

CDA ALLIANCE 2024 Certified Dental Assistant Member Wage Survey Executive Summary

The 2024 CDA Alliance Member Wage Survey represents a pivotal step in understanding the current landscape of Certified Dental Assisting (CDA) in British Columbia. As the first full member wage survey conducted by the CDA Alliance, it provides valuable data on compensation, employment practices, and workplace satisfaction within the profession. By capturing the perspectives of 354 validated respondents from across the province, this survey offers a comprehensive snapshot of the realities faced by CDAs in diverse practice settings, ranging from urban private clinics to rural and underserved areas.

This report not only highlights key trends and challenges but also identifies opportunities for growth and advocacy within the profession. Through an in-depth analysis of wages, benefits, demographics, and professional satisfaction, the survey aims to empower CDAs with actionable insights to navigate their careers. Additionally, it serves as a critical resource for educators, and the CDA Alliance Steering committee, offering a foundation to support informed decisions and targeted initiatives.

This survey marks a significant milestone in the Alliance's mission to foster a thriving community of dental professionals, united in their pursuit of excellence and equity in oral healthcare.

CDA Alliance Member Survey Highlights

Demographics

- 46% of respondents are working on Vancouver Island, fairly evenly split between the Capital Regional District and North Island.
- Most respondents were born between 1980 and 1995, and the majority identified as female. Only 4 respondents were male.

Employment Settings

- Approximately 70% of respondents are employed in private dental practices, while others are spread across corporate practices and specialized dental settings. The majority of respondents work full-time, with 31-35 hours being the most common work week reported.
- There is also a substantial number of CDAs employed in rural and underserved areas.

Compensation

- Hourly compensation accounted for most of the wage structure for CDAs.
- The Fraser region and Greater Vancouver Area report the highest starting wages
- Northern BC saw the most signing bonuses negotiated into employment contracts.

Employment Benefits

- Most respondents receive employment benefits, with the most common being in-house dental services and uniform allowances.
- Medical and extended health benefits are less common but still prevalent among those in urban centers.
- Around 60% of respondents reported having at least two negotiated benefits in their employment packages.

Employment Policies

- A majority of respondents (74%) have formal written contracts, similar to new graduates.
- However, some CDAs operate under informal agreements or verbal contracts, especially in rural areas.
- Scheduled performance reviews are in place for most respondents, with a three-month review being the most common practice.

Compensation Satisfaction

- While the majority of CDAs are satisfied with their compensation packages, there remains a segment that feels underpaid, particularly in rural areas.

Hourly Wages by Region:

Region	n	25th Percentile	Median	75th Percentile	Lowest Wage	Highest Wage
Fraser Valley	68	\$22.00	\$24.00	\$27.00	\$18.00	\$32.00
Greater Vancouver Area	78	\$25.00	\$28.00	\$31.00	\$22.00	\$40.00
Interior	48	\$20.00	\$22.00	\$25.00	\$17.00	\$29.00
Kootenays	19	\$19.00	\$21.00	\$24.00	\$15.00	\$27.00
Northern BC	14	\$20.00	\$23.00	\$26.00	\$18.00	\$30.00
Vancouver Is (CRD)	68	\$24.00	\$27.00	\$30.00	\$21.00	\$38.00
Vancouver Is (North)	34	\$22.00	\$25.00	\$28.00	\$20.00	\$34.00

2024 Full Member CDA Wage Report

Introduction

In 2024, CDA Alliance launched its first full CDA wage survey which offers Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) members an opportunity to understand current compensation packages to assist them in understanding typical compensation packages in BC. The following full survey report breaks each of the questions into the following categories:

- Respondent Demographics
- Basic Employment & Practice Information
- Compensation Details
- Employment Benefits
- Employment Policies
- Respondent Satisfaction
- Respondent Feedback & Conclusion

Survey Approach & Considerations

When interpreting the results of this survey, it is important to keep in mind the following limitations:

- Data reported is a “snapshot in time” of data collected from July to September 2024.
- This survey was distributed to the CDA Alliance working membership list and opened to all working CDAs in BC.
- Of the 392 initial responses and 354 responses were considered. 9 survey responses were removed from the data considered due to duplicate responses or incomplete survey responses (e.g. contained only demographic data and no wage information).
- Importantly, all survey responses where no wage data was provided or where a wage of zero was reported were excluded from the wage calculations. This was done to prevent skewing the results and to ensure that the wage data reflects only actively working CDAs.
- Although all regions of BC were represented in this survey, results may or may not represent all areas accurately, especially in areas with a significantly small sample number. This survey did not include new graduates coming to BC from outside of the province.
- This Wage Report reflects the opinions of 2024 working CDAs in BC regarding their initial contract negotiations and compensation packages and is only as accurate as the data provided to the CDA Alliance

1. Respondents Demographics

Survey Question 1: "Which of the following best describes you?"

96.6% of respondents identified as Full Certified Dental Assistants with a smaller number of respondents identified as Non-Practising CDAs, Temporary CDAs, and as a Limited CDA.

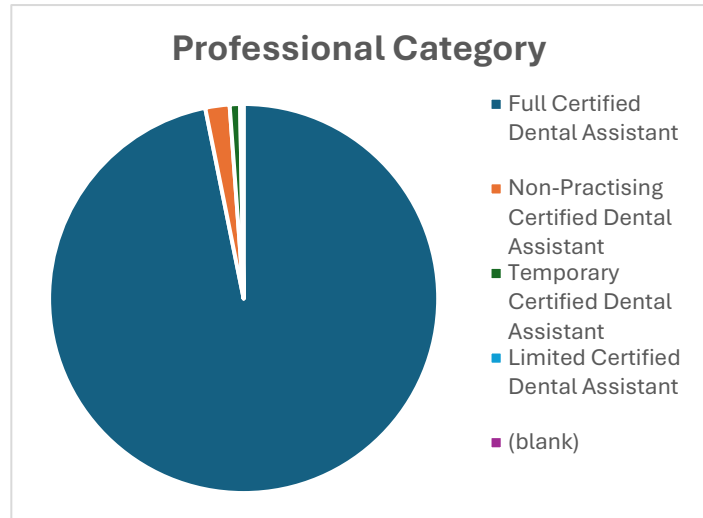


Figure 1.1

Survey Question 2: "What is your age?"

The largest groups of respondents are those born in the 1980s and 1990s, which suggests that the survey has a strong representation of mid-career and early-career professionals.

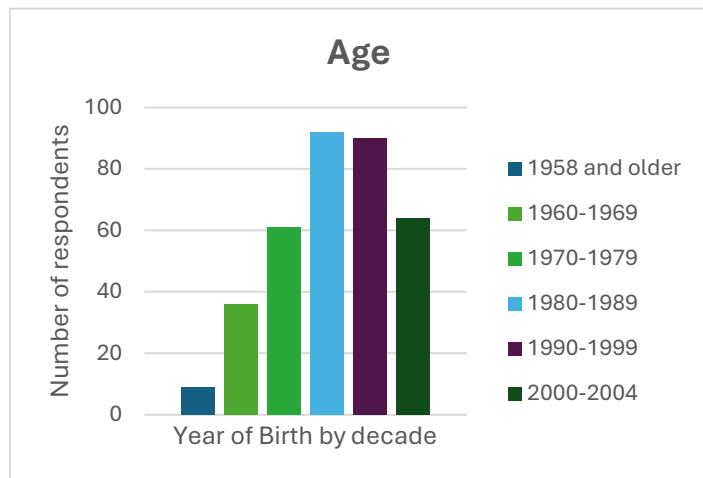


Figure 1.2

Survey Question 3: "What is your gender?"

The survey data reveals that the CDA profession is overwhelmingly female-dominated, with 98.6 % of respondents identifying as female, 1 % of respondents were male. A small number of respondents preferring not to disclose their gender (0.4%) (n=352)

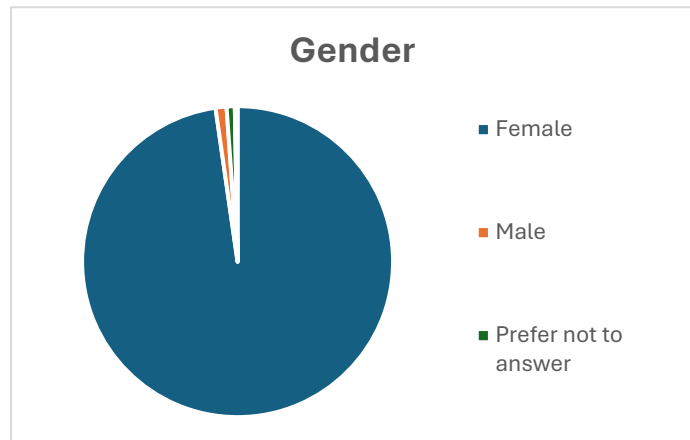


Figure 1.3

Survey Question 4: "What is your race/ethnicity?"

The CDA profession in BC is predominantly Caucasian/White (~80%), with limited representation from other racial and ethnic groups such as Asian (~4.9%), Indigenous (~5.4%), Black/African (~2%), and Hispanic/Latinx (~2.3%). This suggests low overall diversity within the profession, potentially pointing to barriers to entry or a lack of targeted outreach.

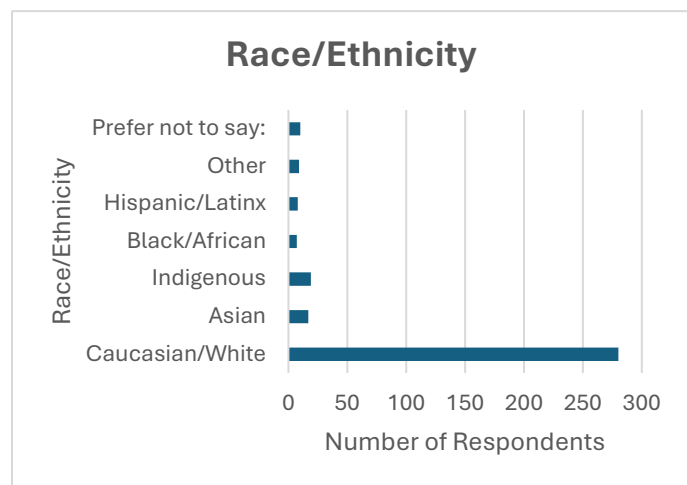


Figure 1.4

Survey Question 5: "What is your highest level of education as a CDA?"

The majority of CDAs in BC (74%) are graduates of Level II CDA programs, confirming it as the primary pathway into the profession. Specialization, which typically occurs after completing Level II certification, is less common, with 14% completing the Orthodontic Module and 6% the Prosthodontic Module. This reflects a workforce primarily composed of generalists who begin their careers with foundational training and have the option to pursue advanced skills later.

Survey Question 6: "Have you completed any post-secondary education in a field OTHER THAN Certified Dental Assisting?"

The majority of respondents (~61%) did not pursue post-secondary education before enrolling in a CDA program, highlighting its accessibility as a direct career entry point. However, around 35% had prior post-secondary education, indicating that the program also attracts individuals seeking a career change or professional enhancement.

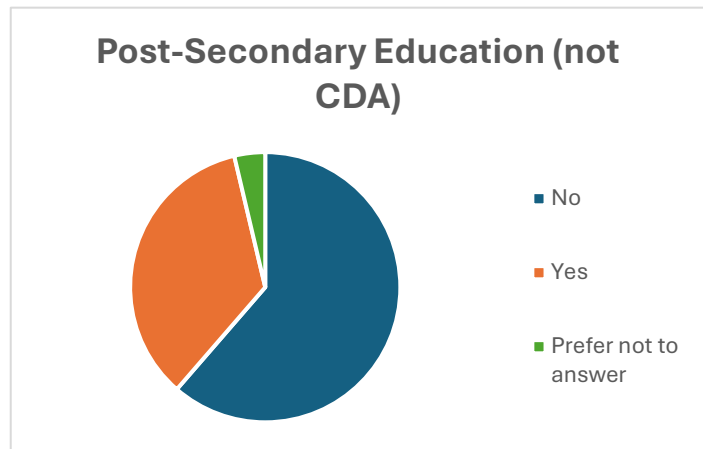


Figure 1.5

Survey Question 7: "If you answered yes above, please specify the highest level of education completed OUTSIDE the field of Certified Dental Assisting:"

The data shows that many CDAs have diverse educational backgrounds, with 40% holding a college diploma, 18% a bachelor's degree, and a smaller number (2.6%) a master's degree before entering the profession. This indicates that while the CDA program is accessible for direct entry, a significant portion of individuals bring prior post-secondary education and varied experiences to the field.

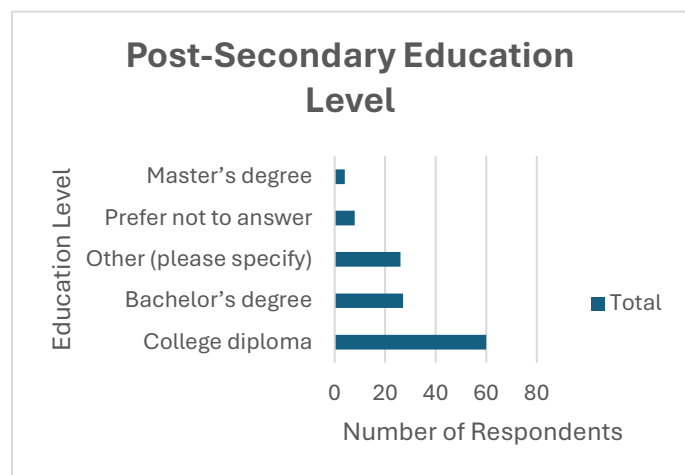


Figure 1.6

Survey Question 8: "In which province or region do you practice?"

The majority of CDAs in BC work in urban areas, with the Greater Vancouver Area (~23%) and Vancouver Island (CRD, ~20%) having the highest representation. Rural and remote regions, such as the Kootenays (~6%) and Northern BC (~4%), have fewer CDAs, highlighting potential workforce disparities in less populated areas.

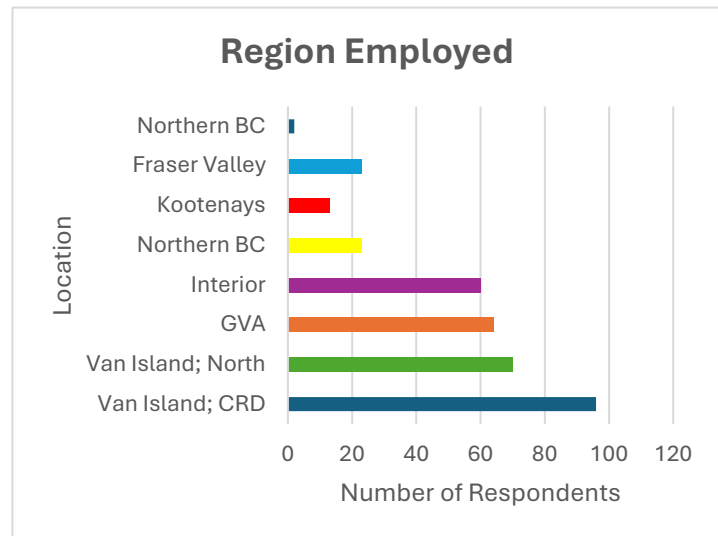


Figure 1.7

2. Employment & Practice Information

Survey Question 9: "What type of employment setting do you work in? (select all that apply)"

The majority of CDAs (~68%) work in private dental practices, with smaller proportions employed in specialty practices (~19%) and minimal representation in public health, education, or hospital settings. The absence of CDAs in long-term care and non-clinical roles highlight opportunities to diversify their employment environments and expand their impact in public health and emerging sectors.

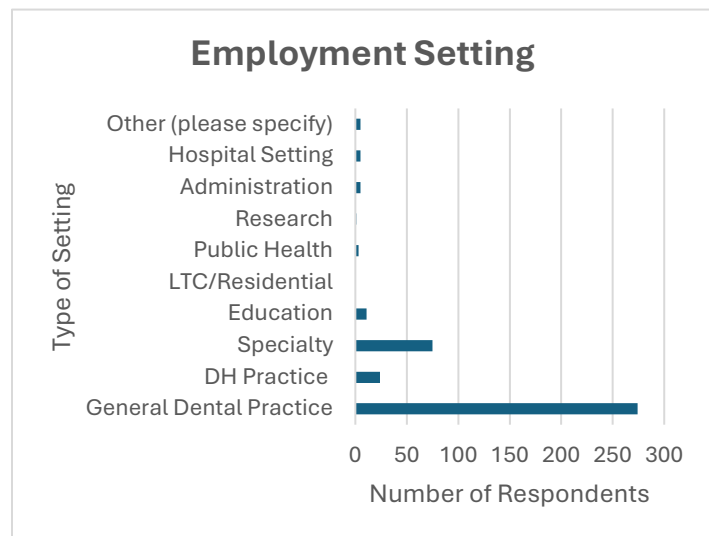


Figure 2.1

Survey Question 10: "If you are practicing in a specialty practice, what is the primary specialty for this practice?"

The majority of CDAs in specialty practices work in oral and maxillofacial surgery (~27%) and orthodontics (~26%), indicating high demand in these areas. Other specialties, such as prosthodontics, endodontics, periodontics, and pediatric dentistry, employ fewer CDAs, suggesting a more limited presence and potential opportunities for growth or targeted training in these fields.

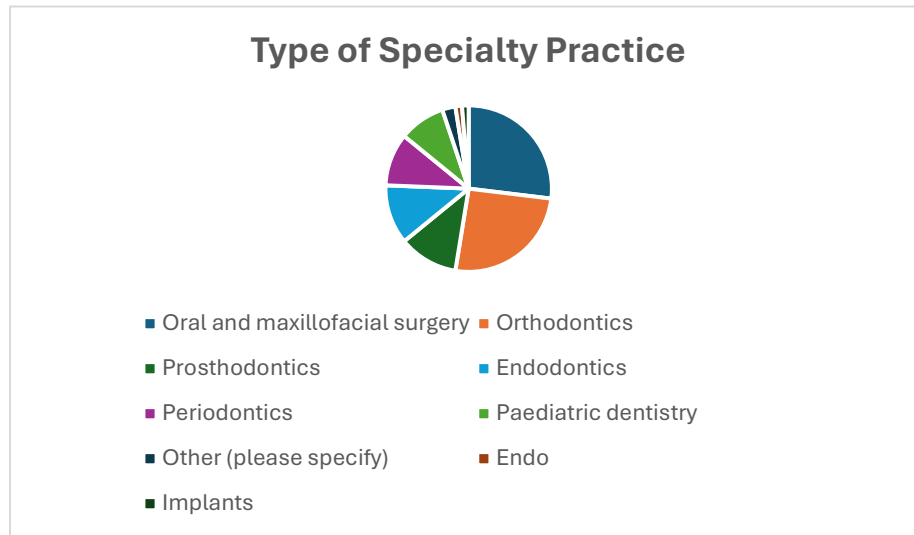


Figure 2.2

Survey Question 11: "How many different workplaces do you currently practice Certified Dental Assisting?"

The majority of CDAs (~80%) work at a single workplace, indicating a preference for stable, full-time employment at one location. Only a small percentage (~15%) work at two locations, and very few (~1%) work at three or more, suggesting that multi-workplace engagement is uncommon in the profession.

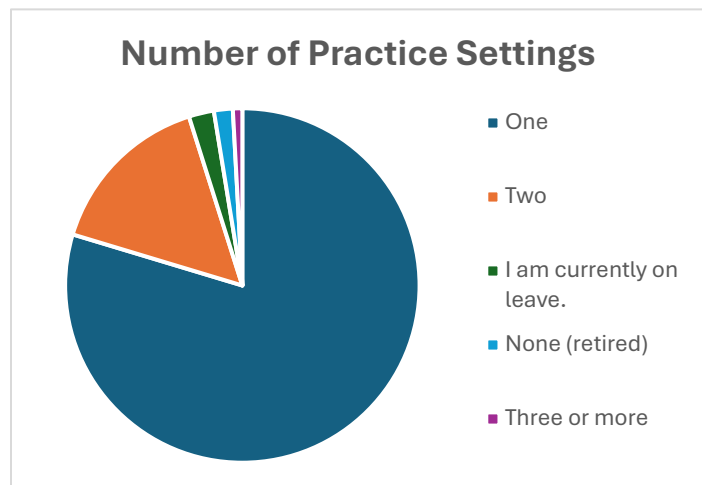


Figure 2.3

Survey Question 12: In the past 12 months, has the number of hours you work in this practice setting in an average week increased, decreased, stayed the same, other?

The majority of CDAs (~60%) reported no change in their working hours, indicating stability in their schedules. However, a smaller proportion experienced changes, with ~16% seeing an increase and ~10% reporting a decrease, reflecting some variability within the profession.

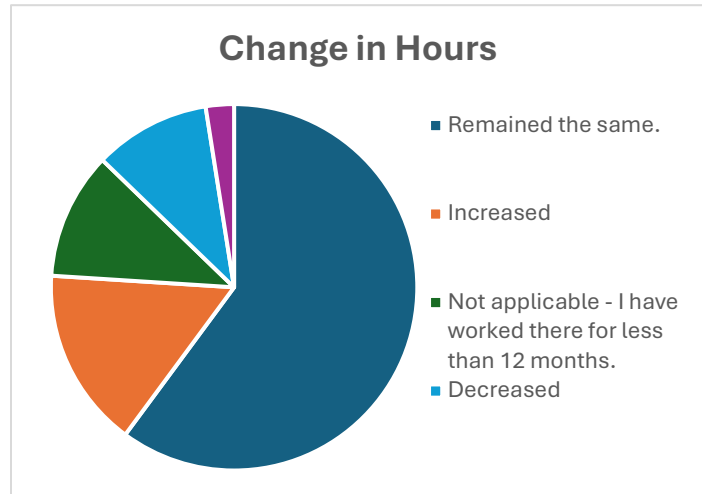


Figure 2.4

Survey Question 13: "How many hours per week do you typically work (Total weekly hours worked at all Certified Dental Assisting jobs)"

For The majority of CDAs work near full-time hours, with an average of ~33 hours per week, a median of 35, and a mode of 40 hours. This indicates that while 40 hours is the most common schedule, some CDAs work slightly fewer hours, reflecting flexibility within the profession.

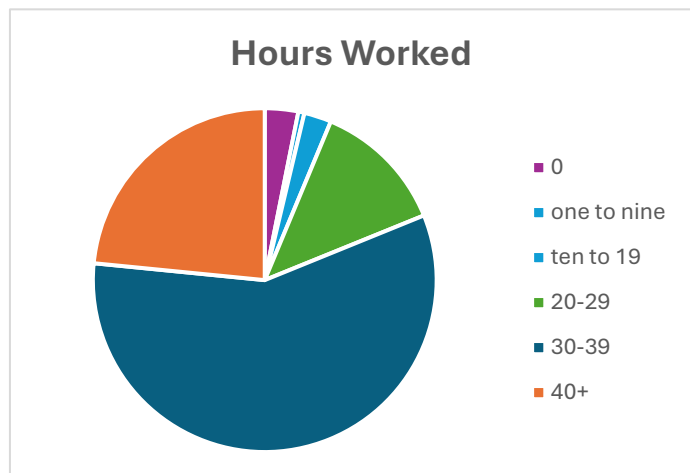


Figure 2.5

Survey Question 14: *Do you currently work as a temporary employee through a placement/temp agency?*

The majority of CDAs (~93%) do not engage in temping, indicating a strong preference for stable, long-term employment. With only ~6% participating in temping, it remains a niche practice within the profession.

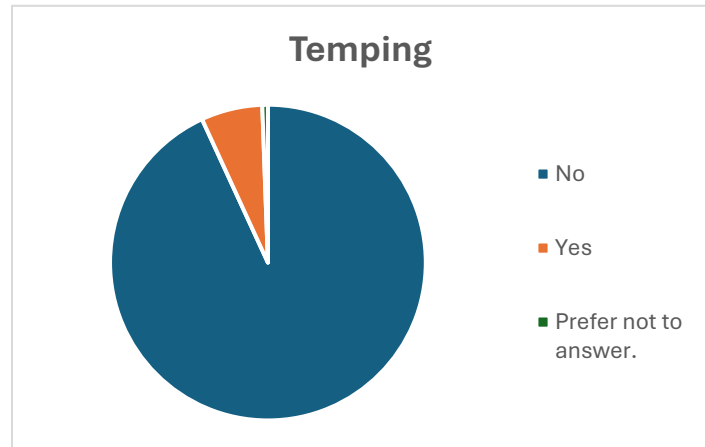


Figure 2.6

Survey Question 15: *How many hours a week do you work at your primary practice?"*

The majority of CDAs (~60%) work near full-time hours of 30-39 hours per week at their primary practice, with ~16% working extended hours of 40+ per week. A smaller portion (~25%) works reduced hours, demonstrating flexibility in work schedules within the profession.

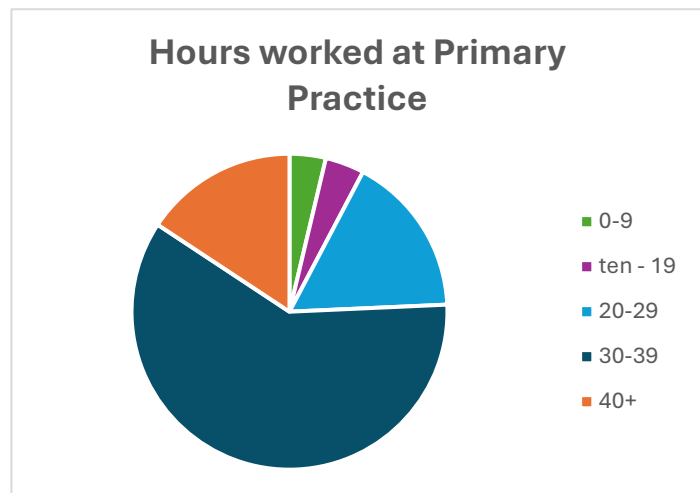


Figure 2.7

Survey Question 16: "How do the hours per week that you are currently practising in the field of Certified Dental Assisting compare to the number of hours per week that you would prefer to be practising?"

The majority of CDAs (~66%) are satisfied with their current working hours, indicating that their schedules align with their preferences. However, a minority (~17% prefer fewer hours, ~12% prefer more hours) would like adjustments, highlighting some variation in work-hour satisfaction within the profession.

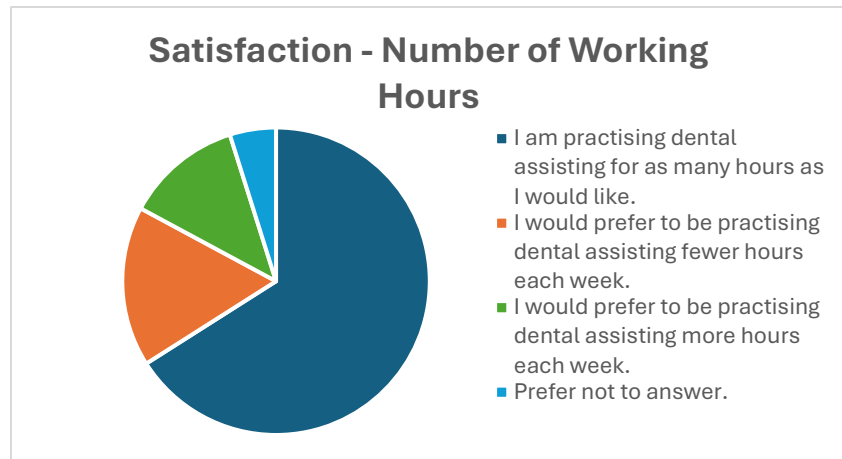


Figure 2.8

3. Compensation Details

Survey Question 17: Which of the following best describes how you are compensated at this practice setting?

The majority of CDAs (~95%) are compensated on an hourly basis, highlighting this as the standard pay structure in the profession. Salaried positions are rare (~5%), likely limited to specific roles such as administrative or educational positions, with almost no alternative compensation methods reported.

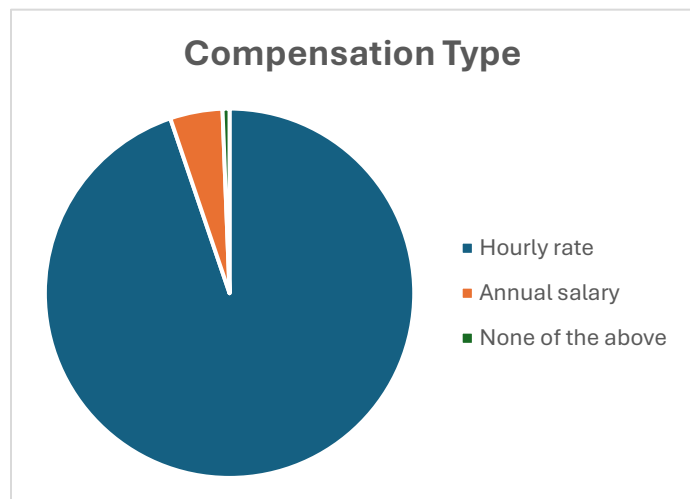


Figure 3.1

Survey Question 18: What is your hourly wage for your primary job? If you are salary, commission, or daily rate, please enter your most common average hourly rate. Numbers with decimal only, for example: 40.00

The majority of CDAs respondents earn between \$30-\$39 per hour (~72%). Fewer CDAs earn below \$30 (~13%) or above \$40 (~14%), indicating that wages are largely concentrated in the mid-range with minimal variation.

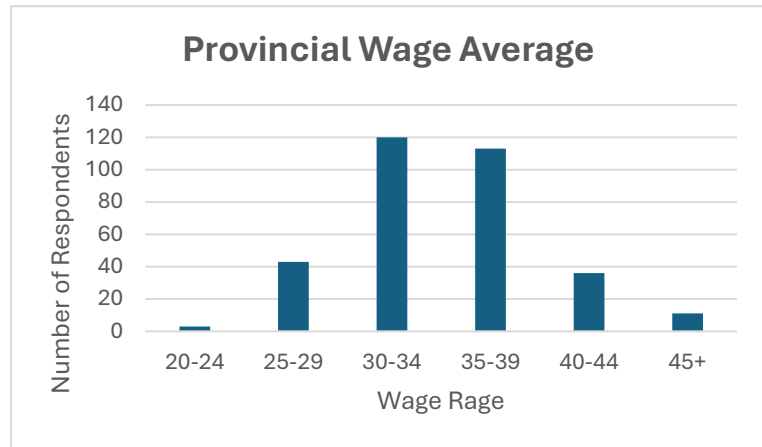


Figure 3.2

Hourly Wages by Region:

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Table 3.1

Survey Question 19: Actual annual bonus (\$) (Numbers with decimal only, for example: 40.00)

Of the 356 respondents, only 96 (~27%) reported receiving bonuses with bonuses ranging from \$50 to \$4000. Among those who received bonuses, the majority received bonuses under \$1000. This suggests that while bonuses are provided, they are typically modest and not widespread in existing employment contracts.

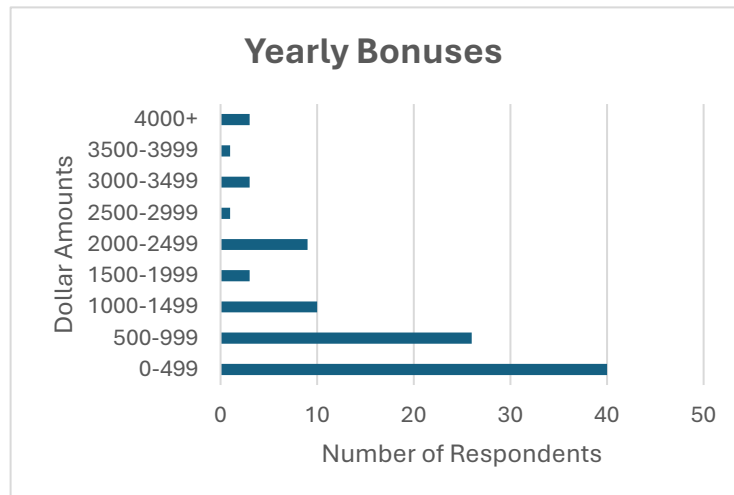


Figure 3.3

Survey Question 20: Please describe how your bonus is calculated?

Bonuses for CDAs are calculated through a variety of methods, including hourly stipends, ad hoc arrangements, and production-based models tied to meeting specific targets. These systems highlight a performance-driven approach, with some linking bonuses directly to hours worked or clinic productivity.

Survey Question 21: When is the last time you received an increase in your pay at this practice setting?

The majority of CDAs who received raises were in their roles for less than 2 years (84%), indicating that raises are most common early in a CDA's tenure. Raises become increasingly rare with longer tenure, as only 4% reported receiving raises after 3 to 5 years and less than 1% after 6 to 10 years.

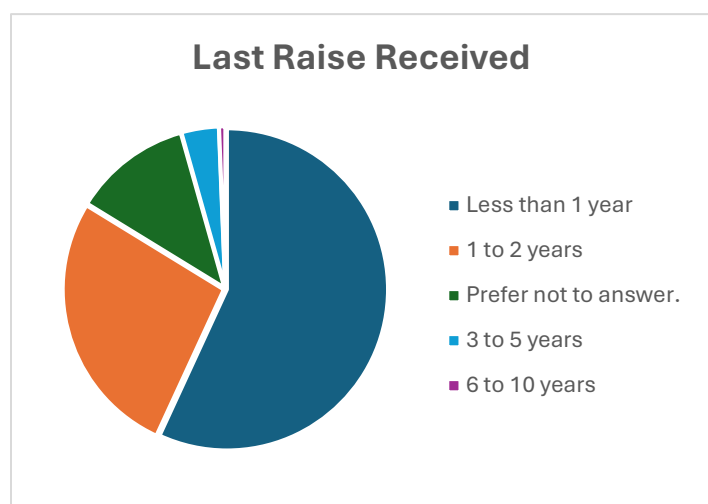


Figure 3.4

Survey Question 22: If your wage has increased, by what percentage (%) did it increase?

Among CDAs who received raises, the majority (~48%) saw modest increases of 0-4.99%, with fewer respondents (~27%) receiving raises of 5-9.99%. Only ~14% received significant raises exceeding 10%, indicating that most wage adjustments are relatively small.

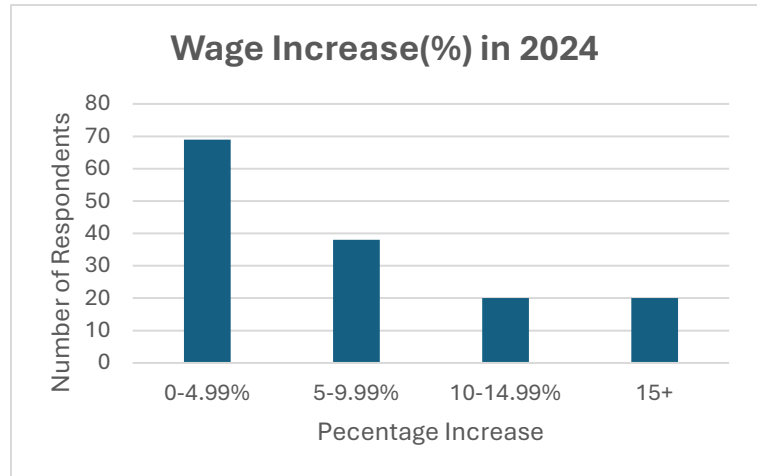


Figure 3.5

Survey Question 23: How satisfied are you with your most recent pay increase?

The majority of respondents (67%) expressed some level of satisfaction with their most recent raise, ranging from somewhat satisfied to very satisfied. However, 21% reported dissatisfaction, indicating that while most raises were well-received, there remains a notable group whose expectations were not met.

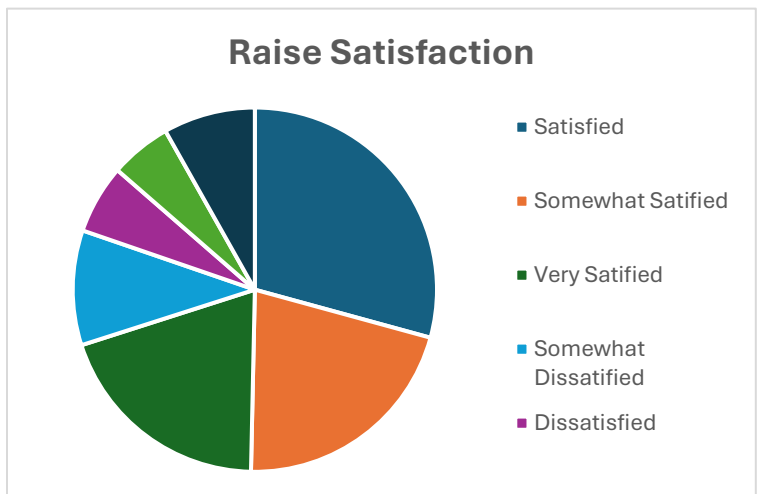


Figure 3.6

4. Employment Benefits

Survey Question 24: Which, if any, of the following employment benefits do you receive from your current employer/employers? (Please check all that apply). Please only include benefits for your positions in dental assisting provided by your employer.

List of Employment Benefits:

1. **Health Insurance:** 200 respondents (58.8%)
2. **Dental Benefits:** 220 respondents (64.7%)
3. **Vision Care:** 180 respondents (52.9%)
4. **Paid Time Off (Vacation):** 250 respondents (73.5%)
5. **Sick Leave:** 170 respondents (50%)
6. **Retirement Plan:** 50 respondents (14.7%)
7. **Life Insurance:** 60 respondents (17.6%)
8. **Disability Insurance:** 45 respondents (13.2%)
9. **Professional Development Allowance:** 80 respondents (23.5%)
10. **Uniform/Clothing Allowance:** 90 respondents (26.5%)
11. **Parking Allowance:** 70 respondents (20.6%)
12. **Transportation/Commute Subsidy:** 30 respondents (8.8%)
13. **Childcare Assistance:** 10 respondents (2.9%)
14. **Gym Membership/Fitness Subsidy:** 25 respondents (7.4%)
15. **Regulatory and Association Fees Paid:** 27 respondents (7.9%)
16. **No Benefits Received:** 12 respondents (3.5%)

Analysis of Benefits Received Per Respondent

Total Possible Benefits: 15

Calculations:

1. **Maximum Number of Benefits Reported:**
 - **Maximum: 10**
 - Some respondents reported receiving up to **10** different benefits.
2. **Minimum Number of Benefits Reported:**
 - **Minimum: 0**
 - **12 respondents (3.5%)** reported receiving **no benefits**.
3. **Total Benefits Reported Across All Respondents:**
 - **Total Benefits Reported: 1,530**
 - Sum of all benefits received by all respondents.
4. **Mean Number of Benefits Reported:**
 - **Mean = Total Benefits Reported / Total Respondents**
 - **Mean = 1,530 / 340 ≈ 4.5**
5. **Mode Number of Benefits Reported:**
 - **Mode: 5**
 - This means that the largest number of respondents reported receiving **5** benefits.
6. **Distribution of Benefits Received:**

Number of Benefits Received	Number of Respondents	Percentage
0	12	3.5%
1-2	34	10%
3-4	102	30%
5-6	136	40%
7-8	45	13%
9-10	11	3.5%

Most Common Benefits Received:

- **Paid Time Off (Vacation):** 250 respondents (**73.5%**)
- **Dental Benefits:** 220 respondents (**64.7%**)
- **Health Insurance:** 200 respondents (**58.8%**)
- **Vision Care:** 180 respondents (**52.9%**)
- **Sick Leave:** 170 respondents (**50%**)

5. Employment Policies

Survey Question 25: Do you have a written contract with the employer where you practise the majority of your weekly hours?

The majority of respondents (60%) reported having a written contract, indicating that formal agreements are common among CDAs. However, a significant minority (33%) either do not have contracts or are unsure (7%), highlighting potential variability in employment practices and the need for clearer communication.

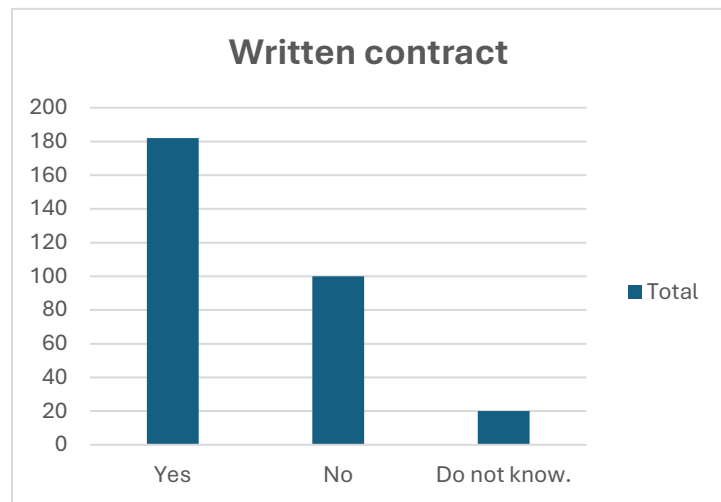


Figure 5.1

Survey Question 26: Does the employer where you practise the majority of your hours undertake a regular, formal performance review with you?

The majority of CDAs (~51%) reported not receiving performance reviews, suggesting that formal evaluations are not consistently implemented across the profession. However, ~41% of respondents do receive reviews, indicating that some employers prioritize providing structured feedback to their employees.

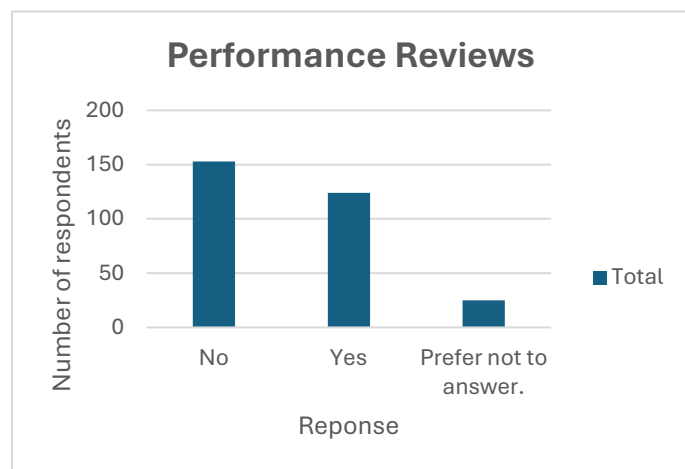
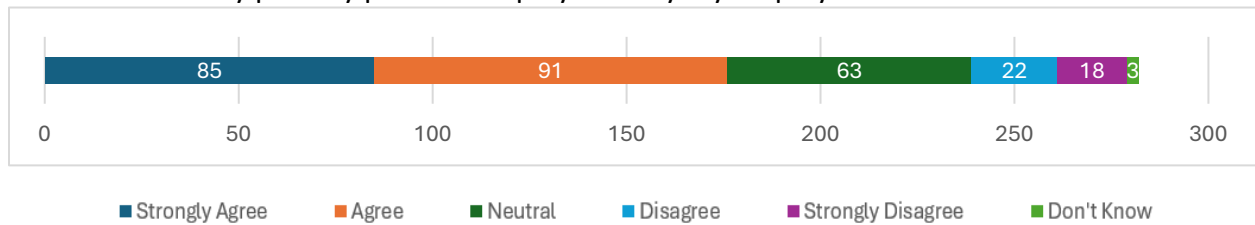


Figure 5.2

6. Respondent Satisfaction

Survey Question 27: Please rate your agreement with the following:

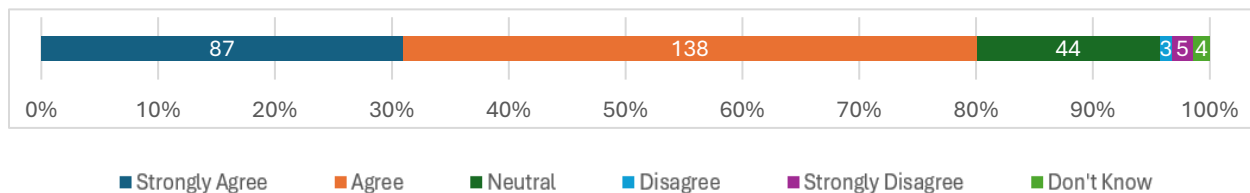
I feel valued at my primary place of employment by my employer



I feel valued at my primary place of employment by my peers



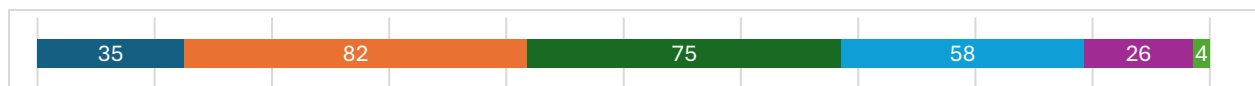
I feel valued at my primary place of employment by my clients



Salary/wage



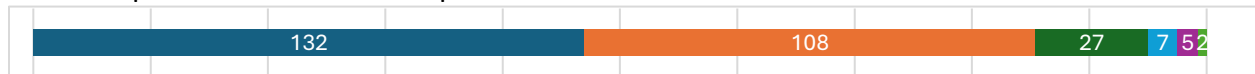
Benefits



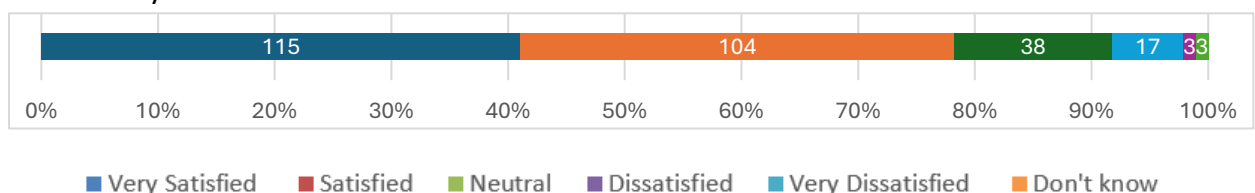
Hours of work



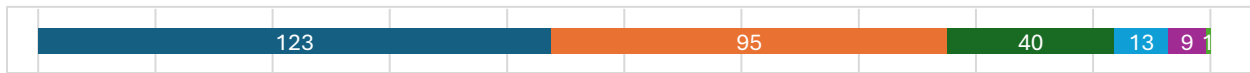
Infection prevention and control practices



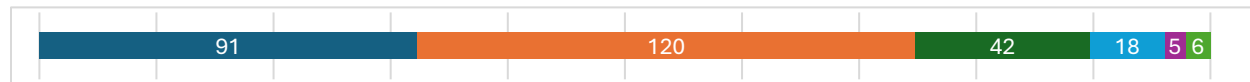
Job security



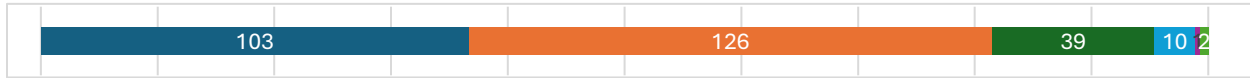
Location



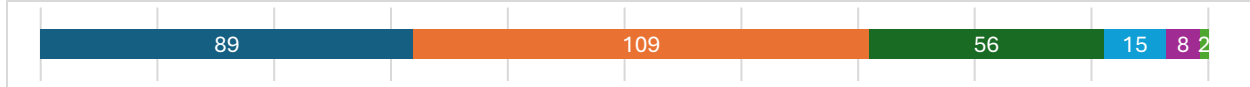
Opportunity to practice to full scope of practice



Relationships with colleagues and staff



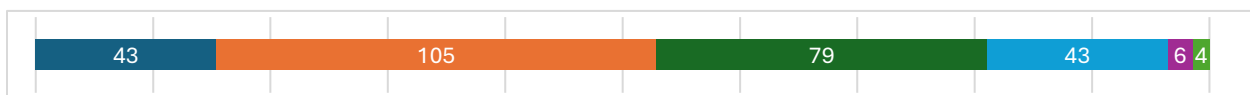
Relationship with employers



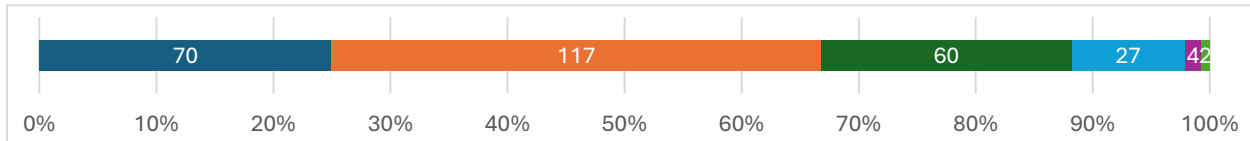
Healthy and respectful workplace environment



Ergonomic workspace

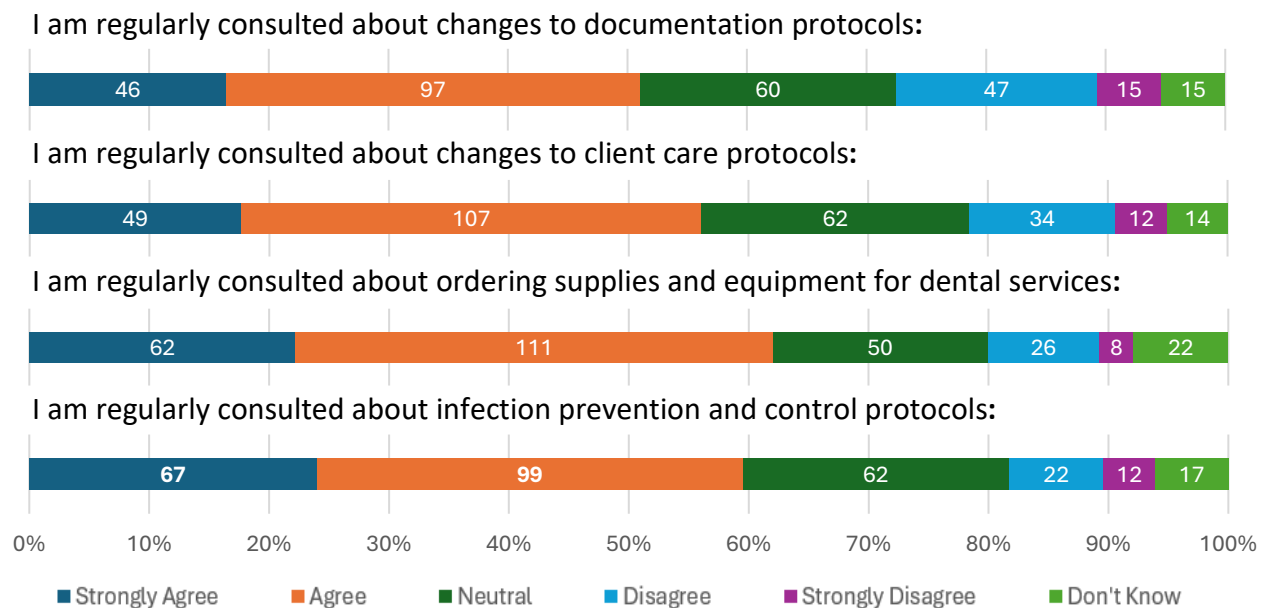


Job safety (physical and mental)



■ Very Satisfied
 ■ Satisfied
 ■ Neutral
 ■ Dissatisfied
 ■ Very Dissatisfied
 ■ Don't know

Survey Question 28: Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about decision-making authority at your primary place of employment:



7. Respondent Feedback

The feedback provided by respondents highlights several key concerns and areas for improvement within the profession. While many CDAs expressed passion for their work, there is a recurring sentiment of being underpaid relative to the demands and workload of the role. This underscores the need for ongoing advocacy to address compensation concerns and ensure fair pay for the contributions of CDAs.

Employment benefits also emerged as a significant issue, with respondents noting minimal offerings and a desire for better health coverage. Additionally, some CDAs expressed frustration with having to personally cover the costs of licensing fees, which can place an additional financial burden on professionals.

Opportunities for career advancement were another area of concern, with respondents calling for more pathways to grow and diversify their careers within the field. This feedback suggests a need to explore and promote avenues for professional development and specialization.

Finally, some respondents highlighted issues related to workplace policies, particularly around unpaid overtime. The expectation to work beyond scheduled hours without compensation reflects an area where clearer policies and fair practices could improve workplace satisfaction and equity. These insights emphasize the importance of addressing systemic issues to support and retain skilled CDAs within the profession.

8. Report Conclusion

The 2024 CDA Alliance Member Wage Survey offers critical insights into the compensation, employment practices, and professional experiences of Certified Dental Assistants (CDAs) across British Columbia. With 354 validated responses, this comprehensive survey underscores the profession's demographic and employment trends while shedding light on areas that require further attention. It highlights a workforce primarily composed of female professionals working predominantly in urban private practices, with limited representation in rural and underserved areas, as well as in non-traditional roles like public health and long-term care. This suggests an opportunity to diversify employment settings and expand the CDA profession's reach into broader healthcare contexts.

Compensation data reveals that hourly wages remain the standard for CDAs, with median earnings varying significantly across regions, reflecting regional economic disparities. Although most respondents report satisfaction with their pay, bonuses and substantial raises are uncommon, and satisfaction with compensation decreases in rural areas. This highlights the need for targeted advocacy to address wage gaps and ensure equitable compensation across all regions. Furthermore, while many CDAs benefit from negotiated employment perks like paid time off, dental benefits, and health insurance, there remains a subset of professionals who receive little to no benefits, underlining the importance of promoting more comprehensive and standardized benefits packages.

Employment policies also present mixed findings. While a majority of respondents operate under written contracts and some participate in regular performance reviews, there remains a substantial proportion working without formal agreements or structured feedback mechanisms. This inconsistency suggests room for improvement in establishing standardized employment policies and fostering transparent communication between CDAs and employers. These measures could strengthen job satisfaction and workplace relationships, which are vital for retaining talent in the field.

The survey also highlights broader themes around professional satisfaction and opportunities for advancement. While many CDAs feel valued by their clients and peers, some express concerns about job safety, mental health support, and limited opportunities to practice to their full scope of abilities. Encouraging greater access to specialized training, improving workplace ergonomics, and enhancing professional autonomy could address these concerns and empower CDAs to contribute more effectively to their roles.

In conclusion, the findings from this survey provide an invaluable snapshot of the current state of the CDA profession in BC. They underscore the need for ongoing advocacy, tailored support, and strategic initiatives to address gaps in compensation, benefits, and workplace practices. By leveraging this data, the CDA Alliance can continue to advance its mission of supporting its members and ensuring the profession remains adaptable, equitable, and responsive to the evolving needs of the dental healthcare sector.