

BCDHA 2023 Dental Hygiene New Graduate Wage Survey

Executive Summary

During the summer of 2023, the British Columbia Dental Hygienists' Association (BCDHA) conducted its' first Dental Hygiene (DH) new graduate wage survey. The survey was distributed to the 2023 CDHA list of BC new graduate dental hygienists. Survey results reflect the views of those members surveyed between July and September 2023. A total of 104 members participated. (52% of BC graduates polled)

New Graduate Survey Highlights

Employment Settings

- 73% of DH new graduates are employed in privately owned dental practices.
- 8 out of 10 new graduates reported accepting full-time job offers, with 40% of respondents accepting jobs working between 31-35 hours and 37% working 36-40 hours.
- 77% of respondents report satisfaction with the number of hours negotiated in the primary employment contract, with one out of six (15%) respondents preferring to work fewer hours. In contrast, 8% would like more hours.

Compensation

- 98% of respondents reported hourly wage as their primary wage structure.
- On average, respondents reported a starting wage of \$53 per hour (not including bonuses and/or commissions).
- Respondents report that 12.5% of new graduates received a signing bonus, ranging from \$200 to \$30,000.
- Respondents receiving higher signing bonuses reported long-term commitments were required to receive the bonus.

Benefits, Extended Health, Dental, and Other Employment Policies

- 89% of employed respondents received at least one employment benefit.
- The top five benefits received by respondents are in-house dental (67%), uniform allowances (64%), professional development (36%), medical/extended health benefits (32%) and paid parking (26%).
- Nine out of ten (95%) employed respondents report that they have an employment agreement in place, 80% of those indicate the agreement is a formal, signed employment contract.
- 66% of respondents report a regular required performance review, with 3-month reviews reported by 70% of those with scheduled reviews.
- 11.5% of respondents indicated no benefits negotiated in their compensation package.

Items negotiated to support professional growth

- The top benefits received by respondents to support professional growth are longer appointment times (59%), additional computer training (38%), and additional support to acclimate to real-life scheduling (32%).
- Shadowing experienced DHs before starting practice was the most common item noted in the “other” category.

Wage Results and Information

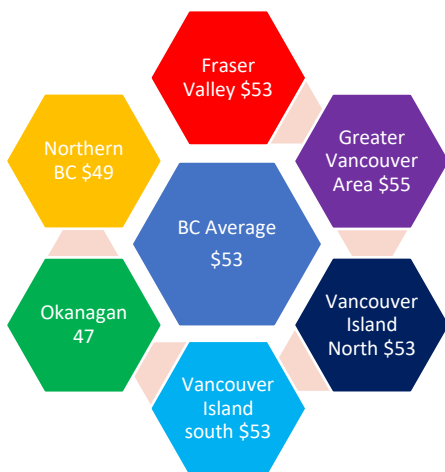
The results shared in this section provide up-to-date wage statistics for new graduate clinical Dental Hygienists and do not include practice environments for education or alternative practice environments (e.g., dental sales, public health, etc.)

PLEASE NOTE: Wage data denoted with an asterisk (*) represents a small sample size (5 respondents or less). As such, the average wage may not accurately represent the location. If you are a new graduate member from a locale with a small sample size, please encourage your colleagues to participate in our next employment survey.

Consideration for future surveys

Demographic information and level of completed dental hygiene education was not collected for the initial survey but may be considered for future surveys.

2023 British Columbia Average New Graduate Dental Hygiene Wage



Average New Graduate wage based on location		
Location	Hourly Wage	(N=X)
Fraser Valley	\$53	N=19
Greater Vancouver Area	\$55	N=37
Vancouver Island South	\$53	N=18
Vancouver Island North	\$53	N=14
Okanagan*	\$47*	N=5*
Northern BC	\$49	N=9
TOTAL	\$53	N=102

BCDHA 2023 Dental Hygiene New Graduate Wage Full Survey Results

Introduction

In 2023, BCDHA collaborated with BC Dental Hygiene (DH) Educators to launch the first BCDHA New Graduate Wage Survey. This survey offers 2024 new graduate members information about initial compensation packages to assist them in negotiating their first contracts after graduation by understanding typical compensation packages in BC. The following full survey report breaks each of the questions into the following categories:

- Basic Employment & Practice information
- Compensation details
- Employment benefits
- Employment policies
- Compensation 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 2023.
- This survey was conducted using the BCDHA new graduate dental hygiene member list (n=199) and is not a random sample. 112 initial responses were received, with eight duplicate responses removed from the survey data, with a final total of 104 survey responses evaluated (n=104)
- Survey results may or may not accurately represent all graduates in BC, 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 2023 New Graduates regarding their initial contract negotiations and compensation packages and is only as accurate as the data provided to the Association.

Basic Employment & Practice Information

Survey Question 1: What province, territory, or other location did you find employment at a DH?

For respondent distribution, the survey locations were divided into the following sections:

- Greater Vancouver Area
- Fraser Valley
- Vancouver Island; Capital Regional District (CRD)
- Vancouver Island; Upper Island
- Northern BC
- Okanagan
- Kootenays
- Other (outside of BC)

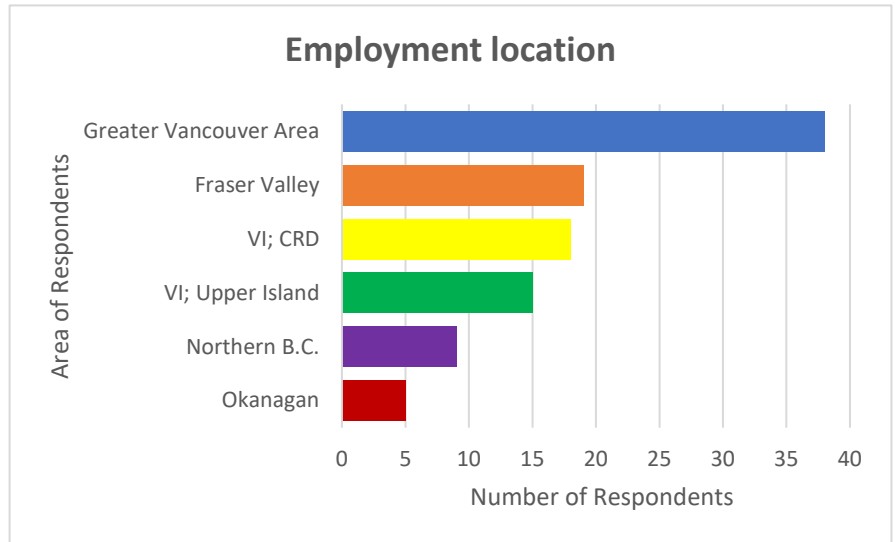


Figure 1.1

All recent graduates who participated in the survey mentioned that they have successfully obtained employment in British Columbia. Among the respondents, 36% landed jobs in the Vancouver area. About three out of every ten new graduates are working on Vancouver Island, and more than half (54.5%) are employed in the Capital Regional District (Victoria and the surrounding area). Notably, none of the recent graduates accepted positions in Kootenays.

Survey Question 2: For your primary practice setting, please indicate what type it is:

Seven out of 10 (72.5%) respondents indicated that they are working in a privately owned general dental practice. A further 24% of new graduate dental hygienists are working in general dental practices owned by dental corporations, while only a handful are in dental hygiene clinics (3%).

Employment in an independent dental hygiene clinic was reported most in larger centers like the Capital Regional district and Greater Vancouver area.

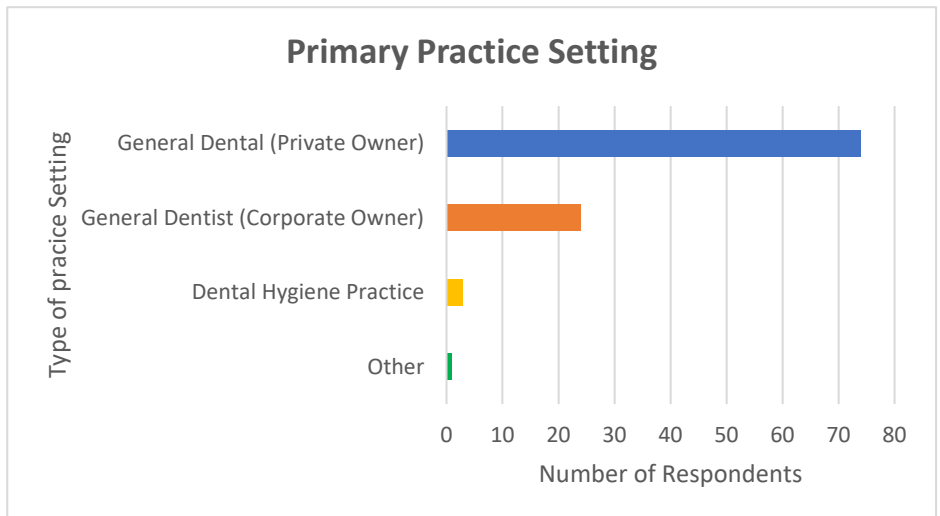


Figure 1.2

Survey Question 3: How many different practice settings are you employed as DH?

Seven out of 10 new graduates are employed in a single practice setting, accounting for 71% of respondents. Among those who work in multiple locations, having two workplaces is the most common scenario, comprising 24% of this subgroup. Notably, new graduates working in the Greater Vancouver Area are more likely to work in multiple locations, with 37% falling into this category. Additionally, the highest incidence of temporary agency employment is reported in the Vancouver Area.

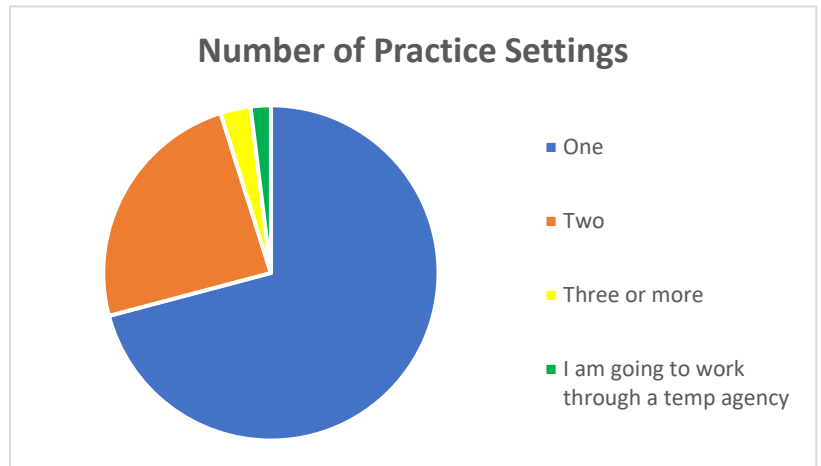


Figure 1.3

Survey Question 4: How many hours will you work a week? (cumulative across all practice settings)

Considering 30 hours as the threshold for defining full-time working hours, more than eight of ten new graduate (82.5%) dental hygiene report that they work full-time hours.

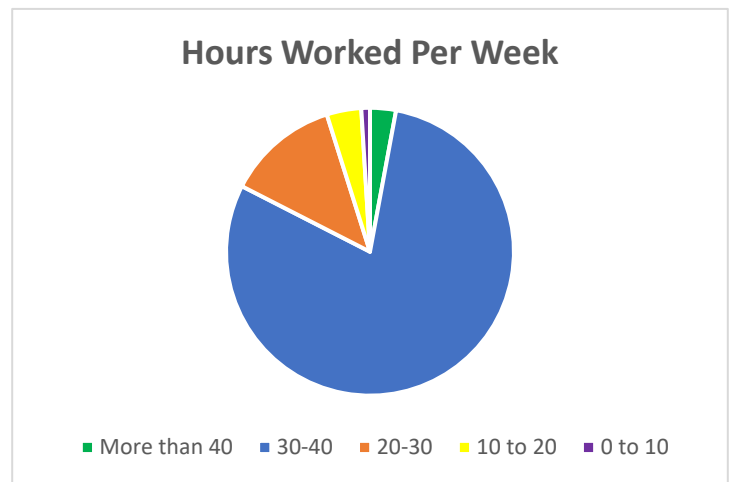


Figure 1.4

Survey Question 5: How did you first hear about the job you accepted?

Fifty-three percent of recent graduates across BC initially sourced their jobs through employment websites. Conversely, a higher proportion of applicants on Vancouver Island (45%) were more inclined to find employment through word of mouth, typically from friends or colleagues.

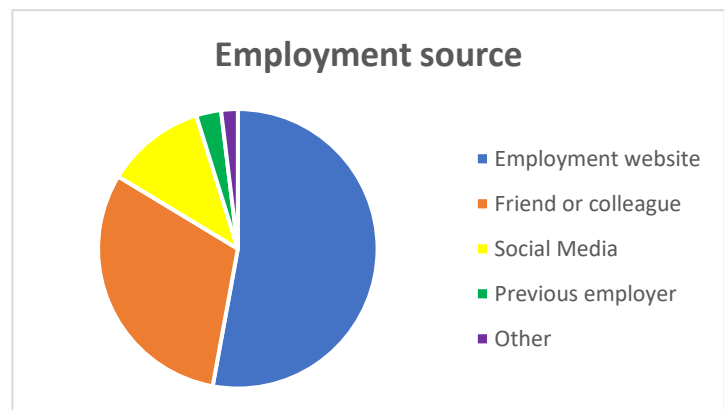


Figure 1-5

Compensation Details

Survey Question 6: Which best describes your negotiated wage?

Almost exclusively, 98% of new graduate respondents reported earning an hourly wage.

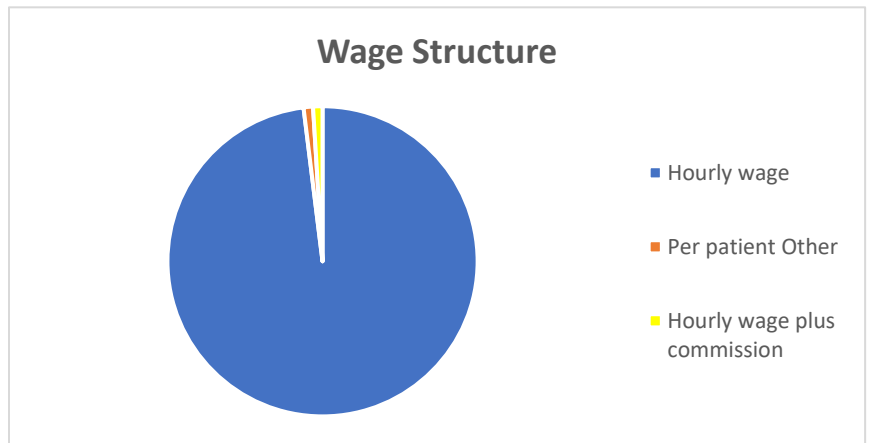


Figure 2.1

Survey Question 7: If you are paid an hourly wage, what is your negotiated hourly wage?

In 2023, the average negotiated wage for new graduates was \$53. The highest individual wage was reported in Northern BC, even though the overall wage range in Northern BC was lower than the average across the entire province of BC.

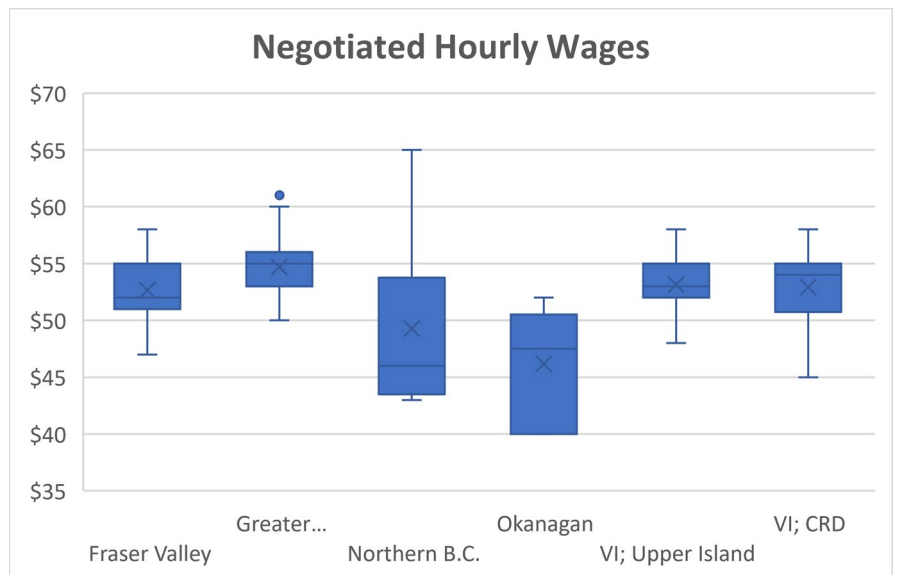


Figure 2.2

Survey Question 8: Did you receive a signing bonus or retention benefit for taking this job?

Just over one out of ten (13%) new graduate DHs negotiated a signing bonus in their contract.



Figure 2.3

Survey Question 9: If you answered "Yes" to the previous question, how much did you receive?

New graduate compensation packages exhibited bonuses that varied widely, ranging from a one-time signing bonus of \$200 to a single \$30,000 distributed over three years. Among the reported bonuses, four dental hygienists mentioned an average annual bonus of \$10,000. Notably, larger bonuses were associated with longer required signing periods, typically spanning 2 to 3 years. The majority of bonuses, falling within the range of \$1,000 to \$3,000, were typically paid within the first year of employment.



Figure 2.4

Employee Benefits

Survey Question 10: What benefits were negotiated into your employment contract (please select all that are applicable)

New graduates reported a wide range of benefits,

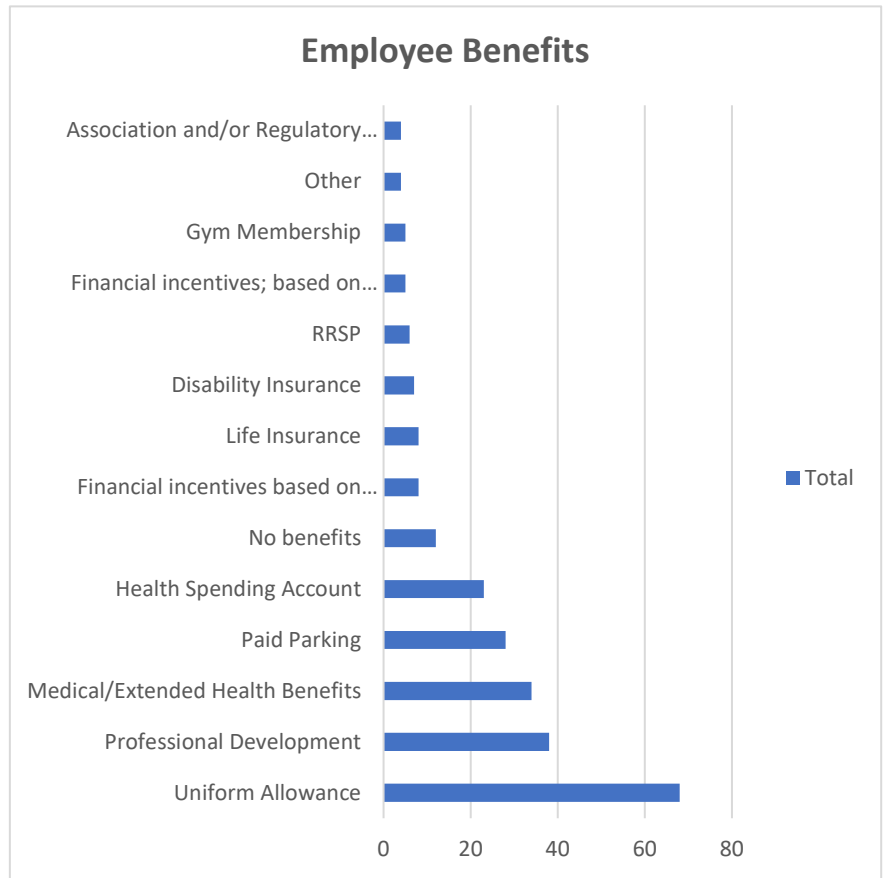


Figure 3.1

89% of Respondents received more than one employee benefit, with the highest average number of benefits being 2, including in-house dental and continuing education.

There was a significant correlation between wages and the number of negotiated employee benefits; indicating that individuals with higher wages tended to negotiate fewer benefits into their contracts

Part-time employment was associated with the lowest number of benefits reported by respondents, with 80% of those in part-time positions receiving no benefits.

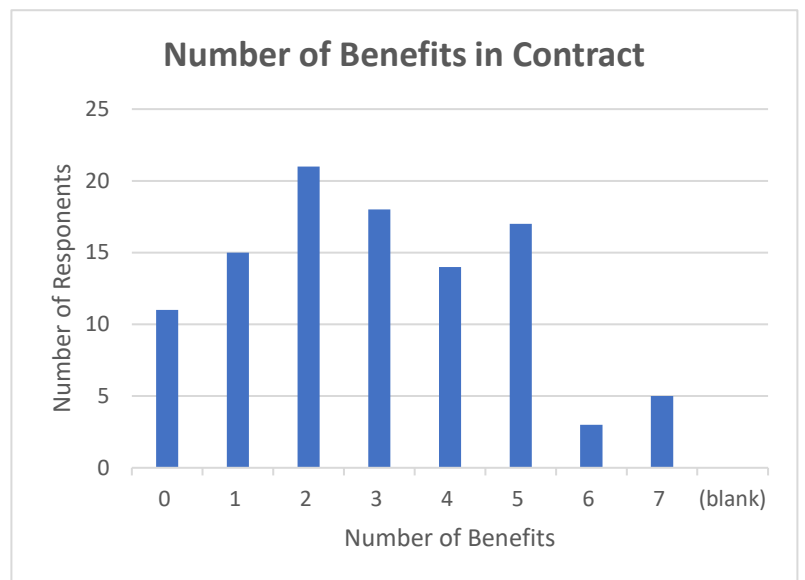


Figure 3.2

Survey Question 11: If you selected "other" please explain.

4 respondents reported additional items like:

- aesthetic treatments (facials, Botox, eyelash extensions); and
- additional extended health services such as RMT and eye care.

Survey Question 12: Within the first months of DH employment, did your employer provide you with any of the following to help you acclimate to "real-world scheduling and practice management?"

91% of respondents reported being given additional support, with the most common being additional computer training.

Of interest, 100% of new graduates who reported receiving no employee benefits still negotiated at least one additional support to help them acclimate to real-world scheduling, with the most common support being longer appointment times.

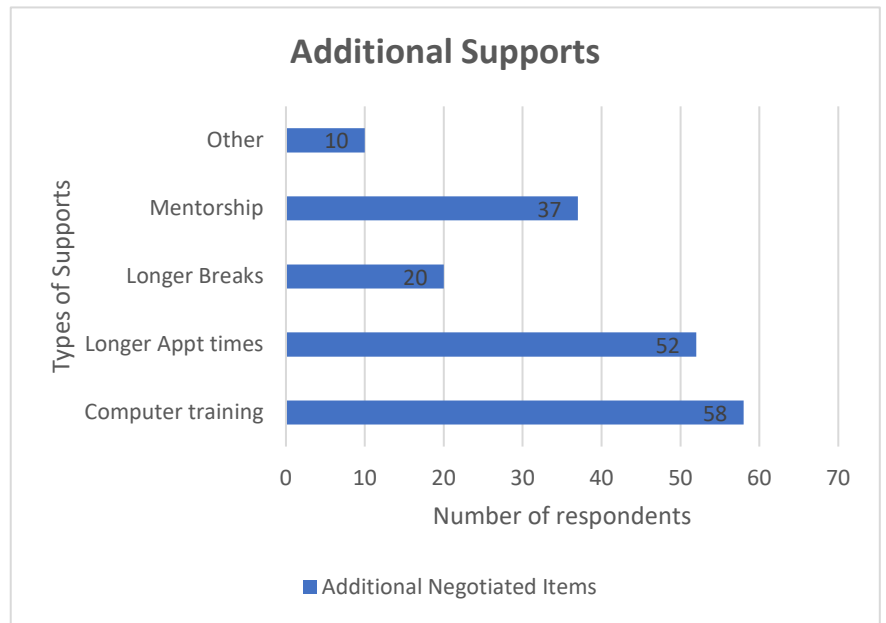


Figure 3.3

Employment Policies

Survey Question 13: Which of the following describes your employment contract at your primary practice setting?

95% new graduates reported having some form of employment contract in their primary practice setting. Formal written contracts were reported for more than eight out of 10 respondent(81%), and for 90% of those employed in corporate offices.

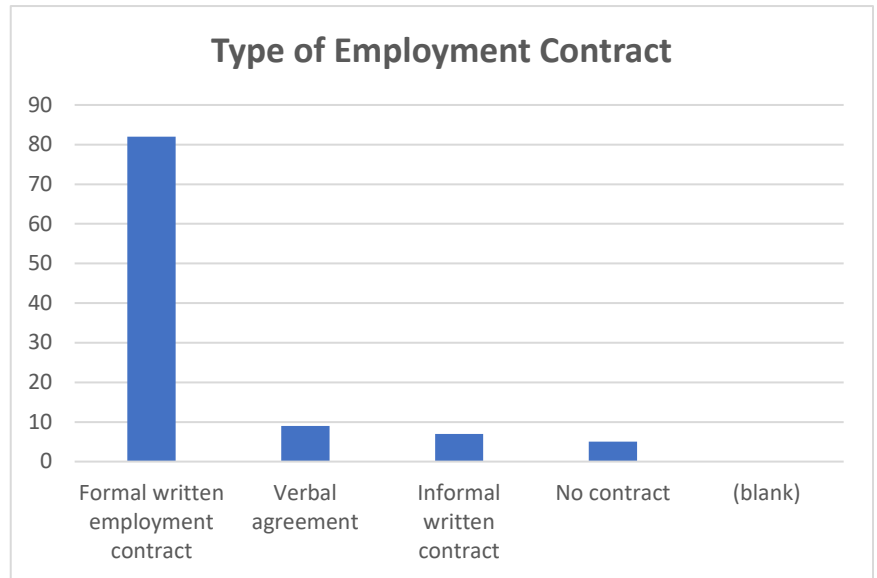


Figure 4.1

Survey Question 14: When will your next performance evaluation be held? (FT vs PT vs Other)

Most new graduate dental hygienists have a performance evaluation within the first year, with 46% reporting a 3-month review in their primary practice setting.

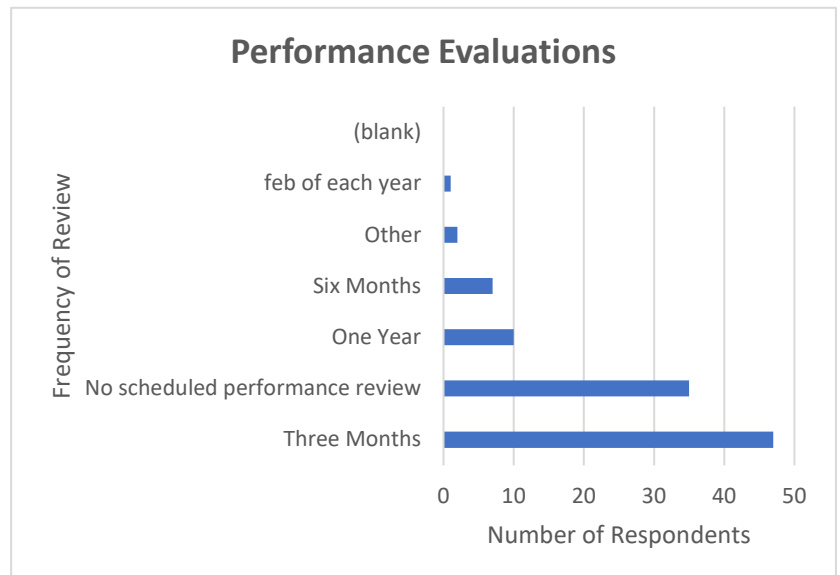


Figure 4.2

Compensation Satisfaction

Survey Question 15: How many hours are you scheduled to work compared to your ideal number of hours?

78% of new graduates are happy with the number of hours they are working,

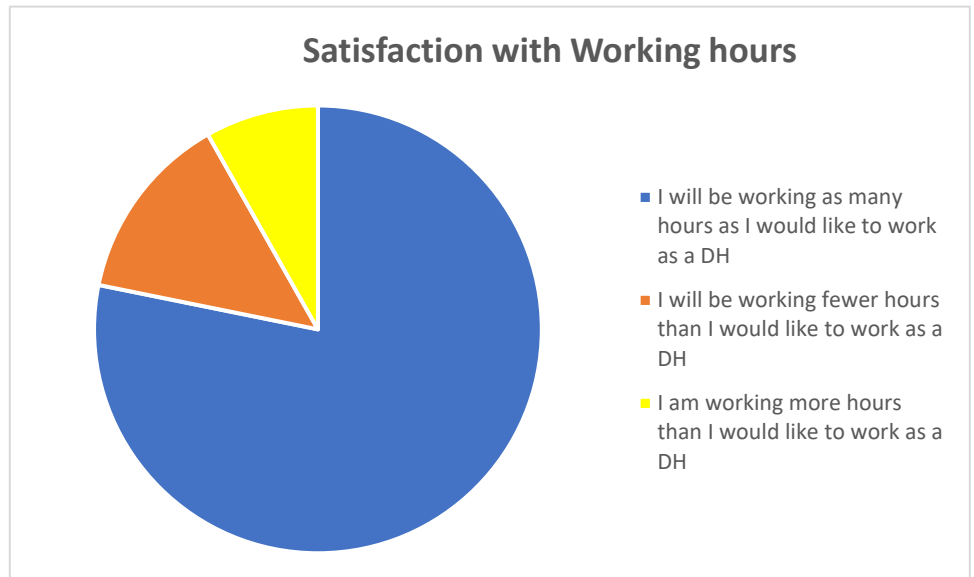


Figure 5.1

Survey Question 16: Are you satisfied with your current compensation package?

47% of respondents expressed satisfaction with their compensation package, with the remainder almost split between being unsure (28%) or unsatisfied (24%).

Health Benefits appeared as a factor that would improve satisfaction.

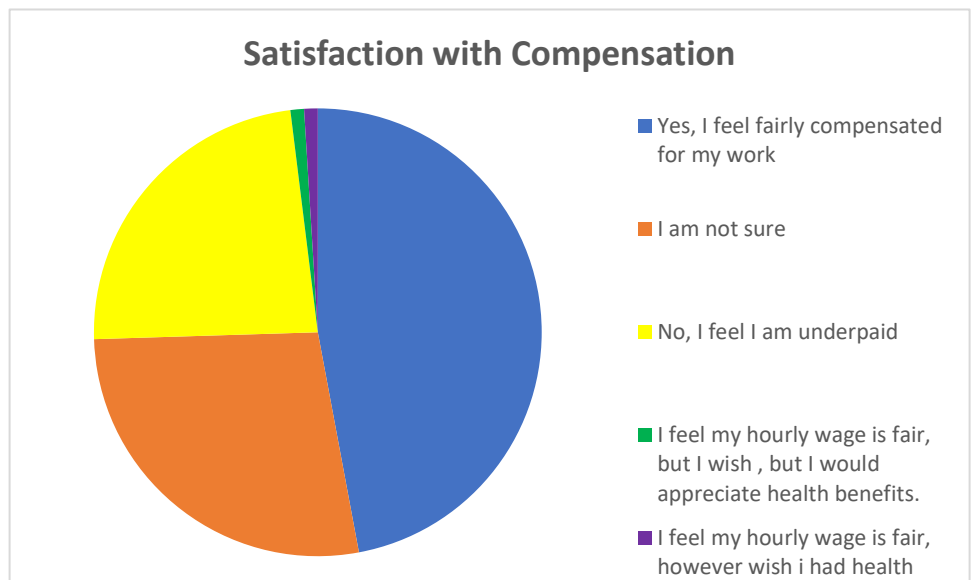


Figure 5.2

Respondent Feedback

Survey Question 17: Do you want to share anything about your compensation package or experience as a new graduate dental hygienist?

A range of comments were shared spanning from frustration from being underpaid by employers to complete satisfaction with employment negotiations. Respondents, particularly those with previous working experience, especially as Certified Dental Assistant (CDA), expressed feeling more confident negotiating their employment contracts.

Some respondents expressed uncertainty about what to expect from employers, and a few advised additional coaching for future graduates as they prepare for negotiating initial contracts. The reported sentiments included a general lack of confidence in the negotiating process and understanding of compensation packages, an interest in learning communication skills for professional growth, and a desire for colleague support, albeit with uncertainty about where to find such support.

These insights are valuable to inform both educators and the professional association regarding future planned support to prepare future new graduate dental hygienists for the employment contract negotiation.

Conclusion

The BCDHA 2023 Dental Hygiene New Graduate Wage Survey provides critical information regarding wage, compensation, and practice expectations to newly graduated DHs and educators in BC. The intent of this initiative is to assist dental hygienists in negotiating their first contracts after graduation by understanding typical compensation packages in BC, guide future wage surveys and support Dental Hygiene members.

The average wage in BC for new graduate DHs was found to be \$53 CAD, with 98% of respondents receiving an hourly wage structure. 82% of respondents reported obtaining full-time positions with seven out of ten graduates employed in a single practice setting, most often in private-owned dental clinics. 95% of respondents indicated that they have an employment contract in place with 81% indicating that it is a formal written contract. The average respondent reported receiving at least 3 benefits in their contracts, the largest percentage being uniform allowances, in-house dental and professional development. Signing bonuses were noted approximately 13% of the time, with the largest signing bonuses noted in Northern BC requiring long-term contracts to receive them.

Nearly half of new graduates expressed some dissatisfaction with their compensation package, either feeling underpaid or unsure about their agreement. It is our hope that this survey information will help them understand and feel more confident negotiating their employment packages.

The BCDHA looks forward to expanding this new graduate wage survey in 2024 to engage newly graduated DHs in BC. In this endeavor, we hope to support all BCDHA members, and further promote the profession.

