



FACT SHEET

Mental Health Status of Dental Assistants

The Canadian Dental Assistants Association (CDAA) asked Dental Assistants (DAs) across Canada about how they are feeling at work and about their mental state, this is what they told us:

KEY SURVEY FINDINGS

Demographics:

- 98% + female
- 73% aged 25-54 (majority); less than 2% over age 65
- 10% currently unemployed due to mental health illness or issues

Workplace Environment:

- 91% of dental assistants working in private practice reported finding their work stressful
- 70% indicated they do not have access to stress management or stress reduction programs in their current workplace
- 18.9% reported the discrimination they experienced at work has negatively impacted their mental health
- 17% felt disrespected in their current workplace
- 31% reported there is often a lack of staff to complete the work
- 27.7% reported dissatisfaction with their current job
- 25.3% reported it is likely they will seek a new job in the next 12 months; 12.3% indicated it was very likely to occur
- 52.8% have too much work to complete all their assigned tasks well



- 30% reported they are distrustful of management at their workplace
- 19% felt management does not make the safety of the dental team a priority

Mental Health Status:

- 82% experienced emotional exhaustion
- 41% experienced an unfeeling and impersonal response to their patients (*depersonalization*)
- 73% felt a strong sense of personal accomplishment in their job
- 80% felt anxious at their workplace; 62% felt this all or most of the time
- 77% felt depressed during the four weeks prior to the taking the survey; 17% felt this way all or most of the time
- 51% felt in control of their behavior and emotions all or most of the time
- 62% indicated they have experienced psychological distress in their workplace; with 39% feeling this level of distress has increased in the month prior to taking the survey
- Among those experiencing psychological distress, 47.6% feel worthless at work and 27% feel this way all or most of the time; 58% feel hopeless at work with 22% feeling this way all or most of the time
- Dental assistants across Canada were absent from work approximately 1107 days during the month prior to taking the survey because they were unable to work due to mental health issues
- 16% of dental assistants visited a physician or mental health professional in the 30 days preceding the survey to address their feelings of nervousness, hopelessness, restlessness, worthlessness, and depression



- In comments provided by dental assistants, 54% reported experiencing mistreatment in the workplace which negatively impacted their mental health; these comments focused primarily on mistreatment from employers and patients
- In comments provided by dental assistants, 27% cited a lack of adequate compensation and benefits as a contributing factor to their level of stress and mental health issues
- In comments provided by dental assistants, 17% noted they either had left the profession or were imminently leaving the profession of dental assisting. These comments cited the following reasons for why they are leaving: lack of adequate compensation and benefits, unhealthy workplace environment, and increased stress levels due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- In comments provided by dental assistants, 11% described the negative impact COVID-19 protocols had on their mental and/or physical health.