



2022 Workplace Survey

April 29, 2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Objective

The purpose of this report is to share the results of the 2022 NSDAA Membership Workplace Survey.

Goals

Surveys were previously completed in 2006, 2010 and 2017. Where possible we've included comparisons between the 2022 results with that of previous years.

Summary

492 surveys were completed from March 27th to April 19th, 2022 using an anonymous online survey that was distributed to members by email.

The verbatim responses are included unedited.

RESULTS

Respondent Information

In which county are you employed?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Annapolis	2.0%	10
Antigonish	2.0%	10
Cape Breton	9.6%	47
Colchester	4.5%	22
Cumberland	1.8%	9
Digby	1.2%	6
Guysborough	0.0%	0
Halifax (HRM)	55.7%	274
Hants	3.9%	19
Inverness	1.0%	5
Kings	5.1%	25
Lunenburg	3.9%	19
Pictou	3.5%	17
Queens	0.0%	0
Richmond	0.2%	1
Shelburne	1.6%	8
Victoria	0.4%	2
Yarmouth	2.8%	14
Other (please specify)	0.8%	4
ANSWERED QUESTION		492
SKIPPED QUESTION		0

Which age group applies to you?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	Response Percent	Response Count
	2017		2022	
Under 30	25.6%	100	22.0%	108
31 - 40	24.6%	96	24.2%	119
41 - 50	26.7%	103	23.0%	113
Over 50	23.1%	90	30.9%	152
ANSWERED QUESTION		389		492
SKIPPED QUESTION		0		

Your Office

Which best describes your role in the dental office?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Licensed Dental Assistant working chair side	85.6%	421
Licensed Dental Assistant working administration	16.1%	79
Licensed Dental Assistant working as a float	13.8%	68
Non-licensed individual working as a Dental Assistant	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)	3.3%	16
ANSWERED QUESTION		492
SKIPPED QUESTION		0

Responses to “Other”:

- RDA, working as a Treatment coordinator
- Teaching CEREC procedure for predoctoral students
- Treatment coordinator
- Working in ortho taking records and doing lab work
- RDA at Dalhousie Dentistry
- Licensed working as iDA instructor
- Supply purchaser
- Sterilization
- Licensed DA working in Steri
- Lab work
- Infection Control
- Education
- Dental Technician
- Licensed Dental Assistant working as a treatment coordinator
- Licensed DA instructor
- Faculty - clinical facilitator NSCC

What best describes your work setting?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	Response Percent	Response Count
	2017		2022	
General	75.6%	292	79.1%	389
Specialty	15.5%	60	17.3%	85
Teaching	1.8%	7	1.4%	7
Administration	2.6%	10	0.4%	2
Management			0.8%	4
Other (please specify)	4.4%	17	1.0%	5
ANSWERED QUESTION		386		492
SKIPPED QUESTION		3		

Responses to "Other":

- Emergency
- not currently attached to 1 particular office
- Specialty clinics, teaching, general
- Pedo
- Unemployed

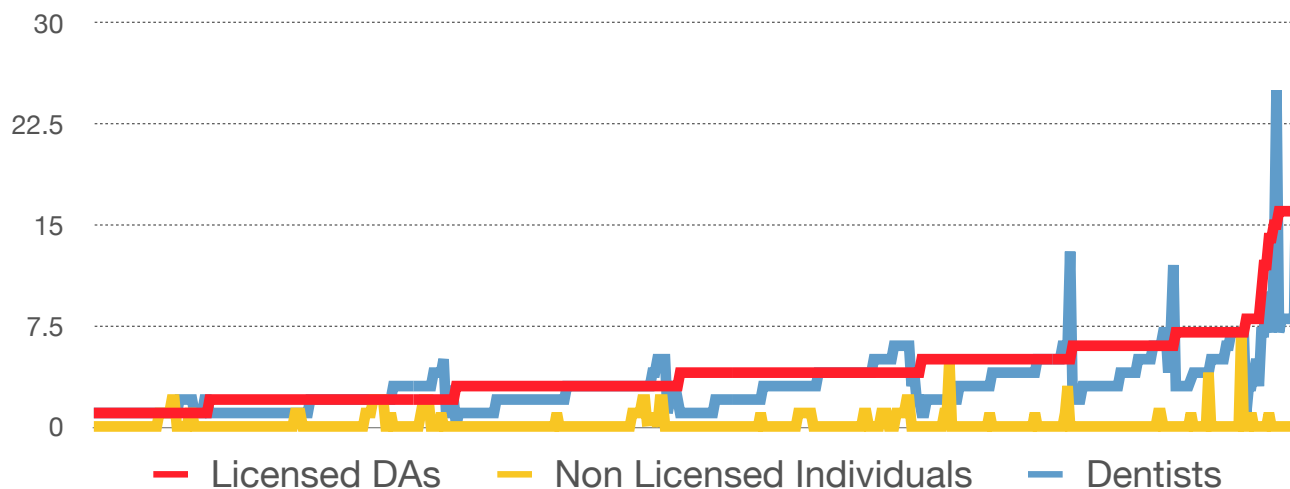
What type of practice do you work in ?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Privately owned practice	70.9%	349
Corporately owned practice	22.4%	110
Government funded institutions	4.9%	24
Other	1.8%	9
ANSWERED QUESTION		492

Responses to "Other":

- DND (4)
- Federal government
- Private college (3)
- Unemployed

NUMBER OF OCCUPATIONS IN YOUR OFFICE



Your Employment

What is your current employment status?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	Response Percent	Response Count
	2017		2022	
Full-time	85.3%	331	86.4%	424
Part-time	9.0%	35	9.0%	44
Relief/Temp	2.1%	8	2.6%	13
Other (please specify)	3.6%	14	2.0%	10
ANSWERED QUESTION		388		491
SKIPPED QUESTION		1		1

Responses to "Other":

- Maternity , full time in april
- Maternity leave
- Maternity leave
- Maternity leave
- Maternity leave going into full-time
- Laid-off/ retired
- Between 2 offices
- Condensed work week
- Contract
- Contract

How many hours per week do you work?

	2022	2017	2010	2006
Average Hours per week	34.4	35.5	34.3	35.4

In the past two years during Covid-19, how has your average hours worked per week changed ?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Increase in hours	13.6%	67
Decrease in hours	13.6%	67
Remained the same	72.8%	358
ANSWERED QUESTION		492

How many years have you worked as a dental assistant?

Answer Options	2022	2017	2010	2006
Years as dental assistant (AVERAGE)	18.5	16.5	14.8	13.6

How many years have you worked with your present employer?

Answer Options	2022	2017	2010	2006
Years with present employer (AVERAGE)	8.7	8.8	7.7	7.4

What is your hourly rate of pay (if salaried, please break down to hourly rate)?

Answer Options	2022	2017	2010	2006
Hourly rate of pay (AVERAGE)	\$25.54	\$21.18	\$18.44	\$16.65

Average hourly rate of pay by age range

Answer Options	2022	2017
Under 30		\$23.43
31 - 40		\$25.62
41 - 50		\$27.00
Over 50		\$26.12

Do you receive annual salary increases?

Answer Options	2022	2017	2010	2006
YES	44%	36%	49%	51%
NO	56%	64%	51%	49%

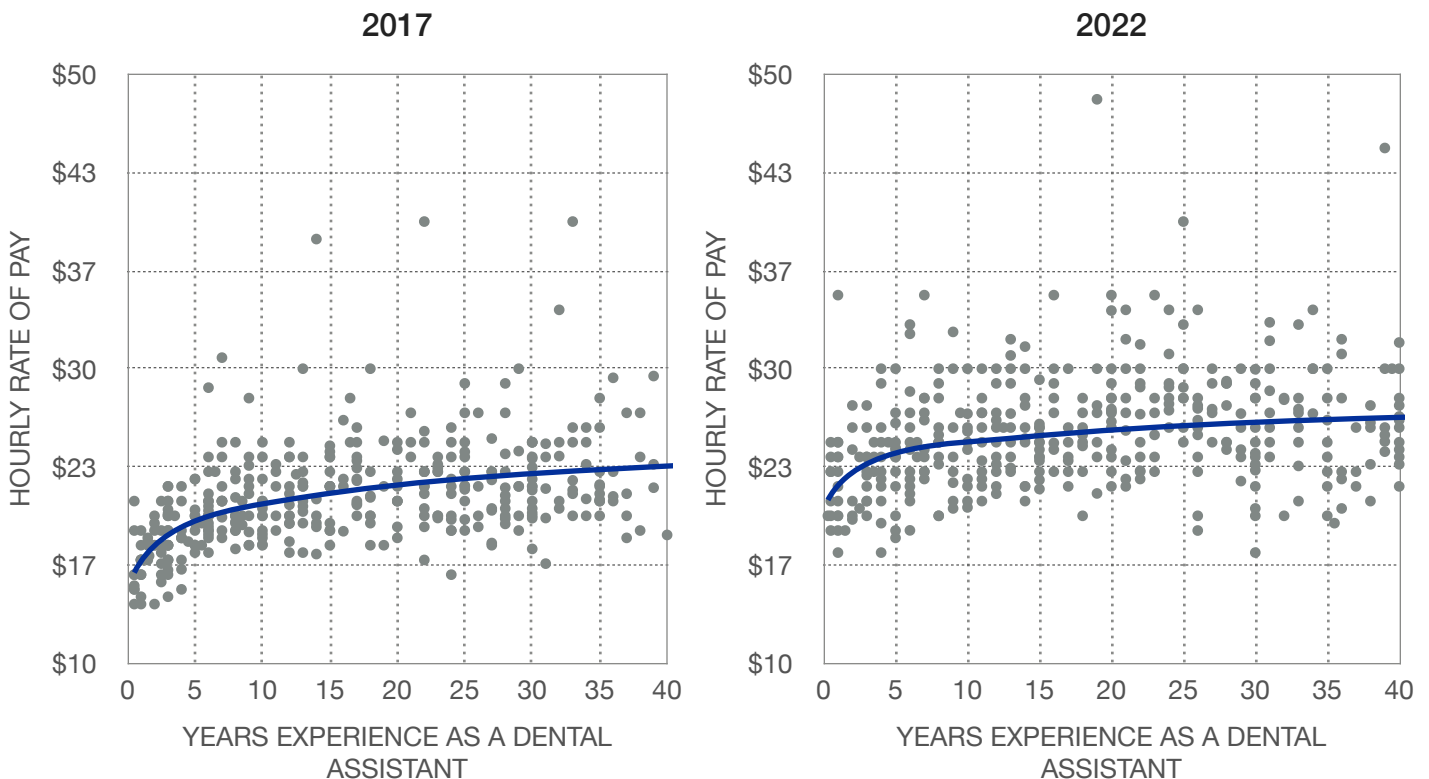
In the past two years during Covid-19, how has your hourly rate changed ?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Increase in hourly rate	65.4%	322
Decrease in hourly rate	0.8%	4
Remained the same	33.7%	166
ANSWERED QUESTION		492

Average hourly rate of pay by county

Answer Options	2022	2017
Annapolis	\$24.25	\$20.50
Antigonish	\$26.50	\$20.75
Cape Breton	\$22.58	\$19.51
Colchester	\$25.70	\$21.04
Cumberland	\$22.76	\$19.22
Digby	\$23.00	\$21.00
Halifax (HRM)	\$26.62	\$21.78
Hants	\$24.30	\$22.03
Inverness	\$21.80	\$19.19
Kings	\$25.30	\$21.46
Lunenburg	\$25.53	\$20.65
Pictou	\$24.00	\$20.35
Richmond	\$22.00	
Shelburne	\$24.04	\$19.56
Victoria	\$29.25	
Yarmouth	\$23.74	\$20.68

Hourly rate of pay by years of experience (and “best fit” line)



What benefits do you receive from your employer? (select all that apply)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	Response Percent	Response Count
	2017		2022	
Paid Continuing Education	61.7%	229	56.5%	278
Uniform Allowance	60.1%	223	66.5%	327
Paid or Provided Dental Benefits	58.5%	217	58.7%	289
Paid Sick Days	57.7%	214	60.0%	295
Bonuses	36.9%	137	26.8%	132
Yearly Raises	30.7%	114	32.9%	162
Paid Health Plan	28.3%	105	27.2%	134
Bereavement Benefits	24.0%	89	24.0%	118
Yearly Review	23.7%	88	27.6%	136
Parking	19.4%	72	29.1%	143
Paid Membership/License Fee	19.1%	71	28.7%	141
Paid Overtime	17.0%	63	16.5%	81
Regular Pay When Dentist Away (not vacation)	15.4%	57	15.9%	78
Life or Disability Insurance			21.5%	106
Pension/RRSP Contribution			12.8%	63
Other (please specify)	13.7%	51	5.1%	25
ANSWERED QUESTION		371		492
SKIPPED QUESTION		18		

Responses to "Other":

- No steady or contracted benefits
- TFSA
- Health Spending Account
- Paid snow days
- Paid CPR
- Just rate of pay
- No benefits
- None of the above
- All of those benefits come off my pay bi-weekly
- No other compensation
- Medical, dental and pension are shared cost with employer
- There are caps on the amount of CE/uniform allowance I get
- Not employed currently
- No paid lunch
- Nothing is offered at my clinic
- any other benefits under union - NSGEU collective agreement
- Well pay instead of sick days. If we do not take any time off during the month we get 1 days pay added to our cheque. We have a \$1000 health spending account.
- Money towards health , family dental discount , year staff appreciation retreats
- 2 snow days and 10 paid holidays
- 3 paid sick days a year but if don't use them you lose them & only a Christmas Bonuse
- laundry services for uniforms

In the past two years during Covid-19, how have your benefits changed ?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Increase in benefits	8.9%	44
Decrease in benefits	5.1%	25
No change in benefits	86.0%	423
ANSWERED QUESTION		492

Additional Comments (any other information/comments you would like to provide)

- Dental assistants are undervalued and underpaid
- I am so disheartened with dental assisting..we work so hard with little compensation or appreciation. It's no wonder there is such a shortage. I would never ever advise someone to get into this career.
- Got written up for taken sick days. When it's advised not to work when we're sick.
- I asked for a raise due to the fact that the cost of living has gone way up in the past 2 years. I don't think I would have gotten one without asking and proving my logic as to why I deserved one.
- Many dentists do not know the value of their assistants , it's unfortunate that I feel more and more are leaving the profession do to wages and other factors . These last few yrs have showed that in order for a practice to run smoothly RDA are needed .
- Becoming Unionized
- Concerned about the influx of level 1 RDAs in out province from Ontario. How is the nsdaa protecting the jobs for level 1 RDAs?
- I took a position in a new office 1.5 years ago after 18+ years in the same practice. In my previous job I hadn't received an increase in pay or benefits in over 5 years despite increased duties, work hours, responsibilities and demands by my employer. In fact paid holidays and benefits were clawed back arbitrarily. When I gave notice of my resignation, my employer offered substantial increases in pay and benefits. As a dental auxiliary I feel many dental offices take RDAs for granted and our value to the practice is completely overlooked and that has been highlighted dramatically during COVID times. Many RDAs I know feel the same way. With the cost/time commitment of membership fees and continuing education in relation to the pay scale and benefits offered, I question why any person would chose this vocation. For the most part I have enjoyed this occupation for the last 22 years, but unfortunately it would have never supported me as a single person and it hasn't been a sound financial endeavour. I have worked my body to it's breaking point watching my employer get rich and reap the financial benefits. Would I chose this profession again knowing all I know now? The answer is a resounding NO.
- Thank you for asking.
- I'd like to see that no unlicensed dental assistants (level 1) should be allowed to work chairside at all, whether they are waiting for upgrading or to write exams. It's insulting to us dental assistants that are licensed and pay fees and pay for continuing education to keep our license.
- In a career for almost 30 years and feeling quite disappointed, unappreciated and 100% underpaid. Experience definitely does not get us anywhere. Offices are offering new graduates the same, or often times, more than what experienced ladies in this industry are receiving. Makes me wonder if a union would be a better choice for us.
- I am paid salary based on 32 hrs a week but with Covid have found that I am working into lunch and late every night, to the amount of 2-4 hours a week which is unpaid.
- Raises are inconsistent, could be 2-4 years before get next raise. RDA's are mostly unappreciated and undervalued part of the dental team. The rewards come from helping our patients through their anxiety at dental appointments and building relationships with them.
- The value of our profession is not reflected by the pay scale.
- Paid Continued Education- CPR only, within the last 6 years under new employer. Only 2 days paid sick days per year, over the last 33 years. Haven't taken any sick time in 10 years or more. Personal and (most) immediate family member/s, dental cleanings and standard restorative fillings (only), carried out at no cost.
- None
- Is it not high time the dental profession was covered by Worker's Compensation!
- I am very sickened to be honest, that the non licensed dental assistants work chairside and in the mouth and make the same as us registered assistants. We get no raises to help with the cost of living. (Every four years if we are lucky, or when an employee leaves). No benefits are offered, we rarely get a lunch, we rarely get out on time and not compensated for overtime hours. It has gotten so much worse since covid hit.
- We are very underpaid :(and unappreciated.
- Dental assistants should have a union and.should have something to show after decades of hard work
- We are an underpaid profession. We put in a lot of unrecognized hours , arrive early , work thru lunch and sometimes end late. Many

- employers don't contribute to CE requirements to maintain your licence and our salaries don't reflect the high costs involved for these requirements. In retrospect, I would never advise a young person that this profession is a fair working environment with great benefits.
- Shortage of dental assistants should have the dentists looking at why there is a shortage. It's the pay, lack of workman's compensation. Also being governed by dentist is why the wages are so low. Dental assistants should have their own governing body and perhaps even a union.
 - My hourly rate is based on the combination of dental assistant and administrator
 - I feel there needs to be big changes made for assistances to retain what they have and to attract new ones. With minimal pay and benefits and ever increasing requirements and costs of licensing and dues. It's making the job less attractive as in the past we were considered unskilled labour.
 - Our wages were only increased since covid due to many employees leaving the office. The staff especially RDA's were very underpaid before covid. During the past 2 years of covid the RDA's at our office have been overworked and underpaid. We do not have any breaks and may only get 5 to 10 mins for lunch every day.
 - I love being a RDA but the last two years have completely burnt me out. Now with inflation rising it's definitely making me consider other career choices. Not having any sort of pension plan is also a huge factor.
 - I am very disappointed in the decision to increase the PDBNS license fee by 25%. I have been so far unable to get a reply explaining the reasons for such an increase.
 - No regular salary increases at our office.. ever... we have to ask..our rate of pay must change
 - Currently unemployed, but looking & doing fill in work
 - Having to work long days even when your employer knows you don't want to
 - We get only the top for uniform allowance. Not the bottoms.
 - Only just got a 5.4 cost of living raise (which is not the same as a raise) in January. Before then, not for 4 years. And no performance reviews. Not all CE is paid for. But most.
 - We need more trained DA's. No available replacements when needed in our area
 - 2 sick days a year and if you don't use them you lose them so you always go to work sick because you need to get a pay check and now we lost our our free dental work we have to pay for it and that means a lot to get you teeth cleaned for free when it's almost 200 dollars
 - We should be treated better financially
 - I'm new in Nova Scotia. I moved from BC, over there wages for dental assistants are more competitive and employers offer more benefits than here.
 - Mandatory raises based on experience should be standard
 - when we were off for COVID our employer continued to pay for medical ben
 - Dental assistants should be paid 20 +an hour
 - After 46 continual years as a RDA I find it disappointing that a new grads starting wage is the same as what I make or close to it! There is no regard or compensation for dedication to the profession 😞. Never would I encourage anyone to enter this profession based on my experiences over the years.
 - With inflation.....I am making the same wage I was making in 1999
 - I have changed my job placement since the ending of last year. So my Benefits and salary has changed.
 - Still over worked and underpaid for the job we do
 - Worked full time June to November 1, 2021 and working full time now since January 2022... I had retired but fill in when asked
 - In general, RDAs are the most underpaid position in a dental office and most often have more responsibilities/tasks to perform. Lots contemplating leaving the profession due to low wage
 - Only had three raises in pay over 11 years
 - That Dental professionals should be covered by Workers compensation
 - I feel with the number of years of service I should receive more than four weeks vacation.
 - I have only been working relief /temp for the last 2 months
 - Only receive 2 sick days a year?
 - I believe that assistants should make more than they do. An office can't run smoothly without us and I believe that we are severely under compensated for the job that we do and I believe that it will deter others from becoming assistants. We should be making AT LEAST \$20/hr out of school. The debt to income ratio out of school is ridiculous.
 - RDA s over 25 years work experience should have a break in CE cycles...like none ! if we ain't got it figured out by now we shouldn't be here
 - For all the work we do we deserve a Cost of living increase not just a yearly raise.
 - NSDA should provide its members with better insurance benefits health and dental options, pension options and provide more dental upgrading options NSDAA hasn't provided upgrades since prophy polishing over 20 years ago.
 - Dentists are allowed to hire unlicensed assistants....if this stopped.....I strongly feel that we would be paid much higher....
 - Will get benefits after my 3 months probation
 - would like to see us become unionized
 - Our staff is paid unfairly and we are not suppose to discuss wages with each other to cover that up. It's a big secret and we don't even get paid what we are worth according to the provincial standard
 - I would love to see a better salary rate for the amount of years I have in (41).
 - It got better because I went to a new office

- Regarding our health insurance plan and life and disability plan our employers pay half of the premium cost, we pay the other half. Only some of the Continuing education courses are pay for buy them, some we pay for ourselves and we can do lots of free ones online, thank goodness for that because paying for them all would be quite costly to us as dental assistants.
- We need increase more than we get after this covid bec we are more expose to this virus than any other health workers and to support our high prices of basic commodities: from gas, food and utilities..
- Thanks.
- Create every year some kind of newsletter or email info with suggestion about salary and benefits, that gives the assistants (new assistant, with some years of experience or if works in a specialized office) and idea of how much salary and benefits can negotiate
- I strongly believe new graduates working Chairside should make no less than \$20 per hour.
- We are not treated respectfully! We need better wages and benefits!
- The last 2 years I have received salary increases because I was underpaid. Still not what I should be but getting better.
- Still. 2 Lisence assistants in the office, neither working chair side !!
- Yearly raises are frowned upon(claims at 20/hour we are being overpaid!)
- In tri-county CE is very costly, boss pays for none!! Considering getting out of dentistry,
- We need a Union or some type of pension or RRSP plan for dental workers.
- The only reason I received a raise was due to multiple co workers quitting and I also threatened to leave without a proper raise. Some staff are underpaid and with the cost of living increasing. It's impossible to live off of what we make. Especially with our office being a specialist we should be paid at a higher rate than a general practice.
- We are under paid and licensing is too expensive.
- Mayflower offices need more help with HR or need to hire HR. Very unprofessional. They Do not realize I was entitled to my 2 weeks of shifts from my permanent position after returning from medical leave. Very very unfortunate. Also, terrible at communication.
- N/A
- I feel the scope of practice for dental assistants should be broadened. This is my third province to be employed as a level 2 DA and the most restricted. I think we should try to be more uniform with the surrounding provinces as Nova Scotia and Ontario are the most behind. I also believe dental assistants should be unionized, it is difficult to imagine staying in this career with no pension in the end. Thank you for your time!
- All dental assistants should be paid at least \$35 an hour in my opinion.
- Increase in pay due to increase of living expenses
- It is only recently that I received any medical insurance, sick days and license paid and an increase in pay . There is a shortage of DA because it is very hard to live on the current salary DA's are given . When you look at the pay scale to the rest of the dental team and the duties in which a DA's preform , and the cost of living in today's world. A DA can't hardly make ends meet on his or her own with there current salary , DA's need a second job in order to get ahead
- I believe that a person should be paid according to hers or his abilities and years of experience not because all the rest of DA 's in the building are be paid that amount (all DA in the same office and or town get the same pay) . Even if some DA 's may only have one or two years experience, how is that fair to the DA's who have worked 10 , 20 , 30 years .
- I believe that there has to be a big change as how DA are paid , after all DA's are a very vital part of Dental team! ! I hope that something comes of this survey, as it very disappointing when the salary don't change and if it does it only by 25 cents . I do realize it takes a deal to run a dental office , but I also realize that dental office make very good money . Perhaps if they paid the DA's accordingly there would be happy productive team !
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- difficult to give accurate info where I am just working at as a temp relief staff at numerous offices as needed
- I changed offices during this time span. For 2020 I was working in one office where everything stated was the opposite. I lost hours pay benefits and more. I left there at the very end of 2020 and immediately received \$5 raise and more benefits and more vacation. I also got steadier hours and no wage loss during restrictions etc.