

Wages & Benefits

in the Caring and Non-Profit Workforce

Staff Perspective



Workforce Planning Board
of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin

March 2026

Our Vision: We envision the continuous development of a leading-edge workforce.
Our Mission: Engage partners to find solutions to local workforce development needs.

We would like to express our sincere thank you to all those who took the time to take part in the development of this report, sharing their insight into the caring and non-profit sectors.

The material contained in this report has been prepared by the Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin (WPBWWD) and draws from a variety of sources considered to be reliable. We make no representation or warranty, express or implied, as to its accuracy or completeness. In providing this material, WPBWWD does not assume any responsibility for liability.

The research staff used AI software to do the initial organization of ideas and themes from the survey's customized questions. The researcher then reviewed the organization of these comments to ensure the sector can easily use the data. AI was also used for initial text editing to improve clarity.

Canada 



Ontario 

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The views expressed in this document do not reflect those of the Government of Canada or the Government of Ontario.

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Using This Report

The data in this report comes directly from our Caring Workforce Survey of staff in the caring and non-profit sectors, conducted in November 2025. Quotes are straight from participants and reflect their perspectives about working in the sector.

This report focuses on compensation and benefits information, including flexible work and work from home options which are becoming benefits that parts of the sector can offer. Managers and HR professionals can use this knowledge to evaluate their own workplaces and create better environments for attracting, retaining and strengthening their staff.

Who Provided Input?

This is what we know about the 160 people who provided feedback.

Where they work

- Waterloo Region (83 people), Guelph-Wellington (68) and Dufferin County (18). Some worked in more than one geography
- Social & Community Services (68), Childcare (55) and 38 in other caring sectors.
- Almost 80% worked in non-profit companies with 20% in for-profit care.
- 52% worked in companies with fewer than 50 people. Large organizations tended to be in Childcare, Social & Community Services, and Health organizations.
- 84% reported being non-unionized.
- Most staff knew how their organization was funded. The most identified program funding came from the provincial and federal governments.

About their job

- 57% reported being a front-line worker who delivered service, support or programming.
- 43% were managerial/supervisory, human resources, support or another role.
- 86% of respondents were full-time and 79% were permanent employees.
- Contract employees were almost evenly split between having a likely renewal and planned end dates.
- 49 respondents had less than 4 years in the sector. 102 reported having 5+ years. Many of the responses come from staff with more experience. 47 people had 15+ years in the sector.

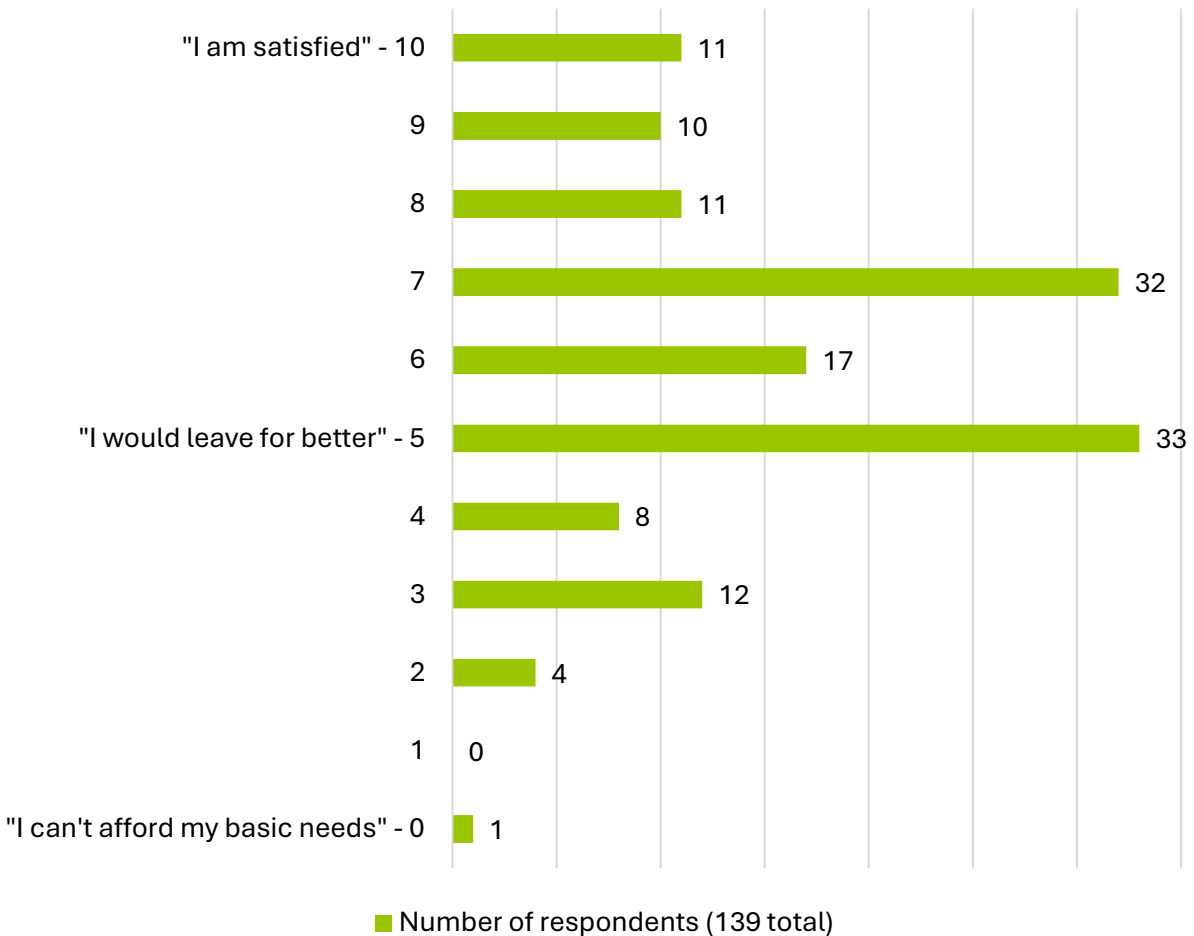
Wages

Workers across the Caring sectors overwhelmingly describe wages as:

- insufficient
- stagnant
- inequitable
- disconnected from the cost of living
- disconnected from the critical nature of their work.

Many organizations lack the funding to address wage issues, leading to long-term concerns about retention, recruitment, and sector sustainability. There is strong pressure for higher wages, standardized pay structures, and funding models that reflect the essential role these workers play.

How satisfied are you with your current wage / salary?



It is concerning that **42% of respondents selected a wage satisfaction rating of 5 or less**, indicating that they would leave their role for a better salary or that their wages are not meeting their living needs.

This becomes even more concerning within the context of who took the survey. **Nearly half (46%) of respondents have over 10 years of experience in their sector.** Only 5 respondents (3%) have worked in their sector for less than a year. Staff pay challenges are not alleviated with increased experience and skills in the sector.

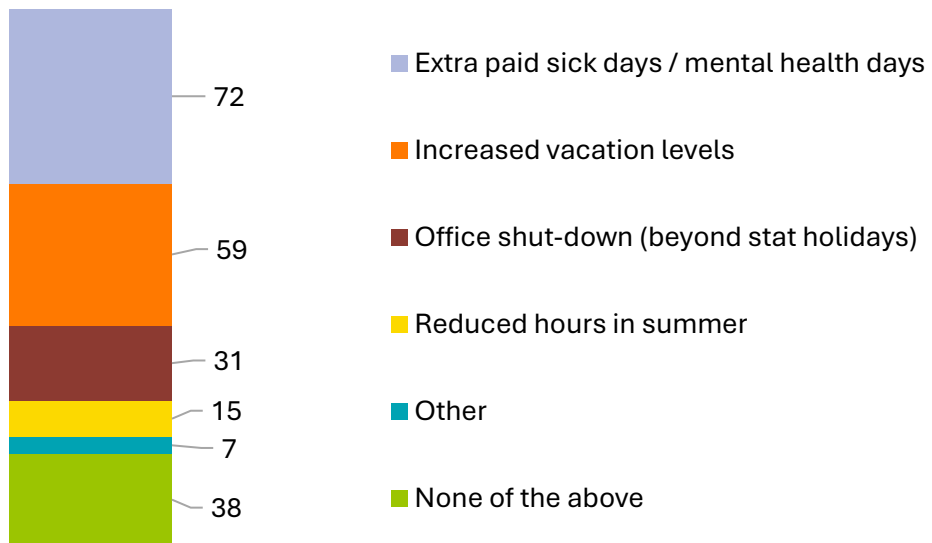
Wage-related comments from survey respondents demonstrate that **it is critical to advocate for better wages and funding** to attract and retain staff in these sectors.

- “The sector I work in has not had an increase in budget for over 15 years.”
- “In 19 years with same organization, have had 2 wage increases and no increase in mileage.”
- “Wages should be higher so people are not constantly leaving for better paying jobs.”
- “Wages are not balanced across the organization in terms of understanding what a specific Job Class does versus another.”
- “I worry about how my staff will be able to afford to stay in their jobs as costs around them go up. Our funders do not provide cost of living increases, which is problematic. Also, I worry about my position being seen as an attractive job prospect should I ever leave the organization. I can't imagine they'd be able to get someone with my qualifications without raising the salary offerings. I already had this scenario for another position in the office that I was trying to recruit for.”

Paid Extras

Respondents were provided with a list of paid extras and instructed to select all that applied at their workplace.

Paid extras currently offered by my workplace



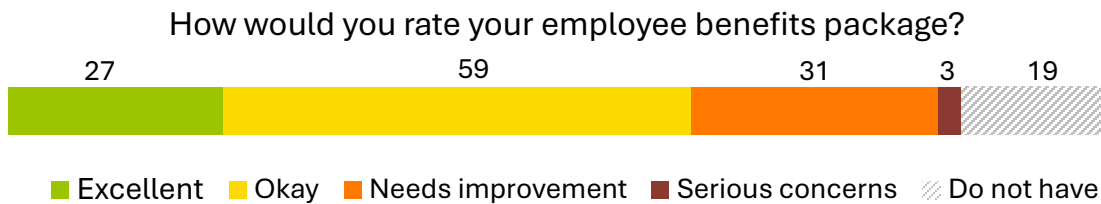
'Other' responses that survey respondents wrote in included:

- health spending accounts
- special wellness benefits
- training funds
- paid parking

One respondent mentioned that the paid extras were not applicable to them because they are a contract employee.

Benefits Package

Of 139 survey responses, 86 (62%) rated their benefits as Excellent or Okay, 34 (24%) were unhappy, and 19 (14%) said that they did not receive benefits through their workplace.



“List 2 important benefits you look for in a workplace Benefits package”

Keyword or Theme	#1	#2	TOTAL
dental	39	24	63
medication	28	14	42
health	24	16	40
extended health coverage	5	16	21
mental	8	8	16
sick days	9	7	16
vision	5	11	16
retirement	8	6	14
affordable	5	8	13
vacation	3	9	12
flexibility	2	3	5
health spending account	3	1	4
braces	0	2	2
family coverage	0	2	2

Part-time workers wanted benefits, even if prorated in proportion to full-time workers.

Extended health care coverage requests included: massage, chiropractor, physiotherapy, acupuncture, naturopath, fertility, and osteopaths.

Affordability was mentioned frequently in the context of increased max coverage amounts and increased percentage covered to address increased costs of services (i.e. glasses, therapy), as well as the affordability of paying the insurance premiums.

Other unique requests included:

- “Coverage for assistive devices to aid in repetitive workplace motions.”
- “Uniform benefit” and “Coverage for sport uniforms”

Work From Home

Working from home and flexible work are being seen as benefits that employers offer that do not require deep pockets and may prove to be a competitive advantage in some parts of the sector.

Do you believe it would be possible to do the tasks of your job working from home?



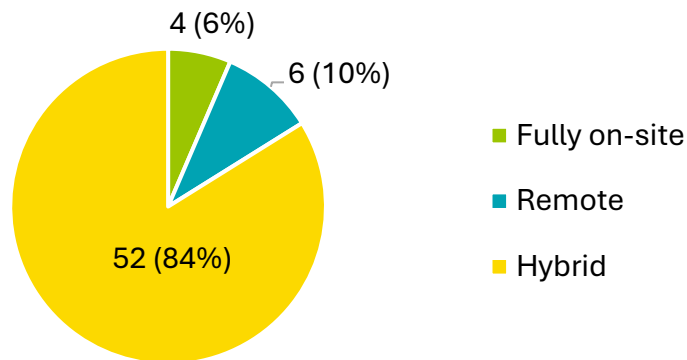
For those who thought it would be possible to do their work from home, we asked if their workplace currently offered that option.

Does your workplace currently offer work-from-home options?



We also asked about their preferred work location. Hybrid work was the clear top choice.

Work location preference



Flexible Work

56 respondents (40%) said they believed it would **not** be possible to do the tasks of their job on a flexible work schedule.

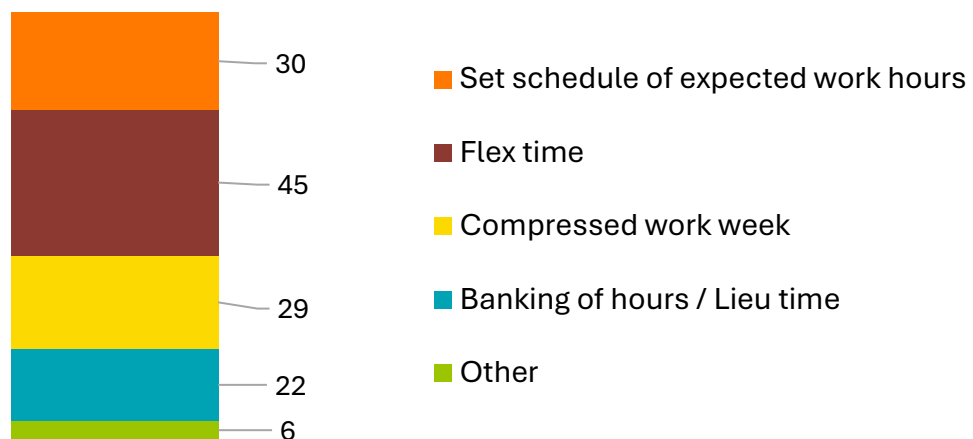
Of the 83 respondents (60%) who believed it **would** be possible to do the tasks of their job on a flexible work schedule:

- 47 (57%) said Yes, their workplace currently offers flexible work option for their role
- 36 (43%) said No, their workplace did not currently offer flexible work option

Respondents who believed flexible work would be possible for their role also selected a preferred work schedule from the following list (multiple selections possible):

- A set schedule of expected work hours (i.e. 9:00-5:00)
- Flex time (variable start or end times within core hours)
- Compressed work week (i.e. 4-day work week working 10 hours per day)
- Banking of hours / Lieu time (choose, within negotiated boundaries, hours of work)
- Other (please specify)

Flexible Work Arrangement Preferences



“Other” responses include:

- “business hours - bank when i attend events, etc - No OT”
- “I like the option of Flex Time but usually sticking to a consistent schedule is best.”
- “Some remote days but mainly onsite”
- “a four-day work week similar to some European countries, with perhaps a rotating coverage system for Fridays (e.g. you have to work a few Fridays per year)”
- “I prefer a set schedule but because I work with the board, committees, do lots of outreach and fundraise, this isn't always possible. At times like that, I track my hours and take time off in my schedule when I want and when it works for office coverage.”



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