

What Makes Care Aides Satisfied With Their Jobs?

ABOUT THIS RESEARCH 1,338 care aides surveyed across 53 long-term care homes · November 2023 – May 2024

What makes a care aide satisfied at work? According to new research, it's not their age, experience, income, or even the province where they work — it's the culture of their workplace. Whether a care aide is a 44-year-old Canadian-born working day shifts or a 28-year-old newcomer working evenings, workplace culture is what matters most.

This study is the first in Atlantic Canada to examine care aides' job satisfaction, drawing on data from **1,099** care aides across the region.

CARE AIDES, BY ANY NAME

The role is known by a different name in each province.

NEW BRUNSWICK

Resident Attendant (RA)

NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

Personal Care Attendant (PCA)

NOVA SCOTIA

Continuing Care Assistant (CCA)

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Resident Care Worker (RCW)

The usual factors don't apply

Researchers first tested whether personal factors made a difference. None of them significantly related to how satisfied care aides felt about their jobs.

WHAT DOES NOT INFLUENCE JOB SATISFACTION

None of these were significantly related to it.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| ✗ Age | ✗ Born in Canada | ✗ Home size (small / medium / large) |
| ✗ Gender | ✗ Holds a care aide certificate | ✗ Ownership type (public / private / not-for-profit) |
| ✗ Household income | ✗ Hours worked per week | ✗ Rural or urban location |
| ✗ Years of experience | ✗ Province | ✗ Leadership |
| ✗ Shift type (day vs. evening/night) | | |

BEHIND THE NUMBERS

Leadership was not significantly associated with job satisfaction. What mattered was **the culture of the workplace that leaders helped create.**

The human cost is real

More than half of Atlantic Canadian care aides are at high risk of burnout. And yet nine in ten say they like their work.

That tension is the central story of this workforce and has real impact on job satisfaction.

WHAT PULLS JOB SATISFACTION DOWN ↓

Emotional exhaustion
Cynicism

WHAT LIFTS JOB SATISFACTION UP ↑

Professional efficacy
Mental health

BEHIND THE NUMBERS

High professional efficacy appears to be helping care aides buffer the effects of sustained demand. That sense of accomplishment is real, but it is **not a reason to leave working conditions unchanged.**

CITATION

FULL ARTICLE Duynisveld, A., Adefemi, K., Hubley, E., & Keefe, J. (2026). Factors associated with care aide job satisfaction in Atlantic Canadian long-term care homes. *Journal of the American Medical Directors Association*, 27(8), Article 106345. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jamda.2026.106345>

THIS BRIEF Atlantic Research Collaboration on Long-term Care. (2026). What Makes Care Aides Satisfied With Their Jobs? [Research Brief]. www.arcltc.ca

The work environment is the lever

The work environment tells its own story, and it has four chapters:



WORKPLACE CULTURE

LOOKS LIKE Care aides feeling recognized and supported, having some say in how they do their work, and sharing a sense of purpose with their team.



SOCIAL CAPITAL

LOOKS LIKE Staff who know and support each other – both within and across units and shifts – and across job roles.



EVALUATION

LOOKS LIKE Care aides receiving meaningful information about their performance and how residents are responding to care.



STAFFING FLEXIBILITY

LOOKS LIKE Enough people to meet demand – adequate support in the moment, not just on paper.

BEHIND THE NUMBERS

Culture is not just a feeling. It can be **tracked, compared across homes, and improved deliberately**. Homes that want to know where they stand have the means to find out.

Where do we go from here?

FIVE STEPS FOR LONG-TERM CARE AND SECTOR LEADERS

The factors most strongly associated with care aide job satisfaction are organizational and modifiable – an invitation for leaders to prioritize effectively and act on what they have the power to change.

1



Ask care aides what recognition and support looks like to them.

Culture had the strongest connection to satisfaction in this study. Start by understanding what feeling valued actually means to your unit and in your care home.

2



Create connections across staff roles and shifts, not just within them.

Social capital depends on staff knowing and trusting each other. Deliberate handoff practices and cross-team/cross-shift touchpoints build that over time.

3



Close the feedback loop.

Care aides who receive timely, meaningful information about their performance and residents' responses to care report higher satisfaction. Make feedback a routine, not an event.

4



Continue to treat adequate staffing as a priority.

While increasing staffing numbers is always a goal within LTC, staffing structures need flexibility to respond to demands throughout the day.

5



Take burnout as a symptom of a need for change.

High exhaustion and cynicism were the strongest drags on satisfaction in this study. When burnout is widespread, the need to address workplace factors – like those discussed here – is highest.

ABOUT THIS RESEARCH

This work is part of the **Atlantic Research Collaboration on Long-term Care (ARC LTC)**, led by Dr. Janice Keefe at Mount Saint Vincent University, in collaboration with the University of New Brunswick, Translating Research in Elder Care, Memorial University of Newfoundland, and Dalhousie University.

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