

Who is Looking After Mom and Dad in Atlantic Canada?

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

It's early morning in a long-term care home. Someone is being helped out of bed. Down the hall, a resident is waiting to get dressed. The person behind these acts is a care aide. They are often the person a resident sees most, but we know surprisingly little about them. For the first time, researchers have surveyed these workers. They found a workforce that is experienced, committed, and deeply invested — but also under strain, and unsure how much longer they can keep going.

The people behind the care

Across Atlantic Canada, the name for this role depends on where you are.

- In New Brunswick, it's **Resident Attendant**
- In Newfoundland and Labrador, it's **Personal Care Attendant**
- In Nova Scotia, it's **Continuing Care Assistant**
- In Prince Edward Island, it's **Resident Care Worker**

Most care aides are women in their 40s or 50s with close to a decade of experience. But that picture is shifting as newcomer workers become a growing part of the workforce, a change already well underway in some places.

BEHIND THE NUMBERS

Care aides remain one of the few health workforce groups in Canada with **no national standards** for training, scope of practice, or regulation.

A SNAPSHOT OF ATLANTIC CANADA'S CARE AIDES

1,338 care aides surveyed across 53 LTC homes



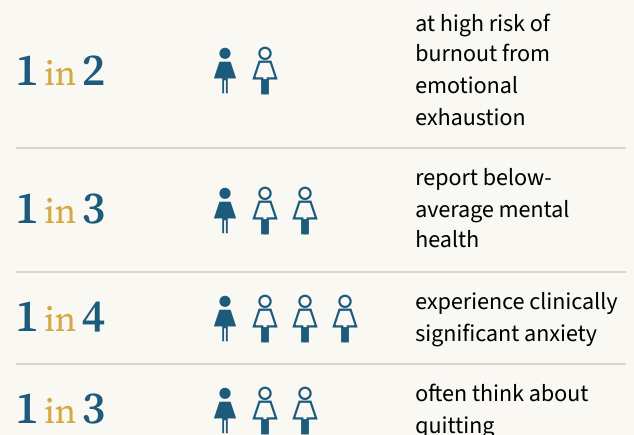
They love the work. The work is breaking them

Almost **9 in 10** care aides say they like their work. But **more than half** are at high risk of burnout, and **one in three** is thinking about leaving the job altogether.

BEHIND THE NUMBERS

Nearly half of care aides have children at home. **One in eleven** is also caring for an aging parent. For many, caregiving doesn't end when the shift does.

THE TOLL BENEATH THE DEDICATION



CITATION

FULL ARTICLE Keefe, J., Dicks, H., Adefemi, K., Duynisveld, A., McCloskey, R., & Estabrooks, C. A. (2026). Who is looking after mom and dad in Atlantic Canada? *Canadian Journal on Aging*. Published online 2026: 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0714980826100853>

THIS BRIEF Atlantic Research Collaboration on Long-term Care. (2026). Who is looking after mom and dad in Atlantic Canada? [Research Brief]. arcltc.ca

Four provinces, four different pictures

New Brunswick has the highest burnout and strongest intention to leave.

Prince Edward Island has the highest job satisfaction and the lowest burnout.

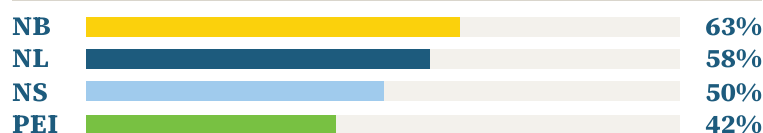
Newfoundland and Labrador has the highest on-site access to clinical educators, but high burnout.

Nova Scotia falls in the middle on most indicators.

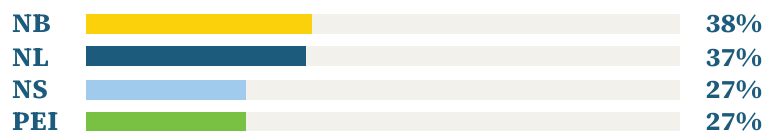
BEHIND THE NUMBERS

Access to on-site clinical educators varies sharply by province. Nearly every care home in **Newfoundland and Labrador** (100%) has one. Two-thirds of homes in **Prince Edward Island** (67%) and **Nova Scotia** (60%) do. In **New Brunswick**, just 6% of care aides work in a home with on-site educator access.

HIGH RISK OF BURNOUT (EXHAUSTION)



OFTEN THINK ABOUT QUITTING



SATISFIED WITH THEIR JOB



The workers you might not expect to be struggling

Workers under 40 report higher burnout, worse mental health, and greater anxiety—and are most likely to be looking for another job.

Care aides born in Canada fare worse on nearly every measure, including mental health, job satisfaction, and intention to quit.

BEHIND THE NUMBERS

Many newcomer care aides arrive through programs that **tie their work permits to a specific employer** – leaving them with less flexibility to leave. Targeted supports for this group remain essential.

AGE

	UNDER 40	OVER 40
High burnout risk (exhaustion)	60%	47%
Below-average mental health	38%	23%
Clinically significant anxiety	30%	20%

BIRTHPLACE

	CANADA	OUTSIDE CANADA
Often think about quitting	35%	20%
Below-average mental health	35%	16%
Clinically significant anxiety	29%	12%

Where do we go from here? The path forward is clear

Focus on what different workers need to stay.

Younger care aides need mentorship and clear career pathways; older workers need support to stay healthy and continue sharing their experience; Canadian-born care aides showing higher levels of strain need targeted supports; and newcomer care aides need ethical recruitment and stable pathways into long-term careers.

Address provincial gaps and count the workforce.

The differences in support – especially access to Clinical Educators – is too large to ignore. Mandatory care aide registries, already underway in Nova Scotia, are a foundation for planning and accountability that other provinces need to follow.

Fund workplaces that support their people.

Meet the standard of at least 4.1 hours of direct care per resident per day, and invest in the wellbeing and professional development of care aides so that they can do their jobs without sacrificing their own health.

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.

SUPPORTED BY

