



**Canadian Association of Physician Assistants**  
**Association canadienne des adjoints au médecin**

# **Compensation Report**

Canadian Association of Physician Assistants

Updated December 2022

## Introduction

This compensation report was prepared to assess salary and overall compensation for physician assistants (PAs) in Canada. The objective of the report is to help PAs assess employment opportunities and to help employers understand the landscape and remain competitive in their efforts to recruit and retain these advanced practice providers.

In order to provide clarity to employers regarding appropriate compensation and to ensure that PAs across the country are being paid fairly, the Canadian Association of Physician Assistants (CAPA) has collected some of the existing data on salaries and pay structures currently in place in some Canadian and international jurisdictions. The purpose of this document is to ensure that proper guidance is in place so that employers can pay their PA employees fair salaries that are consistent with their skills, training, and experience. This report aims to serve as a resource to help practicing PAs negotiate their next career opportunity, to help employers appropriately position PAs within their organizations, and to serve as a guide for anyone working to establish pay scales and compensation packages. The figures will guide all parties in the hiring process and advocate for the financial security and stability of the profession.

It is worth noting that the pay scales and salaries outlined in this document are based on data collected to date and are not comprehensive or all encompassing. The figures have been obtained from a range of specialties and organizations to provide further clarity and direction regarding acceptable PA wages.

## Who are PAs?

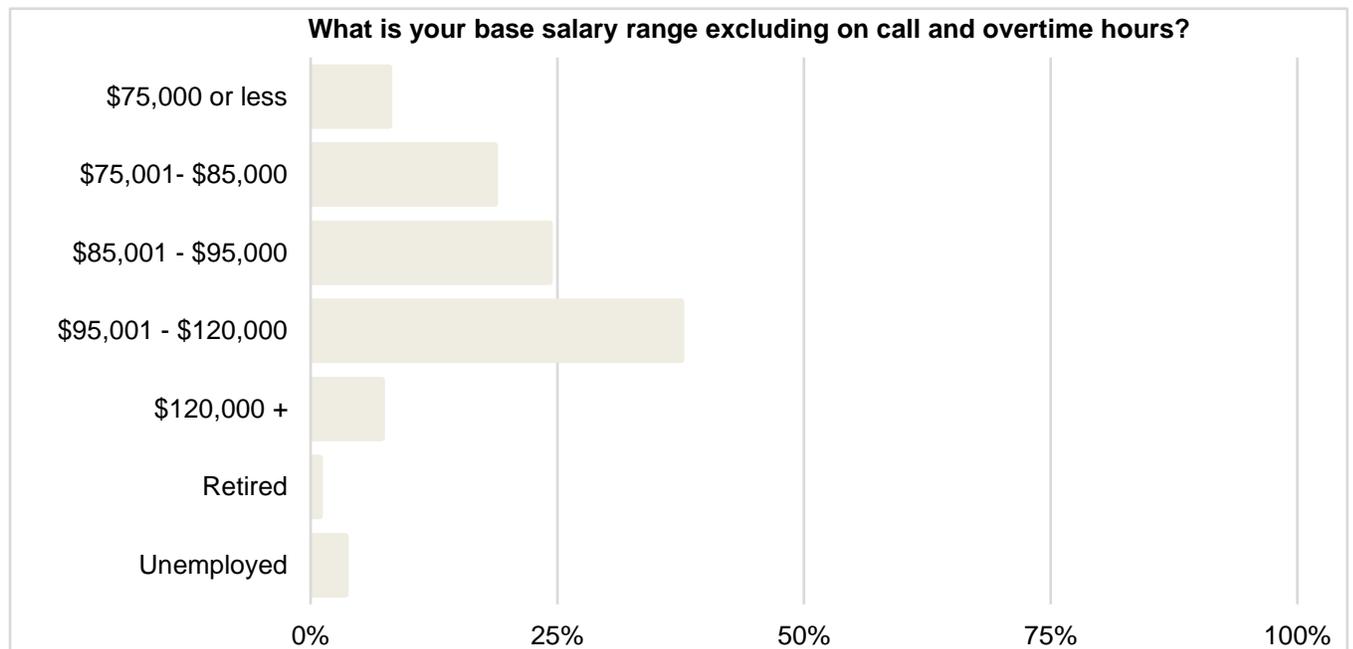
PAs are highly skilled healthcare providers who practice medicine in collaboration with physicians. In a range of clinical settings, PAs work autonomously under the license of one or more supervising doctors to “extend” physician services and improve patient access to care. They diagnose illness, develop, and manage treatment plans, prescribe medication, perform procedures, act as first assist in surgery, and much more. In Canada, they were first introduced in the Canadian Armed Forces more than 60 years ago, but today have become “must haves” in provincial public health systems and physician practices across the country.

See Appendix A for a series of reports from the Conference Board of Canada, including recommendations on how Canada can better leverage PAs to meet service gaps and health system sustainability goals. See Appendix B for a detailed look at PA education, certification, scope of practice, and maintenance of competency.

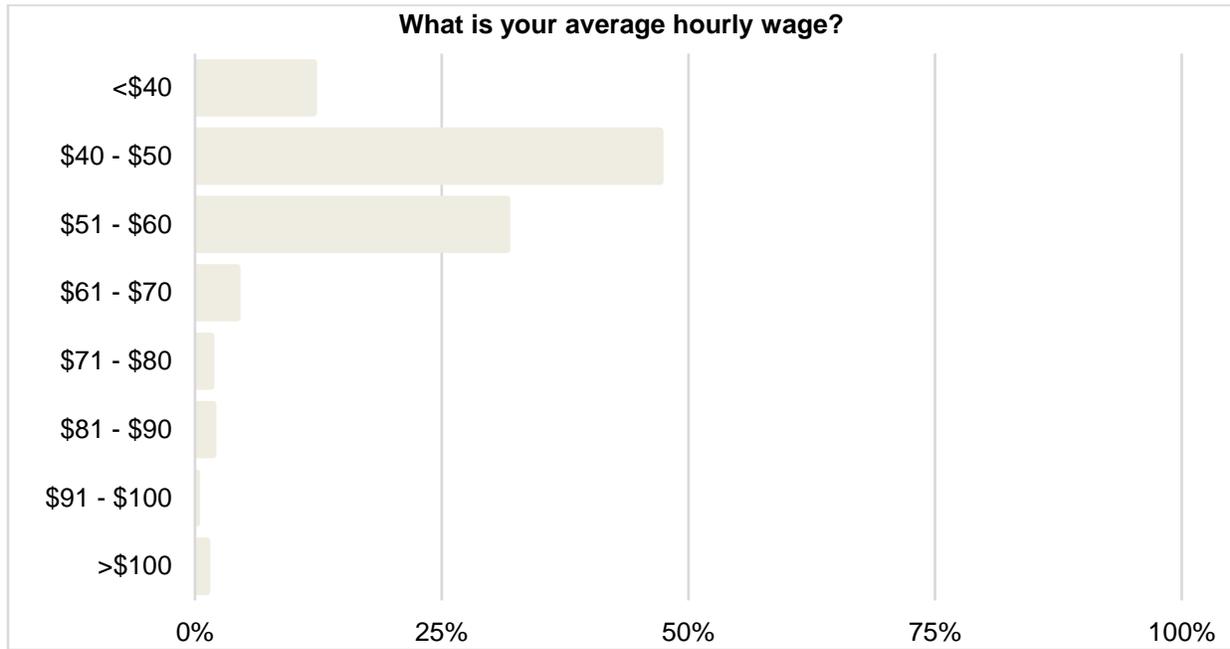
## Salaries in Canadian Jurisdictions

Salary is the most common approach to PA remuneration both in Canada and internationally. According to CAPA's 2021 Membership Survey, 64% of members are paid a salary while the remaining 36% are paid an hourly wage. Salaries provide a stable source of income, allowing PAs to be involved in non-clinical activities and encouraging collaborative care. Salaries are set at a rate that is reflective of the PA's experience and their specialty area.

In Canada, most PAs are remunerated via salary with civilian salaries ranging from approximately \$75,000 (or less) to \$120,000 (or more) annually, depending on the individual PA's education, experience, scope of practice, and hours worked. According to CAPA's 2021 Membership Survey, PAs currently make:



For those PAs that earn an hourly wage, the breakdown is as follows:



**Manitoba**

Unlike in many provinces, Manitoba also has an established pay scale used by the various provincial health authorities. Below is the scale for the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. The salaries in the Northern Regional Health Authority have a 25% geographic differential from the salaries outlined in the scale below. The steps in the scale below correspond to yearly increases. As of 2022, the Physician and Clinical Assistants of Manitoba (PCAM), the organization that represents PAs and CAs in Manitoba are negotiating a new pay ladder with the employer.

<b>Manitoba: Winnipeg Regional Health Authority Collective Agreement 2015-2019</b>					
<b>Step 1</b>	<b>Step 2</b>	<b>Step 3</b>	<b>Step 4</b>	<b>Step 5</b>	<b>Step 6</b>
\$81,446	\$85,115	\$94,159	\$101,606	\$109,859	\$118,475
\$39.157	\$40.921	\$45.269	\$48.849	\$52.817	\$56.959
Effective from April 1, 2018 through March 31, 2019					

**Ontario**

While Ontario does not have an established salary scale for remuneration; various institutions have established their own scales based on labour market trends. Below are examples of salary scales implemented within Ontario hospitals.

<b>Example: Greater Toronto Area Hospital</b>					
	<b>Step 1</b>	<b>Step 2</b>	<b>Step 3</b>	<b>Step 4</b>	<b>Step 5</b>
Hourly	\$43.360	\$46.076	\$48.779	\$51.496	\$54.201
Annual	\$84,552.00	\$89,848.20	\$95,119.05	\$100,417.20	\$105,691.95

<b>Example: Southern Ontario Hospital</b>					
	<b>Step 1</b>	<b>Step 2</b>	<b>Step 3</b>	<b>Step 4</b>	<b>Step 5</b>
Hourly	\$43.171	\$44.8130	\$47.4420	\$50.0840	\$52.7150
Annual	\$82,233.45	\$87,385.35	\$92,511.90	\$97,633.80	\$102,794.25

<b>Example: Northern Ontario Hospital (1)</b>						
	<b>Step 1</b>	<b>Step 2</b>	<b>Step 3</b>	<b>Step 4</b>	<b>Step 5</b>	<b>Step 6</b>
Hourly	\$42.16	\$44.28	\$46.38	\$48.49	\$50.60	\$52.72
Annual	\$82,212	\$86,346	\$90,441	\$94,555.50	\$98,670	\$102,802
Effective April 1, 2018. Full-time employees move up a step annually and part-time employees move up a step by hours (1,725 hours = one step).						

<b>Example: Norther Ontario Hospital (2)</b>					
	<b>Step 1</b>	<b>Step 2</b>	<b>Step 3</b>	<b>Step 4</b>	<b>Step 5</b>
Hourly	\$43.080	\$44.979	\$46.877	\$48.778	\$50.679
Annual	\$84,006	\$87,709.05	\$91,410.15	\$95,117.10	\$98,824.05

As of 2022 in 5 clinics and 2 mobile treatment units in Ottawa, there are 3 PAs employed as permanent full-time staff. These positions are Monday to Friday 8-hour days without any evenings, weekends or on call. The specialty is combined Family Medicine and Addictions Medicine. Benefits are co-pay and there are no specific Continuing Professional Development (CPD) amounts, but the employer does cover CPD for staff on a case-by-case basis.

<b>Step</b>	<b>Annual Salary</b>
New Grad	\$86,500
Step 1	\$90,000
Step 2	\$94,500
Step 3	\$99,000
Step 4	\$104,186

### **New Brunswick**

In New Brunswick, although pending review to reassess the current pay band, PAs have currently been placed in pay band 7 of the Government of New Brunswick Management and Non-Union agreement. The current hourly wage is \$43.29-\$52.37 per hour (~\$85 000-\$103 000 salary), with a 1% increase for cost-of-living adjustment biannually. There are approximately 17 steps in the pay scale. Where one starts on the pay scale depends on years of experience and skill set.

For a full-time employee, standard benefits include health and dental, paid holidays and sick time. While casual employees do not receive these benefits, they get an additional 3% on top of their hourly wage to offset this.

There is no official CPD amount, but the Health Authority does support funding for this (it is mentioned in the contract but without a set yearly maximum amount), and will generally support and reimburse for courses/conferences when requested.

## Alberta

Although PAs who have been working in Alberta Health Services agreed to a 2-year pilot project in 2013, they were only regulated by the Government of Alberta in April 2021. PA salaries have been frozen on the Alberta Health Services (AHS) Pay Ladder since PAs were introduced in the Alberta Health System in 2013. In Alberta, the PA pay scale is well below the CA and Nurse Practitioner (NP) pay scale. The PA pay ladder is the following:

Step	Rate
Step 1 - 2	-
Step 3	\$62,650
Step 4 * minimum	\$71,600
Step 5	\$75,180
Step 6	\$78,939
Step 7	\$82,886
Step 8	\$87,030
Step 9 * job rate	\$89,500
Step 10	\$92,185
Step 11	\$94,951
Step 12	\$97,799
Step 13-17 * maximum	\$99,500

## Canadian Armed Forces (CAF)

Below is a summary of the pay, entitlements, and benefits for a certified PA starting employment in the CAF. The information below is for a fully certified PA only. There are several different entry plans into the CAF whereby the CAF will pay for the education and provide a salary while a member completes school, which varies greatly depending on the entry plan.

All new incoming PAs will start at the rank of Lieutenant (Lt). Members are a Lt for 3 years with an automatic promotion to Captain. Although the incoming PA may be fully certified in their clinical occupation, they still require military training. The initial pay scale represents this requirement, as the CAF cannot fully employ the PA until they have completed this military training. It takes about 18-24 months for a new officer to reach what we call the occupational function point (OFFP).

**Pay (Pay level is raised every year)**

Rank	Pay level	Annual Pay
Lt	1	\$ 75,240
Lt	2	\$77,484
Lt	3	\$79,716
<b>Promotion to Captain (has 10 pay levels with annual increase)</b>		
Capt	Basic	\$83,988
Capt	1	\$87,180
Capt	2	\$90,384
Capt	3	\$93,552
Capt	4	\$96,660
Capt	5	\$99,648
Capt	6	\$102,612
Capt	7	\$105,660
Capt	8	\$107,437
Capt	9	\$109,200
Capt	10	\$111,012

**Entitlements / Benefits**

1. Vacation: 20 days(increases to 25 days at 5 years, 30 days at 28 years)
2. Benefit package (level 3 Federal Service Medical/Dental), all OTCs fully covered
3. Maternity / Paternity: 93% normal salary
4. Full Pension Plan – may start annuity after 25 years regardless of age
5. License and Fees: Fully reimbursed annually (CAPA and Provincial included)
6. CPD: Primary CPD - 1 x fully funded conference annually (includes travel, accommodations, registration, workshops), Secondary CPD \$500 annually (books, electronics, subscriptions that confer CPD credits)
7. Personal subscription to PEPID platform annually
8. Full Pension Plan

## Benefit Packages

### Hospital-Based PAs

PAs employed by hospitals have compensation opportunities that are distinct from those employed in private practice, family health teams, community health centres etc. Their compensation packages tend to be more competitive, including a higher base salary, paid vacation and sick leave, medical and dental benefits, pension, and in some cases, a CPD budget. Hospital-based PAs may also be eligible to receive evening, night, and weekend premiums, as well as on-call hours.

### Privately Employed PAs

Privately employed PAs negotiate compensation packages directly with their employer. Compensation packages include paid vacation and sick leave, medical and dental benefits, and a CPD budget.

### Ontario Family Health Teams

In Ontario, Family Health Teams (FHT) employ a wide range of interdisciplinary health care providers (occupational therapist, nurse practitioner, dietitian, registered nurse, social worker etc.). The compensation structure and benefits for health care providers follow Ontario Ministry of Health guidelines.

## Salaries in International Jurisdictions

There are some differences between Canadian and international jurisdictions when it comes to the PA profession. For example, despite PAs having been part of the health care system in Canada longer than in some other countries, PAs remain some of the most underpaid PAs internationally.

The United States provides PA remuneration through a discounted fee-for-service model. According to the American Academy of PAs, in 2020 the median base salary for an American PA was \$110,000 USD (\$139,766 CAN) or \$61/hour USD (\$78/hour CAN), plus benefits. This is based on a 32-hour work week and does not include bonuses or productivity pay.

According to the National Association of PAs (NAPA), the Dutch Association of Physician Assistants, in the Netherlands, PA services can be billed to insurance companies and deducted from practice expenses. Individual PAs negotiate their own salaries with their employer, with an average base salary of €60,000 (\$87,000 CAN), and a range of €47,000 (\$61,843 CAN) and €78,000 (\$102,632 CAN).

The averages outlined here for both the United States and the Netherlands are base salaries only. Total compensation for PAs may include bonuses, call hours, profit sharing, etc. The final salary may change depending on someone's experience, previous education, and personal negotiation skills.

## PA Perspectives

*"I was able to secure employment as a new graduate through the Career Start Program with a salary of \$90,000 working four days per week. But Career Start funding lasts for a maximum of two years and after this point the employer couldn't renew my contract for full-time hours.*

*I've been offered contracts in the range of \$30 to \$40 per hour, but I feel this significantly undervalues my skills and training and doesn't appropriately compensate an experienced PA like me for the workload and responsibilities I undertake or the value I bring to a physician's practice.*

*I've since returned to my first career as an ultrasound technologist, where I'm paid \$47/hour with benefits, a pension plan, four weeks of paid vacation, and paid sick days. I'm passionate about being a PA, but poor compensation models are jeopardizing the profession in Ontario."*

-PA, Southern Ontario

## Recommendations for Employers

### Consider All the Factors

When developing salary scales employers must consider, among several factors, the skills, training, and experience of the PA. They should also consider labour market trends, annual inflation rates, and the increased specialization and expertise that PAs develop over time. Given the nature of the profession, each PA's scope of practice is unique and directly linked with the supervisory relationship, and the level of autonomy and delegation of various controlled acts from the supervising physician.

### Competitive Salaries and Benefits

A key to recruitment and retention of advanced practice providers, especially in provinces where there are no clear scales or collective agreements in place, is to offer competitive salaries and benefits that are both appropriate for the PA and feasible for the employer. Examine the median to get an idea of what you should expect to compensate the PA and don't forget to consider the full package – vacation days, sick days, health benefits, pension or RRSP contributions, and a budget for CPD.

To have PAs who routinely perform exceptional work and strive to do their best, it's important that they feel sufficiently compensated for their worth and comfortable discussing their growth. Appropriate compensation inspires above average performance and ensures employee loyalty.

## Appendix A: Conference Board of Canada Reports

A series of reports from the Conference Board of Canada also provides important evidence on how PAs can help alleviate demand and save money.

- [Value of Physician Assistants: Understanding the Role of Physician Assistants Within Health Systems](#)
- [Funding Models for Physician Assistants: Canadian and International Experiences](#)
- [Gaining Efficiency: Increasing the Use of Physician Assistants in Canada](#)
- [Value of Physician Assistants: Recommendations for Action](#)

Notably, the Conference Board states that hiring more PAs and properly integrating them on health care teams could save the Canadian health care system up to \$1 billion by the year 2030.

## Appendix B: About PAs

### Education

In Canada there are three accredited PA education programs. These programs meet national standards of education, including a defined set of competencies that are outlined in the profession’s National Competency Profile (EPA-PA). The programs are:

- University of Manitoba Masters of Physician Assistant Studies
- McMaster University Physician Assistant Education Program
- The Consortium of PA Education (University of Toronto in collaboration with the Northern Ontario School of Medicine and the Michener Institute at UHN).

By aligning PA education with the medical model, it lays the foundation for a collaborative working relationship with physicians.

The intensive PA program extends over 24 months and begins with classroom instruction in basic medical sciences. This is followed by physician-directed rotations with multidisciplinary teams in medical and surgical disciplines. The students participate in over 2,000 hours of clinical training in areas that include trauma, anesthesia, general surgery, sports medicine, orthopedic, internal medicine, emergency medicine, pediatrics and family medicine. See Table 1 below for links to more information on each program.

**Table 1: PA Education Programs in Canada**

Institution	Degree	Admission Requirements	Curriculum
McMaster University Physician Assistant Education Program	Bachelor of Health Sciences Degree (Physician Assistant)	Applicants must have completed a minimum of two years of undergraduate work and only degree courses at an accredited university will be considered. Applicants are expected to have achieved an overall simple average of at least 3.0 on the Ontario Medical School Application Service scale for consideration. <a href="#">Complete details.</a>	<a href="#">A 24-month program</a> – year one focuses on clinical sciences and year two involves 48 weeks of supervised clinical placements.

Institution	Degree	Admission Requirements	Curriculum
The Consortium of PA Education (University of Toronto in collaboration with the Northern Ontario School of Medicine and Michener Institute for Applied Health Sciences)	Bachelor of Science Physician Assistant Degree	Admission requirements include a minimum of 10 full-year courses or the equivalent of four semesters full time of undergraduate university education from a recognized university. <a href="#">Complete details</a>	<a href="#">A 24-month program</a> – year one focuses on clinical sciences and year two involves 40 weeks of supervised clinical placements, with specific experience in rural Ontario settings.
University of Manitoba	Masters of Physician Assistant Studies	<a href="#">Complete details</a> – requires a four year Bachelor’s degree and requires undergraduate courses in anatomy, physiology and biochemistry	<a href="#">Educational philosophy and curriculum</a> – an academic first year followed by 13 months of clinical rotations in various medical and surgical environments, with one quarter of clinical education in rural environments.

### Certification and Maintenance of Certification

Graduates of accredited Canadian PA programs are eligible to write the Physician Assistant Entry to Practice Certification Exam. Individuals who successfully pass the exam are awarded the Canadian Certified Physician Assistant (CCPA) designation from CAPA.

Importantly, the Physician Assistant Certification Council of Canada (PACCC) maintains a strict policy regarding the maintenance of certification that involves partnering with the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada for use of the Mainport ePortfolio system.

### Continuing Professional Development

Like other health professionals, after graduation PAs continue learning in the clinical work environment and through CPD. A PA’s scope of practice grows and shifts over time with advanced or specialized knowledge, with changes or advances in the medical profession overall, or with changes in the PA’s practice setting or specialty.

In terms of CPD requirements to maintain certification, PAs must earn and report at least:

- **400 credit hours** of CPD activities over the course of a five-year cycle by participating in educational activities that meet the identified needs of their professional practice.

- **40 credit hours** of CPD activities per year, even in the years after they have reached the 400-credit minimum requirement.
  - \* **25 credit hours per section (Section 1 and 2 only). Credit hours may still be reported in Section 3, however, having a minimum number of credits in this section is NOT a condition for meeting CPD requirements.**

Credits are documented using the MAINPORT ePortfolio system, the CPD reporting tool for the Maintenance of Certification (MOC) Program. In addition to the education component, PAs must annually renew their professional membership with CAPA to maintain their CCPA certification designation and access to the MOC program.

### Scope of Practice

A PA scope of practice is physician-delegated, and the medical services assigned to the PA must be within the scope of the supervising physician. In Canada, the PAs degree of autonomy will vary in each provincial jurisdiction where they practice.

Prior to assigning clinical work, supervising physicians must consider:

- the best interest of the patient
- the competence of the PA to safely complete the task
- the amount of supervision the PA should have in completing the task, and how that supervision will be provided
- the organization's policies and procedures.

Each PA and their supervising physician(s) will establish a practice agreement that documents the types of clinical work the PA will perform in that practice setting, how that work will be assigned and the type of supervision they will receive when performing that work.

### Standards of Practice

The [EPA-PA](#) is a framework that describes the abilities of PAs to meet the needs of the patients they serve.

CAPA's objective in the development of this document is to communicate to the public and to the PA profession a set of standards that all physician assistants are expected to acquire for entry to practice. It is intended to help employers, PAs, physicians, educators and others to understand the breadth and depth of practice for PAs in Canada.

The EPA-PA defines how and under what circumstances the PA may exercise their competencies within the health care system. The EPA-PA is relevant to a practice in any health care setting or role.

## Professional Liability Protection

Many PAs are responsible for securing their own professional liability coverage for their practice. Employers may require that professional liability insurance be in place as a condition of employment. Through CAPA, all certified PAs have access to coverage through Smith & Reid Insurance, which is underwritten by Berkley's Canada. The Canadian Medical Protective Association can provide further information about managing risks to practicing physicians. The CMPA also provides some guidance on [its website](#).