

# The Chronic Wage Issue



Advocacy Brief

**In January 2023, after almost a decade of no increases in funding for staff wages, the Government of Alberta provided the Community Disability Services (CDS) sector a funding infusion for frontline worker wages (10%) and administrative costs (5%) [1].** This response was in large part due to the Project Blueprint CDS evidence-based recommendation for immediate wage relief [2], bolstered by sector-wide advocacy across the province.

**Despite this infusion, wages remain relatively low and work demands high.**

Faced with rising costs and burnout, CDS workers are attracted to better-paying work in other care sectors and government. Turnover and vacancy rates continue to be high, exacerbating work stress for existing frontline and managerial staff. Rural communities with smaller pools of skilled resources are impacted even more intensely than urban services. Furthermore, this infusion did not provide direct wage relief for non-frontline positions, which also pay less compared to similar work in other sectors.

**Project Blueprint CDS calls for ongoing measures to address the chronic wage issue, for both frontline and other positions.** These include funding wage parity between the CDS sector and government, and establishing consistent and ongoing increases to address inflation and maintain parity.

**At stake are daily supports for Albertans with developmental disabilities.**



## Despite the increase in wage funding...

The sector continues to have

a high **turnover rate** of **28%**

and a **vacancy rate** of **6.8%** [3]

When asked what top three issues were currently affecting their workforce,

**72%** of organizations listed **mental health**, and

**63%** listed **employee burnout** [4]

**90%**

of all workers in the sector are in **frontline positions**,

and their **average hourly wage** remains relatively low at

**\$21.77** [3]

*“Alberta's CDS sector is generally no longer viewed as a credible, long-term employment option.”* [2]

The average  
frontline hourly wage is

**\$21.77**

compared to \$20.32 in 2020

The average hourly wage for  
all positions in the CDS sector is

**\$23.03**

compared to \$21.50 in 2020

**69%**

of all frontline staff make under \$22.50 per hour [3]

### By position:

**Community Disability  
Services Workers  
(CDSW)**

**89%**

make  
under **\$22.50** an hour

Average wage

**\$20.20**

**Community Disability  
Services Practitioners  
(CDSP)**

**86%**

make  
under **\$25.00** an hour

Average wage

**\$23.31**

**Complex Support  
Needs (CSN)**

**91%**

make  
under **\$27.50** an hour

Average wage

**\$25.18**

**Employment  
Specialists  
(Emp Spec)**

**80%**

make  
under **\$30.00** an hour

Average wage

**\$25.78**

**Team Leaders**

**67%**

make  
under **\$30.00** an hour

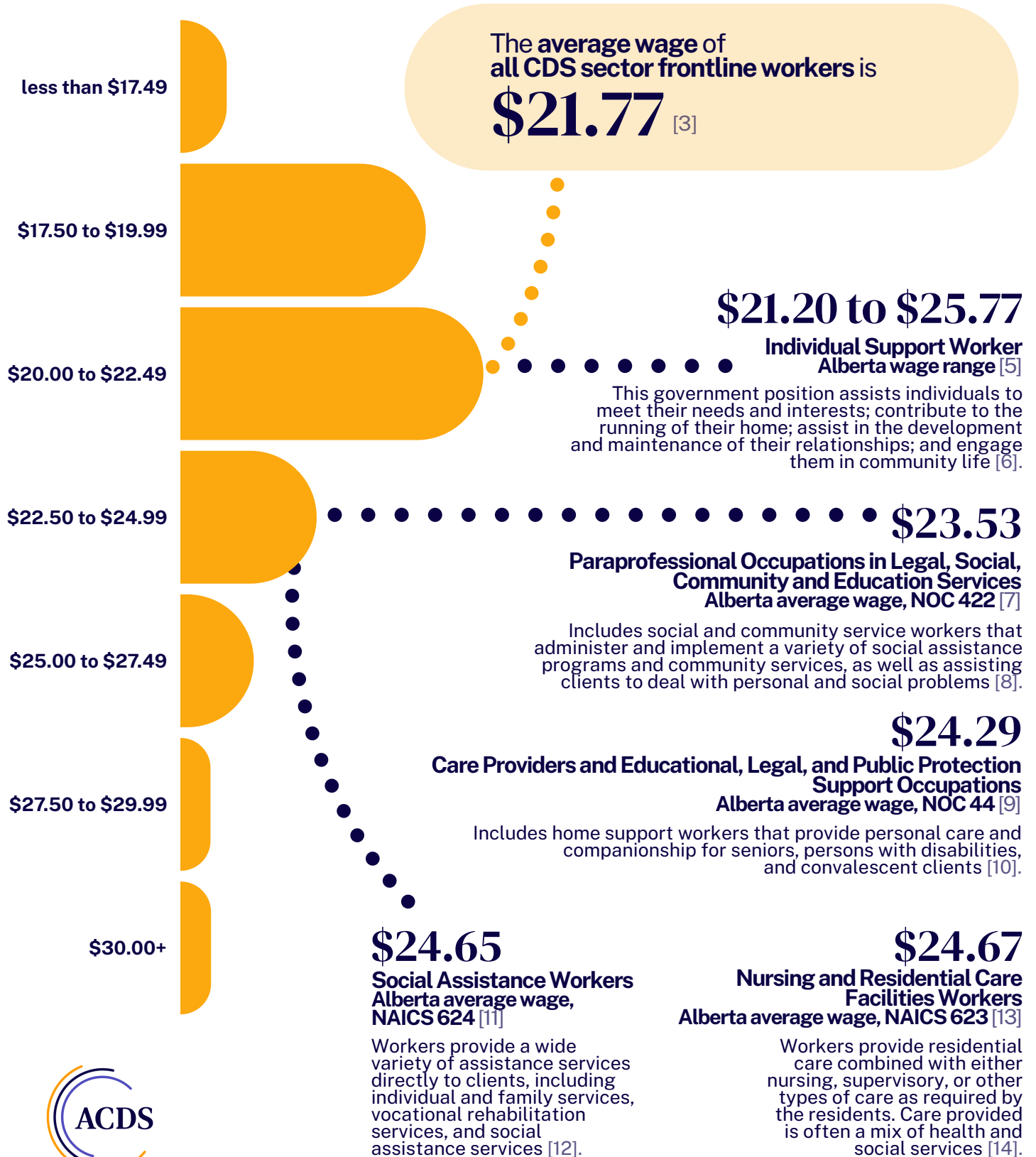
Average wage

**\$28.69** [3]



# Frontline CDS workers continue to work for lower wages than those in government and comparable sectors.

## Hourly wages of frontline CDS workers [3]



## References and Notes

- [1] Government of Alberta. December 21, 2022. "Investing in Alberta's social sector." Alberta.ca. [alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=86201231FB305-D17A-EFB5-D07B72C7BEC9CE0E](https://alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=86201231FB305-D17A-EFB5-D07B72C7BEC9CE0E)
- [2] Alberta Council of Disability Services (ACDS). December 19, 2022. *Blueprint CDS: A Comprehensive Workforce Strategy for Community Disability Services: Technical Document*. ACDS.ca. [acds.ca/files/Workforce/BlueprintCDSComprehensiveWorkforceStrategyfortheCDSSector\\_Technical.pdf](https://acds.ca/files/Workforce/BlueprintCDSComprehensiveWorkforceStrategyfortheCDSSector_Technical.pdf)
- [3] ACDS. 2024. *ACDS Survey 2023: Workforce Fundamentals*. Calgary, AB. ACDS.ca. [acds.ca/workforce/annual-workforce-survey/index.html](https://acds.ca/workforce/annual-workforce-survey/index.html)
- [4] ACDS. January 2024. *Sector Scanner 2023*. Calgary, AB. ACDS.ca. [acds.ca/files/Resources/Sector%20Scanner%202023\\_Jan%202024.pdf](https://acds.ca/files/Resources/Sector%20Scanner%202023_Jan%202024.pdf)
- [5] Government of Alberta. Subsidiary Agreement #009. "Subsidiary Agreement between the Government of Alberta and the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees representing Health and Therapy & Institutional and Patient Support Services." [collective-agreement.alberta.ca/Pages/My-HR/Collective-agreement/Subsidiary-Agreement--9.aspx](https://collective-agreement.alberta.ca/Pages/My-HR/Collective-agreement/Subsidiary-Agreement--9.aspx)  
Note: Wages effective September 1, 2023.
- [6] Government of Alberta. 2022. *Individual Support - Subsidiary 9: APS Benchmark Listings*. Alberta.ca. [alberta.ca/system/files/custom\\_downloaded\\_images/psc-benchmarks-individual-support.pdf](https://alberta.ca/system/files/custom_downloaded_images/psc-benchmarks-individual-support.pdf)
- [7] Statistics Canada. January 5, 2024. "Table 14-10-0417-01 Employee wages by occupation, annual." <https://doi.org/10.25318/1410041701-eng>  
Note: Average hourly wage rate is for NOC 422 Albertan employees in 2023.
- [8] Government of Canada. June 2023. "NOC 2021 Version 1.0. 42201 - Social and community service workers." [noc.esdc.gc.ca/Structure/NocProfile?objectid=WMwZecP328TRsoCZMp%2ByoTYzk6XMcRS9qGd4xJyLBkk%3D](https://noc.esdc.gc.ca/Structure/NocProfile?objectid=WMwZecP328TRsoCZMp%2ByoTYzk6XMcRS9qGd4xJyLBkk%3D)
- [9] Statistics Canada. January 2023. "Table 14-10-0306-01 Employee wages by occupation, monthly, unadjusted for seasonality, inactive." [doi.org/10.25318/1410030601-eng](https://doi.org/10.25318/1410030601-eng)  
Note: Average hourly wage rate is for NOC 44 Albertan employees in December 2022. Though this data has since been updated, the 2023 data combined NOC 44 and NOC 45 (student monitors, crossing guards, and related occupations).
- [10] Government of Canada. June 2023. "NOC 2021 Version 1.0. 4412 - Home support workers, housekeepers and related occupations." [noc.esdc.gc.ca/Structure/NocProfile?objectid=WMwZecP328TRsoCZMp%2ByoTYzk6XMcRS9qGd4xJyLBkk%3D](https://noc.esdc.gc.ca/Structure/NocProfile?objectid=WMwZecP328TRsoCZMp%2ByoTYzk6XMcRS9qGd4xJyLBkk%3D)
- [11] Statistics Canada. March 28, 2024. "Table 14-10-0206-01 Average hourly earnings for employees paid by the hour, by industry, annual." <https://doi.org/10.25318/1410020601-eng>  
Note: Average hourly wage rate is for NAICS 624 Albertan employees in 2023.
- [12] Statistics Canada. March 23, 2018. "North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Canada 2017 Version 1.0: 624 - Social assistance." [www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3VD.pl?Function=getVD&TVD=307532&CVD=307534&CPV=624&CST=01012017&CLV=2&MLV=5](https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3VD.pl?Function=getVD&TVD=307532&CVD=307534&CPV=624&CST=01012017&CLV=2&MLV=5)
- [13] Statistics Canada. March 28, 2024. "Table 14-10-0206-01 Average hourly earnings for employees paid by the hour, by industry, annual." <https://doi.org/10.25318/1410020601-eng>  
Note: Average hourly wage rate is for NAICS 623 Albertan employees in 2022 (data quality from 2023 was too unreliable to be published).
- [14] Statistics Canada. March 23, 2018. "North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Canada 2017 Version 1.0: 623 - Nursing and residential care facilities." [www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3VD.pl?Function=getVD&TVD=307532&CVD=307534&CPV=624&CST=01012017&CLV=2&MLV=5](https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3VD.pl?Function=getVD&TVD=307532&CVD=307534&CPV=624&CST=01012017&CLV=2&MLV=5)

