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M. Susan Caswell
MHSc, MSc, PhD Candidate
School of Public Health & Health Systems
University of Waterloo

In partnership with Dietitians of Canada
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Executive Summary

Dietetic educators across Canada have been calling for workforce reporting on recent graduates to identify trends and emerging practice areas and inform optimal education and advocacy opportunities. In response, Dietitians of Canada commissioned researchers at the University of Waterloo and the University of Saskatchewan to work with an advisory team to develop, administer, and analyze a workforce survey of Ontario and Saskatchewan dietetic program graduates. The goal was to provide an overview of employment paths of those who have met the educational and professional qualifications to write the Canadian Dietetic Registration Exam since 2014.

An online survey, mounted on Survey Monkey®, was available from June to September 2019 and advertised to potential respondents using a range of approaches. There were 314 qualifying respondents: 261 from Ontario and 53 from Saskatchewan.

Survey results indicate a positive outlook for new graduates: 78% of respondents obtained paid employment as a dietitian within the first 12 months of completion of dietetic training, with many obtaining a position before completing their training.

The average length of the first primary dietitian position was 15 months and 47% of respondents were employed full-time (19% permanent, 28% temporary). In addition, 33% of respondents also had a secondary paid dietitian position with a different employer and 41% of respondents held non-dietitian positions in their first year after completing their dietetic training. Over three quarters of respondents were currently employed as a dietitian at the time of surveillance. The average length of time in their current primary dietitian position at the time of competing the survey was 14 months. In addition, 23% of respondents held a secondary dietitian position with a different employer and 26% held non-dietitian positions.
At the time of survey completion, 47% of respondents were employed 36 or more hours per week as a dietitian. Of all respondents, 51% earned between $55-$75,000 per year and 30% were actively seeking dietitian employment in addition to their current position.

When asked if they felt they had the knowledge and skills required to advance their dietetics career, 91% indicated ‘Yes’. When asked if they felt they had the ability and opportunity to advance their dietetics career, 80% indicated ‘Yes’. Overall, 83% were Satisfied or Very Satisfied with the preparation provided by their academic coursework and practicum and NO respondents were Very Dissatisfied.

While graduates expressed overall satisfaction with their dietetic education and training, cultural competence and private practice and business knowledge were areas respondents indicated more in-depth education and training would be of value.

Finally, demographic data collected indicates 96% of respondents identified as female, 81% identified as white, and less than 15% indicated language fluency in a language other than English.

The data from this 2019 survey may serve as a baseline for future surveys or comparison with other provinces.
Research Team & Advisory Committee

Research Team

Susan Caswell MHSc, MSc, PhD (candidate)
   School of Public Health & Health Systems, University of Waterloo
Rhona Hanning PhD, RD, FDC
   School of Public Health & Health Systems, University of Waterloo
Jessica Lieffers PhD, RD
   College of Pharmacy and Nutrition, University of Saskatchewan

Advisory Committee

Corinne Eisenbraun MA, RD, FDC
   Senior Director, Policy and Programs, Dietitians of Canada
Jennifer Buccino BASc, MEd, RD
   Regional Executive Director, Ontario, Dietitians of Canada

Shawna Berenbaum PhD, RD
   College of Pharmacy and Nutrition, University of Saskatchewan
Pierrette Buklis MHSc, RD, FDC
   Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto
Megan Cowan MPH, RD
   School of Nutrition, Ryerson University
Tammy Fansabedian MHSc, RD
   School of Nutrition, Ryerson University
Lesley Macaskill MHSc, RD
   School of Food & Nutritional Sciences, Brescia University College
Introduction

Data on the early career paths and dietetic training experience of recent graduates has not been collected since 2009 and would be of value on program, provincial, and national levels. Dietetic educators across Canada have been calling for workforce planning and reporting to be completed to identify trends and emerging practice areas and inform optimal education and advocacy opportunities.

Questions regularly posed by educators include:

- Where are graduates finding employment?
- How long is it taking them to find employment?
- Are graduates taking on multiple positions before finding secure full-time employment?
- Does our current education and training system meet the needs of new graduates once they enter the workforce?
- Are there gaps identified by graduates in their preparation for the positions they assume or would like to assume post-graduation?

Dietitians of Canada commissioned a survey of recent Ontario and Saskatchewan graduates to collect feedback and provide an overview of practice experience. The purpose of the survey was to: 1) describe the employment paths of Ontario and Saskatchewan graduates who met the educational and professional qualifications to write the Canadian Dietetic Registration Exam between 2014 and 2019; 2) examine the nature of work and practice areas; 3) inform dietetics students about career opportunities; 4) inform education and training programs; and 5) to inform professional development and advocacy opportunities.

Researchers from the University of Waterloo and the University of Saskatchewan developed and administered the survey in consultation with the advisory committee.
Survey Methods

The web-based survey was drafted based on the 2009 survey and advisory committee input. The draft survey was pre-tested using cognitive testing (n=5), revised as indicated, and then pilot tested (n=17). Following minor changes indicated, the survey was mounted on Survey Monkey®. Recruitment took place via email invitations from dietetic training programs in Ontario and Saskatchewan, Dietitians of Canada newsletters and Dietitians of Canada social media outlets. The survey was open between June and September 2019.

*Overall survey results are summarized in Sections A through G in the full survey report.*

*Province specific highlights are summarized in Appendices 1 and 2.*
Survey Sample

Qualified Respondents 314

Ontario 261

Saskatchewan 53

Respondents\(^1\) completed the training in Ontario and Saskatchewan to meet educational and professional qualification requirements to write the CDRE from 2014-2019

Respondent Breakdown by Graduation Year

\(^1\) Eligible Ontario and Saskatchewan graduates totaled 1232 for graduation years 2014 to 2019.
Concluding Comments

The employment outlook for new dietetic graduates is positive. Of recent graduates, 79% are currently employed as a dietitian with 56% of respondents\textsuperscript{2} working full-time (combined permanent and temporary). Over 50% of graduates indicated they were earning between $55,000 and $75,000 annually.

Although most graduates are working within the healthcare sector, a range of practice areas was represented, including those that are less traditional for the profession.

While many graduates are finding full-time employment, temporary or contract positions, job/employer changes and/or multiple part-time or contract positions are common. Graduates also indicated that private practice/consulting routes were developed to expand employment opportunities.

Graduates expressed overall satisfaction with their dietetic education and training, while highlighting some areas where additional background would have been valuable. These areas included cultural competence, with a particular focus on First Nations, Inuit, and Métis; private practice; and business skills, with a focus on private practice.

One final consideration worth noting, is the demographic make-up of recent dietetic graduates in Ontario and Saskatchewan responding to the survey: 96% identified as female, 81% identified as white, and 8% indicated language fluency in a language other than English or French. This suggests that dietetic graduates in Ontario and Saskatchewan are less diverse than the general population within their age range.

This was the first workforce study of recent dietetic graduates in a decade. The findings have importance for recent graduates, students considering entering the

\textsuperscript{2} This includes current employment for both those whose current position is the same as described for their first position and those whose current position is different than the first position described.
profession, educators and employers. The survey will serve as a comparator for anticipated studies in other provinces and a baseline for future studies.
Appendices

Appendix 1: Ontario Highlights

Available in the full survey report and as a separate highlights report

Appendix 2: Saskatchewan Highlights

Appendix 3: Response Breakdown by Program

Appendix 4: Copy Survey Instrument

Appendix 5: Respondent Data Set Information
Appendix 2: Saskatchewan³ Highlights

Respondents completed training in Saskatchewan to meet educational and professional qualification requirements to write the CDRE 2014-2019

SASKATCHEWAN RESPONDENTS BY GRADUATION YEAR

³ Eligible Saskatchewan graduates totaled 133 for graduation years 2014 to 2019.
Additional University Education

- 12% of respondents indicated they have completed or are working towards completion of an additional university degree since completing their dietetic training
  - Top areas of study indicated were public health, nursing, and medicine or dentistry

- Top 4 reasons for pursuing an additional degree
  1. Satisfy job/career requirements or goals
  2. Enhance professional knowledge and skills
  3. Change fields or learn a new occupation
  4. Lack of suitable employment opportunities

Additional Certifications or Diplomas

- 28% of respondents indicated they have completed or are working towards completion of additional certifications or diplomas
  - The top certification listed was Certified Diabetes Educator (CDE) at 57%

- The top 4 reasons indicated for pursuing additional certifications or diplomas were
  1. Enhance professional knowledge or skills
  2. Satisfy job/career requirements or goals
  3. Support general interest or self-improvement
  4. Pursue opportunity available through employer
1st Year Dietitian Employment Profile of Saskatchewan Educated Dietitians

*Primary Position as defined for the survey: Position worked the greatest number of hours*

**Obtaining Employment**

- 86% of respondents obtained paid employment as a dietitian within the first 12 months of completion of dietetic training
  - 88% of those who obtained employment within the first 12 months did so within the first 6 months

- Of the 14% of respondents who *did not obtain employment* as a dietitian within the first 12 months, top reasons indicated:
  - Pursued further education
  - Unable to obtain a position

**Applying for 1st Dietitian Position**

- 41% of respondents who obtained employment as a dietitian within the first 12 months, applied for 5 positions or fewer and 41% of respondents applied for 6 to 15 positions before obtaining employment

- The 2 most successful strategies indicated for obtaining a position as a dietitian were
  1. Job search websites (e.g., Indeed)
  2. Employer websites (e.g., Health Regions)
Time in 1st Dietitian Position

- Average length of time at first primary dietitian position → 15 months

Employment Category

- 40% of respondents were employed ‘temporary full-time’
- 24% of respondents were employed ‘permanent full-time’

Language Fluency

- 90% of first positions held did not require or prefer language fluency other than English or French. Of positions preferring other language fluency, the top language indicated was Cree.

Geographic Region: 1st Dietitian Position

Relocation

- 64% of respondents relocated for their first position as a dietitian
  - 56% of respondents to a rural⁴ region (<10,000)

Geographic Region of First Dietitian Position

- Urban (>10,000) 48% of respondents
- Rural (<10,000) 48% of respondents
- Remote/northern 14% of respondents
- Different province than dietetic training 2% of respondents

⁴ Urban/rural delineation is based upon prior dietetic surveys (e.g., 2009 Dietetic Employer Survey)
Employer & Roles: 1st Primary Dietitian Position

Principal Role: 1st Primary Dietitian Position

- Top 3 roles principal roles of primary position
  1. Community health
  2. Health care team
  3. Acute care hospital/in-patient

- 30% indicated they also had secondary roles with the same employer. The top 3 secondary roles indicated were
  1. Long-term care
  2. Acute care hospital/in-patient
  2. Management

Employer: 1st Primary Dietitian Position

Top employers indicated
  1. First Nations, Inuit, Métis governance or health facility (e.g. tribal council)
  2. Provincial government
  3. Hospital
  4. Health facility within a medical clinic: publicly funded

5 Acute care hospital/in-patient and management were equally represented
Position Changes: 1st Year

- 52% of respondents changed primary positions within the first 12 months
  - Top reasons identified were
    - Move from a temporary or contract position to a permanent position with a different employer
    - Move to a different area of practice
    - Move to a different employer

Secondary Dietitian Positions: 1st Year

- 20% of respondents also had a secondary paid dietitian position with a different employer at the same time as their primary position
  - The top 3 roles indicated for secondary dietitian employment were
    - Private practice/consulting
    - Community health
    - Business/Industry (e.g., grocery store dietitian)

Other Employment: 1st Year

- 42% of respondents also held non-dietitian positions in their first year of practice
Current Employment Profile *if Different from First Year*

*This section profiles current positions held, if they differ from dietitian employment the 1st year following training*

- Of those respondents currently employed as a dietitian, 59% of respondents were employed in a position different from the 1st primary position described for their 1st year of training

**Application Strategies**

- Top successful strategy used to obtain current dietitian position
  - Employer websites (e.g., Health Region)

**Time in Current Dietitian Position**

- Average length of time in current primary dietitian position → 15 months

**Current Employment Category**

- 26% respondents were employed ‘temporary full-time’
- 52% of respondents were employed ‘permanent full-time’
Geographic Region: Current Position

- 52% of respondents relocated for their current position
  - 92% to an urban region (>10,000)
  - 0% to the remote north

- Relocation costs were not paid by employers for any of the Saskatchewan educated respondents moving to their current position

- Geographic region of current position
  - Urban (>10,000) 77% of respondents
  - Rural (<10,000) 19% of respondents
  - Remote/northern 9% of respondents
  - Different province from dietetic training 14% of respondents

Language Fluency

- 86% of current positions held did not require or prefer language fluency other than English or French. Of the positions preferring other language fluency, the only language indicated was Cree.

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6 Note: Respondents had the option to ‘check all that apply’ to allow for responses fitting more than one category
Principal Role: Current Position

Top Roles included
1. Community health
2. Acute care/hospital/in-patient

- 14% of respondents indicated they also had current secondary roles with the same employer. Top secondary roles included
  1. Community health
  2. Acute care hospital/in-patient
  3. Hospital clinic (e.g., Out-patient Diabetes clinic)\(^7\)
  3. Long-term care
  3. Public health

Employer: Current Dietitian Position

Top 3 employers for current dietitian position
1. Provincial government
2. Hospital
3. First Nations, Inuit, Métis governance or health facility

\(^7\) Hospital clinic, Long-term care, and Public health were equally represented
Secondary Positions

- 14% of respondents also had a secondary paid dietitian position with a different employer at the same time as their current primary position.
  - The top role indicated for secondary dietitian employment was Community Health.

Other Employment

- 26% of respondents also currently held non-dietitian positions.
Employment Status

Current Weekly Hours Working as a Dietitian

Number of Hours Worked Per Week (% respondents)

- 36+ hours: 58.7%
- 26-35 hours: 13.0%
- 16-25 hours: 2.1%
- 0-15 hours: 26.1%
Income

- Annual income earned as a dietitian
  - 19% of respondents earned $55-65,000 per year
  - 33% of respondents earned $65-75,000 per year

Benefits

- 79% of employers provided a benefits package

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8 Encompasses self-reported earnings of those working full-time, part-time and in multiple positions.
9 Respondents were asked for both annual earnings and an hourly wage calculation (even if earnings were salary based)
Training Satisfaction

- When asked if they felt they had the knowledge and skills to advance their dietetics career
  - 92% of respondents indicated ‘Yes’

- When asked if they felt they had the ability and opportunity to advance their dietetics career
  - 75% of respondents indicated ‘Yes’

- Overall satisfaction with academic coursework and practicum
  - 76% of respondents were Satisfied or Very Satisfied
  - Only 7% of respondents were Dissatisfied
  - NO respondents were Very Dissatisfied
Satisfaction with dietetics training in supporting development of specified skill sets

![Satisfaction with Skill Sets (% respondents)](image)

- Nutrition Counselling
- Education Planning & Delivery
- Practice-based Research
- Using Evidence to Inform Practice
- Working with Cultural & Social Diversity
- Written Communication
- Oral Communication
- Teamwork & Collaboration
- Negotiation & Conflict Management
- Project Management
- Leadership
- Financial Management

Legend:
- Dissatisfied
- Satisfied or Very Satisfied
Demographics: Saskatchewan Educated Respondents

Age

- 87% of respondents were between 20 and 29 years old

Gender

- 98% identified as female

Cultural Identity

- 91% identified as white

Language Fluency

- English 100%
- French 4%
- Other 0%

Current place of residence

- Saskatchewan 89%
- Another province 11%
Appendix 3: Response breakdown by program

Response Breakdown by Program (n=314 respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accredited Program</th>
<th>Participants (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-degree practicum</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aramark Canada Ltd.</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brescia University College (DDEPT)</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand River Hospital</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton Health Sciences</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ontario School of Medicine</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Health Sciences Centre</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryerson, St. Mikes (PMDip)</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryerson, North York General (PMDip)</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunnybrook &amp; Women’s College HSC</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital for Sick Children</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other(^{10})</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Undergraduate degree with integrated practicum</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Université d’Ottawa</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Saskatchewan</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Master’s program with accredited practicum</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brescia University College (MScFN)</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital for Sick Children</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryerson University (MHSc)</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Guelph (MAN)</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Toronto</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent practicum (Ontario only)</strong></td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{10}\) i.e., St. Michael’s Hospital stand-alone internship
Appendix 4: Survey Instrument

A copy of the survey is appended to the full survey report.
Appendix 5: Respondent Data Set Information

Aggregate has been provided to Dietitians of Canada and is being securely maintained in encrypted password-protected files, stored with a project specific folder on a secure server for a period of 10 years as per clearance provided by the University of Waterloo Office of Research Ethics Committee (ORE#40910) and a letter of acknowledgement in lieu of a certificate of approval from the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BEH#1225).

For further information please contact
Corinne Eisenbraun, MA, RD, FDC
Senior Director, Education Policy and Programs
Dietitians of Canada
Corinne.eisenbraun@dietitians.ca