

BAKER THORNTON

Specialist Recruiters for Accounting and CPA Practices

CANADA CPA PRACTICE RECRUITMENT INTELLIGENCE REPORT 2025

Comprehensive salary data and
recruitment intelligence for
accounting practices and CPA firms
across Canada

**20
25**

Executive Summary

The Canadian CPA recruitment landscape in 2025 demonstrates unprecedented compensation growth, acute talent shortages, and intensifying competition for qualified professionals. According to the 2025 CPA Compensation Study conducted by Leger on behalf of CPA Canada, Canadian CPAs earned a national median compensation of \$154,000 in 2024, the highest level since the study's inception (CPA Canada, 2025a). This 7.7% increase between 2022 and 2024 outpaced Canada's 6.4% inflation rate during the same period, reflecting the strong competitive position of CPAs in today's market (Canadian Accountant, 2025).

This report provides comprehensive salary data and recruitment intelligence for accounting practices and CPA firms across Canada, analysing compensation by province, experience level, role, and sector. The analysis is based on 7,582 voluntary responses from Canadian CPAs regarding their 2024 compensation, providing partners in CPA firms with actionable insights for talent acquisition and retention strategies (CPA Canada, 2025a).

National Compensation Overview

Overall Median Compensation

The national median total compensation for Canadian CPAs reached \$154,000 in 2024, representing significant growth from prior years (CPA Canada, 2025a). This figure encompasses base salary, bonuses, profit-sharing, and other forms of compensation.

The median base pay component was \$133,000, with an additional \$8,000 in non-base pay (CPA Alberta, 2025a).

Compensation by Experience Level

Compensation grows steadily with experience, demonstrating clear career progression pathways for CPAs across Canada:

- Less than 3 years post-designation: \$92,000 median (CPA Canada, 2025b)
- 3-4 years experience: \$110,000 median (BCCPA, 2025)
- 5-9 years experience: \$130,000 median (BCCPA, 2025)
- 10-14 years experience: \$140,000 median (BCCPA, 2025)
- 15-19 years experience: \$160,000 median (BCCPA, 2025)
- 25+ years experience: \$194,000 median (Canadian Accountant, 2025)

CPAs with three or more years of post-designation experience reported median compensation of \$154,000, up significantly from \$143,000 reported in 2023, representing an 7.7% year-over-year increase (Accounting Today, 2025).

Business Owners and Partners

Business owners comprised 11% of survey respondents, with distinct compensation profiles:

- Accounting firm owners (sole proprietors and partners): \$270,000 median (CPA Alberta, 2025a)
- Other business owners: \$250,000 median (CPA Alberta, 2025a)



- Partners in accounting firms (2022 data): \$320,000 median (CPA Ontario, 2025)

Higher owner compensation correlates strongly with firm size, geographic location, and specialization areas (CPA Alberta, 2025a).

Provincial Compensation Analysis

Alberta

Alberta leads the nation in CPA compensation, reflecting the province's robust economy and intense competition for accounting talent.

Overall Median Compensation: \$169,000 (CPA Canada, 2025a; BNN Bloomberg, 2025)

Regional Breakdown:

- Calgary: Highest compensation levels within Alberta, driven by concentration of energy sector headquarters and professional services firms
- Edmonton: Second-highest compensation, supported by government and diversified economy
- Other regions: Competitive compensation with lower cost of living

Business Owners: Accounting firm owners in Alberta reported median compensation of \$286,000, the highest provincial level for this category (CPA Alberta, 2025b).

Experience Progression:

- Less than 3 years: \$92,000 median
- 25+ years: \$225,000 median (CPA Alberta, 2025b)

Industry Sectors: Among industries with at least 30 members reporting, Oil & Gas, Software, Financial Services, and Real Estate/Building Management offered the highest compensation for non-owners, while Public Practice reported the lowest median (CPA Alberta, 2025a).

Ontario

Ontario reported the second-highest provincial median compensation, reflecting the province's position as Canada's largest economy and home to the Greater Toronto Area financial hub.

Overall Median Compensation: \$163,000 (CPA Alberta, 2025a; BNN Bloomberg, 2025)

Regional Considerations:

- Greater Toronto Area (GTA): Highest compensation levels within Ontario, with intense competition for talent
- Ottawa: Strong compensation driven by government, technology, and professional services sectors
- Other urban centers: Competitive compensation with regional variations

Role-Specific Compensation:

- CPA (general): \$77,370 average annual (ZipRecruiter, 2025a)
- Senior CPA: \$89,780 average annual (ZipRecruiter, 2025b)
- CPA Manager: \$135,782 average annual (Glassdoor, 2025a)
- Senior Manager Accounting: \$108,785 average annual (Glassdoor, 2025b)
- Accounting Manager: \$137,018 average annual (SalaryExpert, 2025)



Partners: Partners in Ontario accounting firms earned a median of \$320,000 in 2022, with accounting firm owners earning \$250,000 median (CPA Ontario, 2025).

Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan reported the third-highest median CPA compensation nationally, demonstrating the province's competitive position despite its smaller population. Overall Median Compensation: \$147,000 (BNN Bloomberg, 2025)

Regional Breakdown:

- Regina: \$152,000 median, the highest compensation in Saskatchewan (CPA Alberta, 2025a)
- Saskatoon: Competitive compensation slightly below Regina
- Other regions: Lower compensation but also lower cost of living

British Columbia

British Columbia's compensation reflects the province's strong economy, technology sector presence, and Vancouver's position as a major financial center.

Overall Median Compensation: Data from the CPA Canada study indicates BC compensation falls between the national median and top-tier provinces.

Experience Progression (BC-specific data):

- Less than 3 years: \$92,000 median
- 3-4 years: \$110,000 median
- 5-9 years: \$130,000 median
- 10-14 years: \$140,000 median
- 15-19 years: \$160,000 median (BCCPA, 2025)

Market: Entry-level accountants in Vancouver start around \$50,000, with CPA-qualified professionals earning \$120,000 or more depending on experience and specialization (Genesa CPA, 2025). Mid-level professionals with 3-5 years of experience typically earn \$65,000 to \$85,000 (Genesa CPA, 2025).

Manitoba

Manitoba's CPA market centers primarily on Winnipeg, with competitive compensation relative to cost of living. Overall Median Compensation: While specific provincial median data was not disclosed in the national report, regional analysis provides insights.

Winnipeg: \$137,000 median compensation, reflecting the city's role as Manitoba's economic and financial center (Mercer Bradley, 2025)

Entry-Level CPAs: Start around \$89,000 in Manitoba (Mercer Bradley, 2025)

General CPA Average: \$77,370 average annual salary (ZipRecruiter, 2025c)

Quebec

Quebec presents unique compensation dynamics due to language requirements and distinct regulatory frameworks.

Overall Median Compensation: Quebec reported the lowest median compensation among provinces with substantial CPA populations at \$299,000 for partners/owners (CPA Alberta, 2025a).

Market Characteristics: The Montreal market shows robust activity with 822+ positions for French-speaking accountants and 244+ positions for accountants without French language requirements, indicating both francophone-focused and bilingual opportunities (Indeed, 2025a; Indeed, 2025b).



Atlantic Canada

The Atlantic provinces (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador) reported lower median compensation than western and central Canada, though cost of living considerations provide context.

Regional Compensation Benchmarks:

- Nova Scotia: \$115,000-\$125,000 median (CPA PEI, 2025)
- New Brunswick: \$110,000-\$120,000 median (CPA PEI, 2025)
- Prince Edward Island: Median salary lags behind other Atlantic provinces (CPA PEI, 2025)

General Averages:

- Nova Scotia CPA: \$77,370 average annual (ZipRecruiter, 2025d)
- New Brunswick CPA: \$75,570 average annual (ZipRecruiter, 2025e)

Compensation by Role and Level

Entry-Level and Staff Accountants

Entry-level positions provide the foundation for CPA career progression, with compensation varying by firm size, location, and sector.

Staff Accountant:

- Canada average: \$51,823 median (PayScale, 2025a)
- Entry-level staff accountant: \$43,771 average (PayScale, 2025b)
- Range: \$43,000-\$67,000 depending on location and firm (Jobted, 2025)

Big Four Entry-Level:

- Tax/Audit Associate (A1): \$60,000-\$75,000 starting range (Becker, 2025)
- RSM (mid-tier) new A1s (Fall 2025): \$80,000 starting (Reddit Accounting, 2025a)
- Big Four average: \$92,883 average annual in Ontario (ZipRecruiter, 2025f)

Senior Accountants

Senior accountants with 3-5 years of experience command significantly higher compensation as they take on greater responsibility.

Senior Accountant:

- Canada average: Approximately \$65,000-\$85,000 range (Genesa CPA, 2025)
- KPMG Senior Accountant, Audit (Vancouver): \$59,500 (Indeed, 2025c)

Managers

Manager-level positions represent a significant step in career progression, with compensation reflecting leadership responsibilities.

Audit and Tax Managers:

- Audit and Taxation Manager: \$100,584 average annual (Glassdoor, 2025c)
- CPA Manager: \$135,782 average annual in Ontario (Glassdoor, 2025a)
- Accounting Manager: \$138,510 average annual Canada-wide (Talent.com, 2025)
- Manager of Tax Services (Public Accounting): \$135,000-\$145,000 range (Robert Half, 2025)

Big Four Managers:

- Manager level: \$100,000-\$130,000 range (Wall Street Oasis, 2025)

Senior Managers

Senior managers occupy critical leadership positions, often serving as the bridge between managers and partners.

Senior Manager Compensation:

- Senior Manager Accounting: \$108,785 average annual in Ontario (Glassdoor, 2025b)
- Senior Accounting Manager: \$103,502 average annual Canada-wide (Glassdoor, 2025d)
- Big Four Senior Managers: \$150,000-\$180,000 range (Wall Street Oasis, 2025)

Partners and Firm Owners

Partnership represents the pinnacle of public accounting career progression, with compensation reflecting equity ownership and firm performance.

Partner Compensation:

- Accounting firm partners (2022): \$320,000 median (CPA Ontario, 2025)
- Accounting firm owners (sole/partner): \$270,000 median national (CPA Alberta, 2025a)
- Partner - Accounting Firm (Toronto): \$250,000 average (PayScale, 2025c)
- Partner salary range: \$155,000-\$293,000 depending on firm size, location, and seniority (SalaryBand, 2025)

Big Four Partners:

- Years 1-5: \$250,000+ entry-level partner compensation (Wall Street Oasis, 2025)
- Years 6-10 (senior partners): \$1.25 million-\$1.5 million (Big4Bound, 2025)
- Years 10+ (star senior partners): \$1.5 million-\$2.5 million (Big4Bound, 2025)
- Management/leadership partners: \$2.5 million-\$4 million (Big4Bound, 2025)

Sector and Industry Analysis

Public Practice

Public accounting firms, including Big Four, mid-tier, and regional practices, employ the largest concentration of CPAs in Canada.

Compensation Characteristics:

- Public Practice reported the lowest median compensation among major sectors for non-owners (CPA Alberta, 2025a)
- However, partnership opportunities and long-term earning potential remain attractive
- Big Four and mid-tier firms offer structured career progression and training

2026 Salary Projections: Robert Half's 2026 Salary Guide projects average pay increases of 3.7% for public accounting roles, higher than the 2.1% average across other finance and accounting positions (Firm of the Future, 2025).

Industry (Private Sector)

CPAs working in private industry often command higher compensation than public practice, particularly in high-value sectors.

Top-Paying Industries (for non-owners with at least 30 respondents):

1. Oil & Gas: Highest median compensation (CPA Alberta, 2025a)
2. Software/Technology: Second-highest compensation
3. Financial Services: Strong compensation with diverse opportunities
4. Real Estate/Building Management: Competitive compensation (CPA Alberta, 2025a)

Construction Sector (Alberta): Non-owner CPAs in construction reported median total compensation of \$224,000, the highest among specific industries analysed (CPA Alberta, 2025c).

Private Industry Ranges:

- Senior corporate roles: \$185,000-\$250,000+ (Accounting Edu, 2025)
- Public accounting firms (non-partner): \$150,000-\$300,000+ depending on level (AccountingEdu, 2025)
- Government sector: \$120,000-\$160,000 with strong benefits and pension (AccountingEdu, 2025)

Recruitment Market Dynamics

Talent Shortage Crisis

Canada faces a critical shortage of accounting professionals that threatens to constrain growth across the profession. According to industry analysis, there are approximately 20% more accounting positions available than qualified candidates to fill them (TOA Global, 2024).

Key Drivers:

- Demographic shifts: Approximately 75% of CPAs are expected to retire in the coming years (IFG Global, 2025)
- Declining enrolment: Accounting program enrolments have declined by 7.4%, reducing the pipeline of future professionals (IFG Global, 2025)
- Rigorous requirements: The demanding nature of CPA certification creates barriers to entry (IFG Global, 2025)
- Changing preferences: Younger professionals increasingly seek roles offering greater work-life balance and flexibility (IFG Global, 2025)

Impact: 83% of accounting leaders reported talent shortages in 2025, up from 70% in previous periods, with 40% of firms impacted by hiring issues and 48% saying conditions are worse than three years ago (HR Reporter, 2025; AdvanceTrack, 2025).

In-Demand Roles

Demand for finance and accounting professionals is outpacing supply across Canada, with particular intensity in several key areas:

Highest-Demand Positions:

- **Audit professionals:** Audit roles remain in consistently high demand as firms struggle to staff engagements adequately
- **Tax specialists:** Tax professionals with expertise in complex corporate and international tax structures are particularly sought after
- **Risk management:** As regulatory complexity increases, risk management specialists are increasingly valuable
- **Financial planning and analysis (FP&A):** Professionals who can provide strategic insights are in high demand (Goldbeck, 2025)

Unemployment Rates: Unemployment rates for many finance and accounting positions remain well below national averages, reflecting sustained intensity of demand (Robert Half, 2025b).

Retention Challenges

Employee retention has emerged as a critical challenge for accounting practices, with turnover rates significantly impacting firm operations and profitability.

Turnover Statistics:

- **Average turnover rate:** 11.9% across Canadian organizations (Mercer's 2025 Canada Turnover Survey analyzing 1,057 organizations) (CPABC, 2024)

- **First-year professionals:** 22% attrition rate among first-year accounting professionals (Robert Half's 2025 Finance & Accounting Report) (Software Oasis, 2025)
- **Public accounting:** Higher turnover than industry roles, particularly during and after busy season
- **Mid-level professionals:** 3-5 year experienced professionals face highest poaching risk due to strong demand (CA Consultants, 2025)

Key Retention Drivers:

- **Limited career advancement opportunities** within current firms
- **Inadequate work-life balance** during busy seasons
- **Insufficient compensation** relative to market rates and counter-offers
- **Lack of professional development support and mentorship**
- **Inflexible work arrangements** (CA Consultants, 2025)

Counter-Offer Prevalence: The consistent upward pressure on salaries is driven by intense competition for talent and the increasing prevalence of counter-offers as firms battle to retain skilled professionals (Durant, 2025). Finding Clarity's 2025 Finance & Accounting Salary Guide indicates that salary inflation continues in Ontario, driven by competition and counter-offers, with bonus payouts becoming more common (Finding Clarity, 2025).

Remote and Hybrid Work Trends

The shift toward flexible work arrangements that accelerated during the pandemic has proven durable and now represents a critical competitive factor in recruitment.



Work Arrangement Statistics:

- Remote and hybrid work levels in Q2 2024 remained significantly higher than pre-pandemic baselines (NCS Corp, 2025)
- Fully on-site job postings dropped from 76% in Q2 2023 to significantly lower levels as hybrid options rise (Robert Half, 2025c)
- 85% of accounting professionals report that flexible work arrangements influence their job satisfaction and retention decisions (LinkedIn, 2025)

Impact on Recruitment: For Canadian CPA firms in 2025, the reality lies in a hybrid model that balances the benefits of in-person collaboration with the flexibility that attracts and retains talent (LinkedIn, 2025). Firms embracing flexible models report higher productivity and improved employee satisfaction, making work arrangement flexibility a competitive advantage in recruitment (LinkedIn, 2025).

Geographic Implications: Remote work capabilities allow firms to recruit talent from broader geographic areas, reducing dependence on local talent pools and enabling access to specialized expertise regardless of location (Remote CA, 2025).

Technology and Automation Impact

AI Adoption

Artificial intelligence and automation are fundamentally reshaping the accounting profession in Canada, with significant implications for recruitment and skill requirements.

Adoption Rates:

- Over 80% of Canadian organizations are now adopting or piloting AI technologies (LinkedIn, 2025)
- 85% of accounting professionals are excited or intrigued by AI's potential, signalling broad acceptance of technological transformation (KarbonHQ's State of AI in Accounting Report 2025) (CPA Charge, 2025)
- Strong AI applications in tax operations, bookkeeping, compliance work, and audit procedures (LinkedIn, 2025)

Skill Requirements: As compliance work becomes increasingly automated, CPAs must develop new competencies in data analytics, predictive modelling, cybersecurity, and AI-powered advisory services to remain competitive (SHS Conferences, 2025; CPA.com, 2025).

Strategic Implications: CPA Canada's 2025 pre-budget submission emphasized the need for new measures to accelerate AI adoption and foster a domestic ecosystem to maintain Canada's competitive position (CPA Canada, 2025c). Firms that successfully integrate AI technologies while developing human advisory capabilities will gain competitive advantages in both service delivery and talent attraction.

Regional Recruitment Intelligence

Western Canada

Alberta

Labour Market Projections: Alberta will require approximately 1,000 new CPAs annually over the next three to five years (CPA Alberta, 2025b).

The top three economic regions driving this demand are Calgary, Edmonton, and surrounding metropolitan areas (CPA Alberta, 2025b).

Employment Growth:

- Calgary: Employment up 4.8% year-over-year as of June 2025 (Bullseye Recruitment, 2025)
- Edmonton: Employment up 3.5% year-over-year (Bullseye Recruitment, 2025)
- Red Deer: Employment up 7.3% year-over-year (Bullseye Recruitment, 2025)

Sector Demand: Approximately 300 CPAs will be needed annually in Alberta's construction sector alone, with non-owners in this industry reporting the highest median total compensation at \$224,000 (CPA Alberta, 2025c).

Employment Outlook: The employment outlook for financial auditors and accountants in Alberta is rated as moderate for the 2024-2026 period, with growth driven by economic expansion, business formation, and regulatory complexity (Job Bank Canada, 2025a).

Strategic Considerations:

- Compensation competitiveness is critical given Alberta's highest-in-nation median of \$169,000
- Energy sector expertise provides competitive advantages (oil & gas accounting, royalty structures, environmental accounting)
- Calgary-Edmonton corridor concentration suggests recruitment strategies should focus on these markets while considering remote work options
- Construction sector offers premium compensation opportunities

British Columbia

Demand Projections: A 2023 study by CPA British Columbia predicted that demand for CPAs in the province would grow at an average annual rate of 1.3% between 2023 and 2027 (CPABC, 2023). This steady growth reflects BC's diversified economy, strong technology sector presence, and Vancouver's position as a major financial center.

Employment Outlook: Job Bank Canada rates prospects as moderate for financial auditors and accountants for the 2024-2026 period (Job Bank Canada, 2025b).

Vancouver Market: Vancouver's accounting job market shows particular strength, with demand for certified accountants and financial auditors remaining robust (CPJ.AI, 2025). CPABC's employer relations and talent development team has intensified efforts to connect aspiring and experienced professionals with opportunities through Career Week initiatives and other recruitment programs (CPABC, 2025).

Strategic Considerations:

- Technology sector opportunities create demand for CPAs with expertise in software revenue recognition, equity compensation, and venture capital accounting
- Work-life balance emphasis means BC candidates often prioritize quality of life, making flexible work arrangements essential
- Credential recognition pathways for internationally trained accountants provide access to diverse talent pools
- Lower compensation than Alberta requires emphasis on lifestyle and quality-of-life benefits



Saskatchewan

Compensation Position: Saskatchewan's third-highest median CPA compensation nationally at \$147,000 reflects the province's strong agricultural and resource sectors and relatively tight labour market (BNN Bloomberg, 2025).

Regional Variations: Regina reported the highest compensation in Saskatchewan at \$152,000 median, with Saskatoon and other centers following (CPA Alberta, 2025a).

Recruitment Infrastructure: CPA Saskatchewan maintains an active job board (CPA Career Connect) featuring opportunities across Regina, Saskatoon, and smaller centers (CPA Saskatchewan, 2025). The University of Winnipeg's 2025 CPA University Fall Recruitment Guidelines indicate structured campus recruitment programs connecting pre-approved program route (PPR) and experience verification route (EVR) employers with emerging talent (University of Winnipeg, 2025).

Strategic Considerations:

- Resource sector specialization provides competitive advantages (agriculture, potash, energy accounting)
- Smaller centers outside Regina and Saskatoon face more acute talent shortages, making retention strategies particularly critical
- Competitive compensation relative to larger provinces, combined with lower cost of living, helps attract and retain talent
- Strong university relationships essential for pipeline development

Manitoba

Winnipeg Market: The Winnipeg market offers 182+ accounting positions across various specializations, indicating steady demand (Indeed, 2025d). Winnipeg CPAs earn a median of \$137,000, with entry-level CPAs starting around \$89,000 (Mercer Bradley, 2025).

Campus Recruitment: The University of Winnipeg hosts structured CPA campus recruitment programs, including full-time positions, summer internships, and co-op placements (University of Winnipeg, 2025). CPA Manitoba maintains a career hub featuring positions across audit, tax, advisory, and specialized roles (CPA Manitoba, 2025).

Strategic Considerations:

- Campus recruitment through University of Manitoba, University of Winnipeg, and other institutions provides access to emerging talent pipelines
- Smaller market size makes retention strategies particularly critical to avoid costly turnover
- Diversified economy across agriculture, manufacturing, transportation, and services creates demand for varied accounting expertise
- Competitive compensation relative to cost of living provides recruitment advantages

Central Canada

Ontario

Market Size: Ontario represents Canada's largest and most competitive accounting labour market, with the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) serving as the nation's financial hub.



Employment Outlook: The employment outlook for financial auditors and accountants in Ontario is rated as good for the 2024-2026 period, reflecting sustained demand across public practice, industry, government, and not-for-profit sectors (Job Bank Canada, 2025c).

Compensation Dynamics: Finding Clarity's 2025 Finance & Accounting Salary Guide indicates that salary inflation continues in Ontario, driven by competition and counter-offers, with bonus payouts becoming more common as firms seek to attract and retain talent (Finding Clarity, 2025).

Regional Variations:

- Toronto/GTA: Highest competition, highest compensation (\$163,000 provincial median), greatest specialization opportunities
- Ottawa: Strong government and public sector focus, cybersecurity and technology emphasis
- Waterloo Region: Technology sector concentration, startup and scale-up opportunities
- London, Hamilton, Kingston: Regional practice opportunities with lower cost of living

Strategic Considerations:

- Compensation competitiveness is critical, particularly in the GTA where counter-offers are common
- Specialization advantages through deep expertise in specific industries (financial services, technology, manufacturing, real estate) provide competitive differentiation
- Flexible work arrangements are essential recruitment and retention tools given GTA commuting challenges

- Diverse talent pools and strong international immigration create opportunities to recruit internationally trained accountants through credential recognition pathways
- Campus recruitment at University of Toronto, York University, Western University, McMaster, and other institutions provides access to top talent

Quebec

Market Characteristics: Montreal's accounting job market shows robust activity, with 822+ positions for French-speaking accountants and 244+ positions for accountants without French language requirements (Indeed, 2025a; Indeed, 2025b). This suggests both francophone-focused and bilingual/anglophone opportunities exist, though French proficiency significantly expands available opportunities.

Employment Outlook: The employment outlook for financial auditors and accountants in the Montreal census metropolitan area is rated as moderate for the 2024-2026 period (Job Bank Canada, 2025d).

Language Requirements: French language proficiency is essential for most accounting positions in Quebec, particularly those serving Quebec-based clients or working within Quebec regulatory frameworks. CPA Quebec maintains distinct practical experience requirements and pathways for candidates (CPA Quebec, 2025).

Compensation: Quebec reported the lowest median compensation among provinces with substantial CPA populations at \$299,000 for partners/owners, though this may reflect different reporting methodologies (CPA Alberta, 2025a).



Strategic Considerations:

- Bilingual CPAs command premium compensation and have access to broader opportunities
- Deep knowledge of Quebec-specific tax, corporate, and regulatory requirements provides competitive advantages
- Understanding Quebec's distinct business culture and client relationship expectations is essential for recruitment success
- Montreal concentration suggests recruitment strategies should focus on this market while considering remote work options for specialized roles
- Campus recruitment at McGill, HEC Montreal, Concordia, and Université de Montréal provides access to bilingual talent

Atlantic Canada

The Atlantic provinces (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador) present distinct recruitment dynamics characterized by smaller markets, regional practice focus, and unique retention challenges.

Nova Scotia

Compensation: Nova Scotia CPAs earn a median of approximately \$115,000-\$125,000, with an average of \$77,370 annually (CPA PEI, 2025; ZipRecruiter, 2025d).

Market Characteristics: The Halifax market benefits from the province's concentration of corporate headquarters, government operations, and professional services. However, the smaller market size relative to central and western Canada creates distinct recruitment challenges.

Recruitment Infrastructure: CPA Nova Scotia maintains a Career Network posting accounting-related job opportunities at a rate of \$200 + HST for up to six weeks (CPA Nova Scotia, 2025).

Strategic Considerations:

- Strong community connections and relationships with local universities (Dalhousie, Saint Mary's, Acadia) provide access to emerging talent
- Atlantic Canada's lower cost of living, coastal lifestyle, and community orientation appeal to professionals seeking work-life balance
- Retention focus is critical given limited local talent pools
- Remote work capabilities allow access to talent beyond Halifax metro area

New Brunswick

Compensation: New Brunswick CPAs earn a median of approximately \$110,000-\$120,000, with an average of \$75,570 annually (CPA PEI, 2025; ZipRecruiter, 2025e).

Market Characteristics: The province's bilingual character (English and French) creates unique opportunities and requirements. Bilingual CPAs have access to broader opportunities serving both anglophone and francophone clients and communities.

Recruitment Infrastructure: CPA New Brunswick posts career opportunities requiring CPA designation at no cost for 30-day periods (CPA New Brunswick, 2025).

Strategic Considerations:

- French-English bilingualism expands opportunities and provides competitive advantages



- Regional practice focus means New Brunswick practices often serve diverse client bases across multiple industries, requiring broad technical competencies
- Campus recruitment through University of New Brunswick, Université de Moncton, and other institutions provides access to emerging talent
- Lower compensation than western provinces requires emphasis on cost of living advantages and quality of life

Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador

Compensation: PEI median salary lags behind other Atlantic provinces, though specific data is limited (CPA PEI, 2025). Newfoundland and Labrador compensation is comparable to other Atlantic provinces.

Market Characteristics: These provinces present the smallest accounting markets in Canada, with opportunities concentrated in Charlottetown (PEI) and St. John's (NL). CPA Atlantic serves these provinces along with Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, providing regional coordination.

Strategic Considerations:

- Smallest markets require creative recruitment strategies, including remote work arrangements and relocation incentives
- Strong community ties and lifestyle benefits provide recruitment advantages for candidates seeking smaller-market opportunities
- Limited local talent pools make retention strategies absolutely critical
- Regional practice diversity requires broad technical competencies across multiple industries and service lines

Compensation Trends and Projections

2025-2026 Outlook

Projected Increases: Robert Half's 2026 Salary Guide projects average pay increases of 3.7% for public accounting roles, higher than the 2.1% average across other finance and accounting positions (Firm of the Future, 2025). This differential reflects the intense competition for accounting talent and firms' recognition that competitive compensation is essential for attraction and retention.

Inflation Context: The 7.7% compensation increase between 2022 and 2024 outpaced Canada's 6.4% inflation rate during the same period, representing real wage growth for CPAs (Canadian Accountant, 2025). This trend is expected to continue as talent shortages persist.

Counter-Offer Environment: The prevalence of counter-offers continues to drive compensation inflation, particularly for mid-level professionals with 3-7 years of experience who are most actively recruited (Durant, 2025; Finding Clarity, 2025).

Bonus and Non-Base Compensation

Bonus Prevalence: Bonus payouts are becoming more common as firms seek to attract and retain talent without permanently increasing fixed compensation costs (Finding Clarity, 2025).

Non-Base Pay: The median non-base pay component was \$8,000 nationally, with significant variation by firm size, role, and performance (CPA Alberta, 2025a).

Profit-Sharing: Partners and firm owners receive substantial profit-sharing distributions that comprise the majority of their total compensation, with significant year-to-year variability based on firm performance.

Strategic Recommendations for CPA Firm Partners

Compensation Strategy

- **Benchmark regularly:** Use CPA Canada's annual compensation study, Robert Half salary guides, and regional data to ensure compensation remains competitive
- **Total rewards approach:** Emphasize total compensation including bonuses, profit-sharing, benefits, and non-monetary rewards
- **Market adjustments:** Conduct mid-year compensation reviews to address market movement and retention risks
- **Transparency:** Provide clear compensation progression pathways to demonstrate career growth potential

Recruitment Strategy

- **Campus recruitment:** Invest in structured campus recruitment programs at target universities to build talent pipelines
- **Credential recognition:** Develop pathways for internationally trained accountants to access broader talent pools
- **Specialisation positioning:** Emphasise firm specialisation and expertise development opportunities

- **Flexible work arrangements:** Offer hybrid and remote work options as standard recruitment tools
- **Geographic expansion:** Consider remote work capabilities to recruit talent from broader geographic areas beyond local markets
- **Employer branding:** Develop strong employer value propositions emphasizing culture, development opportunities, work-life balance, and career progression
- **Referral programs:** Implement employee referral incentives to leverage existing team networks
- **Diversity initiatives:** Build diverse talent pipelines through targeted outreach to underrepresented groups

Retention Strategy

- **Career development:** Provide clear progression pathways, mentorship programs, and professional development support
- **Work-life balance:** Address busy season burnout through workload management, adequate staffing, and recovery time
- **Flexible arrangements:** Offer hybrid work, flexible hours, and results-oriented work environments
- **Recognition programs:** Implement formal recognition and reward systems beyond compensation
- **Stay interviews:** Conduct regular conversations with high-performers to identify retention risks before they resign
- **Counter-offer preparedness:** Develop retention strategies for high-value employees receiving external offers
- **Partnership pathways:** Provide transparent partnership criteria and timelines for senior professionals



Technology Integration

- AI adoption: Invest in AI and automation technologies to improve efficiency and reduce routine compliance work
- Skill development: Provide training in data analytics, AI tools, and advisory competencies
- Advisory positioning: Shift service mix toward higher-value advisory work as compliance becomes automated
- Technology recruitment: Recruit professionals with technology skills and data analytics capabilities
- Innovation culture: Foster culture of innovation and continuous improvement to attract forward-thinking talent

Market-Specific Strategies

Alberta:

- Maintain highest-in-nation compensation competitiveness
- Emphasize energy sector expertise and specialization opportunities
- Focus recruitment on Calgary-Edmonton corridor while offering remote options

Ontario/GTA:

- Prepare for intense counter-offer environment with retention strategies
- Emphasize specialization opportunities in financial services, technology, and other high-value sectors
- Offer flexible work arrangements to address commuting challenges
- Leverage diverse talent pools through credential recognition programs

British Columbia:

- Emphasize quality of life, work-life balance, and lifestyle benefits

- Target technology sector opportunities and specialized expertise
- Offer competitive compensation while highlighting cost-of-living-adjusted value

Quebec:

- Prioritize bilingual recruitment and French language capabilities
- Emphasize Quebec-specific regulatory and tax expertise
- Build strong relationships with Montreal-area universities

Prairie Provinces

(Saskatchewan/Manitoba):

- Emphasize competitive compensation relative to cost of living
- Highlight quality of life and community benefits
- Focus retention strategies given smaller talent pools
- Build strong campus recruitment relationships

Atlantic Canada:

- Emphasize lifestyle benefits, coastal living, and community orientation
- Offer competitive compensation adjusted for lower cost of living
- Develop remote work capabilities to access broader talent pools
- Focus intensively on retention given limited local talent

Emerging Trends and Future Outlook

Demographic Challenges

The accounting profession faces an unprecedented demographic transition, with approximately 75% of CPAs expected to retire in the coming years (IFG Global, 2025).



This "silver tsunami" will create acute talent shortages and succession planning challenges for firms across Canada.

Implications:

- Accelerated partnership timelines as senior partners retire
- Knowledge transfer and succession planning become critical priorities
- Increased competition for mid-level professionals to fill leadership gaps
- Potential consolidation of smaller practices unable to recruit successors

Educational Pipeline Concerns

Accounting program enrolments have declined by 7.4%, reducing the pipeline of future professionals entering the CPA pathway (IFG Global, 2025). This trend, combined with the rigorous CPA certification requirements, threatens to exacerbate talent shortages.

Implications:

- Increased competition for new graduates and CPA candidates
- Rising starting salaries for entry-level positions
- Greater emphasis on alternative pathways including career changers and internationally trained professionals
- Potential regulatory discussions about CPA pathway requirements

Generational Preferences

Younger professionals (Millennials and Gen Z) demonstrate different career preferences than previous generations, prioritizing work-life balance, flexibility, purpose-driven work, and rapid career progression (NCS Corp, 2025a).

Implications:

- Flexible work arrangements become non-negotiable recruitment requirements
- Traditional busy season models face increasing resistance
- Career progression timelines compress as younger professionals seek faster advancement
- Firm culture and values become critical differentiators in recruitment

Technology Transformation

AI and automation will continue to reshape the accounting profession, with over 80% of Canadian organizations adopting or piloting AI technologies (LinkedIn, 2025). This transformation creates both challenges and opportunities.

Implications:

- Compliance and routine work becomes increasingly automated
- Advisory and strategic services become primary value propositions
- CPAs must develop new competencies in data analytics, AI tools, and strategic advisory
- Firms that successfully integrate technology gain competitive advantages in both service delivery and talent attraction
- Technology-savvy professionals become increasingly valuable

Remote Work Permanence

The shift toward flexible work arrangements has proven durable, with remote and hybrid work levels remaining significantly higher than pre-pandemic baselines (NCS Corp, 2025).



This trend fundamentally changes recruitment geography and talent competition.

Implications:

- Geographic boundaries for recruitment dissolve as remote work becomes standard
- Local firms compete with national and international employers for talent
- Office space and workplace design evolve to support hybrid collaboration
- Performance management shifts from presence-based to results-oriented approaches
- Work-life balance becomes a measurable competitive advantage

Conclusion

The Canadian accounting and CPA recruitment landscape in 2025 presents both significant challenges and substantial opportunities for practice leaders. With median CPA compensation reaching a record \$154,000 nationally and provincial variations ranging from \$110,000-\$120,000 in Atlantic Canada to \$169,000 in Alberta, competitive compensation remains a critical foundation for talent attraction and retention.

However, compensation alone is insufficient in today's market. The acute talent shortage—with 20% more positions than qualified candidates and 83% of accounting leaders reporting talent gaps—requires comprehensive strategies addressing work-life balance, flexible work arrangements, career development, technology integration, and employer branding.

Partners in CPA firms must recognize that the profession is undergoing fundamental transformation driven by demographic shifts, technological change, and evolving generational preferences. Firms that successfully navigate this transformation by investing in competitive compensation, flexible work models, technology adoption, and supportive cultures will gain sustainable competitive advantages in both talent acquisition and client service delivery.

The data presented in this report provides evidence-based benchmarks for compensation decisions, recruitment strategies, and retention initiatives. By understanding regional variations, role-specific compensation ranges, and market dynamics, partners can make informed decisions that position their practices for sustainable growth in an increasingly competitive talent environment.



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Appendix: Key Salary Benchmarks Summary

National Benchmarks

- Overall CPA Median: \$154,000
- Base Pay Component: \$133,000 median
- Non-Base Pay Component: \$8,000 median
- Less than 3 years post-designation: \$92,000
- 3+ years' experience: \$154,000
- 25+ years' experience: \$194,000
- Accounting firm owners/partners: \$270,000
- Partners (2022 data): \$320,000

Provincial Medians

- Alberta: \$169,000 (highest)
- Ontario: \$163,000
- Saskatchewan: \$147,000
- Winnipeg, MB: \$137,000
- Nova Scotia: \$115,000-\$125,000
- New Brunswick: \$110,000-\$120,000

Role-Specific Ranges

Entry-Level:

- Staff Accountant: \$43,000-\$67,000
- Big Four Entry (A1): \$60,000-\$80,000
- Entry-Level CPA (Manitoba): \$89,000

Mid-Level:

- Senior Accountant: \$65,000-\$85,000
- CPA (3-5 years): \$110,000-\$130,000

Management:

- Manager: \$100,000-\$145,000
- Senior Manager: \$103,000-\$150,000
- Big Four Manager: \$100,000-\$130,000
- Big Four Senior Manager: \$150,000-\$180,000

Partnership:

- Partner (entry-level, years 1-5): \$250,000+
- Senior Partner (years 6-10): \$1,250,000-\$1,500,000
- Star Senior Partner (10+ years): \$1,500,000-\$2,500,000
- Management/Leadership Partner: \$2,500,000-\$4,000,000



Methodology Note

This report is based on the 2025 CPA Compensation Study conducted by Leger on behalf of CPA Canada, which analysed 7,582 voluntary responses from Canadian CPAs regarding their 2024 compensation. Additional data sources include Robert Half salary guides, provincial CPA body reports, Job Bank Canada labour market information, and industry research from accounting recruitment firms and professional services organisations.

All salary figures represent 2024 compensation reported in 2025 unless otherwise specified. Median figures are used throughout as they provide more accurate representations of typical compensation than averages, which can be skewed by outliers. Provincial and regional variations reflect differences in cost of living, economic conditions, industry composition, and local labour market dynamics.

Partners in CPA firms should use this data as directional guidance while conducting firm-specific market research and compensation benchmarking appropriate to their geographic location, firm size, service offerings, and competitive positioning.





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