Economic Outlook and Emerging Issues in Dentistry

Insights from Data from April 2023
Emerging Issues Polling

• Measuring the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and other emerging issues in dentistry
• Over 3,000 have opted to participate to date. About 1,000 participated in April 2023.
• Data was collected April 18-24, 2023
• Core measures: economic outlook, fullness of practice schedule, schedule barriers, recruitment needs and challenges
• Complete reports with breakdowns available at ADA.org/HPI
Confidence in the Economy

Looking ahead to the next six months, how confident are you in the recovery of the following? (Percentages indicating “very” or “somewhat” confident.)

Dentists’ confidence in the dental care sector and the general U.S. economy rose in April 2023. Confidence levels remain below a high point in 2021.
How full was your dental practice’s appointment schedule last week?

Dentists’ appointment schedules were 87% full April 2023, the highest point since April 2022.
Which of the following factors prevented your dental practice’s appointment schedule from reaching 100% last week? (Select all that apply.)

- Patient no-shows and late cancellations: 81%
- Patient cancellations >24 hrs: 45%
- Not enough patients making appts: 38%
- Trouble filling vacant staff positions: 33%
- COVID safety protocols: 4%

Patient no-shows and late cancellations remained the most common factor for unfilled practice schedules in April 2023.
Which of the following factors prevented your dental practice’s appointment schedule from reaching 100% last week? (Select all that apply.)

- Short-notice cancelation was selected by about 8 in 10 dentists as a reason why their practice schedules are not full.
Currently, how many business days does the average patient have to wait for an initial appointment (excluding emergencies)

Since the beginning of the year, average wait times for both new patients and patients of record have been increasing steadily.
Dental Team Recruitment

Have you recently or are you currently recruiting any of the following positions in your dental practice? (Percentages indicating “yes.”)

More than one-third of dentists continue to report they are actively recruiting dental hygienists and assistants.
More dentists report that recruitment of dental hygienists is very or extremely challenging in April 2023 compared to one year ago.
Employee Benefit Offerings

Have you offered any of these new benefits to dental hygienist or dental assistant applicants that you did not provide prior to the COVID-19 pandemic? (Select all that apply.)

- Raised starting pay rate: 89.0%
- Offered new retirement plan: 23.5%
- Offered health insurance: 21.6%
- Offered a sign-on bonus: 9.9%
- Offered paid time off: 33.0%
- Changed hrs to meet applicants’ needs: 48.6%
- Other, please specify: 2.1%
- None of the above: 7.4%

Nearly 9 out of 10 dentists report raising starting pay for dental staff personnel applicants. Nearly half of all dentists report changing hours to suit applicants’ needs.
Key Takeaways

• **Practice Schedules:** Practice schedules were 87% full on average in April 2023, the highest point since April 2022. Appointment wait times for both new patients and patients of record also went up in April 2023.

• **Recruitment Needs:** More than one-third of dentists are actively recruiting dental hygienists and dental assistants. Dentists continue to say recruitment is extremely challenging. Nearly 9 out of 10 dentists report raising starting pay for hygienist and assistant applicants and nearly half report adjusting working hours to suit applicants’ needs.

• **Confidence:** Dentists’ confidence in various economic sectors has declined since mid-2021 but have been relatively steady over the past several months.
Thank you!

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