Economic Outlook and Emerging Issues in Dentistry

*Insights from Data from August 2022*
Emerging Issues Polling

• Measuring the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and other emerging issues in dentistry
• Over 3000 have opted to participate to date, roughly 1200 responded in the most recent wave
• Data was collected August 16-21, 2022
• Core measures: economic outlook, fullness of practice schedule, schedule barriers, recruitment needs and associated difficulty
• Questions of the month: changes in practice operating expenses, changes in insurance reimbursement
• Complete reports with breakdowns available at ADA.org/HPI
**Economic Outlook**

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 their practices and the dental sector has been relatively low, but steady for a few months.

For the first time since April 2022, more than a quarter of dentists indicated they were “very” or “somewhat” confident in the US economic recovery.
How full was your dental practice’s appointment schedule last week?

Dental practice schedules have been steady for the past six months. In August, dentists indicated that their schedules were 86% full, on average nationally.
How full was your dental practice’s appointment schedule last week?

About a third of dental practices were less than 80% full in August.
How full was your dental practice’s appointment schedule last week?

Solo practice dentists are not quite as busy as their colleagues in group practice.
Scheduling Barriers

Which of the following factors prevented your dental practice’s appointment schedule from reaching 100% last week? (Select all that apply.)

- Patient no-shows/cancel < 24 hrs: 81.5%
- Patient cancellations > 24 hrs: 37.9%
- Not enough patients making appts: 41.0%
- Trouble filling vacant staff positions: 36.8%
- COVID safety protocols: 14.3%

Patient no-shows and late cancellations remained the predominant reason for unfilled practice schedules in August.

About 4 in 10 dentists also indicated they had low patient demand for appointments.
Dental Team Recruitment

Have you recently or are you currently recruiting any of the following positions in your dental practice?

- Dental hygienists: 36.7% Yes, 60.8% No, 12.5% Not sure
- Dental assistants: 38.6% Yes, 58.3% No, 3.1% Not sure
- Dentists: 15.2% Yes, 81.1% No, 3.7% Not sure
- Administrative staff: 28.9% Yes, 66.5% No, 4.6% Not sure

Dental assistants and dental hygienists are the most in-demand members of the dental team, with about 4 out of 10 dentists currently or recently recruiting for these positions. Dental team recruitment needs have been steady for months.
### Challenges Recruiting

**How challenging has it been to recruit the position(s) below?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Extremely Challenging</th>
<th>Very Challenging</th>
<th>Moderately Challenging</th>
<th>Slightly Challenging</th>
<th>Not Challenging at All</th>
<th>Not Sure/Not Applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dental hygienists</td>
<td>77.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental assistants</td>
<td>57.8%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dentists</td>
<td>53.6%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative staff</td>
<td>44.0%</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Recruiting dental hygienists and dental assistants continues to be the most challenging for dentists.*
Increased Practice Operating Costs

How have prices changed for your practice in each of the following categories of expenses over the past 12 months?

Aside from rent and mortgage payments, the vast majority of dentists indicated increases in practice operating costs.

Supplies and materials, staff wages, and lab fees have had the most substantial increases in price.
Increased Practice Operating Costs

How have prices changed for your practice in each of the following categories of expenses over the past 12 months? (Percentage indicating an increase in price.)

Nearly one-third of dentists indicated the price of PPE has increased more than 20%, and roughly 1 in 4 dentists indicate the cost of their supplies and materials has increased by at least 20% in the past year.
Insurance Reimbursement Steady for Majority

How has the average reimbursement level from all insurance companies in your practice changed in the last 12 months?

Insurance reimbursement rates have stayed roughly the same over the past year. One in four dentists indicated that their insurance rates have decreased.
Key Takeaways

- **Practice Schedules:** Dental practice schedules have been very steady for the past six months. Schedules were 86% full on average in August. Patient no-shows and late cancellations are largely to blame for unfulfilled appointment slots, followed by low patient demand.

- **Recruitment Needs:** Dental team recruitment needs remain steady in August. Dental assistants are the most in-demand member of the dental team, while recruiting dental hygienists continues to present the most difficulty for dentists.

- **Increased Practice Operating Costs:** The vast majority of dentists indicate price increases for practice operations. Supplies and materials, staff wages, and lab fees have had the most substantial increases in price.

- **Insurance Reimbursement Steady:** The majority of dentists indicate their insurance reimbursement rates have stayed roughly the same over the past year. One in four dentists indicate that their insurance rates have decreased.

- **Economic Confidence:** Dentists’ confidence in US economic recovery improved slightly in August. For the first time since April 2022, more than a quarter of dentists indicated they were “very” or “somewhat” confident in the US economic recovery.
Thank You!

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