

Economic Outlook and Emerging Issues in Dentistry

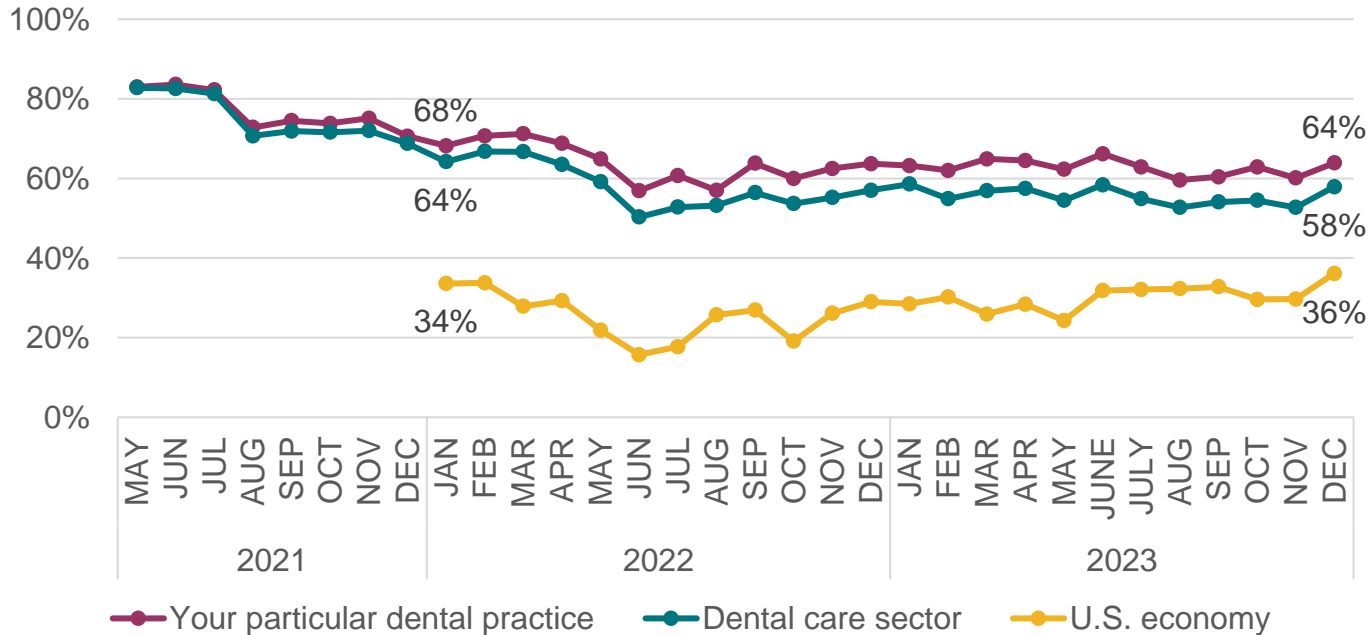
Insights from Data from December 2023

Emerging Issues Polling

- Measuring the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and other emerging issues in dentistry
- Over 3,000 dentists have opted to participate to date; 923 participated in December 2023
- Data was collected December 11-17, 2023
- Core measures: economic outlook, fullness of practice schedule, schedule barriers, recruitment needs and challenges
- New this month: Staff hiring, benefits and recruitment methods
- Complete reports with breakdowns available at ADA.org/HPI

Confidence in the Economy

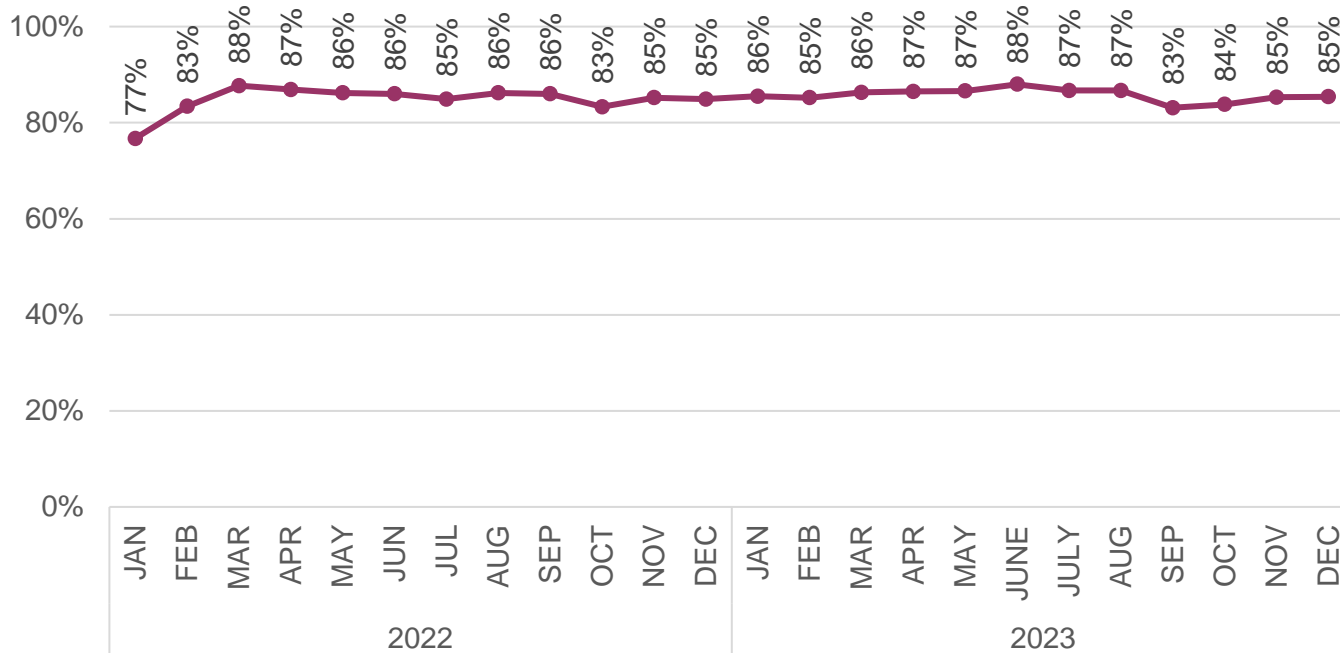
Looking ahead to the next six months, how confident are you in the recovery of the following?
 (Percentages indicating “very” or “somewhat” confident.)



Dentists’ confidence in their dental practice, the dental care sector, and the U.S. economy went up slightly in December 2023 compared to the previous month.

Busyness

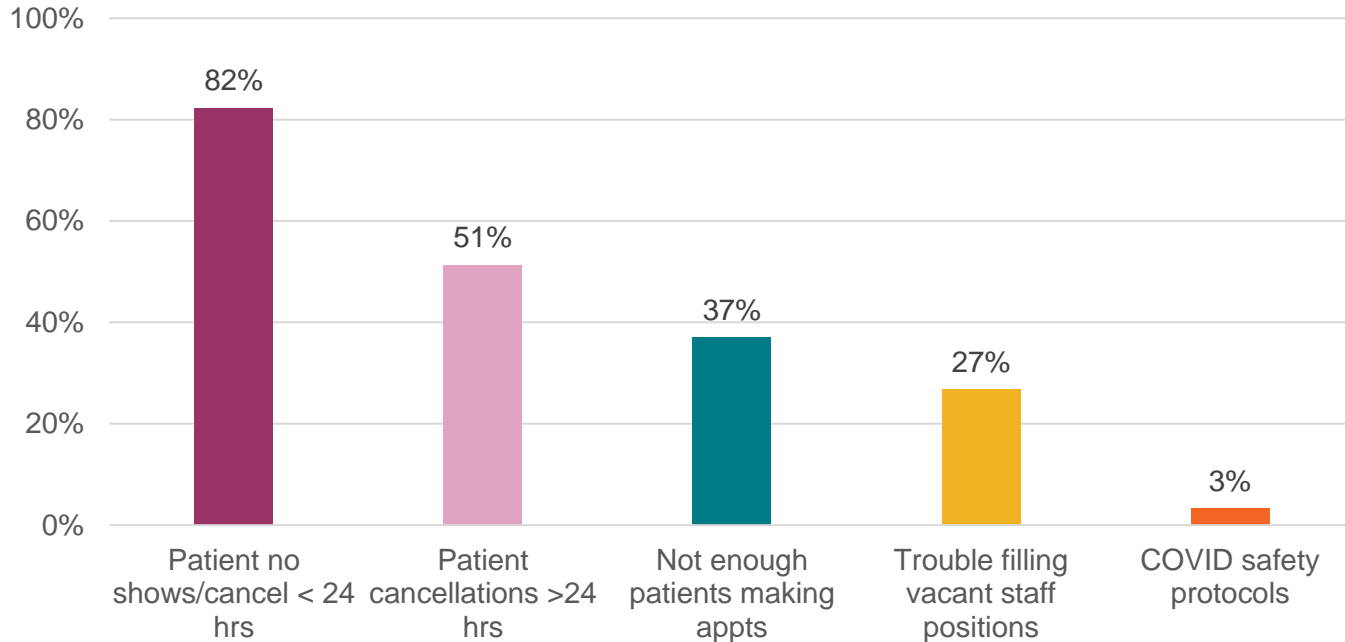
How full was your dental practice's appointment schedule last week?



In December 2023, dentists reported their practice schedules were 85% full, up from a low point of 83% in September.

Barriers to Reaching Full Capacity

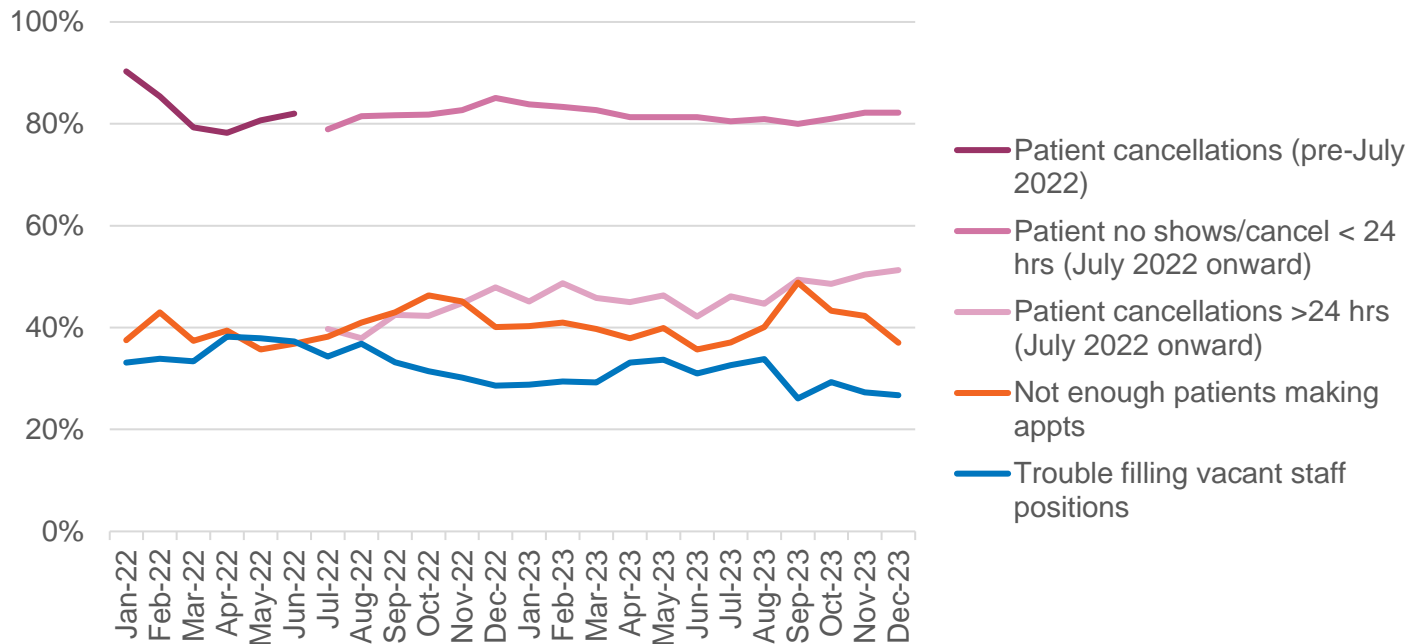
Which of the following factors prevented your dental practice's appointment schedule from reaching 100% last week? (Select all that apply.)



Patient no-shows and late cancellations remained the most common factor for unfilled practice schedules in December 2023.

Barriers to Reaching Full Capacity

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

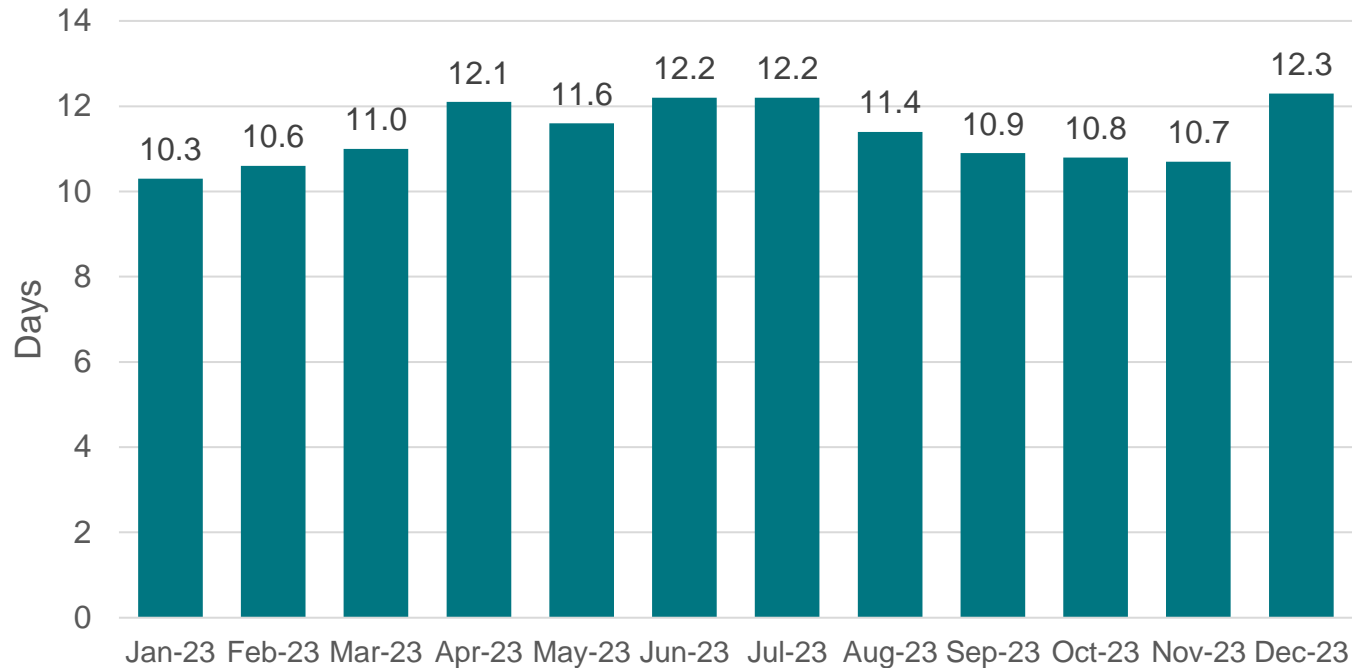


Around 8 out of 10 dentists have cited last-minute patient cancellations as the top reason for underfilled practice schedules since July 2022.

Not enough patients making appointments has steadily declined over the past several months.

Average Wait Times

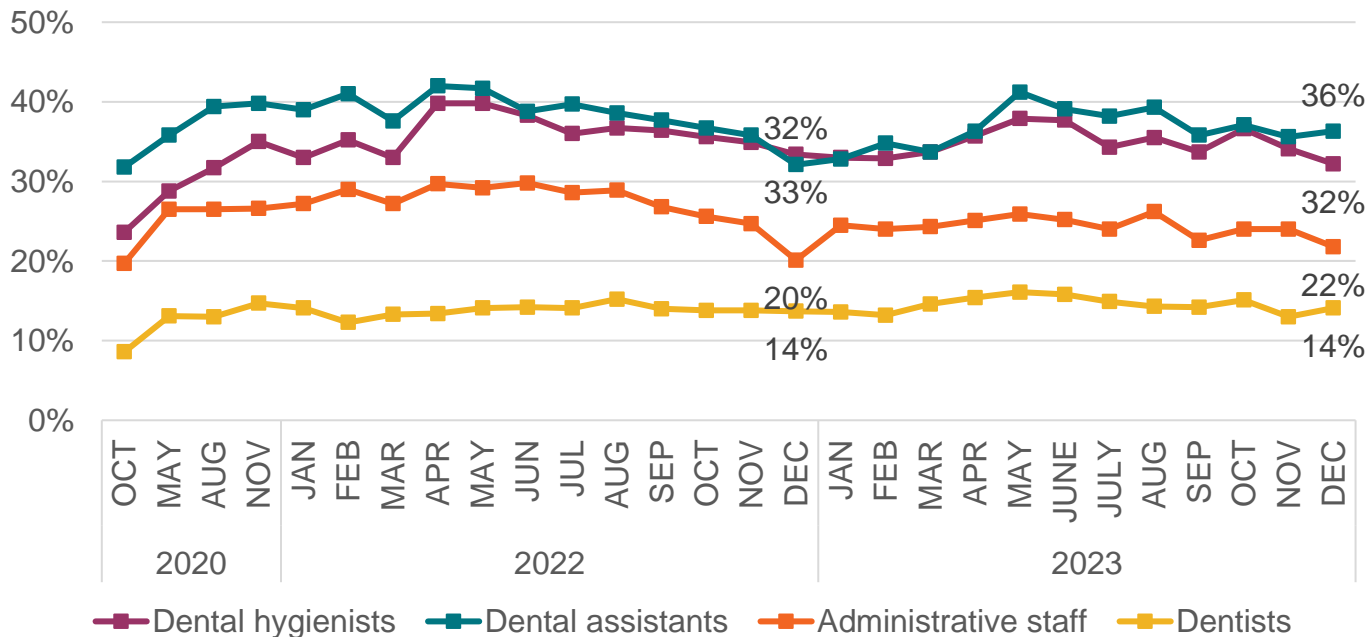
Patients of Record



In December 2023, the average appointment wait time for patients of record went up slightly from the previous months.

Dental Team Recruitment

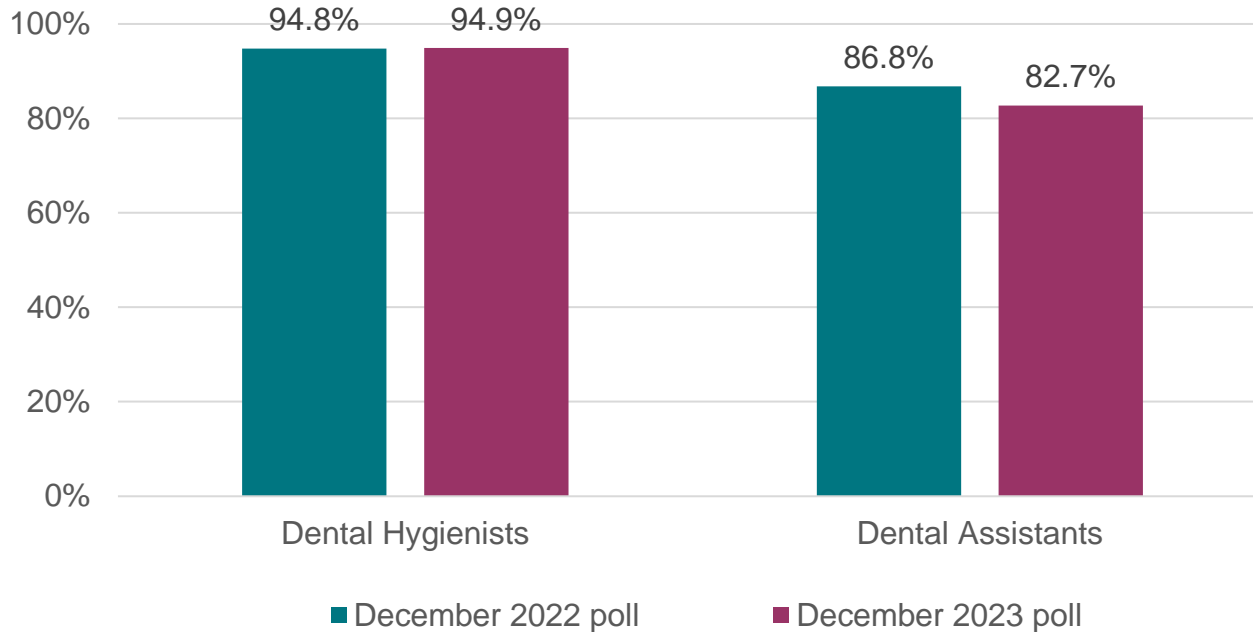
Have you recently or are you currently recruiting any of the following positions in your dental practice? (Percentages indicating “yes.”)



More than one-third of dentists continue to report they are actively recruiting dental hygienists and assistants.

Challenges Recruiting

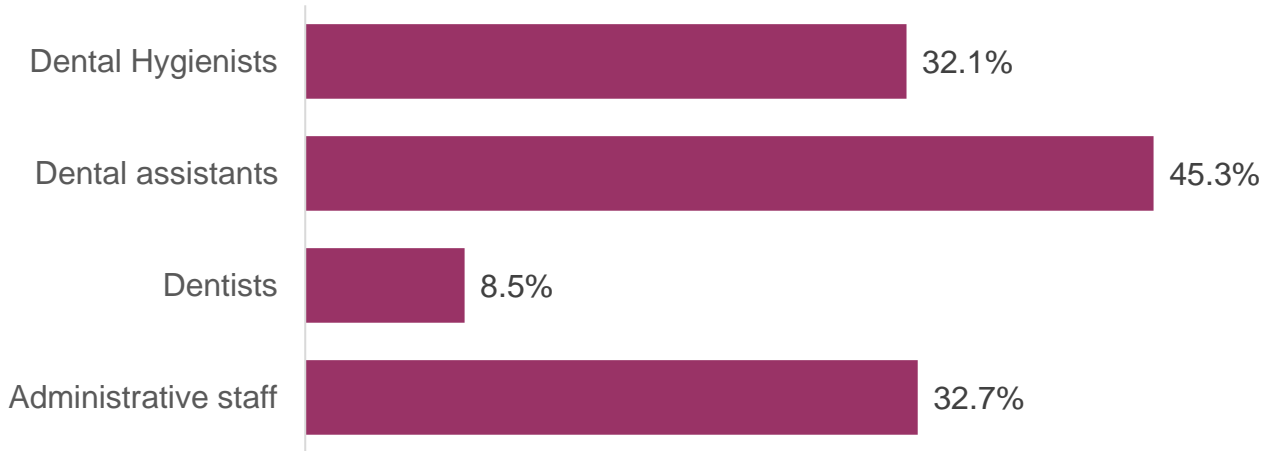
How challenging has it been to recruit the position(s) below? (Percentage indicating “Extremely Challenging” and “Very Challenging”) December 2022 vs. December 2023



Dentists' perceived difficulty in recruiting dental hygienists and assistants is around the same as it was one year ago.

Staff Hiring

[Owner dentists] Did you hire new staff for any of the following positions in 2023?
(Percentages indicating “yes.”)



Nearly half of dentists reported hiring dental assistants in 2023 while nearly one-third reported hiring hygienists and administrative staff.

Staff Hiring

[If hired DH or DA] What tools have you used to find applicants for your DH and/or DA positions? (Select all that apply.)

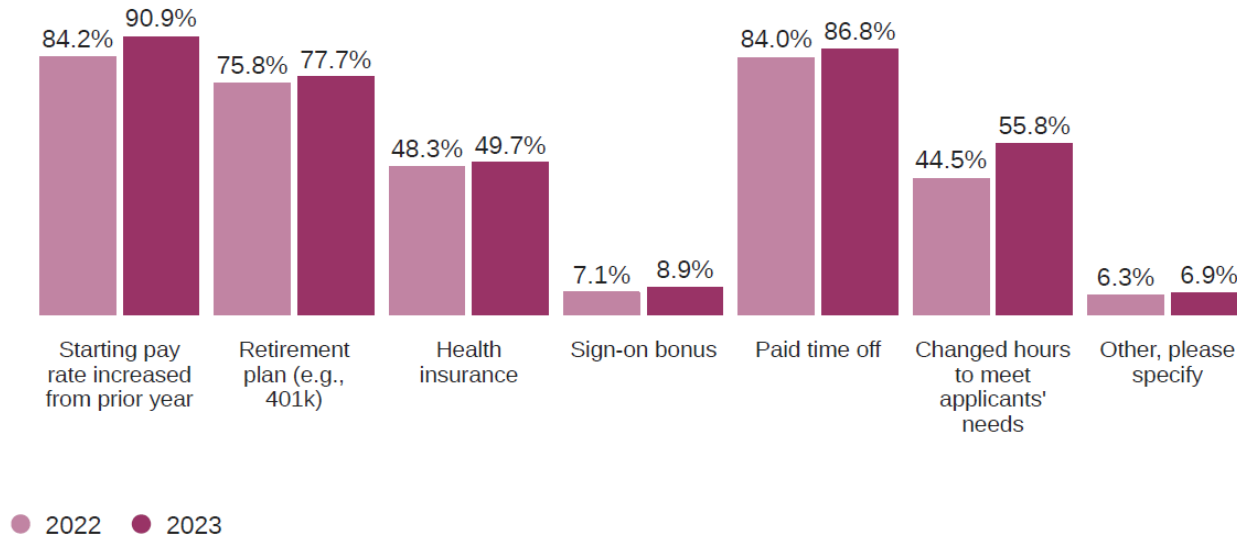
[If hired DH or DA] Which of the selected tools led to new hires? (Select all that apply.)

Dental society classified ads	23.1%	3.8%
Online recruitment websites	77.7%	51.8%
Dental-specific job matching site	14.4%	3.2%
Social media	41.5%	13.0%
Local hygiene or assisting programs	39.7%	12.1%
Staffing agency or recruiter	18.0%	10.1%
Word of mouth	72.9%	51.0%
Other, please specify	5.7%	3.6%

Online recruitment websites and word of mouth are the top ways dentists recruit and hire dental assistants and hygienists.

Staff Hiring

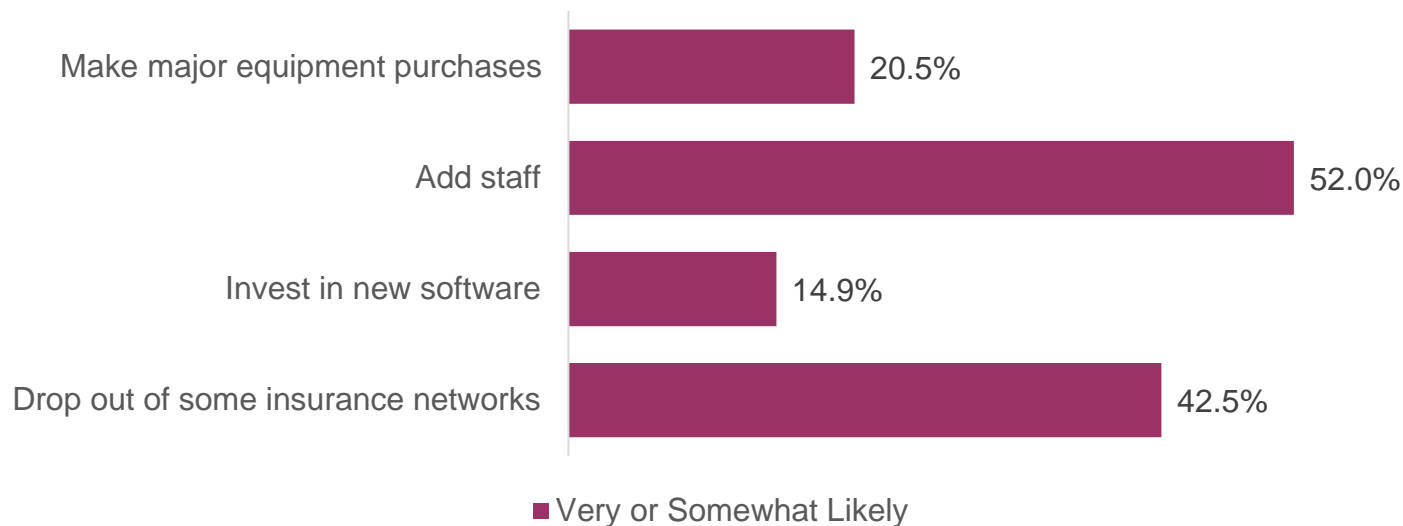
[If hired DH or DA] For each of the last two years, which of the following benefits were offered to dental hygienist and dental assistant applicants?



In 2023, more dentists changed hours to meet applicants' needs compared to 2022.

Looking Ahead to 2024

Looking ahead to 2024, how likely are you to do each of the following for your practice?*

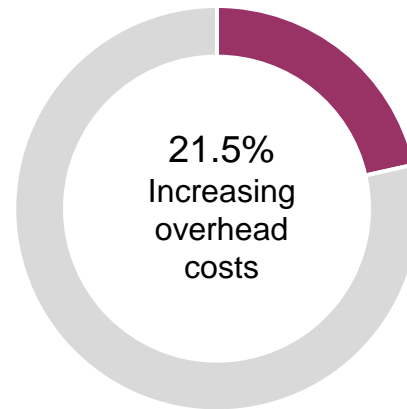
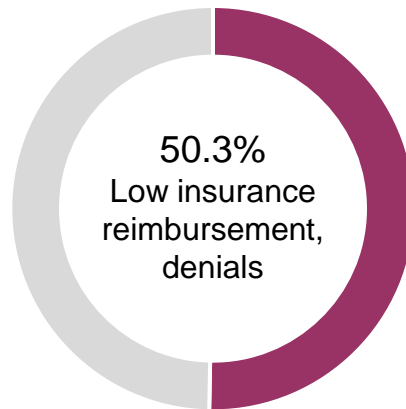
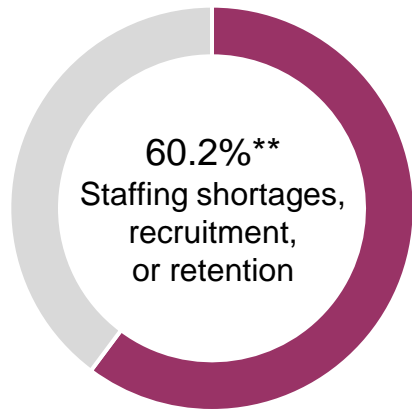


More than half of dentists indicate that they are likely to add staff to their practice in 2024, and about 2 in 5 plan to drop out of some insurance networks.

* Question included in November 2024 wave of HPI's poll.

Top Challenges Looking Ahead to 2024

Also looking ahead to 2024, what are the top 3 challenges facing your practice?*



When asked what are the top challenges facing their practices looking ahead to 2024, the top 3 concerns cited by dentists were staffing shortages, insurance reimbursement, and increasing overhead costs.

* Question included in November 2024 wave of HPI's poll.

** Represents the percentage of responding dentists who cited this particular challenge in their answer.

Key Takeaways

- **Confidence:** Dentists' confidence in their practice and in the dental care sector has been steady the past few months.
- **Busyness:** Practice schedules were 85% full in December 2023, up slightly from a low of 83% in previous months. The most cited reasons for underfilled practice schedules are last-minute patient cancellations. Not enough patients making appointments has declined as a reason over the past several months.
- **Recruitment Needs:** The number of dentists actively recruiting dental hygienists and dental assistants stayed around the same in December 2023. Dentists continue to say recruitment is extremely challenging.
- **Staff hiring and benefits:** Nearly half of dentists reported they hired a dental assistant in 2023 and one-third reported they hired a dental hygienist and administrative staff. Dentists' top reported methods of recruitment were online recruitment websites and word of mouth, which are the main ways dentists ultimately hire staff. Compared to last year, more dentists in 2023 changed hours to meet the needs of applicants.
- **When looking ahead to 2024,** more than half of dentists report they intend to hire more staff, and 2 in 5 plan to drop out of some insurance networks. Dentists' top concerns for 2024 are staffing, reimbursement, and increasing overhead costs.

Thank you!

[@ADAHPI](#)

[ADA.org/HPI](#)

[ADA.org/HPIConsulting](#)

hpi@ada.org



ADA American Dental Association®