Economic Outlook and Emerging Issues in Dentistry

*Insights from Data from February 2022*
Polling refresh

- Measuring the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and other emerging issues in dentistry
- Nearly 3000 have opted to participate to date
- Data was collected February 15-20, 2022
- Complete reports with breakdowns available at ADA.org/HPI
Looking ahead to the next six months, how confident are you in the recovery of the following? (Percentages indicating “very” or “somewhat” confident.)

- Your particular dental practice: 71%
- Dental care sector: 67%
- U.S. economy: 34%

Dentists’ confidence in their practices’ and the sector’s recovery has rebounded slightly, but they remain wary of U.S. economic recovery on the whole.
How full was your dental practice’s appointment schedule last week?

Schedules in dental practices were about 83% full on average in February, representing an increase from 77% full in January.
DSOs, suburban practices are busier

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

Dentists affiliated with DSOs indicated more full schedules compared to their colleagues.

Dentists in urban and rural areas did not have as full schedules as their suburban dentist colleagues.
Assessing practice capacity

1. When your practice is FULLY STAFFED, what is the maximum number of patients it could see in a typical week?

2. Considering your practice’s CURRENT STAFFING situation, what is the maximum number of patients it could see in a typical week?

3. How many patients did your practice ACTUALLY SEE last week?
Shifts in practice capacity

Max patient volume with CURRENT staff as % of max patient volume with FULL staff

ACTUAL patient volume as a % of maximum with CURRENT staffing

Staffing shortages are causing an 11% reduction in practice capacity.

Dental practices’ patient volume is at 84% of its current potential.
Which of the following factors prevented your dental practice’s appointment schedule from reaching 100% last week? (Select all that apply.)

- Patient cancellations
- Not enough patients making appts
- Trouble filling vacant staff positions
- COVID safety protocols

Patient cancellations remained the most common reason schedules were not full in February.

More than 4 out of 10 dentists indicated that low patient demand is also leading to empty appointment slots.
Dental team recruitment needs on the rise again

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

Dental team recruitment needs reached a new high in February.

More than 4 out of 10 dentists have recently or are currently recruiting dental assistants, and 35% have recently recruited or are trying to recruit dental hygienists.
Challenges with recruitment persist

How challenging has it been to recruit the position(s) below? (Percentages indicating “extremely” or “very” challenging.)

- Hiring for any dental team position is a major challenge.
- Over 90% of dentists recruiting dental hygienists indicate it has been “extremely” or “very” challenging, and nearly 90% indicate the same for recruiting dental assistants.
More dental team openings in public health

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

- Dentists in public health settings indicate more dental team openings compared to their colleagues in private practice.

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Applicant shortages in hygiene and assisting

What specifically has been challenging about recruiting dental hygienists and dental assistants?

A lack of applicants is the most common reason dentists are struggling to recruit both hygienists and assistants.

For open hygienist positions, the wage and benefit requirements of the applicants is a challenge for dentists. Dentists also indicate a lack of qualified assistant applicants.
Key takeaways

• Staffing shortages have caused an estimated 11% reduction in practice capacity.
• Openings for dental team positions are on the rise again, reaching a new high in February. There has also been an uptick in the level of difficulty with recruitment for most positions.
• Specific recruitment challenges cited by dentists include not receiving enough applicants, underqualified applicants, and applicant requirements for wages and benefits.
• Schedules in dental practices were about 83% full on average in February, an increase from 77% in January. Gaps are most commonly due to patient cancellations and low patient demand.
• Dentists’ confidence in their practices and the dental care sector has rebounded slightly, but most remain wary of U.S. economic recovery.
Thank You!

@ADAHPI

ADA.org/HPI

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hpi@ada.org