Economic Outlook and Emerging Issues in Dentistry

*Insights from Data from March 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 2000 respond each wave
- Data was collected March 14-20, 2022
- Core measures: economic outlook, fullness of practice schedule, schedule barriers, recruitment needs and challenges
- Questions of the month: masking requirements for patients and staff, cosmetic procedures in practice
- Complete reports with breakdowns available at ADA.org/HPI
- State dashboard coming soon!
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 U.S. economic recovery dropped in March. However, their confidence in dentistry’s recovery is higher than for the U.S. economy and consistent with recent months.
How full was your dental practice’s appointment schedule last week?

Dental practices have gotten busier since January. Across the U.S., schedules in dental practices were 88% full on average in March.
How full was your dental practice’s appointment schedule last week?

Younger and mid-career dentists indicated busier schedules than older dentists in March.

Oral surgeons, endodontists, and dentists working in public health settings were also busier in March than their other dentist colleagues.
Scheduling Barriers

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 March.

Roughly one in seven dentists indicated COVID protocols were getting in the way of full schedules; the lowest share to date.
Dental Team Recruitment

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

After reaching a peak in February, dental team recruitment needs eased up slightly in March.

One-third of dentists were recruiting dental hygienists and 38% were recruiting dental assistants.
Challenges Recruiting

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

Among dentists who are recruiting, the difficulty has remained relatively stable.

Dentists recruiting associate/employee dentists indicated greater difficulty than in the past.
Masking Requirements for Patients

Are masks required for patients in your dental practice waiting area?

Nationally, two-thirds of dentists required patients to mask in the waiting area in March.

Masking was more commonly required in urban practices than in rural practices.
When are masks required for staff in your dental practice?

The majority of dentists nationally required both clinical and non-clinical staff to mask continually throughout the workday.

Similar to requirements for patients in waiting areas, fewer dentists in suburban and rural areas required masks for non-clinical staff.
Cosmetic Procedures

Compared to this time last year, how has the frequency of the following changed among patients in your dental practice?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Increased</th>
<th>Stayed about the same</th>
<th>Decreased</th>
<th>Not sure/Not applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orthodontic treatments in the office</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>49.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitening treatments in the office</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitening using OTC products</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other cosmetic treatments in the office</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Roughly 10% of dentists indicated that there has been an increase in ortho, whitening, and other cosmetic treatments in their offices compared to last year at this time. Slightly more reported a decrease in these procedures.
Key Takeaways

- Dental practices have gotten busier since January. Schedules were 88% full on average in March. Patient cancellations remained the most common reason for not having a full schedule.
- Fewer than three in ten dentists are confident in the U.S. economic recovery, though the majority remain at least somewhat confident in their practices’ and the dental sector’s recovery.
- Dental team recruitment needs eased up slightly in March. One-third of dentists were recruiting dental hygienists and 38% were recruiting dental assistants. The level of difficulty with recruitment has remained relatively stable.
- Nationally, two-thirds of dentists required patients to mask in the waiting area in March. The majority of dentists required both clinical and non-clinical staff to mask continually throughout the workday. Masking requirements were more common in urban than in rural settings, and more common in blue states than in red states.
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