

Economic Outlook and Emerging Issues in Dentistry

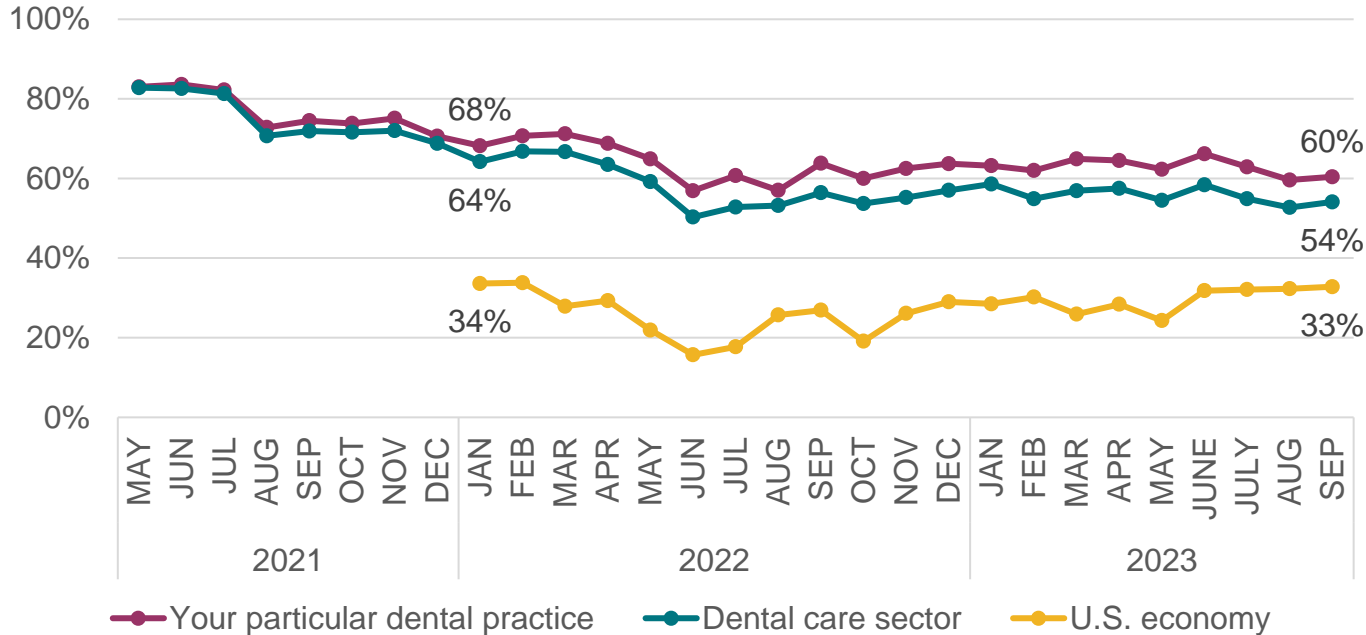
Insights from Data from September 2023

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; 976 participated in September 2023
- Data was collected September 11-17, 2023
- Core measures: economic outlook, fullness of practice schedule, schedule barriers, recruitment needs and challenges
- New this month: billing medical insurance
- Complete reports with breakdowns available at [ADA.org/HPI](https://ada.org/HPI)

Confidence in the Economy

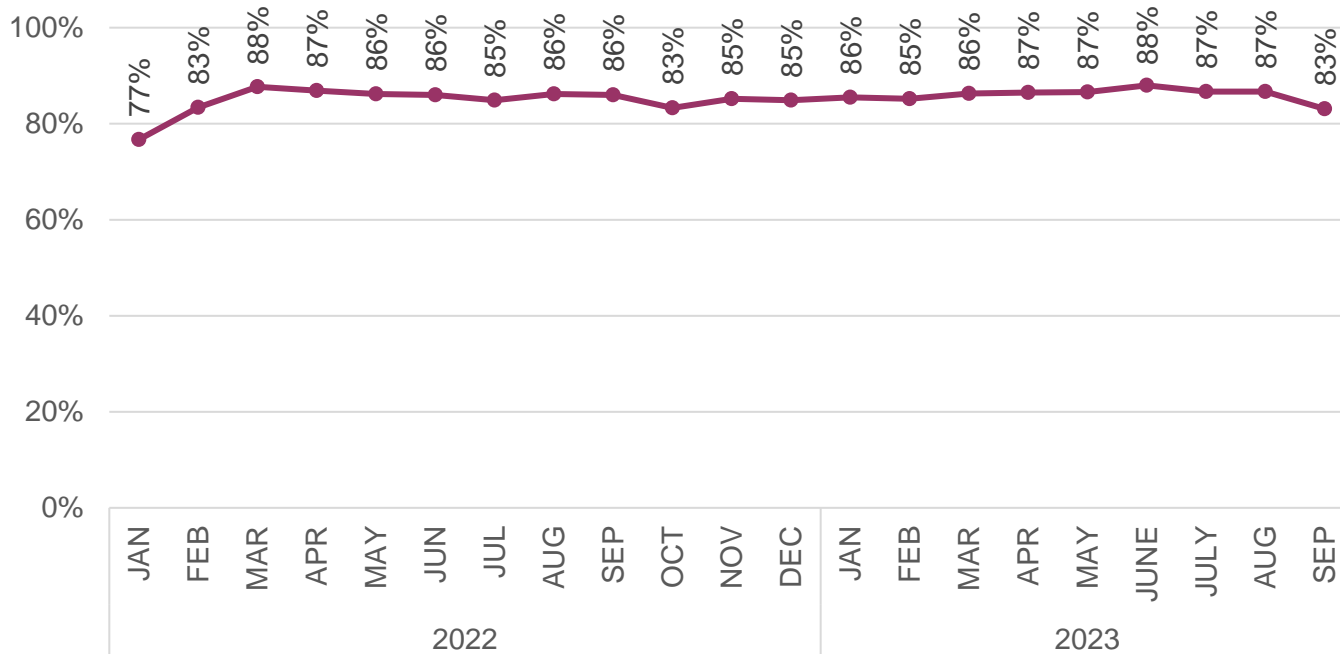
Looking ahead to the next six months, how confident are you in the recovery of the following?
 (Percentages indicating “very” or “somewhat” confident.)



Dentists’ confidence in their dental practice, the dental care sector, and the U.S. economy stayed around the same in September 2023 compared to the previous month.

Busyness

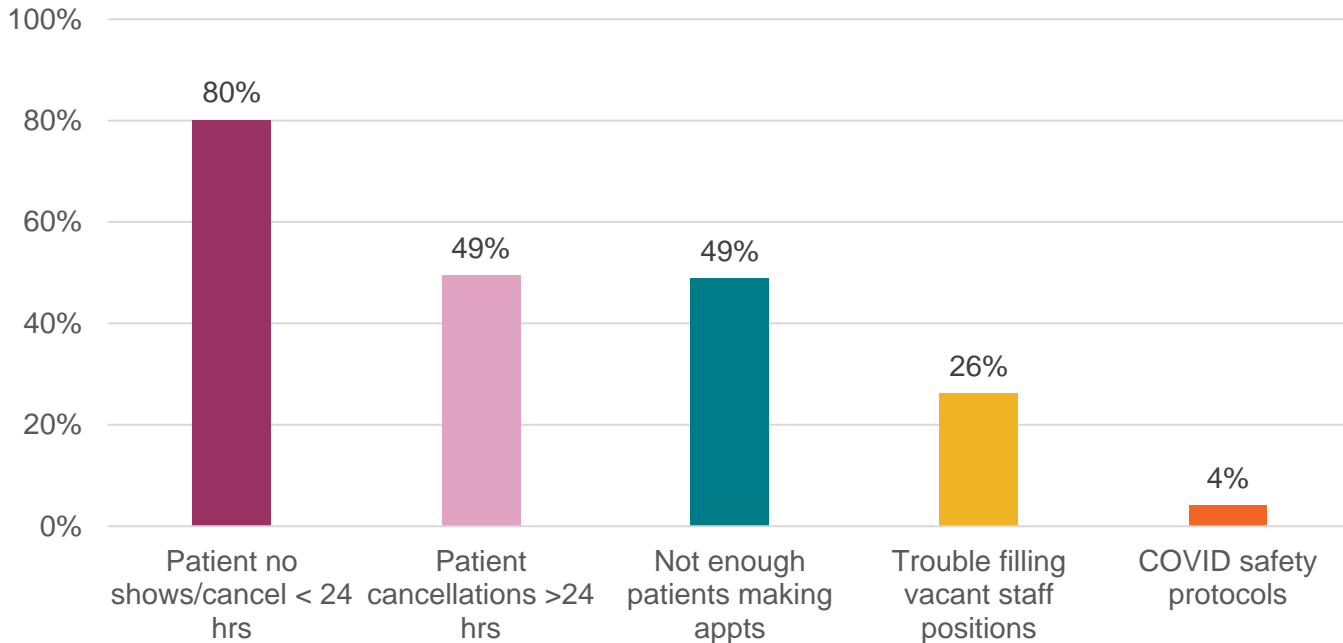
How full was your dental practice's appointment schedule last week?



In September 2023, dentists reported their practice schedules were 83% full, the lowest point in nearly a year.

Barriers to Reaching Full Capacity

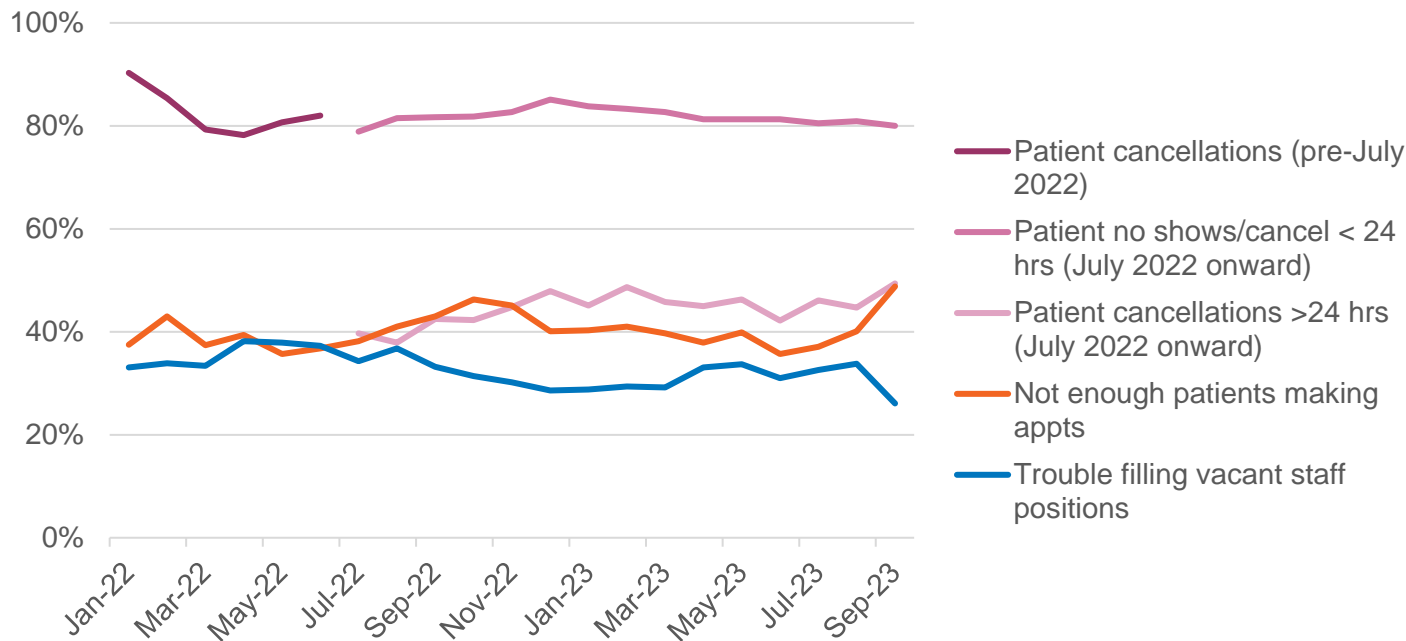
Which of the following factors prevented your dental practice's appointment schedule from reaching 100% last week? (Select all that apply.)



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

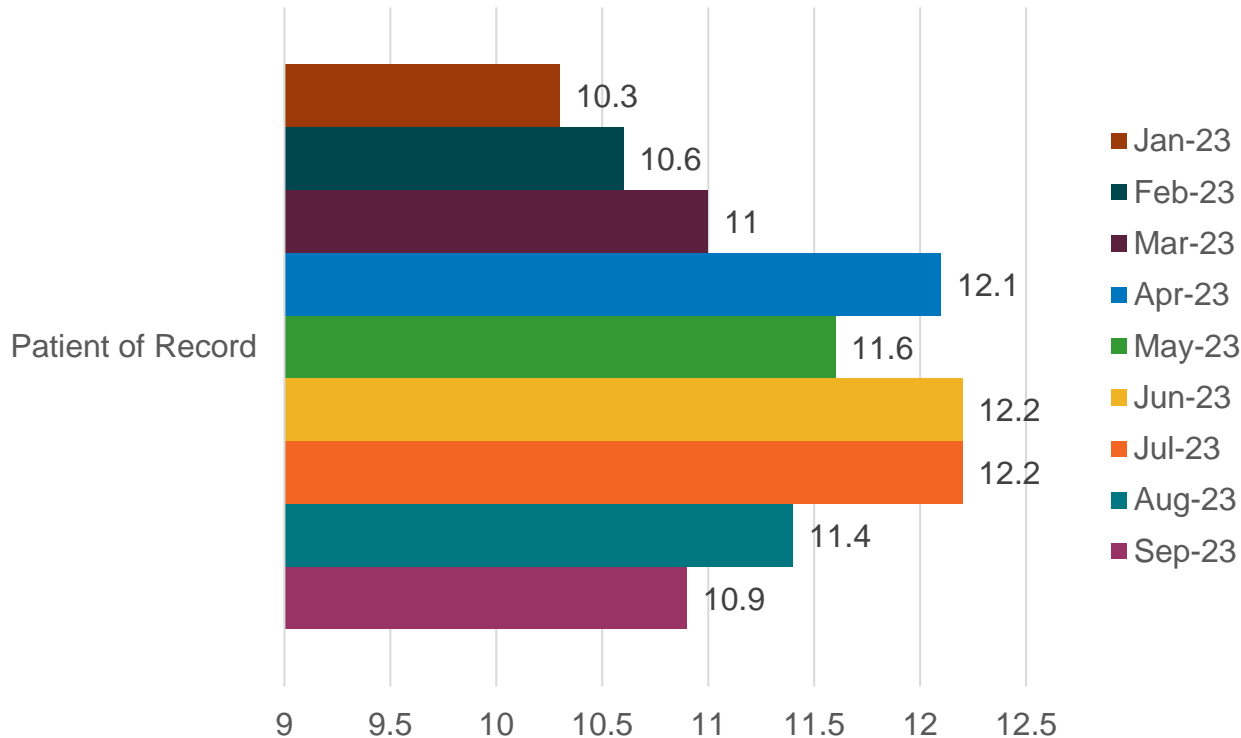
Barriers to Reaching Full Capacity

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



More dentists reported that not enough patients are making appointments to fill schedules. This number has gone up the past couple of months.

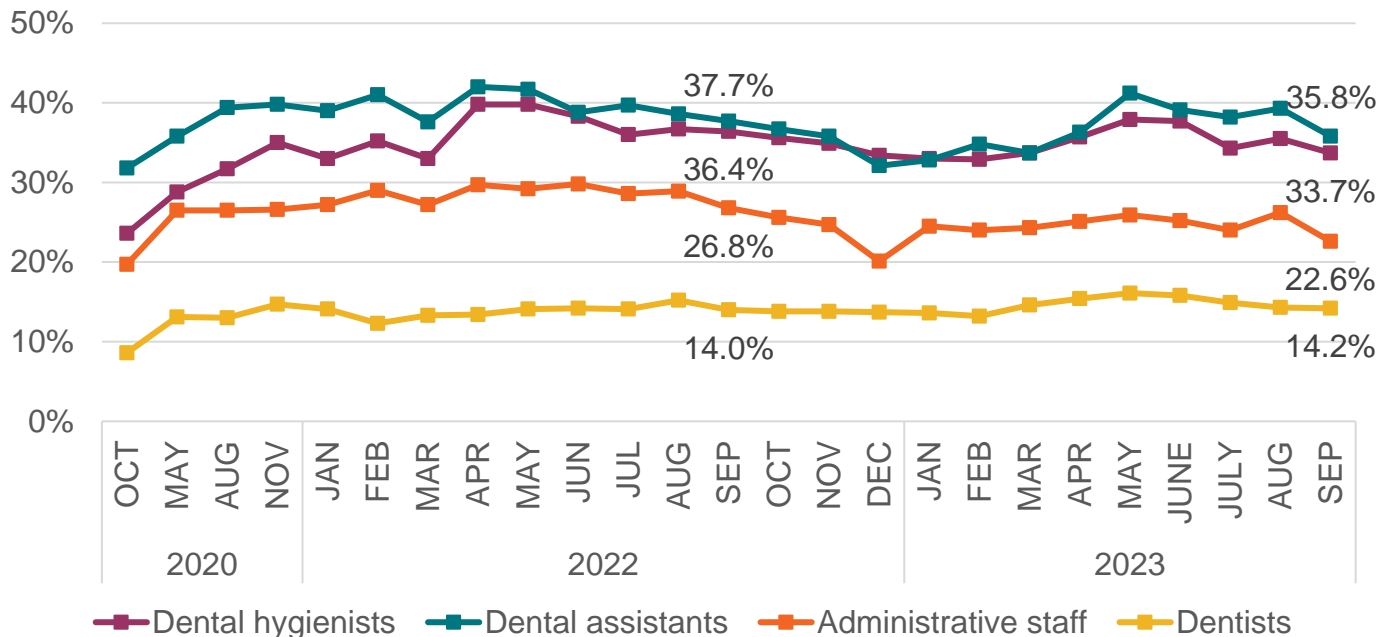
Average Wait Times (Days)



In September 2023, average appointment wait times for patients of record went down slightly compared to August 2023.

Dental Team Recruitment

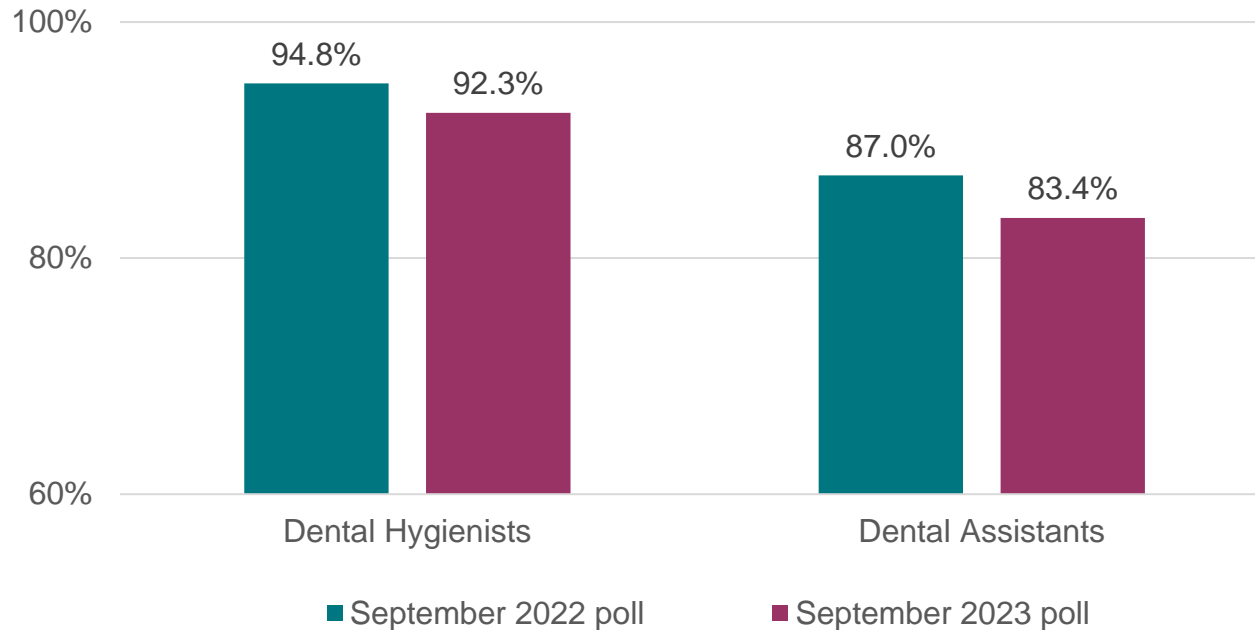
Have you recently or are you currently recruiting any of the following positions in your dental practice? (Percentages indicating “yes.”)



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

Challenges Recruiting

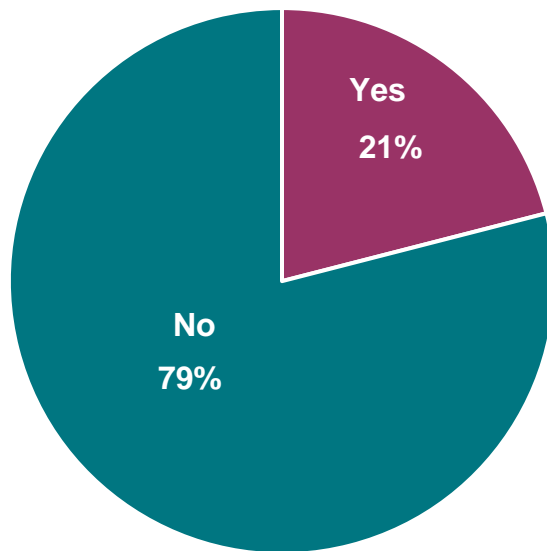
How challenging has it been to recruit the position(s) below? (Percentage indicating “Extremely Challenging” and “Very Challenging”) September 2022 vs. September 2023



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

Billing Medical Insurance

[Owner dentists] Does your practice ever bill medical insurance to cover dental procedures for your patients?



About one in five dentists report that they bill dental procedures under medical codes in order to ensure patient coverage.

Billing Medical Insurance

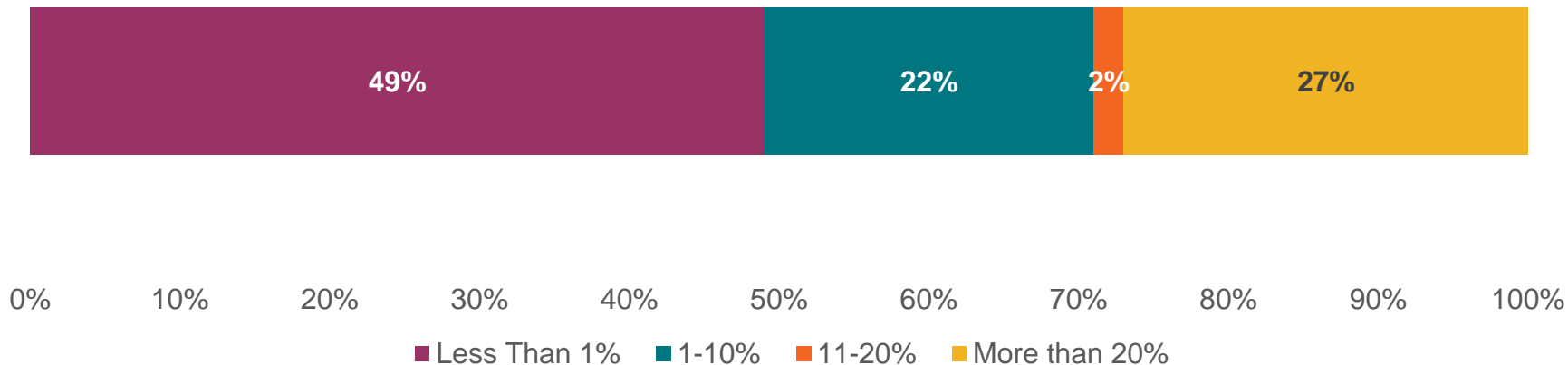
[Owner dentists] If no, why not? (Select all that apply.)

Not necessary	35.5%
Too complicated/time-consuming	27.7%
Lack of training, qualified staff, software	20.2%
Reimbursement will be declined/payment delays	10.3%
Unfamiliar with medical procedure codes, billing process	10.2%

Among dentists who do not bill medical insurance to cover dental procedures, more than one-third feel it not necessary. Other reasons include not having the necessary knowledge, time or resources to do so.

Billing Medical Insurance

[Owner dentists] If yes, please estimate for what share of your patients.



Among dentists who bill medical insurance to cover dental procedures, nearly half report that they only do so for a very small portion of their patients (less than 1%). Conversely, more than one-quarter of dentists report that they do this for more than 20% of their patient base.

Key Takeaways

- **Busyness:** After hovering around 87% full for a year, practice schedules dropped to 83% full in September 2023. The most cited reasons for underfilled practice schedules are patient cancellations and no-shows. However, “not enough patients making appointments” rose in significance the past couple of months.
- **Recruitment Needs:** The number of dentists actively recruiting dental hygienists and dental assistants went down slightly in September 2023. Dentists continue to say recruitment is extremely challenging.
- **Confidence:** Dentists’ confidence in their practice and in the dental care sector went up slightly in September 2023.
- **Billing procedures:** About 1 in 5 dentists report they bill dental procedures through medical insurance; of those same dentists, about half say they only do so for a small portion of their patient base (less than 1%).

Thank you!

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