

Dental workforce wages and Job Counts Dashboard: Data & Methods

The findings in the Health Policy Institute's Dental Workforce Wages and Job Counts dashboard are adjusted for inflation. This document details the methods and sources used to make these adjustments.

The following source¹ breaks down how current dollar values are measured using past values:

When you compare past dollar values to current dollar values, it is also important to adjust values for inflation. The cumulative impact of inflation on prices makes dollar amounts from decades ago seem very small. For example, during its first year in movie theaters (1977-78), ticket sales for the original *Star Wars* movie totaled slightly more than \$260 million.

You can use Consumer Price Index (CPI)² to calculate the current value of a past dollar amount. Multiply the past, or original, dollar amount by the current CPI and divide it by the past CPI (when the original dollar amount was recorded).

$$\text{Current value} = \text{Original value} \times \left(\frac{\text{Current CPI}}{\text{CPI in the past}} \right).$$

In the case of *Star Wars: Episode IV—A New Hope* (as it came to be known some years later), that past value of \$260 million amounts to almost \$1,279 million in August 2022 dollars. That is more than ticket sales from the two most-popular movies in 2022 combined.

For example, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the national median hourly wage for dental hygienists in 2021 was \$37.41. For our dashboard we wanted to calculate its inflation-adjusted value in terms of 2022 dollars, the most recent data year available for this dashboard.

The values of the Consumer Price Index (not seasonally adjusted) we need for this example are for years 2021 and 2022; the values were 270.970 and 292.655 respectively.

Plugging our spending and index values into the formula above, we get \$40.40 as the 2021 national median hourly wage for dental hygienists in terms of inflation-adjusted 2022 dollars.

Suggested Citation

American Dental Association. Dental workforce wages and job counts dashboard. Health Policy Institute. 2023. Available from: <https://www.ada.org/resources/research/health-policy-institute/child-dental-care-utilization-dashboard>.

References

¹ Diego Mendez-Carbajo, "Adjusting for Inflation," PAGE ONE ECONOMICS®, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, January 2023. Available at <https://research.stlouisfed.org/publications/page1-econ/2023/01/03/adjusting-for-inflation>. Accessed March 19, 2024.

² Consumer Price Index, All Urban Consumers. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Available at <https://www.bls.gov/cpi/data.htm>. Accessed March 27, 2024.