

ADA American Dental Association®

National Workforce Shortage Trends and the Future of Staffing



Linda Edgar, DDS, MEd

ADA President

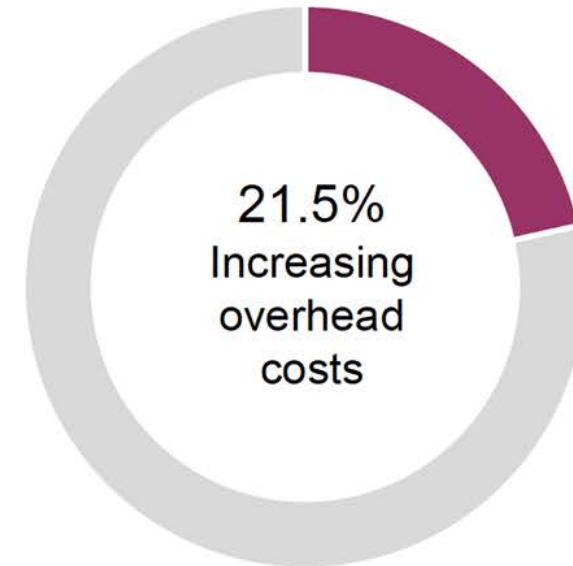
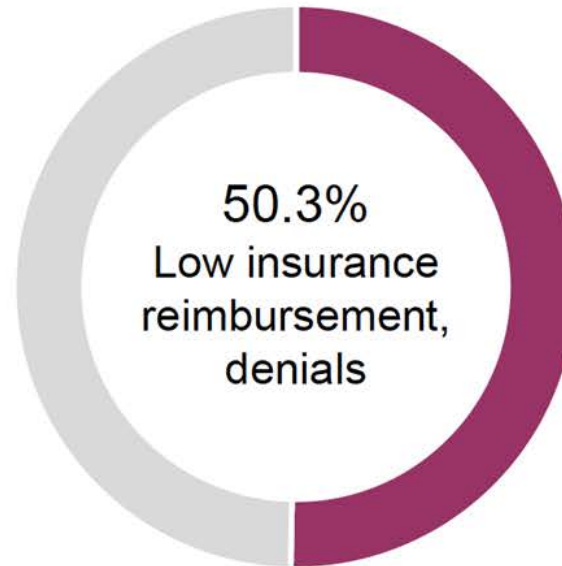
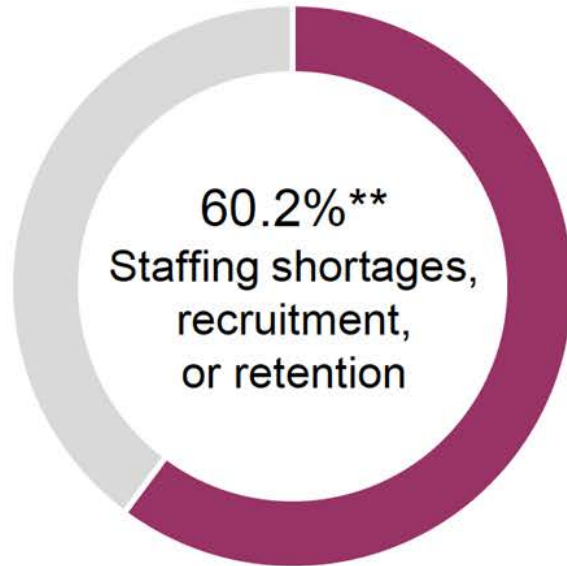
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Panel Q1:

What are the national staffing shortage trends according to the ADA's Health Policy Institute?

Top Challenges for 2024

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

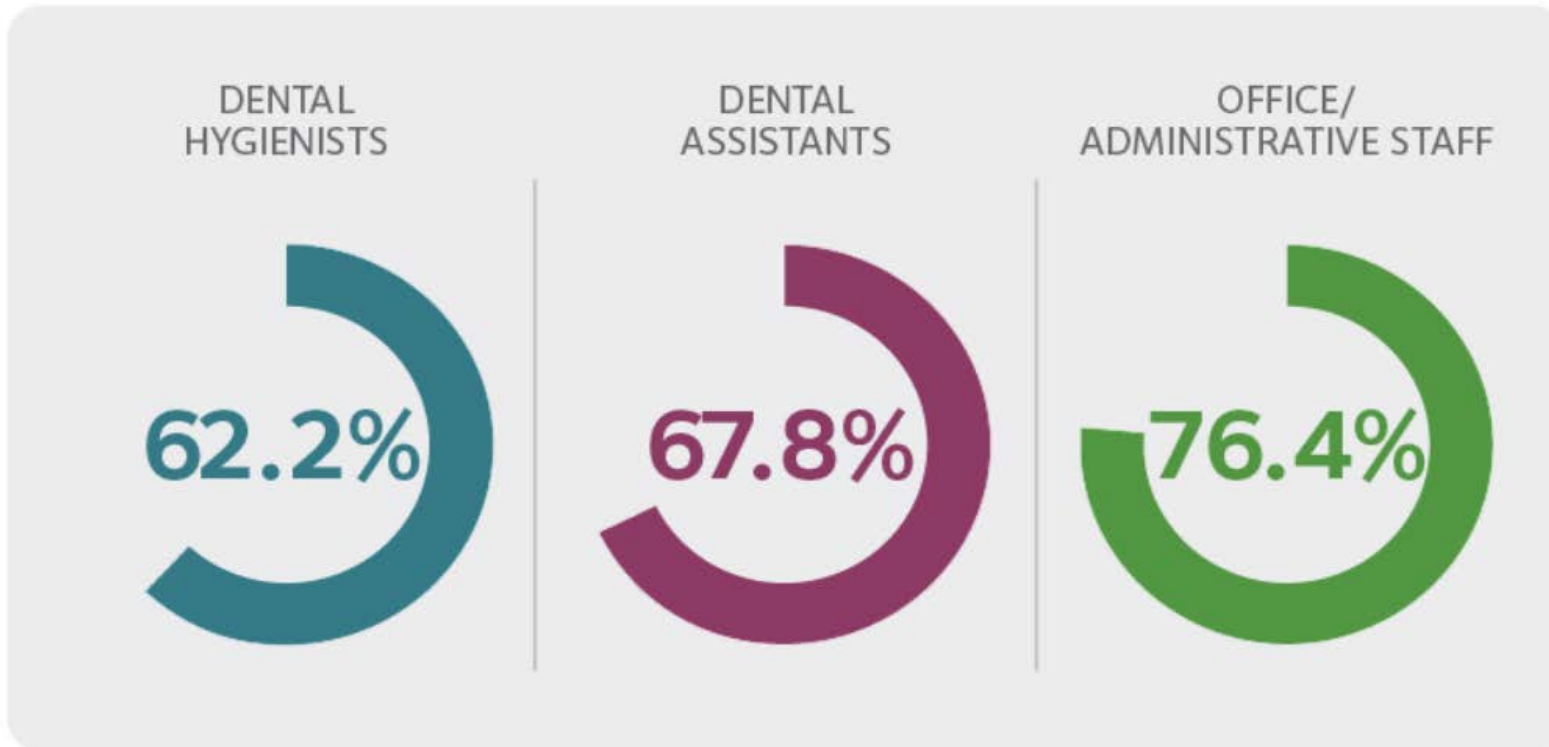


* Question included in November 2023 wave of HPI's poll.

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

Staffing Shortages Have Not Eased

PERCENTAGE OF DENTISTS WITH AN ADEQUATE NUMBER OF NON-DENTIST STAFF IN THEIR PRACTICE, OCTOBER 2023

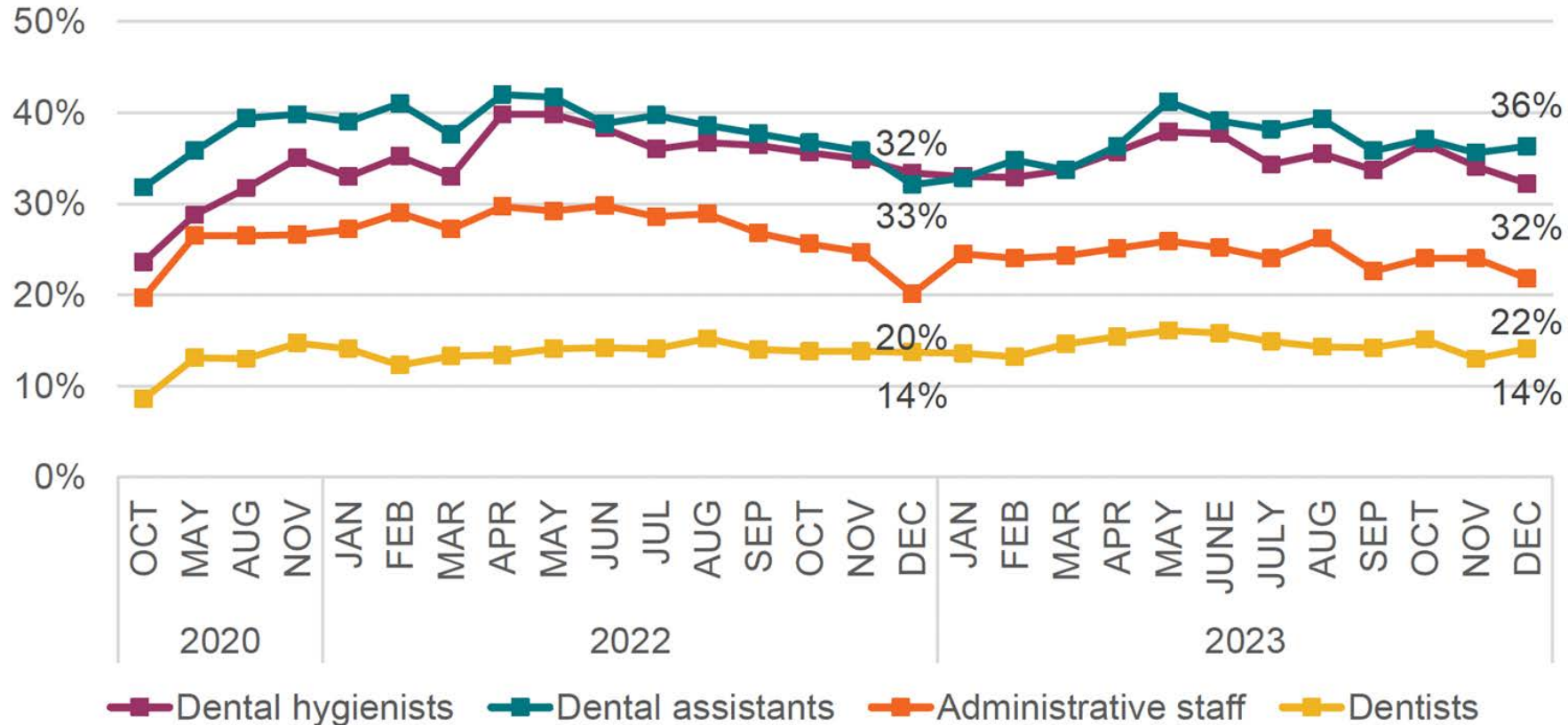


While 3/4 of dentists say they have enough office/admin staff, only 2/3 report they have enough hygienists and assistants.

Source: American Dental Association Health Policy Institute, *Economic Outlook and Emerging Issues in Dentistry*, October 2023.

Dental Team Recruitment

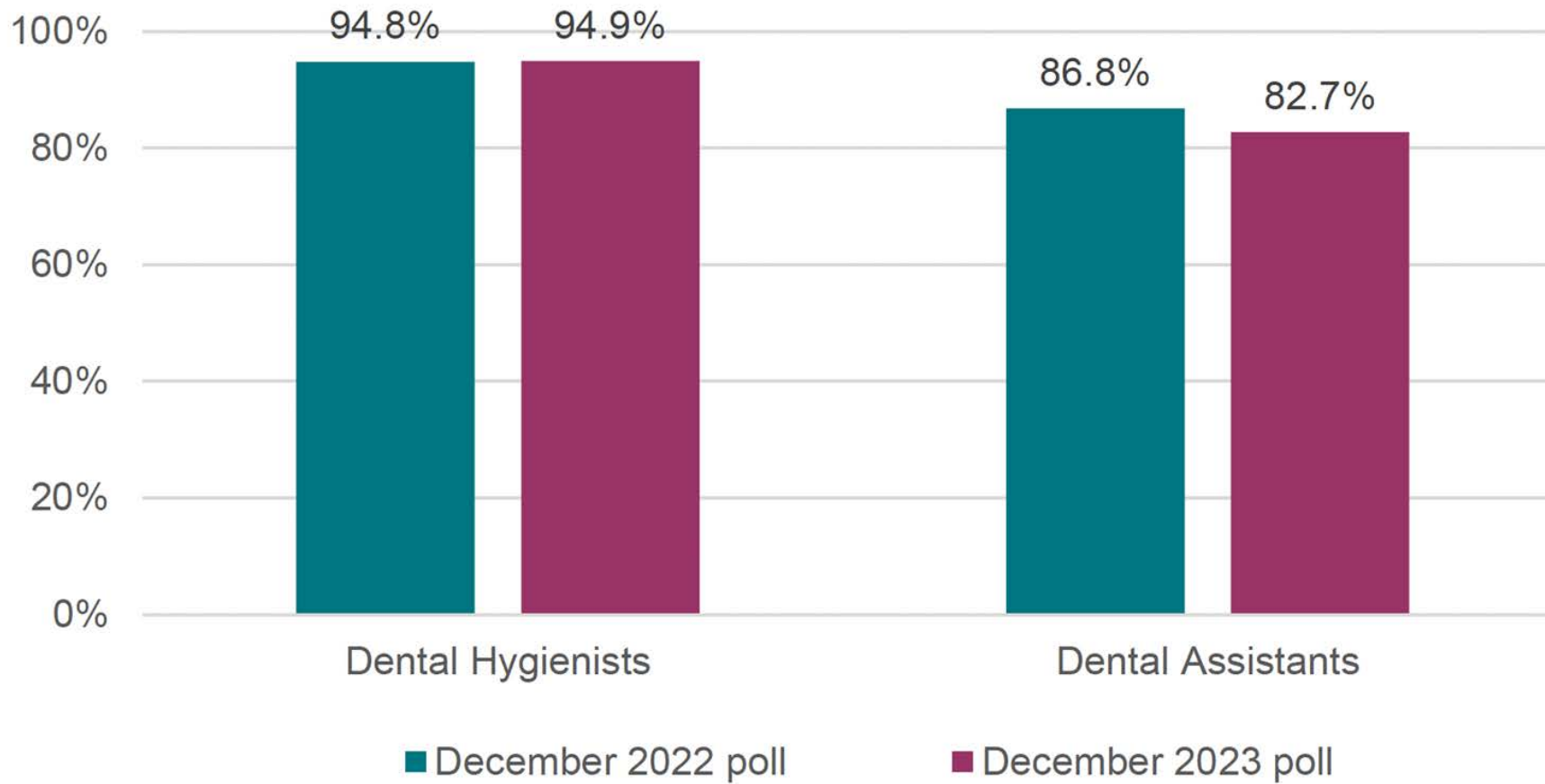
Have you recently or are you currently recruiting any of the following positions in your dental practice? (Percentages indicating “yes.”) **December 2022 vs. December 2023**



More than 1/3 of dentists were actively recruiting dental assistants and dental hygienists in Dec.

Recruitment Challenges Continue

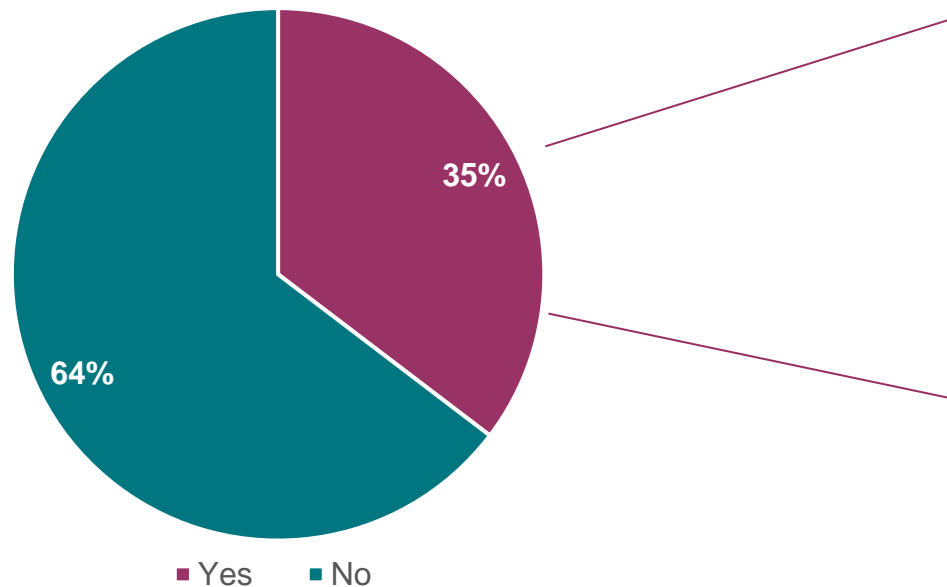
How challenging has it been to recruit the position(s) below? (Percentage indicating “Extremely Challenging” and “Very Challenging”) December 2022 vs. December 2023



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

Dentists are Taking on More Duties

Compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic, has your practice changed the way the workload is divided among dentists and staff?

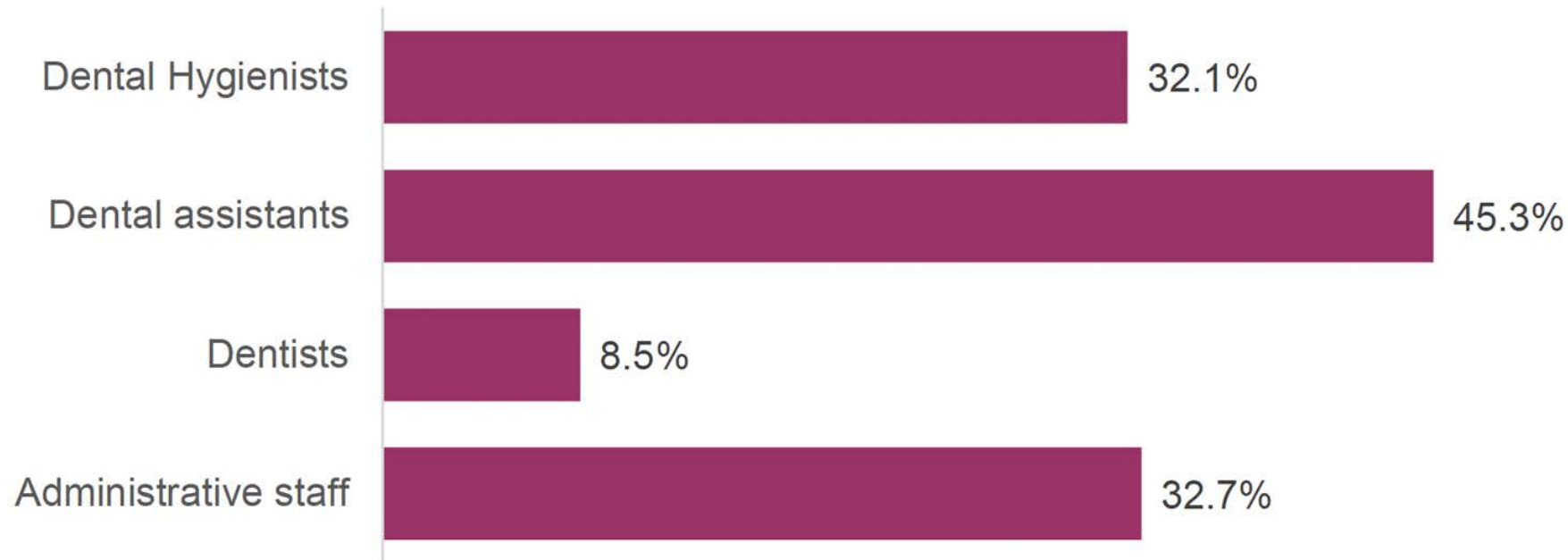


If yes, how so?

Dentist does more hygienist/assistant/admin duties	49.7%
Cross-training staff; multi-tasking	16.2%
Increased responsibilities; maximizing qualifications for clinical staff	14.9%
Increased workload for all staff; Working longer hours	8.8%
Reduced hours or days worked scheduling fewer appointments	4.0%
Increased appointment length	3.7%
Hired additional staff for specific responsibilities	3.7%
Added/retained infection control protocols	3.0%

Staff Hiring Trends in 2023

[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.

Recruitment Practices

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

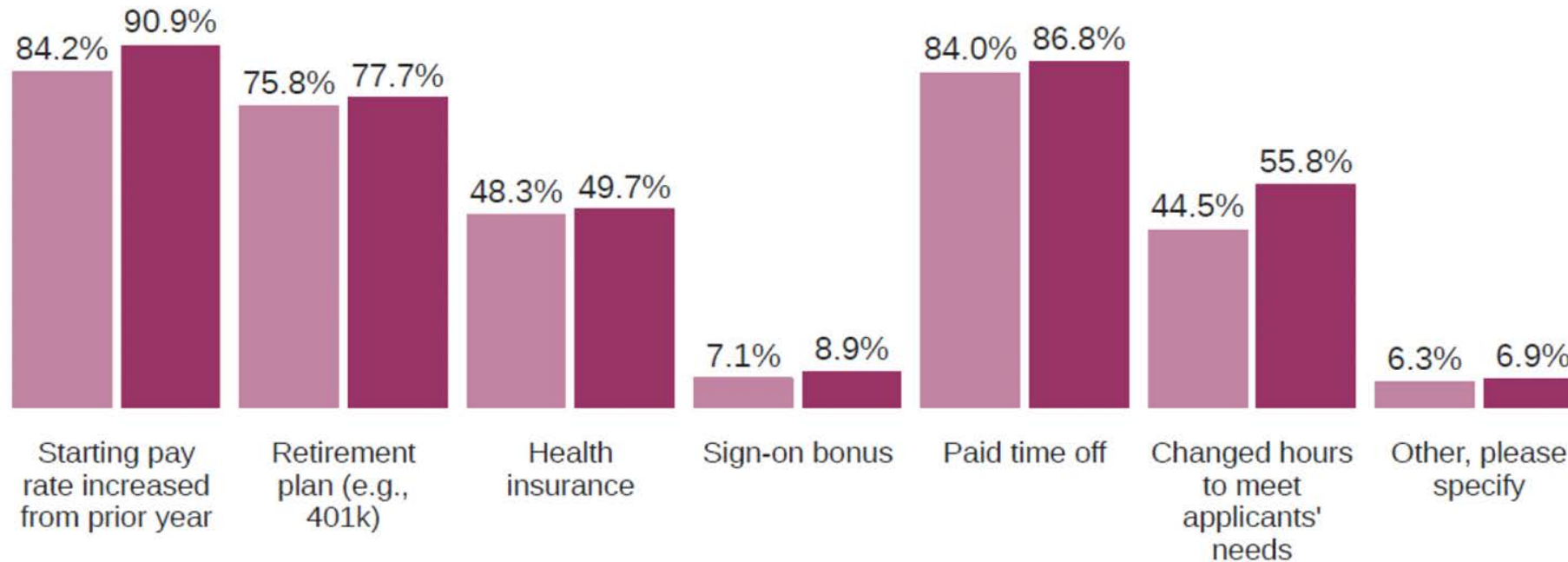
[If hired DH or DA] Which of the selected tools led to new hires? (Select all that apply.)

	[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.

Changes in Recruitment Practices – 2022 vs. 2023

[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?

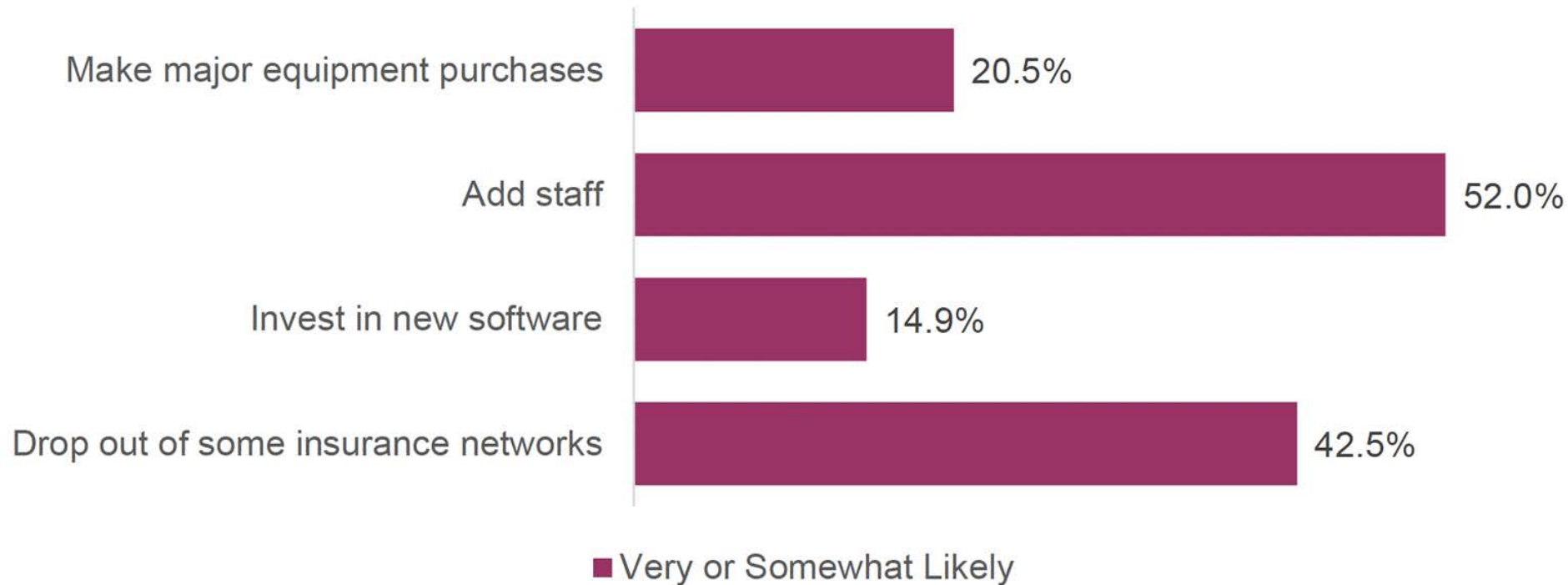


In 2023, more dentists changed hours to meet applicants' needs compared to 2022.

● 2022 ● 2023

How are Practices Adjusting in 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.

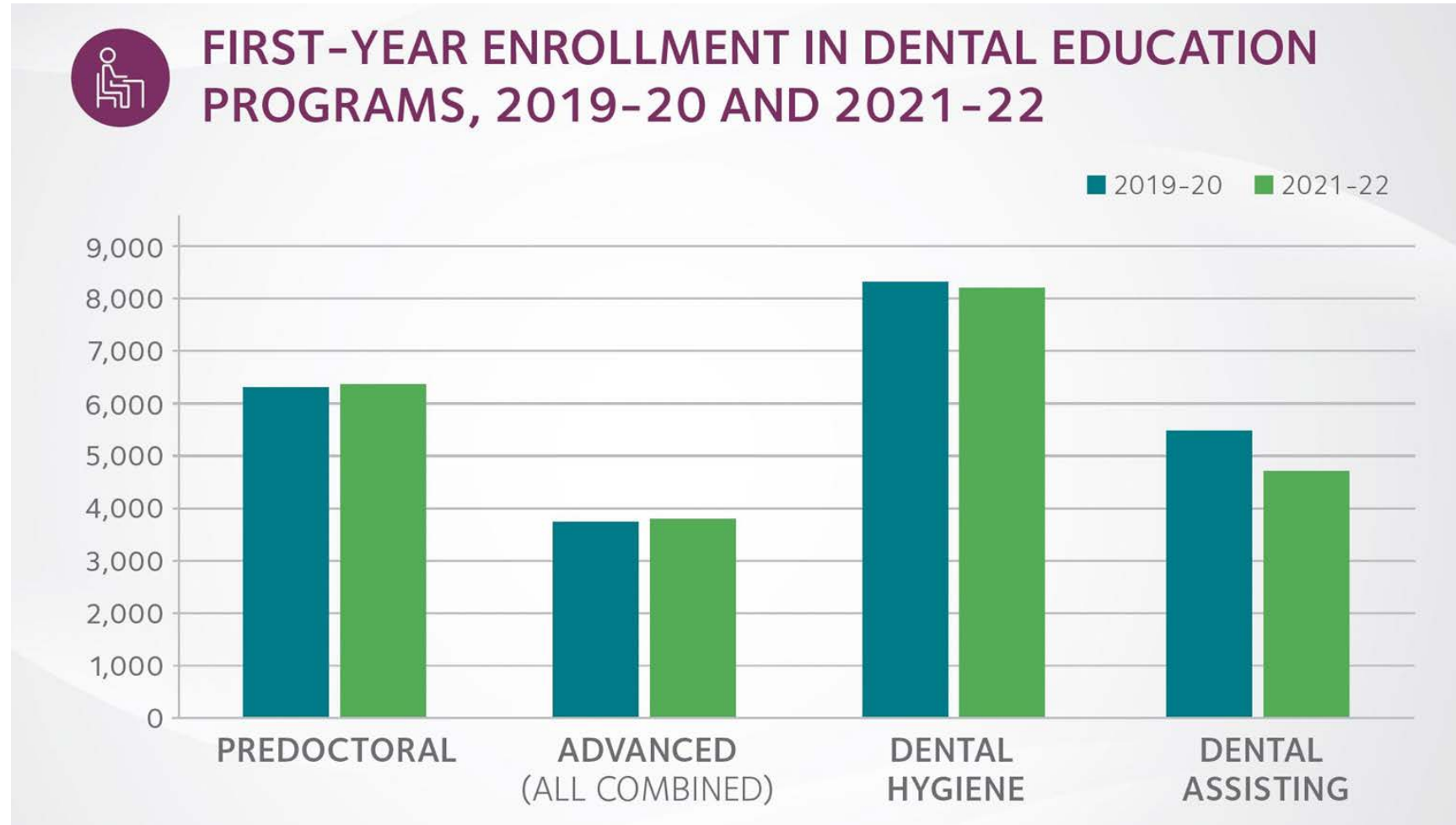
* Question included in November 2024 wave of HPI's poll.

Panel Q2:

What are the key factors driving these trends with staffing shortages?

Slower inflows: Program enrollment sees declines

Enrollment in hygiene and assisting programs is down from pre-pandemic levels.



Greater Outflows in the Field



During the COVID-19 pandemic, safety and childcare concerns prompted some dental hygienists to voluntarily leave the profession in 2021.

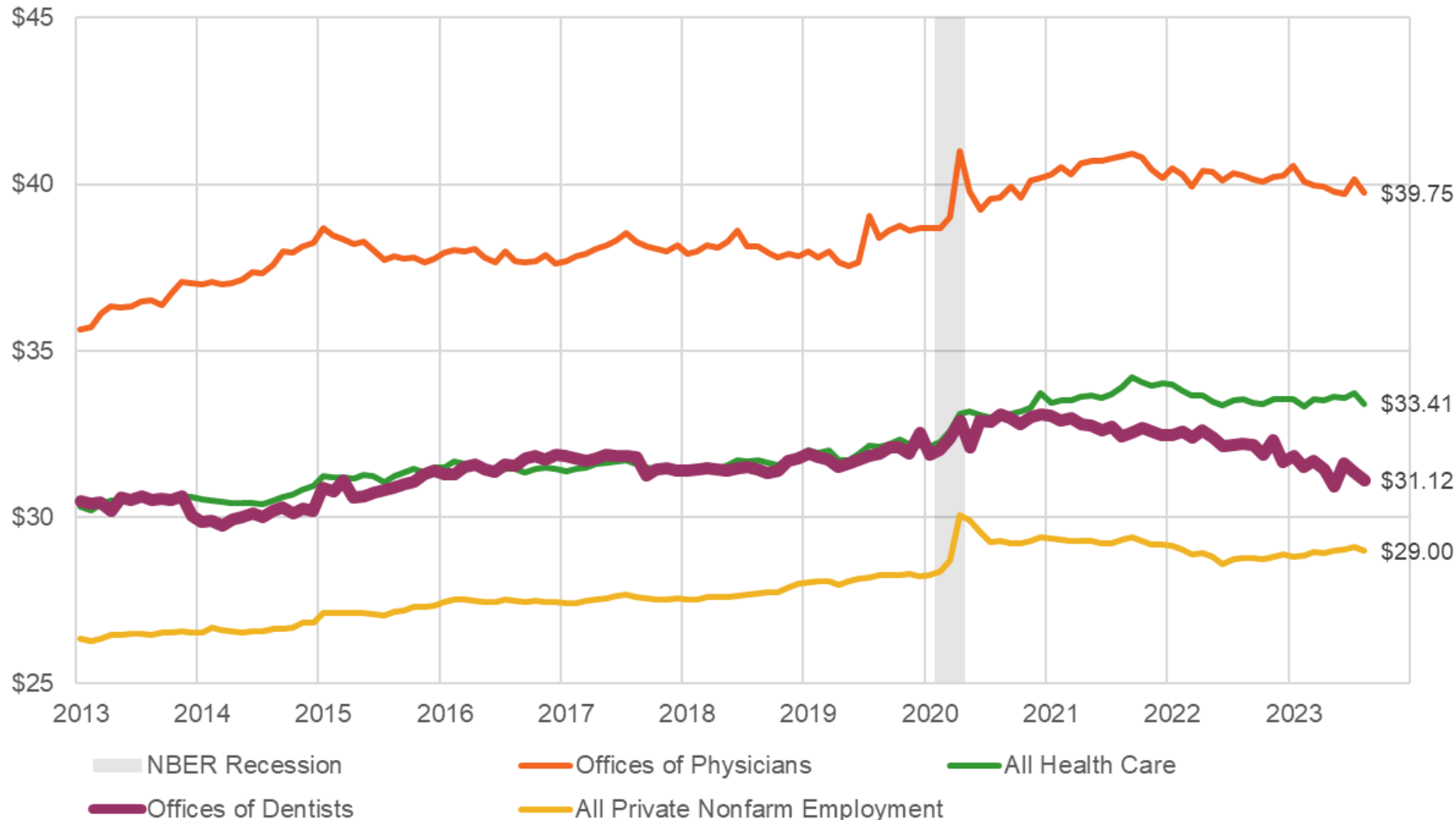
Fewer than half of dental hygienists who left employment early in the COVID-19 pandemic returned to the workforce in 2021.

Other Key Insights on the Economic Data

- Wages of dental office staff are not keeping up with inflation.
- Dentists are busier than ever and are working longer hours post pandemic.
- Practice expenses are increasing faster than revenues, driving stagnation in dentist average net income.
- Suggests there will be continued ‘margin compression’ in the dental sector.

Hygienist and Assistant Wage Stagnation

Inflation-Adjusted Wages (2022 Dollars), Nonsupervisory Jobs



Wages of dental office staff are not keeping up with inflation.

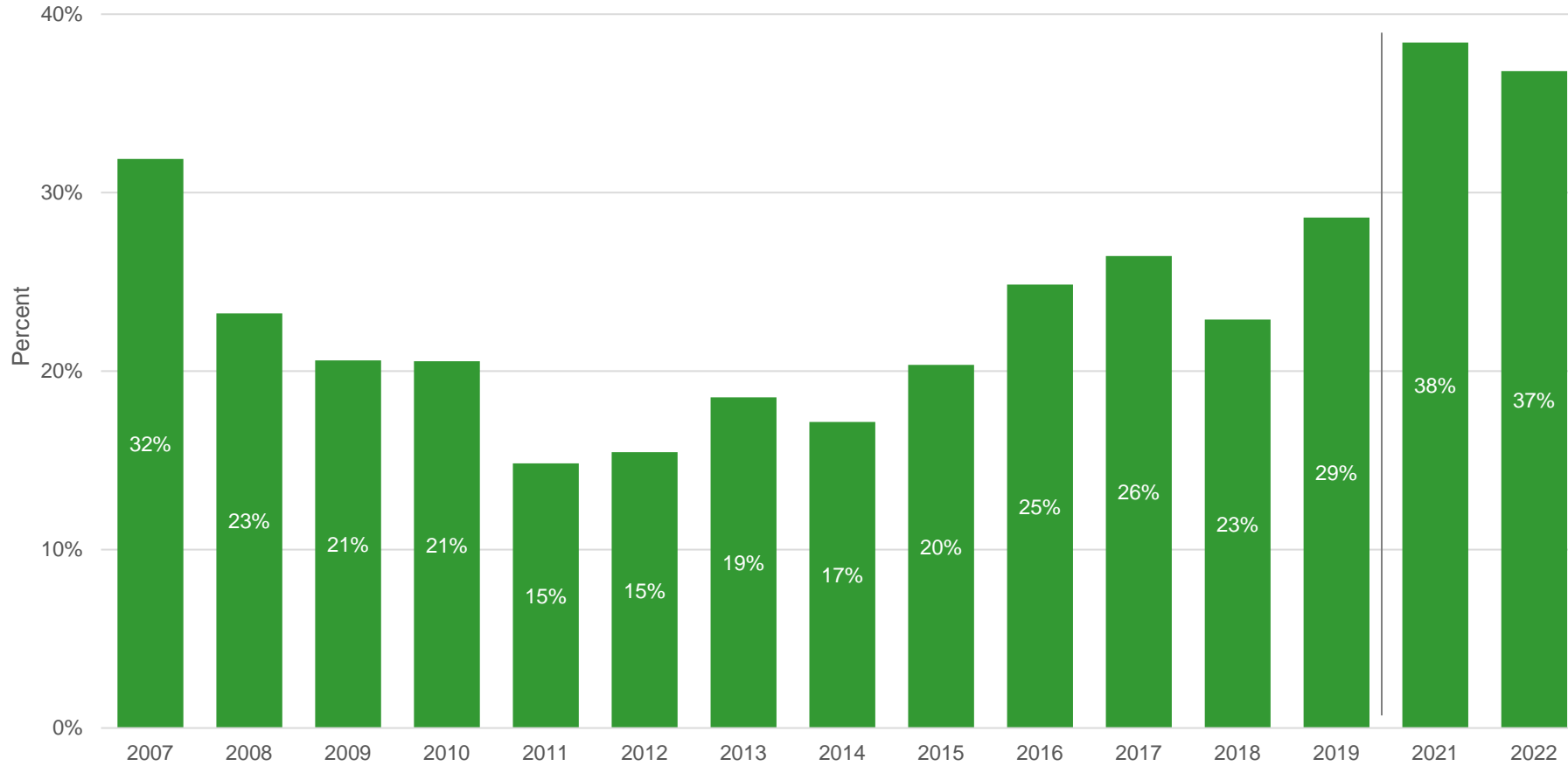
Nor with wages of other health care workers.

Nor with wages in the economy overall.

Note: Data on 'Offices of Dentists' is made up of 37% assistants, 33% front desk staff, 23% hygienists, 7% other staff.

Dentists are Working More than Ever

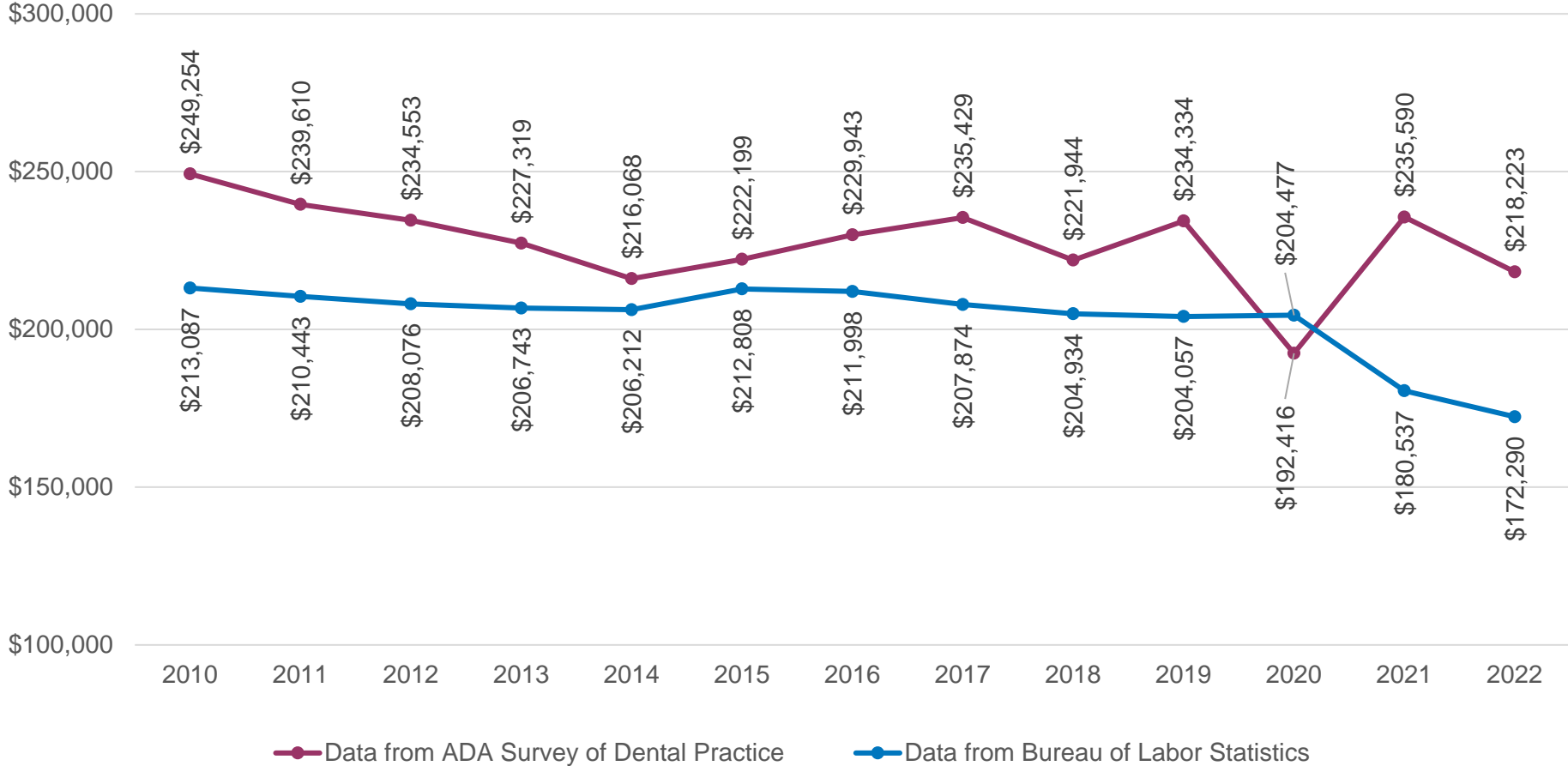
Percentage of General Practitioner Dentists Indicating They are “Too Busy” or “Overworked”



The percent of dentists indicating “Too busy to treat all people requesting appointments” or “Provided care to all who requested appointments but was overworked” is at an all-time high.

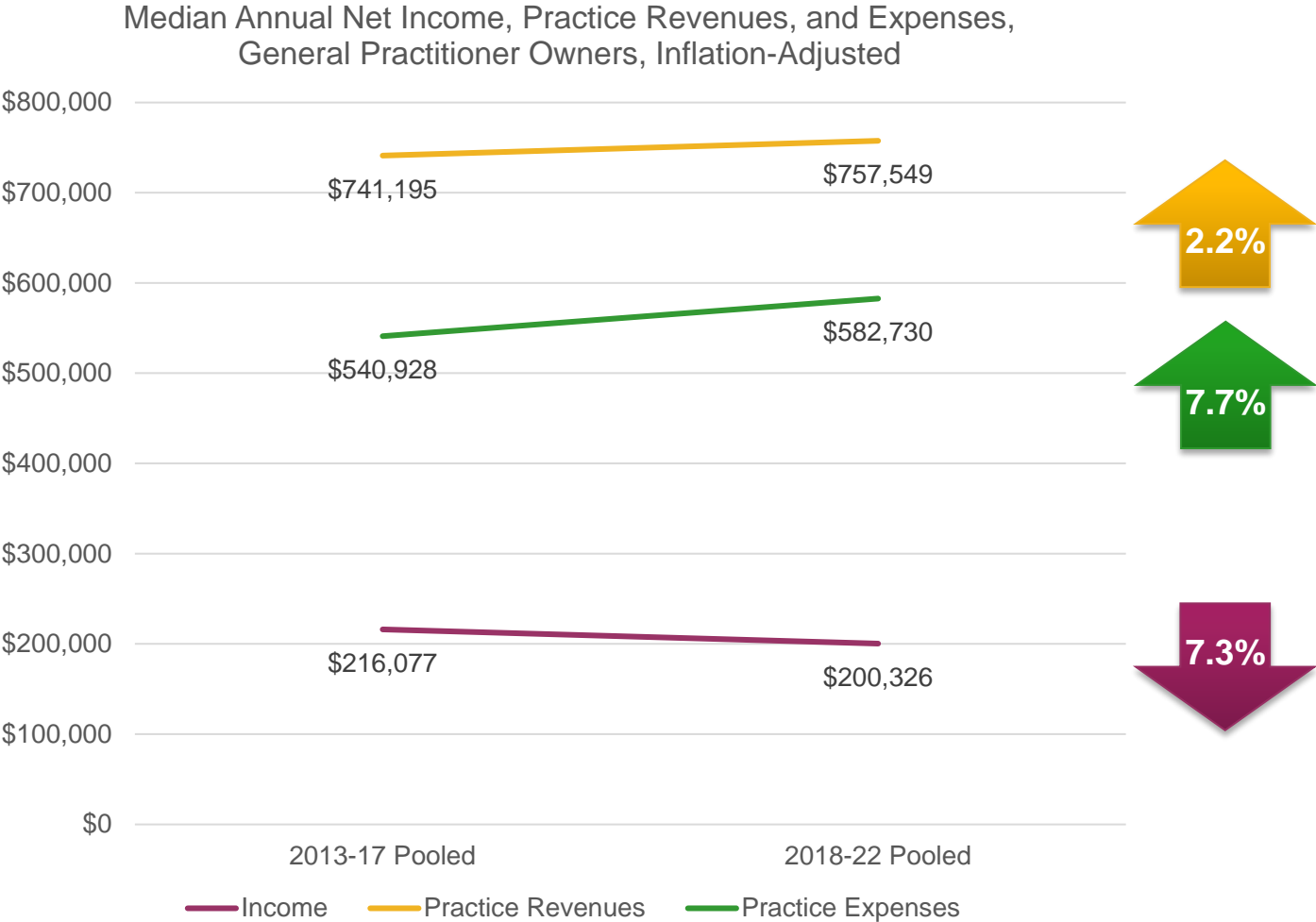
Decline in Average Net Income of Dentists

Average Annual Net Income, General Practitioners in Private Practice, Inflation-Adjusted



Average net income of GP dentists declined by 7% in 2022. The long-term trend shows a slight decline.

Practice Expenses are Rising Faster Than Revenue



Practice expenses are rising faster than practice revenues.

This is driving the downward trend in GP dentist net incomes.

Panel Q3:

What is the ADA's position, and what is the ADA doing to help close the workforce gap on a national level?

Identifying Strategies for Shoring up the Workforce

HPI engaged with multiple partners to conduct primary research on these issues and identify recruitment and retention strategies.

A comprehensive report was published in 2022 summarizing the findings.



American
Dental
Assistants
Association



Here's What the Research Tells Us...

Dental Workforce Shortages: Data to Navigate Today's Labor Market



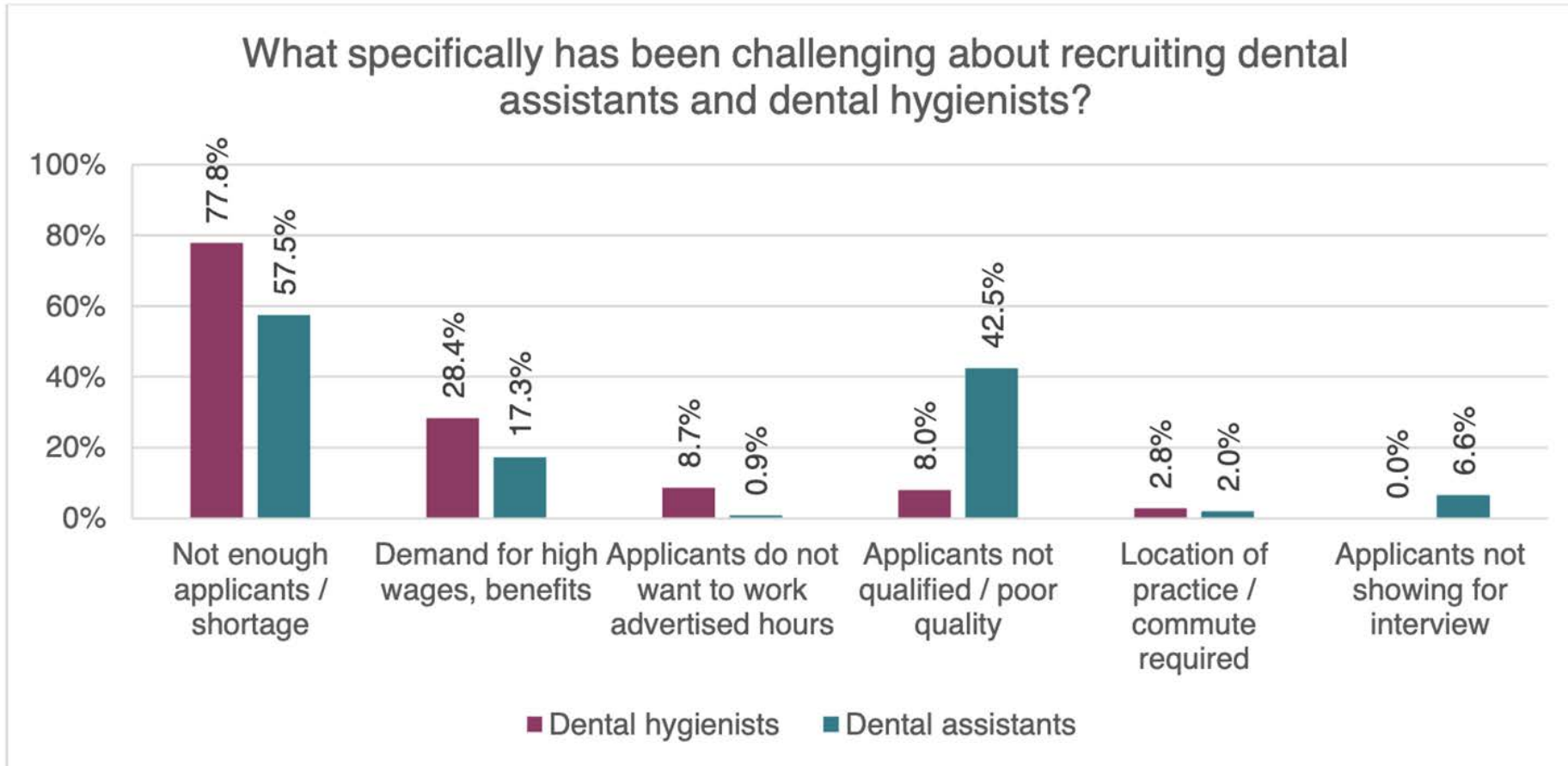
ADA American Dental Association*



Key Findings:

- About 1/3 of the dental assistant and dental hygienist workforce indicate they expect to **retire in 5 years or less.**
- **Factors associated with retention** include work-life balance, positive workplace culture, and ability to help patients.
- **Factors associated with attrition** include negative workplace culture, insufficient pay, lack of growth opportunity, inadequate benefits, and feeling overworked.

Lack of applicants and competitive market



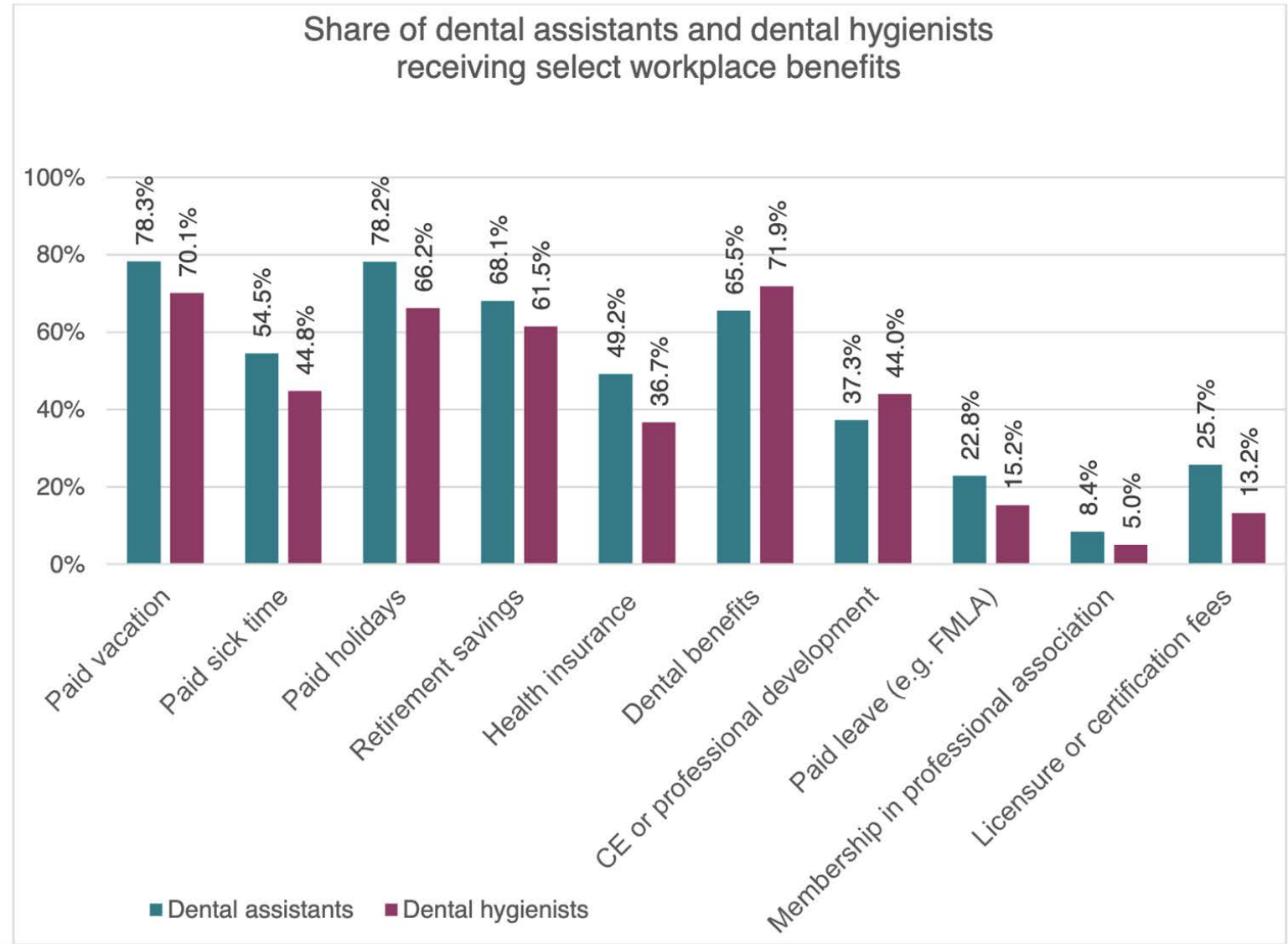
The #1 challenge with recruitment is lack of applicants.

The wage and benefit requirements of the applicants has also been a challenge for dentists.

Dentists also indicated a lack of qualified assistant applicants.

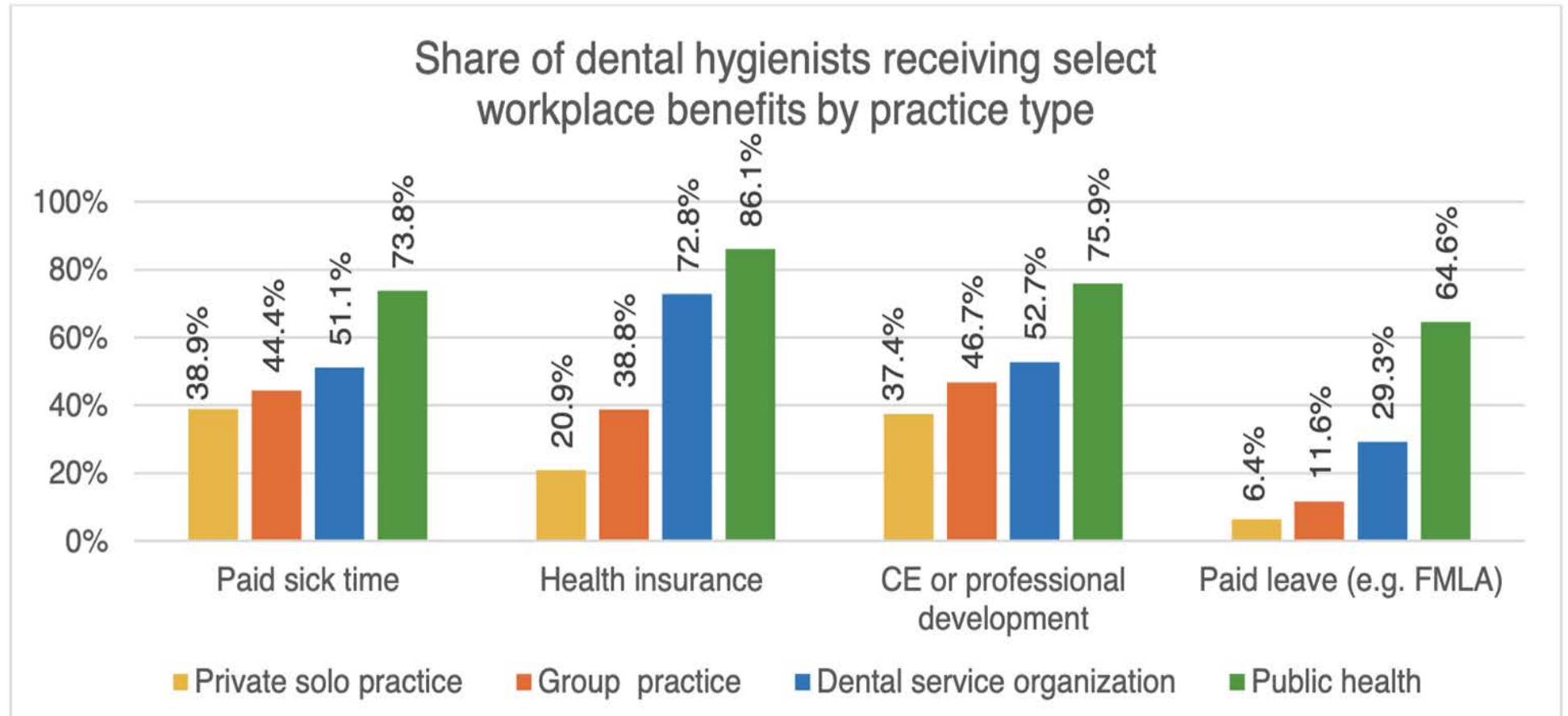
Common Benefits

The majority of dental assistants and dental hygienists indicated that they receive dental benefits, paid holidays, paid vacation, and retirement savings from their employers.



Rare Benefits

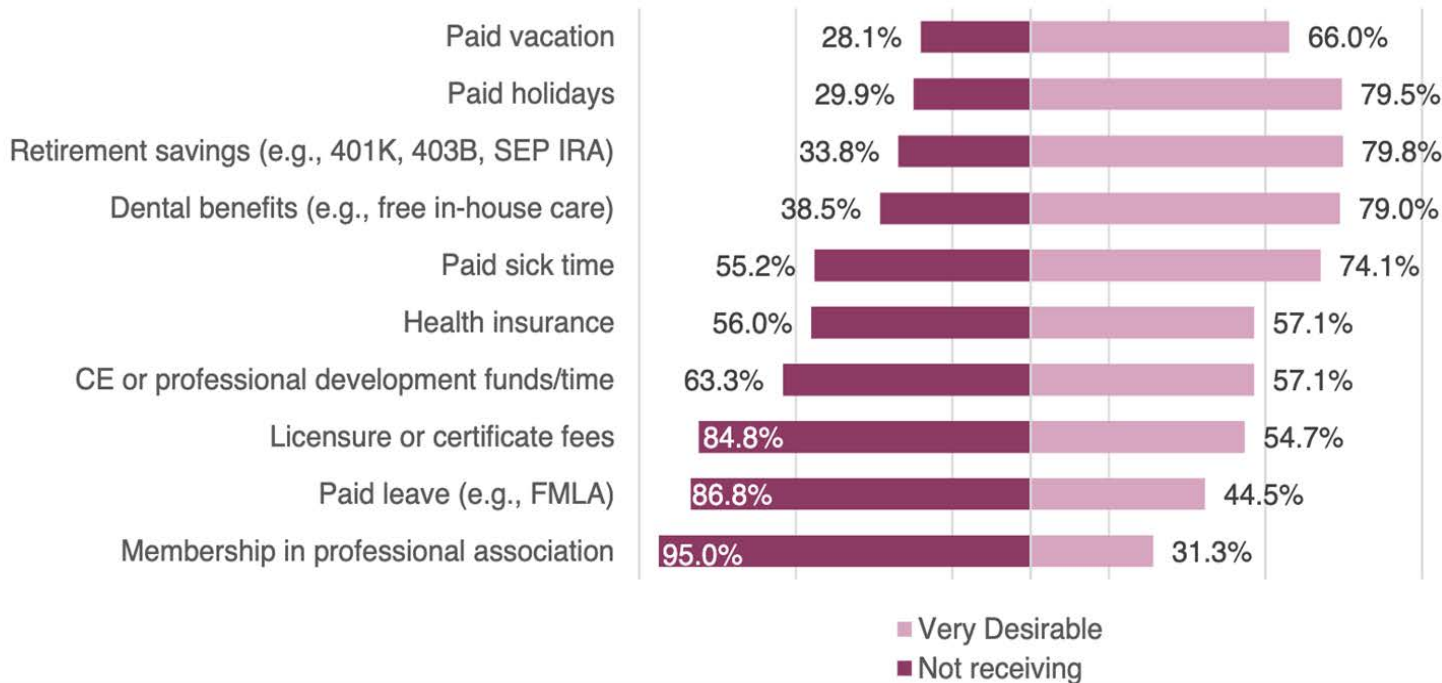
Health insurance, paid sick time, paid leave, and CE or professional development funds are rare overall.



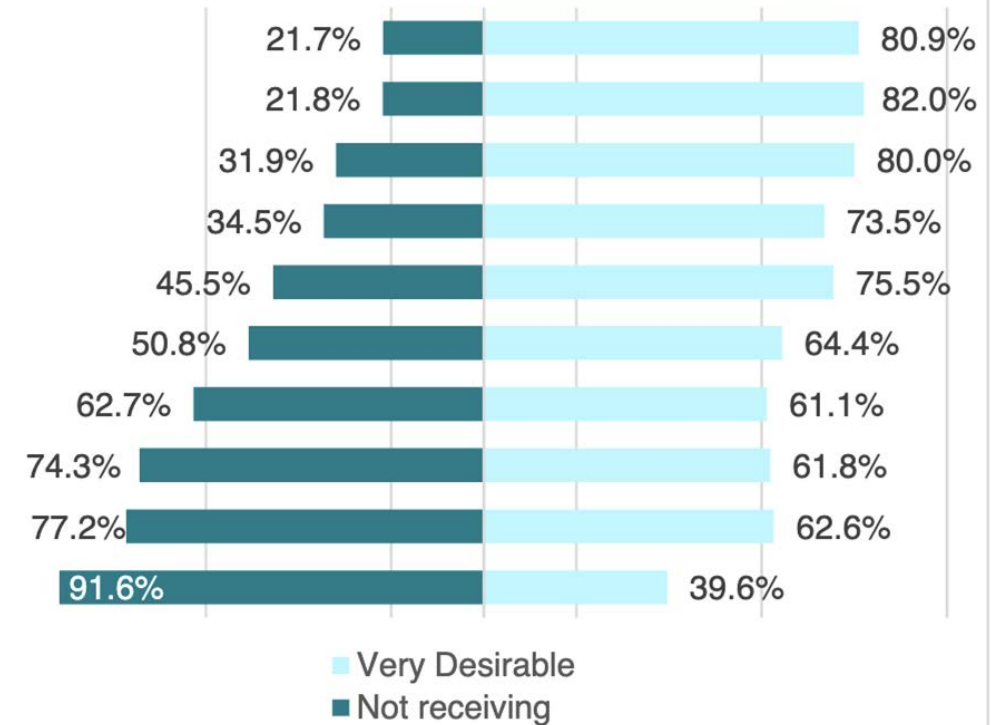
Desirable Benefits

Share of dental hygienists and dental assistants not receiving these workplace benefits, and the share not receiving who find the benefit "very desirable."

Dental Hygienists



Dental Assistants



Federal Workforce Legislation

Advocated for support of important workforce programs

Last summer, the ADA urged members to ask senators to support important workforce programs, including:

- Reauthorizing Action for Dental Health workforce grants
- Expanding the National Health Service Corps scholarship and loan repayment opportunities
- Extending the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education Program

ADVOCACY

ADA Action Alert seeks support for dental workforce measures

The ADA encourages members to contact their senators and ask them to support measures to address dental workforce issues. An [ADA Action Alert](#) requests that emails to senators seek support for reauthorization of the [Action for Dental Health](#) workforce grants to fund programs for dental professionals; the [Restoring America's Health Care Workforce and Readiness Act](#), which would increase funds for National Health Service Corps' scholarships and loan repayment programs; the [Resident Education Deferred Interest Act](#), which would address student loan repayment for dental residents; and the ability for dental professionals who have student loans to modify the interest rate to the current applicable rate. **Full Story:** [ADA News](#) (6/9)

ADA Supports the Senate's **Bipartisan Primary Care and Health Workforce Act**

- ***Increases dental workforce in rural and underserved areas*** by supporting grants to states, service programs, community health centers, and education.
- Passed the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee.

ADA Supports the House of Representatives' **Lower Costs, More Transparency Act**

- ***Extends dental workforce programs focused on service, community health centers, and education.***
- Passed the House in December and will head to the Senate for a vote.

ADA Supports the House and Senate's **Action for Dental Health (ADH) Act**

- ***Provides federal grants to states for the dental health needs of underserved populations, including workforce positions.***
- The ADH Act passed the House committee and awaits a vote by the full House.
- ADH provided grants of \$400,000/year for 4 years to over 35 state oral health programs.

To find out if your state has an ADH grant, please contact your state's oral health program.

You may also contact Corey McGee from the ADA Government Affairs team for more info: mcgeec@ada.org.

ADA Supports the House and Senate's **Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act**

- ***Allows tax-favored 529 plans to be used for dental professional credentials, dental certifications, and licenses for hygienists and dentists.***
- 18 cosponsors in the Senate and 115 cosponsors in the House.

ADA Seeks Annual Appropriations for Oral Health Workforce Programs, including:

- **Title VII Oral Health Training**
 - Predoctoral Dental Training Program: Trained 7,132 dental and dental hygiene students
 - Postdoctoral Dental Program: Trained 711 residents and fellows
- **Dental Faculty Loan Repayment**
 - Program provided loan repayment to 100 dental faculty and relieved over \$2.1 million in debt
- **State Oral Health Workforce Improvement Grant Program**
 - Trained 124 dental students, 29 dental residents, and 2 dental hygiene students
- **National Health Service Corps**

Scan this QR Code for more Information on ADA-supported workforce funding and how to apply

Programs include:

- **Dental Faculty Loan Repayment Program (DFLRP)**
 - Funds increase the number of dental and dental hygiene faculty.
- **Predoctoral Pediatric Training in General Dentistry and Dental Hygiene**
 - Funds go toward pediatric training for dentists and dental hygienists
- **Primary Care Dental Faculty Development Program**
 - Establishes training center for junior primary care dental faculty, Doctors of Dental Surgery (DDS), Doctors of Dental Medicine (DMD) and Dental Hygienists



Improving Licensure Portability

- **The Dentist and Dental Hygienist Compact** provides greater licensure portability for dentists and dental hygienists.
- Five states have passed the compact, and twelve states have introduced it so far in 2024. We need seven states to pass the compact and make it active.
- To learn more, visit www.ddhcompact.org



Helping Dental Practices Save Money

- Stopped the Red Flag Rule (2010) from being implemented
 - The Red Flag Rule would require dentists and other health care providers to develop and implement a written identity theft program for their practices.
 - Saving dentists an estimated \$500/practice



Helping Dental Practices Save Money

- Prevented elimination of the cash method of accounting
 - Saving thousands of dollars
- Enabled dentists to continue balance billing
- Defeated a Medicare Part B dental benefit legislative proposal
- Stopped the 2.3% tax increase on the sale of medical devices



Helping Dental Practices Save Money

- Secured National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards for practices using nitrous oxide sedation
 - Saving up to \$50,000 in costs
- Protected small practices from rushed OSHA rule removal of infection control exemption



Advocacy for Training Programs and Student Loans

- Secured concessions in DEA training mandate
- Prevented steep cuts to oral health training programs
- Achieved a DoE rule to prevent the addition of accrued, unpaid interest to the principal balance of student loans
- Preserved student loan interest deduction, established market-based rates/caps, & introduced income-based repayment



Washington AGD Dental Assistant School


- Opened in Jan. 2022 in collaboration with Dr. Mark Holifield, owner and CEO of Complete Dental Care Educational Center in Jackson, TN
- Offers an affordable 4-week accelerated program designed to train new dental assistants quickly and efficiently.

For more info:

waagddentalassistantschool.org

Innovative Ways to Recruit Dental Assistants

BY DR. DZON NGUYEN



Dr. Nguyen is an expert at taking care of his patients. He loves his work and is determined to make each patient's visit fun.

His goal is to provide quality services for his patients to achieve long-term good dental health. He believes healthy and beautiful smiles can be possible with regularly scheduled appointments and proper preventive dental care. Dr. Nguyen is trained in the most advanced techniques. Dr. Nguyen believes CERC (CERAMIC) porcelain crowns is one appointment.

He enjoys skiing, snowboarding, water boarding, water surfing, and mountain biking with his college sweetheart and their three girls.


If you need at least one new assistant, you are not alone. More than 80% of dental offices are reporting the desire to hire. At the Washington Academy of General Dentistry, we've heard if you join and we have been working for 2 years to solve this issue. By opening the market, most efficient and affordable way to attract people into the profession and train them well for you to be able to offset their immediate, we have an immediate solution to the problem. Our collaboration with Dr. Mark Holifield, the creator of the 4-Week DA program, has allowed us to bring a proven curriculum to the state of Washington offices who are already producing students.

So how do you use this year advantage in hiring that your graduate students or perhaps even an RDA trained local dental assistant? As you well know, the employee market is insane right now. Every industry is scrambling for employees offering generous wages and sign on bonuses. The current unemployment rate for King County is under 3% but in reality, it feels like it's a negative number. This has even translated to a school leaving nearly one of our students for a job before the first day of class and we have it making the full full of dentists. But there are ways to separate yourself from the other dental offices that are being successful at hiring and retaining employees currently in our culture. There are many ways to impart value into your business but one that does use utilizing the market to their advantage has been the willingness to spend on employee education. When an employee, especially a new or potential employee, that their employer is willing to invest in them, it forms a bond of trust. General dentists are on the line of education in their advertising for assistants. They promise them a lot, come here and we will pay for you to become an RDA. Truthfully, that's a powerful word. Dentistry is not just a job but a profession. We make a difference in people's lives. A really effective ad would say something to the effect, "Come work for us and we will pay for the RDA for your name." Every year wants to be proud of what the dental profession has that advantage over other businesses that lack for manufacturing. Take advantage of this in your ads. Ask the question, "Do you just want an employee or a health professional?"

Fortunately, we have a school that isn't a juggling block in time or cost to help join the profession. The model that we are being used commonly used right in dental offices to pay for the employee's education with the promise of an on-the-job period to pay them a low of just a few months. The deal is most desperate for a 2-3 month period to pay them a low of just a few months. The average time we see usually enough time for the employee to get comfortable in their job and

Together, we will solve this assistant shortage issue. The WA AGD is committed to providing the best of our members. If you would like more information, please visit our website waagddentalassistantschool.org or call 800-445-2244 or education for life!

www.waagddentalassistantschool.org




Washington AGD
Dental Assistant School

Now Enrolling

Complete your 4-week dental assistant program in only 10-12 weeks!

Start today! Don't wait. Visit our website today to get more information on dental assistant training!



Workforce Resources Available From The ADA

Tools for dentists on recruiting, retaining, and training the dental team

Focus on
WORKFORCE



[ADA.org/dentalstaff](https://ada.org/dentalstaff)

- Promoting dental team careers
- Staff position descriptions
- Dental employment agreements

...and other resources

Panel Q4:

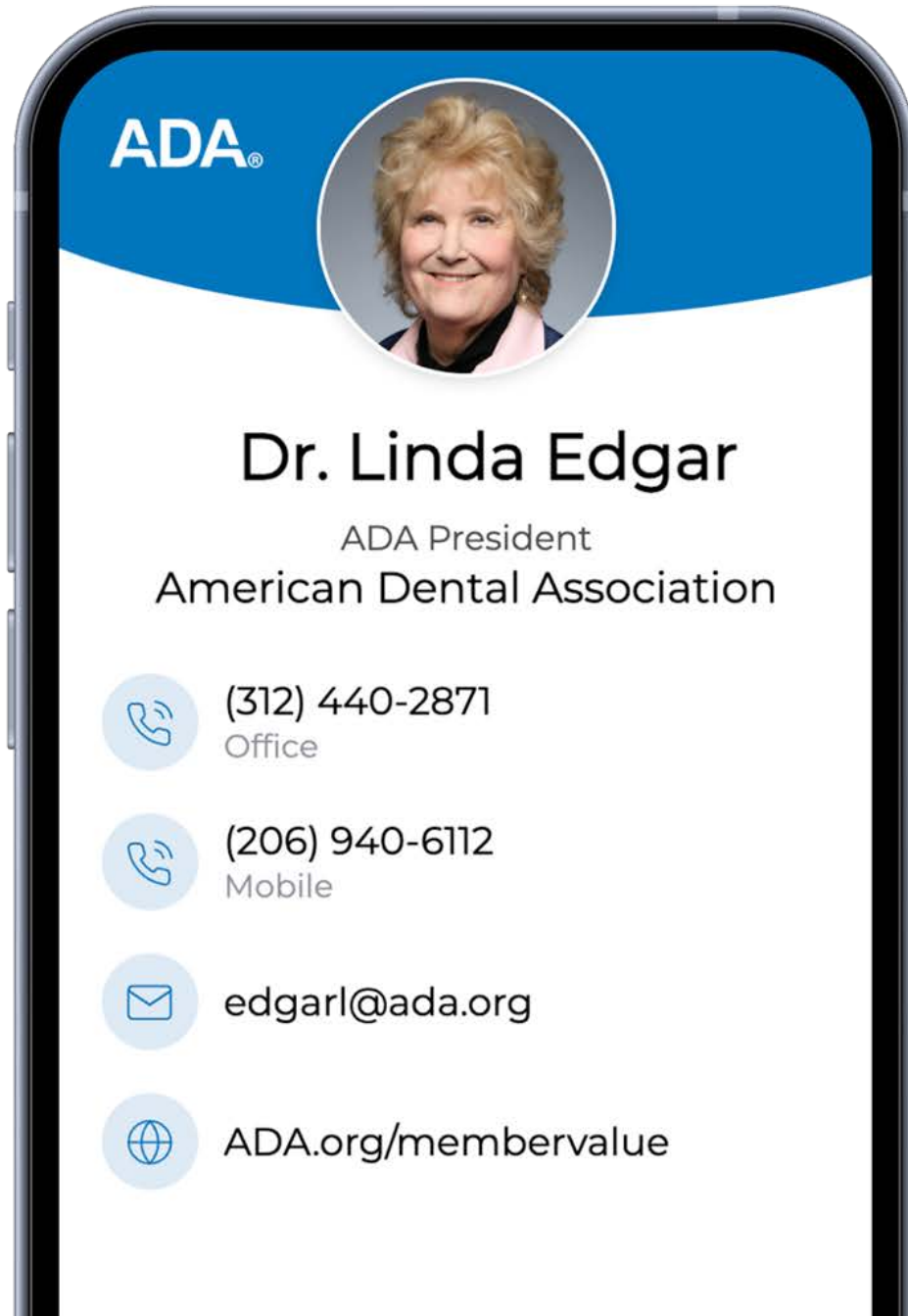
What does the future of staffing look like?

Emerging technology can help mitigate staffing shortages

Technology is shaping the course of the dental staffing world.

- Augmented intelligence and digital imaging are transforming patient care.
 - The ADA developed AI standards in 2023
- Tele-dentistry is revolutionizing remote consultations.





ADA®



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