

General Dental Council

Working patterns data

Summary of key highlights and insights*

October 2024

*Dentist data published in March 2024 and dental care professional data published in October 2024

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Introduction

As part of their annual renewal, we asked dentists and DCPs to answer a short survey on how they work, where they work and how long they work for each week.

This insight and information can help improve the sector's understanding of dental professionals' working patterns and inform discussions about future workforce resource planning.

24,152 dentists (55% of the dentist register) and 43,692 DCPs (58% of the DCP register) answered the working patterns questions. For DCPs this represented 54,600 (64%) of the total number of registered DCP titles.

This data will be published on the [reports section of the GDC website](#) and can be viewed on a national and individual country level. This can be viewed at dentist and total DCP level, as well as by individual DCP title.

The DCP data can be viewed as a total or by professional title, and at a national or country level.

Where the numbers are less than five, they have been removed to avoid identification of any individuals. These are identified by '...' in the excel tables.

The key highlights summarised in the following pages are based on an initial review by the GDC. They should not be considered as a comprehensive review of the findings from the data, rather they are a summary of some of the key highlights based on a UK wide analysis.

We would encourage stakeholder and professional bodies to review the data as there may be other highlights or information that would support workforce discussions that have not been highlighted in the tables that follow.

Dentists (initially published in March 2024)

| Key highlights from questions (Dentists) | | |
|--|---|---|
| Q# | Question | High level insight |
| 1 | Are you currently working in the dental sector? | The vast majority (97%) were working in the dental sector. Less than 15 (0.7%) are seeking work. |
| 2 | What is your current primary field of practice? | Nearly nine-in-ten (89%) were working primarily as a dentist, and a further 9% were working as a specialist. |
| 3 | Which of the following best describes your current employment situation in the dental sector? | More than half (57%) were self-employed/agency or working as a locum. Only around a fifth (20%) were employees. |
| 4 | Considering all dental sector work you do, on average how is your time spent between clinical and non-clinical work? | More than four-fifths (85%) were working predominantly (over 75%) or fully in clinical roles, a further 10% were undertaking a mix of clinical and non-clinical work. |
| 5 | How many hours do you normally work a week as a dental professional? | More than two-fifths (42%) worked 30 hours/week or less. |
| 6 | Which dental setting/s do you work in? | Nearly three-quarters (73%) worked in a general or specialist dental practice. Around 7% worked in a dental hospital, 5% in other hospital settings and 5% in community dental services. |
| 7 | How many places of work do you commonly work in? | Almost four in ten (37%) regularly worked in more than one location, with 62% commonly working in one location. |
| 8 | Considering all dental sector work you do, which of the following best describes the type of dental care you most commonly provide? | Nearly a fifth (19%) provided only private care, with no NHS and a further 14% said they worked predominantly (over 75% of their time) in private care. |
| 9 | As a dental professional, where do you work? | Four out of five (80%) worked in England, 11% in Scotland, 5% in Wales and 4% in Northern Ireland. |

Total DCP response numbers

The total number of DCPs who completed the survey was 43,692 (58% of DCP register). This represented 54,600 professional titles (64% of DCP register)

| Role | Total number of titles | Total number who completed survey | Working patterns response rate |
|----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Clinical dental technician | 430 | 256 | 60% |
| Dental hygienist | 10,175 | 6,836 | 67% |
| Dental nurse | 62,224 | 39,529 | 64% |
| Dental technician | 4,910 | 2,674 | 54% |
| Dental therapist | 6,878 | 4,427 | 64% |
| Orthodontic therapist | 1,121 | 778 | 69% |
| Total | 85,738 | 54,600 | 64% |

All DCP titles

| Key highlights from questions (all DCP titles) | | |
|--|--|---|
| Q# | Question | High level insight |
| 1 | Are you currently working in the dental sector? | Nearly 99% of responding DCPs are currently working in the dental sector. |
| 2 | What is your current primary field of practice? | Over three quarters (76%) of all respondents are working as dental nurses in the UK. The next largest cohort is dental hygienists, at nearly 10% . Less than 1% of respondents are working as clinical dental technicians. |
| 3 | Which of the following best describes your current employment situation in the dental sector? | Nearly 80% of responding DCPs are employed. Only around 15% of all DCPs are self-employed/locum agency workers. This however varies significantly by professional title. Around 6% of those working in 'NHS only' clinical roles were self-employed /locum/agency. This is compared to 30% of those working in 'Private only' clinical roles, and 18% of dentists who worked in a 'Mix of NHS and Private' clinical roles. |
| 4 | Considering all dental sector work you do, on average how is your time spent between clinical and non-clinical work? | Just under half of all responding DCPs (46.6%) are working fully in clinical roles. A further 18% are spending at least three quarters of their time in clinical roles. Nearly 6% of respondents are fully non-clinical. |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| 5 | How many hours do you normally work a week as a dental professional? | <p>Just under half (48.3%) of all DCP respondents told us they work between 30 and 40 hours a week.</p> <p>Slightly less than that (45.5%) said they work 30 hours or less.</p> |
| 6 | Which dental setting/s do you work in? | <p>Nearly two-thirds (64%) of respondents work in general dental practice, just under 6% work in a community setting, while 5% work in a dental hospital setting.</p> <p>Nearly 12% work in a specialist dental practice.</p> |
| 7 | How many places of work do you commonly work in? | <p>Over three quarters (77%) of all responding DCPs commonly work in one location.</p> <p>Over 20% regularly work in more than one location, with at least 1% even working in seven or more locations.</p> |
| 8 | Considering all dental sector work you do, which of the following best describes the type of dental care you most commonly provide? | <p>A quarter of responding DCPs said they provided only private care, with no NHS, and a further 11% said they worked predominantly (over 75% of their time) in private care.</p> <p>Only 15% of responding DCPs are fully NHS, with no private care, and a further 12% said they worked predominantly (over 75% of their time) in NHS care.</p> <p>More than a third (35%) of DCPs said they provided a mix of NHS and Private care.</p> |
| 9 | As a dental professional, where do you work? | <p>More than four out of five (81%) responding DCPs work in England, 10.5% in Scotland, 5% in Wales and 3% in Northern Ireland.</p> |

Clinical dental technicians (CDTs)

| Key highlights from questions (CDTs) | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| Q# | Question | High level insight |
| 1 | Are you currently working in the dental sector? | N/A |
| 2 | What is your current primary field of practice? | The vast majority (91%) of CDT respondents told us their primary field of practice was as a clinical dental technician. The rest practise as dental technicians. |
| 3 | Which of the following best describes your current employment situation in the dental sector? | More than two-fifths (43%) of CDT respondents are owners or part-own a business. Over a third (34%) are self-employed/locum/agency workers, while nearly 22% are employed. |
| 4 | Considering all dental sector work you do, on average how is your time spent between clinical and non-clinical work? | Over two-thirds (67%) of responding CDTs spend their time on a mix of clinical and non-clinical work. Only around 4% are fully clinical. |
| 5 | How many hours do you normally work a week as a dental professional? | Just under half (49%) of CDT respondents told us they work between 30 and 40 hours a week. Just over one in ten (11%) said they work between 50 and 60 hours. |
| 6 | Which dental setting/s do you work in? | Just under half (46%) of respondents work in a lab setting, nearly 9% work in a specialist dental practice and nearly 32% work in general dental practice. |
| 7 | How many places of work do you commonly work in? | Over half (55%) of responding CDTs commonly work in one location. Over 20% of them regularly work in two locations, with one in ten working in three locations. |
| 8 | Considering all dental sector work you do, which of the following best describes the type of dental care you most commonly provide? | Nearly two-thirds (64%) of responding CDTs said they provided only private care, with no NHS, and a further 13% said they worked predominantly (over 75% of their time) in private care. 18% said they carry out a mix of NHS and private care. |
| 9 | As a dental professional, where do you work? | More than four-fifths (86%) of responding CDTs work in England, with a further 7% working in Scotland. |

Dental hygienists

| Key highlights from questions (dental hygienists) | | |
|---|---|---|
| Q# | Question | High level insight |
| 1 | Are you currently working in the dental sector? | Nearly 99% of responding DHs are currently working in the dental sector. |
| 2 | What is your current primary field of practice? | More than two-thirds (69%) of DH respondents told us their primary field of practice was as a dental hygienist. Nearly 30% practise as dental therapists. |
| 3 | Which of the following best describes your current employment situation in the dental sector? | Two-thirds (66%) of DHs are self-employed/locum/agency workers, while 28% are employed. |
| 4 | Considering all dental sector work you do, on average how is your time spent between clinical and non-clinical work? | More than four-fifths (82%) responding DHs are fully clinical. One in ten (10%) are predominantly clinical, while less than 1% are fully non-clinical. |
| 5 | How many hours do you normally work a week as a dental professional? | Nearly two-thirds (64%) of DH respondents told us they work less than 30 hours a week. A third said 33% said they work between 30 and 40 hours. |
| 6 | Which dental setting/s do you work in? | Four-fifths (80%) of DH respondents work in general dental practice, just over 3% work in a community dental service and 7% work in specialist dental practice. |
| 7 | How many places of work do you commonly work in? | Almost two-fifths (39%) of DH respondents regularly work in two locations, with a similar proportion (38%) saying they work in one location. A further 17% work across three locations. |
| 8 | Considering all dental sector work you do, which of the following best describes the type of dental care you most commonly provide? | Just under half (48%) of responding DHs said they provided only private care, with no NHS, and a further 18% said they worked predominantly (over 75% of their time) in private care. Nearly 22% said they carry out a mix of NHS and private care. |
| 9 | As a dental professional, where do you work? | More than four-fifths (85%) of responding DHs work in England, with a further 8% working in Scotland, 4.8% in Wales, and 1.6% in Northern Ireland. |

Dental nurses

| Key highlights from questions (dental nurses) | | |
|---|---|--|
| Q# | Question | High level insight |
| 1 | Are you currently working in the dental sector? | Just under 1.5% of responding DNs are seeking work in the dental sector. |
| 2 | What is your current primary field of practice? | More than nine in ten (92%) of DN respondents told us they currently practise as a dental nurse. 2.5% of respondents said they primarily practised as a dental hygienist. |
| 3 | Which of the following best describes your current employment situation in the dental sector? | Nearly nine-tenths (88%) of respondents are employed, while 7% of DN respondents are self-employed/locum/agency workers. Nearly 3% are on parental leave. |
| 4 | Considering all dental sector work you do, on average how is your time spent between clinical and non-clinical work? | More than two-fifths (44%) are fully clinical. A quarter (25%) of responding DNs spend their time on a mix of clinical and non-clinical work. |
| 5 | How many hours do you normally work a week as a dental professional? | Half (50%) of DN respondents told us they work between 30 and 40 hours a week. Around 28% said they work between 20 and 30 hours. |
| 6 | Which dental setting/s do you work in? | Two-thirds (66%) work in general dental practice, around 13% work in a specialist dental practice and 5% work in a dental hospital. |
| 7 | How many places of work do you commonly work in? | Around four-fifths (81%) of responding DNs commonly work in one location. 11% of them regularly work in two locations, with 1.3% even working in seven locations or more. |
| 8 | Considering all dental sector work you do, which of the following best describes the type of dental care you most commonly provide? | More than a third (37%) said they carry out a mix of NHS and private care. More than a fifth (22%) of responding DNs said they provided only private care, with no NHS, and a further 10% said they worked predominantly (over 75% of their time) in private care. |
| 9 | As a dental professional, where do you work? | More than four-fifths (81%) of responding DNs work in England, a further 11% work in Scotland, 5% in Wales, and 3.3% in Northern Ireland. |

Dental technicians

| Key highlights from questions (dental technicians) | | |
|--|---|---|
| Q# | Question | High level insight |
| 1 | Are you currently working in the dental sector? | N/A |
| 2 | What is your current primary field of practice? | The majority (87%) of DT respondents told us their primary field of practice was as a dental technician. Just under 10% practise primarily as clinical dental technicians. |
| 3 | Which of the following best describes your current employment situation in the dental sector? | Over three-fifths (61%) of DT respondents are employed. Nearly 23% are owners or part own the business, while 14% are self-employed/locum/agency workers. |
| 4 | Considering all dental sector work you do, on average how is your time spent between clinical and non-clinical work? | Over half (53%) of responding DTs spend their time fully non-clinical. Only around 7% are fully clinical. |
| 5 | How many hours do you normally work a week as a dental professional? | Less than three-fifths (59%) of DT respondents told us they work between 30 and 40 hours a week. 12.5% said they work between 40 and 50 hours. Around 17% work 30 hours or under. |
| 6 | Which dental setting/s do you work in? | Over two-thirds (67%) of respondents work in a lab setting, nearly 10% work in a dental hospital and about 7% work in general dental practice. |
| 7 | How many places of work do you commonly work in? | Nearly nine-in-ten (89%) of responding DTs commonly work in one location. Around 7% of them regularly work in two locations, with 1% even working in seven or more locations. |
| 8 | Considering all dental sector work you do, which of the following best describes the type of dental care you most commonly provide? | A third of respondents said they carry out a mix of NHS and private care. 16% provide fully NHS care. Around 30% of responding DTs said they provided only private care, with no NHS, and a further 10% said they worked predominantly (over 75% of their time) in private care. |
| 9 | As a dental professional, where do you work? | More than four-fifths (82%) of responding DTs work in England, just over 9% work in Scotland, 5% in Wales and 3.5% in Northern Ireland. |

Dental therapists

| Key highlights from questions (dental therapists) | | |
|---|---|---|
| Q# | Question | High level insight |
| 1 | Are you currently working in the dental sector? | Just under 2% of responding DThs are currently seeking work in the dental sector. |
| 2 | What is your current primary field of practice? | Nearly three-fifths (58%) of DTh respondents told us their primary field of practice was as a dental therapist. Just under 40% said they primarily practise as dental hygienists. |
| 3 | Which of the following best describes your current employment situation in the dental sector? | More than three-fifths (63%) of DTh respondents are self-employed/locum/agency workers, while 31% are employed. Only 1.3% are owners or part-own a business. |
| 4 | Considering all dental sector work you do, on average how is your time spent between clinical and non-clinical work? | Nearly four fifths (79%) responding DThs spend their time in fully clinical work, with a further 12% working predominantly clinically (at least 75% of time spent). Less than 1% are fully non-clinical. |
| 5 | How many hours do you normally work a week as a dental professional? | Around two-fifths (41%) of DTh respondents told us they work between 30 and 40 hours a week. Just over one third said they work between 20 and 30 hours, with a total of 56% of respondents working 30 hours or less. |
| 6 | Which dental setting/s do you work in? | More than three-quarters (77%) of DTh respondents work in general dental practice, 6% work in a specialist dental practice and just over 5% work in community dental services. |
| 7 | How many places of work do you commonly work in? | Nearly two fifths (39%) of responding DThs commonly work in one location, whilst a similar proportion (38%) regularly work in two locations. |
| 8 | Considering all dental sector work you do, which of the following best describes the type of dental care you most commonly provide? | A third (33%) of responding DThs said they provided only private care, with no NHS, and a further 16% said they worked predominantly (over 75% of their time) in private care. Just under 30% said they carry out a mix of NHS and private care. Only 7% are fully NHS. |
| 9 | As a dental professional, where do you work? | Over 85% of responding DThs work in England, a further 9% work in Scotland, 4.6% in Wales and 1% in Northern Ireland. |

Orthodontic therapists

| Key highlights from questions (orthodontic therapists) | | |
|--|---|---|
| Q# | Question | High level insight |
| 1 | Are you currently working in the dental sector? | N/A |
| 2 | What is your current primary field of practice? | Nearly nine-in-ten (89%) of OT respondents told us their primary field of practice was as an orthodontic therapist. Nearly 9% said they primarily practise as dental therapists. |
| 3 | Which of the following best describes your current employment situation in the dental sector? | Over three-quarters (76%) of responding OTs are employed. 20% are self-employed/locum/agency workers, while 2.5% are currently on parental leave. |
| 4 | Considering all dental sector work you do, on average how is your time spent between clinical and non-clinical work? | More than four-fifths (83%) of responding OTs are fully clinical, with a further 13% spending at least 75% of their time on clinical work. Only 2.5% spend their time on a mix of clinical and non-clinical work. |
| 5 | How many hours do you normally work a week as a dental professional? | Over half (53.8%) of OT respondents told us they work between 30 and 40 hours a week. 33.4% said they work between 20 and 30 hours. |
| 6 | Which dental setting/s do you work in? | Nearly two-thirds (65%) of respondents work in a specialist dental practice, while just under 18% work in general dental practice. |
| 7 | How many places of work do you commonly work in? | Over three-fifths (61%) of responding OTs commonly work in one location. Around 27% of them regularly work in two locations. |
| 8 | Considering all dental sector work you do, which of the following best describes the type of dental care you most commonly provide? | 12.5% said they provided only NHS care, and a further 5.7% said they worked fully in private care. More than two-fifths (45%) of responding OTs said they carry out a mix of NHS and private care. |
| 9 | As a dental professional, where do you work? | More than four-fifths (84%) of responding OTs work in England, a further 10% work in Scotland, 4.3% in Wales and 2% in Northern Ireland. |