

Michigan Department of Community Health

Survey of Dental Hygienists

Survey Findings 2008

INTRODUCTION

In 2008, the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) conducted the third annual survey of licensed dental hygienists to gather information about their employment characteristics, education, and work environment. A total of 3,448 dental hygienists received the survey. Responses were received online or by return mail from 2,163 dental hygienists, for a response rate of 63 percent and a margin of error of ± 1.3 percent with 95 percent confidence.¹

The MDCH contracted with Public Sector Consultants Inc. (PSC) for development, implementation, and analysis of the survey of dental hygienists. The survey was designed in collaboration with the Michigan Dental Hygienists Association. The instrument contained questions about employment status, education, location and setting of primary and secondary practice sites, compensation, whether requirements are met to administer local anesthesia and nitrous oxide, professional satisfaction, the length of time that the respondent intends to continue practicing, as well as a number of demographic questions (age, gender, race/ethnicity). The survey questions and response frequencies are provided in the Appendix.

As of January 2008, a total of 9,734 dental hygienists were licensed in Michigan. All hygienists are required to renew their license every three years from the first year of licensure, thus dividing the universe of hygienists into three cohorts of roughly equal size. For 2008, 3,448 hygienists were eligible for license renewal. The surveys were mailed to all dental hygienists renewing their license in 2008. Hygienists could either return the two-page paper version of the survey by mail or complete the survey online.

The sample for this survey was drawn from the Michigan licensure files maintained by the MDCH. The 2,163 responses include fully and partially completed surveys (that is, those with information missing for one or more variables), meaning that sample size for individual variables will differ and the margin of error may change slightly depending upon the amount of missing data for that particular variable.

While the results of the 2008 survey of hygienists are generally consistent with those of the 2006 and 2007 surveys, differences in the data that fall outside the margin of error are noted. Key survey findings are presented below.

¹ For example, if the answer to a survey question is 60 percent “Yes,” the margin of error and confidence level mean that if this question were asked 100 times, in 95 occurrences the answer of the entire universe of possible respondents would be between 58.7 percent and 61.3 percent (i.e., the ± 1.3 percent margin of error).

EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS

- About 89 percent of dental hygienists licensed in Michigan are working either part- or full-time as a dental hygienist in Michigan. Analysis of data in this report focuses on these “active” licensed dental hygienists.
 - Among active dental hygienists in Michigan, 48 percent are working 30 or more hours per week in dental hygiene or a related area; 44 percent are working between 12 and 29 hours; and 8 percent work fewer than 12 hours per week in dental hygiene or a related area (see Exhibit 1).
- About 9 percent of dental hygienists licensed in Michigan are working as a dental hygienist, but not in Michigan.
- Thirteen percent of licensed dental hygienists are not working as a hygienist.

EXHIBIT 1

Employment Characteristics of Dental Hygienists, 2008

	Percentage of all hygienists	Percentage of active hygienists in Michigan
30 or more hours per week in dental hygiene or related area	43%	48%
12–29 hours per week in dental hygiene or related area	39	44
Less than 12 hours per week in dental hygiene or related area	7	8
Not employed and seeking employment in dental hygiene or related area	3	NA
Not employed and seeking employment outside of dental hygiene	<1	NA
Temporarily not working and not looking for a job	4	NA
Retired, with no plans to return to work	2	NA
Employed in another field	2	NA
Licensed hygienists working in hygiene-related area in Michigan	82%	NA
Licensed hygienists working in hygiene-related area outside of Michigan	9	NA
Licensed hygienists not working in hygiene-related area	11	NA

SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dental Hygienists 2008.

NOTE: Percentages may not equal 100 percent due to rounding. NA = Not applicable.

Among the 3 percent of hygienists who are not employed and are seeking employment in hygiene or a related area, most indicate that this is the result of having difficulty finding a hygienist position (84 percent).

Among the 3 percent of hygienists who are either employed in a field other than hygiene or unemployed and seeking work outside of dental hygiene, the largest proportion (29 percent) say this is because they find such employment more professionally rewarding.

This percentage has declined considerably since 2006, when nearly 70 percent of hygienists employed in a field other than hygiene or seeking employment outside of hygiene said they found other work more professionally rewarding. In 2007, the figure was 43 percent.

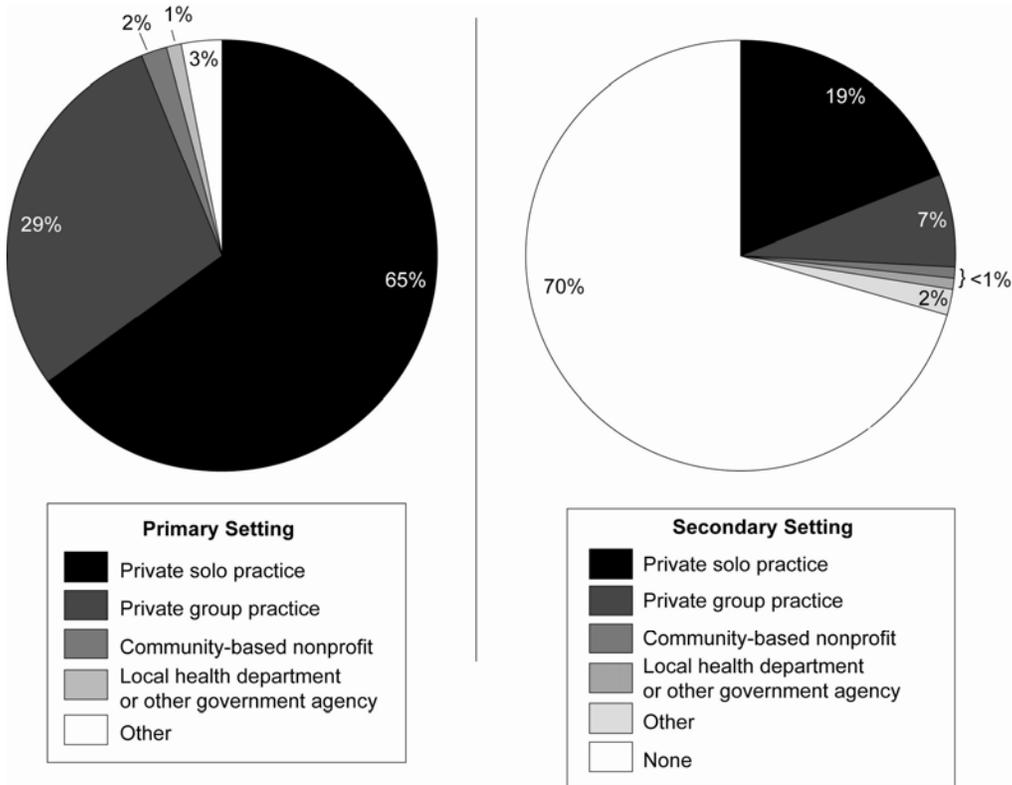
A similar proportion (approximately 27 percent) of licensed hygienists who are either employed or seeking employment in another field say that wages are better in other types of work; this proportion has remained fairly constant. Another 27 percent say they are seeking work outside of dental hygiene because of the difficulty finding a hygienist position. This is the same percentage found in 2007, but represents a large increase over 2006, when only 12 percent said they were seeking other types of employment due to difficulty finding work as a hygienist.

PRACTICE SETTING CHARACTERISTICS

About 31 percent of active dental hygienists work at more than one site; 70 percent work at only one site as a dental hygienist. The primary practice setting of the majority (65 percent) of active dental hygienists is a private solo practice, while slightly more than a quarter (29 percent) work primarily in a private *group* practice. About 2 percent of active hygienists work primarily in a community-based nonprofit; another 1 percent work in a local health department or other government agency; and 3 percent work in another setting.

The secondary practice setting of almost a fifth (19 percent) of active dental hygienists is a private solo practice and about 7 percent work secondarily in a private group practice. About 1 percent work secondarily in a community-based nonprofit; another 1 percent work in a local health department or other government agency; and 2 percent report working in a secondary practice in another setting (see Exhibit 2).

EXHIBIT 2
Practice Settings of Active Dental Hygienists in Michigan, 2008



SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dental Hygienists 2008.

SPECIAL SKILLS

Administering Local Anesthesia and Nitrous Oxide

About 41 percent of active dental hygienists report that they have met the requirements to administer local anesthesia. This percentage has increase since 2006 and 2007, when, respectively, 34 percent and 37 percent of active dental hygienists reported meeting requirements to administer local anesthesia. About 7 percent of active hygienists say they are currently working toward meeting these requirements, a slight decrease from the proportions reported the previous surveys.

Approximately 30 percent of active hygienists report meeting the requirements to administer nitrous oxide. This has also increased since 2006 and 2007 when, respectively, 26 percent and 28 percent of active hygienists reported meeting these requirements. About 10 percent of active dental hygienists say they are currently working toward meeting those requirements, again, a slight decrease from the levels reported in 2006 and 2007.

About 35 percent of active hygienists do administer local anesthesia in their practice, an increase over 2007, when 30 percent reported administering local anesthesia. About 24

percent administer nitrous oxide, essentially unchanged from the levels reported in the 2006 and 2007 surveys (see Exhibit 3).

EXHIBIT 3

Administration of Local Anesthesia and Nitrous Oxide by Active Dental Hygienists in Michigan, 2008

Type of anesthesia	Meet requirements to administer	Working toward meeting requirements to administer	Administer
Local anesthesia	41%	7%	35%
Nitrous oxide	30	10	24

SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dental Hygienists 2008.

Speaking a Foreign Language

About 8 percent of active dental hygienists speak another language in addition to English. Three percent speak Spanish, 1 percent speak French, less than 1 percent speak Arabic, and 5 percent speak a language other than these.

COMPENSATION AND FRINGE BENEFITS

Survey respondents were asked to indicate all of the ways in which they are paid. About 12 percent of active dental hygienists are paid a salary. The vast majority (82 percent) are paid an hourly wage. Only 5 percent are paid a day rate and 9 percent are paid a percentage of production (service fees charged by the dentist). These percentages add up to more than 100 percent because some hygienists work at multiple sites and, therefore, may receive more than one type of compensation.

Respondents were also asked to indicate all of the benefits they receive through any of their employers. The employment benefits received most commonly by active hygienists include vacation (68 percent) and holidays (64 percent), continuing education (65 percent), retirement/401k (51 percent), and a uniform allowance (47 percent).

Only about a third (28 percent) of active hygienists receive paid sick leave from their employer. One quarter have medical insurance (24 percent) and one fifth (20 percent) have dental insurance through their employer; fewer still have vision insurance (6 percent) or life insurance (8 percent). Six percent receive help in paying association dues (see Exhibit 4).

EXHIBIT 4
Compensation and Fringe Benefits of Dental Hygienists, 2008

Compensation type	Percentage of active dental hygienists in Michigan
Hourly	82%
Salary	12
Percentage of production (service fees charged by the dentist)	9
Day rate	5
Benefits received	
Vacation	68%
Continuing education	65
Holidays	64
Retirement/401k	51
Uniform allowance	47
Sick leave	28
Medical insurance	24
Dental insurance	20
Malpractice insurance	12
Life insurance	8
Vision insurance	6
Association dues	6

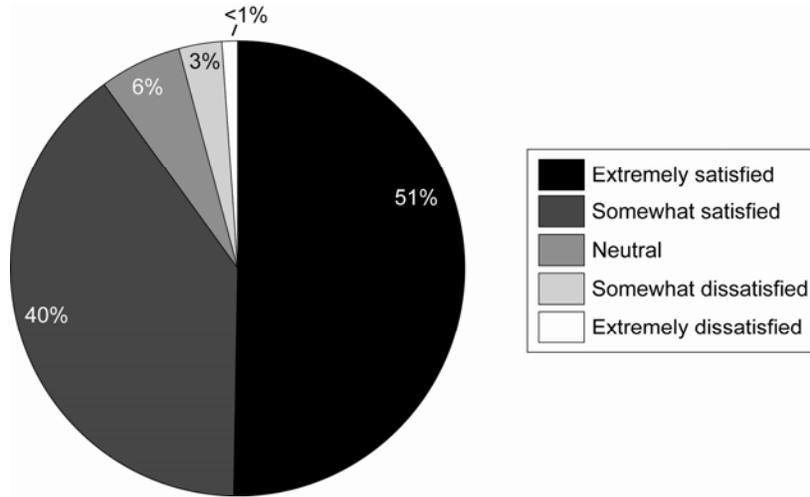
SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dental Hygienists 2008.

NOTE: Hygienists were asked to indicate all of the ways they are paid and all of the benefits they receive from all of their employers, making the sum of the percentages more than 100.

PROFESSIONAL SATISFACTION

When asked to rate their overall professional satisfaction as a dental hygienist, 51 percent of dental hygienists report that they are extremely satisfied; another 40 percent are somewhat satisfied (see Exhibit 5).

EXHIBIT 5
Professional Satisfaction of Active Dental Hygienists in Michigan, 2008

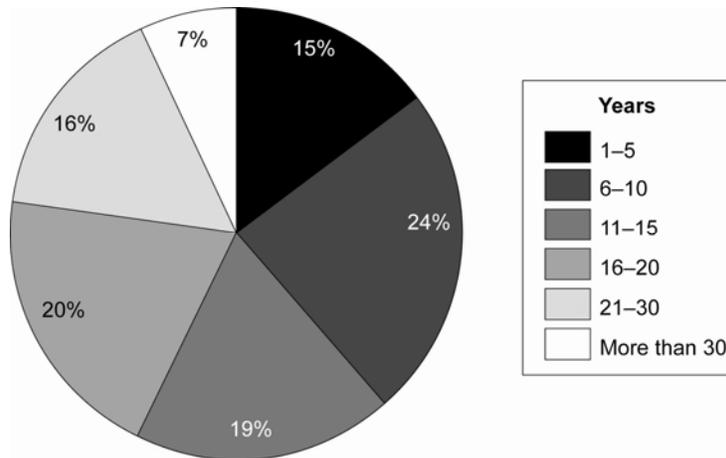


SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dental Hygienists 2008.
NOTE: Percentages may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

PLANS TO CONTINUE PRACTICE

Thirty-nine percent of active hygienists report that they plan to work as a dental hygienist for only one to ten more years (see Exhibit 6).

EXHIBIT 6
Plans of Active Dental Hygienists in Michigan to Continue Practicing, 2008

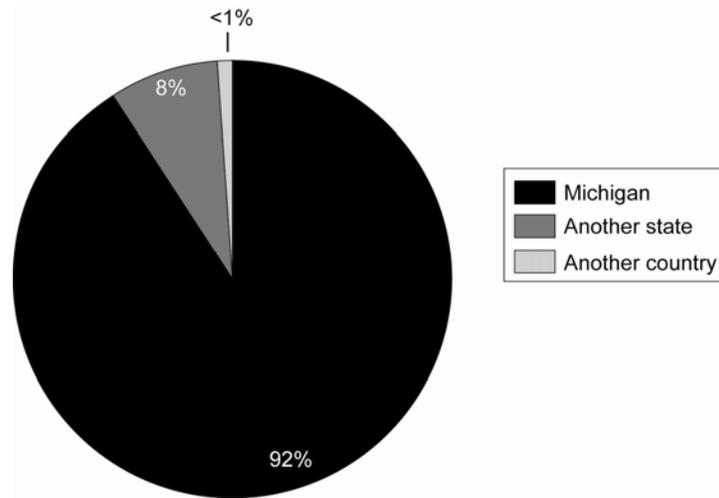


SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dental Hygienists 2008.
NOTE: Percentages may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

EDUCATION

The vast majority of active dental hygienists (92 percent) received their dental hygiene education in Michigan; 8 percent received their education in another state; and less than 1 percent in another country (see Exhibit 7).

EXHIBIT 7
Education Background of Active Dental Hygienists in Michigan, 2008



SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dental Hygienists 2008.
NOTE: Percentages may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

Survey respondents were also asked to indicate all of the degrees they have earned. Approximately 78 percent of active hygienists have an associate's degree in hygiene; this is a decrease from 2006 and 2007, when 82 percent of active hygienists (each year) reported having an associate's degree in hygiene. About 17 percent of active hygienists have a bachelor's degree in hygiene. About 9 percent have a non-hygiene associate's degree and 8 percent have a bachelor's degree in a non-hygiene-related area. Two percent hold a master's degree and less than 1 percent hold a doctoral degree (see Exhibit 8).

EXHIBIT 8
Degrees Held by Dental Hygienists, 2008

Degree achieved	Percentage of active hygienists in Michigan
Associate's: Hygiene	78%
Associate's: Non-hygiene	9
Bachelor's: Hygiene	17
Bachelor's: Non-hygiene	8
Master's	2
Doctorate	<1

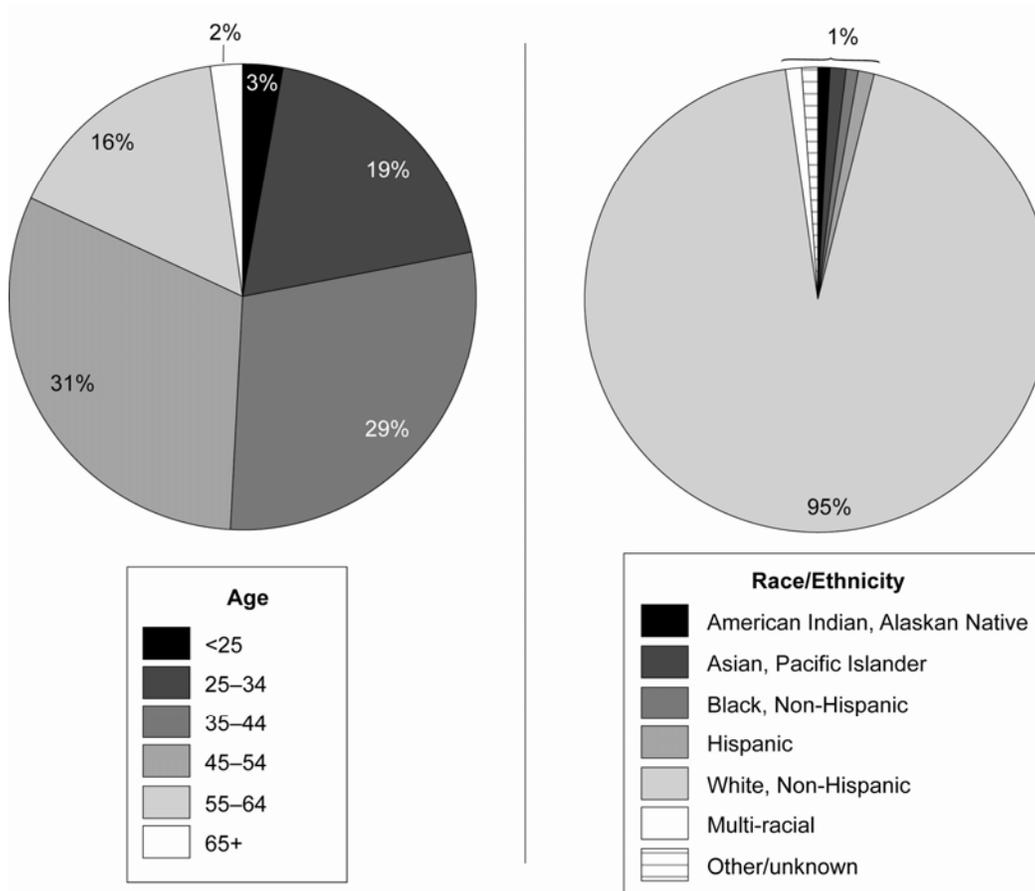
SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dental Hygienists 2008.
NOTE: Hygienists were asked to indicate all of the degrees they hold, so the sum of the percentages is more than 100 percent.

GENDER, AGE, RACE, AND ETHNICITY

- About 99 percent of active hygienists are female; 1 percent of them are male.
- About half (51 percent) of active hygienists are aged 44 or younger. About 18 percent of active hygienists are aged 55 or older.
- Ninety-five percent of active hygienists are white; 1 percent each are African American, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic, or another race (see Exhibit 9).

EXHIBIT 9

Age, Race, and Ethnicity of Active Dental Hygienists in Michigan, 2008



SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dental Hygienists 2008.

NOTE: Percentages may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

Appendix

Survey Instrument and Response Frequencies * (N=2,163)

1. In what year were you born?

Age	2006	2007	2008
<25	3%	4%	3%
25–34	21	20	19
35–44	28	30	29
45–54	35	33	31
55–64	12	13	16
65+	1	1	2

2. What is your current employment status? (Mark **one**)

	Percentage of all hygienists			Percentage of active hygienists in Michigan		
	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008
a. 30 or more hours per week in dental hygiene or related area	41%	43%	43%	45%	48%	48%
b. 12–29 hours per week in dental hygiene or related area	40	38	39	46	43	44
c. Less than 12 hours per week in dental hygiene or related area	8	8	7	9	9	8
d. Not employed and seeking employment in dental hygiene or related area	3	3	3	NA	NA	NA
e. Not employed and seeking employment outside of dental hygiene	<1	<1	<1	NA	NA	NA
f. Temporarily not working and not looking for a job	4	5	4	NA	NA	NA
g. Retired, with no plans to return to work	2	2	2	NA	NA	NA
h. Employed in another field	3	2	2	NA	NA	NA

*Unless otherwise noted, all frequencies are for the dental hygienists who indicated they are working as a hygienist in Michigan. Percentages may not equal 100 percent due to rounding. NA = Not applicable.

3. If you are not working as a hygienist or you are unemployed and seeking work as a hygienist, why is this the case? (Mark **all** that apply)

	Percentage of hygienists seeking employment in hygiene			Percentage of hygienists employed or seeking employment in another field		
	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008
a. Difficult to find hygienist position	83%	87%	84%	12%	27%	27%
b. Better salary in other type of work	5	3	4	25	29	27
c. Work environment prevents me from practicing effectively	6	7	12	15	12	0
d. Other position more rewarding professionally	3	3	4	69	43	29
e. Disability/physical demands of the job	5	2	7	22	20	21
f. Taking care of home/family	34	26	27	12	14	15

4. Please indicate all education degrees completed.

Degree	2006	2007	2008
a. Associate's: Hygiene	82%	82%	78%
b. Associate's: Non-hygiene	10	11	9
c. Bachelor's: Hygiene	17	17	17
d. Bachelor's: Non-hygiene	9	7	8
e. Master's	2	3	2
f. Doctorate	<1	<1	<1

5. Where did you get your dental hygiene education?

	2006	2007	2008
a. Michigan	93%	92%	92%
b. Another state	7	8	8
c. Another country	<1	<1	<1

6. Do you work as a dental hygienist at more than one site?

	2006	2007	2008
a. Yes	28%	30%	31%
b. No	72	70	70

7. Where is your primary place of employment?

	2006	2007	2008
a. Michigan	91%	91%	91%
b. Other U.S. state	9	9	8
c. Canada	<1	<1	<1
d. Other nation	<1	0	<1

8. What is the setting of your primary practice?

	2006	2007	2008
a. Private solo practice	67%	67%	65%
b. Private group practice	27	27	29
c. Community-based nonprofit	2	2	2
d. Local health department or other government agency	2	1	1
e. Other	2	3	3

9. What is the setting of your secondary practice?

	2006	2007	2008
a. Private solo practice	19%	20%	19%
b. Private group practice	6	6	7
c. Community-based nonprofit	1	1	<1
d. Local health department or other government agency	1	<1	<1
e. Other	1	2	2
f. None	70	70	70

10. What is the ZIP Code of your primary place of employment? _____

11. What is the ZIP Code of your secondary place of employment? _____

12. How do you get paid? (Mark **all** that apply)

	2006	2007	2008
a. Hourly	84%	83%	82%
b. Salary	12	13	12
c. Day rate	6	5	5
d. Percentage of production (service fees charged by the dentist)	8	7	9

13. Which of the following benefits do you receive through any of your employers?
(Mark **all** that apply)

	2006	2007	2008
a. Vacation	71%	70%	68%
b. Holidays	67	66	64
c. Sick leave	32	31	28
d. Medical insurance	24	25	24
e. Dental insurance	22	18	20
f. Vision insurance	7	7	6
g. Malpractice insurance	13	11	12
h. Life insurance	7	9	8
i. Retirement/401k	55	52	51
j. Uniform allowance	53	49	47
k. Association dues	7	7	6
l. Continuing education	65	65	65

14. Have you met the requirements that allow a dental hygienist to administer...

	2006	2007	2008
a. Local anesthesia	34%	37%	41%
b. Nitrous oxide	26	28	30

15. Are you currently working toward meeting the requirements that allow a dental hygienist to administer...

	2006	2007	2008
a. Local anesthesia	10%	9%	7%
b. Nitrous oxide	12	11	10

16. In your practice, do you administer...

	2006	2007	2008
a. Local anesthesia	29%	30%	35%
b. Nitrous oxide	25	23	24

17. For how many years do you plan to continue to work in dental hygiene?

	2006	2007	2008
a. 1–5 years	14%	14%	15%
b. 6–10 years	24	25	24
c. 11–15 years	24	20	19
d. 16–20 years	18	20	20
e. 21–30 years	15	15	16
f. More than 30 years	6	7	7

18. Overall, how would you rate your professional satisfaction as a dental hygienist?

	2006	2007	2008
a. Extremely satisfied	47%	50%	51%
b. Somewhat satisfied	41	39	40
c. Neutral	7	7	6
d. Somewhat dissatisfied	5	3	3
e. Extremely dissatisfied	1	1	1

19. Do you speak another language in addition to English?

	2006	2007	2008
a. Yes	8%	7%	8%
b. No	92	93	92

20. If yes, indicate what language(s) you speak? (Mark **all** that apply)

	2006	2007	2008
a. Spanish	3	3%	3
b. French	1	1	1
c. Arabic	<1	1	<
d. Other	5	3	5

21. What is your race/ethnicity? (Mark **one**)

	2006	2007	2008
a. American Indian, Alaskan Native	1%	1%	1%
b. Asian, Pacific Islander	1	1	1
c. Black, Non-Hispanic	2	2	1
d. Hispanic	1	1	1
e. White, Non-Hispanic	95	94	95
f. Multi-racial	<1	1	1
g. Other/unknown	1	1	1

22. What is your gender?

	2006	2007	2008
a. Female	100%	100%	99%
b. Male	<1	<1	1