

# Michigan Department of Community Health

## *Survey of Dentists 2007*

---

March 2008

### INTRODUCTION

In fall 2007, the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) conducted the second annual survey of licensed dentists to gather information about their employment characteristics, education, and work environment. A total of 2,658 dentists received the survey. Responses were received online or by return mail from 1,133 dentists, for a response rate of 43 percent and a margin of error of  $\pm 3$  percent with 95 percent confidence. While the results of the 2007 survey of dentists are generally consistent with those of the 2006 survey, differences in the data that fall outside the margin of error are noted. Key survey findings are presented below.

### METHODOLOGY

MDCH contracted with Public Sector Consultants Inc. (PSC) for development, implementation, and analysis of the survey of dentists. The survey was designed in collaboration with MDCH and the Michigan Dental Association. Survey questions and response frequencies are provided in the Appendix.

As of January 2007, a total of 7,696 dentists are licensed in Michigan. All dentists are required to renew their license every three years from the first year of licensure, thus dividing the universe of dentists into three cohorts of roughly equal size. The sample for this survey was drawn from the Michigan licensure files maintained by MDCH. For 2007, 2,658 dentists were eligible for license renewal. The surveys were mailed to all dentists renewing their license in 2007. Dentists could either return the two-page paper version of the survey by mail or complete the survey online.

Combining the responses from the paper version with the results from the Web survey resulted in a total of 1,133 returned surveys, yielding a margin of error of  $\pm 3$  percent with 95 percent confidence. This total includes fully and partially completed surveys (i.e., those with information missing for one or more variables); for this reason 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.

### EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS

- About 84 percent of respondents are active dentists in Michigan—that is, they are working as a dentist in Michigan (see Exhibit 1). *Unless otherwise noted, data presented in this report are for **active dentists in Michigan**.*
- Of respondents who are active Michigan dentists, 97 percent are providing patient care services and 3 percent spend no time in patient care.
- About 12 percent of dentists licensed in Michigan are working as a dentist, but not in Michigan.
- Only 4 percent of licensed dentists are not working as a dentist.

**EXHIBIT 1**  
Employment Characteristics of Dentists, 2007

	Percentage of all dentists	Percentage of active dentists in Michigan only
Providing patient care services in Michigan	82%	97%
Working as a dentist in Michigan, but no time in patient care	2	3
Working as a dentist but not in Michigan	12	NA
Not working as a dentist	4	NA

SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2007.  
NOTE: NA = Not applicable.

**PRACTICE CHARACTERISTICS**

On average, active dentists in Michigan who provide patient care spend 32 hours per week practicing dentistry. A large majority of active Michigan dentists (83 percent) spend most of their professional time practicing general dentistry. Small minorities spend most of their professional time in other dental specialties; most of these (6 percent) in orthodontics (see Exhibit 2).

**EXHIBIT 2**  
Primary Dental Specialties, 2007

	Percentage of active dentists in Michigan
General dentistry	83%
Orthodontics	6
Endodontics	3
Oral & maxillofacial surgery	3
Periodontics	2
Pediatric dentistry	2
Prosthodontics	2
Dental public health	1

SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2007.  
NOTE: Percentages may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

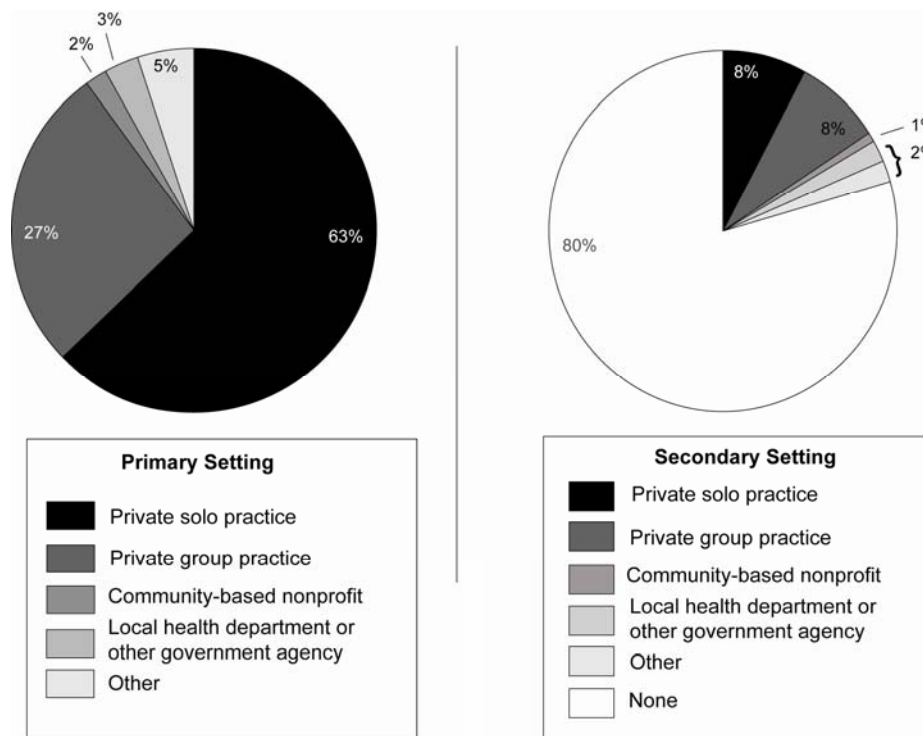
The setting of the primary practice of most dentists (63 percent) is a private solo practice, while a little more than a quarter (27 percent) practice primarily in a private *group* setting. In 2006, 55 percent of dentists responding to the survey reported a private solo practice as their primary practice setting and 35 percent reported practicing primarily in a private group setting.

Three percent have a primary practice site in a local health department or other government agency and 2 percent practice primarily in a community-based nonprofit. About 5 percent have a primary practice site in another setting.

About 8 percent of dentists have a secondary practice site in a private solo practice and 8 percent have a secondary practice site in a private *group* practice. Two percent practice secondarily in a local health department or other government agency and another 2 percent have a secondary practice site in a community-based nonprofit (see Exhibit 3).

### EXHIBIT 3

#### Practice Settings of Active Dentists in Michigan, 2007



SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2007.

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

## PATIENT CHARACTERISTICS

### *Young Children*

About 78 percent of dentists who provide patient care accept children aged three or younger for routine dental care. Fifteen percent accept children as young as age one, 21 percent accept children beginning at age two, and 42 percent accept children starting at age three.

### *Patients with Special Needs*

- About 49 percent of dentists who provide patient care provide care for children with special health care needs.
- About 54 percent of dentists who provide patient care provide care for adults with special needs.

- Approximately 45 percent of dentists who provide patient care provide care for nursing home residents in their dental practice and 10 percent provide care for nursing home residents at the nursing home.

### ***Medicaid, Publicly Funded, and Uninsured Patients***

One quarter (25 percent) of dentists who provide patient care services are currently providing care to Medicaid patients. This is significantly higher than the percentage of dentists who reported caring for Medicaid patients in 2006 (18 percent). Slightly less than one third (32 percent) of dentists responding to the 2007 survey report providing care to patients from other publicly funded programs. Twelve percent are accepting new Medicaid patients and about a fifth (21 percent) are accepting new patients from other publicly funded programs.

#### *Children*

- Dentists who provide patient care report that, on average, 16 of their patients in a typical month are children covered by Medicaid or MICHild.
- The majority of respondents (56 percent) report that none of their patients in a typical month are children covered by Medicaid or MICHild; in 2006, 64 percent reported seeing no children covered by Medicaid or MICHild.
- The 1 percent of respondents who see the most children covered by Medicaid or MICHild report treating, on average, 400 such children each month.
- Dentists providing patient care report that, on average, two patients in a typical month are children paying on a sliding fee scale.
- The vast majority of respondents (92 percent) report they have no patients in a typical month who are children paying on a sliding fee scale.
- The 1 percent of respondents who see the most children paying on a sliding fee scale report treating, on average, 60 or more such children each month.
- Dentists who provide patient care report that, on average, 36 of their patients in a typical month are uninsured children. In 2006, dentists providing patient care reported that an average of 19 patients a month were uninsured children.
- The 1 percent of respondents who see the most uninsured children report treating, on average, 500 or more such children each month.

#### *Adults*

- Dentists who provide patient care report that, on average, 11 of their patients in a typical month are adults covered by Medicaid.
- The vast majority of respondents (81 percent) report that they have no adult patients in a typical month who are covered by Medicaid.
- The 1 percent of respondents who see the most adults covered by Medicaid report treating, on average, 250 or more of such patients each month.
- Dentists providing patient care report that, on average, three of their patients in a typical month are adults paying on a sliding fee scale.
- The vast majority of respondents (90 percent) report that they have no adult patients each month who are paying on a sliding fee scale.

- The 1 percent of respondents who see the most adults paying on a sliding fee scale report treating, on average, 75 or more of such patients each month.
- On average, dentists who provide patient care report that 54 of their patients in a typical month are uninsured adults.
- The 1 percent of respondents who see the most uninsured adults report treating, on average, 450 or more of such patients each month.

Dentists responding to the 2007 survey report seeing more Medicaid, publicly funded, and uninsured patients on average each month than those who responded to the 2006 survey; however, it appears that the increase in 2007 is primarily due to a greater number of these patients being seen by the 1 percent of dentists who see the most patients in these categories. Notable exceptions to this are the average numbers of children covered by Medicaid or MICHild and adults paying on a sliding scale fee; the monthly average for the 1 percent of dentists who saw the most patients in these categories was higher in 2006 than in 2007 (see Exhibit 4).

#### EXHIBIT 4

#### Average Number of Medicaid, Publicly Funded, and Uninsured Patients Seen Monthly by Dentists Providing Patient Care, 2006 and 2007

Patient characteristic	Average number seen in a month by all dentists providing patient care		Average number seen in a month by top 1 percent of dentists providing patient care	
	2006	2007	2006	2007
Children covered by Medicaid or MICHild	13	16	582	530
Children paying on a sliding fee scale	1	2	61	163
Children who are uninsured	19	36	444	1,731
Adults covered by Medicaid	4	11	183	608
Adults paying on a sliding fee scale	2	3	325	164
Adults who are uninsured	38	54	832	1,098

SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2006 and 2007.

NOTE: Data presented are for *active* licensed dentists who provide patient care in Michigan.

## PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

About 24 percent of active dentists report being involved in private practice administration. Twelve percent are involved in teaching; in 2006, 19 percent of respondents reported being involved in teaching. Another 4 percent are involved in administration in a dental school, hospital, health plan, or nursing home; 4 percent in research; and 3 percent in emergency room care (see Exhibit 5).

**EXHIBIT 5**  
Professional Activities of Active Dentists, 2007

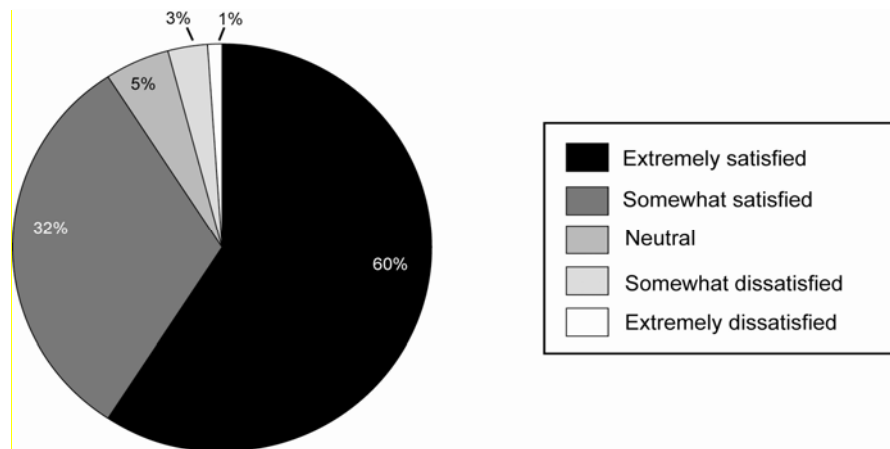
	Percentage of active dentists in Michigan
Administration in private practice	24%
Teaching	12
Research	4
Administration in dental school, hospital, health plan, or nursing home	4
Emergency room care	3

SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2007.  
NOTE: Data presented are for *active* licensed dentists in Michigan.

**PROFESSIONAL SATISFACTION**

When asked to rate their overall professional satisfaction as a dentist, 60 percent of active dentists in Michigan report that they are extremely satisfied; another 32 percent are somewhat satisfied (see Exhibit 6).

**EXHIBIT 6**  
Active Dentists' Professional Satisfaction, 2007

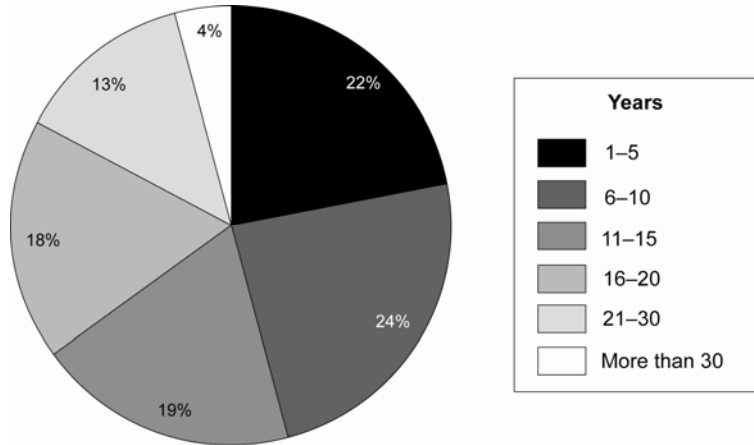


SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2007.  
NOTE: Data presented are for *active* licensed dentists in Michigan. Percentages may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

## PLANS TO CONTINUE PRACTICE

Forty-six percent of active dentists indicate that they plan to practice dentistry for only one to ten more years (see Exhibit 7).

**EXHIBIT 7**  
Active Dentists' Plans to Continue Practicing, 2007



SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2007.

- Approximately 17 percent of active dentists plan to either retire (8 percent) or reduce patient care hours (9 percent) in the next three years (see Exhibit 8).
- About 86 percent of active dentists plan to either maintain their practice as is (72 percent) or increase patient care hours (14 percent) in the next three years.
- Six percent of active dentists plan to move their practice in the next three years to another Michigan location (5 percent) or out of state (1 percent).

**EXHIBIT 8**  
Active Dentists' Practice Plans for the Next Three Years, 2007

	Percentage of active dentists in Michigan
Maintain practice as is	72%
Increase patient care hours	14
Reduce patient care hours	9
Retire	8
Move practice to another Michigan location	5
Move practice out of state	1

SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2007.  
NOTE: Data presented are for *active* licensed dentists in Michigan.

Of dentists who plan to either retire or reduce patient care hours, 76 percent cite their age as a factor that led to the decision. More than a quarter (28 percent) say that lifestyle changes affected their decision. About one-fourth (26 percent) cite increasing administrative/regulatory burdens as factors in their decision. Only 5 percent indicate that the cost of malpractice insurance was a factor in their decision and about 5 percent attributed their decision to an employer/employee conflict (see Exhibit 9).

---

**EXHIBIT 9**  
**Factors in Active Dentists' Decisions to Retire or**  
**Reduce Patient Care Hours, 2007**

---

	Percentage of active dentists in Michigan planning to retire or reduce patient care hours
Age	76%
Lifestyle changes	28
Increasing administrative/regulatory burden	26
Inadequate reimbursement for services	19
Personal or family health concerns	15
General lack of job satisfaction	12
Moved to management/consulting/teaching/ research	6
Malpractice insurance cost	5
Employer/employee conflict	5
Childbearing/childrearing	4

SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2007.

NOTE: Data presented are for *active* licensed dentists in Michigan planning to either retire or reduce patient care hours in the next three years.

---

## EDUCATION

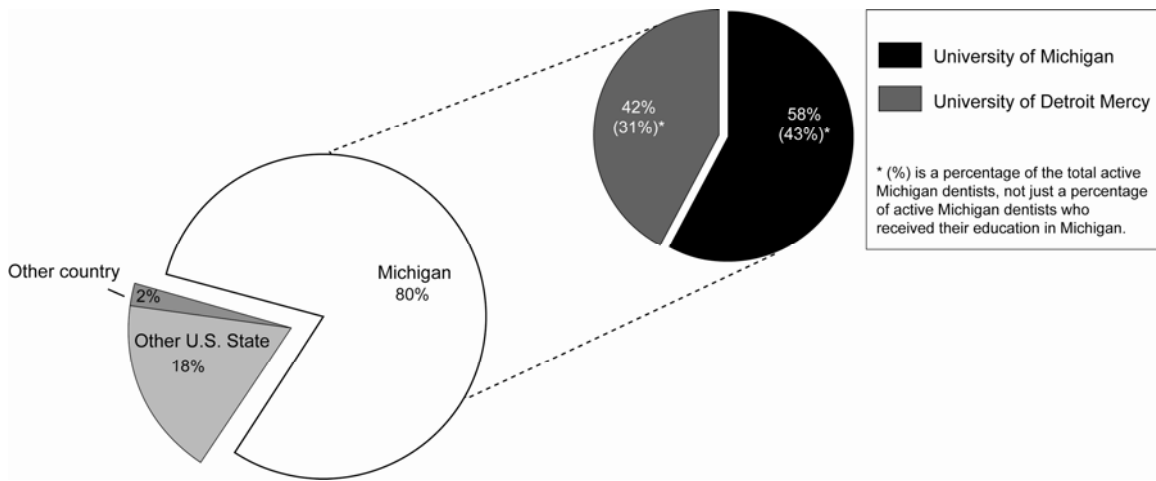
The vast majority of active dentists (80 percent) attended dental school in Michigan; 18 percent attended dental school in another state; and 2 percent in another country. Of those who received their dental degree in Michigan, 58 percent attended the University of Michigan and 42 percent attended University of Detroit Mercy (see Exhibit 10).



---

**EXHIBIT 10**  
Education Background of Dentists, 2007

---



SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2007.  
NOTE: Data presented are for *active* licensed dentists in Michigan.

---

## **GENDER, AGE, RACE, AND ETHNICITY**

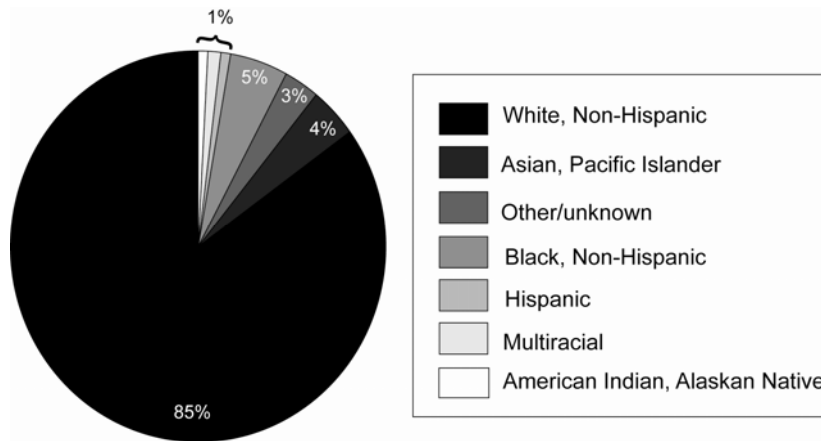
Eighty-one percent of active dentists are male; 19 percent are female. Only 24 percent of active dentists responding to the survey are aged 44 or younger; 47 percent are aged 55 or older. According to the MDCH licensure files, however, the universe of licensed dentists is slightly younger than the survey respondents. Among all licensed dentists in the state, 34 percent are aged 44 or younger and 37 percent are aged 55 or older.

Eighty-five percent of active dentists are white, 5 percent are African American, 4 percent are Asian or Pacific Islander, 1 percent are Hispanic, 1 percent are multiracial, and 1 percent are American Indian/Alaskan Native (see Exhibit 11).

---

**EXHIBIT 11**  
Race and Ethnicity of Active Dentists, 2007

---



SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2007.

NOTE: Data presented are for *active* licensed dentists in Michigan. Percentages do not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

---

## Appendix

### *Survey Instrument and Response Frequencies* \* (N=1,133)

1. In what year were you born?

18-24	0%
25-34	7
35-44	17
45-54	29
55-64	32
65+	15

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

	Percentage of all dentists	Percentage of active dentists in Michigan only
a. Providing patient care services in Michigan	82%	97%
b. Working as a dentist in Michigan, but no time in patient care	2	3
c. Working as a dentist but not in Michigan	12	NA
d. Not working as a dentist	4	NA

3. In which practice specialty do you spend most of your professional time? (Mark **one**)

a. General dentistry	83%
b. Endodontics	3
c. Oral & maxillofacial surgery	3
d. Orthodontics	6
e. Pediatric dentistry	2
f. Periodontics	2
g. Prosthodontics	2
h. Dental public health	1

4. Are you involved in any of the following professional activities? (Mark **all** that apply)

a. Research	4%
b. Teaching	12
c. Administration in private practice	24
d. Administration in dental school, hospital, health plan, or nursing home	4
e. Emergency room care	3

\* Unless otherwise noted, all frequencies are for the dentists who indicated they are “active,” working as a dentist in Michigan. NA = Not applicable.

5. Are you currently... (Mark **all** that apply)

	Percentage of dentists who provide patient care
a. Providing care to Medicaid patients?	25%
b. Accepting new Medicaid patients?	12
c. Providing care for patients from other publicly funded programs?	32
d. Accepting new patients from other publicly funded programs?	21

6. Do you provide care for...

	Percentage of dentists who provide patient care
a. Nursing home residents in your dental practice?	45%
b. Nursing home residents at the nursing home?	10
c. Children with special needs?	49
d. Adults with special needs?	54

7. What is the youngest age at which you will accept a patient for routine dental care?

1	15%
2	21
3	42
4	6
5	6
6	3
7	3
8	1
9	<1
10	1
11	0
12	1
13	<1
14	1
15	0
16	0
17	<1
18	1

8. Where is your primary practice located?

	Percentage of all licensed dentists
a. Michigan	87%
b. Other state	12
c. Canada	1
d. Other country	1

9. What is the setting of your primary practice?

a. Private solo practice	63%
b. Private group practice	27
c. Community-based nonprofit	2
d. Local health department or other government agency	3
e. Other	5

10. What is the setting of your secondary practice?

a. Private solo practice	8%
b. Private group practice	8
c. Community-based nonprofit	1
d. Local health department or other government agency	2
e. Other	2
f. None	80

11. What is the ZIP Code of your primary practice? \_\_\_\_\_

12. What is the ZIP Code of your secondary practice? \_\_\_\_\_

13. In a typical month, how many of your patients are...

- a. Children insured by Medicaid or MICHild? \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Adults insured by Medicaid? \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Adults paying on a sliding fee scale, in which the fee varies with patient income?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- d. Children paying on a sliding fee scale, in which the fee varies with family income? \_\_\_\_\_
- e. Uninsured children (no public or private insurance)? \_\_\_\_\_
- f. Uninsured adults (no public or private insurance)? \_\_\_\_\_

14. On average, how many hours per week do you practice dentistry? \_\_\_\_\_

15. A. Where did you attend dental school?

a. Michigan	80%
b. Another state	18
c. Another country	2

B. If Michigan, please specify the school

a. University of Michigan	58%
b. University of Detroit Mercy	42

16. To assist us in projecting the future supply of dentists, please tell us how much longer you plan to practice dentistry.

a. 1–5 years	22%
b. 6–10 years	24
c. 11–15 years	19
d. 16–20 years	18
e. 21–30 years	13
f. More than 30 years	4

17. Overall, how would you rate your professional satisfaction as a dentist?

a. Extremely satisfied	60%
b. Somewhat satisfied	32
c. Neutral	5
d. Somewhat dissatisfied	3
e. Extremely dissatisfied	1

18. In the next 3 years, I plan to... (Mark **all** that apply)

a. Maintain practice as is	72%
b. Increase patient care hours	14
c. Reduce patient care hours	9
d. Move practice to another Michigan location	5
e. Move practice out of state	1
f. Retire	8

19. If you plan to retire or reduce your patient care hours, what are the factors that led to this decision? (Mark **all** that apply)

	Percentage of active dentists in Michigan planning to retire or reduce patient care hours
a. Age	76%
b. General lack of job satisfaction	12
c. Childbearing/childrearing	4
d. Lifestyle changes	28
e. Malpractice insurance cost	5
f. Personal or family health concerns	15
g. Increasing administrative/regulatory burden	26
h. Employer/employee conflict	5
i. Inadequate reimbursement for services	19
j. Moved to management/consulting/ teaching/ research	6

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

a. American Indian, Alaskan Native	1%
b. Asian, Pacific Islander	4
c. Black, Non-Hispanic	5
d. Hispanic	1
e. Multi-racial	1
f. White, Non-Hispanic	85
g. Other/unknown	3

21. What is your gender?

a. Male	81%
b. Female	19