

Michigan Department of Community Health

Survey of Dentists

Survey Findings 2008

INTRODUCTION

In fall 2008, the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) conducted the third annual survey of licensed dentists to gather information about their employment characteristics, education, and work environment. A total of 2,689 dentists received the survey. Responses were received online or by return mail from 1,135 dentists, for a response rate of 42 percent and a margin of error of ± 2.2 percent with 95 percent confidence.¹

The 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 the MDCH and the Michigan Dental Association. Survey questions and response frequencies are provided in the Appendix, along with comparison figures for the 2007 and 2006 surveys.

As of January 2008, a total of 7,590 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 the MDCH. For 2008, 2,689 dentists were eligible for license renewal. The surveys were mailed to all dentists renewing their license in 2008. Dentists could either return the two-page paper version of the survey by mail or complete the survey online.

The 1,135 returned surveys (paper and Web surveys) include 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. While the results of the 2008 survey of dentists are generally consistent with those of the 2006 and 2007 surveys, differences in the data that fall outside the margin of error are noted. Survey findings are presented below.

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, licensed dentists working in Michigan.***
- Among active Michigan dentists, 98 percent provide patient care services and 2 percent spend no time in patient care.

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 57.8 percent and 62.2 percent (i.e., the ± 2.2 percent margin of error).

- About 13 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, 2008

	Percentage of all dentists	Percentage of active dentists in Michigan
Providing patient care services in Michigan	82%	98%
Working as a dentist in Michigan, but no time in patient care	2	2
Working as a dentist but not in Michigan	13	NA
Not working as a dentist	4	NA

SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2008.
NOTE: Percentages may not equal 100 percent due to rounding. 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. This remains up from 2006, when 78 percent of active Dentists reported spending most of their 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, 2008

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

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

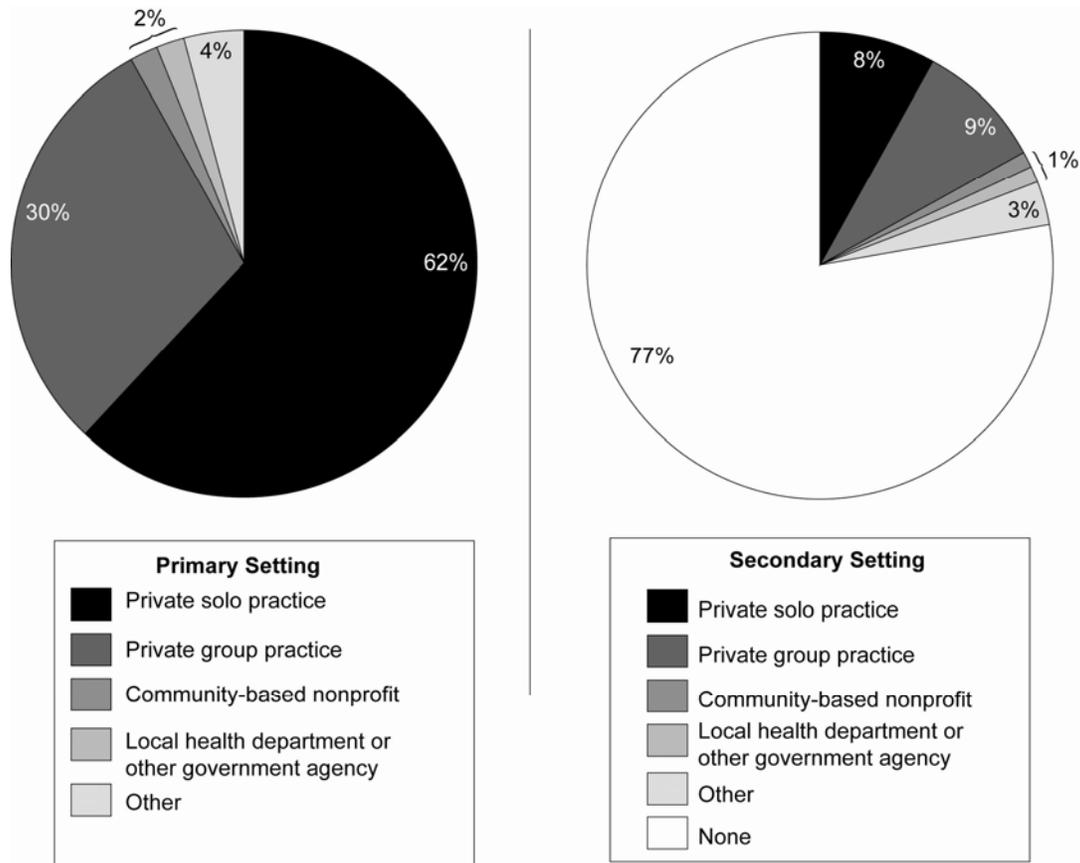
The setting for the primary practice of nearly two out of three dentists (62 percent) is a private solo practice. This is similar to the percent of dentists who worked in a private solo practice in 2007, but represents an increase from 2006, when 55 percent reported working primarily in a private solo practice.

About one-third of active dentists (30 percent) practice primarily in a private group setting. This is slightly higher than the percentage found in 2007 (27 percent), but is down from 2006, when 35 percent of these dentists reported working primarily in a private group practice.

Two percent of active dentists have a primary practice site in a local health department or other government agency and another 2 percent practice primarily in a community-based nonprofit. About 4 percent have a primary practice site in another setting.

Very few dentists report a secondary practice site. About 8 percent of dentists have a secondary practice site in a private solo practice and 9 percent have a secondary practice site in a private group practice. One percent practice secondarily in a local health department or other government agency and another 1 percent have a secondary practice site in a community-based nonprofit (see Exhibit 3).

EXHIBIT 3
Practice Settings of Active Dentists in Michigan, 2008



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

PATIENT CHARACTERISTICS

Young Children

About 81 percent of dentists who provide patient care accept children aged three or younger for routine dental care. Eighteen 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

Among dentists who provide patient care:

- About 46 percent provide care for children with special health care needs.
- About 51 percent provide care for adults with special needs.
- Approximately 42 percent provide care for nursing home residents in their dental practice and 7 percent provide care for nursing home residents at the nursing home.

Medicaid, Publicly Funded, and Uninsured Patients

Approximately one-fifth (21 percent) of dentists who provide patient care services are currently providing care to Medicaid patients. About one-third (33 percent) report providing care to patients from other publicly funded programs. Eleven percent are accepting new Medicaid patients and nearly a quarter (23 percent) are accepting new patients from other publicly funded programs.

Children

- Dentists who provide patient care report that, on average, 15 of their patients in a typical month are children covered by Medicaid or MICHild. More than half (58 percent) see no children covered by Medicaid or MICHild in a typical month.
- The 1 percent of respondents who see the most children covered by Medicaid or MICHild report treating, on average, 200 or more such children each month.
- Dentists providing patient care report that, on average, four patients in a typical month are children paying on a sliding fee scale. However, nearly nine out of ten respondents (89 percent) 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, 40 or more such children each month.
- Dentists who provide patient care report that, on average, 21 of their patients in a typical month are uninsured children. Fewer than one in five respondents (19 percent) report that none of their patients in a typical month are uninsured children.
- The 1 percent of respondents who see the most uninsured children report treating, on average, 164 or more such children each month.

Adults

- Dentists who provide patient care report that, on average, five of their patients in a typical month are adults covered by Medicaid. A large majority of respondents (85 percent) see no adult patients who are covered by Medicaid in a typical month.

- The 1 percent of respondents who see the most adults covered by Medicaid report treating, on average, 130 or more such patients each month.
- Dentists providing patient care report that, on average, two of their patients in a typical month are adults paying on a sliding fee scale. Most respondents (88 percent) report seeing no adult patients 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, 50 or more such patients each month.
- On average, dentists who provide patient care report that 40 of their patients in a typical month are uninsured adults. Only 10 percent of respondents report seeing no uninsured adults in a typical month.
- The 1 percent of respondents who see the most uninsured adults report treating, on average, 100 or more such patients each month.

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

About 24 percent of active dentists report being involved in private practice administration. Twelve percent are involved in teaching. Another 4 percent are involved in research; 3 percent in emergency room care; and 2 percent in administration in a dental school, hospital, health plan, or nursing home (see Exhibit 5). While these are similar figures to those found in 2007, the percentage of active dentists who report working administration in a private practice, teaching, or participating in research have decreased from 2006. In 2006, 29 percent of active dentists worked in administration in a private practice; 19 percent were involved in teaching; and 9 percent participated in research.

EXHIBIT 5
Professional Activities of Dentists, 2008

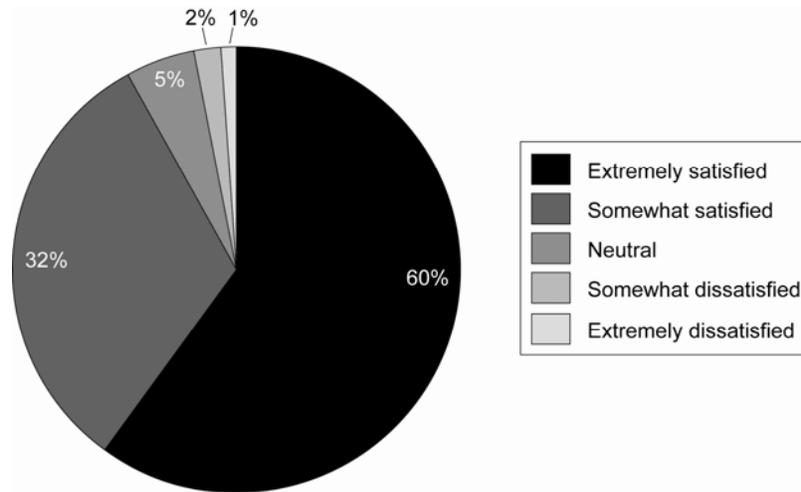
	Percentage of active dentists in Michigan
Administration in private practice	24%
Teaching	12
Research	4
Emergency room care	3
Administration in dental school, hospital, health plan, or nursing home	2

SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2008.

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
Professional Satisfaction of Active Dentists in Michigan, 2008

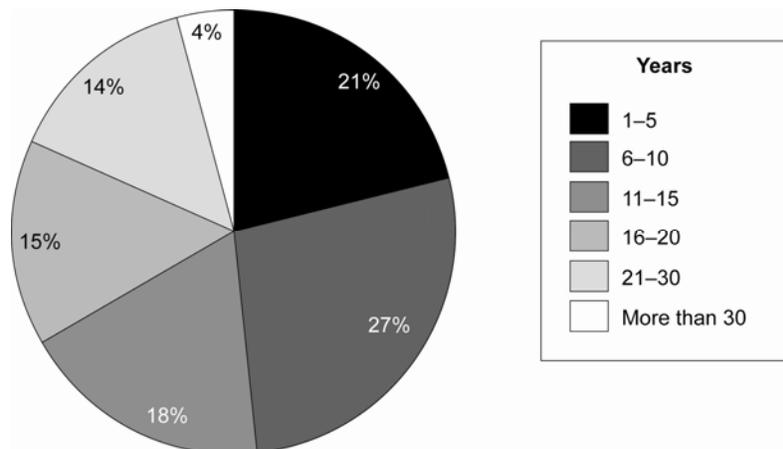


SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2008.

PLANS TO CONTINUE PRACTICE

Nearly half (48 percent) of active dentists plan to practice dentistry for only one to ten more years (see Exhibit 7).

EXHIBIT 7
Plans of Active Dentists in Michigan to Continue Practicing, 2008



SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2008.
NOTE: Percentages do not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

- 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).
- More than three-fourths (82 percent) of active dentists plan to either maintain their practice as is (72 percent) or increase patient care hours (10 percent) in the next three years.
- Five percent of active dentists plan to move their practice in the next three years to another Michigan location (3 percent) or out of state (2 percent).

EXHIBIT 8

Practice Plans of Dentists for the Next Three Years, 2008

	Percentage of active dentists in Michigan
Maintain practice as is	72%
Increase patient care hours	10
Reduce patient care hours	9
Retire	8
Move practice to another Michigan location	3
Move practice out of state	2

SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2008.

NOTE: Percentages equal more than 100 percent because dentists were asked to mark all that apply.

Of the 17 percent of active 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 say 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 Decision of Dentists to Retire or Reduce Patient Care Hours, 2008

	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 2008.

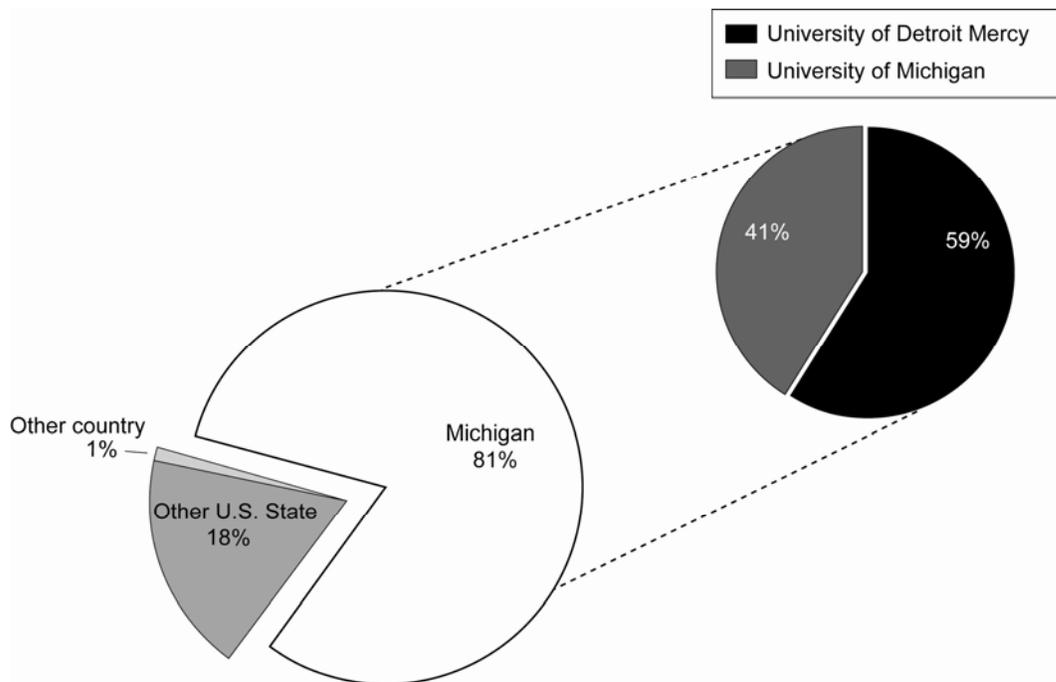
NOTE: Percentages equal more than 100 percent because dentists were asked to mark all that apply.

EDUCATION

More than four out of five active dentists in Michigan (81 percent) attended dental school in Michigan; 18 percent attended dental school in another state; and 1 percent in another country. Of those who received their dental degree in Michigan, 59 percent attended the University of Michigan and 41 percent attended University of Detroit Mercy (see Exhibit 10).

EXHIBIT 10

Education Background of Active Dentists in Michigan, 2008



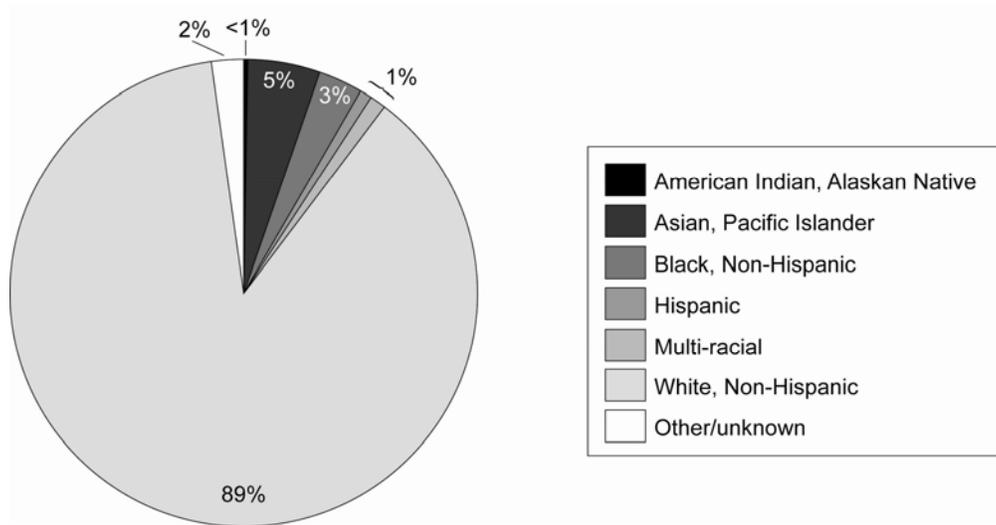
SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2008.

GENDER, AGE, RACE, AND ETHNICITY

Most active dentists in Michigan (80 percent) are male; 20 percent are female. Only 26 percent of active dentists responding to the survey are aged 44 or younger; nearly half (43 percent) are aged 55 or older.

A preponderance of these dentists (89 percent) are white, 5 percent are Asian or Pacific Islander, 3 percent are African American, 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 in Michigan, 2008



SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2008.
NOTE: Percentages do not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

Appendix

*Survey Instrument and Response Frequencies** (N=1,135)

1. In what year were you born?

	2006	2007	2008
18–24	<1%	0%	0%
25–34	13	7	10
35–44	17	17	16
45–54	33	29	30
55–64	24	32	29
65+	13	15	14

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

	Percentage of all dentists			Percentage of active dentists in Michigan only		
	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008
a. Providing patient care services in Michigan	79%	82%	82%	96%	97%	98%
b. Working as a dentist in Michigan, but no time in patient care	3	2	2	4	3	2
c. Working as a dentist but not in Michigan	14	12	13	NA	NA	NA
d. Not working as a dentist	4	4	4	NA	NA	NA

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

	2006	2007	2008
a. General dentistry	78%	83%	83%
b. Endodontics	6	3	2
c. Oral & maxillofacial surgery	4	3	2
d. Orthodontics	3	6	6
e. Pediatric dentistry	3	2	2
f. Periodontics	2	2	2
g. Prosthodontics	2	2	3
h. Dental public health	1	1	1

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

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

	2006	2007	2008
a. Research	9%	4%	4%
b. Teaching	19	12	12
c. Administration in private practice	29	24	24
d. Administration in dental school, hospital, health plan, or nursing home	5	4	2
e. Emergency room care	3	3	3

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

	Percentage of dentists who provide patient care		
	2006	2007	2008
a. Providing care to Medicaid patients?	18%	25%	21%
b. Accepting new Medicaid patients?	10	12	11
c. Providing care for patients from other publicly funded programs?	26	32	33
d. Accepting new patients from other publicly funded programs?	18	21	23

6. Do you provide care for...

	Percentage of dentists who provide patient care		
	2006	2007	2008
a. Nursing home residents in your dental practice?	42%	45%	42%
b. Nursing home residents at the nursing home?	9	10	7
c. Children with special needs?	49	49	46
d. Adults with special needs?	52	54	51

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

Age of patient	Percentage of dentists who provide patient care		
	2006	2007	2008
1	15%	15%	18%
2	17	21	21
3	41	42	42
4	8	6	6
5	4	6	3
6	4	3	4
7	3	3	2
8	1	1	1
9	<1	<1	<1
10	2	1	1
11	<1	0	0
12	1	1	2
13	<1	<1	<1
14	1	1	1
15	0	0	<1
16	1	0	1
17	0	<1	<1
18	2	1	1

8. Where is your primary practice located?

	Percentage of all licensed dentists		
	2006	2007	2008
a. Michigan	84%	87%	86%
b. Other state	14	12	12
c. Canada	2	1	1
d. Other country	<1	1	1

9. What is the setting of your primary practice?

	2006	2007	2008
a. Private solo practice	55%	63%	62%
b. Private group practice	35	27	30
c. Community-based nonprofit	1	2	2
d. Local health department or other government agency	2	3	2
e. Other	7	5	4

10. What is the setting of your secondary practice?

	2006	2007	2008
a. Private solo practice	5%	8%	8%
b. Private group practice	12	8	9
c. Community-based nonprofit	0	1	1
d. Local health department or other government agency	2	2	1
e. Other	2	2	3
f. None	80	80	77

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?

	2006	2007	2008
Minimum	0	0	0
Maximum	1,200	1,120	2,210
Median	0	0	0
Mean	13	16	15

b. Adults insured by Medicaid?

	2006	2007	2008
Minimum	0	0	0
Maximum	550	1,100	300
Median	0	0	0
Mean	4	11	5

c. Adults paying on a sliding fee scale, in which the fee varies with patient income?

	2006	2007	2008
Minimum	0	0	0
Maximum	120	300	200
Median	0	0	0
Mean	2	3	2

d. Children paying on a sliding fee scale, in which the fee varies with family income?

	2006	2007	2008
Minimum	0	0	0
Maximum	150	500	1,111
Median	0	0	0
Mean	1	2	4

e. Uninsured children (no public or private insurance)?

	2006	2007	2008
Minimum	0	0	0
Maximum	700	2,222	2,020
Median	7	10	8
Mean	19	28	21

f. Uninsured adults (no public or private insurance)?

	2006	2007	2008
Minimum	0	0	0
Maximum	1,100	2,222	1,200
Median	15	20	20
Mean	38	48	40

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

Average = 32 hours

15. A. Where did you attend dental school?

	2006	2007	2008
a. Michigan	82%	80%	81%
b. Another state	15	18	18
c. Another country	3	2	1

B. If Michigan, please specify the school

	2006	2007	2008
a. University of Michigan	55%	58%	59%
b. University of Detroit Mercy	45	42	41

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

	2006	2007	2008
a. 1–5 years	19%	22%	21%
b. 6–10 years	24	24	27
c. 11–15 years	20	19	18
d. 16–20 years	15	18	15
e. 21–30 years	16	13	14
f. More than 30 years	7	4	4

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

	2006	2007	2008
a. Extremely satisfied	63%	60%	60%
b. Somewhat satisfied	29	32	32
c. Neutral	5	5	5
d. Somewhat dissatisfied	2	3	2
e. Extremely dissatisfied	<1	1	1

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

	2006	2007	2008
a. Maintain practice as is	67%	72%	72%
b. Increase patient care hours	16	14	10
c. Reduce patient care hours	7	9	9
d. Move practice to another Michigan location	7	5	3
e. Move practice out of state	2	1	2
f. Retire	7	8	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		
	2006	2007	2008
a. Age	80%	76%	79%
b. General lack of job satisfaction	9	12	15
c. Childbearing/childrearing	10	4	5
d. Lifestyle changes	32	28	33
e. Malpractice insurance cost	7	5	2
f. Personal or family health concerns	16	15	19
g. Increasing administrative/regulatory burden	23	26	26
h. Employer/employee conflict	4	5	5
i. Inadequate reimbursement for services	16	19	18
j. Moved to management/consulting/teaching/research	7	6	6

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

	2006	2007	2008
a. American Indian, Alaskan Native	1%	1%	<1%
b. Asian, Pacific Islander	6	4	5
c. Black, Non-Hispanic	2	5	3
d. Hispanic	2	1	1
e. Multi-racial	1	1	1
f. White, Non-Hispanic	85	85	89
g. Other/unknown	3	3	2

21. What is your gender?

	2006	2007	2008
a. Male	81%	81%	80%
b. Female	19	19	20