



# Dentistry in York - Gaps in Provision January 2022



## Acknowledgments

Thank you to everyone who took time out to fill in our survey.

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## Summary of Key Points

We acknowledge the huge impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the additional pressures that enhanced infection and prevention control measures will have imposed on dental practices. However, we believe that the pandemic is not the only cause of the problems outlined below. Access to NHS dental care has been a problem in York for many years and continues to be at crisis point. This is creating additional pressures in other parts of the health system particularly the emergency department and primary care. We need rapid and radical reform of the way dentistry is commissioned and provided.

- In our 2018 survey we asked ‘do you have a dentist’? 84% of those who answered this question said they had a dentist. In 2021 this 59% said they had a dentist. This represents a decline over 3 years of 30%.
- Those respondents who did not have an NHS dentist were asked why this was so. In 2018 46% of people replied that they ‘couldn’t find a dentist taking on NHS patients’. In 2021 this had risen to 71%, an increase of 54%.

- There was a large increase in the percentage of respondents who had not seen their dentist for 1-2 years (a 200% increase), 2-3 years (a 633% increase), 'only in emergencies' (a 200% increase) and 'I don't' (a 100% increase).
- In 2018 the percentage of respondents replying that cost had stopped them getting dental treatment was 28%, in 2021 it was 40% (an increase of 43%).
- In 2018 8% strongly disagreed with the statement 'I can get appointments with my dentist when I need them'. In 2021 41% of respondents strongly disagreed with this statement (an increase of 413%).
- In 2018 7% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement 'my dentist is in a convenient location for me.' In 2021 this percentage had risen to 26% (an increase of 271%). The percentage of respondents agreeing with the statement in 2018 was 40% and in 2021 this had reduced to 17% (a reduction of 57%).
- In 2018 45% of respondents rated their experience as 'excellent', in 2021 this had fallen to 27% (a reduction of 40%). In 2018 3% rated their experience as 'very poor', in 2021 this had increased to 14% (an increase of 367%).
- 27% of the respondents to the question 'Do you all go to the same dentist?' reported that 'none of us has a dentist'. Of those who answered yes or no to this question, in 2018 36% of respondents said that 'not everyone in the household had the same dentist'. In 2021 this was 68%.

- In 2018 the majority of respondents went to the same dentist (74%). In 2021 this had reduced to 46%.
- In 2018 69% of respondents said that they were happy with their family's arrangements for visiting a dentist. In 2021 this had reduced to 27%.
- In 2018 6% of respondents reported that their dental practice was 'not at all accessible'. In 2021 this had risen to 32% (an increase of 433%).
- Out of 153 respondents 79 (52%) reported having one or more of the problems associated with dental pain or poor oral health listed in our survey. Of those that listed at least one symptom 43% reported not being able to sleep properly, 40% reported feeling self conscious about their appearance, 25% unable to eat healthy food, 10% unable to work, 6% unable to undertake physical exercise, 3% unable to care for someone else and 21% listed 'other'.

## Background

Healthwatch York has been hearing from the public about issues regarding dentistry since we started in 2013.

In 2018 Healthwatch York published 'Filled to Capacity: NHS Dentistry in York - a Report Based on Local People's Experience', which found that it was difficult to access NHS dentistry in the city. At that time 46% of people that responded to our survey reported that they couldn't find an NHS dentist that was taking patients and 45% of people who had been looking for an NHS dentist said they had been trying for over 2 years.

<https://www.healthwatchyork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Healthwatch-York-Access-to-NHS-Dentistry-Report-2018.pdf>

Healthwatch England continued to hear concerns about dentistry which were highlighted at the end of 2020 in the 'Dentistry and the Impact of COVID-19 Report'.

<https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/news/2020-12-09/dentistry-and-impact-covid-19>

Their report shows a 452% rise in calls and complaints throughout the summer of 2020. In a follow-up review, Healthwatch England looked at 1,129 people's experiences of accessing dental care received between October and December 2020 and found that access to dentistry was difficult for more than 7 in 10 people (72%), with some people actively seeking dental treatment being told they would have to wait anywhere between a few months to, in one case, two years for an appointment.

Healthwatch England's research continued to show many people continue to struggle to access or afford NHS dental treatment. Feedback on NHS dental care between January and March 2021 found that 80% of people found it difficult to access timely care. Other data sources mirror these findings:

- When the National GP Patient Survey asked if people if they had successfully got an NHS dental appointment in the last two years, in

2020, 6% of the respondents had said no. In contrast, in 2021, this figure was nearly four times higher at 23%.

- In 2020-21, the NHS delivered 69% fewer courses of treatment compared with the previous year, NHS Dental Statistics for England Annual Report.
- The difference in the number of appointments for children in 2021 is particularly stark. An analysis of NHS Digital Data for 2019 and 2021 found that the number of child patients seen has nearly halved, 44% down in 2021 compared to two years earlier.
- NHS Digital's figures also suggest that dental access issues are now acute in many areas. Our analysis of the latest data\* found that seven of the NHS's 42 new sub-regions, known as Integrated Care Systems, report that they have no practices taking on new adult NHS patients. And less than one in five (17%) of practices say they are taking on new child NHS patients at the moment.

<\*Data supplied by NHS Digital on 7 December 2021>

Healthwatch England previously called for more emphasis to be placed on solving structural issues within NHS dental services and warned that dental care was facing an immediate crisis. The Chair of Healthwatch England, Sir Robert Francis QC, said:

*“The big worry about the shortage of NHS appointments leading people to private care is that it further deepens the health inequalities that COVID-19 has starkly highlighted. We won’t build back a fairer service until access to NHS dentistry is equal and inclusive for everyone. Today, dentistry remains the only part of the NHS that receives a lower budget in cash terms than in 2010. The ongoing neglect of NHS dentistry will have repercussions for the life-long health of current and future generations. Lack of access to dental care,*

*particularly for children, is a hugely worrying issue that the NHS must tackle immediately.”*

In July 2021 we published ‘NHS Dentistry - A Service in Decay?’ which exposed a continuing decline in access to NHS dentistry in the city.

Volunteers and staff at Healthwatch York contacted all 39 practices in the city. At the time of the research in May and June 2021 we found that no practice in York was currently accepting new NHS adult patients. We called for urgent and rapid reform of NHS dentistry.

The full report can be viewed at:

<https://www.healthwatchyork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/NHS-Dentistry-A-Service-in-Decay-July-2021-2.pdf>

Healthwatch York Manager, Siân Balsom said;

*“NHS dentistry in the city has reached a new low and is in need of urgent and radical reform. If we fail to act soon we’ll be putting further pressure on an already severely stressed health system.”*

In November 2021 Director of Public Health in York wrote to the Chief Dental Officer on behalf of the City of York Health and Wellbeing Board to inform her of the *“concerns we have about poor access to NHS dental care for adults and children living in York.”*

The letter detailed some of the findings from our report and added; *“reports from the health visiting service (are) that parents are unable to access routine dental care for their children. This is of particular concern given the rise in hospital admissions of children requiring dental treatment under anaesthetic.”*

*“The Health and Wellbeing Board understand that the deteriorating situation will, in part, be caused by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the additional pressures that enhanced infection and prevention control measures will have imposed on dental practices. However the pandemic is not the primary cause of the problem. Access to NHS dental care has been a problem in York for many years but is now at crisis point. The Board also heard that the*

*lack of dental care is creating additional pressures in other parts of the health system particularly the emergency department and primary care.”*

The letter concluded; *“it is clear that a significant reform of the national dental contract is required to address the increasing problems of access to NHS dental care in the longer term. The Health and Wellbeing Board look forward to receiving your response to the issues raised in this letter together with an update on the work that is going on nationally to address our concerns.”*

A high level of feedback from patients concerning dentistry has continued throughout the Autumn of 2021. Some examples are detailed below:

*“Person has a serious issue with gums and has been trying to get NHS treatment. Only offered private treatment at a cost of £4,000.”*

*“Person has been trying to get an NHS dentist due to an urgent issue with his teeth. Has called NHS 111 and contacted all the dentists they suggested, but none of those was accepting emergency cases.”*

*“Man trying to find a dentist for himself, his wife and family. Looked up dentists, called 10. None taking people on, waiting lists of 2-4 years for treatment. So called NHS England. They told him they can't help, and that they know the information on the website isn't up to date so he'd have to call all of them as that's the only way. They also said patients are expected to be able to travel up to 30 miles to access a dentist so he should look at places like Leeds as they might be better.”*

*“I'm looking for an NHS dentist for myself and for my family in York. As far as I can tell such a thing doesn't exist, and the whole industry has been privatised by stealth. I have contacted many practises and got nowhere. There is one 1 place I've found that's taking new people on and they have a 3 year waiting period.”*

*“Partner had a broken tooth, trying to get urgent care. Was eventually given an appointment in Scarborough, which she was worried she'd struggle to get to. She called to find out what they would do, and they told her she would just get a temporary filling as urgent care. So she had to pay for a private appointment for a permanent fix, but saved the train fare to Scarborough.”*



*“I am an NHS patient with this dental practice which has always been excellent. However I recently received a letter from them stating that my planned appointment with a dentist has been cancelled. I have not seen a dentist for 2 years. Apparently they are unable to deal with routine appointments due to the backlog as a result of Covid, and are asking patients to only contact them if they need emergency treatment.”*

*“Unable to find an NHS Dentist that's taking on new patients.”*

*“Child has Hypomineralisation. Needs 3 month check ups as teeth can cause severe pain. Child is on waiting list with London hospital to have teeth removed but huge delays mean this can take a long time. Parents are unable to find a dentist in York that will take on a new patient. Escalated to NHS England and received a generic response stating that it was their responsibility to find a dentist. Parents would like info on anywhere that is taking appointments and also on how to escalate the issue further. Shocked as feels this is the responsibility of the Government to ensure that children are able to receive regular checkups as part of general health.”*

*“It is rather alarming that, 7 months on from my original email, I am still unable to find an NHS dentist anywhere within a sensible distance of York! I have just rung the only practices listed as accepting new NHS patients, only to be told that they have a 3 year waiting list. I am now not only thinking of myself (still entitled to free dental care, supposedly, and with rapidly deteriorating teeth I can't afford the hundreds of pounds to fix!) I am also thinking of my baby son, who should start having dentist appointments as soon as his teeth come through.”*

*“We have been residents of York for a year now and I have contacted every local NHS registered dentist but none have places. We are now on a waiting list of people over 2,000 long. Please can you advise what options are available to us - private care is incredibly expensive for a family of 4.”*

A parliamentary question in January 2022 revealed that in the year up to March 31, 2019, there were 239 dentists working in the Vale of York CCG area, by March of 2020 that had fallen to 218 and by March last year, it was down to 209; lower than at any time since 2015.

In January 2022 The British Dental Association (BDA) said that ‘from this month, NHS dentists have been required by government to treat at least 85 per cent of the number of patients they treated before the Covid pandemic, but almost two thirds of practices say they are 'incapable' of doing that;

*“Treating large numbers of patients is 'entirely at odds' with efforts to prevent the spread of Covid, and would 'put both patients and staff at unnecessary risk', the organisation says. As a result, more than 40 per cent of NHS dentists say they are now likely to change career or seek early retirement.”*

The BDA's North Yorkshire representative Mark Green said:

*"Last year nearly a thousand dentists left the NHS in England. For years we've worked to a broken system that's failed to recognise and reward commitment to the NHS. Now, to add insult to injury, Ministers have imposed ludicrous targets during the Omicron wave. Colleagues who have worked their whole professional lives in the NHS are now looking for the exit."*

<York Press, 11th January 2022>

In the Autumn of 2021 we launched an online survey for people in York about their experiences of accessing NHS dentistry in the city and complemented this with outreach sessions at a variety of locations. The following section details our findings.



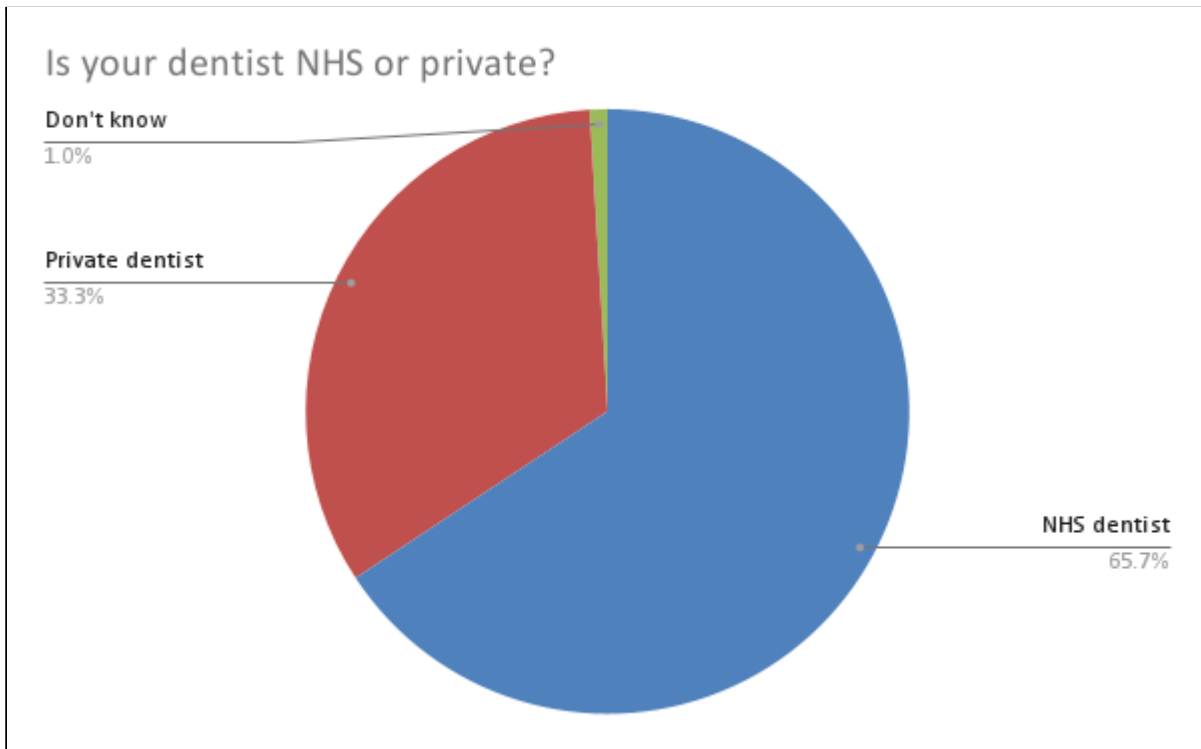
## Our Findings

### **Question 1. Do you have a dentist? (173 respondents)**

In our 2018 survey 84% of those who answered this question said they had a dentist. In 2021 this 59% said they had a dentist. This represents a decline over 3 years of 30%.

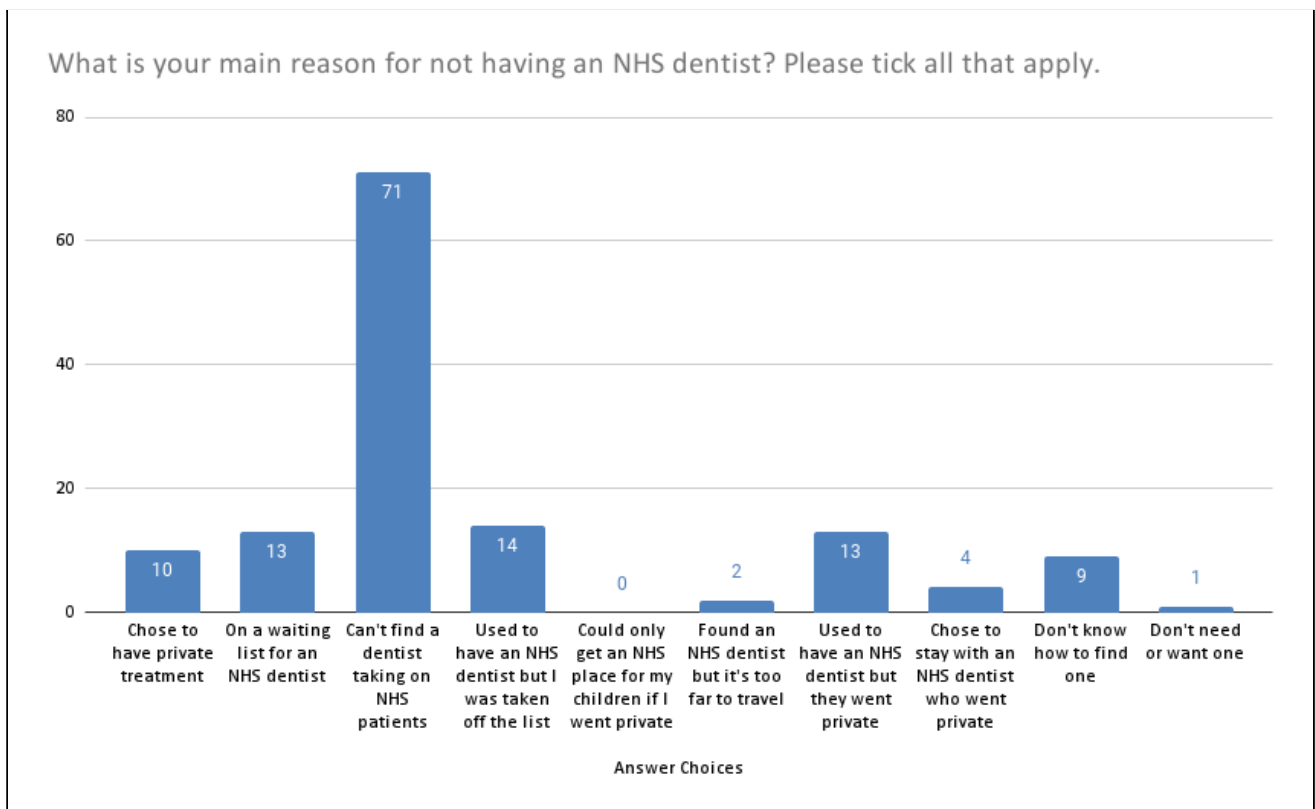
### **Q2. Is your dentist NHS or private? (100 respondents)**

In our 2018 survey 62% of respondents had an NHS dentist, 23% had a private dentist. In 2021 66% of respondents had an NHS dentist and 33% had a private dentist. There has been a notable 43% increase in the number of respondents accessing private dentistry since 2018.



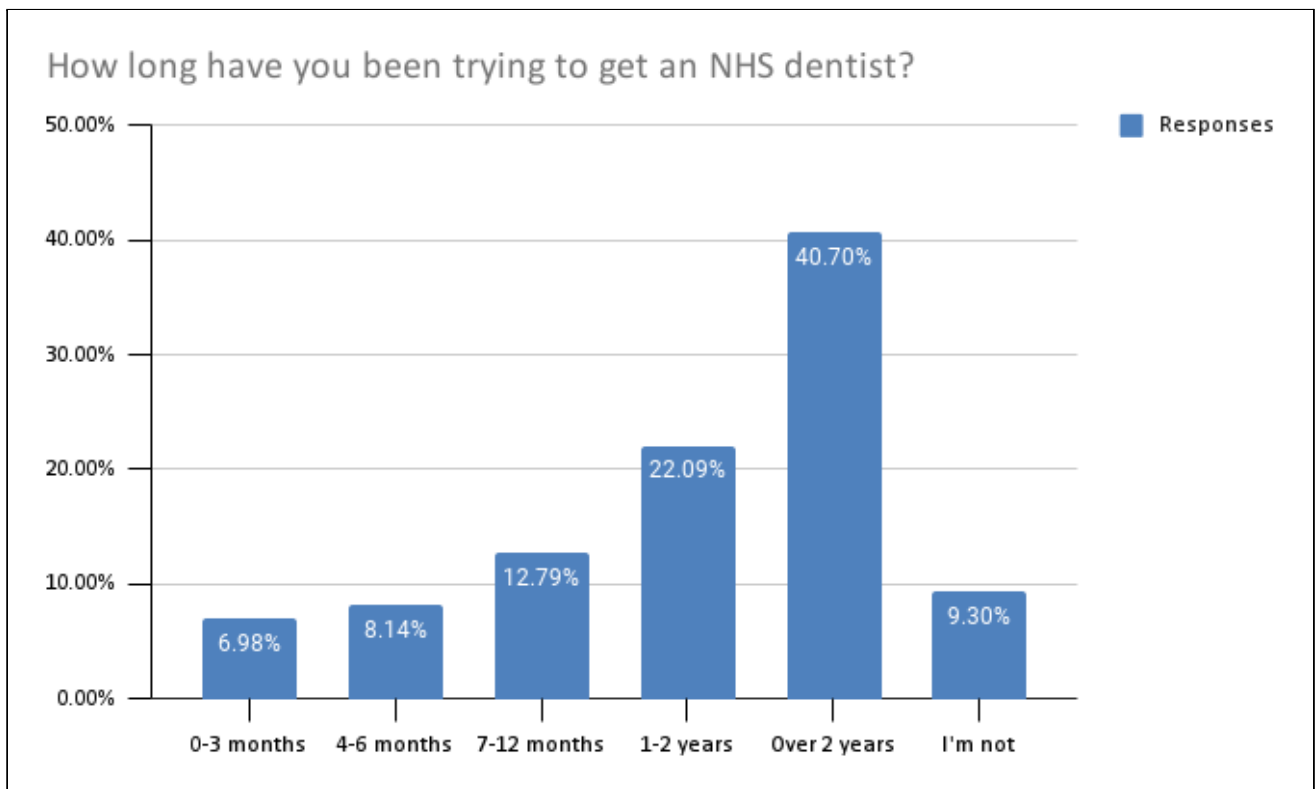
### Question 3. What is your main reason for not having an NHS dentist? (100 respondents and options to give more than one reason)

Those respondents who did not have an NHS dentist were asked why this was so. In 2018 46% of people replied that they ‘couldn’t find a dentist taking on NHS patients’. In 2021 this had risen to 71%, an increase of 54%.



#### Q4. How long have you been trying to get an NHS dentist? (86 responses)

In 2018 45% of respondents reported that they had been looking for over 2 years. In 2021 this had fallen slightly to 41% and 1-2 years had fallen very slightly from 24 to 22%.

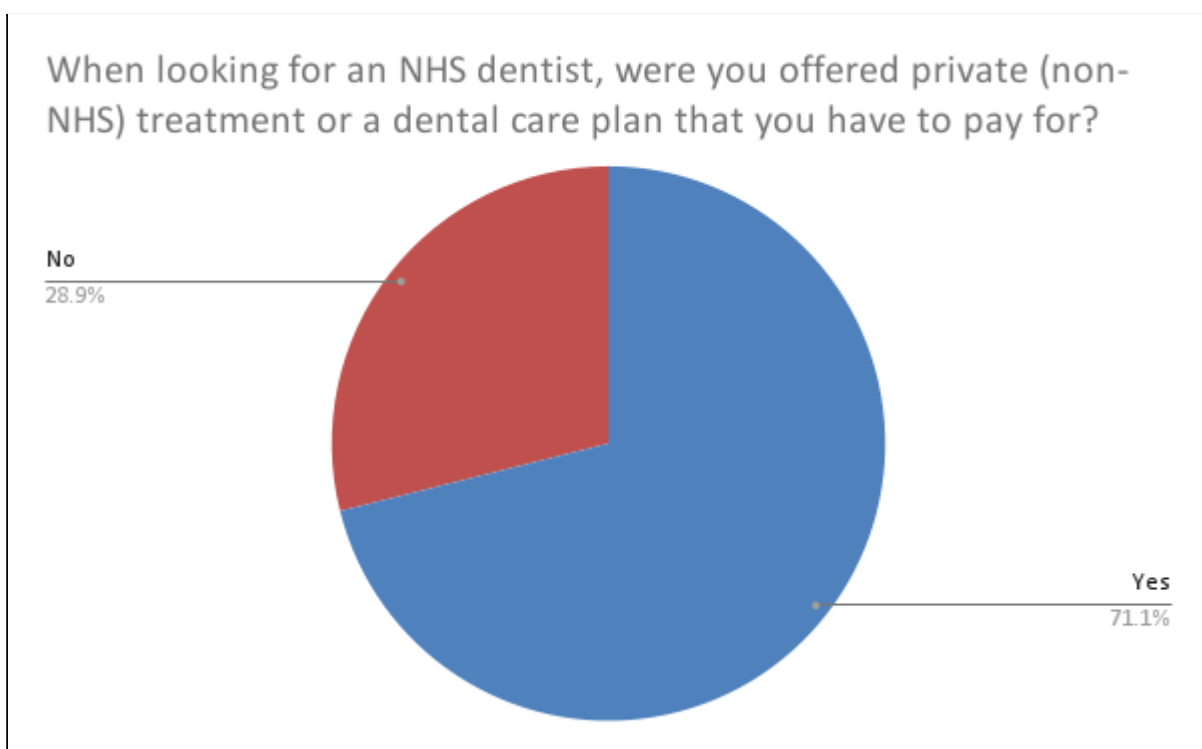


#### Q.5 Which of the following have you tried to find an NHS dentist? (82 responses and able to give more than one answer)

This question was asked to those who did not have an NHS dentist. In 2018 69% of respondents 'contacted dentists directly', in 2021 this had increased to 84. In 2018 'NHS choices' had been contacted by 59% of respondents in 2021 this had risen to 73%. An 'internet search' was performed by 39% of respondents in 2018, in 2021 it was 68%.

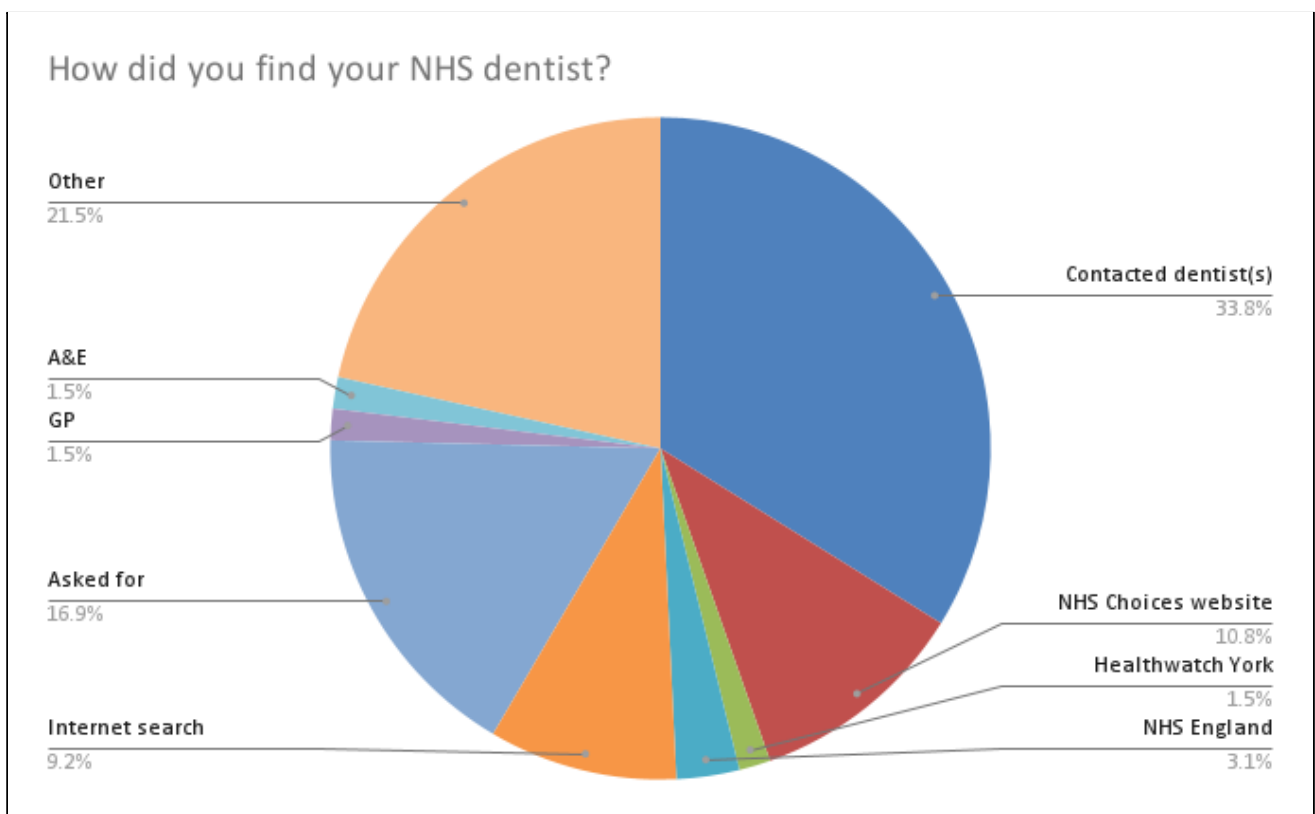
**Q.6 When looking for an NHS dentist, were you offered private (non NHS) treatment or a dental care plan that you have to pay for? (83 Respondents)**

In 2018 56% of respondents who were looking for an NHS dentist were offered private (non NHS) treatment or a private dental care plan. In 2021 this increased to 71%.



### Q.7 How did you find your NHS dentist? (48 responses from respondents with an NHS dentist and options to give more than one answer)

Direct contact with dental practises remained the primary method of respondents in 2021 (34%). The profile of responses remained broadly similar to 2018, although A&E, Healthwatch York and GPs were specifically mentioned in 2021.

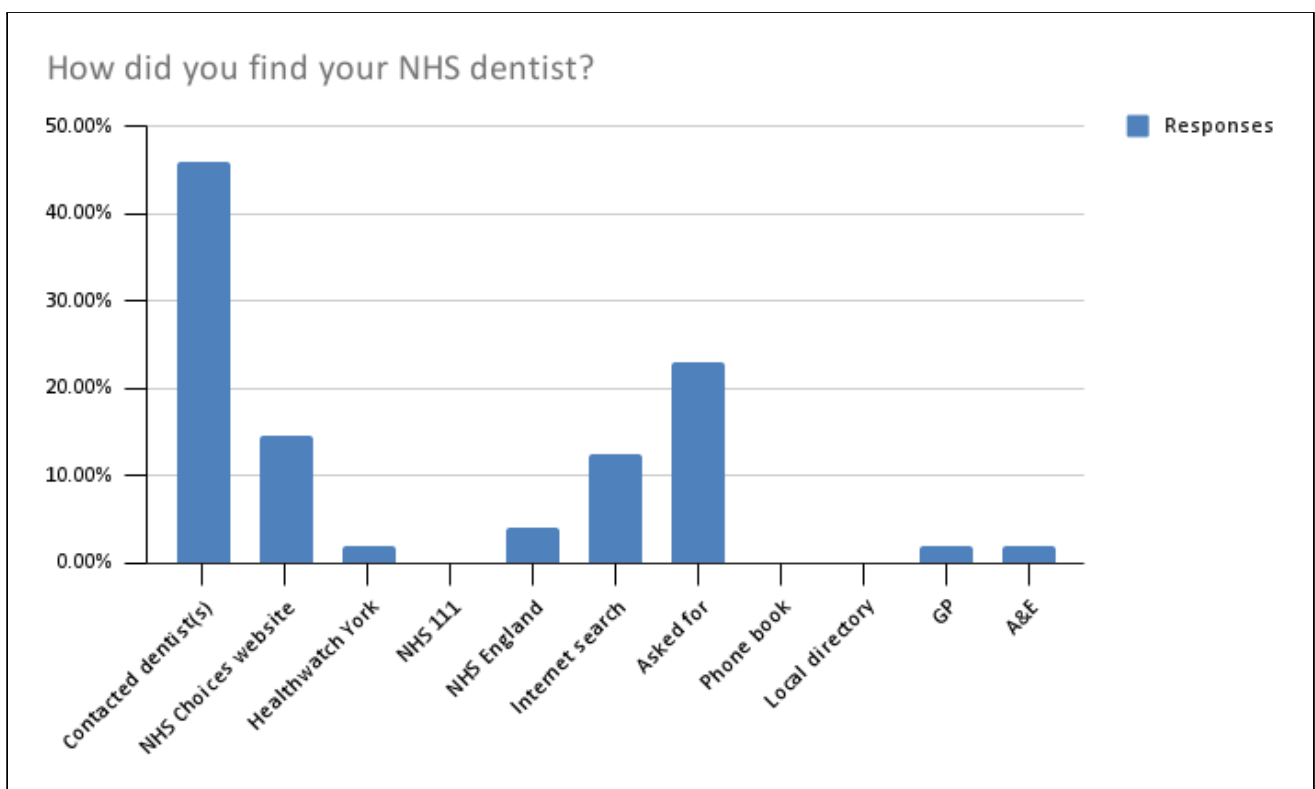




### Q.8 How long did you wait to get your NHS dentist? (60 respondents)

The waiting times for participants who already had an NHS dentist were similar in both the 2018 and 2021 surveys, however, the percentage of respondents waiting over 2 years fell from 10% to 5% in 2021.

	2018	2021
0-3 months	59%	62%
4-6 months	16%	15%
7-12 months	10%	10%
1-2 years	6%	8%
Over 2 years	10%	5%

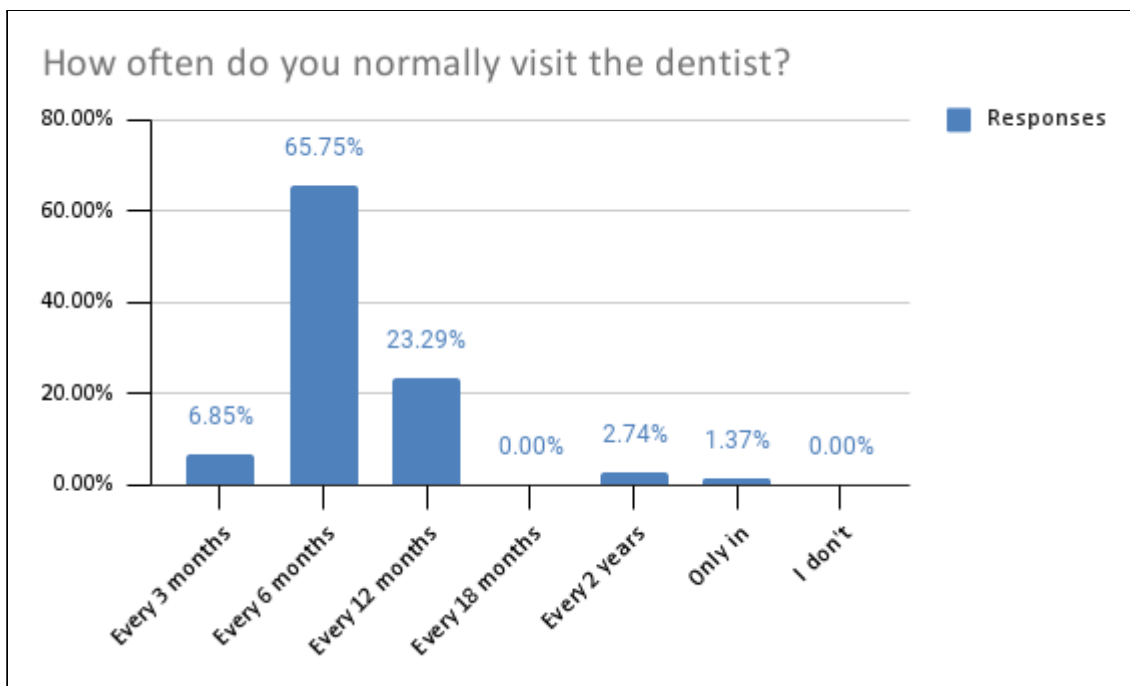


### Q.9 Which dentist do you go to? (76 respondents)

It was interesting to note that alongside local York practices respondents listed dentists as far afield as Stokesley, Great Ayton, Whitby, Selby, Easingwold, Bradford and London.

### Q.10 How often do you normally visit the dentist? (73 respondents)

66% of respondents normally visit the dentist every 6 months and 24% annually. This was broadly in line with the previous survey in 2018 (69% six-monthly and 19% annually).



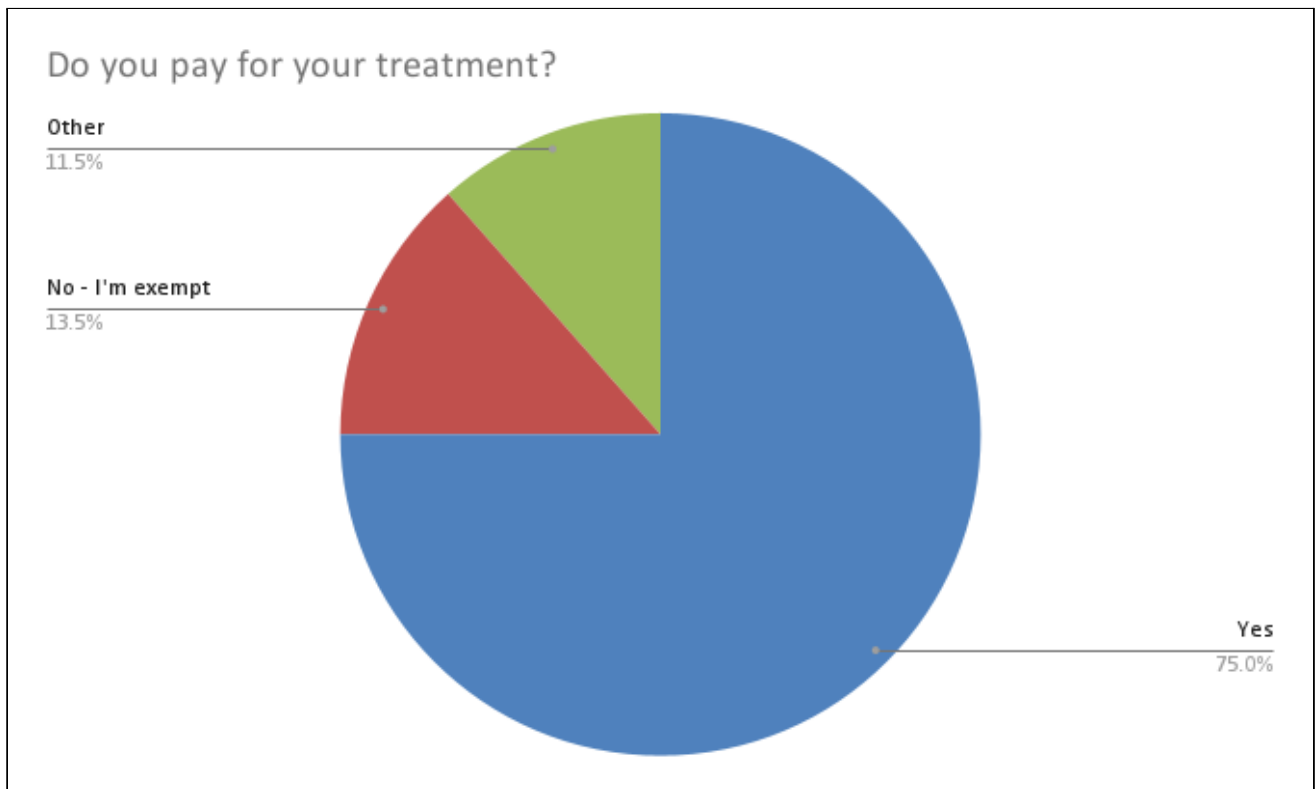
### Q.11 When did you last see a dentist? (156 respondents)

There was a large increase in the percentage of respondents who had not seen their dentist for 1-2 years (a 200% increase), 2-3 years (a 633% increase), 'only in emergencies' (a 200% increase) and 'I don't' (a 100% increase).

	2018	2021
Within the last 2 weeks	13%	7%
3 weeks to 1 month	14%	11%
2-3 months	23%	10%
4-6 months	25%	9%
7-12 month	10%	10%
1-2 years	5%	15%
2-3 years	3%	22%
Only in emergencies	3%	9%
I don't	3%	6%

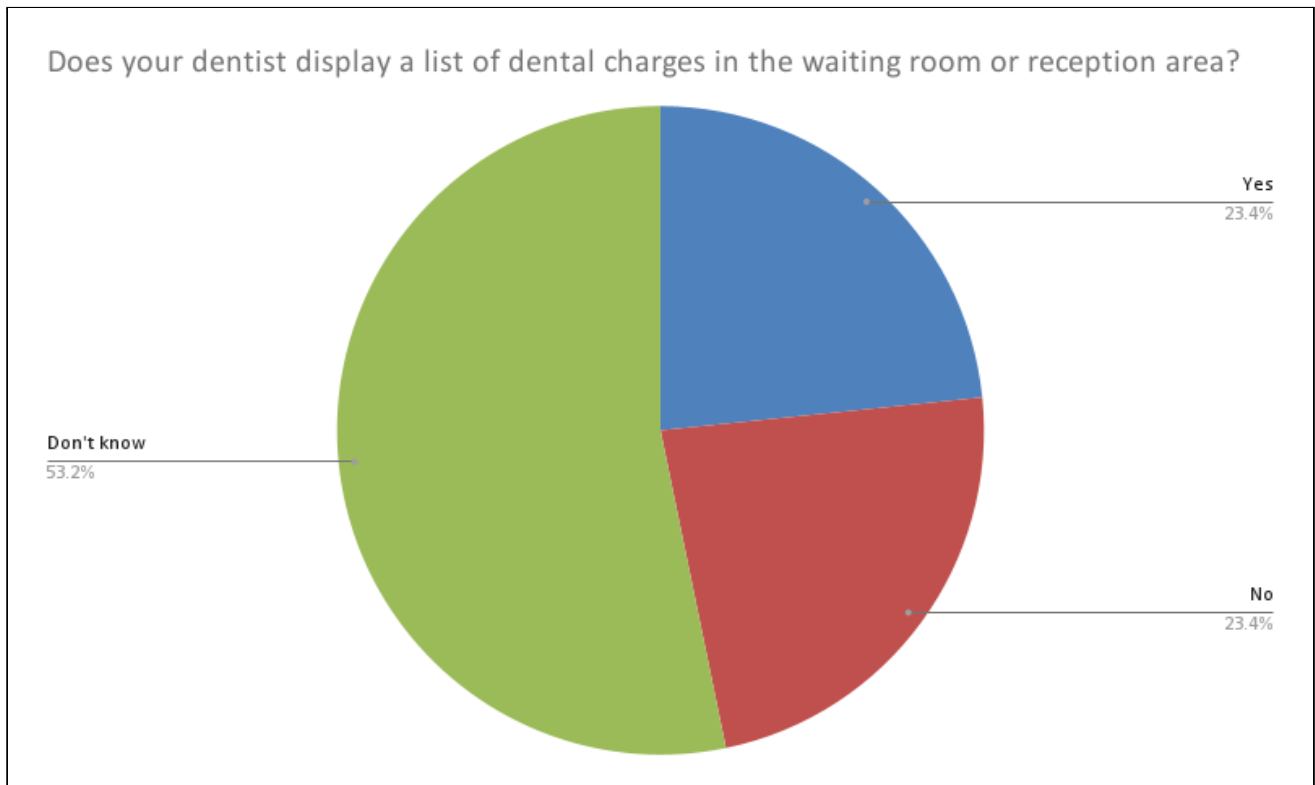
**Q.12 Do you pay for your NHS treatment? (156 respondents)**

75% of respondents paid for their treatment in 2021, 13.5% were exempt and 11.5% replied 'other'. This is a broadly similar profile to the 2018 results.



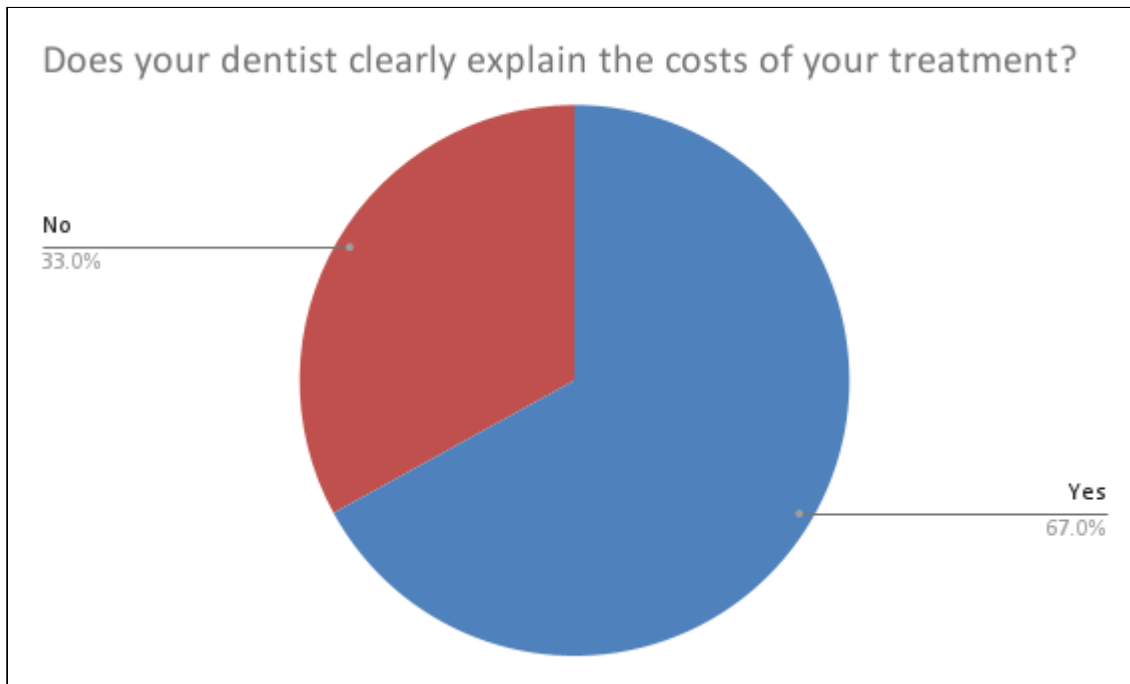
**Q.13 Does your dentist display a list of dental charges in the waiting room or reception area? (156 respondents)**

In 2018 44% of respondents reported that their dentist did display a list of dental charges, but in 2021 this had fallen to 23%.



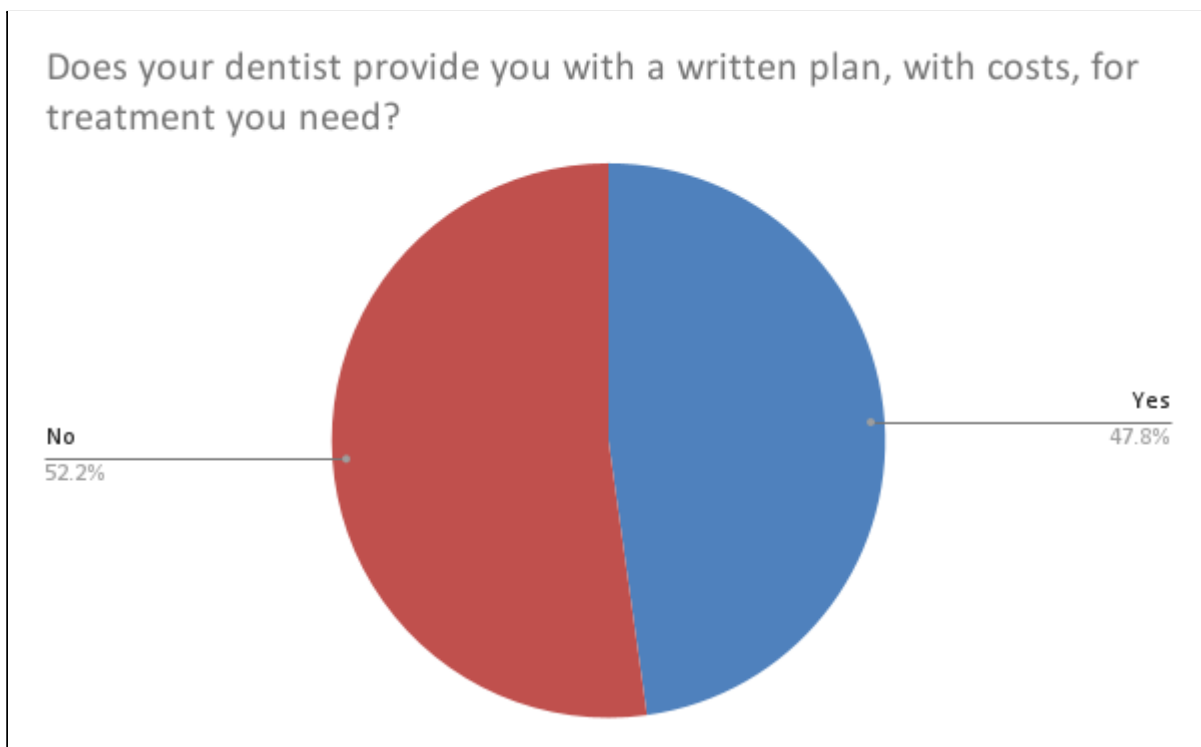
**Q.14 Does your dentist clearly explain the costs of your treatment? (156 respondents)**

In 2018 65% reported that their dentist clearly explained the costs of their treatment, in 2021 this remained broadly similar (67%).



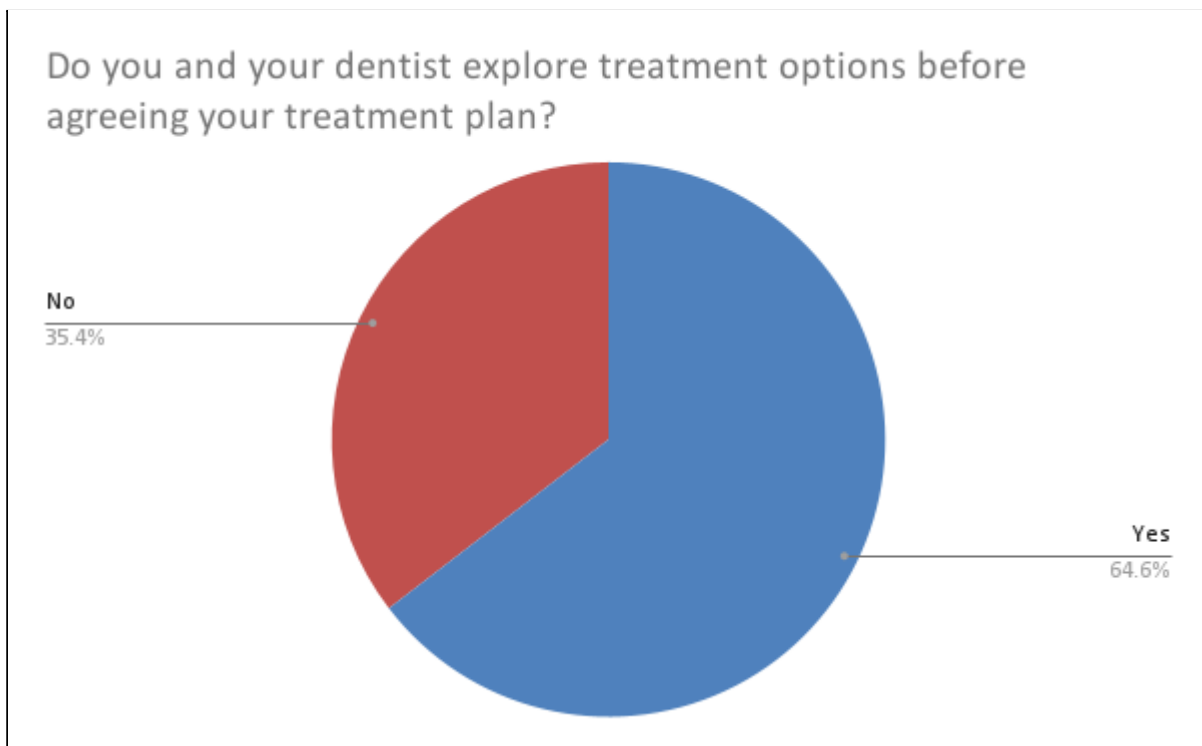
**Q.15 Does your dentist provide you with a written plan, with costs, for treatment you need? (155 respondents)**

48% of respondents reported that their dentist did provide them with a written plan, with costs, for treatment they needed. This is broadly similar to the 2018 survey (45%).



**Q.16 Do you and your dentist explore treatment options before agreeing your treatment plan? (154 respondents)**

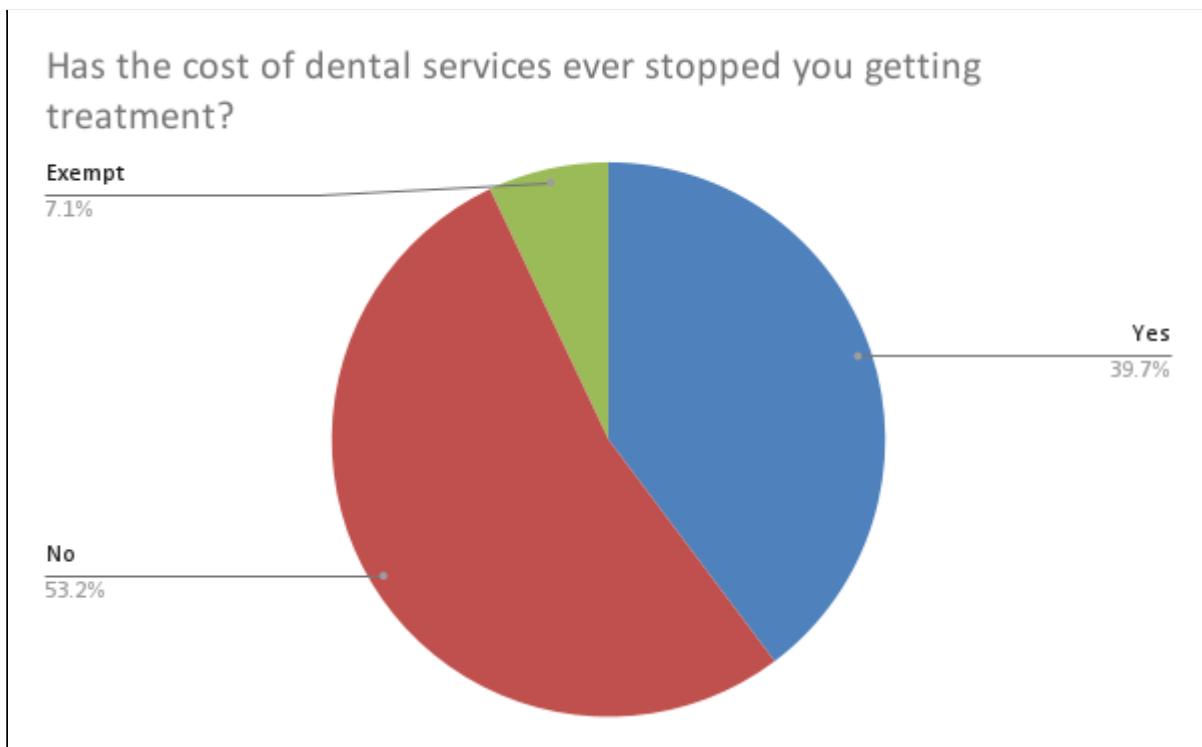
40% of respondents reported that they explored their treatment options with their dentist before agreeing their treatment plan. This is a reduction since the 2018 survey (73%).





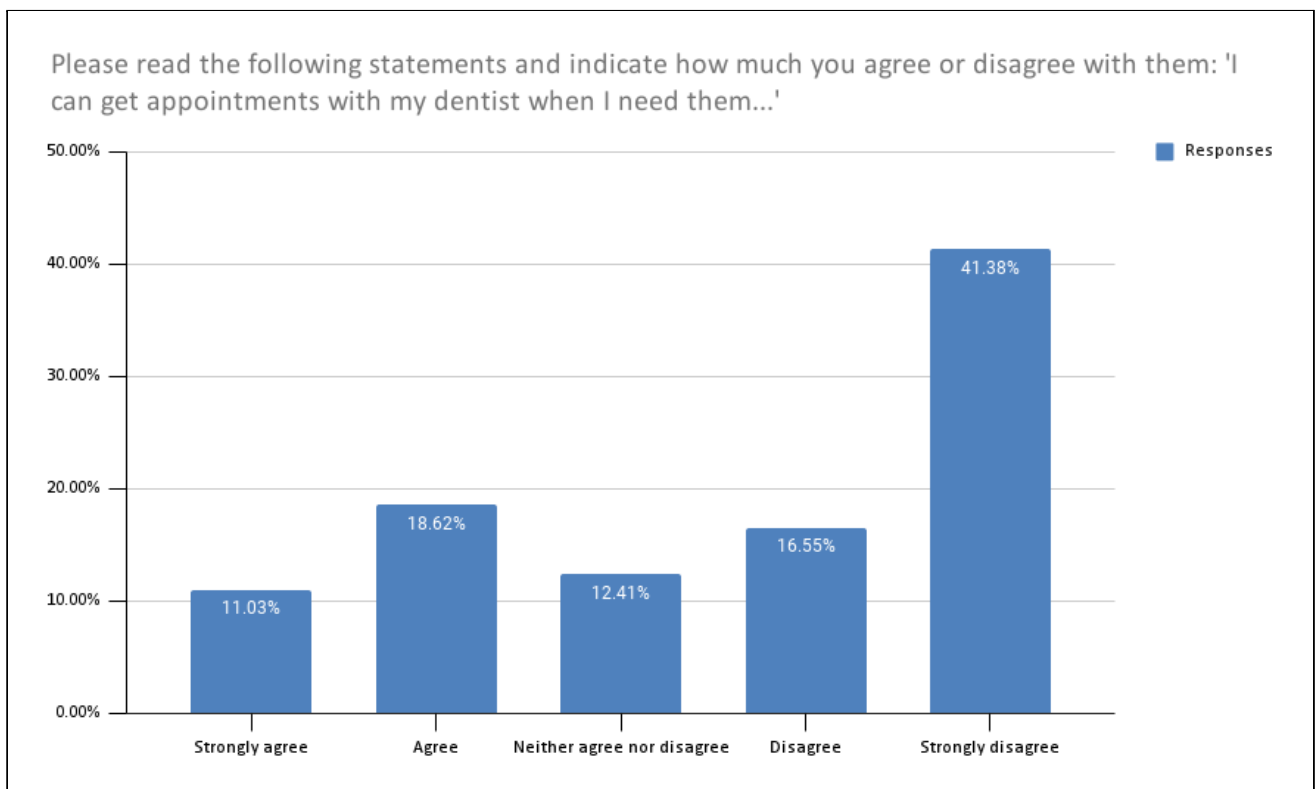
**Q.17 Has the cost of dental services ever stopped you getting treatment?****(156 respondents)**

In 2018 the percentage of respondents replying that cost had stopped them getting dental treatment was 28%, in 2021 it was 40% (an increase of 43%).



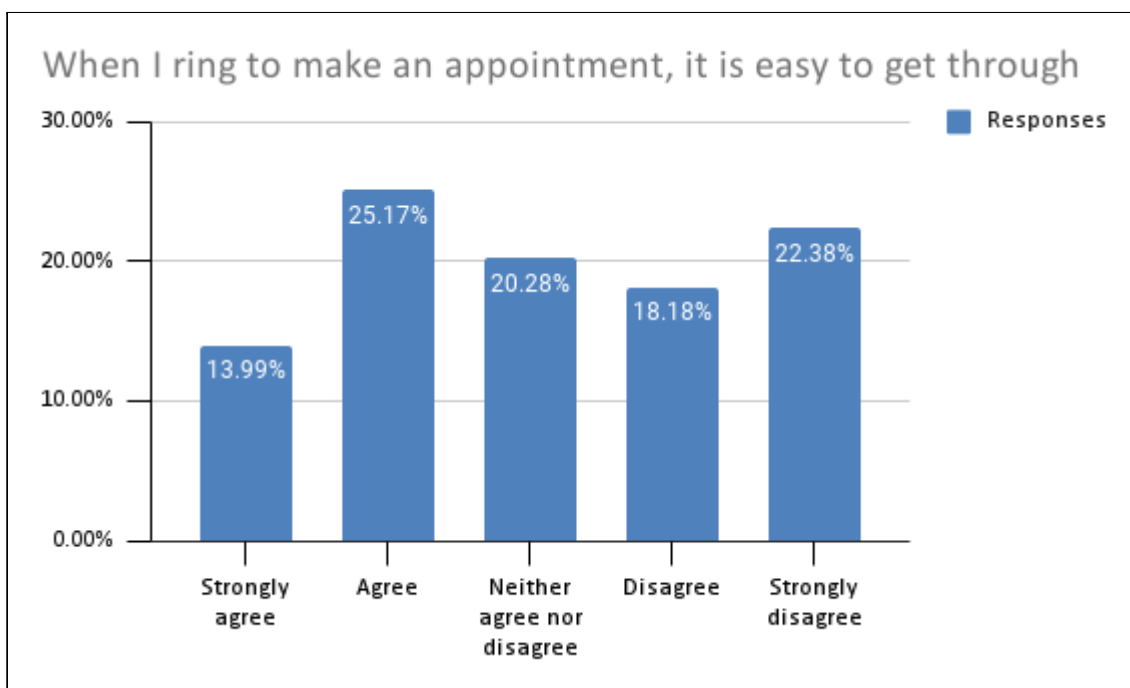
### Q.18 I can get appointments with my dentist when I need them (145 respondents)

In 2018 8% strongly disagreed with the statement 'I can get appointments with my dentist when I need them'. In 2021 41% of respondents strongly disagreed with this statement (an increase of 413%).



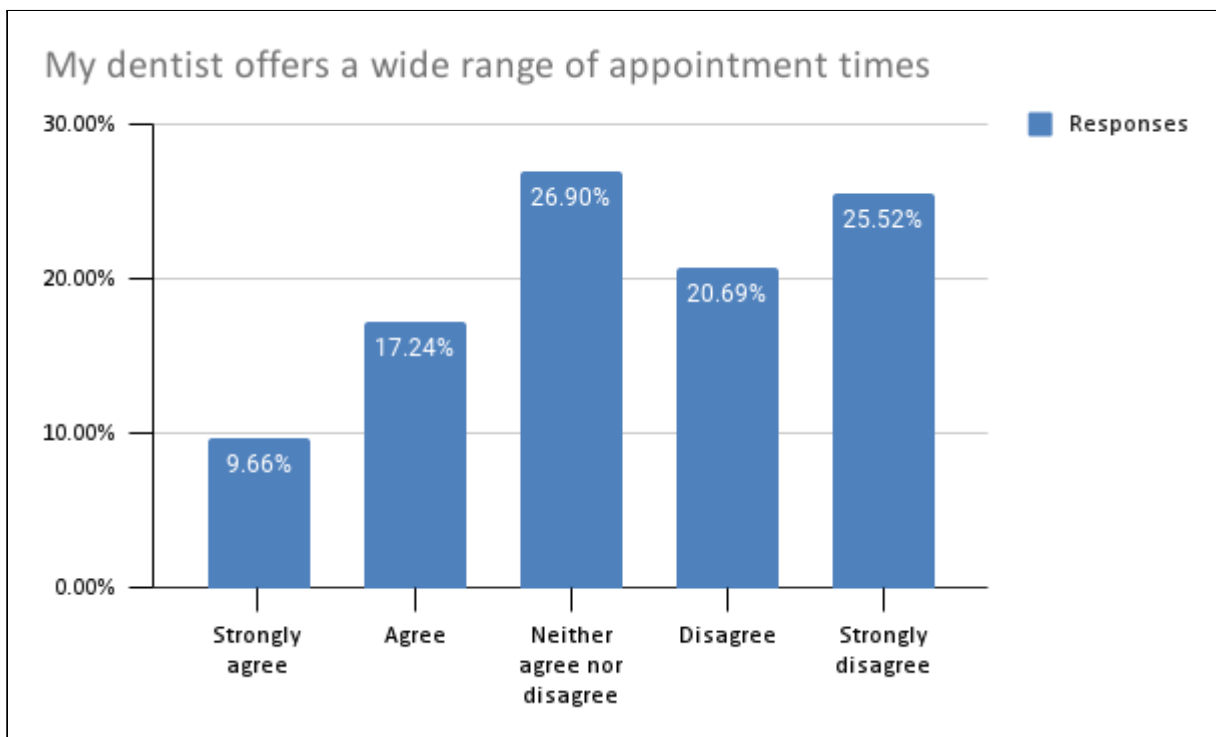
**Q.19 When I ring to make an appointment, it is easy to get through (143 respondents)**

In 2018 50% of respondents agreed with the statement 'when I ring to make an appointment, it is easy to get through.' In 2021 25% of respondents agreed (a reduction of 100%). In 2018 6% of respondents 'strongly disagreed' with the statement. In 2021 22% of respondents 'strongly disagreed' with the statement (an increase of 267%).



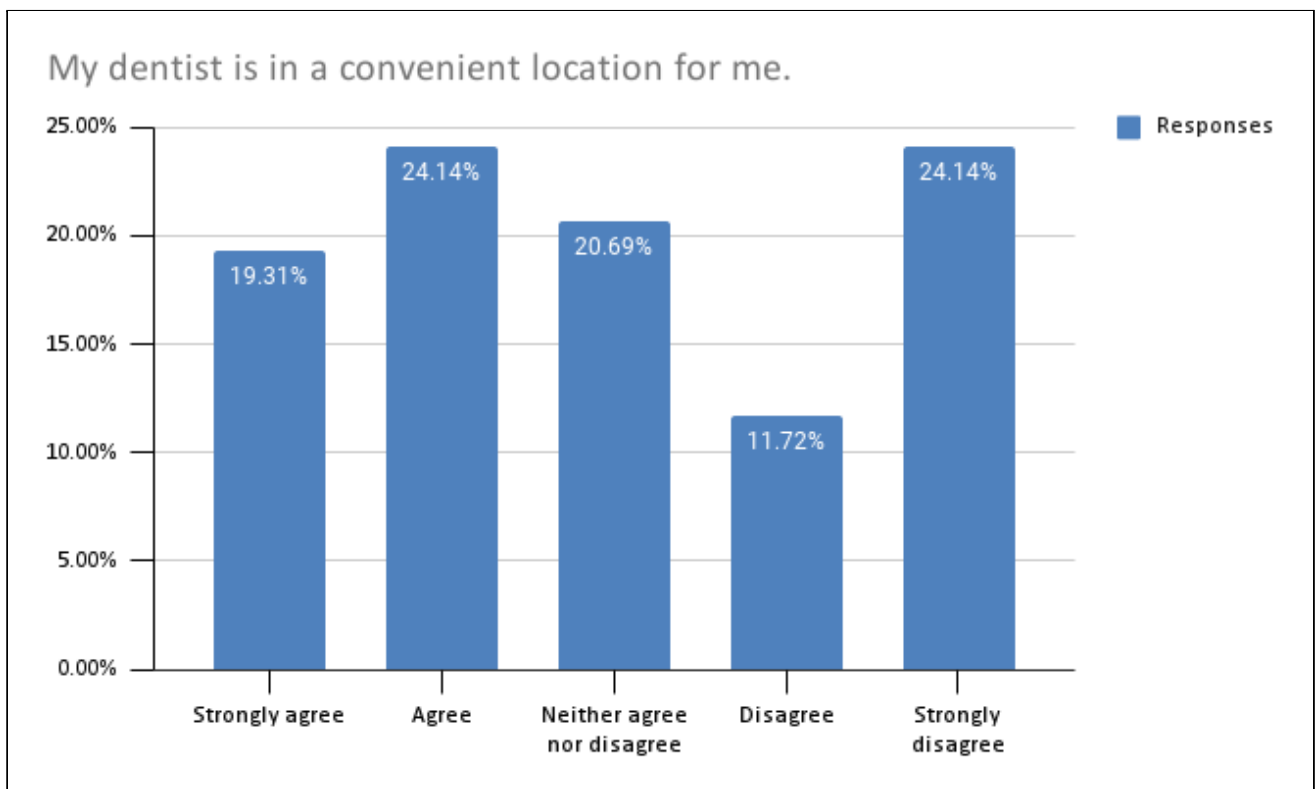
### Q.20 My dentist offers a wide range of appointment times (145 respondents)

In 2018 50% of respondents agreed with the statement 'my dentist offers a wide range of appointment times.' In 2021 25% of respondents agreed (a reduction of 100%). In 2018 6% strongly disagreed. In 2021 22% strongly disagreed (a reduction of 276%).



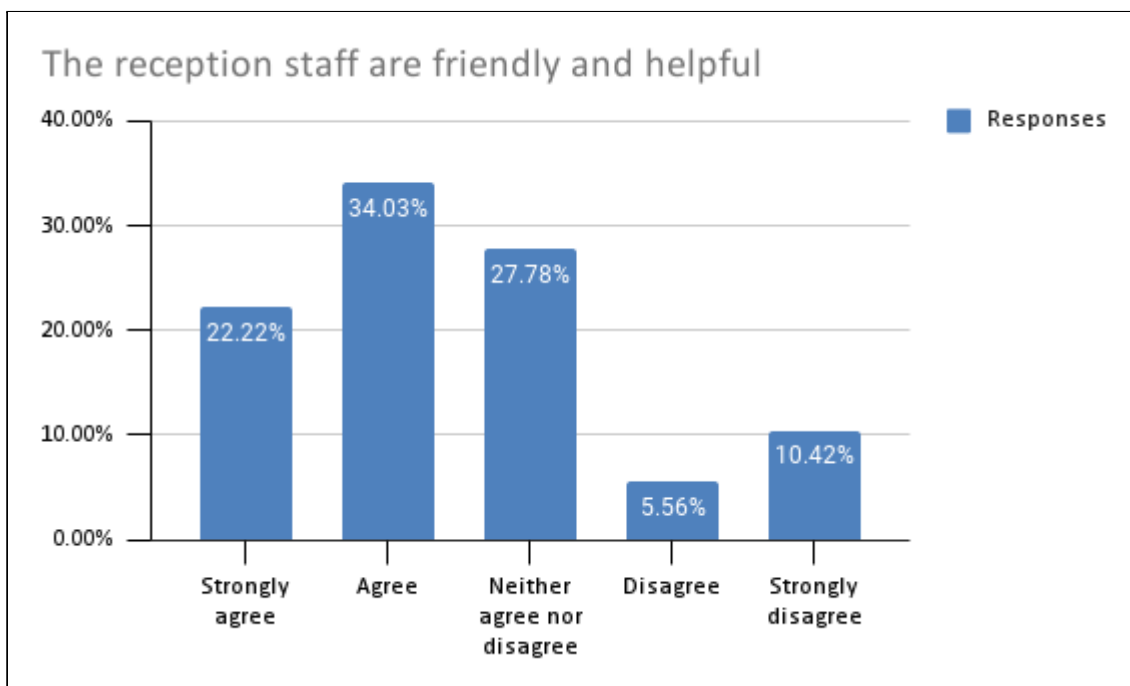
### Q.21 My dentist is in a convenient location for me

In 2018 7% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement 'my dentist is in a convenient location for me.' In 2021 this percentage had risen to 26% (an increase of 271%). The percentage of respondents agreeing with the statement in 2018 was 40% and in 2021 this had reduced to 17% (a reduction of 57%).



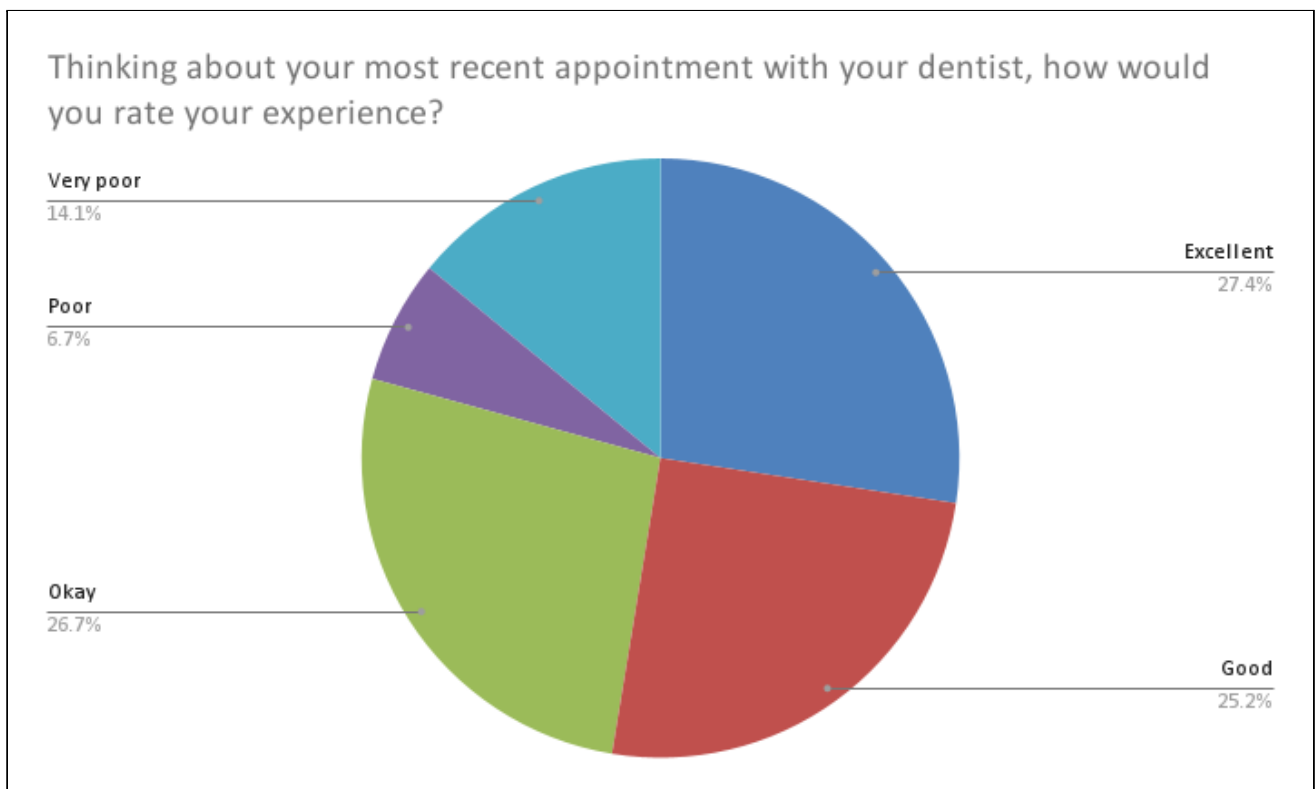
**Q.22 The reception staff are friendly and helpful (144 responses)**

In 2018 52% of respondents 'agreed' with the phrase 'the reception staff are friendly and helpful.' In 2021 the percentage of respondents agreeing had reduced to 34% (a reduction of 35%). In 2018 3% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, in 2021 10% strongly disagreed (an increase of 233%).



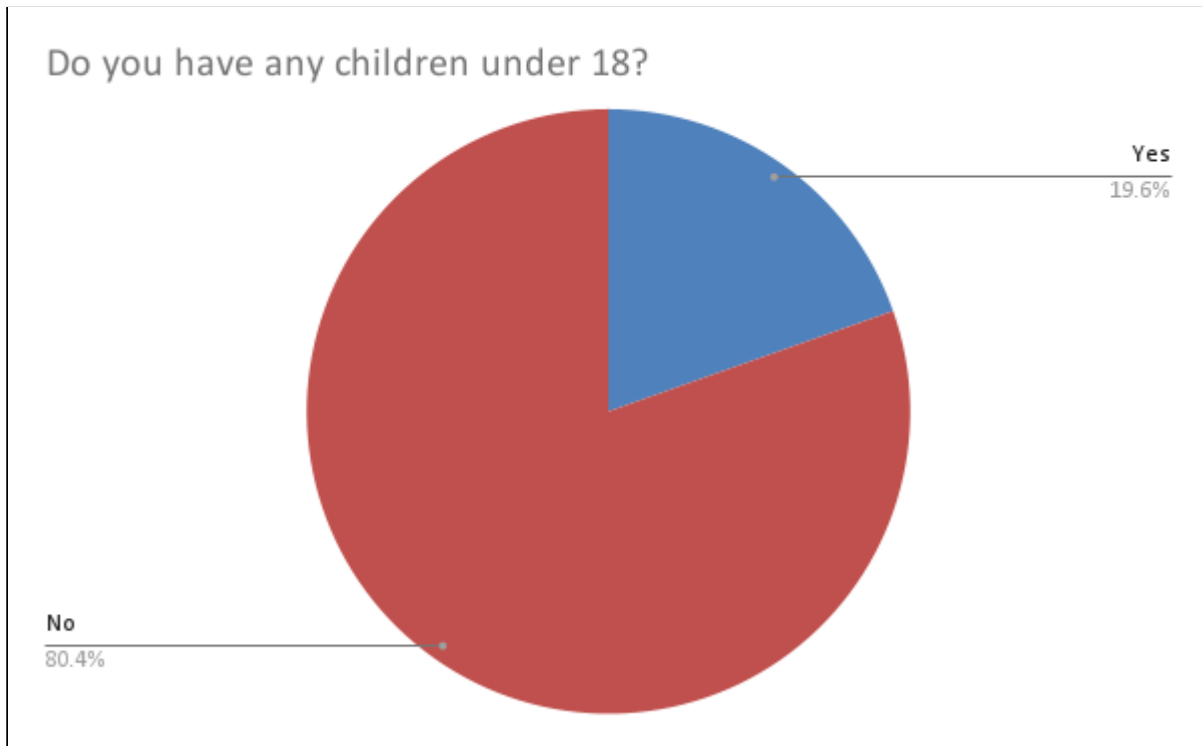
**Q.23 Thinking about your most recent appointment with your dentist, how would you rate your experience (135 responses)**

In 2018 45% of respondents rated their experience as 'excellent', in 2021 this had fallen to 27% (a reduction of 40%). In 2018 3% rated their experience as 'very poor', in 2021 this had increased to 14% (an increase of 367%).



**Q.24 Do you have any children under 18? (153 respondents)**

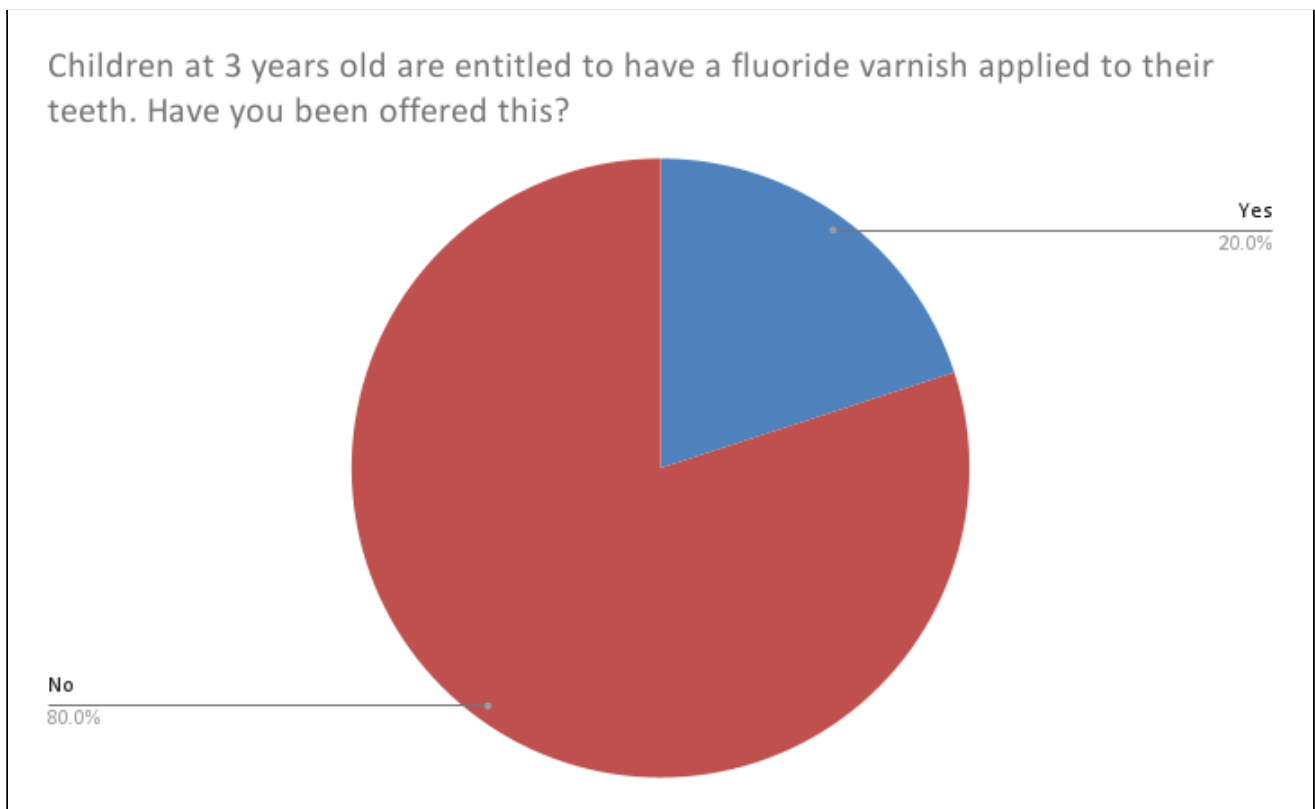
20% of respondents stated that they had children under 18.





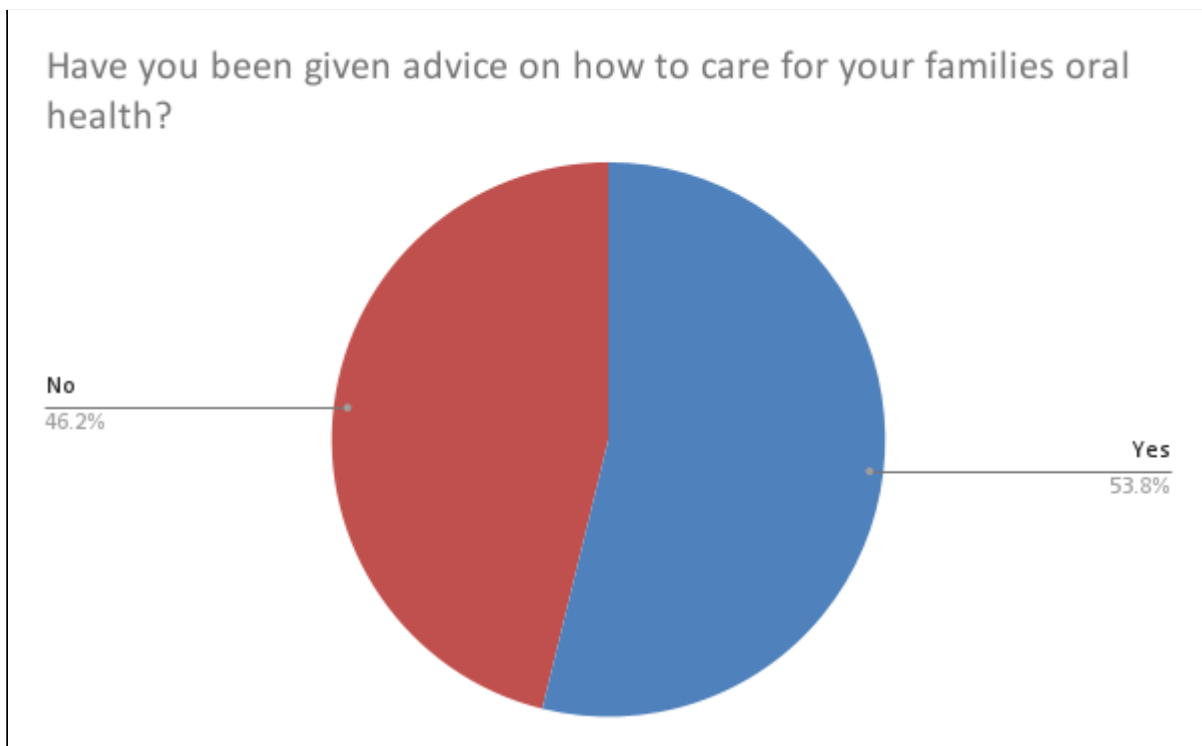
**Q.25 Children at 3 years old are entitled to have a fluoride varnish applied to their teeth. Have you been offered this? (30 respondents)**

In 2018 52% of respondents replied that they had been offered a fluoride varnish for their children. In 2021 this percentage was 20% (a reduction of 62%).



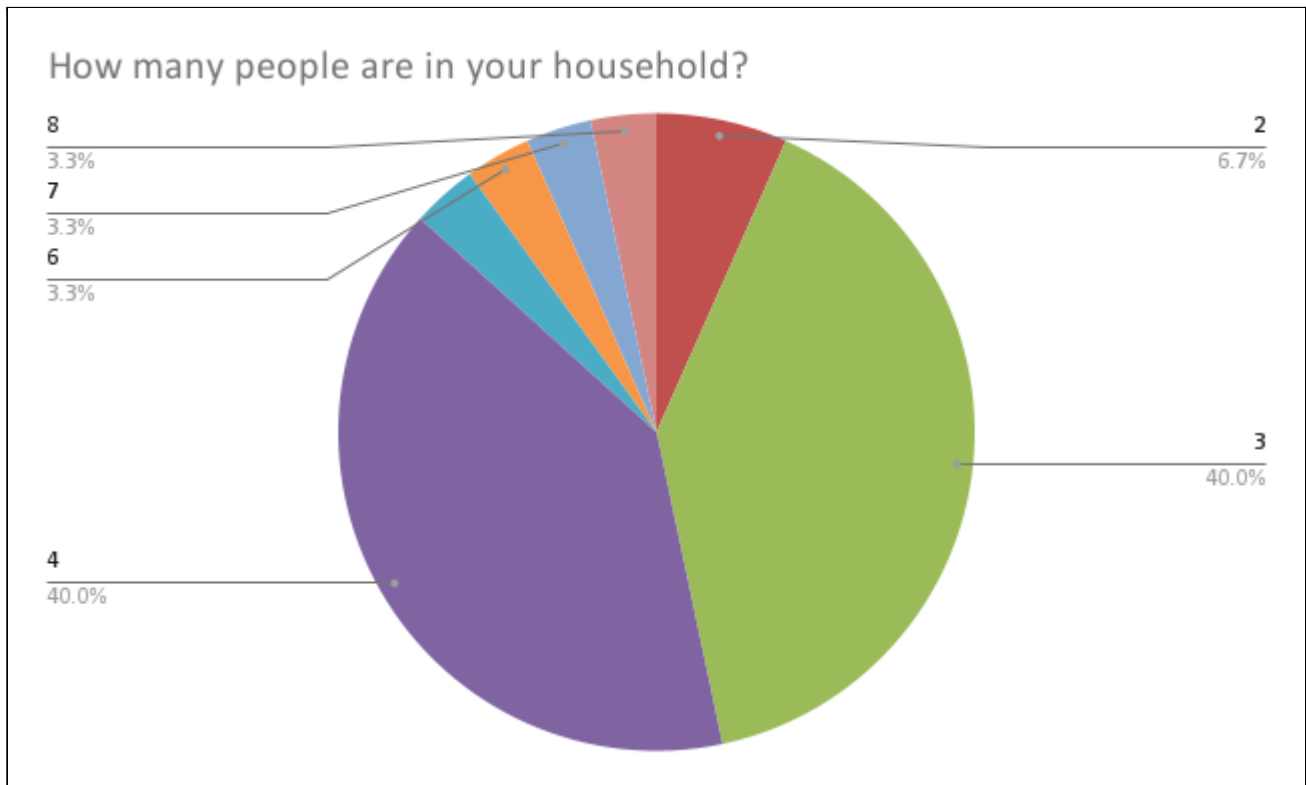
**Q.26 Have you been given advice on how to care for your family's oral health? (30 respondents)**

In 2018 once removing those who stated it was not applicable, 81% of respondents had been offered advice on how to care for their family's oral health. In 2021 this percentage was 54% of respondents.



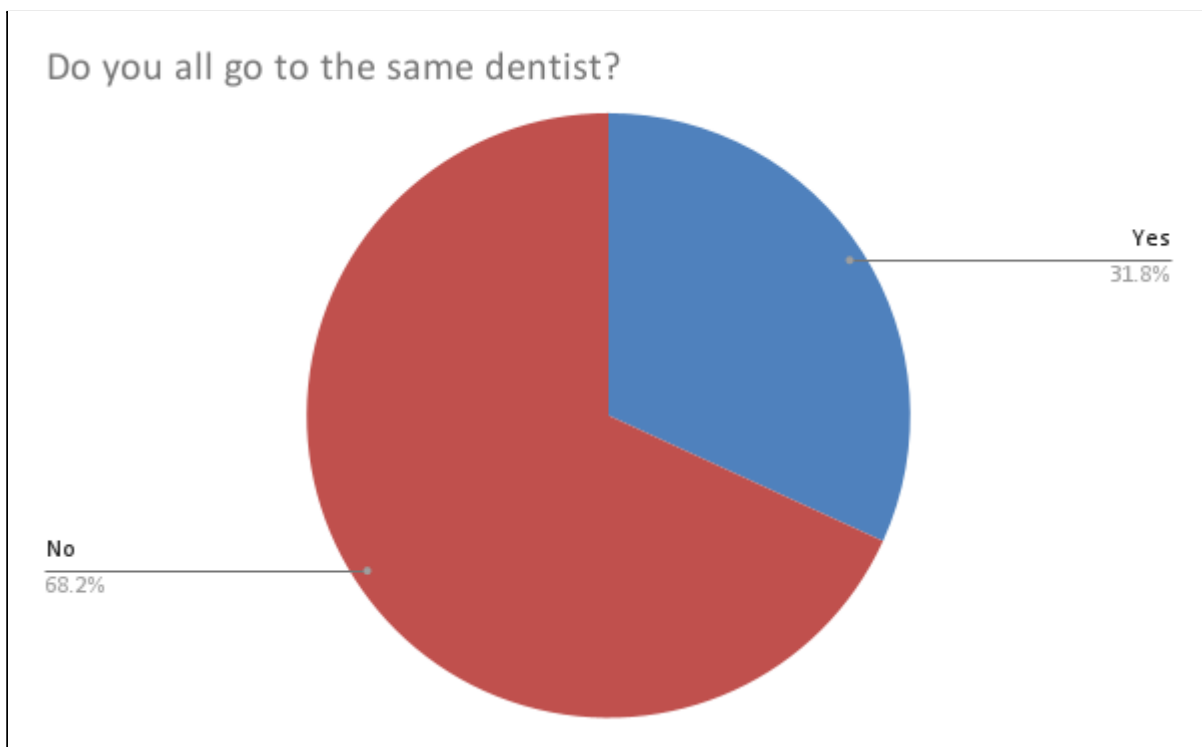
**Q.27 How many people are in your household? (30 respondents)**

87% of respondents said that they had a household of 4 people or fewer.



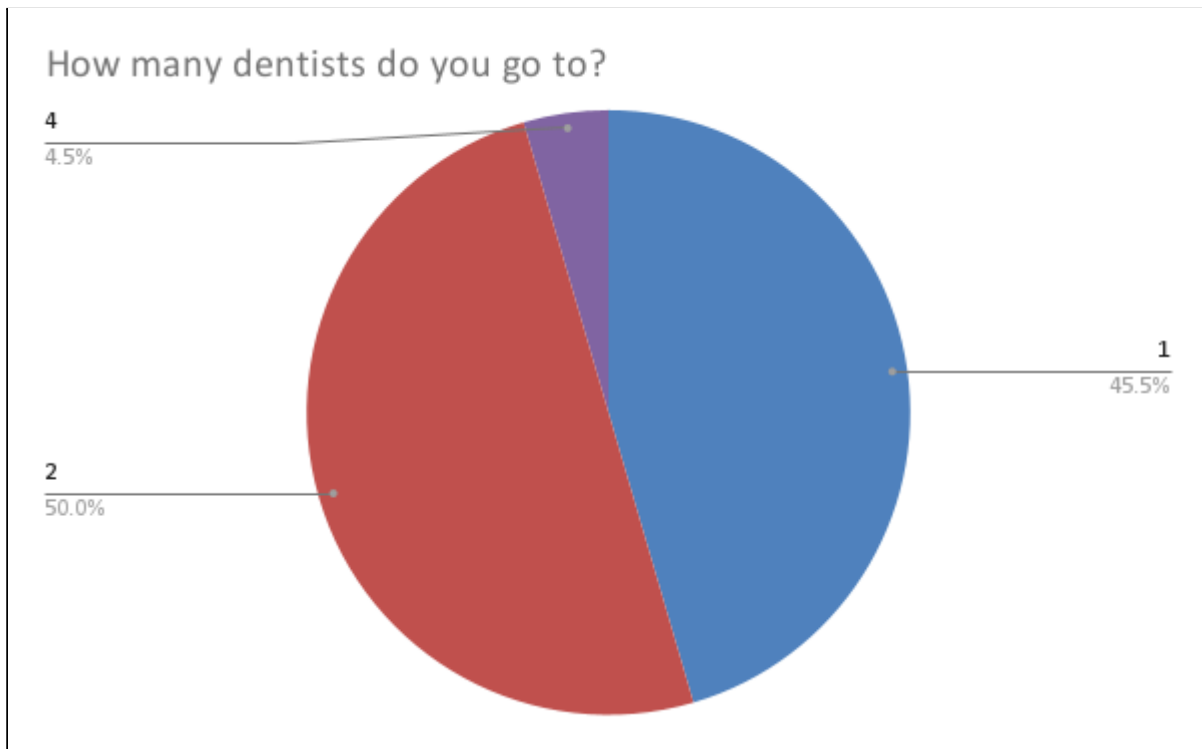
**Q.28 Do you all go to the same dentist? (30 respondents)**

27% of the people who answered this question reported that 'none of us has a dentist'. Of those who answered yes or no to this question, in 2018 36% of respondents said that 'not everyone in the household had the same dentist'. In 2021 this was 68%.



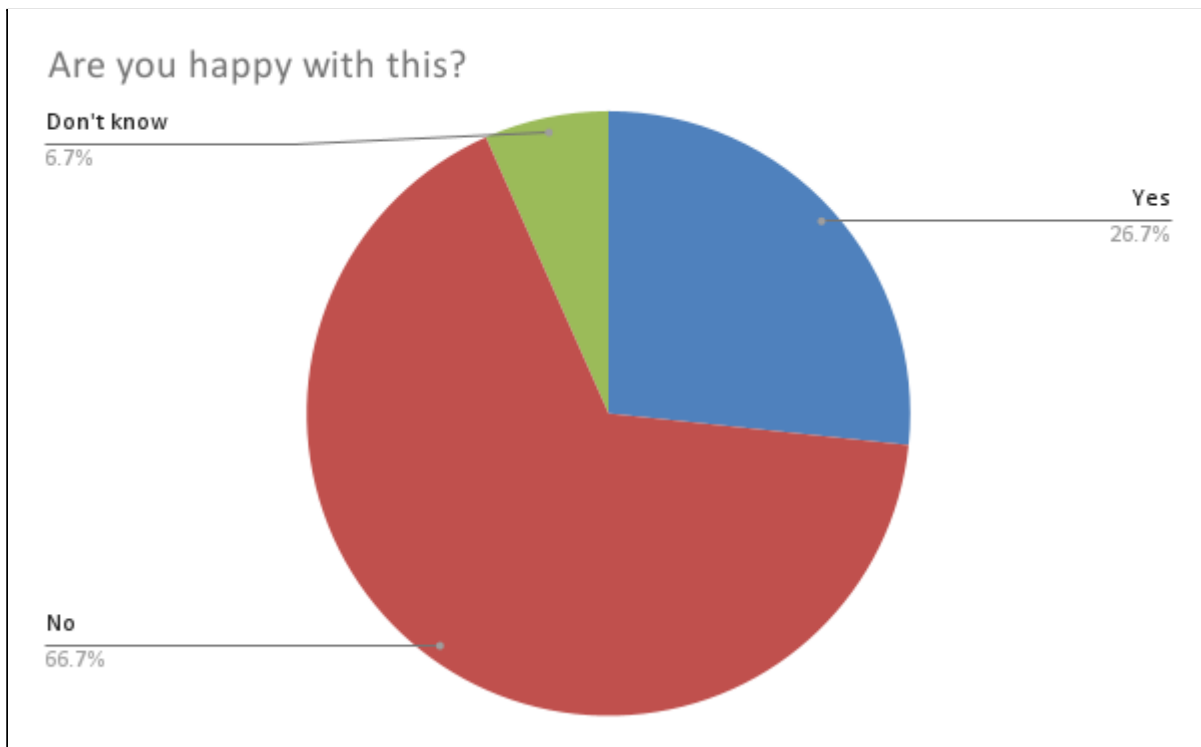
**Q.29 How many dentists do you go to? (30 respondents)**

In 2018 the majority of respondents went to the same dentist (74%). In 2021 this had reduced to 46%.



### Q.30 Are you happy with this? (30 respondents)

In 2018 69% of respondents said that they were happy with their family's arrangements for visiting a dentist. In 2021 this had reduced to 27%.



### Q.32 Do you have any comments about dental access for families? (30 respondents)

#### Comments included:

*“Most dentists in York won't even put us on a waiting list for NHS places. We have to drive so far to get to our NHS dentist it's inconvenient and makes us miss work.”*

*“I think there needs to be some prioritisation - to make sure families with young children get to establish healthy habits now. It's been really tough during the pandemic but we need to make things like dental check ups routine for*

*children. That's impossible with so many families unable to find an NHS dentist."*

*"When did dentistry become something only for the wealthy?"*

*"Me and my sons have been trying to get a dentist in York for over two years, my teeth are loose, I have permanent toothache, my 26 year old son has exposed nerves and crumbling teeth he's in permanent agony where he is crying, my 16 year old has tooth ache all the time."*

*"I rang 22 dentists in and around York and most had no space with a few who had 3 year waiting lists."*

*"I have registered for an NHS dentist in xxx which is a 40 minute drive for me but they can't get me an appointment until 2022."*

*"I have booked into xxx and am paying privately a one off fee to ensure we all get seen this year. I have a tooth that needs attention so I could not wait."*

*"My son who is 3 has only been to the dentist once in his life and my daughter who is nearly 2 hasn't been seen yet."*

*"Every child should be able to access dental care where they live."*

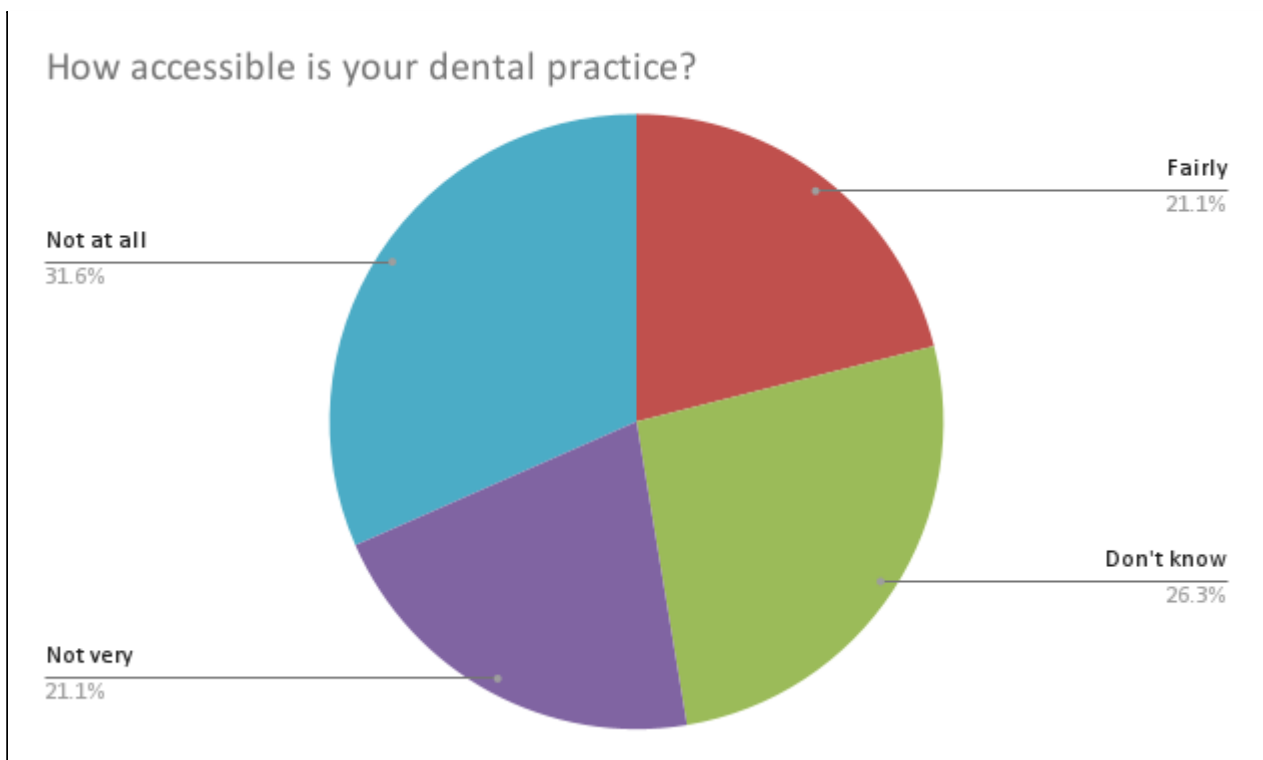
*"It's appalling. I don't buy that it's all down to the pandemic. Our original xxx dentist left at least a year before it started and we were already struggling."*

### 32. Do you consider yourself a disabled person or have any access issues? (151 Respondents)

13% of respondents said that they 'considered themselves to be a disabled person or have access issues.'

### Q.33 How accessible is your dental practice e.g. automatic doors, lifts, ramps, hearing loops? (19 Respondents)

In 2018 6% of respondents reported that their dental practice was 'not at all accessible'. In 2021 this had risen to 32% (an increase of 433%).





**Q.34 Are there any things your dental practice does really well that you think other dental practices could learn from? (60 respondents)**

**Negative comments:**

*“No, they've gone massively downhill even prior to covid and seem more interested in private work and implants.”*

*“No, I think they are very commercial and constantly try to sell extra treatments.”*

*“Keeps us hanging on phone listening to stupid music.”*

*“As someone who is nervous about dentists, faints when having blood tests, etc, I would hope that they are all kind and compassionate with someone like me. It is partly my fear that is keeping me away from the dentist, in addition to the challenges of being able to pay.”*

**Positive comments:**

*“Always checks jaw etc. and recommends the best inter-dental product and can supply them but suggests where I could get them at a cheaper rate.”*

*“Good availability of appointment times.”*

*“Dental hygiene is prioritised.”*

*“Cheerful.”*

*“They explain everything very fully.”*

*“I have been with my dentist for 30 years and wouldn't choose to go anywhere else. Very customer-service focused, reliable and proficient. Worth travelling to London for!”*

*“Have no complaints....always had excellent service.....it's private practice.”*

*“They are wonderful. They listen, they care, they are efficient and helpful.”*

*“The professionalism of the dentist when you actually get to see him is very high!”*

*“They usually send text or call reminders about appointments.”*

*“The new contact system by email is an improvement and gets a response.”*

*“They are aware of my extra physical issues and take extra care to ensure my comfort as much as possible.”*

*“Empathy.”*

*“Very friendly and an advocate of the NHS dental services.”*

*“My last dentist was super efficient and skilled at her job. I understand the delay to my appointment is due to her leaving.”*

*“Reasonable prices if taking up the private option.”*

*“Private dentists are ok, providing that they are more available and prices do not ruin the average household budget.”*

*“They stayed open through the pandemic. Some of my friends' dentists still are not open and must be hiding away like the GPs.”*

*“The reception teams are good at all places...other than that I'm all round upset with the whole thing.”*

*“Friendly reception staff.”*

### **Suggestions for improvement:**

*“TV above the dental chair to distract nervous patients.”*

*“Having clear pay-as-you-go prices online. As someone with relatively healthy teeth, I've never really needed to pay for a plan and so having annual checkups and hygiene appointments is all I'm ever looking for. If I do need any further dental work, I know I can always refer back to the website to keep an eye on my costs.”*

### **Q.35 Is there anything else you want to tell us about your dentist? (70 respondents)**

#### **Reduced service**

*“This practice used to pride itself on being an NHS centre of excellence but no more. They've recently lost staff, their reputation - and lost their way!”*

*“As it has grown over the years the service is not as good.”*

*“Turnover of dentists seems to be high. Rarely see the same person more than twice.”*

### **Effect of Covid-19**

*“I’m glad I have them given the appalling situation re: dental access in York.”*

*“I have been impressed by the way they have adapted to new procedures in the light of Covid-19.”*

*“Dealt with the difficulties arising from the pandemic in an extremely professional manner.”*

*“I do like my practice and do understand that they have struggled to maintain service levels as the building is old and hard to make Covid secure. There seems to be high staff turnover though.”*

### **Tensions with private treatment**

*“There is a clear divide between NHS and paying patients in terms of waiting areas, etc.”*

*“Some reception staff treat private patients more favourably than NHS patients.”*

*“Would not see people all last year even though other dentists would. May have seen me if I was private but no access for NHS patients.”*

*“We have had adverts for private dental appointments while still being told we cannot have a routine NHS appointment.”*

*“They take more care and have more time for the private or cosmetic dentistry patients than the NHS patients and this is not fair. We can’t all afford a private dentist but don’t make us feel like we have a lesser right to seek treatment like we are a burden on them.”*

### **Quality of care**

*“Dental treatment now seems very rushed with little consultation. Have had to return several times for the same filling to be done, as it keeps breaking up. Inferior materials? Now faced with cost of a crown, but will it last?”*

*“I do not believe he was efficiently up to date with his qualifications, training, I wonder as with GP's, Consultants, and other health care professionals are they subject to assessments about their ability and whether the practice is suitable/adequate and patient led?”*

*“I believe XXX are trying to make money out of their customers and don't care much for good customer outcomes. I have reported them to the commissioner and I'm currently looking for a new dentist.”*

*“They are focussed purely on profit and don't care about dental health, I have tried to go to a different dentist but can't get an appointment anywhere for a basic check-up, even if I pay full price for it.”*

*“I had forgotten that before the pandemic I turned up to xxx for treatment (filling) and was told it wasn't actually going to be a dentist doing the treatment & was this OK. I really wasn't sure, but proceeded (mainly as I felt pressured to). The untrained dentist did a temporary filling that was never replaced. This is now the tooth that has to be extracted. I worry that there is real professional negligence at this practice.”*

*"Our dentist - XXX - is wonderful."*

*"Very kind and informal with excellent people skills and clinical care."*

### **Cost of treatment**

*"My dentist is great but treatment is very expensive and although I earn a good salary the cost is very difficult to meet. I would love an NHS dentist but just can't find one."*

*"I would love to tell you about 'my dentist' - but I do not have one to tell you about...that's the point! Too many of your questions assume we have a dentist when many people on low incomes cannot access one at all. York is an absolute disgrace for this and has been for many years now."*

*"I wish I could get one, my teeth hurt and I'm too poor for private :( "*

*"Dentist of 15 years changed to all private work now. No NHS provision even for children. Costs very expensive, over £100 for a dental hygienist appointment. Poor availability of appointments."*

*"I am so desperate for treatment that I have now paid £235 for a check up and a filling and signed up for a payment plan for £14 a month and they have not treated the tooth which is infected. I could cry as I am not working and the costs for the tooth which has a chronic infection. I have been quoted £2,000 to £3,000 or I can have the tooth extracted for around £300. It is scary that I am using my burial savings to sort out one tooth. I have looked for two years for an NHS dentist without success and am at my wits end."*

*"They seem to take liberties in assuming people can afford over inflated treatment costs, even as a full time student which I am."*

*"I was at this dentist for years paying private prices until I heard someone asking at reception if they could go on the NHS list so I asked and heard I had been successful in about 3 months, very happy."*

*"I have the feeling they suggest work to bring money into the private practice. I am worried about the future as I get older and need more dental work - the prices are thousands which I just can't afford. We need more NHS dentists taking on new patients in York."*

*"They should provide all treatments at NHS charges."*

### **Continuity of care**

*"Whilst I have seen a variety of dentists over the years. The one member of staff who has remained constant ensures that new dentists are aware of how they need to alter their normal procedures to take care of me."*

*"I feel let down by this practice, previously I had been at the same practice for over 40 years. Since moving I've had poor care."*

*"There is no consistency with the dentist. Not guaranteed to see the same dentist on each visit."*

*"Had a very poor experience with them in terms of cancelling appointments and not being able to rebook them promptly. This means I've missed over 2 years of check ups. I also dislike seeing a different dentist each time, consistency is very poor. I am considering going private with a different dentist as I can now afford to, but it's not a reasonable solution for many."*

## Communication

*"The dentist used to book appointments automatically (pre-lockdown) and not inform you of the date/time until a text reminder the day before. If the appointment was on a Monday the reminder comes through a Saturday (when the practice is closed) so if you can't make it you have to cancel on Monday morning and incur the NHS late cancellation first strike."*

*"The dentist I had claimed I'd missed an appointment but there was recourse to complain despite being unaware of the appointment. I suspect they saw me as an easy case to get off their books as a carer."*

*"One of the receptionists can be quite rude and make it difficult to give an appointment."*

*"My dentist/practice is still listed as a NHS dentist on the NHS website - it is misleading."*

## Access to service

*"I wish I had one!"*

*"As of today I have tried to join 3 waiting lists closest to me and out of those only one has allowed me to give full details to join them, two have point blank said they are not currently accepting new patients in their NHS waiting lists."*

*"I am currently pregnant and concerned that I will not be able to find a dentist for my child as well as being unable to access a dentist myself."*

*"I understand he's left but the dental practice say we will get a call, when they've recruited a replacement. Fingers crossed as otherwise we can join the*



*massive queue of people desperately seeking a dentist.”*

*“They are short of dentists.”*

*“The location is beneficial due to my age. Both hips replaced and when necessary I use a stick.”*

*“Seems absolutely daft that we pay our taxes for a free national healthcare service which covers everything except our teeth and gums. Dentists show what goes wrong when you outsource NHS services to private companies and start privatising the healthcare service. I can only assume politicians have dentist friends.”*

*“I can't get an NHS dentist so if I have a dental emergency I will go to A&E and if not an immediate emergency I will go to my GP; perhaps they'll be able to get me an NHS dentist spot?”*

*“I worked with someone who moved from York to Wales and hadn't given up their spot at a York dentist because it was equally hard to find spots elsewhere in the UK and so now travels hours back to York for appointments, taking up spaces for locals.”*

*“I really hope to find one in York where I have lived for the past 8 years!”*

*“I have been in pain for almost a year. No NHS dentist in this area. Even 111 couldn't help. Very poor service over the phone.”*

*“Just desperate to find one.”*

*“Can’t really say much as I dont have one been trying to get one for over a year was with xxx in York but they can be quite rude.”*

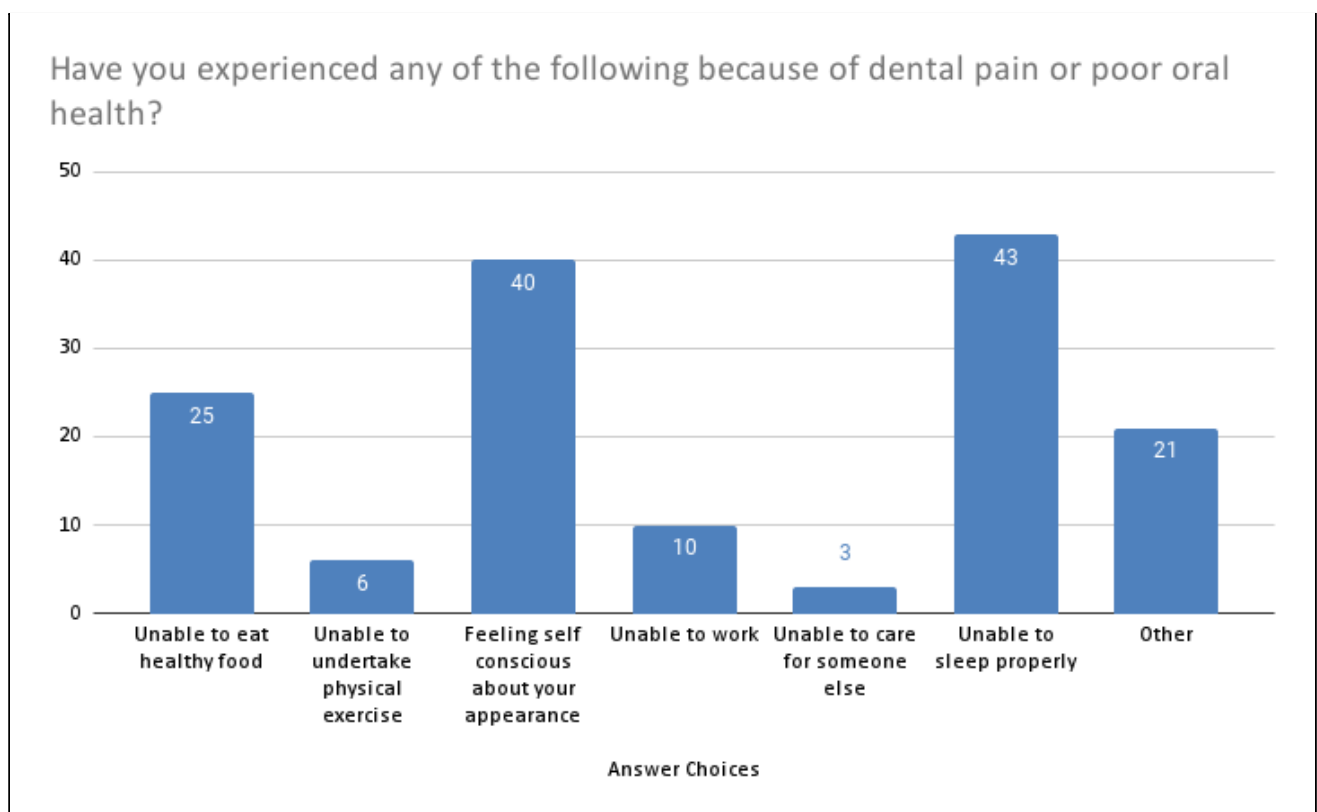
*“I felt trapped with my previous dentist even after a bad experience they wouldn’t let me change to another partner - I felt the only option was to drop off the register and try and find another dentist.”*

*“Have concern that if my dentist leaves or goes private, I would have difficulty getting another NHS dentist.”*

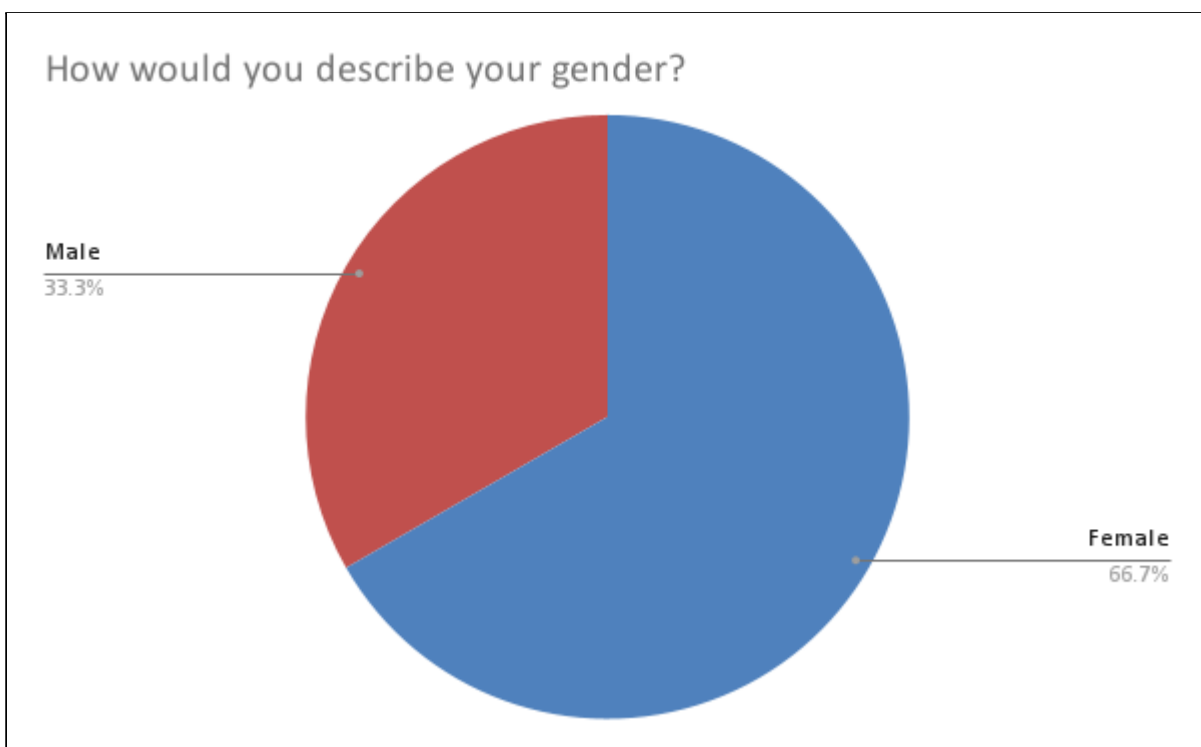
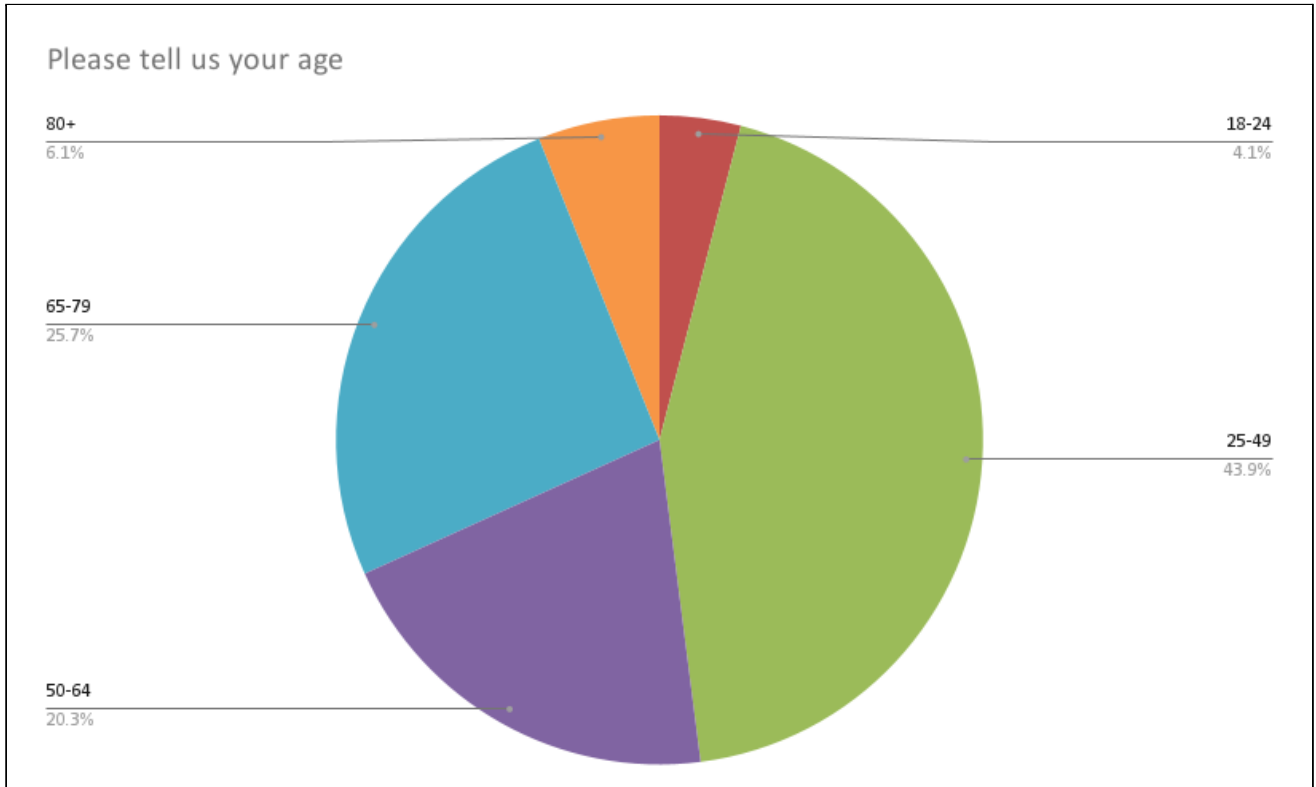
*“I just wish we could get an appointment again.”*

### Q.36 Have you experienced any of the following because of dental pain or poor oral health? (153 respondents)

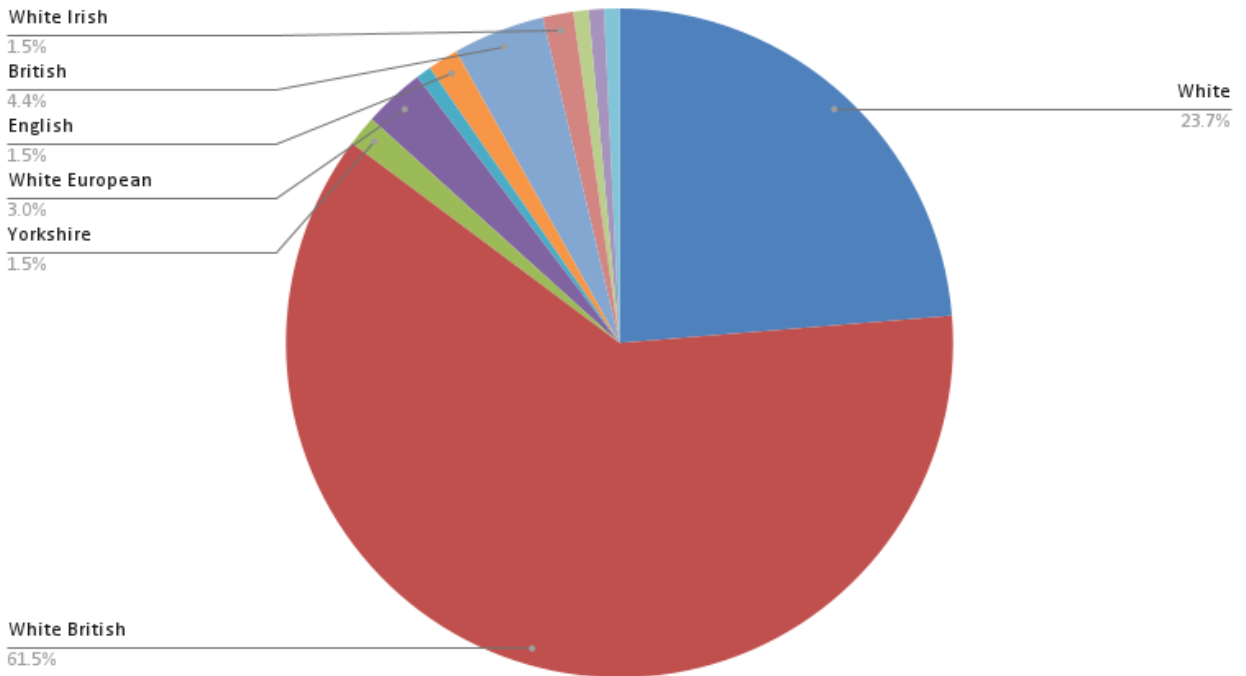
Out of 153 respondents 79 (52%) reported having one or more of the problems associated with dental pain or poor oral health listed in our survey. Of those that listed at least one symptom 43% reported not being able to sleep properly, 40% reported feeling self conscious about their appearance, 25% unable to eat healthy food, 10% unable to work, 6% unable to undertake physical exercise, 3% unable to care for someone else and 21% listed 'other'.



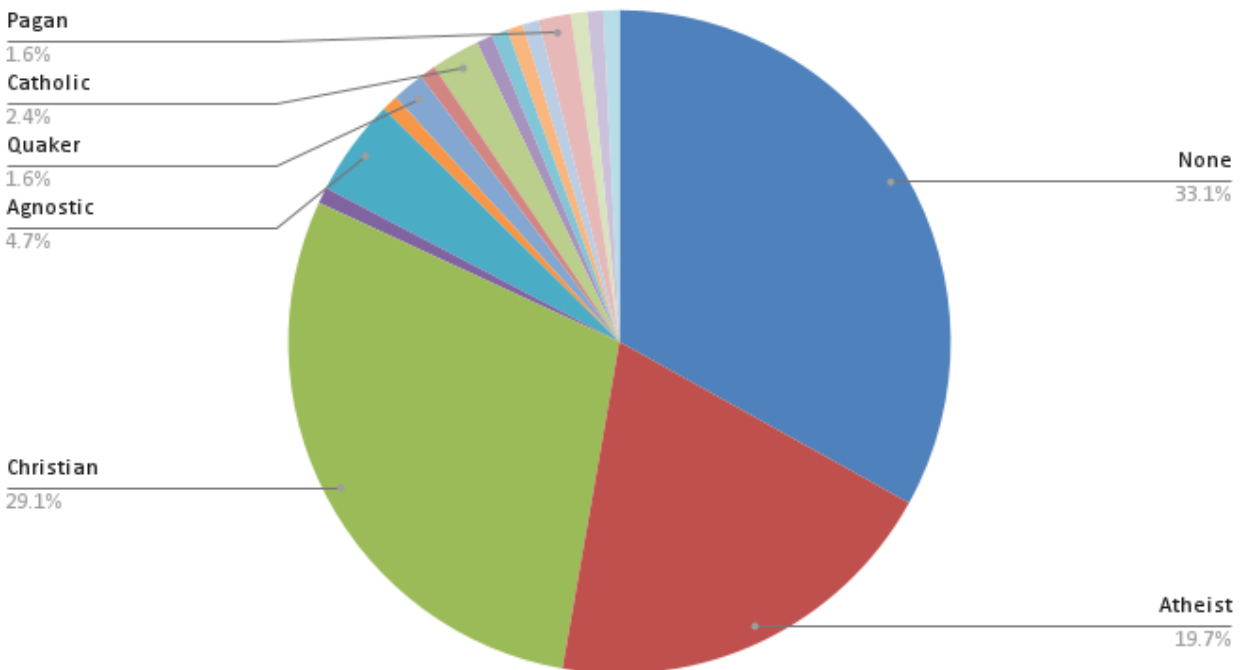
## Demographics of our survey respondents



How would you describe your ethnicity?



How would you describe your religious beliefs?



## Feedback from Outreach Work

We recognise that online surveys have little use in capturing the lived experience of people who have limited access to the internet and suffer multiple deprivations. We targeted some key locations in the city including Carecent and Red Tower and began focused conversations about dentistry from September to November 2021. Snapshots from some of these conversations are listed below.

### <Male 60+>

*“I've tried 20 dentists, but got nowhere. Over the last 12 years my teeth have been falling out and it's now difficult to eat properly. The lady downstairs from me, we rang and the dentists together. Most of them said ‘we are a private surgery’; I can't afford to go private. I do have pain. My neighbour below me is struggling too; she had a lot of pain and had to go to Harrogate to have a procedure done. She went on the train and she's alright now, but there was nothing available in York when she rang for urgent treatment. We've got railcards but it's still difficult to get to Harrogate. I'm an ex-servicemen and I was thinking of trying to contact the army doctor but I don't know if they're still there. I could try Catterick. She rang the urgent care number and ended up in Harrogate! There is no one in York. Is there a service for ex-servicemen?”*

### <Male 50+>

*“I have an NHS dentist, I go to XXX. I normally have a check up somewhere between six months and annually. I am not eligible for free treatment. I pay for cleaning but I do not pay for the check up. When covid came it stopped the service.”*

**<Volunteer Female 60+>**

*“Is there a retired dentist who might offer advice or a real one!?”*

**<Male 60 +>**

*“My dentist is super groovy and is based in XXX. They don't want to do a root canal because it's too expensive. I just take antibiotics. My old dentist ‘Tory boy’ was rubbish! I'll have to pay now.”*

**<Male 60+>**

*“I have an NHS dentist at the moment and I last saw them in February 2021. I had pain and got treatment by being persistent. I had to exaggerate the truth to get treatment; I went to XXX at XXX. The reception staff dealt with it and the support staff were well trained. The tooth was extracted; they have been rebuilding the tooth for 20-years. I don't think there was any other real option; either this or nothing. I asked them if they could do a crown, but they said no. The treatment took about 30-minutes. The pain stopped me sleeping but was controlled with painkillers, but I found out I shouldn't be using ibuprofen. My pharmacist bothered to tell me what was on record, they don't usually tell you the results unless you go to find out.”*

*“The larger the body the bigger the reform needed, small organisations are better. The unit of government is too big; if Labour said ‘more accessible and smaller units’ they might do better. There are too few medical practices in York; XXX have a reputation but are useless. There are only 3 or 4 practices in York, so if you have a history you're in trouble. They are too big. The level of treatment of care is not good. We need small friendly personable units. Discredited economies of scale don't work. For example, merge 6 accountants into one at the hospital and this accountant has no idea about the true costs.*

*We have a monopoly buyer which is as bad as having a monopoly seller. Underfunded support and managing by emotion is not practical. Gigantism is leading to maladministration.”*

**<Male 60+>**

*“I went to Lawrence Street dentist, I was with them for years but I lived abroad for 10 years and when I came back I had no continuity and they said ‘we are not accepting new patients’. The nearest was in Market Weighton which took two buses.”*

**<Volunteer Male 60+>**

*“What about mobile dentists? We could pay if they came here and can promote the service. We could let people in the flats know about it.”*

*“People come here on a Monday then they go to the Folk Hall on a Tuesday Lidgett Grove on a Wednesday Southlands on Thursday and Foxwood Community Centre on Friday. The design of the dentistry system needs review.”*

**<Male 60+>**

*“I had a dental appointment at the XXX surgery. I got treated with two new crowns last week!”*



**<Male 30+>**

*“I am in a lot of pain with my teeth that haven't been to the dentist for over 8 years. I've tried to get an appointment but I can't. I will need to ring 111 very soon. I'm scared about going and would like someone else to come with me.”*

**<Volunteer Female 60+>**

*“Is there one central point where a patient could be notified if there are any NHS places or one central number for any vacancies that come up?”*

**<Male 50+>**

*“I was in a lot of pain and couldn't get to see a dentist last year, I tried and tried, but got nowhere, so I thought 'xxx it I'll pull it out'. I used salt water and it healed up eventually.”*



## What needs to happen...

We believe that action in four areas needs to be taken to address the issues that people have shared with Healthwatch.

- Rapid and radical reform of the way dentistry is commissioned and provided - recognising that the current arrangements do not meet the needs of many people who cannot access NHS dental care in a timely way and acknowledge issues faced by the dental profession.
- Reform commissioning to tackle the twin crises of access and affordability - ensuring that people are not excluded from dental services because of lack of provision locally or difficulty in meeting charges. Currently, there are significant inequalities that must be removed. New arrangements should be based on maximising access to NHS dental services, with particular emphasis on reducing inequalities.
- Improve the clarity of the information about NHS dentistry - improving information, including online, so that people have a clear picture of where

and how they can access services, and the charges they will need to pay.

- Use dental practices to support people's general health - harnessing opportunities, such as the development of Integrated Care Systems (ICS), to link oral health to other key issues such as weight management and smoking cessation.

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**York CVS**

Healthwatch York is a project at York CVS. York CVS works with voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations in York.

York CVS aims to help these groups do their best for their communities, and people who take part in their activities or use their services.

**This report**

This report is available to download from the Healthwatch York website:

[www.healthwatchyork.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchyork.co.uk)

Paper copies are available from the Healthwatch York office, if you would like this report in any other format, please contact the Healthwatch York office.