

Michigan Department of Community Health

Survey of Dentists

Survey Findings 2009

INTRODUCTION

In fall 2009, the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) conducted the fourth annual survey of licensed dentists to gather information about their employment characteristics, education, and work environment.

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. In 2009, a number of questions were added to the survey instrument. New questions identify practice capacity and volunteer hours of dentists, and also assess knowledge of the Michigan Automated Prescription System and Public Act 161. Survey questions and response frequencies are provided in the Appendix, along with comparison figures for the 2008, 2007, and 2006 surveys, where applicable.

As of January 2009, a total of 7,569 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. In 2009, about 2,700 dentists were eligible for renewal and received a copy of the survey instrument with their license renewal form. The survey was also available to dentists completing their license renewal online.

A total of 2,458 dentists renewed their license and 999 responded to the survey either online or by return mail, for a response rate of 41 percent and a margin of error of ± 2.4 percent with 95 percent confidence.¹ The 999 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 question.

While the results of the 2009 survey of dentists are generally consistent with those of the 2006, 2007, and 2008 surveys, differences in the data that fall outside the margin of error are noted. Survey findings are presented below.

¹ For example, if the answer to a survey question is 60 percent “Yes,” the margin of error and confidence level mean that if this question were asked 100 times, in 95 occurrences the answer of the entire universe of possible respondents would be between 57.6 percent and 62.4 percent (i.e., the ± 2.4 percent margin of error).

EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS

- About 83 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, 97 percent provide patient care services and 3 percent spend no time in patient care.
- About 10 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, 2009

	Percentage of all dentists	Percentage of active dentists in Michigan
Providing patient care services in Michigan	83%	97%
Working as a dentist in Michigan, but no time in patient care	2	3
Working as a dentist but not in Michigan	10	NA
Not working as a dentist	4	NA

SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2009.

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 (85 percent) spend most of their professional time practicing general dentistry (see Exhibit 2). This is higher than in 2006 (the same license renewal cohort), 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.

EXHIBIT 2
Primary Dental Specialties, 2009

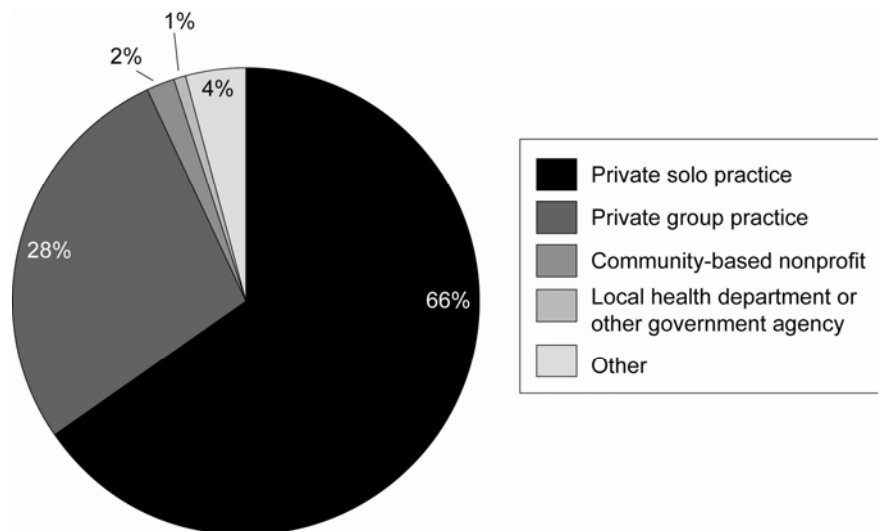
	Percentage of active dentists in Michigan
General dentistry	85%
Orthodontics	6
Oral and maxillofacial surgery	3
Endodontics	2
Pediatric dentistry	2
Periodontics	1
Prosthodontics	1
Dental public health	<1

SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2009.
NOTE: Percentages do not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

The setting for the primary practice of two out of three dentists (66 percent) is a private solo practice (see Exhibit 3). In 2006, which represents the same license renewal cohort as dentists responding in 2009, 55 percent of active dentists reported working primarily in a private solo practice. About 28 percent of active dentists practice primarily in a private group setting. This is lower than the percentage found in 2006 (35 percent).

Two percent of active dentists practice primarily in a community-based nonprofit and another 1 percent have a primary practice site in a local health department or other government agency. About 4 percent have a primary practice site in another setting.

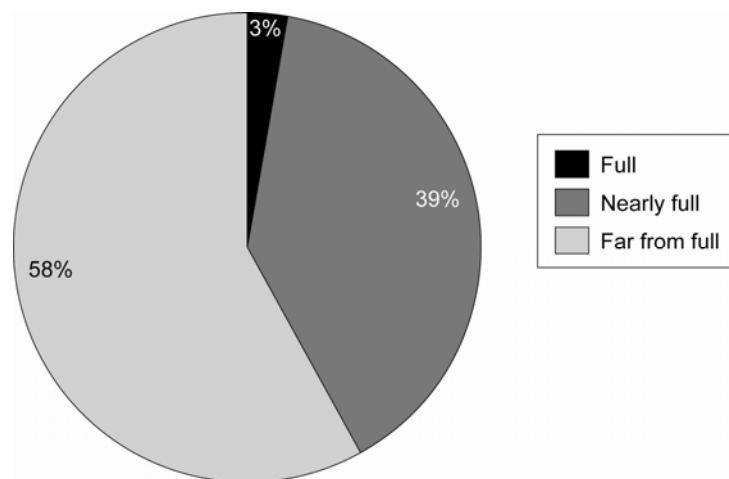
EXHIBIT 3
Primary Practice Settings of Active Dentists in Michigan, 2009



SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2009.
NOTE: Percentages do not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

Only 3 percent of dentists who provide patient care say that their practice is full and they cannot accept any new or additional patients (see Exhibit 4). Nearly two-fifths say their practice is nearly full and they can accept a few new patients. Almost 60 percent say their practice is far from full and they can accept many new patients.

EXHIBIT 4
Practice Capacity of Dentists Providing Patient Care in Michigan, 2009



SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2009.

PATIENT CHARACTERISTICS

Young Children

About 80 percent of dentists who provide patient care accept children aged three or younger for routine dental care. Twenty percent accept children as young as age one, 22 percent accept children beginning at age two, and 38 percent accept children starting at age three.

Patients with Special Needs

Among dentists who provide patient care:

- About 71 percent indicate providing care for children with developmental disabilities in a typical month. Sixty-six percent say between 1 and 5 percent of their patients in a typical month are children with developmental disabilities; 2 percent say these children make up more than 10 percent of their patients in a typical month (see Exhibit 5).
- About 75 percent indicate that they provide care for adults with special needs in a typical month. Seventy percent say between 1 and 5 percent of their patients in a typical month are adults with developmental disabilities; just over 1 percent report that these adults make up more than 10 percent of their patients in a typical month.
- Approximately 51 percent indicate that they provide care for nursing home residents in a typical month. Forty-six percent say between 1 and 5 percent of their patients in a

typical month are nursing home residents; 2 percent say nursing home residents make up more than 10 percent of their patients in a typical month.

EXHIBIT 5
Patient Characteristics of Dentists Providing Patient Care, 2009

Percentage of patients in a typical month	0%	1–5%	6–10%	11–20%	More than 20%
Patients with Special Needs					
Children with developmental disabilities	29%	66%	4%	1%	1%
Adults with developmental disabilities	26	70	4	<1	1
Nursing home residents	49	46	4	1	1
Children					
Children insured by Medicaid or MICHild	48%	34%	8%	4%	6%
Children paying on a sliding fee scale	84	12	2	1	1
Uninsured children	12	32	26	17	13
Adults					
Adults covered by Medicaid	84%	10%	2%	1%	3%
Adults paying on a sliding fee scale	82	11	4	1	1
Uninsured adults	7	13	26	27	26

SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2009.
NOTE: Percentages may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

Medicaid, Publicly Funded, and Uninsured Patients

Ten percent of dentists who provide patient care services are accepting new Medicaid patients; 38 percent are accepting new Healthy Kids Dental patients; and about 17 percent are accepting new patients from other publicly funded programs.

Children

- Approximately half (52 percent) of dentists who provide patient care services indicate that they provide care to children covered by Medicaid or MICHild in a typical month (see Exhibit 5).
 - Nearly two-thirds of these report that between 1 and 5 percent of their patients in a typical month are children covered by Medicaid or MICHild; a fifth say that these children make up more than 10 percent of their patients in a typical month.
- About one-sixth (16 percent) of dentists providing patient care services report providing care to children paying on a sliding fee scale in a typical month.
 - Three-quarters of these indicate that between 1 and 5 percent of their patients in a typical month are children paying on a sliding fee scale; just over a tenth say that these children make up more than 10 percent of their patients in a typical month.
- Nearly 9 out of 10 dentists (88 percent) who provide patient care indicate that they provide care to uninsured children in a typical month.

- About a third of these say that between 1 and 5 percent of their patients in a typical month are uninsured children; another third report that these children make up more than 10 percent of their patients in a typical month.

Adults

- Approximately 16 percent of dentists who provide patient care report that they provide care to adults covered by Medicaid in a typical month (see Exhibit 5).
 - Nearly two-thirds of these say that between 1 and 5 percent of their patients in a typical month are adults covered by Medicaid; one-quarter indicate that these adults make up more than 10 percent of their patients in a typical month.
- Fewer than a fifth of dentists providing patient care report that they provide care to adults paying on a sliding fee scale in a typical month.
 - More than half of these say that between 1 and 5 percent of their patients in a typical month are adult patients who are paying on a sliding fee scale. One tenth of these dentists indicate that these adults make up more than 10 percent of their patients in a typical month.
- More than 90 percent of dentists who provide patient care report that they provide care to uninsured adults in a typical month.
 - About 14 percent of these dentists say that only between 1 and 5 percent of their patients in a typical month are uninsured adults. More than half say that these adults make up more than 10 percent of their patients in a typical month.

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

About 26 percent of active dentists report being involved in private practice administration (see Exhibit 6). Eleven percent are involved in teaching. Another 4 percent are involved in research; 3 percent in administration in a dental school, hospital, health plan, or nursing home; and 2 percent in emergency room care. 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 has 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 6

Professional Activities of Active Dentists, 2009

	Percentage of active dentists in Michigan
Administration in private practice	26%
Teaching	11
Research	4
Administration in dental school, hospital, health plan, or nursing home	3
Emergency room care	2

SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2009.

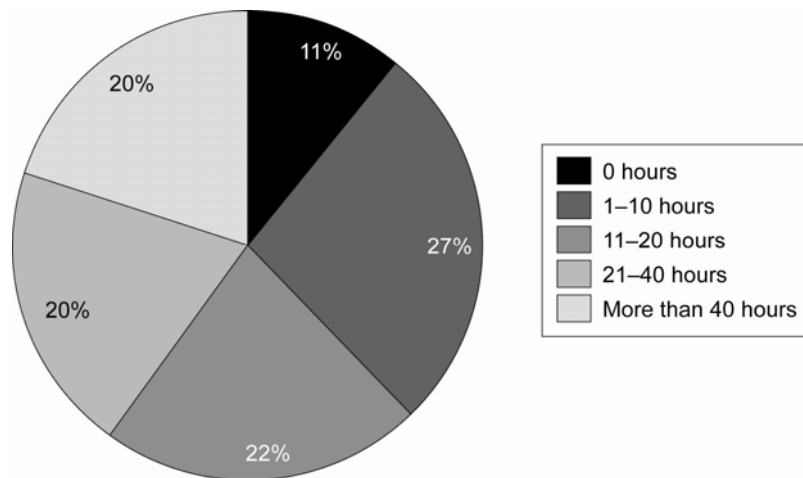
NOTE: Percentages do not equal 100 percent because respondents were asked to "mark all that apply."

In 2009, a new question was added to the survey to assess the extent to which dentists provide dental care for which they receive no payment or reimbursement, either inside their own practice or through volunteer activities in which they see patients outside their practice.

- Eleven percent of active dentists report that they do not provide any direct patient care for which they receive no payment or reimbursement in a year (see Exhibit 7);
- Twenty-seven percent provide from one to 10 hours of unreimbursed or unpaid care in a year;
- Twenty-two percent provide between 11 and 20 hours of this type of care;
- A fifth (20 percent) provide between 21 and 40 hours of volunteer care; and
- Another fifth provide more than 40 hours of direct patient care for which they receive no payment or reimbursement in a year.

EXHIBIT 7

Hours of Care Provided by Active Dentists for Which They Receive No Payment or Reimbursement, 2009

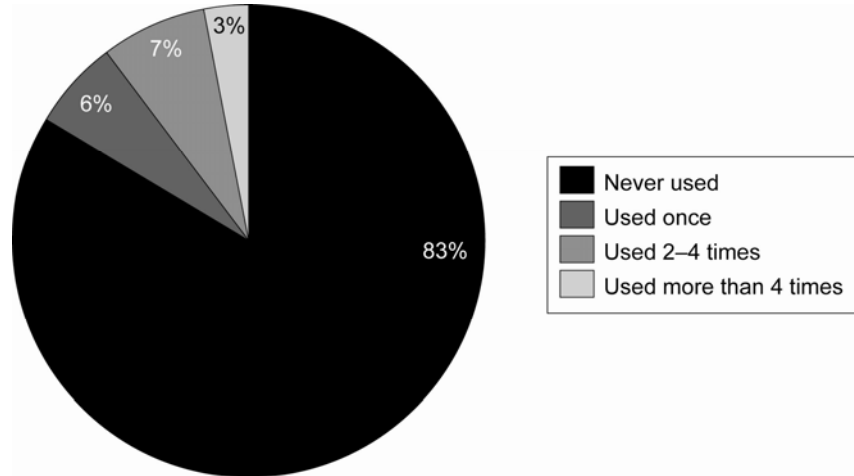


SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2009.

DISPENSING OF CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES

The Michigan Automated Prescription System (MAPS) is available to dentists to track when and where controlled substances have been dispensed to their patients. About 60 percent of active dentists responding to the survey indicate that they are aware of MAPS. Only 16 percent say they have ever used MAPS; 3 percent have used it more than four times (see Exhibit 8).

EXHIBIT 8
Use of the Michigan Automated Prescription System
among Dentists Providing Patient Care, 2009



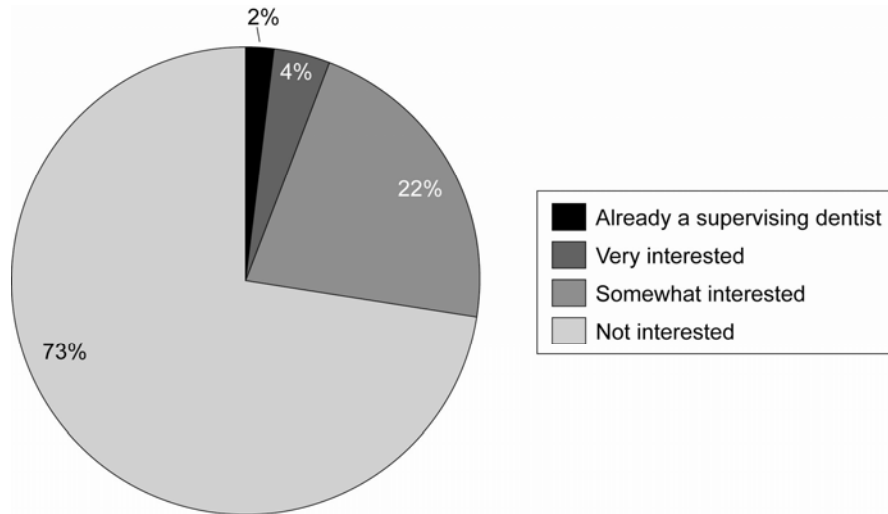
SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2009.
NOTE: Percentages do not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

PUBLIC ACT 161

Public Act 161 is a law passed in 2005 that authorizes a collaborative practice in which registered dental hygienists provide preventive oral health care to underserved populations with the supervision of a dentist. About 61 percent of active dentists responding to the survey indicate that they are aware of PA 161. Seventy-three percent of active dentists responding to the survey say they are not interested in supervising a dental hygienist through a collaborative practice authorized by PA 161 (see Exhibit 9). More than a quarter, however, report being either somewhat (22 percent) or very (4 percent) interested, and 2 percent indicate that they are already a supervising dentist in a PA 161-authorized collaborative practice.

EXHIBIT 9

Interest Among Active Dentists in Supervising a Dental Hygienist Through a PA 161 Collaborative Practice, 2009



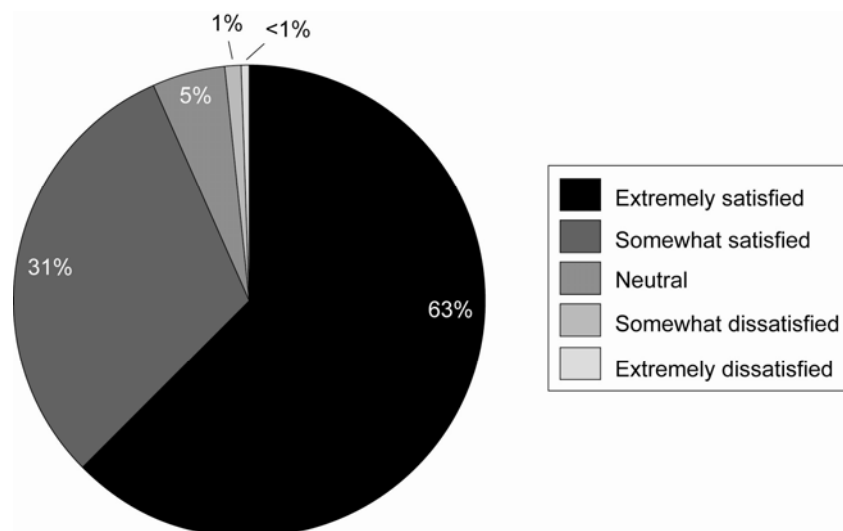
SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2009.
NOTE: Percentages do not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

PROFESSIONAL SATISFACTION

When asked to rate their overall professional satisfaction as a dentist, 63 percent of active dentists in Michigan report that they are extremely satisfied; another 31 percent are somewhat satisfied (see Exhibit 10).

EXHIBIT 10

Professional Satisfaction of Active Dentists in Michigan, 2009



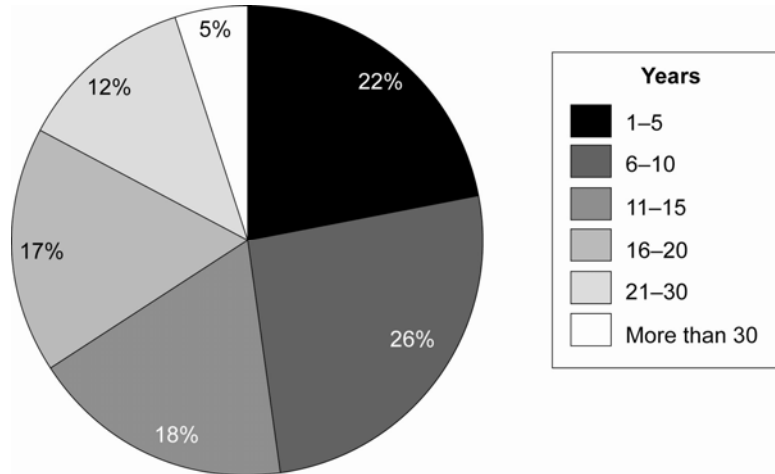
SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2009.
NOTE: Percentages do not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

PLANS TO CONTINUE PRACTICE

Nearly half (48 percent) of active dentists plan to practice dentistry for one to ten more years (see Exhibit 11).

EXHIBIT 11

Plans of Active Dentists in Michigan to Continue Practicing, 2009



SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2009.

- Approximately 13 percent of active dentists plan to either retire (8 percent) or reduce patient care hours (5 percent) in the next three years (see Exhibit 12).
- Nearly nine out of 10 (89 percent) active dentists plan to either maintain their practice as is (72 percent) or increase patient care hours (17 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 12

Practice Plans of Dentists for the Next Three Years, 2009

	Percentage of active dentists in Michigan
Maintain practice as is	72%
Increase patient care hours	17
Reduce patient care hours	5
Move practice out of state	2
Move practice to another Michigan location	3
Retire	8

SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2009.

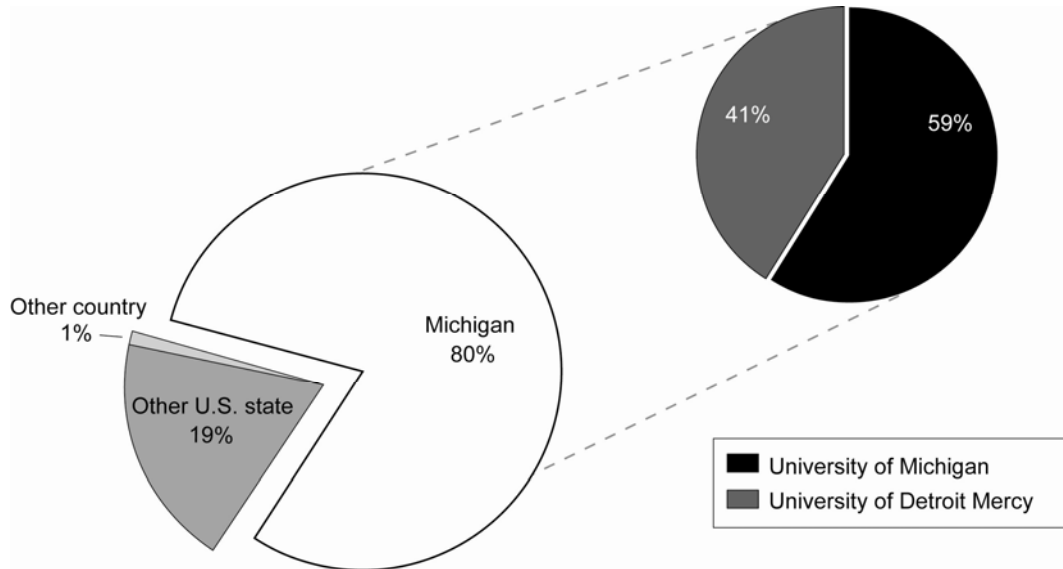
NOTE: Percentages equal more than 100 percent because dentists were asked to mark all that apply.

EDUCATION

Four out of five active dentists in Michigan (80 percent) attended dental school in Michigan; 19 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 13).

EXHIBIT 13
Education Background of Active Dentists in Michigan, 2009



SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2009.

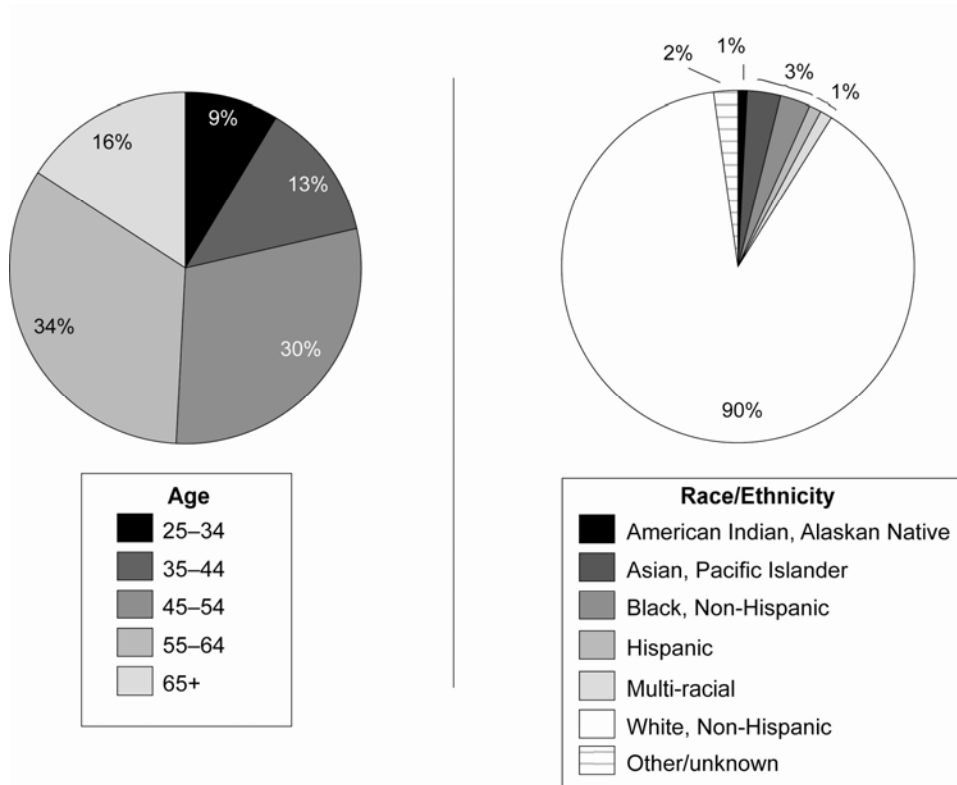
GENDER, AGE, RACE, AND ETHNICITY

Most active dentists in Michigan (83 percent) are male; 17 percent are female. Only 22 percent of active dentists responding to the survey are aged 44 or younger; half (50 percent) are aged 55 or older (see Exhibit 14). In 2006, 37 percent of active dentists responding to the survey were aged 55 or older.

A preponderance of active dentists (90 percent) are white, 3 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.

EXHIBIT 14

Age, Race and Ethnicity of Active Dentists in Michigan, 2009



SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2009.
NOTE: Percentages do not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

Appendix

Survey Instrument and Response Frequencies[†] (N=999)

1. In what year were you born?

	2006	2007	2008	2009
18–24	<1%	0%	0%	0%
25–34	13	7	10	9
35–44	17	17	16	13
45–54	33	29	30	30
55–64	24	32	29	34
65+	13	15	14	16

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

	Percentage of all dentists				Percentage of active dentists in Michigan only			
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2006	2007	2008	2009
a. Providing patient care services in Michigan	79%	82%	82%	83%	96%	97%	98%	97%
b. Working as a dentist in Michigan, but no time in patient care	3	2	2	2	4	3	2	3
c. Working as a dentist but not in Michigan	14	12	13	10	NA	NA	NA	NA
d. Not working as a dentist	4	4	4	4	NA	NA	NA	NA

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

	2006	2007	2008	2009
a. General dentistry	78%	83%	83%	85%
b. Endodontics	6	3	2	2
c. Oral & maxillofacial surgery	4	3	2	3
d. Orthodontics	3	6	6	6
e. Pediatric dentistry	3	2	2	2
f. Periodontics	2	2	2	1
g. Prosthodontics	2	2	3	1
h. Dental public health	1	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	2009
a. Research	9%	4%	4%	4%
b. Teaching	19	12	12	11
c. Administration in private practice	29	24	24	26
d. Administration in dental school, hospital, health plan, or nursing home	5	4	2	3
e. Emergency room care	3	3	3	2

5. 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	2009
1	15%	15%	18%	20%
2	17	21	21	22
3	41	42	42	38
4	8	6	6	8
5	4	6	3	3
6	4	3	4	2
7	3	3	2	2
8	1	1	1	1
9	<1	<1	<1	<1
10	2	1	1	1
11	<1	0	0	0
12	1	1	2	1
13	<1	<1	<1	<1
14	1	1	1	<1
15	0	0	<1	<1
16	1	0	1	<1
17	0	<1	<1	0
18	2	1	1	1

6. What is the setting of your primary practice?

	2006	2007	2008	2009
a. Private solo practice	55%	63%	62%	66%
b. Private group practice	35	27	30	28
c. Community-based nonprofit	1	2	2	2
d. Local health department or other government agency	2	3	2	1
e. Other	7	5	4	4

7. What is the ZIP Code of your primary practice? _____

8. What best describes your patient care practice capacity?*

Practice capacity	Percentage of dentists who provide patient care
a. My practice is full: I cannot accept any new/additional patients	3%
b. My practice is nearly full; I can accept a few new patients	39
c. My practice is far from full; I can accept many new patients	58

*This question was asked for the first time in 2009.

9. In a typical month, what percentage of your patients are...*

Patient characteristics	0%	1–5%	6–10%	11–20%	More than 20%
a. Children insured by Medicaid or MICHild	48%	34%	8%	4%	6%
b. Adults covered by Medicaid	84	10	2	1	3
c. Children paying on a sliding fee scale	84	12	2	1	1
d. Adults paying on a sliding fee scale	82	11	4	1	1
e. Uninsured children	12	32	26	17	13
f. Uninsured adults	7	13	26	27	26
g. Nursing home residents	49	46	4	1	1
h. Children with developmental disabilities	29	66	4	1	1
i. Adults with developmental disabilities	26	70	4	<1	1

*This question was asked for the first time in 2009.

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

	Percentage of dentists who provide patient care
a. Accepting new Medicaid (non-Healthy Kids) patients?	10%
b. Accepting new Healthy Kids patients?	38
c. Accepting new patients from other publicly funded programs?	17

* This question was changed in 2009. Frequencies from previous years cannot be compared to responses to the current survey.

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

Mean = 32 hours

12. About how many hours of direct patient care for which you receive no payment/reimbursement do you deliver in a year? This would include caring for patients inside your own practice and volunteer activities in which you see patients outside your own practice.*

	Percentage of active dentists
a. 0 hours	11%
b. 1–10 hours	27
c. 11–20 hours	22
d. 21–40 hours	20
e. More than 40 hours	20

*This question was asked for the first time in 2009.

13. Are you aware of the Michigan Automated Prescription System (MAPS), which is available to dentists to track when and where controlled substances have been dispensed to their patients?*

	Percentage of active dentists
a. Yes	60%
b. No	40

*This question was asked for the first time in 2009.

14. How would you describe your use of MAPS?*

	Percentage of active dentists
a. I have never used it	83%
b. I have used it once	6
c. I have used it 2–4 times	7
d. I have used it more than four times	3

*This question was asked for the first time in 2009.

15. Are you aware of Public Act 161, a law passed in 2005 that authorizes a collaborative practice in which registered dental hygienists provide preventive oral health care to underserved populations with the supervision of a dentist?*

	Percentage of active dentists
a. Yes	61%
b. No	40

*This question was asked for the first time in 2009.

16. How interested are you in supervising a dental hygienist through a collaborative practice authorized by PA 161?*

	Percentage of active dentists
a. I am already a supervising dentist	2%
b. I am very interested	4
c. I am somewhat interested	22
d. I am not interested	73

*This question was asked for the first time in 2009.

17. A. Where did you attend dental school?

	2006	2007	2008	2009
a. Michigan	82%	80%	81%	80%
b. Another state	15	18	18	19
c. Another country	3	2	1	1

B. If Michigan, please specify the school

	2006	2007	2008	2009
a. University of Michigan	55%	58%	59%	59%
b. University of Detroit Mercy	45	42	41	41

18. How much longer do you plan to practice dentistry?

	2006	2007	2008	2009
a. 1–5 years	19%	22%	21%	22%
b. 6–10 years	24	24	27	26
c. 11–15 years	20	19	18	18
d. 16–20 years	15	18	15	17
e. 21–30 years	16	13	14	12
f. More than 30 years	7	4	4	5

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

	2006	2007	2008	2009
a. Extremely satisfied	63%	60%	60%	63%
b. Somewhat satisfied	29	32	32	31
c. Neutral	5	5	5	5
d. Somewhat dissatisfied	2	3	2	1
e. Extremely dissatisfied	<1	1	1	<1

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

	2006	2007	2008	2009
a. Maintain practice as is	67%	72%	72%	72%
b. Increase patient care hours	16	14	10	17
c. Reduce patient care hours	7	9	9	5
d. Move practice to another Michigan location	7	5	3	3
e. Move practice out of state	2	1	2	2
f. Retire	7	8	8	8

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

	2006	2007	2008	2009
a. American Indian, Alaskan Native	1%	1%	<1%	1%
b. Asian, Pacific Islander	6	4	5	3
c. Black, Non-Hispanic	2	5	3	3
d. Hispanic	2	1	1	1
e. Multi-racial	1	1	1	1
f. White, Non-Hispanic	85	85	89	90
g. Other/unknown	3	3	2	2

22. What is your gender?

	2006	2007	2008	2009
a. Male	81%	81%	80%	83%
b. Female	19	19	20	17