



2026 Dental

Salary Survey
Report



Hiring. Wages. Turnover.

Contents

- 03.** Overview
- 04.** Executive Summary
- 09.** **Report 01**
Dentists
- 20.** **Report 02**
Registered Dental Hygienist
- 32.** **Report 03**
Dental Assistant
- 44.** **Report 04**
Front Office
- 55.** About DentalPost and EndeavorB2B



Overview

DentalPost's 2026 Dental Industry Salary Report reveals a field on the rise — in happiness, in staying power — after years of pandemic-fueled setbacks.

Conducted from August 29 through September 30, 2025, in partnership with Endeavor Business Media (*Dental Economics and RDH Magazine*) and Endeavor Business Intelligence, the survey powering this sixth annual report is the most comprehensive industry offering of its kind, covering income and benefits, hours, job turnover, retirement plans, and more based on contributions from 3,575 dentists, hygienists, assistants, and front-office specialists.

This year's respondents hail from all 50 states and Washington, D.C., where they work in a range of dynamic environments. In addition to the 85% in general dentistry, 5% are in multidisciplinary practices and the rest are in specialized organizations, such as periodontist or endodontist. Most respondents are in private (79%) or corporate (11%) settings; the remaining span academic, military, public health, or multiple arenas.

Additionally, despite the strides dental practices have made in recruiting and retaining top talent, career ladders are trending top-heavy: Nearly three in five respondents (59%) are industry veterans with upward of 20 years' experience; only 17% are in their first decade on the job. As the field continues to age, practices may soon start experiencing the effects of diminished capacity, uncertain career paths, and lopsided succession plans.

Across these ranging roles and settings, compensation, satisfaction, and retention are generally on the rise this year. But progress is uneven. Dental assistants — by far the lowest paid and likeliest to feel overlooked — are sounding the alarm on the disparities holding them, and the practices they anchor, back.

Survey satisfaction and lifestyle indicators suggest that the most successful industry employers in 2026 will head off stagnation by investing in both their practices and their workforces. This will mean prioritizing sustainability, leadership development, and workplace cultures that support flexibility, balance, and improved benefits where needed.





Key Findings and Trends to Action in 2026

Savvy practices will capitalize on a rebounding job market and growing levels of satisfaction and staying power by refreshing their total rewards offerings, upholding autonomy and flexibility in their culture, and launching new recruiting and professional development strategies that rebalance top-heavy career ladders.

Satisfaction

For most dental professionals, job sentiment is on the rise this year, with 70% of all respondents reporting that they're "satisfied" or "very satisfied" in their current role, and happiness levels up by as much as seven percentage points from last year in some roles.

Across roles, dental professionals consistently tie their happiness to a few core factors. When it comes to their work and workplace, they want to feel a strong sense of purpose, have autonomy to practice at the top of their license, and the flexibility to balance work and life. Longstanding relationships — with patients and co-workers alike — also play a crucial role.

But there's one glaring exception: Dental assistants saw declines across every satisfaction measure this year. This trend runs counter to other dental roles and threatens recent progress in attracting new entrants to the field.

The most common sources of dissatisfaction are equally consistent: Time pressure, financial stress, strained workplace relationships, and physical demands all erode satisfaction, particularly in roles with limited flexibility.



What Drives Happiness (And What Undermines It)

+ Strong Relationships

Patients and colleagues are cited thousands of times in write-in comments as the best part of the job, underscoring the importance of a strong culture in sustaining the dental workforce.

+ Autonomy

For many dental professionals, having autonomy in their scope of practice and the trust of colleagues boosts day-to-day satisfaction.

+ Flexibility

As many staff pursue less time in office, flexibility becomes a competitive edge for employers. The challenge is accommodating the evolving range of part-time and full-time team members in office at any given time.

+ Purpose

Write-in responses consistently celebrate the human side of the job. Respondents emphasize the satisfaction that comes from boosting patients' health, confidence, and radiance.

- Whole-Self Strain

Staffing shortfalls, insurance struggles, overwork and underpay, interpersonal conflict, and physical fatigue are increasingly part of daily work life, with inefficiencies and unrealistic expectations fueling burnout.

Compensation

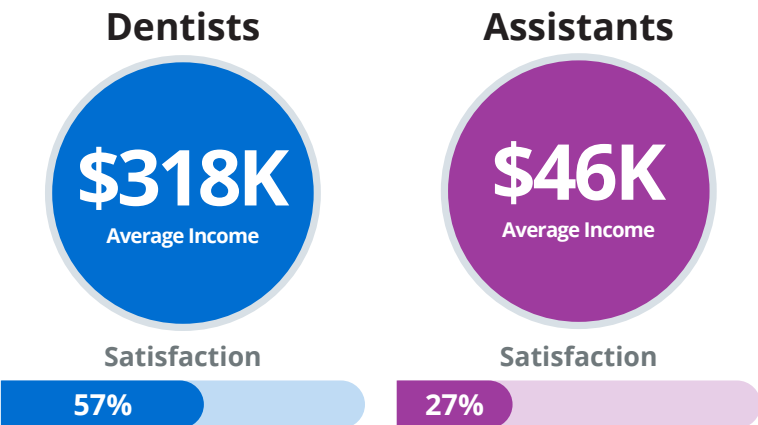
Many dental professionals saw modest improvements this year in key compensation metrics, including average and median income, pay raises, and benefits, suggesting that interventions to address the persistent dental staff shortage are starting to pay off.

51% Over half of this year's respondent's are "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their total compensation

One in two (51%) of this year's respondents is "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their total compensation, meaning there's still room for improvement when it comes to aligning total rewards with the realities of the job and the people who perform it. This is especially true for dental associates, who by and large say the gains they've seen aren't keeping up with growing job demands and living costs.

Indeed, there's a clear link between level of compensation and strength of sentiment, regardless of how much dollar amounts have shifted year over year: Dentists, whose average income rose 10% to \$318K, are the best compensated and happiest with their overall package,

with 57% reporting satisfaction (the same proportion as last year), while assistants, whose average income rose 21% to \$46K, are the worst compensated and least content: A mere 27% report being satisfied with their total rewards, trailing last year's share by seven percentage points and this year's overall pool by a shocking 24 pp.



Such fluctuation is a flashing red light to employers to close disparities in compensation that threaten to reverse the strides they've made in recruiting and retaining key staff amid a rebounding job market.

	Dentists	Hygienists	Assistants	Front Office
Average comp (change YOY)	\$318K (+10%)	\$72K (+9%)	\$46K (+21%)	\$64K (+12%)
Median comp	\$225K (-6%)	\$75K (+4%)	\$40K (+13%)	\$61K (+2%)
% (very) satisfied	57% (+0)	52% (+2)	27% (-7)	44% (+4)



Trends

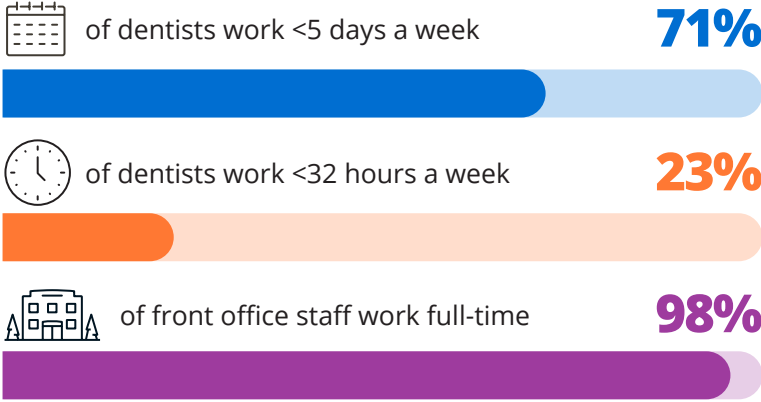
The Job Market Shows Signs Of Stability

Compensation and satisfaction are on the rise in many areas of practice, while recent and prospective attrition is down thanks to bold efforts to reverse a years-long dental staff shortage.

“Hiring has stabilized and retention is improving,” noted one front office professional from Georgia. Nearly three in four RDHs, for example, plan to remain in their current role for the time being, up seven percentage points from last year. Of recent transitioners, the vast majority (82%) were able to make good on their goals, outpacing last year’s share by four percentage points.



Dental assistants are again the outlier and the likeliest dental professionals to be seeking new opportunities: nearly half (47%) are eyeing a move within the next two years, outpacing total respondents by 20 percentage points. Given this anomaly, now’s a great time to consider retooling DA career paths. With new legislation and increasing interest in expanded roles and technology skills, employers can meet the moment with new career development opportunities and the compensation to match.



The Future Is Flexible

Flexible work is thriving in many areas of the dental practice: Three in four respondents (76%) work four or fewer days in the average week. Only 8% work more than 40 hours; a third work fewer than 32. This trend holds across varying roles and levels, including leadership. Nearly a quarter of dentists (23%) work fewer than 32 hours in the average week — five full percentage points more than last year. Additionally, the vast majority (71%) work fewer than five days a week (compared to 68% last year).

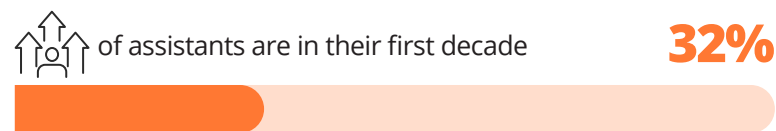
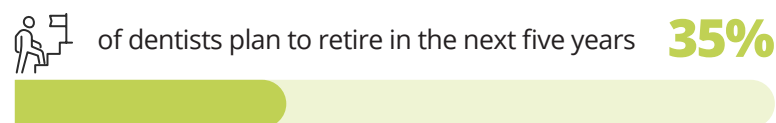
There’s one exception: Front office staff are likelier than they used to be — and far likelier than other dental professionals — to work full time, outpacing last year’s peer group by five percentage points and this year’s overall respondent pool by 22 points. Because these team members value flexibility as much as other dental professionals, they might need additional support to find it amid their busy schedules (e.g., through dedicated benefits or workload management support).



Trends (Continued)

Problems Intensify Around Passing The Torch

When it comes to dentistry, hygiene, and front office work, established professionals are nearing the end of their career faster than newcomers are joining. More than a third (35%) of responding dentists, for example, say they plan to retire in the next five years; less than a fifth (19%) are in their first decade on the job.



To ensure workforce continuity, employers and practice leaders should work together to develop career pathways that attract new practitioners to the field and level up the rest of the team. Because many front office staff are well versed in other areas of practice (e.g., hygiene or dentistry), they are well positioned to lead mentorship and professional development initiatives that strengthen and rebalance career ladders across the organization.

DAs, for all the satisfaction declines they reported this year, might also offer a viable model for bolstering talent pipelines: Although a quarter of assistants (23%) have been in the field for at least three decades, a third (32%) are still in their first decade on the job, marking a seven percentage-point increase from last year and trending 12 points ahead of this year's total respondents.

Comp And Culture Emerge As Top Drivers Of Retention

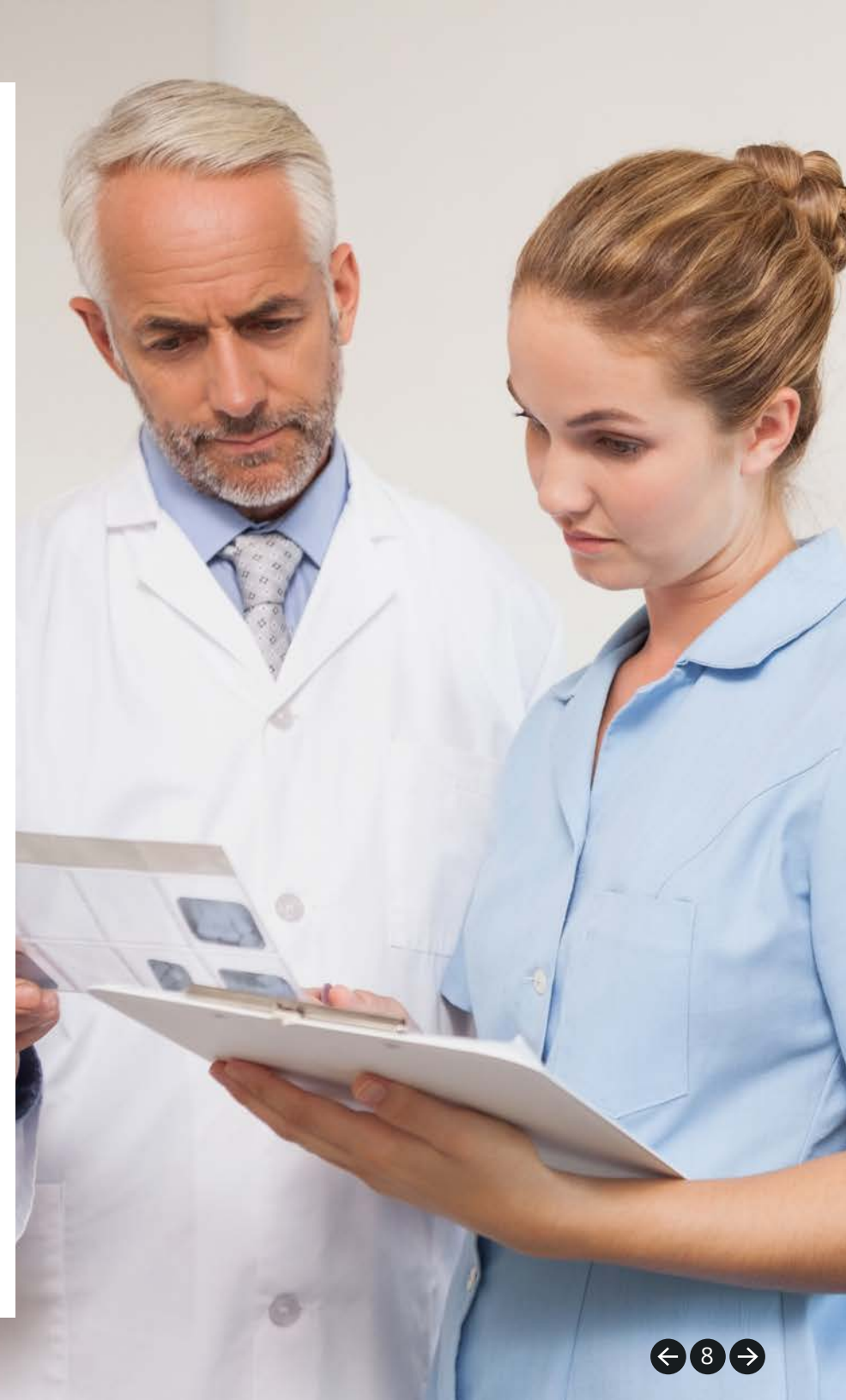
Compensation and culture are consistently cited as drivers of retention. Front office satisfaction and staying power — both on the rise this year — are linked to an employer's ability to deliver competitive pay and a supportive work environment. For hygienists considering a job change in the near term, higher pay and healthier work environments dominate decision making. Among dentists who changed jobs in the past year, 46% cited workplace environment as the primary factor.

Aside from increasing compensation and implementing regular pay increase cycles, employers can consider expanding benefit options like CE stipends, retirement matching, and flexible PTO to improve satisfaction. As one hygienist put it, "In a field saturated with women, most places don't offer maternity leave." Nontraditional supplements, like open-ended stipends and coverage of massage or chiropractic services, can also offer a competitive edge.

46%

Among dentists who changed jobs in the past year, cited **workplace environment** as the primary factor.

The biggest draw for many dental professionals, however, is a thriving culture built by people and passion. "The people I work with and treat are the best," wrote one dentist in Texas. "Providing care for patients aligns with art and science."



Dentist Report

Summary & Highlights

01

Snapshot of the 2025 Dentist

428 dentists contributed to the 2025 Dental Industry Salary Survey, painting the picture of a profession that's mature and established — sometimes to a fault.

For dentists, independence has always been the goal. In 2025, it's also the challenge, framed by the classic tension of every independence story: freedom vs. sustainability.

Most dentists in our survey still own their practices — a badge of professional pride — but that autonomy now comes with aging workforces, rising administrative burdens, and a deepening shortage of successors. While three-quarters of respondents continue to lead as owners or partners, only 3 in 10 are younger than 45, a signal of a shrinking pipeline that threatens practice continuity.

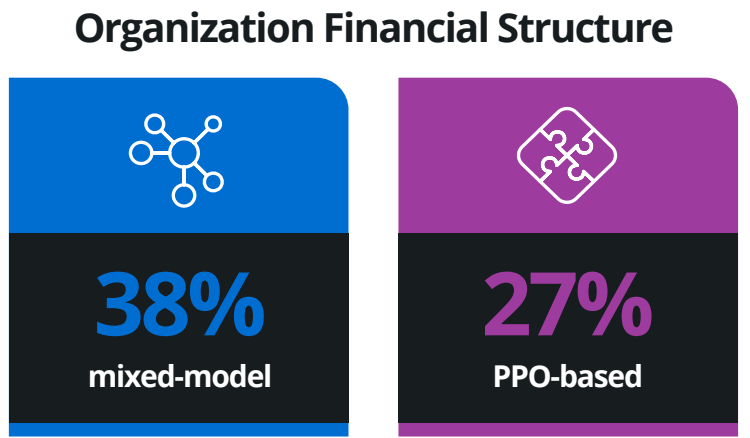
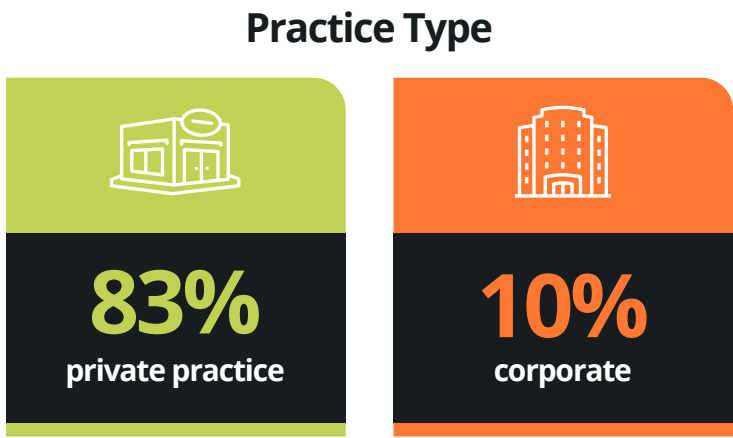
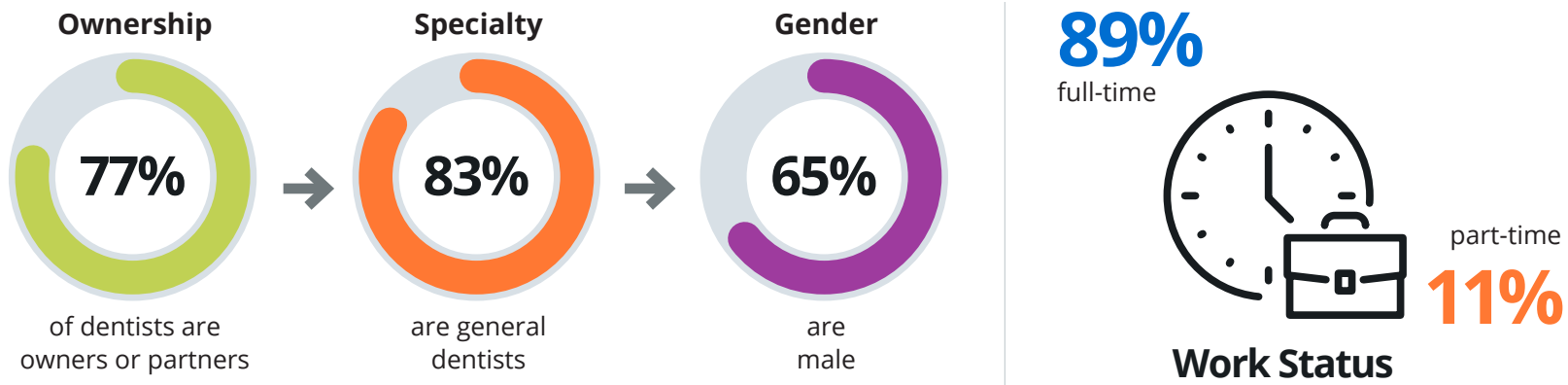
The 2025 survey captures an industry in transition and a profession feeling the weight of rising costs and shrinking teams. The dentists who endure will find strength in balance, support in benefits, and continuity through leadership.

“In our rural area, there has been an efflux of dentists retiring and no new providers, leaving the remaining providers with more and more of the workload, and very few specialists to refer to.”

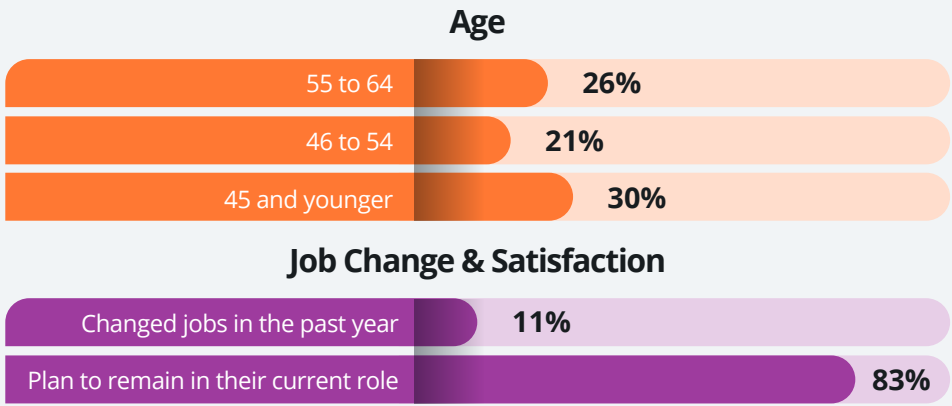




Owner, General Dentist



What lights dentists up?
“The perks that come with owning a practice: Autonomy, set my own hours, able to set prices, and make my own business decisions.”



Satisfaction

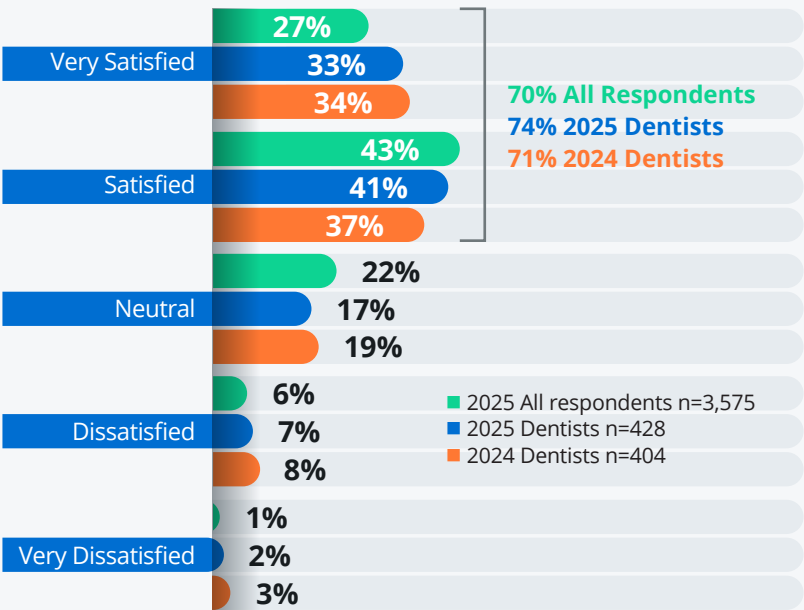
Despite growing pressures, **most dentists still find fulfillment in their work**. Three in four (74%) say they're satisfied in their current role, up three percentage points from 2024 and ahead of the 70% of all 2025 respondents who report at least some job satisfaction. But the definition of happiness is evolving.

Today's dentists are redefining success around flexibility, purpose, and culture — not just compensation.

Satisfaction With Current Job

Nearly three in four responding dentists in 2025 (**74%**) are **satisfied (Very Satisfied + Satisfied)** with their current job. Satisfaction among dentists is slightly higher than last year (71%).

Overall, how satisfied are you with your current job?



Behind the Smile: Top Happiness Indicators

Autonomy = Happiness

Compared to associate and corporate dentists, partners and owners report higher satisfaction and lower burnout.

Purpose is Paramount

Patient care, relationships, and independence remain the core sources of professional satisfaction.

Pressures Are Mounting

Insurance headaches, staffing strain, and burnout top the list of frustrations with new stressors in workload, marketing, and benefit.

Motivations Are Shifting

Of dentists who've changed jobs in the past year, pay mattered less than work environment and location.

Reasons For Changing Jobs

Those who changed jobs in the past year say a better work environment (46%) and a better location (39%) drove their decision.

In the 2024 study, work environment (49%) and higher pay (46%) were the top reasons dentists changed jobs.

Work-Life Balance is Make-or-Break

Traditional perks like medical and retirement coverage are slipping, while flexibility, education, and paid time off are gaining value

Benefits Received

In 2025, responding associate dentists are most likely to say they have retirement (47%), medical (46%), and dental (44%) benefits.

Meaningful differences compared to 2024 include retirement (down 9 pp), medical (down 11 pp), and paid continuing education (up 11 pp).

In addition, significantly more associate dentists say they have no employee benefits in 2025 compared to 2024 (up 14 pp, from 14% last year to 28% in 2025).

Missing Benefits Most Desired

Among associate dentists who have benefits, the most desired benefit that they currently don't have is paid vacation (37%), followed by paid holidays (35%).

Note that in 2024, this was a single-response question; however, paid vacation and paid holidays were the most frequent responses last year too.

“What Lights Dentists Up

According to write-in survey responses, dentists are most driven by using their expertise to make a difference in their communities, fostering long-term — even multigenerational — relationships with their patients and teams, and exercising autonomy across core aspects of their practice.

Using Skills To Make A Difference

“I love **changing people’s lives** by improving their smiles, relieving pain, helping them eat their favorite foods.”

“The blend of science, interpersonal relationships and art. I personally love doing fillings. **I feel a great deal of satisfaction with a job well done** when completing these treatments.”

Cultivating Long-Term Relationships

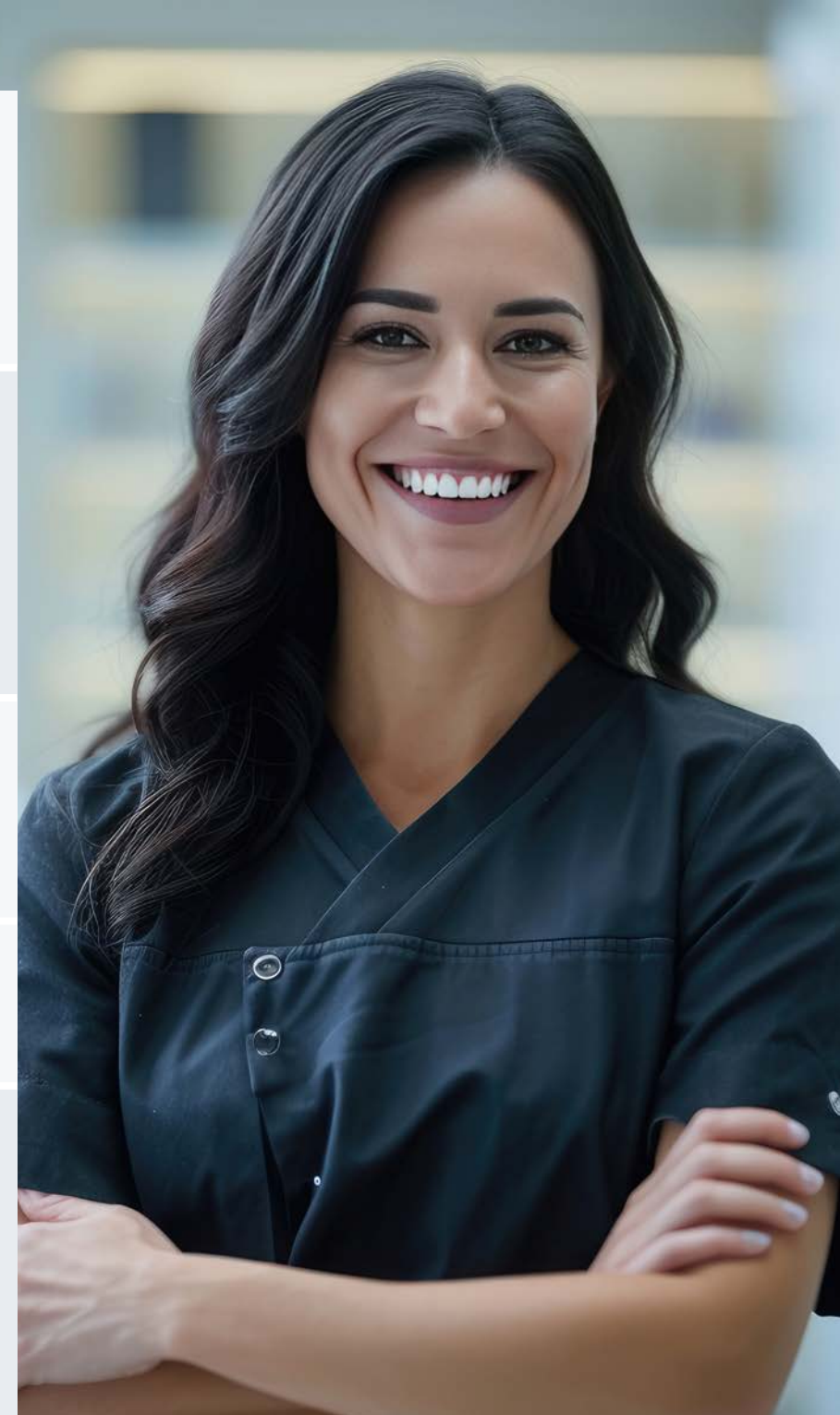
“**Surrounding myself with kind, supportive people** that I can spend my days with, doing what’s right for patients, growing my skill set in a way that’s fun and personally fulfilling.”

“My team is the best. **We all work together as a unit.** I also like the long-time patients that I have seen as kids, and I am now treating their kids.”

Exercising Autonomy And Independence

“The **perks that come with owning a practice:** Autonomy, set my own hours, able to set prices, and make my own business decisions.”

“Clinical autonomy, breadth of procedures. **4-day work week.**”





What Wears Dentists Down



Dentists are feeling the pinch when it comes to insurance and compensation. The rigorous physical, mental, and emotional demands of the job are also a drain, especially when coupled with poor leadership, inadequate staffing, or interpersonal conflict.

Insurance Issues

"Insurance paying pennies on the dollar for **difficult work.**"

"**Difficulty balancing team wage expectations** with little to no increase in insurance reimbursement rates and inflationary cost of doing business."

Staffing, HR, And Leadership Headaches

"Our **office feels disorganized and chaotic** without defined roles and a lot of inefficiency, meaning I don't think it can be turned around easily."

"Seeking partnership; **would like to be more than associate.**"

Stress And Burnout

"Poor reimbursement from PPOs; **poor (revolving door) management and lack of support/direction** from dentist owner (previous corporate management); hard on me physically, back and neck pain as well."

"**5-day-a-week schedule.** Push for continuous increased production without truly being incentivized or compensated for efforts."

Compensation Pressure

"Lack of **transparency and equity** in compensation structure."

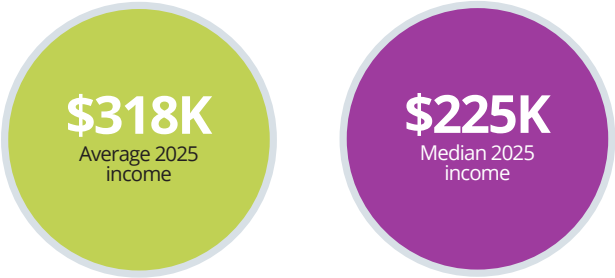
"Lack of complete control over decisions, **not earning what a private practice owner would earn.**"

Quotes have been lightly edited for length and clarity.

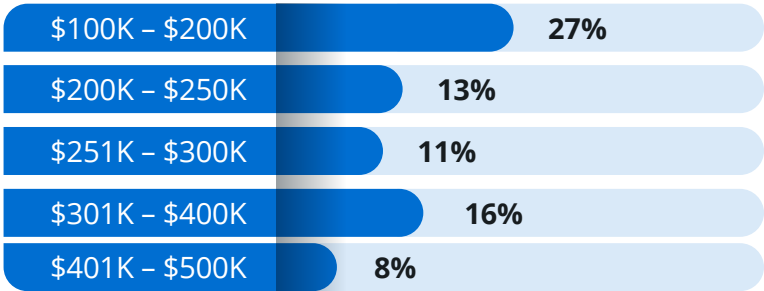
Compensation

Compensation trends are a mixed bag for dentists this year. Compared to 2024, **average income rose 10% to \$318K, while median income dropped 6% to \$225K.** The largest share of dentists (27%) is making \$100K–\$200K.

2025 Employment Income Estimate



Income Distribution



Last Pay Raise

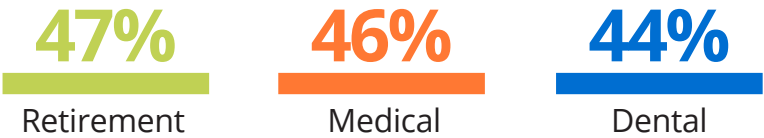
Nearly half of dentists (44%) saw a raise in the past two years. That’s an improvement from last year, up six percentage points, but it still trails the 69% of all respondents who saw salary growth in the same period. Perhaps more noteworthy, 32% of dentists have never received a raise, compared to just 10% of the overall respondent pool.



For leaders, such pay stagnation can be compounded by operational costs and economic pressures. One respondent described the difficulty of “balancing team wage expectations with little to no increase in insurance reimbursement rates and inflationary cost of doing business.”

Benefits Received

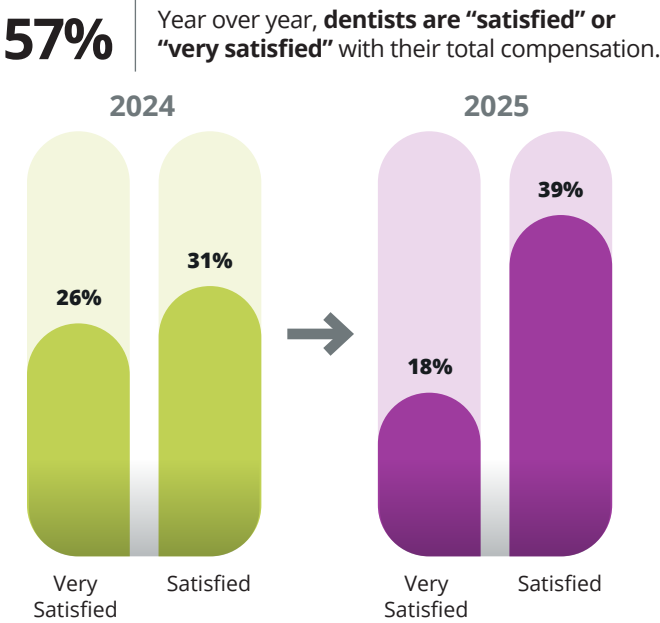
When it comes to benefits, retirement and medical remain the most common, but the share of dentists — especially associates — who receive them is greatly diminished.



Meaningful differences compared to 2024 include retirement (down 9 pp), medical (down 11 pp), and paid continuing education (up 11 pp).

Satisfaction With Total Compensation

Like last year, 57% of dentists are “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their total compensation. The most satisfied group however, has shrunk slightly (two percentage points), signaling evolving expectations and potential friction over uneven pay growth.



Despite some troubling slippage around benefits, the compensation outlook is still relatively sunny. As the definition of “reward” changes, so do the levers that leaders can pull to keep their teams happy. Paid time off, for example, now outranks higher pay as the most desired benefit among dentists who don’t have it. And culture — not comp — is the top reason a dentist job hopped in the past year.

There’s also been a noticeable uptick in practices offering paid continuing education, which is crucial to attracting and retaining young and star talent who will ultimately buoy the aging profession. As DentalPost reported in May, “Dental offices that are proactive in helping new hires feel welcome and capable stand a far better chance of long-term retention.”

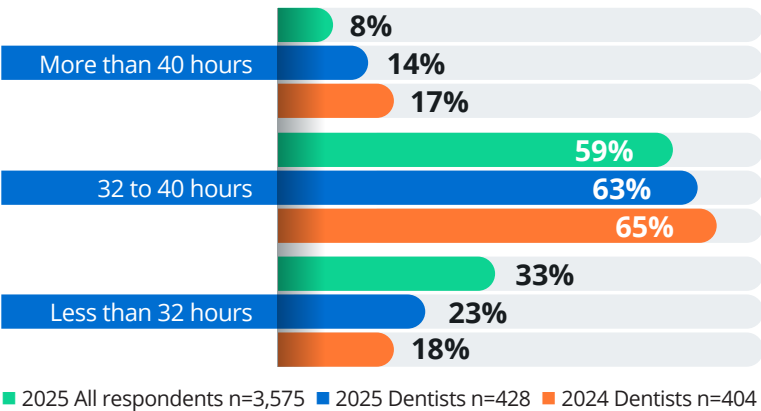
Emerging Trends

Though stability defines much of the dental field, subtle shifts are reshaping its future. The profession’s next chapter hinges on how dentists respond to evolving expectations around workload, benefits, and succession planning.

The Four-Day Future

Nearly a quarter of dentists (23%) work fewer than 32 hours in the average week — five full percentage points more than last year. Additionally, the vast majority (71%) work fewer than five days a week (compared to 68% last year). The pursuit of flexibility marks a cultural pivot toward sustainability and well-being over sheer productivity.

Average Number of Hours Worked Weekly



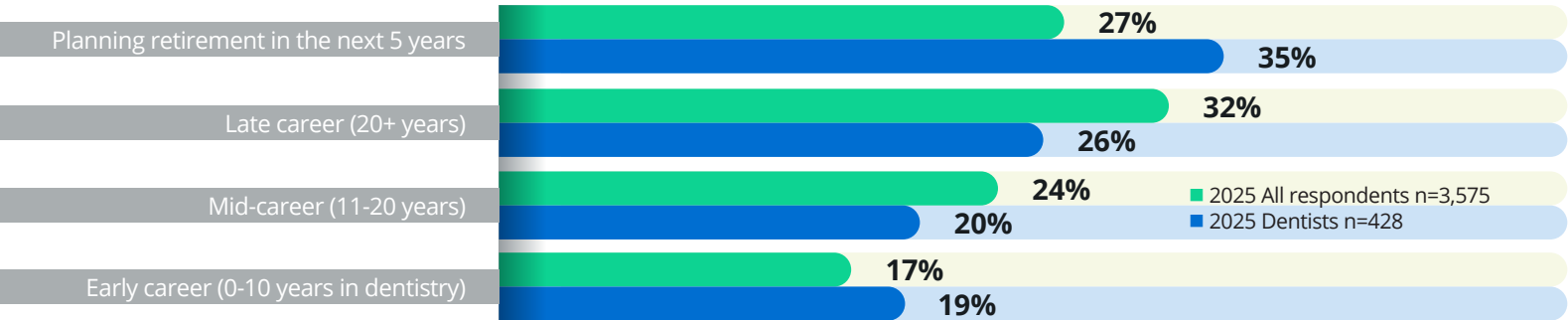
Average Days Worked Weekly

56% More than half of responding dentists (56%) say they work an average of **4 days a week** in 2025, in line with 2024 (55%).

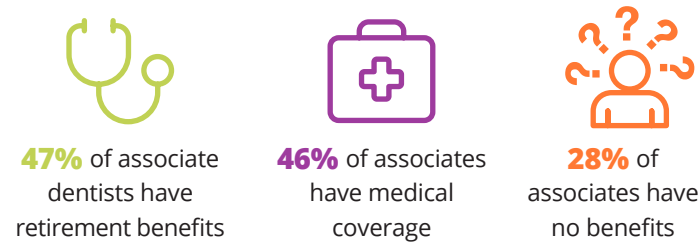
Problems Passing The Torch

Established dentists are nearing the end of their career faster than new dentists are joining the profession: More than a third of responding dentists (35%) say they plan to retire in the next five years; less than a fifth (19%) are in their first decade on the job. This disparity makes way for long-term continuity risks and succession-plan gaps.

Career Stage



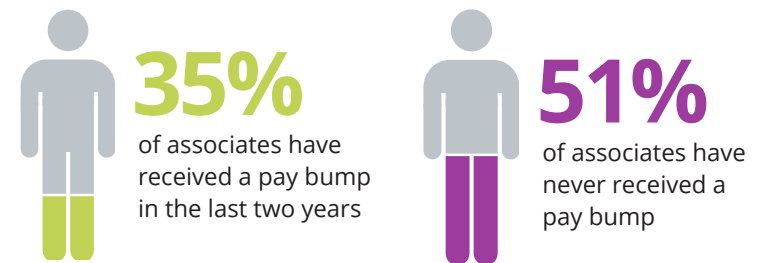
Associate Benefits in Doubt



Compensation packages are weakening for associates, putting the profession’s next generation at greater risk for attrition and succession plans on ice. Fewer than half (47%) of associate dentists have retirement benefits (a 9 percentage-point decrease from 2024), and only 46% have medical coverage (an 11 percentage-point drop), while the share of associates who have no benefits has soared to 28% (from 14% last year).

Next Gen Under Pay Pressure

Associates are also far less likely than their leadership counterparts to have seen a raise recently — or ever — **and far likelier to report being unhappy with their overall compensation.** Just 35% of associates have received a pay bump in the past two years, compared to 47% of owners and partners; more than half (51%) of associates have never gotten a raise, compared to 27% of their counterparts.



Decoding The Data: Mapping Opportunities For Dentists

Each focus area highlights key data, the signal it sends, and the opportunity it presents for modern practices.

Focus area	Key findings	Signal	Opportunity
Ownership & practice structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">77% of dentists are owners or partners23% are associates83% are in private practice10% in corporate practice83% are general dentists	Ownership remains high, but business management and administrative duties are concentrated among a small pool of owner-operators. The private practice model is strong but inflexible.	Build scalable operations and shared administrative systems to alleviate owner strain and support sustainable growth without compromising autonomy.
Employment patterns	<ul style="list-style-type: none">89% of dentists work full-time11% work part-time, up 3pp from 202411% changed jobs in the past 12 months83% are not seeking new roles	Professional stability is high, but the small rise in part-time work and steady job satisfaction suggests at least some dentists are seeking more balance.	Expand flexibility and workload management through practice support, staffing adjustments, and integrated scheduling systems that prevent burnout while maintaining productivity.
Marketing & growth among owners and partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Marketing spend is 2.7% of annual revenue (up from 2.1% in 2024)60% of dentists spend less than 2%27% use both internal and external marketing teams21% have a dedicated marketing manager46% are satisfied with new patient acquisition40% believe they could do more marketingCollections are up, but growth satisfaction dropped 11pp YOY	Marketing confidence is improving, and revenue performance is rising, but dentists aren't feeling satisfied with their growth. Most private practices acknowledge opportunity but lack the structure, data, and leadership to capitalize on it.	Clarify growth metrics so financials and emotional confidence align. Invest in formal marketing leadership, digital strategy, and analytics-driven systems that translate awareness into measurable patient growth.



Focus area	Key findings	Signal	Opportunity
Benefits & compensation	<p>Common benefits include paid holidays, insurance, vacation, retirement plans, and CE allowances</p> <p>Only 25% of dentists report having all the benefits they want</p> <p>Compared to their workplace counterparts, associate dentists are more likely to cite PTO and paid continuing education as missing benefits</p>	Benefits are uneven for associates. While they remain largely content with compensation, that satisfaction doesn't offset limited benefit range or growth incentives.	Expand benefit offerings with flexible and competitive models, including CE stipends, profit-sharing, and retirement matching to attract and retain high-quality associates.
Work environment & culture	<p>11% of dentists changed jobs in the last 12 months</p> <p>80% said the change helped achieve their goals</p> <p>46% switched for better work environment</p> <p>39% for better location</p> <p>28% for higher pay</p> <p>83% are not seeking new employment</p>	Dentists report high overall satisfaction, and when it comes to retention, culture and team dynamics are more influential than compensation.	Strengthen leadership development, team communication, and recognition programs to reinforce a positive culture and maintain engagement across practice teams.
Succession & future planning	<p>Mentions of retirement, practice sale, and ownership transition are increasing among respondents</p> <p>Few report formal transition or mentorship plans</p> <p>35% say they plan to retire in the next five years</p> <p>19% describe their career stage as early (0-10 years in dentistry)</p>	Aging owners and informal transition processes pose long-term continuity risks for private practices.	Implement structured succession planning, including mentorship, valuation support, and associate leadership pathways to ensure practice longevity.





Key Takeaways For Dentists



Owners Are Stuck In A Growth Paradox

Marketing confidence and revenue performance are improving but still not where they need to be for many private practice leaders, who see opportunity but lack structure, data, and leadership to capitalize on it.



Benefits Lose Their Luster

Fewer than half of associate dentists report receiving retirement (47%) or medical benefits (46%), both down from 2024 rates. The share with no benefits has soared to 28% (from 14% last year), widening the support gap within the profession.

Success Hinges On Sustainability More Than Scale

Overall satisfaction increased to 74% (+3pp) but emerging trends point to a profession balancing productivity with well-being, flexibility, and long-term sustainability.



Flexibility Emerges As The New Currency

Full-time work remains dominant (89%), but part-time participation rose to 11%, a 3 pp increase year over year. Paid time off now ranks above higher pay as the most desired missing benefit.

Private Practice Is Bugged Down By Admin And Ops

Ownership remains steady at 77%, but administrative, staffing, and insurance burdens continue to rise, intensifying pressure on the owner-operator model.



Culture — Not Comp — Is The Biggest Retention Boon

Among dentists who changed jobs in the past year, 46% cited workplace environment as the primary factor, outpacing both location (39%) and compensation (28%).

Registered Dental Hygienist Report

Summary & Highlights

02

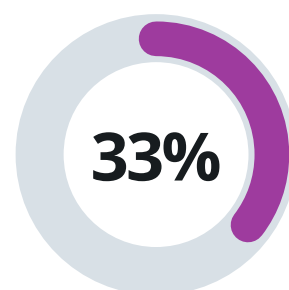
Snapshot of the 2025 Registered Dental Hygienist

Insights from 2,609 hygienists point to a profession cautiously reemerging with renewed ranks and rewards — assuming leaders can rebalance an increasingly top-heavy career ladder.

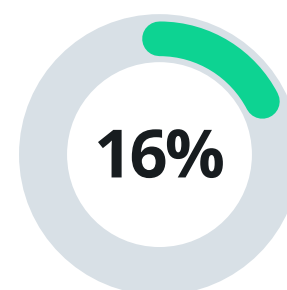
Rising compensation, satisfaction, and retention in 2025 signal that hygiene is on the rebound after years of pandemic-fueled staffing strain. But long-term success will hinge on meeting RDHs' growing demands for autonomy, recognition, and fair compensation.

This year's responding hygienists remain unwavering in their commitment to their profession, team, and patients. One in three (32%) has at least three decades in the field, up two percentage points from last year, and nearly one in five (16%) has been with their current employer more than two decades.

Years of Experience In Current Profession



Late Career (20+ years)

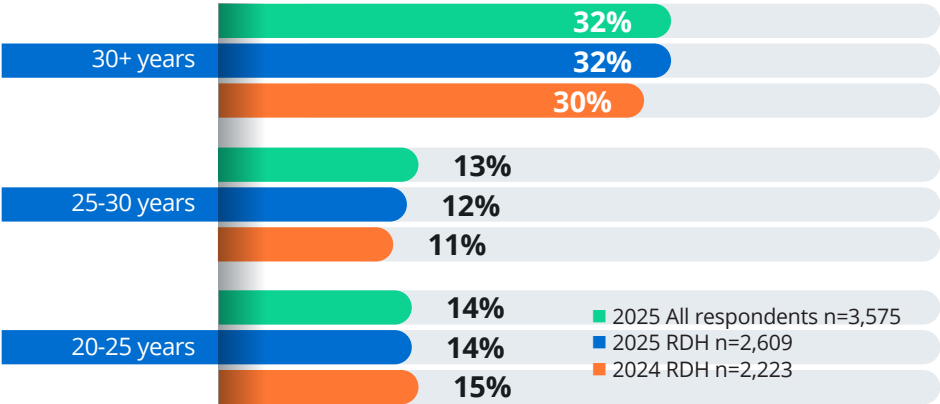


Early Career (<10 years)

"I enjoy making people want to smile again. I enjoy truly improving someone's health and quality of life. I also enjoy working with my hands and the satisfying nature of what I do."



Years Of Experience In Current Profession



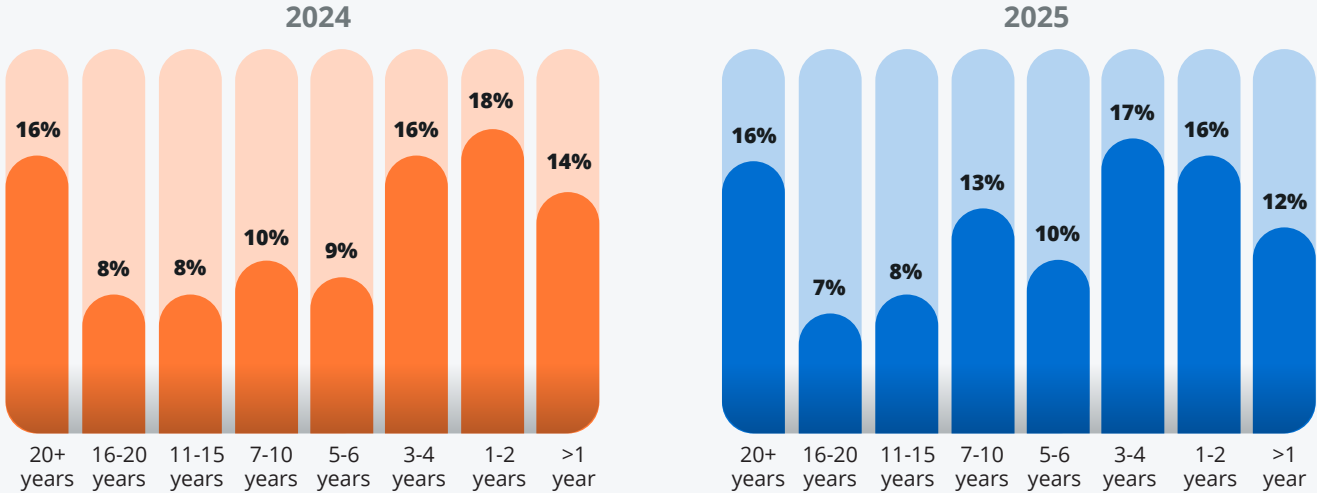
Practitioners, for all their loyalty and expertise, are under pressure as their workforce ages: Only 34% of responding RDHs are younger than 45 years old — a four-point decrease from last year — while 11% are at least 65 years old, a four-point increase. Another 27% plan to retire in the next five years, sharpening concerns about continuity.

The good news is that targeted staffing interventions are starting to pay off. Compensation and satisfaction are on the rise, while recent and prospective attrition is down — thanks in part to creative problem solving and advocacy by hygienists, employers, and regulators.

Looking ahead, survey indicators suggest that the most sophisticated employers will win by pairing competitive compensation with benefits and work culture that address the physical and emotional demands of hygiene. They'll support growth, create clarity around advancement, and elevate hygienists as essential members of the clinical team.

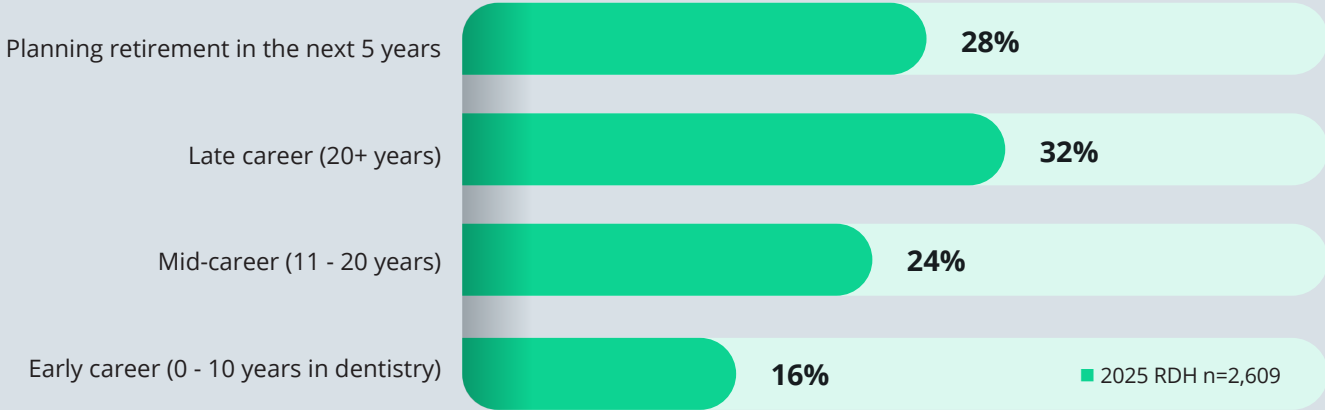
Tenure With Current Practice

In 2025, nearly one out of five RDHs (17%) say they have been with their current practice three to four years. Results for 2025 and 2024 are similar.



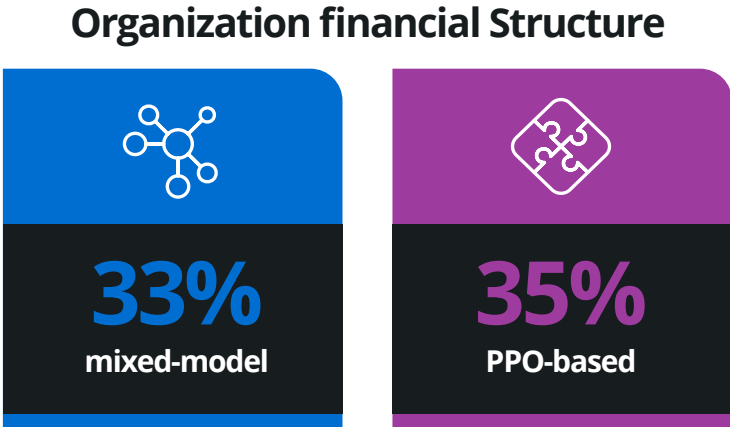
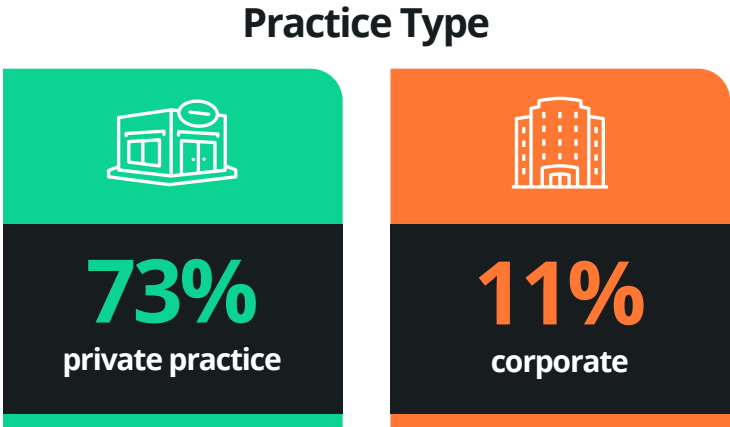
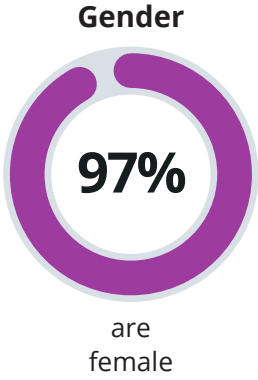
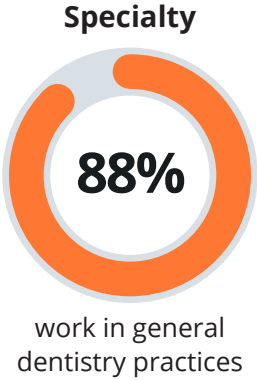
Career Stage

New to the survey this year is a question about current career stage. Nearly a third of responding RDHs (32%) describe their career stage as late. Nearly three in ten (28%) are planning to retire in the next five years.

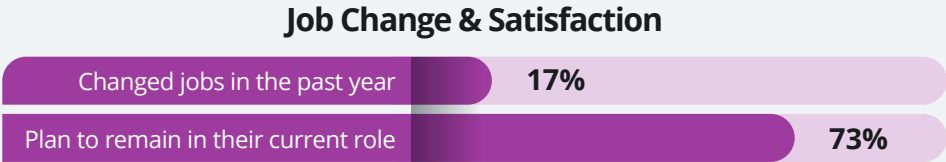
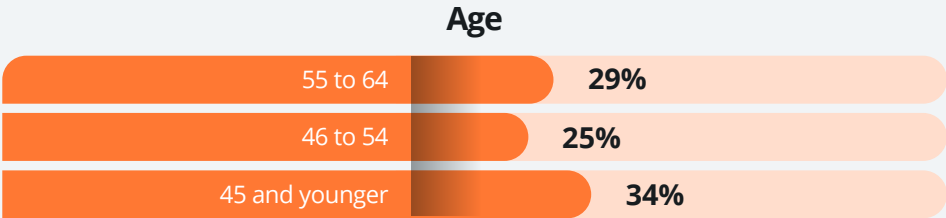




Registered Dental Hygienist, General Dentistry Practice



What lights RDHs up?
“Knowing I am making a difference by providing exceptional dentistry with kindness and compassion.”



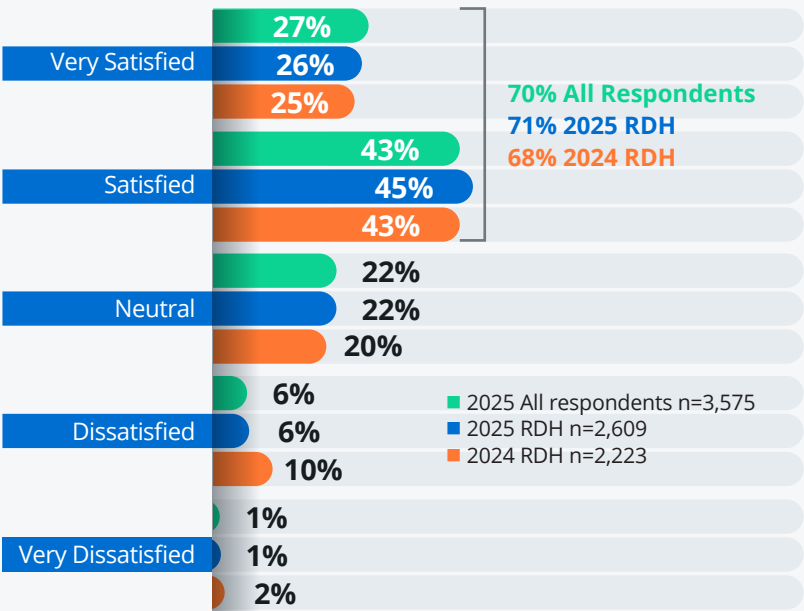
Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is on the rise, with 71% of hygienists saying that they're happy in their current role, up three percentage points from 2024, and trending just ahead of the 70% of all 2025 respondents who are at least satisfied with their job. As in years past, an RDH's happiness hinges on working autonomously and flexibly with good people. It's most rattled by unfair compensation, treatment, and demands.

Satisfaction With Current Job

More than seven in ten responding RDHs in 2025 (71%) are satisfied (Very Satisfied + Satisfied) with their current job. Satisfaction is higher than last year (68%).

Overall, how satisfied are you with your current job?



Behind the Smile: Top Happiness Indicators

Relationships Drive Fulfillment

Patients and colleagues are cited thousands of times in write-in comments as the best part of the job, underscoring the importance of a strong culture in sustaining the hygiene workforce.

Autonomy Defines Quality Of Work

RDHs crave control in their roles. Having autonomy over clinical decisions and trust from dentists remain top contributors to day-to-day satisfaction.

Flexibility is Fundamental

RDHs are outpacing other dental professionals in reduced office time. 34% work fewer than four days a week, 39% work fewer than 32 hours a week, and only 5% work more than 40.

Average Number Of Hours Worked Weekly. In 2025, nearly three out of five responding RDHs (56%) say they work a 32 to 40-hour workweek. Year-over-year results for 2025 and 2024 are consistent.

Average Number Of Days Worked Weekly. Nearly half of responding RDHs (48%) say they work an average of 4 days a week in 2025, in line with 2024 (49%).

Compensation And Culture Shape Retention And Attrition

Among those considering a job change (27%), higher pay and healthier work environments dominate decision making.

Reasons For Changing Jobs

Those who changed jobs in the past year say a better work environment (45%) and a higher pay (44%) drove their decision.

Work environment and higher pay were also the top reasons for changing jobs in 2024.

Motives For Changing Jobs

Among those RDHs in this year's study who would consider changing jobs, more than three out of five (62%) say higher income is a primary motivation.

A better work environment (39%) and better benefits (39%) are the next biggest 2025 motivators.

The top motivators in 2024 mirror 2025.

“What Lights RDHs Up

As the largest group of respondents to this year's survey, hygienists offer a vivid picture through their write-in comments of what motivates and fulfills them: using their expertise to transform smiles and lives — and receiving the recognition they're due for these clinical and business contributions.

Building Relationships With Patients And Making A Difference

“My patients!!! I've been seeing many of them for over 20 years. I love helping them with their dental health. I love hearing how their personal life is going.”

“Seeing patients grab a hold of their care and make improvements. The coaching part that I have in that. The **long-term relationships that I have with patients** over the years.”

Working With Great People

“The owner's empathy, concern, kindness towards employees, patients. It has created a very supportive environment for the entire staff with good comradery and teamwork.”

“My employer treats me like his partner. He respects and asks my opinion. My name is on the door with his. He is generous with hygiene appreciation week, birthdays, including spouses in holiday celebrations, dentistry discounts to extended family members. ... I feel rewarded for all I have poured into the business on my own time.”

Being Flexible And Autonomous

“This doc gives me a lot of autonomy. ... I also am going thru IVF and the office is very **willing to work with me when I need time off.**”

“The autonomy and freedom to do what I feel is best for my patients and ability to build relationships with them.”





What Wears RDHs Down

Common RDH complaints include mounting pressures to do more with less, subpar compensation, and the unchecked tolls of a demanding job on the mind and body.

Toxic Workplace Dynamics And Unrealistic Expectations

“I hate that things seem to be insurance-driven these days for all dental practices. **I’m expected to do so much in an hour.** That really doesn’t allow me to provide the best care. It also affects me ergonomically, and I hate that I can no longer stay on time because of everything that they cram into my schedule in an hour.”

“Implementing new programs, using hygienist to introduce insurance issues, asking patients about tooth alignment. Scanning each patient. **I want to be the hygienist who looks for disease and educates** about perio, the consequences, etc. There isn’t enough time!!!”

Poor Compensation

“**There is never a steady pay raise.** The services go up every year, but the RDH pay does not. The amount of payment to RDH is not equal to the type of service. Unless you are on a bonus system.”

“Salary is on the lower end for my area, **workload is very high,** and we rarely get upgraded equipment or instruments.”

Whole-Body Toll

“**The physical and emotional demands.** Our office has difficult cases. ... It can be physically and emotionally draining on a day-to-day basis.”

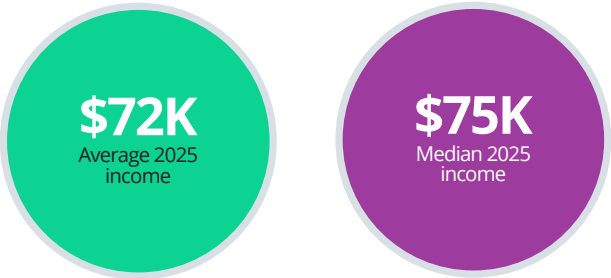
“**It’s hard on my body.** I have a lot of shoulder pain, which also radiates down my hand. So, I need regular massages and chiropractic care to aid with this.”

Quotes have been lightly edited for length and clarity.

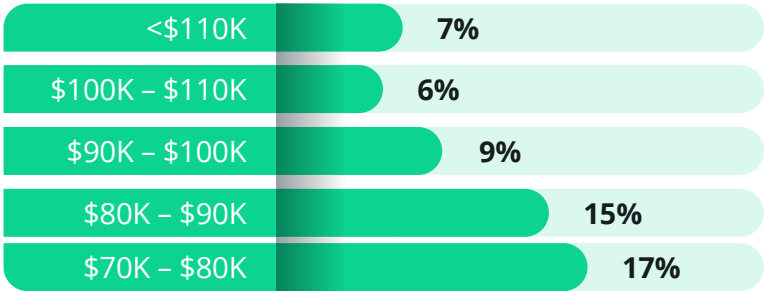
Compensation

RDHs are seeing modest gains in compensation. Compared to 2024, average income rose 9% to \$72K, and **median income rose 4% to \$75K**. The largest share of hygienists (17%) is making \$70,001–\$80,000.

2025 Employment Income Estimate



Income Distribution



Last Pay Raise

The rate of pay increases is also holding strong. In line with last year, 73% of RDHs have seen a bump within the past two years. Almost half (46%) received theirs within the past 12 months, outpacing overall respondents by three percentage points. Only 7% of hygienists say they have never received a raise, down two points from 2024 and three points compared to the overall respondent pool.



When it comes to benefits, more than half of this year’s responding hygienists receive paid vacation, paid holidays, dental plans, and/or retirement coverage. Compared to 2024, RDHs have seen notable fluctuation around paid holidays (down 4pp), medical (down 4pp), vision (down 4pp), dental (up 8pp), and paid continuing education (up 3pp). Additionally, one in 10 RDHs doesn’t receive any benefits, up two percentage points from last year.

Benefits Received



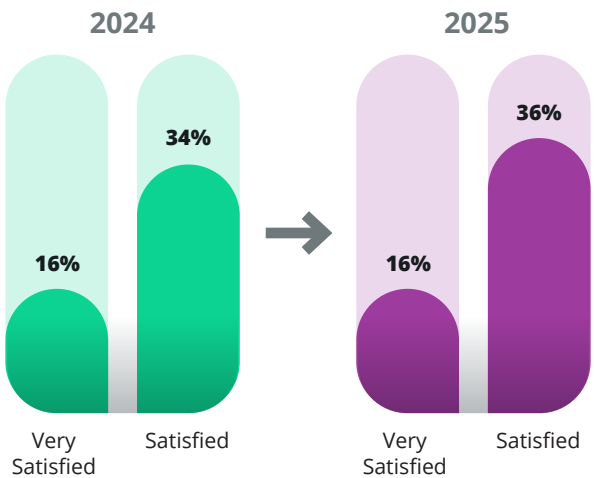
Among RDHs who do have benefits, the most desired one they’re currently lacking is medical coverage, followed by paid continuing education, retirement, and paid sick leave.

Missing Benefits Most Desired



Satisfaction With Total Compensation

52% Over half of responding hygienists are “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with total compensation



All told, over half of responding hygienists (52%) are “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their total compensation, up two percentage points from last year. These modest across-the-board increases in compensation metrics are good news for hygienists and employers alike, suggesting that interventions to address the persistent dental staff shortage are starting to pay off. There’s still room for improvement, though, when it comes to aligning total rewards with the realities of the job and the people who perform it, as this year’s emerging trends demonstrate.

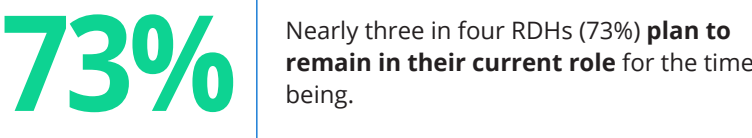
Emerging Trends

Pay, lifestyle, and satisfaction indicators show a hygiene profession that’s on its way to restabilizing after half a decade in a staffing deficit — if employers and leaders can rebalance a top-heavy career ladder.

Job Market Shows Signs Of Stability

Rising retention and satisfaction related to recent job changes signal a rebounding job market and growing alignment of hygienist demands with employer offerings.

Remaining in their current role



Of recent transitioners, the vast majority (82%) were able to make good on their goals, outpacing last year’s share by four percentage points and this year’s overall respondent pool by two. This growing share of happy campers shows promise for continued stabilization in the years ahead.

Achievement Of Job Change Goals



Expanded Benefits Gain Traction

Although the job market appears to be stabilizing, it remains competitive as RDHs’ demand for improved benefits intensifies.

Write-in comments reveal a rise in targeted, non-traditional benefits, such as stipends, massage therapy, bonuses and profit sharing, and compensation for long commutes. Emerging wish-list benefits include better support of reproductive and family health, with expanded medical coverage and PTO, or through intentional supplements. As one respondent put it, “In a field saturated with women, most places don’t offer maternity leave.”

Career Ladders Grow Top-Heavy

To ensure workforce continuity, employers and veteran RDHs should work together to develop career pathways that attract new hygienists to the field and level up the rest of this vital workforce. One theme in write-in responses suggests that experienced professionals are overlooked in education and mentorship opportunities. “I am the oldest clinician in the office and feel like I don’t fit in with the clinical staff at times,” wrote one RDH with over three decades in the field.



Decoding The Data: Mapping Opportunities For RDHs

Each focus area highlights key data, the signal it sends, and the opportunity it presents for modern practices.

Focus area	Key findings	Signal	Opportunity
Employment patterns	65% of RDHs work full-time 35% part-time 78% work in private practices 11% in corporate settings 88% work in general dentistry	Hygiene work remains concentrated in private practice and general dentistry as part-time work continues to proliferate, signaling lasting demand for stability alongside flexibility.	Optimize scheduling systems to accommodate both part-time and multi-location hygienists, improving retention and coverage across varying workloads.
Workforce composition & tenure	Fewer than one in five RDHs (19%) are in their first decade on the job Nearly a third (27%) are planning to retire in the next five years	Established hygienists are planning their exit faster than newcomers are entering the field.	Strengthen recruiting strategies, mentorship programs, and professional development at every career stage to safeguard workforce continuity and succession plans.
Job change & satisfaction	21% of RDHs changed jobs in the past 12 months (down 4pp YOY) 82% say job changes met their goals Top drivers are better work environment (45%) and higher pay (44%) 73% are staying in their current role for the foreseeable future (up 7pp YOY)	The hygiene workforce is starting to restabilize after years of contending with a staffing shortage. When it comes to career satisfaction and staying power, a healthy culture is just as important as competitive compensation.	Invest in positive culture and communication systems to reinforce satisfaction and reduce turnover.



Focus area	Key findings	Signal	Opportunity
Benefits & compensation	<p>Common benefits include paid holidays, insurance, vacation, retirement, and CE allowances</p> <p>More than half (57%) of RDHs are happy with their benefits</p> <p>But only one in four reports having <i>all</i> desired benefits</p>	<p>Although the majority of RDHs are “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their benefits, desire is growing for predictable income, paid CE, and stronger medical coverage, along with nontraditional benefits targeting realities of the job, such as bodily wear and tear.</p>	<p>Expand benefit options like CE stipends, retirement matching, and flexible PTO to improve satisfaction. Stay competitive by exploring nontraditional supplements like open-ended stipends and coverage of massage or chiropractic services.</p>
Career motivation & future planning	<p>Additional job-change reasons include more appreciation, better hours, and improved culture</p> <p>Autonomy and respect are common themes of write-in responses</p>	<p>RDHs value emotional safety and acknowledgment as much as pay; in fact, satisfaction and retention hinge on these aspects of culture.</p>	<p>Foster engagement programs and feedback loops that strengthen belonging and recognition across hygiene teams.</p>

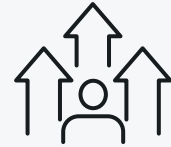
“The dentists here are thorough and so good with my patients. The staff is supportive. **I like this office more than the corporate offices** I’ve worked at: no silly rules that random people from outside the dental clinic try to enforce without even knowing what’s going on at our office.”





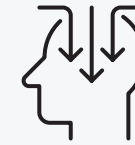
Key Takeaways For RDHs

As the hygiene profession starts to reemerge from the strains of a post-pandemic world, the need is stronger than ever for employers and veteran RDHs to invest strategically in recruiting, succession planning, compensation, and professional development. By focusing efforts across every career stage, practice owners and employers can build a thriving leadership pipeline that supports these essential clinicians from their first days of training through their final days on the job.



Job Market Is Starting To Restabilize

Compensation and satisfaction are on the rise, while recent and prospective attrition is down thanks to bold efforts to reverse a years-long dental staff shortage.



Flexibility And Autonomy Are Key

Hygienists outpace other dental professionals in reduced workweeks, reinforcing how central flexibility is to the profession. Just as important, however, is recognition of hygienists' clinical expertise, and creating the space for them to hone and exercise it.



Compensation Needs Refinement

Demand is rising for compensation that meets the pressures of the job, along with improvements to staple benefits and access to less conventional ones.

Aging Workforce Strains Continuity

Veteran hygienists are nearing retirement faster than new practitioners are joining, signaling an urgent need for improved recruiting, succession planning, and professional development.





Dental Assistant Report

Summary & Highlights

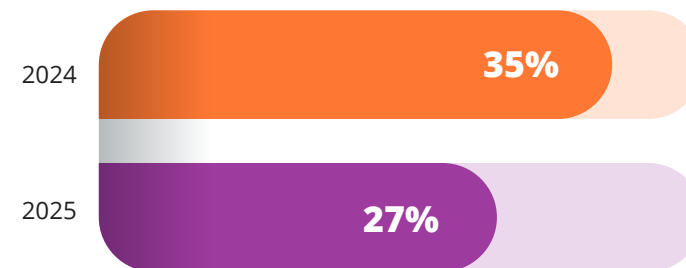
03

Snapshot of the 2025 Dental Assistant

Responses from 173 dental assistants are a shot across the bow for employers: Lagging compensation and simmering dissatisfaction threaten to erase recent gains in recruiting.

Dental assistants are in a difficult position. With pay and benefits falling behind expectations and living costs, satisfaction is plummeting: Only one in four (27%) is “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their total compensation, representing a seven percentage-point drop from last year and a dismal 24 percentage-point deficit compared to all respondents. Additionally, those who’ve changed jobs recently in search of better conditions are harder pressed than their peers to have found them. One respondent put it bluntly: “Lots of extra work, not a lot of extra pay.”

Satisfaction With Total Compensation



“I dislike the toxic environment and the pay. **Dental assistants are very looked over and used.** I honestly can’t wait to get out of this field!”



Plans to Seek a New Job

47%

DAs eyeing a move, #1 likeliest role to leave

Dental assistants saw every single dimension of satisfaction backslide. It should come as no surprise, then, that they are the likeliest dental professionals to be seeking new opportunities: **nearly half (47%) are eyeing a move within the next two years**, outpacing total respondents by 20 percentage points.

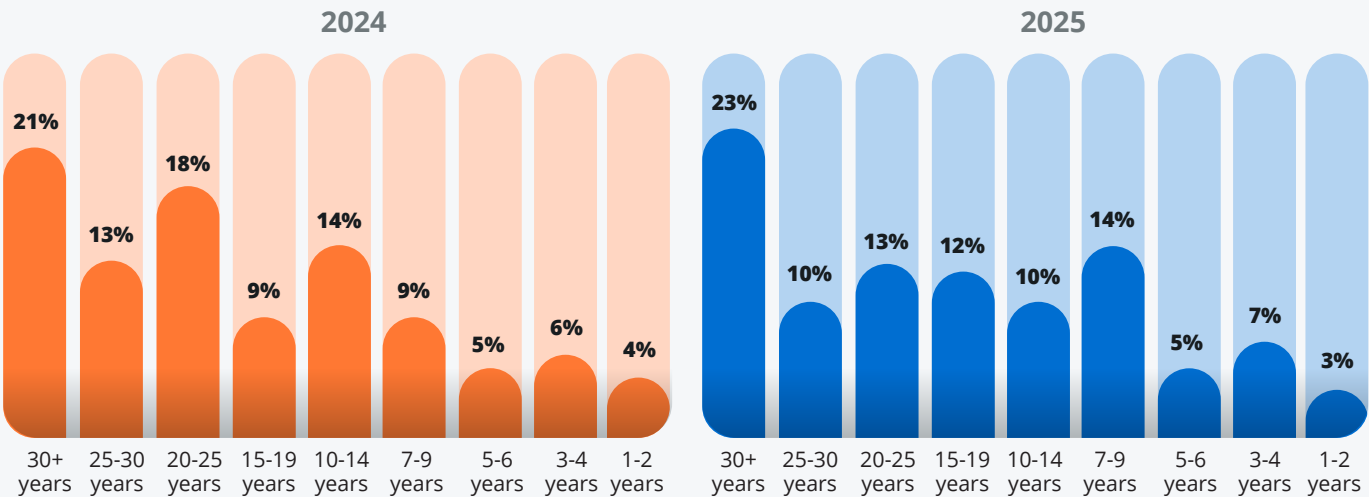
Despite these setbacks, this year’s survey results did reveal one positive development. Compared to other professionals, DAs are represented more evenly across career stages, meaning there’s time to do better by them. Although a quarter of assistants (23%) have been in the field for at least three decades, a third (32%) are still in their first decade on the job, marking a seven percentage-point increase from last year and trending 12 points ahead of this year’s total respondents.

Further, only 16% of dental assistants plan to retire within the next five years, compared to a quarter (27%) of all respondents; more than half (54%) are in early or mid-career, compared to only two in five of the total pool (41%).

The industry’s relatively healthy influx of DAs suggests that recruiting is working. But it raises a different question: Is retention? This year’s survey reveals that, without improvements in compensation, culture, and workload, today’s newcomers may become tomorrow’s departures.

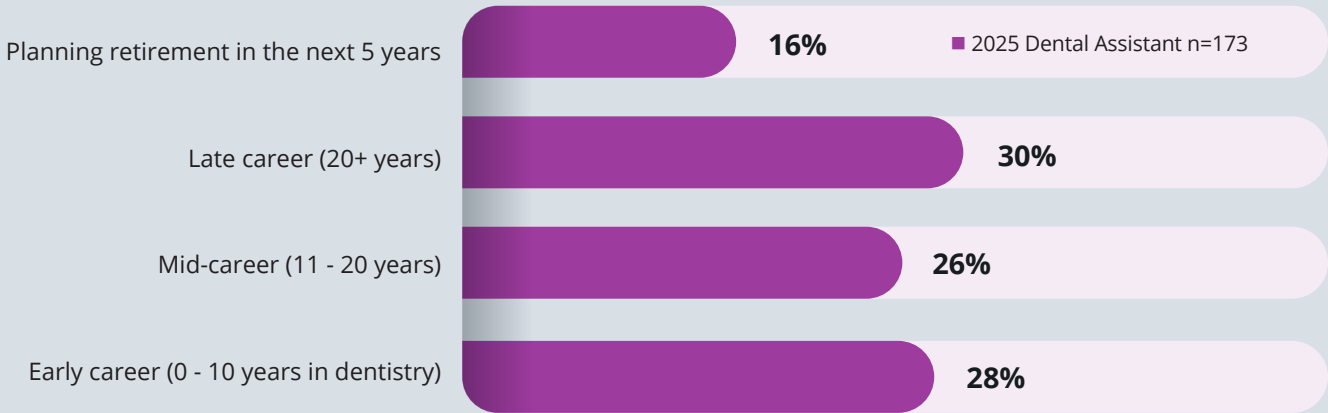
Years of Experience in Current Profession

In 2025, nearly **a quarter of responding dental assistants (23%)** say they have worked in their current profession for **more than 30 years**, in line with 2024 (21%).



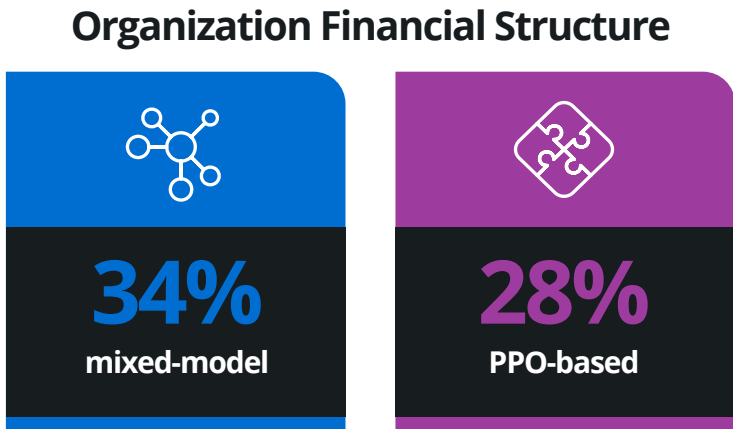
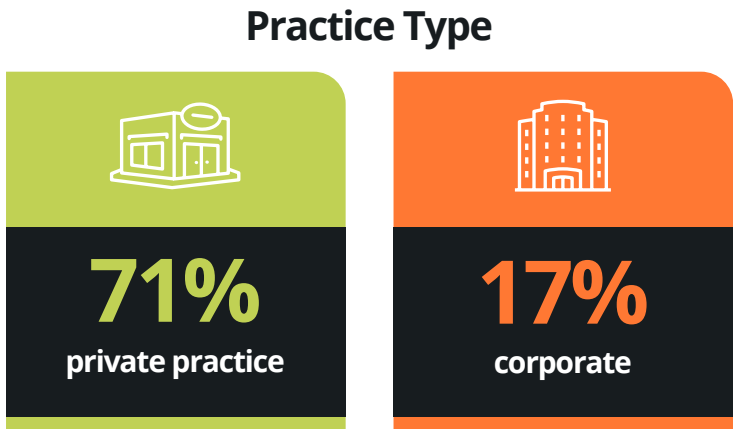
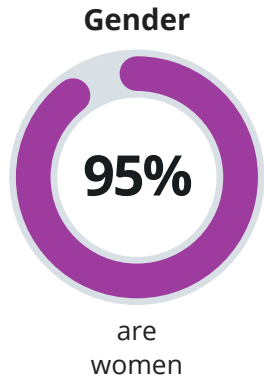
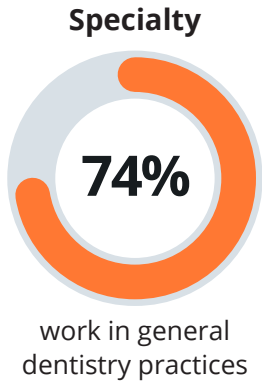
Career Stage

New to the survey this year is a question about current career stage. Three in ten responding dental assistants (30%) describe their career stage as late. Nearly three in ten (28%) say they are early in their career.

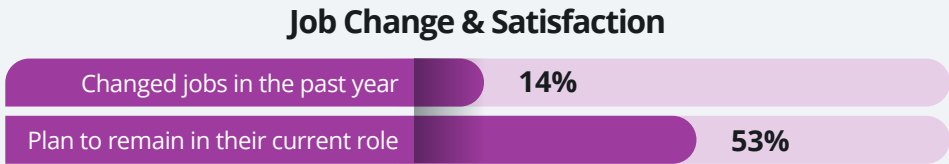
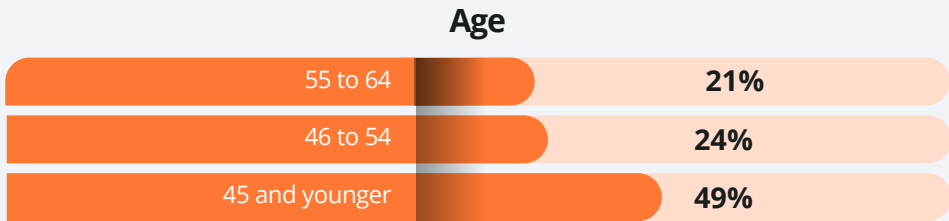




Dental Assistants, General Dentistry Practice



What lights DAs up?
“Being able to have a part in making people feel better both literally and emotionally. Watching transformations.”



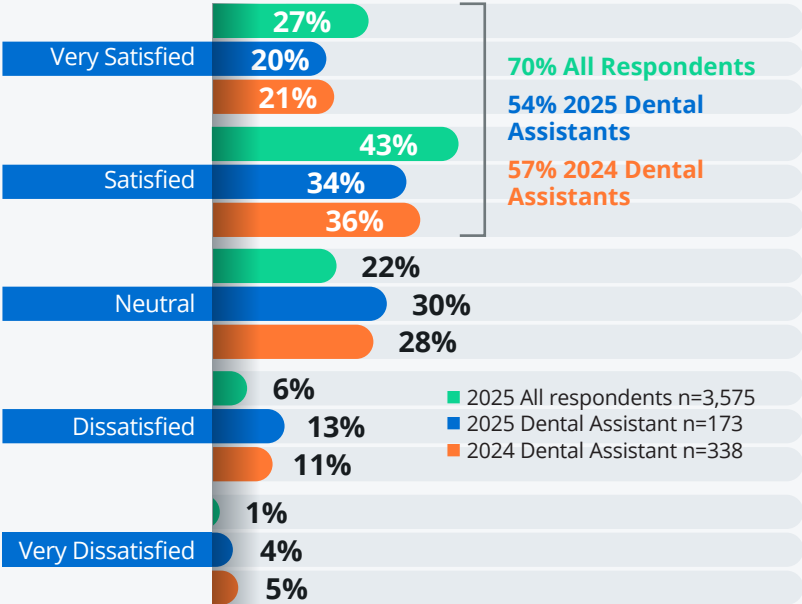
Satisfaction

Dental assistants report a troubling drop in job satisfaction. Only 54% are “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their current work, a three percentage-point dip from last year, and a 16-point deficit compared to this year’s overall respondent pool.

Satisfaction With Current Job

More than half of responding dental assistants in 2025 (54%) are **satisfied (Very Satisfied + Satisfied) with their current job**. Satisfaction is in line with dental assistants in 2024 (57%) but trails all respondents in 2025 by 16 pp.

Overall, how satisfied are you with your current job?



Restoring The Smile: Top Happiness Indicators

Show Assistants The Money

Compensation is a significant factor in job satisfaction (and dissatisfaction). Among DAs considering a job change, 84% cite higher income as a primary motivation, a 14 percentage-point leap from last year. Better benefits (48%) and a more appreciative employer (48%) are also big drivers.

Better benefits (48%) and a more appreciative employer (48%) are the next biggest 2025 motivators.

The top motivators in 2024 were higher income (70%) and a better work environment (45%).

Motives For Changing Jobs

Among dental assistants in this year’s study who would consider changing jobs, more than four out of five (84%) say higher income is a primary motivation.

Purpose And Relationships Are Pillars of Happiness

Write-in responses consistently celebrate the human side of the job. Assistants emphasize the satisfaction that comes from helping patients feel comfortable and contributing to their well-being and confidence.

A Healthy Work Environment Boosts Morale

Appreciation and a supportive office culture are central to positive experiences. When assistants feel valued by their dentists and teammates, their happiness rises noticeably. Several write-ins specifically credit leaders for cultivating a sense of belonging.

Work environment (53%) and higher pay (43%) were also the top reasons for changing jobs in 2024, along with a more appreciative employer (43%).

Achievement of Job Change Goals

Among those who changed jobs in the past year, more than seven in ten (72%) said the change enabled them to achieve their goals, in line with 2024 (75%).

Reasons for Changing Jobs

Those who changed jobs in the past year say higher pay (44%) and a better work environment (40%) drove their decision.

“What Lights Dental Assistants Up

Even amid worrying backslides in satisfaction, dental assistants are buoyed by their patients, their craft, and a healthy and vibrant work environment (when they can find one).

The Patients

“Working with the patients and knowing I put them at ease and make their appointments as pleasant as possible.”

“Love the patient bonding. Being in an office for so long, your patients become family. **I love seeing the smiles on their faces** when we do a cosmetic case. It is so rewarding!”

A Fulfilling Environment

“The team and staff are really fun to be around and are quite literally the only reason we all stay, as well as the patients.”

“My bosses are very appreciative, and **we feel valued.**”

“I am very passionate about teeth! I enjoy helping others, **I love the family environment that my office provides.** The close-knit coworking relationship that we all have is amazing and admirable!”

The Craft

“The different work scenarios, learning skills with lab work, 3-D printer, milling machines — basically the new technology. And my doctor is very kind to his patients.”

“We are on the cutting edge with equipment and technology. We are **offered opportunities for education,** and I feel that my opinions are valued.”





What Wears Dental Assistants Down



DAs are feeling crushed by low compensation, lack of respect, and untenable workloads.

Low Compensation

“It seems the job market and pay rate for dental assistants has decreased over the past couple of years. Also the **benefit packages are no good**, and drs should appreciate their staff more, universally. ... Raises deserve to be reviewed more often.”

“**The pay doesn’t reflect the responsibility** of the work. Assistants are the backbone of the practice but one of the lowest paid positions.”

Disrespect And Toxicity

“The **lack of respect and recognition** dental assistants get. Assistants are the heartbeat of a practice and are not valued as such.”

“The abusive treatment, the **toxic environment**, and how exhausted and drained I feel when I’m going home.”

“Employers don’t value us and don’t take our financial needs into consideration. **We are considered disposable.**”

Overwork And Unrealistic Expectations

“**Lack of systems**, it is hectic, too much is dependent on individual employees, lack of boss’ time management. Feel stuck and burnt out when not sure what to do.”

“I have concerns about my **ability to continue my job long term** due to the physical demands on the body.”

Quotes have been lightly edited for length and clarity.

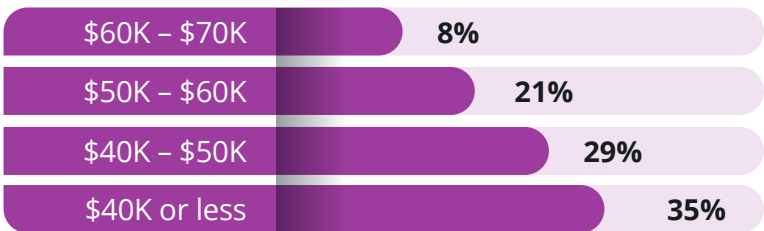
Compensation

Compared to 2024, average income for dental assistants rose 21% to \$46K, while median income rose 13% to \$45K. But satisfaction and longevity indicators reveal that these gains are far from sufficient. Only 7% of assistants make more than \$70,000 annually, while more than a third (35%) make \$40,000 or less.

2025 Employment Income Estimate



Income Distribution



Last Pay Raise

Additionally, assistants are less likely than their peers — and less likely than they’ve been in the past — to have received a recent raise: 65% of dental assistants have seen a bump within the past two years, trailing last year’s share by three percentage points and this year’s total respondents by four points.



When it comes to benefits, this year’s assistants are most likely to have paid holidays (77%), paid vacation (72%), and dental plans (58%). Compared to 2024 rewards, they’ve seen notable movement surrounding dental (up 8pp), medical (down 8pp), and paid sick leave (down 7pp).

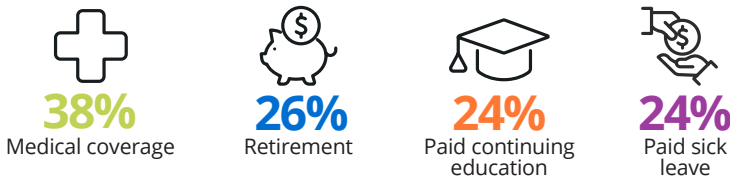
Benefits Received



When it comes to total compensation, satisfaction is markedly lower for DAs than it is for other professionals — and it’s dropping.

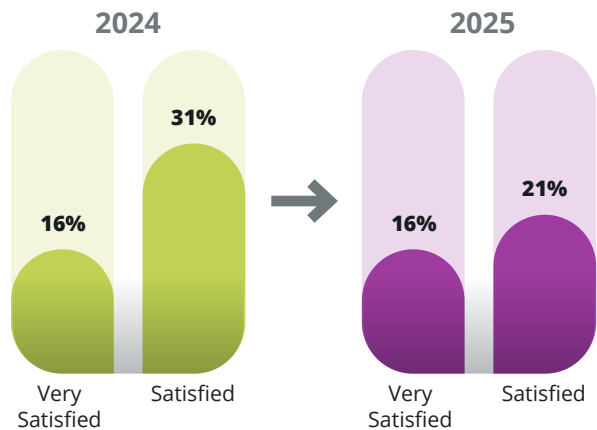
Only one in four (27%) is “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their total compensation, trailing last year’s share by seven percentage points and this year’s overall pool by 24 points.

Missing Benefits Most Desired



Satisfaction With Employee Benefits

37% In 2025, nearly two in five of responding dental assistants are “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their benefits, **down notably by 10 pp from 47% in 2024.**

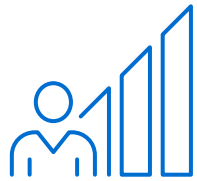


Assistants are relatively happier with the benefits portion of their package, but even this margin is slipping: 37% of dental assistants are “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their benefits, lagging behind last year’s share by 10 pp and this year’s full pool by 19 pp.

Given the red flags spanning compensation dimensions, the single most important thing employers can do to safeguard their assistant workforce is improve pay and benefit packages.

Emerging Trends

As the industry evolves around them, dental assistants are feeling the heaviest strain. Perhaps unsurprisingly, 2025 survey responses highlight sharp and unmistakable declines in satisfaction.



Satisfaction Falls Across All Metrics

Attrition is rising, and satisfaction is falling. Everywhere. Dental assistants are experiencing a backslide on every indicator of happiness on the job. The phenomenon is not only out of step with their peer groups, who are generally happier this year, but it also threatens recent strides made in recruiting.



Workforce Wins Newcomers

Despite all the slippage in 2025, assistants saw better balance of staff across career stages, including a higher proportion of newcomers, an area where other dental professionals are struggling.



Workload Strain Mounts

Understaffing, overbooking, and physical fatigue are increasingly embedded in the day-to-day experience of dental assistants. Even as new technology is introduced, workflow inefficiencies and unrealistic expectations compound burnout.



Scopes of Practice Expand

Write-ins point to increased curiosity about expanded function dental assistants (EFDA) and oral preventive assistants (OPA). Assistants view these roles as a meaningful step toward greater responsibility and earning potential.



Decoding The Data: Mapping Opportunities For Dental Assistants

Each focus area highlights key data, the signal it sends, and the opportunity it presents for modern practices.

Focus area	Key findings	Signal	Opportunity
Employment patterns	<p>91% of assistants work < 40 hours a week, up 3pp from last year</p> <p>Most of this group is just shy of full time, with 77% working 32–40 hours, up 6pp from last year and 18pp compared to the total pool</p> <p>60% work four or fewer days a week</p> <p>Compared to all respondents, the share of assistants who work 5+ days a week is 16pp higher</p>	Assistants are working more hours than they have in the past, and more days than their counterparts in other dental professions, perhaps in attempt to make up for stagnating compensation.	Review scheduling approaches with assistants to ensure they're as efficient as possible and in line with work and life goals. Audit compensation structures to ensure they're competitive.
Benefits & compensation	<p>Only one in four (27%) assistants is happy with their total comp, down 7pp from last year and 24pp compared to all respondents</p> <p>65% of assistants have received a raise within 2 years, down 3pp from last year and 4pp compared to overall pool</p>	Satisfaction with pay and benefits is alarmingly low among DAs compared to their peer groups.	Invest in better pay and benefits for assistants. Implement processes to evaluate compensation and pay increases annually to ensure ongoing competitiveness and counteract slippages seen this year.
Work environment & culture	<p>Nearly half of assistants (47%) are eyeing a career change within 2 years, up 20pp compared to overall pool</p> <p>84% say higher income is a primary motivation, up 14pp from last year</p>	Poor pay prospects impact every aspect of an assistant's experience of their job.	Prioritize reviewing and revising compensation structures to improve satisfaction metrics across the board.

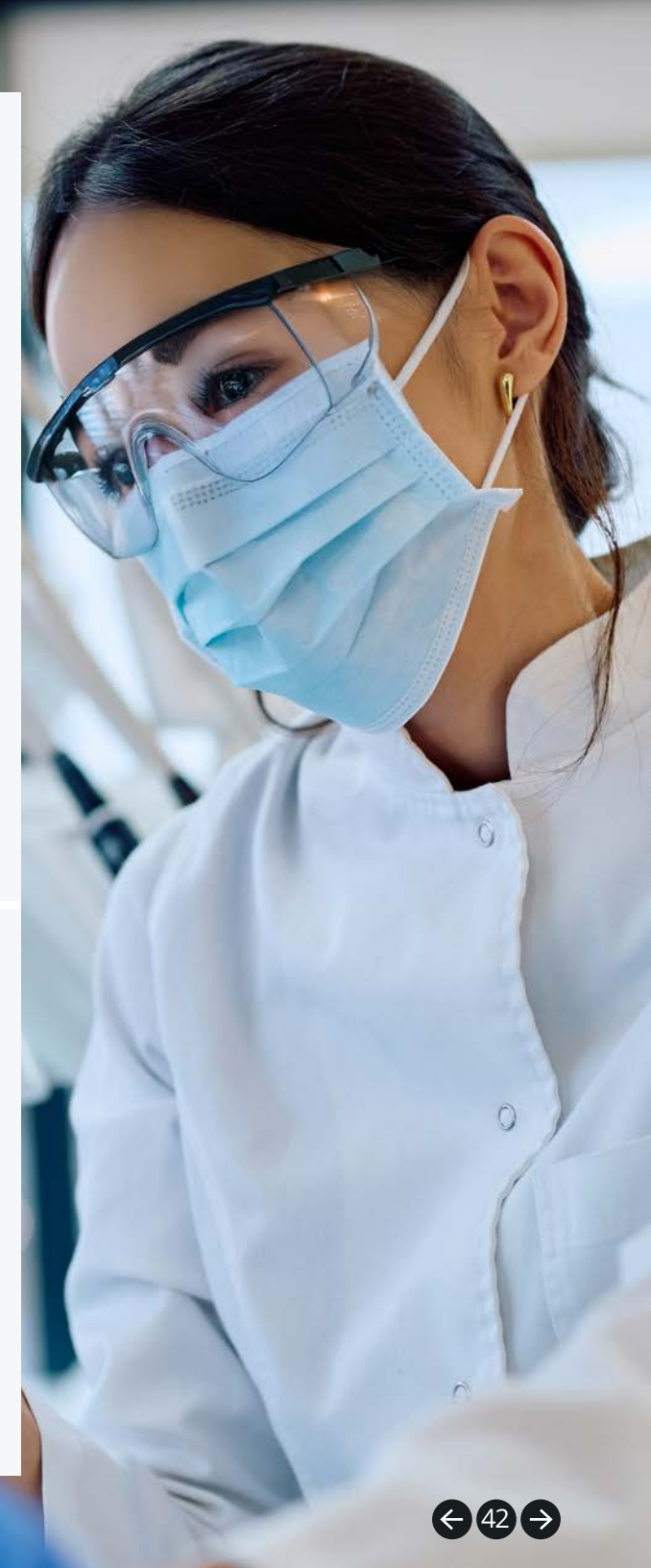


Focus area	Key findings	Signal	Opportunity
Succession & future planning	<p>32% of assistants are in their first decade on the job, up 7pp from last year and 12pp from overall pool</p> <p>16% plan to retire within 5 years, 11pp less than all respondents</p> <p>More than half (54%) are in early or mid-career, 14pp higher than total pool</p>	DAs have seen promising growth among early and mid-career professionals, especially compared to dentists and hygienists, who've struggled to attract newcomers fast enough to counterbalance the growing ranks of near-term retirees.	Apply best practices from succession planning successes to rebalance aging teams. Ensure retention strategies are strong enough to support an influx of newcomers.

“The entire team, and **relationships that we build with our patients**, as well as seeing the final results. Putting a smile on patients’ faces is priceless.”

“The **people I work with**, and I have windows!!!”

“**I love everything about being a dental assistant:** assisting the doctors, cleaning the rooms and setting up the rooms, organizing!, using the new scanner. Taking impressions!”





Key Takeaways For Dental Assistants

This year’s responding DAs are sounding the alarm on declining compensation and working conditions. Leaders and employers must take swift action to right the ship — or risk undoing all the progress they’ve made in winning the next generation.



Dissatisfaction Calls For An Intervention

Assistants are less happy across every dimension of satisfaction measured this year, an experience unique to this group and a call to action for employers and leaders. In addition to better pay, there are opportunities for improved medical, retirement, sick leave, and continuing education benefits.

New Career Pathways Can Be A Salve

Now’s a great time to consider retooling DA career paths. With new legislation and increasing interest in expanded roles and technology skills, employers can meet the moment with new career development opportunities and the compensation to match.



Build Culture And Recognition With Intention

DAs are the heartbeat of the dental team. They deserve to be seen and respected. Embedding consistent leadership micro-practices that emphasize gratitude can significantly influence whether assistants stay or walk.



Focus On Retention, Not Just Recruiting

In 2025, 1 in 5 assistants has been with their current practice for 10+ years, down 8pp from last year and 14pp from the overall respondent pool. Although this shift demonstrates promising momentum toward entry-level growth, it’s also a reminder for employers to ensure they’re encouraging healthy retention.

Front Office Report

Summary & Highlights

04

Snapshot of the 2025 Front Office Professional

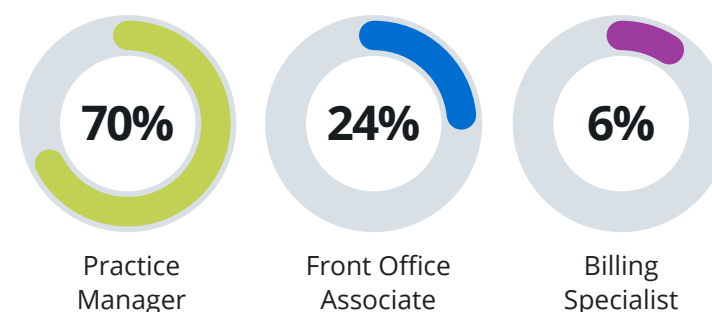
Insights from 365 front office staff reveal a workforce that is strong, stable — and getting stretched a bit thin by growing demands on time and talent.

The front office is powered by highly and diversely skilled professionals. In addition to serving as practice managers, office associates, and/or billing specialists, three in four of this year's respondents from the front office (73%) are also registered dental hygienists. One in 10 (12%) is a dentist. Given all the hats they wear, front office staff often work longer hours and more days than their colleagues in other areas of the practice — with less than they'd like to show for it.

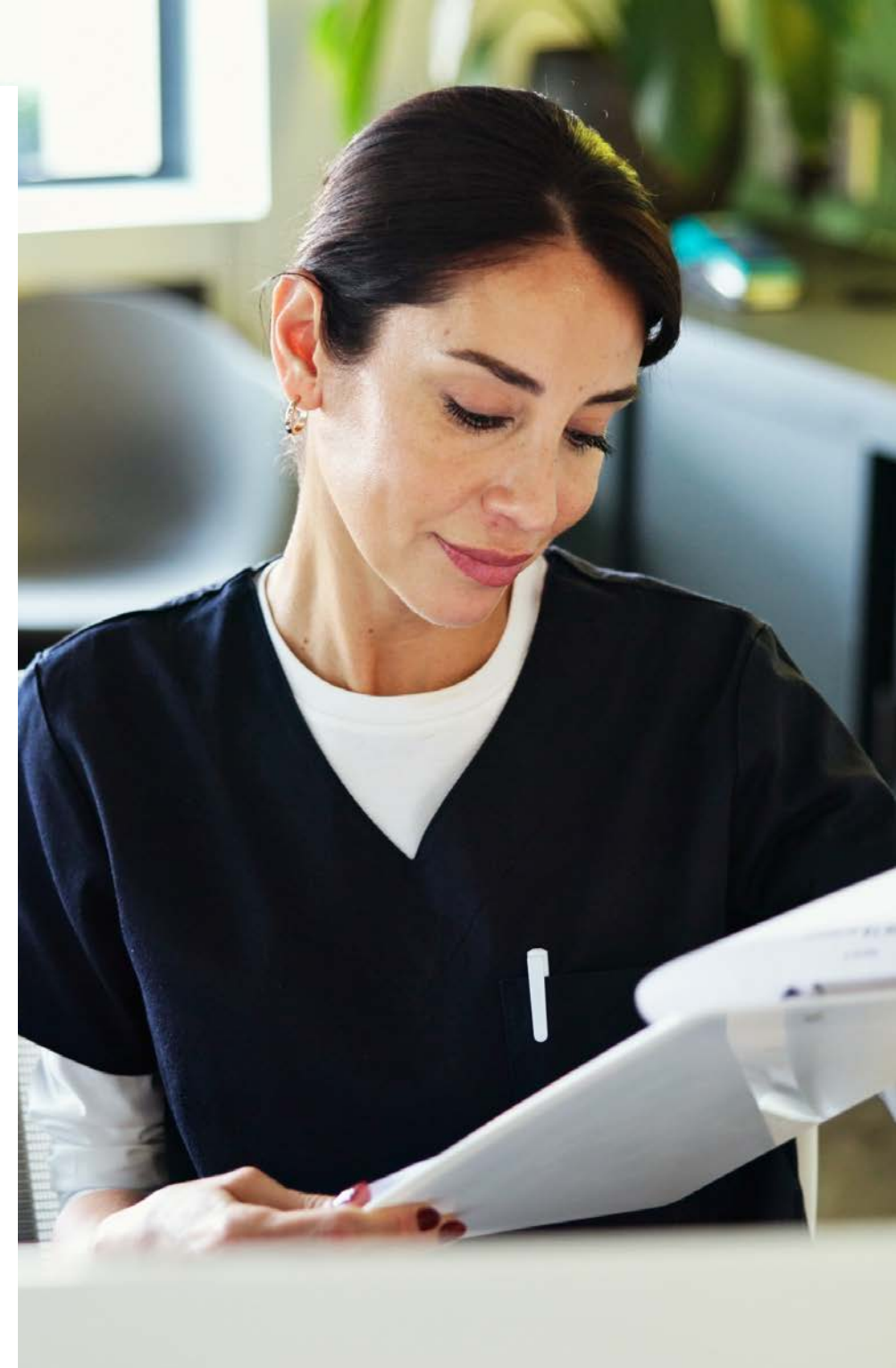
Despite modest gains in compensation and retention this year, front office respondents are becoming more vocal about the need for an environment, pay, and benefits that match the nature of their work.

Role In The Dental Practice

One in ten of all respondents (10%) work in the front office.

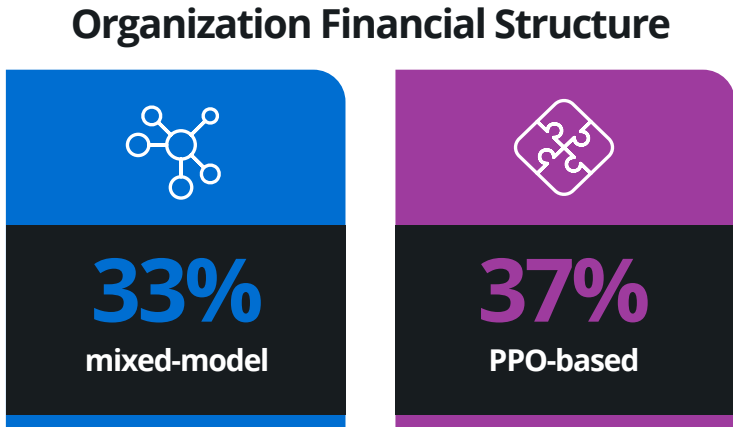
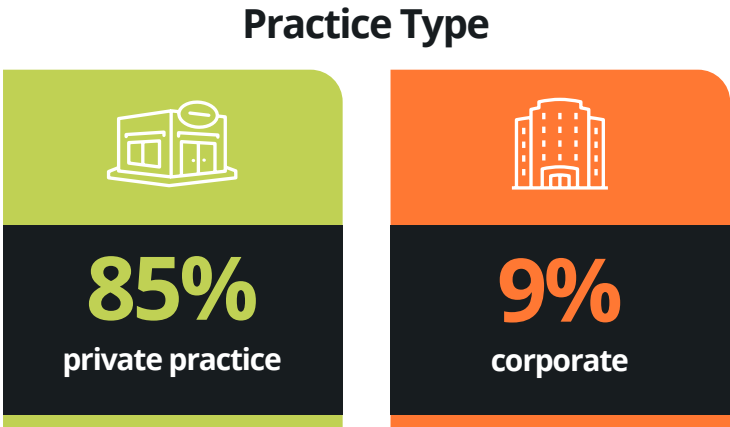
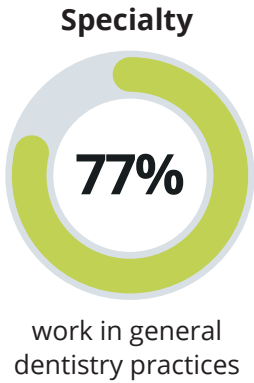


Employers who take these demands seriously will win out with top talent who delight in connecting the dots between patient care and practice success. As one respondent put it, "Good communication, teamwork, and respect are crucial to a positive work environment. When employees are happy, the office runs more efficiently, and the days go by more smoothly."

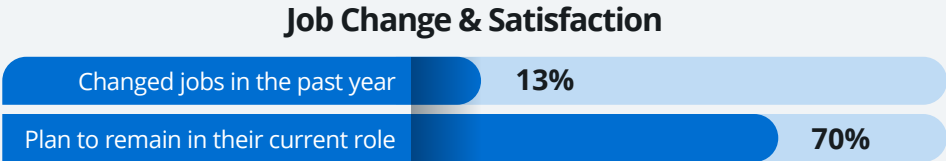
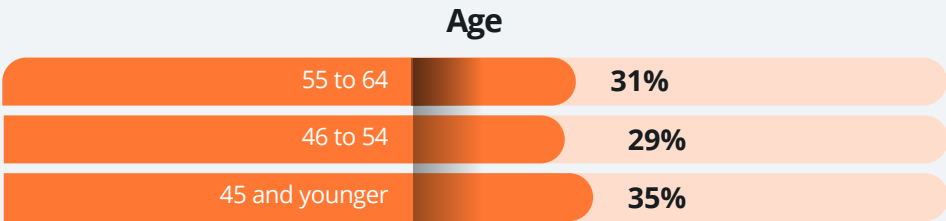




Front Office Professional, General Dentistry Practice



What lights up the front office?
“Flexibility, autonomy, responsibility, growth, and learning new skills.”



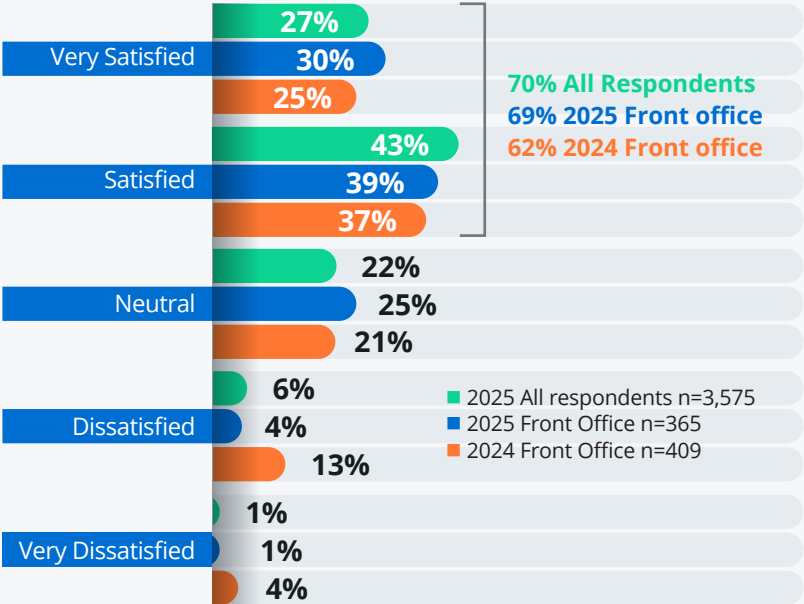
Satisfaction

The front office saw a seven percentage-point **boost in job satisfaction this year**, with seven in 10 respondents expressing happiness in their current role. Only 5% of 2025 respondents report being “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied” on the job, a 12 percentage-point drop from 2024.

Satisfaction With Current Job

Nearly seven in ten front office respondents in 2025 (**69%**) are **satisfied (Very Satisfied + Satisfied)** with their current job, up a meaningful amount (5 pp) compared to last year (62%).

Overall, how satisfied are you with your current job?



Behind the smile: Top Happiness Indicators

Culture + Compensation = Contentment

A healthy work culture and competitive compensation fuel satisfaction and staying power, according to key survey signals:

Retention Is Up

Fewer than a third (30%) of this year’s front-office respondents are considering or planning a job change, a 13 percentage-point drop from 2024.

Plans To Seek A New Job

In 2025, 70% of front office respondents say that they have no plans to seek a new job, up from 57% in 2024.

Comp Complaints Are Down

44% of respondents are at least satisfied with their total rewards; 57% say the same about the benefit component — each a four percentage-point improvement from last year.

Satisfaction With Employee Benefits

In 2025, nearly three in five front office respondents (57%) are satisfied (Very Satisfied + Satisfied) with their employee benefits, up slightly from 2024 (53%).

Recent Job Changers Have Found What They’re Looking For

A better work environment and higher pay were the top pursuits of those who changed jobs in the past year. Two-thirds (65%) of those who found different jobs achieved their goals, up three points from last year.

Achievement Of Job Change Goals

Among those who changed jobs in the past year, nearly two-thirds (65%) said the change enabled them to achieve their goals, up slightly from 2024 (62%).

“What Lights Up The Front Office

According to write-in comments, nothing enlivens the front office quite like quality relationships, autonomy, and the opportunity to flex operational skills in service of patient care and practice success.

Working With and For Good People

“My doctor, the team, the patients, the hours. The doctor really likes our input. I trust her and her work. My stress is much less than before.”

“All the sweet, nice, and grateful patients. They really make it easy to come back to work. Fellow team members. **We have a small family environment.** It makes it fun and interesting.”

Staying Flexible

“I like the freedom I have to **work at my own pace without supervision or micromanagement.** I get my work done with more efficiency this way.”

“Earned flexibility, supportive doctors.”

“Flexibility. I am expected to be here during patient hours, but if I need to be out of office, **I can make up hours in evening or on weekends.**”

Getting Down To Brass Tacks

“I enjoy having knowledge of many different payment plans so that I usually have a way to **help someone get out of pain and become healthy.**”

“I love **helping a business flourish financially.** I love seeing all our positive reviews and nurturing our excellent reputation.”





What Wears Front Office Staff Down



Insurance struggles, strained team dynamics, and inadequate compensation are among the biggest stressors in the front office.

Insurance Woes

“Insurance companies are the **bane of my existence.**”

“The **most challenging part of my job is navigating PPO insurance.** These plans restrict our ability to increase production and increase employees’ salaries, but stepping away from them isn’t realistic because so many corporate practices participate, and patients would look elsewhere. I feel this limits our growth.”

Too Many Hats; Too Little Pay

“The **pay does not compensate for the stresses of the job,** especially working for a prosthodontist and all the surgeries and parts and labs we work with.”

“I’m also responsible for covering for others on vacation/sick plus in-house IT. **I don’t think I’m paid enough for playing 3 roles.**”

“**My role is not clearly defined.** I wear too many hats to excel in a specific area. Not enough help. Owner constantly complaining about staffing costs.”

Staffing Strains and Strife

“**Not being able to fully execute my job duties** as practice manager due to lack of true support and follow-through from owner/associates.”

“Adult babysitting. **Lack of personal accountability** by some and drama/gossip.”

Quotes have been lightly edited for length and clarity.

Compensation

Front office professionals have seen a modest boost in compensation this year. Compared to 2024, their average income rose 12% to \$64k, and their median income rose 2% to \$61k.

2025 Employment Income Estimate



Income Distribution



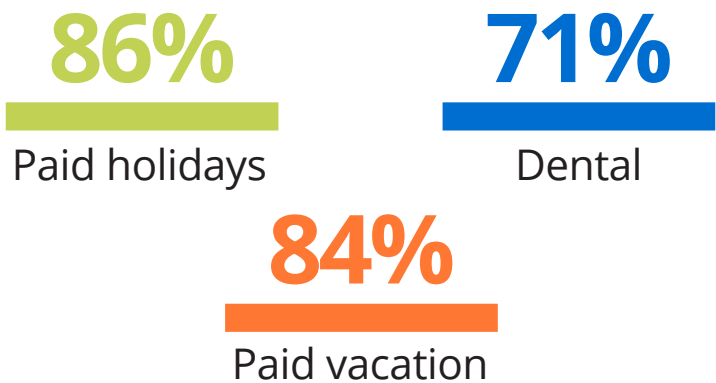
Last Pay Raise

When it comes to pay increases, the outlook is even brighter: **73% of front office staff received a raise** within the past two years, five percentage points higher than last year’s share, and four points higher than this year’s overall respondent pool. On the other end of the spectrum, only 5% have never seen a pay bump, compared to 10% of all respondents.

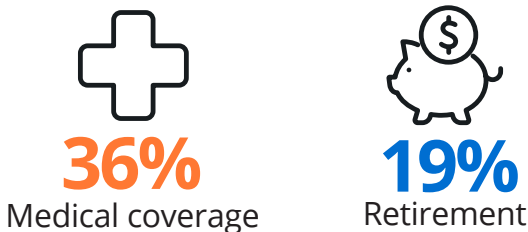


Benefits Received

As for benefits, at least seven in 10 front office professionals receive **paid holidays, paid vacation, and/or dental plans**. That means they outpace the overall respondent pool by as much as 17 percentage points on these fronts, a phenomenon likely linked to their higher proportion of full-time workers. Among those with benefits, the most desired ones they’re currently lacking are medical coverage and retirement.



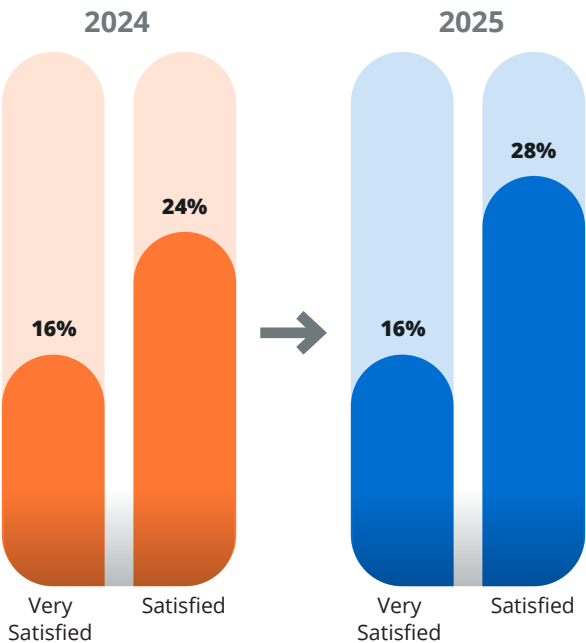
Missing Benefits Most Desired



Satisfaction With Employee Benefits

44%

In 2025, more than two in five front office respondents (44%) are **satisfied with their total compensation (Very Satisfied + Satisfied)**. This top-two box percentage is up slightly compared to 2024 (40%) but trails all respondents by 7 pp.



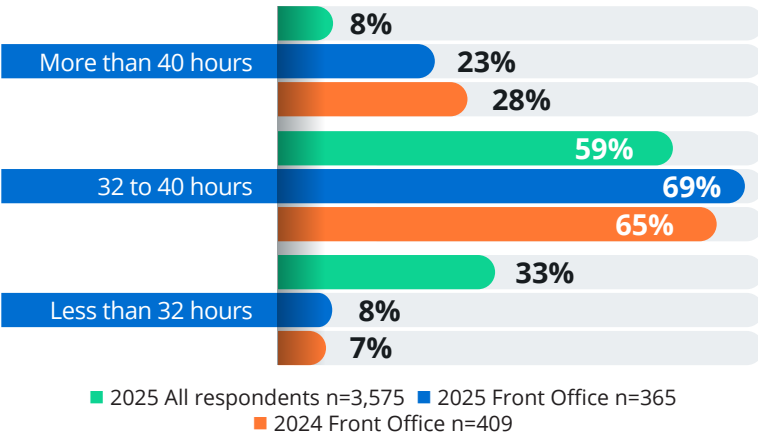
Emerging Trends

Although flexibility is thriving in many areas of dental practice, front office professionals are working longer hours and wearing more hats than ever. Their requests for competitive compensation are, in turn, growing more insistent.

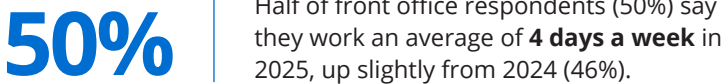
Full-Time Work Is Concentrated In The Front office

Front office staff are likelier than they used to be — and far likelier than other dental professionals — to work full time: They outpace last year’s peer group by five percentage points and this year’s overall respondent pool by a staggering 22 points. Only 8% work fewer than 32 hours in the average week. One in four (23%) clocks more than 40 hours. More hours mean more days on the job: half of front office respondents work four days in a given week (up four points from 2024); only 3% work fewer days, compared to 27% of all respondents.

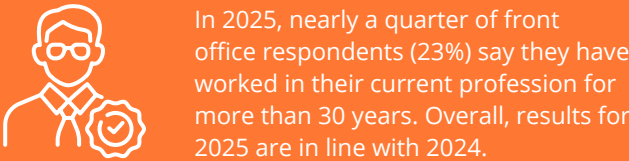
Average Number of Hours Worked Weekly



Average Days Worked Weekly



Years Of Experience In Current Profession



Demand Rises For Comp That Matches Responsibilities

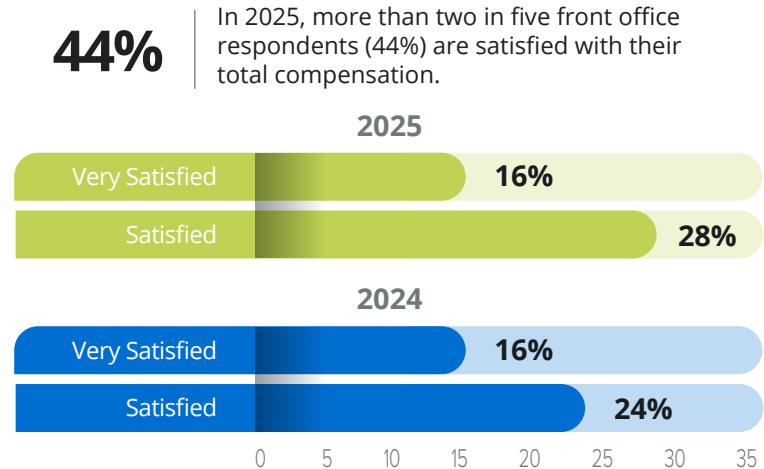
Despite some encouraging steps forward on pay, survey responses signal room for improvement. Yes, satisfaction with total comp ticked up four points, but it still trails the broader dental workforce by seven. And when front office staff made a move this year, the top motivations were unmistakable: more money and better hours, with the latter jumping a notable 14 pp. More telling still: the share of those who’ve achieved their goals in making a jump (65%) trails the overall respondent pool by 15 points.



Employers should respond to these discrepancies by assessing compensation packages for opportunities to step up pay and benefits — especially those that enhance flexibility — or risk losing the invaluable staff they’ve just gained ground in attracting and retaining.

“My children/husband do not receive free cleanings and only get half off treatment. This is not affordable for us,” said one respondent. “I could get better dental benefits for my family somewhere that is not a dental office that offers dental insurance.”

Satisfaction With Employee Benefits



Decoding The Data: Mapping Opportunities For Front Office Staff

Each focus area highlights key data, the signal it sends, and the opportunity it presents for modern practices.

Focus area	Key findings	Signal	Opportunity
Employment patterns	94% of front-office staff work full-time 6% work part-time	FTE roles are ubiquitous and growing in the front office — a big departure from the trend toward flexible work seen in most other areas of dental practice.	Optimize schedules and benefits to reflect the realities of front office work and preempt tension arising from variations.
Workforce composition & tenure	17% of front office staff are in their first decade on the job 38% have more than 20 years under their belt; another 20% are planning to retire in the next five years	Front office staff are seeing a familiar shortfall at the foot of the career ladder, though it's slightly less pronounced than in other areas of the practice.	Strengthen recruiting strategies, professional development, and cross training to safeguard workforce continuity and succession plans.
Job change & satisfaction	13% of front office staff changed jobs in the past year; 70% plan to remain in their current role (+13pp YOY) A better work environment and higher pay were top drivers of recent job hops. Two-thirds of recent transitioners (65%) achieved their goals (+3pp from last year; -15pp from all respondents)	Though staying power is strong in the front office, staff aren't afraid to leave when compensation and culture are on the line.	Audit work environment and total rewards packages to ensure they're attractive to top talent.



Focus area	Key findings	Signal	Opportunity
Benefits & compensation	<p>Common benefits include paid holidays, vacation, and dental plans, while the most desired missing benefits are medical coverage and retirement</p> <p>57% of staff are happy with their benefits (+4pp YOY)</p>	Front-office satisfaction is linked to competitive compensation.	Expand benefit options to improve satisfaction, looking for ways to elevate flexibility among full-time workers.
Career motivation & future planning	<p>73% of front office staff are also RDHs; 12% are dentists</p> <p>“Many hats” and related terms appeared frequently in write-in responses</p>	Front office staff are highly and variously skilled, but they’re getting stretched too thin.	Review and refresh job descriptions, processes, and core operational capabilities to ensure workload is evenly and efficiently distributed throughout the practice.

“Caring for patients. I work out the financial arrangements, pre auths, and appointments, so I build a relationship with them. I have been in the same office over 38 years, so I am well-acquainted with most of the patients, and they look to me for guidance when it comes to financials and insurance.”





Key Takeaways For The Front Office

This year’s front office staff are happier on the whole, and fewer are thinking of leaving their post. But a growing trend toward overwork and underpay could jeopardize this progress. Employers that offer competitive pay and a supportive environment will edge out the rest in attracting and retaining these multifaceted professionals.

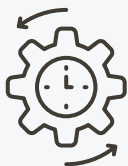


Full-Time Work Is Front-Office Feature

Compared to other dental professionals, front office staff work longer hours and more days doing wider-ranging tasks, so they want their compensation to reflect this dynamism.

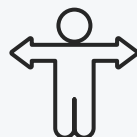
Happiness Hinges On Comp And Culture

Front office satisfaction and staying power — both on the rise this year — are linked to an employer’s ability to deliver competitive compensation and a supportive work environment.



Flexibility Must Be Reinforced

Front office staff value flexibility as much as other dental professionals, but since so many work full-time, they might need additional support to find it (e.g., through dedicated benefits or scheduling shifts).



Cross-Training Could Close Talent Gaps

Because many front office staff are well versed in other areas of practice (e.g., hygiene or dentistry), they are well positioned to lead mentorship and professional development initiatives that strengthen and rebalance career ladders across the organization.

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05

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