



The **GREAT BRITISH**
ORAL HEALTH Report

{my}dentist[®]
helping the nation smile



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Great British Oral Health Report is the most comprehensive survey of oral health data in Britain, combining a new national survey of patient attitudes with the latest published evidence in the dental sector to give an insight into the oral health of the country and the challenges that lie ahead.

The findings are clear: millions of patients are struggling to access NHS dentistry, there is a growing gulf between the North and South of the country, and funding pressures and an acute shortage of NHS dentists mean hundreds of dental practices may have to close in the years ahead.

An estimated ten million people in the UK are currently waiting for routine dental treatment and 19 million appointments have been missed during the pandemic, according to the British Dental Association. Public opinion on access to care shows how acute the crisis currently is. Nearly 60% of people feel that it is harder to access an NHS dentist now than it was ten years ago and Healthwatch England has shown that 85% of dental practices

are closed to new adult patients with significant variations across the country forming a “North-South” divide.

Although oral health has improved in the last thirty years, inequalities based on deprivation and geography have widened, creating a post code lottery in care. In 2008, the proportion of children with dental decay was 2.9x higher in the most deprived than the least deprived areas. In 2019, this increased by a third to be 3.8x higher.

The Oral Health Survey suggests this gap could continue to widen as pressures caused by the pandemic continue to mount and access to NHS dentistry becomes ever more restricted.

To improve access to NHS dentistry around the UK, especially for the most deprived communities, there is strong public support nationwide for the recruitment of highly skilled dentists from overseas, with nearly four-out-of-five people (78%) supporting overseas recruitment of skilled clinicians.

THE ORAL HEALTH SURVEY

AT A GLANCE

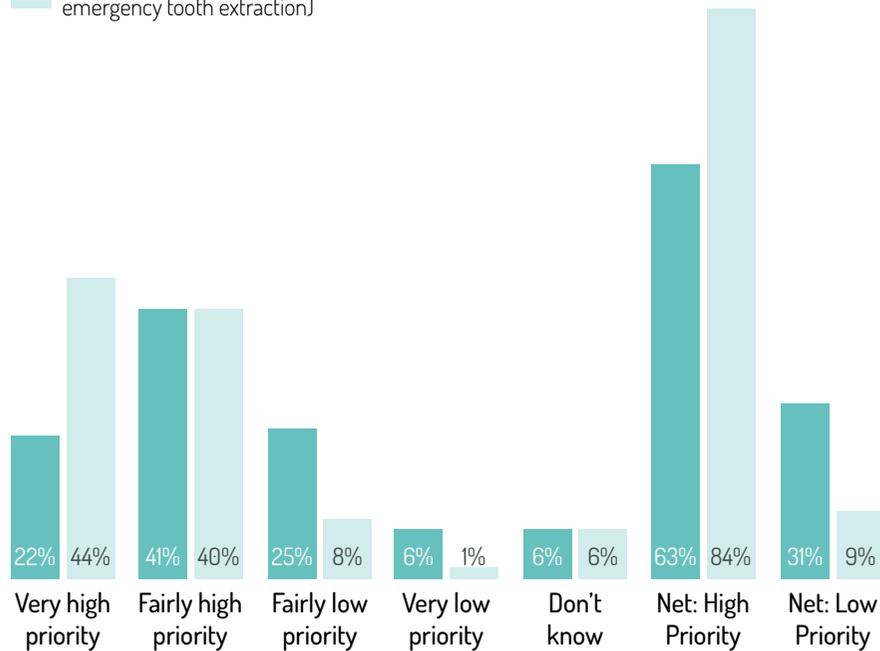
86% of people think that access to emergency dental care should be a high priority for the NHS, with 64% thinking non-urgent dentistry should be a high priority.

High or low priority service

In general, how high or low priority do you think each of the following should be currently for the NHS?

Valid 2,026

- Non-urgent dentistry services** (e.g. check-ups, fillings, cosmetic work etc)
- Urgent dentistry services** (e.g. emergency tooth extraction)

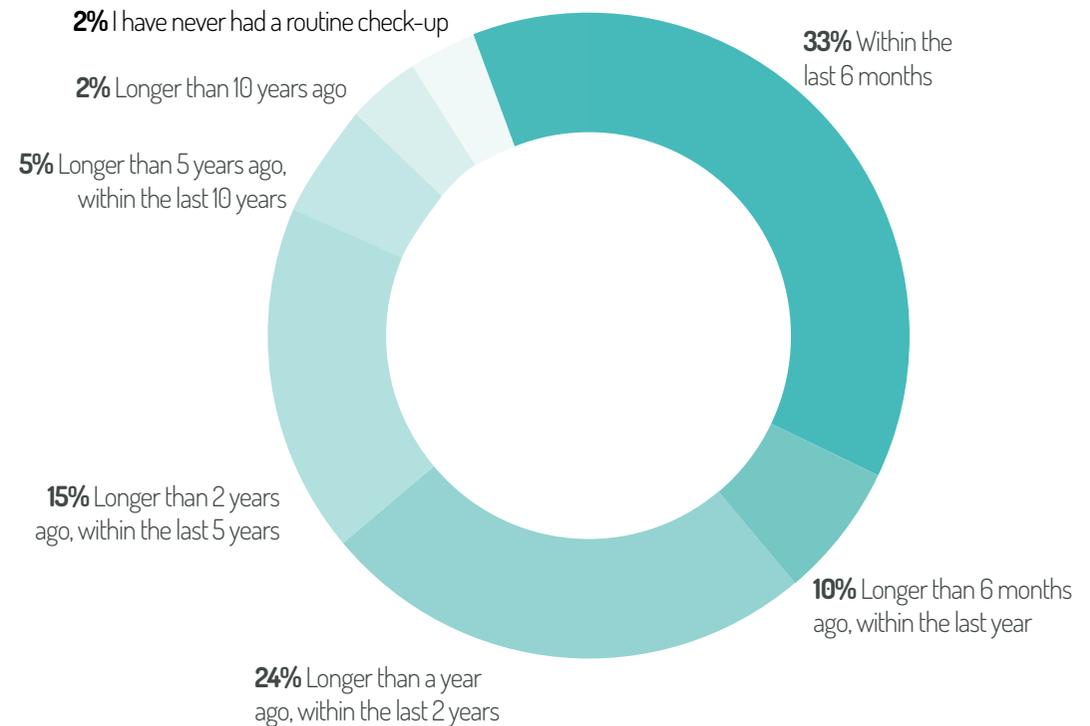


53% of the public have not had a routine dental check-up in the last year:

Most recent check-up

For the above question, by 'routine check-up', we mean a general check-up performed by your dentist to examine your teeth and gums, and to give advice.

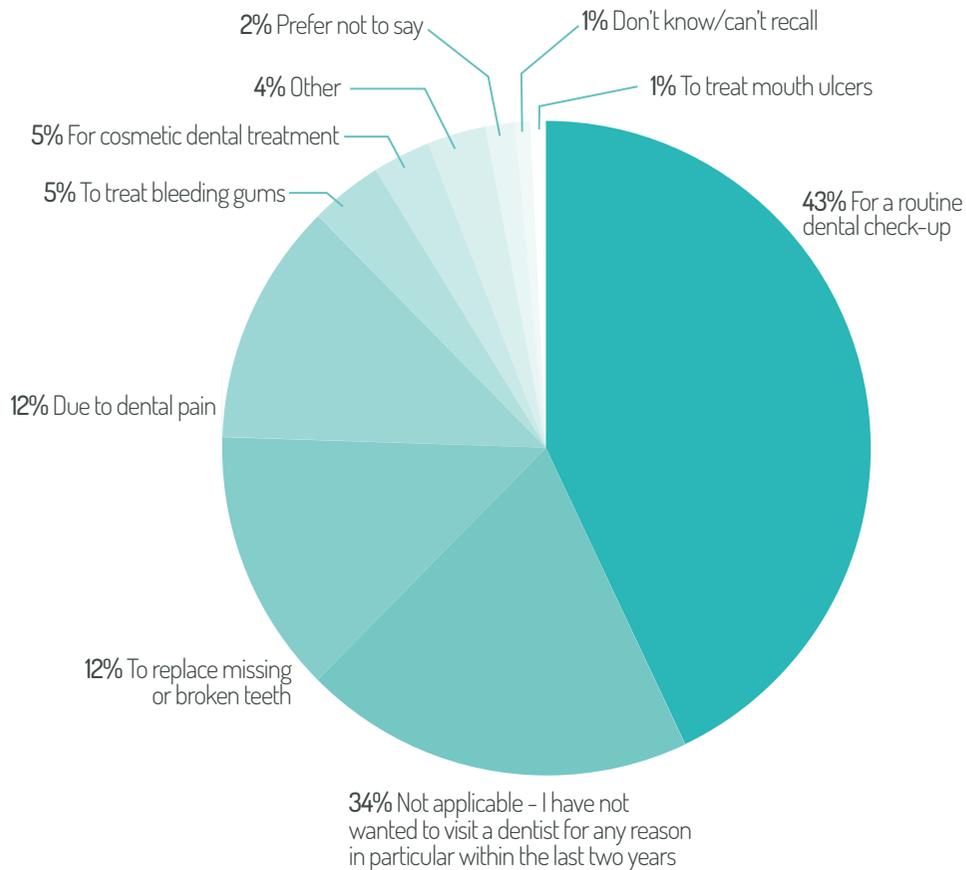
Valid 2,026



Nearly 70% of respondents have wanted to see a dentist in the last two years, but data shows only 43% of people managed to get an appointment in the two years leading up to April 2021. This suggests that more than 14 million people tried and were unable to get a dental appointment in the last two years.

Reasons for wanting to visit a dentist within last 2 years...

Unweighted 1,059

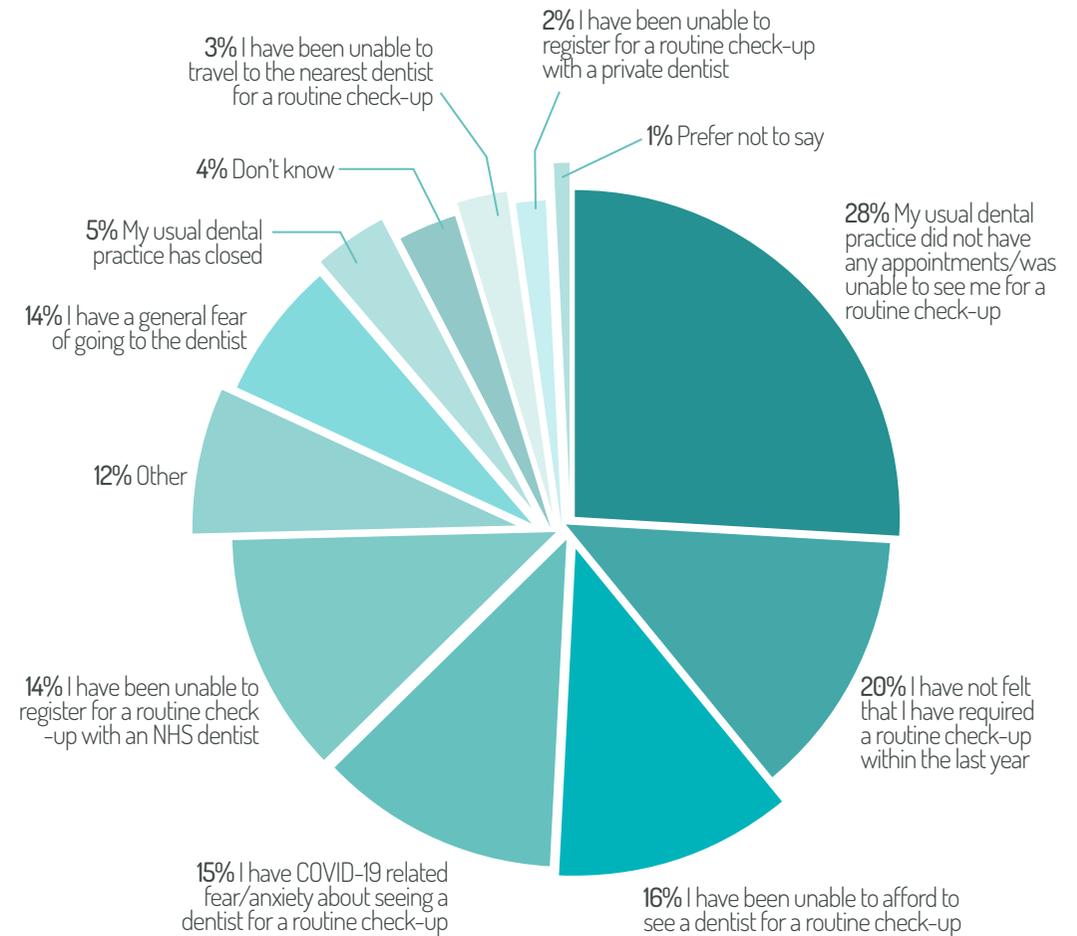


Of those who had not seen a dentist in the last year, 28% could not get an appointment, 16% were unable to afford NHS dentistry and 14% said they were unable to register for a routine check-up with an NHS dentist.

Reasons for not visiting a dentist for a routine check-up within the last year...

Which of the following, if any, are your reasons for not visiting a dentist within the last year?

Unweighted 1,059



THE ORAL HEALTH SURVEY

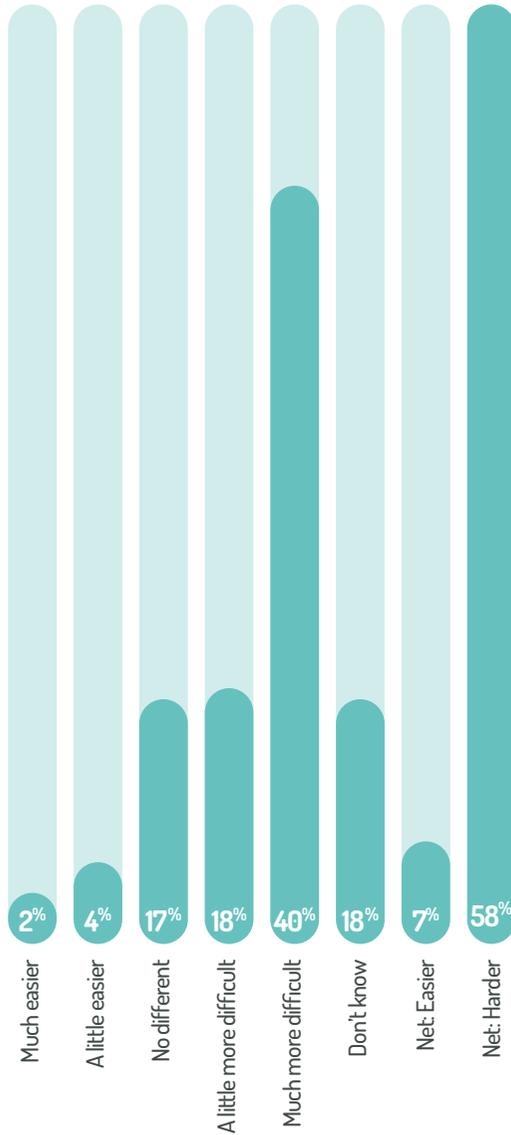
AT A GLANCE

58% of people think access to NHS dentistry has got worse in the last decade, with 40% saying it is now “much more difficult”. Only 7% say it is easier.

Easier or harder to see NHS dentist

Thinking about now (2021) in comparison to 10 years ago, in general, how much easier is it to see an NHS dentist

Unweighted 2,026

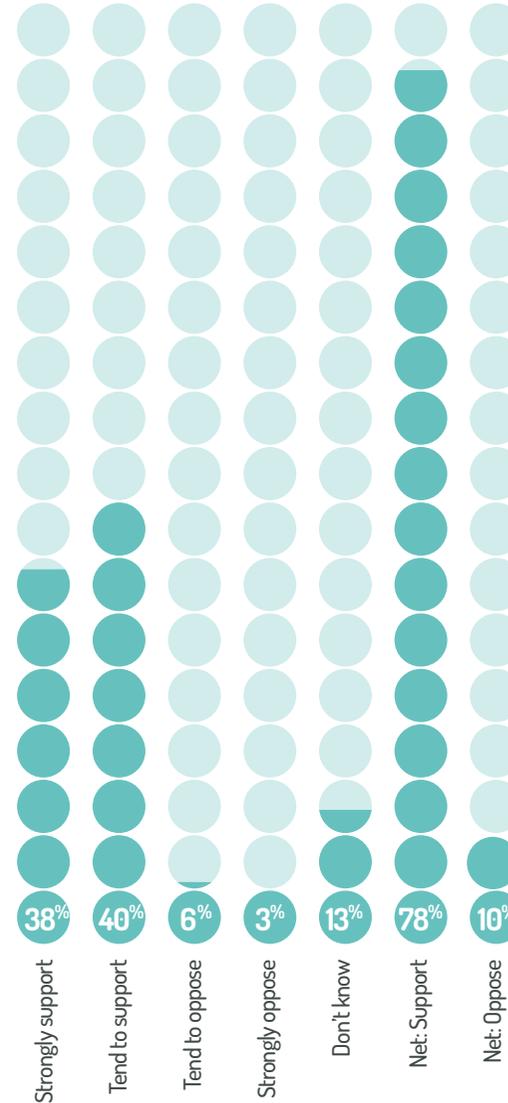


78% support the recruitment of highly skilled dentists from outside of the UK to fill the gap of NHS dentists.

Support or oppose highly skilled dentists from outside the UK

The Association of Dental Groups has argued that there is currently a shortage of dentists in the UK. To what extent would you support or oppose highly skilled dentists from outside the UK being recruited?

Unweighted 2,026



THE ORAL HEALTH SURVEY

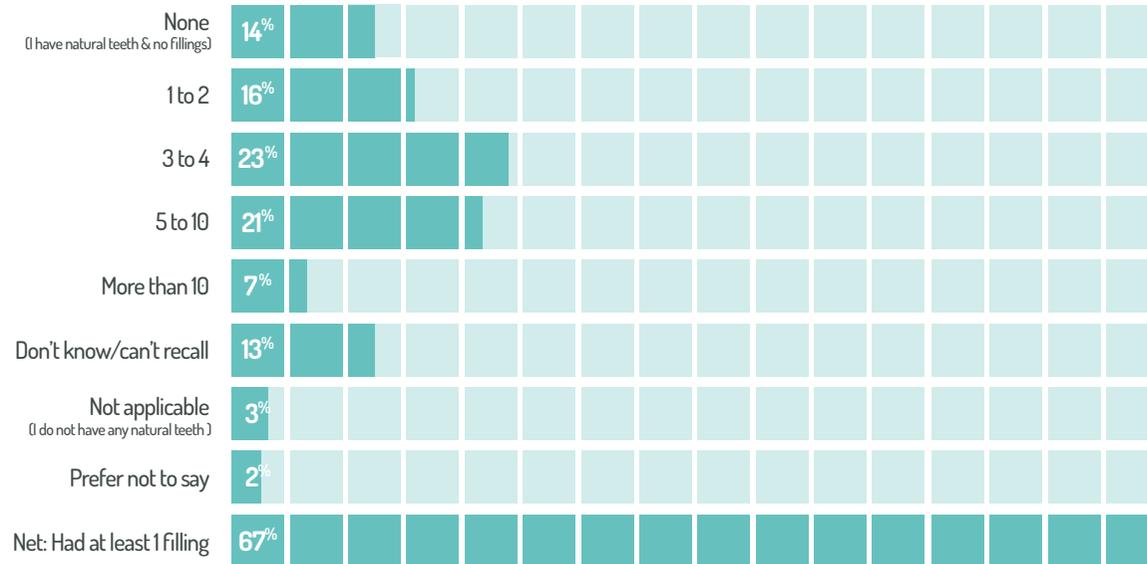
AT A GLANCE

Nearly 70% of the population has at least one filling

Number of fillings

How many fillings do you currently have?

Unweighted 2,026

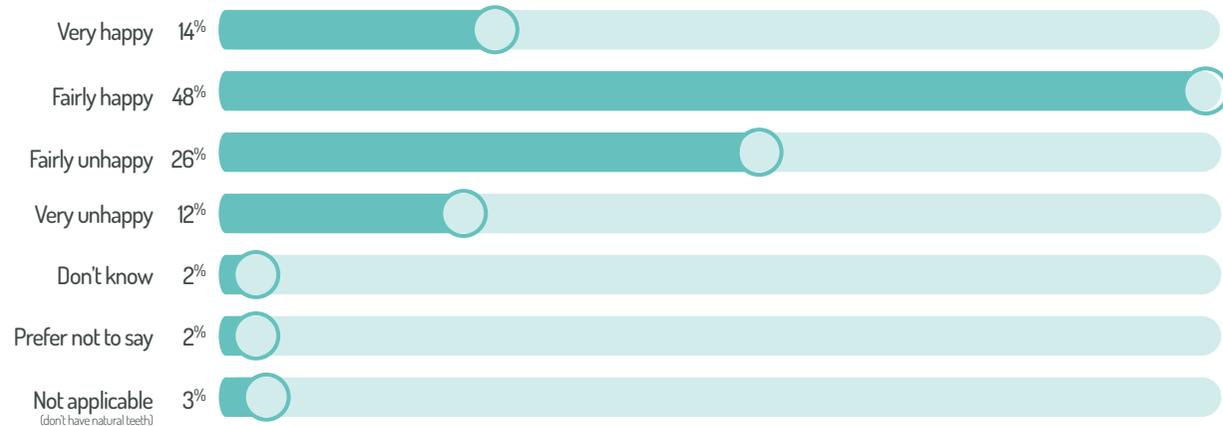


Nearly 40% of the public are unhappy with the appearance of their teeth.

Happy or unhappy with appearance of teeth

In general, how happy are you with the appearance of your teeth?

Unweighted 2,026



1. ACCESS TO NHS DENTISTRY

58%

of the public feel accessing an NHS dentist is harder now than it was ten years ago

85%

of dental practices were closed to new NHS adult patients with 60% being closed to new child NHS patients

12 million

courses of treatments were carried out by general dentists in the year 2020-21, down 69% compared to the previous year

9 million

children have missed out on dental care in the year following the first lockdown, with the percentage of children being seen falling from 58.7% to 23%

There is a growing crisis in accessing NHS dentistry

Data from the {my}dentist Oral Health Survey of patients found that 53% of respondents had not had a dental check-up in the last year. Of these, nearly 60% said the reason was either an inability to get an NHS appointment with their dentist (28%), because they were unable to register to an NHS dental practice (14%), or because they could not afford a routine NHS check-up (16%).

A report from the watchdog Healthwatch England in 2019 found that 85% of dental practices were closed to new NHS adult patients and 40% were closed to new NHS child patients. ([HealthWatch England submission to the Health and Social Care Select Committee, 2019, link](#)). The data from the {my}dentist Oral Health Survey supports these statistics, demonstrating that approximately 60% of the public feel that it has become harder to visit an NHS dentist for any type of appointment compared to ten years ago, with 40% reporting it has become much more difficult and 18% reporting it has become a little more difficult. Only 7% of respondents said it has become easier to get an NHS dental appointment of any type.

The number of NHS practices across the UK is falling, affecting a growing number of patients

The total number of dental surgeries offering NHS treatment has fallen from 9,661 in 2014-2015 to 8,408 in 2019-2020. A Freedom of Information request sent to the Care Quality Commission also showed that the number of practices that closed between 2019-20 and 2020-21 increased by 13% from 843 to 949. (FOI request, CQC, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic has made the access crisis worse.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this problem, leading to an estimated 10 million patients waiting for routine treatment. BDA analysis of Freedom of Information data indicates that nearly 70% of appointments – or 28 million courses of treatment – that would have been delivered in NHS services in England in the year since the start of the pandemic have been missed ([BDA survey, 25 May 2021](#)).

New data from the latest NHS Dental Statistics released by NHS Digital shows that only 12 million courses of treatment were carried out by general dentists in the year 2020-21, down 69% compared to the previous year. Worryingly, 9 million children have missed out on dental care in the year following the first lockdown (defined as March 2020 to February 2021), with the percentage of children being seen falling from 58.7% to 23%. ([NHS Dental Statistics for England 2020-21 Annual Report, 26th August 2021](#)).

NHS Digital said that 18.2 million adults were not seen by an NHS dentist in the 24 months up to 30 June 2021. The number of adults seen in the 24 months up to April 2021 dropped from 49.6% to 42.8% than in the same 24-month comparison up to April 2020. ([NHS Dental Statistics for England 2020-21 Annual Report, 26th August 2021](#)).

53% of the respondents from the {my}dentist survey said they have received no dental care in the last year, the start of the pandemic in the UK. This is despite nearly 70% of the public wanting to see a dentist.

Over 20% of the respondents reported they had to perform “DIY dentistry” as they could not see a dentist - 3% people purchased a temporary filling kit, 14% resorting to extracting their own teeth and 17% taking antibiotics or over-the-counter painkillers. Figures released by Boots said that ‘at-home’ repair kits which facilitate re-cementing crowns and temporarily replacing lost fillings were up by 87% in the last quarter of 2020, compared to 2019.

There is a growing postcode lottery in access to NHS care

There is significant regional variation in access to NHS dental care. In the South-West, just 7.7% of dental practices are taking on new patients. More than 50,000 people are on waiting lists for NHS dentistry in Cornwall and the city of Portsmouth now no longer has a single dental practice accepting new NHS patients.

11% more people had a routine check up in the South of England than the North of England. 56% of respondents said they had to wait over a year to get a routine check-up in the North compared to 50% in the South.

There are also variations between countries in the United Kingdom. In England and Scotland over 40% of respondents said they had a routine check-up within one year, whereas in Wales not even a third of respondents claimed the same (31%).

In total, 16 million people do not have a dentist. In the 24-month period ending 30 June 2020, just over 21 million adult patients were seen by an NHS dentist, fewer than 50% of the population ([NHS Digital, NHS Dental Statistics for England 2019-20, 29 August 2019, link](#)).

A growing number of patients feel they cannot afford dentistry

Private dentistry is not an option for much of the population and is considered by many to be unaffordable. 16% of the population cannot afford NHS dental care let alone private dental care. This is skewed across England, with 74% of respondents seeing an NHS dentist in the North relative to 49% in the South. On the flipside only 29% see a private dentist in the North relative to 45% in the South.

The access crisis is being fuelled by an acute shortage of dentists

A survey by the British Dental Association found that 75% of dental practices are now struggling to fill long-term vacancies ([BDJ, 12 April 2019, link](#)). This rises to 84% among practices with the highest NHS commitments.

This has risen dramatically from 50% in 2016 and 68% in 2017.

Many dentists are moving away from NHS dentistry, with 50% of dentists having sought to reduce their NHS hours over the last three years. This is reflected nationally, with the number of clinical hours worked per dentist in the UK down 10 percentage points from 2008. New NHS digital data suggests that the number of dentists performing NHS activity in 2020-21 is 951 down from the previous year. ([NHS Dental Statistics for England 2020-21 Annual Report, 26th August 2021](#))

58% of NHS dentists are planning to retire from NHS dentistry within the next five years. Over half (53%) of young and newly qualified NHS dentists aged under 35 intend on leaving the NHS in the same period. This is particularly true of EU-trained dentists, who deliver more than 22% of all NHS dentistry, and up to 30% in most deprived areas. ([British Dental Association, 2017](#))

The access crisis is putting pressure on the wider NHS

The access issue is adding pressure to the wider NHS. Approximately 600,000 GP consultations, and more than 200,000 A&E visits, take place for patients with dental problems every year. ([British Dental Association, 2016](#))

The British public want urgent action to support NHS dentistry

63% of respondents said that they believe routine, non-urgent dentistry should be a priority for the government. When asked if urgent dental care should be a priority of the government, 84% stated it should be a high priority, 44% of which said it should be a very high priority.

The {my} dentist Oral Health Survey found that the public strongly support the recruitment of highly skilled dentists from overseas to increase access to NHS dentistry. Nearly four-out-of-five people (78%) supported overseas recruitment.



2. THE STATE OF ORAL HEALTH IN GREAT BRITAIN

38%

of respondents were unhappy with the appearance of their teeth with over one-in-ten stating they were “very unhappy”

970,000

families have children whose teeth have needed to be extracted in hospital under general anaesthetic, while a further **1.2 million** families have children where a tooth was extracted by the general dentist

23.4%

of 5-year-old children in England had experience of dental decay

11g

Young people are still consuming the equivalent of around 8 sugar cubes more than the recommended daily limit – often eating **11g just at breakfast**

1/3

A third of the population is suffering from untreated tooth decay

People are becoming increasingly unhappy with their teeth

The latest data from the {my}dentist Oral Health Survey found that 38% of respondents were unhappy with their smile, with over one-in-ten stating they were “very unhappy”. A similar survey in 2019 found that this was as high as half the population, with teeth coming third in a list of things people stress most about behind finances and relationships. (Independent article on Straight Teeth Direct Survey, 2019)

A Public Health England survey in 2018 found that 18% of the population had experienced one of more of the following oral problems: inability to pronounce words, difficulty in eating, embarrassment, self-consciousness or a painful aching in the mouth ([National Dental Epidemiology Programme for England, Oral health survey of adults attending general dental practices, Public Health England, 2018](#)).

A third of British adults have untreated tooth decay

Data from the same Public Health England survey shows that 27% of the adult population had untreated tooth decay on an average of two teeth. This means that nearly a third of the population is suffering from untreated tooth decay. This was higher in men (31.5%) than women (23.6%) and most prevalent in those aged 25 to 34 (35.3%).

It was also found that participants who had not attended a dentist for 2 years or more were more likely to have untreated tooth decay (48.8%). Severe tooth decay which affects the tooth pulp in adults was found in 11.7% of participants, was higher in men (15.4%) than women (9.3%). ([National Dental Epidemiology Programme for England, Oral health survey of adults attending general dental practices, Public Health England, 2018](#))

This matches the statistics from our recent {my}dentist Oral Health Survey, which found that 67% of the population had at least one filling and over 50% more than three. 80% people had their first filling under the age of 30, which included 59% who had their first filling under the age of 18 as children, suggesting a failure of preventative oral health measures in society.

The {my}dentist Oral Health Survey demonstrated that a quarter of British people only brushed their teeth once a day, despite the recommended minimum being twice per day. Although in absolute terms tooth decay has fallen in severity over the last half-century, it is still the most common disease in the world. If tooth decay is not treated with preventative measures early on, it can lead to holes in teeth, dental abscesses

or spreading infections in the head and neck. These all need an intervention from a dentist, with the intervention depending on the severity of the problem. Fillings, root canal treatment, dental crowns, tooth extractions and, in rare cases, surgery to reduce facial swelling, are some of the options available. A high-frequency sugar diet, poor oral hygiene, smoking and genetics are factors that can increase the risk of tooth decay. ([NHS, 2021](#))

According to Public Health England, while children’s sugar intakes have fallen slightly in recent years, young people are still consuming the equivalent of around 8 sugar cubes more than the recommended daily limit – often eating 11g just at breakfast. Consuming too much sugar can lead to an increased risk of obesity and long term conditions such as type 2 diabetes. ([PHE, 2019](#))

Another report from Public Health England in 2019 found that 23.4% of 5-year-old children in England had experience of dental decay. This was similar to the finding of the previous survey of 5-year-old children in 2017, where 23.3% of the surveyed children had experience of dental decay. At the age of five, children normally have primary, or “milk teeth,” usually twenty in number. The same study found that among the 23.4% of children with experience of dental decay, the average number of teeth that were decayed were 3.4. Although from 2008 to 2017 the proportion of children that experienced tooth decay fell from 30.9% to 23.3%, there has been no further improvement since. This means nearly a quarter of the five-year-old population in the UK experience tooth decay. ([National Dental Epidemiology Programme for England, Oral health survey of adults attending general dental practices, Public Health England, 2018](#))



When tooth decay progresses irreversibly in children the only solution is tooth extraction, which in most cases has to happen under general anaesthetic in hospital. The literature shows that one child is admitted to hospital for tooth extractions in the UK every 10 minutes. There were over 45,000 extractions of multiple teeth in children in England in 2017/18. This is a 22% increase on the 36,833 in 2012/13. 322 children had full mouth clearances in 2017/18, losing all their teeth in one operation. In their totality, this is the costliest operation to the NHS ([Counting the cost of tooth extractions, BDA 2018](#))

The latest figures from the {my} dentist Oral Health Survey suggest that 970,000 families have children whose teeth have needed to be extracted in hospital under general anaesthetic, while a further 1.2 million families have children where a tooth was extracted by the general dentist. (Using [ONS Statistics of 19.4million families in UK, 2020](#), and {my} dentist Oral Health Survey data).

Out of these children who had missed school, 52% had to miss one day, 19% missed two days and 8% missed three days, as tooth decay can cause problems with eating and sleeping as well as causing pain. Public Health England estimate that at least 60,000 days are missed from school during the year for hospital extractions alone ([Public Health England, Child Oral Health: Applying All Our Health, 2019](#)).

Although we are keeping more of our teeth as we age, 73% of people have one or more missing back teeth and 76% of people had one or more missing front teeth ([National Dental Epidemiology Programme for England, Oral health survey of adults attending general dental practices, Public Health England, 2018](#)).

Over half of British people have signs of gum disease

Over half the population (52.9%) of Great Britain have gingivitis. This is more common in men (56.5%) than in women (50.4%) and increasingly

likely in those who have not seen a dentist in more than two years (60.9%) than who had seen a dentist within two years (52.1%) ([National Dental Epidemiology Programme for England, Oral health survey of adults attending general dental practices, Public Health England, 2018](#)). The {my} dentist Oral Healthy Survey found that 5% of the population wanted to visit the dentist to treat bleeding gums.

The number of new cases of mouth cancer in the UK has increased by 58% in the last decade

Diagnoses of mouth cancer is increasing in the UK, with one person every hour being diagnosed with the disease. It is the 14th most common cancer in the UK, but 9th most common for men. It accounts for 2% of all cancers diagnosed in the UK ([The State of Mouth Cancer Report, Oral Health Foundation November 2020](#)). The number of new cases of mouth cancer in the UK was 8,772 in 2019, which is a 5% increase in the year before, a 58% increase since the last decade

and a 97% increase compared to 20 years ago (ibid). Men are more likely to have mouth cancer than women, with over two-thirds of patients being male. Mouth cancer also has a strong relationship with age, with more than 75% of cases being in the population over 55 (ibid). There are different types of mouth cancers, but many of them can be life-threatening. Last year, 2,702 people in the UK lost their lives to the disease. This is a 48% increase in deaths compared with 10 years' ago (ibid).

Mouth cancer is referred from your general dentist to a specialist team at the hospitals. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 lockdown, referrals have fallen by 65% according to one of England's biggest NHS Trusts. When dental practices were closed due to COVID-19, an estimated 10 million patients missed out on treatment or appointments. The literature shows that during this time, 16% of people have experienced at least one of the potential early warning signs of mouth cancer and have been unable to seek professional help (ibid).

3. ORAL HEALTH INEQUALITIES



3.8x

Decay among children was 3.8x higher in the most deprived communities compared to the least deprived communities in 2019, compared to 2.9x higher in 2008 ([Inequalities in Oral Health in England, PHE, 19 March 2021](#)).

50%

There is a reported 50% higher relative risk of death from mouth cancer for those residents in the most deprived Index of Multiple Deprivation quartile compared to the least deprived

34%

of respondents with a household income of less than £20,000 had seen a dentist for a routine check-up within the last year compared to 46% of those with household incomes greater than £20,000

Oral health inequalities between children are widening

Decay among children was 3.8x higher in the most deprived communities compared to the least deprived communities in 2019, compared to 2.9x higher in 2008 ([Inequalities in Oral Health in England, PHE, 19 March 2021](#)). The number of people suffering from oral health problems, many of which are entirely preventable, has reduced in the last few decades. However, the difference between affluent and deprived communities is still a significant public health problem. The below table from Public Health England shows the difference in the rate of tooth extractions between the most deprived communities and the least deprived communities.

For example, tooth decay amongst 5 year olds varied across regions from 18% in the South East to 32% in the North West. The prevalence of untreated active tooth decay also varied widely, ranging from 7% in East Sussex to 48% in Blackburn with Darwen and showed a strong “North-South divide.” ([Inequalities in Oral Health in England, PHE, 19th March 2021](#)). There is a clear positive correlation between gross household income and the percentage of adults who had a routine check-up within the last year.

The [mydentist Oral Health Survey](#) found that 34% of respondents with a household income of less than £20,000 had seen a dentist for a routine check-up within the last year relative to 46% of those with household incomes greater than £20,000. This increased to 59% in households with incomes greater than £60,000.

A similar story was found with participants performing “DIY dentistry”. Those with a lower household income were more likely to perform “DIY dentistry” than those with greater household incomes. Those with household incomes less than £20,000 were three times more likely to have extracted one of their own teeth than those with household incomes above £20,000.

A study on survival after mouth cancer was diagnosed showed significant social inequalities only within the first 18 months. It reported a 50% higher relative risk of death for those residents in the most deprived Index of Multiple Deprivation quartile compared to the least deprived. This difference was not explained after adjusting for age, gender, pathology stage, tumour site, year of surgery and adjuvant radiotherapy. Oral cancer mortality is considerably worse in the North West, North East and Yorkshire than the rest of the country. People are 20% more likely to die from oral health cancer in the North West than in the South East ([PHE 2020](#)).

| Index of Multiple Deprivation England Quintile | Carious tooth extractions | Quintile population | Tooth extraction rate per 100,000 population |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------|--|
| 1 (most deprived) | 14,653 | 3,143,218 | 466.18 |
| 2 | 8,950 | 2,747,615 | 325.74 |
| 3 | 6,080 | 2,504,350 | 242.78 |
| 4 | 4,149 | 2,391,983 | 187.25 |
| 5 (least deprived) | 3,244 | 2,454,121 | 132.19 |
| England | 37,406 | 13,241,287 | 282.50 |

ORAL HEALTH INEQUALITIES

A growing north-south divide

The Great British Oral Health Report has also identified a growing gap between the north and the south, and between different social groups.

There are several particular hot spots across the UK where patients are finding it harder to access care. People in the North East, for example, were most likely to have not been to the dentist in over 10 years and twice as likely to have used a temporary filling kit than the national average. People living in the North East are most likely to have not received any type of dental care since the start of the pandemic. Similarly, people living in the South West of England are most likely to live more than 5 miles away from a dentist, and when they do go to the dentist, are most likely to need to go privately. People in the South West also support the recruitment of highly skilled dentists from outside the UK more than people in any other region.

People in the East of England are most likely to have been unable to afford to see a dentist for a routine check-up in the last year, and are more likely to have had their first filling aged 18 or younger, while people in the East Midlands are most likely to be either fairly or very unhappy with the appearance of their teeth, and are more likely to brush their teeth less than twice a day than people in any other region.



25% of people in the North East have been to the dentist in the last 6 months, compared to 39% of people in the South East



64% of people in the North West find it harder to see an NHS dentist now than they did 10 years ago, compared to 52% of people in the East Midlands



Over 50% of patients in the South West had to choose private care for their last dentist appointment, more than in any other part of the country



People in the South West are most likely to support the recruitment of highly skilled dentists from outside the UK (85%), compared to the national average of 78%



People in the South West are twice as likely than the national average to live more than 30 miles away from a surgery



24% of people in the West Midlands have five or more missing teeth, compared to the national average of 18%



22% of people in the North West have been unable to register for a routine check-up with an NHS dentist in the last year, compared to the national average of 14%



People in the East Midlands are most likely to be either fairly or very unhappy with the appearance of their teeth (44%), compared to 38% of people nationally



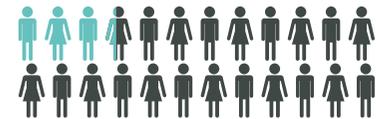
23% of people in the East of England have been unable to afford to see a dentist for a routine check-up in the last year, compared to the national average of 17%



37% of people in the East Midlands brush their teeth less than twice a day, compared to the national average of 28%, and are 15% more likely than people in the South East (22%) to brush their teeth less than twice a day



41% of people in Yorkshire and the Humber reported that their usual dental practice did not have any appointments or was unable to see them for a routine check-up over the last year, compared to 28% of people nationally



People in the North East are 15% more likely than those in the South East to have not received any type of dental care since the start of the pandemic (58% vs 43%)

METHODOLOGY AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Great British Oral Health Report was written by Dr Vinay Raniga for and on behalf of {my}dentist, the UK's leading provider of NHS dentistry. Data contained within the report is from a mixture of public sources (cited throughout the document) and a new survey run in conjunction with YouGov of 2,026 British adults. The survey was carried out between 16 August 2021 and 22 August 2021. The full list of questions asked in the survey can be found here:

1. In general, how high or low priority do you think each of the following should be currently for the NHS?

- a. Non-urgent dentistry services (e.g. check ups, fillings, cosmetic work etc.)
- b. Urgent dentistry services (e.g. emergency tooth extraction)

2. For the following question, by "routine check-up" we mean a general check-up performed by your dentist to examine your teeth and gums, and to give advice about your teeth-cleaning habits. When, if ever, was the most recent time you visited a dentist for a routine check-up?

- a. Within the last 6 months
- b. Longer than 6 months ago, within the last year
- c. Longer than a year ago, within the last 2 years
- d. Longer than 2 years ago, within the last 5 years
- e. Longer than 5 years ago, within the last 10 years
- f. Longer than 10 years ago
- g. I have never had a routine check-up
- h. Don't know/ can't recall
- i. Prefer not to say

3. Thinking about your most recent check-up at the dentist...Was the dentist you visited an NHS or a private dentist?

- a. NHS dentist
- b. Private dentist
- c. Don't know/ can't recall
- d. Prefer not to say

4. For the following question, if you do not have a usual dentist surgery, please think about the one you visited most recently for a routine check-up. Approximately, how far away do you live from your usual dentist surgery?

- a. Up to 5 miles away
- b. More than 5 miles away, up to 10 miles away
- c. More than 10 miles away, up to 15 miles away

- d. More than 15 miles away, up to 20 miles away
- e. More than 20 miles away, up to 25 miles away
- f. More than 25 miles away, up to 30 miles away
- g. More than 30 miles away

5. You previously said that you have not seen a dentist for a routine check-up within the last year. Which, if any, of the following are your reasons for this? (Please select all that apply. If any of your answer(s) are not shown in the list below, please type them in the 'Other' box)

- a. I have been unable to register for a routine check-up with an NHS dentist
- b. I have been unable to register for a routine check-up with a private dentist
- c. I have been unable to afford to see a dentist for a routine check-up
- d. I have been unable to travel to the nearest dentist for a routine check-up
- e. I have COVID related fear/ anxiety about seeing a dentist for a routine check-up
- f. I have not felt that I require a routine check-up within the last year
- g. I have a general fear of going to the dentist
- h. My usual dental practice has closed
- i. My usual dental practice did not have any appointments/ was unable to see me for a routine check-up
- j. Other
- k. Don't know
- l. Prefer not to say

6. For the following question, if you have not wanted to visit a dentist for any reason in particular within the last two years, please select the 'Not applicable' option. For which, if any, of the following reasons have you wanted to visit a dentist within the last two years? (Please select all that apply. If any of your answer(s) are not shown in the list below, please type them in the 'Other' box)

- a. For a routine dental check-up
- b. Due to dental pain
- c. For cosmetic dental treatment
- d. To replace missing or broken teeth
- e. To treat bleeding gums
- f. To treat mouth ulcers
- g. Other
- h. Don't know/ can't recall
- i. Not applicable - I have not wanted to visit a dentist for any reason in particular within the last two years
- j. Prefer not to say

7. Thinking about now (i.e. August 2021), in comparison to 10 years ago (i.e. August 2011)...

In general, how much easier or more difficult do you think it has become to visit an NHS dentist for any type of dental appointment, or do you think there is no difference?

- a. Much easier
- b. A little easier
- c. No difference
- d. A little more difficult
- e. Much more difficult
- f. Don't know

8. How many fillings do you currently have? (If you do not have any natural teeth, please select the 'Not applicable' option)

- a. None (i.e. I have natural teeth and no fillings)
- b. 1 to 2
- c. 3 to 4
- d. 5 to 10
- e. More than 10
- f. Don't know/ can't recall
- g. Not applicable - I do not have any natural teeth
- h. Prefer not to say

9. At approximately what age did you receive your first filling?

- a. Age 10 or younger
- b. Age 11 to 18
- c. Age 19 to 30
- d. Age 31 to 40
- e. Age 41 to 50
- f. Age 51 or over
- g. Don't know/ can't recall
- h. Prefer not to say

10. To the best of your knowledge, approximately, how many missing adult teeth do you have (i.e. either extracted or lost through an accident)?

- a. No missing teeth
- b. 1
- c. 2
- d. 3
- e. 4
- f. 5
- g. 6
- h. 7
- i. 8
- j. 9
- k. 10
- l. 11
- m. 12
- n. More than 12
- o. Don't know/ can't recall
- p. Prefer not to say

11. At approximately what age did you lose your first adult tooth (i.e. either extracted or lost through an accident)?

- a. Age 10 or younger
- b. Age 11 to 18
- c. Age 19 to 30
- d. Age 31 to 40
- e. Age 41 to 50
- f. Age 51 or over
- g. Don't know/ can't recall
- h. Prefer not to say

12. For the following question, please remember that your answers are always treated confidentially and are never analysed individually. In general, how happy or unhappy are you about the appearance of your teeth?

- a. Very happy
- b. Fairly happy
- c. Fairly unhappy
- d. Very unhappy
- e. Don't know
- f. Prefer not to say
- g. Not applicable - I do not have any natural teeth

13. On average, how often, if ever, do you brush your teeth?

- a. More than twice a day
- b. Twice a day
- c. Once a day
- d. Several times a week
- e. Once a week
- f. Less often than once a week
- g. Never
- h. Not applicable - I do not have any natural teeth
- i. Prefer not to say

14. On average, how often, if ever, do you floss your teeth or use inter-dental brushes?

- a. More than twice a day
- b. Twice a day
- c. Once a day
- d. Several times a week
- e. Once a week
- f. Less often than once a week
- g. Never
- h. Not applicable - I do not have any natural teeth
- i. Prefer not to say

15. For the following question, if you have not received any type of dental care since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic (i.e. since March 2020), please select the 'Not applicable' option. Thinking about since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic (i.e. since March 2020)...Which, if any, of the following types of support have you received from a dentist?

(Please select all that apply)

- a. Advice by telephone
- b. Prescription for painkillers or antibiotics
- c. A face-to-face appointment for urgent or emergency dental care
- d. A face-to-face appointment for routine dental care (e.g. a check-up)
- e. Other
- f. Don't know/ can't recall
- g. Not applicable - I have not received any type of dental care since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic (i.e. since March 2020)

16. As a reminder, please remember that your answers are always treated confidentially and are never analysed individually. Still thinking about since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic (i.e. since March 2020)...Which, if any, of the following types of dental treatment did you carry out/ attempt to carry out yourself because you could not visit a dentist?

(Please select all that apply)

- a. I took antibiotics for tooth pain
- b. I took painkillers for tooth pain
- c. I used a temporary filling kit
- d. I extracted my own tooth
- e. Other
- f. Don't know/ can't recall
- g. Not applicable - I did not carry out/ attempt to carry out any type of dental treatment because I could not visit a dentist
- h. Prefer not to say

17. Thinking about all of your child(ren) of any age... Have any of your child(ren) ever needed to miss school due to an oral health problem?

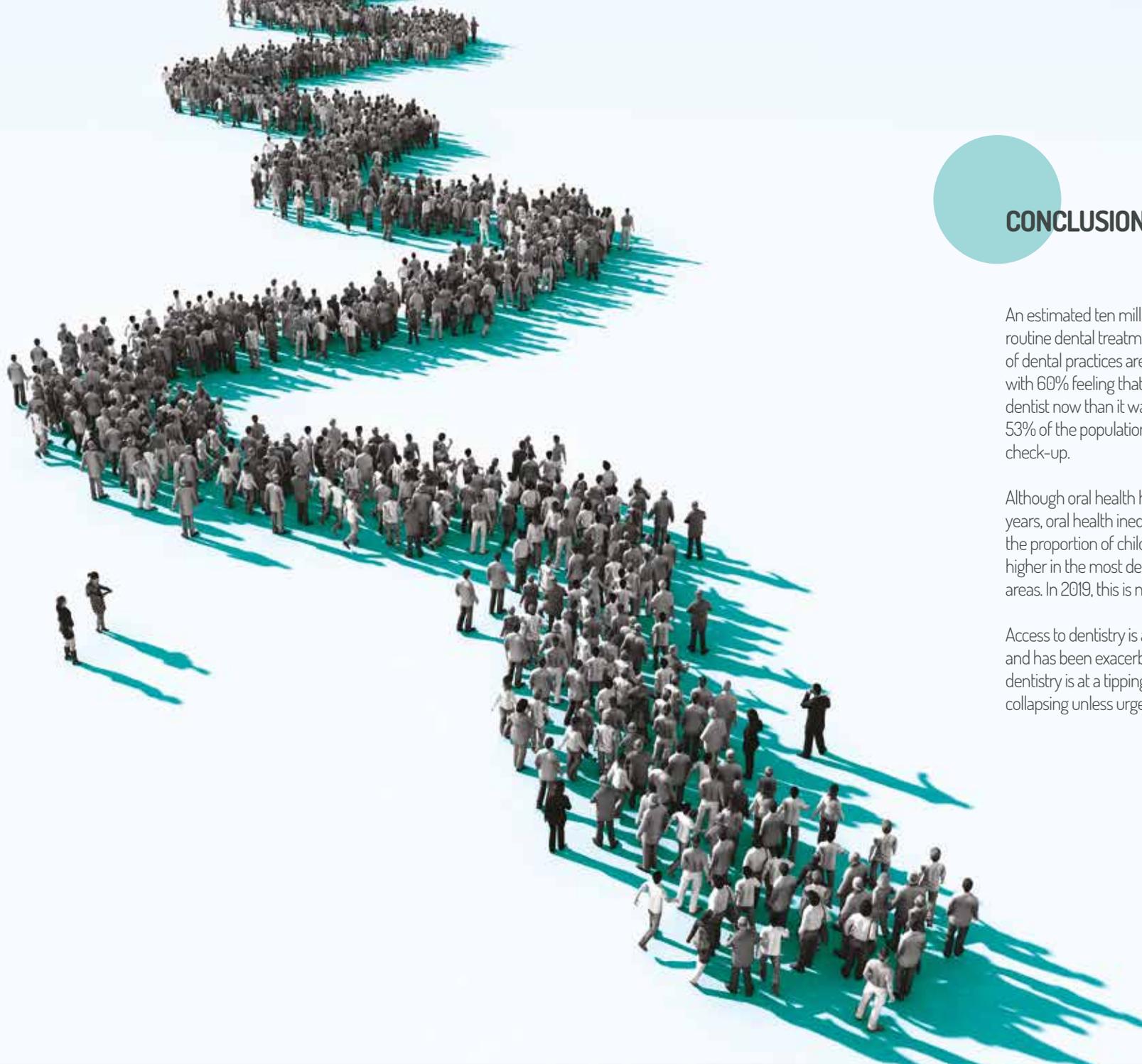
- a. Yes, they have
- b. No, they haven't
- c. Don't know/ can't recall
- d. Prefer not to say

18. You previously said that your child(ren) have needed to miss school due to an oral health problem. If more than one of your children has needed to miss school due to an oral health problem, please think about the longest period of time your child(ren) have had to miss at one time. Approximately, how much school did your child have to miss at one time due to an oral health problem?

- a. 1 day
- b. 2 days
- c. 3 days
- d. 4 days
- e. 5 days
- f. More than 5 days
- g. Don't know/ can't recall

19. For the following question, please do not include any extractions in preparation for orthodontic treatment. Have any of your child(ren) ever needed to have a tooth extracted due to dental decay before the age of 18? (Please select all that apply)

- a. Yes, they have, in our usual dental practice
- b. Yes, they have, under general anaesthesia
- c. No, they have not
- d. Don't know/ can't recall
- e. Prefer not to say



CONCLUSION

An estimated ten million people are waiting for routine dental treatment in the UK. However, 85% of dental practices are closed to new NHS patients with 60% feeling that it is harder to access an NHS dentist now than it was ten years ago. In the last year, 53% of the population saw a dentist for a routine check-up.

Although oral health has improved in the last thirty years, oral health inequalities have widened. In 2008, the proportion of children with dental decay was 2.9x higher in the most deprived than the least deprived areas. In 2019, this is now 3.8x higher.

Access to dentistry is at its lowest levels in years, and has been exacerbated by the pandemic. NHS dentistry is at a tipping point and has real risks of collapsing unless urgent action is taken.