VOICE OF THE ORAL HEALTH PATIENT IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Summary

Feb 28, 2024

BCCOHP British Columbia College of Oral Health Professionals

PIVOTAL RESEARCH Inc.™

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SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Oral health patients are highly satisfied with their oral health care providers across all health regions. Overall, 76% of oral health patient respondents are either satisfied or extremely satisfied which is consistent with satisfaction in 2022.

Prioritization of oral health and disclosing costs are drivers of satisfaction. However, these two key drivers saw notable satisfaction declines from 2022 to 2023.

Oral health care is perceived to be expensive and cost-prohibitive to many residents in BC. Cost, lack of dental insurance, and insufficient coverage are primary reasons why one-in-four residents in BC have not visited a dental office in the last 12 months.

Indigenous BC residents view discrimination as a serious issue in oral health care. In 2022 and 2023, Indigenous respondents were consistently much more likely than non-Indigenous respondents to agree that race-based and other types of discrimination are serious issues impacting oral health care for patients in BC.

Satisfaction is correlated with age, Indigenous identity, race and English language fluency. Compared to overall satisfaction, younger adults and Indigenous identity had the largest disparities in satisfaction. English proficiency and belonging to a racially marginalized community were also frequently associated with lower levels of satisfaction with oral health care, irrespective of geographic location.

Socio-economic factors influence access to and reception of oral health care. A large proportion of non-patient respondents are low-income, unemployed, have not attained university or college education, have disabilities, or are new to Canada.

Few have had concerns about their oral health care professional in the past (14%), but those who addressed their concerns are generally not satisfied with the resolution with many resolving their concerns by looking for a new oral health care team.

Awareness of the regulator and its role is low. While awareness levels of industry regulations, the role of the regulator, and BCCOHP is higher among patient respondents than their non-patient counterparts, overall awareness is still low.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

Background and Research Objectives

The British Columbia College of Oral Health Professionals (BCCOHP or College) is the regulatory body for certified dental assistants, dental hygienists, dental therapists, dental technicians, dentists and denturists in BC.

The College's mandate is to serve and protect the public by regulating Oral health care professionals. Specifically, there are three main ways:

1. By ensuring that Oral health care professionals are able to practice competently
2. By setting expectations for the delivery of safe and patient-centred oral health care
3. By investigating complaints about Oral health care professionals

As part of its strategic plan and the focus on accountability through measurement, the College is conducting a survey through a Voice of the Patient research study among BC residents to measure public experience and perceptions. This study will be shared with Oral health professionals to enhance the delivery of safe, effective and competent team-based oral health care.

Research Methodology

The College contracted Pivotal Research Inc., a third-party research consulting firm based in Edmonton, Alberta, to execute the requirements of the research initiative.

The survey instrument, originally developed jointly by Pivotal Research and the College, was further updated and refined. The online survey was fielded province-wide to a panel of 2,000 BC residents. The sample was representative of BC's population according to health regions and demographics (age and gender), with 6% of respondents self-identifying as Indigenous. This research uncovered perspectives on oral healthcare experience, perceptions of the profession, and awareness of oral healthcare regulation.

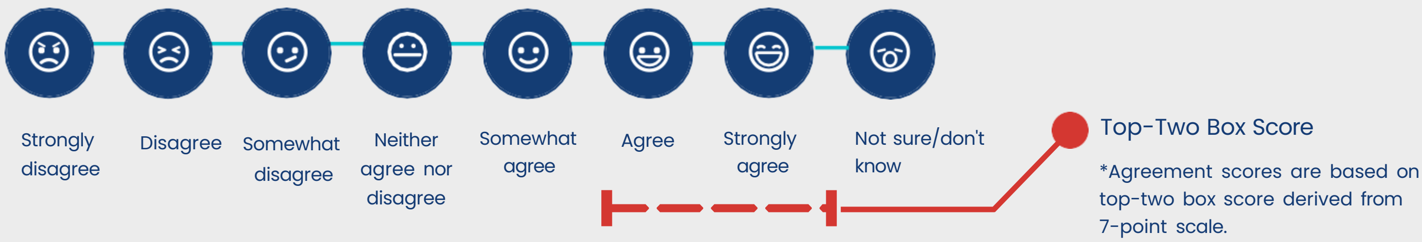
Survey questions were compared with those from the previous annual cohort (2022). Additionally, within the 2023 cohort, we examined differences across demographic characteristics and health regions, highlighting statistically significant differences where applicable.

PERCEPTIONS OF ORAL HEALTH CARE IN BC

Respondents rated their level of agreement with several statements pertaining to oral health care and regulation of oral health care in BC for the following categories:

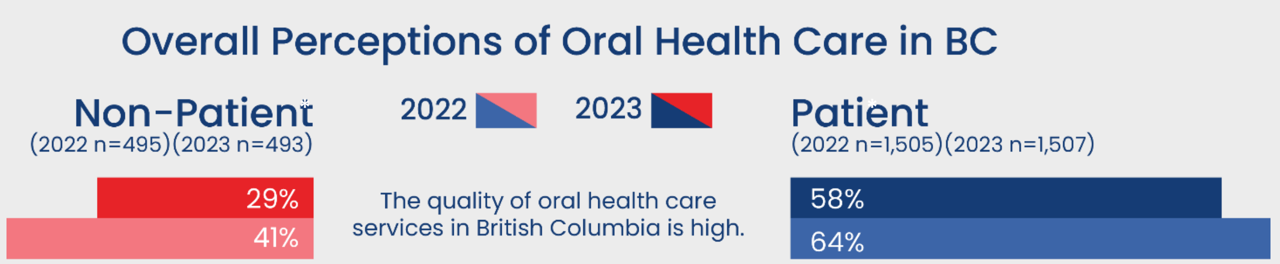
- Overall perceptions of oral health care
- Access to oral health care services;
- Patient agency;
- Discrimination; and
- Oral health costs.

For each statement, respondents were presented with a seven-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree as shown in the graphic below.



Overall Perceptions of Oral Health Care

In general, patient respondents have more favourable perceptions of oral health care in BC than non-patients. Three-fifths (58%) of patient respondents agreed that the quality of oral health care in BC was high, while under one-third (29%) of non-patient respondents agreed. Overall, BC residents had lower perceptions of oral health care in BC compared to the previous year.



PERCEPTIONS OF ORAL HEALTH CARE IN BC

Access to Dental Services

Over two-thirds (69%) of patient respondents and under two-fifths (38%) of non-patients agreed or strongly agreed with the statement assessing their ability to find a suitable dental office in their community. Overall, BC residents feel like they are less able to find a suitable dental office in their community when compared to 2022, though this is more significant among non-patients.

Access to Oral Health Services in BC

Access Perceptions by Demographics

There are no statistically significant differences among respondents who live in different regions in their ability to find a suitable dental office in their community.

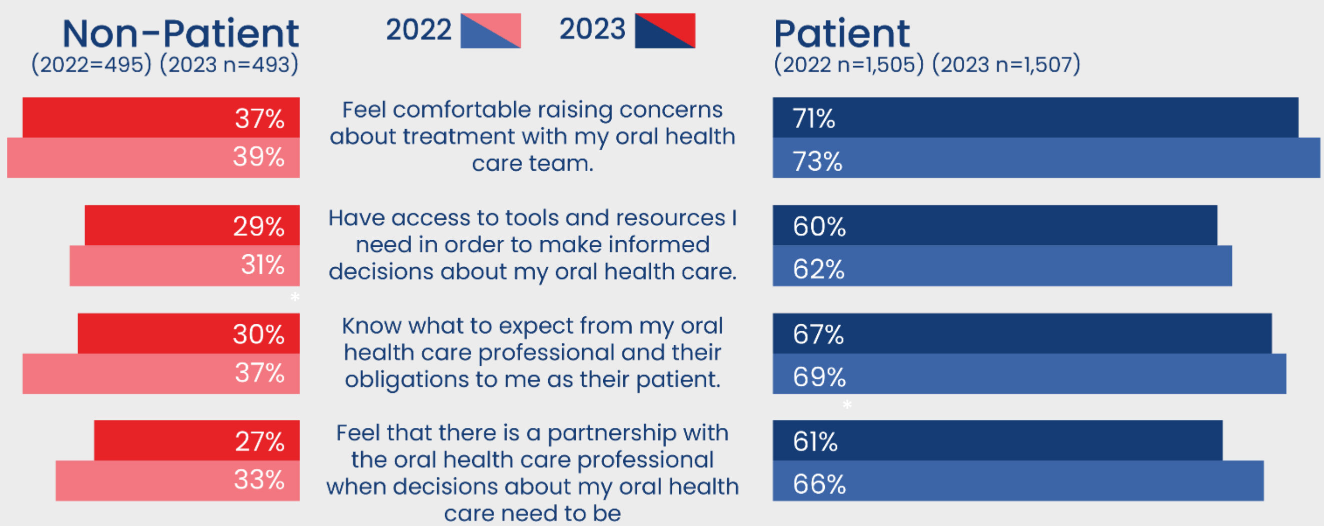
Those who are Indigenous (53%), ages 18-24 (54%), have a disability (55%) and speak English as a second language (58%), are less likely to feel that they can find a suitable provider in their community compared to all respondents (62%).

PERCEPTIONS OF ORAL HEALTH CARE IN BC

Patient Agency

Respondents were asked to state their level of agreement with a set of statements pertaining to patient agency. Between 61% and 71% of patient respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the various Patient Agency statements. Both patients and non-patients agreed most that they feel comfortable raising concerns about treatment with their oral health care team. Since 2022, respondents are less likely to feel that there is a partnership with the oral health care professional when decisions about their health care need to be made in 2023. Lower levels of agreement were also reported by those identified with diverse lived experiences.

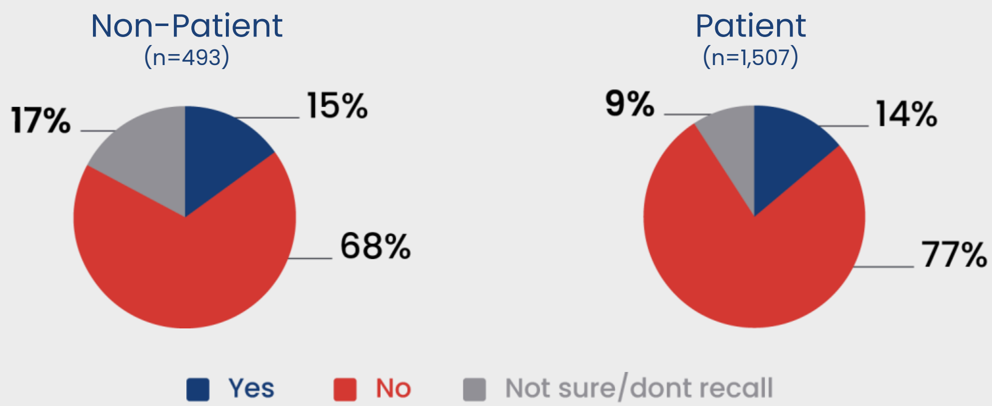
Patient Agency



Concerns about an Oral Health Care Professional

In 2023, a series of questions were added to the survey to uncover how respondents navigate concerns that may arise during an oral health care visit. Respondents were first asked if they have ever had a concern or issue with the competence of their oral health care professional. Both patients (14%) and non-patients (15%) experienced similar levels of concern about an oral health care professional. Respondents who identify as Indigenous (25%), having a disability (23%), part of the LGBTQ2S+ (21%) and racially marginalized communities (19%) experienced concerns at higher rates compared to all respondents (14%).

Concern with Conduct of an Oral Health Care Professional



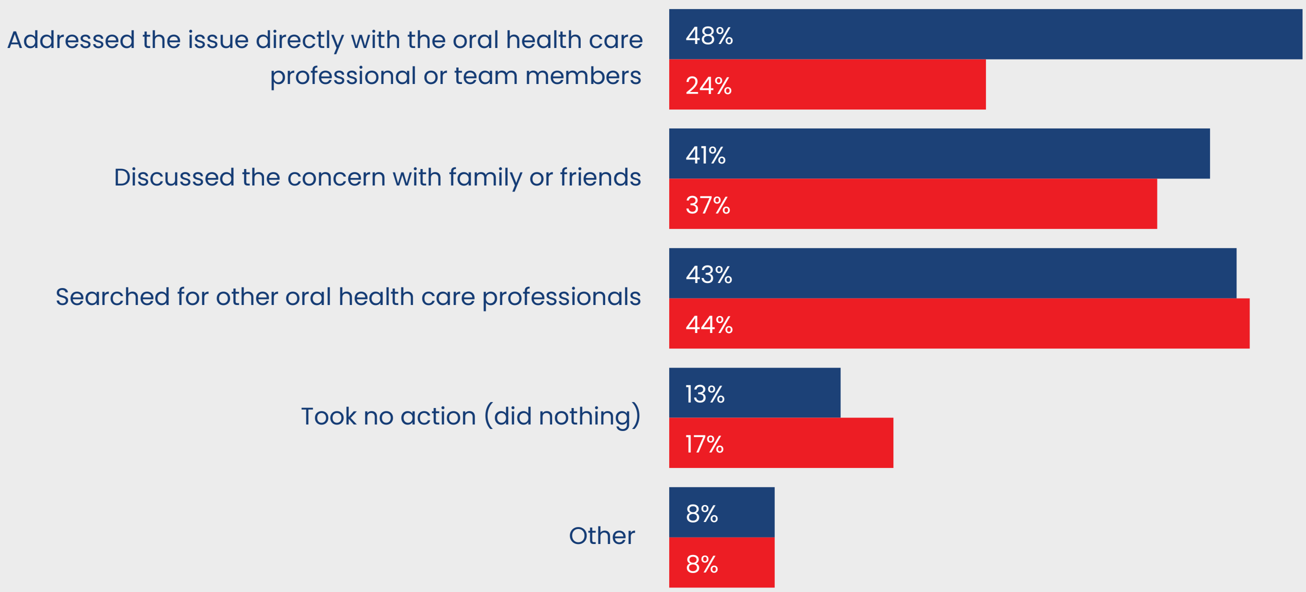
PERCEPTIONS OF ORAL HEALTH CARE IN BC

Concerns with an Oral Health Care Professional

Respondents who reported having concerns with an oral health care professional were asked what they did after having a concern. Nearly half (48%) of patients and a quarter (24%) of non-patients addressed the issue directly with the oral health care professional or team members. In contrast, just under half (44%) of non-patients searched for another oral health care professional. Non-patients (17%) were more likely than patients (13%) to take no action.

Addressing Concerns with an Oral Health Care Professional

Patient (n=213) Non-Patient (n=75)

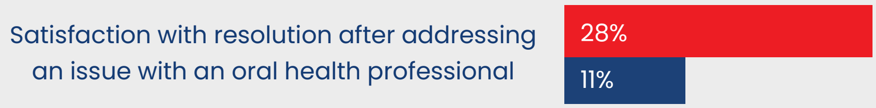


Satisfaction with Resolution

Under one-third (28%) of patient respondents and one-in-ten (11%) non-patient respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the resolution of their concern. Those who previously indicated that they felt comfortable raising issues with their oral health care professional were more satisfied (39%) than those who did agree or strongly agreed that they felt comfortable raising concerns (8%).

Satisfaction with Resolution

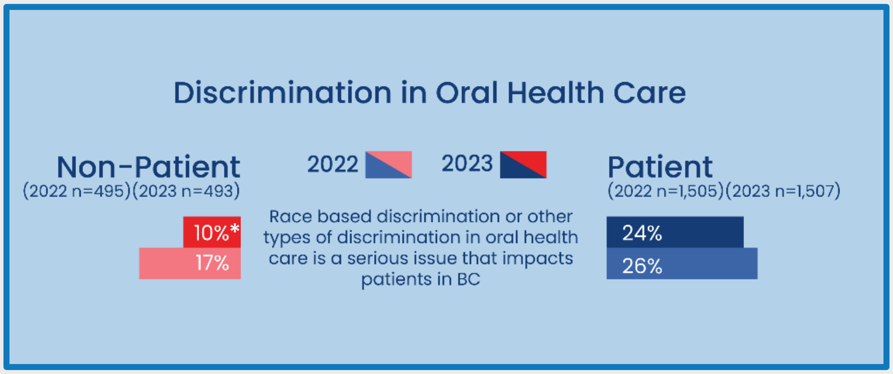
Patient (n=103) Non-Patient (n=18)



PERCEPTIONS OF ORAL HEALTH CARE IN BC

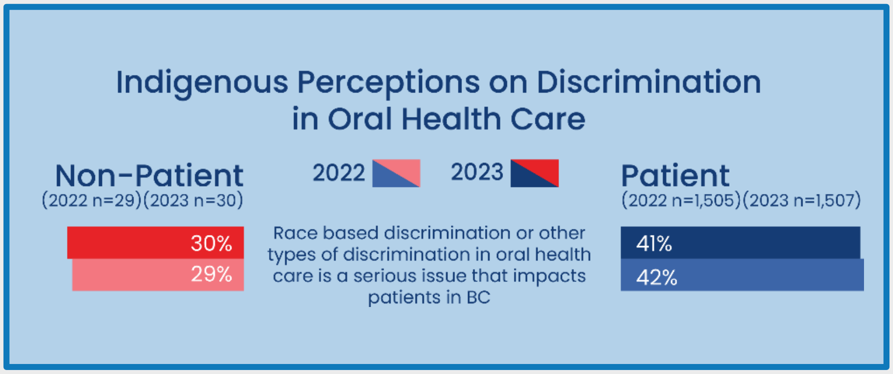
Discrimination

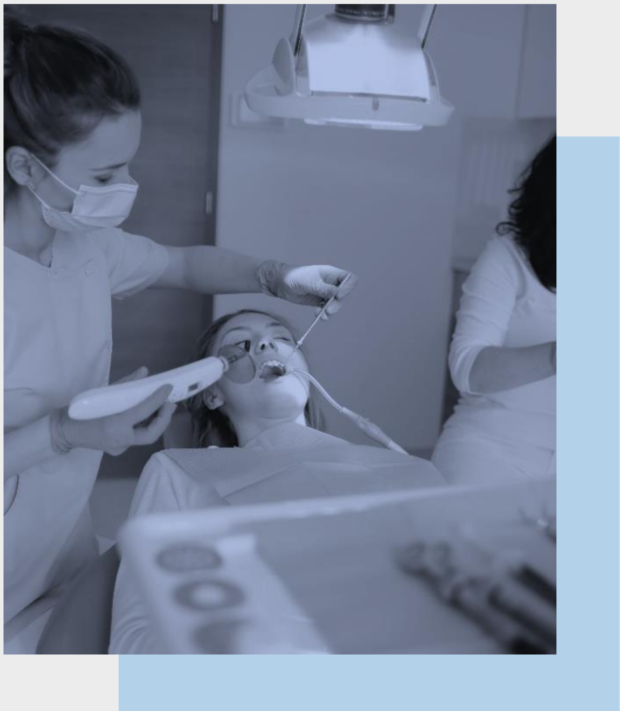
Overall, just under one-quarter of patient respondents (24%) either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "race-based discrimination or other types of discrimination in oral health care is a serious issue that impacts patients in BC. " One-in-ten (10%) non-patient respondents agreed with this statement.



Perceptions of Discrimination by Indigenous Respondents

Respondents who identified as Indigenous were much more likely to agree that discrimination is a serious issue. Two-fifths (41%) of Indigenous patients and just under one-third (30%) of Indigenous non-patients agreed that discrimination was a serious issue impacting patients in BC. This is consistent with perceptions held in 2022.





PERCEPTIONS OF ORAL HEALTH CARE IN BC

Oral Health Care Costs

While patients are more likely than non-patients to access dental care services, price is a common concern among all respondents. Around one-half of patients (52%) and roughly one-in-four non-patients (23%) clearly understand what fees are being charged for each dental procedure. Patients who did not have health insurance had lower satisfaction with clarity of costs (45%).

Understanding of Oral Health Cost in BC

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. In 2023, perceptions of the overall quality of oral health care in BC has decreased for non-patients since 2022.
2. While a small proportion of patient and non-patients experienced concerns about their oral health care professional, those who addressed these concerns with the professional were generally not satisfied with the resolution.
3. Those who are Indigenous, ages 18-24, have a disability and speak English as a second language are less able to find a suitable dental office in their community.
4. Concerns about discrimination while accessing oral health care are relatively low; however, patients who are Indigenous are much more likely than their non-Indigenous counterparts to express this concern.

VISIT TO DENTAL OFFICE

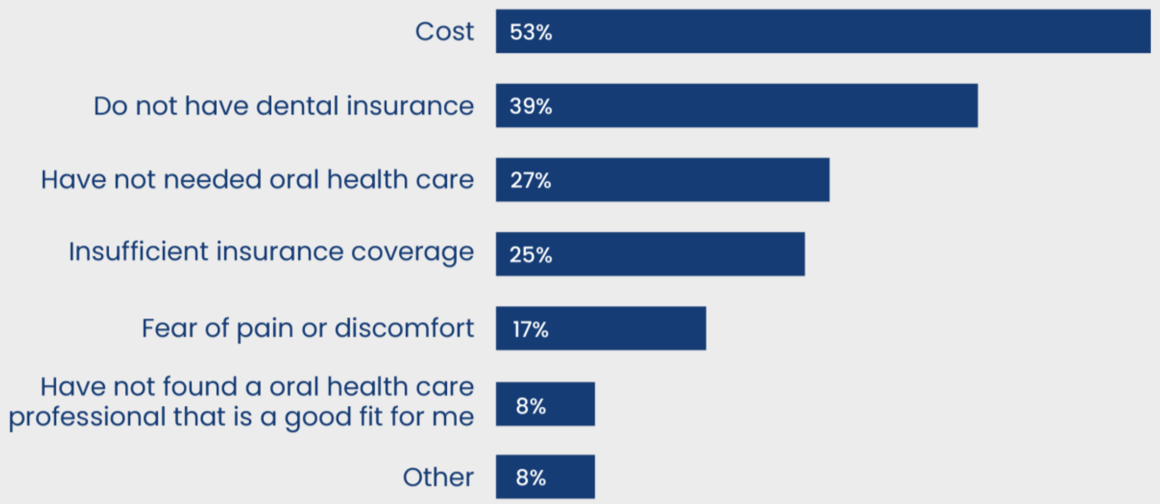
Reasons for Not Visiting Dental Office in Past 12 Months

Those who either did not visit or did not recall their most recent visit to the dental office indicated cost (53%) and lack of dental insurance coverage (39%) as the top two reasons. Other reasons include not requiring oral health care (27%), insufficient dental coverage (25%), fear of pain or discomfort (17%), and not having found a good fit (8%). The top reasons for not visiting a dental office are consistent with those identified in 2022.

Respondents with disabilities were more likely to report that they did not access oral health care due to cost (61%), lack of insurance (49%) or insufficient insurance coverage (31%).

Reason for Not Visiting A Dental Office

n=434

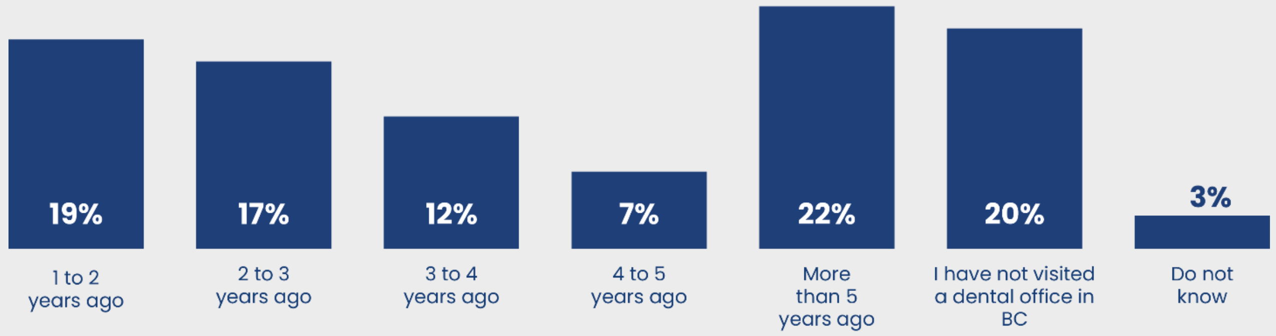


Non-Patient Respondents' Last Visit to a Dental Office

Among non-patients, two-fifths (22%) indicated that their last visit to the dental office was more than 5 years ago, and a similar proportion (20%) have never visited a dental office in BC. In 2023, more respondents indicated that they had not visited a dental office in BC (+6%), while fewer indicated visiting more than five years ago (-6%).

Non-Patient Respondent's Last Visit to Dental Office

n=434



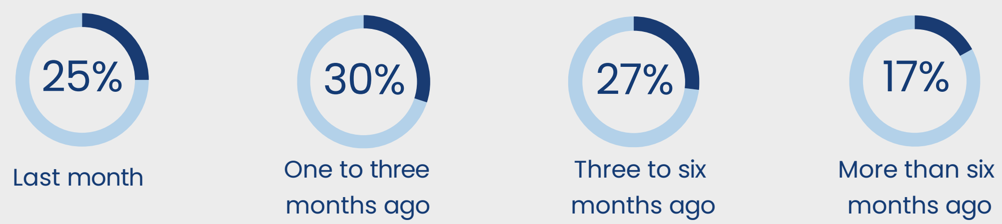
VISIT TO DENTAL OFFICE

Patient Respondents' Last Visit to a Dental Office

Under one-fifth (17%) of patient respondents last visited a dental office between six and twelve months ago. Over half of patient respondents (55%) had visited a dental office within the last three months.

Last Visit to Dental Office

n=1,507

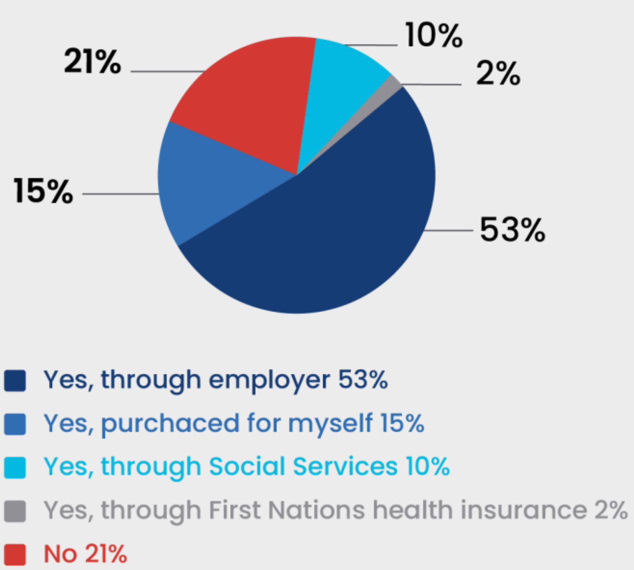


Oral Health Care Insurance Coverage

Most patient respondents (79%) indicated they have access to dental care insurance, with the majority accessing insurance through their employer (53%). A small portion of patient respondents have dental care insurance coverage, which they purchased themselves through Social Services or through First Nations health insurance. One-in-five patient respondents reported having no dental care insurance at all (21%), with this figure rising to 33% among those over 65 years of age.

Oral Health Insurance Coverage

n=1,507



KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Many BC residents continue to encounter barriers to accessing oral healthcare services.
2. BC residents who are new to Canada, low-income, or who have disabilities are less likely to access oral health care services.
3. Treatment costs and lack of or insufficient insurance coverage remain top barriers to accessing care.
4. Oral health care insurance is primarily accessed through employers.

ORAL HEALTH PATIENT JOURNEY

Satisfaction Along the Oral Health Journey

Dental Office

- Cleanliness and infection control measures — 78%
- Ability to access oral health care in case of an emergency — 53%

Pre-Treatment

- Time taken to explain treatment options and answer questions — 70%
- Given enough time and space to think about treatment options before making a decision — 66%
- Putting my oral health care above all other interests — 64%
- The information provided to me about the risks and benefits of undergoing (or not undergoing) a treatment — 60%
- Information about costs of recommended treatments or procedures — 57%

Treatment Procedure

- Feelings of safety and comfort while undergoing treatment — 75%

Post-Treatment

- Oral health treatment was delivered as anticipated — 73%

Staff Interaction/ Communication

- 73% — Clear and understandable communication (verbal and written)
- 70% — Educating me on how to best take care of my/my dependent's oral health
- 64% — Taking time to build rapport

Payment

- Costs were as estimated or any changes were satisfactorily explained and agreed upon — 60%

Consent

- Providing consent when a decision needs to be made — 72%
- Participating in decisions about my (or my dependant's) oral health care — 69%
- Not feeling pressured to choose a particular option — 65%

Overall Dental Care Experience

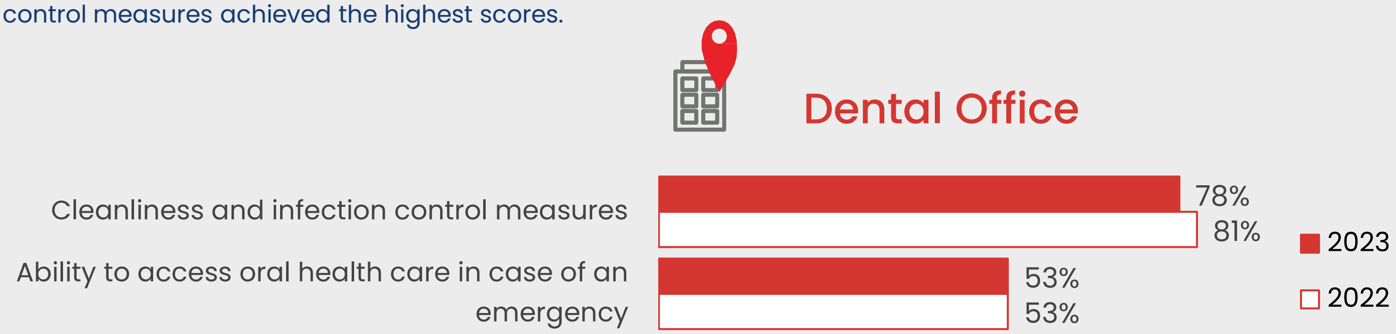
- 76% — Overall Experience Satisfaction
- 54% — Overall Health Rating
- 63% — Importance of Oral Health

ORAL HEALTH PATIENT JOURNEY

It was observed that Indigenous, LGBTQ2S+, racially marginalized individuals, non-native English speakers, people with disabilities, and young adults (18-24) reported lower satisfaction levels across many of the oral health patient journey stages. Their satisfaction scores are detailed in the Appendix for further reference. Satisfaction scores in with an asterisk (*) are statistically different than the score in 2022.

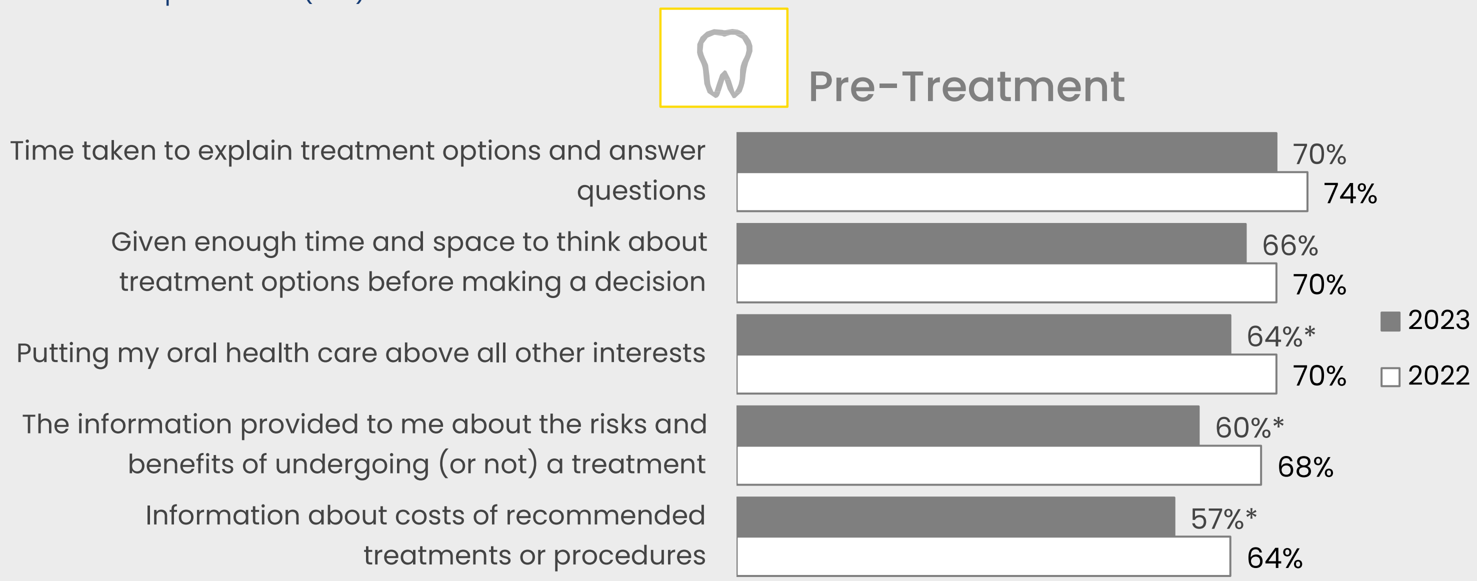
Satisfaction with Dental Office

Cleanliness and infection control measures received a satisfaction score of 78%, while the ability to access oral health care in emergencies scored 53%, closely mirroring 2022's figures. Among all evaluated aspects of the oral health patient journey, access to oral health care was rated lowest in satisfaction, while cleanliness and infection control measures achieved the highest scores.



Satisfaction with Pre-Treatment

Satisfaction with pre-treatment ranged from 57% for information about costs of suggested treatments or procedures to 70% for time taken to explain options and answer any questions. Notably, three areas experienced significant declines in satisfaction compared to 2022: prioritizing my oral health care above all other interests (-6%), information about the risks and benefits of treatments (-8%), and information about the costs of recommended treatments or procedures (-7%).

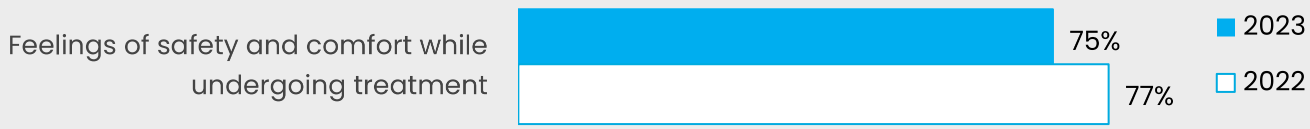


ORAL HEALTH PATIENT JOURNEY

Satisfaction with Treatment/Procedure

Satisfaction with safety and comfort during treatment received a score of 75%, the second highest across all metrics in the oral health patient journey, consistent with 2022 ratings.

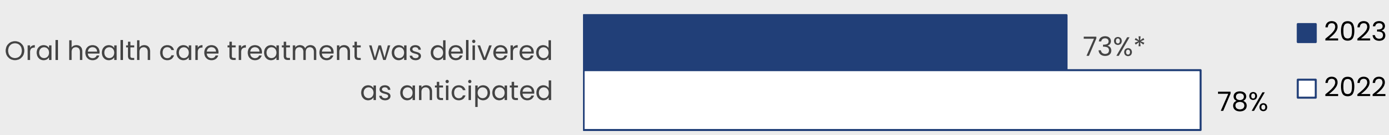
Treatment/Procedure



Satisfaction with Post-Treatment

The statement that oral health care treatment was delivered as anticipated received a 73% satisfaction rate, reflecting a significant 5% decrease from 2022.

Post-Treatment

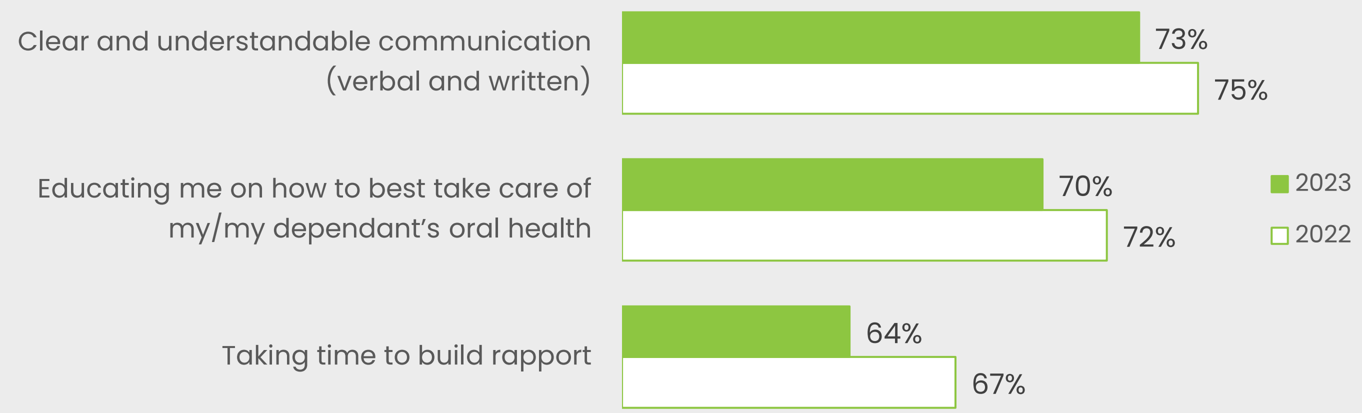


ORAL HEALTH PATIENT JOURNEY

Satisfaction with Staff Interaction/Communication

Staff interaction and communication was rated across three metrics, with the 2023 results revealing slight declines in scores compared to 2022. Respondents were least satisfied with the time taken to build rapport (64%), while they were most satisfied with the clarity of verbal and written communication (73%).

Staff Interaction/Communication



Satisfaction with Payment

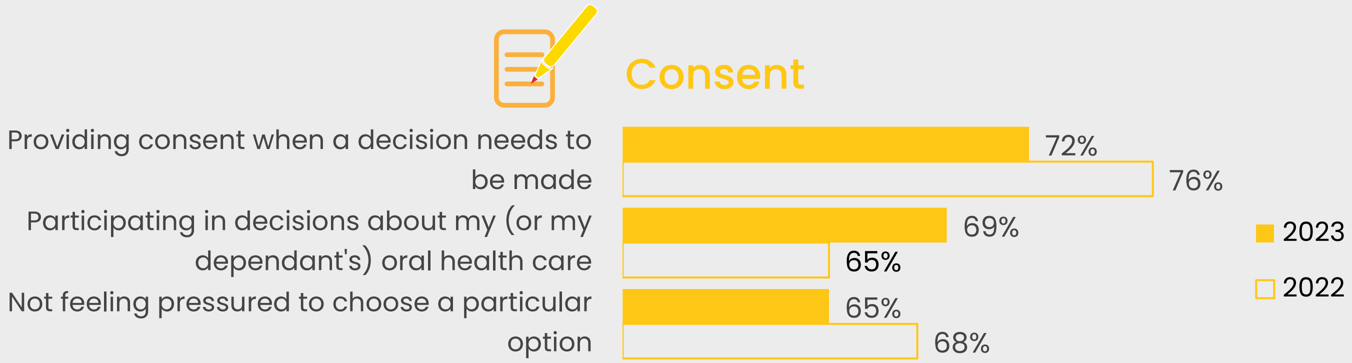
Overall, 60% of patients were satisfied with costs being as estimated or having changes explained and agreed upon, marking a significant decrease from the 65% reported in 2022.

Payment

ORAL HEALTH PATIENT JOURNEY

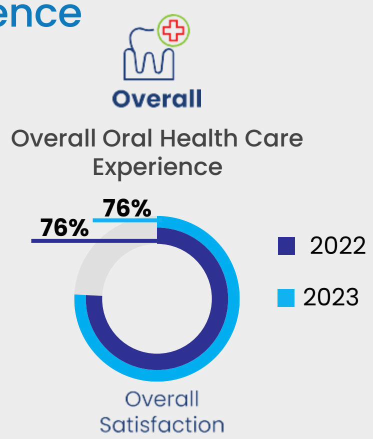
Satisfaction with Consent

Satisfaction levels for three consent-related statements varied, from 65% for not feeling pressured to select a specific option, to 72% for providing consent when a decision is required. Notably, the metric for participating in oral health care decisions was the only one in the oral health patient journey of 2023 to see an improvement over 2022. The other two consent aspects experienced slight decreases in satisfaction.



Overall Satisfaction with Oral Health Care Experience

The majority (76%) of patient respondents were satisfied with their oral health care experience overall. This is consistent with overall satisfaction in 2022. Satisfaction was relatively stable among the health regions.



Patient respondents who identified as Indigenous (71%), racially marginalized (71%), or who had a disability (71%) were least satisfied with their overall oral health care experience. Those over the age of 55 (82%) and respondents making more than $80,000 per year (81%) were most satisfied with their overall oral health care experience.

Satisfaction Scores by Demographic Characteristics

	Overall n=1,507	Indigenous Identity (n=86)	Racially Marginalized Community (n=283)	Has a disability n=203	Income of $80,000 or greater n=614	Ages 18-24 n=204	Age over 55 n=534
Overall Satisfaction	76%	71%	71%	71%	81%	72%	82%

ORAL HEALTH PATIENT JOURNEY

Patient Reported Outcomes with Last Experience

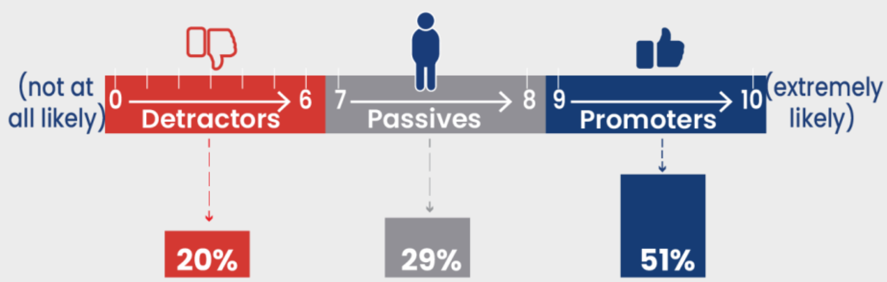
Forty percent of patient respondents reported enhanced comfort following their latest dental office visit. Additionally, 28% observed improvements in dental aesthetics, while 27% experienced reduced or eliminated pain. About 21% noted a decrease in dental anxiety, and nearly 17% reported improvements in functions like chewing or jaw mobility. These findings are consistent with those reported in 2022.

Patient Reported Outcomes
(n=1,507)

Net Promoter Score (NPS)

The Net Promoter Score (NPS), a measure of client loyalty, is calculated by asking respondents their likelihood of recommending their dental office to friends or family on a scale of 0 (not at all likely) to 10 (extremely likely). The NPS is derived by subtracting the percentage of detractors (those scoring 0 to 6) from the percentage of promoters (those scoring 9 or 10). The overall NPS stands at 31, with 51% classified as promoters and 20% as detractors.

Net Promoter Score
n=1,469



Overall 2023 NPS: **51–20= 31**

The table below indicates that older adults gave a higher NPS rating of 48, whereas newcomers to Canada and younger adults reported significantly lower NPS scores of 5 and 4, respectively. Furthermore, members of racially marginalized communities (18) and non-native English speakers (21) also provided lower NPS scores than the overall NPS. Meanwhile, Indigenous individuals and those reporting a disability gave NPS scores comparable to the overall.

NPS by Demographic Characteristics

	Overall n=1,507	Indigenous Identity n=84	Racially marginalized n=278	English as a second language n=376	Has a disability n=194	LGBTQ2S+ n=108	New to Canada (Less than one year) n=41	Ages 18-24 n=191	Age over 55 n=520
NPS	31	29	18	21	33	23	5	4	48

ORAL HEALTH PATIENT JOURNEY

Overall Health Indicators

All respondents, regardless of when they last visited a dental office, were asked to rank their overall health on a seven-point scale from very poor to excellent. Nearly three-fifths (58%) of patients ranked their overall health as good or excellent, while only two-fifths (41%) of non-patients ranked their overall health as good or excellent. Respondents also ranked the importance of their oral health when considering their overall health and well-being. Patients continue to report higher scores than non-patients, with over two-thirds (68%) of patients and half (49%) of non-patients stating that their oral health is important or very important. Patients also report higher scores for both overall health and importance of oral health than in 2022.

Overall Health Indicators

Health Indicators by Demographic Characteristics

	Overall n=2,000	Indigenous Identity n=116	Racially marginalized n=334	English as a second language n=505	Has a disability n=303	Ages 18-24 n=265
Overall Health	54%	45%	51%	54%	27%	52%
Importance of Oral Health	63%	52%	65%	69%	51%	52%

Youth ages 18-24 (52%), Indigenous people (52%) and those with disabilities (51%) ranked the importance of oral health lower than the overall respondents (63%).

ORAL HEALTH PATIENT JOURNEY

Drivers of Satisfaction with Oral Health Care Providers in BC

To further understand the oral health care patient experience in British Columbia, an advanced key driver analysis was performed to identify service attributes that have high impact on the overall dental experience to inform performance enhancements. Regression analysis was conducted on all 16 service attributes along the oral health patient journey. The key driver analysis was followed by ranking all service attributes from high to low based on patient satisfaction.

The model identified four attributes that have a high impact on satisfaction and where the performance of oral health care professionals can possibly be further enhanced as shown in the table below.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. In 2023, three-quarters (76%) of BC residents continue to be satisfied or extremely satisfied with the oral health care they and/or their dependant(s) have received, which is consistent with 2022 (76%).
2. Cleanliness and infection control measures, feelings of safety and comfort, and treatments/procedures being delivered as expected continue to be aspects that received the highest satisfaction scores. Clear communication emerged as a top-scoring satisfaction metric.
3. Youth, Indigenous identity, English language proficiency and racially marginalized identity bear the largest gaps in satisfaction with oral health care.
4. Being allowed time and space to think about treatment options and taking time to build rapport emerged as new key drivers in 2023.
5. Prioritizing oral health care above all interests and disclosing costs of recommended treatments are two key drivers which saw notable satisfaction declines since 2022.

The key driver analysis shows that patients appear to demand more from their oral health care team during aspects of the Pre-treatment Phase, including putting their oral health above all other interests, being given enough time and space to think about treatment options, and receiving high-quality information about the cost of recommended treatments or procedures. Taking time to build rapport was also identified by patients as a key driver.

Key Drivers of Satisfaction for Patient Respondents

Attribute	Patient Journey	Satisfaction Score (%)
Putting my oral health above all interests.	Pre-treatment	64
Allowed time and space to think about treatment options	Pre-treatment	66
Information about costs of recommended treatments or procedures	Pre-treatment	57
Taking time to build rapport	Staff Interaction/ Communication	64