

VOICE OF THE ORAL HEALTH PATIENT IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Summary Report

March 17, 2025

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SUMMARY OF FINDINGS



Oral health patients continue to express high satisfaction with their providers. Overall, 77% of patient respondents reported being satisfied or extremely satisfied with their overall experience, consistent with satisfaction levels in 2023.



Satisfaction at touchpoints along the oral health journey is often correlated with age, Indigenous identity, race, and English language proficiency. Younger adults and Indigenous individuals showed the largest disparities in satisfaction compared to overall recent patient scores. Additionally, lower satisfaction was frequently observed among those who speak English as a second language and individuals from racially marginalized communities.



In 2024, not feeling pressured to choose a particular option emerged as a key driver of satisfaction, alongside existing drivers such as taking time to build rapport, and prioritizing oral health care above all other interests.



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



More respondents reported having access to dental insurance in 2024. The decline in uninsured individuals since 2023 may be related to the introduction of the Canadian Dental Care Plan. In 2024, 9% of recent patients reported using this coverage.



Indigenous respondents perceive discrimination as a serious issue in oral health care. In 2023 and 2024, Indigenous respondents were consistently more likely than non-Indigenous respondents to agree that race-based and other forms of discrimination significantly impact oral health care for patients in BC.



While **only a small proportion of respondents (14%) have had concerns about their oral health care professional in the past,** non-recent patients who did were more likely to discuss their concerns with family and friends rather than addressing them directly with their oral health care provider.



Respondents believed that it is important to be aware of and understand oral health standards. Despite high importance, fewer respondents said that they were likely to read the standards in general, or if they had questions or concerns.

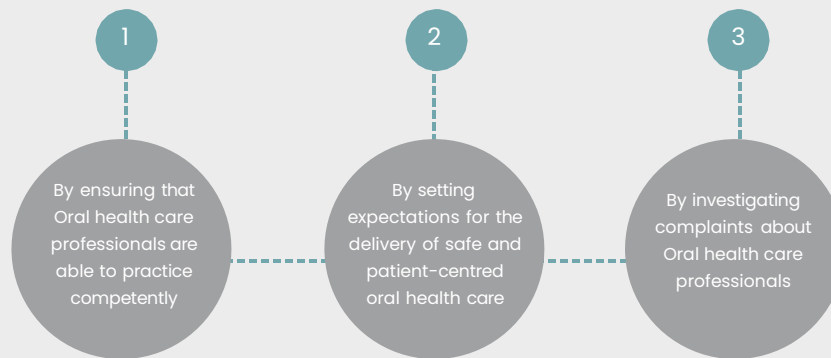
Recent patients are defined as receiving or accompanying a dependant for oral health services in the past 12 months, whereas non-recent patients have not.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

Background and Research Objectives

The British Columbia College of oral health professionals (BCCOHP) is the regulatory body for certified dental assistants, dental hygienists, dental therapists, dental technicians, dentists and denturists in BC.

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



As part of its strategic plan and the focus on accountability through measurement, BCCOHP 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, competent, and team-based oral health care.

Research Methodology

BCCOHP contracted Pivotal Research Inc., a third-party Canadian research consulting firm, to conduct this study. The survey, developed in collaboration with BCCOHP, was designed to explore perspectives on oral healthcare experiences, perceptions of the profession, and awareness of oral healthcare regulation. Data was collected through an online survey with 2,000 BC residents, ensuring broad demographic representation and included both recent and non-recent patients.

- **Recent patients:** Individuals who had received oral health services or were responsible for accompanying dependants who received such services within the 12 months leading up to the survey period.
- **Non-recent patients:** Individuals who had neither received oral health care service nor accompanied a dependant for such services within the past 12 months.

The sample was designed to be representative of BC's population across health regions, age, and gender, with 6% of respondents self-identifying as Indigenous.



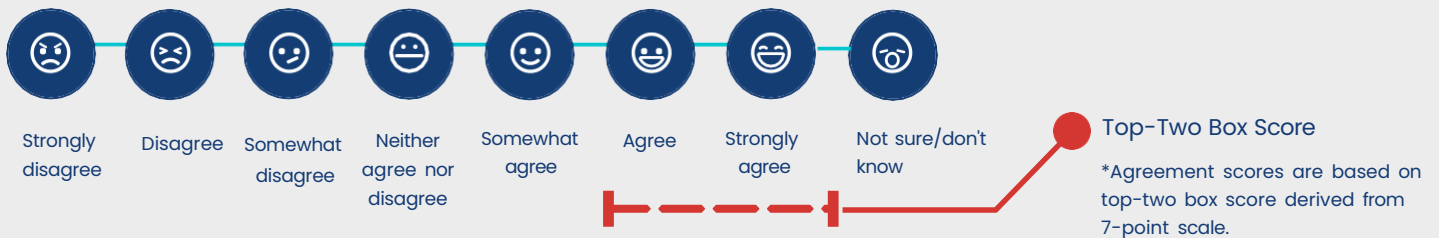
Survey questions were compared with those from the previous annual cohort (2023). Additionally, within the 2024 cohort, we examined differences across demographic characteristics and health regions were examined, highlighting statistically significant differences where applicable. It is important to note that the demographic and sub-group analysis is directional in nature, as the sample is designed to reflect the overall population rather than specific subgroups.

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;
- Concerns about an oral health professional;
- 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

Patient respondents generally held more favorable views of oral health care in BC compared to non-recent patients. Three-fifths (58%) of patients agreed that the quality of oral health care was high, while only 31% of non-recent patients shared this view. Overall, perceptions of oral health care in BC remained consistent with the previous year.

Males reported higher agreement (56%) than females (48%). Agreement scores also increased with household income, ranging from 43% for incomes under \$39,999 to 65% for those earning \$150,000 or more.

Overall Perception of Oral Health Care in BC

Non-recent patient
(2023 n=493)(2024 n=490)

2023  2024 



The quality of oral health care services in British Columbia is high

Patient

(2023 n=1,507)(2024 n=1,510)



PERCEPTIONS OF ORAL HEALTH CARE IN BC

Access to Services

Over two-thirds (69%) of patient respondents and 40% of non-recent patients agreed or strongly agreed that they could find a suitable dental office in their community, consistent with scores from 2023. Respondents living in the Northern Health region (42%) reported significantly greater difficulty in finding a dental office compared to other health regions.

Respondents who are Indigenous (47%), have basic to intermediate English proficiency (47%), and who make less than \$39,999 annually (49%) are less likely to feel confident in finding a suitable provider in their community compared to the overall average (62%). In contrast respondent who are 65 years and older (73%) or those who make incomes of \$150,000 or more (72%) are more likely to feel confident.

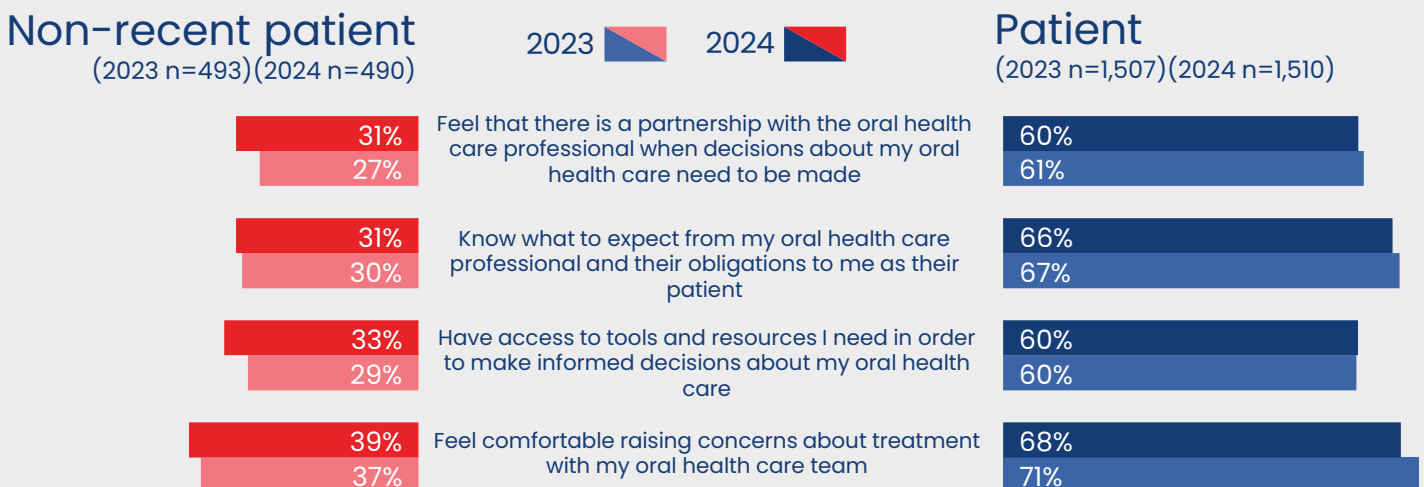
Access to Oral Health Services in BC



Patient Agency

Respondents rated their agreement with statements related to patient agency. Between 60% and 68% of patient respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the various patient agency statements. Both patients and non-recent patients agreed that they feel comfortable raising concerns about treatment with their oral health care team. Agreement levels remained consistent among both patients and non-recent patients with 2023.

Patient Agency



PERCEPTIONS OF ORAL HEALTH CARE IN BC

Concerns about an Oral Health Care Professional

Respondents were asked if they had ever raised concerns about the competence of their oral health care professional. Similar levels of concern were reported by patients (13%) and non-recent patients (17%) since 2023. However, respondents from the Northern Health Region (26%) and those with disabilities (21%) reported higher rates of concern compared to the overall average of 14%.

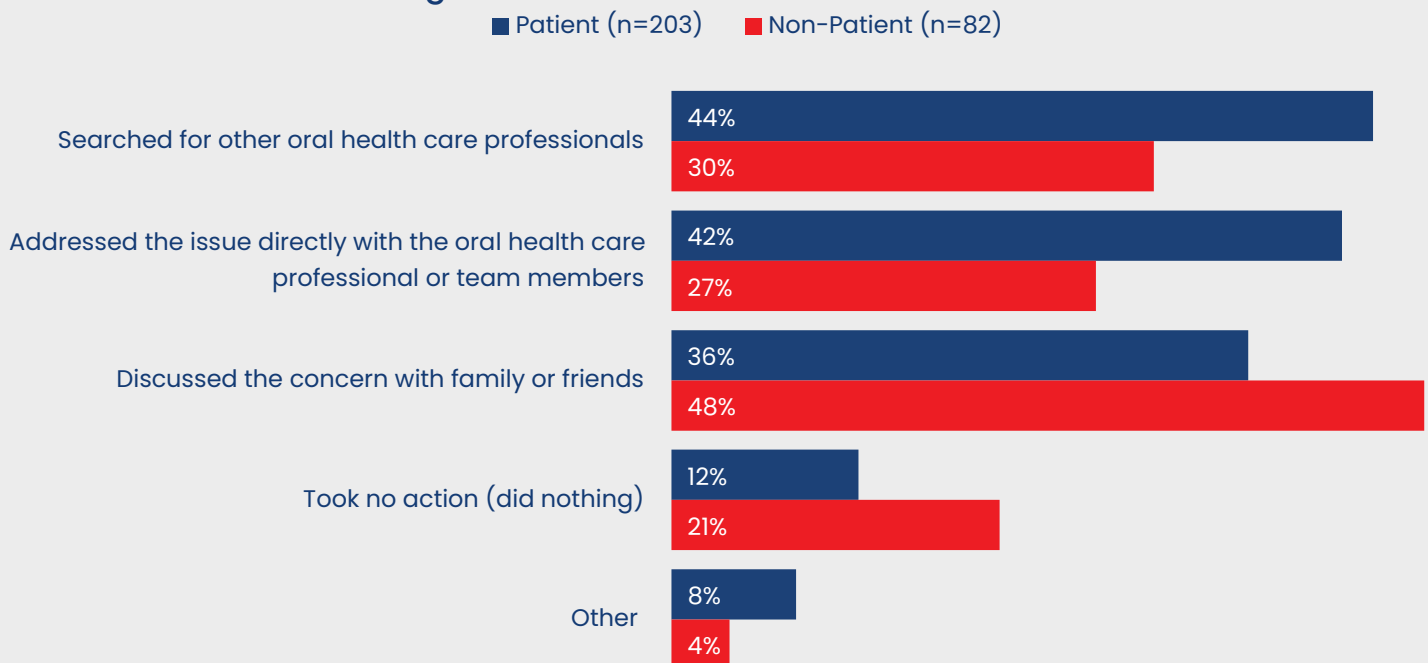
Concern with Conduct of an Oral Health Care Professional



Concerns with an Oral Health Care Professional

Respondents who reported concerns with an oral health care professional were asked about their actions following the concern. Non-recent patients (48%) were most likely to discuss the concern with family or friends while patients were most likely to search for another oral health care professional (44%) and address the issue directly with the oral health care professional or team (42%). Non-recent patients (21%) were notably more likely than patients (12%) to take no action at all. These results are consistent with last years feedback.

Addressing Concerns with an Oral Health Care Professional



PERCEPTIONS OF ORAL HEALTH CARE IN BC

Satisfaction with Resolution

Approximately one-third (34%) of patient respondents and nearly one-fifth (18%) of non-recent patient respondents expressed satisfaction or high satisfaction with how their concerns were resolved. Satisfaction levels have seen an increase for non-recent patients and the decrease in recent patients compared to 2023.

Satisfaction with Resolution

Non-recent Patient
(2023 n=18)(2024 n=22)



2023 2024

Satisfaction with resolution after addressing an issue with an oral health professional

Patient
(2023 n=103)(2024 n=86)

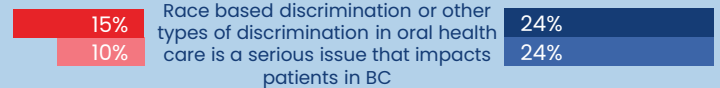


Discrimination

Overall, just under one-quarter of patient respondents (24%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "race-based or other types of discrimination in oral health care is a serious issue impacting patients in BC." Among non-recent patient respondents, 15% shared this view.

Discrimination in Oral Health Care

Non-recent patient (2023 n=493)(2024 n=490) 2023 2024 **Patient** (2023 n=1,507)(2024 n=1,510)



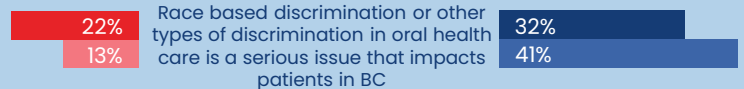
Race based discrimination or other types of discrimination in oral health care is a serious issue that impacts patients in BC

Perceptions of Discrimination by Demographics

Respondents identifying as Indigenous were more likely to acknowledge discrimination as a serious issue. Among them, one-third (32%) of Indigenous patients and just under one-fifth (22%) of Indigenous non-recent patients agreed that discrimination significantly impacts patients in BC. Those who are new to Canada were also more likely to agree that discrimination is a serious issue (32%) compared to the overall (21%).

Indigenous in Perception on Discrimination in Oral Health Care

Non-recent patient (2023 n=30)(2024 n=41) 2023 2024 **Patient** (2023 n=86)(2024 n=82)



Race based discrimination or other types of discrimination in oral health care is a serious issue that impacts patients in BC

PERCEPTIONS OF ORAL HEALTH CARE IN BC

Oral Health Care Costs

While patients are more likely than non-recent patients to utilize oral health care services, understanding fees remains a shared concern. Approximately half of patients (55%) and one-fifth of non-recent patients (21%) report clear understanding of fees for dental treatment or procedures. Respondents with household incomes below \$40,000 express lower understanding of costs (40%).

Understanding of Oral Health Cost in BC

Non-recent patient
(2023 n=493)(2024 n=490)



2023  2024 

I am clear on what fees are being charged for each dental procedure being provided

Patient
(2023 n=1,507)(2024 n=1,510)



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 In 2024, perceptions of the overall quality of oral health care in BC has remained consistent from 2023.
- 2 While a small proportion of patient and non-recent patients experienced concerns about their oral health care professional, they are most likely to discuss the concern with family and friends and look for a new provider.
- 3 Sixty-nine percent of recent patients feel they have access to a suitable dental office in their community. In contrast, only two in five non-recent patients agree.
- 4 Concerns about discrimination while accessing oral health care are relatively low; however, patients who are Indigenous or who are new to Canada are much more likely than their counterparts to express this concern.

VISIT TO DENTAL OFFICE

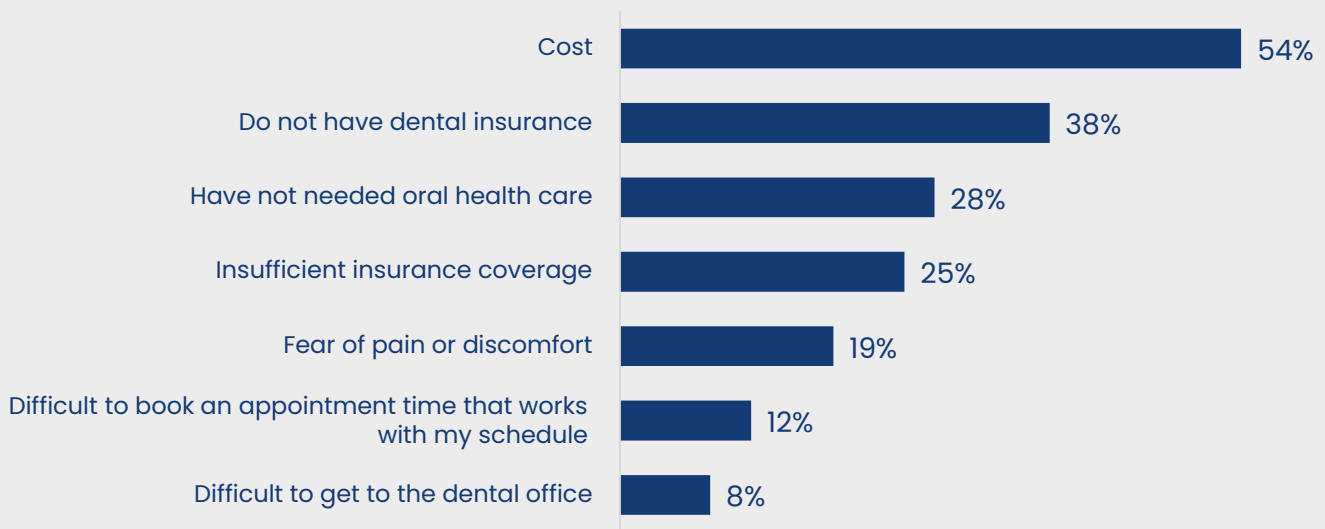
Reasons for Not Visiting Dental Office in Past 12 Months

Those who did not visit or could not recall their last dental visit cited cost (54%) and lack of dental insurance (38%) as the primary reasons. Other reasons included not needing oral health care (28%), insufficient coverage (25%), fear of pain (19%), and difficulty booking an appointment (12%). These reasons align with findings from 2023.

Respondents with English as a second language were more likely to report not needing oral health care (46%).

Reason for Not Visiting A Dental Office

n=417

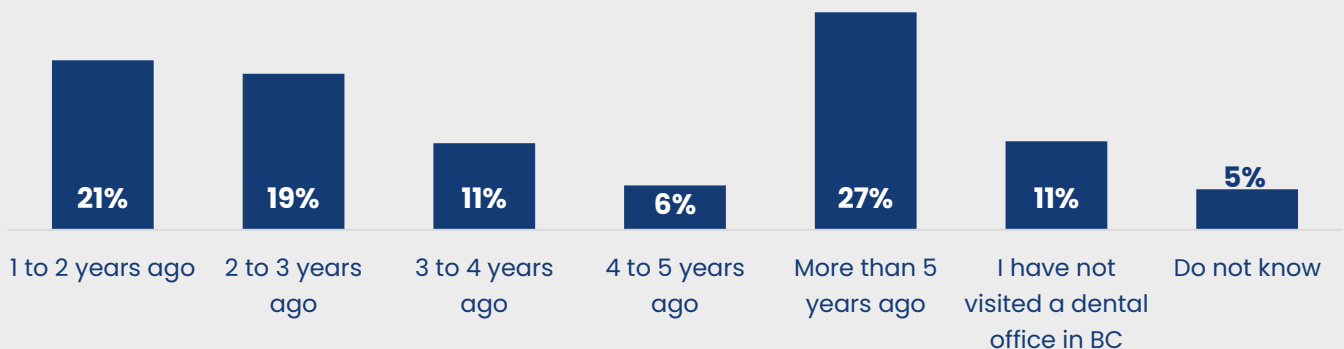


Last Visit to a Dental Office for Non-recent Patients

Among non-recent patients, 27% stated that their most recent visit to a dental office was over five years ago, while 11% reported never having visited a dental office in BC. In 2024, there was a decrease of 9 percentage points for respondents who had never visited a dental office, alongside an increase (+5 percentage points) in those who last visited more than five years ago.

Last Visit to Dental Office

n=417



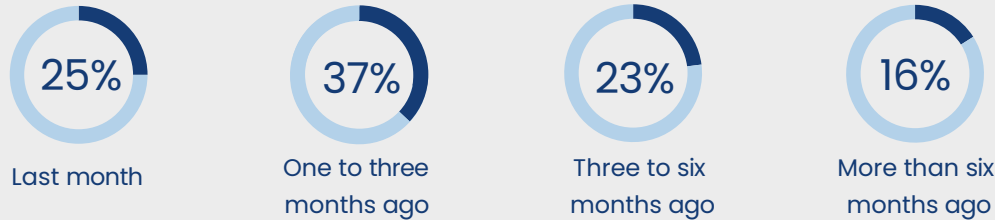
VISIT TO DENTAL OFFICE

Recent Patients Last Visit to a Dental Office

Less than one in five (16%) patient respondents reported that their last dental visit was between six and twelve months ago, while over three in five (62%) had visited within the past three months.

Last Visit to Dental Office

n=1,510



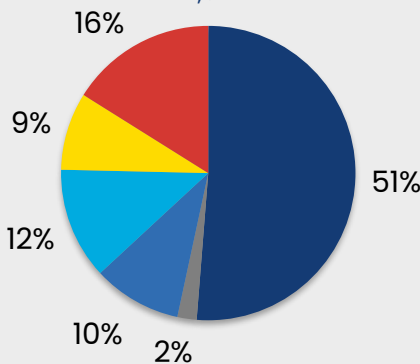
Dental Care Insurance Coverage

Most patient respondents (84%) reported having access to dental care insurance, with the majority obtaining coverage through their employer (51%). Other sources of insurance included Social Services (12%), self-purchased plans (10%), the Canadian Dental Care Plan (9%), and First Nations health insurance (2%). In 2024, 16% of patient respondents indicated they had no dental care insurance, a decrease from 21% in 2023.

The Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP) began its phased rollout in December 2023, expanding coverage for older adults, individuals with disabilities, and younger dependants, with eligibility limited to households earning under \$90,000. In 2024, 9% of respondents reported using the CDCP, with demographic profiles that align with the plan's eligibility criteria.

Dental Care Insurance Coverage

n=1,510



- Yes, through employer, 51%
- Yes, through First Nations health insurance, 2%
- Yes, purchased for myself, 10%
- Yes, through Social Services, 12%
- Yes, through the Canadian Dental Care Plan, 9%
- No, 16%

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 A significant proportion of non-recent patients in BC have limited or no dental care history, with two fifths not visiting a dental office in over 5 years or ever.
- 2 BC respondents who are low-income, or who have disabilities are less likely to have accessed oral health care services.
- 3 Treatment costs and lack of or insufficient insurance coverage remain top barriers to accessing care.
- 4 The number of individuals without dental insurance has decreased since 2023, which may be related to the introduction of the Canadian Dental Care Plan.

ORAL HEALTH PATIENT JOURNEY

Satisfaction Along the Oral Health Journey



Dental Office



Pre-Treatment



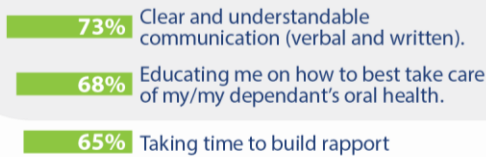
Post-Treatment



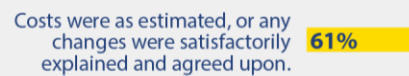
Treatment Procedure



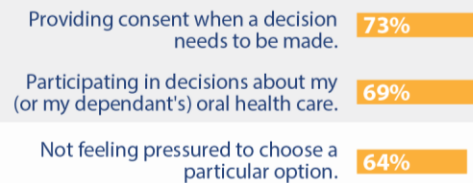
Staff Interaction/Communication



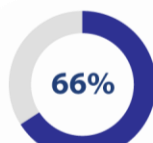
Payment



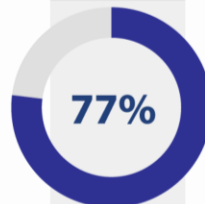
Consent



Overall Oral Health Care Experience



Importance of Oral Health



Overall Experience Satisfaction



Overall Health Rating

ORAL HEALTH PATIENT JOURNEY

Satisfaction Trends Across Demographic Groups

It was observed that Indigenous individuals, racially marginalized groups, English as a second language speakers, people with disabilities, and younger adults (18–24) often reported lower satisfaction levels across multiple stages of the oral health patient journey. In 2024, individuals identifying as LGBTQ2S+ provided satisfaction ratings that were similar to the overall results, whereas in previous years, their ratings were lower. Detailed satisfaction scores for these groups, along with corresponding sample sizes, can be found in the Appendix for further reference. Conversely, older adults (45+) continue to report higher satisfaction across various aspects of the journey.

While these trends provide useful insights, they should be interpreted as directional rather than conclusive, as the sample was designed to represent the overall population rather than specific subgroups. Statistically significant differences are highlighted throughout the narrative where they emerge at different stages of the oral health patient journey. Satisfaction scores marked with an asterisk (*) in the bar charts indicate a statistically significant difference overall between 2024 and 2023.

Satisfaction with Dental Office

Patients continue to express high satisfaction comparatively with cleanliness and infection control measures, which scored 75%. Notably, patients residing in the Island Health authority reported even higher satisfaction, with a score of 84%. In contrast, access to oral health care in emergencies remained a challenge with a satisfaction score of 53%, closely aligning with results from 2023. Among all aspects of the patient journey, access to care was rated the lowest, while cleanliness and infection control continued to achieved top satisfaction, ranking just behind overall satisfaction.



ORAL HEALTH PATIENT JOURNEY

Satisfaction with Pre-Treatment

In 2024, patient satisfaction during the pre-treatment stage was highest for the time taken to explain treatment options (69%), followed by time and space to consider options and prioritizing oral health care (both at 67%). Information on risks and benefits received a satisfaction score of 62%, while Information on treatment costs was ranked the lowest at 57%. These results closely align with the previous year, reflecting consistent patient perceptions.

Notably, individuals within the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority reported significantly lower satisfaction (60%) compared to the overall (69%) when it came to the time taken to explain treatment options and answer their questions.



Pre-Treatment

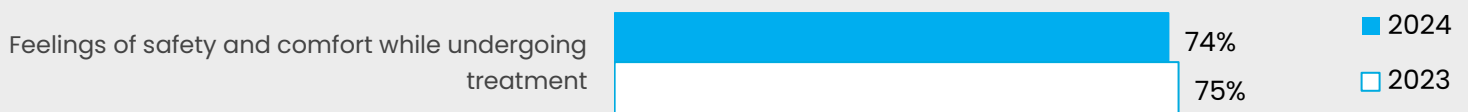


Satisfaction with Safety of Treatment

Satisfaction with safety and comfort during treatment was rated at 74%, making it the third-highest among all oral health metrics and closely aligning with 2023 results.



Safety with Treatment



ORAL HEALTH PATIENT JOURNEY

Satisfaction with Post-Treatment

Satisfaction with oral health care treatment meeting expectations was rated at 74%, consistent with 2023 findings.



Post-Treatment

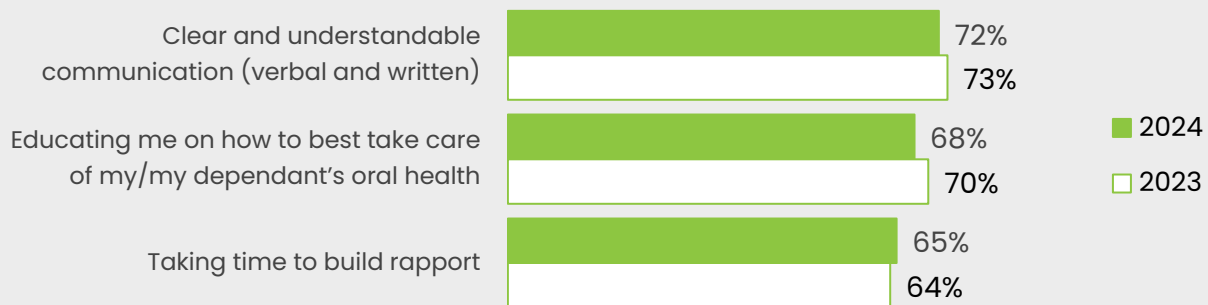


Satisfaction with Staff Interaction/Communication

Staff interaction and communication were assessed across three metrics, with 2024 results closely aligning with those from 2023. Respondents reported the lowest satisfaction for time spent building rapport (65%) and the highest for clarity in verbal and written communication (72%). Notably, patients residing within the Vancouver Coastal Health region reported lower satisfaction (65%) with clear and understandable communication.



Staff Interaction/Communication



Satisfaction with Payment

Overall, 61% of patients were satisfied with cost estimates and explanations of changes, a result consistent with 2023.



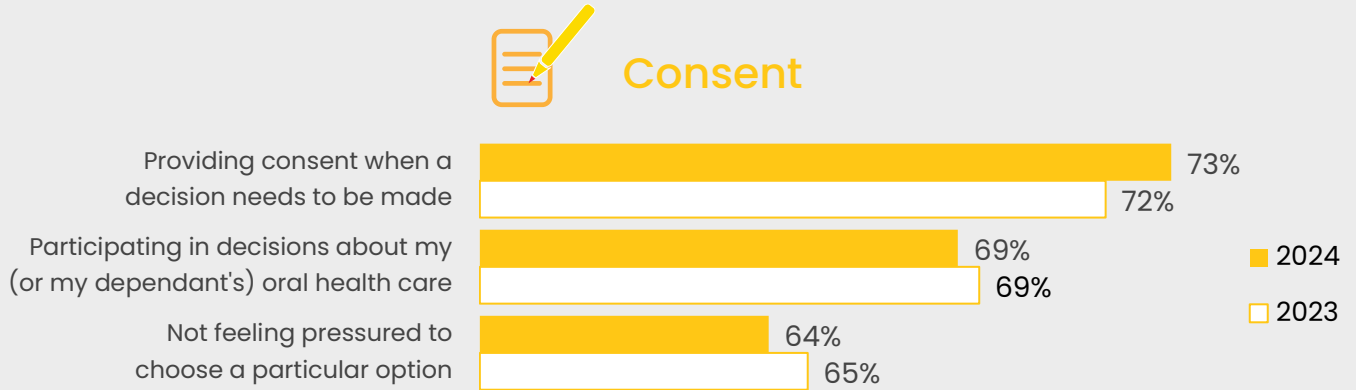
Payment



ORAL HEALTH PATIENT JOURNEY

Satisfaction with Consent

Satisfaction with consent-related statements ranged from 64% for not feeling pressured to choose an option to 73% for giving consent when required, consistent with 2023 results. Notably, patients from the Vancouver Coastal Health region reported lower satisfaction (65%) with providing consent when a decision needs to be made compared to the overall.

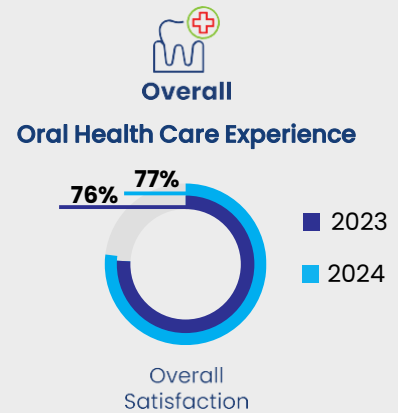


Overall Satisfaction with Oral Health Care Experience

The majority of patient respondents (77%) expressed satisfaction with their overall oral health care experience, consistent with 2023 results.

Satisfaction was highest among those residing in the Island Health (83%) and Fraser Health (80%) regions.

Patients identifying as Indigenous (65%) or aged 18-24 (69%) reported the lowest satisfaction, followed by those with incomes under \$39,999 (71%). Those respondents identifying as racially marginalized (74%) or having a disability (76%) reported satisfaction levels in line with the overall sample. The highest satisfaction was observed among respondents aged 55 and older (86%) and those with annual incomes exceeding \$80,000 (81%).



Satisfaction Scores by Demographic Characteristics

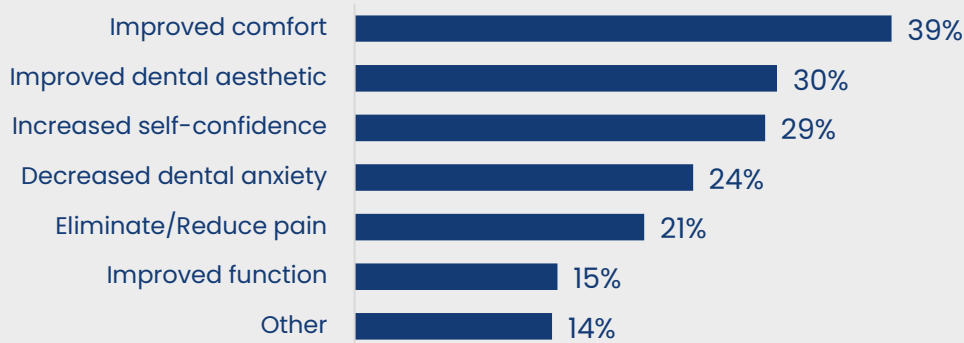
	Overall n=1,510	Indigenous Identity (n=82)	Racially Marginalized Community (n=284)	Has a disability n=244	Income of \$80,000 or greater n=628	Ages 18-24 n=225	Age over 55 n=462
Overall Satisfaction	77%	65%	74%	76%	81%	69%	86%

ORAL HEALTH PATIENT JOURNEY

Patient Reported Outcomes with Last Experience

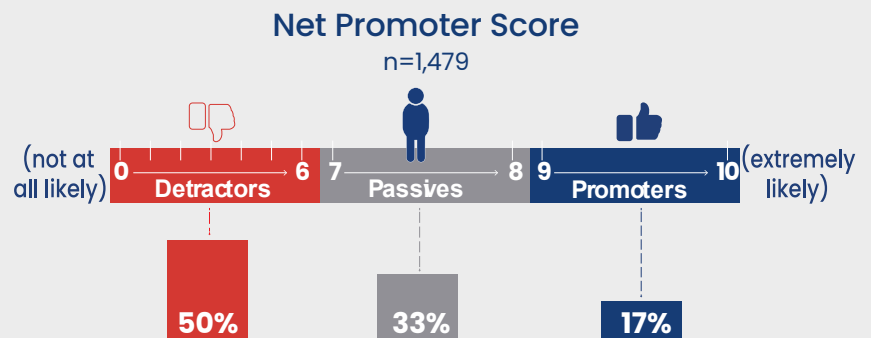
Two in five patient respondents (39%) reported improved comfort following their most recent oral health care visit. Additionally, 30% observed enhancements in dental aesthetics, and 29% experienced a boost in self-confidence. Approximately 24% noted a reduction in dental anxiety, 21% reported decreased or eliminated pain, and 15% highlighted improvements in functions such as chewing or jaw mobility. These results align closely with the findings from 2023.

Patient Reported Outcomes
(n=1,510)



Net Promoter Score (NPS)

The Net Promoter Score (NPS), a key indicator of client loyalty, is determined by asking respondents how likely they are to recommend their dental office to friends or family on a scale from 0 (not likely) to 10 (extremely likely). The NPS is calculated by subtracting the percentage of detractors (scores 0–6) from the percentage of promoters (scores 9–10). For this survey, the overall NPS is 33, with 50% of respondents identified as promoters and 17% as detractors. This closely aligns with last year’s NPS of 31.



Overall 2024 NPS: 50–17= 33

The table highlights variations in NPS scores across different groups. Older adults (51) and LGBTQ2S+ respondents (44) provided higher NPS ratings, while newcomers to Canada (18), individuals identifying as Indigenous (19), and younger adults (19) reported notably lower scores. Additionally, non-native English speakers (23) and racially marginalized communities (27) had lower NPS scores compared to the overall average. Respondents with disabilities (37), however, gave ratings comparable to the overall NPS.

NPS by Demographic Characteristics

	Overall n=1,510	Indigenous Identity n=82	Racially marginalized n=284	English as a second language n=401	Has a disability n=244	LGBTQ2S+ n=123	New to Canada (Less than one year) n=84	Ages 18-24 n=225	Age over 55 n=462
NPS	33	19	27	23	37	44	18	19	51

ORAL HEALTH PATIENT JOURNEY

Overall Health Indicators

All respondents, regardless of when their last dental visit took place, ranked their overall health on a seven-point scale from very poor to excellent. Over half (52%) of patients rated their health as good or excellent, compared to one-third (33%) of non-recent patients. When considering the importance of oral health in overall well-being, patients placed greater emphasis than non-recent patients, with 66% of patients and 49% of non-recent patients stating it is important or very important. Compared to 2023, patients reported significantly lower scores for overall health, while perceptions of the importance of oral health remained consistent.

Overall Health Indicators



Health Indicators by Demographic Characteristics

	Overall n=2,000	Indigenous Identity n=123	Racially marginalized n=333	English as a second language n=491	Has a disability n=362	Ages 18-24 n=290
Overall Health	48%	30%	53%	49%	28%	48%
Importance of Oral Health	62%	46%	67%	68%	55%	46%

Youth aged 18-24 (46%), Indigenous respondents (46%), and individuals with disabilities (55%) ranked the importance of oral health lower than the overall average of 62%.

ORAL HEALTH PATIENT JOURNEY

Drivers of Satisfaction with Oral Health Care Providers in BC

To gain deeper insights into the oral health care patient experience in British Columbia, an advanced key driver analysis was conducted to identify service attributes with the greatest impact on overall satisfaction. This analysis helps inform opportunities for performance enhancement. A regression analysis was performed on all 16 service attributes along the oral health patient journey. Following this, the service attributes were ranked from high to low based on patient satisfaction. The model identified three key attributes that have a significant impact on overall satisfaction and present opportunities for improvement in the performance of oral health care professionals.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1

In 2024, three-quarters (77%) of patient respondents reported to be satisfied or extremely satisfied with the oral health care they and/or their dependant(s) have received, which is consistent with 2023 (76%).

2

Cleanliness and infection control measures, feelings of safety and comfort, and the delivery of treatments and procedures as expected continue to receive the highest satisfaction scores. Additionally, clear and understandable communication and the process of providing consent when making decisions also remain highly rated aspects of care.

3

Overall, satisfaction has remained stable from 2023 to 2024 across all 16 service attributes of the oral health patient journey.

4

The largest gaps in satisfaction with oral health care experience are observed among younger adults (ages 18–24), individuals identifying as Indigenous, and those who speak English as a second language

5

In 2024, not feeling pressured to choose a particular option during the consent process has emerged as a key driver of patient satisfaction.

The key driver analysis indicates that patients expect more from their oral health care team, particularly in three areas: not feeling pressured to choose a particular option, having time to build rapport, and prioritizing their oral health above all other interests.

Key Drivers of Satisfaction for Patient Respondents

Attribute	Patient Journey	Satisfaction Score (%)
Not feeling pressured to choose a particular option	Consent	64
Taking time to build rapport	Staff Interaction/Communication	65
Putting my oral health care above all other interests	Pre-treatment	67

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Pivotal Research respectfully acknowledges that our office is headquartered on the traditional and ancestral land of the Nêhiyawak, Anishinaabe, Niitsitapi, Métis, Dene and Iyãhé Nakoda in Treaty 6 Territory and Métis Region 4.