

GDC publishes new research on the public's experiences of dentistry

The General Dental Council (GDC) has published the latest research on public views and experiences of dental care in the UK, highlighting significant barriers to accessing dental services, especially within the NHS.

Building on previous studies in 2020, 2021 and 2022, this comprehensive research examines a variety of issues including access to, demand for, use of and access to services, affordability, and public confidence in dentistry.

Many respondents reported notable difficulties in booking appointments, in securing a dental practice to visit regularly, and having frequent cancellations, particularly affecting younger individuals, ethnic minorities, and urban residents.

Affordability continues to be a major concern, with nearly one-quarter of respondents expressing dissatisfaction with the cost of dental treatment. The ongoing cost of living crisis has exacerbated this issue, with many prioritising urgent treatment over preventive care to save

money. Additionally, a small percentage (6%) of respondents sought dental care outside the UK, primarily for cost-saving reasons.

The 2024 survey, like the one in 2022, reveals that respondents have significantly more confidence in the quality of dental care in the UK (62%) than in their ability to access it (32%). However, confidence in both aspects has declined since the last survey, from 67% and 38% respectively. Additionally, while just over half (52%) of respondents stated no change in their confidence in how dental care is provided, 24% reported being less confident, with most blaming access issues for this decline and many others citing the rising costs.

Despite the ongoing challenges in access to dental care, affordability, and public confidence in dentistry, the number of respondents saying they had visited a dental practice within the last 12 months maintained the same level as in 2022 (64%).

The trend of increased private and mixed dental care seen in the 2021 and 2022 surveys

has been maintained but not increased further in this survey. Additionally, 42% of respondents receiving private or mixed NHS/private care started private treatment within the past three years, primarily due to difficulties accessing NHS care.

Stefan Czerniawski, Executive Director, Strategy, GDC, said: 'This latest research provides comprehensive insights into the current state of dental care in the UK. The findings highlight the ongoing challenges facing dentistry and the need to make progress in addressing these systemic issues to improve access to timely appointments and the affordability of dental care across the UK.'

'It is particularly concerning that the research shows clear evidence of patients' concerns that the recovery of dental services after the COVID pandemic has not only stalled but may have gone into reverse. This has worrying implications for the oral health of patients and the public and needs urgent attention.'

University of Liverpool commended by Lord Mayor



Left to right: Lisa Owen, Acting Head of Business Tourism, Liverpool City Council, Professor Barry Quinn, University of Liverpool, Ramin Torkizadeh, University of Liverpool Dental Student and Jane Fawley, Liverpool Council Club Liverpool Programme Manager

The Lord Mayor of Liverpool has formally recognised Professor Barry F. A. Quinn, Chair in Restorative Dentistry and Dental Education, and Ramin Torkizadeh, a fourth year dental student, both from the University of Liverpool's School of Dentistry, for their outstanding contributions to promoting

the City of Liverpool and generating over one million pounds in additional economic activity.

They played instrumental roles in hosting the Association of Dental Education in Europe (ADEE) and the European Dental Students Association (EDSA) annual

conferences held in Liverpool in August 2023.

The EDSA represents over 70,000 dental students across 34 countries within the WHO European Region, while ADEE encompasses a broad-based membership across Europe, including 200 dental schools, specialist societies, and national associations. ADEE is committed to advancing the highest levels of healthcare throughout Europe.

Professor Quinn, Secretary General of ADEE, said 'It's a great honour to be recognised by the Lord Mayor. I extend my thanks to Club Liverpool for their support in organising the conferences, as well as to the ADEE staff. Club Liverpool, part of the city council, provides a network of academics and professionals who volunteer to bid for conferences, driving economic growth and value in the region.'

This recognition underscores the significant impact that dental academic staff and student efforts can have on both the local community and the broader economic landscape of the locality in which they are situated.