



Highlights

- While there is wide regional variation in the number of dentists per 100,000 population in New York, most regions of the state are well above the national rate of 55 dentists per 100,000.
- Most dentists in New York are self-employed and work full time in private practices.
- A small number of the state's dentists treat most of the Medicaid patients who receive oral health services. Well over half of New York dentists do not treat any Medicaid patients.
- The vast majority of New York's dentists can accept more patients.
- New York's dentists are older than dentists nationwide and are not as diverse as the state's population.
- Sixty-one percent of the state's dentists graduated from a New York dental school.
- Within the next year, 10% of the state's dentists plan to either reduce hours or stop providing patient care services.

BACKGROUND

There is growing concern about uneven access to oral health care. Despite efforts to improve the oral health of the nation's population, oral health disparities persist. These disparities are characterized by poor oral health status and manifested by emergency room visits for preventable oral health conditions. Populations at greater risk for these disparities include the poor, children, racial/ethnic minorities, rural populations, and the elderly. Among the factors that are critical to oral health access is the supply and distribution of the oral health workforce.

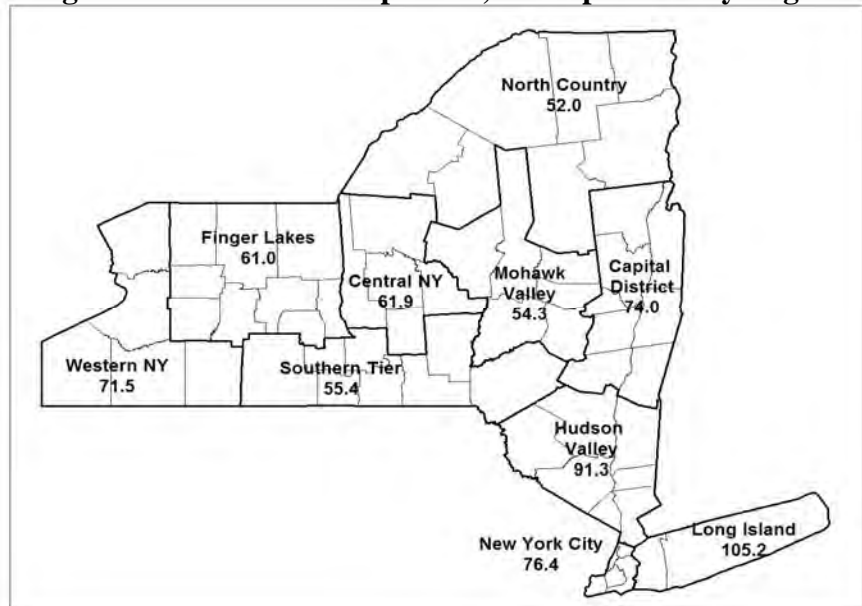
This research brief examines the demographic, educational, and practice characteristics of the state's active dental workforce. Data for this brief were drawn from a re-registration survey of dentists licensed in New York. Since September 2007, the Center, with support from the New York State Departments of Health and Education, has conducted a survey of dentists at the time of license renewal. Between September 2007 and June 2012, nearly 7,900 surveys were completed, representing 44% of the 18,018 licensed dentists. Ninety-five percent of the survey respondents reported actively working in dentistry and 5% reported being either retired or inactive.

KEY OBSERVATIONS

New York has 79 dentists per 100,000 population, which is well above the national rate of 55 dentists per 100,000 population.¹

There is wide regional variation in the distribution of dentists in New York ranging from over 105 dentists per 100,000 on Long Island to 52 and 54 per 100,000 in the North Country and Mohawk Valley, respectively. While the rate of active dentists per 100,000 in the state is well above the national rate, access to oral health services is problematic in many areas of New York for underserved populations. There are currently four federally designated geographic dental health professional shortage areas (DHPSAs) in the state and 35 federally designated special population DHPSAs for either Medicaid-eligible or low income New Yorkers.

Figure 1: Active Dentists per 100,000 Population by Region



1. American Dental Association. <http://www.ada.org/1444.aspx>

Most dentists are self-employed and work full time in private practices.

About 81% of active New York dentists reported working full time, while 19% reported working part time (less than 30 hours per week). Nearly 80% indicated they were self-employed, 21% indicated they were salaried employees, and less than 1% indicated they were volunteers. Approximately 89% of New York dentists indicated they principally worked in a private practice. The next most common practice settings were hospitals (3%) and government institutions (2%). The remainder reported working in schools, community health centers, public health clinics, and nursing homes.

Specialty dentists comprise a larger proportion of dentists in New York compared to dentists nationally.

There is a larger percentage of specialty dentists in New York (26%) than in the U.S. (20%).² About 74% of New York dentists indicated their principal work was in general dentistry. The most common dental specialties among the state's dentists were orthodontics (5%), oral and maxillofacial surgery (5%), and pediatric dentistry (4%). The remainder of New York dentists indicated specialties in periodontics, endodontics, prosthodontics, oral pathology, dental public health, and oral radiology.

Figure 2: Principal Specialty Among New York Dentists

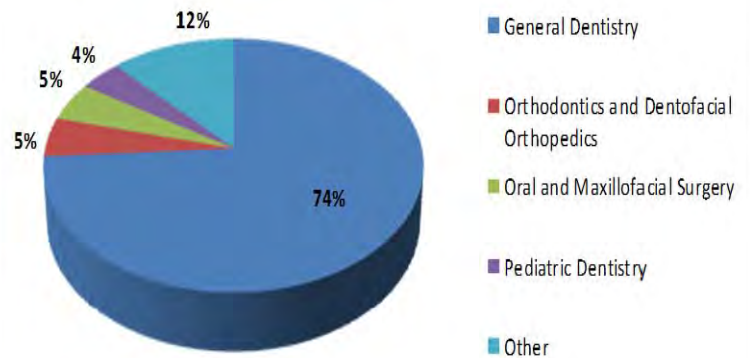
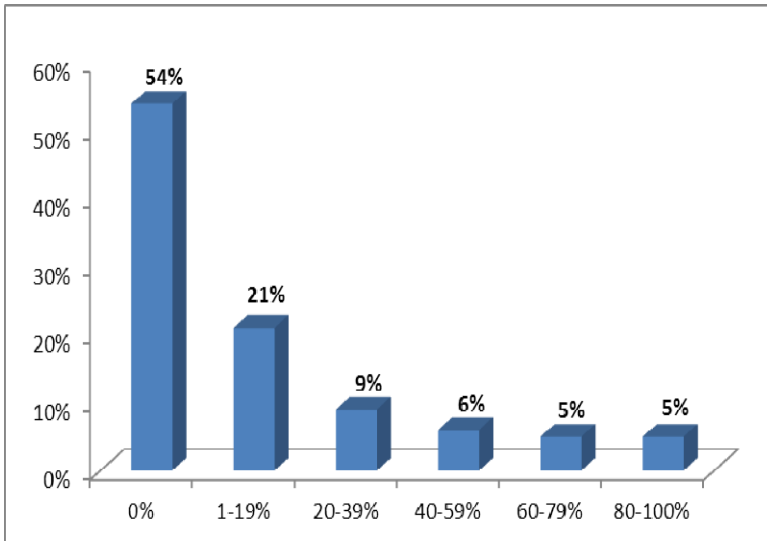


Figure 3: Medicaid Caseloads of New York Dentists



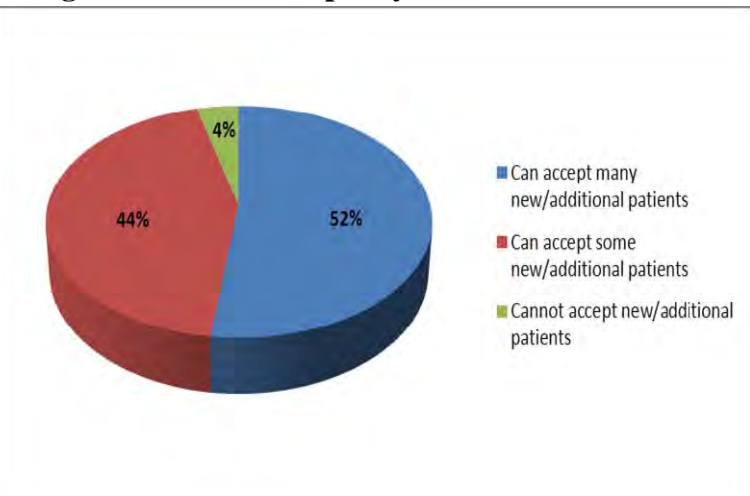
A small number of the state's dentists treat most of the Medicaid patients who receive oral health services. More than half of New York dentists do not treat any Medicaid patients.

Fifty-four percent of New York's dentists reported no Medicaid patients on their caseloads, while 10% indicated that 60% or more of their caseloads are Medicaid patients.

The vast majority of New York's dentists can accept more patients.

Fifty-two percent of the state's dentists indicated their practices could accept many new patients, while 44% indicated their practice could accept some new patients. Only 4% indicated their practices could not accept any new patients.

Figure 4: Practice Capacity of New York Dentists



2. Valachovic, Richard W. Current Demographics and Future Trends of the Dentist Workforce. Power Point presentation to the Institute of Medicine, The U.S. Oral Health Workforce in the Coming Decade Workshop. February 9, 2009. Accessed June 2012 from: <http://www.iom.edu/~media/Files/Activity%20Files/Workforce/oralhealthworkforce/2009-Feb-09/1%20-%20Valachovic.ashx>.

New York's dentists are older than dentists nationwide and are not as diverse as the state's population.

The median age of dentists in New York (52) was older than the median age of dentists in the U.S. (50).³ The gender distribution of dentists in New York (76% male and 24% female) was similar to the gender distribution of dentists in the U.S. (77% male and 23% female).⁴

Whites were overrepresented among New York's dentists relative to the state's population (79% compared to 58%), as were Asians (11% compared to 7%). Black/African Americans were underrepresented among New York's dentists relative to the state's population (3% compared to 14%) as were Hispanics/Latinos (5% compared to 18%). The racial/ethnic representation of New York's dentists was similar to the distribution for dentists nationally (77% Non-Hispanic White, 13% Asian, 6% Hispanic/Latino, 3% Black/African American, and 3% Other/Two or More Races).⁵

Figure 5: Race/Ethnicity of New York Dentists Compared to New York's Population

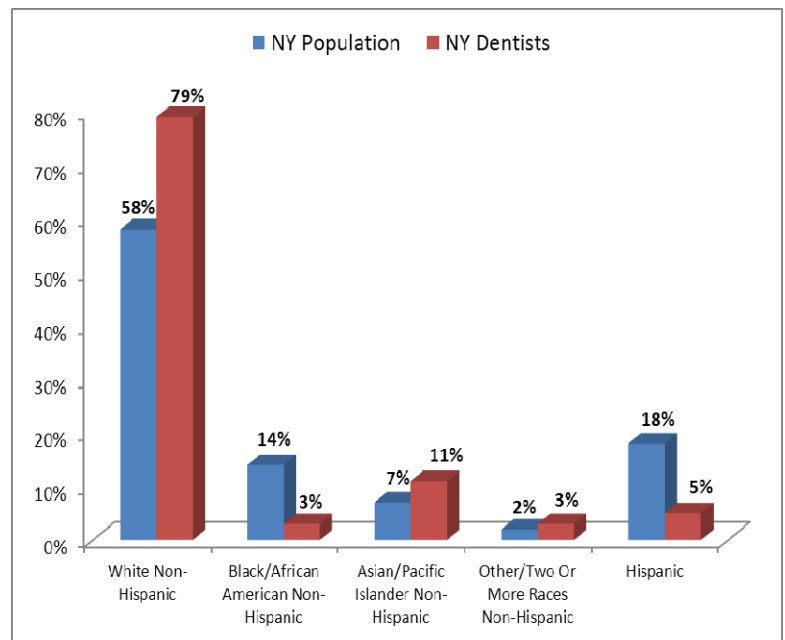
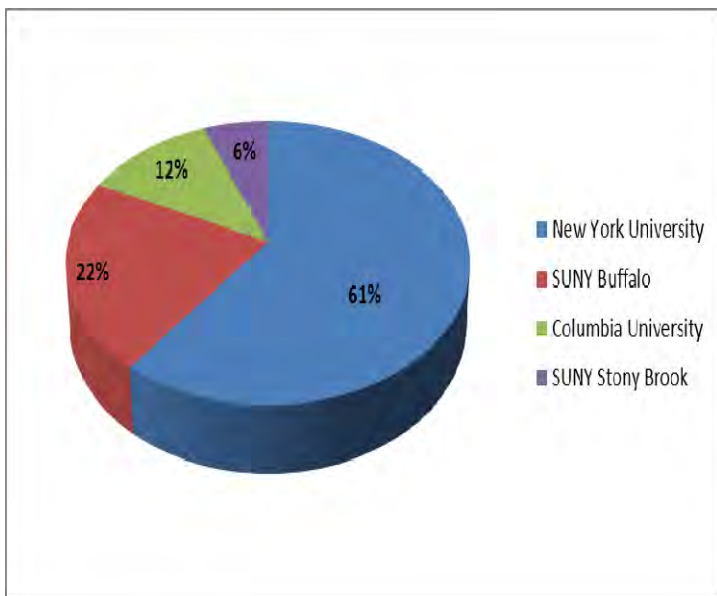


Figure 6: Dental School Attended Among New York Dental School Graduates



Sixty-one percent of the state's dentists graduated from a New York dental school.

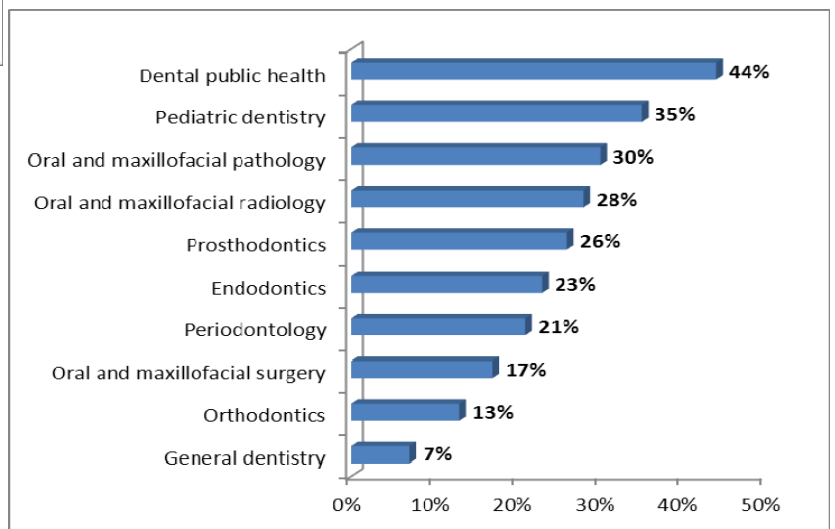
Among dentists who reported attending a New York dental school, 61% graduated from New York University, 22% from SUNY Buffalo, and the remaining 12% and 5% from Columbia University and SUNY Stony Brook, respectively. About 70% of New York's dentists reported graduating from a high school in the state.

New York dentists most often cite shortages in public health and pediatric dentistry.

Dentists were asked to identify dental shortages in their regions. Forty-four percent of dentists reported shortages in dental public health and 35% reported shortages in pediatric dentistry.

Over three-quarters (77%) of New York's dentists indicated they completed a dental residency training program. Seventeen percent reported completing a dental residency training program in a dental specialty.

Figure 7: Perceived Shortages by Specialty Among New York Dentists



Answers of "don't know" were excluded from the computations.

Within the next year, 10% of the state's dentists plan to either reduce hours or stop providing patient care services.

Among dentists who reported plans to reduce hours or stop providing patient care in New York, 7% planned to significantly reduce time spent in patient care, 1% planned to stop providing patient care completely, and 2% planned to move their practices out of the state.

METHODS

Data for this research brief were drawn from an ongoing survey of dentists licensed in New York conducted by the Center for Health Workforce Studies. Between September 2007 and June 2012, nearly 7,900 surveys were completed and entered into a database, representing 44% of dentists licensed in New York.

A respondent was determined to be an active dentist if the individual reported working in dentistry either full or part time. Dentists who reported being retired or inactive were excluded from the analysis. The region in which the dentist practiced was based on the principal practice zip code reported on the survey. If the principal practice zip code was missing or outside of New York, the secondary practice location zip code was used for determining regional rates if located in New York. To estimate total dentists in a region, data were weighted (weight=N/n).

With a response rate of 44% of all licensed dentists in New York, results should be interpreted cautiously. However, as the number of survey responses increases, this limitation will be greatly reduced and a more detailed profile of dentists practicing in New York will be developed, including analysis at county and subcounty levels.

CONCLUSION

New York's active dentists, on average, are older than dentists in the U.S. They are also much less diverse than the state's population, with many fewer Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino dentists relative to the general population. The majority of active dentists in the state graduated from a New York high school and completed their dental education in New York.

New York enjoys a dentist-to-population ratio well above the national ratio, with most regions of the state either meeting or exceeding the national rate of 55 dentists per 100,000 population. Despite the large supply of dentists, however, lack of access to dental care for underserved populations remains problematic. Currently, there are about 40 federally designated dental shortage areas across the state, and the majority of them reflect limited access for either Medicaid-eligible or low income populations. Efforts to address lack of access to dental services should focus on strategies designed to increase the supply of dentists working in underserved populations in the state.

Findings from the dentist re-registration survey make a vital contribution to our understanding of active dentists in New York. The survey is a meaningful tool for monitoring the state's oral health workforce and provides the knowledge necessary to inform programs and policies designed to increase access to oral health services for all New Yorkers.

Center for Health Workforce Studies

This brief was prepared by the Center for Health Workforce Studies at the School of Public Health, University at Albany, State University of New York. Center staff who worked on the report include Tracey Continelli, Mark Dionne, Margaret Langelier, and Jean Moore. Support for this analysis was provided by the New York State Department of Health and the New York State Education Department. Web site: <http://chws.albany.edu>