

Burnout Among Oral Health Providers in the Dental Safety-Net During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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BACKGROUND

- Burnout is a major problem among the healthcare workforce—with potential negative impacts on clinicians' well-being and quality of patient care
- COVID-19 pandemic intensified health workforce burnout, particularly among oral health clinicians due to increased risk of contracting the virus through respiratory aerosols and spatter during dental procedures

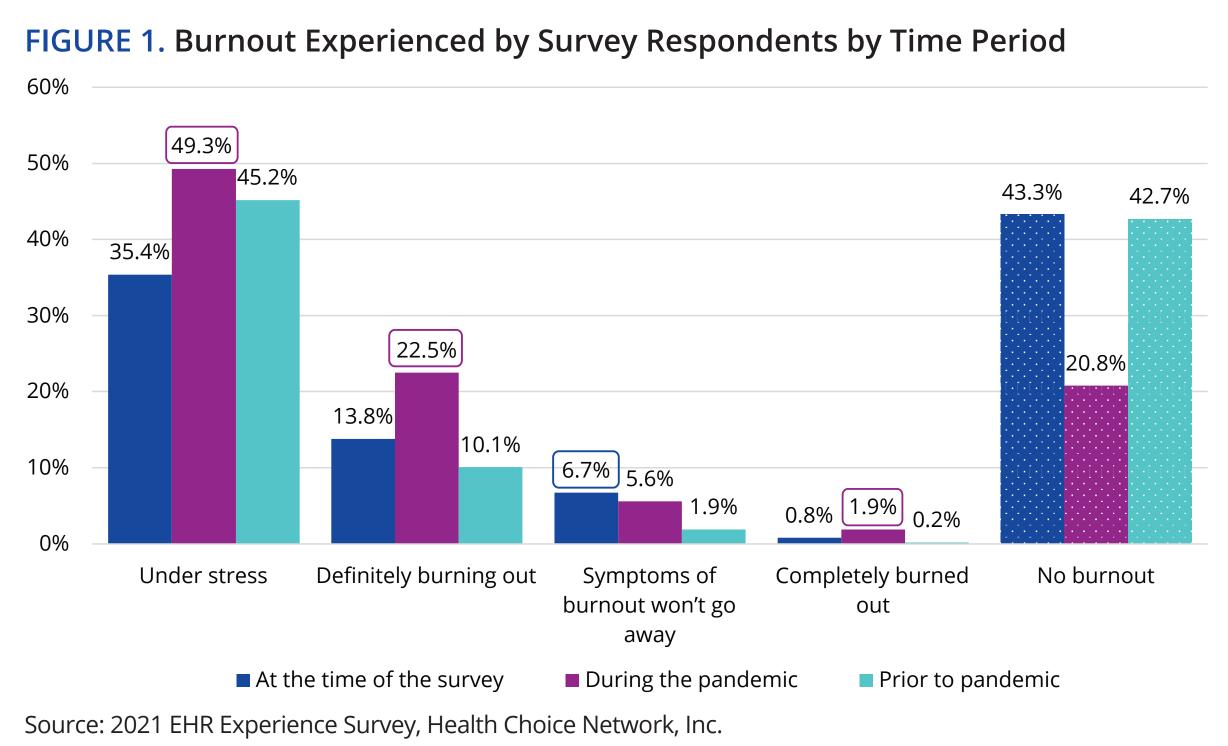


 The objective of this study was to examine levels of burnout and contributing factors among healthcare providers—including oral health clinicians—working in the safety-net during the COVID-19 pandemic

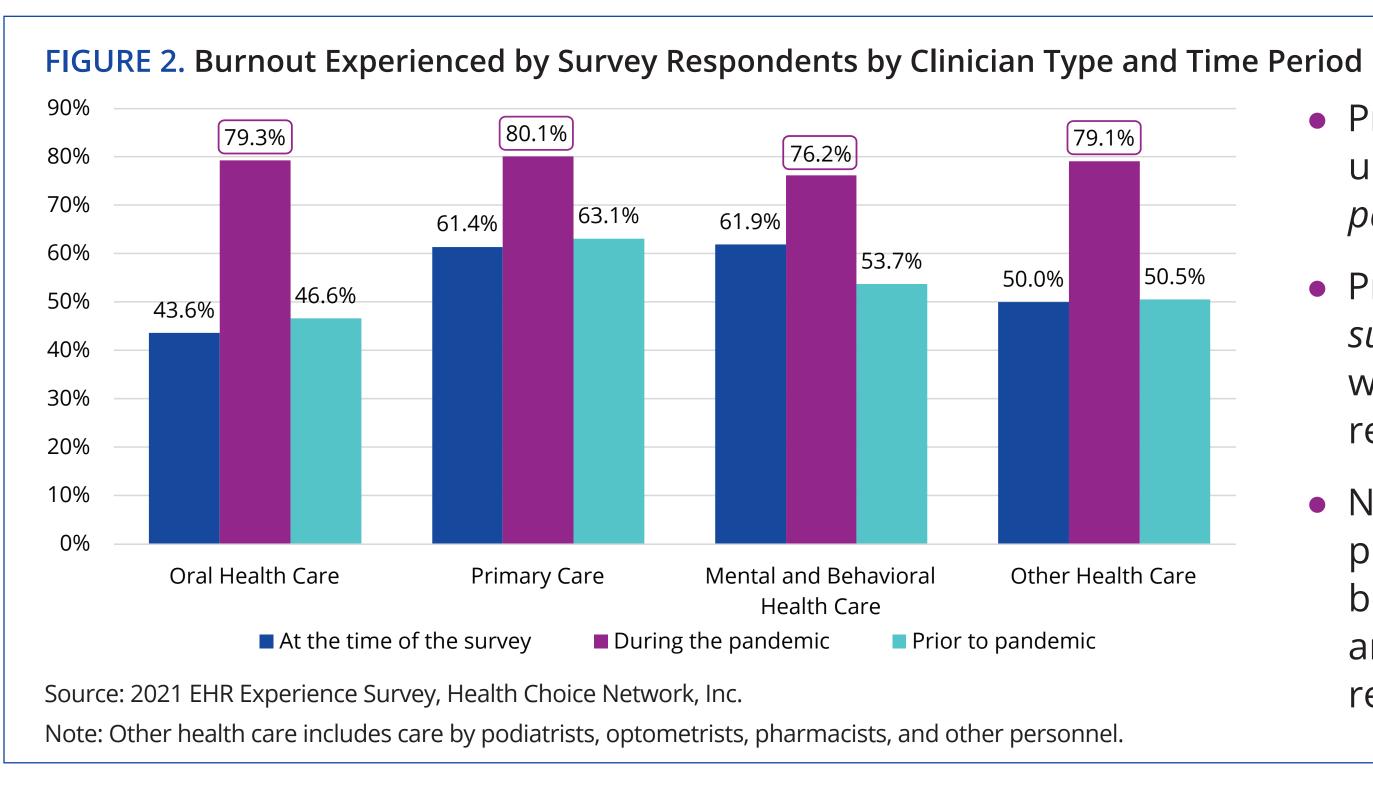


- Surveys were sent to all of Health Choice Network's health centers and clinicians, which spanned 25 health centers in 9 states at the time of survey deployment (9/14/21-10/23/21)
- Study population consisted of more than 3,000 clinicians who provided patient care in Sep/Oct 2021, including oral health, primary care, and mental health providers
- Survey instrument included:
- Single-item measure of burnout experienced by clinicians at time of survey (Sep/Oct 2021), during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2021), and pre-pandemic
- List of 10 potential contributing factors including lack of autonomy, shared values, and use of Electronic Health Records (EHR) tools
- Characteristics of clinicians such as clinician type, years practicing, average hours of clinical practice, patient types served, and geographic location of health center
- Study sample consisted of 70 oral health clinicians, 320 primary care clinicians, 48 mental/behavioral health clinicians, and 120 podiatrist/ optometrist/other clinicians
- Chi-square tests were used to evaluate differences in burnout before and during the pandemic by clinician type and practice characteristics using R software

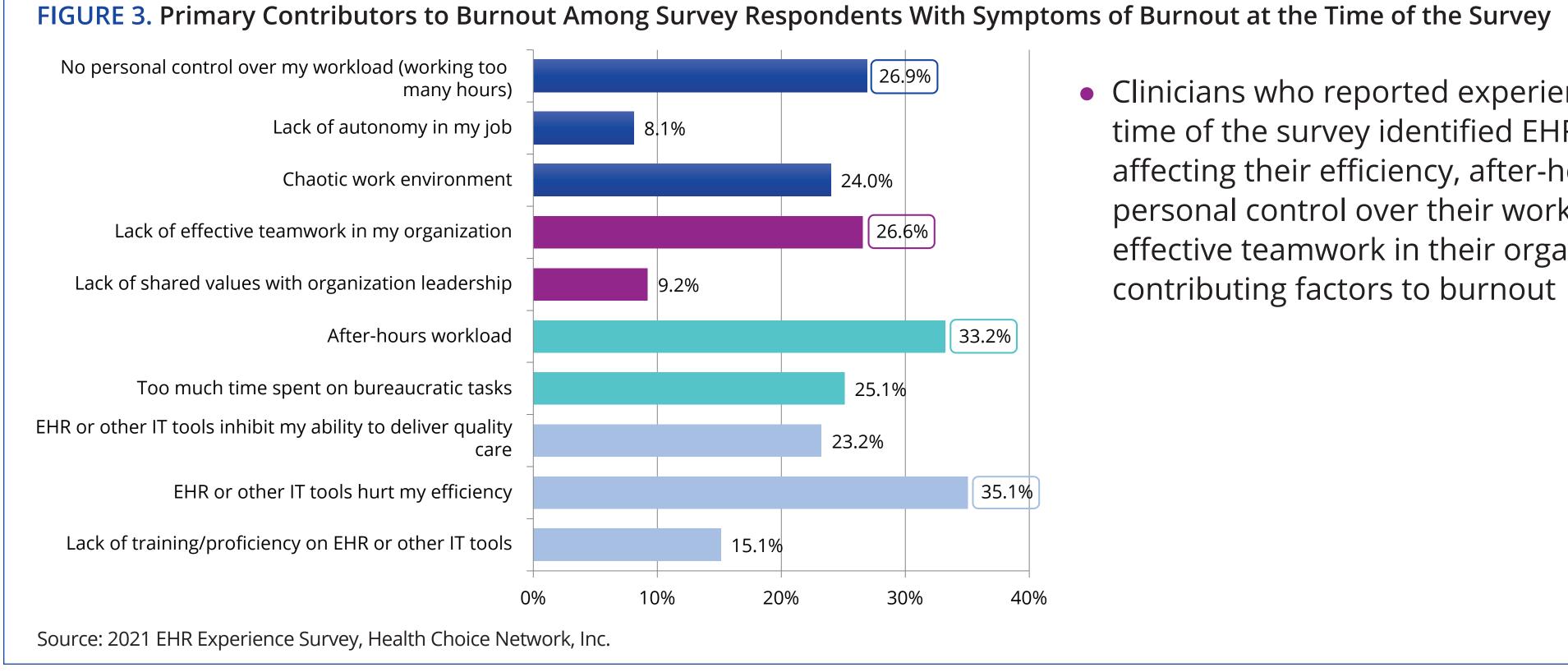
(III) RESULTS



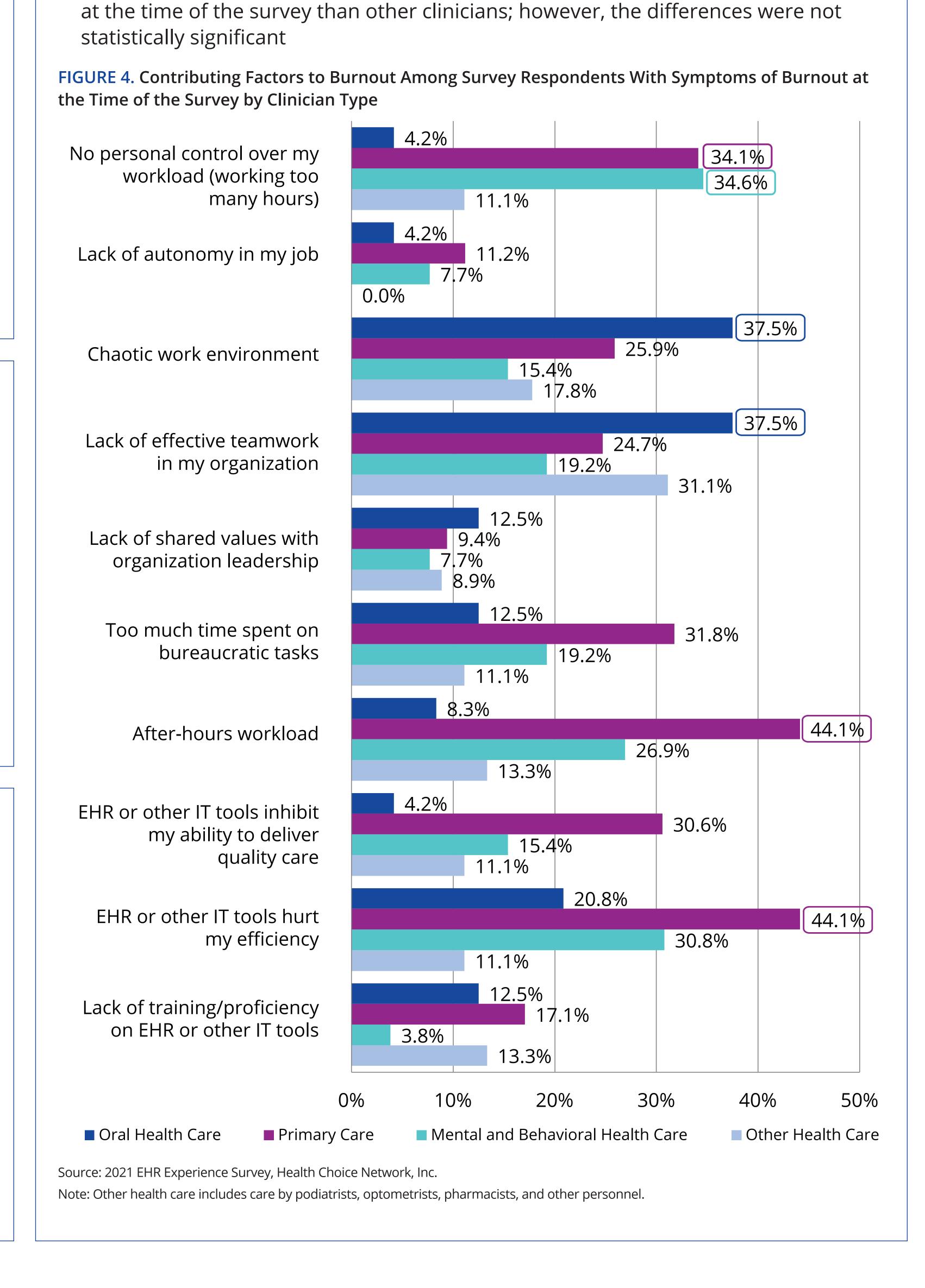
- Proportionally more clinicians reported symptoms of burnout *during the pandemic* beginning in early 2020 and lasting through the third quarter of 2021 (79.2%) than at the time of the survey (56.7%) or pre-pandemic (57.3%) (*P*<0.001)
- Proportionally more clinicians reported feeling under stress, definitely burning out, or completely burned out *during the pandemic*, while more clinicians reported that symptoms of burnout won't go away at the time of the survey than other study periods



- Proportion of respondents experiencing burnout was uniformly high across all clinician types during the *pandemic* in 2020-2021
- Proportion of clinicians' burnout at the time of the survey was comparable to the pre-pandemic period, with proportionally fewer oral health providers reporting burnout than other clinician types (P<0.05)
- No significant differences in burnout by clinical practice characteristics, except a positive association between clinicians' burnout at the time of the survey and years practicing in healthcare (results not



 Clinicians who reported experiencing burnout at the time of the survey identified EHR or other IT tools affecting their efficiency, after-hours workload, no personal control over their workload, and lack of effective teamwork in their organization as primary contributing factors to burnout



Oral health clinicians more often reported chaotic work environment and lack of

effective teamwork in their organization as primary contributing factors to burnout

DISCUSSION

- Study findings show a high proportion of burnout experienced by clinicians working in the safety-net during the pandemic regardless of clinician type or practice characteristics, particularly during the pandemic beginning in early 2020 and lasting through the third quarter of 2021
- Study results highlight high levels of burnout and primary contributing factors among oral health clinicians, with chaotic work environment and lack of effective teamwork in the organization as the most frequently cited work-related stressors
- Further research is needed to assess the prevalence of burnout in dentistry and potential work and family-related factors associated with burnout using validated questionnaires in national representative samples of dentists, hygienists, and assistants
- Future studies are required to evaluate strategies used to increase resilience and potential implications of burnout on oral health workforce recruitment and retention as well as capacity and quality of patient care

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