

Summary of the Dental Results from the GP Patient Survey – January to March 2021

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About this release

Dental questions were originally added to the GP Patient Survey in January to March 2010, as the Department of Health wanted information on NHS dental access and demand for services based on people's reported experience.

The GP Patient Survey was chosen to capture this information as a way of accessing the proportion of the population who do not use (or have not recently used) NHS dental services in addition to those that do, to give a fuller picture of people's dental behaviour and experience.

This paper summarises the key findings of the January to March 2021 dental results and makes comparisons – where appropriate – to previous survey results.

Dentistry during the time period the survey relates to was heavily disrupted by Covid-19 and this may explain some of the changes in answers in Jan-Mar 2021 compared with Jan-Mar 2020.

The GP Patient Survey was significantly re-developed in 2018 in order to keep pace with changes in frontline general practice, although the questions relating to NHS dentistry have not changed.

Changes were made to age brackets and geographical boundaries of CCGs. 16-17-year olds have been included from 2018.

General Survey Information

- For the 2021 GP Patient Survey – conducted between January and March 2021 – 2.4 million GP patients age 16 and over were contacted and 850,000 replies were received. This represents a 35% response rate; an increase of 3 percentage points compared to 2020 results.
- Further information on the GP Patient Survey and technical details regarding its collection and the weighting of the data, can be found on the GP Patient Survey Website at: <http://www.gp-patient.co.uk/>.
- The remainder of this publication relates to the additional analysis carried out on the dental section of this survey. Percentages are given to one decimal place in order to ensure greater accuracy.
- Survey region and CCG breakdowns are based on the GP practice of the respondent and not the address of the dentist.

Next publication:
July 2022

Previous publications:
https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/2020/07/09/gpps_dent_3758-78929/

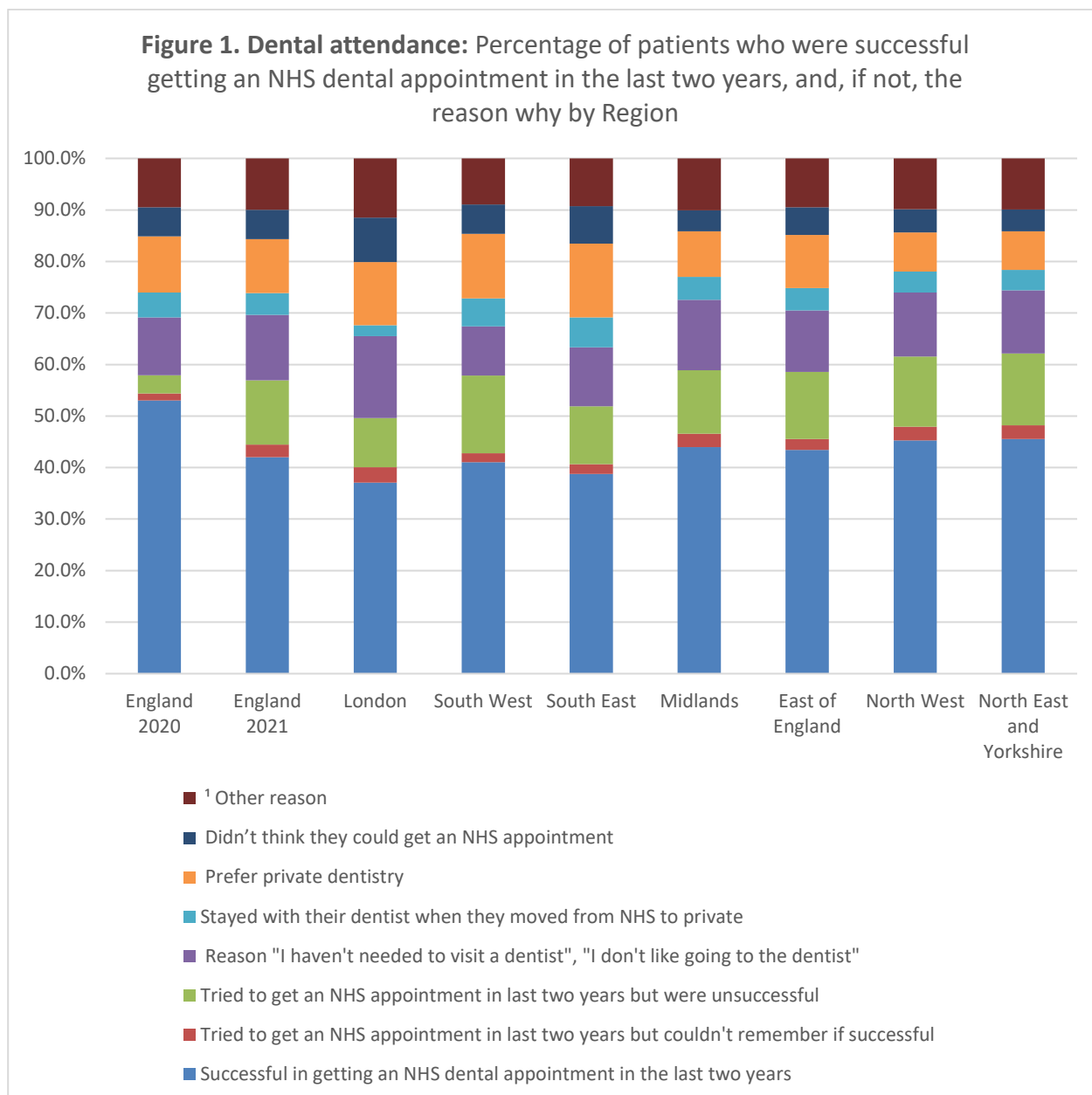
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Overall survey population breakdown of dental behaviour by region

- The following graph (Figure 1) shows the overall survey population breakdown of dental behaviour in England and the 7 regions:



¹ Other reason includes: "I no longer have any natural teeth", "I haven't had time to visit a dentist", "I'm on a waiting list for an NHS dentist", "NHS dental care is too expensive", "Another reason".

- The largest difference compared with 2020 responses is in the proportion of people who tried to get an appointment but were unsuccessful. In 2020 3.5% were unsuccessful, in 2021 12.5% were not successful.
- There was a regional variation in the percentage of respondents who received an NHS dental appointment in the last two years, ranging from 45.6% in the North East and Yorkshire to 37.1% in London (Figure 1).

- The South East has the largest proportion of patients who instead relied on private dental care at 20.1%, with 5.8% of respondents having “stayed with their dentists when they moved from NHS to private” and 14.3% “preferring private dentistry”.

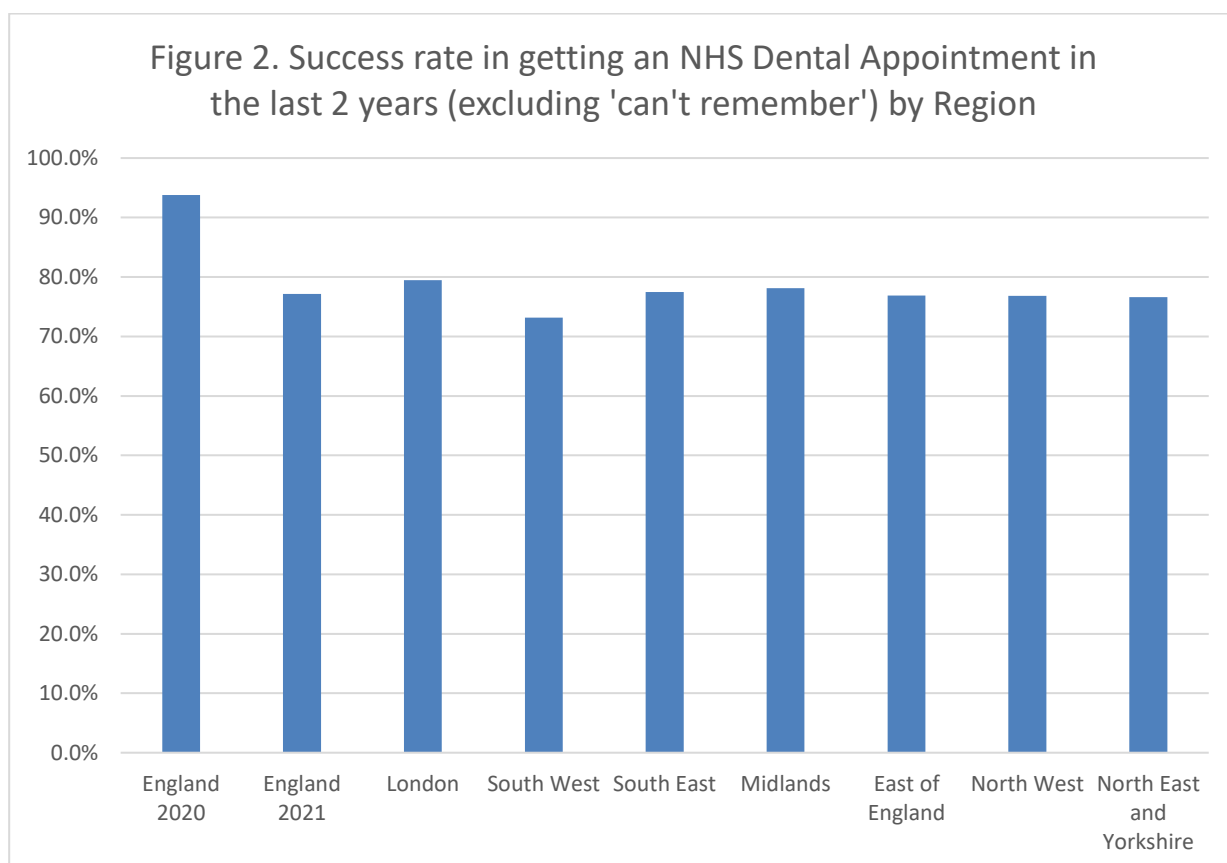
Tried to get an NHS dental appointment

- 55.5% of all respondents tried to get an NHS appointment in the last two years, the maximum recall period recommended by NICE guidelines¹. 36.2% of respondents had tried to get an NHS dental appointment in the last year compared with 49.9% in the previous year; 20.9% within the last six months and 13.0% in the last three months.
- There is regional variation in the contact rate for NHS dentistry services with the percentage trying to get an appointment in the previous 2 years being highest in the North East & Yorkshire at 60.7% closely followed by the North West at 60.2%. In contrast, the rates remain lowest in London at 48.5% followed by the South East at 50.7%.

¹ <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg19/chapter/1-guidance>

Success in getting an NHS dental appointment

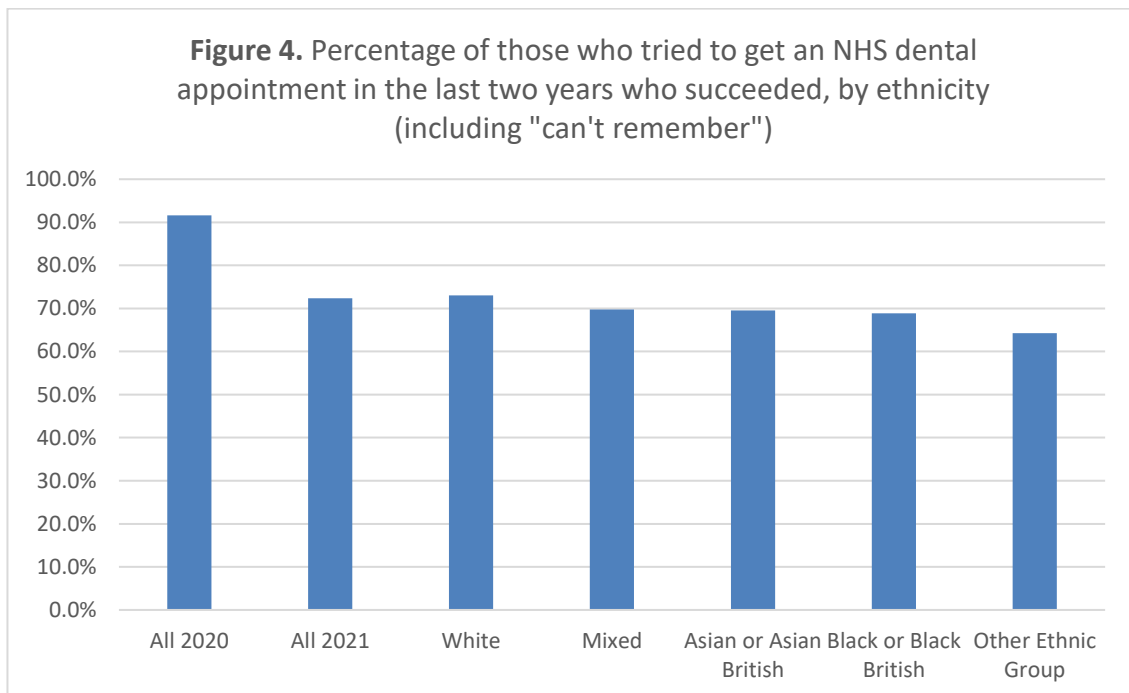
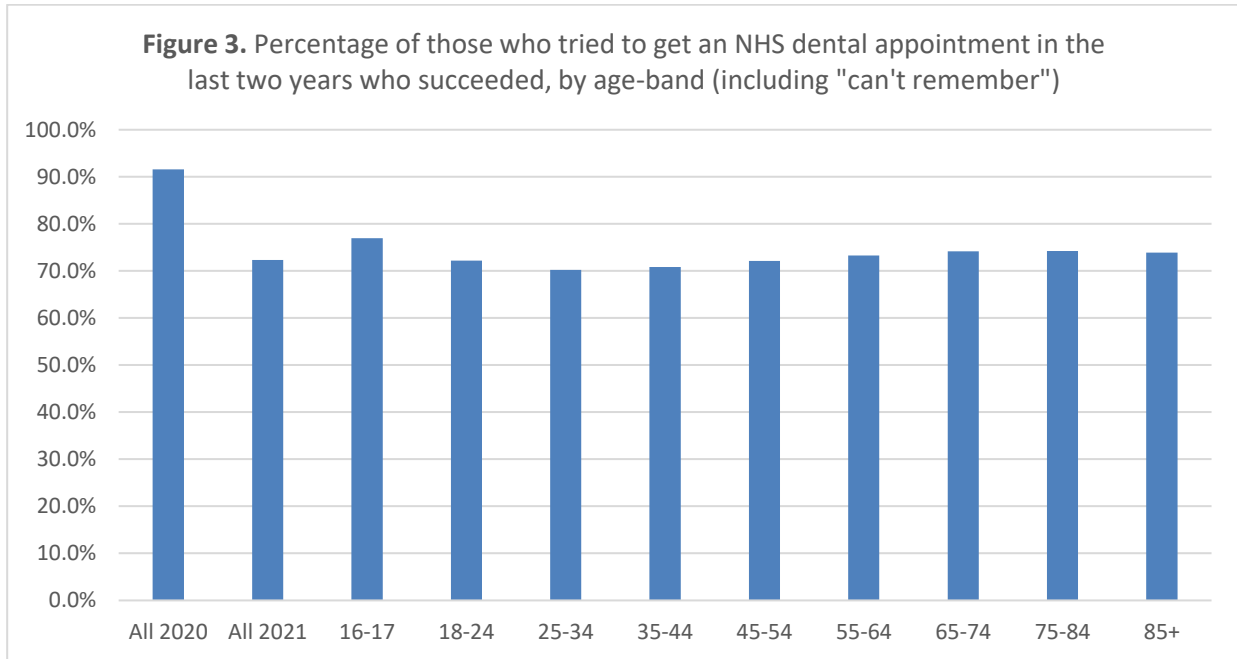
- Of those that tried to get an appointment in the last two years, 73.9% were successful. The success rate (when excluding those who stated that they ‘can’t remember’ whether they were successful, as shown in Figure 2) was 77.1%. This is compared to 93.8% in the previous year (excluding ‘can’t remember’).
- The success rate for respondents who had not been to the practice before was lower, at 51.0%, compared with 78.7% who were successful when trying to make an appointment at a practice they had visited before.
- Regionally, the success rate for people who tried to get an NHS dental appointment was highest in London (79.5%). The South West had the lowest success rate (73.1%) of all the regions (Figure 2).



- The top three CCGs with the highest success rates for those who tried to get an appointment in the last two years (excluding “can’t remember”) were NHS Sunderland CCG (84.0%) NHS South Tyneside CCG (83.2%), and NHS Basildon and Brentwood CCG (83.0%).
- The bottom three CCGs with the lowest success rates for those who tried to get an appointment in the last two years (excluding “can’t remember”) were NHS Norfolk

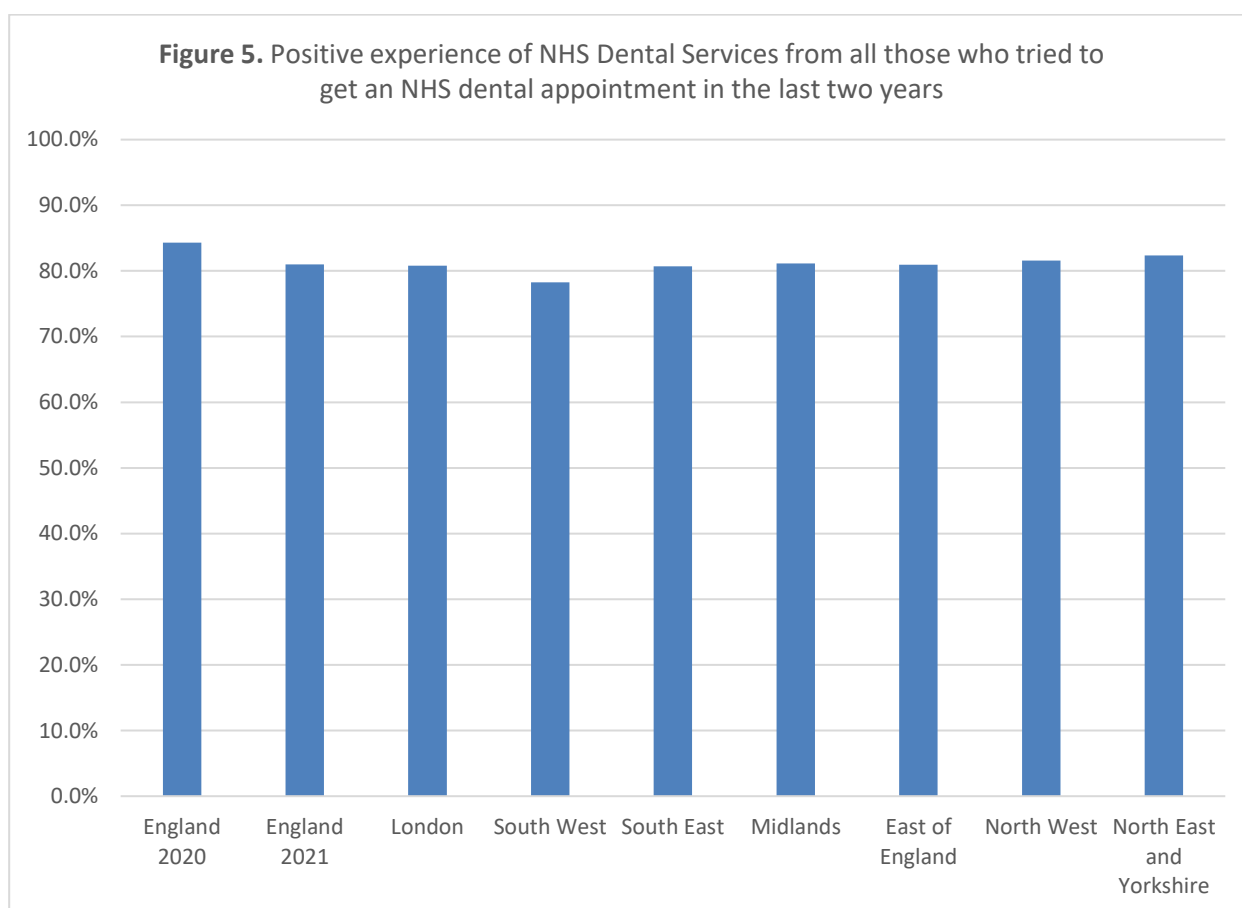
and Waveney CCG (68.0%), NHS North East Lincolnshire CCG (68.0%) and NHS Kernow CCG (65.4%).

- Slightly lower levels of success were reported by younger age groups (Figure 3) and ethnic minorities (Figure 4) against the national figure of respondents (including those who “can’t remember”).



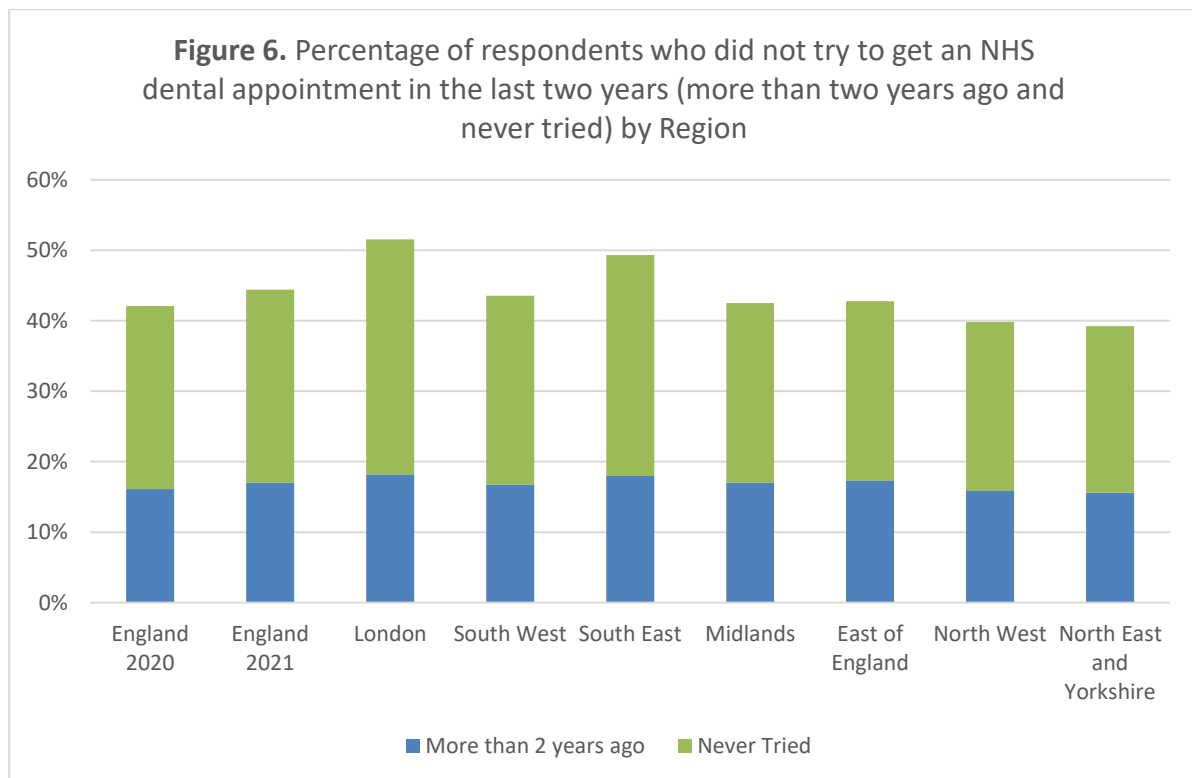
Overall experience of NHS dental services

- Of the respondents that tried to get NHS dental care in the last two years, 81.0% of respondents rated their NHS dental experience as positive. This is slightly lower than in 2020.
- In January to March 2021, 47.8% had a very good experience and 33.2% had a fairly good experience. Meanwhile 10.0% said it was neither good nor poor, and fairly poor and very poor had a 5.3% and 3.7% share of the total respectively.
- Satisfaction rates with the overall patient experience of NHS dental care is highest in North East and Yorkshire, with 82.4% of respondents respectively rating their patient experience as positive. Meanwhile South West had the lowest, with 78.3% (Figure 6).



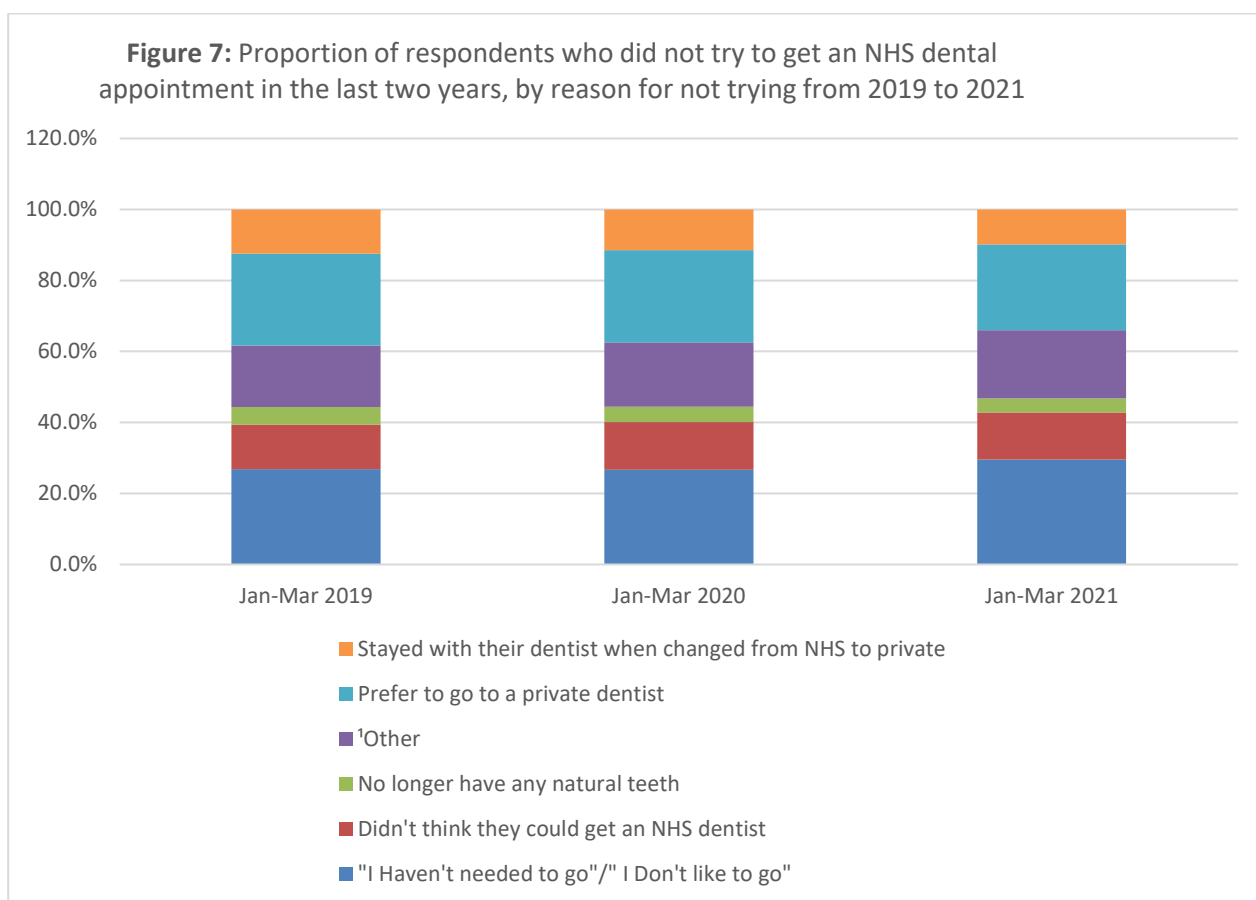
Did not try to get an NHS dental appointment

- Less than half (44.4%) of adults who responded to the survey had not tried to get an appointment with an NHS dentist in the last two years (Figure 7). Over a quarter (27.4%) of all respondents had never tried to get an NHS dental appointment, while 17.0% of respondents last tried over two years ago.
- For the respondents who have never tried to get an NHS dental appointment, London had the highest proportion with 33%.



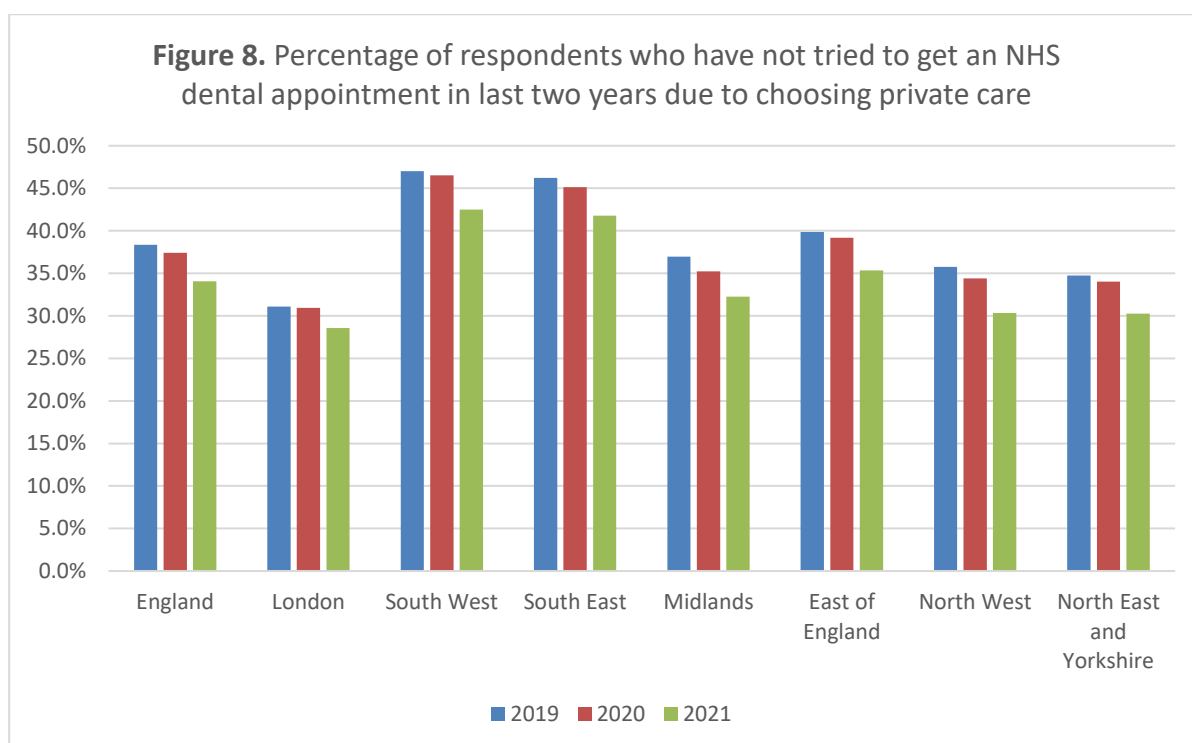
Reasons for not trying to get an appointment

- When considering the respondents who did not try to get an NHS dental appointment, the main reasons stated by respondents for why they have not tried to get an NHS dental appointment in the last two years is “I don’t like to go” or “I haven’t needed to go” with 29.5% of the respondents stating one of these reasons (Figure 8), 23.3% stating they have not needed to visit and 6.2% not liking going to the dentist. The percentage of respondents stating they haven’t needed to visit the dentist increased from Jan-Mar 2020 when 20.5% of respondents gave this reason.
- 13.4% of the respondents who didn’t try to get an NHS dental appointment gave their reason as “I didn’t think I could get an NHS dental appointment”. The proportion of people who gave this response has decreased by 0.1 percentage points compared to the previous year’s results.
- 24.2% of the respondents who did not try to get an NHS dental appointment in the last two years said they preferred private dentistry, slightly lower than 25.9% who gave the same answer last year. Those respondents who stayed with their dentist when they moved from NHS to private made up 9.8%.



¹ Other reason includes: “I haven’t had time to visit a dentist”, “I’m on a waiting list for an NHS dentist”, “NHS dental care is too expensive”, “Another reason”

- These two private dentistry reasons accounted for over a third of all responses (34.1%) of those who have not tried to get an NHS dental appointment in the last two years.
- However, there are marked regional differences, varying from 28.6% in London to 42.5% in the South East (Figure 9).
- All of the regions had a decrease in this figure from the previous year, and the year before.
- The overall figure for 2021 was 34.1%, which is a decrease of 3.4 percentage points upon the previous year.



To get current results (January to March 2021) please click on the following link:

https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/2020-07-09-gpps_dent-86522-2

To access the full dental results for previous years, please click on the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/category/statistics/gp-dental-statistics/>

Annex A – Changes in 2021 survey and comparability with 2020 survey

2021 Question number	2021 Question wording (no change)	2021 Question responses (no change)	2021 results comparable to 2020?
44	'When did you last try to get an NHS dental appointment for yourself?'	'In the last 3 months', 'Between 3 and 6 months ago', 'Between 6 months and a year ago', 'Between 1 and 2 years ago', 'More than 2 years ago', 'I have never tried to get an NHS dental appointment'	Yes
45	'Last time you tried to get an NHS dental appointment, was it with a dental practice you had been to before for NHS dental care?'	'Yes', 'No', 'Can't remember'	Yes
46	'Were you successful in getting an NHS dental appointment?'	'Yes', 'No', 'Can't remember'	Yes
47	'Overall, how would you describe your experience of NHS dental services?'	'Very good', 'Fairly good', 'Neither good nor poor', 'Fairly poor', 'Very poor'	Yes
48	'Why haven't you tried to get an NHS dental appointment in the last 2 years?'	'I haven't needed to visit the dentist', 'I no longer have any natural teeth', 'I haven't had time to visit a dentist', 'I don't like going to the dentist', 'I didn't think I could get an NHS dentist', 'I'm on a waiting list for an NHS dentist', 'I stayed with my dentist when they changed from NHS to private', 'I prefer to go to a private dentist', 'NHS dental care is too expensive for me', 'Another reason'	Yes