

Summary of the Dental Results from the GP Patient Survey – January to March 2023

Published 13th July 2023



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 2023 dental results and makes comparisons – where appropriate – to previous survey results.

The GP Patient Survey was significantly re-developed in 2018 to keep pace with changes in frontline general practice. Questions relating to NHS dentistry have not changed since 2022.

Recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic continued to affect dentistry in 2022-23. This impact is reflected in the comparisons made between 2022-23 and 2021-22 as well as the results from years prior.

Throughout this document we have expressed percentages as whole numbers, so the total may not add up to 100% due to rounding and multiple responses in some of the questions.

General Survey Information

- For the 2023 GP Patient Survey – conducted between January and March 2023 – 2.6 million GP patients age 16 and over were contacted and over 759,000 replies were received. This represents a 29% response rate; a consistent percentage compared to 2022 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 ICS breakdowns are based on the GP practice of the respondent and not the address of the dentist.

Next publication:
July 2024

Previous publications:
[Statistics » GP Patient Survey Dental Statistics: January to March 2022, England](#)

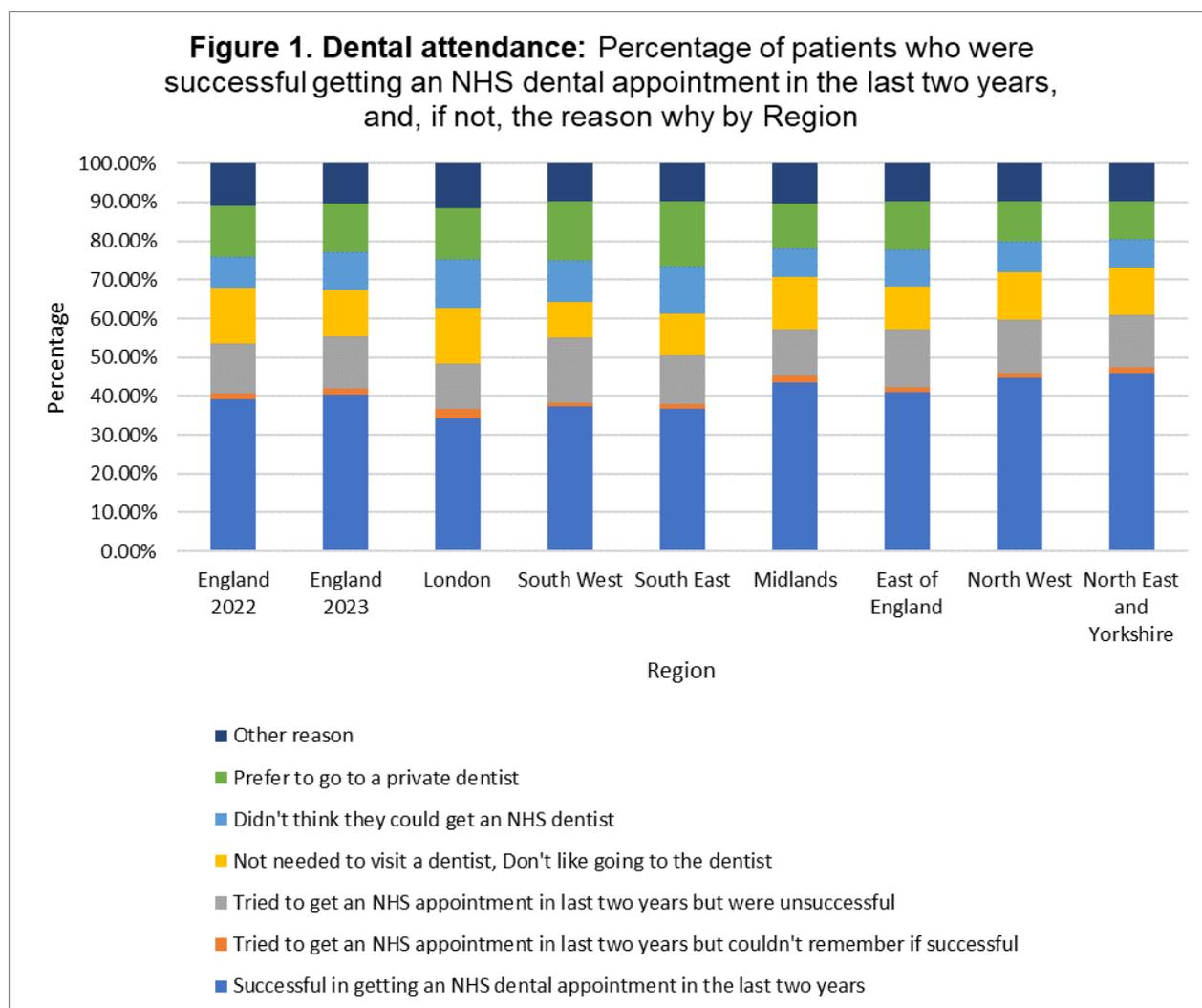
Responsible Statistician:
Caroline Keef

Feedback or queries:
caroline.keef@nhs.net



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:



Other reason includes: "I'm on a waiting list for an NHS dentist", "NHS dental care is too expensive", "Another reason".

- The percentage of people unsuccessful in getting NHS dental appointment in 2023 (13%) remained the same as that of 2022 (13%).
- There was a regional variation in the percentage of respondents who received an NHS dental appointment in the last two years, ranging from 46% in the North East and Yorkshire to 34% in London (Figure 1).
- South East has the largest proportion of patients who preferred private dental care at 17%.

Tried to get an NHS dental appointment

- 53% of all respondents tried to get an NHS appointment in the last two years, the maximum recall period recommended by NICE guidelines¹. 45% of respondents had tried to get an NHS dental appointment in the last year compared with 42% of respondents in 2022. For respondents in 2023, 34% tried to get an NHS dental appointment within the last six months and 21% 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 and Yorkshire at 59% followed by North West at 58%. In contrast, the rates remain lowest in London at 47% followed by the South East 49%.

Success in getting an NHS dental appointment

- Of those who tried to get an appointment in the last two years, 73% 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 75%. This figure has not changed compared to the previous year. It should also be noted that success rates in the past 3 and 6 months were higher (79% in past 3 months and 80% in the past 6 months).
- The success rate for respondents who had not been to the practice before was much lower, at 30% compared with 83% who were successful when trying to make an appointment at a practice they had visited before. In 2022 success rate was 32% for patients visiting a 'new' practice compared with 82% trying to make an appointment at a practice they had visited before. Comparatively, figures for 2021 were 51% for 'new' practices and 79% for patients trying to revisit a practice. These figures relate to people trying to make an appointment in the past two years. As well as this, the proportion of people trying to make an appointment who are new patients in 2023 is 14%. This is in contrast to 2021 where the proportion was 7%.
- From 2022, we asked for reasons given when respondents were unsuccessful in getting an NHS dentist appointment. In 2023, among those who were not successful, the most common reason was 'No, the dentist was not taking new NHS patients' with 40% of unsuccessful respondents stating this, the second was 'No, no appointments were available' with 39% and 21% were unsuccessful for another reason.
- Regionally, the success rate for people who tried to get an NHS dental appointment was highest in the Midlands (79%). South West had the lowest success rate (69%) of all the regions (Figure 2).

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

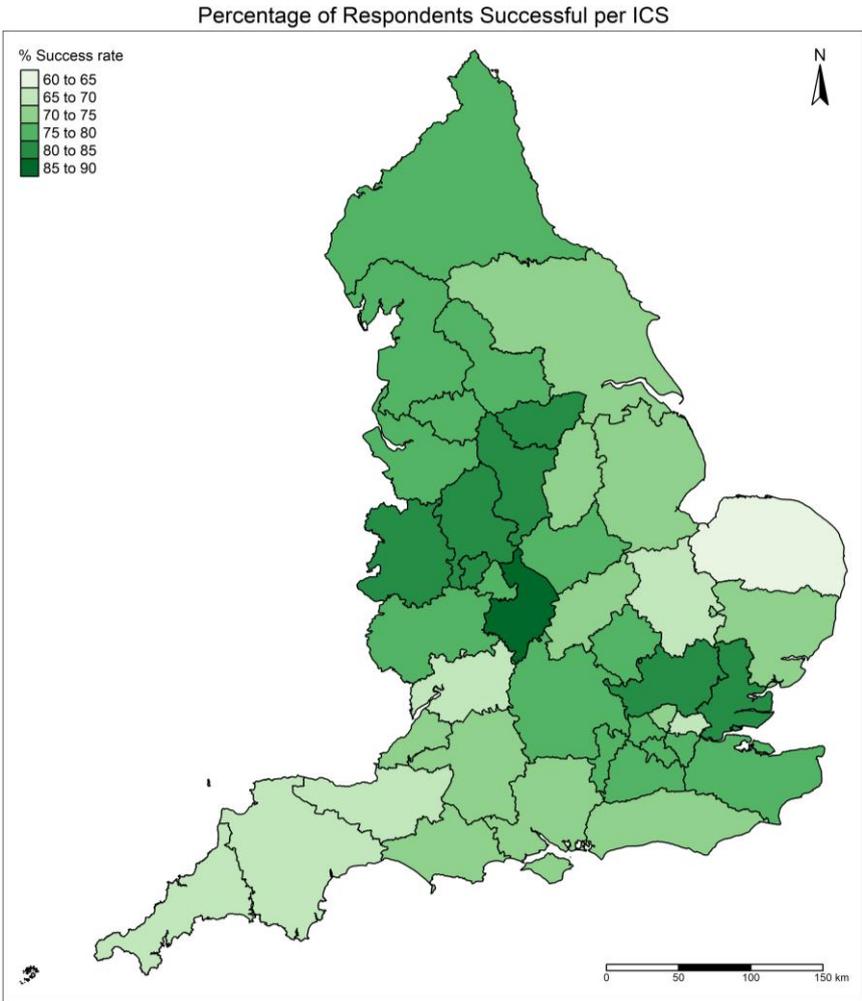
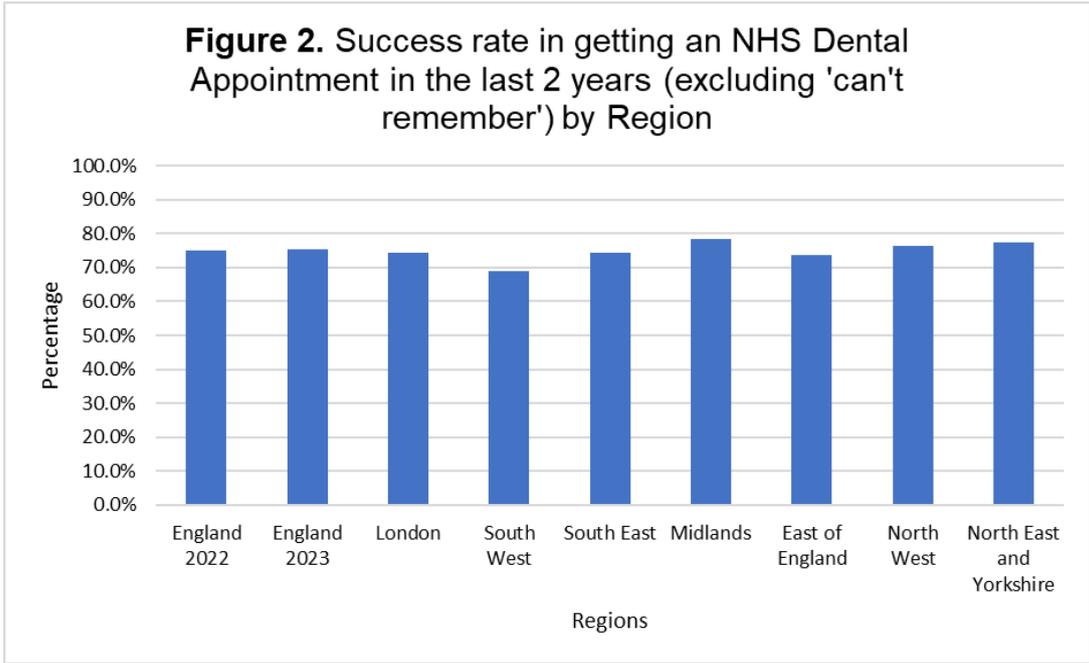


Figure 3. Percentage of respondents who tried to get, and succeeded in getting, an NHS dental appointment in the last two years, at Integrated Care Systems (ICS) level, January to March 2023 (excluding “can’t remember”).

- The top three ICSs with the highest success rates for those who tried to get an appointment in the last two years (excluding “can’t remember”) were NHS Coventry and Warwickshire ICS (87%) NHS Mid and South Essex ICS (83%), and NHS Hertfordshire and West Essex ICS (82%).
- The bottom three ICSs 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 ICS (62%), NHS Cambridgeshire & Peterborough ICS (65%) and NHS Somerset ICS (65%).
- The lowest success rate was reported by 25-34 years (66%) age group (Figure 4) with younger adults generally having lower levels of success. The age group with the highest rate of success was 75-84 years (83%). In 2022 the age group with lowest levels of success were 25-34 (65%) and the age group with highest levels of success were 16-17 (82%).
- The ethnic group with the highest success rate was White (77%) the group with lowest success rate with ‘Other’ (61%). In 2022 the same groups had highest and lowest success rate, White ethnic group had a success rate of 75% and other ethnic group had a success rate of 59%.

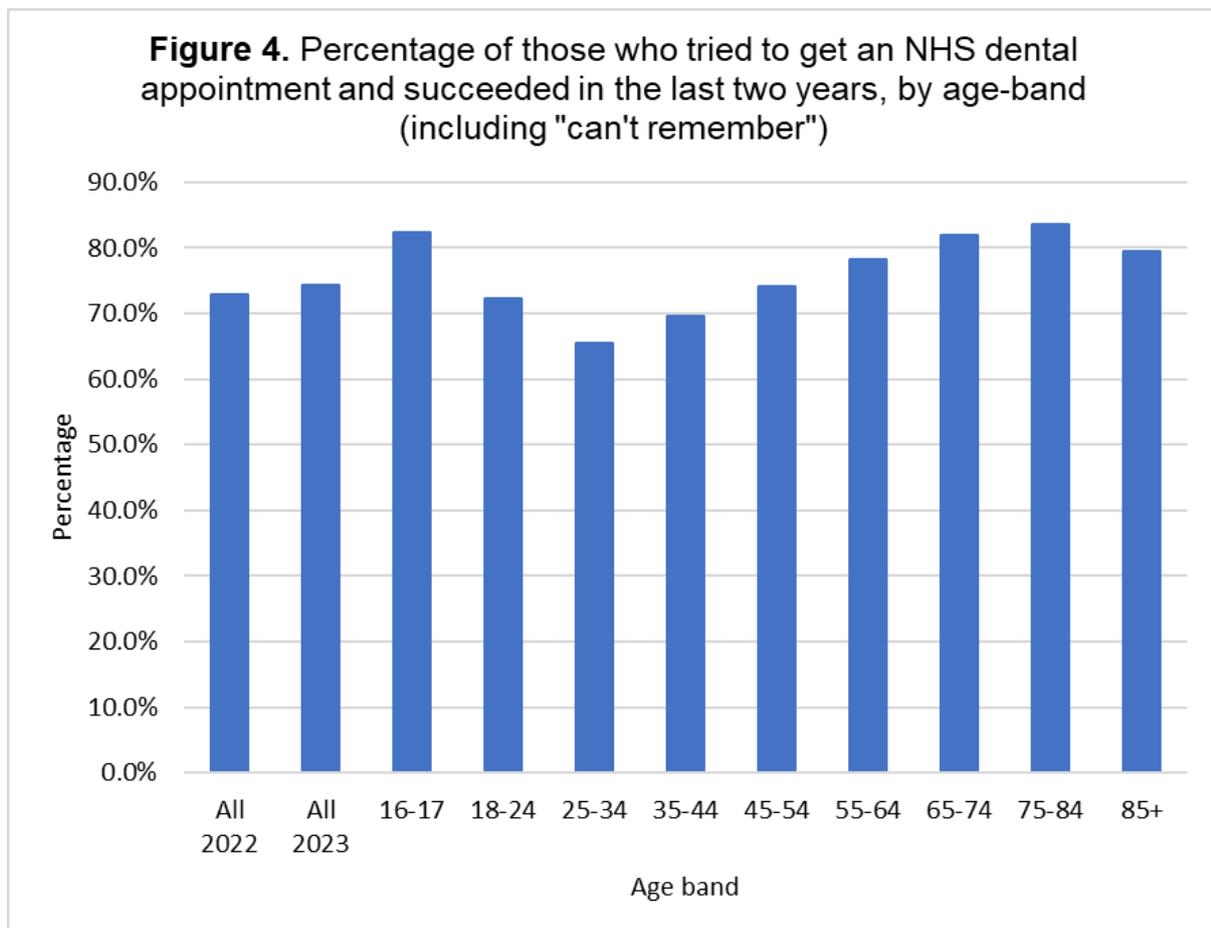
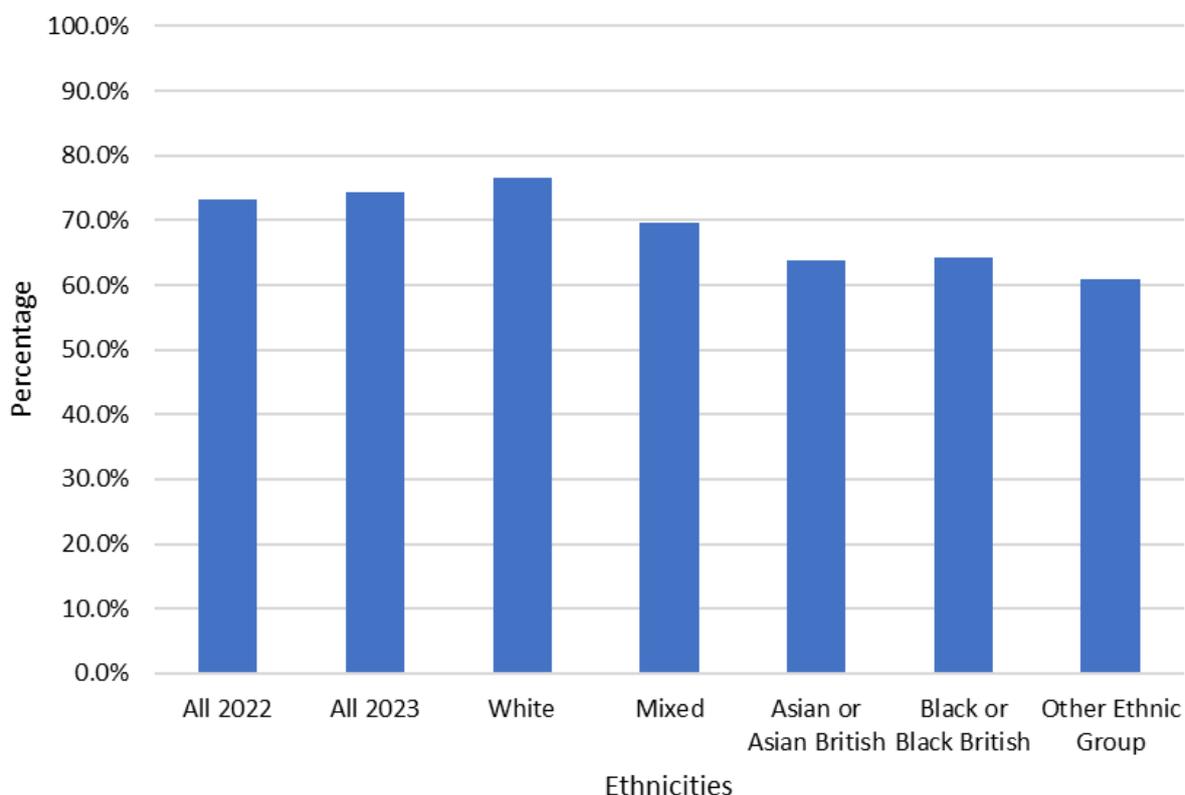
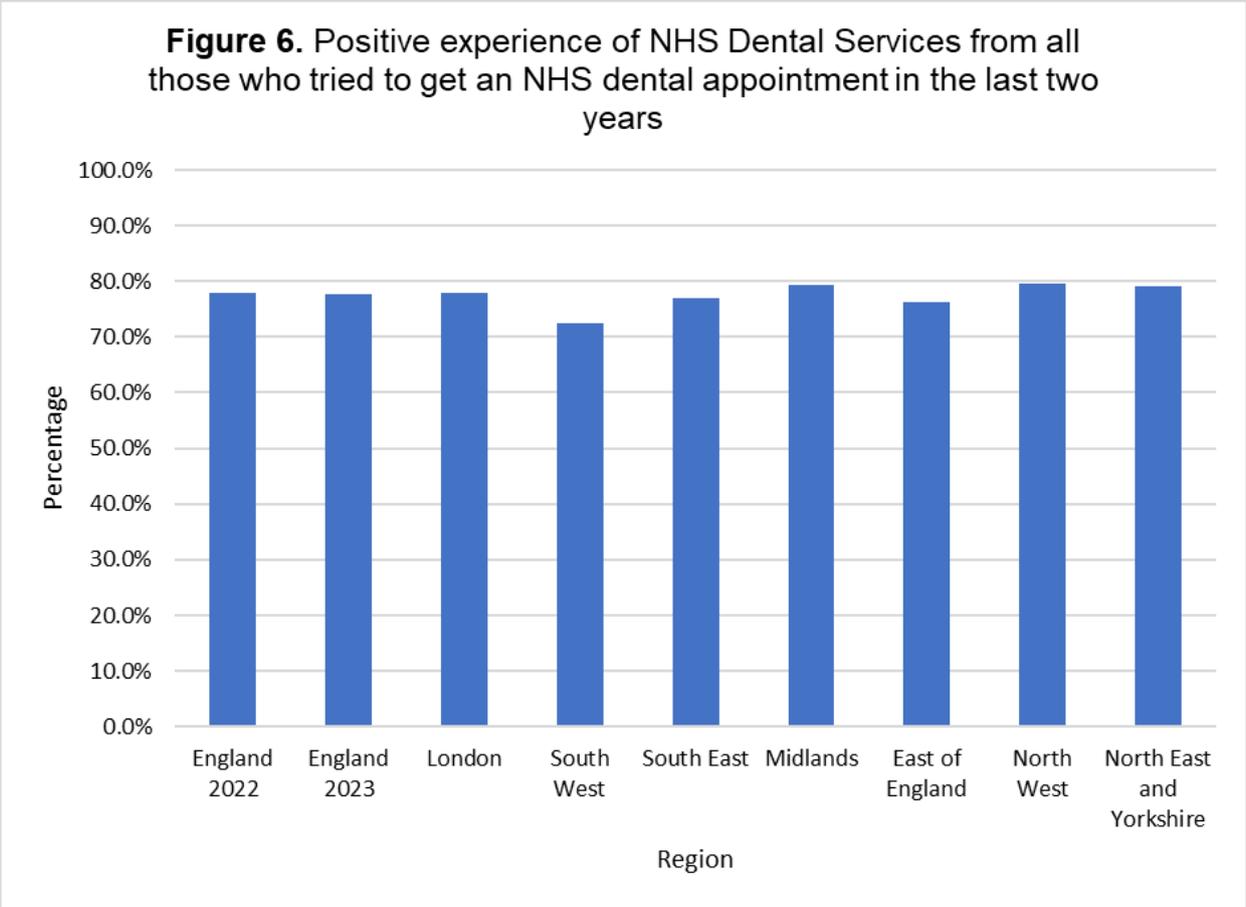


Figure 5. Percentage of those who tried to get an NHS dental appointment and succeeded in the last two years, by ethnicity (including "can't remember")



Overall experience of NHS dental services

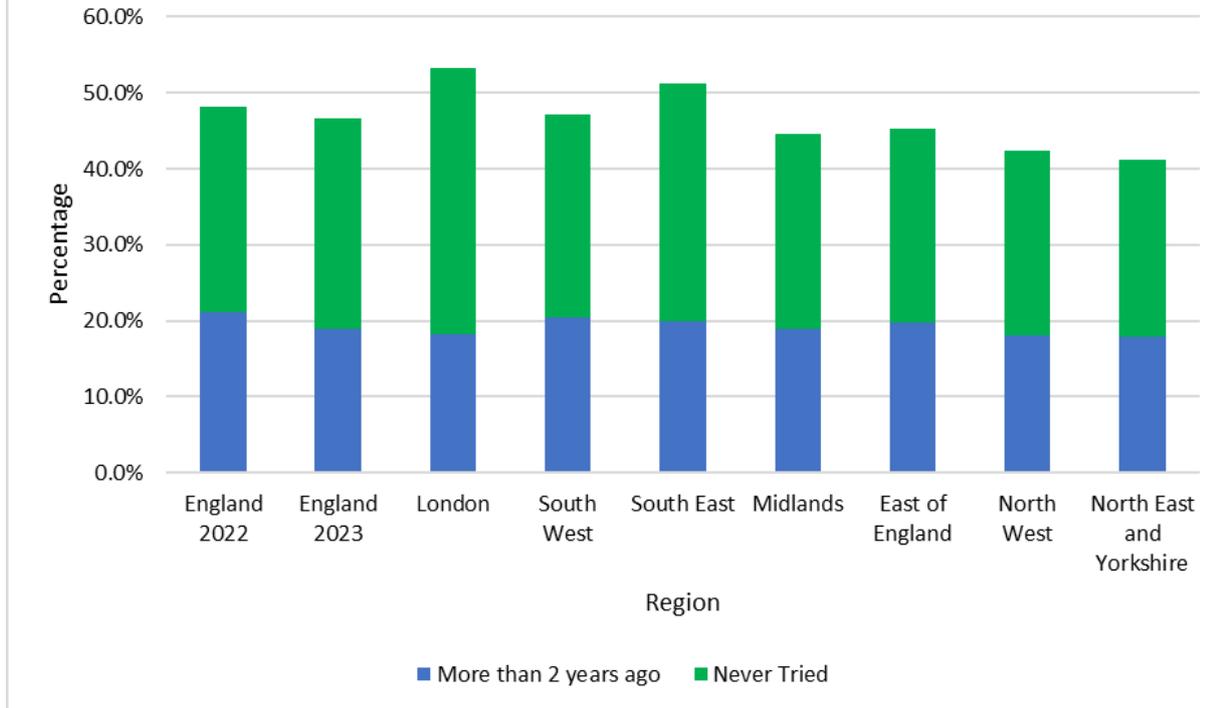
- Of the respondents that tried to get NHS dental care in the last two years, 78% of respondents rated their NHS dental experience as positive. This is the same compared to 2022 which was 78% although lower than 2021 which was 81%.
- In January to March 2023, 46% had a very good experience and 32% had a fairly good experience. Meanwhile 9% said it was neither good nor poor and 6% had a fairly poor experience. This year, there had been an increase of 1% in the proportion of respondents who have had a very poor experience, jumping from 6% to 8%. 2021, in comparison, saw 4% of respondents who had a very poor experience.
- Satisfaction rates with the overall patient experience of NHS dental care was the highest in North West (80%) (Figure 6).



Did not try to get an NHS dental appointment

- In total 47 of all the respondents stated that they had not tried to get an NHS dental appointment in last two years. Of these 28% stated they never tried to get NHS dentist appointment while 19% stated they tried more than 2 years ago (Figure 7).
- For the respondents who have never tried to get an NHS dental appointment, London had the highest proportion with 35%.

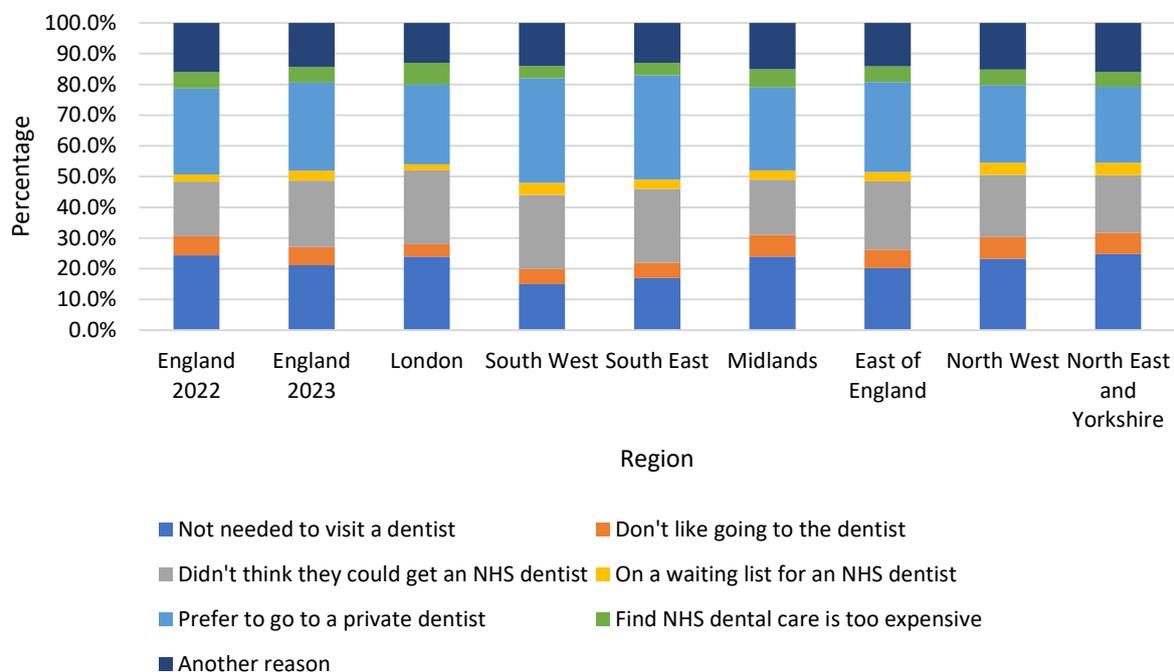
Figure 7. Percentage of all respondents who did not try to get an NHS dental appointment in the last two years (more than two years ago and never tried) by Region



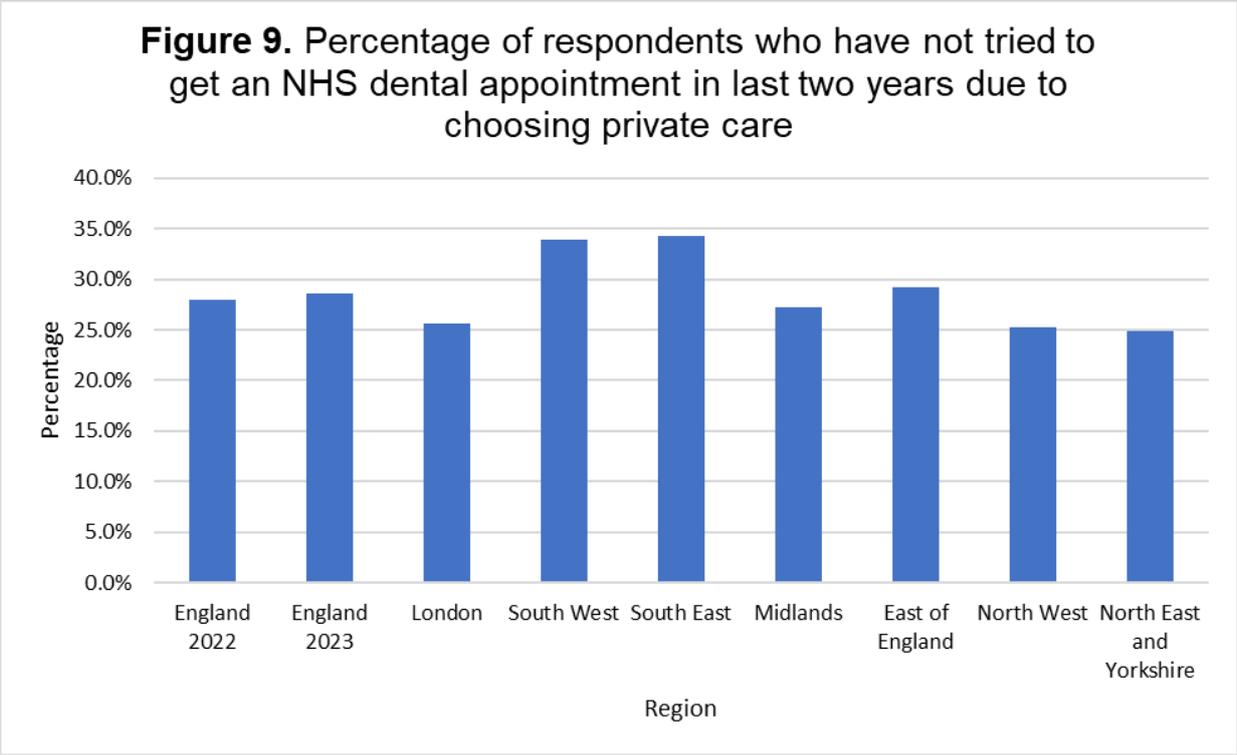
Reasons for not trying to get an appointment

- Excluding people who stated they prefer to go private 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 “Didn't think they could get an NHS dentist” or “not needed to visit a dentist” with 43% of the respondents stating one of these reasons (Figure 8), 22% not thinking they could get an appointment and 21% stating they have not needed to visit. An additional 6% of people stated that haven't tried to make an appointment because they “don't like going to the dentist”.
- Of the respondents that didn't try to get an NHS dental appointment, 24% from London, South East and South West provided their reason as “didn't think they could get an NHS Dentist”. This was the highest proportion of patients who gave this response in comparison to 18% in the Midlands region, the lowest recorded response. Nationally, in 2022, 18% 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”.
- There is a matching proportion of respondents in East of England, North West and, North East and Yorkshire (5%) as well as South West and South East (4%) who have mentioned that they found NHS dental appointment is too expensive.

Figure 8. Percentage of respondents who did not try to get an NHS dental appointment in the last two years, by reason for not trying



- The proportion of respondents who did not need to visit a dentist in England had reduced by 3%, from 24% in 2022 to 21% in 2023. However, the percentage of respondents who didn't think they could get an NHS dentist has increased from 18% to 22% from the previous year, an increase of 4%.
- Across England, the proportion of respondents who prefer to go to a private dentist is 29%. The highest proportion of respondents are in South East (34%) and South West (34%). The lowest proportion are in North West (25%) as well as North East and Yorkshire (25%) (Figure 9). In 2022, both South West and South East had 35% of respondents preferring to go to a private dentist. This is in comparison to 2021 where 43% in South West and 42% in South East indicated their preference to go to a private dentist. It is possible these results are affected by the removal of 'stayed with my dentist when they went private' from the response options. In years prior to 2022, people who gave this response were included as people who preferred to go private.



To get current results (January to March 2023) please click on the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/2023/07/13/gp-patient-survey-dental-statistics-january-to-march-2023-england/>

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/>