

Private Practice Survey

In December 2008, CDHA conducted a survey of dental hygienists who had established their own practice. A total of 106 dental hygienists responded to the survey. This is a very high response rate (approximately 53% to 61%), given that regulatory authorities across Canada informally report that there is a total of 175 to 200 dental hygienists who have established their own practice.

1. Please indicate the location of your private dental hygiene practice? Check all that apply.

Private practices are found predominantly in such locations as long term and residential care facilities, clients' homes, store front locations, and multidisciplinary health clinics.

Responses	Response Frequency
Long-term care facility	40.6%
Clients' private home	28.3%
Residential care facility	27.4%
Store front	27.4%
Multi-disciplinary health clinic	13.2%
Sports arena	4.7%
Community Centre	2.8%
Dental hygienist's home	2.8%
Professional building	2.8%
School	1.9%
Spa	1.9%
Hospital critical care	.9%
Municipal building	.9%

2. In which geographic location do you practice? Check all that apply.

While the majority of dental hygienists practice in urban areas, almost 40 per cent of dental hygienists work in rural areas. Approximately 7 per cent of private practice dental hygienists are providing services in northern or remote locations, and in First Nations Reserves.

Answer Options	Response Frequency
Rural	36.8%
Urban	76.4%
Northern/remote	4.7%
First Nations Reserve	1.9%

3. How many years have you owned your own dental hygiene business?

An overwhelming majority (83%) of dental hygienists have owned their own practice for five years or less.

Answer Options	Response Frequency
0 to 5	83.0%
6 to 10	11.3%
11 to 15	4.7%
16 to 20	0.9%
21 +	0.0%

4. If the federal government dental plan* for First Nations and Inuit peoples reimbursed dental hygienists directly for their services in which of the following locations would you provide services? Indicate all answers that apply. (*dental plan -First Nations Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB), Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB)

The majority of dental hygienists in private practice are ready to provide services to First Nations and Inuit peoples, living in rural (55 %) and urban (65 %) locations. A smaller number of dental hygienists are ready to provide services to northern or remote First Nations and Inuit peoples (16 %), and to First Nations on reserves (33 %).

Answer Options	Response Frequency
Rural First Nations and Inuit peoples (specify town/city)	55.1%
Urban First Nations/Inuit peoples (specify town/city)	65.2%
Northern/remote/ First Nations/Inuit peoples (specify town/city)	15.9%
First Nations clients on reserve (name of reserve)	33.3%

The list below shows the locations where dental hygienists are prepared to provide services for First Nations and Inuit peoples.

RURAL

- Alberta**
Morley;
- Ontario**
Calstock; Garden Village; Georgina; Gogama; Grimsby; Jackson’s Point; King City; Kent; Lambton; Lincoln; Manitoulin district; Matheson; Mattice; Moose Creek; Penetanguishene; Port Colborne; Smooth Rock Falls; Thorold; Wainfleet; West Lincoln
- B.C.**
North Shuswap; Tofino

URBAN

Alberta

Calgary; Canmore; Lloydminster; St. Paul;

Ontario

Barrie; Burlington; Caledonia; Cochrane; Chatham; Cobourg; Foleyet; Fort Erie; Goderich; Hamilton (Dundas); Hearst; Ingersoll; Iroquois Falls; Kirkland Lake; Kitchener-Waterloo; London; Midland; Mississauga; Newmarket; Niagara-on-the-Lake; Niagara Falls; North Bay; Oakville; Ottawa; Owen Sound; Pelham; Peterborough; Sarnia; Simcoe; St. Catharines; St. Thomas; Stratford; Sudbury; Tillsonburg; Timmins; Toronto; Welland; Windsor; Woodstock

B.C.

Abbotsford; Armstrong; Chilliwack; Comox; Cultus Lake; Cranbrook; Duncan; Ladysmith; Nanaimo; Okanagan; Parksville; Powell River; Qualicum Beach; Saanich; Salmon Arm; Sechelt; Sidney; Sooke; Squamish; Ucluelet; Vancouver; Vernon

Saskatchewan

Saskatoon, Regina

Manitoba

The Pas

FIRST NATIONS RESERVES (and general location)

Alberta

Eden Valley (Calgary); Stoney (Calgary); Tsu T'ina (Calgary)

BC

Mount Currie (Squamish); Tsinstikeptum (Westbank);

Ontario

Alderville First Nation (30 km north of Cobourg); Abitibi (Cochrane District, northeastern Ontario); Chapleau (northern Ontario –Sudbury); Christian Island (Georgian Bay, Penetanguishene and Midland); Constance Lake (Cochrane District); Duck Lake(northern Ontario –Sudbury); Flying post (Timmins); Nipissing (north shores of Lake Nipissing, Nipissing District); Matachewan (Timmins); Mattagami (Sudbury District); Mountbatten (Sudbury District, 157 km northeast of Sault Ste Marie); Moravian (Chatham-Kent); Sarnia Indian Reserve (St. Clair River, Sarnia); Six Nations (southeast of Brantford); Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory (Bay of Quinte);

Saskatchewan

Makaoo (Paradise Hill, west central SK); Piapot (Emerald Park, 9km east of Regina); Seekaskootch (Paradise Hill, west central SK)

5. Indicate how frequently your clients use the following payment methods.

The predominant method of payment for dental hygiene services is when the client pays out of pocket. Payment through private dental insurance comes next, followed by federal, provincial and municipal payment methods. Additional methods of payment include: Power of attorney.

Answer Options	Very Rarely	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Very Frequently
Private dental insurance (e.g. Alberta Blue Cross)	4	4	16	23	24
Provincial dental insurance (e.g. Ontario Disability Support Program)	9	15	18	8	4
Federal dental insurance (FNIHB, NIHB or Public Service Dental Care plan, or Veterans Affairs)	11	5	25	11	3
Municipal payor (e.g. City of Edmonton)	3	7	13	2	2
Client pays out of pocket	0	3	12	30	40
Health institution/organization	6	8	4	5	3

6. Indicate which sentence describes your situation? Check all that apply. I use:

The majority of dental hygienists work in a fixed location (60%), followed by those in mobile practices (55%). They use both mobile dental hygiene equipment and equipment at a stationary location.

Answer Options	Response Frequency	Response Count
mobile dental hygiene equipment.	56.4%	53
dental hygiene equipment at the location where I practice.	57.4%	54

7. Where do you provide the following services? Check all the apply.

Dental hygienists provide **oral health education group sessions for the public** in their private dental hygiene office (25%), schools (22%), long term care facilities (21%), residential care facilities (17%), seniors' community centres (16%), and daycare centres (13%). A smaller number of dental hygienists also provide these sessions in community health centres, hospitals, and health care organizations, to boy scout camps, local organizations for physically disabled, corporate office settings with groups of employees.

Dental hygienists provide **oral health education group sessions for groups of professionals** in long term care facilities (24%), and residential care facilities (16%). A smaller number of dental hygienists also provide these sessions in their private dental hygiene office, hospitals, health care organizations, community health centres, schools, seniors community centres and daycares.

Dental hygienists provide **one-on-one coaching/consulting for other health professionals** in long term care facilities (25%), residential care facilities (17%), and in their own private dental hygiene office ((17%). A smaller number of dental hygienists also provide this service in hospitals, community health centres, schools, and seniors community centres. One respondent noted that they teach a mouth care program in a college setting, to licensed nurse practitioners and health care aides.

It is also interesting to note that one respondent indicated that they provide on-line answers to questions from the public.

Answer Options	Oral health education group sessions for the public	Oral health education group sessions for groups of professionals	One-on-one coaching/consulting for other health professionals	Response Count
Your private dental hygiene office	23	8	16	36
Long-term care facility	19	22	23	40
Residential care facility	16	15	16	30
Community health centre	11	4	4	13
Hospital	5	7	8	11
School	20	3	3	23
Daycare	12	2	0	14
Seniors community centres	15	3	1	16
Health care organization	5	5	1	8
Do not provide	15	21	16	32
Other, specify below:	3	4	3	10

8. Which health professionals do you collaborate with? Check all that apply.

Dental hygienists engage in interprofessional collaboration with a wide range of health professionals.

- Almost all dental hygienists (91%) collaborate with dentists.
- The majority of dental hygienists collaborate with the following health professionals: denturists (69%), and physicians (67%).
- Just under half of dental hygienists collaborate with registered nurses (48%); registered practical nurses (35%); dieticians (25%); occupational therapists (13%).
- A small number of dental hygienists collaborate with speech language therapists (8%), massage therapists (5%), audiologists and chiropractors (4%), physiotherapists, pharmacists, oral surgeons and social workers (3%)
- One or two dental hygienists also reported collaborating with the following health professionals: director of care/administrators, dysphasia team, osteopath, Chinese medicine, naturopath, fitness coach, other dental hygienists in private practice, orthodontist, endodontist, dental technician, optician, acupuncturist.

	Response Frequency
Dentists	91.3%
Denturists	68.5%
Physicians	67.4%
Registered Nurses	47.8%
Personal Support Workers	41.3%
Registered Practical Nurses	34.8%
Dieticians	25.0%
Occupational Therapists	13.0%
Speech language therapists	7.6%
massage therapists	5.4%
Audiologists	4.3%
Chiropractors	4.3%
physiotherapist	3.2%
Pharmacists	3.2%
oral surgeons	3.2%
Social workers	3.2%

9. Do you think access to oral health care is increasing because of an increase in the number of private dental hygiene businesses?

Dental hygienists overwhelmingly (77%) think that access to oral health care is increasing because of an increase in the number of private dental hygiene businesses.

Answer Options	Response Frequency
Yes	77.2%
No	3.3%
I do not know	19.6%

Respondents provided the following reasons to explain why an increase in the number of dental hygiene businesses is resulting in increased access to care.

Better Access (45%)

- Increased accessibility associated with mobile units, which take services out of the office and to locations where the clients need them
- Reaching clients who cannot go to a dental office
- Physical travel is eliminated for homebound
- Dental hygienists (DH) are seeing clients who could not get into the dental office frequently enough
- Convenient care provided to residential clients and homebound where clients live
- Access to a dental hygienist directly, without having to see a dentist
- Dental care that meets the needs of the client
- Clients who do not commonly access care through a dental office are now accessing DH services; seeing clients who may not be seen elsewhere
- Hundreds of my clients would have no care at all if I did not go to see them in their settings
- I am now providing on-site dental hygiene care at residential facilities that previously offered no services in the past
- Wide spectrum of service hours — more flexibility in hours of operation

More Choice — Increased Options (34%)

- Unique options
- Alternative options for oral health services
- Increased flexibility for those not wanting services of a dentist
- Seeing clients who would not go to a dentist's office e.g. those with dentures;

Increased Affordability (22%)

- Lower fees
- Dental hygienists address cost of treatment up front so client is prepared
- Cost effective
- More affordable for those without dental insurance
- I have seen many clients with no dental coverage waiting years to have their teeth cleaned

Less Stress (19%)

- Reduced anxiety when visiting a dental hygiene centre
- Reaching those that are scared of going to the dentist, but are open to having their teeth cleaned
- Less intimidating
- Low stress, increased comfort
- Clients may fear visiting a dentist but be more comfortable with a hygienist
- Clients are nervous/afraid of dentists, and are happy to come to a dentist-free clinic
- DH eases them into understanding what treatment the dentist may use, and help to alleviate their fears.
- Clients are apprehensive to see DDS but will see dh
- More relaxed environment;
- Clients who are not comfortable in a dental office are more comfortable in a DH setting
- Doesn't involve needles

10. Do you see a difference in the client population you are serving now in your private dental hygiene business, compared to the client population that you served prior to opening your business?

Dental hygienists report the following changes in the client population that they are serving now, compared to the population that they served prior to opening their business:

- 37 per cent report a significant increase in the senior client population.
- There has been no change in the Aboriginal client population (59 %).
- There has been no change in the recent immigrant client population (55%, or 46 respondents)
- Equal numbers (12%) report an increase and a decrease in the children client population, with 35 per cent reporting this population is unchanged.
- A range of responses were reported for the persons with a disability client population - from unchanged - 35 per cent; to moderate increase – 24 per cent; to significant increase – 35 per cent.

Answer Options	Significant Decrease	Moderate Decrease	Decrease	Unchanged	Moderate Increase	Significant Increase
Aboriginal people (First Nations and Inuit)	6	0	6	49	0	1
Recent immigrants	1	0	5	46	13	1
Children	9	3	13	29	13	0
Seniors	0	1	4	21	24	31
Persons with a disability	1	3	6	29	20	19

11. Which of the following best indicates your primary practice area, the one at which you spend the most hours per week?

Dental hygienists primary area of practice includes three predominant areas: private dental hygiene practice (40 %), private dental practice (23%), and long term and residential care facilities (20 %)

Answer Options	Response Frequency
Private Dental Hygiene Practice	40.5%
Private Dental Practice	22.6%
Long-term Care Facility	15.5%
Residential Care Facility	4.8%
Dental Hygiene Practice Owned by Someone who is not a Dental hygienist	3.6%
Post-secondary Education	1.2%
Dental hygiene practice that is part of a Chain or Franchise	0.0%
Administration	0.0%
Research	1.2%
50% private dh practice; 50% First Nations reserve contracting to a dentist	1.2%
50% dh office; 50% long term care	1.2%
Integrative Health Care Centre	
Instructor at a Dental Hygiene School	
Public Health	0.0%
Hospital	0.0%

12. Which of the following best indicates your secondary practice area?

Twenty five per cent of dental hygienists indicated that their secondary practice area is a private dental hygiene practice. Other secondary practice environments included: private dental practice (16%), dental hygiene practice owned by someone who is not a dental hygienist (4.8%), long term and residential care facility (17%), administration (4.8%), post-secondary education (3.6%), and hospital (2.4%)

Answer Options	Response Frequency
Private Dental Hygiene Practice (including breath odour clinic and sports mouthguard clinics)	25%
No secondary practice	17.9%
Private Dental Practice	15.5%
Dental Hygiene Practice Owned by someone who is not a Dental Hygienist	4.8%
Long-term Care Facility	8.3%
Residential Care Facility	8.3%
Administration	4.8%
Post-secondary Education	3.6%
Hospital	2.4%
Public Health	1.2%
Dental Hygiene Practice that is part of a Chain or Franchise	0.0%

13. In which province / territory do you currently work? Check all that apply.

Dental hygienists from the following provinces responded to the survey: Ontario (66%), British Columbia (20%), Alberta 12%, and Saskatchewan (2%).

14. How many years have you been practicing dental hygiene?

Half of dental hygienists have been practising dental hygiene for 11 to 20 years. A small number of dental hygienists (13%) have been in practice for 5 or less years.

Answer Options	Response Frequency
11 to 15	28.6%
16 to 20	21.4%
21 to 25	14.3%
0 to 5	13.1%
6 to 10	11.9%
26 to 30	7.1%
36+	2.4%
31 to 35	1.2%

15. Indicate your educational credentials. Check all that apply.

The majority (79%) of dental hygienists in private practice possess a diploma in dental hygiene. Other educational backgrounds include bachelor's degree (9%), master's degree (2%), and doctorate (2%).

Answer Options	Diploma	Baccalaureate	Masters	Doctorate
Dental Hygiene	83	1	0	0
Dental Science	1	3	0	0
Education	6	5	2	0
Health	1	0	0	1
Social Science	2	0	1	0
Other disciplines	11	1	1	1

16. What is your gender?

An overwhelming majority (92%) of dental hygienists in private practice are female, with a small percentage of (8%) males.

17. What is your age?

Almost 50 per cent of private practice dental hygienist are aged 35 to 44 years. The age group, 45–59 years ranks next and, comprises 37 per cent of dental hygienists. The age group 25 to 34 comprises 14 per cent of dental hygienists, and the age group 60 and older, comprises 2 per cent of dental hygienists.

Answer Options	Response Frequency
under 20	0.0%
20 to 24	0.0%
25 to 29	2.4%
30 to 34	11.9%
35 to 39	21.4%
40 to 44	25.0%
45 to 49	19.0%
50 to 59	17.9%
60 +	2.4%

18. What languages are your services provided in?

Dental hygienists provide services predominantly in English (99%) and French (13%), with 3 per cent and less providing services in Italian, Estonian, German, Greek, Chinese, Mandarin, Hindi and Punjabi.