



Pediatric Dentists’ Job Satisfaction: A National Survey

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Introduction

- Career satisfaction is a complex, multifactorial concept that encompasses relationships, responsibilities, and benefits (Fernández-Salinerio et al., 2020).
- More literature exists describing the career satisfaction with general dentistry than that of pediatric dentistry, however a previous study found a relatively high level of satisfaction among pediatric dentists (Bates et al., 2013).
- Parental expectations and demands on pediatric dentists continue to evolve (Oliver et al., 2015).
- Access to care continues to be a challenge, especially for patients from areas with low insurance reimbursement rates and few dental providers (Chalmers et al., 2017).

Objective

The purpose of this study was to determine pediatric dentists’ career satisfaction and to identify factors which influence their satisfaction.

Methods

- A 65-item digital survey was modified from “Bates et al., (2013)” to assess pediatric dentists’ career satisfaction.
 - 8 demographic questions related to gender, age, relationship status, and race
 - 19 practice characteristics related to location, setting, patient demographics
 - 34 questions based on the Shugerman et al. Professional Satisfaction Scale
 - 4 questions related to COVID and personal well-being
- The survey was distributed via REDCapTM from August 4, 2021 to September 14, 2021 to AAPD members (n=6322) with 2- and 4-week reminder emails.

Statistical Analysis

- Descriptive statistics provided an overview of participant characteristics in the study.
- Categorical and continuous variables were presented with frequencies and percentages or means, standard deviation, median, and range, respectively.
- Factors related to job and career satisfaction were assessed using chi-square test, Fisher’s exact test, and non-parametric Wilcoxon rank-sum test or Kruskal-Wallis test, as appropriate (p<0.5).

Results

- Of the 6322 emails sent, 669 usable responses were received (11%).
- Even with the relatively low response rate, the current study revealed many significant results with a statistical power of 93.5%.
- 52.9% were males, the mean age was 48.9±13.2 years, 83.8% were married, and 79.9% had children.
- The majority of respondents were Causcasian (80.1%; n=528), followed by Asian (10.2%; n=67), African American (5.0%; n=33), multiracial (2.6%; n=17), Middle Eastern (1.2%; n=8), and any other race (<1%; n=6).
- 57.5% were practice owners or partners, 33.4% associates or employees, and 9.1% faculty members.
- Respondents practiced 31.8±9.8 hours per week and saw 118.6±76 patients per week.
- Patient demographics consisted of private insurance (53.1±29%), Medicaid (37.1±32.4%), and self-pay (11.9±12.1%).

- Providers averaged 4.3±3.7 dental assistants, 1.5±2.1 dental hygienists, 3.0±3.5 front office personnel, 1.0±1.4 office or practice managers, and 1.0±2.8 other auxiliaries.
- Of their time, respondents spent 78.4±24.4% on clinical practice, 13.4±13.6% on administration, and 1.0±2.8% on teaching.

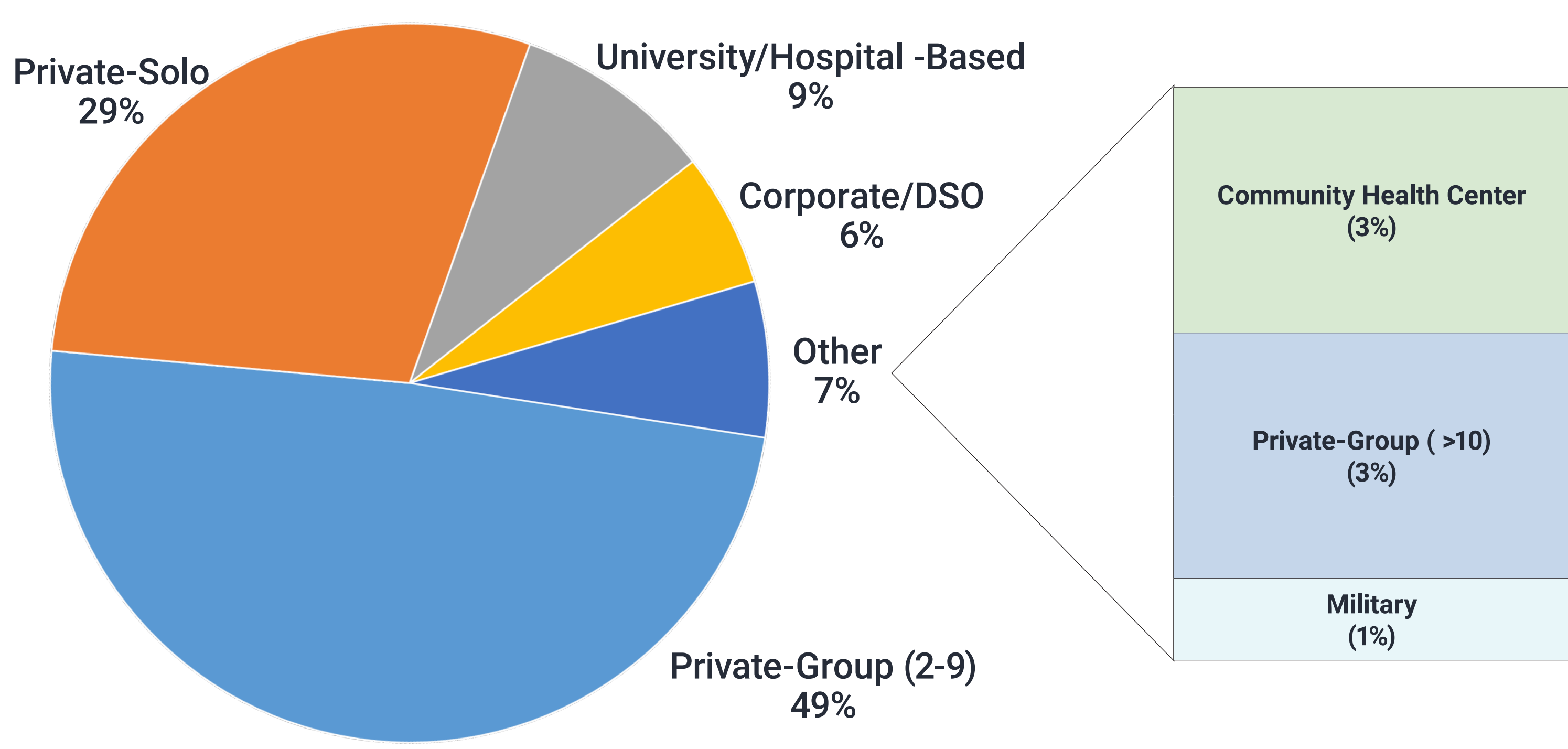


Figure 1: Primary Practice Setting

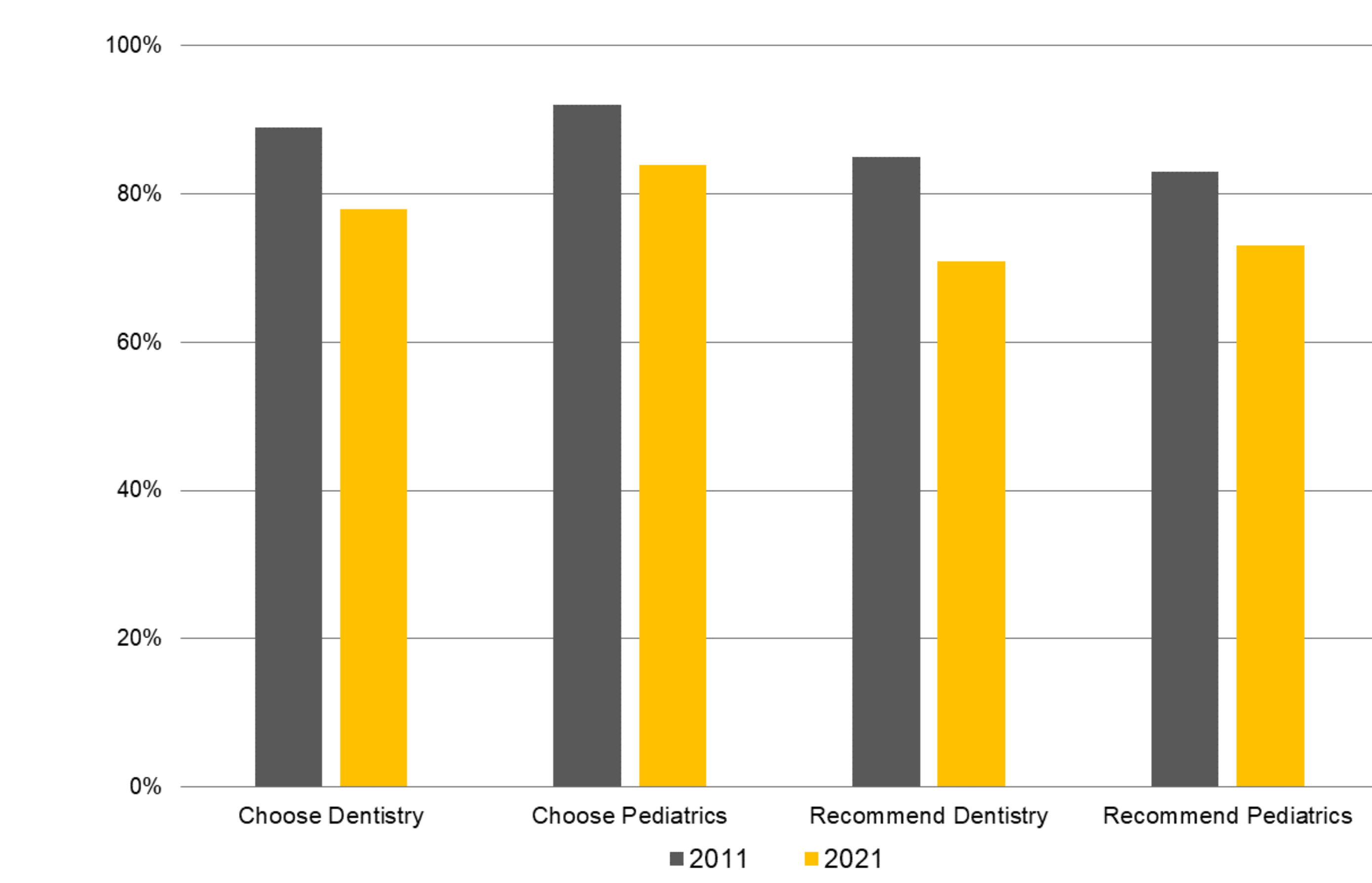


Figure 2: Professional Satisfaction Scale Change from 2011 to 2021
2011 Source: Bates LF, Buehler AM, Boynton JR, Majewski RF, Inglehart MR. Pediatric dentists’ job satisfaction results of a national survey. *Pediatr Dent.* 2013;35(4):343-350.

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- Males were more satisfied with staff (82.6% vs. 73.1%; p=0.001), income (81.1% vs. 70.2%; p=0.002), practice management (41.4% vs. 27.2%; p<0.001), well-being (61.7% vs. 49.4%; p=0.003), and personal time (62.5% vs. 46%; p<0.001).
- Older respondents were more satisfied regarding patient relations, respect, overall professional satisfaction, professional time, income, practice management, well-being, personal time, professional relations, and stress as well as career satisfaction (p<0.05).
- Married respondents were more satisfied with staff (80% vs. 65%; p=0.001) and income (77.8% vs. 62.5%; p=0.022).
- Respondents who had children were more satisfied with patient relations (93.2% vs. 85.7%; p=0.002), respect (82.4% vs. 66.9%; p<0.001), staff (81.8% vs. 64.7%; p<0.001), income (78.4% vs. 66.9%; p=0.008), practice management (37.7% vs. 25.6%; p=0.001), professional relations (88.6% vs. 77.4%; p<0.001), and overall professional satisfaction (71.6% vs. 52.6%; p<0.001).
- Caucasians were more satisfied with income (79.7% vs. 63.4%; p<0.001), practice management (37.3% vs. 27.5%; p=0.013), personal time (57.4% vs. 45%; p=0.018), and professional environment (66.4% vs. 55.7%; p=0.038).
- Solo or private group practitioners were more satisfied with staff (87.5% or 75.7% vs. 70.5%; p<0.001), income (75% or 79.6% vs. 68%; p=0.011), practice management (43.2% or 35.5% vs. 19.7%; p<0.001), and professional relations (87.4% or 89.3% vs. 77.9%; p=0.01).
- Solo practitioners were less satisfied with their professional time (57.8% vs. 69.5% or 68%; p=0.023).
- Respondents who were practicing in suburban or urban areas were more satisfied with professional relations than those in rural areas (90.7% or 82.1% vs. 71.4%; p<0.001).
- Owners, partners or faculty members were more satisfied with their overall career when compared to associates or employees (74.2% or 73.3% vs. 62.4%; p=0.003).
- Dentists practicing less than 40 hours per week were more satisfied with delivery of care (95% vs. 88.4%; p=0.005), respect (82.2% vs. 67.1%; p<0.001), professional time (68.2% vs. 54.1%; p<0.001), income (78.6% vs. 66.4%; p=0.010), well-being (57.9% vs. 48%; p=0.028), personal time (62.5% vs. 27.4%; p<0.001), professional relations (89.9% vs. 74.5%; p<0.001), and overall professional satisfaction (69.7% vs. 58.2%; p=0.001).
- Dentists who treated less than 25% of patients with Medicaid were more likely to be satisfied with staff, income, practice management, personal time, and professional relations (p<0.05).
- COVID-19 had a negative impact on the professional and personal lives of 61% of respondents.
- Dentistry had a negative impact on the physical and mental well-being of 44% of respondents.

Limitations

- Relatively low response rate
- Not as relevant for pediatric dentists practicing in alternative settings
- Lack of knowledge regarding long-term implications of COVID-19 within dentistry

Conclusions

- Pediatric dentistry maintains a high level of career satisfaction despite a significant satisfaction decrease over the last 10 years.
- Older practitioners, males, and those with children tended to be more satisfied with their overall career.
- Referring to other specialists was reported as challenging for young practitioners, rural dentists, and those treating greater than 25% of patients with Medicaid.
- Overall, the recent decrease in career satisfaction may influence future professional appeal and retention in the field of pediatric dentistry.