

Poll: NHS Dentistry 2025

In January 2025, Healthwatch in Sussex sought people's experiences of NHS Dentistry. We previously asked questions about NHS Dentistry in a poll in January 2023 and wanted to see if there had been any changes over the past two years.

In January 2023, 220 people from across Sussex shared their views with us and in January 2025, 595 people responded to our dentistry poll.

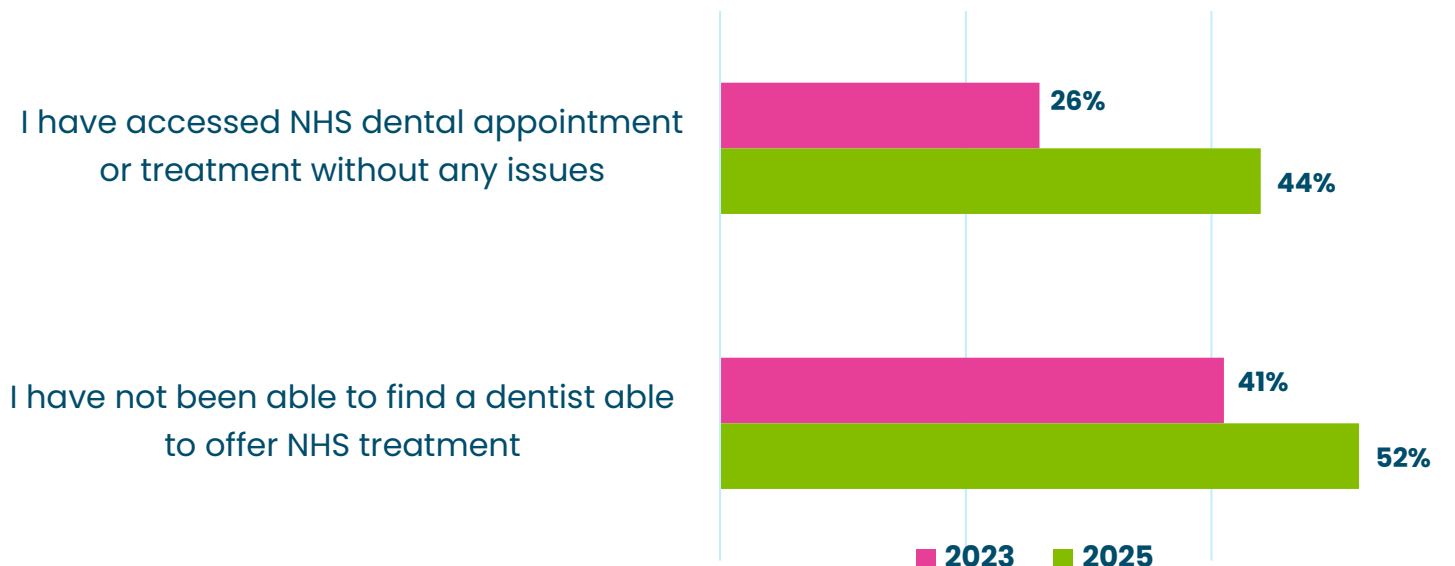
Accessing NHS Dental services:

More than half our respondents (52%) indicated it is a struggle to access a dentist able to offer NHS treatment, which is higher than in 2023 (41%).

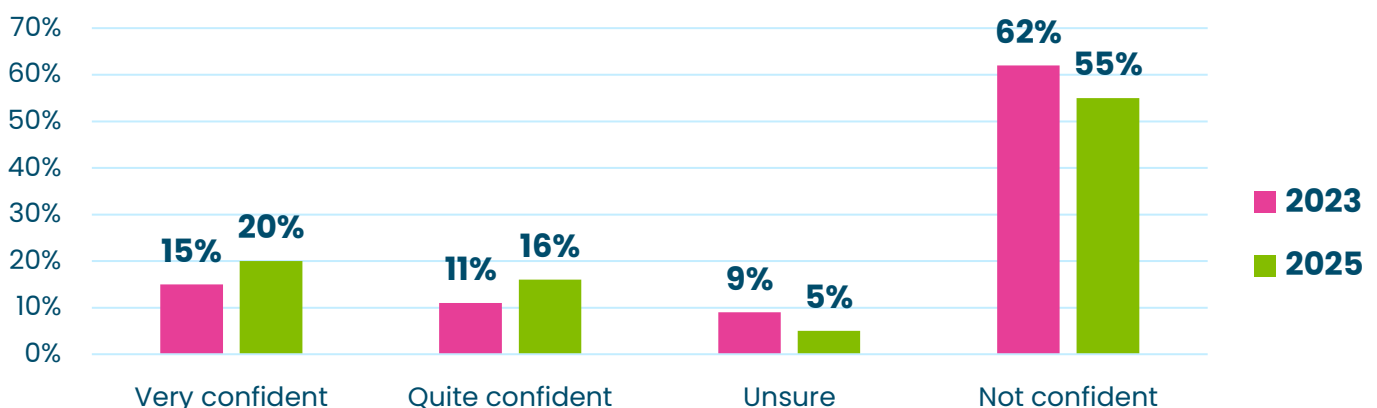
However, we saw an increase in the proportion of respondents who said they were able to access NHS dentistry without any issues in 2025 (44%), compared to 2023 (26%).

We also saw a decrease in the proportion of respondents in 2025 (55%) who were not confident about accessing NHS dental services in the next 12 months, compared to 2023 (62%).

Have you experienced any of the following over the last 12 months?

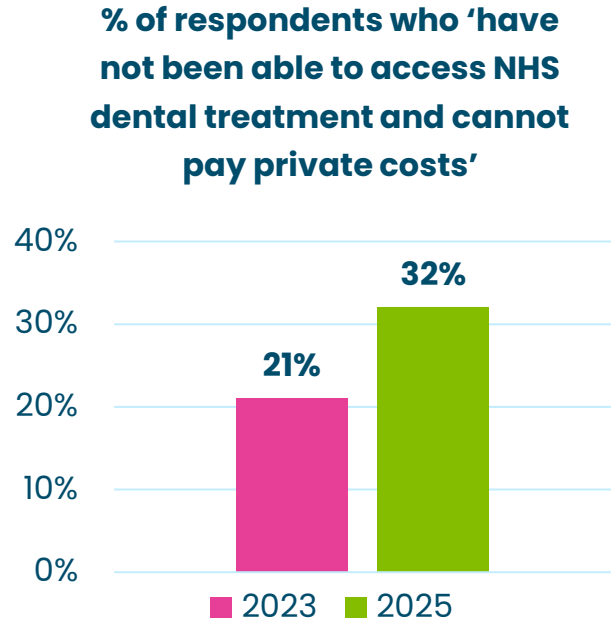
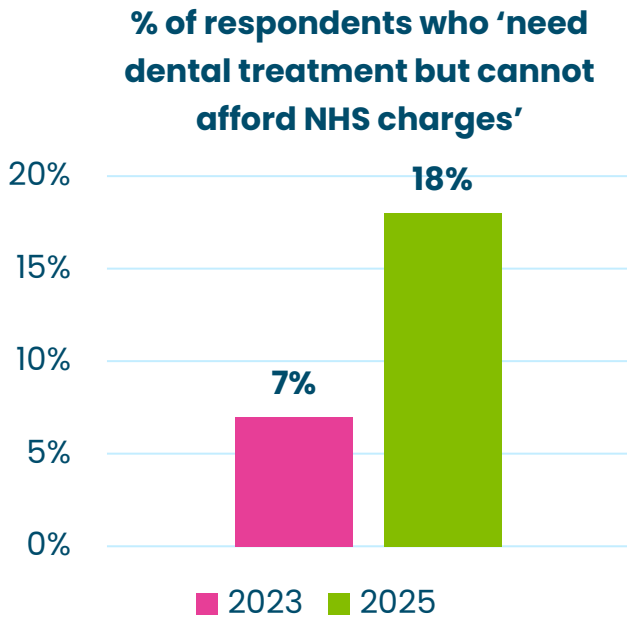


Thinking about the next 12 months, how confident do you feel that you will be able to access NHS dental services for yourself or your family when you need them?



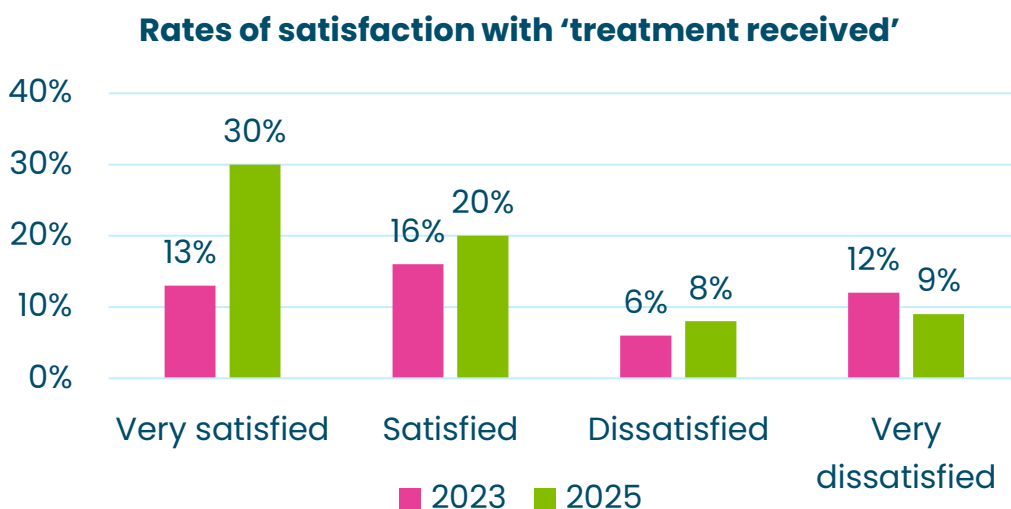
Our results show that in 2025, a greater percentage of respondents (40%) are paying for treatment privately as they could not find any NHS dentists, compared to 22% in 2023, or to access an appointment or treatment more quickly (27% in 2025 compared to 5% in 2023).

Costs of Dentistry: Our results show a greater proportion of people are struggling to pay for dental treatment in 2025 compared to 2023. A growing percentage are unable to afford either NHS charges for dental treatment or private treatment costs as the bar charts below demonstrate:



Satisfaction with NHS dentistry: Our polls asked respondents to rate their levels of satisfaction with eight aspects of dental services. Rates of satisfaction with 'ability to find a dentist offering NHS treatment' increased, with 42% being very satisfied/satisfied in 2025, compared to 26% in 2023.

Rates of satisfaction with 'treatment received' also increased. In 2025, 50% of respondents report being 'very satisfied/satisfied' with treatment received, compared to 29% in 2023. We also a slight decrease in 'very dissatisfied' responses, down to from 12% in 2023 to 9% in 2025, as the chart below demonstrates:



Rates of satisfaction with services in 2025 were lowest with the Sussex Dental Helpline and Emergency Dental Services. 49% of respondents who had used Emergency Dental services and 50% of respondents using the Sussex Dental Helpline were 'very dissatisfied'. [Note: these services were not included in the 2023 poll]

Respondents to our 2025 poll told us:

That many people are still struggling to find NHS dentists in Sussex (121 comments):

"Is impossible to obtain NHS dentistry now [...] My teeth are dreadful."

"Honestly, I just don't think [NHS dentists] exist in Brighton. It's impossible to register".

"It is an absolute shambles, and a huge risk to public health. NHS dentistry does not exist".

"The lack of NHS dentistry is causing some major problems with people's health and wellbeing. My daughter has been kept with her Dentist on the NHS because of her Autism, but both myself and her dad have not been able to find an NHS dentist within the East Sussex area".

That dentistry is expensive –both for those having to pay for private treatment and for those paying NHS charges for dental treatment (56 comments) :

"I used to go for 6 month check ups. The costs are so high now that I can't afford check ups. I just hope I don't need treatment".

"My NHS dentist closed their books to all their NHS adult patients. I am now seen by them as a private patient. [...] I struggle to pay hygienist and check-up costs from my salary".

"I am 74 and looking at the prospect of having no further dentistry because I can't afford it. The one time I did go to a private practice out of desperation, it persuaded me that any future appointments would bankrupt me.

"My children have now left education and are on low wages. I am now having to take loans out to pay for their dental work".

That some NHS dentists are providing a poor service (38 comments):

"Constant cancellation of appointments, general distain from dentist, no consistency of care, no discussions on care options."

"I've been forced into a position where I have no choice but to join a practice [where] you never see the same dentist".

"Although I was able to get NHS dentist appointments, they were reluctant to do any of the work I needed. They claimed they were too busy, or it was too difficult or specialised an area."

Tell us your experience

We always want to hear more about people's experiences of health and care services.

Share your story with your local Healthwatch:

Healthwatch Brighton & Hove

info@healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk or 01273 234 040

Healthwatch East Sussex

enquiries@healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk or 0333 101 4007

Healthwatch West Sussex

helpdesk@healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk or 0300 012 0122