



THE 2024 DENTAL PATIENT SURVEY REPORT

How Patients Research and Choose
Dentists in the Digital Age



We wanted to know how dental patients utilize the Internet to research and select their dentists. Patients have never had more options when it comes to their care – not to mention more data to parse as they choose their provider. Understanding what people are looking for and

what's important to them means that dentists can better adapt their digital marketing strategies to meet patients where they are. So, in order to help understand that better, we put together this simple survey.

Methodology: Who answered these questions?

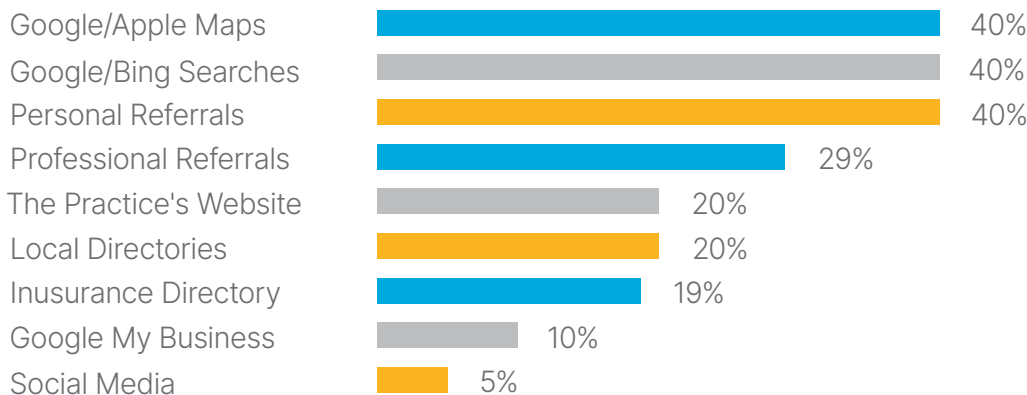
To get accurate data encompassing as many patients as possible, we polled 450 people from across a broad range of age groups, income ranges, and from different areas of the United States. All of the patients polled indicated they had visited the dentist within the last two years. We did not ask our respondents to indicate which kind of dentist they had visited, so these responses apply to all kinds of dentistry and all types of procedures.

1

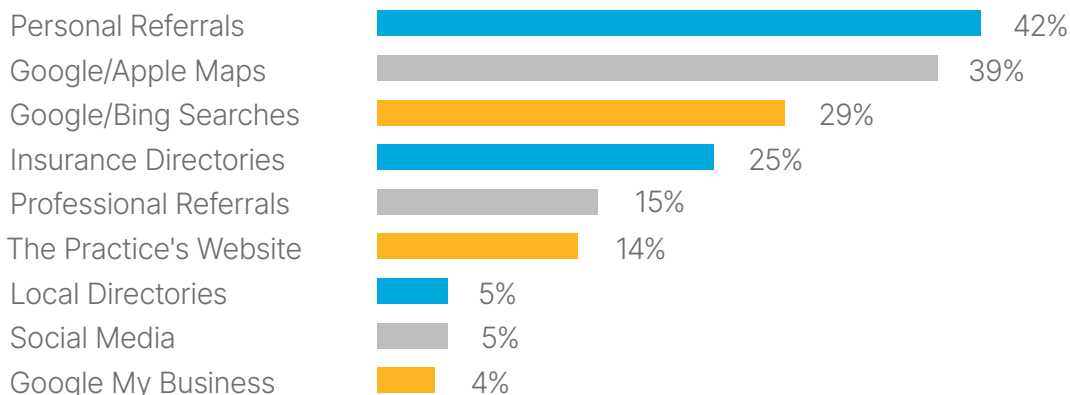
Looking at this data by generation, it's clear that different generations are utilizing different sources to research. Personal referrals were the highest category for each age group, but the numbers decreased as the ages decreased, with the youngest generation indicating that they utilize personal referrals at the same rate as Google or Apple Maps and searching on Google or Bing.

What sources do you use as you research dental providers?

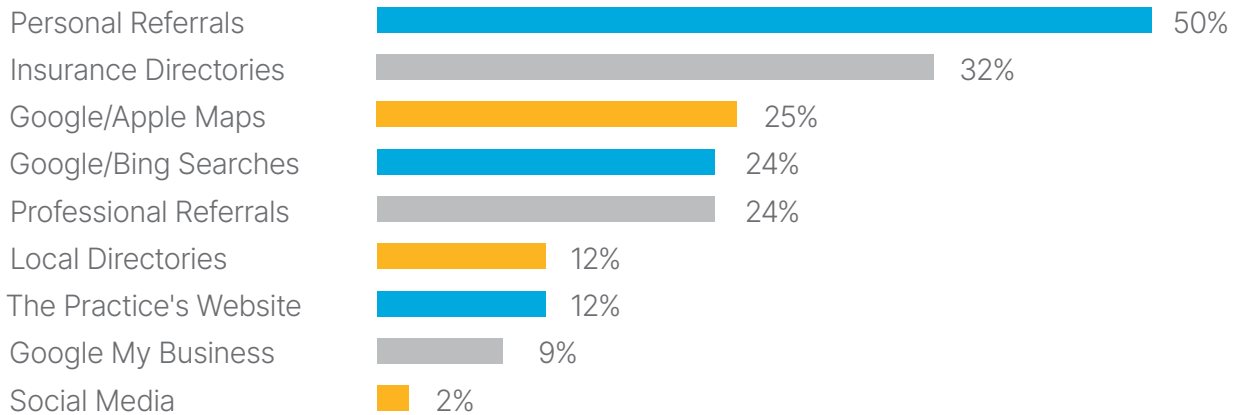
What sources do patients aged 18-29 use to research dental providers?



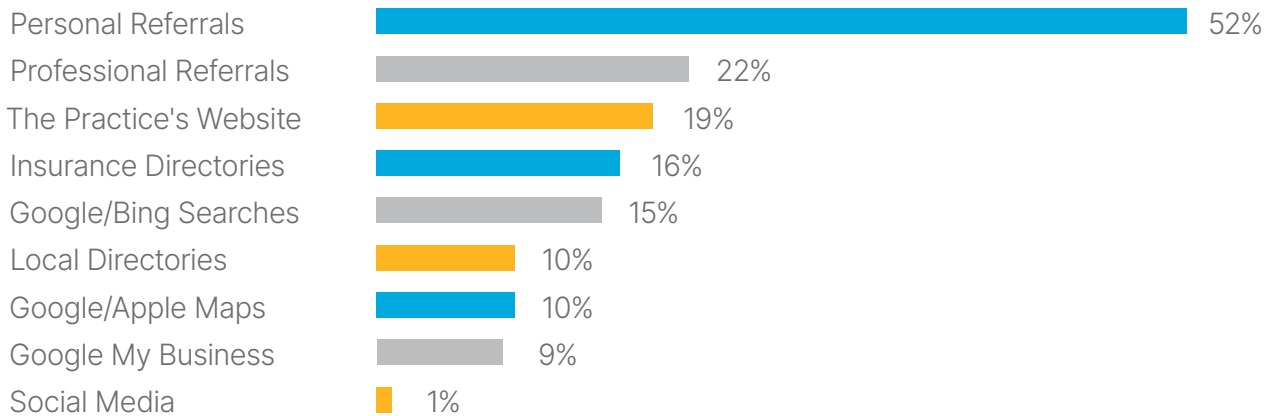
What sources do patients aged 30-44 use to research dental providers?



What sources do patients aged 45-59 use to research dental providers?



What sources do patients aged 60+ use to research dental providers?



INSIGHT

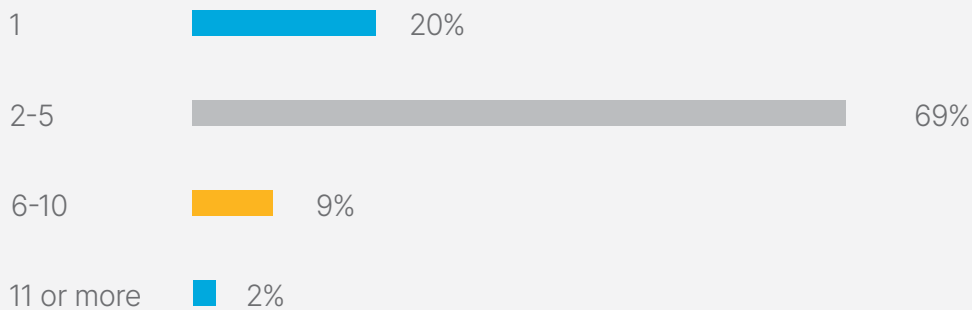
While personal referrals are still incredibly important to all generations, this data demonstrates that there's a sea change coming in the way that patients research and choose their healthcare providers. Every year, the patients in a dental provider's office are more likely to have utilized a digital platform to research them before making the appointment. The fact that personal

referrals are still such a widely utilized method of research, however, tells us that people still trust the word of their family and friends alongside the information they find on the Internet. Since these numbers are only increasing, dentists need to get their practices online now and make sure their marketing is helping them get found.

2

How many dental providers do you compare when searching for a new one?

Nearly 70% of the people we polled told us they compare 2-5 providers before choosing one. Only 20% of the people we polled indicated they look at one provider, which means that 80% of the patients we polled are comparing multiple dentists before choosing one.



INSIGHT

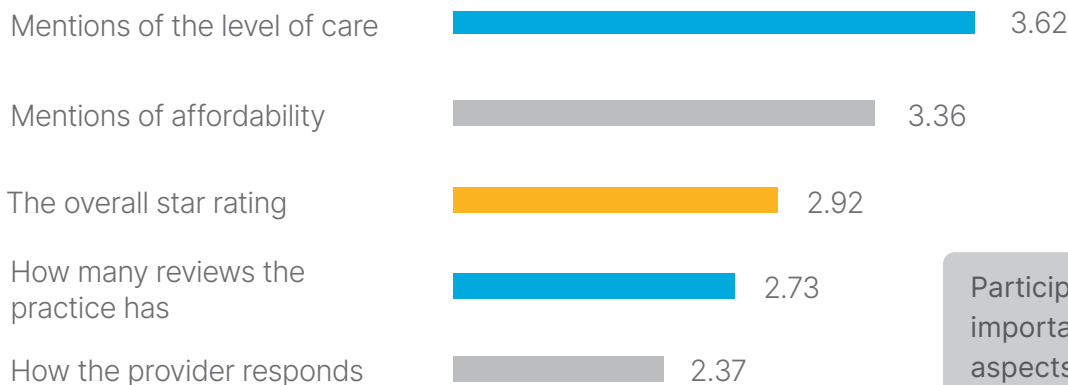
In the same way that relying on word of mouth via referrals and insurance directories is no longer enough as younger patients continue to utilize digital marketing to research, the majority of patients are also comparing multiple dentists

before choosing one. Dental practices can't afford to ignore their online marketing, or else they will lose out to their competition as digital marketing continues to increase in influence during a provider search.

3

We frequently hear that reviews are important to practices and patients alike, but what exactly do people pay attention to when they're reading reviews? As it turns out, the top answer was the level of care, followed by affordability.

Ranking in order of importance, what aspect of a dental provider's reviews makes you the most likely to choose them?



Participants ranked the importance of these aspects from 1-5, 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest. The data shown here is the average rank given to each aspect.

INSIGHT

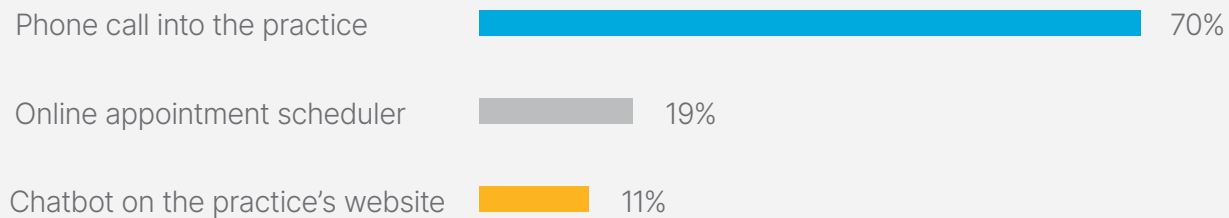
While it makes sense that level of care and affordability would be compelling reasons for a patient to choose a practice, overall star rating, number of reviews, and provider responses

weren't far behind. This indicates that while these might not be compelling reasons for a patient to choose a practice, they're still things that people pay attention to.

4

How did you book your last dental appointment?

There may be a digital shift happening in the dental industry, but the majority of our respondents still used the phone to make their last appointment. 19% used some kind of online appointment scheduling tool, and 11% used a chatbot on the practice's website.



INSIGHT

This tells us two very important things. The first is that your front desk staff (or whoever is answering your phones) is incredibly important. The second thing is that your phone number has to be correct and easy to find anywhere that you have your contact information online. That

includes your local search profiles, social media, and your website. If you have multiple locations with multiple phone numbers, your website has to make that abundantly clear. Failing to do so means potentially losing out on patients.

5

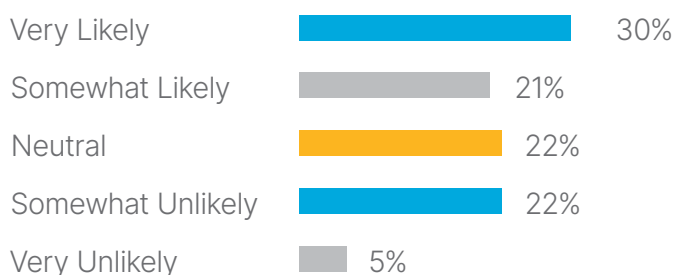
How likely are you to leave a review of your dentist in the following scenarios?

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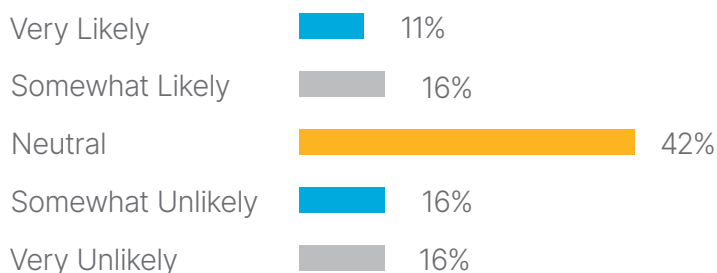
The conventional school of thought around reviews seems to be that unhappy patients are more likely to leave reviews, but this data directly contradicts that. So, what can we take away from that? Clearly, happy patients are more likely to leave reviews, so don't be afraid to send requests for reviews from your patients. Having more reviews is a good thing for your practice, so since there's a good chance the person you're contacting wants to leave a review, sending requests for reviews is a good idea. Sending review requests is also a good way to motivate patients who have a neutral experience to leave you a review, because while they're less likely to leave one, they aren't necessarily opposed to it.

When asked how likely they were to leave a review of their dentist based on their experience, most patients indicated they were most likely to leave a review if they had a good experience, with 33% answering that it was very likely, and 25% answering somewhat likely. 28% answered that they were very likely to leave a review if their experience was bad, while 22% said it was somewhat likely they would.

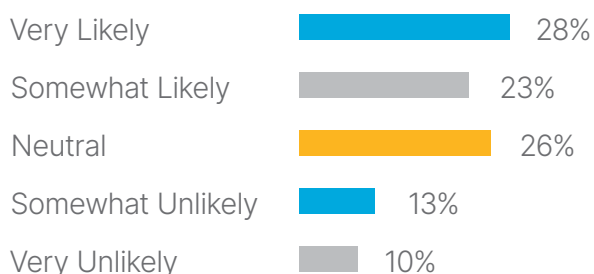
You had a good experience



You had a neutral experience



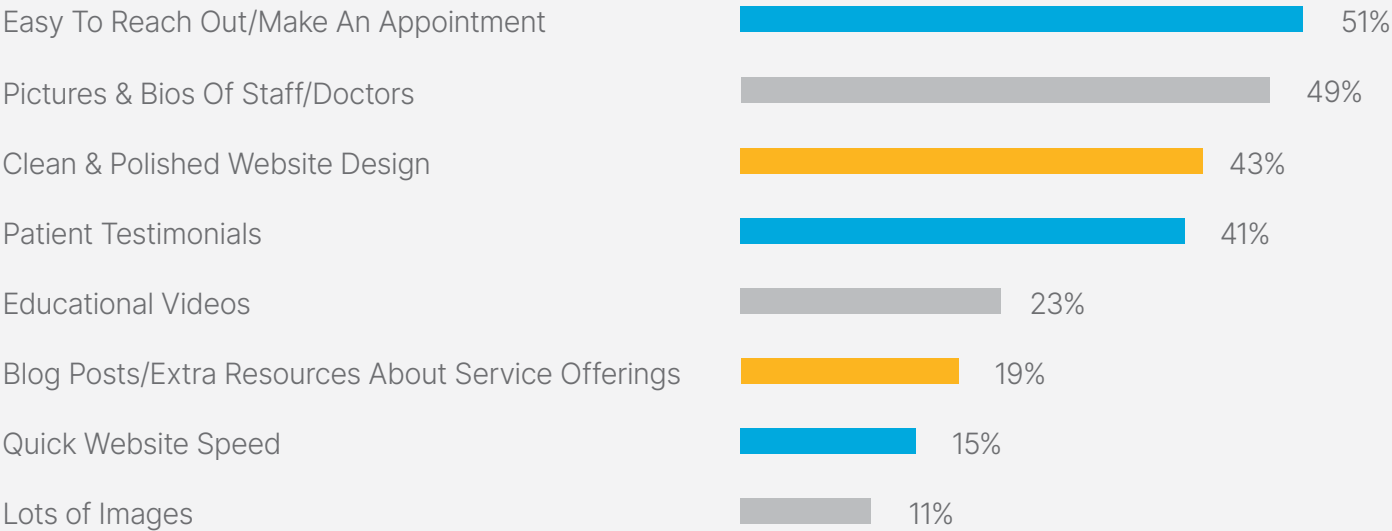
You had a bad experience



6

What aspects of a dentist's website will help you trust them?

Select all that apply



INSIGHT

Dental visits can be anxiety-inducing for many people, so it makes sense that patients coming to your site want to be able to reach out to you to ask questions and/or make an appointment, and they also want to know who will be taking care of them and what their qualifications are. Having

You know your website is important, but what are patients really looking for when they look at a dental website? As it turns out, the number one answer among the people we polled was that it was easy to reach out or make an appointment, at 51%. The second highest answer was photos and bios of the staff and doctors at 49%. Clean & polished website design was third at 43%, and patient testimonials were fourth at 41%.

your website set up so that all of your About Us information is easily accessible and your contact information is readily available will help you alleviate patient concerns before they arise and build trust before your patients ever step foot in your practice.

7

When asked if they trust practices less if they have inaccurate information on their website or local listings, 49% of our respondents answered with a resounding yes. 38% don't pay attention one way or another, and 13% said they don't care.

How likely are you to choose a different dentist if the one you're researching has inaccurate/conflicting information (such as incorrect business hours, business address, contact information, etc.) on their website or local listings?

More likely – I don't trust a dentist with the wrong information for their practice



Neither likely nor unlikely – I don't pay attention to that



Unlikely – If I notice, it's not a big deal to me



INSIGHT

With local listings ranking so highly as a research source for the younger generations we polled, this question shows that getting practice information correct across the various places it's displayed isn't just important—it's the difference between gaining new patients and driving them away. Local listings are subject to change without notice, either because users suggested a change

or because a change happened automatically based on (potentially inaccurate) information collected elsewhere on the Internet. Regularly auditing your local listings and website to make sure your information is up to date and accurate is incredibly important to avoid potentially losing out on half of your incoming patients.

8

Do you ever follow a dentist/dental practice on social media?

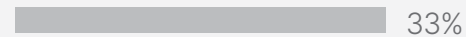
Broken out by generational groups, there's another clear shift demonstrated in social media preferences. Our youngest group of respondents was evenly split between indicating they utilize social media to research a dentist before booking, that they would follow their dentist after becoming a regular patient, and that they would never follow their dentist on social media. As you look at the older generations, these numbers decrease steadily.

18-29

Yes – before I visit, while I'm doing research on a good dentist



Yes – only after I am a regular patient



No – I never follow a dentist on social media

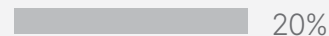


30-44

Yes – before I visit, while I'm doing research on a good dentist



Yes – only after I am a regular patient



No – I never follow a dentist on social media



45-59

Yes – before I visit, while I’m doing research on a good dentist



Yes – only after I am a regular patient



No – I never follow a dentist on social media



60+

Yes – before I visit, while I’m doing research on a good dentist



Yes – only after I am a regular patient



No – I never follow a dentist on social media



INSIGHT

This data suggests that social media will continue to become an important tool for patients researching dentists, as well as for dentists looking to retain their patients long term.

For dental practices looking to gain a competitive advantage, getting on social media and creating a long-term strategy is key to capitalizing on this opportunity.

What Does It Mean?

1

As the digital shift continues, accurate information will be more important than ever.

Can you afford to lose half of your incoming patients? With half of our respondents saying they would choose a different dentist if their website or local listings had incorrect information, ensuring your information is updated is more important than ever. Not only does it have real implications on how many new patients are coming into your practice, but it can impact things like your rankings.

2

Your patients chose you out of multiple providers, which means you can't afford to ignore your marketing.

The vast majority of patients compare more than one dentist before making an appointment. Even if patients are referred directly to your practice, they're still using digital marketing to research you.



3

Your website needs to make it easy for patients to contact you, and you can't neglect your About Us page.

If your website doesn't make it easy for people to contact your practice, it's not doing its job. Auditing the points at which people can find and utilize your contact information on your website frequently can help make sure your website continues to fulfill this mission. Also, if you haven't already set up an About page with information about the dentists and staff that care for patients at your practice, you're missing an opportunity to build trust preemptively with patients.

4

Social media matters more to your younger patients, and will likely continue to grow.

The data is clear: younger patients use social media to research dentists and are more likely to follow their dentists after they become a patient. If you don't have a social media strategy in place, the time is now to create one, as this is a trend that shows no signs of slowing down among younger users.



We Can Help

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