

Annual Belgian Dental Hygienist Survey

2022



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. METHODOLOGY.....	3
3. DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE	4
4. RESULTS	5
4.1 Distribution of workplaces	5
4.2 Employment.....	6
4.3 Patient contact.....	7
4.4 Task performance.....	8
4.5 Work satisfaction	12
4.6 Education satisfaction.....	12

When using the results of this report for any purposes, please refer correctly:

Title: Annual Belgian Dental Hygienist Survey 2022

Author: Doris Voortmans

Publication date: September 2023

Publisher: BBM

www.bb-m.be

For any questions with regard to this report, please contact the author via doris@bb-m.be.

1. INTRODUCTION

In December 2022, the annual Belgian dental hygienist survey was conducted by the Belgian Association for Dental Hygienists 'BBM'. At that time, 375 dental hygienists were officially recognized by the Belgian government¹.

The profession of the dental hygienist in Belgium is defined by a Royal Decree since march 2018². The first dental hygiene education programs started in September 2016. In June 2019, the first dental hygienists graduated in Belgium. The Belgian association for Dental Hygienists, better known as BBM, was founded in 2019.

This report is purely descriptive. The results are used by BBM to identify needs in the field and to optimally represent the Belgian dental hygienists. Conducting this survey annually will allow BBM to explore possible evolutions throughout the next years.

2. METHODOLOGY

An online questionnaire was created by the board of BBM both in Dutch and in French. It consisted of 102 questions, both closed and open-ended. Besides demographics, the questionnaire included themes such as characteristics of employment and job satisfaction. The data collection took place from December 19th until December 31st of 2022 on the survey platform 'Checkmarket'.

Recruitment

The questionnaire was distributed through the following channels of BBM: newsletter, Instagram and Facebook pages.

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
- Dental hygienists working in Belgium recognized by the Belgian government	- Dental hygienists working without recognition from the Belgian government - Dental hygiene students

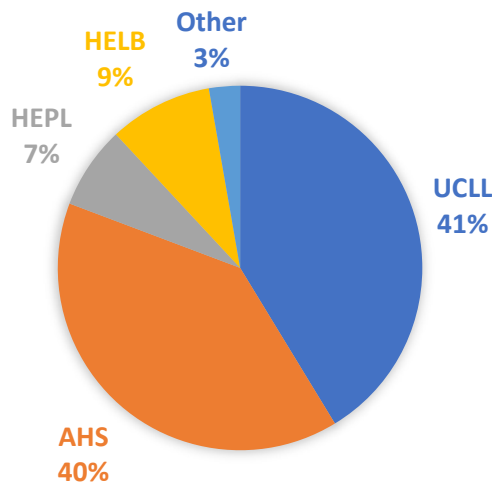
¹ *Mondhygiënist*. (2018, March 21). FOD Volksgezondheid, veiligheid van de voedselketen en leefmilieu. <https://www.health.belgium.be/nl/gezondheid/zorgberoepen/paramedische-beroepen/mondhygienist>

² 28/03/18 - KB betreffende het beroep van mondhygiënist. In *BELGISCH STAATSBLAD — 30.03.2018 — MONITEUR BELGE*. FOD Volksgezondheid, veiligheid van de voedselketen en leefmilieu. <https://www.health.belgium.be/nl/280318-kb-betreffende-het-beroep-van-mondhygienist>

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE

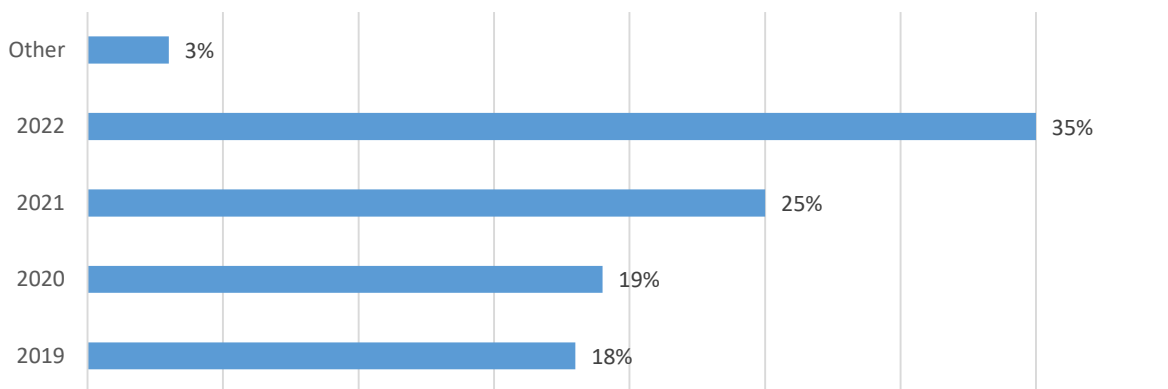
The sample consisted of 109 participants. A total of 82 Belgian dental hygienists reached the end of the questionnaire. The sample included both members (90%) and non-members (10%) of BBM. It consisted mostly of women (87 %). The ages ranged from 21 to 54 years with a mean age of 29 years. Graph 1 shows the university-college of graduation, showing the majority graduated in Flanders (UCLL in Leuven and AHS in Ghent). Graph 2 shows an increase of graduating dental hygienists in 2022. This can be explained by a three year difference in the start of the dental hygiene programs, with the first Flemish graduates in 2019 and the first Walloon graduates in 2022. A small group of dental hygienists (3%) graduated in a different country and in earlier years, but got approved by the recognition committee.

GRAPH 1: UNIVERSITY-COLLEGE OF GRADUATION



N = 109

GRAPH 2: YEAR OF GRADUATION



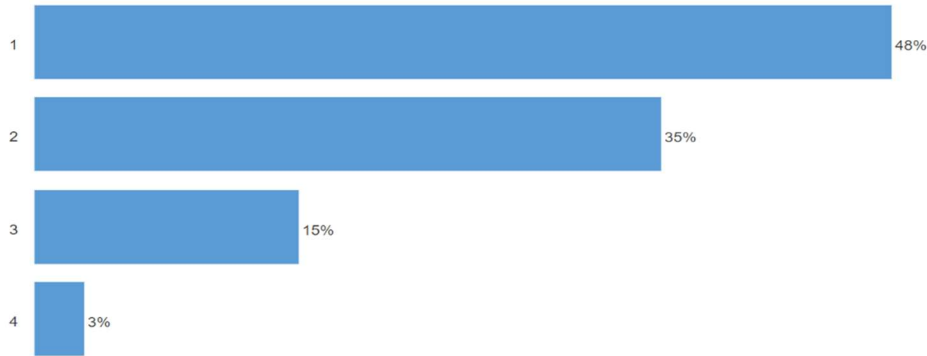
N = 109

4. RESULTS

4.1 Distribution of workplaces

As graph 3 shows, more than half of the Belgian dental hygienists work in more than one organization/practice.

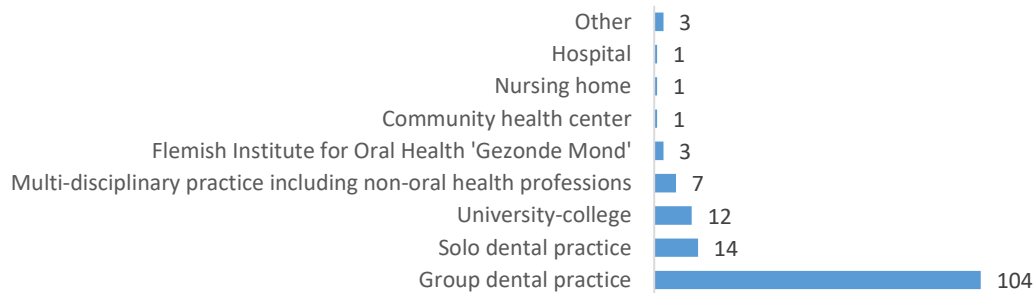
GRAPH 3: NUMBER OF WORKPLACES



N = 109

In graph 4, the total number of dental hygienist workplaces is categorized by type of organization.

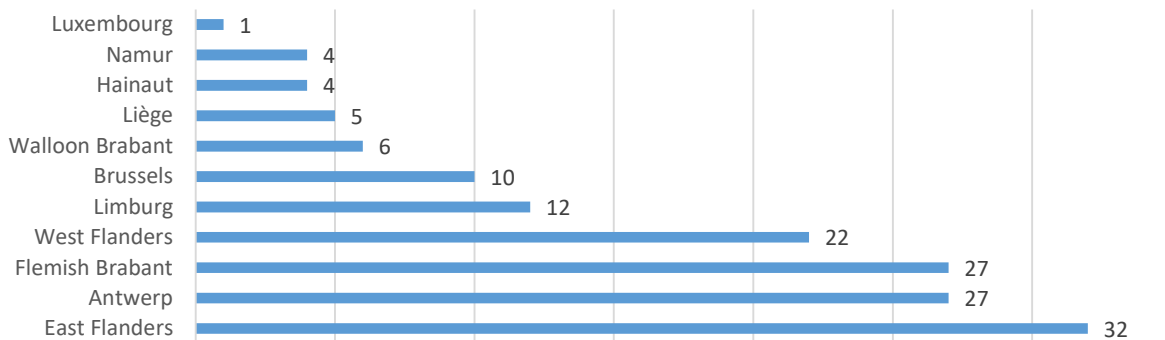
GRAPH 4: TYPE OF WORKPLACES



N = 93

Graph 5 shows the total number of dental hygienist workplaces divided by province. As the description of the sample already stated, there is a larger group of Flemish dental hygienists than Walloon dental hygienists. This again is noticeable in the geographical distribution of dental hygienists in Belgium.

GRAPH 5: LOCATION OF WORKPLACES

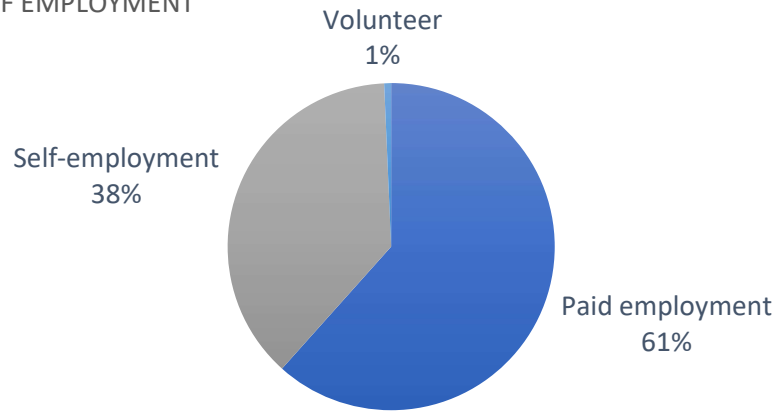


N = 93

4.2 Employment

More than one third of the Belgian dental hygienists is self-employed, as shown in graph 6. According to a previous survey conducted by BBM, in 2021 this was approximately only one fourth.

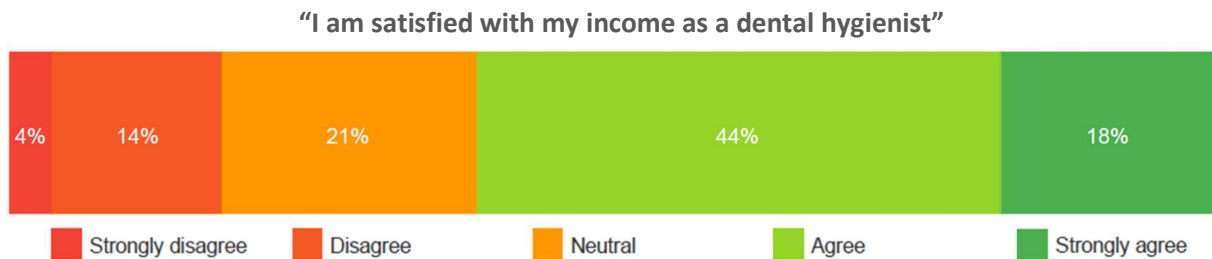
GRAPH 6: KIND OF EMPLOYMENT



N = 93

Graph 7 shows how satisfied Belgian dental hygienists are with their income, showing more than half of them are rather satisfied.

GRAPH 7: SATISFACTION WITH INCOME



N = 85

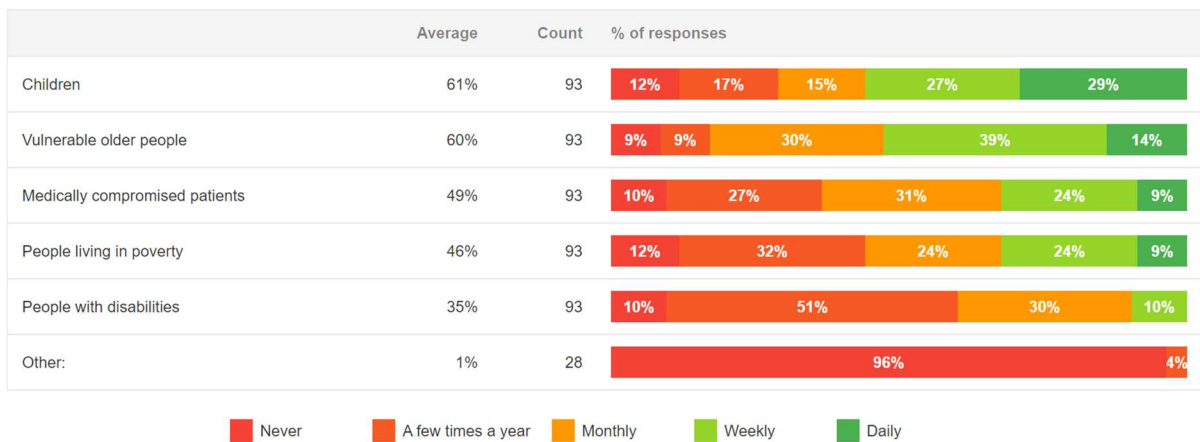
4.3 Patient contact

The following numbers are based on the first/main workplace of the participants. These differ based on the specialization of the practice (e.g. general dentistry, periodontology, orthodontics, ...)

- Average time per patient: 41 minutes
- Average number of patients seen on a workday of 8 hours: 12 patients
- Average duration of a thorough oral hygiene instruction: 11 minutes

Table 1 shows the contact frequency with vulnerable patient groups in the dental hygienist's first/main workplace.

TABLE 1: CONTACT WITH VULNERABLE PATIENTS






















N 93

4.4 Task performance

In the questionnaire, the tasks of the dental hygienist defined by the Belgian Royal Decree were listed. The participants were asked to select the tasks they perform at their first/main workplace. The results of this are shown in table 2. The most performed task is giving preventive oral hygiene instructions.

TABLE 2: MAINLY PERFORMED CLINICAL TASKS

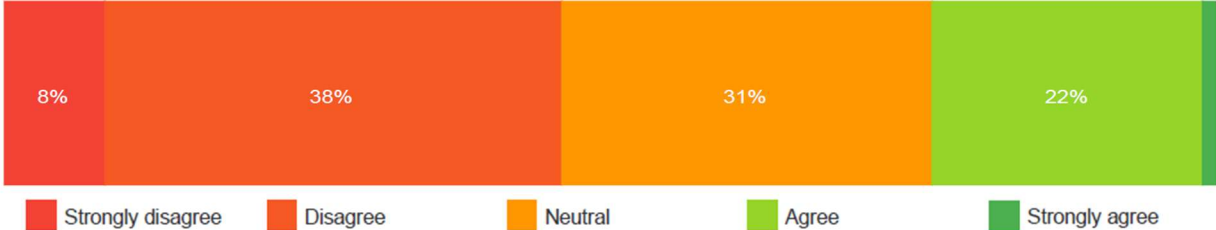
	Count	% of responses	%
Preventive oral hygiene instructions	90		97%
Tartar removal	89		96%
Polishing	83		89%
Preventive oral examination	82		88%
Medical imaging	82		88%
Rootplaning	63		68%
Nutritional advice regarding oral health	61		66%
Making dental impressions	61		66%
Application of prophylactic products (e.g. fluoride)	59		63%
Airpolishing	48		52%
Digital scans	47		51%
Bleaching	42		45%
Construction of study models, bleaching trays or mouth guards	40		43%
Remove stitches	39		42%
Orthodontic procedures	23		25%
Assisting dentist/specialist	20		22%
Other:	4		4%
Apply oral wound dressing	3		3%
In this workplace, I don't work at an individual patient level.	2		2%
Low level lasertherapy	0		
Draw blood	0		

N 93

Graph 8 shows the satisfaction level with regard to the professional profile and the range of tasks, showing almost half of the Belgian dental hygienists are rather not satisfied with the current Royal Decree.

GRAPH 8: SATISFACTION WITH ROYAL DECREE

“I am satisfied with the professional profile/tasks of the dental hygienist defined by the Belgian Royal Decree”



N = 85

The Royal Decree not only defines which tasks the Belgian dental hygienist is allowed and competent to perform, it also defines the level of authority at which they can perform each task: autonomous, on prescription or entrusted. In the questionnaire, the participants were shown the current level of authority and were then asked to select their desired level of authority for each task. These results are shown in tables 3, 4 and 5.

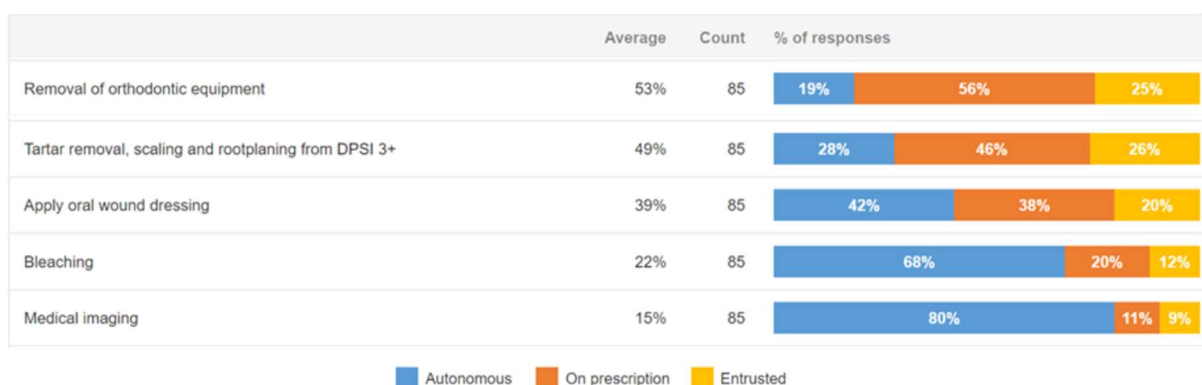
TABLE 3: DESIRED LEVEL OF AUTHORITY FOR AUTONOMOUS TASKS IN THE ROYAL DECREE

	Average	Count	% of responses
Development of a preventive oral care plan	14%	85	82% Autonomous, 7% On prescription, 11% Entrusted
Making dental impressions/digital scans	12%	85	80% Autonomous, 15% On prescription, 5% Entrusted
Construction of mouth guards	12%	85	80% Autonomous, 16% On prescription, 4% Entrusted
Preventive oral examination	8%	85	88% Autonomous, 7% On prescription, 5% Entrusted
Topical anesthesia ASA 1	6%	85	91% Autonomous, 7% On prescription, 2% Entrusted
Application of prophylactic products (e.g. fluoride)	5%	85	93% Autonomous, 5% On prescription, 2% Entrusted
General health history in the context of preventive oral health	4%	85	95% Autonomous, 4% On prescription, 1% Entrusted
Professional cleaning (removal of biofilm, discolorations,...)	2%	85	95% Autonomous, 5% On prescription, 0% Entrusted
Oral health related advice (nutrition, smoking cessation, alcohol, drugs,...)	1%	85	99% Autonomous, 1% On prescription, 0% Entrusted
Oral hygiene instructions	0%	85	100% Autonomous, 0% On prescription, 0% Entrusted

N 85

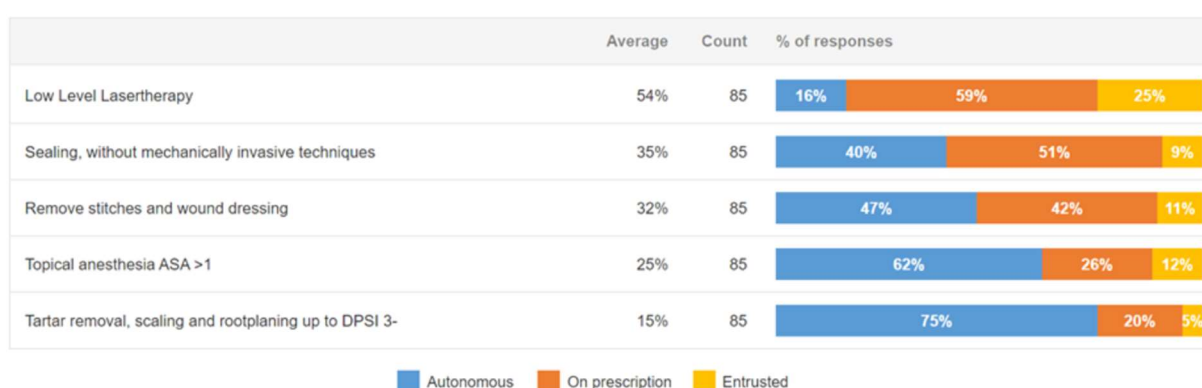


TABLE 4: DESIRED LEVEL OF AUTHORITY FOR TASKS **ON PRESCRIPTION** IN THE ROYAL DECREE



N 85

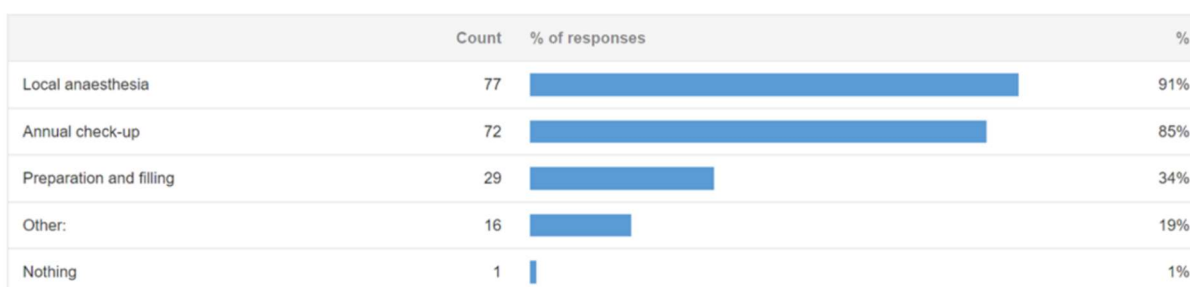
TABLE 5: DESIRED LEVEL OF AUTHORITY FOR **ENTRUSTED** TASKS IN THE ROYAL DECREE



N 85

Another question explored what the Belgian dental hygienists are missing in the professional profile. The most desired expansions to the Royal Decree are listed in table 6. The Belgian dental hygienists express the need for an expansion of the Royal Decree, specifically adding local anesthesia and the annual check-up to their range of tasks.

TABLE 6: DESIRED EXPANSION OF THE PROFESSIONAL PROFILE/TASKS



N 85

Table 7 shows that most dental hygienists do not or only occasionally perform actions within 'collective health promotion'. This could be explained by graph 4, illustrating most dental hygienists only work in a clinical practice on an individual patient level.

TABLE 7: COLLECTIVE (ORAL) HEALTH PROMOTION

	Average	Count	% of responses
Development of educational materials (e.g. posters, ...)	13%	93	60% 31% 6%
Training other healthcare professionals with regard to oral health and -care	12%	93	69% 22% 1% 1%
Develop policy recommendations	8%	93	75% 18% 1%
Develop and give oral health related workshops directly to a target group	7%	93	81% 14%
Position as an expert dental hygienist on a board/in a committee (e.g. local project, ...)	5%	93	88% 6% 1%
Organisation of oral health screenings for vulnerable target groups outside of the dental practice	3%	93	89% 8% 1%
Other:	3%	48	94% 1%

■ Never
■ A few times a year
■ Monthly
■ Weekly
■ Daily

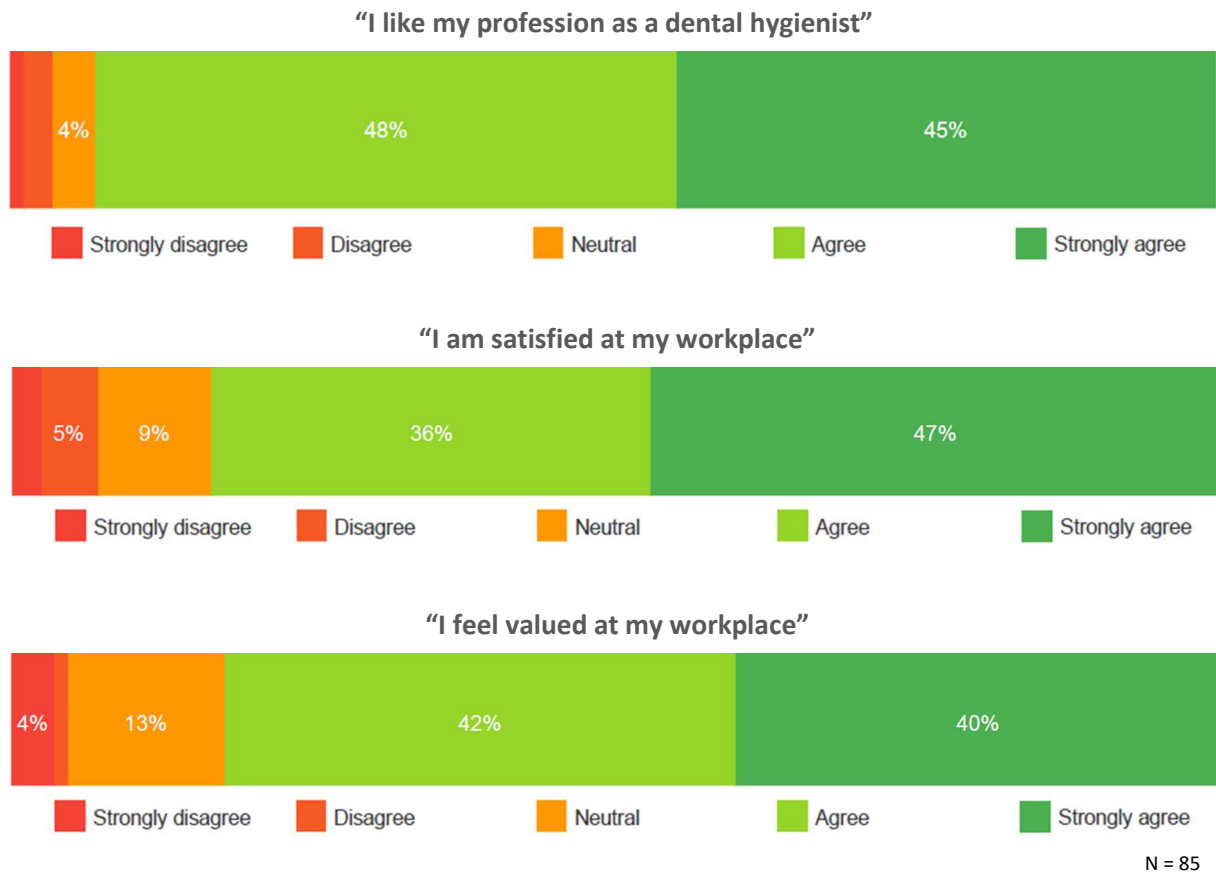
N = 93



4.5 Work satisfaction

In graph 9, a number of statements are shown with their corresponding satisfaction levels, showing the large majority of the Belgian dental hygienists likes practicing their profession and is satisfied at their workplace.

GRAPH 9: WORK SATISFACTION



4.6 Education satisfaction

Finally, graph 10 shows how satisfied the participants are about their dental hygiene education.

GRAPH 10: EDUCATION SATISFACTION



