

# **Annual Belgian Dental Hygienist Survey**

**2023**



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In December 2023, the annual Belgian dental hygienist survey was conducted by the Belgian Association for Dental Hygienists 'BBM'. At that time, 531 dental hygienists were officially recognized by the Belgian government<sup>1</sup>. The profession of the dental hygienist in Belgium is defined by a Royal Decree since march 2018<sup>2</sup>.

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 allows 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 1<sup>st</sup> until December 31<sup>st</sup> of 2023 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 recognized by the Belgian government and working in Belgium	- Dental hygienists working abroad - Dental hygienists working without recognition from the Belgian government - Dental hygiene students

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<sup>1</sup> Een erkend beroepsbeoefenaar zoeken. (2023, October 9). FOD Volksgezondheid, veiligheid van de voedselketen en leefmilieu. <https://www.health.belgium.be/nl/gezondheid/zorgberoepen/paramedische-beroepen/mondhygienist>

<sup>2</sup> 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 188 participants. A total of 128 Belgian dental hygienists reached the end of the questionnaire. Only the fully completed questionnaires are included in this report. The sample included both members (78%) and non-members (22%) of BBM. It consisted mostly of women (86 %). Age ranged from 21 to 56 years, with a mean age of 28 years. Table 1 shows the university-college of graduation, showing that nearly 80% of the participants graduated in Flanders (AHS in Ghent and UCLL in Leuven) and about 20% in Wallonia (HEPL in Liège and HELB in Brussels). Table 2 shows the year of graduation as a dental hygienist.

TABLE 1: UNIVERSITY-COLLEGE OF GRADUATION










	Count	% of responses	%
Arteveldehogeschool Ghent	52		41%
UCLL Leuven	49		38%
HEPL Liège	18		14%
HELB Brussels	9		7%
Other:	0		

TABLE 2: YEAR OF GRADUATION

	Count	% of responses	%
2019	18		14%
2020	10		8%
2021	23		18%
2022	37		29%
2023	40		31%
Other:	0		

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1 Distribution of workplaces

As graph 1 shows, approximately half of the Belgian dental hygienists work in more than one organization/practice.

GRAPH 1: NUMBER OF WORKPLACES

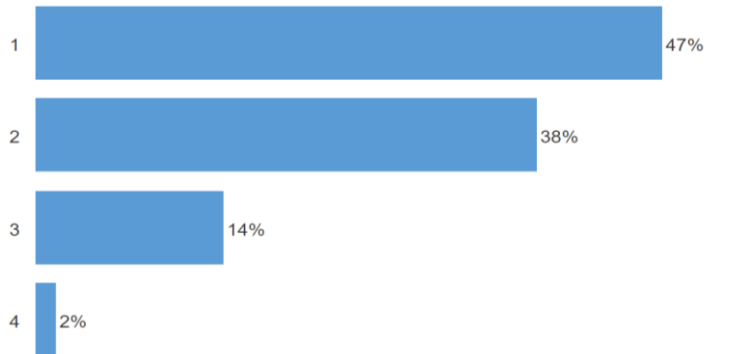


Table 3 categorizes the total number of dental hygienist workplaces (n = 218) by type of organization.

TABLE 3: TYPE OF WORKPLACES

	Count	% of responses
Group-practice dentistry	155	71.0
Solo-practice dentistry	30	14.0
Multidisciplinary practice with both oral and non-oral health professionals	9	4.0
University-college	7	3.0
Other	7	3.0
Hospital	3	1.5
Flemish Institute for Oral Health 'Gezonde Mond' as Process coordinator	3	1.5
Nursing home	2	1.0
Community health center	1	0.5
Mobile dental practice	1	0.5

Table 4 shows the total number of dental hygienist workplaces divided by province.

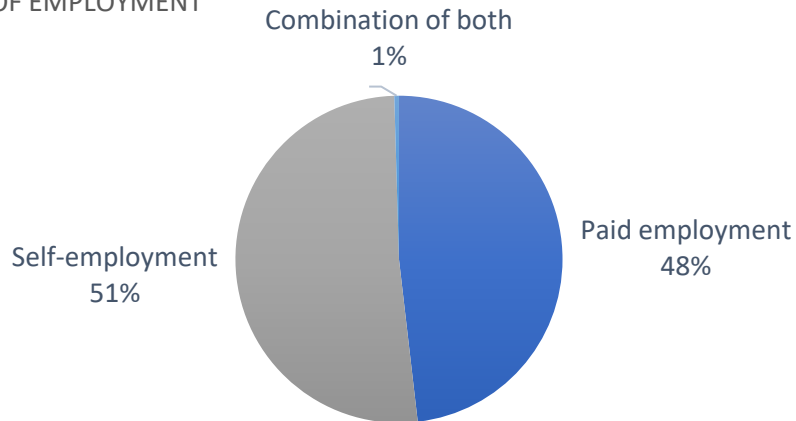
TABLE 4: LOCATION OF WORKPLACES

	Count	% of responses
Antwerp	52	23.4
East-Flanders	36	16.2
West-Flanders	32	14.4
Liège	32	14.4
Flemish Brabant	24	10.8
Brussels	15	6.7
Limburg	11	5.0
Hainaut	11	5.0
Namur	4	1.8
Walloon Brabant	4	1.8
Luxembourg	1	0.5

## 4.2 Employment

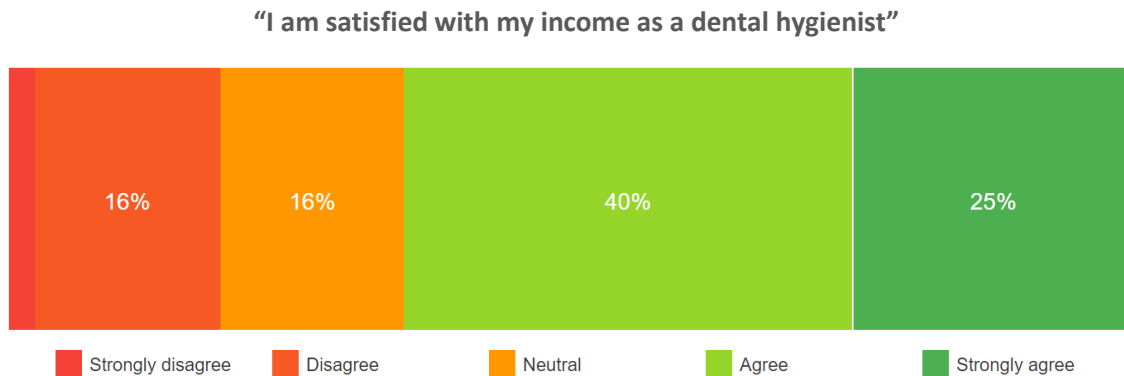
The kind of employment is shown in graph 2. These percentages are also calculated based on dental hygienist workplaces (n = 218). In comparison to previous questionnaires, an increase can be observed in self-employment: in 2022, this percentage was 38%<sup>3</sup>.

GRAPH 2: KIND OF EMPLOYMENT



Graph 3 shows how satisfied Belgian dental hygienists are with their income, showing more than half of them are rather satisfied.

GRAPH 3: SATISFACTION WITH INCOME



<sup>3</sup> Voortmans, D. (2023). *Annual Belgian Dental Hygienist Survey 2022*. BBM. [https://bb-m.be/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Annual\\_Belgian\\_Dental\\_Hygienist\\_Survey\\_2022.pdf](https://bb-m.be/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Annual_Belgian_Dental_Hygienist_Survey_2022.pdf)

### 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: 38 minutes
- Average number of patients seen on a workday of 8 hours: 13 patients
- Average duration of a thorough oral hygiene instruction: 11 minutes

Table 5 shows the contact frequency with vulnerable patient groups in the dental hygienist's first/main workplace.

TABLE 5: CONTACT WITH VULNERABLE PATIENTS

	Average	Count	% of responses
Children	61%	128	8% 20% 18% 28% 26%
Vulnerable older people	60%	128	10% 12% 27% 31% 20%
Medically compromised patients	48%	128	6% 31% 31% 25% 6%
People living in poverty	46%	128	20% 19% 30% 24% 8%
People with disabilities	39%	128	11% 40% 32% 16%
Other:	5%	38	92% 5%










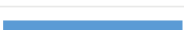


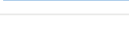








■ Never   
 ■ A few times a year   
 ■ Monthly   
 ■ Weekly   
 ■ Daily



#### 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 6.

TABLE 6: MAINLY PERFORMED CLINICAL TASKS

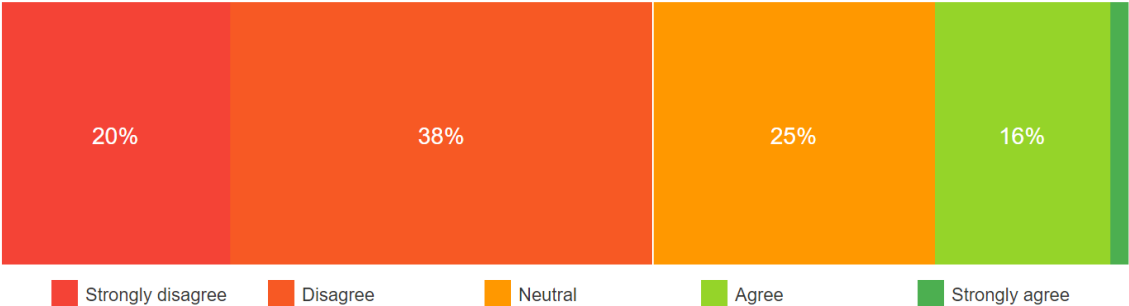
	Count	% of responses	%
Tartar removal	124		97%
Preventive oral hygiene instructions	120		94%
Polishing	115		90%
Preventive oral examination	114		89%
Medical imaging	113		88%
Rootplaning	87		68%
Nutritional advice regarding oral health	80		63%
Airpolishing	79		62%
Making dental impressions	79		62%
Application of prophylactic products (e.g. fluoride)	78		61%
Digital scans	68		53%
Bleaching	64		50%
Construction of study models, bleaching trays or mouth guards	55		43%
Remove stitches	46		36%
Orthodontic procedures	35		27%
Assisting dentist/specialist	25		20%
Other:	6		5%
Apply oral wound dressing	5		4%
Low level lasertherapy	2		2%
In this workplace, I don't work at an individual patient level.	1		1%
Draw blood	1		1%



Graph 4 shows the level of satisfaction with the professional profile and the range of tasks, showing that more than half of the Belgian dental hygienists are rather dissatisfied with the current Royal Decree. The level of satisfaction with the Royal Decree has strongly decreased compared to 2022<sup>4</sup>.

GRAPH 4: SATISFACTION WITH ROYAL DECREE

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



Overall, there is a desire for more autonomy in the professional profile.

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 7. The Belgian dental hygienists expressed the need for an expansion of the Royal Decree, specifically adding local anesthesia and the annual check-up to their range of tasks.

TABLE 7: DESIRED EXPANSION OF THE PROFESSIONAL PROFILE/TASKS

	Count	% of responses	%
Local anesthesia	115		90%
Annual check-up	112		88%
Preparation and filling	55		43%
Other:	23		18%
Nothing	1		1%

<sup>4</sup> Voortmans, D. (2023). *Annual Belgian Dental Hygienist Survey 2022*. BBM. [https://bb-m.be/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Annual\\_Belgian\\_Dental\\_Hygienist\\_Survey\\_2022.pdf](https://bb-m.be/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Annual_Belgian_Dental_Hygienist_Survey_2022.pdf)

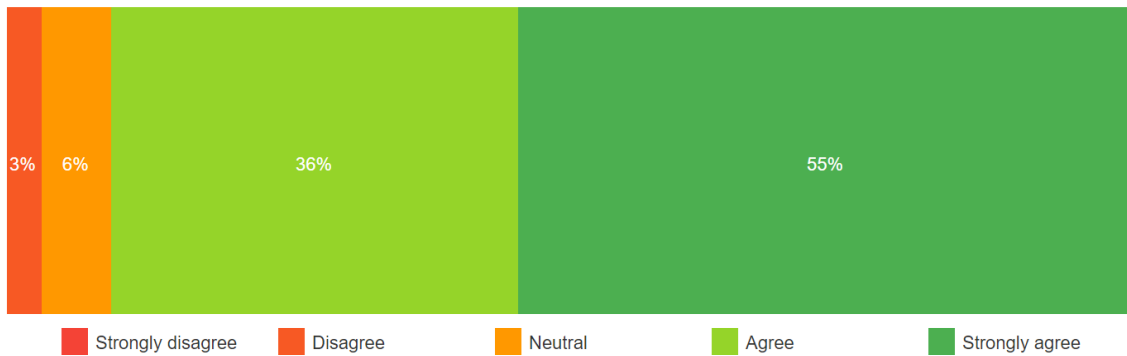


#### 4.5 Work satisfaction

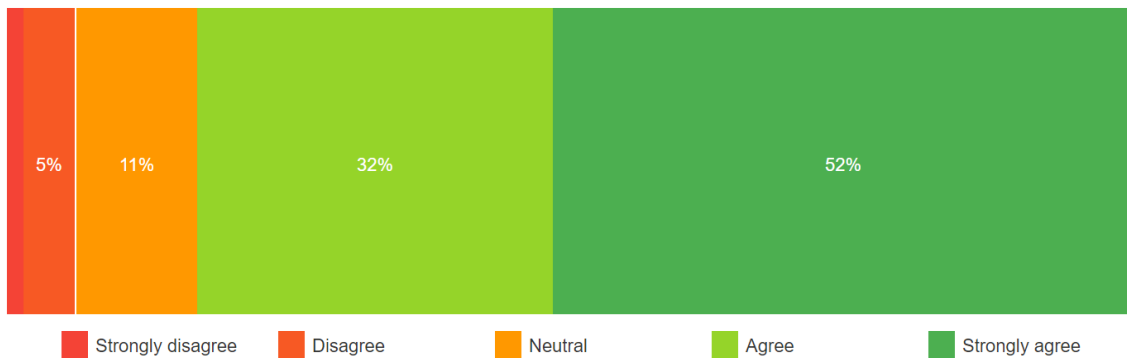
In graph 5, a number of statements are shown with their corresponding satisfaction levels, showing the large majority of the Belgian dental hygienists liked practicing their profession and was satisfied at their workplace.

GRAPH 5: WORK SATISFACTION

“I like my profession as a dental hygienist”



“I am satisfied at my workplace”



“I feel valued at my workplace”

