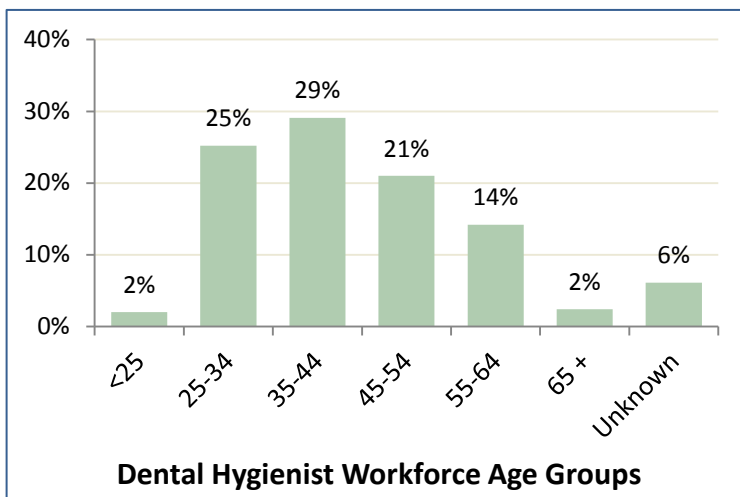




Characteristics of the South Carolina Dental Hygienist Workforce in 2015

Our South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce works with the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics to assess current and future employment levels for different occupations. According to their 2014-2024 occupational projection for Dental Hygienists, demand for that occupation is expected to grow by 14% during that ten year period. This report provides information about the demographic characteristics, work settings and practices, and geographic availability of the Dental Hygienist workforce in South Carolina in 2015.

Dental Hygienists in South Carolina renew their license to practice every two years through the South Carolina Department for Labor, Licensing, and Regulation. The majority of information in this report is based on data gathered during the 2015 renewal period that ended April 30, 2015. A total of 2,552 Dental Hygienists were licensed and actively practicing in the state at that time. Based on 2015 population estimates, this equates to 5.3 Dental Hygienists for every 10,000 persons in the state.



AGE

Compared to many other health occupations, Dental Hygienists have a fairly young workforce. In 2015 the average age of Dental Hygienists active in the workforce was 42.5 years. Only 2.4% were age 65 or older, while slightly more than half (56.3%) were age 44 or younger.

Race/Ethnicity	N	Percent of Total	Percent of Those Who Provided Data
Caucasian	2,035	79.7%	94.9%
African-American	82	3.2%	3.9%
Other	27	1.1%	1.1%
Unknown	408	16.0%	--
Total	2,552	100%	100%

Note: Actual percentages for each group may be different from those in the table because of the relatively large number of cases of unspecified race/ethnicity.

RACE/ETHNICITY

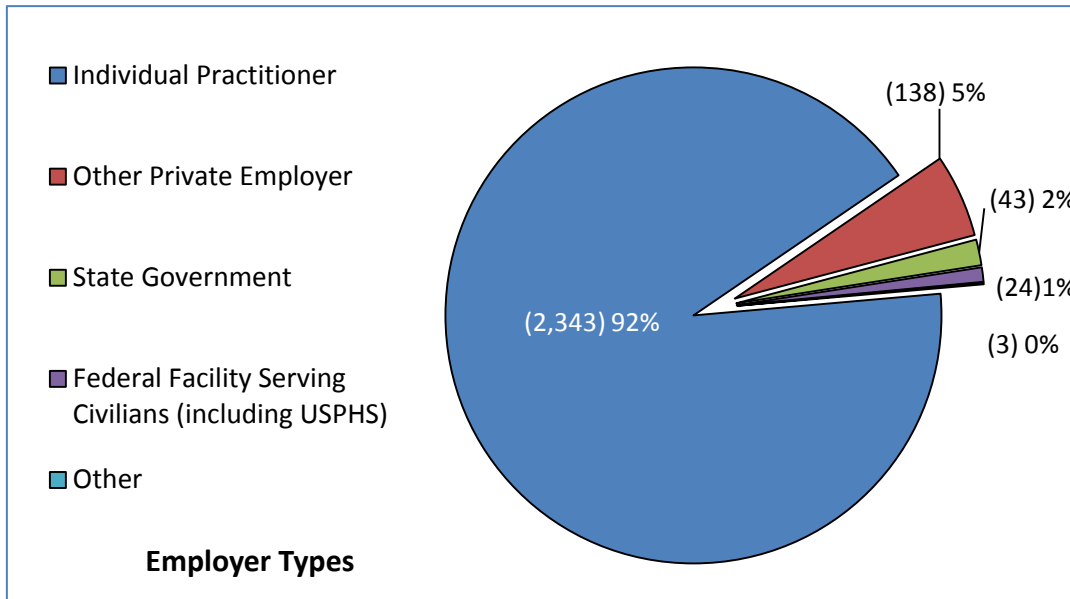
Due to the large amount of missing data related to race and ethnicity (16%) it is difficult to know the true nature of the Dental Hygienist workforce in this regard. The column to the far right reports how race varied among those who reported that information.

GENDER

The vast majority (94%) of Dental Hygienists were female in 2015.

EDUCATION

More than 8 out of 10 Dental Hygienists active in the workforce in 2015 (84.3%) earned their professional credentials in South Carolina. The largest contributing states were Georgia (3.8%) and North Carolina (1.8%).



EMPLOYER TYPE

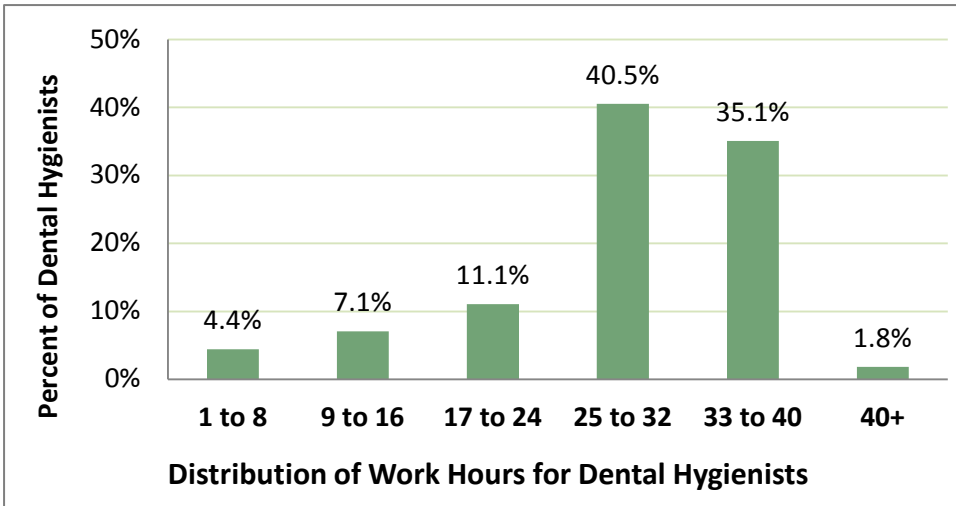
The bulk of the Dental Hygienist workforce (97%) was employed in the private sector in 2015, with almost all of them (92%) working for an individual practitioner.

PRACTICE CHARACTERISTICS

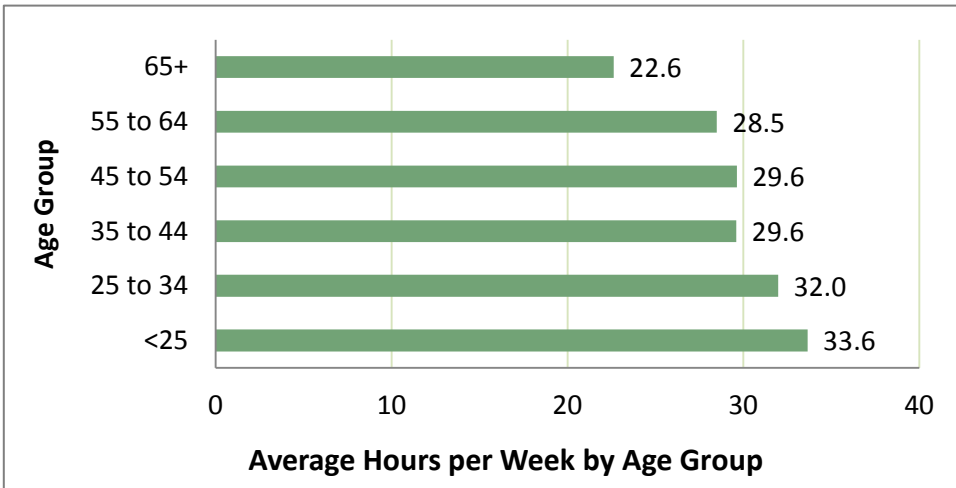
More than 9 of out 10 Dental Hygienists in South Carolina (95.8%) work in a private office setting and most (93.8%) report only one work location. Of the 157 (6.2%) reporting a second practice site, almost all (92.3%) were also in a private office.

Primary Practice Setting	N	Percent
Private Office	2,444	95.8%
Junior College/Vocational School	27	1.1%
Community Health Center/Rural Clinic	24	0.9%
Freestanding Outpatient Clinic	20	0.8%
Elementary or Secondary School	20	0.8%
University/College of Medicine/Dentistry	11	0.4%
School/Treatment Center	3	0.1%
Nursing Home/Other Institution	2	0.1%
Total*	2,551	100%

* Information on primary practice setting was not available for one Dental Hygienist.



The average length of the work week among Dental Hygienists was 30.2 hours in 2015. The majority of Dental Hygienists (63.1%) worked fewer than 33 hours in a typical week.

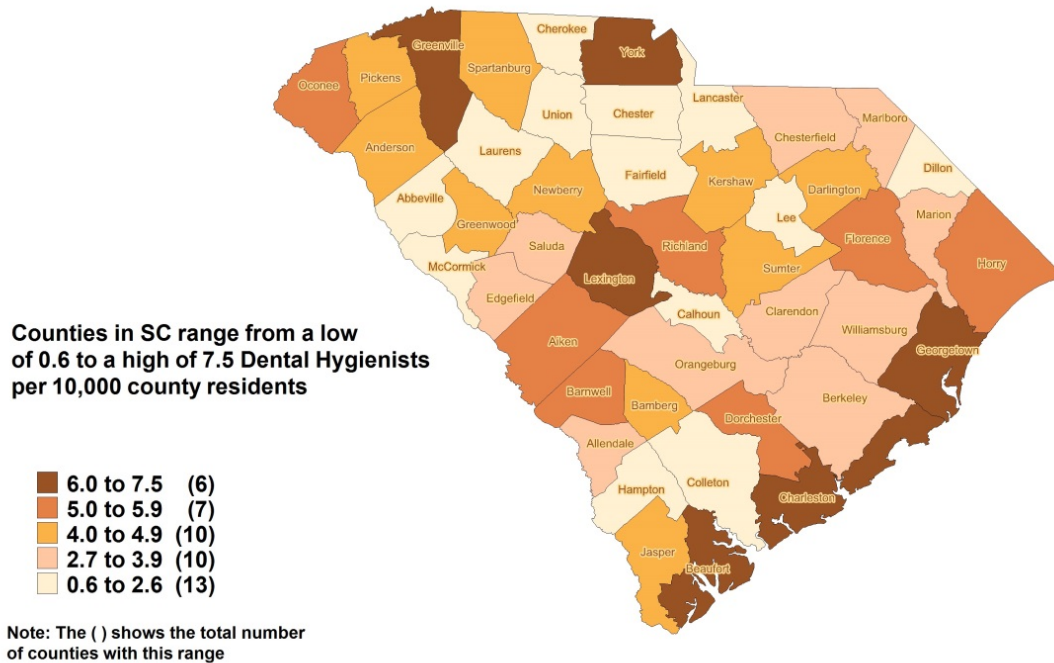


Work patterns varied slightly by age: Dental Hygienists younger than age 35 had a slightly longer work week than those aged 35 and older. The average length of the work week was fairly stable for those aged 35 to 64, dropping only by a few hours per week for those aged 65 and older who remained in the workforce.

Dental Hygienists were asked to report how they spent their work time during the week. Overall, 91% of their time was spent on patient care activities. Administrative tasks accounted for 5% of their time – about 1.4 hours on average. In a typical week in 2015 the Dental Hygienists in the workforce provided almost 70,000 hours of patient care services.

Work Activity	Total Hours per Week Provided by the Dental Hygienist Workforce in 2015	% of Total Weekly Hours	Mean # Hours per Week
Patient Care	69,778	91%	27.4
Administration	3,554	5%	1.4
Teaching	1,170	2%	0.5
Training	769	1%	0.3
Research	462	1%	0.2
Other	894	1%	0.4
Total Hours	76,625		

Concentration of Dental Hygienists Per 10,000 Population



This information is based on all Dental Hygienists with an active license to practice and a practice location in South Carolina as reported during the license renewal period ending 12/31/2015. The county practice locations are those reported as the primary practice site.

population density (where there are fewer than 155 persons per square mile). Of the 46 counties in the state, 32 of them fall into this category.

Since most Dental Hygienists work in private dental offices, it may be informative to compare the rural and urban distribution of Dental Hygienists to that of Dentists. In 2015, 11.8% of Dentists actively practicing in the state had their primary practice site in a rural county.¹ Given that almost 20% of Dental Hygienists had their primary practice site in a rural county during the same time frame, this suggests that rural Dentists were including Dental Hygienists in their practices in a substantial way. In 2015 the Dental Hygienist workforce was making a noteworthy contribution to the provision of oral health services in areas of our state where access to both health care in general and oral health care in particular are often limited.

End Notes

¹ Unpublished statistic calculated by the South Carolina Office for Healthcare Workforce staff, based on the primary practice location of Dentists active in the South Carolina workforce as reported during their biennial renewal process ending December 31, 2015.

Dental Hygienists were working in all counties in the state in 2015, although they were more concentrated in counties with well-developed urban areas as illustrated in the map.

Nonetheless, a sizable percentage (19.8%) worked in counties defined as rural, based on