

23 million sick days due to dental pain as three in ten Brits report taking time off work

1 August 2023 (London) – Nearly three in ten (28%) Britons have had to take time off work due to tooth pain according to new research from Denplan – the UK’s leading dental plan provider – an equivalent of 11.7 million people of working age^[1].

The new figures were uncovered by Denplan, part of Simplyhealth, as part of its 2023 Oral Health Survey of over 5,000 consumers in the UK, due to be published in September.

The survey has revealed that around one in ten (7%) people have taken more than a week off work because of dental pain, with a further 21% saying they had taken at least one day of sick leave for dental pain, suggesting at least 23 million working days lost to dental pain^[2], or 93,000 full time jobs^[3]. One in 10 (9%) people reported that the pain of toothache has affected their quality of work and their productivity when working.

As so-called NHS “dental deserts” continue across the country, 12% of respondents reported trying to book a NHS dental appointment but that they have not been seen yet because waiting lists are too long.

Meanwhile, with the rising cost-of-living impacting household incomes, the perceived cost of accessing dental treatments may be putting people off looking after their oral health.

Almost a third (32%) of people worry about the cost of going to a dentist, with 23% concerned dentists will advise unaffordable treatments. Over a third (34%) of respondents say they have previously postponed or cancelled a dentist appointment because they could not afford it, while 11% said their financial circumstances mean they can now no longer afford to go to the dentist.

The data follows weeks of difficult news for dentistry, after the parliamentary Health and Social Care Committee inquiry into the state of oral health provision described challenges in accessing NHS dentists “totally unacceptable”. Denplan submitted evidence to this inquiry and continue to advocate for better recognition of dentists, as well as improved support for dentists to boost recruitment and retention.

For people worried about costs, dental cover enables them to budget for their dental care over time. Of the respondents with a dental plan, around two-thirds (63%) say they have a plan to help them spread the costs or budget for dental costs, and 27% have it provided by their employer.*

Catherine Rutland, Dentist and Clinical Director at Denplan, said: “Our Oral Health Survey is one of the most comprehensive pieces of research into dental consumers in the UK. The preliminary findings reveal that dental care provision in the UK is far behind where it should be, resulting in millions of working days lost to tooth pain.

“People need certainty about how and where to access dental care in order to avoid the type of severe pain that is so debilitating that it requires time off work. Although many avoid the dentist due to concern around shock costs for unexpected treatments, they aren’t aware that there is affordable dental cover available that allows you to spread payment.

“We need to move to a model where NHS and private dentistry works together to ensure preventative care is prioritised. In doing so, people can catch problems earlier, avoiding invasive and

expensive treatments down the line, and importantly, having to take time off due to dental health problems.”

-ENDS-

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About the 2023 Denplan Oral Health Survey

Between 30 June and 10 July 2023, Deltapoll surveyed a representative sample of 5,101 adults in Great Britain.

Calculating working age Brits

- According to the 2021 Census, 62.9% (37.5 million) of the population on England and Wales was of working age (aged 16-64). [Source](#)
- According to the Scottish Government, the latest population figures published by the Office of National Statistics Estimates there were 3.48 million people aged 16 to 64 in Scotland as of mid-2020. [Source](#)
- According to the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, in 2021, 849,000 people over the age of 16 were in employment. [Source](#)
- These figures combined produce a figure of 41,829,000 people of working age in the four nations of the United Kingdom.

References for extrapolated figures

[1] 21% of people have taken less than a week off work, 7% have taken more than a week off work - 28% in total. 28% of 41.83 million is 11.71 million.

[2] That means of those that have taken time off work, 75% have taken at least 1 day (21 in 28) and 25% have taken 5 days or more (7 in 28). 75% of 11.71 million have taken at least 1 day off work due to dental pain, equivalent to at least 8,784,090 days, 25% of 11.71 million have taken at least 5 days off work due to dental pain, equivalent to at least 14,640,150 days. Combined the figure is at least 23,424,240 days, but will likely be higher as the figures account for the minimum that can be calculated from the data (it assumes under a week equals 1 day, even though a respondent may have in fact taken 2, 3 or 4 days).

[3] There are 252 actual working days in a year (260 minus eight bank holidays). 23,424,240 days, is the equivalent of 92,953 work years – or full time jobs.

About Denplan and Simplyhealth

Simplyhealth a leading healthcare company, committed to providing affordable healthcare, to support everybody's everyday healthcare needs. Through our health and dental plans, we look after over two million customers. We aim to support and protect the NHS through the provision of outpatient support to help people live their best lives.

We don't have shareholders and since 1872 we've been led by our purpose of improving access to healthcare, for all in the UK. We are changing the game, investing £60 million in new businesses to accelerate the development of predictive and preventative healthcare services.

We understand our health depends on the health of our communities and our planet. Each year we commit to giving £1million to a range of community causes, in March 2022 we achieved Carbon Neutral + status for the second year and in 2022 we became the first Health Insurer to be awarded B Corp status.

To find out more, visit www.denplan.co.uk and www.simplyhealth.co.uk