

# Regional Dental Practices in Focus

The latest CommBank Dental Insights Report, conducted in partnership with the Australian Dental Association (ADA), examines practice responses to key operational, financial and market trends. Comparing the responses between practices in regional and metropolitan locations reveals different impacts and strategies for each.

## Revenue and growth

Regional practices are more likely to report higher monthly revenues than pre-pandemic compared to their metropolitan peers. From here, many are seeking to grow in the year ahead.



**31%**

of regional practices report rising revenues compared to pre-pandemic vs **20%** for metropolitan practices

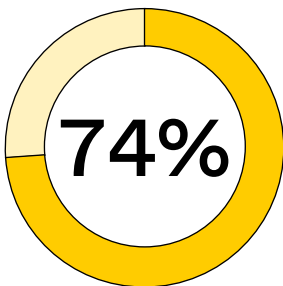


**41%**

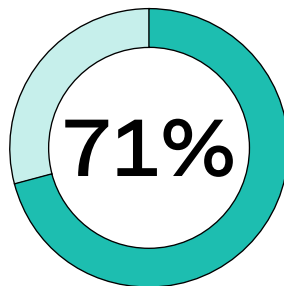
of regional practices are concentrating on growth in the next 12 months, and **47%** are seeking to maintain current revenue.

## Top challenges

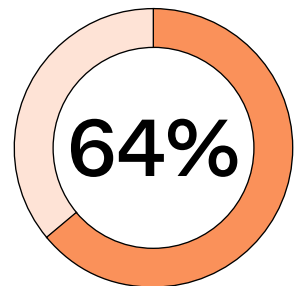
The top challenges for regional practices relate to rising costs, attracting and retaining quality staff and ensuring they are not overworked. Compared to those in metropolitan locations, driving patient demand and competition is far less of a challenge. The top challenges include:



of regional practices see increasing payroll costs as a challenge, **6%** more than in metro locations



of regional practices see attracting and retaining quality staff as a challenge, **6%** more than in metro locations



of regional practices see increasing fixed costs as a challenge, just **3%** more than in metro locations.

## Practice priorities

Regional practices are responding directly to the top challenges, with cost reduction, people and culture and recruitment among the most common priorities for the year ahead, which include:



**37%**

of regional practices are prioritising employee engagement, **7%** more than in metro locations



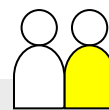
**35%**

Of regional practices are reducing or restructuring costs or debt, **3%** more than in metro locations



**33%**

of regional practices are prioritising investment in new devices and equipment, **3%** more than in metro locations



**31%**

Of practices are seeking to increase the number of dentists and staff, between at least **10%** more than in metro locations.

While rising costs and how practices are responding are somewhat uniform across the industry, there are some marked differences in how practices in regional and metropolitan locations are looking to find and keep people and their technology and equipment priorities. We will examine both in detail.

## Strategies for attracting and retaining staff

Regional practices are more likely to report that access to suitably skilled staff is limiting their operating capacity and growth potential. More than one in three (35%) say they are significantly impacted compared to 28% of metro practices. It is far more challenging for regional practices to find dentists than their metropolitan counterparts, while this wasn't as severe for chairside assistants and administrative staff.

To differentiate the practice in pursuit of finding and keeping good staff, regional practices did have a notable emphasis on using workplace culture and learning and development to gain an edge.



**84%**

of regional practices are nurturing a friendly and supportive workplace, **8%** more than in metro locations



**55%**

of regional practices have flexible working arrangements, **2%** more than in metro locations



**43%**

Use regular team building initiatives and social events, **10%** more than in metro locations



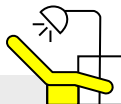
**31%**

Have a strong focus on continuing professional learning and development, **4%** more than in metro locations

# Investment in equipment and devices

More than one in three (37%) of regional practices plan to increase investment in technology and equipment, and a further 41% expect it to remain the same in the year ahead.

The research suggests that compared to practices in metropolitan locations, regional practices are prioritising investment into clinical technology and equipment. This aligns with the 69% of practices that say improving the quality of care is driving their investment.



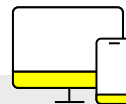
## 29%

of regional practices are investing in chairs or treatment units, **6%** more than in metro locations



## 25%

of regional practices are investing in sterilisation equipment and digital imaging systems, at least **5%** more than in metro locations



## 58%

of regional practices are investing in practice websites to enhance the patient experience, **7%** less than in metro locations



## Spotlight on green dentistry

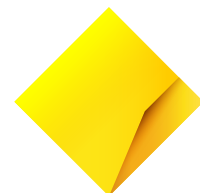
While few dentists believe the industry is responding extremely well to the challenges and opportunities of sustainable dentistry; encouragingly, regional practices are moderately more likely to have a focus on green dentistry in their practice when compared to metropolitan practices (42% vs 39%).

To view more insights from regional practices and the tactics the broader industry is using to navigate emerging challenges and opportunities, visit [Dental Insights webpage](#).

Additionally you can click [here](#) to request a call back from a Health Accredited banker to find out how CommBank Health can help you.

## About the research

CommBank and the Australian Dental Association (ADA) jointly developed the research, based on the perspectives of 473 practice decision-makers across Australia. More than one in four of these practices are located in regional areas across Australia.



### Things you should know:

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\*The report refers to data sourced from an online survey of 473 dental practices that occurred during July-August 2022. The survey was undertaken by ACA Research on behalf of the Commonwealth Bank. All analysis and views of future market conditions are solely those of the Commonwealth Bank.

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