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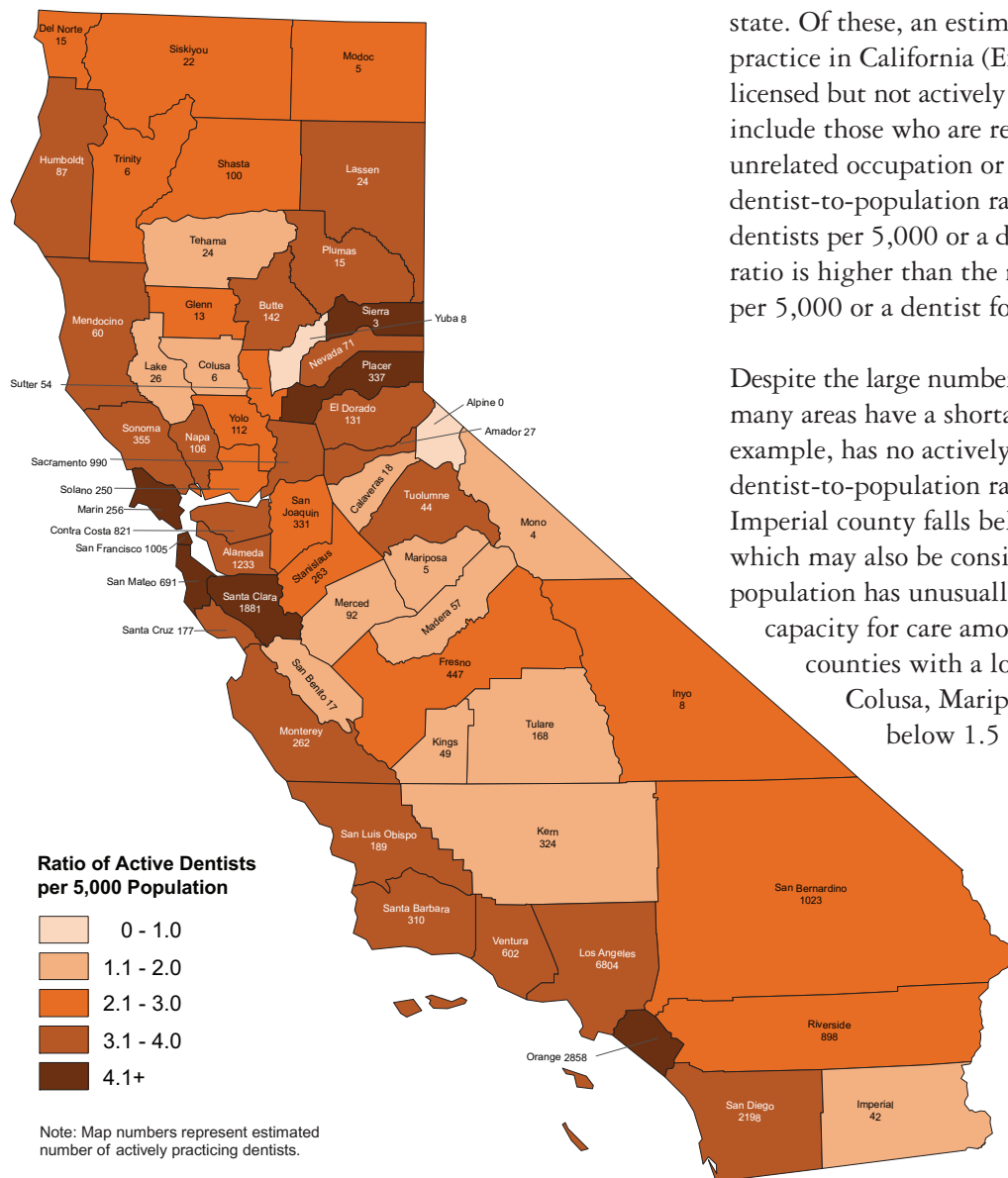
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## Distribution and Characteristics of Dentists Licensed to Practice in California, 2008

Nadereh Pourat and Gina Nicholson

**Exhibit 1. Density of Actively Practicing Dentists in California Counties**



California has about 14% of the total number of dentists nationwide—the largest percentage of any state.<sup>1</sup> Over 31,000 are licensed to practice in the state. Of these, an estimated 26,500 dentists actively practice in California (Exhibit 1). The remaining 4,500 are licensed but not actively practicing. These dentists primarily include those who are retired, disabled, employed in an unrelated occupation or continuing their education. The dentist-to-population ratio in California is estimated as 3.5 dentists per 5,000 or a dentist for every 1,440 persons. This ratio is higher than the national estimate of three dentists per 5,000 or a dentist for every 1,660 persons.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the large number of practicing dentists in California, many areas have a shortage of dentists. Alpine County, for example, has no actively practicing dentists. Yuba has a dentist-to-population ratio of less than one per 5,000. Imperial county falls below the ratio of 1.25 per 5000, which may also be considered a shortage area if the population has unusually high needs or insufficient capacity for care among existing dentists. Other counties with a low supply of dentists include Colusa, Mariposa, Mono and San Benito at or below 1.5 per 5,000.

*(Continued on page 3)*

## Exhibit 2. Dentists Licensed to Practice in California, 2008

COUNTY	County Dentist and Population Totals						Dentist	
	Total No. of Licensed Dentists	Dentists in Active Practice (Estimated)	Percent of Licensed Dentists in Active Practice (Estimated)	County Population	Ratio of Active Dentists per 5,000 Population (Estimated)	No. of Dental Health Shortage Areas (DHPSA)	Percent of Female Dentists in Active Practice	Percent of Newly Licensed Dentists (within 5 years) in Active Practice
All California Counties	31,520	26,465	84%	38,049,462	3.5	233	29%	15%
Alameda	1,399	1,233	88%	1,543,000	4.0	9	34%	13%
Alpine	0	0	n/a	1,222	0.0	0	n/a	n/a
Amador	32	27	84%	37,943	3.6	0	19%	15%
Butte	166	142	86%	220,407	3.2	1	15%	16%
Calaveras	29	18	62%	46,127	2.0	0	17%	11%
Colusa	9	6	67%	21,910	1.4	0	33%	17%
Contra Costa	1,003	821	82%	1,051,674	3.9	2	32%	13%
Del Norte	18	15	83%	29,419	2.5	1	20%	7%
El Dorado	152	131	86%	179,722	3.6	3	22%	10%
Fresno	543	447	82%	931,098	2.4	8	17%	14%
Glenn	13	13	100%	29,195	2.2	1	23%	31%
Humboldt	102	87	85%	132,821	3.3	8	13%	10%
Imperial	46	42	91%	176,158	1.2	4	25%	14%
Inyo	11	8	73%	18,152	2.2	2	0%	0%
Kern	361	324	90%	817,517	2.0	13	23%	22%
Kings	55	49	89%	154,434	1.6	5	22%	14%
Lake	31	26	84%	64,059	2.0	1	31%	15%
Lassen	25	24	96%	35,757	3.4	4	4%	4%
Los Angeles	8,006	6,804	85%	10,363,850	3.3	37	32%	15%
Madera	65	57	88%	150,887	1.9	3	16%	21%
Marin	336	256	76%	257,406	5.0	2	31%	9%
Mariposa	6	5	83%	18,406	1.4	0	0%	0%
Mendocino	69	60	87%	90,163	3.3	9	17%	7%
Merced	103	92	89%	255,250	1.8	3	17%	21%
Modoc	5	5	100%	9,702	2.6	1	0%	40%
Mono	7	4	57%	13,759	1.5	1	0%	25%
Monterey	308	262	85%	428,549	3.1	5	21%	12%
Napa	124	106	85%	136,704	3.9	1	29%	12%
Nevada	90	71	79%	99,186	3.6	2	14%	8%
Orange	3,283	2,858	87%	3,121,251	4.6	3	30%	14%
Placer	398	337	85%	333,401	5.1	0	23%	18%
Plumas	19	15	79%	20,917	3.6	1	0%	7%
Riverside	1,068	898	84%	2,088,322	2.2	7	26%	17%
Sacramento	1,124	990	88%	1,424,415	3.5	3	25%	15%
San Benito	18	17	94%	57,784	1.5	1	18%	6%
San Bernardino	1,238	1,023	83%	2,055,766	2.5	7	30%	22%
San Diego	2,588	2,198	85%	3,146,274	3.5	15	28%	15%
San Francisco	1,230	1,005	82%	824,525	6.1	4	34%	17%
San Joaquin	384	331	86%	685,660	2.4	2	19%	16%
San Luis Obispo	229	189	83%	269,337	3.5	2	15%	11%
San Mateo	814	691	85%	739,469	4.7	2	38%	12%
Santa Barbara	368	310	84%	428,655	3.6	2	18%	15%
Santa Clara	2,131	1,881	88%	1,837,075	5.1	6	38%	13%
Santa Cruz	204	177	87%	266,519	3.3	3	18%	12%
Shasta	123	100	81%	182,236	2.7	9	10%	13%
Sierra	4	3	75%	3,380	4.4	1	0%	0%
Siskiyou	29	22	76%	45,971	2.4	4	18%	5%
Solano	293	250	85%	426,757	2.9	1	26%	13%
Sonoma	432	355	82%	484,470	3.7	6	24%	10%
Stanislaus	308	263	85%	525,903	2.5	2	20%	17%
Sutter	65	54	83%	95,878	2.8	0	11%	13%
Tehama	31	24	77%	62,419	1.9	2	17%	13%
Trinity	9	6	67%	13,966	2.1	3	33%	17%
Tulare	193	168	87%	435,254	1.9	10	20%	14%
Tuolumne	50	44	88%	56,799	3.9	1	9%	11%
Ventura	695	602	87%	831,587	3.6	6	22%	12%
Yolo	124	112	90%	199,066	2.8	2	28%	13%
Yuba	12	8	67%	71,929	0.6	2	38%	13%
Other States/Countries	942	399	42%	n/a	n/a	n/a	26%	36%

Characteristics		Public Dental Care Capacity	
Percent of Dentists in Active Practice Nearing Retirement (30+ years since Licensure)	Percent of Dentists in Active Practice with More than One Practice Location	Number of Community Clinics with Dental Services	Number of Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Dentists in Community Clinics with Dental Services
19%	14%	256	449.8
21%	14%	11	28.5
n/a	n/a	0	0.0
19%	15%	0	0.0
30%	13%	4	15.5
39%	33%	0	0.0
33%	0%	1	1.9
21%	11%	3	6.1
40%	7%	1	2.4
21%	15%	0	0.0
28%	16%	10	13.3
31%	23%	2	5.8
46%	17%	5	9.2
19%	10%	2	4.6
13%	0%	0	0.0
19%	19%	12	15.9
31%	10%	3	3.7
27%	12%	2	5.4
38%	4%	4	5.1
17%	13%	47	78.5
14%	23%	2	3.3
25%	11%	0	0.0
20%	0%	1	2.4
42%	15%	9	19.0
28%	21%	4	6.9
20%	0%	1	1.0
0%	50%	0	0.0
29%	18%	7	8.9
38%	15%	2	4.1
37%	6%	2	3.5
17%	14%	14	17.7
18%	19%	1	2.5
40%	13%	1	1.0
13%	15%	5	6.1
21%	19%	4	6.1
6%	12%	1	1.1
13%	15%	4	6.0
19%	11%	17	39.9
21%	16%	9	11.7
23%	18%	1	2.0
30%	16%	2	5.4
19%	12%	3	1.6
31%	12%	3	5.6
16%	13%	8	16.2
31%	9%	3	10.3
32%	9%	5	7.0
33%	0%	1	0.6
41%	18%	2	2.3
20%	13%	1	1.7
25%	11%	7	15.4
18%	16%	5	3.1
37%	9%	0	0.0
33%	8%	2	5.0
33%	33%	1	0.6
30%	12%	8	14.3
41%	20%	1	1.2
24%	16%	7	11.2
24%	15%	3	4.5
25%	13%	2	5.1
17%	4%	n/a	n/a

(Continued from page 1)

There are 233 dental health professional shortage areas (DHPSAs) statewide. These areas are where there is: a dentist-to-population ratio of one per 5,000 or lower; a high population need with a ratio of at least 1.25 dentists per 5,000 (or 1 per 4,000); and a public or non-profit health center that provides dental services to shortage areas or populations (154 of shortage designations are these health centers) (Exhibit 2).<sup>3,4</sup> DHPSAs are eligible for assignment of dentists through the National Health Service Corps as well as for scholarship and loan payment programs for dentists who agree to serve in shortage areas.

An estimated 84% of all licensed dentists are actively practicing. Nearly one-third of these dentists are female (Exhibit 2). The great majority of actively practicing dentists (84%) are in general practice.<sup>5</sup> Statewide, 14% of active dentists report practicing in more than one location, indicating further variations in capacity for care in a given geographic area.

The percentage of dentists who may be nearing retirement age is greater than the percentage of newly licensed dentists. Fifteen percent of active dentists have received their license within the past five years, while 19% have been licensed for 30 or more years. In some counties far fewer are newly licensed and many more are nearing retirement age. Among newly licensed dentists, 44% are female and 91% are generalists. Among those nearing retirement age, however, only 4% are female and 75% are generalists.

An estimated 12% of the California population is living at or below the federal poverty level. For this group, community clinics may be the primary source of dental care.<sup>6</sup>

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*Notes:*

All analyses of dentist characteristics are given only for the estimated number of dentists in active practice.

Gender was not available in 2008 licensure data. We used gender from the 2003 California Dental Survey for member dentists in both datasets. Gender was assigned for all other dentists based on first or middle name.

Data on dentists practicing in more than one location are calculated based on the number of dentists with multiple practices only among those dentists who list an office address. Data on primary care clinics are provided by the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development (OSHPD) and are reported for 2007. Clinics with an affiliated dentist or hygienist (staff, contract, volunteer) were considered dental care clinics. Data on full-time equivalent (FTE) dentists are provided by OSHPD and are reported for 2007. The number of FTE dentists gives an estimate of the number of dentists working in primary care clinics. The count of dentists working in primary care clinics may overlap with the number of dentists in active practice.

Dental Health Professional Service Areas (DHPSAs) are areas designated as having too few dental providers and include geographic areas, population groups or medical facilities. Not all geographic areas apply for a DHPSA designation. Correctional facilities with a DHPSA designation were excluded from the total count.

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Currently, 256 community clinics provide dental services in California, utilizing 450 full-time equivalent dentists, and providing over one million dental encounters.<sup>7</sup> Previous data indicate that approximately 28% of dentists in private practice provide care for a substantial number of patients with public insurance (about 100 or more publicly insured patients per year). Furthermore, approximately 49% of private-practice dentists provide care at a sliding scale to accommodate the needs of low-income populations, although the extent of these discounts is not known.<sup>8</sup>

### Authors

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### Data and Methods

The California Dental Association (CDA) provided a list of all licensed dentists in California in 2008. This data included information on membership status, date of licensure and up to two practice addresses. Active status and specialty were only available for members of the CDA (70%). Oral surgery, oral pathology, oral radiology and public health specialists were not included. The population of each county was obtained from the California Department of Finance.<sup>9</sup> DHPSA designations were obtained from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.<sup>10</sup> Correctional facilities with a DHPSA designation were excluded from the total count. Data on community clinics were obtained from the State of California, Office of Statewide Health and Planning Department for 2007.<sup>11</sup> Only clinics reporting dentists on staff were included.

Active status was estimated for non-members as follows: those with a practice address were assumed to be active. Activity status was modeled for those without a practice address (2,282 or 7%) using characteristics of members without an office address. Data on dentists practicing in more than one location is limited to dentists who report any office addresses. The count of community clinics

providing dental care included only those utilizing dentists or hygienists. The number of dentists practicing in community clinics is reported as full-time equivalent, which may underestimate the actual number of individual dentists providing services in these clinics. The dentists working in community clinics would be a subset of licensed dentists in active practice.

The data in this fact sheet present a snapshot of licensed and actively practicing dentists in California in the third quarter of 2008. Changes in licensure, practice status and reported practice location of dentists continuously occur leading to discrepancies with data obtained in other time periods.

### Notes:

- 1 American Dental Association, ADA Survey Center. Distribution of Dentists in the United States by Region and State, 2006, September 2008.
- 2 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Bureau of Health Professions. The California Health Workforce: Highlights from the Health Workforce Profile. Available at <http://bhpr.brsa.gov/healthworkforce/reports/statesummaries/california.htm>
- 3 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas by State and County. Available at <http://hpsafind.brsa.gov/>
- 4 Excludes correctional institutions.
- 5 Specialty data were only available for dentists who were members of the California Dental Association. However, analysis of data from the California Dental Survey (2003) showed a similar percentage (84%) of surveyed dentists in active practice statewide to be generalists, including non-members.
- 6 2007 estimate. U.S. Census Bureau: State and County Quick Facts. Available at <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06000.html>
- 7 Authors' analysis of 2007 Annual Utilization Report, Primary Care Clinics data. Includes duplicate patient visits.
- 8 UCLA Center for Health Policy Research analysis of the 2003 California Dental Survey.
- 9 State of California, Department of Finance, E-1 Population Estimates for Cities, Counties and the State with Annual Percent Change – January 1, 2007 and 2008. Sacramento, California, May 2008. [http://www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/reports/estimates/e-1\\_2006-07/](http://www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/reports/estimates/e-1_2006-07/)
- 10 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas by State and County. Available at <http://hpsafind.brsa.gov/>
- 11 State of California, Office of Statewide Health and Planning Department, 2007 Annual Utilization Report Primary Care Clinics. Available at [http://www.osbpd.state.ca.us/bid/Products/Hospitals/Utilization/PC\\_SC\\_Utilization.html](http://www.osbpd.state.ca.us/bid/Products/Hospitals/Utilization/PC_SC_Utilization.html)