

SURVEY REPORT

Illegal Dental Practice

Results of a global survey with National
Dental Associations (NDAs)

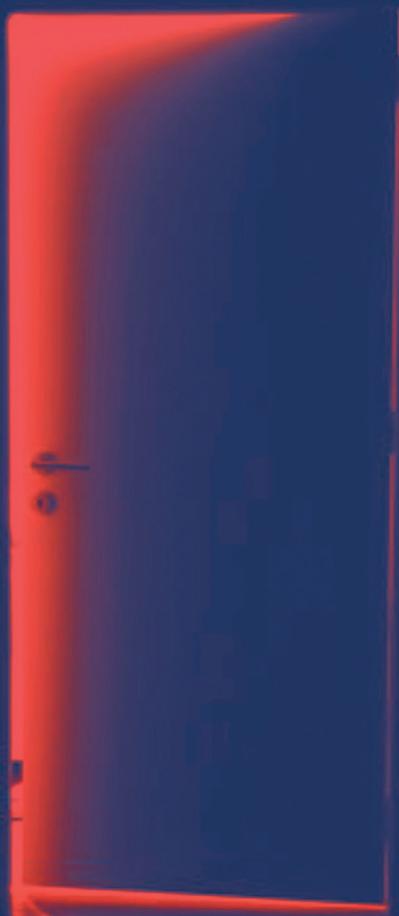


Table of contents

Executive summary	3
Introduction	4
Survey overview	5
Response rate	5
Survey results	6
FDI recommendations for NDAs and Regulators	21
Conclusion	22
Acknowledgement	23
Annex A – Participating NDAs	24
References	25

Executive summary

This report examines the legal definitions, regulatory frameworks, and perceived effectiveness of measures designed to curb illegal dental practice globally. Most countries define illegal dental practice as the provision of dental services by individuals not registered or licensed by an appropriate authority. This includes unqualified practitioners, those whose licenses have lapsed, and those practicing outside their approved scope or falsely using professional titles. Compliance with national laws, ethical codes, and regulatory standards forms the backbone of legal practice; however, enforcement remains inconsistent across regions.

Survey data from 49 national dental associations (NDAs) reveal a near-even split in perceived effectiveness: 49% find current legal provisions effective, 47% do not. This lack of consensus highlights significant variation in enforcement capacity, regulatory transparency, and contextual realities. In many regions, ineffective enforcement mechanisms allow illegal practices to persist, often driven by unmet population needs and health system gaps. In others, rigid legal frameworks may inadvertently criminalize community-based models of care.

The findings underscore a need for more responsive, equitable, and context-sensitive regulatory strategies. Cross-national collaboration and ongoing dialogue between dental associations, policymakers, and public health stakeholders are essential to develop regulatory approaches that safeguard public safety without limiting access to care. The report recommends improved enforcement, better data on regulatory outcomes, and flexible, inclusive legal frameworks that recognize the evolving roles of oral health professionals.

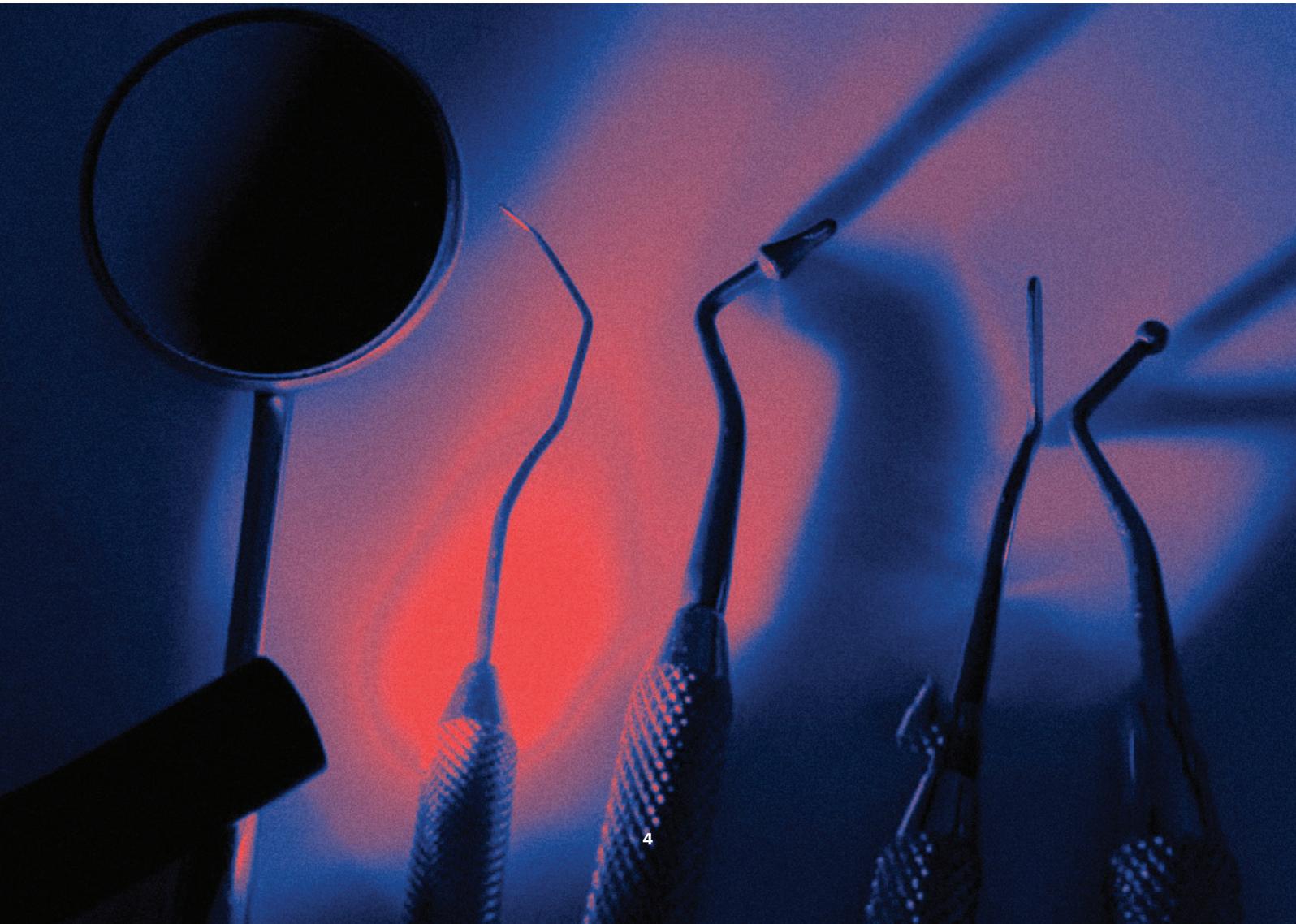
Introduction

Illegal dental practice is a pressing global public health concern that poses significant risks to patient safety and undermines the integrity of the dental profession. FDI World Dental Federation (FDI), the principal representative body for dentists worldwide, has recognized this issue and adopted the “Action Against Illegal Dental Practice”¹ policy statement to address it.

In 2024, FDI’s Dental Practice Committee conducted a survey with its members to understand the extent and challenges posed by the practice of illegal dentistry. The survey was conducted between January and April 2024.

FDI defines illegal dental practice as any dental procedures performed by individuals, or dental practices or dental chains without proper educational qualifications, licensing, or registration as mandated by local or national legislation. This unethical and often dangerous practice can lead to severe complications, such as infections, permanent disfigurement, or even life-threatening situations for patients.

The report highlights that the prevalence of illegal dental practice is driven by various factors, including a lack of access to affordable dental care, cultural differences, a shortage of qualified dental professionals, particularly in underserved areas, and the lure of lower costs offered by unlicensed practitioners. This issue transcends borders and affects both low- and high-income nations, posing a significant challenge to public health authorities worldwide.



Survey overview

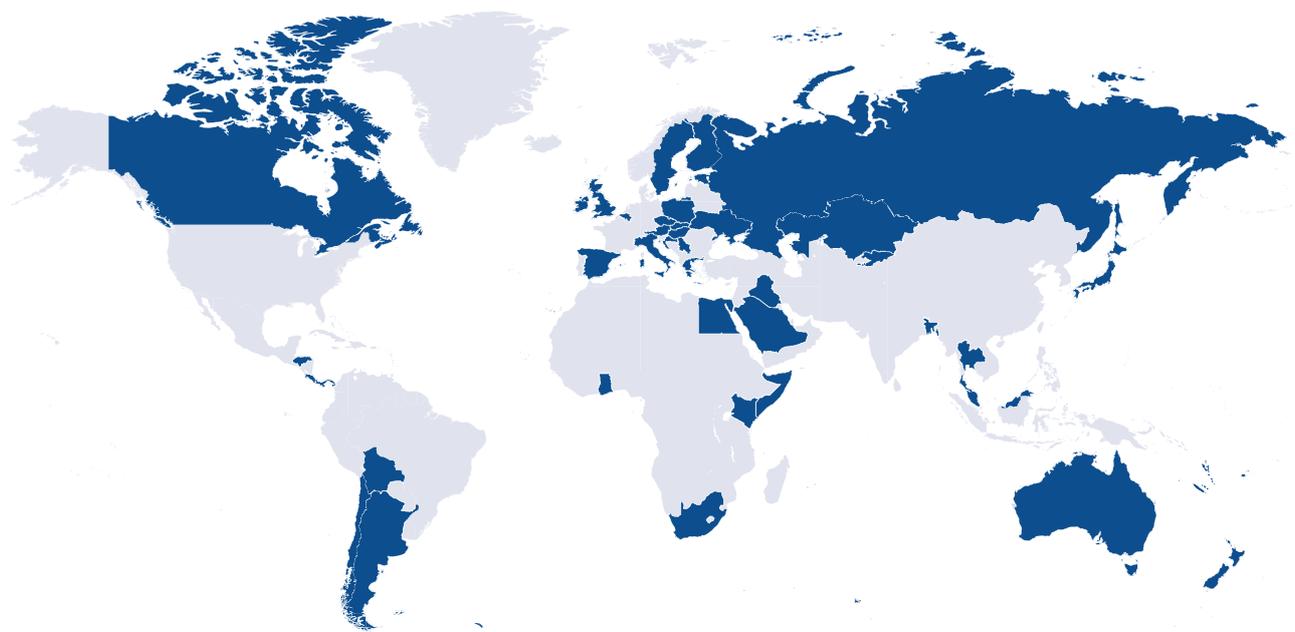
The survey aimed to:

- Understand the extent of illegal dental practice globally;
- Understand the legal and regulatory controls that are in place both national and locally;
- Understand the effectiveness of legal and regulatory controls in different countries;
- Understand how FDI can support its members in tackling illegal dental practice.

The survey was emailed to NDAs on three occasions and the survey was available in English, Spanish and French. The survey consisted of twenty-one questions in both qualitative and quantitative format.

Response rate

Of the 135 members invited to participate, 51 unique responses were received. It is notable that some countries with anecdotal high prevalence of illegal practice did not respond. The Committee made multiple calls to the membership to participate. It is perceived that countries may be reluctant to take part due to the potential stigma of discussing illegal dental practice. It is hoped that a higher response will be received in future surveys.



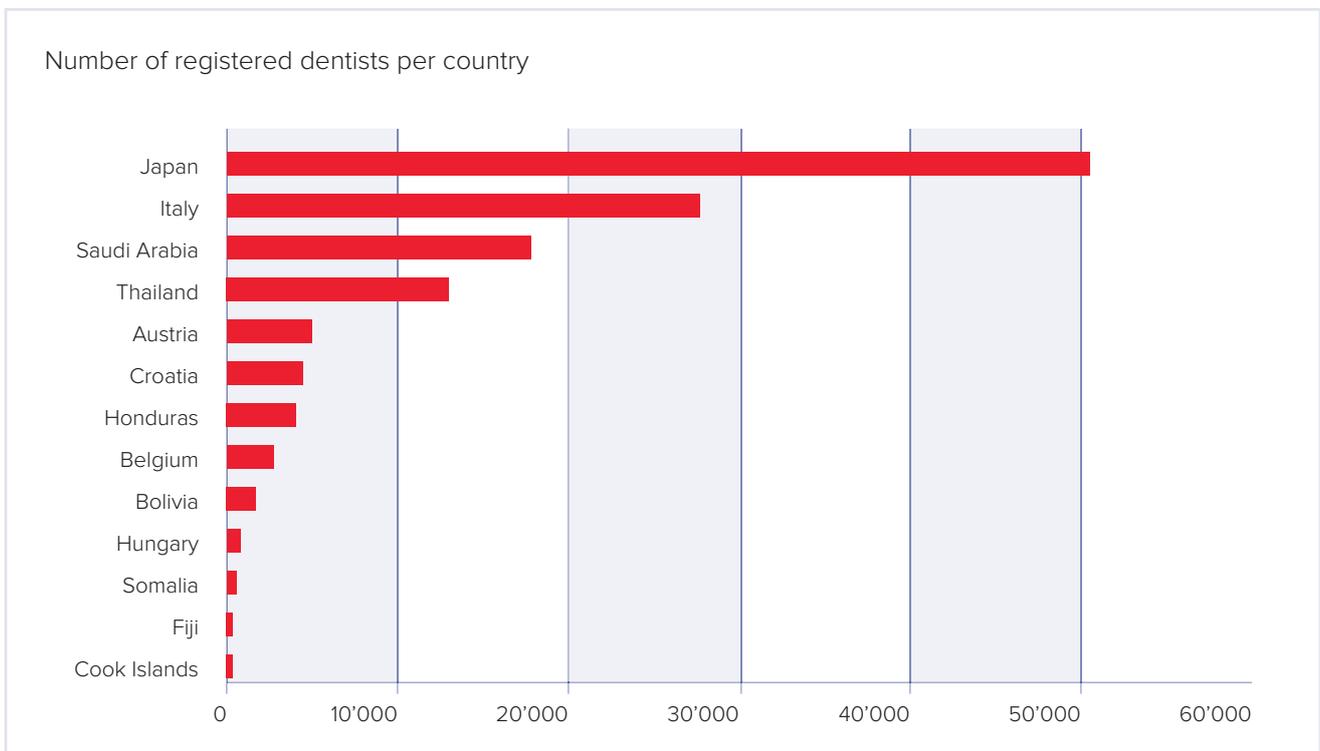
■ Responding NDAs

Survey results

The responses to each question are described below and presented using a combination of graphics and tables. Please note that the data presented in this report is gathered solely from FDI members. As such, the results are derived directly from their knowledge and experiences.

1. How many registered dentists are currently members of your association?

The number of registered dentists in our sample varied from the smallest being 8 in the Cook Islands, to the largest 50'667 in Japan. A full list of participating NDAs can be found in *Annex A*.



2. How does your national dental association define and categorize illegal dental practice within your country's legal framework?

Most countries define illegal dental practice as the provision of dental care by individuals who are not formally registered or licensed by a recognized health or dental authority. This typically encompasses individuals lacking accredited qualifications, those whose licenses have lapsed, been suspended, or revoked, and those practicing without up-to-date continuing professional development (CPD) or annual certification. At face value, this definition appears straightforward; however, it reveals deeper regulatory, ethical, and systemic challenges.

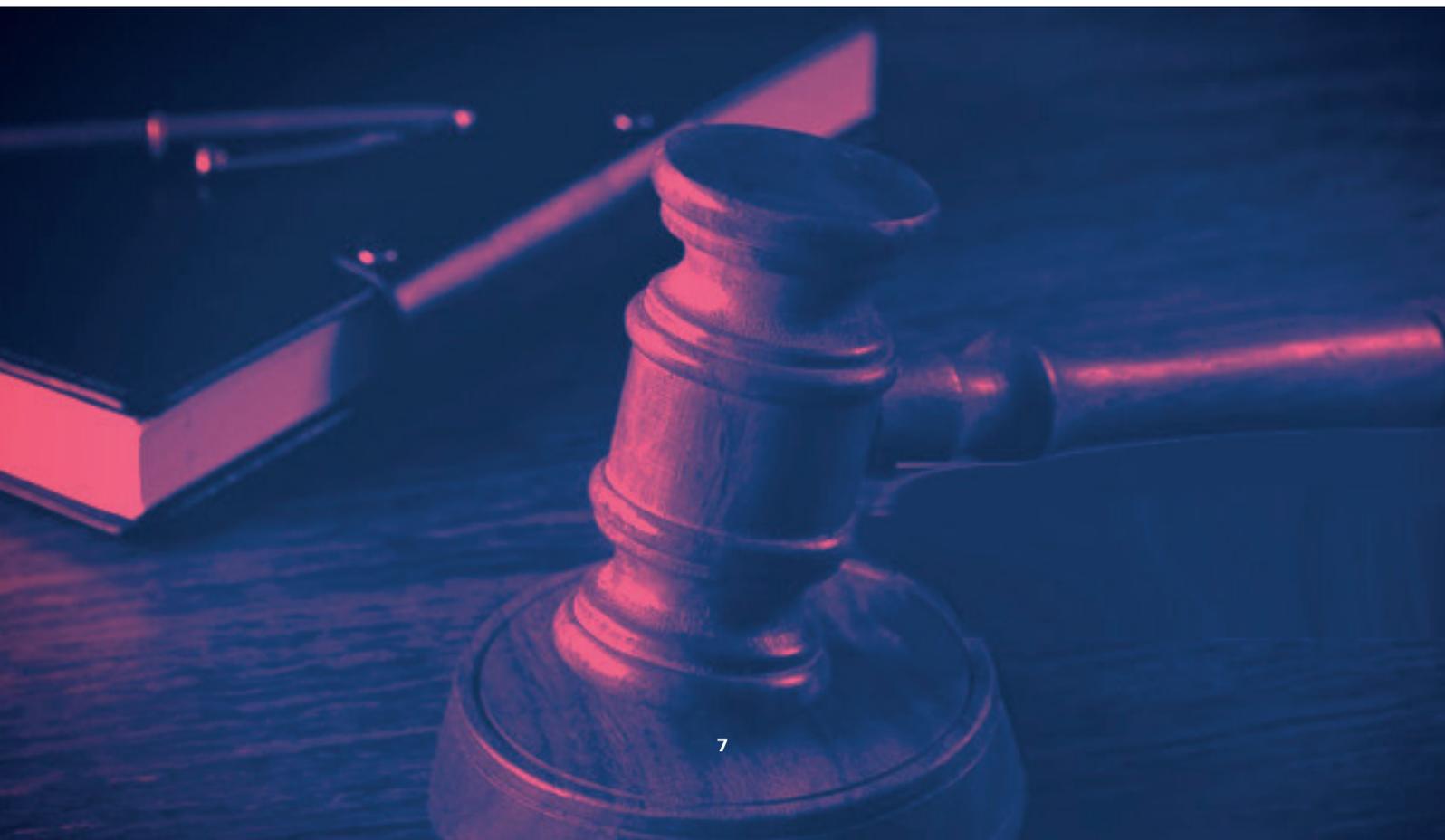
Firstly, the emphasis on registration and formal qualification assumes that regulatory bodies are both competent and universally accessible. In reality, licensure systems vary significantly in terms of transparency, efficiency, and inclusiveness, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), where informal dental practices may proliferate out of necessity due to limited access to formally trained professionals. Thus, the strict application of these legal definitions may inadvertently criminalize community-based care providers serving under-resourced populations.

Moreover, extending the definition of illegality to include practicing beyond one's registered scope raises important questions about workforce flexibility and the evolution of professional roles. For instance, dental therapists and hygienists are increasingly trained to undertake more complex procedures in certain jurisdictions—yet may be legally restricted in others. This tension between evolving competencies and static regulatory frameworks exposes a lag between professional development and legal recognition.

The criminalization of title misrepresentation—using professional labels without proper registration—rightly aims to protect patients. However, this issue also reflects the symbolic power of professional titles and the social capital they confer. It raises critical questions about who is deemed a “legitimate” provider and whether such legitimacy is always aligned with capability or only with institutional validation.

Legal frameworks also hinge heavily on compliance with national health regulations and ethical standards set by councils or associations. Yet such standards often reflect the dominant paradigms of dentistry shaped by high-income countries, potentially marginalizing traditional, community-based, or innovative models of care. Furthermore, there is frequently a disconnect between legal statutes and enforcement mechanisms. In many regions, regulatory bodies lack the resources or political will to systematically monitor and address illegal practice, leading to both under-enforcement and selective prosecution.

Lastly, cross-national variation in defining and enforcing illegal dental practice underlines the need for a more harmonized, equity-focused, and culturally sensitive approach.



3. Are there specific examples or criteria that your association uses to distinguish between legal and illegal dental procedures or practitioners?



Qualifications and certifications

Possession of a University Diploma of Stomatology/ Dentistry, Specialist certificate, and valid license. Completion of academic training programmes, such as a five/six-year training programme including clinical practice hours.



Regulatory compliance

Clinics must obtain licensing which specifies allowed specializations and registration of equipment. Dentists must fulfill continuing education requirements and pass periodic exams.



Registration and licensing

Registration with national dental councils or boards. Mandatory licensing by the Health Professions Act or similar regulatory body specific to each country. Unique identification codes issued by Health Care Surveillance Authorities.



Practice restrictions and guidelines

Only registered and appropriately licensed practitioners can legally perform dental procedures. Illegal practices typically involve performing dental procedures without proper licensing, by unqualified personnel, or outside the regulatory framework.



Membership requirements

Membership in national or local dental chambers or associations. Verification of qualifications, such as education and criminal background checks before membership approval.



Supervision and approval

Certain procedures must be performed under the supervision of licensed dentists or within an approved educational framework.



Ethical and professional standards

Compliance with Ethical Rules of Conduct for practitioners. Maintenance of current practicing certificates issued by dental councils.



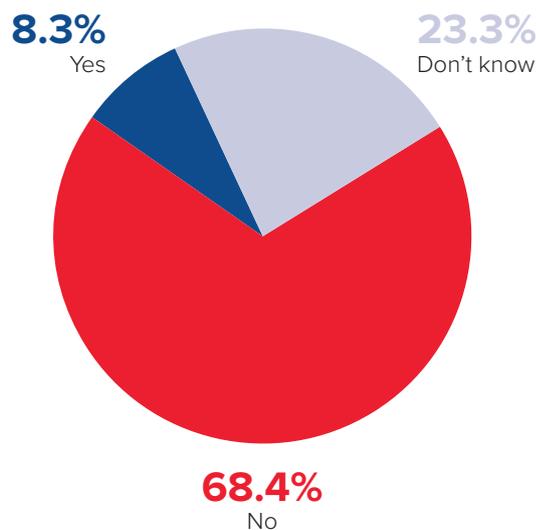
Legal enforcement

Practicing without registration or violating practice guidelines is subject to legal and judicial prosecution including criminal, civil, or administrative actions.

Specific acts or codes, such as the Dental Practitioners Act or the Dentists Act, often outline the framework and regulations governing the practice of dentistry in various countries. Ethical considerations and the potential risk to public health from unqualified practitioners are significant factors influencing these regulations, which by necessity may vary from country to country, given the healthcare requirements national income and availability of a trained workforce.

However, where professional standards are employed, there should be a system to ensure they are adhered to in order to safeguard public health. This summary emphasizes the stringent controls and regulatory measures that are enforced worldwide to ensure that dental practices are carried out by qualified professionals under regulated conditions, safeguarding public health and maintaining professional standards in dentistry.

4. Are there any estimates or data on the prevalence of illegal dental practice in your country?



Response on the Prevalence of Illegal Dental Practice

68.4% of responses indicated “No”, suggesting that there are few estimates or data on the prevalence of illegal dental practice.

8.3% of responses indicated “Yes”, meaning some data or estimates are available.

23.3% responded with “Don’t know”, indicating uncertainty or lack of information regarding the prevalence of illegal dental practices

If yes how much? Is illegal practice quantified?

There is data, but no overall data estimating the prevalence of illegal dental practice. It is also difficult to distinguish between different kinds of illegal dental practice, and the growing demand for facial aesthetics further complicates the phenomenon e.g., someone working as a dentist but without a dental license or offering “specialist” services without appropriate training/registration and there are some who knowingly are “cheating” the welfare/insurance system to obtain economic advantages. Since the type of illegal practice varies, it is also hard to give an overall estimate. That said, it is important to remember that the vast majority of dentists work within the given legal framework, they work as dentists because they want to help patients, and they want to contribute to society in a positive way. On the other hand, the demand and growing commercialization has the potential to drive the growth of illegal practice.

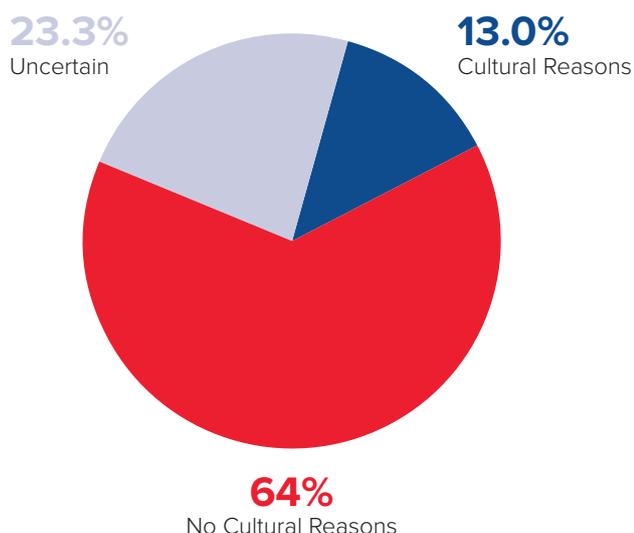
In one country, illegal dental practices are closely monitored by a specialized police force, and in 2015, these illegal treatments were estimated to account for 15% of all dental services, though the actual figures may be higher.

In another country, the dental association reports that illegal dental practice is extremely rare due to stringent regulations. Practicing without proper authorization is challenging because of difficulties in accessing necessary materials and the risk of criminal prosecution. However, illegal activities may still occur in areas like tooth whitening, medical device manufacture and remote orthodontics.

There are instances where previously registered dental professionals, such as dental nurses or technicians, may continue working illegally for a time, leading to legal actions and making it harder for them to return to the profession in the future.

Additionally, there are anecdotal reports of practices facilitating consultations for patients seeking dental treatment abroad, which, if done by unregistered dentists, would be considered illegal and could result in prosecution.

5. Do people conduct illegal dental practice for cultural reasons in your country?



Cultural Reasons for Conducting Illegal Dental Practices

Six (13%) responses indicate that there are cultural reasons for conducting illegal dental practices.

30 (64%) of responses indicate that there are no cultural reasons for conducting illegal dental practices.

14 (23%) of responses are uncertain about the cultural influences on illegal dental practices. The small number of responses acknowledging cultural reasons for illegal dental practice may well be underestimated, further research is needed to understand these phenomena.

6. What specific actions has your association taken to combat illegal dental practice?

A multifaceted approach to address illegal practices in dentistry exists, encompassing several strategies. Enforcement and closure involve collaborating with health agencies to shut down illegal operations and potentially imprison offenders, while also reporting non-compliant entities to regulatory bodies. Public awareness campaigns aim to educate the public about the dangers of illegal practices through various means such as distributing brochures and conducting seminars. Professional guidance involves issuing guidelines and ethical codes to emphasize legal compliance among dental professionals.

Surveillance and reporting mechanisms are crucial, including active surveillance in collaboration with institutions and establishing complaint portals for reporting unethical practices. Legal support and advocacy efforts entail providing continuous legal assistance to practitioners and advocating for revisions to outdated legal frameworks that fail to deter illegal practices effectively.

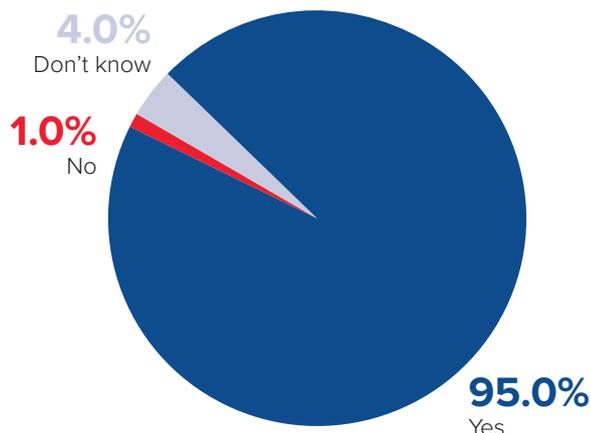
Cultural and community engagement strategies are also highlighted, including addressing harmful cultural practices in dentistry and engaging with communities to raise awareness about seeking treatment from licensed professionals. Shutting down illegal operations involves operational crackdowns on clandestine offices that do not comply with health regulations.

International and government collaboration play a significant role, with efforts directed towards advising governments on refining dental practice laws and collaborating with national health ministries for comprehensive enforcement of regulations. The observations note the diverse approaches taken by different associations, with some prioritizing regulatory compliance while others focus on education and cultural change, all relying heavily on collaboration with governmental and regulatory bodies for effectiveness.

Five responses indicated an inability to take action on illegal dental practice, reflecting various limitations faced by dental associations. These limitations primarily stem from a lack of jurisdiction authority, regulatory constraints, or the perception that illegal practices are not a prevalent issue within certain regions. Specifically, some associations explicitly state that they have no right or remit to control or enforce regulations against illegal practices.

Others acknowledge that their role is limited to reporting and advocating rather than direct intervention. This highlights a significant gap in enforcement capabilities across different dental associations, suggesting a need for either enhanced legal powers or greater collaboration with government and regulatory bodies capable of taking direct action.

7. Are there legal provisions and regulations in place to address illegal dental practice in your country?

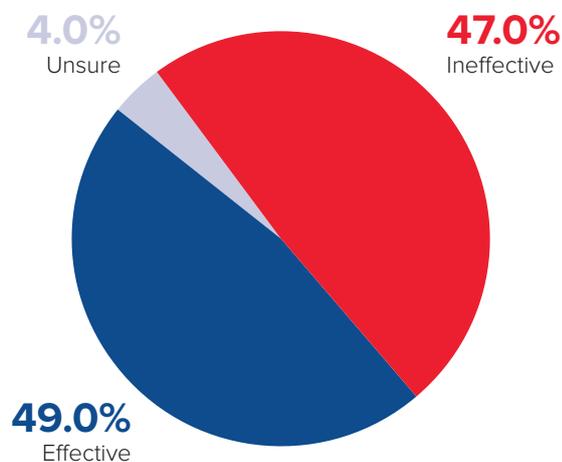


Legal Provisions to Address Illegal Dental Practice

The majority indicate "Yes" (95%), suggesting that legal provisions are indeed in place to address illegal dental practice in various countries.

A few responses are "Don't know", which might suggest uncertainty or lack of information about such provisions. Only a single response indicates "No", showing that almost all countries have some form of regulation to combat illegal dental practices.

8. How would you rate the effectiveness of these legal provisions and regulations in curbing illegal dental practice?



Effectiveness of Legal Provisions to Address Illegal Dental Practice

The nearly even split in responses—49% rating current legal provisions as effective and 47% as ineffective, with 4% unsure—indicates not just a lack of consensus but a deeper ambivalence among stakeholders regarding the impact of regulatory frameworks on curbing illegal dental practice. This polarization warrants critical scrutiny.

First, the division in perception may reflect varying national and regional realities. In countries with robust enforcement mechanisms, well-resourced dental councils, and clear legislative frameworks, regulations may be perceived as effective. In contrast, respondents from regions where regulatory bodies are underfunded or politically constrained may see such provisions as largely symbolic or inconsistently applied. Therefore, the data may not reflect the actual effectiveness of regulations but rather the disparity in institutional capacity and contextual enforcement.

Second, the fact that nearly half of the respondents view the provisions as ineffective underscores a structural gap: laws on paper are insufficient without effective implementation, monitoring, and public accountability mechanisms. This perception of ineffectiveness might stem from several factors, such as:

- The proliferation of informal or underground dental markets is driven by unmet health needs.
- Weak penalties or lack of follow-through for those caught practicing illegally.
- Insufficient public awareness or education about what constitutes qualified dental care.
- Fragmentation in healthcare governance, particularly in federated systems or LMICs.

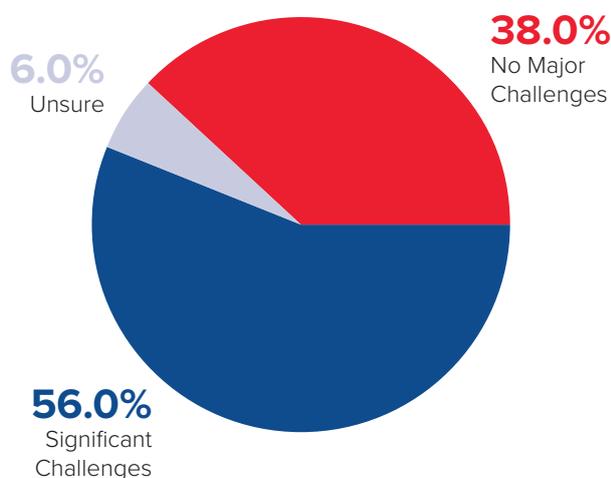
The 4% of respondents who are uncertain may seem numerically insignificant, but their ambivalence is important.

It may point to a broader problem: the absence of clear metrics, evaluations, or reporting on the outcomes of regulatory efforts. If professionals themselves are unsure about the efficacy of legal provisions, it raises questions about transparency, communication, and the integration of feedback loops between regulatory bodies and practitioners.

This nearly even split also highlights a potential conflict between regulation as a protective mechanism for public health versus regulation as a tool for professional gatekeeping. Some dental associations may view stringent regulations as preserving professional standards and public safety, while others may see them as failing to adapt to modern practice realities, limiting access to care, or disproportionately affecting marginalized providers and populations.

Finally, the survey data reveal an opportunity: the lack of consensus can serve as a catalyst for comparative research, policy dialogue, and international cooperation. Rather than striving for one-size-fits-all solutions, regulatory bodies might benefit from collaborative platforms to share enforcement strategies, explore alternative models of licensure and oversight, and co-develop adaptive frameworks that address both quality assurance and access to care.

9. Are there any major challenges or obstacles in enforcing regulations against illegal dental practice?



Challenges in Enforcing Regulations for Illegal Dental Practice

The majority, 28 (56%) respondents, believe there are significant challenges or obstacles in enforcing these regulations, while 19 (38%) do not see major challenges, and a small percentage (6%) are unsure.

For the NDAs who responded yes, the following themes emerged from the data.

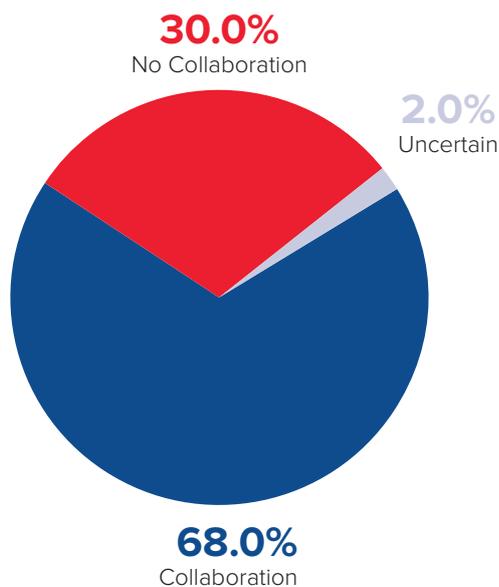
Regulatory and enforcement challenges in combating illegal dental practices include bureaucratic hurdles and delays in the justice system, with non-registered practitioners often evading accountability until a public complaint is lodged. Gathering evidence is time-consuming, impeding prosecution efforts. Furthermore, ineffective communication between government healthcare bodies and dental associations hampers coordination. Existing penalties lack deterrence, and certain unauthorized practices are culturally tolerated.

Cultural and societal issues contribute to the acceptance of illegal practices in some areas, while corruption can hinder law enforcement efforts. Additionally, public awareness of illegal dental practices is lacking, reducing reporting rates. Safety concerns for regulatory officers and hurdles faced by complainants in providing evidence further complicate matters.

Resource limitations constrain regulatory bodies' ability to monitor and control illegal practices effectively, necessitating increased resources for inspections and case handling. Political interests and economic factors, including high costs associated with legal dental practices, exacerbate the problem.

To address these challenges, suggested improvements include updating legislation to align with modern practices, enhancing resources and mandates for regulatory authorities, and addressing systemic issues across legal, cultural, and operational domains. These changes are crucial for combating illegal dental practices effectively.

10. Does your association collaborate with law enforcement agencies or regulators to address illegal dental practice?



Collaboration between Association and Law Enforcement on Illegal Dental Practices

The data indicates a strong trend, with 34 respondents (68%) affirming collaboration between their association and law enforcement agencies or regulators to address illegal dental practices. Conversely, 15 respondents (30%) reported no collaboration, while a small percentage (2%) expressed uncertainty. This suggests a prevalent inclination towards collaboration between dental associations and authorities in tackling illegal dental practices, potentially facilitating more effective enforcement and regulatory measures.

11. What educational and awareness programmes does your association provide to inform the public about the dangers of illegal dental services?

Many NDAs use social media campaigns, newspaper articles, and traditional media interviews to raise awareness. Specific YouTube campaigns and web campaigns are used in some countries to educate the public. Furthermore, continuous engagement through TV, radio, and social media is a common method to highlight the dangers of illegal dental practices.

Some NDAs provide Continuous Education (CE) courses on ethics and dental “quackery” to educate their members and, indirectly, their patients. Educational courses, flyers, and oral health promotion activities are also employed to increase legal awareness and discourage illegal practices. Direct patient education efforts in both traditional and social media are mentioned, focusing on informing patients about the importance of seeking care from registered professionals.

NDAs also engage with dental schools and universities and conduct community outreaches, emphasizing the importance of authentic retention certificates and the dangers of unlicensed practice. In some regions, dental camps are organized in rural and coastal areas to spread awareness through posters and leaflets.

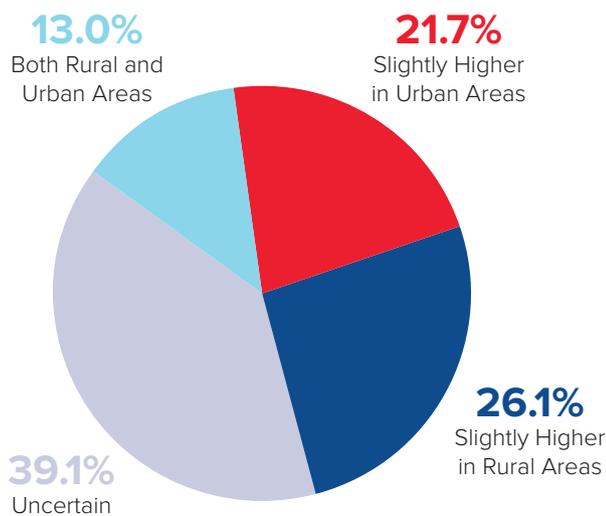
Some associations collaborate with the Ministry of Health to disseminate information. Alerts and important messages from health authorities are also shared on the websites of NDAs to ensure wide dissemination.

Efforts to inform the public about regulatory measures include urging people to check for visible clinic licenses and using media to announce these requirements. In some countries, the NDA works closely with national authorities to ensure that illegal practitioners are stopped and penalized.

Not all associations have dedicated programmes for educating the public about illegal dental practices; in some cases, the responsibility lies with government authorities or is not addressed due to resource constraints.

The data reflects a variety of approaches tailored to the cultural and regulatory environments of each country or region, with a common theme of utilizing both modern and traditional communication channels to enhance public awareness and education about the dangers of illegal dental services.

12. Are there any specific regions or areas within your country where illegal dental practice is more prevalent?



Perception fo the Prevalence of Illegal Dental Practices

The data indicates a notable level of uncertainty regarding the prevalence of illegal dental practices, with 18 respondents (39.13%) expressing uncertainty. Among those who provided an indication, 12 responses (26.09%) suggested a slightly higher prevalence in rural areas, while 10 responses (21.74%) indicated urban areas. Additionally, six respondents (13.04%) mentioned both rural and urban areas. This uncertainty underscores the need for further research and data collection to better understand the distribution and characteristics of illegal dental practices, aiding in the development of targeted interventions and enforcement strategies.

13. What are the common types of illegal dental procedures or activities that your association encounters?

Non-authorized personnel, including beauticians, hair salon workers, and unqualified individuals often perform dental treatments such as veneers, scaling, whitening, and even complex procedures like braces or orthodontics illegally in non-clinical settings (e.g., homes, hotels or beauty parlours). Unregistered or unlicensed practitioners, including those stripped of their licenses due to previous negligence, continue to practice, posing significant risks to public health.

Dental procedures are frequently performed by individuals in inappropriate settings, such as direct-to-consumer services (e.g., clear aligners and dental bleaching kits sold by beauticians). Illegal practice exists in rural areas conducted by local “dentists” with insufficient or no formal dental education, especially in providing emergency dental care like extractions.

Common illicit dental activities include the provision of removable and fixed dentures, extractions, tooth whitening, and placing non-biocompatible implants. Additionally, the rise of “smile design” services and the unauthorized placement of dental implants have also been noted. The misuse of dental materials and procedures such as fashionable braces, unauthorized

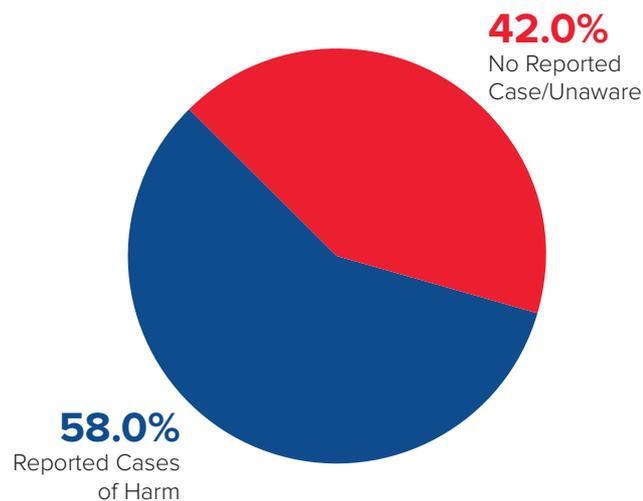
use of dental filling materials, and selling non-legally imported dental materials and equipment online were all noted by the participants.

Illegal advertising practices include sponsored social media campaigns, internet advertisements, and the posting of misleading “before-and-after” photos by unlicensed entities.

In some regions, it’s primarily the responsibility of governmental agencies to supervise and regulate dental practices, rather than dental associations. Issues of illegal dentistry involving foreign dentists practicing without validated qualifications, particularly from outside the European Union, have also been identified.

These findings indicate a widespread issue with illegal dental practices across different regions, driven by unauthorized practitioners and the lack of adequate supervision. The variety of illegal activities calls for enhanced regulatory measures and public awareness to safeguard health standards and professional integrity in dentistry.

14. Are there any reported cases of harm or complications resulting from illegal dental procedures in your country?



Reported Cases of Harm Due to Illegal Procedures

The majority of responses, 28 (58%), indicate that there are reported cases of harm or complications due to illegal dental procedures, while a smaller proportion of respondents are either unaware or reported no such cases.

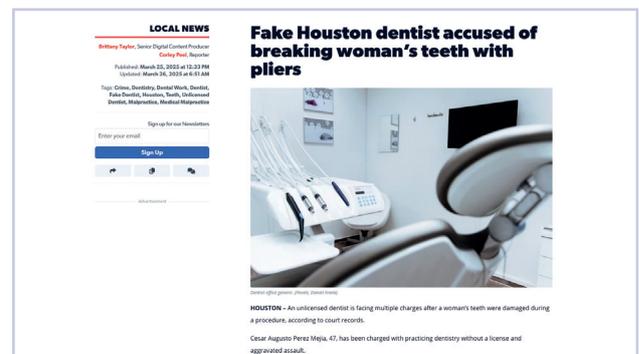
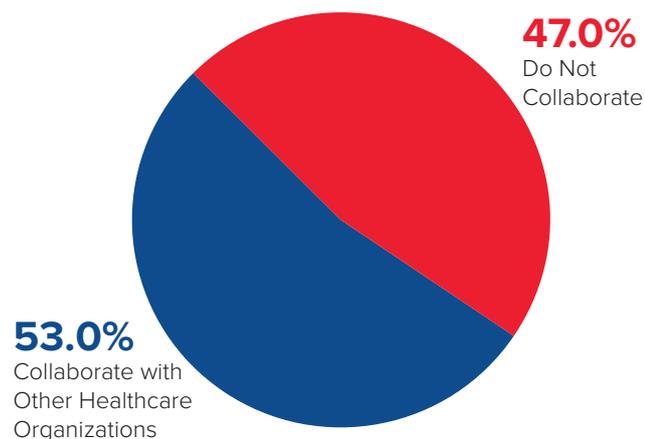


Figure 1 highlights a case of a person being harmed by an illegal dentist in the United States.

15. Does your association work with other healthcare organizations to address the issue of illegal dental practice?



Collaboration with Other Healthcare Organizations to Tackle Illegal Dental Practices

A slight majority of the respondents (53%) are part of associations that collaborate with other healthcare organizations to tackle the issue, while a significant portion (47%) does not engage in such collaborations.

16. What kind of support or resources do you require to better combat illegal dental practice?

The proposed measures outline a comprehensive approach to address illegal dental practices, focusing on strengthening regulatory bodies, enhancing education and awareness, improving training and certification, fostering collaboration and enforcement, supporting victims and whistleblowers, leveraging technological tools, reallocating resources, advocating for policy and legal reforms, and promoting membership and competence standards.

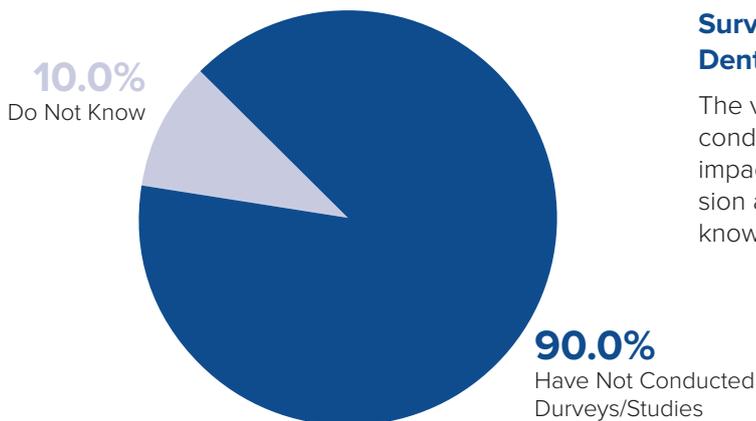
To strengthen regulatory bodies, adequate funding, manpower, and legal authority are recommended to enforce regulations effectively. Implementing new legislation to grant regulators more direct action against illegal practices could bolster enforcement efforts. Increasing public education on the risks associated with illegal dental practices and promoting awareness of how to identify licensed practitioners through media outreach and community education programmes are crucial steps.

Training programmes and certification opportunities for dental professionals would ensure they remain updated on current regulations and best practices. Collaboration between dental regulatory bodies and law enforcement would enhance investigations and enforcement against illegal practitioners. Supporting victims with legal assistance and protecting whistleblowers could encourage reporting without fear of retaliation.

Utilizing technology and data analysis tools to track and identify patterns of illegal practices would enable proactive enforcement. Additional economic resources for comprehensive surveys, statistics, and hiring personnel for monitoring are necessary. Harsher penalties and fines, along with enhanced cooperation among health ministries and dental care organizations, would deter illegal practices effectively.

Requiring mandatory membership for dentists in specific dental associations would facilitate closer regulation, while demanding higher competence from government bodies in addressing illegal dental practices is essential. Overall, these measures advocate for regulatory reform, increased funding, public education, and stronger enforcement partnerships to combat illegal dental practices comprehensively.

17. Have you conducted any surveys or studies on the economic impact of illegal dental practice on the dental profession and public health?



Survey/Studies on Economic Impact of Illegal Dental Practices

The vast majority of respondents (90%) have not conducted any surveys or studies on the economic impact of illegal dental practices on the dental profession and public health. While 10% responded “do not know”.

18. How does your association handle complaints or reports from the public regarding illegal dental practitioners?

Many associations refer cases directly to national or regional dental councils, health ministries, or other responsible regulatory bodies. Meanwhile, some associations have dedicated committees or legal departments that handle the complaints before passing them on to the appropriate government agencies.

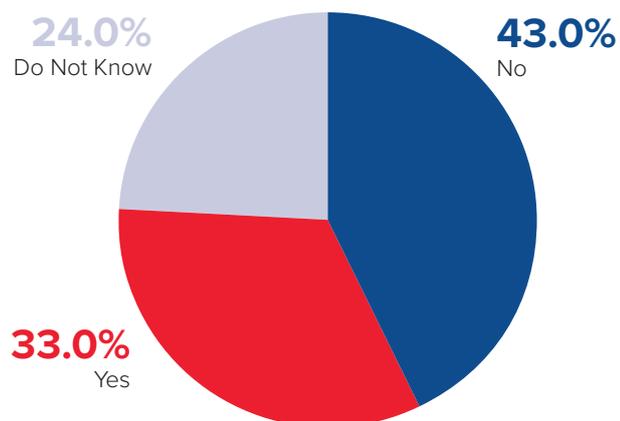
Complaints are often followed up with investigations, either by the NDA itself or by a designated team sent to the site of the alleged illegal practice. Continuous follow-up with relevant authorities is conducted to ensure the complaint is addressed and feedback is provided to the complainant. Associations provide guidance and support throughout the complaint process, helping victims collect information and navigate the legal aspects of filing a complaint. Legal advice and support are offered to the victims to assist them in pursuing justice. Reports are kept confidential, and in some cases, complainants can choose to remain anonymous. Associations support complainants in gathering pertinent information and provide legal advice, though not legal sponsorship.

Some associations actively educate the public on how to recognize illegal practices and encourage reporting them to the authorities. Awareness campaigns and advisories are sometimes issued to inform the public of their rights and the proper channels for filing complaints.

As discussed earlier, some associations collaborate with law enforcement and other government agencies to address complaints. Complaints that require legal intervention are often referred to the police or specific government departments like the Department of Health. In some regions, complaints are initially received at a provincial level by local dental colleges and then compiled nationally for a comprehensive review.

These strategies illustrate a structured approach to managing illegal dental practices, focusing on regulatory compliance, active investigation, victim support, and inter-agency cooperation.

19. Are there any notable success stories or best practices in your country's efforts to combat illegal dental practice?



There is a higher proportion of “No” responses (43%) compared to “Yes” (33%) or “Don’t know” (24%).

However, it’s worth noting that there might be some uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of the efforts to combat illegal dental practice, as indicated by the “Don’t know” responses.

For the NDAs who responded yes, the following themes emerged from the data.

NDAs and regulating bodies have taken action against companies performing illegal tooth-whitening procedures and illegal dental clinics. Examples include shutting down such practices and reporting them to regulatory bodies.

Mass education campaigns have been effective in reducing the prevalence of harmful practices like canine tooth bud extractions among communities like the Maasai. This includes explaining the dangers and long-term consequences of such procedures.

Cases of illegal dental practices being raided and shut down by law enforcement are being publicized through various media channels, including TV, newspapers, and social media platforms. This helps raise awareness and deter illegal practices.

Joint efforts among public authorities have been successful in identifying and prosecuting illegal dental practitioners.

Legal and regulatory measures have been implemented to prevent the sale of dental products to unauthorized individuals or establishments. Cooperation from online platforms like Lazada has been sought to filter out such products.

In one country, fake dentists have been prosecuted and imprisoned, indicating a strong stance against illegal dental practices.

There’s advocacy to maintain and strengthen legislative frameworks that protect against illegal dental practices, furthermore concerns are raised about potential watering down of protective legislation in regulatory reforms.

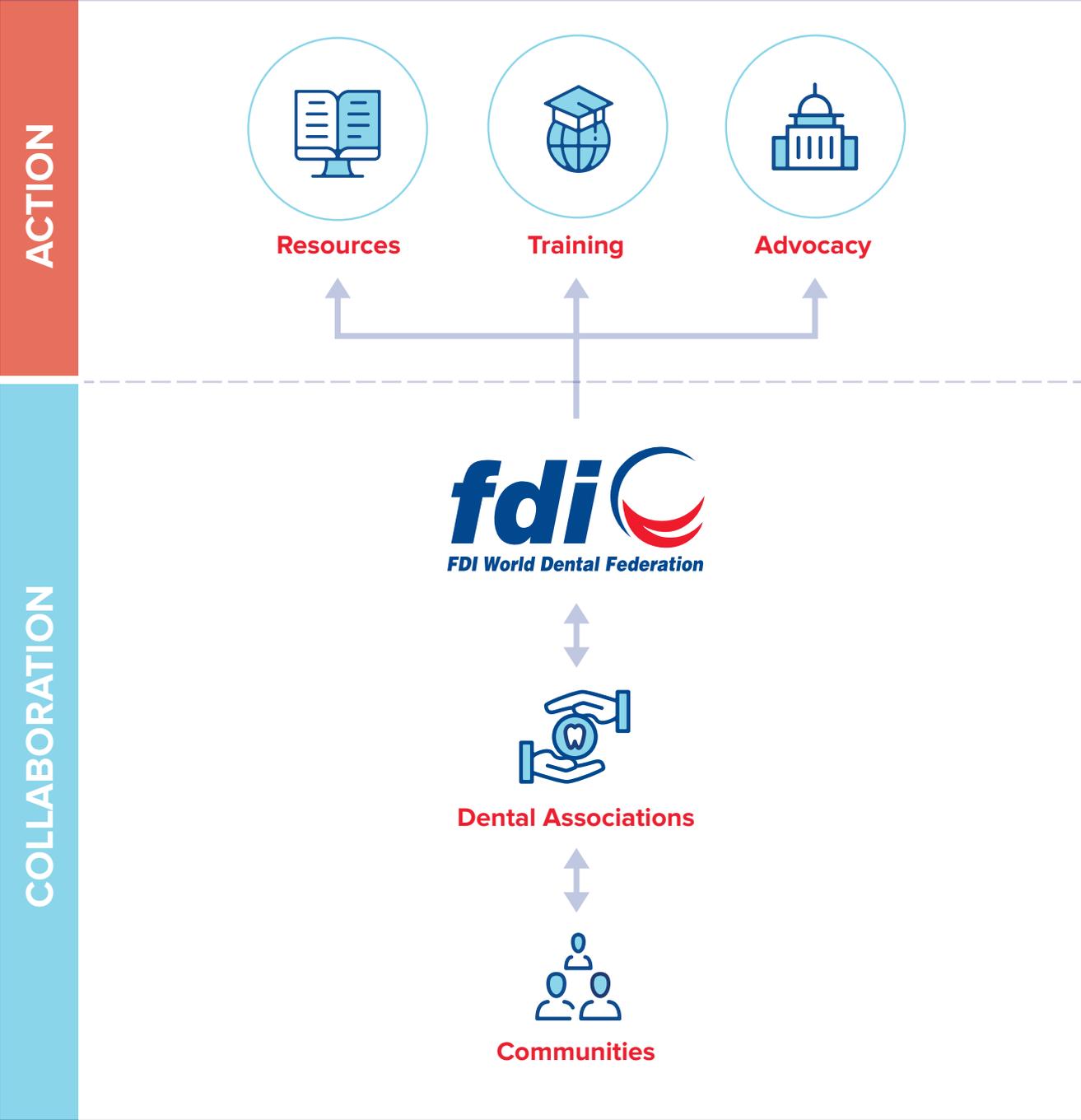
Efforts are made to ensure the quality of dental services, especially in the face of competition from low-cost dental chains or clinics with hygiene deficiencies.

Overall, the examples provided demonstrate a multi-faceted approach involving education, enforcement, regulation, and public awareness campaigns to combat illegal dental practices and improve dental care standards at national and community levels.

20. How can FDI World Dental Federation assist your association in addressing this issue?

Knowledge Sharing and Collaboration

FDI can share experiences and best practices from other dental associations globally. This can include strategies for investigating and stopping illegal dental work, strengthening laws, and improving training standards to international levels. They can also advocate for the establishment and enforcement of more stringent legislation against illegal dental practitioners.



21. Do you have any recommendations or suggestions for global initiatives to combat the illegal practice of dentistry?

Promotion of public awareness

Launch comprehensive awareness campaigns to educate the public about the risks associated with illegal dental practices and encourage community policing and reporting of such activities.

Collaborative actions

Facilitate joint actions between organizations like FDI and national dental associations to emphasize the importance of dentists in providing legal and safe dental treatment.

Standardization of dental practices

Establish common standards for dentists and dental teams globally, including qualifications, duration of studies, specialties, and scopes of practice. Advocate for basic training requirements and propose unified degrees to ensure consistency and quality of care.

Strengthening regulatory bodies

Strengthen regulatory bodies and empower them to enforce penalties on individuals engaged in illegal dental practices. Enhance accessibility to regulatory bodies and dental associations to facilitate reporting of illegal activities.

Affordability and accessibility

Address the cost barrier to quality dental care by controlling costs and ensuring affordability for patients. Improve accessibility to dental clinics and centers, especially in rural areas, and provide national dent-health coverage to all citizens.

Education and gradual licensing

Implement a staggered education and licensing system for dental professionals, gradually increasing working rights based on education and experience levels. This ensures competence and quality in dental practice.

Enforcement of severe penalties

Advocate for severe penalties for individuals involved in illegal dental practices to deter potential offenders and protect patient safety.

International congress or summit

Organize an international congress or summit focused on combating illegal dental practices, bringing together stakeholders to share experiences, solutions, and best practices.

Documentary and awareness initiatives

Produce documentaries highlighting the global issue of illegal dental practices, syndicates involved, financial aspects, and victim testimonials. Utilize social media and other platforms for awareness initiatives.

Legal enforcement and regulation

Advocate for strong regulatory frameworks and enforcement of legal regulations governing dental practices in each country, ensuring compliance with professional ethics and standards.



These initiatives require collaboration, advocacy, and education efforts at both national and international levels to effectively combat illegal dental practices and ensure the delivery of safe and ethical dental care globally.

FDI recommendations for NDAs and Regulators



Strengthening laws and regulations:

- **Updating laws:** Ensure that laws and regulations concerning the practice of dentistry are clear, strict and updated to reflect current practices.
- **Appropriate penalties:** including high fines and custodial sentences if patients are injured or suffer serious financial loss from illegal practice.



Education and awareness:

- **Awareness campaigns:** Launch awareness campaigns to inform the public of the risks associated with illegal dental care and the importance of consulting qualified dentists.
- **Verification of qualifications:** Educate the public on how to verify dentists' qualifications and licenses before receiving care.



Collaboration and partnerships:

- **Collaboration with law enforcement:** Work closely with police and judicial authorities to identify and prosecute illegal practitioners.
- **Partnerships with dental associations:** Collaborate with national and local dental associations to monitor and report illegal practices.



Proactive monitoring and investigation

- **Robust data collection** of the prevalence of illegal dental practice.
- **Partnerships with dental associations:** Collaborate with national and local dental associations to monitor and report illegal practices.



Facilitation of anonymous reporting:

- **Whistleblowing lines:** Set up telephone lines and online platforms to enable the public and professionals to anonymously report cases of illegal practice.
- **Partnerships with dental associations:** Collaborate with national and local dental associations to monitor and report illegal practices.

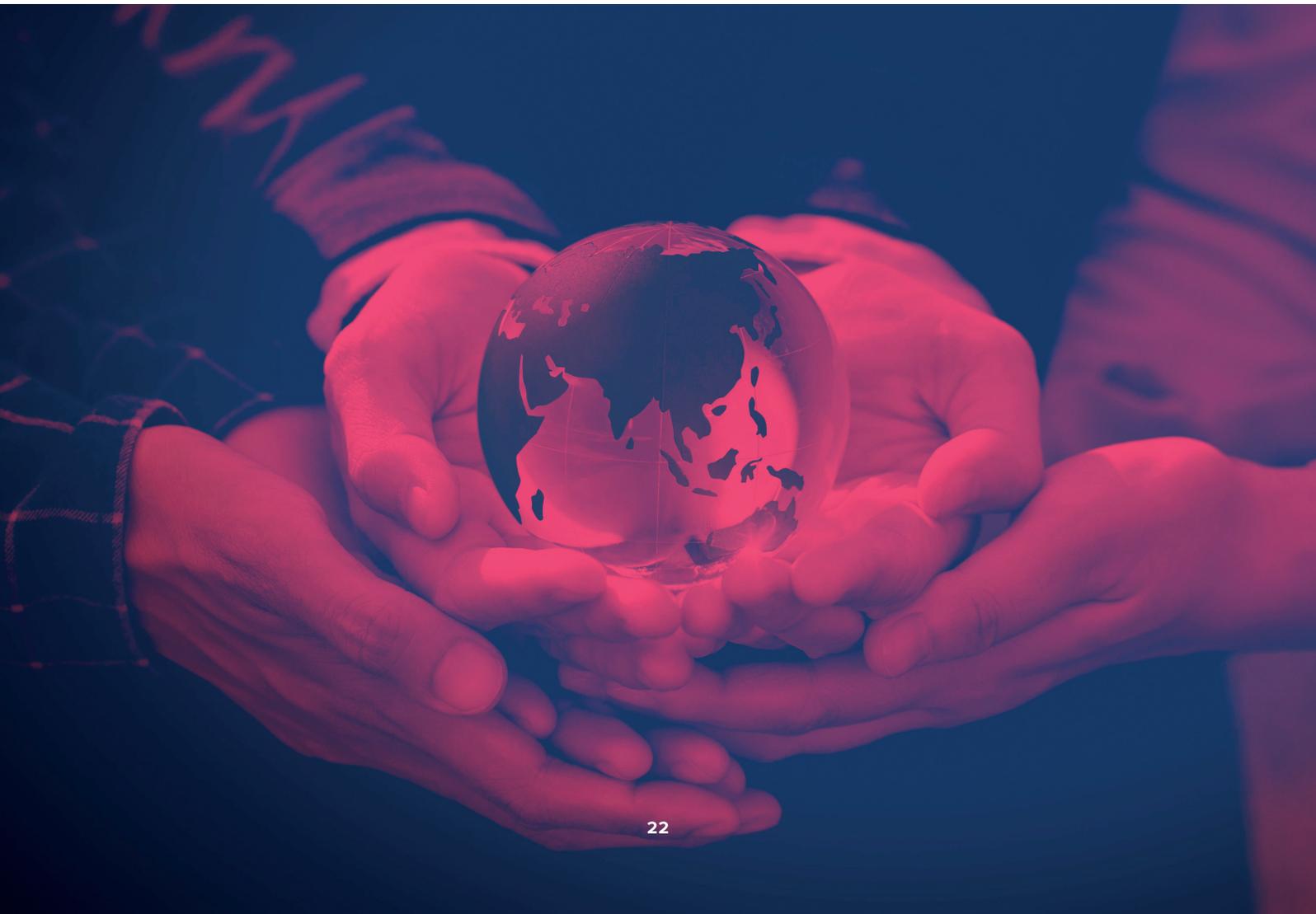
Conclusion

Significant efforts are being made globally to combat the illegal practice of dentistry and improve oral healthcare standards. From regional initiatives to international collaborations, stakeholders are actively engaged in raising awareness, strengthening regulatory frameworks, and advocating for stringent penalties against offenders. However, these efforts are hampered by a lack of available data. Robust efforts should be made to fully understand the extent of this issue.

Key strategies include promoting public awareness, standardizing dental practices, enhancing regulatory bodies, improving affordability and accessibility, and advocating for education and gradual licensing. Additionally, initiatives such as joint actions between organizations, educational campaigns, and documentary productions serve to amplify these efforts and empower dental associations and regulatory bodies in their fight against illegal dental practices.

While challenges persist, including variations in regulatory environments and access to resources, the collective commitment to patient safety and ethical dentistry remains unwavering. Through continued collaboration, innovation, and advocacy, stakeholders can work towards a future where illegal dental practices are minimized, and quality dental care is accessible to all, ensuring the well-being of patients worldwide.

Action taken on this report shall adequately include and explore potential solutions or best practices from countries with successful enforcement strategies.



Acknowledgements

This report was developed under the guidance and review of the FDI Dental Practice Committee:

Dr Mick Armstrong (Chair)

Dr Doniphan Hammer (Vice-Chair)

Assc. Prof Kinga Grzech-Lesniak

Dr Stefanie Tiede

Dr Azamat Baigulakov

Dr Jina Linton

Annex A

Participating NDAs

Association Dentaire Francaise
Alfarabi Collective College
ANDI - Associazione Nazionale Dentisti Italiani
Armenian Dental Association
Asociación Odontológica Panameña
Australian Dental Association
Austrian Dental Chamber
Azerbaijan Stomatological Association
Bangladesh Dental Society
Barbados Dental Association
British Dental Association
Canadian Dental Association
Colegio de Cirujano-dentistas de Chile
Colegio de Cirujanos Dentista de Costa Rica
Colegio de Cirujanos Dentistas de Honduras
Colegio de Odontólogos de Bolivia
Confederacion Odontologica de la Republica Argentina
Consejo General De Dentistas De Espana
Cook Islands Medical Dental Association
Croatian Dental Chamber
Czech Dental Chamber
Estonian Dental Association
Fiji Dental Association
Finnish Dental Association
Ghana Dental Association
Hellenic Dental Association
Hong Kong Dental Association
Irish Dental Association
Jamaican Dental Association
Japan Dental Association
Kazakhstan Stomatological Association
Kenya Dental Association
Lebanese Dental Association
Malaysian Dental Association
New Zealand Dental Association
Ukrainian Dental Association
Russian Dental Association
Polish Chamber of Physicians and Dentists
Stomatological (Dental) Association of the Kyrgyz Republic
Saudi Dental Society
Serbia Dental Association
Slovak Chamber of Dentists
Slovenian Dental Association
Société de Médecine Dentaire
Somali Dental Association
South African Dental Association
Swedish Dental Association
The Dental Association of Thailand
The Egyptian Dental Association
University of Szeged

References

1. FDI World Dental Federation, Action against illegal dental practice, 2021.
Available from: <https://fdiworlddental.org/action-against-illegal-dental-practice>.



FDI World Dental Federation

Chemin de Joinville 26 • 1216 Geneva • Switzerland

T +41 22 560 81 50 • info@fdiworlddental.org • www.fdiworlddental.org

Editorial and writing support:

Dr Rachael England, Public Health Manager

Editorial review:

Roshana Saleem, Communications Manager

Design and layout:

Alain Riad, Website and Visual Brand Manager

fdiworlddental.org

©2025 FDI World Dental Federation

Connect with us

 [fdiworlddental](https://www.facebook.com/fdiworlddental)

 [fdiworlddental](https://www.x.com/fdiworlddental)

 [fdiworlddental](https://www.instagram.com/fdiworlddental)

 [FDIWorldDentalFederation](https://www.youtube.com/FDIWorldDentalFederation)

 [FDI World Dental Federation](https://www.linkedin.com/company/FDI-World-Dental-Federation)