



Are Australians de-prioritising their dental health?

An AirSmile study

MAY 2022

About the study

AirSmile commissioned an independent survey of 1008 Aussies to gauge whether the rising cost of living is impacting their ability to prioritise their health, particularly their dental health. Respondents were presented with 12 of the most common dental treatments and asked whether they would delay them for at least 12 months. Dental treatments included check-ups and cleans, major dental work and cosmetic treatments, such as whitening and veneers. Respondents were also asked how much they could afford to spend on dental in the next 12 months and whether health insurance with dental rebates would impact the affordability of their dental care and treatments.

The survey respondents cover a geographical and population spread that is reflective of the Australian population.



What proportion of Australians would delay dental treatments?

AirSmile found that three in four (71 per cent) of Australians plan to delay dental treatments for at least 12 months. Specifically, 43 per cent of respondents would delay dental check-ups and cleans, while 40 per cent would delay cosmetic dentistry, such as bonding, whitening and veneers, and 32 per cent would delay teeth straightening, such as braces or aligners.

Other dental treatments Australians are willing to delay included the removal of non-painful wisdom teeth (chosen by 31 per cent of respondents), extraction of a non-painful tooth (chosen by 30 per cent), dental crowns or bridges (chosen by 28 per cent), fillings (22 per cent), root canal (21 per cent), fixing a cracked tooth (17 per cent), and treatment for pain (12 per cent).

Just over one quarter (29 per cent) of respondents said they would not delay any dental treatments.

Dental treatments Australians are willing to delay for at least a year

43%

Would delay dental check-ups and cleans

40%

Would delay cosmetic dental surgery, such as bonding, whitening and veneers

32%

Would delay teeth straightening, such as braces or aligners

31%

Would delay the removal of non-painful wisdom teeth

30%

Would delay the extraction of a non-painful tooth

28%

Would delay dental crowns or bridges

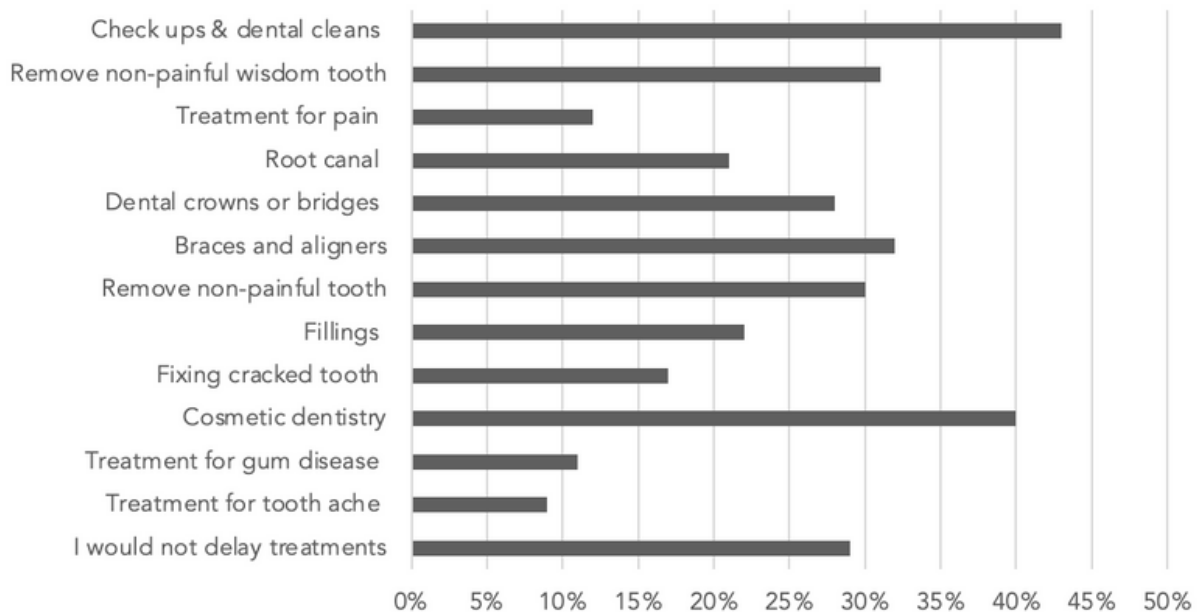
22%

Would delay fillings

21%

Would delay root canal

Treatments that Australians would delay for at least 12 months



Younger Australians are more likely to delay dental work

The younger the age group, the more likely they are to delay dental work: 81 per cent of 18-34-year-olds, compared with 73 per cent of 35-64-year-olds and 50 per cent of over-65s.

Specifically, younger Australians were willing to delay check-ups and dental cleans (selected by 54 per cent of 18-34-year-olds). In contrast, 41 per cent of 35-54-year-olds and 36 per cent of over-55s said the same. Fillings were also less important to younger respondents: 27 per cent of 18-34-year-olds were willing to delay fillings, compared with 22 per cent of 35-54-year-olds, and 18 per cent of over-55s.

Younger age groups were more likely to delay the removal of non-painful wisdom teeth: 38 per cent of 18-34 years, 35 per cent of 35-54 years, 25 per cent of 55-64 years and 21 per cent of over-65s.



Australians most likely to delay dental treatments

South Australia

Overall, 75% of South Australians indicated that they would delay dental treatments in the next 12 months, due to cost of living issues.

When asked about specific treatments:

- 53% would delay cosmetic dental treatments
- 55% would delay check-ups and cleans
- 37% would delay teeth straightening

Western Australia

Overall, 73% of Western Australians indicated that they would delay dental treatments in the next 12 months, due to cost of living issues.

When asked about specific treatments:

- 38% would delay cosmetic dental treatments
- 44% would delay check-ups and cleans
- 40% would delay teeth straightening

New South Wales

Overall, 73% of people in New South Wales indicated that they would delay dental treatments in the next 12 months, due to cost of living issues.

When asked about specific treatments:

- 37% would delay cosmetic dental treatments
- 42% would delay check-ups and cleans
- 31% would delay teeth straightening

Queensland

Overall, 68% of Queenslanders indicated that they would delay dental treatments in the next 12 months, due to cost of living issues.

When asked about specific treatments:

- 38% would delay cosmetic dental treatments
- 38% would delay check-ups and cleans
- 26% would delay teeth straightening

Victoria

Overall, 66% of Victorians indicated that they would delay dental treatments in the next 12 months, due to cost of living issues.

When asked about specific treatments:

- 38% would delay cosmetic dental treatments
- 41% would delay check-ups and cleans
- 30% would delay teeth straightening



In this current environment where cost of living is growing, would you delay any of the 12 dental treatments below?

Response	Age (%)					
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Check-ups & dental cleans	55	52	41	41	42	30
Removal of non-painful wisdom teeth	38	38	35	35	25	21
Treatment for pain	13	18	15	12	11	3
Root canal	14	24	23	23	23	19
Dental crowns or bridges	17	25	23	34	35	31
Braces and aligners (teeth straightening)	36	39	32	29	29	28
Extraction of a non-painful tooth	27	30	31	34	34	25
Fillings	23	32	21	23	22	15
Fixing cracked tooth	12	16	17	19	23	14
Cosmetic dentistry (bonding, whitening, veneers, implants)	34	44	35	45	47	36
Treatment for gum disease	6	13	10	14	15	9
Treatment for toothache	8	15	10	8	12	3
I would not delay any dental treatments	18	20	25	28	27	50

Response	State (%)				
	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA
Check-ups & dental cleans	42	41	38	55	44
Removal of non-painful wisdom teeth	34	25	29	33	38
Treatment for pain	14	11	9	13	13
Root canal	23	16	18	26	26
Dental crowns or bridges	29	22	27	37	31
Braces and aligners (teeth straightening)	31	30	26	38	40
Extraction of a non-painful tooth	28	29	31	37	30
Fillings	22	21	19	26	26
Fixing cracked tooth	14	15	20	22	19
Cosmetic dentistry (bonding, whitening, veneers, implants)	37	38	38	53	46
Treatment for gum disease	10	9	11	17	13
Treatment for toothache	9	10	10	8	9
I would not delay any dental treatments	27	34	32	25	27

How much can Australians afford to spend on dental in the next 12 months?

When asked how much they could afford to spend on dental in the next 12 months, more than half (54 per cent) of respondents said up to two preventative visits in a year, at approximately \$400 in total. A third (32 per cent) could afford \$1000-2000 worth of dental treatments, while 14 per cent said they could afford \$5000 or more in dental work.

A higher proportion of younger Australians said they could afford just two preventative dental visits a year: 32 per cent of 18-34-year-olds, compared with an equal 25 per cent of 34-54-year-olds and over-55s.

Most South Australians could only afford up to \$2000 in dental treatments, at 92 per cent. Many Queenslanders and West Australians could only afford the same, at 90 per cent, compared with 86 per cent of Victorians and 81 per cent of NSW residents.

NSW residents were more likely to be able to afford more costly treatments: 33 per cent of NSW said they would afford \$2000 or more in dental work, compared with 26 per cent of QLD residents, 23 per cent of Victorians, 22 per cent of WA residents and 20 per cent of South Australians.



- **54% of Australians can only afford up to two preventative dental visits per year**
- **NSW residents are more likely to afford costly treatments of more than \$2000**
- **The majority of South Australians (92%) can only afford up to \$2000 in dental treatments**
- **32% of young Australians can afford up to two preventative dental visits per year compared with 25% of those aged 34+**

How much could you afford to spend on dental in the next 12 months, including any necessary dental surgery?

Response	All (%)	Age (%)					
		18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Up to \$200 (this will cover preventative care @ 1 visit a year)	28	33	25	20	27	30	31
Around \$400 (this will cover preventative care @ 2 visits a year)	27	39	25	23	27	27	24
Around \$1000	19	18	20	21	17	18	21
Around \$2000	13	4	17	14	16	9	13
Around \$5000	6	3	6	9	4	7	4
Around \$7000	2	2	1	4	2	2	1
Around \$10,000	3	0	4	5	2	3	3
Around \$15,000	1	0	1	1	1	1	0
Around \$20,000	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
More than \$20,000	3	1	2	4	5	4	2

Response	All (%)	State (%)				
		NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA
Up to \$200 (this will cover preventative care @ 1 visit a year)	28	25	29	30	33	27
Around \$400 (this will cover preventative care @ 2 visits a year)	27	26	24	28	30	28
Around \$1000	19	17	24	18	17	23
Around \$2000	13	14	10	14	12	12
Around \$5000	6	6	6	6	3	4
Around \$7000	2	3	1	1	1	0
Around \$10,000	3	5	3	1	0	4
Around \$15,000	1	1	0	1	0	0
Around \$20,000	0	0	0	1	0	1
More than \$20,000	3	4	3	2	4	3

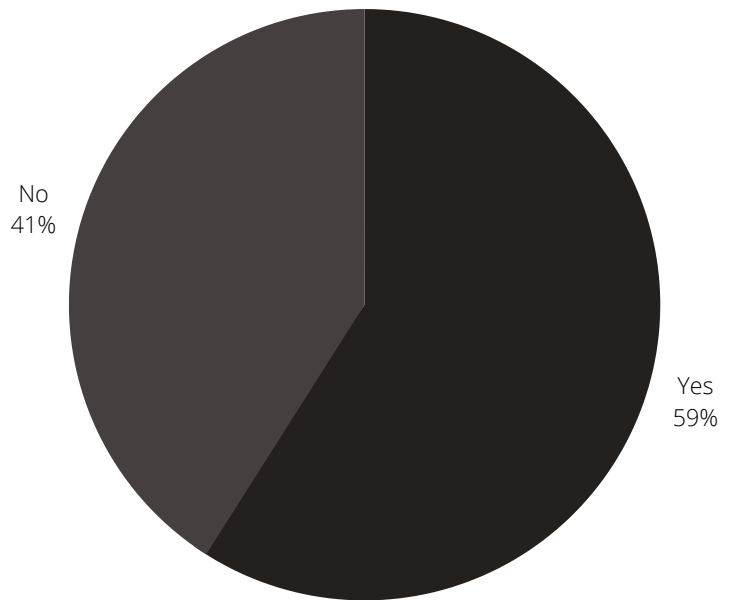
Do Australians think health insurance with dental rebates impacts the affordability of their dental care and treatments?

More than half (59 per cent) of respondents believed that health insurance with dental rebates makes a difference in the affordability of their dental care.

Older Australians were more likely to believe that health insurance with dental rebates did not make a difference to the affordability of their dental care: 30 per cent of 18-34-year-olds believed health cover makes no difference, compared with 38 per cent of 35-54-year-olds and 52 per cent of over-55s.

Victorians were more likely to believe health cover did not make a difference to the affordability of their dental care and treatments, at 45 per cent, compared with 37 per cent of South Australians and 24 per cent of WA residents.

Victorians were more likely to believe health cover did not make a difference to the affordability of their dental care and treatments, at 45 per cent, compared with 37 per cent of South Australians and 24 per cent of WA residents.



Response	Age (%)						State (%)				
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA
Yes	72	69	64	60	48	49	59	55	58	63	76
No	28	31	36	41	52	51	41	45	42	37	24