

Demographic Changes in the South Carolina Dentist Workforce: 2009 - 2015

An influential report by The Institute of Medicine¹ emphasizes the fact that diversity in the healthcare workforce contributes to improved communication, patient access to care, patient satisfaction, helps to reduce health disparities, improves provider problem solving for complex problems, and increases innovation. Diversity is often thought of simply in terms of race, but it is also about gender and age since all three of those personal demographic characteristics help to shape life experience, attitudes and perspectives. This report summarizes the age, gender and racial characteristics of the dentists who were actively practicing in South Carolina in 2009 and 2015, and illustrates how that important segment of the healthcare workforce has been changing.

Age

The average age in the 2009 dentist workforce was 48.9. By 2015 the average age had risen to 49.5 indicating that the workforce as a whole is aging. However, as illustrated in Chart 1 below, the age profile of dentists in South Carolina does not follow a normal bell curve. In both 2009 and 2015 there was a concentration of dentists at both younger and older ages, but a lesser number in the middle-age groups of 45 to 59. Chart 2 makes those patterns easier to see.

Chart 1. Number of Active Dentists by Age Groups: 2009 and 2015

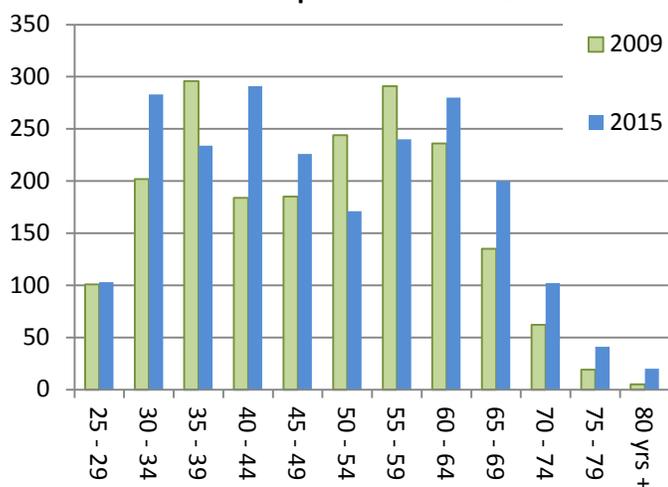
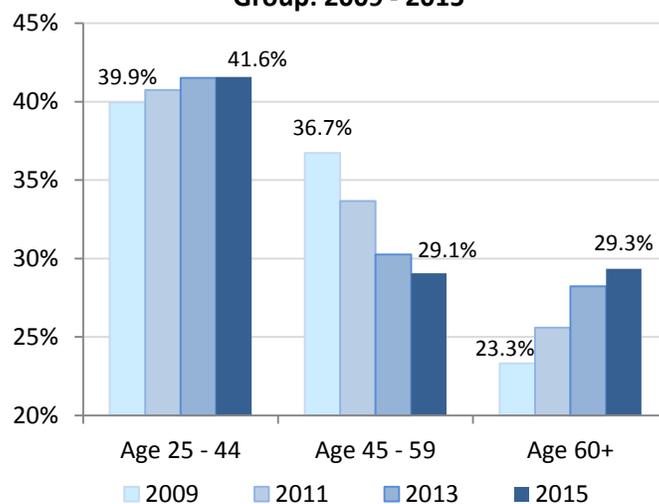


Chart 2. Percentage of Dentists by Age Group: 2009 - 2015



Gender

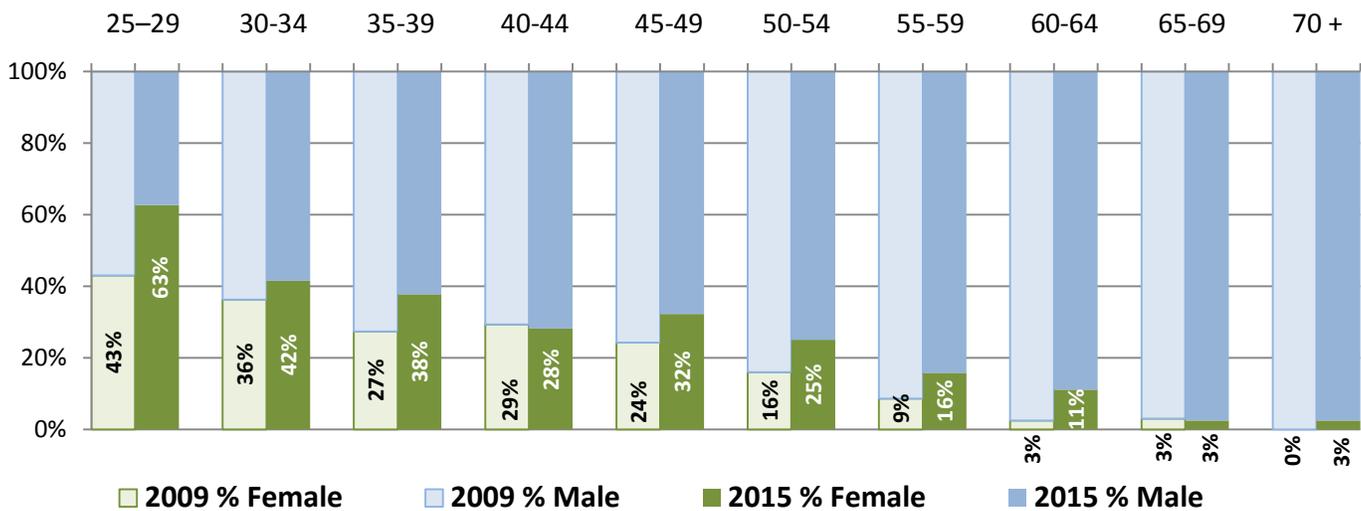
The gender profile of dentists in South Carolina is also changing. Overall, the number of female dentists has grown from about 19% of the workforce in 2009 to almost 25% in 2015. That growth in numbers is not restricted to just younger women entering the profession but also to an increase in the number of female dentists in all age groups. In the older age groups it is assumed that these women are coming into South Carolina to practice at all stages of their career.

Table 1. Gender Distribution in the Dentist Workforce

Gender	# 2009	% 2009	# 2015	% 2015
Females	372	18.9%	547	24.8%
Males	1,591	80.9%	1,648	74.7%
Gender unknown	3	0.2%	10	0.5%
Total Counts	1,966	100%	2,205	100%

Chart 3. Increase in the Percentage of Women in the South Carolina Dentist Workforce

Age Groups in the Dentist Workforce



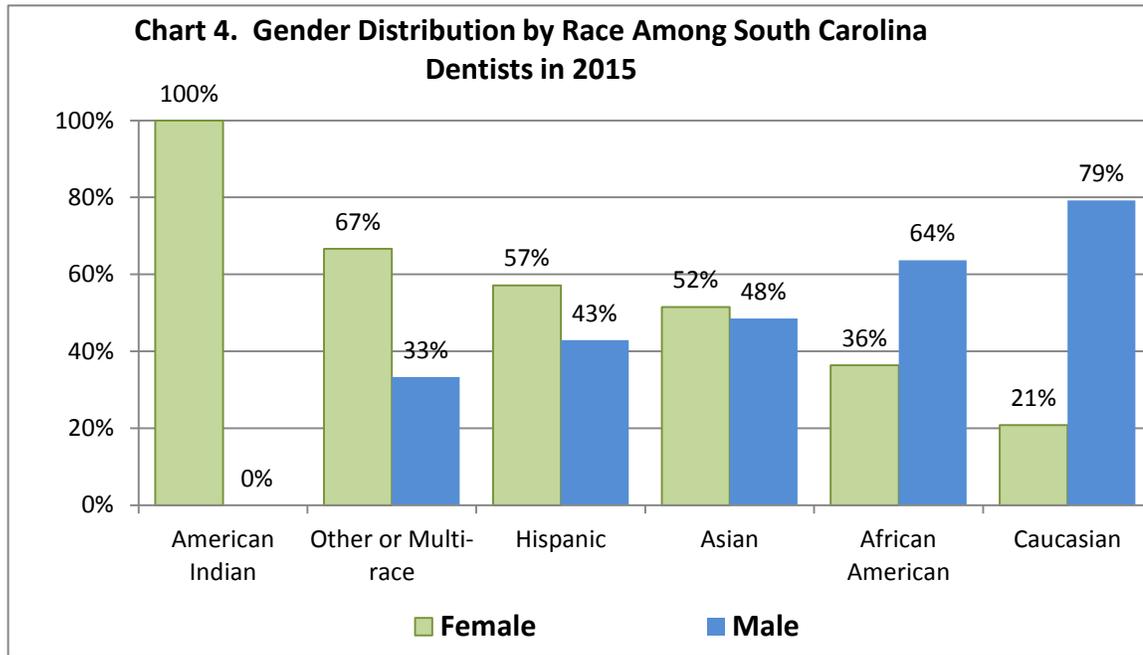
Racial Characteristics

The great majority of practicing dentists in the state are Caucasian – over 80%, based on race data reported by the dentists themselves. The counts of dentists who identify with specific racial groups are presented in Table 2. Note the large number of dentists in 2015 that did not report their race. This large amount of missing data makes it difficult to know if the changes in the percentage in each racial group have really changed over time.

Table 2. South Carolina Dentist Workforce Race Distribution: 2009 & 2015

	2009 Headcount	2009 %	2015 Headcount	2015 %
Caucasian	1,725	87.7%	1,787	81.0%
African American	125	6.4%	121	5.5%
Asian	20	1.0%	33	1.5%
Other or Multi-race	21	1.1%	30	1.4%
Hispanic	6	0.3%	7	0.3%
American Indian	3	0.2%	2	0.1%
Race Unknown	66	3.4%	225	10.2%
Total	1,966	100%	2,205	100%

Race and Gender



The balance of men and women in the dentist workforce in 2015 varied greatly by racial group. In Chart 4 we relied only on those dentists who reported both their race and gender to assess the percentage of women in each racial group actively practicing in South Carolina. It is important to note

many of the minority racial groups have small total numbers (see table 2 above) which results in large percentage values based on only a few individuals.

Age, Gender and Race by Dentist Specialty

The majority of dentists practicing in South Carolina in 2015 (76.5%) were in general practice. The remainder were engaged in a variety of specialty fields within the profession.

Table 3 reports the number of dentists in different specialty fields practicing in South Carolina. In addition, their demographic characteristics are presented in terms of the percentage of each group age 60 or older, the percentage female and the percentage who reported their race as something other than Caucasian on their 2015 license renewal form.

Table 3. 2015 South Carolina Dentist Workforce by Specialty Area and Demographic Characteristics

	2015 Headcount	% age 60 and older	% female	% non-Caucasian
General Dentistry	1,687	29.3%	25.5%	20.3%
Orthodontics	131	26.0%	13.7%	13.7%
Oral Surgery	111	27.9%	9.0%	14.4%
Pediatric Dentistry	90	18.9%	60.0%	15.6%
Periodontics	72	48.6%	18.1%	12.5%
Endodontics	63	14.3%	11.1%	14.3%
Prosthodontics	23	26.1%	13.0%	13.0%
Other	23	52.2%	43.5%	30.4%
All Dentists	2,205	29.2%	24.8%	19.0%

Endnotes

ⁱ Institute of Medicine, 2011. *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press