

NHS Highland



NHS
Highland
na Gàidhealtachd

Meeting:

HHSCC

Meeting date:

7th May 2025

Title:

Dental Services Update

Responsible Executive/Non-Executive:

Pamela Stott, Chief Officer

Report Author:

John Lyon, Director of Dentistry

Report Recommendation: The Committee are asked to note the update on Dental Services.

1 Purpose

This is presented to the Board for:

- Assurance

This report relates to a:

- NHS Board/Integration Joint Board Strategy or Direction

This report will align to the following NHSScotland quality ambition(s):

Safe, Effective and Person Centred

This report relates to the following Strategic Outcome(s)

Start Well		Thrive Well		Stay Well		Anchor Well	
Grow Well		Listen Well		Nurture Well		Plan Well	
Care Well	x	Live Well		Respond Well		Treat Well	
Journey Well		Age Well		End Well		Value Well	
Perform well		Progress well		All Well Themes			

2 Report summary

2.1 Situation

Update on Dental Services for HHSCC for information.

2.2 Background

As at Sep 2024 83% of the NHSH population was registered with a dentist. 56.4% of these registered patients had attended the Dentist in the previous 2yrs. The most deprived quintiles had the lowest level of registrations and participation. (PHS publication Nov 2024- **Appendix 1**).

Lack of specific dental management information at HHSCP and practice level, limits monitoring and planning dental services.

Recruitment and retention of clinicians to deliver NHS dentistry continues to be a major challenge for dental practices/Public Dental Service and this is most acute in rural areas.

To increase access to NHS dentistry within the independent contractor sector, grant assistance through the Scottish Dental Access Initiative (SDAI) is the singular tool available to Health Boards at present. There is no national Scottish Government strategy or associated policies focused on maintaining and developing access to NHS dental services in rural areas.

General waiting times for specialist services is increasing - including Paediatric/Special Care General Anaesthetic Services and Oral Surgery referral service provided by the Public Dental Services.

National Dental Inspection Programme 2024 report available, which demonstrated some improvement in child oral health but with continuing inequalities growing between groups.
<https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/national-dental-inspection-programme/national-dental-inspection-programme-2024/>

Oral Health Initiatives continue both national and local programmes, ongoing review of the efficacy of Fluoride varnish programmes delivered in the Nursery environment.

2.3 Assessment

There has been some limited success with incentivising newly qualified Dentists, and Dentists practising in Scotland for the first time to commit to delivering NHS in the HHSCP area for a 3 year period. Currently 13 dentists have received the associated Recruitment & Retention allowance and are within their 3 year period of required service.

NHSH Health Intelligence Unit now produces a biannual Mapping of Dental Registrations and Participation report which will highlight patterns of change in smaller geographies. Variation in participation patterns across NHS Highland will also be identified. (**Appendix 2**)

NSS to introduce Practice Level Management Information for HBs from Q1 of 2025/26.

During 2024/25 a total of 2 SDAI grants were approved and which will result in an additional 3000 patients having access to NHS dental registration.

Public Dental Services dental teams continue to review, prioritise care and accept ad hoc theatre slots and referrals.

Ongoing Development opportunities for Dentists to shadow in specialist services, including oral surgery services in primary care and hospital services.

One General Dental Practice has contacted NHS Highland, from the HHSCP area, to seek additional funding to maintain NHS dental services, otherwise the Practice may be closed. NHSH is reviewing this request and the potential for support for other General Dental Practices, particularly in rural areas.

Analysis of complaints received by Dental Services, continue to highlight challenges in accessing NHS dental services, including MSP/MP complaints. However, no major adverse events have been noted. (Appendix 3).

2.4 Proposed level of Assurance

This report proposes the following level of assurance:

Substantial	<div></div>	Moderate	<div></div>
Limited	<div>x</div>	None	<div></div>

Comment on the level of assurance

- Increase in recruitment of dentists would improve assurance. Including amendment of the following barriers to recruitment of dentists (outwith the control of NHSH)-
- Amendment to mandatory training regulation in Scotland
 - Amendment of VT equivalence certificates to allow listing of Dentists, with no current NHS experience, to ensure listing with a Health Board to provide NHS dental services
 - Amendment to national Allowances to increase the pool of Dentists that would be considered for Recruitment and Retention allowances
 - Incentives to encourage and sustain Dental Practices in rural area, similar to Scottish Dental Access Initiative grants.

3 Impact Analysis

3.1 Quality/ Patient Care

Growing waiting times for treatment and increase in waiting times for referrals to the PDS.

3.2 Workforce

Increased stress for dental staff to maintain service provision..

3.3 Financial

Failure to recruit to dental clinical post may result in underspend on allocated PDS dental budgets. Use of dentist locums has not been approved so far, there may be an ongoing need to consider locum use to maintain basic services. It should be noted there is a very limited pool of dentists with sufficient experience and available to take on locum work.

3.4 Risk Assessment/Management

Dental department risk register updated.

3.5 Data Protection

Not applicable

3.6 Equality and Diversity, including health inequalities

3.7 Other impacts

3.8 Communication, involvement, engagement and consultation

3.9 Route to the Meeting

This has been previously considered by the following groups as part of its development. The groups have either supported the content, or their feedback has informed the development of the content presented in this report.

Dental Senior Management Team


4.1 List of appendices

The following appendices are included with this report:

Appendix 1-




Appendix 2-



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Appendix 3-



2025 01Clinical Gov
Update (Dental CG&R



Mapping of NHS Highland Dental Registrations and Participation

The Public Health Intelligence team is part of the Directorate of Public Health of NHS Highland and provides an expert resource on epidemiology, demography and population health evidence.



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Mapping of NHS Highland Dental Registrations and Participation

Key Points

Registration

In May 2024, 271,611 NHS Highland residents were registered with an NHS dentist, equivalent to 84% of the population.

48,839 (85%) of NHS Highland children under 18 and 222,772 (84%) adults were registered.

Bute and Cowal (57%) in the Argyll and Bute HSCP and Nairn & Nairnshire (69%) in the Highland HSCP are identified as planning partnership areas with the lowest population levels of registration in NHS Highland.

Across smaller areas of NHS Highland, registration of children under 18 varies between 55.7% and 100%, while adult registrations vary between 30.5% and 100%.

Children under 18 living in the most deprived areas of NHS Highland are less likely to be registered with an NHS dentist. As of 31 May 2024, 79.4% were registered in the most deprived quintile compared to 85.8% in the least deprived quintile.

Participation

In May 2024, 76.8% of NHS Highland children and 51.7% of adults participated in NHS dentistry.

There has been a long-term decline in the proportions of both children and adults participating.

Given lifetime registration, participation is a better measure of the impacts of dental services' closures and limitations resulting from the public health response to the pandemic.

Bute and Cowal (49%) in the Argyll and Bute HSCP and Caithness (45%) in the Highland HSCP are identified as planning partnership areas with the lowest population levels of participation in NHS Highland.

Participation is as low as 54.9% in children and 27.8% in adults in smaller areas of Caithness.

Children under 18 living in the most deprived areas of NHS Highland are less likely to participate in NHS dentistry. As of 31 May 2024, 69.1% participated in the most deprived quintile compared to 83.8% in the least deprived quintile.

Introduction

NHS Highland Dental Services commissioned this work to provide details of registration and participation patterns in NHS Dentistry in NHS Highland up to May 2024.¹

The General Dental Service (GDS) is usually the first contact point for people needing NHS dental treatment. Independent (high-street) dentists provide most GDS through contractual arrangements with the NHS Board, and registered patients can receive the full range of NHS treatment (Map 1).

The Public Dental Service (PDS) provides dental services for people who cannot access care from an independent dentist, including those with complex special care needs and those referred by independent dentists for specific treatment². The PDS also provides GDS in remote rural and island locations in NHS Highland without a GDS practice (Map 2).

Throughout this report, an 'NHS dentist' is a dentist providing GDS as a contracted independent dentist or a PDS dentist.

We identify NHS dental registrations in NHS Highland and highlight patterns of change in registration over time for small area geographies in the Highland Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) and Argyll and Bute HSCP.

The data does not include services provided by private dentists.

Changes in national registration policy have impacted registration numbers. Before April 2006, patients were de-registered if they had not attended an NHS dentist within 15 months. The registration period was extended to 36 months in April 2006 and 48 months in April 2009. Lifetime registration was introduced in April 2010, and registration numbers have generally increased with non-time-limited dental registration.

In addition, we examine variations in the pattern of participation across NHS Highland. Participation is defined as contact for examination or treatment in the last two years. This measure is restricted to only those patients registered with an NHS dentist and, therefore, does not include patients who only see a dentist for occasional or emergency treatment.

¹. The Dental Information Team at Public Health Scotland (PHS) provided details of registrations with an NHS dentist from the Management Information and Dental Accounting System (MIDAS), the payment system for General Dental Services (GDS) and Public Dental Service (PDS) dentists.

² PDS has operated since January 2014, following the merger of the Community Dental Service (CDS) and the Salaried General Dental Service (SGDS).

COVID-19

The pandemic severely impacted dental services, with the risk of infection from aerosol-generating procedures, resulting in NHS dental practices being unable to treat patients on their premises. Urgent Dental Care Centres were established for emergency dental treatment. The remobilisation of dental services occurred in phases, and by 1 April 2022, dentists were allowed to scale back infection prevention and control measures³.

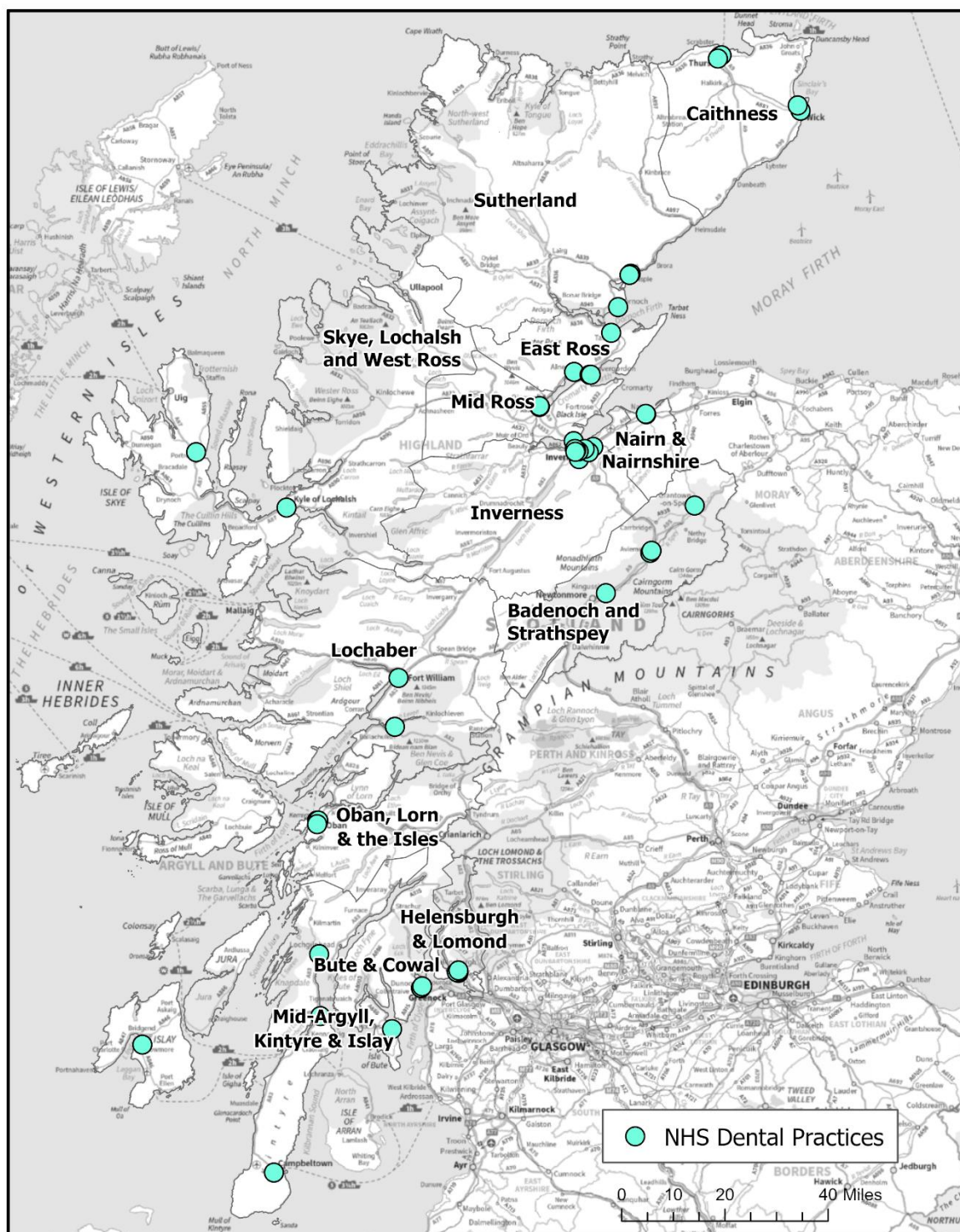
Interpretation

The report highlights geographic areas that have seen significant reductions in the proportion of their populations registered with NHS dentistry in recent periods. The patterns suggest changes in service delivery, including practices no longer offering NHS treatment or not accepting new patients, impacting local access to care.

The data available to the Public Health Intelligence team does not include service configuration details and contractual commitments. The NHS Highland Dental Service should be contacted to provide information on service disposition and arrangements relating to the NHS Highland Dental List that have impacted service provision.

³. The [Scottish Dental](#) web portal's COVID-19 hub provided dentists with official guidance and information throughout the pandemic.

Map 1: General Dental Service locations



General Dental Services (NHS Dental Practices)

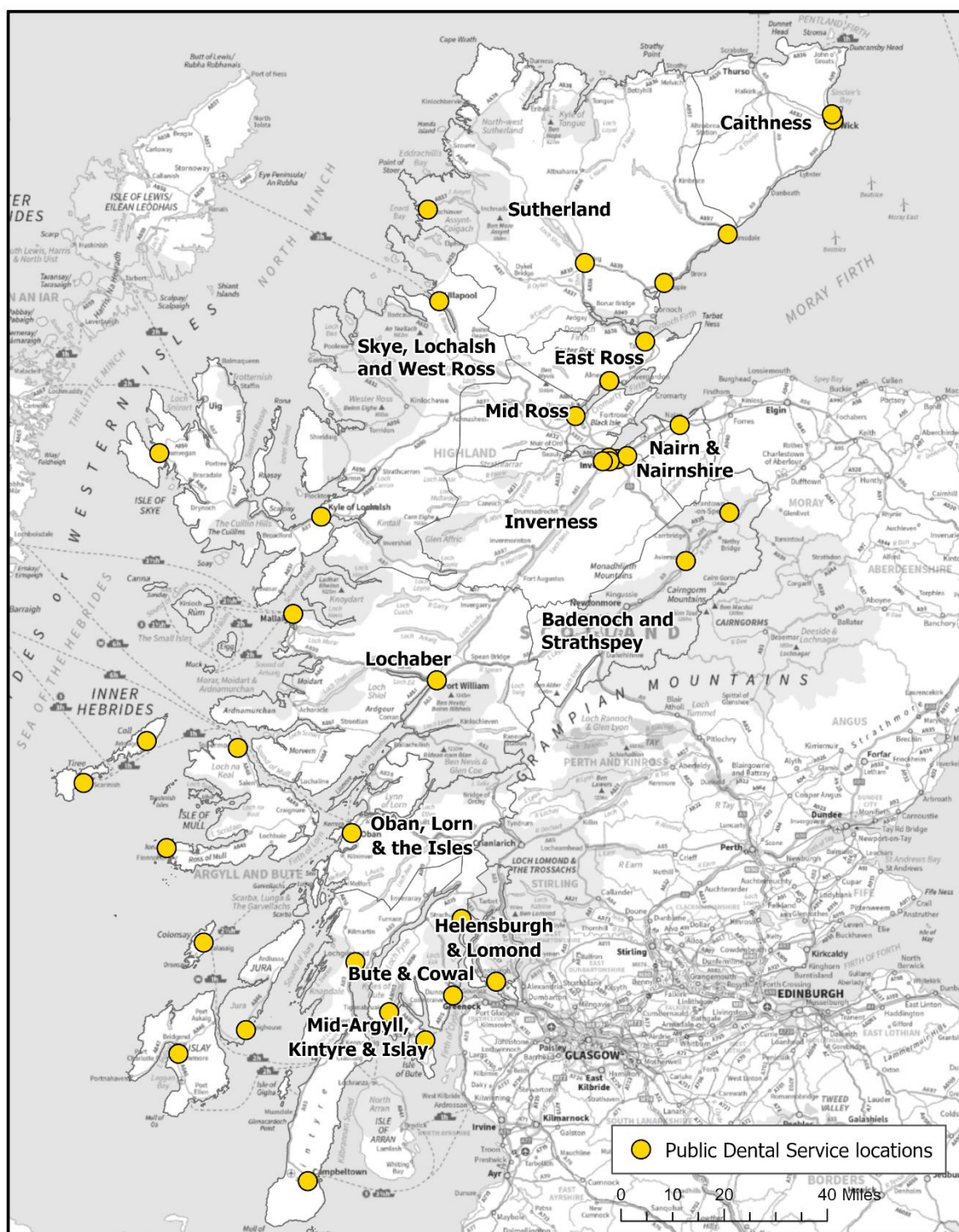
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Date: September 2024

Map 2: Public Dental Service locations



Public Dental Service locations

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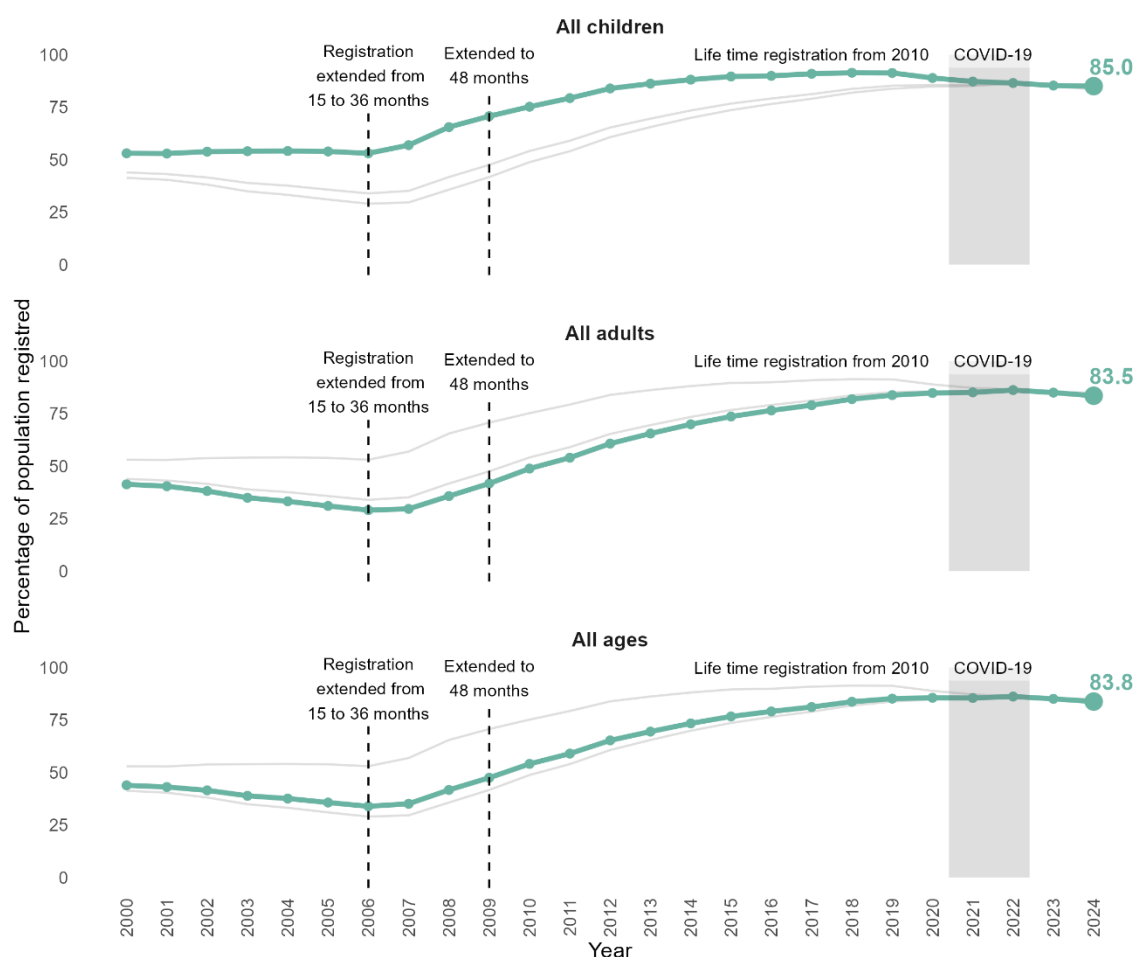
Registration

In May 2024, 271,611 NHS Highland residents were registered with an NHS dentist, equivalent to 84% of the population. 48,839 (85%) of NHS Highland children under 18 and 222,772 (84%) adults were registered.

Adult registration continued to increase during the pandemic, influenced by registered children reaching 18. However, in 2023, the percentage of adult registrations reduced for the first time since 2007, with a further reduction seen in May 2024.

The proportion of children registered with NHS dentistry living in NHS Highland has been declining since 2019, suggesting that access was already an increasing issue for some younger patients before the impact of the pandemic on services.

Figure 1: Percentage of children and adults resident in NHS Highland registered with an NHS dentist ¹



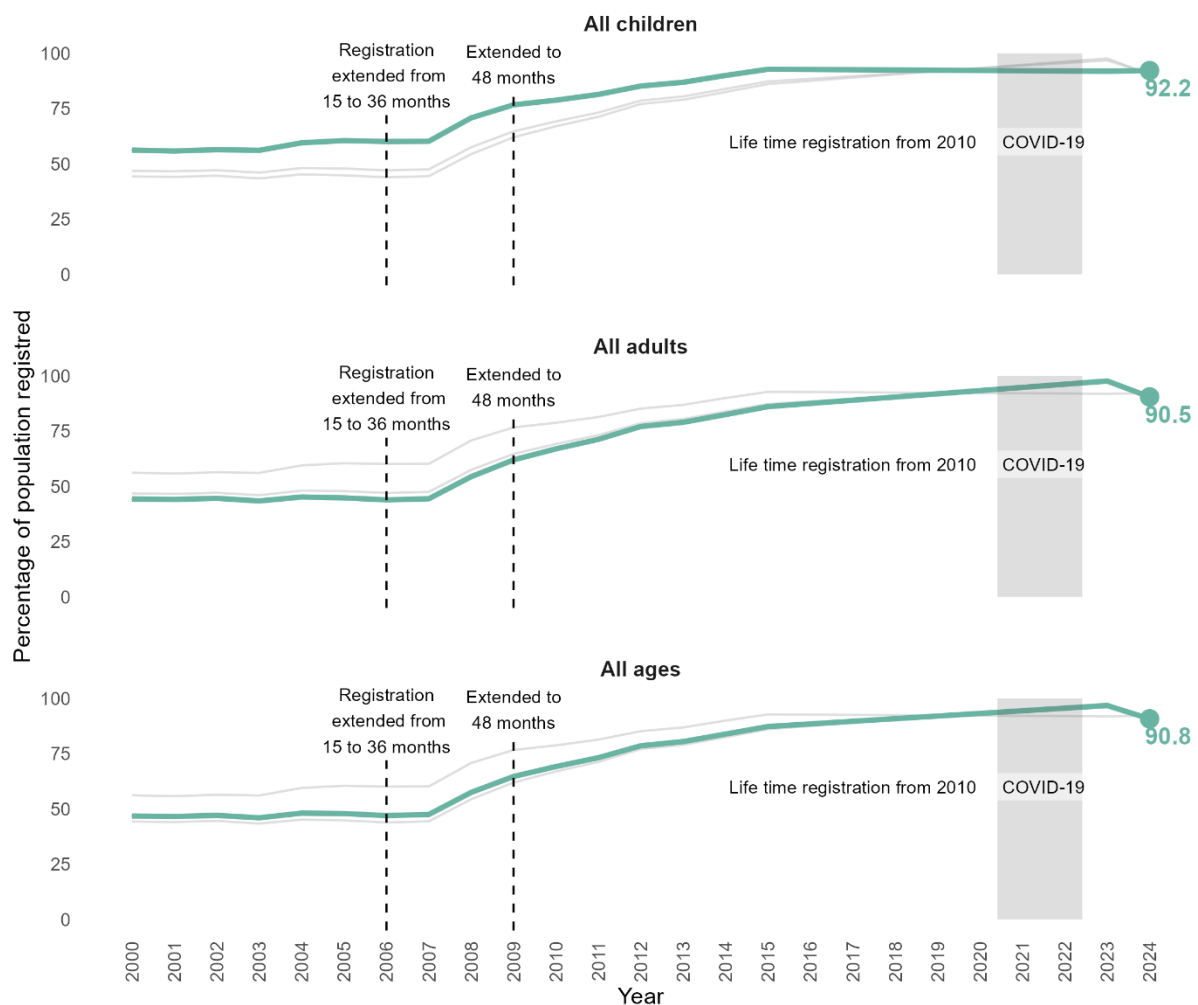
Source: Public Health Scotland (PHS) Dental Statistics 2023 – NHS registration and participation for years 2000 to 2022 (snapshot of statistical data as of 30 September of each year) and registration data at 31 May 2023 and 2024 provided by PHS to the Public Health Intelligence team, NHS Highland as an information request.

1. Registration rates calculated using mid-year population estimates published by the National Records of Scotland – see Appendix 1

In May 2024, 13,092 children under 18 and 65,198 adults living in Argyll and Bute HSCP were registered with NHS Dentistry.

Registration rates in Argyll and Bute are higher than in the Highland HSCP, and children's registration rates have been consistently high over the last ten years. Adult registration rates had consistently increased with lifetime registration until 2024. The drop in adult registration in 2024 suggests a practice's withdrawal of service provision.

Figure 2: Percentage of children and adults resident in Argyll and Bute HSCP registered with an NHS dentist ¹



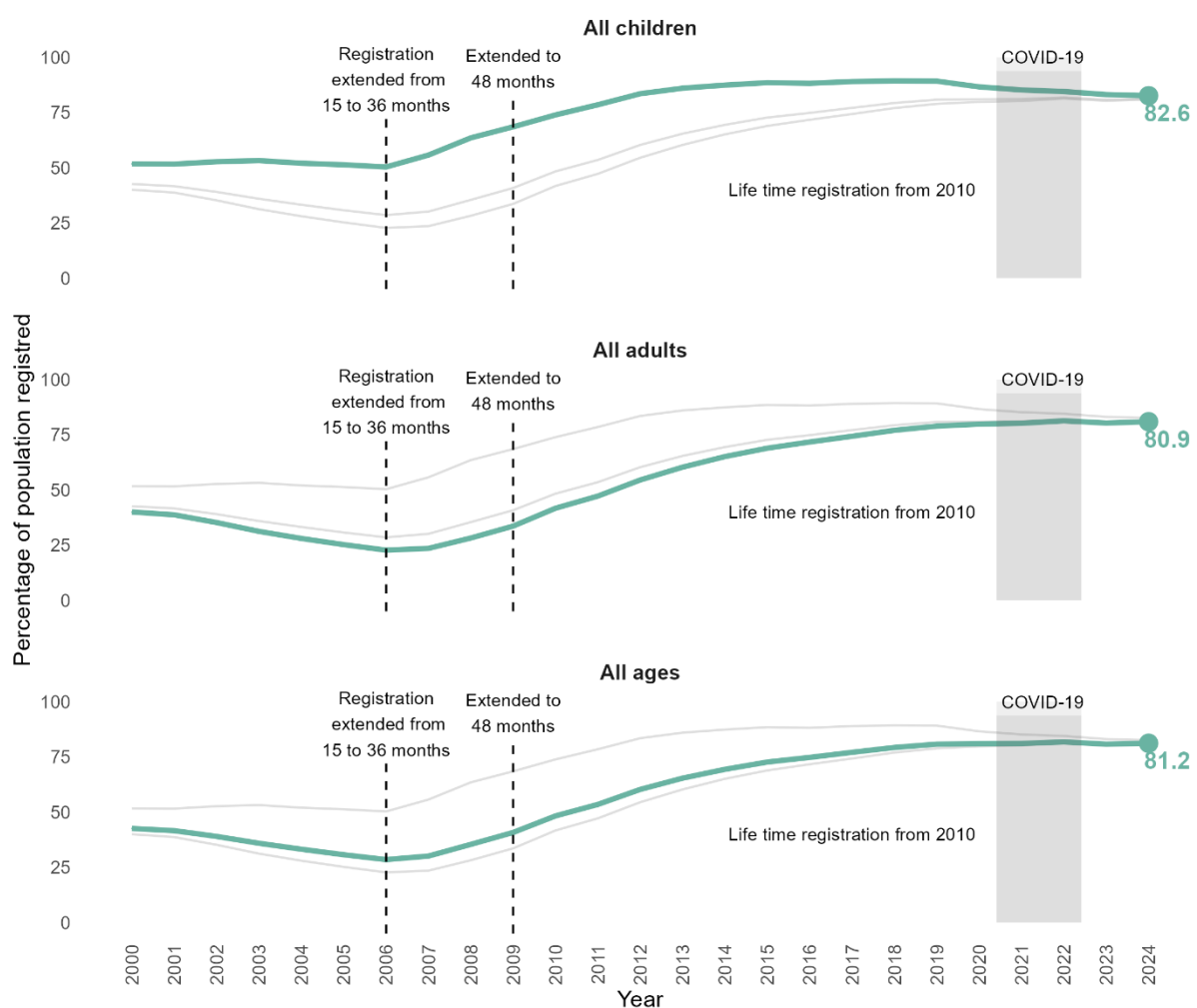
Source: Public Health Scotland (PHS) Dental Statistics 2023 – NHS registration and participation for years 2000 to 2022 (snapshot of statistical data as of 30 September of each year) and registration data at 31 May 2023 and 2024 provided by PHS to the Public Health Intelligence team, NHS Highland as an information request.

1. Registration rates calculated using mid-year population estimates published by the National Records of Scotland – see Appendix 1

Restrictions in effect during the COVID-19 pandemic had little impact on adult registrations in Highland, which have continued to rise. The reduction in the proportion of children registered predates the pandemic and will have been impacted by the closure of practices from 2020 to 2022.

In May 2024, 35,747 children under 18 and 157,574 adults resident in the Highland HSCP were registered with an NHS dentist.

Figure 3: Percentage of children and adults resident in the Highland HSCP registered with an NHS dentist¹



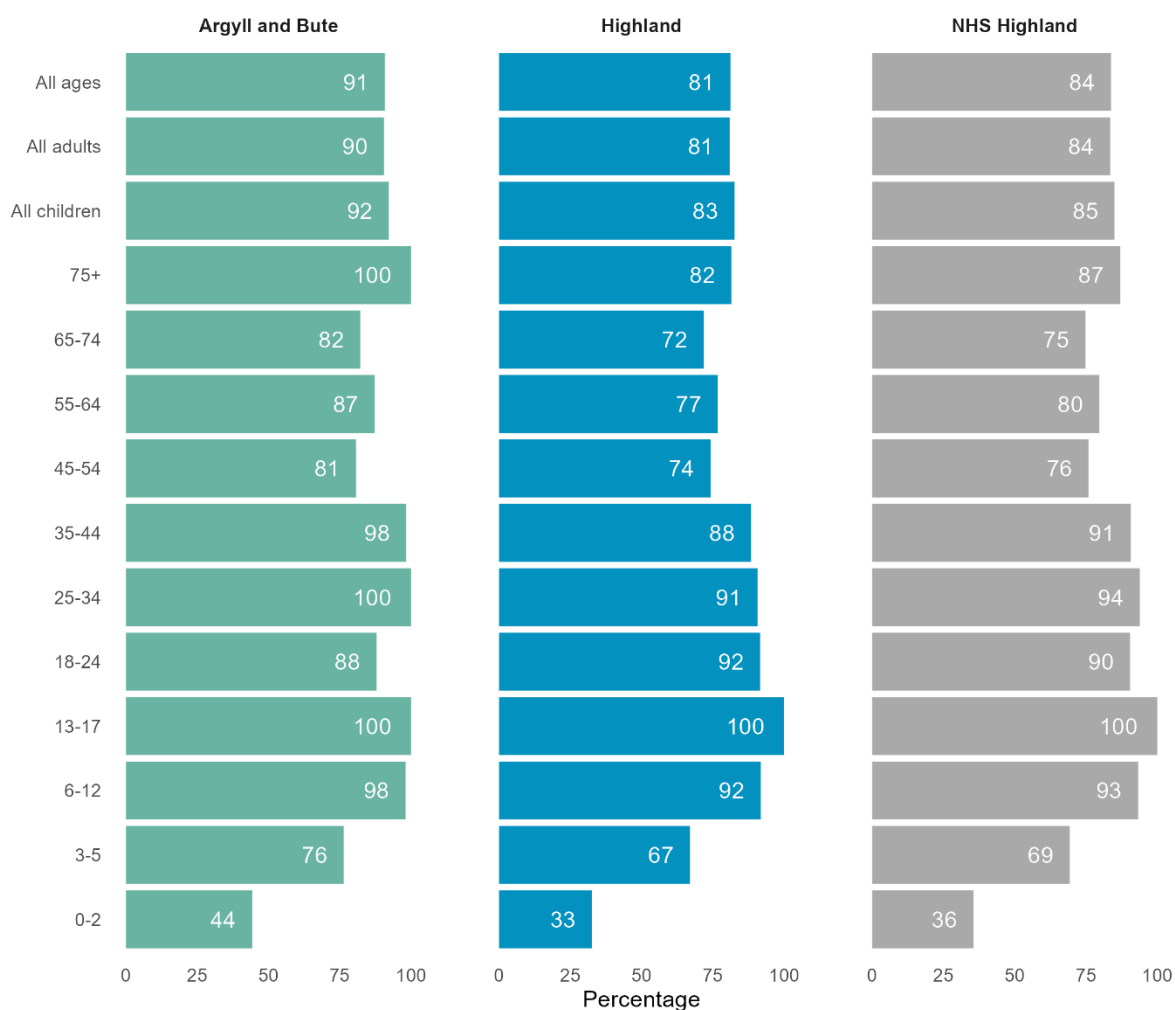
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Registration rates by age of patient

A breakdown of the percentage of patients registered with an NHS dentist by age group as of 31 May 2024 is shown in Figure 4

Figure 4: Percentage of the population in Argyll and Bute HSCP, Highland HSCP, and NHS Highland registered with an NHS dentist as of 31 May 2024¹



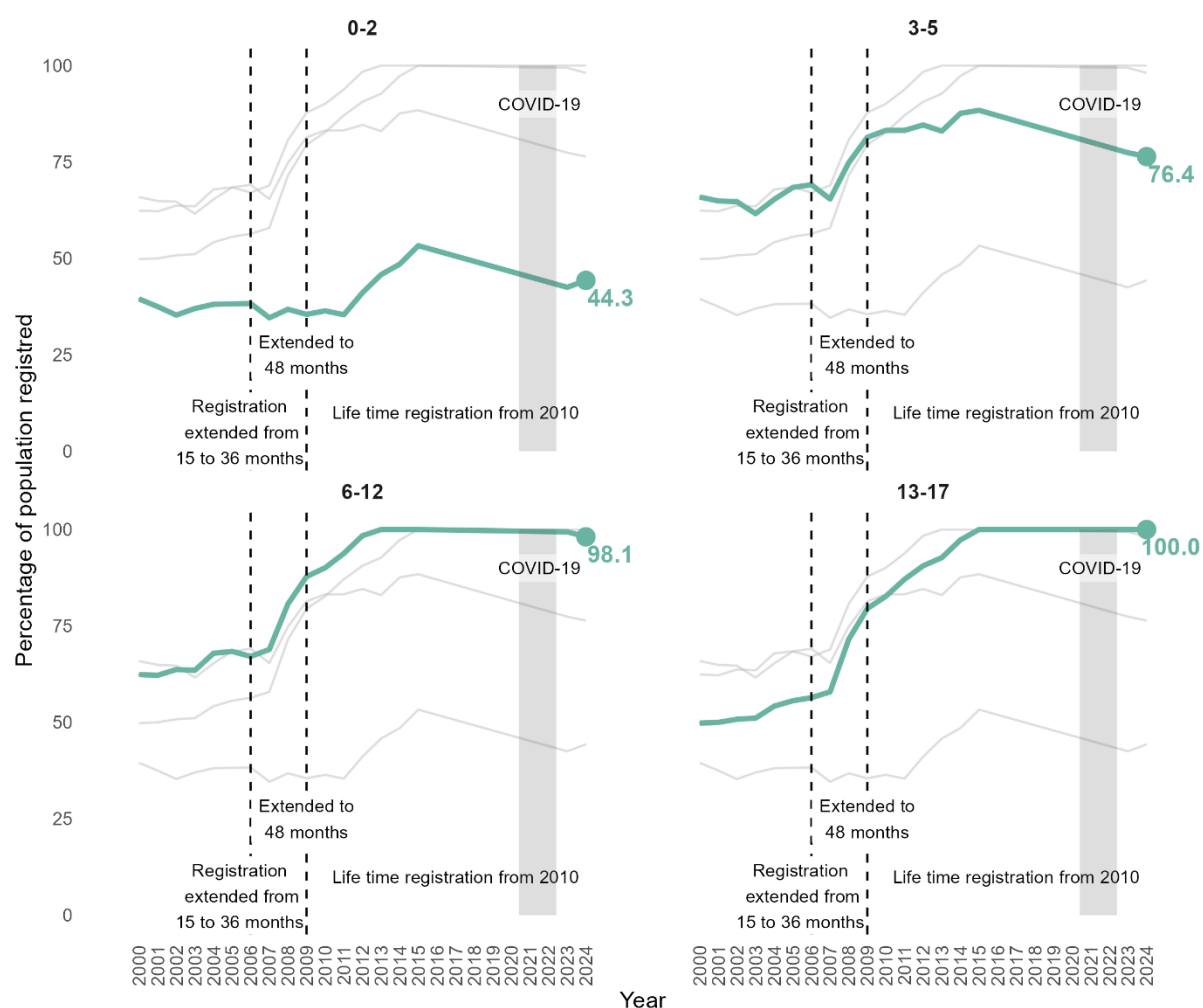
Source: Registration data as of 31 May 2024 provided by PHS to the Public Health Intelligence team, NHS Highland as an information request.

1. Registration rates calculated using mid-year population estimates published by the National Records of Scotland – see Appendix 1

Registration of children

Figure 5 highlights the almost complete registration of children over six living in the Argyll and Bute HSCP, but access at younger ages has generally been falling. The increase in the proportion of children aged 0-2 years registered in 2024 is of note, breaking a downward sequence extending nine years.

Figure 5: Percentage of children resident in Argyll and Bute HSCP registered with an NHS dentist by age group ¹

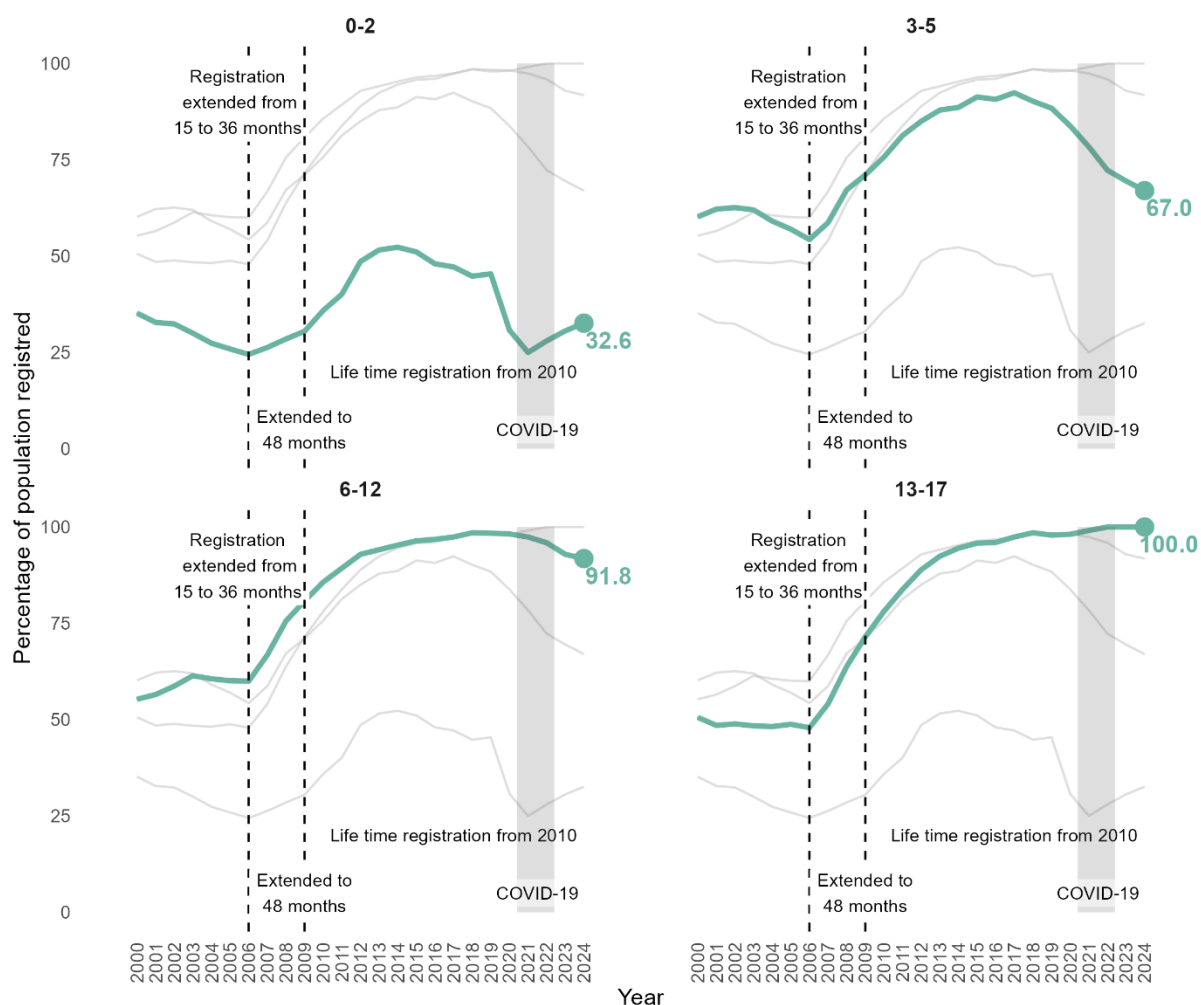


Source: Public Health Scotland (PHS) Dental Statistics 2023 – NHS registration and participation for years 2000 to 2022 (snapshot of statistical data as of 30 September of each year) and registration data at 31 May 2023 and 2024 provided by PHS to the Public Health Intelligence team, NHS Highland as an information request.

1. Registration rates calculated using mid-year population estimates published by the National Records of Scotland – see Appendix 1

Dental registration trends of children living in Highland vary by age group. In 2024, all children aged 13-17 years resident in Highland were registered with an NHS dentist. Registration among those aged 6-12 years has declined from the beginning of the pandemic. Registrations of those aged 3-5 years have decreased from the beginning of the pandemic. Registrations of those aged 0-2 years have decreased from 2017, while there has been an increase in the proportion of those registered under three since 2021, although rates remain low.

Figure 6: Percentage of children resident in Highland HSCP registered with an NHS dentist by age group ¹



Source: Public Health Scotland (PHS) Dental Statistics 2023 – NHS registration and participation for years 2000 to 2022 (snapshot of statistical data as of 30 September of each year) and registration data at 31 May 2023 and 2024 provided by PHS to the Public Health Intelligence team, NHS Highland as an information request.

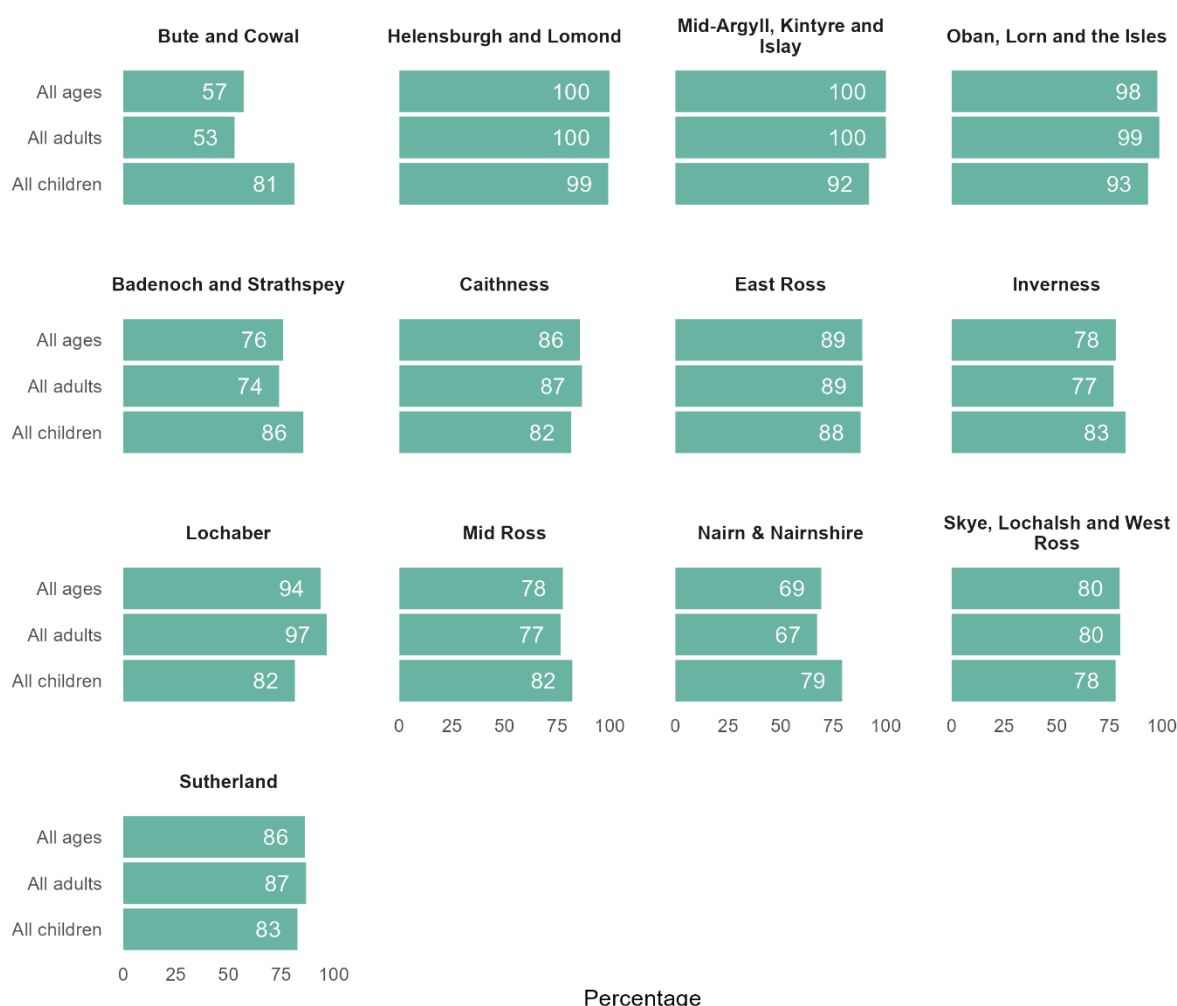
1. Registration rates calculated using mid-year population estimates published by the National Records of Scotland – see Appendix 1

Registration rates in Community Partnerships and Localities

In the Argyll and Bute HSCP as of 31 May 2024, residents of the Bute and Cowal area have much lower registration rates with an NHS dentist than the other three localities.

In the Highland HSCP, the Nairn & Nairnshire area has the lowest adult registration rate with NHS dentistry and the second lowest rate of children's registration. The lowest rate of children's registration with NHS dentistry was in Skye, Lochalsh and West Ross as of 31 May 2024.

Figure 7: Percentage of patients registered with an NHS dentist living in Argyll and Bute HSCP Localities and Highland HSCP Community Partnerships as of 31 May 2024



Source: Registration data as of 31 May 2024 provided by PHS to the Public Health Intelligence team, NHS Highland, as an information request.

1. Registration rates calculated using mid-year population estimates published by the National Records of Scotland – see Appendix 1

Table 1: Number and percentage of patients registered with an NHS dentist living in Argyll and Bute HSCP Localities and Highland HSCP Community Partnerships as of 31 May 2024

Area	Population	Registered	% Registered
All children			
Bute and Cowal	3,151	2,565	81.4
Helensburgh and Lomond	4,250	4,221	99.3
Mid-Argyll, Kintyre and Islay	3,372	3,103	92.0
Oban, Lorn and the Isles	3,429	3,203	93.4
Argyll and Bute	14,202	13,092	92.2
Badenoch and Strathspey	2,319	1,985	85.6
Caithness	4,628	3,776	81.6
East Ross	4,509	3,968	88.0
Inverness	15,925	13,166	82.7
Lochaber	3,754	3,062	81.6
Mid Ross	5,002	4,110	82.2
Nairn & Nairnshire	2,304	1,825	79.2
Skye, Lochalsh and West Ross	2,946	2,298	78.0
Sutherland	1,881	1,557	82.8
Highland	43,268	35,747	82.6
NHS Highland	57,470	48,839	85.0
All adults			
Bute and Cowal	17,195	9,092	52.9
Helensburgh and Lomond	21,584	22,738	100.0
Mid-Argyll, Kintyre and Islay	16,660	17,008	100.0
Oban, Lorn and the Isles	16,579	16,360	98.7
Argyll and Bute	72,018	65,198	90.5
Badenoch and Strathspey	11,722	8,688	74.1
Caithness	20,719	17,987	86.8
East Ross	17,749	15,808	89.1
Inverness	66,458	51,195	77.0
Lochaber	16,288	15,766	96.8
Mid Ross	22,231	17,061	76.7
Nairn & Nairnshire	11,366	7,646	67.3
Skye, Lochalsh and West Ross	16,998	13,639	80.2
Sutherland	11,261	9,784	86.9
Highland	194,792	157,574	80.9
NHS Highland	266,810	222,772	83.5

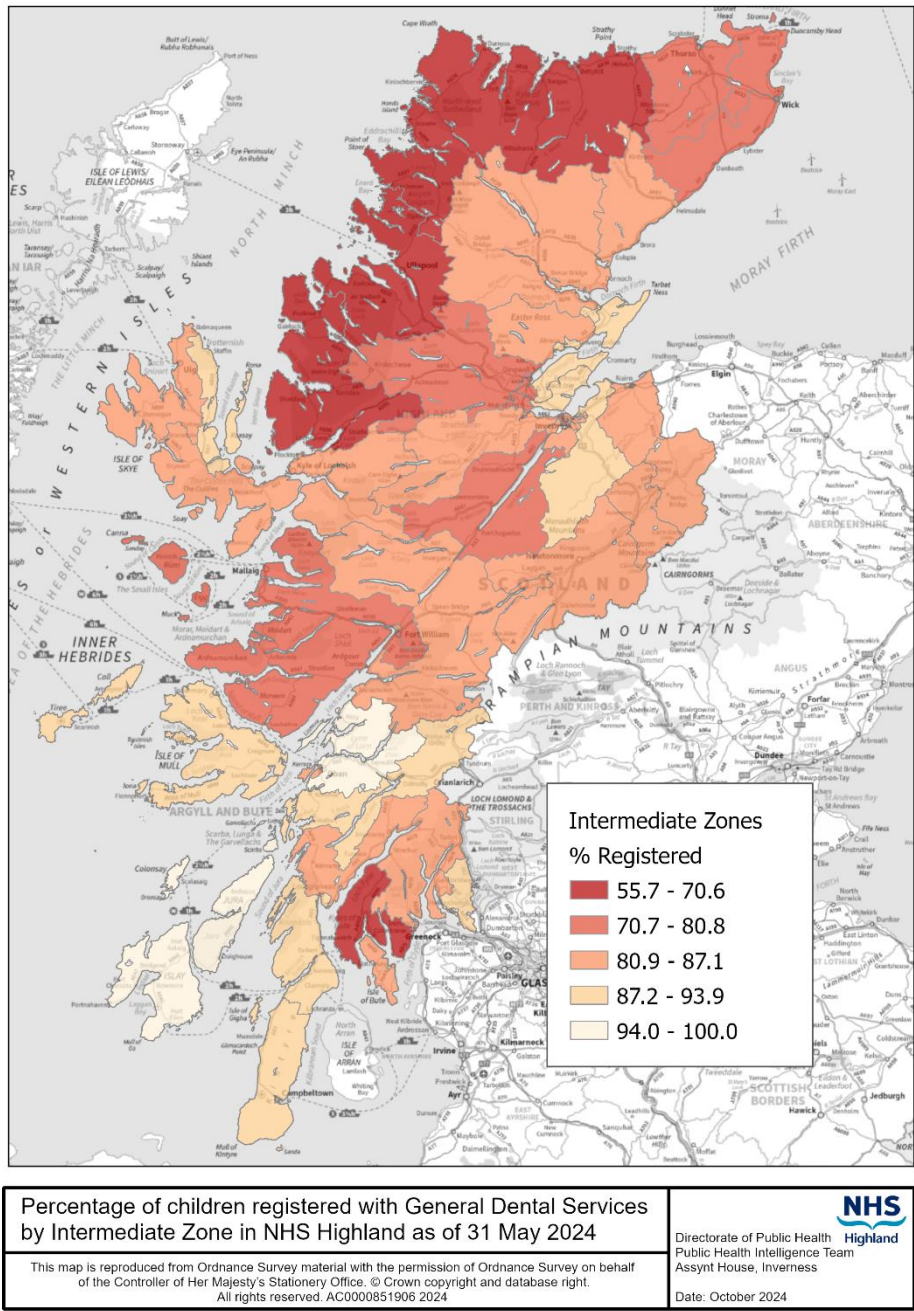
Source: Registration data as of 31 May 2024 provided by PHS to the Public Health Intelligence team, NHS Highland, as an information request.

Registration rates in NHS Highland in Intermediate Zones⁴

Children

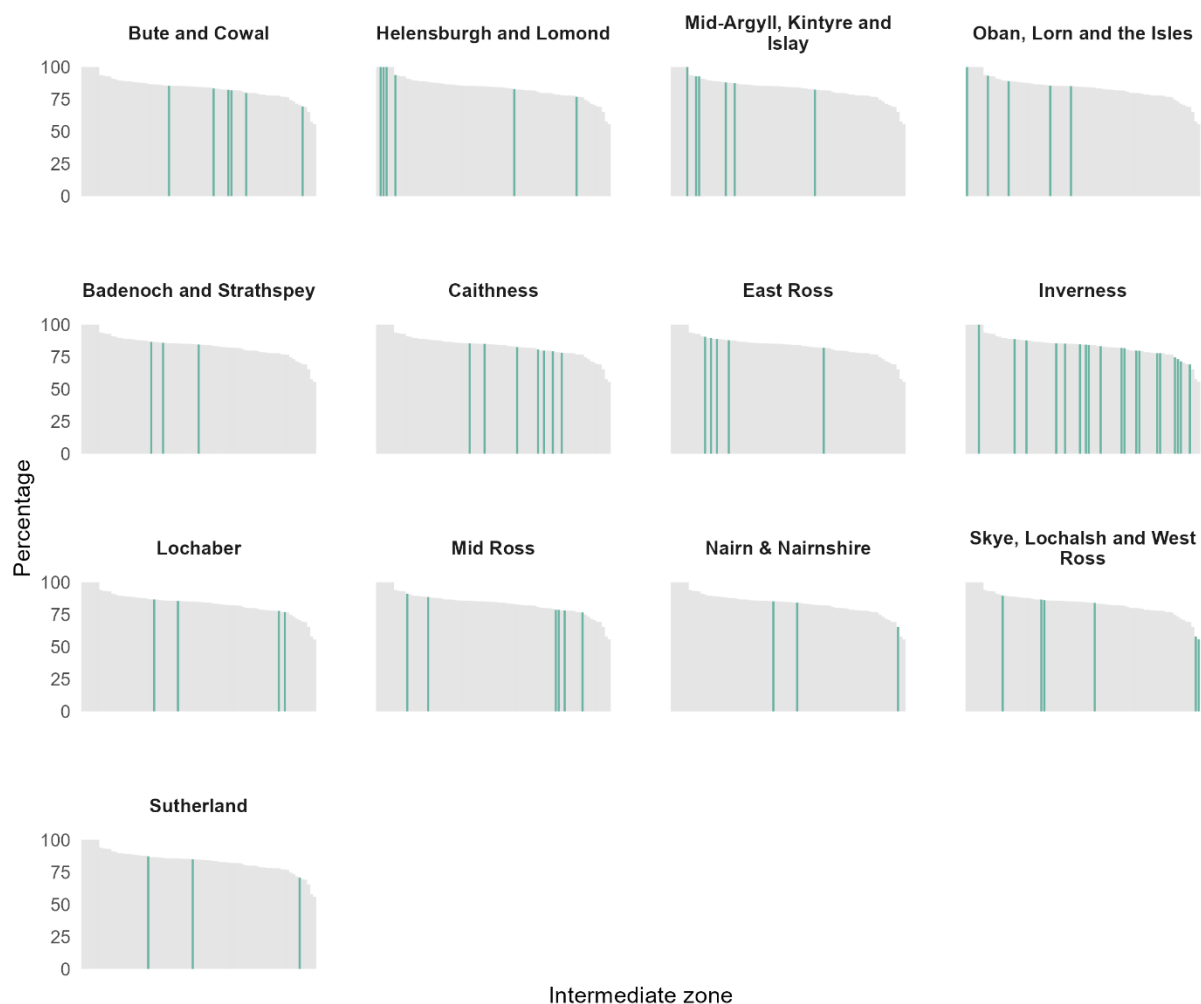
The lowest rates of children's registration as of 31 May 2024 are in Wester Ross, Nairn & Nairnshire, Sutherland and Inverness in the Highland HSCP. The lowest rates in Argyll and Bute are in the Cowal area (Map 3, Figure 8 and Table 2).

Map 3: Percentage of children aged under 18 registered with an NHS dentist by Intermediate Zone in NHS Highland as of 31 May 2024



⁴ Intermediate zones are small geographical areas with a population of 2,500 to 6,000 household residents. There are 1,279 intermediate zones in Scotland and 79 in NHS Highland, often used to disseminate small-area statistics.

Figure 8: Percentage of children aged under 18 registered with an NHS dentist resident in Intermediate Zones in NHS Highland by Community Partnerships and Localities as of 31 May 2024



Source: Registration data as of 31 May 2024 provided by PHS to the Public Health Intelligence team, NHS Highland, as an information request.

1. Registration rates calculated using mid-year population estimates published by the National Records of Scotland – see Appendix 1

Table 2: Number and percentage of children aged under 18 registered with an NHS dentist resident in Intermediate Zones in NHS Highland by Community Partnerships and Localities as of 31 May 2024

HSCP	Community Partnership / Locality	Code	Intermediate Zone	Population	Registered	% Registered
Highland	Skye, Lochalsh and West Ross	S02002012	Ross and Cromarty North West	481	268	55.7
Highland	Skye, Lochalsh and West Ross	S02002011	Ross and Cromarty South West	367	212	57.8
Highland	Nairn & Nairnshire	S02001986	Nairn East	640	418	65.3
Highland	Inverness	S02002001	Inverness Muirtown	517	357	69.1
Argyll and Bute	Bute and Cowal	S02001383	Cowal South	363	252	69.4
Highland	Sutherland	S02002033	Sutherland North and West	463	327	70.6
Highland	Inverness	S02002002	Inverness Merkinch	786	563	71.6
Highland	Inverness	S02001996	Inverness Hilton	765	561	73.3
Highland	Inverness	S02002006	Loch Ness	786	586	74.6
Highland	Mid Ross	S02002016	Conon	798	611	76.6
Highland	Lochaber	S02001978	Lochaber West	856	658	76.9
Argyll and Bute	Helensburgh and Lomond	S02001390	Helensburgh Centre	361	278	77.0
Highland	Lochaber	S02001980	Fort William South	1072	834	77.8
Highland	Inverness	S02002000	Inverness Ballifeary and Dalneigh	854	665	77.9
Highland	Inverness	S02002003	Inverness Scorguie	362	282	77.9
Highland	Mid Ross	S02002013	Ross and Cromarty Central	644	502	78.0
Highland	Caithness	S02002030	Caithness North West	956	748	78.2
Highland	Mid Ross	S02002015	Muir of Ord	701	551	78.6
Highland	Mid Ross	S02002017	Dingwall	1010	794	78.6
Highland	Caithness	S02002027	Wick South	690	547	79.3
Highland	Inverness	S02001995	Inverness Drummond	657	524	79.8
Highland	Inverness	S02001999	Inverness Crown and Haugh	548	438	79.9
Highland	Caithness	S02002026	Caithness South	483	386	79.9

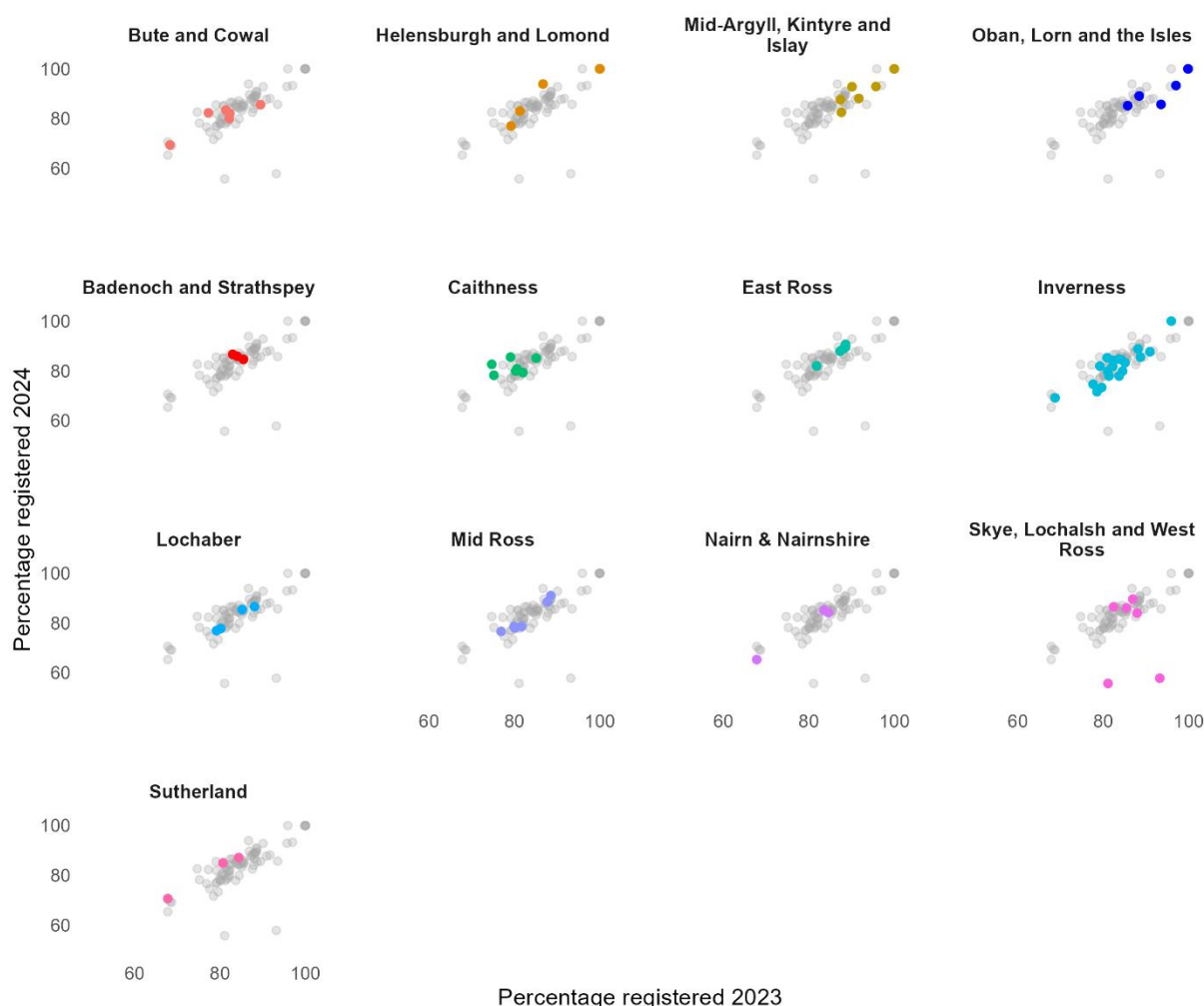
Source: Registration data as of 31 May 2024 provided by PHS to the Public Health Intelligence team, NHS Highland, as an information request.

1. Registration rates calculated using mid-year population estimates published by the National Records of Scotland – see Appendix 1

2. Table shows Intermediate Zones with fewer than 80% of children registered with NHS dentistry

Figure 9 compares the registration patterns of children under 18 registered with NHS dentistry on 31 May 2023 (x-axis) to registrations as of 31 May 2024 (y-axis) by Intermediate Zone. The areas discussed above in Bute and Cowal, Inverness, Nairn & Nairnshire and Sutherland are low registration outliers in both years. However, for children living in the West Ross area of the Highland HSCP, registration rates were over 80% in 2023 compared to under 60% in 2024.

Figure 9: Percentage of children aged under 18 registered with an NHS dentist by Intermediate Zone in NHS Highland on 31 May 2023 and 31 May 2024



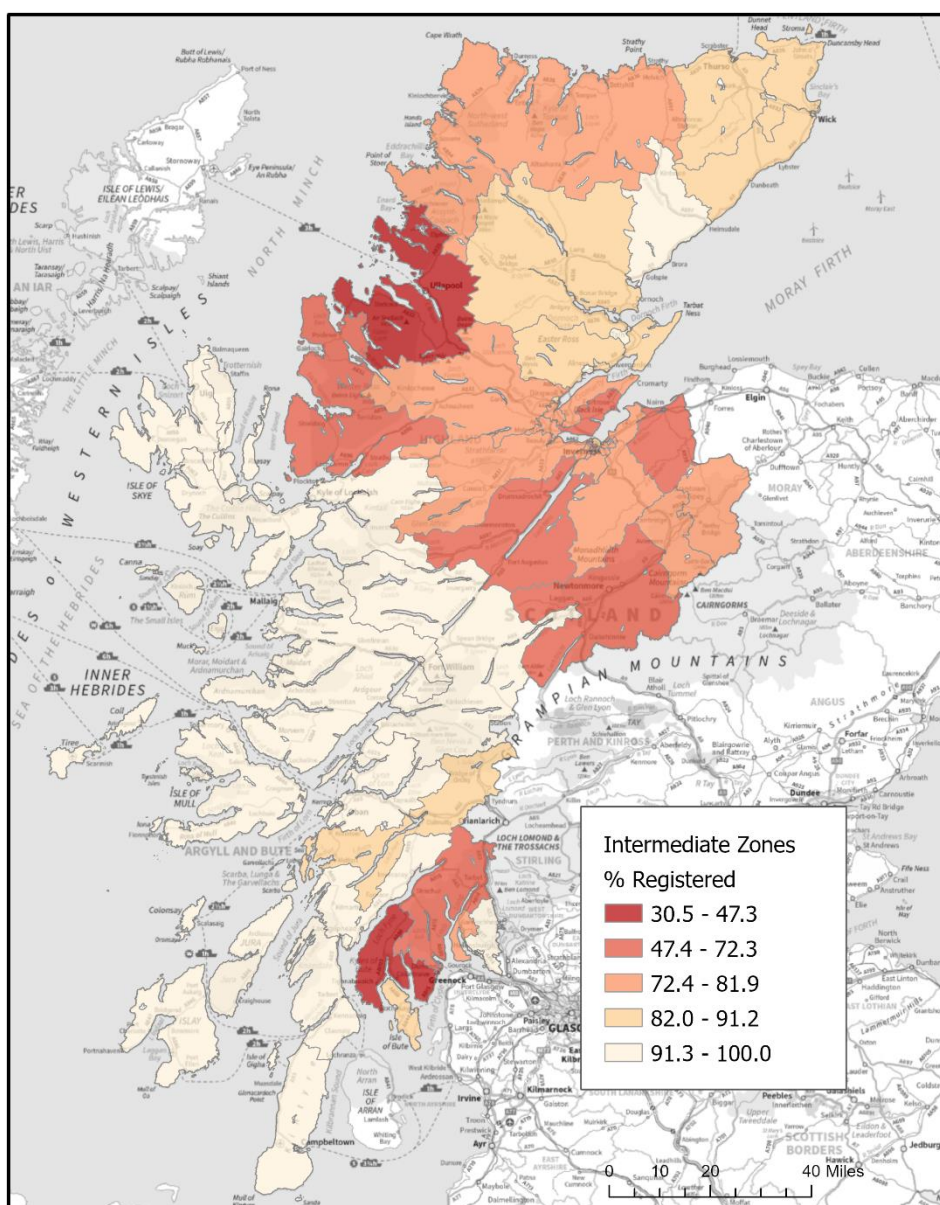
Source: Registration data as of 31 May 2023 and 2024 provided by PHS to the Public Health Intelligence team, NHS Highland, as an information request.

1. Registration rates calculated using mid-year population estimates published by the National Records of Scotland – see Appendix 1

Adults

In May 2024, several areas in the Bute and Cowal area of Argyll and Bute have very low rates of adult registration with NHS dental practice, including Dunoon, Hunter's Quay (north of Dunoon) and the Cowal peninsula. The lowest rates of adult registration in the Highland HSCP are in West Ross, Nairn & Nairnshire, Inverness, Badenoch & Strathspey and Mid Ross (Map 4, Figure 10 and Table 3).

Map 4: Percentage of adults registered with an NHS dentist by Intermediate Zone in NHS Highland as of 31 May 2024



Percentage of adults registered with General Dental Services
by Intermediate Zone in NHS Highland as of 31 May 2024

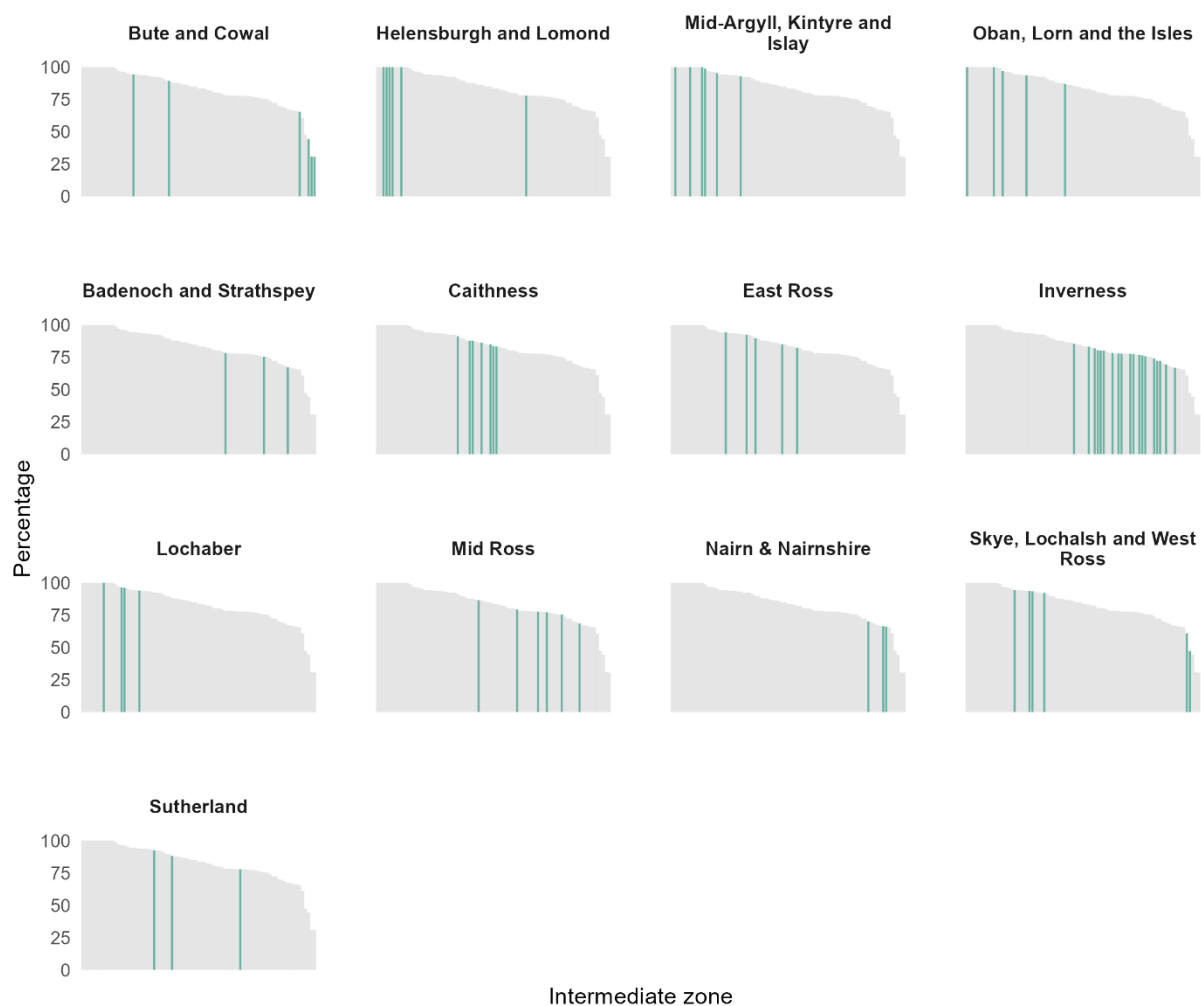
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Assynt House, Inverness

Date: October 2024

Figure 10: Percentage of adults registered with an NHS dentist resident in Intermediate Zones in NHS Highland by Community Partnerships and Localities as of 31 May 2024



Source: Registration data as of 31 May 2024 provided by PHS to the Public Health Intelligence team, NHS Highland, as an information request.

1. Registration rates calculated using mid-year population estimates published by the National Records of Scotland – see Appendix 1

Table 3: Number and percentage of adults registered with an NHS dentist resident in Intermediate Zones in NHS Highland by Community Partnerships and Localities as of 31 May 2024

HSCP	Community Partnership / Locality	Code	Intermediate Zone	Population	Registered	% Registered
Argyll and Bute	Bute and Cowal	S02001386	Dunoon	3474	1058	30.5
Argyll and Bute	Bute and Cowal	S02001385	Hunter's Quay	4233	1302	30.8
Argyll and Bute	Bute and Cowal	S02001383	Cowal South	2357	1043	44.3
Highland	Skye, Lochalsh and West Ross	S02002012	Ross and Cromarty North West	2873	1360	47.3
Highland	Skye, Lochalsh and West Ross	S02002011	Ross and Cromarty South West	2800	1705	60.9
Argyll and Bute	Bute and Cowal	S02001384	Cowal North	2721	1781	65.5
Highland	Nairn & Nairnshire	S02001985	Nairn Rural	4339	2862	66.0
Highland	Nairn & Nairnshire	S02001987	Nairn West	3770	2505	66.4
Highland	Inverness	S02001999	Inverness Crown and Haugh	3753	2510	66.9
Highland	Badenoch and Strathspey	S02001982	Badenoch and Strathspey South	3274	2201	67.2
Highland	Mid Ross	S02002018	Black Isle South	5808	3981	68.5
Highland	Inverness	S02002003	Inverness Scorguie	2506	1742	69.5
Highland	Nairn & Nairnshire	S02001986	Nairn East	3257	2279	70.0
Highland	Inverness	S02001995	Inverness Drummond	2740	1981	72.3
Highland	Inverness	S02002006	Loch Ness	3988	2883	72.3
Highland	Inverness	S02002005	Inverness West Rural	5635	4166	73.9

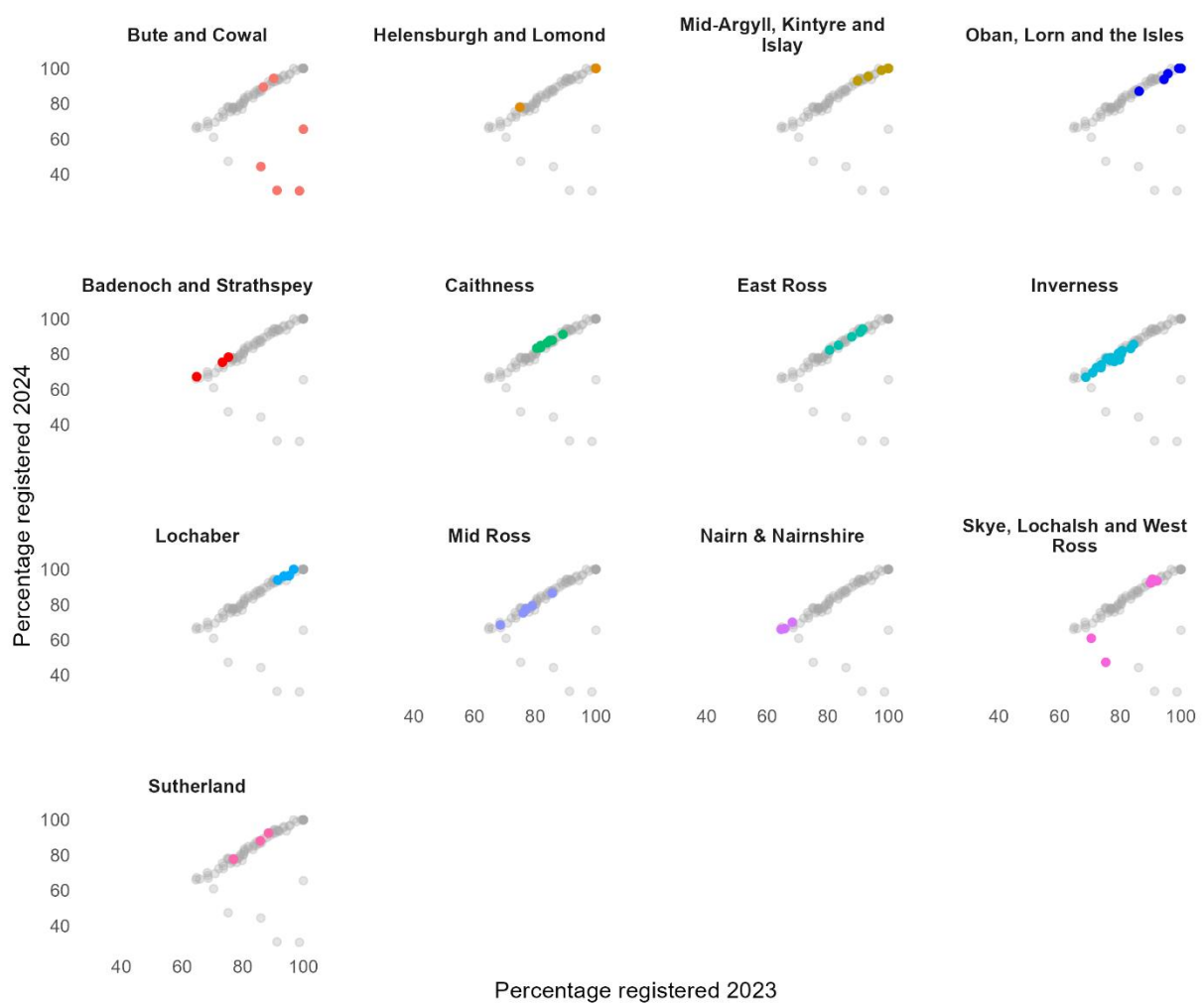
Source: Registration data as of 31 May 2024 provided by PHS to the Public Health Intelligence team, NHS Highland, as an information request.

1. Registration rates calculated using mid-year population estimates published by the National Records of Scotland – see Appendix 1
2. Table shows Intermediate Zones with fewer than 80% of adults registered with NHS dentistry

Figure 11 compares the registration patterns of adults with NHS dentistry on 31 May 2023 (x-axis) to registrations as of 31 May 2024 (y-axis) by Intermediate Zone across NHS Highland.

Bute and Cowal have seen the most prominent annual reductions in the proportion of adult residents registered for NHS dental services, with fewer adults also registered in areas of West Ross compared to 2023. Given lifetime registration, this suggests a significant change in the configuration of NHS dentistry in the areas, with the population of these remote rural communities having greater difficulty accessing local care.

Figure 11: Percentage of adults registered with an NHS dentist by Intermediate Zone in NHS Highland on 31 May 2023 and 31 May 2024



Source: Registration data as of 31 May 2023 and 2024 provided by PHS to the Public Health Intelligence team, NHS Highland, as an information request.

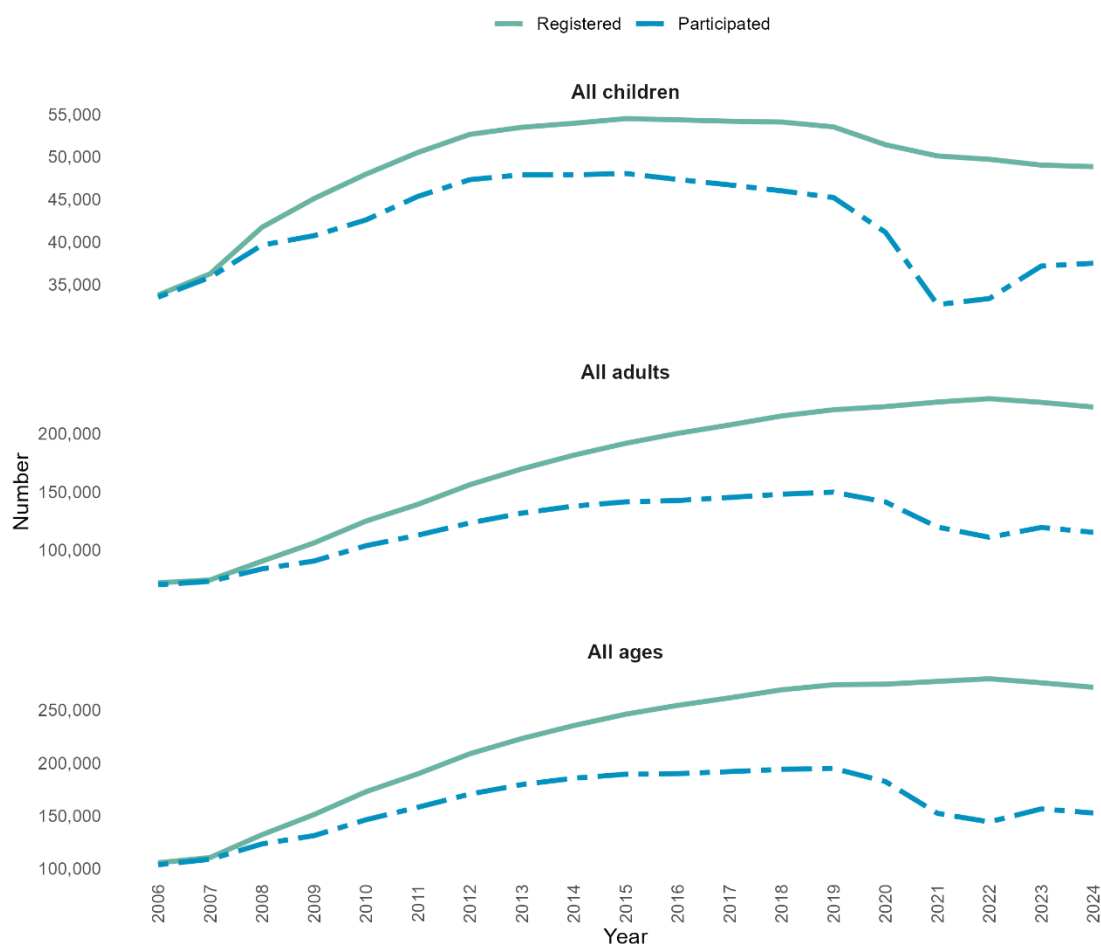
1. Registration rates calculated using mid-year population estimates published by the National Records of Scotland – see Appendix 1

Participation

Participation trends

Participation rates in NHS dentistry in NHS Highland had been consistently falling since 2007, and the closure of dental premises during the pandemic, with reduced access to protect patients from infection during service remobilisation, further contributed to lower participation rates for adults and children. There is evidence that participation has increased in 2024, which is more notable for children. However, before the pandemic, a patient would have to attend a dental practice to be counted as participating. Triage activity, telephone advice, and the issuing of prescriptions are now included as participation without attendance at an NHS dental practice.

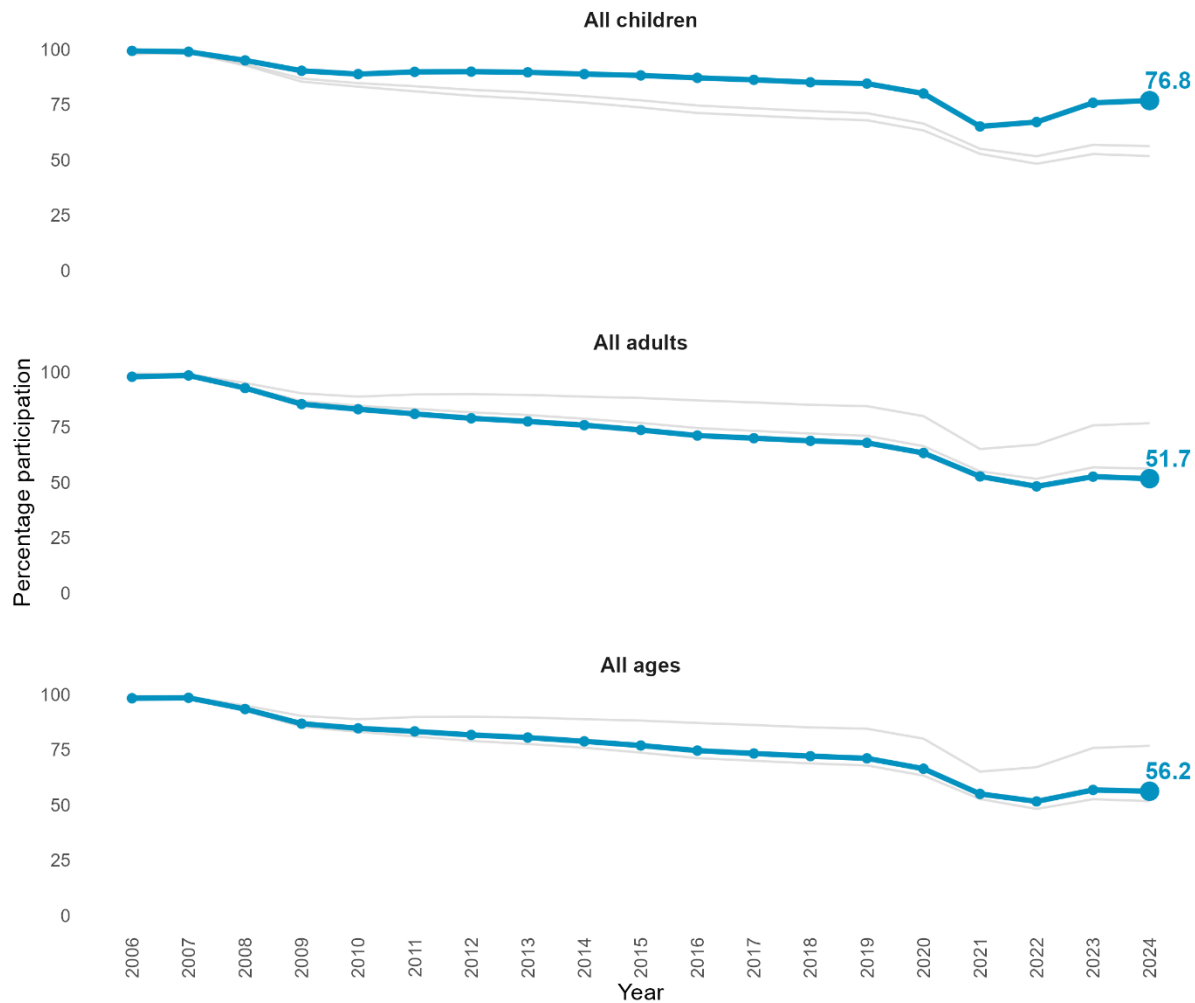
Figure 12: Number of registered patients in NHS Highland participating in GDS



Source: Public Health Scotland (PHS) Dental Statistics 2023 – NHS registration and participation for years 2000 to 2022 (snapshot of statistical data as of 30 September of each year) and registration and participation data at 31 May 2023 and 2024 provided by PHS to the Public Health Intelligence team, NHS Highland as an information request.

On 31 May 2024, 48,839 children living in NHS Highland under 18 were registered for NHS dentistry, and 37,497 (77%) participated in the two years up to 31 May 2024. Of the 222,772 adults registered and living in NHS Highland, 115,172 (52%) had contact with an NHS dentist in the previous two years.

Figure 13: Percentage of registered patients in NHS Highland participating in GDS



Source: Public Health Scotland (PHS) Dental Statistics 2023 – NHS registration and participation for years 2000 to 2022 (snapshot of statistical data as of 30 September of each year) and registration and participation data at 31 May 2023 and 2024 provided by PHS to the Public Health Intelligence team, NHS Highland as an information request.

Participation rates by the age of the patient

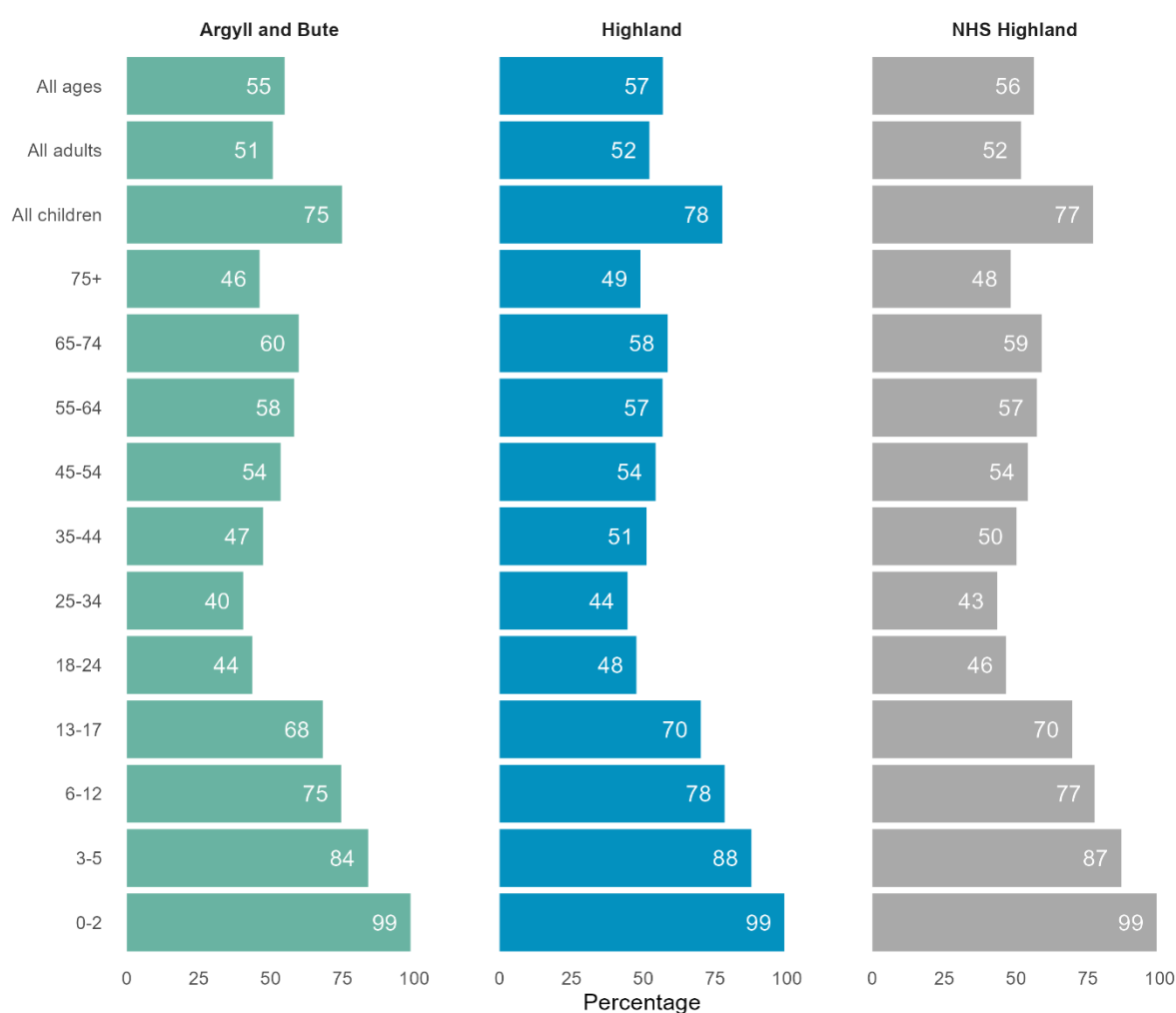
A breakdown of the percentage of patients participating in NHS dentistry by age group over the previous two years as of 31 May 2024 is shown in Figure 14.

The highest participation rates are in children aged 0-2 (99%), and the small number of children registered in this age group will have contributed to the high participation rate.

The participation rate in children subsequently decreases with age.

Adult participation is highest in the 55-64 and 65-74 year age ranges, with participation increasing through the age groups from 25 to 74 years before reducing in those 75 and over.

Figure 14: Percentage of patients resident in Argyll and Bute HSCP, Highland HSCP and NHS Highland participating in GDS by age group as of 31 May 2024



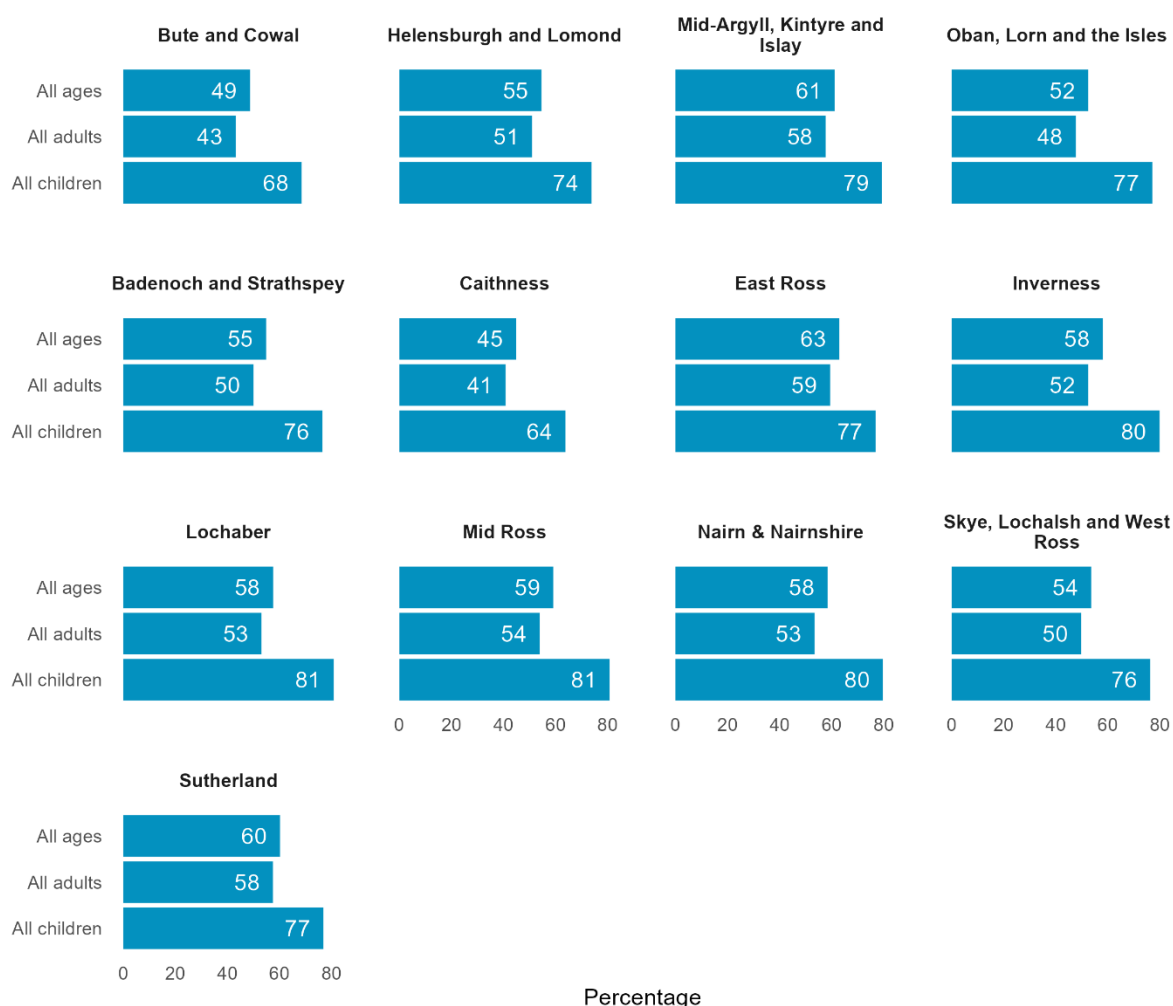
Source: Registration and participation data as of 31 May 2024 provided by PHS to the Public Health Intelligence team, NHS Highland, as an information request.

Participation rates in Community Partnerships and Localities

As of 31 May 2024, the participation rates of children living in the Highland HSCP varied between 64% in Caithness and 81% in Lochaber and Mid Ross. The lowest rate of child participation rates in Argyll and Bute was 68% in Bute and Cowal.

Adult participation rates in May 2024 in the Highland HSCP were lowest in Caithness (41%) and highest in East Ross (59%), with the other six partnerships having similar participation rates between 50 and 54%. In the Argyll and Bute HSCP, adult participation was highest in Mid-Argyll, Kintyre and Islay (58%) and lowest in Bute and Cowal (43%).

Figure 15: Percentage of patients resident in Argyll and Bute HSCP Localities and Highland HSCP Community Partnerships participating in GDS by age group as of 31 May 2024



Source: Registration and participation data as of 31 May 2024 provided by PHS to the Public Health Intelligence team, NHS Highland, as an information request.

Table 4: Number and percentage of patients resident in Argyll and Bute HSCP Localities and Highland HSCP Community Partnerships participating in GDS by age group as of 31 May 2024

Area	Registered	Participated	% Participated
All children			
Bute and Cowal	2,565	1,756	68.5
Helensburgh and Lomond	4,221	3,116	73.8
Mid-Argyll, Kintyre and Islay	3,103	2,461	79.3
Oban, Lorn and the Isles	3,203	2,469	77.1
Argyll and Bute	13,092	9,802	74.9
Badenoch and Strathspey	1,985	1,519	76.5
Caithness	3,776	2,410	63.8
East Ross	3,968	3,053	76.9
Inverness	13,166	10,515	79.9
Lochaber	3,062	2,474	80.8
Mid Ross	4,110	3,320	80.8
Nairn & Nairnshire	1,825	1,454	79.7
Skye, Lochalsh and West Ross	2,298	1,753	76.3
Sutherland	1,557	1,197	76.9
Highland	35,747	27,695	77.5
NHS Highland	48,839	37,497	76.8
All adults			
Bute and Cowal	9,092	3,926	43.2
Helensburgh and Lomond	22,738	11,598	51.0
Mid-Argyll, Kintyre and Islay	17,008	9,817	57.7
Oban, Lorn and the Isles	16,360	7,811	47.7
Argyll and Bute	65,198	33,152	50.8
Badenoch and Strathspey	8,688	4,341	50.0
Caithness	17,987	7,335	40.8
East Ross	15,808	9,388	59.4
Inverness	51,195	26,890	52.5
Lochaber	15,766	8,373	53.1
Mid Ross	17,061	9,201	53.9
Nairn & Nairnshire	7,646	4,080	53.4
Skye, Lochalsh and West Ross	13,639	6,787	49.8
Sutherland	9,784	5,625	57.5
Highland	157,574	82,020	52.1
NHS Highland	222,772	115,172	51.7

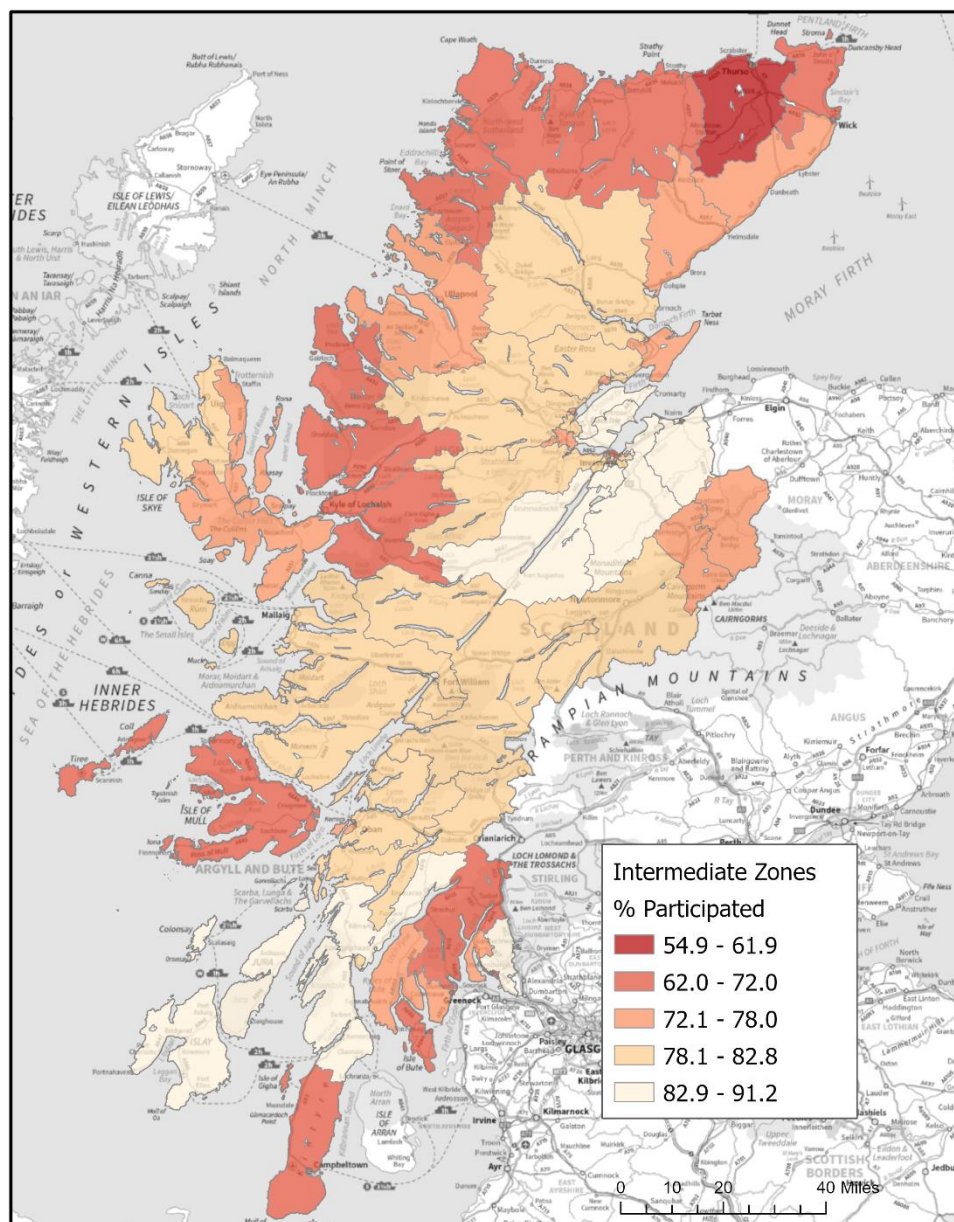
Source: Registration and participation data as of 31 May 2024 provided by PHS to the Public Health Intelligence team, NHS Highland, as an information request.

Participation rates in NHS Highland in Intermediate Zones

Children

Small areas in Caithness and Bute and Cowal are identified as having the lowest rates of child participation in GDS on 31 May 2024 in NHS Highland (Map 5, Figure 16, Table 5 and Figure 17). Figure 17 suggests that the rates of the small areas identified in Caithness and the Bute and Cowal areas have been consistently low in 2023 and 2024.

Map 5: Percentage of children resident in NHS Highland Intermediate Zones participating in GDS as of 31 May 2024



Number of registered children participating with General Dental Services by Intermediate Zone in NHS Highland as of 31 May 2024

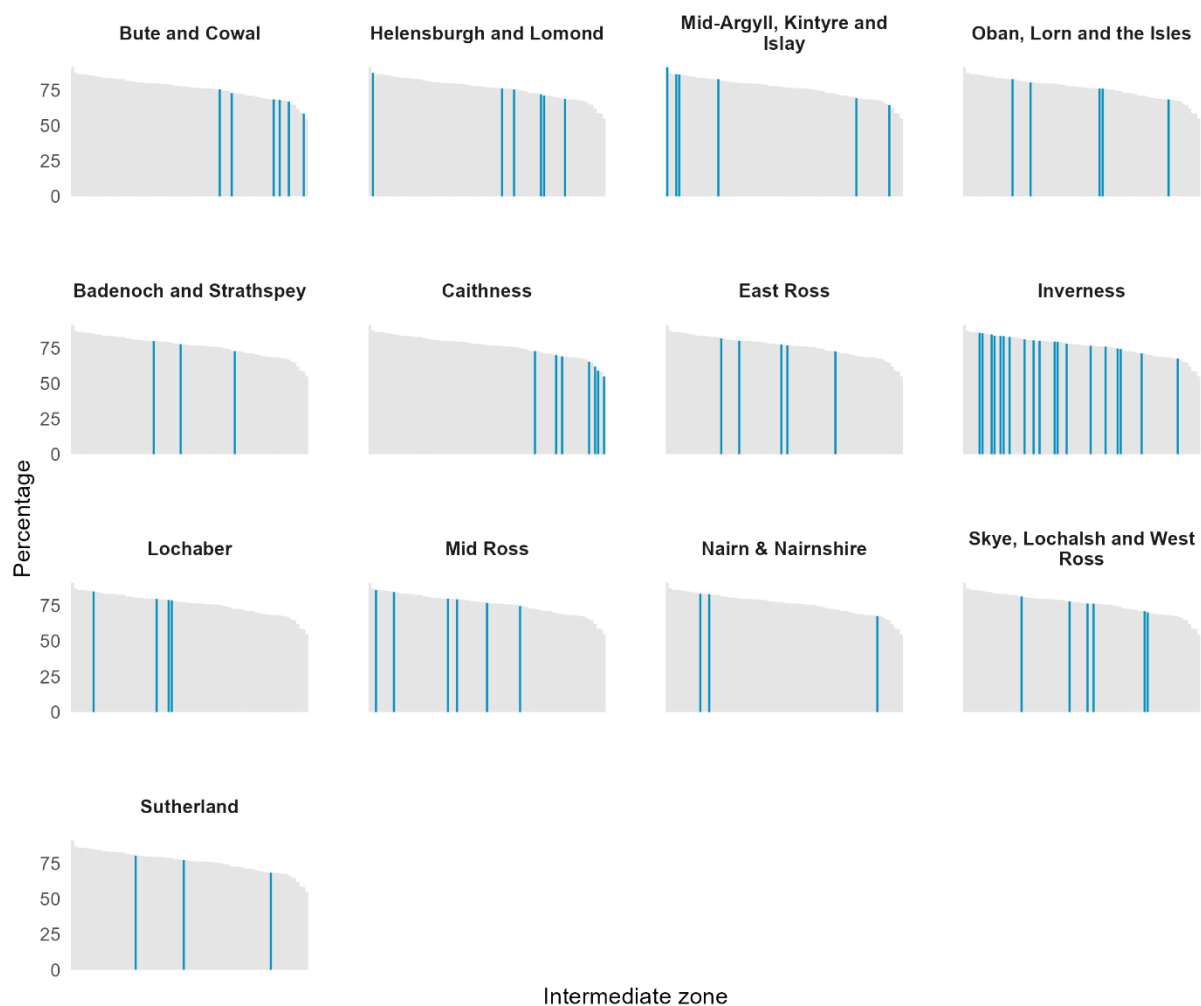
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Public Health Intelligence Team
Assynt House, Inverness

Date: October 2024

Figure 16: Percentage of children resident in NHS Highland Intermediate Zones participating in GDS as of 31 May 2024



Source: Registration and participation data as of 31 May 2024 provided by PHS to the Public Health Intelligence team, NHS Highland, as an information request.

Table 5: Number and percentage of children registered and participating in GDS by Intermediate Zones in NHS Highland by Community Partnerships and Localities as of 31 May 2024

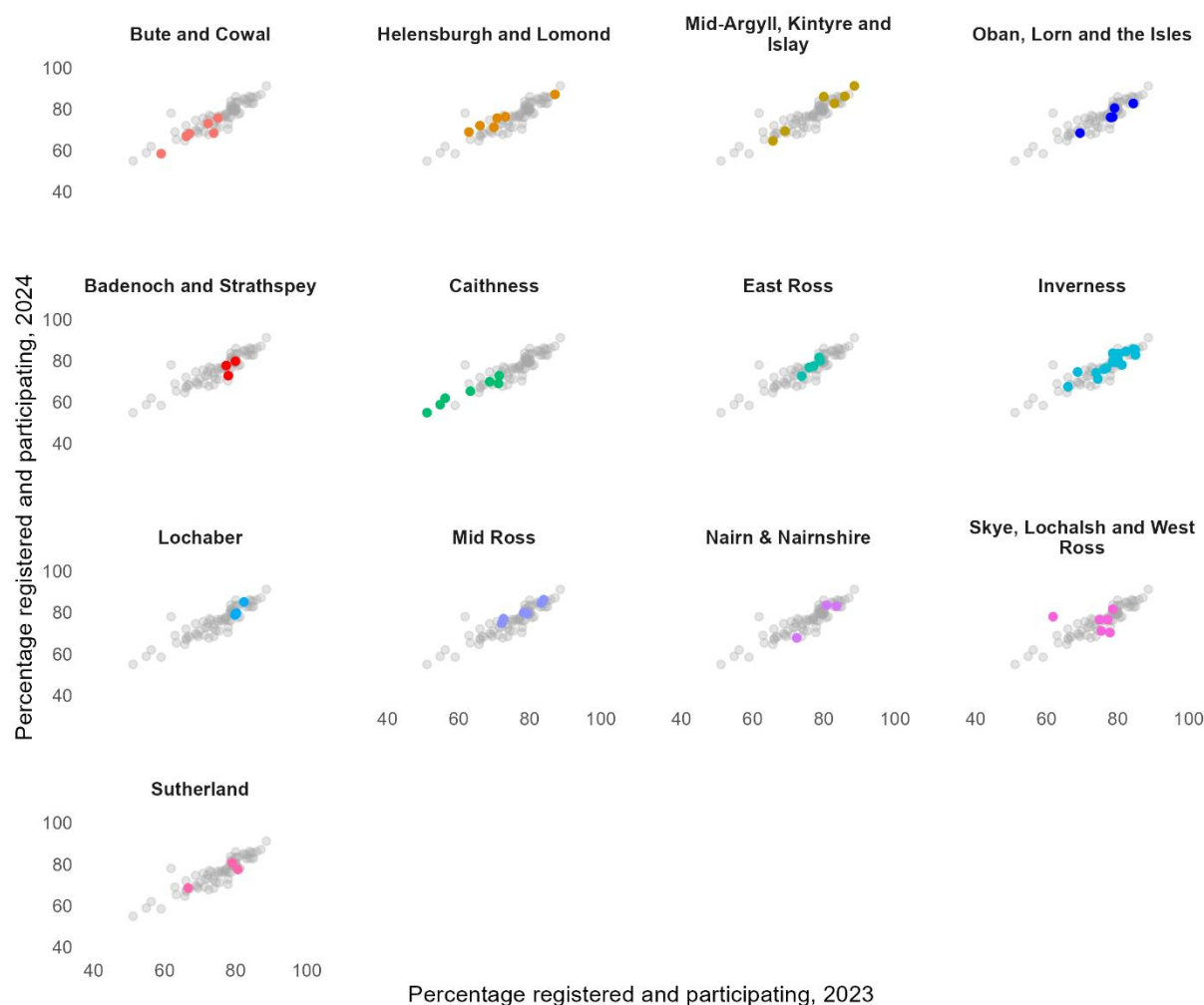
HSCP	Community Partnership / Locality	Code	Intermediate Zone	Registered	Participated	% Participated
Highland	Caithness	S02002032	Thurso West	774	425	54.9
Argyll and Bute	Bute and Cowal	S02001382	Rothsay Town	522	305	58.4
Highland	Caithness	S02002031	Thurso East	313	184	58.8
Highland	Caithness	S02002030	Caithness North West	748	463	61.9
Argyll and Bute	Mid-Argyll, Kintyre and Islay	S02001380	Campbeltown	728	470	64.6
Highland	Caithness	S02002027	Wick South	547	357	65.3
Argyll and Bute	Bute and Cowal	S02001381	Bute	232	155	66.8
Highland	Inverness	S02001998	Inverness Central, Raigmore and Longman	670	452	67.5
Highland	Nairn & Nairnshire	S02001986	Nairn East	418	283	67.7
Argyll and Bute	Bute and Cowal	S02001384	Cowal North	351	239	68.1
Argyll and Bute	Oban, Lorn and the Isles	S02001370	Mull, Iona, Coll and Tiree	623	426	68.4
Argyll and Bute	Bute and Cowal	S02001386	Dunoon	646	442	68.4
Highland	Sutherland	S02002033	Sutherland North and West	327	224	68.5
Argyll and Bute	Helensburgh and Lomond	S02001389	Helensburgh North	897	618	68.9
Highland	Caithness	S02002029	Caithness North East	487	336	69.0
Argyll and Bute	Mid-Argyll, Kintyre and Islay	S02001379	Kintyre Trail	374	259	69.3
Highland	Caithness	S02002028	Wick North	521	364	69.9

Source: Registration and participation data as of 31 May 2024 provided by PHS to the Public Health Intelligence team, NHS Highland, as an information request.

1. Table shows intermediate zones, where fewer than 70% of children participate in GDS.

In Figure 17, most areas show only a slight variation in the proportion of the registered population participating in GDS between the snapshots.

Figure 17: Percentage of children aged under 18 participating in GDS by Intermediate Zone in NHS Highland on 31 May 2023 and 31 May 2024

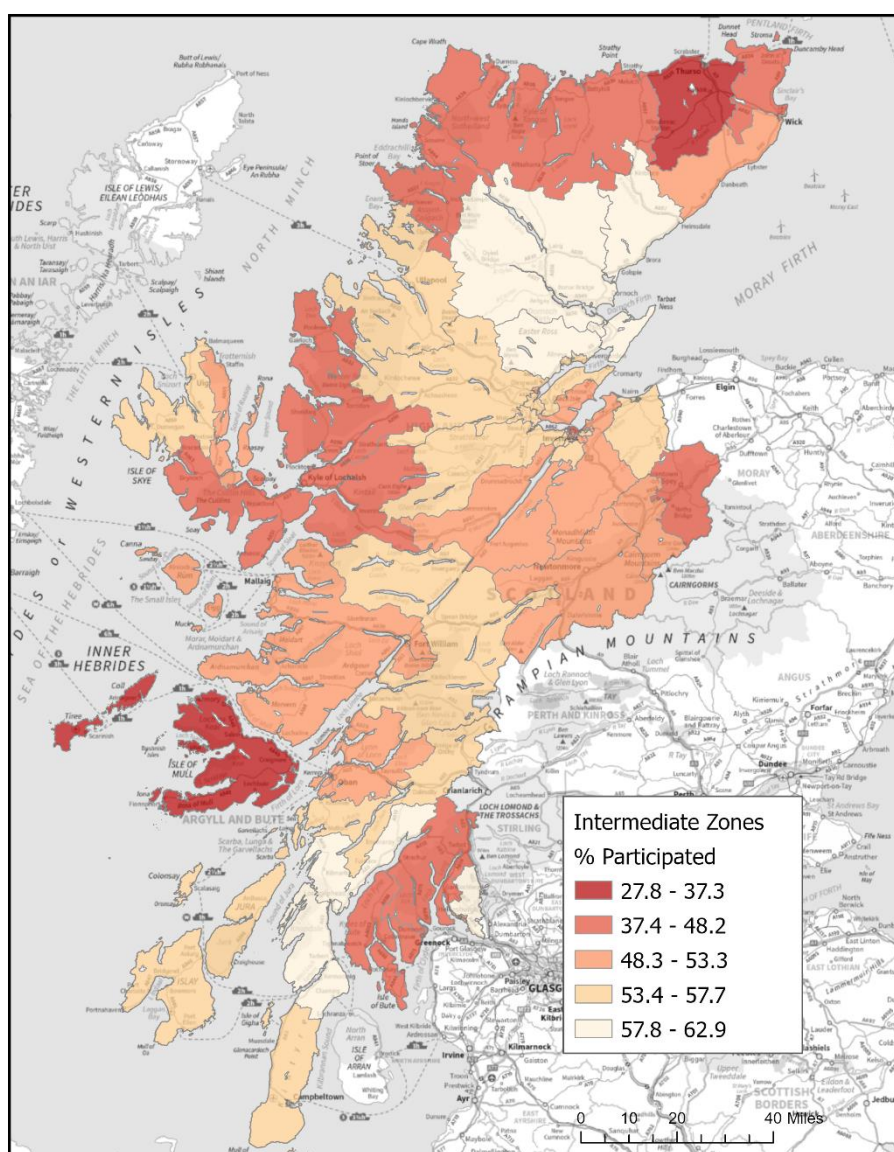


Source: Registration and participation data as of 31 May 2023 and 2024 provided by PHS to the Public Health Intelligence team, NHS Highland, as an information request.

Adults

In the Highland HSCP, areas in Caithness, including Thurso, have low rates of adult participation in GDS. Other places in Highland with low levels of involvement are identified in Inverness, Lochalsh, and in Ross and Cromarty. In the Argyll and Bute HSCP, all areas in Bute and Cowal have lower levels of participation. The area covering the islands of Mull, Iona, Coll, and Tiree also has an adult participation rate in GDS below 40%. (Map 6, Figure 18, Table 6 and Figure 19).

Map 6: Percentage of adults resident in NHS Highland Intermediate Zones participating in GDS as of 31 May 2024



Number of registered adults participating with General Dental Services by Intermediate Zone in NHS Highland as of 31 May 2024

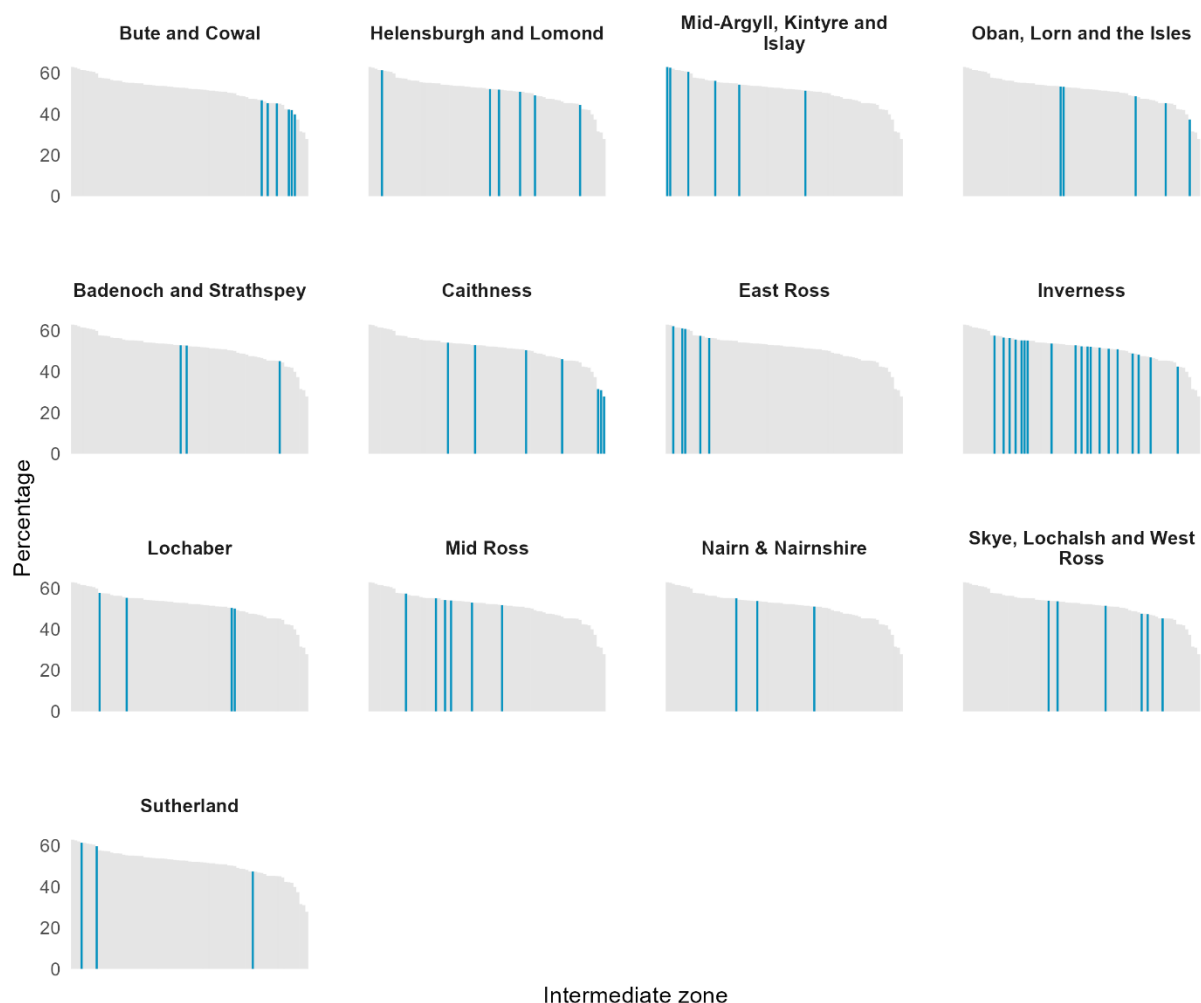
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Date: October 2024

Figure 18: Percentage of adult patients resident in NHS Highland Intermediate Zones participating in GDS as of 31 May 2024



Source: Registration and participation data as of 31 May 2024 provided by PHS to the Public Health Intelligence team, NHS Highland, as an information request.

Table 6: Number and percentage of adults registered and participating in GDS by Intermediate Zones in NHS Highland by Community Partnerships and Localities as of 31 May 2024

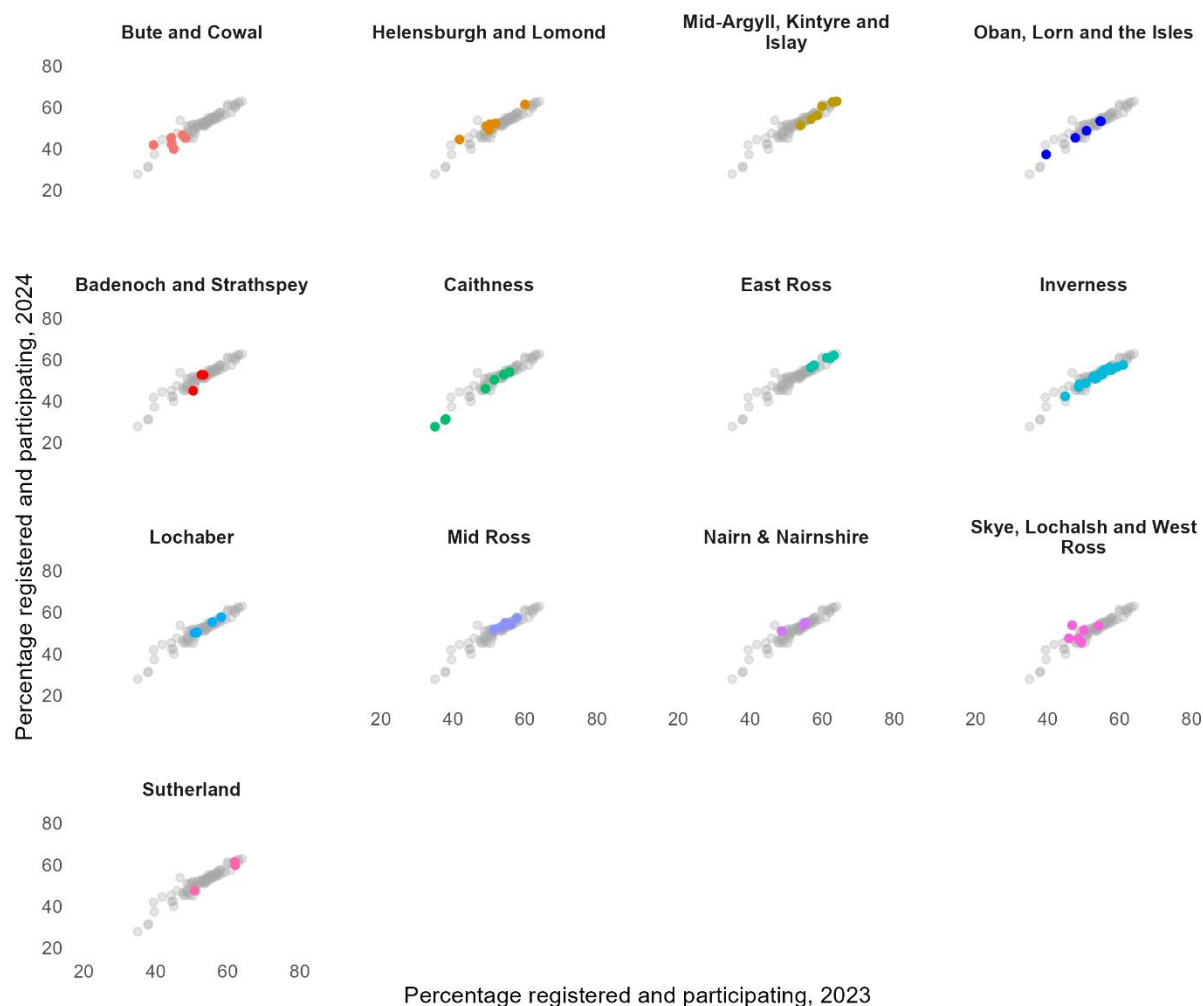
HSCP	Community Partnership / Locality	Code	Intermediate Zone	Registered	Participated	% Participated
Highland	Caithness	S02002031	Thurso East	1847	514	27.8
Highland	Caithness	S02002032	Thurso West	3311	1025	31.0
Highland	Caithness	S02002030	Caithness North West	3657	1153	31.5
Argyll and Bute	Oban, Lorn and the Isles	S02001370	Mull, Iona, Coll and Tiree	3419	1274	37.3
Argyll and Bute	Bute and Cowal	S02001383	Cowal South	1043	416	39.9
Argyll and Bute	Bute and Cowal	S02001382	Rothsay Town	2770	1161	41.9
Argyll and Bute	Bute and Cowal	S02001386	Dunoon	1058	447	42.2
Highland	Inverness	S02001998	Inverness Central, Raigmore and Longman	2556	1085	42.4
Argyll and Bute	Helensburgh and Lomond	S02001387	Garelochhead	4618	2055	44.5
Highland	Badenoch and Strathspey	S02001984	Badenoch and Strathspey North	3181	1435	45.1
Argyll and Bute	Bute and Cowal	S02001385	Hunter's Quay	1302	589	45.2
Argyll and Bute	Oban, Lorn and the Isles	S02001372	Oban North	2000	906	45.3
Argyll and Bute	Bute and Cowal	S02001381	Bute	1937	878	45.3
Highland	Skye, Lochalsh and West Ross	S02002007	Lochalsh	2178	986	45.3
Highland	Caithness	S02002029	Caithness North East	2610	1202	46.1
Argyll and Bute	Bute and Cowal	S02001384	Cowal North	1781	831	46.7
Highland	Inverness	S02002002	Inverness Merkinch	1961	919	46.9
Highland	Skye, Lochalsh and West Ross	S02002008	Skye South	2881	1362	47.3
Highland	Skye, Lochalsh and West Ross	S02002011	Ross and Cromarty South West	1705	810	47.5
Highland	Sutherland	S02002033	Sutherland North and West	2236	1063	47.5
Highland	Inverness	S02002001	Inverness Muirtown	2439	1176	48.2
Argyll and Bute	Oban, Lorn and the Isles	S02001371	Oban South	4381	2135	48.7
Highland	Inverness	S02002000	Inverness Ballifeary and Dalneigh	2667	1302	48.8
Argyll and Bute	Helensburgh and Lomond	S02001390	Helensburgh Centre	2928	1442	49.2

Source: Registration and participation data as of 31 May 2024 provided by PHS to the Public Health Intelligence team, NHS Highland, as an information request.

1. Table shows intermediate zones, where fewer than 50% of adults participate in GDS.

There is little variation in the proportion of the registered population participating in GDS between the snapshots of 31 May 2023 and 2024

Figure 19: Percentage of adults participating in GDS by Intermediate Zone in NHS Highland on 31 May 2023 and 31 May 2024



Source: Registration and participation data as of 31 May 2023 and 2024 provided by PHS to the Public Health Intelligence team, NHS Highland, as an information request.

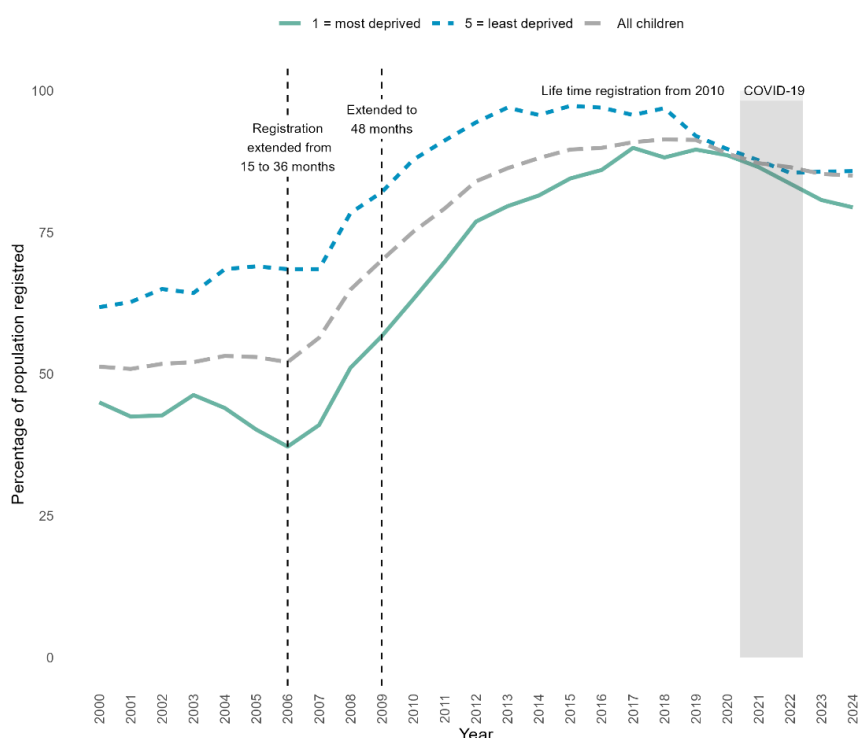
Deprivation

We explore population-level inequalities in access to NHS dentistry by linking registrations and participation activity to the area-based Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation⁵ and relevant population denominator estimates from the National Records of Scotland.

Inequalities in children's registrations

Over the long term (2000 – 2019), systematic inequality is observed in the deprivation gap of children registered in NHS Highland. The gap narrowed between children living in the most and least deprived quintiles as the proportion of children registered in the least deprived quintile levelled and then decreased. In contrast, registration rates of the most deprived continued to increase before levelling (2017 – 2019). Immediately before the pandemic, registration rates were similar for all children. However, as children's registration rates of the most deprived continued to decline from 2020, the inequality gap has started to reopen.

Figure 20: Percentage of children resident in NHS Highland registered with an NHS dentist living in the most and least deprived areas of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation



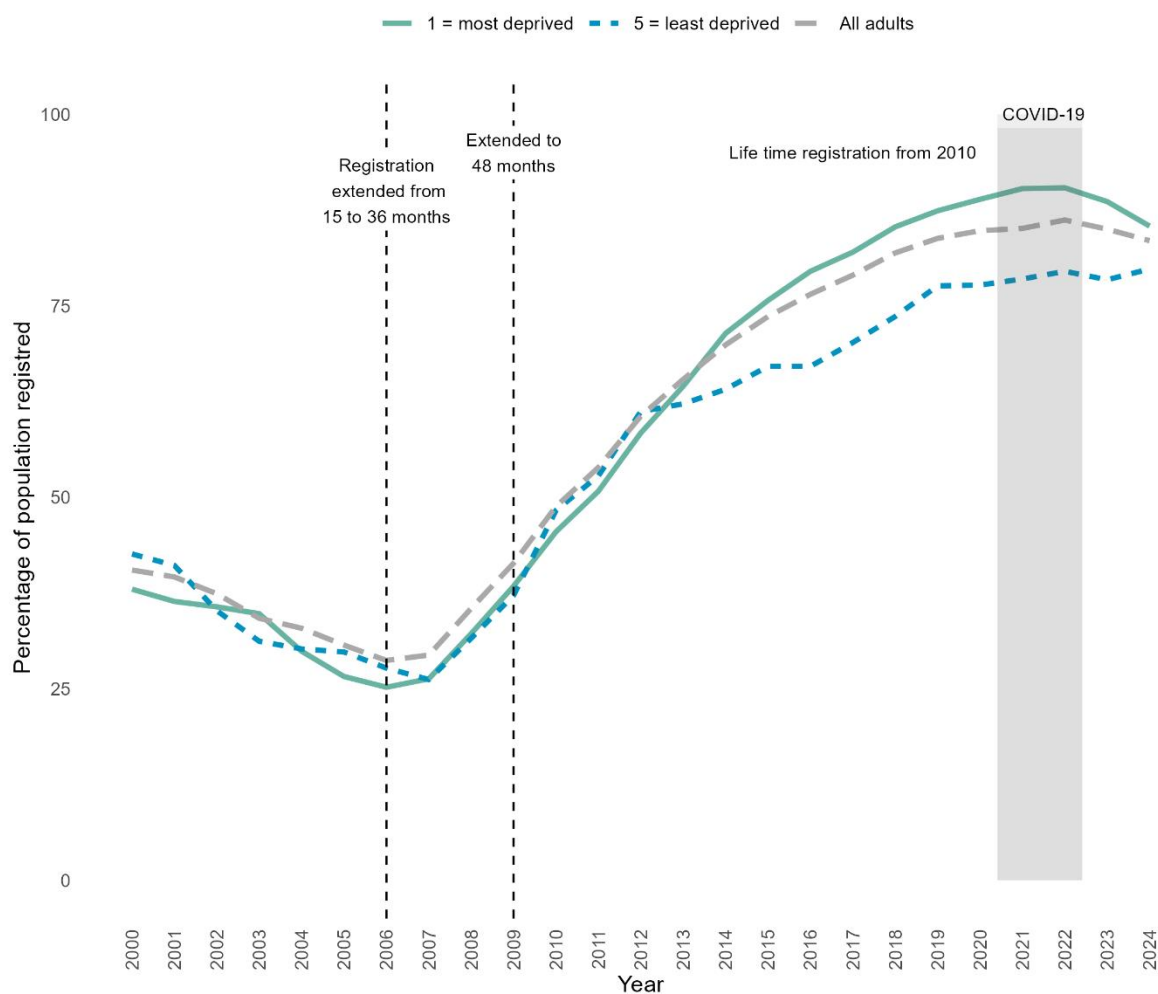
Source: Public Health Scotland (PHS) Dental Statistics 2023 –registrations for years 2000 to 2022 (snapshot of statistical data as of 30 September of each year) and registration data at 31 May 2023 and 2024 provided by PHS to the Public Health Intelligence team, NHS Highland as an information request.

⁵ Scotland's Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is a relative measure of socioeconomic deprivation across over 6,900 data zones (small areas). Data for NHS dental registrations and participation in this report are analysed by 'Scotland level' SIMD population-weighted quintiles, with deprivation quintile 1 indicating the population lives in an area in the most deprived 20% of Scotland. The most appropriate version of SIMD is used for each year of the analysis.

Inequalities in adult registrations

In contrast to children, adults in the most deprived quintiles are more likely to be registered with NHS dentistry. However, the gap in registration between the least and most deprived has reduced post-pandemic, with a fall in registration among those living in the most deprived areas in NHS Highland.

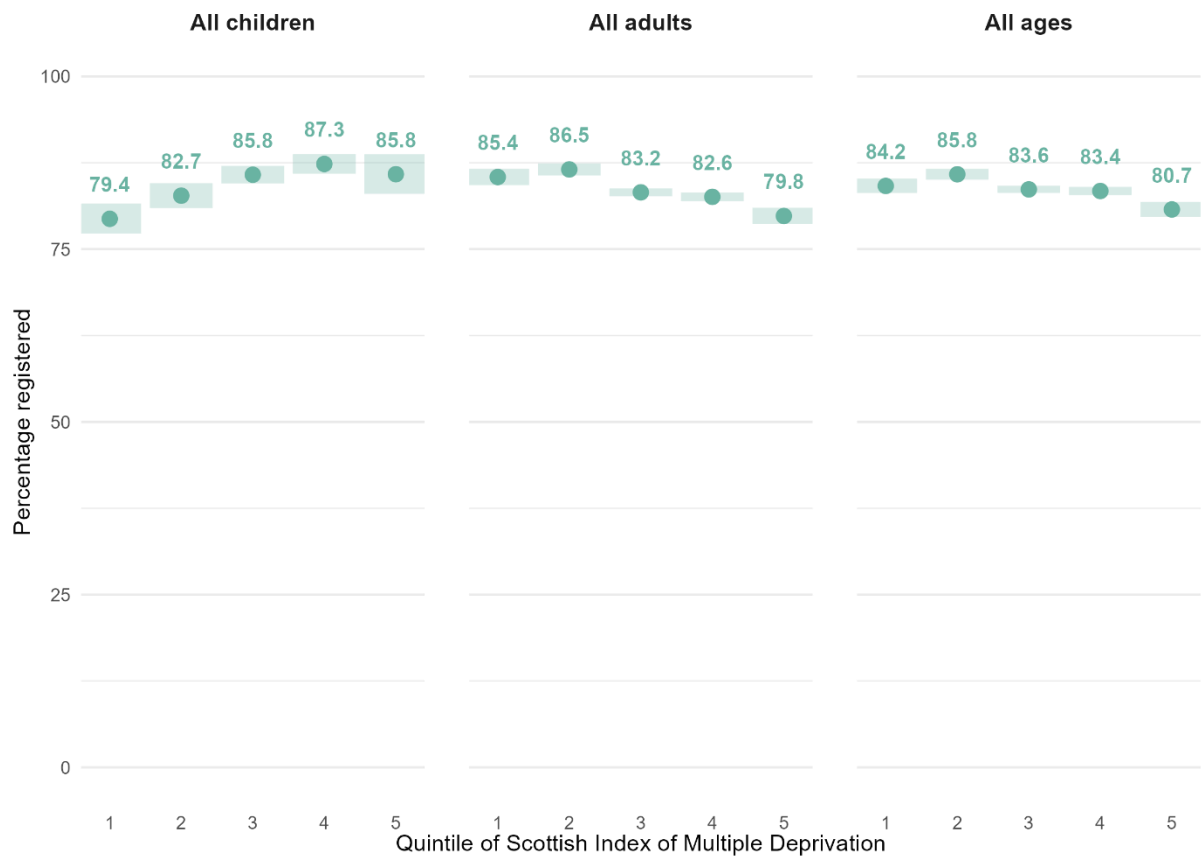
Figure 21: Percentage of adults resident in NHS Highland registered with an NHS dentist living in the most and least deprived areas of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation



Source: Public Health Scotland (PHS) Dental Statistics 2023 –registrations for years 2000 to 2022 (snapshot of statistical data as of 30 September of each year) and registration data at 31 May 2023 and 2024 provided by PHS to the Public Health Intelligence team, NHS Highland as an information request.

Figure 22 shows the deprivation gradients in registration in NHS Highland on 31 May 2024. The availability of free dental treatment for those with specific benefits and reliance on private dentistry may influence these patterns.

Figure 22: Percentage of patients resident in NHS Highland registered with an NHS dentist by quintiles of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation on 31 May 2024¹

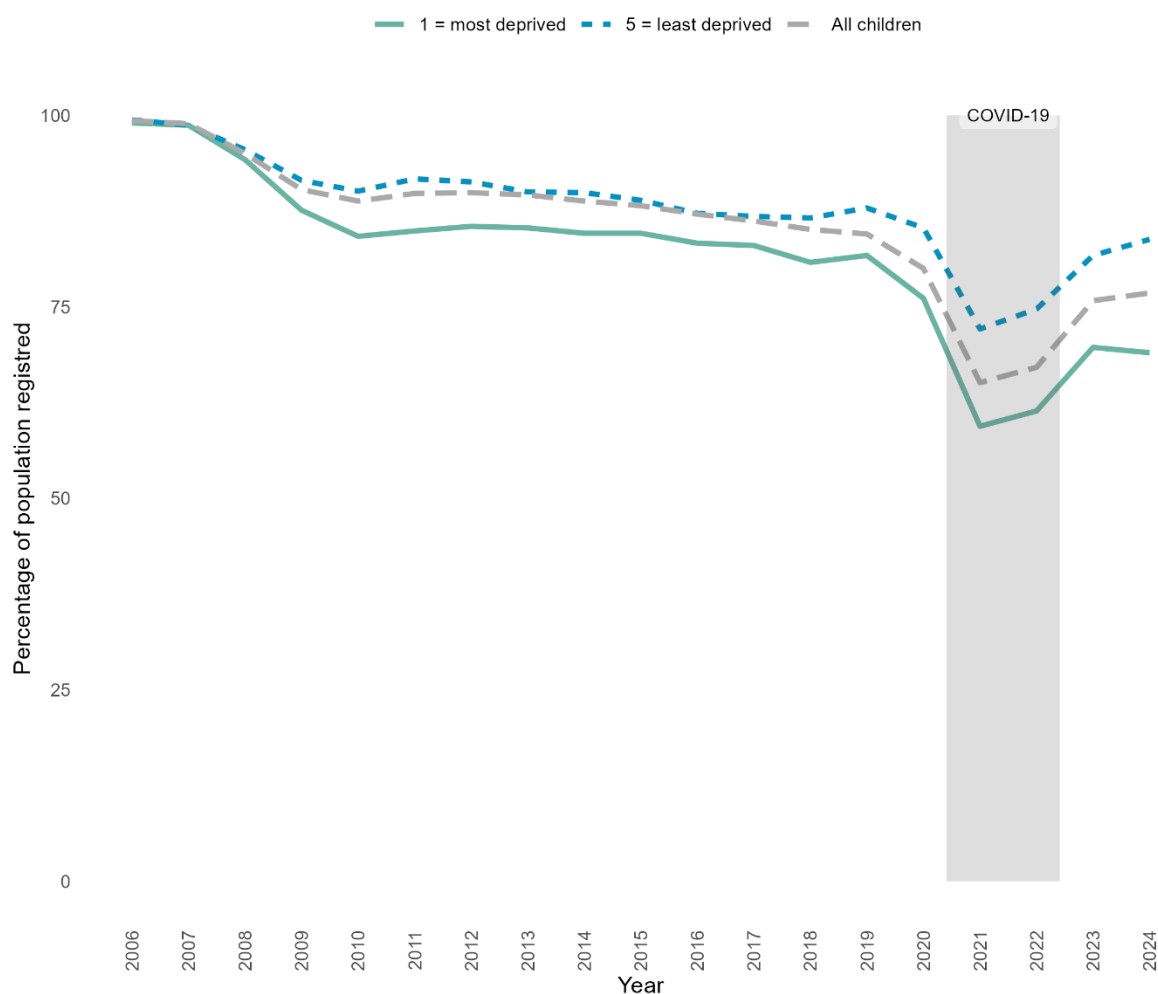


1. The shaded area represents the 95% confidence interval range of the rate
Source: Registration and participation data as of 31 May 2023 and 2024 provided by PHS to the Public Health Intelligence team, NHS Highland, as an information request.

Inequalities in children's participation

Figure 23 shows the inequality gap in participation between children living in the most and least deprived areas of NHS Highland, which increased during the pandemic and continues to persist.

Figure 23: Percentage of children resident in NHS Highland participating with NHS dentistry living in the most and least deprived areas of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation

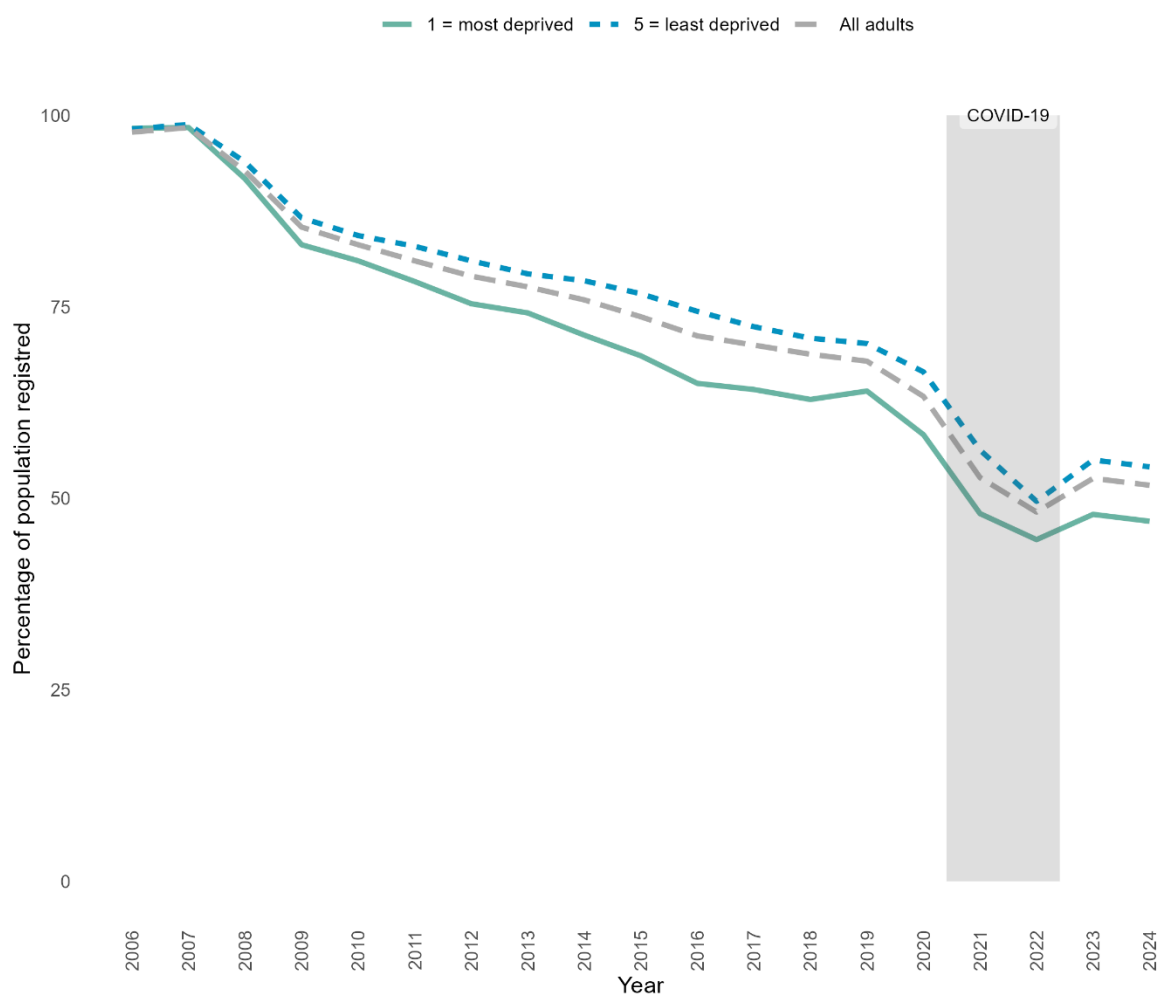


Source: Public Health Scotland (PHS) Dental Statistics 2023 –registrations and participation for years 2000 to 2022 (snapshot of statistical data as of 30 September of each year) and registration data at 31 May 2023 and 2024 provided by PHS to the Public Health Intelligence team, NHS Highland as an information request.

Inequalities in adult participation

Within the long-term downward trend in the adult population's participation in NHS dentistry, inequalities in access have remained, with no notable change in the deprivation gap following the pandemic period.

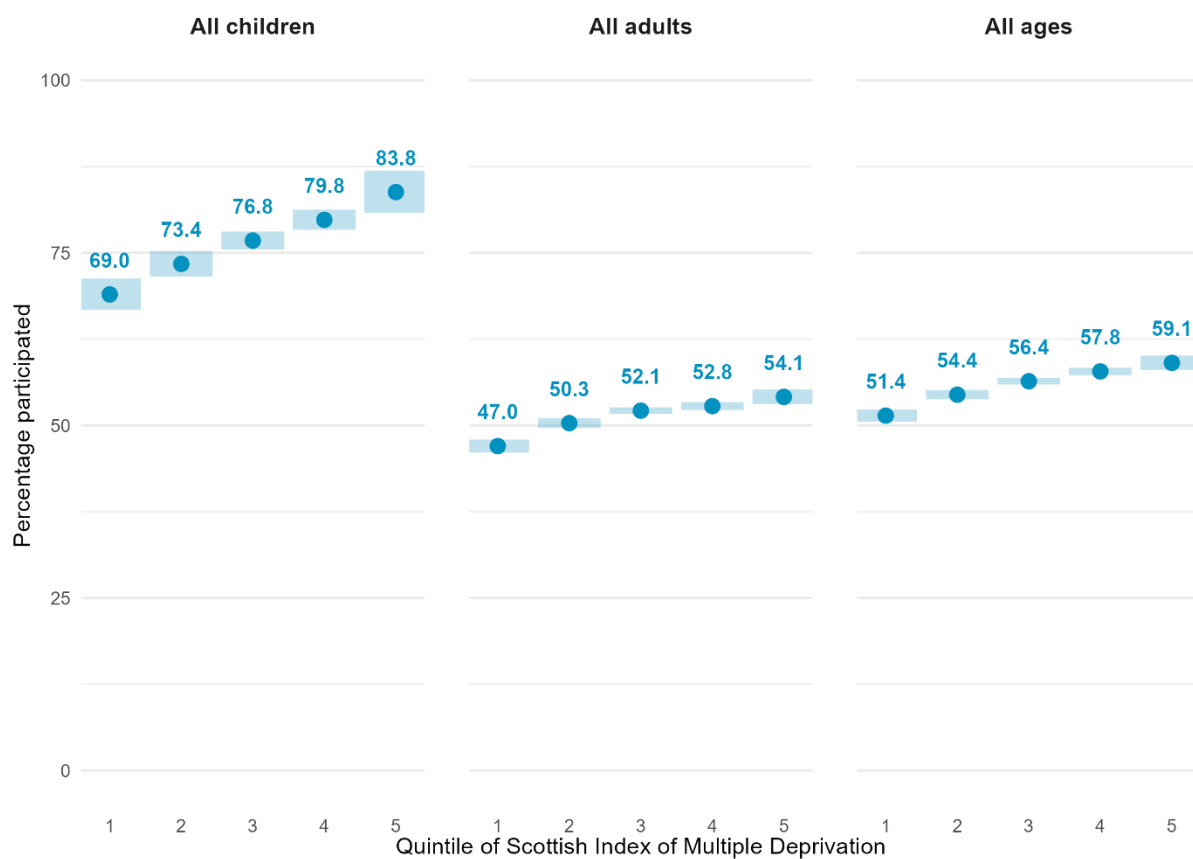
Figure 24: Percentage of adults resident in NHS Highland participating with NHS dentistry living in the most and least deprived areas of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation



Source: Public Health Scotland (PHS) Dental Statistics 2023 –registrations and participation for years 2000 to 2022 (snapshot of statistical data as of 30 September of each year) and registration data at 31 May 2023 and 2024 provided by PHS to the Public Health Intelligence team, NHS Highland as an information request.

Figure 25 highlights the gradient in participation in NHS dentistry, with rates decreasing as deprivation levels increase for children and adults as of 31 May 2024.

Figure 25: Percentage of patients living in NHS Highland participating in NHS dentistry by quintile of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation on 31 May 2024¹



1. The shaded area represents the 95% confidence interval range of the rate

Source: Registration and participation data as of 31 May 2023 and 2024 provided by PHS to the Public Health Intelligence team, NHS Highland, as an information request.

Appendix 1

Deprivation

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation was revised in 2004, 2006, 2009, 2012, 2016, and 2020. The table shows the version of SIMD used for analysis for the reported years.

Year of analysis	SIMD version
2000 ,2001, 2002, 2003	SIMD 2004
2004, 2005, 2006,	SIMD 2006
2007, 2008, 2009	SIMD 2009
2010, 2011, 2012, 2013	SIMD 2012
2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018	SIMD 2016
2019 onward	SIMD 2020

Population Estimates

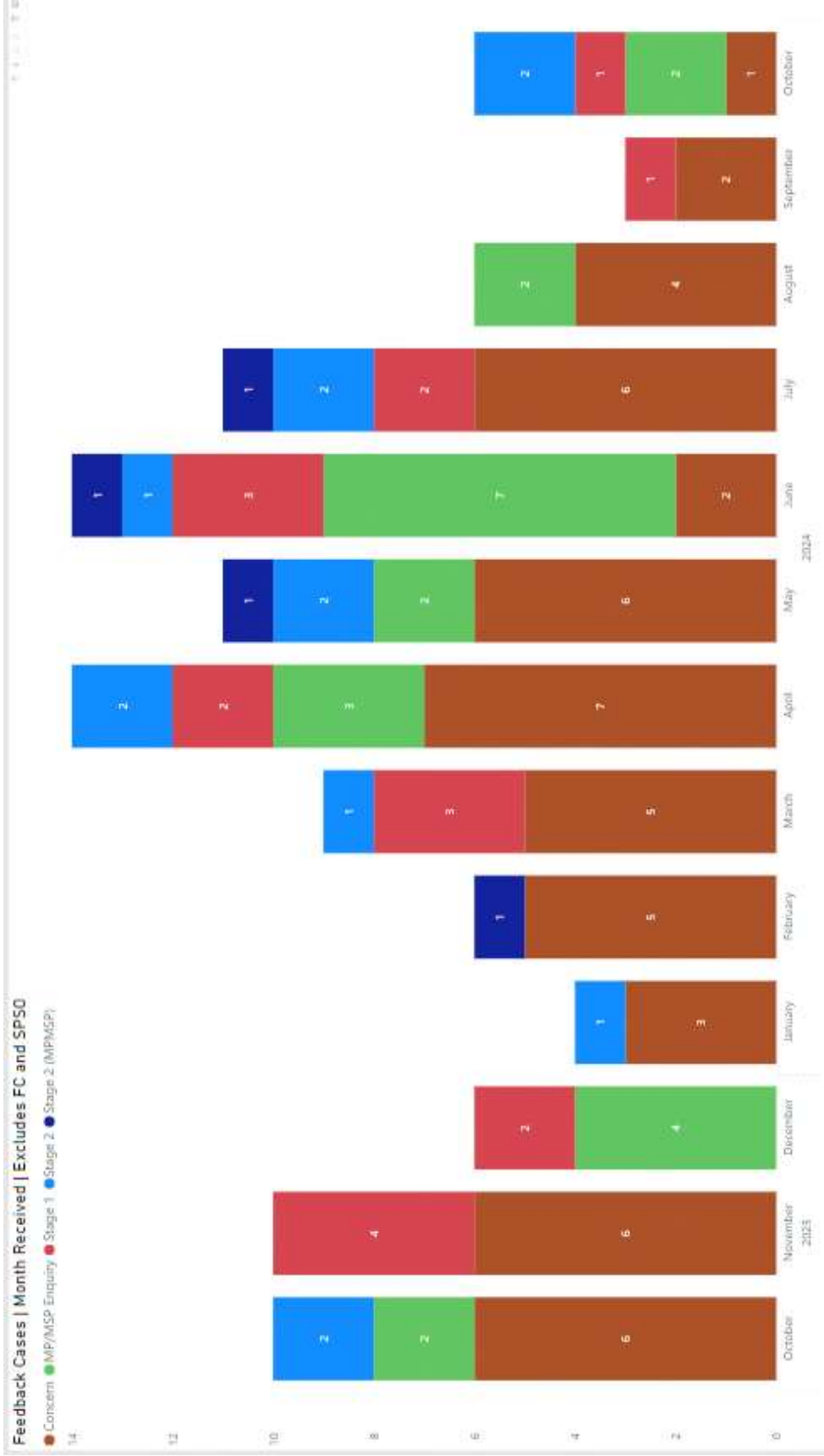
Population estimates available at the time are used in the analysis to report trends in registration rates. In the future, the National Records of Scotland will publish revised population estimates informed by Census 2022 for years from 2011, and the new denominators will change the point estimates reported but not the report's key messages about declining registration trends and systematic variation in registration rates with deprivation.

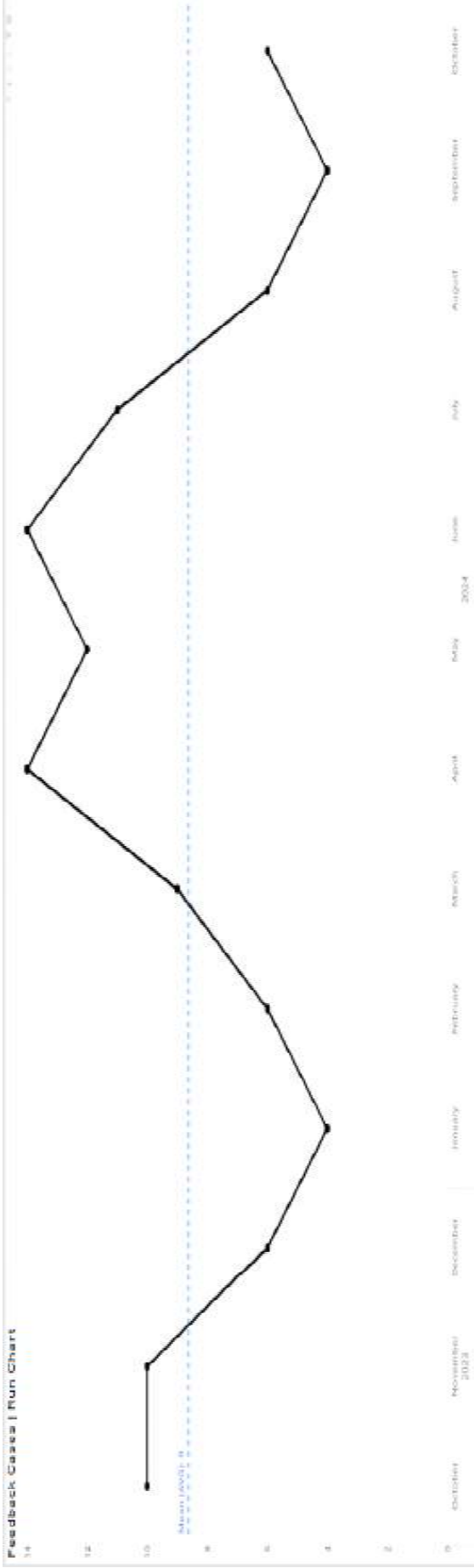
In August 2024, the latest available population for small areas were 2021-based estimates, and these were used to calculate rates reported for activity in 2022, 2023, and 2024.

DENTAL CLINICAL GOVERNANCE & RISK MANAGEMENT GROUP – 15 January 2025
Update from Clinical Governance Support Manager

COMPLAINTS 01/10/2023 – 31/10/2024 – 110

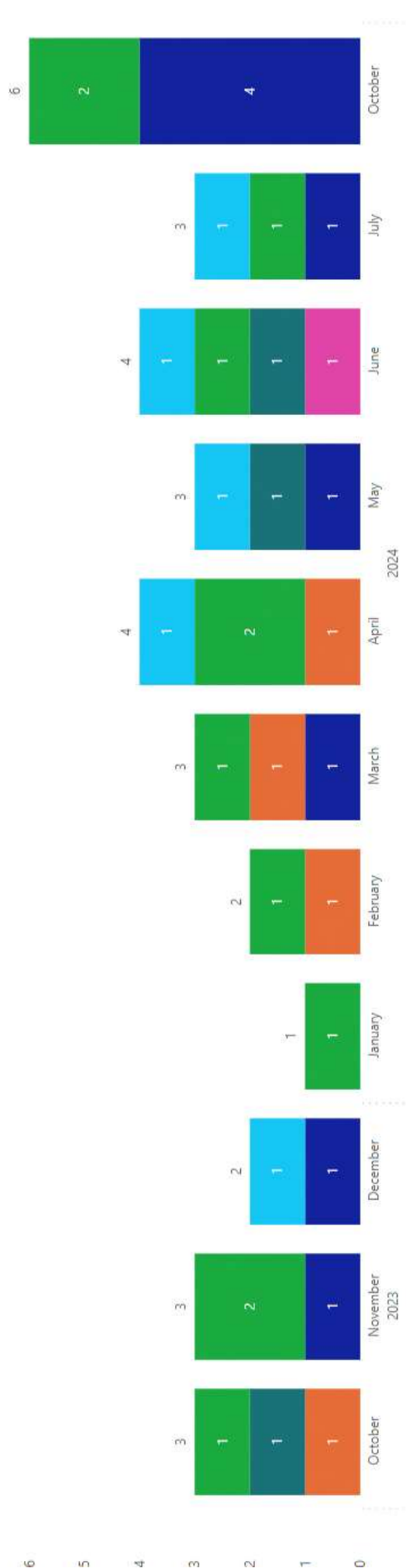
(53) Concern (22) MP-MSP Enquiry (18) Stage 1 (13) Stage 2 (4) Stage 2 (MP-MSP)



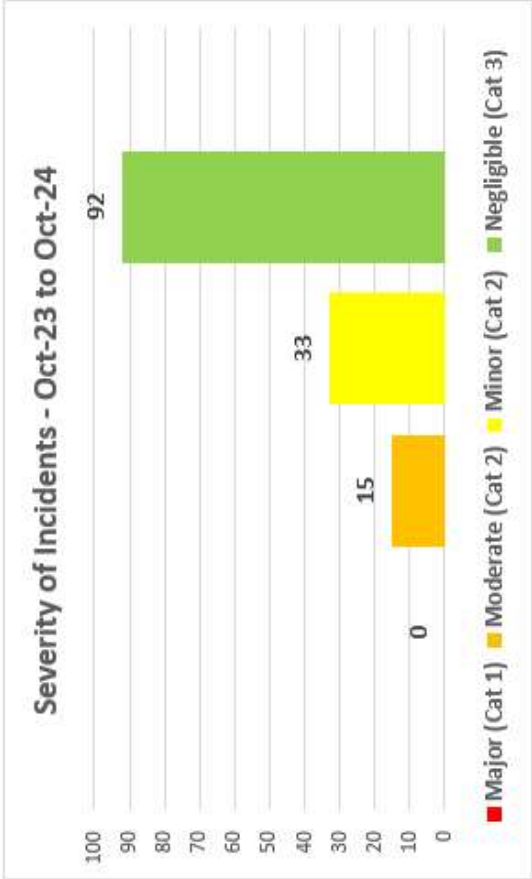
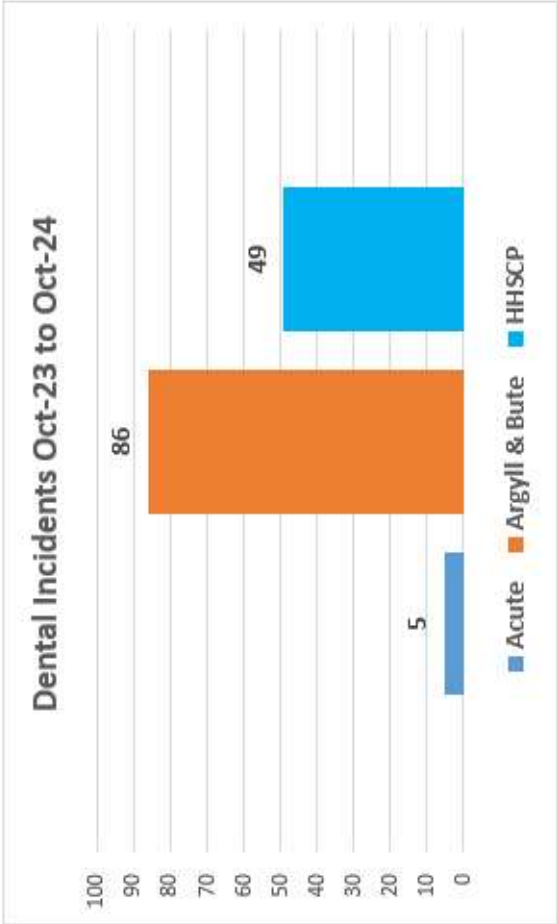
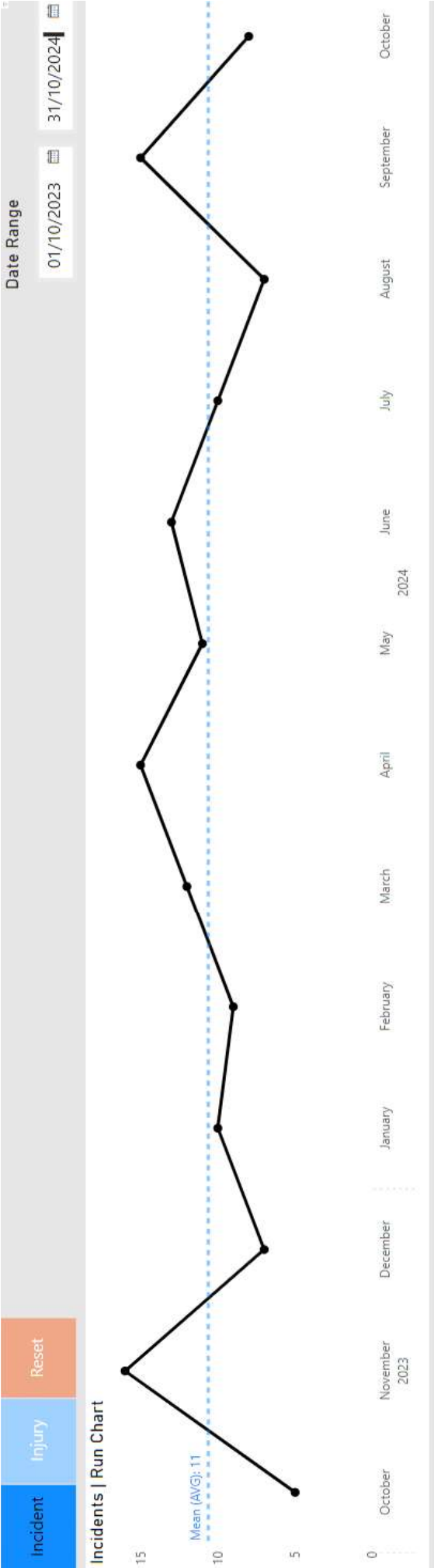


Feedback Cases | Issue Category | Excludes FC and SPS0

● Communication
 ● Complaint Handling
 ● Other
 ● Staff
 ● Treatment
 ● Waiting Times / Delays



ADVERSE EVENTS – 01/10/2023 – 31/10/2024 – 140 Dental Incidents during this period



Themes

Major – there were no major incidents.

Moderate – there were 15 moderate incidents. 4 of these related to infection control and 3 involving staff availability.

Minor – there were 33 minor incidents. 5 of these were sharps incidents and 8 involving staff availability.

Negligible – the majority (115) incidents were negligible (Category 3) where there was either no injury or only minor injury or harm not requiring first aid, with no impact to service or standards of care.

**Lorraine Power
Clinical Governance Support Manager
9 January 2025**