

# Dental Students' Knowledge and Beliefs about Medicaid: A National Survey

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## Introduction

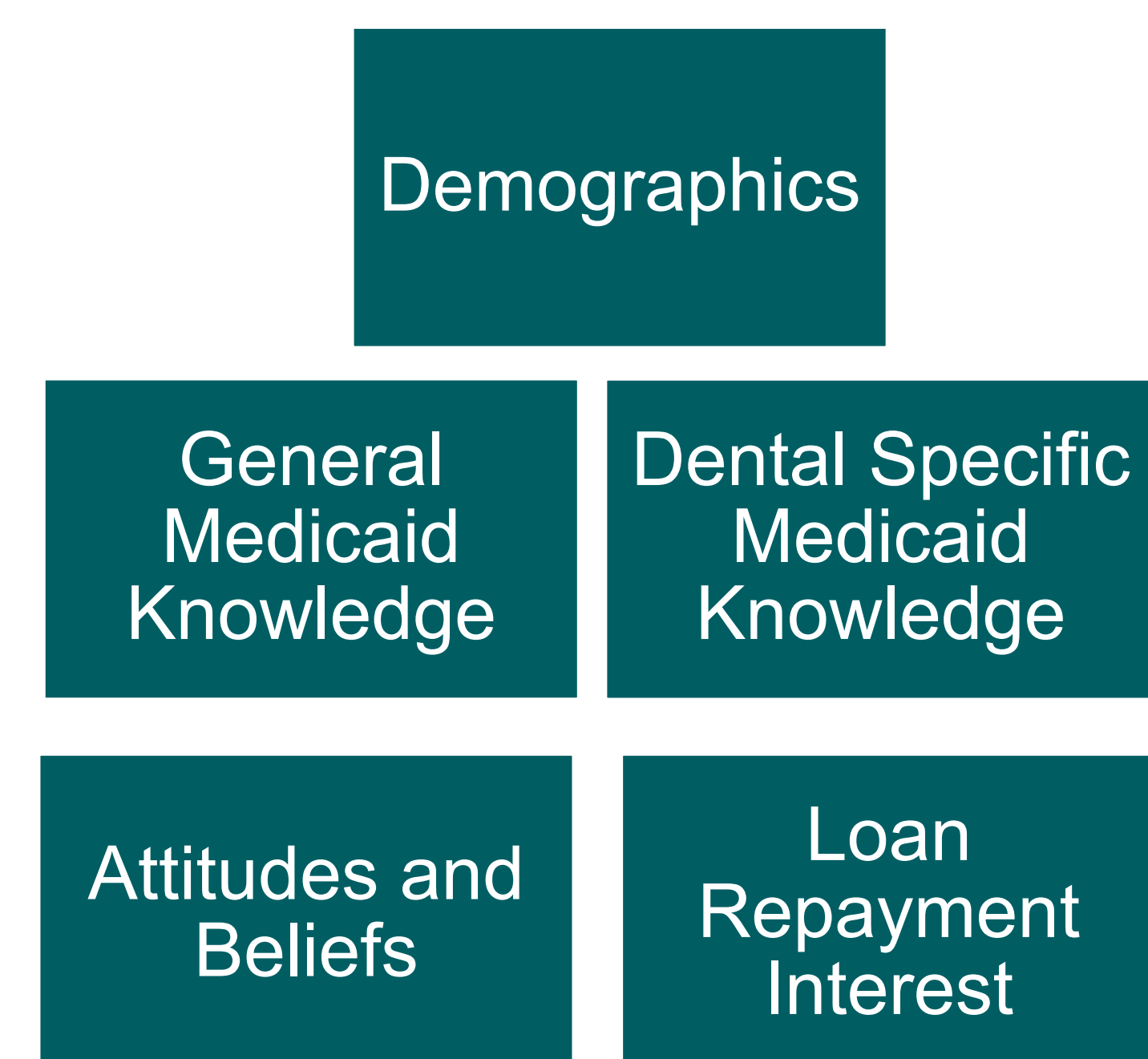
- Dentistry is an essential component of health care, yet many lack access to a dental home.
- Dentist's ethical obligation includes treating people justly and delivering dental care without prejudice, including prejudice to insurance status or type.
- Approximately 80 million Americans received insurance through the Medicaid or CHIP programs, yet dentist participation in the Medicaid program is not meeting the need.
- There is a lack of research in dental public health and Medicaid-focused education in U.S. dental schools.
- There is much to learn from dental students about the future of the dental Medicaid program and ways that dental education may better prepare graduates to care for all people.

## Aims

- Characterize dental students' knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about caring for individuals with Medicaid as their primary form of dental insurance by demographics.
- Determine whether knowledge/beliefs about the Medicaid program are associated with intent to participate.
- Explore whether a loan repayment program would be likely to influence new dental school graduates to participate in the Medicaid program.

## Survey Approach

- Contacted all academic deans at accredited U.S. dental schools.
- Provided an IRB-approved introductory script and survey link to distribute to D1-D4 dental students.
- Electronic survey administered through RedCap.
- Several survey items were repeated or modified from earlier work by Meyer et al., 2019.
- Demographics, perceived concerns, and loan repayment program questions were original to this study.



## Results

Demographics	
Gender	N
Male	47
Female	86
Other	1
Prefer to decline	1
Age	
Average	25
LGBTQIA (+)	
Yes	14
No	121
Race	
American Indian/Alaskan Native	3
Asian/Pacific Islander	10
Black or African American	7
Non-Hispanic White	105
Hispanic-White	5
Biracial/Multiracial	5
Childhood community	
Urban	26
Suburban	60
Rural	50

Table 1. Student demographic responses out of a total of 141 students.

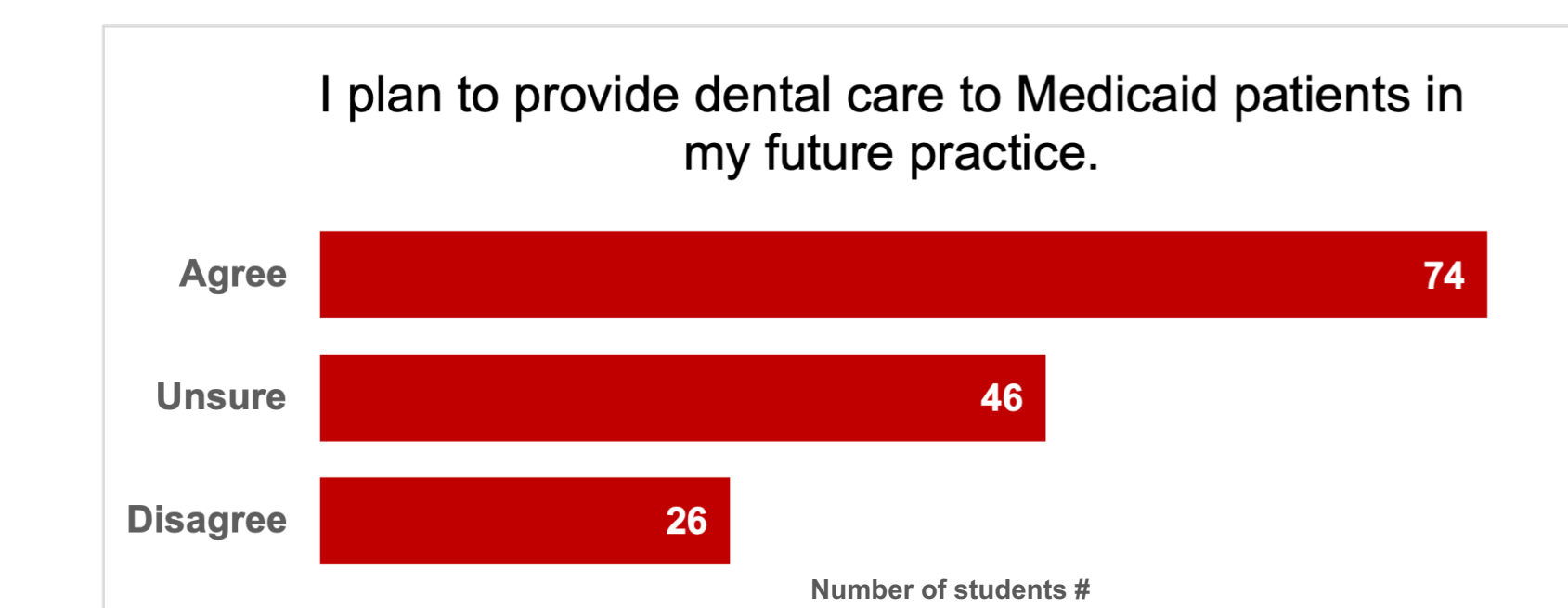


Figure 1. About 50% of students reported they plan to provide dental care to Medicaid patients in their future practice.

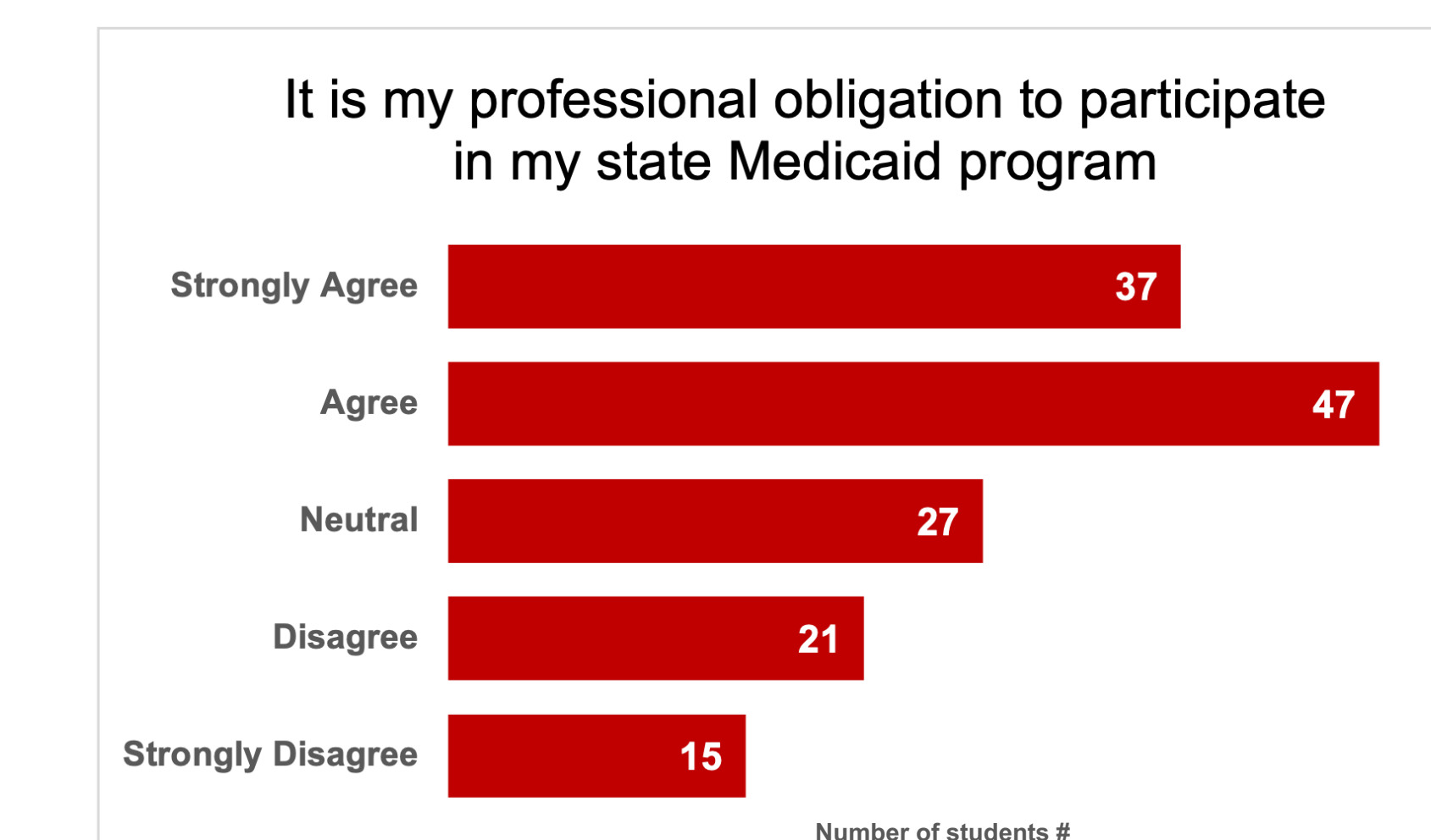


Figure 2. About 57% of students reported they felt it was their professional obligation to participate in their state Medicaid program.

- The results showed a positive and significant correlation between students who agreed with the statement, "It is my professional obligation to advocate for access to oral health care for all people" and intent to participate in the Medicaid program ( $r=0.378$ ;  $p=0.01$ ).
- Students who identified as LGBTQIA+ had a higher knowledge of dental Medicaid [(18.4)=-2.174;  $p=0.021$ ].
- Dental students underestimated the total number of people that receive Medicaid by an average of 25 million.
- 40% of students reported they are extremely concerned about paying back student loans and 33% are moderately concerned.
- Students reported that the minimum student loan repayment amount to enroll in the Medicaid program and treat Medicaid patients would be a median of \$80,000 per year.

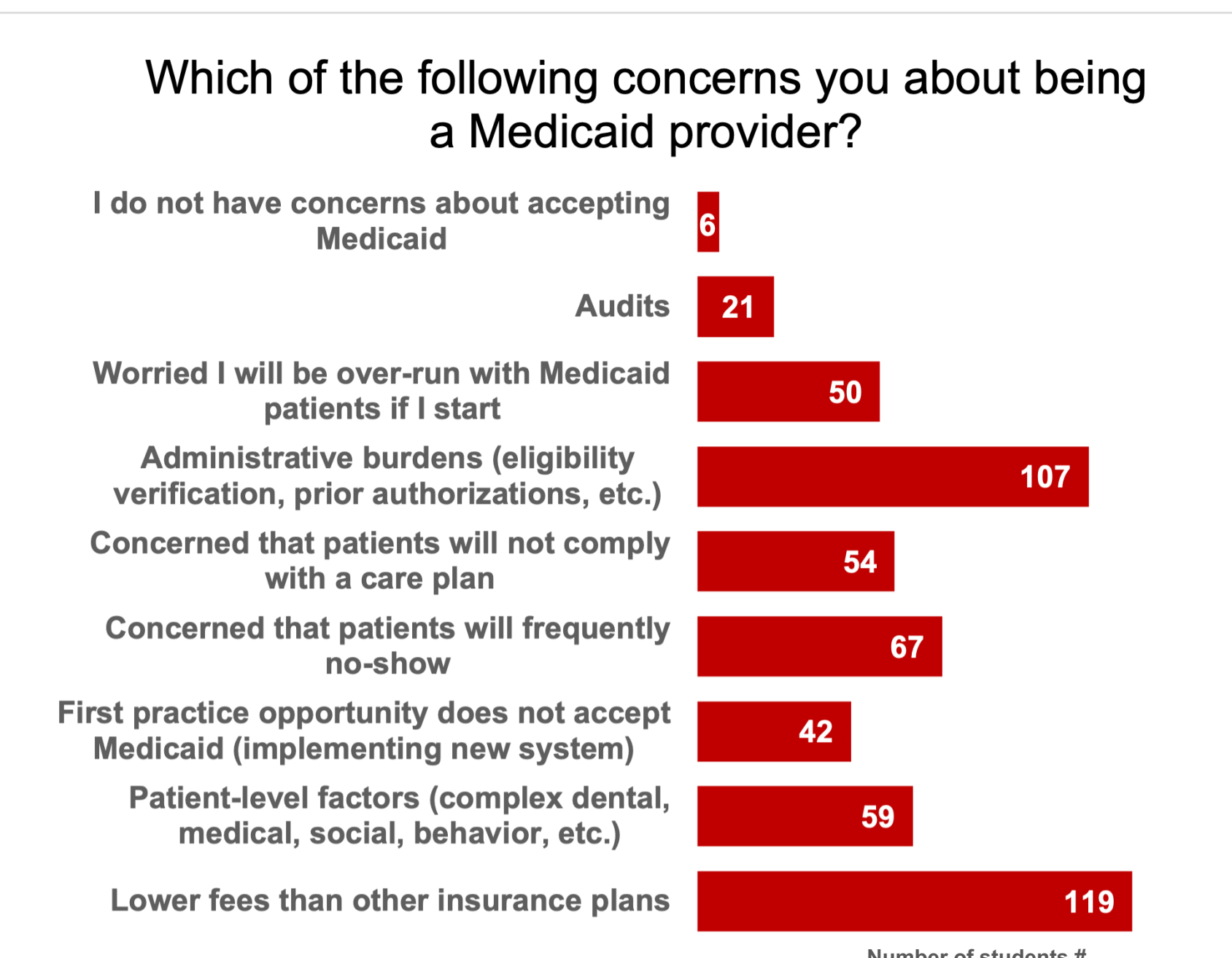


Figure 3. About 80% of students reported they were most concerned about lower fees than other insurance plans as a future Medicaid provider. And, about 73% of students are concerned about administrative burdens.

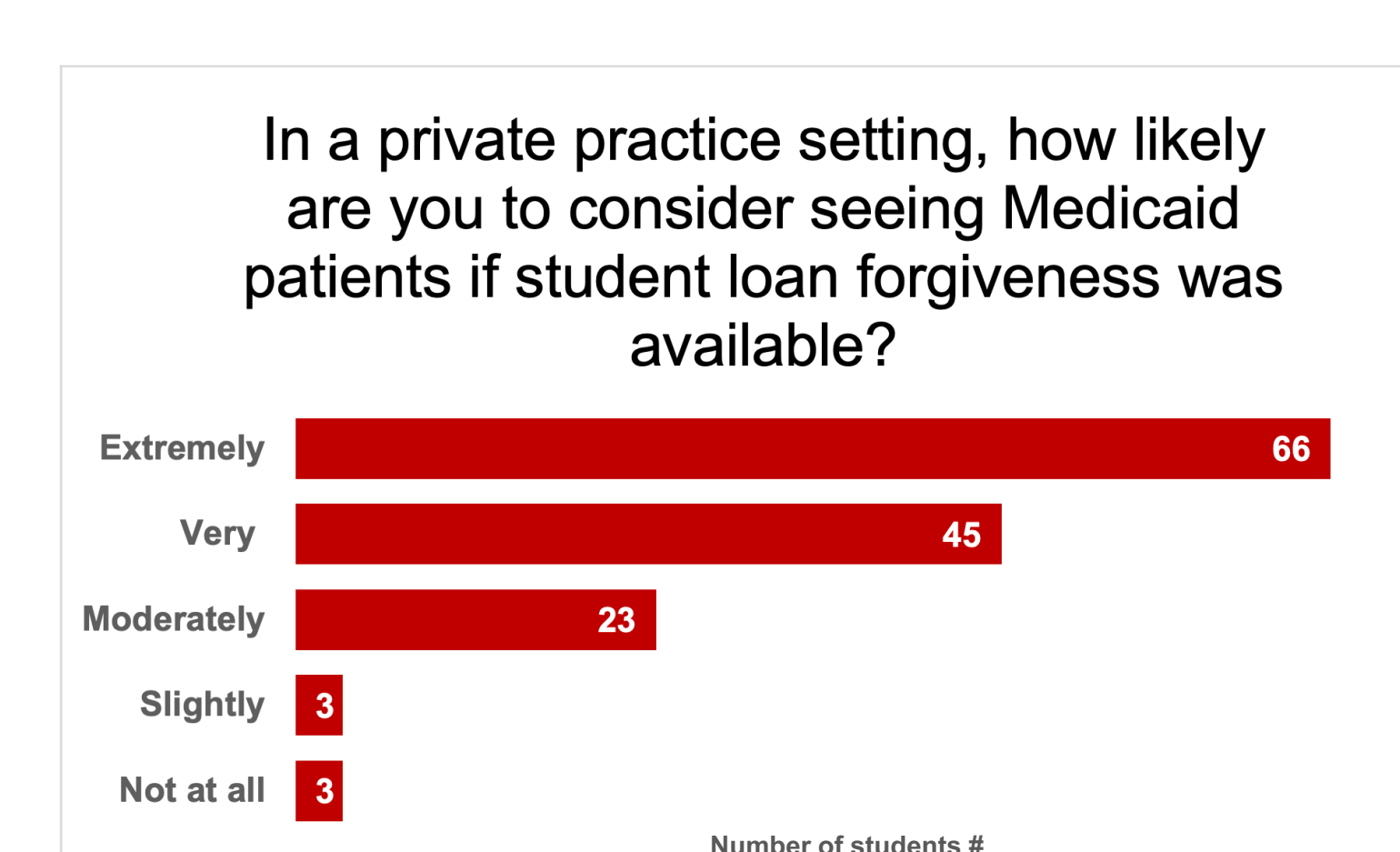


Figure 4. About 80% of students reported they were either extremely or very likely to see Medicaid patients if student loan forgiveness was available.

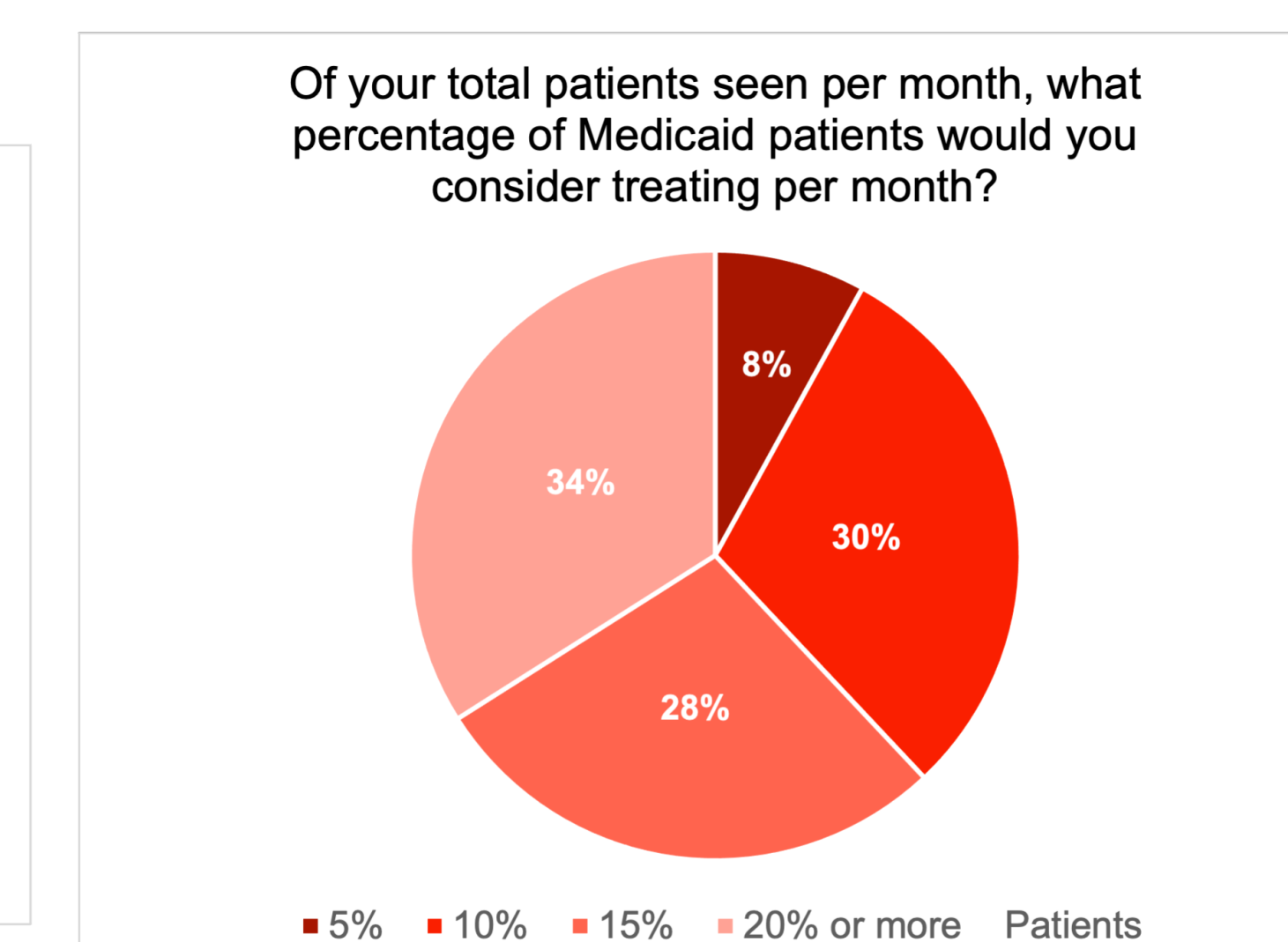


Figure 5. Most students reported they would consider treating more than 10% of Medicaid patients each month out of their total patient population.

## Results continued

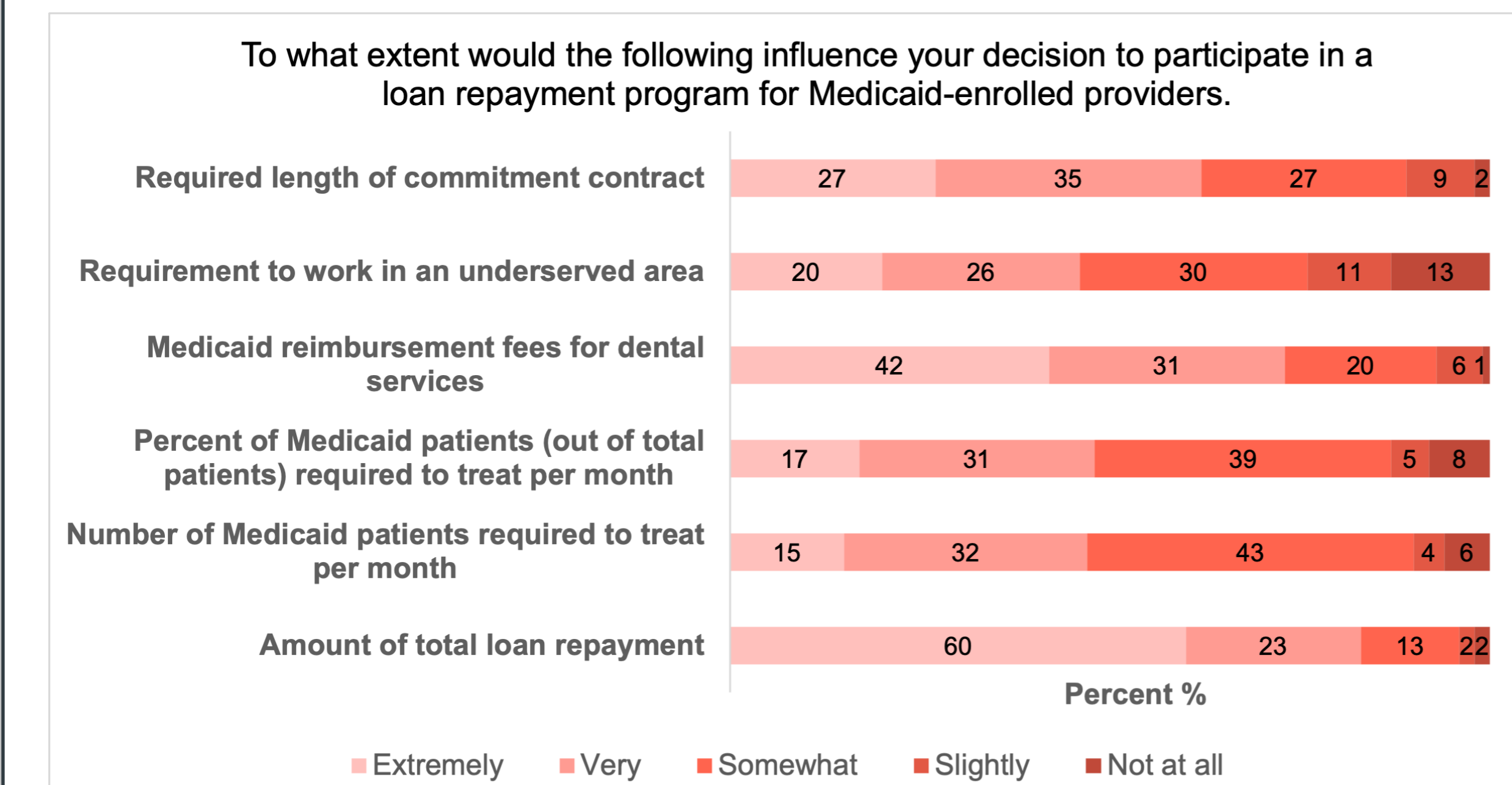


Figure 6. Students reported the amount of total loan repayment was the most influential factor in their decision to participate in a loan repayment program for Medicaid-enrolled providers.

## Conclusion

- Aim #1**
- There was no correlations between dental students' knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs and demographics other than those who reported as LGBTQIA+.
  - There was a positive correlation between dental students who reported LGBTQIA+ and knowledge of dental Medicaid.
  - This conflicts with ADA studies that show that black, Hispanic, and Asian dentists treated more Medicaid patients than non-Hispanic, white dentists.
- Aim #2**
- There was no correlation between knowledge and intent to participate.
  - There was one positive, significant correlation between attitude and beliefs and intent to participate.
  - Those that agreed with the statement "It is my professional obligation to advocate for access to oral health care for all people" had a positive and significant correlation with intent to participate.
- Aim #3**
- 80% of students would be extremely or very likely to treat Medicaid patients in a private practice setting if loan forgiveness was available.
  - There were no correlations between concern for paying back student loans and intent to participate.
  - However, 40% of students are extremely concerned about paying back student loans and 33% are moderately concerned about paying back student loans.

Study limitations include a small, non-representative sample of U.S. dental students due to academic deans declining to distribute the survey and a noncomprehensive statistical analysis.

## References

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