

State of Oral Health in America Key Survey Findings

State of Oral Health Equity in America 2025

In 2025, millions of adults in America cannot get the affordable, high-quality dental care they need to stay healthy. Persistent gaps in oral health coverage leave care out of reach for many, and oral health outcomes and access to dental services continue to lag significantly behind overall health outcomes and access to medical care. Older adults, people with lower incomes, and those living in rural areas are particularly affected.

Key Facts

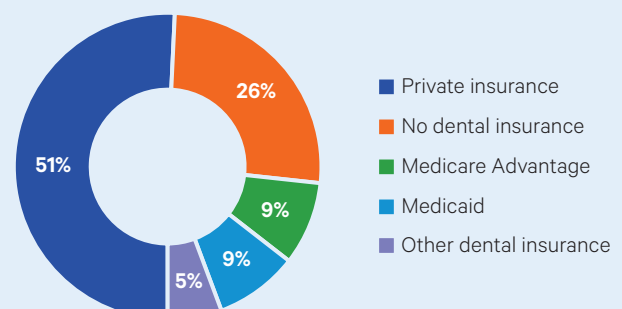
- In 2025, 26% of adults — the equivalent of 69 million adults living in America — are without any form of dental coverage. This is more than three times the percentage of adults without medical insurance (8%, or 21 million adults).
- In 2025, 70% of adults — about 187 million adults — report having had a dental visit within the past year, compared with 84% of adults, or 224 million adults, who visited a physician during the same period.
- Nearly a quarter of US adults (22%, or 59 million adults) rate their oral health as fair or poor, compared with 14% (37 million adults) who rate their overall health as fair or poor.
- Nearly half of adults (46%, or 123 million adults) report having lost at least one tooth due to decay or gum disease.
- Older adults, adults with lower incomes, and adults in rural areas continue to have lower rates of dental insurance, less access to dental care, and worse oral health outcomes.

Gaps in Dental Insurance Persist

Medicare does not cover most dental services. Medicaid coverage for adult dental care varies by state. Not all employers offer dental benefits. The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) covers dental services for only a very small subset of veterans. Because of these inconsistencies, there are significant gaps in dental insurance coverage for adults in the US.

More than one quarter (26%) of US adults — or 69 million — do not have dental insurance, which is more than three times the percentage who lack medical insurance (8%, or 21 million). Nearly three quarters (74%) of adults have some type of dental insurance. About half of adults (51%) are covered through private dental insurance, while 26% have no dental coverage, 9% are covered through Medicare Advantage, 9% through Medicaid, and 5% through other forms of dental insurance. Overall, more adults report having medical insurance (92%) than dental insurance (74%).

Dental Insurance Coverage Reported by US Adults



Older adults are the least likely to have dental insurance, despite having high rates of medical insurance.

Among adults aged 60 and older, 67% have dental insurance — a lower percentage than younger age groups and a sharp drop from the 78% of adults aged 45–59 with coverage. At the same time, adults 60 and older have the highest rate of medical insurance coverage of any age group (97%).

Rates of Having Dental Insurance Reported by US Adults



Age 60 and older **67%**

Age 45–59 **78%**

Dental Insurance Rates by Annual Household Income



Earning \$100,000 or more **85%**

Earning \$30,000 or less **61%**

Adults with lower incomes are also less likely to have dental insurance.

While 85% of adults earning \$100,000 or more annually report having dental insurance (and 97% have medical insurance), coverage drops significantly among those earning \$30,000 or less annually, with only 61% having dental insurance and 87% having medical insurance.

Rural adults are less likely to have insurance.

Adults living in metropolitan areas are more likely to have dental insurance (75%) and medical insurance (93%) than those living in non-metropolitan areas (where 69% have dental and 90% have medical).

Insurance Rates by Residential Location



Metropolitan — dental **75%**

Metropolitan — medical **93%**

Non-metropolitan — dental **60%**

Non-metropolitan — medical **90%**

US Adults Rating Their Oral Health as Fair or Poor



32% Without dental insurance

18% With dental insurance

Having dental insurance is strongly linked to better oral health.

Adults without dental insurance are nearly twice as likely to rate their oral health as fair or poor (32%) than those with dental insurance (18%), including those with government-sponsored dental plans.

Lack of Access to Oral Health Care Persists

Gaps in dental coverage, along with other barriers, leave dental care out of reach for many Americans. As a result, some go more than a year without seeing a dentist, while others seek treatment in hospital emergency departments (EDs). Access to dental care continues to lag behind access to medical care for US adults.

More adults receive medical than dental care.

In 2025, 70% of adults report visiting a dentist in the past year, compared with 84% who report seeing a physician. While 7% of adults report a dental visit but no medical visit, 20% report a medical visit but no dental visit.

Care Visits in the Last Year Reported by US Adults



Dental **70%**

Medical **84%**

Dental Visits in the Last Year by Age



Age 60 and older **77%**

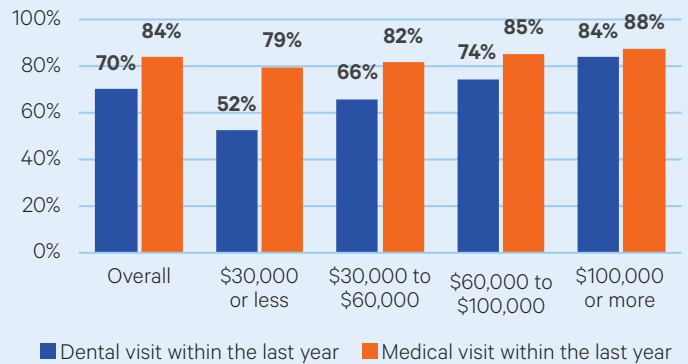
Age 18–29 **63%**

Younger adults are less likely to see a dentist.

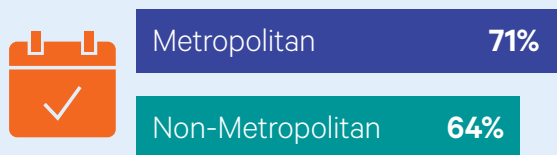
Only 63% of adults aged 18–29 report having a dental visit in the past year, compared with 77% of adults aged 60 and older.

Adults with lower incomes also have less access to dental care. Among adults earning \$100,000 or more annually, 84% report a dental visit and 88% a medical visit in the past year. For those earning \$30,000 or less annually, the rates drop to 52% for dental visits and 79% for medical visits.

Dental and Medical Visits in the Last Year by Annual Household Income



Dental Visits in the Last Year by Residential Location

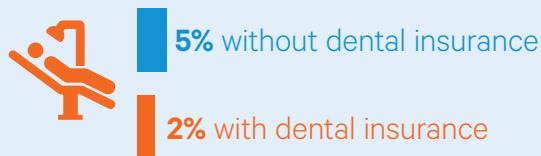


Rural adults are less likely to have a dental visit.

Adults living in metropolitan areas are more likely to report a dental visit in the past year (71%) than those in non-metropolitan areas (64%). Tooth loss also varies: 45% of adults in metropolitan areas have lost at least one tooth due to decay or gum disease, compared with 53% in non-metropolitan areas.

Lack of access to dental care leads many to turn elsewhere for care. Four percent of adults (11 million) report seeking dental care in an ED in the past year for oral pain or discomfort. Adults without dental insurance report seeking dental care in EDs more often than others: 5% of adults without dental insurance report seeking dental care in an ED, more than twice the rate of adults with private dental insurance (2%). Yet ED [treatment for dental pain is costly](#) and [does not address the underlying problems](#), such as dental caries (decay).

ED Visits for Dental Care by Dental Insurance Status

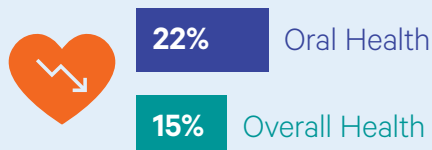


Income, Location, and Insurance Status Are Linked with Poor Oral Health

While oral disease is largely preventable, millions of Americans suffer from poor oral health. Adults consistently rate their oral health as worse than their overall health. Those with Medicare Advantage, Medicaid, or no dental insurance are more affected by oral disease — particularly in the form of missing teeth — than those with private or other types of dental insurance.

Nearly a quarter of American adults rate their oral health as fair or poor (22%), worse than they rate their overall health (15%). Nearly half of adults (46%) report having had one or more teeth removed due to dental caries or periodontal (gum) disease.

US Adults Rating Their Health as Fair or Poor in the Last Year



Adults with lower incomes report worse oral health.

While 90% of adults with an annual household income of \$100,000 or more rate their oral health as excellent, very good, or good, only 64% of adults earning \$30,000 or less annually report the same. Tooth loss is also more common among adults with lower incomes: 57% of those earning under \$30,000 have lost at least one tooth, compared to 52% of those earning \$30,000–\$60,000, 46% of those earning \$60,000–\$100,000, and 33% of those earning \$100,000 or more.

US Adults Rating Their Oral Health as Excellent, Very Good, or Good by Annual Household Income



Earning \$100,000 or more **90%**

Earning \$30,000 or less **64%**

US Adults Rating Their Oral Health as Excellent, Very Good, or Good by Residential Location



Metropolitan **87%**

Non-metropolitan **82%**

Rural adults report worse oral health. Adults living in metropolitan areas are more likely to rate their oral health as excellent, very good, or good (87%) compared to those in non-metropolitan areas (82%). More than half (53%) of adults living in non-metropolitan areas report losing at least one permanent tooth due to dental disease (tooth decay or gum disease), compared to 45% of adults in metropolitan areas.

Lack of dental insurance is linked to poorer self-rated oral health.

While 82% of adults with dental insurance rate their oral health as excellent, very good, or good, only 67% of adults without dental insurance do so.

US Adults Rating Their Oral Health as Excellent, Very Good, or Good by Dental Insurance Status



With dental insurance **82%**

Without dental insurance **67%**

Oral health remains out of reach for far too many Americans, forcing some to resort to extreme measures to receive care.

In 2025, about 11 million adults report seeking dental care in EDs, 10 million report traveling outside the US for dental care, and 1 million report seeing an unlicensed dental provider — choices people make when dental care is no longer affordable and accessible.

Methodology

The State of Oral Health Equity in America (SOHEA) survey is a nationally representative survey of adults' attitudes, experiences, and behaviors related to oral health. The study was designed by CareQuest Institute for Oral Health, and data presented in this report were collected by NORC at the University of Chicago in January–February 2025 from adults aged 18 and older on the AmeriSpeak panel. The sample size was 9,450 and the margin of error was +/- 1.61%. Percentages were converted to numbers of adults based on the current estimated population of adults over 18 in the US. Unless otherwise noted, all data presented in this report were collected in 2025. For a full methodology and additional data, please see our report, "Oral Health in America: Who Gets Left Behind?"



Read our full report,

"Oral Health in America: Who Gets Left Behind?"

for more detailed data on the state of oral health in America in 2025.

Suggested Citation:

CareQuest Institute for Oral Health. *State of Oral Health in America: Key Survey Findings*, Boston, MA: November 2025.
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