

# New Oral Health Data Reflect Inequities, Barrier




Mortality rates from the novel coronavirus are [disproportionately high](#) for people of color, generating a vigorous dialogue about health disparities in America. Lacking meaningful medical and dental insurance is one example of how Black and Latino adults can be uniquely vulnerable when a health-related crisis arrives.



Access to routine dental care is limited for many Americans, and low-income adults face a particular challenge because of the cost of care or a lack of coverage through Medicaid or Medicare. Lacking access to preventive services, these Americans are less likely to maintain good oral health. Newly released data from the [National Health and Nutrition Examination \(NHANES\) survey \(2017-18\)](#) reveals that oral health inequities persist. See full results from the DentaQuest Partnership's analysis in May 2020 of [unplanned dental visits](#), [trends over time](#), and inequities by [race](#) and [income](#).

## Top Reasons for Unplanned Dental Visits

**63%** of the population had **a dental visit within the past 12 months;**



**nearly 1 in 13** of these visits were for **unplanned dental services** due to pain or another problem.





**Nearly 1 in 4** dental visits made by those in **“near poor”** families were unplanned due to pain or another problem.


People in these families were **more than twice as likely** as high-income families<sup>2</sup> to have an **unplanned dental visit**.

<sup>2</sup>Between 100% and 124% of the federal poverty line

## Unmet Dental Needs are Common and Have a Profound Impact

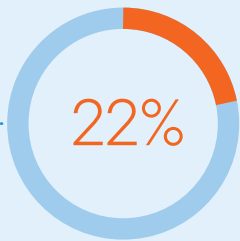


Americans **living in poverty** are **2.2x more likely** than those at higher incomes to have **unmet dental needs** due to **lack of insurance coverage**.

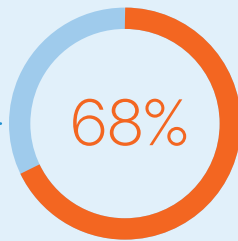


Those **living in poverty** are **102x more likely** to have **difficulty doing their job because of oral health conditions** and they are **215x more likely** to have **oral pain** than those at high incomes.

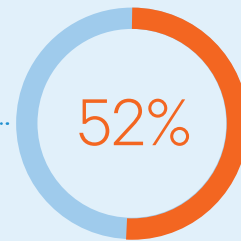
## Racial Disparities Persist in Access to Oral Health



**Black adults** are **22% less likely** than white adults to have had **a routine dental visit** in the past year.



**Black adults** are **68% more likely** than white adults to have **unmet dental needs**.



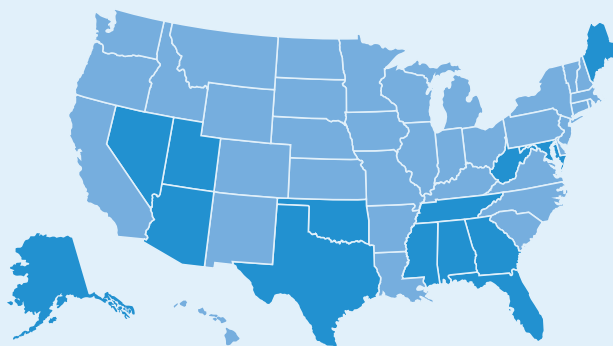
**Latino adults** are **52% more likely** than white adults to report having **difficulty doing their job** very often or fairly often **due to poor oral health**.

## Lack of Dental Insurance Coverage Matters

Whether people see a dentist is affected by their awareness that **certain procedures are not covered by their public or private insurance**.



The percentage of Americans who cited this factor **has doubled** since 2013-14.



Nearly **4 in 10 Black and Latino adults** reside in one of the 14 states where Medicaid's adult dental benefits cover **no services or emergency-only care**.



**A lack of access to dental care, due to COVID-19 closures,** may lead to **increased hospital emergency departments (EDs) visits,** which are currently under tremendous stress in many communities due to the influx of COVID-19 patients.

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