

Family Affair

A Snapshot of Oral Health Disparities and Challenges in Individuals in Households Experiencing Disability

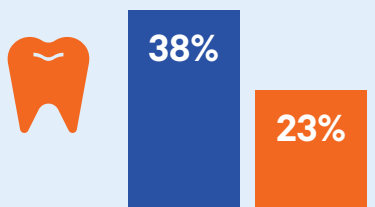


Individuals with a disability have higher prevalence and severity of oral disease in comparison with the general population.¹

This disparity has existed for decades—the 1979 National Conference on Dental Care for Handicapped Americans reported inadequate dental care to be the most critical unmet need for this population.² In 2019, the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) responded to recommendations by the National Council on Disability (NCD) and set a requirement for dental schools to train their students in the treatment of patients with intellectual and developmental disabilities.³ While more attention is being paid to the intersections of disability and oral health care, further discussion of this oral health inequity is necessary. Unmet oral health needs can not only negatively influence an individual’s overall health but also their quality of life.

In CareQuest Institute for Oral Health’s 2022 State of Oral Health Equity in America survey, individuals were asked if they or someone in their household had an intellectual or physical disability. Nearly 800 (n=795, 4.5%) responded “yes” and were categorized as having an intellectual or physical disability in their household. Findings derived from this survey confirm the ongoing pertinence of this oral health issue and a need to prioritize solutions to improve access to care for individuals in households experiencing disability. Key findings include:

A greater proportion of individuals in households experiencing disability (38%) rate their oral health as fair or poor compared with those not in households experiencing disability (23%).



In general, how would you rate your oral health?





Individuals in households experiencing disability visit their dentist

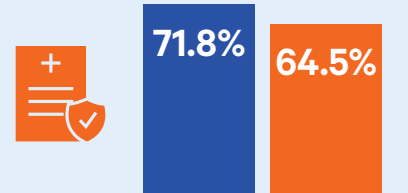
less frequently

than those not in households experiencing disability.



In comparison with those not in households experiencing disability, **a greater proportion of those in households experiencing disability have not visited their dentist** in two or more years (**32.6%** vs. **19.7%**, respectively).

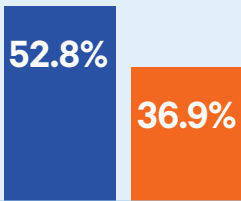
A greater proportion of individuals in households experiencing disability (71.8%) do not currently have dental insurance, compared with those not in households experiencing disability (**64.5%**).



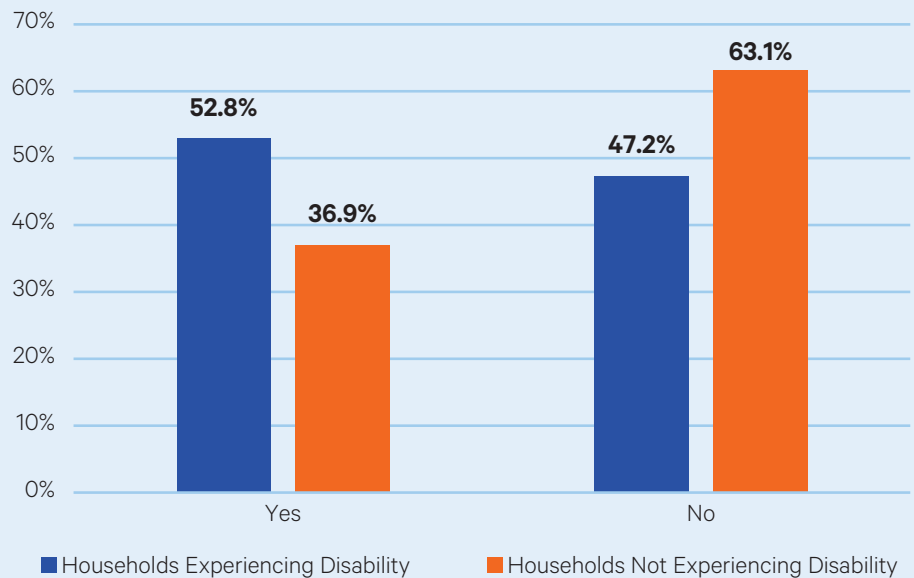
Compared with those not in households experiencing disability (**36.9%**),

a greater proportion

of individuals in households experiencing disability (52.8%) report having had experiences of discrimination in a health care or oral health care setting.



Have you ever been denied health care or oral health care due to discrimination?



17.7%

5.6%

A much higher percentage of those in households experiencing disability (17.7%) report “very often” feeling self-conscious of their teeth and mouth than those not in households experiencing disability (**5.6%**).

Individuals in households experiencing disability report visiting the ED for dental care or pain at **nearly three times** the rate (9.0%) of those not in households experiencing disability (3.1%).



9.0%

3.1%



21.8%

10.6%

Individuals in households experiencing disability are about **twice as likely** (21.8%) to experience high dental anxiety as those not in households experiencing disability (10.6%).

Acknowledgments:

We would like to acknowledge the contributions of Paige Martin, BA; Lisa J. Heaton, PhD; Adrianna Sonnek, MPH; Rebecca Preston, MPH, CHES; and Eric P. Tranby, PhD, of CareQuest Institute for Oral Health.

References:

1. Ceyhan Altun, Günseli Guven, Ozlem Marti Akgun, Meltem Derya Akkurt, Feridun Basak, and Erman Akbulut, "Oral Health Status of Disabled Individuals Attending Special Schools," *European Journal of Dentistry* 4, no. 4 (October 2010): 361–366.
2. Michael Milano, "Oral Healthcare for Persons with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities: Why Is There a Disparity?" *Compendium of Continuing Education in Dentistry* 38, no. 11 (November/December 2017): e5–e8.
3. "At NCD's recommendation, all U.S. dental schools will train students to manage treatment of people with intellectual, developmental disabilities," National Council on Disability, accessed October 13, 2022, <https://ncd.gov/newsroom/2019/dental-schools-IDDD>.

Methodology:

The study was designed by CareQuest Institute for Oral Health. Results were collected by NORC at the University of Chicago in January–February 2021 and January–February 2022 from adults 18 and older on the AmeriSpeak panel. AmeriSpeak is a probability-based panel designed to be representative of the United States' (US) household population. Randomly selected US households were sampled using area probability and address-based sampling, with a known, non-zero probability of selection from NORC National Sample Frame. Sampled households were contacted by US mail, telephone, and field interviewers. A sampling unit of 17,603 was used, with a final sample size of 5,682 and a final weighted cumulative response rate of 4.0%. All data presented account for appropriate sample weights. The margin of error for the survey is 1.75%. All results presented are statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Respondents to the 2022 round of the survey were identified as having disability in their household if they answered "yes" to the question, "Do you or a member of your household have a physical or intellectual disability?" Individuals within the disability community are diverse in their preferences for disability-first versus person-first language; this report uses person-first language. Individuals were considered to have high dental anxiety if they scored 19 or higher on the Modified Dental Anxiety Scale included in the survey. While the cross-sectional nature of these data does not allow for causal conclusions to be drawn, future research should focus on examining underlying factors (e.g., stigma, discrimination, insurance coverage, other socioeconomic factors) that may help further explain these findings.

Suggested Citation:

CareQuest Institute for Oral Health. *Family Affair: A Snapshot of Oral Health Disparities and Challenges in Individuals in Households Experiencing Disability*. Boston, MA: October 2022.

Copyright © 2022 CareQuest Institute for Oral Health, Inc.