

## DENTAL CARE

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, dental caries (tooth decay) is the most common chronic infectious disease among children in the United States.<sup>82</sup> Untreated tooth decay causes pain and infections, which may affect children's ability to eat, speak, play, and learn. Tooth decay, however, is preventable with proper dental care for cleaning, brushing and flossing instruction, sealants, and fluoride treatment. For this reason, the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends that children have their first dental checkup at the eruption of the first tooth or by age 1,<sup>83</sup> with two visits per year thereafter.<sup>84</sup>

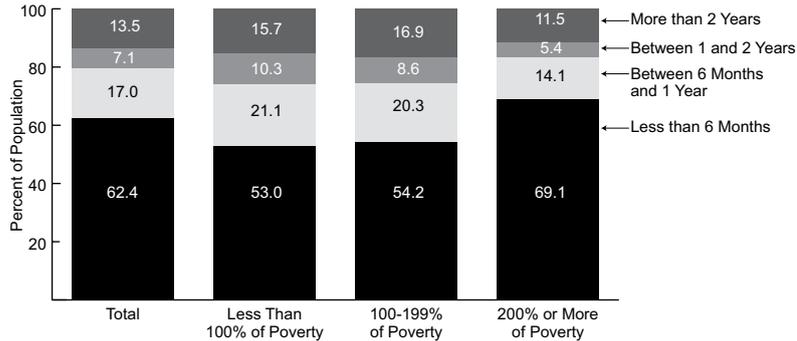
In 2010, 62.4 percent of children aged 2–17 years received dental care in the past 6 months, while 13.5 percent had not received such care in more than 2 years. Receipt of dental care varied by a number of factors, including poverty and insurance status. Children living in households with incomes at or below 100 or 200 percent of the poverty level were less likely than children living in households with incomes above 200 percent of the poverty threshold to have received dental care in the past 6 months (53.0 and 54.2 percent, respectively, compared to 69.1 percent). Uninsured children were about half as likely to have received a dental visit in the past 6 months (30.8 percent) as those with

public (58.8 percent) or private insurance (68.9 percent; data not shown).

Similar patterns were observed for unmet dental care needs. Overall, 4.3 million or 6.6 percent of children had unmet dental care needs in 2010. However, the proportion of children with unmet needs was substantially higher among those who were uninsured (26.4 percent) compared to those with either private (4.1 percent) or public (6.1 percent) insurance. With respect to poverty, children living in households below 100 or between 100 and 199 percent of the poverty level were at least twice as likely to have an unmet dental care need in the past year as children at 200 percent or more of poverty (8.7 and 10.4 percent, respectively, compared to 4.3 percent, data not shown).

### Time Since Last Dental Visit Among Children Aged 2–17 Years,\* by Poverty Status,\*\* 2010

Source (III.7): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Health Interview Survey

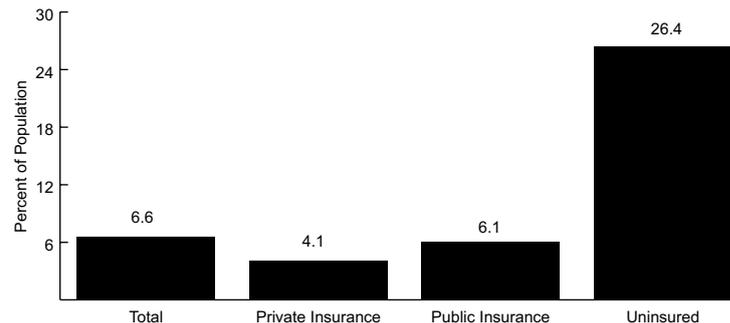


\*All estimates are age-adjusted and may not total to 100 due to rounding.

\*\*Poverty level, defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, was \$22,314 for a family of four in 2010.

### Unmet Dental Need\* in the Past Year Among Children Aged 2–17 Years, by Insurance Type and Status, 2010

Source (III.7): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Health Interview Survey



\*Based on parent report that services were needed but were not affordable; all estimates are age-adjusted.