

ORAL HEALTH CARE UTILIZATION

Regular dental care is essential to promote oral health and to prevent and treat tooth decay and infection. Untreated dental disease can produce significant pain and disability, and can result in tooth loss. In addition to daily brushing and flossing, the American Dental Association recommends regular dental exams and cleanings.¹⁶ Overall, 61.9 percent of adults reported having a dental visit in 2007–2009.

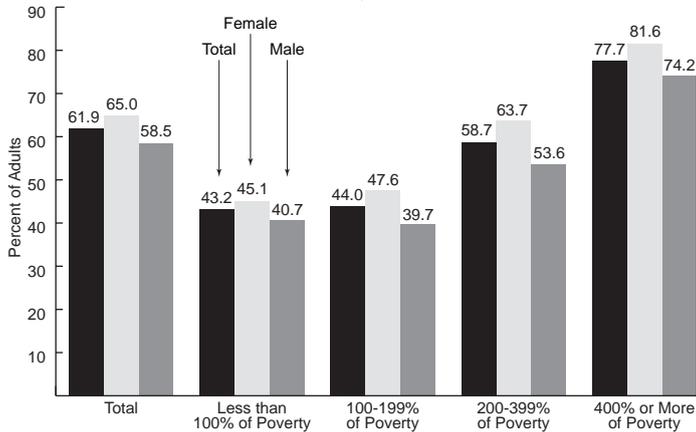
Women were somewhat more likely to have a past-year dental visit than men (65.0 and 58.5 percent, respectively). Among both men and women, those with greater household incomes were more likely to have had a dental visit. For example, 81.6 percent of women with household incomes of 400 percent or more of poverty had a past year dental visit, compared to only 45.1 percent of women with incomes less than 100 percent of poverty.

Cost is a significant barrier to appropriate utilization of dental care. In 2007–2009, 15.1

percent of women reported that they did not obtain needed dental care in the past year because they could not afford it. Health insurance helps to reduce cost as a barrier to health care. Only about 10 percent of women with health insurance reported that they did not obtain needed dental care in the past year due to costs, compared to 42.6 percent of women without health insurance. Among persons under 65 years of age with private health insurance, about one in four lack coverage for dental services.¹⁷

Adults Aged 18 and Older Who Had a Dental Visit in the Past Year, by Poverty Status* and Sex, 2007–2009

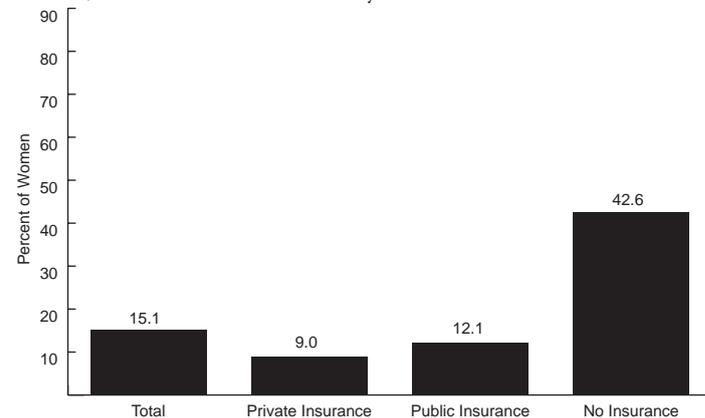
Source II.1: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Health Interview Survey



*Poverty level, defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, was \$21,954 for a family of four in 2009.

Women Aged 18 and Older with an Unmet Need for Dental Care Due to Cost,* by Health Insurance Coverage, 2007–2009

Source II.1: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Health Interview Survey



*Reported needing but not receiving dental care in the past year because of cost.