Oral Health and Well-Being in the United States

How do adults in the United States view their oral health? This fact sheet summarizes select data on self-reported oral health status, attitudes and dental care utilization among United States adults as of 2015 based on an innovative household survey. For methods and sources, visit ADA.org/statefacts. For more information on the ADA Health Policy Institute, visit ADA.org/HPI.

Overall Condition of Mouth and Teeth

Life in General is Less Satisfying Due to Condition of Mouth and Teeth

1 in 5 low income adults say their mouth and teeth are in poor condition.

Life in general is less satisfying due to the condition of mouth and teeth.

39% low income adults

38% young adults

Appearance of Mouth and Teeth Affects Ability to Interview for a Job

29% low income adults

28% young adults

“The appearance of my mouth and teeth affects my ability to interview for a job.”

HPI Health Policy Institute

ADA American Dental Association®
How Often Have You Experienced the Following Problems in the Last 12 Months Due to the Condition of Your Mouth and Teeth?

**PROBLEMS**
- Dry mouth
- Difficulty biting/chewing
- Experience pain
- Avoid smiling
- Embarrassment
- Anxiety
- Problems sleeping
- Reduce social participation
- Difficulty with speech
- Difficulty doing usual activities
- Take days off

**How Often**
- Very often
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

**Oral Health and Well-Being in the United States**

1 in 4 adults avoid smiling due to the condition of their mouth and teeth.

23% of adults feel embarrassment due to the condition of their mouth and teeth.

1 in 5 adults experience anxiety due to the condition of their mouth and teeth.
42% of low income adults have difficulty biting and chewing.

23% of low income adults reduce participation in social activities due to the condition of their mouth and teeth.

35% of low income adults feel embarrassment due to the condition of their mouth and teeth.

37% of low income adults avoid smiling due to the condition of their mouth and teeth.

Low income adults are most likely to report having problems due to the condition of their mouth and teeth.

Pain is the top oral health problem for low income adults.
Problems Due to Condition of Mouth and Teeth, by Age

**DRY MOUTH**

- **18-34**: 16% very often, 21% occasionally, 21% rarely, 43% never
- **35-49**: 11% very often, 19% occasionally, 22% rarely, 49% never
- **50-64**: 13% very often, 19% occasionally, 21% rarely, 46% never
- **65+**: 11% very often, 20% occasionally, 22% rarely, 48% never

**DIFFICULTY BITING/CHewing**

- **18-34**: 15% very often, 20% occasionally, 22% rarely, 42% never
- **35-49**: 12% very often, 17% occasionally, 21% rarely, 48% never
- **50-64**: 12% very often, 20% occasionally, 24% rarely, 44% never
- **65+**: 7% very often, 17% occasionally, 25% rarely, 52% never

**EXPERIENCE PAIN**

- **18-34**: 15% very often, 25% occasionally, 27% rarely, 32% never
- **35-49**: 8% very often, 24% occasionally, 28% rarely, 39% never
- **50-64**: 9% very often, 21% occasionally, 32% rarely, 40% never
- **65+**: 3% very often, 13% occasionally, 32% rarely, 52% never

**AVOID SMILING**

- **18-34**: 16% very often, 17% occasionally, 15% rarely, 51% never
- **35-49**: 14% very often, 13% occasionally, 17% rarely, 56% never
- **50-64**: 12% very often, 12% occasionally, 17% rarely, 60% never
- **65+**: 4% very often, 9% occasionally, 15% rarely, 72% never

**EMBARRASSMENT**

- **18-34**: 16% very often, 19% occasionally, 17% rarely, 49% never
- **35-49**: 12% very often, 12% occasionally, 18% rarely, 58% never
- **50-64**: 9% very often, 11% occasionally, 18% rarely, 61% never
- **65+**: 3% very often, 8% occasionally, 16% rarely, 73% never

**ANXIETY**

- **18-34**: 15% very often, 16% occasionally, 15% rarely, 55% never
- **35-49**: 10% very often, 13% occasionally, 16% rarely, 64% never
- **50-64**: 6% very often, 12% occasionally, 17% rarely, 74% never
- **65+**: 3% very often, 8% occasionally, 15% rarely, 77% never

**PROBLEMS SLEEPING**

- **18-34**: 11% very often, 15% occasionally, 16% rarely, 58% never
- **35-49**: 8% very often, 11% occasionally, 18% rarely, 63% never
- **50-64**: 7% very often, 10% occasionally, 17% rarely, 66% never
- **65+**: 3% very often, 8% occasionally, 15% rarely, 75% never

**REDUCE SOCIAL PARTICIPATION**

- **18-34**: 7% very often, 15% occasionally, 13% rarely, 66% never
- **35-49**: 6% very often, 8% occasionally, 13% rarely, 72% never
- **50-64**: 6% very often, 8% occasionally, 13% rarely, 74% never
- **65+**: 4% very often, 10% occasionally, 13% rarely, 84% never

**DIFFICULTY WITH SPEECH**

- **18-34**: 8% very often, 11% occasionally, 14% rarely, 67% never
- **35-49**: 5% very often, 8% occasionally, 10% rarely, 75% never
- **50-64**: 8% very often, 8% occasionally, 13% rarely, 75% never
- **65+**: 5% very often, 14% occasionally, 81% never

**DIFFICULTY DOING USUAL ACTIVITIES**

- **18-34**: 8% very often, 10% occasionally, 14% rarely, 68% never
- **35-49**: 4% very often, 8% occasionally, 13% rarely, 75% never
- **50-64**: 3% very often, 7% occasionally, 15% rarely, 76% never
- **65+**: 4% very often, 12% occasionally, 83% never

**TAKE DAYS OFF**

- **18-34**: 7% very often, 8% occasionally, 10% rarely, 75% never
- **35-49**: 5% very often, 6% occasionally, 9% rarely, 82% never
- **50-64**: 1% very often, 8% occasionally, 9% rarely, 89% never
- **65+**: 4% very often, 95% ever
Attitudes Toward Oral Health and Dental Care

Attitudes are generally consistent across income levels and age groups.

- **97%** value oral health.
- **85%** feel they need to visit the dentist twice per year.
- **95%** agree regular dental visits keep them healthy.
- **82%** believe straight, bright teeth help you get ahead in life.
- **74%** low income adults
- **48%** high income adults

"I accept I will lose some teeth with age."
### Oral Health and Well-Being in the United States

#### What People Say...

- **77%** of adults say they plan to visit the dentist within the next year.

#### What People Do...

- **37%** of adults actually visited the dentist within the last year.

### Percentage who plan to visit the dentist within the next year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Adults</td>
<td>77%</td>
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</table>

### Percentage who actually visited the dentist within the last year

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<tr>
<td>All Adults</td>
<td>37%</td>
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#### HOUSEHOLD INCOME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>31%</td>
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<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>51%</td>
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#### AGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 to 34</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 to 49</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 to 64</td>
<td>43%</td>
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<tr>
<td>65 or older</td>
<td>42%</td>
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#### SOURCE OF DENTAL BENEFITS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Benefits</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicaid</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No dental coverage</td>
<td>23%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Reasons for Not Visiting the Dentist More Frequently, Among Those Without a Visit in the Last 12 Months

- **Cost**: 59%
- **Afraid of Dentist**: 22%
- **Inconvenient Location or Time**: 19%
- **Trouble Finding a Dentist**: 15%
- **No Original Teeth**: 12%
- **No Perceived Need**: 10%
- **No Reason**: 9%
- **Other**: 10%

**Household Income**

- **Low**: 65%
- **Middle**: 61%
- **High**: 47%

**Age**

- **18-34**: 61%
- **35-49**: 60%
- **50-64**: 64%
- **65+**: 49%

**Source of Dental Benefits**

- **Private**: 47%
- **Medicaid**: 50%
- **Other**: 43%
- **None**: 70%