Dental Care in Medicaid Programs

Update based on the latest available data from multiple sources as of December 2025.

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In this Report

Current Landscape of Adult Medicaid Dental Benefits

Dentist Participation in Medicaid and CHIP

Dental Care Utilization Among Medicaid Beneficiaries

Medicaid Reimbursement for Dental Services

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Key Takeaways

- As of 2025, 38 states and DC offer enhanced dental benefits for adult Medicaid beneficiaries. Eighteen states have expanded their adult Medicaid dental benefits since 2021 and no state has reduced their benefits, reflecting progress in improving coverage for adult beneficiaries.

- The share of U.S. dentists participating in Medicaid/CHIP as of 2024 is 41%, which has remained stable over the past decade despite dental benefit expansions that have occurred in many states. Dentist participation in Medicaid/CHIP varies by state and by dentist characteristics. Pediatric dentists and dentists who are female, Black, affiliated with dental support organizations (DSO), and younger than age 50 have higher rates of participation.

- Among children, dental care utilization rates have not changed in the past few years. Utilization rates have not recovered to pre-pandemic levels. Child Medicaid/CHIP beneficiaries consistently have lower dental care utilization rates than their privately insured counterparts and this gap is not shrinking.

- Among adult Medicaid beneficiaries, dental care utilization is higher in states with enhanced Medicaid benefits compared to states with limited or emergency-only benefits. Dental care utilization has increased among privately insured adults and has surpassed pre-pandemic levels.

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Key Takeaways

- Medicaid FFS reimbursement rates have not kept up with the increases in dentist charges and private insurance reimbursement in most states. Medicaid reimbursement in most states falls far below 50% of dentist charges and 60% of private insurance reimbursement.
- States with higher reimbursement attract more participating providers. However, this does not necessarily translate into significant increases in dental care utilization among Medicaid/CHIP beneficiaries. This provides further evidence that improving access to dental care and increasing dental care utilization is multifaceted. It is important to understand and address the numerous barriers to dental care that go beyond access to providers.
- There is a need for increased data transparency within managed care programs. Our analysis is limited by the “black box” of managed care data reporting. This is something policy should address urgently to provide a more complete picture of key outcomes and metrics in Medicaid programs.
- Please see our accompanying data table for complete data and methods!

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Current Landscape of Adult Medicaid Dental Benefits

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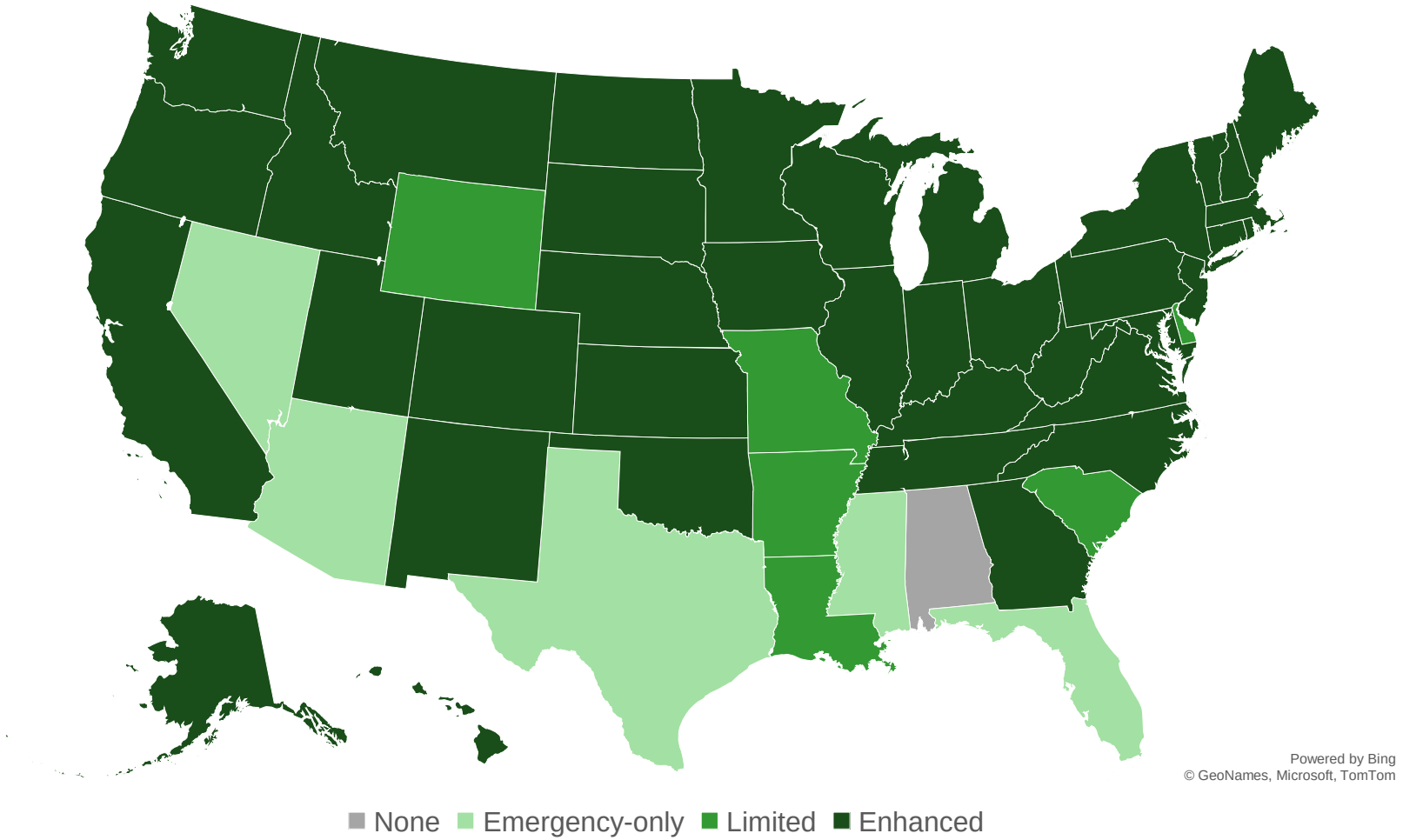
Adult Medicaid Dental Benefits Vary by State



- As of 2025, 38 states and DC offer enhanced adult Medicaid dental benefits.
- Seven states expanded their adult Medicaid dental benefits from last year: Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Utah.
- Alabama remains the only state with no dental coverage for adult Medicaid beneficiaries.

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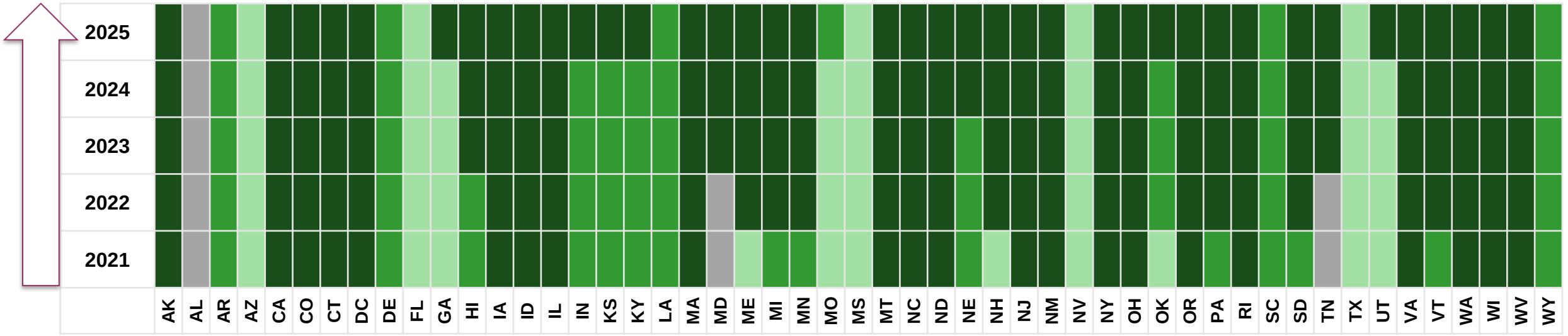
Change in Adult Dental Benefits Varies by State



	None: No coverage.
	Emergency-only: Coverage for pain relief under defined emergency situations.
	Limited: Coverage for a subset of diagnostic, preventive, and minor restorative procedures with a per-enrollee annual maximum expenditure of $1,000 or less.
	Enhanced: Coverage for a more comprehensive mix of services, including diagnostic, preventive, and restorative procedures as well as a per-enrollee annual maximum expenditure of at least $1,000 or no annual spending limit.

- Twenty-two states have had enhanced adult Medicaid dental benefits since 2021.
- Since 2021, 18 states have expanded their adult Medicaid dental benefits. None have reduced benefits.

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Takeaways: Current Landscape of Adult Medicaid Dental Benefits

- In 2025, 38 states and DC have enhanced dental benefit levels for adult Medicaid beneficiaries; six states have emergency-only or no benefits.
- Eighteen states have expanded their adult Medicaid dental benefits since 2021 and no state has reduced their benefits, reflecting progress in improving coverage for adult beneficiaries.
- Many states are likely to encounter Medicaid budgetary pressures due to the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBA), putting adult Medicaid dental benefits at risk.

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Dentist Participation in Medicaid and CHIP

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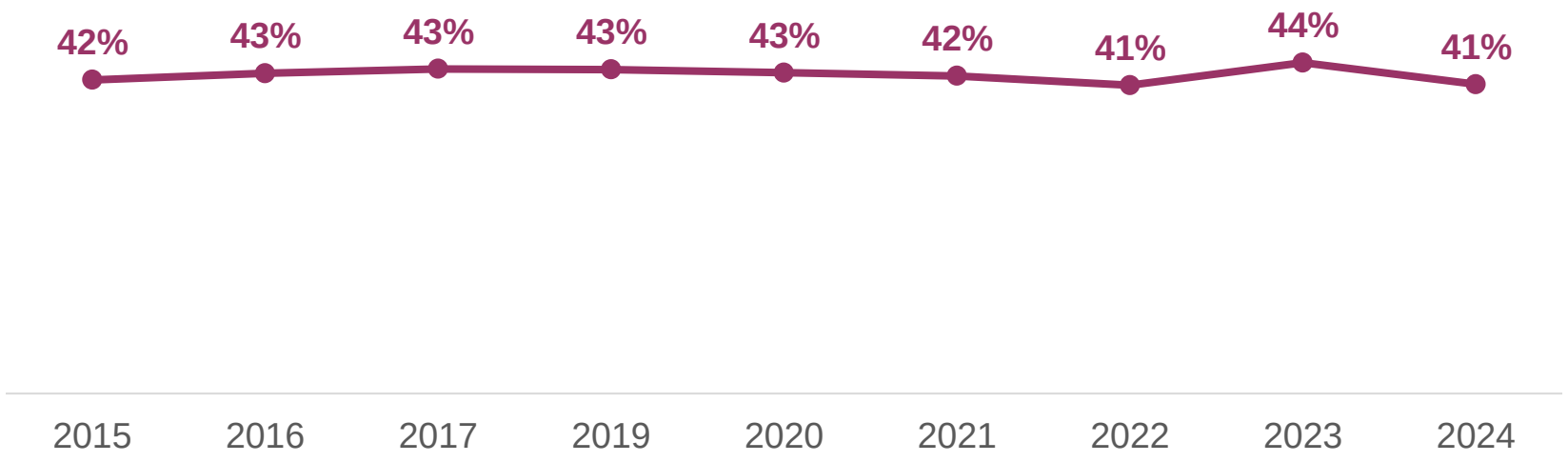
Dentist Participation in Medicaid/CHIP is Stable



- Two in five dentists (41%) in the U.S. participate in Medicaid/CHIP as of 2024.
- Dentist participation in Medicaid/CHIP has changed little since 2015 despite enhancements to Medicaid dental benefit offerings in many states.
- Dentists are classified as participating providers if they are enrolled as a Medicaid or CHIP provider, regardless of patient volume.

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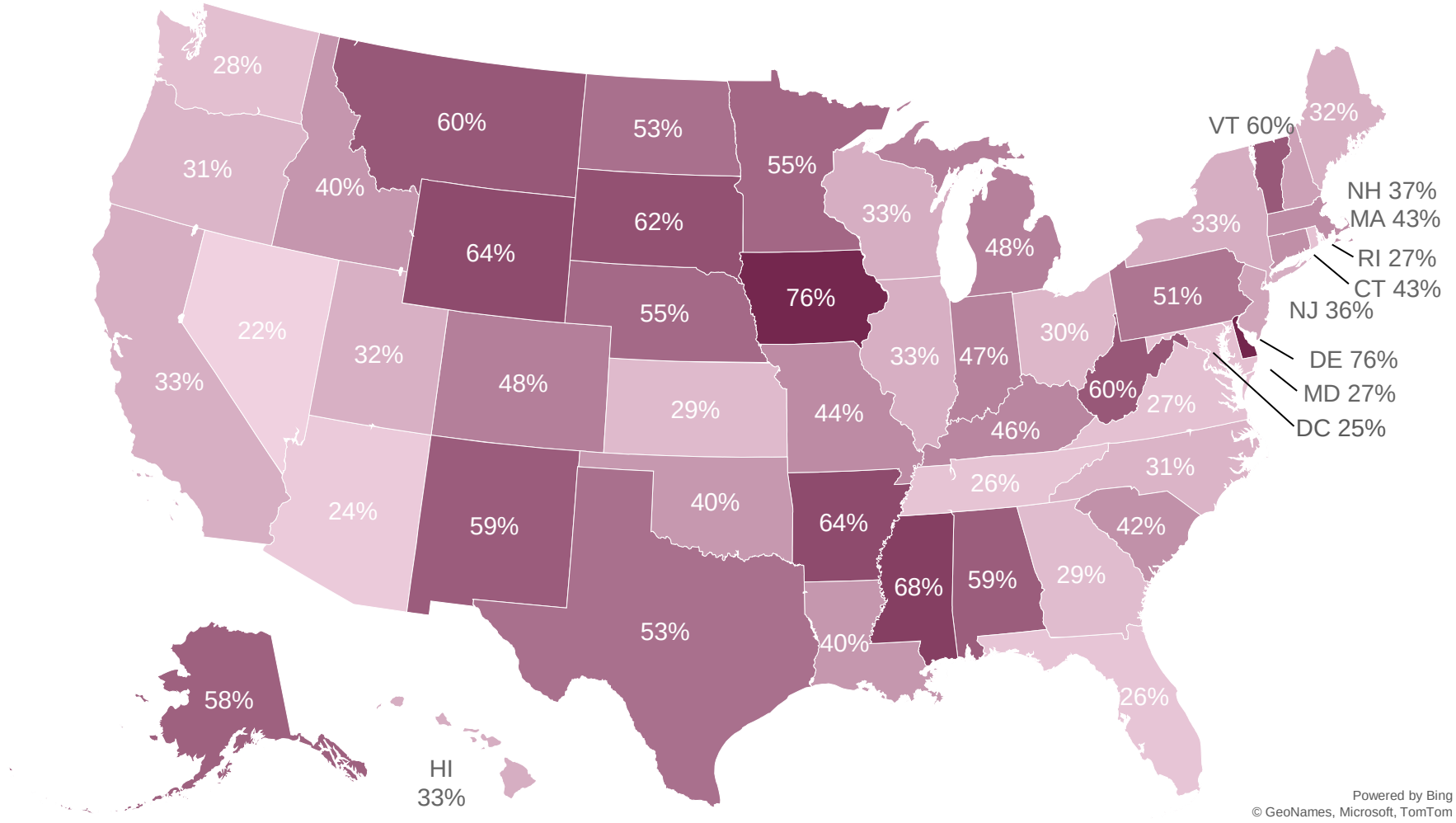
Dentist Participation in Medicaid/CHIP Varies by State



- Medicaid/CHIP participation rates as of 2024 range from 22% in Nevada to 76% in Iowa and Delaware.
- For changes over time in each state, see data table.
- For 2026, we would love to directly source data from state Medicaid agencies! Contact hpi@ada.org to discuss.

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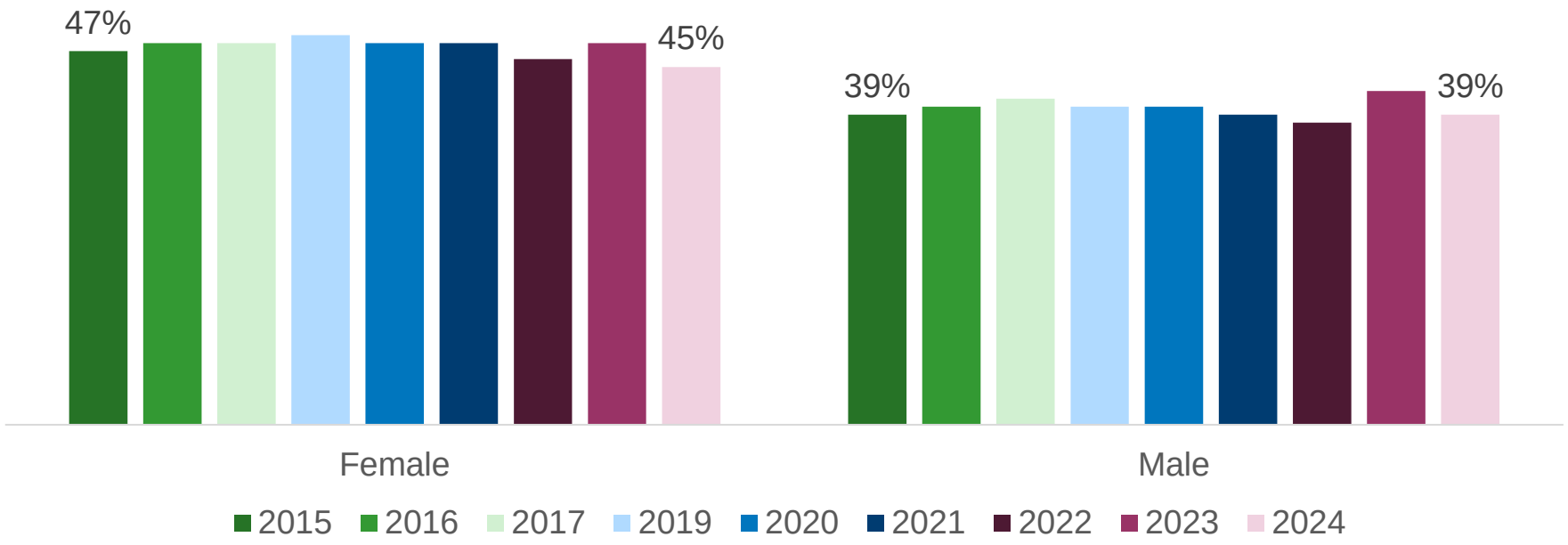
Female Dentists Have Higher Participation Rates



- As of 2024, 45% of female dentists participate in Medicaid/CHIP compared to 39% of male dentists.
- Participation rates by gender have remained stable over time.

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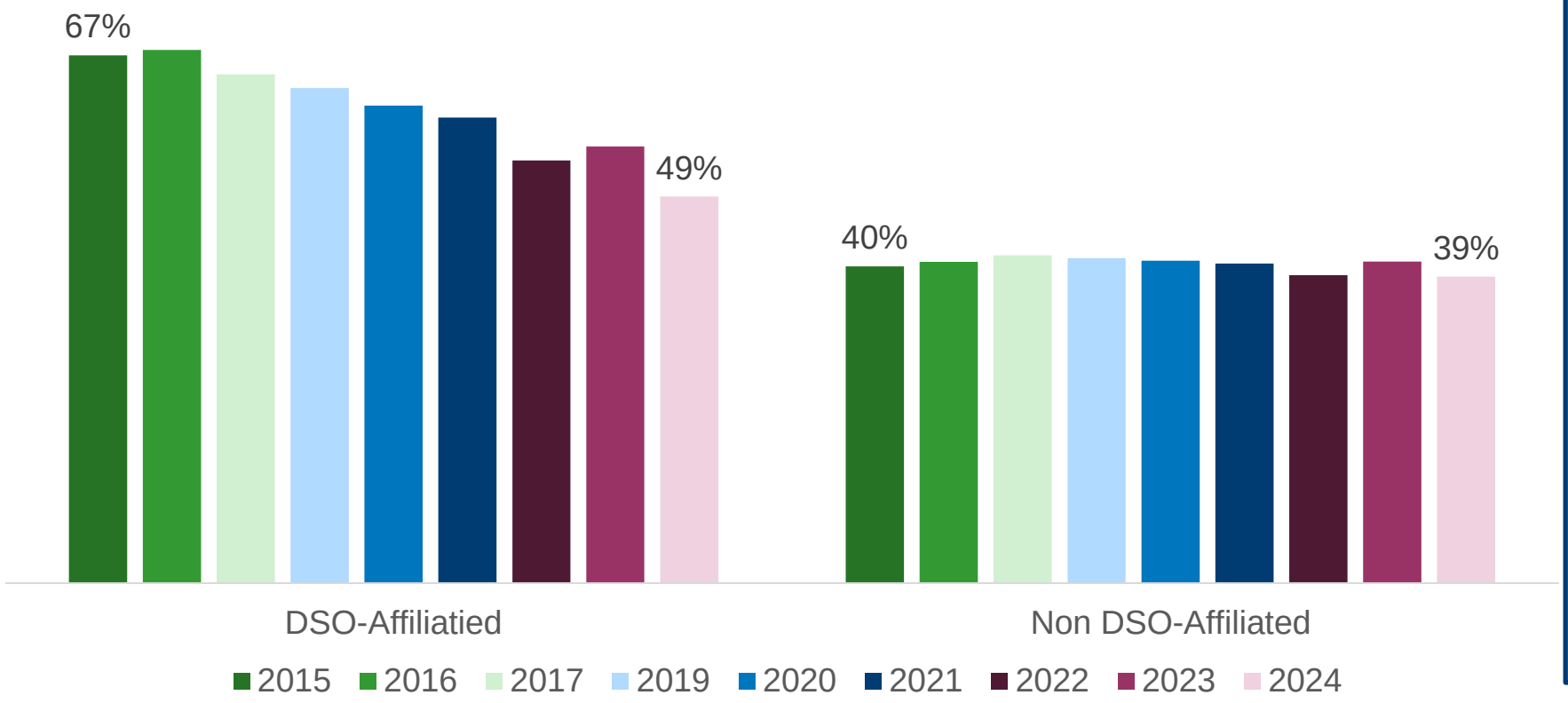
Participation is Declining Among DSO Dentists



- As of 2024, 49% of dentists affiliated with DSOs participate in Medicaid/CHIP, down from 67% in 2015.
- About 2 in 5 dentists unaffiliated with a DSO participate in Medicaid/CHIP.
- The decline in Medicaid/CHIP participation among DSO-affiliated dentists may be partly due to growth and composition of the DSO market over time.

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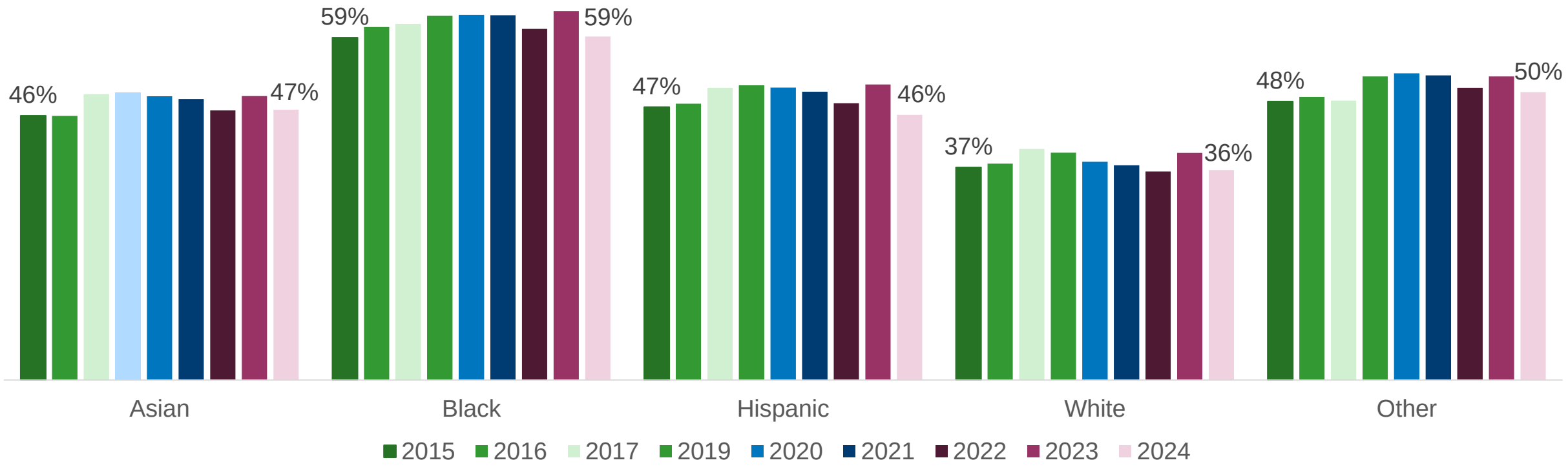
Black Dentists Have Higher Participation Rates

Black dentists have the highest rate of Medicaid/CHIP participation compared to other racial/ethnic groups.



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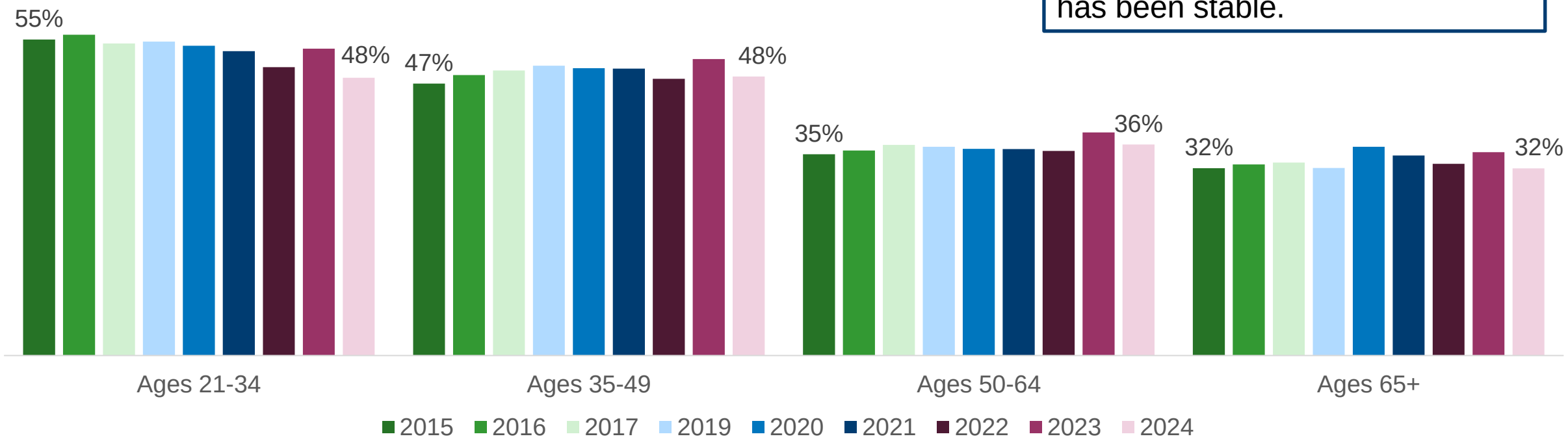
Younger Dentists Have Higher Participation Rates

Medicaid/CHIP participation is highest among younger dentists but has declined over time. In other age groups, participation has been stable.



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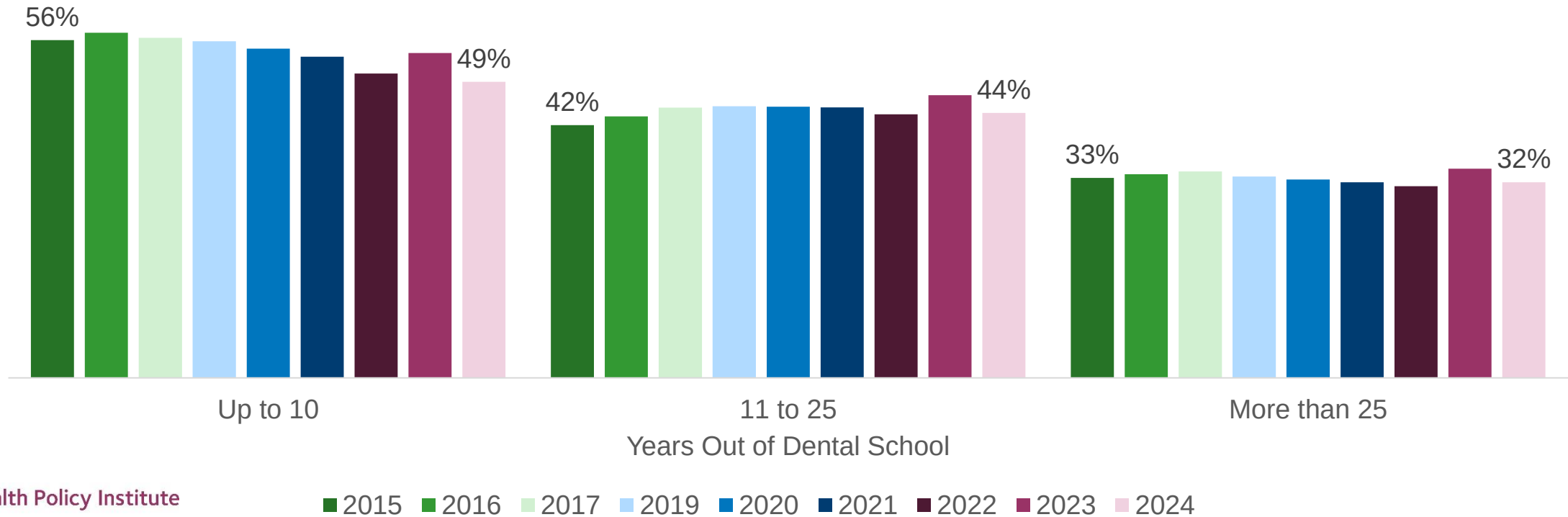
Early Career Dentists Have Higher Participation Rates

While higher than for dentists in later career stages, Medicaid/CHIP participation among dentists up to 10 years out of dental school has been declining.



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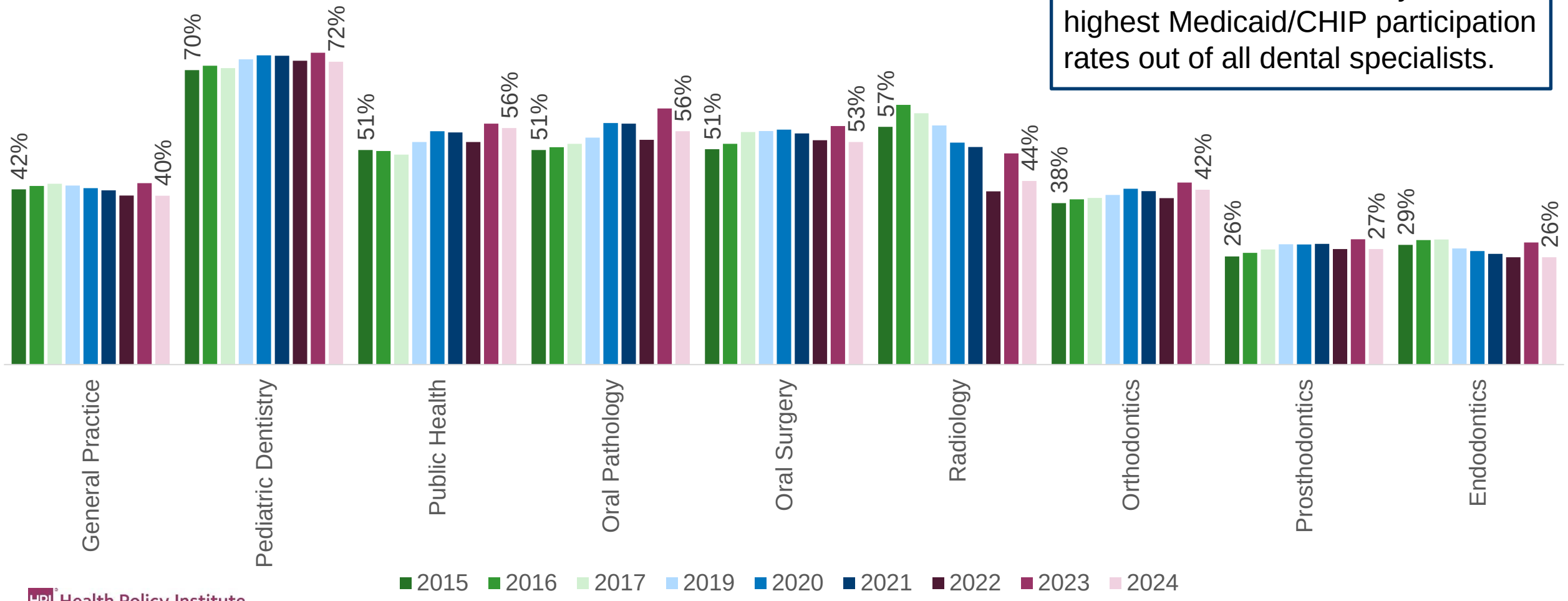
Pediatric Dentists Have Higher Participation Rates

Pediatric dentists have, by far, the highest Medicaid/CHIP participation rates out of all dental specialists.



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Takeaways: Dentist Participation in Medicaid and CHIP

- Medicaid/CHIP participation among dentists has remained stable over the past decade. However, there is significant variation across states.
- Medicaid/CHIP participation is highest among pediatric dentists, dentists who are female, DSO-affiliated, Black, and younger than 50.
- Over time, Medicaid/CHIP participation has declined slightly among younger dentists and DSO-affiliated dentists. For other subgroups, it has remained stable.

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Dental Care Utilization Among Medicaid Beneficiaries

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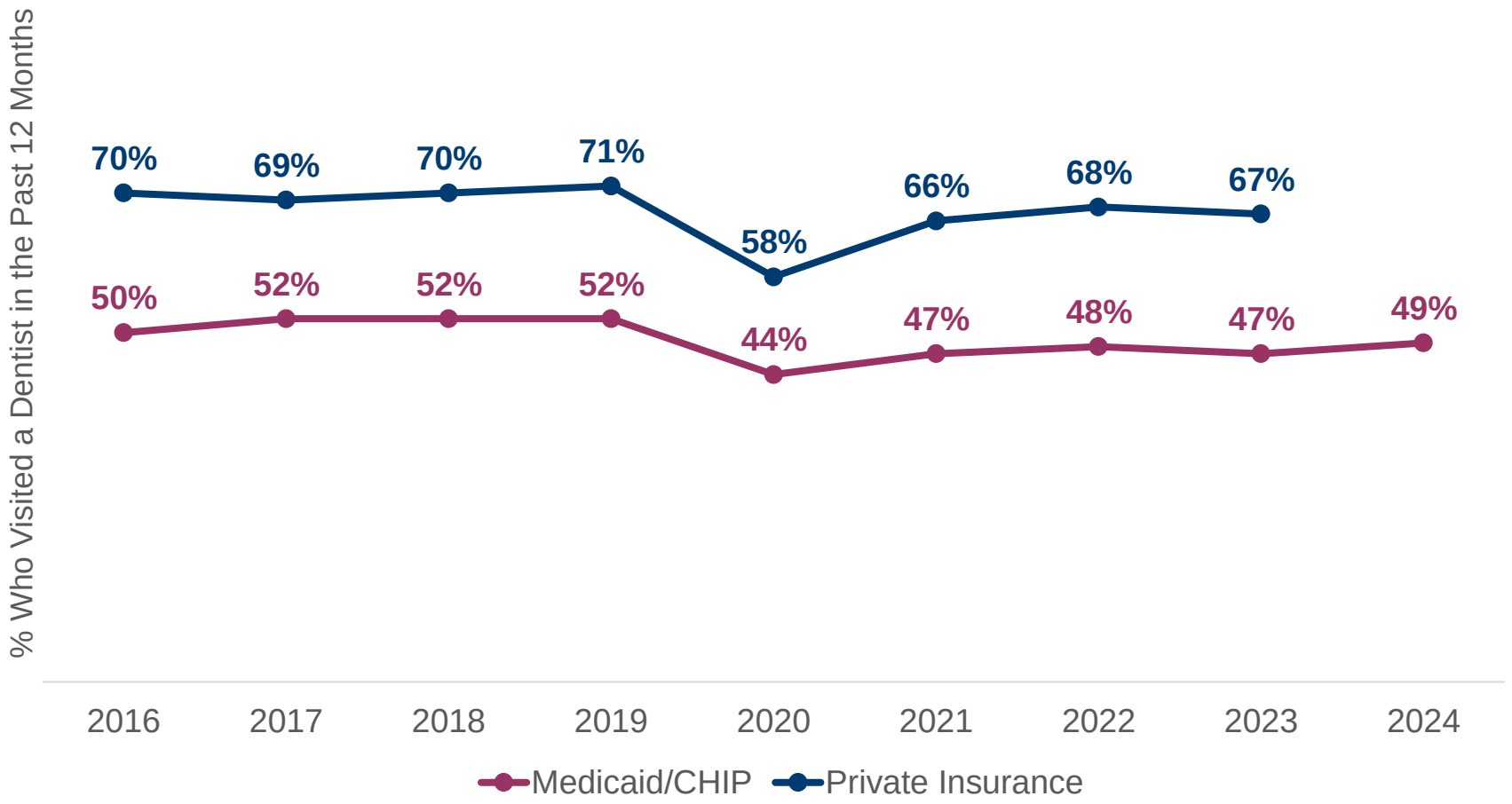
Utilization Among Children has Declined Slightly



- Nationally, dental care utilization among both child Medicaid/CHIP beneficiaries and privately insured children has not fully recovered since a sharp drop during the pandemic.
- There is a persistent gap in utilization rates among Medicaid/CHIP and privately insurance children.

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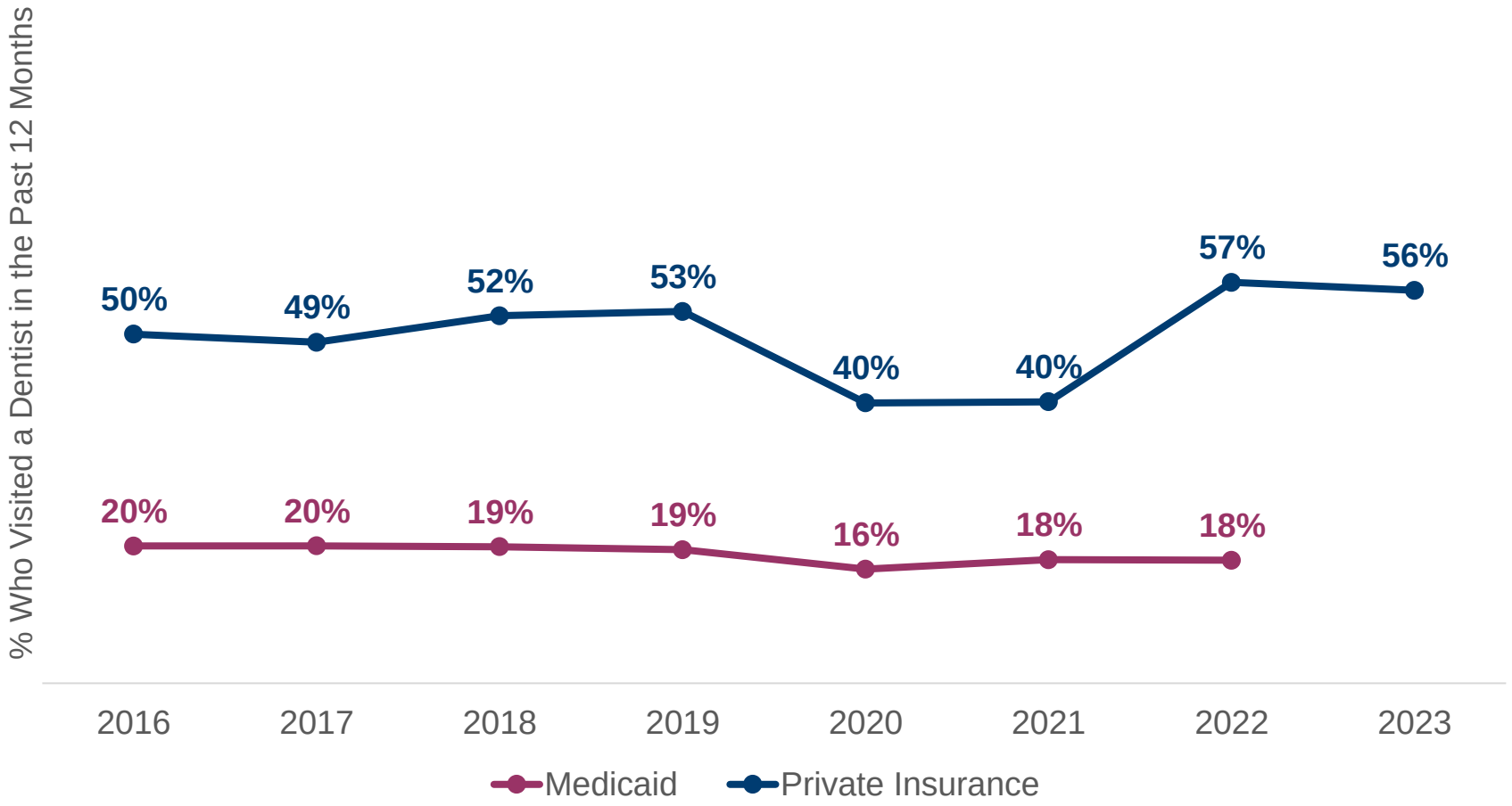
Utilization is Flat Among Adult Medicaid Beneficiaries



- Nationally, dental care utilization among privately insured adults saw a sharp drop during the pandemic but has since surpassed pre-pandemic levels.
- Dental care utilization for adult Medicaid beneficiaries remains considerably lower compared to privately insured counterparts.

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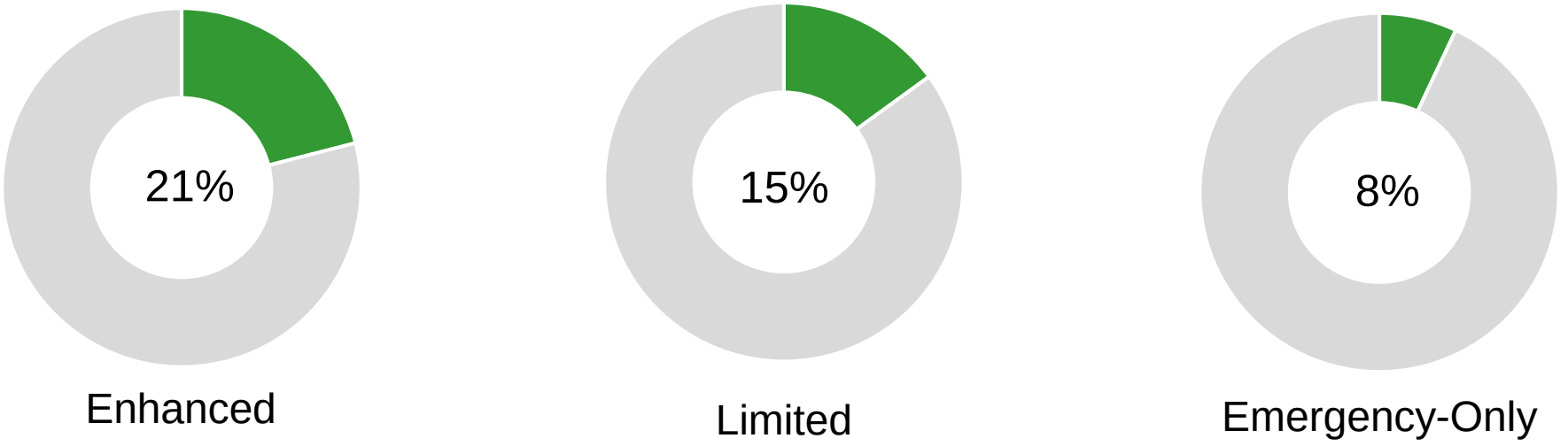
Higher Adult Utilization in States with Enhanced Benefits

Adult Dental Utilization Rates by Adult Medicaid State Benefit Levels, 2022



Around one-fifth of adult Medicaid beneficiaries in states with enhanced dental benefits went to the dentist in 2022 compared to less than one in ten in states with emergency-only benefits.

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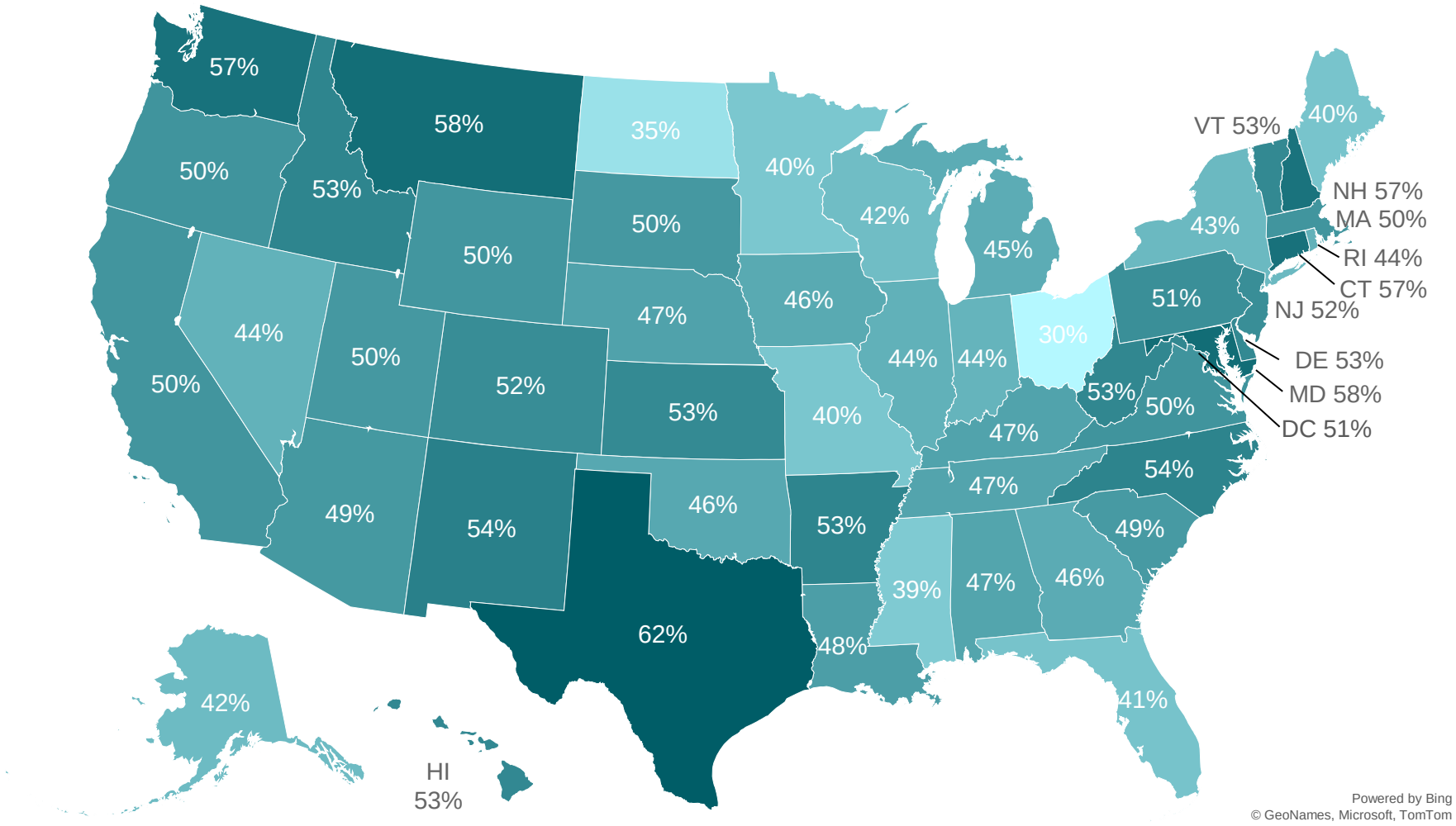
Utilization Among Child Medicaid Beneficiaries Varies by State



- Among child Medicaid/CHIP beneficiaries, the share who visited a dentist in 2024 ranged from 30% in Ohio to 62% in Texas.
- In 27 states, less than half of child Medicaid/CHIP beneficiaries visited a dentist in the past 12 months.

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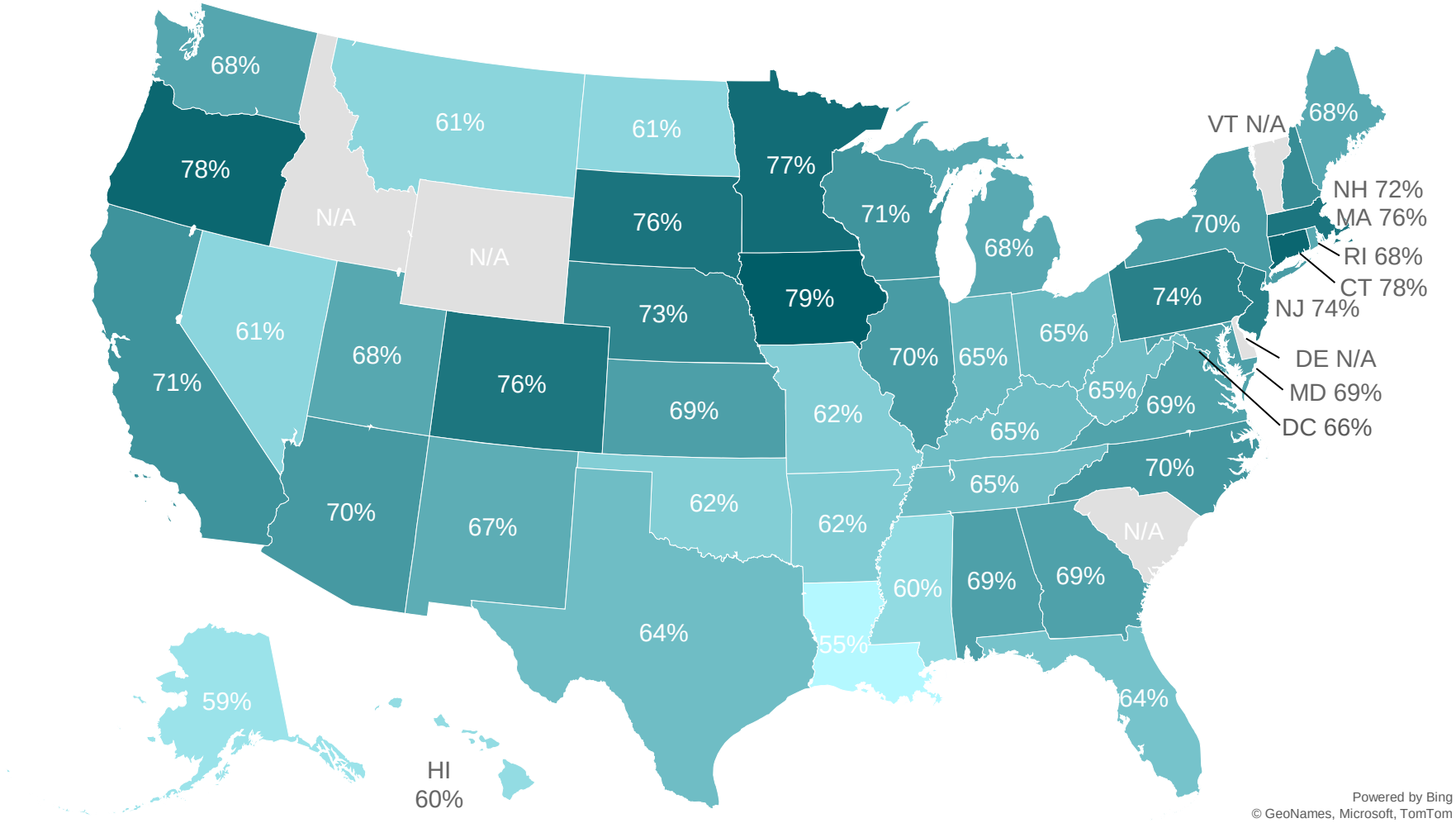
Utilization is Higher for Children with Private Insurance



- The share of privately insured children who visited a dentist in 2023 ranged from 55% in Louisiana to 79% Iowa.
- No state falls below 50% utilization.

Note: For states not reported, please see methods section.

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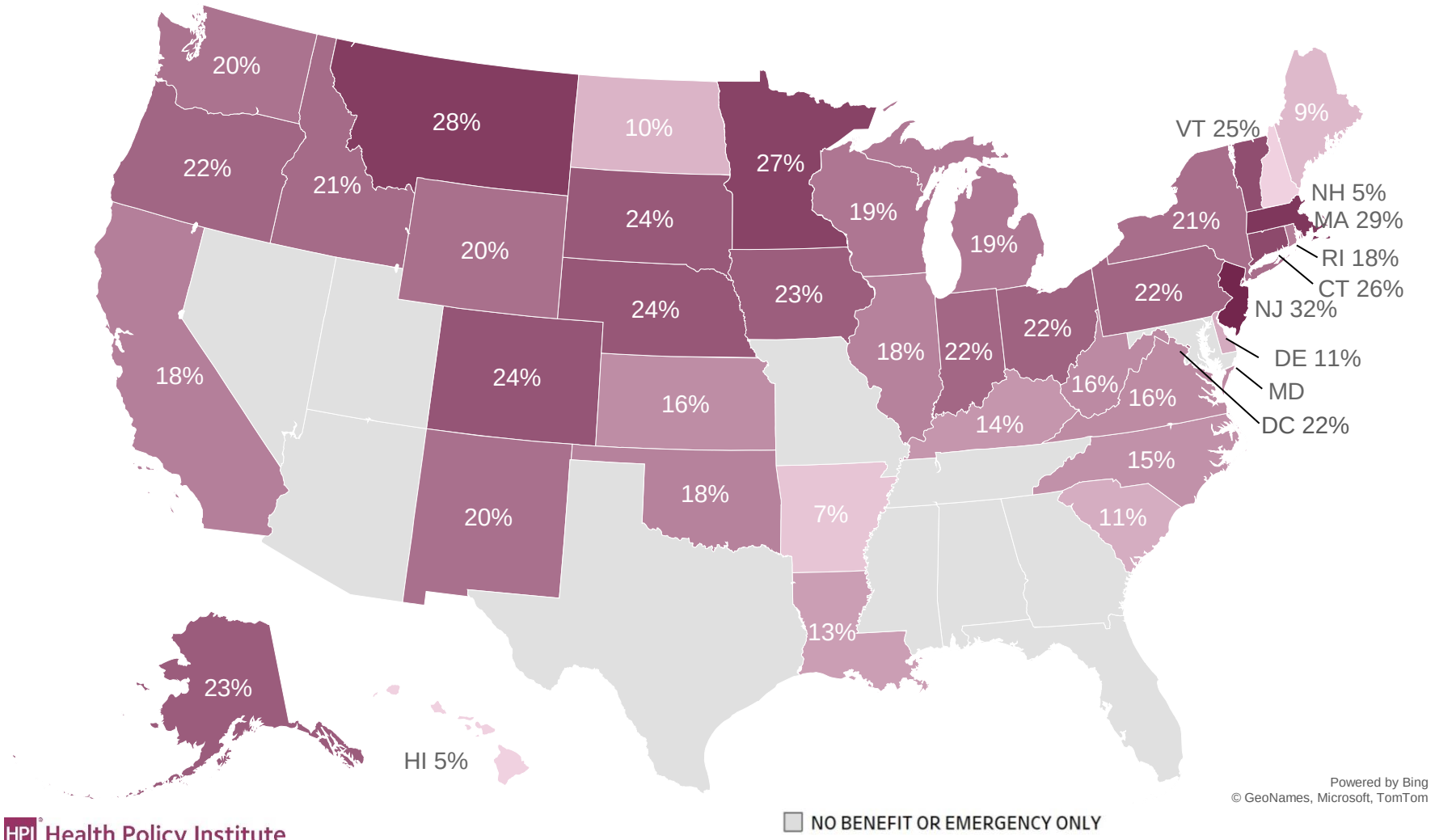
Utilization Among Adult Medicaid Beneficiaries Never Above 1/3



- Among adult Medicaid beneficiaries, the share who visited a dentist in 2022 ranged from 5% in Hawaii and New Hampshire to 32% in New Jersey.
- Every state falls below 33% utilization.

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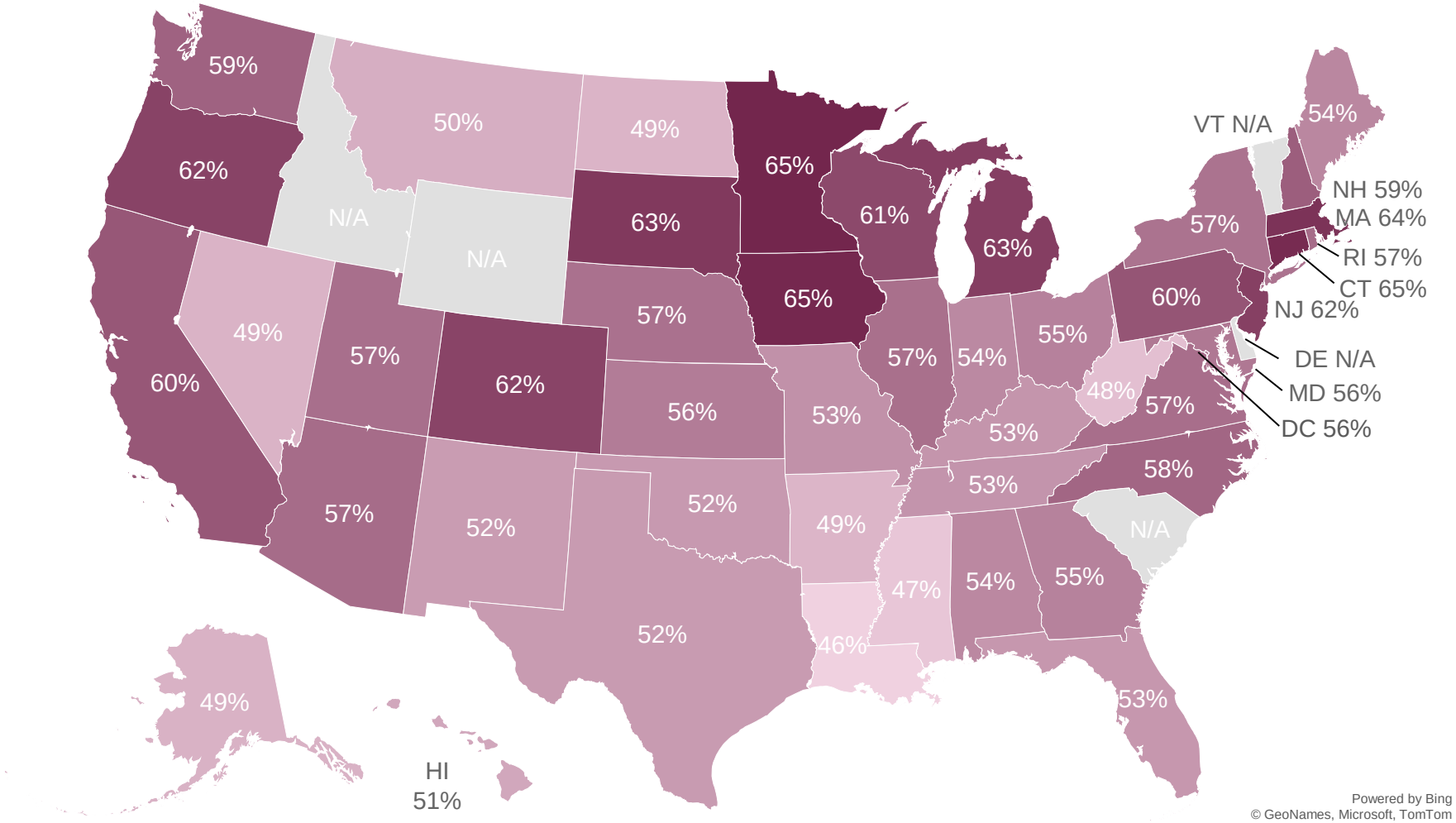
Utilization Among Adults with Private Insurance Varies by State



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- Among privately insured adults, the share who visited a dentist in 2023 ranged from 46% in Louisiana to 65% in Connecticut, Iowa, and Minnesota.
- Eight states fall below 50% utilization.

Note: For states not reported, please see methods section.

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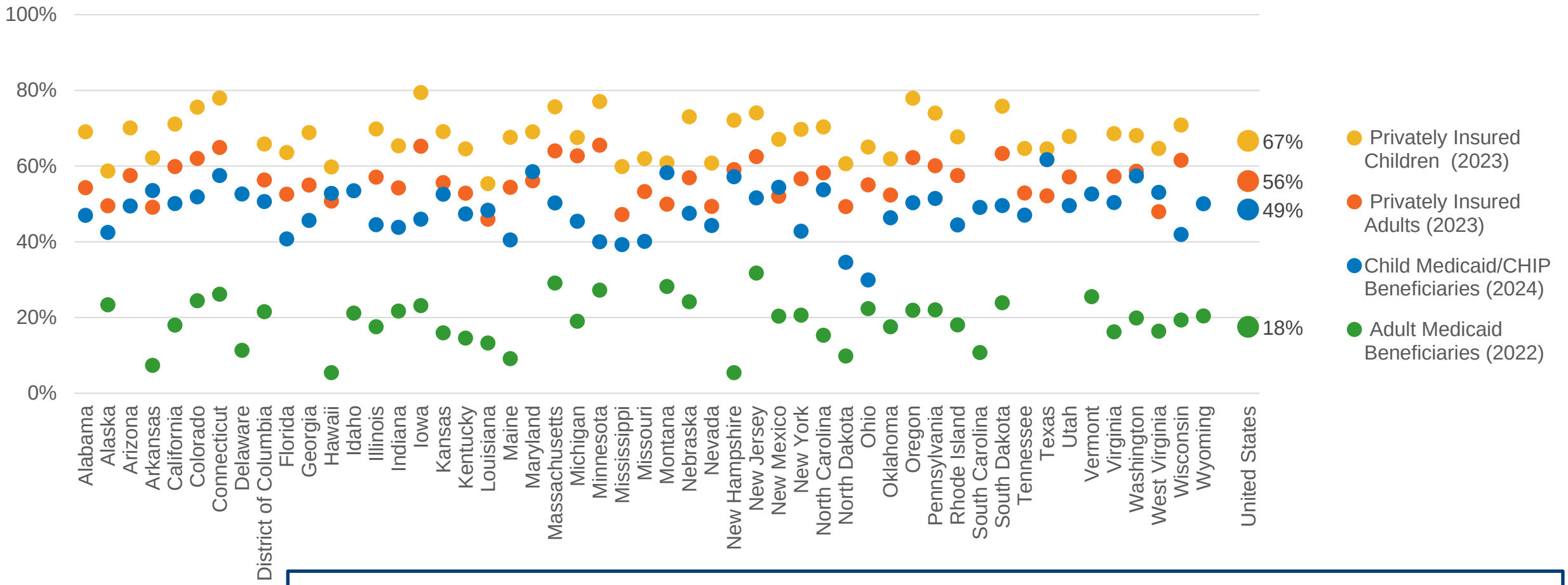
Utilization Varies by Insurance Type, State, and Age



In most states, dental care utilization is highest among privately insured children, followed by privately insured adults, child Medicaid/CHIP beneficiaries, and adult Medicaid beneficiaries.

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Takeaways: Dental Care Utilization Among Medicaid Beneficiaries

- Dental care utilization among children has stabilized in recent years but remains lower than pre-pandemic levels. This is true for both Medicaid/CHIP and privately insured beneficiaries.
- The gap between Medicaid/CHIP and privately insured children is about 20 percentage points and is not narrowing.
- Dental care utilization among adult Medicaid beneficiaries is higher in states with enhanced adult dental benefits in their Medicaid program.
- Dental care utilization among privately insured adults has surpassed pre-pandemic levels.
- For state-level data beyond dental care utilization, including metrics developed by the Dental Quality Alliance, please visit www.ada.org/dqa.

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Medicaid Reimbursement for Dental Services

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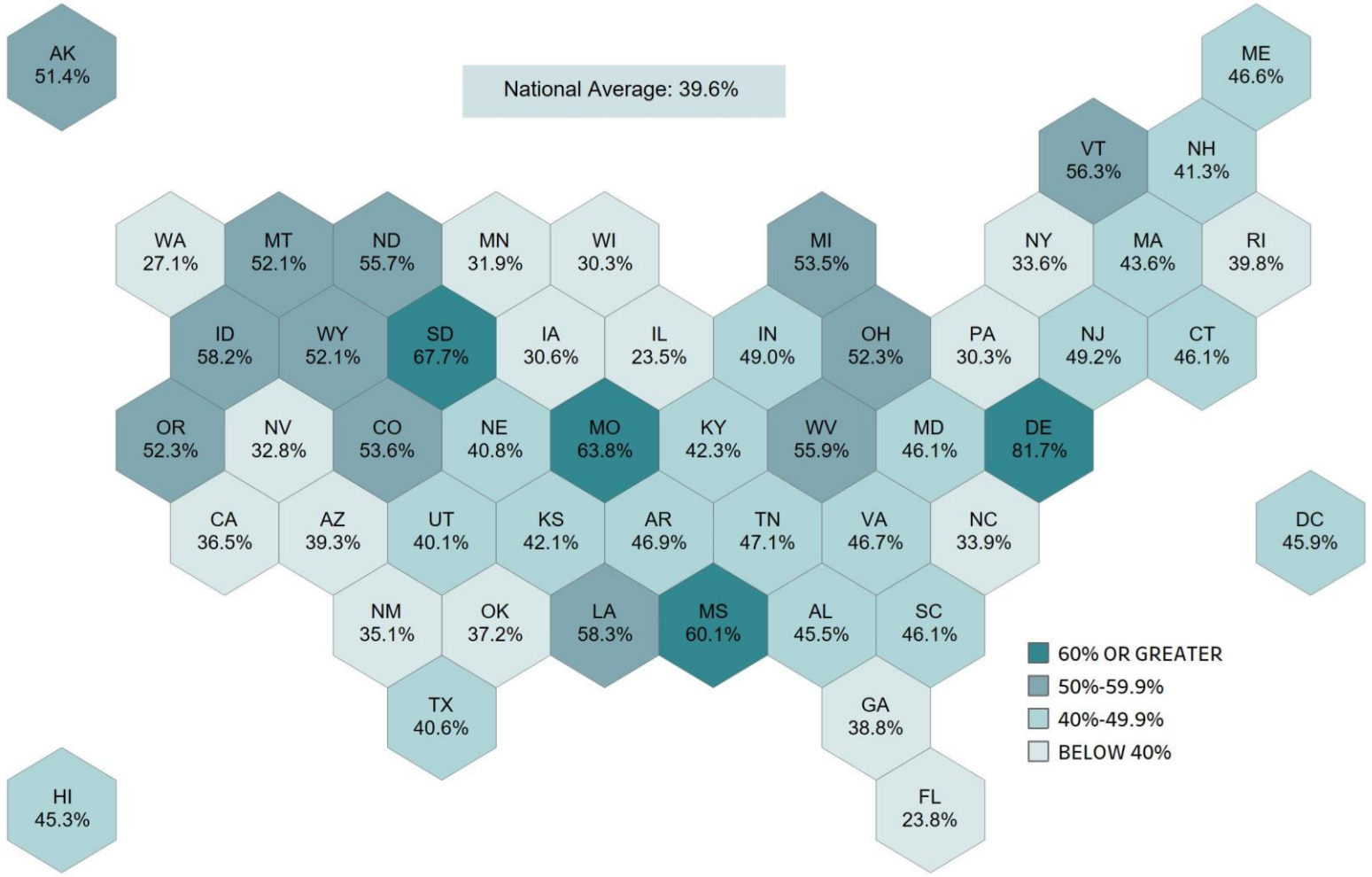
Medicaid Fee-For-Service (FFS) Reimbursement as a Percent of Average Dentist Charges for Child Dental Services, 2025



As of 2025, the Medicaid FFS reimbursement rates for child dental services are less than half of typical dentist charges in 35 states.

Note: The following states are categorized as comprehensive MCO or PAHP states by CMS (as of 2021), and should be interpreted with caution as the FFS rates may not be representative: AR, AZ, DC, DE, FL, GA, IA, ID, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, MI, MN, MO, MS, NE, NJ, NM, NY, OH, PA, RI, TN, TX, UT, WV. This issue may apply in other states as well.

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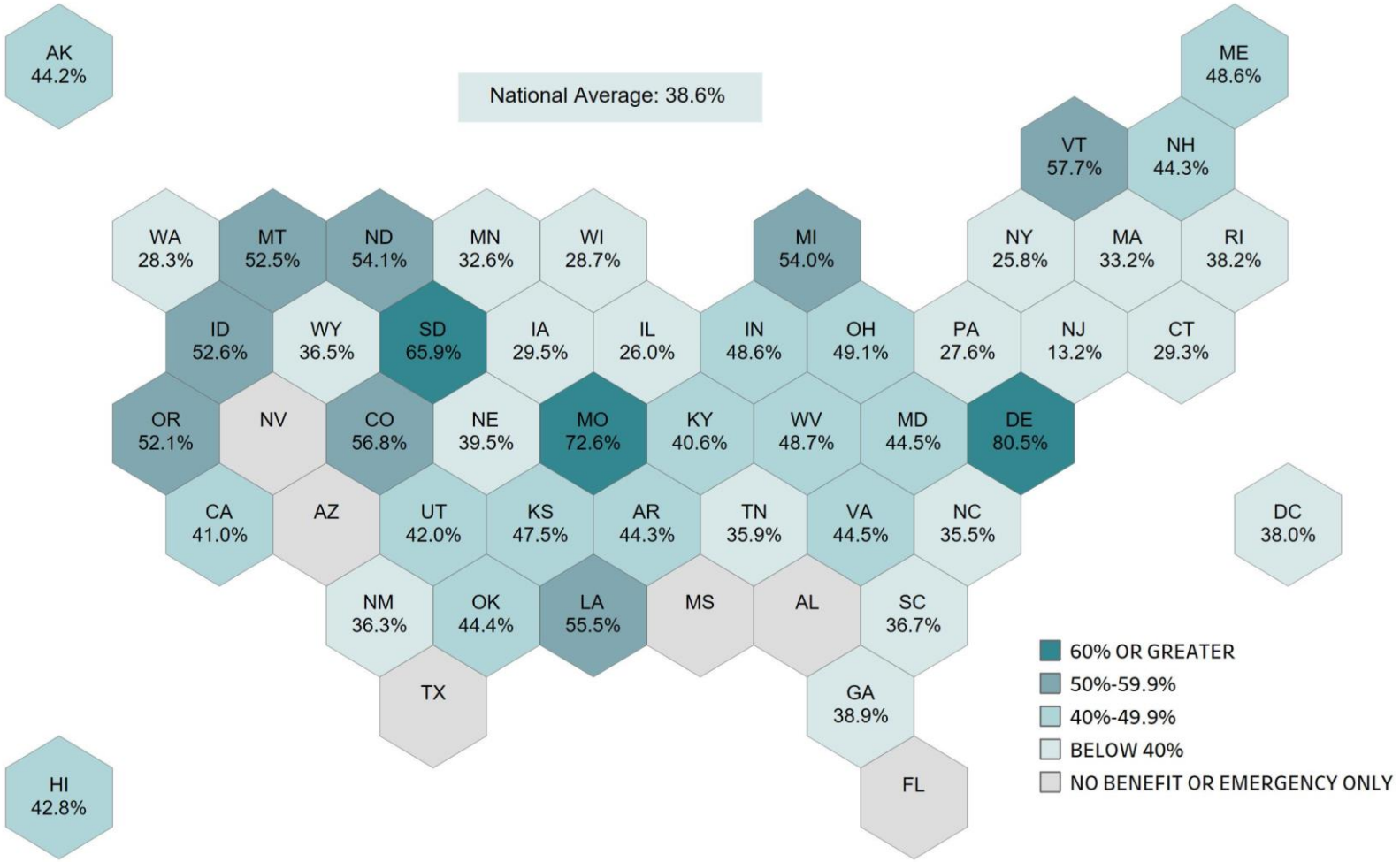

As of 2025, the Medicaid FFS reimbursement rates for adult dental services are less than half of typical dentist charges in 34 states.

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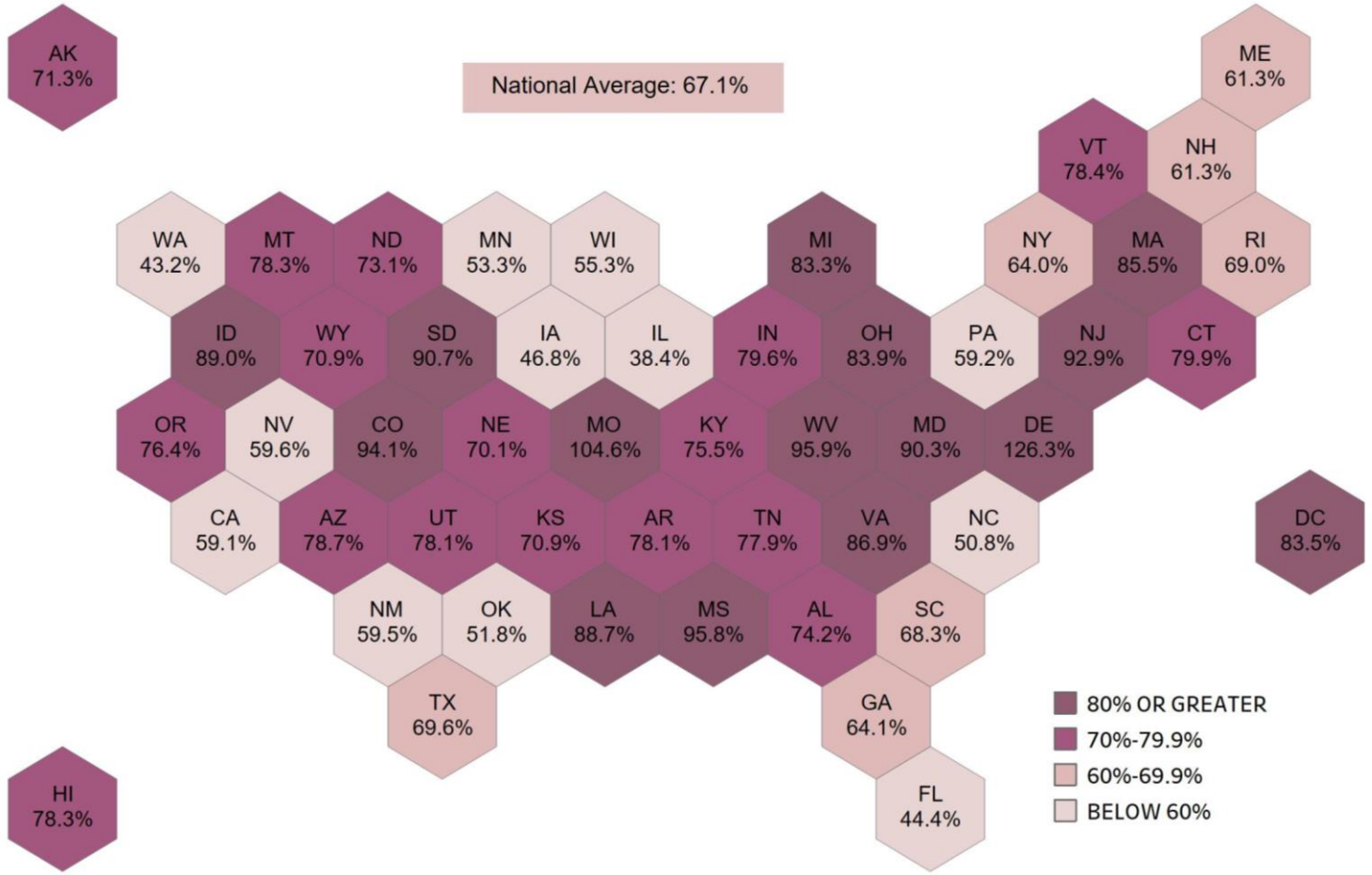
Medicaid FFS Reimbursement as a Percent of Average Private Dental Insurance Payment Rates, Child Dental Services, 2025



As of 2025, the Medicaid FFS reimbursement rates for child dental services fall below 70% of typical private dental insurance payment rates in 19 states.

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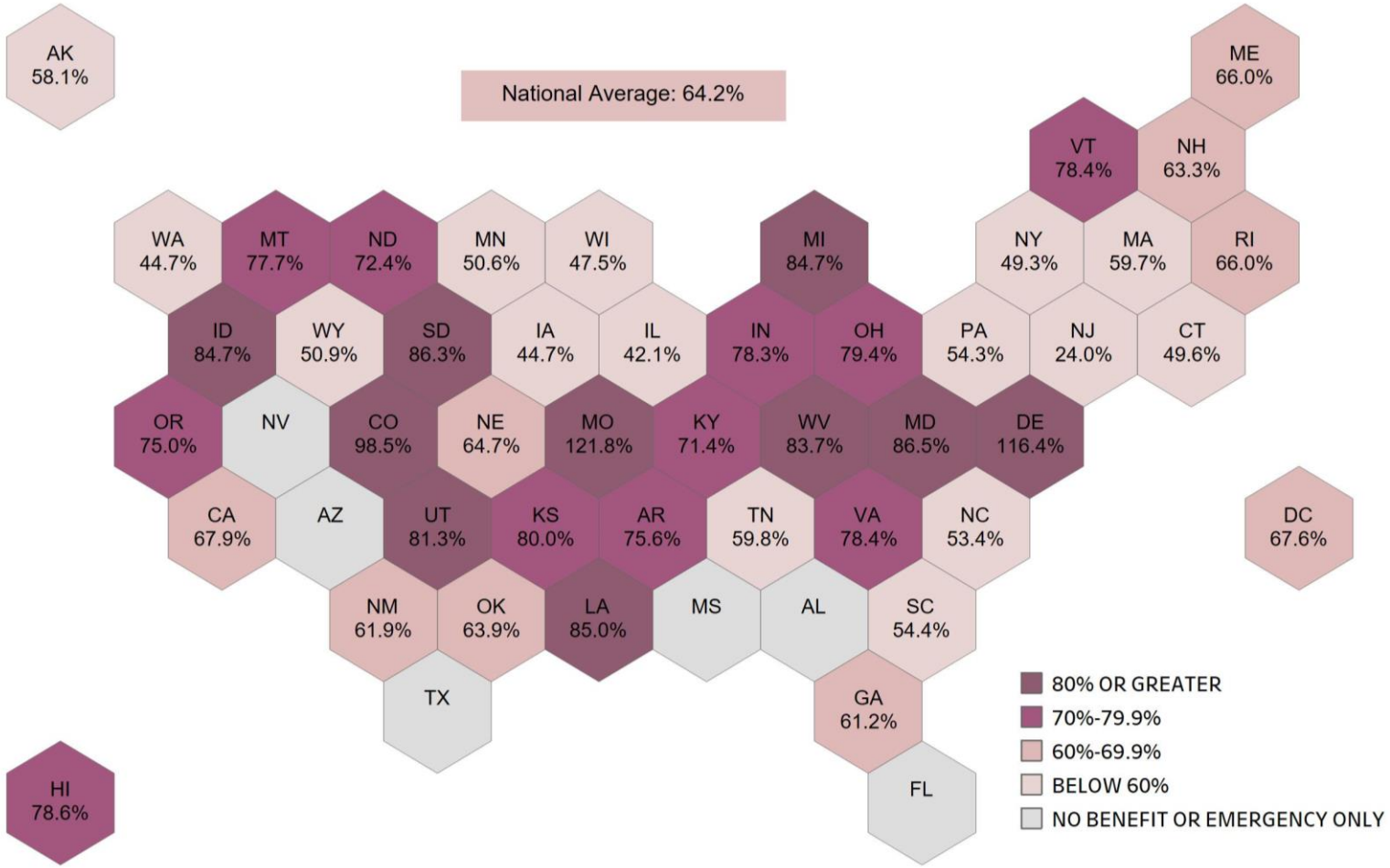

As of 2025, the Medicaid FFS reimbursement rates for adult dental services fall below 70% of typical private dental insurance payment rates in 24 states.

Note: The following states are categorized as comprehensive MCO or PAHP states by CMS (as of 2021), and should be interpreted with caution as the FFS rates may not be representative: AR, AZ, DC, DE, FL, GA, IA, ID, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, MI, MN, MO, MS, NE, NJ, NM, NY, OH, PA, RI, TN, TX, UT, WV. This issue may apply in other states as well.

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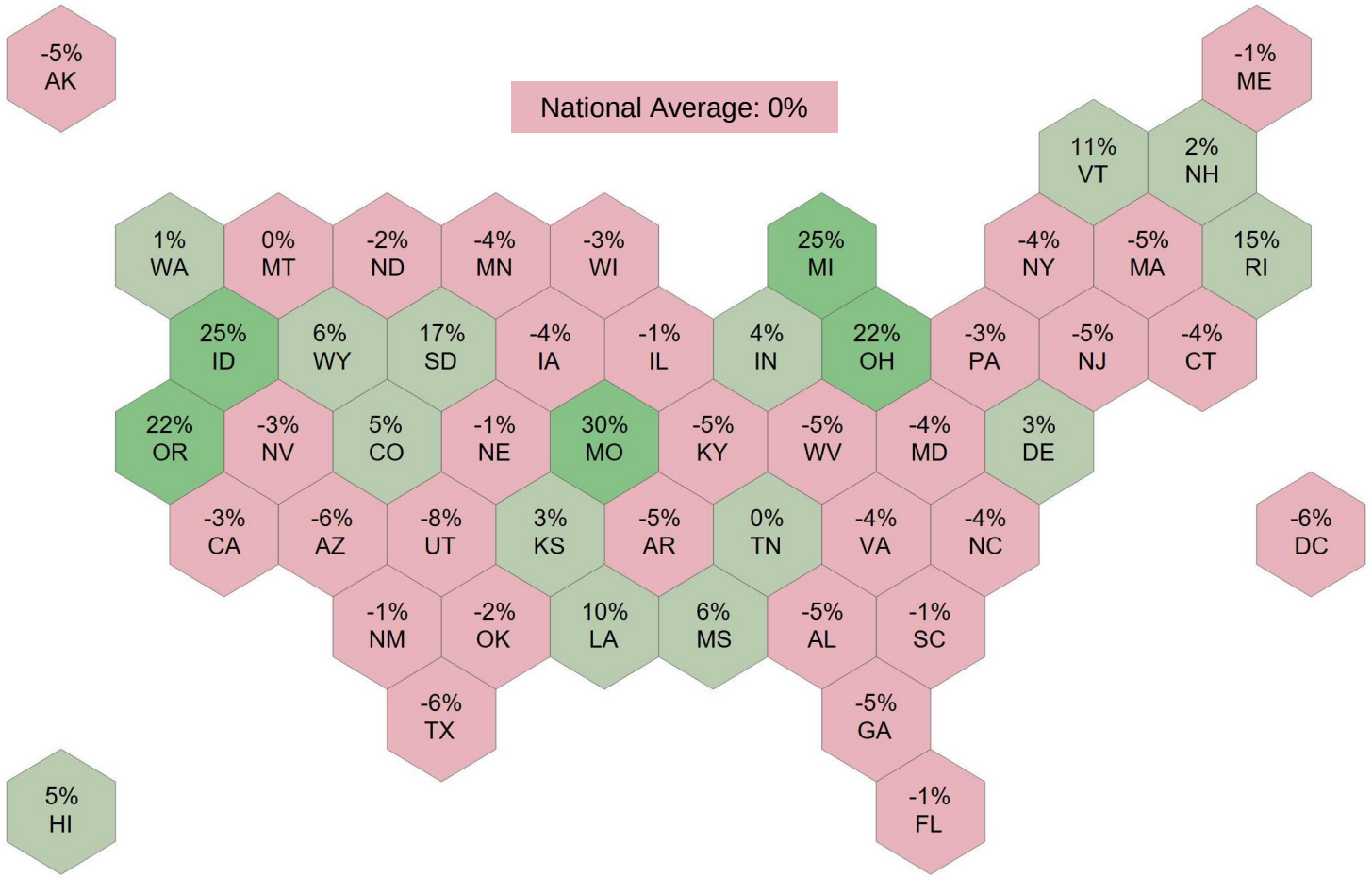
Medicaid FFS Reimbursement as a Percent of Average Dentist Charges, Child Dental Services, Change 2022 to 2025



From 2022 to 2025, 19 states have seen a percentage point increase in their Medicaid FFS reimbursement rates relative to average dentist charges for child dental services.

Note: The following states are categorized as comprehensive MCO or PAHP states by CMS (as of 2021), and should be interpreted with caution as the FFS rates may not be representative: AR, AZ, DC, DE, FL, GA, IA, ID, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, MI, MN, MO, MS, NE, NJ, NM, NY, OH, PA, RI, TN, TX, UT, WV. This issue may apply in other states as well.

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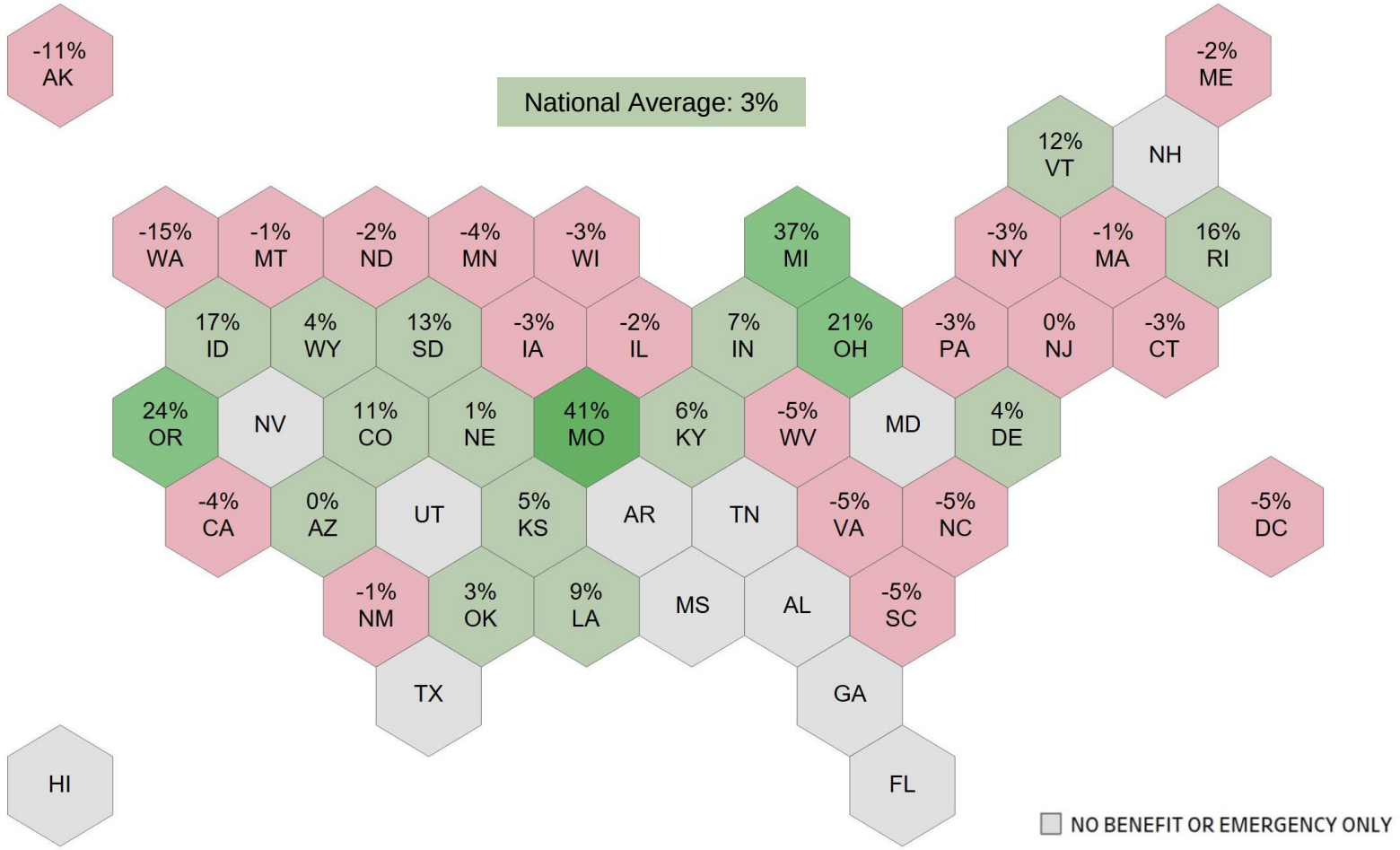
Medicaid FFS Reimbursement as a Percent of Average Dentist Charges, Adult Dental Services, Change 2022 to 2025



From 2022 to 2025, 18 states have seen a percentage point increase in their Medicaid FFS reimbursement rates relative to average dentist charges for adult dental services.

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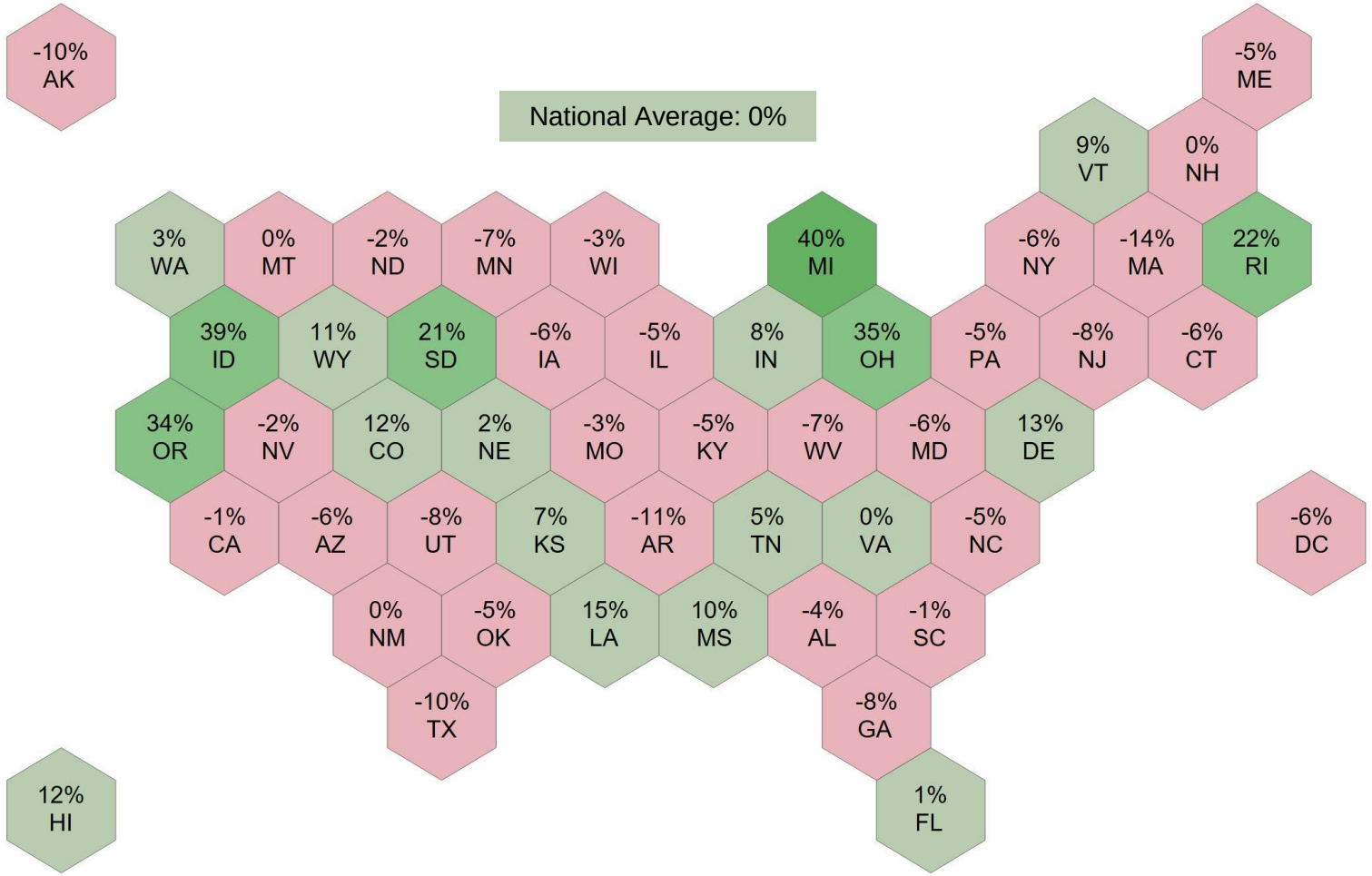
Medicaid FFS Reimbursement as a Percent of Average Private Dental Insurance Payment Rates, Child Dental Services, Change 2022 to 2025



From 2022 to 2025, 20 states have seen a percentage point increase in their Medicaid FFS reimbursement rates relative to average private dental insurance rates for child dental services.

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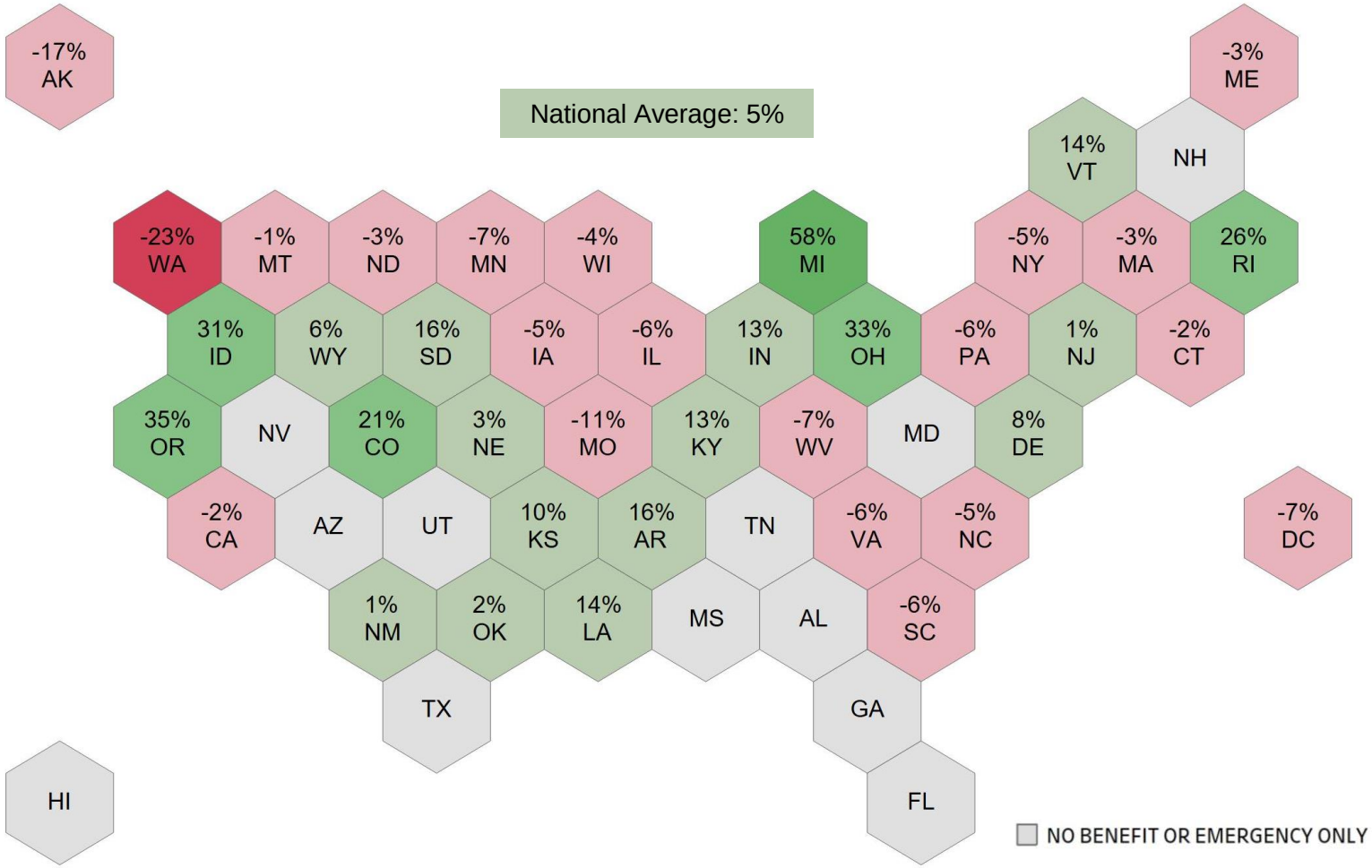
Medicaid FFS Reimbursement as a Percent of Average Private Dental Insurance Payment Rates, Adult Dental Services, Change 2022 to 2025



From 2022 to 2025, 19 states have seen a percentage point increase in their Medicaid FFS reimbursement relative to private dental insurance rates for adult dental services.

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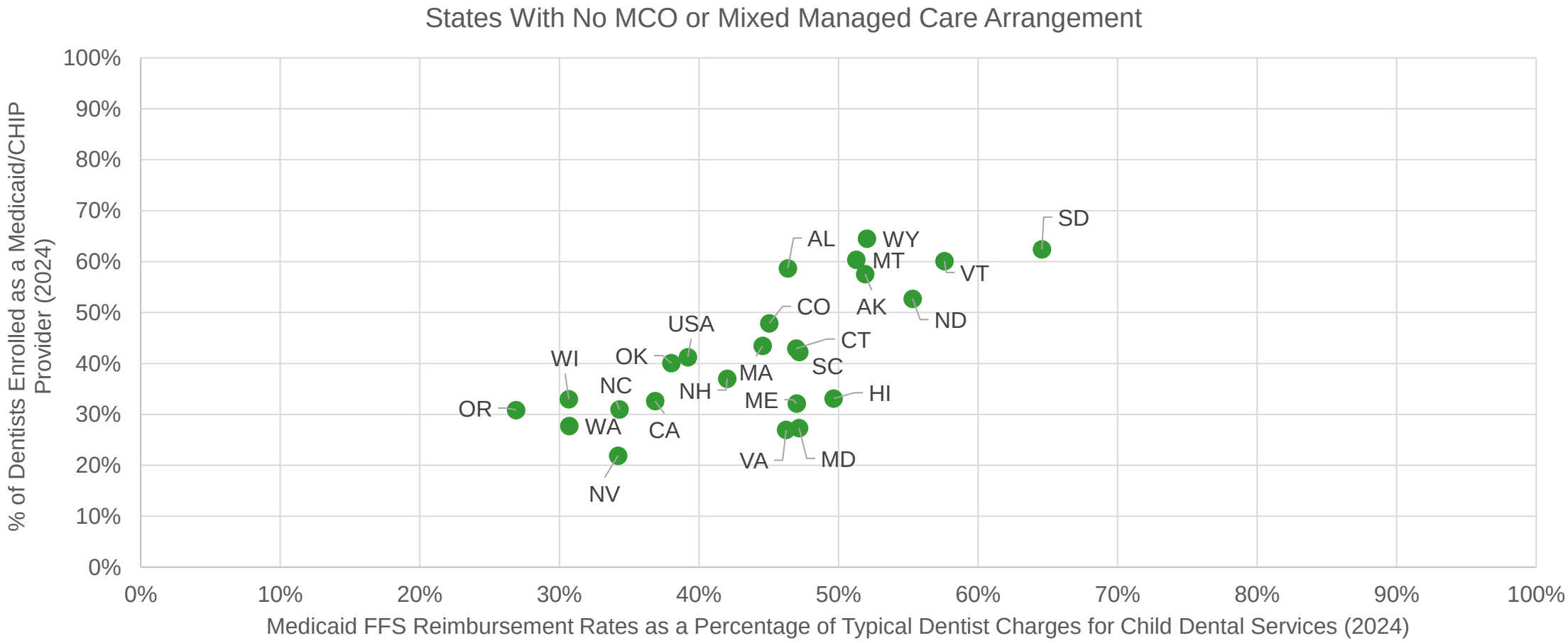
Reimbursement Impacts Medicaid/CHIP Participation Among Dentists



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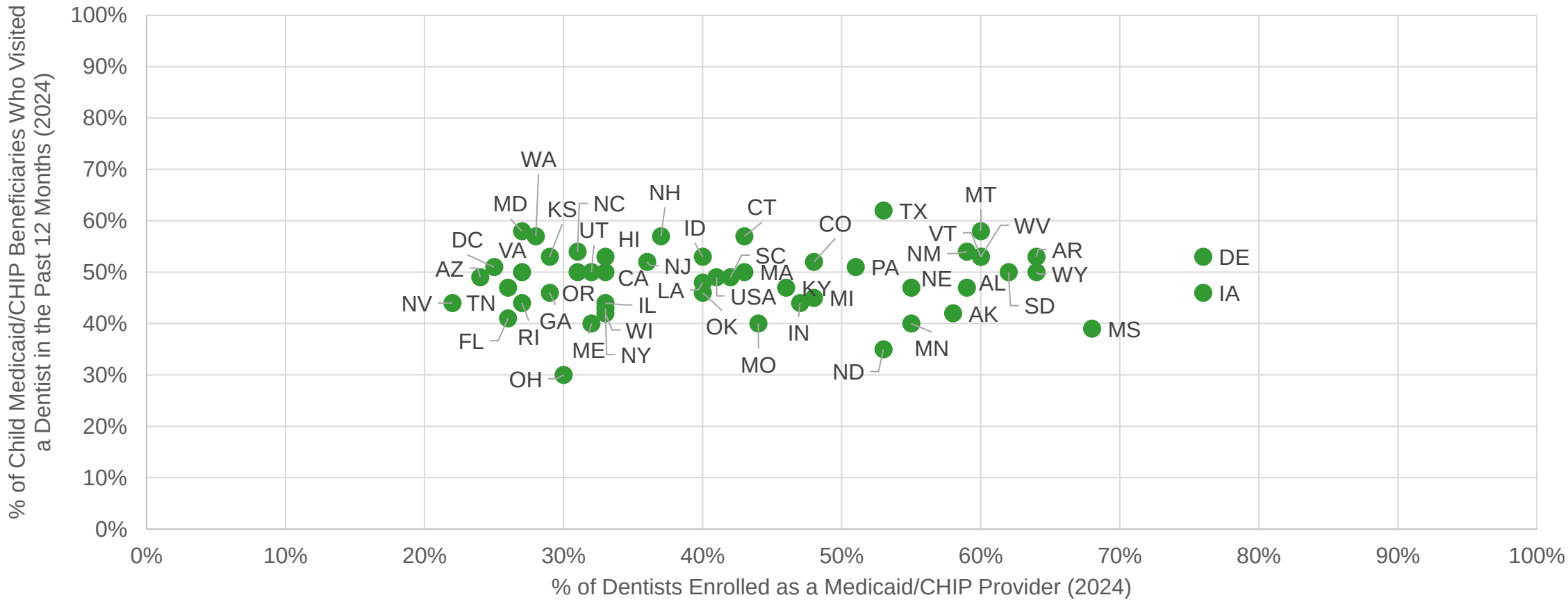
Dentist Medicaid/CHIP Participation Not Correlated with Dental Care Utilization



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Takeaways: Medicaid Reimbursement for Dental Services

- Medicaid fee-for-service (FFS) reimbursement rates, in the majority of states, are not keeping up with dentist charges and private insurance payment rates. In other words, reimbursement rate increases have, in general, not been sufficiently large to close the gap with dentist charges and private insurance reimbursement.

- The majority of the states continue to have Medicaid FFS reimbursement rates at less than half of what dentists typically charge, for both children and adult dental services. Compared to private insurance payment rates, Medicaid FFS reimbursement might appear slightly more favorable, but this is simply due to the high discount rate associated with private insurance payment.

- Many states administer Medicaid dental benefits through Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) or Prepaid Ambulatory Health Plans (PAHPs), who set their own reimbursement rates. We do not have access to these data, and our analysis of Medicaid reimbursement rates for these states should be used with caution. This is a major limitation of our analysis we wish to highlight.

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Data Sources and Methods

HPI Health Policy Institute
ADA American Dental Association®

Data Sources and Methods

FOR COMPLETE DATA & METHODS, DOWNLOAD AND REVIEW THIS DATA TABLE (XLSX).

Current Landscape of Adult Medicaid Dental Benefits

Slides 6-7

Sources: ADA Health Policy Institute analysis of data from the Medicaid Adult Dental Coverage Checker maintained by the CareQuest Institute for Oral Health, Center for Health Care Strategies' Medicaid Adult Dental Benefits, as well as information found on state Medicaid websites.

Notes: HPI's analysis is based on data as of August 2025. CareQuest Institute for Oral Health, Medicaid Adult Dental Coverage Checker, available from: https://www.carequest.org/Medicaid-Adult-Dental-Coverage-Checker. Center for Health Care Strategies' Medicaid Adult Dental Benefits: An Overview factsheet, available from: https://www.chcs.org/media/Adult-Oral-Health-Fact-Sheet_091519.pdf.

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Data Sources and Methods

Dentist Participation in Medicaid and CHIP

Slides 10-17, 38, and 39

Sources: ADA Health Policy Institute (HPI) analysis of HPI's Office Database and Insure Kids Now (IKN) data.

Notes: Medicaid/CHIP participation is defined as being enrolled as a Medicaid or CHIP provider in the IKN database or practicing in a federally qualified health center (FQHC). Providers treating adult Medicaid beneficiaries are captured only if (1) they work in an FQHC or (2) they are also enrolled in pediatric Medicaid or CHIP programs. We are unable to capture providers who accept only adult patients (including adult Medicaid beneficiaries) and are not affiliated with an FQHC. Medicaid/CHIP participation does not account for patient volume. 2018 data is not reported.

Full methodology on HPI's office database can be found at https://www.ada.org/-/media/project/ada-organization/ada/ada-org/files/resources/research/hpi/hpiofficedatabasemethods.pdf. More information on IKN can be found at https://www.insurekidsnow.gov.

For slide 14: "Other" represents (1) 'American Indian or Alaska Native' and (2) 'Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander'. Shares for these groups were too small to be visible in the chart; therefore, these groups were combined.

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Data Sources and Methods

Dental Care Utilization Among Medicaid Beneficiaries

Slides 20, 23, 27, and 39

Utilization among child Medicaid and CHIP beneficiaries

Source: ADA Health Policy Institute analysis of CMS-416 state annual early and periodic screening, diagnostic, and treatment (EPSDT) participation reports.

Notes: We defined dental care utilization as the total number of children ages 1-20 receiving any dental service in a given year divided by the total number of children that were enrolled in Medicaid or CHIP for at least 90 continuous days. In CMS-416 reports, utilization was calculated as Line 12a (total eligible receiving any dental services) divided by Line 1b (total individuals eligible for EPSDT for 90 continuous days).

CMS-416 state annual EPSDT participation reports can be found at: https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/benefits/early-and-periodic-screening-diagnostic-and-treatment.

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Data Sources and Methods

Dental Care Utilization Among Medicaid Beneficiaries

Slides 20, 24, 27

Utilization among children covered by private insurance

Source: ADA Health Policy Institute analysis of MerativeTM MarketScan® Research Databases.

Notes: We defined dental care utilization as total number of children ages 1-20 receiving any dental service in a given year divided by the total number of children that were enrolled in insurance for at least 90 continuous days. Utilization rates from Delaware, Idaho, South Carolina, Vermont, and Wyoming were masked due to either contractual restrictions or data quality concerns.

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Data Sources and Methods

Dental Care Utilization Among Medicaid Beneficiaries

Slides 21, 22, 25, 27

Utilization among adult Medicaid beneficiaries

Source: ADA Health Policy Institute analysis of Transformed Medicaid Statistical Information System (T-MSIS).

Notes: We defined dental care utilization as the total number of adults ages 21-64 receiving any dental service in a given year divided by the total number of adults that were enrolled in Medicaid for at least 90 continuous days. Only states with enhanced and limited adult Medicaid dental benefits are presented.

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Data Sources and Methods

Dental Care Utilization Among Medicaid Beneficiaries

Slides 21, 26, and 27

Utilization among adults covered by private insurance

Source: ADA Health Policy Institute analysis of MerativeTM MarketScan® Research Databases.

Notes: We defined dental care utilization as total number of adults ages 21-64 receiving any dental service in a given year divided by the total number of adults that were enrolled in insurance for at least 90 continuous days. Utilization rates from Delaware, Idaho, South Carolina, Vermont, and Wyoming were masked due to either contractual restrictions or data quality concerns.

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Data Sources and Methods

Medicaid Reimbursement for Child and Adult Dental Services

Slides 30, 31, 34, 35, and 38

Medicaid Fee-For-Service Reimbursement

Source: ADA Health Policy Institute analysis of Medicaid fee-for-service (FFS) reimbursement rate data from fee schedules located at state Medicaid program websites.

Notes: The following states are categorized as comprehensive Managed Care Organization (MCO) or Prepaid Ambulatory Health Plan (PAHP) states by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) (as of 2021), and should be interpreted with caution as the FFS rates may not be representative: AR, AZ, DC, DE, FL, GA, IA, ID, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, MI, MN, MO, MS, NE, NJ, NM, NY, OH, PA, RI, TN, TX, UT, WV. This issue may apply in other states as well.

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Data Sources and Methods

Medicaid Reimbursement for Child and Adult Dental Services

Slides 30, 31, 34, 35, and 38

Average Dentist Charges

Source: ADA Health Policy Institute analysis of FAIRHealth dental module.

Notes: The FAIRHealth dental module covers 125 million individuals with private dental insurance, capturing approximately 75 percent of the total private dental insurance market. Dental procedures charged by dentists are based on ADA CDT® codes. The benchmarks are based on the non-discounted reimbursement rates charged by providers before network discounts are applied. FAIRHealth provided average and median charges along with charges at the 60th, 70th, 75th 80th, 85th, 90th and 95th percentiles for a select basket of procedures.

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Data Sources and Methods

Medicaid Reimbursement for Child and Adult Dental Services

Slides 32, 33, 36, and 37

Medicaid Fee-For-Service Reimbursement

Source: ADA Health Policy Institute analysis of Medicaid fee-for-service (FFS) reimbursement rate data from fee schedules located at state Medicaid program websites.

Note: The following states are categorized as comprehensive Managed Care Organization (MCO) or Prepaid Ambulatory Health Plan (PAHP) states by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) (as of 2021), and should be interpreted with caution as the FFS rates may not be representative: AR, AZ, DC, DE, FL, GA, IA, ID, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, MI, MN, MO, MS, NE, NJ, NM, NY, OH, PA, RI, TN, TX, UT, WV. This issue may apply in other states as well.

Average Private Dental Insurance Payment Rates

Source: ADA Health Policy Institute analysis of Fluent's DentaBase®.

Notes: Fluent's DentaBase® is a multi-payor FFS dental claims database that includes utilization and pricing data from nearly every dentist in the U.S. As of 2023, DentaBase® currently contains over 5 billion claim lines collected from over 70 dental plans. Contributors to DentaBase® account for approximately 40 percent of commercially insured covered lives in the U.S.

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Suggested Reference

HPI® Health Policy Institute

ADA American Dental Association®

Suggested Reference

American Dental Association. Dental Care in Medicaid Programs. Health Policy Institute. December 2025. Available from: https://www.ada.org/-/media/project/ada-organization/ada/ada-org/files/resources/research/hpi/dental_care_in_Medicaid_programs.pdf.

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Thank you!

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