



Oral Health Disparities

Oral health care disparities are the unequal opportunities disadvantaged groups face when it comes to receiving the dental care they need¹.

Children, Ages 2 to 19:

- **Cavities and racial or ethnic groups** - Nearly 70% of Mexican American children, ages 12-19, have had cavities in their permanent teeth, compared to 54% of non-Hispanic White children².
- **Untreated cavities and family income** - Seventeen percent of children, ages 2-5, from low-income households have untreated cavities in their primary teeth – three times the percentage of children from higher-income households. By ages 12 to 19, 23% of children from low-income families have untreated cavities in their permanent teeth, twice that of children from higher-income households².

Adults, Ages 20 to 64:

- **Untreated cavities and racial or ethnic groups** - Nearly twice as many non-Hispanic Black or Mexican American adults have untreated cavities as non-Hispanic White adults².
- **Untreated cavities and income** - About 40% of adults with low-income or no private health insurance have untreated cavities. Low-income or uninsured adults are twice as likely to have one to three untreated cavities and three times as likely to have four or more untreated cavities as adults with higher incomes or private insurance².

Adults, Ages 65 or older:

- **Untreated cavities and racial or ethnic groups** - More than nine in 10 older adults have had cavities, and one in six have untreated cavities. Older, non-Hispanic Black or Mexican American adults have two to three times the rate of untreated cavities compared to older, non-Hispanic White adults².
- **Edentulism (complete tooth loss)** - Seventeen percent of older adults have experienced complete tooth loss. Low-income, older adults with less than a high school education, or those who are current smokers are more than three times as likely to have lost all of their teeth when compared to adults with higher incomes, more than a high school education or who have never smoked².

Oral Cancer and Gum Disease:

- **Adults and oral cancer** - The five-year survival rate for various throat cancers is lower among Black men (41%) than White men (62%)².
- **Adults and gum (periodontal) disease** - Forty-two percent of adults have some form of gum disease. Among adults, ages 65 and older, the rate of gum disease increases to 60%. Severe gum disease is most common among adults aged 65 or older, Mexican American and non-Hispanic Black adults, and people who smoke².

Sources:

[1] Disparities in Access to Oral Health Care; National Library of Medicine, 2020. Retrieved June 2023.

[2] Disparities in Oral Health; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021. Retrieved June 2023.