

# Many lack access to dental care in Kentucky

Routine dental care is essential in maintaining overall health and well-being. Poor oral health can have a negative effect on a person's nutrition, appearance and speech. Pain and suffering because of poor oral health can lower quality of life by limiting one's ability to sleep, work and socialize. It can raise the risk of infection, heart disease and death.

The 2012 **Kentucky Health Issues Poll (KHIP)** included questions about dental insurance, dental visits, unpaid dental bills and having a usual source of oral healthcare to gauge Kentucky adults' access to oral healthcare.

## 1.7 million Kentucky adults lack dental insurance

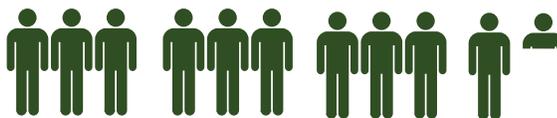
Having dental insurance is an important factor in being able to get oral healthcare. More than half (51%) of Kentucky adults reported having no dental insurance of any kind. We estimate that 1.7 million Kentucky adults lack dental insurance. That's more than 10 times the number of people who attended the 2012 Kentucky Derby.<sup>1</sup>

**165,307**  
Number of people who attended the 2012 Kentucky Derby<sup>1</sup>

 = 165,000 people

**1.7 million**

Number of Kentucky adults without dental insurance, more than **10 times** Derby attendance



<sup>1</sup><http://www.kentuckyderby.com/news/2012/05/05/kentucky-derby-138-establishes-across-board-records>

## Four in 10 do not have usual source of oral care

Having a usual dentist, clinic, health center or other oral healthcare provider is known as a usual source of care. People who have a usual source of care are more likely to seek appropriate and timely healthcare when they need it. About 4 in 10

Kentucky adults (39%) said that they do not have a personal dentist or oral health provider.

Generally as age, education and income increased the percentage of Kentuckians who reported having dental insurance and a usual source of oral healthcare also increased.

**Continued on back**

These findings unless otherwise noted are from the Kentucky Health Issues Poll, funded by the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky and The Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati. The Kentucky Health Issues Poll was conducted Sept. 20-Oct. 14, 2012, by the Institute for Policy Research at the University of Cincinnati. A random sample of 1,680 adults from throughout Kentucky was interviewed by telephone. This included 1,360 landline interviews and 320 cell phone interviews with cell phone users. In 95 of 100 cases, the statewide estimates will be accurate to  $\pm 2.5\%$ . There are other sources of variation inherent in public opinion studies, such as non-response, question wording, or context effects that can introduce error or bias.

For more information about the Kentucky Health Issues Poll, please visit [www.healthy-ky.org](http://www.healthy-ky.org) or [www.healthfoundation.org/kentucky-health-issues-poll](http://www.healthfoundation.org/kentucky-health-issues-poll).

## Kentucky lags nation in oral health

Oral healthcare is important in maintaining a person's overall health. Regular and preventive care can help catch minor problems before they become serious. According to KHIP, only 6 in 10 (61%) Kentucky adults visited the dentist within the past year, compared with 70% of adults nationwide.<sup>2</sup>

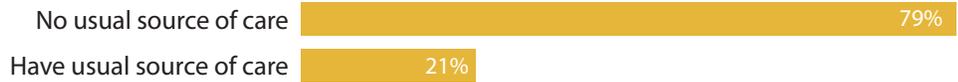
More than 2 in 10 Kentucky adults (21%) who had a usual source of oral healthcare reported that the last time they visited a dentist was more than five years ago. Among those without a usual source of oral healthcare, almost 8 in 10 (79%) said their last dental visit was more than five years ago.

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) 2010 [most recently available data] <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/brfss/display.asp?state=UB&cat=OH&yr=0&qkey=6610&grp=0&SUBMIT4=Go>

### Percentage of adults who last visited a dentist or dental clinic within the past year for any reason



### Percentage of Kentucky adults who last visited a dentist or dental clinic more than five years ago for any reason



### In the past 12 months, did you or another family member in your household skip dental care or check-ups because of the cost or not? (Graph shows only those Kentucky adults who said they had skipped care.)



## Few have dental debt, but many going without needed oral care

While nearly all Kentucky adults (92%) report not owing money for dental bills, many are going without needed dental care. Nearly 4 in 10 Kentucky adults (37%) reported that

someone in their household skipped dental care or check-ups in the last 12 months because of the cost. Twice as many adults without dental insurance (49%) reported going without needed oral healthcare as did those with dental insurance (25%).