

Use of Dental Services: United States, 1983

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In 1983 Americans went to dentists more than 400 million times, an average of almost two visits per person. Nearly one-half of all Americans, however, did not visit a dentist in 1983. Persons having higher family incomes were much more likely to have seen a dentist than those with lower incomes (see figure).

These data are from the 1983 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS), which contained special questions on the dental visits of the civilian noninstitutionalized population. This report contains selected statistics based on those questions. The complete questionnaire is published in "Current Estimates from the National Health Interview Survey: United States,

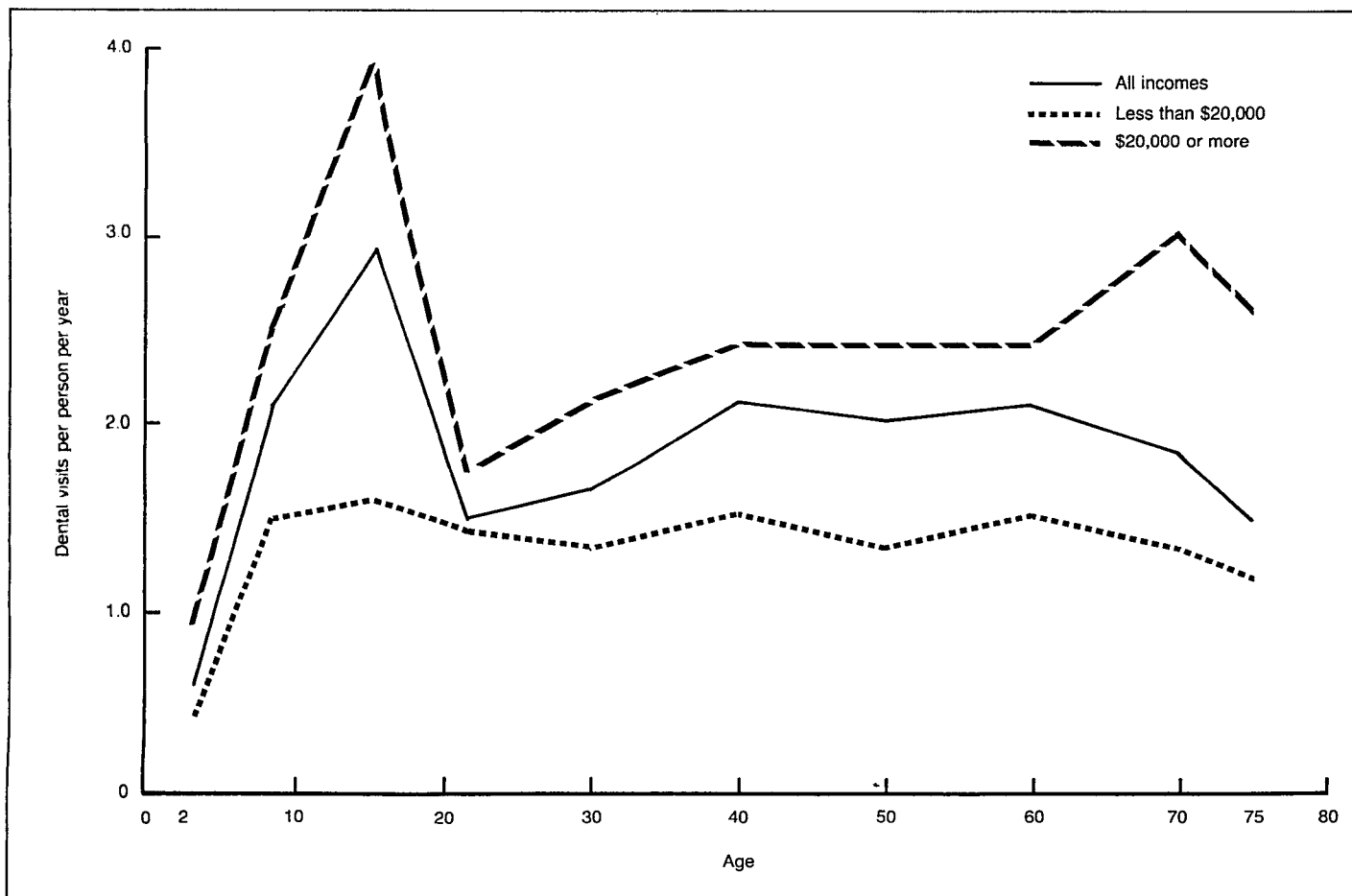


Figure. Number of dental visits per person (2 years to 75 years) per year, by age and family income: United States, 1983

1983," Series 10, Number 154.¹ A microdata public use data tape containing all of the information collected can be purchased from the National Center for Health Statistics, Division of Health Interview Statistics, Computer Systems and Programming Staff.

The 1983 dental questions were an expanded version of the dental questions included regularly in NHIS in earlier years.² Additional questions were included in the 1971 NHIS, and some questions are included again in the 1986 NHIS. In 1983 survey questions addressed the issues of the interval since last dental visit, the number of dental visits made in the year prior to the interview, the dental services provided, and the type of dentist seen. Also included were questions on the use of dental fluoride products and on edentulousness (toothlessness).

The National Health Interview Survey is a cross-sectional household interview survey conducted annually by the National Center for Health Statistics. It is based on a multistage area probability sample representing the civilian noninstitutionalized population of the United States. Population statistics estimated from the sample are subject to sampling variability. Tables showing standard errors of estimates are included in the technical notes. (A more complete description of the 1983 NHIS design may be found in Series 10, Number 154.¹)

Interval since last visit

Of primary interest to dental practitioners and health planners are persons with unusually frequent dental visits, indicating dental problems, and those who appear to be underserved by the dental care system. Although dental authorities suggest getting "regular professional care," they do not specify the exact interval. However, many dentists recommend at least one or two dental visits annually for examination and cleaning. For the purposes of this report, one visit per year will be used as the standard.

Table 1 indicates the extent to which this standard may have been met. The proportion of the population 2 years

of age and over with one or more dental visits in the year prior to interview varies by age from a high of about two-thirds among children 5–17 years of age, to a low of less than one-third among those 75 years of age and older.

Overall, 45.0 percent of the population (or 100 million persons) had not seen a dentist in over a year and were, by current standards of dental practice, a medically underserved population. A majority of children 2–4 years of age (64.2 percent, or 6,899,000) and a significant proportion of children 5–11 years of age (13.1 percent, or 2,978,000) had never been to a dentist. Even in the older age groups where a substantial proportion of the population was edentulous (22.3 percent of those 55–64 years of age, 34.0 percent of those 65–74 years, and 45.2 percent of those 75 years and over), a substantial number of persons with teeth had not received dental care within the year.

For every age group 12 years and over, females were more likely than males to have seen a dentist in the year before the interview. However, although the levels are different, the overall pattern of dental care is similar in both sexes. The largest percent difference between the sexes in recent (within 1 year) dental visits occurred among persons in the age group 18–34 years, in which 61.9 percent of the females and 51.8 percent of the males had seen a dentist.

In every age group, white people were more likely than black people to have had a recent dental visit. Overall, 57.0 percent of white persons and 41.8 percent of black persons visited dentists within the previous year. The difference between the races was greatest among persons 12–17 years and 55 years and older: 70.2 percent of white adolescents (aged 12–17) and 48.4 percent of black adolescents had recent visits. This is attributable in part to the greater percent of white adolescents receiving orthodontic treatment. In addition, black persons were more likely to report never having seen a dentist.

The proportion of the population with a visit in the previous year increased significantly with higher income. Less than two-fifths (38.8 percent) of persons with a family income below \$10,000 had recently visited dentists, compared with about three-fourths (74.0 percent) of those with a family income of \$35,000 or more. The positive relationship between the proportion with recent visits and income persists through virtually all age groups.

In terms of the standard of a minimum of one dental visit per year, roughly 25 million persons in each of the three lower income groups and more than 10 million persons in the \$35,000 or more category did not meet this standard. (In addition, another 14 million persons whose income was not reported did not have a recent visit.) In the older age groups, some of these people were edentulous, a condition that is also highly associated with income (data not shown), but the proportion of each age and income category without teeth is far lower than the proportion with no visits. Even in the highest income category, of those 65 years and over 20.8 percent were edentulous, but 34.2 percent reported no visits in the previous year.

¹National Center for Health Statistics: Current estimates from the National Health Interview Survey, United States, 1983. *Vital and Health Statistics*. Series 10, No. 154. DHHS Pub. No. (PHS) 86-1582. Public Health Service. Washington. U.S. Government Printing Office, June 1986.

²See National Center for Health Statistics: Current estimates from the Health Interview Survey, 1969–81. *Vital and Health Statistics*. Series 10, Nos. 63, 72, 79, 85, 95, 100, 119, 126, 130, 136, 139, 141. Public Health Service. Washington. U.S. Government Printing Office. National Center for Health Statistics, C. S. Wilder: Dental visits, volume and interval since last visit, United States, 1969. *Vital and Health Statistics*. Series 10, No. 76. DHEW Pub. No. (HSM) 72-1066. Health Services and Mental Health Administration. Washington. U.S. Government Printing Office, July 1972. National Center for Health Statistics, C. S. Wilder: Dental visits, volume and interval since last visit, United States, 1978 and 1979. *Vital and Health Statistics*. Series 10, No. 138. DHHS Pub. No. (PHS) 82-1566. Public Health Service. Washington. U.S. Government Printing Office, Apr. 1982. National Center for Health Statistics, C. E. Burnham: Edentulous persons, United States, 1971. *Vital and Health Statistics*. Series 10, No. 89. DHEW Pub. No. (HRA) 74-1516. Health Resources Administration. Washington. U.S. Government Printing Office, June 1974.

Table 1. Number and percent distribution of persons 2 years of age and over by interval since last dental visit, according to age, sex, race, and family income: United States, 1983

[Data are based on household interviews of the civilian noninstitutionalized population. The survey design, general qualifications, and information on the reliability of the estimates are given in the Technical notes.]

Characteristic	Interval since last dental visit								
	All persons ¹	All intervals ²	Total ³	Less than 1 year					Never
				Less than 6 months	6-11 months	1-2 years	2-5 years	5 years or more	
All persons	Number in thousands								
All ages	222,212	100.0	55.0	36.0	17.7	11.3	13.5	12.6	5.8
2-4 years	10,743	100.0	28.4	19.2	8.4	2.8	1.0	...	64.2
5-17 years	44,761	100.0	67.0	45.2	20.1	11.7	8.9	2.1	8.9
5-11 years	22,666	100.0	67.2	44.3	21.2	10.7	6.9	0.9	13.1
12-17 years	22,096	100.0	66.7	46.1	18.9	12.7	11.0	3.4	4.5
18-34 years	67,710	100.0	57.0	34.9	20.6	14.4	16.7	8.1	1.8
18-24 years	28,561	100.0	55.5	33.3	20.8	15.4	16.7	7.7	2.3
25-34 years	39,149	100.0	58.0	36.1	20.5	13.7	16.8	8.4	1.4
35-54 years	51,101	100.0	57.4	37.8	18.4	11.5	15.4	13.3	0.7
35-44 years	28,933	100.0	59.4	39.2	19.0	11.9	15.4	11.0	0.9
45-54 years	22,168	100.0	54.8	36.0	17.6	11.0	15.4	16.4	0.6
55-64 years	22,004	100.0	51.3	35.6	14.7	9.2	14.5	22.4	0.7
65 years and over	25,892	100.0	38.6	26.9	10.9	7.5	13.2	38.0	0.9
65-74 years	16,045	100.0	43.2	30.1	12.2	7.6	13.8	33.1	0.8
75 years and over	9,847	100.0	31.1	21.6	8.9	7.3	12.2	46.1	1.0
Male									
All ages	107,030	100.0	53.0	33.9	17.8	11.6	14.2	13.0	6.3
2-4 years	5,467	100.0	29.1	20.2	8.1	2.6	1.2	...	63.9
5-17 years	22,838	100.0	66.1	43.7	20.7	11.7	9.3	2.4	9.0
5-11 years	11,512	100.0	67.6	43.7	22.0	10.5	6.8	1.0	13.1
12-17 years	11,326	100.0	64.6	43.6	19.3	13.0	12.0	3.9	4.8
18-34 years	33,133	100.0	51.8	30.6	20.0	15.0	18.5	10.1	2.2
18-24 years	13,990	100.0	50.1	28.8	20.1	16.4	18.3	9.4	2.9
25-34 years	19,144	100.0	52.9	32.0	19.8	14.0	18.7	10.6	1.7
35-54 years	24,757	100.0	55.3	35.7	18.5	11.8	15.9	14.5	0.9
35-44 years	14,067	100.0	56.9	36.9	18.8	12.4	15.9	12.3	1.0
45-54 years	10,690	100.0	53.4	34.1	18.0	10.9	15.9	17.4	0.8
55-64 years	10,261	100.0	50.4	34.2	15.2	9.1	14.7	22.8	0.8
65 years and over	10,573	100.0	37.9	26.1	11.0	7.5	13.4	38.3	1.0
65-74 years	6,967	100.0	42.1	28.5	12.5	8.0	13.8	33.6	0.9
75 years and over	3,606	100.0	29.9	21.3	8.2	6.6	12.5	47.3	1.1
Female									
All ages	115,183	100.0	56.9	37.9	17.6	11.0	12.8	12.3	5.3
2-4 years	5,276	100.0	27.8	18.2	8.7	3.0	*0.8	...	64.6
5-17 years	21,923	100.0	67.9	46.8	19.4	11.6	8.4	1.9	8.8
5-11 years	11,154	100.0	66.9	44.9	20.3	10.8	7.1	0.8	13.2
12-17 years	10,770	100.0	68.9	48.7	18.5	12.4	9.9	2.9	4.3
18-34 years	34,577	100.0	61.9	39.0	21.3	13.9	15.0	6.2	1.3
18-24 years	14,572	100.0	60.7	37.6	21.4	14.5	15.1	6.0	1.7
25-34 years	20,005	100.0	62.8	40.0	21.2	13.4	15.0	6.3	1.0
35-54 years	26,344	100.0	59.4	39.8	18.3	11.3	15.0	12.3	0.6
35-44 years	14,866	100.0	61.9	41.4	19.2	11.4	15.0	9.7	0.7
45-54 years	11,478	100.0	56.1	37.7	17.2	11.2	15.0	15.6	0.4
55-64 years	11,743	100.0	52.1	36.8	14.2	9.2	14.3	22.0	0.5
65 years and over	15,319	100.0	39.1	27.4	10.8	7.5	13.1	37.9	0.8
65-74 years	9,078	100.0	44.1	31.4	11.9	7.4	13.8	32.7	0.7
75 years and over	6,241	100.0	31.8	21.7	9.3	7.7	12.1	45.4	0.9

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 1. Number and percent distribution of persons 2 years of age and over by interval since last dental visit, according to age, sex, race, and family income: United States, 1983—Con.

[Data are based on household interviews of the civilian noninstitutionalized population. The survey design, general qualifications, and information on the reliability of the estimates are given in the Technical notes.]

Characteristic	Interval since last dental visit								
	All persons ¹	All intervals ²	Total ³	Less than 1 year		1–2 years	2–5 years	5 years or more	Never
				Less than 6 months	6–11 months				
White	Number in thousands								
Percent distribution									
All ages	190,668	100.0	57.0	37.9	17.8	11.0	12.9	12.4	5.1
2–4 years	8,710	100.0	29.2	20.1	8.3	2.9	0.9	...	63.6
5–17 years	36,826	100.0	69.9	48.3	20.0	11.1	8.0	1.8	8.0
5–11 years	18,630	100.0	69.7	46.9	21.2	10.3	6.2	0.8	12.1
12–17 years	18,196	100.0	70.2	49.6	18.8	11.9	9.8	2.8	3.8
18–34 years	57,536	100.0	59.0	36.5	21.2	14.2	16.2	7.5	1.4
18–24 years	24,025	100.0	57.9	35.3	21.2	15.1	16.1	7.0	1.9
25–34 years	33,511	100.0	59.9	37.4	21.1	13.5	16.3	7.9	1.0
35–54 years	44,476	100.0	59.2	39.6	18.4	11.2	14.7	13.0	0.6
35–44 years	25,104	100.0	61.3	41.2	18.9	11.5	14.8	10.6	0.6
45–54 years	19,371	100.0	56.4	37.5	17.7	10.8	14.5	16.2	0.5
55–64 years	19,696	100.0	53.4	37.4	14.9	8.7	14.0	21.5	0.6
65 years and over	23,423	100.0	40.5	28.5	11.1	7.4	12.6	37.2	0.7
65–74 years	14,485	100.0	45.2	31.9	12.4	7.4	13.3	32.3	0.6
75 years and over	8,938	100.0	33.0	23.1	9.1	7.4	11.5	45.2	0.7
Black									
All ages	26,173	100.0	41.8	23.5	16.5	13.7	17.3	14.4	9.6
2–4 years	1,736	100.0	25.4	15.7	8.9	2.5	*1.5	...	66.4
5–17 years	6,652	100.0	51.2	29.0	20.0	15.2	13.7	4.1	13.3
5–11 years	3,403	100.0	53.8	30.9	20.5	13.0	10.5	1.8	18.6
12–17 years	3,249	100.0	48.4	27.1	19.5	17.5	17.0	6.6	7.8
18–34 years	8,427	100.0	44.0	24.7	17.3	15.8	20.3	12.3	3.6
18–24 years	3,819	100.0	42.2	22.1	17.8	16.8	20.3	12.5	4.1
25–34 years	4,608	100.0	45.6	26.8	16.9	15.0	20.3	12.1	3.2
35–54 years	5,260	100.0	44.1	24.3	18.1	13.9	20.6	16.8	1.5
35–44 years	2,999	100.0	45.8	24.5	19.7	15.0	19.3	14.7	2.0
45–54 years	2,260	100.0	41.9	24.0	15.9	12.4	22.3	19.5	*0.8
55–64 years	1,964	100.0	33.2	19.3	13.0	14.1	19.0	30.0	*1.2
65 years and over	2,135	100.0	19.0	10.4	8.1	8.8	19.4	46.6	3.1
65–74 years	1,346	100.0	23.6	12.8	10.0	10.4	18.9	41.1	*2.9
75 years and over	789	100.0	11.2	6.2	*4.9	6.2	20.4	56.0	*3.5
Less than \$10,000									
All ages	40,694	100.0	38.8	22.9	14.8	11.5	17.0	22.7	8.6
2–4 years	2,356	100.0	23.5	14.0	8.4	3.1	*1.3	...	69.7
5–17 years	7,664	100.0	53.1	30.4	21.1	13.4	13.9	3.8	14.7
5–11 years	4,143	100.0	54.8	31.7	21.6	12.9	10.5	1.8	19.1
12–17 years	3,521	100.0	51.1	28.8	20.5	14.0	17.8	6.2	9.6
18–34 years	12,480	100.0	48.1	27.9	19.0	15.3	19.6	11.9	3.5
18–24 years	6,939	100.0	52.0	30.5	20.2	14.8	17.6	10.1	3.5
25–34 years	5,541	100.0	43.1	24.7	17.6	15.9	22.1	14.1	3.4
35–54 years	5,498	100.0	34.8	20.2	13.6	11.1	24.3	25.9	2.4
35–44 years	3,139	100.0	37.1	21.7	14.5	11.9	23.4	23.1	3.0
45–54 years	2,359	100.0	31.8	18.3	12.3	10.1	25.3	29.7	*1.6
55–64 years	3,615	100.0	28.7	17.9	10.5	9.7	17.8	41.5	1.4
65 years and over	9,081	100.0	24.3	15.4	7.9	7.7	15.3	49.8	1.4
65–74 years	4,965	100.0	26.0	16.1	8.6	7.9	16.6	46.9	1.5
75 years and over	4,116	100.0	22.2	14.5	7.1	7.6	13.7	53.2	1.3

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 1. Number and percent distribution of persons 2 years of age and over by interval since last dental visit, according to age, sex, race, and family income: United States, 1983—Con.

[Data are based on household interviews of the civilian noninstitutionalized population. The survey design, general qualifications, and information on the reliability of the estimates are given in the Technical notes.]

Characteristic	All persons ¹	All intervals ²	Interval since last dental visit							Never
			Total ³	Less than 1 year						
				Less than 6 months	6–11 months	1–2 years	2–5 years	5 years or more		
Number in thousands	Percent distribution									
\$10,000–\$19,999										
All ages	50,109	100.0	47.5	29.9	16.5	12.5	16.0	15.6	7.2	
2–4 years	2,654	100.0	23.3	15.8	7.0	2.6	*0.9	...	69.5	
5–17 years	9,684	100.0	56.8	35.8	19.6	15.0	11.2	2.9	13.1	
5–11 years	5,298	100.0	57.5	35.6	20.6	13.5	8.8	1.0	18.3	
12–17 years	4,386	100.0	55.9	36.1	18.4	16.8	14.1	5.1	6.7	
18–34 years	16,829	100.0	51.5	30.6	19.5	15.2	19.9	10.2	1.9	
18–24 years	6,872	100.0	50.2	29.6	19.3	15.6	20.6	9.6	2.4	
25–34 years	9,956	100.0	52.3	31.2	19.6	14.9	19.5	10.6	1.5	
35–54 years	8,831	100.0	44.4	28.6	14.8	13.6	19.7	20.3	1.1	
35–44 years	5,131	100.0	46.5	29.9	15.4	14.5	20.5	16.1	1.3	
45–54 years	3,699	100.0	41.5	26.8	13.9	12.3	18.5	26.1	*0.8	
55–64 years	5,124	100.0	43.2	28.3	13.9	9.6	17.3	27.9	0.9	
65 years and over	6,988	100.0	41.4	28.0	12.8	7.4	13.0	36.9	0.9	
65–74 years	4,777	100.0	44.6	30.0	13.9	7.6	14.0	32.5	0.9	
75 years and over	2,211	100.0	34.6	23.7	10.4	6.8	10.9	46.4	*0.9	
\$20,000–\$34,999										
All ages	61,987	100.0	61.4	40.8	19.2	11.6	12.5	8.5	5.1	
2–4 years	3,246	100.0	31.1	21.5	8.8	2.8	*1.0	...	61.8	
5–17 years	13,452	100.0	72.8	50.4	20.5	10.9	7.4	1.5	6.7	
5–11 years	7,084	100.0	73.9	50.0	21.9	9.3	5.3	0.6	10.2	
12–17 years	6,368	100.0	71.6	50.8	18.9	12.7	9.8	2.5	2.9	
18–34 years	20,333	100.0	61.3	38.3	21.6	14.6	15.3	6.7	0.9	
18–24 years	6,888	100.0	57.3	34.7	21.3	17.6	15.6	6.3	1.7	
25–34 years	13,445	100.0	63.3	40.2	21.7	13.0	15.2	6.9	0.6	
35–54 years	15,726	100.0	59.8	39.2	19.3	12.2	15.2	11.9	0.3	
35–44 years	9,241	100.0	62.7	41.2	20.4	12.2	14.9	9.2	*0.4	
45–54 years	6,485	100.0	55.5	36.5	17.8	12.2	15.6	15.7	*0.3	
55–64 years	5,705	100.0	58.0	41.1	15.8	9.1	13.8	17.8	*0.4	
65 years and over	3,526	100.0	58.8	43.3	15.1	6.7	11.3	22.7	*0.3	
65–74 years	2,490	100.0	61.5	45.4	15.7	6.9	12.0	19.0	*0.1	
75 years and over	1,035	100.0	52.4	38.5	13.7	6.0	9.5	31.6	*0.7	
\$35,000 or more										
All ages	42,223	100.0	74.0	51.3	21.3	9.1	8.5	5.0	2.6	
2–4 years	1,556	100.0	40.4	28.5	10.3	*2.1	*0.5	...	53.7	
5–17 years	9,145	100.0	84.5	62.4	20.4	7.4	4.6	0.7	2.3	
5–11 years	4,073	100.0	84.7	60.9	21.9	6.4	3.6	*0.2	4.5	
12–17 years	5,071	100.0	84.4	63.7	19.2	8.3	5.4	1.0	*0.5	
18–34 years	11,195	100.0	71.2	45.0	24.6	12.1	11.5	4.0	0.4	
18–24 years	4,536	100.0	69.3	42.4	25.1	14.0	11.7	3.5	*0.5	
25–34 years	6,658	100.0	72.4	46.7	24.2	10.8	11.4	4.3	*0.4	
35–54 years	14,397	100.0	74.0	50.6	22.2	9.3	9.7	6.3	*0.1	
35–44 years	8,070	100.0	75.1	51.4	22.5	9.7	9.7	5.1	*--	
45–54 years	6,328	100.0	72.6	49.7	21.8	9.0	9.7	7.8	*0.1	
55–64 years	4,107	100.0	74.3	53.8	18.7	7.7	7.8	9.1	*0.2	
65 years and over	1,823	100.0	65.8	52.3	12.5	7.1	8.8	17.7	*0.3	
65–74 years	1,261	100.0	73.7	59.8	13.0	6.6	7.9	11.6	*0.2	
75 years and over	562	100.0	48.0	35.6	11.4	8.2	10.9	31.5	*0.5	

¹Includes other race and unknown income.²Includes unknown intervals.³Includes persons with visit in past year, unknown exact interval.

NOTE: Estimates for which the numerator has a relative standard error of more than 30 percent are indicated with an asterisk.

Number of visits in past year

The distribution of the population by the number of reported dental visits in the previous year is shown in table 2. Among those who did make a visit, most were reported to have had either one or two visits. The proportion with only one visit was highest in the age group 2–4 years, in which over 60 percent of all children with visits had only one. More than 10 percent of the population 12–17 years of age, in contrast, had more than five visits. Of those adolescents with visits, just over 20 percent had five or more visits.

As mentioned earlier, not only were females of almost all ages more likely than males to have had a dental visit in the past year, they were also more likely to have had multiple visits. The highest proportion with multiple visits for both sexes was in the group aged 12–17 years, primarily for orthodonture, where about one-fourth of the girls and one-fifth of the boys had three or more visits.

Not all subgroups of adolescents, however, had an equally high rate of visits. About 25 percent of white adolescents

(12–17 years of age) had three or more dental visits, and about 15 percent had five or more visits; in contrast, only about 12 percent of black adolescents had three or more visits in the previous year, about the same proportion as black children 5–11 years of age.

There were also large differences in dental care use frequencies among the various income groups. With increasing income, not only did the proportion of persons with at least one visit in the prior year increase, but the proportion with three or more visits also increased. The usage difference associated with income was particularly great among persons 65–74 years of age. In this age group, only about 8 percent of persons in the lowest income category had three or more visits compared with about 14 percent and 20 percent in the middle income categories, and about 29 percent of those with an income of \$35,000 or more. Much, but not all, of the difference may be attributed to a substantially greater rate of edentulousness among persons in lower income categories.

Table 2. Percent distribution of persons 2 years of age and over by dental visits in past year according to age, sex, race, and family income: United States, 1983

[Data are based on household interviews of the civilian noninstitutionalized population. The survey design, general qualifications, and information on the reliability of the estimates are given in the Technical notes]

Characteristic	Total ¹	Number of visits in past year						
		None	1	2	3	4	5–12	13 or more
All persons		Percent distribution						
All ages ²	100.0	44.6	21.8	17.1	5.7	3.4	5.8	0.9
2–4 years	100.0	71.3	17.7	7.2	1.7	0.6	0.8	*.
5–17 years	100.0	32.7	27.0	20.6	6.2	3.5	7.3	2.0
5–11 years	100.0	32.5	29.9	22.0	6.5	3.4	4.4	0.6
12–17 years	100.0	32.8	24.0	19.2	5.9	3.5	10.3	3.3
18–34 years	100.0	42.7	24.3	17.2	5.6	3.2	5.7	0.7
18–24 years	100.0	44.1	25.2	15.7	5.2	2.9	5.3	0.8
25–34 years	100.0	41.7	23.6	18.3	5.8	3.3	6.0	0.7
35–54 years	100.0	42.1	20.9	18.2	6.3	4.2	6.8	0.8
35–44 years	100.0	40.1	21.9	19.0	6.5	4.4	6.6	0.8
45–54 years	100.0	44.7	19.4	17.1	6.1	4.0	7.1	0.7
55–64 years	100.0	48.0	16.8	17.3	6.5	4.1	5.8	0.5
65 years and over	100.0	60.9	13.9	12.7	4.6	3.0	3.7	0.3
65–74 years	100.0	56.4	15.3	14.0	5.3	3.5	4.4	0.5
75 years and over	100.0	68.4	11.6	10.6	3.5	2.3	2.6	*0.2
Male								
All ages	100.0	46.6	21.6	16.5	5.5	3.2	5.2	0.7
2–4 years	100.0	70.8	17.9	7.8	1.6	*0.7	*0.6	*.
5–17 years	100.0	33.4	27.6	20.6	5.9	3.4	6.2	1.7
5–11 years	100.0	32.1	30.9	21.8	6.3	3.5	3.9	0.5
12–17 years	100.0	34.8	24.2	19.5	5.5	3.3	8.6	2.9
18–34 years	100.0	47.9	23.2	15.4	5.0	2.7	4.8	0.5
18–24 years	100.0	49.4	24.8	13.4	4.6	2.4	4.2	0.4
25–34 years	100.0	46.7	21.9	16.8	5.3	2.9	5.2	0.5
35–54 years	100.0	44.2	20.2	17.6	6.5	4.0	6.2	0.5
35–44 years	100.0	42.8	21.0	18.2	6.7	4.2	6.0	0.5
45–54 years	100.0	46.1	19.2	16.9	6.3	3.7	6.5	0.5
55–64 years	100.0	48.9	16.2	17.1	6.8	3.9	5.6	0.5
65 years and over	100.0	61.6	14.2	12.2	4.6	3.0	3.3	*0.3
65–74 years	100.0	57.5	15.4	13.5	5.3	3.3	3.9	*0.4
75 years and over	100.0	69.6	11.8	9.7	3.4	2.3	2.3	*0.2

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 2. Percent distribution of persons 2 years of age and over by dental visits in past year according to age, sex, race, and family income: United States, 1983—Con.

[Data are based on household interviews of the civilian noninstitutionalized population. The survey design, general qualifications, and information on the reliability of the estimates are given in the Technical notes]

Technical notes

Characteristic	Total ¹	Number of visits in past year						
		None	1	2	3	4	5–12	13 or more
Female		Percent distribution						
All ages	100.0	42.7	21.9	17.7	5.8	3.6	6.4	1.1
2–4 years	100.0	72.0	17.5	6.6	1.8	*0.5	1.0	*-
5–17 years	100.0	31.8	26.3	20.6	6.5	3.5	8.4	2.2
5–11 years	100.0	32.9	28.9	22.2	6.7	3.4	4.8	0.7
12–17 years	100.0	30.8	23.7	19.0	6.2	3.6	12.0	3.8
18–34 years	100.0	37.8	25.3	19.0	6.1	3.6	6.5	1.0
18–24 years	100.0	39.0	25.6	17.9	5.8	3.5	6.3	1.2
25–34 years	100.0	36.9	25.1	19.7	6.3	3.8	6.7	0.8
35–54 years	100.0	40.2	21.5	18.7	6.1	4.4	7.3	1.0
35–44 years	100.0	37.6	22.8	19.8	6.3	4.5	7.1	1.1
45–54 years	100.0	43.5	19.7	17.4	5.9	4.2	7.6	0.9
55–64 years	100.0	47.2	17.4	17.5	6.3	4.2	5.9	0.5
65 years and over	100.0	60.4	13.7	13.0	4.6	3.1	4.0	0.4
65–74 years	100.0	55.5	15.2	14.3	5.3	3.6	4.8	0.5
75 years and over	100.0	67.6	11.5	11.1	3.5	2.4	2.8	*0.1
White								
All ages	100.0	42.6	22.1	18.1	5.8	3.6	6.1	1.0
2–4 years	100.0	70.6	18.0	7.7	1.7	0.6	0.7	*-
5–17 years	100.0	29.7	27.3	22.1	6.2	3.7	7.9	2.3
5–11 years	100.0	30.0	30.3	23.6	6.5	3.7	4.5	0.7
12–17 years	100.0	29.4	24.3	20.6	6.0	3.7	11.3	3.9
18–34 years	100.0	40.7	24.9	18.2	5.7	3.2	5.9	0.8
18–24 years	100.0	41.7	25.7	16.9	5.5	2.9	5.7	0.9
25–34 years	100.0	39.9	24.3	19.1	5.9	3.5	6.1	0.7
35–54 years	100.0	40.4	21.2	19.1	6.5	4.3	7.0	0.8
35–44 years	100.0	38.3	22.1	20.2	6.7	4.5	6.8	0.8
45–54 years	100.0	43.1	19.9	17.7	6.2	4.1	7.3	0.8
55–64 years	100.0	45.9	17.1	18.6	6.7	4.3	5.8	0.6
65 years and over	100.0	59.0	14.4	13.5	4.9	3.2	3.8	0.4
65–74 years	100.0	54.4	15.9	14.9	5.6	3.6	4.5	0.5
75 years and over	100.0	66.4	12.1	11.3	3.8	2.6	2.8	*0.2
Black								
All ages	100.0	57.7	19.4	10.3	4.6	2.4	3.9	0.4
2–4 years	100.0	74.2	16.9	5.2	*1.4	*0.2	*1.3	*-
5–17 years	100.0	48.3	25.0	13.3	6.2	2.1	3.4	*0.3
5–11 years	100.0	45.8	27.6	13.4	6.9	1.9	3.1	*0.2
12–17 years	100.0	50.8	22.2	13.1	5.4	2.3	3.7	*0.4
18–34 years	100.0	55.3	20.4	11.0	4.7	2.8	4.0	*0.4
18–24 years	100.0	57.3	21.9	9.5	3.5	3.3	2.6	*0.4
25–34 years	100.0	53.6	19.1	12.2	5.6	2.5	5.2	*0.3
35–54 years	100.0	55.2	17.6	11.5	4.9	3.3	5.3	*0.7
35–44 years	100.0	53.4	19.5	10.7	5.0	3.8	5.1	*1.0
45–54 years	100.0	57.6	15.1	12.7	4.8	2.7	5.6	*0.4
55–64 years	100.0	66.4	15.1	5.7	4.6	2.1	5.0	*0.2
65 years and over	100.0	80.7	8.3	4.1	*1.5	*1.7	2.6	*0.2
65–74 years	100.0	76.0	9.9	4.8	*2.2	*2.7	3.4	*0.4
75 years and over	100.0	88.8	5.6	*3.0	*0.5	*-	*1.4	*-

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 2. Percent distribution of persons 2 years of age and over by dental visits in past year according to age, sex, race, and family income: United States, 1983—Con.

[Data are based on household interviews of the civilian noninstitutionalized population. The survey design, general qualifications, and information on the reliability of the estimates are given in the Technical notes]

Characteristic	Total ¹	Number of visits in past year						
		None	1	2	3	4	5–12	13 or more
Under \$10,000		Percent distribution						
All ages	100.0	61.1	17.7	10.0	4.2	2.1	3.8	0.4
2–4 years	100.0	76.5	15.6	4.9	*1.1	*0.5	*.	*.
5–17 years	100.0	46.9	24.5	12.8	7.0	2.8	5.0	*0.5
5–11 years	100.0	45.2	26.4	12.6	7.6	3.4	4.2	*0.4
12–17 years	100.0	48.9	22.2	13.1	6.2	2.2	5.9	*0.7
18–34 years	100.0	51.9	22.4	12.8	4.8	2.4	4.5	0.6
18–24 years	100.0	47.9	24.2	14.4	5.1	2.6	4.5	0.6
25–34 years	100.0	56.8	20.0	10.9	4.4	2.3	4.5	0.5
35–54 years	100.0	65.0	15.2	8.4	3.7	2.4	4.4	*0.3
35–44 years	100.0	62.9	15.7	9.0	4.5	2.7	4.7	*0.4
45–54 years	100.0	67.8	14.5	7.7	2.8	1.9	4.0	*0.2
55–64 years	100.0	71.3	11.6	8.2	3.3	1.5	3.4	*0.2
65 years and over	100.0	75.6	10.1	6.9	2.7	1.6	2.5	*0.2
65–74 years	100.0	73.8	10.9	6.8	2.9	1.9	2.9	*0.4
75 years and over	100.0	77.6	9.2	6.9	2.4	1.2	2.0	*.
\$10,000–\$19,999								
All ages	100.0	52.3	19.7	13.6	4.9	3.2	4.9	0.7
2–4 years	100.0	76.6	13.6	5.6	2.1	*0.7	*0.8	*0.1
5–17 years	100.0	42.9	24.8	15.9	5.7	3.3	5.3	0.9
5–11 years	100.0	42.3	27.0	16.6	6.0	3.6	3.4	*0.3
12–17 years	100.0	43.7	22.2	15.1	5.4	2.9	7.5	1.7
18–34 years	100.0	48.4	22.3	14.3	5.2	3.4	5.2	0.7
18–24 years	100.0	49.6	22.4	13.3	4.9	3.4	4.9	0.8
25–34 years	100.0	47.5	22.3	15.0	5.4	3.3	5.4	0.7
35–54 years	100.0	55.4	17.1	12.2	4.8	3.6	5.6	0.8
35–44 years	100.0	53.3	18.5	13.0	5.0	3.7	5.3	*0.8
45–54 years	100.0	58.4	15.2	11.0	4.5	3.4	6.1	*0.8
55–64 years	100.0	56.6	15.7	13.4	4.8	3.6	5.0	*0.5
65 years and over	100.0	58.6	15.0	13.4	4.7	3.2	4.1	0.6
65–74 years	100.0	55.4	15.7	14.6	5.3	3.5	4.4	*0.7
75 years and over	100.0	65.4	13.6	10.9	3.3	2.4	3.6	*0.4
\$20,000–\$34,999								
All ages	100.0	38.5	23.5	19.5	6.6	3.8	6.6	1.1
2–4 years	100.0	68.6	19.2	8.4	1.7	*0.5	*1.0	*0.1
5–17 years	100.0	27.1	28.6	23.8	6.4	3.7	7.5	2.5
5–11 years	100.0	26.0	31.9	26.1	6.8	3.4	4.5	0.8
12–17 years	100.0	28.3	25.1	21.2	6.0	4.0	10.8	4.3
18–34 years	100.0	38.5	24.7	18.8	6.6	3.7	6.6	0.7
18–24 years	100.0	42.5	24.9	16.4	6.1	3.3	5.7	0.7
25–34 years	100.0	36.5	24.6	20.0	6.8	3.9	7.1	0.8
35–54 years	100.0	40.2	21.4	18.7	6.8	4.5	7.3	0.8
35–44 years	100.0	37.1	22.6	19.4	6.9	5.1	7.5	1.0
45–54 years	100.0	44.5	19.5	17.7	6.8	3.7	7.0	0.6
55–64 years	100.0	41.9	18.1	19.6	8.3	4.3	6.9	*0.7
65 years and over	100.0	41.2	19.1	20.8	8.2	4.9	5.3	*0.3
65–74 years	100.0	38.5	20.3	21.2	8.4	5.0	5.9	*0.4
75 years and over	100.0	47.6	16.4	19.8	7.7	4.6	*3.8	*.

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 2. Percent distribution of persons 2 years of age and over by dental visits in past year according to age, sex, race, and family income: United States, 1983—Con.

[Data are based on household interviews of the civilian noninstitutionalized population. The survey design, general qualifications, and information on the reliability of the estimates are given in the Technical notes]

Characteristic	Total ¹	Number of visits in past year						
		None	1	2	3	4	5-12	13 or more
\$35,000 or more		Percent distribution						
All ages	100.0	25.9	26.1	25.7	7.3	4.8	8.3	1.5
2-4 years	100.0	59.6	24.5	12.6	*1.3	*0.9	*0.4	*.
5-17 years	100.0	15.3	29.2	28.2	6.6	4.6	12.0	3.7
5-11 years	100.0	15.1	33.9	32.6	6.5	4.2	6.6	*0.7
12-17 years	100.0	15.5	25.5	24.7	6.6	4.9	16.2	6.1
18-34 years	100.0	28.7	29.1	24.8	6.2	3.5	6.5	0.9
18-24 years	100.0	30.6	31.3	21.5	5.5	3.0	6.6	1.1
25-34 years	100.0	27.4	27.6	27.1	6.6	3.8	6.4	0.8
35-54 years	100.0	25.8	24.9	25.6	8.3	5.3	8.6	1.0
35-44 years	100.0	24.8	26.1	26.5	8.3	5.1	8.0	0.9
45-54 years	100.0	27.1	23.3	24.5	8.4	5.4	9.4	1.1
55-64 years	100.0	25.5	20.4	28.7	9.1	7.1	7.8	*0.8
65 years and over	100.0	34.2	16.2	24.8	9.8	8.1	6.1	*0.4
65-74 years	100.0	26.4	17.1	27.7	11.5	9.0	7.9	*0.6
75 years and over	100.0	52.0	14.2	18.5	*6.2	*6.2	*2.3	*.

¹Includes unknown number of visits.

²Includes other races and unknown income.

NOTE: Estimates for which the numerator has a relative standard error of more than 30 percent are indicated with an asterisk.

Average number of visits

Overall, Americans made an estimated 422,043,000 visits to dentists in 1983, an average of 1.9 visits per person (table 3). Taking the population as a whole, the average rate was highest for adolescents aged 12-17 years. The rate was lower in the young adult years (18-34), higher for those 35-64 years of age, and lower among persons aged 65 and over. To some extent, the decline over age 65 is attributable to an increasing rate of edentulousness with age and less need for dental services.

There were significant differences, however, between the racial groups in the rates of dental visits. Among black persons, the highest average rate occurred not in the 12-17-year age group, but in the 45-54-year age group (1.8 visits per person per year).

The relationship of age to the use of dental services is affected by family income. The effect was greatest among persons 65 years of age and over and 12-17 years. In all income groups, dental visits in the older age groups declined; however, the age at which the decline occurred differed by income group: The rate of dental visits began to decline at a higher age for those with higher income. For those with a family income of more than \$20,000, the rate of dental visits for adults increased through the age group 65-74 years and only declined among those 75 years of age and over. For all income groups combined, adolescents made significantly more visits than those in other age groups. The high rate of visits for adolescents, however, was almost entirely among those with family incomes of more than \$20,000.

Table 3. Number of dental visits and visits per person 2 years of age and over per year by age according to sex, race, and family income: United States, 1983

[Data are based on household interviews of the civilian noninstitutionalized population. The survey design, general qualifications, and information on the reliability of the estimates are given in the Technical notes.]

Characteristic	All persons	Sex		Race			Family income			
		Male	Female	White	Black	All other	Less than \$10,000	\$10,000– \$19,999	\$20,000– \$34,999	\$35,000 or more
Number of visits in thousands										
All ages ¹	422,043	182,584	239,459	381,746	31,307	8,990	50,487	77,512	139,563	112,453
2–4 years	7,166	3,764	3,402	6,067	*941	*157	1,307	1,430	3,137	1,027
5–17 years	110,630	50,170	60,460	99,967	7,707	2,957	10,254	18,085	39,150	33,864
5–11 years	47,268	22,364	24,904	41,266	4,798	1,205	5,787	9,384	17,444	11,370
12–17 years	63,362	27,807	35,556	58,701	2,909	1,752	4,467	8,701	21,706	22,494
18–34 years	113,147	46,636	66,511	100,726	10,114	2,307	18,130	24,205	39,521	21,692
18–24 years	44,344	17,734	26,610	39,766	4,038	*540	11,345	8,936	11,249	8,203
25–34 years	68,803	28,902	39,901	60,960	6,076	1,767	6,785	15,269	28,272	13,489
35–54 years	106,408	46,763	59,645	95,036	8,863	2,510	7,486	14,141	36,279	38,073
35–44 years	61,133	26,983	34,150	55,423	4,752	*959	4,451	8,820	22,583	20,173
45–54 years	45,275	19,780	25,495	39,613	4,111	1,551	3,035	5,320	13,696	17,900
55–64 years	45,118	20,021	25,097	42,008	2,474	*635	4,844	9,084	12,567	11,838
65 years and over	39,574	15,229	24,345	37,942	1,207	*424	8,466	10,567	8,908	5,959
65–74 years	28,496	11,541	16,955	27,040	1,088	*368	5,468	8,136	6,804	4,484
75 years and over	11,078	3,688	7,390	10,902	*119	*56	2,998	2,431	2,104	1,474
Number per person per year										
All ages ¹	1.9	1.7	2.1	2.0	1.2	1.7	1.2	1.5	2.3	2.7
2–4 years	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.7	*0.5	*0.5	0.6	0.5	1.0	0.7
5–17 years	2.5	2.2	2.8	2.7	1.2	2.3	1.3	1.9	2.9	3.7
5–11 years	2.1	1.9	2.2	2.2	1.4	1.9	1.4	1.8	2.5	2.8
12–17 years	2.9	2.5	3.3	3.2	0.9	2.7	1.3	2.0	3.4	4.4
18–34 years	1.7	1.4	1.9	1.8	1.2	1.3	1.5	1.4	1.9	1.9
18–24 years	1.6	1.3	1.8	1.7	1.1	*0.8	1.6	1.3	1.6	1.8
25–34 years	1.8	1.5	2.0	1.8	1.3	1.7	1.2	1.5	2.1	2.0
35–54 years	2.1	1.9	2.3	2.1	1.7	1.8	1.4	1.6	2.3	2.6
35–44 years	2.1	1.9	2.3	2.2	1.6	*1.2	1.4	1.7	2.4	2.5
45–54 years	2.0	1.9	2.2	2.0	1.8	2.9	1.3	1.4	2.1	2.8
55–64 years	2.1	2.0	2.1	2.1	1.3	*1.8	1.3	1.8	2.2	2.9
65 years and over	1.5	1.4	1.6	1.6	0.6	*1.3	0.9	1.5	2.5	3.3
65–74 years	1.8	1.7	1.9	1.9	0.8	*1.7	1.1	1.7	2.7	3.6
75 years and over	1.1	1.0	1.2	1.2	*0.2	*0.5	0.7	1.1	2.0	2.6

¹Includes unknown number of visits.²Includes unknown income.

NOTE: Estimates for which the numerator has a relative standard error of more than 30 percent are indicated with an asterisk.

Technical notes

The National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) is a continuous, cross-sectional, nationwide survey conducted by household interview. Each week a probability sample of households in the civilian noninstitutionalized population is interviewed by personnel of the U.S. Bureau of the Census to obtain information on the health and other characteristics of each member of the household.

During 1983, the sample consisted of approximately 40,900 households. The total noninterview rate was about 3 percent—about 2 percent of which was attributable to respondent refusal, and the remainder resulted primarily from an inability to locate eligible respondents at home after repeated calls. Information was obtained for all household members for the core section of the questionnaire, a sample of approximately 106,000 persons. The dental questions were contained in a separate booklet. Dental information was obtained for all but 438 of the 105,620 people for whom core information was obtained, an additional non-response rate of 0.4 percent. A description of the survey design, methods used in estimation, and general qualifications of NHIS data was published previously.³

The estimates shown in this report are based on a sample of the (civilian noninstitutionalized) population rather than on the entire population and are therefore subject to sampling error. Some tables in this report contain cells in which the estimate is small for a given characteristic. When an estimate or the numerator or denominator of a rate is small, the sampling error may be relatively high. Approximate standard errors of estimates of selected percents are shown in tables I and II. Additional information on standard errors for all statistics presented in this report is available from the author.

In this report, terms such as "similar" and "the same" mean that no statistically significant difference exists between the statistics being compared. Terms relating to difference

(for example, "greater" or "less") indicate that differences are statistically significant. The *t*-test with a critical value of 1.96 (0.05 level of significance) was used to test all comparisons that are discussed. Lack of comment regarding the difference between any two statistics does not mean the difference was tested and found not significant.

Table I. Standard errors, expressed in percentage points, of estimated percents: 1983 National Health Interview Survey dental supplement; dental visits

Base of percent in thousands of visits	Estimated percent				
	2 or 98	5 or 95	10 or 90	20 or 80	50
50	19.0	29.6	40.8	54.4	68.0
70	16.1	25.0	34.5	45.9	57.4
100	13.5	20.9	28.8	38.4	48.1
300	7.8	12.1	16.6	22.2	27.7
500	6.0	9.4	12.9	17.2	21.5
700	5.1	7.9	10.9	14.5	18.2
1,000	4.3	6.6	9.1	12.2	15.2
5,000	1.9	3.0	4.1	5.4	6.8
10,000	1.3	2.1	2.9	3.8	4.8
20,000	1.0	1.5	2.0	2.7	3.4
30,000	0.8	1.2	1.7	2.2	2.8
50,000	0.6	0.9	1.3	1.7	2.1
100,000	0.4	0.7	0.9	1.2	1.5
400,000	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.6	0.8

Table II. Standard errors, expressed in percentage points, of estimated percents: 1983 National Health Interview Survey dental supplement; population

Base of percent in thousands (population)	Estimated percent				
	2 or 98	5 or 95	10 or 90	20 or 80	50
50	3.9	6.0	8.3	11.1	13.8
70	3.3	5.1	7.0	9.4	11.7
100	2.7	4.3	5.9	7.8	9.8
300	1.6	2.5	3.4	4.5	5.6
500	1.2	1.9	2.6	3.5	4.4
700	1.0	1.6	2.2	3.0	3.7
1,000	0.9	1.3	1.9	2.5	3.1
5,000	0.4	0.6	0.8	1.1	1.4
10,000	0.3	0.4	0.6	0.8	1.0
20,000	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.6	0.7
30,000	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.6
50,000	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.4
100,000	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.3
200,000	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2

³National Center for Health Statistics, M. G. Kovar and G. S. Poe: The National Health Interview Survey design, 1973-84, and procedures, 1975-83. *Vital and Health Statistics*. Series 1, No. 18. DHHS Pub. No. (PHS) 85-1320. Public Health Service. Washington. U.S. Government Printing Office, Aug. 1985.

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Symbols

- - - Data not available
 - . . . Category not applicable
 - Quantity zero
 - 0.0 Quantity more than zero but less than 0.05
 - Z Quantity more than zero but less than 500 where numbers are rounded to thousands
 - * Figure does not meet standards of reliability or precision
 - # Figure suppressed to comply with confidentiality requirements
-

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