

# Health Reports, April 2024

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## Dental insurance is a key predictor of oral health care access and use among Canadians

Oral health is a crucial component of overall health and can affect physical and emotional well-being. Two new articles released today in *Health Reports* look at the role of insurance and cost barriers in access to oral health care services among Canadian adults, children and youth.

### Dental insurance reduces barriers to seeing a dental professional

In 2022, cost was reported as a barrier to seeing a dental professional for Canadians, with 25.9% of adults avoiding dental visits due to cost in the previous 12 months. A higher percentage of uninsured adults (47.4%) avoided dental care because of cost than adults with public insurance (20.9%) or private insurance (16.0%). As reported in the 2019 Canadian Health Survey of Children and Youth, children without dental insurance (23.3%) were significantly more likely to report a cost barrier to seeing a dental professional compared with those with dental insurance (4.5%). Among families with an adjusted family net income of \$90,000 or more, 13.4% of children and youth without dental insurance were unable to see a dentist due to cost compared with 1.9% of those with dental insurance.

### The majority of Canadian children and youth aged 5 years and older visit a dentist

Visits to an oral health care provider are important, as they help prevent oral health problems such as cavities and establish a healthy oral care routine. In 2019, 89.6% of Canadian children and youth aged 5 to 17 years had visited a dental professional within the previous 12 months. The percentage of children and youth having visited a dental professional was lower among those who reported cost barriers to dental care (60.8%) compared with those who did not have cost barriers to dental care (92.2%). When looking at children younger than 5 years, 79.8% of 1-year-olds had never visited a dentist. However, this proportion decreased with age: 16.4% of 4-year-olds had never been to a dentist. For adults aged 18 to 64 years, 65.7% had visited a dental professional within the last year, as reported in the 2022 Canadian Community Health Survey.

### Canadians with dental insurance are more likely to have visited a dentist regardless of income

In 2019, a higher percentage of Canadian children and youth with dental insurance (93.1%) visited a dental professional in the previous 12 months than uninsured children and youth (78.5%). Similarly, among adults, those with private insurance (74.6%) or public insurance (62.8%) were more likely to visit a dental professional than those without insurance (49.8%). The positive relationship between dental insurance and oral health care use for adults, children and youth was evident, even among the most affluent Canadian families and those who reported cost was a barrier to visiting a dentist.

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The articles "[Assessing the role of dental insurance in oral health care disparities in Canadian adults](#)" and "[Factors associated with the use of oral health care services among Canadian children and youth](#)" are now available in the April 2024 online issue of *Health Reports*, Vol. 35, No. 04 (**82-003-X**).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; [infostats@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:infostats@statcan.gc.ca)) or Media Relations ([statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca)).