

Dental visits returning to levels seen before the COVID-19 pandemic among Canadians in the provinces, 2023-2024

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According to the first results from the Canadian Oral Health Survey (COHS), approximately three in four Canadians aged 12 years and older (72%) reported during the period from November 2023 to March 2024 that they had visited an oral health professional in the past year. This was down from 75% in 2018 but up from 65% in 2022.

First ever national oral health survey

Oral health is a critical component of well-being, affecting physical and psychological health throughout people's lives. Routine dental visits play an important role in maintaining oral health. The [Canadian Dental Association](#) suggests that dental visits every six months are adequate for most people. However, the recommended frequency of visits depends on an individual's needs and risk of oral diseases.

Many Canadians had [difficulties accessing health care services or avoided non-emergency dental treatments](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic because of fear of exposure to the virus. This led to the postponement of dental services.

The COHS is the first-ever national survey dedicated to oral health in Canada. It was conducted in the provinces from November 2023 to March 2024.

The survey was developed to address key oral health data gaps in Canada and to provide data to help inform new federal investments in dental care, including the Canadian Dental Care Plan.

The survey covered several key aspects of oral health, including individuals' ability to pay for oral health care, experiences with the oral health care system, challenges finding oral health services, self-reported oral health, and care needs. This release focuses on recent dental visits and dental insurance coverage.

School-aged children and youth most likely to have visited an oral health professional in the past year

Just under three in four Canadians (72%) reported during the period from November 2023 to March 2024 that they had visited an oral health professional in the previous 12 months.

School-aged children and youth aged 6 to 17 years (about 88%) were most likely to have visited an oral health care professional in the previous 12 months, while children younger than 6 years (52%) were least likely to have seen one.

Among adults, those aged 18 to 64 years (about 75%) were most likely to have visited an oral health professional in the previous 12 months, followed by those aged 65 to 79 years (69%) and 80 years and older (55%).

These differences are consistent with the trends reported in previous years.

Canadians with dental insurance coverage are much more likely to see an oral health professional than those without insurance

Canadians with private or public dental insurance (81%) were much more likely to report during the period from November 2023 to March 2024 that they had visited an oral health professional in the past year than those without insurance (56%).



These results are in line with recent reports that identified dental insurance as an independent predictor of accessing dental care among [adults](#), [seniors](#) and [children and youth](#), even after controlling for other factors.

Dental insurance is much more prevalent among Canadian youth than among seniors

From November 2023 to March 2024, children aged 0 to 5 years (83%) were most likely to be covered by dental insurance, followed by youth aged 6 to 11 years (79%) and 12 to 17 years (77%).

In contrast, about one in three seniors aged 65 to 79 years living in private dwellings (38%) and one in four seniors aged 80 years and older living in private dwellings (25%) reported having dental insurance.

Albertans most likely to be covered by dental insurance, Quebecers least likely

From November 2023 to March 2024, Canadians living in population centres (67%) were more likely to have dental insurance coverage than those living in rural areas (56%).

Canadians living in Quebec (53%) were the least likely to have dental insurance.

Dental insurance coverage in the other provinces ranged from 67% in New Brunswick, Ontario and British Columbia to 77% in Alberta.

Canadians more likely to report having dental insurance coverage compared with two years earlier, but proportion remains just below pre-pandemic level

Just under two-thirds (64%) of Canadians aged 12 years and older reported during the period from November 2023 to March 2024 that they had dental expenses covered by dental insurance, just below pre-pandemic levels (65% in 2018) but up from 2022 (61%).

This decline in insurance coverage is likely related to the decrease in dental visits seen from 2018 to 2024. However, many other factors affect access to dental care, including the availability of oral health care providers, the accessibility of dental offices, accommodation for patients' specific needs and acceptability (i.e., mutual comfort between patient and oral health professional).

Table 1
Proportion of Canadians who visited an oral health professional in the previous 12 months, Canada, excluding territories

	Visited an oral health professional in the previous 12 months	95% confidence interval (low)	95% confidence interval (high)
	%		
Total, aged 0 and older	72.2	70.9	73.5
Gender			
Men+ ¹	70.6	68.6	72.4
Women+	73.8*	72.3	75.3
Age group			
0 to 5 years	51.8*	47.8	55.8
6 to 11 years	88.6*	86.2	90.6
12 to 17 years	87.6*	85.1	89.7
18 to 34 years ¹	67.5	63.3	71.4
35 to 49 years	74.6*	72.1	77.0
50 to 64 years	76.7*	74.6	78.7
65 to 79 years	69.5	67.6	71.2
80 years and older	55.1*	51.6	58.5
Rurality status			
Rural area ¹	67.0	64.1	69.8
Population centre	72.9*	71.5	74.3
Province			
Newfoundland and Labrador	68.7*	66.0	71.3
Prince Edward Island	73.1	69.6	76.4
Nova Scotia	71.1	68.4	73.7
New Brunswick	65.0*	62.1	67.8
Quebec	69.0*	66.7	71.3
Ontario ¹	74.5	71.8	77.0
Manitoba	69.3*	66.5	72.0
Saskatchewan	70.4*	67.7	72.9
Alberta	70.9	68.3	73.4
British Columbia	74.6	71.5	77.5
Dental insurance			
Yes	80.8*	79.4	82.1
No ¹	56.0	53.6	58.4
Don't know	49.4	40.3	58.6
Type of dental insurance			
Public insurance only ¹	69.1	62.3	75.1
Private insurance	81.6*	80.2	83.0
Don't know type of insurance	62.8 ^E	44.8	77.8

^E use with caution

* significantly different from reference category (p < 0.05)

1. Reference category.

Note(s): Given that the non-binary population is small, data aggregation to a two-category gender variable is sometimes necessary to protect the confidentiality of responses. In these cases, individuals in the category "non-binary people" are distributed into the other two gender categories. Unless otherwise indicated in the text, the category "men+" includes men (and boys), as well as some non-binary people, while the category "women+" includes women (and girls), as well as some non-binary people.

Source(s): Canadian Oral Health Survey – Cycle 1, 2023 to 2024 (5399).

Table 2
Insurance status, Canada, excluding territories

	Have dental insurance	95% confidence interval (low)	95% confidence interval (high)	Does not have dental insurance	95% confidence interval (low)	95% confidence interval (high)	Dental insurance status unknown	95% confidence interval (low)	95% confidence interval (high)
	%								
Total, aged 0 and older	65.6	64.2	66.9	31.0	29.7	32.2	3.5	2.9	4.2
Gender									
Men+ ¹	65.9	64.0	67.7	30.5	28.8	32.2	3.6	2.9	4.5
Women+	65.2	63.6	66.9	31.4	29.9	33.0	3.3	2.6	4.3
Age group									
0 to 5 years	82.7*	79.0	85.9	14.2*	11.3	17.6	3.1*	1.9	5.0
6 to 11 years	78.8*	75.3	82.0	17.2*	14.3	20.6	3.9	2.7	5.6
12 to 17 years	76.9*	73.7	79.9	18.2*	15.5	21.1	4.9	3.4	7.0
18 to 34 years ¹	67.3	63.2	71.3	26.3	22.8	30.2	6.4	4.6	8.8
35 to 49 years	75.3*	72.8	77.6	22.8	20.6	25.2	1.9*	1.3	2.9
50 to 64 years	70.1	67.8	72.3	27.8	25.7	29.9	2.1*	1.4	3.2
65 to 79 years	38.0*	36.1	40.0	59.8*	57.8	61.7	2.2*	1.7	2.8
80 years and older	25.1*	22.3	28.2	71.7*	68.5	74.6	3.2*	2.2	4.5
Rurality status									
Rural area ¹	56.3	52.8	59.7	41.7	38.3	45.2	2.0	1.4	2.7
Population centre	66.8*	65.3	68.3	29.5*	28.2	30.9	3.7*	3.0	4.5
Province									
Newfoundland and Labrador	69.6	67.0	72.1	26.5	24.3	28.8	3.9	2.7	5.6
Prince Edward Island	70.9	67.2	74.3	26.8	23.5	30.3	2.3	1.4	3.8
Nova Scotia	69.9	67.3	72.4	27.6	25.5	29.9	2.4	1.3	4.7
New Brunswick	67.1	64.3	69.9	29.7	27.1	32.4	3.2	2.2	4.8
Quebec	52.9*	50.2	55.5	43.7*	41.2	46.3	3.4	2.4	4.7
Ontario ¹	66.9	64.1	69.7	28.9	26.4	31.5	4.1	3.0	5.7
Manitoba	72.1*	69.3	74.8	24.3*	21.8	26.9	3.6	2.3	5.6
Saskatchewan	76.1*	73.6	78.4	21.3*	19.1	23.6	2.6	1.9	3.7
Alberta	77.0*	74.4	79.5	20.2*	17.9	22.7	2.7	1.9	4.0
British Columbia	66.8	63.8	69.6	30.5	27.8	33.4	2.7	1.7	4.3

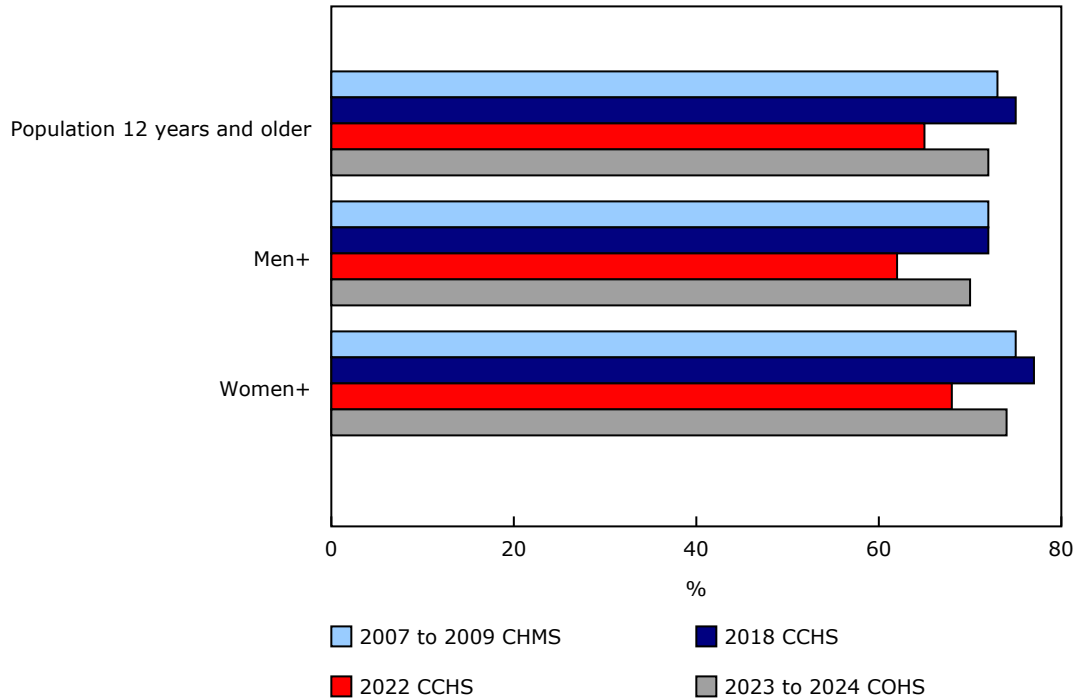
* significantly different from reference category (p < 0.05)

1. Reference category.

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Source(s): Canadian Oral Health Survey – Cycle 1, 2023 to 2024 (5399).

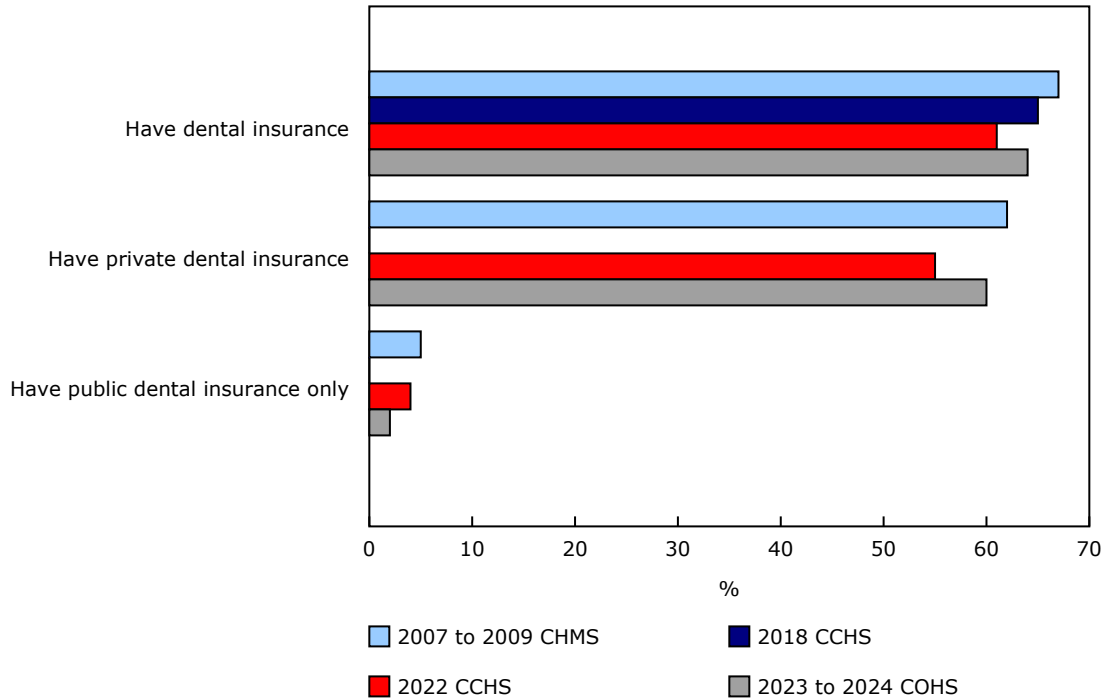
Chart 1
Percentage of reported visits to an oral health professional in the previous 12 months for Canadians 12 years and older, by gender, Canada, excluding territories



Note(s): CHMS = Canadian Health Measures Survey, CCHS = Canadian Community Health Survey and COHS = Canadian Oral Health Survey. Data on gender were not collected in the 2007 to 2009 CHMS and the 2018 CCHS. The results for these years are based on self-reported sex at birth (male or female), while the results for the 2022 CCHS and the 2023 to 2024 COHS are based on self-reported gender. Given that the non-binary population is small, data aggregation to a two-category gender variable is sometimes necessary to protect the confidentiality of responses. In these cases, individuals in the category "non-binary people" are distributed into the other two gender categories. Unless otherwise indicated in the text, the category "men+" includes men (and boys), as well as some non-binary people, while the category "women+" includes women (and girls), as well as some non-binary people. The CHMS includes only people aged 12 to 79 years.

Source(s): Canadian Oral Health Survey – Cycle 1, 2023 to 2024 (5399), Canadian Community Health Survey, 2018 and 2022 (3226) and Canadian Health Measures Survey – Cycle 1, 2007 to 2009 (5071).

Chart 2
Insurance status of Canadians aged 12 years and older at the time of the survey, Canada, excluding territories



.. not available for a specific reference period

Note(s): CHMS = Canadian Health Measures Survey, CCHS = Canadian Community Health Survey and COHS = Canadian Oral Health Survey. The CHMS includes only people aged 12 to 79 years.

Source(s): Canadian Oral Health Survey – Cycle 1, 2023 to 2024 (5399), Canadian Community Health Survey, 2018 and 2022 (3226) and Canadian Health Measures Survey – Cycle 1, 2007 to 2009 (5071).

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Note to readers

Cycle 1 of the Canadian Oral Health Survey (COHS) is a voluntary annual household survey that collects information directly from Canadians on their oral health.

The target population for the COHS consists of Canadian households with adults aged 18 years and older living in the provinces. Where applicable, responding adults also provided information for all household members aged 17 years and younger.

It excludes people living in the territories and on reserves and in other Indigenous settlements in the provinces, as well as the institutionalized population.

Past results presented here for comparisons over time are from other health surveys: results for 2007 to 2009 are from the Canadian Health Measures Survey, and results for 2018 and 2022 are from the Canadian Community Health Survey. It is important to note that each of these surveys asked about respondents' last visit to an oral health professional in different ways. The COHS specifically mentioned visits to any oral health professional, including dentists, denturists, dental hygienists and any other dental specialists. However, the other surveys did not specify which oral health professionals were included in their questions.

Dental insurance is defined as having all or part of respondents' dental expenses covered by any insurance plan or government program. Private insurance includes plans through an employer (including those partially paid or sponsored by an employer), private plans (including personally purchased plans) and plans through colleges and universities. Public dental insurance includes government-paid plans (e.g., children's or seniors' dental programs, the Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec, and the Non-Insured Health Benefits program for First Nations people and Inuit, which includes individuals living on and off reserves).

Population centres are areas with a high concentration of people, such as large towns or cities. These areas consist of nearby communities that are economically and socially connected and usually have a population of at least 10,000 people. In contrast, rural areas are those with a population of fewer than 10,000 people.

This preliminary release includes several variables from the COHS related to dental visits, insurance, and awareness of publicly funded programs. The full release of the COHS data is anticipated this fall. It will include all data from the survey and provide additional insights on oral health care access and self-reported oral health status in Canada.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [5399](#).

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) or Media Relations (statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca).