



# Most Kentucky adults have had dental visit in past year

Oral health is critical to overall health. In February 2014, Governor Steve Beshear launched the kyhealthnow initiative, making “improving the health and wellness of Kentucky’s children, families and workforce one of his highest priorities.”<sup>1</sup> One of kyhealthnow’s goals is to increase Kentucky adults’ dental visits 10% by 2019.

The American Dental Association (ADA) recommends that adults have regular dental visits based on their oral health status and health history, and in consultation with their dentists.<sup>2</sup> To learn whether Kentucky adults meet this standard, the **Kentucky Health Issues Poll (KHIP)** asked about adults’ most recent dental visit.

## Most have visited dentist in past year

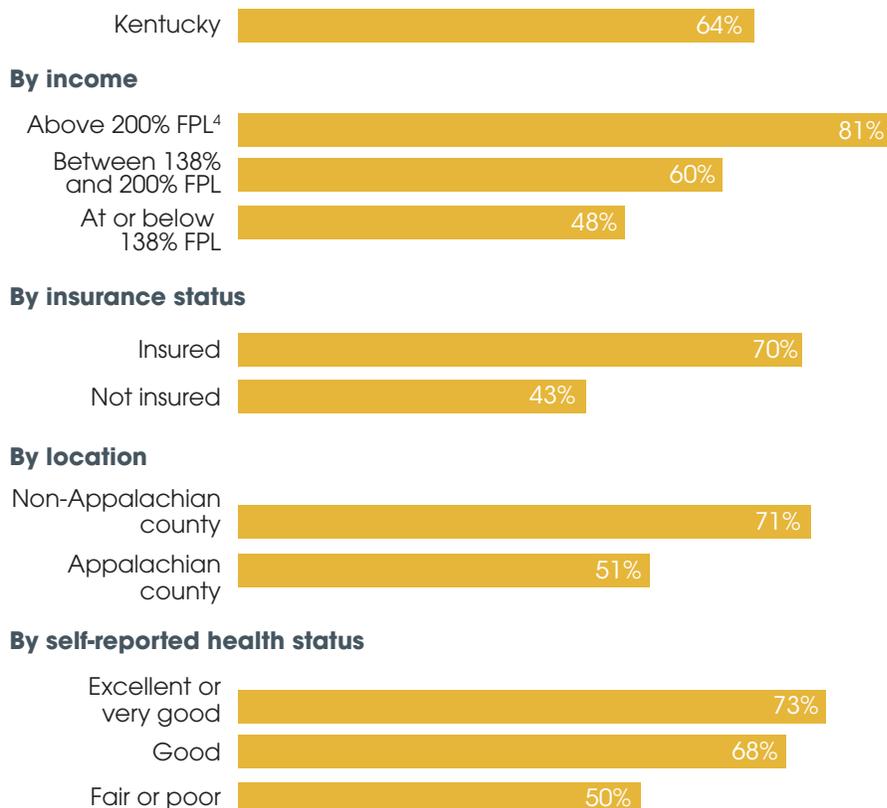
KHIP asked adults how long it had been since their last dental visit.<sup>3</sup> Six in 10 adults (64%)

<sup>1</sup> <http://governor.ky.gov/healthierky/kyhealthnow/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ada.org/8700.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> KHIP asked, “How long has it been since you last visited a dentist or a dental clinic for any reason? Include visits to dental specialists, such as orthodontists.”

### Percentage of Kentucky adults who had a dental visit within the past year



reported visiting a dentist or dental clinic within the past year. Almost 1 in 6 (15%) had not visited the dentist or dental clinic in five or more years.

<sup>4</sup> 138% of FPL in 2012 was \$31,800 for a family of four; 200% FPL was \$46,100.

## Differences by income, insurance status, location, health status

Only 5 in 10 adults (48%) with incomes at or below 138% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL)<sup>4</sup>

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reported seeing a dentist in the past year. This compares with 6 in 10 adults (60%) with incomes between 138% and 200% FPL and 8 in 10 adults (81%) with incomes above 200% FPL. About 4 in 10 uninsured Kentucky adults (43%) reported a dental visit in the past year, compared with 7 in 10 insured adults (70%).

Geographic differences were also seen. Half of adults living in Appalachian counties (51%) had seen a dentist in the past year, compared with 7 in 10 adults (71%) living in non-Appalachian counties. Only half of respondents (50%) who rated their own health as fair or poor had visited the dentist or dental clinic within the past year.<sup>5</sup> More than 7 in

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<sup>5</sup> KHIP asked, "Would you say that in general your health is . . . excellent, very good, good, fair or poor?"

10 adults (73%) who rated their health as excellent or very good had been to a dentist in the past year.

## **1 in 4 have been asked about dental health by doctor**

In addition, KHIP asked, "Has your physician ever asked you about your oral or dental health?" One in 4 Kentucky adults (24%) said yes. Responses were similar across all demographic groups except age. Younger adults were less likely than older adults to have had a physician ask about their oral health.

Kentucky adults whose physicians asked about their oral health were more likely to have visited a dentist or dental clinic in the past year (73%) than those who were not asked about their oral health (62%).