

Consumer Survey of Health Care Access: Barriers to Accessing Oral Health Services

Presented by:

Simona Surdu, MD, PhD

Director, Oral Health Workforce Research Center

Project Director, Center for Health Workforce Studies

College for Integrated Health Sciences, University at Albany

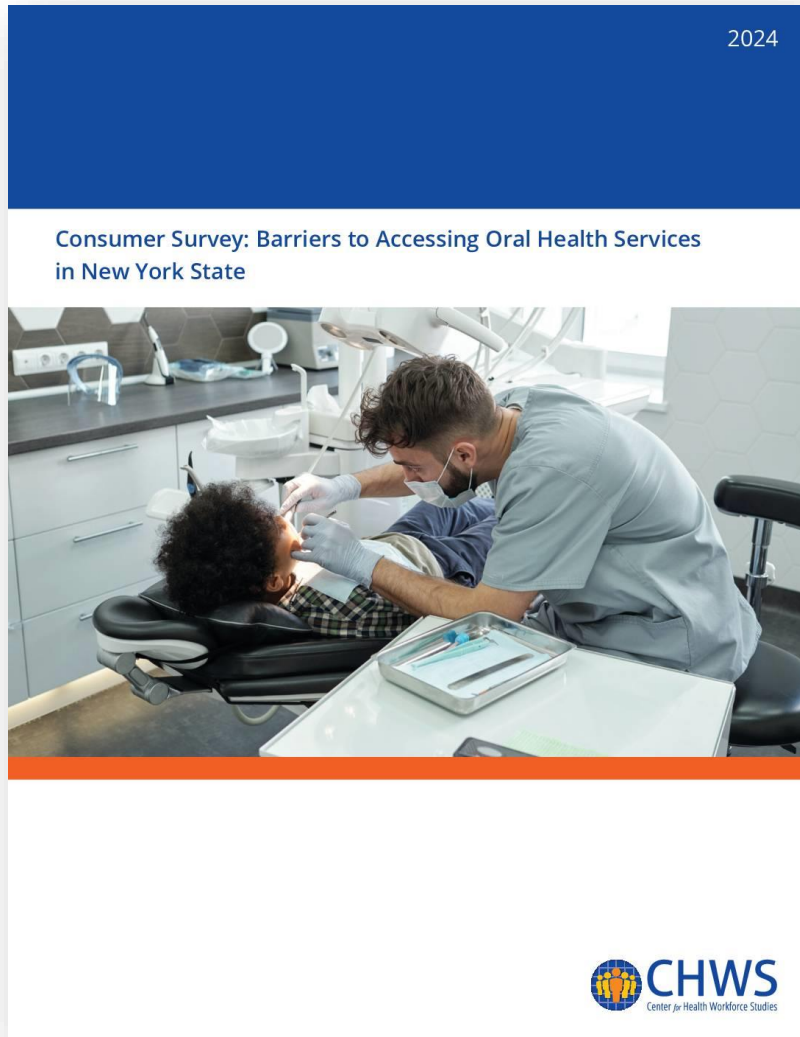
State University of New York (SUNY)

NYS Oral Health Coalition Annual Meeting

October 16, 2025



Consumer Survey Findings: Barriers to Accessing Oral Health Services in New York



- Objectives:

- This study aimed to assess **patterns** of oral health service utilization
- Identify **barriers** to accessing dental care for adults in New York State
- **Data were obtained** from the *2022 Consumer Survey of Health Care Access* conducted by the American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC), using a national panel of approximately 1.8 million adults
- **Descriptive statistical analyses** were performed to assess respondents'
 - Perceived **need** for dental care
 - Their **utilization** of oral health services
 - **Differences** across population groups
 - **Access barriers and facilitating factors**

Surdu S, Bassett R, Wang J, Wroble J. *Consumer Survey Focused on Experiences Accessing Oral Health Services in New York State*. Rensselaer, NY: Center for Health Workforce Studies, University at Albany, College of Integrated Health Sciences; October 2024.

Key Findings

The 2022 Consumer Survey of Health Care Access included 6,501 respondents ages 18 and older from across the US, with 431 from New York

67.3% of New Yorker responders reported **needing oral health care** in the past year (n=286)

64.8%

always received oral health services they needed in the past year

35.2%

either **sometimes** received needed oral health services (**16.7%**) or **did not** receive any care (**18.5%**) in the past year

The lowest rates of *always* receiving care when needed were reported by consumers who were:

18-34 years old
(56.8%)

Hispanic/Latino
(54.0%)

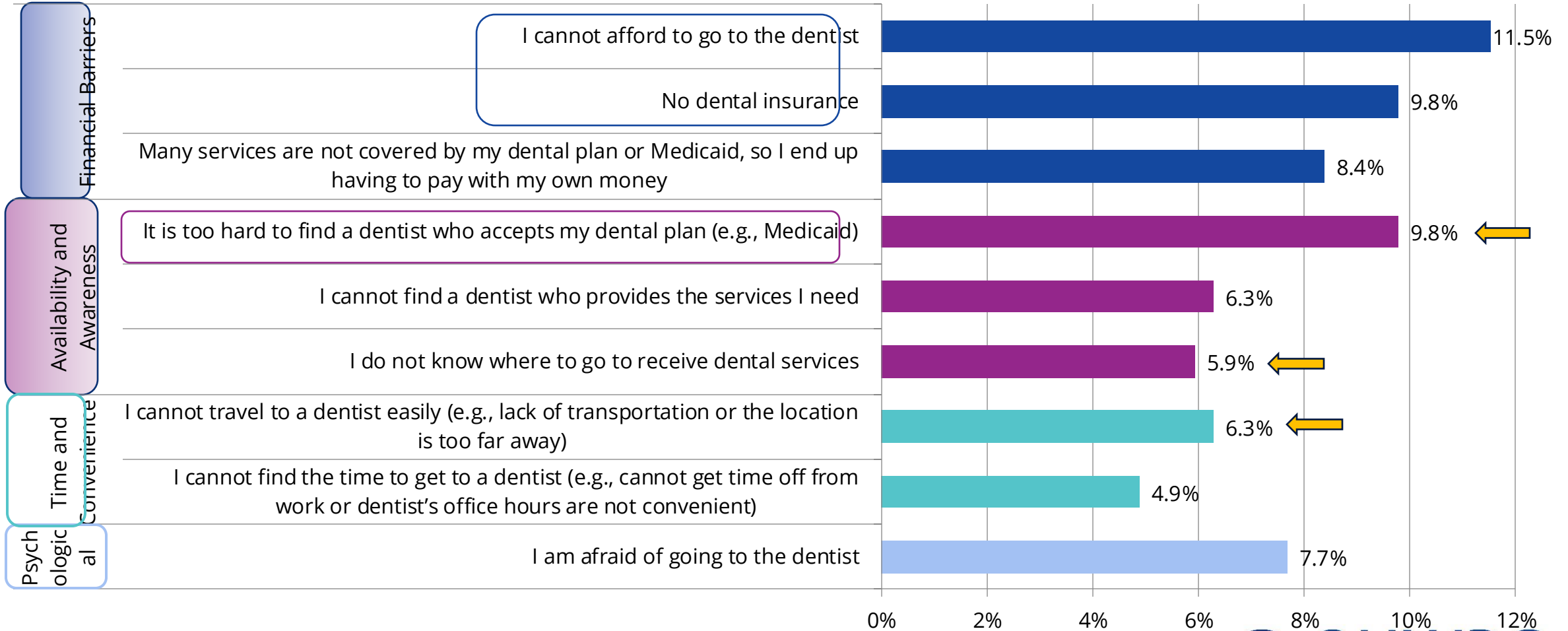
Black/African
American
(33.3%)



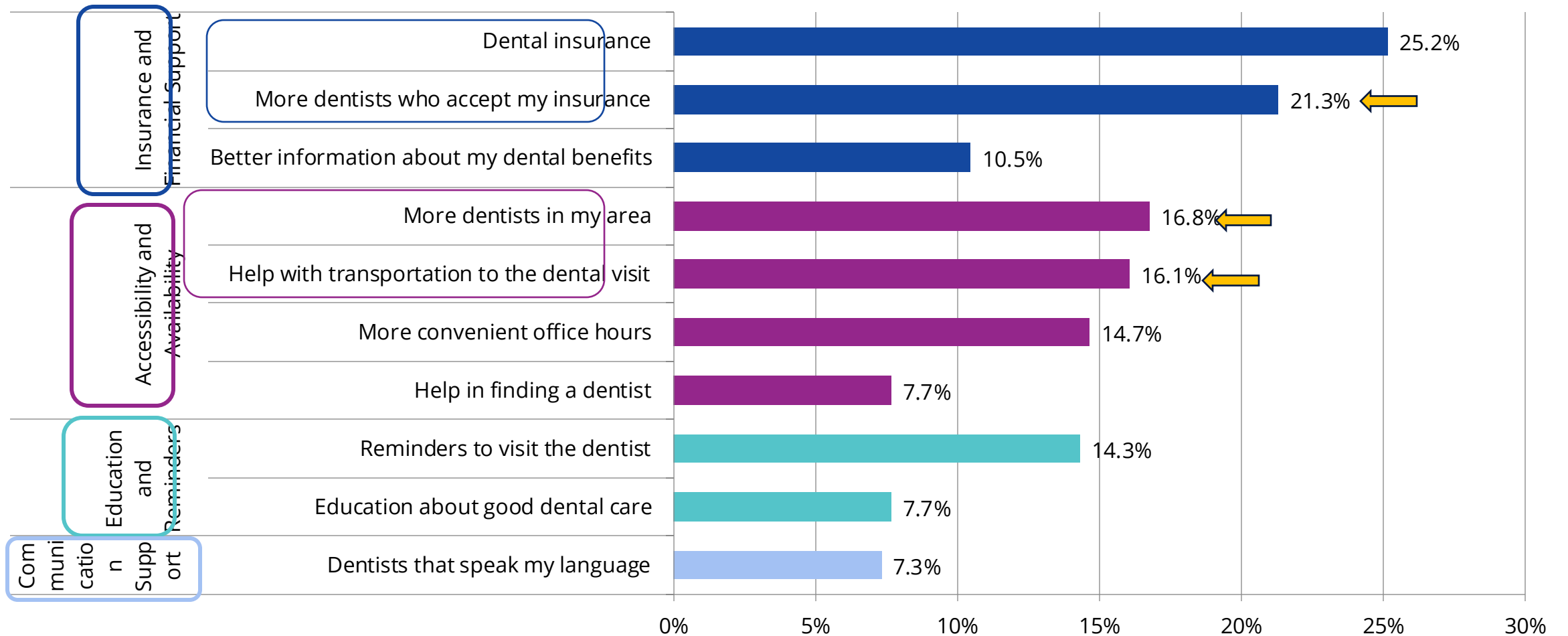
Had less than a high
school education
(52.7%)

Had annual
household incomes
under \$50,000
(51.7%)

43% of New Yorkers Reported Access Barriers (n=124)



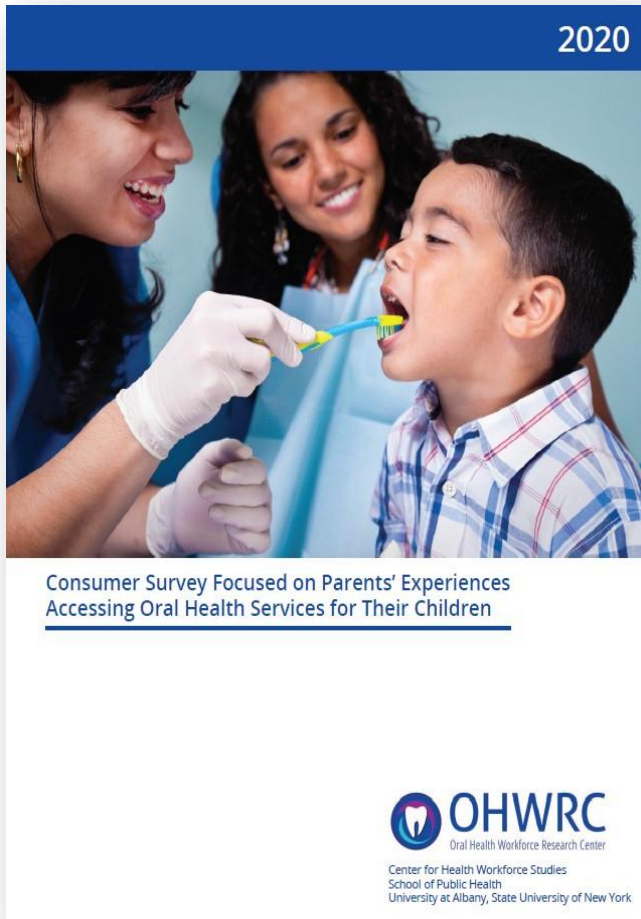
71% of New Yorkers Identified Factors That Would Help Them Visit a Dentist Regularly (n=202)



Conclusions

- Race and ethnic minorities, individuals with less education, and those with lower incomes had **the lowest rates of dental care**
 - **Major access barriers**—including financial constraints, lack of dental insurance, and difficulties finding providers who accept Medicaid or offer the needed services—continue to impact New York residents
- **To reduce oral health disparities**, it's essential to increase the availability of dental providers in underserved areas and improve public awareness of available services
 - Additionally, addressing transportation challenges could help alleviate some access barriers

Parents' Experiences Accessing Oral Health Services for Their Children



Objectives: To evaluate barriers to oral health care services for children using the 2019 Consumer Survey of Health Care Access

Key findings:

- Nationwide, 9% of children only sometimes received care or *did not receive any* dental care in the past year
- Nearly 1 in 4 children experienced one or more barriers to dental care
- Barriers to services utilization included dentists' limited participation in public insurance programs, dental practice hours, and distance to providers
- These findings underscore the need for policy solutions like school-based dental programs and initiatives to improve oral health literacy among parents

Zhao Y, Surdu S, Langelier M. [Parental Perspectives on Barriers to Pediatric Oral Health Care: Associations with Children's and Families' Characteristics](#). *Pediatric Dentistry*. 2023;45(1):24-35. PMID: 36879369

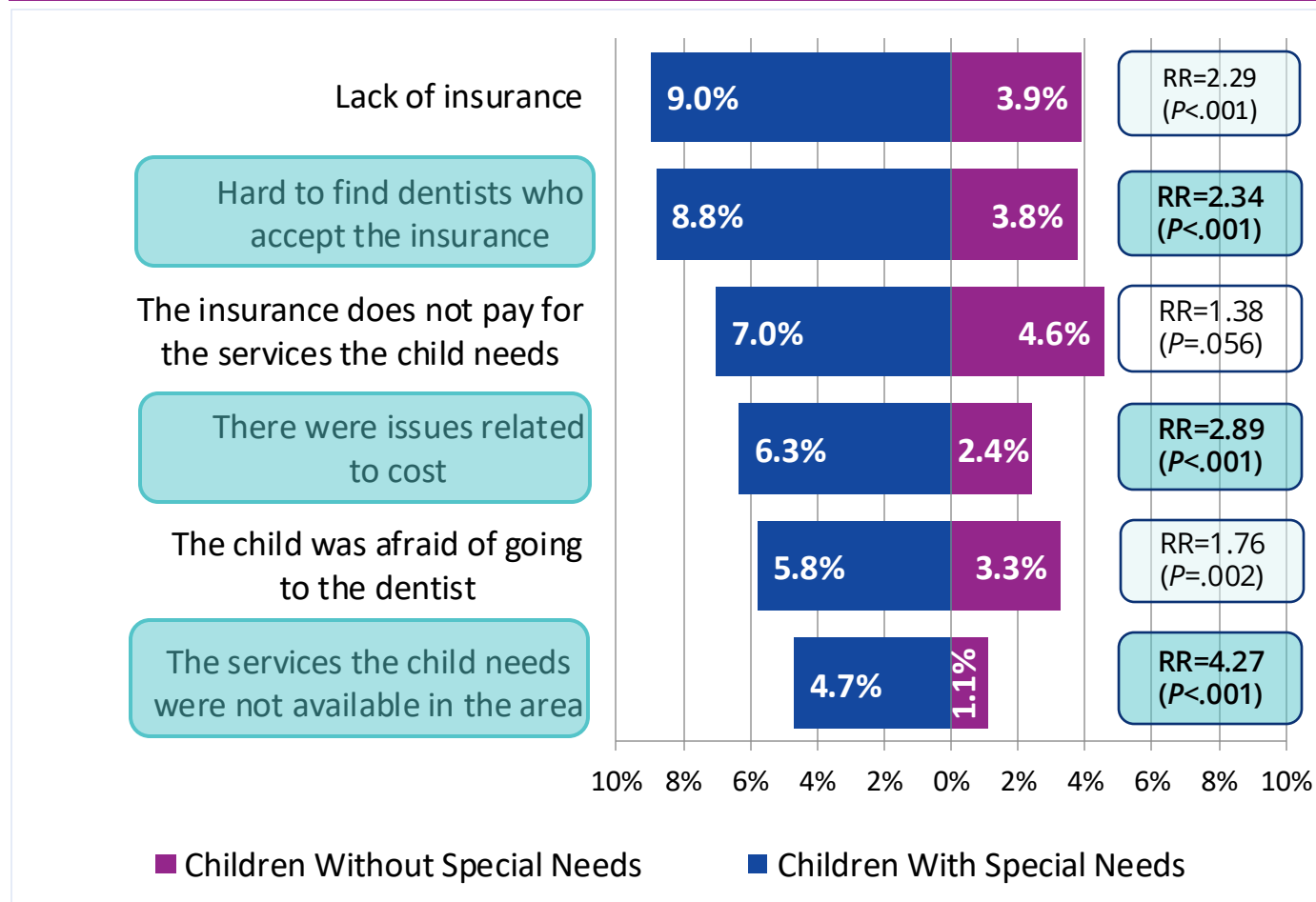
Parental Oral Health Literacy

Oral Health Knowledge Statements	Correct Answer	Incorrect Answer	Don't Know
There is a strong relationship between what children eat and their dental health <i>[true]</i>	69.6%	13.1%	17.3%
Thumb sucking can cause problems with the development of a child's teeth and jaws <i>[true]</i>	69.0%	14.9%	16.1%
Oral health does not affect overall health <i>[false]</i>	68.5%	18.7%	12.8%
If a child has been sick, you should replace the child's toothbrush once the child is well <i>[true]</i>	63.7%	12.6%	23.7%
Giving a young child fruit juice in a bottle at bedtime or naptime cannot cause tooth decay <i>[false]</i>	59.6%	25.7%	14.7%
Cavities are nearly 100% preventable <i>[true]</i>	57.6%	17.6%	24.9%
A child should go to the dentist by age 1 or within 6 months after the first tooth erupts <i>[true]</i>	53.7%	16.1%	30.2%
It is not important to clean a baby's gums with a soft cloth even before the baby's teeth surface <i>[false]</i>	47.8%	30.9%	21.3%
Giving a young child milk in a bottle at bedtime or naptime cannot cause tooth decay <i>[false]</i>	46.8%	30.5%	22.8%
Dental disease cannot be passed from a caregiver to a baby by sharing utensils <i>[false]</i>	30.7%	35.3%	34.0%

Over a quarter (26.6%) of parents correctly answered *fewer than half of the questions* about children's oral health

- Only about half (53.7%) of parents knew that children *should visit a dentist within 6 months of the 1st tooth eruption*
- Improving oral health literacy is essential for *early prevention* and *long-term outcomes*

A Comparison of Parental Perceived Barriers for Children With and Without Special Needs



Definition of a special need included a diagnosed *emotional, developmental, or behavioral health* condition requiring treatment or counseling.

- **About 26% of children** in the consumer survey **had a special need** as reported by their parents
- *Children with special needs* were **disproportionally more likely** to experience (1) **unavailability of services in their area**, (2) **cost issues**, and (3) **difficulty finding dentists who accepted their insurance**
- These disparities suggest that **children with special needs** require **targeted support to ensure equitable access to oral health services**

Recently Completed OHWRC Research

Journal Articles:

- [Key factors associated with oral health services at Federally Qualified Health Centers](#) (*J Public Health Dent*, 2025)
- [Utilization of Oral Health Services among Pregnant Women and Associations with Gestational Diabetes and Hypertensive Disorders of Pregnancy: Insights from the 2016–2020 Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System \(PRAMS\)](#) (*JADA*, 2025)
- [Workplace factors associated with job satisfaction among dental hygienists and assistants in the United States](#) (*Heath Aff Sch*, 2025)
- [Safety Net Patients' Satisfaction with Oral Health Services by Provider Type and Intent to Return for More Care](#) (*J Public Health Dent*, 2024)
- [The Impact of Pandemic Concerns on Consumers' Teledentistry Use During the First Months of the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) (*Public Health Rep*, 2023)
- [A Longitudinal Cohort Study of Opioid Prescriptions Associated with Non-Surgical Dental Visits Among Oregon and New York State Medicaid Beneficiaries \(2014-2016\)](#) (*JADA*, 2022)

Technical Reports:

- [Consumer Survey: Barriers to Accessing Oral Health Services in New York State](#) (2024)
- [Oral Health Needs Assessment for New York State, 2024](#) (2024)
- [Identifying Strategies to Improve Oral Health Workforce Resilience](#) (2023)
- [Teledentistry Adoption and Use During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) (2023)
- [COVID-19 Impact on Dental Service Delivery, Financing, Regulation, and Education Systems: An Environmental Scan](#) (2023)
- [Implications of COVID-19 on Safety-net Oral Health Services](#) (2023)
- [Teledentistry Trends in the United States During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) (2022)
- [Provider and Patient Satisfaction With the Dental Therapy Workforce at Apple Tree Dental](#) (2022)
- [Assessing the Characteristics of New York State Dentists Serving Medicaid Beneficiaries](#) (2022)
- [A Comparison of Opioid Prescribing Patterns by Dentists in New York and Oregon, 2014-2016](#) (2021)

Questions?

- For more information, please email us at: ssurdu@albany.edu
- Sign up for the OHWRC mailing list [here](#)
- Visit us at:



@OHWRC



@OHWRC



/company/center-for-health-workforce-studies