

## DESCRIPTION

This indicator focuses on tooth loss among adults 65 years old and older. Tooth loss is one way to gauge oral health among seniors. Research has shown associations between chronic oral infections and heart/lung diseases, stroke, and diabetes. It can also affect facial appearance and quality of life. Tooth loss is preventable in almost all cases.<sup>1</sup>

## HOW ARE WE DOING

Almost 23 percent of people 65-75 have severe gum disease which can lead to tooth loss.<sup>2</sup> Thirty-six percent of Minnesotans 65 and older have lost some teeth. In Ramsey County in 2012, about 10 percent of adults 65 and older lost all their teeth due to tooth decay or gum disease, which was lower than both the state and national rates.<sup>3</sup> Preventive services are a key to good oral health, and those without dental insurance are less likely to use preventive services. More than 12 percent of Minnesotans did not access dental care in the past year because of the cost.<sup>4</sup>

## BENCHMARK INDICATOR

Healthy People 2020: Reduce the proportion of adults 65-74 years who have lost all of their natural teeth.

U.S. Target 21.6 percent.<sup>5</sup>

## DISPARITIES

Significant disparities exist among seniors for dental health. In general, the elderly, people with low incomes, and people of color experience a higher rate of oral diseases because they have less access to affordable dental care. In addition, higher levels of teeth loss are seen among these same groups as well as those with diabetes, disabilities or a smoking habit.<sup>1</sup> In 2014, 13 percent of Minnesota older adults with less than a high school education had complete tooth loss compared to 2 percent of older adults with a college degree. About 16 percent of Minnesota older adults with a household income less than \$35K had complete tooth loss compared to 4 percent of those with a household income of \$35K or more. About 15 percent of Minnesota older adults with a disability had complete tooth loss compared to 7 percent of those without a disability.<sup>1</sup>

## RISK FACTORS

There are several oral health risks that apply specifically to older adults. The use of multiple prescription or over-the-counter medications can leave them open to medication mistakes, drug interactions or negative reactions to drugs.<sup>6</sup> Prescription and other medications can reduce saliva production, leading to dry mouth condition that occurs in 30 percent of older adults.<sup>1</sup> This in turn can contribute to tooth decay and gum disease. The physical and cognitive changes that can come with aging may also create challenges for education, communication and self-care.<sup>6</sup>

(continue on back)

## Information to note

- About 10% of Ramsey County residents 65 and older are missing all their natural, permanent teeth because of tooth decay or gum disease.
- An older person in Minnesota who does not have a high school degree is 16 times more likely to have all their teeth extracted than a person who has a college degree.
- African-American seniors, current smokers, and those with less income and lower levels of education have fewer remaining teeth.

<sup>1</sup> Minnesota Department of Health Oral Health Program (2014). Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. St. Paul, Minnesota: MN Public Health Data Access portal. <https://apps.health.state.mn.us/mndata/oral-health>. Accessed August 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Seniors Oral Health. Washington Dental Service Foundation Web site. <http://seniorsoralhealth.org/>. Accessed August 10, 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Chronic disease and Health Promotion Data Indicators. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site. <https://www.nidcr.nih.gov/DataStatistics/FindDataByTopic/ToothLoss/ToothLossSeniors65andOlder.htm>. Accessed July 31, 2017.

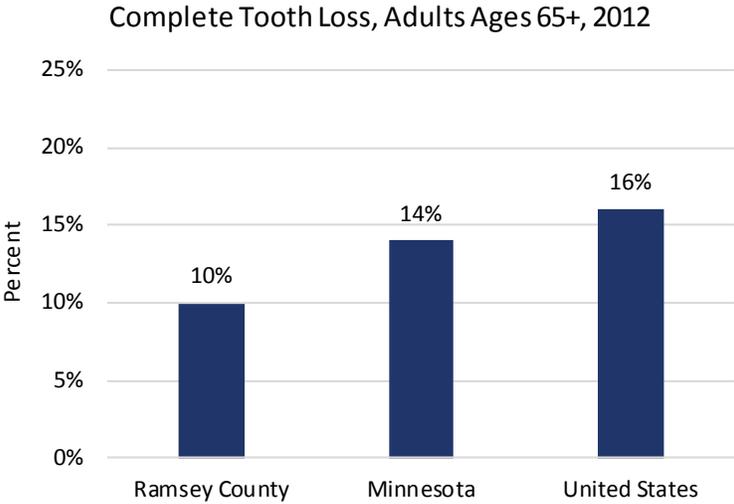
<sup>4</sup> Quick Facts: Oral Health in Minnesota. Minnesota Department of Health Web site. <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/healthimprovement/data/quick-facts/oralhealth.html>. Accessed July 31, 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Healthy People 2020. <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives>. Accessed January 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Oral Health Topics: Aging and Dental Health. American Dental Association Website. [http://www.ada.org/en/member\\_center/oral-health-topics/aging-and-dental-health](http://www.ada.org/en/member_center/oral-health-topics/aging-and-dental-health). Accessed August 10, 2017.

**WHAT RAMSEY COUNTY GOVERNMENT IS DOING**

Saint Paul - Ramsey County Public Health provides data monitoring and reporting for this topic in order to better understand the overall health and current conditions in the community. The information may help inform community partners, policy makers or county program leadership.



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<sup>7</sup> Behavioral Risk Factors: Selected Metropolitan Area Risk Trends, Chronic Disease and Health Promotion Data & Indicators. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site. <https://chronicdata.cdc.gov/Behavioral-Risk-Factors/Behavioral-Risk-Factors-Selected-Metropolitan-Area/cpem-dkkm>. Accessed August 2, 2017.

<sup>8</sup> Chronic disease and Health Promotion Data Indicators. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site. <https://www.nidcr.nih.gov/DataStatistics/FindDataByTopic/ToothLoss/ToothLossSeniors65andOlder.htm>. Accessed August 2, 2017.