



# Examining Oral Health and Wellness in Arizona **2024 Report**

Commissioned by Delta Dental of Arizona





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## Foreword from Michael Jones

**President & CEO, Delta Dental of Arizona**

I'm excited to share this year's "Examining Oral Health and Wellness in Arizona" report. It highlights how important oral health is to our overall well-being and gives us valuable information about the health habits of adults and children in our state. This year, it shows that more people understand the link between oral health and chronic conditions, mental health and the benefits of regular preventive care.

One key finding is that 92% of adults believe visiting the dentist is as important as having an annual physical. At Delta Dental of Arizona, we know that good oral health is essential to overall care, just like regular check-ups, screenings and vaccinations. It's great to see that so many Arizonans agree.

The steady rate of dental coverage among adults shows that people in our state are committed to their oral health. This commitment also supports other areas of health, including physical, mental and financial well-being, leading to better health outcomes. As the leading dental benefits provider and a strong supporter of oral health, Delta Dental of Arizona is working closely with the healthcare industry to improve oral health and overall wellness. By focusing on whole person health, we hope to see continued improvements in health outcomes for everyone.



**At Delta Dental of Arizona, we know that good oral health is essential to overall care, just like regular check-ups, screenings and vaccinations.”**



**Michael Jones**  
**President & CEO,**  
Delta Dental of Arizona

## A message from Heather Schneider, DMD

**Dental Director, Delta Dental of Arizona**

Investing in good oral health habits is vitally important when it comes to our overall wellness, and it's great to see that this year's report shows more adults understand this connection. Dental care should not be an afterthought, given its direct ties to systemic health.

More people are taking care of their teeth to avoid serious dental and financial issues compared to last year. As a dentist, I can tell you that good oral care at home can really cut down on cavities and gum disease. This, in turn, helps lower the risk of chronic conditions like heart disease, respiratory issues, and diabetes.

There's more good news from the report: more adults are going for preventive dental visits than last year, and there are fewer unexpected visits. Dental insurance plays a big role in encouraging people to get their recommended cleanings twice a year.

However, we still need to work on improving dental hygiene habits in children. Parents often struggle with sugary snacks and inconsistent brushing and flossing routines. Teaching kids optimal habits early is crucial for a lifetime of good oral health.

By focusing on preventive oral health care, both adults and children can keep their smiles healthy and support their systemic well-being and quality of life.



**Heather Schneider, DMD**  
**Dental Director,**  
Delta Dental of Arizona

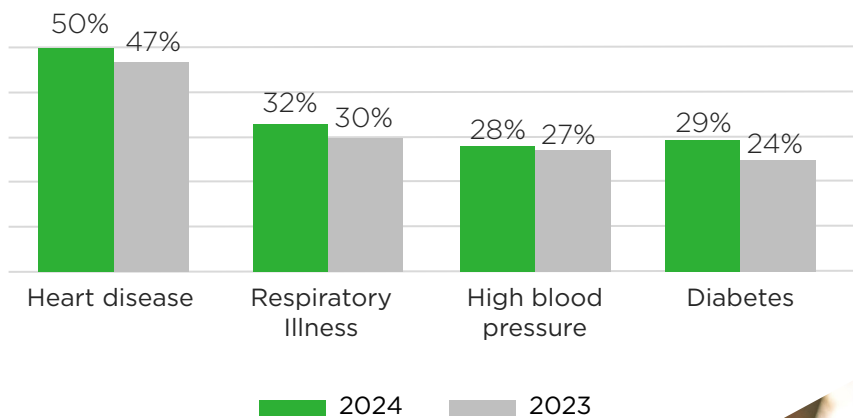


## Oral Health and Overall Health

**Adults still recognize how important it is to take care of their oral health for their overall well-being.** In fact, 94% of Arizonans believe that their oral health is closely tied to their general health. Plus, 97% of Arizona parents also acknowledge this connection in their children, which aligns with prior years.

**Notably, 79% of Arizonans connect poor oral health to specific overall health.** That's why they have remained consistent with their dental care routines.

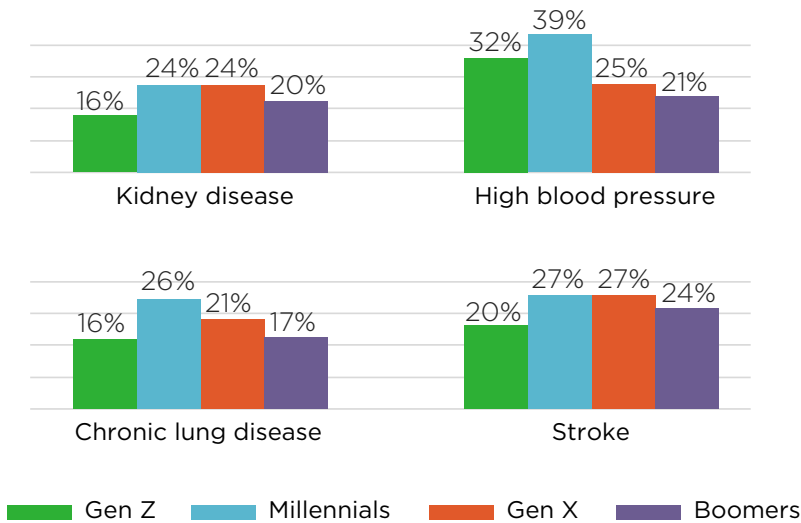
Percentage of adults who understand the connection between oral health and specific health conditions



## Generational Perspective

**Interestingly, Arizona Millennials have the greatest understanding of oral health and its ties to specific conditions.** Exposure to health information via their employers and social media could contribute to this generational difference.

Percentage of adults who understand the connection between oral health and specific health conditions



**However, all generations of Arizonans agree that taking action to protect their oral health can help prevent specific conditions.** In fact, 9 in 10 (92%) adults believe that a dental visit is as important as an annual physical.



“

Maintaining oral health isn't just about having a bright smile—it is in fact, intimately tied to our overall well-being. This year's report highlights how people continue to understand the connection between oral health and chronic conditions. Recognizing and prioritizing oral health isn't just about teeth; it's about protecting against systemic illnesses, improving quality of life and supporting holistic well-being.”

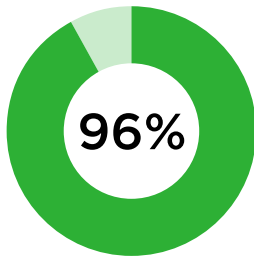


Heather Schneider, DMD  
Dental Director,  
Delta Dental of Arizona

## Healthy Mouth, Healthy Life

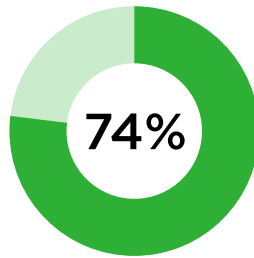
**Good oral health makes Arizonans feel better.** In Arizona, 94% of adults agreed that their awareness of oral health's connection to overall health has made a positive difference to them.

### HEALTHIER LIFESTYLE



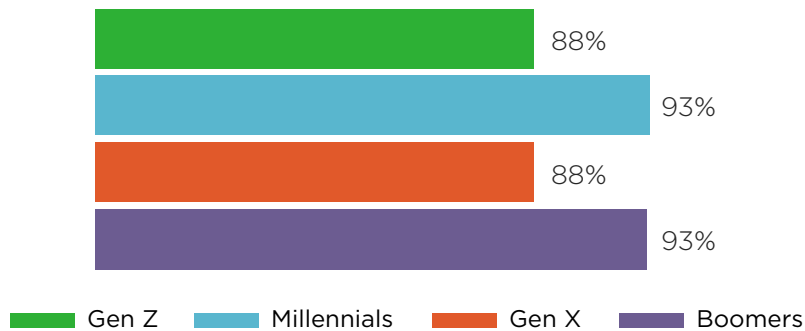
agree taking action to protect oral health enables them to live a **healthier lifestyle**

### MENTAL HEALTH



agree taking action to protect oral health is closely connected to their **mental health**

Arizonans of all ages agree that good oral health allows them to be more confident



The impact of oral health issues on Arizonans' mental health



**23%**  
Became anxious



**20%**  
Lost sleep



**21%**  
Felt embarrassed



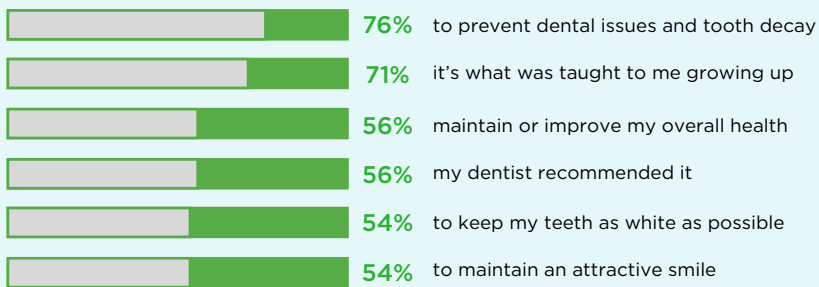
**19%**  
Felt sad

**However, when adults in Arizona have dental problems, it can negatively impact both their mental and physical health.** 1 in 5 (21%) reported feeling anxious or sad, having trouble sleeping or feeling embarrassed about their looks. Additionally, 2 in 10 (22%) admitted to missing work because of dental issues.

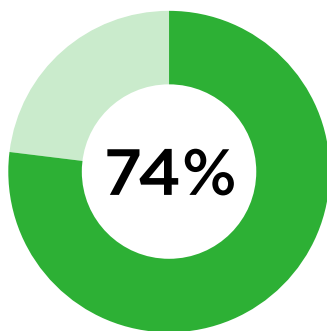
## Oral Health Care Habits

Arizonans continue to make oral health a priority, aiming to prevent dental problems and tooth decay. Surprisingly, there's been less emphasis this year on cosmetic reasons, like whitening teeth or having an attractive smile.

### Percentage of adults who brush their teeth, because...



Over the past year, Arizonans focused on keeping healthy oral health care habits to avoid costly dental problems. In fact, 94% say that these good practices can save them money in the long-term.



# 3 in 4

adults (74%) met the criteria for daily brushing, flossing and rinsing



## CHILDREN'S SPOTLIGHT

**Parents in Arizona remain committed to their children's dental health but still have some obstacles to overcome.** Nearly 8 in 10 (77%) acknowledged their child's oral health is not as good as it could be. However, more than 9 in 10 (97%) consider their child's oral health to be important to their overall health.

Percentage of children who meet the recommended criteria for daily brushing, flossing and rinsing

71%

brush twice a day

50%

floss once a day

18%

rinse once a day

**As with adults, oral health can affect mental health.** In fact, 22% of Arizona parents whose children experienced dental issues say that they or their child become anxious as a result. 13% say it's made them or their child sad.

Parents say their child's oral health is not as good as it could be because they...



38%

do not floss enough



35%

eat too many sweets



30%

do not brush enough



16%

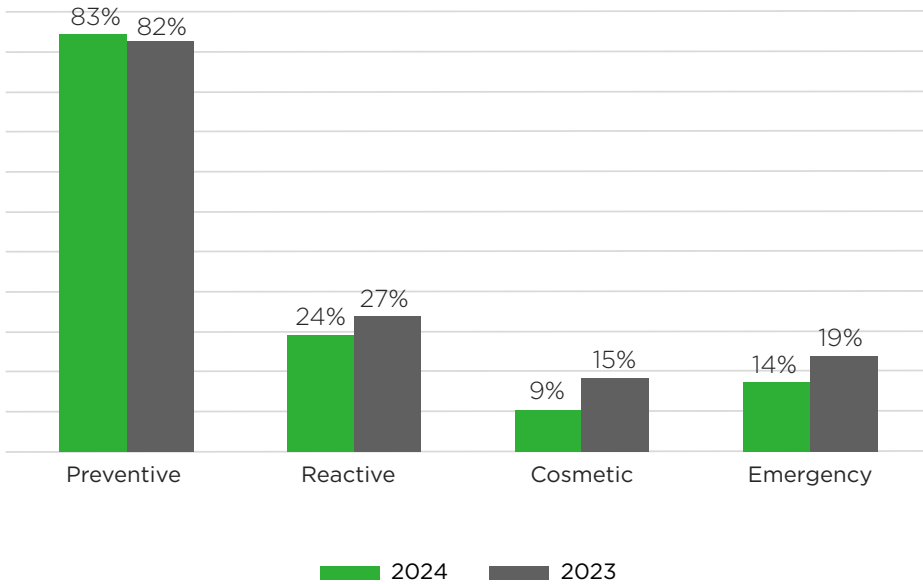
drink too much juice and soda



# Preventive Dentist Visits

Arizonans made preventive dentist visits a priority in 2023 and were less likely to visit the dentist for unexpected or cosmetic reasons. This trend is expected to continue with 76% of adults planning to visit the dentist in 2024 for preventive care.

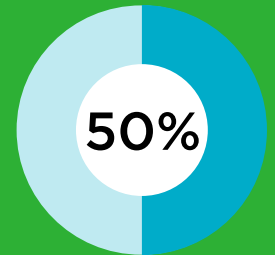
Types of dental visits made by adults



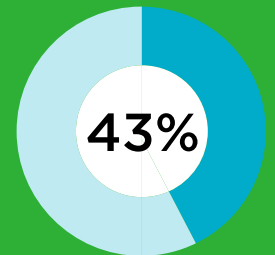
Of those who sought preventive care last year, 64% did so because they believe getting **preventive checkups reduce their chances of experiencing serious dental issues**. Other reasons for preventive visits included:

- My dental insurance covers at least one annual visit and cleaning (52%)
- I scheduled a preventive visit when they were last at the dentists (52%)
- I know my oral health is directly tied to my overall health (50%)

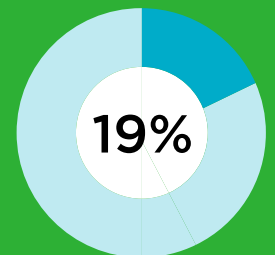
Top financial barrier to preventive dentist visits for adults



couldn't afford the out-of-pocket cost



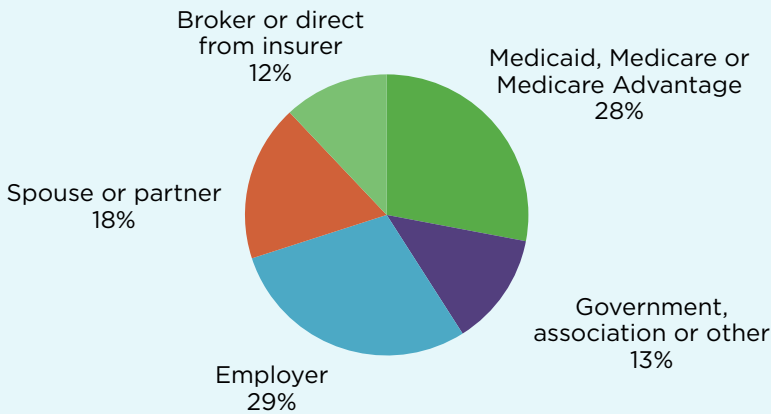
didn't have dental insurance



didn't want to spend the money

# Dental Insurance

## How adults get their dental insurance



8 in 10

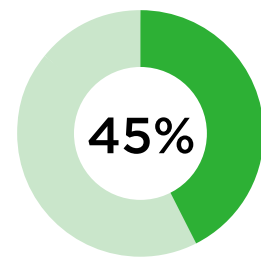
adults (86%) agree that having dental insurance is essential to protecting oral and overall health

**In 2023, 61% of Arizonans had dental insurance, while 86% of parents report their child was covered.** The number of insured Arizonans is on par with the previous year as they continue to prioritize dental coverage for themselves and their families.

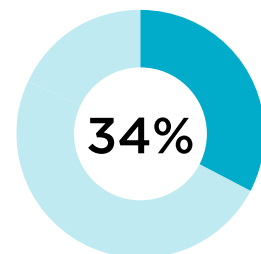
**Cost and affordability continue to be the biggest roadblocks for Arizonans who don't have dental insurance.** However, around two-thirds of Arizonans (67%) without dental insurance have had it in the past.

**In the next 12 months, uninsured Arizonans are more likely to seek dental insurance for their child than themselves.** 70% parents without dental insurance for their child hope to enroll in the next 12 months, while only 34% of uninsured adults are likely to enroll.

## Top barriers to enrolling in dental insurance



say they cannot afford the monthly premium payment



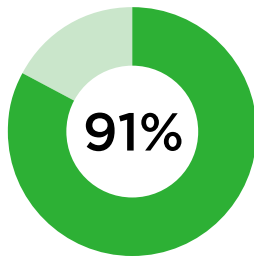
say they cannot afford the additional out-of-pocket costs



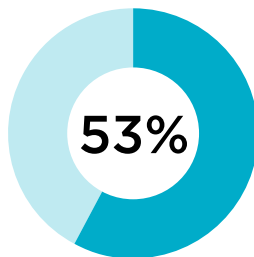
Ultimately, the results are clear. Dental insurance is important in helping people receive necessary oral care.

Adults with dental benefits were more likely to have visited the dentist in 2023 to seek preventive care than those without coverage.

### Percentage of adults who visited the dentist in 2023



With coverage



Without coverage

The state of oral health in 2024 remains strong as adults and children in Arizona focus on good oral care habits and prioritize preventive dental visits. People increasingly recognize the effort needed to maintain oral health. This effort impacts their overall well-being physically, mentally and financially. And, dental insurance plays an important role to better overall health outcomes for everyone.



## About the Research

Delta Dental of Arizona commissioned a third-party market research firm, Material Holdings, LLC, to undertake research that formed the basis for this report. Material conducted its research between March 12 and March 21, 2024, using an email invitation and online surveys of two audiences recruited through an opt-in panel:

- 300 Arizona adults ages 18+
- 300 Arizona parents of children ages 12 and under

Geographic distribution quotas were set to ensure a reliable and accurate representation of the U.S. population of adults and parents with children ages 12 and under. Research in this report has a margin of error of +/- 3%.

The generational categories referred to in this report are defined by the following:

- Gen Z: individuals born between 1997 and 2005
- Millennials: individuals born between 1981 and 1996
- Gen X: individuals born between 1965 and 1980
- Boomers: individuals born between 1946 and 1964

## About Delta Dental of Arizona

Delta Dental of Arizona (Delta Dental) is a health and wellness company providing affordable dental and vision benefits to individuals, families and businesses throughout the state. Building on its reputation as the state's largest and most experienced dental insurance provider, Delta Dental's mission is to create a path to better health and wellness. Since 2010, Delta Dental of Arizona, through its Foundation, has given over \$18 million to support oral health education, disease prevention and food assistance programs for underserved and uninsured communities across the state. For more information about Delta Dental of Arizona, visit [www.deltadentalaz.com](http://www.deltadentalaz.com).

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