



CALIFORNIA  
HEALTHCARE  
FOUNDATION

SNAPSHOT

# Drilling Down: Access, Affordability, and Consumer Perceptions in Adult Dental Health

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2008

# Introduction

Although many Californians have dental insurance, even those with coverage may not be getting the dental care they need, and this is also the case among people who get dental benefits under Medi-Cal. Those with public insurance are more likely to delay care and to report that they have poor dental health than those with private coverage. Additionally, those with public coverage may not even be aware that they have coverage, which only adds to the likelihood that they don't seek care when they need it.

These are parts of the findings of a 2007 Harris Interactive survey of California adults that looked at dental health by insurance status, income, and ethnicity, as well as perceptions about what constitutes appropriate frequency of care and what part good dental health plays in overall health status.

## OTHER FINDINGS INCLUDE:

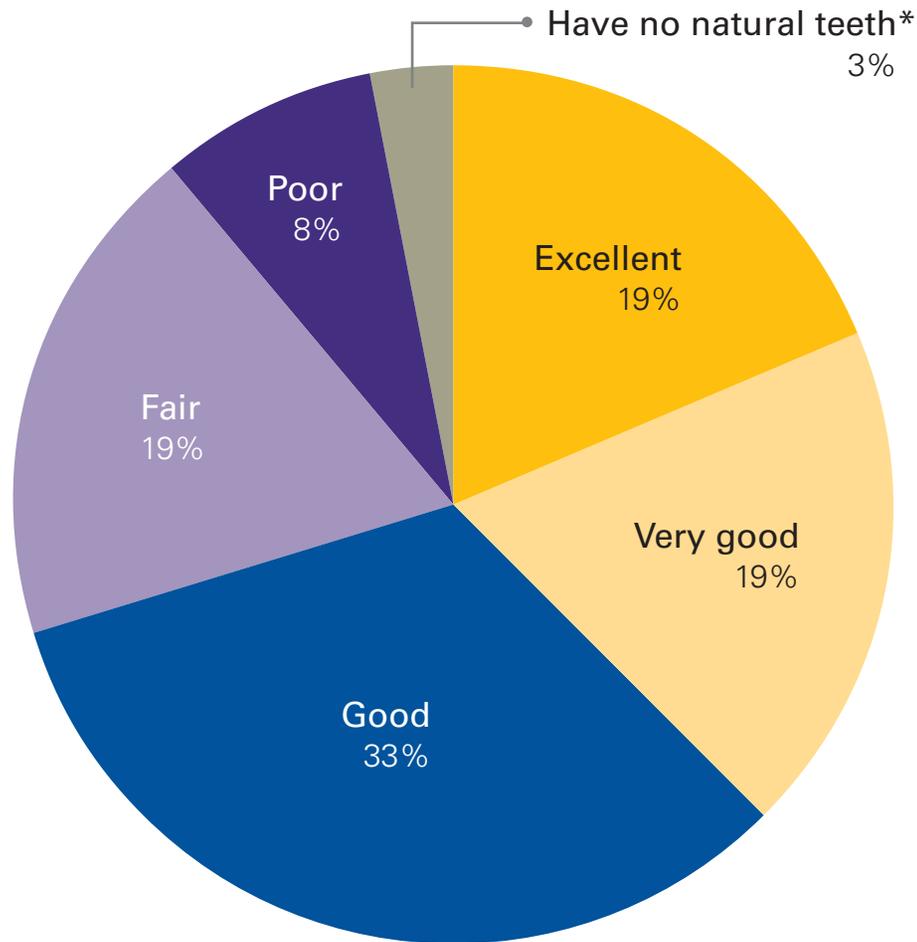
- African Americans (40 percent) and Latinos (43 percent), those with incomes below \$25,000 (54 percent), and the publicly insured (54 percent) report fair or poor dental health.
- Nearly, two out of five (39 percent) California adults do not have dental insurance coverage.
- Sixty percent of adults aged 18 to 64 with Medi-Cal don't know that they have dental benefits to cover their care.
- Seventy-three percent of adults do not know that cavities are infectious and can be spread from person to person.
- Affordability of dental care is the number one reported barrier to access to dental care. Affordability concerns are most common among uninsured, but is also a concern for privately and publicly insured.

## Adult Dental Health

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# Dental Health Status of Respondents, California, 2007



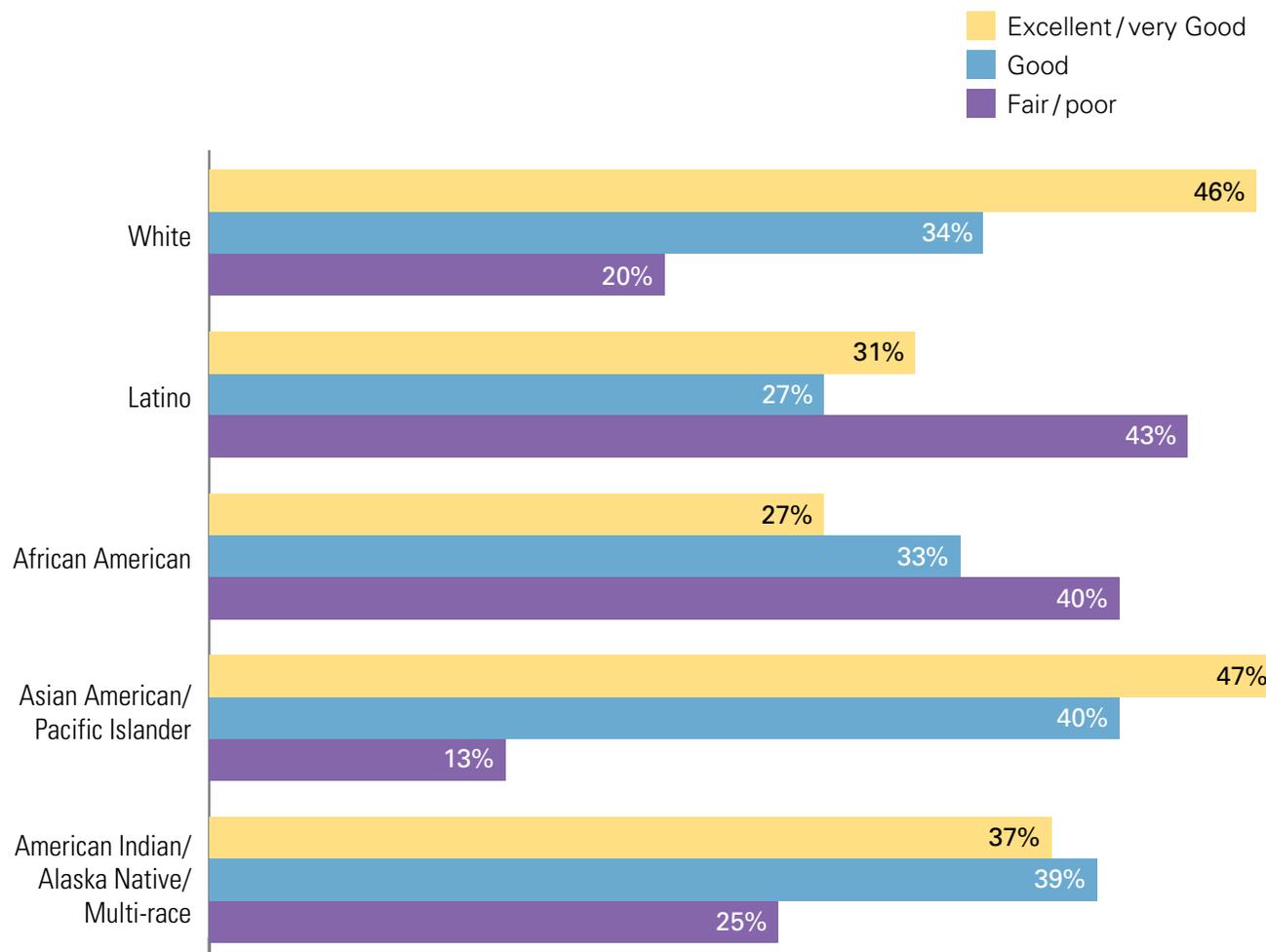
## Adult Dental Health Dental Health Status

Nearly three in ten respondents reported fair or poor oral health, including complete tooth loss.

\*Small sample size may lead to unreliable estimates.

Source: Survey of 1,007 adult respondents in California, conducted by telephone between November 5 and December 17, 2007, by Harris Interactive, for the California HealthCare Foundation.

# Dental Health Status, by Race/Ethnicity, California, 2007

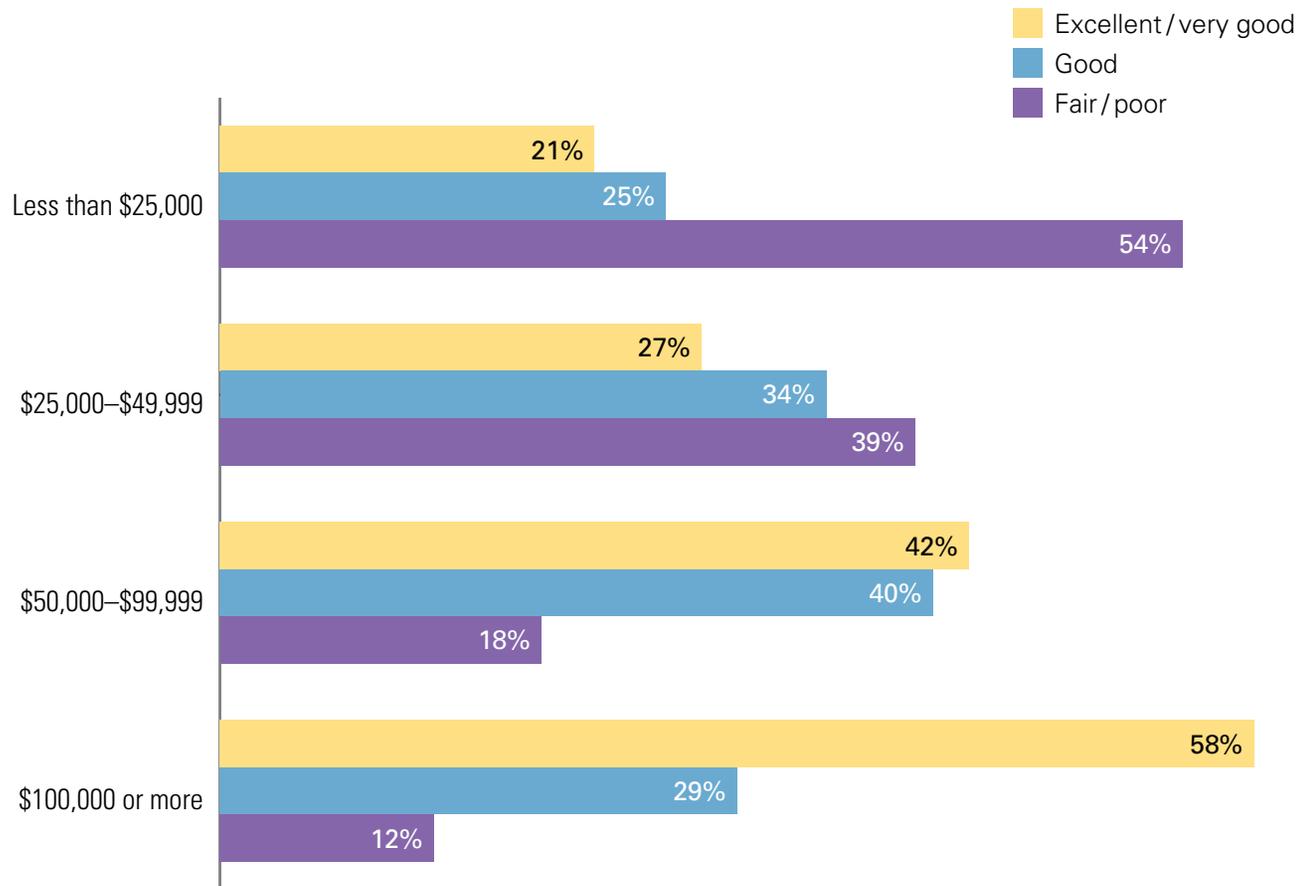


Source: Survey of 1,007 adult respondents in California, conducted by telephone between November 5 and December 17, 2007, by Harris Interactive, for the California HealthCare Foundation.

## Adult Dental Health Dental Health Status

Race and ethnicity are important predictors of dental health. Significantly more Latino and African American adults reported fair/poor dental health status compared with Whites and Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders.

# Dental Health Status, by Individual Income Level, California, 2007

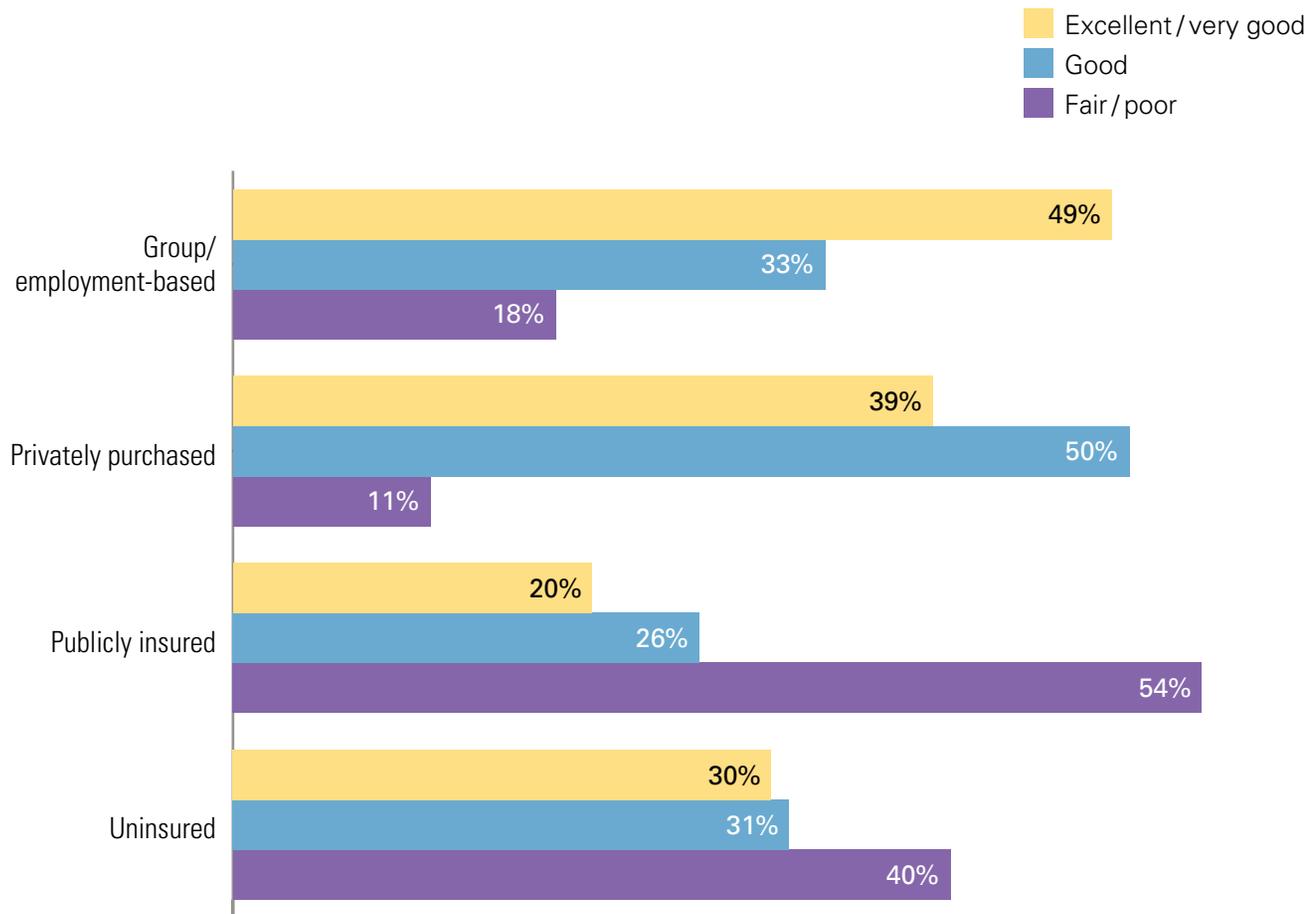


## Adult Dental Health Dental Health Status

Income level is an important predictor of dental health. Those earning under \$50,000 annually were significantly more likely to report fair or poor dental health status compared with those earning \$50,000 or more.

Source: Survey of 1,007 adult respondents in California, conducted by telephone between November 5 and December 17, 2007, by Harris Interactive, for the California HealthCare Foundation.

# Dental Health Status, by Dental Insurance Coverage, California, 2007

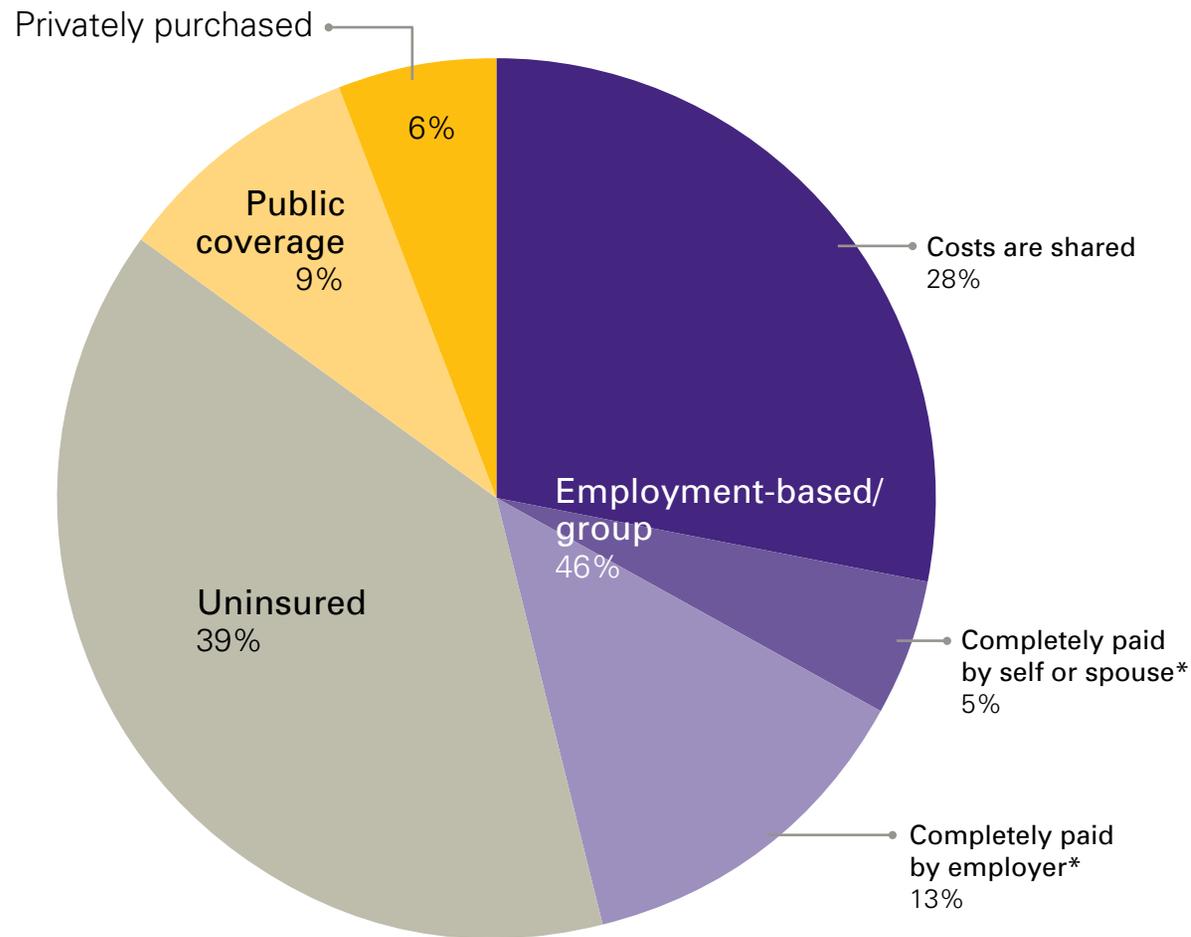


## Adult Dental Health Dental Health Status

Insurance status is an important predictor of dental health. Those with group/employer-based or private dental insurance reported significantly better dental health than those who were uninsured or publicly insured.

Source: Survey of 1,007 adult respondents in California, conducted by telephone between November 5 and December 17, 2007, by Harris Interactive, for the California HealthCare Foundation.

# Dental Insurance Premiums, by Source of Payment, California, 2007



## Adult Dental Health Out-of-Pocket Costs

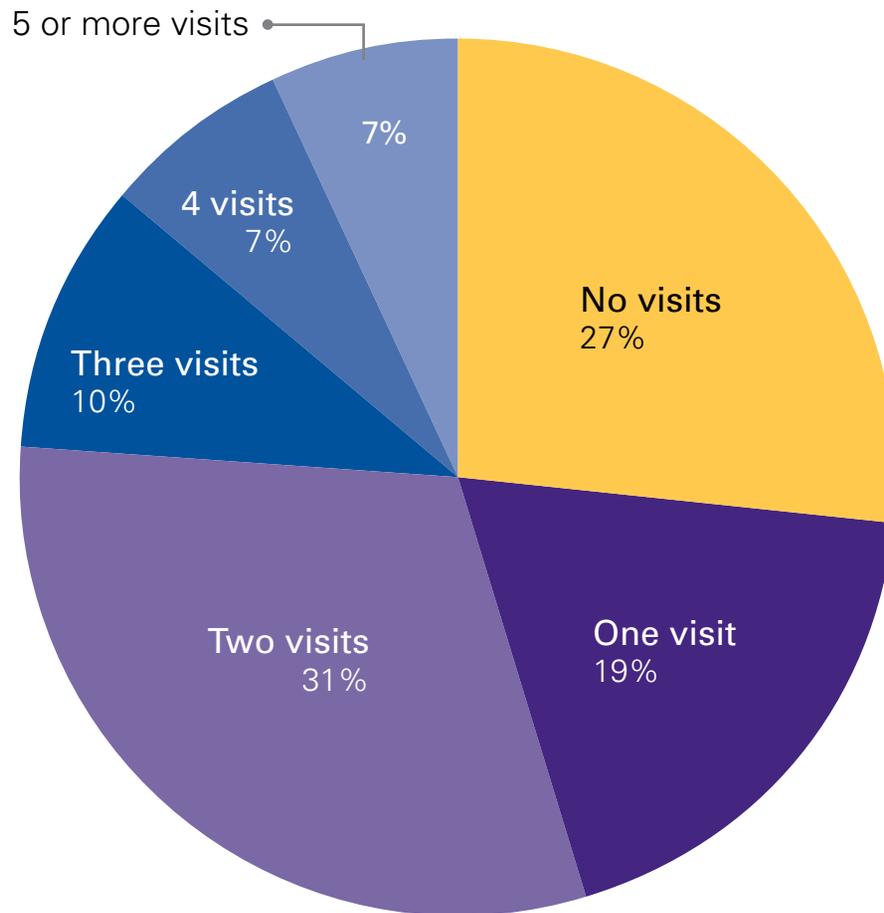
Among the 46 percent of respondents with employment-based or group dental coverage, nearly three quarters<sup>†</sup> reported paying a portion or all of their dental insurance premiums.

\*Small sample size may lead to unreliable estimates

Source: Survey of 1,007 adult respondents in California, conducted by telephone between November 5 and December 17, 2007, by Harris Interactive, for the California HealthCare Foundation.

<sup>†</sup>Twenty-eight percent plus 5 percent amount to 33 percent and is equivalent to 73 percent of those with employment or group dental insurance.

# Dental Care, by Number of Visits in Past Year, California, 2007

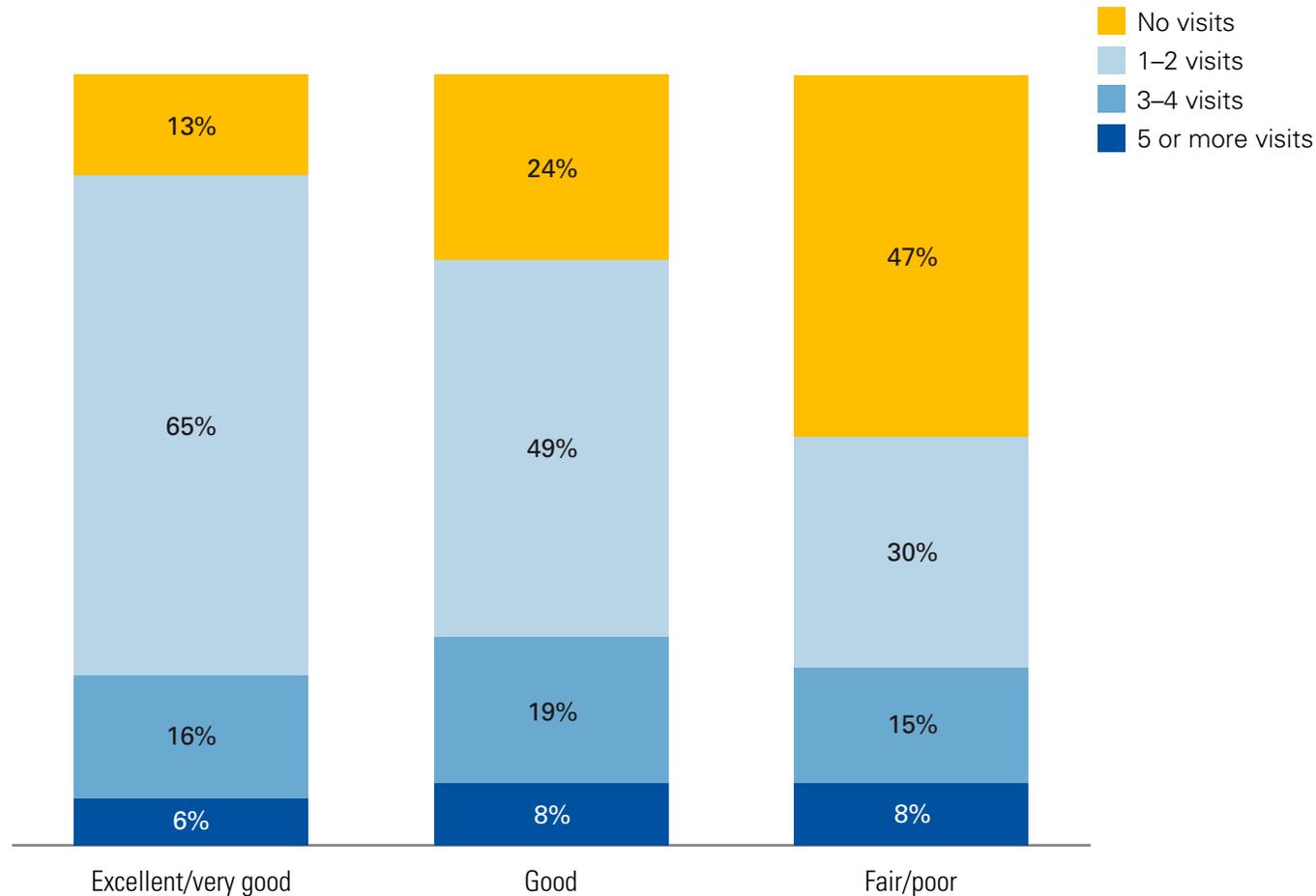


## Adult Dental Health Use of Services

Over one-quarter of respondents did not visit the dentist in the past year, while over half reported seeing the dentist at least twice.

Source: Survey of 1,007 adult respondents in California, conducted by telephone between November 5 and December 17, 2007, by Harris Interactive, for the California HealthCare Foundation.

# Number of Dental Visits in Past Year, by Dental Health Status, California, 2007

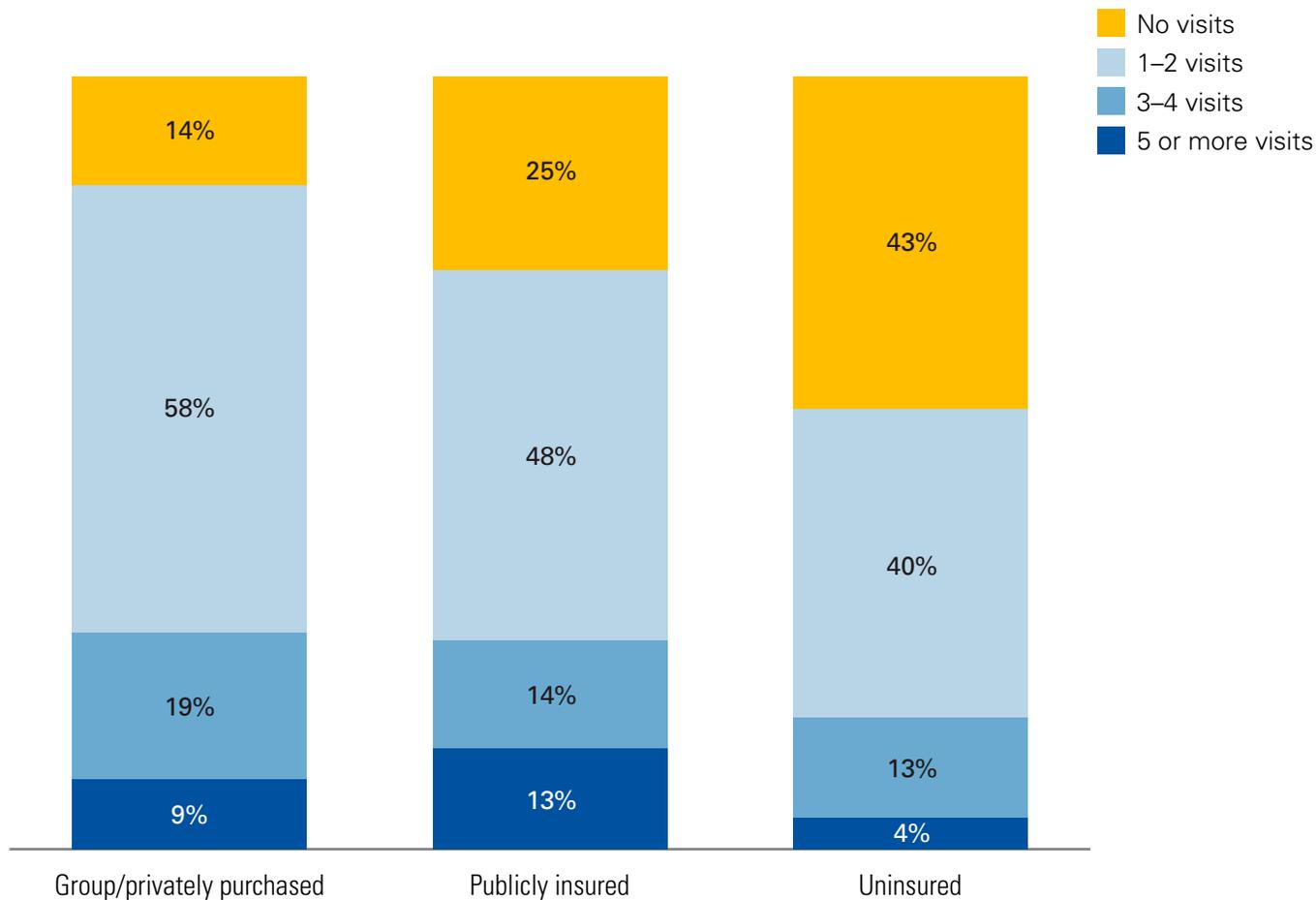


## Adult Dental Health Use of Services

Regular dental visits contribute to better dental health. Those reporting excellent or very good dental health status were more likely to have visited a dentist regularly, while those reporting fair/poor dental health were less likely to have visited the dentist at all.

Source: Survey of 1,007 adult respondents in California, conducted by telephone between November 5 and December 17, 2007, by Harris Interactive, for the California HealthCare Foundation.

# Number of Dental Visits in Past Year, by Dental Insurance Coverage, California, 2007

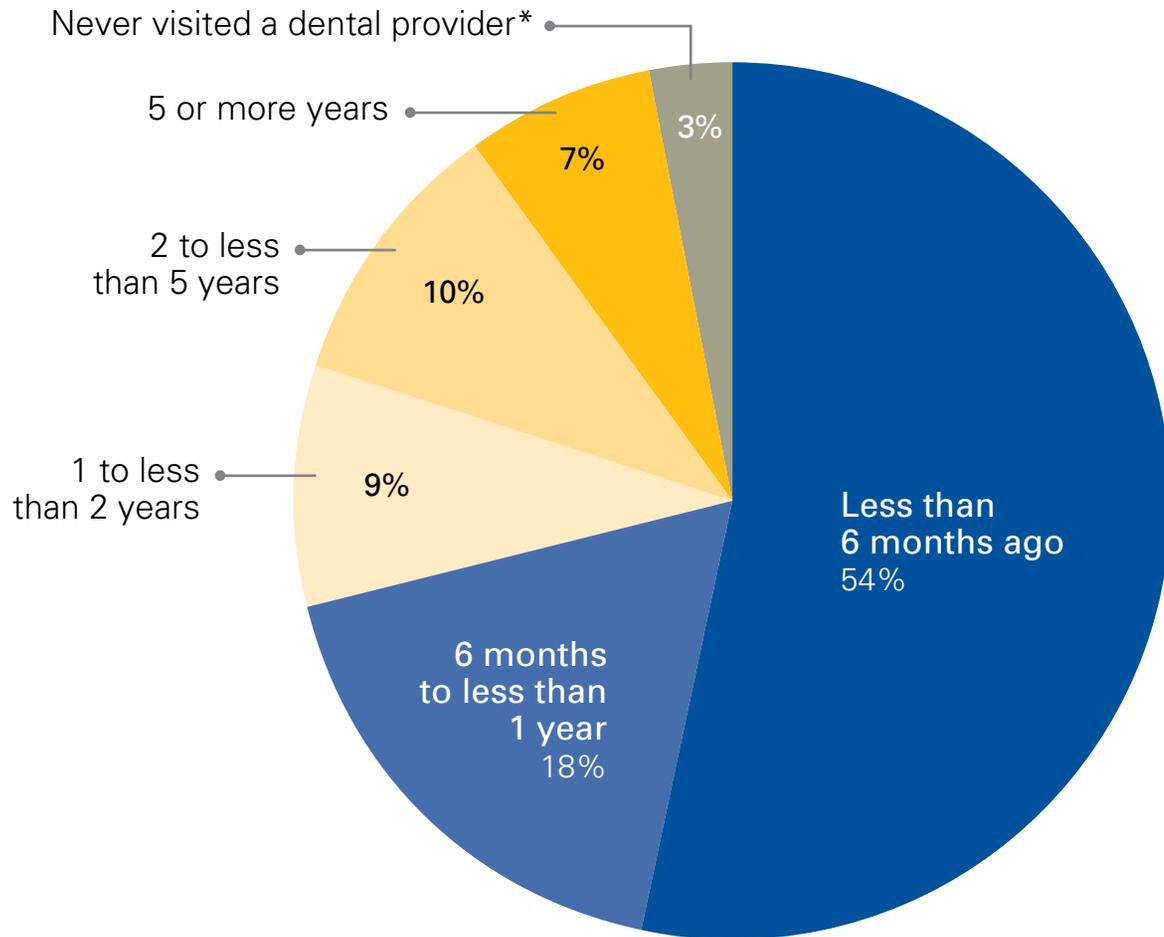


## Adult Dental Health Use of Services

Publicly insured and the uninsured were significantly less likely to have seen a dentist in the past year than those with group or privately purchased insurance.

Source: Survey of 1,007 adult respondents in California, conducted by telephone between November 5 and December 17, 2007, by Harris Interactive, for the California HealthCare Foundation.

## Time Since Last Dental Visit, California, 2007



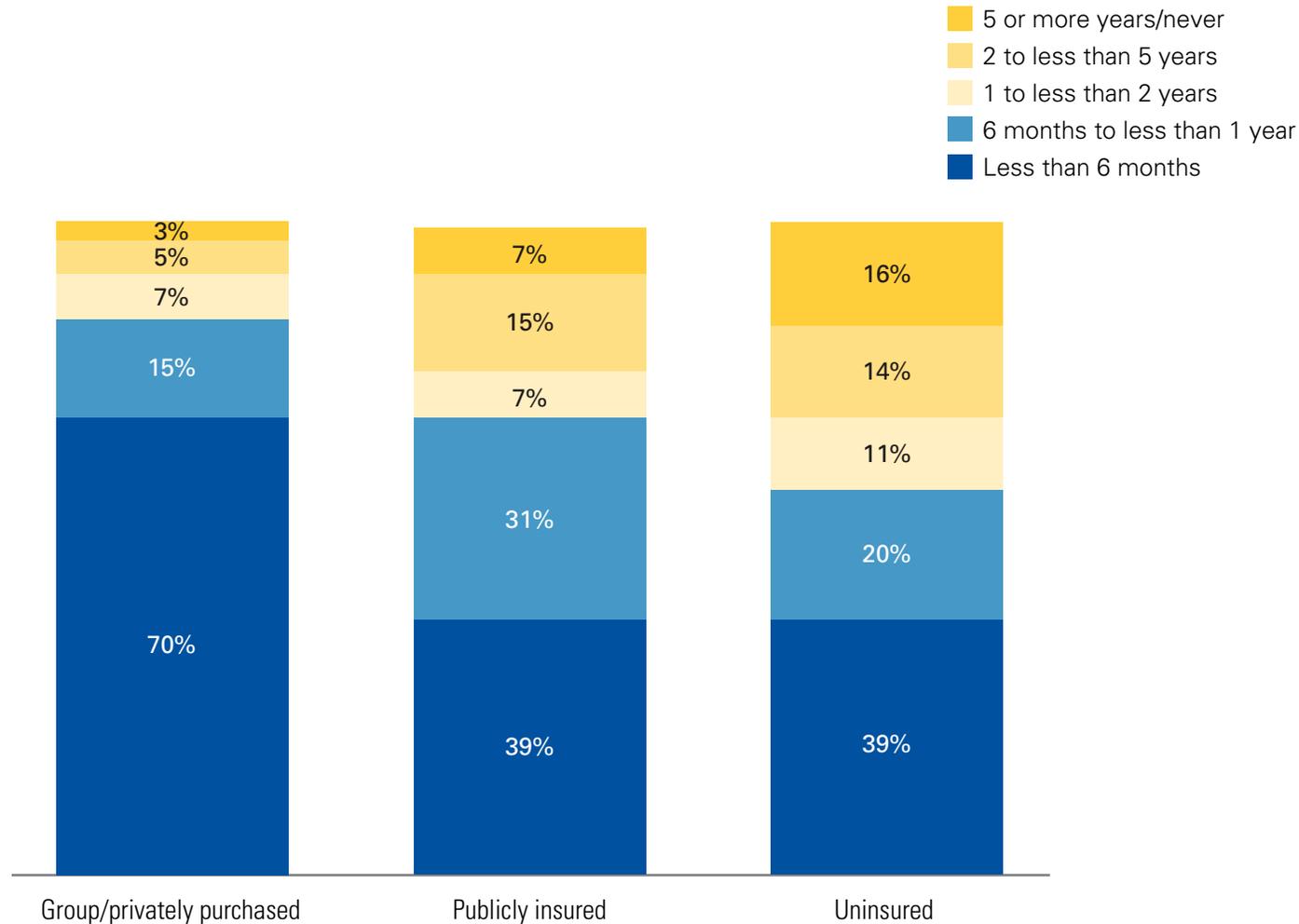
\*Small sample size may lead to unreliable estimate.

Source: Survey of 1,007 adult respondents in California, conducted by telephone between November 5 and December 17, 2007, by Harris Interactive, for the California HealthCare Foundation.

### Adult Dental Health Use of Services

Over half of respondents said they had visited the dentist or hygienist in the past six months, while about 20 percent said they hadn't seen such a provider for two or more years.

# Time Since Last Visit, by Insurance Coverage, California, 2007

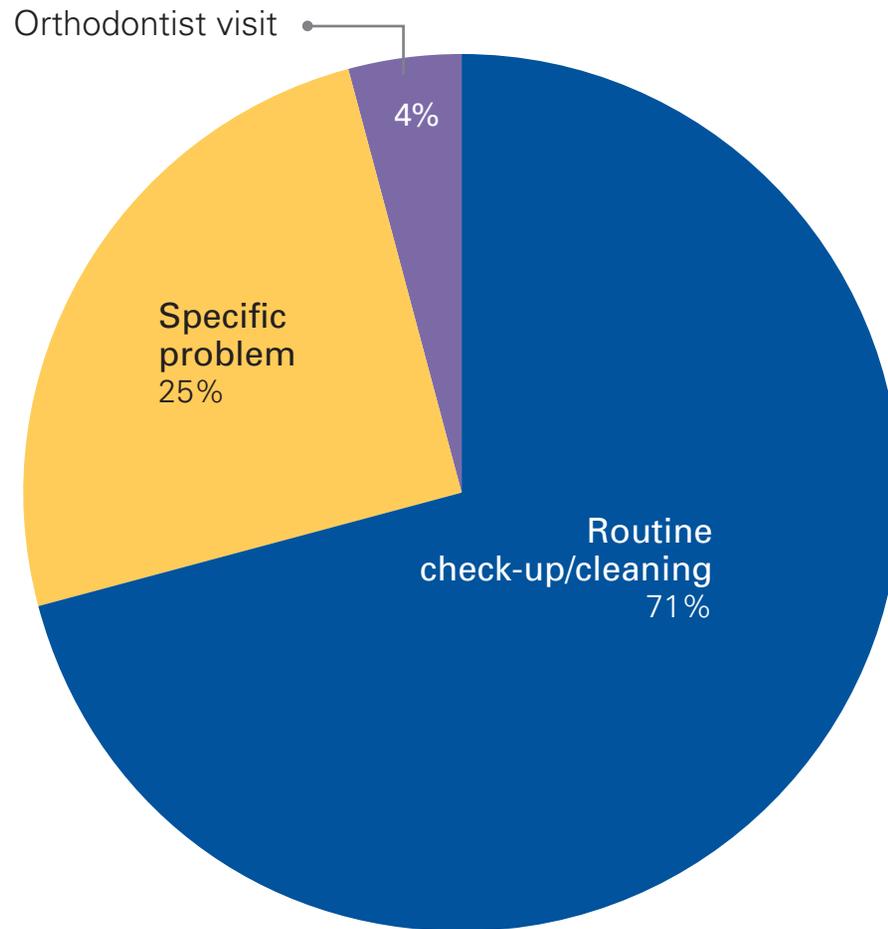


## Adult Dental Health Use of Services

Respondents who are publicly insured or uninsured were significantly less likely to have visited a dental provider recently than those with group or privately purchased insurance.

Source: Survey of 1,007 adult respondents in California, conducted by telephone between November 5 and December 17, 2007, by Harris Interactive, for the California HealthCare Foundation.

## Reason for Last Dental Visit, California, 2007



Note: Respondents were not asked to state reasons for other visits in the past year.

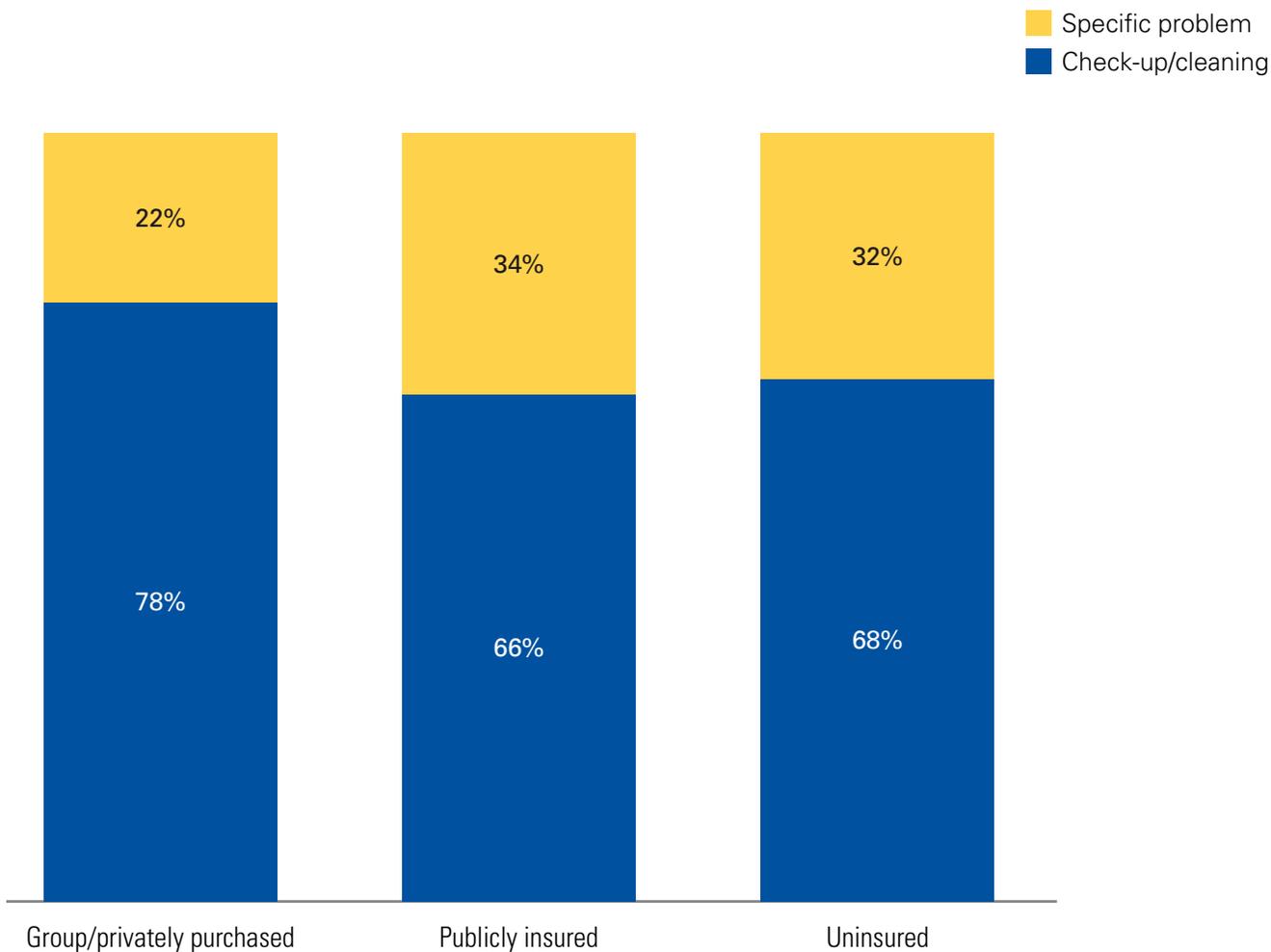
Source: Survey of 1,007 adult respondents in California, conducted by telephone between November 5 and December 17, 2007, by Harris Interactive, for the California HealthCare Foundation.

### Adult Dental Health Use of Services

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Over two-thirds of respondents reported that they last visited a dentist or hygienist for preventive care.

# Reason for Last Dental Visit, by Dental Insurance Coverage, California, 2007

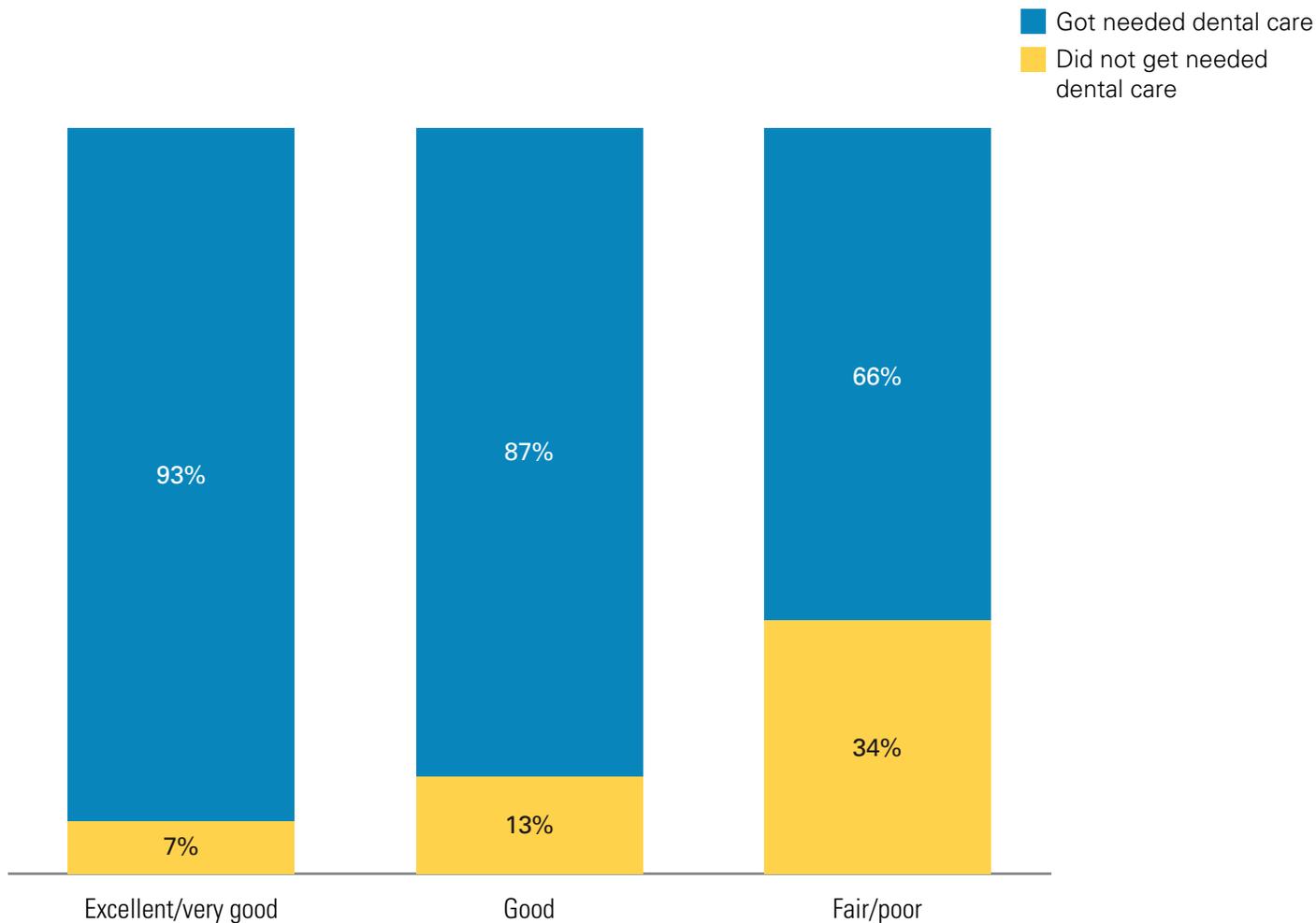


## Adult Dental Health Use of Services

When asked the reason for their last dental visit, publicly insured and uninsured respondents were more likely to report receiving care for a particular problem than those with group/privately purchased dental insurance.

Source: Survey of 1,007 adult respondents in California, conducted by telephone between November 5 and December 17, 2007, by Harris Interactive, for the California HealthCare Foundation.

# Access to Dental Care, by Dental Health Status, California, 2007

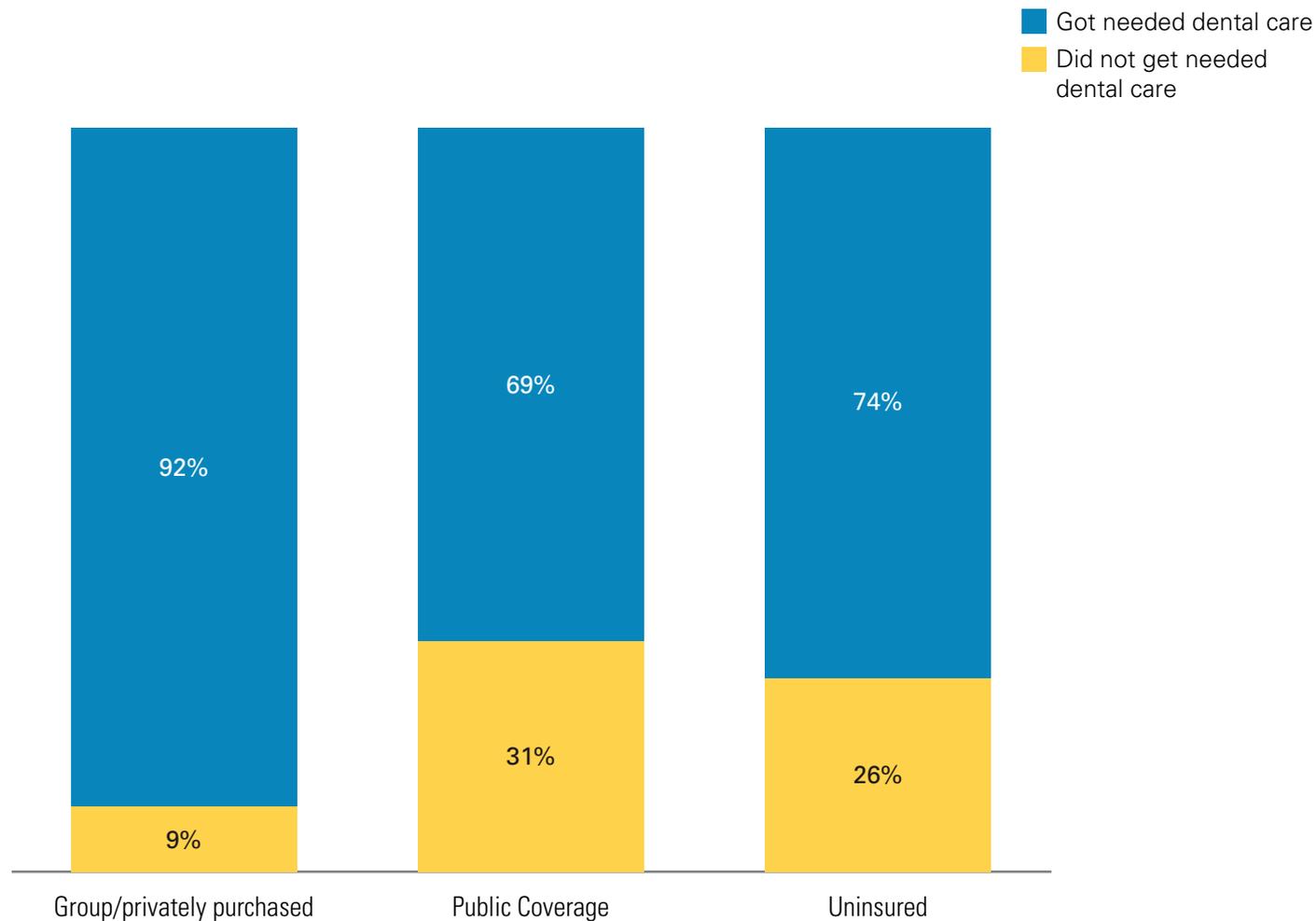


## Adult Dental Health Use of Services

Respondents who said their dental health was excellent or very good were more likely to report getting the dental care they needed than those who said their dental health was good or fair/poor.

Source: Survey of 1,007 adult respondents in California, conducted by telephone between November 5 and December 17, 2007, by Harris Interactive, for the California HealthCare Foundation.

# Access to Dental Care, by Insurance Coverage, California, 2007

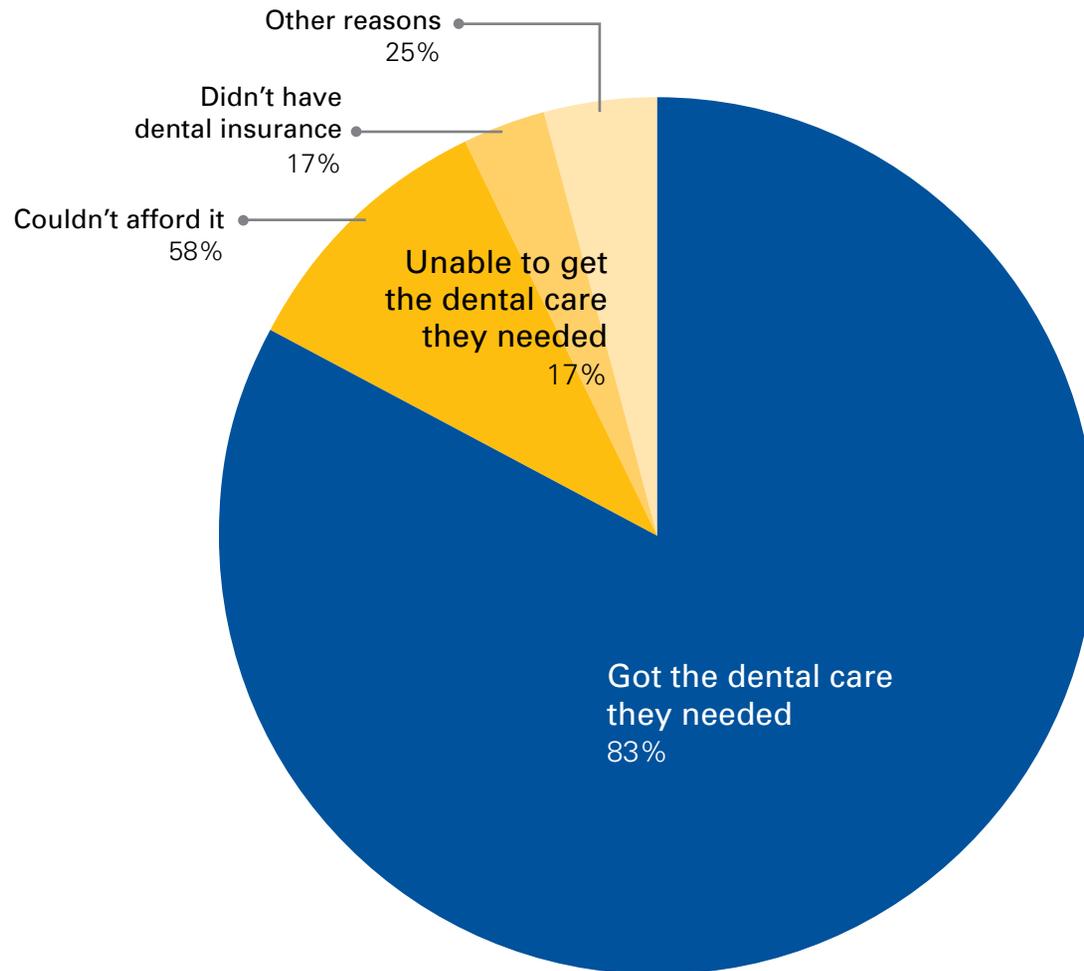


## Adult Dental Health Use of Services

Publicly insured and uninsured respondents were much more likely to report not getting the dental care they needed than group/privately insured respondents.

Source: Survey of 1,007 adult respondents in California, conducted by telephone between November 5 and December 17, 2007, by Harris Interactive, for the California HealthCare Foundation.

## Barriers to Dental Care, California, 2007



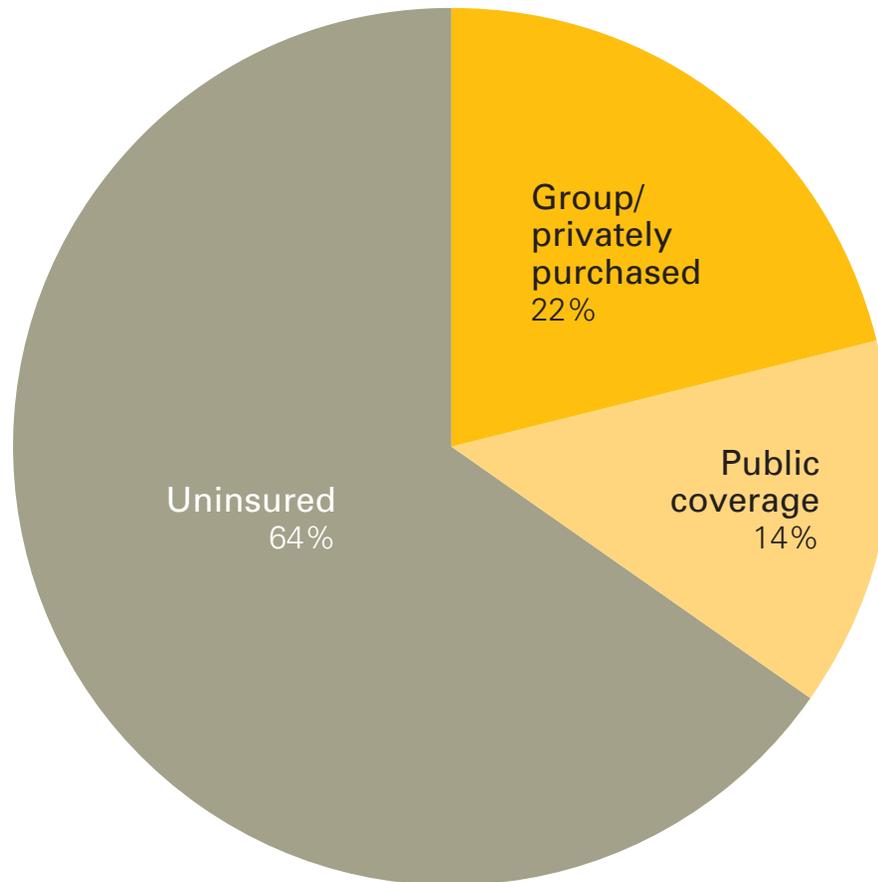
Note: "Other reasons" for not getting care included problems with dentist hours, location, transportation, and other factors.

Source: Survey of 1,007 adult respondents in California, conducted by telephone between November 5 and December 17, 2007, by Harris Interactive, for the California HealthCare Foundation.

### Adult Dental Health Use of Services

Nearly 60 percent of those who were unable to get the dental care they needed last year said that they couldn't afford it. Another 17 percent cited lack of dental insurance as the reason for not getting care.

## Unable to Obtain Dental Care Due to Cost, by Insurance Coverage, California, 2007

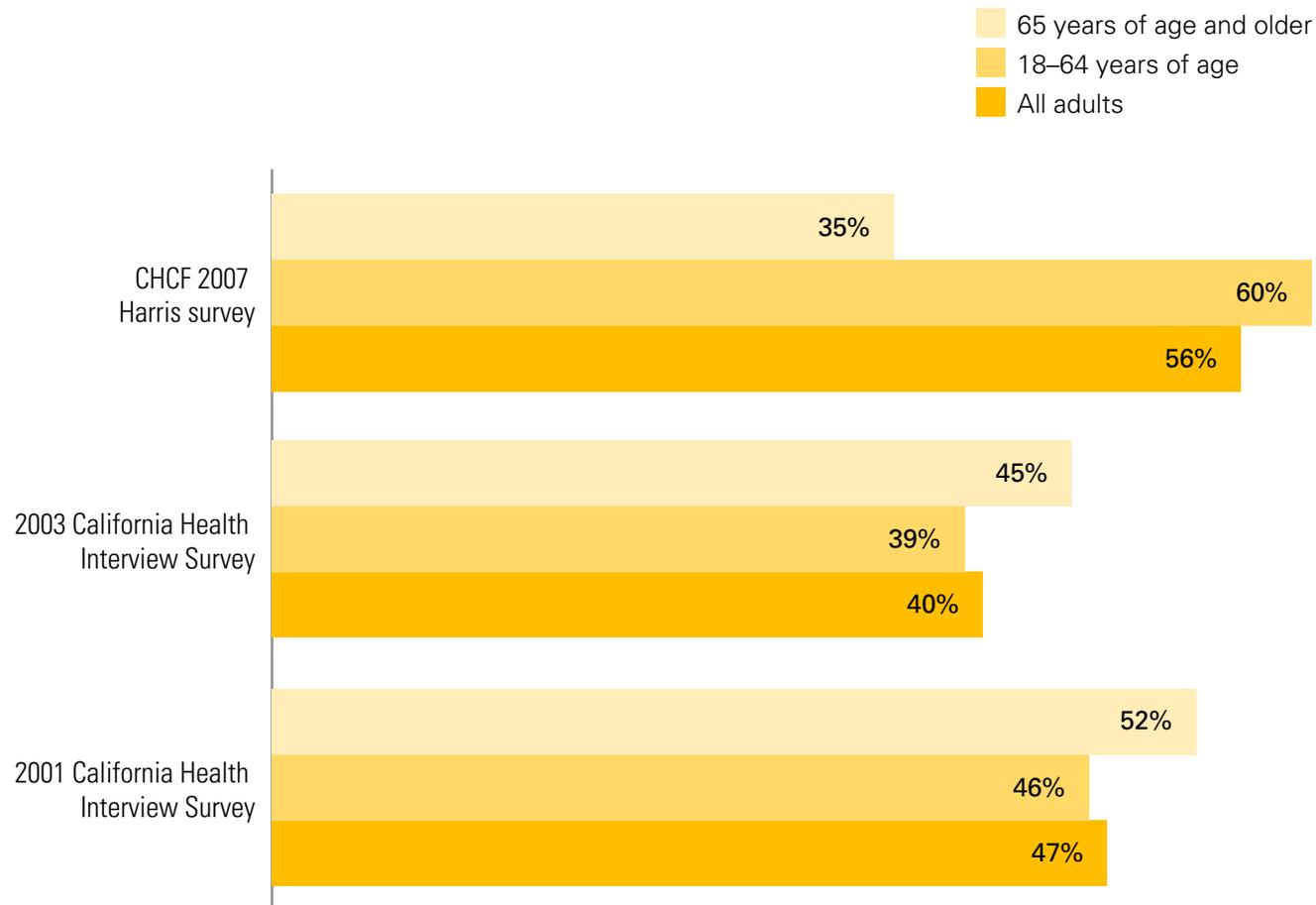


Source: Survey of 1,007 adult respondents in California, conducted by telephone between November 5 and December 17, 2007, by Harris Interactive, for the California HealthCare Foundation.

### Adult Dental Health Use of Services

Nearly two-thirds of those who could not afford needed dental care and didn't get it were uninsured. However, significant numbers of publicly and privately insured respondents also reported the same difficulty. These statistics reflect how dental out-of-pocket costs are a barrier to dental care, even for those with dental insurance.

# Medi-Cal Beneficiaries' Knowledge of Dental Benefits, by Age Group, California, 2007



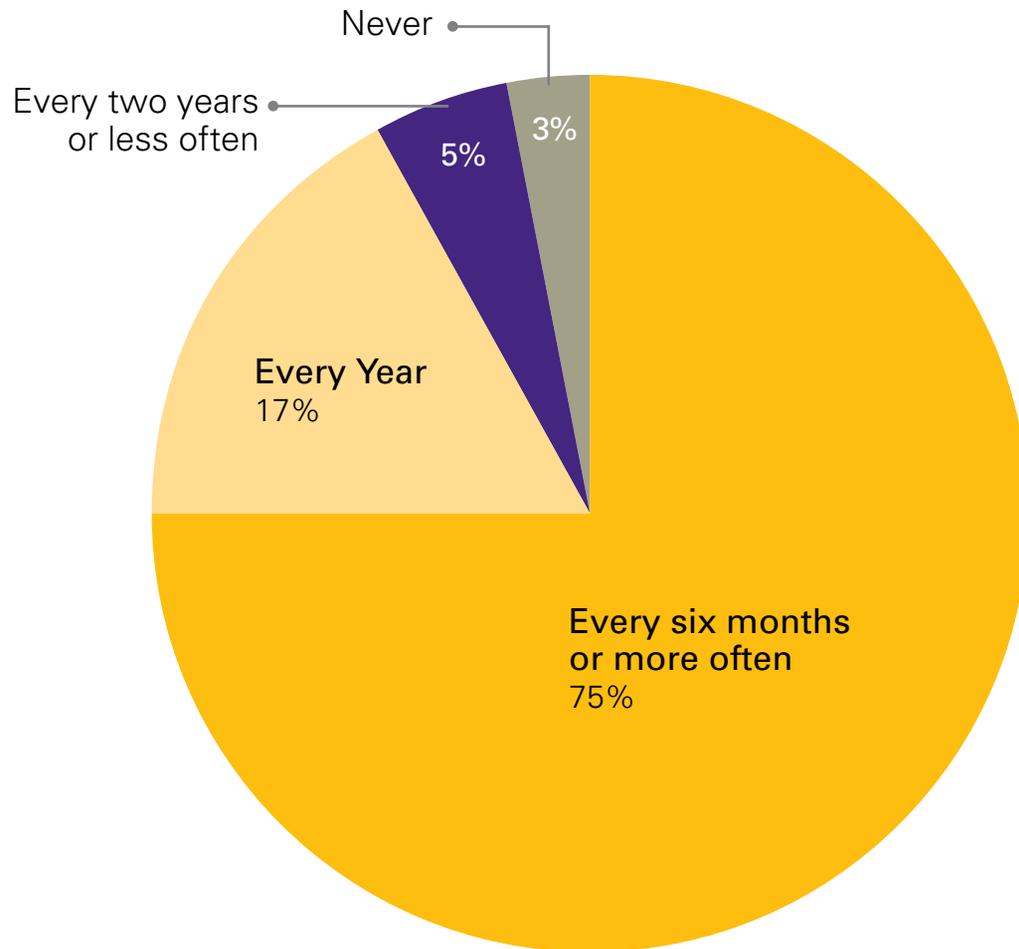
Note: The CHCF Harris Interactive survey estimate of 56 percent is based on a smaller sample than that of CHIS surveys, and has a 10 percent margin of error.

Source: Survey of 1,007 adult respondents in California, conducted by telephone between November 5 and December 17, 2007, by Harris Interactive, for the California HealthCare Foundation.

## Adult Dental Health Perceptions and Misperceptions

Results from independent surveys suggest that a substantial proportion of individuals covered by Medi-Cal may not be aware of their dental benefits. Nearly all Medi-Cal beneficiaries have full dental benefits. Targeted education and outreach may reduce this lack of awareness.

# Perceptions of Appropriate Dental Visit Frequency, California, 2007



Source: Survey of 1,007 adult respondents in California, conducted by telephone between November 5 and December 17, 2007, by Harris Interactive, for the California HealthCare Foundation.

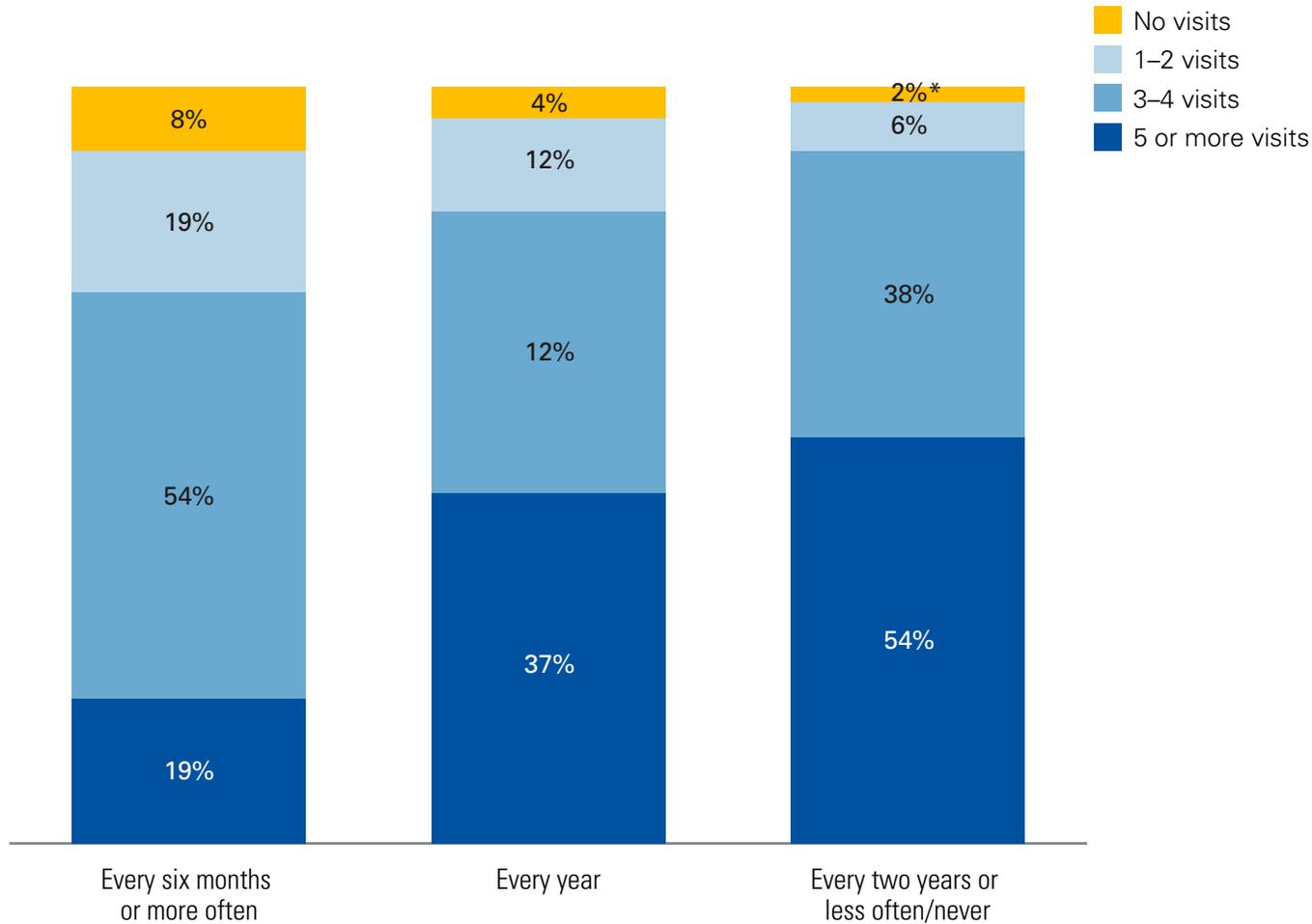
## Adult Dental Health Perceptions and Misperceptions

The majority of respondents said that a person should visit the dentist at least every six months, while a quarter of respondents suggested longer intervals. Parents stated similar beliefs about the frequency of visits for their children.

# Relationship Between Beliefs and Actions

## California, 2007

FREQUENCY OF ACTUAL VISITS, BY VISIT FREQUENCY BELIEF



\*Small sample size may lead to unreliable estimates

Source: Survey of 1,007 adult respondents in California, conducted by telephone between November 5 and December 17, 2007, by Harris Interactive, for the California HealthCare Foundation.

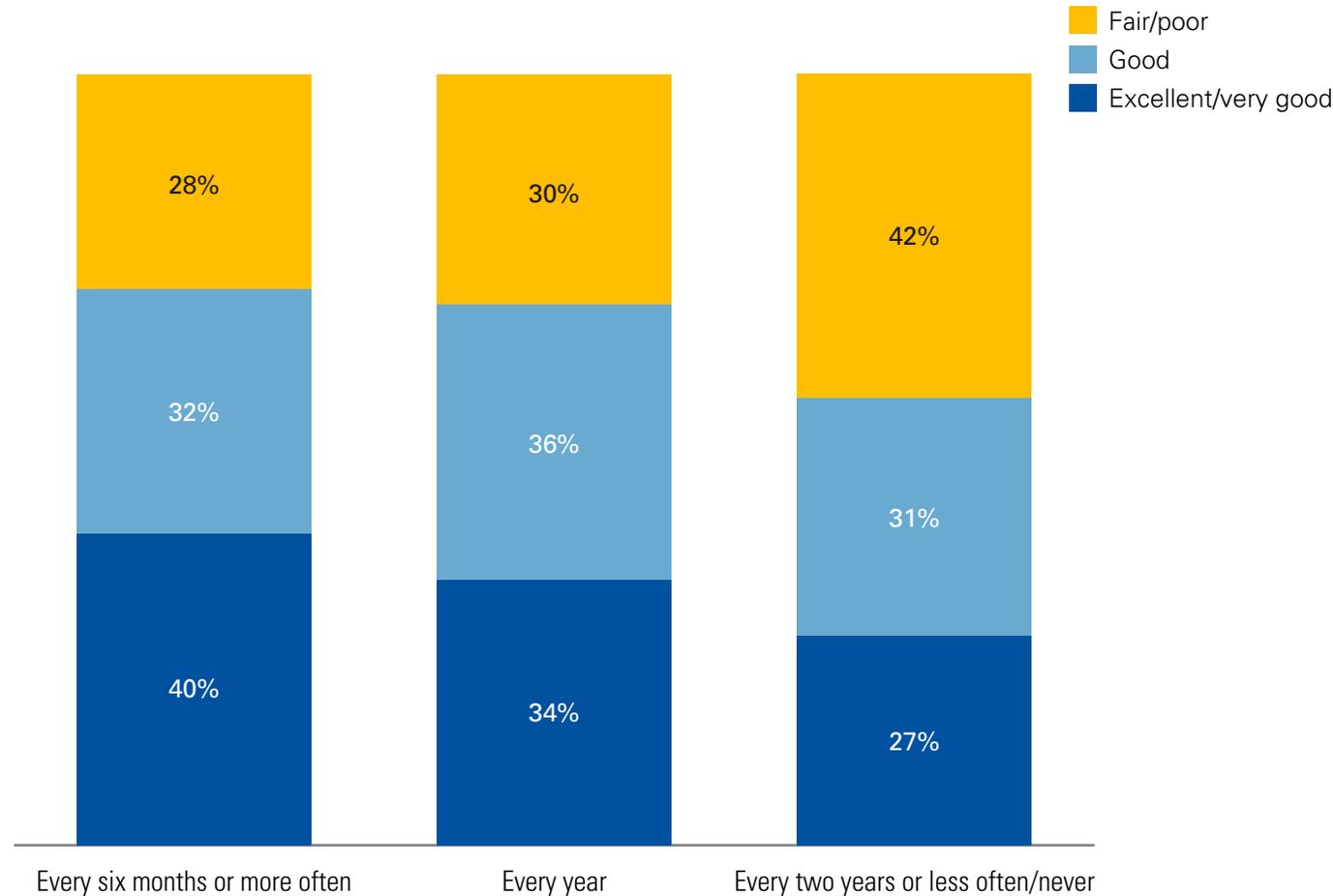
### Adult Dental Health

#### Perceptions and Misperceptions

Respondents who believe in more frequent visits saw the dentist more often in the past year.

# Relationship Between Beliefs and Dental Health Status, California, 2007

DENTAL HEALTH STATUS, BY VISIT FREQUENCY BELIEF

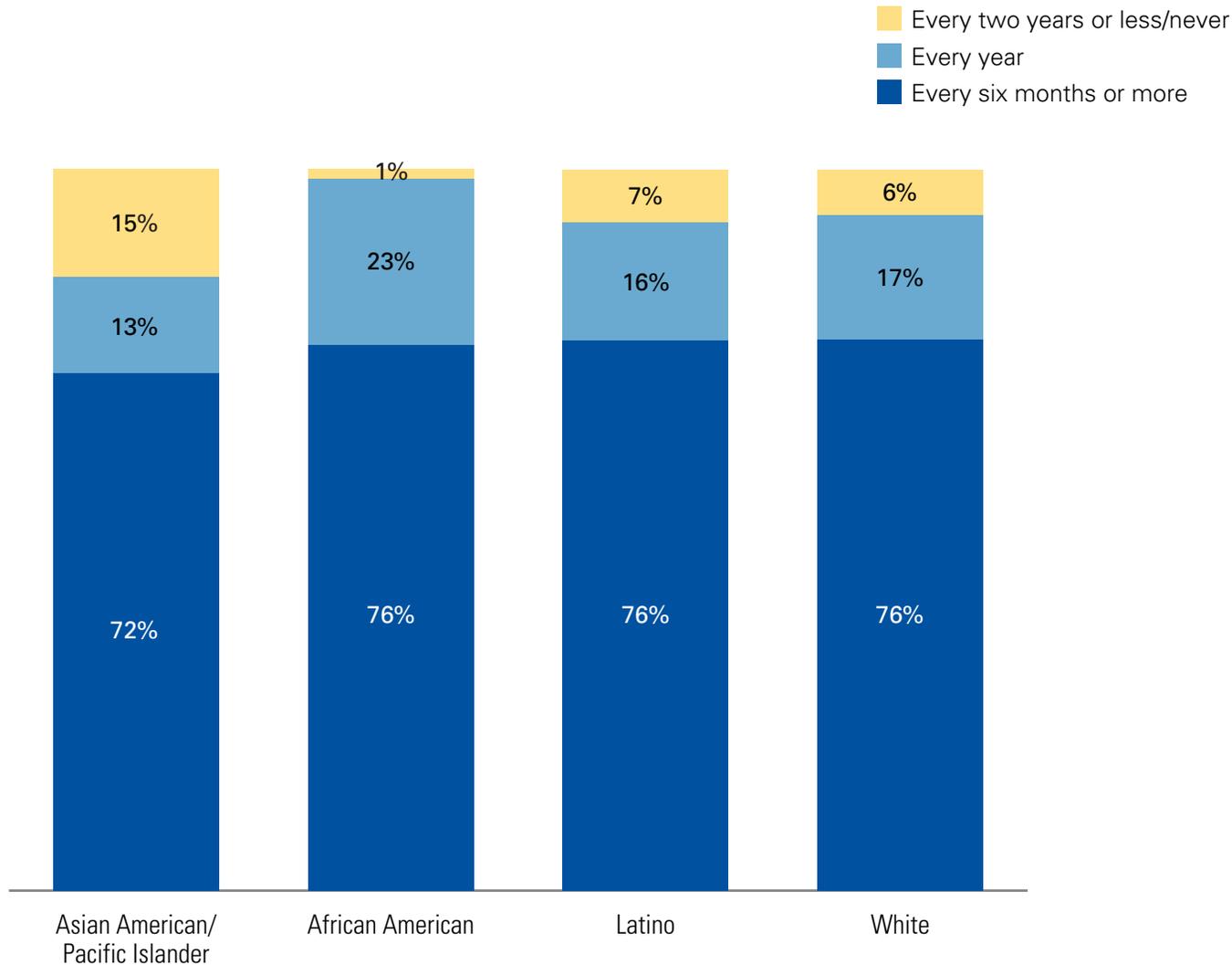


## Adult Dental Health Perceptions and Misperceptions

Individuals who believed a person should visit a dentist at least every six months were more likely to report excellent or good dental health than those who believed in visits no more than every two years or longer.

Source: Survey of 1,007 adult respondents in California, conducted by telephone between November 5 and December 17, 2007, by Harris Interactive, for the California HealthCare Foundation.

# Visit Frequency Beliefs, by Race/Ethnicity, California, 2007

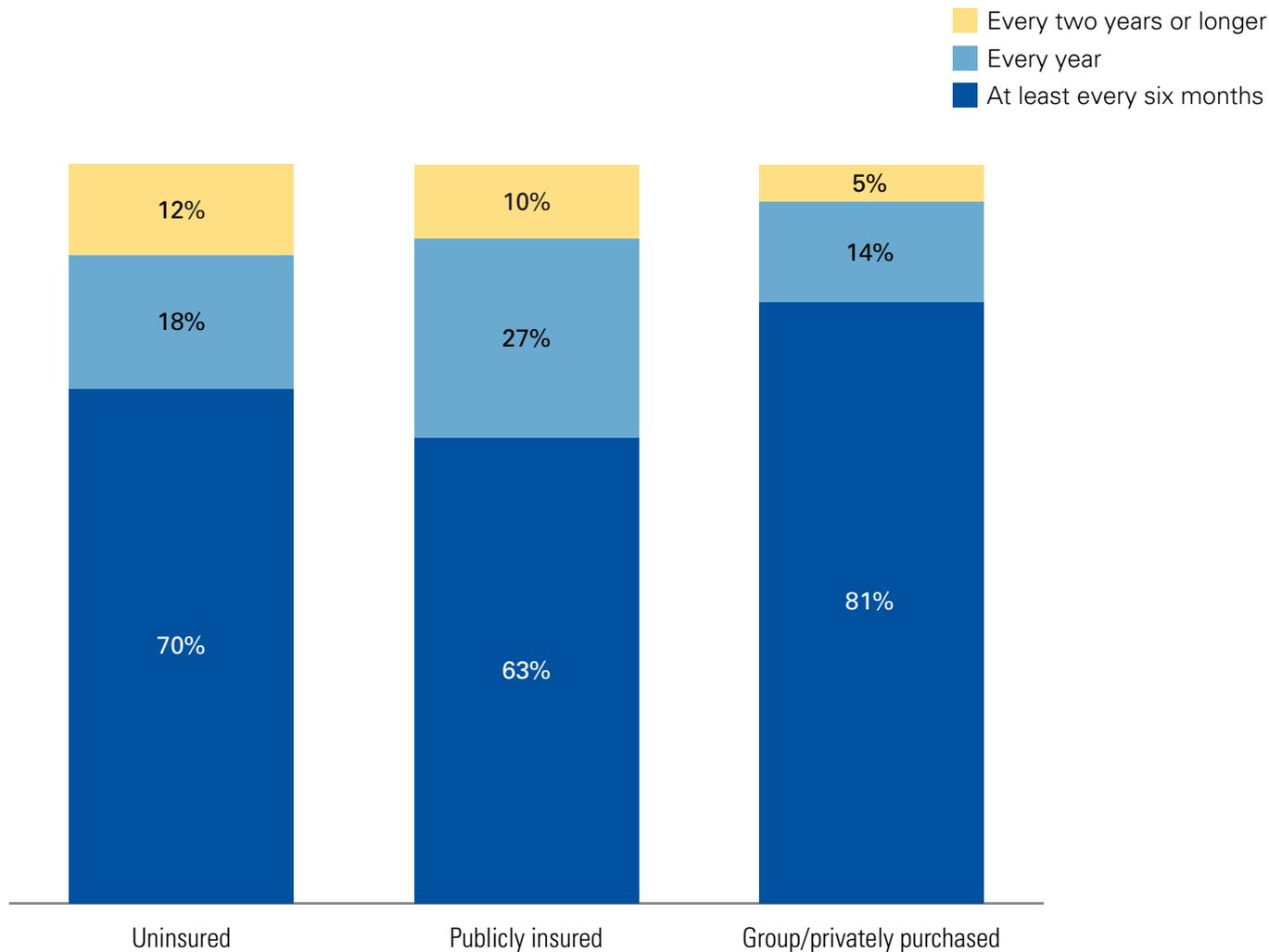


## Adult Dental Health Perceptions and Misperceptions

Substantially more Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders responded that dental check-ups should occur every two years or longer, compared with Whites and African Americans. Additional outreach to Asian American/Pacific Islander communities may be warranted.

Source: Survey of 1,007 adult respondents in California, conducted by telephone between November 5 and December 17, 2007, by Harris Interactive, for the California HealthCare Foundation.

# Visit Frequency Perceptions, by Insurance Coverage, California, 2007

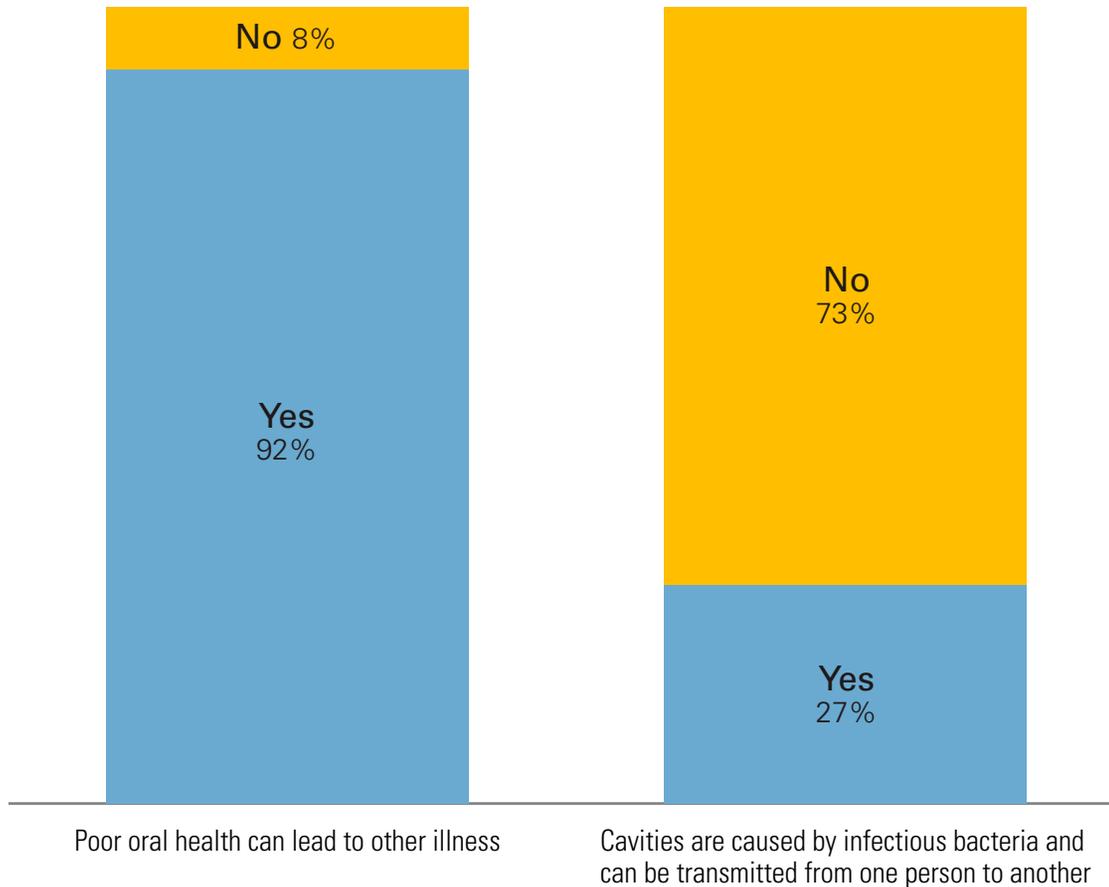


## Adult Dental Health Perceptions and Misperceptions

When compared with uninsured and publicly insured respondents, more group/privately insured individuals stated that dental check ups should occur at least every six months.

Source: Survey of 1,007 adult respondents in California, conducted by telephone between November 5 and December 17, 2007, by Harris Interactive, for the California HealthCare Foundation.

# Knowledge of Oral Health Issues, California, 2007

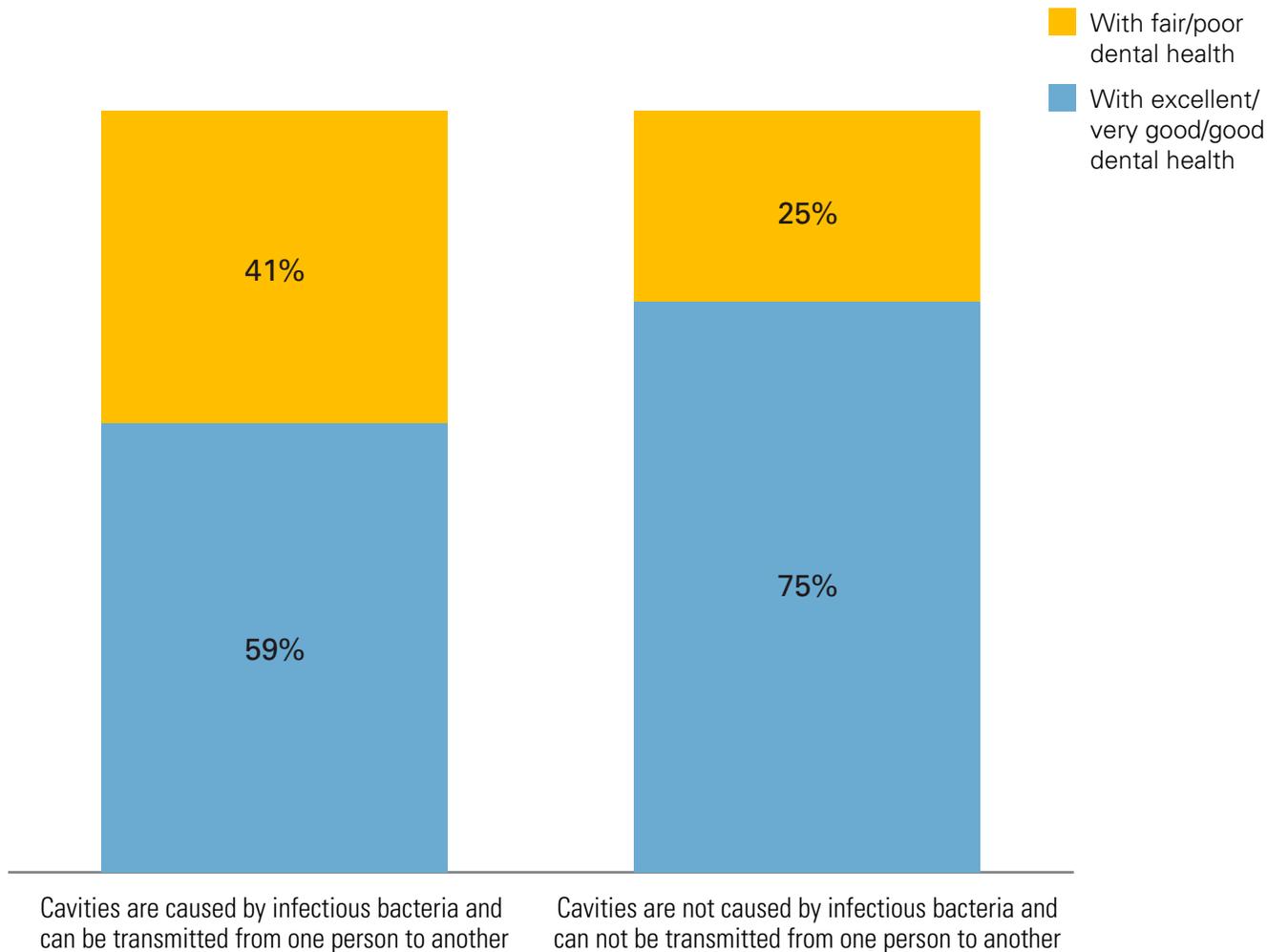


Source: Survey of 1,007 adult respondents in California, conducted by telephone between November 5 and December 17, 2007, by Harris Interactive, for the California HealthCare Foundation.

## Adult Dental Health Perceptions and Misperceptions

The great majority of respondents were aware that poor oral health can lead to other illnesses. However, a much smaller proportion knew that cavities are caused by infectious bacteria, suggesting the need for further public education on this topic.

# Relationship Between Dental Health Status and Oral Health Knowledge, California, 2007



## Adult Dental Health Perceptions and Misperceptions

Respondents who knew that cavities are caused by infectious bacteria were more likely to have fair/poor dental health status than those who didn't know this fact. These statistics may indicate that individuals with dental health problems learn this information from their providers during treatment.

Source: Survey of 1,007 adult respondents in California, conducted by telephone between November 5 and December 17, 2007, by Harris Interactive, for the California HealthCare Foundation.

# Demographics of Survey Respondents: Adult California Residents, Ages 18 and Older

## Gender

Male	49%
Female	51%

## Age

18-24	10%
25-44	41%
45-64	34%
65+	14%

## Race/Ethnicity

White	49%
Latino	29%
African American	6%
Asian American/Pacific Islander	5%
Other	8%

## Education

12 or fewer years of education	17%
High school diploma	27%
AA degree or some college	28%
Bachelor's degree or higher	28%

## Individual Income

Less than 25K	16%
25K-49.9K	22%
50K-99.9K	32%
100K+	29%

## Survey Language

English	84%
Spanish	16%

## Area of Residence

City/large town	51%
Suburbs of a city/large town	19%
Small town	23%
Village or rural location	8%

## Work Status

Full-time	45%
Part-time	10%
Self-employed	7%
Unemployed and looking for work	5%
Not in labor force	33%

Source: Survey of 1,007 adult respondents in California, conducted by telephone between November 5 and December 17, 2007, by Harris Interactive, for the California HealthCare Foundation.

## Author

Nadereh Pourat, Ph.D.

UCLA Center for Health Policy Research

[pourat@ucla.edu](mailto:pourat@ucla.edu)

## Methodology

The data for this survey are from the California General Public Survey conducted by telephone between November 5 and December 17, 2007 by Harris Interactive, using random digit dialing. Over 1,000 California residents ages 18 and older participated in the 20 minute survey, with a final sample of 1,007 included in this publication.

The differences specified in the body of the snapshot are statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$ .

The data on the percentage of individuals who had Medi-Cal coverage but did not report having dental insurance from the California General Public Survey were compared with similar data from the 2001 and 2003 California Health Interview Survey (CHIS). CHIS is a statewide representative survey of California civilian population, conducted in two year intervals. Approximately, 58,000 and 42,000 adults participated in the 2001 and 2003 CHIS surveys, respectively.

## Adult Dental Health

### GIVE US YOUR FEEDBACK

Was the information provided in this report of value? Are there additional kinds of information or data you would like to see included in future reports of this type? Is there other research in this subject area you would like to see? We would like to know.



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Thank you.

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CALIFORNIA  
HEALTHCARE  
FOUNDATION

California HealthCare Foundation

1438 Webster Street, Suite 400

Oakland, CA 94612

510.238.1040

[www.chcf.org](http://www.chcf.org)