

Oral health means more than good teeth. Gum disease and tooth decay have been linked to chronic disease, such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. It can also lead to missing school and/or work. Preventive oral health care visits can help identify diseases, injuries, and nutrition problems.

Oral health conditions are preventable and treatable when discovered early.

The table below outlines the state of dental health within The Rappahannock-Rapidan Health District's (RRHD) communities. This information can help guide the community as we work together to develop ways to make it easier for everyone to have access to dental care and better oral health.

Dentists report that **95%** of their patients lack knowledge of proper oral care and

**65%** of survey respondents reported the same.



*Knowledge of oral health is important for healthy behavior, allowing individuals to protect their overall health and the health of their children.*

**64% of children and 29% of adults**

with Medicaid dental coverage had at least one dental service in the last year.



*Regular dental visits are important to help keep teeth and gums healthy and avoid tooth loss.*

**59%**

of survey respondents age 18+ have a dental provider and have been seen in the last year.



*The American Dental Association (ADA) recommends dental visits about once every 6 months.*

**48%** of dentists and **38%** of dental hygienists expect to retire in the next 10 years.



*Rural areas have lower rates of dental providers and there are often not enough dentists who accept Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) or who have discounted fee schedules.*

Mouth and throat cancers were diagnosed at a rate of **14.7 residents per 100,000**. **2.7 per 100,000** died from these cancers.



*Most dentists perform an examination of your mouth during a routine dental visit to screen for oral cancer, which can identify mouth cancer early, when there is a greater chance for a cure.*

**63%**

of residents served by community water systems receive fluoridated water



*Fluoride in water is the most efficient way to prevent cavities, one of the most common childhood diseases.*

**38%**

of adults aged 45-64 lost at least one tooth because of tooth decay or gum disease.



*Tooth loss can cause both physical and emotional health issues.*

Compared to Virginia (**895.2 per 100,000**), RRHD residents (**641.9 per 100,000**) used emergency rooms and urgent care centers less for non-traumatic (not caused by an accident) dental related issues. However, Black/African American residents had the highest utilization rate at **1,060.4 per 100,000**.



**31%**













of adults age 18+ have no dental insurance.



*People with dental insurance coverage are more likely to get oral health care.*

## Social Determinants of Health

Social determinants of health (SDOH) refer to the environmental (non-medical) factors that affect wellness. They are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age that help determine the quality of a person’s health, including oral health. Many factors affect how easily people can access oral health care. Some of the barriers to care are lack of insurance coverage, transportation issues, and financial concerns. These barriers can lead to unequal access to preventative oral health care and treatment.

Rappahannock Rapidan Health District		Compared to Virginia
Age	 18% Age 65+	VA (16%)
Race	 21% Non-White	VA (37%)
Ethnicity	9% Hispanic Ethnicity	VA (10%)
Limited English Proficiency	 4% of those Age 5+ have Limited English proficiency	
Income	 8% of the population lives in Poverty	
	24% live in Cost Burdened Households	
Disability	 12% have a Disability	
Health Insurance	 6% Uninsured Children Age 0-19 10% Uninsured Adults Age 18-64	
		

### Number of Survey Respondents

Community Residents: **167**  
 Community Dental Practice Leaders: **22**  
 Community Health Professionals: **17**



RRHD conducted a study to identify oral health issues and risk factors in the community. The project used existing data, three surveys (residents, dental practice leaders, and community health professionals), and recommendations developed with community stakeholders.

For more details, please refer to the *Rappahannock Rapidan Health District Oral Health Needs Assessment 2024* report, available on RRHD's website: [rrhd.org](http://rrhd.org).

