

Title: Wild and Worrisome: Oral health disparities in West Virginia

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Purpose: This study analyzed oral health disparities in WV: specifically, age and income as potential determinants of oral health measured by tooth loss and dental visit utilization.

Methods: Cross tabulations of 2018 BRFSS data with differences in proportion z tests were utilized to evaluate whether significant disparities exist. Additionally, two regressions were performed with linear, logistic, and poisson specifications, analyzing trends between WV and the US.

Results: Number of teeth extracted revealed a positive association ($p < .01$) with both the 65+ and WV variables. Conversely, the income level variable had a negative relationship ($p < .01$). Dental visit utilization was positively associated with both the 65+ and income variables ($p < .01$). Additionally, being a WV resident had a negative association ($p < .01$).

Conclusions: Overall, findings showed age, income, and location all significantly predicted oral health. These findings reinforce the need for an increase in preventative measures, especially in Appalachia where oral health disparities are prevalent.