



# RHODE ISLAND DATA BRIEF

## Oral Health Concerns and Dental Care among Rhode Island Middle and High School Students, 2015

June  
2016

### Introduction

**This report presents data for Rhode Island public middle and high school students (grades 6-12) on self-reported oral health concerns and receipt of dental care. The data used for this analysis were obtained from the 2015 Rhode Island Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS).**

**2015 Rhode Island YRBS and Oral Health Questions:** During the spring of 2015, 2,479 students from 22 public middle schools and 3,462 students from 22 public high schools completed the self-administered paper survey. Oral health questions have been included in the survey since 2013, as outlined by the Rhode Island Oral Health Surveillance System.

The questions estimate the percentage of Rhode Island middle and high school students who have:

- experienced pain or soreness with their teeth or mouth during the past year,
- been self-conscious and embarrassed because of their teeth or mouth during the past year, and
- seen a dentist for a dental check-up, exam, cleaning, or other dental work in the past year.

**Reading the statistics:** This report presents bar graphs showing percentages and 95% confidence intervals (CI). Since percentages from survey data are estimates, the 95% CI indicates the range of values within which the "true" value lies 95% of the time. When two groups have CIs that overlap, it indicates that the "true" values are likely to be similar in both groups. If the CIs do not overlap, it indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups.

For more information about oral health in Rhode Island or this report, call the Health Information Line at 401-222-5960 / RI Relay 711 or visit [www.health.ri.gov/oralhealth](http://www.health.ri.gov/oralhealth). For more information about the YRBS, visit [www.health.ri.gov/data](http://www.health.ri.gov/data)

### ABOUT THE YRBS:

The YRBS is a biennial national survey of public middle and high school students, developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to monitor health risk behaviors related to leading causes of injury, violence, morbidity, and mortality among youth. In collaboration with the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE), the Rhode Island Department of Health has conducted the YRBS since 1995. The YRBS data are weighted to be statistically representative of public middle and high school students statewide.

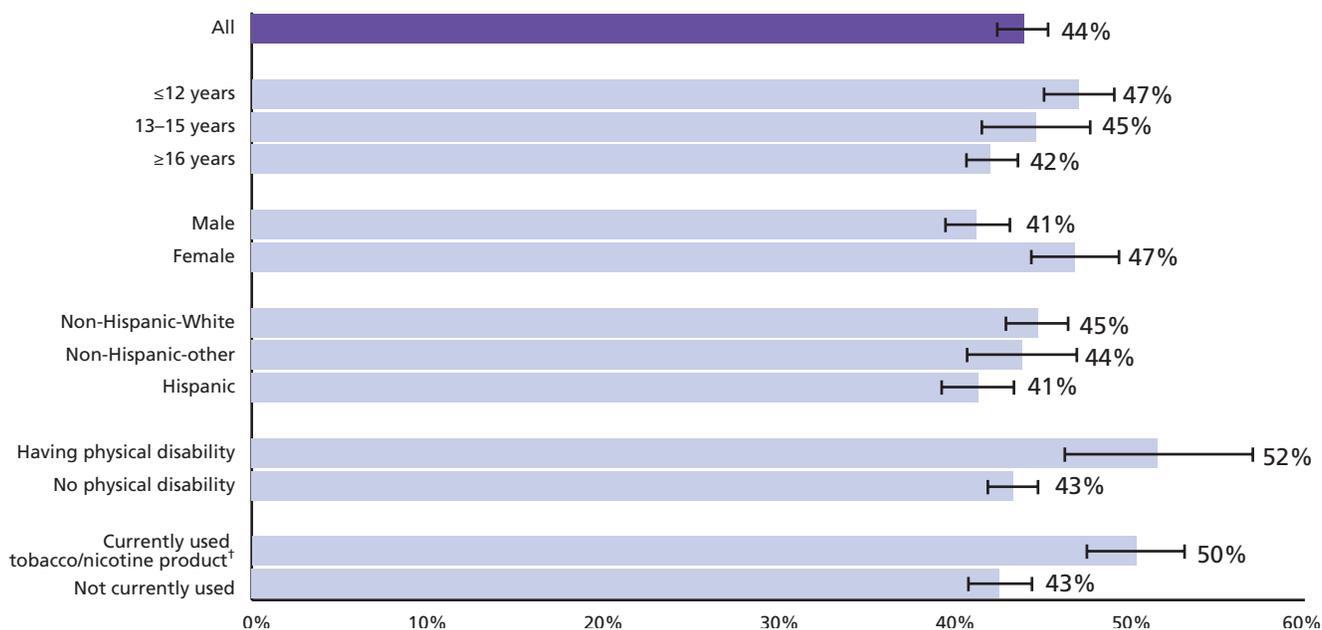


This brief was produced by the Rhode Island Oral Health Program and funded through cooperative agreement DP13-1307 between the Rhode Island Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

## Oral Health Concerns among Rhode Island Middle and High School Students:

- **Pain or soreness with the teeth or mouth:** Forty-four percent (44%) of Rhode Island middle and high school students reported they experienced pain or soreness with their teeth or mouth at least one time during the past year (Figure 1).
- **Pain or soreness with the teeth or mouth** were more prevalent among:
  - » younger students ( $\leq 12$  year old) than 16 years or older (47% vs. 42%),
  - » female students than males (47% vs. 41%),
  - » students who had physical disability or long-term health problem, compared with students who did not have physical disability (52% vs. 43%), and
  - » students who currently used any tobacco and nicotine product, including cigarette, smokeless tobacco, cigar or electronic vapor (e-cigarette), compared with students who did not use any tobacco product (50% vs. 43%).

**FIGURE 1. RI MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHOSE TEETH/MOUTH HAVE BEEN PAINFUL/SORE ONCE OR MORE DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS, 2015**



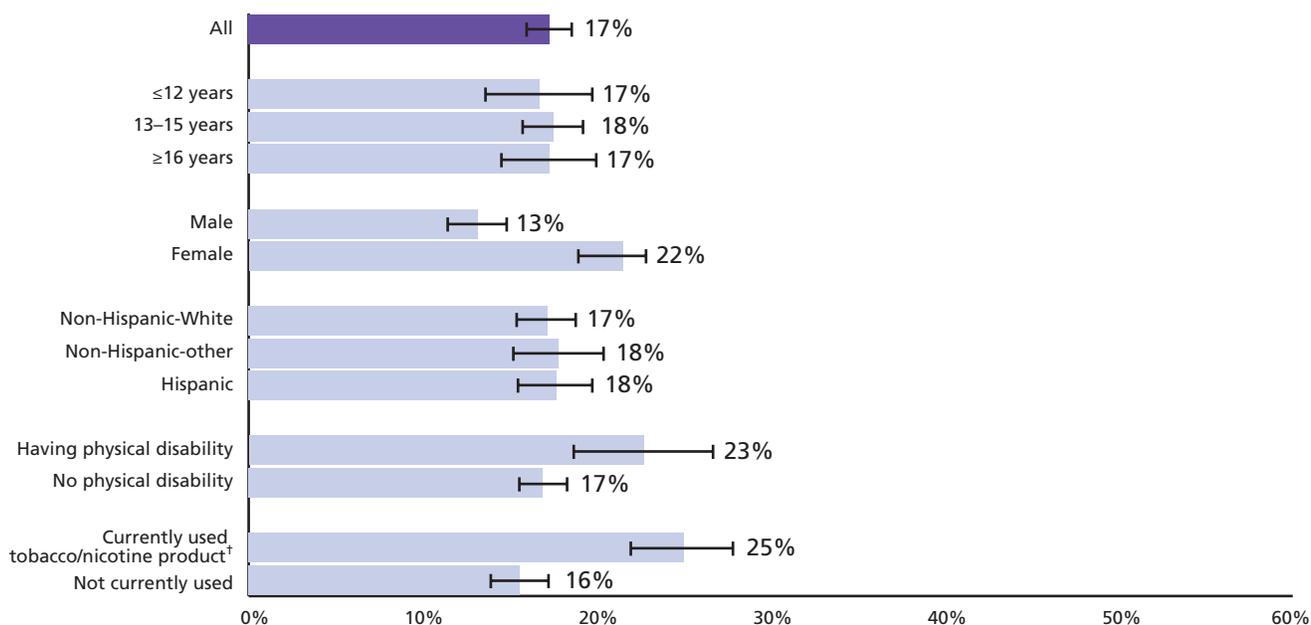
Data Source: Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2015

† Cigarette, smokeless tobacco, cigar, electronic vapor product use on at least 1 day during last 30 days before the survey

## Oral Health Concerns among Rhode Island Middle and High School Students:

- **Self-consciousness or embarrassment because of teeth or mouth:** Approximately one in six students (17%) reported they were self-conscious or embarrassed sometimes, most of the time, or always because of their teeth or mouth in the past year (Figure 2).
- **Self-consciousness or embarrassment because of teeth or mouth** were more frequently reported among:
  - » female students than males (21% vs. 13%),
  - » students with physical disability or long-term health problem than students who did not have physical disability (23% vs. 17%), and
  - » students who currently used any tobacco and nicotine product, including cigarette, smokeless tobacco, cigar or electronic vapor (e-cigarette), compared with students who did not use any tobacco product (25% vs. 16%).

**FIGURE 2. RI MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO WERE SOMETIMES, MOST OF THE TIME, OR ALWAYS SELF-CONSCIOUS OR EMBARRASSED BECAUSE OF THEIR TEETH/MOUTH DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS, 2015**



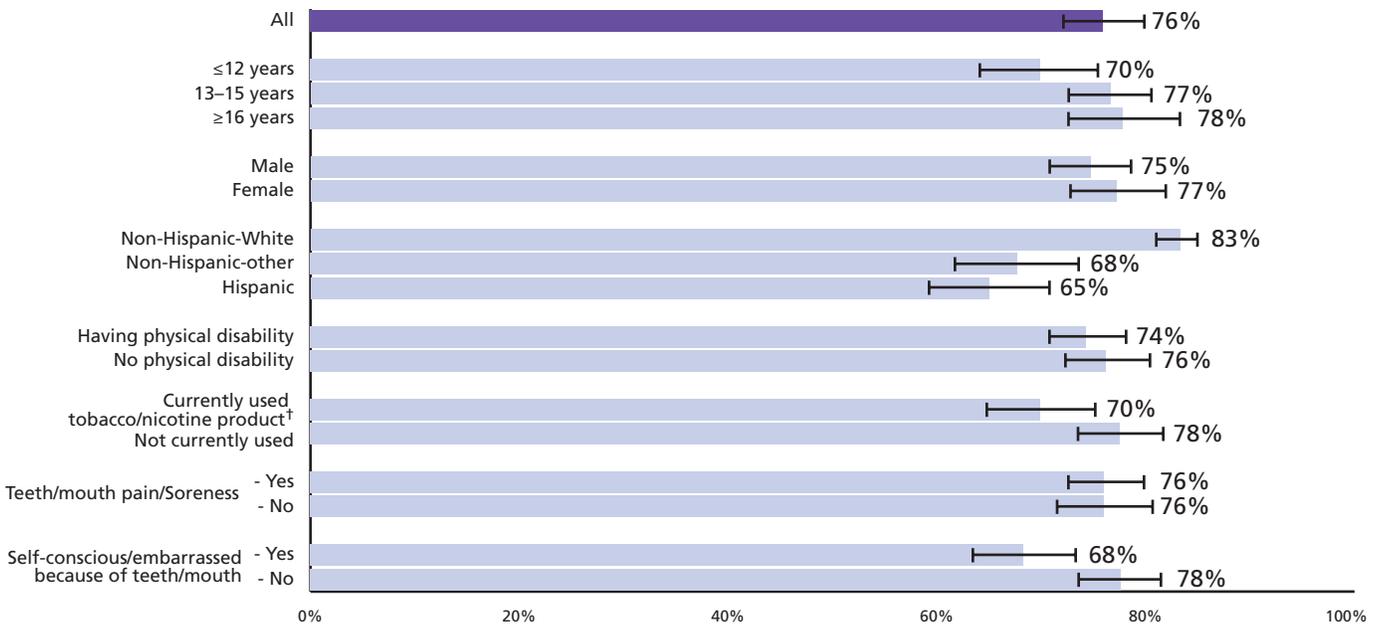
Data Source: Data Source: Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2015

† Cigarette, smokeless tobacco, cigar, electronic vapor product use on at least 1 day during last 30 days before the survey

## Receipt of Dental Care among Rhode Island Middle and High School Students:

- Overall, about three in four Rhode Island middle and high school students (76%) reported having seen a dentist for preventive (check-up, exam, or teeth cleaning) or any dental care (Figure 3).
- The likelihood of seeing a dentist was greatly determined by a student’s race and ethnicity. Hispanic and non-Hispanic minority (including Black and other) students were less likely to have seen a dentist in the past year than those who were non-Hispanic and White (non-Hispanic White: 83%, non-Hispanic minority: 68%, and Hispanic: 65%).
- All tobacco and nicotine products negatively affect oral health and increase risk of developing periodontal disease and oral cancer. Besides, functional and esthetic oral health problems, such as reduced sense of taste, stained teeth or tongue, or bad breath, are caused by use of tobacco/nicotine products. However, Rhode Island middle and high school students who currently used any tobacco/nicotine product were less likely, than non-users, to have visited a dentist (70% vs. 78%).
- Students who reported lower self-confidence with their oral health may need dental care more than their peers. Although, students who were self-conscious or embarrassed because of their teeth or mouth were significantly less likely to be seen by a dentist in the past year than those who did not report such concerns (68% vs. 78%).

**FIGURE 3. RHODE ISLAND MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO SAW A DENTIST DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS, 2015**



Data Source: Data Source: Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2015

† Cigarette, smokeless tobacco, cigar, electronic vapor product use on at least 1 day during last 30 days before the survey

### Conclusion:

- Good oral health is critical to all adolescents’ physical, emotional, and social well-being. Poor oral health may adversely affect school attendance, academic performance, and self-esteem. Further assessment of students’ oral health problems, sources of regular dental care, and dental insurance status is recommended to reduce barriers that hinder Rhode Island adolescents’ receipt of optimal dental care.



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