



2023 STEPs Survey findings

Oral Health

Rationale

The rising burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in Ghana is a critical public health issue, exacerbated by demographic shifts and lifestyle changes.

Oral health is a significant contributor to this burden, with far-reaching impacts on individual health, productivity, and the healthcare system. Oral health is often neglected, yet it is vital to overall well-being.

Poor oral health can lead to severe consequences, including pain, infection, and complications in managing other conditions like diabetes.



Key messages

- Ghana has made progress in promoting oral health, but challenges remain in ensuring equitable access to dental services, especially in rural areas. Greater emphasis on preventive care and community-based services is needed, alongside nationwide awareness campaigns on dental hygiene.
- Maintaining good dental hygiene, such as regular brushing and dental visits, is crucial for preserving natural teeth. Awareness should be raised about the importance of regular check-ups, even in the absence of pain.
- Despite high levels of oral discomfort, many Ghanaians have never visited a dentist, with disparities across urban and rural areas and between genders. Expanding dental care infrastructure and mobile units in underserved regions can address this gap.
- To improve dental care accessibility, more dental assistants should be trained and deployed to primary healthcare facilities, ensuring basic dental care services are available at the community level.

- Dental care utilization in Ghana is low. Evidence from the STEPS survey shows that, 29% of adults in Ghana experienced pain or discomfort to mouth or teeth in the past 12 months. However, only 3.4% sought dental care within the past 12 months
- One in hundred adults have lost all natural teeth
- 84.9% of the population has never received dental care. This is worse among rural residents (91.3%) compared to urban residents (78.4%)
- Overall, 54.3% adult clean their teeth at least twice a day
- Majority of Ghanaians seek dental care only when they experience pain

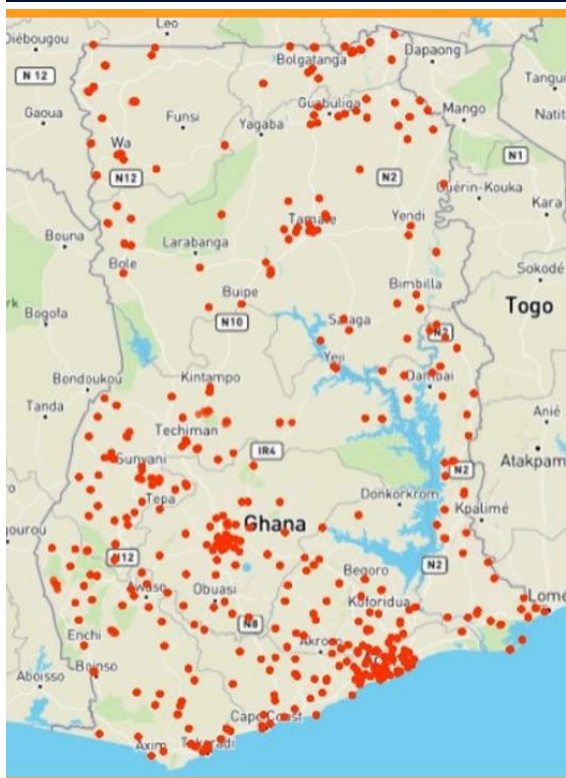
1. What is Oral Health

Oral health is the state of the mouth, teeth and orofacial structures that enables individuals to perform essential functions such as eating, breathing and speaking, and encompasses psychosocial dimensions such as self-confidence, well-being and the ability to socialize and work without pain, discomfort and embarrassment. Oral health varies over the life course from early life to old age, is integral to general health and supports individuals in participating in society and achieving their potential.

Oral diseases encompass a range of diseases and conditions that include dental caries, periodontal (gum) disease, tooth loss, oral cancer, oro-dental trauma, noma and birth defects such as cleft lip and palate.

Oral diseases are among the most common noncommunicable diseases worldwide, affecting an estimated 3.5 billion people. While the global burden of oral health conditions is growing, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, the overall burden of oral health conditions on services is likely to keep increasing because of population growth and ageing.

2. 2023 STEPS Survey method



- Map of Ghana showing Nationwide household selection.
- A multi-stage sampling technique was used to obtain a nationally representative sample.
- Data was collected in all 16 regions, 385 enumeration areas and 5438 respondents aged 18 to 69.

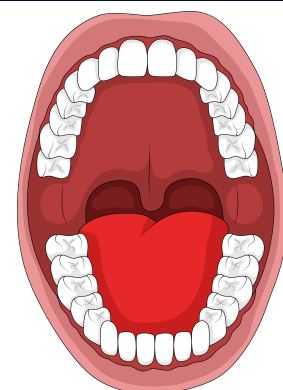
3. Natural Teeth Retention

Majority of Ghanaians accounting for 98.9% of Ghanaians have ≥ 20 natural teeth. However, natural teeth loss increases with age. While nearly all younger adults retain 20 or more natural teeth, this percentage decreases with age.

By the age of 60-69 years, 4.4% of individuals have only 10-19 teeth remaining, illustrating the trend of increasing tooth loss with advancing age. One in hundred adults aged 18 -69 have lost all natural teeth (edentulous).



One in Hundred adults aged 18 - 69 have lost all natural teeth



4. Pain or Discomfort

Percentage having oral pain or discomfort*

Age Group (years)	Men			Women			Both Sexes		
	n	%	95% CI	n	%	95% CI	n	%	95% CI
18-29	550	27.4	22.7-32.3	873	26.0	22.2-29.8	1423	26.7	23.6-29.8
30-44	721	24.0	19.8-28.2	1393	28.3	25.3-31.4	2114	26.2	23.4-29.1
45-59	519	32.8	28.0-37.6	812	36.7	32.7-40.7	1331	34.8	31.8-37.8
60-69	232	44.0	35.9-52.1	338	41.2	34.4-48.1	570	42.6	37.3-48.0
18-69 (All)	2022	28.3	25.9-30.8	3416	29.7	27.7-31.7	5438	29.0	27.4-30.6

* During the past 12 months, did your teeth or mouth cause any pain or discomfort?

Across the age groups, the prevalence of oral pain or discomfort increases with age. The prevalence among the 60–69-year group is 44.0% for both sexes, 41.2% among Men and 42.6% among Women.

However, the prevalence among the young adults, (18-29 years) is 26.7% for both sexes

A significant proportion of adults aged 18-69, accounting for 29.0% reported experiencing pain or discomfort caused by their teeth or mouth in the past 12 months.

This issue is more prevalent among women (31.1%) than men (26.8%). Additionally, pain or discomfort is more common in urban areas (32.0%) compared to rural areas (25.0%). The prevalence also increases with age, affecting 42.6% of those aged 60-69 years.

5. Dental Care Utilization

Percentage of respondents having seen a dentist during the past 12 months

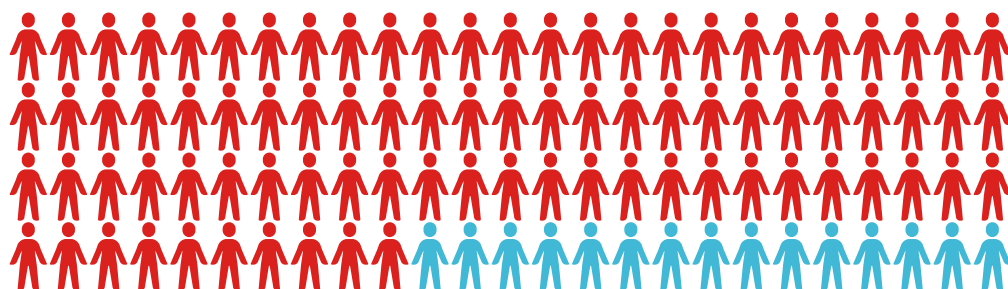
Age Group (years)	Men			Women			Both Sexes		
	n	%	95% CI	n	%	95% CI	n	%	95% CI
18-29	550	2.6	1.1-4.0	873	2.3	1.1-3.5	1423	2.4	1.5-3.4
30-44	721	5.1	3.2-7.0	1393	3.4	2.3-4.5	2114	4.2	3.1-5.3
45-59	519	3.9	1.4-6.3	812	4.1	2.0-6.2	1331	4.0	2.4-5.6
60-69	232	3.5	1.1-5.9	338	4.7	1.5-7.9	570	4.1	2.1-6.1
18-69 (All)	2022	3.6	2.6-4.6	3416	3.1	2.4-3.9	5438	3.4	2.7-4.0

There is no statistically significant difference between men and women with regards to seeing a dentist in the past 12 months. overall, 3.6% of men, 3.1% of women and 3.4% both sexes have seen a dentist in the past 12 months.

Only 3.4% of adults visited a dentist within the past year. Dental visits were slightly higher among women (3.8%) compared to men (3.0%). Additionally, 4.5% of urban residents visited a dentist, compared to 1.7% of rural residents.

A significant portion of the population (84.9%) has never received dental care. This figure is higher among men (87.1%) compared to women (82.8%), and rural residents (91.3%) compared to urban residents (78.4%).

The main reason for their last dental visit was pain or trouble with teeth or gums, reported by 70.7% of those who visited a dentist.



85 out of 100 adults have never received dental care

DID YOU KNOW?



“84.9% of Ghanaians have never received dental care”

Oral health is a key indicator of overall health, well-being and quality of life

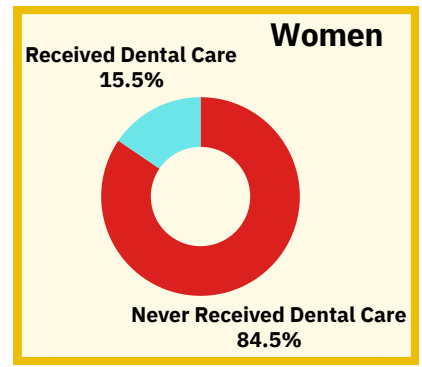
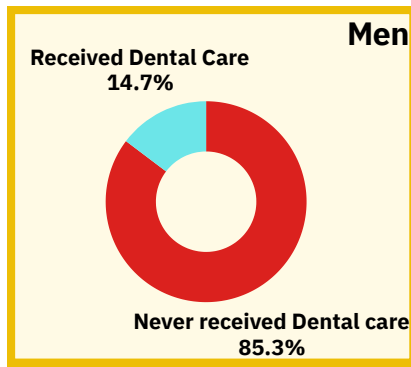
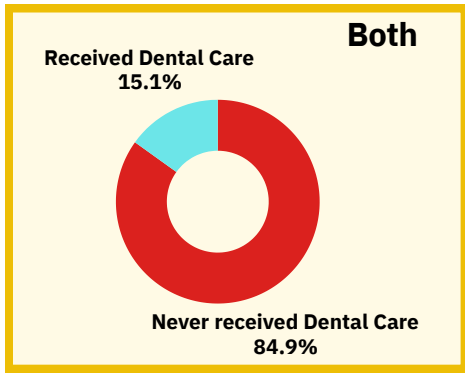
See your dentist today!

DID YOU KNOW?



29% of adults in Ghana experienced pain or discomfort to mouth or teeth in the past 12 months. However, only 3.4% sought dental care within the past 12 months

INTERESTING FACT



There is no statistical difference in seeking dental care among men and women adult Ghanaians. However, there is significant difference between urban and rural areas where 91.3% of rural dwellers have never received dental care compared with 78% among urban dwellers.

6. Dental Hygiene Practices

Almost all adults (98.2%) clean their teeth at least once a day, with 54.3% brushing twice daily. Toothpaste usage is high (94.1%), particularly among younger individuals. Additionally, 92.8% of toothpaste users use fluoride-containing toothpaste, with usage being more common among younger individuals

Percentage cleaning teeth at least twice a day

Age Group (years)	Men			Women			Both Sexes		
	n	%	95% CI	n	%	95% CI	n	%	95% CI
18-29	550	45.6	40.2-51.1	873	56.2	51.6-60.7	1423	50.7	47.0-54.3
30-44	721	57.7	53.3-62.1	1393	57.7	54.3-61.2	2114	57.7	56.0-60.5
45-59	518	51.3	45.7-57.0	811	60.5	55.8-65.2	1329	56.0	52.2-59.8
60-69	232	54.8	47.1-62.6	337	63.0	56.2-69.7	569	58.9	54.0-63.8
18-69 (All)	2021	50.8	47.6-54.0	3414	57.9	55.3-60.5	5435	54.3	52.2-56.5

There is a statistically significant difference between men and women with regards to cleaning teeth at least twice a day. Overall, 50.8% of men, 57.9% of women and 54.3% both clean teeth at least twice a day



DON'T FORGET!

Good oral health

is essential in our daily lives, from

eating

breathing

speaking

It contributes to our overall health and well-being and gives us confidence in interacting with others

7. Implication

The data highlights the need for increased access to dental care and improved public awareness of oral health, especially among men, rural residents, and older adults who are more prone to tooth loss and oral discomfort. The fact that most dental visits are driven by pain indicates inadequate preventive care.

8. Call to Action

- **Strengthen public oral health campaigns:** Promote regular dental check-ups and proper oral hygiene practices, particularly targeting men, older adults, and rural populations. Emphasize the importance of preventive care rather than only seeking treatment for pain.
- **Improve access to dental services:** Expand dental services, particularly in underserved rural areas, through community-based clinics and mobile units.
- **Train and deploy more dental assistants:** Increase the training and deployment of dental assistants to primary healthcare facilities, ensuring that basic dental care is accessible at the community level. Equipping these primary health centers with the necessary tools and resources for dental care will further enhance service delivery.
- **Integrate oral health into primary healthcare:** Incorporate basic oral health services into primary healthcare settings to increase access and early intervention.



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Acknowledgement

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