

Economic barriers keep many African Americans away from the dentist for routine care

A survey of a representative sample of African American and white adults living in the Detroit tri-county area found that African Americans and whites had similar dental self-care habits, but that African Americans see the dentist less often for routine visits. The study found that 13 percent of African Americans compared to 1 percent of whites had never gone to a dentist for a routine visit or checkup. African Americans in the study tended to have lower family incomes: 37 percent of African Americans and 16 percent of whites had family incomes of less than \$20,000 annually. When income and insurance were statistically controlled, race differences in frequency of dental checkups were greatly reduced, suggesting that economic barriers are key factors keeping African Americans away from dental services. *Ronis DL, Lang WP, Antonakos CL, Borgnakke WS. Preventive oral health behaviors among African Americans and whites in Detroit. Journal of Public Health Dentistry. 1998; 58:234-240. Contact: David Ronis, PhD, (734) 930-5119, e-mail at dronis@umich.edu.*