

What does veteran oral health look like for Illinois?

More than 85% of Veteran Health Administration (VHA) enrollees are not eligible for dental care coverage. That equates to approximately **7.6 million veterans** not getting dental care who are eligible for other primary care through the VHA. As a result of inadequate dental care, veterans have poor oral health outcomes, like losing all of their natural teeth, which is worse for rural veterans. Chronic disease conditions like diabetes and heart disease are exacerbated by poor oral health ultimately costing more money and quality of life for veterans who have these issues and don't have access to dental care. This report shows what oral health looks like for the state of Illinois, considers additional health outcomes by age and rurality, and compares to national statistics.

Quick Facts for Illinois

- 6.0% of the state population are veterans, about 591,000 people.
- 4.7% of veterans live in a rural county.

Illinois Veteran Health Outcomes

Indicator	All IL Veterans	Working Age IL Veterans (under 65)	Rural IL Veterans	National Population Comparison	National Working Age Adult Comparison
Edentulism	10.2%	5.7%	9.6%	4.7%	2.4%
Heart Disease	12.2%	7.5%	4.4%	6.5%	3.6%
Diabetes	21.2%	10.0%	41.1%	12.1%	9.0%

Key Takeaways for Illinois

- Working age veterans are losing all their natural teeth (edentulism) at higher rates than the national average with worse rates for rural veterans.
- High rates of heart disease and diabetes are leading to poorer overall health and higher costs of care. **Illinois has the fourth highest percentage of veterans with diabetes in the US.**
- Policy solutions, like expanding dental care coverage through the VA, can reduce the high costs of healthcare for Illinois veterans and improve their quality of life.

Data for this report were calculated from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System.