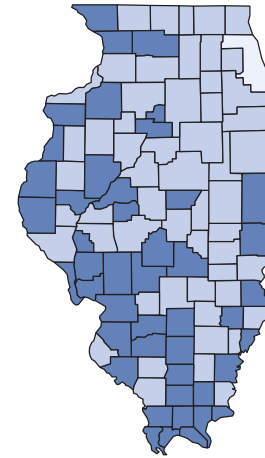
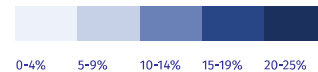


The Oral Health of Veterans Living in Illinois

Veterans cannot be healthy without oral health. Veterans bear a disproportionate burden of disease and disability as a result of their military service. Across the country, more than 85% of Veteran Health Administration (VHA) enrollees are not eligible for dental care coverage. That means roughly 7.6 million veterans who are eligible for other primary care through the VHA aren't getting dental care. Inadequate dental care is costly and painful — particularly when poor oral health is accompanied by chronic disease conditions like heart disease or diabetes. This profile provides data that describe what oral health looks like for veterans living in the state of Illinois, highlight additional health indicators by age and rurality, and compare veterans living in Illinois to veterans nationally. These profiles can be paired with our [data dashboard](#) and [research briefs](#) for additional insights into veteran oral health and wellbeing.



Percentage of Veterans by County



Quick Facts About Veterans In Illinois

6.0% of the state population, or about 591,269 people, are veterans

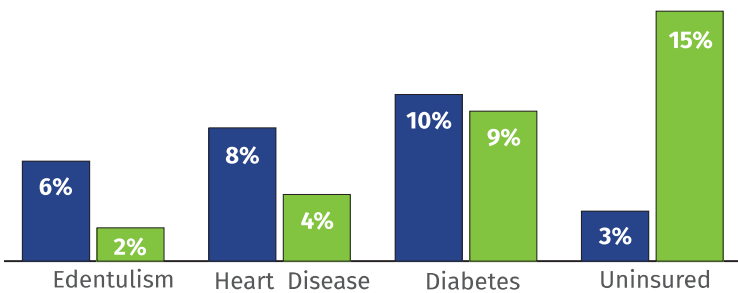
5.9% of veterans live in a rural county

Pope St. Clair Pulaski counties have the highest veteran population

A Closer Look at Veteran Oral Health in Illinois

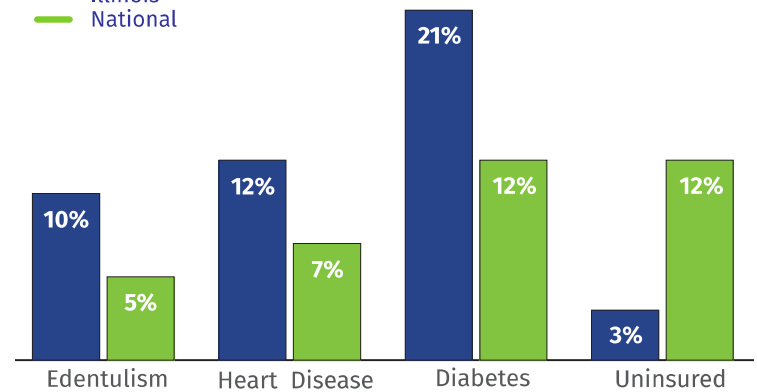
Working Age Veterans (Under 65)

— Illinois
— National

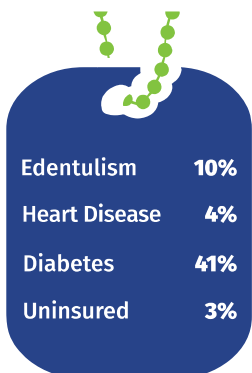


All Veterans

— Illinois
— National



Rural IL Veterans



State Ranking Across Four Conditions*



13

Edentulism



40

Heart Disease



4

Diabetes




49

Uninsured

*This ranking was assigned by comparing the "All Veterans" status across the 50 states plus Washington DC, Puerto Rico and Guam. A lower number rank represents the worst conditions for that metric category and a higher number rank represents the best condition.

Illinois State Report Card: How Does Your State Compare?

These assessments of veteran health and wellbeing are based on how Illinois compares to other states in important indicators that can serve as risk factors for poor oral health. While, ideally, any indication of poor oral health or chronic disease isn't favorable, these grades give state-based stakeholders an understanding of how the systems in their state are addressing important outcomes for veterans — and where they can invest more of their efforts for improvement. Learn more about how grades were determined on our [website](#).



OVERALL GRADE **C**

When considering all health outcomes together and averaging how Illinois ranked in each category.



EDENTULISM

C

10%

of Veterans in IL have lost all their natural teeth.

In oral health, edentulism is considered the “final marker of disease burden.” Veterans who have lost all of their natural teeth may have lifelong struggles with optimal dental functioning, a painful result of inadequate access to dental care. This grade is based on how a state compares to the average of all states among veterans who reported having lost all of their natural teeth.



HEART DISEASE

B

12%

of Veterans in IL have heart disease.

Heart disease is linked to poor oral health. Veterans with heart disease are more likely to have poor oral health outcomes and cost healthcare systems more money in patient care. This grade is based on how a state compares to the average of all states among veterans who reported having coronary heart disease or a heart attack.



DIABETES

C

21%

of Veterans in IL have diabetes.

Poorly managed diabetes can create significant oral health outcomes — including edentulism. Veterans with diabetes are more likely to have poor oral health outcomes and cost healthcare systems more money in patient care. This grade is based on how a state compares to the average of all states among veterans who reported a diagnosis of Type II Diabetes.



UNINSURED

A

3%

of Veterans in IL are medically uninsured.

Health insurance is a critical determinant of overall health. Lack of health insurance is not only an indicator of cost, access, and utilization of health care, it is an indication of the financial burden placed upon state health care systems to support indigent care. Uninsured veterans are left to fund health care out of pocket or forgo medically necessary care. This grade is based on how a state compares to the average of all states among uninsured veterans.



DENTAL VISITS

B

70%

of Veterans in IL visited a dentist in the past year.

Visiting a dentist for routine care is the most cost-effective way to improve oral health. Investing in dental prevention means that costly and painful issues are caught early in the disease process saving healthcare systems more money long term. This grade is based on how a state compares to the average of all states among veterans who reported seeing a dentist in the last year.

Strategic Recommendations

Expand dental care coverage through the Veteran Health Administration (VHA) means that state health care system costs are reduced and many veterans can receive dental care in concert with other primary care.

- Integrated care delivery that
- prioritizes preventive dental
- care can reduce poor outcomes
- associated with chronic disease
- conditions, reducing high costs of
- care for veterans and states.

- Stakeholders including policymakers,
- primary care associations, state health
- departments, and oral health coalitions
- can lead coordinated efforts to apply
- these data-driven insights to make
- Illinois veterans healthier.