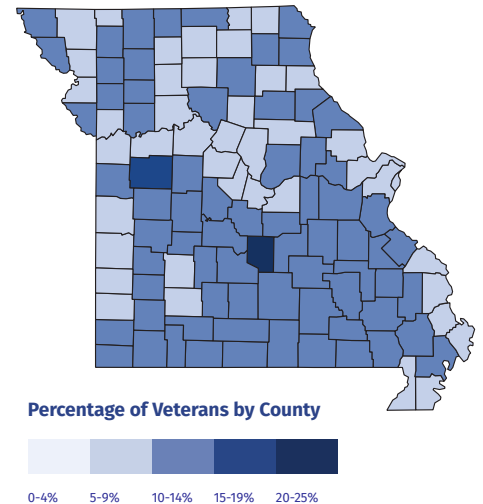


The Oral Health of Veterans Living in Missouri

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 Missouri, highlight additional health indicators by age and rurality, and compare veterans living in Missouri to veterans nationally. These profiles can be paired with our [data dashboard](#) and [research briefs](#) for additional insights into veteran oral health and wellbeing.



Quick Facts About Veterans In Missouri

8.6% of the state population, or about 413,742 people, are veterans

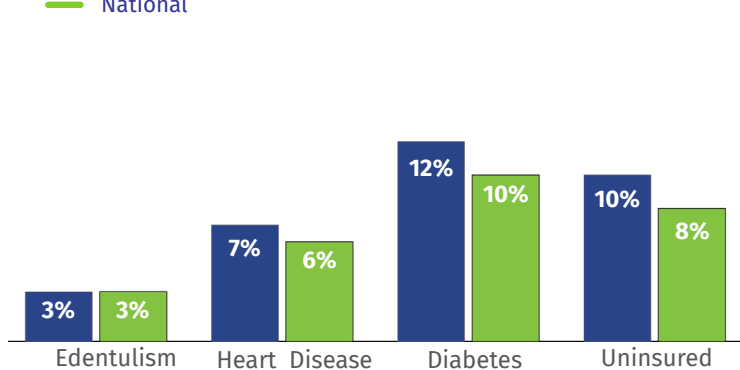
13.1% of veterans live in a rural county

Pulaski Johnson Carter counties have the highest veteran population

A Closer Look at Veteran Oral Health in Missouri

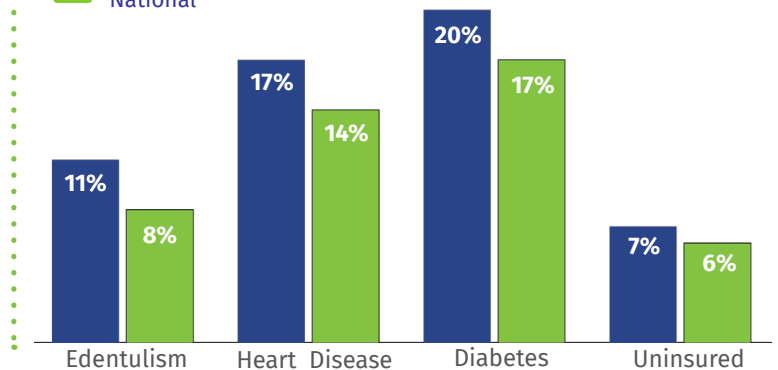
Working Age Veterans (Under 65)

— Missouri
— National

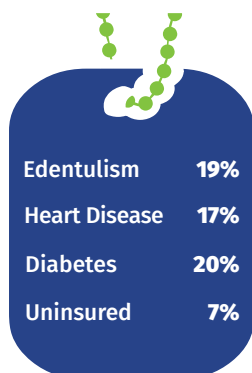


All Veterans

— Missouri
— National



Rural MO Veterans



State Ranking Across Four Conditions*



6

Edentulism



17

Heart Disease



9

Diabetes



17

Uninsured

*Rankings were assigned from worst (#1) to best (#51) by comparing the "All Veterans" status across the 50 states plus Washington DC using unrounded values. Values displayed graphically were rounded to the nearest ones place.

Missouri State Report Card: How Does Your State Compare?

These assessments of veteran health and wellbeing are based on how Missouri 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** **F**

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



EDENTULISM

F

11% of Veterans in MO 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.



HEART DISEASE

D

17% of Veterans in MO 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.



DIABETES

F

20% of Veterans in MO 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.



UNINSURED

D

7% of Veterans in MO 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.



DENTAL VISITS

C

64% of Veterans in MO 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.

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 Missouri veterans healthier.