

Make Your Smile Count!

Third Grade Oral Health Screening Survey, 2013-15

Overall Findings

This data brief reports results of the oral health screening survey of 3rd grade schoolchildren conducted during the 2013-15 school years.

- Even though tooth decay can be prevented, **51 percent** of Ohio schoolchildren had a **history of tooth decay** in their primary (baby teeth) or permanent teeth. This means that they either had a filling or crown, had a cavity that had not yet been treated, or had a tooth that had been extracted (pulled) due to decay.
- **17 percent** had cavities that had not been treated.
- **10 percent** reported having had a **toothache** in the past six months.
- Fortunately, **49 percent** of Ohio's schoolchildren had a **dental sealant** on at least one permanent (adult) molar. A dental sealant prevents the most common type of tooth decay seen in children today--decay on the biting surfaces of the back teeth.

How do the results of this screening survey compare to findings from previous surveys and to national targets?

Figure 1 shows how the results of the 2013-15 survey compare to those from similar surveys conducted by the Ohio Department of Health since 1998.

- Except for a small increase in 2004-05, the percentage of children with a history of tooth decay has remained about the same since 1998-99.
- The percentage of children with untreated cavities continues to decrease, however, the rate of decline leveled off between 2009-10 and 2013-15.
- The percentage of children with dental sealants steadily increased from 1998-99 to 2009-10, but has remained essentially unchanged since.



Figure 1: Oral Health Indicators for Ohio 3rd Grade Schoolchildren, 1998-2015

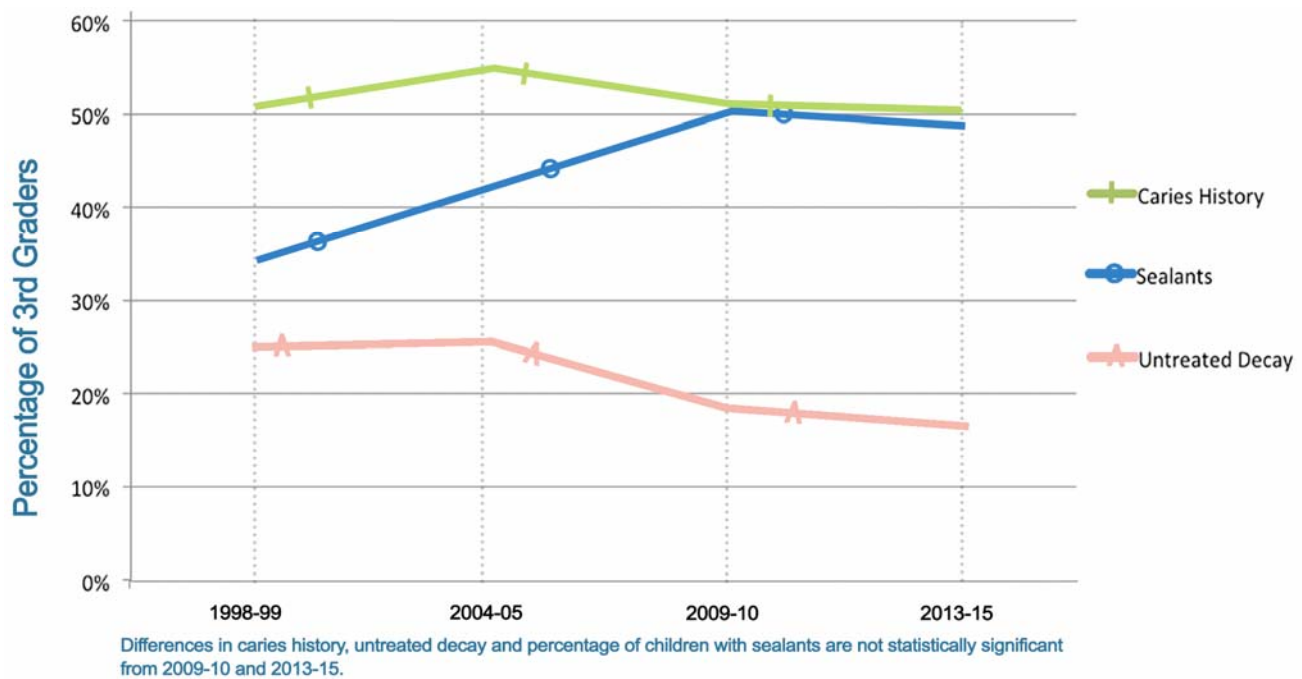


Table 1 compares the results of this survey with the National Healthy People 2020 Objectives.

- The percentage of 3rd grade schoolchildren in Ohio with untreated cavities is better than the national target, as are the percentage of children with dental sealants and the percentage who have visited the dentist in the previous year.
- Ohio has yet to meet the national target for the percentage of children with a history of tooth decay.

Table 1: Comparison of 2013-15 Ohio Survey Results to National Targets for 2020 ¹			
	2013-15 Survey	National Targets	Target Met?
Percentage of children with history of tooth decay	51%	49%	No
Percentage of children with untreated cavities	17%	26%	Yes
Percentage of children with one or more dental sealants	49%	28%	Yes
Percentage of children who had visited the dentist within the past year	80%	49%	Yes

¹Healthy People 2020. US Department of Health and Human Services.
<https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/oral-health>. Accessed 6/6/16.

Methods

The Ohio Department of Health conducted an open-mouth oral health screening survey of 3rd grade schoolchildren during the 2013-15 school years. A randomized sample of 440 public elementary schools was selected to yield data for Ohio and each of its 88 counties. Approximately 16,000 schoolchildren were screened.

With consent from parents, schoolchildren were screened by a trained team of dental hygienists and dentists. Four indicators of oral health were measured: toothaches, history of tooth decay (cavities, fillings, crowns or teeth missing due to cavities) untreated tooth decay, and the presence of dental sealants.

The consent form asked parents questions about getting dental care for their child, such as how recently their child had been to the dentist, if they had dental insurance and their ability to get needed dental care.

Other data collected on each child were race, ethnicity and enrollment in the Free and Reduced Price Meal Program (as an estimate of family income.) Children were classified as to whether they lived in a metropolitan, suburban, Appalachian or rural/non-Appalachian county. These data were collected so disparities in oral health status and access to dental care could be studied.

For more information, please visit our website at <https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/oral-health-program>.