

Spotlight on Florida

Children's Use of Emergency Departments for Non-Traumatic Dental Conditions



Oral health is directly linked to overall health. When oral health deteriorates, it can have far-reaching consequences and affect health beyond the mouth.

Most oral disease is almost entirely preventable. Yet routine dental care is out of reach for millions of Americans due to high costs of care, lack of dental coverage, cultural and linguistic issues, shortages of dental professionals in rural areas, and dentists who accept public and/or private insurance, and the lack of integration between the medical and dental health care systems.

Lack of access to care can leave people with few or no viable options other than visiting hospital emergency departments (EDs) for oral health care. Most EDs are not equipped to provide dental treatment, and patients are treated for symptomatic pain or possible infection without definitive diagnosis and appropriate treatment for the underlying problem. These visits are costly — to patients, health systems, state Medicaid programs, and taxpayers — and often respond to unmet oral health needs that would be more effectively addressed by dental professionals in dental offices, clinics, and community locations.

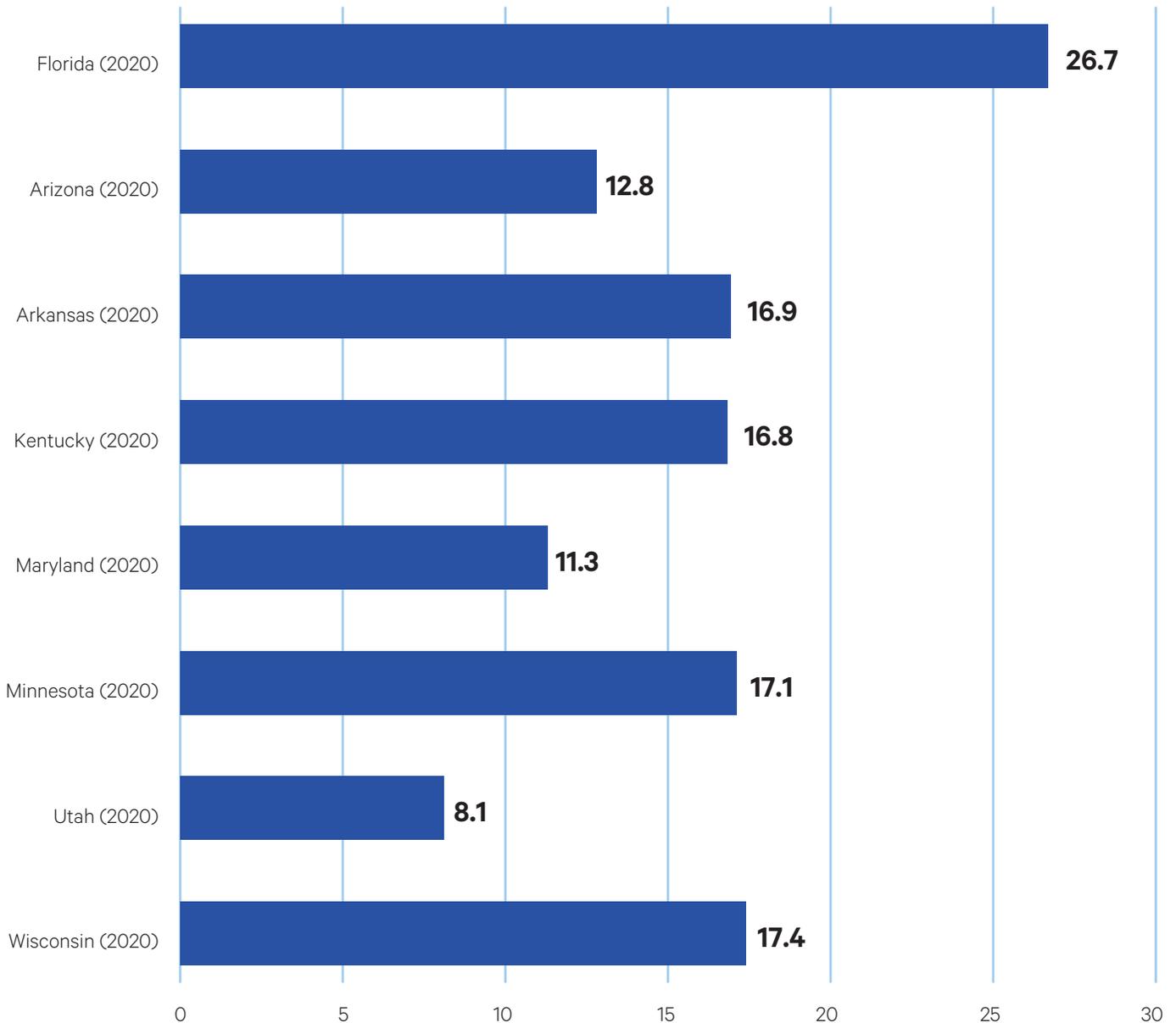
Use of EDs for non-traumatic dental conditions (NTDCs), dental issues that would be best addressed in a dental setting, unfortunately is not new. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted and exacerbated this issue. At a time when ED capacity is strained and in high demand, reducing the number of preventable dental visits in these settings is of vital importance.

Nationally, children who visit EDs for NTDCs in the United States (US) are more likely to be uninsured or covered by Medicaid insurance and live in lower-income households. Children in the US with two or more chronic health conditions are more likely to be hospitalized for NTDCs than children without a chronic health condition. Studies outside the US find that dental caries (tooth decay) is the most common cause of ED NTDC visits in children ages 17 and below. This report examines rates of ED visits for NTDCs for children ages 14 and below in Florida based on data from the Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project (HCUP).

In 2020, **Florida had the highest rate of ED NTDC visits for those aged 14 and below (26.7 per 10,000 people)** compared to all other states for which 2020 data are available through the [CareQuest Institute for Oral Health HCUP dashboard](#). The national rate in 2019 (the most recent year for which we have national data) for children aged 14 and below was 27.3.



Rate of ED Visits for NTDCs per 10,000 people
Ages 14 and Below

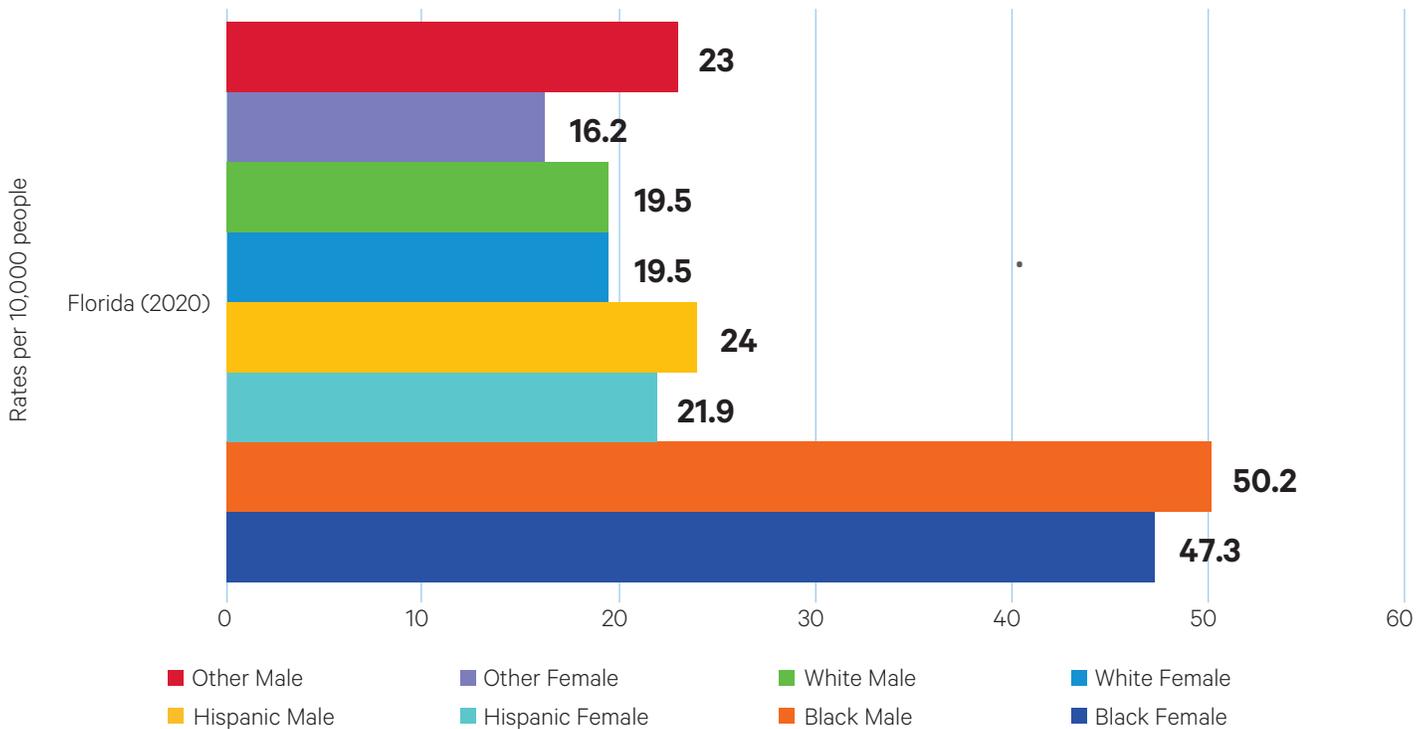




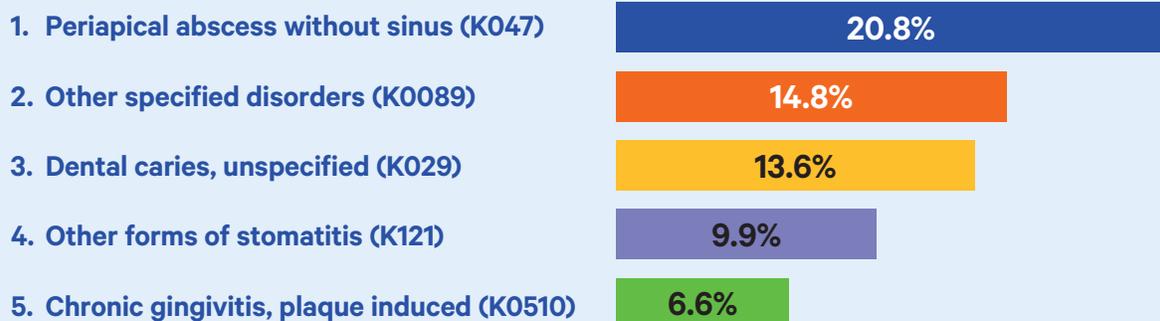
Of children aged 14 and below, **the rate of ED NTDC visits in Florida in 2020 was highest for Black males (50.2 per 10,000 people). The second-highest rate was for Black females (47.3).** This was higher than for Hispanic males (24.0), Hispanic females (21.9), white males and females (both 19.5), and individuals identifying their race as “other” (males = 23.0, females = 16.2 per 10,000 people).

Rate of ED Visits for NTDCs per 10,000 people

Ages 14 and Below by Race and Gender



In 2020, **the most common diagnoses for Florida children 14 years of age and under** were:

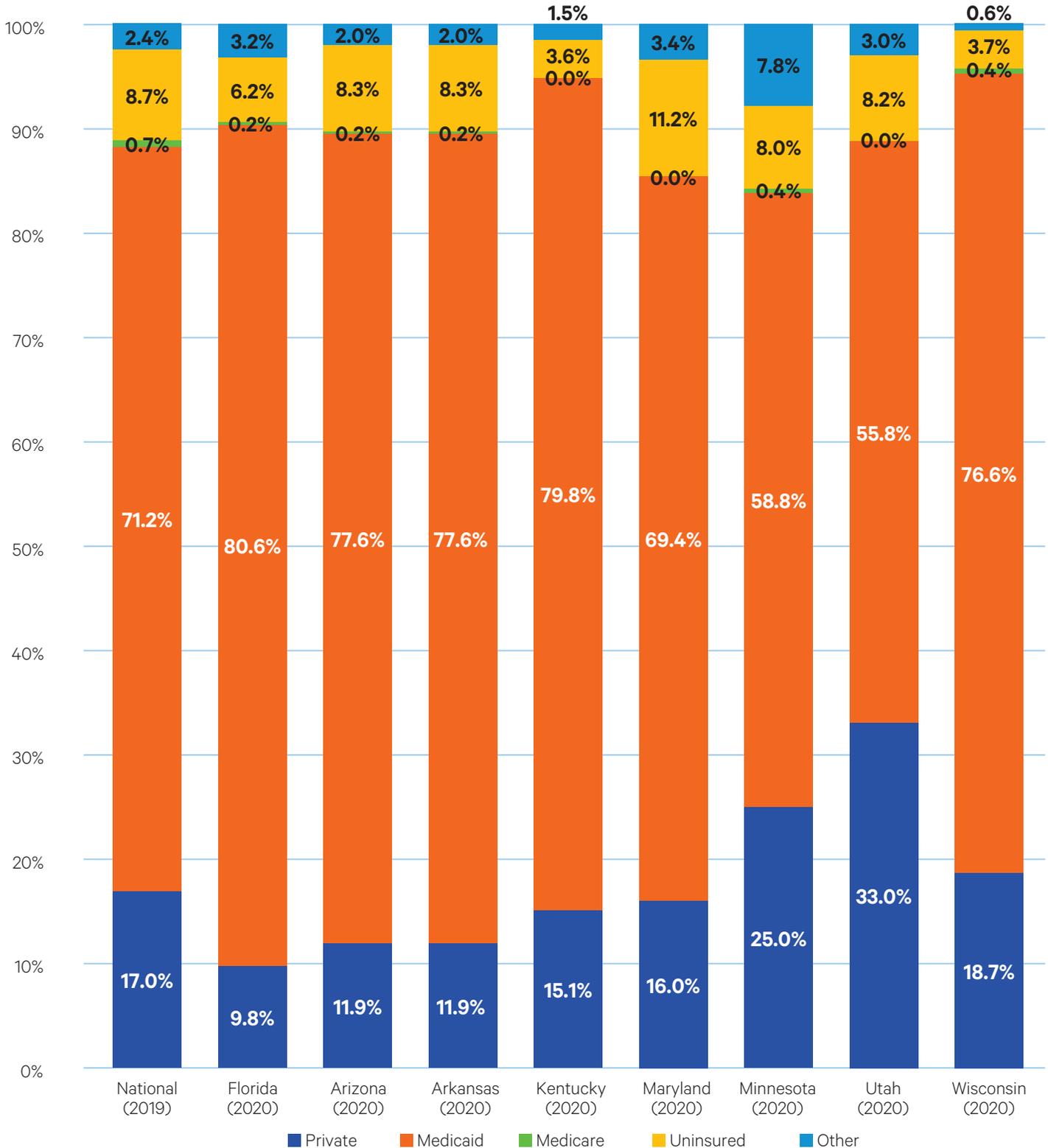


For children 14 years of age and younger in 2020, **Medicaid was most likely to cover ED NTDC visits for children in Florida (80.6%)** compared to nationally (71.2%) and all other states for which data are available (range = 55.8% [Utah] to 79.8% [Kentucky]).



Insurance Coverage Percentages for ED Visits for NTDCs by State

Ages 14 and Below

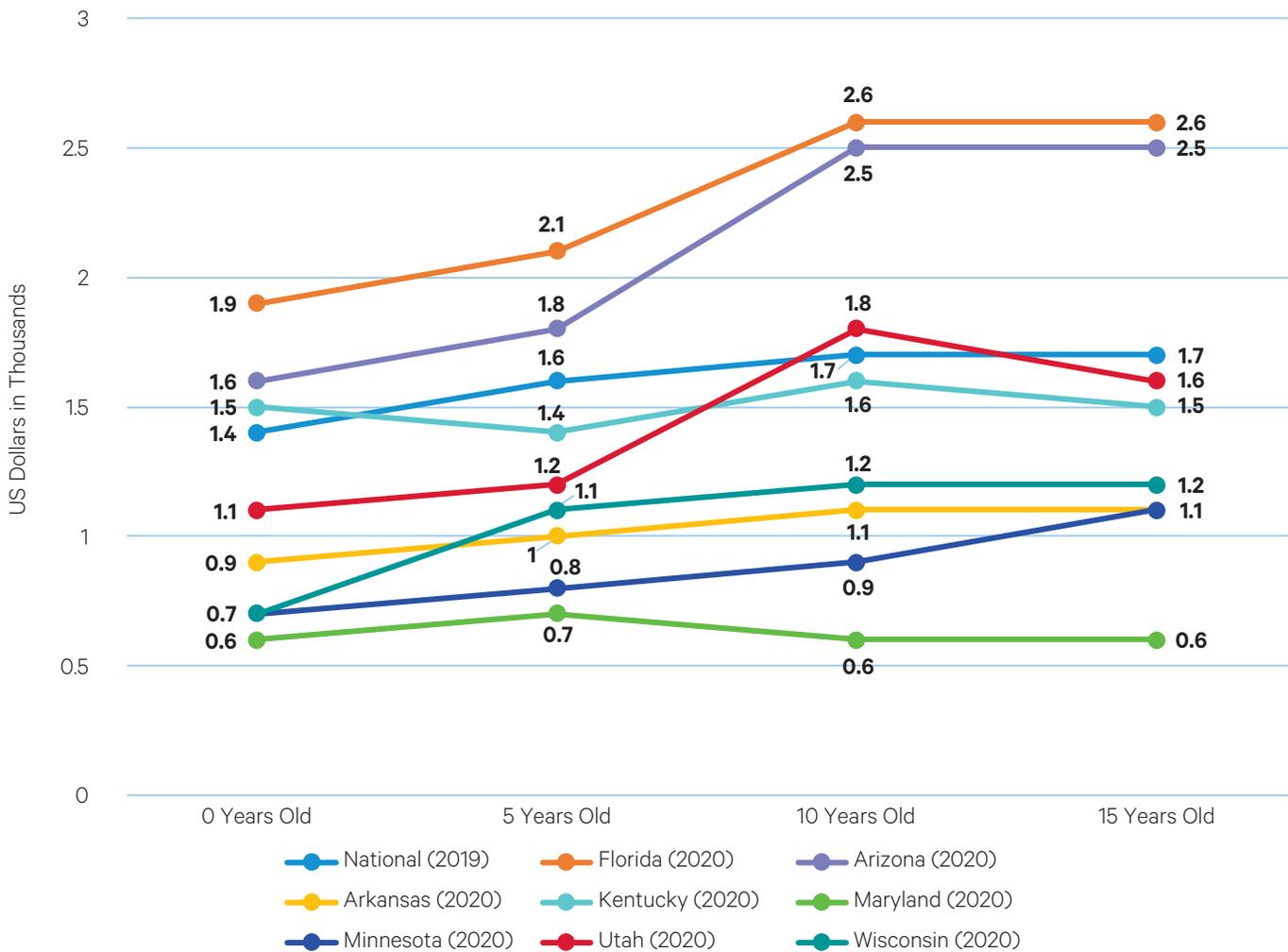


Of all states for which we have data from 2020, **Florida has the highest average charge for ED NTDC visits for children aged 0 years (\$1.9K), 5 years (\$2.1K), 10 years (\$2.6K), and 15 years (\$2.6K).** In comparison, Maryland had the lowest average charge for ED NTDC visits for children aged 0 years (\$0.6K), 5 years (\$0.7K), 10 years (\$0.6K), and 15 years (\$0.6K).



Charges (in thousands of dollars) for ED NTDC Visits

Ages 15 and Below



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