

2020

# AUSTRALIA'S ADULT ORAL HEALTH TRACKER

A progress report on preventable oral diseases and their risk factors  
Tracking progress for a healthier Australia by 2025



AUSTRALIAN  
HEALTH POLICY  
COLLABORATION

## TECHNICAL NOTE

Australia's Oral Health Tracker was originally released in 2018. This progress report card outlines the latest data<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup> on Australian adult oral health and how these figures compare to the past and whether they are tracking toward the proposed population health targets for 2025. The baseline data is the available data nearest to the year 2010, while the target year 2025 is in line with the World Health Organization (WHO)'s targets for global prevention and reduction in chronic diseases.

There are limitations in the data that is currently available. Comparative data in this report is drawn from the most recent reputable source for the appropriate age cohort. Most of the data is as recent as 2017/18, while some dates from 2015/16. For full details regarding the data source, refer to Australia's Oral Health Tracker technical appendix 2020 available at [ada.org.au/oralhealthtracker](http://ada.org.au/oralhealthtracker)

## PREFERRED CITATION

Australian Dental Association 2020. Australia's Adult Oral Health Tracker 2020, Mitchell Institute, Victoria University, Melbourne. [ada.org.au/oralhealthtracker](http://ada.org.au/oralhealthtracker).

## REFERENCES

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Australian Dental Association (ADA) and the Australia Health Policy Collaboration (AHPC) in cooperation with a working group made up of academics, researchers, epidemiologists, public health experts and dental practitioners, developed Australia's Oral Health Tracker 2018 to inform and influence oral health policies and services in Australia.

The Australian Health Policy Collaboration is led by the Mitchell Institute at Victoria University and brings together leading health organisations and chronic disease experts to translate rigorous research into good policy. The national collaboration has developed health targets and indicators for preventable chronic diseases designed to contribute to reducing the health impacts of chronic conditions on the Australian population.

The Mitchell Institute for Education and Health Policy at Victoria University is one of the country's leading education and health policy think tanks and trusted thought leaders. Our focus is on improving our education and health systems so more Australians can engage with and benefit from these services, supporting a healthier, fairer and more productive society.

Updates included in the first progress report, Australia's Adult Oral Health Tracker 2020, have been compiled by the ADA, the peak national body for dentists in Australia, with support from the Australian Research Centre for Population Oral Health (ARCPOH) and AHPC. Australia's Oral Health Tracker is a shared resource and it is for use by everyone with an interest in improving the oral and general health of Australians.

# ADULTS

## HOW ARE AUSTRALIAN ADULTS TRACKING?

Oral diseases are among the most common and costly to Australians and the healthcare system. Many of the conditions that affect the oral cavity are largely preventable, including dental caries, periodontitis, and oral cancers. These conditions can have a significant effect on oral health and quality of life, with the ability to cause pain and an increase in days absent from work. In severe cases, these conditions can result in hospitalisation or even lead to death.

Oral diseases share many common risk factors with diseases that affect whole-body health. These can include non-nutritious diets high in sugar, tobacco use, and the regular consumption of alcohol at risky levels.

Changes to maintain or improve Australian oral health require both individual behavioural changes and government policy action. Individual changes should address diet, a reduction in free sugar and alcohol consumption, cessation of smoking, regular exposure to fluoride and regular preventive dental checks.

To aid individual changes, government actions must address the determinants of health, including social, lifestyle and economic factors to improve the oral health of Australians. A multi-faceted approach is required to address the level of complexity and factors affecting oral health.

Australia's Adult Oral Health Tracker 2020 progress report is the first update of Australia's Oral Health Tracker since its creation in 2018. Where possible, the progress of the 14 risk factors have been updated and compared against their 2025 targets. Several risk factors have shown improvement, while others move further away from their goal. Only one risk factor has reached its 2025 target, demonstrating that Australians are retaining their teeth for longer.

Concerningly, the prevalence of tooth decay and gum disease have worsened.



### Tooth decay

**32.1% of adults (aged 15+) have untreated tooth decay, a 6.6% increase from 25.5% in 2004/06.**


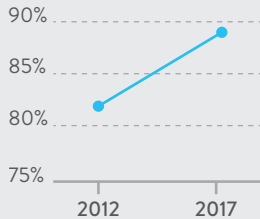


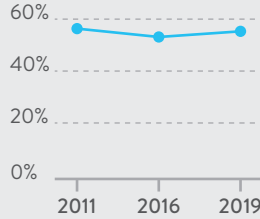



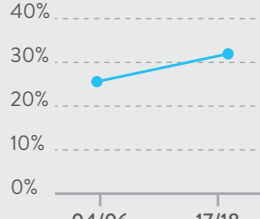


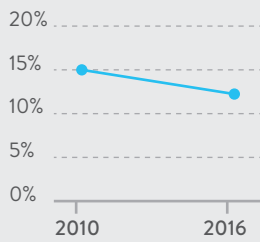


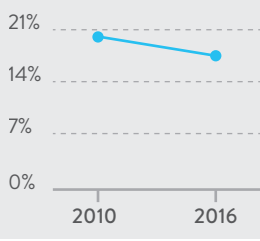


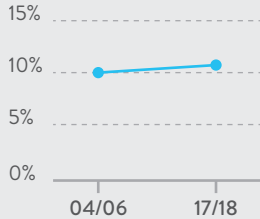

### Gum disease

**28.8% of adults (aged 15+) have periodontal pockets (>4mm), a 9% increase from 19.8% in 2004/06.**

## TABLE KEY















	Trend in right direction. <b>Good progress</b> towards target. Maintain efforts.
	Trend indicates <b>no/limited progress</b> towards target.
	Trend in wrong direction. <b>Poor progress</b> against target.

## ADULTS

RISK FACTORS	LATEST AUSTRALIAN DATA	2025 TARGET	BASELINE DATA AGAINST LATEST DATA	TREND
 <p>The proportion of the population with access to optimally fluoridated drinking water</p>	89%^ <sup>^</sup>	<b>94.0%</b>		
 <p>Adults (18+) that brush teeth twice daily</p>	53%	<b>56.0%</b>		
 <p>Adults (19+) consuming too much free sugar</p>	47.8%^ <sup>^</sup>	<b>33.5%</b>	No new data	Inadequate data to assess trend
 <p>Untreated tooth decay in adults (aged 15+)</p>	32.1%	<b>20.4%</b>		
 <p>Daily smokers (aged 14+)</p>	12.2%^ <sup>^</sup>	<b>5.0%</b>		
 <p>Long term risky drinking (aged 14+)</p>	17.1%^ <sup>^</sup>	<b>13.7%</b>		
 <p>Adults (aged 15+) who have never experienced decay in permanent teeth</p>	10.7%	<b>10.9%</b>		

<sup>^</sup> Statistic as per Australia's Oral Health Tracker 2018 - unable to update data as no comparable data has been collected since.

## ADULTS

RISK FACTORS	LATEST AUSTRALIAN DATA	2025 TARGET	BASELINE DATA AGAINST LATEST DATA	TREND
 <p>Prevalence of diabetes in adults (25-64 years)</p>	4.2%	<b>4.1%</b>		
 <p>Age-standardised incidence rate of oral cancers</p>	10.3 per 100,000	<b>9.7 per 100,000</b>		
 <p>Adults (aged 15+) with periodontal pockets (&gt;4mm)</p>	28.8%	<b>16.8%</b>		
 <p>Age-standardised mortality rate from oral cancers</p>	1.6 per 100,000	<b>1.4 per 100,000</b>		
 <p>Adults with severe tooth loss (fewer than 21 teeth)</p>	10.2%	<b>15.5%</b>		 <p>Reached 2025 target</p>
 <p>Adults who reported toothache in the last 12 months</p>	20.2%	<b>14.9%</b>		
 <p>Adults (18+) that have had a dental check-up in the last 12 months</p>	48.8%	<b>61.0%</b>		

For further details, including additional indicators and data for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders where available, please see the accompanying technical document available at [ada.org.au/oralhealthtracker](http://ada.org.au/oralhealthtracker).

### Chronic diseases prevention for Australia: Statement of commitment

We call for, and are active contributors towards, a systemic and sustained approach to the prevention and management of chronic diseases in Australia.

### Core principles

Action is required urgently to reduce the incidence and impact of chronic diseases, and must address the underlying risk factors and determinants. There is a critical need for a national prevention agenda.

We support a set of core principles that provide a common platform for interventions to prevent chronic diseases:

1.	A systemic approach—focussing on common risk factors and determinants.
2.	Evidence-based action—acting now, using best available evidence, and continuing to build evidence.
3.	Tackling health inequity and health disparity—working to improve and redress inequities and disparities in access to programs, services and inequities in outcomes.
4.	A national agenda with local action—building commitment and innovation with local and community-level actions.
5.	A life course approach—intervening early and exploiting prevention opportunities at all ages and across generations.
6.	Shared responsibility—encouraging complementary actions by all groups.
7.	Responsible partnerships—avoiding ceding policy influence to vested interests.

The benefits of reducing the incidence and impact of chronic diseases are nationally significant. They extend beyond the impact on the health of individuals to our children’s future, the well-being of the communities in which we live, and the economic prosperity of our society. Australians deserve a healthier future. We can, and we must, do better.

### Signatories for Australia’s Oral Health Tracker

Australasian Academy of Paediatric Dentistry
Australian & New Zealand Academy of Periodontists
Australian College of Dental Schools
Oral Medicine Academy of Australasia
Dental Hygienist Association of Australia
Australian Dental and Oral Health Therapist Association
Alliance for a Cavity Free Future
Rethink Sugary Drink
Royal Australasian College of Dental Surgeons
Australian Dental Prosthetists Association
Australian Research Centre for Population Oral Health
Consumers Health Forum
Dietitians Association of Australia
Australian Society of Special Care in Dentistry

### Signatories for Australia’s Oral Health Tracker

Australia and New Zealand Obesity Society
Australian Centre for Health Research
Australian Dental Association
Australian Disease Management Association
Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations
Australian Health Care Reform Alliance
Australian Health Promotion Association
Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association
Australian Psychological Society
Australian Women’s Health Network
Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute
Better Health Plan for the West
Brimbank City Council
Cabrini Institute
Cancer Council Australia
Catholic Health Australia
Caring & Living As Neighbours
Charles Perkins Centre, University of Sydney
Chronic Illness Alliance
Cohealth
Confederation of Australian Sport
CRANApus
Deakin University
Diabetes Australia
Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education
George Institute for Global Health
Health West Partnership
Inner North West Primary Care Partnership
Kidney Health Australia
Lowitja Institute
Mental Health Australia
MOVE muscle, bone & joint health
National Alliance for Action on Alcohol
National Heart Foundation
National Rural Health Alliance
National Stroke Foundation
NCD FREE
Network of Alcohol and other Drugs Agencies
Networking Health Victoria
Obesity Australia
Overcoming Multiple Sclerosis
People’s Health Movement OZ
Public Health Association of Australia
Royal Flying Doctor Service
School of Medicine, University of Notre Dame
School of Psychology and Public Health, La Trobe University
Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health
Social Determinants of Health Alliance
South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute
Suicide Prevention Australia
The Telethon Kids Institute
Victoria University
Victorian Health Promotion Foundation
YMCA