

Washington Elder Smiles

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To prevent oral disease and improve overall health

Our Mission



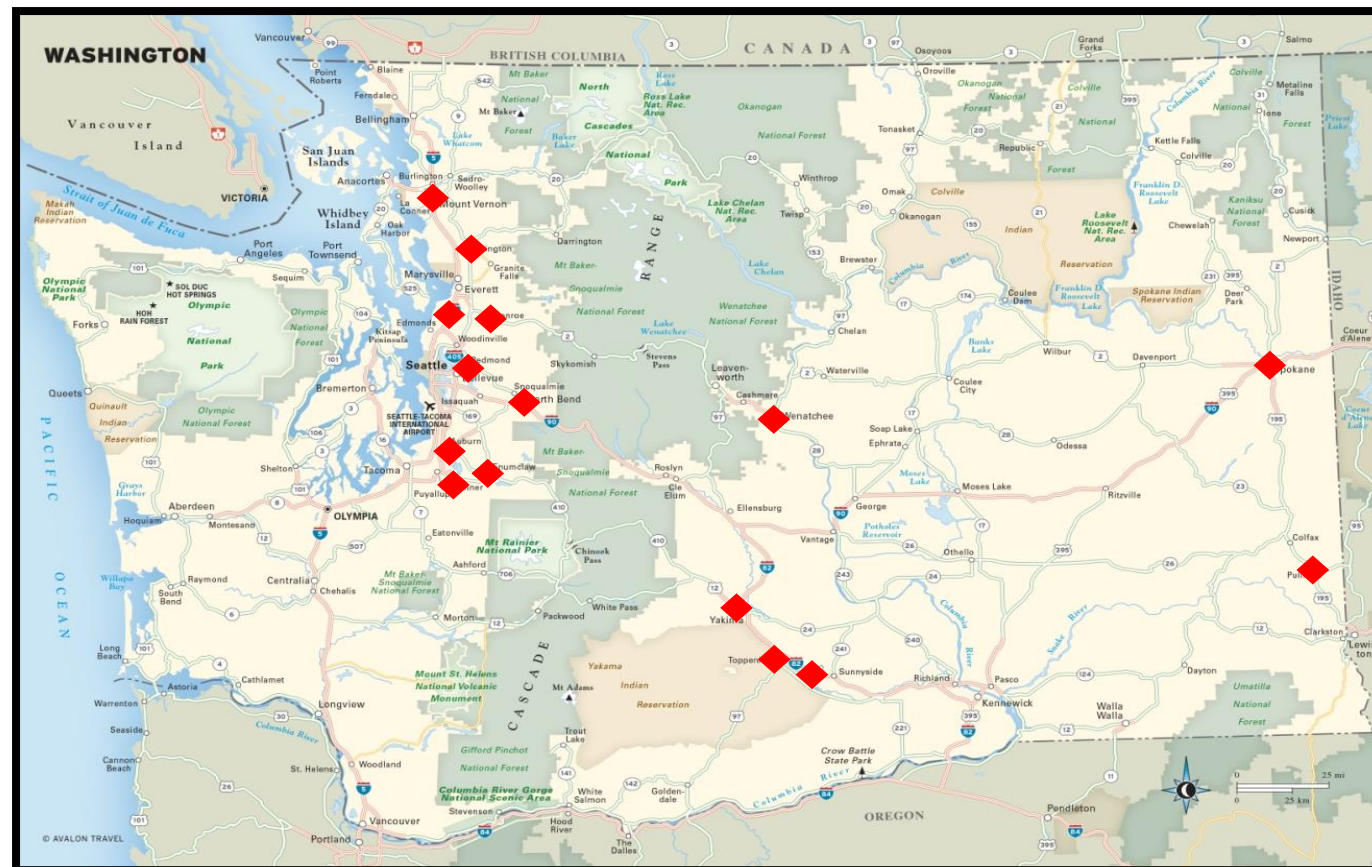
Washington Elder Smiles

Elder Smiles is Washington's first oral health survey of adults 65+ years

Trained dental hygienists screened and obtained questionnaire data from older adults at a convenience sample of 15 senior centers throughout Washington State

Senior centers in:

- Arlington
- Auburn
- Enumclaw
- Granger
- Lynnwood
- Monroe
- Mount Vernon
- North Bend
- Pullman
- Redmond
- Spokane
- Sumner
- Toppenish
- Wenatchee
- Yakima



Washington Elder Smiles

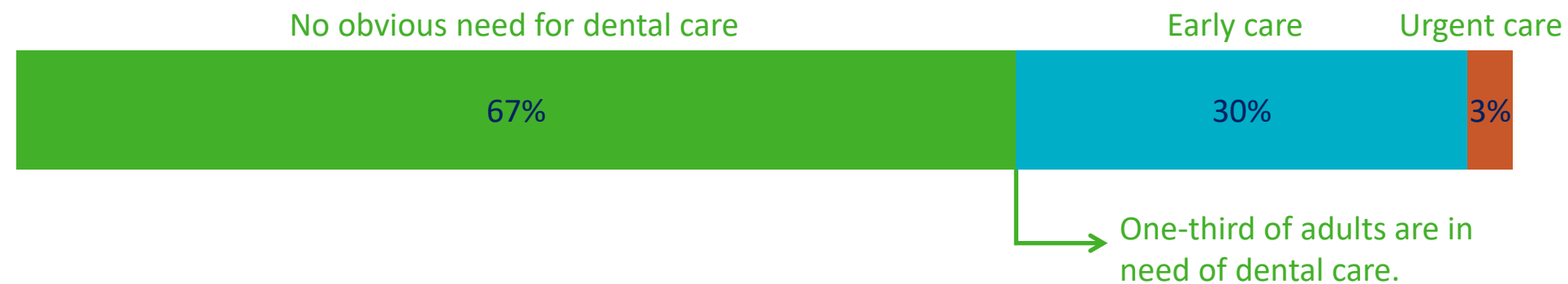
- > To assure an adequate number of Hispanic/Latino participants, senior centers serving the Hispanic community were oversampled
 - > To account for the oversampling, data were weighted to represent Washington's older adult population in terms of race, ethnicity, age, and gender
- > Data is available for 570 adults ranging in age from 65 to 100 years
- > **IMPORTANT:** *Washington Elder Smiles* is not representative of the entire older adult population in Washington State and results should not be generalized to all adults 65+ years. This survey reflects the oral health of adults attending senior centers that were **willing to participate** in an oral health screening.
- > **LIMITATION:** Efforts were made to screen all adults attending the senior centers but some adults refused to participate. The self-selection process could have biased the results but the direction of the possible bias is unknown.

Key Findings

1. Many senior center participants have **poor oral health** with one in three needing restorative dental care.
2. There are **oral health disparities** among senior center participants. Men, compared to women, have higher rates of untreated tooth decay and gum disease while Hispanics, compared to non-Hispanic whites, have a higher prevalence of untreated tooth decay.
3. Almost **half of the senior center participants** screened had not been to a dentist in the last year. The primary reasons for not having a dental visit were “cost” and “no insurance.”
4. Among the senior center participants screened, **tooth loss** had a negative impact on an individual’s food choices.
5. Compared to the general population of older adults in Washington State, older adults screened at senior centers have **poorer oral health**.

Key Finding #1

Many senior center participants have poor oral health with one in three (33%) needing restorative dental care. Because x-rays and more advanced diagnostic tools were not used, the percentage needing dental care is likely underestimated.



• Men, compared to women, are more likely to need dental care (41% vs. 26%)



• 47% of the Hispanic adults screened need dental care compared to 32% of white adults



• People with a dental visit in the last year, compared to those without a dental visit, are less likely to need dental care (22% vs. 43%)

The Problem

Too many older adults that attend senior centers are in need of dental care.

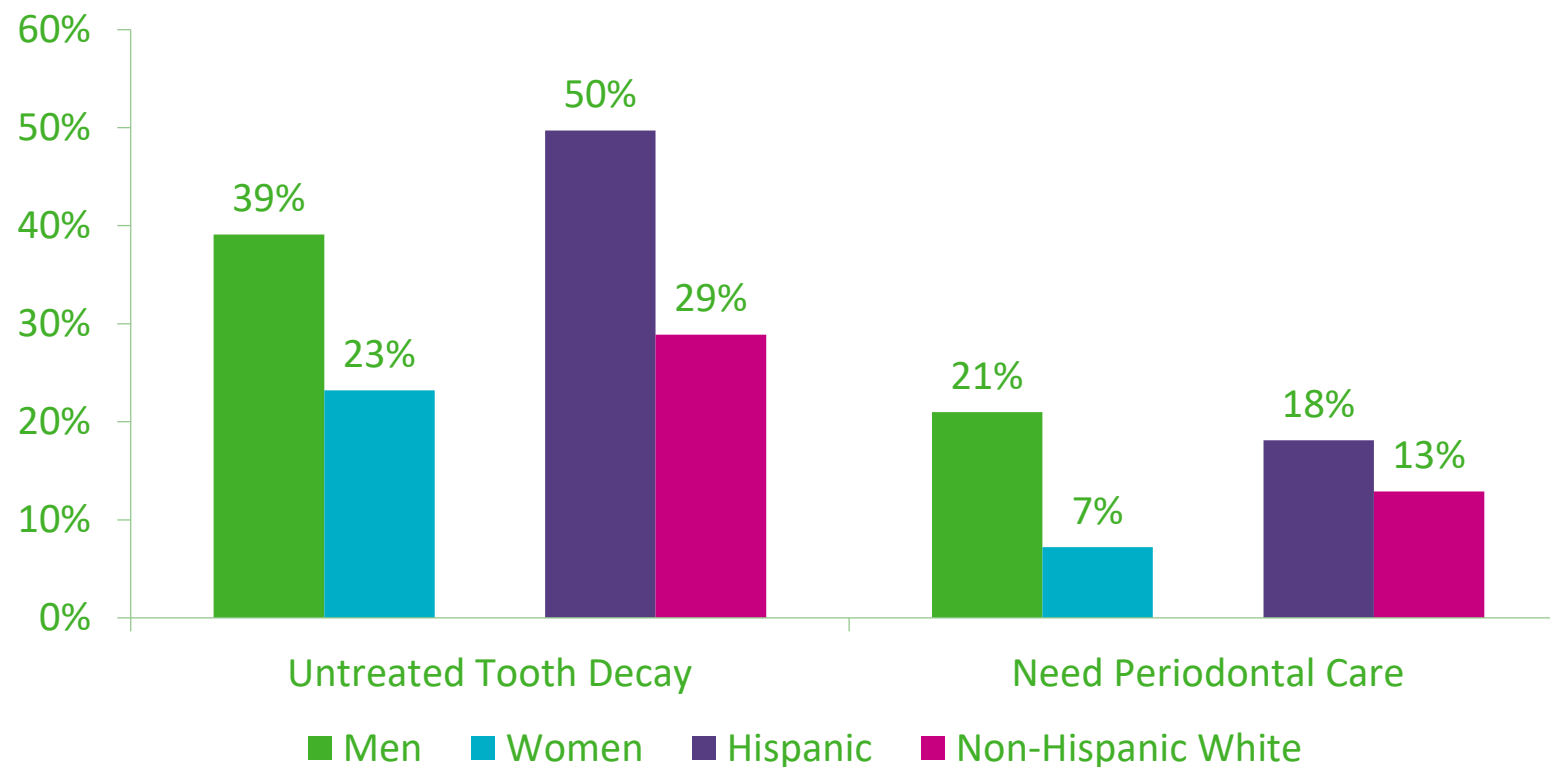
The Solution

Washington State should develop screening and referral systems geared toward vulnerable older adults attending senior centers.

Key Finding #2

There are oral health disparities among senior center participants. Men, compared to women, have higher rates of untreated tooth decay and gum disease while Hispanics, compared to non-Hispanic whites, have a higher prevalence of untreated tooth decay.

Percent with Untreated Tooth Decay and Needing Periodontal Care



The Problem

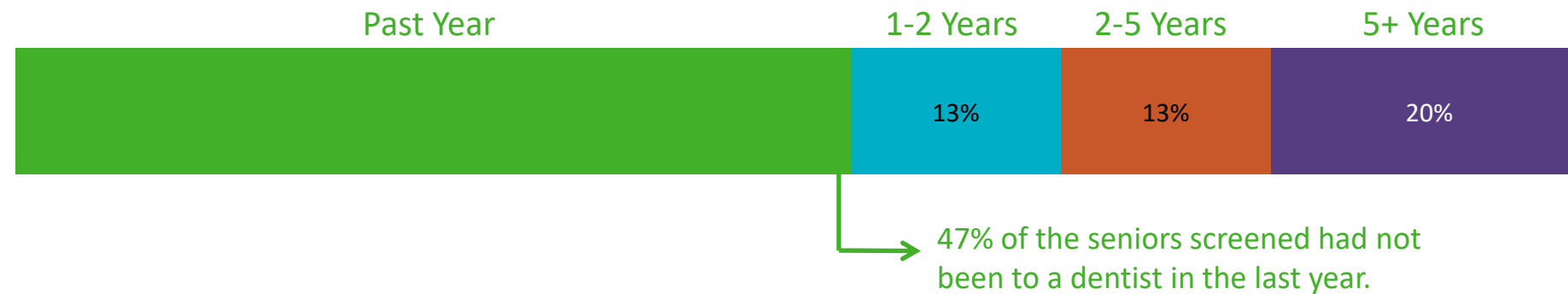
Among senior center participants, certain populations have higher rates of oral disease.





The Solution

Washington State should develop culturally and age appropriate preventive and restorative services that target the highest risk populations.

Key Finding #3

Almost half (47%) of the senior center participants screened had not been to a dentist in the last year. The primary reasons for not having a dental visit were “cost” and “no insurance”.



-  • Men, compared to women, were less likely to report a dental visit in the last year (45% vs. 60%)
-  • People without dental insurance were less likely to report a dental visit in the past year (49% vs. 67%)
-  • Adults that reported poor/fair condition of teeth were less likely to have visited the dentist (39% vs. 66%)
-  • 60% of dentate adults had a dental visit in the past year compared to only 19% of edentulous adults

The Problem

Too many senior center participants do not see a dentist for annual examinations, preventive services and/or treatment.

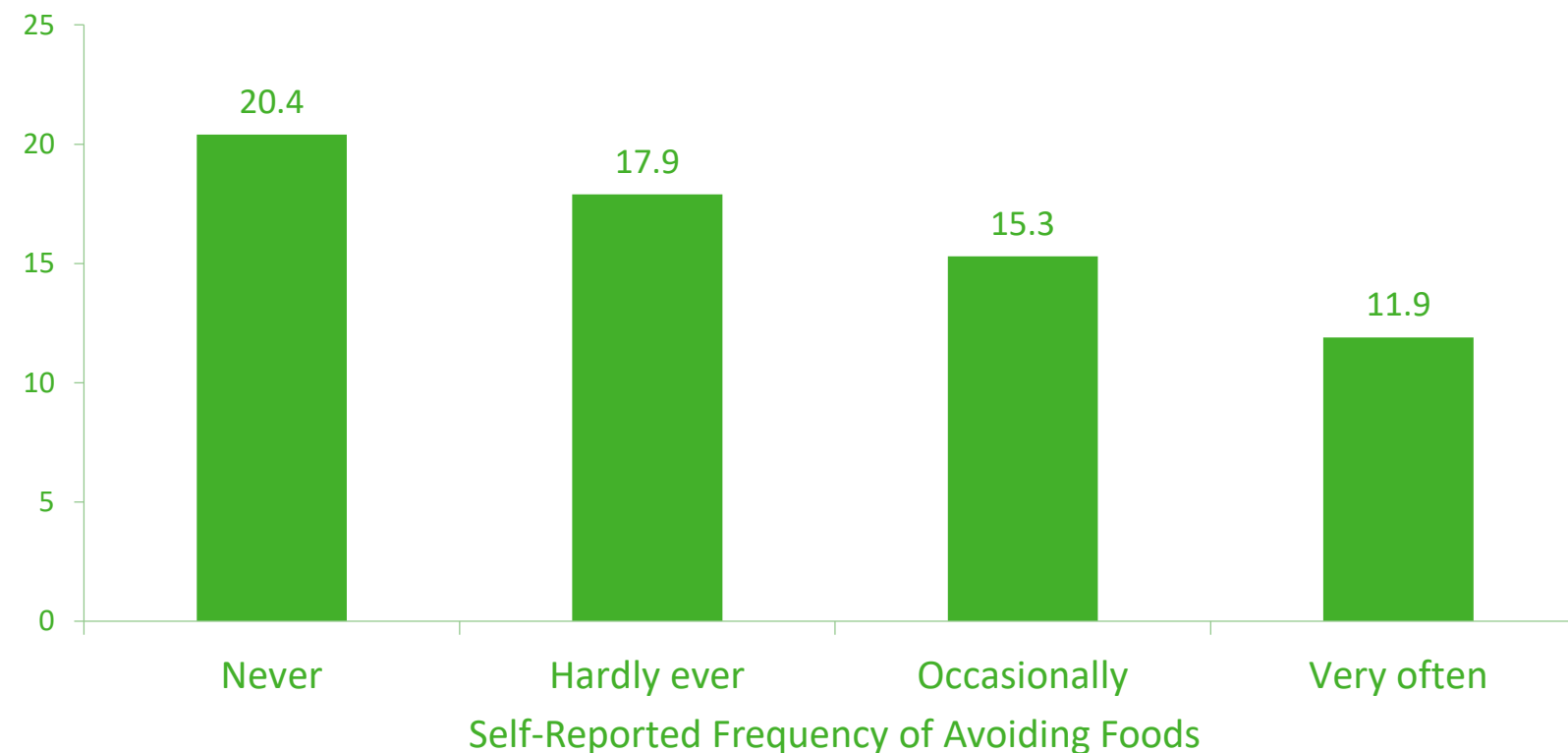
The Solution

. Washington State should develop screening and referral systems that link vulnerable lower income adults with appropriate and affordable dental care.

Key Finding #4

Among the senior center participants screened, tooth loss had a negative impact on an individual's food choices. Adults that reported avoiding particular foods "very often" because of problems with their mouth had significantly fewer teeth than those that "never" or "hardly ever" avoided foods.

Mean Number of Teeth by Frequency of Avoiding Foods



The Problem

One in three senior center participants avoids particular foods at least occasionally because of problems with their mouth.

The Solution

Washington State should develop preventive services geared toward helping adults retain more teeth into older age.

Key Finding #5

Compared to the general population of older adults in Washington State, older adults screened at senior centers have poorer oral health. Older adults screened at senior centers are...

- (1) more likely to have diabetes or pre-diabetes
- (2) more likely to be edentulous
- (3) less likely to have had a dental visit in the last year
- (4) less likely to have dental insurance
- (5) less likely to describe the health of their teeth as good, very good, or excellent
- (6) more likely to avoid foods because of problems with their mouth

The Problem

In terms of oral health, senior center participants are especially vulnerable. Compared to the general population of older adults they have more disease, less access to dental insurance and are less likely to have regular dental visits.

The Solution

Washington State should develop systems that encourage the provision of preventive and restorative dental services at Washington's senior centers.

Next Steps

To improve the oral health of senior center participants, efforts must be made to increase access to both preventive and restorative dental care for vulnerable older adults.



Work with private dental providers, publicly funded clinics, Area Agencies on Aging, and senior center staff to develop and implement screening/referral programs at Washington's senior centers.



Inform seniors and senior center staff about the availability of lower cost dental care through publicly funded clinics such as Federally Qualified Health Centers.



Develop culturally and age appropriate oral health education materials for distribution at senior centers with a high proportion of higher risk adults.



Continue to advocate for a dental health provision in Medicare and adult Medicaid.



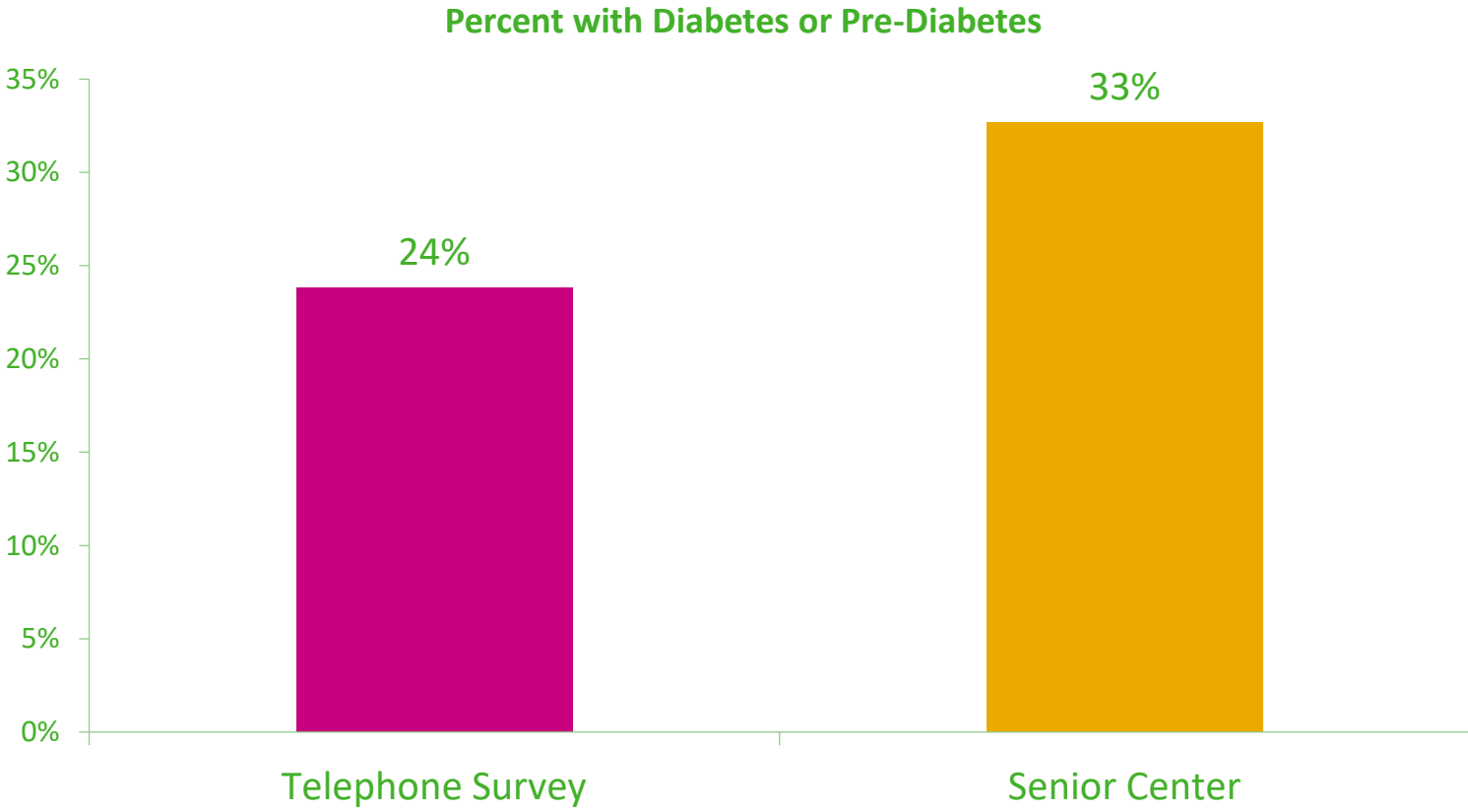
Encourage all health care providers to discuss oral health with their patients including the importance of visiting a dentist and the impact of drugs on xerostomia and oral health.

THE ORAL HEALTH OF OLDER ADULTS SCREENED AT SENIOR CENTERS COMPARED TO THE GENERAL OLDER ADULT POPULATION IN WASHINGTON STATE



Diabetes or Pre-Diabetes

Compared to the general population of older adults in Washington State, those screened at senior centers are more likely to have diabetes or pre-diabetes.



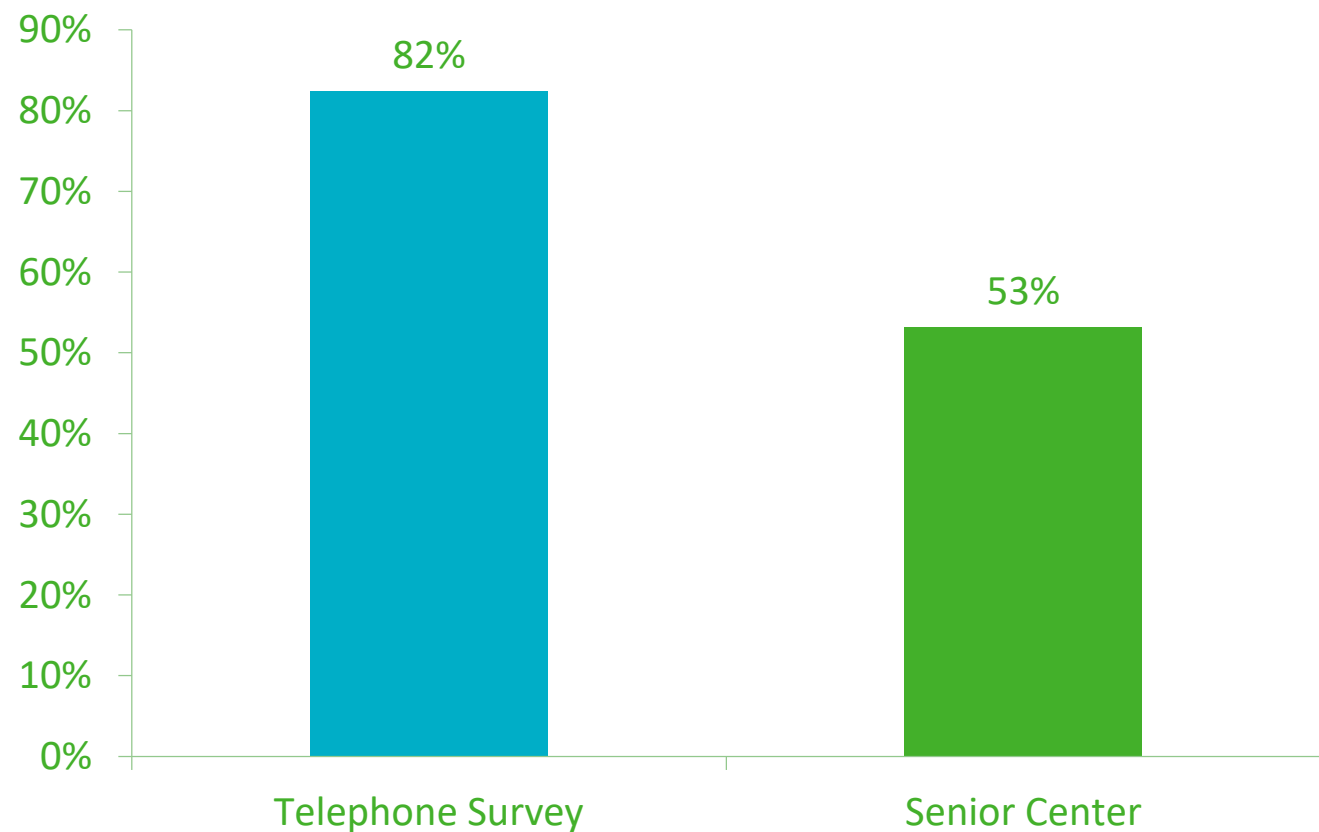
33% of older adults screened at senior centers have diabetes or pre-diabetes.

Limited to adults 65+ years of age

Last Dental Visit

Compared to the general population of older adults in Washington State, those screened at senior centers are less likely to have had a dental visit in the last year.

Percent with a Dental Visit in the Last Year



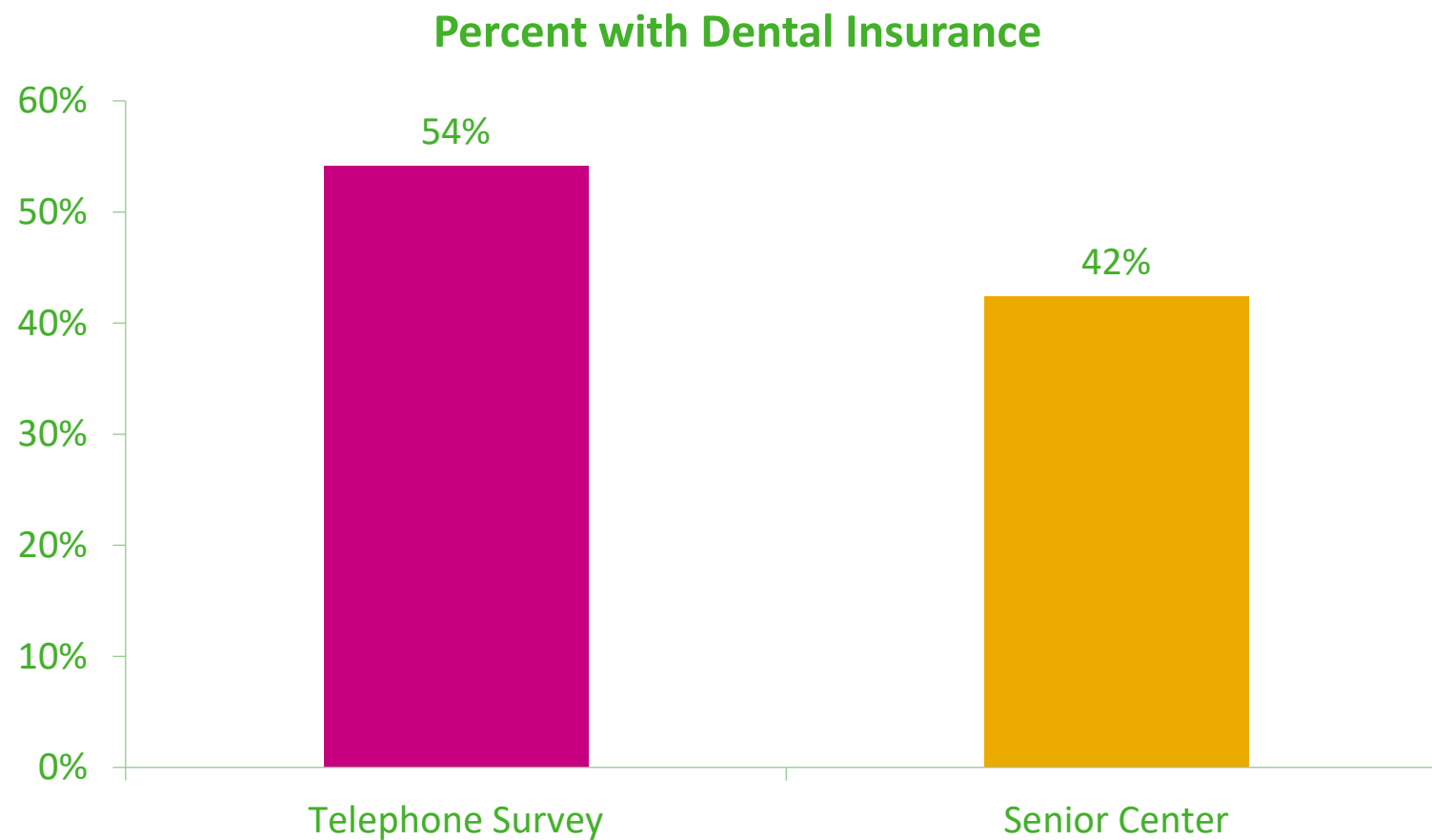
Only 53% of older adults screened at senior centers had been to the dentist in the last year.

20% of older adults screened at senior centers had not been to a dentist in the last 5 years.

Limited to adults 65+ years of age

Dental Insurance

Compared to the general population of older adults in Washington State, those screened at senior centers are less likely to have dental insurance.



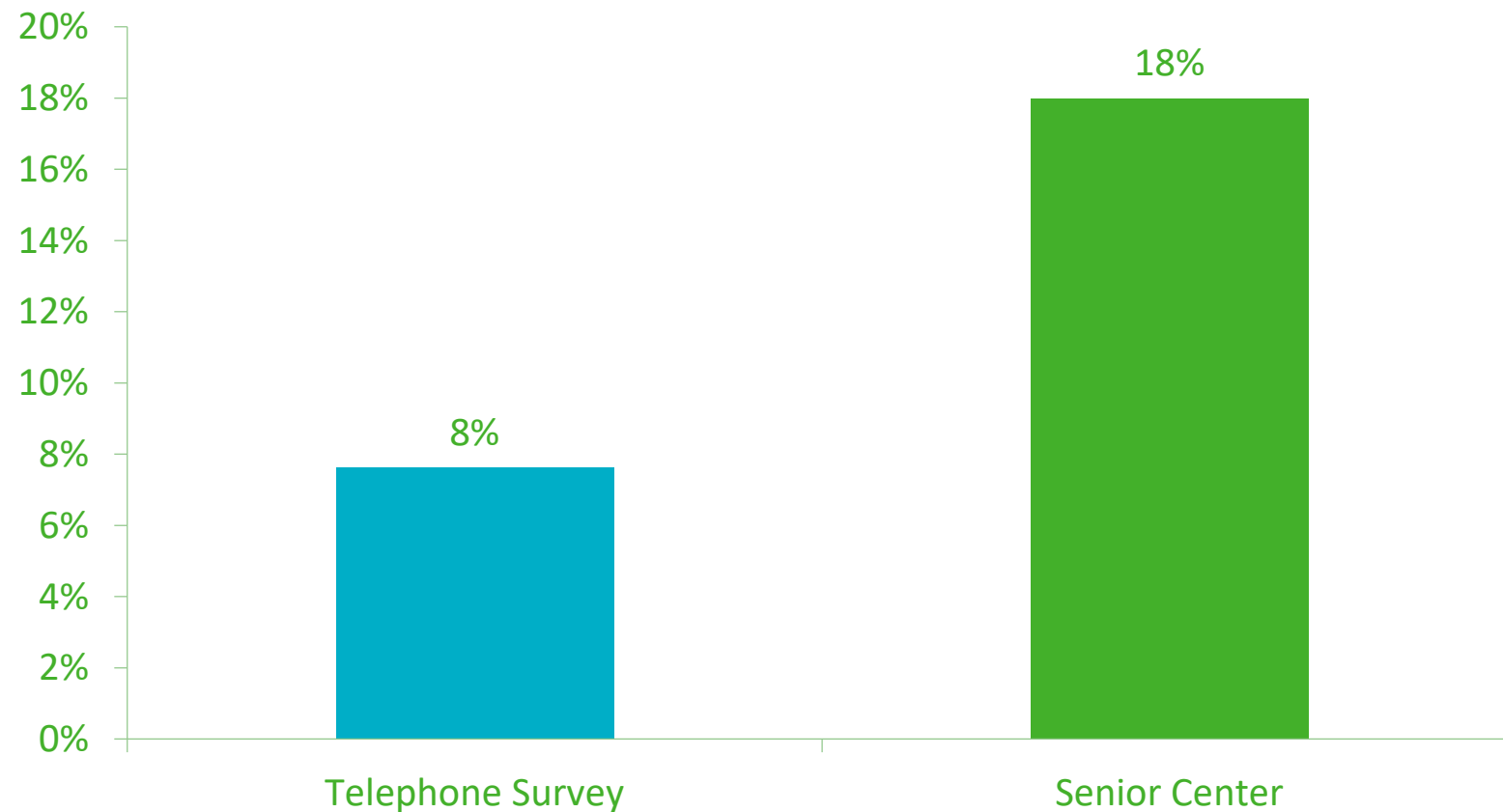
Only 42% of older adults screened at senior centers had dental insurance.

Limited to adults 65+ years of age

Prevalence of Total Tooth Loss

Compared to the general population of older adults in Washington State, those screened at senior centers are more likely to have lost all of their natural teeth.

Percent with no Natural Teeth

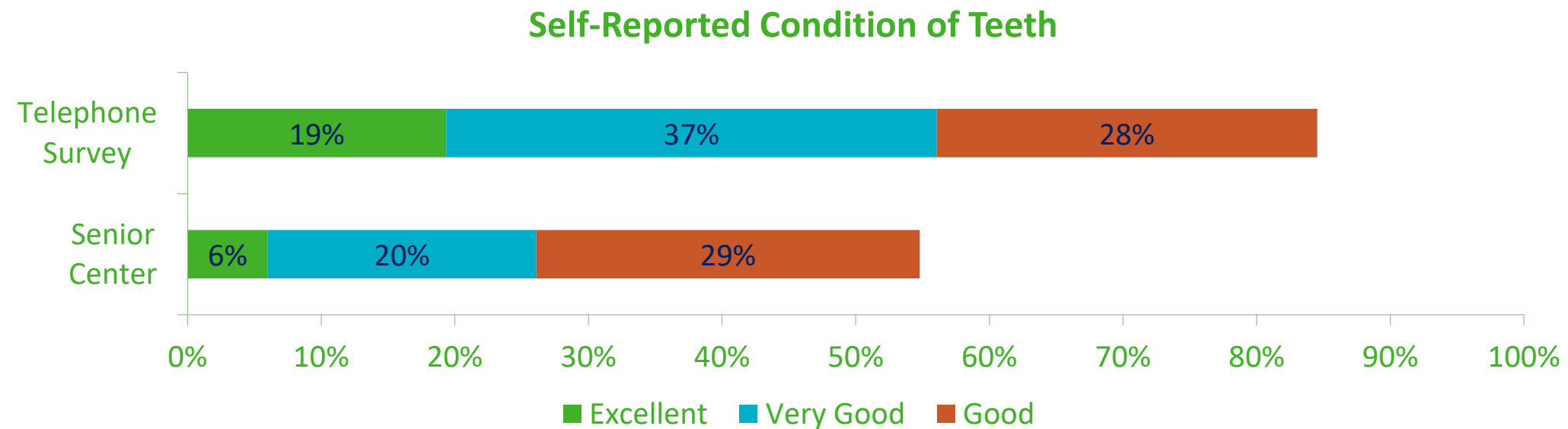


18% of older adults screened at senior centers had lost all of their natural teeth.

Limited to adults 65+ years of age

Condition of Teeth

Compared to the general population of older adults in Washington State, those screened at senior centers are less likely to describe the health of their teeth as good, very good or excellent.

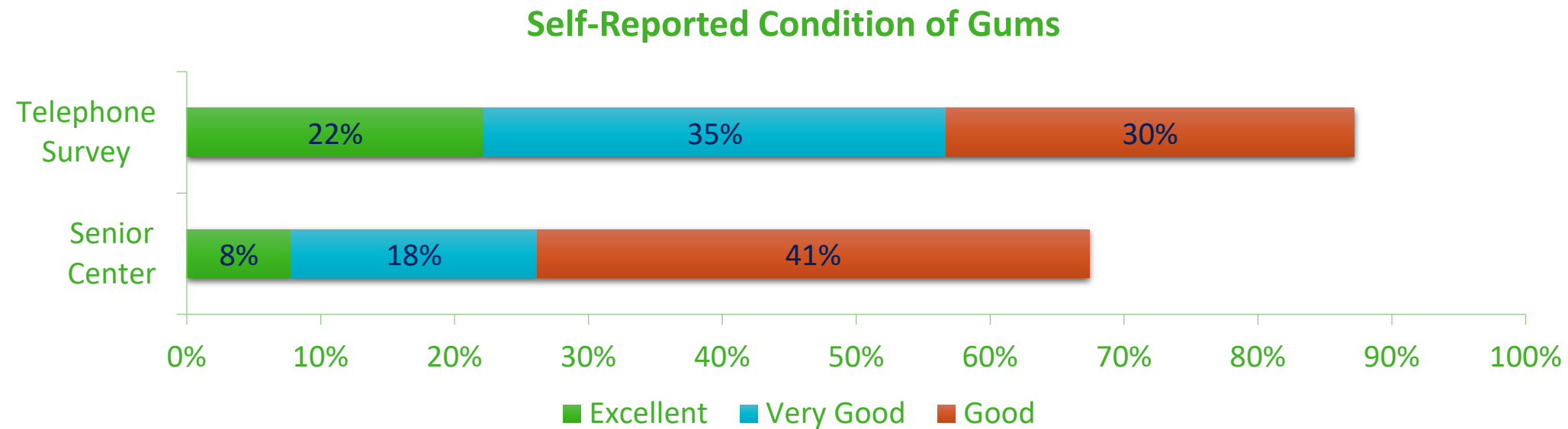


Only 55% of older adults screened at senior centers describe the health of their teeth as “good” or better.

Limited to adults 65+ years of age

Condition of Gums

Compared to the general population of older adults in Washington State, those screened at senior centers are less likely to describe the health of their gums as good, very good or excellent.

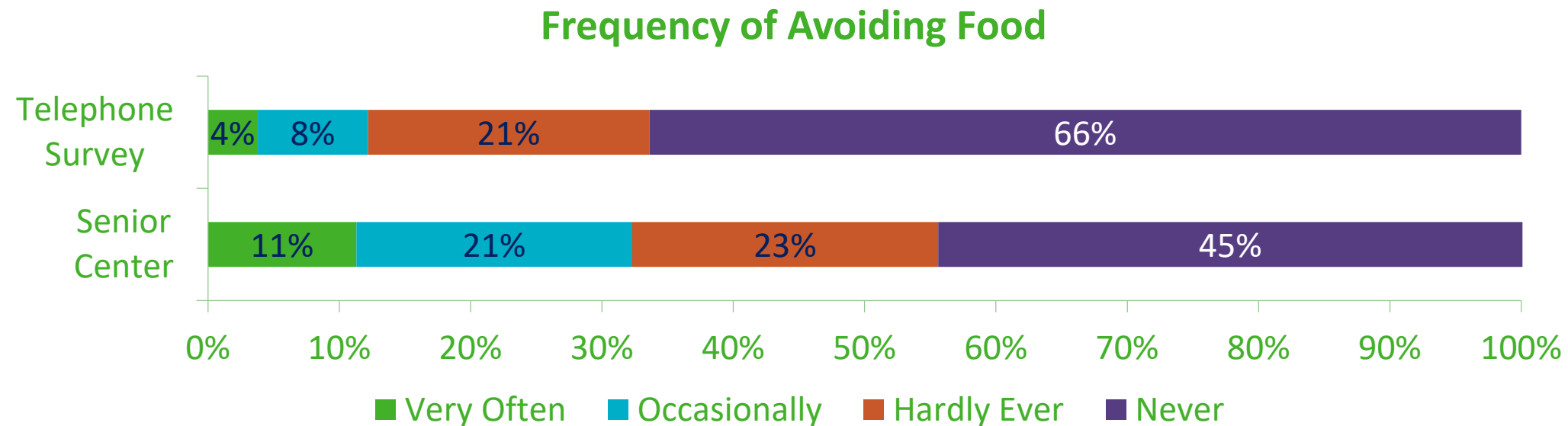


About 67% of older adults screened at senior centers describe the health of their gums as “good” or better.

Limited to adults 65+ years of age

Frequency of Avoiding Food

Compared to the general population of older adults in Washington State, those screened at senior centers are more likely to avoid particular foods because of problems with their teeth, mouth or dentures.



32% of older adults screened at senior centers avoid foods either very often or occasionally because of oral problems compared to 12% of the general population of older adults in Washington State.

Limited to adults 65+ years of age

Using the Data

Internal

- > Investment decisions
- > Advocacy opportunities
- > Partnerships/promotions
- > Workforce education
- > Conferences

External

- > AAA directors
- > ACH regional leaders
- > Dental hygiene assoc.
- > Senior center assoc.
- > Conferences

Thank you!

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