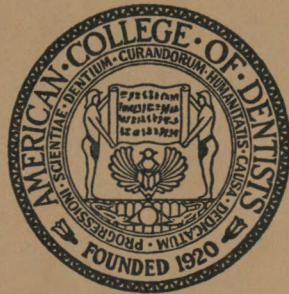


# JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF DENTISTS



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# Socio-Economic Status and the Utilization Of Dentists' Services

LOUIS KRIESBERG, Ph.D. and  
BEATRICE R. TREIMAN, A.M.

In the fall of 1959, the National Opinion Research Center conducted a national survey of public attitudes and practices in the field of dental care. The survey, sponsored by the Commission on the Survey of Dentistry in the United States, covered a wide range of topics; this report presents some of the findings from a preliminary analysis of the data most directly related to the utilization of professional dental services.<sup>1</sup> More particularly, we are asking what is it about socio-economic status that explains the high relationship between it and going to the dentist.

The data were collected through personal interviews with 1,862 adults. To render the analysis more meaningful, we have omitted from consideration those respondents who have already lost all their natural teeth, a group constituting almost a fourth of the sample.

Presumably, the most important factor affecting the likelihood that someone will go to the dentist is the condition of his teeth. Respondents were asked what led them to initiate their last dental visit or series of visits. One-third of the respondents said they had some pain, and another third said they had other evidence of a need for dental care; but 30 per cent said they went only for a check-up or to have their teeth cleaned and 4 per cent gave other reasons for having gone to the dentist. Most people, then, who have gone to the dentist, have gone because they believed they needed dental work.

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Biographical sketches of the authors appear at the end of this article, page 165.

Earlier versions of this paper were presented at meetings of the American Association for Public Opinion Research, Atlantic City, May 7, 1960, and of the Society for Social Research, Chicago, May 20, 1960.

<sup>1</sup>This investigation was supported in large part by a research grant, D-1076, from the National Institute of Dental Research, U. S. Public Health Service. We also express our thanks to the Commission on the Survey of Dentistry in the United States and its staff for their active participation in all stages of this study. Among the many people at the National Opinion Research Center who contributed to the study, we particularly want to mention Selma Monsky, Field Director; Jacob J. Feldman, Senior Study Director; and Harold Levy, IBM Supervisor.