



# Health Status Report

## Oral Health in Perth County

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to

- Examine oral health care and dental disease trends in Perth County residents aged 12 and over, over a 10-year period
- To identify health inequalities and community needs
- Identify needs to direct the planning and implementation of local programs and services.

### THE ROLE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

The Ontario Public Health Standards set out mandatory requirements for oral health public health services for children but not adults<sup>1</sup>. Although some health units and/or municipalities have made it a priority to provide services and/or education to adults, PDHU has not yet undertaken such strategies.

### SUMMARY OF RESULTS

- The percentage of Perth County residents who brushed their teeth at least twice daily was lower than their Ontario counterparts.
- A lower percentage of Perth County males visited a dentist and had access to insurance compared to Ontario males.
- Significant inequalities are experienced by Perth County's older adults, lower income earners, and residents with less than high school education. These groups struggle to access dental care and bear a disproportionate burden of dental disease.

### BACKGROUND

In Canada, many oral health services are not included among the insured services outlined in the Canada Health Act. Dental care is largely privately financed, with only 5% of the sum of care paid from public dollars<sup>2</sup>. Statistics show that one in every five people in Ontario does not visit a dentist because they cannot afford it<sup>3</sup>.

In a 2012 report on oral health, the office of Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health reported that:

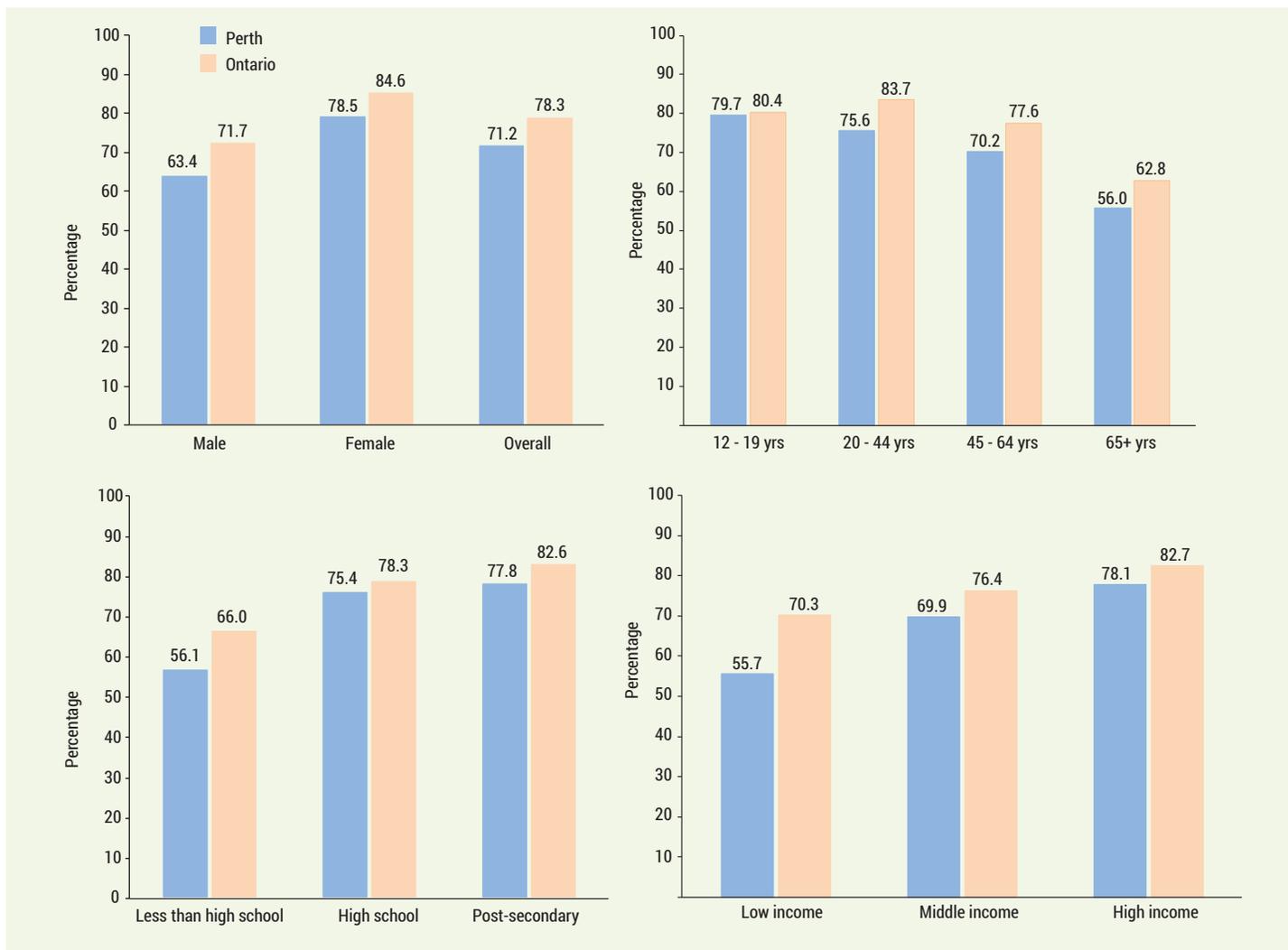
- 75% of Canadians made a dental visit in the previous 12 months
- 17% of Canadians avoided receiving dental care because of the cost
- 4.15 million working days are lost annually due to dental visits or dental sick days<sup>3</sup>.

In Canada, 96% of adults are affected by tooth decay, a disease that is often preventable<sup>4</sup>.

While some basic prevention, such as fluoridated water, is easily accessed by Perth County residents, other preventive services are available through dental providers making them less accessible to those without private dental insurance, living with low income or living in rural areas.

# RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

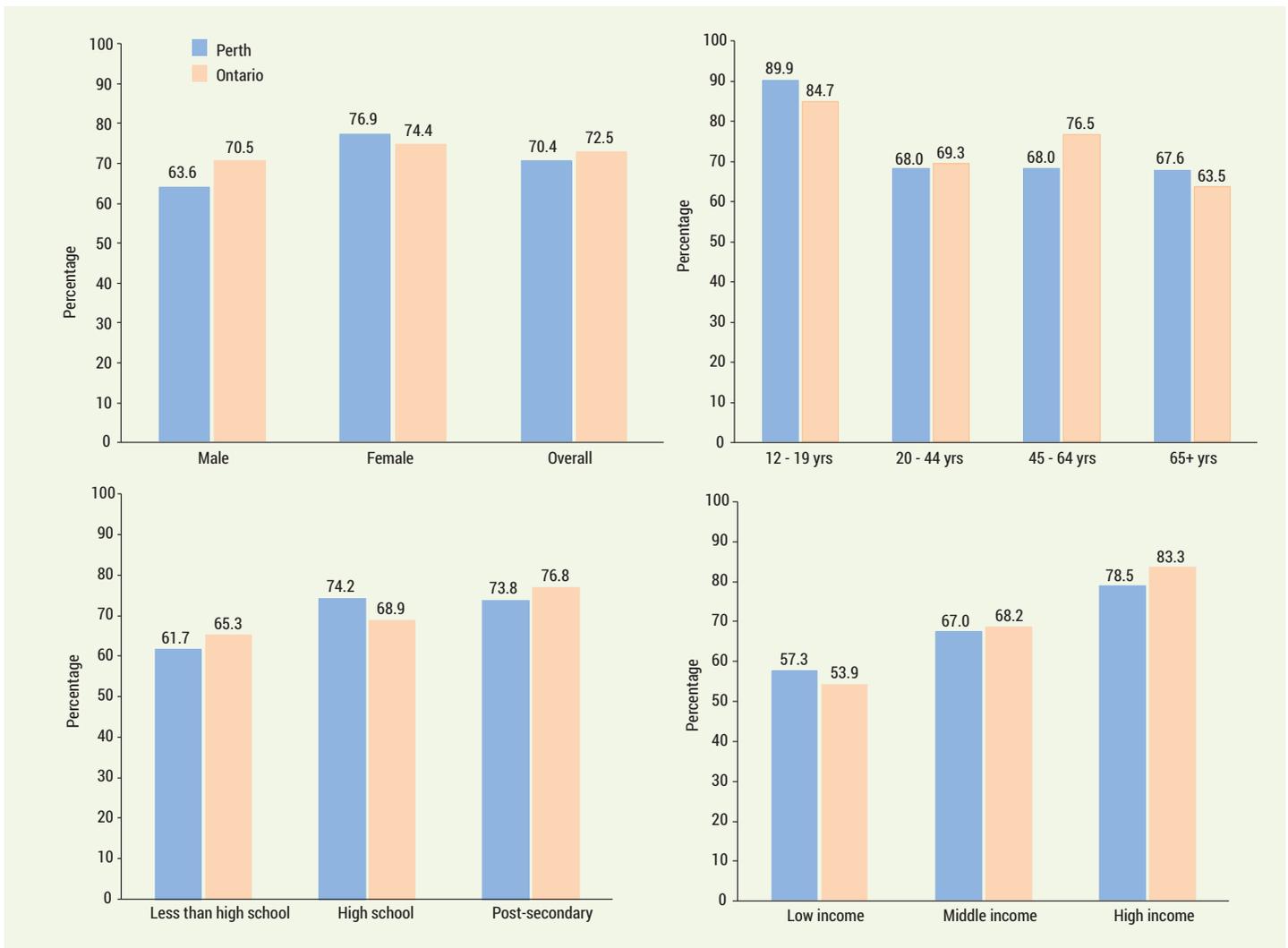
**Figure 1** Percentage of Perth County and Ontario residents who brushed their teeth at least twice a day by sex, age, education, and income, 2005-2013



Source: Canadian Community Health Survey 2005, 2009, 2010, 2013. Statistics Canada

- The percentage of Perth County males and females who brushed their teeth twice daily was lower compared with their Ontario counterparts.
- The percentage of Perth County males who brushed their teeth at least twice a day was lower compared to Perth County females.
- The percentage of Perth County residents aged 65 years and over who brushed their teeth twice daily was lower compared to Perth County residents in the other age categories.
- The percentage of Perth County residents with less than a high school education who brushed their teeth twice daily was lower compared to the percentage of Perth County residents with high school and post-secondary education.
- The percentage of Perth County residents living in low income or middle income who brushed their teeth twice daily was lower compared to their Ontario counterparts.
- The percentage of Perth County residents who brushed their teeth twice daily increased with increasing education and income.
- The percentage of Ontario residents who brushed their teeth twice daily increased with increasing education and income.

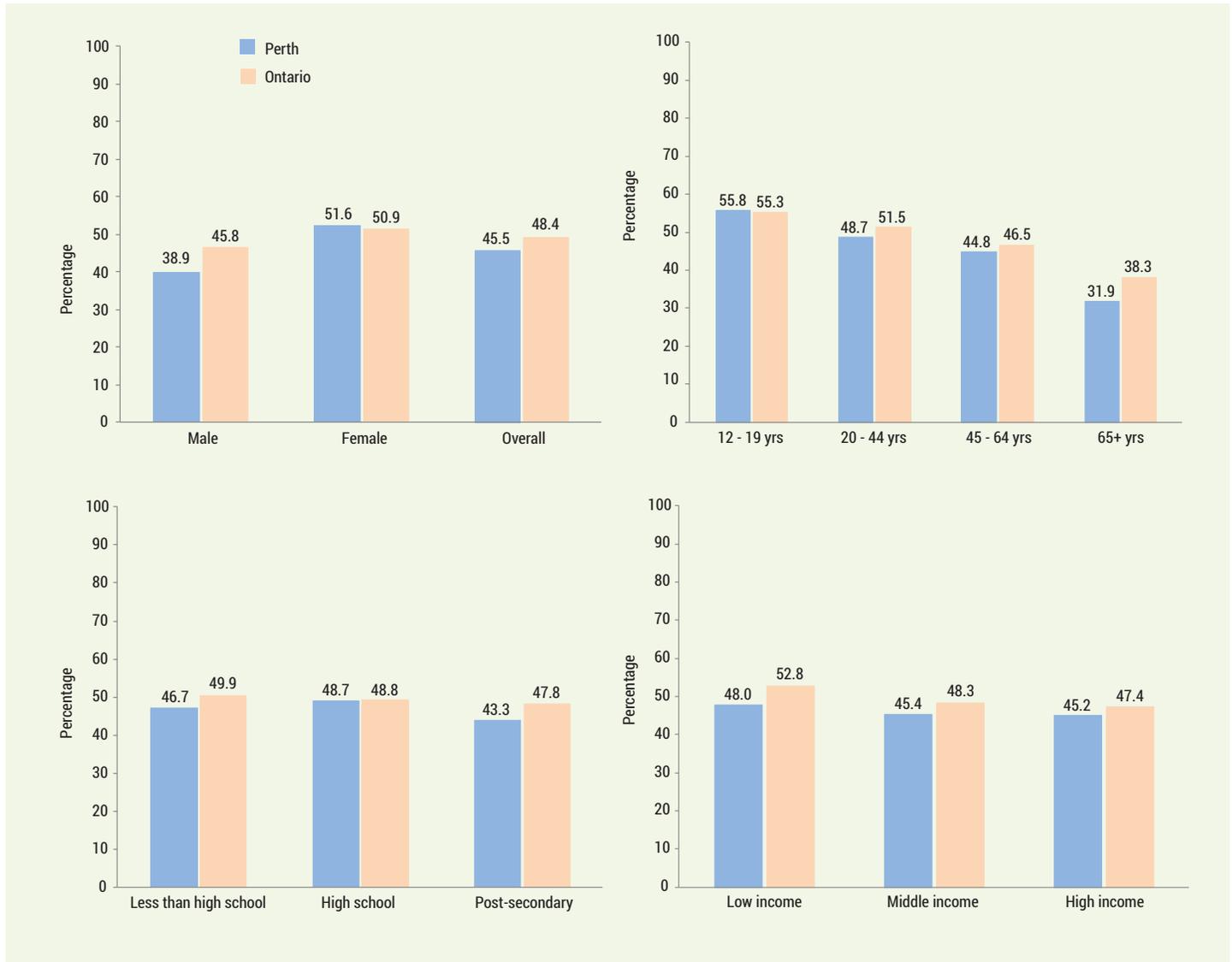
**Figure 2** Percentage of Perth County and Ontario residents who visited the dentist in the previous year by sex, age, education, and income, 2005-2013.



Source: Canadian Community Health Survey 2005, 2009, 2010, 2013. Statistics Canada

- A lower percentage of Perth County and Ontario males visited the dentist compared to their female counterparts.
- A lower percentage of Perth County males visited the dentist compared to Ontario males.
- The percentage of Perth County residents aged 12-19 years old who visited the dentist was higher compared to the percentage of Perth County residents in older age groups.
- The percentage of Perth County residents with less than a high school education who visited the dentist was lower compared to Perth County residents with a high school or post-secondary education who visited the dentist.
- The percentage of Perth County residents living in high income who visited the dentist was lower compared to the percentage of Ontarians living in high income who visited the dentist.
- The percentage of Ontario residents who visited the dentist increased with increasing education and income.

**Figure 3** Percentage of Perth County and Ontario residents who experienced oral or facial pain\* in the previous month by sex, age, education, and income, 2005-2013.

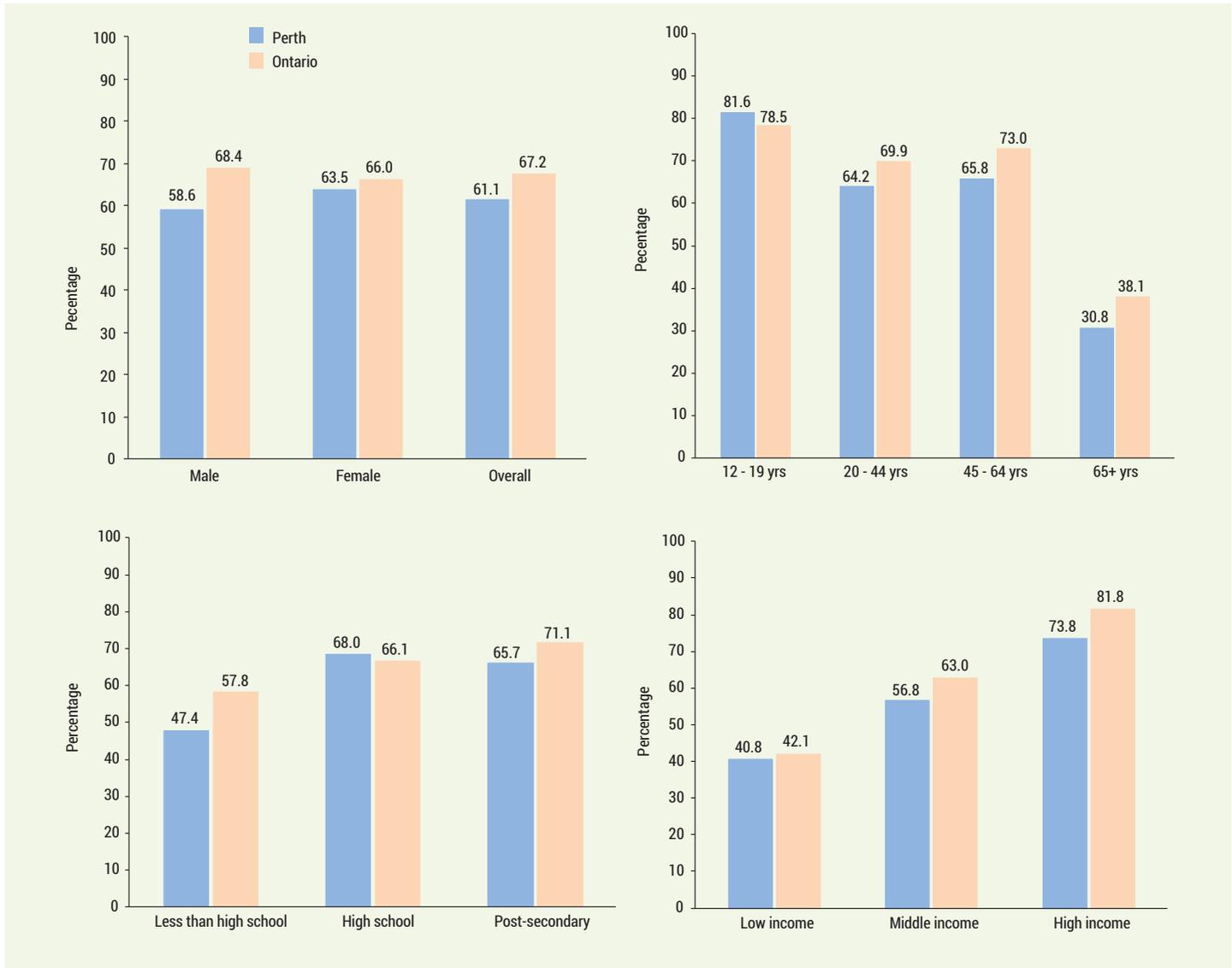


Source: Canadian Community Health Survey 2005, 2009, 2010, 2013, Statistics Canada

- In both Perth County and Ontario, the percentage of females who experienced oral or facial pain was higher than the percentage of males who experienced oral or facial pain.
- The percentage of Perth County residents aged 65 years and over who experienced oral or facial pain was lower compared to Perth County residents in the younger age groups.
- The percentage of Ontarians who experienced oral or facial pain decreased with increasing age.
- The percentage of Ontarians with less than a high school education who experienced oral or facial pain was higher than the percentage of Ontarians with a post-secondary education.
- In Perth County, neither education level nor income was related to experiencing oral or facial pain.
- The percentage of Ontarians living in low income who experienced oral or facial pain was higher compared to the percentage of Ontarians living in middle or high income.

\* Oral and facial pain may include but is not limited to toothaches, sensitive to hot and/or cold food or drink, and pain in the mouth or face.

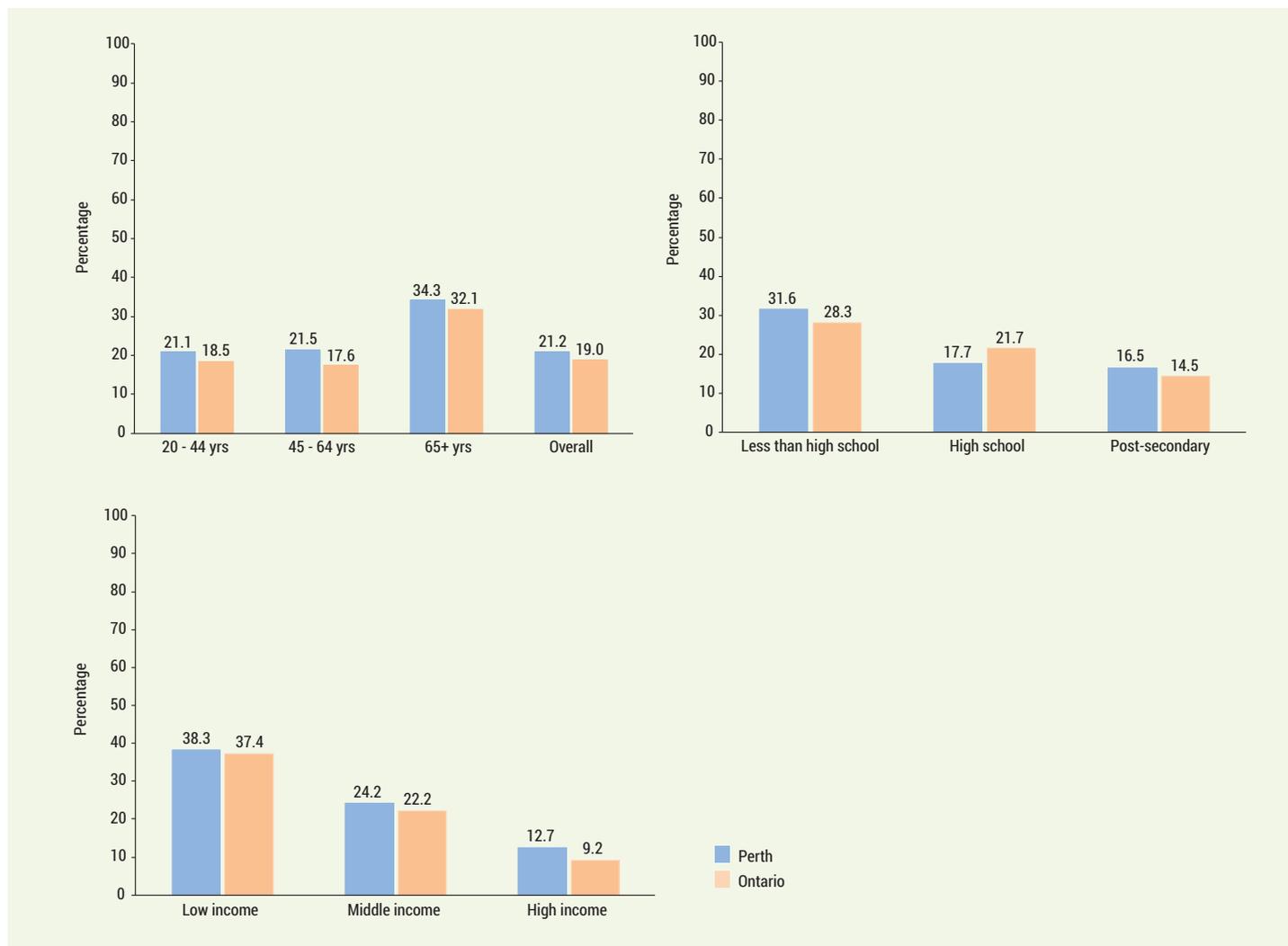
**Figure 4** Percentage of Perth County and Ontario residents who had insurance that covers all or part of their dental expenses by sex, age, education, and income, 2005-2013



Source: Canadian Community Health Survey 2005, 2009, 2010, 2013. Statistics Canada

- The percentage of Perth County males who had dental insurance was lower compared to Ontario males.
- The percentage of Perth County residents aged 12-19 years who had dental insurance was higher compared to Perth County residents in the older age categories.
- The percentage of Perth County residents with less than a high school education or post-secondary education who had dental insurance was lower compared to Ontarians with less than a high school education or post-secondary education.
- The percentage of Perth County residents with less than a high school education who had dental insurance was lower compared to Perth County residents with a high school education or a post-secondary education.
- The percentage of Perth County residents who had dental insurance increased with increasing income.
- The percentage of Ontarians who had dental insurance increased with increasing education and income.

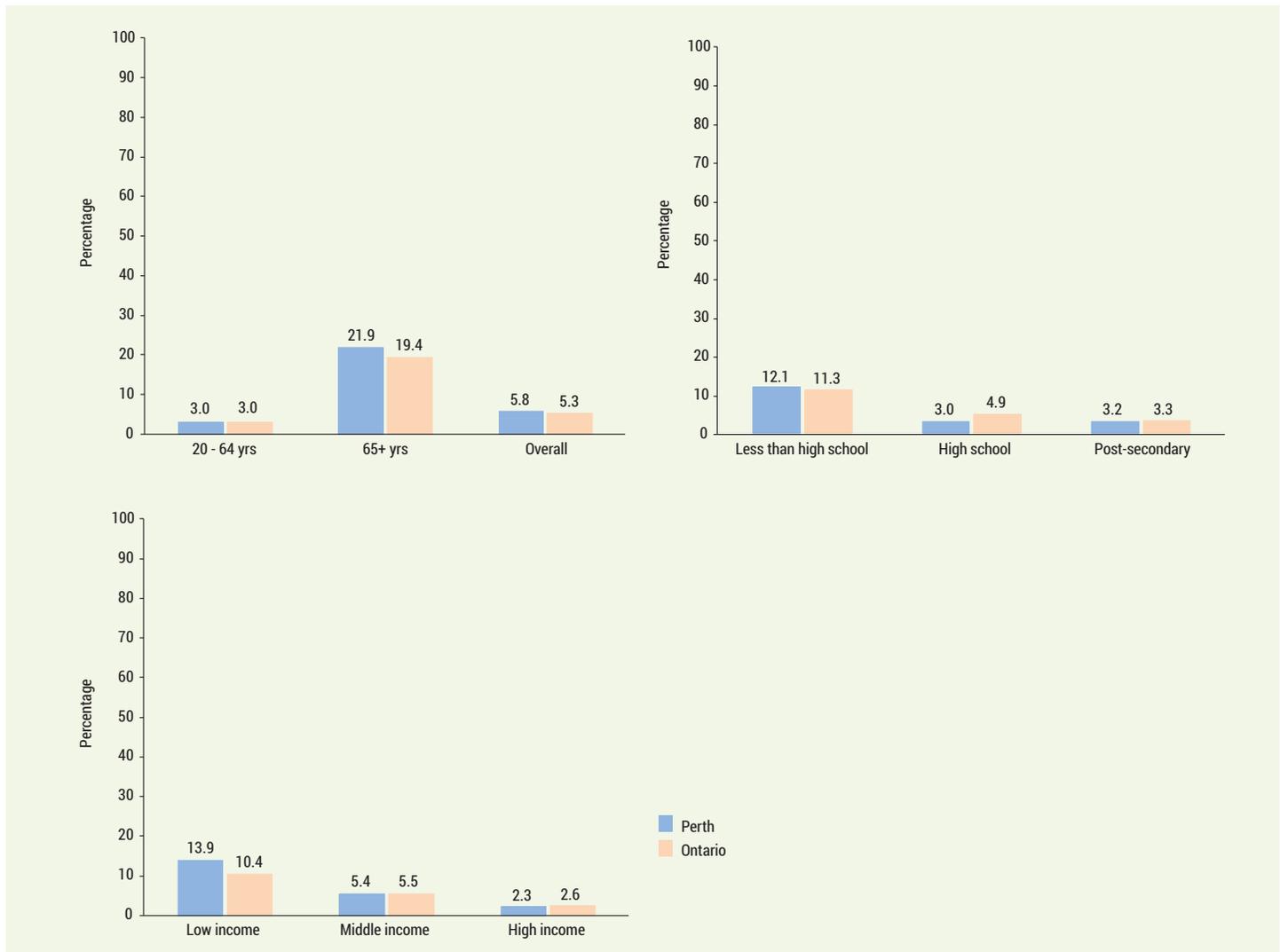
**Figure 5** Percentage of Perth County and Ontario residents who visited the dentist only for emergency care by age, education, and income, 2005-2013



Source: Canadian Community Health Survey 2005, 2009, 2010, 2013. Statistics Canada

- The percentage of Perth County and Ontario residents aged 65 years and over who visited a dentist only for emergency care was higher compared to residents aged 20-44 or 45-64 years.
- The percentage of Perth County residents with less than a high school education who visited the dentist only for emergency care was higher compared to Perth County residents with a high school or post-secondary education.
- The percentage of Perth County residents who visited the dentist only for emergency care decreased with increasing income.
- The percentage of Ontarians who visited the dentist only for emergency care decreased with increasing education and increasing income.

**Figure 6** Percentage of Perth County and Ontario residents who did not have their own teeth by age, education, and income, 2005-2013



Source: Canadian Community Health Survey 2005, 2009, 2010, 2013. Statistics Canada

- The percentage of Perth County residents aged 65 years and over who did not have their own teeth was higher compared to Perth County residents aged 20-64 years.
- The percentage of Perth County residents with less than a high school education who did not have their own teeth was higher compared to Perth County residents with a high school or a post-secondary education.
- The percentage of Perth County residents who did not have their own teeth decreased with increasing income.
- The percentage of Ontarians who did not have their own teeth decreased with increasing education and increasing income.

## Other Results

- Almost 5% of Perth county residents experienced social limitations in the previous year due to oral health status. This is similar to the 4% of Ontarians who experienced social limitations due to oral health conditions. (Source: Canadian Community Health Survey 2005, 2009, 2010, 2013, Statistics Canada)
- Over 3% of Perth County residents, and over 4% of Ontario residents, did not visit a dentist in the past three years due to cost. (Source: Canadian Community Health Survey 2005, 2009, 2010, 2013, Statistics Canada)

## DISCUSSION

Oral health – like general health – occurs on a gradient. These results are consistent with existing research that shows disadvantaged groups in Ontario and Canada have less access to dental care and bear a disproportionate burden of dental disease. A close look at the information in this report reveals that oral health inequalities are experienced by Perth County's older adults, low-income earners and residents with less than a high school education.

The recent Canadian Academy of Health Sciences report identified several troubling problems affecting oral health care in Canada, defined by two categories: 1) vulnerable groups have the poorest health and the most difficulty accessing care; and 2) the current public and private oral health care systems are not effective in providing reasonable access to care for vulnerable groups<sup>5</sup>.

## DATA SOURCES AND LIMITATIONS

The Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) is a general, cross-sectional health survey that covers the household population aged 12 years or older. Coverage in the provinces is in the range of 98%. The main limitation is that CCHS uses self-reported data, which can be subject to response bias. For more information on the CCHS visit: [www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/survey/household/health/canadiancommunityhealth#Q10](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/survey/household/health/canadiancommunityhealth#Q10).

Perth County is a relatively small county and a relatively small number of respondents are contacted each year. The estimated values might not exactly match the true underlying values. This is also reflected in the confidence intervals surrounding the Perth County estimates, which are considerably wider compared to confidence intervals of estimates for Ontario.

## NEXT STEPS

The existing inequities demonstrate a gap in available oral care services for Perth County adults. PDHU will explore recommendations and advocacy avenues to take action and address these service gaps at a local level.

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<sup>1</sup>Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (2008). Ontario Public Health Standards. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario. Available from: [www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/oph\\_standards/docs/ophs\\_2008.pdf](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/oph_standards/docs/ophs_2008.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>Quiñonez C, Locker D, Sherret L, Grootendorst P, Azarpazhooh A, Figuerido R. An environmental scan of publicly financed dental care in Canada. Community Dental Services Research Unit and Office of the Chief Dental Officer, Health Canada, 2005.

<sup>3</sup>Oral Health – More Than Just Cavities. A report by Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health. April 2012. Available from: [www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/ministry/publications/reports/oral\\_health/oral\\_health.pdf](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/ministry/publications/reports/oral_health/oral_health.pdf) Accessed October 19th 2015.

<sup>4</sup>Health Canada. Report on the findings of the oral health component of the Canadian Health Measures Survey 2007-2009. Ottawa, ON: Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada; 2010. Available from: [www.fptdwc.ca/assets/PDF/CHMS/CHMS-E-tech.p](http://www.fptdwc.ca/assets/PDF/CHMS/CHMS-E-tech.p)

<sup>5</sup>Canadian Academy of Health Sciences. Improving Access to Oral Health Care for Vulnerable People Living in Canada. Canadian Academy of Health Sciences, 2014.



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