

# New study notes disparities in periodontal disease

28 August 2012

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A new article by Dr. Luisa N. Borrell, the chair of Lehman College's Department of Health Sciences, explores the disparities in periodontal disease (gum disease) among U.S. adults along age, sex, racial/ethnic and socioeconomic lines over a ten-year period. The article appears in the September-October issue of *Public Health Reports*.

Dr. Borrell and her co-author, Prof. Makram Talih of Hunter College's School of Public Health, assessed these disparities using a summary measure they developed, the Symmetrized Theil Index, to account for each group's share of the disease and its [population size](#).

Using data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys (NHANES) conducted in 1988-1994 and in 1999-2004 to examine the disparities, their study concludes that although periodontal disease decreased by 7.1% overall between surveys, the disease remained most common among adults aged 35 and older, men, blacks, Mexican-Americans, those without a [high school diploma](#) and low-income households.

Unlike most studies, which contrast statistics between two time periods, Dr. Borrell and her co-author examined differences among the [population groups](#) within a given time period to understand how race/ethnicity, income and education levels impact the disease.

"This study takes a look at statistics not only across time but also within a given time period," Dr. Borrell says. "In fact, our findings show that while disparities in periodontal disease decreased between the surveys, these disparities were wider between groups in the 1999-2004 NHANES compared to those observed in the 1988-1994 NHANES."

Provided by The City University of New York  
APA citation: New study notes disparities in periodontal disease (2012, August 28) retrieved 30

September 2020 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-08-disparities-periodontal-disease.html>

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