

# ORAL HEALTH IN SOCIAL MEDIA: A SAMPLE FROM KEY PARTNERS

September 2016

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DentaQuest  
FOUNDATION

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research

# table of contents

page

3

---

Introduction

page

7

---

Questions

page

8

---

Findings

page

32

---

Key Takeaways

page

33

---

Appendices

# introduction

- **Why social media?**
- **About this report**
- **Potential limitations**

# Why social media?

An important goal of Oral Health 2020 is for oral health to be included in health dialogue and public policy throughout the nation. Of course, one important venue for this dialogue is social media. Increasingly, social media is used as a medium for commentary, discourse, and involvement in key issues affecting Americans today. This report shares insights from an exploratory analysis of the oral health conversation in two key social media venues—Facebook and Twitter.

It is worth noting that social media entails a vast landscape of individuals and organizations through interconnected platforms. As a starting point, this report focuses on 18 key organizations and how they have contributed to the oral health conversation through social media.

# About this report

The following analysis is inspired by the methodology of traditional media analysis, the focus of which is typically print media. It examines volume, tone, and content of Facebook and Twitter posts during the course of one year (May 1, 2015 through May 1, 2016). There were a total of 10,497 Facebook and Twitter posts that specifically discussed oral health. Key issue areas examined in this analysis include: Affordable Care Act (ACA), Medicaid, Medicare, Medical-Dental Integration, Schools, and Childhood Caries.

The 18 organizations selected for this analysis fit into one of four categories:

- (i) Partners focusing primarily on oral health,
- (ii) Partners focusing on children's health and/or well-being and not primarily on oral health,
- (iii) DQF grantees, or
- (iv) Government agencies, including federal agencies that could be valuable partners in this work.

*Please note that although this report is formatted as a slide deck, it is not intended for use as a presentation.*

# Potential limitations

***This analysis is not designed to be nationally representative.***

The 18 organizations selected for this analysis are not representative of the oral health conversation nationally. This analysis is not designed to provide a comprehensive review; rather, it is a focused and exploratory exercise.

***Tone does not speak to whether a post supports or opposes oral health.***

Tone refers to the connotation of a post – information can be conveyed with a neutral, positive, or negative tone. It does not suggest whether the content of a post supports or opposes the goals of Oral Health 2020. For example, a post with a negative tone could be speaking to the need for a stronger oral health safety net. Analyses of tone are typically used to understand how messages are conveyed, not the content of those messages. The content and nature of the messages are analyzed separately.

# questions

- **Volume.** How often does oral health appear in Facebook and Twitter?
- **Tone.** What is the tone on oral health?
- **Content.** What are the posts about?
- **Followers.** Who are followers of and participants in the oral health conversation in social media?

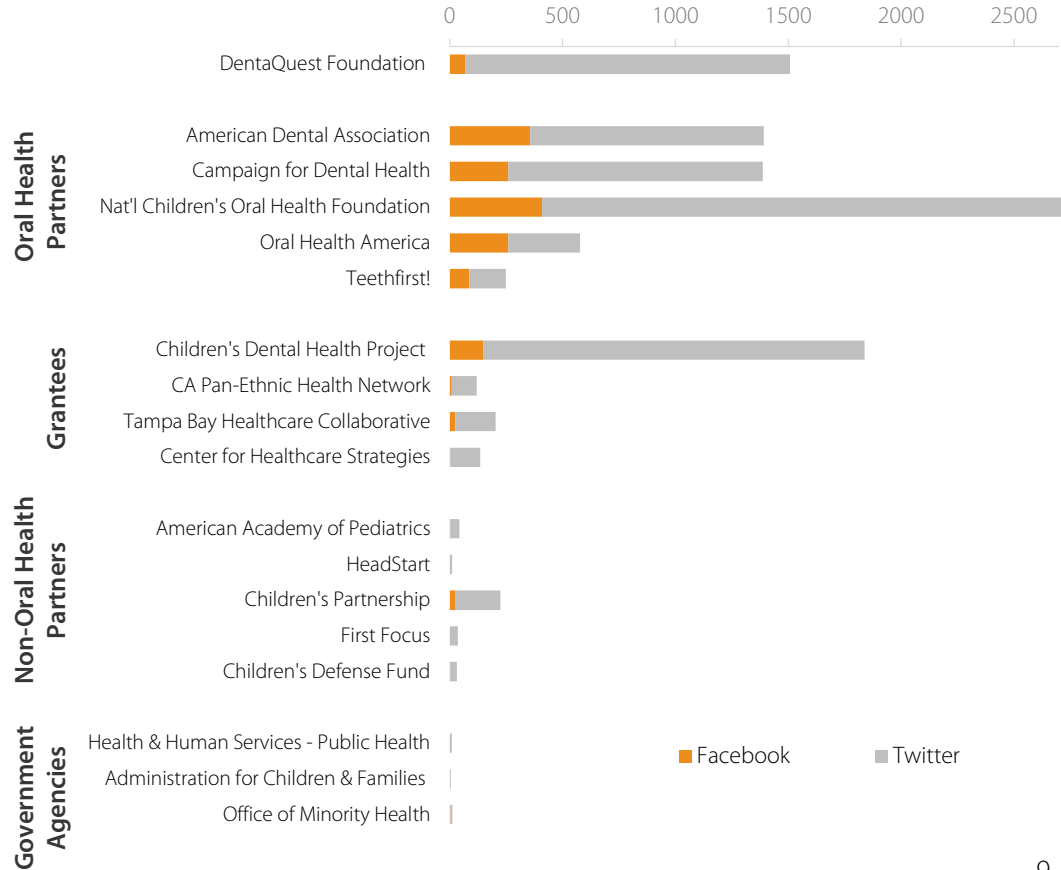
# volume

How often does oral health appear  
in Facebook and Twitter?



## Number of Oral Health Posts

The majority of posts were from Twitter. Less than one-fifth of all social media posts were from Facebook. Oral health partners and DQF grantees posted the most about oral health.



tone

What is the tone on oral health?

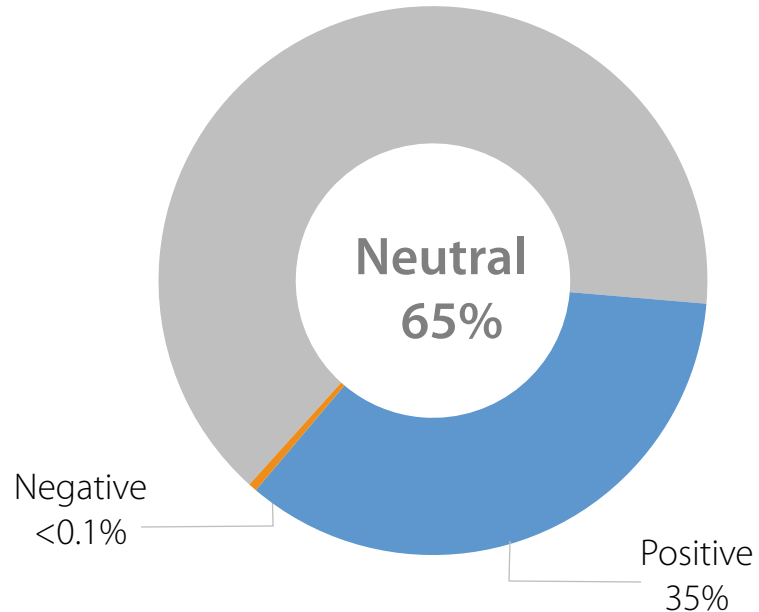
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## What is the tone on oral health?

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- **Neutral** posts were either flat in attitude towards oral health or did not use emotive writing in any way.
- **Positive** posts conveyed a positive connotation.
- **Negative** posts conveyed a negative connotation.

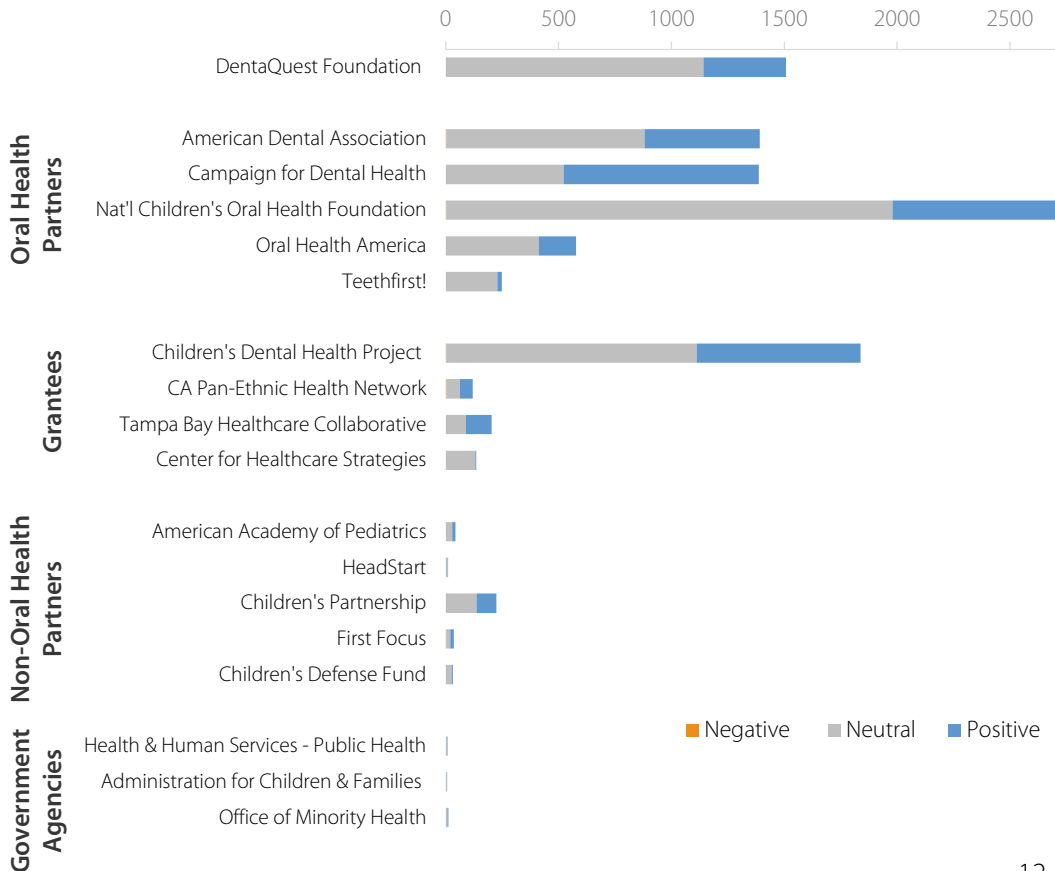
Most of the posts on oral health were neutral, using a “just the facts” tone. About one-third of the posts were positive, and only a handful of posts were negative.



*\*Total n = 10,497 unduplicated posts.*

## Oral Health Posts

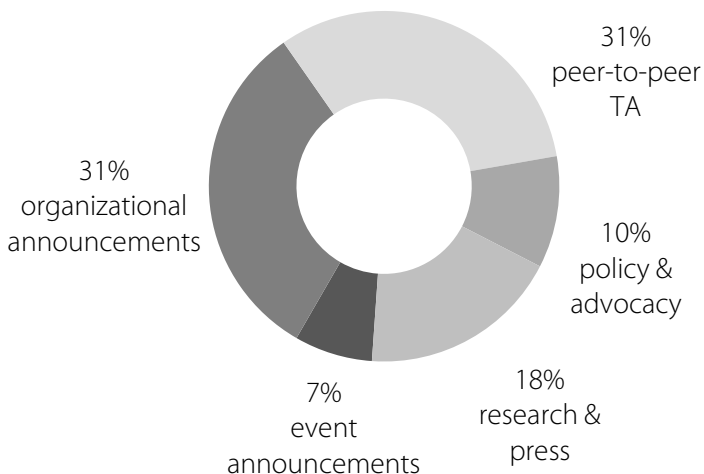
The majority of **positive** posts were from oral health partners. Policy makers and non-oral health partners posted the least about oral health.



## Neutral Posts (6,787 posts)

**Neutral** posts mostly shared oral health-related information and news articles, as well as organizational and program updates on events and opportunities.

Content Topics



**“Free community water #fluoridation resources for health professionals, parents and caregivers.**

<http://t.co/BMAwE7bAIM> #iamhealthequity ”

**“Oral Health America is heading to the Little League World Series today!**

Check out our National Spit Tobacco Education Project slogan contest winner throw out the first pitch at 3pm EDT then head to our table to grab our new trading pin! #LLWS.”

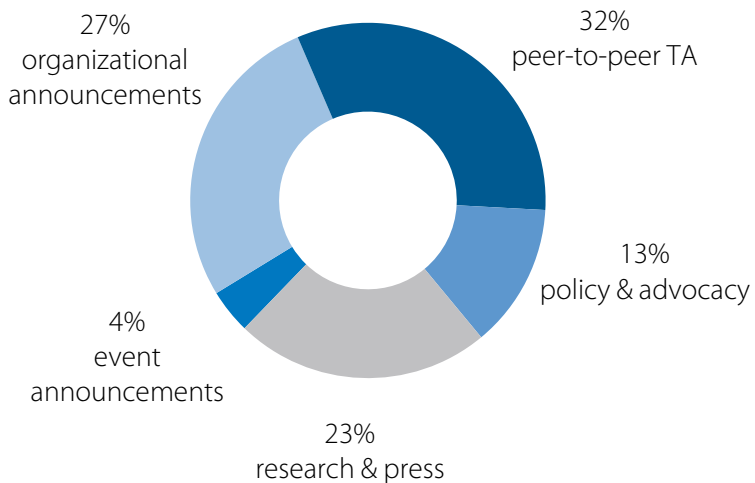
**“The Miami Herald recently explored reasons why many young children experience tooth decay.** Some parents mistakenly believe that baby teeth don’t matter.”

## Positive Posts (3,701 posts)

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**Positive** posts tended to promote support for the effectiveness and importance of oral health care.

Content Topics



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“Children’s Dental Health Month is over, but many still suffer from decay. **RT to say #oralhealth is important everyday!**”

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“**The New York Times reports more people are choosing to drink water over sugary beverages. We like it!** Here are four other great eats for your teeth...[\[link to American Dental Association’s article “Good Foods for Dental Health”\]](#)”

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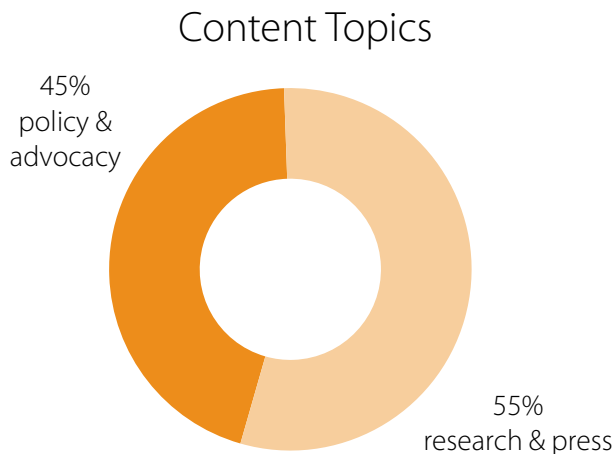
“**Fluoride in drinking water helps build strong, healthy teeth!** Learn about how fluoride prevents cavities. <http://expi.co/0e7wm>”

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## Negative Posts (9 posts)

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**Negative** posts mostly referenced news articles that described policy events and conflicting opinions that groups have about oral health policy.



“Denti-Cal Program Grilled Again – California Healthline:  
<http://t.co/UyF35hqsom>”

*Excerpt from article: “**The Denti-Cal program has been neglected for decades and is broken,**” said state Sen. Richard Pan (D-Sacramento), who testified before the Little Hoover Commission...*”

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“Why Native Americans want a new form of dental care – Marketplace <https://t.co/5wqUBClvgn> #DentalTherapists”

*Excerpt from article: “Intertribal organizations representing some 105 tribes and pueblos have passed resolutions supporting dental therapy. **As interest builds, dentists are digging in their heels. The American Dental Association and its local dental societies have fought legislation in 12 states.**”*”

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content

What do the posts say?



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## Top Content Topics

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The top two content topics for all posts are *peer-to-peer technical assistance* and *organizational announcements*.

Topic**	N	%*
Peer-to-Peer Technical Assistance	3,380	32%
Organizational Announcements	3,091	29%
Research & Press	2,829	27%
Policy & Advocacy	1,177	11%
Event Announcements	722	7%
Miscellaneous	138	1%
Jobs & Professional Development	48	<1%

\*Total n = 10,497 unduplicated posts

\*\* Content topic definitions are located in the appendices.

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## Top Issue Areas

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The top two issue areas for all posts include *childhood caries* and *medical-dental integration*.

Issue	N	%*
Childhood Caries	684	7%
Medical-Dental Integration	423	4%
Medicaid	298	3%
Schools	254	2%
Affordable Care Act (ACA)	70	1%
Medicare	45	<1%

\*Total n = 10,497 unduplicated posts.

## **Childhood Caries (684 posts)**

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Conversation about childhood caries spoke to the need for addressing dental disease in children, as well as educating others about its importance. Posts also shared related resources and information on the topic.

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“Baby teeth fall out anyway. **So is it a big deal if a cavity forms in a baby tooth? Yes, it is.** Learn more: <http://www.endcavities.org/at-stake/>”

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“**Tooth decay is the #1 health issue of our nation’s children.** ~23% of children ages 2-5 have dental cavities in primary teeth.”

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“**More than 40% of kids have tooth decay by the time they reach kindergarten** <https://t.co/jletCVDYiO> #WellnessWed <https://t.co/upE6vzzu6S>”

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## **Medical-Dental Integration (423 posts)**

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Those talking about the intersection of medical and dental care emphasize the importance of collaboration across professions. Information on dental health impacting a person's overall health and wellness is also often discussed.

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**"Dentists and pediatricians must work together to help keep your whole child healthy** – no mouths excluded! #WellnessWed"

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**"Research increasingly connects oral health with overall health.** Latest study links gum disease and #Alzheimers - <https://t.co/Ux1jsngrqN>"

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**"The evidence linking poor oral health to other diseases or medical conditions keeps growing.** For example: <https://t.co/mpEHDErhx>"

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## **Medicaid (298 posts)**

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Those talking about Medicaid promoted the importance of Medicaid coverage for dental care. Posts also spoke to the need for increasing oral health care access for Medicaid-enrolled adults, as well as shared related resources and information on the topic.

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“Say what? A report of Medicaid programs in 4 states found that 2 of them actually prevented the state from reimbursing dental services that were identified by Medicaid as appropriate. **It's a problem that needs to be fixed.**”

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**“3.7M kids are eligible for Medicaid or CHIP dental benefits. Let's get them the care they need! @IKNGov**  
<http://t.co/33ytWGT0QA>”

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**“Indiana's Medicaid director vows to ‘hold the health plans accountable’** for ensuring that more children get the dental care they need.”

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## **Schools (254 posts)**

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Schools are increasingly recognized as an opportunity to provide education and services to improve oral health for children. In addition, conversation about schools spoke to the importance of the relationship between proper oral health and academic success for children.

**“We hope this idea spreads: New Jersey elementary school observes a ‘sugarless day to prevent tooth decay’**

<https://t.co/TI6ID9XUVp> #HealthyStart”

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**“Schools are an ideal place to reach children who need dental services.**

<https://t.co/1Ai0WGYEYF> #Month4Smiles #NCDHM  
<https://t.co/tpqqIWiBXQ>”

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**“Engaging Schools to Support Better Oral Health for Low-Income Children** - <http://t.co/S2UcTbYY3e> via @CHCS\_Medicaid @oralhealth2020”

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## *Affordable Care Act (70 posts)*

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There is ongoing debate about the influence and effectiveness of ACA on dental coverage for children, adults and families.

“Today's **Supreme Court of the United States ruling on #ACA subsidies is a tremendous win** for families who rely on it for affordable health and dental coverage.”

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“The ACA has expanded dental coverage for kids, but **without data its impact is too soon to know** <https://t.co/7boM5F2RHV> #WellnessWed”

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“The **ACA was a big flop when it comes to adult dental coverage** said Dr. Jonathan Shenkin, American Dental Association Vice President.”

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## Medicare (45 posts)

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Posts on Medicare spoke to the need for comprehensive oral health coverage and care for older adults. Those talking about this issue area also shared relevant information and resources.

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**“Medicare Rights Center just finished up their communications campaign called Medicare 50 wishes. The first one being to add a dental benefit.** The 51st wish was chosen by the public and released today: Add a standardized benefit for dental, vision, and hearing care!”

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“RT @bettycoffman: **Medicare doesn't include dental, leaving many older adults without coverage.** Myths and facts here: <http://t.co/U0Gpm14NSJ>”

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**“Dentists, are you confused about the upcoming Medicare deadline?** We’ve put together a video overview of your options regarding enrollment.”

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## ***Most Important Oral Health Tweets\****

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Of the 18 organizations analyzed, the top five most important oral health tweets focus on sharing dental care tips and resources, primarily discussing fluoride. In addition, the American Dental Association receives the most engagement of followers with the highest number of retweets and favorites across all organizations.

*\* Tweets with the highest total number of retweets and favorites*

**#1** Get the facts about fluoride: <http://expi.co/0nybK> #ncdhm #oralhealth

- American Dental Association, **159 Retweets and Favorites**

**#2** Here's how much #fluoride toothpaste you should use on your kid's toothbrush. #NCDHM #2min2x #bedtimebattle

- American Dental Association, **148 Retweets and Favorites**

**#3** Kids need to floss too! #NCDHM

- American Dental Association, **117 Retweets and Favorites**

**#4** Our New Year's resolution – smile more!

- American Dental Association, **109 Retweets and Favorites**

**#5** It's National #FacialProtection Month! Find out how to safeguard your smile. <http://expi.co/0tTEp> #sports

- American Dental Association, **104 Retweets and Favorites**

## DentaQuest Foundation

### Most Important Oral Health Tweets\*

Focusing on the @OralHealth2020 account, the top five most important oral health tweets primarily talk about sharing dental care tips and resources, as well as spreading the word about OH2020 grantee convenings.

**#1** Materials for parents, pediatric medical providers on preventing tooth decay in young kids: From the First Tooth <http://bit.ly/1PgDpZF>  
- 18 Retweets and Favorites

**#2** Info to help learn and share about #fluoride from @ILikeMyTeeth <http://bit.ly/1O7mDhc> #healthliteracymatters  
- 16 Retweets and Favorites

**#3** Wishing our Northeast/Mid-Atlantic partners safe travels home after #ROHC2015 in Baltimore! #OH2020 #ExpectOralHealth  
- 13 Retweets and Favorites

**#4** Sweet drinks are linked to childhood obesity, and even fruit juice "isn't as healthy as people think" <http://bit.ly/1TOZF0d> #HealthyStart  
- 13 Retweets and Favorites

**#5** #OH2020 partners sharing thoughts about developing & building a network infrastructure #NOHC2016  
- 13 Retweets and Favorites

\* Tweets with the highest total number of retweets and favorites

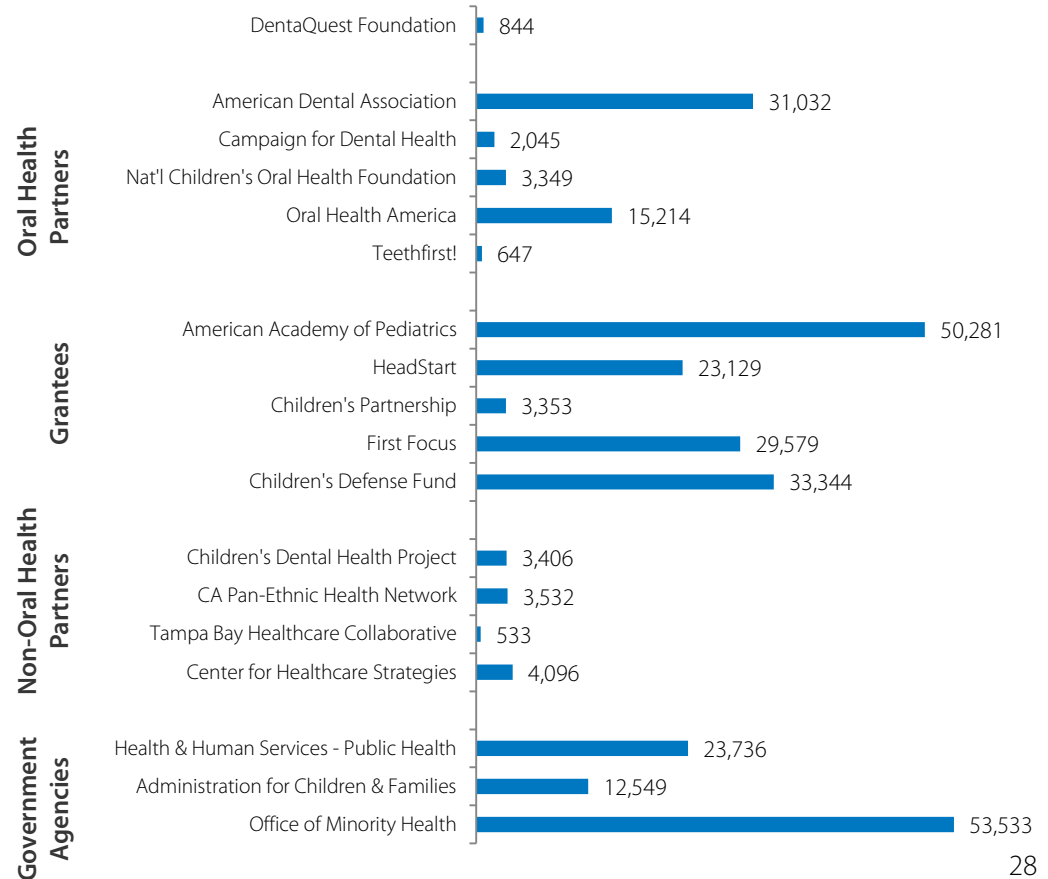
# followers

Who are followers of and participants in the oral health conversation in social media?

## Number of Twitter Followers\*

Government agencies, as well as non-oral health partners, have the most Twitter followers.

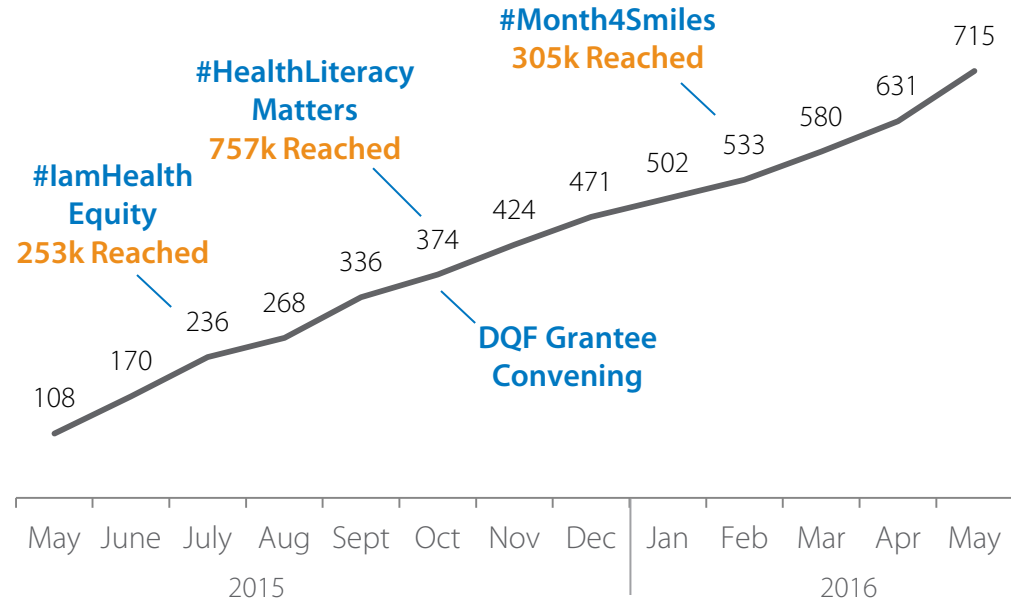
\* As of 7/25/16



## Growth of @OralHealth2020 Twitter Followers

The DentaQuest Foundation's number of Twitter followers has increased from 108 to 715 since May 2015. Average percentage increase of followers was 18 percent per month. There is no clear correlation or trend between Twitter Storms (e.g. #Month4Smiles) and growth of OH2020 followers.

Timeline of @OralHealth2020 Followers

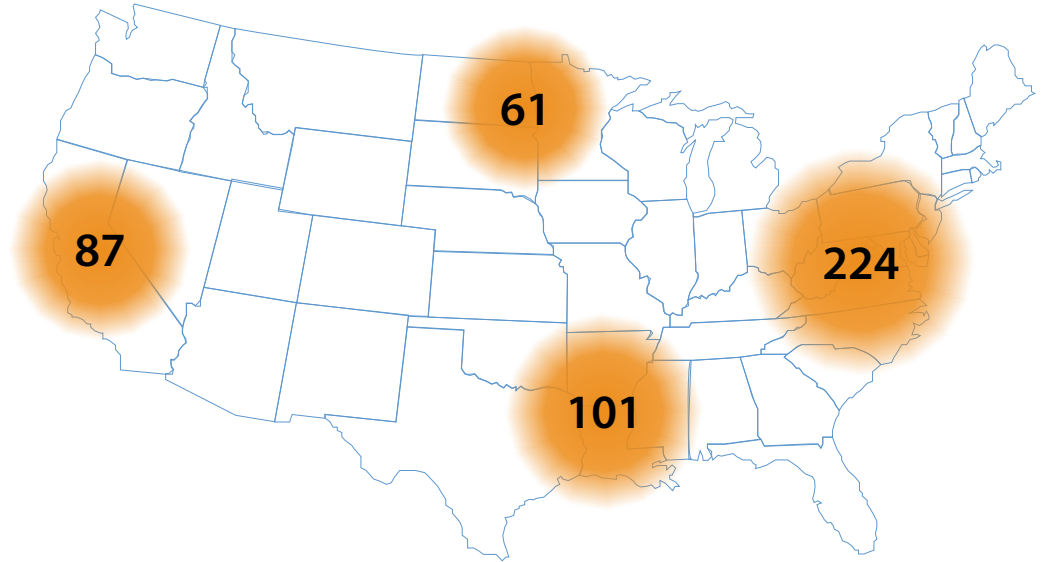


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## **Locations of @OralHealth2020 Followers\***

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This map displays the approximate locations of @OralHealth2020 followers across the country. Top two regions include the Northeast and Southern areas of the U.S.



*\* As of 7/25/16. Geographic locations are approximate.. Not all followers' location data is available and mapped.*

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*DentaQuest Foundation*

***Most Mentioned Users***

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Grantees and internal staff are the most mentioned users for @OralHealth2020.

**Most Mentioned Users**

Mentions

Children's Dental Health Project	26
Ralph Fuccillo	14
DentaQuest	14
Oral Health America	14
CA Pan-Ethnic Health Network	12

# Key takeaways

- A majority of posts mentioning oral health was neither positive nor negative in tone. Less than 1% was negative in tone, while a little over one-third was positive.
- The organizations with the greatest reach are government agencies and non-oral health partners. However, these same organizations post the least about oral health. There may be opportunities to engage these organizations to elevate the oral health conversation in social media.
- Of the organizations we reviewed, the American Dental Association is the most influential oral health partner on social media. The organization receives the most engagement of followers with the highest number of retweets and favorites on oral health tweets across all organizations.
- Similar to oral health coverage in traditional media, posts highlighted the growing intersection of medical and dental care and collaboration.
- Posts with the highest level of engagement shared dental care tips and resources. Organizations most frequently posted about opportunities for peer-to-peer technical assistance as well as organizational announcements.



# appendices

# content topic definitions

- **Research & Press:** Messages linking or talking about new report findings and/or stories in the media
- **Organization Announcements:** Organization/program updates on events and opportunities
- **Policy & Advocacy:** Messages providing legislative updates and coordinating campaigns
- **Jobs & Prof Dev:** Messages with info on job openings and/or prof dev opportunities
- **Event Announcements:** Messages from other partners/orgs on events and activities
- **Peer-to-Peer TA:** Messages sharing oral health-related info and/or soliciting advice
- **Miscellaneous:** Messages that address areas that don't fall under the topic areas above

# social media terms

- **Retweet:** Abbreviated as RT, a Retweet is used on Twitter, to show you are tweeting content that has been posted by another user.
- **Follower:** A follower is another Twitter user who has followed you to receive your Tweets in their Home stream.
- **Mention:** A Tweet that contains another user's @username anywhere in the body of the Tweet.
- **Favorites:** This is represented by a small star icon next to a Tweet and are most commonly used when users like a Tweet. Favoriting a Tweet can let the original poster know that you liked their Tweet, or you can save the Tweet for later.

## Oral Health Partners

### Most Mentioned Users

A variety of organizations – from advocacy nonprofits to dental corporations – are active participants in the oral health conversation.

Organization	Most Mentioned Users	Mentions
American Dental Association	American Dental Association	11
	American Student Dental Association	9
	ADA News	9
	Centers for Disease Control & Prevention	7
	USA TODAY	5
Campaign for Dental Health	American Academy of Pediatrics	24
	Children's Dental Health Project	12
	MomsRising	11
	Delta Dental Colorado	10
	American Dental Association	8
Nat's Children's Oral Health Foundation (NCOHF)	NCOHF	54
	My Smile Matters	44
	Children's Dental Health Project	20
	Patterson Dental	18
	Alliance for a Cavity-Free Future Global	13
Oral Health America	Oral Health America	136
	Alliance of the ADA	54
	Tom's of Maine	26
	Dentalaegis	25
	Patterson Dental	24
Teethfirst!	Oral Health 2020	10
	Rhode Island Dept. of Health	10
	Children's Dental Health Project	9
	Rosie Pope	7
	Rhode Island KIDS COUNT	7

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## Grantees

### Most Mentioned Users

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Oral Health 2020 is one of the most mentioned users for both the Children’s Dental Health Project and the Tampa Bay Healthcare Collaborative.

Organization	Most Mentioned Users	Mentions
Children’s Dental Health Project	Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services	24
	Oral Health 2020	18
	Mayo Clinic	17
	The New York Times	15
	Text4baby	13
CA Pan-Ethnic Health Network	CA Immigrant Policy Center	46
	Latino Coalition for a Healthy CA	43
	Health Access CA	33
	Ricardo Lara	31
	UCLA Center for Health Policy	30
Tampa Bay Healthcare Collaborative	Oral Health 2020	37
	Nonprofit Leadership	30
	Florida Blue	19
	Sam Silverstein	14
	Jon Acuff	12
Center for Healthcare Strategies	Health Affairs	19
	Robert Wood Johnson Foundation News	19
	Commonwealth Fund	17
	Milbank Memorial Fund	8
	National Governors Association	7

## Non-Oral Health Partners

### Most Mentioned Users

Health professionals and child advocates are some of the most mentioned users for non-oral health partners.

Organization	Most Mentioned Users	Mentions
American Academy of Pediatrics	Dr. Benard P. Dreyer	68
	Healthy Children	53
	American Academy of Pediatrics	17
	Centers for Disease Control & Prevention	15
	WendySueSwanson MD	13
HeadStart	Yasmina Vinci	34
	National Head Start	29
	Office of Head Start	17
	The White House	14
	Kathy and Ro	13
Children's Partnership	ALL IN	48
	California Healthline	36
	Covered California	35
	Mayra E. Alvarez	28
	Georgetown Center for Children & Families	24
First Focus	Bruce Lesly	45
	Diane Ravitch	37
	First Focus	34
	KIDS COUNT	30
	Charles M. Blow	23
Children's Defense Fund	The New York Times	16
	American Acad Pediatrics	15
	John King	15
	Christopher Emdin	10
	U.S. Department of Education	10

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## *Government Agencies*

### *Most Mentioned Users*

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Government agencies tended to mention other policy makers the most in their tweets.

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Most Mentioned Users</b>	<b>Mentions</b>
Health & Human Services (HHS) – Public Health	U.S. Surgeon General	71
	Centers for Disease Control & Prevention	39
	Office of Minority Health	37
	HHS.gov	35
	HHS Office of Adolescent Health	34
Administration for Children & Families (ACF)	Office of Head Start	21
	ACF	21
	Centers for Disease Control & Prevention	17
	HHS.gov	13
	HHS Office of Adolescent Health	12
Office of Minority Health	Preconception Peer Educators Program	18
	Men’s Health Network	15
	Centers for Disease Control & Prevention	11
	FDA Minority Health	7
	AIDS.gov	7