Spotlight on Florida

Children's Use of Emergency Departments for Non-Traumatic Dental Conditions

Oral health is directly linked to overall health. When oral health deteriorates, it can have far-reaching consequences and affect health beyond the mouth.

Most oral disease is almost entirely preventable. Yet routine dental care is out of reach for millions of Americans due to high costs of care, lack of dental coverage, cultural and linguistic issues, shortages of dental professionals in rural areas and dentists who accept public and/or private insurance, and the lack of integration between the medical and dental health care systems.

Lack of access to care can leave people with few or no viable options other than visiting hospital emergency departments (EDs) for oral health care. Most EDs are not equipped to provide dental treatment, and patients are treated for symptomatic pain or possible infection without definitive diagnosis and appropriate treatment for the underlying problem. These visits are costly — to patients, health systems, state Medicaid programs, and taxpayers — and often respond to unmet oral health needs that would be more effectively addressed by dental professionals in dental offices, clinics, and community locations.
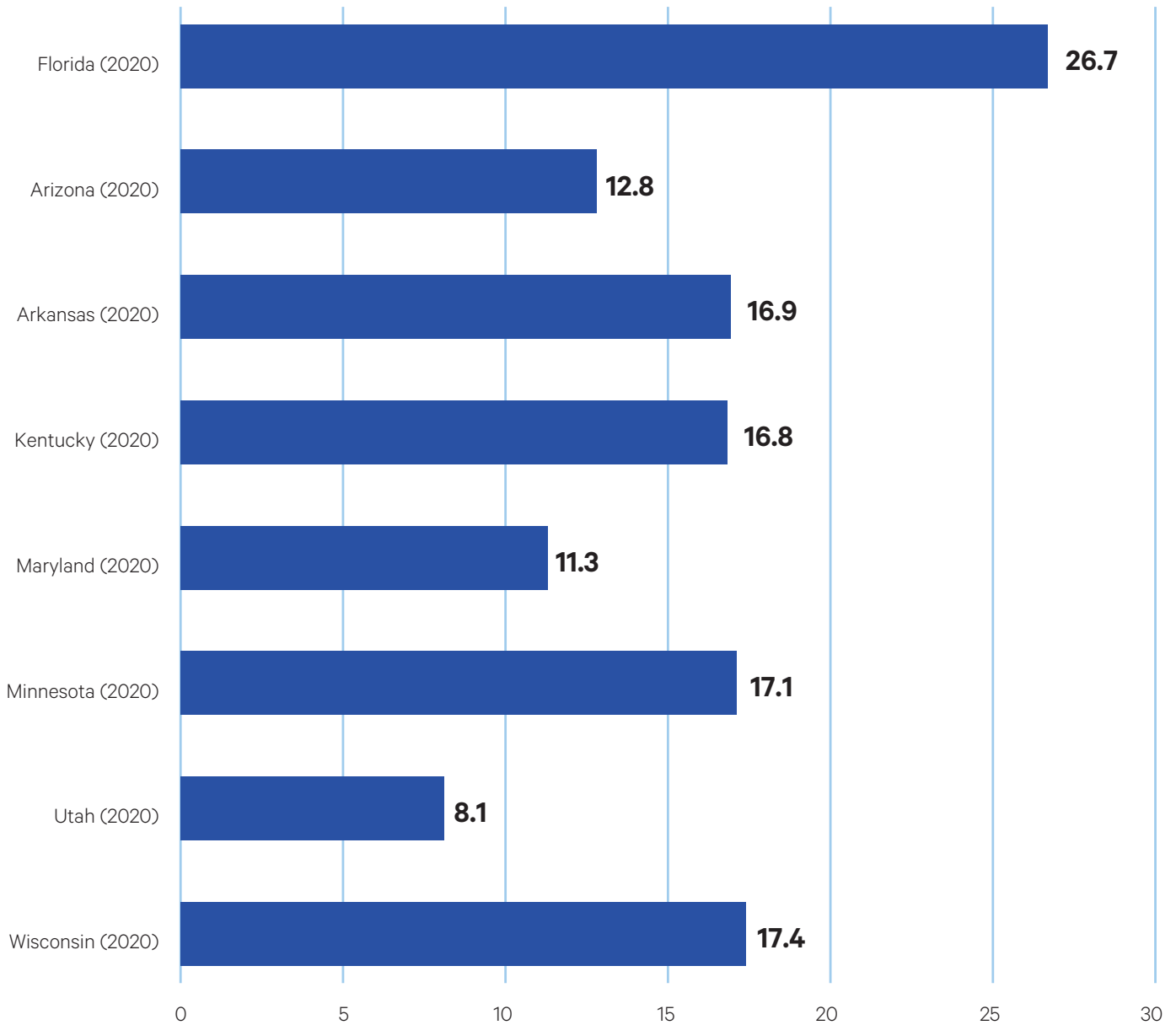
Use of EDs for non-traumatic dental conditions (NTDCs), dental issues that would be best addressed in a dental setting, unfortunately is not new. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted and exacerbated this issue. At a time when ED capacity is strained and in high demand, reducing the number of preventable dental visits in these settings is of vital importance.

Nationally, children who visit EDs for NTDCs in the United States (US) are more likely to be uninsured or covered by Medicaid insurance and live in lower-income households. Children in the US with two or more chronic health conditions are more likely to be hospitalized for NTDCs than children without a chronic health condition. Studies outside the US find that dental caries (tooth decay) is the most common cause of ED NTDC visits in children ages 17 and below. This report examines rates of ED visits for NTDCs for children ages 14 and below in Florida based on data from the Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project (HCUP).

In 2020, **Florida had the highest rate of ED NTDC visits for those aged 14 and below (26.7 per 10,000 people)** compared to all other states for which 2020 data are available through the CareQuest Institute for Oral Health HCUP dashboard. The national rate in 2019 (the most recent year for which we have national data) for children aged 14 and below was 27.3. As these rates are now more than two years old and were measured during the COVID-19 pandemic, they may not be reflective of current trends in ED visits.

Rate of ED Visits for NTDCs per 10,000 people
Ages 14 and Below

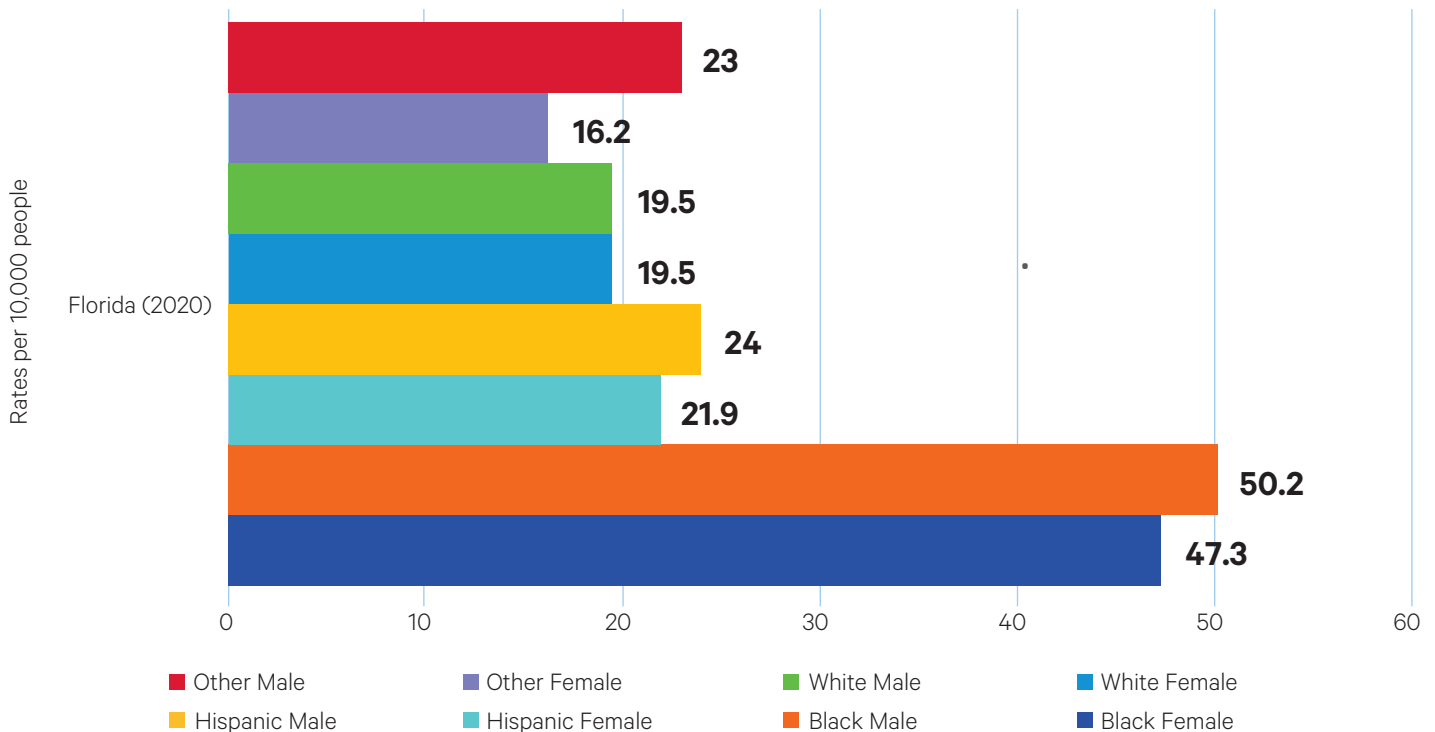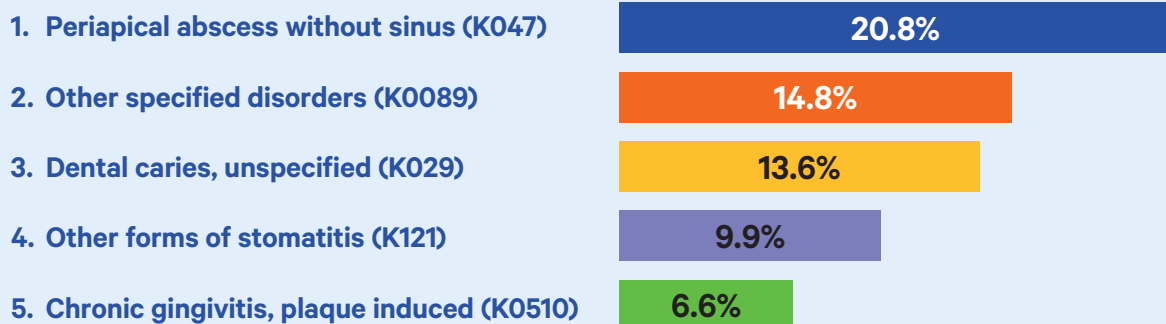| State	Rate
Florida (2020)	26.7
Arizona (2020)	12.8
Arkansas (2020)	16.9
Kentucky (2020)	16.8
Maryland (2020)	11.3
Minnesota (2020)	17.1
Utah (2020)	8.1
Wisconsin (2020)	17.4

Of children aged 14 and below, **the rate of ED NTDC visits in Florida in 2020 was highest for Black males (50.2 per 10,000 people). The second-highest rate was for Black females (47.3).** This was higher than for Hispanic males (24.0), Hispanic females (21.9), white males and females (both 19.5), and individuals identifying their race as "other" (males = 23.0, females = 16.2 per 10,000 people).

Rate of ED Visits for NTDCs per 10,000 people
Ages 14 and Below by Race and Gender

Rates per 10,000 people

Florida (2020)

Category	Rate
Other Male	23
Other Female	16.2
White Male	19.5
White Female	19.5
Hispanic Male	24
Hispanic Female	21.9
Black Male	50.2
Black Female	47.3

Legend:
- Other Male
- Other Female
- White Male
- White Female
- Hispanic Male
- Hispanic Female
- Black Male
- Black Female

In 2020, **the most common diagnoses for Florida children 14 years of age and under** were:

1. **Periapical abscess without sinus (K047)** — 20.8%
2. **Other specified disorders (K0089)** — 14.8%
3. **Dental caries, unspecified (K029)** — 13.6%
4. **Other forms of stomatitis (K121)** — 9.9%
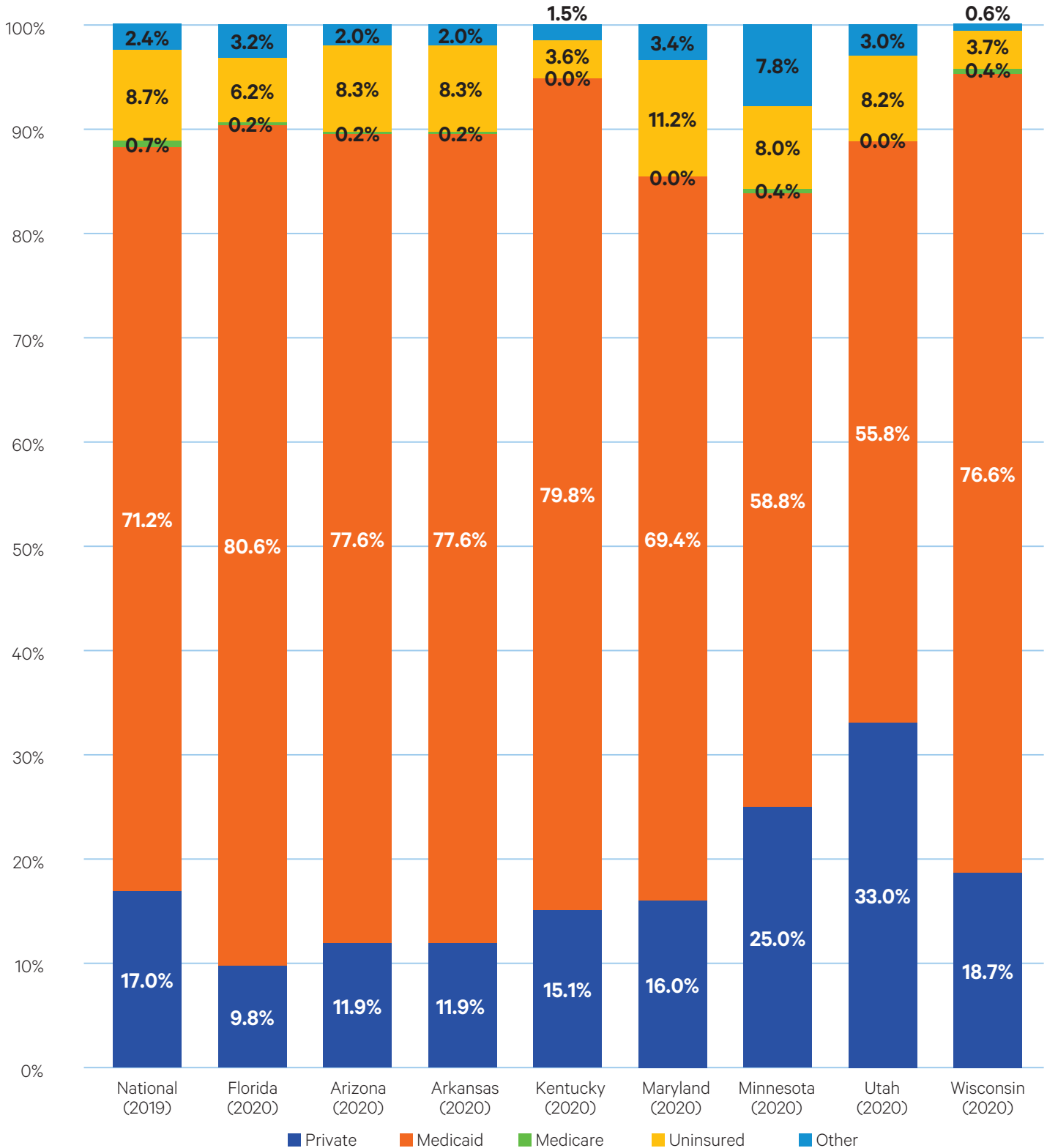5. **Chronic gingivitis, plaque induced (K0510)** — 6.6%

For children 14 years of age and younger in 2020, **Medicaid covered 80.6% of ED NTDC visits for children in Florida,** similar to the percentage of these visits covered by Medicaid in Kentucky (79.8%), Arizona (77.6%), and Arkansas (77.6%).

Insurance Coverage Percentages for ED Visits for NTDCs by State
Ages 14 and Below

	National (2019)	Florida (2020)	Arizona (2020)	Arkansas (2020)	Kentucky (2020)	Maryland (2020)	Minnesota (2020)	Utah (2020)	Wisconsin (2020)
Other	2.4%	3.2%	2.0%	2.0%	1.5%	3.4%	7.8%	3.0%	0.6%
Uninsured	8.7%	6.2%	8.3%	8.3%	3.6%	11.2%	8.0%	8.2%	3.7%
Medicare	0.7%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%	0.4%
Medicaid	71.2%	80.6%	77.6%	77.6%	79.8%	69.4%	58.8%	55.8%	76.6%
Private	17.0%	9.8%	11.9%	11.9%	15.1%	16.0%	25.0%	33.0%	18.7%

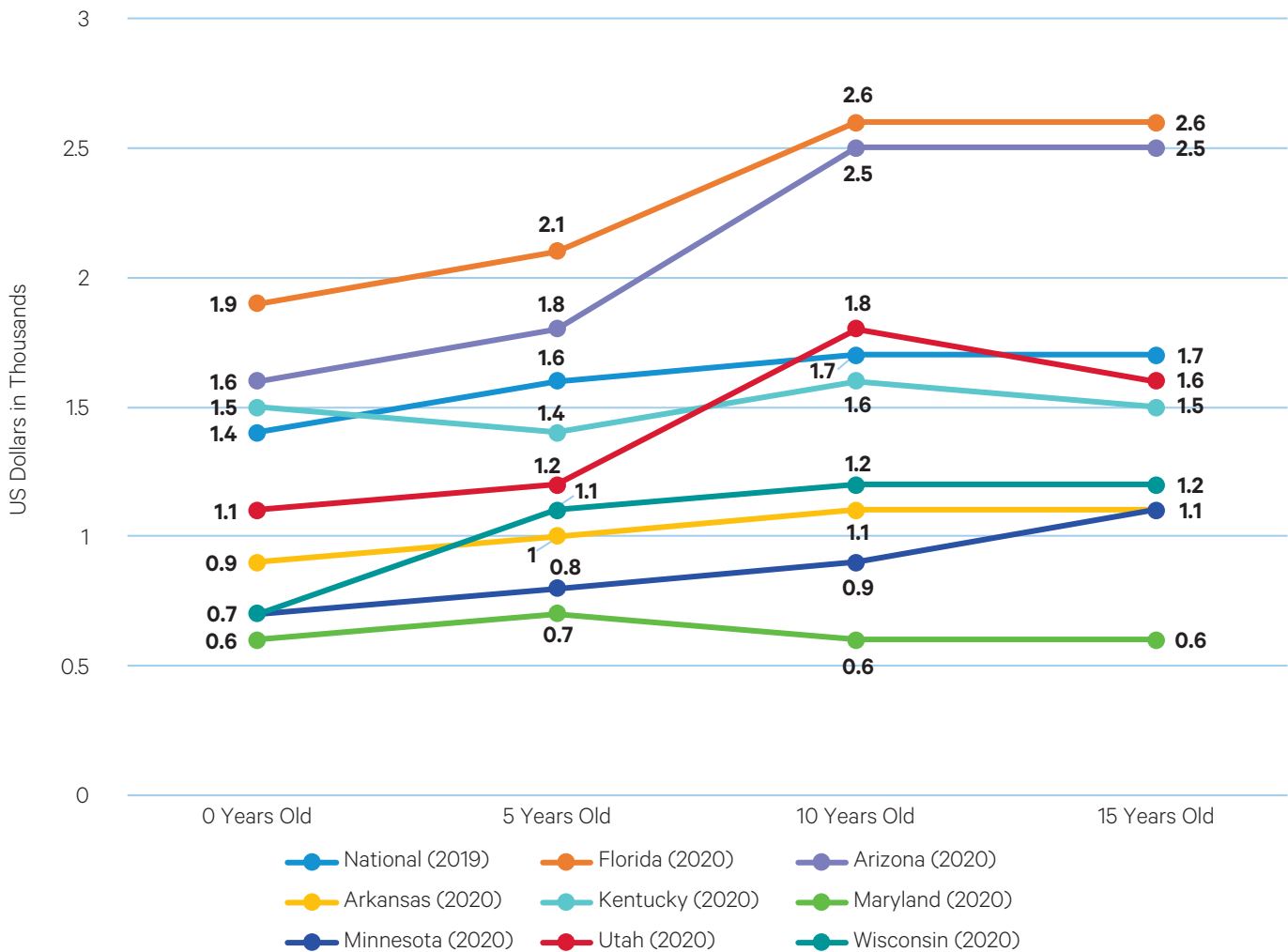Legend: ■ Private ■ Medicaid ■ Medicare ■ Uninsured ■ Other

Of all states for which we have data from 2020, **Florida has the highest average charge for ED NTDC visits for children aged 0 years ($1.9K), 5 years ($2.1K), 10 years ($2.6K), and 15 years ($2.6K).** In comparison, Maryland had the lowest average charge for ED NTDC visits for children aged 0 years ($0.6K), 5 years ($0.7K), 10 years ($0.6K), and 15 years ($0.6K).

Charges (in thousands of dollars) for ED NTDC Visits
Ages 15 and Below

US Dollars in Thousands

	0 Years Old	5 Years Old	10 Years Old	15 Years Old
National (2019)	1.4	1.6	1.7	1.7
Florida (2020)	1.9	2.1	2.6	2.6
Arizona (2020)	1.6	1.8	2.5	2.5
Arkansas (2020)	0.9	1	1.1	1.1
Kentucky (2020)	1.5	1.4	1.6	1.5
Maryland (2020)	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.6
Minnesota (2020)	0.7	0.8	0.9	1.1
Utah (2020)	1.1	1.2	1.8	1.6
Wisconsin (2020)	0.7	1.1	1.2	1.2

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