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Tooth Fairy payouts plunge for second consecutive year

Delta Dental celebrates 20+ years of tracking the Tooth Fairy's U.S. annual giving

ROANOKE, Va. (February 21, 2019) — Parents, do not be surprised if a savvy kid holds on to a lost tooth until market conditions improve. The Tooth Fairy's purse strings appear to be tighter than a year ago with the average monetary payout down by 43 cents. According to the just-released Original Tooth Fairy Poll®, sponsored by Delta Dental, the Tooth Fairy's average cash gift declined to \$3.70 for a lost tooth.

Not all parents say the Tooth Fairy is following the national average. In homes that the Tooth Fairy visits, close to two in five parents (37 percent) share they give their child at least \$5.00 or more. Also, a first lost tooth continues to impress. Parents recognize this milestone with an average of \$4.96, representing \$1.26 above the \$3.70 average for subsequent teeth lost.

Delta Dental has been gauging the Tooth Fairy's U.S. annual giving trends for more than two decades. The newly disclosed value of a lost tooth may be slipping, but is significantly greater than the 1998 national average of \$1.30, which equates to about \$2.00 today with inflation.



Value of lost tooth and economy

The Original Tooth Fairy Poll has typically served as a good indicator of the economy's overall direction, tracking with the movement of Standard & Poor's 500 Index (S&P 500) for 14 of the past 17 years. A year ago, a single lost tooth was valued at \$4.13 and dropped to \$3.70 in this year's survey, down 10 percent. Over the same time period, the S&P 500 also saw a decline and decreased by three percent.

U.S. regional snapshot

The Northeast region (\$3.75) appears closest aligned with the national average (\$3.70) for the Tooth Fairy's tracked gift giving. Delta Dental's latest annual poll identifies a \$1.28 difference between the highest U.S. regional average to the lowest. The Tooth Fairy's stingy streak looks to transcend all regions, with each experiencing a decline in the average payout amount. Additional regional highlights include:

- **\$4.19 — The West:** Continues to lead U.S. regions in highest average monetary gifts for a lost tooth but dropped 66 cents compared to a year ago (\$4.85)
- **\$3.91 — The South:** Replaces the Northeast for second-highest regional average but slid by 21 cents when looking back a year (\$4.12)
- **\$3.75 — The Northeast:** Closely follows the South in average Tooth Fairy payout but tumbled 60 cents from the previous poll (\$4.35)
- **\$2.97 — The Midwest:** Represents an average of 73 cents less than the national average (3.70) and 47 cents lower than a year ago (\$3.44)

Other stats from homes visited by the Tooth Fairy

- Joy: The Tooth Fairy gives kids something to be excited about, according to more than half of parents (56 percent).
- Bedtime: Children go to bed early when leaving out a tooth say 30 percent of parents.
- Savers: Children choose to save their Tooth Fairy earnings say nearly half of parents (48 percent).
- Oral health: More than one-third of parents (34 percent) believe the Tooth Fairy instills good oral health habits.

“While our Original Tooth Fairy Poll is rooted in fun, it is also interesting to see how parents are using visits from the Tooth Fairy as a learning tool in their home,” said Jennifer Elliott, chief marketing officer for Delta Dental Plans Association. “Parents share that the Tooth Fairy is delivering so much more than a tangible gift for a lost tooth, such as teaching our next generation about proper oral health habits and personal financial responsibility in a memorable way.”

About the survey

The Original Tooth Fairy Poll was conducted between December 31, 2018, and January 13, 2019, among a nationally representative sample of 1,058 parents of children ages 6-12. The margin of error is +/- 3 percent. For more information about the Delta Dental-sponsored survey, Tooth Fairy trivia, and oral health tips for infants to pre-teen, visit [Original Tooth Fairy Poll](#).

About Delta Dental of Virginia

Delta Dental of Virginia is a member company of the Delta Dental Plans Association, the nation’s largest, most experienced dental benefits carrier providing dental coverage to more than 78 million people in more than 146,000 groups across the nation. For additional information about Delta Dental of Virginia, visit DeltaDentalVA.com.

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