Sentinel Oral Health Surveys of Ohio Schoolchildren

Since 1987, the Bureau of Community Health Services (BOHS) has conducted statewide oral health surveys of Ohio schoolchildren approximately every five years. Beginning in the 1999-2000 school year, BOHS implemented an additional approach to assessing the oral health status of Ohio children. A purposive sample of 25 public elementary schools was chosen to participate in annual oral health surveys. These schools were referred to as "sentinel" schools, as the data gleaned from each annual survey would enable BOHS to monitor the oral health status of Ohio schoolchildren over time.

The sampling frame from which the 25 schools were selected included those that had been very cooperative during the 1998-99 statewide survey, and those that were highly representative of the state in terms of demographic characteristics and indicators of oral health.

Each year since 1999, BOHS has conducted an open-mouth screening survey at the sentinel schools, using the same methodology as that used for its statewide surveys. The sentinel school surveys yield data on the following indicators:

- untreated cavities;
- a history of tooth decay (e.g., fillings, cavities, extractions);
- the presence of dental sealants;
- length of time since the last dental visit;
- whether dental care is needed but can't be obtained; and
- toothaches during the previous six months.

In the 2006-07 school year, a new sample of sentinel schools was selected using a more rigorous sampling scheme so that weighted estimates could be generated. The sample size was increased to 30 schools.

The following graphs present data for the years 1998-2011. (Sentinel school data for the 1998-99 school year were extracted from the 1998-99 statewide data and are included in the graphs.) Data are presented by:

- family income ("low income" defined as <185% of the Federal Poverty Level*);
- race (white and black/African American only); and
- payment for dental care (uninsured, covered by Medicaid or covered by private insurance).

*185% of Federal Poverty Level for a Family of Four
1998 = $30,433/year
1999 = $30,895/year
2000 = $31,543/year
2001 = $32,653/year
2002 = $33,485/year
2003 = $34,040/year
2004 = $34,873/year
2005 = $35,798/year
2006 = $37,000/year
2007 = $38,203/year
2008 = $39,220/year
2009 = $40,790/year
2010 = $40,790/year
2011 = $41,350/year

Ohio Sentinel School Data,
Statewide Trends, 1998-2011

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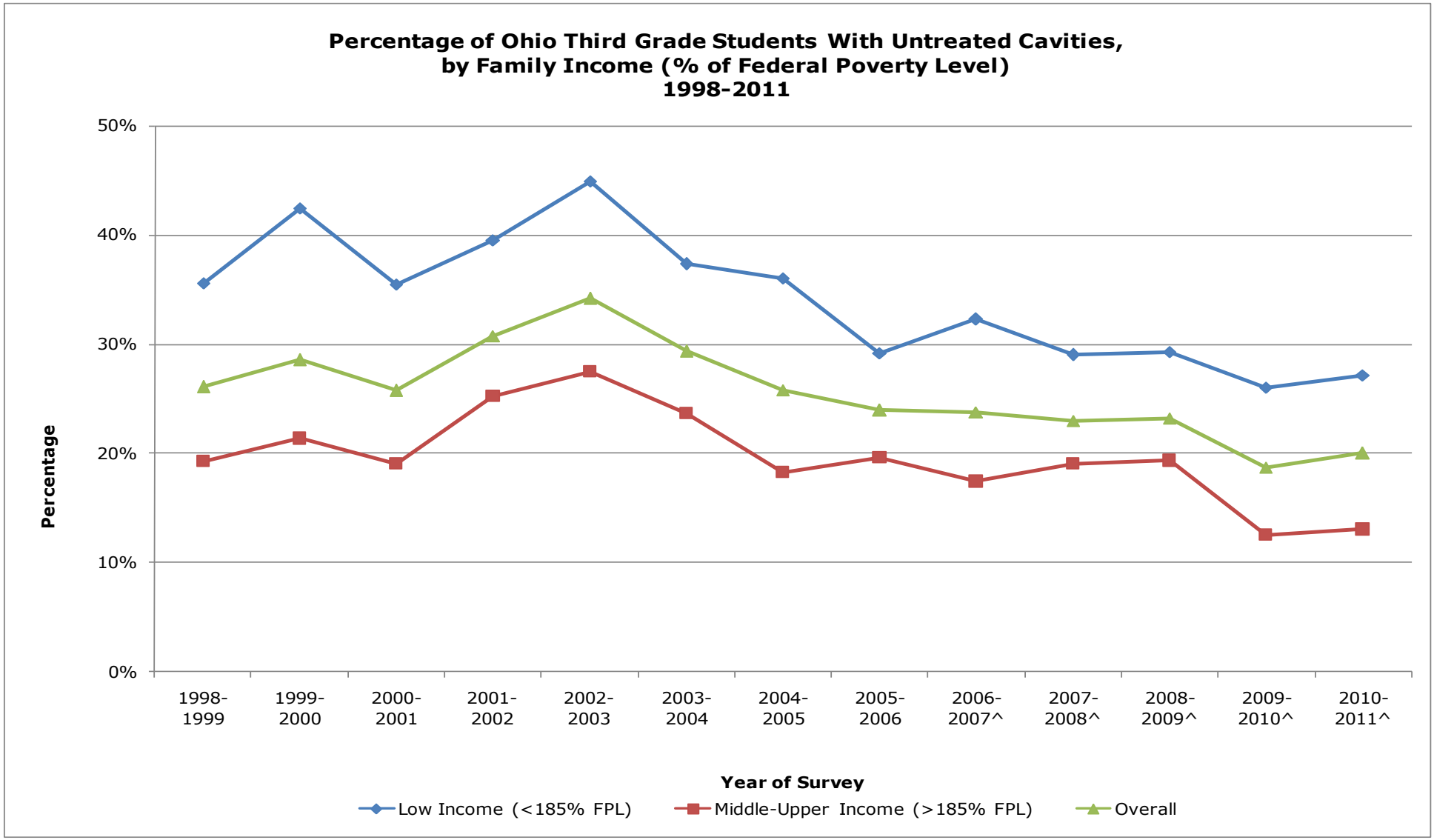
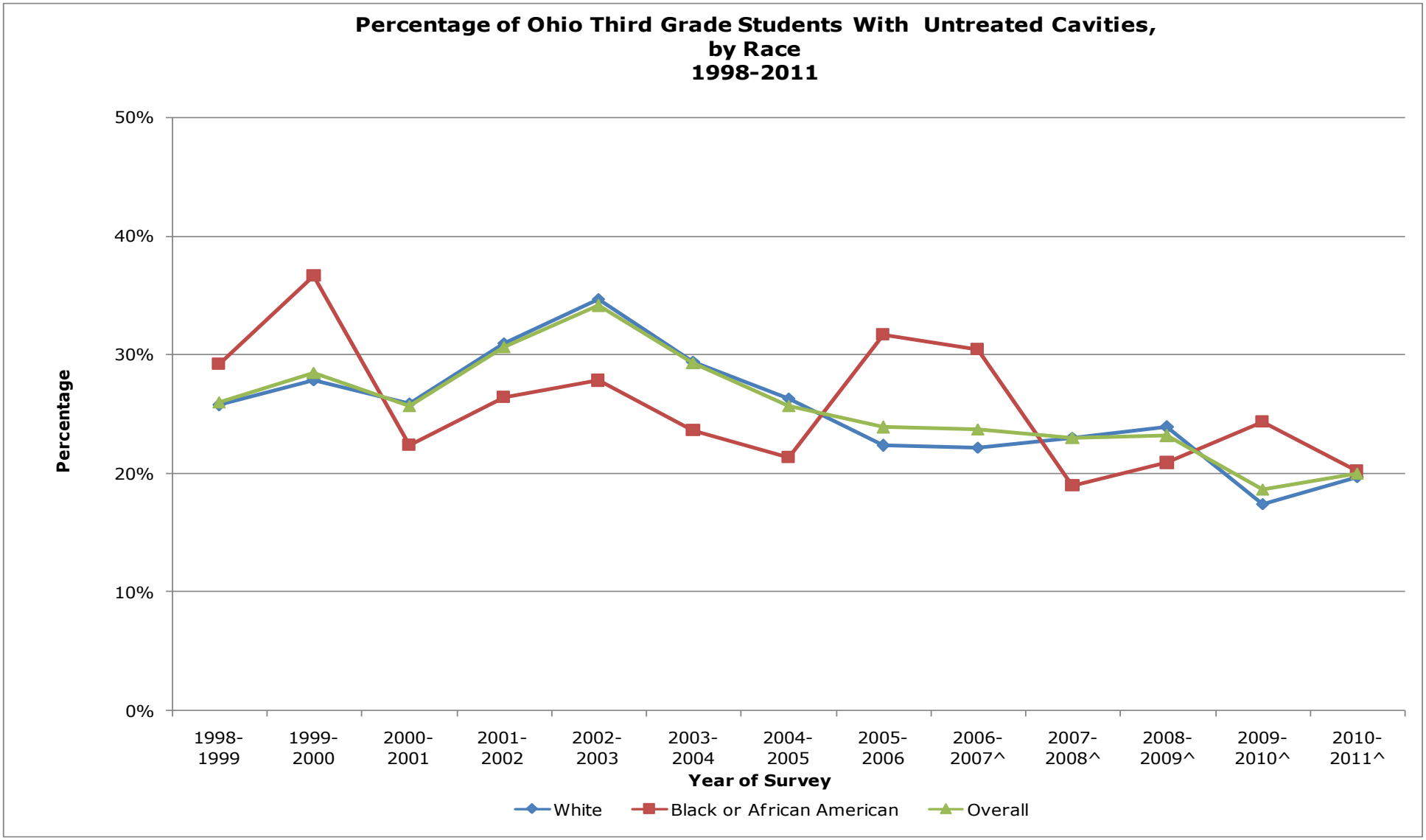


^ The 2006-11 data were collected on a new sample of 30 schools and yielded weighted estimates.



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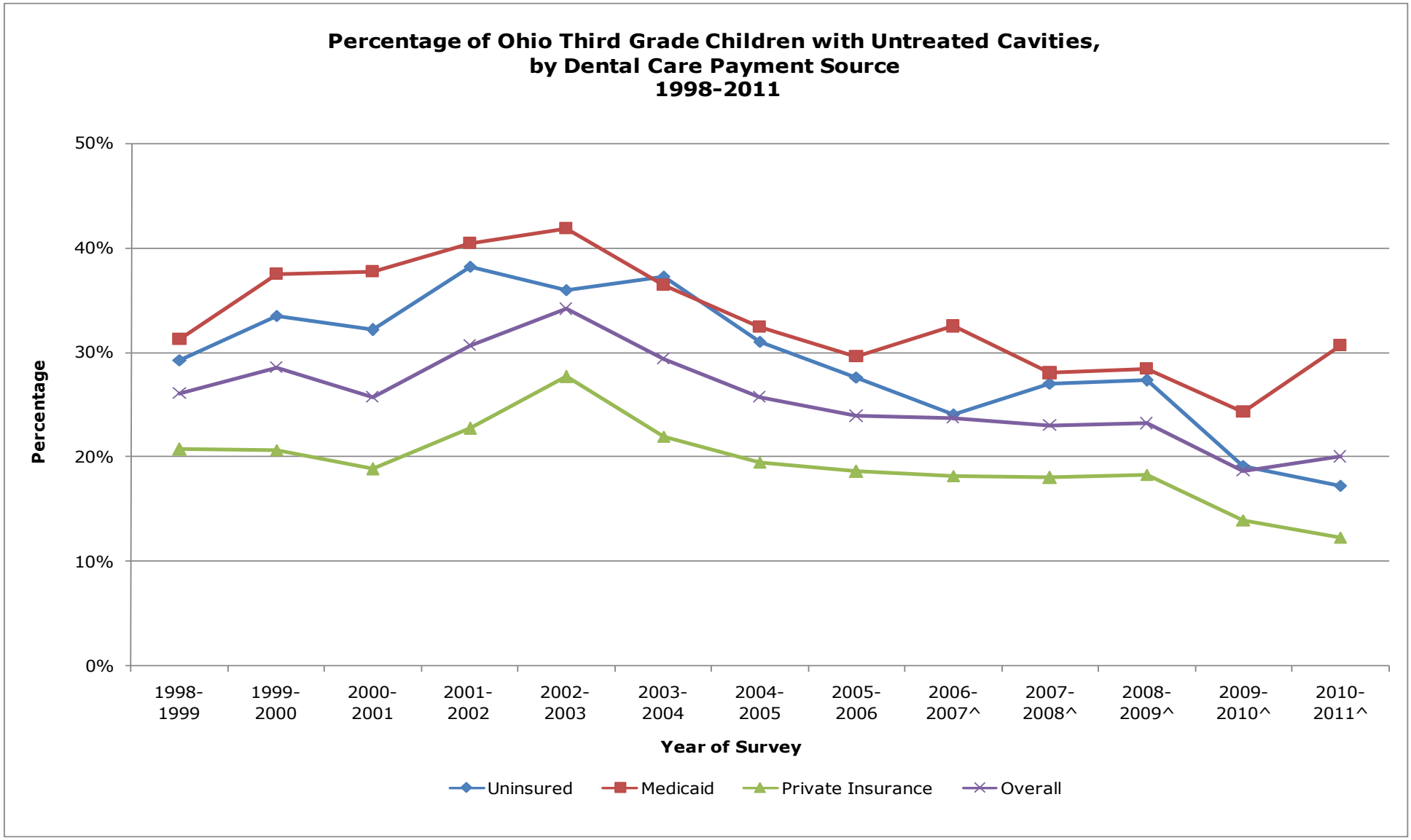

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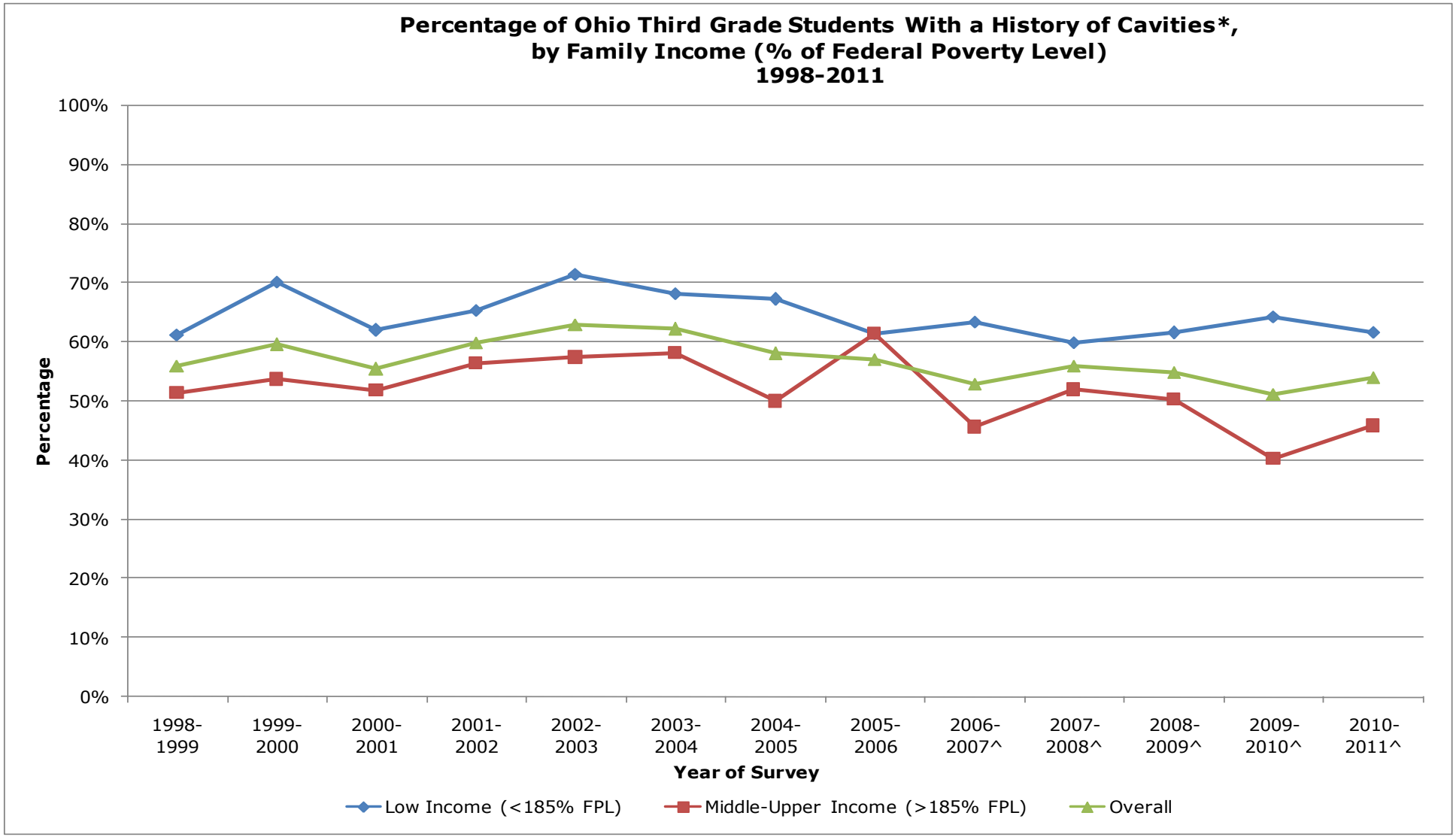

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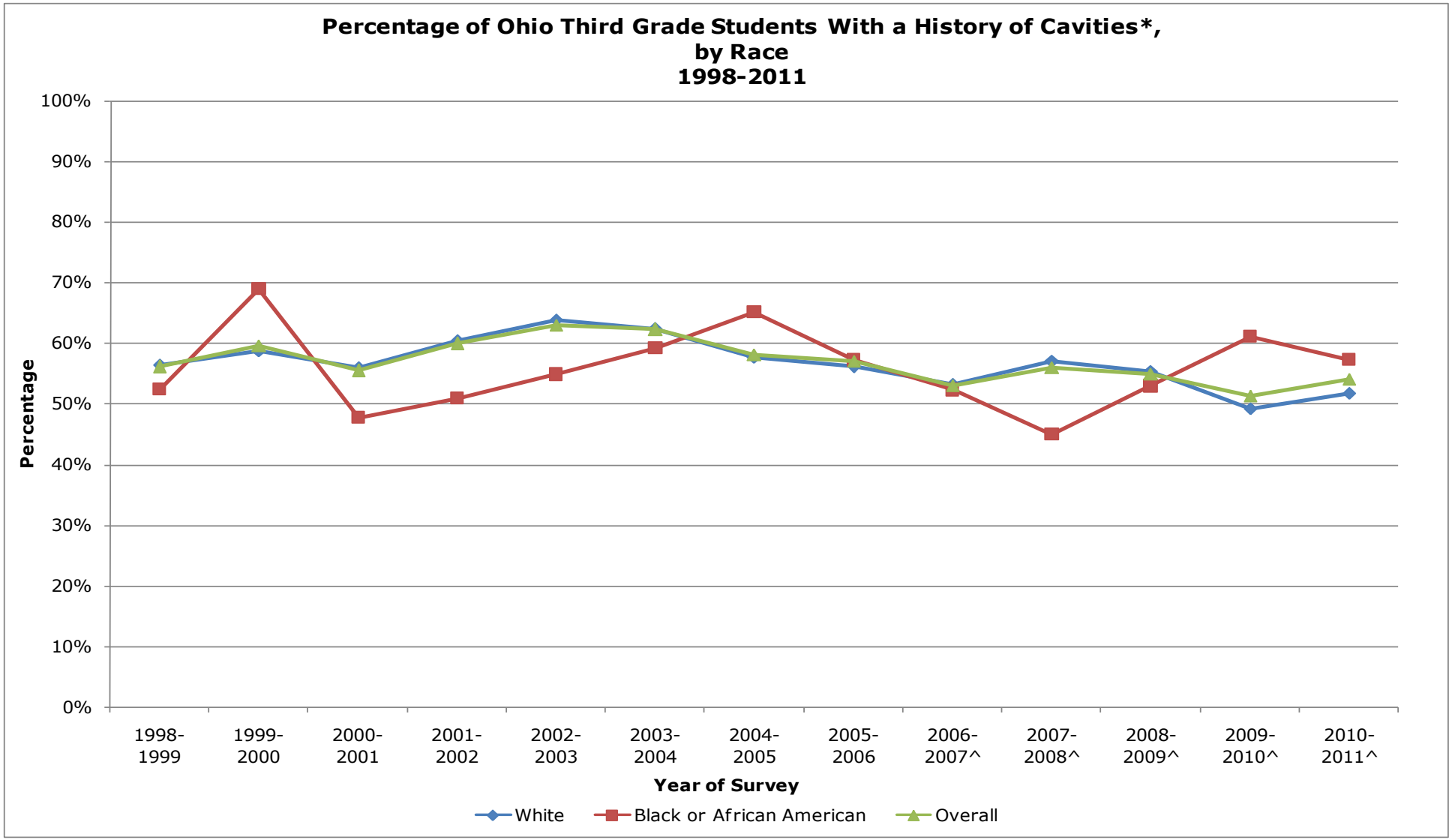

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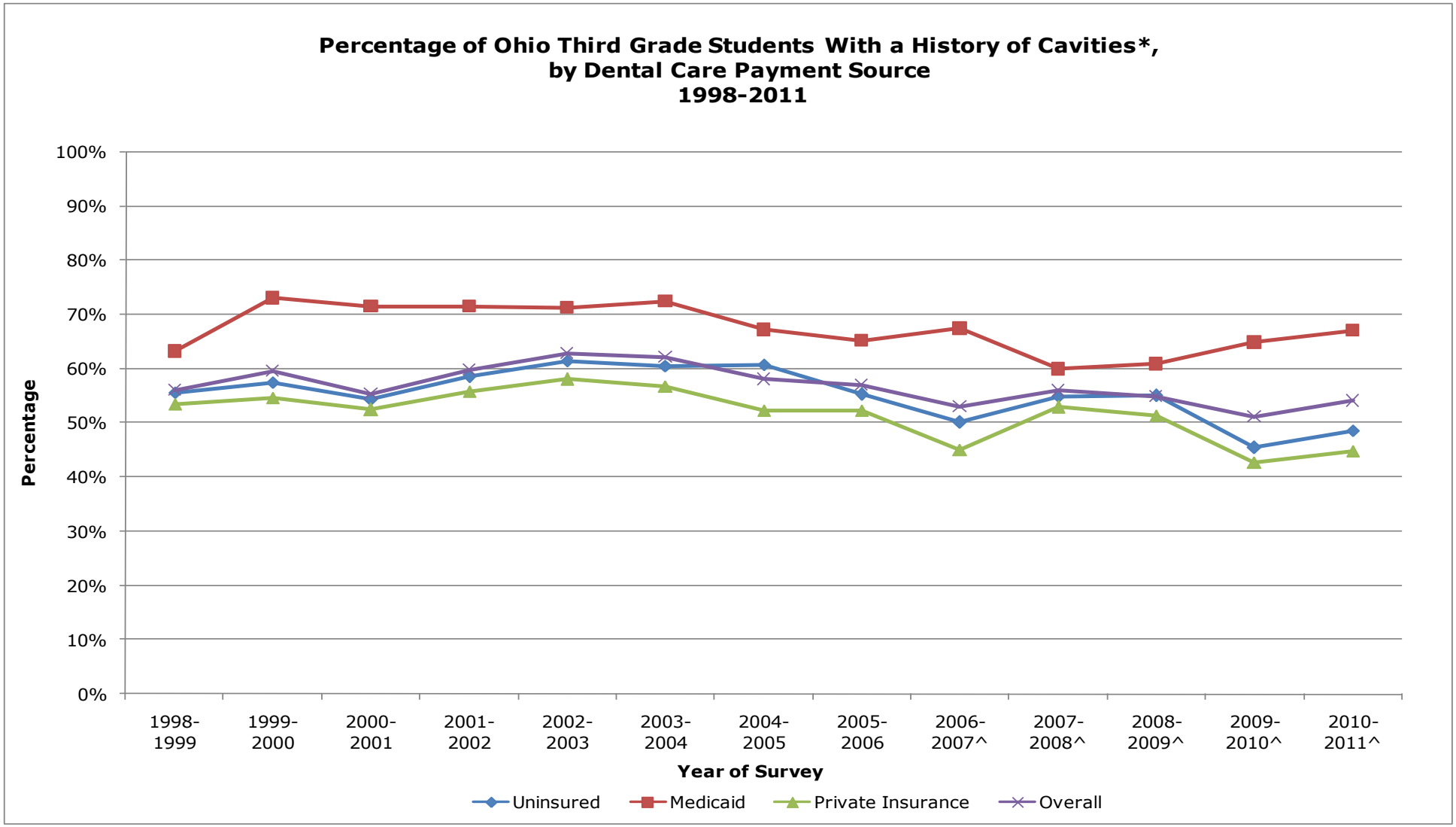

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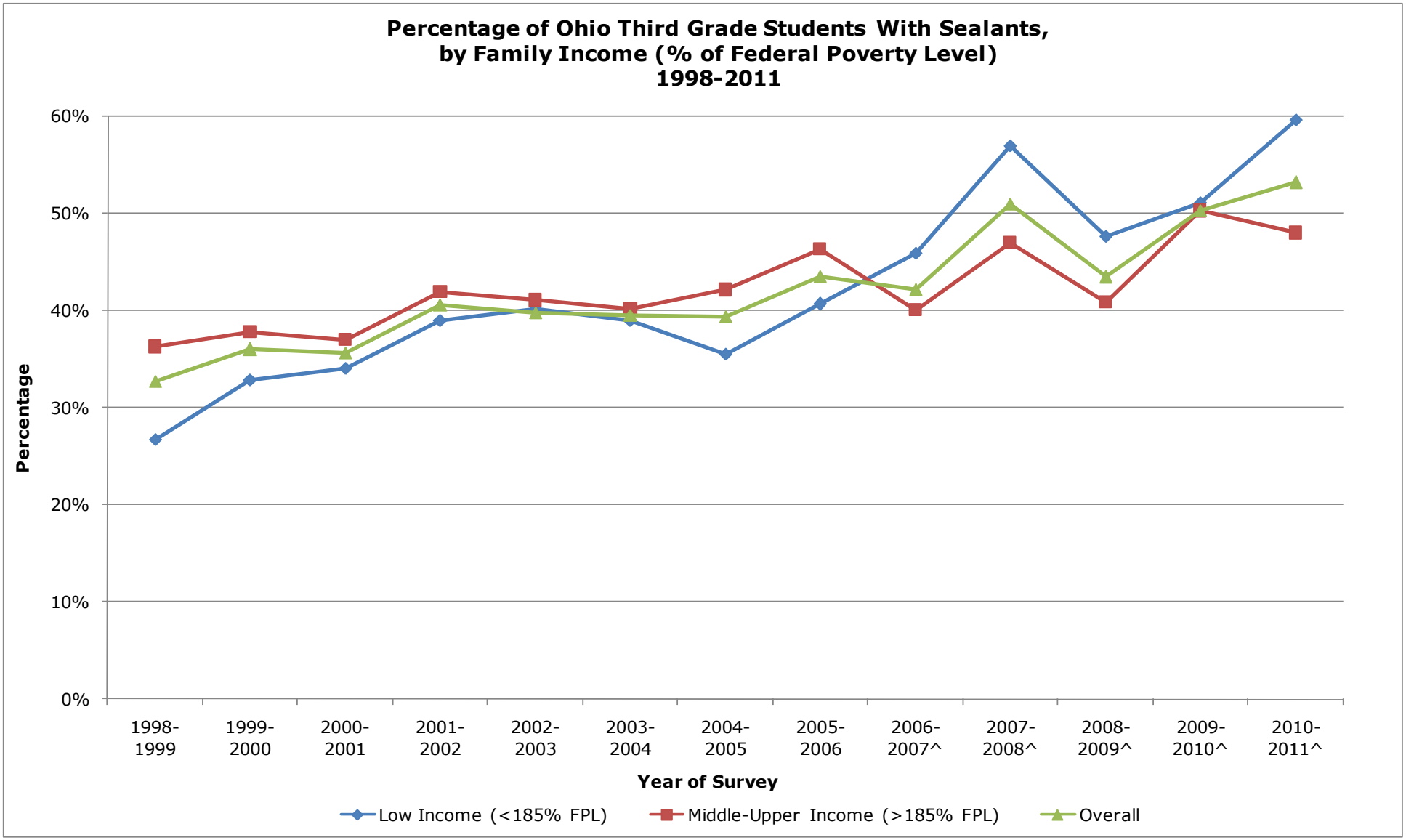

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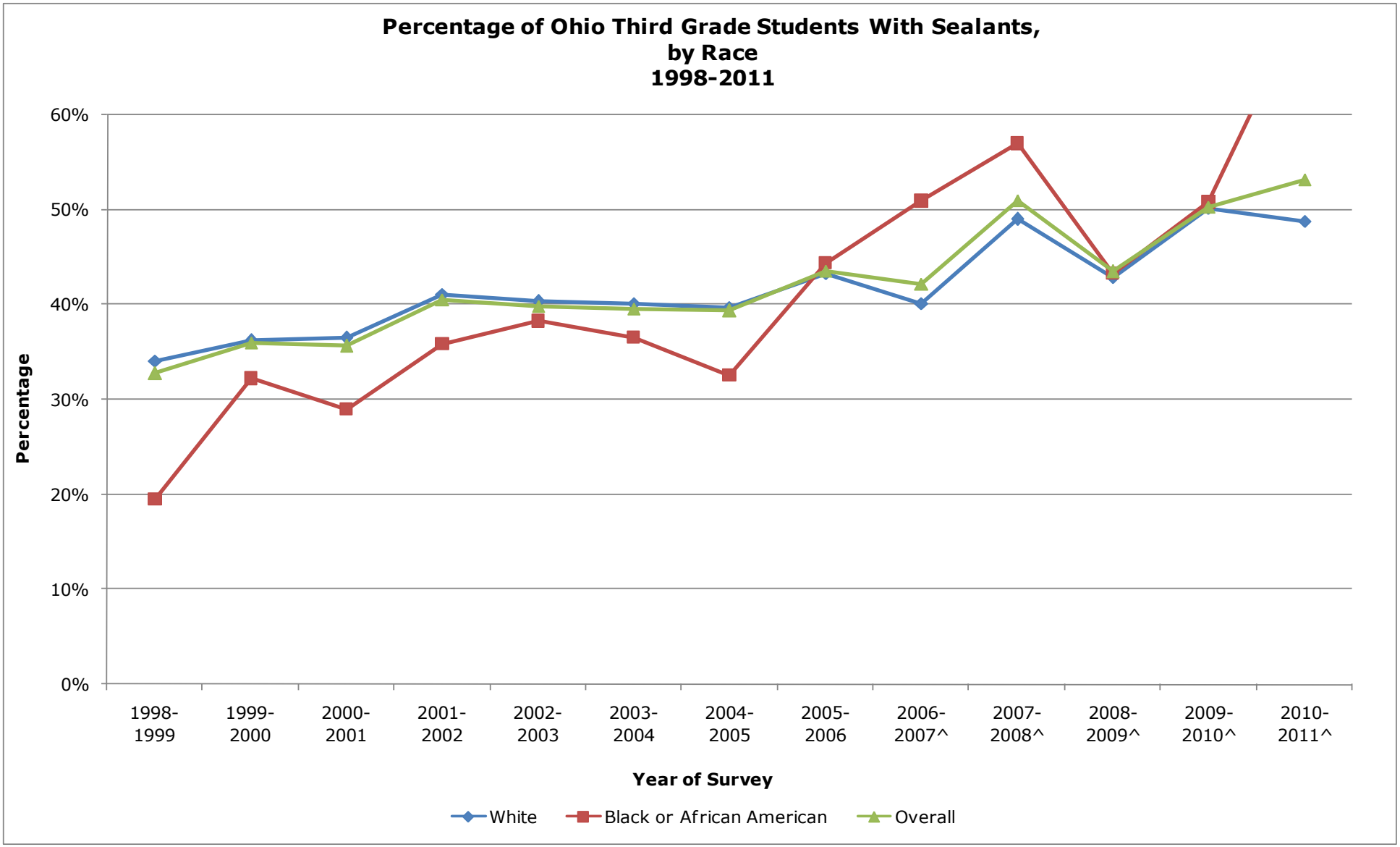

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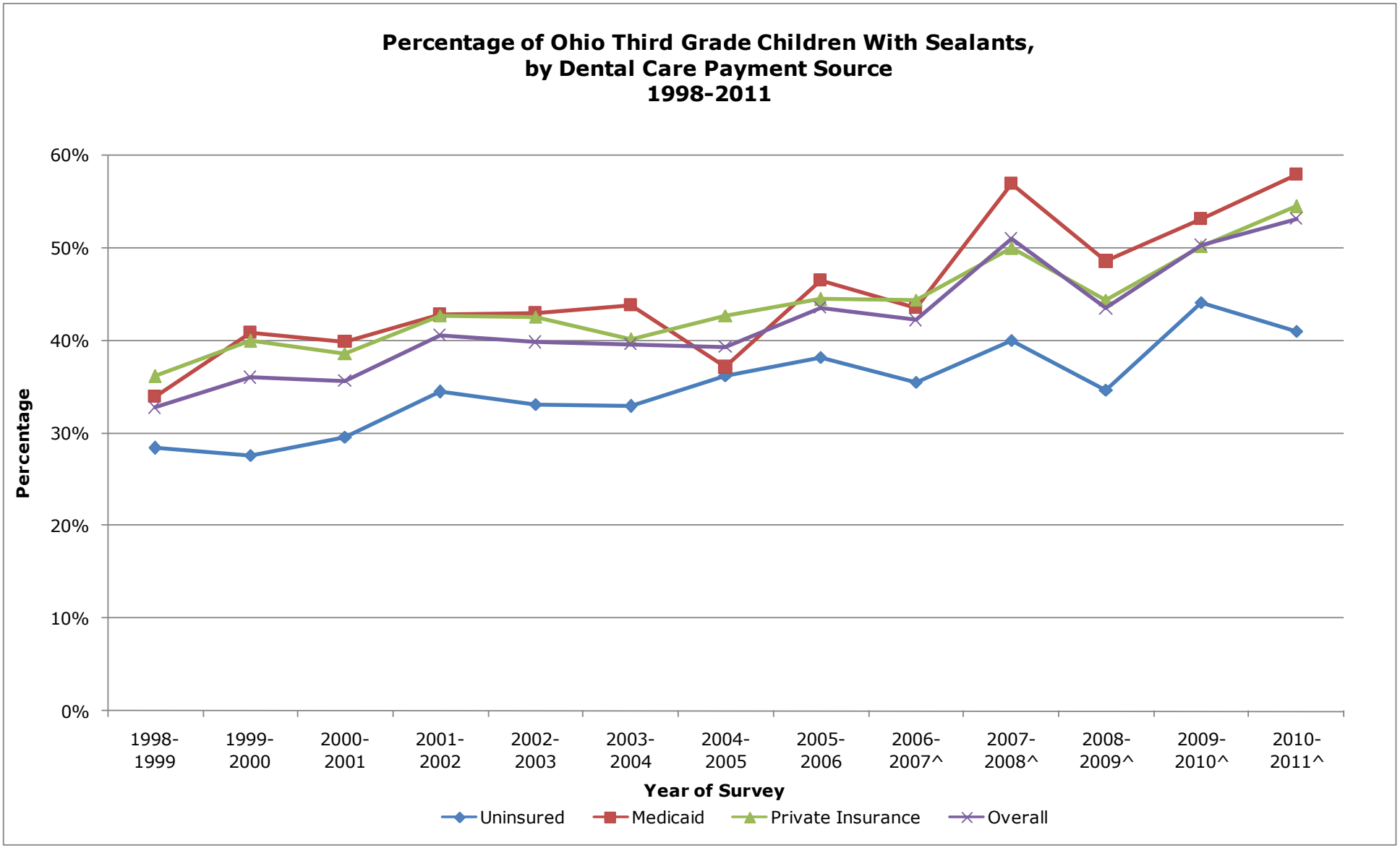

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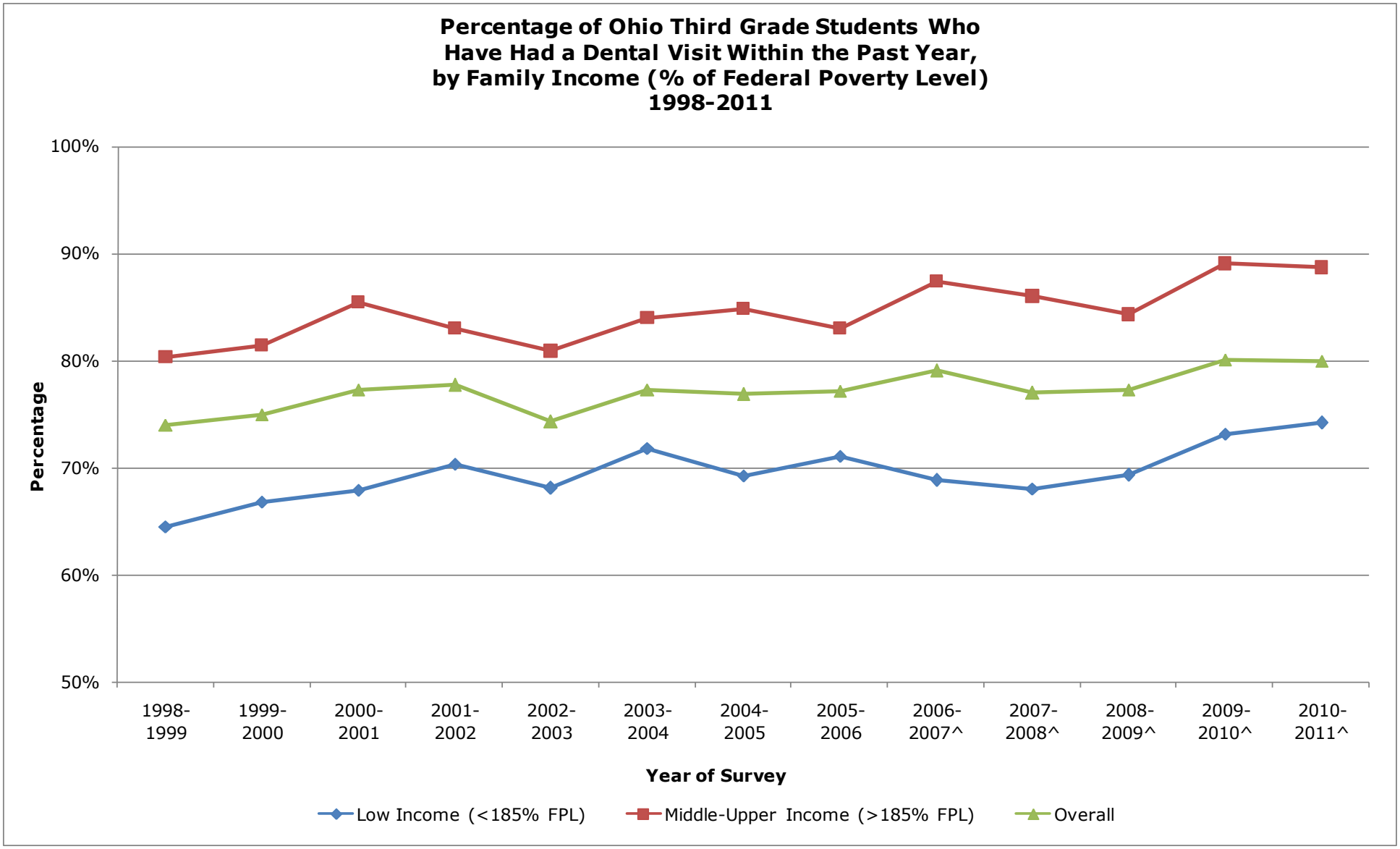

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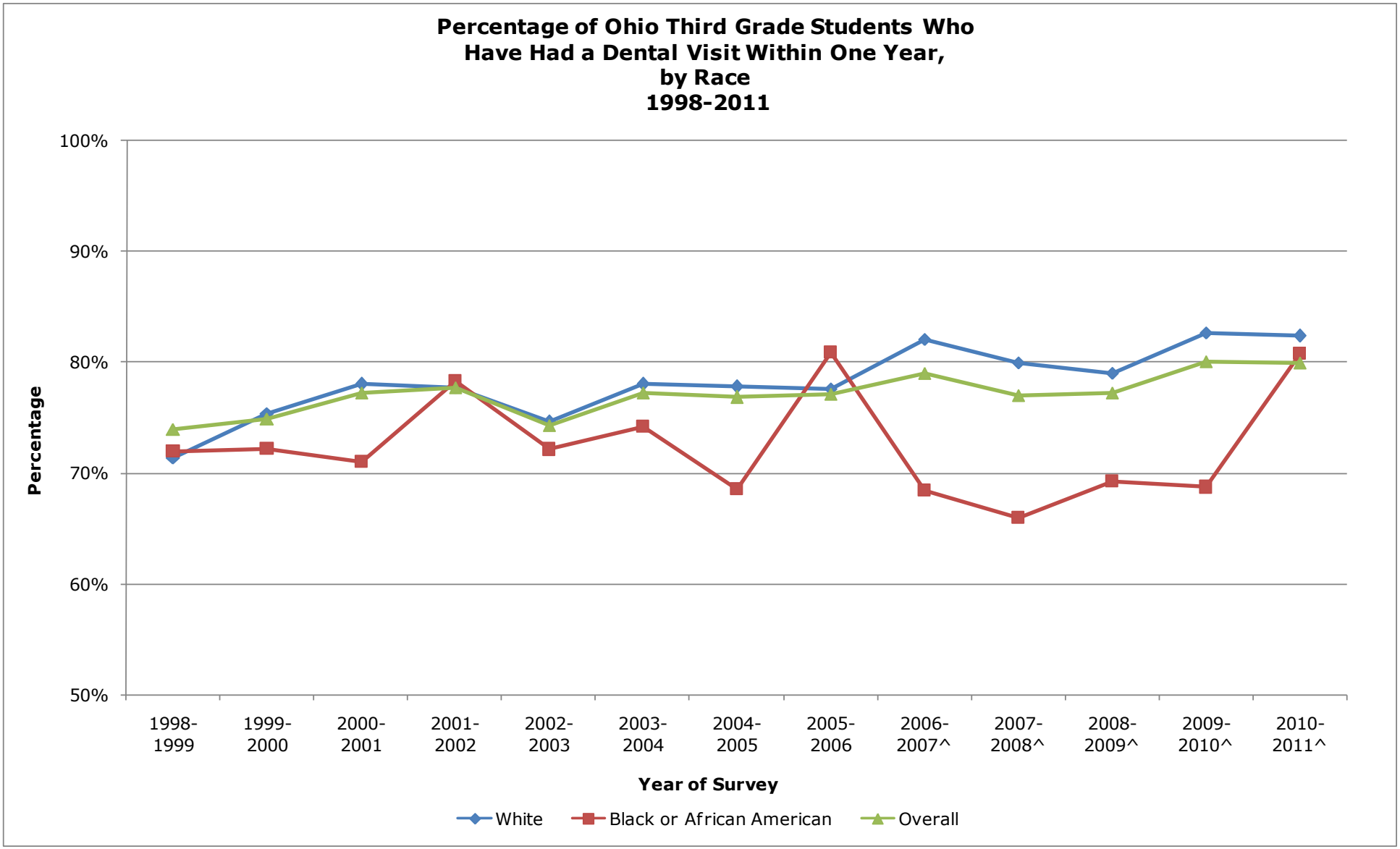

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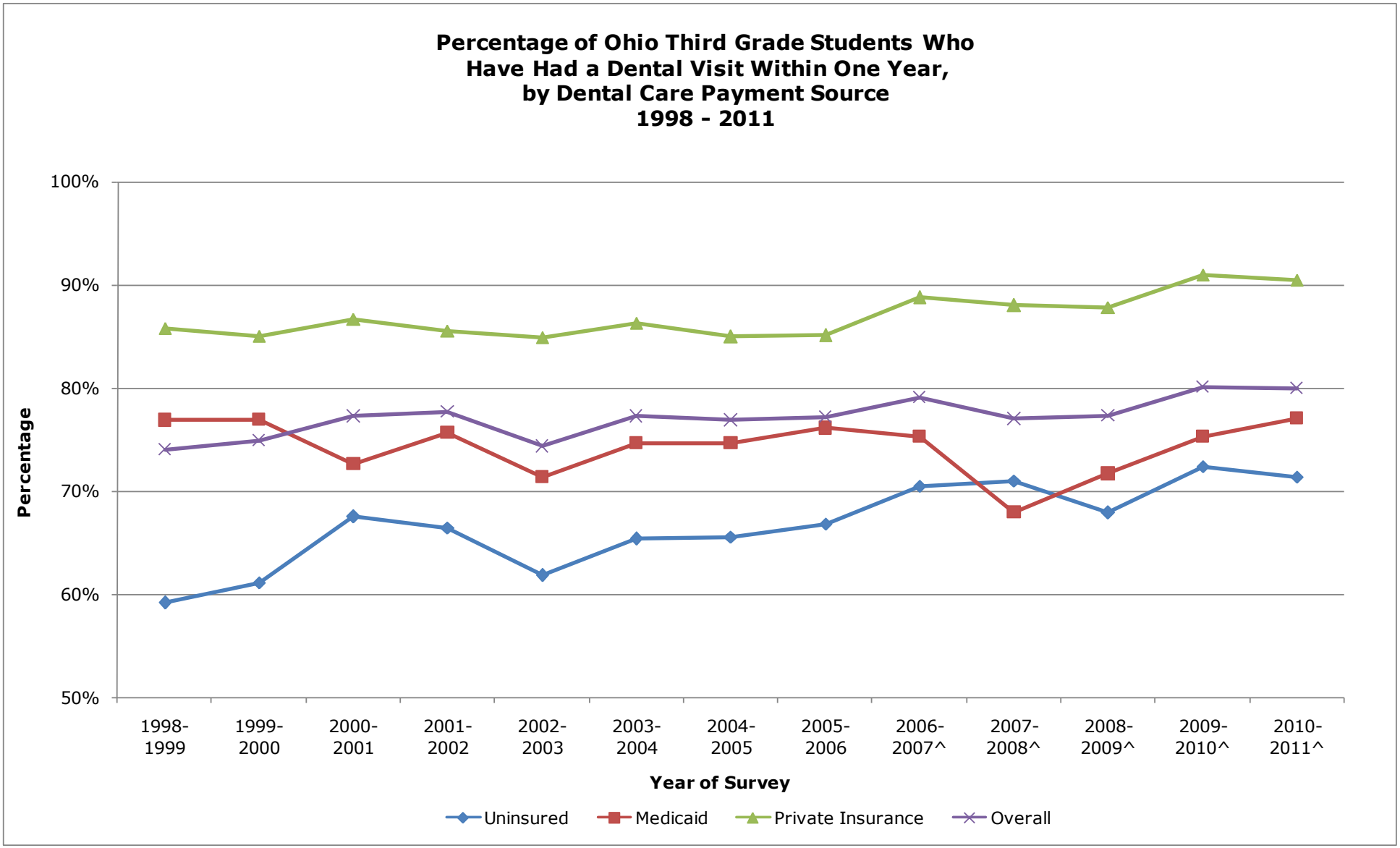

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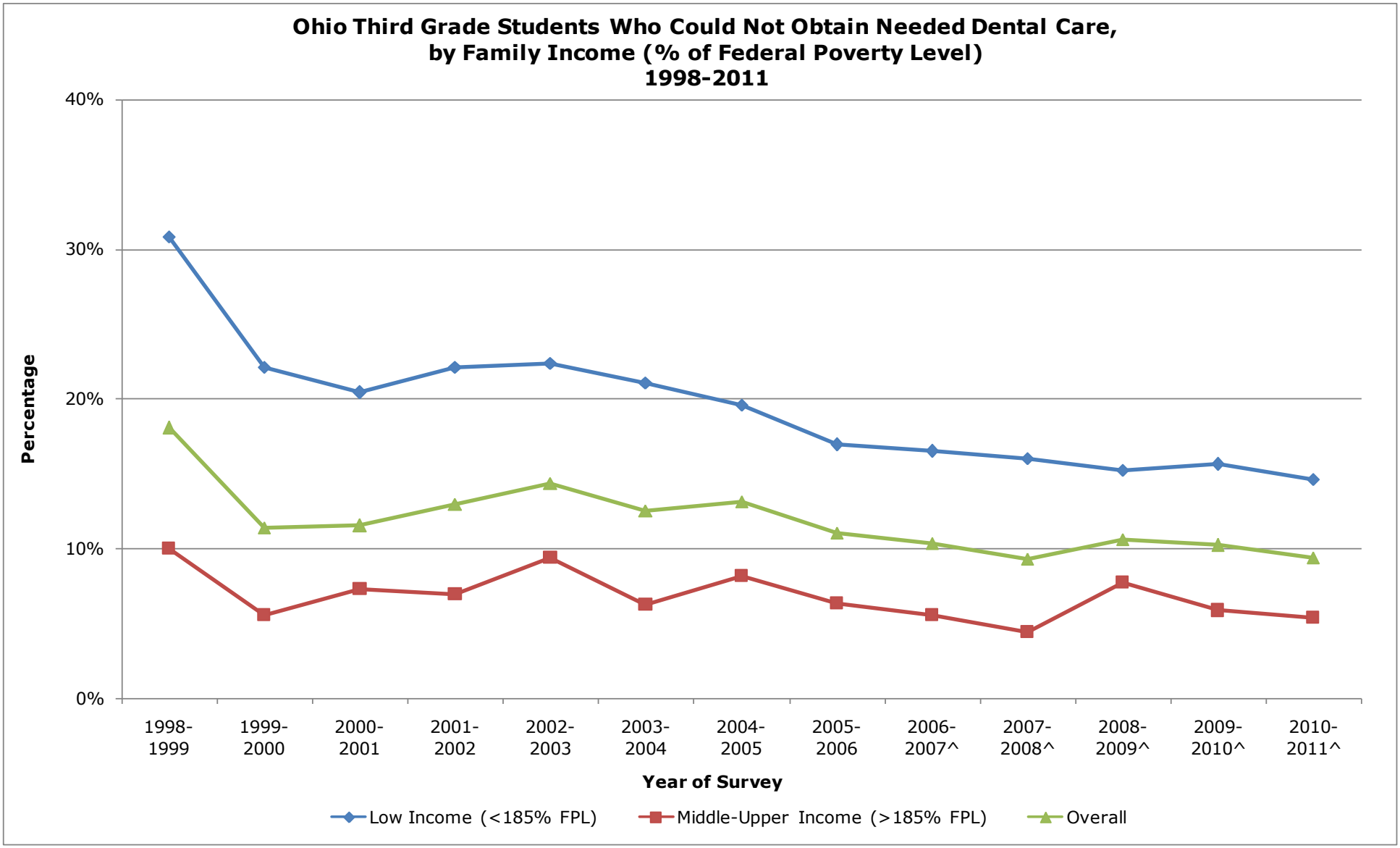

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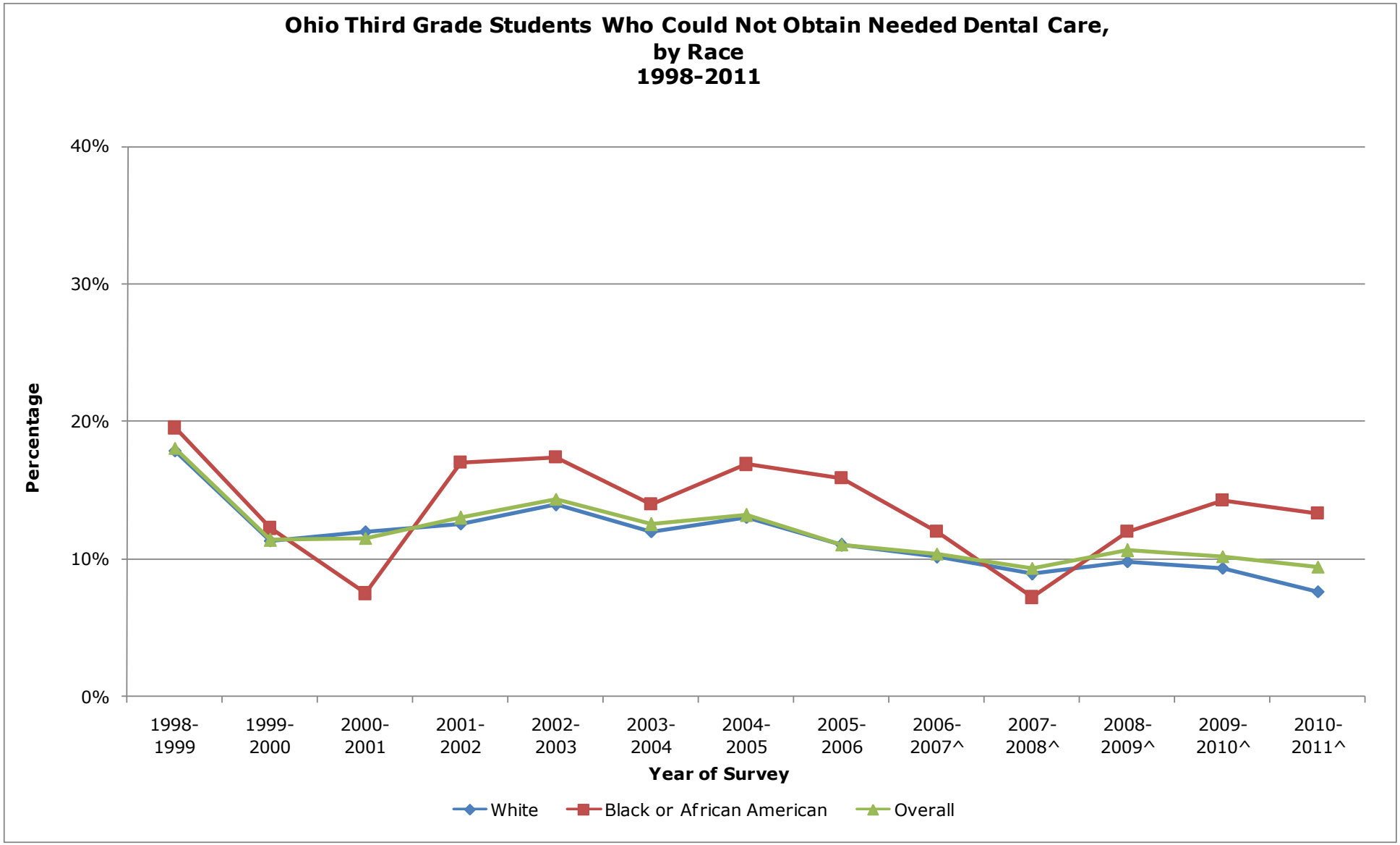

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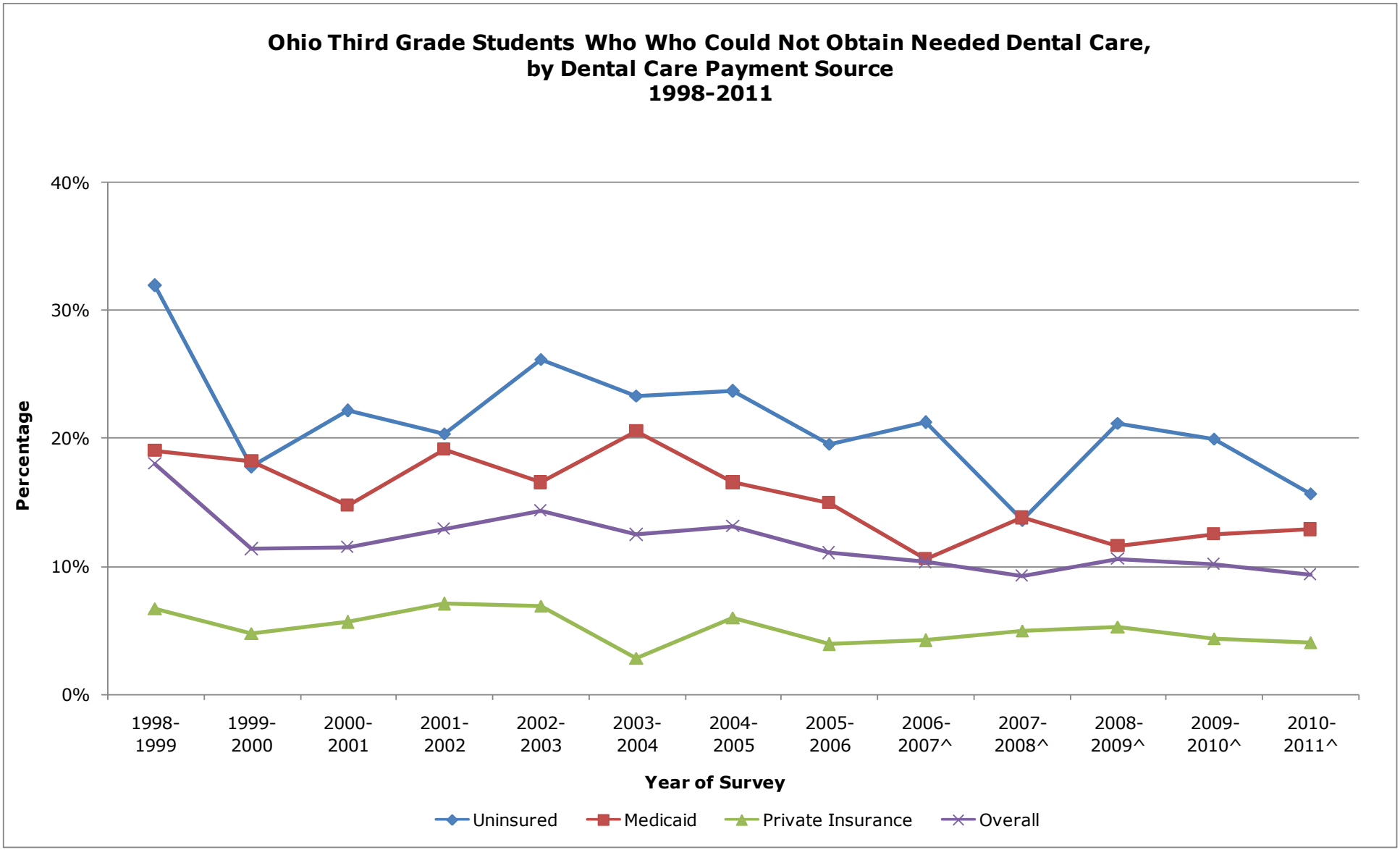

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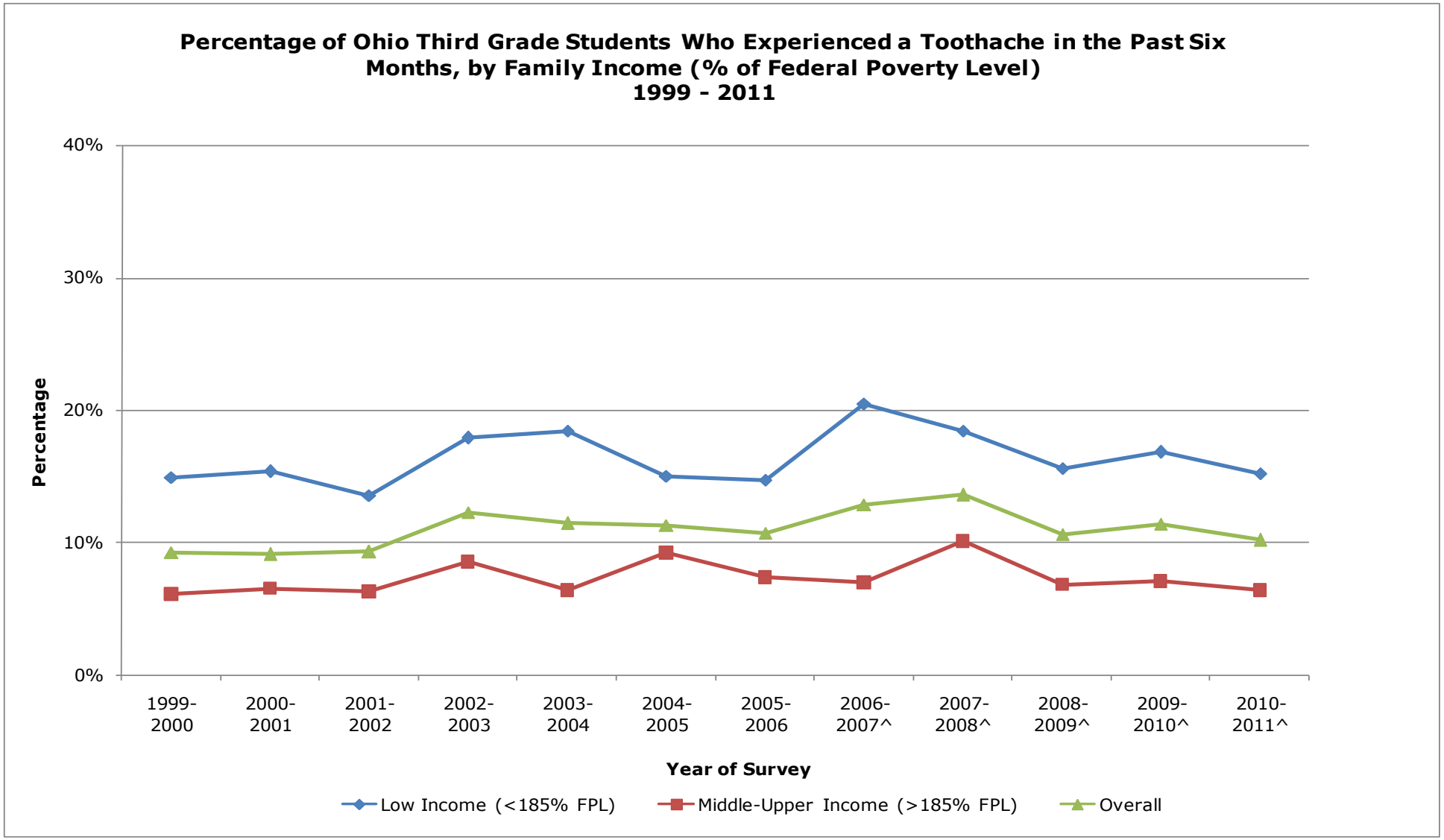

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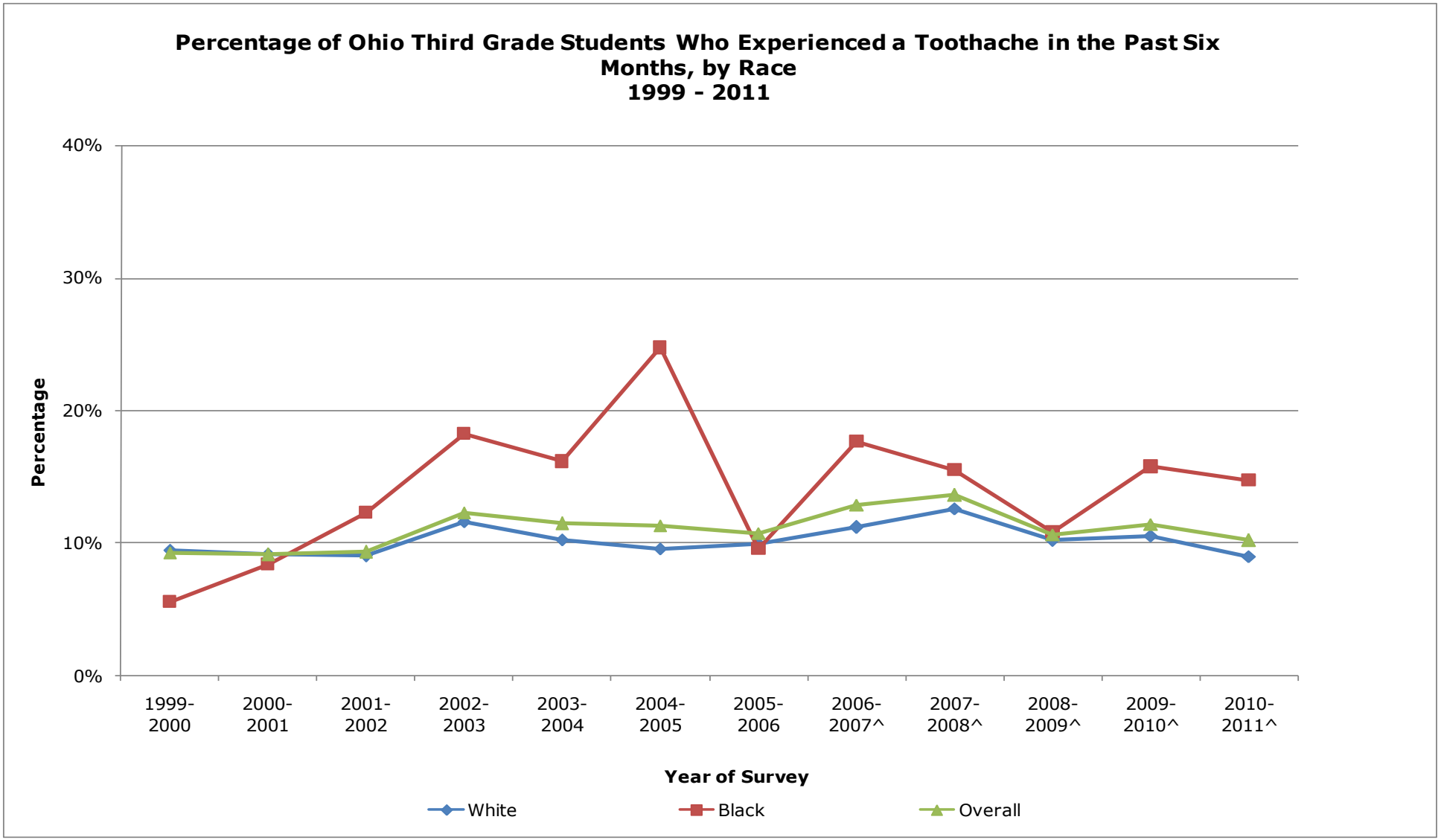

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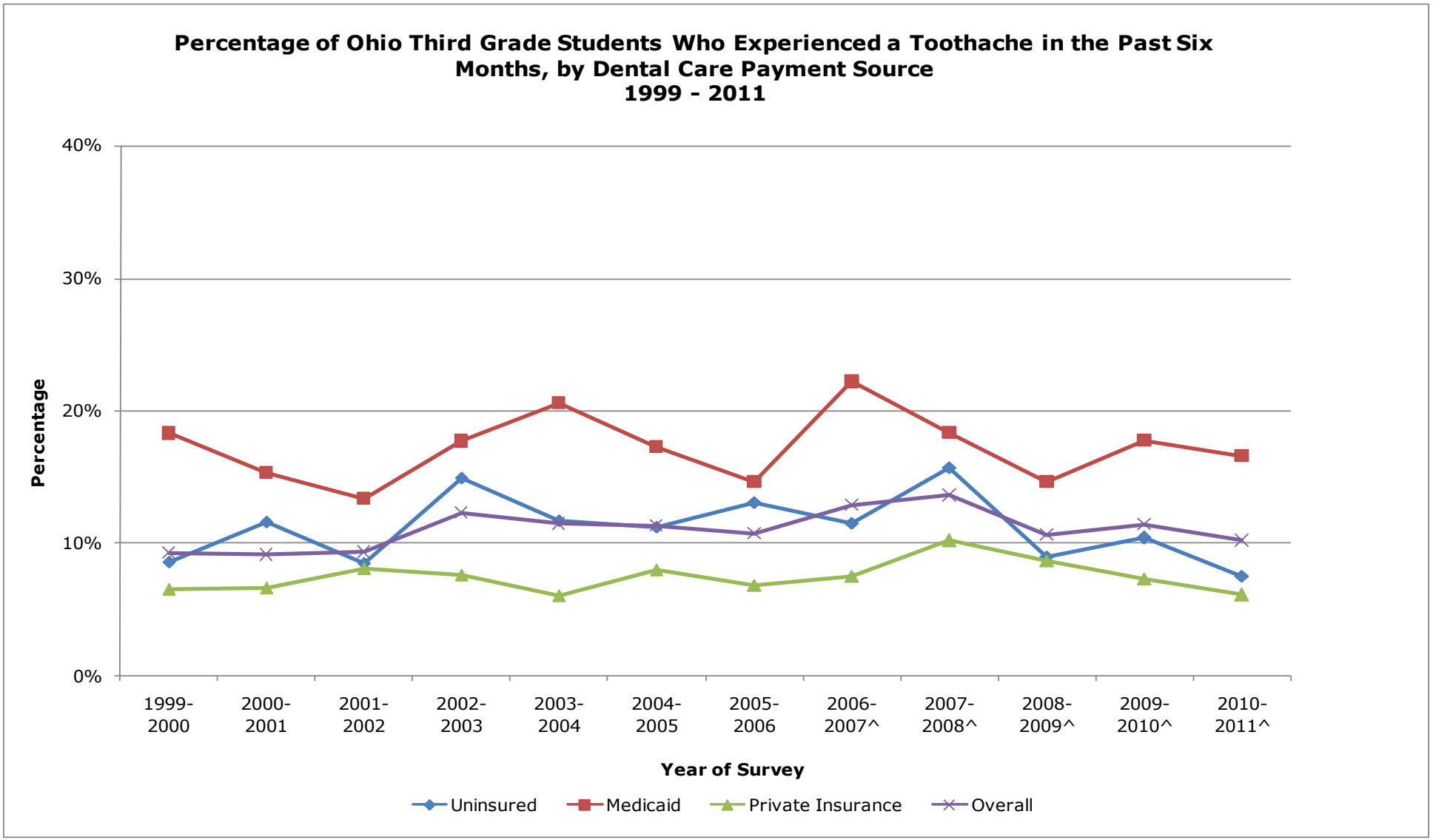

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