

The 2024 State Health Assessment is an overview of what we know about the health and well-being of people in Vermont. This data brief reflects findings about the health needs and experiences of older Vermonters. It includes information from publicly available data and focus groups and interviews with community partners and individuals with lived expertise.

Key Findings

- **A growing group:** The number of Vermonters aged 65 and older nearly doubled between 2010 and 2021, from 10.5% to 19.5% of the population.
- Facing many **financial challenges:**
 - Only 22% are in the workforce.
 - An average annual income around \$7,500 less than the state average.
 - 9.1% live below the poverty line.
 - More than half of renters spend greater than 30% of income on rent.

“You go and you pay for the visit. To me, that's okay. But then you're afraid to bring up something else because then they're going to send you to someplace else...and you just can't afford it. So where you say, well put it off. I'm not going to go.”

- Around 26% **live alone**, making support harder to reach when needed.
- Two-thirds report **challenges accessing** needed community health services.
- Only 78% of older Vermonters have a **reliable internet connection**.
- **Inadequate, unreliable, and confusing insurance** or Medicare coverage makes healthcare services difficult or impossible to access.
- Higher rates of chronic disease, disability, and cancer have profound impacts on the **emotional health, need for healthcare, and budgets** of older residents.

“If I got to go to the medical store to get diabetic shoes, I have to walk a mile and a half from where the bus lets me on. Yeah, and this time of year, I'll have to not have it.”

"I started using a food shelf and cut back on presents to my grandchildren."

- An increasing number of older Vermonters have **unstable housing** or have become unhoused.
- **Social and environmental stressors**, like climate change and COVID-19, have a greater impact on already vulnerable groups.

"The cost is just totally ridiculous to afford. We're talking a hundred thousand dollars here that this hospital got out of me. It's not right. There's no reason to keep raising the cost of healthcare."

- Of those providing care to family members or partners:
 - 41% said they are **supporting someone** with a form of dementia
 - Over half provide support more than **20 hours a week**, many do so 24/7
 - Problems accessing and **affording respite care** is a common concern
 - Spouses as caregivers report **more problems** with their own health
- **Access to care barriers** include transportation, getting and keeping insurance, co-payments, and limited dental coverage.

Health conditions	with a disability	with arthritis	ever had cancer	with cardiovascular disease	with hypertension	with high cholesterol
All US	29%	25%	7%	8%	30%	30%
All VT	25%	29%	7%	8%	25%	25%
VT: Age 65+	38%	54%	18%	18%	52%	52%

"It's getting a little scary when you look towards the future and you look at more and more people aging, and how are we going to care for all these people...particularly when you have people out on the outskirts that are 40 minutes from anything, from getting a gallon of milk."

In collaboration with



References:

- [County Health Rankings](#), University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. Resources include:
 - [VT Department of Health Population Health Surveys and Data](#)
 - [VT Agency of Education Data and Reporting](#)
 - [VT Cancer Registry](#)
 - [VT Crime Information Center](#)
 - [VT Department of Health Environmental Public Health Data Tracking](#)
 - [VT State Highway Safety Office](#)
 - [VT Vaccination coverage](#)
- [CARES database](#), University of Missouri. Data compilation is from many sources, including but not limited to:
 - US Census Bureau
 - American Community Survey (ACS)
 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
 - United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)
 - Department of Transportation
 - Federal Bureau of Investigation
- [Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System \(BRFSS 2021\)](#)
- [Listening Session Report: Vermont Action Plan for Aging Well](#)
- VT Legislative Joint Fiscal Office Issue Brief: [Vermont's population estimates by age group: 2021 compared with 2010](#)