

Risk Factors Associated with Physical Inactivity among Adults with Arthritis

April 2026

Physical activity can reduce joint pain from arthritis and improve quality of life. However, Vermont adults with arthritis are less likely to engage in physical activity compared to those without arthritis. This brief describes factors associated with physical inactivity among adults with arthritis.

If you need help accessing or understanding this information, contact ahs.vdhpdanalytics@vermont.gov.

Key Points

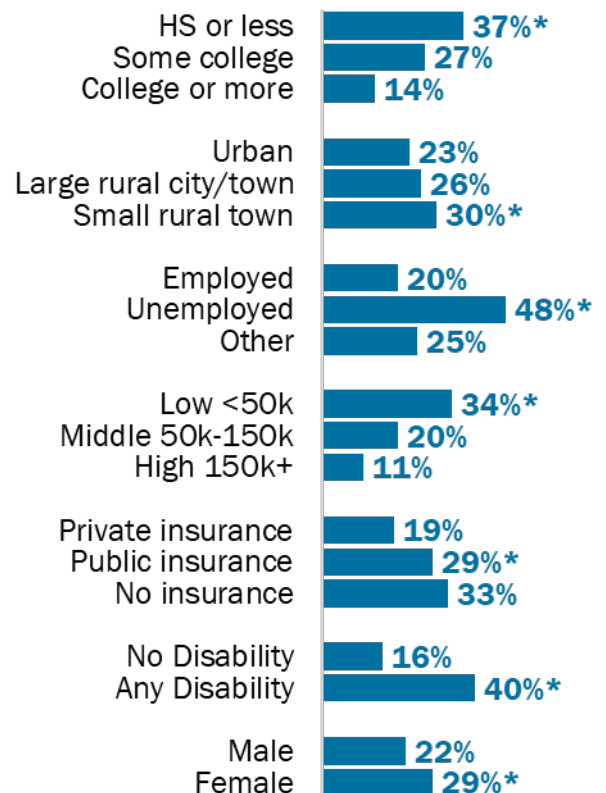
- **Adults with arthritis who also have a disability, lower annual household income, and additional chronic conditions are less active.**
- **Reducing financial barriers to physical activity may increase activity among adults with arthritis.**

Demographic Factors

Percent of Vermont adults with arthritis who did not engage in leisure time physical activity in the past month by demographics

Adults with arthritis who did not participate in leisure time physical activity in the past month are more likely to:

- Have a high school (HS) education or less compared to some college or more
- Live in a small rural town compared to an urban area
- Be unemployed compared to employed or other^
- Have a low annual household income compared to middle or high income
- Be covered by public insurance compared to private insurance
- Have any disability compared to no disability
- Be female compared to male



Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2024



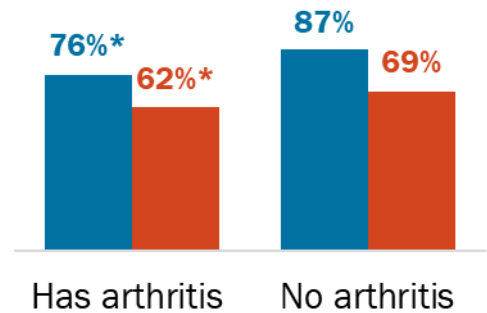
HealthVermont.gov
802-863-7200



According to the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, adults are recommended to participate in at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity a week.

Vermont adults with arthritis are significantly less likely to engage in leisure time physical activity and less likely to meet aerobic activity recommendations, compared to adults without arthritis.

Vermont adults with arthritis are less likely to participate in leisure time physical activity and less likely to meet aerobic activity recommendations.

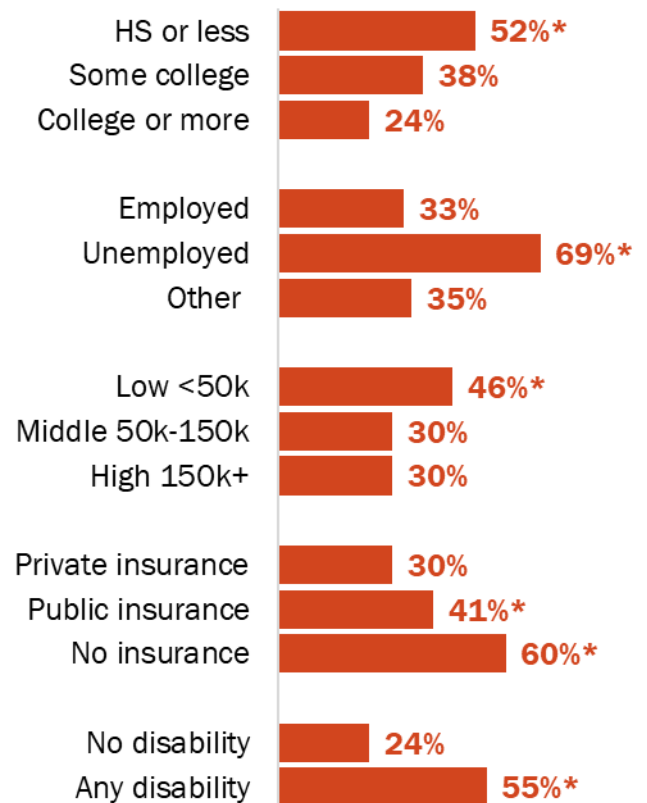


Vermont Adults with arthritis who do not meet aerobic activity recommendations are more likely to:

- Have a high school education or less compared to some college or more
- Be unemployed compared to employed or other
- Have a low annual household income compared to middle income
- Be covered by public or no insurance compared to private insurance
- Have any disability compared to no disability

There were no significant differences in the percent of adults with arthritis who met aerobic activity recommendations by sex or rurality (data not shown).

Percent of Vermont adults with arthritis who do not meet aerobic activity recommendations



Social Drivers of Health and Health Behaviors

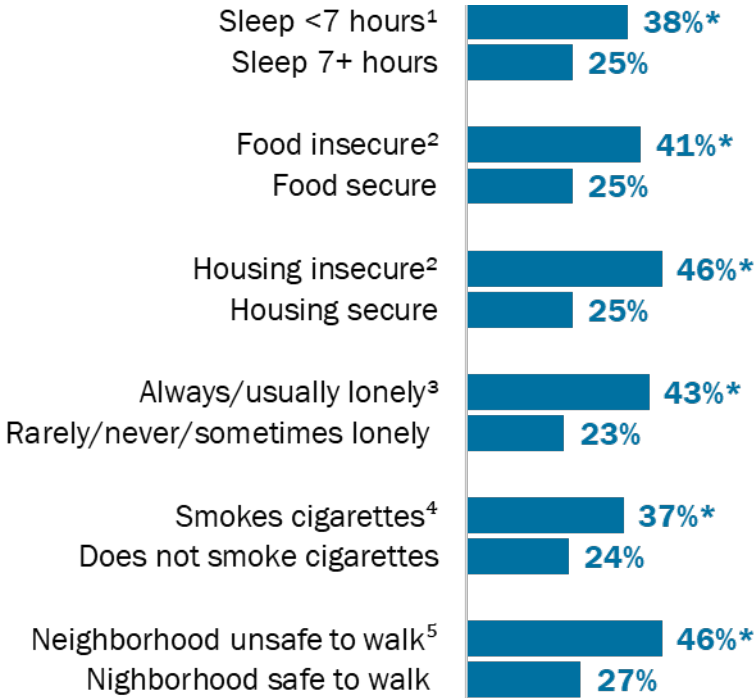
Social drivers of health refer to the conditions that people live and work in that impact health.

Vermont adults with arthritis who did not engage in leisure time physical activity in the past month are more likely to:

- Sleep less than 7 hours on average, each night
- Be food or housing insecure
- Always or usually be lonely
- Smoke cigarettes
- Rate their neighborhood as unsafe to walk^^

There are no significant differences in the percentage of adults with arthritis who engage in leisure time physical activity by county, district office, or hospital service area (data not shown).

Percent of Vermont adults with arthritis who did not engage in leisure time physical activity in the past month



Adults with arthritis who did not meet aerobic activity recommendations are more likely to:

- Rate their neighborhood as unsafe to walk^^
- Smoke cigarettes

Data on sleep, food and housing insecurity, and loneliness was not available for analysis for aerobic activity recommendations.

Percent of Vermont adults with arthritis who do not meet aerobic activity recommendations, by health drivers and behaviors



Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System:
¹ 2022, ² 2022, 2024, ³ 2024, ⁴ 2023, 2024, ⁵ 2023

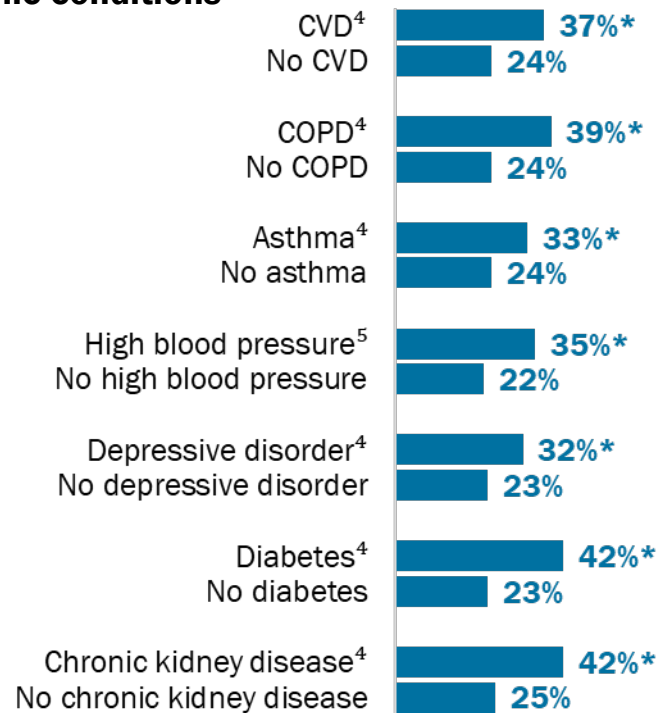


Co-Occurring Chronic Conditions

Percent of Vermont adults with arthritis who do not engage in leisure physical activity by co-occurring chronic conditions

Adults with arthritis who do not engage in leisure time physical activity are more likely to also have:

- Cardiovascular disease (CVD)
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- Asthma
- High blood pressure
- Been diagnosed with a depressive disorder
- Diabetes
- Chronic kidney disease

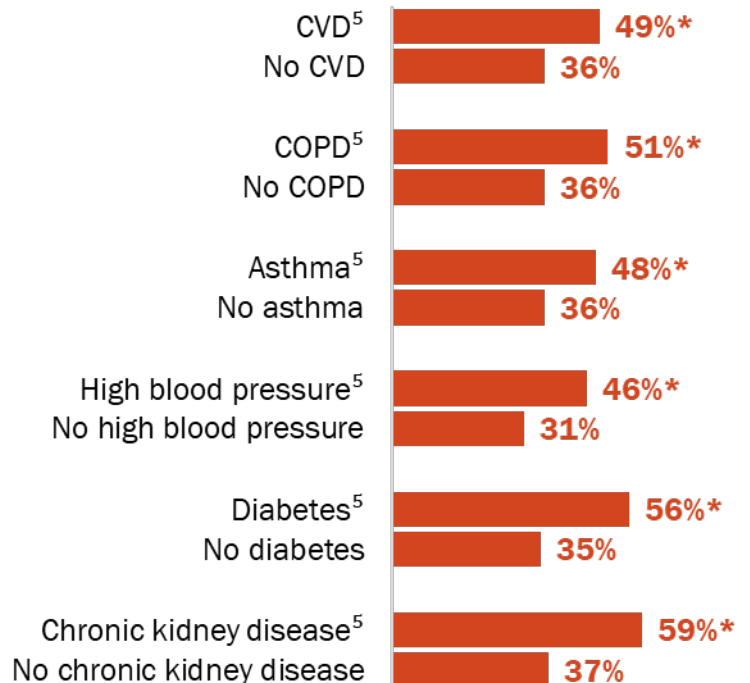


Percent of Vermont adults with arthritis who do not meet aerobic activity recommendations by co-occurring chronic conditions

Adults with arthritis who do not meet aerobic activity recommendations are more likely to also have:

- CVD
- COPD
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Chronic kidney disease
- Asthma

No differences were found by depression status (data not shown).



Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System: 1 2022, 2 2022, 2024, 3 2024, 4 2023, 2024, 5 2023

Key Takeaways

Many of the factors that impact rates of inactivity are related to an individual's financial situation, specifically employment, income, insurance coverage and education. These results indicate that socioeconomic factors are an important barrier to physical activity for Vermont adults with arthritis. Programs and policies that aim to increase physical activity among adults with arthritis may benefit from reducing financial barriers to engaging in physical activity as well as targeting specific populations where physical activity rates are lower.

Data Notes

*Denotes statistically significant difference.

^ Employment Status:

Employed: adults who are employed for wages and self-employed.

Unemployed: adults who have been out of work or are unable to work.

Other: adults who are homemakers, students, or retired.

^^Individuals who rate their neighborhood as safe to walk include respondents who rated their neighborhood as slightly or not at all safe to walk. Individuals who rated their neighborhood as safe to walk include those who rated their neighborhood as quite safe or extremely safe to walk.

Geographic setting is measured using Rural-Urban Commuting Area (RUCA) codes. USDA, Economic Research Service. RUCA Codes are a measure of population size and commuting frequency. www.ers.usda.gov/dataproducts/rural-urban-commuting-area-codes/documentation.

The Health Department recognizes that many social, economic and environmental inequities made worse by structural oppression, marginalization and racism influence the data we collect and report. We continuously work to better collect and share data that reflect the lived experiences of all Vermonters. If you have questions or concerns, please check our [Data Encyclopedia](#) for more information, including who to contact to find out more.