

Arthritis in Vermont

September 2025

Arthritis is one of the most common chronic conditions affecting Vermonters, making it critical that we understand its impact on the State.

About Arthritis:

Arthritis is a group of 100+ conditions that cause swelling in joints, the tissues around joints and other connective tissues. The most common form of arthritis is Osteoarthritis, or “wear and tear” arthritis. Other common conditions include fibromyalgia, gout, lupus and rheumatoid arthritis. Symptoms of arthritis often include pain, aching, stiffness and swelling in or around the affected joints, as well as redness and heat.

There is no way to prevent the onset of arthritis, but there are ways to decrease risk and limit the impact of arthritis. For example, quitting tobacco, eating a balanced diet, and doing regular exercise can help delay the onset of arthritis

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

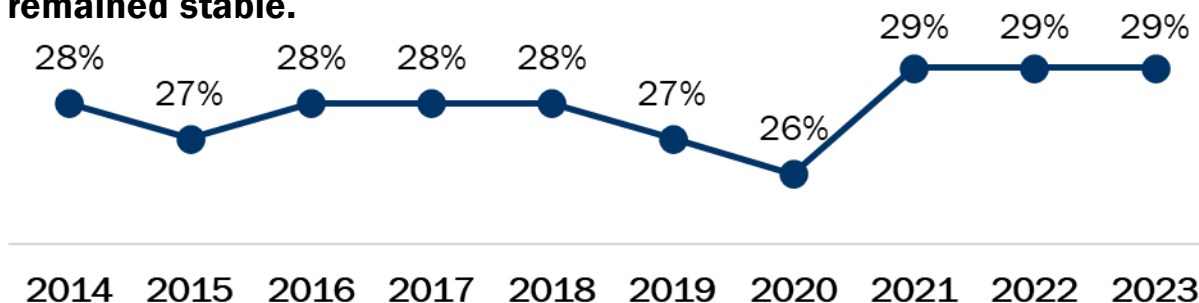
Key Points

- **Arthritis is a common chronic condition affecting 155,500 of Vermont adults that can have significant impacts on an individual’s day-to-day life.**
- **Evidence-based interventions, like low impact exercise and chronic care self-management, may offer relief to individuals with arthritis by helping reduce pain, improve movement and provide strategies for managing symptoms.**

Arthritis Demographics

About three in ten Vermont adults have arthritis (29%). The percentage of adults with arthritis has remained stable in recent years and the 2023 rate is statistically similar to 2014 and 2022 rates.

Prevalence of Arthritis Among Adults in Vermont from 2014-2023 has remained stable.



Data Source: BRFSS, 2014-2023



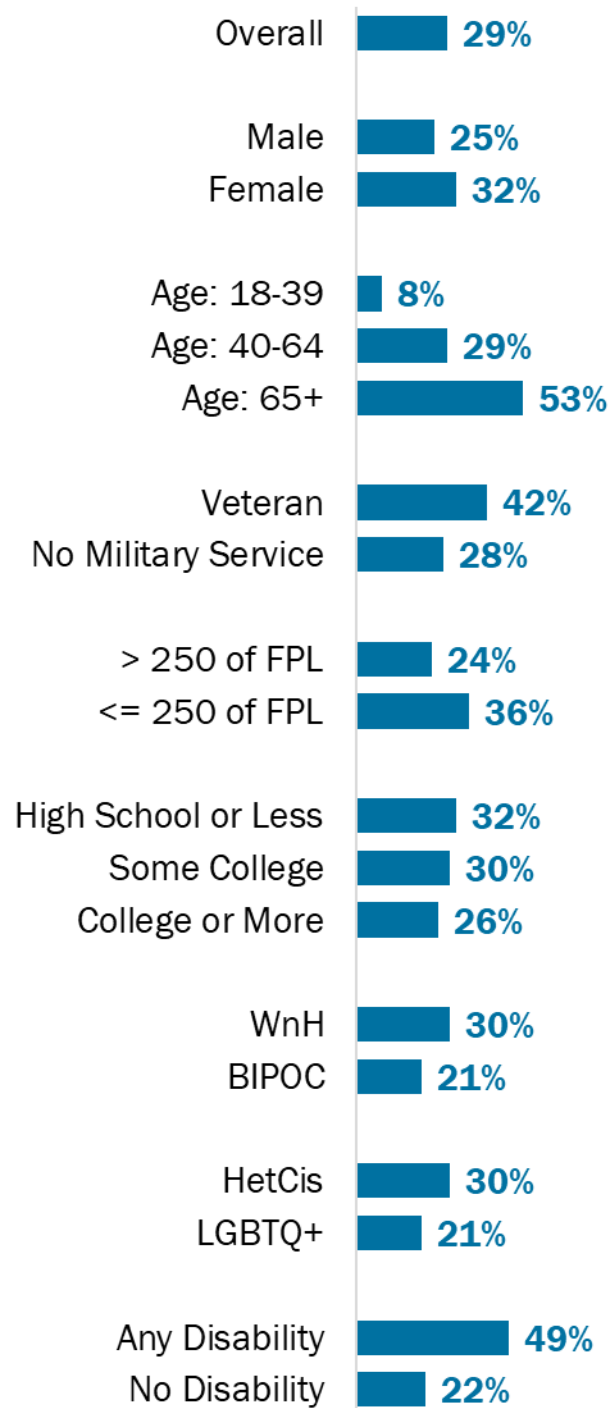
HealthVermont.gov
802-863-7200



Understanding and surveilling the burden and prevalence of arthritis within Vermont's communities is instrumental in guiding public health policy aimed at increasing access to physical activity opportunities and other arthritis appropriate, evidence-based interventions.

- Nearly three in ten Vermont adults have arthritis (29%), This is statistically higher than the 25% of U.S. adults.
- Women (32%) are more likely to have arthritis compared to men (25%).
- The percentage of adults with arthritis increases dramatically with age. After the age of 40, 40% of Vermont adults report a diagnosis of arthritis. After age 65, over half (53%) of adults report a diagnosis.
- Veterans (42%) are more likely than individuals with no military service (28%) to have arthritis.
- The percentage of adults with arthritis decreases with increasing household income.
- The prevalence of arthritis is statistically higher among adults with some college or less compared to adults who have completed college or more.
- White, non-Hispanic and cisgendered, heterosexual adults are statistically more likely to report having arthritis.
- Adults with a disability are more than two times as likely to report having arthritis than adults with no disability. This is a statistically significant difference.

Arthritis Prevalence Among Vermont Adults



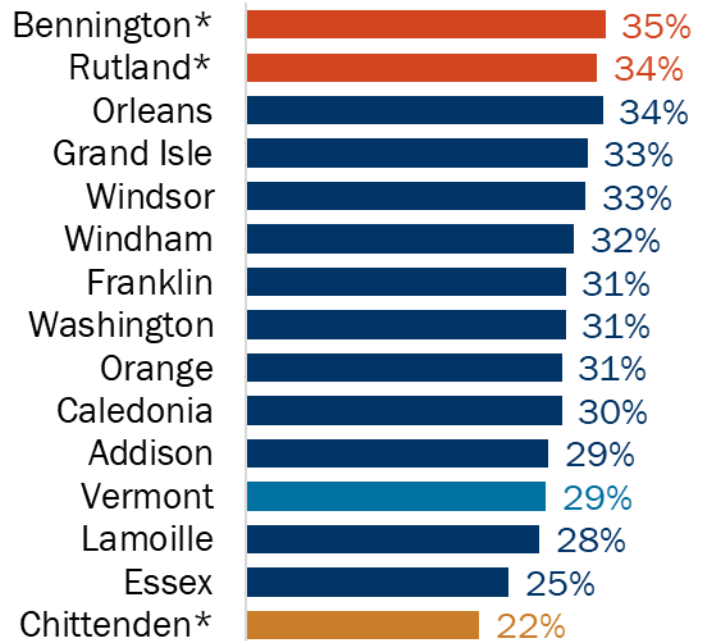
Data Source: BRFSS, 2023

Arthritis by Geography

Where we live can have major impacts on our health and well-being. For adults with arthritis, living in rural areas may increase social isolation and limit access to transportation, health care and the ability to participate in arthritis appropriate evidence based intervention (AAEBI) programs, such as physical activity programs.

- Two counties, **Bennington** (34%) and **Rutland** (34%), have statistically higher rates of arthritis than the overall **Vermont** rate (29%). **Chittenden** County (22%) has a statistically lower rate of arthritis.
- Arthritis is more prevalent in micropolitan or small towns (34%) when compared to urban areas of the state (26%).

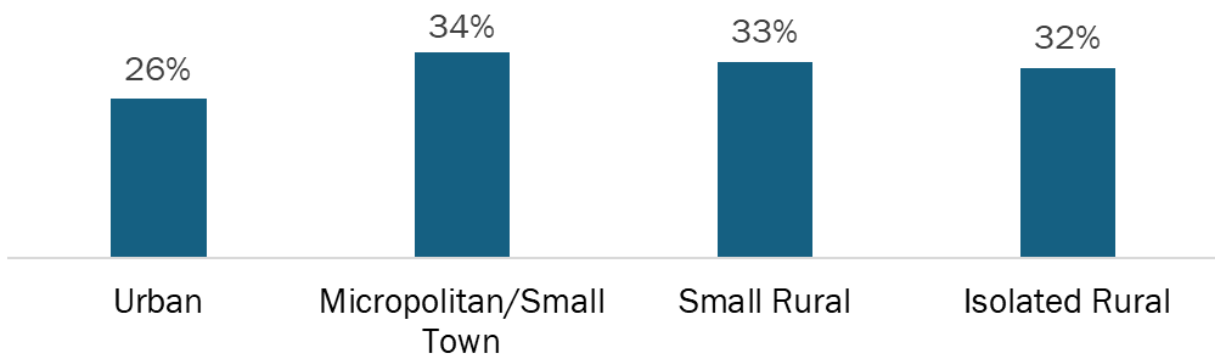
Adults in Bennington and Rutland Counties have the highest rate of arthritis in Vermont.



Data Source: BRFSS 2022-2023

*: Statistically different from statewide prevalence

Vermonters living in small towns have higher rates of arthritis than Vermonters living in an urban setting.

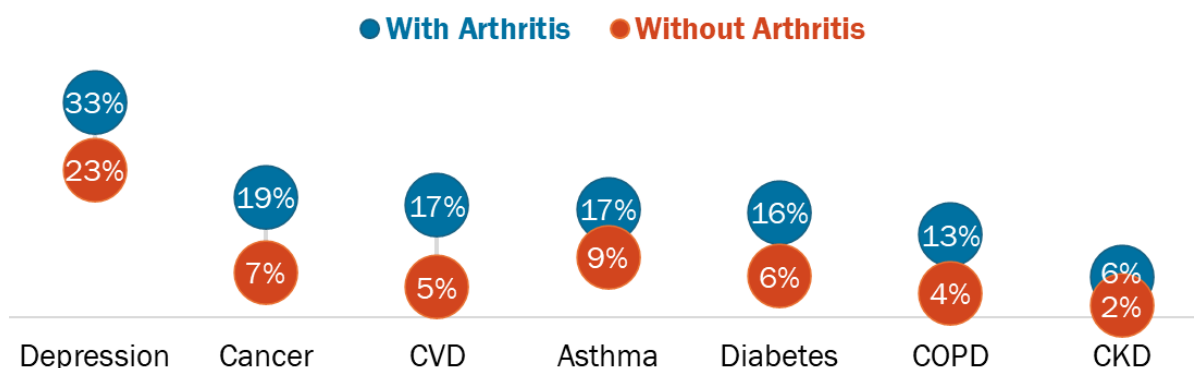


Data Source: BRFSS 2023

Health Status and Other Conditions

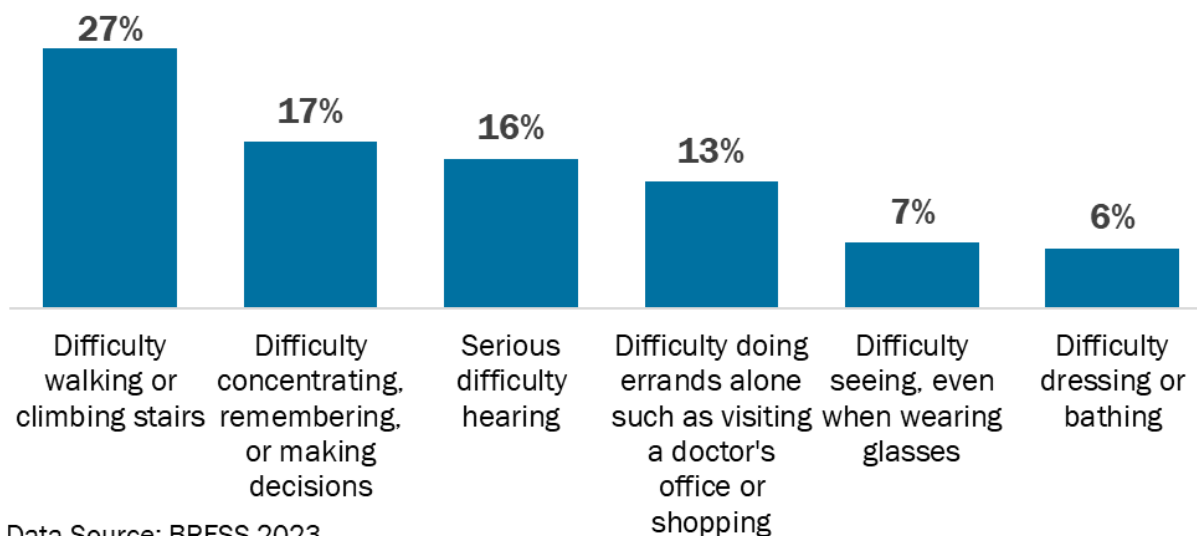
Adults with arthritis are more likely to report fair or poor general health (26% vs. 9%) and fair or poor physical health (24% vs. 8%) when compared to adults who do not have arthritis. Adults with and without arthritis report fair or poor mental health at similar rates (18% vs. 15%, respectively).

Over two-thirds (67%) of adults with arthritis report having at least one other chronic condition in addition to their arthritis, and are more likely to report depression, cancer, cardiovascular disease, asthma, diabetes, COPD and chronic kidney disease (CKD) than adults without arthritis.



Data Source: BRFSS 2023

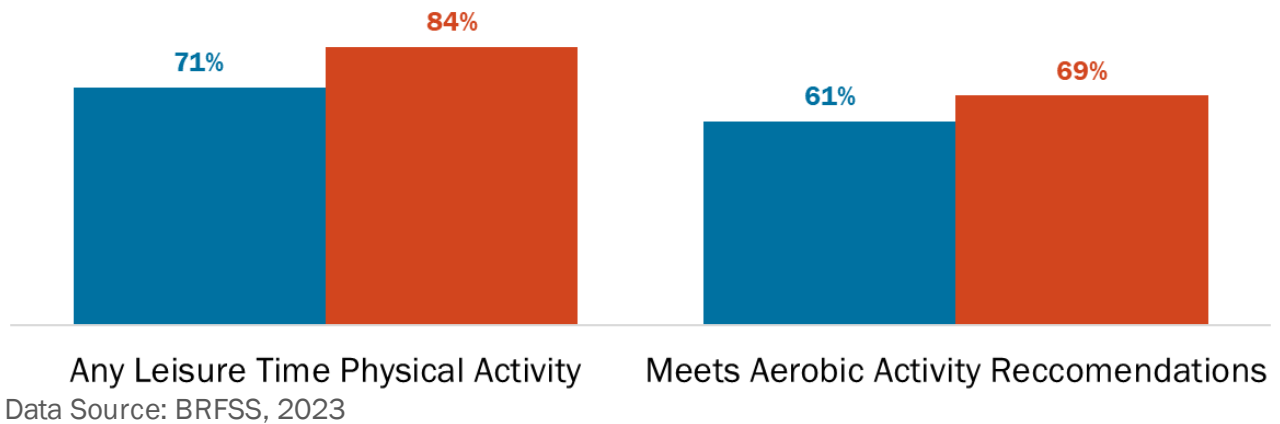
The most common disability indicator people with arthritis report is difficulty walking or climbing stairs (27%).



Data Source: BRFSS 2023

Vermont adults with arthritis are statistically less likely to report any physical activity in the past 30-days compared to Vermont adults who do not have arthritis (71% vs. 84%). They are also statistically less likely to report meeting aerobic exercise recommendations (61% vs. 69%).

Vermont adults with arthritis are less likely to report leisure time physical activity or meet aerobic exercise recommendations than adults without arthritis.



Impacts of Arthritis

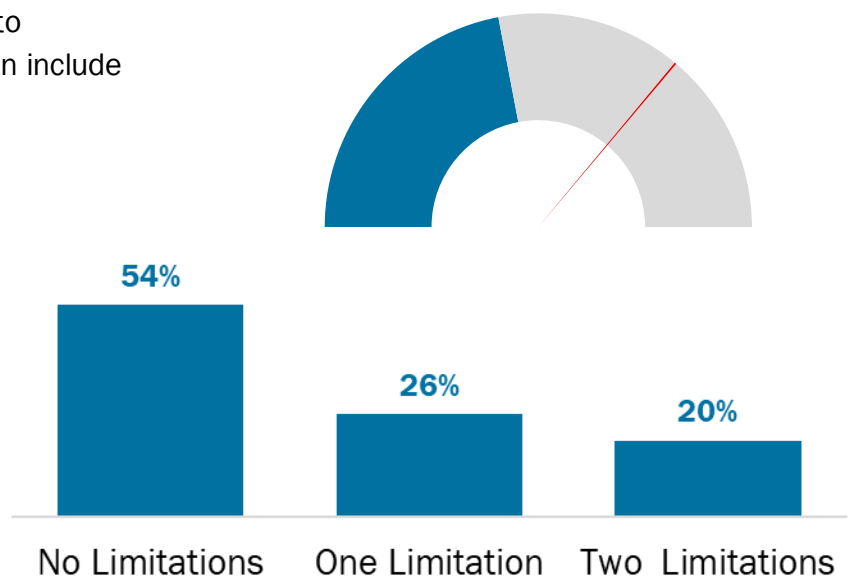
Arthritis can really impact a person's life. Adults with arthritis are more likely to suffer from severe joint pain, experience work and lifestyle limitations, and may be at an increased risk of experiencing social isolation.

On average, Vermont adults with arthritis rate their joint pain as 4.3 on a scale of 1 to 10. Because of their arthritis, almost half of adults report at least one limitation to activities (46%). These limitations can include limitations at work or lifestyle.

Vermont adults with arthritis report joint pain of 4.3 out of 10 on average, 7 out of 10 is considered severe joint pain.

Almost half (46%) of adults with arthritis report having at least one limitation in their life due to their arthritis.

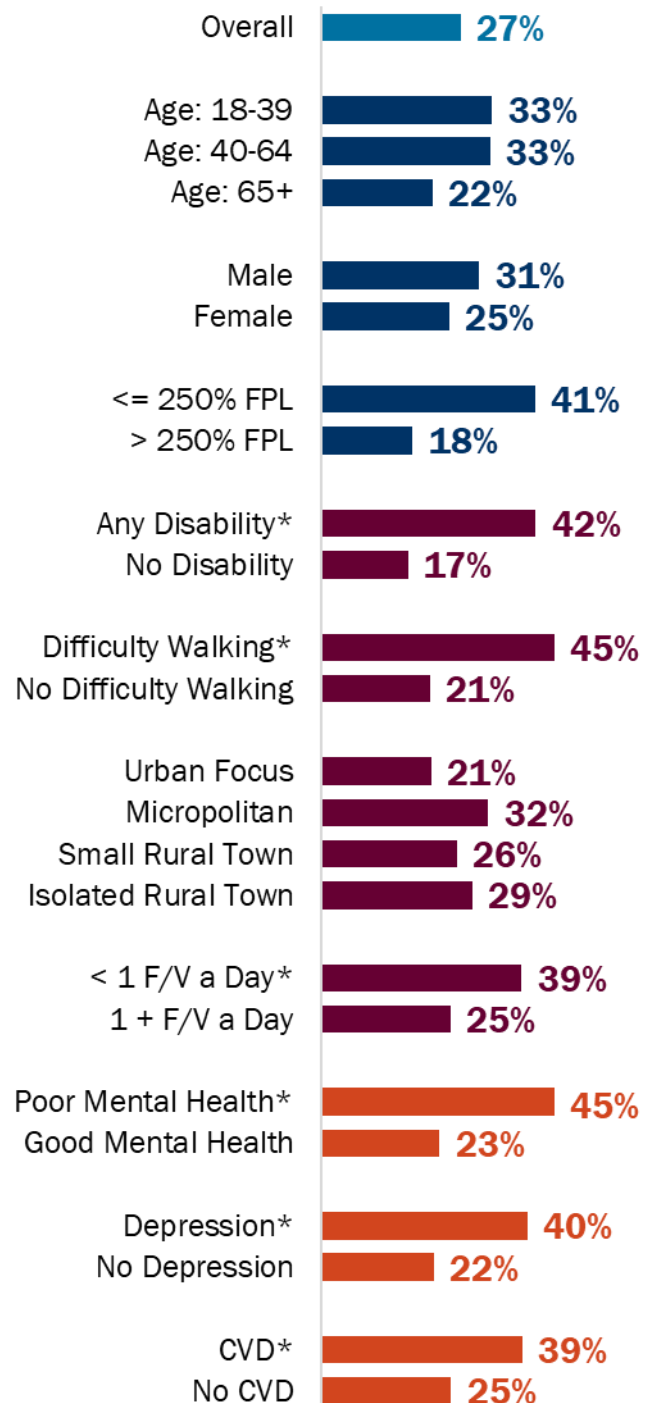
Data Source: BRFSS, 2021



Work limitations due to arthritis can lead to a reduced quality of life among individuals and lead to potential financial strain, a loss of independence, social isolation and emotional distress, like depression and poor mental health.

- Over a quarter (27%) of Vermont adults with arthritis report that their joint symptoms affect their ability to work or the type or amount of work that they do.
- Vermont adults experiencing work limitations due to arthritis are significantly higher among adults with a disability and among adults who reported difficulty walking or climbing up stairs.
- Adults 40-64 years old are significantly more likely to report work limitations than those 65+. All other differences by age are not significant.
- Vermont adults with arthritis experiencing work limitations due to arthritis is significantly higher among those living in households at 250% of the FPL or less compared to those above 250% the FPL.

Work limitations due to arthritis by populations of focus, measures of well-being and risk factors for social isolation.

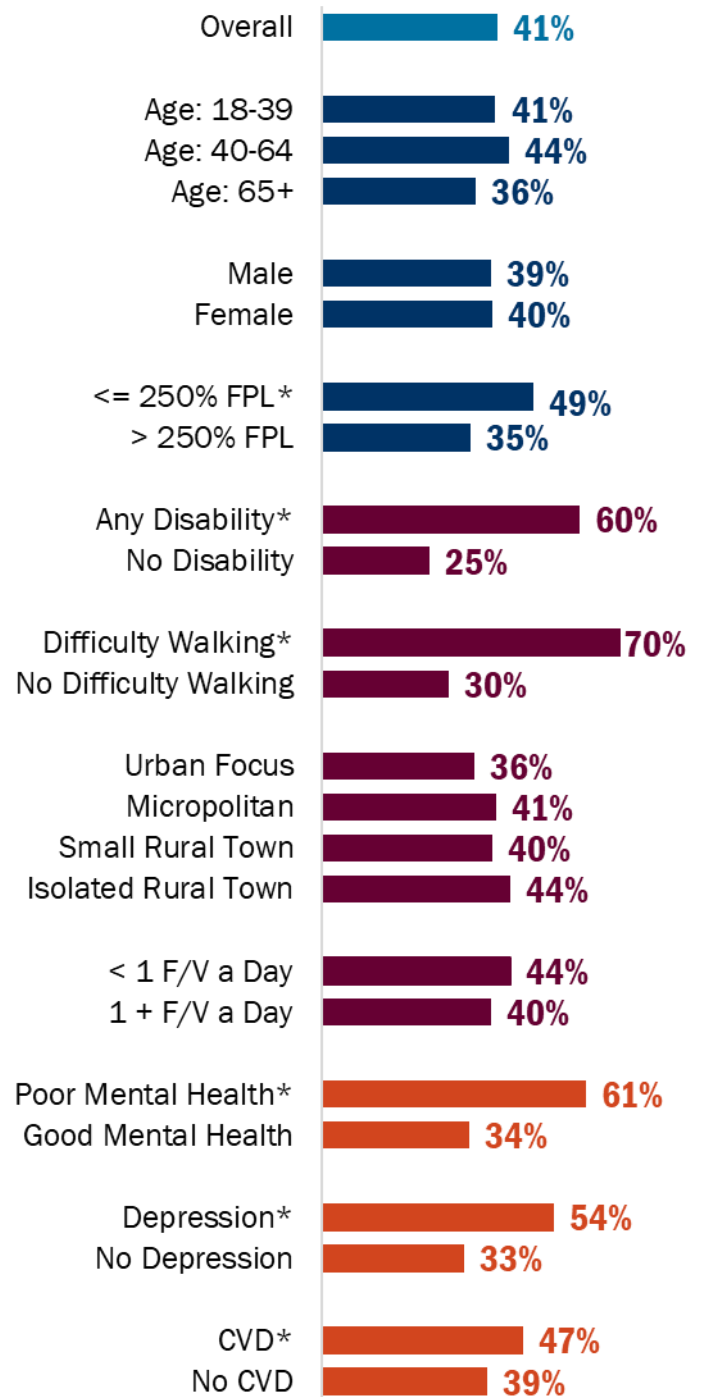


Data Source: BRFSS, 2021

Due to arthritis related joint symptoms, individuals can experience interruptions and limitations to their lifestyle. These limitations can have a profound effect on an individual's quality of life leading to depression and poor mental health.

- Two in five (41%) of Vermont adults with arthritis report their joint symptoms cause limitations in their lifestyle by interfering with their normal social activities.
- Vermont adults who report social lifestyle limitations due to symptoms of their arthritis are significantly more likely to live in households at less than or equal to 250% of the FPL compared to those in households living at 250% or higher.
- Experiencing lifestyle limitations due to arthritis is significantly more likely for adults with depression, cardiovascular disease or who experience poor mental health than those without depression or not experiencing poor mental health.
- The rate of Vermont adults with arthritis reporting that their joint symptoms interfere with their normal social activities is significantly higher among adults with a disability compared to those without a disability

Lifestyle limitations due to arthritis by populations of focus, measures of well-being and risk factors for social isolation.

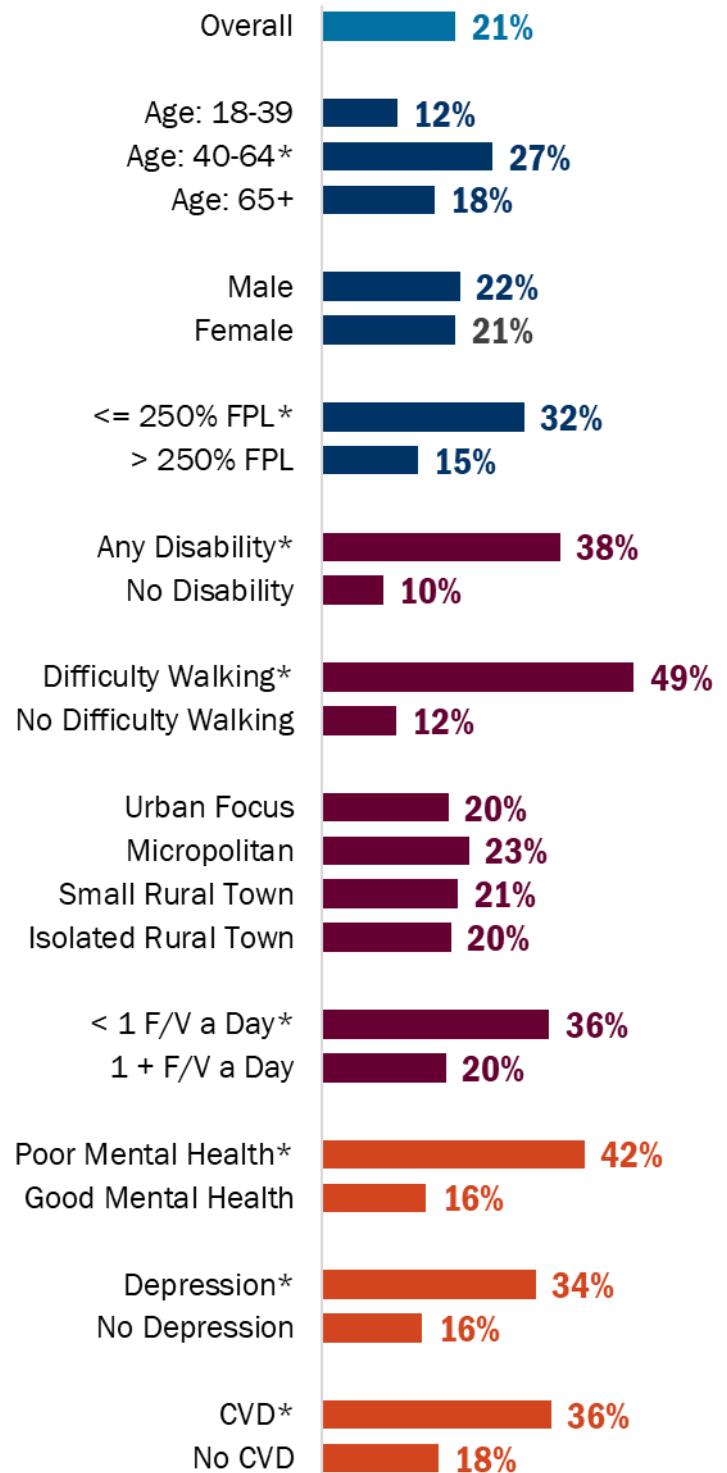


Data Source: BRFSS, 2021

The main symptoms of arthritis are joint pain and stiffness.

- One in five (21%) Vermont adults with arthritis report that their joint pain is severe.
- The rate of Vermont adults with arthritis reporting severe joint pain is significantly higher among those with arthritis living in households 250% of the FPL or less compared to those in households living at 250% or higher.
- Severe joint pain due to arthritis is significantly more likely among those who consume less than one fruit and vegetable a day, have depression, and experience poor mental health
- The rate of Vermont adults with arthritis reporting severe joint pain is significantly higher among those with a disability compared to those who do not have a disability.
- Adults aged 40-64 years old are significantly more likely to report severe joint pain compared to all other age groups.

Severe Joint Pain due to arthritis by populations of focus, measures of well-being and risk factors for social isolation.



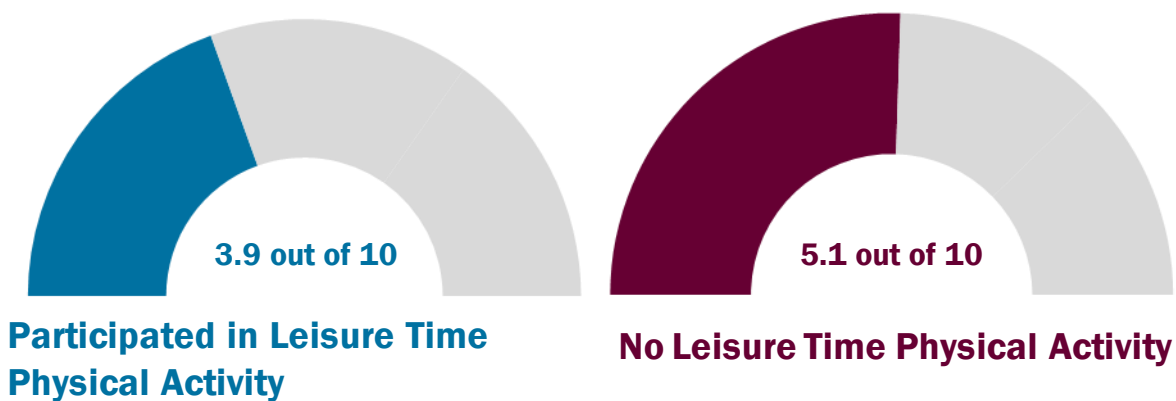
Data Source: BRFSS, 2021

Arthritis Self-Management

Chronic care self-management courses can provide ways for people with arthritis to engage in evidence-based interventions, like low impact exercises, which can help reduce pain, improve movement and manage the symptoms of arthritis.

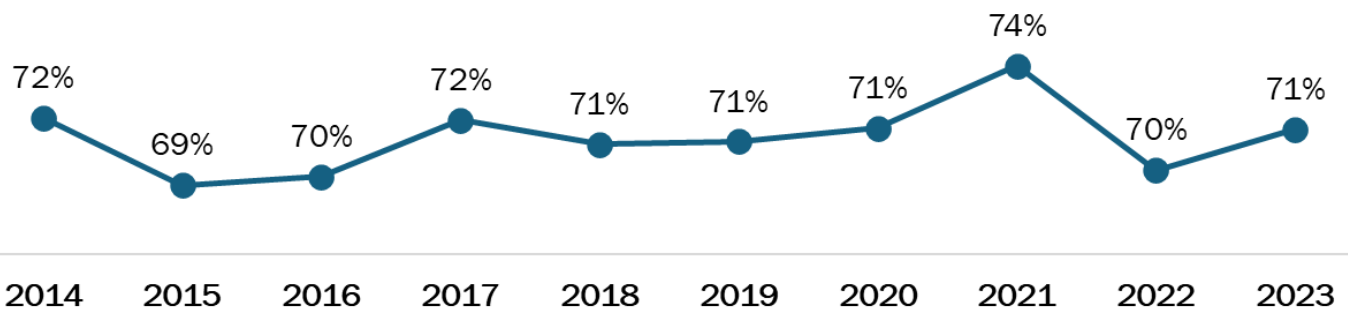
Low impact physical activity can help reduce pain and improve function for adults with arthritis. Two thirds (67%) of Vermont adults with arthritis who saw a health care provider for a routine checkup had a provider suggest physical activity to help manage joint symptoms. Of those, three quarters (75%) report participating in leisure time physical activity, and 73% report walking is their exercise of choice.

On average, adults with arthritis who participate in leisure time physical activity rate their joint pain lower than adults who did not participate in any leisure time physical activity.



Data Source: BRFSS, 2021

The percent of adults with arthritis who participate in any physical activity has remained stable from 2014-2023.



Data Source: BRFSS, 2014-2023

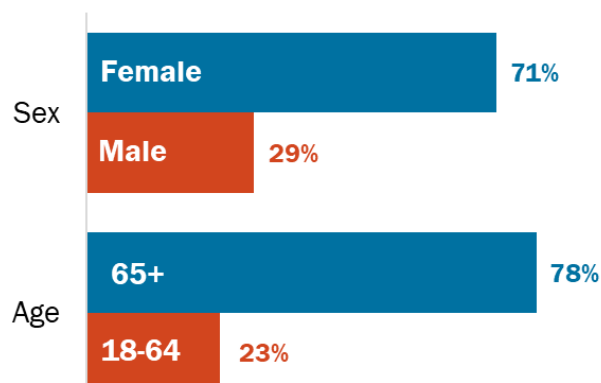
Pain management courses, like [My Healthy Vermont's Chronic Pain Management Workshops](#), offer community-based support, from medication management to emotional support and exercise instruction for people suffering from chronic pain. However, only 13% of Vermont adults with arthritis have taken an educational course on managing their arthritis or joint pain.

Self-care/home management training is a chronic care intervention strategy that offers provider-based education to patients on joint protection strategies, compensatory strategies for home activities like cooking and cleaning, and help to enhance the patient's ability to function independently.

The rate of Vermont adults with arthritis receiving self-care/home management training has increased significantly since 2016, rising from 77.5 per 100,000 insured adults with arthritis to 230.9 per 100,000.

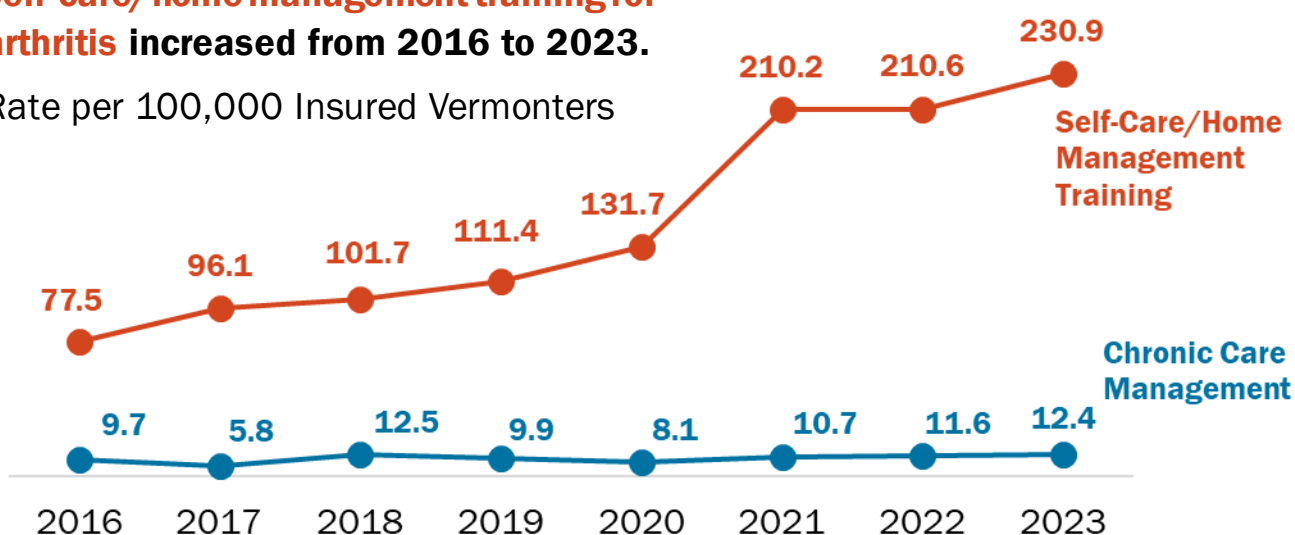
Females are significantly more likely to receive training than males (71% vs. 29%), and adults 65 years and older are significantly more likely than younger adults under the age of 64 (78% vs. 23%).

Females and Adults 65 years and older are much more likely to receive self-care/home management training for arthritis.



The rate of health care encounters for self-care/home management training for arthritis increased from 2016 to 2023. Source: GMCB VHCURES, 2023 - extract 3014 - extracted 6/25/25.

Rate per 100,000 Insured Vermonters



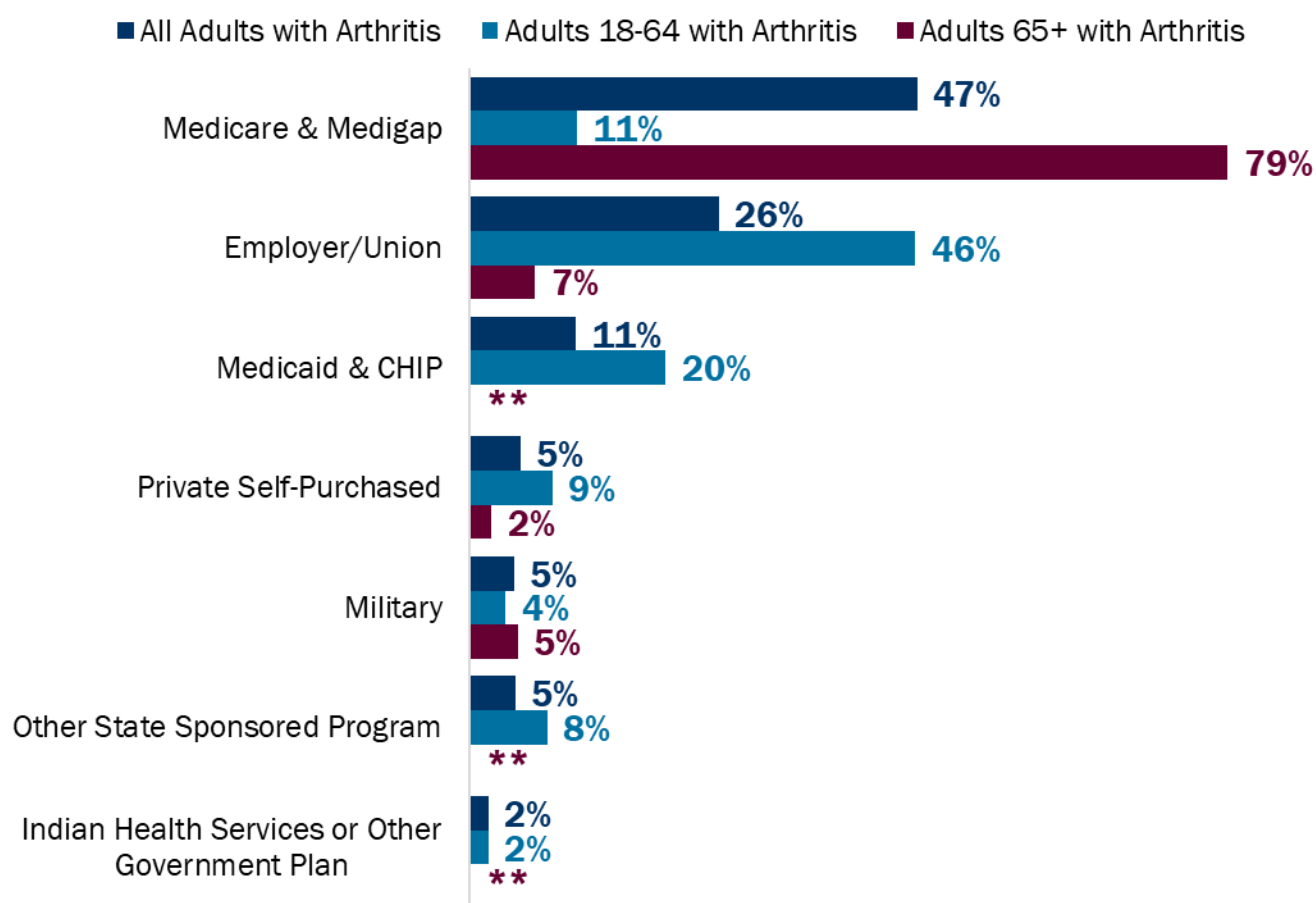
Source: GMCB Vermont Health Care Uniform Reporting and Evaluation System (VHCURES), 2016-2023 - extract 3014 - extracted 6/25/25.

All analyses, conclusions, and recommendations provided here are solely those of the Department of Health and not necessarily those of the GMCB.

Almost all adults who have arthritis report having some form of health plan (99%). Among adults with arthritis who have health plan coverage:

- The majority are covered by Medicare & Medigap (47%). This is significantly driven by adults over the age of 65, among whom three quarters of the population is covered by Medicare or Medigap (79%).
- About half of those ages 18-64 are covered by an employer/union health plan (46%).
- Those age 18-64 are significantly more likely to possess a health coverage plan supplied by their employer/union, Medicaid or CHIP, or a private self-purchased plan than all adults with arthritis, regardless of age.

Vermont Adults with Arthritis by Source of Medical Health Plan Coverage, 2023



** Value suppressed because sample size is too small or relative standard error (RSE) > 30
Data Source: BRFSS 2023

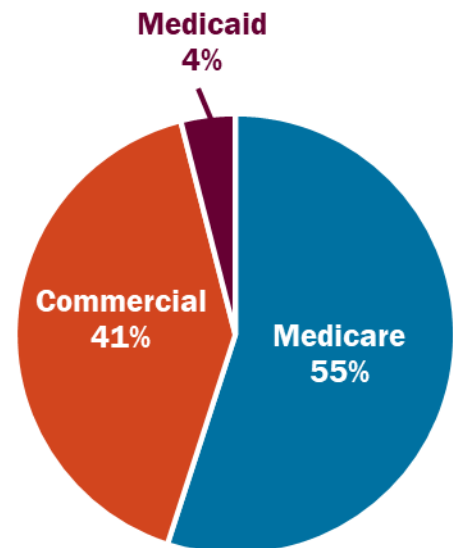
Medicare is a form of government sponsored health insurance that is available to adults over the age of 65 and any adult with severe disabilities. This plays a critical role in ensuring that adults with arthritis receive the care they need.

While the majority of adults with arthritis between the ages of 18 and 64 possess employer-sponsored health insurance, they are almost twice as likely to have Medicare coverage than all adults in Vermont (11% vs. 6%, respectively).

Likewise, among adults who have received self-care/home management training for arthritis, over half were covered by Medicare.

More than half of Vermont adults who received self-care/home management training for arthritis were primarily covered by Medicare with two in five covered by commercial insurance.

Proportion of adults 18+ years old with an encounter in 2023.



Source: GMCB VHCURES, 2023 - extract 3014 - extracted 6/25/25.

Resources

- For more information on the [State of Vermont's Arthritis Program](#).
- Arthritis appropriate physical activity programs are available through several [Area Agencies on Aging \(AAAs\)](#).
- [Low impact physical activity](#) can help reduce pain and improve function.
- [UVM's Walk with Ease](#) program offers physical activity support/group options.
- [My Healthy Vermont](#) offers chronic pain management workshops that can help with arthritis.
- [The Osteoarthritis Action Alliance](#) can provide additional resources and programs that utilize arthritis-appropriate, evidence-based interventions.

Data Notes

The Vermont Department of Health recognizes the many social, economic and environmental inequities which drive the data in this document. We are working to incorporate data reflective of these lived experiences among all Vermonters.

In this report: disability includes anyone who reports having a serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs, concentrating or making decisions, hearing, seeing, dressing or bathing or who, because of a physical, mental or emotional condition, has difficulties doing errands alone; sex refers to sex assigned at birth; BIPOC is Black, Indigenous, or people of color; LGBTQ+ is lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and other sexual orientations; WnH is White non-Hispanic; HetCis is heterosexual and cisgendered; urban and rural distinctions are designated based on the [USDA Rural-Urban Commuting Areas Codes](#) Type A; F/V means fruit and vegetable consumption; FPL is the Federal Poverty Limit.