

# Diabetes among Vermont Veterans

March 2026

[Routine surveillance of diabetes](#) among Vermonters found that Vermont veterans have the highest rate of diagnosed diabetes compared to other groups. Veterans make up approximately 9% of the Vermont adult population (about 46,200 Vermonters). Around two in five of them (19%) have diabetes. Compared to the general population, veterans often live and work in different conditions than most people, including high stress environments, especially those who have deployed to combat areas. This provides them with unique experiences and exposures, which likely lead to a unique relationship with diabetes. This data brief describes diabetes among Vermont veterans and examines the health outcomes that they experience.

### Key Points

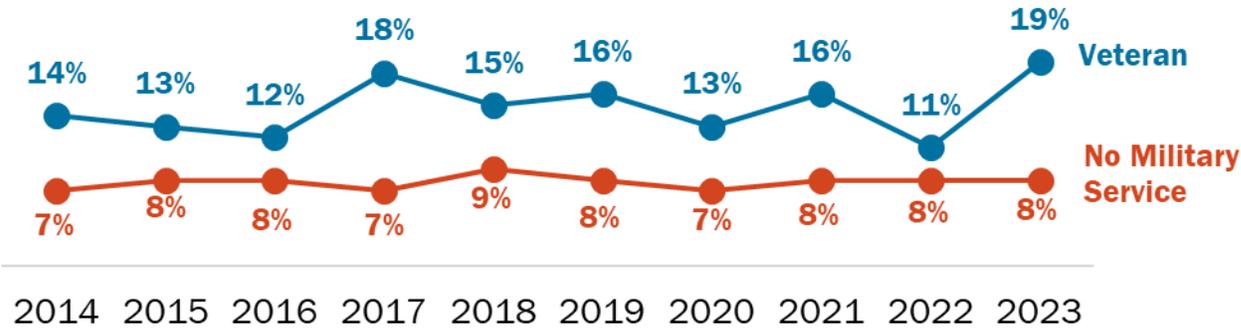
- **Diabetes prevalence is more than two times higher among veterans.**
- **On average, veterans are diagnosed with diabetes at an older age.**
- **Veterans experience poor mental health at a rate more than twice that of those with no military service.**

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## Annual Prevalence

- The prevalence of diagnosed diabetes among Vermont veterans in 2023 (19%) is more than twice the prevalence of diabetes among those with no military service (8%).
- In all years, except 2022, the prevalence of diagnosed diabetes was statistically higher among Vermont veterans compared to those with no military service.

**The prevalence of diagnosed diabetes among Vermont veterans is consistently higher than those with no military service.**



Source: Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), 2014-2023



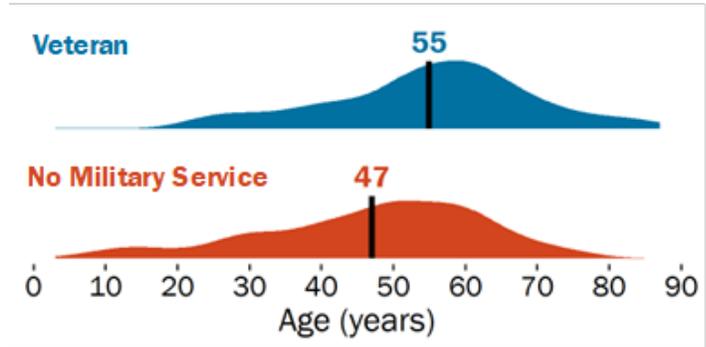
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## Diabetes and Age

- On average, Vermont veterans tend to be older (55-years) at the time of diabetes diagnosis compared to those without military service (47-years).

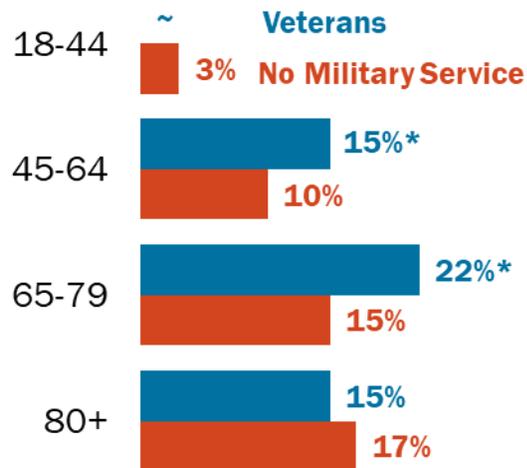
**Distribution of Age at Diabetes Diagnosis by Military Service with Mean Age Indicated Among Vermont Adults**



Source: BRFSS, 2023

- Diagnosed diabetes prevalence increases with age. Though the prevalence decreases in veterans 80 and older while continuing to rise among those with no military service.
- Vermont veterans 45-64 years old have a significantly higher prevalence of diagnosed diabetes (15%) compared to those with no military service (10%).
- Similarly, veterans 65-79 years old are significantly more likely to have diagnosed diabetes (22%) compared to those with no military service (15%).

**Among adults 45-64 and 65-79 years old, veterans are significantly more likely to have diabetes than those with no military service.**



~ Suppressed due to small numbers or low statistical reliability.

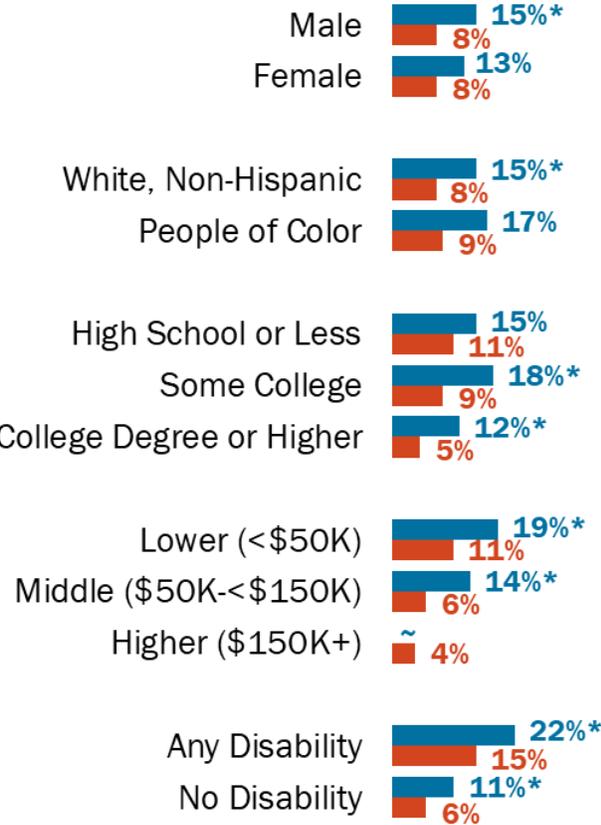
\*Statistical difference by veteran status.

Source: BRFSS, 2021-2023

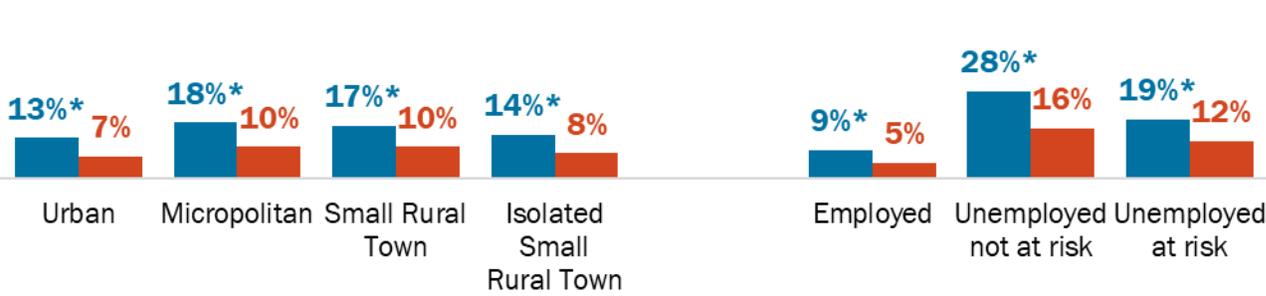
## Population Characteristics

- Compared to those with no military service, diagnosed diabetes prevalence is significantly higher among Vermont veterans who:
  - Are male,
  - Are white, non-Hispanic,
  - Have some college or higher education,
  - Have Lower to Middle annual household incomes, or
  - Have a disability.
- Additionally, veterans with a disability have a significantly higher prevalence than those with no disability.

**Vermont veterans experience a higher burden of diagnosed diabetes compared to those with no military service in every demographic category.**



**Vermont Veterans have a significantly higher prevalence of diagnosed diabetes compared to those with no military service regardless of geographic setting or employment status.**

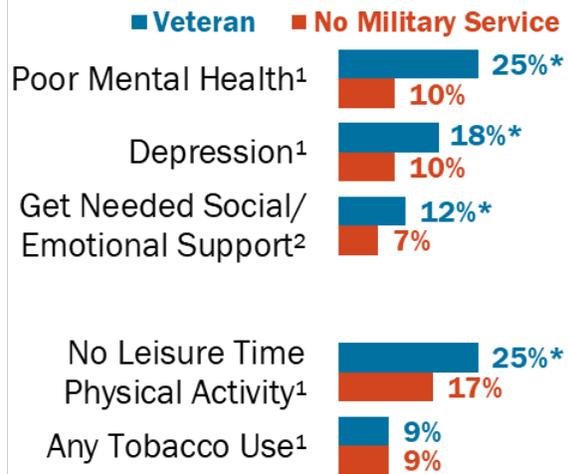


\*Statistical difference by veteran status.  
 ~Data suppressed due to small sample size or low statistical reliability.  
 Source: BRFSS, 2021-2023

## Mental Health and Other Risk Factors

- Vermont veterans with diagnosed diabetes are significantly more likely to report poor mental health (25%) and depression (18%) than those with no military service (10%).
- Veterans are more likely to always/usually get the social and emotional support they need (12%) than those with no military service (7%).
- Vermont veterans are significantly more likely to not get any leisure time physical activity (25%) than those with no military service (17%).
- Suicidal ideation, binge and heavy drinking were examined but could not be reported due to small numbers and low statistical reliability.

### Mental health outcomes and risk factors among adults with diagnosed diabetes by veteran status.

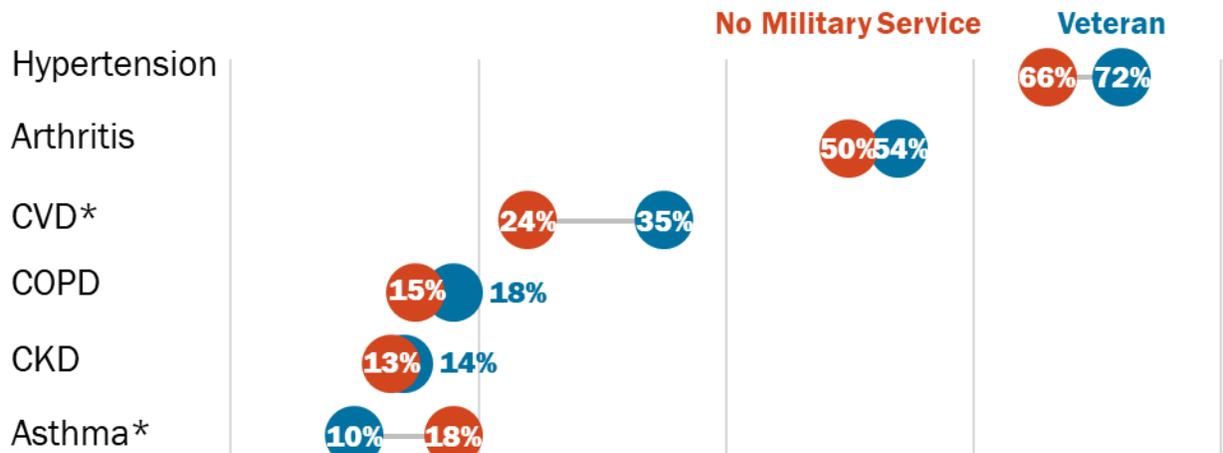


\*Statistical difference by veteran status.  
 Source: <sup>1</sup>BRFSS, 2021-2023; <sup>2</sup>BRFSS, 2018, 2020, 2022

## Co-Occurring Chronic Conditions

Vermont **Veterans** with diabetes have higher rates of nearly all co-occurring chronic conditions compared to those with **no military service**.

The rate of cardiovascular disease (CVD) is significantly higher among veterans with diabetes. The rate of asthma is significantly lower among veterans.



\*Statistical difference by veteran status. Source: BRFSS, 2021-2023

COPD = Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, CKD = Chronic Kidney Disease

## Summary

These results show that veterans in Vermont over 45 years of age are at higher risk for diabetes, similar to what is seen nationally.<sup>1</sup> While it is not known exactly why this is the case, it suggests that there is some characteristic, experience or exposure unique to veterans. The older average age of diagnosis among veterans is of interest because it could reflect the positive influence of the more physically active lifestyle military service members lead and therefore delay diabetes onset or it could represent delayed diagnosis which could result in worse health outcomes.

Research suggests that having post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can increase the risk of diabetes.<sup>2</sup> This implies that the higher rates of poor mental health and depression among Vermont veterans are important to consider as it may be likely that stress and anxiety are more common among them. Since chronic stress can lead to insulin resistance and, if not addressed, type 2 diabetes,<sup>3</sup> PTSD and anxiety are likely significant modifiable risk factors. Other unique exposures and experiences may deserve further consideration as well.

## References

<sup>1</sup> Liu Y, Saya S, Show X, et al. Prevalence of and Trends in Diabetes Among Veterans, United States, 2005-2014. *Prev Chronic Dis*. 2017;14:E135. Published 2017 Dec 14. Doi:10.5888/pcd.170230.

<sup>2</sup> Scherrer JF, Salas J, Wang W, et al. Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Type 2 Diabetes Outcomes in Veterans. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2024;7(8):e2427569. Published 2024 Aug 1. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2024.27569.

<sup>3</sup> Sharma K, Akre S, Chakole S, Wanjari MB. Stress-Induced Diabetes: A Review. *Cureus*. 2022;14(9):e29142. Published 2022 Sep 13. doi:10.7759/cureus.29142

## Notes

Veterans include those who have ever served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces, in either the regular military, National Guard, or military reserves.

Employment status: Unemployed at risk are those out of work or unable to work; Unemployed not at risk are those who are homemakers, students, or retired; Employed are those employed for wages or self-employed.

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](http://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.