

# Health Care Utilization among Incarcerated Individuals in Vermont

December 2025

There is growing recognition that incarceration is a significant public health issue. Studies have shown that when compared to the general population, people who are incarcerated are more likely to have chronic diseases like high blood pressure, asthma, cancer, and arthritis, as well as infectious diseases like tuberculosis, hepatitis C, and HIV<sup>1</sup>. This places a great deal of responsibility on the correctional system to provide the appropriate standard of care to people who are incarcerated.

In Vermont, there is a desire to better understand how patterns of health care utilization among the incarcerated population compare to those of the general population. This data brief explores demographics, type of care, and common reasons for seeking care.

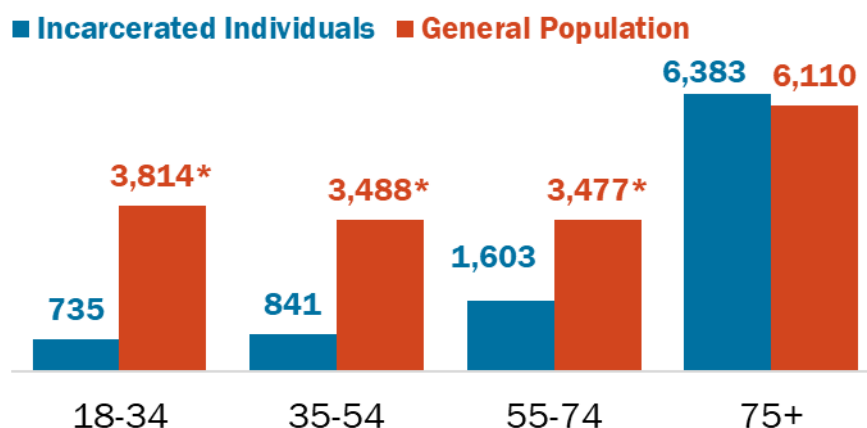
Due to data limitations, data for incarcerated individuals is for the 2023-2024 fiscal year, while the data for the general population is for the 2021-2022 fiscal year.

If you need help accessing or understanding this information, contact [ahs.vdhpdpanalytics@vermont.gov](mailto:ahs.vdhpdpanalytics@vermont.gov).

## Demographics

**Younger incarcerated individuals visit the emergency department or hospital at lower rates than the general population. Incarcerated individuals who are 75 years and older visit at similar rates to the general population.**

Rate per 10,000 people



Source: Vermont Department of Corrections, 2023-2024. Vermont Uniform Hospital Discharge Data Set, 2021-2022.

\*Statistically significant difference between groups.



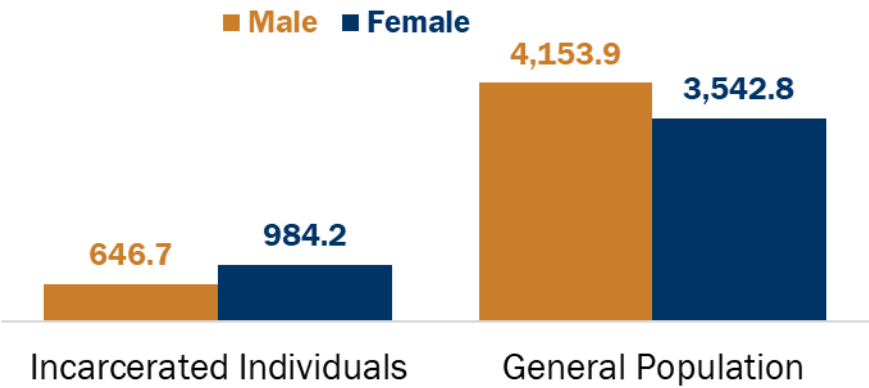
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During the 2023-2024 fiscal year, there were 578 visits to the emergency department, 111 inpatient/emergency department visits, 20 inpatient only hospital visits, and 22 observation visits among incarcerated individuals.

**Among incarcerated individuals, more females visit the emergency department or hospital while among the general population more males visit the emergency department or hospital.**

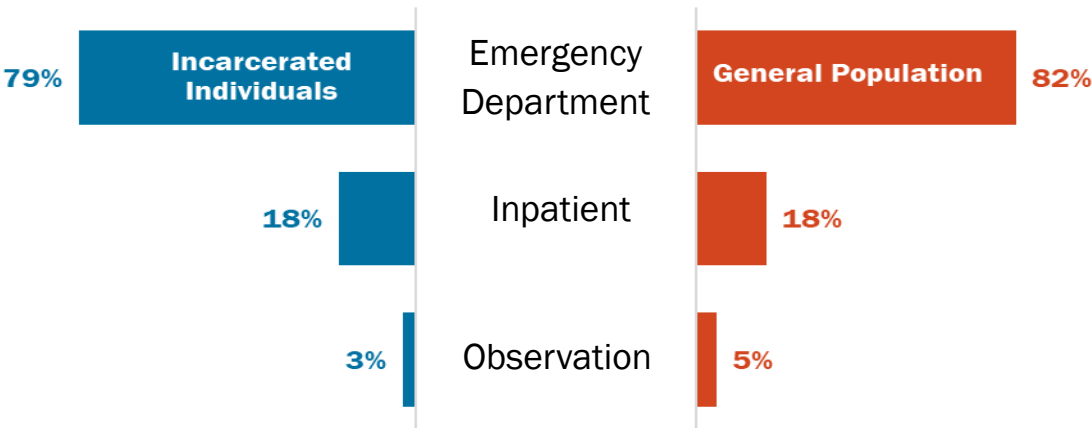
Rate per 10,000 people



Source: Vermont Department of Corrections, 2023-2024. Vermont Uniform Hospital Discharge Data Set, 2021-2022.

**Type of Care and Method of Transportation**

**Overall, incarcerated individuals and the general population have similar utilization of three different types of hospital health care.**



Source: Vermont Department of Corrections, 2023-2024. Vermont Uniform Hospital Discharge Data Set, 2021-2022.

The most common way incarcerated individuals are transported to the hospital is via custody car (58%), followed by ambulance (41%). The remainder are either booked at the bedside or transported by air ambulance.

## Top 10 Primary Diagnoses by Population

Incarcerated Individuals (ED)	Incarcerated Individuals (Inpatient)	General Population (ED)	General Population (Inpatient)
Chest Pain	***	COVID-19	Sepsis
Seizures	***	Chest Pain	COVID-19
Altered Mental Status	***	Nausea with Vomiting	Non-ST-Segment Elevation Myocardial Infarction
Abdominal Pain	***	Dizziness and Giddiness	Hypertensive Heart and Chronic Kidney Disease
Head Injury	***	Headache	COPD with Acute Exacerbation
Cellulitis	***	Urinary Tract Infection	Post-Term Pregnancy
Low Back Pain	***	Syncope and Collapse	Hypertensive Heart Disease with Heart Failure
Syncope and Collapse	***	Abdominal Pain	Pneumonia
Falls	***	Low Back Pain	Acute Kidney Failure
Opioid Use, With Withdrawal	***	Acute Upper Respiratory Infection	Urinary Tract Infection
*** To protect individual privacy, specific causes of inpatient visits for incarcerated individuals are suppressed due to small numbers.			

Note: The timeframe for the Vermont Uniform Hospital Discharge Data Set data (2021-2022) overlaps with the height COVID-19 pandemic, which explains why COVID-19 shows up as a common diagnosis for the general population. Other than COVID-19, the leading causes of ED or inpatient visits for the general population were similar to those seen prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

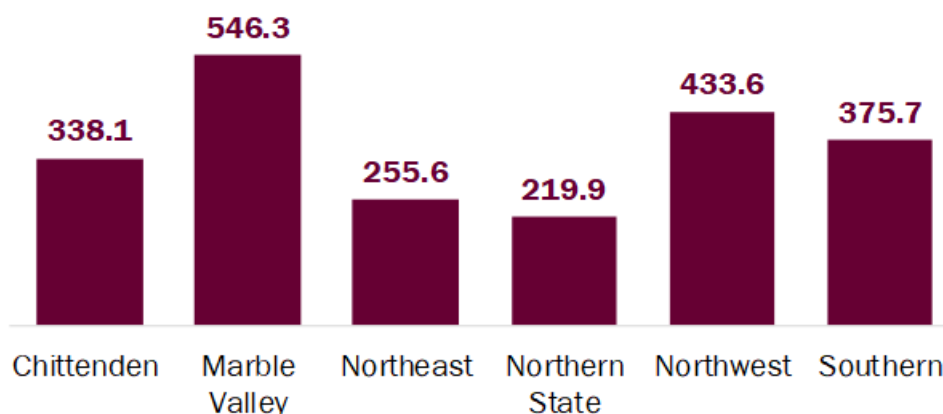
## Regional Patterns in Care

Regionally, incarcerated individuals have different hospital and emergency department use. The highest utilization rates are seen at Marble Valley Regional Correctional Facility.

The lowest rates are seen at Northern State Correctional Facility.

**Marble Valley Regional Correctional Facility has the highest rate of health care admissions.**

Rate per 10,000 incarcerated individuals at each facility



Source: Vermont Department of Corrections, 2023-2024.

Note: the above graph only includes records where a correctional facility was identified.

## Conclusion

Comparing health care utilization between incarcerated individuals and the general population revealed potentially informative information.

- Incarcerated individuals under the age of 75 visit the emergency department of a hospital at lower rates than the general population. Individuals aged 75 and older use the health care system at similar rates across groups.
- In the incarcerated population, females are more likely to utilize the health care system. In the general population, males utilize health care more often.
- Primary diagnoses of conditions like seizures, cellulitis, head injuries, and opioid use are common among the incarcerated population, but not as common in the general population.

**Disclaimer:** All analyses, conclusions, and recommendations provided here are solely those of the Vermont Department of Health and not necessarily those of the Green Mountain Care Board.

## References

1. [Healthy People 2030 Social Determinants of Health Literature Summaries: Incarceration.](#)