

# Physical Activity – Data Brief

## Vermont Behavioral Risk Factor Survey

### Background

Regular physical activity helps improve people’s overall health and fitness, and reduces the risk for many chronic diseases. Thus, fitting regular exercise into people’s daily schedule is important to maintaining health. Recommendations are for adults to get at least 2 hours and 30 minutes (150 minutes) of moderate-intensity aerobic activity (i.e., brisk walking) every week and muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days a week. Using 2011 Vermont Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) data we can look at exercise in adult Vermonters.

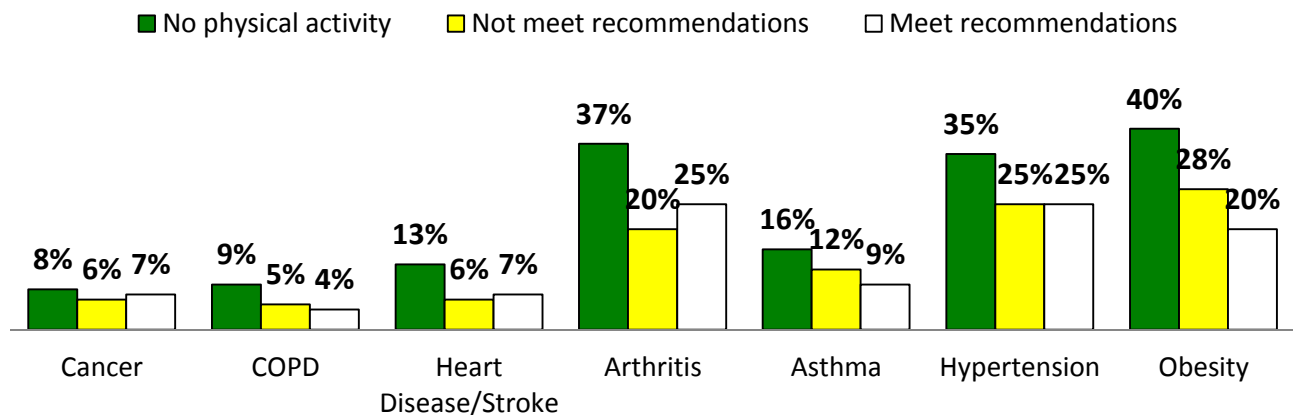
### Demographics

Nearly six in ten (59%) adult Vermonters exercise regularly and meet the physical activity recommendations. About a fifth (19%) of Vermont adults exercise but not enough to meet recommendations, and another fifth (22%) don’t exercise. About a third (29%) of Vermonters aged 65+ don’t exercise, which is nearly 30% higher than that of other age groups (around 20%). Adult Vermonters with higher levels of income and education are more likely to exercise than adults with lower levels of income and education. People who consider their own community unsafe for walking are less likely to do enough physical activity than those who consider their community safe for walking (47% vs. 60%). Exercise prevalence was statistically similar across races and gender.

### Chronic Diseases

Adults who do not exercise have a significantly higher prevalence of most chronic diseases than those who exercise. However, there were no significant differences when comparing those who exercise regularly but do not meet recommendations versus those who meet physical activity guidelines. The exception is in the prevalence of obesity. Vermont adults who meet physical activity recommendations are less likely to be obese compared with those who exercise, but do not meet recommendations.

**Chronic diseases by physical activity level**



### Risk Factors

In 2011, consumption of fruits and vegetables increased with level of physical activity; all differences by physical activity level are statistically significant.

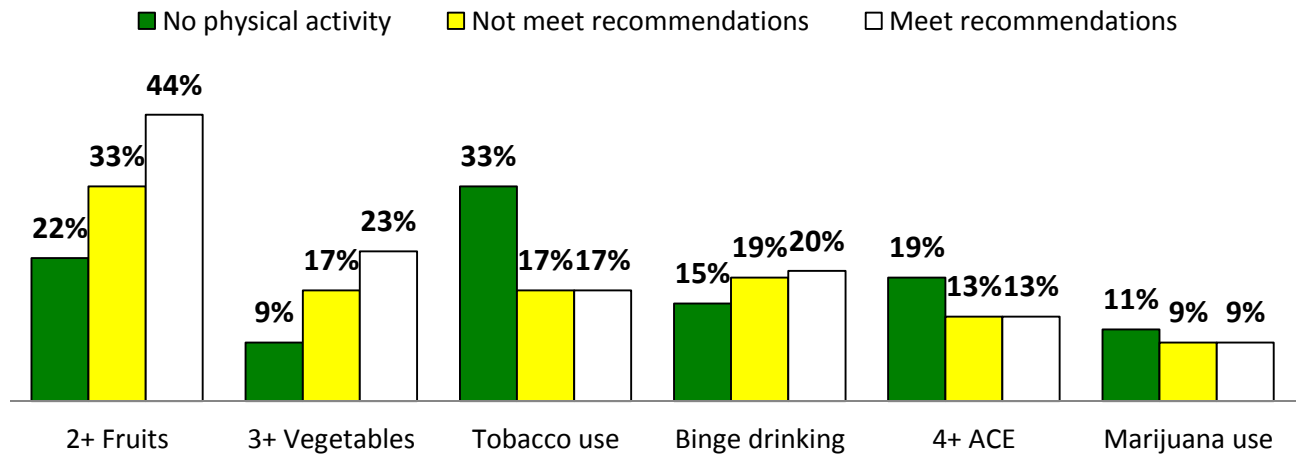
A third (33%) of adult Vermonters who don’t exercise currently smoke, while less than 20% of those who exercise at all report the same. Smoking was significantly higher among those with no exercise compared with

those with any. There were no differences in smoking prevalence between those who exercise some, but don't meet physical activity guidelines and those that meet guidelines. Additionally, about a fifth of not exercising Vermont adults had four or more adverse childhood experiences<sup>1</sup>, which is statistically higher than the 13% reported by those who do exercise.

Interestingly, adults who don't exercise (15%) are less likely to binge drink than those who exercise (20%).

There are no significant differences in recent marijuana use by physical activity level.

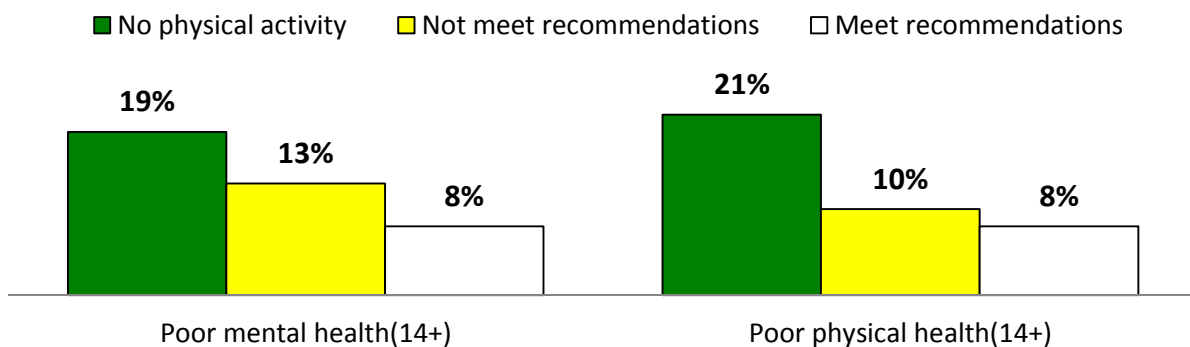
### Risk factors by physical activity level



### Mental and Physical Health

Poor mental and physical health rates decrease as physical activity increases. All reported poor mental health rates differ significantly by level of physical activity. Two in ten (21%) adults who do not exercise reported poor physical health, which is nearly two times that among adults with any exercise (9%), a statistically significant difference.

### Mental and physical health by physical activity level



For more information on the BRFSS or to suggest ideas for future BRFSS Data Briefs, contact Jessie Hammond, M.P.H or Jianjin Wang. ([Jessie.Hammond@state.vt.us](mailto:Jessie.Hammond@state.vt.us); 802-863-7663; [Jianjin.Wang@state.vt.us](mailto:Jianjin.Wang@state.vt.us)).

<sup>1</sup> For more information about adverse childhood experiences go to <http://www.cdc.gov/ace/> or see this data brief: [http://healthvermont.gov/research/brfss/documents/2010\\_data\\_brief\\_ace.pdf](http://healthvermont.gov/research/brfss/documents/2010_data_brief_ace.pdf).