

Older Adults - Data Brief

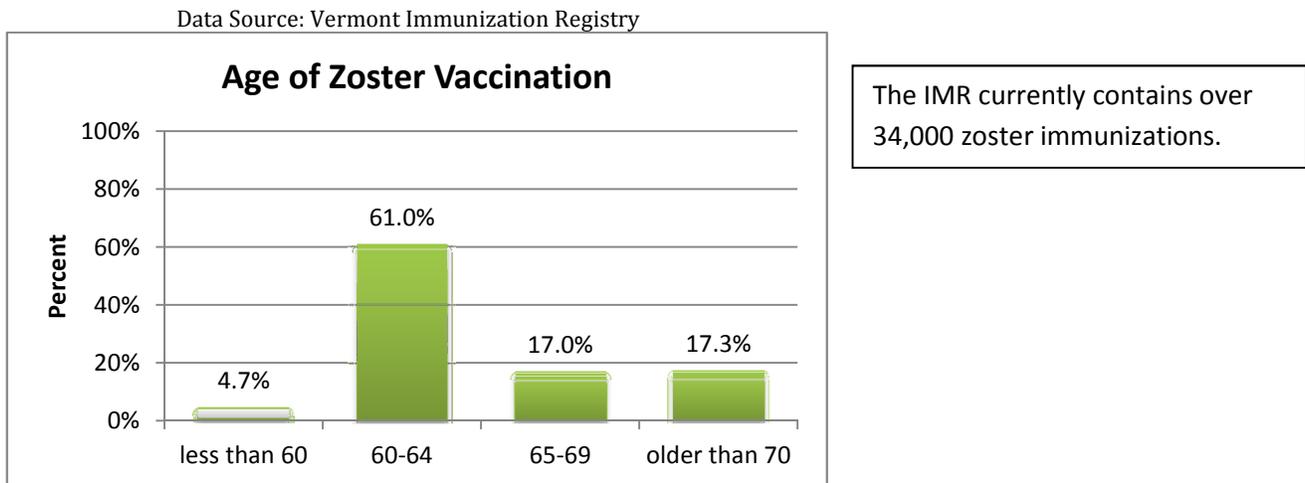
Vermont Immunization Registry

Background

Vaccines are often thought of primarily in the context of childhood, yet they are an important part of a person's healthcare regimen throughout life. As a person ages, their immune system tends to weaken, which can increase their risk for various diseases.¹ Several vaccines can help prevent disease as a person gets older. However, adult vaccination coverage remains low.²

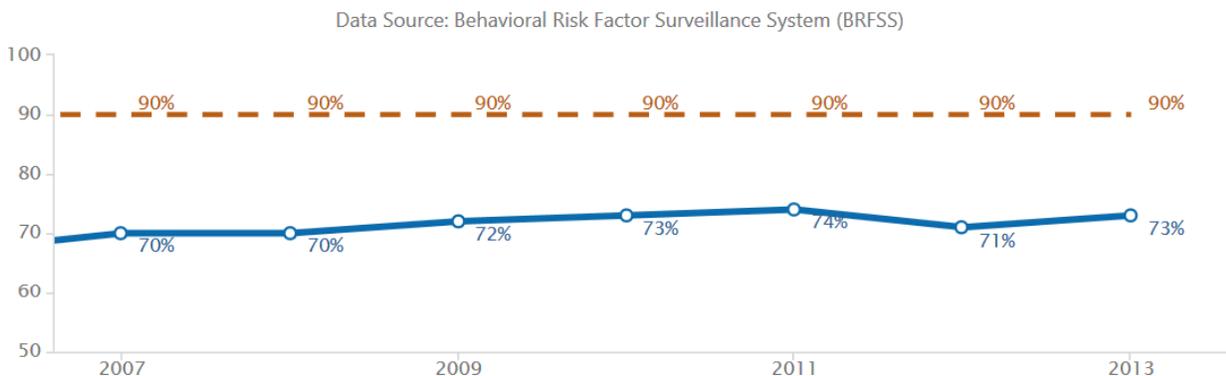
Herpes Zoster (Shingles)

Shingles is a painful localized skin rash, often with blisters, that is caused by the varicella zoster virus (VZV), the same virus that causes chickenpox.³ Since 2006, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have recommended that all adults ages 60 and older receive a single dose of zoster vaccine to prevent shingles, which can cause nerve pain.⁴ The Vermont Vaccines for Adults Program provides zoster vaccine to enrolled practices for use in their 60-64 year old patients. Below is a breakdown of the age at which Vermont adults received a zoster vaccination.



Pneumococcus

Streptococcus pneumoniae (pneumococcus) is a leading cause of serious illness, including invasive pneumococcal disease, meningitis and pneumonia in older adults.⁵ The recommendation for, and use of pneumococcal conjugate vaccine in children since 2000, has indirectly led to a decrease in pneumococcal disease among adults ≥ 65 years.⁵ Two pneumococcal vaccines are recommended for all people over the age of 65. Below is a graph over time showing the percentage of adults in Vermont over the age of 65 that have received at least one dose of a pneumococcal vaccine.⁶

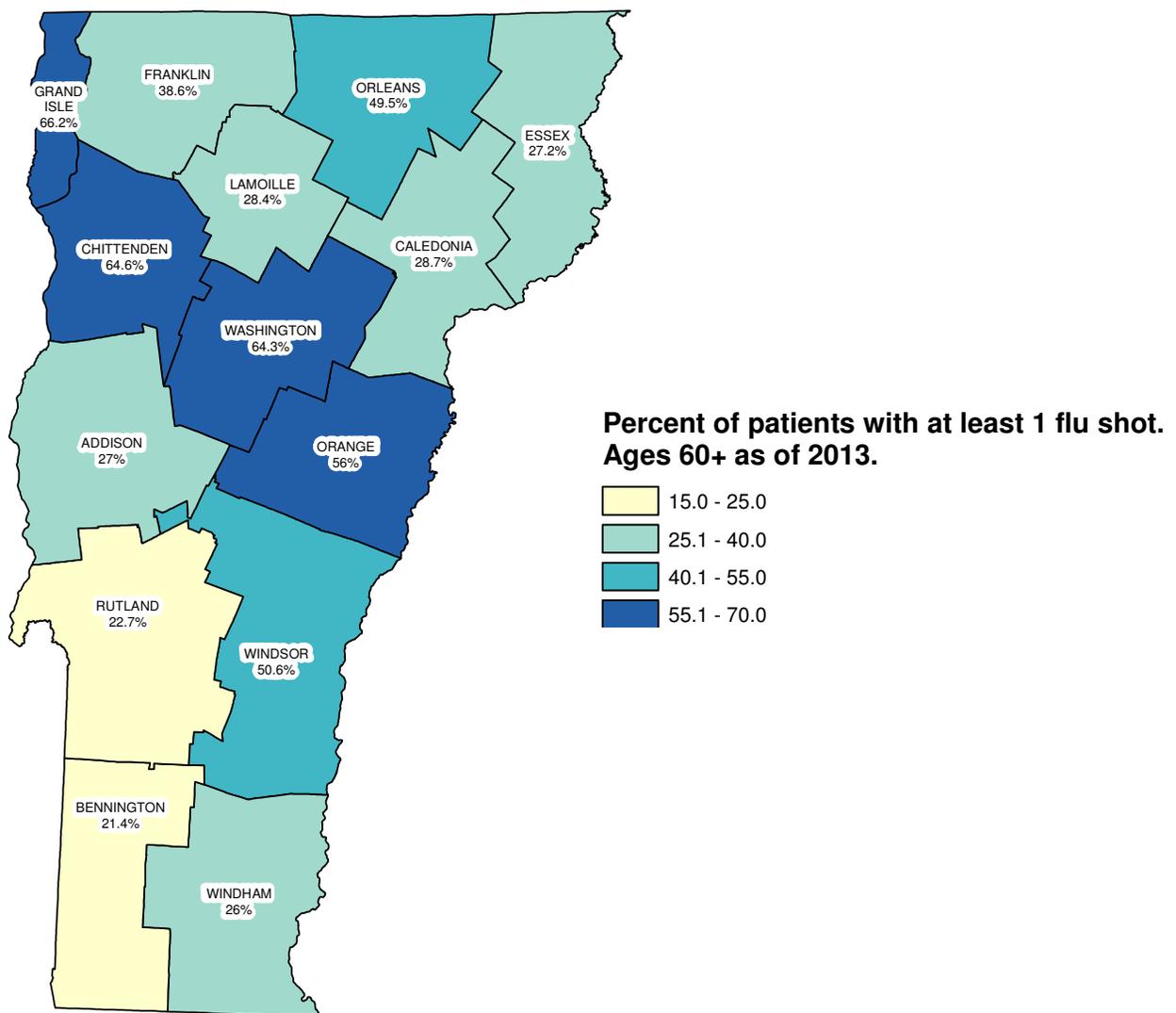


Influenza

Seasonal flu is a viral respiratory infection that can cause mild to severe illness, and can have potentially life-threatening complications.⁷ The best way to protect against the flu is to be vaccinated every year. This is especially true for the older population, whose immune systems may be weaker. Furthermore, when more people in a community are vaccinated, more people are protected from the influenza virus.

The map below shows the percentage of adults aged 60 years or older with one or more flu vaccinations as of 2013. The data comes from the Vermont Immunization Registry (IMR). While many Vermont medical providers serving adults report to the IMR, usage of the IMR is not yet universal. Also, many VT adults receive immunizations at pharmacies and nursing homes, some of which do not yet report to the IMR. Because of this, vaccine coverage in Vermont may actually be higher than the numbers suggest.

Data Source: Vermont Immunization Registry



¹ Vaccine Information for Adults, http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adults/rec-vac/index.html?s_cid=cs_650

² Vaccination Coverage Among Adults, Excluding Influenza Vaccination — United States, 2013,

http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6404a6.htm?s_cid=mm6404a6_e

³ Shingles (Herpes Zoster) Vaccination, <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/shingles/default.htm>

⁴ CDC's Advisory Committee Recommends "Shingles" Vaccination, <http://www.cdc.gov/media/pressrel/r061026.htm>

⁵ <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr> (Sept 19, 2014 / 63(37):822-825)

⁶ Immunization and Infectious Disease Performance Dashboard, http://www.healthvermont.gov/hv2020/dashboard/imm_infectious.aspx

⁷ Seasonal Influenza Q&A, <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/qa/disease.htm>