

Worksite Wellness: Chronic Disease – Data Brief

2014 Vermont Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)

Background

With over 68% of Vermont adults employed or seeking work,¹ worksites are a prime setting to reach a large segment of the Vermont population and influence family members and communities.

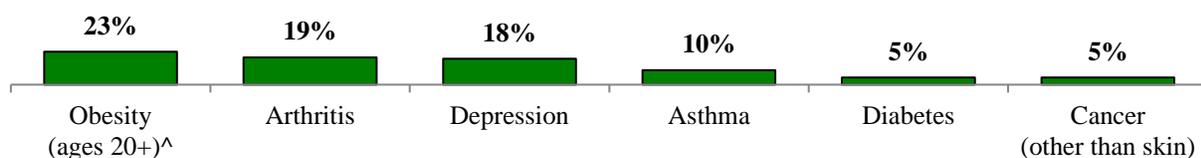
Comprehensive workplace health promotion programs that adopt best practices can create a culture of health. These programs provide a positive influence on employee health behaviors and overall health with positive financial outcomes for employers in the form of reduced absenteeism, healthcare utilization, and productivity.² Helping employees be healthier will decrease the impact of chronic disease on the workplace and lead to a more present and productive workforce.³

Chronic Disease

On average, employed Vermont adults reported their health kept them from their usual activities, which may include work, one day per month in 2014. More than half (56%) of employed Vermont adults had one or more chronic diseases, while a quarter had at least two (24%).

The most prevalent chronic diseases among employed Vermont adults in 2014, regardless of occupation, were obesity, arthritis, and depression. Almost a quarter (23%) of all employed adults 20 years of age or older were obese. Nineteen percent of employed adults in 2014 had arthritis. In 2013, over a quarter (28%) of employed adults who had arthritis said it affected their ability to work. Eighteen percent of employed adults in 2014 had a depressive disorder. One in 10 employed Vermont adults had asthma in 2014 and a little over half (53%) said it was exacerbated by a current or previous job. A small proportion of employed adults had diabetes (5%), cancer (5%), skin cancer (4%), cardiovascular disease (CVD) (3%), chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder (COPD) (3%), or chronic kidney disease (CKD) (1%).

Prevalence of Selected Chronic Diseases Among Employed Adults, BRFSS 2014



^Age-adjusted to the U.S. 2000 population.

Chronic Disease and Occupation

Obesity, depression, diabetes, CKD, asthma, non-skin cancer, and skin cancer prevalence by occupation all showed significant differences compared to the statewide rate for employed adults. Adults employed in Transportation, and Material Moving were significantly more likely to be obese (46%), have diabetes (11%) and CKD (7%) with an obesity and diabetes prevalence twice that of the state rate for employed adults and a CKD prevalence seven times the state rate. Healthcare Support workers had significantly higher rates of depression (34%) and asthma (21%) that were twice as high as employed adults overall.

The rate of depression among Office and Administrative Support workers (23%) was significantly higher than the state rate. Cancer, not including skin cancer, was significantly higher among those employed in Management (8%), which was almost twice the state rate for employed adults (5%). Skin cancer was significantly higher among Management (8%) as well as Education, Training, and Library (8%) workers, with rates twice the state rate for employed adults (4%).

The prevalence of obesity was less than half the state rate for employed adults among those working in Art, Design, Entertainment, Sports and Media (8%) and Life, Physical, and Social Service (8%) occupations. Depression was significantly lower among those employed in Construction and Extraction (10%), Production (8%), and Installation, Maintenance, and Repair (6%) occupations. Asthma was less than a third (3%) of the state rate for asthma among employed adults in Production occupations.

The prevalence of arthritis, CVD, or COPD did not differ significantly across occupations.

Prevalence of Chronic Disease among Vermont's Adult Workforce, By Occupation, BRFSS 2014

Occupation*	Chronic Disease Prevalence with Significant Differences from State Average							
	Estimated # Vermonters	Obesity	Depression	Diabetes	CKD	Asthma	Cancers (other than skin)	Skin Cancer
Office and Administrative Support	33,400		23% ↑					
Management	30,000						8% ↑	8% ↑
Education, Training, and Library	22,100							8% ↑
Construction and Extraction	20,300		10% ↓					
Production	17,300		8% ↓			3% ↓		
Transportation and Material Moving	11,100	46% ↑		11% ↑	7% ↑			
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	9,000		6% ↓					
Art, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	7,200	8% ↓						
Healthcare Support	7,000		34% ↑			21% ↑		
Life, Physical, and Social Service	4,000	8% ↓						
All Employed VERMONT Adults	314,900	23%	18%	5%	1%	10%	5%	4%

* For 11 of the 23 categories of occupations, there were no significant differences in any of the chronic disease prevalences compared to the statewide rate. Therefore, these occupations are not shown.

Worksite Wellness

The Vermont Department of Health has identified five priority strategies for worksites to adopt that will assist in creating environments that support chronic disease prevention. They are: 1) implementing healthy food and beverage policies, 2) going tobacco-free, 3) providing refrigerators, microwaves, and break areas, 4) helping employees get 30 minutes of physical activity every day, and 5) supporting local food initiatives. These strategies are low-cost and offer population-level impact on health.

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¹ United States Bureau of Labor and Statistics, 2015.

² Goetzl RZ, et al. Do workplace health promotion (wellness) programs work? *J Occup Environ Med.* 2014;56(9):927-934.

³ Vuong TD, et al. Absenteeism due to functional limitations caused by 7 common chronic diseases in US workers. *J Occup Environ Med.* 2015;57(7):779-784.