

# Falls Among Older Adults – Data Brief

## 2012 Vermont Behavioral Risk Factor Survey

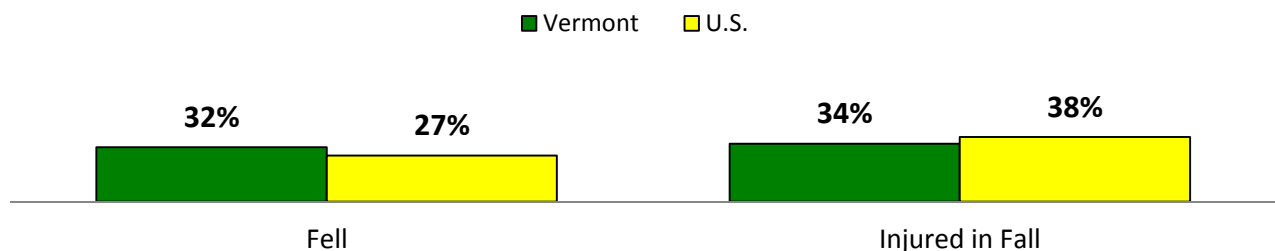
### Background

Falls among older adults are the leading cause of unintentional injuries, both fatal and non-fatal, in the U.S. and Vermont<sup>1</sup>. In 2010, 120 Vermont adults ages 65 and older died as a result of a fall<sup>2</sup>. More than 1,600 older Vermont adults were hospitalized and an additional 5,023 went to the emergency room due to a fall in 2009. The severity of non-fatal injuries can range from the more moderate, such as lacerations, to severe injuries like bone fractures and head trauma. Vermont Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System data from 2012 allows us to look at the occurrence of falls among older adults.

### Falls

In 2012, a third of Vermont adults 65 and older said they fell at least once in the last year. This is significantly higher than the approximately one in four U.S. adults who said the same (32% vs. 27%). However, among older adults who fell, similar proportions of Vermont and U.S. adults reported being injured during a fall (34% vs. 38%). Injured in a fall was defined as visiting a doctor due to the fall or limiting regular activities for at least a day or two because of the injury.

**Falls and Falls with Injury Resulting, In Last year**  
**Adults 65 and Older**



One in six (16%) older Vermont adults fell once in the last year. Eleven percent fell two or three times, and one in twenty, or five percent, fell four or more times.

**Falls in Last Year**  
**Vermont Adults 65 and Older**



### Health Status

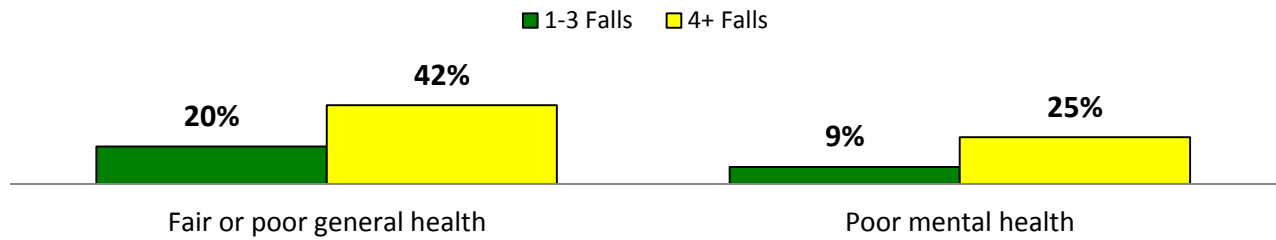
An estimated 4,500 Vermont adults ages 65 and older fell four or more times in the last year. As might be expected, these adults are significantly more likely to report fair or poor general health as compared with those with one to three falls (42% vs. 20%). Adults with four or more falls were nearly three times as likely as

<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) [online]. Accessed April 7, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Vermont Vital Statistics, 2010.

those with fewer falls to report poor mental health in the last month (14 or more poor mental health days), a statistically significant difference (25% vs. 9%).

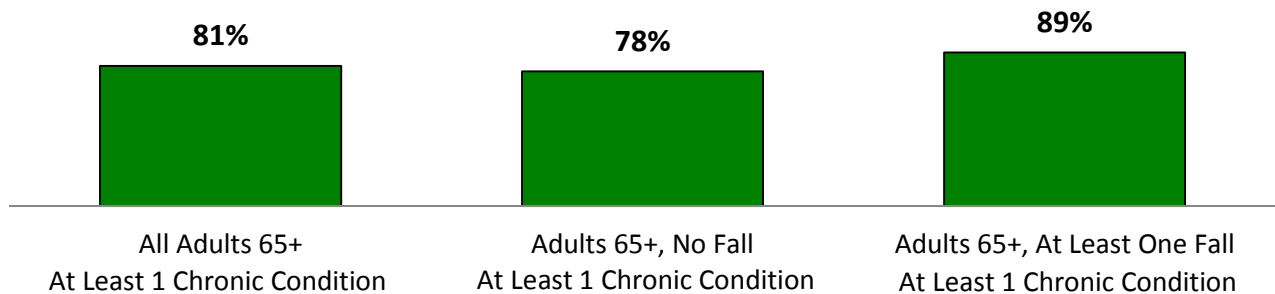
### Health Status Vermont Adults 65 and Older Who Fell



### Chronic Conditions

Eight in ten Vermont adults ages 65 and older have at least one chronic condition. Older adults with at least one fall are significantly more likely to have at least one chronic condition compared to those that did not fall.

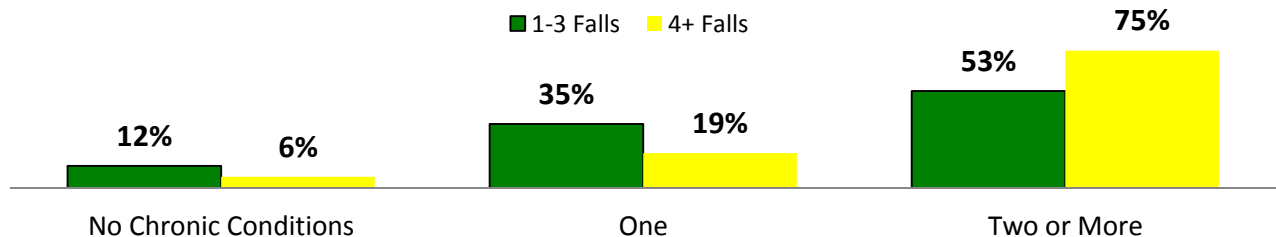
### Chronic Conditions\* and Falls Among Vermont Adults 65 and Older



\*Chronic conditions include: diabetes, arthritis, obesity, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, cancer, asthma, cardiovascular disease, and depression.

Older adults that fell four or more times in the last year have more chronic conditions than those with fewer falls. Three-quarters of those with four or more falls have at least two chronic conditions compared to about half of those with one to three falls, a statistically significant difference.

### Chronic Conditions\* Vermont Adults 65 and Older Who Fell



\*Chronic conditions include: diabetes, arthritis, obesity, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, cancer, asthma, cardiovascular disease, and depression.

### Demographics

There are no statistically significant differences between older adults that fell four or more times and one to three times by mean age, gender, education level, or annual household income level.

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