

Health drivers

- 📌 **An aging population:** 34.8% of Vermonters are 55 years or older, compared to 29% in the US. This is the fastest growing age group in the state.
- 📌 **A changing population:** The number of Vermonters of color has doubled in the last 15 years.
- 📌 Problems with **housing, the high cost of living, and accessing medical and mental health/substance use services** are greater for Vermonters of color, members of the LGBTQ+ community, older Vermonters, Indigenous Peoples, Vermonters with disabilities, and the unhoused community.

“I can't get into a counselor, there is no one is going to help me, so I am going to take a pill. I'm going to shoot up, I'm going to do whatever I got to do to get these bad thoughts out of my head. The help is just not there.”

- 📌 The rising cost of living has put many Vermonters in **a state of economic crisis**.
- 📌 **Even with insurance**, out-of-pocket healthcare expenditures further strain limited family incomes.
- 📌 In 2020, **26.1%** of calls to Vermont 2-1-1 were for housing, employment, or income support.
- 📌 **Homelessness rose by 197%** since 2020, and even more for people of color and Indigenous Peoples. There was also a 36% increase in homelessness for families with children from 2022-2023.

“Rent is rising and rising and rising, we're paying more for no changes in conditions of housing, right? It's just like an astronomical rise for no additional benefit.”

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“It is not ok for someone with...leukemia to wait 4 months just to get in the door...some leukemias will be terminal in a shorter time than this.”

Healthcare provider shortages, across the state, lead to long wait times for services. One-third of all Vermonters with long service wait times had **physical and psychological pain** and declines in overall health as a result.

Increased rates of mortality in Vermont (per 100,000 residents)	VT	US
Coronary Heart Disease	101.3	91.5
Suicide	17.7	13.8
Unintentional Injury	59.7	50.4
Cancer	156.1	149.4

Increased mental health challenges: More than one-third of all Vermonters reported **anxiety and depression symptoms** in 2021. The growth in the **suicide rate** is among the fastest in the nation.

Of the 6,000 Vermonters age 12-17 reporting depression symptoms in 2021, **41% did not get treatment**. 25% of all people who chose not to get mental health treatment did so because of **cost**.

More Vermonters are turning to the emergency room for basic medical care and to their primary care doctors for help with social and economic needs, like finding safe, affordable housing and getting access to healthy foods.

Growing substance use: 22% of Vermonters ages 12 and older reported using cannabis in the last 30 days, compared to 12% nationally.

Vermont saw a **10% increase** in opioid-related deaths from 2021-2022.

Fewer and fewer Vermonters are going to the dentist, citing a lack of available providers.

“If you live in the more rural parts, you have to figure out how to get yourself there and if you cannot drive, do not have a vehicle, do not have a friend, good luck to you.”