

Arthritis Risk Factors and Impact on Quality of Life

March 2025

Arthritis is a major cause of disability in Vermont and the U.S. In 2021, nearly three in ten (29%) Vermont adults had arthritis, statistically higher than the quarter (25%) of U.S. adults who reported having it.¹ Arthritis conditions are usually characterized by pain/stiffness in or around one or more joints limiting mobility and impacting mental health and overall quality of life for those with it.² Certain lifestyle factors such as, poor nutrition, depression and poor mental health, can increase joint symptoms and severity.^{3,4} This data brief describes the impact of arthritis on the quality of life of populations of focus for the [Arthritis Program](#).

If you need help accessing or understanding this information, contact paul.meddaugh@vermont.gov.

Key Points

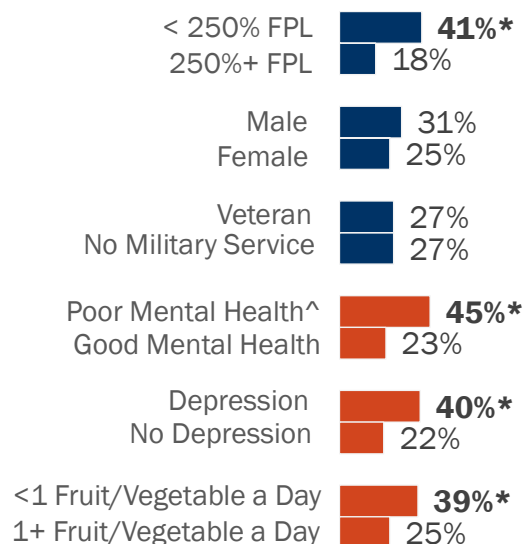
- **Adults with arthritis are more likely to have work and lifestyle limitations and severe joint pain if they:**
 - **Experience depression or poor mental health**
 - **Have household incomes < 250% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL)**

Work Limitations

- Over a quarter (27%) of Vermont adults with arthritis report that their joint symptoms affect their ability to work or the type or amount of work that they do.
- Vermont adults with arthritis experiencing work limitations due to arthritis was significantly higher among those living in households at less than 250% of federal poverty level (FPL) compared to those in households at or above 250% of the FPL. There are no statistically significant differences by biological sex or veteran status.
- Experiencing work limitations due to arthritis is significantly more likely among those who consume less than one fruit or vegetable a day as well as those who have depression or experience poor mental health.

Work limitations due to arthritis is twice as high among those living at < 250% of the FPL

Rates by population of focus and lifestyle factors known to increase symptom severity



Data Source: BRFSS, 2021

* Statistically significant difference within group.

[^] Defined as self-reported poor mental health on 14 or more days during the last month.



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Lifestyle Limitations

- Two in five (41%) Vermont adults with arthritis report that their joint symptoms cause limitations in their lifestyle by interfering with their normal social activities.
- Vermont adults with arthritis who report that their joint symptoms interfered with normal social activities is significantly higher among those living in households at less than 250% of the FPL compared to those in households living at 250% or higher. There are no statistically significant differences in joint pain causing lifestyle limitations by biological sex or veteran status.
- Experiencing lifestyle limitations due to arthritis is significantly more likely among adults with depression or who experience poor mental than those without depression or not experiencing poor mental health. There are no statistically significant differences by fruit and vegetable consumption.

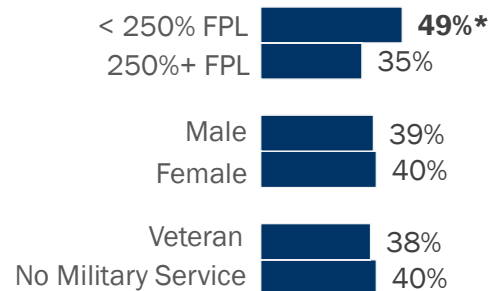
Data Source: BRFSS, 2021

* Statistically significant difference within group.

^ Defined as self-reported mental health on 14 or more days during the last month.

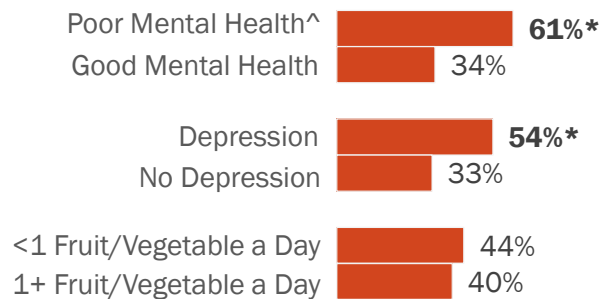
Lifestyle limitations due to arthritis is significantly higher among adults living at < 250% of the FPL

Rates by population of focus



Lifestyle limitations due to arthritis are one and a half times higher among adults with poor mental health or depression

Rates by Lifestyle factors known to increase symptom severity

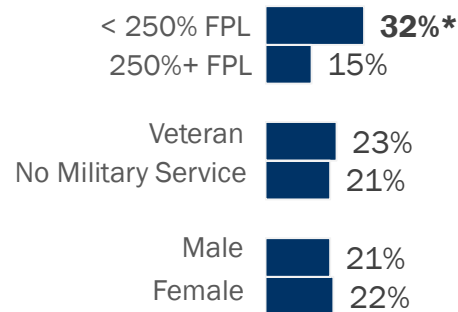


Severe Joint Pain

- One in five (21%) Vermont adults with arthritis report that their joint pain is severe.
- The rate of Vermont adults with arthritis reporting severe joint pain is significantly higher among those with arthritis living in households at less than 250% of the FPL compared to those in households living at 250% or higher. There are no statistically significant differences by biological sex and veteran status.
- Severe joint pain due to arthritis is significantly more likely among adults with arthritis who consume less than one fruit and vegetable a day, have depression, and experience poor mental health compared to those who consume one or more fruits and vegetables a day, do not have depression, and do not experience poor mental health, respectively.

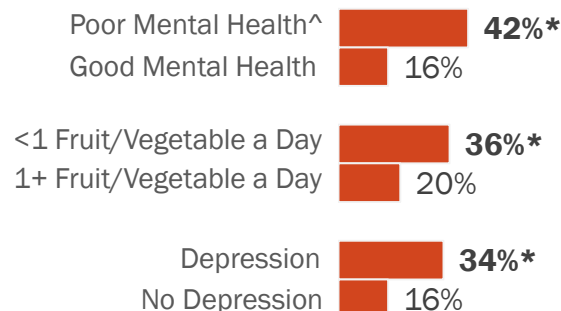
Severe joint pain due to arthritis was more than two times higher among adults living at < 250% of the FPL

Rates by population of focus



Severe due to arthritis is twice as high among those with poor mental health and depression

Rates by Lifestyle factors known to increase symptom severity



Data Source: BRFSS, 2021

* Denotes statistically significant difference within group.

[^] Defined as self-reported mental health on 14 or more days during the last month.

¹ Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), 2021.

² Hootman JM, Helmick CG, Brady TJ. A Public Health Approach to Addressing Arthritis in Older Adults: The Most Common Cause of Disability. *Am J Public Health*. 2012;102(3):426-433. doi: [10.2105/AJPH.2011.300423](https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2011.300423).

³ Arthritis and Mental Health. Arthritis.org. Accessed February 27, 2025. <https://www.arthritis.org/health-wellness/healthy-living/emotional-well-being/anxiety-depression/arthritis-and-mental-health>.

⁴ Eat Right for Your Type of Arthritis. Arthritis.org. Published June 18, 2021. Accessed February 27, 2025. <https://www.arthritis.org/health-wellness/healthy-living/nutrition/healthy-eating/eat-right-for-your-type-of-arthritis>.