

Cognitive Impairment – Data Brief

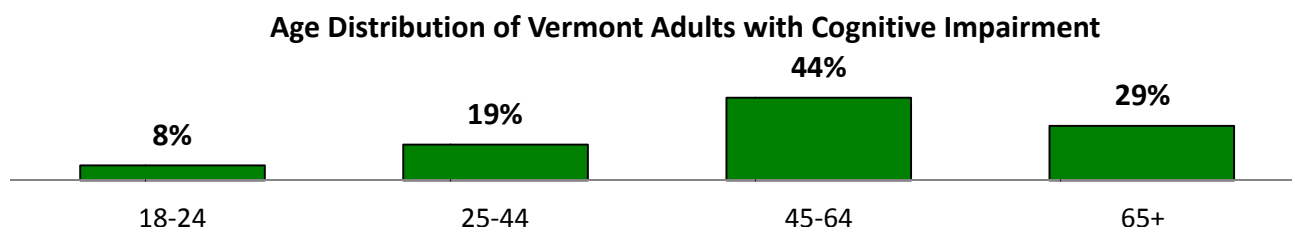
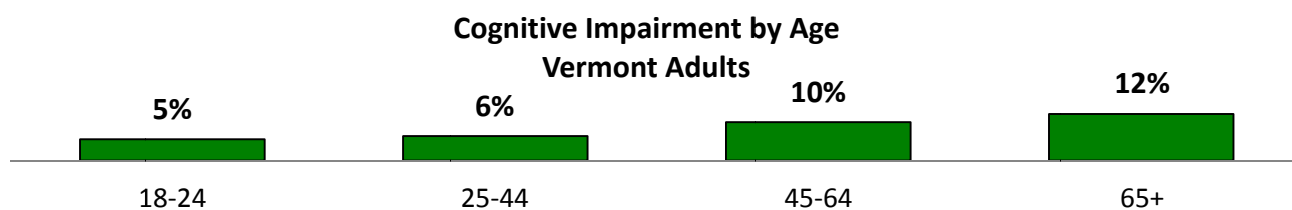
2013 Vermont Behavioral Risk Factor Survey

Background

Cognitive impairment can have both mild and severe impacts. These range from minor changes in cognitive functions like remembering or concentrating, but still able to complete every day activities to losing the ability to talk or write, or to live independently¹. While cognitive impairment can occur at any age, it is most common among older adults, making it an issue of growing importance in Vermont, given that the proportion of the population over age 60 is expected to continue to rise through at least 2030². In 2013, the Vermont Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) included several questions on cognitive impairment among adults.

Cognitive Impairment

In 2013, nine percent of Vermont adults said that in the last 12 months they had experienced confusion or memory loss that is getting worse. The percentage of Vermont adults experiencing worsening cognitive decline increased with age, with one in nine adults aged 65 and older affected. Of those reporting cognitive decline, 44% were 45-64 years old and 29% were adults 65 and older. The BRFSS only captures non-institutionalized adults, which means it excludes adults who live in nursing and group homes. As a result, it is likely that cognitive impairment among Vermont adults 65 and older is under reported on the BRFSS.



Cognitive impairment does not differ by gender, with eight percent of females and nine percent of males reporting decline in the last year.

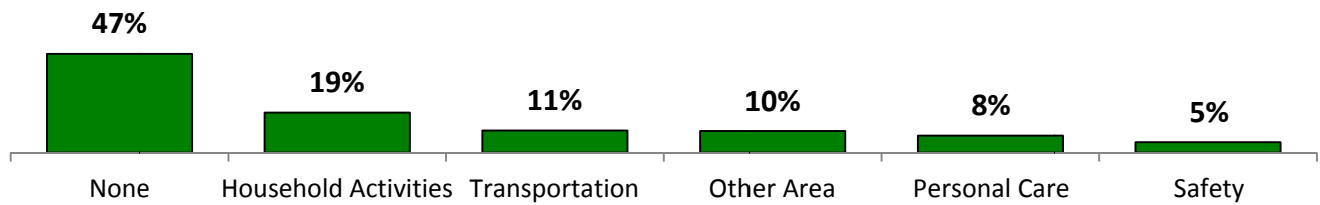
Type of Assistance Needed

Among adults 45 and older with increasing cognitive impairment, household activities such as managing money or housekeeping was most commonly reported as the area where assistance is needed (19%) due to confusion or memory loss. Transportation to things like doctor's appointments was the second most listed type of assistance needed (11%), while personal care (e.g. eating or bathing) and safety (e.g. forgetting to turn the stove off or falling) were listed by eight percent or fewer.

¹ http://www.cdc.gov/aging/pdf/cognitive_impairment/cogimp_policy_final.pdf

² <http://dail.vermont.gov/dail-publications/publications-general-reports/vt-population-projections-2010-2030>

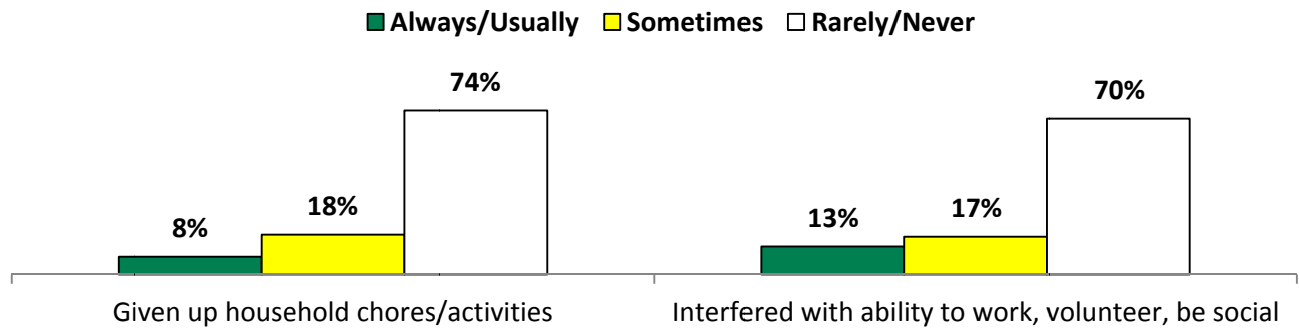
Type of Assistance Needed Vermont Adults 45 and Older, with Increasing Cognitive Impairment



Changes to Activities and Lifestyle

About one in ten adults 45 and older who have experienced an increase in cognitive impairment during the past year, also said they always or usually had to give up household activities or chores during that same time frame. An additional 18% said they've had to do this some of the time. Three in ten adults said that during the last year confusion or memory loss has interfered at least some of the time with their ability to work, volunteer, or participate in social activities.

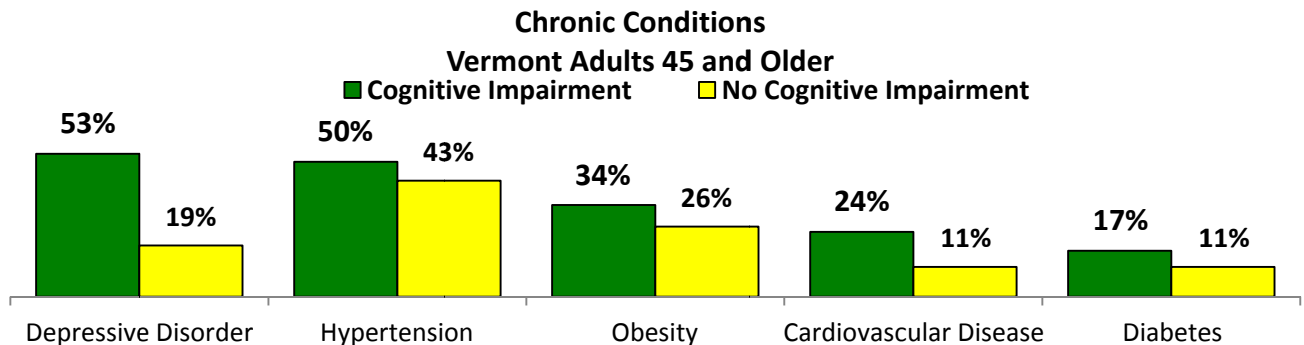
Impact of Cognitive Impairment on Ability* to Participate in Usual Activities Vermont Adults 45 and Older, with Increasing Cognitive Impairment



*Refers to ability to participate in activities during the previous year.

Chronic Conditions

In 2013, adults with cognitive impairment were significantly more likely than those without to report ever being diagnosed with depressive disorders, hypertension, obesity, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes. Adults with declining cognitive abilities were also significantly more likely than those without to report poor physical health (34% vs. 10%) and poor mental health (29% vs. 6%), which were defined as at least 14 days in the last month where physical or mental health was poor.



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).