

Health Status of Virginians with Disabilities, 2004-2006

Adults with and without disabilities were compared on health status and health behaviors based on findings from the Virginia Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (VABRFSS), an annual, statewide random-digit-dial (RDD) telephone adult health behavior survey. Three-year (2004-2006) average prevalence rates are reported. Approximately 5,500 adults participated in the survey each year. About 18% of the sample (~ 1.1 million adults in Virginia in 2006) report having a disability (responding “Yes” to “Are you limited in any way in any activities because of physical, mental, or emotional problems?”). Here are key findings:

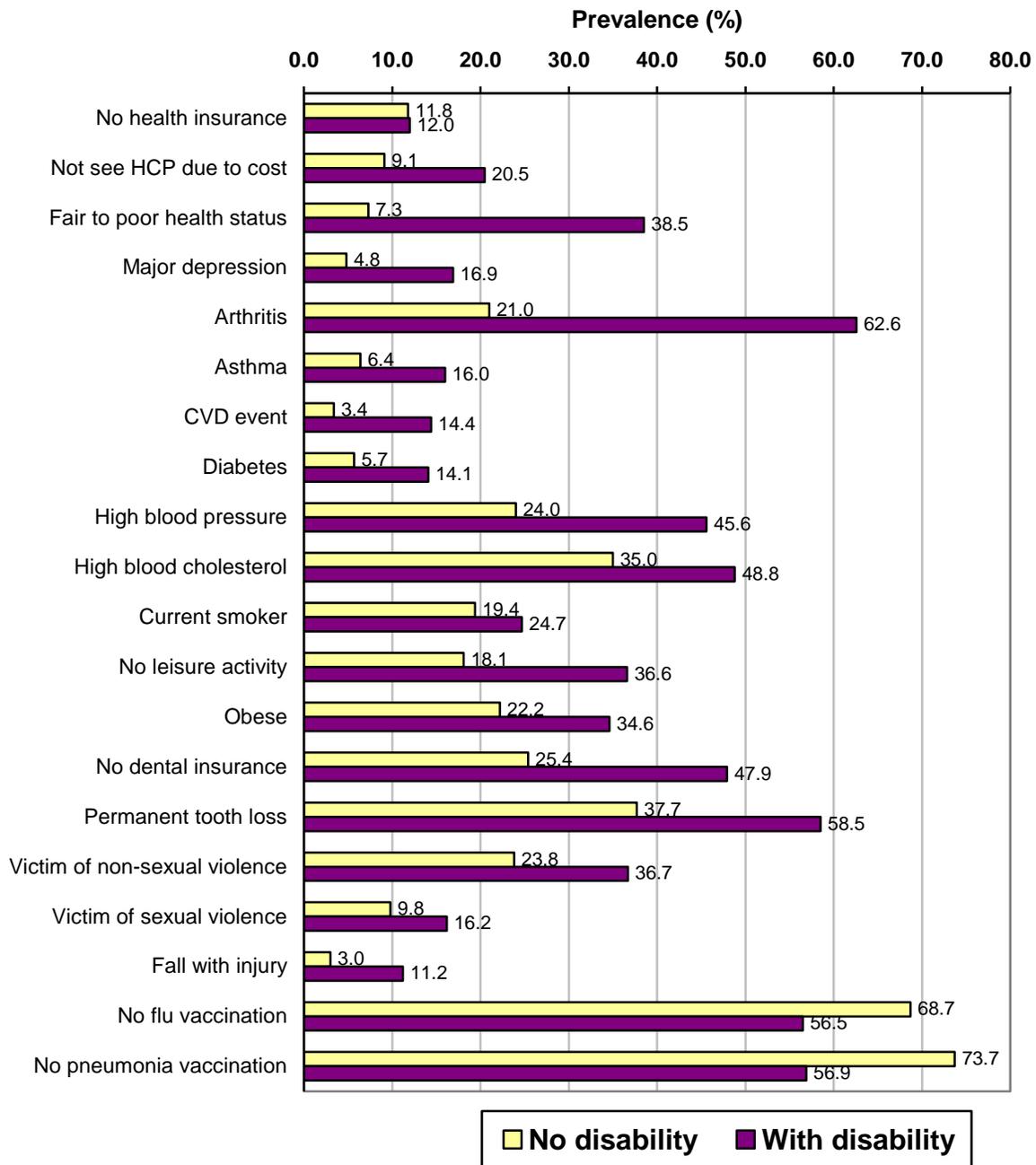
- One-in-four (26.1%) adults with a disability use special equipment (e.g., wheelchair, walker).
- Disability is equally prevalent among men and women, whites, blacks and Hispanics. Disability is more common among older adults (29.7% of adults 65 and older) and military veterans (21.8%).
- Adults with disabilities tend to have lower incomes and fewer years of education. 20.4% of adults with disabilities are unable to work (compared to 0.9% of adults with no disabilities).
- Although adults with disabilities tend to have health insurance coverage and a usual source of care (i.e., primary care provider) at similar rates as adults with no disability, 20.5% report difficulty in accessing healthcare when needed due to cost (compared to 9.1% of adults with no disabilities).
- 38.5% adults with disabilities rate their health “fair” or “poor”. They report having more days in the past month when their physical health (~ 10 days) and mental health (6.1 days) was not good or when their health prevented them from doing their usual activities (6.9 days).
- 16.9% of adults with disabilities experience current symptoms of major depression - 3-1/2 times the rate for adults with no disability (4.8%).
- 24.7% of adults with disabilities smoke cigarettes, 34.6% are obese, 34.9% are overweight, and 36.6% are not physically active.
- Related to the above-mentioned risk factors, 62.6% of adults with disabilities have arthritis, 14.1% have diabetes, 16% have current asthma, 45.6% have high blood pressure, and 48.8% have high cholesterol. In addition, they are four times (14.4%) more likely to have had a previous cardiovascular event (i.e., heart attack, stroke).
- 47.9% of adults with disabilities have no dental health insurance, and 23.7% have not visited their dentist for routine teeth cleaning. As a consequence, 58.5% report permanent tooth loss.
- Adults with disabilities, particularly young adults and women, were more likely to be victims of sexual (16.2%) and non-sexual violence (36.7%).
- 11.2% of adults with disabilities suffered a fall with injury in the past three months.

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- Adults with disabilities are more likely to get their flu and pneumonia vaccinations. They are less likely to consume alcohol.
- With the exception of mammography, adults with disabilities are screened for preventable cancers at similar rates as adults with no disabilities.

Prevalence of Health Status, Health Behaviors and Chronic Diseases among Adults With Disabilities and Adults With No Disability, Virginia, 2004-2006.



Source: Virginia Department of Health, Virginia Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. Extracted in 2009.