

Vermont Mental Health Performance Indicator Project

Agency of Human Services, Department of Mental Health
103 South Main Street, Waterbury, Vermont 05671

MEMORANDUM

TO: Vermont Mental Health Performance Indicator Project
Advisory Group and Interested Parties

FROM: John Pandiani, Erika Edwards, Rod McCormick, and Walter Ochs

DATE: April 30, 2010

RE: Serious Psychological Distress in Vermont: 2007 & 2009

The prevalence of serious psychological distress (SPD) is a key indicator of the need for mental health services in a population. This week's brief report compares rates of SPD in the general population of the state of Vermont during CY2007 with comparable rates for 2009, overall and for gender, age, and economic groups.

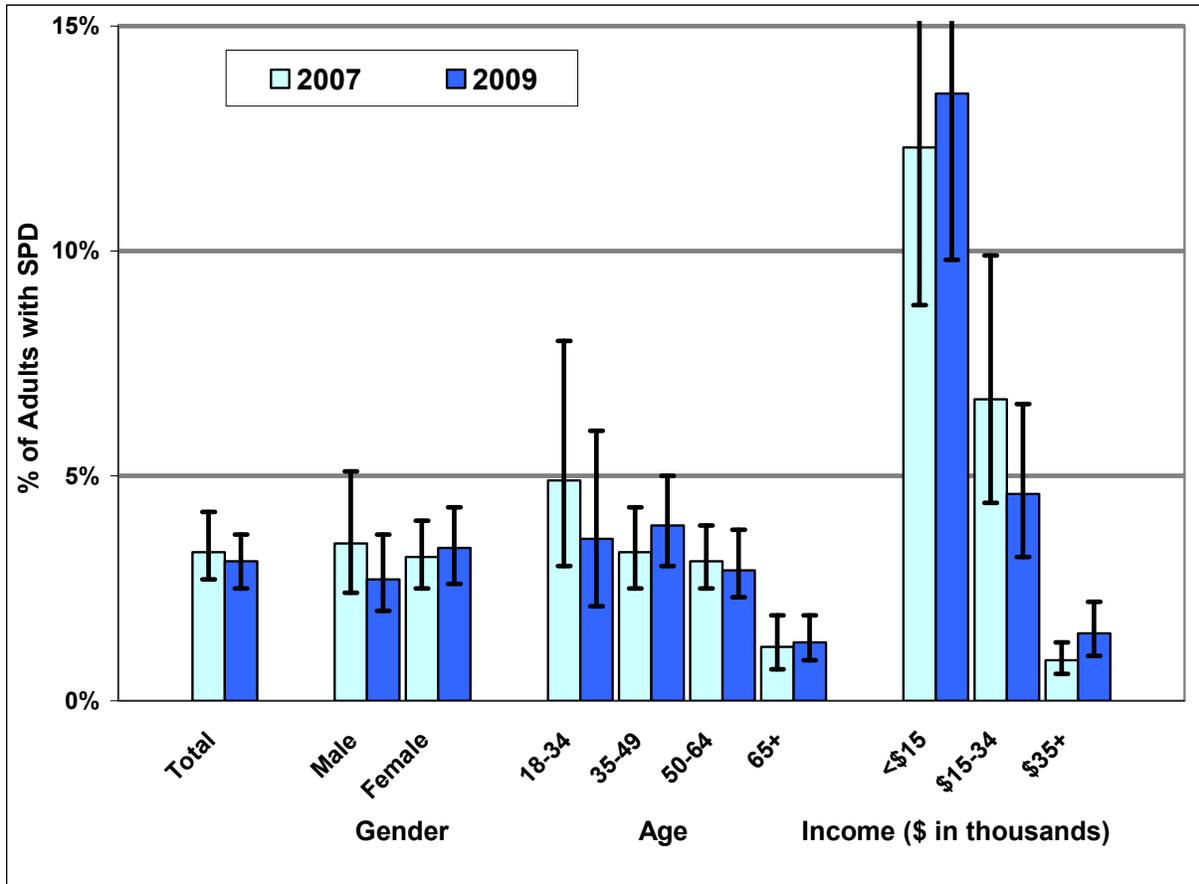
All findings are based on responses to the Vermont Department of Health Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) survey of representative samples of non-institutionalized adult Vermont residents. Information regarding serious psychological distress is based on the "K6"¹ module of six questions designed to identify individuals "with a high likelihood of having a diagnosable mental illness and associated functional limitations." K6 is intended to identify persons with mental health problems severe enough to cause moderate to serious impairment in social, occupational, or school functioning and to require treatment. Published research using this scale found the 30-day prevalence rate of SPD in the non-institutionalized adult population of the United States to be approximately to be 3.1%.¹

Analysis of the 2007 and 2009 Vermont BRFSS surveys indicates there were no significant changes in the overall rate of SPD (3.3%± vs. 3.1%± respectively). These estimates are not significantly different from each other and neither is significantly different from the national estimate. Adults reporting an annual income of less than \$15,000 had the highest rates of SPD in both years under examination (12% and 13%) and adults reporting an annual income of greater than \$35,000 had the lowest rates of SPD in both years under examination (0.9% and 1.5%). Among age groups, older adults (age 65+) had the lowest rates of SPD in both years (1.2% and 1.3% respectively). There were no statistically significant differences among other age groups, and there were no statistically significant differences between male and female respondents.

We look forward to your interpretation of these findings, and your suggestions for further analysis of these data. Please forward your comments and suggestions to pip@vdh.state.vt.us or 802-241-4049.

¹Pratt, L. A., Dey, A. N., & Cohen, A. J. (2007). Characteristics of Adults with Serious Psychological Distress as Measured by the K6 Scale: United States, 2001-04. *Advance Data*, 382, 1-19.
<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/ad/ad382.pdf>

Vermont General Population Adults with Serious Psychological Distress by Gender, Age, and Income: 2007 & 2009



	Total	Gender		Age				Income		
		Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	<\$15	\$15-34	\$35+
CY2007 %	3.3%	3.5%	3.2%	4.9%	3.3%	3.1%	1.2%	12.3%	6.7%	0.9%
95% CI	(2.7-4.2%)	(2.4-5.1%)	(2.5-4.0%)	(3.0-8.0%)	(2.5-4.3%)	(2.5-3.9%)	(0.7-1.9%)	(8.8-17.0%)	(4.4-9.9%)	(0.6-1.3%)
CY2009 %	3.1%	2.7%	3.4%	3.6%	3.9%	2.9%	1.3%	13.5%	4.6%	1.5%
95% CI	(2.5-3.7%)	(2.0-3.7%)	(2.6-4.3%)	(2.1-6.0%)	(3.0-5.0%)	(2.3-3.8%)	(0.9-1.9%)	(9.8-18.4%)	(3.2-6.6%)	(1.0-2.2%)

Analysis based on data collected by the Vermont Department of Health Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) survey during CY2007 and CY2009. The BRFSS is an on-going telephone health survey system conducted by the health department of each state. The BRFSS surveys include residents and exclude institutionalized Vermonters. Serious psychological distress (SPD) was indicated by a K6 score of 13 and over. K6 is "intended to identify persons with mental health problems severe enough to cause moderate to serious impairment in social, occupational, or school functioning and to require treatment." Published research results indicate that "...the crude 30-day prevalence rate of SPD in the non-institutionalized adult population of the United States was 3.1%." (1)

(1) Pratt, L. A., Dey, A. N., & Cohen, A. J. (2007). Characteristics of Adults with Serious Psychological Distress as Measured by the K6 Scale: United States, 2001-04. *Advance Data*, 382, 1-19.