

Vermont Mental Health Performance Indicator Project

Agency of Human Services, Department of Health, Department of Mental Health
108 Cherry Street, Burlington, Vermont 05401

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

FROM: John Pandiani, Rod McCormick and Walter Ochs

DATE: December 7, 2007

RE: Prevalence of Problem Drinking among Vermont Veterans

This week's PIP report was prepared in response to a request from Paul Dragon, Vermont's Integrated Services Initiative (VISI) director. Following our November 9, 2007 report on "Prevalence of Depression among Vermont Veterans,"¹ Paul requested a report on co-occurring mental health and substance abuse among Vermont veterans. This week's brief report begins to address that issue by examining rates of "problem drinking" among Vermont Veterans. This report (like the earlier report) is based on analysis of findings of the 2006 Vermont Department of Health Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) survey. A copy of the survey instrument is available on-line.²

This report is based on analysis of responses to two BRFSS questions related to alcohol consumption. The first question relates to "heavy drinking" as measured by average number of alcoholic drinks per day during the past 30 days. For this survey, an alcoholic drink is equal to 12 ounces of beer, 4 ounces of wine, or one ounce of liquor. Heavy drinking is defined as consumption on average of more than two alcoholic drinks per day (males) or more than one alcoholic drink per day (female). The second question relates to "binge drinking." Binge drinking is defined as consumption of 5 or more drinks on more than one occasion at any time during the past 30 days. Problem drinking, the subject of this analysis, is defined by responses that indicate either "heavy drinking" or "binge drinking."

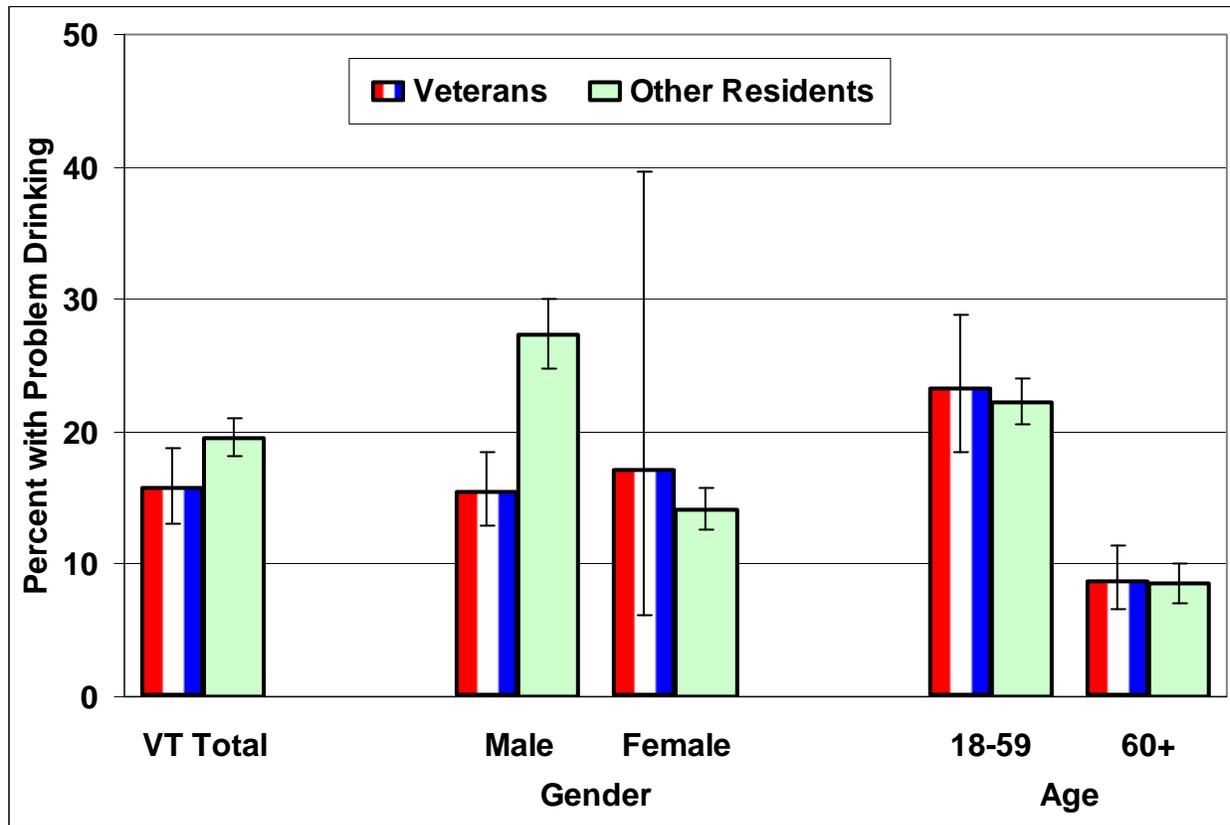
As reported earlier, Vermont's 2006 BRFSS indicates that 14% of adult Vermont residents are armed forces veterans, including 27% of adult male residents and 2% of adult female residents. The representation of veterans in the 60+ age group was much greater than the representation of veterans in the 18-59 age group (31% vs. 9%).

As you will see, Vermont's 2006 BRFSS indicates that Vermont veterans are significantly less likely than other Vermont residents to report indications of problem drinking. Sixteen percent of armed forces veterans report problem drinking (as defined above), as compared to 20% of non-veterans. This lower prevalence of problem drinking among veterans is evident for men (16% vs. 27%), but is not evident for women. Female veterans are more likely to report problem drinking than other female residents of Vermont (17% vs. 14%), although the difference is not statistically significant due to the small number of female veterans in the sample.

We look forward to your questions and comments about these findings, and your suggestions for further analyses that focus on the health status of armed forces veterans or the distribution of problem drinking in Vermont. We can be reached at 802.863.7249 or pip@vdh.state.vt.us.

1. <http://healthvermont.gov/mh/docs/pips/2007/documents/Pip110907.pdf>
2. <http://www.cdc.gov/brfss/questionnaires/pdf-ques/2006brfss.pdf>

Prevalence of Problem Drinking among Vermont Veterans and other Residents, 2006



	Veterans		Other Residents	
	% Drinking	95% CI	% Drinking	95% CI
VT Total	16%	(13-19%)	20%	(18-21%)
Gender				
Male	16%	(13-19%)	27%	(25-30%)
Female	17%	(6-40%)	14%	(13-16%)
Age				
18-59	23%	(18-29%)	22%	(21-24%)
60+	9%	(7-11%)	9%	(7-10%)

Analysis based on data collected by the Vermont Department of Health Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) survey during FY2006. The BRFSS is an on-going telephone health survey system conducted by the health department of each state. The BRFSS surveys include residents and excludes institutionalized Vermonters. "Problem Drinking" includes individuals who had five or more drinks on more than one occasion during the last month or includes individuals that on average consume more than two alcoholic drinks per day (males) or more than one alcoholic drink per day (females).