

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: September 19, 2008

RE: Serious Psychological Distress in the General Population of Vermont

The prevalence of serious psychological distress is a key indicator of the need for mental health services in a population. During CY2007, the Vermont Department of Health addressed the need for information about psychological distress by incorporating the "K6"¹ measure of serious psychological distress (SPD) into its statewide Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) survey.

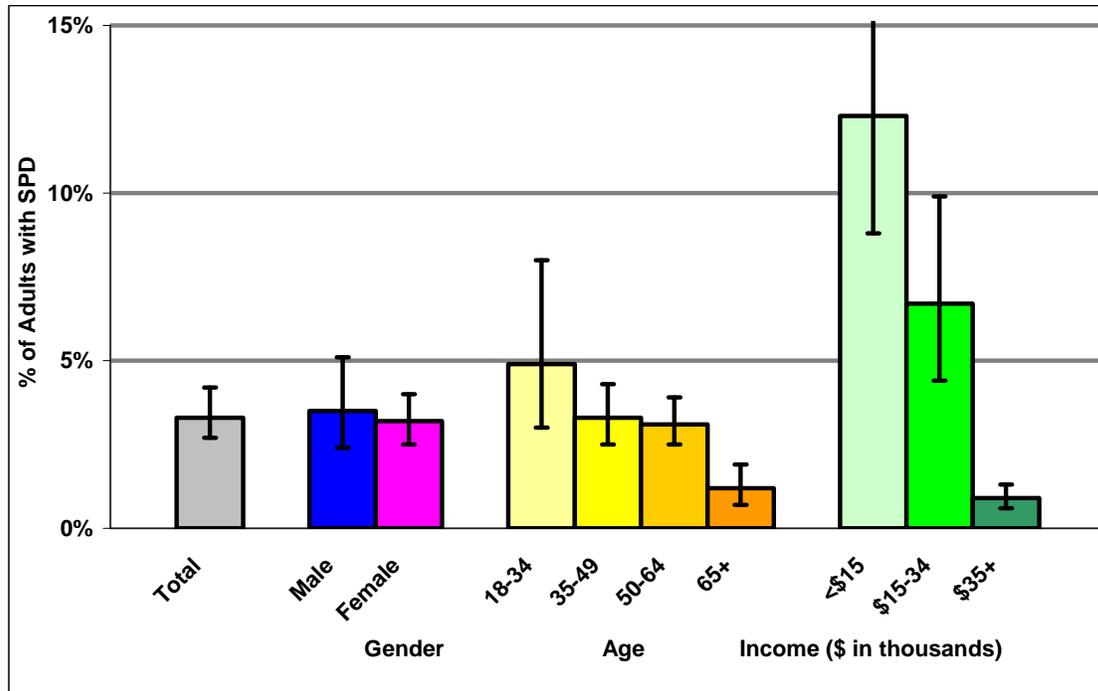
K6 consists of six questions designed to identify individuals "with a high likelihood of having a diagnosable mental illness and associated functional limitations." K6 is "intended to identify persons with mental health problems severe enough to cause moderate to serious impairment in social, occupational, or school functioning and to require treatment." Serious psychological distress is indicated by a K6 score of 13 or greater. 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

Analysis of the 2008 Vermont Department of Health Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) survey of a representative sample (n = 6,592) of Vermont residents estimates that 3.3% of non-institutionalized adult Vermont residents have serious psychological distress. The difference between this statewide estimate and the national estimate is not statistically significant. There was no significant difference between SPD rates for men and women. The SPD rates for Vermonters aged 65+ (1.2%) were significantly lower than the statewide rate. SPD rates for people with annual incomes of less than \$15,000 (12.3%) and people with annual incomes of \$15,000 through \$34,999 (6.7%) were significantly higher than for Vermont residents with annual incomes of \$35,000 or higher (<1%).

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 802.863.7249

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



with Serious Psychological Distress (SPD)

	<u>Percent</u>	<u>95% CI</u>
Total	3.3%	(2.7-4.2%)
Gender		
Male	3.5%	(2.4-5.1%)
Female	3.2%	(2.5-4.0%)
Age		
18-34	4.9%	(3.0-8.0%)
35-49	3.3%	(2.5-4.3%)
50-64	3.1%	(2.5-3.9%)
65+	1.2%	(0.7-1.9%)
Income		
<\$15,000	12.3%	(8.8-17.0%)
\$15,000-34,999	6.7%	(4.4-9.9%)
\$35,000+	0.9%	(0.6-1.3%)

Analysis based on data collected by the Vermont Department of Health Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) survey during CY2007. 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.