

Households With Special Needs and Challenges

Many households in Vermont are impacted by conditions that require service-enriched housing. Often, conditions facing Vermonters are intersecting and complex, such as age and disability or substance use disorder and mental illness. Vermonters that fall into these categories often have lower incomes and can have difficulty navigating the system of housing support, as well as dealing with instances of housing discrimination.¹

Due to Vermont’s aging population, the proliferation of addictive drugs, and the mental health crisis exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, data shows that the percentage of Vermont households facing these challenges is increasing.²

Disability

Disability encompasses an extremely wide range of conditions, linked by the common thread that stable housing is critical to the health and well-being of disabled people and that services and physical accessibility features are critical to housing stability. Fifteen percent of Vermonters reported a disability compared to 13% nationwide.³

Vermont Disabled Population by Sex and Age

	Total population	Population with a disability	Percent of total population with a disability
Total population	637,608	92,193	15%
Male	317,034	46,267	15%
Female	320,574	45,926	14%
Under 5 years	28,275	325	1%
5 to 17 years	88,386	6,199	7%
18 to 34 years	143,126	13,840	10%
35 to 64 years	250,459	33,658	13%
65 to 74 years	78,933	16,672	21%
75 years and over	48,429	21,499	44%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates 2018-2022 (Table S1810).

With cognitive difficulties topping the list, the unique service and housing needs of Vermonters with intellectual and development disabilities was recently examined by the Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council and Green Mountain Advocates. This study recommended the development of 600 units of permanent supportive housing that is affordable, accessible and connected to transportation to house this significant segment of Vermonters.⁴

Substance Use & Substance Use Disorder

Data consistently shows that substance use, and substance use disorder affect Vermonters at a higher rate than the rest of the country, on average. While about 7% of people aged 12 and older are dealing with a substance use disorder on the national level, that figure is close to 18% in Vermont.⁵ Substance use represents a double-edged sword when it comes to housing instability. While a safe place to live is critical both to reducing the harm of using drugs and to receiving the consistent treatment necessary to recover from addiction, substance use has historically been a disqualifying factor for housing assistance, as well as a factor that has led to eviction.



The most critical intersection of substance use disorders and housing is the fact that living in proximity to people using drugs or alcohol is the key factor leading individuals in recovery to relapse. The solution to this is to ensure that people in recovery have access to places to live where substance use disorder is not permitted for anyone and where they are able to easily access the resources necessary to ensure their health and personal stability going forward. This kind of housing is referred to as a recovery residence. Following the closure of multiple sites, only 96 Certified Recovery Residence beds remain operational statewide.⁶

Vermonters with substance use disorder, 2021

Condition	% of Vermont population	Vermont population estimate	% of national population
Drug use disorder	11%	65,000	9%
Pain reliever use disorder	2%	10,000	2%
Opioid use disorder	2%	12,000	2%
Alcohol use disorder	12%	69,000	11%
Substance use disorder	21%	120,000	17%
Needing but not receiving treatment at a specialty facility for illicit drug use	9%	48,000	7%
Needing but not receiving treatment at a specialty facility for alcohol use	12%	68,000	10%
Needing but not receiving treatment at a specialty facility for substance use	20%	111,000	15%
Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Association, 2021 State-Specific Tables			

Domestic Violence & Sexual Abuse

Victims of domestic violence may struggle to find permanent housing after fleeing abusive relationships. Many have fled with little money or possessions and often to a place devoid of personal connections that could provide assistance. Abusers commonly sabotage a victim’s economic stability, making victims more vulnerable to homelessness. Many victims and survivors of domestic violence have trouble securing rental housing because of poor credit, rental, and employment histories that result from their abuse. In 2022, the Vermont Network tracked 2,483 individuals who were provided emergency or permanent housing support following domestic or sexual violence.⁷ Amongst these were 89 families which secured stable housing as a result of government programs. During the 2023 Vermont Point-In-Time count, 200 households that had experienced domestic violence were experiencing homelessness.

Exiting the Correctional System

In February 2024, the Vermont Department of Corrections (DOC) provided 245 beds of transitional housing, but this is not a sufficient resource to ensure stable housing for people leaving prison.⁸ In 2022, the DOC reported that 71 people were held in prison past their intended release date because of an inability to find housing.⁹ Additionally, the rate at which prisoners require transitional housing out of an inability to afford shelter on their own is rising- in 2022, 25% of Vermont prisoners required housing support upon release, up from 19% in 2021.

Mental Illness

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, access to safe and affordable housing is the biggest single barrier faced by adults with severe mental illness as they attempt to achieve a decent standard of living or recovery from their conditions. Per 2021 data, about 27,000 Vermonters have a severe mental illness. This represents a rate slightly lower than the national average.¹⁰ The 2023 Point-In-Time count found that 698 Vermonters experiencing homelessness reported they had a mental illness.¹¹



Notes

- ¹ Vermont Legal Aid report, [Renters At Risk: The Cost of Substandard Housing](#).
- ² Substance Abuse and Mental Health Association, 2021 [State-Specific Tables](#).
- ³ U.S Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2018-2022 (Table S1810).
- ⁴ Service Supported Housing for Vermonters with Intellectual and Development Disabilities, [2023 Research Brief](#).
- ⁵ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Association, 2021 [State-Specific Tables](#).
- ⁶ VT Department for Children and Families, [Pandemic-Era Hotel/Motel Housing Report](#), Feb. 2024.
- ⁷ <https://www.vtnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Vermont-Network-Data-Snapshot-2022.pdf>.
- ⁸ VT Department for Children and Families, [Pandemic-Era Hotel/Motel Housing Report](#), Feb. 2024.
- ⁹ Vermont Department for Children and Families, 2024 [Transitional Housing page](#).
- ¹⁰ National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2021 [Mental Health in Vermont](#).
- ¹¹ Vermont annual Point-in-Time (PIT) Count, 2023 from [housingdata.org](#).

This fact sheet is part of the **Vermont Housing Needs Assessment 2025-2029** completed in June 2024 for the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development. Related information is available in companion fact sheets and the comprehensive, more detailed report.

Fact Sheets:

- Executive Summary
- Demographic Trends
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