

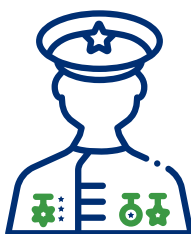


NYS BRFSS Brief

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is an annual telephone survey of adults developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention conducted in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and several US Territories. The New York BRFSS is administered by the New York State (NYS) Department of Health (DOH) to provide statewide and regional information on behaviors, risk factors, and use of preventive health services related to the leading causes of chronic and infectious diseases, disability, injury, and death.

Veterans' Health

New York State Adults, 2021



Introduction

The well-being of our military personnel is a public health priority - before, during and after their service. In 2021, approximately 7%, or 18 million, of the adult civilian population in the United States were veterans. Veterans are those who served in active military, naval, or air service, and were discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable.¹ Veterans are much more likely to be men and older in age. This reflects the characteristics of veterans who served during World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam era, all of whom are now over 60 years old.² The effects of military service on physical and psychological health are complex. Some veterans have health issues related to their military service and may be more likely to suffer from trauma-related injuries, substance abuse, and mental health disorders than people who have never served in the armed forces.³ Monitoring veterans' health and use of health care as part of the aging civilian population is critical to chronic disease prevention and control.

In 2002, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention requested veteran-related questions be added to the core questionnaire of the BRFSS. In this report, we use BRFSS data collected in 2021 to estimate the size, demographics, and select chronic disease health indicators for the veteran population in New York.

Health Equity

Health equity will only be achieved when every veteran attains their full health potential. Social and economic inequities result in adverse health outcomes. Health disparities are differences in health observed among groups of people. NYSDOH remains committed to eliminating health disparities through our programs, achieving optimal health for all New Yorkers.



Key Findings

- An estimated 969,000 adults, or 6.1% of NY's adult population, are veterans (Table 1).
- 13.5% of NY adults aged 65 and older reported past military service (Table 1).
- Disabilities are common among veterans. More than one in six (or 17.6% of) adults who report serious difficulty hearing are veterans (Table 1). 37% of veterans report at least one disability, compared to 25.9% of non-veterans (Table 2).
- Veterans aged 18 to 64 are more likely to smoke tobacco (Table 2); report a diagnosis (Dx) of cardiovascular disease (CVD), chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure (HBP), or arthritis, compared to non-veterans aged 18 to 64 (Figure 1).
- Veterans aged 18 to 64 are more likely to participate in physical activity (Table 2) and less likely to report asthma, compared to non-veterans aged 18 to 64 (Figure 1).
- Among veterans aged 65 and older, the prevalence of cancer or CVD Dx was higher (while the prevalence of asthma or depression Dx was lower), compared to non-veterans aged 65 and older (Figure 2).



Department
of Health



Table 1. Percent of Veterans in NYS by Demographic Indicators, BRFSS 2021

New York State [n= 39,095]	Weighted N 968,528	Percent ^a 6.1	95% CI ^a (5.7-6.5)
Region			
Rest of State (NYS excluding NYC)	685,864	7.5	(7.0-8.0)
New York City	282,664	4.2	(3.6-4.7)
Urban-Rural			
Urban	935,245	6.0	(5.6-6.4)
Rural	33,284	9.0	(7.5-10.5)
Sex			
Male	855,170	11.2	(10.5-11.9)
Female	113,359	1.4	(1.1-1.6)
Race/Ethnicity			
White/Non-Hispanic	669,824	7.7	(7.2-8.2)
Black/Non-Hispanic	115,721	5.4	(4.3-6.5)
Hispanic	105,114	3.7	(3.0-4.5)
Other Race or Multiracial/Non-Hispanic ^b	46,115	2.6	(1.8-3.5)
Age			
18-24 Years Old	29,789	1.7	(1.0-2.4)
25-34 Years Old	86,160	3.0	(2.3-3.7)
35-44 Years Old	98,898	4.0	(3.1-4.9)
45-54 Years Old	113,325	5.0	(4.1-5.9)
55-64 Years Old	139,758	5.3	(4.6-6.1)
65+ Years Old	467,044	13.5	(12.4-14.5)
Educational Attainment			
Less than High School	57,266	2.8	(2.0-3.7)
High School or GED	264,456	6.5	(5.8-7.1)
Some College	348,554	8.3	(7.5-9.2)
College Graduate	290,515	5.3	(4.8-5.8)
Annual Household Income			
Less than \$25,000	88,895	4.2	(3.4-5.0)
\$25,000 to \$49,999	207,171	7.1	(6.2-8.0)
\$50,000 and greater	470,132	7.2	(6.6-7.9)
Missing ^c	187,786	4.8	(4.1-5.4)
Employment Status			
Employed/Self-Employed	399,814	4.6	(4.2-5.1)
Unemployed	71,720	2.5	(1.8-3.1)
Not in Labor Force	486,417	12.2	(11.3-13.2)
Health Insurance Type			
Private	316,419	4.4	(3.9-4.9)
Medicare	337,211	10.8	(9.8-11.8)
Medicaid	54,801	2.6	(1.9-3.3)
Military-related	138,808	84.6	(79.8-89.5)
Other Government Insurance ^d	59,760	4.3	(3.2-5.5)
Disability Status			
Yes, Any Disability	336,319	8.6	(7.8-9.5)
Yes, Cognition	95,753	6.0	(4.9-7.1)
Yes, Self-care	73,614	6.8	(5.4-8.2)
Yes, Independent Living	55,444	9.8	(7.4-12.1)
Yes, Mobility	177,431	8.8	(7.6-10.0)
Yes, Vision	55,337	7.2	(5.3-9.0)
Yes, Hearing	147,469	17.6	(15.0-20.1)
No	572,574	5.3	(4.9-5.8)

^a% = weighted percentage; CI = confidence interval.

^b Other race is defined as American Indian, Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, Other race not specified, or Multiracial.

^c "Missing" category included because more than 10% of the sample did not report income.

^d Includes children's health insurance plan, Indian health service, state sponsored health plan or other government plan.

Table 2. Prevalence of Select Health Indicators among NYS Adults, by Veteran status and Age, BRFSS 2021

HEALTH RISK BEHAVIORS								
	Current Smoker ^a		Binge or Heavy Drinking ^b		Sugar-sweetened Beverage Consumption 1+ Times per Day		Leisure Time Physical Activity ^c	
	Percent	95% CI	Percent	95% CI	Percent	95% CI	Percent	95% CI
All NYS Adults	12.0	(11.5-12.6)	15.7	(15.0-16.4)	19.0	(18.0-19.9)	74.2	(73.4-75.0)
18-64	13.3	(12.6-14.0)	18.7	(17.8-19.6)	20.4	(19.2-21.5)	75.7	(74.8-76.6)
65+	8.3	(7.4-9.2)	6.6	(5.8-7.3)	15.0	(13.5-16.4)	68.4	(66.8-70.1)
Veterans	14.9	(12.8-17.0)	14.6	(12.4-16.8)	22.1	(19.0-25.1)	73.4	(70.7-76.1)
18-64	21.1	(17.5-24.8)	22.3	(18.3-26.3)	26.2	(21.3-31.2)	80.6	(77.1-84.2)
65+	8.7	(6.5-10.9)	7.2	(5.3-9.1)	18.0	(14.2-21.9)	66.5	(62.4-70.5)
Non-Veterans	11.9	(11.3-12.5)	15.8	(15.0-16.5)	18.8	(17.8-19.7)	74.2	(73.4-75.0)
18-64	13.0	(12.3-13.7)	18.5	(17.6-19.5)	20.1	(19.0-21.3)	75.5	(74.5-76.4)
65+	8.2	(7.2-9.2)	6.5	(5.6-7.3)	14.5	(12.9-16.0)	68.6	(66.8-70.4)

HEALTH CARE ACCESS INDICATORS								
	Avoided Medical Care Due to Cost		Has a Health Care Provider		Has Health Care Coverage		Had a Routine Health Checkup in the Past Year	
	Percent	95% CI	Percent	95% CI	Percent	95% CI	Percent	95% CI
All NYS Adults	8.0	(7.5-8.5)	86.2	(85.6-86.8)	93.9	(93.5-94.4)	78.9	(78.1-79.6)
18-64	9.3	(8.7-10.0)	83.1	(82.3-83.9)	92.4	(91.9-93.0)	75.1	(74.2-76.0)
65+	3.6	(2.9-4.3)	96.0	(95.2-96.7)	98.6	(98.1-99.2)	91.2	(90.2-92.2)
Veterans	4.2	(3.0-5.4)	91.7	(89.9-93.5)	97.6	(96.4-98.7)	85.6	(83.4-87.8)
18-64	7.1	(4.8-9.4)	88.0	(85.1-90.8)	96.5	(95.1-97.8)	79.0	(75.3-82.6)
65+	1.3	(0.6-2.0)	95.3	(93.0-97.6)	98.6	(96.6-100.0)	91.7	(89.2-94.3)
Non-Veterans	8.2	(7.7-8.8)	85.9	(85.2-86.5)	93.7	(93.2-94.2)	78.4	(77.6-79.2)
18-64	9.4	(8.8-10.1)	82.9	(82.1-83.7)	92.3	(91.7-92.8)	74.9	(73.9-75.8)
65+	4.0	(3.1-4.8)	96.2	(95.4-96.9)	98.6	(98.1-99.2)	91.1	(90.0-92.2)

SELF-ASSESSED HEALTH AND DEPRESSION								
	Fair or Poor Self- Assessed Health		Poor Self- Assessed Physical Health		Poor Self- Assessed Mental Health ^d		Ever Diagnosed with a Depressive Disorder ^e	
	Percent	95% CI	Percent	95% CI	Percent	95% CI	Percent	95% CI
All NYS Adults	14.6	(14.0-15.3)	9.9	(9.4-10.4)	13.0	(12.4-13.6)	17.0	(16.4-17.6)
18-64	12.9	(12.2-13.5)	8.6	(8.1-9.2)	14.4	(13.7-15.1)	18.0	(17.2-18.8)
65+	21.4	(19.9-22.9)	14.8	(13.4-16.1)	8.4	(7.3-9.4)	14.5	(13.3-15.7)
Veterans	17.5	(15.3-19.6)	12.5	(10.6-14.4)	9.3	(7.8-10.9)	14.4	(12.3-16.5)
18-64	13.7	(10.8-16.7)	10.2	(7.8-12.7)	12.4	(9.8-15.0)	18.3	(15.0-21.7)
65+	21.3	(18.0-24.6)	15.1	(12.1-18.1)	6.4	(4.5-8.3)	10.1	(7.9-12.3)
Non-Veterans	14.5	(13.8-15.1)	9.8	(9.2-10.3)	13.2	(12.6-13.9)	17.2	(16.5-17.9)
18-64	12.9	(12.2-13.6)	8.6	(8.0-9.1)	14.5	(13.8-15.3)	18.1	(17.3-18.8)
65+	21.4	(19.7-23.1)	14.8	(13.3-16.3)	8.7	(7.6-9.9)	15.2	(13.9-16.5)

Table 2. Prevalence of Select Health Indicators among NYS Adults, by Veteran status and Age, BRFSS 2021

CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS								
	Cancer Diagnosis ^f		Cardiovascular Disease Diagnosis ^g		COPD Diagnosis ^h		Current Asthma Diagnosis	
	Percent	95% CI	Percent	95% CI	Percent	95% CI	Percent	95% CI
All NYS Adults	9.6	(9.1-10.0)	7.4	(6.9-7.8)	5.5	(5.0-5.7)	9.8	(9.3-10.4)
18-64	4.8	(4.4-5.2)	4.3	(3.9-4.7)	3.9	(3.5-4.4)	10.4	(9.8-11.1)
65+	26.0	(24.6-27.3)	17.9	(16.7-19.2)	10.7	(9.7-11.7)	8.6	(7.7-9.6)
Veterans	20.2	(17.9-22.4)	18.4	(16.1-20.6)	10.4	(8.7-12.2)	5.4	(4.2-6.6)
18-64	4.0	(2.7-5.3)	8.8	(6.2-11.4)	8.1	(5.5-10.8)	7.0	(4.8-9.2)
65+	36.5	(32.5-40.4)	28.2	(24.7-31.8)	13.1	(10.5-15.6)	4.1	(2.8-5.4)
Non-Veterans	8.9	(8.5-9.3)	6.6	(6.2-7.1)	5.0	(4.7-5.4)	10.0	(9.5-10.6)
18-64	4.8	(4.4-5.2)	4.1	(3.7-4.5)	3.7	(3.3-4.0)	10.4	(9.8-11.1)
65+	24.4	(22.9-25.9)	16.3	(15.0-17.7)	10.4	(9.3-11.5)	9.3	(8.3-10.4)

	HBP Diagnosis ⁱ		Diabetes Diagnosis		Obese ^j		Arthritis Diagnosis	
	Percent	95% CI	Percent	95% CI	Percent	95% CI	Percent	95% CI
All NYS Adults	30.5	(29.7-31.3)	11.4	(10.9-12.0)	29.1	(28.2-30.0)	23.6	(22.9-24.3)
18-64	22.4	(21.5-23.2)	8.3	(7.7-8.9)	29.9	(28.8-30.9)	16.2	(15.5-17.0)
65+	58.5	(56.8-60.1)	21.9	(20.5-23.4)	27.3	(25.7-28.9)	49.3	(47.6-51.0)
Veterans	45.5	(42.5-48.5)	17.7	(15.4-20.0)	32.6	(29.6-35.6)	36.1	(33.2-39.0)
18-64	34.1	(29.7-38.5)	12.8	(9.7-16.0)	38.7	(34.1-43.2)	24.4	(20.6-28.2)
65+	57.8	(53.6-62.0)	23.3	(19.9-26.7)	27.5	(23.4-31.5)	47.9	(43.8-52.1)
Non-Veterans	29.5	(28.7-30.3)	11.0	(10.4-11.6)	28.9	(28.0-29.8)	22.7	(22.0-23.5)
18-64	21.8	(21.0-22.7)	8.1	(7.5-8.7)	29.5	(28.4-30.5)	15.8	(15.1-16.5)
65+	58.6	(56.7-60.4)	21.8	(20.1-23.4)	27.2	(25.5-29.0)	49.5	(47.6-51.3)

DISABILITY STATUS								
	Any Disability [*]		Cognition		Self-Care		Independent Living	
	Percent	95% CI	Percent	95% CI	Percent	95% CI	Percent	95% CI
Veterans	37.0	(34.0-40.0)	10.4	(8.6-12.2)	6.0	(4.6-7.5)	8.1	(6.4-9.7)
Non-Veterans	25.9	(25.1-26.8)	10.8	(10.2-11.4)	3.7	(3.3-4.1)	7.3	(6.8-7.9)

	Mobility		Vision		Hearing		No Disability	
	Percent	95% CI	Percent	95% CI	Percent	95% CI	Percent	95% CI
Veterans	19.3	(16.9-21.7)	5.9	(4.4-7.5)	15.8	(13.5-18.0)	63.0	(60.0-66.0)
Non-Veterans	13.2	(12.6-13.9)	5.1	(4.7-5.5)	4.9	(4.5-5.3)	74.1	(73.2-74.9)

Technical Notes:

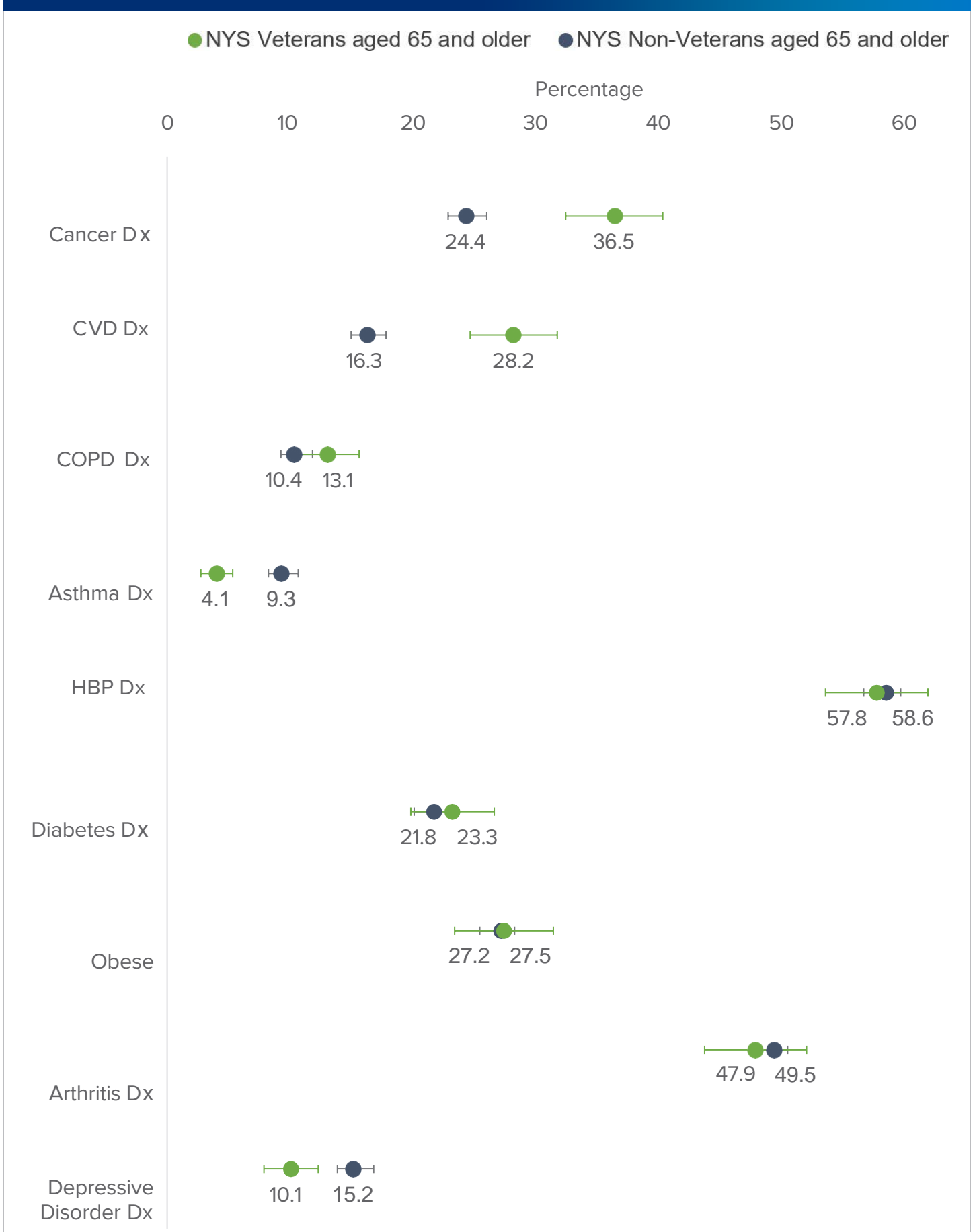
Values in **bold** indicate a significant difference between the NYS Veteran and non-Veteran populations.

- a) Current smoker is defined as an adult who has smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their lifetime and currently smokes on at least some days.
- b) Binge drinking is defined as consuming four or more drinks for women and five or more drinks for men on a single occasion in the past month and heavy drinking is defined as eight or more drinks per week for women and fifteen or more drinks per week for men.
- c) No leisure time physical activity is defined as having no regular physical activity, other than a regular job, in the past 30 days
- d) Poor mental health is defined as reported problems with stress, depression, or emotions on at least 14 of the previous 30 days.
- e) A depressive disorder includes depression, major depression, dysthymia, or minor depression.
- f) History of skin or other type of cancer.
- g) History of heart disease, heart attack or stroke.
- h) Chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder.
- i) High blood pressure.
- j) Obese is defined as having a body mass index of 30 kg/m² and higher.
- k) All respondents who reported at least one type of disability (cognitive, mobility, vision, self-care, independent living, or serious difficulty hearing).

Figure 1. Prevalence of Select Health Indicators by Veteran Status, Aged 18 to 64, BRFSS 2021



Figure 2. Prevalence of Select Health Indicators by Veteran Status, Aged 65 and older, BRFSS 2021





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BRFSS questions

Veteran

1. "Have you ever served on active duty in the United States Armed Forces, either in the regular military or in a National Guard or military reserve unit?"



Program Contributions

New York State Department of Health

Bureau of Chronic Disease Evaluation and Research



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