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Assessing Provider Perspectives of Transportation Difficulties for Patients at Hinesburg Family Medicine

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Assessing Provider Perspectives of Transportation Difficulties for Patients at Hinesburg Family Medicine

Evan Thor Lowry, MS3

August 2020

Mentor: Michelle Cangiano, MD

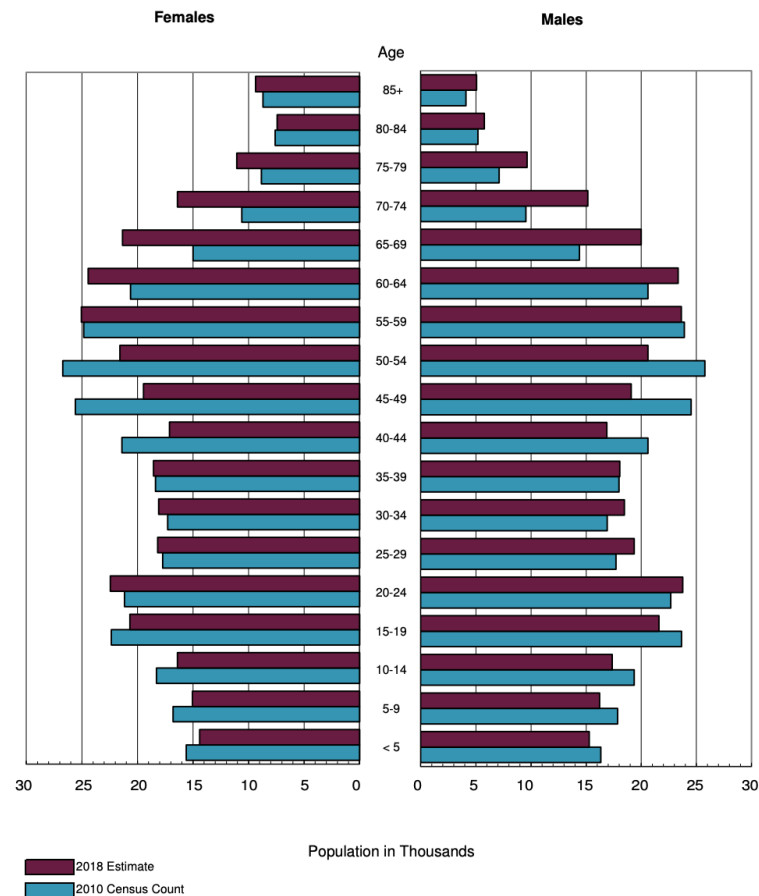
Location: Hinesburg Family Medicine

Problem Identification and Need

- **Inspired by a patient who stated they had to pay a stranger to transport them to their office visit.**
- **Estimated 450,000 Vermonters (out of a total population of about 620,000) live in rural areas. Living in a rural area is a risk for difficulty accessing transportation [1].**
- **Vermont has an aging population, above the national average, which leads to more Vermonters facing transportation difficulties.**
 - **Estimated by 2030 that approximately 30% of Vermonters will be above 65 years of age [2].**
- **One in five over age of 65 does not drive anymore.**
- **Research shows that many older adults without a personal vehicle miss or delay appointments. This study had over 40% of patients missing appointments because of no transportation. This leads to worsening negative health impacts [3].**
- **It is important to identify patients at risk for transportation difficulties and offer resources to help them make appointments, especially in time of Covid-19.**

Problem Identification and Need

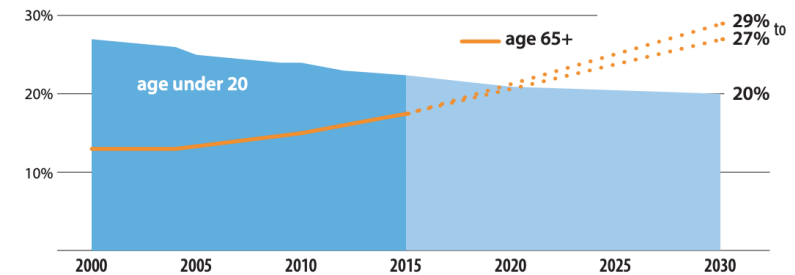
Figure 2. Population Age-Sex Distribution of Vermont, 2010, 2018.



Projected Aging Trends

U.S. Census • 2016 / Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development • 2011–2015

projected decline of the younger age groups and growth of the older age groups in the Vermont population



https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/SHA_3_Demographics.pdf?wpmobileexternal=true

https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/HS_STAT_2018_Population_Estimates_Bulletin.pdf

Problem Identification and Need

DRAFT • 4/5/2018

Vermont • Key Demographics

• A Small State, More or Less Rural

Vermont is home to nearly 625,000 people. Our land mass is small—9,216 square miles—and averages 68 people per square mile. More than one-quarter of Vermonters live in Chittenden County. Rutland County is next most populous, and Washington County is a close third. Caledonia, Essex and Orleans, the counties that make up the Northeast Kingdom, are the least populated and the most rural.

• An Aging Population

Vermont is aging faster than other states. In 2015, our median age was 43 years, compared to the national median of 38. By the year 2020, the percentage of Vermonters age 65+ is projected to exceed the percentage of those younger than 20.

• Growing Diversity

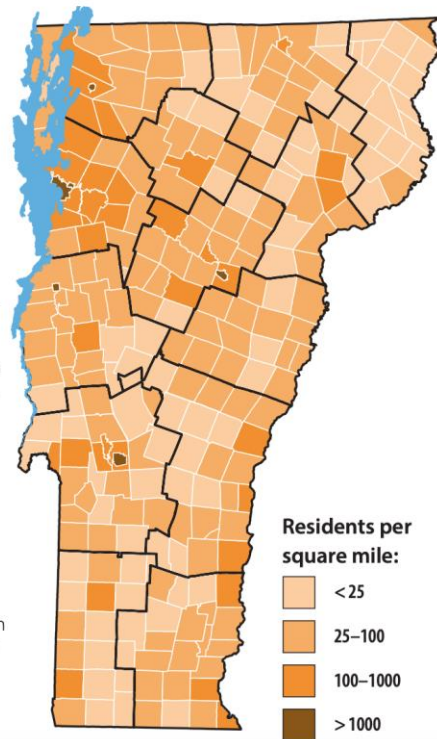
While Vermont's racial and ethnic population, at 7% of the total, is proportionately small when compared to the rest of the U.S., their numbers are growing at a faster rate than the population overall.

• Income & Education

In 2015, 91% of adults age 25 and older had a high school education or more, and 36% had at least a bachelor's degree. Nearly half of all earners have an annual income below \$50,000. The median income in 2015 was \$35,512.

Population Density, by Town

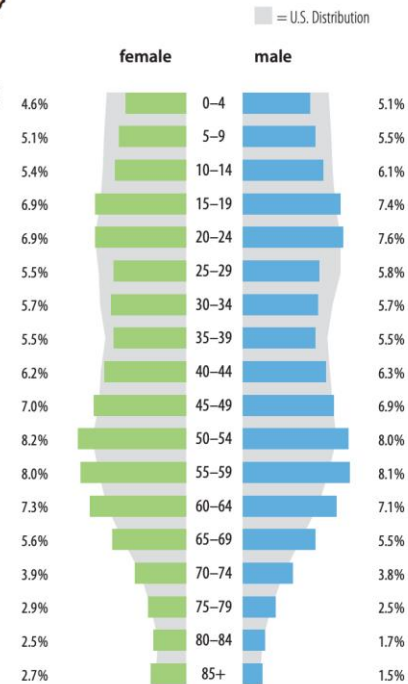
American Community Survey • 2016



Age Distribution, Vermont & U.S.

American Community Survey • 2011–2015

% of total Vermont population that falls into each age group, shown against the percentages for the entire U.S.



Public Health Consequences

- Study in elderly patients in Chittenden county [3]
 - 40% of elderly patients had transportation difficulties.
 - 69% of participants had delayed or missed appointments due to difficulty accessing transportation.
 - Lack of transportation causes missed healthcare appointments, decreased community involvement, and social isolation, which worsen health overall.
- Lower Socioeconomic Status (SES) leads to worse access to transportation [4]. Lower SES usually also means more health problems.
- As population ages in Vermont, it will be harder for Vermont to meet the needs of aging population and population with disabilities that needs transportation assistance.
- Patients with lower SES often have more chronic health conditions, and they are the population most at risk for missing appointments or not being able to make it to the pharmacy to pick up prescriptions due to lack of transportation access. They also face social isolation. This leads to worsening of chronic conditions. It is important to understand providers understanding of transportation difficulties to identify how best to provide resources so that providers can improve this barrier for patients.



Community Perspectives

“It is very difficult for seniors who rely on SSTA, as they often can’t coordinate or are rushed through visit due to transportation waiting”

Phyllis Martin, Patient Services,
UVMHC Hinesburg



Community Perspectives

“They don’t teach you this (referring to helping patients with transportation barriers) stuff in school, so you have to learn on the fly”

Kathryn Butterly, Nurse Practitioner,
UVMHC Hinesburg

Transportation Survey

Why am I filling this out?

Transportation continues to be a concern for many patients. Although Telehealth is a great help, Zoom can't draw blood or collect a urine (yet). For many patients, they still need to be regularly seen in person. Some patients have had to cancel appointments last minute or delay needed care due to the inability to secure transportation to the clinic. This survey will help update our knowledge on this issue and see how pervasive it still is.

How often do you hear a patient express concern about transportation?

Daily Weekly Monthly Never

How often have you heard of a patient who was late to an appointment due to unreliable transportation?

Daily Weekly Monthly Never

How often has a patient had to reschedule or no showed an appointment due to unreliable transportation?

Daily Weekly Monthly Never

Do you feel that you know how to refer a patient with transportation concerns to a transportation service?

Yes No

Methodology

- Provided survey at various staff at Hinesburg Family Medicine
- Survey is shown here:

How often do you hear a patient express concern about transportation?

Daily = 10%

Weekly = 50%

Monthly = 30%

Never = 10%

How often have you heard of a patient who was late to an appointment due to unreliable transportation?

Daily = 0%

Weekly = 60%

Monthly = 30%

Never = 10%

How often has a patient had to reschedule or no showed an appointment due to unreliable transportation?

Daily = 0%

Weekly = 50%

Monthly = 40%

Never = 10%

Do you feel that you know how to refer a patient with transportation concerns to a transportation service?

Yes = 60%

No = 40%

N = 10

a

Response and Data

Intervention

- List and links with various transportation resources that can be provided to patients (see attachment for full):

Transportation Resources for Hinesburg Family Medicine

The Vermont Public Transportation Association provides mobility choices for seniors (60+), those on Medicaid, and for people with disabilities through various funding programs. These programs help Vermonters remain independent and active within their community.

Great resources at website:

<https://vpta.net/>

1. Special Services Transportation Agency (SSTA)

For patients that need more assistance due to physical and mental health needs. |

- Subsidized cost, but may cost \$2.50 per ride
- Location: Chittenden County
- Medicaid provider
- Website: sstarides.org
- Phone number: 802-878-1527

2. United Way of Chittenden County Neighbor Rides

Volunteers using own cars partnered with SSTA – organized through SSTA

- Location: Chittenden County
- Website: unitedwaynvt.org/neighborrides and sstarides.org
- Phone number: 802-878-1527

3. Rural Community Transportation (RCT)

Provides transportation for Medicaid eligible, Elderly and Disabled programs, and for general public.

- Location: Northeast Kingdom: Essex, Caledonia, Orleans and Lamoille Counties
- Medicaid provider
- Website: <http://riderct.org/>
- Phone number: 855-811-6360



Effectiveness and Limitations

- Effective because identified need for transportation for patients including provider perspective.
- Effective because provided list of resources for family med clinic to familiarize with to provide to patients.
- Will help patients get better transportation.
- Limited because not much research on transportation limits in Vermonters.
- Limited because unable to get patient perspective on transportation.



Future Needs

- Look at and survey patient perspectives on transportation limitations to better identify who is at risk.
- Identify a better system to identify patients at risk of transportation barrier so providers can more easily know who to give resources to.
- Identify more resources for patients and update current list.
- Determine percentage of counties patients are from to know which resource is best for most patients.
- Identify which staff is best to have resources on hand – nurses and MAs, front office staff, or PAs and MDs.



References

- 1. Bureau of Transportation Statistics Publications (2011) The US rural population and scheduled intercity transportation in 2010: a 5-year decline in transportation access.
https://www.bts.gov/archive/publications/scheduled_intercity_transportation_and_the_us_rural_population/2010/entire. Accessed August, 2020.
- 2. Jones K, Schwarz L (2013) Vermont population projections 2010–2030.
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- 3. Hadley, S. E., Fox, L., Castro, A., Pishoy, H., Leavitt, B., Ross, C., . . . Carney, J. K. (2016). Access to transportation for chittenden county vermont older adults. *Aging Clinical and Experimental Research*, 28(4), 769-774.
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doi:[10.1007/s10900-013-9681-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10900-013-9681-1)