



Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Office of the Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Policy and Planning

2003 Survey of Veteran Enrollees' Health and Reliance Upon VA

With Selected Comparisons to the 1999 and 2002 Surveys

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

December 2004

Executive Summary

The 2003 Survey of Veteran Enrollees' Health and Reliance Upon VA provided some interesting insights into the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) enrollee population. The purpose of this report is to provide decision makers with descriptive information about enrollees collected from the VHA 2003 survey, with selected comparisons to the similar VHA surveys in 1999 and 2002. All three surveys were designed using optimally stratified random sampling techniques to represent non-institutionalized enrollees. The initial report comparing the results of the 1999 and 2002 surveys can be found at <http://vaww.va.gov/vhaopp>.

Both reports focus on the areas which show interesting differences and have the potential to help inform VA leadership in its development of VHA policies and strategic planning, including the following; socioeconomic characteristics of the enrollee population, public and private insurance coverage, health status measures, and future use of VA health care services by the veteran enrollee population.

Each chapter describes the survey results at the national level analyzed by priority, age, and income groups and then reports similar results at the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) level.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide a synopsis of the information collected by the Office of the Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health (ADUSH) for Policy and Planning 2003 Survey of Veteran Enrollees' Health and Reliance Upon VA. It also compares the 2003 data to the data collected in the previous surveys at the national level.

VHA Enrollee Survey Overview

The Survey of Veteran Enrollees' Health and Reliance Upon VA is the fourth in a series of surveys of VHA enrollees conducted by ADUSH under multi-year Office of Management and Budget (OMB) authority. All four VHA surveys of enrollees consisted of telephone interviews with stratified random samples of enrolled veterans. In 2000, 2002, and 2003, modifications were made to the survey instrument to reflect management's need for specific data and information on enrolled veterans. Sampling in the 2000 survey was restricted to Priority 5 and Priority 7-2 veterans who were new to the VHA enrollment system as of October 1, 1998. Due to the selective sampling of new enrollees and other limitations of the 2000 survey, the focus of the report is on results of the latest 2003 survey, with selected comparisons to the 2002 and 1999 survey data. In 2003, 41,704 enrollees completed the survey for a 64 percent response rate. This was an increase from the 59 percent response rate in 2002.

Survey of Veteran Enrollees' Health and Reliance Upon VA	1999	2002	2003
Weighted to represent the population of veteran enrollees'	3,642,537	6,175,694	6,742,676
Weighted population as of:	Feb 3, 1999	Dec 31, 2001	Dec 31, 2002
Stratified sample size: By VISN, enrollment Priority, and new or past user enrollee	~ 27,000	63,126	65,472
Number of completed interviews	19,686	37,528	41,704
Overall response rate	N/A	59.5%	63.7%
Interviews conducted during the following timeframe	Mar 1999	Apr-May 2002	Aug-Sep 2003

Findings / Highlights

There were a number of interesting and useful findings in the 2003 survey. Between the time of the 1999 survey and the 2003 survey, growth in VHA enrollment increased a remarkable 85 percent. There was explosive growth in the number of enrollees between 1999 and 2002, demonstrated by a 70 percent increase in the enrollee population, and there was a further 9 percent increase between 2002 and 2003. Although the data showed a large increase in enrollees in the Priority 7-8 Group between 1999 and 2002, there was smaller change between the 2002 and 2003 survey results for Priority 7-8 enrollees. There was also an increase in the percent of enrollees age 65 or over between 1999 and 2002, and a small decrease in the percent of older enrollees between 2002 and 2003; the overall number of enrolled veterans age 65 or over actually increased.

1999				2002				2003			
Weighted to Represent the Population of 3.6 Million Veteran Enrollees				Weighted to Represent the Population of 6.2 Million Veteran Enrollees				Weighted to Represent the Population of 6.7 Million Veteran Enrollees			
February 3, 1999				December 31, 2001				December 31, 2002			
Priority Group				Priority Group				Priority Group			
1 - 3	4 - 6	7	National	1 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 8	National	1 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 8	National
1,221,787	1,772,178	648,573	3,642,537	1,807,305	2,601,176	1,767,212	6,175,693	1,944,512	2,659,327	2,138,837	6,742,676
34.0%	49.0%	18.0%		29.0%	42.0%	29.0%		28.8%	39.4%	31.7%	
Age Group				Age Group				Age Group			
< 45	45 - 64	65 +	National	< 45	45 - 64	65 +	National	< 45	45 - 64	65 +	National
563,654	1,435,242	1,643,641	3,642,537	805,869	2,333,650	3,036,174	6,175,693	925,877	2,626,337	3,190,462	6,742,676
15.0%	39.0%	45.0%		13.0%	38.0%	49.0%		13.7%	39.0%	47.3%	
Income Group				Income Group				Income Group			
Low	High	DK/Ref	National	Low	High	DK/Ref	National	Low	High	DK/Ref	National
2,706,020	609,709	326,808	3,642,537	3,856,004	1,265,689	1,054,001	6,175,694	4,337,904	1,586,741	818,031	6,742,676
74.0%	17.0%	9.0%		62.0%	20.0%	17.0%		64.3%	23.5%	12.1%	

Source: 1999, 2002, 2003 VHA Survey of Veteran Enrollees' Health and Reliance Upon VA

The survey data showed very similar patterns to those described above in all other areas measured. In general, while major differences were reported between the 1999 and 2002 surveys, the rate of change slowed considerably between 2002 and 2003. For example, although the surge of Priority 7-8 enrollees between 1999 and 2003 resulted in more enrollees with Medicare coverage and a general decrease in functional limitations, the changes in those areas between 2002 and 2003 were relatively minor. Most categories changed two percent or less between 2002 and 2003.

Highlights of the 2003 survey include the finding that over 22 percent of enrolled veterans under age 65 are enrolled in Medicare. This high percentage points out the sizeable population of younger disabled veterans enrolled in VHA. Conversely, almost 6 percent of enrollees age 65 or over do not have Medicare.

Enrollees with Various Medicare Coverage by Age												
	Medicare Part A without B			Medicare Part B without A			Medicare Part A and B			No Medicare		
	<45	45-64	65+	<45	45-64	65+	<45	45-64	65+	<45	45-64	65+
1999	20,843	93,487	233,372	5,610	17,376	42,483	57,633	212,673	1,152,869	479,568	1,111,705	214,917
	3.7%	6.5%	14.2%	1.0%	1.2%	2.6%	10.2%	14.8%	70.1%	85.1%	77.5%	13.1%
2002	33,468	135,209	319,490	19,782	36,742	79,832	79,398	399,750	2,386,727	673,221	1,761,948	250,125
	4.2%	5.8%	10.5%	2.5%	1.6%	2.6%	9.9%	17.1%	78.6%	83.5%	75.5%	8.2%
2003	42,465	156,416	329,567	12,625	31,716	79,308	66,647	487,332	2,596,339	804,141	1,950,873	185,248
	4.6%	6.0%	10.3%	1.4%	1.2%	2.5%	7.2%	18.6%	81.4%	86.9%	74.3%	5.8%

Source: 1999, 2002, 2003 VHA Survey of Veteran Enrollees' Health and Reliance Upon VA
Denominator is the enrollee population by Age

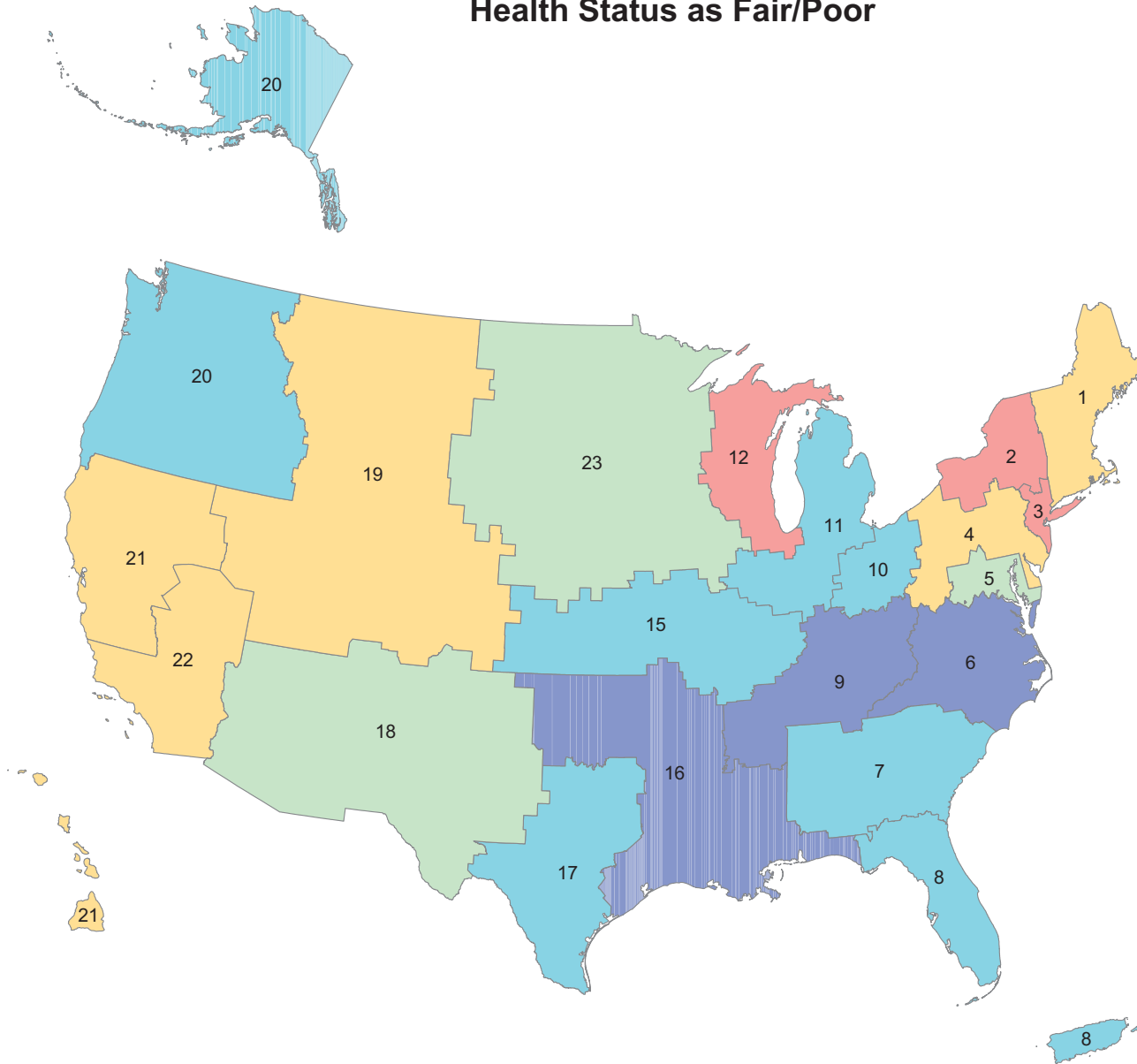
Almost 23 percent of enrolled veterans have no public or private health insurance coverage, more than double the estimated rate of uninsurance for the general veteran population.

Health Insurance Coverage Reported by Enrollees Surveyed									
Year	Medicare A	Medicare B	Medigap	Medicaid	Private			TRICARE For Life	No Coverage
					HMO	Non-HMO	Total		
1999	1,770,877	1,488,645	NA	211,558	NA	NA	1,661,646	NA	1,013,046
	48.6%	40.9%	NA	5.8%	NA	NA	45.6%	NA	27.8%
2002	3,354,043	3,002,231	1,706,930	416,957	745,889	811,204	1,557,093	464,376	1,371,640
	54.3%	48.6%	27.6%	6.8%	12.1%	13.1%	25.2%	7.5%	22.2%
2003	3,678,765	3,273,967	1,893,111	408,825	816,012	862,083	1,678,095	476,280	1,532,320
	54.6%	48.6%	28.1%	6.1%	12.1%	12.8%	24.9%	7.1%	22.7%

Source: 1999, 2002, 2003 VHA Survey of Veteran Enrollees' Health and Reliance Upon VA
Percentages do not total to 100 because enrollees may have multiple coverage.

Other interesting highlights include the finding that while the percent of enrollees reporting fair or poor health decreased, the number of veterans reporting this health status actually increased, due to the surge of enrolled veterans. Thirty-four percent of all enrolled veterans reported fair or poor health status.

2003 Percent of Enrollees Reporting Health Status as Fair/Poor



Legend

VISN

Health Status Fair/Poor

- 28.3% - 28.9%
- 29.0% - 31.7%
- 31.8% - 32.7%
- 32.8% - 37.8%
- 37.9% - 42.7%

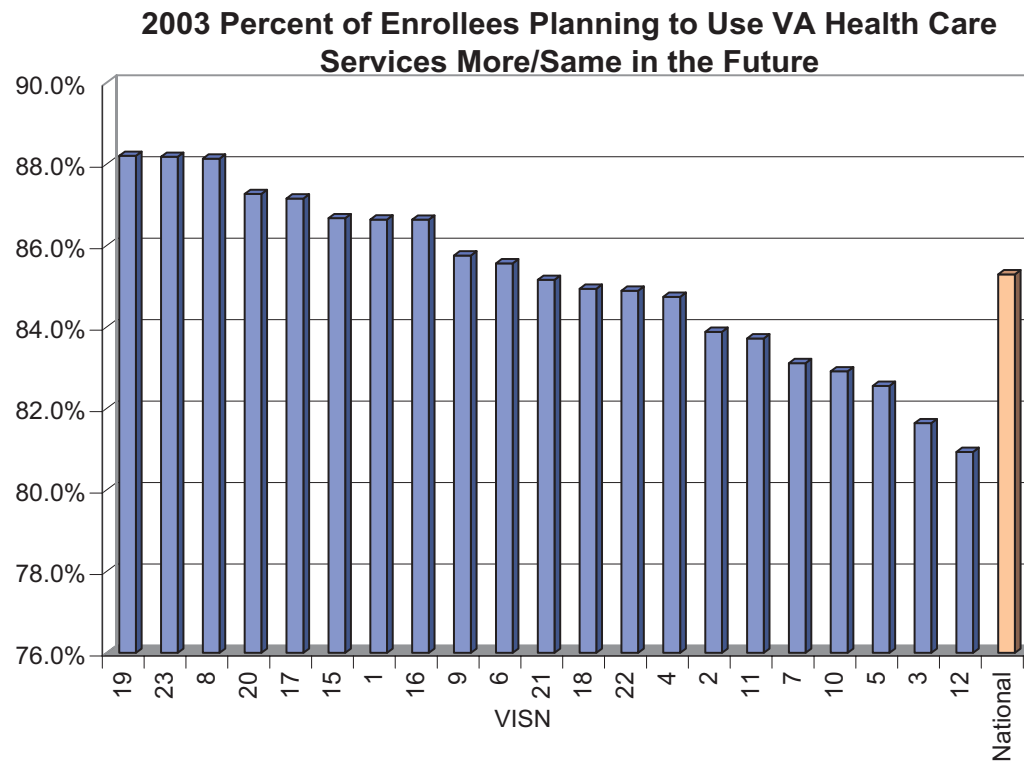
VISN	Fair/Poor	VISN Enrollee Population	%
1	97,018	308,815	31.4%
2	53,367	188,128	28.4%
3	109,169	383,947	28.4%
4	130,767	413,608	31.6%
5	52,078	161,904	32.2%
6	128,332	329,239	39.0%
7	146,777	387,985	37.8%
8	212,329	614,265	34.6%
9	123,718	289,628	42.7%
10	87,942	252,339	34.9%
11	104,132	294,387	35.4%
12	90,527	312,969	28.9%
15	99,423	263,755	37.7%
16	225,475	533,881	42.2%
17	97,469	271,358	35.9%
18	92,745	285,534	32.5%
19	54,701	180,100	30.4%
20	93,044	268,340	34.7%
21	92,271	297,534	31.0%
22	124,944	394,063	31.7%
23	101,684	310,892	32.7%
National	2,317,907	6,742,676	34.4%

The number of enrolled veterans with severe Activities of Daily Living (ADL) and Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs) limitations is more than double the number reported in 1999.

Weighted to Represent the Population of Veteran	1999		2002		2003	
No ADLs or IADLs	2,426,922	66.6%	3,136,113	50.8%	3,523,698	52.3%
IADLs only or 1-2 ADLs	1,010,989	27.8%	2,542,979	41.2%	2,754,117	40.8%
3+ ADLs	204,625	5.6%	496,601	8.0%	464,860	6.9%

Source: 1999, 2002, 2003 VHA Survey of Veteran Enrollees' Health and Reliance Upon VA

Fully 85 percent of enrolled veterans reported a plan to use more or the same amount of VA healthcare in the future.



Source: 2003 VHA Survey of Veteran Enrollees' Health and Reliance Upon VA

A new question was added this year asking respondents to describe how they plan to use VA health care services in the future. Fully 49 percent reported they planned to use VA as their primary source of care, 21 percent as backup to non-VA care, 21 percent as backup to non-VA care, and 16 percent for prescriptions only.

Reasons for planned future use of VA health care services by VISN							
VISN	Primary source of care	Backup to non-VA care	Prescriptions only	Other	No plans for VA use	Don't know	Refused
1	42.1%	24.3%	21.0%	0.6%	9.6%	2.3%	0.1%
2	40.3%	25.4%	16.2%	1.2%	14.0%	2.8%	0.1%
3	33.3%	27.3%	19.1%	1.2%	13.6%	4.5%	1.1%
4	37.4%	21.1%	26.9%	1.3%	9.4%	3.8%	0.1%
5	45.1%	24.6%	12.1%	3.0%	9.9%	4.7%	0.7%
6	51.3%	22.2%	13.1%	1.5%	8.2%	3.5%	0.3%
7	46.9%	22.9%	13.7%	2.1%	11.6%	2.6%	0.2%
8	51.7%	20.1%	18.2%	0.9%	6.2%	2.9%	0.0%
9	55.9%	19.6%	12.2%	1.4%	7.3%	3.5%	0.1%
10	40.0%	25.1%	18.8%	0.6%	11.6%	3.7%	0.1%
11	47.7%	18.9%	18.1%	1.6%	9.9%	3.5%	0.3%
12	49.7%	16.2%	20.4%	1.6%	7.9%	3.5%	0.6%
15	51.1%	16.3%	20.8%	1.7%	8.0%	1.8%	0.3%
16	57.8%	19.4%	11.3%	0.7%	7.1%	3.7%	0.1%
17	54.6%	21.9%	10.5%	1.7%	8.3%	2.7%	0.3%
18	59.1%	17.1%	9.1%	1.4%	9.8%	3.5%	0.0%
19	51.5%	21.1%	13.2%	1.0%	10.5%	2.5%	0.2%
20	53.0%	22.4%	11.3%	0.8%	7.7%	4.5%	0.2%
21	51.9%	21.5%	12.7%	1.4%	9.7%	2.8%	0.0%
22	54.8%	22.9%	8.0%	1.3%	10.8%	2.3%	0.0%
23	47.3%	15.8%	24.4%	1.2%	7.9%	3.4%	0.0%
National	49.0%	21.1%	16.0%	1.3%	9.2%	3.2%	0.2%

Source: 2003 VHA Survey of Veteran Enrollees' Health and Reliance Upon VA

Respondents who were not patients between 1996 through 1998 and enrolled after that time were asked their primary reason for enrolling. In this case, almost 34 percent of new enrollees reported enrolling for routine care, 14 percent for backup to non-VA care, and fully 31 percent enrolled primarily for prescription benefits.

Reason for Enrollment	Frequency	Percent
Regular or routine care	1,421,730	33.8%
Prescriptions	1,316,809	31.3%
Backup for non-VA care	567,242	13.5%
Specialist care	372,183	8.9%
Other	200,863	4.8%
Don't know	144,745	3.4%
Emergency care	137,867	3.3%
Prosthetic supplies	32,609	0.8%
Refused	12,037	0.3%

Source: 2003 VHA Survey of Veteran Enrollees' Health and Reliance Upon VA

In summary, the data clearly show that VHA continues to care for a population that remains more impaired than the general veteran or civilian populations. In addition, enrolled veterans continue to be challenged by possessing a smaller amount of resources. These results demonstrate an ongoing need within VHA for visionary leadership and a strong commitment to the provision of appropriate, timely and high-quality services to our core veterans.

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The complete Enrollees' Survey report is available to view and/or download on the Office of the Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health (ADUSH) for Policy and Planning intranet website at <http://vaww.va.gov/vhaopp>