



In the spring of 2018, Vermont Commission on Women undertook a year-long qualitative data-gathering initiative, “the Listening Project”. The Project included various events during which VCW Commissioners and community members gathered to share and reflect on their experiences of living in Vermont, as well as a 16-question online survey. These efforts were designed to collect information and stories about challenges confronting Vermont women and their communities. With data from over 2,000 survey respondents and event participants, we are sharing the project’s results and stories to highlight the unique challenges and experiences Vermont women shared; these compelling anecdotes, combined with recent data tell a powerful story.

## Key Takeaways

- **The qualitative data that over 2,000 survey respondents’ stories provide us with, aligns, but brings greater color and nuance, to the data we have on the experiences and wellbeing of Vermont women**
  - Within the report, you’ll find powerful quotes and stories that survey respondents shared. Many of these stories bring to life the data collected and published by our partners at Change the Story and other Vermont organizations seeking to better understand and quantify the experiences of Vermont women and girls through data.
- **Vermont women’s experiences differ by age, race, county of residence, and so much more**
  - Younger survey respondents were much more likely to indicate that mental health was a concern for themselves and their families. 56% of those under 25 identified it as a top concern.
  - For middle-aged and older respondents, health care was a very prevalent concern. The cost and availability of health care came up frequently in survey respondents stories; 63% of respondents between 45 and 64 indicated concerns about health care.
  - Child care and paid family leave were of greatest concern for those between 25 and 44.
  - Respondents identifying that they live in Essex, Franklin, Lamoille and Orleans counties were more likely than their counterparts to identify affordability as a challenge for themselves and their families.
  - Housing availability was of biggest concern to those in Essex, Lamoille and Rutland counties.

- Respondents identifying as single with minor children were more likely to identify that they struggle to meet their expenses, as were respondents identifying as American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, or as multiple ethnicities.
- **Affordability, economic security, child care and paid family and medical leave, bias and harassment, work-life balance, and higher education opportunities are all major concerns for women and their families in Vermont**
  - Out of the many concerns raised by survey respondents, these issues rose to the top for women and their communities.
  - Issues of affordability including health care, housing, transportation and food were frequently identified as challenges by and for women across the state.
  - Economic security and the ability to find and retain a job that provides significant income and benefits for one's family was an overarching concern. Respondents saw this as key in a women's ability to take care of herself and her family.
  - Child care and paid family and medical leave were frequently cited concerns, especially for participants between 25 and 44 for whom it was the biggest concern. It was an issue that in respondents stories overlapped frequently with many other concerns including the ability to actively participate in the workforce or participate in higher education.
  - Bias and harassment were issues that surfaced for respondents when it came race, gender, sexual orientation, disability and age. Respondents identifying as people of color were much more likely to worry about being discriminated based on race in their communities.
  - Work-life balance and schedule flexibility were themes that emerged as being important to women in Vermont as well. Lacking an employer that understands the demands of being a working parent and provides flexible work schedules and family-friendly policies was a frequently cited concern.
  - Finally, higher education and job training opportunities were another challenge that surfaced in respondents' answers to many questions. The ability to access and afford such opportunities was seen as out of reach for many women in respondents' communities.