



**HEALTH CARE CHALLENGES:
WHAT VERMONTERS ARE SAYING
& WHAT THE DATA SAYS**

LISTENING PROJECT



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 the recent data tell a powerful story. Here we highlight the stories respondents shared about their experiences related to health care challenges in the state.

The survey asked Vermonters to respond to: “What do you think has the biggest effect on a woman’s ability to have enough money to take care of herself and her family in your community?”, here are some answers we received:

“Income and access to healthcare are two tying and underlying issues I know women have to worry about daily. Paying for contraceptives if insurance doesn't cover it and period supplies for things we weren't even given a choice over.”

-Respondent declined to provide any identifying details

“Health insurance! Once a woman earns enough to get out of poverty, she is no longer Medicaid eligible and health insurance is outrageously expensive. In many cases, it does not pay to work hard and better yourself.”

-Bennington county woman between 35 and 44

“Healthcare takes a huge part of income that could otherwise be spent on other bills. Affordable healthcare would go a long way to taking the press off many families.”

-Bennington county woman between 45 and 54

“Access to a proper social safety net: guaranteed health care, guaranteed paid parental leave, subsidized child care, paid sick leave.”

-Washington county woman between 45 and 54

“Health - you need to be healthy in order to work, which allows you to make money, and allows you to take care of yourself and your family. Hospital bills and insurance is still very expensive.”

-Chittenden county woman between 25 and 34

What the data says about health care challenges for women in Vermont:

- The City of New York’s Department of Consumer Affairs did an analysis comparing the prices of products with clear male and female branding. They found that women pay 8% more for senior/home health care products (such as braces, canes and adult diapers).ⁱ
- According to the 2018 Vermont Household Health Insurance Survey conducted by the Department of Health, 3%, or 19,800 Vermonters indicate that they are uninsured. 51% of those who are uninsured indicate that cost is the only reason, 22% indicate it is one of the main reasons. Another 36% of Vermonters under age 65 are underinsured. 40% of those with private health insurance are considered underinsured.ⁱⁱ
- In a recent VPR-Vermont-PBS Poll, 9% of Vermonters indicated that health care is the most important problem facing the state.ⁱⁱⁱ



DATA

ⁱ New York City Department of Consumer Affairs, “From Cradle to Cane: The Cost of Being a Female Consumer: A Study of Gender Pricing in New York City,” 2015,

<https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dca/downloads/pdf/partners/Study-of-Gender-Pricing-in-NYC.pdf>.

ⁱⁱ Vermont Department of Health, “Vermont Household Health Insurance Survey,” 2019,

https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/VHHIS_Report_2018.pdf.

ⁱⁱⁱ “VPR - Vermont PBS 2020 Polls.”