



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 bias, harassment, and discrimination in the state.

**The survey asked Vermonters to respond to: “What needs do you or women in your community have that aren’t being met? What do you think would help?”, here are some answers we received:**

“The need to be treated as full human beings worthy of the same love and unconditional support that the men have been getting from all of us their entire lives. Equal pay would be helpful. Rape and assault laws with some teeth in them would also be helpful. A social shift is required. I don’t know what would help get us there.”  
-Caledonia county woman between 45 and 54

“Women are not believed when speaking out about sexual harassment/assault and are not taken seriously at medical offices in relation to physical or mental pain.”  
-Chittenden county woman between 25 and 34

“Services aimed at those most in need/most marginalized. Race-informed/LGBTQ-informed services. Anti-discrimination organizations/knowledge”  
-Rutland county woman between 25 and 34

**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:**

“The views of men (and some women) that they are less competent, less driven, less capable, just simply less... because of their gender.”  
-Lamoille county woman between 35 and 44

“She needs to feel free to take initiative. Often, it's hard to be employed doing what we love if others don't celebrate our successes. She needs to be able to feel free to apply to all sorts of different jobs.”

*-Woman between 18 and 24*

“Low wages; wage and hiring discrimination based on gender, gender identity, race; higher expenses and lack of housing and health care access”

*-Rutland county woman between 25 and 34*

**Respondents who identified as male also commented on challenges that they see women in their communities facing when it comes to bias, discrimination and harassment. Some of their comments on these topics included:**

“(We must) prove to men that workplace and gender equality are not indicative of a zero sum game in which women gain at the expense of men, but rather an economic and social opportunity in which the whole of society stands to benefit (especially nuclear family units).”

*-Essex county man between 18 and 24*

“(There is) societal pressure to be all things to everyone; lack of support in the workplace to be an effective employee while balancing parenting needs.”

*-Franklin county man between 35 and 44*

“(There is) low pay in the traditionally women's professions, such as teaching.”

*-Chittenden county man between 55 and 64*

### **What the data says about bias, discrimination and harassment for women in Vermont:**

- Traditionally female fields (such as nursing, teaching, office administration and food service) employ 43% of Vermont women who work full-time.<sup>i</sup>
- It is estimated that nationally over a third of women experience sexual harassment at work.<sup>ii</sup>



**DATA**

<sup>i</sup> Change the Story, “Change the Story, “2019 Status Report: Women, Work, and Wages in Vermont,” 2019, <https://changethestoryvt.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/WomenWorkWages2019.pdf>.

<sup>ii</sup> Change the Story.