



**CHILD CARE, PAID FAMILY
& MEDICAL LEAVE:
WHAT VERMONTERS ARE SAYING
& WHAT THE DATA SAYS**



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 child care and paid family and medical leave in the state.

The survey asked Vermonters to respond to: “What do you see as the most significant challenges facing women, overall, in your community?”, here are some answers we received:

“Access to childcare. I was a teacher, got on wait lists at 3 months pregnant. Didn’t get off in-home and center-based daycare (wait)lists until my son was 2. That’s 2 years of missing out on experience, salary, promotions, etc. That shouldn’t happen.”

-Addison county woman between 25 and 34

“Lack of quality, affordable child care so that women are able to work. I also think that we need more employers who are flexible with schedules for moms. (Not being annoyed with new moms for having to pump, or allowing moms with school-aged kids to be able to have the time occasionally to go to school events during the day, adequate personal time, etc.). Overall, I don’t work fulltime at this point because I have not found an employer that allows enough personal time. (whether that is paid or unpaid).”

-Franklin county woman between 25 and 34

“Being able to have children without sacrificing careers or job security. Paying for daycare so they can work. Access to birth control/sex education.”

-Windsor county woman between 35 and 44

“Becoming a mother was very hard. I went back to work after 3 months of unpaid leave, and during this time I felt pressured by my husband to go back even sooner. When I went back to work I was still sleeping 3 hours per night, so I felt like I was hurting myself physically and mentally. I think that there is an overall lack of knowledge of what women go through during pregnancy and post partum, and we are in a society that does not support maternity - hence the fact that we have no paid maternity leave.”

-Chittenden county woman between 25 and 34

“Parental leave especially for single parents and low income working families. Paid parental leave and more available affordable child care while ensuring that child care workers are paid a living (at least \$15/hour NOW not in a couple of years).”

-Washington county woman 65 or over

What the data says about child care and paid family and medical leave in Vermont:

- A family of four earning \$50,000 a year could spend up to 41.2% of their income on high-quality child care for two children.ⁱ
- Nationally, 2/3rds of unpaid family caregivers are women.ⁱⁱ
- A new mother who earns the state’s median full-time wage for women (\$41,145) and leaves the workforce for five years is estimated to lose \$433,00 in income, wage increases and retirement assets.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Similarly, the cost of lost wages and social security benefits to a woman who cares for an aging family member is estimated to be over \$324,000, on average.^{iv}
- In a recent VPR-Vermont PBS Poll, 56% of Vermonters indicated that they favor a paid family leave plan, even if it would mean higher taxes.^v



DATA

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

ⁱⁱ Change the Story.

ⁱⁱⁱ Change the Story.

^{iv} Change the Story.

^v “VPR - Vermont PBS 2020 Polls: February,” Vermont Public Radio, February 13, 2020, <http://projects.vpr.org/vpr-vermont-pbs-2020-polls-february>.