



**ECONOMIC SECURITY:
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 economic security 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:

“Low paying jobs that are flexible enough to meet the needs of a single parent, in addition, the high cost of housing.”

-Chittenden county woman between 35 and 44

“Low wages all one’s life. Being relegated to the lower paid positions. Lack of promotion due to double-standards for mothers or caregivers; no family leave.”

-Caledonia county woman 65 or over

“Vermont is not affordable and there is no room to get a promotion. Housing should not take 2/3 of a family's monthly income. In Ohio a family can buy a modern two floor home with a pool for less money than a Vermont family renting a two bedroom apartment on the second floor of a house that was built in 1940. There needs to be a higher minimum wage that matches the rise of inflation.”

-Orange county woman between 25 and 34

“Time and money. Women need resources to gain an education and to stay competitive in the workforce without graduating with thousands or hundreds of thousands of dollars in dept. I would love to stay competitive and obtain my PhD. but I will be paying my undergrad and graduate loans off until my oldest son enters college.”
-Windsor county woman between 35 and 44

“Access to hiring, conscious businesses. A single individual can not live well on the average hourly wage...let alone trying to adequately support a family. Poverty income lines do not take into account quality of life and this leaves many without.”
-Addison county woman between 35 and 44

“Fair wages that also take into account the cost of living in Vermont. It is viciously expensive to live in Vermont, and the biggest employers constantly promote the idea that everyone who lives/works in Vermont will be paid less, even when the business/administrators are making money hand over fist and paid massive salaries compared to their employees.”
-Chittenden county woman between 45 and 54

What the data says about economic security for women in Vermont:

- Single female householders with minor children under five years old have a poverty rate in Vermont of 47.1%, compared to the rate of 14% of single male householders in the same situation.ⁱ
- In Vermont, women with disabilities are more than twice as likely to live in poverty.ⁱⁱ
- The poverty rates for Black and Asian women in Vermont are higher than national averages. Black women in Vermont have a poverty rate of 26.9%.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Poverty is a challenge for women at every age in Vermont, but is highest at either ends of the spectrum (for women between 18 and 24 and for women over 75).^{iv}
- In a recent VPR-Vermont-PBS Poll, Vermonters were asked what the most important problem facing the state today is and the plurality (30%) of participants selected “the economy/jobs/cost of living”.^v



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>.