

Work from Home: COVID-19 and Vermont's Future

September 3rd, 2020

Study Background

Vermont's demographic challenges are well-documented: Vermont is the second-oldest state in the nation, and [lacks replacement workers for the rapidly retiring workforce](#). The latest census report noted that 11 of Vermont's fourteen counties [experienced population decline](#).

While these variables prove challenging for economic development in the state, Vermont has presented itself as an attractive location for folks "sheltering in place" due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Vermont's successful COVID-19 management strategy coupled with a growing population of "telecommuters" raises the question: *does the COVID-19 pandemic present an opportunity to add a new wave of in-migrants to the state?*



A 25-question survey was developed by the Center for Research on Vermont and the Vermont Futures Project, and was targeted towards people who have temporarily relocated to Vermont during, and due to, the COVID-19 pandemic. It was administered during the summer of 2020, and yielded 226 usable results.

Results

The results of this survey offered a series of high-level findings which provide critical insight into the perspectives and needs of telecommuters who have relocated to Vermont, either temporarily or permanently, due to the COVID-19 pandemic

Key findings included:

- 1/3 of respondents indicated that they were "likely" or "very likely" to remain in Vermont after the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Respondents who indicated they were "likely" or "very likely" to stay cited that nature and outdoor access, quality of life, an ongoing ability to work remotely, COVID-19 safety, and proximity to family as reasons they would remain in VT
 - Barriers include winter weather, lack of affordable housing, lack of economic opportunity and jobs, high taxes and cost of living, lack of diversity, poor internet quality, and a need to return to their established lives as barriers to remaining in VT
- Older demographics (51-65 years old and 66+ years old) indicated they were more likely to stay in VT than younger demographics (18-35 years old)

Recommendations

- Develop a branding campaign to assert that Vermont is the "work-from-home" capital of the United States
- Conduct a needs assessment of this population of new Vermonters to determine what will keep them here
- Consider a phase 2 survey focused on second home-owners to understand in more detail who is moving to Vermont
- Create a weekly, online seminar series around Vermont, intended for people to learn about and engage with their new state
- Consider how to recruit and organize this potential wave of in-migrants to meet Vermont's goals of downtown renewal

To learn more, visit the Center for Research on Vermont's website at www.uvm.edu/cas/vermontresearch

