



**Looking Ahead:  
Vermonters' Values and Concerns  
Summary Report**

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## Introduction

Vermont has a history of envisioning the future. Each agency in state government and many Vermont organizations and associations systematically measure and evaluate the state's progress; envisioning a place where common goals can be realized. Over time these studies have engaged and united Vermonters, inspired leaders and initiated practical gubernatorial and legislative initiatives. In 2007, the Council on the Future of Vermont program was developed by the Vermont Council on Rural Development in the belief that in this time of rapid change we need to step back to consider the big picture trends, evaluate the opportunities and challenges ahead, and consider common Vermont priorities. As one component of this project, the Center for Rural Studies at the University of Vermont conducted a telephone survey in March of 2008.

This survey and resulting analysis are designed to show levels of agreement and concern with topic areas that are important to Vermonters. The telephone survey is a scientifically valid measurement, with a confidence interval of 99 percent with +/- 5 percent margin of error. The topics in the survey, included as an appendix of this report, emerged from many public conversations hosted around the state during 2007. In addition to surveying Vermonters, the Council on the Future of Vermont is conducting an unprecedented number and variety of listening sessions throughout the state, interviewing Vermont business leaders, working Vermonters, seniors, veterans, students, environmental and community leaders and commissioning research based on the topics and ideas that arise in local dialogues. Based on all these inputs, the Council will present a comprehensive picture of the values, concerns, and aspirations of Vermonters in our time.

This release of the survey results represents the first component of the findings of the Council on the Future of Vermont. The values, opinions, concerns and priorities documented by the survey will be evaluated as important public inputs to the work of the Council. Many topics in this survey, such as Vermont's working landscape and growing concerns around affordability, echo common topics in today's media. We recognize that Vermont is intrinsically linked to national and even global trends, but there also seem to be areas – illuminated in part by the results of this survey – that indicate characteristics that are unique to our state. From *trust in our neighbors*, to *lack of concern around public safety*, to an emphasis on *increased civic action as a next step to achieve our goals*, the respondents to this survey seem to be telling us that the Vermont approach may be different from that of our neighboring states.

Ultimately, all of the data collected in this survey will be combined with the Council on the Future of Vermont's results from other research, public forums, interviews and web-based survey results. The goal of the Council on the Future of Vermont is to identify common themes of major concern to Vermonters, the values they stand by, and their priorities for the future of the Vermont community and to articulate these within the context of historic data.

This survey provides the Council on the Future of Vermont with clear indicators about topics of concern for Vermonters and helps to verify the data that has been collected through public dialogue around the state. The results from the Center for Rural Studies' 2008 poll are interesting and valuable on their own but will also serve as key points of reference for members of the Council on the Future of Vermont as they deliberate toward the full conclusion of their study in March of 2009. This summary report, as well as more detailed reports on the findings, notes from all of the public listening sessions and further information about the Council on the Future of Vermont program of the Vermont Council on Rural Development, can be found online at [www.futureofvermont.org](http://www.futureofvermont.org).

## Executive Summary

The Council on the Future of Vermont (CFV), a project of the Vermont Council on Rural Development, is in the midst of a statewide public dialogue on the values, challenges, opportunities, priorities and visions for the future of the state. The Council's mission is to answer the questions: "What do these challenges and opportunities mean to Vermonters?" and "What do they believe we will need to do to meet the future with confidence?"

As part of this process, the Center for Rural Studies at the University of Vermont implemented a statewide telephone survey to gauge Vermonters' opinions on a specific set of values and challenges initially identified during a series of public forums hosted by CFV. This report provides a summary of the data gathered through telephone polling in March of 2008.

## Methods

This survey was designed by a committee of the Council on the Future of Vermont in partnership with the UVM Center for Rural Studies. Every value and concern statement was created using testimony of Vermonters at the CFV community forums. The survey committee worked with the Center for Rural Studies specialists to create a survey tool to test level of agreement and level of concern around specific topic areas which had been identified through the public meetings. There were a total of 699 respondents to this survey. Results based on a sample of this size have a confidence interval of 99 percent with a margin of error of +/- 5 percent. This means that if the survey were to be repeated in Vermont, 99 percent of the time the results would be within plus or minus five percent of the numbers reported here (see expanded methodology and detailed respondent demographics in Appendix 1). The survey questions are in Appendix 2.

## Key Findings

Survey respondents were asked for their input on a series of 12 values and 24 challenges. This report highlights detailed findings of the top seven highest rated values and challenges as identified by respondents.

Survey respondents placed the greatest value overall (97.2%) on *the state's working landscape and heritage*. Together with the second and third-ranked values – *I am proud of being from or living in Vermont* and *I value Vermont's spirit of independence* – these statements provide a picture of the most compelling attributes of the state that bring Vermonters together. Of the survey respondents, 15 had lived in Vermont for fewer than three years, 70 had lived in Vermont for three to 10 years and 600 had lived in Vermont for more than 11 years. The average number of years living in Vermont for all respondents was 35; overall this survey group could be said to have long experience with the state and its issues.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Vermonters expressed high level of concern about the increasing cost of living, jobs, the economy and healthcare. Annual statewide polls conducted by the Center for Rural Studies have consistently revealed these as top issues for Vermonters. The open-response questions near the end of this survey provided a way for Vermonters to express their concerns in a very specific way. When asked: *What do you see as the most important goal for Vermont in the next generation?* Vermonters responded with a range of answers overwhelmingly focused on subjects directly related to affordability. Their answers included commentary on tax rates, affordable healthcare, education and other services and the need for more jobs and higher wages. These concerns reflect the current increases in cost of living being experienced by Vermonters and others across the country.

## Vermonters' Top Values

The value statements crafted for this survey reflect what Vermonters identified at public forums around the state throughout the Council on the Future of Vermont process. By measuring survey respondents' level of agreement (or disagreement) with these value statements, the Council on the Future of Vermont is able to verify the importance to all Vermonters of these values as well as provide a counterpoint to the public forum process. Respondents were asked to provide feedback on a set of 12 values utilizing a standard rating scale with the options: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree, or don't know.

The following table provides a synopsis of the *top seven* highest-ranked values by percentage of combined "agree" and "strongly agree" responses.

Table 1  
*Top Values*

Value Statement	Percent of Strongly Agree/Agree Responses
I value the working landscape and its heritage	97.2
I am proud of being from or living in Vermont	93.6
I value Vermont's spirit of independence	93.1
I value the privacy I get in Vermont	91.0
I believe Vermont's creative communities are valuable to the state	89.2
I value the small size and scale of the state	87.9
I trust my neighbors	86.2

Source: Center for Rural Studies (<http://crs.uvm.edu>) 2008 Council on the Future of Vermont Telephone Survey (N=699)

When comparing how respondents ranked each value against all other values, the value statement receiving the greatest percentage of strongly agree and agree responses was: *I value the working landscape and its heritage* (97.2% of all respondents). This high level of agreement and the other high levels of agreement within the top seven value statements verify the strength of the commonality of these tangible and not-so-tangible themes among Vermonters in 2008.

A brief review of the value statements which received the highest percentage of combined "strongly disagree" and "disagree" responses is also of value. *I believe that private property rights are well respected in Vermont* received the highest level (15.4%) of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed. The value statement *I value the accessibility of government* ranked second highest for number of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed (13.2%), after which the level of disagreement for the remaining value statements dropped significantly. By expressing disagreement with these statements, respondents may be disagreeing with a specific word or theme or with a general concept. For example, respondents who expressed disagreement with the statement *I value the accessibility of government* may not value it, may not believe that it exists, or may not believe that it is accessible. These specific areas are highlighted because they deserve more analysis than was possible through the survey. It is important to note that even in cases where high levels of disagreement were recorded, the overwhelming majority (over 80% in both cases) agreed with the statements.

## Vermonters' Top Challenges

In addition to the values identified in the CFV forums, participants identified a set of challenges they believe the state will face in the next generation. To begin to understand how Vermonters might prioritize challenges facing our state, this survey measured respondents' *level of concern*. Survey respondents were asked to describe their level of concern on 24 challenges utilizing a standard rating scale with the options: very concerned, moderately concerned, slightly concerned, not at all concerned and don't know.

The following table provides a synopsis of the *top seven* ranked challenges by percentage of combined "very concerned" and "moderately concerned" responses.

Table 2  
*Top Challenges*

Challenge Statement	Percent of Very Concerned/ Moderately Concerned Responses
The increasing costs of living, such as transportation, heating and electricity	96.1
The health and viability of Vermont farms and the agricultural sector	92.1
The tax rate in Vermont	85.1
The development of an adequate workforce for the future	84.4
The state's existing public infrastructure and its future maintenance	83.6
A shortage of affordable housing	83.3
The way Vermont finances public education	83.0

Source: Center for Rural Studies (<http://crs.uvm.edu>) 2008 Council on the Future of Vermont Telephone Survey (N=699)

Ninety-six point one percent of respondents reported being either very or moderately concerned about *the increasing costs of living, such as transportation, heating and electricity*. These findings reveal the common theme of affordability expressed by Vermonters throughout this survey. Three of the top seven challenges relate to affordability (increasing costs of living, tax rate and shortage of affordable housing). The second most concerning statement (92.1%): *The health and viability of Vermont farms and the agricultural sector*, further verifies the high level of agreement with the *working landscape and its heritage* value statement. When considering these two together it is interesting to note that working landscape resonated highly with respondents, both as a source of concern for its future and as a source of value.

Conversely, high percentages of surveyed Vermonters reported being slightly or not at all concerned about some of the challenges identified through the CFV public forums. Fifty-six point two percent of respondents were slightly or not at all concerned about *the level of engagement of Vermonters in their local governments*. This is interesting, especially because in the open-ended questions, nearly 30 percent of respondents later identified some form of increased civic action as a next step for addressing Vermont's most important future goals (pp. 19). The fact that respondents expressed a low level of concern can be interpreted in at least two ways: they may not be worried about the issue, or they may believe that the level of engagement in local governments is high enough so that they do not see it as concerning.

Similarly, more than half of respondents were “slightly” or “not at all” concerned about public safety, the increase in the average age of Vermonters and the level of engagement in local communities. These findings verify that some challenges identified through the public forums are not of as great concern to Vermonters as others. They could also be seen as an expression of confidence in Vermont’s public safety, future demographics and level of engagement in communities and the state’s ability to respond to the challenges of the future.

The survey also revealed a number of interesting, statistically significant demographic trends among some of the values and challenges not included in this “top seven” report. For example, the higher a respondent's education level, the more likely he/she was to be concerned about the limited availability of high speed Internet and wireless telecommunications, changes to the earth's climate and pressure to convert open lands to residential, commercial or other development. And interestingly, the higher a respondent's education level, the less likely he/she was to be concerned about public safety in Vermont.

Also, respondents at both ends of the age spectrum (ages 18-24 and older than 75) answered several questions in a similar fashion. For example, these two age groups were much less concerned about the limited availability of high speed Internet and wireless telecommunications than those in the 25-44, 45-59 and 60-74 age groups. Respondents at both ends of the age spectrum were more likely to value participatory government in Vermont than those in the other age groups. And finally, the higher a respondent's age, the more likely he/she was to value the accessibility of government in Vermont.

The summary and complete results of this survey, as well as the notes from public forums, are available online at the Council on the Future of Vermont’s website: [www.futureofvermont.org](http://www.futureofvermont.org).

## Results

### Cross Tabulation Results of Top Seven Values

The following pages show the top seven values and challenges identified by the 699 telephone survey respondents. The tables and charts show the frequency of responses for each value and challenge statement and the text describes some of the key demographic characteristics of these respondents. For all of the following results, respondents who declined to answer the question were not included in the count. Pages 9 through 12 provide analyses of the top seven value statements, and pages 13 through 16 provide analyses of the top seven challenges.

An examination of how different demographic groups answered each question is located after each table. The “strongly agree” and “agree” response categories were combined for this part of the analysis. The title of each table is the exact phrase from the survey to which respondents were asked to give their opinion (for example, Table 5 shows the results of respondents being asked ‘Please state your level of agreement, from strongly agree to strongly disagree, with the following statement: *I value the working landscape and its heritage*. Do you strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree or strongly disagree?’) Similarly, for the challenge statements, the “very concerned” and “moderately concerned” response categories were combined for this part of the analysis. All responses were then compared to respondents’ age, gender, education, income, length of time living in Vermont and geographic location. Chittenden County and the Northeast Kingdom were used as proxies for urban and rural respondents in Vermont.

It is important to note that the percentage values indicate the responses for each demographic group but *can not* necessarily be generalized to the population as a whole. Descriptions marked with \* are statistically significant at 0.1 or less (a standard social science threshold). This means that there is at least a 90 percent probability that the relationship between the demographic group and the response did not occur by chance — that at least 90 times out of 100 we would get the same result. Consequently, the results marked with \* *can* be applied to the population as a whole. The demographic descriptions following each chart show both the statistically significant and the non-statistically significant findings of interest.



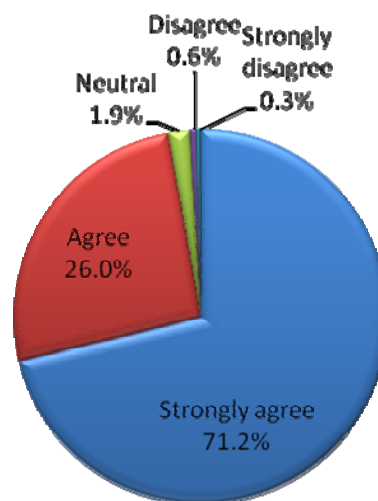
## The working landscape

Table 3

*I value the working landscape and its heritage.*

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	492	71.2
Agree	180	26.0
Neutral	13	1.9
Disagree	4	.6
Strongly disagree	2	.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>691</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Center for Rural Studies (<http://crs.uvm.edu>) (N=699)  
2008 Council on the Future of Vermont Telephone Survey



Vermonters across the board overwhelmingly value the working landscape and its heritage. The higher a respondent's education level, the more likely he/she was to agree/strongly agree with this value. Responses ranged from 87 percent agree/strongly agree for those without high school diplomas up to 99.2 percent for those with degrees.\* Respondents in the \$35,000-\$49,999 income range were least likely (88.6%) to agree/strongly agree with this statement while 100 percent of those in the \$25,000-\$34,999 income range said they agreed/strongly agreed.\* Urban respondents were more likely (98%) to agree/strongly agree that they value the working landscape and its heritage than rural respondents (94.4%). This statement also had a very high percentage of agreement across all age categories, periods of time living in Vermont and genders. This seems to be a very common value for Vermonters, despite differences in background and socio-economic level.

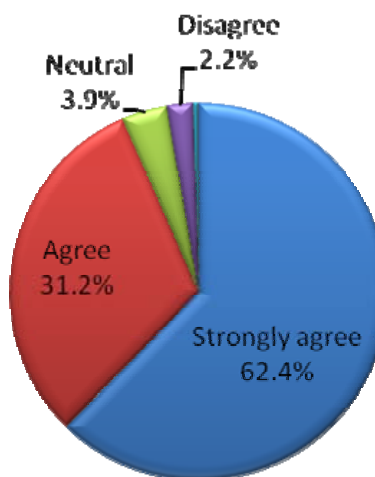
## Pride in being from Vermont

Table 4

*I am proud of being from or living in Vermont.*

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	434	62.4
Agree	217	31.2
Neutral	27	3.9
Disagree	15	2.2
Strongly disagree	3	.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>696</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Center for Rural Studies (<http://crs.uvm.edu>) (N=699)  
2008 Council on the Future of Vermont Telephone Survey



All of the respondents without high school diplomas agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, while 92.6 percent of those with high school diplomas and 93.9 percent of those with degrees felt the same. Respondents living in Vermont for less than three years agreed/strongly agreed at a higher level (100%) than those living in Vermont from three to 10 years and more than 11 years (88.4% and 94%, respectively). Having chosen Vermont as their home, new arrivals, interestingly, were most proud of being from or living in the state. Although age, gender and whether the respondent lived in an urban or rural location did not seem to affect level of agreement, respondents with household income range of \$25,000-\$34,999 agreed/strongly agreed the most (100%), while those in the \$35,000-\$49,999 range agreed/strongly slightly less (91.5%).

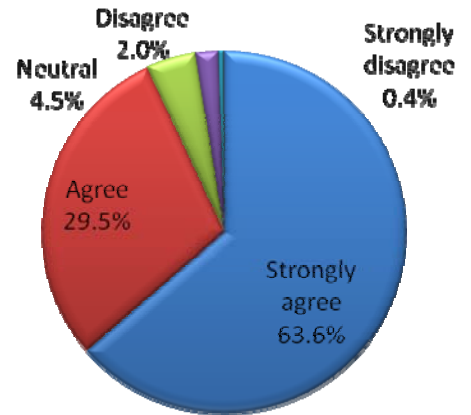
## Vermont's spirit of independence

Table 5

*I value Vermont's spirit of independence.*

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	442	63.6
Agree	205	29.5
Neutral	31	4.5
Disagree	14	2.0
Strongly disagree	3	.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>695</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Center for Rural Studies (<http://crs.uvm.edu>) (N=699)  
2008 Council on the Future of Vermont Telephone Survey



All the respondents living in Vermont for less than three years agreed/strongly agreed, compared to 89.9 percent of those living in Vermont for three to 10 years and 93.1 percent of those living in Vermont for more than 11 years. All respondents with household incomes between \$25,000 and \$34,999 placed high value on Vermont's spirit of independence, while respondents with household incomes less than \$25,000 had the lowest level of agreement (92%). That said, the overwhelming majority of Vermonters of all incomes identified with the idea of independence as a key characteristic of the state. Nearly 10 percent more younger respondents (18-24) agreed/strongly agreed that Vermont's spirit of independence was a value than respondents between the ages of 25 and 44. The percentage of agreement increased as educational level increased and rural and urban respondents shared a similarly high level of agreement.

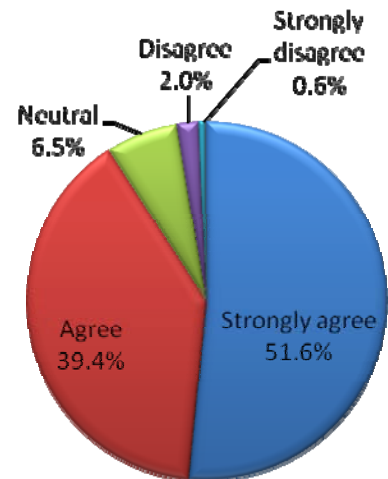
## Privacy in Vermont

Table 6

*I value the privacy that I get in Vermont.*

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	359	51.6
Agree	274	39.4
Neutral	45	6.5
Disagree	14	2.0
Strongly disagree	4	.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>696</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Center for Rural Studies (<http://crs.uvm.edu>) (N=699)  
2008 Council on the Future of Vermont Telephone Survey



Urban and rural respondents shared a similar level of agreement for the statement *I value the privacy I get in Vermont* (89.6% and 91.7%, respectively). All of the respondents living in Vermont for less than three years agreed/strongly agreed, compared to 88.4 percent of those living in Vermont for three to 10 years and 91 percent of those in Vermont for more than 11 years. The less than \$25,000 household income group was least likely to agree/strongly agree (86.2%), compared to 100 percent of those in the \$25,000-\$34,999 category. Respondents across all education levels and age categories had a high percentage of agreement and male respondents were slightly more likely than females to agree/strongly agree.

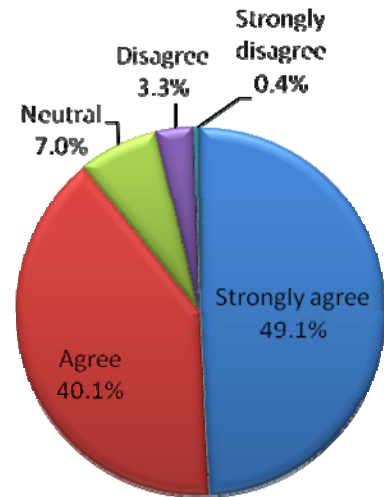
## Vermont's creative communities

Table 7

*I believe that Vermont's creative communities are valuable to the state.*

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	342	49.1
Agree	279	40.1
Neutral	49	7.0
Disagree	23	3.3
Strongly disagree	3	.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>696</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Center for Rural Studies (<http://crs.uvm.edu>) (N=699)  
2008 Council on the Future of Vermont Telephone Survey



Rural respondents were more likely than their urban counterparts to agree/strongly agree with the statement *I believe that Vermont's creative communities are valuable to the state* (94.4% and 87.7% respectively)\* and women were more likely (93%) to value creative communities than men (84.9%).\* Respondents living in Vermont between three and 10 years were slightly more likely to agree/strongly agree than those living in Vermont less than three years or more than 11 years. All of the respondents with household incomes between \$25,000 and \$34,999 agreed/strongly agreed, compared to 88.5 percent of those in the more than \$75,000 household income category. Responses by age categories ranged from 82.4 percent agree/strongly agree for those aged 18-24 to 91.4 percent agreement for those older than 75. Responses across education categories ranged from 87.2 percent for those with high school diplomas or some college to 90.6 percent for those with degrees.

### ***What is Statistically Significant?***

*In this report, we give you an indication of demographics for each statement, but remember percentage values indicate the responses for each demographic group and can not necessarily be generalized to the population as a whole. Descriptions marked with \* are statistically significant at 0.1 or less. This means there is at least a 90 percent probability that the relationship between the demographic group and the response did not occur by chance and therefore these results can be generalized to the population as a whole.*

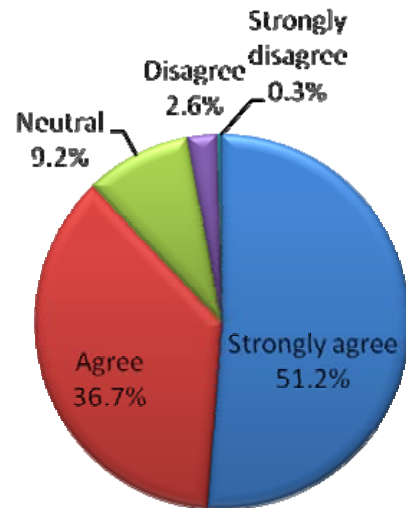
## Scale of the state

Table 8

*I value the small size and scale of the state.*

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	356	51.2
Agree	255	36.7
Neutral	64	9.2
Disagree	18	2.6
Strongly disagree	2	.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>695</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Center for Rural Studies (<http://crs.uvm.edu>) (N=699)  
2008 Council on the Future of Vermont Telephone Survey



Urban respondents were slightly more likely (88.4%) than rural respondents (86.3%) to value the small size and scale of the state. Respondents living in Vermont for more than 11 years were slightly more likely (88% of respondents) to agree/strongly agree than those living in Vermont for 10 years or fewer (85.7%). Respondents in the \$50,000-\$74,999 household income range were least likely to agree/strongly agree (83.7%) while those in the \$25,000-\$34,999 range were most likely to agree/strongly agree (100%). Respondents aged 18-24 had the lowest percentage of agreement (76.5%), compared to 83.7 percent for those aged 25-44 and 89.9 percent for those aged 60-74. Education level and gender did not make much of a difference in the agreement percentages.

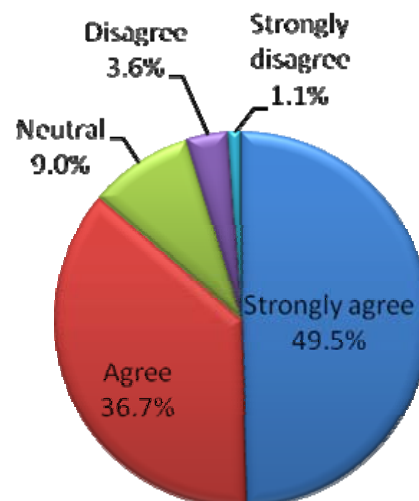
## Trust in neighbors

Table 9

*I trust my neighbors.*

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	345	49.5
Agree	256	36.7
Neutral	63	9.0
Disagree	25	3.6
Strongly disagree	8	1.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>697</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Center for Rural Studies (<http://crs.uvm.edu>) (N=699)  
2008 Council on the Future of Vermont Telephone Survey



Urban respondents were slightly more likely (89.7%) to trust their neighbors than rural respondents (86.3%). Respondents living in Vermont for less than three years were most likely to agree/strongly agree that they trust their neighbors (100%), compared to those living in Vermont for three to 10 years and more than 11 years (85.7% and 85.8%, respectively). Respondents in the \$35,000-\$49,999 household income range were least likely to agree/strongly agree (70.4%), compared to 91.7 percent of respondents in the \$25,000-\$34,999 range.\* Also, the higher a respondent's level of education, the more likely he/she was to trust his/her neighbors. Responses ranged from 73.9 percent for those without high school diplomas to 88.7 percent for those with degrees.\* Similarly, the percentage of respondents who agreed/strongly agreed increased as their ages increased. Responses ranged from 82.4 percent for those aged 18-24 up to 90 percent for those older than 75. Men were slightly more likely to trust their neighbors than women.\*

## Cross Tabulation Results of Top Seven Challenges

The following pages show the top seven challenges identified by the telephone survey respondents. The tables and charts show the frequency of responses for each value statement and the text describes some of the respondents' key demographic characteristics. Respondents who declined to answer the question were not included in the count.

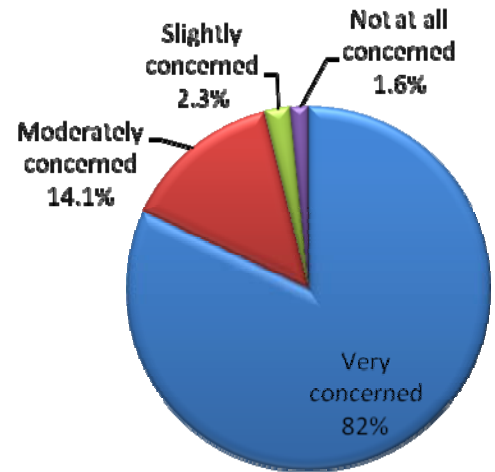
### Affordability

Table 10

*The increasing costs of living, such as transportation, heating and electricity.*

	Frequency	Percent
Very concerned	569	82.0
Moderately concerned	98	14.1
Slightly concerned	16	2.3
Not at all concerned	11	1.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>694</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Center for Rural Studies (<http://crs.uvm.edu>) (N=699)  
2008 Council on the Future of Vermont Telephone Survey



This question of affordability seemed to strongly affect respondents, regardless of income, age or geography. Respondents with high school diplomas or some college were most concerned with the increasing costs of living in Vermont (96.5%), followed by those with degrees (96.3%) and those without high school diplomas (87.5%).\* Respondents in all income categories had a high level of concern, ranging from 95.3 percent to 100 percent. Urban and rural respondents both were very likely to be very/moderately concerned. Respondents having lived in the state for 11 years or more were slightly more likely to be very/moderately concerned than those having lived in Vermont for shorter periods of time. Level of concern across age categories ranged from 88.2 percent for those aged 18-24 to 97.1 percent and 97.2 percent for those aged 60-74 and 45-59, respectively. Men were slightly more concerned than women.

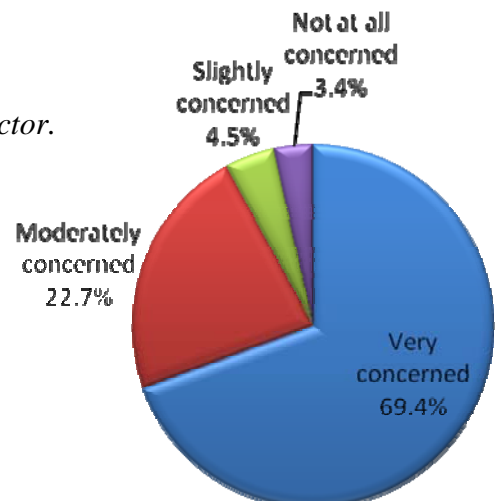
### Vermont agriculture

Table 11

*The health and viability of Vermont farms and the agricultural sector.*

	Frequency	Percent
Very concerned	474	69.4
Moderately concerned	155	22.7
Slightly concerned	31	4.5
Not at all concerned	23	3.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>683</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Center for Rural Studies (<http://crs.uvm.edu>) (N=699)  
2008 Council on the Future of Vermont Telephone Survey



Urban respondents were slightly more likely (90.9%) to be very/moderately concerned about the health and viability of Vermont farms and the agricultural sector than were their rural counterparts (87.1%). Ten percent more of respondents in the \$25,000-\$34,999 household income range (83.3%) were very/moderately concerned, than those in the \$50,000-\$74,999 range (94.3%). Respondents across all age categories expressed a high level of concern. The percentage of respondents who said they were very/moderately concerned increased slightly with education level. Length of time living in Vermont did not make much of a difference in the responses and a

slightly higher percentage of women were very/moderately concerned than men.\*

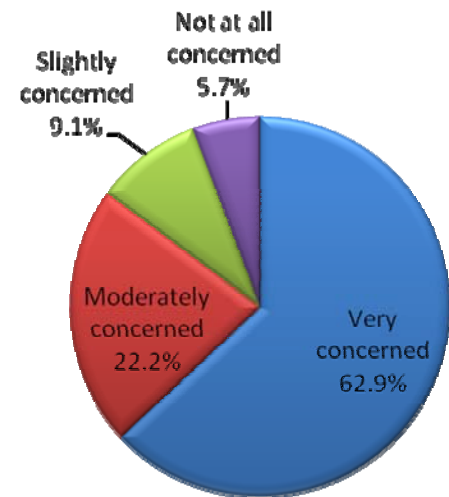
## Vermont taxes

Table 12

*The tax rate in Vermont.*

	Frequency	Percent
Very concerned	427	62.9
Moderately concerned	151	22.2
Slightly concerned	62	9.1
Not at all concerned	39	5.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>679</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Center for Rural Studies (<http://crs.uvm.edu>) (N=699)  
2008 Council on the Future of Vermont Telephone Survey



Rural respondents were slightly more likely (89.9%) to be very/moderately concerned about the tax rate in Vermont than were their urban counterparts (84.8%). The percentage of respondents who were very/moderately concerned increased with the length of time they lived in Vermont, from 71.4 percent for those living in Vermont for less than three years up to 85.7 percent for those living in the state for more than 11 years. All of the respondents in the \$25,000-\$34,999 household income category were very/moderately concerned, compared to about 80 percent very/moderate concern in other income brackets. Respondents with high school diplomas or some college were most likely to be concerned about the tax rate; 88.9 percent said they were very/moderately concerned, compared to 83.1 percent of those with degrees and 78.3 percent of those without high school diplomas.\* Respondents at both ends of the age spectrum (ages 18-24 and older than 75) were the least concerned about the tax rate (70.6% and 80.3% respectively) while respondents aged 60-74 were most concerned (87.3%). Men were slightly more concerned than women.

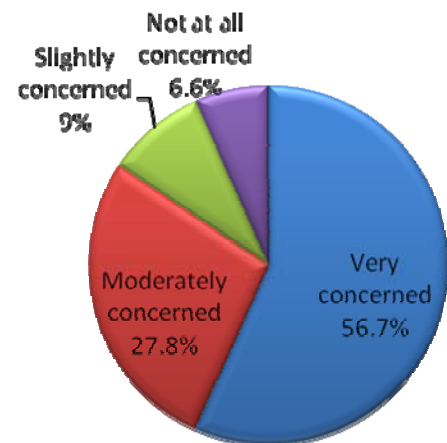
## Workforce

Table 13

*The development of an adequate workforce for the future.*

	Frequency	Percent
Very concerned	386	56.7
Moderately concerned	189	27.8
Slightly concerned	61	9.0
Not at all concerned	45	6.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>681</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Center for Rural Studies (<http://crs.uvm.edu>) (N=699)  
2008 Council on the Future of Vermont Telephone Survey



Respondents aged 45-59 and 60-74 were most concerned (87.3% and 87.1%, respectively) about the development of an adequate workforce.\* Rural respondents were slightly more concerned (90.1% very/moderately concerned) than their urban counterparts (85%) and the longer respondents had lived in Vermont, the higher the percentage of very/moderately concern. It is interesting to note that younger people seemed less concerned, as did seniors; respondents at both ends of the age spectrum (ages 18-24 and over 75) said they were very/moderately concerned (70.6% and 75.3%, respectively). Respondents with degrees were most concerned (85.2%), compared to 83.9 percent of those with high school diplomas or some college and 79.2 percent for those without high school diplomas. Men were slightly more concerned than women.

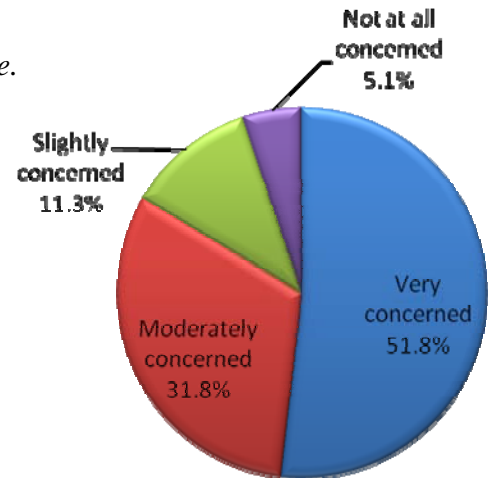
## Public infrastructure

Table 14

*The state's existing public infrastructure and its future maintenance.*

	Frequency	Percent
Very concerned	353	51.8
Moderately concerned	217	31.8
Slightly concerned	77	11.3
Not at all concerned	35	5.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>682</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Center for Rural Studies (<http://crs.uvm.edu>) (N=699)  
2008 Council on the Future of Vermont Telephone Survey



Urban respondents were slightly more concerned (85.1% very/moderately concerned) about the state's existing public infrastructure and its future maintenance than were their rural counterparts (80.3%). The longer respondents had lived in Vermont, the higher the percentage of very/moderately concern, ranging from 71.4 percent for those living in Vermont for less than three years up to 84 percent for those living in Vermont for more than 11 years. All of the respondents in the \$25,000-\$34,999 household income category were very/moderately concerned, compared to 81.2 percent of those in the less than \$25,000 category. Respondents aged 60-74 were most concerned about the state's public infrastructure and its future maintenance (86.5%), compared to 70.6 percent of those aged 18-24. Respondents with degrees were more concerned than those with high school diplomas or some college and those without high school diplomas. Men were slightly more concerned than women.\*

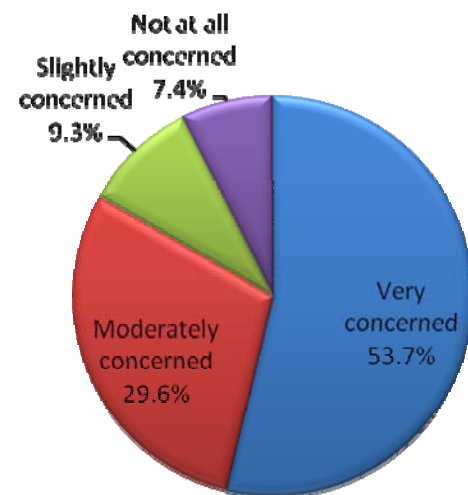
## Affordable housing

Table 15

*A shortage of affordable housing.*

	Frequency	Percent
Very concerned	370	53.7
Moderately concerned	204	29.6
Slightly concerned	64	9.3
Not at all concerned	51	7.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>689</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Center for Rural Studies (<http://crs.uvm.edu>) (N=699)  
2008 Council on the Future of Vermont Telephone Survey



Age seemed to make a notable difference in responses to this question. Respondents at either end of the age range were least concerned about a shortage of affordable housing (ages 18-24 and older than 75), while those aged 45-59 and 60-74 were the most concerned. Respondents in the less than \$25,000 household income category were most concerned (92.9%), compared to 81.3 percent of those in the more than \$75,000 category. Urban respondents were slightly more likely (83.1%) than rural respondents (81.7%) to be very/moderately concerned by a shortage of affordable housing. Respondents having lived in Vermont for less than three years were slightly more concerned than those who had lived in Vermont for longer periods of time. The percentage of very/moderately concerned responses increased with education. Respondents with degrees were most concerned (85%), compared to 81.4 percent of those with high school diplomas or some college and 78.3 percent for those without high school diplomas. Women were slightly more concerned than men.

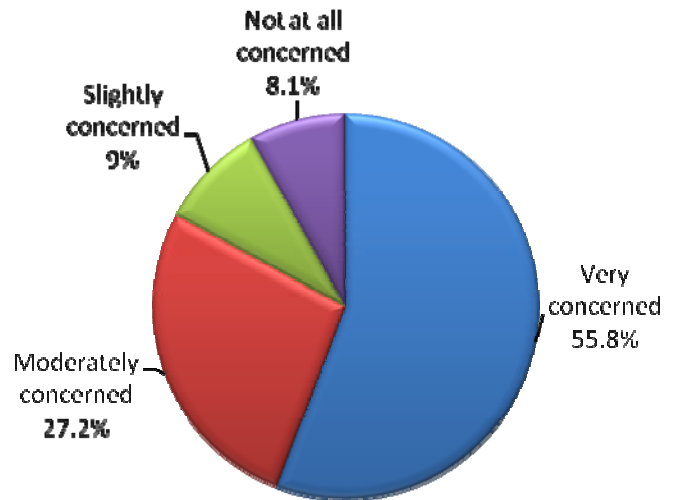
## Public education

Table 16

*The way Vermont finances public education.*

	Frequency	Percent
Very concerned	373	55.8
Moderately concerned	182	27.2
Slightly concerned	60	9.0
Not at all concerned	54	8.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>669</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Center for Rural Studies (<http://crs.uvm.edu>) (N=699)  
2008 Council on the Future of Vermont Telephone Survey



Respondents living in Vermont for less than three years were much less concerned (61.5% very/moderately concerned) than those living in Vermont for three to 10 years and more than 11 years (83.6% and 83.5%, respectively). Respondents in the \$35,000-\$49,999 household income category were less concerned (75.8% very/moderately concerned) than those in the \$50,000-\$74,999 category (88.2%). Respondents aged 18-24 were less concerned (70.6% very/moderately concerned) than those in the other age categories. Those aged 24-44 were most concerned (84.7%). Urban respondents were slightly more concerned about the way Vermont finances public education than were rural respondents. The percentage of respondents who said they were very/moderately concerned increased with education level, from 77.3 percent of those without high school diplomas up to 85.1 percent of those with degrees. Men were slightly more concerned than women.\*



## Classification of Open Ended Responses

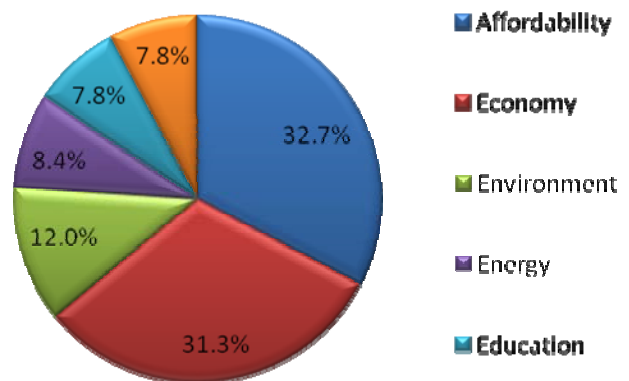
The survey included two open-response questions in which respondents were asked: *What do you see as the most important goal for Vermont in the next generation?* And *What would be the first step in achieving that goal?* These questions were asked near the end of the survey after the key survey themes had been introduced to respondents. Through analysis of the results, the full responses were collapsed and grouped into general categories (see Tables 17 and 18). Although this report describes the summary – the top six responses – to these open ended questions, the [Full Findings](#) document, available at the Council on the Future of Vermont website describes the responses to these questions in more detail.

“Open- response” refers to those questions that respondents were free to answer in any way they liked. These responses were categorized into several general themes that emerged from among all the answers received. For example, the response “*Attracting jobs that will keep young people in the state working*” was categorized under “Economy” broadly and subcategorized under “Jobs for Youth”, whereas a response like “*Keeping young people in the state*” was categorized under “Youth Opportunities” because there was no specific mention of “jobs” in the statement.

Many responses included multiple goals. In these instances the respondent’s first goal mentioned was utilized in the count. For example the statement; “*Energy, jobs, good, higher paying jobs*” was categorized under “Energy” because this was the primary response listed.

For the open-response question *What do you see as the most important goal for Vermont in the next generation?* responses were collapsed into the following general categories; affordability, economy, environment, energy, education and youth opportunity. The pie chart at right shows the percent of responses for each of these general categories and Table 17 provides a closer examination of some of the subcategories.

**Top Six Response Categories**



In Tables 17 and 18 “Frequency” refers to the actual number of respondents who indicated a particular topic. “Percent within Category” refers to the proportion of the response within each category. “Percent within all Responses” describes the proportion of each subcategory within the entire response set.

Table 17

What do you see as the most important goal for Vermont in the next generation?

<b>Top Six Response Categories</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent within Category</b>	<b>Percent within all Responses</b>
<b>Total Affordability</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>32.7</b>
Affordable/Accessible Healthcare	47	28.7	9.4
Lower/Change Taxes	31	18.9	6.2
Cost of Living	30	18.3	6.0
Affordable/Accessible Education	27	16.5	5.4
Livable Wage	15	9.1	3.0
Affordable Housing/Land	14	8.5	2.8
<b>Total Economy</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>31.3</b>
Attract Businesses and Jobs	80	51.0	16.0
Create Jobs for Youth	38	24.2	7.6
Be Business Friendly/Less Restrictions	19	12.1	3.8
Green Economy/Industry	10	6.4	2.0
Economy/Stability	10	6.4	2.0
<b>Total Environment</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>12.0</b>
Environment	21	35.0	4.2
(Maintain) Rural Character	13	21.7	2.6
Smart Growth/Control Sprawl	11	18.3	2.2
Open Space/Recreation	6	10.0	1.2
Reduce Pollution	5	8.3	1.0
Land Conservation	4	6.7	0.8
<b>Total Energy</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>8.4</b>
Develop Alternative/Renewable Energy	29	69.0	5.8
Increase Efficiency/Lower Consumption	6	14.3	1.2
Independence	4	9.5	0.8
Energy	3	7.1	0.6
<b>Total Education</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>7.8</b>
Increase the Quality of Education	34	87.2	6.8
Increase Education Funding	5	12.8	1.0
<b>Total Youth Opportunities*</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>7.8</b>
Youth Opportunities	39	100.0	7.8
<b>Total for all Responses</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Center for Rural Studies (<http://crs.uvm.edu>) 2008 Council on the Future of Vermont Telephone Survey (N=699)

\*Youth Opportunities does not include job opportunities for youth as a response. This response is included under economy.

About a third (32.7%) of respondents specifically referred to topics of affordability as the most important goals for Vermont in the next generation. Among these, affordable healthcare ranked highest beating out lower/change taxes. Nearly an additional third (31.3%) of respondents listed topics relating to the economy as important goals for Vermont in the next generation. Among these, an increase in businesses and jobs ranked highest.

Table 18

## What would be the first step in achieving that goal?

Top Six Response Categories		Frequency	Percent within Category	Percent within all Responses
<b>Total Business and Jobs</b>		<b>128</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>30.5</b>
	Become more business friendly, remove business constraints	85	66.4	20.2
	Increase the number of well-paid jobs	36	28.1	8.6
	Increase small business opportunities	7	5.5	1.7
<b>Total Governance and Citizen Involvement</b>		<b>118</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>28.1</b>
	Change State/Federal government	27	22.9	6.4
	Increase community/citizen engagement	27	22.9	6.4
	Increase communication/ engagement with government	24	20.3	5.7
	Increase public awareness of issues	24	20.3	5.7
	Force the government to act faster/do more	16	13.6	3.8
<b>Total Education</b>		<b>65</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>15.5</b>
	Increase educational options and quality	32	49.2	7.6
	Increase and change educational financing	25	38.5	6.0
	Increase educational financing for VT youth	8	12.3	1.9
<b>Total for Energy</b>		<b>42</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>10.0</b>
	Increase funding/sourcing for alternatives and efficiency	42	100.0	10.0
<b>Total Cost of Living</b>		<b>35</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>8.3</b>
	Change/decrease the tax structure/rate	35	100.0	8.3
<b>Total Healthcare</b>		<b>32</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>7.6</b>
	Increase healthcare options/availability	22	68.8	5.2
	Make healthcare affordable	5	15.6	1.2
	Increase competition	5	15.6	1.2
<b>Total for all Responses</b>		<b>420</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Center for Rural Studies (<http://crs.uvm.edu>) 2008 Council on the Future of Vermont Telephone Survey (N=699)

While most of the top six categories in Table 18 reflect the previously identified goals in Table 17, of interest is the emphasis placed upon governance and citizen involvement. Nearly 30 percent (28.1%) of respondents identified some form of increased civic action as a next step for addressing their most important goal for Vermont in the next generation.

## Conclusion

This Council on the Future of Vermont survey gives a glimpse into the hearts and minds of Vermonters. When combined with the public forums, discussions with specific stakeholders and online survey and dialogues, it will allow the Council to describe a broad picture of the values and challenges that Vermonters share as well as document future priorities.

The three most significant values that emerged from the Council on the Future of Vermont survey are 1) independence, 2) community ties and 3) working landscape. Vermont residents are connected at a very intimate level with their environment and the heritage that exists in the state. It is clear from the closed-ended questions, as well as the more flexible open-ended that these three values are found across demographic lines – to repeat, Vermont residents of all types respond that their independence, their communities and the working landscape are of great importance to them.

For three decades, the Center for Rural Studies has conducted the annual Vermonter Poll, a statewide telephone public opinion poll. Through its survey work, the Center has seen how economic, social, political and environmental trends are reflected in the population's goals and values. The fact that respondents to the Council on the Future of Vermont survey placed the most value on the state's working landscape and heritage confirm patterns observed by the Center for Rural Studies research over the years. For example, respondents to the 2006 Vermont Land Trust Conservation Survey ranked having working farms as first in importance from a list of specific indicators. Similarly, in the 2007 Vermonter Poll, almost all respondents (96.2 percent) agreed with the statement “Developing agriculture that is both profitable and environmentally friendly is a priority in Vermont.”

Vermonters have long perceived themselves as independent and community minded. These values are reflected in the survey work of the Council for the Future of Vermont and parallel the more focused concerns depicted on the Vermonter polls. These values are reflected in action as well. Consider the following selected statistics: we are a state with almost 80,000 reported small businesses/ economic activities,<sup>1</sup> more than 6,000 operating farms,<sup>2</sup> natural resource oriented endeavors include 30,500 woodlot managers<sup>3</sup> and a significant gardening culture.<sup>4</sup> In terms of community action we have an adult population where more than half acknowledge active community service.<sup>5</sup> These data suggest that, in action, Vermonters practice a variety of activities reflecting self-sufficiency and thus, the value of independence.

And yet we are reminded that this independence and self-sufficiency is constrained by the size of our place. Vermont is a very small state with just over 620,000 inhabitants in 2007<sup>6</sup> and is ranked 49<sup>th</sup> of 50, a small city by national standards.<sup>7</sup> Vermont is small in physical size as well (a “place” of less than 10,000 rock ribbed, square miles, 45<sup>th</sup> of 50 states<sup>8</sup>). Here too, action compensates for size. Our citizenry routinely self-govern and vote in numbers which rank us among the highest performing populations of all the states. Local community participation is the venue of preference for both action and local allegiance. The 246 towns and

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau 2005 Statistics of U.S. Businesses and 2005 Nonemployee Statistics. This estimate is obtained by adding the 19,140 establishments employing fewer than 100 to the non-paid employee businesses (59,806) reported by Census for 2005. The non-paid employee category is often enterprise specific, e.g. there may be several businesses per respondent, typically self-employed individual operating very small unincorporated businesses. In 2005, U.S. Census reports that 86% of small business establishments (fewer than 100 employees) employed 26% of Vermont's paid employees (Census Bureau 2005 Statistics of U.S. Business, released in 2006).

<sup>2</sup> <http://crs.uvm.edu/agriculture/2005aghandbook.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> personal correspondence, Thom McEvoy, UVM Forest Resources Specialist

<sup>4</sup> National Gardening Association, 2005

<sup>5</sup> Center for Rural Studies Vermonter Polls

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates 2007, Washington, D.C. released., June, 2007

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Census Bureau 2007 County and City Data Book 2007, 14<sup>th</sup> edition, Washington DC 2007

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Census Bureau 2007 County and City Data Book 2007, 14<sup>th</sup> edition, Washington DC 2007

cities each self-govern, mirroring national processes with judicial (Board of Civil Authority), legislative (town meeting) and administrative (selectboard and mayor or town managers) branches, complimented, in most places, by planning commissions and natural resource committees. The primacy of place – an allegiance to town of residence – is reflected in the value placed on community by Council on the Future study participants.

This Council on the Future of Vermont survey shows that Vermonters place a great deal of value on the working landscape, independence and community. However, these respondents are clearly aware of a number of forces that lie beyond local control. The results from this survey seem to reflect looming external factors include climate change and the price and availability of critical resources. Affordability and economy together made up nearly 60 percent of the responses to the open-ended questions in the telephone poll. It also seems that the very values that respondents hold may be the source of the challenges they see in the future.

These challenges (affordability and economy) have been identified by respondents in Vermonter Poll results over the past decade. Each year, one of the questions on the Vermonter Poll is “What do you feel is the most important problem facing Vermont in the coming decade?” Table 19 also shows that in 2008, the economy, healthcare, employment, taxes and affordability were the top five issues.

Table 19

*Top five most important problems facing Vermont in the coming decade, 2004-2008*

<b>Rank</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>1</b>	Jobs	Health care	Health care	Health care	Economy
<b>2</b>	Health care	Jobs	Jobs	Jobs	Health care
<b>3</b>	Environment	Development/ sprawl	Government/ politics	General taxes	Jobs
<b>4</b>	Economy/ economic development	Taxes	Economy/ economic development	Property taxes	Taxes
<b>5</b>	Development/ sprawl	Economy/ economic development	Development/ sprawl	Education	Affordability

Source: Center for Rural Studies (<http://crs.uvm.edu>)

The concern for affordability and the economy reflected by two thirds of the Council on the Future of Vermont poll respondents reflects a trend identified by demographers and economists who point to the most dramatic demographic change afoot in Vermont as those changes in the so-called “dependent population” – those too young and too old to be considered a part of the active labor force. Current trends will lead us, by 2030, to a situation with a quarter of our population over age of 65,<sup>9</sup> challenging health care, transportation, housing and, critically, capacity to contribute to the tax base. Close behind Vermont's graying population is a “shadow” trend, namely a marked decline of young people in both the proportion of our population and in absolute numbers. It would appear that this message has resonated with participants in the Council on the Future of Vermont project and is reflected in concerns for affordability, as well as employment opportunities.

Demographic trends have significant ramifications for all services, especially health care, issues of infrastructure such as transportation and housing, and audiences for both formal and informal education. Although the younger age cohort (those under 18) will grow over time in absolute numbers by 2030, there will be 15,000 fewer under 18 in 2010 than in 2000; a loss of just over 10 percent. These trends portend significant changes in the coming decade. By 2030, for example the median age of Vermonters (44) is

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Census, Interim State Population Projections by Selected Age Groups: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2030.

expected to exceed the national median age by some 5 years.<sup>10</sup> Consensus regarding the full implications of these demographic changes has not been found yet across the state. Debate has focused, for example, on the implications for housing, health costs, transportation and the quality, availability and quantity of work for youth as well as elders.<sup>11</sup> While respondents to the Council for the Future of Vermont survey were not overly concerned with population growth and dynamics, they identified youth activities, job opportunities and retention of youth as a great concern for the future.

In terms of those economic issues best measured by income or wages, a persistent concern for Vermonters has been income levels. Household income level in Vermont has traditionally trailed U.S. and regional averages. This gap has steadily closed over the decades, moving Vermont from one of the very poorest rural states toward the middle.<sup>12</sup> To a degree, a legacy of isolation and frugality (“the use it up, wear it out” mentality) underpins our celebration of independence and self-sufficiency. Barring major national economic collapse, incomes are anticipated to continue a slow but steady increase here.<sup>13</sup> Of great concern, however, are the large number of households with incomes under \$35,000 and especially those headed by elders<sup>14</sup>. Declining household size is expected to level off at approximately 2.3 inhabitants, small compared to other states and with implications for both housing and transportation.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to demographic shifts and the slow growth of household income, yet another force in Vermont may help us to understand respondents’ marked concern for affordability and its counterpart, economic opportunity. As the state has grown, so too has the population spread evenly throughout our cherished 246 towns and cities. The communities of the Lake Champlain basin have witnessed the most dramatic growth, but this has been followed in the Connecticut River Valley, central Vermont and Rutland County. In similar fashion, southern Vermont, anchored east by Brattleboro and west by Bennington, has grown slowly but surely. Between 1960 and 2000 it was rare to have more than 5% (a dozen) of our 246 towns experience actual decline<sup>16</sup>. The urban areas have been stable (occasional small declines), with growth most dramatic in the towns adjacent to urban population hubs.<sup>17</sup> However, as Vermont’s population continues to disperse geographically, commuting has increased between both towns and counties and Vermonters are spending more time driving to and from work. More than 3 in 4 Vermont towns have a net export of day workers in recent decades, a pattern likely to fall in the face of rising fuel prices.<sup>18</sup>

Polling results reflecting Vermonters’ concerns for affordability and economic opportunity may be in direct response to the current fuel situation and to the trend of residents moving into that cherished landscape which Vermonters value for its own sake. The expression of concern from an active citizenry around the cost of services, of transportation or of energy reflect the strong ties to communities of residence, a pride in living here and a valued working landscape in a time when outside forces are putting pressure on their preferred way of life.

The summary and complete results of this survey, as well as the notes from public forums, are available online at the Council on the Future of Vermont’s website: [www.futureofvermont.org](http://www.futureofvermont.org).

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<sup>10</sup> 2007 VTrans, Long Term Business Plan, Working Paper 4.

<sup>11</sup> See for example, Vermont Housing Finance Agency, “Housing and the Needs of Vermont’s Aging Population, Summer, 2007; Wolf, Art and Richard Heaps, Northern Economic Consulting, <http://www.vteconomy.com/index.html>”; “Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Housing and Wages in Vermont; 2007, VTrans, Long Term Business Plan, Working Paper 4; or The Vermont Economy Newsletter, “Is Vermont’s Labor Force Already Shrinking?” Oct. 2007, Vol. 17, No. 10. among many other sources.

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, County and City Data Book, selected editions, Washington DC.

<sup>13</sup> New England Economic Partnership, November 2006: Vermont Economic Outlook.

<sup>14</sup> Vermont Housing Finance Agency, “Housing and the Needs of Vermont’s Aging Population”, Summer, 2007

<sup>15</sup> 2007 VTrans, Long Term Business Plan, Working Paper 4

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Census of the Population, 2000. (compiled by the CRS, 2007).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> 2007 Vtrans, Long Term Business Plan, Working Paper 4

## Appendix 1: Expanded Survey Methodology and Demographics

### Methodology

The data used in this report were collected by the Center for Rural Studies from March 10 to 17, 2008. Telephone polling was conducted from the University of Vermont between the hours of 1 and 8 p.m. on weekdays using computer-aided telephone interviewing (CATI). A random sample for the poll was drawn from a Vermont phone list that is updated quarterly. Only Vermont residents over the age of 18 were interviewed.

The survey instrument consisted of a series of 37 closed-response questions, two open-response questions and a demographic question set. For the closed-ended questions, respondents were asked to state their level of agreement with a series of statements related to values and their level of concern about a series of statements related to challenges. For the open-ended questions, respondents were free to answer in any way they liked. (See Appendix 2 for the survey questions.)

The questions about challenges were intentionally left vague in an effort not to bias the respondents. For example, when asked to state a level of concern about the “rate of business development in Vermont,” a respondent’s “very concerned” response could either refer to concern about business development being too fast or not fast enough. Analysis of respondents’ interpretation of “concern” is readily accomplished through the lens of the open-ended questions, where respondents were able to specify their responses.

There were a total of 699 respondents to this survey. Results based on a sample of this size have a confidence interval of 99 percent with a margin of error of plus or minus 5 percentage points. This means if the survey were to be repeated in Vermont, 99 percent of the time the results would be within plus or minus five percent of the numbers reported here.

### Demographics

The general demographic characteristics of the respondents show that they are older, more educated and of a higher household income than the Vermont population on average.<sup>19</sup> This represents a commonly recognized bias for telephone surveys in general. As the calling lists used for telephone polling are created from land-line lists, the increase in cell-phone-only households might compound this issue. However, since the methodology is based upon random sampling, the statistically significant results can be generalized to the Vermont population as a whole within the specified demographic groupings.

The age of the respondents ranged from 18 to 103, with a median age of 56 (mean: 56). This is 15 years higher than the median age of Vermonters, 41 years. Respondents were almost evenly split along gender lines with 52 percent being female and 48 percent being male. Statewide, the split is 51 female and 49 male.

Respondents reported an average of 2.6 household members, with a range of one to eight, and the average number of household members under the age of 18 of .55, with a range of zero to five. The average household size for the state is 2.4 people.

The total number of years respondents reported having lived in Vermont, including all earlier periods, ranged from one to 96 years, with an average of 35 years and a mode of 40 years.

Almost all the respondents (96.5 percent) had graduated high school and 55.3 percent had bachelor’s or higher degrees. However, according to the U.S. Census, 89.8 percent of Vermonters aged 25 and older are high school graduates and 32.4 percent have bachelor’s or higher degrees.

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<sup>19</sup> Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey

The majority of respondents (73.9 percent) had household incomes above the median for Vermont; 26.1 percent of respondents had household incomes equal to or lower than the median household income for Vermont (\$47,665).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> 2006 inflation-adjusted dollars, with a margin of error of +/- \$1,270



## Appendix 2: Telephone Survey Questions

These are the questions that were asked in the Council on the Future of Vermont telephone survey. For the complete survey instrument, see the full results report at [www.futureofvermont.org](http://www.futureofvermont.org).

1. Have you attended a Conversation on the Future of Vermont forum?
2. The next questions mention some of the values that Vermonters have identified at the forums and ask you to state your level of agreement with these values.
  - I value Vermont's spirit of independence.
  - I am proud of being from or living in Vermont.
  - I trust my neighbors.
  - I value the privacy that I get in Vermont.
  - I am tolerant of diverse lifestyles in Vermont.
  - I believe there is a strong sense of community where I live.
  - I believe that that Vermont's creative communities are valuable to the state.
  - I value the working landscape and its heritage.
  - I value the participatory government in Vermont.
  - I value the accessibility of government in Vermont.
  - I value the small size and scale of the state.
  - I believe that private property rights are well respected in Vermont.
3. During our conversations around the state, Vermonters have identified many challenges that they believe the state will face in the next generation. The following questions mention some of these potential challenges and ask you to state your level of concern about them.
  - A shortage of affordable housing.
  - A shortage of appropriate housing.
  - The accessibility of health care.
  - The quality of health care.
  - The rate of business development in Vermont.
  - The development of an adequate workforce for the future.
  - The increasing costs of living, such as transportation, heating and electricity.
  - The quality of education.
  - The way Vermont finances public education.
  - Pressure to convert open lands to residential, commercial, or other development.
  - The changes in the earth's climate and their potential impacts on the Vermont landscape and seasons.
  - The increasing price of land in Vermont.
  - The potential for an increased rate of population growth in Vermont.
  - An increase in the average age of the Vermont population.
  - The limited availability of high speed internet connections and wireless telecommunications in Vermont.
  - An increasing gap between high-income and low-income populations.
  - The health and viability of Vermont farms and the agricultural sector.
  - The level of engagement of Vermonters in their local communities.
  - The level of engagement of Vermonters in their local governments.
  - The tax rate in Vermont.
  - The state's existing public infrastructure and its future maintenance.
  - Public safety in Vermont.
  - The future of Vermont's renewable and alternative energy infrastructure.
  - The maintenance of healthy downtowns and village centers in Vermont.
4. What do you see as the most important goal for Vermont in the next generation?
5. What would be the first step in achieving that goal?
6. Demographic questions
  - In what year were you born?
  - What is the highest level of education that you have completed?
  - How many members are there in your household?
  - How many people in your household are under the age of 18?
  - How many total years have you lived in Vermont, including any earlier periods?
  - In what city or town do you live?
  - Please state your gender.