

The State of Chittenden County

Achieving our vision for a healthy, inclusive, and prosperous future

It will come as no surprise that this year's annual report looks different.

To monitor and build on successes, bring new information to the legislature and community leaders, and continue to work on areas that need improvement, the ECOS Partnership prepares this annual report and an online data scorecard each year. These resources provide insight into current and future needs in Chittenden County, and allow us to focus on long-term solutions rather than just treating short-term symptoms.

In addition to some of the data we report on annually, this year's ECOS Annual Report includes indicators of disparities that have resulted from systemic racism in our nation and community, as well as indicators associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. This intentional focus on **race, equity, and the COVID-19 pandemic** marks the commitment of the ECOS leadership team to address these challenges.

This report is prepared by the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) on behalf of the ECOS Partners:



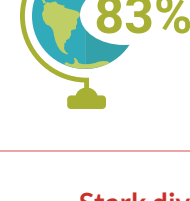
CCRPC
City of Burlington
GBIC

Lake Champlain Chamber
UVM Medical Center
University of Vermont

United Way of
Northwest Vermont
Vermont Department
of Health

RACE & EQUITY

Achieving a healthy, inclusive, and prosperous future for Chittenden County is the vision of our [Regional ECOS Plan](#). However, the ECOS partners know we cannot achieve that future without addressing the systemic racism in our community. While addressing inequity has been one of the eight key strategies in the ECOS Plan since 2013, there is much work to be done.



83% of the population growth in Chittenden County over the last 10 years has been Hispanic (of any race), Black or African American, and/or American Indian and Alaska Native. This equates to 5,901 of the additional 7,069 people from 2010-2019.

Source: American Community Survey 2019 5-Year Estimate



Still, many of our indicators are not disaggregated by race. We will work with partners to improve data collection to help address this challenge.

Stark divides across race and ethnicity are seen in:



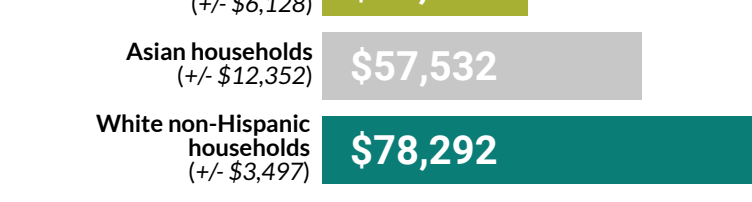
As such, it is clear that a healthy, inclusive, and prosperous future is **not** in reach for all Chittenden County residents.

Xusana Davis, Esq., Vermont's Executive Director of Racial Equity, notes in her [2020 Report](#):

"It is of critical importance that Vermonters of dominant groups recognize that equity — in this case, racial equity — benefits the whole, and the continuing to ignore or actively resist efforts to undo structural inequity will lead to the continued shrinking of Vermont's local and tourist economies, the hollowing of its school systems and underperformance of schools for marginalized groups, the weakening of its state workforce, and the exodus of its young people who are leaving in search of greater diversity and social cohesion."

ANNUAL MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Black and African American households earn less than half of White households.



If there were wage equity in Vermont, our residents would be making over **\$188 million dollars** of more income, contributing that much more to the economy.

Source: American Community Survey 2019 5-Year Estimates

BIPOC DEFINITION

Throughout this report, the term BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) is used. Specific racial data is provided when available.

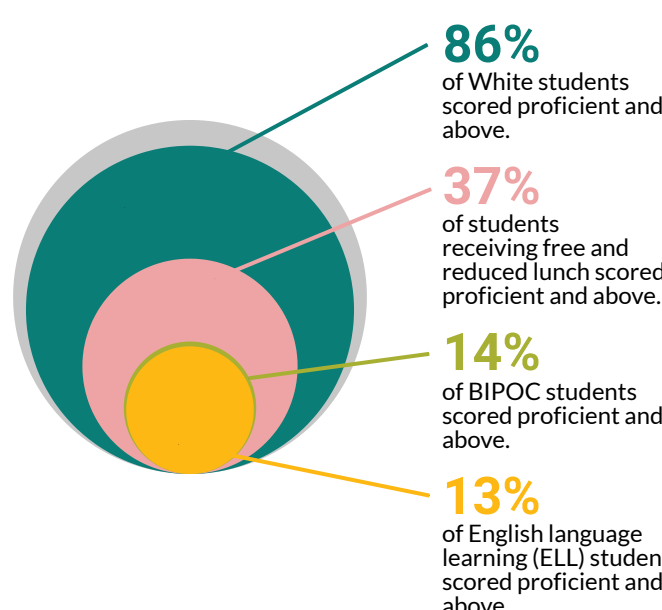
COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

38% of the population identifying as Black or African American (+/- 7.1%) goes on to a Bachelor's degree or higher.

52% of the White population (+/- 1.1%) goes on to a Bachelor's degree or higher.

Source: American Community Survey 2019 5-Year Estimates
*Data is not available for other races and ethnicities due to small sample sizes.

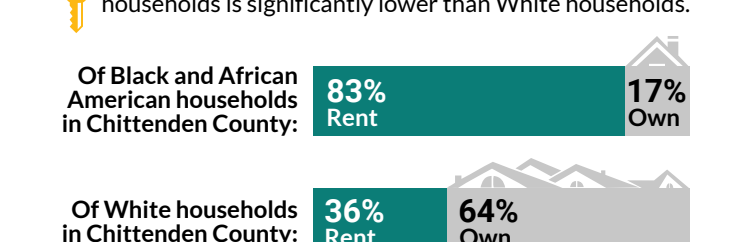
THIRD GRADE SMARTER BALANCED LANGUAGE ARTS TEST RESULTS*



Source: 2018 Smarter Balanced Tests
*Data for certain population groups may be suppressed due to privacy.

HOMEOWNERSHIP

Homeownership among Black and African American households is significantly lower than White households.



Source: American Community Survey 2019 5-Year Estimates

COVID-19 AMONG BIPOC VERMONTERS

In Chittenden County, BIPOC residents contracted COVID-19 at **2.7 times** the rate of White residents.*

*Data as of January 12, 2021. Source: Vermont Department of Health

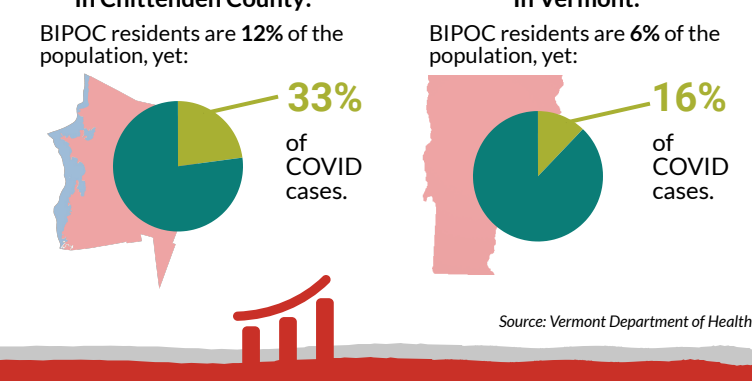
Xusana Davis, Esq., Vermont's Executive Director of Racial Equity, explains in her [January 2021 Report](#): "One of the largest frustrations for equity practitioners in 2020 was combating the misguided belief that there are qualities inherent to people of color that make them more vulnerable in times of crisis or widespread illness. In reality, it is **epigenetic factors**—that is, factors resulting more from behavior and environment—that play a greater role in making communities of color more vulnerable to ecological or public health crises."

In other words, social determinants of health have created inequities in access to **and** quality of: **HEALTH CARE · EDUCATION · EMPLOYMENT · HOUSING · MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES · SOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES** which contribute to higher rates of underlying or chronic medical conditions.

These upstream factors give rise to the conditions that have made communities of color more likely to be infected with or die of an illness like COVID-19." -Xusana Davis, Esq., Vermont's Executive Director of Racial Equity

COVID CASES AMONG VERMONT RESIDENTS

COVID cases in Vermont disproportionately affect BIPOC residents.



Source: Vermont Department of Health

BIPOC Vermonters are also disproportionately represented in essential frontline jobs that:

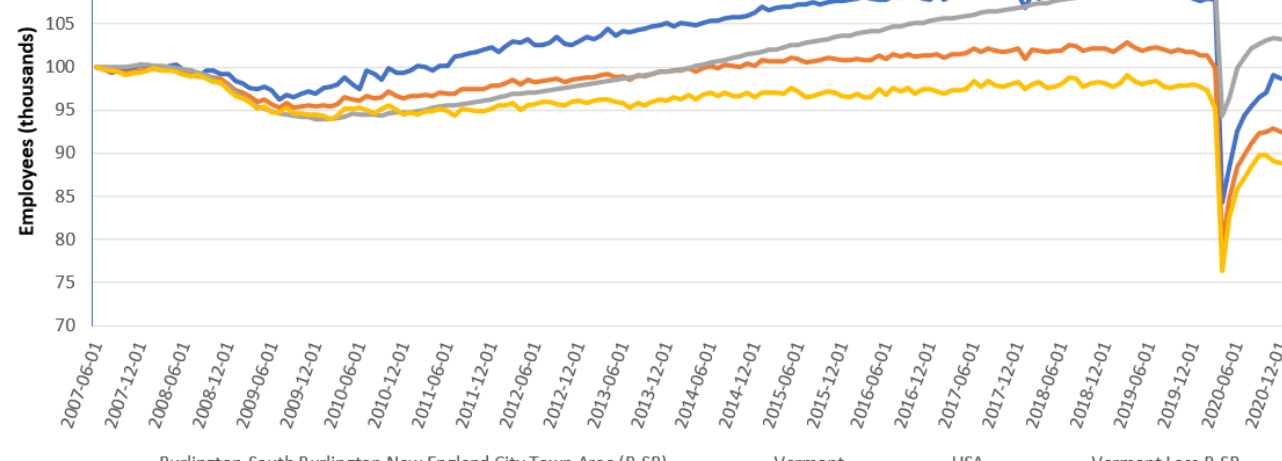
- CANNOT BE DONE AT HOME
- OFFER LESS ACCESS TO PAID SICK TIME
- REQUIRE CLOSER PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH THE PUBLIC

Source: Vermont Department of Health

COVID-19 IMPACT ON THE ECONOMY

JOB LOSS & AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Total Non-Farm Employment, Monthly, Seasonally Adjusted; Indexed to Peak Employment Prior to 2008 Recession



Source: Vermont Department of Labor

The Governor's Shelter in Place and Stay Home, Stay Safe orders affect Vermont residents differently depending on reliable access to the internet.

BROADBAND ACCESS

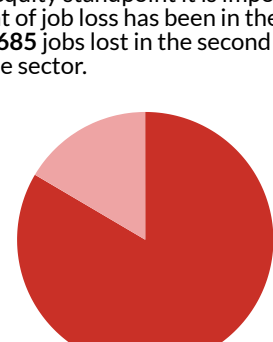
In Chittenden County, 96% (55,225 buildings) are served at 25 Mbps or better broadband service. FCC defines 25 Mbps as the standard, but this service level is not adequate for some. Statewide, 77% have access to this standard.

View Chittenden County broadband status [here](#)

Source: Vermont Department of Public Service

SERVICE SECTOR JOB LOSS

From an income-equity standpoint it is important to note that a significant amount of job loss has been in the low-wage service sector. Of the 15,685 jobs lost in the second half of 2020, 13,099 were in the service sector.



Source: Vermont Department of Labor

DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACT ON WOMEN

Data on unemployment claims from the VT Department of Labor suggests that Vermont women are facing unemployment at higher rates than men during this time. Below is a snapshot of what's included in the [Vermont Commission on Women Report](#):

- In January 2021, 63.8% of unemployment claims were attributed to **women**, while 36.2% were attributed to **men**.
- Women in Vermont are more likely than men to be in part-time positions and make up a disproportionate share of those earning less than \$11 an hour. This makes them less likely to qualify for benefits like paid leave or health insurance.
- Minority business-owners have been found to be disproportionately represented in "higher-risk" industries during this time, nationally.
- 47% of Vermont households headed by women with minor children under five years old are in poverty, whereas 14% of male headed households with children under five are in poverty.
- 27% of Black women in Vermont are living in poverty. This is over twice the rate of White women in poverty, and higher than the national average for Black women.

Source: Vermont Commission on Women

Note: Many of the indicators below are not disaggregated by race. We will work with partners to improve data collection to help address this challenge.

SUBSTANCE USE & MENTAL HEALTH

OPIOID FATALITIES & TREATMENT ACCESS

There were 134 accidental opioid fatalities as of November 2020 compared to 99 as of November 2019. 89% of 2020 fatal overdoses involved fentanyl.

The waiting list for medication assisted treatment continues to be zero.

Source: Vermont Department of Health

RESOURCES:

VISIT: [VT HelpLink](#), a 24/7 resource for connecting Vermonters to free and confidential substance-related information and referral services.

MENTAL HEALTH & SUICIDE RATE

The rapid spread of COVID-19 has resulted in feelings of uncertainty, anxiety, depression, and distress.

Although necessary to prevent spread of COVID-19, stay at home orders have resulted in an increase in suicide risk factors.

How the pandemic has affected suicide rates is still unknown, but resources are available to mitigate risks.

If you or someone you know is thinking about or planning to take their own life, there is help 24/7.

RESOURCES:

CALL: National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 800-273-8255
Veterans Crisis Line: Press 1 when prompted
CALL: Trevor Lifeline (LGBTQ Crisis Lifeline): 866-488-7368

TEXT: "VT" to 741741 anywhere in the U.S. about any type of crisis.

TRANSPORTATION

Vehicle traffic and transit ridership declined drastically during the initial months of the COVID-19 pandemic, then slowly increased as the economy opened back up. View the [full data here](#).

It is unclear if traffic volumes will return to their pre-pandemic levels or if there will be a long-term reduction in traffic — this will depend on many factors such as the degree to which people continue to telecommute, where they decide to live post-pandemic, and any increase in the use of other modes of transportation.

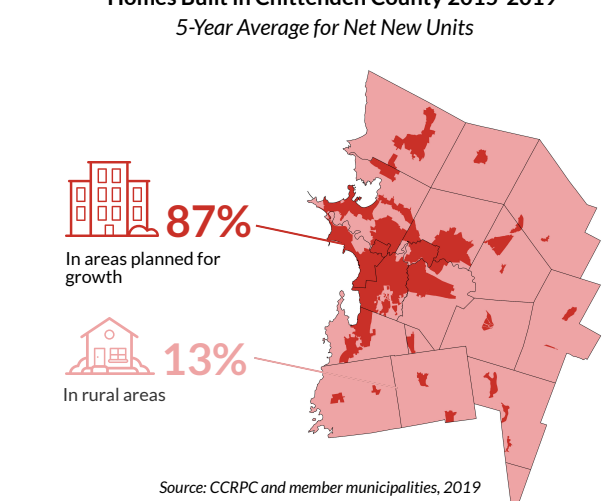
As we move forward into an uncertain future, it is imperative to monitor the vehicle traffic and other modes of transportation so we can invest in the appropriate transportation improvements at the right time.

SMART GROWTH

HOUSING IN AREAS PLANNED FOR GROWTH

While development in existing communities can be difficult, infill in the right places has positive benefits of increased inclusivity and economic strength. For the eighth year in a row, Chittenden County has exceeded its ECOS Plan goal of 80% of development occurring in planned growth areas. In 2019, 691 of 775 units (89%) were in areas planned for growth.

Homes Built in Chittenden County 2015-2019
5-Year Average for Net New Units



Source: CCRPC and member municipalities, 2019

OVERALL HOUSING PICTURE

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated many of the existing housing challenges and uncovered a housing market that was even worse than previously documented for low-income households.

HOMELESSNESS

The Chittenden County homeless 2020 [Point in Time](#) increased from:



As of September, there were about 500 homeless households living in temporary motel/hotel placements (homeless families = 45; homeless individuals = 444).

For the numbers of renters and landlords assisted, view the [Vermont Rental Housing Stabilization Program](#)

NEW CONSTRUCTION

COVID-19 has and will continue to impact new construction for all income types.

Construction projects were put on hold for two months, adding to the cost of construction.

The price of lumber has increased 50% since April 2020.

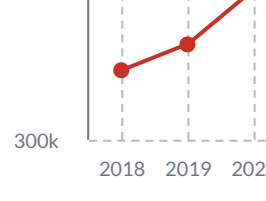
Source: National Association of Home Builders

CARES Act

Swift response by the State of Vermont with CARES Act funding to support renters and homeowners to cover their housing costs prevented a catastrophe to date and will hopefully do so through 2021.

MEDIAN HOME PRICE

The median home price for single-family homes in Chittenden County increased by nearly 9% in 2020 and 14% over the previous 2 years.*



There has been an increase in out-of-state homebuyers adding to the demand — and likely driving prices higher.

The full impact of COVID-19 on the homelessness and construction will likely be felt for the next couple years.

*Source: As reported by New England Real Estate Network-MLS from Coldwell Banker Hickok & Boardman Early 2021 Market Report

WATER QUALITY

STATE AND FEDERAL ESTIMATED TOTAL PHOSPHORUS LOAD REDUCTIONS

The overall Lake Champlain Total Maximum Daily Load requires a total phosphorus load reduction of 212.4 metric tons per year. The state is tracking progress on this goal, and the details are outlined in the [Vermont Clean Water Initiative 2020 Performance Report](#).

MAIN LAKE SEGMENT GOAL

In the Main Lake segment, the goal is to reduce phosphorus load by 33.2 metric tons per year.



As of state fiscal year 2020, we have achieved 2.2 metric tons total phosphorus reduction in the Main Lake segment.

This represents 7% of the target achieved in the Main Lake segment.

For more details on local and statewide progress on phosphorus reduction, including a map of the lake segment boundaries, view the [Vermont Clean Water Initiative 2020 Performance Report](#)

Source: Vermont Clean Water Initiative 2020 Performance Report

COVID RESOURCES

The following links contain COVID data dashboards and other resources:

- City of Burlington »
- Public Access Institute »
- Track the Recovery »
- United States Census »
- University of Vermont Medical Center »
- United Way of Northwest Vermont »
- Vermont Agency of Commerce & Community Development »
- Vermont Agency of Transportation »
- Vermont Commission on Women »
- Vermont Department of Health »
- Vermont Department of Labor »
- Vermont Futures Project »
- Vermont Housing & Finance Agency »

Visit the ECOS Scorecard to view all the indicators measuring progress toward the ECOS Plan goals.

ecosproject.com