

Vermont State Health Assessment Community Engagement Data



Climate Change

The data in this slide deck is specific to **climate change** as a health need.

May 2024

Where does this data come from?

This data was collected as part of the 2024 [Vermont State Health Assessment](#).

We are grateful to the people of Vermont who participated in focus groups and interviews for the State Health Assessment. The following information comes from individuals who identify as members of and/or support one or more of the following communities:

- Indigenous people
- People of color
- People with disabilities
- People who are unhoused
- People who identify as LGBTQ+
- Older Vermonters

The information presented here are the expressed opinions of Vermonters based on their lived and professional experiences. They are not the opinions of the Vermont Department of Health, but rather the people who make up the communities with whom we work.

How can I use this data?

Please use this data freely! We hope that it is useful for our partners in your efforts to improve health and well-being.

You can use this data to:

- Elevate the voices of people with lived experience to provide context to quantitative data.
- Understand the factors that impact health and well-being.
- Identify solutions to address some of the most important health needs facing people in Vermont.
- Inform planning and decision-making for your organization or community.
- Identify opportunities for collaboration with other organizations or sectors.

Visit [How Healthy Are We? Data Resources | Vermont Department of Health](#) to access other Health Department data. Access local data, trends over time, visualizations and maps, equity and disparities information, topic-specific data and more.

Who does this data reflect?

Geographic representation of focus group participants

County	Focus group involvement	% of State population
Addison	7%	6%
Bennington	13%	6%
Caledonia	7%	5%
Chittenden	25%	26%
Grand Isle	<1%	1%
Lamoille	4%	4%
Missing	6%	
Orange	1%	5%
Orleans	6%	4%
Rutland	6%	9%
Washington	8%	9%
Essex	1%	1%
Franklin	6%	8%
Windham	4%	7%
Windsor	5%	9%

Community representation of focus group participants

Community	Focus group involvement
Older Vermonters	19%
Vermonters with a disability	19%
LGBTQ+ Vermonters	15%
Vermonters of color	14%
Missing data	11%
Unhoused Vermonters	10%
None of the above	8%
Indigenous Peoples	4%

Community representation of interviewees

Community	Key informants
No specific community	23%
Vermonters of color	18%
Older Vermonters	15%
Vermonters with a disability	14%
Unhoused Vermonters	13%
LGBTQ+ Vermonters	11%
Indigenous Peoples	5%

Climate Change: Key Drivers & Health Impacts

Key drivers are important factors that contribute to a health need. These were identified by the community.

Key Drivers	Health Impacts
<p>1. Increased tick exposure and illness: Warming winters results in less freezing which increases the length of tick season. Providers noted seeing patients with ticks more months of the year.</p>	<p>Tick borne illnesses are more frequent.</p>
<p>2. Decreased access to fresh food: The increased amount of rain through the year challenges the ability to do personal gardens and impacts farmers, making it harder to get locally grown, fresh, and healthy produce. Food lost in power outages.</p>	<p>Expensive fresh fruits and vegetables are medicine for many, contributing to health and prevention for some and to slower disease progression for others.</p>
<p>3. Temperature fluctuations, a longer hot season, and fires and smoke.</p>	<p>Some medical conditions like asthma and diabetes were reported to flare during temperature fluctuations. Smoke exacerbates asthma and make people unable to exercise.</p>
<p>4. Flooding leads to many housing and transportation complications, including living in homes with mold, poor water quality, and wastewater contamination.</p>	<p>Struggle to access help, new and exacerbated health conditions, becoming displaced or unhoused. Any extreme weather is dangerous for the unhoused population. "I have a good friend whose home was declared unfit to live in because of the flooding. She is of limited financial means and has numerous health problems. And so, she's houseless."</p>
<p>5. Anxiety about the uncertainty of climate change and frustration with the lack of serious resources and actions taken to address it.</p>	<p>Stress, worry about the future.</p>

Climate Change: Summary of Key Drivers

“There are certain roads that still haven't even been fixed 8 months later. So, when the next round of flooding comes around, there's only one route you can take. And if that floods out, you're trapped. I've lost 3 or 4 days of work because the flooding is bad enough where I'm afraid if I leave, I can't get back in.”

#	Key drivers (not in order of importance)
1	Increased tick exposure and illness.
2	Decreased fresh food access.
3	Temperature fluctuations, a longer hot season, fires and smoke bring flare ups of medical conditions.
4	Flooding leading to many housing and transportation complications.
5	Anxiety over climate change and lack of action.

Climate Change: Possible Solutions

These solutions were identified by participants of the focus groups and interviews.

Possible solutions

Create more shelters to house anyone who had lost their homes during natural disasters.

Improve building and road infrastructure to match the changes in climate and lessen that impact of events like flooding.

“...the infrastructure that we have in place is no longer adequate for what is happening with the climate, so we are going to need to change the infrastructure.”

Build coordinated and inclusive climate crisis responses to include Vermonters who have disabilities, are unhoused, who do not speak English, and who live in more isolated geographic areas.

Ensure that public health messaging during emergencies includes ASL translation and captions.