

# Climate Workforce: Winter 2023 Survey Findings

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For VPIRG and EAN

## Introduction

The Energy Action Network (EAN) started a team because they recognized Vermont's need for a solid workforce in order to meet its energy and climate goals. This includes training Vermonters with the skills to electrify our transportation sector, install clean energy solutions, weatherize homes, build net zero commercial buildings, and sustainably manage our working lands, forests and waterways. The team partnered with organizations across Vermont to host focus group discussions in January and February of 2023. Their goal was to find information from potential climate workforce employees about what they value from a job and how to best communicate with them.

In a partnership with Montpelier High School's Community Based Learning program, a student worked with a member of the Vermont Public Interest Research Group (VPIRG) to create a survey for Vermont's high schoolers. Students are the next group of people to enter the workforce and the survey was established to further the research done by the EAN in order to inform an outreach campaign. Working in conjunction with the EAN, VPIRG and members of VEEP, as well as other organizations, the survey was formulated and distributed. Upon comparison with the Energy Action Network report from focus groups, this survey of Vermont high school students reaped similar results for what people value about jobs and the best outreach strategies.

## Survey Methodology

The survey was distributed through channels like Montpelier High School administration, the Youth Lobby, Youth Climate Leaders Academy retreat, Work Based Learning contacts at Northfield and Williamstown high schools, and emails to the principals at multiple Vermont schools. The most response came from Montpelier High School, U32 High School, and Williamstown Middle and High School.

Based on the focus group discussions previously conducted by the EAN team, the survey questions were modified for high schoolers. The survey collected demographic information such as what school they attend, age, current plans after high school and whether the student believes they will stay in Vermont post-graduation. The second part of the survey asks what they value the most about a job, how they learn about new jobs and if they would be interested in having a career that benefits the environment.

1. \*Where do you attend high school (Short answer)
2. \*How old are you (Short answer)
3. \*What grade are you in?
  - a. 9th
  - b. 10th

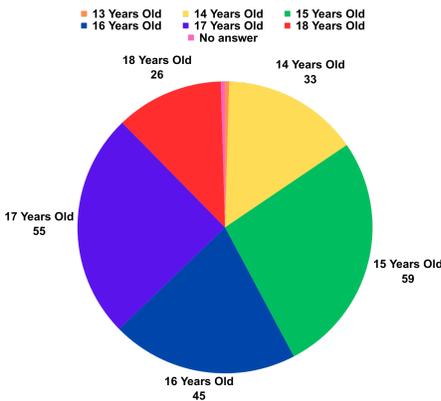
- c. 11th
  - d. 12th
4. \*What is your plan after high school?
- a. Immediately enter the workforce
  - b. Attend a two year degree program
  - c. Attend a four year degree program
  - d. Attend a non degree training or certificate program
  - e. Join the military
  - f. I don't know
  - g. Other
5. \*Are you planning to stay in Vermont after high school and/or university?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Maybe
6. \*Please label how important the following things are to you when you are looking for a job (Scale 1-5)
- a. Wage or salary
  - b. Health insurance
  - c. Flexibility in scheduling
  - d. On the job training and support
  - e. English language support
  - f. Transportation support
  - g. Housing support
  - h. Having a job that helps the community, other people, or the natural world.
7. Can you tell us more about which things are most important to you? (Optional)
8. \*When you enter the workforce, where do you anticipate learning about available job options? Select all that apply.
- a. Friends, family, acquaintances
  - b. Front Porch Forum
  - c. Social media
  - d. High school teachers, college professors, college counselors
  - e. Career fairs
  - f. Websites
  - g. I don't know
  - h. Other
9. \*How would you prefer to learn about different jobs and careers? Select all that applies.
- a. Job shadow
  - b. An unpaid internship
  - c. Paid internship/apprenticeship
  - d. Social media posts
  - e. Watch videos
  - f. Read about the job
  - g. I don't know
  - h. Other
10. \*I would be interested specifically in doing a job that helps the environment and the climate.
- a. Strongly agree

- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Strongly disagree

## Demographics of Survey Respondents

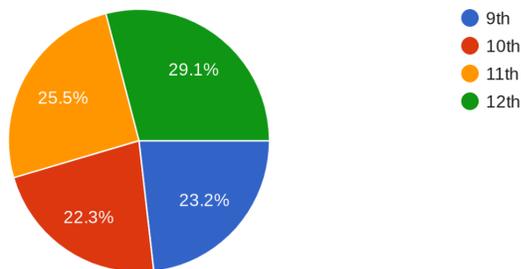
In total, there were 220 respondents to the survey. The participants were teenagers within several Vermont high schools, varying from 13-18 years old. A majority of the response (29.1%) derived from seniors, followed by juniors, freshmen, and sophomores. Approximately 55% of the respondents planned to attend a 4-year university following graduation, while around 10% of students planned to immediately enter the workforce. When asked whether they planned to stay in Vermont after graduation, 45% were undecided and 40% responded no.

### Respondent Age



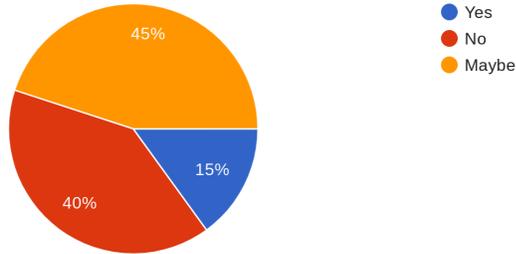
### What grade are you in?

220 responses



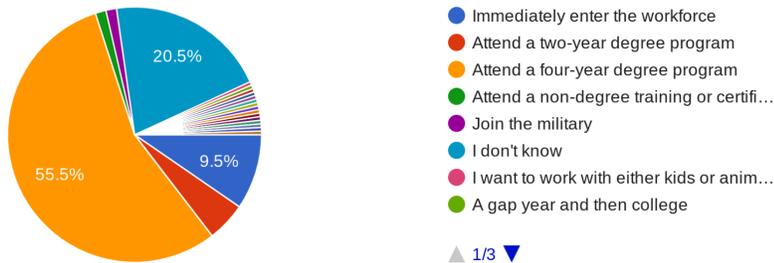
Are you planning to stay in Vermont after high school and/or university?

220 responses



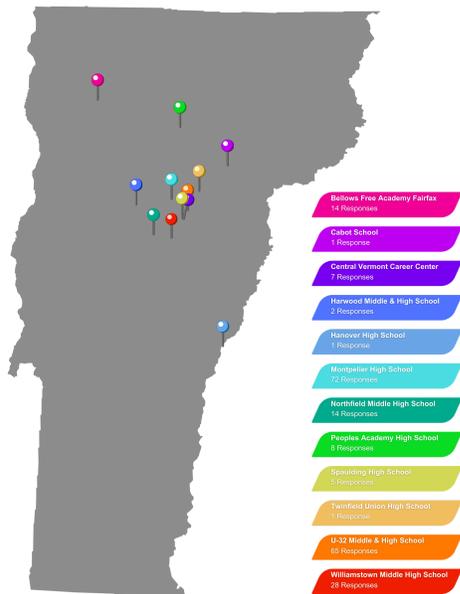
What is your plan after high school?

220 responses



- Save up and travel
- nail tech or a athlete player
- im planning on attending CVCC and t...
- I dont really know, i know i want to pur...
- community college, idk
- Gap Year, Continue Working
- College
- Take a gap year before going to com...
- Gap year, then continue college (I'm already taking college classes)
- fame n fortune
- travel
- Gap year probably and then four-year degree program
- Travel, contemplate if college is actually a good idea, than pick one of my many options of jobs.

## Geographical Participation



The survey feedback originated from 10 different Vermont cities and towns.

- Barre: 5
- Cabot: 1
- East Montpelier: 65
- Fairfax: 14
- \*Montpelier: 79
- Morristown: 8
- Northfield: 14
- Twinfield: 1

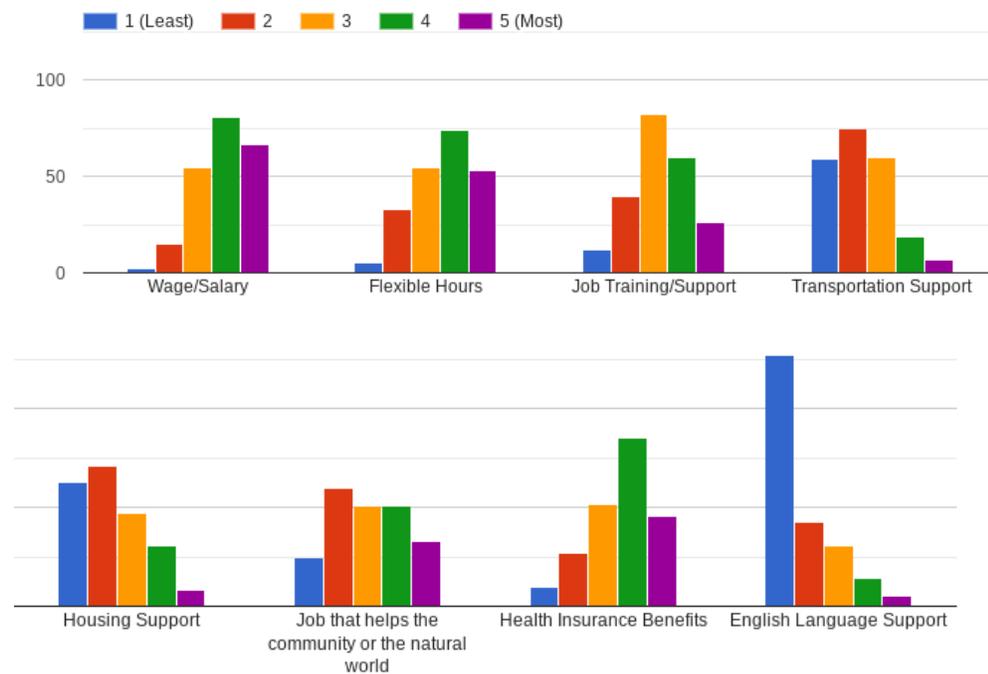
Waterbury: 2

Williamstown: 28

\*Included unknown CVCC students with Montpelier population

## Part 1: Most important job considerations

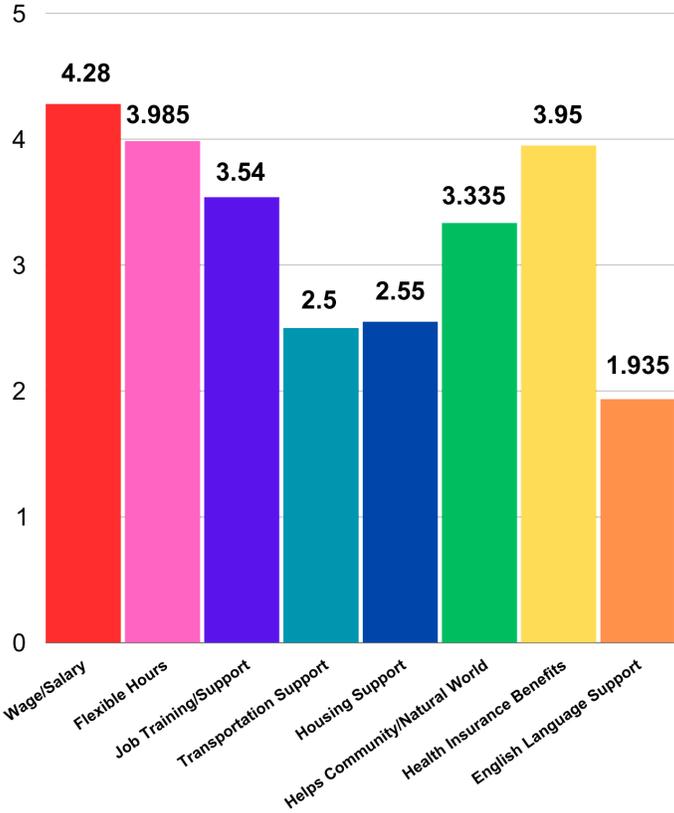
The most common responses for job considerations that Vermont high school students rated as a 5 (very important) were wage/salary, flexible hours, health insurance, training support, and a job that helps the community or natural world, which aligned with the results of the Energy Action Network survey.



Job Consideration Factors	% of participants ranking each consideration as a 5 on a scale from 1-5
Wage/Salary	30%
Flexible Hours	24%
Job training/Support	11%
Transportation Support	3%
Housing Support	3%
Job that helps community, natural world	15%

Health Insurance Benefits	20%
English Language Support	2%

**Mean Job Consideration Factor Ranking**



**Adequate Wage**

Wage and Salary was an essential consideration when considering a job, with 30% of respondents selecting it as a 5 (very important) on the scale and a mean rating of 4.28. The EAN report notes that younger voices thought of jobs in terms of being able to lead a happy life, which is similar to the perspective of most respondents. Feedback on the optional elaboration question showed students desired financial stability with a job that paid enough to support them and allow them to have a fulfilling life. A common response looked like, “Money ensures living a good life, getting proper nutrition, and having a bright future.”

**Flexibility**

Flexibility was another key consideration for high school students because on average students rated the factor highly with a mean of 3.985, and 24% of the respondents selected it as one of their most important considerations. However, in contrast with the EAN respondents, who thought about flexibility within a

9-5 workframe and childcare needs, students desired flexibility in their career because of mental health concerns, irregular schedules, and wanting to pursue other interests outside of work. One student says, “I have a lot of interests and am often involved in my community, so having flexible hours is important to me.”

### **Health Insurance**

Surprisingly, health insurance was another essential consideration for students. The mean rating for the consideration was 3.95. Further feedback shows that many high schoolers recognize how expensive and difficult it is to access health care plans without benefits being included in your job.

### **Training Support**

Many students also rated training support as an important part of a job. The mean rating for job support was 3.54. A student writes, “job training is essential to me because I want to be able to do my job well and create trust in staff members and bosses.” This aspect was less focused on in the EAN focus groups due to prior work experience as adults, but was important to youth.

### **Job that helps the community, other people, or the natural world**

Students reported the significance of having a job that helps their community, the environment, or others. In the optional response, they noted that they preferred having an enjoyable job, particularly one that helps their community. Some shared their desire to create change in their communities, and others aimed to do something that allowed meaningful interaction with people. A student shared, “It is important to me that my career will have a positive effect on the community and environment,” which aligned with the desire for a job that felt fulfilling and helpful.

## **Part 2: Communications: How workers prefer to learn about jobs**

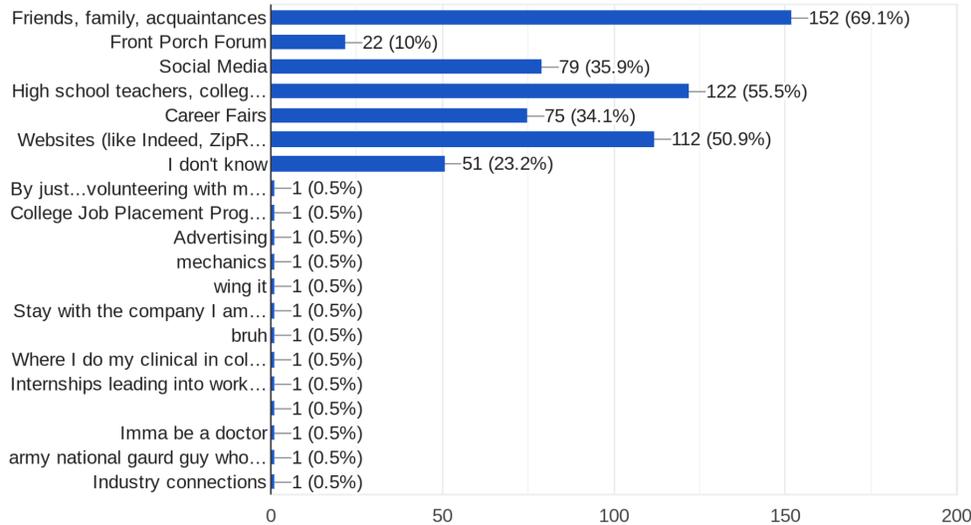
Respondents were asked how they predicted they would learn about jobs in the future, and selected all that applied. Their options were as follows:

- Friends, family, acquaintances
- Front Porch Forum
- Social Media
- High school teachers, college professors, college counselors
- Career Fairs
- Websites (like Indeed, ZipRecruiter, etc)
- I don't know
- Other

## Prediction

When you enter the workforce, where do you anticipate learning about available job options? Select all that applies.

220 responses



Most commonly students responded that they anticipated learning about job opportunities from their family and friends, followed by high school teachers, college professors, and counselors. Adults in the EAN focus groups discussed how they found opportunities through “word of mouth” which draws a close comparison with the socialization that draws both students and adults to careers. The third and fourth most selected options were websites and social media, though only 35% of respondents anticipated learning about jobs through social media, which is surprising for a young generation.

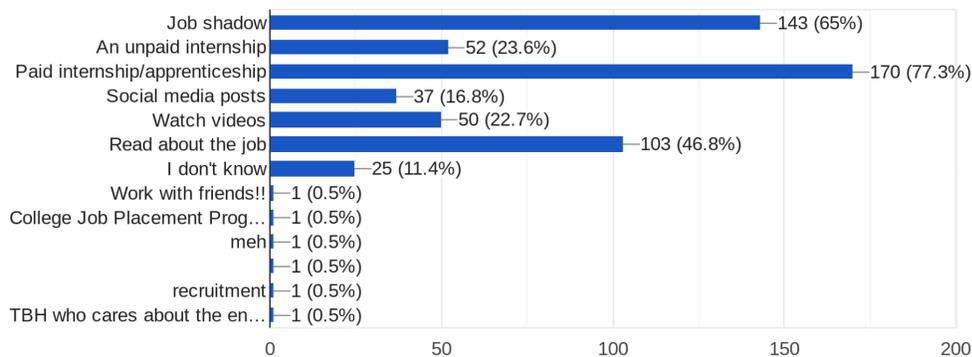
Respondents were also asked how they would prefer to be introduced to careers and how they wanted to learn about them. Their options were:

- Job shadow
- An unpaid internship
- Paid internship/apprenticeship
- Social media posts
- Watch videos
- Read about the job
- I don't know
- Other

## Preference

How would you prefer to learn about different jobs and careers? Select all that applies.

220 responses

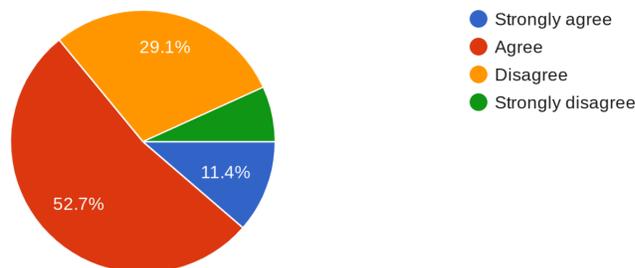


A majority of students responded that they preferred to learn about different jobs through a paid internship/apprenticeship or a job shadowing experience. 77% of participants favored a paid internship, while only approximately 23% of respondents selected an unpaid internship, as earning money was an important incentive for exploring a career. Surprisingly, almost only 16% of respondents preferred social media posts as a way to be exposed to new job offerings.

## Part 3: Interest in Environment and Climate Jobs

I would be interested specifically in doing a job that helps the environment and the climate

220 responses



When asked if students had an interest in doing a job that specifically helps the environment and climate, over half of respondents said that they agreed. Similar to findings in some EAN focus groups, a little over 50% of respondents were interested or curious about careers within the climate workforce. Approximately 29.1% of students disagreed, reporting a lack of interest in having a career that specifically helps the environment and climate. A minority of students chose either extreme, with 6.8% saying they strongly disagree about this interest and 11.4% strongly agree. In our optional response one student commented on how important it was to have a job that supports the natural world, stating, “The natural environment is a place of beauty and wonder and really want to find a job that can work with and in that space and work to

protect its ecosystems from infringement.” However, a small qualitative conversation between acquaintances showed that there was some incentive to choose “Agree” based on a feeling of guilt for not having interest in this type of career.

Generally, students have an interest in participating in jobs that positively impact their community, their environment, and the climate. These opportunities can best be marketed and advertised to younger generations through reaching out to counselors, teachers, and school administrators to spread word about new offerings. Another helpful resource would be posting jobs on commonly known websites (such as Indeed, etc.) and using a social media post to alert people to these connections. When learning about new jobs, Vermont high school students are most encouraged through paid internships, job shadow opportunities and the ability to read more about what a job has to offer. It will be important to highlight the wage or salary, flexibility in hours, any additional medical benefits (health insurance), and how it contributes to the community or natural world.