

**VERMONT 250
COMMISSION**

LISTENING SESSION
ONLINE SURVEY

SUMMARY REPORT

FEBRUARY 16, 2024

Attendees

LISTENING SESSION #1 | Monday, January 22, 2024

Heather Pelham, 250th Anniversary Commission, Commissioner of Tourism and Marketing
Israel Provoncha, 250th Anniversary Commission, Re-enactor/Historian
James Lockridge, 250th Anniversary Commission, Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership
Jim Brangan, 250th Anniversary Commission, Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership
Jonah Spivak, 250th Anniversary Commission, Friends of the Battle Monument
Laura V. Trieschmann, 250th Anniversary Commission, State Historic Preservation Officer/Chair
Martin Mahoney, 250th Anniversary Commission, Bennington Museum
Stephen Perkins, 250th Anniversary Commission, Vermont Historical Society
Tom Hughes, 250th Anniversary Commission, Historian
Katharine Ingram, Vermont Department of Tourism & Marketing, Trade and Partner Relations Manager
Maureen McCracken, Vermont Department of Tourism & Marketing, Director of Marketing Strategy and Research

LISTENING SESSION #2 | Wednesday, January 24, 2024

Devin Colman, Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, State Architectural Historian
Kevin Mullen, First Families VT
Noel Clark, Vermont Humanities, Communications Officer
Paul Carnahan, Vermont Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, Council member
Rich Holschuh, Vermont Commission on Native American Affairs, Chair
Jill Adams, Atowi, Future Commission Member
Susan McClure, 250th Anniversary Commission, Vermont Arts Council, Executive Director
Victoria Sample, Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, Historic Sites Section Chief
Walter Wallace, Rockingham, Certified Local Government Coordinator
Maureen McCracken, Vermont Department of Tourism & Marketing, Director of Marketing Strategy and Research

PLACE CREATIVE COMPANY (BOTH SESSIONS)

Steve Crafts, Partner, Chief Brand Strategist and Creative Officer
Michael Adams, Senior Brand Strategist
Meredith Breiland, Account Director
Bret Murray, Strategic Brand Designer

This report is to be held in strict confidence.

Approach

We used qualitative and quantitative research methods to arrive at the logo and brand identity insights in this report.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

We held two remote listening sessions. One with 11 members of the Vermont 250 Commission. Another with nine representatives from groups and organizations around Vermont.

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

We distributed an online survey to state groups and organizations to send to members. We received 112 submissions.

Vermont 250TH Anniversary
LOGO + IDENTITY INSIGHTS

LOGO + IDENTITY INSIGHTS

BE INCLUSIVE

Create a logo that isn't specific to a place, people, or perspective.

SYMBOLS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS

Symbols have universal meaning that don't limit you to the words portrayed in the mark.

LITERAL DEPICTIONS LACK DIVERSITY

All Vermonters need to feel like there's a place for them to connect within the commemoration.

CAREFULLY CONSIDER COLOR MEANING

Explore a color palette that reflects Vermont's heritage and its unique identity within the United States.

TOGETHER IN TIME AND SPACE

Create an identity that recognizes Vermont's history dates back more than 250 years.

LOGO + IDENTITY INSIGHTS

After completing qualitative listening sessions and a quantitative survey, we developed lists of what to embrace and what to avoid.

WHAT TO EMBRACE

SHAPES



ABSTRACTIONS



SYMBOLS



SHAPE OF VERMONT



VERMONT 250TH ANNIVERSARY

NOTE: THIS IS THE OFFICIAL NAME

250TH

WHAT TO AVOID

NO CHURCH STEEPLES



The University of Vermont

NO IDENTIFIABLE MOUNTAINS



OKEMO
MOUNTAIN RESORT

NO FARMS OR BARNS

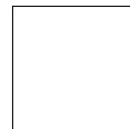


DAKIN FARM

NO SPECIFIC PEOPLE



NO RED, WHITE, AND BLUE



LISTENING SESSION

Appendix

The following pages include notes from the brand exercises we did for each session.

BRAND EXERCISES

LISTENING SESSION #1 | MONDAY, JANUARY 22, 2024

Brands that Inspire

What's a brand that inspires you? What can we take away from it that applies to Vermont's 250th Anniversary?

BRANDS THAT INSPIRE



National Historic Landmark Plaque



THULE: Note that this is a brand we should not aspire to. I have a preference for art vs. vector art. We should be authentic by engaging with Vermont artists. We should be “beyond basic”

PATAGONIA: Chosen because it is a brand beyond a logo. They stand for an ethos and set of values

NATIONAL HISTORIC REGISTRY: Not a graphic logo, but stands for significance

400th Champlain Celebration: Easy to adapt, Shows ways to participate

BICENTENNIAL - it was inspiring in 1976

ADDITIONAL CONVERSATION:

Logos can be descriptive or prescriptive

Logos are sometimes “stamps” vs. art

250th button: Used to kick off this project

PBS: nostalgic, descriptive

1980 Lake Placid Olympic logo: ski jump, easily paired with rings for integrated look

Art Hop: Flexibility for partners to use

Habitat for Humanity: Wordmark + logomark

Look of holding up a roof, which is the work they do

Shows motion like an upwards arrow

Ideals that Drive Us

We'll identify the core motivations and beliefs desired as a result of this identity development work.

IDEALS THAT DRIVE US

Commemorate

Vermont's uniqueness (created our own independence), cool historical way to look back, without putting in a value judgment - we're still becoming the state and country we want to be. Engagement with heritage in all its presentations. Celebrating Community.

Create

Shaping our future. Better Community. A place for everyone. A place to continue sharing. Relevancy. (Nothing to do with me - it happened 250 years ago...it's relevant now.) Agency amongst the public—how can you be part of it?

Acknowledge

History that allows us to create better community and move forward. Inclusivity—everyone can see themselves in it—as an invitation. We may need to overcome some stories. Other people's stories have been left out of history—need to include a diversity of stories. Vermonters have an active role in a continuum of change making.

Who We Are Who We Are Not

A perception exercise to help define the tone, feeling,
and voice for the identity work.

WHO WE ARE



12



19

Lego, interesting and nostalgic - Square, what's going on inside is NOT square is a nice dichotomy - Engineering meets imagination, a Thought bubble. It conveys what the product actually is. Lego feels softer

Human, organic, not sterile

Emotionally approachable

Tells a story

Badge/shape? Something that anchors it

Image 19: rural, soothing, familiar. The land is part of our history.

WHO WE ARE NOT



2

Uber

3

Walmart 

7



Walmart: Dated, boring

Ford: Dated, boring

Many are “plain pasta” without what we know about the companies

Boring = no emotional content

We need something human, not a generic identity cog.

Type as a logo is boring and meaningless

Walmart: cold, big box

Abstraction mark—what does it mean? What does it convey?

Uber: name only, doesn’t convey what they do

Image 19 = Sleepy Hollow and overexposed view of what Vermont is. It’s more about people within the environment, it’s become so complicated so fast when we talk about people. There is a lot you can read into a landscape image.

Overplayed but also what people love about Vermont so you can’t fight it too much.

Image 27 & 28 dislike intensely:

Question mark: lazy

28: Sears studio background look.

Pile of rocks: adventuring and finding them, but remind me of the poop emoji. Have our eye out for dangerous abstractions.

WHO WE WANT TO BE



6

amazon

11

Darn Tough, Amazon, have some technical execution

Implementation: be able to use it in different ways and backgrounds

Legacy brands, locked up (like Ford)

Amazon has a sense of motion, smile feeling to it

Organic, humanity in the conversation but need different sizes, formats to consider.

Brand Persona

Think about your brand as if it were an actual human being. What adjectives would you (and your audience) use to describe its personality if it was an actual person?

BRAND PERSONA



BRAND EXERCISES

LISTENING SESSION #2 | WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 24, 2024

Brands that Inspire

What's a brand that inspires you? What can we take away from it that applies to Vermont's 250th Anniversary?

BRANDS THAT INSPIRE



patagonia®



HILLSIDE
AT O'BRIEN FARM

RANDOLPH FOOD SHELF:

Colorful, Apple is representative, functional

ATOWI

Symbol is an image for the word, bridge a gap. Educate, bring people into other ways of understanding. It's a place-based symbol that commemorates a place of Vermont. We're together in place and time. Clockwise and counterclockwise directions are relative to your position. Collective reality. Places you with others, connections

TRAIN LOGOS:

Backed by a good product, Represent movement, travel, Art deco evokes a relevant time period

BICENTENNIAL:

Strong logo. What is the product? This has layers of meaning, simple. Did have some controversy: commemorate like the 4th of July. The experience beyond the logo

PBS: Trustworthiness, Nostalgia

SCOOBY DOO: Colors, Easily recognizable

SAINTE-MARIE AMONG THE HURONS: Canadian museum, Logo reflects history

Ideals that Drive Us

We'll identify the core motivations and beliefs desired as a result of this identity development work.

IDEALS THAT DRIVE US

Commemorate

The broad span of 250 years—there's not one date this is tied to. Moments both large and small. The stories of “people in the streets” - cobblers, sailors, etc.

Create

A place we can talk about and not sugarcoat what's going on. A place where communities can tell their stories. A place to tell more inclusive, authentic stories you wouldn't normally hear—puts people forward (humanize what life was like)

Acknowledge

...And move forward in a healing way. There were sacrifices on many sides. The real truth of this 250 years. The whole sense of change.

Who We Are Who We Are Not

A perception exercise to help define the tone, feeling,
and voice for the identity work.

WHO WE ARE



10



Olympic logo: Does not have a word in it. Words lock things down. Oral vs. written culture. Linking, multiple colors, readily apparent what they're showing. We are more symbolic.

Olympics: only logo that isn't trying to sell. Promoting a multicultural experience. Intertwining, people first. Convey ideas. Educating, not selling.

Olympics: Aspirational, anyone could become an Olympian.

A brand for everyone.

Image 17 is Brattleboro, so it is recognizable. Image 19 is an intersection of place and what is gifted to us of creation and the human interaction of that through architecture. The rainbow is a nice symbol and has strong associations already but they're wonderful because whoever is looking at the rainbow sees it landing on a different place depending on where you are. Multiple colors bring everybody in.

Freedom and Unity is the official state motto. How do we include this without devolving into stereotypes and cliches? Official landmarks, etc.

Image 18: shows unity and kinship and overlooking a place, enjoying a warmth from the sun

WHO WE ARE NOT



2



4



15



16



20

Ford truck owners are “Ford people”. Identifiable in terms of labeling the person. Patagonia person vs. LL Bean person. Land Use Law—certain numbers have regional meaning. Act 250 means something to Vermonters, it is very relevant. Careful consideration to other associations to words we use.

Image 20 is a symbol of despair.

We’re leaving a lot out of place when we see just humans.

Image 15: Victorious state, hope we’re not promoting that.

Image 20: too sad and depressing

Image 16: “it’s not all “shits and giggles”

WHO WE WANT TO BE



17



18

Image 18: inclusivity, although they’re younger and athletic. Pictures of individuals don’t include everyone at all.

Image 17: Rainbow is a little trite but the architecture is cool.

Being “Vermont” is actually really aspirational and not real. How do we place that in a big picture of the US being 250 years old?

What is our role in that? Other than a map of the US with Vermont in green on a map. How do we portray who we think we are?

We’re not necessarily who we think we are! The truth behind it is much more complex and self-contradictory.

Brand Persona

Think about your brand as if it were an actual human being. What adjectives would you (and your audience) use to describe its personality if it was an actual person?

BRAND PERSONA



Vermont 250TH Anniversary
SURVEY INSIGHTS

SURVEY DETAILS

COMPLETION STATS

- 552 Views
- 214 Individuals Started the Survey
- 112 Submissions
- 52.3% Completion Rate
- 20:31 Average Time to Complete

A high number of people started the survey but did not complete it. The long completion time and high drop-off rate suggests that people wanted to learn more about Vermont's 250 Anniversary but were not invested in or interested enough to participate.

There may be other barriers to participation, but considering the survey took approximately three minutes to complete, the survey method itself should not have been a big deterrent.

The survey reached participants across the state: 21.3% of those who participated were from Chittenden County, followed by Bennington County (14.8%), Rutland County (13%), and Windham County (13%). The gender identity of respondents was 47% female, 42% male, and 11% other/prefer not to say.

STATEWIDE SURVEY INSIGHTS

A RANGE OF RESPONDENTS MENTION THE GEOGRAPHY AND LAND AS WHAT MAKES VERMONT UNIQUE.

Respondents mention **Vermont's landscape in 53.7% of all open-ended answers** to "What makes Vermont unique?". These responses include references to: scenery, natural beauty, nature, forests, mountains, outdoors, rural, geography, Green Mountains, land, field, water, foliage, countryside, limited development and undeveloped land. A similar theme of small emerged: villages, rural, low population, and small size were frequently mentioned.

ONLY 10 PEOPLE (9.2%) MENTIONED "HISTORY" AS A UNIQUE FEATURE.

Historical references (when provided) include 14th state, frontier history, independence, the first constitution on the continent, and The Green Mountain Boys.

VERMONT IS ALSO UNIQUE BECAUSE OF THE PEOPLE.

Characteristics mentioned include independence, community, connections, caring, neighborliness, strong, strong character, a focus on tradition, creative, tenacity, honest, hard-working, sterling values, culture, innocence and intelligence.

CIVIL MINDEDNESS ALSO DEFINES VERMONT.

Respondents mention a mix of progressive and traditional values. As one person states "Vermont has an ethos or DNA that is fundamentally different than other states. It is seen in its independence, commitment to the individual, town meetings and other forms of participation and activism, work ethic, agrarian economy, creativity, leadership, and dedication to the natural world to name a few."

CULTURE IS A STRONG IDENTIFIER.

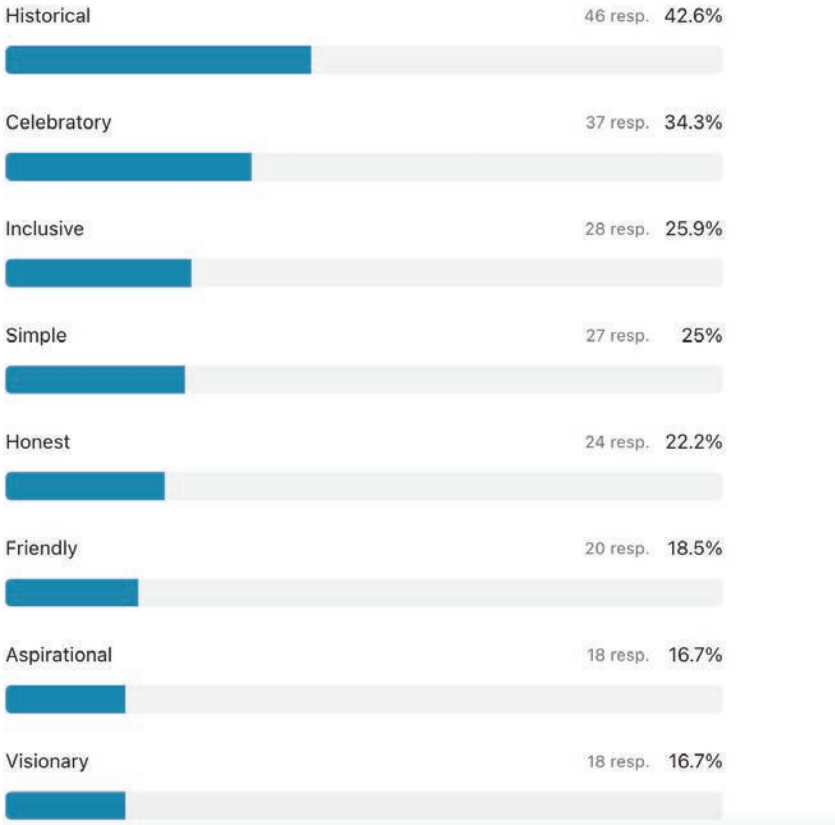
To quantify how people view their identity to the state, we asked "How do you identify as "a Vermonter"? Culture, History and Family rank high.

It is important for Vermont's historical legacy to be represented in the logo.

Overwhelmingly, the logo should make Vermonters feel PROUD, as mentioned by 65 people (60.2%) of people in this open-ended question. Inclusive and "feeling represented" are also important.

The logo should feel:

108 out of 108 people answered this question (with multiple choice)



What is the relative importance (rank) of each to represent in the Vermont 250th logo?

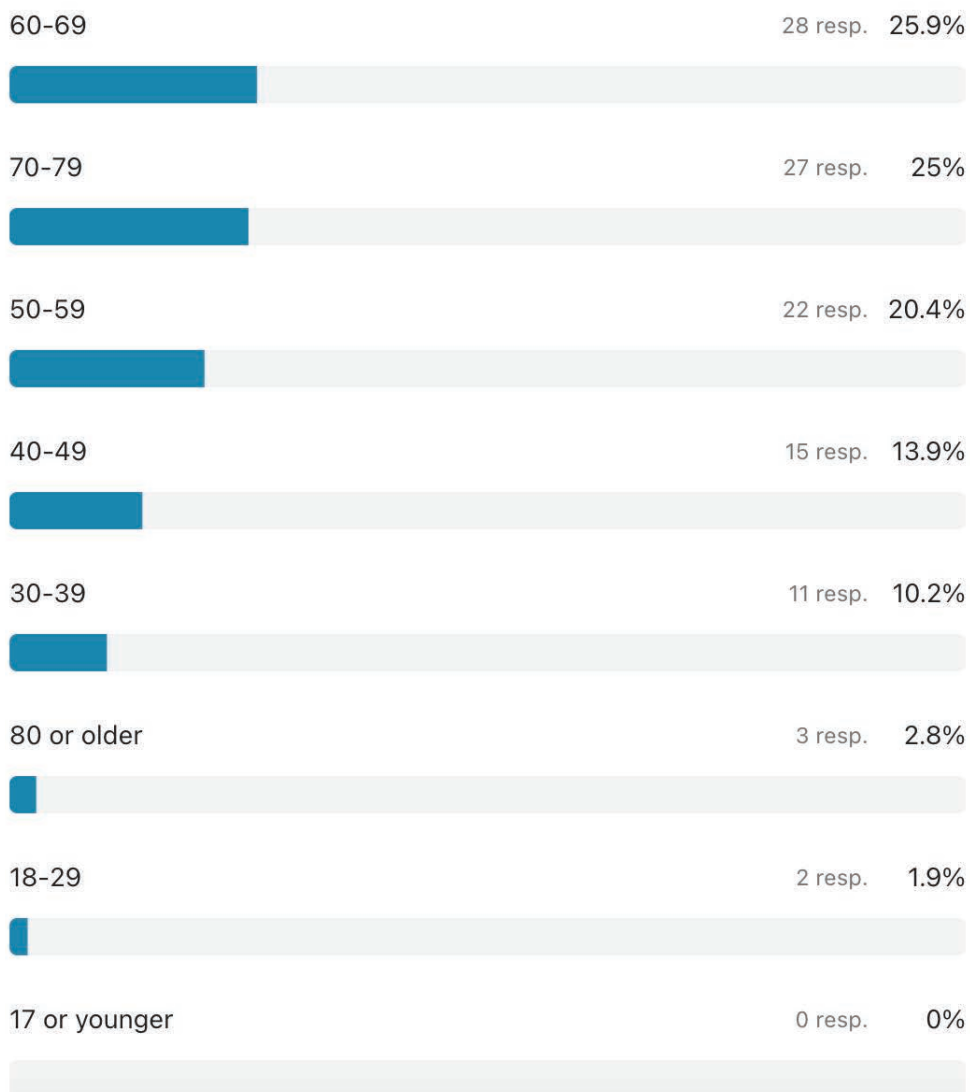
108 out of 108 people answered this question

#1	Vermont's historical legacy.	#1.73 average
#2	The identities of Vermonters	#2.53 average
#3	The diversity of experiences of Vermonters.	#2.64 average
#4	Vermont's conflicts and struggles.	#3.1 average

53.7% of respondents were over the age of 60 with 1.9% under 30 years old.

Which category includes your age?

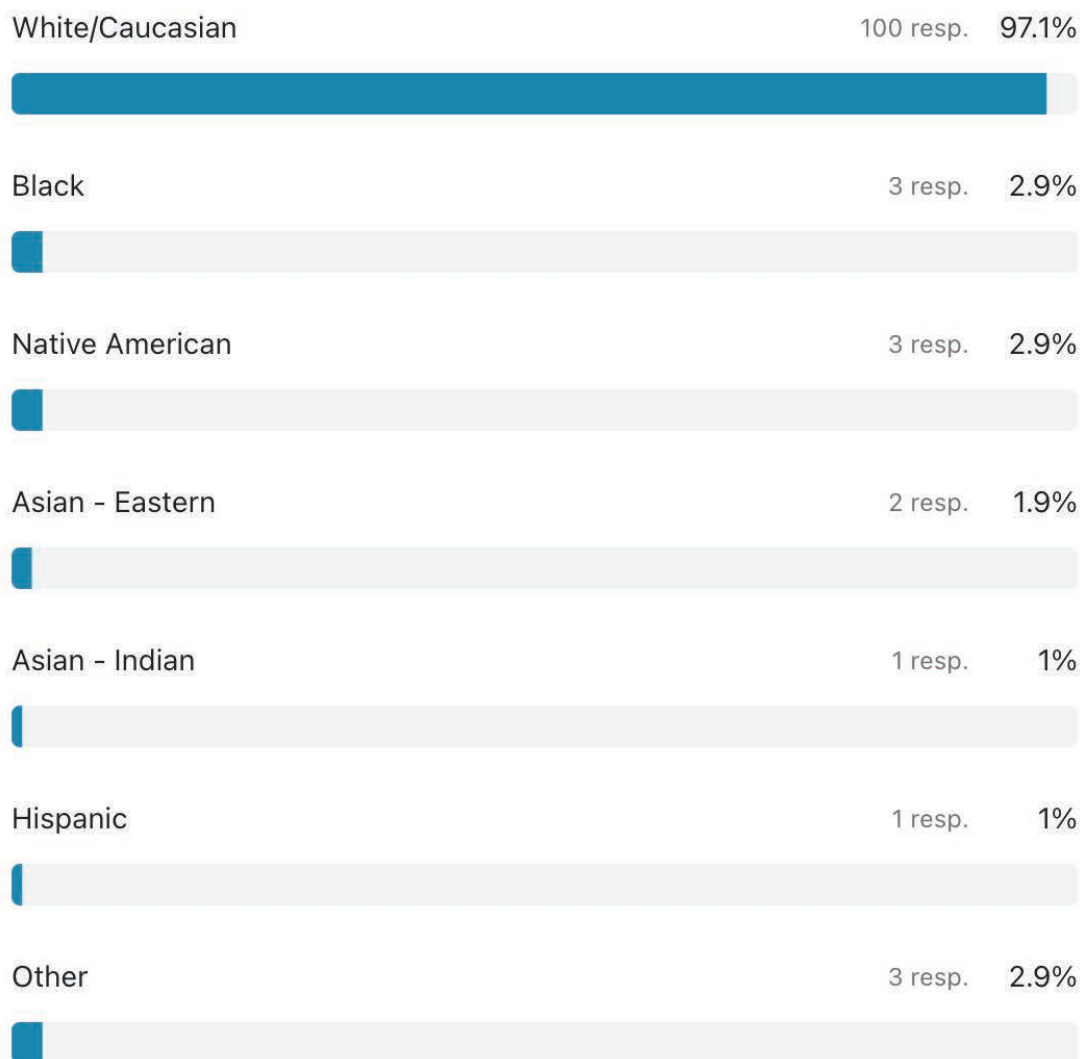
108 out of 108 people answered this question



The respondents reflect the ethnic composition of Vermont.

What is your ethnic background? Please check all that apply.

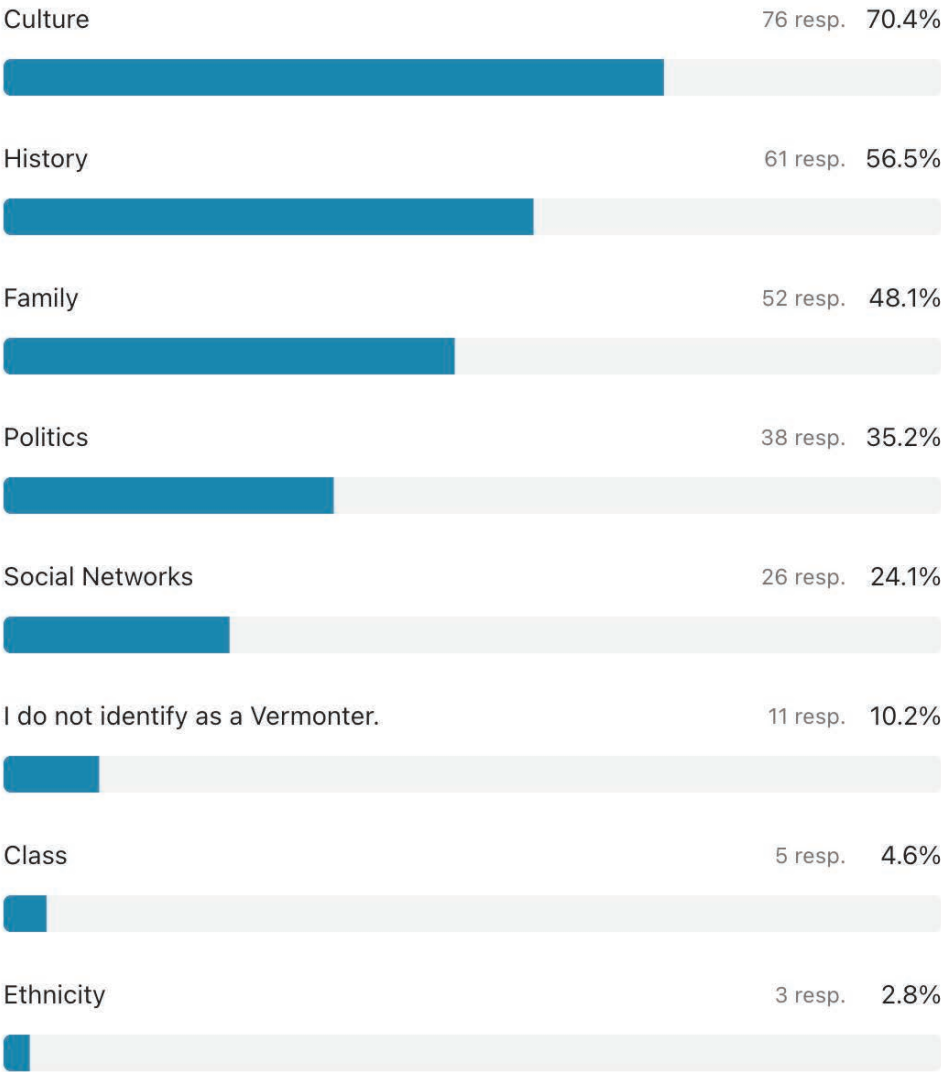
103 out of 108 people answered this question (with multiple choice)



Respondents mostly identify with the culture, history, and family life in Vermont

In what ways do you identify as "a Vermonter"?

108 out of 108 people answered this question (with multiple choice)



Summary of Open-Ended Comments

17% of respondents mention inclusive activities or people they want represented during Vermont's Commemoration activities

- “commemorate the history, celebrate all the people - from Abenaki to Settlers to new immigrants”
- “With an honest homage to the really real found in the diverse communities who have developed a sense of place in the Green Mountains. No schlock.”
- “Acknowledge the contributions of all Vermont citizens, like Abnaki, French, English, Irish, Italian, Black, and the “New Americans” that are immigrating to VT too.”
- “I’d like to see a focus on some of the less frequently told stories of Vermonters, especially of women, people of color, indigenous peoples, and others”
- “Diversely, without guardrails that exclude self-identifying participants”
- “Honestly, I really don’t think this is worth spending money on. Not the logo specifically, but the whole idea of celebrating the 250th anniversary of America given that America has been on the wrong side of herstory over, and over, and over again. Our country was founded on genocide, and now we’re responsible for the destruction of the planet... I can’t believe someone has to read all these! But I honestly feel that way.”
- “With restorative justice for incarcerated Vermonters and programming to support those in need”

Other commemoration ideas are more traditional or mention past celebrations:

- “Large reenactments”
- “Community celebrations, art, museum exhibits, parades, grand parades, dedication (and re) of monuments”
- “In traditional patriotic unifying non-divisive ways as was the Bicentennial in 1976”
- “In the same manner as the Bicentennial.”
- “Reverting the official state flag to the Stark flag”
- “Parades, proclamations, historical presentations”
- “Each town to highlight their citizens and contributions to Vermont as a state.”
- “Vermont State Historic Sites and related museums (Lake Champlain Maritime Museum among others) might collaborate on Exhibits and Events commemorating the date. The Bicentennial Steam Train was a memory of a lifetime!”
- “Looking for all of the forward thinking from so many great Vermonters that took others ages to catch up with, including Ethan’s book on Reason, Stannard’s men and their penchant for quick thinking in war time to save the Union and those who lived close to the land; loggers, farmers, trappers, hunters, et cetera.”

We were hoping themes would emerge showcasing an outlook for the next 250 years of Vermont. The responses reflect both positive and negative views of how Vermonters are shaping the future of the state. One response sums up many of these feelings:

“There are fewer people in the old category of Vermonters and the ethics and ethnologies are changing. Some for the better, some not so well. Some newcomers want to overdevelop Vermont and destroy the landscape and culture we enjoy. There are some good efforts in improving diversity and equity which are helpful.”

(Continued on the following page)

How are Vermonters shaping the future of our state?

Positive responses mention:

- Welcoming diversity
- Responding to climate change
- Protecting the outdoors
- Strong work ethic
- Engagement in their communities
- Participation in politics
- Keeping up traditions of the past
- Through the lifestyle and arts
- Innovative, green, open to all

Negative responses mention:

- Over-development
- Vermont's future is being shaped by progressive, affluent, relatively new arrivals from MA, NY, CT.
- We have a bad reputation as being all white, too liberal, and closed off to outsiders.
- Rejecting the wisdom of our ancestors.
- By becoming NIMBY'S
- Making it too expensive for young families
- High taxes are awful.
- Real Vermonters aren't being listened to enough.
- As a seventh generation Vermonter, I see many flatlanders trying to make Vermont like the states they came from

When asked about what images represented Vermont the best, the respondents selected these three images.



place.