



Vermont Climate Action Plan

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS

Vermont Climate Council
Oct 19, 2021



Public Engagement Channels



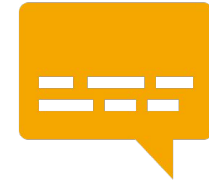
Interviews &
Roundtables
37 participants



Public Engagement
Events
521 total attendees



Public Opinion
Survey
679 responses



Public Comment
Form
365 comments submitted

A photograph of four diverse young people (two boys and two girls) leaning on a blue barrier. They are smiling and looking towards the camera. The background shows concrete steps.

Findings:

Interviews & Roundtables (Phase 1)

State of Vermont

CLIMATE ACTION
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Interviews & Roundtables

Climate concerns

Equity: the uneven burden of climate impacts and lack of access to solutions for Vermonters with less financial resources.

The impact of climate change on the environment, farms, forests and outdoor recreation.

Lack of trust in state government or resistance to new regulations is an issue with some Vermonters.

Concerns regarding the impacts of and preparation for climate migration.

The way in which the problem of climate change is defined affects how we will try to solve the problem.

Climate Solutions

Equitable approach to planning. Vermonters want their diverse experiences and points of view represented in a plan that offers accessible solutions and protection from uneven impacts.

Vermonters want a just energy transition. Ensuring access to solutions was raised as a critical issue for consideration.

Food security and sustainable consumption. Climate-friendly agriculture, improved food access, and strong local food systems that feed all Vermonters are a priority as well as promoting more sustainable consumption of goods and services.

Land management and carbon sequestration. Forestry, conservation, and land management solutions.

Findings:

Public Engagement Events



Events





Event participant concerns about climate impacts in Vermont



KEY FINDINGS

- Vermonters want bold action on climate change
- Equity is a core concern
- Accessibility of climate solutions (financial or spatial)
- Deep concern about young people/mental health
- People appreciated being connected in dialogue about these issues and were interested in staying engaged in the process



Efficient transportation systems and vehicles

Priorities

Frequent:

- Join the Transportation and Climate Initiative (TCI)
- Increase the focus on equity in TCI
- Encourage EV adoption (rebates especially for low-income individuals to make EVs more affordable), incentives including for secondary market, fast charge stations
- Reduce vehicle miles driven, encourage carpooling/ride sharing, digital ride boards safe bike lanes
- Electrification of public systems, including school buses
- Ensure compact land use, smart development
- Increase public transit options, enhance use of existing transportation networks, expand commuter rail network with bus connections, efficient freight
- Enforce speed in rural areas, especially for heavy industrial traffic
- Invest in transport infrastructure via workforce development
- Funding for safe paths/corridors for active transport/mobility

Outliers:

- Fuel rationing, increase gas tax, ban sales of fossil fuel vehicles, stop airport expansion



Efficient transportation systems and vehicles

Barriers

- EV access is cost prohibitive
- EV availability, range and battery issues, lack of charging stations
- Hesitance to go with new technology, resistance to change
- Lack of public transportation in rural areas
- Reliance on personal vehicles, land use policies and no incentives for dense development
- Lack of pedestrian infrastructure, insufficient bike safety
- Tourism encourages driving
- Lower income individuals have a higher transportation burden
- Lack of analysis of long-term impacts of various modes of transit

What's missing?

- Efficient convenient public transit, ultra-light electric rail
- Speed management
- Alternative fuels (biodiesel)
- Land use planning for safe, pleasant, infrastructure for walking and biking
- Subsidized ride sharing
- Charging stations
- Improved broadband to allow for remote work



Better buildings and homes

Priorities

Frequent:

- Weatherization and efficiency incentives, prioritize affordability for renter and low-income properties, focus on oldest housing stock first, increase workforce to provide weatherization
- Efficient requirements for new construction, updated building codes for all construction that establishes minimum standards efficiency systems, code enforcement, green retrofitting
- Educational resources for contractors, workforce training
- Net zero standards for new construction
- Reduce the use high carbon building products, increase use of green materials, green roofs and water capture
- Fuel switching options, electric heat pump installation
- Performance standards for fossil heating providers

Outliers:

- Smaller high-density housing and cohousing
- Support community resilience zones
- Installation of composting toilets in new construction



Better buildings and homes

Barriers

- Lack of affordable climate-resilient housing
- Financial burden and limited options for renters
- Weatherization costs, lack of funding for efficiency rebates
- Labor shortage, workforce is lacking capacity and training
- Zoning that prohibits higher density development
- Affordable housing investments are not making it to BIPOC people-
- Standards that are not enforced
- Lack of political will
- NIMBY opposition to affordable housing, density and infill development



Better buildings and homes

What's missing?

- Policy that explicitly prioritizes creation of affordable, carbon-neutral housing built by laborers with union-protected, fair-paying jobs
- Affordable safe housing for farmworkers
- Affordable, safe, efficient, walkable, beautiful, denser housing
- Using existing housing stock to assist people experiencing homelessness
- Workforce investments
- Promoting personal behavior modifications, such as thermostat management
- Electrification of buildings, ability to prohibit extension of natural gas into new or remodel construction
- Rebates for home EV chargers



Clean, reliable energy

Priorities

Frequent:

- Make renewable energy affordable and accessible to low-income Vermonters
- More in-state renewable electricity generation, increase RES requirements, 100% RES
- Local clean energy generation, expand small-scale community-owned solar, distributed solar, rooftop solar, solar mandates on new construction/parking lots
- Incentivize solar and wind, prioritize environmental justice where energy is generated,
- Optimize, modernize, and increase resiliency and storage capacity of grid
- Promote resiliency through microgrids, modernizing substations and increased electricity storage
- Accurate GHG accounting
- Need to account for the carbon emissions and loss of carbon sequestration from the increase in wood energy
- Expand net metering, smart metering
- Consider local community input when planning/siting energy sources, avoid environmental impacts of industrial wind energy
- Emphasize conservation, energy efficiency
- Prohibit fossil fuel infrastructure development
- Good paying, green jobs with benefits and training



Clean, reliable energy

Barriers

- Energy transition costs
- Clean energy still has environmental impacts
- Hydroelectric power from Quebec produces flooding, mercury pollution, causes displacement and shifts the emission burden to Indigenous communities
- VT legislature has made it more difficult to incentivize solar
- Political efforts to obstruct net metering and community solar
- Account for biomass as source of carbon
- Corporate greenwashing

What's missing?

- Conveying science and data to Vermonters so they can make informed energy choices
- Asking people to take personal responsibility for reducing energy use
- Impact on people whose jobs will be lost in an energy transition
- Accounting for the carbon emissions and loss of carbon sequestration from the increase in wood energy



Resilient working and natural lands

Priorities

Frequent

- Support workforce development/training within forest economy and other natural environment sectors
- Help farmers meet goals, protect, preserve and maintain ability to farm, subsidize regenerative agriculture and carbon sequestration
- Create local food hubs, incentives for local gardens, community gardens, CSAs, Farmers Markets and agricultural processing, storage and distribution
- Invest in BIPOC land access and farming
- Focus on soil health
- Manure management for emissions reductions
- Invest in nature-based solutions
- Conserve land for farming, wildlife, wetlands protected and restored, protect biodiversity. Protect the natural systems that support carbon sequestration
- Re-establishing stream banks for ecosystem functions and sequestration, strengthening riparian zones
- Stop forest fragmentation, development impacts from climate refugees

Outliers

- Biomass for energy production
- Leave Vermont's forests wild



Resilient working and natural lands

Barriers

- Lack of affordable land
- Land Trusts shouldn't get more money- not accessible to BIPOC
- Lack of recognition of ecosystem complexities
- Crops may change in the future
- Some policies will slow down progress in other areas (e.g. land conservation may make housing more difficult)
- Ensure capacity of wastewater/water infrastructure can support development while maintaining intact, healthy ecosystems
- Impacts of sprawl on agricultural and forest lands, climate migration pricing out Vermonters
- Economic constraints
- Zoning laws
- Capital cost of land and equipment

Missing

- Allocations to BIPOC communities to ensure they are directly and equitably benefitting from investments/incentives
- concerns about current use and lack of income sensitivity -- so many second homeowners are getting benefits and people aren't even able to access the land
- Migration corridors for wildlife



Strong rural communities

Priorities

Frequent

- Broadband access – remote work opportunities
- Regional backbone infrastructure
- Small business development – training, mentoring, health care
- Funding for regional planning and action
- State investments in regional infrastructure
- Land use that reduces emissions and increases carbon sequestration.
- Planning for climate refugee populations
- Programs to help rural communities focus on their economic vitality, create systems of mutual aid for the most vulnerable especially after weather events
- Move away from high consumption lifestyles and localize economies

Outliers

- Nucleated development to improve walkability and reduce vehicular use, hubs that connect to transport



Strong rural communities

Barriers

- Not enough funding or expertise
- Need social justice now
- Reliance of wage/labor capitalism
- Local vs state tensions – lack of trust, unrealistic to rely on state and federal help
- Lack of internet
- Weekend/absentee owners causing an erosion of community
- Climate migration exacerbating job and housing insecurity, increasing racial tensions

What's missing?

- Social capital, how to stay connected, Community building events to bring people of all ages together to promote local resilience
- Making sure to involve the rural folks in decisions
- Emergency shelters for the unhoused especially during environmental hazards (storms, power outages) in each municipality.
- Technical assistance



Low-carbon products and processes

Priority

- Carbon removal technology, beneficial at the large plant level
- Corporate responsibility
- Strong extended producer responsibility laws
- Prioritize financial incentives to buy local

Barriers

- Biomass - not a renewable resource

Missing

- Reduce personal energy use
- Offset food miles
- Incentivize changes in standards for asphalt and concrete
- Incentivizing industries to view all waste streams as resources
- Accountability for major polluters



BIPOC Public Input Session-Rationale

- BIPOC communities experience differential vulnerabilities to climate change
- In VT we have seen disparities in environmental justice, health outcomes, and other areas
- This is just one group (consisting of many groups) in VT that experiences differential vulnerabilities
- This session was contested by some members of the public and had to be rescheduled

**ATTORNEY GENERAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMISSION TASK FORCE**

ON

**ACT 54- RACIAL DISPARITIES IN STATE
SYSTEMS**

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

December 15, 2017



Submitted by:
Karen Richards, Executive Director, Human Rights Commission
Attorney General Thomas J. Donovan
David Scherr, Asst. Attorney General



BIPOC event – Key Takeaways

- Impacts exacerbated by the climate crisis are felt disproportionately by BIPOC, including lack of affordable and climate resilient housing and land, affordable health care and clean energy.
- Lack of representation and inclusion of BIPOC voices in the subcommittees and council
- Rushed timeline undermines ability for meaningfully BIPOC engagement
- Priorities identified in the climate plan uphold a corporate profit model that will not financially benefit BIPOC
- Due to lack of representation and outreach many on the call voiced concerns over the legitimacy of CAP process and a lack of trust for implementation of plan
- Focus on thinking outside the box with regards to climate adaptation and green jobs



BIPOC event – Climate Action Plan

Gaps:

Across ALL sections CAP was found to be lacking

- BIPOC involvement/agency in decision-making
- BIPOC representation and opportunities to lead
- Prioritization of equity and shifting of power dynamics

Recommendations:

- Independent body including BIPOC to report on actual performance/effectiveness of this CAP
- More BIPOC control of funding
- More representation on Council that BIPOC can join in real time- or open doors for Abenaki and BIPOC Earth Stewards to participate in these decision-making rooms.

SURVEY: Vermont Climate Action Plan and Comprehensive Energy Plan

By completing the survey below, you can help the Vermont Climate Action Plan and the Comprehensive Energy Plan address climate pollution, energy consumption, and prepare for the impacts of climate change.

OK

1. What is your zip code?

2. What climate-related issues are you concerned about? Choose all that apply

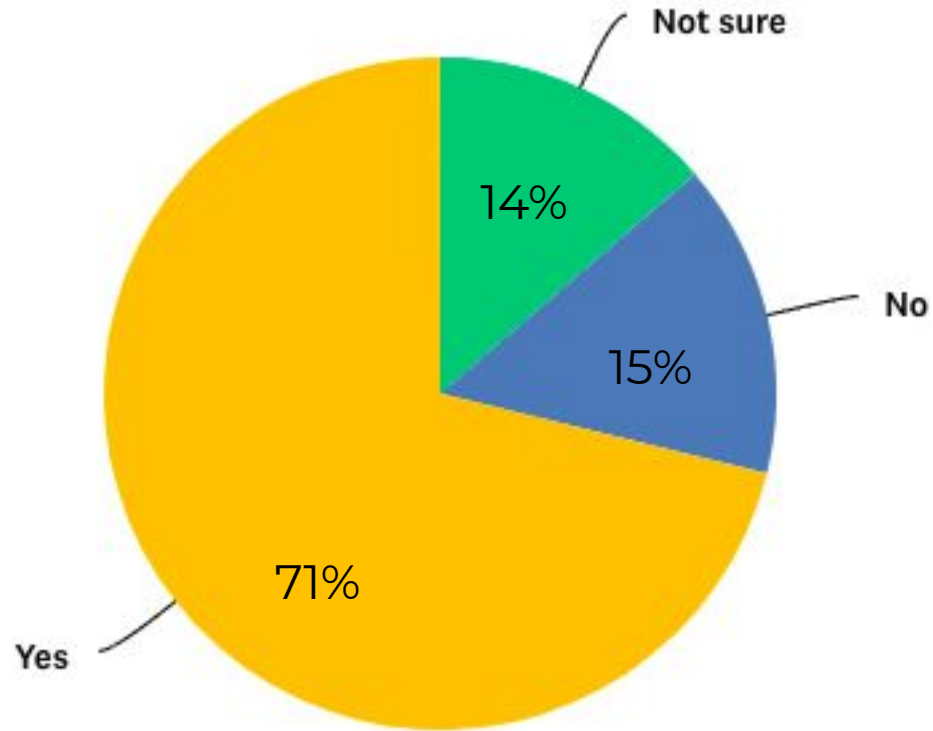
- Severe rain and flooding
- Heatwaves
- Changes to working lands

0 of 18 answered

Findings:

Public Opinion Survey

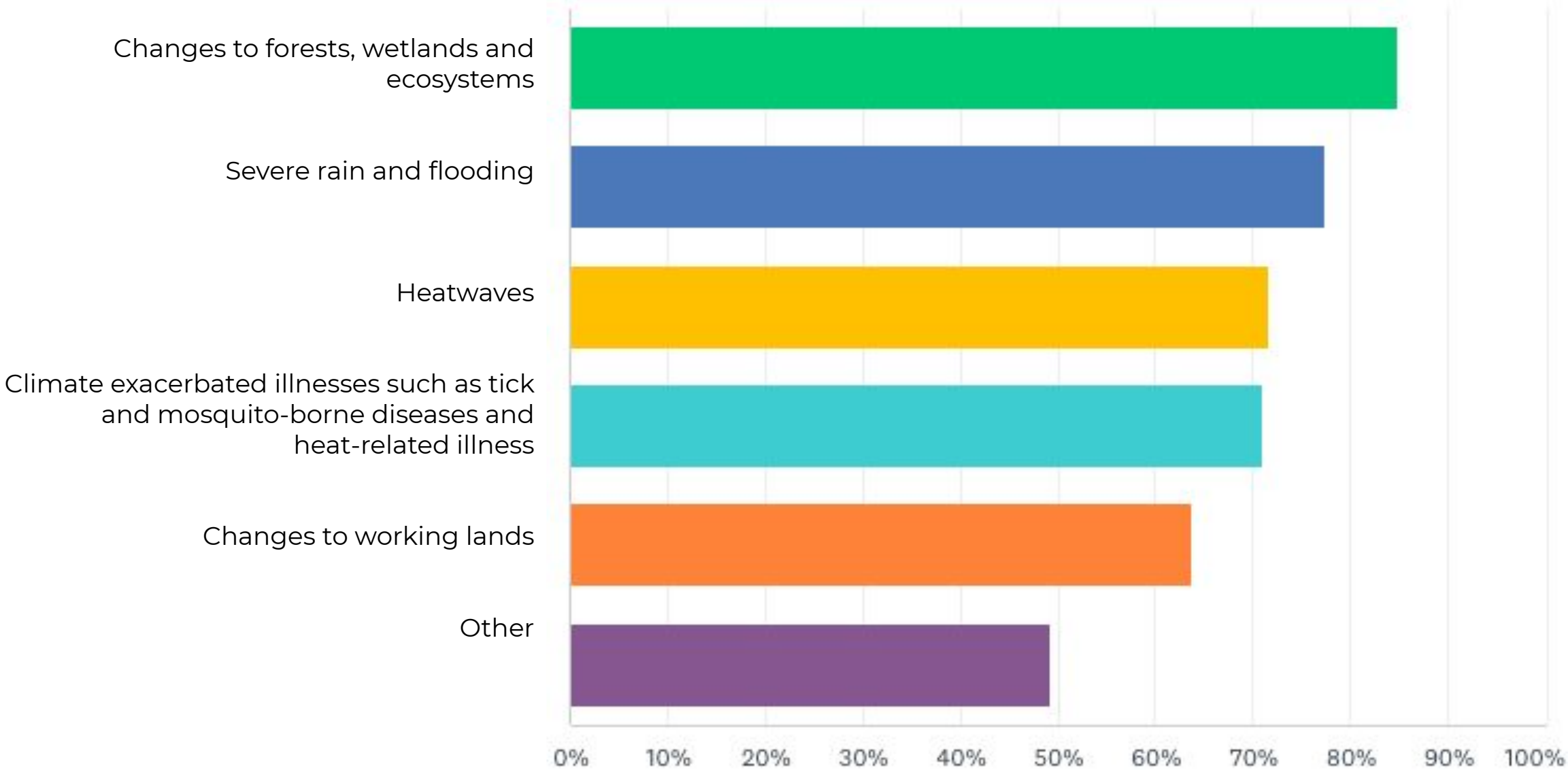
Have you been personally affected by climate change?



In what ways?

- Flooding
- Storms
- Heat waves
- Seasonal changes
- Drought
- Ticks/pests

What climate-related issues are you concerned about? Choose all that apply



WHAT CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS ARE YOU MOST CONCERNED ABOUT FOR...

the state:

Flooding
Forests
Climate refugees/migration
Drought
Ecosystems
Tourism
Agriculture
Maple industry
Heat waves
Invasive species

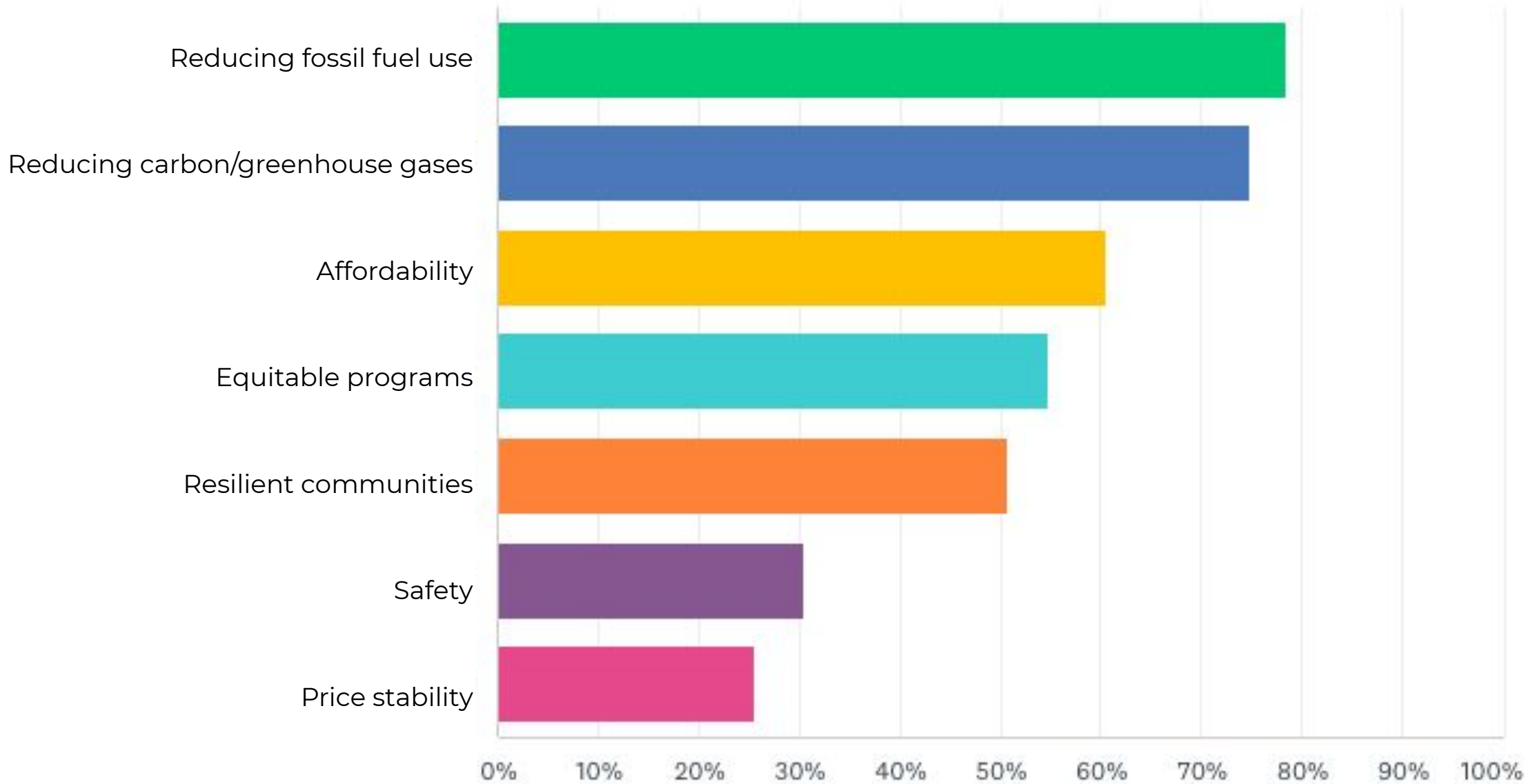
your community:

Flooding
Drought
Climate refugees/migration
Heat waves
Extreme weather
Water quality
Economy
Invasive species
Agriculture
Air quality

you personally:

Children/future generations
Heat waves
Flooding
Ticks
Quality of life
Drought
Health
Climate refugees/migration
Water quality
Air quality

What principles related to Vermont's energy use are the most important to you?



What support or resources do you or your community need to reduce your consumption of fossil fuels, adapt to an already-warming world and become more resilient?

Incentives and subsidies for EVs and charging stations

Public transportation and transportation alternatives


Energy audits and financial support for weatherization, housing upgrades

More rights as renters

Inclusion/representation of BIPOC in decision making

Infrastructure improvements

Education to prepare for impacts and reduce personal emissions



What would you like to see prioritized in the Climate Action Plan?

Affordable weatherization of buildings

Subsidies for energy efficiency

Access to public transportation and transportation alternatives

Increase local renewable energy sources, microgrids

Storm/extreme weather resilience

Replace and reduce fossil fuels

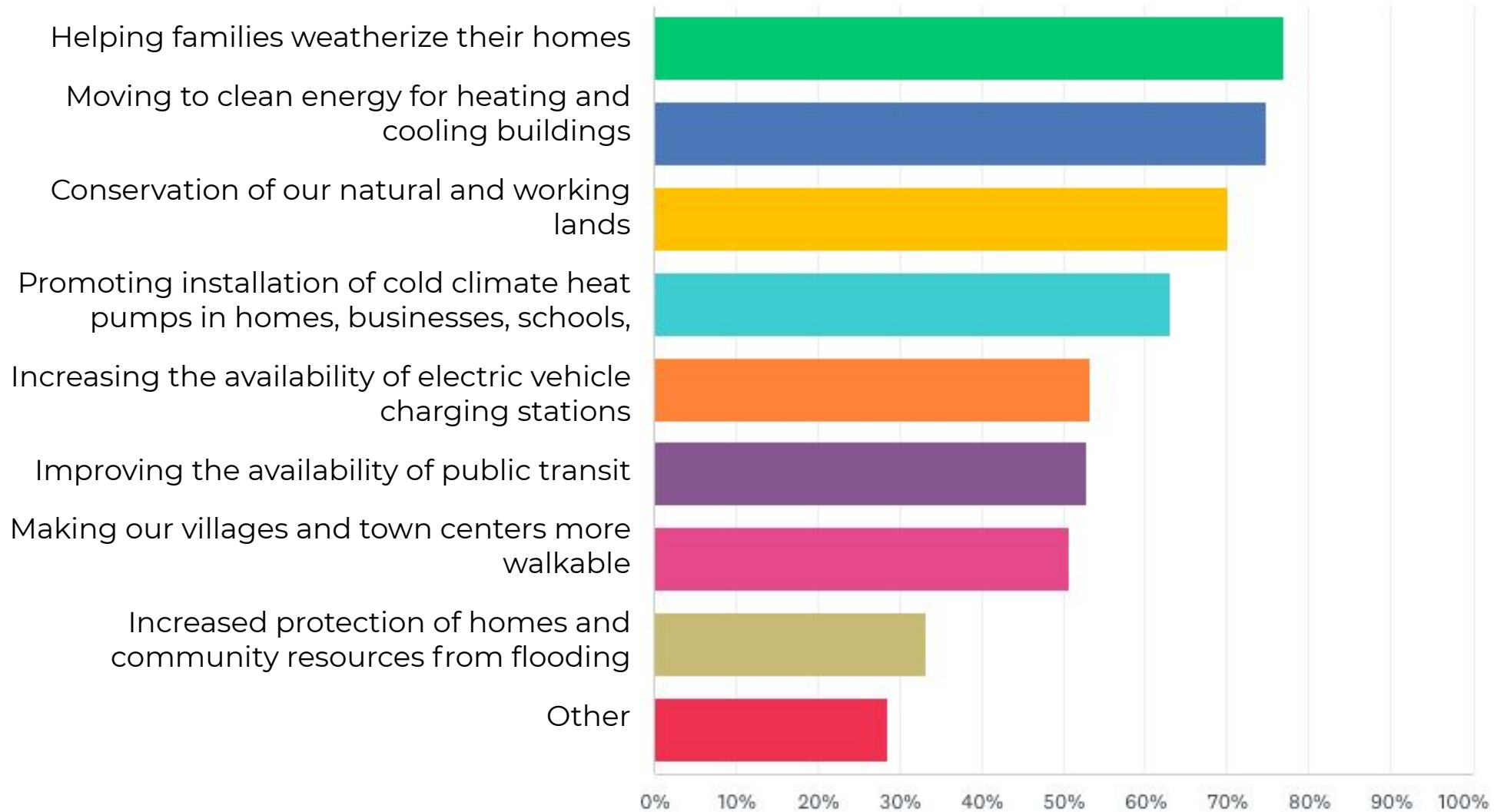
Incentives for electric vehicles

Equity and a just transition for low-income and BIPOC community members

Sustainable farming and food production

Infrastructure improvements

Which of the following types of actions would you most like to see more of in your community?



VERMONT CLIMATE COUNCIL PUBLIC INPUT FORM

PUBLIC INPUT FORM

PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED

VERMONT CLIMATE COUNCIL WEB SITE

Vermont Climate Council Public Input Form

Name:

Name is required.

Email:

Email is required.

Phone:

Town:

Town is required.

State or Province:

Vermont

Audience:

'Choose One'

Web Links:

Add Web Links here with full HTTP address and then click the Add Web Link button.

Comments:

File Upload: Press the Choose File button to locate the file you would like to associate with your comments and then press the

Choose File

No file chosen

Upload

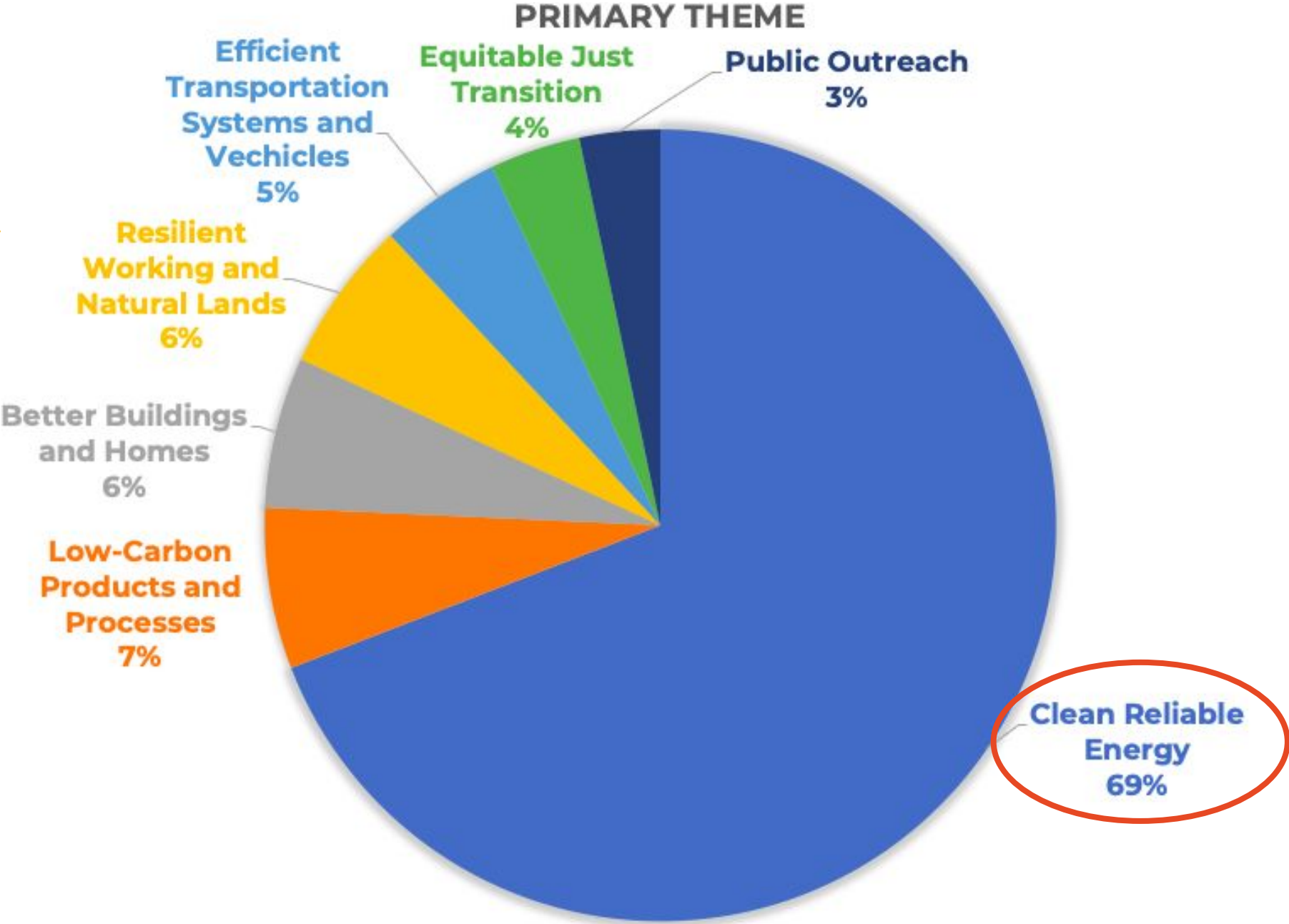
Thank you for taking the time to provide public input on the work of the Vermont Climate Council. Please note that to review the material between your input and its appearance on the Vermont Climate Council Public Comments Received page, of no more than a week, we will need your work to approve them as quickly as we can. Please note also that your email and phone number will not be made public and will only be shared with Councilors or Subcommittee members if further clarity around your input is sought. Again, we appreciate your input and thank you.

Submit Comments

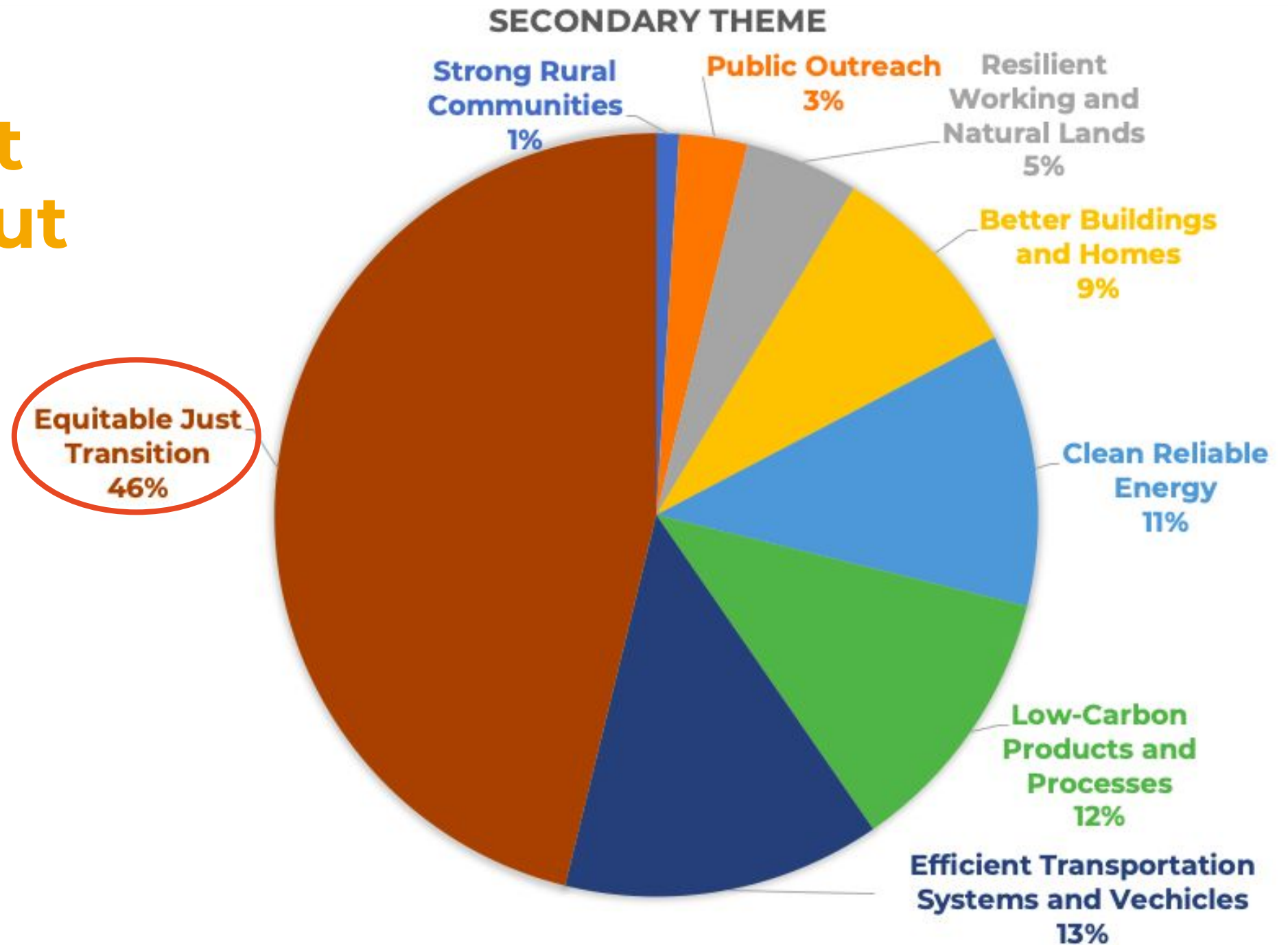
Findings:

Public Comment Form

Public Comment Form input



Public Comment Form input



GAPS

- Timeline for process impacted participation levels and BIPOC outreach, Vermonters experiencing poverty, disability groups, and other groups that experience differential vulnerabilities
- Not enough time to engage partners
- COVID event restrictions impacted attendance in terms of who might have been comfortable attending, as well as the limitations of outdoor spaces and masked conversation

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE

