

VT Saves

Retirement Program

(Senate Bill 135)

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The Problem

- Americans, including Vermonters, have inadequate retirement savings.
- Too many Vermonters – particularly those who are self-employed or work for small employers – lack access to convenient, automatic retirement savings.
- Workers with access to workplace retirement programs are **15x more likely** to save than those without. [[Access to Workplace Retirement Plans by Race and Ethnicity](#), AARP Public Policy Institute, 2017]
- Vermonters with insufficient retirement savings will have to rely on social programs when they stop working.
- Over 80% of Americans earning less than \$50,000 lack access to workplace retirement savings. [[AARP Research Minute](#), Feb. 15, 2023]

Most Small Employers Do Not Offer Retirement Benefits

45% of all Vermont employers do not offer retirement benefits.

Among employers with 20 or fewer employees, about 55% do not offer retirement benefits.

While about 60% of Burlington-area employers offer a plan, only about 50% of employers in the rest of the state do. [[2019 Fringe Benefit Study](#), Vermont Dept. of Labor].

When an employer does not offer a retirement plan, on average fewer than 5% of its employees are saving for retirement. [[Payroll Deduction Retirement Programs Build Economic Security](#), Fact Sheet: Vermont, p. 2 fn. 3, AARP]

When an employer *does* offer a plan, over 70% of employees participate. *Id.*

VERMONT: WHO IS NOT COVERED BY A WORKPLACE RETIREMENT PLAN?

Item	Group	%	Number
ALL	ALL	40.4%	88,346
Age	18–34 years	49.8%	42,051
	35–44 years	34.6%	16,599
	45–54 years	34.7%	15,249
	55–64 years	34.3%	14,448
Race & Ethnicity	Hispanic	43.0%	960
	Asian (Non-Hispanic)	39.9%	1,817
	Black (Non-Hispanic)	71.9%	2,307
	White (Non-Hispanic)	39.7%	81,491
Education	Less than High School	66.8%	5,318
	High School	48.3%	28,480
	Some College	45.3%	25,299
	Bachelor’s or Higher	30.5%	29,249
Gender	Male	38.5%	41,727
	Female	42.4%	46,619
Employer Size	Under 10	68.9%	25,219
	10–24	53.8%	23,405
	25–99	36.6%	6,215
	100–499	27.7%	9,118
	500–999	19.8%	2,747
	1,000 +	29.0%	21,642
Earnings Quintile	\$18,000 or less	74.4%	31,739
	\$18,001 to \$31,000	61.1%	24,795
	\$31,001 to \$50,000	32.9%	17,118
	\$50,001 to \$78,000	18.8%	8,091
	Over \$78,000	16.4%	6,602

Vermonters who are not currently covered are:

- **Lower-earning**
- **Younger**
- **Less educated**
- **More likely to be BIPOC**
- **More likely to be female**

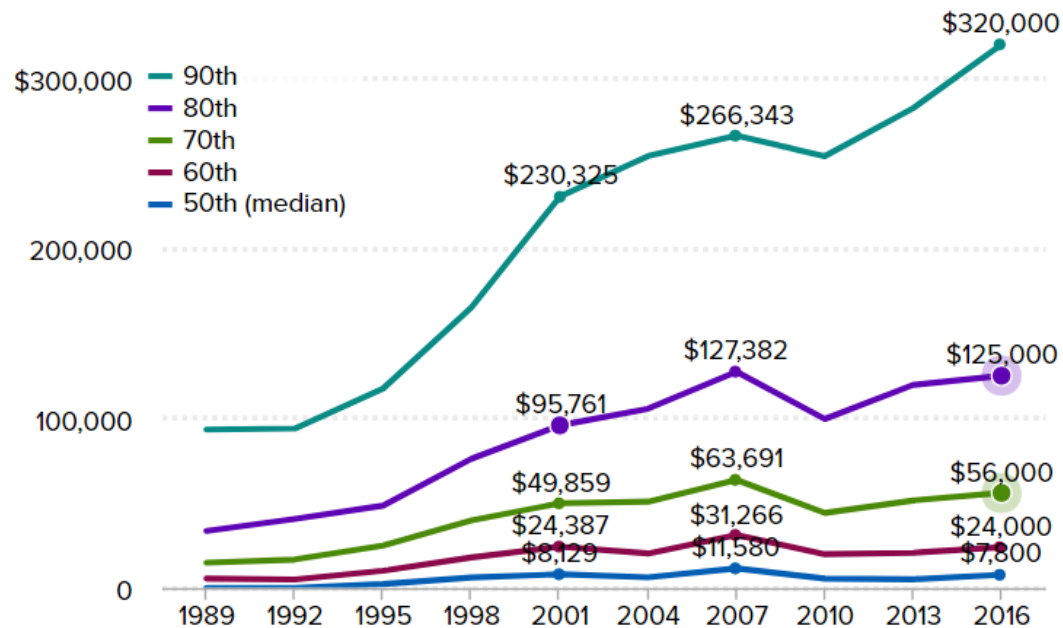
[Payroll Deduction Retirement Programs](#)
[Build Economic Security: Vermont - AARP](#)
[Fact Sheet](#)

Retirement Security is Unevenly Distributed (1/2)

Americans in historically disadvantaged groups are on average less prepared for a financially secure retirement than others.

Women are on average less prepared for a financially secure retirement than men. (“The State of American Retirement Savings,” Economic Policy Institute, Dec. 10, 2019); this is due to lower average wages and longer lifespan, among other things.

Since the Great Recession, retirement wealth distribution has grown even more unequal:



Retirement Security is Unevenly Distributed (2/2)

Black and Latinx Americans are roughly half as likely as White non-Hispanic Americans to have any retirement savings at all.

Share of families age 32–61 with retirement account savings by race, 1989–2016

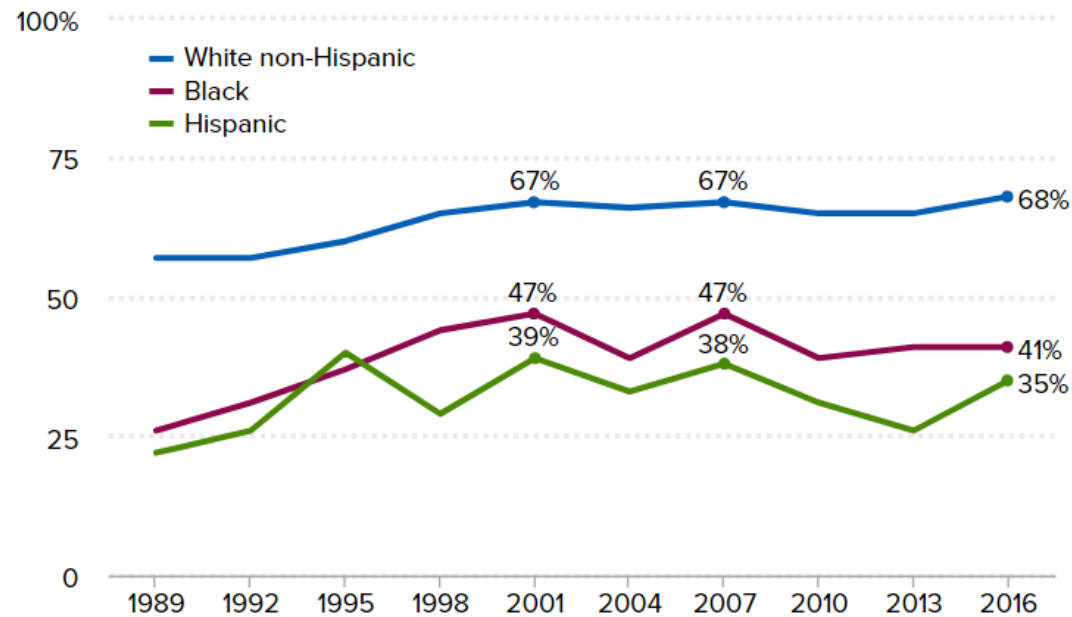


Chart Data

Note: Retirement account savings include funds in 401(k)-style defined contribution plans and in IRAs.

Source: EPI analysis of Survey of Consumer Finance data, 2016.

No Age Group Has Sufficient Median Retirement Savings

Median retirement account savings of families by age, 1989–2016 (2016 dollars)

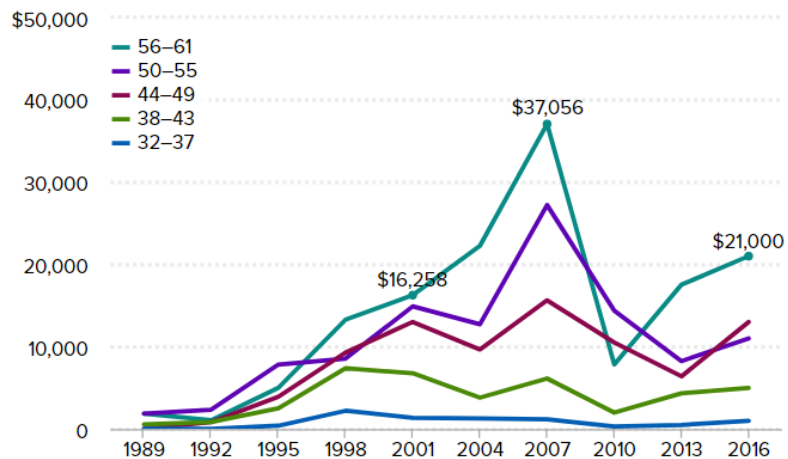


Chart Data

Note: Scale changed for visibility. Retirement account savings include funds in 401(k)-style defined contribution plans and in IRAs.

Source: EPI analysis of Survey of Consumer Finance data, 2016.

Median retirement account savings of families by age, 1989–2016 (2016 dollars)

	32–37	38–43	44–49	50–55	56–61
1989	\$0	\$560	\$0	\$1,866	\$1,866
1992	\$0	\$839	\$839	\$2,348	\$1,057
1995	\$392	\$2,506	\$3,915	\$7,830	\$5,011
1998	\$2,213	\$7,377	\$9,295	\$8,558	\$13,279
2001	\$1,355	\$6,774	\$13,007	\$14,903	\$16,258
2004	\$1,272	\$3,815	\$9,666	\$12,718	\$22,256
2007	\$1,158	\$6,137	\$15,633	\$27,213	\$37,056
2010	\$298	\$1,990	\$10,501	\$14,369	\$7,848
2013	\$495	\$4,331	\$6,393	\$8,249	\$17,529
2016	\$1,000	\$5,000	\$13,000	\$11,000	\$21,000

Retirees without access to employer-based plans have *dramatically* lower savings than retirees with such access.

 **63% of savers without an employer plan have *less than \$10,000*.**

 **70% of savers with an employer plan have *more than \$100,000*.**

Figure 2
Retiree Savings and Investments, With and Without a Retirement Plan*

In total, about how much money would you say you (and your spouse) currently have in savings and investments, not including the value of your primary residence or defined benefit plan assets?

2021 Retirees n=1,353

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2021 Have Plan*	2021 No Plan
Less than \$1,000	29%	35%	27%	21%	25%	14%	21%	15%	6%	42%
\$1,000 - \$9,999	17	11	15	8	7	8	11	9	5	21
\$10,000 - \$24,999	12	7	13	6	4	5	4	5	4	9
\$25,000 - \$49,999	8	8	7	3	5	5	6	7	6	11
\$50,000 - \$99,999	7	10	9	7	8	6	8	9	9	6
\$100,000 - \$249,999	11	10	10	16	13	18	11	13	16	5
\$250,000 or more	17	19	19	38	37	43	38	42	54	6

*Have Retirement Plan defined as respondent or spouse having at least one of the following: IRA, DC plan, or DB plan
 Figures and n-sizes from all years presented exclude those who answered 'Don't know' or refused to answer
 Source: Employee Benefit Research Institute and Greenwald Research, 2021 Retirement Confidence Survey.

Americans – and Vermonters – also lack emergency savings

On top of the retirement crisis, Vermonters – like other Americans – are not financially prepared for emergencies.

Almost 60% of Americans do not have enough saved to handle a \$1,000 emergency without borrowing.

Because VTSaves would – by default – be a Roth IRA, it would function as an emergency fund as well as retirement savings. Savers may withdraw their principal at any time without penalty.

What are the Benefits of Auto-IRA Programs? (1/2)

- **Substantial increases in retirement preparedness across the board**
 - **Projected increases in household net worth (NW) of 69% across all eligible workers**
- **Larger increases in readiness among historically disadvantaged Americans**
 - **Projected increases in household NW of 89% among Black and Latinx families.**
 - **For younger Black and Latinx families, increases are projected at 125%.**
- **Retirement Security Becomes More Evenly Distributed**
- **Generational/Entrenched Wealth Gaps are Reduced**

Benefits of Auto-IRA Programs (2/2)

- Decreased reliance on social-safety-net programs in retirement. [2017 AARP estimate](#): roughly \$1,000,000/year in reduced state spending if the average retiree had only \$1,000/year in increased income.
- Savers may be able to [delay claiming Social Security](#) by one or more years between “early” (age 62) and “normal” (age 67) retirement. Each year of delay has the potential to increase Social Security benefits by 7-8% for life.
 - Pew Charitable Trusts (see link above) estimates that about half of auto-IRA participants would be able to delay claiming by at least 1 year, and about a third could delay by two or more years. The effects are most pronounced for BIPOC savers and savers with less than a high school education.
- Greater retirement security for seniors leads to greater financial freedom for their children and others who would otherwise fill the gap.

Savers are Making Meaningful Progress

- Savers in Oregon and California are setting aside an average of about \$2,000 per year.
- Total assets under management in the six active states are \$735 million as of Jan. 31, 2023.
- Average account balances are growing rapidly.
- Most savers accept the default deferral rate (5% in VT Bill, with 1% increase after each year of participation, to a maximum of 8%).
- Most savers use a target-date fund that automatically rebalances an appropriate mix of assets over time, based on saver's age.

Auto-IRA is a Tested and Popular Model

(2015) Illinois
(2015) Oregon
(2016) Maryland
(2016) Connecticut
(2016) California⁸
(2019) New Jersey (as amended)
(2020) Colorado
(2021) Virginia
(2021) Maine
(2021) New York (as amended)
(2022) Hawaii
(2022) Delaware

Pew Trusts 2017 Survey

**73% of workers support
automatic enrollment**

**68% support automatic annual
escalation of contributions**

[cri-state-brief-snapshot-22-01.pdf](#)
([georgetown.edu](#))

VT Saves – Key Features (1/2)

- **Minimal state costs – 3 or fewer FTEs. Some advertising/outreach costs. Efficiencies of partnering with another state and a third-party administrator.**
- **Applies only to employers without an existing plan.**
- **No cost to employers. Modest management fee to employees.**
- **Employees have full control: can opt out and control contribution rate. 5% by default, with “escalator” to 8%.**

VT Saves – Key Features (2/2)

- **Simple investment line-up. Capital preservation, target-date funds.**
- **Phased rollout – 25+ employees by July 1, 2025, 15-24 by Jan. 1, 2026, 5-14 by July 1, 2026.**
- **Potential to include even smaller employers – Oregon currently rolling out to <5.**
- **VT Saves will make thousands more Vermonters eligible for the Savers Match under Secure 2.0.**

Resources

[Oregon Saves](#)

[My CT Savings](#)

[CalSavers](#)

[Colorado Secure Savings](#)

General Resources

[Georgetown Center for Retirement Initiatives](#)

[AARP State Retirement Resource Center](#)

[Pew Charitable Trusts Retirement Savings Project](#)

[Brookings Institution State Retirement Resource Center](#)