

AFFORDABILITY PERCEPTIONS OF CHANGE SURVEY



Whether Atlantic Canadians are open to change and how it is perceived are pressing questions of social and political importance. Cities in the region have been experiencing urban growth, shifting economies, increased immigration, and the return of younger people, which are all prompting a need to study how residents in the region's cities are experiencing and understanding change. For this reason, the Perceptions of Change project was launched at Dalhousie University, with funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

In consultation with colleagues at Memorial University, University of New Brunswick, McMaster University, University of British Columbia, University of Toronto, and Western University, a team of researchers at Dalhousie conducted a telephone survey of residents from four Atlantic Canadian cities during May through July of 2019. The four cities surveyed were Charlottetown, Halifax, Moncton, and St. John's. The purpose of the survey was to assess what changes Atlantic Canadians observed over the last five to 10 years in their neighbourhoods and the city as a whole. It also aimed to better understand how people feel about those changes. This is the second survey conducted across all four cities as a part of the Perceptions of Change research project. This report focuses on people's perceptions of affordability.

Overall, residents of the four Atlantic Canadian cities surveyed viewed economic change in their cities for the better. Despite this optimism, residents also expressed concern over affordability in their neighbourhoods. The majority of people surveyed felt that their neighbourhoods had become less affordable compared to five to 10 years ago. This observation is generally consistent across demographic characteristics; however, it was more pronounced for younger residents and those with higher levels of education.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

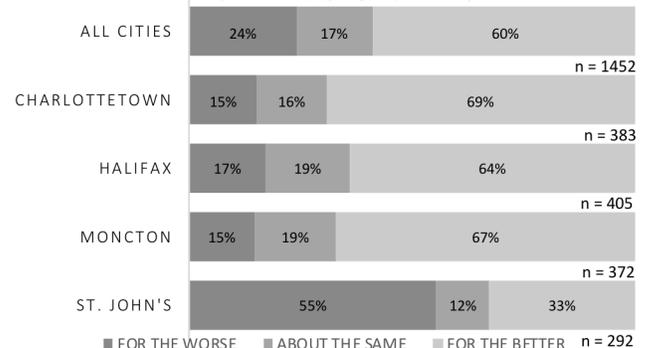
- The majority of residents surveyed reported that economic change in their city is 'for the better,' except among those in St. John's, where 55% of residents felt it was 'for the worse.'

- When asked about economic change in their neighbourhood, the majority of participants reported no change. This was also true for perceptions of neighbourhood wealth and employment.
- Perceptions of affordability were generally negative, with more residents feeling that their neighbourhoods had become less affordable over time. This was consistent for people across demographic groups.
- Younger people were more concerned about affordability compared to older residents. Sixty-seven percent of participants ages 18 to 34 years reported that their neighbourhood was less affordable, compared to 54% of those ages 65 years and older.
- More educated participants were more likely to view neighbourhood affordability as changing 'for the worse': 26% of those with less than a high school education reported negative change, compared to 67% of those with a professional or graduate degree.

ECONOMIC CHANGES IN THE CITY AND NEIGHBOURHOOD

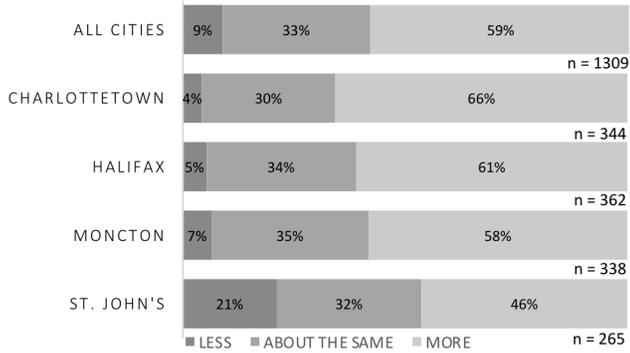
When residents in Charlottetown, Halifax, Moncton, and St John's were asked about their perceptions of economic change overall compared to five to 10 years ago, the majority of participants felt that these changes in their city were for the better. This proportion ranges between 64% and 67% across Charlottetown, Halifax and Moncton; however, this sentiment was not shared in St. John's, where 55% of residents perceived economic change in their city as for the worse.

PERCEPTIONS OF OVERALL ECONOMIC CHANGE
IN CITY IN LAST 5-10 YEARS



The majority of participants also felt that the people in their city have higher incomes now compared to five to 10 years ago, ranging from 58% to 66% across Charlottetown, Halifax and Moncton. However, in St. John's, 46% of residents surveyed observed increased incomes in the city.

PERCEPTIONS OF CHANGE IN CITY INCOME IN LAST 5-10 YEARS

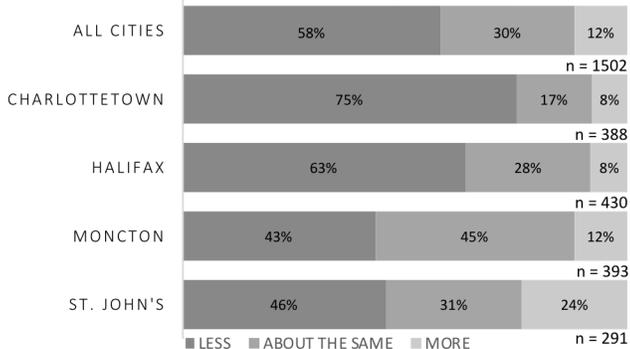


CONCERNS ABOUT AFFORDABILITY

Despite optimism around economic changes in three of these four Atlantic Canadian cities, many participants expressed concerns about affordability in their neighbourhoods. For example, in Charlottetown, 75% of residents indicated their neighbourhoods are less affordable compared to five to 10 years ago. This observation is echoed by 63% of Haligonians. A smaller proportion of residents in Moncton and St. John's expressed these concerns: 43% and 46%, respectively.

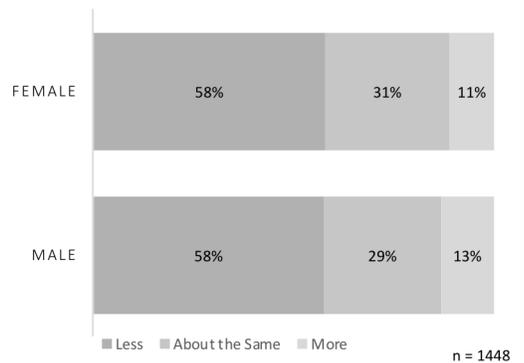
Although St. John's residents expressed the most negative views on economic changes in the city, 24% of those surveyed noted that their neighbourhood is more affordable now, which is higher than the proportion of residents feeling the same way in the other three cities.

PERCEPTIONS OF CHANGE IN NEIGHBOURHOOD AFFORDABILITY IN LAST 5-10 YEARS



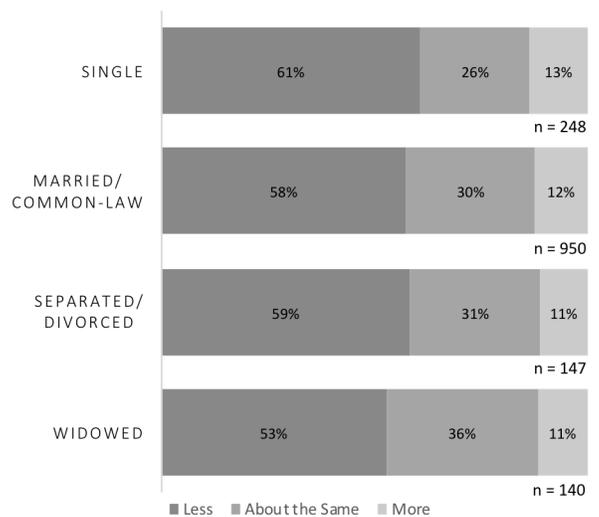
When views on affordability are assessed in conjunction with demographic characteristics, we find that perceptions of neighbourhood affordability are consistent across genders: 58% of both men and women observe that their neighbourhoods are less affordable compared to five to 10 years ago.

PERCEPTIONS OF NEIGHBOURHOOD AFFORDABILITY BY GENDER



Perceptions of affordability are generally the same across marital status, with 53% to 61% of participants from all categories viewing their neighbourhood as less affordable compared to five to 10 years ago.

PERCEPTIONS OF NEIGHBOURHOOD AFFORDABILITY BY MARITAL STATUS



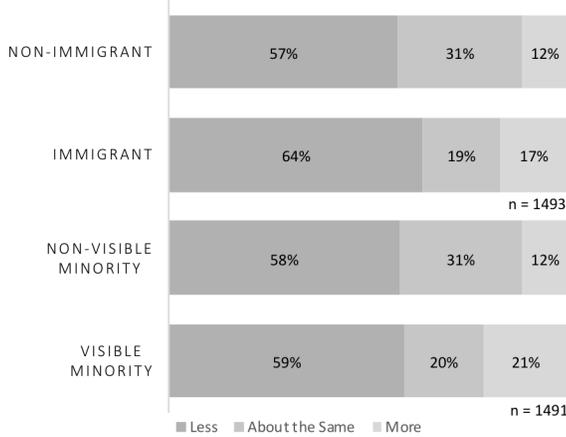
When we examine differences in views of affordability based on visible minority status, we find little difference between categories, with 58-59% of participants in both categories reporting that their neighbourhoods are less affordable compared to five to 10 years ago. Despite that high level of consensus around decreased affordability, the proportion of visible minority residents surveyed who felt their

neighbourhood had become more affordable was 21%, nearly 10 percentage points higher than that of those who are not visible minorities, at 12%.

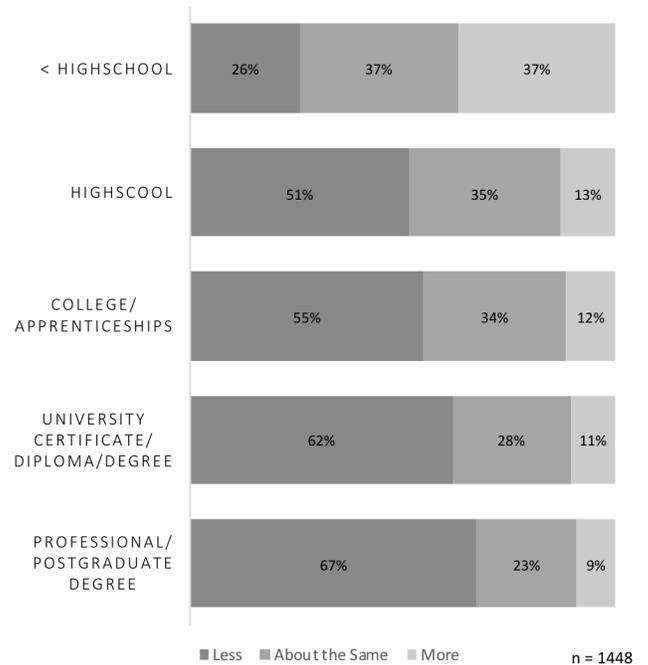
Immigrants were more likely than non-immigrants to indicate that their neighbourhood had become less affordable compared to five to 10 years ago: 64% of immigrants, compared to 57% of non-immigrants. On the other hand, a greater proportion of immigrants also felt that their neighbourhoods had become *more* affordable.

When perceptions of affordability are examined for different levels of education, we see that a higher proportion of people with higher levels of education view their neighbourhood as less affordable compared to five to 10 years ago. Twenty-six percent of people with less than a high school education felt their neighbourhood was less affordable, compared to more than 50% of participants in all other categories, including 67% of participants with a professional or postgraduate degree.

PERCEPTIONS OF NEIGHBOURHOOD AFFORDABILITY BY IMMIGRANT AND VISIBLE MINORITY STATUS

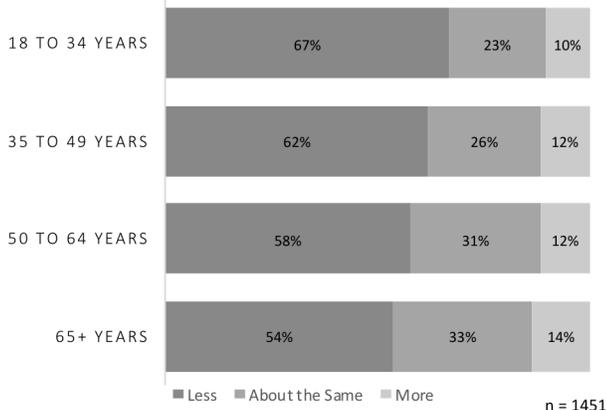


PERCEPTIONS OF AFFORDABILITY BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION

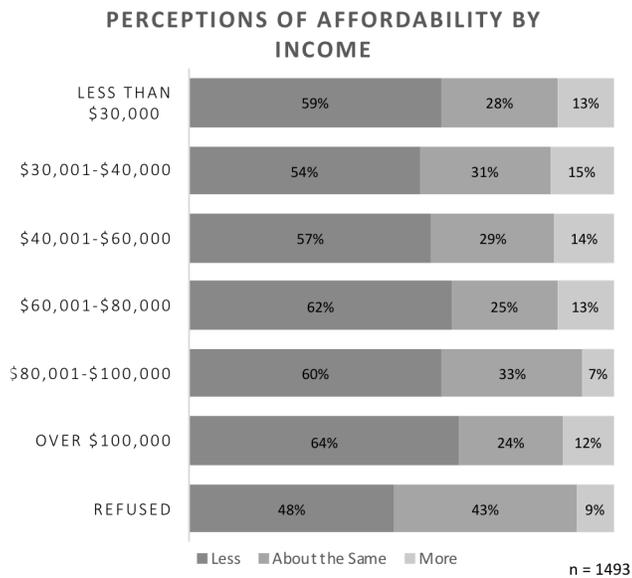


Views of affordability are notably different across age groups. While there is consensus across all age groups that neighbourhoods are less affordable compared to five to 10 years ago, this sentiment is most pronounced among younger respondents: 67% of participants ages 18 to 34 years viewed their neighbourhood as less affordable, which is 13 percentage points higher than the proportion of those ages 65 years and older.

PERCEPTIONS OF NEIGHBOURHOOD AFFORDABILITY BY AGE GROUP



We also considered levels of employment income and found a general consensus across categories with all groups finding their neighbourhoods less affordable. Even so, fewer people in the lowest income bracket felt their neighbourhood had become less affordable, at 59%, compared to those in the highest income bracket, where 64% felt their neighbourhood was less affordable. It generally appears that those with higher levels of income are more likely to see changes in affordability as being 'for the worse' in their neighbourhood.



WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE SURVEY?

More women than men participated in the survey: 61% women compared to 39% men. The majority of participants, 76%, owned their homes and 69% reported living in single detached houses. Almost all of the participants, 87%, spoke English as their first language. The average age of participants was 58. Four percent identified as visible minorities, 7% as immigrants or refugees, 2% identified as Indigenous (Indian, Métis, or Inuit), and 57% were legally married.

The majority of participants, 79%, had some post-secondary education; 27% named a Bachelor's degree as their highest level of education obtained. The median individual employment income reported by participants was between \$40,001 and \$60,000, and 53% reported spending a third or more of their incomes on housing and related expenses.

CONCERNS ABOUT AFFORDABILITY AMONG YOUNG AND EDUCATED RESIDENTS

Overall, our analysis shows that young people living in Atlantic Canadian cities and those with higher levels of education are most likely to note decreasing affordability in their neighbourhoods. In light of generally positive views of economic change in the region's cities, these trends point to potential tensions between maintaining economic growth and development and keeping cities affordable and attractive to young, educated people with high skills

that can drive growth in the region. The overall perception of decreasing affordability, moreover, is seen across gender, marital status, and other demographic categories, and it shows that the region cannot ignore the issue of decreasing affordability that comes with economic growth.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Participants were recruited through a random selection of telephone numbers assigned to the Charlottetown Census Agglomeration, from a list that included landline and mobile telephone numbers. Twenty-three percent of participants were recruited through mobile numbers. Only participants over the age of 18 and who were residents of Charlottetown were invited to participate. To ensure confidentiality, the names and telephone numbers of the participants were not linked to their responses. The survey was designed and led by Dr. Howard Ramos, Principal Investigator for the Perceptions of Change project. The survey was conducted by student researchers through the Rural Futures Research Centre at Dalhousie University.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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