

HALIFAX 2019

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, over the last decade, experienced urban growth, shifting economies, increased immigration, and the return of younger people which are all prompting a need for new data on the region in order to study how its residents are experiencing and understanding these changes. 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 Halifax residents during May through July of 2019. The purpose of the survey was to assess what changes Haligonians 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 third survey conducted on Halifax as a part of the Perceptions of Change research project.

Overall, Haligonians observed changes to the built environment and population of the city. They observed widespread construction, infrastructure renewal, and an increase in both population size as well as social and cultural diversity. While Halifax residents generally felt that the city's economy had improved over the last five to 10 years, the sentiment was not echoed to the same degree at the neighbourhood level where most people reported no change. Residents surveyed also expressed concerns over affordability. Haligonians were divided in their perceptions of changes to the natural environment of the city compared to its change in their neighbourhoods. When they did observe changes to the natural environment, they typically perceived them as worsening in the city but improving in their neighbourhoods.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Haligonians commonly identified changes to the built environment and population as the biggest changes in the city over the last five to 10 years.
- Sixty-four percent of participants believed the city's overall economic conditions had improved. Fewer reported economic improvements in their neighbourhoods.
- The majority, 63%, disagreed that their neighbourhoods had become more affordable.
- The majority of participants believed the city had become more diverse and has more senior citizens. These changes were also observed at the neighbourhood level.
- On average, Haligonians believed that 56% of their neighbours share similar values and beliefs, and they reported high levels of "fitting in" to their neighbourhoods.
- Ninety-nine percent of participants noted new construction in their city and 72% observed it in their neighbourhoods.
- The majority of participants reported no change in the condition of buildings and houses in their neighbourhoods as well as the prevalence of rental housing.
- Perceptions of changes in the natural environment, both in the city and in participants' neighbourhoods, were mixed. The majority reported no change to air quality, but perceived changes in water quality and in the number of green spaces in the city.

CHANGES TO THE CITY

When Haligonians were asked to identify the biggest changes in the city over the last five to 10 years, the top five changes were construction/development; buildings; population and growth; infrastructure; and housing/apartments/condos.

Top 5 Most Notable Changes in Halifax

1	Construction/ Development	141	31%
2	Buildings	130	29%
3	Population & Growth	108	24%
4	Infrastructure	93	20%
5	Housing/ Apartments/ Condos	90	20%

n = 455

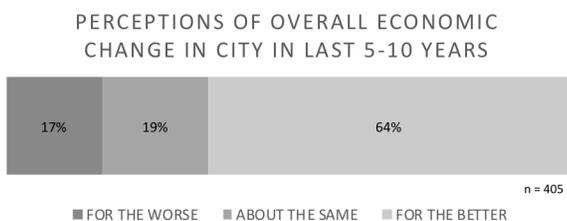
Thirty-one percent of participants in Halifax discussed **construction/development** in and around the city as one of the top changes they were witnessing. Similarly, **buildings** were mentioned by 29% who observed new buildings, renovations, or the demolition of existing structures. Twenty-four percent identified changes in **population and growth**. They specifically noted the expansion of the city and its growing number of residents. Twenty percent of participants observed changes in **city infrastructure**, including the building of new roadways. Twenty percent of Haligonians surveyed identified changes to **housing/apartments/condos** as one of the most notable changes to the city, with many referring to the number of apartments and condominiums being built. All top five themes raised by survey participants relate to construction and population growth.

ECONOMIC CHANGES

Participants were asked about economic changes in the city and their neighbourhood. Sixty-one percent noted an increase in the average income in the city while more than a third, 34%, observed a decrease. Eighty-five percent of Haligonians surveyed observed higher rates of employment in the city.



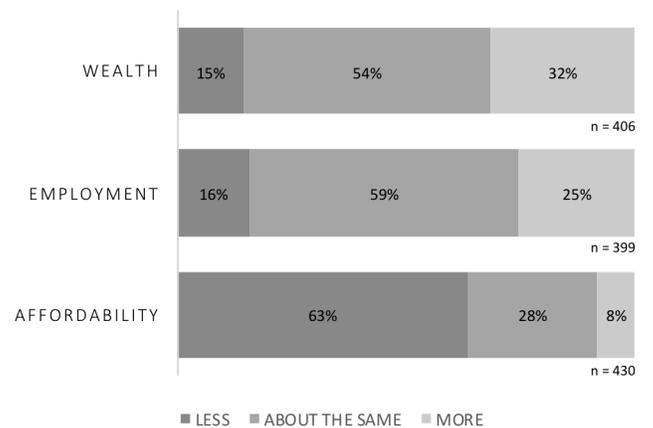
When asked about their overall perception of economic changes in the city, 64% of Haligonians reported seeing change for the better.



Participants were also asked about their perceptions of economic factors in their neighbourhood. On average, they estimated the percentage of neighbourhood residents with low incomes at 19% and the neighbourhood unemployment rate at 11%.

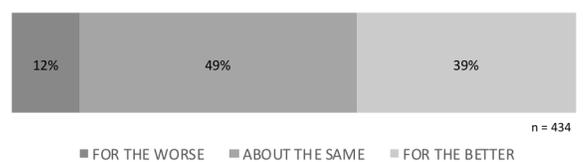
Thirty-two percent of Haligonians surveyed reported that there was more wealth in their neighbourhood compared to five to 10 years ago and 54% reported no change. Twenty-five percent of participants felt that more people in their neighbourhood were employed compared to five to 10 years ago and 59% felt there was no change. Just 8% of participants felt the neighbourhood was more affordable compared to five to 10 years ago, while 63% felt it was less affordable. This points to potential tensions between support for growth but concerns over affordability.

PERCEPTIONS OF ECONOMIC CHANGES IN NEIGHBOURHOOD IN LAST 5-10 YEARS



When participants were asked about their overall perceptions of economic change in their neighbourhoods, 49% felt things were about the same, while 39% observed changes for the better.

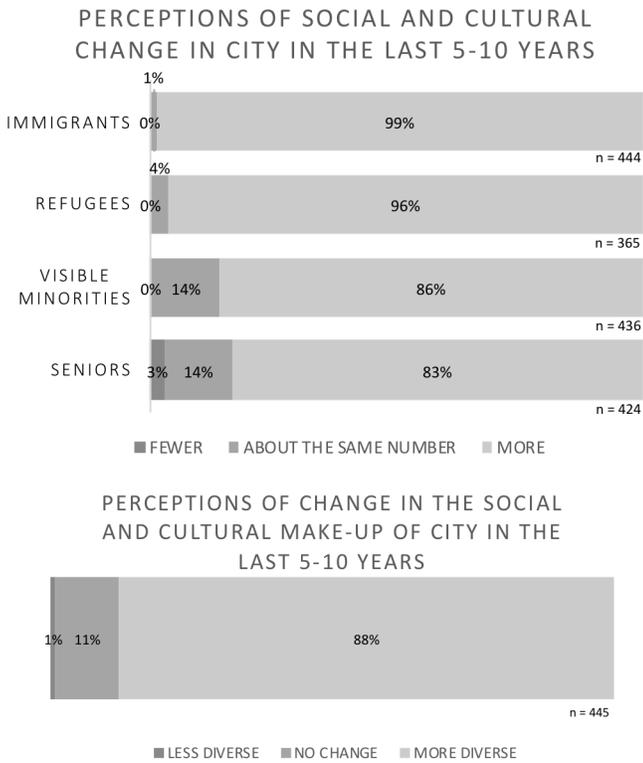
PERCEPTIONS OF ECONOMIC CHANGE IN NEIGHBOURHOOD IN LAST 5-10 YEARS



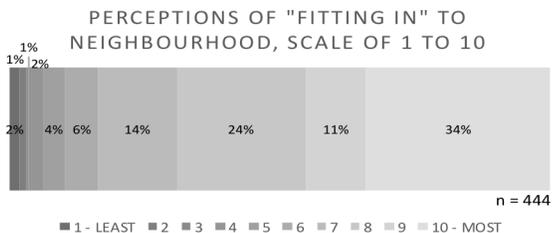
SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CHANGES

When participants were asked about social and cultural changes in Halifax over the last five to 10

years, 99% reported an increase in the number of immigrants; 96% observed an increase in the number of refugees; 86% reported an increase in the number of visible minority residents; and 83% noted an increase in the number of senior citizens. When asked about overall social and cultural changes, 88% of survey participants felt that the city had become more diverse in the last five to 10 years.

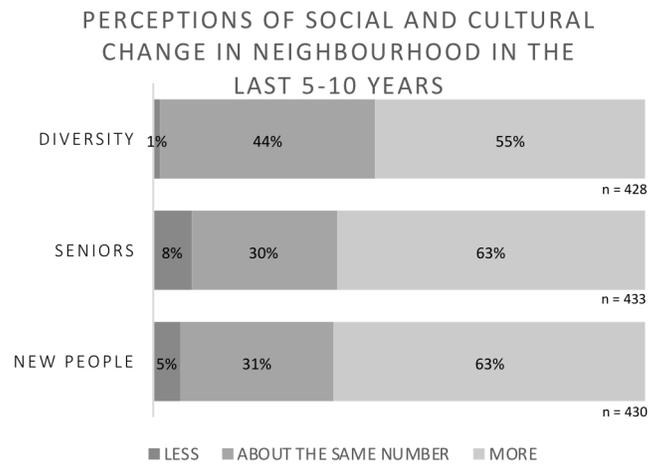


When asked what percentage of people in their neighbourhood shared similar values and beliefs, participants estimated, on average, that 56% of people did. The most common estimate was 50%, but a wide range of estimates were offered, with the majority of participants estimating between 34% and 78%. When asked how well they believed they “fit in” to their neighbourhood on a scale from one to 10, where 10 is the strongest sense of fitting in, Haligonians on average reported “8,” largely expressing a strong sense of fitting in and belonging.

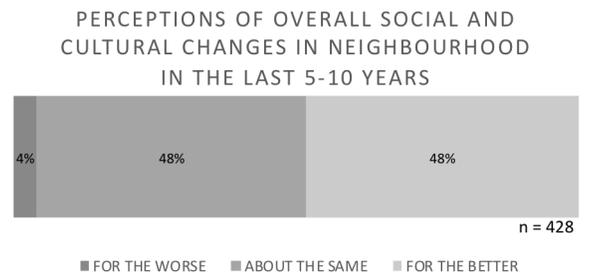


Participants were also asked about social and cultural diversity of their neighbourhoods. On average, Haligonians surveyed estimated that 12% of their neighbours were immigrants, 4% were refugees, 18% were visible minorities, 46% had a university degree, and 37% were senior citizens.

Fifty-five percent of residents felt their neighbourhood had become more diverse, compared to five to 10 years ago and 44% expressed that it had not changed. The majority of participants, 63%, indicated that there are more senior citizens, and the same percentage reported more new residents in their neighbourhood.



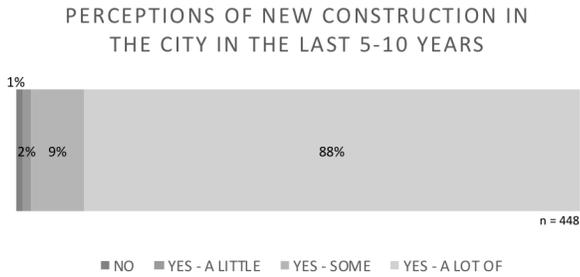
Overall, when participants were asked to assess the social and cultural changes in their neighbourhood, there was an even split between those who felt that things were the same and those who perceived changes for the better, at 48% each.



CHANGES TO THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

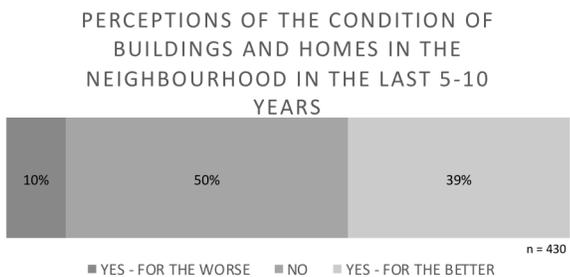
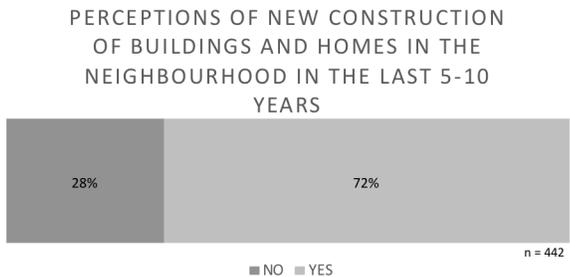
Participants were also asked about changes to their built and natural environments. Eighty-eight percent of Haligonians surveyed observed “a lot” of new

construction in the city compared to five to 10 years ago.



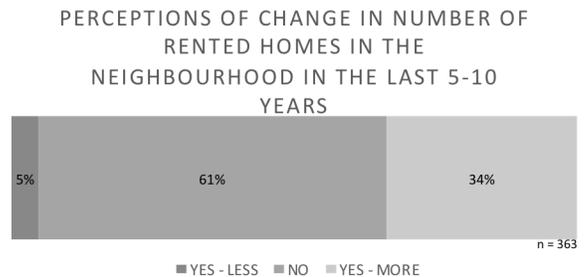
When asked about the condition of buildings and homes, participants estimated that on average 15% of buildings and houses in their neighbourhood were in need of repair. When asked to estimate the percentage of rental housing in their neighbourhood, participants put this figure at 25%.

Halogonians were also asked about the changes to the built environment in their neighbourhoods. Seventy-two percent reported new buildings and homes being constructed in the neighbourhood in the last five to 10 years. As for the conditions of existing buildings and homes in their neighbourhood, 39% of participants reported change for the better and 10% reported change for the worse in the last five to 10 years.

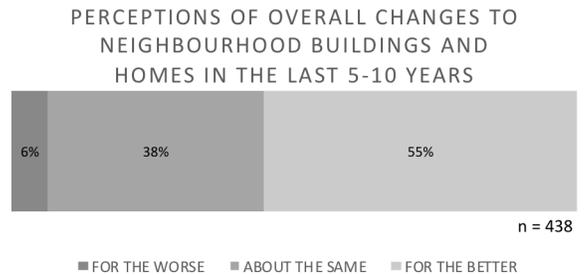


Participants were also asked about housing tenure, and 34% of those surveyed observed an increase in rental housing in their neighbourhood compared to

five to 10 years earlier. The majority of participants, 61%, did not perceive any change.

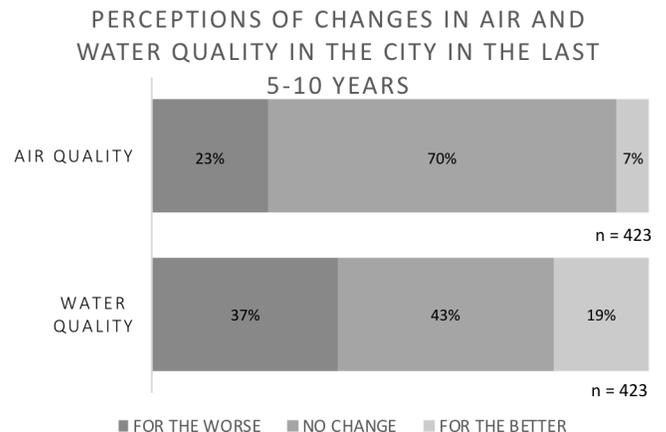


Overall, 55% of survey participants felt that changes in their neighbourhood's buildings and homes were for the better, and 38% felt that buildings and homes had generally stayed about the same in the last five to 10 years.

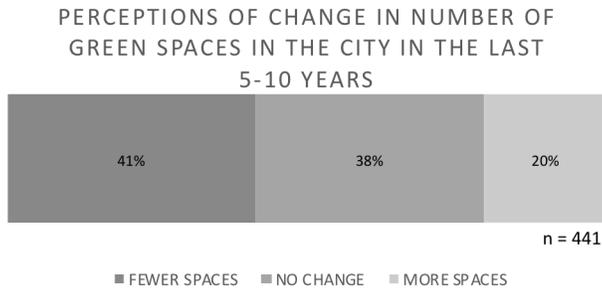


CHANGES TO THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

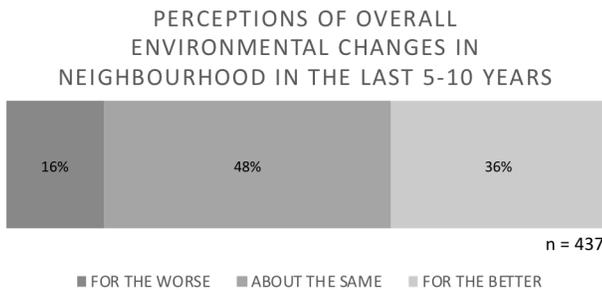
Perceptions on the natural environment were also examined. The majority of participants, 70%, reported no change in the city's air quality over the last five to 10 years, while 23% felt that it had changed for the worse. Forty-three percent of Halogonians saw no change in the quality of the city's natural bodies of water while 37% observed a change for the worse compared to five to 10 years ago.



When asked about changes in the number of green spaces in the city, 41% of participants felt there were fewer, 38% felt there was no change, and 20% felt there were more green spaces in the city now compared to five to 10 years ago.



In their neighbourhood, perceptions of the natural environment were more positive. Forty-eight percent of Haligonians participating in the survey reported no overall change in their neighbourhood in the last five to 10 years, 36% reported change for the better, and 16% noted that change had been for the worse.



HOW HAVE PERCEPTIONS CHANGED SINCE 2017?

Surveys on Halifax were conducted in both 2017 and in 2019, and in both rounds Haligonians identified changes to the built environment as the biggest changes occurring in the city. The number of participants who identified a change in the city's population increased between 2017 and 2019. In 2017, it ranked 5th among the top mentioned changes in Halifax while in 2019 population was the third most mentioned change in the city.

There was an increase in positive perceptions of economic changes in the city between 2017 to 2019. In 2019, there was a 10 percentage point increase in the proportion of Haligonians who observed overall economic change for the better compared to 2017.

There were similar increases in perceived income and employment in the city, with an 18 percentage point increase for those who observe increased income and a 13 percentage point increase for those who perceive higher employment. At the neighbourhood level, the proportion of Haligonians who observed overall economic change for the better increased by 13 percentage points between 2017 and 2019. In 2019, 63% of Halifax residents said their neighbourhoods were less affordable, and in 2017, although this question was asked slightly differently, 79% of participants disagreed with a statement on their neighbourhood being more affordable.

In terms of social and cultural changes to the city and neighbourhood, there was little change in perceptions. Participants in the 2019 survey continued to perceive the city and their neighbourhoods as being more diverse compared to five to 10 years ago. There was only a 2 percentage point increase in the number of participants who perceived their city as being more diverse, an average increase of five percentage points in the number of participants observing more immigrants and visible minorities, and a 2 percentage point decrease in the number of Haligonians observing more refugees in their city. There was an increase of 7 percentage points in the proportion of people claiming a score of 8 or higher when asked about how much they fit in to the neighbourhood on a 10-point scale.

While perceptions of changes to the built and natural environments did not change a lot between 2017 and 2019, more Haligonians observed increases in rental housing in their neighbourhood in 2019, at 34%, compared to 26% in 2017. There was also a marginal increase in the percentage of Halifax residents reporting less green space in the city, from 38% in 2017 to 41% in 2019.

Overall, the perceptions of change in 2019 largely resemble those reported in 2017. Perceptions of economic change remain generally positive, but many are concerned about affordability. Residents continued to perceive an increase in diversity in their city and neighbourhoods. Haligonians also continued

to observe the expansion of the built environment in their city and neighbourhoods and changes to the natural environment, when observed, were generally seen as being for the worse in the city but for the better in participants' neighbourhoods.

WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE SURVEY?

More women than men participated in the survey: 66% women compared to 33% men. The majority of participants, 68%, owned their homes and 57% reported living in single detached houses. Almost all of the participants, 92%, spoke English as their first language. The average age of participants was 57. Six percent identified as visible minorities, 10% as immigrants or refugees, 2% identified as Indigenous (Indian, Métis, or Inuit), and 53% were legally married.

The majority of participants, 77%, had some post-secondary education; 28% named a Bachelor's degree as their highest level of education obtained. The median individual employment income reported by participants was between \$60,001 and \$80,000, and 56% reported spending a third or more of their incomes on housing and related expenses.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Participants were recruited through a random selection of telephone numbers assigned to the Halifax Census Metropolitan Area, from a list that included landline and mobile telephone numbers. Nineteen percent of participants were recruited through mobile numbers. Only participants over the age of 18 and who were residents of Halifax 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.

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