

### **Halifax: A city under construction, but worried about affordability**

A new survey of Haligonians shows that the majority point to construction and development as the biggest changes occurring in the city, and they tend to view these changes as for the better. At the same time, however, they worry about affordability. Researchers at Dalhousie University launched the Perceptions of Change project to understand how residents perceive the economic, social, cultural, physical, and environmental changes.

The researchers conducted a telephone survey of 465 Halifax residents to determine what changes they observed in the city and in their neighbourhood over the last five to 10 years. Researchers also aimed to better understand how people feel about the changes they see. The survey has a 95% confidence level, or 19 time out of 20, with a +/- 2.5% margin of error.

Construction and development, as well as changes to buildings, housing, and infrastructure, were by far the most common changes observed by Haligonians. More than 70% of participants noted these changes to the built environment as the biggest changes to the city in the last five to 10 years, and 99% of participants observed some amount of new construction in the city in the last five to 10 years.

The majority, 53%, saw changes to buildings and homes in their neighbourhoods as for the better. Howard Ramos, sociologist at Dalhousie University and lead researcher on the project, points out, “It is hard not to notice all the construction that has gone on in the city, and the survey shows that Haligonians are open to it.” Haligonians are concerned, however, about affordability in the city. Only 14% of participants believed that their neighbourhood had become more affordable in the last five to 10 years. “Although Haligonians seem to like the changes going on in the city, they are worried that they will be priced out of the benefits that come with them,” notes Ramos.

Improvement in the city’s economy and increased social and cultural diversity were also commonly observed by Haligonians: 71% noted more employment in the city, and 85% believed that the population had become more diverse in the last five to 10 years. These economic and social changes were generally viewed favourably, especially at the neighbourhood level: 90% of participants believed that, overall, the economy was about the same or better than five to 10 years ago, and 96% said the same about social and cultural changes. Perceptions of change in the city’s natural environment were mixed, with 38% of participants noticing fewer green spaces compared to five to 10 years ago.

The Perceptions of Change project is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Surveys were also conducted in Charlottetown, Moncton, and St. John’s. For more information about the project, or to find out survey results from other Atlantic Canadian cities, contact Dr. Howard Ramos at [howard.ramos@dal.ca](mailto:howard.ramos@dal.ca) (902 402 9893) or see the full report at the project’s website: <http://perceptionsofchange.ca/neighbourhoodchange.html>

