

# MONCTON 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 Moncton residents during May through July of 2019. The purpose of this survey was to assess what changes Monctonians observed over the last five to 10 years in the city as a whole and their neighbourhoods. It also aimed to better understand how people feel about those changes. This is the second survey conducted on Moncton as a part of the Perceptions of Change research project.

Overall, Monctonians observed changes to the city's infrastructure and population. They mentioned urban sprawl, widespread construction, infrastructure renewal, and an increase in population size as the top changes occurring in the city. While Monctonians generally felt that that city's economy had improved over the last five to 10 years, this sentiment was not echoed at the neighbourhood level, and some expressed concerns over affordability. Residents of Moncton are generally neutral in their perceptions of change to the natural environment of their city and neighbourhoods. When they did observe changes to the natural environment, they tended to be divided over whether or not the changes were for the better or for the worse.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Monctonians commonly identified changes to city infrastructure and population as the biggest changes in the city in the last five to 10 years.
- Sixty-seven percent of participants believed the city's overall economic conditions had improved; fewer reported the same in their neighbourhoods.
- About 43%, indicated that their neighbourhoods had become less affordable.
- The majority of participants believed the city had become more diverse and has more senior citizens. Although these changes were also echoed at the neighbourhood level, more participants felt there was no change.
- On average, Monctonians believed that 55% of their neighbours share similar values and beliefs, and, in general, they reported high levels of "fitting in" to their neighbourhoods.
- Ninety-seven percent of participants noted the construction of new buildings and homes in their city and 69% observed it in their neighbourhoods.
- The majority of participants reported no change in the condition of buildings and houses or in the prevalence of rental housing in their neighbourhoods.
- Perceptions of changes in the natural environment, both in the city and in participants' neighbourhoods, were overall neutral. The majority observed no changes to the city's air quality and green spaces, but perceived changes in water quality. In their neighbourhoods, residents tended to observe either no change to the natural environment or positive changes.

## CHANGES TO THE CITY

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

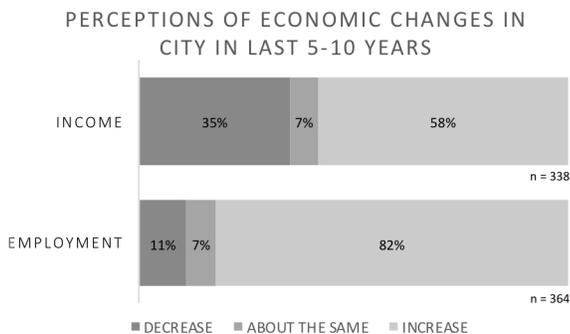
2019	Ct.	Perc.
1 Infrastructure	132	32%
2 Population & Growth	113	28%
3 Construction/ Development	87	21%
4 Business/Economy	74	18%
5 Housing/ Apartments/ Condos	56	14%
	407	

Thirty-two percent of Monctonians mentioned changes in **city infrastructure** as one of the top changes they were witnessing. They specifically mentioned the building of the Avenir Centre as well as other community buildings. Changes in **city population and growth** were the second most mentioned change, with 28% of participants commenting on this. Twenty-one percent commented on **construction and development** in the city. Participants observed new buildings, renovations, and/or the demolition of existing structures. Eighteen percent of participants observed changes in city **businesses and the economy**. Finally, 14% of Monctonians surveyed identified changes to **housing/apartments/condos** as among the most notable changes to the city, with many mentioning Moncton’s ‘urban sprawl.’

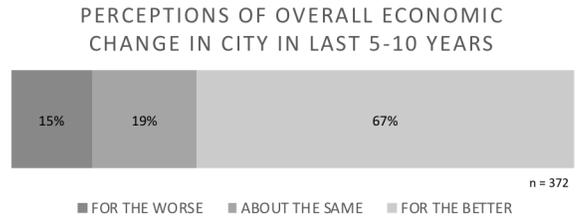
All of the top five changes identified by participants relate to city growth. It is clear that the Monctonians surveyed are observing growth in the city’s population, built environment, and economy.

### ECONOMIC CHANGES

Participants were asked about economic changes in their neighbourhood and city. Fifty-eight percent noted an increase in the average income, while more than a third, 35%, observed a decrease. Eighty-two percent of Monctonians surveyed observed higher rates of employment.

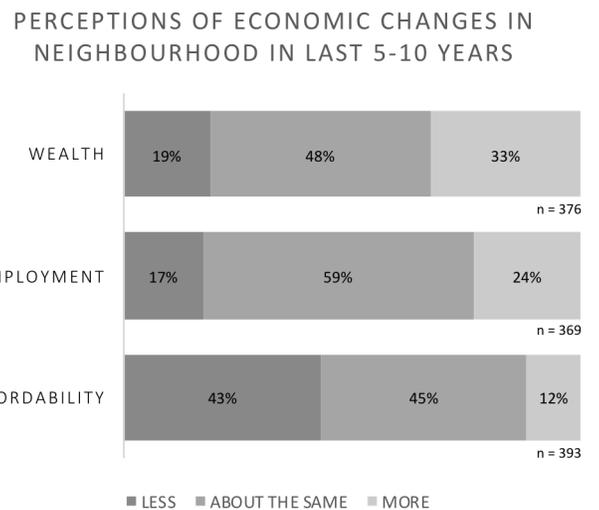


When asked about their overall perception of economic changes in the city, 67% of Monctonians reported seeing change for the better.



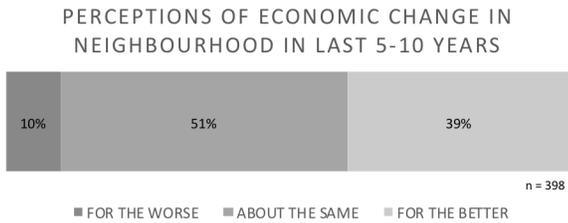
Participants were also asked about their perceptions of economic factors in their neighbourhood. On average, they estimated their neighbourhood’s unemployment rate at 10% and the percentage of residents with low incomes in their neighbourhood at 20%.

Thirty-three percent of Monctonians surveyed reported that there was more wealth in their neighbourhood compared to five to 10 years ago and 48% reported no change. Only 24% of participants felt that more people in neighbourhood were employed compared to five to 10 years ago and 59% felt there was no change. Just 12% of participants felt the neighbourhood was more affordable compared to five to 10 years ago, while 43% felt it was less affordable. This points to potential tensions between support for growth but concerns over affordability.



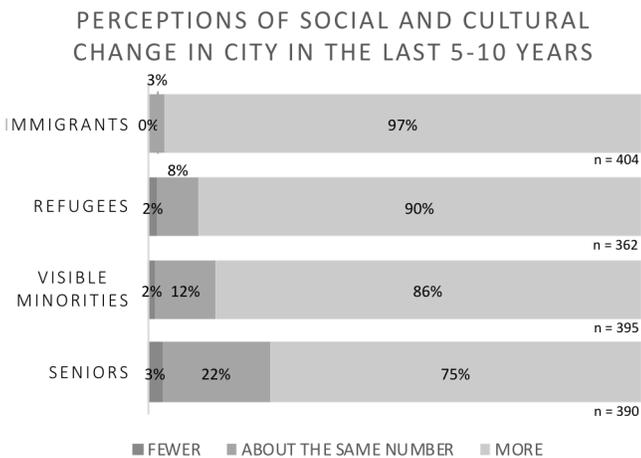
When participants were asked about their overall perceptions of economic change in their

neighbourhoods, 51% felt things were about the same, while 39% observed changes for the better.



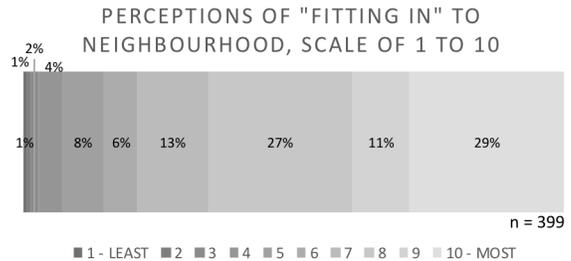
### SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CHANGES

When participants were asked about social and cultural changes in Moncton over the last five to 10 years, 97% reported an increase in the number of immigrants; 90% observed an increase in the number of refugees; 86% reported an increase in the number of visible minority residents; and 75% 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.



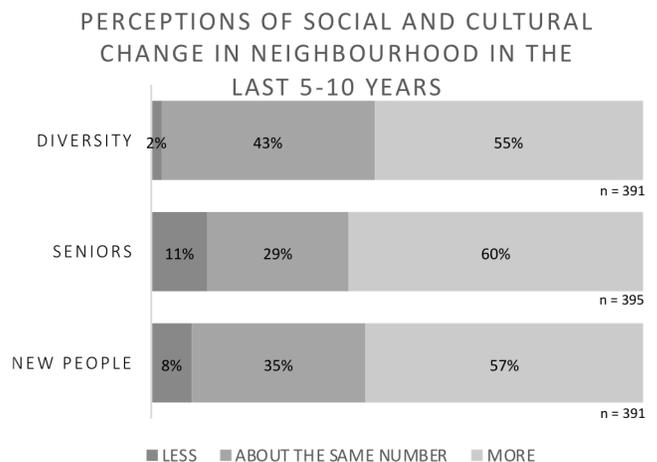
When asked what percentage of people in their neighbourhood shared similar values and beliefs, participants estimated, on average, that 55% of people did. The most common estimate was 55%,

but a wide range of estimates were offered, with the majority of participants estimating between 33% and 77%. 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, Monctonians on average reported “8,” largely expressing a strong sense of fitting in and belonging.



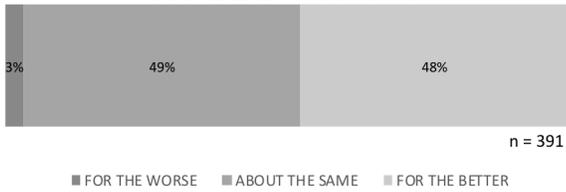
Participants were also asked about social and cultural diversity within their neighbourhoods. On average, Monctonians surveyed estimated that 8% of their neighbours were immigrants, 3% were refugees, 11% were visible minorities, 39% had a university degree, and 35% were senior citizens.

Fifty-five percent of residents felt their neighbourhood had become more diverse, compared to five to 10 years ago, while 43% expressed that it had not changed. The majority of participants, 60%, indicated that there are more senior citizens. Similarly, 57% of participants reported more new residents in the neighbourhood compared to five to 10 years ago.

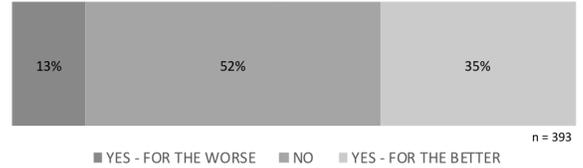


Overall, when participants were asked to assess the social and cultural changes in their neighbourhood, 48% of Monctonians observed change for the better while 49% indicated that things had not changed.

PERCEPTIONS OF OVERALL SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CHANGES IN NEIGHBOURHOOD IN THE LAST 5-10 YEARS



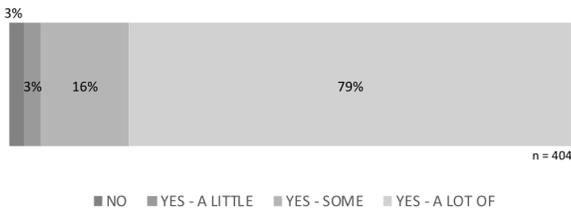
PERCEPTIONS OF THE CONDITION OF BUILDINGS AND HOMES IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD IN THE LAST 5-10 YEARS



**CHANGES TO THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

Participants were also asked about changes to their built and natural environments. Seventy-nine percent of Monctonians surveyed observed “a lot” of new construction in the city compared to five to 10 years ago.

PERCEPTIONS OF NEW CONSTRUCTION IN THE CITY IN THE LAST 5-10 YEARS



When asked about the condition of buildings and homes, participants estimated on average that 16% 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 18%.

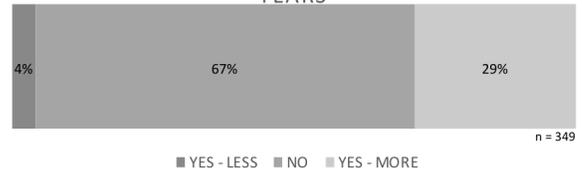
Monctonians were also asked about the changes to the built environment in their neighbourhoods. Sixty-nine percent reported new buildings and homes being constructed in the neighbourhood in the last five to 10 years. As for the conditions of existing buildings and homes in their neighbourhood, 35% of participants reported change for the better and only 13% reported change for the worse in the last five to 10 years.

PERCEPTIONS OF NEW CONSTRUCTION OF BUILDINGS AND HOMES IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD IN THE LAST 5-10 YEARS



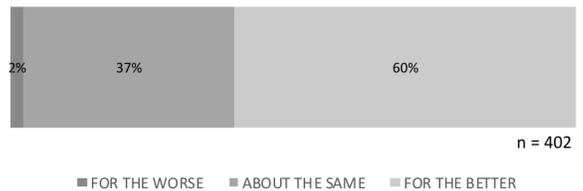
Participants were also asked about housing tenure, and 29% of those surveyed observed an increase in rental housing in their neighbourhood compared to five to 10 years earlier. The majority of participants, 67%, did not perceive any change.

PERCEPTIONS OF CHANGE IN NUMBER OF RENTED HOMES IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD IN THE LAST 5-10 YEARS



Overall, 60% of survey participants felt that changes in their neighbourhood’s buildings and homes were for the better and 37% felt that buildings and homes had generally stayed about the same in the last five to 10 years.

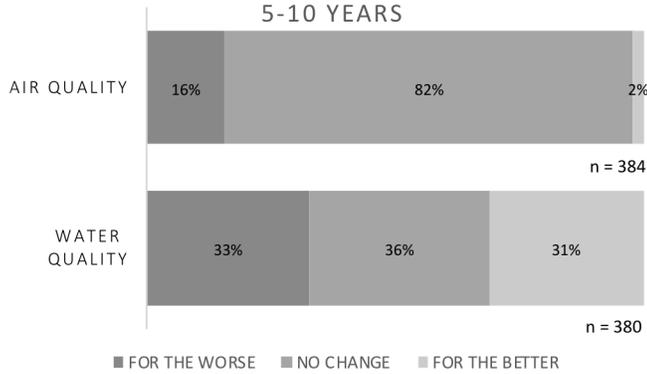
PERCEPTIONS OF OVERALL CHANGES TO NEIGHBOURHOOD BUILDINGS AND HOMES IN THE LAST 5-10 YEARS



**CHANGES TO THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

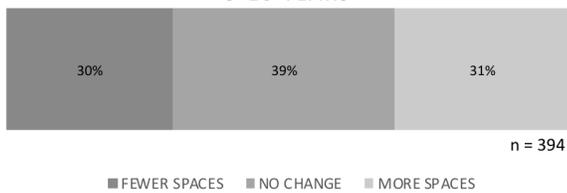
Perceptions on the natural environment were also examined. The majority of participants, 82%, reported no change in the city’s air quality over the last five to 10 years, while 16% felt that it had changed for the worse. Thirty-six percent of Montonians saw no change in the quality of the city’s natural bodies of water while 33% observed a change for the worse compared to five to 10 years ago.

PERCEPTIONS OF CHANGES IN AIR AND WATER QUALITY IN THE CITY IN THE LAST 5-10 YEARS



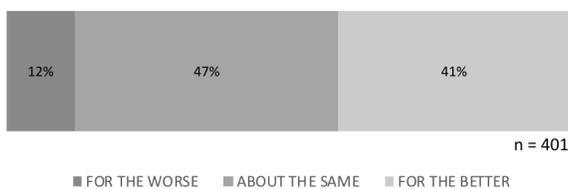
When asked about changes in the number of green spaces in the city, 30% of participants felt there were fewer, 39% felt there was no change, and 31% felt there were more green spaces in the city now compared to five to 10 years ago.

PERCEPTIONS OF CHANGE IN NUMBER OF GREEN SPACES IN THE CITY IN THE LAST 5-10 YEARS



In their neighbourhood, perceptions were more positive. Forty-seven percent of Moncton residents participating in the survey reported no overall change to the natural environment in their neighbourhood in the last five to 10 years, 41% reported change for the better, and 12% noted that change had been for the worse.

PERCEPTIONS OF OVERALL ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES IN NEIGHBOURHOOD IN THE LAST 5-10 YEARS



**HOW HAVE PERCEPTIONS CHANGED SINCE 2017?**

Surveys on Moncton were conducted in both 2017 and in 2019 and in both rounds Monctonians identified population growth as one of the top two

biggest changes occurring in the city. Compared to 2017 where it ranked 1st among the top changes mentioned, economic changes were the fourth most observed change in the city in 2019. The number of participants who commented on change in the city’s infrastructure increased between 2017 and 2019.

Positive perceptions of economic changes in the city between 2017 to 2019 remained unchanged at 67%. Despite this overall positive perception, there were decreases in perceived wealth, income, and employment in the city, with a 15 percentage point decrease in those who perceived more wealth, a 10 percentage point decrease in those who observed increased income, and an 8 percentage point decrease in those who perceived higher employment. At the neighbourhood level, the proportion of Monctonians who observed overall economic change for the better stayed about the same between 2017 and 2019. In 2019, only 43% of Moncton residents said their neighbourhoods were less affordable while in 2017, although this question was asked slightly differently, 72% of participants disagreed with the statement that their neighbourhood was more affordable compared to 5 to 10 years ago.

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, and an average decrease of 3 percentage points in the number of participants observing more immigrants and refugees, while the number observing more visible minorities in their city remained unchanged between 2017 and 2019. There was also a small increase of 2 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 have not changed a lot between 2017 and 2019, fewer Monctonians observed increases in

new construction in their city in 2019 at 79%, compared to 85% in 2017. There is also a marginal decrease in the percentage of Moncton residents reporting positive perceptions of environmental change in their neighbourhoods, with a decrease of 6 percentage points between 2017 and 2019.

Overall, perceptions of change in 2019 largely resemble those reported in 2017. Perceptions of economic change remained overall positive, but they were more negative when broken down into measures of wealth, income, and affordability. Residents continued to perceive an increase in diversity in their city and neighbourhoods. Monctonians observed slightly less change to the built environment in their city and neighbourhoods. Changes to the natural environment, when observed, were divided over the issues of water quality and green spaces in the city, while changes at the neighbourhood level were generally seen as being for the better.

### **WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE SURVEY?**

More women than men participated in the survey: 59% women compared to 40% men. The majority of participants, 78%, owned their homes and 70% reported living in single detached houses. About two-thirds of the participants, 69%, identified English as their first language, while 25% identified French. The average age of participants was 57. Three percent identified as visible minorities, 3% as immigrants or refugees, 3% identified as Indigenous (Indian, Métis, or Inuit), and 59% were legally married.

The majority of participants, 73%, had some post-secondary education; 21% 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 54% 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

Moncton Census Metropolitan Area, from a list that included landline and mobile telephone numbers. Twenty-two percent of participants were recruited through mobile numbers. Only participants over the age of 18 and who were residents of Moncton 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**

Special thanks to Dr. Karen Foster and the team of student researchers at the Rural Futures Research Centre for their work on the telephone survey: Golge Cagildiyan, Maggie Dingwell, Chloe Doras, Brianna Hunt, Nesma Makhoulouf, Shekara Grant, Alexandra Milmine, Rayyan Rafan, Maeghan Taverner, Izem Unlu, Nevena Vucetic, Emily Donald, Kris George, Kayla Preston, Hailie Tattrie, Hannah Main, and Alyssa Gerhardt.

### **AUTHORS**

This report was authored by Howard Ramos, Emma Kay, and Rachel McLay, of the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology at Dalhousie University. For more information on this research, please contact Howard Ramos by email at [howard.ramos@dal.ca](mailto:howard.ramos@dal.ca).