

Charlottetown Perceptions of Change Survey



How residents of Atlantic Canada perceive change, and whether or not they are open to it, is a question of pressing social and policy importance. The region has been experiencing some of the most profound economic, social, cultural, physical, and environmental changes in recent Canadian history. However, a lack of data on the region has hampered the ability to systematically examine those changes and public perceptions toward them.

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 Charlottetown residents in the spring of 2017. The purpose of this survey was to assess what changes Charlottetown residents have observed over the last five to 10 years, both in their own neighbourhoods and in the city as a whole, and to better understand how they feel about those changes.

Overall, survey results show that Charlottetown residents have observed a significant increase in ethnocultural diversity from immigration over the last five to 10 years. When asked about the changes within their neighbourhoods, a slight majority believed that the social and cultural changes have been for the better. Charlottetown residents also reported new construction and economic improvements in the city. Participants' opinions were mixed on the subject of changes in the natural environment and in their neighbourhoods.

Executive summary:

- Participants most frequently identified increased ethnocultural diversity as the biggest change, followed by changes in business and economy, the built environment, and population growth.
- Sixty-two percent reported overall improvements in the city's economic conditions.
- Participants were less likely to observe economic improvements in their neighbourhoods, and the majority did not believe that their neighbourhoods had become more affordable.
- Participants overwhelmingly observed more ethnocultural diversity and more senior citizens.
- Within their neighbourhoods, participants' perceptions of social and cultural change were mixed; 57% reported overall change for the better.
- On average, residents believed that 58% of their neighbours shared similar values and beliefs to them, and, in general, they reported high levels of "fitting in" to their neighbourhoods.
- Ninety-six percent of participants noted the construction of new buildings and homes in their city, and 74% within their neighbourhoods.
- The majority believed that their neighbourhood facilities and amenities were sufficient. Few noted changes in amenities, except for public transit, which most agreed had improved.
- The majority of participants reported no changes in the natural environment in their city or neighbourhood.
- Perceptions of the ethnocultural make-up and unemployment rate of Charlottetown neighbourhoods were similar to the figures reported in 2016 Census data for the city overall. Participants estimated higher numbers of low-income residents, seniors, and residents with university degrees in their neighbourhoods than census data reports for the city as a whole.

MOST NOTICEABLE CHANGES

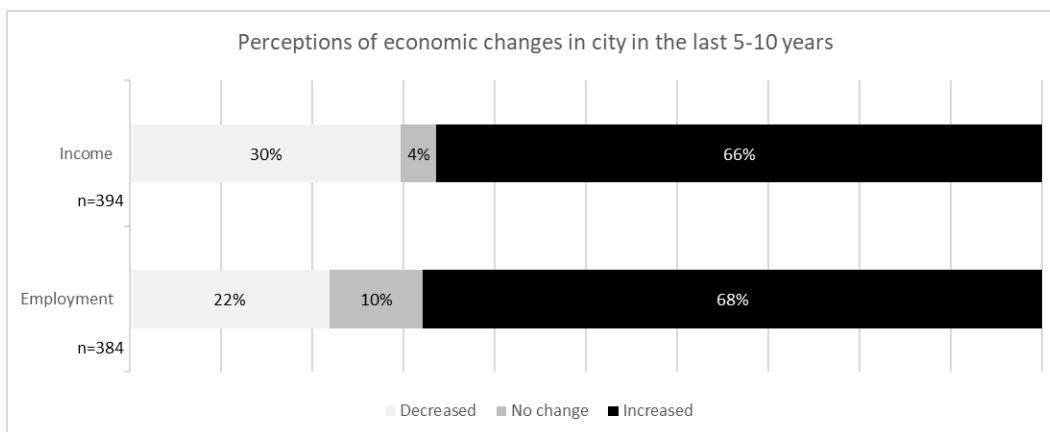
When Charlottetown residents were asked to identify the biggest changes in the city over the last five to 10 years, the top five areas of change mentioned were immigration and diversity, business/economy, infrastructure, housing/apartments, and population and growth.

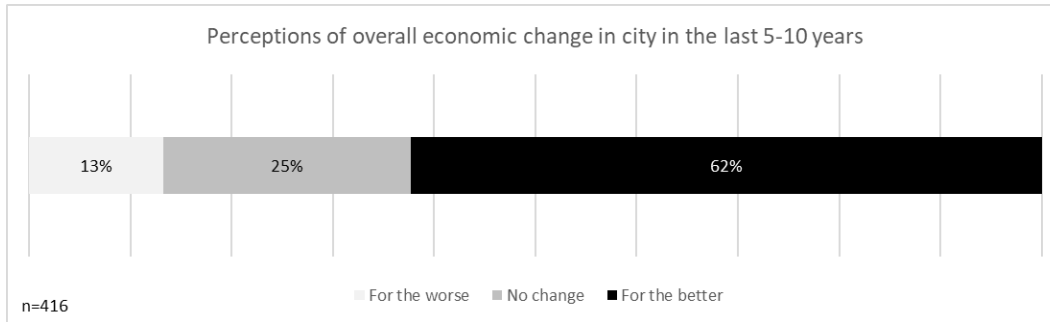
Top Five Most Noticeable Changes in Charlottetown		
1	Immigration and Diversity	165 36%
2	Business/Economy	121 26%
3	Infrastructure	98 21%
4	Housing/Apartments	76 17%
5	Population and Growth	58 13%
n=460		

Thirty-six percent of participants in Charlottetown referred to increased ethnocultural **diversity** in the city, largely as a function of immigration. Twenty-six percent discussed changes to **business and the economy**, and especially the arrival of new businesses, stores, and restaurants. Twenty-one percent discussed changes to **infrastructure**, especially road construction and roundabouts. Seventeen percent of participants referred to changes in **housing and apartments** in Charlottetown, including new apartments, houses, and subdivisions being built. Finally, 13% of participants mentioned **growth and population** increases in the city in the last five to 10 years.

ECONOMIC CHANGES

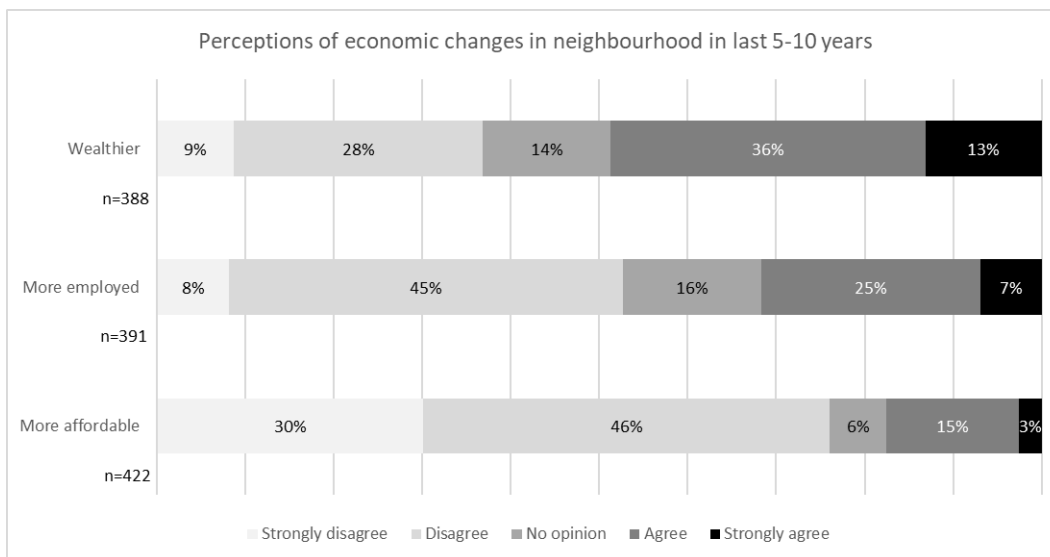
When participants were asked about economic changes in the city, 66% of participants in Charlottetown had observed an increase in the average income and 68% noted higher rates of employment. When asked about their overall perception of economic changes in the city, 62% of participants reported seeing change for the better.



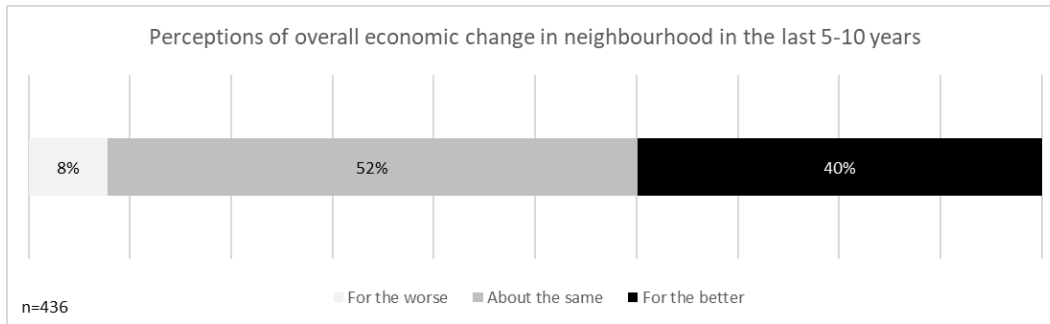


Survey participants were also asked about economic factors within their neighbourhoods. On average, they estimated neighbourhood unemployment rates at 10% and they estimated that 19% of their neighbourhood's residents had low incomes. This estimate of the unemployment rate is almost identical to the figure provided by Statistics Canada for Charlottetown as a whole, 9%, based on the 2016 Census, while the average estimate of low-income residents is higher than Statistics Canada's estimate of 9%.

Participants were asked their level of agreement to questions about economic changes in their neighbourhoods. Forty-nine percent of participants agreed or strongly agreed that people in their neighbourhood were wealthier compared to five to 10 years earlier. When asked if more people were employed compared to five to 10 years before, 32% agreed or strongly agreed. Just 18% agreed or strongly agreed that their neighbourhood had become more affordable over the same period, while 76% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

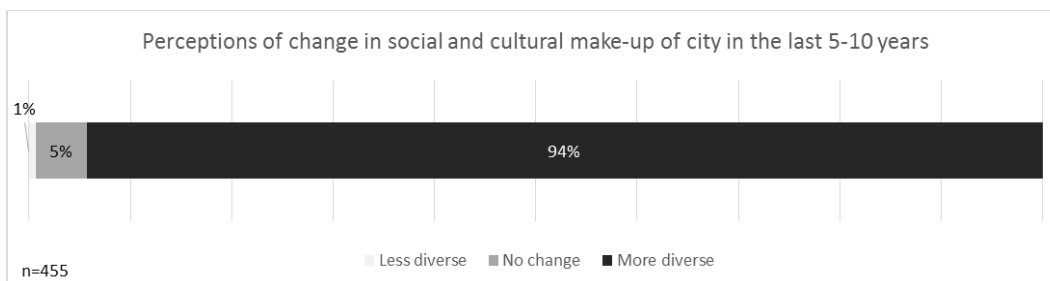
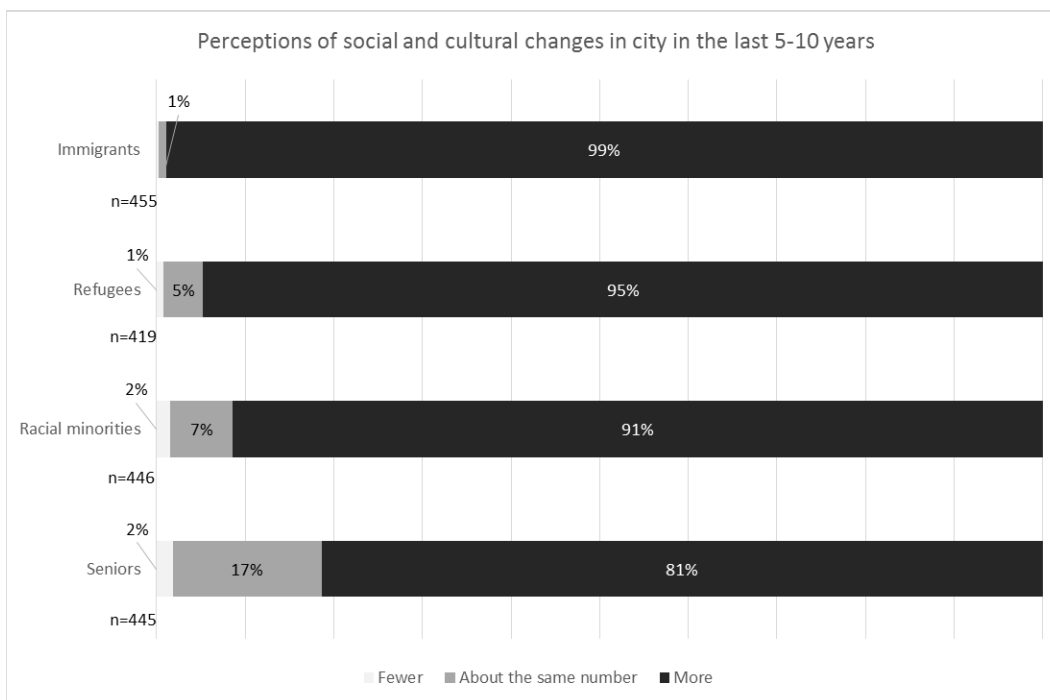


When participants were asked about their overall perceptions of economic change in their neighbourhoods, the majority, 52%, felt things were about the same, while 40% noted that it had changed for the better.

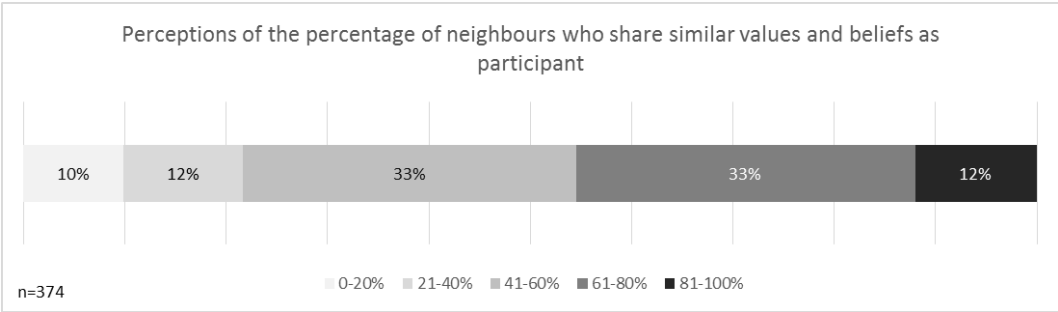


SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CHANGES

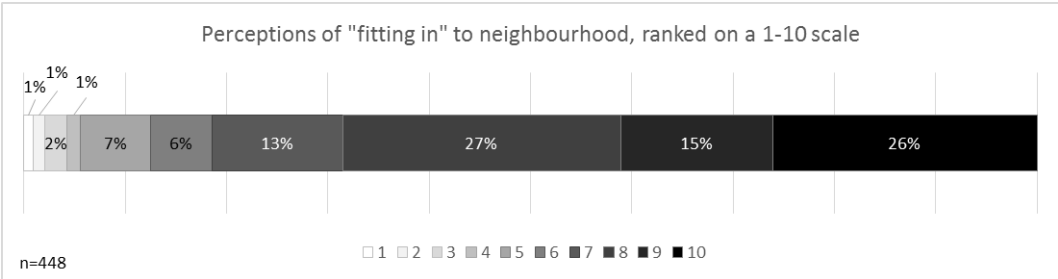
When participants were asked about social and cultural changes in Charlottetown over the last five to 10 years, 99% noted an increase in the number of immigrants; 95%, an increase in the number of refugees; 91%, an increase in the number of racial minority residents; and 81%, an increase in the number of senior citizens. When asked whether the cultural make-up of the city had changed compared to five to 10 years ago, 94% of participants reported that, overall, the city had become more socially and culturally diverse.



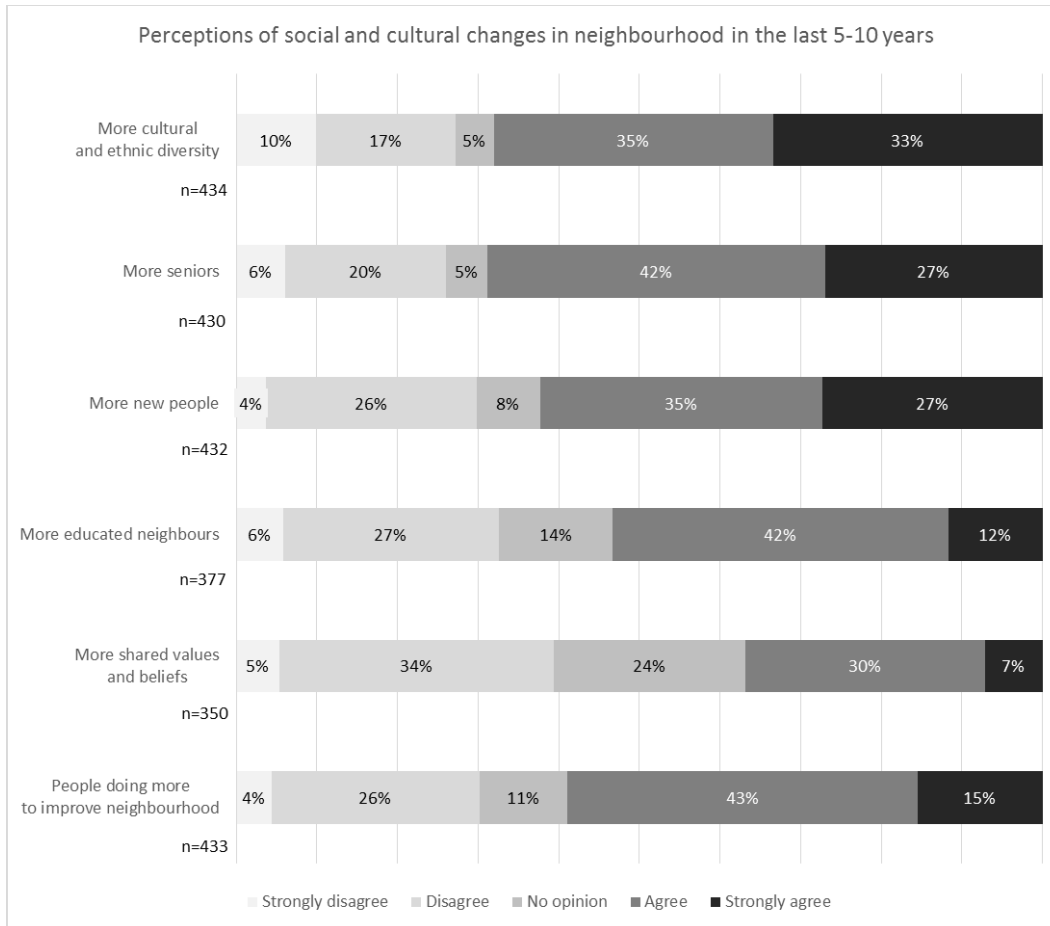
Participants were also asked about social and cultural diversity within their neighbourhoods. On average, residents of Charlottetown who participated in the survey estimated that 13% of their neighbours were racial minorities, 11% were immigrants, 3% were refugees, 43% had university degrees, and 36% were senior citizens. Participants' estimates of the prevalence of immigrants and refugees is similar to 2016 Census figures for Charlottetown, which show 9% immigrants and 1% refugees. Participants' estimates for other measures were higher than those in the 2016 Census, which shows 8% racial minorities, 26% with university degrees, and 17% senior citizens in the city.



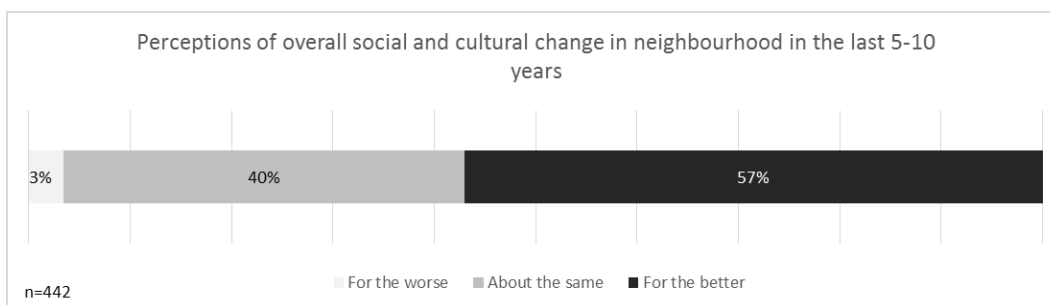
When asked what percentage of people in their neighbourhood shared similar values and beliefs as them, participants estimated, on average, that 58% of people did. The most common estimate was 50%, but a wide range of estimates were offered, with the majority of participants estimating between 40% and 80%. When asked how well they believed they “fit in” to their neighbourhood on a scale from one to 10, where 10 signifies fitting in strongly, participants in Charlottetown, on average, reported “8,” largely expressing a strong sense of fitting in and belonging.



Participants also rated their level of agreement with statements on social and cultural changes in their neighbourhood. When asked if their neighbourhood had become more culturally or ethnically diverse compared to five to 10 years ago, 68% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that it had; 69% agreed or strongly agreed that the number of senior citizens had increased in the same period; 62% agreed or strongly agreed that there were more new people in their neighbourhood; 54% agreed or strongly agreed that their neighbours had become more highly educated; 37% agreed or strongly agreed that more people shared the same values and beliefs as them; and 58% agreed or strongly agreed that people were doing more to improve their neighbourhood compared to five to 10 years ago.

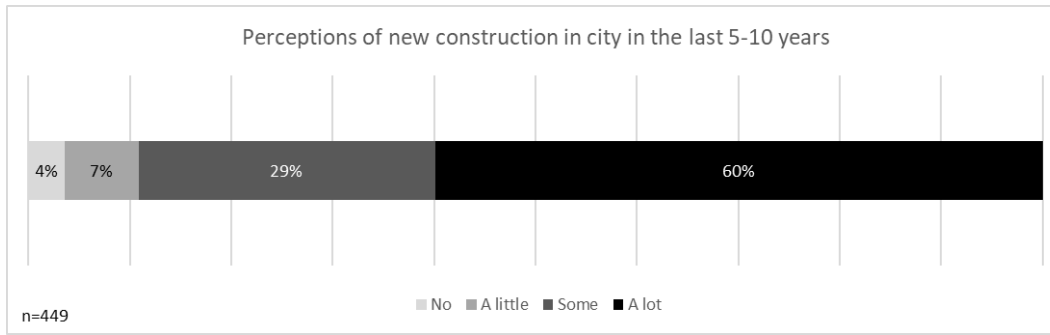


Overall, when participants were asked to assess the social and cultural changes in their neighbourhood, the majority, 57%, felt the changes were for the better, 40% said that things were about the same, and only 3% judged changes to be for the worse.



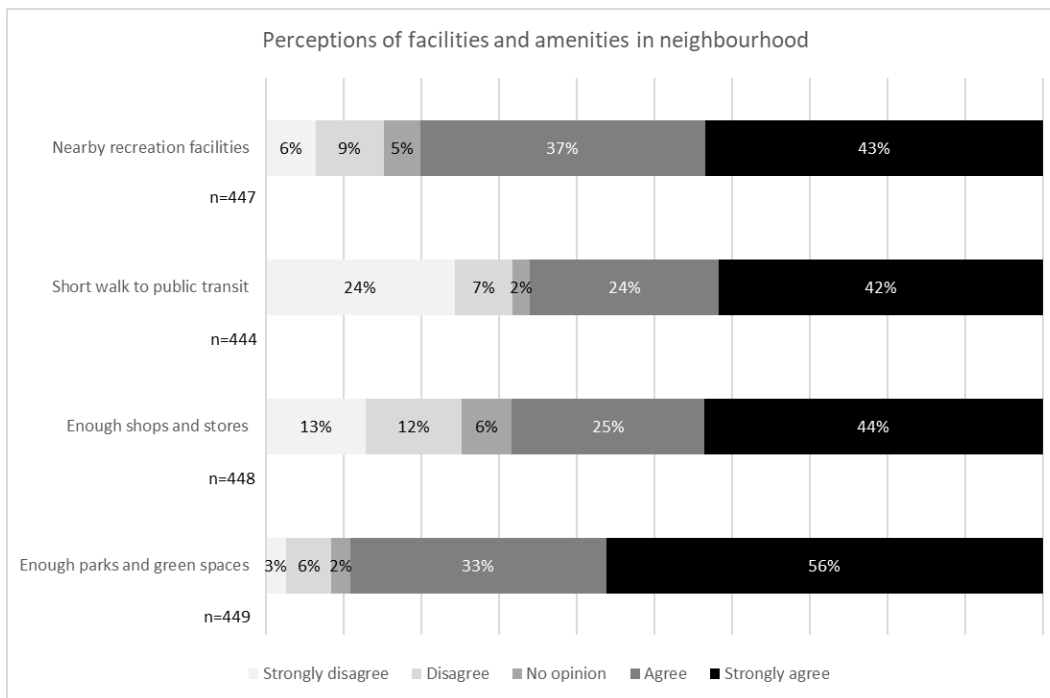
CHANGES TO THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Survey participants were asked questions about their perceptions of the built environment and their access to amenities and services. When Charlottetown residents taking part in the survey were asked whether they observed new construction in the city, 60% reported noticing “a lot” of new construction compared to five to 10 years ago. Overall, 96% of participants noted some amount of new construction in the city.



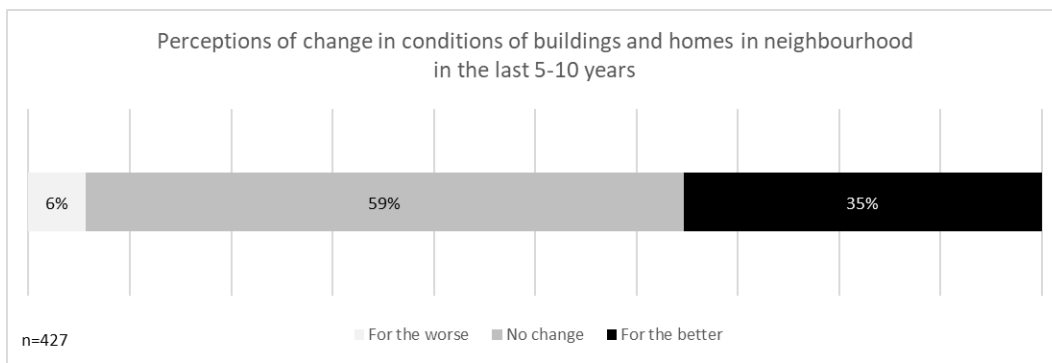
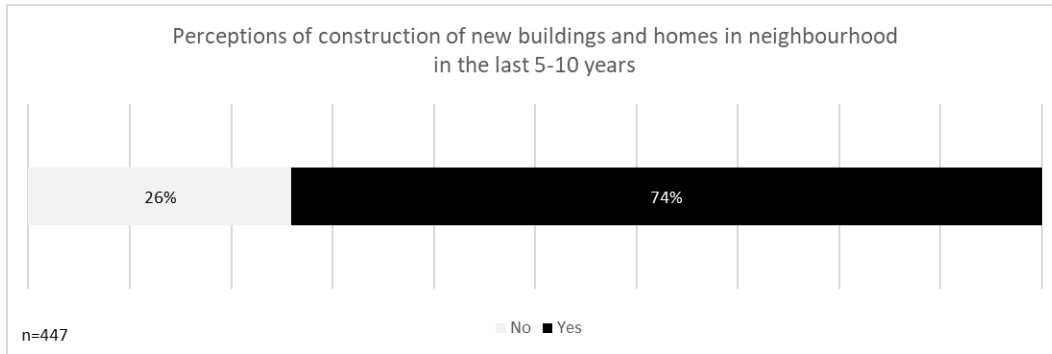
Regarding the condition of buildings and homes, participants estimated on average that 11% of buildings and houses in their neighbourhood were in need of repair. They were also asked to estimate the percentage of rental housing in the neighbourhood; on average, participants put this figure at 21%. Participants’ average estimate of houses and buildings in need of repair is higher than the 6% estimate for Charlottetown as a whole, reported in the 2016 Census. Conversely, their estimate of the prevalence of rental homes is lower than Statistics Canada’s estimate of 37%.

When asked about facilities and amenities in their neighbourhoods, 80% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that there were nearby recreational facilities; 66% agreed or strongly agreed that public transit was available within a short walk of their home; 69% agreed or strongly agreed that there were enough shops, stores, markets or other places in their neighbourhood to buy what they need; and 89% agreed or strongly agreed that there were enough parks and green spaces in their neighbourhood.

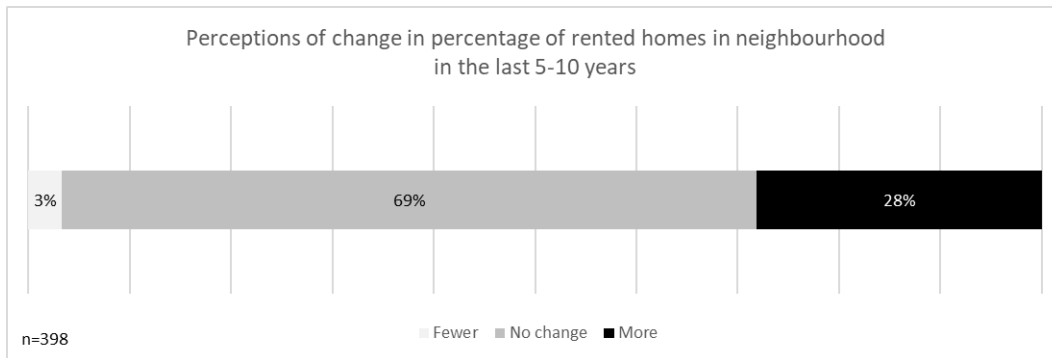


When participants were asked about changes to the built environment in their neighbourhood, 74% reported that new buildings and homes had been constructed and 35% observed improvements in the

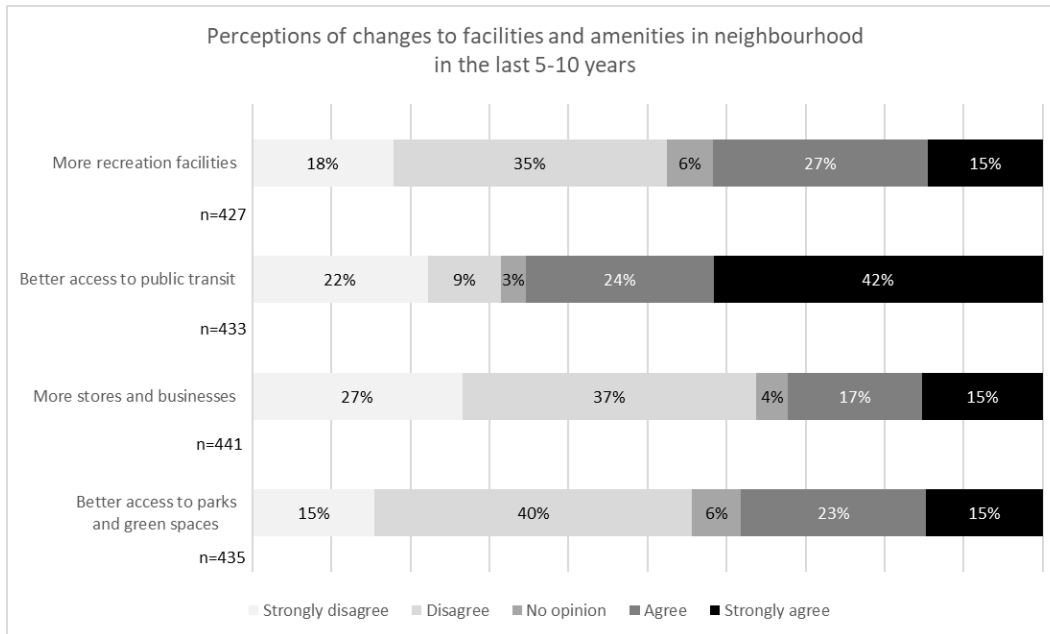
conditions of buildings and homes in the last five to 10 years. The majority, 59%, had observed no change in conditions.



Participants were also asked about housing tenure: 28% of those surveyed noted more rental housing in their neighbourhood compared to five to 10 years earlier. However, the majority, 69%, did not perceive any change.

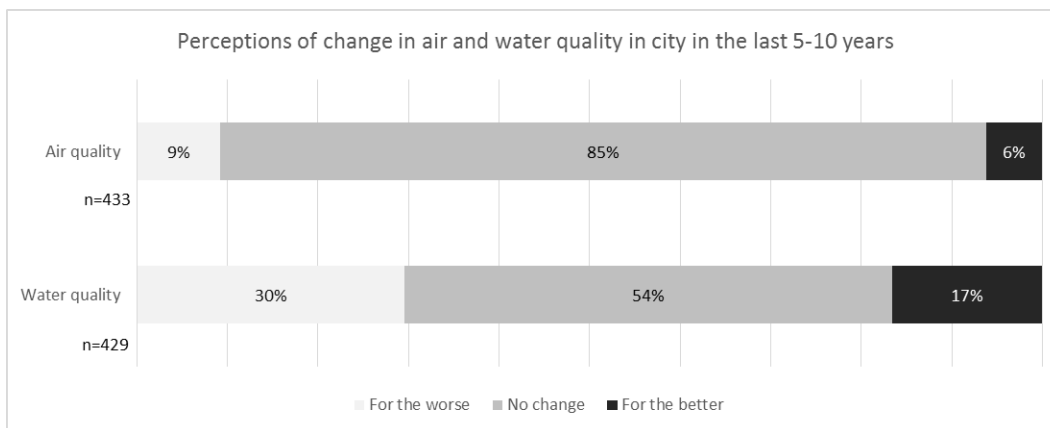


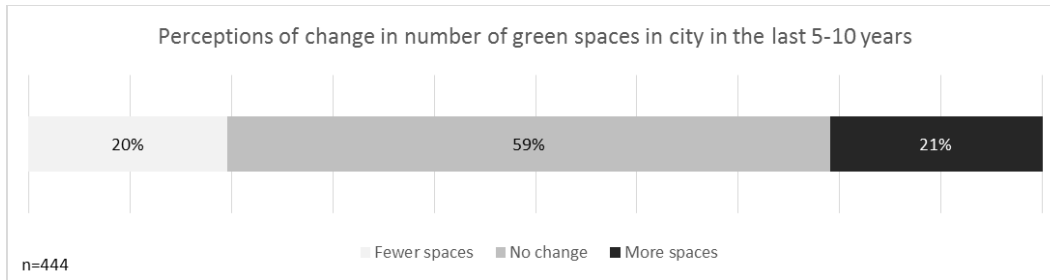
Participants were also asked for their level of agreement with several statements on changes to the amenities and services available in their neighbourhood: 42% agreed or strongly agreed that there was better access to recreational facilities in the neighbourhood at the time of the survey compared to five to 10 years before; 66% agreed or strongly agreed that there was better access to public transit; 32% agreed or strongly agreed that the number of stores and businesses in their neighbourhood had increased; and 38% agreed or strongly agreed that there was better access to parks or green spaces compared to five to 10 years earlier.



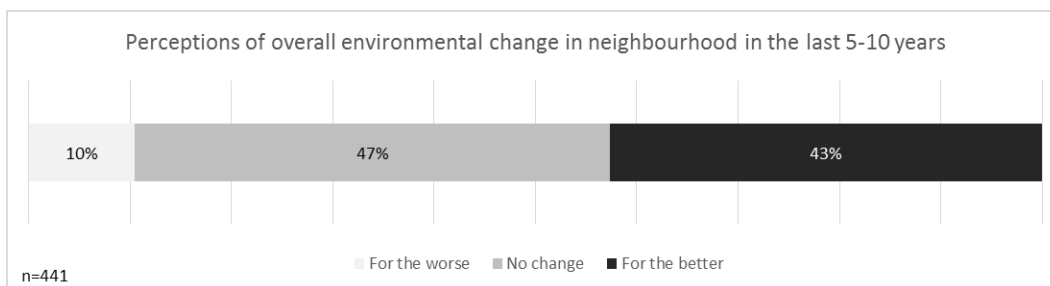
CHANGES TO THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Participants were asked about their perceptions of change in the natural environment in Charlottetown. The majority of participants in the survey, 85%, reported no change in the city’s air quality over the last five to 10 years. A slight majority, 54%, also noted no change in the city’s natural bodies of water, and 30% observed change for the worse. A similar majority, 59%, observed no change in the number of green spaces in the city, while the remainder were divided between noticing more spaces and fewer.





Forty-seven percent of participants in Charlottetown reported no overall change to the natural environment in their neighbourhood in the last five to 10 years, 43% reported change for the better, and 10% noted that change had been for the worse.



WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE SURVEY

More women than men participated in the survey: 62% women compared to 38% men. The majority of participants, 72%, owned their homes; 76% lived in detached houses. Almost all of the participants, 96%, spoke English as their first language. The average age of participants was 57. Four percent identified as racial minorities, 6% as immigrants or refugees, 4% identified as Indigenous (Indian, Métis, or Inuit), and 62% were legally married.

The majority of participants, 74%, had some post-secondary education; 31% named a Bachelor's degree as their highest level of education obtained. More than one-third of participants, 34%, reported having earned no employment income in the last year. The median individual employment income reported was \$30,000 to \$40,000, and 14% reported spending more than a third of their incomes on housing and related expenses.

METHODOLOGY

To understand Charlottetown residents' perceptions of neighbourhood change, we conducted a telephone survey of 460 residents between May 24, 2017 and June 26, 2017. The survey had a 95 percent confidence level and a standard error of 0.025. 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-two percent of participants were recruited through mobile numbers. Only participants over the age of 18 and who reside in 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 supervised by Professor Howard Ramos, Sociology and Social Anthropology, Dalhousie University. For additional information, he can be reached at: howard.ramos@dal.ca

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