

Moncton 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 Moncton residents in the fall of 2017. The purpose of this survey was to assess what changes 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 the changes.

Overall, survey results show that Moncton residents were quick to note growth in the city. Population growth, economic growth, and expansion of the built environment were the biggest changes observed by participants over the last five to 10 years. They also reported increased ethnocultural diversity and improvements to the local economy. There is less consensus among participants when it comes to changes in the natural environment and to changes at the neighbourhood level.

Executive summary:

- Moncton residents most frequently identified growth in the city and population as the biggest changes, followed by changes in business and the economy and to the built environment.
- The majority of participants believed that the city's income, employment rates, and overall economic condition had improved. On the neighbourhood level, perceptions were more divided.
- Participants largely observed more ethnocultural diversity and more senior citizens in the city.
- Within their neighbourhoods, participants' perceptions of social and cultural change were mixed; 51% reported no overall change.
- On average, residents believed that 58% of their neighbours shared similar values and beliefs, and, in general, they reported high levels of "fitting in" to their neighbourhoods.
- Ninety-eight percent of participants noted the construction of new buildings and homes in their city, and 70% in their neighbourhoods.
- Most participants believed that their neighbourhood facilities and amenities were sufficient, but noted improved access to recreation facilities, stores and businesses, and parks and green spaces more frequently than public transit.
- The majority of participants reported no change in the condition of buildings and houses or in the prevalence of rental housing in their neighbourhoods.
- Most participants reported no change in the city's air quality, and opinions were mixed regarding other changes in the natural environment.
- Perceptions of the ethnocultural make-up and unemployment rate of Moncton neighbourhoods were similar to the figures reported in 2016 Census data for the city overall. Participants estimated higher numbers of seniors, residents with university degrees, with low incomes, and unemployed residents in their neighbourhoods than census data reports for the city as a whole.

MOST NOTICEABLE CHANGES

When Monctonians 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 growth and population, business/economy, buildings, infrastructure, and housing and apartments.

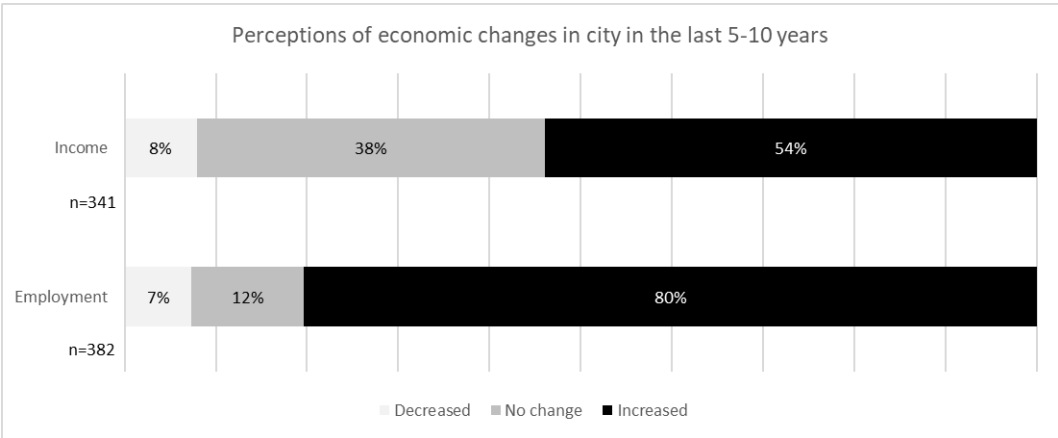
Top Five Most Noticeable Changes in Moncton		
1	Growth and Population	149 33%
2	Business/Economy	134 30%
3	Buildings	126 28%
4	Infrastructure	94 21%
5	Housing/Apartments	83 18%
n=450		

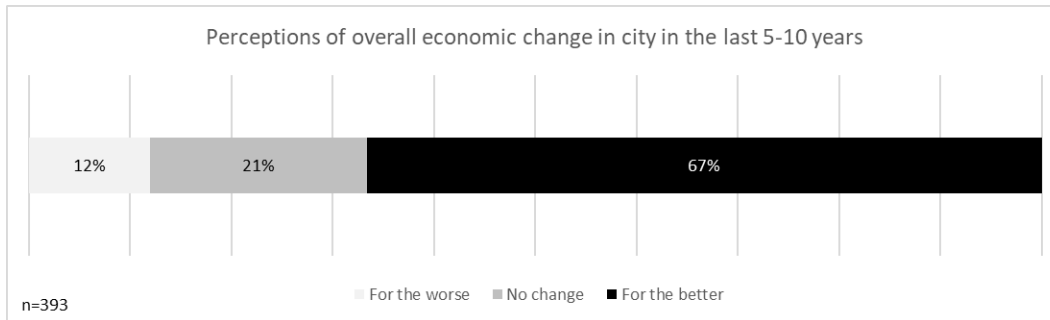
One-third, 33%, of participants in Moncton mentioned recent **growth and population** increases in the city. Thirty percent referred to changes in **business and the economy**, particularly to growth in the number of businesses and in the retail sector.

Twenty-eight percent of participants discussed **buildings**, especially new buildings, including the new event centre being constructed. **Infrastructure**, including road construction and the replacement of the causeway, was mentioned by 21% of participants. Eighteen percent discussed **housing and apartments**, especially new houses and subdivisions. Overall, these responses suggest that growth and expansion—in the population, in the economy, and in the built environment—are dominant themes in Monctonians’ perceptions of change in their city over the last five to 10 years.

ECONOMIC CHANGES

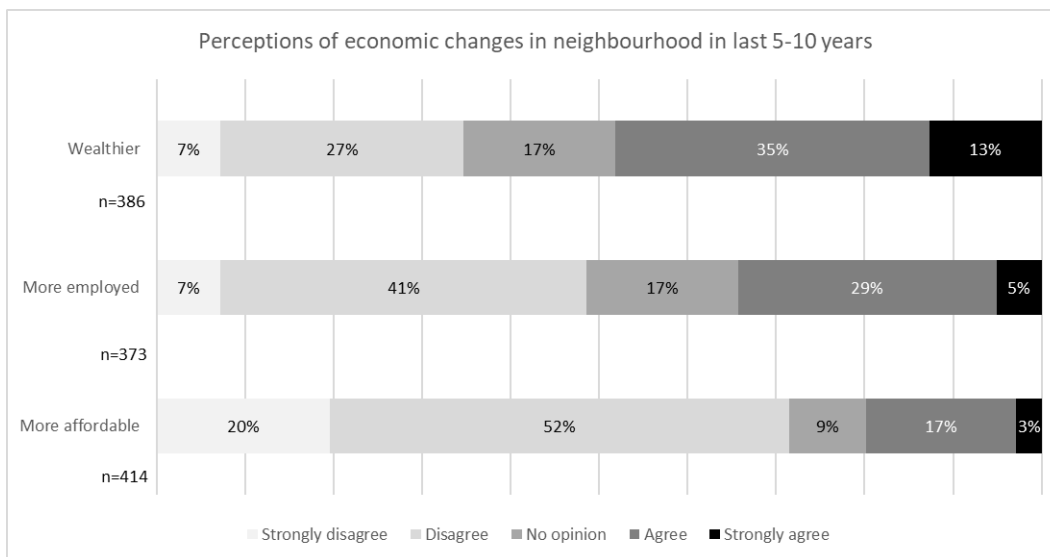
When participants were asked about economic changes in the city, 54% of Monctonians surveyed had observed an increase in the average income and 80% noted higher rates of employment. When asked about their overall perception of economic changes in the city, 67% of participants reported seeing change for the better.



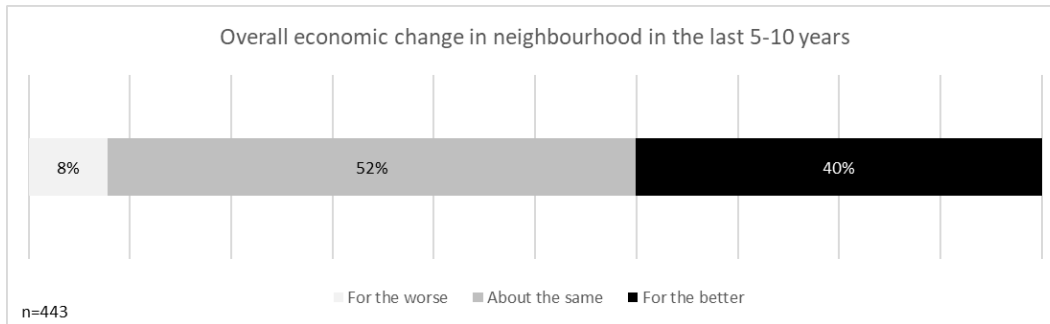


Survey participants were also asked about economic factors within their neighbourhoods. On average, they estimated neighbourhood unemployment rates at 12%, and they estimated that 23% of their neighbourhood’s residents had low incomes. These values are higher than the 8% unemployment rate and the 8% low-income rate estimates for Moncton as a whole, provided by Statistics Canada based on the 2016 Census.

Participants were asked their level of agreement to questions about economic changes in their neighbourhoods. Forty-eight 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, 34% agreed or strongly agreed. Just 20% agreed or strongly agreed that their neighbourhood had become more affordable over the same period, while 72% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

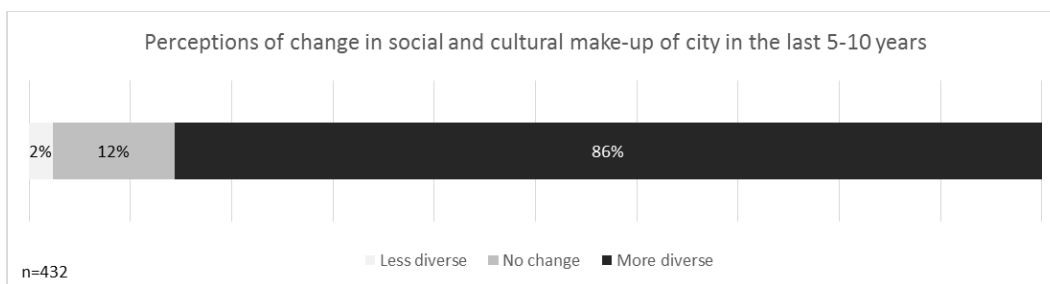
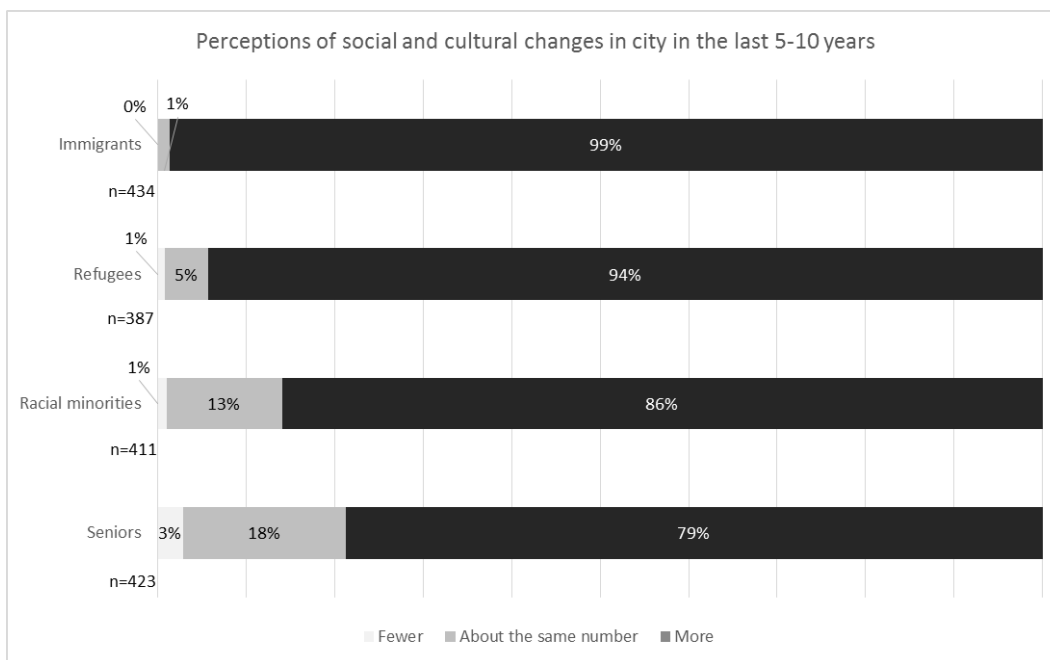


When participants were asked about their overall perceptions of economic change in their neighbourhoods, the majority, 52%, felt things were about the same, while 40% noted that change was for the better.

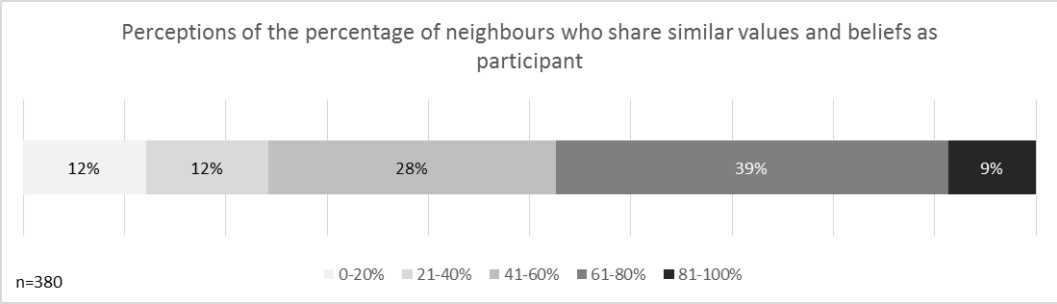


SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CHANGES

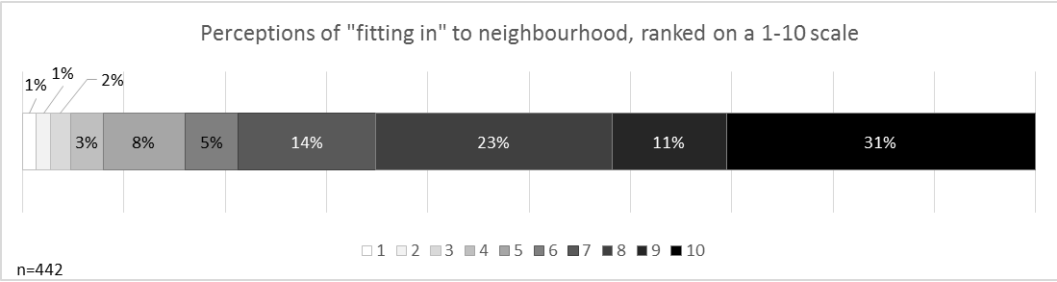
When participants were asked about social and cultural changes in Moncton over the last five to 10 years, 99% noted an increase in the number of immigrants; 94%, an increase in the number of refugees; 86%, an increase in the number of racial minority residents; and 79%, an increase in the number of senior citizens. When asked whether the cultural make-up of the city had changed compared to five to 10 years ago, 86% of participants reported that, overall, the city had become more socially and culturally diverse.



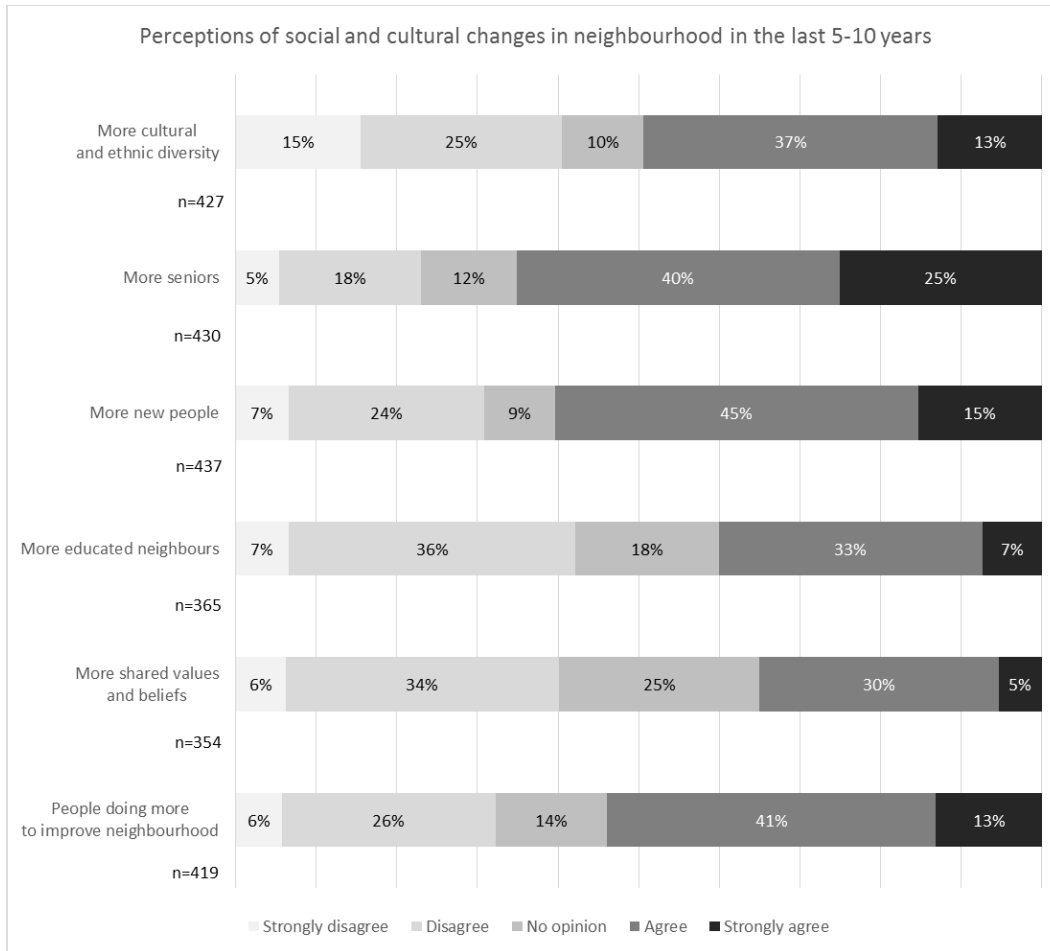
Participants were also asked about social and cultural diversity within their neighbourhoods. On average, Monctonians who participated in the survey estimated that 10% of their neighbours were racial minorities, 7% were immigrants, 3% were refugees, 40% had university degrees, and 37% were senior citizens. Participants' estimates of the prevalence of immigrants and refugees is similar to 2016 Census figures for Moncton, which show 6% immigrants and 1% refugees in the city. Participants' estimates for other measures were higher than those in the 2016 Census, which shows 5% racial minorities, 20% with university degrees, and 17% senior citizens in the city.



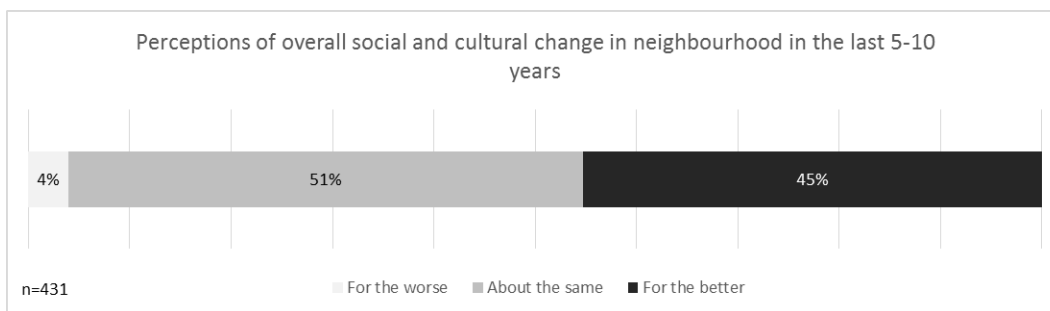
When asked what percentage of people in their neighbourhood shared similar values and beliefs, participants estimated, on average, that 58% of people did. The most common estimate was 50%, but a wide range of estimates were offered, with the majority of participants estimating between 40% and 80%. Participants were asked how well they believed they “fit in” to their neighbourhood on a scale from one to 10, where 10 is fully fitting into their neighbourhood. On average, participants 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, 50% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that it had; 65% agreed or strongly agreed that the number of senior citizens had increased in the same period; 60% agreed or strongly agreed that there were more new people in their neighbourhood; 40% agreed or strongly agreed that their neighbours had become more highly educated; 35% agreed or strongly agreed that more people shared the same values and beliefs as them; and 54% agreed or strongly agreed that people were doing more to improve their neighbourhood compared to five to 10 years ago.

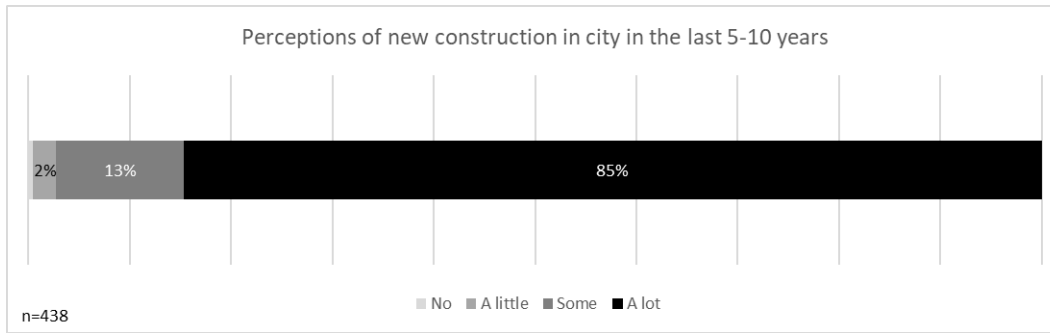


Overall, when participants were asked to assess the social and cultural changes in their neighbourhood, the majority, 51%, said that things were about the same, 45% felt the changes were for the better, and only 4% judged changes to be for the worse.



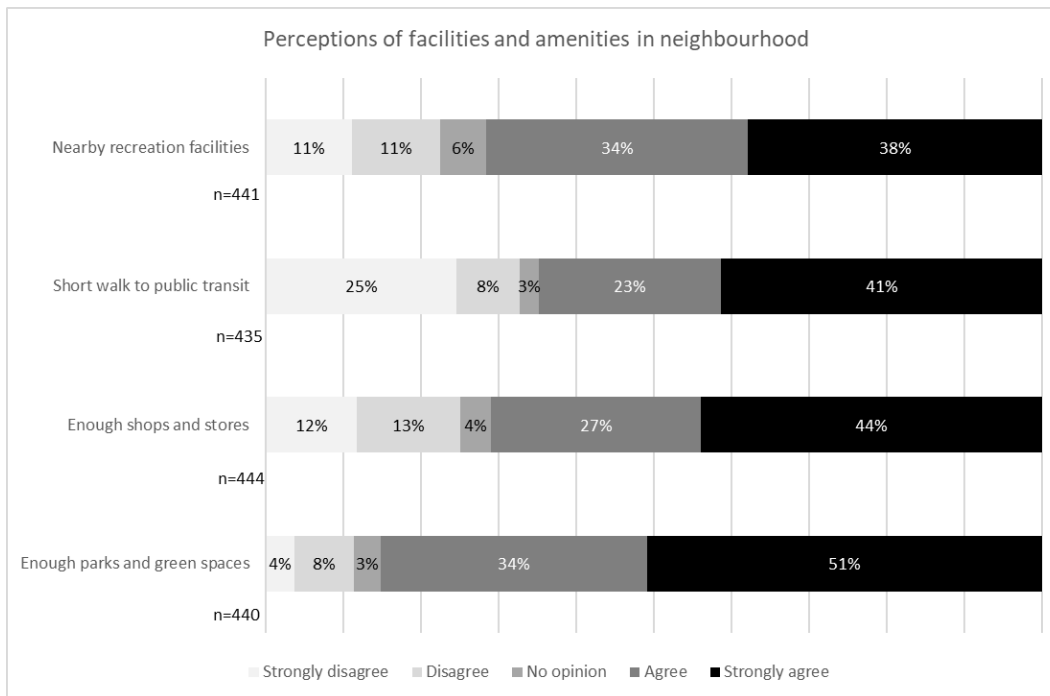
CHANGES TO THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Survey participants were asked questions about their perceptions of the built environment and their access to amenities and services. When Monctonians taking part in the survey were asked whether they observed new construction in the city, 85% reported noticing “a lot” of new construction compared to five to ten years ago. Overall, 98% of participants noted some amount of new construction in the city.



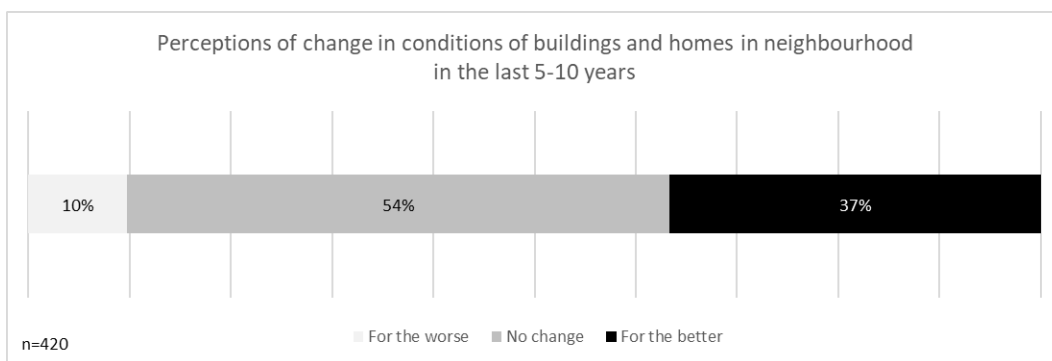
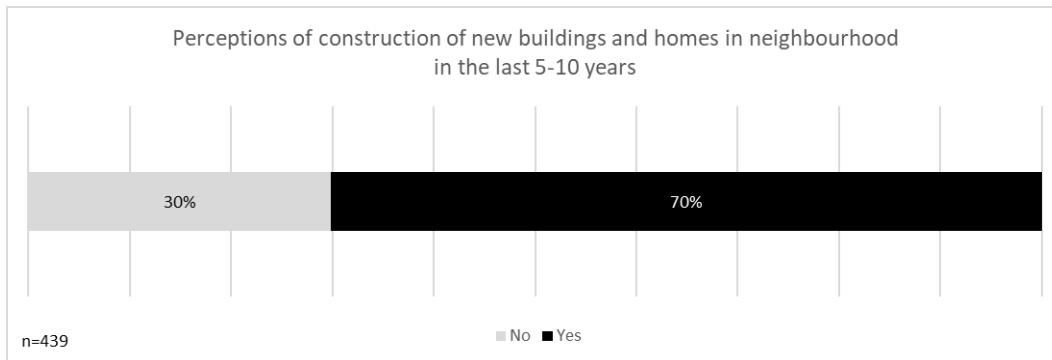
Regarding the condition of buildings, participants estimated on average that 15% of buildings and houses in their neighbourhood were in need of repair. They were also asked to estimate the percentage of rental housing in the neighbourhood; on average, participants put this figure at 20%. Participants’ average estimate of houses and buildings in need of repair is higher than the 6% estimate for Moncton as a whole, reported in the 2016 Census. Their estimate of the prevalence of rental housing is lower than Statistics Canada’s estimate of 31%.

When asked about facilities and amenities in their neighbourhoods, 72% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that there were nearby recreational facilities; 64% agreed or strongly agreed that public transit was available within a short walk of their home; 71% agreed or strongly agreed that there were enough shops, stores, markets or other places in their neighbourhood to buy what they need; and 85% agreed or strongly agreed that there were enough parks and green spaces in their neighbourhood.

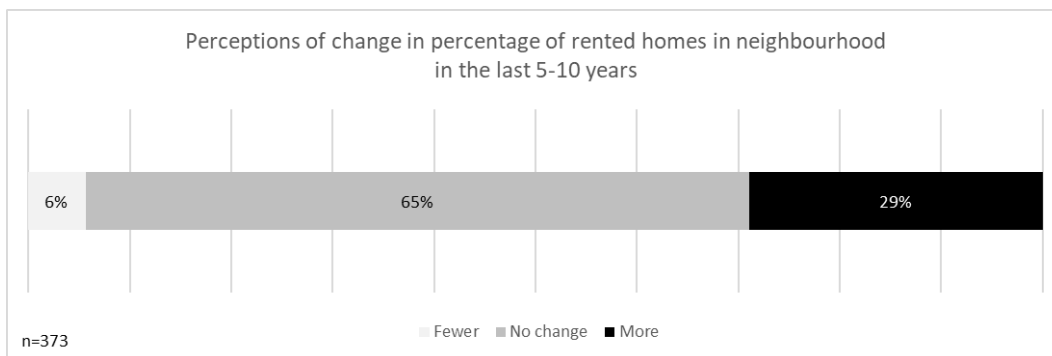


When participants were asked about changes to the built environment in their neighbourhood, 70% reported that new buildings and homes had been constructed and 37% observed improvements in the

conditions of buildings and homes in the last five to 10 years. The majority, 54%, had observed no change in conditions.

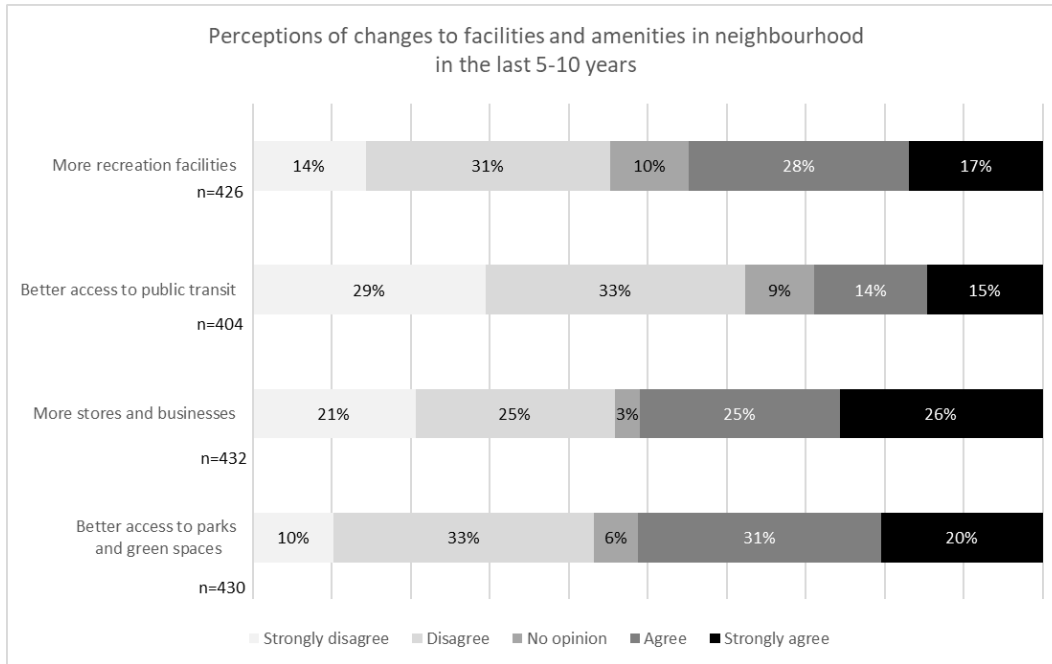


Participants were also asked about housing tenure: 29% of those surveyed noted more rental housing in their neighbourhood compared to five to 10 years earlier. However, the majority, 65%, did not perceive any change.



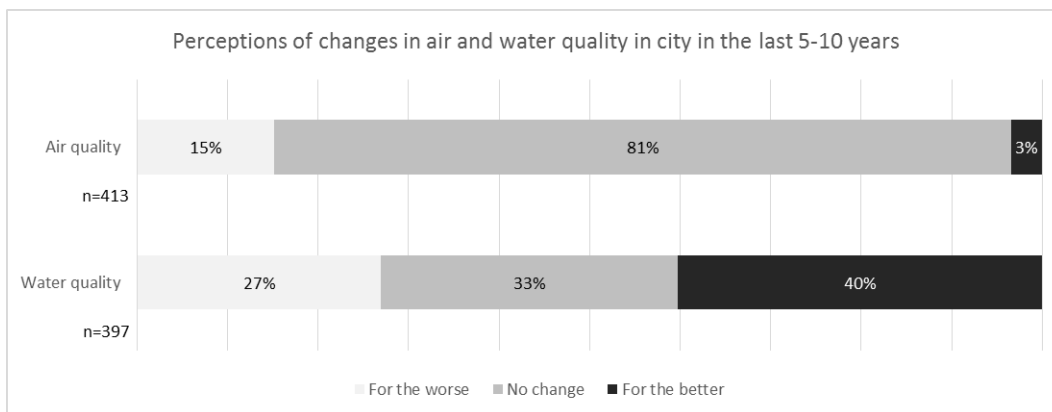
Monctonians who participated in the survey were also asked for their level of agreement with several statements on changes to the amenities and services available in their neighbourhood: 45% agreed or strongly agreed that there was better access to recreational facilities in the neighbourhood at the time of the survey compared to five to 10 years before; 29% agreed or strongly agreed that there was better access to public transit; 51% agreed or strongly agreed that the number of stores and businesses in their

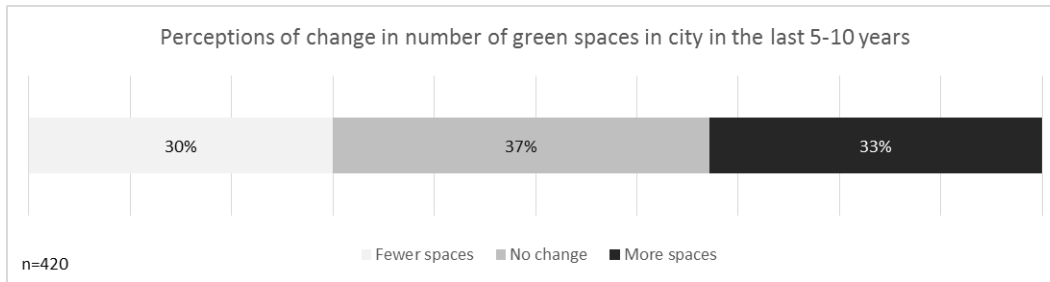
neighbourhood had increased; and 51% agreed or strongly agreed that there was better access to parks or green spaces compared to five to 10 years earlier.



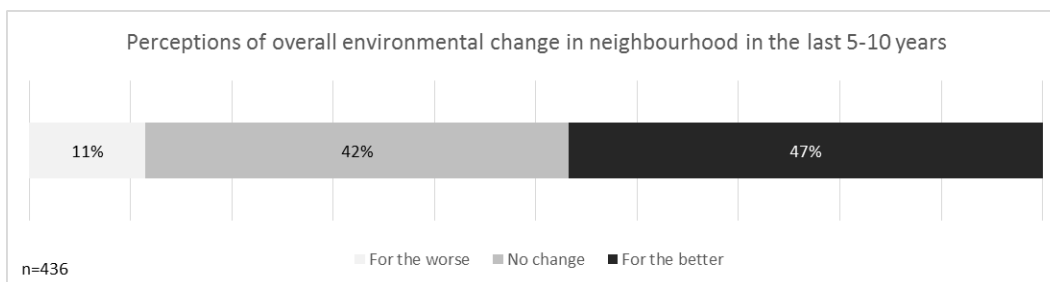
CHANGES TO THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Participants were asked about their perceptions of change in the natural environment in Moncton. The majority of participants in the survey, 81%, reported no change in the city’s air quality over the last five to 10 years. There is little consensus among participants with respect to changes in the quality of the city’s natural bodies of water, with 40% reporting change for the better, 33% reporting no change, and 27% reporting change for the worse. A similar pattern is seen with respect to changes in the number of green spaces in the city: 37% saw no change, 33% observed more spaces, and 30% noted fewer spaces compared to five to 10 years ago.





Forty-seven percent of Moncton participants noted improvements to the natural environment in their neighbourhood in the last five to 10 years, 42% reported no change, and 11% reported that change had been for the worse.



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; 74% lived in detached houses. Two-thirds of participants, 66%, spoke English as their first language and 31% spoke French as their first language. The average age of participants was 55. Three percent identified as visible minorities, 5% as immigrants or refugees, 4% identified as Indigenous (Indian, Métis, or Inuit), and 57% were legally married.

The majority of participants, 69%, had some post-secondary education; 27% named a Bachelor's degree as their highest level of education obtained. More than one-third of participants, 40%, reported having earned no employment income in the last year. The median individual employment income reported was less than \$30,000, and 13% reported spending more than a third of their incomes on housing and related expenses.

METHODOLOGY

To understand Moncton residents' perceptions of neighbourhood change, we conducted a telephone survey of 450 residents between August 21, 2017 and October 18, 2017. The survey had a 95 percent confidence level and a standard error of 0.025. We recruited participants 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-seven percent of participants were recruited through mobile numbers. Only participants over the age of 18 and who resided in 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 supervised by Professor Howard Ramos, Sociology and Social Anthropology, Dalhousie University. For additional information, he can be reached at: howard.ramos@dal.ca

Research assistants who worked on the survey in Moncton were: Emma Cruddas, Shekara Grant, Emma Kay, Kathleen MacNabb, Madeleine McKay, Rachel McLay, and Kirstie Smith.