



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE CENTRE REGION SUSTAINABILITY SURVEY

FOR COLLEGE, FERGUSON, HALFMOON, HARRIS AND PATTON TOWNSHIPS
AND THE BOROUGH OF STATE COLLEGE

July 2021

Overview

The Centre Regional Planning Agency (CRPA) sought resident input to gauge community knowledge of, and interest in sustainable practices for developing a regional Climate Action and Adaptation Plan. CRPA is creating a plan for the Centre Region that will identify strategies to reduce the region's greenhouse (GHG) emissions and adapt to a changing climate. Preparing for and managing climate change-related risks goes beyond local government and will require collective action from across our community. Public engagement is a key component to help create a relevant community action plan.

One way used to engage the public, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic, was through a survey. The survey took an average of 15 minutes and included questions related to:

- Sustainability strategies for buildings and energy, transportation, food, recycling, land use, and water
 - The factors that would affect the likelihood of respondents doing sustainable practices
 - the level of support for local government strategies
- Impacts of a changing climate
- Demographics

Two survey instruments were used to gather public opinion: a random sample mailed survey and a publicly advertised survey. Both surveys were conducted in the spring of 2021 and asked identical questions. After two months the surveys closed April 30, 2021, and a total of 1,824 responses were received: 744 from the randomly mailed and 1,080 from the publicly advertised survey. In

return for completing the survey, respondents were entered to win a \$100 Downtown Improvement District gift card, a free energy audit, or a \$1,000 solar electric voucher.

Results of Randomly Mailed Survey

Who did we hear from?

A postcard mailer was sent twice to 3,000 random residential addresses in College, Ferguson, Halfmoon, Harris and Patton Townships and State College Borough in late February and March.

- We heard from 744 residents - 26% response rate.
- Most respondents were property owners (61%), over 26 years old (75%) and have lived in our community for more than 4 years (65%).
- Residents rated their concern about the impacts of climate change as 3.6 on a scale of 1 to 5, with a 5 being very concerned.
- 60% of the respondents agreed that climate change is happening. 15% were neutral on the topic.

Is this a representative sample?

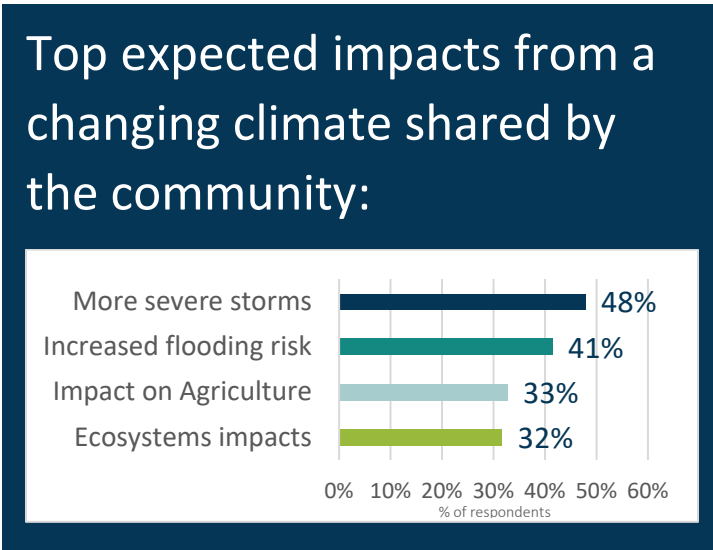
Yes. Based on the response rate, we achieved a 95% confidence level with 3.6% margin of error. To further understand our sample population, we also looked at available census data and it indicates that the demographics of survey respondents accurately reflects the makeup of the population based upon Census data.



Based on national public opinion polling completed by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication and George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication it was expected that up to 80% of the community could be neutral or agree that climate change is happening (alarmed – disengaged = 80%).



What did we learn?



Need more education and outreach

While many community members are doing sustainable practices, it is not a majority and increased education and outreach is likely to have an impact on more people taking sustainable actions.

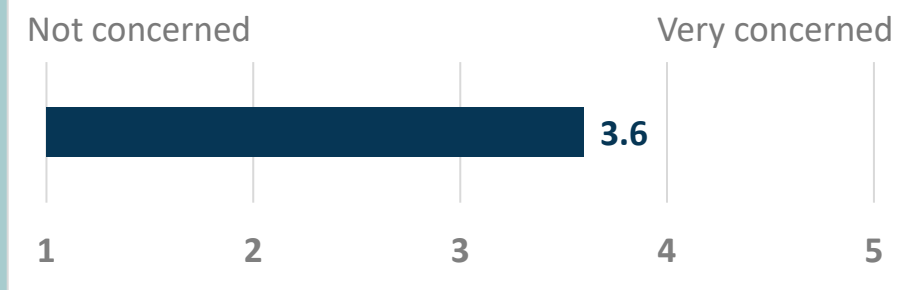
Top 10 Strategies

Below are strategies that received the highest support in order of their weighted average, with 1 being no support and 5 supporting.

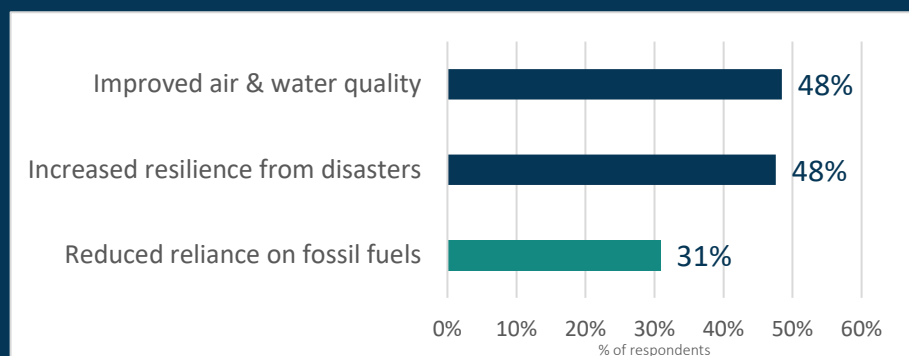
- Identify high priority conservation lands, 3.89
- Incentives for new buildings - more efficient, 3.88
- Use green infrastructure to better manage impacts of stormwater, 3.88
- Improve walking conditions, 3.85
- Expand/Initiate organics programs, 3.84
- Expand/connect bike networks, 3.83
- Educate / incentivize sustainable landscaping practices, 3.82
- Education programs for conservation and renewables, 3.81
- Provide waste audit services to businesses, 3.78
- Promote energy audits and funding for increased efficiency, 3.74



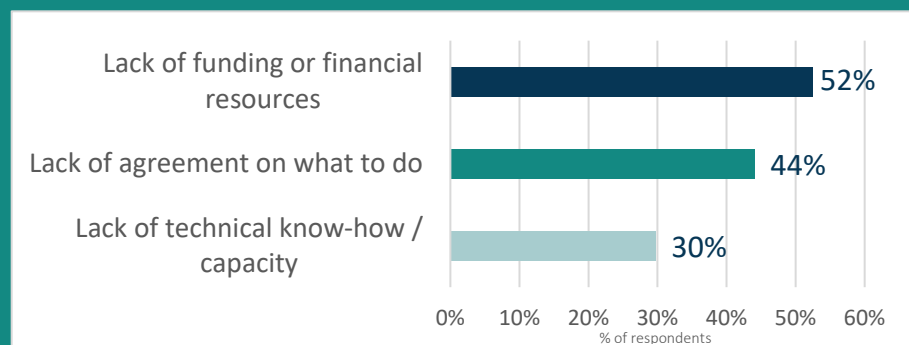
Community level of concern about climate impacts



Community ranked 3 most important potential benefits when addressing climate change



Community ranked 3 issues most likely to prevent our community from acting



- 75% Climate change is happening
- 84% Addressing climate change will be good for our local economy
- 83% Policy makers should consider scientific projections about what the climate might be like in 50 years

Includes responses that were neutral, somewhat agreed and agreed with these statements.



Results of Publicly Advertised Survey

A total of 1,080 community members completed the publicly advertised survey. They live, work and study in College, Ferguson, Halfmoon, Harris and Patton Townships and State College Borough.

How do these survey results compare?

The public opinion responses aligned with the random mailed survey with the following noticeable differences:

Expected impacts

- 1 - Impacts on ecosystems
- 2 - Impacts on agriculture
- 3 - More severe storms
- 4 - **Health impacts**

Highest ranked strategies **Top 3**

The strategies that received the highest support align with the random mailed results.

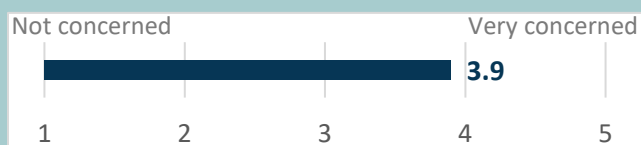
Identify high priority conservation lands, 4.48

Local policy to preserve ag and forested land, 4.48

Use green infrastructure to better manage impacts of stormwater, 4.47

★ Note: All strategies scored over 4 except for 'Require government to commit to 100% renewable energy' which scored 3.86.

Level of Concern



Preventing action

The third issue identified as most likely to prevent our community from acting was **lack of political will**, not technical know-how.

Demographics

- 58% of the respondents were women and 35% were men, which is opposite from the random mailed survey.
- 83% of the respondents have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 54% in the random mailed survey.

Next Steps

The results will serve as the foundation for community ownership and commitment for actions in the CAAP, and will be a source of useful information going forward into the implementation phase of climate action and adaptation. The reports will be shared with the General Forum, municipal managers, authorities and other relevant stakeholders. A press release and social media updates will be sent out to direct the community to view the results. Both reports will be available on the COG website (www.crcog.net/climateaction) and CentreSustains.com.

The next step is to develop the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan and have the six municipalities adopt it. The Plan will be made available for public review in late summer, early fall for public feedback.

Continued active support of key stakeholders and inclusive community engagement will be necessary to design an effective Climate Action and Adaptation Plan. It's vitally important to have collaborations with governmental entities, businesses, community organizations and residents. Through these efforts and others, the Centre Region can achieve additional benefits beyond reducing emissions, including saving money and improving Centre Region's economic vitality and its quality of life.

Full Report: <https://www.crcog.net/sustain-survey>

