

Climate Change: Beliefs

Background

Health indicator report

- The purpose of this health indicator report is to estimate climate change beliefs among adults aged 18 and over living in Halton Region.
- There is a wide range of understandings, beliefs, and values related to climate change, which may influence the population's acceptance of climate change-related policies. Knowing where Halton residents fall on the belief spectrum can help us understand how to promote policies related to climate change.
- Residents were classified into six segments of climate change beliefs, ranging from the highest belief in climate change to the lowest belief: **Alarmed > Concerned > Cautious > Disengaged > Doubtful > Dismissive.**
- Classification into one of the six segments was based on questions about the importance of climate change to you personally; how worried you are about climate change; how much you think climate change will harm you in your lifetime; and how much you think climate change will harm future generations.
- The results from this report will be used to inform Halton Public Health's Climate Change and Health vulnerability assessment and/or adaptation planning, as required in the Ontario Public Health Standards *Healthy Environments and Climate Change Guideline, 2018*
- This health indicator report uses data from the Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System (RRFSS).

Key findings

- In 2020, Halton residents fell into the following six segments of climate change beliefs:
 - 41% are alarmed
 - 34% are concerned
 - 12% are cautious
 - 3% are disengaged
 - 8% are doubtful
 - 2% are dismissive
- 90% of Halton respondents felt the issue of climate change is somewhat, very or extremely important to them
- 80% of respondents are somewhat or very worried about climate change
- 38% of respondents think climate change will harm them in their lifetime quite a bit or a great deal
- 81% of respondents think climate change will harm future generations quite a bit or a great deal
- Females, younger adults and those who are post-secondary graduates tended to lean more towards a higher belief in climate change compared to males, older adults, and those who are not post-secondary graduates.

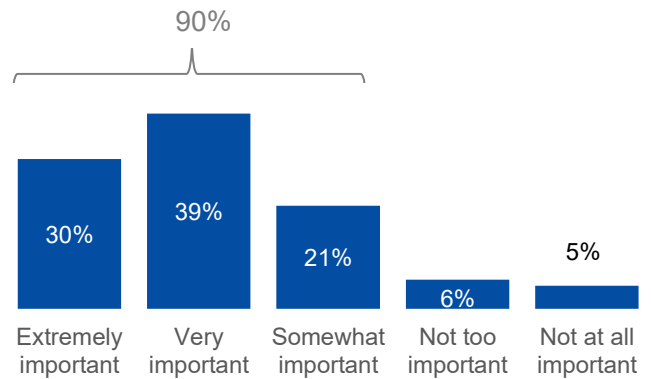


Personal importance of climate change

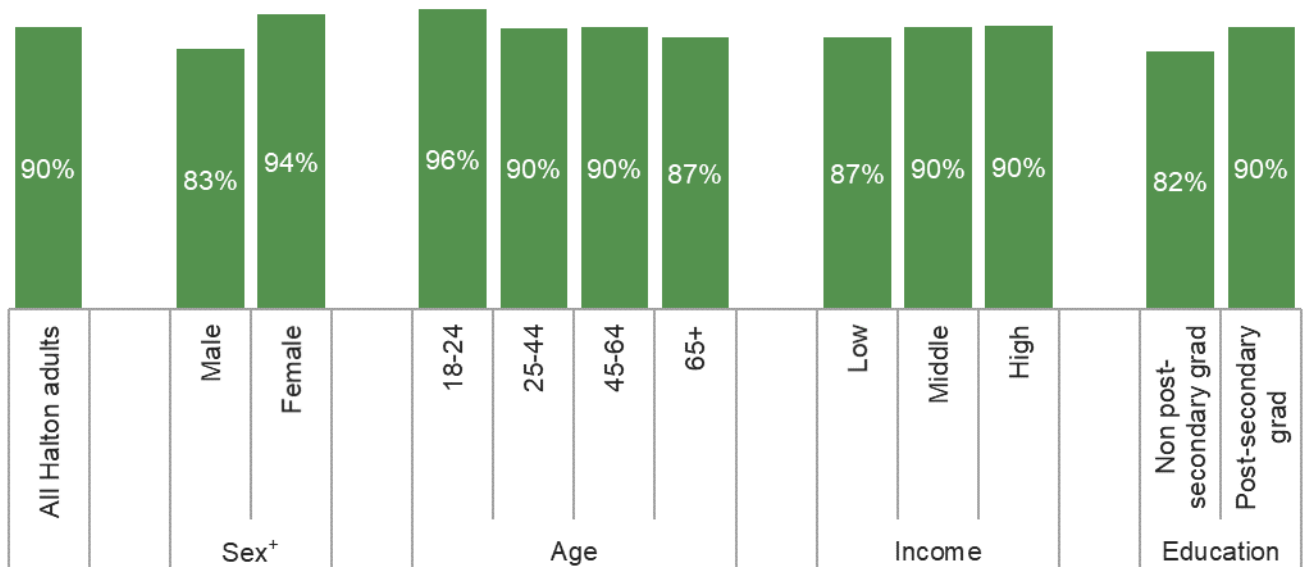
Extremely important, very important or somewhat important

In 2020/21:

- 90% of Halton adult respondents felt that the issue of climate change was extremely (30%), very (39%) or somewhat important (21%) to them personally. Additionally, 6% felt it was not too important and 5% felt it was not at all important.
- Females were more likely to feel that the issue of climate change was extremely, very or somewhat important to them personally compared to males, and this difference was **statistically significant**.
- There were no statistically significant differences by age group, income or education in the percentage of Halton respondents who felt that the issue of climate change was extremely, very or somewhat important to them personally.



Percentage of adults aged 18 and over by how important climate change is to them personally, Halton Region, 2020-2021



Percentage of adults aged 18 and over who felt climate change is extremely, very or somewhat important to them personally, Halton Region, 2020-2021

* Indicates a statistically significant difference, as mentioned in text above.

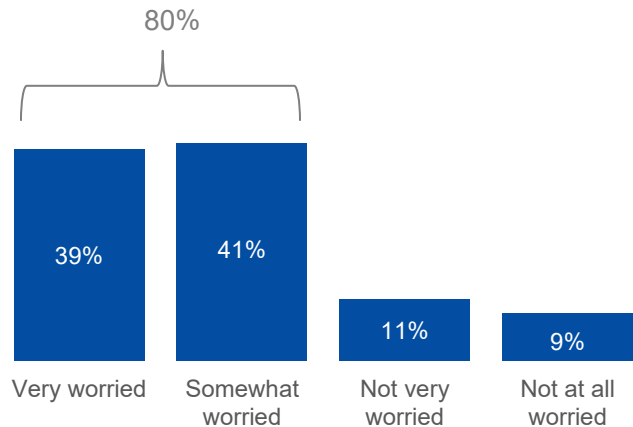


Worry about climate change

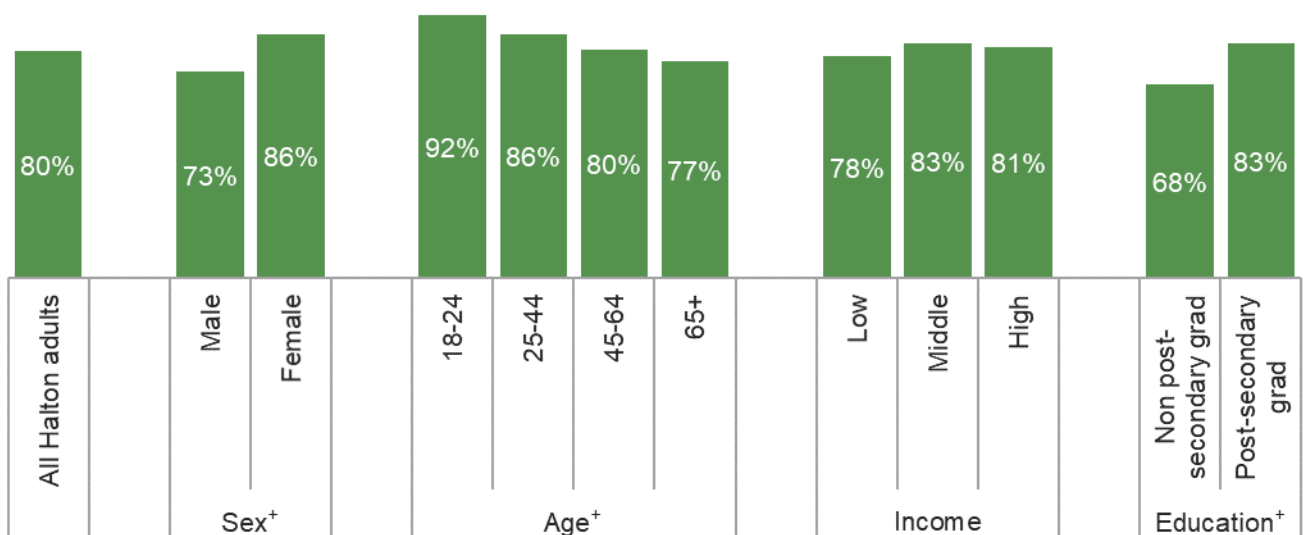
Very worried or somewhat worried

In 2020/21:

- 80% of Halton adult respondents were very (39%) or somewhat (41%) worried about climate change. Additionally, 11% were not very worried and 9% were not at all worried.
- Females were more likely to feel very or somewhat worried about climate change compared to males, and this difference was **statistically significant**.
- Adults aged 18-24 were more likely to feel very or somewhat worried about climate change compared to adults aged 65+, and this difference was **statistically significant**.
- Adults who are post-secondary graduates were more likely to feel very or somewhat worried about climate change compared to adults who are not post secondary graduates, and this difference was **statistically significant**.
- There were no statistically significant differences by income in the percentage of Halton adult respondents who were very or somewhat worried about climate change.



Percentage of adults aged 18 and over by how worried they are about climate change, Halton Region, 2020-2021



Percentage of adults aged 18 and over who felt very or somewhat worried about climate change, Halton Region, 2020-2021

⁺ Indicates a statistically significant difference, as mentioned in text above.

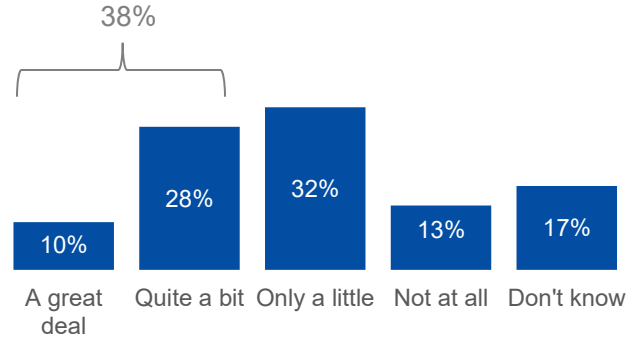


Belief about climate change harm to self

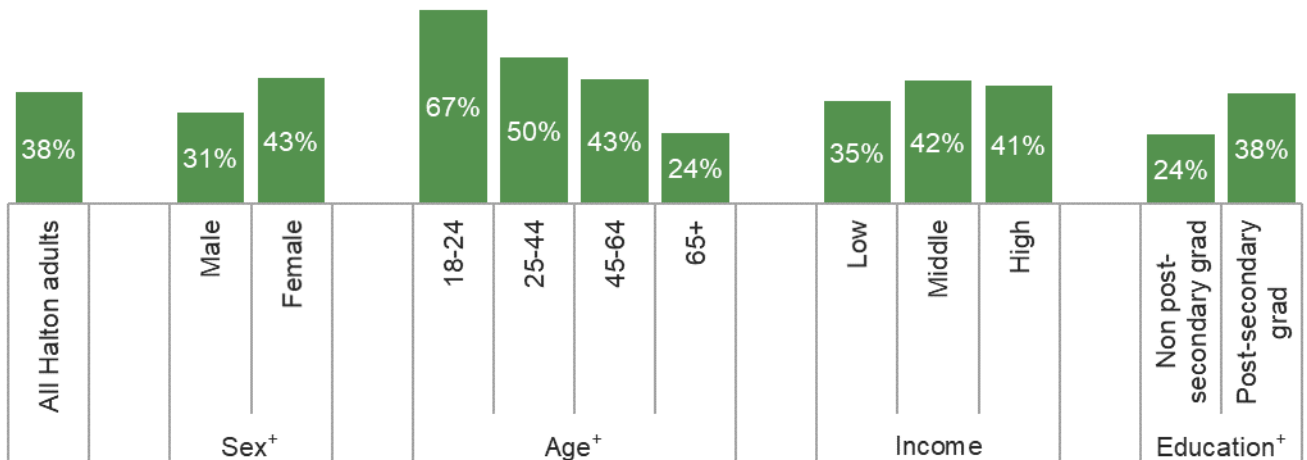
A great deal, quite a bit

In 2020/21:

- 38% of Halton adult respondents felt climate change would harm them a great deal (10%), or quite a bit in their lifetime (28%). Additionally, 32% felt it would only harm them a little in their life-time, 13% not at all and 17% didn't know.
- Females were more likely to think that climate change would harm them a great deal or quite a bit in their lifetime compared to males. This difference was **statistically significant**.
- Adults aged 18-24 were more likely to think that climate change would harm them a great deal or quite a bit in their lifetime compared to adults aged 65+, and this difference was **statistically significant**.
- Adults who are post-secondary graduates were more likely to think that climate change would harm them a great deal or quite a bit in their lifetime compared to adults who are not post-secondary graduates. This difference was **statistically significant**.
- There were no statistically significant differences by income in the percentage of Halton adult respondents who felt that climate change would harm them a great deal or quite a bit in their lifetime.



Percentage of adults aged 18 and over by how much they feel climate change will harm them in their lifetime, Halton Region, 2020-2021



Percentage of adults aged 18 and over who felt climate change would harm them a great deal or quite a bit in their lifetime, Halton Region, 2020-2021

⁺ Indicates a statistically significant difference, as mentioned in text above.

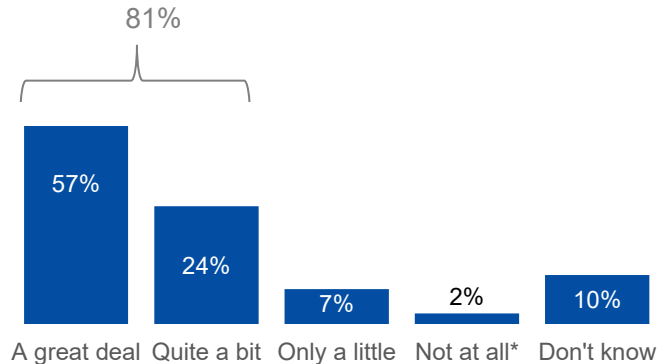


Belief about climate change harm to future generations

A great deal, quite a bit

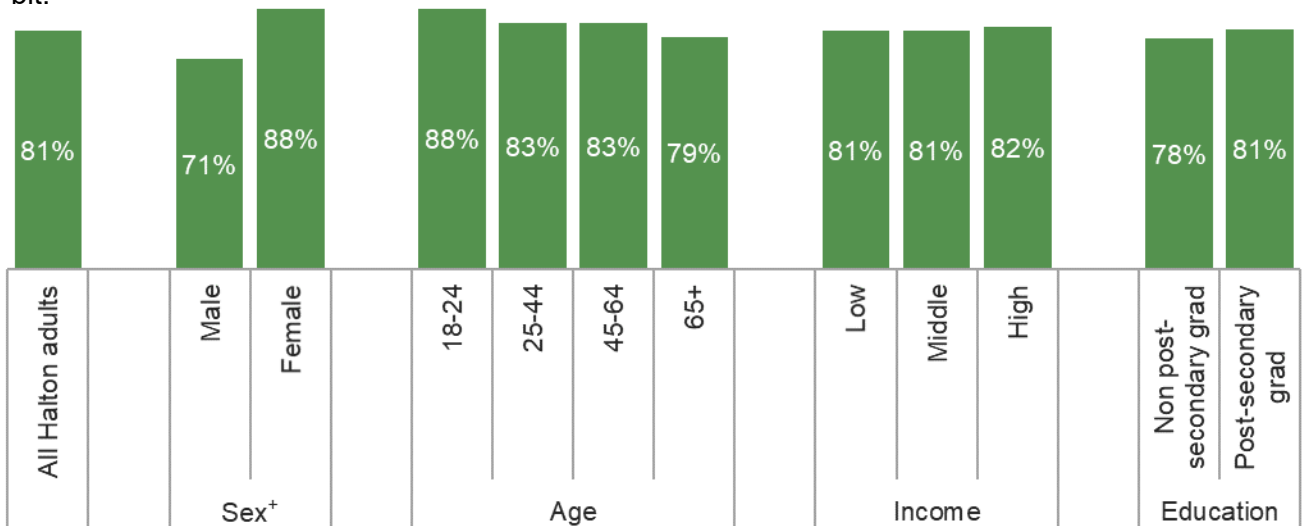
In 2020/21:

- 81% of Halton adult respondents felt climate change would harm future generations a great deal (57%) or quite a bit (24%). Additionally, 7% felt it would harm future generations only a little, 2% not at all and 10% didn't know.
- Overall, respondents were more likely to think that climate change would harm future generations than it would harm themselves in their lifetime.
- Female were more likely to think that climate change would harm future generations a great deal or quite a bit compared to males. This difference was **statistically significant**.



Percentage of adults aged 18 and over by how much they feel climate change will harm future generations, Halton Region, 2020-2021

- There were no statistically significant differences by age, income or education in the percentage of Halton respondents who felt climate change would harm future generations a great deal or quite a bit.



Percentage of adults aged 18 and over who felt climate change would harm future generations a great deal or quite a bit, Halton Region, 2020-2021

* Indicates a statistically significant difference, as mentioned in text above.

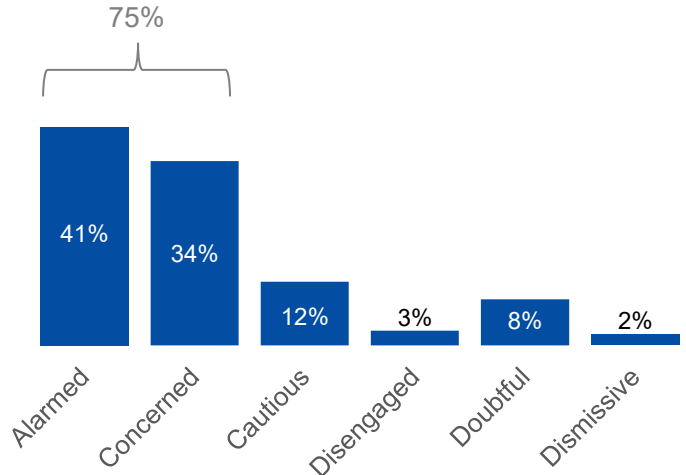


Climate change views

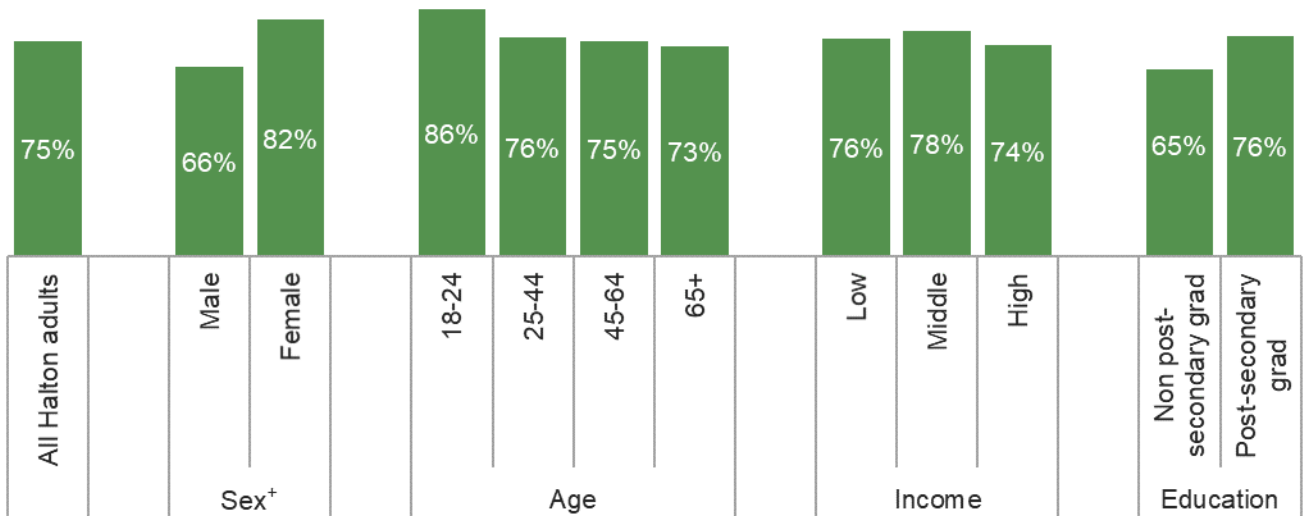
Alarmed, Concerned

In 2020/21:

- 75% of Halton adult respondents fell into the Alarmed or Concerned categories on the scale of climate change beliefs. Additionally, 12% were Cautious, 3% Disengaged, 8% Doubtful and 2% Dismissive.
- Females were more likely to be Alarmed or Concerned on the scale of climate change beliefs compared to males. This difference was **statistically significant**.
- There were no statistically significant differences by age, income or education in the percentage of Halton adult respondents who were Alarmed or Concerned on the scale of climate change beliefs.



Percentage of adults aged 18 and over by scale of climate change belief, Halton Region, 2020-2021



Percentage of adults aged 18 and over who are Alarmed or Concerned about climate change, Halton Region, 2020-2021

⁺ Indicates a statistically significant difference, as mentioned in text above.

About RRFSS

- The Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System (RRFSS) is an on-going telephone survey (landline and cell phone) used to collect information on attitudes, behaviours, knowledge and awareness of issues related to health in Halton. RRFSS is conducted by the Institute of Social Research and York University.
- Halton Region purchased an additional 800 responses to specifically focus on climate change attitudes, behaviours, knowledge and awareness among Halton residents aged 18 and over. Responses were collected from January to March 2020. Data collection was then paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and resumed from April to December 2021.
- For more information on RRFSS methodology, limitations and statistical terms see the Data Notes and Data Interpretation Guide at www.halton.ca/For-Residents/Public-Health/Health-Statistics.

Data notes

Definitions:

The **Alarmed** are convinced climate change is happening, human-caused, an urgent threat, and they strongly support climate policies. Most, however, do not know what they or others can do to solve the problem. The **Concerned** think human-caused climate change is happening, is a serious threat, and support climate policies. However, they tend to believe that climate impacts are still distant in time and space, thus climate change remains a lower priority issue. The **Cautious** haven't yet made up their minds: Is climate change happening? Is it human-caused? Is it serious? The **Disengaged** know little about climate change. They rarely or never hear about it in the media. The **Doubtful** do not think climate change is happening or they believe it is just a natural cycle. They do not think much about the issue or consider it a serious risk. The **Dismissive** believe climate change is not happening, human-caused, or a threat, and most endorse conspiracy theories (e.g., "global warming is a hoax").¹

Data Source: Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System [2020-2021], Halton Region Public Health and Institute for Social Research, York University.

Estimates marked with an asterisk (*) should be interpreted with caution due to high variability. Estimates marked with a double asterisk (**) are not reportable.

References

1. Chryst, B., Marlon, J., van der Linden, S., Leiserowitz, A., Maibach, E., & Roser-Renouf, C. (2018). Global warming's "Six Americas Short Survey": Audience segmentation of climate change views using a four question instrument. *Environmental Communication*, 12(8), 1109-1122. <https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/visualizations-data/sassy/>

For more health indicator and health status reports, visit the Halton Health Statistics webpage at halton.ca.

Last updated: February 2024