



CLIMATE CONSCIOUSNESS: SHAPING FUTURES AT UOFT

Author: Kira Jensen, Principal Investigator & Laidlaw Leadership and Research Scholar

Research Advisor: Professor Matthew Hoffmann

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INTRODUCTION

Understanding the impact of climate change education (CCE) and exposure is crucial for supporting the next generations career and life trajectories. This study investigates the connections between CCE, students' awareness and optimism, engagement in climate-related activities, and the adjustments students make in their lifestyle choices. These relationships were explored to reveal how climate consciousness can shape meaningful, actionable responses amongst undergraduate students.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How does climate change awareness and educational experiences affect the career and life planning decisions of undergraduate students at the University of Toronto?

OBJECTIVES

- Identify what factors influence current undergraduate students' perceptions, understanding, and optimism regarding climate change.
- Assess the strengths and limitations of current climate change curricula.
- Examine the challenges that students face to sustainable living for insight into how they can be better supported.
- Determine whether increased knowledge and awareness about climate change influences students' decisions and experiences of climate change.

METHODS

- The study involved 155 undergraduate students from the University of Toronto, including four individuals who participated in interviews.
- Data was collected through a structured survey containing 30 questions, and semi-structured interviews to capture both quantitative and qualitative perspectives.

ANALYSIS

- Chi-square and Cramers V tests were used to analyze associations between categorical variables, while regression analyses assessed the impact of multiple independent variables on changes in lifestyle choices.

SURVEY DEVELOPMENT

The survey was built to assess students' exposure to climate change education, understanding, and impact on attitudes and behaviours.

- Education exposure questions evaluated the depth and frequency of climate change topics covered in secondary school and undergraduate curricula.
- Perceptions and actions were examined to measure students' climate change knowledge, awareness, and engagement in related activities.

RESULTS

Figure 1: Relative Frequency of Challenges Experienced by Students Due to Climate Change

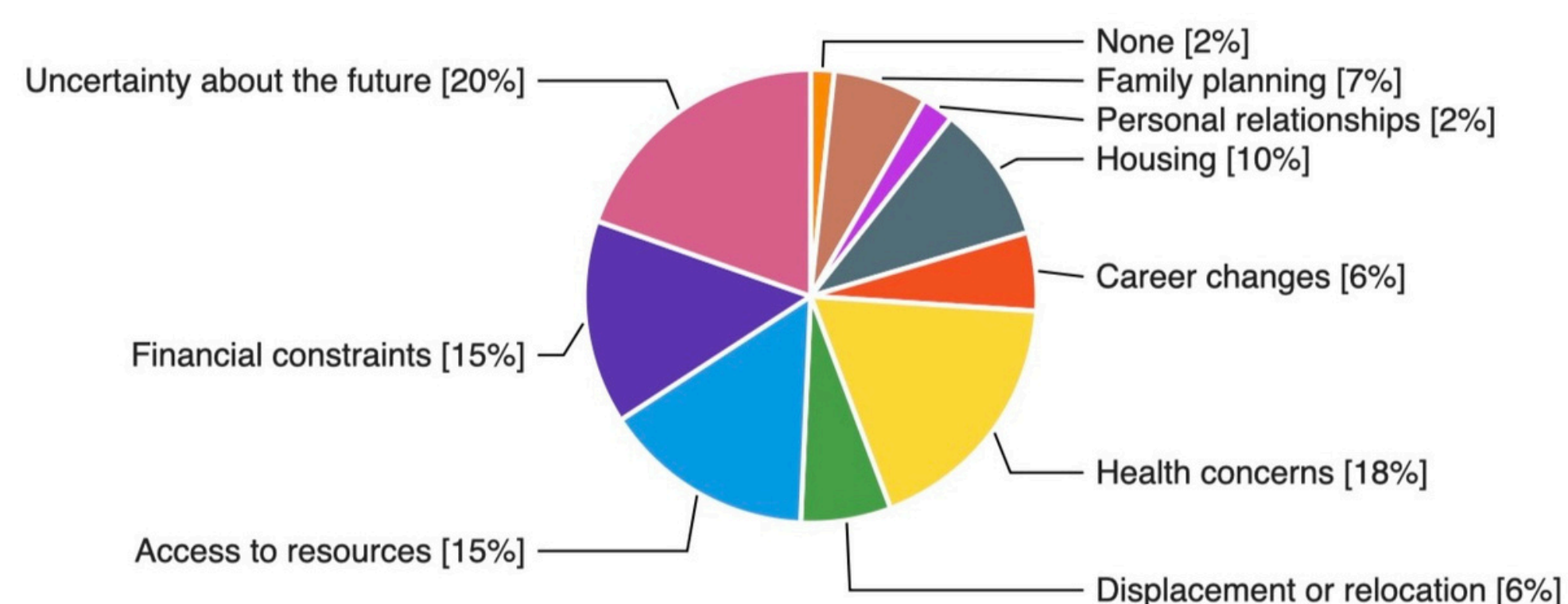


Figure 2: Comparison of Exposure to Climate Education in University versus Secondary School

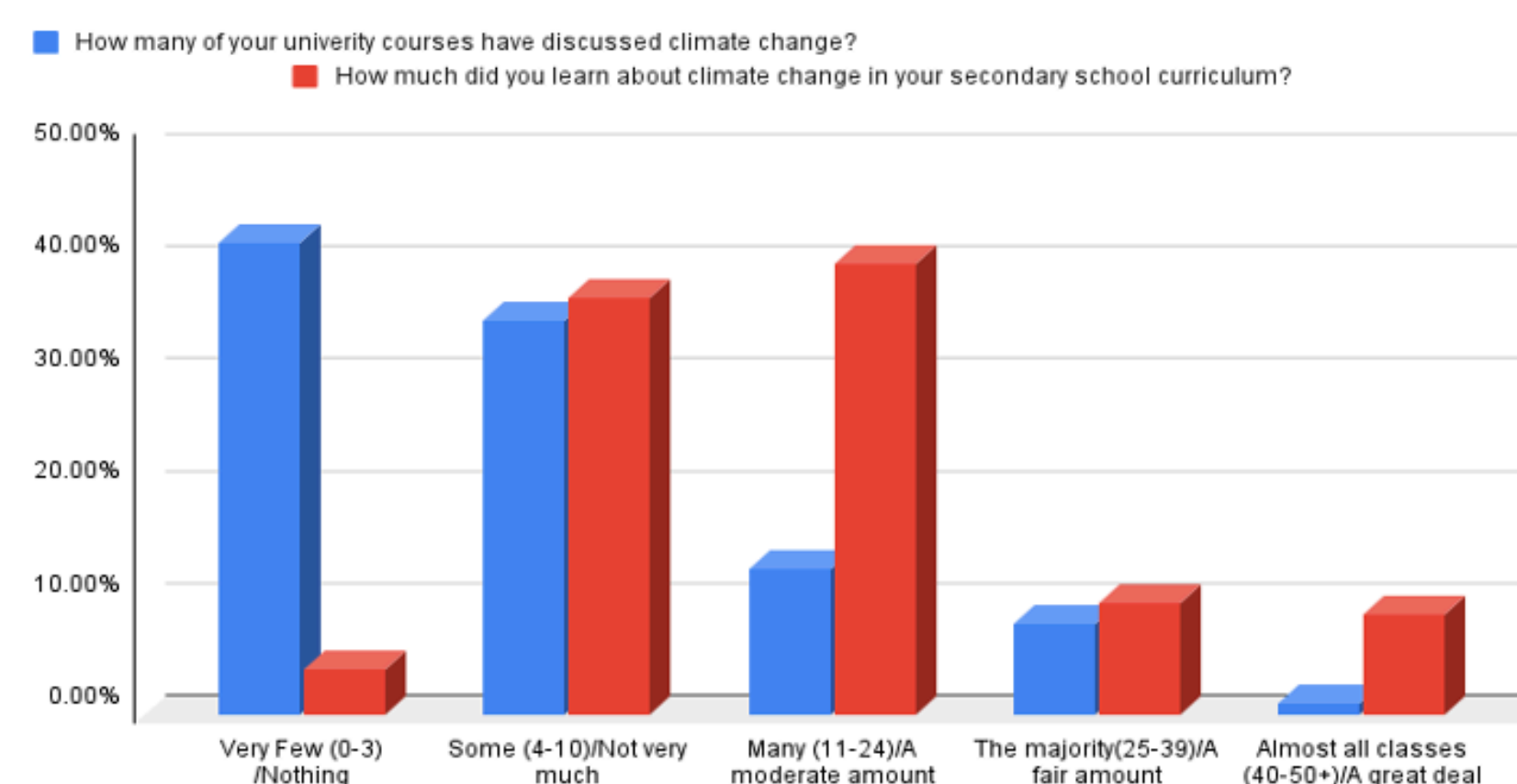
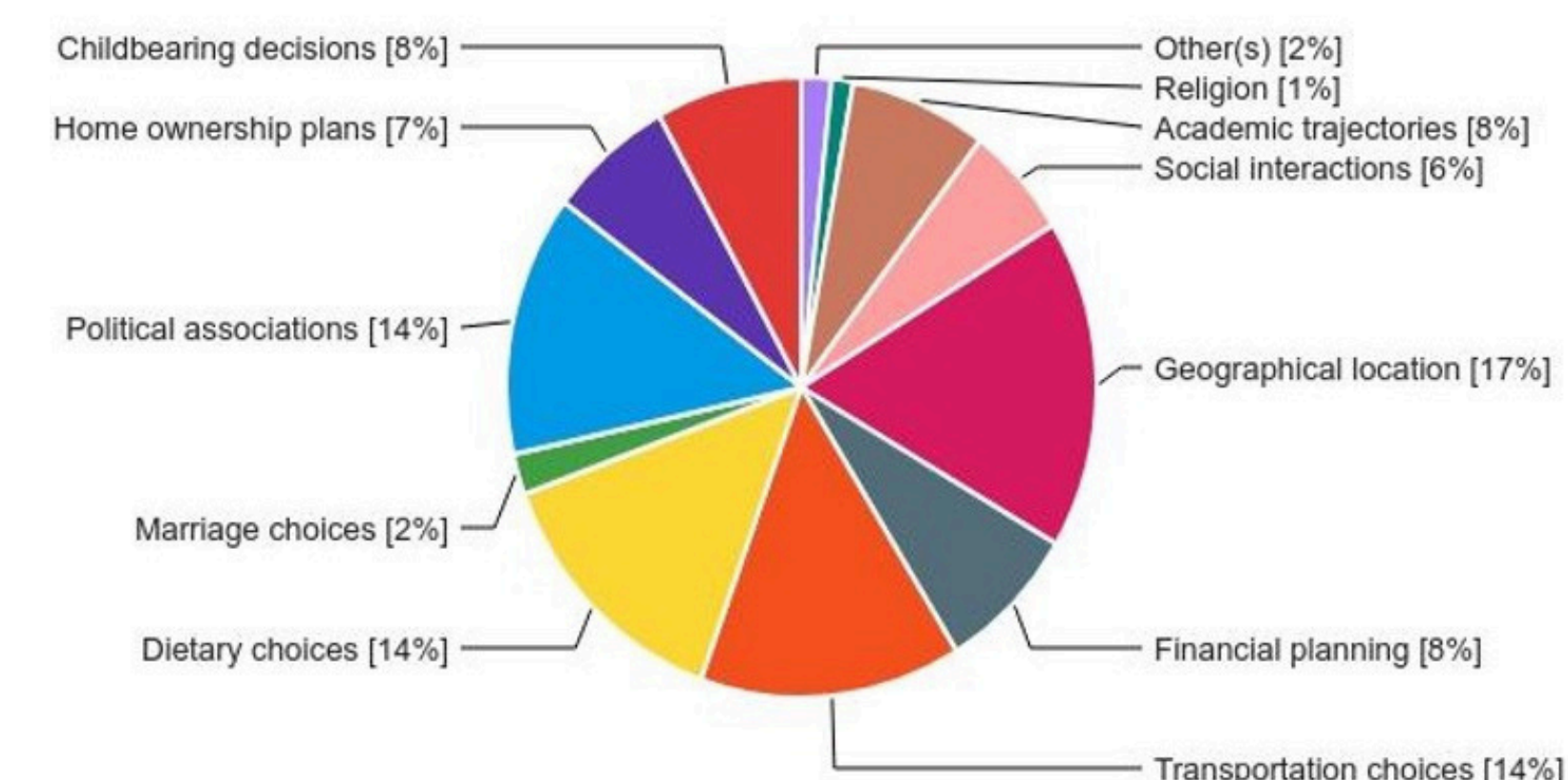


Figure 3: Relative Frequency of Lifestyle Factors and Decisions Impacted by Climate Change



KEY FINDINGS

1. Students are unsatisfied with the depth, frequency, and relevance of their secondary school and post-secondary CCE.
2. Increased CCE, whether through formal courses or informal channels, is associated with a greater likelihood of students making proactive lifestyle changes.
3. High-impact, well-designed courses and projects most effectively influence students' climate-conscious behaviors.

CONCLUSION

This study evidenced the need for increased student and educator support in developing effective curricula. To achieve this, policies must provide educators with training and resources for effective approaches. Future research should focus on evaluating various educational methodologies, understanding the impact of students' backgrounds on their perceptions of climate change, and developing strategies to improve emotional resilience as well as practical application of climate knowledge.