

Mt. Ararat High School Student Energy Survey

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Project Goals

The project goal was to collect and evaluate the Mt. Ararat High School student opinion about climate change and the environment around them. The student survey was designed to get as much information as conveniently possible about the views, knowledge, and priorities of Mt. Ararat students. The results will inform the town of Topsham's Energy Committee about student views on climate issues and action.

Survey Design

First, two pre-existing climate surveys were reviewed: the town of Topsham's original adult survey and a student survey from Brunswick High School. Edits were made from these templates to make them more relevant to Mt. Ararat students, such as changing what town was being discussed, removing questions that younger people might not know the answers to, and helping distinguish between residents of Topsham and those of other towns in the school district. Ultimately, while the changes made were minor, they were sufficient to make the survey questions appropriate to Mt. Ararat students.

Survey Overview

The survey was emailed to students and available for about 1.5 weeks. Out of ~750 students, 139 participated in the survey or 18.5%. The first part of the survey was a general overview of students' awareness of climate change in the community. This included questions about their concerns and what impacts they've observed. The second optional part gathered demographic information such as age, residence, and housing status. The third, optional portion consisted of five more in-depth questions about individuals' actions, and preparations for climate change.

Data

Q1: How concerned are you about changes to our weather on a scale of 0-4, with 0 being "not at all" and 4 being "extremely"?

Average: 3

Q2: How important is it for Topsham to address potential impacts of severe weather on a scale of 0-4, with 0 being "not at all" and 4 being "extremely"?

Average: 3

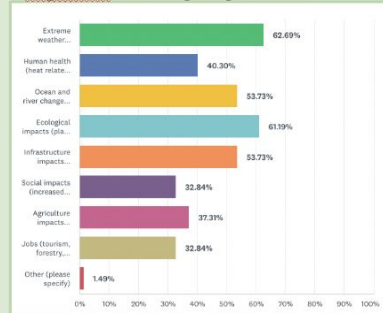
Q4: What places and populations in Topsham do you think are more vulnerable to climate change?

Most common answers: areas near rivers, woodlands, poorer people

Q5: How should Topsham's climate action target compare to the state of Maine?

41% say to set a similar goal (26% say greater, 3% say less)

Q14: Which climate related impacts should Topsham's climate plan prioritize?



Q6: 34% of students surveyed live full-time in Topsham

Q9: What is your grade?

28% 9th, 25% 10th, 16% 11th, 31% 12th

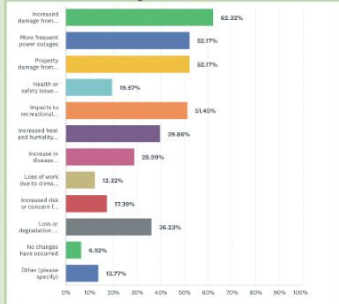
Q12: Email is by far the preferred way of receiving info

60% of students agreed to answer 5 more in depth questions

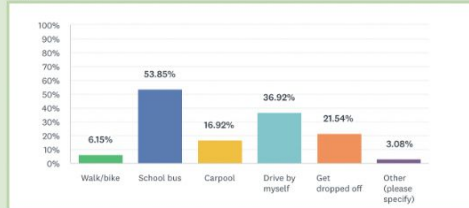
Q18: What do you think the school can do to help the climate?

Most common answers: reduce lunch plastic packaging, encourage recycling/composting, increase climate awareness/education

Q3: What kinds of climate related issues have you experienced recently that you haven't in the past?



Q16: What mode of transit do you use most to get to school?



Analysis of Results

Most people surveyed are fairly concerned about climate impacts, with some outliers. The biggest observed concerns involve extreme weather, flooding, and populations near water. The most observed impacts included damage to property and public areas, power outages, and weather changes. Many people favored climate action (setting a similar goal to the state of Maine), but were unsure of how to implement it. More education about everyday energy use and generation should be considered as part of the required high school curriculum, since there was a lack of understanding about how energy actually works. Some useful ideas about how to decrease climate impacts in the high school included less plastic waste (lunch packaging, utensils) and more recycling efforts.

References

Brunswick High School Energy Survey (2023)
Topsham Energy Survey (2024)

Acknowledgements

Mt. Ararat students (thank you!)