

Advancing Education for Global Impact

2024 Mohawk College
Student Sustainability
Survey Results





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Introduction

The 2024 Student Sustainability Survey, conducted by the Sustainability Office from September 16 to October 6, 2024, aimed to gather insights from Mohawk College students about sustainability education. A total of 2,095 students from various campuses and programs participated, providing valuable feedback on their interest in sustainability topics, preferred teaching methods, and views on the college's sustainability efforts. This survey builds on the 2021 Sustainability Survey and supports Mohawk College's Climate Action Plan, School of Climate Action and Academic Plan.

The results show strong demand for sustainability education across all academic disciplines. Students expressed a desire for an institution that reflects sustainability values and an interest in applying sustainability knowledge after graduation. Hands-on learning opportunities, such as internships, work placements, and campus/community projects, were the most highly preferred teaching methods. Additionally, students wanted sustainability practices integrated into campus operations as part of their educational experience.

In terms of specific topics, students were particularly interested in the links between sustainability and human health, as well as the environmental impact of human activity. Over two-thirds of students have participated in at least one sustainability-related opportunity at Mohawk, with many reporting positive impacts on their awareness and actions regarding sustainability.

The survey results offer important insights into how Mohawk College can strengthen sustainability education. The Responsible Futures Planning Team, a group of students and staff, reviewed the findings, and the students on the team developed actionable recommendations to improve sustainability efforts. These recommendations, detailed in the full report, will guide future initiatives to ensure that sustainability education meets students' needs and aligns with the broader goals of the college's sustainability efforts.

This survey provides a foundation for continued growth in sustainability education at Mohawk College and will be used to track progress in future surveys.

For questions or comments regarding the report or survey, please contact sustainability@mohawkcollege.ca.

Program-specific results may also be available upon request.



Methodology and data considerations

A note on sample size

Please note that certain sections of this report, where results are broken down by campus or school, are based on a smaller sample size. While these responses offer valuable insights, the limited number of responses may affect how broadly these findings can be applied to the overall student population. As such, caution is advised when interpreting these results, as they may not fully reflect the views of all students.

Methodology for analyzing open-ended responses

To identify common themes in student feedback from open-ended questions, the following steps were taken:

1. A random sample of 100 responses was selected.
2. Responses identified as obviously AI-generated were removed.
3. The remaining responses were grouped into themes.
4. The most common themes were highlighted in the report, along with direct quotes that represent the feedback.

Please note that categorizing responses into themes involved subjective judgment.

Student feedback highlights



Support for sustainability in higher education

>95%

strongly agree or agree that colleges and universities should include principles of sustainable development in their operations and teachings.

>90%

strongly agree or agree that colleges and universities should help shift our values to support responsible consumption, greater social equity, and a healthier environment.

>85%

considered a college or university's impact on social and environmental issues as **very or somewhat important** when deciding which institution to attend.



~19 out of 20

feel that it is **very or somewhat important** to them to be able to make a meaningful impact on social and environmental issues in their future career.



Student feedback highlights



Interest in learning about sustainability

>90%

strongly agree or agree that sustainable development is something they would like to learn more about.



What students want to learn about sustainability

Top two topics

1. Sustainability and human health

Examining how environmental sustainability affects public health and well-being, and the health benefits of sustainable practices.

2. How humans affect nature

Understanding how human activities drive climate change and biodiversity loss, and focusing on conservation strategies, sustainable practices, and individual action.

How students want to learn about sustainability

Top two methods

3. Providing practical experience

Offering hands-on learning opportunities through internships, work placements, and involvement in campus and community projects.

4. Demonstrating sustainability on campus

Creating learning opportunities by ensuring the campus environment exemplifies sustainable practices and principles, with informative signage and interactive displays for students.

Student feedback highlights



Perceptions of institutional sustainability and student voice

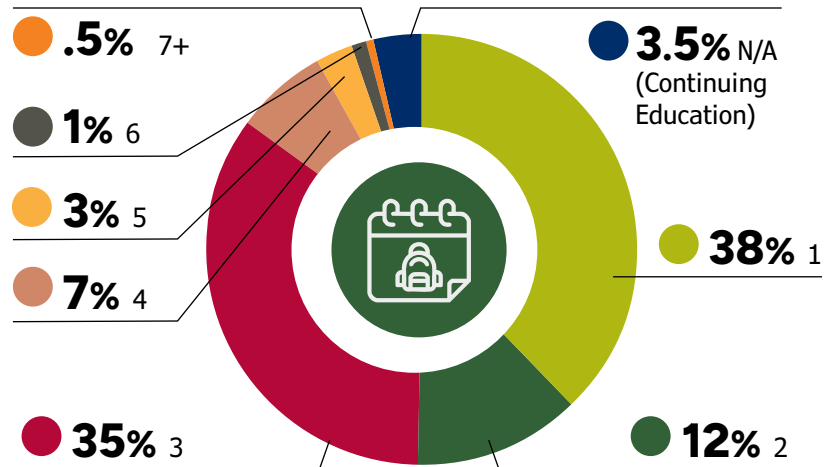


Demographics

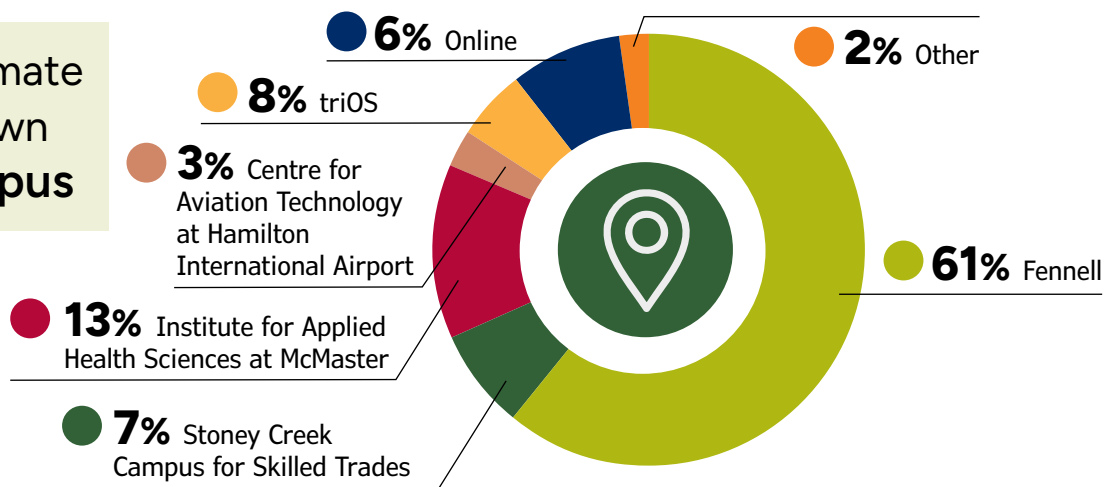
A total of **2,095 students** participated in this optional survey, representing a variety of campuses, programs, and semesters. The demographic breakdown of the responses is shown below.



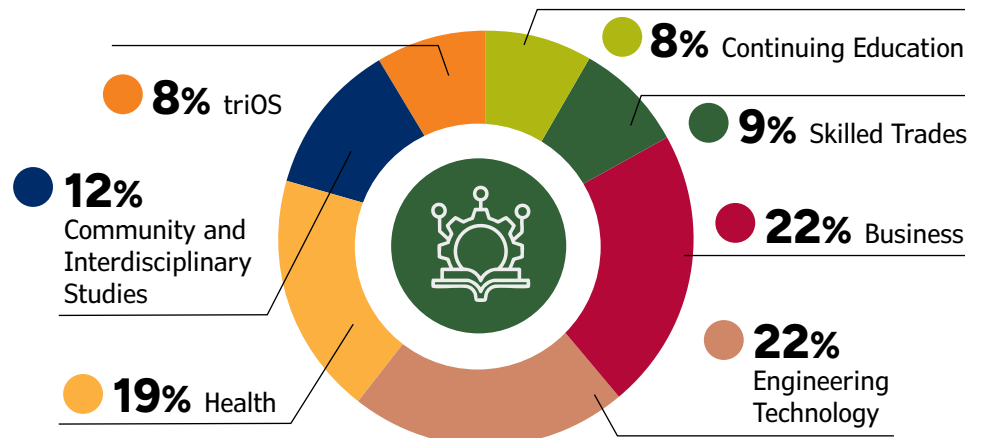
Approximate
breakdown
by semester/
level



Approximate
breakdown
by campus



Approximate
breakdown
by school/
academic
division



Perspectives on education for sustainable development

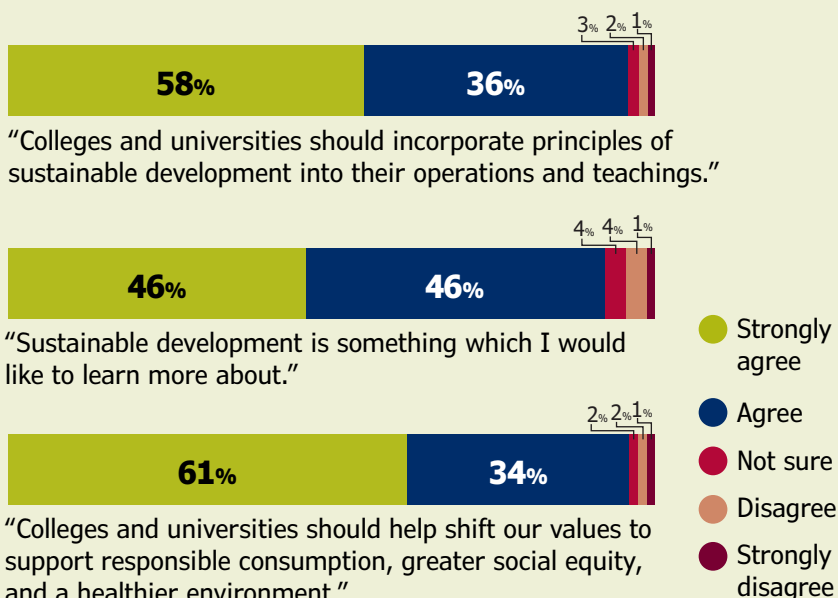


Perspectives on sustainability in higher education

We asked students about their interest in sustainability within the academic context to understand the demand for sustainability initiatives. The results show a strong desire among Mohawk College students for sustainability-focused education and actions.

Taking a definition of sustainable development as "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

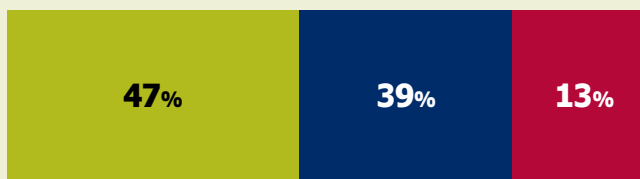
To what extent, would you say that you agree or disagree with the following statements?



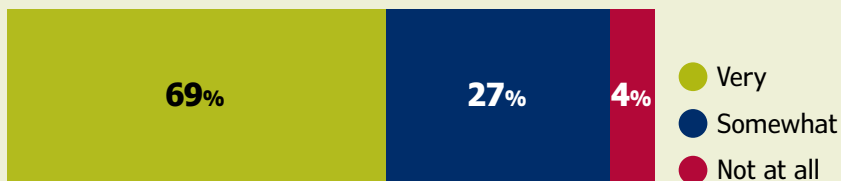
Sustainability in school choice and careers

We asked students how sustainability influenced their decision to attend Mohawk College and how it shapes their career aspirations. The results highlight the growing importance of sustainability in the college selection process and in students' long-term professional goals.

How important was a college or university's commitment to social and environmental issues in your personal decision on where to attend?



Thinking of your future career, how important is it to you that you can make a meaningful impact on social and environmental issues?



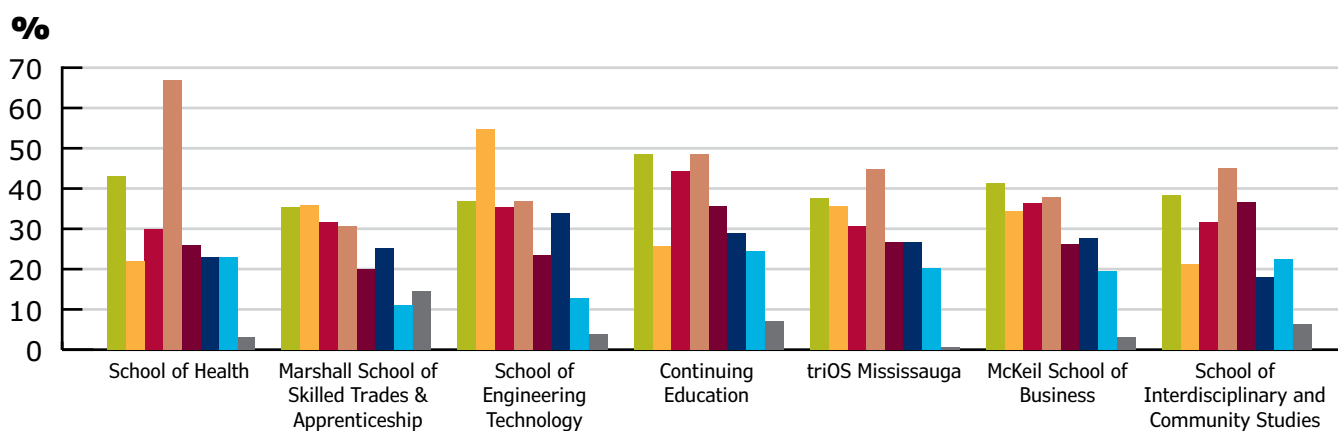
Preferences for learning and teaching sustainability concepts

We asked students about the sustainability topics they are most interested in and their preferences for how these topics should be taught. The findings provide insight into students' priorities and suggest the most effective teaching approaches for sustainability education.



What areas of sustainability would you most like to learn more about during your program, whether through classes or extracurriculars?
Please choose up to four options.

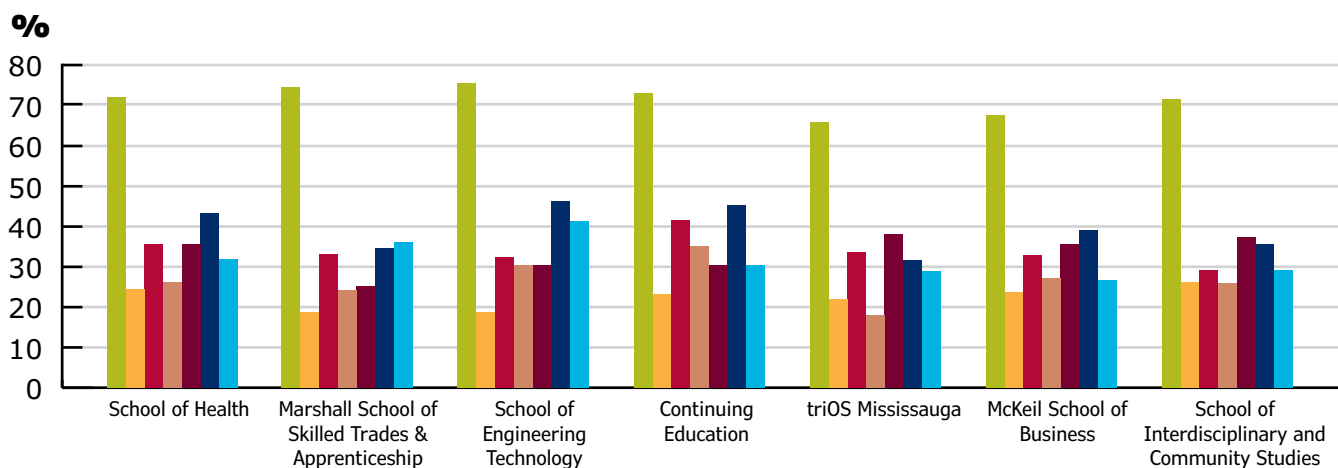
Legend	Option	Description
	How humans affect nature	Understanding how human activities drive climate change and biodiversity loss, and focusing on conservation strategies, sustainable practices, and individual action
	Green technologies and research	Exploring innovations such as renewable energy, electric vehicles, and sustainable materials, and engaging in research to advance sustainability knowledge and innovation
	Creating sustainable change	Learning how to drive transformative change in business, politics, and society to prioritize long-term environmental and social sustainability
	Sustainability and human health	Examining how environmental sustainability affects public health and well-being, and the health benefits of sustainable practices
	Community, global impact, and diverse perspectives	Learning how climate change affects different communities, its links to social justice, and the solutions held by global and Indigenous cultures
	Green careers and sector impacts	Exploring sustainable career paths and how various fields or industries, including your own, can contribute to sustainability goals
	Navigating sustainability emotions	Addressing climate anxiety and emotional responses related to sustainability through support and coping strategies
	None of these	





Imagine every college and university had to teach students the skills needed for sustainable development. What would be the best methods for students to learn this? Please choose up to four methods.

Legend	Option	Description
●	Providing practical experience	Offering hands-on learning opportunities through internships, work placements, and involvement in campus and community projects
●	Promoting cross-disciplinary approaches	Providing opportunities to collaborate and combine insights from various fields to tackle complex sustainability challenges
●	Utilizing case studies and real-world examples	Incorporating practical case studies and examples into coursework
●	Embedding sustainability in course content	Adapting course material to illustrate how sustainability principles apply to the issues being studied, and incorporating specialized modules as needed
●	Organizing extracurricular activities	Hosting sustainability-focused events and initiatives through student organizations and academic departments
●	Demonstrating sustainability on campus	Creating learning opportunities by ensuring the campus environment exemplifies sustainable practices and principles, with informative signage and interactive displays for students
●	Engaging in applied research	Providing opportunities for students to participate in original research to explore new solutions or advance knowledge



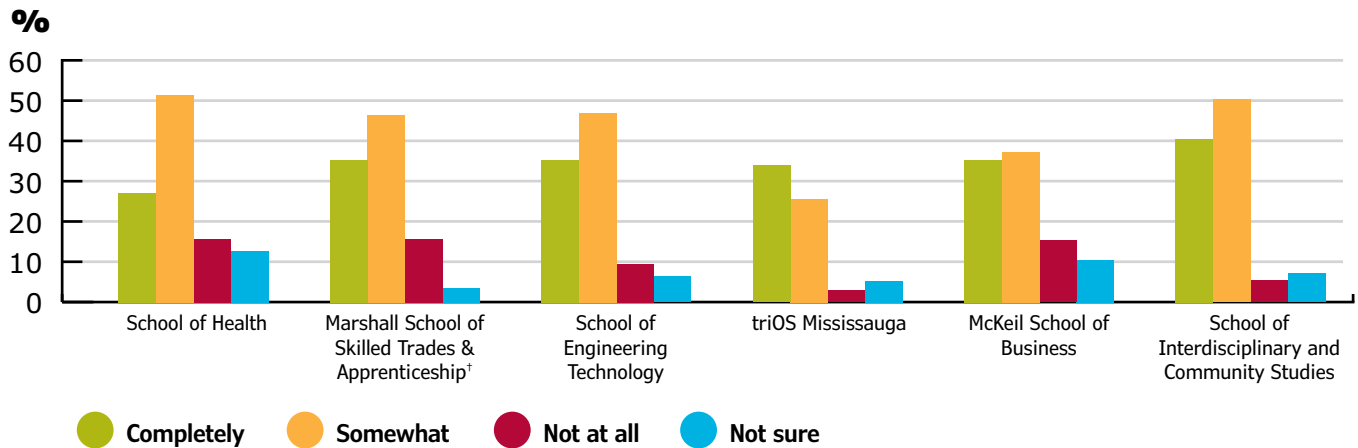
Satisfaction with current sustainability education

We asked students how satisfied they are with Mohawk College's efforts to integrate sustainability into the formal curriculum and teaching. This section helps establish a baseline for how well sustainability is being taught within the academic framework, providing insight into the effectiveness of sustainability-focused courses and content. The data gathered will be useful for measuring the impact of future curriculum improvements.

Additionally, students shared their experiences and recommendations for enhancing sustainability education within the classroom.



Reflecting on your program at Mohawk College so far, do you feel that it has equipped you to contribute to sustainable development in your field or industry?*



*Only asked to semester 3+ students

[†]Low response rate due to different semester system



Do you have any recommendations for Mohawk College educators on effectively teaching sustainability and climate change? Is there something you wish your instructors better understood about these topics?*

Help students learn how sustainability connects to their program/career

21%

“Currently I don’t believe sustainability and climate change are talked about in my program at all. Which is interesting as the technology sector is having a large impact on the world and environment, particularly with the creation and use of AI.”

Events, workshops, volunteering, awareness activities

21%

“Connecting students’ own experiences to the topic, including visual aids and hands-on activities, including on-campus workshops and guest speakers, more advertisement and exposure of Mohawk College Sustainability Team’s events and initiatives.”



“I think it’s important for students to have a hands-on approach such as community help, field trips to places that are actually working on sustainability projects [...]”

Prioritize practical, hands-on learning 20%

“Being in the photography program we use a lot of disposable stuff for studio time (mostly plastic based stuff, like tape etc). **I would prefer finding a more sustainable product to use instead of always throwing away plastic.”**

Integrate green practices into lessons and leverage campus sustainability 13%

“Climate change is a major issue nowadays along with sustainability. **In my opinion teachers should present real life examples and analogies to relate the problems and solutions [...].”**

Utilize real-life examples (current events, case studies, etc.) 9%

“Educators should recognize the link between climate change and social justice, ensuring diverse voices are part of the conversation.”

Incorporate diverse perspectives and climate/social justice 6%

*The percentages represent an approximate proportion of the sample whose responses aligned with the identified theme.

Sustainability culture at Mohawk College



Satisfaction with sustainability culture

We asked students about their satisfaction with the broader sustainability culture at Mohawk College and the Mohawk Students' Association. This includes their perspectives on campus sustainability initiatives, opportunities for action, and the overall commitment to social and environmental issues beyond the classroom. The feedback helps us understand how students perceive the college's efforts to foster a sustainable campus community and create opportunities for engagement and positive change. These results also serve as a baseline for measuring future progress in sustainability initiatives.

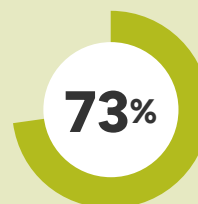
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following?

Mohawk College takes action to limit negative impacts on the environment and society.



Strongly agree or agree

My student union (Mohawk Students' Association) takes action to limit negative impacts on the environment and society.



Strongly agree or agree

Being a student at Mohawk College encourages me to think and act to help the environment and other people.



Strongly agree or agree

Mohawk College would benefit from hearing more student opinions on improving its impacts on the environment and society.



Strongly agree or agree

Sustainability participation and its impacts

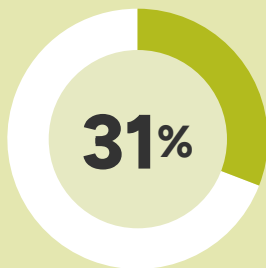
We asked students about their awareness of, engagement with, and empowerment through sustainability initiatives at Mohawk College. The responses provide valuable insights into how these initiatives have impacted their understanding and actions related to sustainability. Additionally, students offered suggestions for improving participation and strengthening sustainability efforts on campus. This section helps assess the effectiveness of current initiatives and highlights opportunities for future growth and student involvement.



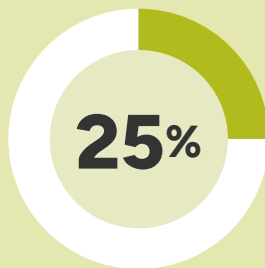
Which of the following sustainability participation opportunities, if any, have applied to you during your time at Mohawk College?
Please check all that apply.

~74%

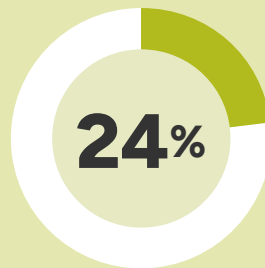
of students have participated in at least one of these sustainability efforts during their time so far at Mohawk College.*



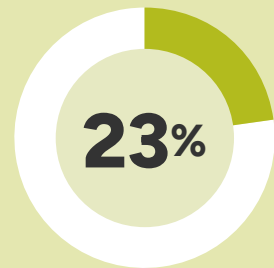
Have seen signage and/or other evidence of sustainable practices on campus



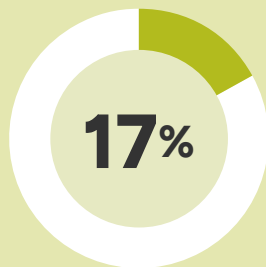
Have learned about sustainability topics as part of their coursework



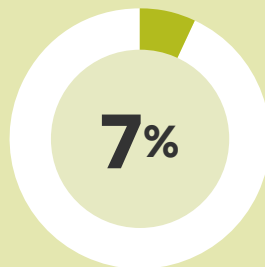
Have interacted with sustainability at a campus booth or event



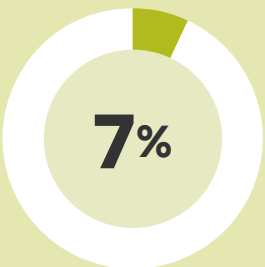
Follow Mohawk College Sustainability on Instagram (@SustainableMoCo)



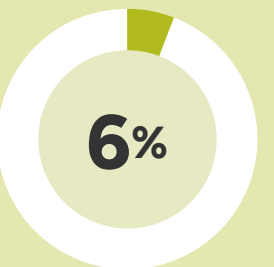
Have used a sustainability service or program offered by the college



Have had a class presentation or tour from the Sustainability Office



Have worked or volunteered with the Sustainability Office



Have been part of a sustainability-focused capstone or research project

*Numbers do not add up to 100, as students could select as many options as applied to them.



What impact, if any, have any of the experiences in the previous question had on you?*

Greater awareness,
understanding and
feelings of responsibility

54%

"I learned the importance of sustainability
and how we can take care of the environment,
conserve natural resources, reduce pollution,
minimize waste, promote social equity, and
support economic stability."



**"Using the community
garden, bike cage,
and e-waste cabinets
has made me more
conscious of my role
in sustainability,**
leading me to adopt
more eco-friendly habits
in my daily life. These
experiences ...[make]
sustainability feel more
tangible and achievable."

Change in personal
practices, taking
further action

18%

**"The working of EA building stayed with me
when I first visited it** and came to know about it
and I want that to pass on to every other student."

Awareness and pride in Mohawk's sustainability initiatives 9%

**"Exposure to Indigenous approaches to
sustainability has had a profound impact
on how I view my relationship with nature.**
Understanding that environmental stewardship
can be more than resource management, [and]
that it can also be a deep, reciprocal connection
with the land, has changed the way I think about
sustainability in my personal life..."

A more reciprocal relationship with nature 4%

*The percentages represent an approximate proportion of the sample whose responses aligned with the identified theme.



Before taking this survey, how aware were you of the sustainability participation opportunities at Mohawk College?

15%

51%

24%

10%

● Very
● Somewhat
● Not at all
● No answer



Do you have any further suggestions for how Mohawk College can strengthen its commitment to sustainability and climate action?*

"More events must be organized in order to let the new students and other people to know about the impacts of destroying the environment on the health of human beings."

More sustainability events and programs to inspire involvement

35%

"Increase the use of locally sourced, sustainable, and organic foods in campus dining areas to support local. Expand the use of renewable energy sources like solar panels or wind energy on campus."

Green campus initiatives (e.g., waste, renewable energy, biodiversity)

33%

Integrate sustainability into programs and electives

16%

"Integrate sustainability topics into all programs, not just environmental studies, to raise awareness across disciplines."



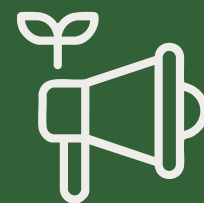
Improve awareness of Mohawk College's sustainability opportunities and action

13%

"Strengthen through social media the commitments and actions that are carried out and planned to be advanced to improve sustainability at Mohawk College."

*The percentages represent an approximate proportion of the sample whose responses aligned with the identified theme.

Student calls to action



This survey was partially inspired by the launch of the Responsible Futures program at Mohawk College, which partners students with the institution. Students on the 2024 Responsible Futures Planning Team drafted the following recommendations as next steps for Mohawk College to continue advancing education for sustainable development. These recommendations apply to everyone, recognizing the need for a whole-institution approach to address sustainability challenges.

Recommendations for Mohawk College

- Publish updates on progress towards supporting responsible consumption, greater social equity, and a healthier environment
- Make these readily available to students and staff
- Promote to prospective and new students that Mohawk College is taking environmental and social action, especially as many students are worried about climate change and the future
- Teach sustainability in a way that explores both challenges and their potential solutions
- Disclose college committees where there is student representation
- Promote pathways to green careers and sustainability best practices to students through their learning
- Make sustainability goals related to course objectives obvious to students (i.e. have it right in grading rubric)
- Include sustainability features in general College tours (i.e. stopping at the Joyce Centre for Partnership & Innovation)

Recommendations for Mohawk Students' Association (MSA)

- Feature sustainability on the MSA website and in the impact report
- Further promote student services that enhance sustainability (i.e. career closet)
- Demonstrate sustainability in activities through waste reduction

Recommendations for Responsible Futures Planning Team

- Ideate ways to keep motivation for progressing actions that support sustainable development
- Explore role in local climate justice efforts