

Stay or Go? Education and Career Choices of Youth in St. John's, Newfoundland

Khehra Navneet Kaur

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

Young people in St. John's face a real decision after school: study here, leave for work or university elsewhere, or build a life at home. This project asks what shapes that choice.

Research question: What factors influence whether youth aged 16 to 24 in St. John's plan to stay in Newfoundland and Labrador?

How I did it: an anonymous online survey of 120 youth aged 16 to 24, plus 6 short interviews, recruited through two high schools and a Memorial University student group.

Goals: find out what youth plan to do, understand what pushes and pulls them, and share the results with a school or youth organization

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THE BIG PICTURE

Newfoundland and Labrador has the oldest population in Canada, and its youth share is projected to keep shrinking. But the story is not only about people leaving.

48.0: Median age, the highest of any province
16.1% → 15.5% : Share aged 15 to 29, 2024 to projected 2034
16.4% : Provincial youth unemployment, vs. 12.9% for Canada (Aug 2026)
+65 : Net interprovincial migration, July 2024 to July 2025 (+598 the year before)

Over the long run, Alberta and Nova Scotia drew the most people away, with net outflows of 36,096 and 10,288 from 1995 to 2024. At home, Memorial University had 17,056 students in fall 2025 (down 4.6%), yet the number of Newfoundland and Labrador students rose 1.9% to 11,102

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WHAT I LEARNED

- Leaving is not always final. Many youth described going away as a step, not an ending.
- Jobs and wages weigh more than lifestyle when youth talk about leaving.
- Family and place keep people here, even when the job market looks tough.

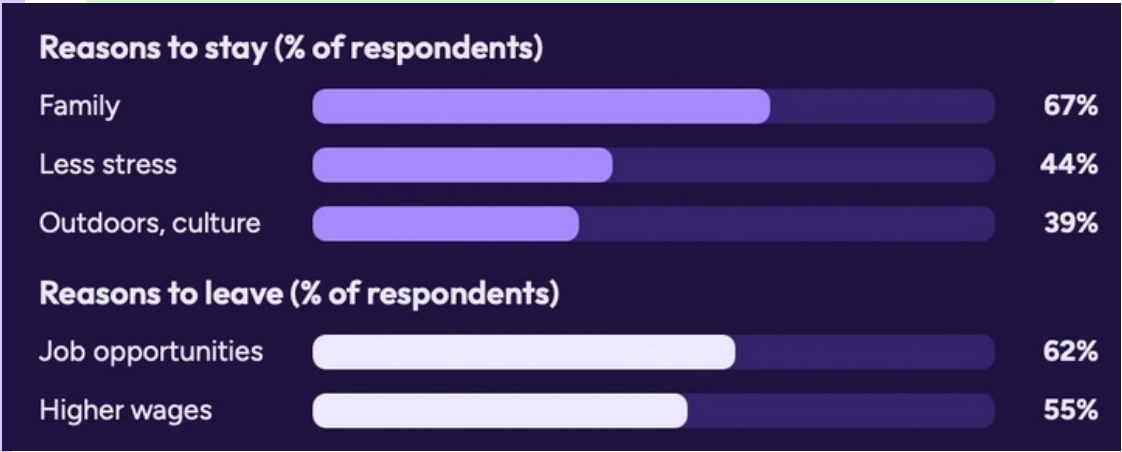
Limits: a small sample, one city, and plans are not the same as actual moves. A follow-up in a year would show who really stayed



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WHAT YOUTH TOLD ME

58% plan to stay for post-secondary studies, and 41% would leave for a job if the pay were better elsewhere.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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