Atlantic Metropolis Centre ~ Working Paper Series
Centre Métropolis Atlantique ~ Série de documents de recherche

"Good to be Alberta Bound?": Out-Migration, In-Migration and the Strait Region of Nova Scotia, 2001-2006

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Working Paper No.43-2011
Série de documents de recherche 43-2011

Centre Métropolis Atlantique
Atlantic Metropolis Centre

December 2011

The Atlantic Metropolis Centre's Working Papers Series
Série de documents de recherche du Centre Métropolis Atlantique

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Abstract - By drawing from Statistics Canada and qualitative research data, this paper shows that population decline in the Strait Region of Nova Scotia has implications for out-migrants and the remaining aging population. For out-migrants, their departure from the Strait Region often results in upward mobility and increased income opportunities; however, for a significant minority of them, the process is associated with declining income opportunities. While rural and small town youth perceive out-migration to be necessary, those who remain in the Strait Region reflect on the negative consequences of out-migration on the vitality of aging communities. The paper concludes with a discussion of the challenges of trying to promote return migration and immigration as strategies for reversing population decline.

Keywords/Mots-clefs: Internal Migration, Immigration, Return Migration, Population Decline.

Introduction[1]

Moving away is a common theme in the history of Atlantic Canada. With the exception of the First Nations and recent immigrants, Atlantic Canada residents have histories that date back to the 1700s and even earlier for Newfoundland. The sons and daughters of early immigrants continued the migration process and often made their way to the 'Boston States' or points farther 'West' in Canada (Fingard 1993; Thornton 1988). Added to this is the temporary migration of those who move away to work to support those who remain behind. Those who migrated included the 'harvest train' of 'Maritimers' from 1890-1928. Males migrated 'West' by rail for the grain harvest and returned afterwards (MacKenzie 2002). In the post-World War II period, Ontario loomed large on the horizon for Atlantic Canadians; migration to work in the province's factories was eclipsed only by the Alberta oil boom in the 1970s and beyond (Hiller 2009).

Alberta became during the 1970s the 'second promised land' – a magnet for internal migration in Canada. While Ontario, Québec and British Columbia are the major destination points for current immigrants, Alberta's booming resource economy also attracts internal migrants, of which Atlantic Canada is one source. From 1972-1982, nearly 25 per cent of the more than 2.8 million internal migrants in Canada moved to Alberta; from 1996-2002, nearly 20 per cent of the more than 1.9 million internal migrants also moved there. For these periods, the combined total percentage of internal migrants to Alberta matched that to Ontario – a more populous province. For Atlantic Canadians, Alberta was second only to Ontario as a destination for internal migration

[1] The authors acknowledge the research funding provided by the *Atlantic Metropolis* and *Atlantic Rural Centres*. The *Centre for Regional Studies* and *University Council for Research* at St. Francis Xavier niversity also provided funding. The authors thank the *Regional Development Authorities* (Antigonish, Guysborough County, Strait-Highlands) in the Strait Region and the *Guysborough Antigonish Strait-Highlands Health Authority* for their collaboration in this research. Ms. Carla Haley-Baxter, Administrative Assistant, Department of Sociology, St. Francis Xavier University, provided excellent organizational assistance. We also thank all our respondents. Kaitlin Brady, Sarah Dunmore, Katie MacDonald, Lisa Rankin and Cory Snider were the student research assistants on this project. This paper is a revised version of one presented at the seminar ***On the Move: Out-Migration and In-Migration in Rural and Small Town Nova Scotia,*** on March 11, 2011, at Council Chambers, Bloomfield Centre, St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, Nova Scotia. The authors acknowledge the suggestions provided by the *Atlantic Metropolis* copy editor.

(Hiller 2009). As the data from this study show, Alberta bound is also a primary destination for Atlantic Canadians from the Strait Region of Nova Scotia, which encompasses the four counties in Eastern Nova Scotia (Antigonish and Guysborough) and Cape Breton Island (Inverness and Richmond) that were connected by the Canso Causeway in 1955. In this paper, we critically examine data pertaining to the most recent wave of out-migration – the period from 2001-2006 – when young, well-educated men and women moved away from the Strait Region and contributed their skills to other parts of Canada.

This paper is divided into eight sections: *First*, we contextualize rural and small town out-migration by referring to some of the vast literature on migration. This literature shows that youth are dominant among international migrants, often bringing high skill levels to their ultimate destinations. This is also true for the internal migration from rural and small town places to urban destinations in nation-states. *Second*, we provide a social profile of the Strait Region of Nova Scotia. *Third*, the paper briefly presents our data sources and methods. *Fourth*, we document population decline and out-migration in the Strait Region. *Section Five* follows with a statistical profile of out-migrants, while *Section Six* assesses perspectives on out-migration by 'potential' young out-migrants and by those who continue to live in the Strait Region. *Seventh*, we examine the degree to which immigration can counter high levels of out-migration. Our quantitative evidence suggests that immigration, as a policy, is weak because of the high levels of secondary migration among existing immigrants. *Section Eight* concludes by arguing that immigration, as a policy, for rural repopulation will only succeed if supported by a commitment from the provincial government and host communities. Lack of commitment will only further contribute to rural social decline in Nova Scotia.

Section 1: International Migration, Internal Migration and Rural Decline

> The younger the migrant, the longer the payback period, and the more worthwhile the investment in a long-distance move.
>
> T. J. Hatton and J. G. Williamson, *Global Migration and the World Economy: Two Centuries of Policy and Performance (2008,* p. 78)

1.1: International Migration and Internal Migration

A common theme emerging from research findings on international migration is that young people dominate migration flows. From 1868-1900, those aged 15-29 constituted over 50 per cent of Danish emigrants; two-thirds of Irish emigrants between 1871 and 1910 also were in this age group. In 1881 in particular, 71 per cent of Irish emigrants were aged 15-29. In contrast, 26 per cent of the population of Ireland was in this age group. The United States, a major destination for 19th century emigrants, received an incoming population dominated by those from 15-40 years of age, representing 76 per cent of all immigrants from 1868-1910. At this time, only 42 per cent of the American population was in this age group (Hatton and Williamson 2008).

The age of internal migrants in late 20th century Canada parallels that of the immigrants to the United States in the 19th century. Hiller (2009) showed that those aged 15-34 comprised the major age group that relocated to Alberta in the two waves of internal migration covered by his study (1975-1982; 1996-2002). Fueled by high numbers of internal migrants (2009:69), Alberta in 1998 was the youngest province in Canada, with a mean age of 34.6 (for Canada, it was 36.8).

> [T]his migration played a huge role in making Alberta the youngest province in Canada. The median age in Alberta was 35 in 2001, two years lower than the next youngest province and 2.6 years younger than the national median age…the Atlantic provinces provide a significantly higher proportion of out-migrants to Alberta in the 20- to-29-year-old category than does any other province. This might be a commentary on the job market for young people in those provinces but likely is also due to the fact that younger people are more willing than older people to migrate over greater distances, especially at their own expense.[2]

The two waves of internal migration in Hiller's (2009) analysis documented a higher ratio of males to females. The sex ratio of males to females in 1981 was 115.7 males per

[2] Hiller (2009) states that the percentage of interprovincial migrants to Alberta in 2001 aged 20-24 was 13.9 per cent for Canada as a whole. In contrast, 17.4 per cent of all migrants to Alberta from Nova Scotia were in this age bracket.

100 females; in 2001, this ratio was 105.9 to 100. The figures for internal migrants from Nova Scotia during these two periods were 126.5 to 100 and 116.3 to 100.

Patterns noted in both international and internal migration to Alberta are replicated in our study. The out-migrants from the Strait Region are young (20-34) and predominantly male the farther 'West' one goes in Canada. Yet something else is at work here. The legacy of youth out-migration in the new millennium is also associated with aging populations in declining rural areas, a feature common across the North Atlantic region.

The vast literature on rural out-migration bears witness to rural areas being on the wrong side of the demographic divide. Rural youth are educated and have the economic and human capital needed in rural areas, but their skills are benefitting (or will benefit) other places (Bjarnson and Thorlindsson 2006; Corbett 2007; Hansen 2004; Hamilton, et al. 2004; Haase 2009; McGrath 2009; Ommer 2007; Stockdale 2006, 2004 and 2002).

The challenge is attracting new migrants who can potentially combat the skill losses that migrant rural youth represent. However, as Stockdale (2006) notes in research on rural Scotland, the internal migrants who replace departing rural youth are not only older, they rarely provide the capital necessary to regenerate lost jobs. While Stockdale's analysis of the employment provided by the businesses set up by newcomers to rural areas needs to be replicated, it is instructive and raises the question of the degree to which migration back to declining rural areas can promote revitalization in 'traditional' and 'new' industries. If, as Hansen (2004) notes for rural Norway, one cannot depend on return migration, what are the prospects for rural immigration?

1.2: Immigration to Atlantic Canada

Immigration is largely an urban phenomenon, especially for Canada, whose three largest cities (Montréal, Toronto and Vancouver) have long been the destination for immigrants to the country. The period since the late 1960s has experienced a shift in migration patterns from countries in Europe to those from the Global South (such as China and India), with smaller cities and rural areas not being major beneficiaries. A recent change to Canada's immigration policy that aims to disperse immigration across the country has

had minimal impact on the recruitment of new immigrants to rural areas.[3] However, success stories such as those of Steinbach and Winkler, Manitoba, are the exception and not the norm (see Rose and Desmarais 2007; Silvius and Annis 2007).

Akbari, et al. (2007) show that the retention rate of immigrants in Atlantic Canada declined from 1981 to 2001, while Houle (2007) noted that the secondary migration of Atlantic Canadian immigrants to larger centres is common in Canada. He attributed this to the lack of larger centres in the Atlantic region. For Houle (2007), secondary migration may be an intended consequence of the migration experience. That is, the first move is to establish a 'foothold' in Canada. However, as Davison (2009) highlights, newcomers need to be integrated after they arrive. In other words, it is not enough for Atlantic Canadian communities to attract immigrants; they must also give immigrants a reason to stay. Some of the policies necessary for the social integration of immigrants will be noted towards the end of this paper.

1.3: Research Issues

Given that youth are a dominant cohort in international and internal migration flows, it stands to reason that one place's loss is another's gain. During high birth rate periods, such out-migration of youth may not be heavily noticed in a community's economic and social life. Yet, even peripheral regions in contemporary capitalist societies are experiencing lower birth rates and aging populations. Lower birth rates in places that are major recipients of internal migrants may be more than compensated by the arrival of younger cohorts from elsewhere. If peripheral regions are losing their youth, there are two options to counteract its impact: internal migration and immigration. Since out-migrants rarely return in large numbers (see Hatton and Williamson 2008), then immigration is vital to the ongoing reproduction of peripheral areas.

The remainder of this paper explores these issues within the context of out-migration from the Strait Region of Nova Scotia from 2001-2006. Our purpose is twofold: First, we are documenting the degree to which out-migration enhances the 'life chances' (see Weber 1978) of out-migrants. No one leaves home to worsen his or her 'life chances', but as we shall see, out-migrants between 2001 and 2006 experienced

[3] This refers to the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP), which is discussed later in this paper.

labour market outcomes that were mixture of upward and downward mobility prospects. Second, we investigate the implications of out-migration for the Strait Region. Those who remain in the Region experience frustration over the continuing waves of out-migrants and their negative impact on rural and small town communities. Finally, we look at the issues of immigration and return migration. Our qualitative and quantitative data show that the Strait Region is not experiencing high levels of return migration or immigration; moreover, the retention of existing immigrants is low. We assess this issue in our conclusions.

Section 2: Research Setting: The Strait Region

The Strait Region of Nova Scotia encompasses the counties of Antigonish, Guysborough (on the Nova Scotia mainland), Inverness and Richmond (on Cape Breton Island). It has a land area of 10,568 square kilometres (The Economic Assembly 2010) and a population of 56,670 (see *Table 1*). A causeway linked the mainland and island portions in 1955. The region arguably does not have a coherent identity in that residents do not necessarily define themselves as being from the 'Strait Region', yet it has become a geographical context for economic planning and public policy.

The construction of the causeway in 1955 provided the basis for year round ice-free ports on the southern side of the causeway, which then enabled the construction in 1961 of a newsprint facility in Port Tupper. The region is now central to the Atlantic Gateway, an initiative aimed at constructing a port to receive container ships from Europe with cargo that can be placed on rail cars destined for major centres in North America. Finally, the region is the basis for Economic Assemblies (held in 2003 and 2010) aimed at seeking solutions to the economic decline of the region.

The economic base of the region is largely located in the service sector, which, depending on the county, employs approximately 60-75 per cent of the labour force. Until its closure in September 2011, the most significant employer in manufacturing was the NewPage paper mill in Port Tupper. In 2006, this firm employed 550 individuals (The Economic Assembly 2010). However, in 2010, a combination of rising power rates and an unfavourable exchange rate between the Canadian and American dollars resulted in significant losses. The latter made the mill unprofitable for over a year; in the second

quarter of 2010, the rising Canadian dollar resulted in $ 4 million in losses. In addition, power rates are expected to rise by 16 per cent in the next year. The closure affects 600 in the mill, and 400 in the woods (Canadian Broadcasting Company 2011). Other (albeit much smaller) manufacturing employers are found in the fish processing and forestry sectors (The Economic Assembly 2010). The 'ripple effects' of the mill closure, however, will not only affect employment in the latter sector, it will most likely contribute to the out-migration patterns that are noted in this paper.

In terms of public policy, the region is home to the Strait Regional School Board (SRSB). This board covers a large geographic area but has one of the smallest enrolments of any school board in Nova Scotia. The school-aged population is declining, with implications for the consolidation and closure of schools, a problem exacerbated by the out-migration of young families.[4] The region is also the base for the Guysborough Antigonish Strait Health Authority (GASHA),[5] which is dealing with an aging population and impending retirements among health care staff. That education and health use the Strait Region as an administrative zone is significant because education and health are the two largest budget items in the delivery of public services in Nova Scotia. In 2009-10, the Departments of Health and Education combined for over 62 per cent of provincial expenditures (Province of Nova Scotia 2009).

The Strait Region also has a culturally diverse population. In addition to the Mi'kmaq, who have lived there the longest, the region includes descendants of Scottish, English, Irish, Acadian and African-Nova Scotian settlers, all of whom date back to the 18th century. After World War II, the Dutch represented the last significant influx of immigrants. They arrived from largely overpopulated farmlands in the Netherlands and went on to make a significant contribution to the Strait Region's agricultural sector.[6]

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[4] The SRSB had an enrolment of 10,228 in 2006 -07. It was projected to fall to 7,041 by 2010-11 and to 6,551 by 2014-15. Only the French school board (Conseil Scolaire Acadien Provincial) (projected enrolment of 3,684) has a smaller projected enrolment. From 2006-2011, the enrolment in the SRSB was expected to fall by over 13 per cent, the largest projected decline for any school board in Nova Scotia (see Province of Nova Scotia, 2007).

[5] The Cape Breton Regional Health Authority administers the Northern and Central portions of Inverness County.

[6] Today, Scottish, English and Irish descendants are scattered throughout the region. The Mi'kmaq are concentrated in the Paq'tnkek, Waycobah and Chapel Island reservations; the Acadians are largely

Over the last 20 years, the Strait Region has experienced an ongoing decline in population (see **Section 4**), whose significance is the subject of the remainder of this paper. We show that the Strait Region has similarities to other rural communities in the North Atlantic and elsewhere. A 'dual face' characterizes the out-migration of rural youth; this applies to both out-migrants and those who remain in rural communities. Further, with its aging demographic and minimal in-migration, net out-migration potentially threatens the economic and social well-being of the Strait Region as a whole.

Section 3: Data Sources and Methods

This study is based on data from five sources. These include: data from Statistics Canada publications (2007; 2006a; 2006b; 2001), a target group profile of Statistics Canada (2010) data on out-migrants from the Strait Region (2001-2006), an October 17, 2009, workshop with 14 individuals knowledgeable about out-migration from the Strait Region[7], and, finally, a March 23, 2010, focus group with 17 graduating students from the Strait Campus of the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) and self-administered questionnaires completed April 30, 2010, by 10 graduating Bachelor of Education students from St. Francis Xavier University. The Statistics Canada data focus on those who have left the Strait Region; the workshop provides a perspective on the consequences of such out-migration for the region; and the student data deal with the next group of 'potential out-migrants' from the region.

The Research Ethics Board at St. Francis Xavier University approved the methods used in the collection of original data for this project. Workshop participants received a signed 'Invitation to Workshop on Out-Migration in the Strait Region' form prior to data collection. The form explained the nature of the research and the role of confidentiality in the research process and report writing phase. In addition, these individuals were

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concentrated in Pomquet, Isle Madame and Cheticamp but can be found throughout the region. African-Nova Scotian community members, who are descendants of Black Loyalists, are concentrated in Guysborough County. Finally, the descendants of Dutch immigrants are largely located in Antigonish and Inverness Counties.

[7] These workshop data were supplemented by six interviews with other individuals. Five were with individuals who could not attend the workshop. The sixth interview was with the manager of a rural enterprise that has hired immigrants from Europe.

provided with a 'Consent Form for Participating in: the 'Rural Out-Migration Workshop' to ensure they understood the invitation to participate form. Individuals each signed a copy of the consent form and kept a copy for their records. This process was repeated in the interviews with individuals who were unable to attend the workshop, for the focus group with students at the Strait Campus of the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) and for the Bachelor of Education students from St. Francis Xavier University, who filled out self-administered questionnaires.[8]

Section 4: Population Decline in the Strait Region[9]

Tables 1-3 illustrate the nature of population decline in the Strait Region. *Table 1* shows that each county in the region has lost residents since 1996, the greatest loss being in Guysborough (-17.0) and Richmond (-9.2) counties. This contrasts with the experiences of Nova Scotia as a whole, which recorded a slight increase in population. In fact, only 5 of the 18 counties in Nova Scotia experienced any population increase from 2001-2006, 4 of which are within commuting distance of Halifax.

[8] For a comprehensive discussion of our data and methods, see Phyne and Harling-Stalker (2010) (available from the authors). We do not analyze the results from the questionnaires completed by the St. Francis Xavier students in this paper.

[9] Unless otherwise noted, all of the quantitative data in the remainder of this paper is from Statistics Canada (2010).

Table 1: Population Change in the Strait Region Counties and Nova Scotia, 1996-2006

Census Division, Region and Province	*1996*	*2001*	*2006*	*Percentage Change, 1996-2006*
Antigonish	19,554	19, 578	18,836	-3.7
Guysborough	10,917	9,827	9,058	-17.0
Inverness	20,918	19,937	19,036	-9.9
Richmond	11,022	10,225	9,740	-11.6
Strait Region	62,411	59,567	56,670	-9.2
Nova Scotia	909,282	908,007	913,462	0.4

Source: Based on data contained in Statistics Canada, *Census of the Canadian Population* (2006a; 2001)

Moreover, from 2001-2006, 9 of the top 25 census subdivisions in Canada that experienced population decline were in Atlantic Canada. The Strait Region contains two of these census subdivisions. Inverness, Subdivision B (which includes the town of Mabou), was the census subdivision with the seventh fastest declining population in Canada. The population fell by 6.9 per cent from 5,769 to 5,369. The population of Antigonish, Subdivision B (which includes the eastern portion of the county), fell from 6,819 to 6,509, or by 4.5 per cent (Statistics Canada 2007).

The Strait Region's population is not only declining, it is also aging. *Table 2* shows the median ages and age dependency ratios for the Strait Region.[10] All counties, with the exception of Antigonish County, have higher median ages and age dependency ratios than the province as a whole. In fact, the median age for Guysborough County (48.3) is almost seven years higher than that for the province as a whole (41.8). The age

[10] The age dependency ratio is the ratio of dependents (up to 14 and over 64) to the working age population (15-64). The figure represents the number of dependents per 100 individuals in the workforce.

dependency ratios for all Strait Region counties also exceed that for Nova Scotia as a whole (45.5). This has implications for health care delivery because this aging population parallels a staff of health care professionals who are entering retirement in larger numbers than in the past. The Provincial Health Service Operational Review indicates that an aging population in Nova Scotia as a whole demands a reconfiguration of health care priorities away from acute towards chronic health care (Corpus Sanchez International Consultancy 2007).

Table 2: Median Ages and Age Dependency Ratios for the Strait Region Counties and Nova Scotia, 2006

County or Province	***Median Age***			***Age Dependency Ratio***
	Male	Female	Total	
Antigonish	39.5	41.3	40.4	45.9
Guysborough	48.0	48.6	48.3	52.2
Inverness	44.0	44.7	44.3	49.7
Richmond	46.4	46.7	46.6	53.4
Nova Scotia	41.4	42.5	41.8	45.2

Source: *Table 2* in Phyne and Harling-Stalker (2010)

Table 3 shows the net migration to the Strait Region from 2001-2006. There was an overall net migration of -2,910 during this period. Other areas in Nova Scotia (-1,360) and Alberta (-980) were the places that the Strait Region to which the Strait Region lost most of its population, which, as we shall see in **Section 5**, represents a loss of a young and well-educated population. Although the net population loss to Ontario is small (-50), the data in **Section 5** also show that population loss to that province also consists of a young and well-educated population. The small net out-migration to Ontario may represent the return of an older population that departed during earlier out-migration periods. However, we do not have the data to verify this supposition. Nevertheless, urban areas in Nova Scotia, Ontario and Alberta represent the main 'magnets' for Strait Region out-migrants and are vital areas to target if policy-makers wish to make serious efforts to cultivate return migration.

Table 3: Net Migration to the Strait Region, 2001-2006

Province/Territory	*Out-Migrants to*	*In-Migrants from*	*Net Migration*
Newfoundland and Labrador	285	120	-165
Prince Edward Island	95	100	5
Elsewhere in Nova Scotia	3,480	2,210	-1,360
New Brunswick	395	275	-120
Québec	160	50	-110
Ontario	925	875	-50
Manitoba	25	20	-5
Saskatchewan	70	70	0
Alberta	1,170	190	-980
British Columbia	275	195	-80
Northern Canada	70	25	-45
Total	6,950	4,040	-2,910

Source: Based on data contained in: Statistics Canada, *Census Divisions of Residence 5 years ago for the Inter-Census Division Migrants Aged 5 Years and Over*. Catalogue Number 97-556-X2006014, 2006b.

Figures 1A-1D show the age distribution of the working-age population (15-64) in the Strait Region (*Figure 1A*) and that for out-migrants who stayed in Nova Scotia (*Figure 1B) or* settled in Ontario (*Figure 1C*) or Alberta (*Figure 1D*) at the time of the 2006 census. What is striking, but not surprising given what we know about migration patterns is that the out-migrants are much younger than those living within the Strait Region. While older age cohorts in the Strait Region outnumber the population aged 20-24 and 25-29, the latter constitute the largest cohorts for working-age out-migrants. This population is younger the farther West the population migrates. Females generally outnumber males for intraprovincial out-migrants, but males outnumber females the farther one goes 'West', a trend noted in the migration literature. This is further demonstrated by the sex ratios of Strait Region residents and out-migrants.

Figure 1A: The Age Distribution of Strait Region Residents (15-64), 2006

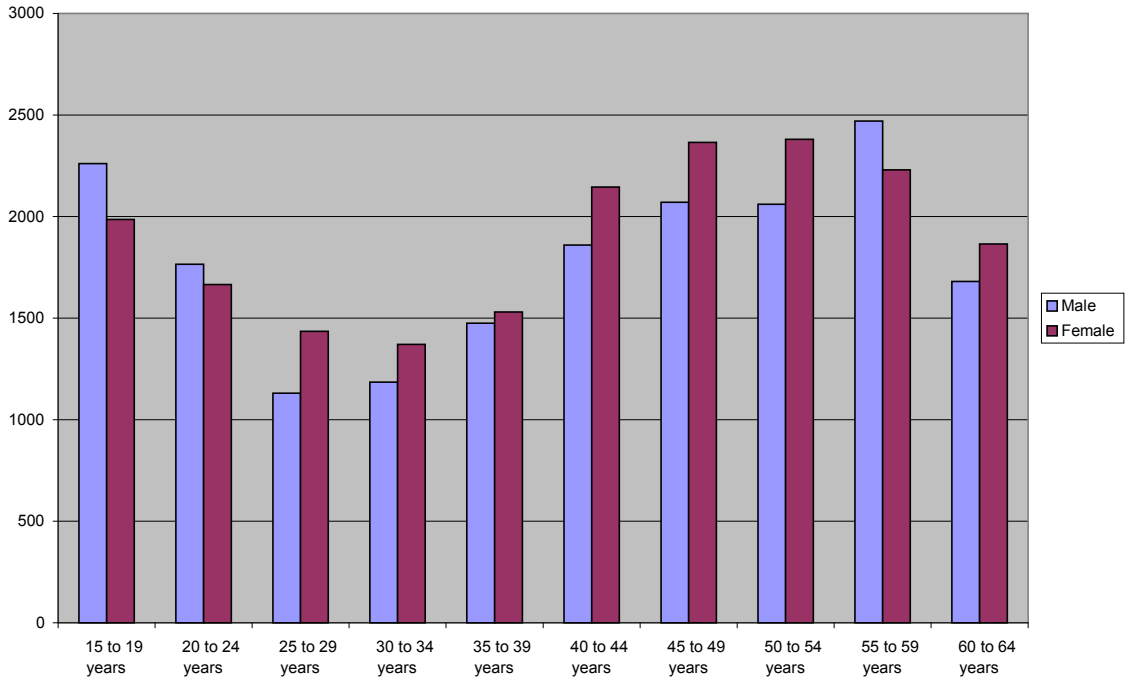


Figure 1B: The Age Distribution of Intraprovincial Out-Migrants (15 -64), 2006

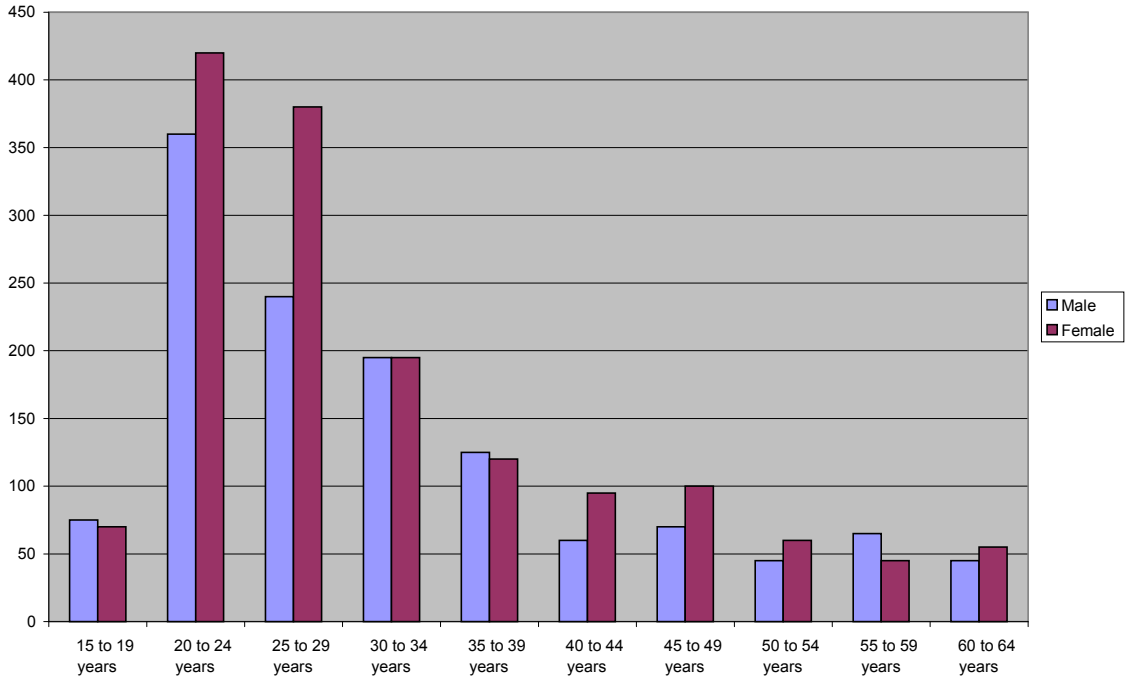


Figure 1C: The Age Distribution of Out-Migrants to Ontario (15-64), 2006

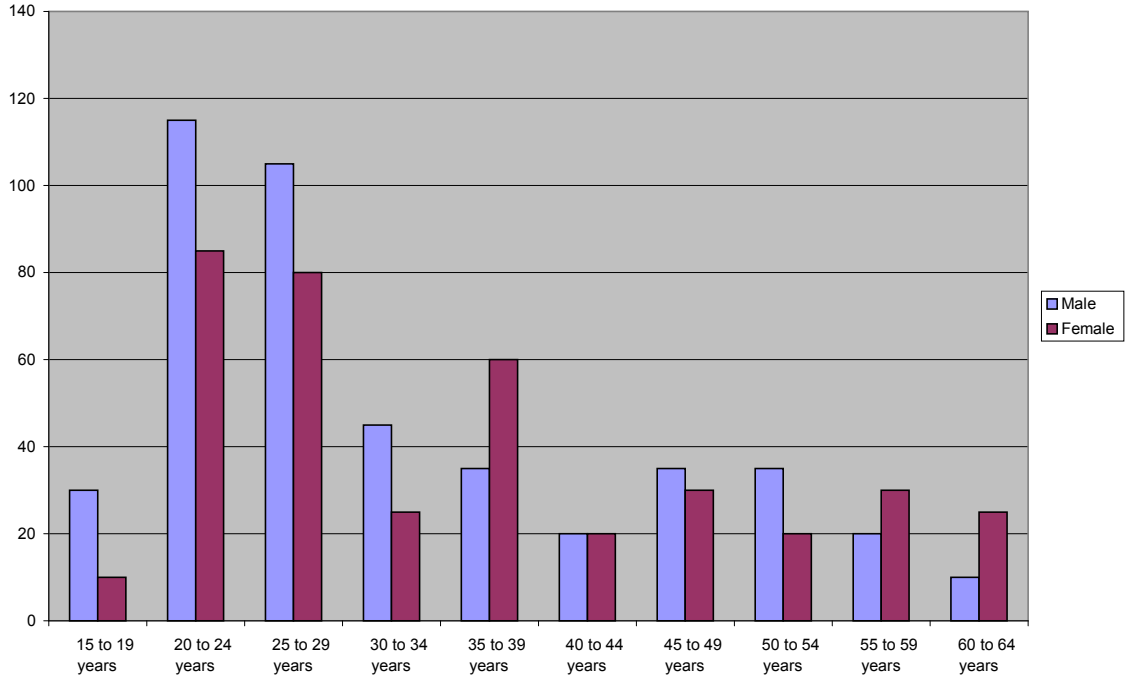


Figure 1D: The Age Distribution of Out-Migrants to Alberta (15-64), 2006

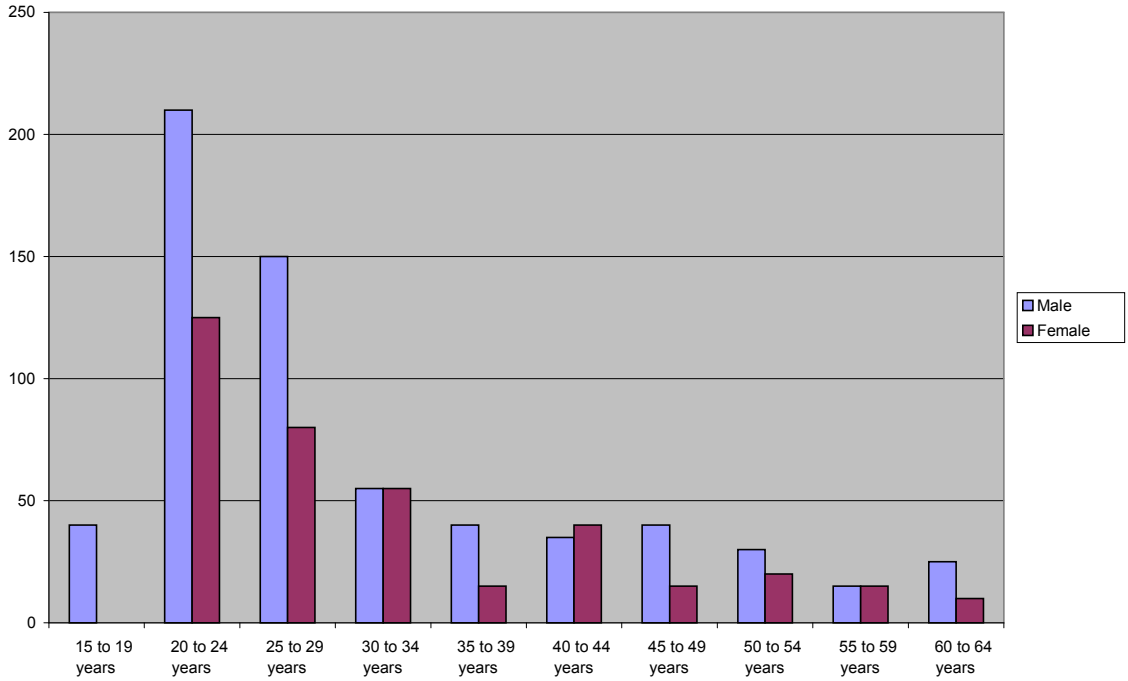


Table 4 shows for Strait Region residents and out-migrants[11] a low ratio of males to females for all but three of the working-age groups. Females also tend to outnumber males for most of the working-age groups of out-migrants who stayed in Nova Scotia. However, the ratio of males to females increases for out-migrants to Ontario and Alberta. In particular, the high ratios of males to females in the out-migrant age groups of 20-24 (1.70) and 25-29 (1.90) to Alberta are significant given that a large proportion (see *Figure 1D*) of out-migrants to that province fall within these age groups.

Table 4: Male/Female Sex Ratios for Strait Region Residents and Intraprovincial, Ontario and Alberta Out-Migrants (15-64), 2006[1]

Age	*Strait Region*	*Intraprovincial Out-Migrants*	*Ontario Out-Migrants*	*Alberta Out-Migrants*
15 to 19	1.13	1.07	3.00	None
20 to 24	1.06	0.85	1.35	1.70
25 to 29	0.78	0.63	1.31	1.90
30 to 34	0.86	1.00	1.80	1.00
35 to 39	0.96	1.04	0.58	2.60
40 to 44	0.87	0.63	1.00	0.87
45 to 49	0.87	0.70	1.20	2.70
50 to 54	0.86	0.75	1.75	1.50
55 to 59	1.10	1.44	0.70	1.00
60 to 64	0.90	0.81	0.40	2.50

1. Since there are 40 males and no females among Alberta out-migrants ages 15-19, no ratio is reported here.

Section 5: The Dual Face of Out-Migration I: Out-Migrants

This section and the next emphasize the dual nature of out-migration. International migrants experience a mix of upward and downward mobility in the nation of their destination (see Hatton and Williamson 2008). This is also noted in Hiller's (2009) discussion of internal migration to Alberta, in which he also provides data on the experiences of internal migrants from Atlantic Canada to Alberta, showing that the migration experience has a 'dual face'. Here, we build on the following observations: 1) while the out-migrants from the Strait Region are younger and better educated than the

[11] A ratio above 1 means that males outnumber females.

residents of the Strait Region overall, their 'life chances' are a mix of upward and downward mobility; and 2) the experience of out-migration is something anticipated to be necessary by 'potential' out-migrants but viewed as largely negative by the residents of the region. This section deals with the mixed mobility outcomes for out-migrants; in the next section, we discuss the out-migration experience in terms of the 'anticipatory' perceptions by 'potential' out-migrants and the experiences and concerns among those who continue to reside in the region.

Figures 2A and *2B* show the education levels of males and females (aged 25-64) in the Strait Region and for out-migrants to other parts of Nova Scotia, Ontario and Alberta. Not surprisingly, the much older Strait Region population is not as well educated as the younger cohorts who left the region from 2001-2006. Figure 2A shows that more than 40 per cent of males in the Strait Region had high school or less education. Males who left for Alberta from 2001-2006 were the only cohorts who closely matched this trend. However, the males who left for Alberta were also more likely to have a university education. This duality most likely reflects high-paying blue and white-collar positions in the booming Alberta economy of the last decade (see Hiller 2009). Figure 2B shows that female out-migrants, especially those to other areas in Nova Scotia and to Ontario, have higher levels of education than females in the Strait Region and Alberta. In fact, female out-migrants to Ontario were the most educated of the female populations in this study, with fewer than 20 per cent having just high school education or less.

Figure 2A: The Education of Strait Residents and Out-Migrants (Male), 25-64 Years, by Percentage in Each Category

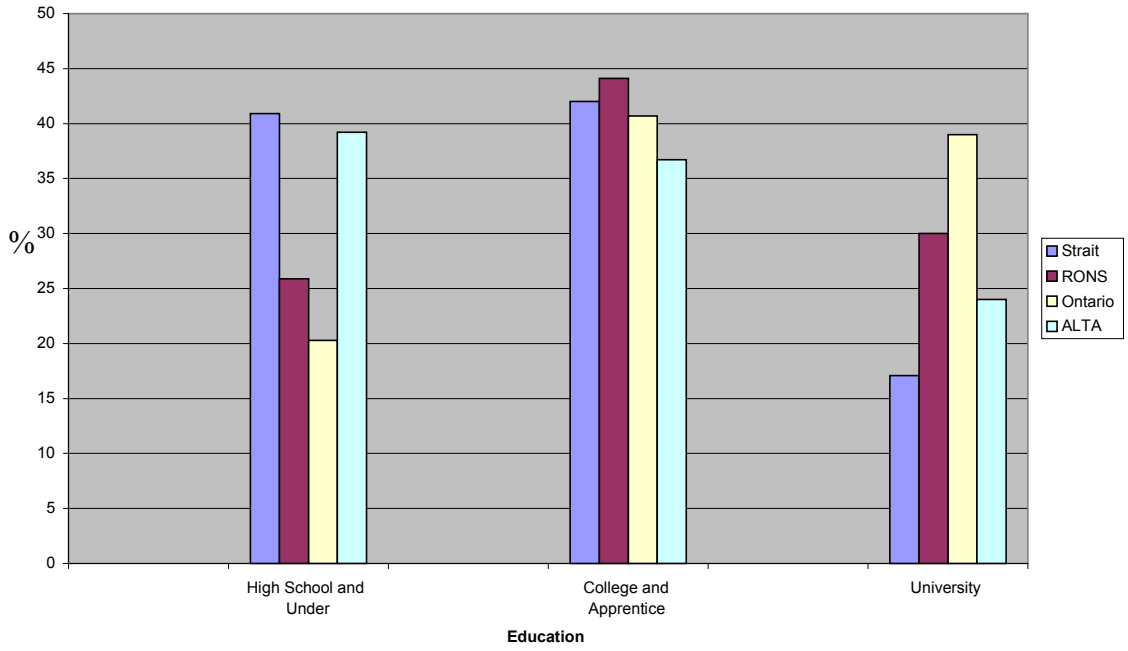
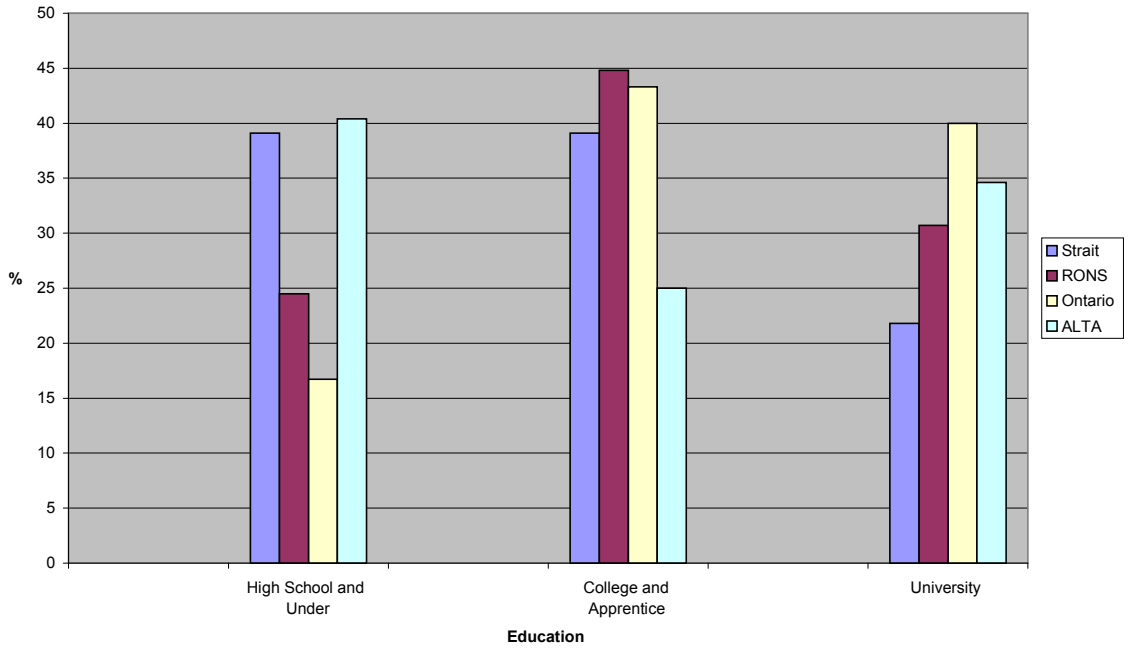


Figure 2B: The Education of Strait Region Residents and Out-Migrants (Female) by Percentage in Each Category



Tables 5B-5C show the distribution of occupations for males and females among Strait Region out-migrants (with Table 5A being a list of categories). The top occupation group for males, regardless of location, is in the category 'Trades, Transport and Equipment Operators'.[12] The presence of out-migrants in the 'Management' field increases with distance west to Ontario. For females, 'Sales and Service' is the top category in all geographic areas. These data reflect the gendered division of labour in Canada, with males more likely to be present in blue-collar jobs and women in the pink - collar service sector. Women are also present in 'Health', 'Social Science, Education, Government and Religion' and 'Business, Finance and Administration'. The latter category should not be confused with upward mobility because this also includes administrative support staff and clerical workers in financial institutions. As Wright (1978) noted more than three decades ago, different social classes can be part of the same occupational group.[13]

Table 5A: List of Occupational Categories

Category	*Type of Occupations*
A	Management
B	Business, Finance and Administration
C	Natural and Applied Sciences
D	Health
E	Social Science, Education, Government and Religion
F	Art, Culture, Recreation and Sport
G	Sales and Service
H	Trades, Transport and Equipment Operators
I	Primary Industry
J	Processing, Manufacturing and Utilities

[12] Detailed figures are not provided here in an effort to maximize the efficient use of space. The full data can be found in Phyne and Harling-Stalker (2010).

[13] This is also a conclusion made by Weber (1978), who noted that different social classes can belong to the same status group. For Weber, occupational groups often act as status groups with different degrees of privilege.

Table 5B: The Top Five Occupational Groups for Males (totals in parentheses) [1]

Strait Region	*Intraprovincial Out-Migrants*	*Ontario Out-Migrants*	*Alberta Out-Migrants*
H (4,970)	H (305)	H (110)	H (340)
I (2,455)	G (240)	A (80)	G (80)
G (2,050)	C (115)	G (70)	C (75)
J (1,055)	A (95)	B (55)	I (40)
A (960)	E (80)	F (25)	B (25)
Total (11,490)	Total (835)	Total (340)	Total (560)
Overall Total (14,575)	Overall Total (1,110)	Overall Total (405)	Overall Total (640)

[1.] The overall total figures for *Tables 5B, 5C, 6B* and *6C* include those for all occupations and industries, in addition to the top five total of listed occupations or industries.

Table 5C: The Top Five Occupational Groups for Females (totals in parentheses)

Strait Region	*Intraprovincial Out-Migrants*	*Ontario Out-Migrants*	*Alberta Out-Migrants*
G (4,505)	G (415)	G (100)	G (120)
B (3,060)	B (310)	E (65)	B (75)
E (1,545)	E (160)	B (50)	E (45)
D (1,395)	D (150)	J (15)	C (35)
A (835)	A (75)	F (15)	A (20)
Total (10,505)	Total (1,110)	Total (245)	Total (295)
Overall Total (13,220)	Overall Total (1,195)	Overall Total (280)	Overall Total (325)

Tables 6B-6C show the industries of employment for out-migrants (with 6A being the list of industries). What is notable here is that the high presence of males in the 'Construction' industry increases the farther west they move, once again reflecting the better economic conditions in Ontario and Alberta. In Alberta, males also have a high presence in 'Primary Resource' and 'Professional and Scientific' industries, most likely reflecting the recruitment of certified trades and university-educated individuals for the province's petroleum sector. For females, the 'Wholesale and Retail' sector is highest among those from the Strait Region, intraprovincial migrants, and migrants to Alberta. Ontario stands out in that two of the top three industries for female out-migrants are in 'Educational Services' and 'Professional and Scientific' industries, mostly likely

reflecting that out-migrants to Ontario are the highest educated females in this study. It most likely also applies to their higher earnings.

Table 6A: List of Industries

Category	*Type of Industry*
11-22	Primary Resource (P)
23	Construction (C)
31-33	Manufacturing (M)
41-45	Wholesale and Retail (W)
48-49	Transportation and Warehousing
51	Information and Culture
52-53	Real Estate
54	Professional and Scientific (P&S)
55	Management of Companies
56	Administrative Support (Ad)
61	Educational Services (E)
62	Health Care and Social Assistance (H&S)
71-72	Arts, Entertainment, Accommodation and Food (A)
81	Other Services (Oth)
91	Public Administration (PA)

Table 6B: The Top Five Industries of Employment for Males (totals in parentheses)

Strait Region	*Intraprovincial Out-Migrants*	*Ontario Out-Migrants*	*Alberta Out-Migrants*
P (2,910)	W (190)	C (65)	C (180)
M (2,085)	C (110)	PA (60)	P (115)
C (2,015)	M (105)	F (25)	P&S (65)
E (785)	A (105)	W (40)	W (50)
A (785)	PA (85)	A (25)	M (40)
Total (8,580)	Total (595)	Total (215)	Total (450)
Overall Totals (14,395)	Overall Totals (1,115)	Overall Totals (400)	Overall Totals (625)

Table 6C: The Top Five Industries of Employment for Females (totals in parentheses)

Strait Region	*Intraprovincial Out-Migrants*	*Ontario Out-Migrants*	*Alberta Out-Migrants*
H&S (2,710)	W (265)	E (35)	W (50)
W (2,110)	H&S (200)	OTH (35)	A (40)
A (1,835)	A (135)	P&S (30)	P&S (35)
E (1,530)	OTH (95)	AD (30)	E (35)
M (640)	E (85)	M (30)	H&S (30)
Total (8,825)	Total (780)	Total (160)	Total (190)
Overall Totals (12,950)	Overall Totals (1,170)	Overall Totals (280)	Overall Totals (305)

We conclude this section with a discussion of labour force outcomes. *Tables 7-9* show labour force participation and income data for Strait Region residents and out-migrants. While male and female out-migrants generally fared better than their Strait Region counterparts, there are some notable exceptions.

Table 7 exhibits the labour force participation rates by age and gender for Strait Region residents and out-migrants. Whether one is looking at those 15-24, or 25 and over, the labour force participation rate was higher for out-migrants, especially the farther 'West' they went. However, while the unemployment rate tended to be lower for most out-migrants, this was not the case for those who left for Ontario. Female out-migrants between 15-24 had an unemployment rate of 25 per cent at the time of the 2006 census, higher than the 21.4 per cent for Strait Region residents. In addition, the unemployment rate for female out-migrants 25 and over in Ontario (13.6 per cent) exceeded that for their Strait Region counterparts (10.5 per cent).

Table 7: Selected Labour Force Data I: Participation Rates by Age and Gender for Strait Region Residents (non-migrants, 2001-2006) and Intraprovincial, Ontario and Alberta Out-Migrants, 2001- 2006

Age and Rate	***Strait Region Residents***		***Intraprovincial Out-Migrants***		***Out-Migrants in Ontario***		***Out-Migrants in Alberta***	
Age (15-24)	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Labour Force Participation	66.5	60.1	82.8	82.7	96.6	84.2	96.1	84.0
Employment Rate	54.7	47.1	66.7	67.3	82.8	68.4	86.3	80.0
Unemployment Rate	17.8	21.4	19.4	18.5	10.7	**25.0**	10.2	0.0
Age (25 and Over)								
Labour Force Participation	66.1	54.1	80.5	63.5	79.7	68.8	95.1	72.4
Employment Rate	57.8	48.4	73.2	56.2	78.1	59.4	87.8	70.7
Unemployment Rate	12.6	10.5	8.5	11.4	3.9	**13.6**	7.7	7.1

Table 8 reports median income by employment status. Those working full time had higher median incomes, but this varied by geographic location. For out-migrants, the median income for males working full year and full time was only lower in Ontario ($38,927) than it was for males in the Strait Region ($42,712). For females who worked full year and full time, only out-migrants who stayed in Nova Scotia ($22,449) earned less than females in the Strait Region ($28,449). What is most interesting here is that the small number of female out-migrants (125) working full year and full time in Ontario had a median income ($46,151) that exceeded that for males who also worked full year and full time ($38,927). Ontario females working full year and full time earned 118.5 per cent of that of their male counterparts. In all other cases (full year and full time, and part year or part time), female out-migrants earned less than their male counterparts despite their similar levels of education (see *Figures 2A* and *B*).

Table 8: Selected Labour Force Data II: Median Employment Income by Employment Status and Gender for Strait Region Residents (Non-migrants, 2001-2006) and Intraprovincial, Ontario and Alberta Out-Migrants, 2001-2006 (number of earners in parentheses)

Province/Region	***Employment Status***				***Female Income as a Percentage of Male Income***	
	Full-Year and Full-Time		*Part-Year or Part-Time*		*FY and FT*	*PY or PT*
	Male	Female	Male	Female		
Strait Region Residents	42,712 (6,350)	28,449 (5,675)	13,480 (8,235)	8,441 (7,850)	66.6	62.6
Intraprovincial Out-Migrants	45,559 (600)	22,945 (520)	11,298 (530)	8,828 (735)	50.4	78.1
Out-Migrants in Ontario	38,927 (250)	46,151 (125)	20,869 (150)	13,145 (160)	**118.5**	63.0
Out-Migrants in Alberta	47,669 (290)	31,954 (115)	27,727 (330)	11,979 (205)	67.0	**43.2**

Finally, *Table 9* shows the prevalence of the low-income cut-off (before and after tax) for the target groups in our study.[14] As the data show, males and female out-migrants all had higher levels of low income than their counterparts in the Strait Region, especially among female out-migrants who stayed in Nova Scotia and those who left for Ontario. Whereas 11.5 per cent of females in the Strait Region had low income before tax, this figure was higher for those who left for other parts of Nova Scotia (29.5 per cent) or Ontario (33.7 per cent). Moreover, the highest unemployment rate was among females who migrated to Ontario (see *Table 7*). In general, while out-migrants earned more money than their counterparts in the Strait Region, they were also at a greater risk of falling into poverty. This may be due to the absence of social support networks for out-migrants that may otherwise be available for those living in the Strait Region. However, this assertion would have to be tested in another study.

[14] Statistics Canada (2010) defines the low-income cut-off (before and after tax) for economic families and persons in private households who spend more than 70 per cent or more of their income (in other words 20 per cent above the average of 50 per cent) on food, shelter and clothing. Statistics Canada emphasizes that the low-income cut-off is not a measure of poverty but of individuals who are worse off than average. The data in the target group profile reports the low-income cut-off for individuals in private households.

Table 9: Prevalence of the Low Income Cut-Off (Before Tax and After Tax) for Total Persons in Private Households by Gender for Strait Region Residents (Non-migrants, 2001-2006) and for Intraprovincial, Ontario and Alberta Out-Migrants, 2001-2006

Province/Region	*Low Income Cut-Off (Before Tax)*		*Low Income Cut-Off (After Tax)*		*Total Persons in Private Households*	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Strait Region Residents	8.4	11.5	5.8	7.7	24,575	26,355
Intraprovincial Out-Migrants	18.4	29.5	14.6	21.3	1,545	1,875
Out-Migrants in Ontario	10.7	33.7	9.7	27.7	515	465
Out-Migrants in Alberta	13.6	19.1	9.4	11.4	695	445

Section 6: The Dual Face of Out-Migration II: Strait Region Residents

When people in the Strait Region talk about out-migration, two stories emerge: the necessity to leave for work and the frustrations of those left behind. These have been the dominant narratives since the 19th century. Initially, most people generally were leaving for the 'Boston States', the American Eastern Seaboard, but currently, the destination of choice is Alberta. As Hiller (2009) accurately described it, Alberta has become the 'second promised land' for many Maritimers. As we see from our demographic data, and carried through in our qualitative information, the Strait Region is no different. This section weaves these two tales from the perspective of participants in a focus group of NSCC graduates planning to leave the region, and community workers at a workshop discussing the impact of out-migration on the region.

6.1: The Perspective of 'Potential' Out-Migrants

"... you can make way more money if you go to Fort McMurray" .

Male NSCC graduate

Alberta, the proverbial land of 'milk and honey', is perceived as the destination for the graduating cohort at NSCC. This is evident not only in the above quote but also

in many others' rationales for heading to Alberta. One male graduating from the pipe fitter programme puts it this way: "[I] want to go out 'West.' [My] friends have in the past and come back with a $50,000 truck. My dad is in the same program – [we] are going to head out 'West'". The purchasing power available from working on the tar sands project is visible to the young graduates as they see what their friends (who made the move) who are home for a visit have bought. Pick-up trucks, a symbol of rural masculinity, also become the symbol of wealth. Going out to work in the Alberta tar sands is not just about the money but is a way of "doing" rural masculinity (see Brandth and Haugen 2005). It becomes a display of masculinity in the face of the demise of the local 'traditional' ways of performing masculinity – fishing, lumbering, and mining.

This quote is also interesting in that the graduate's father has gone to school to qualify to work in in Alberta's oil fields. While we did not talk to those returning to school for second careers, this example indicates that not just the young are making the move but also those more advanced in their working careers. This experience is similar to the trends noted in rural Newfoundland in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Thornton 1988). While this is not strongly indicated in our demographic analysis, it may speak to the possible future of out-migration for the region – that is, multi-generations of families leaving.

What makes today's graduates' story different from previous leaving-for-work narratives is that 'getting a job' is not necessarily the main concern. Beyond mere employment, it is the speed with which one can move along in a chosen career path. One reason Alberta is a destination of choice is that individuals can gain the apprenticeship hours necessary for accreditation at a faster rate than if they stayed in the Strait Region. As a male carpentry graduate from Guysborough said, "[There] are jobs, but not enough qualified people [around for me to get my hours for my papers]. People just become skilled workers. [You] go to Alberta to get your hours". This was reiterated by a female Antigonish graduate in Cosmetology: "[You can get] more experience. [You] have to have hours before you can open your own shop (i.e., hair cutting salon). [You need] 960 hours. [You] have to wait three years to hire others". Graduates know that there is work here, but going out to Alberta allows them to qualify faster in their trade.

The other part of the 'leaving-for-work' story is eventually returning when enough money has been saved. Everyone who participated in the focus group indicated that they wanted to return to the region some day. Many indicated that the goal is to get loans paid off: "[It] depends on the money situation. [I would] pay off loans [then] come back with enough to buy a truck" (Male participant). Again, we see not just concern about getting out of debt but also having the purchasing power to get the truck, a strong symbol, at least locally, of financial well-being.

Some indicated that they wanted to be able to open their own business in the region after completing the accreditation process. A male carpentry graduate from Guysborough put it this way: "[I'd] like to give back to the area – [to] have papers [and] own a business to employ others. [They] won't have to do what they [current and previous students] did [leave the region]". There is a strong sense here of improving the Strait Region's employment situation so that, at least in the eyes of this participant, more people will have the opportunity to stay.

6.2: The Perspective of Those Who Remain

Isle Madame is becoming a seniors' island.

Workshop Participant

As the demographic data indicate, the Strait Region is experiencing a great change: the population is aging. Not only are the youth leaving, more complex demographic trends are happening. As one participant at the workshop pointed out,

> There is a natural thing that everyone wants to "see the world" – go somewhere else. Look at [your] own family. How many people are still in [your] hometown? Most move away. The number of people per household has dropped: less births [and] more deaths. Many go, but not all come back. [You] have to show the advantages of coming back to a hometown. People are having children later and having less. People want to be an individual. Where I am doesn't matter – [I] can talk to everyone on-line.

Within this quote the participant is noticing that not only are people leaving but there are also smaller families and more deaths as the population ages. Participants also noticed that new residents are coming to the area to retire. Another participant noted,

> Services and goods – [those] 55 plus [have] lots of money to spend. What are the services? [They] come for the quality of life – go back to their roots. What we need to add to that factor? What this boils down to [is] quality of life [is] not enough to keep kids here or come back to work.

This was echoed by a further participant's thoughts:

> Young people leave, but other people are here for the quality of life. We don't sell [this place]. If I keep telling my kids nothing here for you, you cannot turn around and tell them the quality of life is good. [You need] to tell young families to come back. [This is a] good place to raise your kids. [The] issue [is] of marketing and promote that.

What we see in this latter quote is recognition of the need for ownership of the problem at the local level. By doing this, the community can start to develop solutions.

Some would not agree completely, however. There is also frustration with institutions in place to protect and help us: government and education. At the time of this workshop, this frustration was most vivid in Canso, Guysborough County, when it was on the verge of losing its town status, which it then did in the Spring of 2010. One participant articulated this frustration:

> In Canso, the government didn't try to replace jobs when the fishery closed in 1992 but also bought the temporary fishery. Most families then moved there [to Ontario]. Look at income; people are still unemployed – no jobs. The educational institutions are not teaching students jobs that will keep them in town. They are not teaching specific skills [for] what we need to sustain our community … Development workers are not promoting what we as a community want. They are promoting things that will cause them to leave. [They] should look to training applicable to the area.

This story is one familiar to other Maritime areas, whether it is government mismanagement of the fishery (see Marshall's 2009 discussion on Grand Manan, New Brunswick) or schools teaching youth to leave (Corbett 2007). This narrative of

frustration still circulates among those living in small Maritime communities but seems to be something that those left behind are trying to overcome. The Strait Region has turned to immigration, but it has not seemed to work since the period when numerous Dutch families moved to the Region after World War II. However, solving this problem is especially important because of the lack of health care professionals.

The community needs to change culturally to have its needs met. As one participant said, "We celebrate our Celtic culture, but some people feel excluded by that"; this respondent feels that residents of the Strait Region have to perceive the need to be more open if their communities are to grow.

Section 7: Reversing the Decline: The Prospects for Return Migration and Immigration

> [*When I was] a pre-schooler, a lot of farms in Mabou, [because of] the Land Settlement Board, [went to] Dutch people [who] moved in and took land my ancestors looked back on. We have not seen that in 50 years [i.e., in-migration]. Our communities have to be more accepting of overseas people. The next wave [of in-migrants] is not our brothers and sisters coming back from Alberta.*
>
> Comment by workshop participant

Given that out-migration is an institutionalized reality in the Strait Region and for Atlantic Canada as a whole, what are the prospects for reversing ongoing population decline? Workshop participants considered the option of fostering more return migration as a solution to the labour market shortage and other needs of the Strait Region. They suggested the need to have information on the skill sets of those leaving the Strait Region so such individuals could be tracked as a source of 'potential' return migrants.

One individual indicated what could be useful is the tracking of closed accounts at financial institutions. He stated that

> One thing they (i.e., the East Coast Credit Union) track is open and closed accounts. [The credit unions] have 17,000 members – 50 per cent of the population of the region. [There are] various reasons [for looking at closed accounts], but when looking at figures, only recently have they seen 'closed

> accounts'. Many members tend to have blue-collar jobs. Look at closed [accounts] – see [if] they have closed because they have left the area. [It] may be the case that father has lost a job and has to move for a better job. [It is a] fairly significant trend to see them leave.

The implication here is that a database on closed accounts could be useful for tracking out-migration trends in specific communities and might provide information on the skills departing the Strait Region.

A workshop participant from Isle Madame referred to both the negative impact of out-migration and the usefulness of a database of skilled out-migrants for dealing with that issue:

> We lost 2,400 people – [since] the mid-1980s – [as many as] 6,000 going back 30 years ago. [Since that time] Isle Madame [has] represented 80 per cent of the out-migration of Richmond County…[We] are trying in Isle Madame to set up manufacturing. [We are] trying to partner with a company in Québec. My database has 20 millwrights [from Isle Madame] all over the country. "Are you [millwrights from Isle Madame] interested in coming here"?

Return migration in high numbers is unlikely without an economic boom equivalent to the 'Celtic Tiger' phenomenon from 1995-2006, when massive economic growth (at times above 10 per cent) resulted in net return migration after almost 150 years of out-migration (see Kirby 2010). An equally difficult strategy is the need to foster higher levels of immigration.

A key observation in many of the essays in Reimer's (2007) edited collection on immigration to rural Canada is that rural areas face challenges in attracting and retaining immigrants. Not only do Canada's largest cities attract most immigrants, these places also serve as the basis for the 'secondary migration' of new immigrants to Canada. In other words, there is a relationship between region and the size of a settlement and secondary migration of immigrants to Canada (Houle 2007). The secondary migration of immigrants is highest in Atlantic Canada and for communities with less than 100,000 people. Houle (2007) showed that for immigrants aged 15 and over who had arrived in Atlantic Canada from 2000-2001, more than 30 per cent left their original point of

settlement for a new destination after 24 months. The corresponding figure for each of Québec, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia and Territories is around 10 per cent or below.

One central reason why immigration retention is difficult in Atlantic Canada's smaller communities is the challenge of integration. This fact is emphasized in Bruce's (2007) overview of immigration as a rural repopulation strategy for Atlantic Canada, Davison's (2009) study of the challenges of immigration for Cape Breton Island and Baldacchino's (2006) report on recent immigrants to Prince Edward Island.

In 2006, 1,465 immigrants lived in the Strait Region, but more than 30 per cent had arrived before 1961. From 2001-2006, there were 110 immigrants, but only 70 remained. Thus, more than 36 per cent of immigrants underwent secondary migration. Overall, 260 immigrants left the Strait Region from 2001-2006; this is nearly 20 per cent of the population of immigrants remaining in the Region. Of those 260 immigrants who left, 70 remained in Nova Scotia, 90 moved to Ontario and 50 relocated to Alberta (calculated from Statistics Canada 2010).

Although we do not know the exact reasons why these immigrants left the Strait Region, lack of social integration may be a factor. Workshop participants concurred that integrating immigrants is one of the Strait Region's biggest challenges, with the issue of integrating immigrant doctors receiving special attention. One individual raised the following scenario: "In recruiting a physician, say you come from Jordan to Newfoundland and to L'Ardoise. Who is responsible to help with school? Who is to start to socialise with that family?" A workshop participant familiar with L'Ardoise noted that "…[It] is always a [tough] job to get people in [L'Ardoise]. [In] the last 10-15 years, 25 doctors [arrived]; some come for six months and move on. [They] want kids to have social activities not available to us. We emphasize that, i.e., help them to integrate – do things with my wife, have our kids involved". This individual added that it is also difficult for Muslims to stay in Richmond County because they have no place to worship, but they do have a mosque in Halifax. An interviewee who works in the health care field stressed that the lack of cultural diversity in the Strait Region hinders the retention of immigrants:

> The challenge with physicians [is] cultural diversity. It becomes challenging in our area; [there is] not a lot of cultural diversity. We have Scots, Dutch, First Nations and some Blacks, [but] reaching out to other cultures [such as] Muslims [is] difficult. [It is difficult for them] to make a connection [as they] continue [their] religious practices. My experience [is that] they have left because of those reasons. [It is] challenging [as there is] no one to share beliefs with. [It's very] challenging in a rural area. Some physicians have left and moved out to Toronto [as their family] is there. [It's] multicultural. [They] can participate in their cultural beliefs and not be different. [In a] rural area the population is different and [pervaded by a Scottish culture].

The issue of social integration means that the successful integration of immigrants is not reducible to available job opportunities. Newcomers must feel welcome in a community.

With the recent regionalization of Canada's immigration policy, some communities are approaching the challenge of attracting and retaining immigrants through the use of what is referred to as 'Welcoming Communities'.[15] Here, community groups provide a venue where newcomers can interact with community residents. The objective is to let immigrants know that they are welcome in the community. The use of welcoming communities was well known to workshop participants. Some noted that Truro is more successful than the Strait Region in this area for retention. According to one participant: "[There is] a welcoming community in Truro. [My] brother [works in] engineering at […]. He [has] recruited from all over. [When] welcoming newcomers, a van goes to Halifax each week to get food for the people [of] different cultures and backgrounds. [It] seems to make a big difference. [There are] a lot of immigrants in Truro. [Truro is] very aggressive".[16] An individual knowledgeable about immigration noted that for welcoming communities in the Strait Region,

> [There is] small progress. I see some organisations include in their publications [that] jobs are open to immigrants, but this is really small. Diversity – [there is] definitely an interest in it [and] people want that more. [We] have not broken the glass, but we are moving in that direction. [People

[15] This emerged in the wake of the PNP, which is discussed below.

[16] For more details on the Truro experience, see Flint (2007).

> want] more of a role for immigrants in the community. I held a cultural competency workshop a few weeks ago [and] could have filled it twice. Health care has made strides in this area [by] doing work with minorities and immigrants as patients. They do their welcoming in the hospital.

As mentioned above, the 'welcoming communities' initiative follows in the wake of recent changes to Canada's immigration policy. In 2003, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) introduced an initiative to foster the geographic dispersion of immigrants in Canada. The Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) was designed to match the recruitment of immigrants to the needs of provincial economies and has four streams: skilled worker, family business worker, international graduate and the community identified. The first three streams are employer driven. For the community-identified stream in Nova Scotia, the applicant must be able to contribute to the local economy, have sufficient settlement supports and have a letter of support from the local regional development authority (Davison 2009).

In Nova Scotia, the regional development authorities are involved in the PNP, and a Regional Immigration Navigator (RIN) is assigned to some of them[17]. The development authorities in the Strait Region share one. While the RIN for the Strait Region needs to be knowledgeable about all aspects of the PNP, 50 per cent of that individual's work is with the community-identified stream. According to the terms of this stream, the applicant has to come to the RIN. "The newcomer has to provide letters of support from the community - submit an application and receive a letter from the Regional Development Authority – letter of support from the community. [The Regional Development Authority in conjunction with the RIN] looks at their [the applicant's] final business plan. [They] look at the letter of intent". Many of the immigrant entrepreneurs who have recently come to the Strait Region through the community-identified stream are highly qualified Europeans:

> Some of these people are starting bakeries, restaurants and woodworking shops. Some are tourism operators and crafts people – from the UK and other parts of Europe. Some are in IT work. Some are highly skilled in their home

[17] This discussion of the role of the RIN, and of that of the PNP program, is based on interviews with several individuals, including the RIN, as well as information from Davison (2009). To protect the confidentiality of the RIN, we do not refer directly to that person's comments in our discussion.

> country. [It's a] complete shift in this country [for them to] go from network administrator to a restaurant owner. [Those] from UK and Germany – [the] immigrant entrepreneurs [and] telecommuters –set up a new business. Some sell their businesses back home and start up again here. Some work here and are still employed by a company in their home country.

Since 2006, about 30 immigrant families have moved into the Strait Region. It is estimated that most are from Europe and that they have invested about $350,000-$400,000 each.

While recent immigrant entrepreneurs have been retained, some are experiencing difficulties. Two physicians from the United Kingdom have successful practices in their home country. They spend six months in the United Kingdom and six in Canada, but they cannot practice here. "The pay is less here than in the UK. And, they need to retrain for up to two years. Some have a mixed practice, holistic/naturopath position, [so] coming to Nova Scotia can be challenging. [The] rules are a big hindrance (i.e., acceptance of qualifications). In the last three years four physicians came here – all from the UK. Two are still in the region – the other two, I don't know"? The issue of how accreditation negatively impacts immigrant professionals is well documented (see Reitz 2008).

A systematic study of why immigrants are leaving the Strait Region is needed. Nevertheless, our workshop and interview data suggest that social integration and problems with accreditation are important issues in their out-migration. However, we do know that recent immigrant entrepreneurs, who are mainly from Europe, are more likely to stay in the Strait Region. While we do not have quantitative data on the national origins of immigrant entrepreneurs in the Strait Region, Akbari, et al. (2007) showed that the vast majority of immigrant entrepreneurs (self-employed) in Atlantic Canada in 2001 had come from either Europe or the United States.

The retention of immigrants does not only depend on social integration and accreditation issues; the loss of job opportunities also assumes a role and has resulted in the out-migration of immigrants from Port Hawkesbury, the second largest town in the Strait Region:

> The retention issue, [the] gaps I see here, [is] minorities [such as those from the] Middle East and younger [people are] often tied to job opportunities. The

> call centre in Port Hawkesbury [had a] large number of [East Indians]. The centre closed [and] the immigrants moved to Toronto, Halifax and Sydney. There were 40 – 5 moved back. The [immigrants] were in town – most people did not know they were living here. Most would have liked to stay – the issue was not with the lifestyle. But, only a few are staying with the new call centre – [others] have found better jobs in Ontario and Halifax. The call centre that operated from 2004-2006 had 200 employees. Around that time, ethnic foods started to appear in the supermarkets.

The observation of "better jobs in Ontario and Halifax" is reminiscent of the reasons why some NSCC graduates are themselves contemplating leaving the Strait Region.

We have shown that the Strait Region has a low number of immigrants in its overall population and that retaining immigrants is an issue. While more systematic data are needed, a tentative analysis of the data here suggests that immigrant entrepreneurs from Europe are more likely to stay, but skilled professionals from countries from the Global South are more likely to leave the Strait Region.

Given that workshop respondents and interviewees have observed that it is difficult to retain visible minorities in the Strait Region, one would assume that they constitute a significant percentage of the 260 immigrants who left the region from 2001-2006. However, when we look at the target group profile (Statistics Canada 2010), the data for the immigrants who both stayed in or left the Strait Region from 2001-2006 show that most were born in either the United States or Europe. This, of course, does not mean that visible minorities are not part of this group, but it does demonstrate that visible minorities from the Global South are not a significant part of the resident or immigrant out-migrant population.

For example, in 2006, more than 75 per cent (1,100) of the 1,465 immigrants living in the Strait Region were born in the United States (500), the Netherlands (250), the United Kingdom (200) or Germany (150). Moreover, among the 260 immigrants who left the Strait Region from 2001-2006, the percentage of Americans and Europeans is even higher. Of the 70 immigrants who migrated elsewhere in Nova Scotia, 65 were born in either the United States or Europe. The corresponding number of immigrants among out-migrants to Ontario (with numbers born in the United States and Europe in

parentheses) is 90 (70) and Alberta 50 (45). Only in British Columbia do most (20 out of 25) immigrants who left the Strait Region list a country in the South (in this case India) as their place of birth (calculated from Statistics Canada 2010).

This, of course, does not mean that the workshop participants' and interviewees' observation that visible minorities are experiencing difficulties in integrating in the Strait Region is a dubious claim. Rather, it is possible that some of these visible minority immigrants may have worked in the Strait Region but lived outside the region. Hence, they will not show up in out-migration data, but their departure will still be recognized. In addition, the experiences of the few visible minorities who left the Strait Region may resonate more deeply with workshop participants and interviewees given the small numbers of visible minorities in the Strait Region. They may be also referring to the experiences of visible minority immigrants who came to the Strait Region since the 2006 census.

This, of course, also points to the issue of retaining visible minorities, whether from Canadian-born or immigrant origins. While the target group data for out-migrants from 2001-2006 does not distinguish visible minorities in terms of their national origins, it does show that although visible minorities constituted less than 2 per cent (790) of the population in the Strait Region in 2006, they represented 3 per cent (105) of the out-migrant population that moved elsewhere in Nova Scotia and over 11 per cent (115) of the out-migrant population that moved to Ontario (calculated from Statistics Canada 2010). Thus, if the Strait Region is having difficulty retaining visible minorities in general, it stands to reason that it will face challenges attracting and retaining immigrants.

Section 8: Conclusions

This paper documents the social impact of population decline in the Strait Region of Nova Scotia. Population loss in Atlantic Canada is not a novel phenomenon. The patterns that developed after Confederation have persisted to the present (see Thornton 1988). What *is* new, however, is that the current wave of out-migration coincides with the aging of the local population throughout Atlantic Canada, and the Strait Region is no exception. Corbett's (2007) incisive analysis shows that rural youth are being educated to leave. His point is that through their education, rural youth learn that out-migration is part of their

future. ‘There is nothing here for you’. The skills of rural youth are exported to central and western Canada.

Nevertheless, out-migration is no panacea for those who leave. As our evidence shows, rural out-migrants have mixed mobility opportunities. Many leave as skilled workers and go on to earn more than those who remain in the Strait Region. Yet significant numbers, especially women, do go on to earn less, falling below Statistics Canada’s low-income cut-off line. Some things are constant; for example, men are more likely to have more favourable labour market outcomes than women. Although our data do not permit us to make a correlation among gender, education and income, it is likely that males with less education earn more than their female counterparts. The women who do best are most likely those with high levels of education who leave for Ontario.

Our qualitative data shows that there is a perception, especially among our focus group of NSCC graduates, of *having* to leave. For males, Alberta is a place to get ‘red seal certified’ in a shorter time; it is also a place with higher income and greater opportunities. Females also perceive the need to leave to enhance their qualifications and opportunities.

For the workshop participants, out-migration is still considered to be a negative factor. They recognize that ‘young people always want to leave’; they also consider that this has consequences for the overall vitality of aging communities. In our larger report (Phyne and Harling-Stalker 2010), we point out that out-migration has consequences for labour market recruitment, property succession, health care shortages and the dearth of volunteers.

Two obvious solutions to out-migration are efforts to promote return migration and immigration. Within a small town and rural context, this is easier said than done, however. Return migrants in this study are largely from Ontario. This is most likely the return of an aging cohort of earlier out-migrants. The interview data for our larger study suggest this to be the case. As for immigration, most immigrants came before 1961. The wave of recent immigrants from countries in the Global South largely bypassed the Strait Region, and those who do come have a high likelihood of relocating. This secondary out-migration is a problem noted in rural Canada in general (Houle 2007) and can only be

addressed if the provincial government invests more in the retention and integration of existing immigrants.

The residents of the Strait Region must rise to the challenge of assisting in this integration process. As one respondent said in the workshop, the next wave of in-migrants will not be 'our brothers and sisters coming back from Alberta'. The ultimate question is - *Who will be in the next wave, if it comes at all*? The future of the Strait Region hinges on an answer to that question unless an unforeseen economic boom results in a 'Celtic Tiger' on this side of the Atlantic. As we have seen, that is no recipe for long-term viability (see Kirby 2010).

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