

Policy Note #33 | December 2022

Exit Signs, Northern Ontario, and Francophone Out-Migration

What Makes a Welcoming Community? (Series)

By: B. Kerem Karabeyoğlu



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Land Acknowledgement

NPI would like to acknowledge the First Peoples on whose traditional territories we live and work. NPI is grateful for the opportunity to have our offices located on these lands and thank all the generations of people who have taken care of this land.

Our main offices:

- Thunder Bay on Robinson-Superior Treaty territory and the land is the traditional territory of the Anishnaabeg and Fort William First Nation.
- Sudbury is on the Robinson-Huron Treaty territory and the land is the traditional territory of the Atikameksheng Anishnaabeg as well as Wahnapiitae First Nation.
- Kirkland Lake is on the Robinson-Huron Treaty territory and the land is the traditional territory of Cree, Ojibway, and Algonquin Peoples, as well as Beaverhouse First Nation.
- Each community is home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples.

We recognize and appreciate the historic connection that Indigenous peoples have to these territories. We support their efforts to sustain and grow their nations. We also recognize the contributions that they have made in shaping and strengthening local communities, the province, and Canada.

This report was made possible through the support of our partner, Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation. Northern Policy Institute expresses great appreciation for their generous support but emphasizes the following: The views expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Institute, its Board of Directors or its supporters. Quotation with appropriate credit is permissible.

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About the Author

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Born and raised in Istanbul, Turkey, Kerem graduated in 2021 from Western University with a B.A. in Political Science. During his studies, Kerem developed a keen interest in the areas of Canadian Arctic Sovereignty and Intergovernmental Cooperation. His academic focus was also directed towards International Peace-building and Transitional Justice studies. Immediately after graduating, Kerem returned to Turkey to intern as a Junior Consultant in the Turkish Parliament. Now, back in Canada, he is pursuing his professional interests in promoting long-term sustainable development. Having experienced Northern Ontario for the first time tree-planting, he has been inspired to return to the natural beauty of the region ever since. An avid trail runner, soccer fan, and skier, Kerem is also passionate about producing music in his free time.

About the Partner: Réseau du Nord

Réseau du Nord creates links between organizations from all regions of Northern Ontario, such as: Sudbury, Timmins, North Bay, Sault Ste. Marie and Thunder Bay, to put in place a system to facilitate the reception and integration of newcomers.

Réseau du Nord follows the objectives of the strategic plan developed by the Steering Committee:

- Increase the number of French-speaking immigrants so as to increase the demographic weight of the Francophone communities in a minority situation.
- Improve the capacity of French-speaking communities in a minority situation and strengthen welcoming and settlement structures for French-speaking newcomers.
- Ensure the economic integration of French-speaking immigrants within Canadian society and Francophone communities in minority situations in particular.
- Ensure the social and cultural integration of French-speaking immigrants within Canadian society and Francophone communities in minority situations.
- Foster regionalization of Francophone immigration outside of Toronto, Montréal and Vancouver.

About the Northern Analyst Collective:

The Northern Analyst Collective, a project of Northern Policy Institute, will allow members to “time share” a professional policy analyst. By merging our collective resources we can ensure that the smallest municipality or local charity can access high-end skills at an affordable price.



NPI is pleased to have the support of FedNor for this important work to assess the impact of the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot in Northern Ontario.

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Executive Summary

Northern Ontario communities need up to 12,391 French-speaking immigrants, every year for 10 years, to maintain their demographic population current levels. With that being said, a large part of population growth revolves around not only attracting people to these regions, but also retaining the population already here. As such, Northern Policy Institute, in collaboration with organizations across Northern Ontario, launched an exit survey to collect data on why people leave Northern Ontario communities. This survey was one of six surveys launched in February 2022 looking at the factors and experiences that contribute to the continuum of welcoming – from the individual, employer, and service provider perspective – at the community-level in Ontario's northern regions.

Although the exit survey was targeted at all out-migrants from these communities, this analysis specifically focuses on Francophone respondents, and the factors contributing to their decisions to leave. More specifically, respondents were asked to consider socio-economic factors such as their employment and housing satisfaction, opportunities present in the community, and their sense of belonging to provide greater insight on their decision to leave. Similar reports are conducted for those that left Northwestern and Northeastern Ontario, respectively.

Overall, the survey results revealed that both social and economic factors played a large role in the decision-making process when electing to leave a community. Socially, the majority of Francophone respondents indicated a strong sense of belonging to their previous community, though the most prevalent challenge expressed by the respondents is the lack of social interaction with other residents while living in their previous community.

Looking at economic factors, more than half of respondents indicated being "very" or "somewhat" satisfied with their employment situations while living in Northern Ontario. Nevertheless, the most common reason for leaving their previous community was the presence of better job opportunities elsewhere, followed by respondents highlighting better access to education being available elsewhere.

In consideration of the survey findings looking at Francophones who out-migrated from a Northern Ontario community, some of the report recommendations include:

1. Education for employers on the benefits Francophone employees bring to their labour force can help increase Francophone opportunities, number of hires, and overall job satisfaction. This can also expand the range of services offered in French to aid other Francophones in the community.
2. Communities and organizations can work to promote socialization through virtual or in-person workshops, events, and activities. For Francophone newcomers, events could be held that specifically target their demographic.

The above measures help address some of the challenges respondents mentioned facing in their previous communities. Addressing and mitigating these issues might help reduce the number of Francophone out-migrants from Northern Ontario communities. Moving forward, to track the progress of initiatives implemented to retain the existing population, community-level data is needed to inform decision-making and program evaluation.

Introduction

Many Northern Ontario communities are experiencing a demographic shift and a population decline. A population that is aging at a faster rate than the rest of the province, paired with a low birth rate and high levels of youth out-migration can result in future labour market shortages.

To help mitigate these challenges, communities in Ontario's northern regions must prioritize attraction, retention, and welcoming, as well as ensure full labour market participation amongst the population.

To further explore this topic and inform community-level decision-making, Northern Policy Institute (NPI), in partnership with multiple organizations across the various regions of Northern Ontario, conducted a data collection initiative to assess former residents' level of satisfaction with the community in which they previously resided, and their reasons for leaving. The exit survey was open from February 1 to February 22, 2022.

The survey was conducted on individuals who had previously resided in a Northern Ontario community, and have since left that community. Analysis of these results were conducted for three subgroups: those who previously resided in Northwestern Ontario, those who previously resided in Northeastern Ontario, and those who are "fluent" or "advanced" in French and previously resided in a Northern Ontario community. Of those who responded to the exit survey, fewer than five respondents participated in the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot (RNIP).

The purpose of this survey was to better understand the factors influencing out-migration from the regions of Northern Ontario.

Methodology

The questions in the survey were designed to gain a better understanding of several economic and social features that influenced respondents' decision to leave their communities. Factors such as employment and housing satisfaction, opportunities present in communities, and other social factors were included in the survey.

Distribution was done through a collective effort by organizations across Northern Ontario, and took the form of targeted social media ads, direct distribution through emails, social media posts, newsletters, information sessions, and direct reach out (personal emails, phone calls, and word of mouth). In addition, respondents were entered into a draw to win one of two \$100 prepaid Visa gift cards. All surveys and promotional materials were available in French and English.

The sample size was made up of 147 respondents who were surveyed using a non-random participant self-selection online survey method. Of the 147 total, 56 respondents indicated that they are "fluent" or "advanced" in French, and the previous communities in which they lived were within the regions of Northern Ontario. This paper specifically focuses on the Francophone subset of respondents.

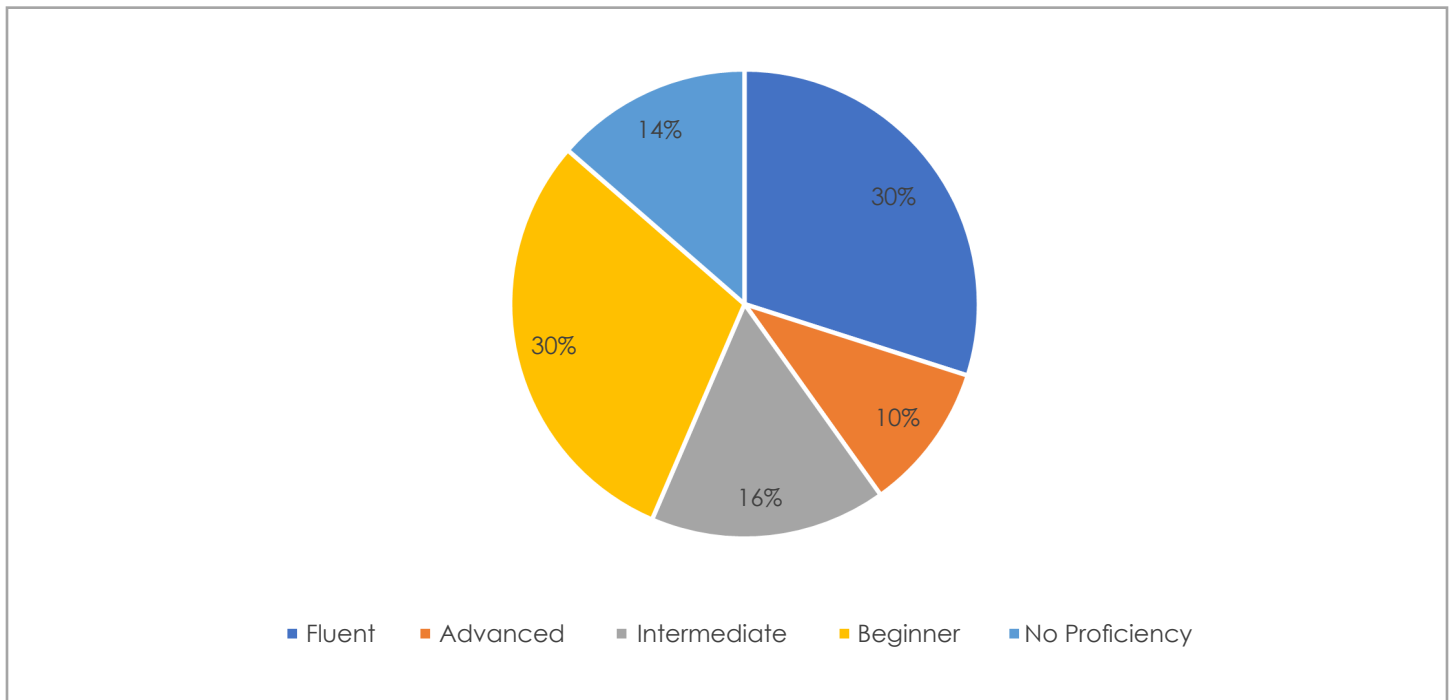
As a result of the small sample size, the data available is limited. Further data collection will need to be conducted in the future to arrive at more concrete conclusions on the subject. Due to the sample size, analysis is not available at the community-level and thus is presented for Northern Ontario. Even then, given the number of respondents for this survey, caution should be made to avoid over-generalizing these experiences to all Francophones who previously lived in a Northern Ontario community.

Demographics

The three most commonly indicated previous communities where Francophone respondents lived were West Nipissing/Sturgeon Falls (27 per cent), Hearst (16 per cent) and Greater Sudbury (14 per cent). Other common communities included Kapuskasing (nine per cent) and Thunder Bay (nine per cent). Other previous communities were indicated, but each community had less than five per cent of overall responses. Some of these communities include the urban centres of Timmins, Sault Ste. Marie, and North Bay. Cumulatively, these communities made up 25 per cent of responses.

Of the 56 respondents, some left several questions blank. Owing to this, the number of respondents (the n) of the resulting graphs fluctuates throughout the results of the survey.

Figure 1: Respondents by French Proficiency (%)



Note: (n=147)

Thirty per cent of respondents to the survey indicated that they are fluent in French – the same percentage indicated that they speak French at a beginner level. Respondents who spoke French at an advanced level made up 10 per cent of the total. Those who identified as intermediate level made up the third-highest portion at 16 per cent of the sample. Six per cent chose not to answer and 14 per cent of the total number of respondents do not speak any French.

Of the 56 Francophone respondents, 64 per cent identified as female and 30 per cent identified as male.¹ Eighty-two per cent indicated “Born Canadian Citizen” as their migration status. Seven per cent indicated “Temporary Resident – Work Permit”.²

¹ Six per cent of respondents identified as gender-fluid, non-binary, or did not indicate their gender.

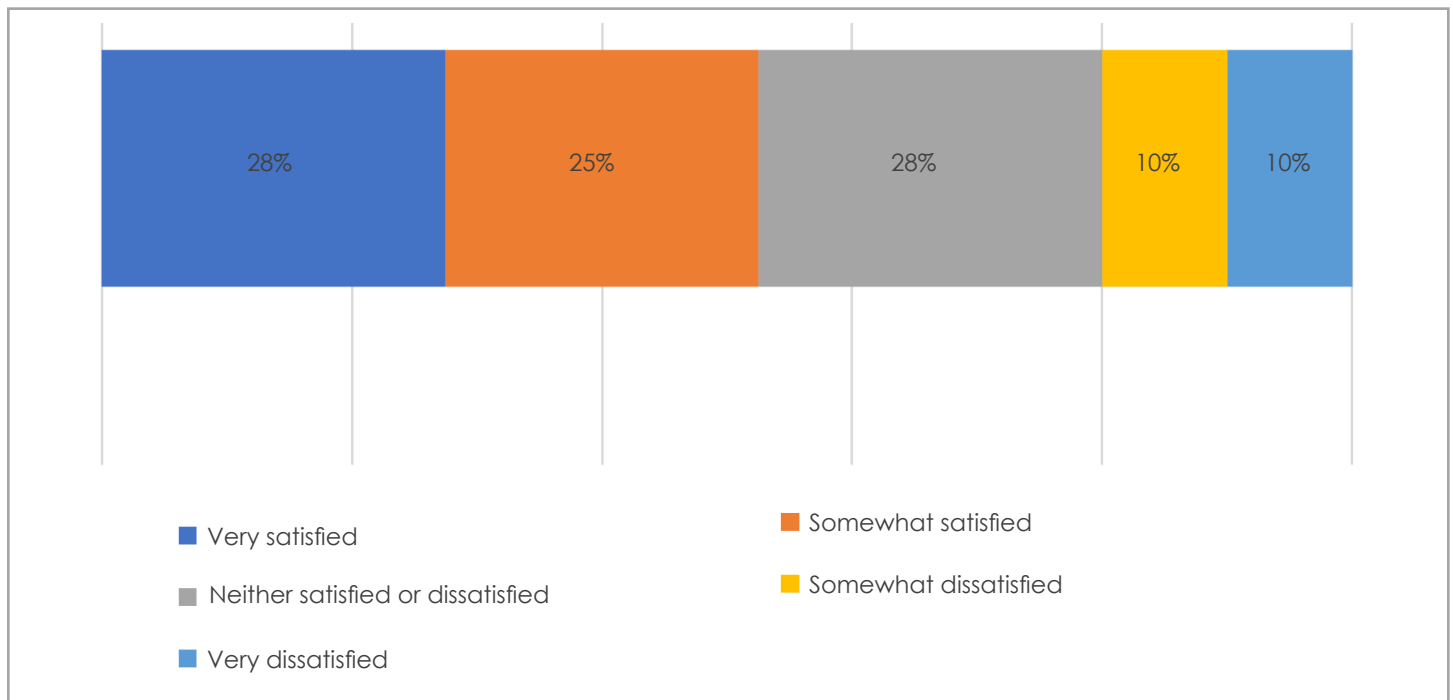
² Eleven per cent of respondents did not indicate their migration status.

Satisfaction with Employment in Previous Communities

When asked about the level of satisfaction with their employment situation in their previous communities, 28 per cent of respondents indicated that they were neutral in their opinions on the subject. Just over 50 per cent had positive opinions about their employment in their

previous communities. Non-Francophones respondents responded similarly with regards to their employment satisfaction in previous communities. Twenty per cent of the respondents indicated that they were somewhat or very dissatisfied with their employment.

Figure 2: Respondents by Employment Satisfaction (%)



Note: (n=56)

Workers with former occupations in skill level A (professional jobs that usually require a degree) were most satisfied with their employment situations in their previous community. Of those that were satisfied with their employment situation, the most common industry of employment was in the education services. Most

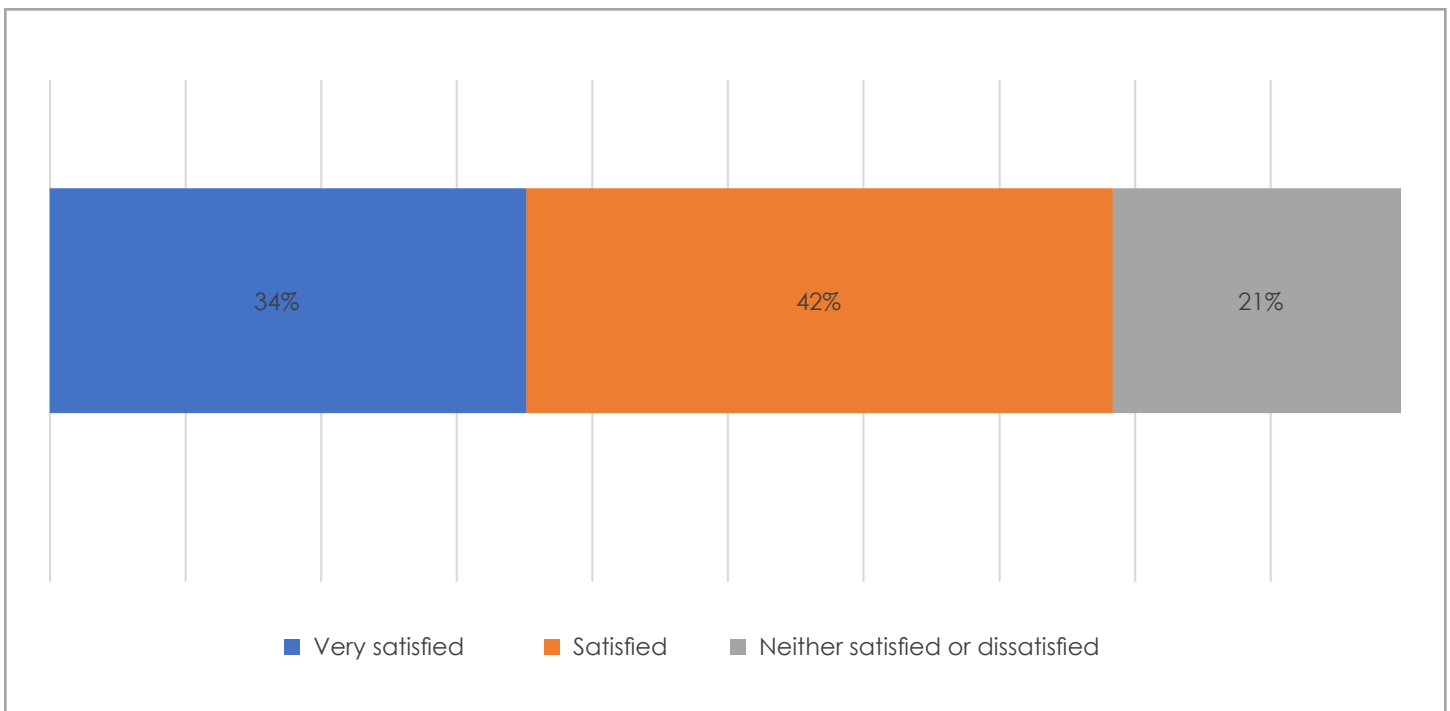
non-Francophone respondents who were satisfied with their employment also indicated being in the education services. Finally, no specific reasons were given regarding why some respondents were dissatisfied with their previous employment.

Satisfaction with Housing in Previous Communities

Many respondents indicated that they had positive experiences with housing in their previous communities. Similar numbers of non-Francophone respondents conveyed the same sentiment with respect to housing satisfaction. Thirty-eight of the 56 respondents answered

the question regarding satisfaction with housing. Forty-two per cent indicated that they were satisfied with housing and 34 per cent indicated that they were very satisfied. Twenty-one per cent were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Figure 3: Respondents by Housing Satisfaction (%)



Note: (n=38)

The survey found that the most common reasons for difficulties in finding housing in the previous communities were related to low vacancy rates and respondents'

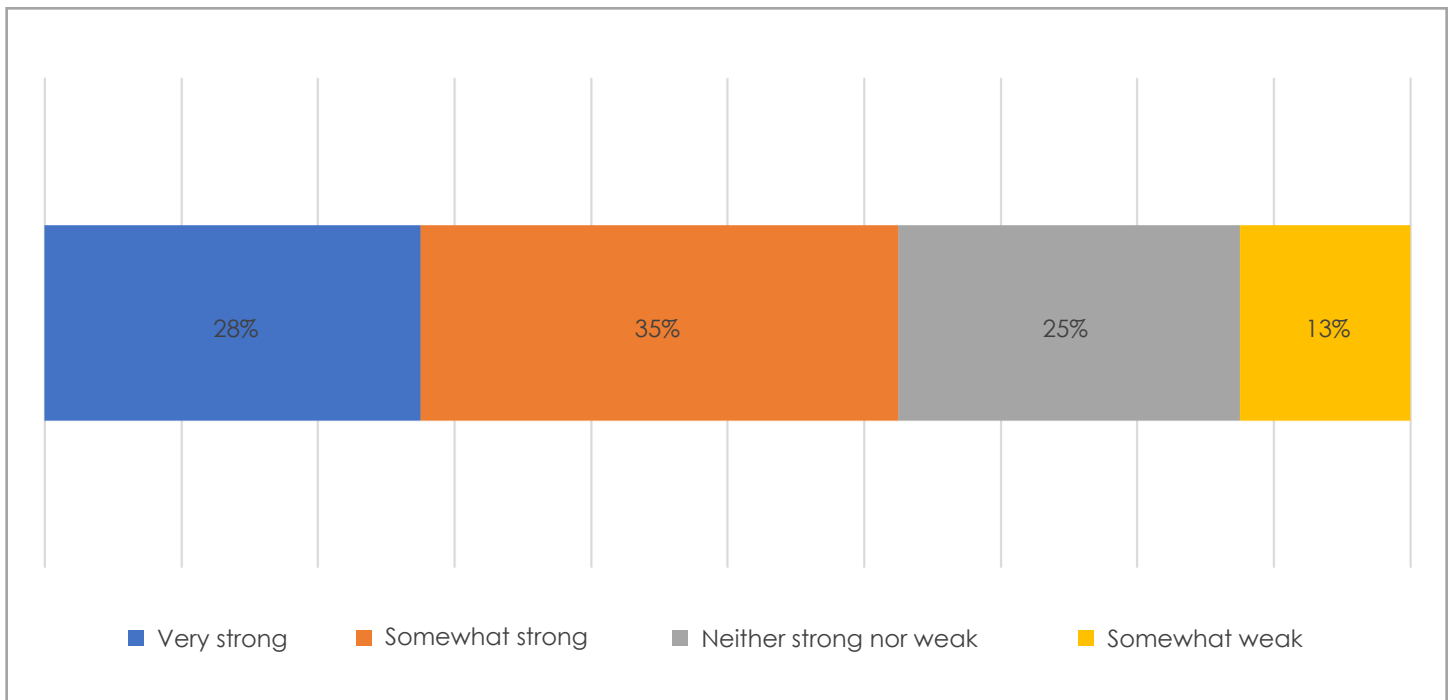
financial constraints. Several respondents also indicated that the available housing did not meet the needs of their families.

Sense of Belonging in Previous Communities

Most Francophone respondents indicated a strong sense of belonging in their previous communities. Of the 40 respondents, 35 per cent denoted somewhat strong and 28 per cent stated a very strong sense of belonging. Thirteen per cent of the sample denoted somewhat

weak, and 25 per cent were neutral on the subject. The responses from non-Francophone respondents were similar when it came to their sense of belonging in their communities.

Figure 4: Respondents by Sense of Belonging in Community (%)



Note: (n=40)

Forty-four per cent of respondents indicated that their families lived in their previous communities prior to their arrival, while 37 per cent of respondents indicated that they had no family members living in their previous

communities prior to arrival. A lack of family was also a major reason for some respondents to have moved away from their previous communities.

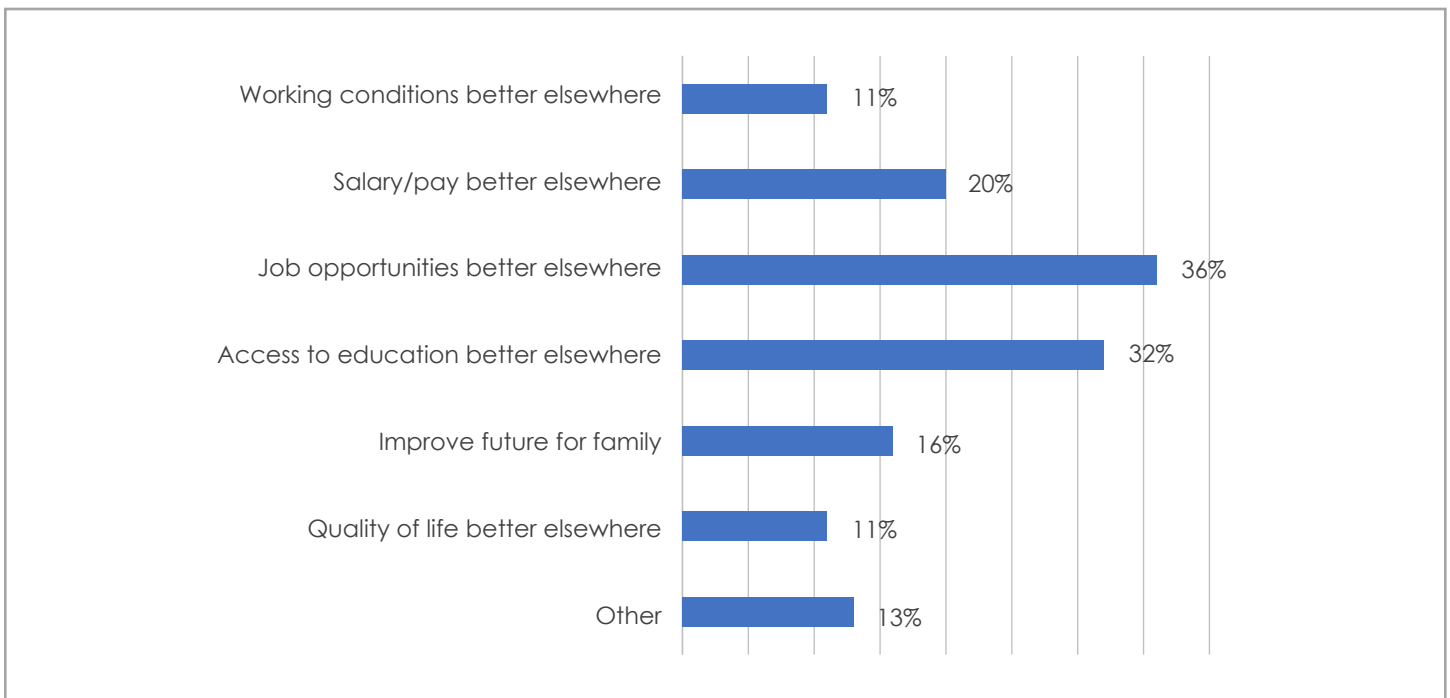


Main Reasons for Moving Away from Previous Communities

When the 56 respondents were asked the reasons for leaving previous communities, having better job opportunities elsewhere was the highest response (36 per cent). For 20 per cent of the respondents, salary/pay is better elsewhere, was an important factor in making the choice to leave their communities. The responses indicate that more opportunities and better salaries are possible outside the communities in which the respondents had previously lived. Thirty-two per cent indicated that better access to education elsewhere was a reason for moving away. Similarly, non-Francophone respondents also highlighted better job opportunities elsewhere as a reason for leaving their communities.

Fewer than five respondents indicated that they were students when living in their previous community. The majority of them were pursuing a bachelor's degree. The fields of study mentioned most were education, business management, public administration, social and behavioural sciences, and law.

Figure 5: Respondents by Reasons for Leaving Previous Community (%)



Note: (n=56)

Of the 56 respondents, 27 per cent indicated that their current place of residency is elsewhere in Canada, outside of Ontario. Thirty per cent indicated that their current residency is elsewhere in Ontario, outside of

the regions of Northern Ontario. Twenty-one per cent indicated that their current residence is in Northeastern Ontario.³

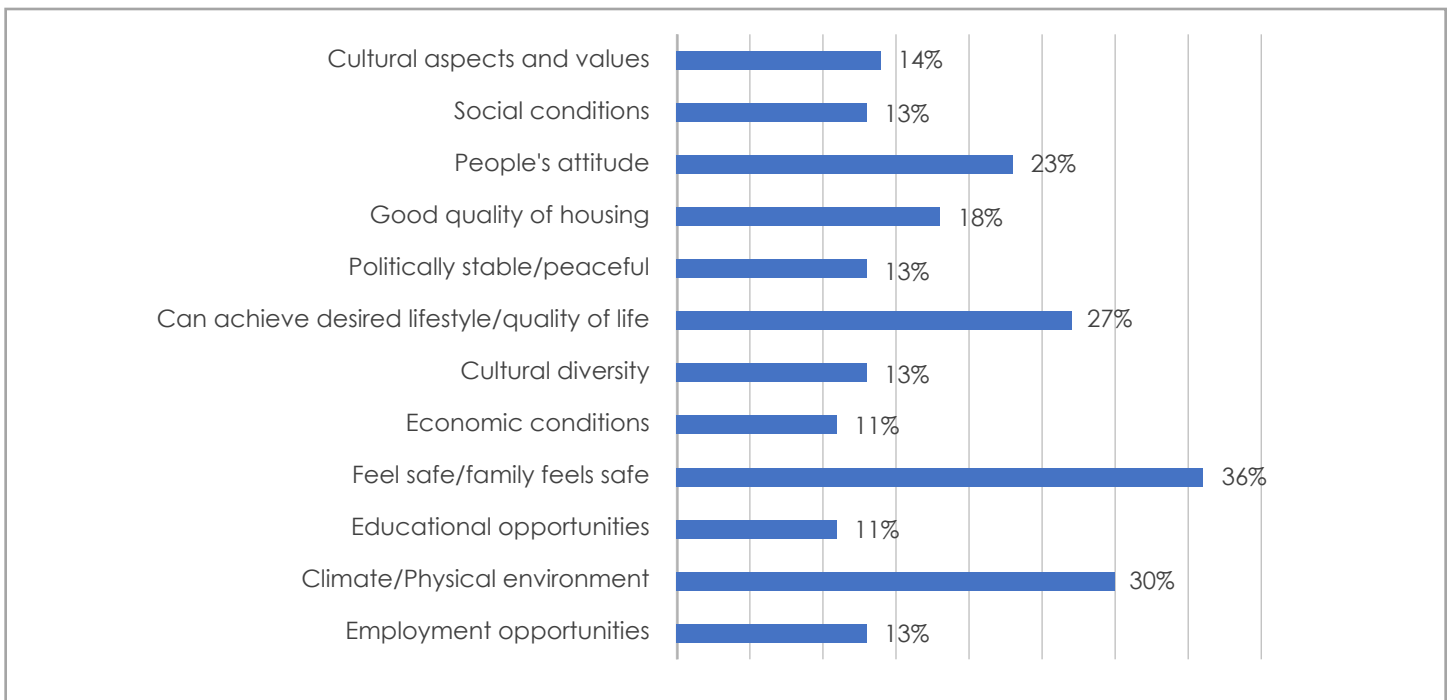
³ Thirteen per cent of respondents left this section blank. Nine per cent indicated that they either moved outside of Canada, moved to Northwestern Ontario, or preferred not to answer.

Aspects Liked About Previous Communities

Of the 56 respondents, 36 per cent indicated that the relative sense of safety was the most likable aspect of living in their previous communities. Twenty-seven per cent of the responses also showed that one could achieve their desired lifestyle and quality of life within those previous communities. Thirty per cent highlighted the climate and physical environment of their previous communities. The attitudes of their neighbours were also likable, according to 23 per cent of the responses.

Only 13 per cent denoted employment opportunities as a positive aspect of their previous communities. Non-Francophone respondents indicated that the climate and physical environment in Northwestern Ontario were the most likable aspect of their previous communities. Additionally, non-Francophone respondents in Northwestern Ontario indicated a lower rate of satisfaction with the relative safety of their families in their previous communities.

Figure 6: Respondents by Aspects Liked about Previous Community (%)



Note: (n=56)

Greatest Difficulties Following Arrival in Previous Communities

When asked about their greatest difficulty upon their arrival, out of 56 respondents, 18 per cent indicated the lack of social interaction. Similarly, 16 per cent highlighted problems associated with the possibilities of making new friends in the communities. Other common difficulties include adapting to a new culture or new values, gaining access to professional help such as medical, dental, or legal services, and finding good quality housing.

Comparably, non-Francophone respondents had similar difficulties concerning social interaction possibilities and gaining access to professional help and services.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Overall, there are several key findings. Although most respondents indicated that they are satisfied with their employment situation, respondents largely indicated that employment-related factors were a reason for out-migration. In addition to low salaries being an issue, a lack of diversity in the labour market opportunities is also noted. **Investment in labour market integration for immigrants, Indigenous peoples, and the domestic population is an opportunity for the region to better retain its residents. Additionally, encouraging diversity in job opportunities can be helpful with retention. More focus into diversity in the job market is also required when promoting and marketing jobs, specifically for Francophone newcomers and Canadians.** This diversity can be encouraged in a multitude of ways such as investment into industries and occupations of growth, alignment between what is taught in schools and the skills needed in the labour market, and funding that helps businesses provide job opportunities such as the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation (NOHFC) and FedNor internship programs. Additionally, educating employers on the benefits Francophone employees bring to their labour force can help increase Francophone opportunities, number of hires, and overall job satisfaction. Expanding the range of services offered in French, in part by hiring more French-speaking employees, will also be of service to other Francophones

in the community.

Another challenge expressed by the respondents is the lack of social interaction with citizens in the previous communities. It is important to note, however, that the pandemic might have played a role in difficulties socializing. Physical distancing has led to the temporary closure of many recreational and social establishments that promoted these activities within the communities. Regardless, **communities and organizations can work to promote socialization through virtual (or in-person) workshops, events, and activities. For Francophone newcomers, events could be held that specifically target their demographic and cultural group. French cultural and social events are an opportunity to welcome and connect newcomers from French-speaking countries around the world with French-speakers already in the community.**

Moving forward, community-level data can promote informed decision-making related to out-migration in the communities of Northern Ontario. As such, an effort should be made across, and in this case, beyond Northern Ontario to share, promote, and take these surveys. With granular data, there is the opportunity for comparability across regions, allowing for the identification of best practices and areas for improvement.



About Northern Policy Institute

Northern Policy Institute is Northern Ontario's independent, evidence-driven think tank. We perform research, analyze data, and disseminate ideas. Our mission is to enhance Northern Ontario's capacity to take the lead position on socio-economic policy that impacts our communities, our province, our country, and our world.

We believe in partnership, collaboration, communication, and cooperation. Our team seeks to do inclusive research that involves broad engagement and delivers recommendations for specific, measurable action. Our success depends on our partnerships with other entities based in or passionate about Northern Ontario.

Our permanent offices are in Thunder Bay, Sudbury, and Kirkland Lake. During the summer months we have satellite offices in other regions of Northern Ontario staffed by teams of Experience North placements. These placements are university and college students working in your community on issues important to you and your neighbours.

Related Research

Identifying Northern Ontario's Strengths and Weaknesses in the Attraction and Retention of Newcomers
Christina Zefi

Magnetic North 2021 Conference Report: Attraction, Retention, and Welcoming in Ontario's Northern Regions
Mercedes Labelle

A Reason to Stay: Retaining Youth in Northern Ontario
Andre Ouellet & Dr. Martin Lefebvre

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