

# Is Newfoundland a New-found Home for International Students? Challenges and Opportunities

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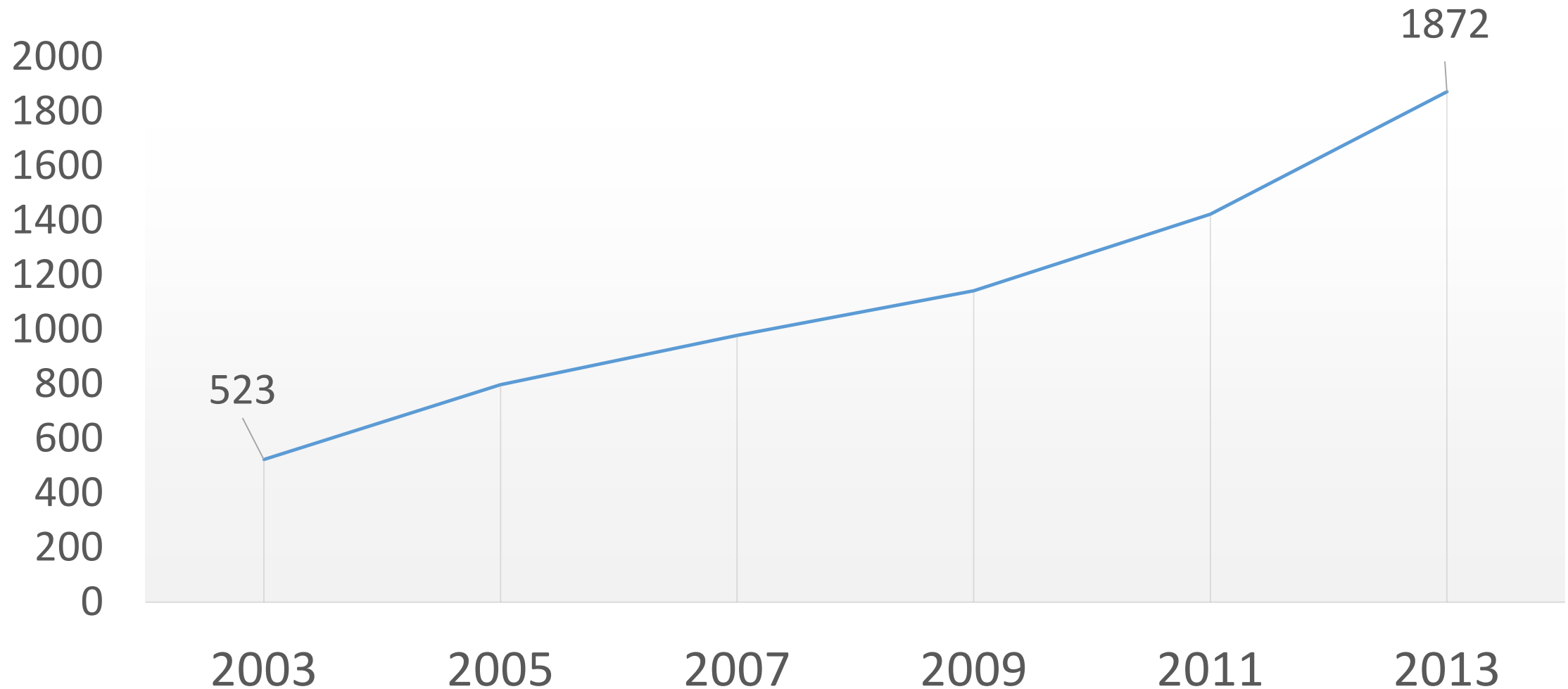
*“While water flows downstream in nature,  
humans strive to move up in the world.”*

-- an old Chinese saying

# Growth in the Number of International Students at Memorial University



## MUN International Student Enrolment - Fall Semester



# Research Problem & Research Questions



- Research problem - low retention of international students in Newfoundland
- Research questions:
  - 1) Where do international students intend to live after graduation?
  - 2) What are the factors influencing those who plan to leave Newfoundland?
  - 3) What are the factors influencing those who plan to stay in Newfoundland?

# Methodology



## Mixed methods design

- First phase – collect quantitative data (online surveys)  
(to know the current trend in international students' post-graduation location choice)
- Second phase – collect qualitative data (individual interviews)  
(to know the factors influencing them to make such a settlement plan)

# Methodology



## Online surveys

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RBLBQ62>

## Individual interviews

Code Name	Gender	Country of Origin	Marital Status	Duration in St. John's	Graduate Program
SA	Female	South Europe	Living with common-law partner in St. John's	1 year & 5 months	Gender Studies
SB	Female	West Asia	Single	6 months	Education
SC	Female	Bangladesh	Living with husband in St. John's	More than 2 years	Oil and Gas Engineering
SD	Male	South Asia	Girlfriend back home	1 year & 6 months	MBA
SE	Male	China	Living with wife in St. John's	Almost two years	Computer Science

# Findings (online surveys)

## 58 responses

- Gender: Male (47%) & Female (53%)
- Ethnic background: Asia (70%), Europe (12%), Latin America (6%), Sub-Saharan Africa (6%), and United States (6%)
- Enrollment year: 2011 Fall (43.48%) & 2012 Fall (26.09%)
- Program: Engineering and Applied Science (31.37%), Science (19.61%), Arts (13.73%), & Business Administration (13.73%)
- Intention of applying for Permanent Residence: Yes (88%) & No (12%)
- Post-graduation location choice: Live in NL permanently (27.45%); live in St. John's for a period of time and then move to other cities in CA (41.17%); leave St. John's for other Canadian cities as soon as they graduate (21.57%); & go back to home country (9.8%)
- Factors: Better job opportunities in their fields of education (84%), better salary (50%), and the quality of the urban environment (36%)

# Findings (qualitative interview)

## - Post-graduation settlement plan

- SA: Move to Halifax with her partner after she graduates
- SB: Stay in St. John's for about one year and probably move to larger Canadian cities afterwards in pursuit of career development
- SC: Where to start her family depended on where she and her husband could find satisfactory jobs and where her husband would like to settle.
- SD: Stay in St. John's after graduation until he could find a professional job somewhere in Canada.
- SE: Live in St. John's with his wife for a quite long period



# Findings (qualitative interview)

## - Reasons for relocation

### Concern over employment

- Local economy was not vibrant due to the fact that there were a small number of companies and businesses.

*“The labor market is limited here, just because the fact that they are not very many people in this province, like ten thousand, but place like Toronto, there are two million people, so obviously the economy is better, and options are many.” (SD)*

- The economic boom in oil and gas sector would not increase the need of workforce in their fields.

*“It’s ridiculous what they are saying at the moment, next five or seven years, there would be thousands, yes, maybe, which sectors? It’s maybe nothing I am doing, I am not working in that sectors, it doesn’t apply to me.” (SA)*

- The economic boom would bring very few employment opportunities to new graduates in oil and gas engineering.

*“I know people think it is easy for us to find a job, but it’s not, most of the job advertisements for St. John’s, they require 10 or 15 years of work experience. I will not have as much of experience as they need upon graduation.” (SC)*

## Findings (qualitative interview)

- Reasons for relocation

### **Spouses' dissatisfaction and uncertainty**

*“The first month was really hard, especially for the ESL class, there was nothing, but sometimes you really want to learn, you really want to improve, write and read, and he found really isolated.”*  
(SA)

*“I don't know what my husband really wants to do, if he is not happy here, he wants to leave, obviously I have to leave.”* (SC)

# Findings (qualitative interview)

## - Reasons for relocation

### Lack of networks

- The low-profile of St. John's

*"It's not like New York where the city you could see what's going on ... but here, it's really up to you to open yourself and to connect with people." (SA)*

- The difficulty of making local friends

*"Once I came to the class and said hi, they just looked at me, they did not want to get contact." (SB)*

- Introverted personality

*"I am introverted because I am very friendly with people I know, but if I go out of that, I feel really uncomfortable. I don't go to people unless I really have to. I don't have very good networks, I just don't want to go to people unless I have to do it." (SC)*

- The difficulty of establishing meaningful professional contacts at career fairs

*"... the career fairs and expositions were mostly in engineering, science, but for education, nothing." (SB)*

# Findings (qualitative interview)

## - Reasons for relocation

### **Inefficient public transportation**

- High bus fare rates for short rides
- Low frequency of buses
- Circuitous bus routes
- Unpunctuality
- Few long-distance buses connecting the cities in NL
- Lack of means to connect the province with mainland Canada

### **Winter inconveniences**

- Difficulty of walking in winter due to the terrible sidewalk condition

*“I don’t feel comfortable, it’s tiring. Winter is long here, five months a year at least. In winter, it is so dangerous, because the snow pile up, but pushing the snow close to the pavement, sometimes you have to climb.” (SA)*

# Findings (qualitative interview)

## - Reasons for retention

- A major-related part-time job

*“That job is in my research area, and I can create some fantastic website to the users. I can gain a sense of achievement in that position. I haven’t graduated, but I have already got a good job.”*

- Confidence in the local economic development

*“St. John’s will grow, after ten years, who can say St. John’s is not the important city in Canada? That’s why I plan to live in St. John’s.”*

- Spouse’s satisfaction with life

*“We don’t have enough energy to meet the busy living environment.”*

- Friendliness of local residents

*“They try to accept what you are doing instead of shouting at you or showing their strange face to you.”*

# Discussion

- Closeness to nature, clean atmosphere, and a gentle pace of life in Newfoundland appeal to international students.
- These virtues are not sufficient to keep these students in this province, as some other factors may push them to leave.
  - The lack of career opportunities
  - The lack of meaningful connections
  - The lack of supports for accompanying spouses of international students
  - The lack of city services such as public transit and snow clearing

# Recommendations

- Balancing Economic Development and Creating Career Opportunities
- Building Meaningful Connections
- Supporting Spouses of International Students
- Improving City Amenities



Thank you! 谢谢!