Profile of English-Speaking Youth
Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine

A mixed methods study produced for:

Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN)

Council of Anglophone Magdalen Islanders (CAMI)

Committee for Anglophone Social Action (CASA)

Vision Gaspé-Percé Now

Author: Mary Richardson, PhD, consultant

Co-author: Mary Zettl, MA, research assistant

With Kim Harrison, program manager, CASA

May 2020

Contents

Executive summary

Three community organizations commissioned this profile of the situation of young people in the Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine region: the Committee for Anglophone Social Action (CASA), the Council for Anglophone Magdalen Islanders (CAMI) and Vision Gaspé-Percé Now. A study grounded in community-based participatory action research was developed, with the goal of hearing directly from young people about their realities in order to take action on issues affecting them in the region's communities. A mixed methods approach combined an on-line survey with focus group discussions exploring questions related to out-migration, education, employment, social life, services and more. A total of 438 young people filled out the survey and nine FGD were held in a total of six communities (with a total of 82 youth).

Challenges facing English-speaking youth in the region

Youth face challenges related to language skills, education, employment, social life and services. Exposure to and acquisition of French language are affected by schooling, jobs, friends and family. Some young people are able to acquire a high level of fluency because of their life circumstances (family and friends), while others simply do not have the opportunities to do so. One's skill level in French, in turn, has a strong impact on employment opportunities, since many jobs require good communications skills in French. When a young person is not relatively skilled in French this creates barriers not only to employment, but also to social activities, training and further education. These linguistic issues are compounded by historic tensions between English and French speakers, which are still felt to some extent today.

Additional barriers to employment and social participation in general, are related to limited transportation options, limited availability of child care and limited educational opportunities in the region beyond high school. Since there are no universities or English CEGEP in the region (the Gaspé CEGEP offers a limited number of courses and programs in English), youth who want to pursue higher education generally have to leave the region, and sometimes leave the province.

Opportunities

Despite these challenges, 43% of survey respondents said they definitely plan to stay in the region, and an additional 24% said they probably will stay. They have strong connections to their home, their family and their region. Indeed, many of them identify mainly as Gaspesians or Magdalen Islanders. They value the small town atmosphere of their home communities, the peace and tranquility, the proximity to nature and the outdoors, the beautiful scenery and other aspects of living in this region on the east coast of Quebec.

Those who left the region did so to pursue education and job opportunities; and among the leavers, half were interested in returning, given the right conditions. This suggests that not all young people leave or stay away entirely voluntarily, and that actions can be taken to attract some of them back.

Recommendations

Some key recommendations have been made based on an analysis of the study results, as well as a review of relevant literature on rural youth (see Appendix):

Language skills

1. Enhance French language training through work and at school to help English speakers improve their French language skills, including the possibility of a French immersion program

Education

2. Facilitate access to education and training opportunities in the region, specifically providing more diverse skills training

Employment

3. Enhance job opportunities for English speakers, including support for entrepreneurship (business development)
4. Provide counselling services such as personal coaching and career counselling
5. Work *with* traditional rural industries, occupations, knowledge and skills

Social life

6. Create more places for youth to socialize and more activities that bring them together
7. Organize activities that increase social connection and interactions between English-speaking, French-speaking and Mi'gmaq youth in nearby communities

Health and well-being

8. Create initiatives to access and improve knowledge on how to access health and social services, particularly for mental health and addiction

Mobility and attractivity

9. Explore promising approaches for attracting youth back to the region
10. Work *with* mobility and migration—support young people who want to leave, and support them to come back

Governance

11. Involve young people in community planning and decision-making
12. Protect what makes rural life attractive already—consider the impacts of policy decisions in all areas on quality of life, particularly those aspects that seem unique to rural communities and attract people to live in them: for example, nature, recreation, pace of life, and social capital.

Introduction

In mid-2019, three community organizations representing the English-speaking population of the Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine (GIM) region of Quebec came together to develop a knowledge base that could lead to relevant local projects for young people from their region. These organizations are the Committee for Anglophone Social Action (CASA), the Council for Anglophone Magdalen Islanders (CAMI) and Vision Gaspé-Percé Now.

A collaboration between three community organizations

Their long history of work with the English-speaking community (including with youth) meant that they were aware of, and concerned about, the situation of young Anglophone Gaspesians and Magdalen Islanders. For CASA, integrating youth into the job market on the Gaspé Coast has long been a priority. In partnership with Carrefour-Jeunesse-Emploi, CASA offers direct employment support and services to English-speaking youth. In addition, youth have benefited from various skills development programs offered by CASA in the last two years, with many participants outside of the labour market securing employment or enrolling in ongoing training and education programs.

CAMI works to address the issue of youth exodus within the English-speaking community of the Magdalen Islands by increasing educational opportunities, promoting bilingualism, offering innovative programming, and assisting service providers in their efforts to reach English-speaking youth.

Vision Gaspé-Percé Now is currently compiling a portrait of English-speaking youth in the MRC Côte-de-Gaspé by identifying the challenges service providers in this area face in reaching English-speaking youth and defining the needs of youth in order to develop appropriate responses so that vulnerable English-speaking youth are given access to the services they require.

In order to more rigorously document the specific situation of young people between 15-35 years old, these organizations wanted to hear directly from youth themselves. This study was developed to respond to that need. The focus is on rural youth and their motivations for staying, leaving or returning to their home region, including issues of employment, education, sense of attachment and identity.

Regional context

This region is predominantly rural with small villages and towns located along about 500 kilometres of coastline, as well as on the Magdalen Islands. English speakers form a minority language community representing about 10% of the regional population. (Please refer to the Appendix for statistical data on English- and French-speaking populations in the region.)

It is important to note the great diversity of communities in this region and the geographic and social contexts in which they are located. Because of the distances between communities, and the fact that they are located along a coastline, there is limited interaction between communities and travel between them is time-consuming. In addition, some communities have a sizeable English-speaking population while in others, English speakers are a very small minority. Some communities have very few industries or services, while others (such as Gaspé Town and Cap-aux-Meules) are important regional centres. There are two Mi'gmaq communities on the Gaspé Coast, whose members, in addition to the Mi'gmaq language, speak English and are therefore included in this study as "English speakers". All of these and other geographic, social and cultural realities shape the lives of young people in the region and are helpful in interpreting these results.

Report contents

This report presents the results of the study as well as a discussion and some key recommendations. Since the situation varies significantly by MRC (regional county municipalities), appendices are provided for each MRC, as well as for specific sub-groups who answered the survey.

Project approach and methodology

The approach taken for this project is rooted in community-based participatory action research. This means that the research is being done with and by the "community"—in this case, community organizations representing and serving English speakers—in response to the needs of community members, with the goal of taking action on issues affecting these communities.

In order to gain deeper insights into the realities facing young people in the region, and to understand the challenges they face, the factors informing their decisions and other critical information, a mixed methods approach was developed, combining an on-line survey with focus group discussions with youth.

Survey

A draft survey was developed by the researcher (MR), then revised with input from the three partner organizations, and tested by staff working with young people in the region. Following all revisions that were deemed necessary, it was finalized and shared with the community. Respondents filled out the survey in one of three ways: 1) on-line using a link, 2) on paper, 3) on a tablet or a computer provided by youth workers.

Although statistics on "youth" generally focus on the 15-29 age group, the partner organizations decided to include people aged 30-35, because of their actions in the areas of employability and skills training. The results presented below therefore are for all respondents aged 15-35. However, the appendices present breakdowns for youth aged 15-29 only, by MRC.

Targeted numbers of respondents were calculated for each MRC (for a +/- 90% confidence level and about a 7% margin of error).

Table 1: Survey respondents

Residence	Number of English-speaking youth 15-35	Number of respondents targeted	Number of respondents obtained
MRC Îles	95	60	68
MRC Rocher-Percé	115	60	41
MRC Côte-de-Gaspé	205	90	53
MRC Bonventure	380	100	168
MRC Avignon	415	95	47
Outside the region	*unknown*	100	52
Other			3
TOTAL	**1210**	**505**	**432***

*Note that there were 438 survey respondents but six did not provide information on their place of residence.

Numbers were reached or exceeded in MRC Bonaventure and MRC des Îles, while lower numbers of respondents were obtained in all other regions. The target numbers were very ambitious (almost half of the youth population), and given the difficulty in reaching youth and encouraging them to respond,

the authors and community organizations feel that these numbers provide significant information, particularly when combined with qualitative insights from the focus group discussions.

RESPONDENTS BY AREA OF RESIDENCE

Area of Residence	Count
Other	3
MRC Rocher Perce (Port Daniel to Chandler)	41
MRC des Îles (Magdalen Islands)	68
MRC Côte-de-Gaspé	53
MRC Bonaventure (Cascapedia St. Jules to Shigawake)	168
MRC Avignon (Maria to Matapedia)	47
An urban centre outside Quebec	8
An urban centre in Quebec	15
A rural or small town area outside Quebec	9
A rural or small town area in Quebec (outside Gaspesie-…)	20

The survey was completed between mid-November 2019 and mid-January 2020. Staff from the three community organizations promoted the survey among young people aged 15-35 and with organizations, schools and other groups working with these age groups. The survey collected information from participants on demographic information, education level, French language exposure and skills, employment status and desires, sense of identity, perception of their community, and factors motivating them to leave and stay in the region. Respondents living outside the region filled out only the sections pertaining to them, which were focused on their reasons for leaving and their interest in returning to the region and the conditions that could make that possible.

A total of 438 respondents participated in the survey. Responses were gathered and collated via Survey Monkey. Results were extracted from the Excel Workbook generated through Survey Monkey and entered into tables. Questions and responses into the respective categories: demographics (age group, gender, identity, childhood community), young parent subset (have children, need child care, child age, language of child care or schooling), education, employment, French language skills, perspectives on social and community life, intentions for the future (stay, leave). Results were then organized into tables and converted into charts for improved visualization. Open-ended comments were also extracted by survey question number and coded according to response. Coded responses were grouped, tallied and organized into tables (e.g., skills training and education programs) or summarized and added to the result reporting that follows. Percentages shown in this report were rounded to the nearest whole number from the Survey Monkey Excelbook for ease of reporting.

Focus group discussions

Alongside the survey, nine focus groups discussions (FGD) were held in a total of six communities, with a total of 82 youth. The researcher (MR) developed an interview outline and tested it with two groups in New Carlisle (one in grades 10 and 11, and the other with young people in their 20s). She also provide training to a few of CASA's staff so that they could confidently facilitate the other FGDs. Note that no FGD were held with youth living outside the region.

Table 2: Focus Group Discussions

Location	Number of participants	Age of Participants	Additional notes
New Carlisle High School	30	15-17	Grade 10-11 students
New Carlisle	5	18-29	Youth in their 20s
New Richmond High School	9	15-17	Grade 10-11 students
Anchor Adult Ed Centre	6	20-29	3 Employment program, 2 academic upgrading, 1 centre coordinator
New Carlisle	4	24-30	Full-time employed females
Gaspé Polyvalent	10	17-18	Grade 11 students
Douglastown	5	20-35	Female, employed
Magdalen Islands	6		Youth
Escuminac	7	15-16	Intermediate School students

The content of these discussions was transcribed in note form and coded by thematic area. A single person did the coding for all interview data. The main themes were:

1. quality of life
2. education
3. employment
4. health and wellness
5. transportation
6. local goods and services
7. housing
8. out-migration
9. identity
10. language

Sub-themes were also identified as they emerged from the interview content. All coded data identified the source (location and age group). Coded data was regrouped by theme and organized into two main categories: *Quality of Life* and *Ideas on Improving Quality of Life*. Under each main category the findings were reconfigured.
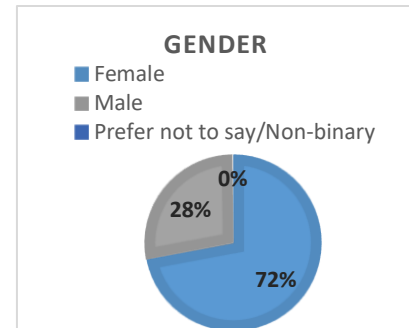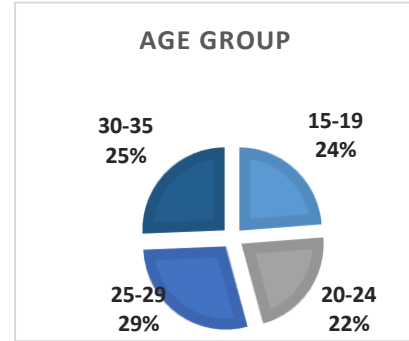
Survey Results

The results below are for survey respondents as a whole. Results for each MRC are provided in Appendices.

Respondent profile

A total of 438 youth responded to the survey. Respondents were relatively evenly spread across all four age groups: 15-19 (n=103), 20-24 (n=95), 25-29 (n=124), 30-35 (n=111). It is important to bear in mind this age range when examining the results, since realities vary greatly between teens who are still in school and living with their parents, and older people who are more likely to have finished their education, be in the workforce, and perhaps have a home and family.

Almost three-quarters of respondents were female and a little over one-quarter male (of 433 respondents, 312 were female, 120 were male and 1 was non-binary/preferred not to say).

AGE GROUP

- 15-19 24%
- 20-24 22%
- 25-29 29%
- 30-35 25%

GENDER

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say/Non-binary

- 72%
- 28%
- 0%

Identity

Respondents were asked how they identify themselves among six options: Gaspesian, Magdalen Islander, Mi'gmaq (Indigenous or Aboriginal), Quebecker, Canadian, Other. They could report the identities as being most, secondary, or somewhat important. As shown below, Canadian and Gaspesian were by far the most frequently selected responses. All Magdalen islanders chose "Magdalen Islander" as their first identity and a total of 113 respondents identified as Mi'qmaq (or Indigenous or Aboriginal) as their primary, secondary or tertiary identity. Few (n=59) identified primarily as Quebecers.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOURSELF?
(NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS)

	Gaspesian	Magdalen Islander	Mi'gmaq (or Indigenous or Aboriginal)	Quebecker	Canadian
somewhat	38	48	62	94	15
secondary	49	14	24	110	74
most	246	68	27	59	298

■ most   ■ secondary   ■ somewhat
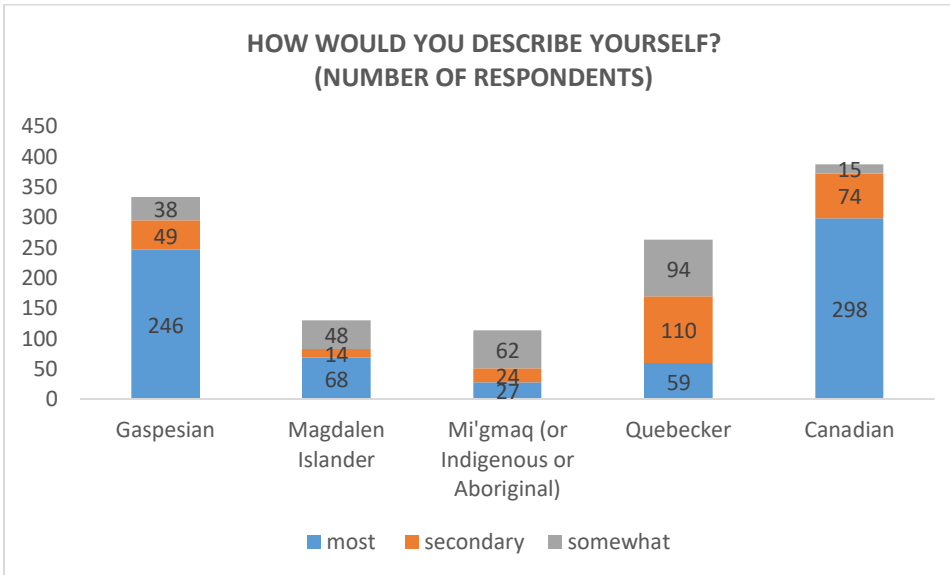
'Other' responses included: American (2), French (1), British (1), immigrant (1), Maritimer (1), English Quebecer (1) (total: 434 respondents)

Place of residency

The largest proportion of respondents were from MRC Bonaventure, followed by the Magdalen Islands, MRC Côte-de-Gaspé, MRC Avignon, then MRC Rocher-Percé. As explained above, this is a reflection of local English-speaking youth populations, as well as response rates in each MRC or area outside the region. About 13% of respondents were living outside the region.

PROPORTION OF RESPONDENTS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCY

- Other 1%
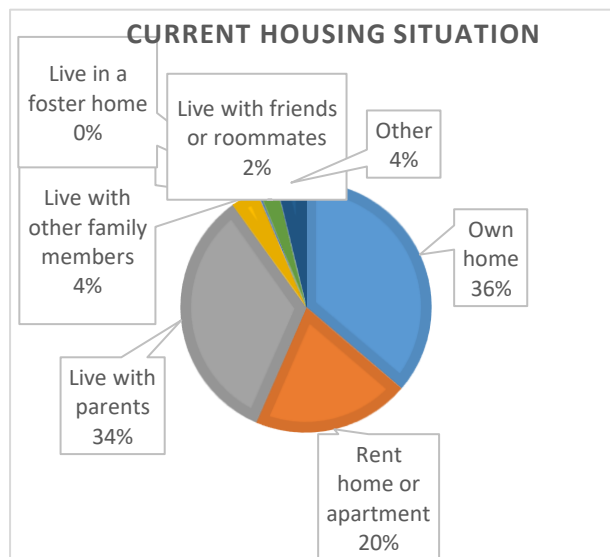- A rural or small town area in Quebec (outside Gaspesie-les îles) 5%
- A rural or small town area outside Quebec 2%
- An urban centre in Quebec 3%
- An urban centre outside Quebec 2%
- MRC Avignon (Maria to Matapedia) 11%
- MRC Rocher Perce (Port Daniel to Chandler) 9%
- MRC des Îles (Magdalen Islands) 16%
- MRC Côte-de-Gaspé 12%
- MRC Bonaventure (Cascapedia St. Jules to Shigawake) 39%

Housing

345 respondents

Thirty-six percent of respondents owned their own home, 34% lived with their parents, 20% rented, 4% lived with other family members, 2% lived with friends or roommates, 0% (n=1) lived in a foster home, and 4% reported 'other' living situation. These responses included: living with partner (boyfriend/girlfriend) (n=5), living in a group home (n=3), live with in-laws (n=2), trying to buying a place (n=2), employment paid housing (n=1).

CURRENT HOUSING SITUATION

- Live in a foster home 0%
- Live with friends or roommates 2%
- Other 4%
- Live with other family members 4%
- Own home 36%
- Live with parents 34%
- Rent home or apartment 20%

Childhood community

433 respondents

Seventy-one percent of respondents reported growing up on the Gaspé Coast, while 17% grew up on the Magdalen Islands and 12% grew up in other locations. Responses in the 'other' category were

Montreal (n=16), Ontario (n=13), USA (n=4), Maritimes (n=7), Outside Canada (n=4), other rural community in Quebec (n=5), Central Canada (n=2)

Current Situation

429 respondents

Forty-nine percent of respondents have stayed on the Gaspé Coast or Magdalen Islands, 12 % have moved there from another region, 22% have moved away and returned, 13% moved to a more urban centre, and 4% moved to another rural area.

CHILDHOOD COMMUNITY

Other 12%

Magdalen Islands 17%

Gaspé Coast 71%

CURRENT SITUATION

Moved to another rural area 4%

Moved to more urban centre 13%

Moved away and returned 22%

Moved from another region to Gaspé 12%

Stayed in Gaspé Coast or Magdalen Island 49%
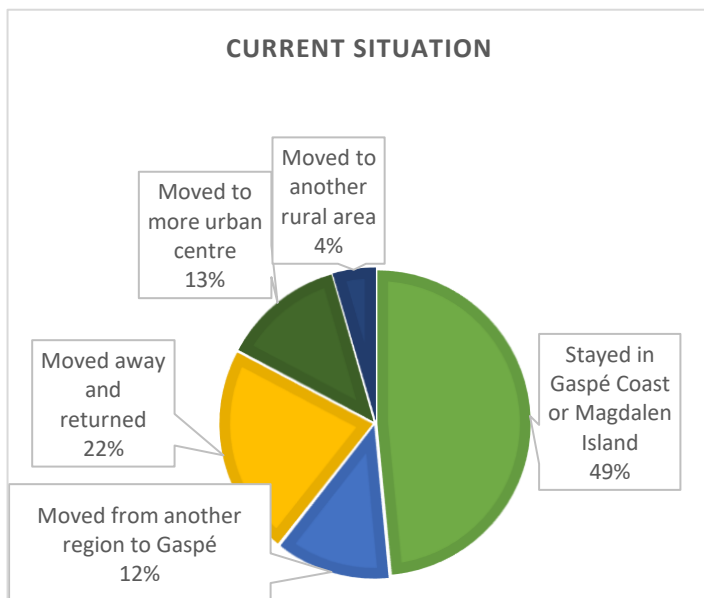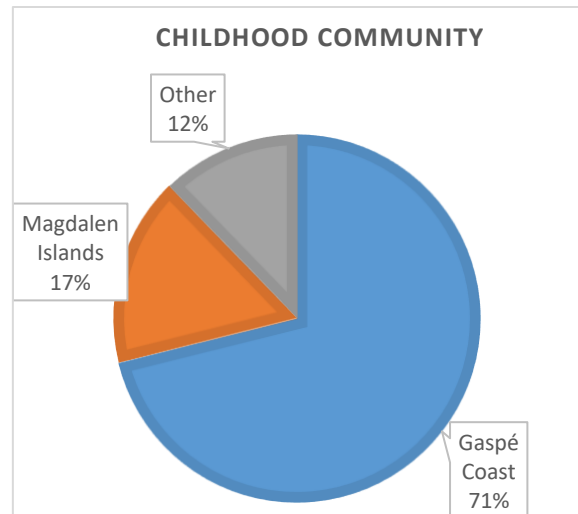
Main reason for living in the region

343 respondents

Regarding the main reason the respondents lived in the region, 39% were there because of family or a partner, 22% selected 'It's beautiful', 14% were there for work, 9% were there for leisure related reasons, 7% main reason was the affordability, 3% selected other and responded with: born here, came back to hometown, group home, family

MAIN REASON FOR LIVING IN REGION

- Family/partner lives here
- School/training apprenticship 6%
- My work/job 14%
- It's beautiful 22%
- It's cheap 7%
- related (sports, outdoors, etc) 9%
- Other 3%
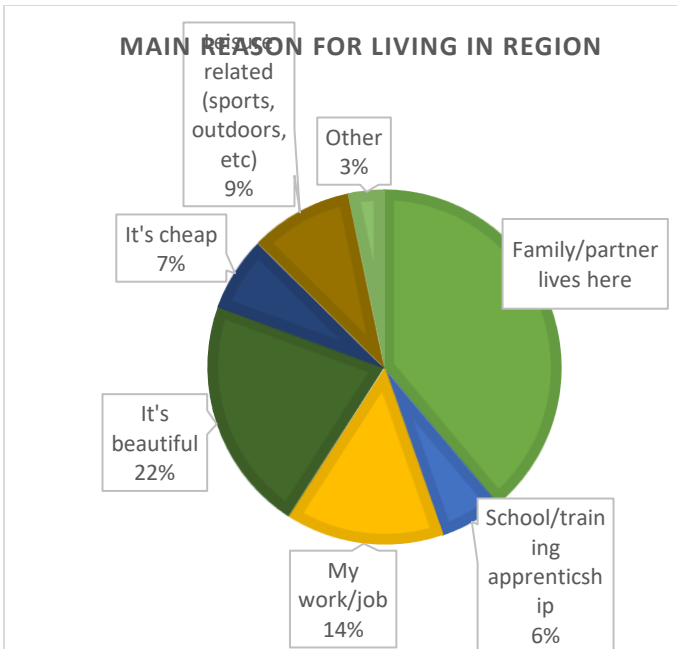
Children

Of the 438 respondents, a subset of N=126 had children. From that group, 24 were single parents and 72 had school aged children. Sixty-eight (n=68) had access to child care. Fifty-four percent of the respondent subset had access to childcare while 23% did not, and 23% did not need it. Forty-seven percent of respondents had English childcare with 39% having French childcare, 12% with bilingual childcare, 2% reported childcare in another language and less than 1% was in Mi'gmaq.

CHILDREN

- Yes 36%
- No 64%

SINGLE PARENT

- Yes 19%
- No 81%

CHILD CARE ACCESS

- I don't need them 23%
- Yes 54%
- no 23%

TYPE OF CHILD CARE

- babysitting by a family member or neighbour 21%
- other 5%
- Private daycare 17%
- School daycare 15%
- Subsidized daycare 42%

CHILD CARE LANGUAGE

- Mi'gmaq (or other Indigenous language) 0%
- Bilingual 12%
- Other 2%
- English 47%
- French 39%
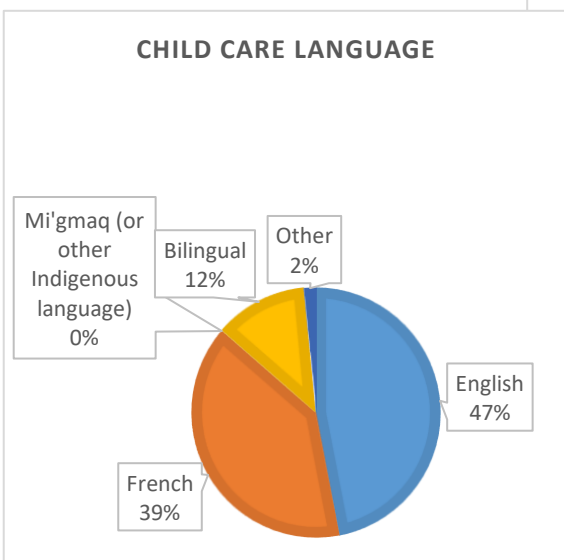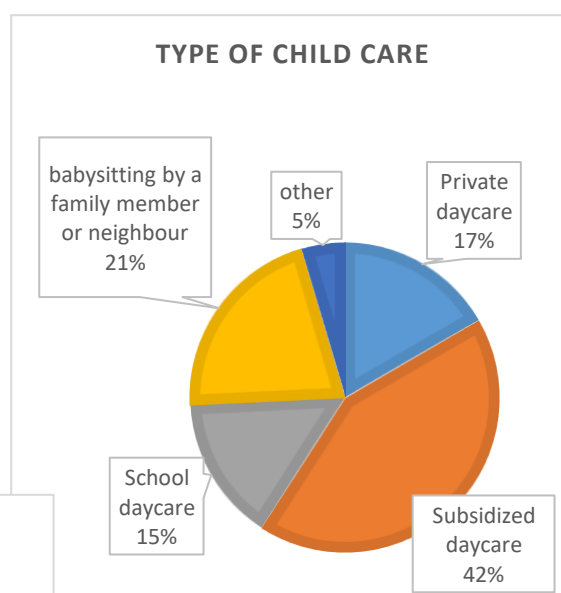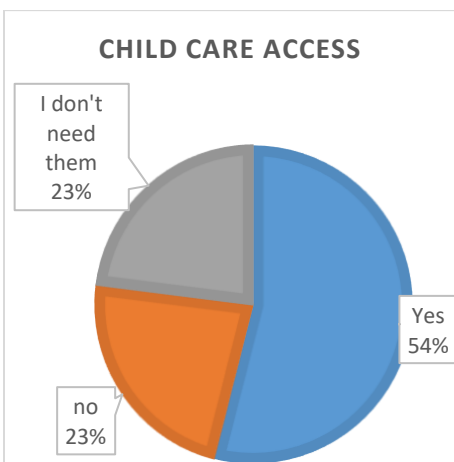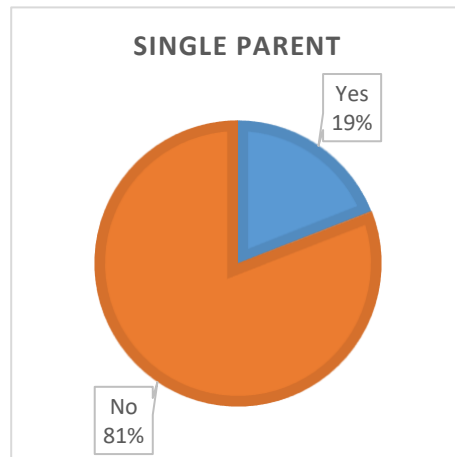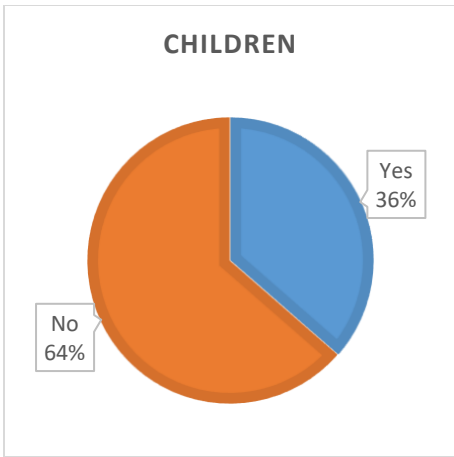
Schooling

Fifty-nine percent of respondents had school aged children, which may partially explain why many did not need childcare. Concerning the language of child's schooling, 76% reported their children attending school in English, 22% were attending in French and 2% were attending in Mi'gmaq. When asked if respondents would put their children in French Immersion, 46% responded yes, 25% responded no and 29% responded that they unsure.

HAVE SCHOOL AGED CHILDREN

No 41%
Yes 59%

CHILD SCHOOLING LANGUAGE

Mi'gmaq 2%
French 22%
English 76%
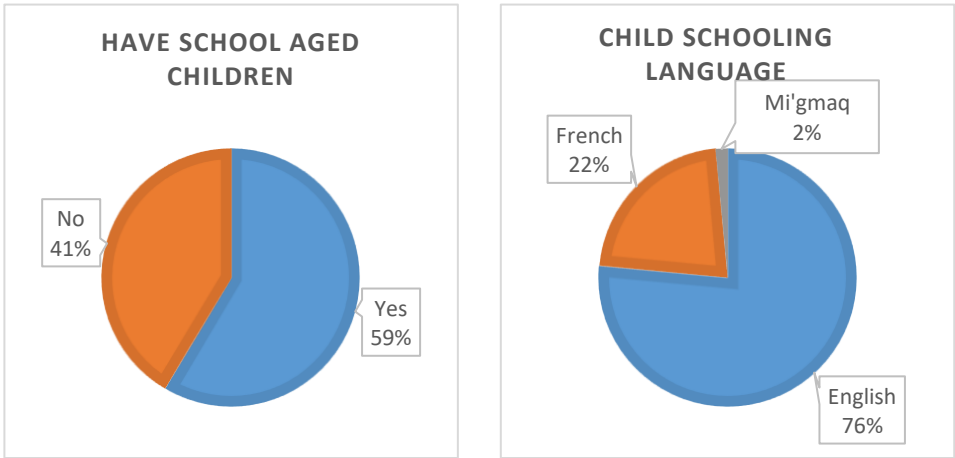
French language exposure

Respondents reported being exposed to French through school (48%), work (46%), friends (43%), bilingual family (41%), and sports and activities (19%). 'Other' responses (9%) included francophone parent or family member (8), my community (6), my job (3), socialize with Francophone (3), none (5), taught self (1).

FRENCH EXPOSURE (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

- Through school: 48%
- Family bilingual: 41%
- Friends: 43%
- Sports and Activities: 19%
- My job: 46%
- Other: 9%

LANGUAGE SPOKEN GROWING UP

Mi'gmaq (other Idigenous language) 1%
French 8%
Other 5%
English 86%
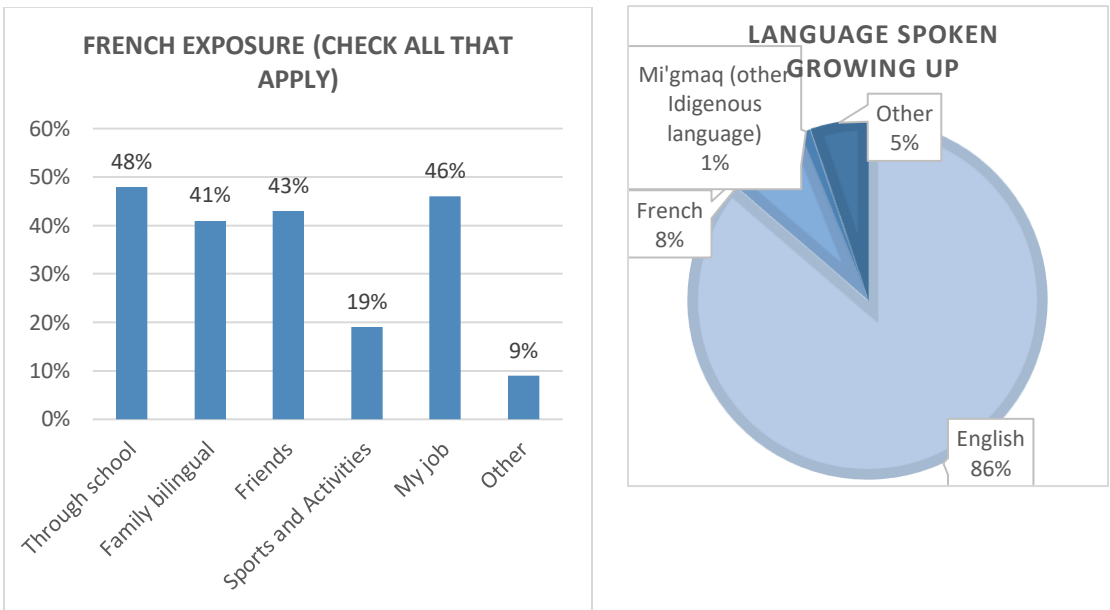
Eighty-six percent respondents grew up with English as their first language with 8% growing up speaking French and 1% speaking Mi'gmaq. Five percent reported 'other'. Responses from the other category were primarily: both English and French (17), French (1), Russian (1), Eng/Span/German (1).

French Language Skills

Oral comprehension: n=326, Speaking skills: n=326, Reading and writing skills: n=327

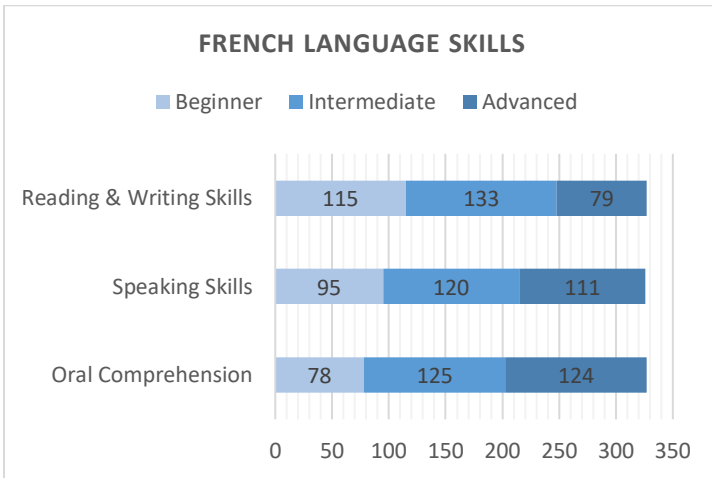75% of all survey respondents had some level of French language skill. Of those that reported having some level of French (oral comprehension, spoken, reading and writing) 2/3 held an intermediate or better level of French, which equates to roughly 50% of all survey respondents.

FRENCH LANGUAGE SKILLS

Legend: Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced

	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced
Reading & Writing Skills	115	133	79
Speaking Skills	95	120	111
Oral Comprehension	78	125	124

French level as a barrier for opportunities: n=327

Sixty-one percent of survey participants found their French level (or lack thereof) was a barrier to accessing opportunities. The barrier also specifically related to hindering opportunities in employment (24%), skills training and education (14%), participation in social activities (14%), participating in sports or recreational activities (9%). Only 37% of respondents reported their French level was not a barrier to accessing opportunities, in other words it was either not required or their French was sufficient.

FRENCH LEVEL AS A BARRIER

- Yes - participating in sports or rec activity 9%
- Other 2%
- No 37%
- Yes participating in social activity or club 14%
- Yes - training or education 14%
- Yes - employment 24%

The remaining 2% of respondents who selected "other" cited similar areas of their lives where they felt the language barrier: being promoted or getting a higher paying job (3), can't understand French so it hinders everything from day-to-day tasks to socializing (4), 1 doesn't "need" French, one was moving away for work, one found all answers relevant.
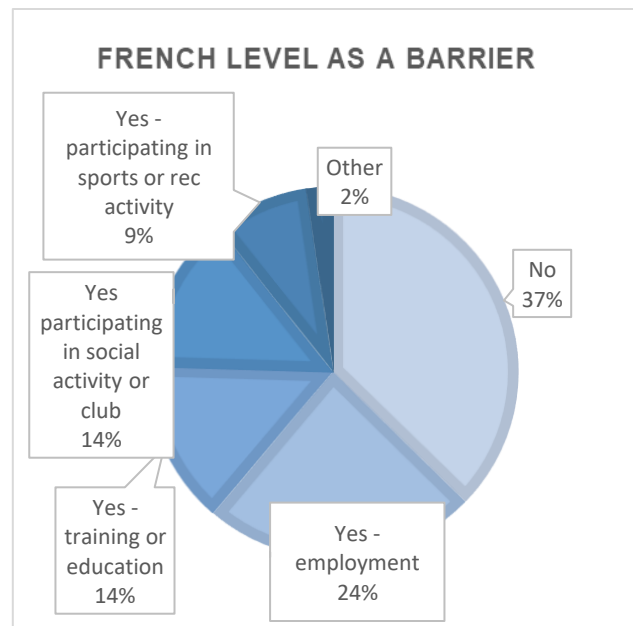
Education and skills training
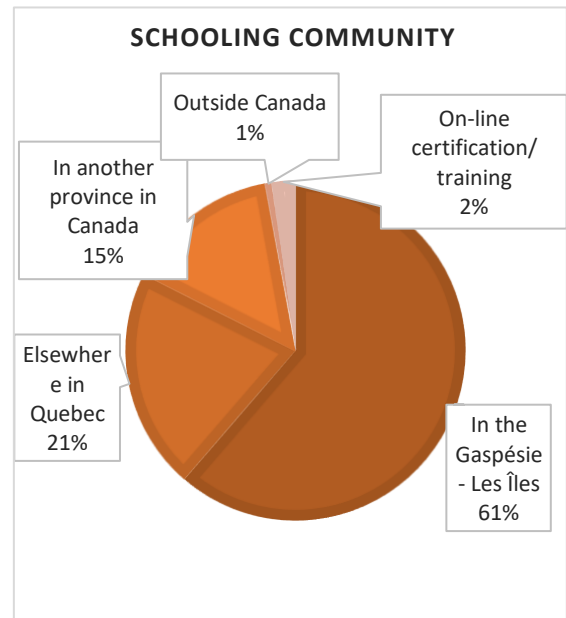
Highest level of education: n=315

Of the 315 respondents, 34% reported high school as their level of education. Nineteen percent had a trade/vocational certificate, 16% held elementary level, 15% university, 14% CEGEP and 2% had WOTP or WOSSP. As there were an estimated 50% of all survey participants under the age of 19, it is very likely that the majority of the high school and elementary school level education levels are from them.

Schooling Community: n=313

Sixty-one percent of survey participants attended school in the Gaspé-Magdalen Islands region, with 21% attending elsewhere in Quebec, 15% in another province in Canada, 2% via online certification and 1% attending school outside Canada.

Elementary School language:

Eighty-three percent of respondents attended elementary school in English, with 13% attending in French and 1% attending in Mi'gmaq. This left 3% selecting 'other' who attended elementary school in both English and French interchangeably or switched between the languages from different grades (n=9).

EDUCATION LEVEL

- University 15%
- Elementary 16%
- CEGEP 14%
- Trade certificate/ vocational 19%
- WOTP or WOSSP 2%
- High School 34%

SCHOOLING COMMUNITY

- Outside Canada 1%
- On-line certification/ training 2%
- In another province in Canada 15%
- Elsewhere in Quebec 21%
- In the Gaspésie - Les Îles 61%

LANGUAGE - ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- Mi'gmaq (other Indigenous language)
- Other 3%
- French 13%
- English 83%

High School language:

Ninety-one percent of respondents attended secondary school in English, while 7% attended it in French. The 2% that reported 'other' attended in both English and French language (n=4). One reported attending secondary school in English and Spanish.

LANGUAGE - HIGH SCHOOL

French
7%

Other
2%

English
91%
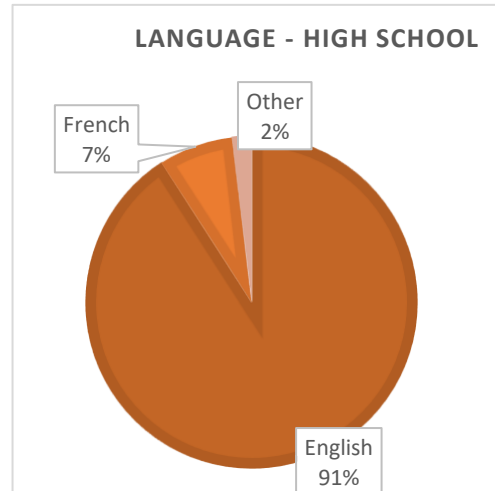
Currently enrolled in additional skills training: n=315

ENROLLED IN SKILLS TRAINING

Yes
15%

No
85%
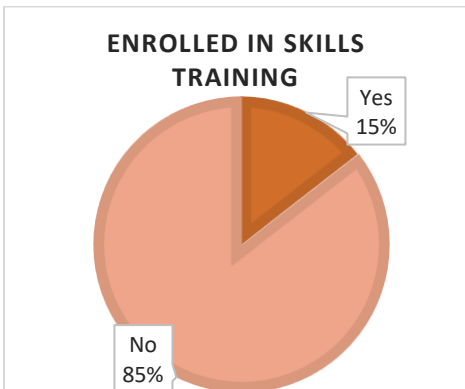
Only 15% of respondents reported being enrolled in additional skills training, while 85% were not.

Desire skills training/education: n=143

Responses regarding skills training and education preferences have been grouped together by theme. Trades (n=19) were the most common responses, followed by the health field, the arts and business.

Table 3: Training Program Wish List (n=143)

Category	# of respondents	Specifics
Trades	19	Welding, electrician, construction, trucking, heavy equipment operator, carpentry, mechanic, small vessel or train operator
Medical/Health	14	Home care, nursing, medical secretary, dental hygienist, speech therapy, paramedic, first aid, ultrasound technician
Arts	14	Photography, music, writing, digital art, graphic design
Certificate (or already enrolled)	14	DEP, College, university, CEGEP (no specification given)
Business/Administration	13	Accounting, entrepreneurship, social media marketing, admin course, business course,
Multiple Interests	12	Respondents gave several answers covering multiple fields: culinary, trades, medical, legal, esthetics, arts, business admin, computer science, home care
Language	10	Learning French, Teaching French to English speakers, learning/teaching other languages.
N/A or nothing	9	
Pedagogy (teaching)	8	Teacher, Teachers Assistant, Early childhood education, special ed, outdoor education
Miscellaneous	6	Agriculture, Egyptology, Physical Training,
Fishing/Marine related	4	Fisheries, Captains Class
Social Work	4	Social work, intervention skills, addictions counselling
Culinary	4	
Beauty	3	
Law	2	
Massage Therapy	2	
Working with kids	2	
Computer science	2	
Something with animals	1	

Interestingly, 12 respondents listed multiple interests that covered several categories already listed in the table above and 9 had no response or no interest in other training.

Employment

Employment status: Respondents n= 323

Regarding employment status, 36% of respondents reported full-time employment, 16% were seasonal, 15% were part-time, and 12% were attending school. A combined total of 8% were on social assistance or had no income, 3% were on EI, 2% were employed and in school. Three percent reported 'other' as stay at home moms (n=4), group home, contract, on welfare, employed on call, or a combination. Only 1% were employed out of the region or self-employed.
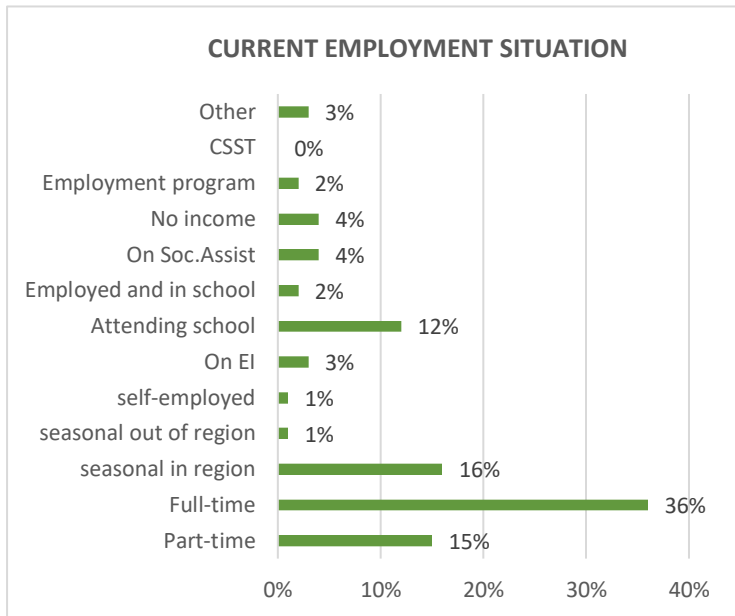
Looking for work: n=320

Sixty-five percent of the survey participants were not looking for work, while 25% were. Of the 25% who were looking 14% wanted full-time work and 11% part-time. 10 percent reported being seasonal workers.
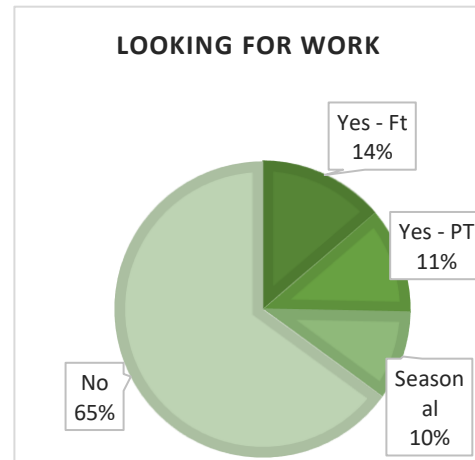
Job search methods: n=320

In terms of how participants looked for work, the majority (62%) looked via word of mouth through family or friends. Forty-eight percent used Emploi Quebec, 45% searched using social media and 31% used online searched. CASA (20%), job fairs (14%), company websites (14%) and paid programming (13%) were also job search methods used. Carrefour jeunesse (9%), Horizon (7%), Other (7%) and Vivre en Gaspésie website (2%) were among the least used methods for search searches.
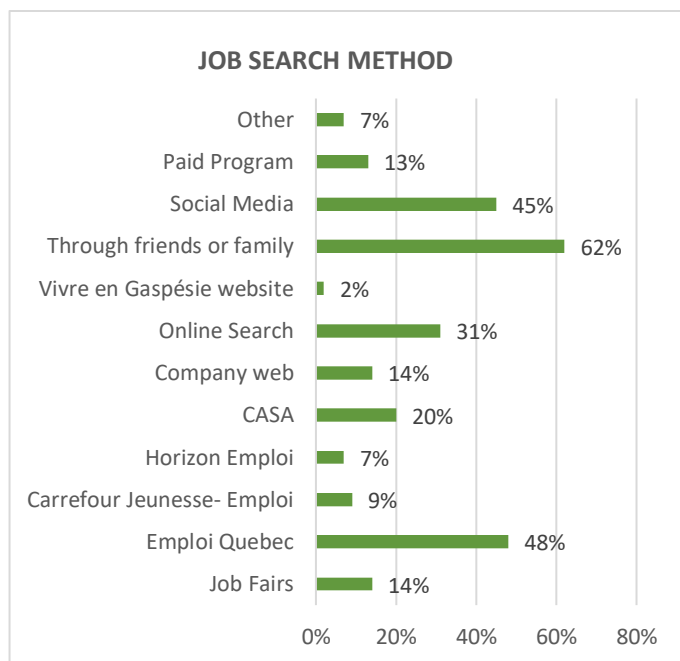
Feeling prepared for work: n=111

Roughly ¾ of respondents felt they were prepared for the work they wanted. Needing more schooling (n=15), needing improved French skills (n=12), and needing more experience (n=11) or hands on training (n=10) were the top reasons why respondents did not feel prepared for work in their field. Eight did not know what they

CURRENT EMPLOYMENT SITUATION

Category	Percentage
Other	3%
CSST	0%
Employment program	2%
No income	4%
On Soc.Assist	4%
Employed and in school	2%
Attending school	12%
On EI	3%
self-employed	1%
seasonal out of region	1%
seasonal in region	16%
Full-time	36%
Part-time	15%

LOOKING FOR WORK

- Yes - Ft 14%
- Yes - PT 11%
- Seasonal 10%
- No 65%

JOB SEARCH METHOD

Method	Percentage
Other	7%
Paid Program	13%
Social Media	45%
Through friends or family	62%
Vivre en Gaspésie website	2%
Online Search	31%
Company web	14%
CASA	20%
Horizon Emploi	7%
Carrefour Jeunesse- Emploi	9%
Emploi Quebec	48%
Job Fairs	14%

wanted to do and seven needed transportation. Feeling the education system had not prepared them for work in their field (n=4), mental health issues (n=4) and needing childcare services (n=2) were also noted but the least common responses.

FEELING PREPARED FOR THE WORK THEY WANT

No 26%

Yes 74%

REASONS NOT FEELING PREPARED FOR WORK IN THEIR FIELD

Category	Value
Need childcare services	2
Need Transportation	7
Need better French Skills	12
Mental Health issues	4
Do not know what I want to do	8
Education system has not prepared me	4
Need more hands training	10
Need more experience	11
Need more schooling	15
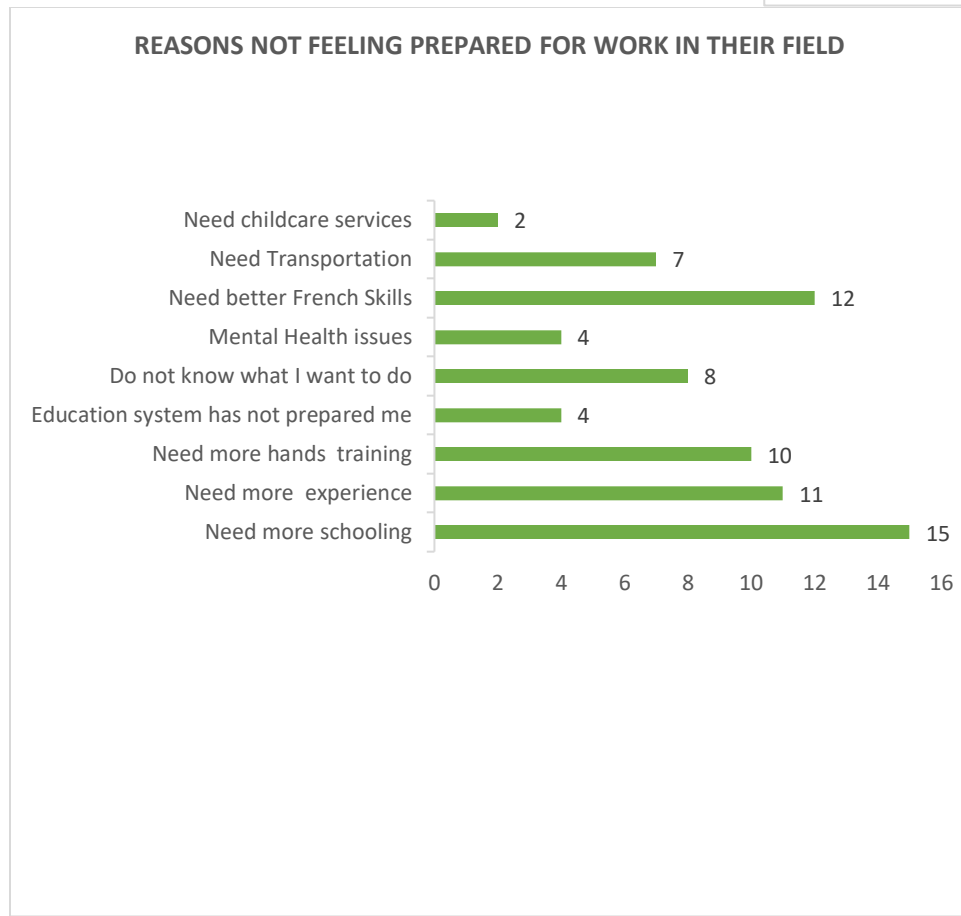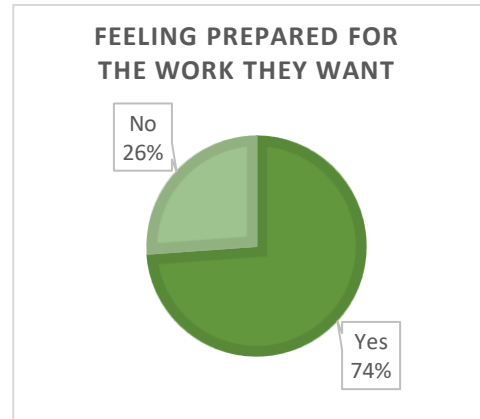
Perspectives on social and community life

Social and recreational programs in community: n=275

Almost half of respondents reported there were very few social and recreational programs in their community, meanwhile 42% reported to be 'some'. This clearly shows a lack of activities in the region's communities. This was echoed when the participants were asked (a multiple choice question) about what was missing from their communities (n= 276) with social activities, youth centre and sports being the top responses. Night life, musical activities, fitness clubs (MMA, martial arts, gym), an English library, more activity centres or facilities for activities, day care and better transportation were answers recorded in the comments. 'Other' comments were coded tallied and are shown in the table seen here.

SOCIAL & RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS IN COMMUNITY

Many 3%
None 8%
Some 42%
Very Few 47%

SOCIAL ASPECTS MISSING FROM COMMUNITY

(bar chart: Youth Centre, Maison de jeunes, Sports, Social Activities, Nothing (we have everything I need), Other)
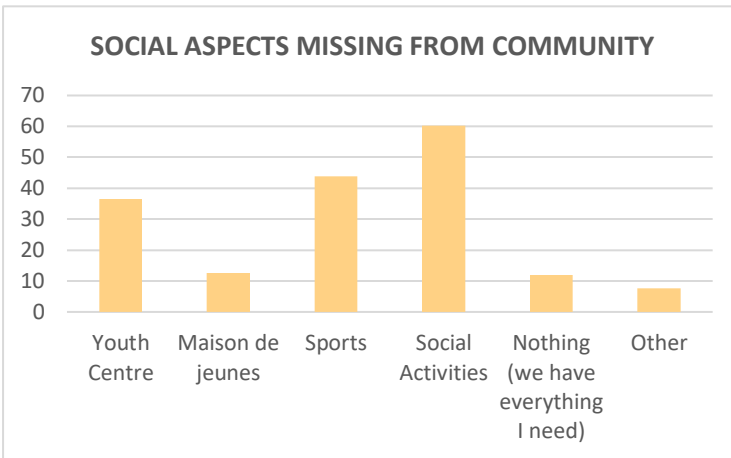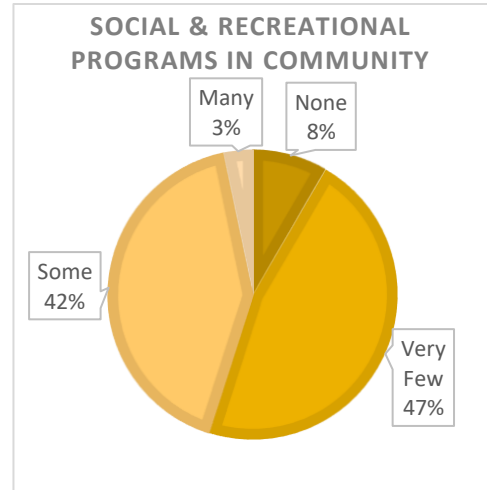
Missing from community: Other comments	
More activities	9
More services	3
Everything	2
Infrastructure	2
I don't know or think it is missing anything	3
More urban	1
More pride in their community	1

Like best about their community: n=224

This was an open-ended question. Respondents reported liking the people, sense of community, and social fabric of their communities most. The tranquility, scenery and family ties were also reported. Twenty-four respondents listed multiple reasons that touched on community, family, and nature among others. (see table below)

Like least about their community: n=216

This was another open-ended question. Lack of activities (n=47) was the most reported aspect they liked least in their communities.The people and the reality of small town gossip and lack of privacy was another top aspect people liked least. Lack of employment, language related issues, and remoteness were also commonly noted. Twenty-four respondents had no response, did not know or had nothing they liked least.

Interestingly, the responses regarding the people and social culture within the communities was very indicative of the dichotomous nature of small towns. The sense of community support and commradery between people in the region was liked most by respondents but that also came with a lack of privacy and gossip, and thus liked least.

What do you like least about your community	
Lack of social activities, Nothing to do	47
The people - nosey, gossip, lack of privacy	40
Language	18
Lack of employment	16
Remoteness	16
Lack of commerce	14
Lack of services	9
Infrastructure	6
Drugs & Alcohol	6
Miscellaneous	5
Small	5
Housing	3
Pollution	2
Difficulty engaging people or joining in community	1
Everything	*1*
I don't know, nothing, no response	*24*
Respondents= 216	

What do you like best about your community	
The people, friendly, sense of community, sense of support	88
Small size, quiet, peaceful, it's home	32
Surrounding nature, scenery	20
Family closeness or familial ties	15
Multiple listed (people, community, peaceful, nature, etc)	24
Social or outdoor activities	8
French-English mix	4
Security	3
Affordable	1
Miscellaneous	*10*
Nothing, N/A	*14*
Respondents = 224	

Intentions for the future

Plans to remain in the region: n=276

Over two-thirds of respondents planned to remain in the region with 43% responding definitely, and 24% answered probably. Only 13% reporting planning on leaving and 20% unsure.

Motivating factors to stay in the region: n=276

Family was the by far the most important motivating factor in staying in the region, followed by having a partner and having work.

PLANS TO REMAIN IN THE REGION

definitely not 6%
probably not 7%
unsure 20%
definitely 43%
probably 24%

FACTORS MOTIVATING YOU TO STAY IN THE REGION

Category	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Sports & Rec	7	8	22	20	36	67	90
Community and social life	2	16	41	43	64	67	21
Available housing	5	23	42	55	64	39	20
Partner or relationship	42	63	37	49	19	15	26
School	14	25	30	28	37	38	76
Work	23	73	64	49	21	15	8
Family	179	46	13	8	7	2	5

Motivating factors to leave the region: n=260

People's French level and lack of jobs were the top factors motivating young people to leave the region.

FACTORS MOTIVATING YOU TO LEAVE THE REGION

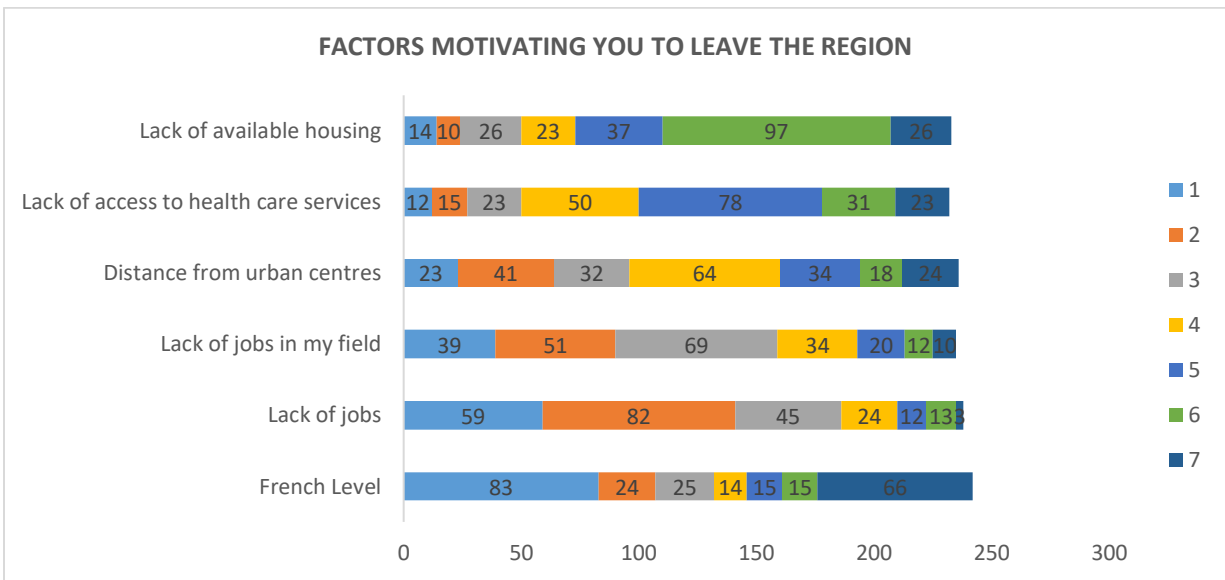| Category	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Lack of available housing	14	10	26	23	37	97	26
Lack of access to health care services	12	15	23	50	78	31	23
Distance from urban centres	23	41	32	64	34	18	24
Lack of jobs in my field	39	51	69	34	20	12	10
Lack of jobs	59	82	45	24	12	13	3
French Level	83	24	25	14	15	15	66

Youth living outside the region

Reasons for leaving: n=66

Of those survey participants living outside the region, the majority of individuals left for school (37/66) or work (31/66). While a few left to be with friends, family or a life partner, 24/66 checked that they left because they did not see a future in the region. Other responses recorded were: needed a change - health improvement, did not speak French, French hate me, a break-up.

Interest in returning: n=66

When asked whether they had an interest in returning, half of the respondents said yes. Only 23% said they had no interest in returning and 27% where unsure.
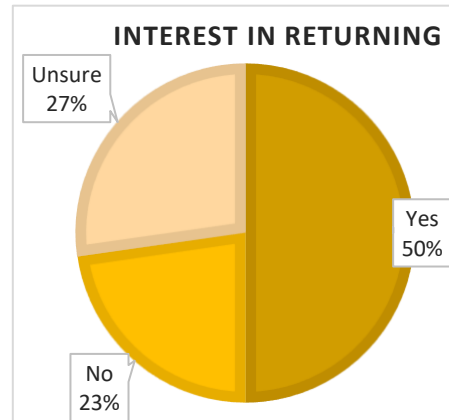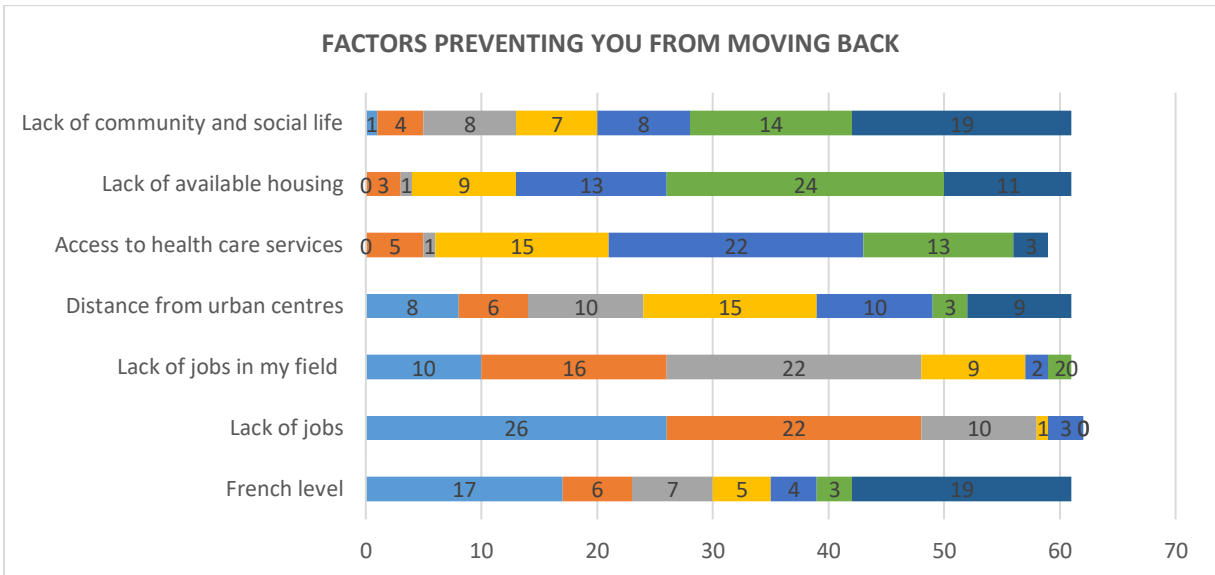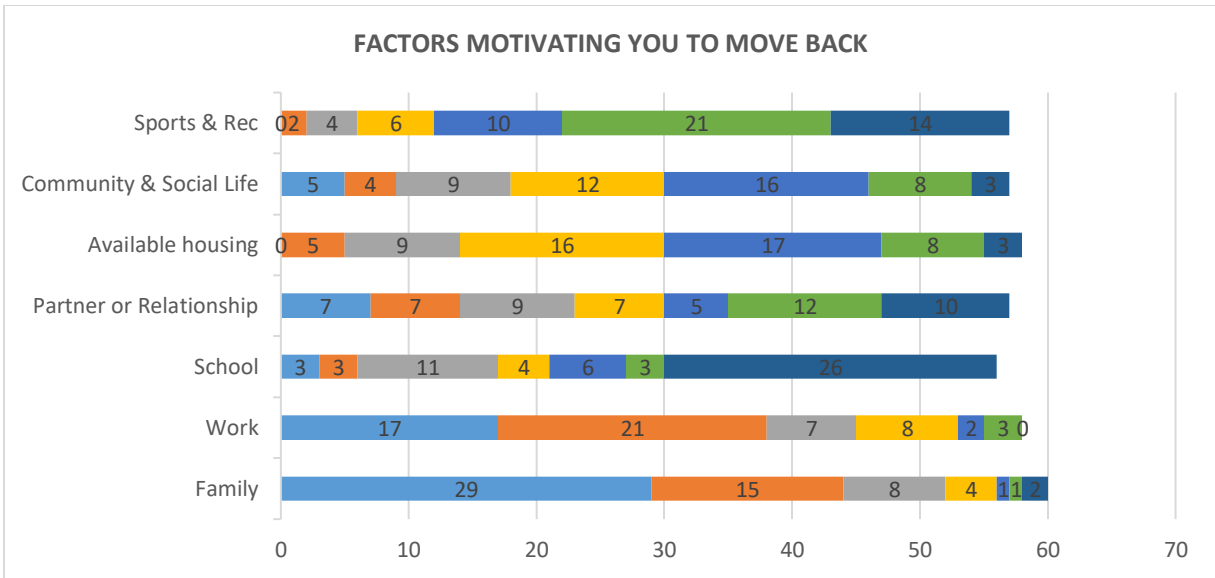
Factors in the decision to return:
Factors motivating you to move back to the region: n=63
Factors preventing you from moving back to the region: n=63
Similar to the results of questions to stay or leave the region, factors motivating people to return and preventing them from returning were similar. People were motivated to return for family, work or a life partner. However, the lack of work opportunities and their French level were the main factors preventing them from returning.

INTEREST IN RETURNING

Unsure 27%

Yes 50%

No 23%

FACTORS MOTIVATING YOU TO MOVE BACK

Category							
Sports & Rec	0	2	4	6	10	21	14
Community & Social Life	5	4	9	12	16	8	3
Available housing	0	5	9	16	17	8	3
Partner or Relationship	7	7	9	7	5	12	10
School	3	3	11	4	6	3	26
Work	17	21	7	8	2	3	0
Family	29	15	8	4	1	1	2

FACTORS PREVENTING YOU FROM MOVING BACK

Category							
Lack of community and social life	1	4	8	7	8	14	19
Lack of available housing	0	3	1	9	13	24	11
Access to health care services	0	5	1	15	22	13	3
Distance from urban centres	8	6	10	15	10	3	9
Lack of jobs in my field	10	16	22	9	2	2	0
Lack of jobs	26	22	10	1	3	0	
French level	17	6	7	5	4	3	19

Focus group discussion results

Nine focus groups were held throughout the region, covering a variety of age groups and settings. Four were held at high schools in the region, one was held at an adult education centre, one was held at a community organization for youth and three were held in the community. In total, 82 participants took part in the 9 focus groups.

Themes identified from the focus groups were similar to those the survey sought to capture and have been organized here into two overarching categories: *Currently Quality of Life* and *Ideas on Improving Quality of Life*. Within these two categories, the themes were organized and specific sub-themes added as necessary. Themes that emerged are: Social Activities, Sports and Recreation, Arts and Culture, Technology, Education, Language, Employment, Identity, Infrastructure and Transport, Local Goods and Services, Housing, Health and Wellness, and Outmigration.

Current Quality of Life

The summaries presented here are based on the perspectives of the youth who participated in the focus group discussions.

Social Activities and Entertainment

The lack of social activities and entertainment options were a consistent theme in all focus groups. *"There's more than just work that's important. There are children here, they need amusement parks. Especially for children. Growing up here there was not a lot to do, I felt it was a loss of childhood."* (FG1). Teens insist that there are few options for socializing. Several of the high school aged participants found the region boring or 'hated the place' saying that the 'most social activity in some communities is going to McDonalds'. Participants, however, equally reported community events being poorly attended no matter what is tried. In some communities there are youth centres, such as the Maison des Jeunes in Gaspé, however, in this case all activities are in French. Other youth centres, like that in Gesgapegiag, are simply poorly attended. The indigenous community centre has activities for kids, including a swimming program. One issue in offering activities is the large age gap between old and young, with many activities geared toward seniors. This, as well as the general lack of bilingual activities, results in smaller social circles in the communities.

According to one focus group, people in the region are relatively artisanal (micro-breweries, artists, etc.). However, the lack or limited availability of English entertainment is an issue and was mentioned across all groups. *"English movies are only available at 5:30 at the only theatre around. We don't get English movies often. The nearest theatre really is in Campbellton (a 4 hour a drive)."* (FG7). Others refer to a *"Lack of entertainment or fun things to do. In Montreal you are freer to express or be yourself."* (FG5).

The need to speak French varied from community to community and has changed over the years. For example, *"Gaspé (town) no longer has English-only activities. In Gaspé, you do need to speak French to get a job. In New Carlisle, you can still get by speaking English only. There is nothing in Douglastown anymore (skating rink, splash pads, movie nights, nothing)."* (FG7) Some participants expressed frustration about the historical English-French dynamic and the animosity between the groups. (FG1, FG3) *"If Quebec was English, we wouldn't hate this place as much as we do."* (FG3) Some participants reported still struggling despite being bilingual. (FG3)

Sports & Recreation

As with social activities, sports and recreation were said to be limited by language and community remoteness. In short, there is a need for more recreational activities available in English, close to home. (FG5). Many have to drive to larger towns for shopping, cinema or other activities. (FG1, F3) Exercise classes are often available only in French and there are sometimes not enough sports or people to make teams. Some youth mentioned that there is no cooperation between the English and French schools' sports' teams except with football. However, one teacher in one of the focus groups reported the schools working on collaborating with the French.

Technology

Technology (iPad, internet, social media, video games) was highlighted as an aspect hindering people's need or desire for social interaction. Kids are not as interested in attending community events or leaving the house. The attachment to technology and attachment to TV and internet is also seen to be causing lethargy, wasted potential, social isolation and mental health issues (for example, due to social media where interactions can sometimes be hostile).

Local Goods & Services

Retail: Shopping centres are small or non-existent and youth feel unwelcome at them (FG6). English language or bilingual resources (e.g., books) are unavailable, leaving online ordering or driving hours to a larger centre as the only alternatives. McDonalds and Tim Hortons close at midnight, and with no bars or night clubs, there are very few options to meet up or do things. Staffing food service or retail jobs even if they do exist in communities may also be an issue. Although new businesses or organizations may bring jobs and offer higher salaries, they can monopolize employees, meaning the few restaurants or services left have trouble attracting or retaining staff. (FG7) *"We want to "keep it country", but we also want some aspects of the city (mall, 24-hr restaurants)".*

Transportation: Public transportation is limited (no service on weekends) or does not exist (FG3, FG2). In some cases, spots on public transit must be reserved in advance (FG3). People need cars or have to find a ride to activities. Transportation for youth, specifically, is non-existent and in general is an issue. (FG7) In one case bus service was cut, so people had to find a ride to get anywhere. Ride sharing, however, has made it easier to travel outside the region.

Child Care services: The lack of childcare services (mentioned in several groups) makes it challenging for parents to attend work and even keep their employment (FG7). *"My friend just got notice that her daycare is closing in two weeks because the daycare owner can't deal with the stress anymore. How is she supposed to keep her job if there is nowhere for her child to go?"*

Employment

Opportunity: Employment opportunities are perceived as limited overall, but more so for English speakers. Entrepreneurial interests are also challenging to pursue due to a perceived lack of resources, knowledge and sometimes, support from the community governing body. Some jobs are available at community organizations but salaries are lower than similar jobs in larger centres. Those without higher education feel they cannot leave their community for work. (FG5).

Jobs Available: Actual available employment is limited for both English and French speakers, with opportunities for advancement, regardless of language skills, also limited. (FG2). Options for work are said to be restricted to industries, such as fishing, and local retail, food service or grocer (IGA). Even then, hours are limited and salaries remain low. (FG1) This causes people to leave the region in search of better opportunities and wages despite wishing to stay in their community. (FG5)

Obstacles: Language and limited availability of jobs were the two largest barriers to entering the work force for youth. Although roughly half of the high school aged focus group participants felt they were bilingual enough to get a job, the rest needed to learn French to be able to compete with their peers for similar positions. Some perceived employer bias against hiring youth, perceiving them as entitled (FG2), and not believing they are bilingual or have the appropriate language skills.

Some participants reported that some employers are less willing to accommodate schedules with employee realities (ex. lack of child care or transport) (FG2). A lack of desire to work is also noted, with employment insurance (EI) or welfare being easy, making youth comfortable and less interested in working (FG2). They reported being unemployed and 'caring for self' as more fulfilling than working full time. Some parents also did not want to miss out on watching their kids grow up. Working from home, having a shorter work week or being self-employed was seen as preferable by some. (FG5)

Housing
Renting: Housing in these communities is generally considered limited and landlords are believed to be increasingly unwilling to rent to young people, some even feeling that they discriminate against people by last name. (FG2) Knowing the right person to connect you to housing can help.

Availability / Accessibility: Low-income housing is needed especially for single parents (FG5) and the search can take months to find lodging. (FG4) Housing in some communities is prioritized for families, leaving couples and singles at the bottom of the list. (FG5)

Education
Language: Few of the participants felt they were strictly unilingual. Many participants have some level of French either through being a French speaker sent to English school or switching between English and French over the years. (FG6) High school aged participants cited wishing to socialize with French students in the same building. (FG6) Having two school boards was perceived to keep French and English teachers, schools and students separated.

School administration: Participants expressed unhappiness with Bonaventure high school being closed and English elementary and high school being combined into one school. Some felt that high school kids may negatively influence elementary students. Elementary students are said to make a mess in shared spaces (FG1) and the high school students feel they are treated like children because the two schools are combined. They also believe it causes a lack of school spirit. They expressed a desire to have a real high school away from elementary aged students. Some also wished to meet new people and be around French students of the same age. (FG3) Additionally, they reported that due to teachers moving around a lot, stability and trusting relationships are hard to establish with teachers and adversely affects students. As a result, morale about the school, teachers, curriculum and education, seems low overall.

Curriculum: Participants are of the opinion that curriculum options have decreased or become limited over the years, including French and English language at high school and CEGEP. High school curriculums lacked some courses needed for students to apply to specific university programs, for example in the sciences. (FG1; FG3) Online learning was attempted for the sciences but students were unsuccessful using this distance learning mode. (FG3) The French curriculum was also considered insufficient and frustrating for students who wished to improve their skills and opportunities.

Extracurricular Activities: Only a fraction of the high school aged participants is in after-school sports programs. They need a bigger gym and more students for English teams, as French teams are much

larger. (FG1) Many of the high school aged participants expressed desire for more after-school activities.

Adult Education and Training: Many people are said to drop out of adult education (English and French) and recruitment is a challenge, since the draw of earning a wage is more attractive than remaining in school. (FG7) The Anchor (adult education program) had two main reviews – it is '*wonderful*', and a '*waste of time*'. (FG2)

CEGEP: CEGEP in the region is considered good quality (but English instruction is available only in Gaspé town, and only for specific programs). Many Francophone students go to English CEGEP. Most courses in natural science, forestry and social sciences are offered only in French, making students take courses in English and French simultaneously. (FG7)

Health & Wellness

Drugs & Alcohol: Participants in one of the groups reported that roughly 4/5 people ages 15-21 are taking hard drugs (speed and cocaine), which they say are easier to get than marijuana. (FG2) Participants cited not knowing where to refer people if they needed help and have seen people go down a 'bad path' with drugs and alcohol. "*Even if you say to people, maybe this isn't such a great way to spend your life, they will say, "what else is there to do?*" (FG2).

Drinking & Driving: One focus group said that this was popular, resulting in an attitude that losing your license is 'not a big deal'. Some participants, however, said that they refuse to drink and drive. (FG2)

Mental Health: Mental health services in English are considered lacking. (FG5, FG6) Suicide rates are a concern and people have long waits to see a therapist, forcing some to go to the Emergency Room to receive care. Teachers are seen to be unaware of the issues students have (FG6) and it is believed that social media are partly to blame. Some participants reported feeling lucky to use unemployment to 'recharge' and look after their mental health.

Environment/ Ecoanxiety: Several participants aged 20+ stated never wanting to leave the region and risk increasing their carbon footprint or further impact the environment. Participants feel there is not enough being done about the environment. They do not feel hopeful about the future (FG6) and some feel worried about the future of Gaspé with increasing tourism and economic development, in particular the developing oil industry which is creating a split in the community between those in favour and those against it. (FG7) A couple of participants felt anxiety about the worsening conditions of the world and a looming 'apocalypse'. Some stated feeling glad to have survival skills and wishing to live off the grid and/or learn to garden. Some felt that living in a larger centre would increase 'ecoanxiety'. (FG5)

Outmigration

Returners: Only one FG had returners (n=4). Two came back for family, one came back because it was home and to be close to family, and one returned for the affordability and closer commute to work. The ocean, the mountains and the safety were all reasons participants from another focus group stayed in the Gaspé.

Leavers: Focus group participants cited that most people who left, did so to pursue higher education. (FG4) This was met with mixed sentiments. There was an attitude that education is not helpful and inaccessible due to income or requiring 'book smarts' to attain. In addition, free skills training available in communities made spending money on higher education less attractive. "*All these programs are free, and they benefit us (Skills Link, PPE). Why should I have to pay for education?*" (FG4) People felt

going out to see the rest of the world and experiencing life beyond their town had some value. Some participants reported having friends that would return to the region if they were bilingual. (FG7). Some students plan to go to university and not return to the community. (FG1)

Impacts: Communities 'lose' their young people to education and larger centres. If they leave for higher education, they often do not end up returning. (FG7) Participants said they may return for employment opportunities, affordability, family and personal preference, however, the lack of activities, services, access and potential life partners were factors that could keep young people from returning to their communities.

Identity and Community

"*We need to be closer to the French students, and stop labelling each other "French" people or "English" people*". (FG6)

"I'm really proud to be from the Gaspe. I've always felt like an outsider in Quebec. Any place I have travelled in Quebec, because of my language barrier I've felt linguistic racism. I'll never fit in because I'm not "French" even though I speak French, I've always felt excluded. Quebecers are the unfriendliest Canadians." (FG5)

The majority of the participants reported identifying first as a Canadian followed by a secondary and, sometimes, tertiary identity. Gaspesian was a major response in some of the focus groups; Magdalen Islander was the main identity for those from the islands; while Mi'gmaq was a main or secondary identity for other participants.

The discussions revealed that some participants related 'Quebecer' to being 'French' and therefore did not identify as such. Several focus groups additionally noted the discrimination from the French-speaking Quebecers and did not feel accepted as a 'Quebecer' despite having a long family history in the region, simply because they were English speakers.

It's all equal for me, I couldn't put a 1, 2 or 3. I was not bilingual growing up, but I am now. I feel more like a Quebecer now, because I can take part in different events. Speaking French has allowed me to be a part of society. (FG7)

In a survey at CEGEP, they asked us that (how you identify yourself) and put "Anglo-Quebecer", not just "Quebecer". It was kind of racist, that you didn't get to choose "Quebecer", it was only "Anglo-Quebecer". Even though we're Anglo-Quebecers, we are still Quebecers. We have history going back hundreds of years. (FG7)

Community: A dichotomy emerged from the focus groups regarding the sense of community. On the one hand people know each other and feel connected. Participants aged 20+ reported loving the small town, its affordability, its safety and being close to friends and family, and having less traffic and stress than living in the city –"*It's home.*" (FG5, FG7) Participants mentioned that class sizes are smaller and people come together as a community for causes, (FG7) it is safer and easier to make connections within the town, and kids can play in the yard without parents worrying. (FG7) On the other hand, however, participants reported people also being 'small minded', gossipy and nosey.

Outdoors: Participants found the natural setting surrounding their communities peaceful, spacious, and close to nature, the mountains and the ocean. They can take part in hunting and fishing (FG1, FG6), and enjoy clean air and nice views. (FG1)

Ideas for improving Quality of Life

Ideas for Social Activities, Sports & Recreation

Participants wanted more social activities and opportunities (painting and wine night, bowling, movie night, adult outings). Focus groups also suggested a sports league not affiliated with the school, having activities with French schools (gym night), setting up a Civic Centre, opening a paintball field, and more extracurricular activities.

They also wanted spaces where they can go, such as a movie theatre, hockey rink, McDonalds, mall, sports centre. A youth drop-in centre was suggested as a safe location away from drugs. There are some facilities that exist in these communities (Ex. skating rink, baseball field, arena) but some point to a lack of resources and municipal support to operate or access them.

Other ideas included more opportunities for students to travel, and different cuisines (vegetarian/vegan).

Ideas for Education

Participants suggested making schools French immersion instead of separate and unilingual. Some suggested the Anchor offer more trades courses in English. Some suggested that Francophone and Anglophone students spend more time together, and have more joint activities.

Ideas for Employment

Some participants suggested it would help if every job had on-the-job training in French or offered free language courses to help people become bilingual.

Ideas for Health and Wellness

Participants suggested services to support self-development, such as mentoring or coaching. The ideas mentioned above for social activities, sports and recreation also would be positive factors in improving health and wellness.

Ideas for Transportation & Infrastructure

Participants suggested that REGIM (public transport) improve frequency of service. In terms of infrastructure, they suggested a swimming pool, better parks and a hospital.

Childcare

Childcare services are greatly needed and were noted several times in different focus groups.

Discussion

Analysis of both the survey and focus group data reveal some key issues and messages to take into account in future actions.

On average, English-speaking youth aged 15-29 in Quebec are more likely than their French-speaking peers to have a low level of educational attainment, to be unemployed and to be living on $20,000 or less. This also is true on average for English-speaking youth in the Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine region (although not on all MRC territories). The survey data and the data from the focus group discussions shed light on some of the dynamics that may be influencing these realities, as well as some of the paradoxes that youth in the region face.

Interactions between language, education, employment and social life

First, a set of complex interactions take place between language, education, employment, social life and services, such as transportation and child care. Exposure to and acquisition of French language are affected by schooling, jobs, friends and family. Some young people are able to acquire a high level of fluency because of their life circumstances (family and friends), while others simply do not have the opportunities to do so. One's skill level in French, in turn, has a strong impact on employment opportunities, since many jobs require good communications skills in French. When a young person is not relatively skilled in French this creates barriers not only to employment, but also to social activities, training and further education. These linguistic issues are compounded by historic tensions between English and French speakers, which are still felt to some extent today. Many youth felt that having separate schools (and social and sports activities) does nothing to ease these tensions or assist in improving French language acquisition. Additional barriers to employment, and social participation in general, are limited transportation options, limited availability of child care and limited educational opportunities in the region beyond high school. Since there is no English CEGEP in the region, and the Gaspé CEGEP offers only a limited number of courses and programs in English, youth who want to pursue higher education have to leave the region, and sometimes the province. Universities are all located outside the region.

High school

A notable take away from the high school aged focus groups was the dissatisfaction with the school system. These teenagers felt that they were not getting the full range of courses and conditions for learning that would help to prepare them for future opportunities. For the Baie-des-Chaleurs area, the closure of the high school in Bonaventure and combination of the English elementary and secondary grades into one school is perceived negatively. In addition, adult education was not seen to provide sufficient choice of training.

Social activities, spaces and norms

Some of the youth pointed to social norms that encourage the use of drugs and alcohol, risk-taking behaviour and many hours on screens and social media. This may be exacerbated by a lack of social and recreational activities for young people, including sports, arts, cultural activities, entertainment, and more. In addition, in many communities there are few, if any, places for young people to "hang out" in a context that is safe, fun and adapted to their age-related needs. A certain social acceptance of social assistance and employment insurance was also seen as a negative influence on young people, discouraging some from pursuing education and job opportunities. Some perceived an increase in mental health issues (depression and anxiety) alongside a lack of services in English for dealing with them.
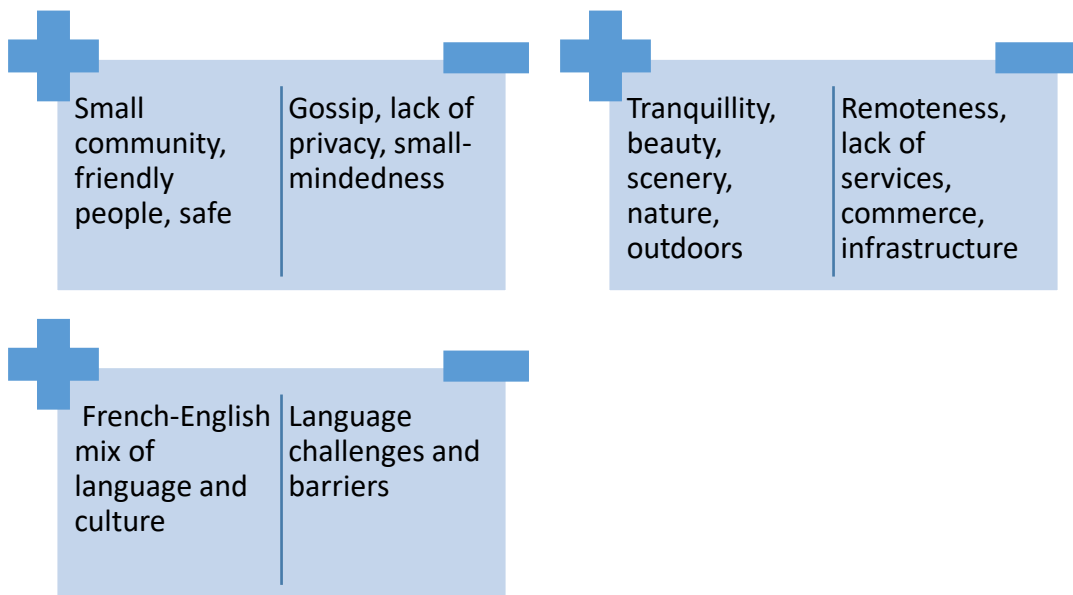
Sense of identity and belonging

Despite what can in some ways seem a bleak portrait of the situation of youth in the region, almost half (43%) of survey respondents said they definitely plan to stay in the region, with an additional quarter (24%) saying they probably will stay. Only 6% said they definitely do not plan to stay (20% were unsure). Interestingly, among those who are living outside the region (leavers) fully one half are interested in returning, with less than a quarter saying they are not interested, and little over a quarter being unsure. The main reasons for wanting to be in the region are family, a life partner and work; and the main reasons for leaving are an insufficient level of French language skill and jobs (in general or in their field).

This points to a strong connection to "home", to family and to the region. Most participants identified primarily as Canadian or Gaspesian, followed by Gaspesian/Magdalen Islander or Canadian Second. A significant number also identified as Mi'gmaq (or Aboriginal). Very few felt they were Quebecers. Responses in the focus group data pointed to the belief that Quebecers are French speakers, and the term "Anglo-Quebecers" did not seem to resonate strongly with them.

The light and the shadow

The data gathered points to two contrasting sides of the same reality for young people. On the one hand, many youth expressed an appreciation for their small communities, where people know each other, are friendly and feel safe; on the other hand, they dislike the gossip, the lack of privacy and the "small-mindedness". They appreciate the tranquillity, beauty, scenery and natural features of their home region; but they dislike the remoteness, as well as the lack of services, commerce and infrastructure. They like the mix of French and English languages and cultures; however that very mixture presents challenges and barriers, as they need to be relatively fluent in French to have access to good educational, employment and social opportunities.

Small community, friendly people, safe	Gossip, lack of privacy, small-mindedness

Tranquillity, beauty, scenery, nature, outdoors	Remoteness, lack of services, commerce, infrastructure

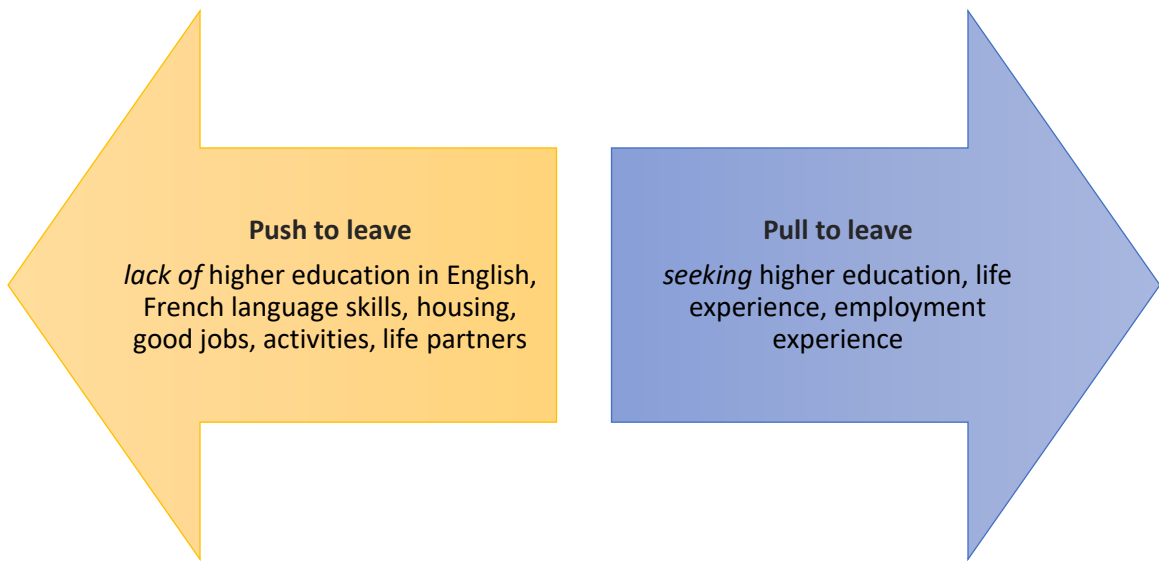| French-English mix of language and culture	Language challenges and barriers

Opposing forces to stay or leave

It would seem that young people in the Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine are subject either to negative factors that push them to stay, or positive factors that act as a pull. When young people lack education, social support or financial possibilities, they are "pushed" to stay in the region, but not by positive or attractive factors. On the other hand, their attachment to family, to the beauty of the land, to their work or to a life partner can all act as a magnet, attracting them to stay in the region.

Push to stay

low education, social support, financial possibilities

Pull to stay

family, beautiful landscape, work, and life partner
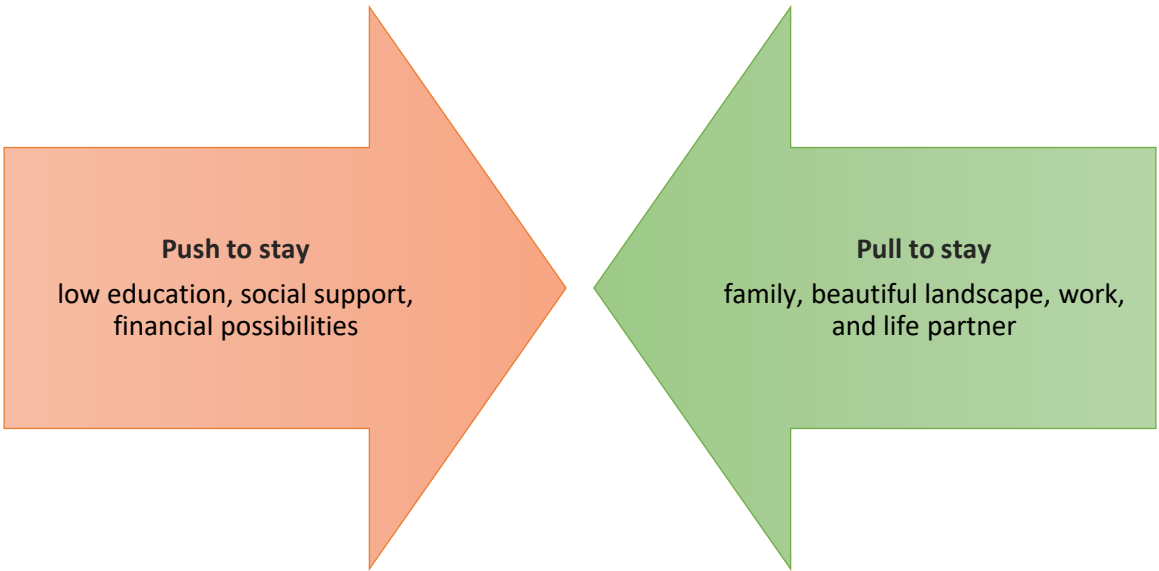
When young people lack higher education options in English, French language skills, housing options, good jobs, social activities and potential life partners, they are "pushed" to leave. On the other hand, they may be attracted (positively) to leave the region by a desire for higher education, a more cosmopolitan life experience or more employment experience

Push to leave

lack of higher education in English, French language skills, housing, good jobs, activities, life partners

Pull to leave

seeking higher education, life experience, employment experience

These forces that encourage some to stay and others to leave contribute to the devitalization of the region as young people migrate out of the region, or stay but with poor job prospects and incomes. Being an English speaker, especially if not bilingual, exacerbates the situation.

Recommendations

Language skills

1. Enhance French language training through work and at school to help English speakers improve their French language skills, including the possibility of a French immersion program

Education

2. Facilitate access to education and training opportunities, specifically providing more diverse skills training

Employment

3. Enhance job opportunities for English Speakers, including support for entrepreneurship (business development)
4. Provide counselling services such as personal coaching and career counselling
5. Work *with* traditional rural industries, occupations, knowledge and skills

Social life

6. Create more places for youth to socialize and more activities that bring them together
7. Organize activities that increase social connection and interactions between English-speaking, French-speaking and Mi'gmaq youth in nearby communities

Health and well-being

8. Create initiatives to access and improve knowledge on how to access health and social services, particularly for mental health and addiction

Mobility and attractivity

9. Explore promising approaches for attracting youth back to the region
10. Work *with* mobility and migration—support young people who want to leave, and support them to come back

Governance

11. Involve young people in community planning and decision-making
12. Protect what makes rural life attractive already—consider the impacts of policy decisions in all areas on quality of life, particularly those aspects that seem unique to rural communities and attract people to live in them: for example, nature, recreation, pace of life, and social capital.