

1.0 THE FOLLOW-UP STUDY OF JUNE 2001 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

1.1 INTRODUCTION

One of the key determinants of an individual's employment opportunities is their level of education. This statement is supported by *The Report of the Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program 1999* which demonstrated that, despite a province's overall labour market conditions, individuals with a higher level of education had higher rates of employment. However, for individuals at lower levels of educational attainment, employment rates across all provinces showed greater variability with outcomes tied more to the strength of the respective provincial labour market.

Recent statistics on educational attainment suggest that Newfoundland and Labrador's youth are increasingly aware of the importance of education to their future. In 1979, according to Statistics Canada, 45.3% of 25-34 year olds in the Province had not completed high school however by 2000 this percentage had decreased to 17.6%. Similarly, the proportion of this population group that had attained high school or above increased from 54.3% in 1979 to 88.3% in 2000.

This positive trend towards higher levels of education is especially meaningful given that the majority of new jobs to be created over the next five years will require that incumbents have obtained post-secondary credentials. In fact, if only non-student employment is considered, 70% of new jobs will require a post-secondary diploma and occupations requiring a university degree will demonstrate an annual growth rate of 2.3%.¹

Yet despite a demonstrated relationship between education and labour market outcomes, a significant proportion of high school graduates still choose not to pursue post-secondary activities immediately after high school. What, then, motivates the Province's high school graduates to make the decisions they do regarding post-secondary education participation?

To better understand the mind-set of today's graduates, the Department of Youth Services and Post-Secondary Education's Division of Corporate Planning and Research conducted a survey of June 2001 high school graduates to explore various factors related to their post-graduation

¹ Applied Research Branch, HRDC, 2002

activities. Whether or not they had engaged in post-secondary studies was determined, in part, by accessing September 2001 enrolment data for each institution as well as through the surveying process. For those who had undertaken post-secondary studies at the time of survey, areas investigated included reasons for choice of programs and institutions, source of program and career information, satisfaction with choice of post-secondary study and long-term career plans and goals. The survey also determined whether high school graduates from June 2001 were aware of, and their choices influenced by, the existence of career planning resources such as the Department's *CareerSearch* document. Within the non-post-secondary group, areas examined included barriers to post-secondary education, reasons for not attending post-secondary, future plans and current activities.

It is anticipated that the information gained through this survey will be valuable to secondary and post-secondary program administrators and may lead the way towards initiatives which will result in a larger percentage of students entering the post-secondary system. An increased post-secondary participation rate would be beneficial to the province as a whole as the future labour market conditions of Newfoundland and Labrador will be, in part, dependent on the qualification of its workers.

1.2 Survey Methodology

Prior to the actual survey, the high school graduate database was matched up with first year enrolment data from Memorial University, the College of the North Atlantic, the Marine Institute and, where possible, private college data. Further private college enrolment was obtained in various ways including direct contact with private institutions. On the basis of this, students were classified as either post-secondary (if they were found in a first-year database) or unknown status (if they were not found in a first-year database). Finally, through the interview process the graduates of unknown status were questioned to determine if they were post-secondary or non-post-secondary high school graduates (not currently attending a post-secondary institution).

Considered to be important to the overall success of the project, the input of key stakeholders was sought prior to the implementation of the survey. Officials representing a number of groups were consulted as the survey was being developed. During consultation, groups were provided with a copy of the most recent survey instrument and asked to provide feedback. In cases, stakeholder opinion was considered and the survey was modified accordingly. The groups consulted during the survey development process included:

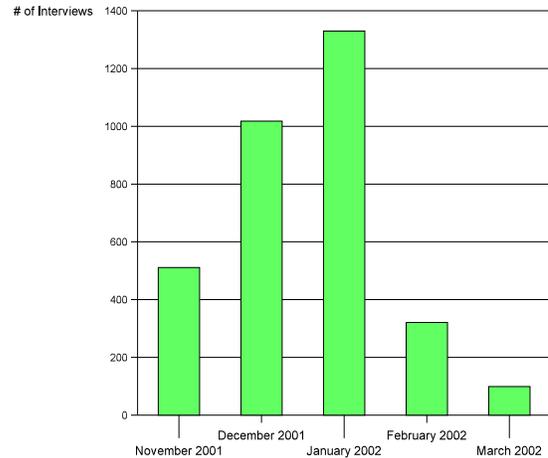
- The College of the North Atlantic
- The Centre for Institutional Analysis and Planning, Memorial University
- The Marine Institute
- The Association of Private Colleges of Newfoundland and Labrador
- Futures in Newfoundland and Labrador Youth (FINALY)
- The Department of Education
- The Department of Youth Services and Post-Secondary Education
- The Department of Human Resources and Employment
- The Division of Student Financial Services
- High School Guidance Counsellors

Additionally, government officials with their respective departments in Alberta, British Columbia, Prince Edward Island and Ontario were contacted to discuss their similar initiatives.

The actual surveying commenced once the survey instrument had been developed to the satisfaction of key stakeholders. To facilitate the survey, telephone interviewers used a computer-aided telephone interview (CATI) system. The CATI system allowed interviewers to enter the information they obtained on the telephone directly into the computer. Additionally, the software disallowed invalid entries and reduced the amount of data cleaning necessary at the end of the survey.

The interviews were conducted during the late fall of 2001 and early winter of 2002. Accordingly, there may be some graduate respondents who were enrolled in a post-secondary institution in the fall of 2001 that may have quit their programs in the winter of 2002 or graduates who waited until winter 2002 to start post-secondary studies. The information obtained is, therefore, not a snapshot of the fall 2001 or winter 2002 semesters but rather an examination of the post-secondary status of June 2001 high school graduates at the time of survey. Figure 1.2.1 shows the number of completed interviews conducted on a monthly basis over the duration of the survey.

**Figure 1.2.1 Number of Completed Interviews
by Month of Contact
Follow-up Survey of June 2001 High School Graduates**



Because of the relatively large number of graduates, only a subset of the graduates that were determined to be enrolled at Memorial University and the College of the North Atlantic were contacted. For the purpose of analysis, weighting was applied to the subset to ensure that the characteristics of this group were equally represented across all school districts. An attempt was made to complete a census of all other June 2001 high school graduates.

As shown in Table 1.2.1, of the 5,992 students who graduated in June 2001, actual telephone surveys were completed on 3,279. Although unavailable to complete a survey, the whereabouts of 206 graduates was determined through contact with the household. Interviewers were unable to make contact with another 621 graduates for varying reasons including incorrect phone numbers (39%), no forwarding phone number (22%), and the unavailability of the graduate through the survey period (11%). Additionally, just over 12% of the 621 non-respondents refused to respond to the survey and a further 6% of households refused to provide access to the graduate. As stated previously, 966 high school graduates attending Memorial University and 137 graduates attending the College of the North Atlantic were not included in the survey pool, however they have been included in the analysis through weighted values of graduates completing the survey.

Table 1.2.1 Project Overview
Follow-up Survey of June 2001 High School Graduates

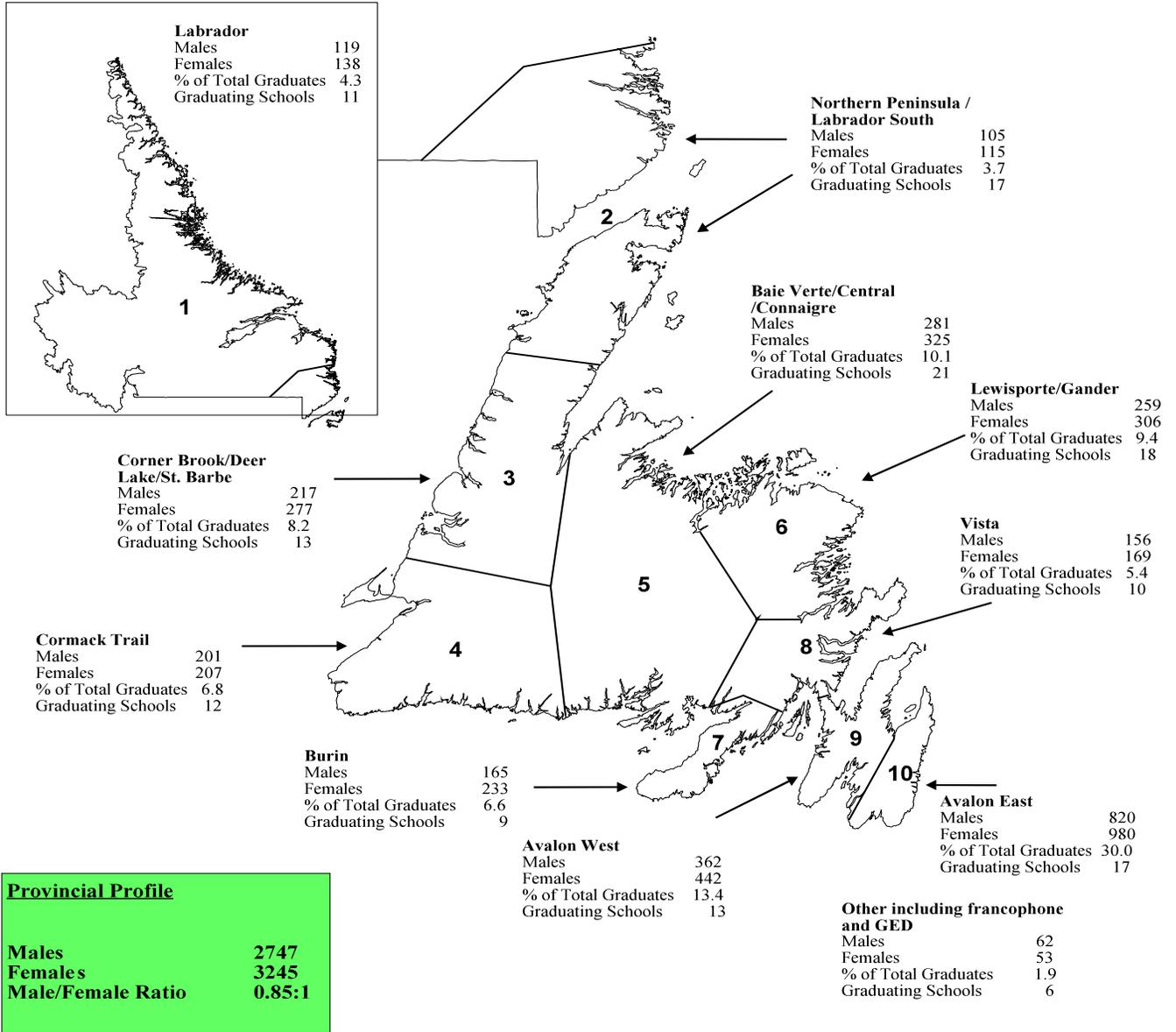
	Survey Sample				Not in Survey Sample				Total	
	Completed Survey		Did Not Complete Survey		Outside of Sector Subset		Not Interviewed but Whereabouts Known		#	%
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%		
College of the North Atlantic	427	45.9	357	38.3	137	14.7	10	1.1	931	100.0
Memorial University	754	35.5	393	18.5	966	45.4	13	0.6	2126	100.0
Marine Institute	92	82.1	15	13.4	-	-	4	4.5	112	100.0
NF Private Colleges	169	73.8	18	7.9	-	-	42	18.3	229	100.0
Out-of-Province University	282	83.4	-	-	-	-	56	16.6	338	100.0
Out-of-Province Colleges	59	81.9	-	-	-	-	13	18.1	72	100.0
Non-Post-Secondary ⁽¹⁾	1496	95.8	-	-	-	-	67	4.3	1563	100.0
Unknown	-	-	605 ⁽³⁾	97.4	16 ⁽²⁾	2.6	-	-	621	100.0
Total	3279	54.7	1388	23.2	1119	18.7	206	3.4	5992	100.0

⁽¹⁾ Includes graduates who indicated that they were working or unemployed as well as those upgrading for future post-secondary enrolment and other reasons outlined in this document.

⁽²⁾ Contact information unavailable.

⁽³⁾ Includes 111 graduate or graduate households who refused to cooperate.

1.3 Profile of June 2001 High School Graduates: School District Breakdown



Taking in the cities of Mount Pearl and St John's and its surrounding communities, the Avalon East School District has the highest percentage (30.0%) of June 2001 high school graduates. The Avalon West and Baie Verte/Central/Connaigre School Districts graduated 13.4% and 10.1%, respectively, of the June 2001 graduating class followed closely by the school districts of Lewisporte/Gander (9.4%) and Corner/Brook/Deer Lake/St. Barbe (8.2%). The remaining school districts, excluding the "other" district which includes francophone and GED programs and had only 1.9% of total graduates, have graduate percentages ranging from 4.3% (Labrador) to 7.3% (Cormack Trail).

1.4 Status of June 2001 High School Graduates

The follow-up survey of the June 2001 high school graduating class (N = 5,992) determined that, at the time of survey, almost 64% of graduates (n = 3,808) were engaged in post-secondary studies. Another 26% (n = 1,563) had chosen not to pursue further studies immediately after high school (see Figure 1.4.1). These graduates were working or unemployed, upgrading their marks, delaying post-secondary enrolment for a later time, or unable to pursue their post-secondary education due to family or personal reasons. The survey was unable to determine the status of 10% (n = 621) of the graduates largely due to poor contact information for these graduates.

Figure 1.4.1 Post-Graduation Status of June 2001 High School Graduates

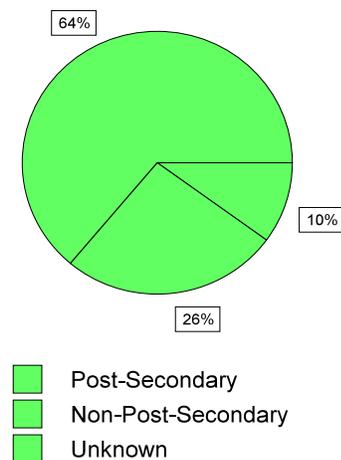


Table 1.4.1 gives a more detailed breakdown of graduate pursuits during the interview period. Almost 64% of the total June 2001 high school graduating class were engaged in post-secondary studies at the time of survey while 26% were working, unemployed or involved in some other post-graduation activity. When the graduates whose status could not be tracked are removed from the total, the percentage of graduates attending post-secondary rises to 70.9%.

Status	Number of Graduates	% Of Total Graduates	% Of Tracked Graduates
Memorial University	2126	35.5	39.6
College of the North Atlantic	931	15.6	17.4
Marine Institute	112	1.9	2.1
NF Private College	229	3.9	4.3
Out-of-Province College	72	1.2	1.4
Out-of-Province University	338	5.7	6.3
Subtotal : Post-Secondary	3808	63.6	70.9
High School - Upgrading	143	2.4	2.7
Employed	898	15.0	16.8
Unemployed	416	7.0	7.8
Other	106	1.8	2.0
Subtotal: Non-Post-Secondary	1563	26.1	29.1
TOTAL TRACKED GRADUATES	5371	89.7	100.0
Refused	111	1.9	-
Unknown	510	8.5	-
TOTAL JUNE 2001 GRADUATES	5992	100.0	-

**Table 1.4.1 Post-High School Activities
June 2001 High School Graduates**

The largest percentage of graduates (46%) whose whereabouts were revealed during the survey process were attending Memorial University (40%) or an out-of-province university (6%). A small percentage (2%) were also attending the Marine Institute of Memorial University. The desire for a vocational education led the remainder of post-secondary graduates to the College of the North Atlantic (17%), private colleges located in Newfoundland and Labrador (4%) or out-of-province colleges (1%).

Almost one-quarter of tracked graduates were either working (17%) or unemployed (8%) at the time of survey. Additionally, a small group (2%) were pursuing careers in the military, fulfilling family or personal commitments or engaged in some other non-post-secondary activity. A further 3% of the total tracked graduate population or 9% of the non-post-secondary cohort, were back in high school upgrading their marks with most intending to pursue post-secondary in the future.

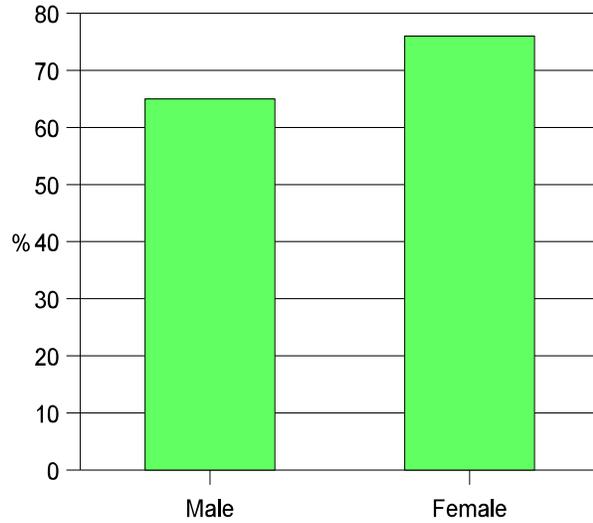
The post-graduation status of June 2001 high school graduates can also be defined by socioeconomic factors such as gender, urban² or rural residence, and the highest parental level of education.

Gender

While the largest proportion of both male and female graduates were enrolled in post-secondary studies, the female population of the June 2001 graduating class were the most inclined to pursue further education immediately after graduation from high school. In fact, as shown in Figure 1.4.2, the percentage of female graduates who chose to continue their studies (76%) was 11 percentage points higher than their male counterparts (65%).

² For the purpose of this report, urban Newfoundland and Labrador is defined as the cities of Corner Brook, Mount Pearl and St. John's and its surrounding communities including Conception Bay South, Paradise, Portugal Cove-St. Philips and Torbay.

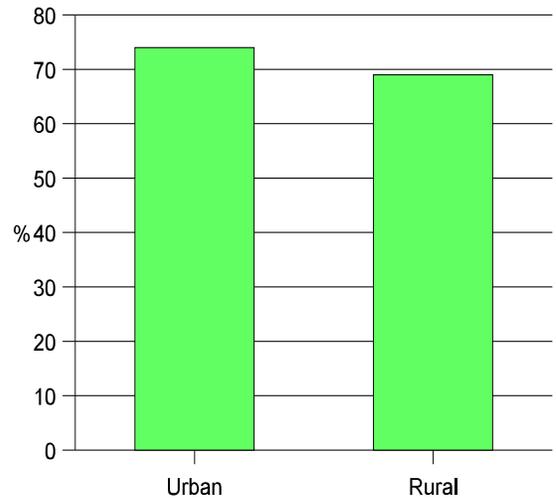
Figure 1.4.2 Graduates Attending Post-Secondary by Gender June 2001 High School Graduates



Urban/Rural

The value of a post-secondary education is apparent to both urban and rural graduates and only a small difference in post-graduation activities was noted in the survey. Using the previously described determination of the urban/rural split, it was concluded that, of the total rural population graduating from high school in June 2001 and contacted through this survey or with whereabouts only known, 69% were enrolled in a post-secondary institution at the time of survey while 31% were engaged in non-post-secondary activities (Figure 1.4.3). Similarly, almost three quarters of the graduates from urban centres whose whereabouts only were known or who completed surveys were also enrolled in post-secondary studies.

**Figure 1.4.3 Graduates Attending Post-Secondary by Urban/Rural Place of Residence
June 2001 High School Graduates**

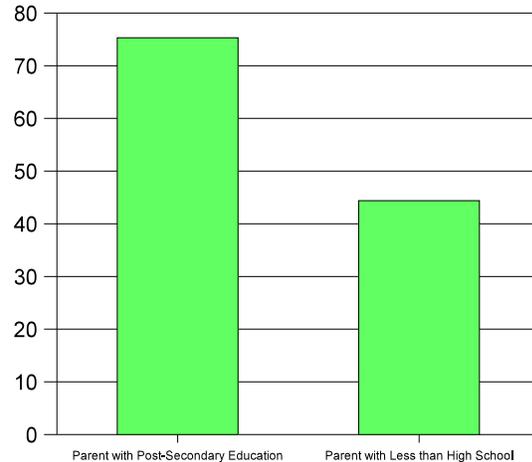


Parental Education

Student achievement, parental education and household income are some of the many social and economic factors influencing participation in education. Recent studies have concluded that children whose parents have higher levels of educational attainment, and thus greater probability of finding and keeping a job, will be more inclined to pursue a post-secondary education.³ In contrast, those individuals in the lower socio-economic status groups make a relatively greater sacrifice to attend post-secondary. More recent studies including the Youth in Transition Survey, conducted cooperatively by Human Resources Development Canada and Statistics Canada, corroborate this - 64% of 18-20 year olds from the survey group engaged in post-secondary studies at the time of survey came from families where one or both parents had a university degree. This is further borne out by the June 2001 graduates. Almost three-quarters of graduates with at least one parent who had completed some level of post-secondary education (i.e. degree, diploma, certificate) were engaged in post-secondary studies at the time of survey compared to less than half of those graduates whose parent(s) had not completed high school (see Figure 1.4.4).

³ Report of the Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program 1999, CMEC, 2000.

Figure 1.4.4 Graduates Attending Post-Secondary by Highest Parental Level of Education June 2001 High School Graduates



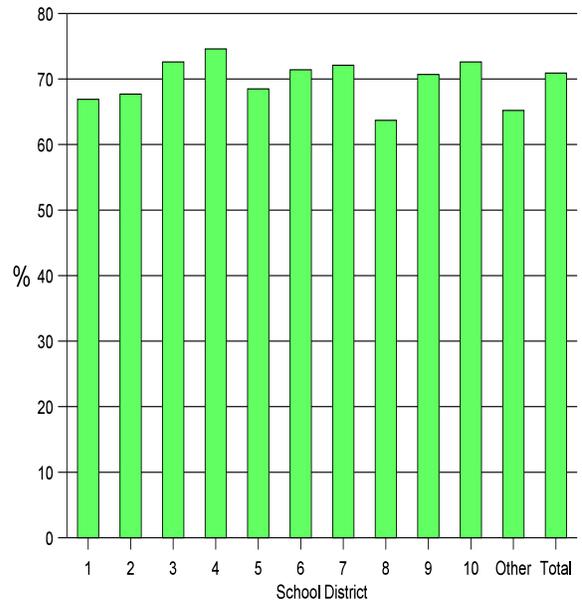
According to Statistics Canada's 2000 Labour Force Survey, just over 52% of the Province's population aged 25-54 (the surmised age of our graduates' parent population) had completed some form of post-secondary program, 7% had attended post-secondary but not completed a program and 41% had attained high school graduation or less. Again, the results of the survey of June 2001 high school graduates echo these statistics. Almost 49% of our graduates had at least one parent with a completed post-secondary education and 7% indicated a parent with some post-secondary schooling. Just over 38% indicated that the highest level of parental education was a high school education or less (38%) while the educational attainment of either parent was unknown to 6% of graduates.

School District

The post-secondary activity of the June 2001 graduates can also be defined by school district. At 74.6%, the highest percentage of June 2001 graduates to pursue post-secondary studies were from the Cormack Trail School District followed by both the Avalon East and Corner Brook/Deer Lake/St. Barbe School Districts at 72.6%, the Burin School District at 72.1%, the Lewisporte/Gander School District at 71.4% and the Avalon West School District at 70.7%. As shown in Figure 1.4.5, marginally smaller percentages of graduates from the Baie Verte/Central/Connaigre School District (68.5%), the Northern Peninsula/Labrador South School District (67.7%), and the Labrador School District (66.9%) were in attendance at a post-secondary institution at time of survey while at 63.6%, the graduates of 2000 from the Vista

School District were the least inclined to pursue post-secondary studies immediately after graduation from high school.

Figure 1.4.5 Graduates Attending Post-Secondary by School District June 2001 High School Graduates



Finally, June 2001 high school graduates were asked to indicate their current living arrangements and if they had dependent children.

Dependent Children

A small number of respondents (1.6%, n=60) reported having children financially dependent on them. Female graduates were two and a half times more likely to report having dependent children than their male counterparts. At the time of survey the highest percentage of graduates with children were either working (24%) or unemployed (22%). In spite of having this added responsibility, 15% were attending Memorial University and 12% were attending the College of the North Atlantic. Of note, those with children are more likely to be living at home with their parents (almost 50%) although 22% indicated that they were living independently.

Living Arrangements

When posed the question of where they are currently living more than 60% of graduates stated that they lived with their parents, 15% lived with friends and 11% lived in a dormitory or residence. As outlined in Table 1.4.6, when broken down further, Marine Institute students were more likely to live with friends (54%), out of province University students favoured a dormitory or residence while most graduates at Memorial University (58%), in-province private colleges (42%) as well as those not attending a post-secondary institution (82%), were living at home with their parents.

Figure 1.4.6 Living Arrangements at Time of Survey By Post-Graduation Activity June 2001 High School Graduates

