

Drastic population declines forecasted for southern Labrador and Northern Peninsula

The Harris Centre releases estimates on population decline over the next 20 years

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Black Tickle, Labrador, which has about 140 residents. (CBC)

A demographic time-bomb is ticking in southern Labrador and on Newfoundland's Northern Peninsula, new Memorial University research released Thursday suggests.

A study released from MUN's Harris Centre sheds light on how dire the population situation is expected to be in some rural areas of the province by 2036. "For some regions, such as the tip of the Northern Peninsula and the Labrador Straits, population over the next 20 years is likely to decline significantly," Keith Storey, research director for the Harris Centre's population project, told CBC Radio's *Labrador Morning*. The Northern Peninsula is likely to see a 40 per cent population decline, and the drop is expected to be almost as much for the Labrador Straits and south coast as well. Storey said the regions have very few births in total, a rapidly aging population and an increase in out-migration.

"Without intervention, the trends identified in the report will have a drastic impact on the economy, governance and overall quality of life," the Harris Centre wrote.

Migration the 'largest factor'

Migration is the largest factor affecting population decline, Storey said, but it's also important to remember that the people who stay in the regions are getting older. "At first glance, it looks as though the population is in good shape," said Alvin Simms, lead researcher of the population project, in a statement about the project's release.

It isn't just where people are born: it's about whether or not they are likely to stay.-

Alvin Simms

"But when you factor in migration, there is population decline over time, even in areas with high natural growth. It isn't just where people are born: it's about whether or not they are likely to stay."

Dr. Keith Storey, seen in a file image, is the research director for the Harris Centre's population project. (Memorial University)

The Harris Centre found the Labrador's north coast, central and western regions have the best chance at maintaining their populations, assuming there are no significant changes in their local economies.

For example, Labrador West's economy is dependent on iron ore mining. Assuming that remains steady, there is potential for in-migration, and a workforce replacement success rate of 50 per cent would see their population remain relatively stable.

The opposite is true, however, for the Labrador southern coast, the Straits and the Northern Peninsula.

"For these regions, retaining their existing workforce will be hard, but encouraging in-migration might be even harder," said Simms.

Looking to the future

While Storey said it would be 'wonderful' to encourage people to migrate to the areas, he doesn't see that as a likely solution — but he's looking for ideas on how to adapt. "It's not something we can afford to ignore, because if we do ignore it then we are going to find ourselves in very, very difficult circumstances in terms of trying to address some of the implications of these changes," Storey said.

"With a much older population, fewer people in the workforce and fewer resources to provide that population with services, if we don't start thinking about that now then in the future we are going to be seriously disadvantaged."

While this report focused on Labrador and the Northern Peninsula, the Harris Centre plans to continue their research across the province as further project funding is secured.

By referring to the article above, answer the following questions.

1. Classify and explain the population change that is described in this article? (*Provide evidence from the article to support your answer.*)

2. In the space below, draw a depiction of the population profile that would represent the current population change of the Northern Peninsula and Southern Labrador?

3. a. Identify and explain two factors of population change, presented by the article, that are accounting for this population change? Provide examples from the article to support your response. (*Keep with the language and terminology used in this unit.*)
