

# Fogo Island's Labour Market Data Report



## **Labour Market & Industry Diversification Project**

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## Executive Summary

The Fogo Island Labour Market Data Report is a strategic resource designed to support the Town of Fogo Island in shaping policies for industry diversification and sustainable economic growth. A thriving labour market is the foundation of a strong economy, and the skills, education levels, and workforce composition directly influence economic resilience and development opportunities.

Preparing the Labour Market Data Report involved collecting data from Statistics Canada, Fogo Island's Housing Needs Assessment 2023, internet research, and other local observations. This report provides a comprehensive analysis of Fogo Island's labour market, examining available skills, education levels, workforce demographics, and employment trends. It identifies key challenges related to workforce attraction and retention, highlighting gaps in labour supply and demand. By assessing these factors, the report offers valuable insights into opportunities for workforce development, talent attraction, and economic expansion.

The findings will inform decision-making for local businesses, policymakers, and economic development initiatives, ensuring that Fogo Island remains competitive in an evolving economic landscape. Addressing labour market gaps through strategic planning will support long-term sustainability, job creation, and a more diversified economy.

### Key Opportunities & Recommendations:

#### *Labour Supply and Demand Gaps*

- Expand local skilled trades training through partnerships with colleges or apprenticeship programs.
- Develop incentives for skilled workers (e.g., relocation assistance, housing incentives, tax benefits).
- Enhance retention strategies by offering year-round employment opportunities in seasonal industries.

#### *Education and Workforce Readiness*

- Launch local training and certification programs focused on in-demand skills (e.g., renewable energy, IT, aquaculture, health services).
- Strengthen career pathways for youth by partnering with universities and trade schools to create co-op or remote work opportunities on Fogo Island.
- Introduce an adult upskilling initiative to support career transitions into growing sectors like digital services, alternative energy, or specialized tourism.



### ***Workforce Retention and Attraction Challenges***

- Invest in workforce housing solutions (e.g., employer-assisted housing, modular housing, co-living spaces).
- Promote Fogo Island as a remote work-friendly location by improving digital infrastructure and co-working spaces.
- Develop a newcomer attraction strategy with settlement support and community integration programs.

### ***Industry Diversification and Economic Growth***

- Expand sustainable fisheries and aquaculture initiatives to increase year-round employment.
- Develop a creative industries hub supporting local artists, digital media, and cultural tourism.
- Attract eco-tourism and adventure tourism businesses that align with Fogo Island's natural environment.
- Launch a small business incubator program to support entrepreneurship in underdeveloped industries



## Current Community Profile: Fogo Island

In 2011, Fogo Island's communities amalgamated to form the *Town of Fogo Island*, a single municipality responsible for supporting the island's economic development and providing essential services such as infrastructure, tax collection, fire services, public works, recreation, tourism, and community planning. The *Town of Fogo Island* has a population of 2,117 residents, based on the 2021 Census by Statistics Canada. Through collaboration with local businesses, non-profits, various government departments, academic institutions, expatriates and residents, the Town works to foster the economic and social well-being of the island. Volunteers lead recreation and cultural committees, playing a vital role in supporting key economic sectors such as tourism and recreation. Furthermore, their support in organizing recreational activities ensures the community's vibrance and accessibility to all.

Fogo Islanders are creators, storytellers, and innovators who know how to stitch together the essence of heritage and modernity like a quilt. Their warmth and hospitality reflect a place where neighbours are like family and where every connection is valued. Whether on land or sea, Fogo Islanders embrace their home's beauty and challenges, always finding new ways to adapt, thrive, and celebrate their vibrant culture and treasured home.

According to the *Town of Fogo Island's Strategic Plan 2023-2025*, the current council's **vision** is to create "a united, vibrant, and inclusive Island that is a great place to raise a family and is economically diversified and focused on maintaining its unique heritage, while providing activities and programs for all ages." The council's **mandate** for the *Town of Fogo Island* is: "to provide citizens, businesses, and visitors effective, efficient, and financially responsible programs and services, while focusing on maintaining traditional ways in a modern world."

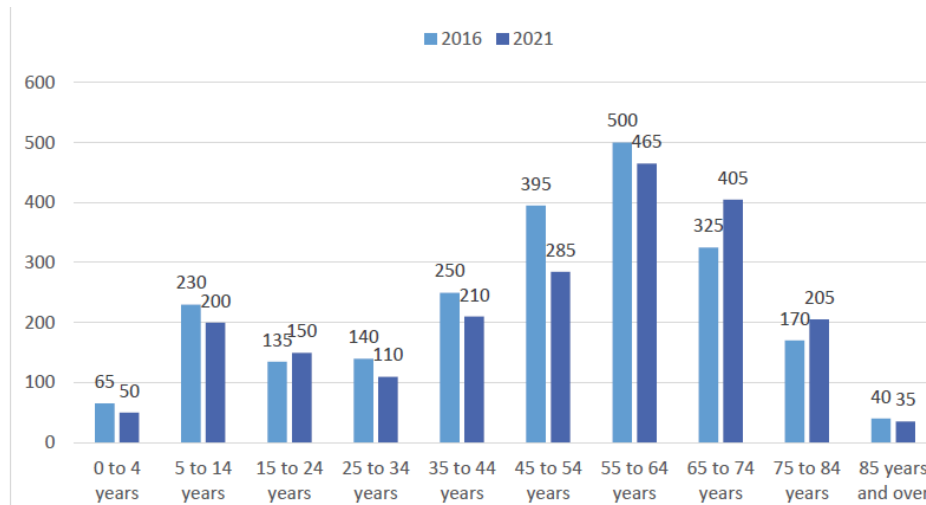
*The Town of Fogo Island's economic development priorities* include:

- Create sustainable & equitable economic growth
- Stimulate and support entrepreneurship, digital business skills, and business optimization
- Strengthening labour market development, including career development and skills trainings
- Encourage & support population growth, through housing solutions and good quality of life
- Support existing & emerging industry development
- Advance the development of food & water security



## Demographic Trends

*Note:* The following information is augmented by data from the *Fogo Island's Housing Needs Assessment*, completed in 2023, using the most recent Census data of 2021, by *J Consulting Group* and *VINK Consulting*, as well as data collected from *Statistics Canada*.



The most recent census data for Fogo Island shows the population trending downwards, a reflection of broader de-population across rural Newfoundland and Labrador. In 2021, just over half (52.4%) of Fogo Island's year-round residents were aged 55 and over, and 30.5% were aged 65 and over. The number of youth aged 15 to 24 years also increased, while each of the other age categories below 65 years of age saw population decreases. This illustrates that the local workforce amounts to 54.7% of the population of permanent residents, which has experienced a 1% decrease since 2016.

## Movement of People

### **Population Outmigration:**

Younger generations are moving off-island in search of 'better' opportunities for work and education, contributing to an increase in an aging population in the demographic profile. It is reducing the local labour force and therefore the labour flexibility. The outmigration of the senior population is also reported for accessing suitable senior housing and health care amenities. There's also a pressure on ambitious entrepreneurs or career-driven individuals



who feel Fogo Island is a risky place to invest in, so they migrate towards urban centres to build their lives- returning only for visits, because they will always love their home.

### ***Population Immigration:***

There's a charm to Fogo Island that attracts people from across the globe and some of them stay to make it their home. Over the past ten years, the island has witnessed an immigration of people from different parts of the world who have family ties or settle without those ties. Most are actively taking part in the labour market and economic activities. New residents bring fresh perspectives and skills that contribute to the island's evolving economic ecosystem. For example, new residents come to the island to work in existing businesses - such as working with Shorefast, bringing their unique set of skills and backgrounds to that business - or they start their own businesses. This growing diversity strengthens the social fabric, creating opportunities for cultural exchange, while also supporting local businesses and helping to sustain the island's economy.

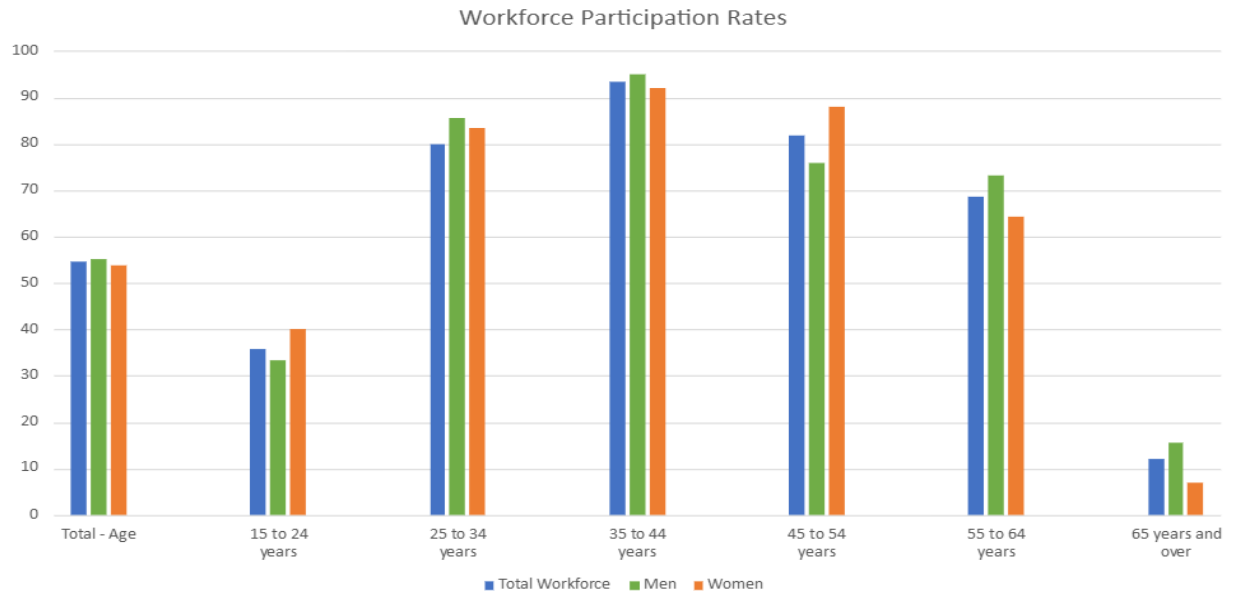
### ***Seasonal Impacts:***

The population fluctuates with seasonal workers and visitors, particularly during the summer months, as temporary residents will come for tourism-related work or to participate in the island's seasonal economy, such as working at the Fogo Island Co-op's seafood plants. This creates challenges such as imbalanced housing demand, reliance on seasonal income, and workforce shortages in the 'off-season'.

## **Labour Market Supply**

The term 'labour market' will be used to describe the general labour market, including both on- and off-island populations. The term 'workforce' will be used to reference the local labour market who live on the island and are able to work. Fogo Island's workforce is shaped by several key factors, including an aging population, seasonal employment patterns, and limited access to specialized training opportunities.





The workforce on Fogo Island, according to Stats Canada 2021, totals 1,220 people – which is a participation rate of 54.7%. The participation rate reflects the percentage of the working-age population (typically ages 15-64) that is actively participating in the labour force, meaning they are either employed or actively seeking work. The participation rate excludes people who are unable to work, due to disabilities, etc.

The population aged 55 to 64 years old have a higher percentage of workforce participation (68.6%) compared to national average (63.7%). There is also a 12.2% participation rate within people above 65 years old, indicating that people of retirement age are staying in the workforce longer than ‘normal’. It's important to note, also, that 250 people are under the age of 15 and will be entering the workforce over the next 10 years.



### **Workforce Rates**

Labour force status	Participation Rate	Employment Rate	Unemployment Rate
Total - Age	54.7%	40.8%	25.9%
15 to 24 years	35.7%	21.4%	40.0%
25 to 34 years	80.0%	75.0%	0.0%
35 to 44 years	93.3%	62.2%	35.7%
45 to 54 years	81.8%	71.2%	13.0%
55 to 64 years	68.6%	47.1%	30.0%
65 years and over	12.2%	78.0%	42.9%

According to Stats Canada 2021, for Fogo Island's population, the total employment rate for the island is 40.8% and total unemployment rate is 25.9%. The age group belonging to 35 to 44-year is constituting (93.3%) of the workforce supply, however, they are second highest in unemployment rates (35.7%). The age groups 25 to 34-year-olds (75.0%) and 45 to 54-year-olds (71.2%) have the highest **employment rates**. While the highest **unemployment rates** are as expected, with the highest being above 65 years-old (42.9%), and 24 years-old and younger (40.0%).

### **Growing Labour Dependence on Government Assistance**

Rural Newfoundland has been experiencing profound social and economic shifts in the context of various local and global events. This has influenced the growing dependence on government social support schemes including labour unemployment insurance. Historically reliant on seasonal industries such as fishing and tourism, the seasonality of these economic sectors and its inherent uncertainties have always worked as a barrier to taking part in year-long labour activities. It pushed the islanders to look upon social assistance programs, including unemployment support, to cushion from any economic shock in times of uncertainties. Recent global events such as supply chain disruptions during the COVID pandemic radically shifted the characteristics of labour markets at all levels in the political economy. This has ramifications on Fogo Island also, where these events exacerbated pre-existing fissures in the local labour market relations. Post-pandemic economic challenges intensified uncertainties, and it followed with increased dependence of communities on government assistance programs.



According to the *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers*, increasing welfare dependency is primarily attributed to the Passive Labour Market Policies (PLMPs) that are designed to provide financial assistance to individuals who are unemployed or inactive in the labour market. These policies primarily focus on income support mechanisms, such as unemployment benefits, early retirement schemes, and short-term working schemes. The main objective of PLMPs is to offer financial security to job seekers during their job search, thereby alleviating immediate economic pressures. PLMPs can have disincentive effects, as they may reduce the motivation for job seekers to actively search for employment or accept job offers.

The OECD guidance underlines the importance of promoting Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs), which aim to enhance employability and facilitate the transition into work. The balance between PLMPs and ALMPs is crucial, as effective ALMPs can help mitigate the potential negative impacts of PLMPs by encouraging job search and reducing the duration of unemployment. ALMPs include various measures such as job-search counselling, training programs, and employment incentives. They play a crucial role in connecting unemployed individuals with job opportunities, especially during economic crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, where they support the reallocation of displaced workers and help mitigate long-term unemployment. The OECD report highlights that a well-functioning organizational set-up is vital for the agility of ALMP systems to respond to changing labour market needs.

Drawing on these insights and studies, the local labour policies should envision forward-looking labour market strategies which will foster a balance between ALMP and PLMP. For that, a regulatory set-up that encompasses the legislation governing ALMPs is needed, which affects their flexibility and complexity. A more flexible regulatory environment allows for quicker adaptations to ALMPs in response to labour market changes. The OECD report discusses how the complexity of regulations can hinder the responsiveness of ALMP systems.

To achieve sustainable economic growth on Fogo Island, we need to strategically decrease reliance on government welfare—such as unemployment benefits—by fostering innovative, locally driven opportunities. This proactive approach will not only create wealth and enhance productivity but will also boost labour market participation, thereby easing fiscal pressures on assistance programs. Devising forward-looking local labour policies that promote re-skilling, agility, and the adaptive nature of labour is the need of the hour. Such a policy prescription could challenge the deepened labour on welfare schemes and a locally



perceived/normalized “fallback” culture on welfare support for survival. This will also help younger generations in the context of the island not to normalize “fallback” on welfare schemes as a coping mechanism and a strategy to alleviate economic uncertainties. Instead, it will spur new aspirations, including entrepreneurial spirit, which can potentially help diversify the island’s economy.

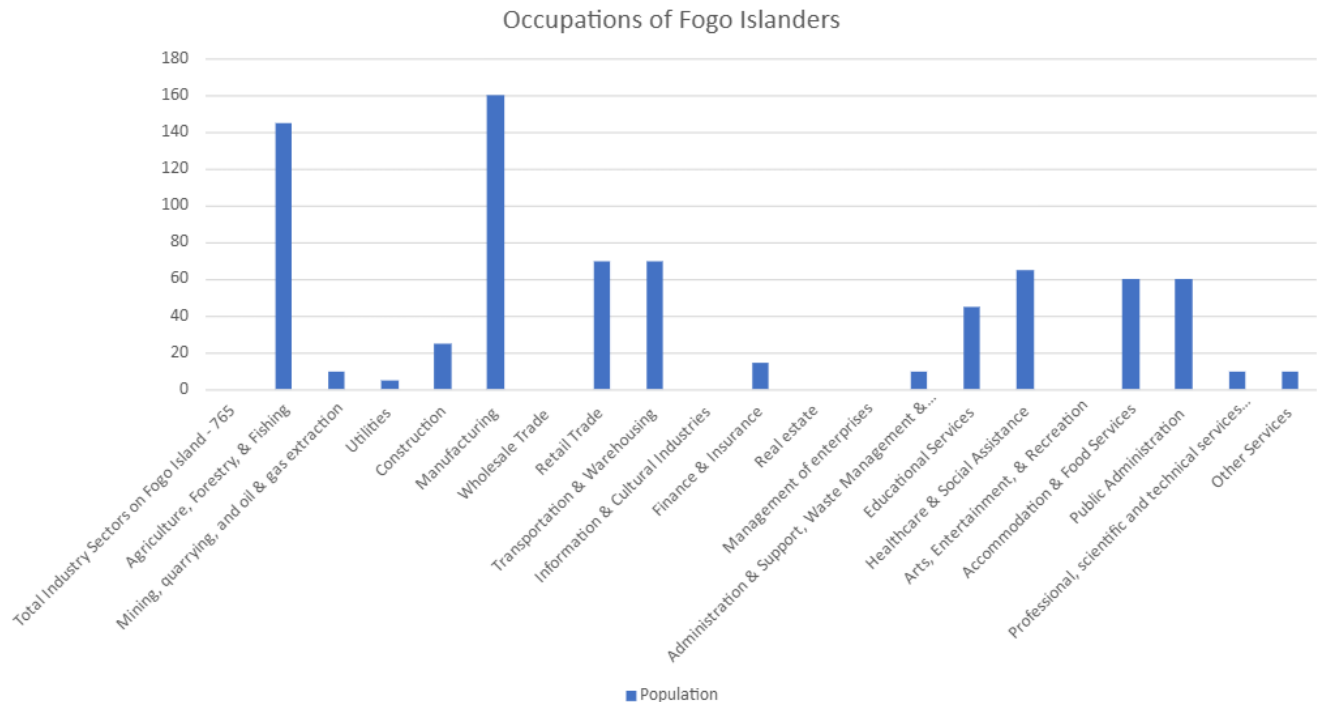
### **Workforce Skills**

For the purpose of this report, workforce skills will be identified through the current sectors of occupations and the educational field of studies of Fogo Islanders. Understanding the education levels and fields of study within the workforce is essential for assessing the existing skill base, identifying gaps in workforce qualifications, and developing strategies to align local talent with industry needs. By analyzing workforce skills through both education and employment sectors, we can gain insights into the strengths of the local labour market, the degree of specialization among workers, and the potential for skills transferability between industry sectors.

- By examining the highest level of education attained by residents, we can determine the current qualifications and training levels in the local workforce.
- Analyzing fields of study helps identify whether there is a strong presence of tradespeople, business professionals, healthcare workers, educators, or technical specialists in the community.
- If certain industries, such as healthcare, construction, or childcare, struggle to find workers, reviewing local education levels can help determine if there is a shortage of trained professionals in those fields.



## Summary of Occupations on Fogo Island



### Common Occupation Sectors

As expected, **fishing and manufacturing** (primarily production positions at the Fogo Island Co-op) are the largest sources of employment for residents, providing 350 jobs (not including administration and maintenance positions). These industries require a range of skills, including mechanical aptitude, problem-solving, teamwork, and knowledge of marine environments. Many of these skills are transferable within the broader marine-based economy, allowing for adaptability in emerging industries on Fogo Island. For example, lobster fishers could adopt seaweed harvesting, utilizing their expertise in vessel operation, sustainable harvesting practices, and ocean navigation.

**Retail, transportation, and warehousing** are also prominent industries on the island. These fields require logistical coordination, customer service, and inventory management skills, all of which can be applied across multiple sectors, including tourism and distribution industries.

Other highly engaged sectors include **healthcare and social services, public administration, and accommodations**, which are essential to maintaining the well-being and economic stability of the community. Healthcare and social services require specialized training, but also involve skills such as communication, crisis management, and



caregiving - which are valuable across multiple professions. Public administration plays a crucial role in governance and community planning, while accommodation and hospitality remain key drivers of the island's tourism economy.

It is also encouraging to see strong engagement in **construction and educational services**. Construction provides skilled trades that are critical for infrastructure development, homebuilding, and maintenance, while education supports workforce development and long-term community sustainability. Both sectors contribute to the island's economic resilience, offering local employment opportunities and reducing reliance on external contractors and educators.

### ***Less Common Occupation Sectors***

A smaller number of Fogo Island residents are employed in sectors such as **mining and oil & gas extraction, utilities, finance, administration, and professional services**. While these industries represent a smaller share of the local workforce, they contribute valuable expertise and specialized skills to the community. Workers in **mining and oil & gas extraction** typically possess technical knowledge in resource management, equipment operation, and safety protocols. These skills could be applied to other industries, such as marine resource extraction (e.g., seaweed harvesting) or renewable energy projects. Employment in **finance, administration, and professional services** provides the island with essential business management, bookkeeping, regulatory compliance, and consulting expertise. These skills are vital for supporting local businesses, non-profits, and municipal operations. Additionally, administrative and financial skills are highly transferable across industries, helping businesses improve efficiency and sustainability.

### ***Untapped Occupation Sectors***

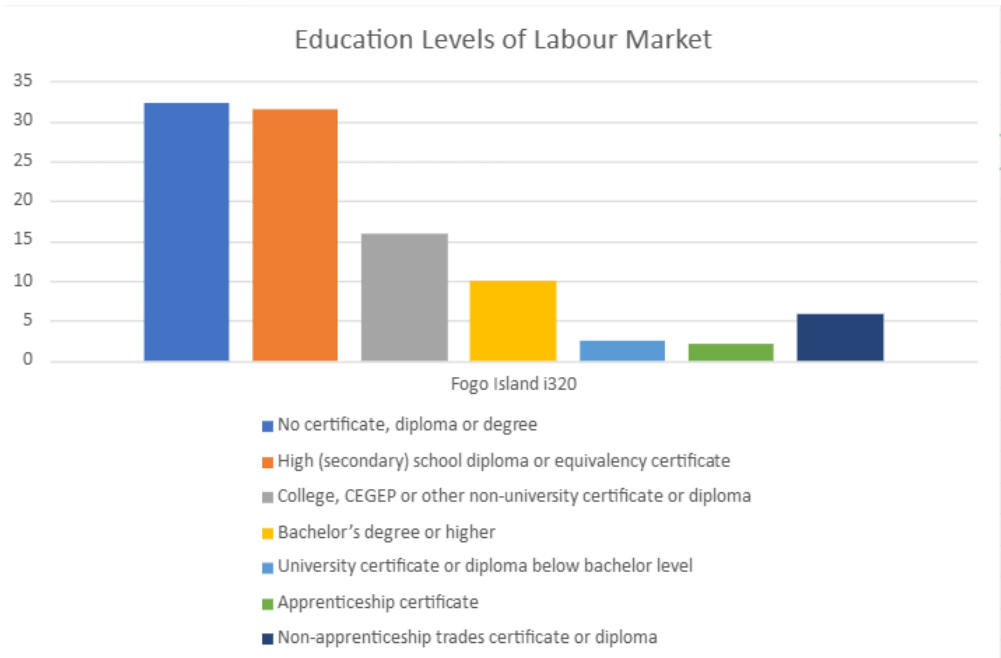
One notable untapped sector is the **wholesale trade sector**, which could create opportunities for local businesses, particularly for those in retail and warehousing, to expand into **export trade**. Given the island's strong foundation in fisheries and emerging industries like seaweed harvesting, a well-developed wholesale trade sector could improve supply chain efficiency, support local producers, and open new markets beyond the island. Workers in retail and warehousing already possess logistics, inventory management, and sales skills that could be leveraged to establish wholesale distribution networks.

Some sectors are represented inaccurately in the statistical data. For instance, the **real estate market** on Fogo Island exists but is primarily handled by off-island agents with local



connections. While this ensures that real estate services are available, it also means that much of the industry’s economic benefits, including commissions and long-term client relationships—are flowing outside the community. Developing a local real estate presence could enhance Fogo Island’s capacity to manage property sales and rentals while keeping more revenue within the local economy. Another example is the **arts, entertainment, and recreation sector**, which, while active, is **largely sustained by volunteer efforts**. Rural Newfoundland has a long-standing culture of volunteerism, particularly for initiatives that enhance residents’ quality of life. This is evident in community-led events, arts programs, and recreation activities.

### Education Levels

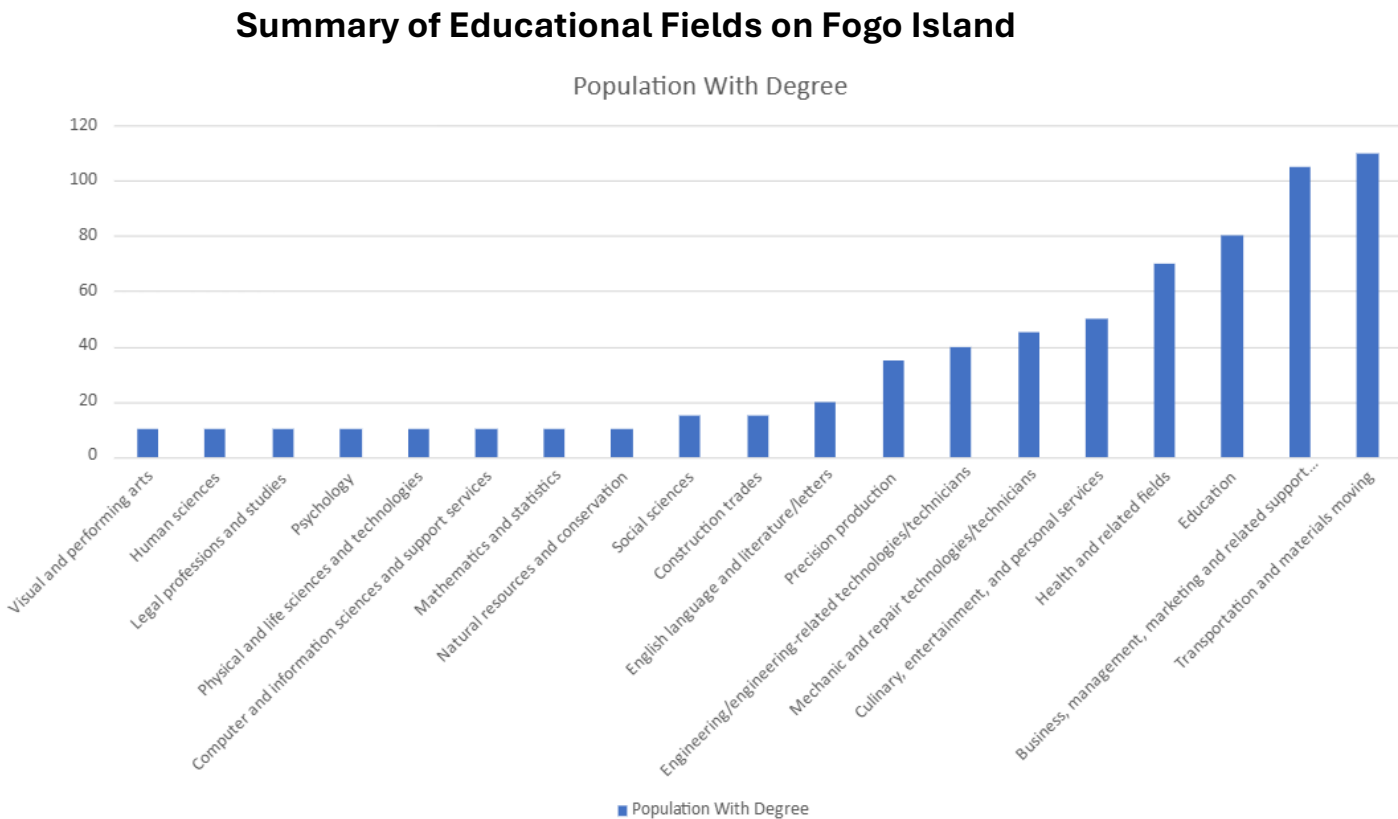


Education level and labour market outcomes are strongly correlated, with higher education generally leading to better job opportunities, higher wages, and greater job stability. Individuals with post-secondary education or specialized training tend to have higher employability rates, as many industries require advanced skills. Additionally, studies show that there’s a correlation with education level and income levels. Conversely, lower education levels are often linked to lower wages, fewer job prospects, and higher unemployment rates, highlighting the importance of education in workforce development.

According to Stats Canada 2021, 32.4% of the island’s population do not have any degree or formal education, 31.6% of the population have as high as a high school diploma, 16% have a college diploma and 9.9% have a bachelor's degree. The most common trend observed



here is the local population has an education level as far as high school and then most likely entered the workforce. This data also could show that many people who go to post-secondary institutions do not come back to the island for work.



### Most Common Fields of Study

Fogo Island’s workforce is shaped by a range of educational backgrounds, with dominant fields of study reflecting the key industries that drive the local economy. There is much alignment between the fields of study and the active occupational sectors on the island. The most dominant fields of study are **transportation & distribution, and business, management, and related fields**. These fields provide skills essential to logistics, supply chain management, and entrepreneurial ventures. Given the island’s reliance on transportation for goods and services, as well as the role of small businesses in sustaining the local economy, these areas of expertise are critical for economic stability. The knowledge gained in business and management studies is highly transferable, supporting a wide range of industries, from retail and hospitality to fisheries and administration.



The second most dominant fields of study include **education, healthcare, and culinary, entertainment, and personal services**. These sectors are essential for community well-being and quality of life. Education and healthcare provide stability through public-sector employment, while **culinary, entertainment, and personal services** contribute to tourism and local service industries. The presence of these fields of study suggests that Fogo Island has a skilled workforce capable of supporting both the social infrastructure and experience-based economic opportunities, such as expanding hospitality and wellness services.

The third most dominant fields of study are **mechanics, engineering, and precision production**, which align with industries such as construction, fisheries, and marine transportation. These technical skills are crucial for maintaining infrastructure, supporting industrial operations, and fostering innovation in emerging sectors such as renewable energy and aquaculture. Skilled trades and engineering expertise also offer strong potential for workforce adaptation, allowing for growth in both traditional and evolving industries.

### ***Less Common Fields of Study***

A small number of Fogo Island residents, roughly 10 to 15 individuals per field—have educational backgrounds in the following areas:

- **Security and Protective Services** – This includes training in law enforcement, emergency response, and fire protection. While these skills are crucial for public safety, limited opportunities on the island may lead individuals to seek employment elsewhere or in related fields such as public administration or security roles in fisheries and forestry.
- **Visual and Performing Arts** – Despite Fogo Island’s reputation for culture and creativity, formal education in the arts is relatively rare. However, the strong presence of community-led arts initiatives and volunteer-driven cultural projects suggests that many people engage in the arts informally. Expanding paid opportunities in this sector could help retain and attract talent.
- **Human Sciences** – This field includes studies related to human development, nutrition, and community services. These skills can contribute to areas such as early childhood education, social work, and wellness programs, all of which align with community needs.
- **Legal Professions and Studies** – Legal expertise is a niche but valuable asset to any community. Currently, real estate transactions and business legal matters are often handled by off-island professionals. Developing local legal expertise could benefit businesses, governance, and land management.



- **Psychology** – Mental health services are increasingly important in rural communities, yet trained professionals in psychology are limited. Expanding access to mental health support, especially for youth, seniors, and those working in high-stress industries—could address a critical gap.
- **Physical and Life Sciences and Technologies** – These studies cover biology, chemistry, and related fields, which are directly applicable to industries such as aquaculture, marine science, and environmental conservation. With Fogo Island’s growing interest in regenerative aquaculture and sustainability, individuals with these skills could play an important role in industry development.
- **Computer and Information Sciences and Support Services** – The digital economy remains underdeveloped on Fogo Island, with few local opportunities in IT, cybersecurity, or software development. However, as remote work becomes more viable, individuals with these skills could support local businesses or engage in global markets from the island.
- **Mathematics and Statistics** – Though a specialized field, math and statistical skills are highly transferable. These individuals could contribute to financial services, data analysis for fisheries and tourism, or research in emerging industries like seaweed harvesting and ocean conservation.
- **Natural Resources and Conservation** – With growing interest in sustainable fisheries, seaweed farming, and ecological preservation, expertise in this area could be valuable. Expanding conservation initiatives could create opportunities for local employment in environmental monitoring and policy development.
- **Social Sciences** – This broad field includes sociology, anthropology, and political science, all of which contribute to understanding community needs and policymaking. These skills are particularly relevant in municipal governance, heritage preservation, and tourism development.
- **Construction Trades** – While construction is already an important sector, formal education in construction trades is relatively uncommon. Strengthening this field through apprenticeships or trade certification programs could help address local housing and infrastructure needs.
- **English Language and Literature** – While not an immediately job-specific field, studies in English literature develop skills in communication, writing, and analysis. These abilities are valuable in education, media, marketing, and tourism storytelling.

While these fields are underrepresented in Fogo Island’s workforce, many of them hold the potential for economic diversification and community development. Encouraging local employment opportunities in these areas, whether through partnerships, business



development, or remote work—could help retain talent and strengthen the island’s resilience. Overall, the diversity of educational backgrounds on Fogo Island demonstrates a well-rounded skill base that supports the island’s existing industries while providing opportunities for economic expansion. By identifying ways to connect these skills to emerging sectors, encourage cross-sector mobility, and develop local workforce capacity, the island can strengthen its economic resilience and foster long-term growth.

## **Agriculture: A Vital Need for Growth**

Fogo Island has a history of family/ community driven subsistence agriculture practices. Often, it uses locally available resources such as preserved seeds and kelp or manure for fertilizer to keep these vegetable gardens going each year. These micro farms produce diverse agriculture products, which include various types of potatoes, cabbage, carrots, turnips and onion bulbs. This sector and its significance in supporting the food systems of the island, at a larger scale, is often overlooked.

Recently, there is evidence of growing interest from entrepreneurs in scaling farming production on the island. The island offers innumerable opportunities primarily stemming from tourism and local preference for organic farming and agricultural production using greenhouse operations, hydroponics, composting, circular economy-based small-scale farming, and regenerative agriculture. It demands agricultural education in supporting the growing demand for such agri products.

With increasing interest in food security, sustainable growing practices, and value-added agricultural products, having trained professionals in this field would be a game-changer. Although gardening is traditionally practiced, scaling up agriculture demands expertise in soil management, crop production, greenhouse technologies, and agribusiness operations. Addressing this gap could strengthen local food systems, reduce reliance on imported produce, and support new business ventures in local food production, specialty crops, and eco-friendly packaging solutions (such as seaweed-based compostable packaging).

### **Potential solutions to bridge gaps:**

- Encouraging local youth or entrepreneurs to pursue agricultural studies through scholarships or partnerships with agricultural colleges.
- Hosting training workshops on greenhouse growing, hydroponics, and regenerative farming methods.
- Establishing mentorship programs connecting local growers with experts from Newfoundland’s agricultural sector.



- Reaching out to potential social enterprises and organizations initiating a pilot farming production unit

## Labour Demand

Many businesses on the island face ongoing challenges in recruiting and retaining workers with the necessary skills to meet their operational and growth needs. Over the past year, numerous job postings have remained unfilled, indicating a gap between the skills available within the local workforce and the skills in demand by employers. The labour market demand is split between seasonal roles, which often require general skills but struggle with retention, and year-round positions, which require specialized expertise that is difficult to find locally. Understanding the skill shortages across different industries is essential to bridge the gap between available workers and employer needs.

### *Key Skills in Demand by Sector*

#### **1. Customer Service & Retail Skills (Seasonal Demand)**

- Industries: Retail, Hospitality, Tourism
- In-Demand Skills:
  - Point-of-sale (POS) system operation
  - Inventory management
  - Conflict resolution and customer engagement
  - Multitasking in fast-paced environments
- Businesses such as the Fogo Island Co-op and Shorefast rely on seasonal workers with strong customer service skills. However, the temporary nature of these jobs makes it difficult to attract and retain skilled workers.

#### **2. Technical & Skilled Trade Certifications (Year-Round & Seasonal Demand)**

- Industries: Fishing, Seafood Processing, Construction
- In-Demand Skills:
  - Food safety handling and quality control
  - Boat operation and marine safety training
  - Skilled trades (electrical, carpentry, plumbing)
  - Heavy equipment operation
- The seafood processing sector requires workers with food handling certifications, but these jobs are often physically demanding and seasonal. The construction sector struggles to find skilled tradespeople who are willing to stay on the island long-term.



### **3. Health & Wellness Specializations (Year-Round Demand)**

- a. Industries: Healthcare, Personal Services
- b. In-Demand Skills:
  - i. Registered massage therapy
  - ii. Nursing & personal support work
  - iii. Mental health & counseling services
  - iv. Fitness & rehabilitation training
- c. The local massage therapy clinic has expressed interest in expanding her team and has found it challenging to attract such specialized skills to the island. If she could

### **4. Early Childhood Education & Youth Development (Year-Round Demand)**

- a. Industry: Education & Childcare
- b. In-Demand Skills:
  - i. Certified Early Childhood Educators (ECEs)
  - ii. Youth programming and recreation leadership
  - iii. Special education and inclusion support
- c. Organizations like the YMCA need qualified ECEs, but without local training programs, hiring remains a challenge.

## **Labour Market Needs Assessment**

Retaining current residents and attracting new workers, particularly in specialized fields, will require addressing key challenges to ensure long-term population and economic stability. Fogo Island's remote location presents unique obstacles but also creates opportunities for innovative solutions that can strengthen the local labour market.

### ***Housing***

The availability of housing and rental properties is one of the most crucial factors in attracting a new labour force to the island. Without adequate and affordable housing, it becomes difficult to recruit workers, especially those relocating from other regions. Fogo Island has struggled with a limited housing market, characterized by:

- A lack of rental properties makes it difficult for temporary or seasonal workers to find accommodation.
- High costs of construction and infrastructure due to the challenges of building on an island.



- A preference for single-family dwellings, which limits multi-unit developments that could accommodate a larger workforce.

However, the Town of Fogo Island has secured funding for housing creation through federal programs, which will allow them to create incentive programs for housing developers. This is to encourage and help facilitate the development of multi-unit purpose-built housing, affordable housing, and accessible housing.

#### **Opportunities:**

- **Purpose-Built Housing:** The ongoing housing development initiatives provide an opportunity to create purpose-built rental units, which is designed to encourage workers to come and experience the island as residents to see if it's somewhere they want to continue to live and work.
- **Workforce Expansion:** These housing developments will require skilled tradespeople, including carpenters, electricians, plumbers, and contractors, creating new job opportunities in the construction sector.

### ***Transportation & Mobility***

The island's ferry service, while making the island unique, is the only transportation link to the mainland- often unpredictable due to weather conditions and mechanical issues, which can disrupt travel plans for workers and businesses. The Town of Fogo Island and the Provincial Government have been trying to find solutions for the ferry service to make it more reliable and less of an issue. There is no public transportation on Fogo Island, making it difficult for workers without personal vehicles to commute to job sites.

#### **Opportunities:**

- **Employer Transportation Solutions:** Businesses could offer shared transportation options for workers, such as company shuttles or ride-sharing programs, to assist employees without personal vehicles.
- **Local Transportation Initiatives:** The introduction of a community-based transport service, such as a carpool network or an on-demand shuttle, could help bridge transportation gaps.
- **Infrastructure Investment:** Strengthening advocacy efforts for more reliable ferry service could lead to improvements in scheduling, reliability, and efficiency, making Fogo Island more attractive to potential workers and businesses.



## ***Sense of Community & Quality of Life***

Fogo Island's remote location results in fewer entertainment, social, and recreational activities compared to urban centers, which can make it challenging to retain young professionals and newcomers. Limited childcare services create additional barriers for families considering relocation, as access to daycare and educational resources is essential for working parents.

However, Fogo Island has been diligent with their efforts to create a space that is still true to its rural nature while providing opportunities for planned recreational activities and entertainment. There are musical events throughout the year, which adds to the entertainment for the island. The island itself is like a recreation playground, because of all the trails and nature-based places to enjoy activities, such as boating and fishing. The YMCA and family resource center have been trying hard to fill the gaps for childcare and have plans to grow their capacity to provide these services to families.

Newcomers may also face challenges integrating into the close-knit community, particularly if they are unfamiliar with the cultural and social dynamics of rural Newfoundland.

### **Opportunities:**

- **Community Integration Programs:** Expanding cultural and social events, mentorship programs, and newcomer support groups can help ease the transition for new residents. There could also be a welcome committee who helps share information about living on-island, or the Town of Fogo Island could leverage their website to provide easily accessible information about living on the island. Providing information on how to connect with places like the Family Resource Centre or recreational groups.
- **Investment in Recreation and Arts:** By enhancing recreational facilities, expanding community programming, and promoting local arts and culture, Fogo Island can offer a richer quality of life that makes it a desirable place to live and work.
- **Childcare Expansion:** Encouraging new childcare facilities or incentives for home-based childcare providers could make Fogo Island more attractive for young families.

## ***Communications & Digital Literacy***

Rural Newfoundland, including Fogo Island, faces issues with **slow internet speeds and inconsistent connectivity**, making it difficult for businesses, students, and remote workers



who rely on digital operations. Limited broadband infrastructure has historically restricted access to opportunities such as remote employment, e-commerce, online education, and telehealth services.

Digital literacy is almost necessary for remote living because it's how most communications are shared, and how many services are accessed- which is a concern to the older populations. Digital literacy remains a barrier for some populations, which can create friction when a younger workforce moves into a business that struggles with digital literacy and modern business operating practices.

#### **Opportunities:**

- **High-Speed Internet** is available through Starlink, which is designed for remote areas to have access to fast and reliable internet connection. There is also new fiber-optic internet infrastructure being installed on the island, which is planned to be available in 2026. This can increase the attraction of people to the island and opens new population groups to advertise to.
- **Attracting Remote Workers:** With reliable internet, Fogo Island could position itself as a remote work destination (Workcation), appealing to companies and professionals who are trying productivity improvement through a relaxing tentative high-quality close to nature lifestyle. These remote workers could include those who identify as “digital nomads” or “online entrepreneurs” who want to work online and live life how they want.
- **Digital Literacy Training:** Offering digital skills workshops could improve workforce adaptability and encourage local businesses to modernize operations.

### ***People with Disabilities***

Limited accessibility in public spaces and workplaces may create barriers for workers with disabilities (such as hearing challenges, mobility challenges, mental health challenges, etc.), potentially encouraging them to relocate off island- or discourage new people to move here. Additionally, the lack of specialized healthcare and support services can make it difficult for individuals with disabilities to access the care and resources they need for daily living and employment.

#### **Opportunities:**

- **Accessible Infrastructure Development:** Future development projects should prioritize accessibility to ensure inclusivity in housing, workplaces, and public spaces.



- **Telehealth Services Expansion:** Increasing access to virtual healthcare services could improve support for individuals with disabilities and other medical needs.
- **Employment Programs:** Leverage employment programs to gain additional resources for your employees with disabilities. There are government programs available to support the hiring and retention of these employees.

While Fogo Island’s remoteness presents unique labour market challenges, these obstacles also create opportunities for strategic investments in housing, transportation, community engagement, digital infrastructure, and accessibility. By addressing these key areas, the island can build a more resilient workforce and attract skilled professionals who will contribute to its long-term sustainability.

## **Recommendations for Labour Market Development Strategies**

Addressing Fogo Island’s workforce challenges requires a proactive approach that strengthens the local talent pool, enhances skill development, and attracts new workers to fill critical labour gaps. The following strategies offer a framework for improving labour market conditions and supporting the long-term sustainability of businesses on the island.

### **Targeted Training Programs**

Partnering with local and regional educational institutions can help bridge the gap between workforce supply and industry demand by providing accessible certification and skills development programs. Key initiatives could include:

- Collaborating with colleges and training providers to offer on-island courses for in-demand fields such as early childhood education, healthcare support, skilled trades, and food safety handling.
- Expanding online learning opportunities for certifications in business administration, digital marketing, or bookkeeping to support small business growth.
- Establishing industry-led apprenticeships or mentorship programs that allow workers to gain hands-on experience while earning necessary credentials.



## Upskilling & Professional Development

Investing in the skill development of existing workers can help address labour shortages by equipping them with the qualifications needed to take on more specialized roles. Strategies include:

- Providing tuition subsidies or employer-sponsored training for workers interested in pursuing certification in areas such as massage therapy, youth recreation, or marine safety.
- Encouraging cross-training among businesses, allowing workers to develop multiple skill sets that make them more adaptable to seasonal shifts in employment.
- Offering digital literacy programs to help workers build technology skills for jobs that require remote work capabilities or online customer service.

## Workforce Attraction & Retention Strategies

To fill gaps in skilled labour, efforts must be made to attract new workers while also retaining those already on the island. Recommended strategies include:

- **Housing Incentives:** Encouraging the development of affordable housing and rental options to make relocation more viable for skilled professionals.
- **Relocation Assistance:** Providing financial support for moving expenses or signing bonuses for workers relocating to the island for specialized positions.
- **Community Integration Programs:** Creating networking events, newcomer mentorship programs, and local engagement initiatives to help new workers establish roots and remain on Fogo Island.
- **Competitive Wages & Benefits:** Encouraging businesses to explore wage subsidies, flexible work arrangements, and employee benefits to attract and retain skilled professionals.
- **Marketing Fogo Island as an Attractive Place to Live:**
  - Developing a strategic marketing campaign that highlights Fogo Island's quality of life, natural beauty, strong community, and work-life balance to appeal to skilled professionals seeking a change from urban environments.
  - Promoting success stories of individuals who have relocated to the island and thrived in their careers.



- Collaborating with real estate agents, local businesses, and community groups to showcase available job opportunities alongside housing options and lifestyle benefits.
- Using social media, digital advertising, and partnerships with regional economic development organizations to increase awareness of Fogo Island as a great place to live and work.

A combination of local training opportunities, professional development programs, and workforce attraction strategies will be key to addressing Fogo Island's labour shortages. By investing in skill-building and promoting the island as an attractive place to live, businesses will be better equipped to meet their staffing needs, and the island's economy can grow in a sustainable way.