

## **Factors that Impact the Retention of International Students in Peterborough**

Includes:

Final Report

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## **1. Abstract**

The internationalization of higher education has spurred a significant influx of international students seeking academic credentials as a pathway to a future in Canada, Trent University, Peterborough ON, is no exception. However, despite the promise of a brighter tomorrow, numerous students encounter unforeseen obstacles. This research project aims to delve into the intricate challenges contributing to the departure of international students upon completing their studies at Trent University, Peterborough.

Employing a mixed-methods approach, the project began with an extensive literature review, utilizing Adam Call's research conducted in 2019/2020 as the framework to examine factors influencing international students' departure from Peterborough. Subsequently, data was gathered through surveys and semi-structured interviews with current international students and alumni. This provided substantial primary data to probe the socio-economic and cultural influences shaping their decision to stay or leave Peterborough. The qualitative data collection offers nuanced insights into the firsthand experiences of international students, shedding light on the factors impeding their retention in Peterborough.

The research findings are anticipated to provide valuable insights to Trent University and regional authorities, facilitating a deeper understanding of international students' needs. By grasping these needs, the project aims to devise support mechanisms and strategic interventions to enhance retention strategies, fostering a more inclusive environment for international students throughout their tenure at Trent University and beyond.

## **2. Acknowledgements**

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### **3. Executive Summary**

The retention of international students upon graduation in their province of study poses a significant challenge for small cities like Peterborough. Despite the need to retain skilled and diverse labour, many students leave Peterborough once they graduate from Trent University. This research project aims to understand the factors behind international students' reasoning for leaving Peterborough to inform the development of viable solutions, support, and interventions directed at the needs of international students in Peterborough. Building upon Adam Call's report, which primarily focused on the economic impact of international students in Peterborough, our project looked further into the factors and challenges faced by these students, including employment, housing, socio-cultural dynamics, and academic experiences, all of which influence their choice to depart.

Our methodology commences with an extensive literature review to discern patterns and comprehend the issues encountered by international students both nationally and within the local context. Subsequently, we conducted quantitative and qualitative research through surveys and semi-structured interviews, inviting current students and alumni of Trent University to articulate their challenges during their time at Trent and post-graduation, thus shaping their decision to leave Peterborough. The qualitative data gleaned from interviews provides rich narratives and perspectives, illuminating the lived experiences of individuals in Peterborough, while the survey generates statistical data representing the challenges faced by international students.

Overall, our research project aims to enhance support systems for international students before and after graduation from Trent University, creating greater opportunities for them within Peterborough. Furthermore, our research aspires to inform Trent University, regional authorities, and the Workforce Development Board in developing resources tailored to the specific needs of international students during their tenure at Trent and beyond graduation.

#### **4. Introduction**

*“It’s unacceptable that some private institutions have taken advantage of international students by operating under-resourced campuses, lacking supports for students, and charging high tuition fees, all the while significantly increasing their intake of international students”*. These are the words of Marc Miller, Canada’s immigration minister. In brief, Canada's acceptance of a large number of international students has outpaced the development of necessary structural infrastructure to ensure their smooth transition into the country. Trent University, Peterborough is no exception to this phenomenon. The landscape of international education in Canada is rapidly evolving, with a staggering 1,040,985 international students enrolled in the country by the close of 2023 (The Canadian Bureau of International Education). Among the myriad institutions attracting international students, Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario stands out to students due to its competitive tuition fees and friendly credit transfer policies. However, the expectations that international students hope for in Peterborough have not transpired in their academic and post-academic lives as they grapple with a multitude of issues while trying to adapt to Peterborough’s systems.

This report aims to understand the structural barriers faced by international students in Peterborough before and after graduating from Trent University. It also aims to provide strategic interventions to Trent University, regional authorities, and the Workforce Development Board to address the specific needs of international students. Therefore, this report will be structured as follows. This report begins with a comprehensive literature review that uses Adam Call's work as a framework to understand the factors and forces which shape the 2800 (20% of total Trent enrollment) international students’ decisions as to whether they stay or leave Peterborough before

and after graduating from Trent University. The literature review also examines the work of Dale McCartney (2021) to understand the history of international students in Canada. This section particularly focuses on how international students became integrated into the Canadian education system over three important periods from 1970- 2014, essentially branding them as profit ventures rather than students.

Next, this report introduces the results of our first data collection method, an email survey to identify the demographic characteristics and understand trends of the factors that push international students out of Peterborough. The survey also identified the reasons that made Peterborough attractive to stay in after graduation. The survey offers statistical analysis based on the students' rich perspectives that culminate in their lived experiences while studying in Peterborough and after graduating from Trent. The survey is organized around several key aspects relevant to the socio-cultural environment of Peterborough and Trent, including economic conditions such as housing and the local labour market, transportation accessibility to and from Peterborough, as well as the extent of support international students receive in both Peterborough and Trent. This support encompasses various areas such as academics, immigration matters, employment opportunities, and accommodations.

Following this, we review the findings from interviews conducted closely following the survey questions, allowing for a deeper understanding of the specific barriers and experiences faced by international students. The interviews highlight the interconnected nature of the factors and the influence of personal circumstances on their decision. Namely, though we find employment as the main reason to stay or leave, community connections play a huge role in shaping individuals' perceptions of the labour market. Additionally, the weight attributed to sociocultural factors varied depending on personal circumstances, for instance, economic

background and job flexibility. The interviews also helped inform our recommendations through the input of current students and alumni. Primarily, we found that students required more support to navigate, as well as obtain employment and housing in Peterborough. However, there was also a perceived lack of responsibility on the part of Trent, one which we hope our report will help address.

## **5. Research Questions and Methodology**

### **Research Questions:**

#### *Core Question:*

1. What are the factors which contribute to the decision of international students to stay or leave Peterborough after graduating from Trent?

#### *Subsequent Questions:*

1. What factors will inform the decision of current Trent international students to stay or leave Peterborough post-graduation?
2. What factors contributed to the decision of Trent international Alumni to stay or leave Peterborough?

### **Methodology:**

1. **Literature review:** To establish a robust foundation, we conducted a comprehensive literature review of pertinent academic literature. The structure of our literature review was based on Adam Call's report in 2020. This literature review served to identify key factors impacting international students' residency decisions in smaller cities like Peterborough.
2. **Qualtrics Survey:** The second component involved a Qualtrics electronic survey questionnaire targeted at both current Trent international students and Trent international alumni. This survey focused on elucidating factors that currently influence or have previously influenced their intentions to either remain in or depart from Peterborough. To ensure a representative sample, we obtained email contact details from Trent University's registry, thereby facilitating the compilation of a comprehensive list of survey participants.

3. **Semi-Structured Interviews:** Complementing the quantitative data, we conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with a subset of current and former students. These interviews were designed to provide nuanced insights into the multifaceted aspects influencing their decisions, encompassing economic considerations, cultural experiences, academic factors, and available support systems within the Peterborough community.
  
4. **Data Analysis and Coding:** The fourth component of our methodology consisted of rigorous data analysis and coding to provide substantial information about the findings gathered from our surveys and semi-structured interviews. Through rigorous scrutiny of survey responses and interview transcripts, we extracted meaningful patterns and themes to understand the factors influencing International students' decisions.

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## **6. Literature Review**

This literature research paper aims to establish and understand the dominant forces shaping international students' decisions as they navigate whether to stay or leave the Peterborough area upon graduation from Trent University. This research builds upon a study conducted by Adam Call in 2019/2020, which focused on both the economic impact of international students on Peterborough's economy and the factors that influenced the students' decision regarding where to live post-graduation.

### **6.1 Context**

International student mobility has become an important topic in the global higher education landscape. Students transcend national borders into foreign cultural environments for an opportunity to acquire a 'prestigious' foreign degree. One of the most popular global destinations for obtaining a higher degree is Canada.

Since the late 20th Century, international students have been seen as the ideal source of skilled immigrants and consumers to replace Canada's ageing labour force (Colyar et al., 2023). As a result, the federal and provincial governments of Canada have implemented a series of immigration policies such as Post Graduate Work Permits, Permanent Residency, and Citizenship to facilitate their integration into Canada. However, international students are often seen as cash cows for the Canadian economy, contributing to \$22.3B annually and concentrated in Ontario with around 412,000 students contributing \$12.3B (Colyar et al., 2023). As larger Ontario cities become more densely populated, international students more frequently choose smaller cities such as Peterborough, Kingston, and Hamilton. Thus, beyond understanding why international students stay or leave Peterborough, we also aim to highlight the sociocultural challenges they face resulting from the commodification of international education in Canada.

### *6.1.1 The Economic Context*

The economic gains that Trent international students provide the city of Peterborough formed the basis of Call's survey. Economic considerations remain relevant to our research as they are the driving force behind government policies concerning international enrollment. Primarily, we focus on the ways international students have been reduced to consumer statistics and the impact this has on their wellbeing and quality of life. This narrowed view on economic growth often neglects the personal experiences of individual students and their sociocultural circumstances (Chen & Smith, 2020).

### *6.1.2 The History of International Students in Canada*

The first period of internationalized enrollment occurred from 1970 to 1985 with the emergence of differential fees. This led to a large influx of international students while keeping support services as low as possible (Canadian Bureau for International Education, 1977). Despite rising numbers, discussions of easing the transitions for international students in Canada only started to emerge in the 1980s. However, these discussions were nominal, and the attitudes towards international students can be described as patronizing, neglecting the voices of international students (Jordan, 1982; McBlane, 1984).

Nevertheless, during this period, a national consensus built around international students started unfolding, and key developments from this period led to the internationalization policies of postsecondary institutions in Canada. Such policies classified international students as migrants, ultimately grouping them into a category undeserving of taxpayer funds. Moreover, due to funding cuts by provincial governments across Canada, the proposition of differential tuition fees between international and domestic students arose (McCartney, 2016). International students were

categorized as wealthy immigrants, providing justification to triple their tuition fees while simultaneously limiting their rights and mobility in Canada.

In the mid-1980s institutions saw differential fees as an opportunity to close fiscal deficits through increasing international tuition revenues; thus, the number one priority during the late 1980s and 1990s was recruiting international students (McCartney, 2021). In Ontario, the government deregulated international student tuition (1984), an economic policy to encourage post-secondary institutions to counter fiscal pressures by internationalizing enrollment (McCartney, 2016). For example, institutions such as Seneca, Laurier, and the University of Toronto quickly began enrollment plans for international recruitment – in 1984 alone, the University of Toronto gained \$6.6m from international students” (The Ad Hoc International Education Strategy Committee).

In the early 2000s, providing education to international students became a critical export industry in Canada, and subsequently, the federal government began strategizing supportive policies to internationalize these institutions' enrollment (McCartney, 2021). Recruiting international students became a national interest and priority for Canada. The federal government enacted, expanded and amplified the strategic plans set out by provincial governments to foster a mass influx of international students (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2001). The federal government's involvement vastly changed the landscape of immigration policies for international students.

Unrestricted international tuition fees relieved the government of a financial burden, allowing them to cut postsecondary education subsidies, and shift the cost onto international students. Consequently, the internationalization of enrollment is widely unregulated, allowing institutions to create new college pathway programs for international students who are deficient in

language and academic credentials (Rahilly & Hudson, 2018). By 2018 the “pathway disease” spread rapidly across Canada, with at least 72% of universities and colleges in Canada having at least one pathway program. These pathways were strictly profit-oriented (McCartney & Metcalfe, 2018) and led to an explosion in international student enrollment without the proper supports to accommodate them (Samuel & Burney, 2003).

As The National Report of Canada (2012) declared, international education has become the most important Canadian export ‘product’, more so than the export of Raw aluminum, fertilizers, and machinery exports (airplanes and helicopters). Since the federal government released its education strategy, a document which speaks to international education in purely economic terms, international enrollment has increased at unprecedented rates (Colyar, J., Pichette, J., & Deakin, 2023). For context, between 2012 and 2021 Ontario institutions have increased international enrolment by 342% (Colyar, J., Pichette, J., & Deakin, 2023).

These mass increases have not been with the proper provision of supports and services by educational institutions or the government. Consequently, international students struggle to obtain safe and affordable housing, suitable employment, and health care (El Masri & Khan, 2022). Landlords often exploit international students, charging inflated security and rental deposits while grouping them in illegal and overcrowded housing (CBIE, 2018). Moreover, physicians at Durham College and Ontario Tech University found that around 70% of students from India have never had a physical examination and confessed to depression and mental health issues (Apna Health, 2021). Viewing international students in purely economic terms has led to neglect for and a decline in, their quality of life.

## 6.2 What Brings Students to Canada and What Motivates Them to Stay

Canadian immigration policies allow international students to obtain a Post Graduate Work Permit, allowing students who graduate to remain in Canada and work for a period ranging from 1 to 3 years. Once their Post-Graduate Work Permit expires, students are eligible to apply for Permanent Residency and, subsequently, citizenship. The top two factors for choosing Canada are the quality of education and the career opportunities a Canadian degree permits (Call, 2020). Similarly, students who stayed in Peterborough after graduation remained due to a higher quality of life and job opportunities (Call, 2020). The most important factor for student retention, mentioned by 90% of respondents, was employment opportunities (Call, 2020).

## 6.3 Social and Cultural Integration

A key factor identified in the literature on international students' residential decisions post-graduation concerned social and cultural integration. A widely recognized issue among international students was the cultural barriers they faced while studying abroad (Arthur & Flynn, 2011, 8). Baruch et al. (2007) found that the degree to which an individual's values, beliefs and norms match, or are able to merge with, those of the host society contributes to the formation of their internal sentiments towards it. The initial experiences of a student and the degree of support they receive upon arrival will heavily shape their views and sentiments toward the location. The adaptation period upon arrival and the support received to ease the initial culture shock will thus influence new students' perception of the community, their attitudes, and their satisfaction with the area (Baruch et al., 2007, 3). In this early stage, the University's involvement in providing students with a welcoming environment is essential for their social integration, primarily by introducing newcomers to support groups, systems, and outside organizations (Baruch et al., 2007, 3).

Recurrent across the literature was an emphasis on the importance of services available to international students to support them through the social, economic and legal processes of migration. Consistent in the research was a call by international students for campus services targeting their specified needs and additional support for navigating obstacles. Although Peterborough, specifically Trent, offers various support systems and services for international students, they fall short in their absence of hands-on engagement with the students, such as workshops and seminars. The Trent International webpage includes various PowerPoint presentations covering topics such as transitioning to the new environment, employment search, networking, and housing (Trent International). Despite supplying students with in-depth coverage of the topics, the slides are composed primarily of both information and external websites, failing to incorporate any interactive material. Similarly, Call (2020) critiques the New Canadian Center's (2022) attempt to “support and integrate” incoming students by directing them to supplementary support groups and services without providing any direct or practical support. Moreover, he found the resources provided by the NCC to be confusing, difficult to navigate, and most often not recognized by the groups they aim to serve (Call, 2020, 20).

Moreover, the University’s initial and ongoing efforts to connect international students with the community, within and outside the University, were widely identified across the literature as being of chief importance. Lu et al. (2009) found that strong intimate relationships in the destination country work as a pull factor in the decision to stay or leave. The significance of personal networks is reflected in Call’s (2020) survey, wherein the majority of students who answered “maybe” to staying in Peterborough post-graduation simultaneously ranked the most compelling reason to stay as their personal relationships to the area.

While the emotional influences in the decision to stay or leave are closely tied to the student's experience at the University – enjoyment of studies, sense of community, connections to and attitudes of peers and professors (Baruch et al., 2007, 3) – other key determinants relate to the accessibility to goods and services within the city of residency and the extent that they are able to integrate into the city's environment. Call's (2020) survey provides an extensive list of goods and services that international students reported leaving Peterborough to acquire; specifically, students frequently left town for cultural foods, religious institutions, clothing, and entertainment.

#### 6.4 Housing

The rapid rate of international and domestic student enrolment in Trent has caused a housing crisis (Timmermans, 2023). Students often fail to find safe and affordable housing accommodations near their campuses, resulting in a majority of international students commuting from neighbouring cities such as Bowmanville, Oshawa, and Kingston. Peterborough's rental and housing market is facing severe shortage for affordable and safe houses. This follows Call's (2020) research wherein housing was ranked in the top three accommodations students left town for, suggesting that a substantial proportion of students were unable to secure appropriate housing in Peterborough.

According to the empirical data by Timmermans (2023), international students face implicit and explicit discrimination, such as the denial of housing based on immigration status and race by landlords when searching for accommodations. Often, international students in Ontario live in illegal, overcrowded housing and pay exorbitant rental prices (Masri, 2022). Call's (2020) findings spotlighted that rent was the highest monthly expense for an international student, ranging anywhere from 600 to 1200 and accounting for 43% of their expenditure. As rent prices keep rising in Peterborough, international students face an opportunity cost where they sacrifice on other expenses such as food, causing food insecurity (Timmermans, 2023). Furthermore, according to

the Peterborough Examiner (2022), the vacancy rate remains at 1.1%, and the average monthly cost of housing for a 1-bedroom apartment in Peterborough ranges between 1100-1600 CAD (Peterborough Examiner, 2022). Given their unfamiliarity with the Canadian housing system, international students are more likely to experience severe exploitation and precarious living conditions.

### 6.5 Perceived Opportunities and Employability

By and large, the perception held by international students towards the labour market of a given area, along with the perceived opportunities within it, were primary determinants in deciding where to reside post-graduation. Upon graduation, if students choose to remain in Canada and gain permanent residency status, they must obtain a work permit and gain 1560 hours of “qualified work experience” in managerial, professional or skilled trades (New Canadians Center, 2021). Call (2020) highlights the perceived stress international students feel towards applying for permanent residency and the strain this poses on their decision to stay or leave Peterborough post-graduation. The internal perceptions of students towards the labour market, employer attitudes, and the opportunities available to them in their particular field of study are thus critical determinants in their decision. As Soon (2012) observes, work-related perceptions include employability, wage competition, work environment, and advancement opportunities. In the context of Peterborough, the job market was cited as an unwelcoming community for international students (Call, 2020).

## **7. Survey Findings**

### **7.1 Structure of Survey:**

The survey was divided into four formats for current students and alumni based on students' intentions upon or before graduation from Trent University. The survey was divided into eight surveys ( four alumni, and four current students) and was structured as follows: Intending to Stay in Peterborough, Never Lived in Peterborough, Intending to Leave Peterborough, and Left Peterborough. For data analysis purposes, the survey results were segregated into two main sections: 1) Students intending to stay in Peterborough and 2) Students who have left or are intending to leave Peterborough. Furthermore, to facilitate analysis, the data presented in the following tables are extracted from two of the eight surveys.

### **7.2 Demographics:**

The survey encompassed a cohort of 40 students, out of which 31 were current students and 9 were alumni. The student list was gathered from Trent International and the survey was distributed via email to the listed individuals. The age of the survey respondents ranged from 19 to 31, with around 62% of respondents aged 23 and under. (anonymous due to Qualtrics settings) In terms of gender distribution, the majority of respondents identified as female, accounting for 57% of the total, while the remaining 43% identified as male. Regarding country of origin, India emerged as the most prevalent, with 35% of respondents hailing from there, followed by Abu Dhabi at 12%. China, Mexico, and Bangladesh shared the third spot in terms of representation.

**Table 1- respondents country of origin**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Tally</b>
India	14
Abu Dhabi	5
China	2
Mexico	2
Bangladesh	2
Nepal	1
Iran	1
Bolivia	1
South Sudan	1
Malaysia	1
Sri Lanka	1
Ethiopia	1
Ecuador	1
Zimbabwe	1
Nigeria	1
Venezuela	1
Iraq	1

As previously indicated, table 1 delineates the countries of origin or citizenship of the survey respondents. Directly below, the subsequent table illustrates the academic programs selected by participants during their tenure at Trent University. Notably, forensic science emerged as the primary program of choice among respondents, followed by computer science

and business administration majors. Meanwhile, biology and psychology programs constituted the third most commonly selected academic pathways among the surveyed individuals.

Table 2 - respondents' program of study

Major (Bachelor)	Tally
Business administration	5
Forensic Science and Psychology	4
Biology	3
Psychology	3
Nursing	2
Forensic Science and Biology	2
Finance	2
Computer science	2
International Development studies	2
HR and Marketing Entrepreneurship	1
Teaching as a Foreign Language	1
Computer	1
Chemistry and Forensic Science	1
Forensic Science and Sociology	1
Accounting	1
Information systems	1
Computer Science and Economics	1
Social Work	1
Biochemistry	1
Sociology	1
Applied modelling and quantitative methods	1

### 7.3 Students' Attitudes Towards Peterborough:

The initial section of our survey comprised a series of ice-breaker questions, inquiring whether students resided in Peterborough, their familial status, marital situation, and their post-graduation intentions regarding remaining in the Peterborough area. The table below delineates the residential locations of students, with 82% of respondents indicating Peterborough as their current residence, while seven students/alumni (18%) have opted to reside elsewhere, reasons for which will be elaborated upon shortly.

**Table 3- Students residing in Peterborough**

<b>Yes</b>	32
<b>No</b>	7

**Table 4- Students intending to remain in Peterborough Post-Graduation**

<b>Yes</b>	11
<b>No</b>	27

The table presented above sheds light on the post-graduation intentions of international students regarding residency in Peterborough. A substantial 68% of respondents expressed their intention to depart from Peterborough upon completing their studies at Trent, while only 28% indicated a desire to remain in the city.

### 7.4 Students Intending to Stay or Stayed in Peterborough

Among the 40 respondents, 9 individuals (comprising 2 alumni and 7 current students) either remained in Peterborough or expressed intentions to do so. Students were tasked with rating the significance of various social factors on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning not important and 5 being very important. The factors students were asked to rate in their decision to remain in

Peterborough included feelings of belonging, the sense of community within Peterborough, the sense of community at Trent University, family networks, and feelings of welcome, among others.

7.4.1 Social factors:

**Table 5- Importance of Social Factors**

	Average	Minimum	Maximum
Feeling of belonging	4.0	2.0	5.0
Feeling welcome	4.0	3.0	5.0
Sense of community in Peterborough	4.5	4.0	5.0
Sense of community at Trent	4.0	3.0	5.0
Adequate entertainment/recreational activities	5.0	5.0	5.0
Family networks	3.67	1.0	5.0
Easy to make new friends	4.5	4.0	5.0
Language	1.0	1.0	1.0
Similar customs	2.50	1.0	4.0

Table 5 highlights students’ positive attitudes towards the community at Trent and Peterborough. On average, students perceive both communities as welcoming, which serves as a reason for their intention to remain in Peterborough upon graduation from Trent, fueled by their positive experiences as students. Specifically, the sense of community in Peterborough and at Trent

garnered ratings of 4.5 and 4.0, respectively, while the feeling of welcome in Peterborough received a rating of 4.0.

#### 7.4.2 Employment:

**Table 6 - importance of employment**

	Average	Minimum	Maximum
Availability of jobs overall	4.33	3.0	5.0
Availability of jobs in desired fields	4.67	4.0	5.0
Prospects for career growth and advancements	4.00	2.0	5.0
Competitive pay	5.00	5.0	5.0
Networking opportunities	4.33	3.0	5.0
Feeling welcome by employers	5.00	5.0	5.0
Feeling welcome by co-workers	3.33	1.0	5.0

Despite the positive sentiments students harbour toward both the Peterborough and Trent communities, the table above indicates that employment played a pivotal role in their decision to stay in Peterborough. Students were asked to rate factors related to employment on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being the most important and 5, being the least important.

Students were asked to rank the three most significant factors influencing their decision to stay in Peterborough in Table 7. In the designated boxes below, they assigned a numerical ranking, with 1 indicating the most important factor. Social factors such as a sense of belonging and the community atmosphere at Trent University or in Peterborough emerged as the predominant reasons for their decision to remain in the city.

**Table 7 - Ranking of all factors**

	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Social Factors</b>	2				
<b>Cultural factors</b>		2			
<b>Housing-related factors</b>				1	
<b>Supports and services from Trent</b>	1				
<b>Supports and services from Peterborough</b>		1	1		
<b>Others:</b>	1		1		

*7.4.3 Housing:*

**Table 8- Housing factors**

	<b>Average</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>
<b>Costs</b>	5.0	5.0	5.0
<b>Quality</b>	3.0	1.0	5.0
<b>Distance to Universities or amenities</b>	5.0	5.0	5.0
<b>Feeling welcome by landlords or other tenants</b>	4.5	4.0	5.0
<b>Accessibility (Price, locations, availability, acceptance by landlords)</b>	<b>5.0</b>	5.0	5.0

The table above illustrates the ratings of housing-related factors provided by students who have chosen to stay or are intending to stay in Peterborough. It is evident from the table that factors such as the distance to the university and the cost of housing are of significant importance for these students, even if it means compromising on housing quality. Amidst the housing shortage, finding suitable accommodation emerges as a crucial consideration. Additionally, housing located in close

proximity to Trent University is regarded as particularly favourable, as evidenced by the top rating of 5.0 for accessibility and distance to the university.

#### 7.4.4 Other factors:

The survey consisted of additional questions about their decision to remain in Peterborough such as cultural factors and transportation-related considerations. Students were asked to rank transportation and cultural factors on a scale of 1-5, and 5 being very important and 1 not at all. The tables below display the data on how students ranked transportation and cultural factors when considering residing in Peterborough.

**Table 9- Cultural factors**

	Average	Minimum	Maximum
<b>Culturally-appropriate restaurants</b>	1.50	1.0	2.0
<b>Culturally - appropriate foods</b>	1.50	1.0	2.0
<b>Places of worship</b>	1.0	1.0	2.0
<b>Cultural groups and organizations</b>	1.0	1.0	2.0

As observed in Table 9, cultural factors such as culturally appropriate foods, restaurants, places of worship, and cultural groups and organizations, did not emerge as significant considerations in students' decisions to remain in Peterborough, as all these factors were rated below 2.

**Tables 10 & 11 - Transportation**

Within Peterborough	Average	Minimum	Maximum
Bus routes	5.0	5.0	5.0
The frequency that buses ran	5.0	5.0	5.0
Reliability of busses	5.0	5.0	5.0
Accuracy of busses	4.33	3.0	5.0

From Ptbo to GTA	Average	Minimum	Maximum
Accessibility to transportation to leave the city	4.33	4.0	5.0
Affordability of transportation to leave the city	3.67	2.0	5.0
Ease of transportation to leave the city	4.67	4.0	5.0

Overall, the transportation systems within Peterborough and the connections from Peterborough to other cities received relatively high ratings. Both alumni and current students consistently rated each transportation factor above 4 on average.

### 7.5 Students Intending to Leave/Left Peterborough

33 out of 40 respondents either left Peterborough or intended to leave Peterborough. The following tables present the results gathered from the 33 respondents.

### 7.5.1 Employment:

**Table 12 - Importance of employment**

	<b>Average</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>
<b>Lack of availability of jobs overall</b>	<b>4.53</b>	2.0	5.0
<b>Lack of availability of jobs in desired fields</b>	<b>4.53</b>	2.0	5.0
<b>Lack of prospects for career growth and advancements</b>	<b>4.73</b>	2.0	5.0
<b>Lack of Competitive pay</b>	3.87	1.0	4.0
<b>Lack of networking opportunities</b>	3.87	2.0	4.0
<b>Feeling unwelcome by employers</b>	2.63	1.0	4.0
<b>Feeling unwelcome by co-workers</b>	2.0	1.0	4.0

Students were asked to rate employment-related factors on a scale of 1 being the most important and 5, being the least important. The factors students were asked to rate were (1) available jobs, (2) jobs in desired fields,(3) jobs that lead to career advancement,(4) discrimination 5) networking and, (6) pay. Table 12 highlights how the labour market influences the students' decisions to either stay in or leave Peterborough after graduation. Out of the 21 respondents to this specific question, each rated (1) Lack of availability of jobs overall, (2) Lack of availability of jobs in desired fields, and (3) Lack of prospects for career growth and advancement with a rating of 4 or higher. The data highlights the significance for international students to secure employment aligned with their degree or jobs with potential for career advancement post-graduation.

### 7.5.2 Housing:

Table 13- Housing-related factors

Intending to Leave	Average	Minimum	Maximum
<b>High Costs</b>	3.46	2.0	5.0
<b>Poor quality</b>	2.60	1.0	5.0
<b>Excessive distance to Universities or amenities</b>	2.17	1.0	4.0
<b>Feeling unwelcomed by landlords or other tenants</b>	2.44	1.0	5.0
<b>Inaccessibility (Price, locations, availability, acceptance by landlords)</b>	3.0	1.0	5.0

Table 13 presents the outcomes regarding housing factors influencing current students' decisions to either remain or depart from Peterborough. The relatively diminished significance of housing among current students can be attributed to the fact that 62% of them (25 individuals) fall within the age range of 21-23, indicating they are in their second, third, or fourth years of university and likely secured housing prior to the ongoing housing crisis. Notably, the most prominent factor influencing students' decisions to leave Peterborough was the cost of housing, as depicted in Table 13. Moreover, Table 14 below showcases a disparity in housing ratings as a determinant for leaving Peterborough, comparing the ratings provided by students who stayed in Peterborough during their time at Trent University with those who departed from the city after graduation.

Table 14- Housing-related factors

Left/haven't lived	Average	Minimum	Maximum
<b>High Costs</b>	3.46	2.0	5.0
<b>Poor quality</b>	2.60	1.0	5.0
<b>Excessive distance to Universities or amenities</b>	2.17	1.0	4.0
<b>Feeling unwelcomed by landlords or other tenants</b>	2.44	1.0	5.0
<b>Inaccessibility (Price, locations, availability, acceptance by landlords)</b>	3.0	1.0	5.0

Table 14 illustrates the differences in housing ratings between the students who intend to leave and those who have already left or/ lived outside Peterborough during their time at Trent. 9 Out of the 40 students surveyed, 9 have either already left Peterborough or resided outside the city. For this subset of students, housing emerges as a notably significant factor compared to those intending to leave Peterborough. High housing costs and inaccessibility were cited as primary reasons for these students to either reside outside Peterborough or choose to leave the city.

### *7.5.3 Supports and services:*

Tables 15 and 16 presented below illuminate the perceived inadequacy of support services for students during their time at Trent University. Students were asked to rate supports and services by Trent and Peterborough on a scale of 1-5, 1 meaning not important at all and, 5 very important, specifically, students were asked to evaluate the importance of the level of support provided by Trent and the city of Peterborough in their decision to either leave or remain outside Peterborough. The factors provided for students to rate encompassed academic services and support, networking opportunities, counselling services, housing provisions, assistance with finding accommodation,

immigration support, assistance with permanent residency applications, aid with visa applications, and support in finding employment.

**Table 15- Supports and services by Trent**

Trent	Average	Minimum	Maximum
<b>Academic services and supports</b>	2.45	1.0	4.0
<b>Financial Services</b>	3.15	2.0	5.0
<b>Networking</b>	<b>3.73</b>	2.0	5.0
<b>Counselling services</b>	2.56	1.0	5.0
<b>Provision of housing</b>	3.08	1.0	5.0
<b>Finding accommodation</b>	<b>3.58</b>	1.0	5.0
<b>Social integration in the Trent community</b>	2.56	1.0	4.0
<b>Immigration</b>	3.0	2.0	5.0
<b>Pr application</b>	3.22	1.0	5.0
<b>Visa application</b>	3.22	2.0	5.0
<b>Finding employment</b>	<b>4.45</b>	3.0	5.0

**Table 16- Supports and services by Peterborough**

Trent	Average	Minimum	Maximum
<b>Financial Services</b>	2.78	1.0	5.0
<b>Counselling services</b>	2.50	1.0	5.0
<b>Finding accommodation</b>	<b>3.73</b>	1.0	5.0
<b>Social integration in the Ptbo community</b>	3.50	1.0	5.0
<b>Immigration</b>	3.0	1.0	5.0
<b>Pr application</b>	3.57	1.0	5.0
<b>Visa application</b>	3.40	2.0	5.0
<b>Finding employment</b>	<b>4.25</b>	2.0	5.0
<b>Networking</b>	<b>3.64</b>	1.0	5.0

Table 15 and Table 16 demonstrate the importance of support services for international students during their time at Trent and upon graduating from Trent. The survey data reveals a concerning trend indicating insufficient support for international students, particularly concerning the job market, immigration, and accommodations. Notably, both networking opportunities (rated at 3.73 and 3.64) and assistance in finding employment (rated at 4.25 and 4.45) emerged as the two highest factors indicating inadequate support and services provided by Trent and Peterborough. Furthermore, students expressed dissatisfaction with immigration services post-graduation, finding it challenging to navigate processes such as permanent residency aid and visa applications, as evidenced by ratings above 3 in Tables 15 and 16. Moreover, accommodations posed another significant challenge, with students rating the assistance in finding housing/accommodations above 3.5, indicating a lack of support and services in this area.

**Table 17 - Ranking of all factors**

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Social Factors</b>	1	6	9	1	
<b>Cultural factors</b>		4	7	2	
<b>Housing-related factors</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	2	1	
<b>Supports and services from Trent</b>	1	1	1		3
<b>Supports and services from Peterborough</b>	6	4	2		1
<b>Others: Employment-related factors</b>	<b>12</b>				
<b>Others: Lack of masters programs</b>	1				

In Table 17, students were tasked with rating the top three most influential factors in their decision to leave Peterborough, assigning numerical rankings within designated boxes. Notably, when given the opportunity to elaborate in the "other" box, 12 students emphasized and rated employment-related factors (jobs aligned with their degree, job availability, and opportunities for career growth) as the primary reason (#1) for departing from Peterborough. Furthermore, support and services provided by Peterborough, particularly in areas such as immigration, housing, and employment, were identified as the number one factor six times. Additionally, housing-related considerations, encompassing factors like price, quality, and distance to the university, emerged as the primary reason to leave Peterborough (#1) on four occasions and as the second most influential factor (#2) on eight occasions after graduation.

*7.5.4 Other Factors:*

**Table 18- Cultural factors**

	Average	Minimum	Maximum
<b>Culturally-appropriate restaurants</b>	3.36	2.0	5.0
<b>Culturally - appropriate foods</b>	3.08	1.0	5.0
<b>Places of worship</b>	2.71	2.0	5.0
<b>Cultural groups and organizations</b>	2.73	1.0	5.0

Students were asked to rate cultural factors such as culturally appropriate, restaurants and places of worship on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being very important and 1 not important at all. The findings presented in Table 18 reveal that cultural factors did not significantly influence students' decisions to leave Peterborough, as each cultural aspect received ratings below 3.4.

Students were asked to rate transportation-related factors in the tables below from 1-5 with, 5 being very important and 1 not important at all. Tables 19 and 20 reveal that both local

transportation within Peterborough and transportation from Peterborough to the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) were not substantial factors influencing respondents' decisions to leave Peterborough. Across both tables, each transportation factor received ratings below 3.7. Therefore, transportation did not emerge as a significant consideration in their decision to depart from Peterborough.

**Tables 19 & 20 - Transportation**

Within Peterborough	Average	Minimum	Maximum
<b>Bus routes</b>	3.58	2.0	5.0
<b>The frequency that buses ran</b>	3.36	2.0	5.0
<b>Reliability of busses</b>	3.69	2.0	5.0
<b>Accuracy of busses</b>	3.17	2.0	4.0

From Ptbo to GTA	Average	Minimum	Maximum
<b>Accessibility to transportation to leave the city</b>	3.14	2.0	5.0
<b>Affordability of transportation to leave the city</b>	2.79	1.0	4.0
<b>Ease of transportation to leave the city</b>	3.54	2.0	5.0

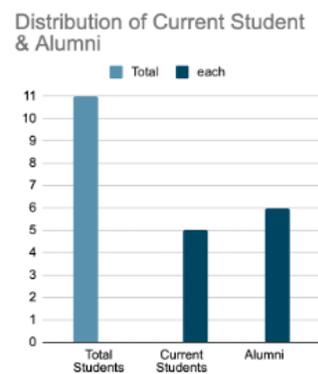
## 8. Interview Findings

Between January 19th, 2024 and February 2nd, 2024, we conducted eleven semi-structured interviews with five current international Trent students and six international Trent alumni. These interviews allowed us to gain a better understanding of the specific factors that influence, or have influenced, international students' decision to stay or leave Peterborough after graduation.

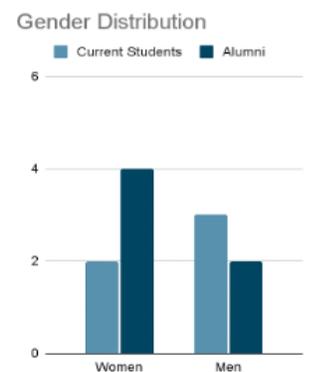
As discovered through the literature review, the degree to which students are integrated socially and culturally into the city will heavily influence their residency decisions post-graduation (Baruch et al., 2007). This is because their ability to relate with, connect to and form personal connections in the area shapes their perceptions and desire to stay or leave (Baruch et al., 2007). As Lu et al. (2009) found, the support provided by the University and the city will contribute to the ability of international students to integrate into the Trent and Peterborough communities. Thus, despite mentions of employment as the chief factor in students' decisions to stay or leave Peterborough, understanding international students' sentiments, perceptions, and experiences in the social and cultural spheres of Peterborough, as well as the level of support they have received from Trent and Peterborough, can provide us with a substantial understanding of the multifaceted and interconnected forces which have shaped their decision or intentions to stay or leave upon graduation.

### 8.1 Demographics

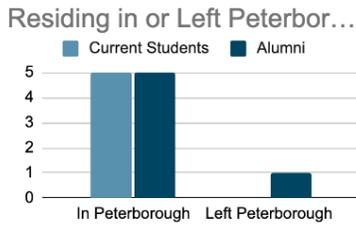
**Table 1** illustrates the distribution of current students vs alumni, while **Table 2** shows the ratio between males and females. We found no differences in the empirical findings between men and women, suggesting a structural or systemic



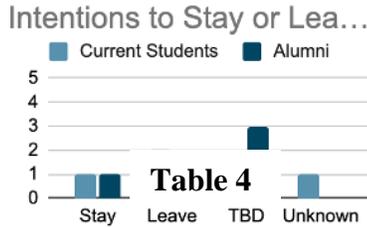
**Table 1**



**Table 2**



**Table 3**



**Table 4**

nature to the barriers and factors identified by participants. Tables 3 & 4<sup>1</sup> show the number of interviewees currently residing in Peterborough and their future intentions to stay or leave. All of the current students currently reside in Peterborough and all six of the alumni resided in Peterborough while studying at Trent University.

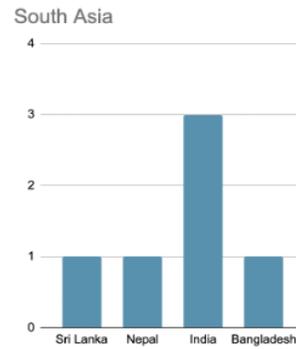
Tables 5 & 6 present the country of origin of the eleven

interviewees, with

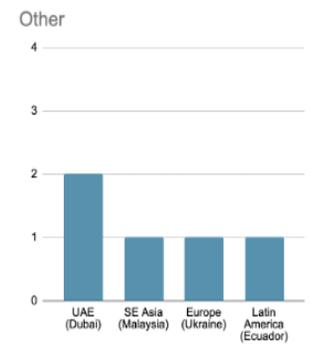
the majority coming from South Asian countries.

While some students came from the same country, all eleven participants had different cultural or ethnic backgrounds. For instance, two students came from Dubai, UAE (United Arab Emirates),

but their ethnic backgrounds were Persian and Indian. This diversity in our sample group allowed us to gain a broader understanding of the more general and culturally specific factors that influence international students' decision to stay or leave Peterborough.

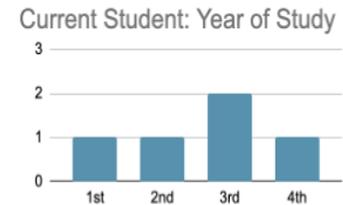


**Table 5**

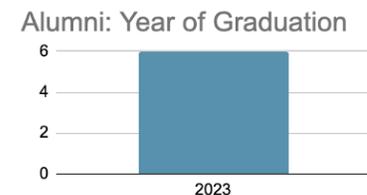


**Table 6**

Further, Tables 7 & 8 illustrate the distribution of current students' year of study and the year the alumni graduated from Trent. While we interviewed at least one student from each year of undergraduate studies, all six of our alumni graduated during the academic year of either 2022-2023 or 2023-2024. Table 9 shows the distribution of the current students and alumni based on their field of study. Notably, the largest category was in the social sciences: two alumni from



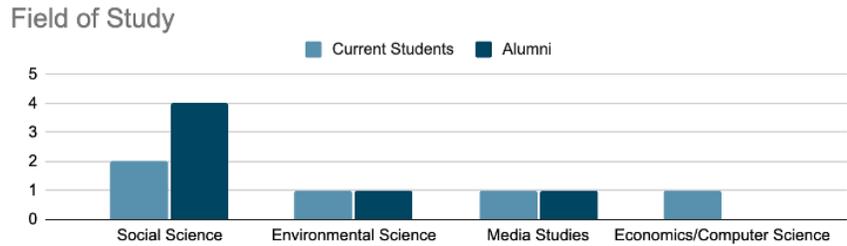
**Table 7**



**Table 8**

<sup>1</sup> The column 'unknown' will present itself in instances where we do not have sufficient information to categorize the student(s).

international development, one alumnus with a joint major in sociology and psychology, one



alumnus in sociology and

two current students in social work.

**Table 9**

8.2 Social Factors

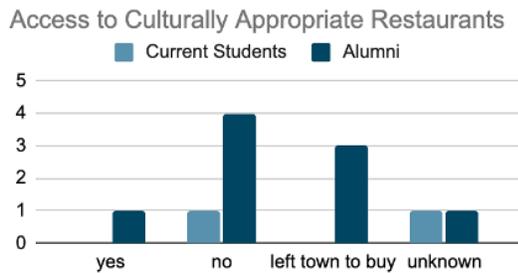
The findings of our interviews highlighted the significance of social and cultural integration in students' decisions to stay or leave Peterborough upon graduation. Those who immersed themselves in Peterborough communities were more inclined to stay in Peterborough. Further, students who established social relationships in the broader Peterborough community mentioned staying, or intending to stay, for the perceived advantages of these connections. Our research highlights that, to varying extents, social and cultural factors are interconnected with the broader key determinants in the decisions of international students to stay or leave Peterborough.

8.2.1 Cultural Factors

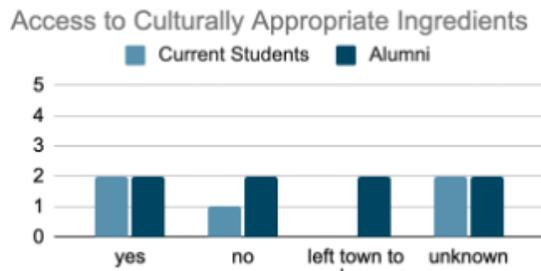
A prominent barrier faced by international students across our literature review was cultural integration. These barriers ranged from an inability to access cultural items to difficulty adapting to the host country's values, beliefs or norms, and so forth. Call's (2020) survey identified that international students often left Peterborough to acquire culturally appropriate goods and services. As Arthur & Flynn (2011) found, the degree to which students can integrate into the local culture will hold weight in their decision to stay or leave the region. As such, we examined topics relating to sustaining a connection to their culture in Peterborough.

8.2.1.1 Culturally Appropriate Food:

**Table 10** illustrates our interviewees' ability to access cultural cuisine in Peterborough. The types



**Table 10**



**Table 11**

of cuisine unavailable in Peterborough were Nepali, Sri Lankan, Maharashtrian (Mumbai), Malaysian, Persian, South Indian, and Ukrainian. Only one student had access to culturally appropriate cuisine, namely Indian cuisine, Halal foods and Middle Eastern-style takeout. However, the cultural cuisine available in Peterborough generally received a positive review. As one interviewee noted: “There's limited options, I think, overall. But the options I have are, I think they're pretty good. If you know

where to look in Peterborough, you'll find some really good places to eat”. Nevertheless, this was not a uniform view; for example, one student perceived the cultural food scene as expensive and limited: “...even the food culture, it's...basically non-existent. I can bet, like you go on Uber Eats right now, 95% of all the restaurants will be just chain restaurants, like Domino's, Popeyes and stuff like that”. As seen in **Tables 10 & 11**, four students left Peterborough periodically to access cultural foods and ingredients.

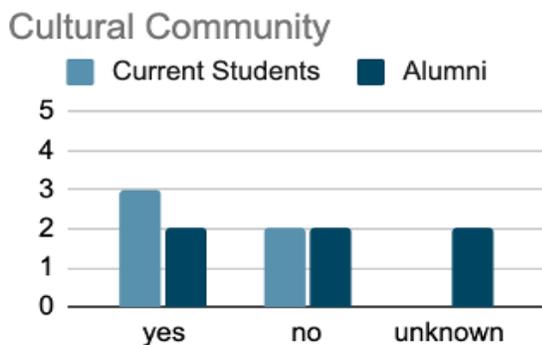
Relatedly, **Table 11** illustrates our interviewees' ability to access culturally appropriate cooking ingredients in Peterborough. Cultural ingredients listed as unavailable were: Ukrainian, Sri Lankan, and Maharashtrian (Mumbai). When discussing access to cultural ingredients at traditional Canadian grocery stores, one participant said, “if you go to regular grocery stores, like Walmart and stuff, the Asian sections are...like, yeah, you got instant noodles. Great. Yeah”. However, most interviewees spoke positively about the cultural grocery stores in Peterborough.

For example, one student said, “They [Peterborough] do have two Asian groceries. Both next to each other, Indian and Chinese. Yeah. Which is like, pretty good”. Students discovered these cultural restaurants and stores through social connections, not through Trent or other external integration supports. As one student put it, “It was a lot of word of mouth from friends being like, Oh, there's this store downtown where you can find things”.

While access to cultural foods and ingredients was not a prominent factor in the interviewees' decision to stay or leave upon graduation, the availability of culturally appropriate foods and ingredients was suggested to make Peterborough more appealing for long-term residency upon graduation. Additionally, access to cultural goods and services supports the integration of international students into the host city by providing a sense of familiarity. For instance, one interviewee correlated cultural foods with feelings of comfort: “There's a lot of local Nepali restaurants in Toronto. So...if I'm feeling like comfort food, I usually make a trip to Toronto”. Even though this was not a primary factor in the interviewees' decision to stay or leave, it is influential in helping them establish personal connections with the city and providing a sense of belonging.

#### 8.2.1.2 Cultural Community:

As shown in **Table 12**, five of the eleven participants connected to a cultural community, all



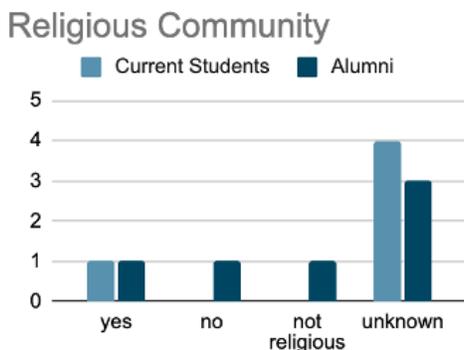
**Table 12**

established through Trent rather than the broader Peterborough community. Specifically, two students found cultural community through clubs or groups, two by working on campus, and one through friends and word of mouth. Of those who found cultural community, two said it was very

important; one expressed that it was not very important; and two did not elaborate enough to make a definitive claim. Nevertheless, all five students appreciated the sense of familiarity and understanding. One student said, “It’s always it’s really great to meet your people basically” while another noted, “it’s really nice to relate to people who come from, you know, like, similar backgrounds as you’d like... You know, like similar life stories and, or just, like, whatever, like circumstances growing up.” Others expressed the connection to their home country that these relationships brought; when discussing cultural cuisine they could not find in Peterborough one said, “...so many bring you food. It’s like, oh my god, guys, I love you”.

On the other hand, four out of eleven mentioned they did not find any sense of cultural community at Trent or Peterborough. Three of the four did not identify it as a direct influence in their decision, but one said lack of cultural connectivity was the primary reason for intending to leave Peterborough upon graduation. In particular, the interviewee associated this absence with more than a sense of disconnect from culture but also with a perception of judgment from others. Further, one student highlighted how students often sought out cultural communities; for instance, she said, “a lot of them [International students] will actually try to find jobs in like big corporations like Walmart or like, you know, like, Sobey’s or stuff like that or like McDonald’s like stuff like that because they tend to find a similar demographic to them like international students or people who are like part of minorities”.

8.2.1.3 Religious Community:



Four out of eleven students discussed religion; one was “absolutely not” religious, and three had religious affiliations – Christian, Muslim and Buddhist. All three identified religious infrastructure as important, and two

Table 13

identified religious community as important. As seen in **Table 13**, two out of the three were able to find a religious community in Peterborough, but only one had access to religious infrastructure. One participant said: “I would like to have the ability to have like, a space, like a, like a mosque or something”. Another student mentioned leaving Peterborough to find a religious community – “The nearest Buddhist temple...is located in Markham...And so we go there when um for like religious activities and all that stuff”.

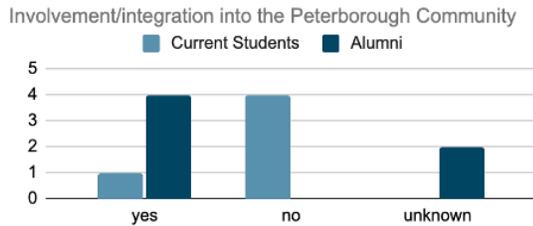
Following the same trend as the aforementioned cultural factors, lack of religious community or places of worship was not perceived as a determinant in interviewees' decision to stay or leave Peterborough. Nevertheless, the degree students can find a sense of cultural connectivity within the city will contribute to their integration. The access to culturally appropriate goods and services provided comfort, familiarity and a sense of belonging. This is important because cultural factors – alongside social factors – contribute to students' sentiments and satisfaction with the city (Baruch et al., 2007). Thus, despite not being directly listed by interviewees as considerations in their decision, these factors are highly influential and should be given weight.

### 8.2.2 Integration into the Broader Community

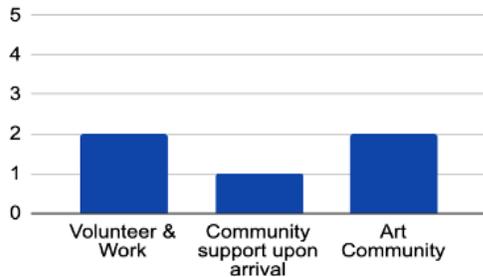
As Lu et al. (2009) & Baruch et al. (2007) explain, the decision of international students to stay or leave the host city, and even more generally the host country is closely connected with their social experiences, integration into the local community and environment and the personal relationships or networks they establish. Our findings exemplify the importance of establishing social connections for students' integration into the broader Peterborough community. Primarily, this encompasses the integration and involvement students have in the Peterborough and Trent communities as well as the relationships they derive from this. Accordingly, our interview

questions aimed to get a sense of the degree to which international students felt welcomed or unwelcomed in Peterborough and at Trent, whether they were integrated into the local or Trent community, and whether they had formed any personal relationships in Peterborough.

8.2.2.1 *Involvement and Integration into the Peterborough and Trent Communities*



**Table 14**

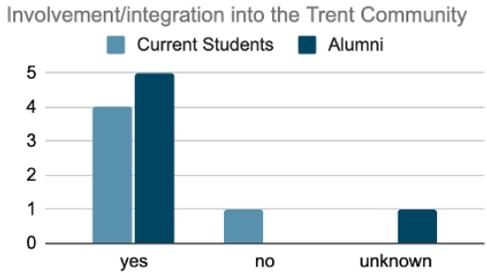


**Table 15**

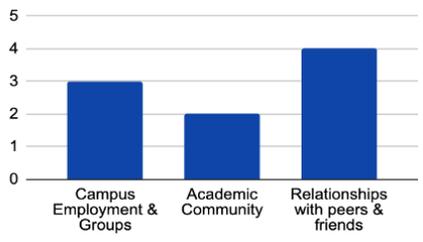
Our interviews, mainly alumni, indicated that involvement and integration into the broader Peterborough community was a sizable reason to stay. Those who became a part of the Peterborough community outside of Trent found a sense of belonging, formed personal attachments to the area, and obtained employment through community networks. **Table 14** shows the participation of current students and alumni in the Peterborough community.

Notably, the four alumni who said yes stayed after graduation, and the only current student who said yes also attributed his community ties as a reason to stay upon graduation. **Table 15** illustrates where interviewees found this sense of community.

Conversely, interviewees perceived their level of involvement in the Trent community as less influential in deciding whether to stay or leave Peterborough. However, integration and involvement in the Trent community proved to be an important element on several accounts. It improved the likelihood of students connecting with the broader Peterborough community, helped students find employment, and provided students with a sense of belonging. **Table 16** shows the participants' involvement in the Trent community and **Table 17** illustrates where they found this



**Table 16**



**Table 17**

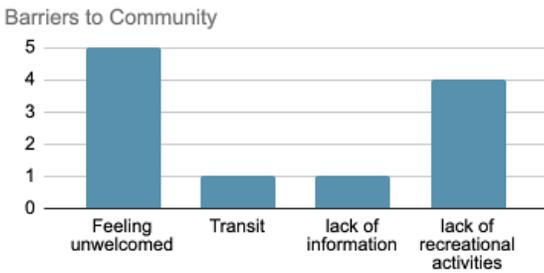
that participants highlighted during the interviews. The most recurrent barrier was feeling unwelcome, mainly rooted in encounters with discrimination, alongside sentiments of being an outsider in the local community. A negative perception of inclusivity was said to discourage and deter students from participating in the broader community.

The second significant barrier identified was the absence of recreational activities in Peterborough — nightclubs, street festivals, shopping centers, arcades, etc. – and three students mentioned leaving town for entertainment. One interviewee specified facing barriers in Peterborough nightlife since it almost exclusively revolved around drinking alcohol. Relatedly, another participant emphasized that Trent and Peterborough might have events or activities, however, they aren’t promoted effectively. Finally, one student noted Peterborough transit as a barrier to community participation. He explained how inadequate transit to the surrounding Peterborough regions prohibited him from joining local sports teams.

community. Notably, four current students established community ties at Trent, whereas only one found it in the broader Peterborough community.

*8.2.2.2 Barriers to Community*

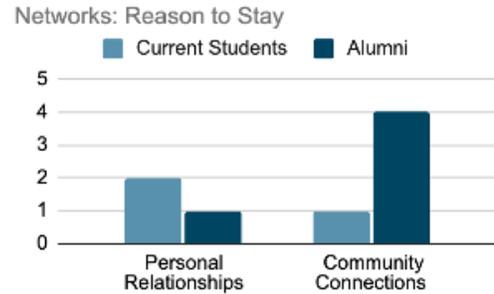
Though the general perception of interviewees toward the Trent and Peterborough communities was more positive than those in Call’s (2020) research, barriers to community integration have persisted. **Table 18** represents the most significant obstacles



**Table 18**

### 8.2.2.3 Social Networks and Relationships

Lu et al. (2009) found that personal relationships within the host location – i.e., friendships, family, partners, etc. – were a major pull factor in the decision of international students to stay or leave the region. Similarly, Call’s (2020) research found personal relationships to be the highest-ranked reason for students with undecided intentions to stay. **Table 19** shows similar findings in our interviews, with eight out of eleven participants indicating either personal relationships or community connections as a contributing factor to their decision or intention to stay. Conversely, this was also a reason to leave; one alumnus and one current student identified family member(s) in other areas of Canada as influential to their respective decision and intention to leave.



**Table 19**

It should be emphasized, however, that the degree of influence personal relationships hold, alongside their weight compared to other factors, is subjective between individuals. Thus, while common trends exist, an interplay between factors and unique personal circumstances plays a role in individualizing the significance attributed to the various factors we identify.

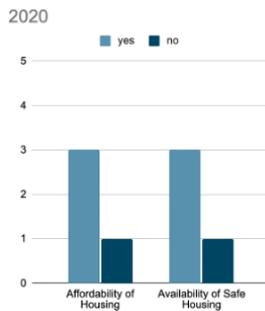
### 8.3 Housing

The housing crisis is not isolated to Peterborough; the cost of living has risen exponentially across Canada for the past few years. Though this has undoubtedly impacted most students, we highlight the unique challenges of international students. It is important to note that personal circumstances play a significant role in determining to what extent these challenges are felt. Hence, we must be mindful that economic backgrounds and the degree of financial dependency on external sources will produce diverging experiences. Further considerations which may influence the options

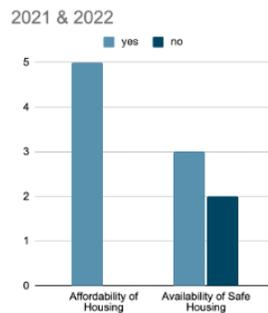
available to international students include but are not limited to: the time of year they were looking, locationality, access to transit, and differentiating budgets.

### 8.3.1 Affordability and Availability of Safe Housing

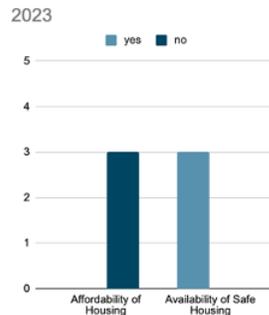
All the participants were asked the year(s) they found housing in Peterborough and were asked to describe their experience finding affordable and safe housing. **Tables 20, 21, 22 and 23**<sup>2</sup> express the availability of affordable safe housing during each respective period<sup>3</sup>.



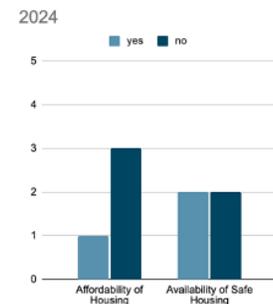
**Table 20**



**Table 21**



**Table 22**



**Table 23**

The tables illustrate the shift from the 2020-2022 period, wherein affordable and safe housing was mostly accessible to worsened conditions in 2023 and 2024. All three students looking for housing in 2023 noted that while safe housing was available, affordable housing was absent; consequently, many expressed how this subjected themselves or someone they knew to unsafe or poor living conditions. As one student put it, “There was quite a few options. But again, they give us the price that then drives like your options...you have a specific budget, and you're only looking at a couple houses...maybe it's just not ideal, but you have to pick it anyway”. A lack of knowledge for the area was also identified as an obstacle to finding safe housing. Students emphasized the uncertainty in their search, for instance, one interviewee stated with regard to international students

<sup>2</sup> Tables 20, 21 and 22 represent the full year from January – December of the respective year(s). Table 23 represents the experience of participants looking for housing in 2024 between January and March.

<sup>3</sup> Yes’ and ‘no’ here answer the respective questions of whether safe housing was generally accessible and affordable.

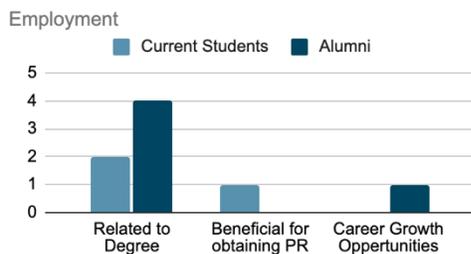
that, “You're not aware of like spaces in Peterborough that are not safe...Like you'll learn that as you go on. But if I was to be an international student and I see a rent of 400 versus a rent of like 700, that makes a huge difference. And I'm like, I'm going to go for the 400 one”.

### 8.3.2 Landlords and Leases

Two main concerns mentioned throughout interviews surrounding housing were landlords and leases. In part, this relates to a lack of knowledge. For instance, when discussing leases, one student mentioned, “I wasn't sure what exactly it should look like after a couple of years is when I realized that there was a standard Ontario rental lease document...the first lease that I had did not look like that”. As another student put it, “Landowners definitely take advantage of things. As soon as they see that you're international, they try to up you for this and that. And like a lot of people actually don't know how the whole rental system works”. This insecurity was spoken on by other interviewees, for example, as another one described, “people are sharing rooms paying \$500 each. Three people on the same roof, imagine that”. While some students noted positive experiences with landlords, we cannot overlook the precarity and exploitation that often accompanies a lack of knowledge.

## 8.4 Employment

Employment-related factors were listed by eight of eleven interviewees as the main factor in their decision to stay or leave Peterborough. This closely follows Call’s (2020) survey results wherein 90% of participants rated job opportunities as the main reason to stay in Canada. **Table 24** shows



the three employment-related factors listed by current students and alumni.

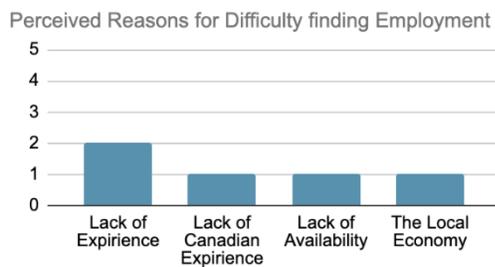
Primarily, students listed employment related to their degree as the main reason to stay or leave

**Table 24**

Peterborough. For example, concerning future intentions to stay or leave Peterborough, one alumnus said, “I mean, it all depends on where I can find the job which suits my needs and education”. Another interviewee said, “Like if I get a job in Peterborough, we would really like to stay in Peterborough because I love Peterborough”, but also made clear that “work opportunities is the first thing”. Additionally, the alumnus who left stated, “I think I did definitely want to leave, but I was open to staying there if there was like there were employment opportunities that were in my field”.

As shown in **Table 24**, job opportunities that would help them gain permanent residency (PR) and employment with career growth opportunities were also mentioned as reasons to stay/leave. Concerning the former, as one alumnus explained: “in order to be eligible for PR, I gotta find a job which...falls under one of the three tiers... once I find a job in that domain, I gotta stay in there for one year. And then once my one year is over, I can apply for PR”. Also, one current student noted that while his current place of employment is not related to his field of study, he intends to stay upon graduation because a government job would look good on PR applications. Regarding jobs with opportunities for growth, one alumnus who found employment and stayed in Peterborough noted, “So I like the job. There's not a lot of room for growth...So I'll probably be here for a couple of years and I'll move out”.

#### 8.4.1 Challenges



While five out of six alumni have found work since graduation, all six reported having difficulty finding work in Peterborough, specifically related to their degree. Of the Alumni who stayed, two found employment unrelated to their degree, two found

employment that would help them obtain experience in their desired field, and one was not able to find employment. Further, one alumnus left Peterborough primarily for a career opportunity. **Table 25** illustrates the alumni's perceptions of not finding employment in Peterborough.

A prominent barrier for alumni was a lack of experience; four out of six listed this as a substantial barrier to their ability to obtain employment in their field. As one student explained, “I need a job in my career. Like, I actually want to work here...the good thing about Peterborough is there's actually a lot of community organizations...but like they...need some sort of experience, like they require at least like three to five years of experience...I'm like, Oh, I can't match. Like, even if I do interviews, I can't match, like the criteria in that in that end”. In some cases, interviewees reported not even applying for certain positions due to the application requirements.

#### *8.4.2 Advantages*

Despite challenges finding employment, the alumni who stayed also explained the various advantages of being in Peterborough. Primarily, three out of five mentioned finding employment through social networks they established in Peterborough. Also, one alumnus who had not found employment in Peterborough but stayed anyway perceived her community connections as potentially beneficial for finding employment in the future: “Because it's a small town, you can kind of network enough to just have a place somewhere like...part of the reason why I even want to stay here right now is that I have created those networks by volunteering...So that's like the networks that you build is probably the number one reason to stay here”. Similarly, two current students mentioned social networks as a benefit of staying in Peterborough, specifically for finding employment in their field. In terms of employment, the perceived advantages of staying in Peterborough exclusively pertained to the community networks they have established, further emphasizing the importance of connecting students with the local community.

## **9. Recommendations**

A review of relevant literature, alongside the input of the participants of our interviews, has helped guide our recommendations for improving the retention of international students in the context of Peterborough. The recommendations center mainly on increasing the level of support provided to international students. First, the disconnect between current students and the broader Peterborough community makes clear that there must be more efficient efforts to integrate students into the local community. Secondly, there must be a more proactive effort to understand and address the specific challenges faced by international students, particularly in employment and housing. Finally, we emphasize the responsibility of Trent to not only have a plan for the students it brings it, but also active measures to ensure students are safe, cared for, and sufficiently supported.

### **9.1 Integration into the Peterborough community before graduation**

Cultural and social integration, both in the workplace and the broader community, should be of particular importance. Brunch et al. (2007) discuss how the economic conditions in a student's home country are often considered and compared to that of the host country in the decision to stay or leave post-graduation. Accordingly, the authors point out that students migrating from an emerging country, such as China and India, are less likely to give the same weight to economic opportunities in their decision; instead, their perceived quality of life and enjoyment of the area and employment were more influential (Baruch et al., 2007, 5). As such, building personal relationships and connections with the city could heavily influence international students' decision to stay or leave the region. In the context of Peterborough, Statistics Canada (2021) illustrates that between 2016 and 2021, the second largest population of immigrants in Peterborough came from India. Hence, facilitating ways to better connect students with both the

Trent and Peterborough communities should be prioritized if the city wishes to improve retention rates for these demographics.

### 9.1.1 Integration into the Peterborough community

Though employment was most commonly listed as the main reason to stay or leave Peterborough, connections to the community were intrinsically connected to perceptions of the labour market – four of six alumni viewed their community ties within the city as networks for finding employment. This is important because, as Soon (2012) emphasized, perceptions of employability and advancement opportunities in the host location are of great influence in the decision of international students to stay or leave after graduation. Importantly, a positive correlation between involvement in the local Peterborough community and the decision or intended decision to stay in Peterborough after graduation was recurrent throughout our interviews.

On the other hand, we found a disconnect between the Trent and Peterborough communities. Our research findings show low levels of involvement in the broader Peterborough community among current students in comparison to the Alumni<sup>4</sup>. Most instances of a sense of community in Peterborough occurred in the downtown area, yet many current students and alumni mentioned very limited interaction with Peterborough's downtown core until the upper years. For instance, when discussing involvement in the Peterborough community, one alumnus noted, "I don't think I necessarily found that until maybe last year [fourth year]". A better examination of the social and geographical factors forging this disconnect could provide an understanding of why it prevails and how to bridge the gaps between Trent and Peterborough.

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<sup>4</sup> Table 14 & 16, Page 44 & 45

## 9.2 Provision of interactive support tailored to the specific needs of international students

By and large, the predominant suggestion by interviewees was for better-suited and direct support from Trent in navigating, along with obtaining, employment and housing in Peterborough. This follows the research of Arthur & Flynn (2011) who emphasized the benefits international students gained from interactive support programs that targeted their specific needs, as well as a call for educational institutions to provide support better tailored to the challenges faced by international students.

### 9.2.1 Employment

In order to gain Permanent Residency (PR) in Canada, something all the interviewees intended to obtain, international students must get a work permit upon graduation, which is valid for three years, and get 1560 hours of “skilled work experience” (New Canadians Center, 2021). The time constraint of this process, coupled with the enormous financial costs of international tuition fees, places disproportionate pressure on international students to find suitable employment upon graduation.

#### *9.2.1.1 Post-Graduate Support:*

Correspondingly, many alumni wished Trent offered support navigating employment-related issues post-graduation. One alumnus said, “having an advisor...who sort of help you with things after graduation...who can sort of sit you down and be like, hey, this is what you need to do. This is the documents you need to get...things like that...I think it would be really helpful”. Another alumnus illustrates negative perceptions attributed to this lack of support – “I feel like as an international student, if you're paying like \$100,000 over four years to come and study here, I think sort of being like, okay, you've graduated now, you're not our problem anymore is kind of rough on students”.

### *9.2.1.2 Preparing Students for the Labour Market:*

Additionally, all six alumni faced challenges finding employment making clear the barriers posed by a lack of knowledge and or experience. Unrealistic ideas of the opportunities their degree would provide create frustration and despair among individuals entering the workforce. Trent should provide students with a clear and genuine idea of their options post-graduation, as one alumnus said, “I got a pamphlet that said you can do all these things, but when I actually looked for jobs, they all asked for like a master's degree or an additional diploma and like what can I do with a psych degree then, right? So yeah, they have these conversations, but not in terms of what jobs are actually available and what qualifications they ask for”. Considering the immoderate international tuition fees, Trent has an indispensable responsibility to ensure students are aware of the reality they will face upon graduation.

Following closely, a lack of experience in their respective fields posed major barriers for alumni looking for employment related to their degree. The necessity of finding “skilled labour” for PR, alongside the omission of responsibility for international students post-graduation, forced many students to find employment in fields unrelated to their qualifications. Many participants suggested finding ways to connect students with local employers and organizations before they graduate; this is especially important for students without co-op or related degree opportunities. As students prepare to enter an increasingly competitive labour market, educational institutions must ensure they have the proper education *and* experience.

### *9.2.1.3 Networking:*

Finally, a dominant barrier for international students seeking degree-related jobs was networking. Arthur & Flynn (2011) found that international students perceived the application process for employment as difficult, ambiguous, and provoked a sense of frustration. Primarily, the lack of

community networks and contacts posed greater restraints (Arthur & Flynn, 2011, 9). As aforementioned, a disconnect between Trent and Peterborough populaces prevailed, and participants echoed the need for greater collaboration throughout our research. Reflecting back on their experiences, one alumnus suggested that Trent get “more connected to the organizations that are there”. This was reflected in other alumni saying, “I mean in terms of employment, if the university did kind of collaborate with the different job board organizations we have throughout the city” and “it would be very helpful if the university could somehow help in the networking aspect”.

### 9.2.2 Housing

Across Ontario, international students have been subject to overpriced, overcrowded and at times illegal housing conditions (Masri, 2022). In the context of Peterborough, the cost of living has become unaffordable; in Call’s (2020) survey, rent costs accounted for on average 43% of international students total expenditures. As rent continues to skyrocket, students are forced to sacrifice other vital necessities, such as nutritious food (Timmermans, 2023), and face higher risks of accepting unsafe or poor living conditions.

#### *9.2.2.1 Access to Knowledge*

Of vital importance is a need for better housing support and services, particularly for international students. Our research uncovered the specific challenges and precarity many participants faced; this included, but was not limited to, increased uncertainty around the housing systems – leases, tenant rights, what landlords can legally do, etc. – a lack of knowledge regarding safe and accessible location, and a high risk of poor, unsafe, or precarious living situation. Many students emphasized a need for informative sessions for housing during students’ first year; one student said, “Housing, I think, is a huge thing that I think would be helpful to navigate with, especially

for new students... I think that's one big thing". Our participants revealed many instances where students did not know their rights, further emphasizing the necessity for Trent to improve housing support and the provision of knowledge.

#### *9.2.2.2 Access to Safe Places:*

Of vital importance, Trent must provide safe spaces for students to go in the face of precarious and potentially dangerous situations. Notably, one student highlighted, "I've heard a lot of stories of people when they come in, and they actually, first of all, don't have residence with Trent and they didn't know that. And then they're sent to like hostels...It's just like a very scary situation". While the housing crisis is Canada-wide, the exponential increase in enrollment of students at Trent has considerably worsened conditions in Peterborough (Timmermans, 2023), in turn making safe and affordable housing inaccessible to large populations of students. As one student put it, "the first step to a solution of a problem is to acknowledge that there is a problem...Trent does not acknowledge its own role...which is one of the biggest roles in the city".

#### *9.3 The Responsibility of Trent as a Political Actor*

Finally, it is important to emphasize Trent's political role in the city of Peterborough and the significance this holds in ensuring they are made accountable for the students they bring in. In terms of social contributions, Trent provides the local employment market with 6,135 jobs, 484 active research projects, 839 student research placements, and 225 school education placements (Trent University Report to the Community, 2022). Economically, Trent contributes 9% to Peterborough's local GDP, with an estimated \$675 million economic impact on the local economy (Trent University Report to the Community, 2022). As such, Trent is a political actor within the city, one with weighty influence and one which should utilize its power to ensure students are protected and properly accommodated. For example, in light of the financial exploitation, tenant

rights abuses, and unsafe living conditions, Trent has a responsibility to make sure the city is holding landlords accountable.

However, this political positionality is significant as it gives Trent a major say in the policies and local government activity; hence, the responsibility of Trent to its students extends to taking proactive measures. Trent must use this power to enact measures such as pressuring the city to ensure the downtown core, where most students reside, is a safe environment, or participating in city planning to advocate for bus routes to *efficiently*<sup>5</sup> reach all student residential hubs. As one student noted, “Trent needs to acknowledge its role and bring in students more responsibly. Whereas the students that come in, they have a set plan and they don't just feel lost”.

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<sup>5</sup> Efficiently here means (a) frequent buses and (b) arriving from the destination to Trent in a timely manner.

## **10. Conclusion**

The purpose of this research project was to identify the factors influencing international students' decisions to stay or leave Peterborough after graduating from Trent. To achieve this goal, a thorough literature review was conducted to understand the factors shaping the decisions of International students to remain or leave a province upon graduation. The literature review was bifurcated into two sections for a comprehensive analysis. The initial section delved into the international student phenomenon at a more granular level. The main focus of this section was on comprehending the dominant forces shaping international students' decisions as they navigate whether to stay in or leave the Peterborough area upon graduation from Trent University. This section of the literature review is built on a study conducted on the impact of International students on Peterborough's economy.

The subsequent section scrutinized the work of Dale McCartney, centring on the historical trajectory of the international student phenomenon in Canada. This portion of the review homed in on pivotal periods when international students were assimilated into Canada's post-secondary education landscape.

The following section of our report builds upon the insights gleaned from our survey and semi-structured interviews. The survey included both alumni and current students and included cultural, social, and economic factors in their decision. The survey results underscored the pivotal role of employment in shaping international students' decisions to either stay in or depart from Peterborough upon graduating from Trent University. Both alumni and current students indicated that employment status significantly influenced their choice regarding residency in Peterborough. Additionally, the survey shed light on the impact of housing availability and support services received by international students on their decision-making process.

In the context of the prevailing housing crisis, respondents who secured housing upon their initial arrival in Peterborough tended to perceive housing as less of a determining factor compared to those who had not yet secured housing or had left Peterborough. Furthermore, the survey highlighted the importance of obtaining permanent residency for international students as their ultimate objective upon migrating to Canada, with factors related to immigration rated highly in terms of the support they wish to receive.

The findings from the interviews echoed many of the themes identified in the survey results. However, allowing individuals to articulate their opinions on factors influencing their decision to stay or leave Peterborough provided valuable additional insights. Notably, one difference between Call's research and this report is the positive perception of the Peterborough community, as the interviewees admired Peterborough's and Trent's community and were willing to stay if a job opportunity of their liking was made available to them.

Moreover, findings from the interviews highlighted a common concern among international students regarding the lack of support received by international students. The findings of our interview are consistent with findings across the whole of Canada, where enrollment of international student enrollment has increased but support and resources have reduced. The interviews highlighted the importance of obtaining PR as an end goal for international students with many of the interviewees expressing their intent on acquiring permanent residency and either moving elsewhere or looking for a high-skilled job.

Ultimately, the combined findings from the survey and interviews serve as a foundation for formulating recommendations aimed at retaining international students in Peterborough, the primary objective of this research project. These recommendations include enhancing international student support by facilitating connections with local employers before graduation, increasing

housing assistance by educating international students about their rights as tenants, and improving support services at Trent University to help students understand the career prospects associated with their degrees.

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## **12. Appendix**

### **Survey questions:**

#### **Icebreaker questions:**

Current Students

1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender (male, female, other (option to specify))?
3. What is your country of origin?
4. What program are you currently enrolled in [if you are a joint major, or have a minor, choose all that apply]?
5. What is your marital status? (single, engaged, married, other)
6. Do you have children?

If Yes, residing in Peterborough or

If no elsewhere in Canada, another country

Alumni

1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender (male, female, other (option to specify))?  
What is your country of origin?
3. What program did you major in while studying at Trent University?
4. What was your marital status while studying at Trent University (not married, engaged, married, other)?
5. Did you have children while studying at Trent University:

If yes, while you were studying at Trent, did they reside in: Peterborough, elsewhere in Canada, another country

#### **Main Questions:**

6. On a scale of 1-5, 1 meaning not important at all, 5 being very important, how influential were these factors in your decision to leave Peterborough?

Social factors:

- Feeling of not belonging
- Feeling unwelcome

- Lack of Sense of community in Peterborough
- Lack of Sense of community at Trent
- Lack of adequate entertainment/recreational activities
- Lack of Family networks
- Hard to make new friends
- Language barriers
- Different customs
- Other (please specify)

7. On a scale of 1-5, 1 meaning not important at all, 5 being very important, how influential were these factors in your decision to leave Peterborough?

Cultural factors:

- Lack of Culturally-appropriate restaurants
- Lack of Culturally-appropriate foods?
- Lack of places of worship
- Lack of cultural groups and organizations
- Other (please specify)

8. On a scale of 1-5, 1 meaning not important at all, 5 being very important, how influential were the following factors related to housing in your decision to leave Peterborough?

9. On a scale of 1-5, 1 meaning not important at all, 5 being very important, how influential were factors related to employment in your decision to leave Peterborough?

- Lack of availability of jobs overall
- Lack of availability of jobs in desired field
- Lack of prospects for career growth and advancement
- Lack of Competitive Pay
- Lack of Networking opportunities
- Feeling unwelcome by employers
- Feeling unwelcome by co-workers
- Other (Please specify)

10. On a scale of 1-5, 1 meaning not important at all, 5 being very important, how influential were the following factors related to bussing transportation within Peterborough in your decision to leave Peterborough?

- Bus routes
- The frequency that buses run
- Reliability of buses
- Accuracy of bus times
- Other (Please specify)

11. On a scale of 1-5, 1 meaning not important at all, 5 being very important, how influential were the following factors related to transportation into and outside of Peterborough in your decision to leave Peterborough?

- Accessibility to transportation to leave the City
- Affordability of transportation to leave the City
- Ease of transportation to leave the City

10. On a scale of 1-5, 1 meaning not important at all, 5 very important, how important was the level of support provided by Trent in the following areas, in your decision to leave Peterborough?

- Financial services and support
- Academic services and support
- Counseling services
- Provision of housing
- Finding accommodation
- Social integration in the Trent community
- Immigration
- Permanent residency application
- Visa application
- Finding employment

- Networking
- Other (Please specify)

11. On a scale of 1-5, 1 meaning not important at all, 5 very important, how important was the level of support provided in Peterborough in the following areas for your decision to leave Peterborough?

- Financial services
- Counseling
- Finding accommodation
- Social integration in the Peterborough community
- Immigration
- Permanent residency application
- Visa application
- Finding employment
- Networking
- Other (Please specify)

12. Of all the factors identified in this survey which contributed to your decision/intention to leave/stay please rank the three most important.

- Social Factors
- Cultural Factors
- Housing-related factors
- Supports and services from Trent University
- Supports and services from Peterborough
- Other (Please specify)

## **SSI Questions:**

### **PREAMBLE:**

**Alumni:** We are interested in understanding the reasons why you decided to stay/leave Peterborough upon graduation from Trent.

- Do you live in Peterborough?
- Did any factors related to the cultural environment shape your decision to stay/leave, or not? By Cultural environment, we mean things like your sense of community, social barriers such as discrimination and cultural differences, and your accessibility to goods or services.

**Current students:** We are interested in understanding the factors that have influenced your intentions to stay/leave Peterborough upon graduation from Trent.

Do you live in Peterborough? Did any factors related to the cultural environment shape your decision to stay/leave, or not? By Cultural environment, we mean things like your sense of community, social barriers such as discrimination and cultural differences, and your accessibility to goods or services.

Phrased for Alumni and current students who do not live in Ptbo but once did (no, yes)

### **CULTURAL FACTORS:**

Have you been able to sustain a connection to your culture in Peterborough while studying at Trent University, or not?

- Does Peterborough have culturally appropriate restaurants, or not?
- Are you able to access culturally appropriate food in Peterborough, or not?
- Does Peterborough have appropriate places of worship, or not?
- Were you part of a cultural community in Peterborough, or not?
  - Does Peterborough have strong cultural communities, or not?
- Has this influenced your decision to leave Peterborough, or not?

**Have any other cultural features of Peterborough influenced your decision to leave, or not?**

## **SOCIAL FACTORS**

**Alumni:** Did you feel a sense of belonging in Peterborough while you were a student at Trent, or not?

**Current:** Do you feel a sense of belonging in Peterborough, or not?

### **PROBES: Phrased for current students**

- Has a sense of community in Peterborough contributed to your feelings of belonging, or not?
  - If yes:
    - What were the features that made up that community? Can you elaborate on them?
    - Are there community features that were missing in Peterborough, or not? Can you elaborate on them?
  - If no:
    - Why do you feel this is the case?
    - What factors were you looking for in a community that could not be found there?
- Follow up: has this influenced your decision to leave Peterborough, or not?
- Has a sense of community at Trent contributed to your feelings of belonging, or not?
  - If yes:
    - What were the features that made up that community? Can you elaborate on them?
    - Are there community features that were missing in Peterborough, or not? Can you elaborate on them?
  - If no:
    - Why do you feel this is the case?
    - What factors were you looking for in a community that could not be found there?
- Follow up: has this influenced your decision to leave Peterborough, or not?

- Have any social relationships contributed to your feelings of belonging, or not? By social relationships, we mean family ties, friendships, connections with peers and faculty at Trent, community groups or clubs etc.
  - Follow up: has this influenced your decision to leave Peterborough, or not?
  
- Have you ever felt unwelcome in Peterborough, or not?
  - Have you faced any language barriers, or not?
  - Have you ever felt unfairly treated, or not?
    - If yes: Can you elaborate on this?
  - Follow up: has this influenced your decision to leave Peterborough, or not?
  
- Are entertainment and recreation activities readily available in Peterborough, or not?
  - Has this influenced your decision to leave Peterborough, or not?
  
- Have any other social features of Peterborough influenced your decision to leave, or not?

## **HOUSING**

Do you live in Peterborough?

If yes:

- Can you describe your experience in finding housing?
- Can you describe your housing conditions and affordability?
- Have factors related to housing influenced your decision to live in Peterborough? Such factors include costs, conditions, accessibility, support in finding housing, treatment by landlords, or any other housing-related experiences.

## **PROBES**

- Have you felt unfairly treated or not while looking for housing or living in Peterborough?

If no:

- Have you ever lived in Peterborough, or not?
  - If yes: What were your reasons for leaving?
    - Can you describe your experience in finding housing?
    - Can you describe your housing conditions and affordability?
  - Have factors related to housing influenced your decision to leave Peterborough? Such factors include costs, conditions, accessibility, support in finding housing, treatment by landlords, or any other housing-related experiences.
  
- If not: What are the reasons for that?
  - Have factors related to housing influenced your decision to live outside of Peterborough? Such factors include costs, conditions, accessibility, support in finding housing, treatment by landlords, or any other housing-related experiences.

## **EMPLOYMENT**

### **Current Students**

- Have you looked for or have you found employment in Peterborough or not?

If yes:

- Did you face any challenges or advantages, or not?
- If yes: what were they?

- Follow up: Has this influenced your decision to leave Peterborough, or not?

- Can you describe your experience in looking for employment?
- Has this influenced your decision to leave Peterborough, or not?

If no:

- Why not?

### **Probes:**

- Have you felt unfairly treated when looking for employment in Peterborough, or not?
  - Has this influenced your decision to leave Peterborough, or not?
  - if work related to your degree were available in Peterborough, would you consider returning to Peterborough postgraduation, or not?

- Have any other features of Peterborough's employment market influenced your decision to leave, or not?

**Alumni Students:**

- Are you aware of any jobs available in your field or not?
- How do you perceive employment opportunities in your chosen career path in Peterborough?

Follow up: Has this influenced your decision to leave Peterborough, or not?

- Are there any specific challenges or advantages you have faced when seeking employment in Peterborough, or not?

**Probes:**

- Have you felt unfairly treated when looking for employment in Peterborough, or not?
- Have these challenges or advantages influenced your decision to leave Peterborough, or not?

- Have any other features of Peterborough's employment market influenced your decision to leave, or not?

**LEVEL OF SUPPORT**

**Current students only:** When you first came to Peterborough, did you receive support from the University to ease your transition, or not?

**PROBES:**

If yes:

- Were any supports and services beneficial to your transition, or not?
  - If yes: which were most beneficial? and In what ways were they helpful?
  - If no: why not? And, Are there any ways these services/supports could be improved, or not?

- Did the level of support you received upon arrival influence your decision to leave Peterborough, or not?
  - If yes: Can you describe the ways in which it impacted your decision to leave?

If no:

- Were you aware of any support available, or not?
  - If yes: which ones?
  - If no: is there any way these supports/services could have been made more accessible, or not?
- Did the level of support you received upon arrival influence your decision to leave Peterborough, or not?
  - If yes: Can you describe the ways in which it impacted your decision to leave?

Follow up:

- Did you receive support in Peterborough outside of the University or not?
  - If yes: Can you describe the level of support received?
  - Follow-up yes/no: Did this influence your decision to leave, or not?
- Are there any support or services that would have made your transition easier, or not?

**Both but phrased for current students:** Have you received ongoing support from Trent during your time at the University?

**PROBES:**

- Have you received support from Trent in navigating immigration-related issues, or not?
  - If yes: have they been helpful? If yes, How have they been helpful?
- Does the process of becoming a Permanent Resident impact your decision to pursue becoming a Canadian Citizen, or not?
  - Has the level of support in this process, provided by Trent influenced your decision to leave Peterborough, or not?
  - Are you aware of any immigration or employment support available for international students at Trent?
    - If yes:

- Which resources are aware of? Have you been able to utilize these resources, or not?
  - Have they been helpful, or not? If yes, How have they been helpful?

If no:

- Do you have any recommendations for how to make these resources more accessible, or not?
- Have you received support from Trent in finding housing?
  - If yes: have they been helpful? If yes, How have they been helpful?
- Have you received academic support from Trent, or not?
  - If yes: have they been helpful? If yes, How have they been helpful?
- Have you received counseling services from Trent, or not?
  - If yes: have they been helpful? If yes, How have they been helpful?
- Does Trent provide adequate support for any other needs, or not?

If no:

- Can you elaborate on this?
  - Has this influenced your decision to leave Peterborough, or not?

If yes/no:

- Has this influenced your decision to leave Peterborough, or not?

- Has the level of support you received influenced your decision to leave Peterborough, or not?
  - If yes: can you elaborate on this?

**Both but phrased for current students:** Have you received ongoing support in Peterborough during your time at the University?

**PROBES:**

- Have you received support from Peterborough in navigating immigration-related issues, or not?
  - If yes: have they been helpful? If yes, How have they been helpful?

- Does the process of becoming a Permanent Resident impact your decision to pursue becoming a Canadian Citizen, or not?
    - Has the level of support in this process, provided in Peterborough influenced your decision to leave Peterborough, or not?
    - Are you aware of any immigration or employment support available for international students in Peterborough?
      - If yes:
        - Which resources are aware of? Have you been able to utilize these resources, or not?
          - Have they been helpful, or not? If yes, How have they been helpful?
      - If no:
        - Do you have any recommendations for how to make these resources more accessible, or not?
  - Have you received support in Peterborough in finding housing?
    - If yes: have they been helpful? If yes, How have they been helpful?
  - Do the supports available in Peterborough provide adequate support for any other needs, or not?
    - If no:
      - Can you elaborate on this?
        - Has this influenced your decision to leave Peterborough, or not?
    - If yes/no:
      - Has this influenced your decision to leave Peterborough, or not?
- 
- Has the level of support you received influenced your decision to leave Peterborough, or not?
    - If yes: can you elaborate on this?

## **Transit within and outside Peterborough**

**WITHIN–Both but phrased for current students:** Could you describe your experience with the Transportation system within Peterborough? I.e., Buses, taxis, parking ect.

- Have you been able to navigate the Peterborough bus system or not?
  - Are the bus routes clear and accessible or not?
  - Do the buses run frequently enough or not?
  - Have you faced any issues with the Peterborough bus system or not?
  - (If applicable) In relation to other cities' bus systems, how would compare the bus system in Peterborough?
    - Is it better or worse?
  - Do you have any recommendations on ways to improve the Peterborough bus system or not?
- Has Trent provided any support to help you navigate the Peterborough bus system or not?
- Has Peterborough provided any support to help you navigate the Peterborough bus system or not?
- Has the Peterborough bus system influenced your decision to leave Peterborough or not?
- Can you describe your experience with taxi/y-drive services in Peterborough?
  - Are taxi/y-drive services accessible?
  - Are taxi/y-drive services affordable?
  - Do you have any recommendations to improve the taxi/y-drive services in Peterborough?
- Do you have a car/do you drive in Peterborough?

If yes:

Do you drive to the Trent campus?

If yes:

  - Is parking at Trent affordable?
  - Is parking at Trent accessible?
  - Do you have any recommendations to improve parking at Trent?

If no:

- Why is that?

How has been your experience driving in Peterborough?

- Is parking in Peterborough affordable?
- Is parking in Peterborough accessible?
- Do you have any recommendations to improve parking in Peterborough?

Has the Peterborough transit system influenced your decision to leave Peterborough, or not?

- If yes: can elaborate on how it has influenced your decision?
  - If the Peterborough transit system was more efficient would you have considered staying in Peterborough?

### **OUTSIDE–Both but phrased for current students:**

Can you describe your experience with transportation into and outside of Peterborough? By this we mean transportation from Peterborough to another location or from another location to Peterborough.

- Does Peterborough have an accessible transportation system to leave and return to the city?
- Have you been able to find transportation to arrive at your out-of-town destinations?
- Is the transportation into and outside of Peterborough affordable?
- Is the transportation system to leave or return to the city simple or complex?
  - Does it provide ease or confusion or neither?

### **FINAL QUESTION**

#### **(Current)**

Knowing what you have experienced, would you still make the decision to study in Peterborough?

#### **(Alumni)**

Looking back, would you have made the same decision to stay or leave Peterborough after graduating?

**[FOR THOSE WHO LEFT: ‘EVERYTHING CONSIDERED, WHAT WOULD HAVE HAD TO CHANGE FOR YOU TO HAVE STAYED IN PETERBOROUGH’**

**[FOR THOSE WHO INTEND TO LEAVE: ‘EVERYTHING CONSIDERED, WHAT WOULD HAVE TO CHANGE FOR YOU TO STAY IN PETERBOROUGH’**