

**MSc Economic Geography**  
**Master thesis**

*"Exploring Migration Intentions and Education Choices Among Adolescents from the Wadden "*

This study examines migration intentions and education choices among adolescents from the Wadden islands and answers the research question to what extent are the migration intentions of adolescents from the Wadden islands reflected in their educational choices. Combining quantitative and qualitative data, the research explores the factors influencing their decisions and the relationship between migration intentions and educational trajectories. Future labour market opportunities emerged as a key factor in shaping migration intentions. Other important factors are community ties and island specific determinants such as accessibility and the tight housing market. Also gender differences in were considered but had a small impact on migration intentions. Migration intentions seemed to specifically impact the educational trajectories of those who had the intention they wanted to return. As they would have jobs available for after their study and their educational choices align with the career opportunities given to them. These findings show that migration intentions alone do not solely determine educational trajectories. Overall, this research enhances our understanding of the complex dynamics involved in migration and education choices among adolescents.

## Colophon

Title: "Exploring Migration Intentions and Education Choices Among Adolescents from the Wadden islands "

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Version: Final

Date: September 2023

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Context and Relevance

Islands have become the focus of many migration and labour market studies (Armstrong et al., 2014). Islands differ from regions on the mainland because of their unusual demography, lower activity rates (specifically female activity rates), higher self-employment rates and seasonal employment (Copus et al., 2006). Similarly to many rural areas in North-West Europe, they are experiencing a net out-migration of adolescents. Highly educated adolescents in particular are inclined to leave rural areas or islands. This out-migration is often motivated by a search for better employment opportunities or a better lifestyle. The loss of these highly educated adolescents is also called a 'brain drain' (Kooiman et al., 2018). This net-out migration of adolescents can lead to a downward spiral of economic activity, an ageing population or in some cases even depopulation in rural areas or islands (Armstrong et al., 2014; Thissen et al., 2010).

Policymakers are focusing on this 'brain drain' as it is seen as a threat to the economic development and the reputation of these areas (Stockdale, 2006). Generally, it can be said that in Europe an increasing number of rural areas are dealing with a declining population. This is related to the European population's ageing and the increasing participation of rural adolescents in higher education and their migration to urban areas (Findlay et al., 2009).

While some adolescents choose to leave the islands in search of better employment and educational opportunities in urban settings (Guan and McElroy, 2012; Jentsch and Shucksmith, 2004), it is noteworthy that not all adolescents leave their home region, and some opt to return after completing their education (Corijn and Manting, 2000). Additionally, the availability of attractive employment opportunities for highly educated individuals can significantly influence the decision to stay or leave rural areas, including small islands (Bjarnason and Thorlindsson, 2006; Spilanis et al., 2014). As future job prospects and future education are among the most relevant topics in the decision-making process for adolescents to migrate away from their home region (Bjarnason and Thorlindsson, 2006; Mulder and Clark, 2002) other factors also play a part in this decision-making process. Studies have found that a strong connection with the community and deep-rooted family ties are important factors, as adolescents who have a positive connection to the community are less likely to move away (Bjarnason and Thorlindsson, 2006; Eacott and Sonn, 2006). Also, studies have found a gender difference when it comes to rural migration (Skaptadottir, 2000).

The Wadden islands face specific challenges that can influence the migration decisions of adolescents. Firstly, the rising costs of housing on the islands make them less attractive for adolescents to stay in their home region (Gersdorf, 2023; Partoer, 2014). Construction expenses and non-residents purchasing properties contribute to the inflated housing market (Gersdorf, 2023). Additionally, the decline in accessibility poses a significant challenge (Verweij et al., 2021). Boat connections, particularly ferry trips, require more time and cost than regular public transport on the mainland (Armstrong et al., 2008; Verweij et al., 2021). These housing and boat connections challenges can impact adolescents' migration intentions from the Wadden.

Within these dynamics of adolescent migration, the transition from secondary education to higher education is a crucial moment that often prompts adolescents to consider migration. Which is why this is also the target group in this study. The move away from home for continuing education is the first major step in the transition to completely independent living (Mulder and Clark, 2002). As stated before, there is an ongoing trend of adolescents leaving rural areas and islands. And specifically for the Wadden islands, the reason for many adolescents leaving is to participate in secondary education as it is not available on the islands themselves.

Given these dynamics, this study aims to analyse the migration behaviour of adolescents from the Wadden Islands after completing high school, specifically focusing on how their educational choices and upbringing on the islands impact their decision to move or stay. By gathering and analysing both quantitative and qualitative data, this research aims to provide insights into the migration patterns of Wadden Island adolescents and their educational decision-making processes. Many studies have already been done on rural migration and island migration (Armstrong et al., 2008). This research wants to add to the academic knowledge on the topic by conducting a case study on adolescents from the Wadden islands and focusing on pivotal moments in an adolescent's life when it comes to migration (Mulder and Clark, 2002). By doing so, the research also has a societal relevance. Out-migration of adolescents is a serious issue and the focus of many policies. Alongside this, it is also relevant for maintaining liveability on the Wadden islands (Partoer, 2014).

## 1.2 Geographical Demarcation

For this study adolescents from the Wadden-islands are chosen because the Wadden Islands are one of the few relatively isolated communities in the Netherlands (Provincie Friesland, 2007). Figure 1 is a map which shows the Wadden-islands. As can be seen on the map, to reach the islands one must cross the Wadden Sea. For this study, only the inhabited Dutch Wadden islands will be studied. These islands have a surface of around 382 square km and have around 24000 inhabitants, of which around half live on Texel (CBS, 2023).

The Dutch Wadden Sea Region covers the area between the mouth of the Ems and the North Sea. The current Wadden Sea islands are part of it, as is the former Zuiderzee island of Wieringen. And of course, it includes the Wadden Sea itself. The Wadden Sea is the shallow plain of unbanked salt marshes, mud flats and shoals, cut through by channels and gullies, flooded by the water at high tide, with large areas falling dry at low tide.



Figure 1. Map of the Wadden area (Ecomare)

## 1.3 Research Question

This study aims to analyze the migration behaviour of adolescents from the Wadden islands. To do this quantitative and qualitative data is gathered and analyzed. This leads to the following research question;

*To what extent are the migration intentions of adolescents from the Wadden islands reflected in their educational choices?*

The research question focuses on understanding how the migration intentions of adolescents from the Wadden islands relate to the choices they make regarding their education. This study seeks to understand the relationship between migration intentions and educational choices among adolescents from the Wadden islands. The research question can be divided into two interconnected aspects:

1. Do the migration intentions of these adolescents align with the types of education they pursue? In other words, do those who aspire to leave the islands tend to select educational paths that correspond to their plans to relocate?
2. To what extent do migration intentions influence the educational choices made by these adolescents? By examining the interplay between migration intentions and educational decisions, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how adolescents navigate their choices concerning both migration and future education.

## 1.4 Structure and Methodology

This study is structured as follows: Chapter 2 will further outline the core concepts such as the difference between the intention to migrate and actual migration and explain different outlooks on rural adolescent out-migration and deep dive into the reasons adolescents chose whether or not to migrate. Chapter 2 will end with drawing hypotheses from the studied literature and the conceptual framework. Chapter 3 discusses the quantitative part of the study and shows the results. Chapter 4 presents the results of the qualitative data analysis and gives the results. Chapter 5 will discuss the findings and reflect on the research process and comes back to the hypotheses. This Chapter will also give future research recommendations. Chapter 6 concludes the study.

## 2. Literature Review

This chapter starts by discussing the concept of the out-migration of adolescents from rural areas and what impact education and future job prospects influence the choice to migrate or stay. First 2 approaches to adolescent out-migration are discussed, secondly, the distinction between the intention and actual migration is discussed and third specific factors that determine out-migration are discussed. This literature review is mostly based on research which focuses specifically on rural out-migration and only in section 2.4 it is more specifically based on islands. This is because more is known about rural out-migration among adolescents and there are many similarities in migration intentions between adolescents in both kinds of regions. Lastly, a summary is made and conclusions are drawn regarding the relevant relationships in the form of hypotheses and a conceptual framework is presented. These expectations are made based on the relevant academic literature, later to be tested using the data gathered in the research.

### 2.1 Regional and Individual Perspective

Rural adolescent out-migration can be approached from 2 perspectives; (1) the perspective of the region and (2) the perspective of the individual. The first approach looks at the impact migration has on the economic development of the area and the impact it has on social life in rural areas (Stockdale, 2002). Relevant aspects are the type of employment available in the region, the characteristics of the supply of labour in the region as well as the age structure and social cohesion within the local communities. Adolescents play an important part in the economic and social capital within rural regions as they are supposed to start their adult life within the home region and community. Economic and social capital within rural regions is seen as factors for success. (Thissen et al., 2010) And adolescents play an important part in this as they are supposed to start their adult life by forming their own identity within their home region and community. Considering this perspective, the net out-migration of a young population is considered a failure (Stolle and Hooghe, 2004).

In the second perspective, the individual perspective, it is less important where a person is born for future life decisions. It is becoming more common, and socially accepted that adolescents are socially mobile and are focusing more on education and employment opportunities outside of their home region. Attachment to the place you originate from is no longer decisive in the identity formation of rural adolescents (Jones, 1999). Highly educated people have a less strong bond with their home region and are more mobile. (Gustafson, 2001). Taking this individual perspective, the successful development of a region and its community is heavily dependent on return migrants or people who have accumulated human and social capital outside of the region. This ability to retain these kinds of people and attract return migrants is dependent on the region and its characteristics (Thissen et al., 2010). Rural areas are becoming increasingly less attractive places to live for adolescents and net out-migration is common in these regions (Harts, 2008).

## 2.2 Intention to Migrate

Taking this second, individual, perspective, there is a net out-migration of adolescents from rural to more urban areas. Several factors influence the choice to move away or stay in the home region. This section provides a better insight into the distinction between the intention to migrate and actual migration. The relevance of discussing the difference between migration intentions and actual migration in an academic context lies in the recognition that while theory suggests a strong correlation between intention and action, the literature reveals instances where the two do not align, as highlighted by Glendinning et al. (2003). This distinction is crucial as it emphasizes the need to account for the complexities and various influencing factors that can lead to deviations from migration intentions, allowing for a better understanding of migration patterns and decision-making processes. The theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975), shows that migration intentions are, generally, a strong predictor of actual migration rates. However, a slight difference in the intention to migrate and actual migration remains. Whereas some might stay when they planned to leave, others might do otherwise. In some cases, the migration takes place at a different time than was intended or some might come back when it was not planned. (Glendinning et al., 2003). The difference in intent of migration and actual migration is affected by different reasons such as a lack of financial resources, personal circumstances and interpersonal pressure, prior experiences of migration, changes in personal circumstances, such as marriage, divorce, childbirth, illness or death in the family, career advancement or unemployment (De Jong, 2000).

## 2.4 Determinants of Out Migration

A model that looks into interregional migration is the 'escalator model'. Within small urbanized countries such as the Netherlands, the out-migration of the young population is part of the national or sub-national migration system (Floor et al., 2006). Fielding (1992) linked social and geographical mobility during an individual's life course and expressed this in the concept of 'escalator regions'. The employment opportunities these regions offer can propel the careers of in-migrants. In the three-stage model of the escalator region, young people move to this region, advance in their careers and move away once they have realized this upward social mobility and move to a region with lower living costs and what some consider a higher quality of life. By moving out of the region they step off the escalator (Kloosterman & Musterd, 2001). In the Netherlands, the region called the Randstad, which broadly consists of the four main cities; Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht can be considered the escalator region as the Randstad offers the densest labour market in the Netherlands (Kooiman et al., 2018). This is in line with findings from Venhorst et al (2011) who found that higher-educated graduates often move from university cities in other Dutch regions to the Randstad, with employment as the main driver. On a national scale, this region can be considered an escalator region however, on a much smaller scale, for the three Northern provinces the city of Groningen can be considered an escalator region (CBS, 2008). The city attracts a lot of adolescents who move to the city to enjoy an education and many leave the city after graduating. Therefore, it can be expected that this is also true for adolescents from the Wadden-islands located in these provinces.



Migration decisions of adolescents are influenced by the characteristics of globalization and individualization, which are common across North-West European countries. This net-out migration of adolescents can lead to a downward spiral of economic activity, an ageing population or in some cases even leads to depopulation in rural areas or islands (Armstrong et al., 2014; Thissen et al., 2010). This is not only at the NUTS-2 level with rural regions which have a considerable distance from main metropolitan regions in Europe but also concerns rural regions at the NUTS-3 level within smaller urbanized countries like the Netherlands. Social mobility is increasingly presupposing geographical mobility (Stockdale, 2004). Adolescents are becoming less and less dependent on the opportunities in their home region (Thissen et al., 2010). However, the effects of these factors vary across regions due to cultural differences, education systems, and employment structures (Steenbekkers et al., 2006). With regard to patterns of leaving the parental home, the Netherlands aligns with the Northern European pattern of early home-leaving (Billari et al., 2001). In particular, rural regions and islands have distinct settlement histories that shape adolescents' sense of belonging, identification with the region, perceptions of employment opportunities, and migration history (Kooiman et al., 2018). Islands, characterized by smaller land areas, population size, isolation, and a distinctive "experiential identity," foster strong connections to the home region and family roots, making them particularly prone to adolescent out-migration (Gillis, 2004; King, 2009). These islands often have relatively homogenous and intimate societies, where residents have mutual acquaintances and share local knowledge, contributing to a strong sense of common identity.

#### 2.4.2 Connection to the Home Region

A strong attachment to place and strong community ties are often associated with adolescents who have the desire to stay in their rural home region and potentially return to it in the future (Bjarnason and Thorlindsson, 2006; Eacott and Sonn, 2006). This attachment is particularly pronounced among adolescents with deep family roots in their rural home community (Thissen et al., 2010). The identification of adolescents with the home region is another important factor influencing migration decisions. Adolescents who have a strong relationship with their home region are more likely to choose to stay in the region or return to the region after enjoying secondary education (Reichert et al., 2011; Thissen et al., 2010). Similarly, a strong connection to the local community significantly impacts migration intentions. Conversely, a sense of feeling confined within a rural community can also trigger out-migration among adolescents (Bjarnason and Thorlindsson, 2006). Studies in various regions have shown that negative perceptions of the region among adolescents are correlated with increased migration intentions. These considerations suggest the existence of a structural model for adolescent migration intentions, which is influenced by individual opportunities, economic interests, and identity formation (Thissen et al., 2010).

Research has also revealed that adolescents who move to urban areas for educational or occupational opportunities are more likely to express a desire to return if they hold a positive view of their home region or have strong family connections there (Bjarnason, 2014). These findings indicate that a strong connection to the home region and family roots serve as predictors for migration, particularly on islands where relatively homogenous and intimate societies foster a strong sense of common identity and familiarity with the local environment (King, 2009). Adolescent migration intentions can reflect an overall assessment of the community's attractiveness to potential in-migration and represent an overall evaluation of the area and community (Bjarnason, 2014; Eacott and Sonn, 2006).

#### 2.4.6 Male versus Female Perspective

Aside from this, there is also a distinction between male and female adolescents' migration intentions (Skaptadottir, 2000). Young females often have higher educational aspirations than males which means they are more inclined to move to a new urban setting, as rural areas are less likely to be able to offer these educational opportunities (Stockdale, 2002; Bjarnason and Thorlindsson, 2006). For instance, in a study conducted by Kloep et al. (2003), young women rated the importance of going

to university higher than young men and found that young females found little understanding of their future academic and career plans among their male peers. Also, females often have more interest in working in the service industry which can be pursued more in urban areas rather than rural areas (Skaptadóttir, 2000). Another aspect of the rural that pushes females to more urban settings is the closeness of small communities which is experienced by females as ‘oppressive, repressive, suppressive and obsessive’ (Stockdale, 2002). Additionally, recreational activities in rural areas are usually more male-oriented, which leads to frustration among female adolescents (Dahlström, 1996; Pretty et al., 2003). This leads to the belief that there is a higher intention to migrate among young females from rural areas, which is in line with the findings by Bjarnason and Thorlindsson (2006).

#### 2.4.4 Wadden-island Specific Determents

This research focuses on analysing the migration intentions of adolescents from the Wadden Islands in the Netherlands, taking into account their background characteristics, education, and employment opportunities. The Wadden Islands are experiencing an ageing population, except for Vlieland, where the ageing rate exceeds the Dutch average (CBS, 2023). A study conducted by Partoer (2014) reveals that adolescents on the islands highly value the environment and community. However, challenges in the housing market, labour market, boat connections, and tourism industry raise concerns about living on the islands.

The rising costs of housing on the Wadden Islands pose a significant issue for residents, making the islands less attractive for adolescents to remain in their home region. The increased expenses are mainly attributed to the additional costs associated with constructing houses on the islands. Additionally, non-residents purchasing properties on the islands as second homes or for rental purposes contribute to the inflated housing market (Gersdorf, 2023). Adding to this, usually, in small villages the supply of houses consists primarily of owner occupied dwellings, whereas most dwellings in large cities are rented (Clark & Dieleman, 1996). This also true for all the Wadden islands, except for Vlieland (CBS, 2022).

Furthermore, the research conducted by Partoer (2014) highlights the impact of boat connections on the islands. Accessing services that are not available on the islands often requires significant time and cost, especially compared to the mainland. The frequency of ferry trips relative to regular public transport is considerably higher, particularly for the Wadden Islands, where ferry crossings across the Wadden Sea pose increasing challenges. Dredging activities to maintain fairways for ferries have negative consequences for aquatic life and conflict with UNESCO’s core values. Figure 2 illustrates the increasing trend of dredging over the years, exacerbating timetable constraints and affecting the livability of island inhabitants (Verweij et al., 2021).

Consequently, these challenges regarding housing, boat connections, and dredging pose significant issues for the residents of the Wadden Islands, potentially impacting their migration decisions. The migration patterns of adolescents are influenced by pivotal moments in their lives, particularly during their school and work transitions. These two distinct phases offer unique opportunities for young individuals to explore options beyond their island community (Mulder and Clark, 2002; Bjarnason, 2014). Adolescents often migrate during their schooling years in pursuit of higher education, seeking educational institutions ((Mulder and Clark, 2002). Similarly, as they transition into the workforce, some adolescents may migrate to seek employment in industries that are more abundant or lucrative elsewhere (Bjarnason and Thorlindsson, 2006).

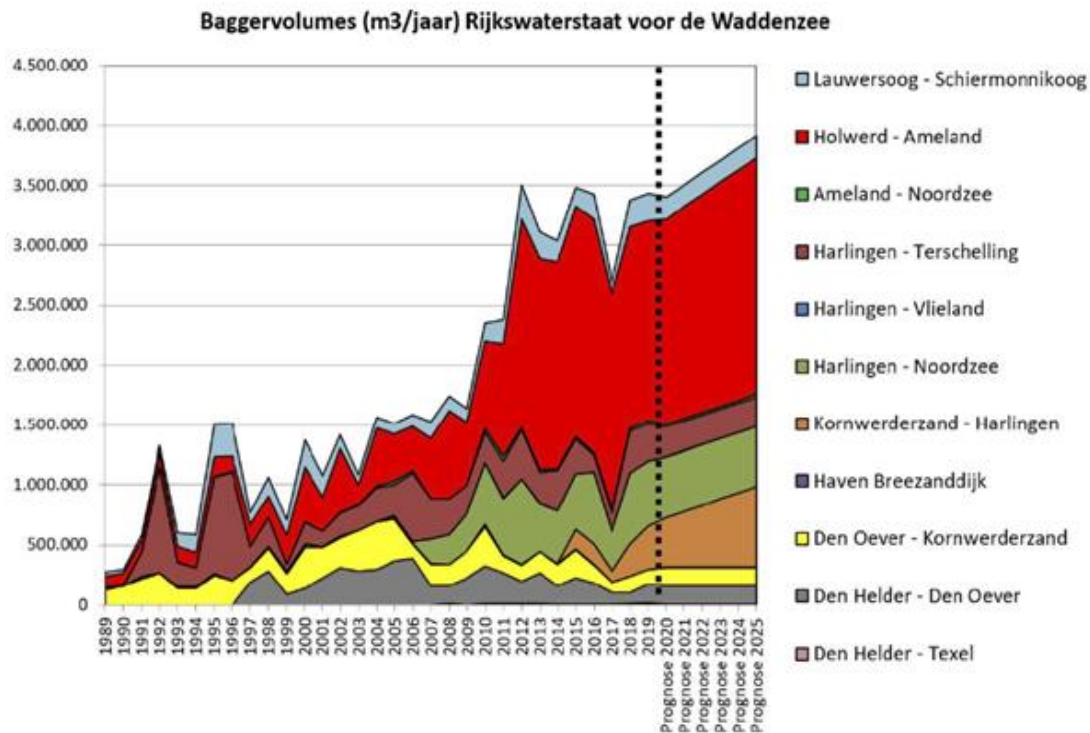


Figure 2. Dredging volume in m<sup>3</sup> per year (Rijkswaterstaat)

#### 2.4.1 Labour Market and Education

Adolescents with higher educational and occupational aspirations are more likely to express an intention to leave rural communities (Bjarnason and Thorlindsson, 2006). It is not solely the lack of jobs that drives ambitious adolescents away from rural areas, but rather the specific types of jobs available (Seyfrit et al., 2010). Migration intentions among rural adolescents are closely tied to their expectations of finding better job opportunities elsewhere, reflecting an overall assessment of the perceived quality of educational and occupational prospects in different regions (Bjarnason, 2014; Thissen et al., 2010). This connection between migration intentions and employment prospects is particularly evident among highly educated individuals, who are more inclined to migrate from rural areas to pursue independent lives in urban settings (Aassve et al., 2002; Harts, 2008). Additionally, limited educational opportunities in rural areas contribute to the influence of education on migration decisions, as higher education levels are often associated with better access to information about opportunities and living conditions in other regions (Bjarnason and Thorlindsson, 2006; Haapanen and Böckermann, 2017). Moreover, the labour market dynamics in rural areas, characterized by a scarcity of employment opportunities, especially for highly educated individuals, further shape migration patterns (Bjarnason and Thorlindsson, 2006). On small islands, where higher education options may be limited and labour markets differ from those in other regions, the urge to migrate is even stronger among adolescents seeking better prospects (Armstrong et al., 2014). Consequently, education plays a significant role in migration intentions, partly due to the limited educational opportunities in rural areas, and its impact is amplified by the differential earnings potential, access to information, and new labour market opportunities associated with higher education levels (Haapanen and Böckermann, 2017).

Whether adolescents base their educational choice on a future in their home region. Literature shows that the limited options for higher educated people sometimes prevent people from moving back (Reichert et al. 2011). A job prospect is a precondition for return migrants. In some cases, adolescents chose an education specifically to be able to return to their home region or they have a business to return to such as a family business or someone in a position retiring. However, this is only when

adolescents specifically want to return (Reichert et al, 2011; Niedomysl & Amcoff, 2011). For example, by enrolling in two-year programs in accounting, mechanics, and the like. Other examples are people having a job waiting upon their return: in farming, in a family business, or with an employer who supported employee training. And then there are other examples like people having the intent to return with a degree in health care who had nurtured a relationship with an established health practitioner in their rural community, who was approaching retirement. The opportunity to take over a practice allowed them to return home while still pursuing a career in their field (Reichert et al. 2011). Nevertheless, there are return migrants and for many of them, the reason to return is related to family ties or family reasons of one kind or another (Laoire, 2007). People who move back to the community where they grew up often do so to be close to their parents, extended family and friends, which in turn is often part of a broader desire based on community and kinship (Farrell et al., 2012). Additionally, a great majority of return migrants do so to raise their children in their home region and for the quality of rural life. For this group finding a job or a way of making a living is not solely the reason for moving, but instead is a precondition for returning (Reichert et al. 2011). And whereas labour markets in rural areas have limitations, certainly for higher educated people, these limitations were overcome by adolescents who left intending to come back.

## 2.5 Hypotheses

From the theory and studies discussed above, some hypotheses can be drawn which will be discussed in this final chapter of the theoretical framework. First off, the escalator model and the individual and regional perspectives on rural youth migration were discussed. The first explains how an urban region can attract adolescents to gain upward mobility. The second, explains how rural out-migration can be looked at from a regional or individual perspective.

Also, the difference between the intention to migrate and actual migration rates was discussed. In general, migration intentions are good predictors of actual migration (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). Factors that determine migration intentions are related to education and employment opportunities which often lack in rural areas (Bjarnasson, 2014; Thissen et al., 2010). This leads to the following hypotheses;

*H1; There is a higher chance adolescents want to move away from the Wadden-islands if they are participating in higher education.*

*H2; A large share of the migration motives are related to (better) employment opportunities elsewhere.*

Related to education and the labour market, studies show that it is often reflected in their educational choices when adolescents move away to enjoy secondary education outside of their rural home region with the intent of coming back (Reichert et al., 2011).

*H3; With adolescents moving away with the intent of coming back this is reflected in their education choice.*

Many studies also show that family roots influence migration intentions. Adolescents are more likely to stay in the home region if they are close to the community and have deep-rooted family roots in their home region (Bjarnason and Thorlindsson, 2006). This leads to the following hypothesis;

*H3; There is a higher chance adolescents want to migrate from the Wadden-islands if they don't have family living on the Wadden-islands.*

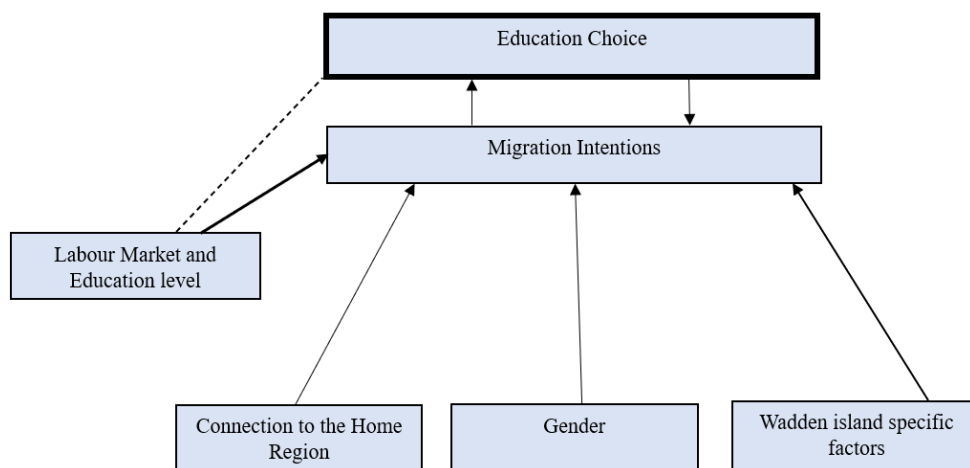
And finally, studies have shown that there is a difference in migration intentions between female and male adolescents. Young females often have higher educational aspirations than their male counterparts and have more interest in jobs that are less likely to be available in rural areas. Also, sometimes young females have less attachment to their home region as they find it ‘oppressive, repressive, suppressive and obsessive’(Skaptadottir, 2000; Stockdale, 2002). Considering the secluded nature of islands and the so-called ‘islandness’ mentioned by Armstrong et al. (2004) this leads to the following hypothesis;

*H4; There is a higher chance female adolescents from the Wadden-islands will have the intention to migrate than their male counterparts.*

## 2.6 Conceptual Model

The conceptual model in Figure 3 is a visual representation of the literature review. A conceptual model can be defined as a network existing of interlinked concepts that together provide a comprehensive understanding of phenomena (Jabareen, 2009). As stated in Section 2.2, migration intentions are, generally, a strong predictor of actual migration rates (Glendinning et al., 2003; Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). Therefore, in the model only migration intention is mentioned. This research aims to answer the research question; to what extent are the migration intentions of adolescents from the Wadden islands reflected in their educational choices. As stated in Section 2.4 there are several determinants of out migration; labour market and education, connection to the home region, gender and island specific factors. In the model the influence these have on migration intention is visualized by the small arrows. As mentioned in Section 2.4.1, earlier research shows that due to the limited options in terms of work prevent higher educated people to return to rural areas and that a job prospect is often seen as a precondition for return migrants. However, this is only applicable when adolescents want to return (Reichert et al, 2011; Niedomysl & Amcoff, 2011). In Figure 3, the visual representation places the labor market and education determinant slightly higher than the others, with a thicker arrow to signify its relatively stronger influence. Migration intention and education choice are positioned at the top of the model, highlighting their interconnectedness, as indicated by the two arrows that suggest mutual influence between these two factors.

Figure 3. The conceptual model



### 3. Quantitative data analysis

In this Chapter, the quantitative data methodology and results are presented. Firstly, in section 3.1 the descriptive data analysis is presented, later the methodology and finally the results are presented. The quantitative data consists of a survey that was filled out 40 times by high school students in their final year. The survey was filled out anonymously and spread out to the teachers or coordinators in the high schools. The survey questions can be found in Appendix 1. The first section, 3.1 is there to provide a broad overview of the respondents and the outcome of the survey. This part is meant as a brief introduction to qualitative data analysis. Since the survey was not filled out enough to draw definitive conclusions. Also, for further clarity, in Appendix 2 the school system of the Netherlands is briefly explained, which might clarify for the next Chapters.

#### 3.1 Data Gathering

For the data gathering teachers or administrative employers from high schools on the Wadden islands were contacted. Each of the Wadden islands has a high school however, not all the different high schools offer all the different levels or not all different levels can be finished on the Wadden islands. For further explanation on the different levels, see Appendix 2. It's worth highlighting that Texel stands out as the exception, where students can complete all levels of high school directly on the island. In contrast, students pursuing havo and vwo level education on other Wadden islands are required to commute to the mainland to complete their high school journey. To ensure comprehensive data representation, we also reached out to select mainland schools. In total, we contacted seven schools in pursuit of our research objectives. The data collection was executed through an online survey accessible via a provided link and QR code. The survey explicitly communicated that the collected data would be exclusively used for research purposes. Contact information for employees was found through the readily available email addresses found on the schools' official websites. However, it's important to acknowledge that participation in the survey was entirely voluntary. Due to the specific nature of our target group and the optional nature of the survey, the response rate was relatively modest. Consequently, only 40 individuals completed the survey. In the subsequent section, we delve into the descriptive analysis of this collected data.

#### 3.2 Descriptive data analysis

As mentioned before, the survey was filled out 40 times. A sample size of 40 respondents may not provide sufficient statistical power to draw meaningful conclusions or detect significant patterns in your analysis. In statistical analysis, a larger sample size is generally preferred because it enhances the reliability of your findings. A small sample size can lead to a higher margin of error, making it challenging to generalize your results to a larger population accurately (Miočević and Milica, 2020). Therefore, a descriptive approach was used. Descriptive data analysis, as outlined by Johnson (2014), serves as a valuable tool, especially in situations where the dataset is limited in size. It represents the initial stage of data analysis and lays the foundation for further analytical processes and other strategies for how the data should be handled. In section 3.4 the results of the descriptive data analysis is discussed and is explained how these results form the basis for the qualitative data analysis, which is further explained in Chapter 4.

Of the respondents 47,5% identify as female, 45% male and 7,5% would rather not say. The ages of the respondents vary between 15 and 21, the ages 16 and 17 were most common, the first being mentioned 14 times and the second being mentioned 17 times. The results from question 4 in the survey 'Which island are you from' can be found in Table 1. Of the respondents, 57,5% have parents who are born on the island. 70% of the respondent have, aside from their parents other family living

on the island. This can vary between just grandparents or other extended family members such as aunts, uncles and cousins. Just considering the descriptive statistics, it can be said that there are no vwo students who want to live on the island later in their life whereas you do see vmbo students wanting to live there. But since the sample size is so small it is difficult to draw conclusions. Also, by looking at the data, it is visible that fewer females want to live on the island than males. However, the difference is very small.

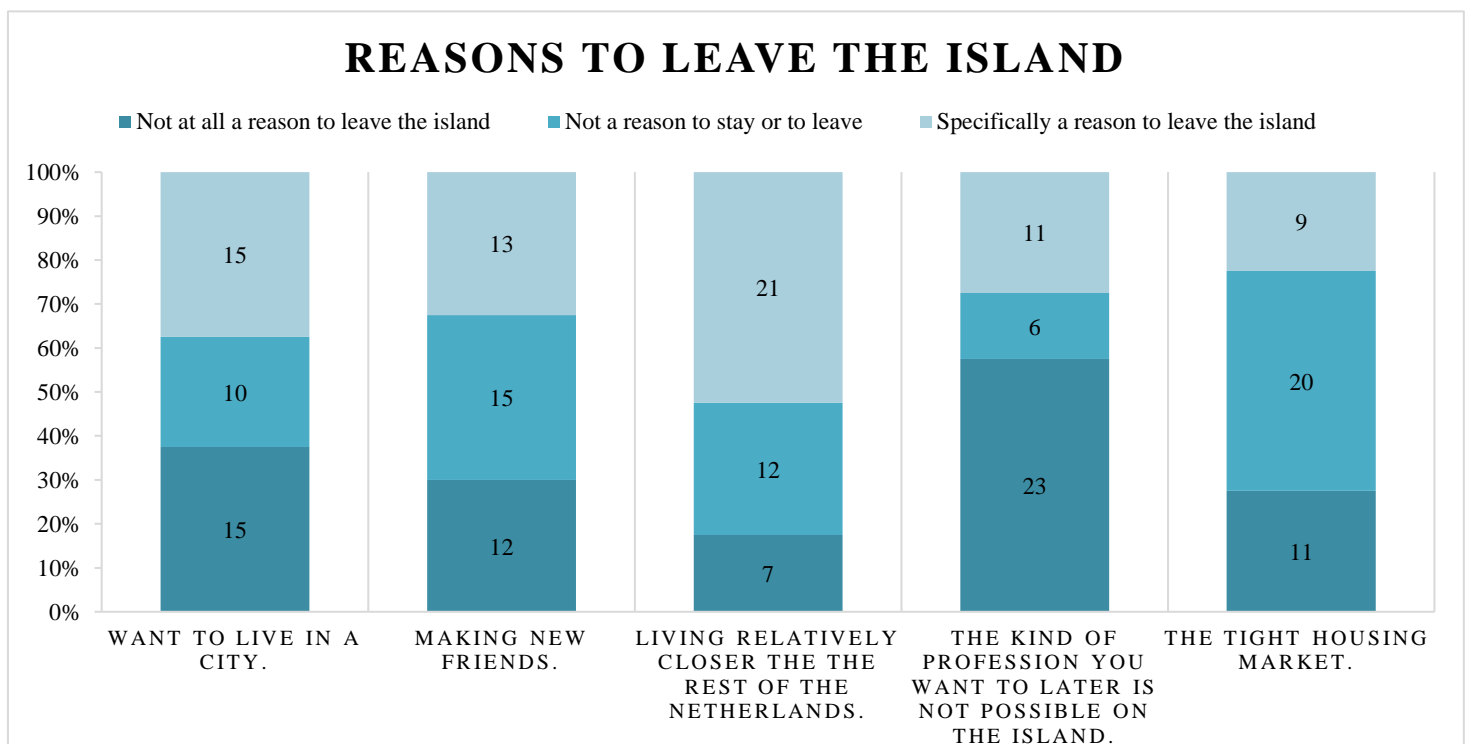
Which island are you from?	
Texel	11 Respondents
Vlieland	5 Respondents
Terschelling	12 Respondents
Ameland	6 Respondents
Schiermonnikoog	6 Respondents

Table 1; Results from question 4 in the survey

Most of the respondents are currently in their final year of havo, 18 to be precise, 7 in vwo, 10 in vmbo-t, 4 in vmbo-kader and 1 in vmbo-basis. 90% of the respondents want to continue their education. The 10% who did not want to continue their educational career often also said they did not know what they wanted to do for work later. From the respondents 95% of the fathers worked and 77,5% of the mothers worked. 72,5% of the respondents said that they did not choose their study specifically because they want to work on the island later on. A large part of the respondents, 42,5% are unsure about whether they want to live on the island.

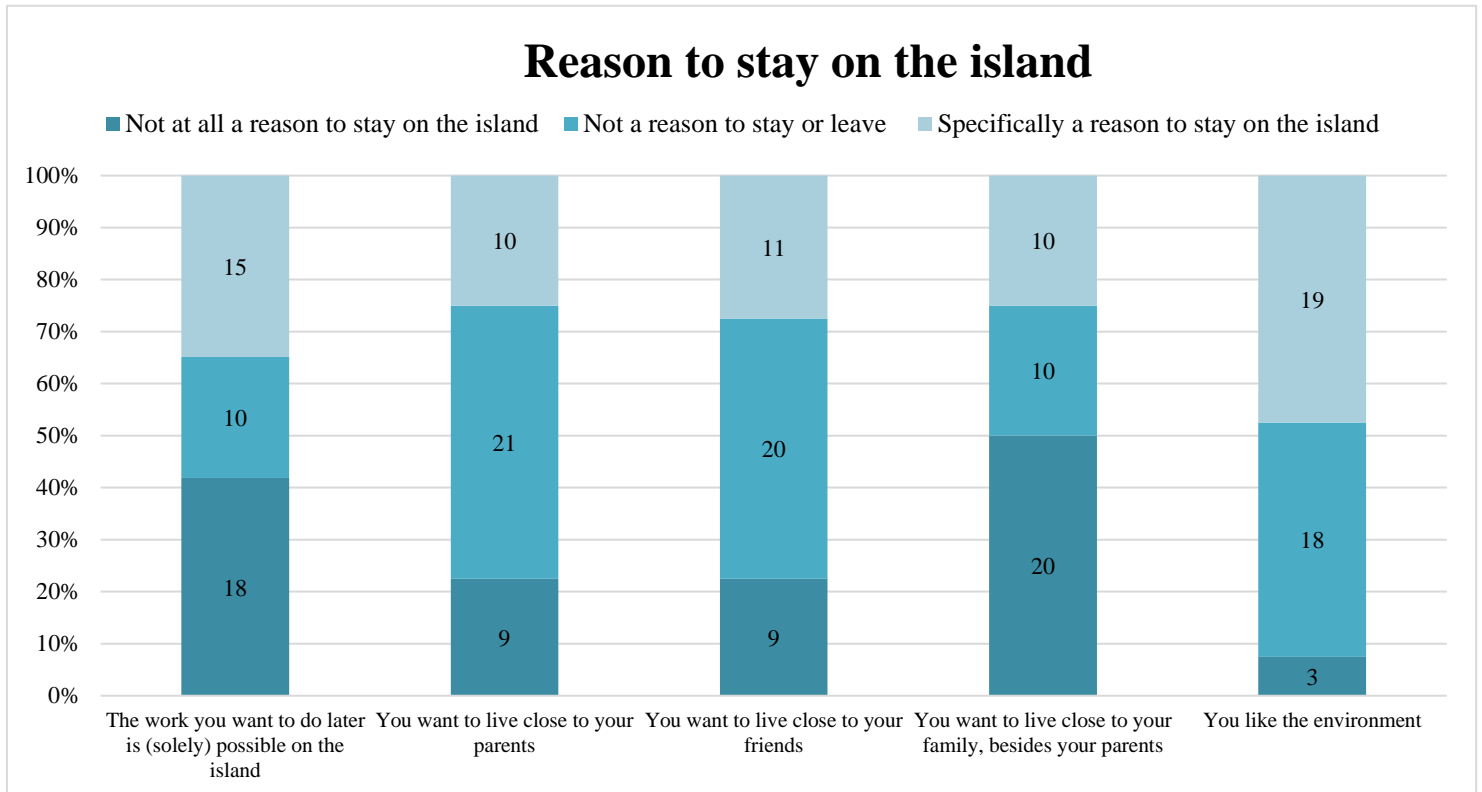
The final questions of the survey were about motivations to either stay on the island or leave the island. The respondents were asked to rate the reasons on a scale from 0-10, the results can be seen in Figure 4 below. In the survey 0 meant that it is not at all a reason to leave the island, 10 is a reason to stay on the island. Additionally, respondents could fill out their reasons to leave many of the respondents mentioned that the boat connection is annoying. Also, it was mentioned several times that the respondents felt it was boring on the island or that it is expensive to live there.

Figure 4 ; Results from questions in the survey



A similar question was asked about the reasons respondents might choose to stay. The reason this question was asked is that research often tends to focus on reasons why adolescents might want to leave their home region. However, the reason one might want to stay is just as important and plays a vital role in migration intentions. The results of the question can be seen in Figure 5. Other reasons respondents gave to stay were that it was quiet on the islands and 2 respondents mentioned that they are going to take over their parents' company.

Figure 5 ; Results from questions in the survey



### 3.2 Results Quantitative Data

The analysis done in this part of the research aims to answer the research question of to what extent the migration intentions of adolescents from the Wadden islands are reflected in their educational choices. In section 2.5 some hypotheses were drawn. One of these was that adolescents who are aiming to participate in higher education are more likely to move away from the Wadden islands. Because of the small sample size, it is difficult to conclude the quantitative data gathered in this research. However, the data does show that there are no vwo students who said that they wanted to live on the island whereas you do see this in the vmbo students, which seems to support the hypothesis.

Against expectations, future job prospects don't seem to have a large impact on the student's migration intentions. In both the stay and leave questions, the means are smaller than 4 and do not seem to have an important impact on the migration intentions of the adolescents. However, travel time, living close to friends and family and the environment seem to have a large impact on why adolescents might want to stay or leave. But this could also be because of the ages of the respondents. The boat connection was often mentioned even when respondents admitted that the ferry trip does not take long it was still described as 'annoying'. And whereas friends and family are important for adolescents in why they would want to stay, it was also mentioned in the survey responses that they



felt the people on the island were boring. However, living close to family and friends was seen as more important than making new friends. This study did not find any significant relation between parents being born on the island and migration intention. Also, the quantitative data did not find any significant relation between females and increased migration intentions. What did stick out was the appreciation for the environment on the islands. This was the most important reason why adolescents might want to stay on the island, as can be seen in Table 3. Also, in the survey it was mentioned several times that they enjoyed the peacefulness on the islands.

The data indicates that participating in higher education may influence migration intentions, as there were no students from the vwo level who expressed a desire to live on the island, whereas some vmbo students did. Future job prospects appeared to have less impact on migration intentions, while factors such as travel time, proximity to friends and family, and the environment played significant roles. Notably, the appreciation for the island's environment and the sense of peacefulness were particularly highlighted. Notably, the data reveals that none of the students from the vwo level expressed a desire to live on the island later in life. This suggests a higher likelihood of vwo students opting for educational opportunities outside the Wadden Islands. On the other hand, some vmbo students indicated a willingness to reside on the island in the future. This may imply that, for certain vmbo students, their educational choices may align with their intention to stay on the island.

The findings provide some insights into the research question regarding the extent to which the migration intentions of adolescents from the Wadden Islands are reflected in their educational choices. However, due to the small sample size and uneven distribution of students across different education levels, caution must be exercised in drawing definitive conclusions. It is important to acknowledge the limitations associated with the small sample size and the need for further research with a larger and more diverse population. By expanding the study's scope, researchers can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between migration intentions and educational choices among adolescents from the Wadden Islands. This will be further discussed in Chapter 5 as the limitations of the research are discussed there.

## 4. Qualitative Data Analysis

In this Chapter the qualitative data will be analysed. First, the Methodology will be discussed in section 4.1 and in section 4.2 the results are discussed. In total 10 interviews were conducted with adolescents from the Wadden.

### 4.1 Methodology

The qualitative data analysis involved conducting semi-structured interviews with adolescents who grew up on the Wadden Islands, aiming to provide a deeper understanding of the pivotal moments in migration: education and entering the labour market. An interview guide was developed based on the literature review presented in Chapter 2 and the quantitative data of which the results are presented in Chapter 3. Clifford et al. (2016) refer to semi-structured interviews, in which the interviews will follow a degree of a predetermined and standardized list of questions. However, it does allow for an open response in the participant's own words to ensure a way to address the issues by the informant and have some flexibility in the interviews. Next to this, semi-structured interviews give a valuable chance to pose open-ended questions, taking into account an extent of deviation that empowers the analyst to figure out the particular viewpoints of respondents. Before the interviews, the research question and the primary goal of the research were explained. This was done to sharpen answers given by the respondents since they were aware of the question the research aimed to answer. As for the interview guide, the literature review and quantitative data results were used to establish a context for the topics. All of the interviews were recorded. Subsequently, the recorded interviews were transcribed. The transcriptions were reviewed and coded in Atlas.ti. For the coding, a combination of deductive and inductive codes The deductive code tree was theory-driven and based

on the analysed literature, whereas the inductive code tree was identified during the coding process. The inductive coding tree was necessary as not all the concepts were considered beforehand (Thomas, 2003). The qualitative data analysis aimed to deepen our understanding of the factors that influence migration intentions among adolescents from the Wadden islands and how much this impacts their education choices. By combining this analysis with the earlier quantitative data analysis, the research findings were enhanced. The interview guide can be found in Appendix 3, the coding tree can be found in Appendix 4.

## 4.2 Ethical Considerations

It is crucial to be upfront about the research’s purposes and objectives and the data gathering and analysis method to operate ethically. As a result, interviewees were issued a consent form via email before the interviews and were explicitly asked beforehand whether they approved of the interview being recorded at the start. The consent form included agreements on the research’s objective, data processing, and interviewee rights, such as the right to remain anonymous and the ability to revise transcripts for factual flaws. Interviewees verified their agreement with the specific agreements by signing the form. Without consent, the information gathered during the interviews will not be utilized for anything other than the stated purpose. Appendix 6 contains the consent form. After transcribing the interviews, the recordings were deleted.

## 4.3 Results Qualitative Data

In this section the results of the interviews will be discussed. As mentioned before, in total 10 interviews were conducted. Table 2 provides a small overview of the respondents. In general, it can be said that almost all respondents liked growing up on the islands and enjoyed their youth there. The following quote by respondent 4 illustrates this; *“And it was really nice growing up when I was really young because you really had a lot of freedom. My parents live close to the beach so me and my brothers could run around there and do what we want so that was really fantastic.”* Nevertheless, not all respondents would want to return to the island they grew up in. Overall, the interviews showed that for most respondents there is not one definitive factor that determines whether adolescents want to stay or move away from their home region. In the next sections, these factors will be further discussed.

Respondent	Gender	Age	Island they grew up	Current living place	Education
R1	Female	20	Schiermonnikoog	Groningen	Hbo – Primary Education Teacher
R2	Male	22	Terschelling	Groningen	Hbo - Commercial Economics
R3	Female	23	Terschelling	Groningen	Wo – Law
R4	Female	19	Vlieland	Utrecht	Wo – Medicine
R5	Male	20	Ameland	Groningen	Hbo – Physiotherapy
R6	Female	20	Texel	Amsterdam	Wo - Science Creative Technology
R7	Male	21	Ameland	Deventer	Hbo- Business Administration
R8	Male	22	Terschelling	Midsland	Mbo – Instalation Technology
R9	Female	21	Ameland	Dokkum	Mbo – Beauty Specialist
R10	Male	24	Texel	Den Burg	Mbo – Travel, Leisure and Hospitality

Table 2; Small overview of the respondents in this study

### 4.3.1 High school experience

The research aimed to investigate the extent to which the migration intentions of adolescents from the Wadden Islands are reflected in their educational choices. The interviews showed that due to

the limited educational opportunities on the islands, students often had to move to the mainland to complete their high school education. This situation led to various housing arrangements, such as living with family members or fellow students in different cities. Consequently, a noticeable divide emerged between students pursuing vmbo and those pursuing havo or vwo. The interviews revealed that this created a divide between the group of students that remained on the island and the students that had to move to the mainland. However, despite this separation, the respondents emphasized the strong bond they shared with their childhood friends from the islands. Respondent 4 illustrates this with the following quote; *“look you are stuck together in a small group. You know each other from primary school, you do everything with that group, but you quickly lose sight of each other when people are on the mainland during the week, but you still remain very close to each other. You are in a boat together.”* Respondents expressed this notion of being "stuck on the same boat together," highlighting the unique experience of growing up on the islands. Nevertheless, the interviews showed that students who lived on the mainland throughout their high school years felt a diminished connection with their island of origin. This is important to note, as it could play a factor in the difference between adolescents aiming for higher education as opposed to adolescents who will follow an education on a mbo level. Overall, 7 out of the 10 respondents had to leave the island in order to complete their high school education.

#### 4.3.2 Connection to the Community

This aspect has a large impact on how the respondents felt about their home island. All respondents were still in touch with friends and family on the island. However, as mentioned in the first section, it did seem like respondents who lived on the island throughout their entire high school years did seem closer to the community. In most cases, the respondents had other extended family living on the island. And although almost all respondents would want to live close to their family this was never the convincing factor for respondents to return to their home island. However, some respondents did express that they would want to live close to their parents. Respondent 1 illustrates this; *“Only my parents live on the island, my grandparents and aunt and uncle live in Friesland and Groningen. I would want to live close to them but moving back to Schier I don’t really see happening but I would stay in the North”*. What seems to be a more relevant factor are the friend groups of the respondents. The respondents who have a specific wish to return to the island, or have already done so, are very close with their friend group from the island who also still live there. Whereas the respondents who are not inclined to move back now have friend groups in the place they currently live. This is illustrated by the following quote from respondent 5 who said the following after being asked why he does not want to return to Terschelling after his study where he thought he might when he started with his study; *“Well there are many reasons. At the moment I have all my social contacts here, all my friends from Terschelling are living here now.”* Whether respondents appreciated the close knittedness of a small island community almost all said they liked it. It was specially mentioned that the respondents As respondent 4, who does not have the intention of returning said in her interview; *“ [Vlieland] is very small and cosy [kneuterig] so as a child it is a lot of fun, the school is small so you’re friends with everyone. And on the island everyone knows everyone so that is nice.”* Respondent 9, who wants to return to Ameland said the following; *“I find it really cosy [gezellig en knus] everyone knows everyone and you can trust everyone and you know exactly what to expect from people.”* Nevertheless, it was mentioned by one respondent that she felt like the community is a little bit close minded. She mentions gossip about her best friend who is gay. However, overall, in the interviews it became clear that the respondents really liked the community. But the most important factor is where their friends currently live.

#### 4.3.3 Island Specific Factors

Travel time and the housing market was mentioned in all interviews and seen as an important factor by all respondents. Respondent 9 who currently still lives in Dokkum but wants to return to Ameland said that the boat and the housing are holding her back right now; *“I really want to return to Ameland and start my own beauty therapist company there. I think I will be able to do so in a couple of years. For now I don’t mind living here [Dokkum] since many of my friends live on the mainland and the boat is never on time which is super annoying. And I cannot afford a house there, I would be able to buy something with my parents’ help but I need to save up and hope something will be available.”* When asked if respondents who do not want to return would return if the boat connection would be better or if the housing market would be less tight on the islands most respondents said they would consider it more but that the labour market and career opportunities would still lack on the islands. Nevertheless, all respondents were enthusiastic about the environment and enjoyed growing up. And respondents who do not want to return still enjoy visiting their parents and other family on the island. This is also illustrated by the following quote from respondent 6 who currently lives in Amsterdam: *“The city can be so extremely crowded and rushed so I love to come back there [Texel] and go to the beach and just enjoy the quiet. Also life is a bit slower which I really like. But, I don’t think I like it enough to live there I like the city life but it’s nice that I can fall back on it as my family still lives there.”* During the interviews, it became clear that for all the respondents the island they grew up held a special place in their lives even when they did not want to return. But, the lack of job opportunities and the relative distance held them back.

#### 4.3.4 Male versus Female

As mentioned in the literature by Bjarnason and Thorlindsson (2006) And Stockdale (2002) a difference between male and female respondents is to be expected. This is due to the difference in educational aspirations of adolescents and the leisure activities which tend to be more male-oriented in rural areas. In this study all the respondents participating a wo-level study are female but since this is a small-scale study this is likely a coincidence. Considering the different perspectives males and females might have on the community and the lifestyle on the islands there was a discrepancy between the male and female respondents. Almost all female respondents said they did indeed feel like the community and activities are more male-oriented. It was mentioned several times that specifically during their high school years they felt like the boys felt more at peace living there than they did. However, non would go as far as to say that they felt claustrophobic. One particular thing that stood out was the football club most male respondents mentioned. In some cases, respondents already lived on the mainland for a few years yet still played at the same football club. This was the case for 3 out of the 5 male respondents. This was never mentioned by the female respondents. However, it was also mentioned in the interview with respondent 6 who specifically mentions the football clubs when asked about the possible differences between males and females. From the interviews, it became clear that there is a difference in the male and female perspectives and that the female perspective is more negative. However, this never seemed to be a definitive factor.

#### 4.3.5 Education choices

All of the interviewees chose to live on the mainland after completing high school in order to pursue further education. When asked about their reasons for selecting their particular field of study, the initial response from all respondents was that they found the subject interesting. From the respondents returned to their home islands after finishing school and one want to return. These three respondents acknowledged that a significant factor in their education choice was the prospect of going back to the island. For instance, respondent 8 mentioned the possibility of inheriting their father's installation company and therefore chose a study that aligned with that path. These findings align with existing literature by Reichtert et al. (2011) who stated that often a job prospect is a precondition for return migrants. This would explain that those who have the intent of coming back to their home region choose an education path that allows them to return. Respondent 2 also chose his study with the thought of taking over his parents’ shop after finishing his study. However, since living in the city

and seeing what is possible with his study he realized he does not want to return but stay in Groningen after finishing. The other 6 respondents very clearly did not want to return to the islands they came from and said they did not consider this when choosing a study. Some of these respondents chose a program that would enable them to return to their home island, it was not the primary motivation for their choice, as illustrated by the following quote: "*Physiotherapy is something that I would be able to find a job in on Ameland. However, I don't want to, I really like life in a city and I think I will stay in Groningen*" (R5). Overall, consistent with the literature, it appears that adolescents who desired to return to their home region reflected this intention in their educational choices, as the 3 respondents who intend to return specifically chose an education that would allow for a career on the island.

#### 4.4 Conclusion Qualitative Data

In conclusion, this chapter focused on analysing qualitative data obtained through interviews with adolescents from the Wadden Islands. The methodology section described the interview process, including the development of an interview guide and the use of a structured approach. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded using Atlas.ti. The qualitative data analysis aimed to deepen the understanding of migration intentions and their impact on education choices among adolescents from the Wadden islands.

Ethical considerations were addressed through consent forms to ensure transparency about the research's purpose, data processing, and interviewee rights. The results section discussed the findings from the interviews, highlighting the perspectives of the respondents. The analysis also revealed that the connection to the community played a significant role in how respondents felt about their home islands. Friend groups and family ties were important factors, with some respondents expressing a desire to live on the mainland, close to their family on the island rather than returning to their specific home island. Island-specific determinants such as travel time, housing prices, and the closeness of the community were frequently mentioned. While respondents appreciated the environment and the peacefulness of the islands, career opportunities and the labour market were often cited as limitations. Regarding gender differences, the interviews did not reveal significant variations except for the male respondents' mention of their football clubs and their continued involvement, which kept them close to their island friends.

Overall, it can be said that factors such as travel time and the housing market play a part in the decision-making process and hold respondents back to return. However, labour market opportunities play a larger role. From the interviews, it felt like the respondents appreciated the community and the environment on the islands but the final straw that held them back was the limited career options. Considering study choice, this did seem influenced by whether respondents would want to return to their home island. The respondents who want to return or have already returned did also chose a study program that aligned with their future on the island. Overall, the qualitative data analysis provided insights into the factors influencing migration intentions and education choices among adolescents from the Wadden islands. The findings complemented the earlier quantitative data analysis, enhancing the overall research findings. Finally, out of the 10 interviews, only 3 were definitive in their desire to live on the island. These were also the respondents who enjoyed a mbo level education.

Having conducted 10 interviews in this study, we gathered a diverse set of insights from respondents with different backgrounds. These interviews helped answer the main research question. In qualitative research, reaching a point where new insights or information doesn't significantly add to what you already know is important. The diverse backgrounds of the respondents made our findings rich and well-rounded. Plus, when we looked at what we found in these interviews and compared it to the quantitative data we collected earlier, everything seemed to fit together nicely. So, all in all, these 10 interviews were enough to get a clear picture of our research topic and answer our main question effectively.

## 5. Discussion

In this Chapter the discussion is presented. In the first section, the results of this research will be interpreted and the research question will be answered. Also, a reflection on the research progress is included in section 6.2, in section 6.3 the hypotheses will be discussed and in the in the final section further research recommendations are made.

### 5.1 Discussion

This study aimed to investigate migration intentions and education choices among adolescents from the Wadden islands. The findings revealed several key factors that influence the decisions of these adolescents. Firstly, higher education was found to be strongly associated with a greater desire to migrate from the islands. This aligns with previous research by Bjarnason and Thorlindsson (2006) who emphasized the importance of educational opportunities as a driving force behind migration. Adolescents pursuing higher education recognized the need to seek improved career prospects outside their home region, leading to a higher likelihood of migration. Furthermore, the study examined the influence of gender on migration intentions. The qualitative data showed that there was a slight difference between the female and male perspective on the home region with the female perspective being slightly more negative. However, it is important to note that gender alone does not exert a substantial impact on migration decisions. Other factors, such as educational aspirations and job opportunities, emerge as more influential determinants.

In answering the research question regarding the extent to which migration intentions are reflected in the educational choices among adolescents from the Wadden islands, the study provided valuable insights. The results demonstrated that while migration intentions do play a role, educational choices are influenced by a combination of factors such as personal interests and labour market opportunities. The research found that for adolescents who want to return to their home island this is reflected in their educational choices. This was because there was a career opportunity for them. They then choose a study program that aligned with this opportunity. This adds to findings by Reichert et al. (2011) who found that a job is a precondition for return migrants in regions with limited labour market opportunities. For the adolescents who do not have a specific wish to return the choice for a specific study program was based on personal interests. The research findings highlight the complexity of the decision-making process and the need to consider various factors beyond migration intentions alone. In conclusion, this study contributes to the understanding of migration intentions and education choices among adolescents from the Wadden islands. The results provide valuable insights for policymakers involved in supporting the educational and career aspirations of young individuals in island communities.

### 5.2 Reflection

Throughout the study, several strengths and limitations were met. First off, the plan was to survey more students and also do qualitative research with this group. However, this was difficult to manage. Secondly, due to the researcher's social circle, the group of interviewees was biased as most of the respondents are currently participating in hbo and wo. It would have been better to conduct more surveys and conduct interviews among a more diverse group of respondents. One of the strengths of the research was doing the quantitative data analysis before the qualitative data gathering. Even though the group of survey respondents was small and no definitive conclusions can be drawn from the results it did provide insights for the interviews. One example is that the peacefulness of the islands is very much appreciated by adolescents.

### 5.3 Hypotheses

This section will come back to the hypotheses which were drawn from the literature review in Chapter 2. Hypothesis H1, suggesting a higher likelihood of adolescents wanting to move away from the Wadden islands if they are participating in higher education, is supported by the research findings. The analysis reveals that individuals pursuing higher education demonstrate a stronger inclination to migrate from the islands, indicating that educational opportunities beyond the islands significantly influence their migration intentions.

The second hypothesis, H2, proposed that a large share of migration motives are related to (better) employment opportunities elsewhere. This is supported by the research outcomes. The analysis demonstrates that employment prospects play a crucial role in shaping migration intentions among adolescents. Many participants, specifically higher-educated adolescents express a desire to seek improved career opportunities in other regions, highlighting the significance of employment-related factors in their decision-making process.

Hypothesis H3, suggesting that the intent to return to the Wadden islands among migrating adolescents is reflected in their education choices, is partially supported by the research findings. While some adolescents express a future intention to return to the islands, their educational decisions are influenced by multiple factors. This indicates that migration intentions alone do not solely determine their educational trajectories. Other considerations, such as individual educational interests and career aspirations, also contribute to shaping their education choices.

Hypothesis H4, positing a higher likelihood of migration intentions among female adolescents from the Wadden islands compared to their male counterparts, is not strongly supported by the research outcomes. Although a slight difference in migration intentions between genders is observed, the overall disparity is not statistically significant. In the interviews some females did express that they felt like the islands might be suited for their male counterparts but there was no strong proof for this. Factors such as educational aspirations and job opportunities emerge as more influential determinants of migration intentions, suggesting that gender alone does not exert a substantial impact on migration decisions.

In conclusion, the research findings corroborate the influence of higher education, employment prospects, and individual career goals on the migration intentions of adolescents from the Wadden islands. While the aspiration to return to the islands in the future may shape certain educational choices, it does not act as the sole determinant. Moreover, while a subtle gender difference in migration intentions is discernible, other factors play a more prominent role. These findings provide valuable insights into the complex interplay of factors influencing migration intentions among adolescents from the Wadden islands.

In Section 2.6 a conceptual model was given. This model aimed to illustrate the factors influencing migration intentions among adolescents from the Wadden islands. This model highlighted the key components, including education levels, practical considerations, and career aspirations, and connection to the community. The research findings align with several aspects of the conceptual model. It is evident that higher education levels are associated with a greater desire for opportunities outside the home region. This corresponds to the model's hypothesis that educational choices play a pivotal role in migration decisions. However, the data also revealed that practical factors such as travel time and housing affordability played a significant role, influencing migration intentions. While these practical factors were represented in the model, the differences certain aspects have were not correctly specified.

## 5.4 Further Research

To further enhance our understanding of migration intentions and education choices among adolescents from the Wadden islands, several recommendations are proposed in this section. As mentioned in the discussion, the scale of this study is unfortunately very small. Therefore, it could be insightful to do this research on a larger scale or with focus groups. This would allow for a better, more general insight into adolescents from the Wadden islands. Alongside this, it could be useful to conduct a longitudinal study. With longitudinal studies, individuals are tracked over an extended period, which allows the researchers to examine the long-term effects of migration on both the individuals who migrate and those who stay or return. By observing changes in educational outcomes, career trajectories, and social dynamics, these studies could provide valuable insights into the consequences of migration. Studies by those like Kratz (2020) show that longitudinal research with migration can be very insightful.

Secondly, comparative studies could be undertaken to gain a broader perspective. By comparing the migration patterns and experiences of adolescents from the Wadden islands with those from other rural or island communities, researchers could identify commonalities and differences. This comparative approach would shed light on the unique challenges and opportunities faced by island communities and help inform targeted interventions. The importance of comparative studies in the field of adolescent migration is also mentioned by Thissen et al. (2010) or Bloemraad (2013).

Furthermore, conducting economic analyses and policy evaluations is crucial. Such analyses would explore the economic implications of youth migration from the Wadden islands, including the impact on local economies and labour markets. By evaluating existing policies and developing new strategies tailored to the needs of these communities, policymakers can address the challenges associated with youth migration, which is needed as stated by van Gersdorf (2023).

Another interesting topic would be to further research the impact of football clubs on male migration intentions. In this research it already became clear that football clubs are a prominent part in adolescents live and influence the social circle of adolescents. Future research on this would be interesting, specifically the intertwining of sports, social life and returning to the home region.

Finally, the early selection of students into different levels of high school has become an increasingly debated issue. As early as 2018, the Education Inspectorate recognized that this system results in 'clusters of like-minded individuals from which students rarely diverge' (Warndorff, 2023). While some research has been conducted on this subject (van Gestel & van Avermaet, 2021), there remains a dearth of studies examining the distinctions between students in mbo, hbo and wo. This distinction is often overshadowed by the broader categorizations of lower and higher education, despite its inherent interest.

By exploring these research areas, policymakers can enhance their understanding of the factors that impact why adolescents from the Wadden islands choose to migrate or make certain education choices. This knowledge can be used to develop practical policies and interventions that support the goals, well-being, and long-term growth of young individuals on the Wadden islands and island communities in general.



## 6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study aimed to investigate migration intentions and education choices among adolescents from the Wadden islands. The research employed a mixed-methods approach, incorporating quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing these decisions.

The introduction discussed the importance of studying migration intentions and education choices among young individuals in island communities, given their unique socio-economic and geographical context. And explained the academic and societal importance of the research. The literature review revealed important insights from previous studies and theories related to migration intentions. Several determinants of migration were discussed such as the influence of higher education, employment prospects, and community connections on migration intentions. Previous research has shown that adolescents pursuing higher education are more likely to migrate from their home regions in search of better educational and career opportunities. Additionally, employment prospects were identified as a large factor in migration intentions from adolescents. Studies have suggested that job availability and prospects play a crucial role in shaping the migration intentions of young individuals (migration (Bjarnason and Thorlindsson, 2006; Haapanen and Böckermann, 2017). Community connections and social networks were found to be important factors in the decision-making process. Island communities often have close-knit social networks, which have been a pull factor for the respondents who have returned or want to return. The literature highlighted the significance of family ties, friendships, and a sense of belonging to the community in shaping migration decisions (Eacott and Sonn, 2006; Thissen et al., 2010). The literature review ended with some hypotheses which were discussed in Section 5.3. The conceptual model visualized the connections made in the literature review.

In the quantitative phase of this research, we utilized surveys to gain a comprehensive overview of high school students' perspectives on education and island life on the Wadden Islands. The data collected through surveys formed the basis for the qualitative data research. What specifically came to light was the appreciation the high school students have for the environment. For the qualitative phase of this research, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted to delve into the personal experiences, perspectives, and motivations of our participants regarding migration intentions and education choices. The qualitative data underscored the complexity of factors influencing migration intentions. It became evident that the decision to migrate or stay on the Wadden Islands is a result of educational pursuits, career aspirations, and the allure of island living. Taken together, the qualitative data gave more depth to the quantitative findings. In conclusion, the combined quantitative and qualitative approaches in this study have provided a comprehensive understanding of migration intentions and education choices among adolescents from the Wadden Islands.

In conclusion, the main research question of this study was to examine the extent to which adolescents' educational choices are reflected in their migration decisions. Through a mixed-methods approach, including quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews this question was answered. Quantitative findings revealed a link between higher education levels and a greater inclination for off-island opportunities, while practical considerations like travel time and housing affordability also played pivotal roles. Qualitatively, personal factors such as family ties and community attachment emerged as influential, highlighting the complexity of migration decision-making. The study's conceptual model provided a framework to interpret these findings. This research not only enhances academic understanding but also has significant societal relevance, addressing the pressing issue of youth out-migration and its implications for the liveability of the Wadden islands. In summary, this study offers a comprehensive perspective on how educational choices intersect with migration intentions among adolescents, bridging the gap between academic inquiry and real-world policy concerns.

## References

- Figure 1. Map of the Wadden area (Ecomare)
  - Figure 2. Dredging volume in m<sup>3</sup> per year (Rijkswaterstaat)
  - Figure 3 conceptual framework
  - Figure 4 ; Results from questions in the survey
  - Figure 5 ; Results from questions in the survey
- 
- Table 1; Results from question 4 in the survey
  - Table 2; Small overview of the respondents in this study
- 
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# Appendix 1

## Survey questions

### Algemene vragen

- Hoe oud ben je?
- Hoe identificeer jij je?
  - A. Man
  - B. Vrouw
  - C. Zeg ik liever niet

### Achtergrond

- Van welk eiland kom je?
  - A. Texel
  - B. Vlieland
  - C. Terschelling
  - D. Ameland
  - E. Schiermonnikoog
- Zijn je ouders op het eiland geboren?
  - A. Ja
  - B. Nee
- Indien nee, Waar komen je ouders vandaan?
- Heb je, naast je ouders, nog veel familie op het eiland wonen? (Opa, oma, tante, oom etc.)
  - A. Ja
  - B. Nee
- Wat voor beroep hebben je ouders?
- Werken je ouders op het eiland?
  - A. Ja
  - B. Nee

### Vervolg studie & werk

- Op welk niveau middelbare school zit je?
  - A. Vwo
  - B. Havo
  - C. Vmbo-T
  - D. Gemengde leerweg
  - E. Vmbo kader
  - F. Vmbo basis
- Welk profiel volg je?

vwo & havo	Vmbo-T	Gemengde leerweg, Vmbo kader en Vmbo basis
Economie & maatschappij	Techniek	Bouwen, wonen en interieur
Cultuur & maatschappij	Zorg en welzijn	Produceren, installeren en energie
Natuur & gezondheid	Economie	Mobiliteit en transport
Natuur & techniek	Landbouw (Groen)	Media, vormgeving en ICT
		Maritiem en techniek

		Zorg en welzijn
		Economie en ondernemen
		Horeca, bakkerij en recreatie
		Groen
		Dienstverlening en producten

- Wil je een vervolgopleiding doen na je middelbare school?
  - A. Ja
  - B. Nee
- Welke opleiding wil je doen en waarom?
- Heb je deze vervolgstudie gekozen om later op het eiland te kunnen werken?
  - A. Ja
  - B. Nee
- Waar wil je de vervolgstudie gaan doen en waarom?

#### **Verhuismotivatie**

- Wil je na je vervolgopleiding op het eiland wonen?
  - A. Ja
  - B. Nee
- (indien van het eiland weg verhuist) zijn er andere redenen dat je van het eiland weg wil?
  - A. Je wilt in een stad wonen
  - B. Nieuwe vrienden maken
  - C. Je wilt 'dichterbij' de rest van Nederland wonen
  - D. De huizenmarkt
  - E. Het soort beroep dat je wilt doen is niet mogelijk op het eiland
- Zijn er nog andere redenen waarom je weg wilt verhuizen?
- (Indien je op het eiland wil blijven) Wat zijn punten die je juist zouden overtuigen op het eiland te blijven?
  - A. Je vindt de natuur/omgeving mooi op het eiland
  - B. Je wilt dichtbij je vrienden wonen
  - C. Je wilt dichtbij je ouders wonen
  - D. Het werk wat je later wil doen is mogelijk op het eiland
- Zijn er nog andere redenen waarom je op het eiland wil blijven?

## Appendix 2

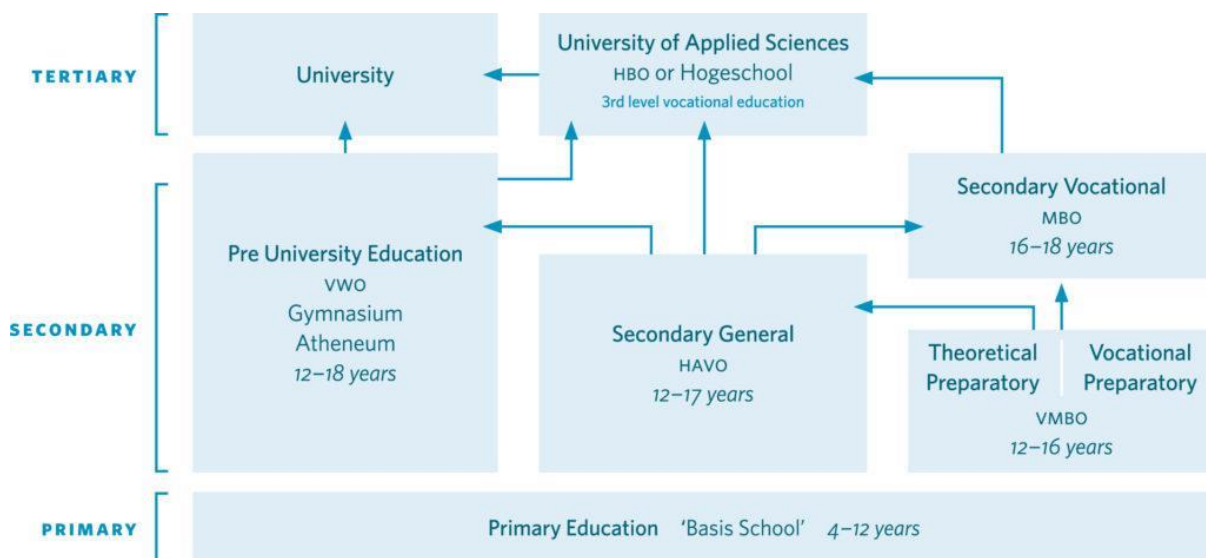


Table by Willemijn van Oppen, Educaide

Figure A1 – the Dutch school system (source: <https://www.xpat.nl/moving-to-netherlands/netherlands-facts/national-education-system/>)

### Primary School

Children between the ages of 4 and 12 attend Dutch primary schools located near their residential areas. These schools consist of eight grades, ranging from group 1 to group 8. Primary schools can vary in terms of their religious or educational focus. The Dutch government oversees and monitors all primary schools.

### Explanation of the Dutch Education System

#### Secondary Education

Once children reach the age of 12, they move on to secondary school, which offers different levels of education:

**Preparatory Vocational Secondary Education (VMBO)** - a 4-year program

**Senior General Secondary Education (HAVO)** - a 5-year program

**University Preparatory Education (VWO)** - a 6-year program

The choice of level is based on the advice provided by the primary school and the results of a test.

#### Higher Education

There are two main types of higher education in the Netherlands:

**HBO (Hoger Beroepsonderwijs)** - Vocational education with a professional orientation. To be eligible for bachelor's programs at HBO, the minimum requirement is HAVO or MBO.

**WO (Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs)** - Scientific education with a research orientation. To be eligible for bachelor's programs at WO, the minimum requirement is VWO.

## Appendix 3

### Interview guide

#### *Introduction questions*

- Van welk eiland ben je afkomstig?
- Wat is je leeftijd?

#### *Background questions*

- Hoe vond je het om op te groeien op het eiland?
- Zijn je ouders van het eiland afkomstig?
- Heb je naast je ouders nog andere familie op het eiland?
- Wat voor werk doen je ouders?

#### *Education questions*

- Welke niveau middelbare school heb je gedaan?
- Indien vwo/ havo en niet van Texel afkomstig- Hoe heb je het aangepakt met het afmaken van de bovenbouw van de middelbare school?
- Welke studie doe je momenteel of heb je afgerond?
- Waarom ben je deze studie gaan doen?
- Heeft de mogelijkheid om later terug te keren je keuze beïnvloedt?

#### *Labour market questions*

- Wat wil je nu na je studie doen?
- Zou je nu je ouder bent overwegen om terug te gaan? Of zie je dat pas in een later stadium gebeuren?
- Zou je zeggen dat werk mogelijkheden het belangrijkste zijn in deze keuze?

#### *Environment questions*

- Uit mijn onderzoek is ook al gebleken dat veel jongeren juist heel erg de rust waarderen op het eiland en dat dit iets zou zijn wat ze eventueel zo ver zou krijgen om op het eiland te blijven. Wat denk jij hierover?
- En ook bleek boottochten en de huizenmarkt iets wat ze tegen houdt later op een Wadden eiland te wonen, wat denk jij hiervan?



## Appendix 4

<i>Determinants of migration</i>		
<b>Education level</b>	Higher education	
	Lower education	
<b>Education possibilities</b>		
<b>Labour market</b>	Carreer opportunities	Carreer not possible on the island
		Carreer solely possible on the island
<b>Strong bond with the community</b>	Parents on the island	
	Family on the island	
	Friends on the island	
<b>No strong bond</b>	No friends or family	
	Experiences the community as to small	
<b>Positive perception of the island</b>	Likes the enviornment	
	Likes the peace and quiet	
<b>Negative perception of the island</b>	Experiences it as 'boring'	
	'There is nothing to do'	

## Appendix 5

### Consent Form

#### **Toestemmingsformulier van deelname**

Onderzoeksproject: Master Thesis 2023

Universiteit: Rijksuniversiteit

Groningen, Faculty of Spatial Sciences

Onderzoeker: Gonneke van Iwaarden

Geachte Deelnemer,

Allereerst wil ik u van hartelijk bedanken dat u de tijd heeft genomen om deel te nemen aan dit onderzoeksproject. Het doel van dit onderzoek is om beter inzicht te krijgen in migratie van jongeren afkomstig van de Wadden en . Op deze manier wil ik u informeren over het verloop en de gevolgen van een deelname. Het interview zal circa 45 minuten, afhankelijk van lengte van de antwoorden en de eventuele nieuwe vragen die er kunnen ontstaan. Daarnaast zal het gesprek in lijn met de huidige Covid-19 maatregelen worden uitgevoerd. Ook zal het gesprek opgenomen en getranscribeerd worden om ze te analyseren en antwoord te geven op de onderzoeksvraag voor dit onderzoeksproject. Daarnaast heeft u de mogelijkheid om het transcript te ontvangen om te controleren om feitelijke onjuistheden.

Voor verdere opmerkingen en vragen kunt u contact opnemen met Gonneke van Iwaarden [s3737543@student.rug.nl](mailto:s3737543@student.rug.nl)

Hierbij verklaar ik dat:

Ik geheel vrijwillig bereid ben aan dit onderzoeksproject mee te doen JA/NEE

De uitkomsten van dit interview verwerkt mogen worden in het onderzoeksproject. JA/NEE

Toestemming geef om het interview op te laten nemen door middel voor de opnamesoftware voor verwerkingsdoeleinden. JA/NEE

Een pseudoniem gebruikt kan worden (voorbeeld: respondent 1) JA/NEE

Naam van deelnemer van interview.....

Email (voor eventuele ontvangst van transcript).....

Datum .....

Handtekening.....