

Special Feature—The Journey to Work



Commuters on Outer Ring Road

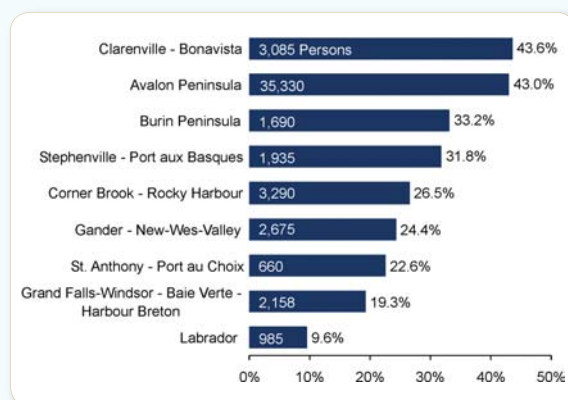
Commuting for work has become a commonplace occurrence in modern economies, especially around major urban centres. Recently, however, there has been growing interest in understanding daily commuting patterns among smaller cities, towns and rural communities. Information about these commuting patterns can provide valuable insights to: help businesses identify a potential supply of workers; help individuals access a wider range of employment opportunities; support government and community agencies in preparing for labour force adjustments that may result from industry closures or major investments within a particular region; and, inform planners in the development of public infrastructure, such as transportation systems.

Over the past several years, the Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment (HRLE) has carried out research to increase the understanding of regional labour market dynamics in Newfoundland and Labrador. This research included a partnership with the Department of Finance to study commuting patterns in the province. Census data and small area es-

timation techniques were used to narrow commuting patterns among workers in more than 500 communities to 30 local workflow areas in the province. These areas are listed by Rural Secretariat Region in the accompanying table.

One major finding stemming from this research is the extent to which communities are interde-

Proportion of People Who Live and Work in Different Communities, 2001



Note: Proportions reflect those reporting a usual place of work in the 2001 Census which differed from their community of residence. This data does not include people working at home, outside the province, nor those without a fixed workplace address. 2001 Census; Department of Finance; Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment.

pendent in terms of employment. This suggests that changing economic conditions in a single community, especially regional service centres, can have significant implications for individuals and communities in surrounding areas.

The research findings indicate that among the regions, the greatest rate of commuting occurred among workers in the Clarenville – Bonavista region where 43.6% of workers usually travelled to a community outside their home community to work on a daily basis (see chart). The Avalon Peninsula region ranked a close second with 43% of workers residing in a different community than where they worked. Not surprisingly, the least amount of commuting occurred in the Labrador region (9.6% of workers). This largely reflects the distribution of the population among relatively few communities dispersed over a large geographic area.

Other interesting information generated through this research, includes how far people travel for work. On average, those commuting to another community for their job usually travelled 26 kilometres (one-way)². Workers in the Gander – New-Wes-Valley region travelled the longest distance (45 kilometres) while workers in the Labrador region travelled the shortest distance (14 kilometres).

Using Workflow Information: Corner Brook Area

An analysis of workflow patterns in the Corner Brook area demonstrates how this information can provide valuable insights to support local labour market and development activities. For example, a business that was looking to expand in the area would be interested in the available labour supply. According to the 2001 Census, 9,400 people worked in Corner Brook. However, only 71% of these workers

² This data does not reflect commuting distance for workers that live and work within the same community.

“Usual Place of Work” Data

“Usual place of work” data from the 2001 Census was used in the analysis of provincial workflow patterns. This data provides greater insight about commuting patterns than other sources as it provides information about the communities where individuals work (for those who reported a fixed workplace address) as well as the communities where they live. Most other labour market data sources only report where a worker lives.

Identified Workflow Areas/Maps By Rural Secretariat Region

Region	Workflow Area
Labrador	Coastal Labrador Happy Valley-Goose Bay Labrador City Northern Labrador
St. Anthony - Port au Choix	Port au Choix St. Anthony
Corner Brook - Rocky Harbour	Corner Brook Jackson's Arm Rocky Harbour
Stephenville - Port aux Basques	Channel-Port aux Basques Stephenville
Grand Falls-Windsor - Baie Verte - Harbour Breton	Baie Verte Buchans Grand Falls-Windsor South Coast Springdale
Gander - New-Wes-Valley	Fogo Island Gander Lewisporte Twillingate
Clarenville - Bonavista	Arnold's Cove Bonavista Clarenville
Burin Peninsula	Marystown
Avalon Peninsula	Bay de Verde Bay Roberts Carbonear-Harbour Grace Placentia Southern Shore St. John's

The workflow maps and data referenced in this section were prepared by the Social and Economic Spatial Analysis Unit, Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency, Department of Finance. The maps are available on the Labour Market Development Division's web portal for the Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment: www.lmiworks.nl.ca.

Note: The workflow area maps have been named for the centre drawing the biggest flow of workers. The maps actually contain flows for many communities in the workflow area.

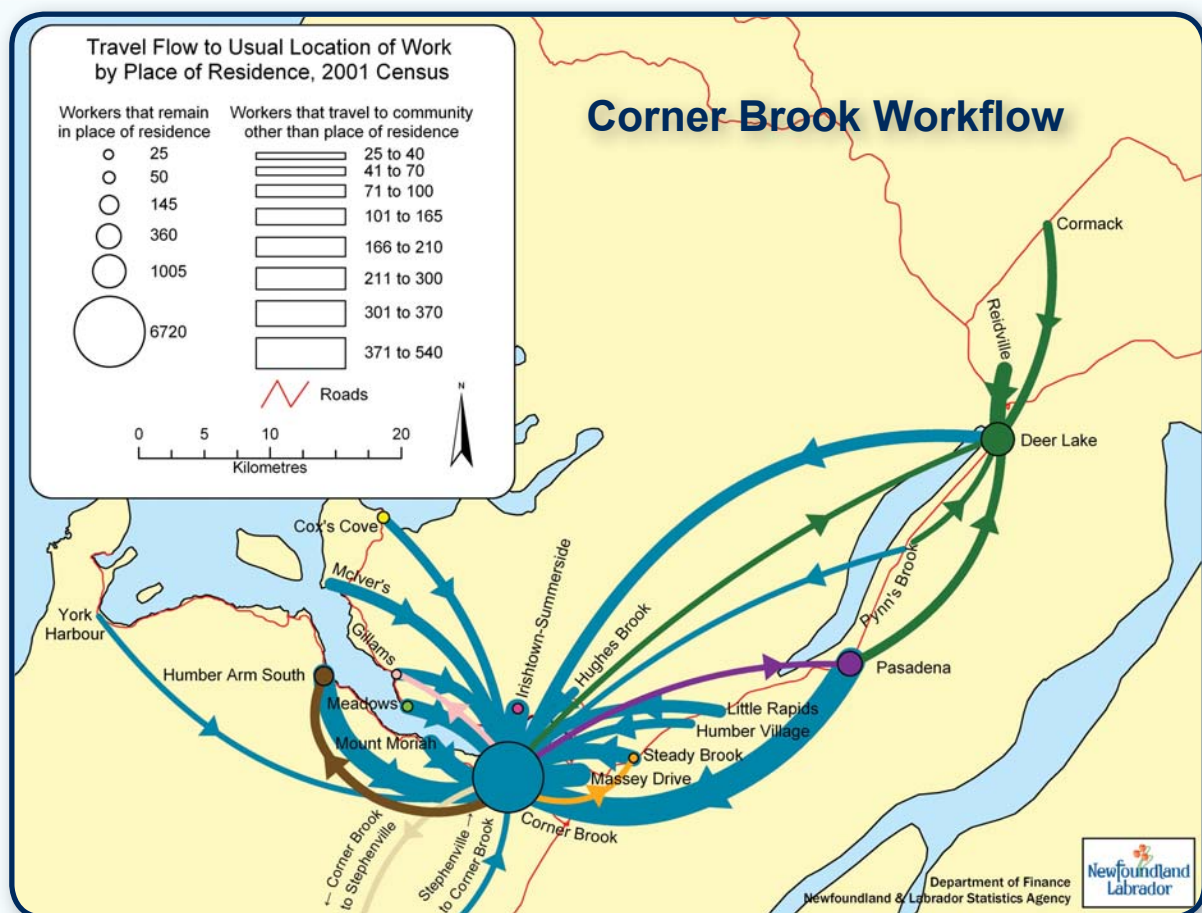
(6,720 people) actually lived in the city. The remaining 2,680 workers lived among 17 other communities, most of which were no more than 30 minutes drive away (see blue coloured lines in map). Almost 5,000 people aged 25 to 54 years (prime working age) resided in communities within this 30 minute commuting distance, pointing to a much larger potential labour supply than would be available in the City of Corner Brook alone.

This specific example for Corner Brook was provided for illustration purposes only and the actual supply of workers would also depend on the participation rates in the communities included. However, similar analyses can be carried out for other communities and workflow areas in the province.

Next Steps

A number of initiatives related to these workflows are currently underway, including further research to better understand the characteristics of commutes (e.g., gender, age, education, occupation, industry). The feasibility of developing a web-based planning tool that allows users to generate their own workflow maps for specific communities is being explored. In addition, workflow data is being used to support research on migration patterns and relationships between rural and urban communities. It is intended to update current workflow maps when the latest census data is released in 2008.

Maps and information about existing workflows and other related initiatives are available at: www.lmiworks.nl.ca or by contacting HRLE.



Article prepared by: Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment; and the Department of Finance