

Feature Article: Regional Migration

Summary

Migration both from within the province and from outside the province is a major factor in the population change of many regions of British Columbia. In addition to affecting the total population, the age of the migrants also influences the type of facilities and services required by the population.

Unlike international migration, which mainly affects the lower mainland, interprovincial (with other provinces) and intraprovincial (among regions of B.C.) migration have a more widespread impact across the province. Information on regional migration is now available for the period from July 1, 1998 to June 30, 1999. During this period the province experienced a record net outflow (-14,500) of people to other provinces. This resulted from the smallest inflow (43,300) of people from other parts of the country since 1984/85, accompanied by high outflows (57,800). Across the province, only three regions escaped the exodus: Squamish-Lillooet with a net inflow of 150 people, and Central Coast and Stikine where there was virtually no net interprovincial migration.

The following table shows the ten regional districts with the largest net interprovincial outflows - these ten accounted for 85% of the total provincial net outflow. On balance, Greater Vancouver lost 5,100 people to other provinces, and four other regions (Fraser- Fort George, Peace River, Thompson-Nicola and Fraser Valley) each lost more than 1,000 people.

Interprovincial Migration by Regional District, 1998-99

Regional District	Net Migration	Percent of Total Migration		
		Net	In	Out
Greater Vancouver	-5,062	34.9	42.8	40.9
Fraser-Fort George	-1,213	8.4	2.0	3.6
Peace River	-1,172	8.1	3.0	4.3
Thompson-Nicola	-1,118	7.7	2.9	4.1
Fraser Valley	-1,084	7.5	5.1	5.7
Comox-Strathcona	-796	5.5	2.5	3.2
Cariboo	-702	4.8	0.9	1.9
Kitimat-Stikine	-393	2.7	0.6	1.1
Central Kootenay	-382	2.6	1.9	2.1
Okanagan-Similkameen	-327	2.3	2.4	2.4
Sub-total	-12,249	84.6	64.1	69.2
Rest of the Province	-2,235	15.4	35.9	30.8
Total	-14,484	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Statistics Canada

Intraprovincial migration measures people moving from one regional district to another. Over the 1998/99 period 91,200 people migrated within the province, which was the lowest level of internal migration since 1984/85. There tends to be a relationship between interprovincial and intraprovincial migration. Periods when there are more people moving into B.C. from other parts of the country are also times when more people move within the province. For example, in 1989/90 82,200 people migrated to B.C. from other provinces and 140,800 people relocated to another region within the province. The comparable figures for 1998/99 were 43,300 and 91,200 persons, almost half as many interprovincial migrants and one third fewer intraprovincial migrants. Both types of movement probably reflect the general economic situation in the province. In addition, periods in which Greater Vancouver and Capital have received large net *interprovincial* inflows are times when they have experienced large net *intraprovincial* outflows. These movements may reflect the relative living costs, especially for housing, between the

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metropolitan areas and other regions of the province.

In the 1998/99 period, Central Okanagan (+2,200) and Fraser Valley (+1,900) were the recipients of the largest number of people from within the province. Other parts of the Okanagan also had net inflows from the rest of the province. Greater Vancouver (-3,600) and Fraser-Fort George (-900) lost the most people to other parts of B.C. The following table shows the regions with the largest net internal flows, either in or out.

Intraprovincial Migration by Regional District, 1998-99

Regional District	Net Migration	Percent of Total Migration		
		Net	In	Out
Central Okanagan	2,177	26.9	7.0	4.6
Fraser Valley	1,868	23.1	10.7	8.6
Okanagan-Similkameen	803	9.9	3.6	2.7
Nanaimo	681	8.4	5.9	5.1
Thompson-Nicola	665	8.2	5.4	4.7
North Okanagan	610	7.5	3.6	2.9
Kitimat-Stikine	-609	-7.5	1.3	2.0
Skeena-Queen Charlotte	-656	-8.1	0.8	1.6
Fraser-Fort George	-947	-11.7	3.7	4.7
Greater Vancouver	-3,647	-45.0	22.4	26.4
Sub-total	945		64.4	63.4
Rest of the Province	-945		35.6	36.6
Total	0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Statistics Canada

Greater Vancouver has experienced net outflows to both other provinces and other regions in both 1997/98 (-8,400 people) and 1998/99 (-8,700 people). However, in each period the region received net inflows from international sources of close to 30,000 people. Other regions of the province receive much lower international migration. In 1998/99, the Fraser Valley received a net inflow of only 650 people from international sources and the Capital received 220 people.

Age of Migrants

Interprovincial migration occurs most frequently among those in their mid-twenties to mid-thirties. In the 1997 to 1999 period, around 40% of the population loss as a result of net interprovincial migration was between the ages of 25 and 34. Persons in this age group tend to have fewer commitments, both in terms of family and assets, than those in the older age groups, resulting in relatively lower social and economic costs from migration. Intra-provincial migration is more evenly distributed by age, although the largest groups of migrants are still those in their twenties and early thirties - those aged 20 to 34 account for about 35%. In many cases the social and economic costs of moving to another part of the province are much lower than for moving between BC and another province, especially if the move is to a neighbouring region.

Although the proportion of interprovincial migration attributable to seniors is relatively small, it is fairly constant over time and less likely to be affected by the relative economic conditions in different provinces. In 1997/98 and 1998/99, when there were large net outflows of total population to other provinces there continued to be small net inflows of those aged 65 and over. There were also net inflows for the 45 to 64 age group in 1997/98. According to the General Social Survey¹ conducted by Statistics Canada in 1990, the main reason for seniors to make a long distance move (more than 1,000 km) is to be closer to family. In the case of intraprovincial migration, seniors make up

¹ Che-Alford, Janet, *Residential Mobility of Canadians*, Statistics Canada, 1990.

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a larger proportion of the total - around 7% in the last two years. Other reasons for moving that are common among seniors are to relocate to a smaller home or to a better neighbourhood.

In looking at the ages of migrants at the regional level, the following five broad age groups were used: 17 and under, 18-24, 25-44, 45-64, 65 and over. For areas with large net flows of migrants with other provinces and other regions of B.C., the 25-44 age group and their children in the 17 and under age group form the bulk of the changes in population as a result of migration.

There are some interesting exceptions to this general situation. The behaviour of the 18-24 age group is unique. In 1998/99, Greater Vancouver had large net outflows of people to other provinces and other regions. These outflows included all age groups except the 18-24 group, who continued to migrate to Greater Vancouver. On the other hand, Fraser Valley and Nanaimo had net inflows from other regions in all age groups except the young adult group.

In the two older age groupings (45-64 and 65 and over), Capital, Cowichan Valley and Nanaimo showed a net gain from other provinces although they lost population under 45 to other parts of the country. Central Okanagan gained people in the 45-64 group from other provinces but lost people of other ages.

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