

Feature Article: Regional Migration

Summary

Migration both from within the province and from outside the province, especially from other parts of Canada, has a strong impact throughout much 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 (from other provinces) and intraprovincial (from within B.C.) migration have a more widespread impact across the province. Although the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) accounts for 87% of net international migration, its share (49%) of interprovincial migration is much smaller, and other parts of the province, in particular Vancouver Island and the Okanagan, play a bigger role. In addition the GVRD accounts for 90% of the net flow of people to other areas of the province, including other parts of the lower mainland.

The following table shows the top ten regional districts in terms of net interprovincial migration.

Interprovincial Migration by Regional District, 1993-94

Regional District	Net Migration	Percent of Total Migration		
		Net	In	Out
Greater Vancouver	19,367	49.2	43.8	38.4
Capital	3,822	9.7	10.7	11.7
Central Okanagan	2,535	6.4	6.1	5.7
Nanaimo	1,979	5.0	3.8	2.6
Comox-Strathcona	1,191	3.0	3.0	2.9
Thompson-Nicola	1,072	2.7	2.8	3.0
Fraser-Fort George	1,012	2.6	2.7	2.8
Central Fraser Valley	937	2.4	2.5	2.6
Cowichan Valley	768	2.0	1.5	1.2
Okanagan-Similkameen	690	1.8	2.1	2.5
Sub-total	33,373	84.8	79.0	73.4
Rest of the Province	6,004	15.2	21.0	26.6
Total	39,377	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Statistics Canada

Together they accounted for 85% of the provincial total of 39,377 people during the period from July 1, 1993 to June 30, 1994. The population of Greater Vancouver increased by approximately 19,400, the Capital by 3,800, the Central Okanagan by 2,500 and the Nanaimo region by 2,000, as a result of population exchange with the other provinces. In the previous year the same regional districts were also the top four net recipients of people from other provinces and only Fraser-Fort George and Cowichan Valley were not in the top ten destinations. (Note that for the lower mainland these data are compiled for the four regional districts as they existed prior to July 1995.)

The pattern of intraprovincial migration has been similar over the past two years with the Nanaimo Regional District being the largest recipient of migrants from other parts of the province and the GVRD and the Capital Regional District (CRD) being the largest donors. The other regions in the following table have consistently been major net recipients of intraprovincial migrants over the past few years.

Intraprovincial Migration by Regional District, 1993-94

Regional District	Net Migration	Percent of Total Migration		
		Net	In	Out
Nanaimo	2,268	11.5	5.9	4.0
Fraser-Cheam	1,892	9.6	4.4	2.8
Central Fraser Valley	1,736	8.8	6.8	5.3
Thompson-Nicola	1,683	8.6	5.2	3.8
Comox-Strathcona	1,636	8.3	4.2	2.8
Cowichan Valley	1,596	8.1	3.8	2.4
Central Okanagan	1,497	7.6	5.3	4.0
Dewdney-Alouette	1,418	7.2	6.9	5.7
Capital	-1,155	-5.9	7.2	8.2
Greater Vancouver	-17,664	-89.9	17.3	32.1
Sub-total	-5,093		67.0	71.2
Rest of the Province	5,093		33.0	28.8
Total	0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Statistics Canada

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When comparing these two types of migration, it can be seen that many of the regional districts - Central Okanagan, Nanaimo, Comox-Strathcona, Thompson-Nicola, Central Fraser Valley, and Cowichan Valley - are major recipients of both types of migrants. However the large inflows of interprovincial migrants to the GVRD and CRD are partially offset by large outflows to other parts of the province.

Age Structure

Interprovincial migration occurs most frequently among those in their twenties. Around 34% of the population gain as a result of net interprovincial migration is between the ages of 20 and 29. 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 moving to BC from 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 1993/94 only 1.8% of net interprovincial migration to the province was in the group aged 65 and over. 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 a larger proportion of the total - 6.7% in 1993/94. Other reasons for moving that are common among seniors are to move 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 regions with large net inflows of migrants from 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 increases 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. The GVRD and CRD, which have large net outflows to the rest of the province in most age groups, have either a net inflow of young adults from the rest of the province as in the case of the CRD or a much smaller relative net outflow than for other age groups as in the case of the GVRD. Central Fraser Valley Regional District has the largest net inflow of young adults from other regional districts, and it is relatively stronger than the inflow of other age groups.

In the two older age groupings (45 -64 and 65 and over), the CRD receives relatively strong inflows of interprovincial migration in both age groups. Central Okanagan and Nanaimo Regional Districts both receive a large flow of people in the 45 -64 group from other provinces, while Nanaimo is the largest receipt of migrants from other parts of the province in this age group.

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