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## Feature Article: Where we work and how we get there

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### Summary

*Information on people's place of work relative to their place of residence and on how they travel between their homes and workplaces is important for planning transportation networks and regional development. Within British Columbia the patterns that were observed in 1996 differ considerably between the large urban areas and the more rural parts of the province.*

### Place of Work

There are many factors that influence people's decision of where to live relative to where they work, including the type and price of housing, family composition, the type and stability of their work, the type of transportation available and the length of time to travel between home and work.

In 1996, 39% of the employed provincial labour force worked in the same municipality or area<sup>1</sup> in which they lived (excluding those who worked at home). There was considerable variation across the province with the highest rates observed in the more rural regional districts of Fraser Fort-George (70%) and Skeena-Queen Charlotte (65%). At the provincial level, about the same proportion (41%) of people worked in a different municipality from the one in which they lived but the rates were highest in the more urban areas – Capital (53%), Cowichan Valley (52%) and Greater Vancouver (48%). In the

case of both Capital and Greater Vancouver the other municipality was within the same regional district. However, in the case of people living in Cowichan Valley and Fraser Valley, large proportions (19% and 17% respectively) worked outside the regional district, mainly in their larger neighbouring districts.

For the province as a whole, 9% of the employed labour force worked at home in 1996. This included 25% of the primary sector, with agriculture being the major part of this sector where people worked at home, and 20% of the business services sector. The strong growth in self-employment (especially the group without paid help), as well as changes in information and communications technology have made working at home a more common practice. These changes have had the strongest impacts on women and on those employed in the service sector.

At the regional level, Stikine (15%), Okanagan-Similkameen (14%), and Peace River (13%) had relatively high proportions of people working at home. These people were employed mainly in the agriculture and/or accommodation and food sectors.

Another group of workers were ones with no fixed place of work. This group made up 11% of the employed labour force in 1996 but was concentrated in the construction, primary, and transportation and communication sectors. Over half of the people working in the construction industry had no fixed place of work.

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<sup>1</sup> The areas of analysis are census sub-divisions (CSD), which consist of municipalities, Indian reserves and groupings of the remaining rural areas. The relative size of the CSDs will have an effect on the some of the rates presented.

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**People working in the agriculture and accommodation and food sectors are the main reason why some regions have high rates of people working at home.**



### BC STATS

A fifth of the primary sector, probably mainly people employed in fishing and logging, also had no fixed place of work. As a result of the industrial mix of this group, men (16%) were more likely than women (5%) to not have a fixed place of work. The regions with the largest proportion of workers in this group were Central Coast (23%) and Sunshine Coast (16%), also reflecting the prevalence of this type of work in specific industries.

There was also a small group of people who worked outside the country. This was only 0.5% of the employed provincial labour force or less than 10,000 people. Three-quarters of these people lived in Greater Vancouver, where they had good access to air and other forms of transportation.

### Mode of Transportation

The relationship between place of residence and place of work obviously has implications for the options available for getting to and from work. The census asked respondents for the method of transportation that they usually used or if more than one method was used, then the method used for the greatest distance was reported.

Travelling to work by car is by far the most common method of transportation. In 1996, 81% of those with a workplace outside their home drove to work by car, with 74% being drivers and only 7% passengers. The highest proportion of those who drove lived in Central Okanagan (84%), Fraser Valley (83%) and Cowichan Valley (83%). In the case of the last two areas, many people were travelling outside of the regional district

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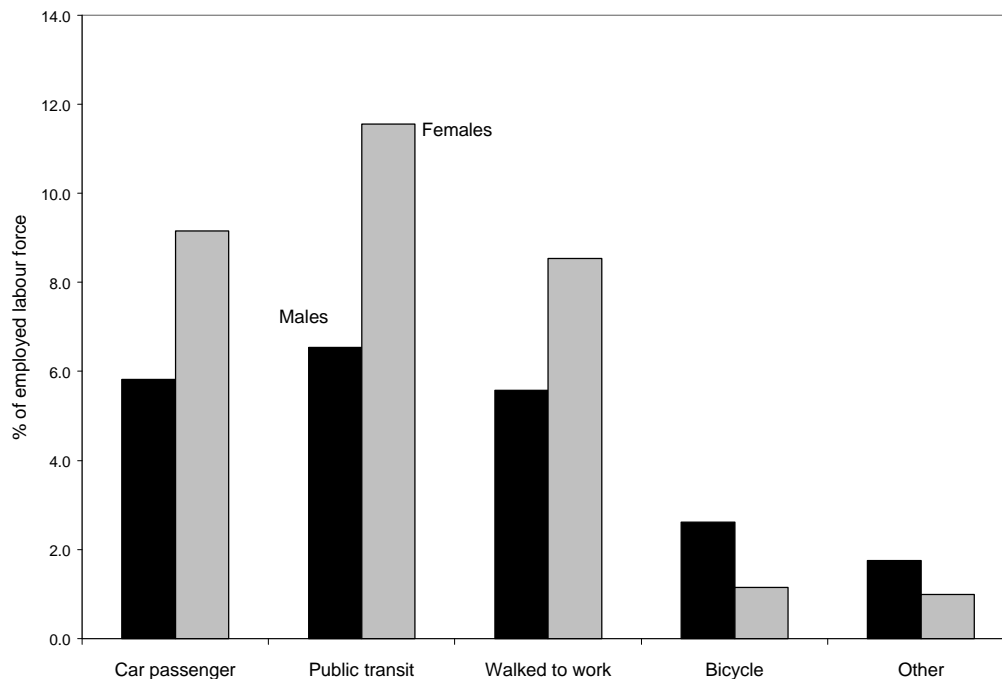
where they lived. People living in the most northern parts of the province (Fort Nelson-Liard and Stikine) and in Skeena Queen-Charlotte were more likely to travel as passengers.

Public transit was used by 9% of the provincial employed labour force but only in the metropolitan areas of Vancouver (14%) and Victoria (10%) were there large numbers of people that used public transit. This likely reflects the greater availability of public transit in these areas, as well as the costs associated with car travel (parking, insurance, gasoline, car repairs and maintenance).

For the province as a whole, 7% of workers walked to work. As this option is usually associated with short travel distances, it was used more frequently in areas where there are smaller communities: Stikine (29%), Central Coast (25%) and Skeena-Queen Charlotte (18%). On the other end of the spectrum, fewer than 5% of workers in Central Okanagan and Fraser Valley travelled to work on foot.

As with walking, the distance between home and work is an important factor in choosing to cycle to work. The availability of other facilities used by cyclists, such as bike lanes and paths, secure bike storage and showers also affects their decisions. Two per cent of workers province-wide cycled to work in 1996.

**Men were more likely to drive their cars or cycle to work, while women were more likely to use other methods of transportation.**



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The Capital, with 5% of people cycling to work, had a much larger proportion than the rest of the province and also much larger than any other metro area in the country – Ottawa-Hull and Saskatoon were next, both with 2% of workers.

In addition to regional differences in methods of transportation between home and work, men and women generally displayed different patterns. A larger percentage of men than women drove a car or rode their bike to work, while a larger percentage of women took public transit, travelled by car as a passenger or walked to work.

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