

Intra-Provincial Migration: Examining the Movement Between Census Metropolitan Areas

Over two-thirds of British Columbia's population lives within one of the province's four Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs). A CMA is defined by the Census as an area with a population greater than 100,000, including at least 50,000 people in an 'urban core.' The CMAs in British Columbia surround the cities of Abbotsford, Kelowna, Vancouver, and Victoria. As the largest concentrations of population in the province, these areas also concentrate consumption, employment, and services. This article uses data from the 2006 Census on mobility in the previous one and five-year periods to examine what role the Census Metropolitan Areas have in the movement of individuals within the province.

Intra-Provincial Migration

Between 2001 and 2006 more than 13% of the population over 5 years of age migrated intra-provincially, while only 4% migrated to another

province. The preference for intra-provincial migration is common among all age groups. The age structure of intra-provincial migrants is similar to that of other migrants: The most active age group is 15-24 year olds who may be moving away from home for the first time in search of education or employment; 25-44 year olds tend to be a bit less mobile, often moving to start or relocate families, sometimes with children; Beyond age 45, the propensity to migrate is generally low, and decreases with age.

Between the four CMAs, there are similarities in their pattern of intra-provincial migration, yet the location of each within the province contributes to their distinct economies and results in their differing appeal. The rest of the article will briefly look at each CMA.

1-Year Intra-Provincial Migration Flows Between CMAs, Ages 1+, Census 2006

| | | Origin | | | | | NET |
|-------------|--------------|----------|------------|---------|-----------|----------|--------------|
| | | All Ages | Abbotsford | Kelowna | Vancouver | Victoria | |
| Destination | Abbotsford | 0 | 170 | 4275 | 190 | 1905 | -245 |
| | Kelowna | 260 | 0 | 1830 | 210 | 2755 | 835 |
| | Vancouver | 3310 | 965 | 0 | 2865 | 8755 | -7135 |
| | Victoria | 120 | 305 | 2530 | 0 | 4225 | -630 |
| | Outside CMAs | 3095 | 2780 | 14395 | 4545 | 0 | 7175 |

5-Year Intra-Provincial Migration Flows Between CMAs, Ages 5+, Census 2006

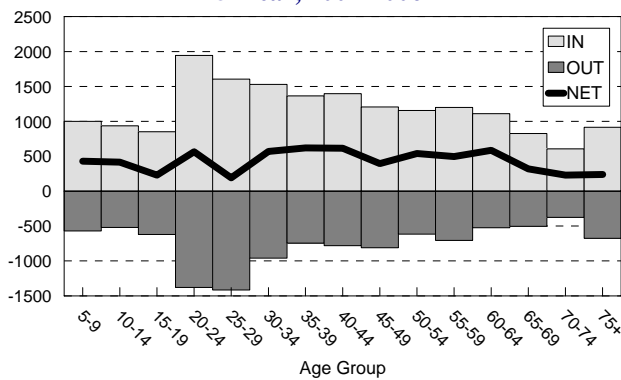
| | | Origin | | | | | NET |
|-------------|--------------|----------|------------|---------|-----------|----------|---------------|
| | | All Ages | Abbotsford | Kelowna | Vancouver | Victoria | |
| Destination | Abbotsford | 0 | 430 | 12485 | 405 | 5325 | 595 |
| | Kelowna | 785 | 0 | 6120 | 745 | 10010 | 6420 |
| | Vancouver | 7845 | 3300 | 0 | 7905 | 27840 | -25560 |
| | Victoria | 460 | 930 | 7935 | 0 | 13950 | 1360 |
| | Outside CMAs | 8960 | 6580 | 45910 | 12860 | 0 | 17185 |

Kelowna

2006 is the first census year that Kelowna has been included as a CMA. Over the preceding five years it experienced the fastest growth among CMAs, with a 9.8% increase in population. Kelowna also has the oldest population. The median age is 43.4 years old (slightly more than Victoria's 43.1), and 18% are aged 65 or older. Located in the Central Okanagan, Kelowna has a diverse economy and strong transportation links to the Lower Mainland. This makes it an attractive destination for migrants from all over the province.

Intra-provincial migration between Kelowna and areas outside CMAs accounted for the highest migration flows for Kelowna in both the previous one and five-year periods. Flows between Kelowna and Vancouver were also strong. Relative to these flows, intra-provincial migration with Victoria and Abbotsford was much smaller.

Figure 1: Kelowna CMA Intra-Provincial Migration, 5-Year, 2001-2006



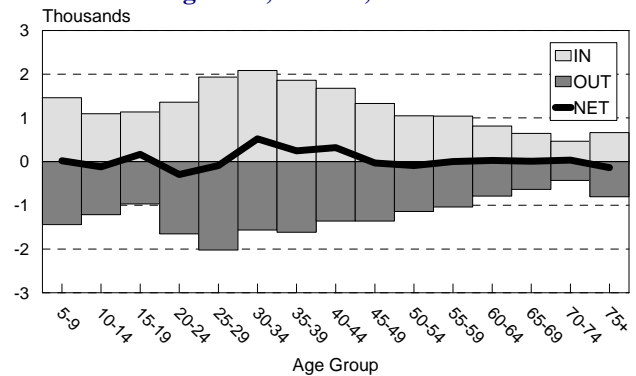
Abbotsford

The Abbotsford CMA is the youngest, with a median age of 36.8 compared to the provincial median age of 40.8. Abbotsford attracts many families and its proximity to Vancouver draws

many of that area's residents who are looking for a less urban home. Traditionally, the area has had a strong agricultural base, but it is becoming increasingly diversified.

Not surprisingly, intra-provincial migration flow was strongest between Abbotsford and nearby Vancouver, with Abbotsford receiving a net in-flow of migrants. Areas outside CMAs attracted residents from Abbotsford, creating a net out-flow, yet the percentage of migrants to and from areas outside CMAs was much lower for Abbotsford than for other CMAs. Again, this is most likely due to the close proximity to Vancouver.

Figure 2: Abbotsford CMA Intra-Provincial Migration, 5-Year, 2001-2006



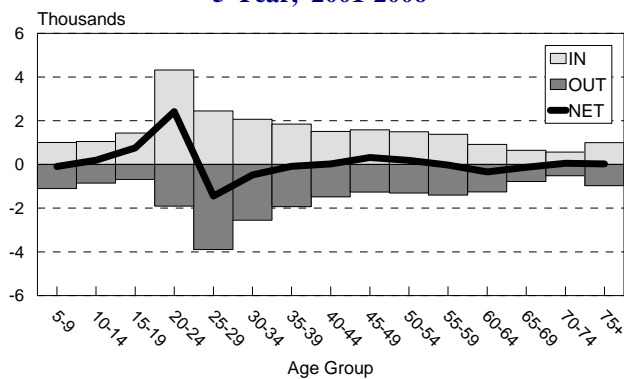
Victoria

Located on southern Vancouver Island, Victoria is a leading tourist destination and the seat of the provincial government, resulting in a mostly service-based economy. It is a popular place among retirees, and the university and colleges also mean a constant supply of younger people. As the largest city on Vancouver Island, Victoria attracts many island residents who desire a more urban environment, but also want to stay on the island.

The age distribution of Victoria’s intra-provincial migrants shows strong in-migration among 20-24 year olds, as well as strong out-migration among 25-29 year olds, characteristic of an area with a large component of university and college students.

Vancouver was responsible for the majority of intra-provincial migration flows in younger age groups. However, among 45-64 and 65+ year olds the primary destination was areas outside the CMAs. It is also notable that 9% of out-migrants 65+ from Victoria moved to Kelowna, while only 3% of Victoria’s total out-migrants went there. This appears to reflect Kelowna’s growth as a retirement destination.

Figure 3: Victoria CMA Intra-Provincial Migration, 5-Year, 2001-2006



Vancouver

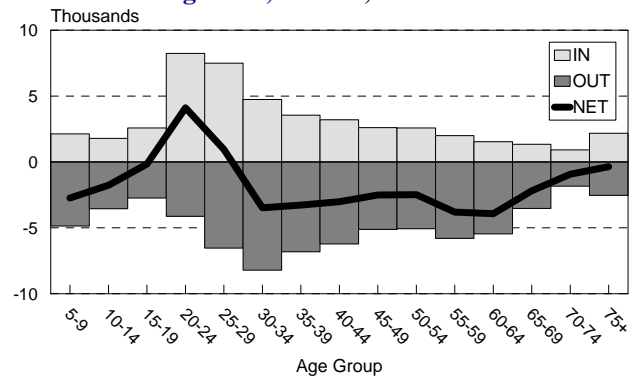
The largest of B.C.’s CMAs, Vancouver represents more than half of the provincial population. Also, as the third largest city in Canada, Vancouver is a primary destination for immigrants and inter-provincial migrants to B.C. However, individuals often move to Vancouver first, only to continue on to other parts of the province after a short stay.

Typically, Vancouver experiences negative net intra-provincial migration, especially to the regions outside the CMAs. One exception to

this trend is for the 15-24 age group who tend to have a positive net migration to Vancouver.

All areas have strong flows with Vancouver. Part of the explanation for this is simply its size. But the flows to Vancouver are also indicative of its role as an intermediate spot for relocation throughout the province.

Figure 4: Vancouver CMA Intra-Provincial Migration, 5-Year, 2001-2006

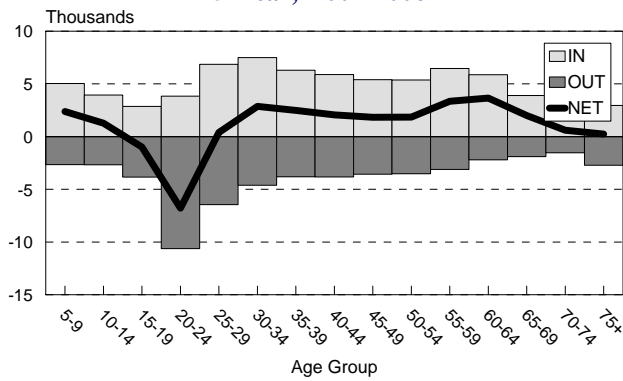


Regions Outside CMAs

There is a great deal of diversity in the characteristics of the regions outside of B.C.’s CMAs. In general, these areas are more rural and are more likely to depend on primary industries such as forestry or mining. At the same time, many cities and smaller population centers are included.

Over the census period examined, young people 15-24 had a net migration away from these areas, while all other groups had a net in-migration. Much of this migration is cyclical and may reflect the economic situation of the period. Nevertheless, the age distribution of the flows seems to indicate that young people are especially drawn to the cities.

Figure 5: Outside CMA's Intra-Provincial Migration, 5-Year, 2001-2006



The Vancouver CMA is large. All areas of the province have high migration flows with Vancouver. As well, its position as a prime destination for immigrants and inter-provincial migrants contributes to its role in dispersing the population throughout the province.

Summary

Caution must be used in inferring long-term trends from this data as it only provides one snapshot in time. Even so, this data does indicate some individual roles in intra-provincial migration for the CMA's.

Abbotsford's position can best be described in relation to Vancouver. Residents are able to maintain strong ties to that area while avoiding some of the crowds, making it attractive to families wanting to be near the city.

Victoria attracts many island residents from more rural areas, as well as young and retired people from all over the province. The young are attracted to the concentration of post-secondary opportunities and service sector jobs. For seniors, it is the availability of services that is most appealing.

Kelowna is the most easterly CMA and has a much more central location in the province than the other cities. As the largest population concentration outside of the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island, it a desirable destination for those looking to live in the Interior with the benefits that go with being in a more urban area.