

Feature Article – Intraprovincial Migration

Summary

Migration is considered to be an important contributor to population change for British Columbia. International migration often receives the greatest attention as it is often viewed as providing much needed foreign capital and skills. Interprovincial migration also receives considerable attention as it is considered to be an indicator of prosperity relative to the rest of the country. However, the importance of intraprovincial migration, or the movement of people within the province, provides a fundamental understanding of regional economic cycles and the interactivity between various sources of migration.

Overview

Intraprovincial migration refers to migration between areas within the province. Data for intraprovincial migration is available for Regional Districts (RDs) for the years from 1986 to 2003.

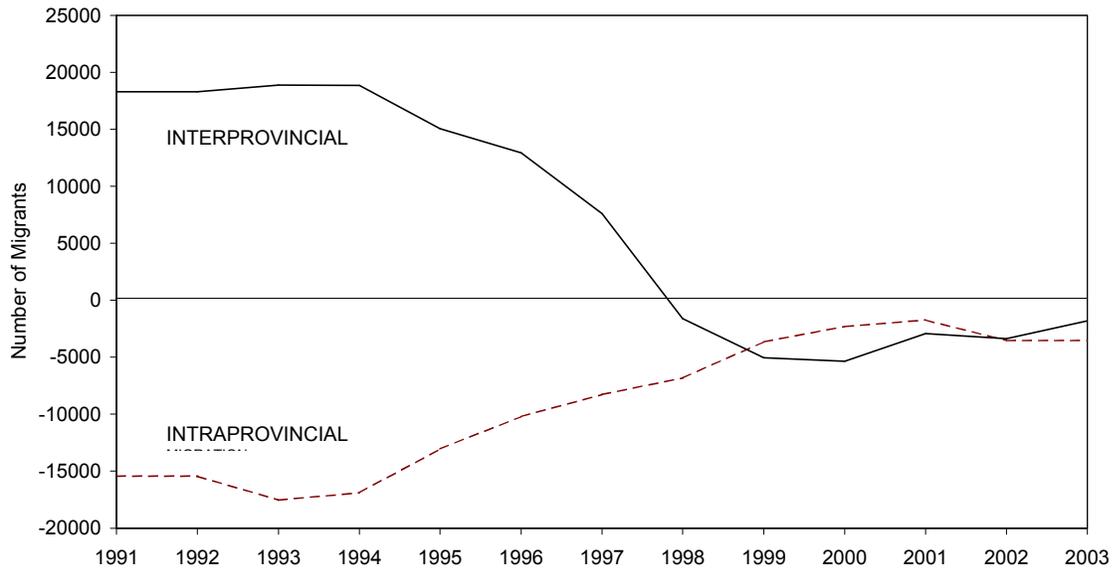
Variations in migration within the province highlight the differences between highly populated RDs and those RDs with relatively low numbers of people. The highly populated areas are often referred to as core areas and are exemplified by high density, while areas with low numbers of residents are referred to as peripheral areas, exemplified by low density.

Economic activity differs between the two extremes on the spectrum of population density. In the core areas, the economy is considered to be more diversified while in peripheral areas the economy is often

dependant on one or two main activities. In BC, peripheral areas are highly dependant on resource extraction, particularly logging, and primary processing. Economic activity in these areas is vulnerable to fluctuations in demand for raw resources. These swings in demand for commodities are often referred to as boom and bust cycles. It follows that as economic activity increases in peripheral areas, 'in' migration also increases with the majority of the new residents coming from core areas, while as economic activity decreases in peripheral areas, 'out' migration increases with the majority of migrants moving to more densely populated areas. This expansion (or movement out of core areas to peripheral areas) is followed by a contraction (or movement from rural areas back to highly populated areas), which is then followed by another expansion.

Increased demand for resources not only results in higher prices, more job opportunities, and migration out of core areas, it also strengthens the provincial economy. This in turn makes BC attractive to people outside the province. The relative economic activity between BC and the rest of Canada (particularly Ontario and Alberta) is a good indicator of interprovincial migration. During economically robust times, migration out of core areas to the rest of the province increases, and interprovincial migration from the rest of the country to the province and to core areas also increases.

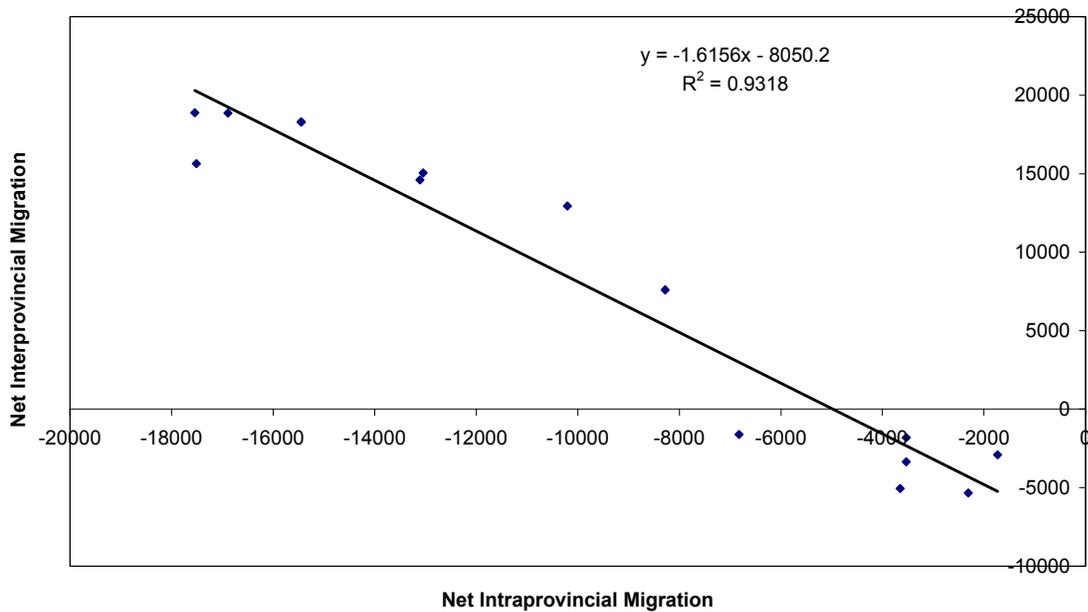
INTRAPROVINCIAL AND INTERPROVINCIAL MIGRATION - GVRD



Again, the relative strength of the provincial economy as measured by GDP in relation to the rest of the country varies over time. Net *intraprovincial* (in minus out)

migration for the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) is highly negatively correlated with net *interprovincial* migration for the GVRD.

INTRAPROVINCIAL AGAINST INTERPROVINCIAL NET MIGRATION - GVRD - 1991 TO 2003



Although intraprovincial migration for the GVRD fluctuates it tends to be negative, contributing far more people to other RDs than it receives. Over the last fifteen years, 150,000 more people moved out of the GVRD than moved in to it from other parts of the province.

Intraprovincial migration to BC's second largest core area, the Capital RD is similar to that of the GVRD, albeit at a much smaller scale. Nonetheless, it also tends to contribute more migrants during 'boom' times, and receives more during 'down' times. Intraprovincial migration for these two core areas are highly positively correlated (+87%) but they are both highly negatively correlated with most of the rest of the province. If intraprovincial migration is used as a measure of economic

hardship, the last 'down' time in the late nineties and early 2000 was not as bad as that of the early to mid eighties.

The regional districts that do not follow this tendency are the intermediate sized Fraser Valley (FVRD), Central Okanagan, and Nanaimo RDs. These RDs (with the exception of the FVRD in 1986) remained positive throughout time period - through both boom and bust times.

If this propensity for migrants to move between higher and lower density areas depending on levels of economic activity remains true for these intermediate areas, then people may be moving in from rural areas during 'down' times while people may be moving in from core areas during 'boom' times.

