



University of Nevada
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FACT SHEET 08-09

Inter-County Commuting Patterns in Lyon County: Implications for Lyon County's Economy

Brandon Sendall, Graduate Research Assistant, Department of Resource Economics

Thomas R. Harris, Economic Development Specialist, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension; Professor, Department of Resource Economics; and Director, University Center for Economic Development, College of Agriculture, Biotechnology and Natural Resources, University of Nevada, Reno

Loretta Singletary, Extension Educator, Lyon County Office, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension

The majority of working Americans commute to and from work on a daily basis. And while many of these trips are made within the same city or county limits, a number of commuters travel outside their county of residence. While this activity is of little importance to an individual worker, inter-jurisdictional commuting can impact a city's or county's revenue base or its required level of public services, both positively and negatively. This fact sheet will discuss the presence of "incommuters" and "outcommuters" in Lyon County and the State of Nevada in general, and it will discuss how these commuting patterns might have possible implications on county revenues and public services.

Each of Nevada's seventeen counties experiences some level of inter-county commuting. Those who travel outside their county to work are called **outcommuters**. Those who travel into that same county from other counties in order to work are called **incommuters**.

Lyon County Outcommuters

Table 1 illustrates the most current (2003) numbers and percentages of total Lyon County's outcommuters. Of 15,141 resident workers, only 7,866 (52%) work within Lyon County. The remaining 7,275 workers (48%)

who live in Lyon County travel to other counties for employment. Eighty-seven percent of Lyon County's outcommuters travel to Carson City, Washoe County or Douglas County for work.

Lyon County is located just east of the counties of Carson City, Washoe, Storey and Douglas (Figure 1). The two most populated areas in Lyon County are Fernley, located on the northern tip of Lyon County next to Washoe County, and the Dayton Valley/Moundhouse area, located on the western border adjacent to both Carson City and the southern portion of Washoe County. These two areas in Lyon County are located within a short driving distance of the Reno-Sparks area, which is the second largest employment center in the state of Nevada, and Carson City, the state's capital and home to many government jobs.



Figure 1. Lyon County.

Lyon County's close proximity to other counties that have a comparative advantage in jobs and overall economic growth are the most likely reasons for the high rate of outcommuting. In fact, in comparison to other Nevada counties, Lyon County sees a larger percentage of its workforce outcommuting than any other county except Storey County (see Figure 2).

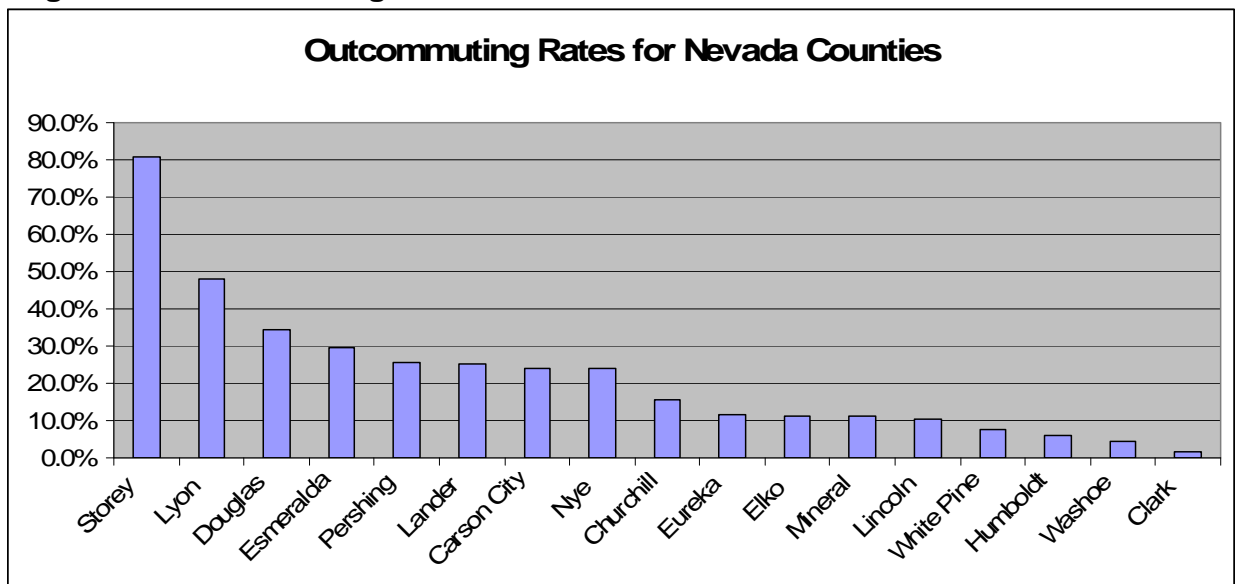
To give another illustration of how many Lyon County residents outcommute in comparison to other Nevada counties, there are almost as many outcommuters from Lyon County (7,275) as outcommuters from Washoe County (7,336). In comparison, Washoe County has more than 11 times more resident workers than Lyon County.

Table 1: Lyon County Residents' Places of Work.

Residence County	Workplace County	Count	% of Total
Lyon	Lyon Co. NV	7,866	51.95%
Lyon	Carson City NV	2,949	19.48%
Lyon	Washoe Co. NV	2,845	18.79%
Lyon	Douglas Co. NV	560	3.70%
Lyon	Churchill Co. NV	426	2.81%
Lyon	Storey Co. NV	128	0.85%
Lyon	Pershing Co. NV	85	0.56%
Lyon	Mineral Co. NV	48	0.32%
Lyon	Other NV	70	0.46%
Lyon	California	123	0.81%
Lyon	Other	41	0.27%
		15,141	100.00%
	Outcommuters	7,275	48.05%

Source: United States Census Bureau, 2003.

Figure 2: Outcommuting Rates for Nevada Counties.



Source: United States Census Bureau, 2003.

Lyon County Incommuters

A look at the incommuting patterns into Lyon County show that there is some incommuting from Carson City and Washoe County, but more incoming workers come from Churchill County, which lies to the east, than any other county. Table 2 illustrates incommuting figures for Lyon County.

Surprisingly, 2,276 of Lyon County's workers (22%) commute from nearby counties. This shows that the high rate of outcommuting is not solely due to the lack of jobs in Lyon County or

the attractiveness of other neighboring counties, but also the fact that outsiders have a sizeable portion of the jobs within Lyon County.

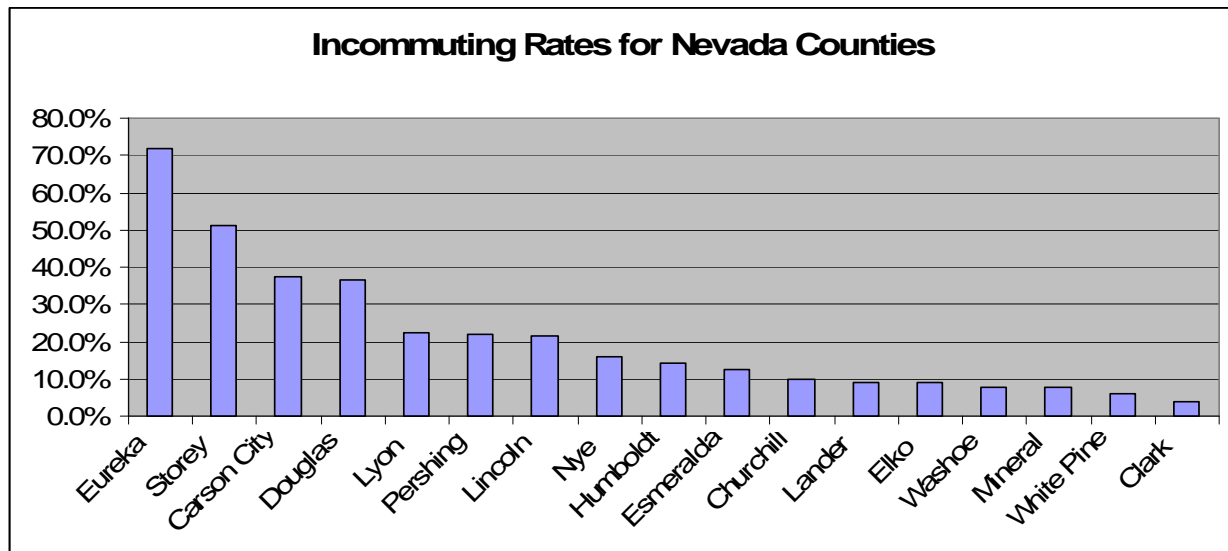
Figure 3 indicates that while Lyon County has a high rate of outcommuters in comparison to other Nevada counties (Figure 1), it also has a fairly high rate of incommuters. The two figures indicate that Lyon County is a highly transient area in terms of its working population.

Table 2: Lyon County Workers' Places of Residence.

Residence County	Workplace County	Count	%
Lyon Co. NV	Lyon	7,866	77.56%
Churchill Co. NV	Lyon	663	6.54%
Carson City NV	Lyon	623	6.14%
Washoe Co. NV	Lyon	501	4.94%
Douglas Co. NV	Lyon	188	1.85%
Storey Co. NV	Lyon	121	1.19%
Mineral Co. NV	Lyon	50	0.49%
Pershing Co. NV	Lyon	19	0.19%
Other NV	Lyon	48	0.47%
California	Lyon	45	0.44%
Other	Lyon	18	0.18%
		10,142	100.00%
	Incommuters	2,276	22.44%

Source: United States Census Bureau, 2003.

Figure 3: Incommuting Rates for Nevada Counties.



Source: United States Census Bureau, 2003.

Updated Data

County-to-county commuting data is only compiled during the decennial census, so more recent information is not available at this time. This means that exact commuting numbers are not available since the housing boom that occurred in Lyon County shortly after the 2000 census. However, annual Bureau of Economic Analysis county personal income and resident adjustment factor changed at approximately the same rate as county population. This would indicate that a similar commute to work pattern is present today as in 2000.

Conclusions: Local and Regional Implications for Lyon County's Economy

Lyon County's large amount of outcommuters can be felt in neighboring counties and the region as a whole. In fact, Lyon County is the second largest supplier of incommuters for both Carson City and Washoe County, making it a **bedroom community** of sorts for the two.

Certainly the imbalance resulting from a relatively large number of homes and small number of jobs within Lyon County's borders has both positive and negative effects. Many residents seek out homes in quiet, semi-rural areas with relatively easy access to city amenities and jobs. But the lack of economic activity within the county could have a negative effect on its tax base. **The combination of a large population and a relatively small amount of economic activity will likely result in a high demand for public services but little tax revenue to pay for these services.**

References

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- U. S. Bureau of the Census. *County-to-County Worker Flow Files, 2000*. Prepared by the Population Division, Journey to Work & Migration Statistics Branch, Bureau of the Census. Washington, DC: Internet Release, March 6, 2003.

As for Lyon County, the U.S. Census commuting data provides an economic indicator for the local and regional economy in western Nevada. **Lyon County sees a much higher percentage of its resident workers leave the county for work than the state average (48% versus 52%) and not nearly as many people commute into Lyon County as commute out (7,275 outcommuters versus 2,276 incommuters). These data suggest that there is a shortage of jobs and economic activity and an overabundance of housing in Lyon County.**

With Lyon County's two largest populated areas located so close to the Reno-Sparks area and Carson City, it would be difficult to change either situation. Looking at the census data, there are 15,141 resident workers in Lyon County, but there are only 10,142 people working in Lyon County. Assuming most jobs within county lines are filled, there is no other choice for roughly 5,000 Lyon County residents but to cross county lines for employment.

For Lyon County decision makers, it is evident that the success of regional job creation will impact the Lyon County labor force. Benefits from employment do tend to be regional, but Lyon County must be aware of employment commuting impacts and how these impacts affect the local economy. Commuting impacts such as where commuters shop, the expense of commuting, the lost community and family building activities because of commuting, and the environmental and energy impacts of commuting are questions that should be investigated.