



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

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The majority of working Americans commute to and from work on a daily basis. 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 and/or its required level of public services, both positively and negatively. This fact sheet discusses the presence of "incommuters" and "outcommuters" in Elko County and the State of Nevada in general and the potential impacts of these commuting patterns on county revenues and public services.

Each of Nevada's counties experiences some level of inter-county commuting. Some county residents travel outside the county for work. These people are called **outcommuters**. Others travel into that same county from other counties to work. These workers are called **incommuters**.

Elko County

Elko County is located in the northeast corner of the state, bordering Utah to the east and Idaho to the north. The largest city in Elko County is the city of Elko,

located near the center of the county, with West Wendover and Carlin located on the eastern and western borders, respectively. All three cities are located adjacent to Interstate 80.

Elko County is located in the northeast corner of the state, approximately 238 miles away from the state's metropolitan area of Washoe County. Elko County borders White Pine, Eureka, Lander and Humboldt Counties. All of these counties are rural, that is, remote and sparsely populated. In fact, Eureka County is the only border county that is not classified a "non-core" county (see Figure 1). A non-core county is a county in Nevada that has not been designated by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget as a metropolitan or micropolitan county.

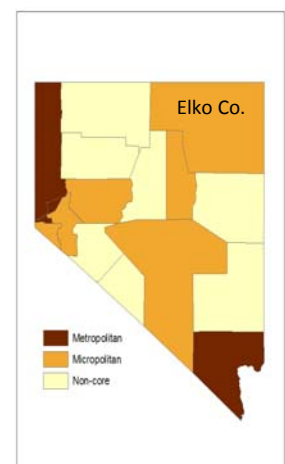


Figure 1: Nevada Counties.

Elko County Incommuters

Figures for Elko County workers' places of residence show few workers incommute to the county. Roughly 2% of Elko County workers reside in Twin Falls County, Idaho and another 2% come from Tooele County, Utah (see Table 1). The probable reason that the top two sources of incommuters

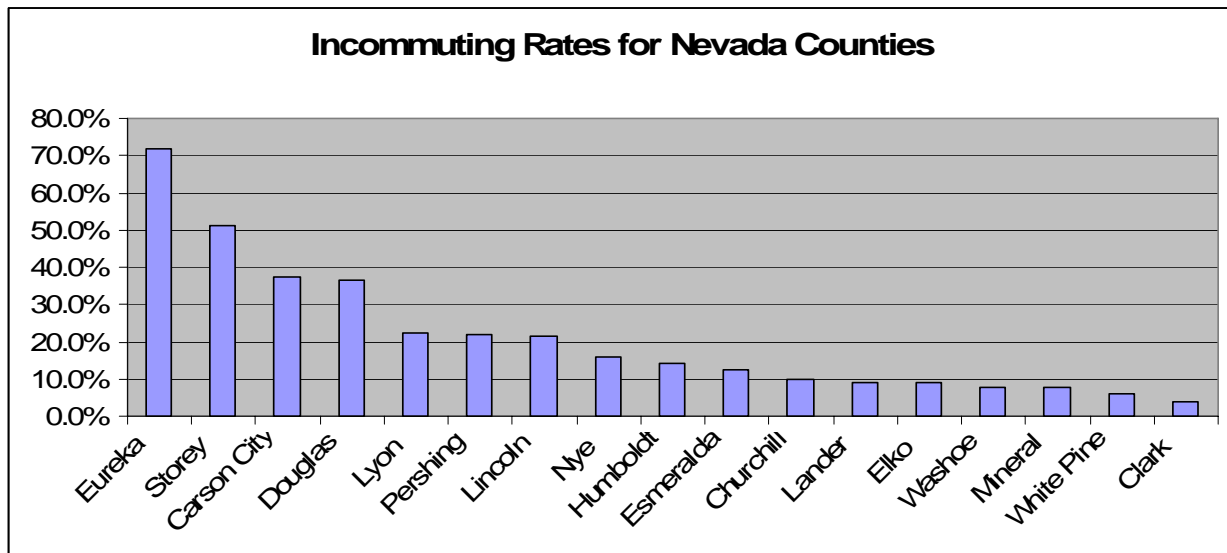
are from across state lines is the presence of casinos in West Wendover and Jackpot (near the Nevada-Idaho border). The casinos attract workers from across state lines, but even with the draw of West Wendover and Jackpot, Elko County has the fifth lowest incommuting rate of all Nevada counties (see Figure 2).

Table 1: Elko County Workers' Places of Residence.

Residence County	Workplace County	Count	
Elko Co. NV	Elko Co. NV	18,852	91.11%
Twin Falls Co. ID	Elko Co. NV	477	2.31%
Tooele Co. UT	Elko Co. NV	414	2.00%
Lander Co. NV	Elko Co. NV	128	0.62%
Clark Co. NV	Elko Co. NV	71	0.34%
Eureka Co. NV	Elko Co. NV	50	0.24%
Other NV	Elko Co. NV	161	0.78%
Other ID	Elko Co. NV	163	0.79%
Other UT	Elko Co. NV	95	0.46%
Other	Elko Co. NV	281	1.36%
		20,692	100.00%
	Incommuters	1,840	8.89%

Source: United States Census Bureau, 2003.

Figure 2: Incommuting Rates for all Nevada Counties.



Source: United States Census Bureau, 2003.

Elko County Outcommuters

Elko County overall has a similar rate of outcommuting as incommuting. Again, Elko County has the fifth lowest outcommuting rate in the State of Nevada (see Figure 3). The interesting aspect of Elko County's outcommuting figures is that while only 11% of Elko County resident workers leave the county for work, over 61% of those outcommuters travel to

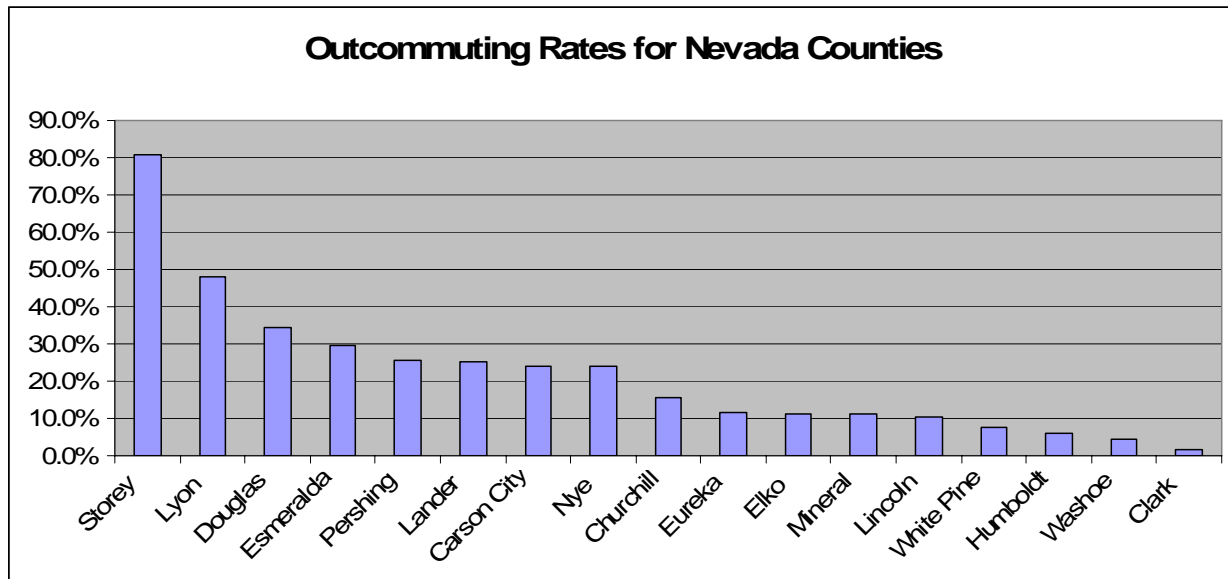
neighboring Eureka County. While the total number of outcommuters is fairly small, the proportion of those who commute to Eureka County indicates a strong live-work relationship with neighboring Eureka County. This is due to the large Carlin Trend gold mines located in northeastern Eureka County. Northern Eureka County has little to no housing so the mining employees live in Elko County.

Table 2: Elko County Residents' Places of Work.

Residence County	Workplace County	Count	
Elko Co. NV	Elko Co. NV	18,852	88.60%
Elko Co. NV	Eureka Co. NV	1,488	6.99%
Elko Co. NV	Tooele Co. UT	325	1.53%
Elko Co. NV	Humboldt Co. NV	79	0.37%
Elko Co. NV	Washoe Co. NV	67	0.31%
Elko Co. NV	Lander Co. NV	42	0.20%
Elko Co. NV	White Pine Co. NV	39	0.18%
Elko Co. NV	Other NV	46	0.22%
Elko Co. NV	Other	340	1.60%
		21,278	100.00%
	Outcommuters	2,426	11.40%

Source: United States Census Bureau, 2003.

Figure 3: Outcommuting Rates for Nevada Counties.



Source: United States Census Bureau, 2003.

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

Figures 2 and 3 showed that Elko County has relatively low incommuting and outcommuting rates in comparison to the rest of the state. However, these aggregate numbers do not reflect the regional mining economy and the structure of inter-county commuting.

The true nature of the commuting pattern is revealed in Table 2, where 61% (1,488 workers) of Elko county's total outcommuters travel to Eureka County for work. While the total numbers show Elko County as being a somewhat average county in terms of inter-county commuting, the large portion of Elko's outcommuters working in Eureka County indicates a close relationship with that one specific neighboring county. In fact, the incommuting figures from Eureka County in Table 3 show that over 66% of Eureka County's workers commute from Elko County. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, 84% of all Eureka

Table 3: Eureka County Incommuters

Residence County	Workplace County	Count	%
Elko Co. NV	Eureka Co. NV	1,488	66.34%
Eureka Co. NV	Eureka Co. NV	630	28.09%
Lander Co. NV	Eureka Co. NV	54	2.41%
White Pine Co. NV	Eureka Co. NV	36	1.60%
Other NV	Eureka Co. NV	33	1.47%
Other	Eureka Co. NV	2	0.09%
		2,243	100.00%
	Incommuters	1,613	71.91%

References

- Bureau of Economic Analysis. Local Area Personal Income. Total full-time and part-time employment by NAICS industry, CA25N. 2001.
- 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.

County jobs were in mining in 2001. These data suggest that Elko County acts as a bedroom community of sorts for Eureka County's mining industry. Additionally, this inter-county commuting pattern provides the impetus for the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (2000) to designate Elko and Eureka Counties as the Elko *Micropolitan Area*.

This live-work relationship with Eureka County can both negatively and positively impact Elko County's economy. First, Elko County has the burden of providing public services for all its residents who work in Eureka County. When the commuting workers return home to Elko County, they demand public services such as roads and schools, as well as a developed commercial sector. But the taxes associated with mining activities are collected in Eureka County. However, the commuting workers spend the majority of their income in Elko County because of the lack of housing and commercial sector activity in Eureka County.

While the increased demand for public services in Elko County is certain, the distribution of tax dollars is scattered. Eureka County collects taxes related to its mining industry. Elko County collects property and sales taxes from the mine workers spending their income in Elko County and the indirect economic impacts associated with their spending. This brings up the discussion of regional sharing of revenues where county economics are linked by commuting patterns.