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## COMMUTING: DOES YOUR COUNTY IMPORT OR EXPORT WORKERS?

If you're like me, you spend a lot of time commuting. Personally, I've listened to countless books on tape and tallied immeasurable miles driving to and from my place of employment. The American Community Survey tells us that the average Utah worker spends just about 21 minutes traveling to work each day (slightly less than the average U.S. worker with a 26-minute commute). However, because of its limited sample size, the American Community Survey reveals little about who is crossing county lines for employment purposes.

### COMING AND GOING

Fortunately for data geeks, information from the Local Employment Dynamics (LED) program (operated by the U.S. Census Bureau) exposes the dramatic amount of commuting occurring in Utah. Plus, newly updated information for 2008 provides a relatively recent snapshot of commuter data. Essentially, the LED database compares where workers are employed and where they live. And, the best part? Using the program software, one can easily map and compare where workers live and work to determine commuting patterns both in and out of your particular county.

### WORKER IMPORTING OR EXPORTING?

Because this article focuses on the less-populated counties in Utah, we'll ignore the commuting patterns for the behemoth counties of the Wasatch

Front. To determine whether or not a county is a net importer or exporter of workers, I've extracted two data items—the number of out-of-county workers commuting to jobs within a particular county (inflows) and the number of county residents who work outside their county of residence (outflows). If a county's labor inflows are greater than its outflows, it's a worker importer. If worker outflows outnumber inflows, the county is a labor exporter.

### SENDING THEM AWAY

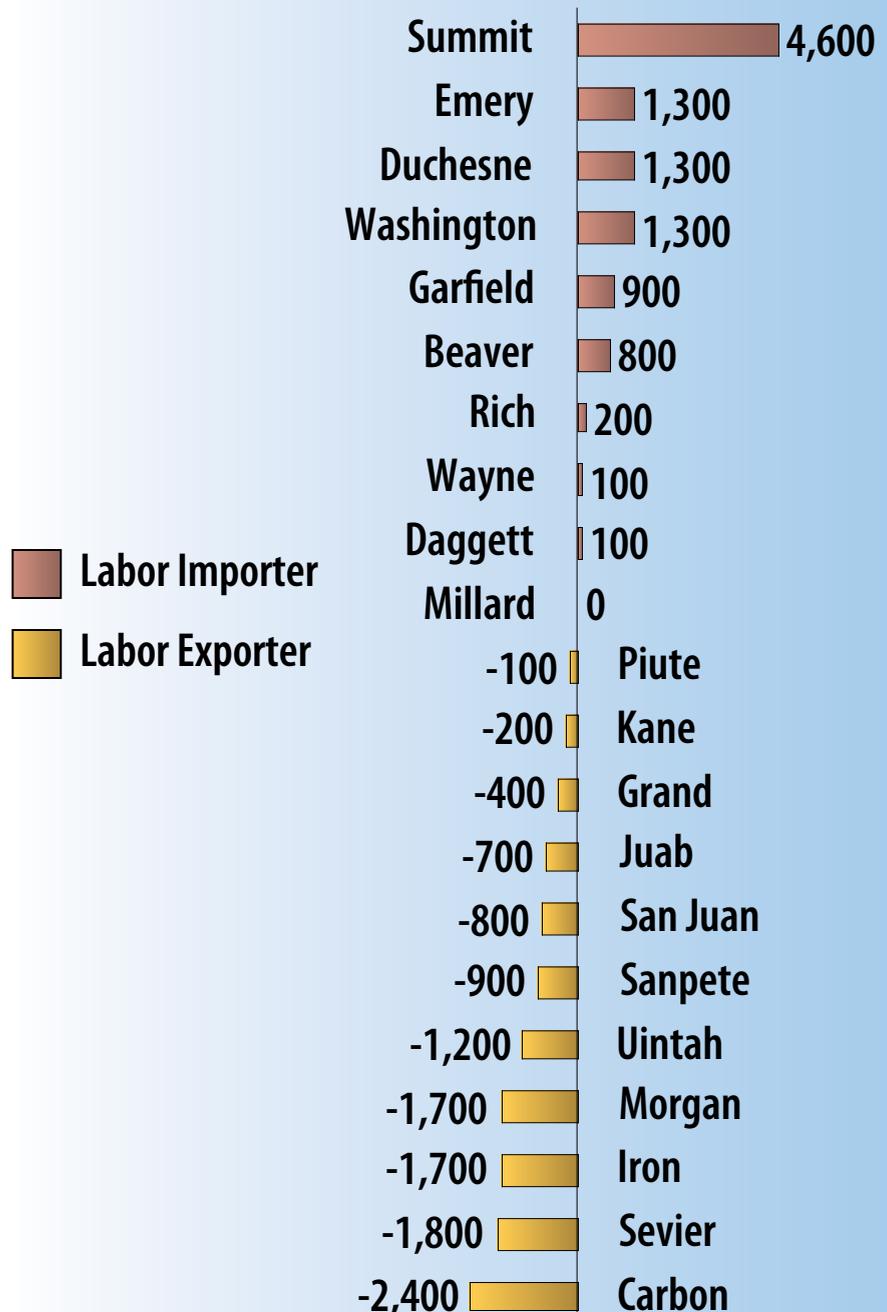
Not surprisingly, a majority of small Utah counties rank as labor exporters. City workers often prefer living in less-populated areas for aesthetic/quality of life reasons or because housing is less expensive. In addition, finding employment in rural areas may necessitate searching farther afield. Tooele, located on the periphery of the Wasatch Front appears, by far, the largest exporter among this group of 15 worker-exporting counties.

### BRINGING THEM IN

While Millard County exports roughly the same number of workers that it imports, another nine counties show up as labor importers. Tourism-dependent Summit, Garfield, and Wayne counties are heavily dependent on imported labor. Duchesne and Emery counties import labor to work in their extractive industries. On the other hand, Washington County's 2008 labor importation seems more reflective of its explosive short-term building bubble than of a long-term trend—prior to 2007 the county showed a net outflow of workers.

Obviously, there's a whole lot of commuting going on. As more data becomes available, it will be interesting to note just what impact (if any) the recession has caused in commuting patterns. In this article, I've just scratched the surface of the commuting data that is available. If you are interested in finding out more about commuting in (and out) of your particular county, you can check out the LED web site: <http://lehd.did.census.gov/led/>

## NET-FLOWS OF LABOR 2ND QUARTER 2008



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Local Employment Dynamics OnTheMap Origin-Destination Database.