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Trends in Commute Patterns across the North San Joaquin Valley (NSJV)

In this Research Brief, we take stock of significant commute patterns across the NSJV in 2019. While the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted these patterns and cast uncertainty over long-term changes, we believe that this information provides useful context as we look toward the future. Before turning to the individual counties that form the NSJV, we begin with a discussion of regional features and interregional commute patterns in particular.

The figure to the right shows the most recent American Community Survey data on commuting. This 2019 data, was released as a high-precision sample through IPUMS USA earlier this year. It shows that NSJV commuters into the San Francisco Bay area continue to dominate inter-regional commuting across northern California.

When we compared annual inter-regional commuting in 2012 to 2019, we found that NSJV commuters to the Bay Area increased by 59% with over 36,000 more commuters in 2019 than 2012. This is the largest growth in inter-regional commuting across northern California, with the Sacramento area's growth of 14,000 commuters to the Bay Area the second largest during this time.

Another feature of the NSJV commute is that its share of employed residents who work outside the region (inter-regional workers) has grown from 15% in 2012 to 18% in 2019. However, in the other three regions the share of inter-regional workers has been steady or declining. The NSJV has also seen a slight rise in the proportion of those employed in the NSJV who reside in the NSJV, with the share growing from 93% in 2012 to 94% in 2019. This increase has occurred as inter-county commuters within the NSJV has increased.

Between 2012 and 2019, commuters from NSJV counties to the Bay Area increased as follows:

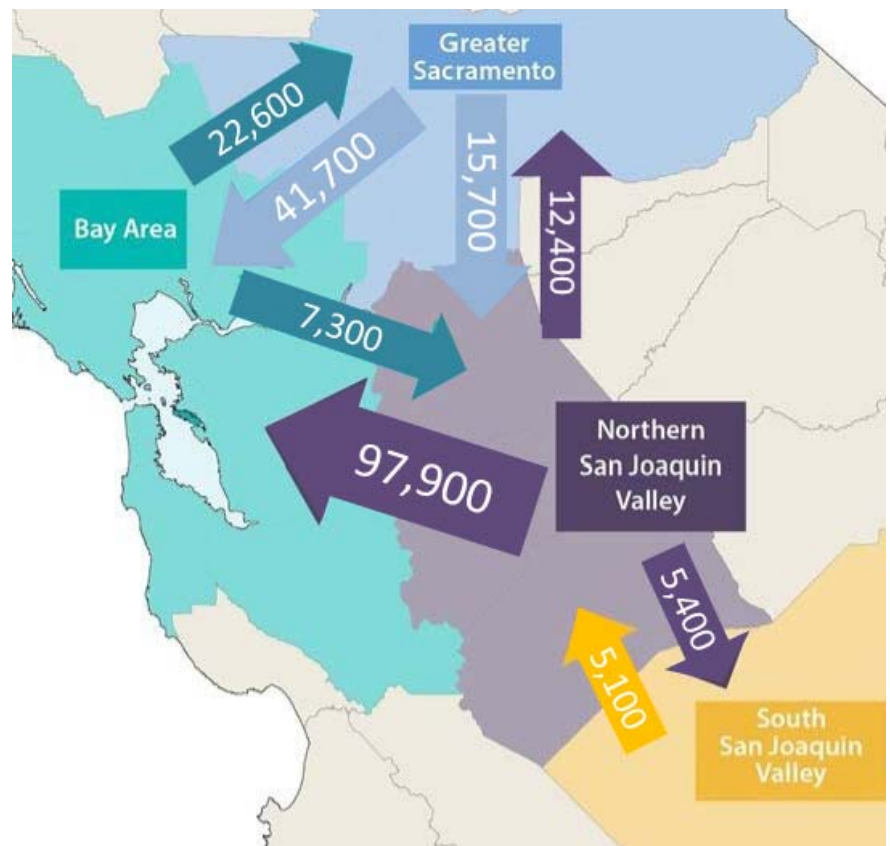
- San Joaquin increased by 23,600 or 57%.
- Stanislaus increased by 8,400 or 60%.
- Merced increased by 4,400 or 77%.

Similarly, from 2012 to 2019, south-to-north intra-regional between county commuting grew in the NSJV:

- Merced to Stanislaus increased 2,700 or 23%.
- Stanislaus to San Joaquin rose 9,500 or 46%.

In contrast, during this same period inter-regional workers

2019 Northern California Inter-Regional Commute Flows



Trends in Commute Patterns across the NSJV (continued)

Workers' Place of Residence

County of Residence:	Share of Total (2019)	Number of Workers (2019)	2012-2019 Workers Change
San Joaquin			
In-County	80%	226,810	20%
Stanislaus	11%	30,040	46%
Sacramento	4%	11,350	2%
All Others	5%	13,960	-11%
Stanislaus			
In-County	83%	167,940	14%
Merced	7%	14,830	23%
San Joaquin	6%	12,120	-12%
All Others	4%	7,460	19%
Merced			
In-County	87%	73,740	8%
Stanislaus	5%	4,430	-39%
Madera	3%	2,190	69%
All Others	5%	4,180	60%

from the Bay Area to the NSJV declined by 8% and commuters from San Joaquin to Stanislaus dropped 12% while commuters from Stanislaus to Merced declined 39%. This suggests that Bay Area jobs and economic growth are creating ripples of opportunities into the NSJV and a similar pattern is playing out within the region. The growing inter- and intra- regional connectivity is also reflected in updated definitions used by all Federal agencies since the Office of Management and Budget issued its March 2020 revision, which now includes the Metropolitan Statistical Areas of all three NSJV counties as part of the San Jose-San Francisco-Oakland, California Combined Statistical Area.

Residents' Place of Work

County of Work:	Share of Total (2019)	Number of Residents (2019)	2012-2019 Residents Change
San Joaquin			
In-County	72%	226,810	20%
Alameda	11%	35,810	59%
Stanislaus	4%	12,120	-12%
Santa Clara	4%	11,890	46%
Contra Costa	3%	9,630	99%
Sacramento	3%	8,890	33%
San Francisco	1%	4,480	197%
All Others	2%	6,040	-42%
Stanislaus			
In-County	74%	167,940	14%
San Joaquin	13%	30,040	46%
Alameda	6%	12,990	91%
Merced	2%	4,430	-39%
Santa Clara	2%	4,040	-12%
All Others	4%	8,360	31%
Merced			
In-County	70%	73,740	8%
Stanislaus	14%	14,830	23%
Santa Clara	7%	7,450	95%
Fresno	2%	2,110	73%
San Joaquin	2%	1,940	16%
Madera	1%	1,500	53%
All Others	4%	4,460	-9%

San Joaquin County

San Joaquin County has the largest number of employed residents and jobs in the NSJV. The southern portion of the county has seen a rising number of residents commuting into the Bay Area for several decades. In 2019, the Bay Area was the place of work for 65,400 (21%) of the county's employed residents. The majority of these Bay Area commuters worked in Alameda County, followed by Santa Clara, and Contra Costa Counties, but large growth in commuters to San Francisco is also notable. Considering all commuting destinations, a total of 28% of San Joaquin County workers were employed outside the County as of 2019.

Stanislaus County

Stanislaus County in 2019 had 26% of its residents working outside the county. While the largest increase in residents working out of county was to San Joaquin County, the 9 counties of the Bay Area region accounted for 22,500 (10%) employed residents in 2019. In terms of county jobs, there were 34,000 residents in 2019 from outside Stanislaus county that worked jobs in the county. The largest number of these workers reside in Merced County and between 2012 and 2019 they grew 23%. The next largest source of out-of-county residents working in Stanislaus were from San Joaquin County, but their numbers actually decreased 12% in this period, resulting in a much stronger south to north commuting flow than in the past.

Merced County

In 2019, 30% of Merced County workers had jobs based outside the county, the largest proportion in the NSJV. Stanislaus has the largest share, but commuters to the Bay Area grew to 10% of the county's workforce in 2019. The share of out-of-county residents working jobs in Merced county declined between 2012 and 2019, meaning more jobs in Merced County are now filled by local residents. Notably, the number of Stanislaus commuters to Merced jobs decreased by 2,800.

Questions? Contact Us >>>

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