

Economic Geography

- The concept of 'economic geography' provides a framework for understanding a local economy by analysing how it operates over a spatial or geographical level. This analysis can be highly complex, but includes an understanding of how the local economy is connected to its neighbours in various ways, for example, through the journeys people make to work, to shop or spend their leisure time, the operation of housing markets and through the connections between businesses, their supply chains and customers. Recognising the importance of these concentrations of activity, and spatial links, allows a greater appreciation and understanding of the importance of the wider economy in Dudley Borough's present and future prosperity, and the opportunities and challenges faced by the local economy.
- In a geographical context, Dudley Borough is located within the West Midlands Region. The borough's economy has a large degree of 'self containment', in that the majority of economically active people both live and work in Dudley Borough. In terms of key connections, a significant proportion of Dudley Borough's 'economic footprint' is contained within the Black Country sub region. Working outwards, by far the greatest proportion of the borough's economic geography is contained within the boundaries of the West Midlands.
- There is particularly strong interaction between the two southern Black Country boroughs (Dudley and Sandwell) and between the northern Black Country areas (Walsall and Wolverhampton). There are also strong links between Dudley Borough, South Staffordshire and Wyre Forest (including Kidderminster). Dudley Borough's links with other major commercial and urban conurbations, principally Birmingham, and Telford and Wrekin, do exist but are markedly less important than those within the Black Country itself.
- This overall pattern of Black Country-centred-relationships holds true in terms of business connectivity, travel to work, shopping and the housing market. However, in terms of travel to work areas, it has become clear that commuting areas have expanded in recent years, with managers and professional staff increasingly choosing to live in rural or rural fringe areas of Staffordshire and Worcestershire, and travelling to work (inward migration) in Dudley Borough.
- The next single most important relationship is between the Black Country and Birmingham. The links between Birmingham and Sandwell are strongest, but reasonably close links also exist between Dudley Borough and Birmingham. A good example of this is the strong commuter flow of Dudley Borough's residents, (outward migration) via the train link, to Birmingham's financial district.

Travel to Work Areas

- Travel to work patterns provide a proxy for the area's broader economic geography. 70.6% of the borough's resident population also work in the borough. 17.6% work in neighbouring Sandwell - by far the largest contingent outside Dudley Borough itself. The next highest recipient of Dudley Borough's residents is Wolverhampton (6.6%). Whilst Birmingham receives only 3% of Dudley Borough's workforce, many of these will be managers and professional people.
- Although the above percentages have altered slightly over the past decade, the overall pattern and distribution of the Borough's workforce has remained constant. What is changing, conversely, is the number of workers - again, many professionals - who live outside the borough, often in South Staffordshire or Worcestershire - and travel into the borough to work.

Place of Residence of those working in Dudley Borough - 2001 & 2008

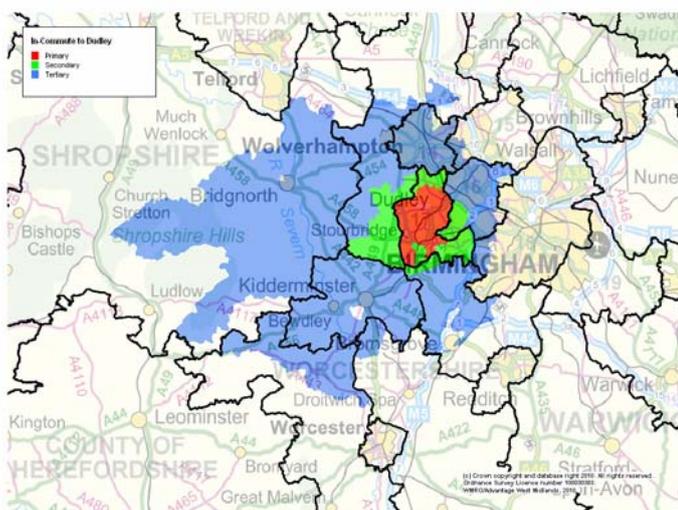
Place of Residence	2001 (%)	2008 (%)	Change over time (%)
Birmingham	2.8	4.6	↑ 1.8
Dudley	70.6	67.3	↓ 3.3
Sandwell	9.7	8.7	↓ 1.0
Walsall	1.4	2.7	↑ 1.3
Wolverhampton	3.2	4.5	↑ 1.3
South Staffordshire	3.1	3.8	↑ 0.7
Bromsgrove	1.6	1.9	↑ 0.3
Wyre Forest	2.2	-	↓ 2.2
Bridgnorth	0.8	1.1	↑ 0.3

(- denotes non significant flows)

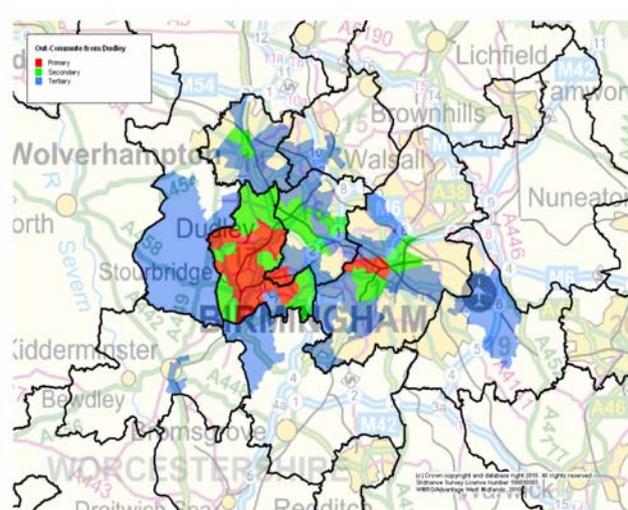
Source: ONS

- The following maps are taken from the 'Analysis of Sub-Regional Dynamics in the West Midlands' report undertaken by the West Midlands Regional Observatory (WMRO) in March 2010. The analysis identifies relationships between places in the West Midlands based on key economic aspects.

In-Commute to Dudley Borough



Out-Commute from Dudley Borough



Retail flows

- Birmingham is by far the largest retail sub-region, with 30% of the West Midlands shopper population choosing the city as their main shopping destination for non-food goods. However, Merry Hill is the second most important retail centre, with 12% of the region's shoppers visiting the centre (although the largest catchment is from the Black Country). Merry Hill is therefore 68% contained in terms of the loyalty of its local residential customer base.

Leisure flows

- Birmingham City, with its shops, nightlife, cultural and sporting facilities is by far the single biggest magnet for customers within the West Midlands, including those from Dudley Borough. However, Merry Hill and Kidderminster (combined) provide important (one of ten in total) groupings of leisure sub-regions.