Toronto Immigrant Settlement Trends by Neighbourhood (Census Tracts), 1961 to 2001

The following maps and graphs provide a decade-by-decade look at changes in immigrant settlement patterns in Toronto from 1961 to 2001. For each census tract, the number of immigrants who recently arrived in each Census year is mapped as a percentage of the total population.

There is some variation among the maps, because the period of arrival in Canada tracked by the Census has changed over time, but the maps still provide an overview of the changing residential destinations for newcomers in Toronto. Whereas once immigrants were most likely to settle in older inner-city neighbourhoods, today they are more likely to settle in places such as suburban Scarborough, North York, and Etobicoke.

The final two maps show immigrants throughout the entire Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) who arrived between 1996 and 2001 and between 1981 and 2001. Since most of the outer suburban areas around the City of Toronto were more sparsely populated in the 1960s and 1970s, it is not helpful to map the entire CMA back to 1960. The CMA maps must be interpreted cautiously, because many parts of the large census tracts outside of the built-up areas of the Toronto region contained relatively few immigrants in 2001.

The bar chart shows the growth in the immigrant and Canadian-born population between 1961 and 2001 in the Toronto CMA. In 1961, immigrants accounted for about 33% of the total population. By 2001, they accounted for 44% of the population. Immigration has been responsible for half of the population growth in the Toronto CMA over the past 40 years.

The line graph shows the change in the origins of the immigrant population over time for immigrants living in the Toronto CMA in 2001. Up to the 1960s, most immigrants came from European countries. Since the 1970s, most have come from Asian countries. This change results from a shift in Canadian immigration policy in the 1960s that eliminated the preference for European immigrants and placed more emphasis on immigrants’ educational qualifications.

Technical Notes

Definition of immigrant population in the census: Refers to people who are, or have been, landed immigrants in Canada. A landed immigrant is a person who has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Children born in Canada to immigrant parents are not considered immigrants in the Census.

Changes in census tract boundaries: Census tracts usually have from 2,000 to 6,000 people. As population increases, census tracts are subdivided (one census tract becomes two or more). We mapped immigration data for earlier census years using 2001 census tract boundaries in order to show more detail, since there were more census tracts in 2001 than in previous census years. For the City of Toronto, census tract boundary changes mainly affect the northern parts of Etobicoke, North York, and Scarborough. For census years before 2001, we assumed that the new subdivided tracts have the same percentage of immigrants as the undivided tract. This may not be the case, but this strategy does not affect the overall view of general trends and enhances the comparability of the maps from one census year to the next.

Source of the immigration data: In the Canadian Census, immigration data are obtained from a 20% sample of the population, that is, the one in every five households who fill out the long form in which place of arrival are reported. The brief exception to this is the 1971 census, when a one in three (33%) sample was used.

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Recent Immigrants, Previous Six Years
City of Toronto, 1961
Census Tracts

Imigrants who Arrived 1956-1961 as a Percentage of the Population, 1961

Source: Statistics Canada, 1961

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Neighbourhood Change Community University Research Alliance, SSHRC
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Recent Immigrants, Previous Seven Years
City of Toronto, 1971
Census Tracts

Immigrants who Arrived 1965-1971 as a Percentage of the Population, 1971

Source: Statistics Canada, 1971
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Recent Immigrants, Previous Three Years
City of Toronto, 1981
Census Tracts


Source: Statistics Canada, 1981

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Recent Immigrants, Previous Four Years
City of Toronto, 1991
Census Tracts


Source: Statistics Canada, 1991

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Recent Immigrants, Previous Six Years
City of Toronto, 2001
Census Tracts

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001
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Imigrants who Arrived 1996-2001 as a Percentage of the Population, 2001

- City of Toronto's Priority Neighbourhoods (2005)
- Highways (2005)
- Subway (2005)
- Non-Residential Areas or No Data Available

30% or More
20% to 30%
10% to 20%
Less than 10%

Census Tract 2001 boundaries shown
Recent Immigrants, Previous Six Years in the Toronto CMA, 2001
Census Tracts

CMA = Census Metropolitan Area

Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2001
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Neighbourhood Change Community University Research Alliance, SSHRC
Immigrant and Canadian Born Population Growth
Toronto CMA, 1961 to 2001

Population in Millions

Census Year


Foreign Born
Canadian Born

Source: Statistics Canada,

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Neighbourhood Change Community University Research Alliance, SSHRC
by Period of Arrival

Period of Arrival to Canada

United States
Central and South America
Caribbean and Bermuda
Europe
Africa
Asia
Oceania and other

Percentage of Total Immigrants

Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2001