

Study: Centre and peripheries: Settlement patterns and social integration of the population with an immigrant background in the Toronto, Montréal and Vancouver metropolitan areas

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From a residential standpoint, it is well known that highly urbanized population centres are home to the majority of immigrants. In 2011, 63% of the immigrant population in Canada was living in one of the country's three largest census metropolitan areas (CMAs): Toronto, Montréal and Vancouver.

The settlement pattern of immigrants in these CMAs has changed in recent years. There is now a greater tendency among newcomers to settle in peripheral municipalities, most often those bordering a central municipality. This phenomenon is referred to as the suburbanization of immigrants.

This suburbanization trend of immigrants changes the context of integration into Canadian society. Traditionally, immigrants being dispersed in the peripheral municipalities was associated with greater integration into the host society. However, living on the outskirts of central municipalities does not necessarily mean that immigrants are more fully integrated than in the past. The outskirts of central municipalities now have a higher proportion of immigrants than before, are relatively heterogeneous in terms of socio-economic status and have a similar urban concentration of the population with an immigrant background (immigrants and second generation populations).

Suburbanization on the rise

The suburbanization trend of immigration intensified from 2001 to 2011. As a result, settling initially in a central municipality is no longer the predominant settlement pattern of immigrants to Canada.

The Toronto CMA saw the sharpest rise in the proportion of immigrants living in a peripheral municipality (also called the suburbanization rate) from 2001 to 2011. More than half the immigrant population (51%) was living in a municipality peripheral to Toronto in 2011, up 10 percentage points from 2001 (40%). In Montréal, the proportion of immigrants living in a peripheral municipality rose from 27% in 2001 to 33% in 2011. In Vancouver, the suburbanization rate increased from 66% in 2001 to 72% in 2011.

Recent immigrants contribute to the rise in suburbanization

In the Montréal CMA, the percentage of recent immigrants aged 15 and older living in a peripheral municipality increased from 13% in 2001 to 21% in 2011. However, the suburbanization rate of recent immigrants in the Montréal CMA in 2011 was half that of established immigrants (42%), that is, those who settled in Canada more than five years earlier.

In the Toronto CMA, the percentage of recent immigrants living in a peripheral municipality also rose, from 32% in 2001 to 42% in 2011. The percentage of established immigrants also increased by 10 percentage points (from 42% in 2001 to 52% in 2011).

In the Vancouver CMA, suburbanization rates vary little from one group to another (72% for recent immigrants compared with 71% for established immigrants). However, the proportion of recent immigrants living in a peripheral municipality was also up, from 68% in 2001 to 72% in 2011.



Are these new settlement patterns favourable to the social integration of immigrants?

Moving to a new country involves a number of residential changes and social transitions. In addition to moving to a new dwelling and neighbourhood, immigrants and their families redefine their points of reference and put down new social roots. In this regard, family and friendship ties, relationships with neighbours, social participation and community involvement, as well as a sense of belonging to where they live provide important information on the social experiences of immigrants and their second-generation descendants in the environment where they settle.

This study reveals that the concentration at the census tract level in both central and peripheral municipalities is similar. Furthermore, according to the indicators examined, the level of social integration of immigrants is similar for all concentrations.

About one-third of the population with an immigrant background reported knowing most or all of their neighbours

Regardless of their place of residence, approximately one-third of the population with an immigrant background reported knowing most or all of their neighbours.

In addition, regardless of the type of municipality of residence (central or peripheral) or the proportion that the population with an immigrant background represents in their neighbourhood, a majority of immigrants and their descendants (over 80%) reported feeling a very or somewhat strong sense of belonging to Canada, their province, their city and their local community.

Overall, the sense of belonging to the local community is stronger when immigrants and their descendants are part of a larger local personal network. The same finding applies for relationships with neighbours and participation in social activities.

As such, while the settlement patterns of immigrants follow more diverse courses than in the past, they are not necessarily the factors that encourage or impede social integration.

Note to readers

The results come from a new study, "Settlement patterns and social integration of the population with an immigrant background in Toronto, Montréal and Vancouver metropolitan areas." Based on data from the 2001 and 2006 Canadian censuses and the 2011 National Household Survey, it examines two trends that describe the experience of immigrants in those census metropolitan areas (CMAs) from 2001 to 2011. The first is the increasing suburbanization of immigrants in the three CMAs, while the second looks at the urban concentration of immigrants within the CMAs in 2011 from a centre-periphery perspective.

Using data from the General Social Survey on Social Identity, the study also examines the characteristics of settlement patterns based on certain social integration characteristics of the population with an immigrant background. Some of these characteristics include personal networks, relationships with neighbours, social participation, participation in group activities, and sense of belonging, all of which are analyzed by the type of municipality of residence (centre or periphery of the CMA). As well, the study looks at the degree of concentration in the neighbourhood (census tract) of the population with an immigrant background.

Data on immigration and the ethnocultural characteristics of the Canadian population will be released on October 25, 2017.

Definitions

A **census metropolitan area (CMA)** is formed by one or more adjacent municipalities centred on a population centre (also known as the core). A CMA must have a total population of at least 100,000, of which 50,000 or more live in the core. In this study, the boundaries of CMAs and their constituent municipalities are defined according to the 2011 boundaries.

Census subdivision (CSD) is a general term for municipalities (as determined by provincial/territorial legislation) or areas treated as municipal equivalents for statistical purposes (for example, Indian reserves, Indian settlements and unorganized territories).

The **central municipality (or census subdivision)** is the one after which a CMA is named. In this study, the respective central municipalities of the Toronto and Vancouver CMAs are the CSD of Toronto and Vancouver. For the Montréal CMA, the municipalities of Montréal, Montréal-Est, Montréal-Ouest, Westmount, Côte-Saint-Luc, Hampstead and Mont-Royal have been grouped together to form the central municipality for spatial continuity purposes. The term **peripheral municipality** refers to any non-central municipality (or census subdivision) that is a component of the census metropolitan area (in other sources, these are sometimes called suburban municipalities, surrounding municipalities or suburban rings).

In this release, **suburbanization** refers to the increasing trend of immigrants settling in certain medium-sized peripheral municipalities.

The **suburbanization rate** is the percentage of the immigrant population living in a peripheral municipality in the census metropolitan area.

The boundaries of a **neighbourhood** may vary from a social or analytical perspective. In this study, the term neighbourhood corresponds to a census tract. Census tracts are small, relatively stable areas, usually with a population of between 2,500 and 8,000. They are located within census metropolitan areas and in census agglomerations that have a core population of 50,000 or more.

Recent immigrants are defined as immigrants who received landed immigrant status in the five years preceding the survey (for example, from 2006 to 2011 for the 2011 National Household Survey).

Established immigrants are those who received landed immigrant status in 2005 or earlier, or more generally, immigrants who have lived in the country for more than five years.

The **second generation** refers to persons born in Canada whose parents are both foreign-born.

The **population with an immigrant background** comprises recent immigrants, established immigrants and the second generation.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey numbers [3901](#), [5024](#) and [5178](#).

The article "[Settlement patterns and social integration of the population with an immigrant background in the Montréal, Toronto and Vancouver metropolitan areas](#)" is now available online ([89-657-X](#)).

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