

Canada's population estimates: Subprovincial areas, July 1, 2020

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Population growth in Canada's large urban regions slows, but still outpaces that of other regions

In most large urban regions (census metropolitan areas [CMAs]) in the country, population growth slowed from July 1, 2019, to July 1, 2020, compared with the same period a year earlier (+1.3% compared with +1.7%).

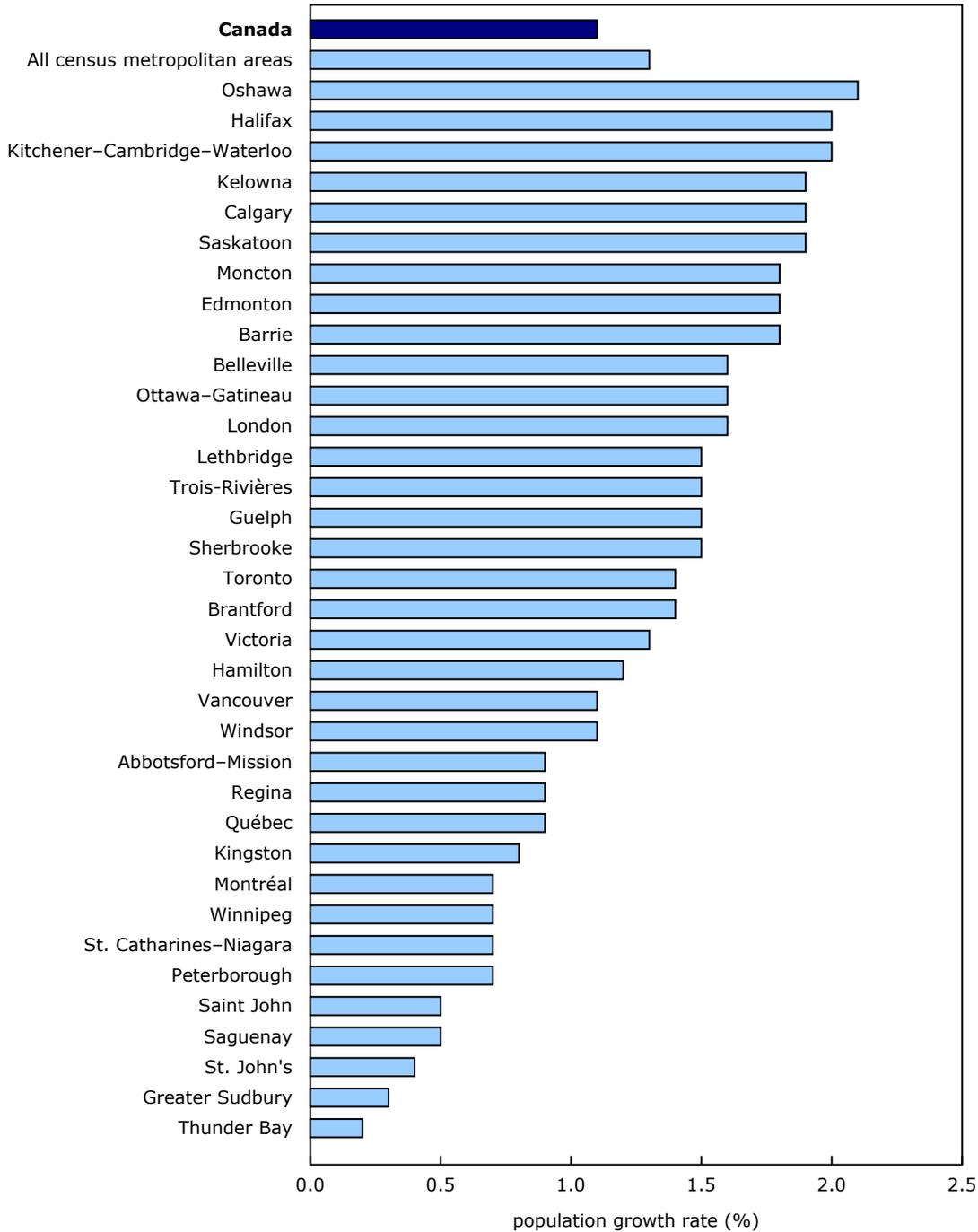
However, the long-term trend of urbanization continued over that period, as the other regions of the country grew at a lower rate (+0.6%).

On July 1, 2020, 27.3 million people, or just over 7 in 10 Canadians (71.8%) lived in a CMA.

Despite lower international migration (permanent and temporary) due to travel restrictions aimed at reducing the spread of COVID-19, international migration accounted for the vast majority (90.3%) of the growth in CMAs from July 1, 2019, to July 1, 2020. In comparison, it accounted for just over one-third of the population growth in other regions of the country.



Chart 1
Population growth rate by census metropolitan area, 2019/2020, Canada



Source(s): Table 17-10-0135-01.

Excess mortality attributable to COVID-19 has had a limited impact on the slowing population growth in urban centres, despite urban centres being the epicentres of the pandemic. In the CMA of Montréal (+0.7%), for example, net international migration declined by over 23,000 from 2018/2019 levels, falling from 72,827 to 49,729. This decrease widely exceeded the number of COVID-19-related deaths in the CMA of Montréal, even though the region recorded the most COVID-19-related deaths nationally during the first wave of the pandemic.

The CMA of Oshawa (+2.1%) recorded the fastest growing population, followed by the CMAs of Halifax and Kitchener–Cambridge–Waterloo (both up 2.0%) and Kelowna, Calgary and Saskatoon (all three up 1.9%).

Urban sprawl continues, with Toronto and Montréal both experiencing record-high population losses to surrounding areas

More people are opting to live outside of Canada's largest urban centres, which is contributing to ongoing urban sprawl.

Despite still showing overall positive population growth, mostly due to international migration, the CMAs of Toronto, Montréal and Vancouver continued to see more people moving out to other regions of their province rather than moving in. From July 1, 2019, to July 1, 2020, the CMAs of Toronto (-50,375) and Montréal (-24,880) each posted a record loss of people as a result of these population exchanges.

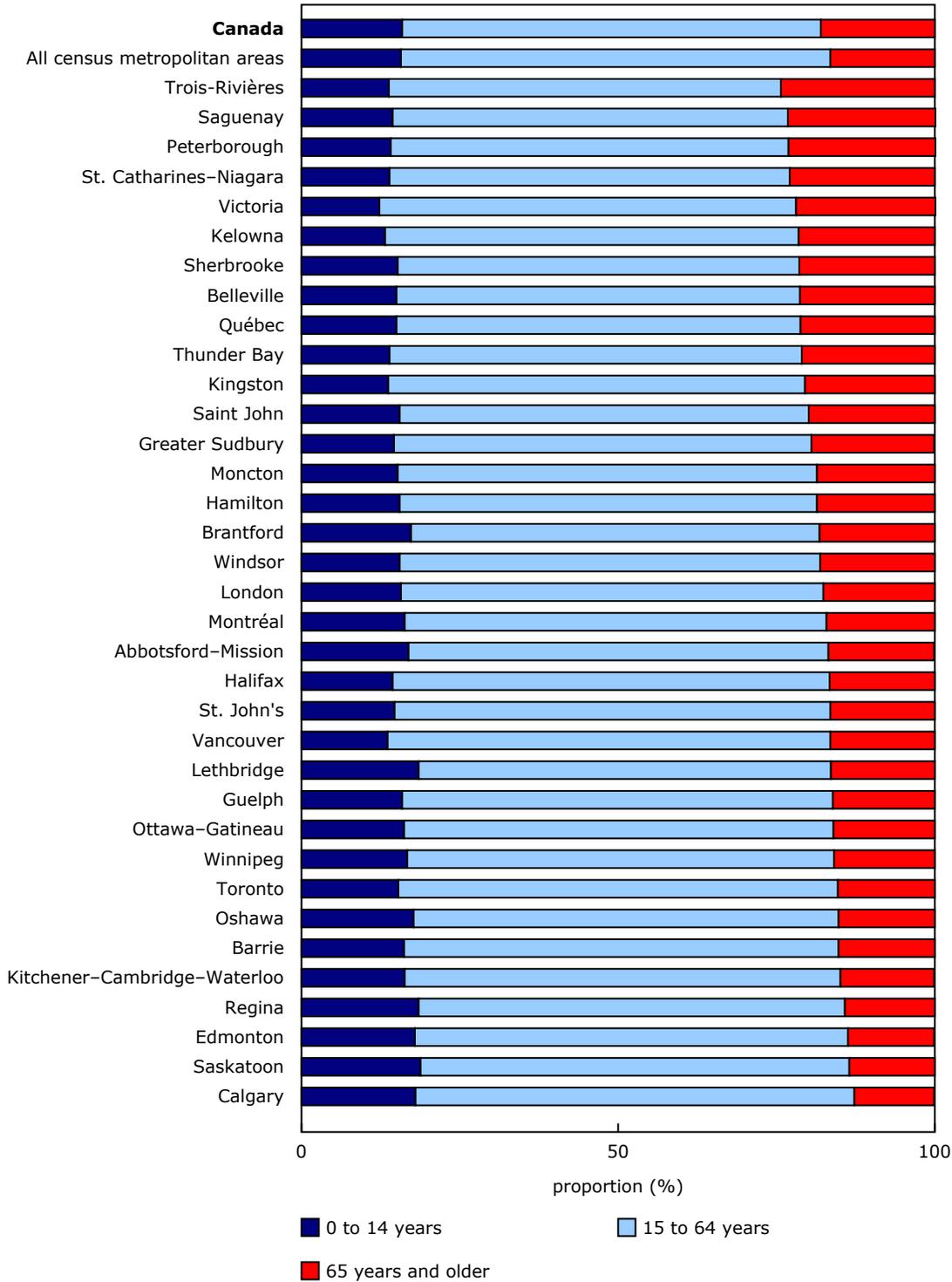
In Toronto, the net loss was mainly driven by people moving to surrounding CMAs. For example, the population growth in Oshawa (+2.1%)—which posted the fastest growth—was partly due to migration flows from the neighbouring CMA of Toronto.

High population growth rates in municipalities located close to the Montréal CMA, like Farnham (+5.2%) and Saint-Hippolyte (+4.1%), were also partly due to migratory flows coming from the Montréal CMA.

Urban sprawl continued within Canada's three largest CMAs, with the fastest growing municipalities more often found in suburban areas. For example, the municipalities of Milton (+4.0%) and Brampton (+3.4%) grew at the fastest pace among those within the Toronto CMA (+1.4%). Similarly, the municipalities of Mirabel (+3.6%) and New Westminster (+2.8%) were among the fastest growing in the CMAs of Montréal (+0.7%) and Vancouver (+1.1%), respectively.

The desire to live outside the largest urban centres was also reflected in the rapidly increasing housing costs in neighbouring real estate markets, [a trend that has continued in spite of the pandemic](#). Personal health, the ability to work remotely, and higher housing costs are among the most important factors contributing to the decision of many Canadians to continue (or to no longer continue) living in large urban centres hardest hit by the pandemic. Whatever the exact reasons, urban sprawl is an important trend to monitor.

Chart 2
Distribution of population by age group and census metropolitan area, Canada, July 1, 2020



Note(s): Census metropolitan areas are sorted in descending order of the percentage of the population aged 65 and older. Percentage figures may not add up to 100% as a result of rounding.

Source(s): Table [17-10-0135-01](#).

Table 1
Annual population estimates by census metropolitan area, July 1, 2020

	Population estimates
	number
Canada	38,005,238
All census metropolitan areas	27,306,305
Abbotsford–Mission	204,265
Barrie	218,188
Belleville	112,980
Brantford	151,566
Calgary	1,543,283
Edmonton	1,468,926
Greater Sudbury	172,462
Guelph	167,509
Halifax	448,544
Hamilton	804,691
Kelowna	222,748
Kingston	176,184
Kitchener–Cambridge–Waterloo	593,882
Lethbridge	128,851
London	551,066
Moncton	158,695
Montréal	4,364,189
Oshawa	423,036
Ottawa–Gatineau	1,461,494
Ottawa–Gatineau, Ontario part	1,111,773
Ottawa–Gatineau, Quebec part	349,721
Peterborough	131,939
Québec	832,328
Regina	263,184
Saguenay	163,354
Saint John	131,772
Saskatoon	336,614
Sherbrooke	224,557
St. Catharines–Niagara	437,114
St. John's	214,014
Thunder Bay	126,861
Toronto	6,555,205
Trois-Rivières	163,287
Vancouver	2,737,698
Victoria	408,883
Windsor	356,880
Winnipeg	850,056

Source(s): Tables [17-10-0135-01](#) and [17-10-0005-01](#).

Note to readers

This release focuses mainly on preliminary postcensal population estimates for census metropolitan areas by age and sex as of July 1, 2020. Revised estimates as of July 1, for the years 2017 to 2019, are also available. Population estimates are also released for census agglomerations, census divisions, census subdivisions and economic regions. See the Tables tab for more information.

Historical analysis of net intraprovincial migration is based on data for the years 2001/2002 to 2019/2020, inclusively. This period represents the extent to which comparable intraprovincial migration estimates are available.

This analysis is based on preliminary data. These data will be revised over the coming year, and it is possible that some trends described in this study will change as a result of these revisions. Therefore, this analysis should be interpreted with caution.

The estimates released today are based on 2016 Census counts, adjusted for census net undercoverage and incompletely enumerated Indian reserves, to which are added the population growth estimates for the period from May 10, 2016, to the date of the estimate. These estimates are based on the 2016 Standard Geographical Classification.

The annual period of reference comprises the period of July 1 of a certain year to July 1 of the following year. Therefore, 2019/2020 refers to the period from July 1, 2019, to July 1, 2020.

For the purpose of calculating **rates**, the denominator is the average population during the period (the average of the start-of-period and end-of-period populations). For the sake of brevity, the terms **growth**, **population growth** and **population growth rate** have the same meaning. A rate higher than -0.1% and lower than 0.1% is considered not significant.

A **census metropolitan area** is formed by one or more adjacent municipalities centred on a population centre (known as the core). A CMA must have a total population of at least 100,000, of which 50,000 or more must live in the core. To be included in the CMA, other adjacent municipalities must have a high degree of integration with the core, as measured by commuting flows derived from census place of work data.

Census subdivision is the general term for municipalities (as determined by provincial/territorial legislation) or areas treated as municipal equivalents for statistical purposes (e.g., Indian reserves, Indian settlements and unorganized territories). For the sake of brevity, the terms **census subdivision** and **municipality** have the same meaning.

Available tables: [17-10-0135-01](#) to [17-10-0142-01](#) .

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [3608](#).

The publication *Annual Demographic Estimates: Subprovincial Areas*, July 1, 2020 ([91-214-X](#)), is now available.

The following products are also available as part of the series *Statistics Canada—Data Visualization Products* ([71-607-X](#)):

"Annual demographic estimates, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations: Interactive dashboard,"

"Annual demographic estimates, census divisions: Interactive dashboard" and

"Annual demographic estimates, economic regions: Interactive dashboard."

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca).