

# Canada's large urban centres continue to grow and spread

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In 2021, nearly three in four Canadians (73.7%) lived in one of Canada's large urban centres, up from 73.2% five years earlier.

These large urban centres with a population of 100,000 or more people, referred to as [census metropolitan areas \(CMAs\)](#), accounted for most of Canada's population growth (+5.2%) from 2016 to 2021.

Canada continues to urbanize as large urban centres benefit most from new arrivals to the country. From 2016 to 2019, Canada welcomed a record high number of immigrants and more than 9 in 10 settled in CMAs.

There were six more CMAs in 2021 compared with five years earlier, another sign of the increasing urbanization of the country.

Rapid population growth in cities is increasing the need for infrastructure, transportation and services of all kinds—including front-line emergency services. Further urban spread also raises environmental concerns such as car-dependent cultures and encroachment on farmlands, wetlands and wildlife.

Using new 2021 Census data, today we look at how Canada's 41 large urban centres have evolved since 2016 and since the onset of the pandemic. For the first time, we focus on population changes within different areas located inside Canada's CMAs and see that population growth within our cities has not been uniform across their territory.

Most CMAs across Canada, big and small, are generally structured the same way. There is a downtown, usually characterized by a high concentration of apartments, condos, offices, shops, restaurants, theatres and bars. There is also an urban fringe, which often includes neighbourhoods of single family or town homes with a yard, low rise condos and apartments, occasionally interspersed by commercial or industrial zones. Various types of suburbs surround the downtown core and urban fringe, and depending on the size of the city, can stretch out anywhere from a ten minute drive to a thirty or more minute journey to the downtown (see text box **What constitutes a downtown or a suburb?**).

Although most CMAs take on the same basic form, each is unique in that they reflect the character of the Canadians who live there. Location within Canada and home prices are also important considerations, as are the economic, social, health and education benefits afforded to those who choose to live there.

**Note about the PDF version of this release:** due to formatting issues, the PDF version of this release may display some blank pages. Rest assured that the content is not compromised. The HTML version provides optimal viewing.



## Highlights

Nearly three in four Canadians (73.7%) lived in one of Canada's large urban centres in 2021, up from 73.2% five years earlier.

Downtowns are growing fast, and more rapidly than before. From 2016 to 2021, the downtown populations of the large urban centres grew faster (+10.9%) than the urban centres as a whole (+6.1%). The populations of downtowns also grew at over twice the pace compared with the previous census cycle (+4.6%).

At the same time, urban spread continued, and was accelerating in many CMAs. Overall, suburbs farthest from downtowns were generally growing at a faster pace (+8.8%) than the urban fringe (+3.7%) and suburbs closer to downtowns (+5.8%).

In the spring of 2021, 3.5% of Canadians (1,281,474 people) were living in the downtowns of one of the 41 large urban centres of the country. The most populated downtowns were Toronto (275,931 people), Vancouver (121,932 people), Montréal (109,509 people), Ottawa (67,169 people) and Edmonton (55,387 people).

Vancouver (18,837 inhabitants per square kilometre) has the most densely populated downtown.

The downtown of Halifax grew at the fastest pace (+26.1%) from 2016 to 2021. In several of Canada's largest urban centres, the downtowns also showed very robust population growth, namely in Montréal (+24.2%), Calgary (+21.0%) and Toronto (+16.1%).

In Canada's three largest urban centres, the distant suburbs (30 minutes or more from downtown) grew at a faster pace than the urban fringe and suburbs closer to downtown, further evidence of the ongoing urban spread.

Urban spread also occurred in the intermediate suburbs (20 to 30 minutes from downtown) in Edmonton (+23.4%), Calgary (+23.3%) and Ottawa (+21.4%). The growth in these intermediate suburbs largely surpassed that of their respective downtowns, urban fringes and near suburbs.

The COVID-19 pandemic ended the rapid population growth that occurred in Canada's downtowns from 2016 to 2019.

There were fewer people living in the downtowns of Montréal (-3.1%) and Vancouver (-2.9%) on July 1, 2021, compared with the same day a year earlier. This contrasts with the census period as a whole, with the downtown population of Montréal growing on average by 4.8% a year from 2016 to 2021, while in Vancouver, the downtown population grew by 1.5% a year on average.

Population growth also slowed in the suburbs with the onset of the pandemic, albeit to a lesser extent than in downtowns.

## The downtowns in Canada's large urban centres are growing rapidly while urban spread continues

Two concurrent phenomena are changing the face of most of Canada's large urban centres.

The population of the vast majority of downtowns is growing faster than before, while urban spread also continues and in some large urban centres is accelerating.

While the population of neighbourhoods between the downtown and the most distant suburbs are also rising, they are growing at a much slower pace.

## What constitutes a downtown or a suburb?

A census metropolitan area (CMA) is a large urban centre with 100,000 or more people.

Downtowns are located in the central core of a CMA and all other areas can be characterized by their proximity to the downtown.

Downtowns have been defined based on job density, and their boundaries have been the subject of extensive consultations with municipalities across the country, along with other experts and urban planners. For more information on the methods used to determine the boundaries of downtowns, see [Defining Canada's Downtown Neighbourhoods: 2016 Boundaries](#).

Every CMA has a primary downtown, located in the historic central municipality within the CMA. Thus, the downtown of the Toronto CMA is located within the municipality of Toronto.

Secondary downtowns have also been defined based on job density and on population counts in certain other municipalities within the CMA. For example, the municipality of Mississauga, which is part of the Toronto CMA, has a downtown that is referred to as secondary for the Toronto CMA overall, given that the primary downtown for the CMA is in the central municipality of Toronto.

This analysis is limited to primary downtowns. The term "downtown" is used to refer to the primary downtowns of the CMAs. Data related to secondary downtowns are available in the tables at the end of this release.

For this analysis, areas outside of the downtown in CMAs can be broken down into four separate zones characterized by the time it takes for a person to drive to the downtown by car.

An **urban fringe** is located less than a 10 minute drive from downtown.

A **near suburb** is located within 10 to 20 minutes from downtown.

An **intermediate suburb** is located within 20 to 30 minutes from downtown.

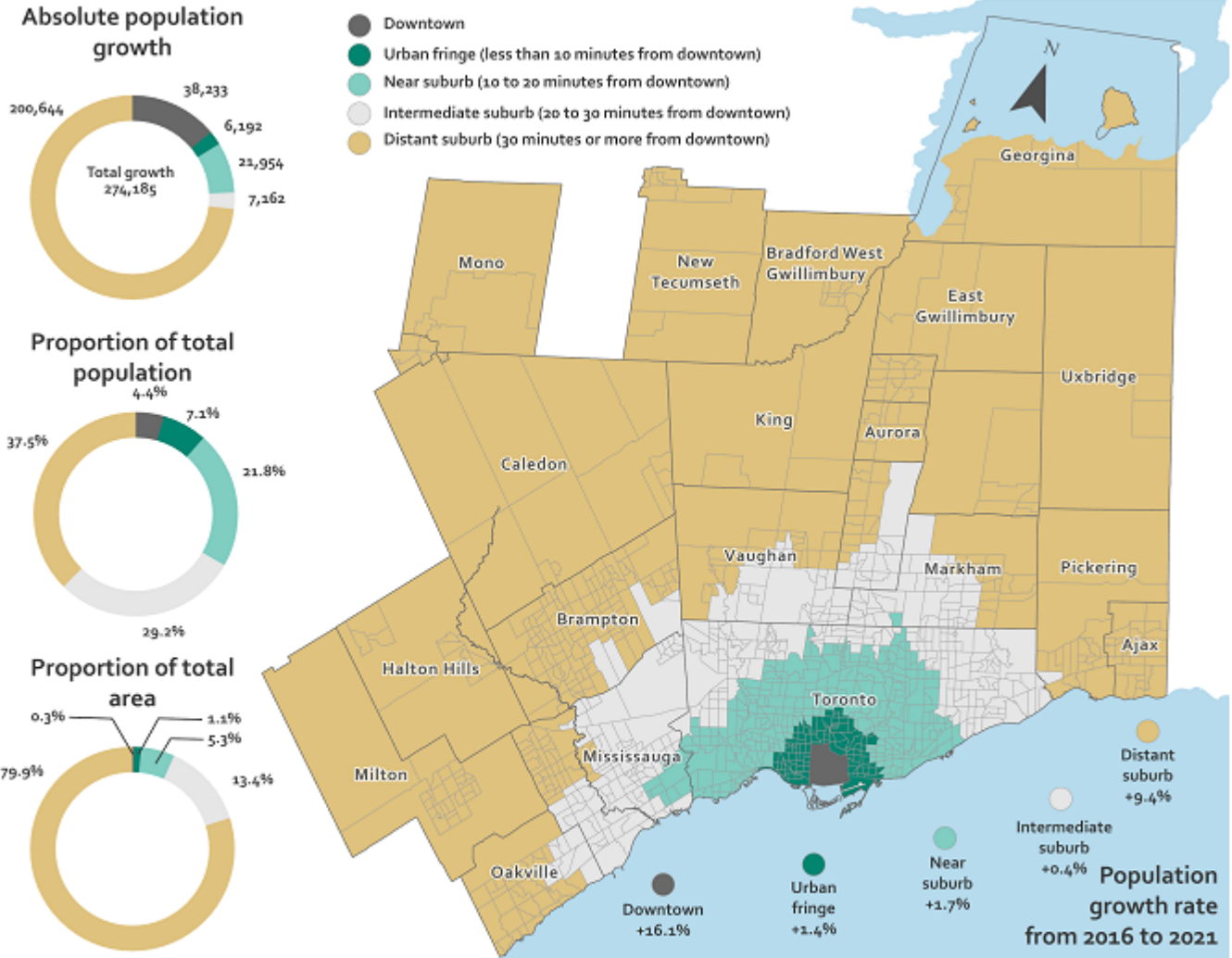
A **distant suburb** is 30 minutes or more from downtown.

Each zone is defined by the travel time from the downtown to outlying census tracts (small, relatively stable geographic areas ranging from 2,500 to 8,000 people), based on the time it takes to drive from downtown during non-rush hours.

Travel time by car is more reflective of reality than distance in kilometres between an outlying neighbourhood and a downtown given geographic or structural obstacles that could be encountered along the way such as rivers, ravines or railway tracks that may slow or block access to the downtown.

While there are 41 CMAs in Canada, we include 42 downtowns in this study to differentiate between the Ontario and Quebec parts of Ottawa–Gatineau.

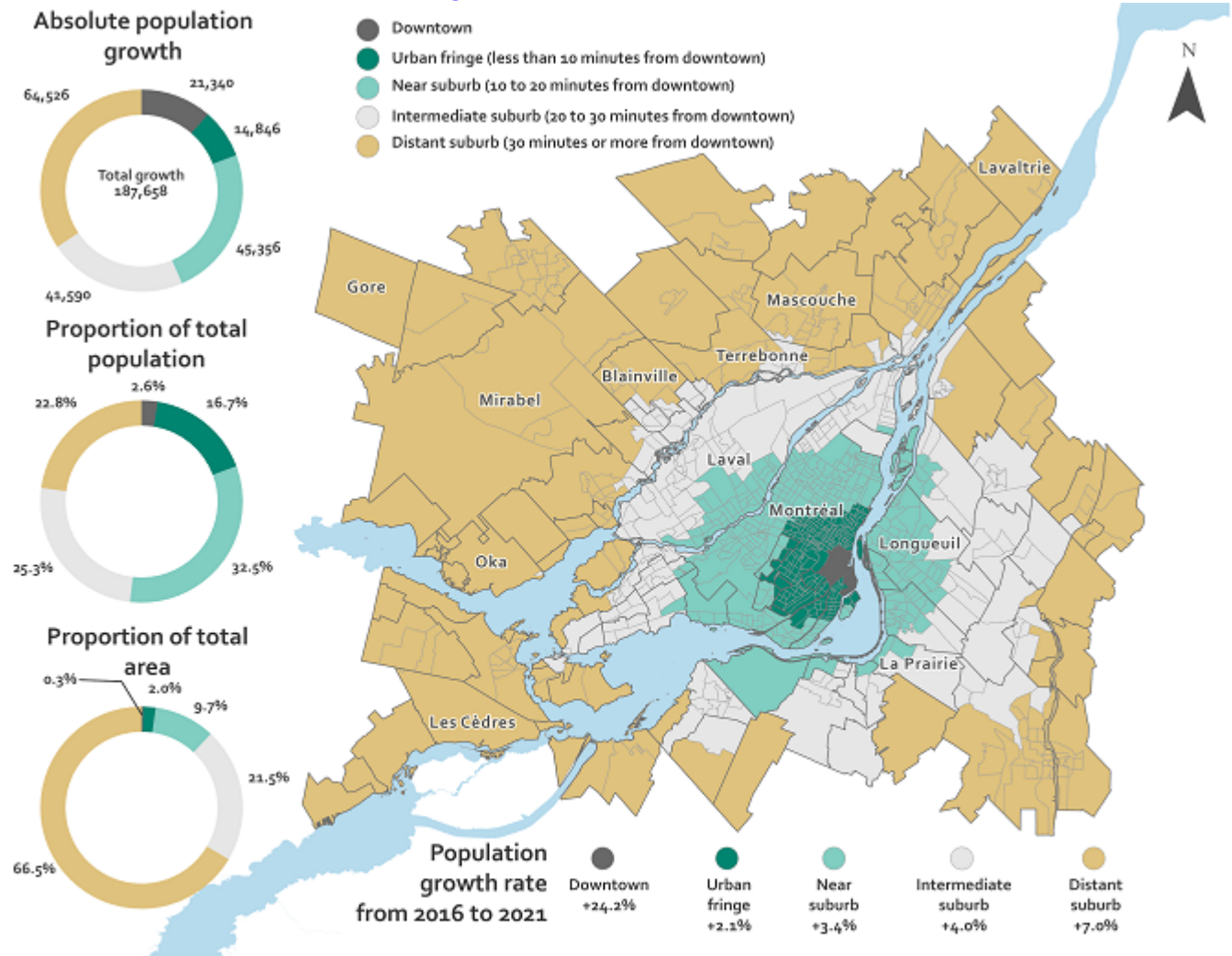
**Map 1 – Urban spread is continuing in the census metropolitan area of Toronto while its downtown is growing more rapidly than before**



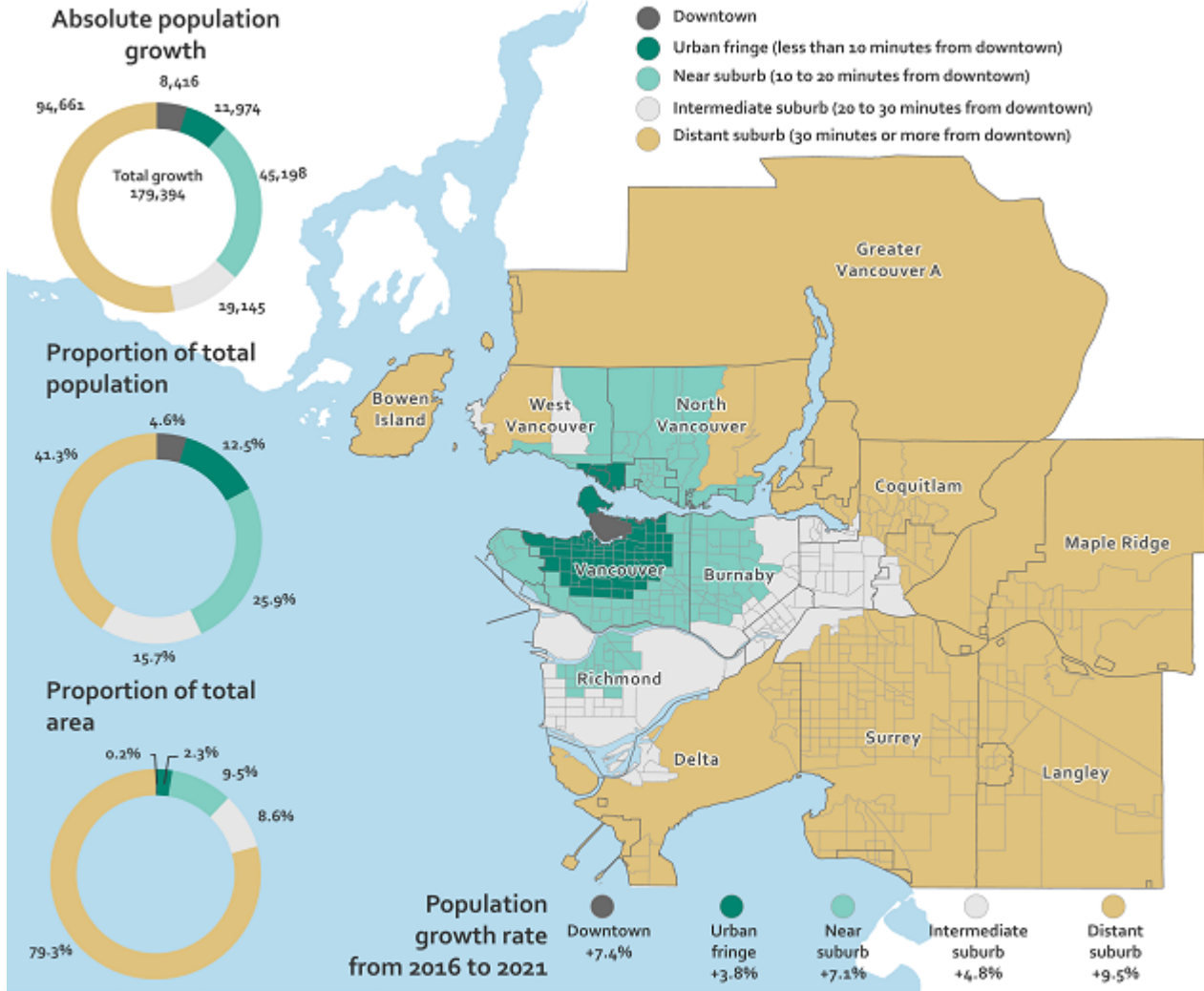
**Note:**  
This map is based on the primary downtown.

**Source:**  
Census of Population, 2016 and 2021 (3901).

**Map 2 – Montréal's downtown grew at the second-fastest pace nationally from 2016 to 2021, while its distant suburb is also rising fast**



**Map 3 – Distant suburb makes up more than half of Vancouver census metropolitan area's population growth while its downtown has the highest population density in the country**

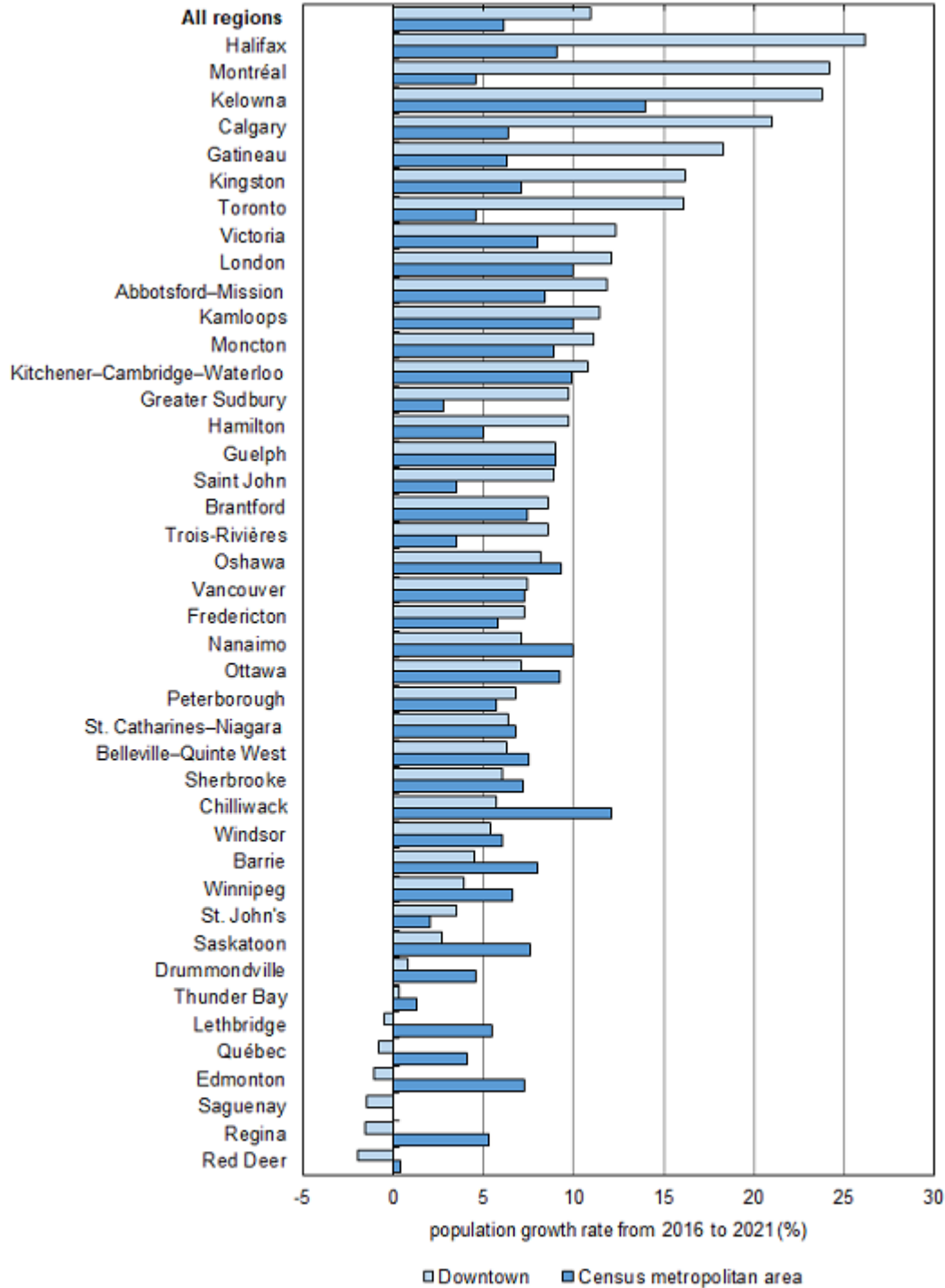


**Note:**  
This map is based on the primary downtown.

**Source:**  
Census of Population, 2016 and 2021 (3901).

## **Downtowns are growing faster than five years ago**

**Infographic 1 – Among Canada's downtowns, the population is growing the fastest in those of Halifax, Montréal and Kelowna**



**Note(s):** Regions are ranked in descending order of the population growth rate in downtowns. This chart shows the population growth rate of the primary downtown.

**Source(s):** Census of Population, 2016 and 2021 (3901).



Overall, the populations of downtowns grew at over twice the pace from 2016 to 2021 (+10.9%) compared with the previous five-year period (+4.6%), despite a slowdown since the onset of the pandemic in the spring of 2020.

Most downtowns (36 of 42) saw their population rise from 2016 to 2021. Most also saw their pace of population growth accelerate (33 of 42) compared with the previous census cycle from 2011 to 2016.

The population of downtowns (+10.9%) also rose at a faster pace compared with the population of CMAs overall (+6.1%). In other words, urban centres—particularly downtowns—have become more densely populated since 2016.

This is a reversal of the trend from 2011 to 2016, when the population of downtowns (+4.6%) grew at a slower pace compared with CMAs as a whole (+6.2%).

Several downtowns in Canada's largest CMAs, those of one million people or more, were among the fastest growing from 2016 to 2021 (Montréal: +24.2%; Calgary: +21.0%; Toronto: +16.1%).

The downtown population of Halifax (+26.1%) grew almost three times faster compared with the entire Halifax CMA (+9.1%), while the downtown of Montréal (+24.2%) grew more than five times faster than the Montréal CMA (+4.6%).

The populations of Canada's two largest downtowns—Toronto (+16.1%) and Vancouver (+7.4%)—also outpaced the growth rates of their CMAs (+4.6% in Toronto and +7.3% in Vancouver).

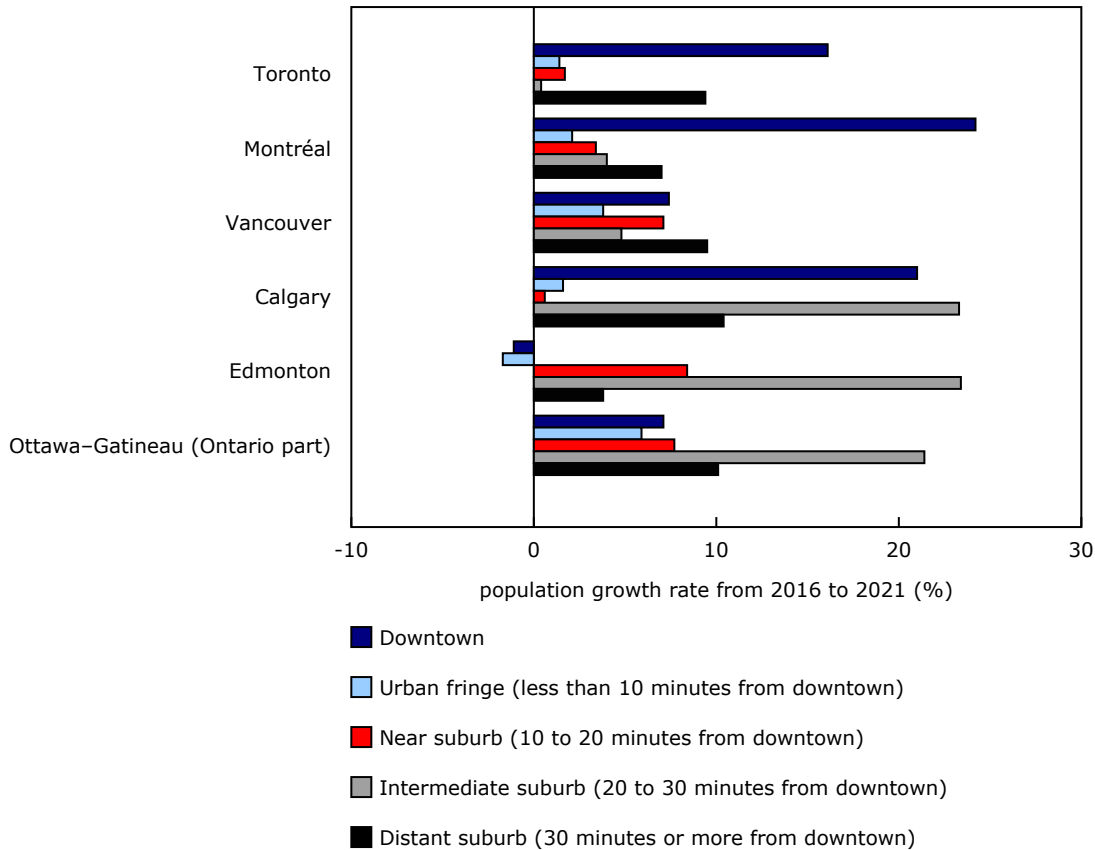
The recent acceleration of population growth in downtowns can be explained by various factors. On the one hand, administrations in several cities have adopted plans to increase the density and housing supply of downtowns. As well, the desire to live in central neighbourhoods remains strong, since many people want to minimize their commute times by living closer to work and to live in a dynamic area of their city that offers many nearby services and sources of entertainment.

Since the onset of the pandemic, the allure of downtown living may have lost some of its sheen with more people working from home and fewer opportunities to indulge in cultural or entertainment activities. Demographic estimates produced quarterly and annually by Statistics Canada will track whether population growth trends will shift over the coming years.

## Urban spread continues in Canada's largest metropolitan areas

### Chart 1

In Toronto, Montréal and Vancouver, downtowns and distant suburbs growing at the fastest pace, while the population in intermediate suburbs of Calgary, Edmonton and Ottawa is growing fast



**Note(s):** This chart is based on primary downtowns.  
**Source(s):** Census of Population, 2016 and 2021 (3901).

The populations of downtowns, urban fringes and near, intermediate and distant suburbs grew in most large urban centres from 2016 to 2021, but their pace of growth varied considerably.

For example, in Canada's three largest urban centres, the distant suburbs (30 minutes or more from downtown) grew at a faster pace than the urban fringe and suburbs closer to downtown. The population increases among the distant suburbs of Toronto (+9.4%), Montréal (+7.0%) and Vancouver (+9.5%) all surpassed those of their CMA overall.

In the CMA of Vancouver, the distant suburbs grew at the fastest pace from 2016 to 2021, while in Toronto and Montréal, the pace of growth in distant suburbs was surpassed only by that of their downtowns. In Toronto, close to three-quarters of the total population growth in the CMA stemmed from distant suburbs.

Urban spread was also occurring in the intermediate suburbs (20 to 30 minutes from downtown) in Edmonton (+23.4%), Calgary (+23.3%) and Ottawa (+21.4%). The growth in these intermediate suburbs largely surpassed that of their respective downtowns, urban fringes and near suburbs.

The sustained population growth in the intermediate and distant suburbs may be attributable to various factors, including limited space to build new housing close to downtown, the desire of some families to have a larger home or property, the lower cost of housing on the outskirts or wanting to be closer to nature.

Urban spread is also occurring in Canada's mid-sized CMAs, but unlike in the six largest urban centres, it is the near suburbs, located within a 10 to 20 minute drive from downtown, where population is growing at the fastest pace.

In these smaller metropolitan areas, more land is often still available for development close to the downtown.

In some suburbs, population growth may have been bolstered by the greater possibility of working from home during the pandemic. A recent study showed that [approximately 40% of the jobs in Canada could feasibly be done at home](#). Indeed, in April 2020, during the first wave of the pandemic, about 40% of employees worked most of their hours from home, up from 4% in 2016. At the time of the census in May 2021, 5.1 million Canadians worked at least half of their usual hours from home.

Higher housing prices may also be a factor, with [new home prices](#) up 11.3% year over year nationally in May 2021, the largest increase since November 2006, and new home prices were 17.8% higher compared with 2016. Higher housing prices may have tempted Canadians to move to more distant suburbs, where larger houses could be available at a lower cost than closer to downtown.

## **In 2020 and 2021, the population of most of Canada's downtowns grew slower or declined in the wake of the pandemic**

Since the onset of the pandemic in the spring of 2020, far fewer Canadians are commuting to work downtown as many businesses and government agencies that could do so shifted from an office setting to working virtually at home.

However, the much lower levels of commuter traffic downtown have not resulted in population declines of the same magnitude according to our most recent preliminary demographic estimates.

For example, from July 1, 2020 to the end of June 2021, the downtown population of Toronto (+0.4%) continued to grow, albeit at a much slower pace compared with the pace of growth seen from 2016 to 2021 overall (+3.2% annually). This may be related to housing supply, especially condominiums, where new units continued to come onto the market even after the onset of the pandemic. Some buyers who bought their home prior to the pandemic may only have taken possession in 2020 or 2021.

From July 1, 2020, to the end of June 2021, the pace of growth slowed in the vast majority of downtowns (38 of 42) compared with the years leading up to the pandemic (2016 to 2019). Moreover, the population declined in 30 of 42 downtowns from July 1, 2020 to the end of June 2021, albeit mostly by a slight margin.

For example, with the onset of the pandemic, the population declined in the downtowns of Canada's second and third largest urban centres. There were fewer people living in the downtowns of Montréal (-3.1%) and Vancouver (-2.9%) on July 1, 2021, compared with the same day a year earlier. This contrasts with the census period as a whole, with the downtown population of Montréal growing on average by 4.8% a year from 2016 to 2021, while in Vancouver, the downtown population grew by 1.5% a year on average.

## **Population growth also slowed in the suburbs in 2020 and 2021, one year into the pandemic**

Preliminary demographic estimates show that the pace of population growth in the suburbs has also slowed since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, albeit to a lesser extent than in downtowns.

For example, from July 1, 2020 to the end of June 2021, the population of the distant suburbs in the CMAs of Toronto (+1.8%) and Montréal (+0.7%) grew at a slightly slower pace compared with the annual averages from 2016 to 2021 (+1.9% for Toronto; +1.4% for Montréal).

There could be several reasons why the pandemic has had less of an impact on population growth in suburbs than in the downtowns. Some people who have worked at home since the start of the pandemic may have chosen to move out of the downtown to the suburbs in search of more space or a more affordable home.

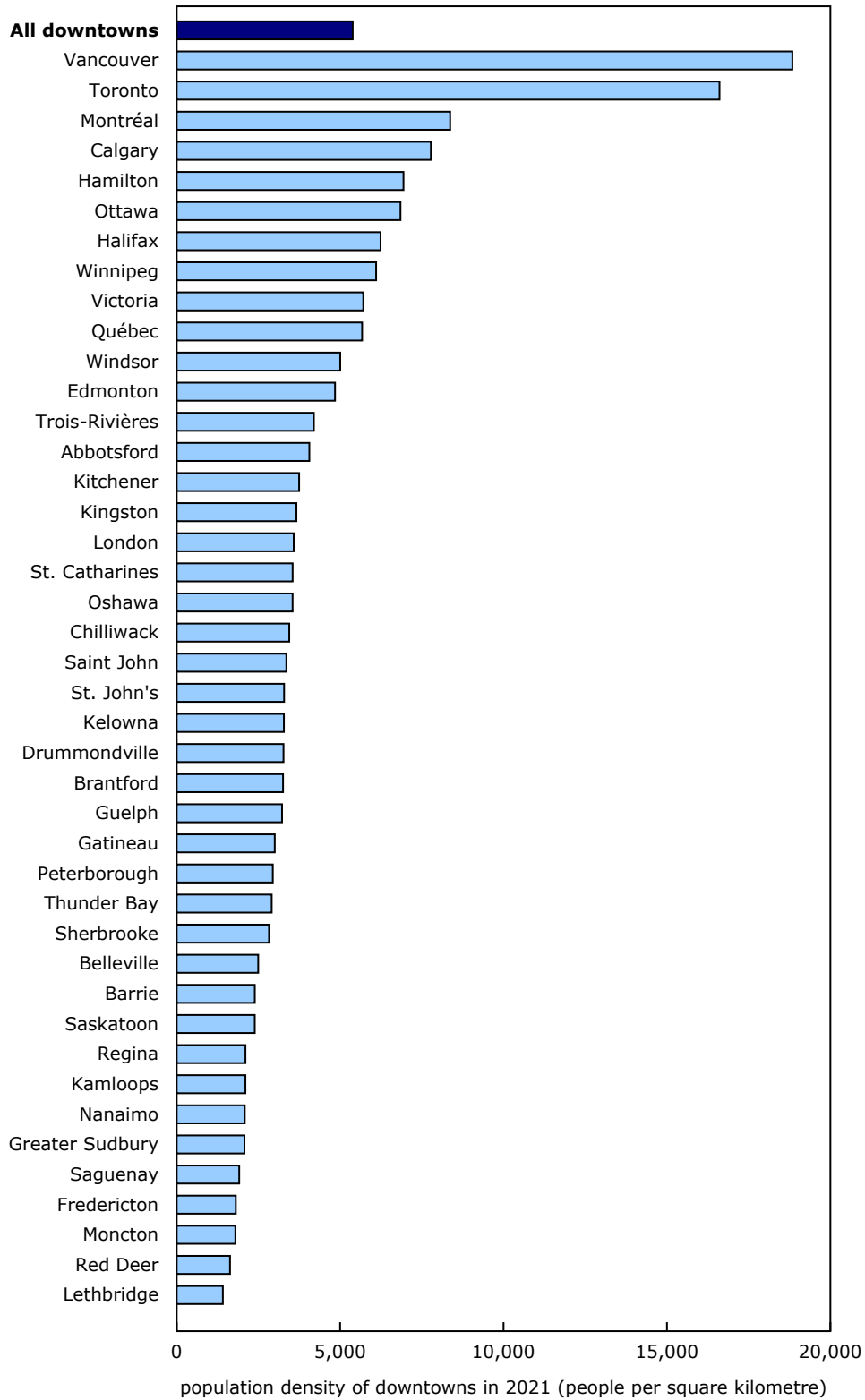
Given that new arrivals to Canada are more likely to settle in the core of urban centres, border restrictions to slow the spread of COVID-19 may have had less impact on population growth in the distant suburbs but contributed more to slower growth downtown.

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**The downtowns of Vancouver and Toronto are by far the most densely populated in Canada**

**Chart 2**

**Downtowns in the largest urban centres also have the highest population densities**



**Note(s):** Downtowns are ranked in descending order of population density in 2021. This chart shows primary downtowns.

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Source(s): Census of Population, 2021 ([3901](#)).

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Approximately 3.5% of Canadians (1,281,474) were living in the downtowns of one of the 41 CMAs across the country in the spring of 2021.

The most populated downtowns were Toronto (275,931 people), Vancouver (121,932 people), Montréal (109,509 people), Ottawa (67,169 people) and Edmonton (55,387 people).

Since downtowns are often characterized by high-rise apartment buildings, these areas have among the highest population densities in the country.

The population density of all CMA downtowns combined totalled 5,385 people per square kilometre in 2021. Vancouver (18,837 inhabitants per square kilometre) had the most densely populated downtown, followed by Toronto (16,608 inhabitants per square kilometre).

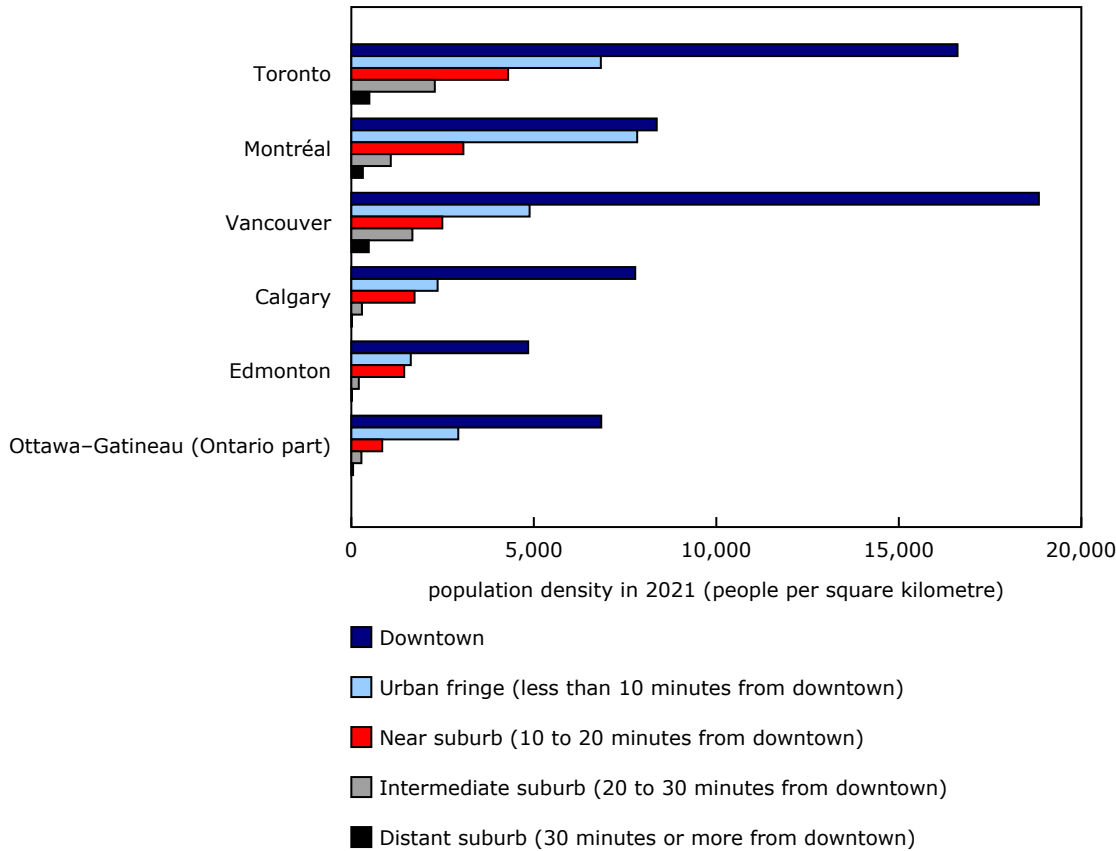
By comparison, [there were 28,668 people per square kilometre in Manhattan in 2020](#) (9.5 MB, in PDF format only), the densest borough in New York.

The vastness of Canada makes our overall population density among the lowest in the world, with four inhabitants per square kilometre. For the 41 CMAs in Canada combined, there are 226 people per square kilometre.



As you move further away from downtown, areas become less densely populated

**Chart 3**  
Population density increases sharply the closer you are to downtown



**Note(s):** This chart is based on primary downtowns.  
**Source(s):** Census of Population, 2016 and 2021 (3901).

Typically, neighbourhoods located further from downtown tend to be less densely populated.

Census results show that the distant suburbs (areas located 30 minutes or more from downtown by car) of Toronto and Vancouver had a population density of just under 500 people per square kilometre in May 2021. In Montréal, that figure was just over 300 people per square kilometre.

That density was even lower in Calgary, Edmonton and Ottawa, where there were fewer than 50 inhabitants per square kilometre in distant suburbs. This is mostly explained by the fact that, unlike Canada's three largest metropolitan areas, more land is still available for development.

**Looking ahead: A deeper dive into the makeup of cities**

The 2021 Census data to be released in the coming months will provide a better understanding of the diverse neighbourhoods of Canada's largest urban centres. Are there more seniors or young adults living downtown? Where are families with children concentrated? Which parts of town do single Canadians call home?

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Data from the upcoming census releases will shed light on these questions and many, many more.

### **Did you know? Outside large urban centres, population is also increasing, although at a slower pace than urban Canada**

To learn more about the total population and dwelling counts from the 2021 Census, check out the other analytical documents released today.

The *Daily* article entitled "[Canada tops G7 growth despite COVID](#)" presents key results at the national, provincial and territorial levels. It also presents some population trends for Canada's rural areas.

The *Census in Brief* article entitled "[Population growth in Canada's rural areas, 2016 to 2021](#)" presents a more detailed portrait of population growth inside Canada's rural areas.

The *Census in Brief* article entitled "[Canada's fastest growing and decreasing municipalities from 2016 to 2021](#)" examines municipalities (census subdivisions) in Canada that were the largest in 2021, and fastest growing and decreasing in population from 2016 to 2021. It also presents some trends on urban spread in Canada.

**Table 1**  
**Population and population growth rate of primary downtowns, 2016 to 2021**

	Population in 2016	Population in 2021	2016 to 2021 Population growth rate
	number		%
<b>All primary downtowns</b>	<b>1,155,685</b>	<b>1,281,474</b>	<b>10.9</b>
St. John's	9,431	9,760	3.5
Halifax	20,267	25,555	26.1
Moncton	7,837	8,708	11.1
Saint John	7,552	8,221	8.9
Fredericton	11,007	11,813	7.3
Saguenay	6,349	6,252	-1.5
Québec	29,788	29,547	-0.8
Sherbrooke	12,427	13,171	6.0
Trois-Rivières	7,858	8,533	8.6
Drummondville	9,486	9,563	0.8
Montréal	88,169	109,509	24.2
Gatineau	9,877	11,685	18.3
Ottawa	62,725	67,169	7.1
Kingston	8,288	9,630	16.2
Belleville	12,340	13,119	6.3
Peterborough	15,948	17,032	6.8
Oshawa	16,055	17,379	8.2
Toronto	237,698	275,931	16.1
Hamilton	48,510	53,236	9.7
St. Catharines	14,442	15,363	6.4
Kitchener	27,092	30,018	10.8
Brantford	11,134	12,093	8.6
Guelph	13,497	14,705	9.0
London	23,220	26,034	12.1
Windsor	11,633	12,263	5.4
Barrie	13,343	13,943	4.5
Greater Sudbury	12,590	13,809	9.7
Thunder Bay	10,818	10,847	0.3
Winnipeg	42,394	44,061	3.9
Regina	18,520	18,220	-1.6
Saskatoon	12,101	12,425	2.7
Lethbridge	4,862	4,837	-0.5
Calgary	38,663	46,763	21.0
Red Deer	8,247	8,079	-2.0
Edmonton	55,997	55,387	-1.1
Kelowna	13,415	16,605	23.8
Kamloops	5,922	6,600	11.4
Chilliwack	11,996	12,684	5.7
Abbotsford	24,238	27,109	11.8
Vancouver	113,516	121,932	7.4
Victoria	41,229	46,309	12.3
Nanaimo	5,204	5,575	7.1

**Note(s):** Populations and population growth rates of secondary downtowns are shown in Table 2.

**Source(s):** Census of Population, 2016 and 2021 (3901).

**Table 2**  
**Population and population growth rate of secondary downtowns, 2016 to 2021**

	Population in 2016	Population in 2021	2016 to 2021 Population growth rate
	number		%
<b>All secondary downtowns</b>	<b>308,345</b>	<b>351,930</b>	<b>14.1</b>
Longueuil (Montréal)	14,320	14,672	2.5
Laval (Montréal)	9,495	12,390	30.5
Mississauga (Toronto)	59,395	63,880	7.6
Brampton (Toronto)	25,384	26,433	4.1
Oakville (Toronto)	14,612	15,433	5.6
Markham (Toronto)	9,770	12,906	32.1
Vaughan (Toronto)	410	5,558	1,255.6
Richmond Hill (Toronto)	3,693	4,491	21.6
Burlington (Hamilton)	15,012	15,310	2.0
Waterloo (Kitchener–Cambridge–Waterloo)	10,898	14,299	31.2
Cambridge (Kitchener–Cambridge–Waterloo)	8,708	8,934	2.6
Richmond (Vancouver)	66,463	76,795	15.5
Burnaby (Vancouver)	39,279	42,454	8.1
Surrey (Vancouver)	30,906	38,375	24.2

**Note(s):** Census metropolitan areas where secondary downtowns are located are shown in brackets.

**Source(s):** Census of Population, 2016 and 2021 ([3901](#)).

**Table 3**  
**Population density of primary downtowns, 2021**

	Population density
	people per square kilometre
<b>All primary downtowns</b>	<b>5,385</b>
St. John's	3,286
Halifax	6,237
Moncton	1,795
Saint John	3,355
Fredericton	1,808
Saguenay	1,913
Québec	5,673
Sherbrooke	2,825
Trois-Rivières	4,197
Drummondville	3,268
Montréal	8,367
Gatineau	3,000
Ottawa	6,847
Kingston	3,663
Belleville	2,494
Peterborough	2,940
Oshawa	3,546
Toronto	16,608
Hamilton	6,939
St. Catharines	3,547
Kitchener	3,746
Brantford	3,254
Guelph	3,223
London	3,580
Windsor	5,004
Barrie	2,389
Greater Sudbury	2,073
Thunder Bay	2,906
Winnipeg	6,102
Regina	2,103
Saskatoon	2,388
Lethbridge	1,412
Calgary	7,778
Red Deer	1,631
Edmonton	4,845
Kelowna	3,280
Kamloops	2,102
Chilliwack	3,444
Abbotsford	4,059
Vancouver	18,837
Victoria	5,709
Nanaimo	2,082

**Note(s):** Population density for secondary downtowns is shown in Table 4.

**Source(s):** Census of Population, 2021 (3901).

**Table 4**  
**Population density of secondary downtowns, 2021**

	Population density
	people per square kilometre
<b>All secondary downtowns</b>	<b>4,927</b>
Longueuil (Montréal)	4,042
Laval (Montréal)	3,110
Mississauga (Toronto)	8,948
Brampton (Toronto)	4,109
Oakville (Toronto)	2,549
Markham (Toronto)	2,630
Vaughan (Toronto)	2,263
Richmond Hill (Toronto)	3,010
Burlington (Hamilton)	3,992
Waterloo (Kitchener–Cambridge–Waterloo)	3,051
Cambridge (Kitchener–Cambridge–Waterloo)	2,809
Richmond (Vancouver)	6,905
Burnaby (Vancouver)	7,907
Surrey (Vancouver)	5,377

**Note(s):** Census metropolitan areas where secondary downtowns are located are shown in brackets.

**Source(s):** Census of Population, 2021 ([3901](#)).

**Table 5**  
**Population by proximity to downtown, census metropolitan areas, 2016 to 2021**

	Downtow n	Downtow n	Urban fringe (less than 10 minutes from downtow n)	Urban fringe (less than 10 minutes from downtow n)	Near suburb (10 to 20 minutes from downtow n)	Near suburb (10 to 20 minutes from downtow n)	Intermedi ate suburb (20 to 30 minutes from downtow n)	Intermedi ate suburb (20 to 30 minutes from downtow n)	Distant suburb (30 minutes or more from downtow n)	Distant suburb (30 minutes or more from downtow n)
	Populatio n in 2016	Populatio n in 2021	Populatio n in 2016	Populatio n in 2021	Populatio n in 2016	Populatio n in 2021	Populatio n in 2016	Populatio n in 2021	Populatio n in 2016	Populatio n in 2021
<b>All metropolitan areas</b>	<b>1,155,685</b>	<b>1,281,474</b>	<b>6,253,079</b>	<b>6,484,325</b>	<b>8,516,209</b>	<b>9,024,144</b>	<b>4,794,919</b>	<b>5,055,023</b>	<b>4,996,963</b>	<b>5,436,153</b>
St. John's	9,431	9,760	85,287	85,325	69,185	70,396	38,933	41,421	5,582	5,677
Halifax	20,267	25,555	120,091	131,026	137,330	151,868	64,591	66,620	84,653	90,634
Moncton	7,837	8,708	79,620	87,059	34,917	38,206	20,015	21,170	2,421	2,574
Saint John	7,552	8,221	41,804	43,318	40,207	40,972	14,399	14,691	22,240	23,411
Fredericton	11,007	11,813	31,423	33,560	36,202	38,067	5,330	5,602	18,728	19,568
Saguenay	6,349	6,252	52,524	51,318	63,242	64,494	25,329	24,720	14,076	14,783
Québec	29,788	29,547	211,280	218,355	355,840	370,688	146,345	151,399	63,153	69,322
Sherbrooke	12,427	13,171	100,965	108,422	56,604	60,558	29,340	31,073	12,769	14,174
Trois-Rivières	7,858	8,533	92,000	94,067	47,657	50,413	8,527	8,476	...	...
Drummondville	9,486	9,563	26,626	28,370	38,513	40,507	21,726	22,352	798	818
Montréal	88,169	109,509	703,986	718,832	1,350,700	1,396,056	1,045,884	1,087,474	915,335	979,861
Ottawa–Gatineau (Quebec part)	9,877	11,685	127,324	128,781	120,786	132,616	39,674	41,260	34,765	38,951
Ottawa–Gatineau (Ontario part)	62,725	67,169	241,203	255,503	460,962	496,370	123,609	150,047	150,651	165,925
Kingston	8,288	9,630	59,226	61,420	60,069	65,545	16,566	17,446	17,026	18,505
Belleville–Quinte West	12,340	13,119	33,064	36,415	25,666	26,667	24,161	26,661	8,170	8,322
Peterborough	15,948	17,032	63,799	64,878	23,031	24,851	14,671	16,699	4,272	5,164
Oshawa	16,055	17,379	198,151	207,446	144,914	165,936	20,728	24,550	...	...
Toronto	237,698	275,931	434,219	440,411	1,327,885	1,349,839	1,801,166	1,808,328	2,127,072	2,327,716
Hamilton	48,510	53,236	240,561	247,925	396,566	419,218	57,904	60,775	4,004	4,030
St. Catharines–Niagara	14,442	15,363	128,320	132,518	170,586	185,204	47,747	51,444	44,979	49,075
Kitchener–Cambridge– Waterloo	27,092	30,018	230,169	251,509	202,222	226,933	64,411	67,387	...	...
Brantford	11,134	12,093	90,217	95,657	23,479	26,824	9,373	9,588	...	...
Guelph	13,497	14,705	106,110	115,270	32,377	35,613	...	...	...	...
London	23,220	26,034	223,091	233,856	145,125	170,169	62,508	66,607	40,125	46,885
Windsor	11,633	12,263	135,754	142,596	129,864	137,547	46,663	51,342	74,804	78,882
Barrie	13,343	13,943	119,765	124,459	42,849	49,022	21,102	25,432	...	...
Greater Sudbury	12,590	13,809	44,524	46,691	56,232	56,937	28,474	28,598	24,138	24,570
Thunder Bay	10,818	10,847	67,431	67,999	30,641	30,961	4,090	4,092	8,641	9,359
Winnipeg	42,394	44,061	341,752	345,718	323,036	363,558	28,081	29,172	47,836	52,169
Regina	18,520	18,220	175,968	186,617	22,241	23,392	6,440	6,925	13,526	14,063
Saskatoon	12,101	12,425	192,615	201,413	45,960	57,148	15,445	16,196	28,974	30,298
Lethbridge	4,862	4,837	87,955	92,547	15,115	16,932	9,121	9,218	341	313
Calgary	38,663	46,763	257,913	262,083	758,705	763,548	286,623	353,420	50,705	55,992
Red Deer	8,247	8,079	92,171	92,765	...	...	...	...	...	...
Edmonton	55,997	55,387	260,098	255,617	720,612	780,955	156,387	192,933	128,347	133,226
Kelowna	13,415	16,605	71,648	78,939	75,547	87,206	25,593	28,941	8,689	10,471
Kamloops	5,922	6,600	39,936	41,615	41,360	46,834	6,083	6,768	10,510	12,325
Chilliwack	11,996	12,684	48,397	53,049	24,677	28,282	11,516	13,628	4,926	6,124
Abbotsford–Mission	24,238	27,109	88,652	94,089	62,691	69,312	2,303	2,386	2,634	2,830
Vancouver	113,516	121,932	318,394	330,368	639,140	684,338	395,287	414,432	997,094	1,091,755
Victoria	41,229	46,309	141,091	143,418	116,474	128,640	45,169	51,933	23,807	26,937
Nanaimo	5,204	5,575	47,955	53,101	47,000	51,522	3,605	3,817	1,172	1,444

... not applicable

**Note(s):** The table is based on data from primary downtowns.

**Source(s):** Census of Population, 2016 and 2021 (3901).

**Table 6**  
**Population growth rate by proximity to downtown, census metropolitan areas, 2016 to 2021**

	Downtown	Urban fringe (less than 10 minutes from downtown)	Near suburb (10 to 20 minutes from downtown)	Intermediate suburb (20 to 30 minutes from downtown)	Distant suburb (30 minutes or more from downtown)
	2016 to 2021 Population growth rate	2016 to 2021 Population growth rate	2016 to 2021 Population growth rate	2016 to 2021 Population growth rate	2016 to 2021 Population growth rate
	%				
<b>All metropolitan areas</b>	<b>10.9</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>8.8</b>
St. John's	3.5	0.0	1.8	6.4	1.7
Halifax	26.1	9.1	10.6	3.1	7.1
Moncton	11.1	9.3	9.4	5.8	6.3
Saint John	8.9	3.6	1.9	2.0	5.3
Fredericton	7.3	6.8	5.2	5.1	4.5
Saguenay	-1.5	-2.3	2.0	-2.4	5.0
Québec	-0.8	3.3	4.2	3.5	9.8
Sherbrooke	6.0	7.4	7.0	5.9	11.0
Trois-Rivières	8.6	2.2	5.8	-0.6	...
Drummondville	0.8	6.5	5.2	2.9	2.5
Montréal	24.2	2.1	3.4	4.0	7.0
Ottawa–Gatineau (Quebec part)	18.3	1.1	9.8	4.0	12.0
Ottawa–Gatineau (Ontario part)	7.1	5.9	7.7	21.4	10.1
Kingston	16.2	3.7	9.1	5.3	8.7
Belleville–Quinte West	6.3	10.1	3.9	10.3	1.9
Peterborough	6.8	1.7	7.9	13.8	20.9
Oshawa	8.2	4.7	14.5	18.4	...
Toronto	16.1	1.4	1.7	0.4	9.4
Hamilton	9.7	3.1	5.7	5.0	0.6
St. Catharines–Niagara	6.4	3.3	8.6	7.7	9.1
Kitchener–Cambridge–Waterloo	10.8	9.3	12.2	4.6	...
Brantford	8.6	6.0	14.2	2.3	...
Guelph	9.0	8.6	10.0	...	...
London	12.1	4.8	17.3	6.6	16.8
Windsor	5.4	5.0	5.9	10.0	5.5
Barrie	4.5	3.9	14.4	20.5	...
Greater Sudbury	9.7	4.9	1.3	0.4	1.8
Thunder Bay	0.3	0.8	1.0	0.0	8.3
Winnipeg	3.9	1.2	12.5	3.9	9.1
Regina	-1.6	6.1	5.2	7.5	4.0
Saskatoon	2.7	4.6	24.3	4.9	4.6
Lethbridge	-0.5	5.2	12.0	1.1	-8.2
Calgary	21.0	1.6	0.6	23.3	10.4
Red Deer	-2.0	0.6	...	...	...
Edmonton	-1.1	-1.7	8.4	23.4	3.8
Kelowna	23.8	10.2	15.4	13.1	20.5
Kamloops	11.4	4.2	13.2	11.3	17.3
Chilliwack	5.7	9.6	14.6	18.3	24.3
Abbotsford–Mission	11.8	6.1	10.6	3.6	7.4
Vancouver	7.4	3.8	7.1	4.8	9.5
Victoria	12.3	1.6	10.4	15.0	13.1
Nanaimo	7.1	10.7	9.6	5.9	23.2

... not applicable

**Note(s):** The table is based on data from primary downtowns.

**Source(s):** Census of Population, 2016 and 2021 (3901).



**Table 7**  
**Population density by proximity to downtown, census metropolitan areas, 2021**

	Downtown	Urban fringe (less than 10 minutes from downtown)	Near suburb (10 to 20 minutes from downtown)	Intermediate suburb (20 to 30 minutes from downtown)	Distant suburb (30 minutes or more from downtown)
	population density (people per square kilometre)				
<b>All metropolitan areas</b>	<b>5,385</b>	<b>1,749</b>	<b>528</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>71</b>
St. John's	3,286	905	202	133	33
Halifax	6,237	1,340	611	148	14
Moncton	1,795	1,180	90	18	3
Saint John	3,355	699	128	46	8
Fredericton	1,808	474	70	7	4
Saguenay	1,913	653	97	58	8
Québec	5,673	2,790	1,170	166	32
Sherbrooke	2,825	851	118	56	56
Trois-Rivières	4,197	1,406	93	20	...
Drummondville	3,268	1,631	243	26	14
Montréal	8,367	7,832	3,070	1,081	316
Ottawa–Gatineau (Quebec part)	3,000	1,686	435	182	14
Ottawa–Gatineau (Ontario part)	6,847	2,930	846	276	48
Kingston	3,663	1,371	282	26	19
Belleville–Quinte West	2,494	576	83	49	21
Peterborough	2,940	1,174	48	27	17
Oshawa	3,546	1,843	759	43	...
Toronto	16,608	6,836	4,295	2,287	494
Hamilton	6,939	2,328	595	146	29
St. Catharines–Niagara	3,547	1,341	410	120	118
Kitchener–Cambridge–Waterloo	3,746	2,019	292	369	...
Brantford	3,254	486	88	17	...
Guelph	3,223	1,526	69	...	...
London	3,580	2,263	292	56	60
Windsor	5,004	1,704	585	117	76
Barrie	2,389	1,794	96	82	...
Greater Sudbury	2,073	596	184	54	8
Thunder Bay	2,906	600	115	11	5
Winnipeg	6,102	2,522	1,001	28	14
Regina	2,103	1,515	33	18	5
Saskatoon	2,388	1,287	84	17	7
Lethbridge	1,412	930	16	5	388
Calgary	7,778	2,364	1,732	291	17
Red Deer	1,631	933	...	...	...
Edmonton	4,845	1,629	1,448	205	17
Kelowna	3,280	1,392	420	187	4
Kamloops	2,102	2,387	124	180	2
Chilliwack	3,444	479	249	55	6
Abbotsford–Mission	4,059	2,041	190	93	17
Vancouver	18,837	4,884	2,493	1,673	478
Victoria	5,709	2,616	826	296	89
Nanaimo	2,082	908	445	138	1

... not applicable

**Note(s):** The table is based on data from primary downtowns.

**Source(s):** Census of Population, 2021 (3901).

**Table 8**  
**Proportion of population by proximity to downtown, census metropolitan areas, 2021**

	Downtown	Urban fringe (less than 10 minutes from downtown)	Near suburb (10 to 20 minutes from downtown)	Intermediate suburb (20 to 30 minutes from downtown)	Distant suburb (30 minutes or more from downtown)
	%				
<b>All metropolitan areas</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>23.8</b>	<b>33.1</b>	<b>18.5</b>	<b>19.9</b>
St. John's	4.6	40.1	33.1	19.5	2.7
Halifax	5.5	28.1	32.6	14.3	19.5
Moncton	5.5	55.2	24.2	13.4	1.6
Saint John	6.3	33.2	31.4	11.2	17.9
Fredericton	10.9	30.9	35.0	5.2	18.0
Saguenay	3.9	31.8	39.9	15.3	9.1
Québec	3.5	26.0	44.2	18.0	8.3
Sherbrooke	5.8	47.7	26.6	13.7	6.2
Trois-Rivières	5.3	58.2	31.2	5.2	...
Drummondville	9.4	27.9	39.9	22.0	0.8
Montréal	2.6	16.7	32.5	25.3	22.8
Ottawa–Gatineau (Quebec part)	3.3	36.5	37.5	11.7	11.0
Ottawa–Gatineau (Ontario part)	5.9	22.5	43.7	13.2	14.6
Kingston	5.6	35.6	38.0	10.1	10.7
Belleville–Quinte West	11.8	32.8	24.0	24.0	7.5
Peterborough	13.2	50.4	19.3	13.0	4.0
Oshawa	4.2	49.9	40.0	5.9	...
Toronto	4.4	7.1	21.8	29.2	37.5
Hamilton	6.8	31.6	53.4	7.7	0.5
St. Catharines–Niagara	3.5	30.6	42.7	11.9	11.3
Kitchener–Cambridge–Waterloo	5.2	43.7	39.4	11.7	...
Brantford	8.4	66.4	18.6	6.7	...
Guelph	8.9	69.6	21.5	...	...
London	4.8	43.0	31.3	12.3	8.6
Windsor	2.9	33.7	32.5	12.1	18.7
Barrie	6.6	58.5	23.0	11.9	...
Greater Sudbury	8.1	27.4	33.4	16.8	14.4
Thunder Bay	8.8	55.2	25.1	3.3	7.6
Winnipeg	5.3	41.4	43.6	3.5	6.3
Regina	7.3	74.9	9.4	2.8	5.6
Saskatoon	3.9	63.4	18.0	5.1	9.5
Lethbridge	3.9	74.7	13.7	7.4	0.3
Calgary	3.2	17.7	51.5	23.9	3.8
Red Deer	8.0	92.0	...	...	...
Edmonton	3.9	18.0	55.1	13.6	9.4
Kelowna	7.5	35.5	39.3	13.0	4.7
Kamloops	5.8	36.5	41.0	5.9	10.8
Chilliwack	11.1	46.6	24.9	12.0	5.4
Abbotsford–Mission	13.9	48.1	35.4	1.2	1.4
Vancouver	4.6	12.5	25.9	15.7	41.3
Victoria	11.7	36.1	32.4	13.1	6.8
Nanaimo	4.8	46.0	44.6	3.3	1.3

... not applicable

**Note(s):** The table is based on data from primary downtowns.

**Source(s):** Census of Population, 2021 (3901).

## Note to readers

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Canadians are encouraged to download the [StatsCan app](#) to view the census results.

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### Definitions, concepts and geography

The population growth rates reported in this document are calculated as the difference in population size between two dates (two censuses, for example), divided by the population of the earlier date, expressed as a percentage change.

All data and results presented in this document are based on the 2021 geographic boundaries.

According to the geographic boundaries of the 2021 Census, Canada now has 41 census metropolitan areas (CMAs) and 111 census agglomerations (CAs). Readers can consult the [CMA and CA reference maps](#).

The six new CMAs are Fredericton (New Brunswick), Drummondville (Quebec), Red Deer (Alberta), Kamloops (British Columbia), Chilliwack (British Columbia) and Nanaimo (British Columbia).

In addition, the CMA of Ottawa–Gatineau was expanded to include the former CAs of Arnprior and Carleton Place. Similarly, the CMA of Windsor was expanded to include the former CA of Leamington.

Two former CAs from the 2016 Census ceased to be CAs in the 2021 Census: Bay Roberts (Newfoundland and Labrador) and Cold Lake (Alberta).

Five new CAs have been added since the 2016 Census: Sainte-Agathe-des-Monts (Quebec), Amos (Quebec), Essa (Ontario), Trail (British Columbia) and Ladysmith (British Columbia).

For detailed definitions of CMAs and CAs, please refer to the [Census Dictionary](#).

### 2021 Census of Population products and releases

Today, Statistics Canada is releasing the first results from the 2021 Census of Population. These results focus on the growth in population and dwellings from 2016 to 2021 at the national, provincial and territorial levels, as well as for various subprovincial geographical levels.

Several 2021 Census products are also available today on the 2021 [Census Program](#) web module. This web module has been designed to provide easy access to census data, free of charge.

[Analytical products](#) include two articles in *The Daily* and two articles in the *Census in Brief* series.

[Data products](#) include the population and dwelling counts for a wide range of standard geographic areas, available through the [Census Profile](#) and [Highlight tables](#).

[Focus on Geography](#) provides data and highlights on key topics found in this Daily release and in the *Census in Brief* articles at various levels of geography. In addition, a new data visualization, [Ranking of the 10 most populated municipalities, 1901 to 2021](#), is now available.

[Reference materials](#) are designed to help users make the most of census data. They include the [Guide to the Census of Population, 2021](#), the [Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021](#), and the 2021 [Census of Population questionnaires](#). Both the Dictionary and the Guide are updated with additional information throughout the release cycle.

Geography-related 2021 Census Program products and services can be found under [Geography](#). This includes [GeoSearch](#), an interactive mapping tool, and [thematic maps](#), which show data for various standard geographic areas, along with the [Focus on Geography](#) and [Census Program Data Viewer](#), which are data visualization tools.

Over the coming months, Statistics Canada will continue to release results from the 2021 Census of Population, and provide an even more comprehensive picture of the Canadian population. Please see the [2021 Census release schedule](#) to find out when data and analysis on the different topics will be released throughout 2022.

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**Available tables:** [98-10-0006-01](#) and [98-10-0008-01](#).

**Definitions, data sources and methods:** survey number [3901](#).

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; [infostats@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:infostats@statcan.gc.ca)) or Media Relations ([statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca)).