

The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole
Planning and Economic Development
April 13, 2023

Report of the Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Planner

York Region 2021 Census Data

1. Recommendation

1. The Regional Clerk forward this report to local Chambers of Commerce, Boards of Trade and the local municipalities for information.

2. Summary

This report provides Council with analysis of 2021 Census data, identifying key highlights for York Region. Throughout 2022, Statistics Canada released 2021 Census data on population, households, income, labour, education, immigration, housing, linguistic diversity, Indigenous identity, ethnocultural diversity, mobility, and commute to work. Attachment 1 bulletins include highlights from all Census releases.

Key Points:

- York Region has grown by 5.7% since 2016 to a population of 1,173,103 in 2021, however, the rate of growth has been declining since 1996
- Immigration accounted for 84.3% of population growth since 2016
- For the first time, the number of residents aged 65+ was greater than the number of children younger than 15
- Median household income of \$112,000 ranks second among all municipalities in Ontario, an increase of 7.7% since 2016
- York Region has the highest rate of homeownership (82%) in the GTHA
- Housing stock continues to become more diverse, as growth in multi-unit dwellings continued to outpace growth in single-detached homes
- Census data can be explored interactively through the [York Region Census Explorer](#) dashboard

3. Background

A nation-wide Census is conducted every five years

Statistics Canada's nation-wide Census collects information on the demographic and social characteristics of the population. The 2021 Census included a mandatory short form questionnaire sent to all households, a mandatory long form questionnaire sent to a random sample of 1 in 4 households and the mandatory Census of Agriculture.

The short form questionnaire consists of questions on population, age, household characteristics and language. The long form questionnaire collects a range of demographic data on labour force activity, education, housing, Indigenous identity, ethnocultural and religious identity, mobility and commute to work.

Income data was obtained by linking Census data with tax records. Immigration data was obtained from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship's Canada administrative records and linked with Census data.

York Region bulletins were developed within three days of each Statistics Canada release of Census data throughout 2022. The bulletins were prepared by the interdepartmental York Region Census Data Working Group, the bulletins are included as Attachment 1 in this report and can be found on the [Census and Demographic Data webpage](#). Census data can be explored interactively through the [York Region Census Explorer](#) dashboard.

In [May 2022](#), the York Region Census Data Working Group shared a memorandum focused on [population and demographic profile data](#) findings from the 2021 Census.

Census data informs planning and service delivery

Census data provides detailed information on the characteristics of the Region's population and economy. Census data informs everything from where and how government services are provided to the location of new schools, growth management, and health services. Census base line data is also used for allocating municipal funding and federal/municipal transfer funds. The information collected is used by Regional and local municipal services including planning, economic development, environmental services, transportation, finance, and community and health services. More detailed examples of how Census data is used throughout the Region are provided in Appendix A.

4. Analysis

POPULATION GROWTH

York Region grew by 63,455 people, the third highest growth in Ontario

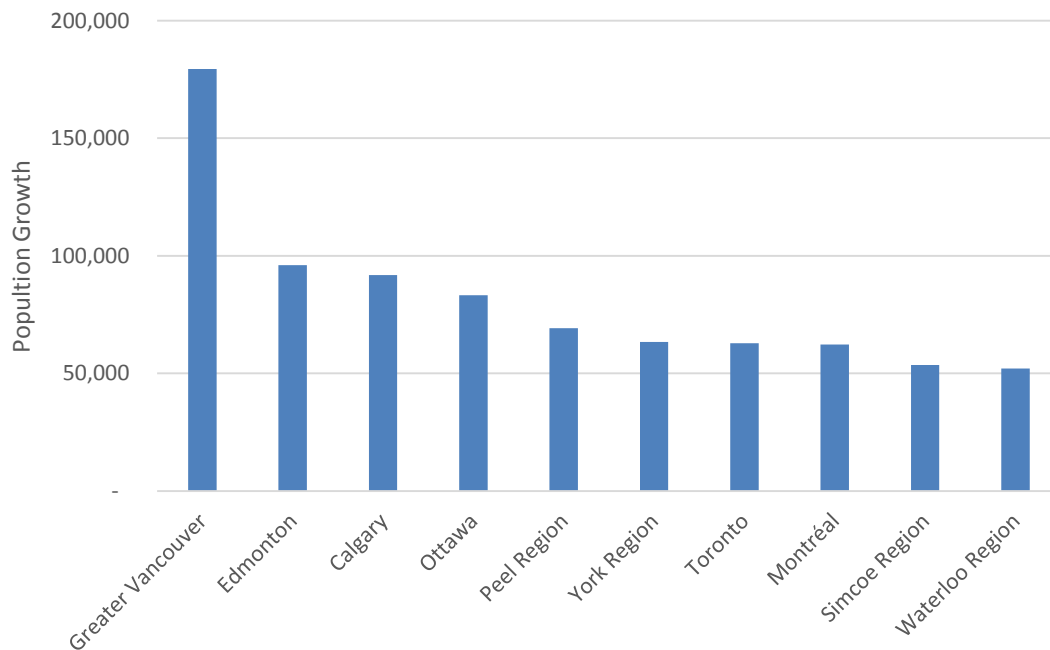
York Region grew by 5.7% since 2016, above Toronto (2.3%) and Peel (5%) and below Hamilton (6%), Durham (7.9%), and Halton (8.8%). Most of the Region's population growth

was concentrated in Vaughan, East Gwillimbury and Markham, with East Gwillimbury being the fastest growing municipality in Canada and a growth rate of 44.4% since 2016.

York Region’s total 2021 Census population was 1,173,103. In terms of total population size, York Region was the seventh-largest Census Division in Canada and the third largest in Ontario (Census divisions consist of counties, regional municipalities, regional districts and single-tier municipalities). From 2016 to 2021, York Region grew by approximately 63,455 people, making it the Census Division with the third most growth in Ontario and the sixth in Canada (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Top Ten Highest Census Divisions by Population Growth in Canada, 2016 to 2021



Occupied private dwelling units in York Region increased by 33,956 or 9.5% since 2016, the highest occupied private dwelling unit growth rate in the GTHA. At the local municipal level, Vaughan, Markham, Richmond Hill and East Gwillimbury combined accounted for the majority of housing unit growth (at 78% of the growth in occupied dwellings from 2016 to 2021).

York Region’s rate of growth (% change between Census periods) has been declining since 1996. The rate of growth was 23.1% by 2001, 15.7% by 2011, and 5.7% by 2021. York Region has historically had a higher population growth rate compared to municipalities in the GTHA, recording the highest growth rate compared to other municipalities until the last two Census periods (2011-2021).

York Region's population estimated to be over 1.2 million in December 2022

Statistics Canada's initial Census release traditionally undercounts the total population, meaning that a portion of the population is missed. There is also a small number of people who are counted more than once (e.g., a student living away from home).

To determine how many individuals were missed or counted more than once on Census day, Statistics Canada conducts post-census coverage studies of a representative sample of individuals. The results of these studies and the undercount estimate are published separately. It can take up to two years before the undercount studies are released.

In past Census periods, York Region's undercount (the percentage of population missed by Statistics Canada) has ranged between 3% and 4%. Applying the 2016 undercount estimate of 3% to the 2021 Census data, results in a total population estimate of 1,208,296 for the Region in 2021. This preliminary analysis indicates that the Census population figure adjusted for the undercount is lower than York Region's mid-year 2021 population estimate of 1,221,452. An undercount study and revised population figure will be provided by Statistics Canada in 2023, after which time population figures will be recalibrated.

IMMIGRATION

York Region is ethno-culturally diverse with more than 238 distinct ethnic origins reported in the 2021 Census

York Region was home to 53,495 recent immigrants in 2021. A recent immigrant refers to a person who obtained a landed immigrant or permanent resident status up to five years prior to a given Census year. A total of 557,025 residents or 47.8% of York Region's total population are immigrants, which refers to residents born outside of Canada. In 2021, York Region had the second highest proportion of immigrant population in the GTHA, after Peel Region (52%). From 2016 to 2021, York Region's population increased by 63,455 residents, with recent immigrants accounting for 84.3% of that growth.

York Region's diverse communities speak over 120 languages and 60% of people are multilingual. The top three non-official languages spoken at home in York Region are Cantonese, Mandarin and Iranian Persian.

INDIGENOUS IDENTITY

5,885 residents identified as having an Indigenous background

The term "Indigenous Peoples" in the Census refers to three groups—First Nations people, Métis, and Inuit. While these groups are representative of the Indigenous population, each is tremendously diverse.

3,230 Indigenous Peoples within York Region identified as First Nations (North American Indian), 2,080 identified as Métis, 105 identified as Inuk, 180 identified as having multiple Indigenous identities, and 280 identified as Indigenous but their identity category was not included in the Census.

Georgina has the highest proportion of York Region residents that identified as having an Indigenous background (1,320 residents), followed by Newmarket (1,015 residents) and Vaughan (675 residents).

POPULATION AGE STRUCTURE

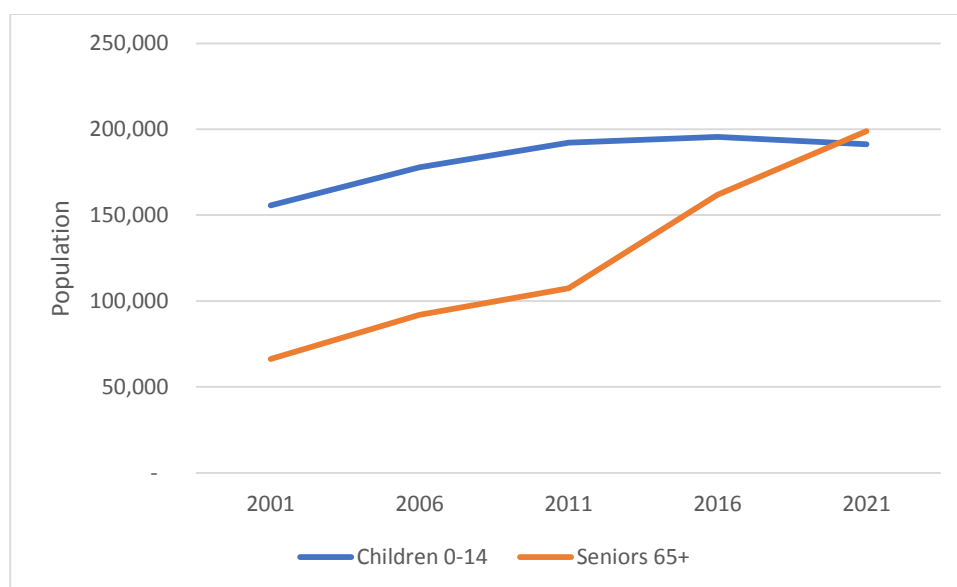
York Region's senior population (65+) grew by 23% from 2016 to 2021

From 2016 to 2021, the proportion of the Region's population in the 65+ age group has increased from 14.6% to 17%. During this period, York Region's senior's population grew by 23% from 161,735 in 2016 to 198,920 people in 2021. Conversely, the share of the population in youth (0-14) and adult (25-44) age cohorts has been declining. This trend mirrors the aging of the population evident throughout Ontario and Canada.

For the first time, the number of York Region residents aged 65+ was greater than the number of children younger than 15 (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Population Growth in Children and Seniors from 2001 to 2021



LABOUR FORCE AND EDUCATION

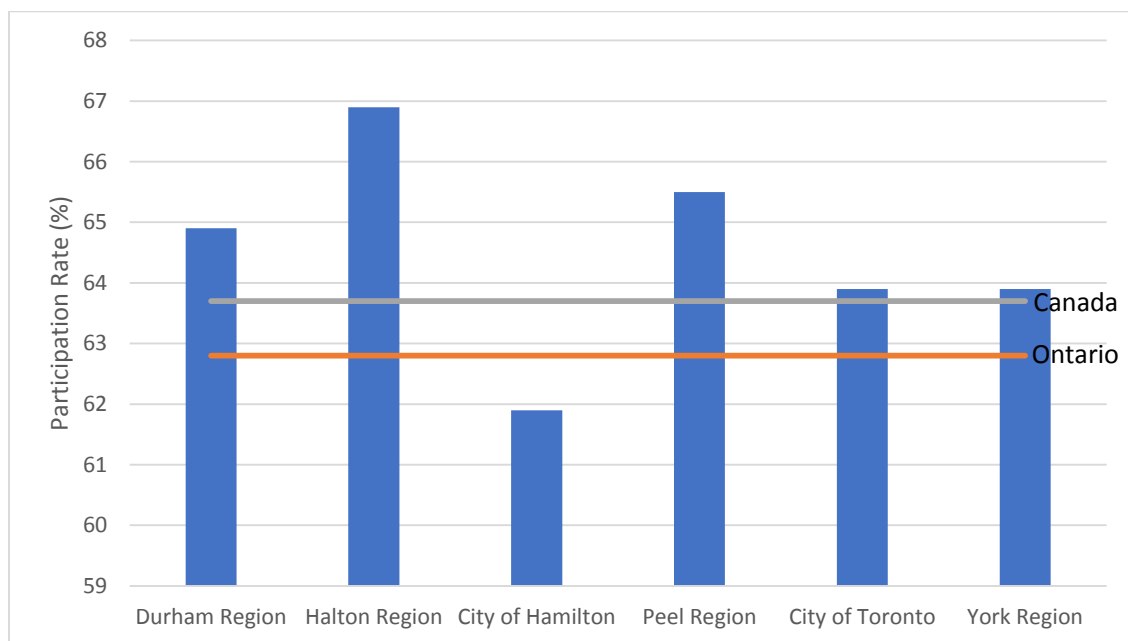
64% of York Region's population is in the labour force

According to the Census, there were 622,430 York Region residents aged 15 years and over in the total labour force in 2021. The total labour force figure includes persons who were either employed or unemployed (yet were actively looking for work), these persons may or may not work in York Region. Of the total labour force, 87% or 543,545 persons, were employed.

The participation rate measures the total labour force (including those who are employed and unemployed) relative to the size of the population 15 years of age and over, excluding institutional residents. In other words, it is the share of the working-age population that is working or looking for work. Of the York Region population aged 15 years and over, 64% participated in the labour force in 2021. This represents a 3% decrease in labour force participation since 2016.

Figure 3 shows the participation rate of each upper and single-tier municipality in the GTHA. The participation rate in York Region was 64% in 2021, which is higher than Ontario and Canada, but ranks fourth among GTHA municipalities.

Figure 3
Participation Rates, GTHA, Ontario and Canada, 2021



In 2021, the 543,545 employed York Region residents worked across a wide variety of industries. The top five industries for employment were Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (12% labour force participation), Retail Trade (11% labour force participation), Healthcare and Social Assistance (9% labour force participation), Finance and Insurance (8% labour force participation), and Manufacturing (8% labour force participation).

York Region’s aging population may result in future labour force challenges

The labour force replacement ratio is the ratio of people expected to be entering the workforce (15-24 age group) versus those expected to leave the workforce (55-64 age group). A labour force replacement ratio of one means that the number of people leaving the workforce is equal to the number entering the workforce and is an indicator of a healthy economy. Since 2006, there has been a steady decline in York Region’s labour force replacement ratio. In 2021, the Region’s labour force replacement ratio was 0.9 compared to 1 in 2016.

The percentage of York Region residents close to retirement age (55 to 64) is 14.2% in 2021, compared to just 4.4% in 2001. York Region's aging population is a factor that may lower the labour force replacement ratio and participation rate of its resident labour force in the years to come. York Region will be competing with other municipalities in the GTHA and Ontario for migrants to maintain labour force growth, in alignment with federal immigration targets, and it is important that the Region remains an attractive destination for residents, workers, and businesses.

York Region's live-work percentage has increased

The live-work percentage depicts the number of residents who are in the employed labour force that live and work within the same municipality. Improving the York Region live-work percentage is positive for the economy. Shorter commute times, less traffic congestion on roads and more quality time for workers to spend with their families improve the quality of life and strength of the overall economy in York Region.

York Region's live-work percentage of 76.9% in 2021, shows an increase compared to 57.6% in 2016. However, the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to the increase of the live-work percentage, meaning an increased proportion of York Region residents working from home.

73% of York Region's working age population (aged 25-64) have a post-secondary education, the second highest in the GTHA

York Region residents are well educated. In 2021, 73% of York Region residents had a post-secondary education, compared to 70% in 2016. This represents the second highest most educated population in the GTHA next to Halton Region (78%). Specifically, 46.6% of York Region residents have completed a university degree (bachelor or higher); and 26.5% of residents have completed a college/trades/university diploma. Additionally, 50% of immigrants living in York Region had a university degree (bachelor or higher) in 2021.

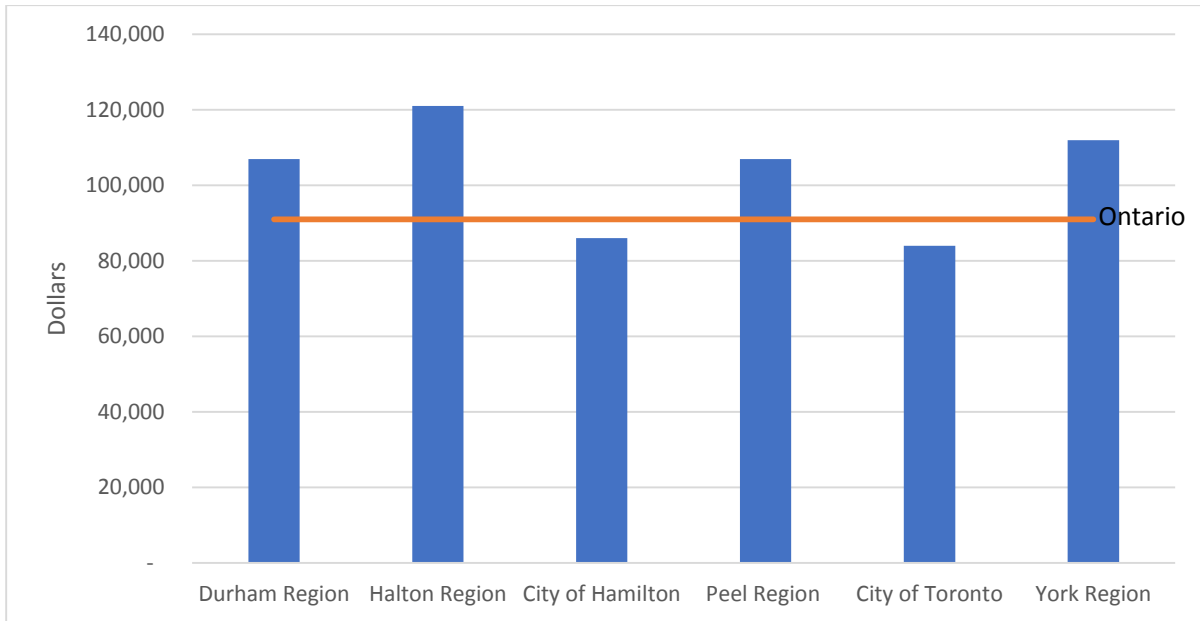
A number of major international and domestic companies make decisions to locate in York Region to access the Region's skilled workforce. Higher education and skills training will continue to contribute to York Region's talented labour force and attract new businesses.

INCOME

York Region's median household income ranks second among all municipalities in Ontario

According to the 2021 Census, York Region's median household income in 2020 was \$112,000, an increase of 7.7% since 2016 when adjusted for inflation. However, income growth in York Region is not keeping up with the growing cost of living. While employment income (includes wages and salaries) increased by 8%, the consumer price index (inflation) shows that prices in 2021 increased 9.4% since 2016 (the Toronto CMA inflation rates for 2015 and 2020 were used in the consumer price index calculation). York Region's median household income ranks second among all municipalities in Ontario. Figure 6 compares median household incomes across the GTHA.

Figure 4
Median Household Income, GTHA, 2020



Three York Region municipalities rank within the top 20 Ontario municipalities by highest median household income (King, Vaughan, Whitchurch-Stouffville). At \$141,000, King has the highest median household income of all municipalities in Ontario.

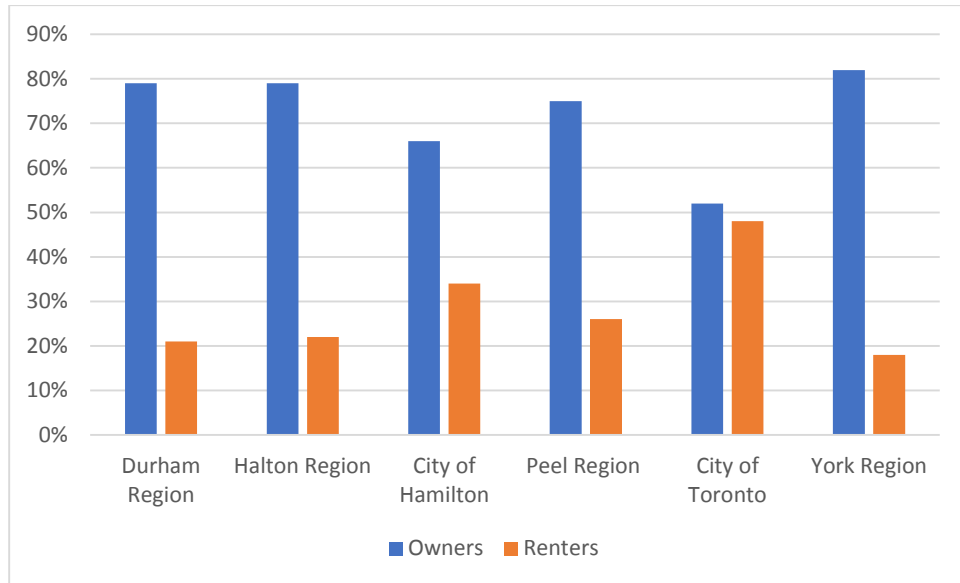
HOUSING

York Region has the highest rate of homeownership in the GTHA

In 2021, 82% (320,985) of households in York Region were occupied by owners, the highest rate of homeownership in the GTHA (see Figure 5). In comparison, 68% of the total households in Ontario and 65% in Canada were owner occupied. Between 2016 and 2021, the number of owner-occupied households in York Region increased by 4.9%.

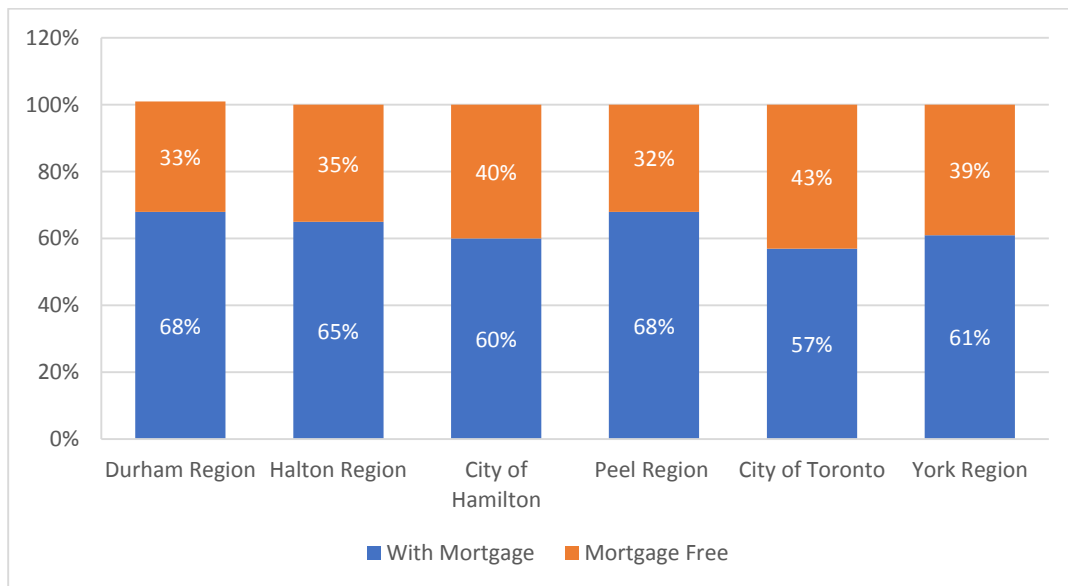
In 2021, only 18% of total households in York Region were occupied by renters (this includes primary and secondary rental units). This is the lowest proportion of renter households in the GTHA.

Figure 5
Private Households by Tenure, GTHA, 2021



In 2021, 61% of York Region owner households had a mortgage, while 39% were without a mortgage. Figure 6 compares mortgage and mortgage free households across the GTHA.

Figure 6
2021 Owner Households with a Mortgage or Mortgage Free for the GTHA



York Region’s housing stock continues to diversify

The 2021 Census shows that York Region’s housing stock continued to become more diverse. Growth in multi-unit dwellings has continued to outpace growth in single-detached homes. Between 2016 and 2021, single-detached homes grew by 6% while semi-detached,

rows and apartment units grew by 6%, 13% and 25% respectively. A more diversified housing stock is important for providing a choice of housing options, affordability, and creating more compact, transit supportive communities.

York Region's Housing Affordability Task force is committed to addressing housing affordability challenges and planning for complete communities with a full range of housing options. An Affordable Private Market Housing Implementation Plan and a Community Housing Master Plan are being developed to increase affordable housing options across York Region.

5. Financial

Data from the 2021 Census is used by various Regional departments to support a number of regional initiatives as outlined in Appendix A. York Region's departments coordinate and share custom Census data purchases within the Region.

6. Local Impact

Local municipalities use Census data as a basis for decision making, planning of infrastructure and housing requirements, transit planning and planning for the provision of schools, hospitals and roads. The Region shares custom Census data tabulations with local municipalities as requested.

Detailed local municipal Census data can be accessed through the [York Region Census Explorer](#) dashboard.

7. Conclusion

2021 Census data is important for evaluating population growth and economic trends across York Region. As the rate of York Region's population growth declines and the population continues to age, Regional initiatives that strive to attract and retain businesses and residents in the Region will be important. Attracting knowledge-based jobs to York Region, along with the provision of affordable housing are examples of Regional efforts to strengthen the Regional economy.

Census data collected is used by various Regional departments including planning and economic development, environmental services, transportation, finance and community and health services and will continue to inform planning and service delivery.

For more information on this report, please contact Paul Bottomley, Manager, Policy, Research and Forecasting at 1-877-464-9675 ext.71530. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.



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March 23, 2023

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Appendix A – Examples of How Census Data is used by Department
Attachment 1 – 2021 Census Release Bulletins

York Region Department	Examples of how Census Data is used by Department
Community and Health Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze trends in immigrant population to build comprehensive understanding of newcomers needs • Inform decisions impacting newcomer services (Local Immigration Partnership, Newcomers Centres, Community Agencies) • Assess the needs for community programs and services to determine how funds should be allocated (Social Services, programs for children, employment services, Community Investment Strategy) • Analyze York Region’s children population to develop Children’s profile and programs such as day care • Provide background information for the Housing and Homelessness Plan update and determine the needs for subsidized housing and Home Repair Program • Update of York Region’s Seniors Strategy and assist with program planning for seniors, supportive living and long-term care • Public Health uses Census data for Chronic Disease Surveillance and Monitoring Programs, and for health policy planning and analysis • The Human Services Planning Board (HSPB) of York Region uses Census data to understand income trends to find new ways to improve health and well-being for low and moderate income residents by addressing such issues as the lack of affordable housing and economic and social well-being
Public Works-Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Census data provides base information for the Transportation Forecasting Model • The Transportation Forecasting Model is then applied to a wide variety of planning studies, including Transportation Master Plans, Road and Transit Environmental Assessment Studies and Transportation Impact Studies for development approvals
Corporate Services – Long Range Planning Division	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Census data provides base information for the Population and Employment Forecast Model which is used as input into several major regional initiatives and studies including the Development Charges By-law, the Transportation Master Plan and the Water and Wastewater Master Plan • Census data is used as input to planning projects and initiatives including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Affordable Housing Measuring and Monitoring ○ Housing and Homelessness Progress Plan and Update ○ Affordable Private Market Housing Implementation Plan ○ Growth Management and Monitoring ○ Transportation Planning ○ Intensification Strategy and Monitoring

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Employment Planning○ Vacant Employment Land Inventory Update○ Vacant Residential Land Inventory Update○ Indigenous Engagement and Public Consultation○ Base data for Short Term Forecast○ Community Energy and Emissions Plan○ Demographic and Socio-Economic Analysis studies
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