



RURAL WELLBEING

Racial Diversity Factsheet



HIGHLIGHTS

- In 2021, 34% of Ontario's population identified with racialized population groups, compared to 29% in 2016.
- Racial diversity is greater than 10% in only 9 rural municipalities, compared to 47 urban municipalities.
- Most of the rural communities with higher racial diversity are in southwestern Ontario.

Overview - What do social statistics tell us?

Census data helps us understand how diverse our communities are. Diversity refers to “the acceptance and respect of various dimensions including race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, socio-economic status, religious beliefs, age, physical abilities, political beliefs, or other ideologies.”¹

This factsheet presents statistics for individuals who identified with one or more of the following racialized population groups: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Arab, Latin American, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean and Japanese. The proportion of racialized people living in a community can be viewed as a measure of racial diversity. We examine differences across municipalities in Ontario to explore rural and urban trends. Summary statistics for census divisions and economic regions are presented in the appendices.

Date source:

Statistics Canada. 2022. Census Profile. 2021 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. [98-316-X2021001](#).

For interactive maps and data visualizations, please see the [Society page](#) of the Community Wellbeing Dashboard.



A note about terminology

It is difficult to describe groups of people because “terminology is fluid and what is considered most appropriate will likely evolve over time. Moreover, people within a group may disagree on preference and may choose to use different terms to describe themselves.”² However, Ontario’s Human Rights Commission provides general guidelines for terminology they consider to be most inclusive.

Data for this factsheet was sourced from the Census profile data for visible minority populations. We will use the term “racialized groups” which is consistent with the Ontario Human Rights Commission’s guidelines regarding inclusive terminology.³ According to Ontario’s anti-racism strategic plan, the term racialized “...acknowledges that race is a social construction that can change over time and place. It can be applied to people who have racial meanings attributed to them as a group in ways that negatively impact their social, political, and economic life...”⁴

If you, or your organization, disagrees with the terminology we have used in this factsheet, please let us know so that we can ensure our language is respectful and inclusive.

Definitions:

Rural: any municipality outside of census metropolitan areas.

Urban: any municipality within a census metropolitan area.

Racialized: the social construct of race that is applied to people or groups of people.

Racialized people: People who identified as South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Arab, Latin American, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean and Japanese in the 2021 Census.

Racial Diversity: the representation and relative size of racial groups within a population.

Municipality: Census subdivisions, municipalities, and areas treated as municipal for statistical purposes, including unorganized territories and Indigenous reserves and settlements.

Overview

The number of racialized people grew by almost 1 million people since 2016. In 2021, 34% of Ontario’s population identified with racialized population groups, compared to 29% in 2016. The increase in racialized population was concentrated in urban areas.

Urban areas are much more racially diverse. Almost all racialized people live in urban areas, with only 2% living in rural areas – the same proportions as in 2016.

Racialized people make up 4% of the rural population, but 40% of the urban population (Table 1). This represents a 1% increase in rural areas and a 5% increase in urban areas compared to 2016.

² [Ontario Human Rights Commission](#).

³ [Ontario Human Rights Commission](#).

⁴ [Ontario’s anti-racism strategic plan](#)

Table 1. Overview of statistics for rural and urban areas.

Geography	2021 Population	Number of racialized people	Proportion of racialized population	Proportion of total population
Rural	2,481,753	99,060	2%	4%
Urban	11,742,189	4,712,735	98%	40%
Ontario	14,223,942	4,811,795	100%	34%

Table 2. Number and proportion of people in racialized population groups.

Population group	Rural		Urban	
	Number of people	Proportion of racialized population	Number of people	Proportion of racialized population
South Asian	29,000	29%	1,485,845	32%
Chinese	8,995	9%	810,825	17%
Black	23,720	24%	744,650	16%
Filipino	9,010	9%	354,120	8%
Arab	3,525	4%	280,255	6%
Latin American	8,170	8%	240,660	5%
West Asian	1,845	2%	209,910	4%
Multiple	3,875	4%	176,655	4%
Southeast Asian	4,360	4%	162,995	3%
Not specified	2,990	3%	120,505	3%
Korean	2,105	2%	96,745	2%
Japanese	1,465	2%	29,570	1%

South Asian, Chinese and Black Canadians make up the largest proportion of racialized people in both rural and urban areas (Table 2). There are fewer Chinese Canadians but more Black Canadians in rural areas. The proportions of Filipino, Southeast Asian, Korean, and Japanese Canadians are similar in rural and urban areas. Rural areas have a smaller proportion of Arab and West Asian Canadians, but a higher proportion of Latin American Canadians.

Table 3. Number of municipalities within categories of racial diversity.

Proportion of total population	Rural	Urban
Less than 10%	423	60
10 – 20%	8	19
20 – 30%	1	8
30 – 40%	0	9
Greater than 40%	0	11

Most rural areas have low racial diversity, with a racialized population of less than 10% (Table 3). Just over half of urban municipalities also have a low proportion of racialized people. Racial diversity is greater than 10% in only 9 rural municipalities, compared to 47 urban municipalities.

Most of the rural communities with higher racial diversity are in southwestern Ontario (Table 4). Urban racial diversity is highest around the Toronto area (Table 5). Racialized people make up more than half of the population in 8 urban municipalities.

Table 4. Rural municipalities with the highest racial diversity.

CSD	Number of racialized people	Proportion of total population
Shelburne	2,650	29%
Grand Valley	605	16%
Woodstock	6,290	13%
Amaranth	525	12%
Southgate	1,045	12%
Deep River	470	11%
East Garafraxa	305	11%
Terrace Bay	155	10%
Pickle Lake	40	10%

Table 5. Urban municipalities with the highest racial diversity.

CSD	Number of racialized people	Proportion of total population
Markham	276,880	82%
Brampton	523,850	80%
Richmond Hill	133,460	66%
Ajax	81,560	64%
Mississauga	441,480	61%
Toronto	1,537,285	55%
Milton	72,535	55%
Pickering	51,125	52%
Whitchurch-Stouffville	22,860	46%
Oakville	90,130	42%
Vaughan	132,655	41%

Summary

Racial diversity is important for a community’s cultural, economic, and social wellbeing. Communities that embrace diversity are more vibrant and innovative. Racial diversity in rural areas has not increased since 2016. Communities, policy makers and researchers can use the statistics presented in this factsheet to examine why racial diversity is still low in rural areas. For example, it is possible that immigration policies are more effective in urban areas, or maybe racialized people feel more comfortable in urban areas. Understanding why some communities are more racially diverse than others is important for reducing racism and discrimination. It is important for communities to embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion in order to improve their wellbeing.



This factsheet was prepared by Danielle Letang, Manager of Data Strategy for the Rural Ontario Institute. Questions about data sources and comments or feedback can be directed to facts@ruralontarioinstitute.ca.

This factsheet complements ROI’s [Community Wellbeing Dashboard](#). Factsheets provide insight and analysis of rural facts and trends featured in the dashboard.

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Appendix 1. Summary of statistics for Census Divisions.

Census Division	2021 Population	Number of racialized people	Proportion of total population
Algoma	113,777	3,800	3.3%
Brant	144,937	18,380	12.7%
Bruce	73,396	2,740	3.7%
Chatham-Kent	104,316	6,690	6.4%
Cochrane	77,963	2,605	3.3%
Dufferin	66,257	10,395	15.7%
Durham	696,992	251,310	36.1%
Elgin	94,752	4,275	4.5%
Essex	422,860	98,220	23.2%
Frontenac	161,780	17,890	11.1%
Greater Sudbury / Grand Sudbury	166,128	10,825	6.5%
Grey	100,905	4,175	4.1%
Haldimand-Norfolk	116,706	4,830	4.1%
Haliburton	20,571	425	2.1%
Halton	596,637	209,505	35.1%
Hamilton	569,353	140,950	24.8%
Hastings	145,746	8,160	5.6%
Huron	61,366	1,230	2.0%
Kawartha Lakes	79,247	2,635	3.3%
Kenora	66,000	1,590	2.4%
Lambton	128,154	7,115	5.6%
Lanark	75,760	2,430	3.2%
Leeds and Grenville	104,070	3,165	3.0%
Lennox and Addington	45,182	1,270	2.8%
Manitoulin	13,935	110	0.8%
Middlesex	500,563	122,020	24.4%
Muskoka	66,674	1,795	2.7%
Niagara	477,941	62,385	13.1%

Census Division	2021 Population	Number of racialized people	Proportion of total population
Nipissing	84,716	2,700	3.2%
Northumberland	89,365	3,880	4.3%
Ottawa	1,017,449	324,960	31.9%
Oxford	121,781	9,225	7.6%
Parry Sound	46,909	935	2.0%
Peel	1,451,022	990,345	68.3%
Perth	81,565	4,415	5.4%
Peterborough	147,681	9,585	6.5%
Prescott and Russell	95,639	4,830	5.1%
Prince Edward	25,704	780	3.0%
Rainy River	19,437	315	1.6%
Renfrew	106,365	3,445	3.2%
Simcoe	533,169	65,245	12.2%
Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry	114,637	6,185	5.4%
Sudbury	22,368	415	1.9%
Thunder Bay	146,862	8,775	6.0%
Timiskaming	31,424	730	2.3%
Toronto	2,794,356	1,537,285	55.0%
Waterloo	587,165	159,060	27.1%
Wellington	241,026	41,930	17.4%
York	1,173,334	641,195	54.6%

Appendix 2. Summary of statistics for Economic Regions.

Economic Region	2021 Population	Number of racialized people	Proportion of total population
Hamilton--Niagara Peninsula	1,495,885	264,935	17.7%
Kingston--Pembroke	484,777	31,545	6.5%
Kitchener--Waterloo--Barrie	1,427,617	276,630	19.4%
London	717,096	135,520	18.9%
Muskoka--Kawarths	403,538	18,320	4.5%
Northeast / Nord-est	557,220	22,120	4.0%
Northwest / Nord-ouest	232,299	10,680	4.6%
Ottawa	1,407,555	341,570	24.3%
Stratford--Bruce Peninsula	317,232	12,560	4.0%
Toronto	6,525,393	3,591,250	55.0%
Windsor--Sarnia	655,330	112,025	17.1%