

## Residents Fleeing the City of Toronto, Peel and York Regions to Find More Affordable Homes

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June 18, 2024

### Executive Summary

This blog examines Statistics Canada’s latest estimates of net intraprovincial migration flows between Ontario census divisions (municipalities) in 2023 and the six preceding years. Net intraprovincial migration refers to the net flow (inflow less outflow) of Ontario residents between municipalities in the province. A quest for more affordable housing plays a significant role in the movement of residents between municipalities before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key findings:

- The number of Ontarians moving between municipalities (CDs) accelerated during the pandemic and remained high in the 12 months ending July 1, 2023.
- Three municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) accounted for 100% of the net outflow of residents within the province in the 12 months ending July 1, 2023 – the city of Toronto (51,508); Peel region (40,934); and York region (6,249) for a total net outflow of 98,600 persons.
- In contrast, the net inflow of residents within the province was much more dispersed – the three top recipients were Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) municipalities: Simcoe county (12,782), Durham region (10,416) and Niagara region (8,213). They accounted for just 32% of the province’s intraprovincial migration in 2023.

It is anticipated that the continued dispersal of the residents of the GTA - particularly those residing in Toronto, York, Peel, and Halton - will occur as they search for the type and price of housing they can afford elsewhere in the GGH and other parts of the province.

### Background

Statistics Canada (StatCan) recently released population estimates as of July 1, 2023, for census divisions (CDs) across Canada. The agency prepares these estimates annually. The estimates are revisited following each quinquennial Census of Canada. In this case, the previously released estimates for 2017-2022 have all been rebased following the 2021 Census of Canada.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The source of the data utilized in this blog is listed at the end of the text.

StatCan also prepares estimates of the components of the population change:

- Natural increase: births less deaths;
- Net international migration: immigration less emigration;
- Net interprovincial migration: persons moving between provinces;
- Net intraprovincial migration: persons moving between municipalities within the same province.

This blog focuses on population change in the 12 months ending July 1 of the years considered (the 12 months ending July 1, 2023, are referred to as 2023).

We also label CDs as municipalities (the terms are used interchangeably here). In Ontario, most CDs are large single-tier municipalities (like the cities of Toronto, Ottawa, or Hamilton), regional municipalities (like the regions of York, Durham, or Waterloo) or counties (like Simcoe or Wellington counties). The county population estimates include separated municipalities within their borders (Wellington county includes the city of Guelph).

Much attention has been focused on the surge in immigration into Canada and where new immigrants locate. Immigration is now the primary source of population increase in many municipalities. Less attention is paid to the migration patterns of Ontario residents and the factors behind them, especially for residents moving between municipalities within larger urban regions.

This blog examines net intraprovincial migration flows between Ontario municipalities (census divisions) in 2023 and the six preceding years. Net intraprovincial migration refers to the net flow (inflow less outflow) of Ontario residents between municipalities.

There are two appendix tables providing data for all CDs in Ontario:

- Appendix Table 1: Net Intraprovincial Migration by CD, 2017-2023
- Appendix Table 2: Net Intraprovincial Migration by CD, Average Annual 2017-2022 and 2023

## **Pronounced increase in Ontarians moving between municipalities during the pandemic**

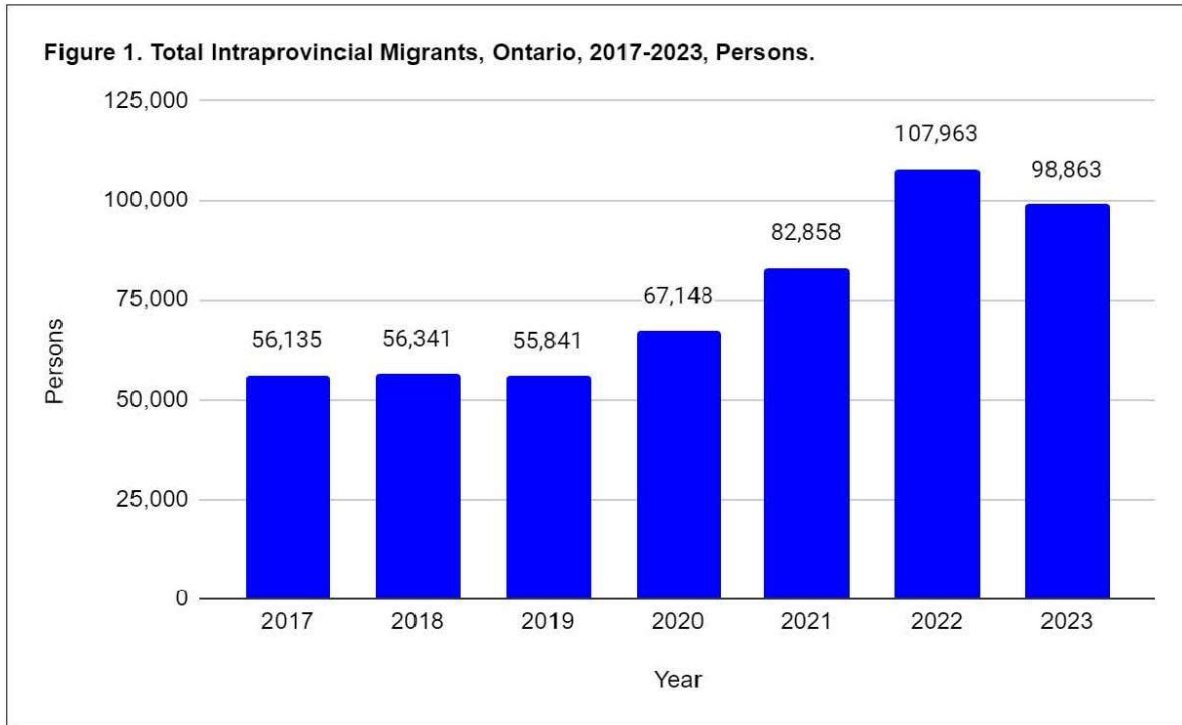
Looking at the number of residents moving between municipalities (CDs) in the province between 2017 and 2023 provides insights into the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on population movement. Bank of Canada research in 2022 found a narrowing gap between housing prices in central cities and their suburbs in 2020-2022, consistent with a preference shift to more living space.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> As summarized in a CUR blog, Frank Clayton. Narrowing the Housing Price Gap Between the Suburbs and Downtown Toronto: Demand or Supply Driven in the Future? September 15, 2024.

The number of Ontario residents moving between municipalities supports shifting housing demand during the pandemic.

Figure 1 shows the total number of Ontarians moving between municipalities from 2017 to 2023.



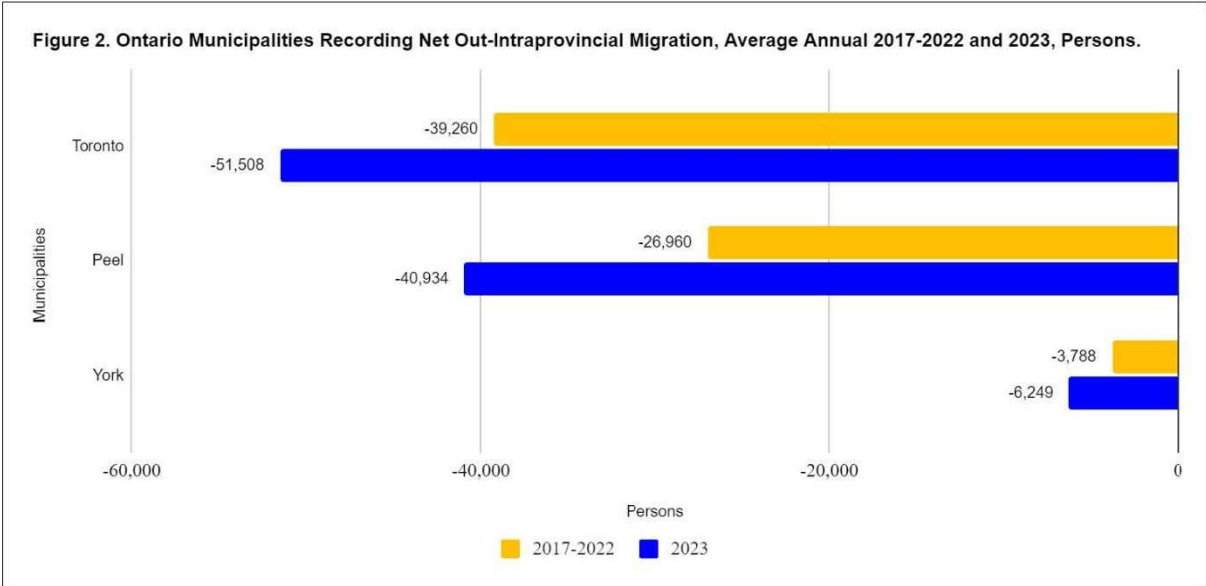
\*Data relates to the CDs for 12 months ending July 1st of the indicated calendar year.  
Source: CUR based on Appendix Table 2

*Highlights:*

- The number of intraprovincial migrants across the provinces was stable at about 56,000 persons in 2017-2019, before the pandemic.
- Intraprovincial migration accelerated during the pandemic to 107,963 persons in the 12 months ending July 1, 2022.
- Intraprovincial migration moderated slightly in 2023 to 98,863 persons but remained much higher than in the years immediately before the pandemic.

# Three municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area had a net loss of 98,600 residents to other parts of Ontario in 2023

Figure 2 focuses on the municipalities experiencing a negative net interprovincial migration in 2023.



\*Data relates to the CDs for 12 months ending July 1st of the indicated calendar year.  
Source: CUR based on Appendix Table 2

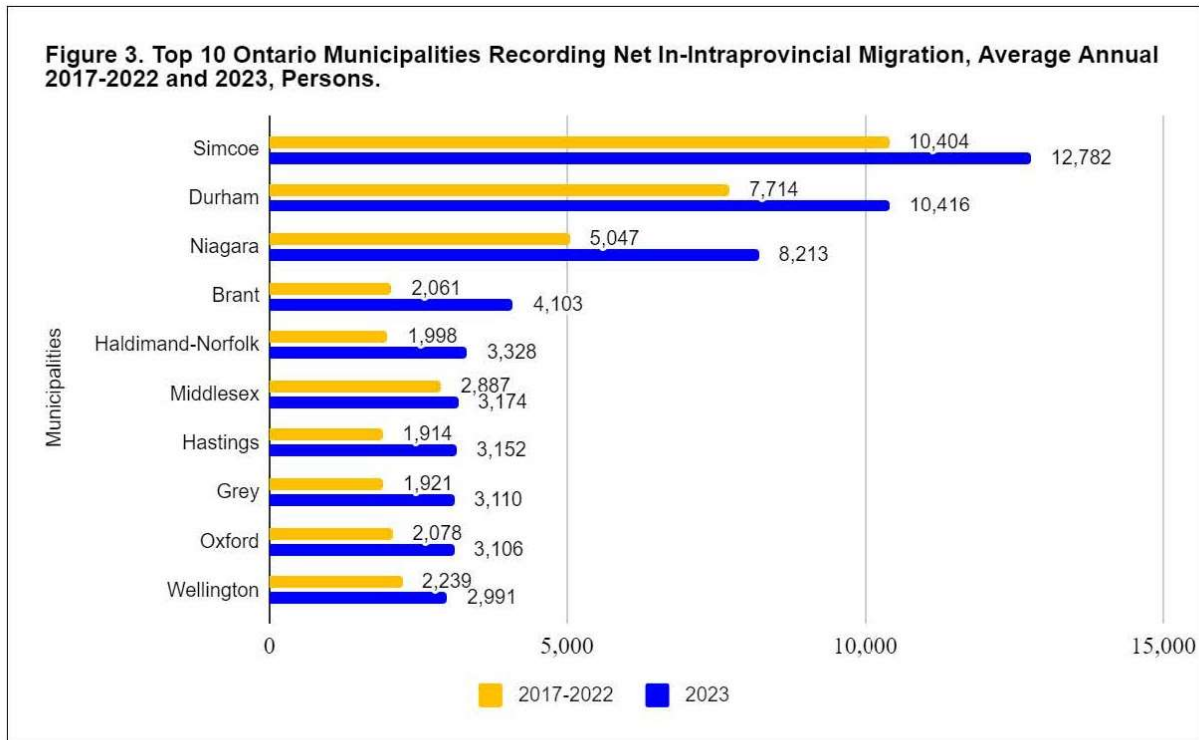
*Highlights:*

- Only three out of 49 CDs (municipalities) recorded net outflows of resident population to other places in Ontario in 2023.
- The three population losers are all in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) – the city of Toronto, along with Peel and York regions.<sup>3</sup>
- Two of these municipalities had sizable net outflows: the city of Toronto (51,508) and Peel region (40,934).
- York region, on the other hand, recorded a much smaller net outflow of residents (6,249).
- For all three municipalities, the 2023 net losses surpassed the average annual net losses of the previous six years. Yet, they were still less than in 2022 for the city of Toronto and Peel region (see Appendix Table 1).

<sup>3</sup> The Greater Toronto Area (GTA) consists of the city of Toronto and the regions of Durham, York, Peel and Halton.

## Simcoe county, Durham, and Niagara regions experienced the largest net inflow of intraprovincial migrants in 2023

Figure 3 shows the top ten municipalities (CDs) exhibiting a net gain of interprovincial migrants in 2023.



\*Data relates to the CDs for 12 months ending July 1st of the indicated calendar year.  
Source: CUR based on Appendix Table 2

### Highlights:

- **Three municipalities – Simcoe county, Durham and Niagara regions – were the largest recipients of net intraprovincial migrants in 2023**

Simcoe county took the top spot with 12,782 net intraprovincial migrants in 2023, followed by Durham region (10,416) and Niagara region (8,213). All three municipalities have sizable greenfield land inventories for building ground-related homes.<sup>4</sup>

- **While the losing municipalities were just three, the net intraprovincial gainers were spread throughout the province**

The three top municipalities accounted for just 32% of all the net intraprovincial migrants. Since there are no detailed estimates of gross migration flows between

<sup>4</sup> Ground-related homes include single- and semi-detached houses and townhouses. With the affordability crunch, the housing mix on greenfield land is now encompassing forms of missing middle housing beyond townhouses (like stacked townhouses and garden apartments).

individual municipalities, we can only surmise what is happening. Seven of the municipalities in Figure 2 are part of the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH).

It appears the residents leaving the city of Toronto and Peel and York regions moved to other parts of the GTA and to outer municipalities in the GGH in search of more affordable ground-related homes, but some moved even farther afield.

In turn, residents of many GGH municipalities moved from the region to other parts of the province for housing affordability reasons.

- *Most of the top ten recipient municipalities had higher net in-migration in 2023 than the average annual of the six prior years*

The exceptions included Halton and Waterloo regions and the city of Ottawa.

### **The lack of affordable homes likely contributes to the mounting net outflow of intraprovincial migrants from the GTA**

The worsening affordability of housing within the GTA is an important reason for the rising GTA net migrant losses during the past seven years. On the demand side, surveys conducted by Ipsos for the Toronto Regional Real Estate Board continually show that about 80% of all likely GTA homebuyers state they are most likely to purchase a ground-related home (55-60% a single-detached or semi-detached house).

The bottom line is that we anticipate the continued dispersal of the residents of the GTA, particularly those residing in Toronto, York, Peel and Halton, as they search for the type and price of housing they want elsewhere in the GGH and other parts of the province.

### **References**

Frank Clayton. (2023). Narrowing the Housing Price Gap Between the Suburbs and Downtown Toronto: Demand or Supply Driven in the Future? CUR. Available Online]: [https://www.torontomu.ca/content/dam/centre-urban-research-land-development/BLOG/blog71/CUR\\_Narrowing\\_the\\_Housing\\_Price\\_Gap\\_Between\\_Suburbs\\_and\\_Downtown\\_Toronto\\_Spt.\\_2022.pdf](https://www.torontomu.ca/content/dam/centre-urban-research-land-development/BLOG/blog71/CUR_Narrowing_the_Housing_Price_Gap_Between_Suburbs_and_Downtown_Toronto_Spt._2022.pdf)

Statistics Canada. [Table 17-10-0153-01 Components of population change by census division, 2021 boundaries](#)

## Appendices

Appendix Table 1: Net Intraprovincial Migration, Ontario Census Divisions*, 2017-2023, Persons**								
Census Division	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
Simcoe	10,411	8,255	8,683	9,264	11,911	13,898	12,782	75,204
Durham	4,098	4,747	6,320	9,631	10,666	10,824	10,416	56,702
Niagara	3,649	3,310	3,186	4,030	7,017	9,089	8,213	38,494
Middlesex	3,012	3,590	1,294	1,529	3,411	4,487	3,174	20,497
Halton	1,783	2,529	5,152	5,092	2,582	2,085	414	19,637
Hamilton	2,087	1,183	1,827	3,356	3,753	2,576	2,938	17,720
Brant	1,585	1,020	1,473	1,787	2,391	4,108	4,103	16,467
Wellington	1,980	2,069	1,427	1,941	2,364	3,655	2,991	16,427
Oxford	1,692	1,779	1,576	1,875	2,426	3,120	3,106	15,574
Haldimand-Norfolk	1,136	2,168	1,682	1,677	2,023	3,304	3,328	15,318
Ottawa	2,893	2,272	1,836	2,987	1,201	1,876	1,816	14,881
Grey	1,542	1,363	1,486	1,677	2,037	3,423	3,110	14,638
Hastings	1,567	1,794	1,360	1,446	2,011	3,306	3,152	14,636
Waterloo	3,034	2,296	945	1,564	2,364	2,637	1,084	13,924
Peterborough	1,750	1,416	1,132	998	1,836	2,722	2,442	12,296
Kawartha Lakes	1,516	1,416	1,154	1,324	1,488	2,248	2,133	11,279
Muskoka	1,331	1,248	1,116	1,280	1,507	2,306	2,127	10,915
Northumberland	1,726	1,038	827	864	1,574	2,505	2,371	10,905
Lanark	589	1,013	1,298	1,300	1,581	2,161	2,092	10,034
Prescott and Russell	244	671	1,170	1,404	1,652	2,175	2,175	9,491
Elgin	666	724	1,111	1,242	1,482	1,759	1,909	8,893
Frontenac	1,274	1,219	703	860	1,336	1,692	1,318	8,402
Leeds and Grenville	365	899	874	926	1,198	2,078	1,930	8,270
Bruce	783	836	899	1,057	1,358	1,521	1,463	7,917
Renfrew	411	427	679	783	1,265	1,825	1,915	7,305
Dufferin	1,219	1,161	754	734	918	1,071	1,026	6,883
Perth	685	810	659	679	967	1,194	1,287	6,281
Nipissing	431	299	564	728	963	1,588	1,470	6,043
Chatham-Kent	359	295	411	661	971	1,471	1,639	5,807
Parry Sound	413	644	303	574	706	1,357	1,436	5,433
Huron	309	585	460	620	815	1,190	1,087	5,066
Algoma	32	348	519	357	597	1,535	1,586	4,974
Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry	-67	180	585	534	883	1,116	1,164	4,395
Lambton	183	546	459	377	512	1,171	1,065	4,313
Haliburton	568	417	309	380	606	1,005	977	4,262

<b>Appendix Table 1 continued</b>								
Lennox and Addington	259	332	667	441	523	827	932	3,981
Prince Edward	213	188	350	456	672	412	446	2,737
Sudbury	-84	25	89	155	298	693	547	1,723
Timiskaming	-14	58	99	169	295	502	434	1,543
Manitoulin	127	99	169	137	289	325	316	1,462
Greater Sudbury / Grand Sudbury	-154	142	49	202	146	514	452	1,351
Rainy River	-11	9	-11	37	61	30	1	116
Kenora	-154	-131	-24	13	-63	-114	-18	-491
Thunder Bay	-188	-140	-171	-271	-271	307	234	-500
Cochrane	-464	-475	-456	-354	202	216	262	-1,069
Essex	213	921	82	-1,779	-747	59	-154	-1,405
York	-9,985	-4,700	103	-335	-1,603	-6,205	-6,249	-28,974
Peel	-14,890	-19,369	-22,045	-28,825	-31,961	-44,668	-40,934	-202,692
Toronto	-30,124	-31,526	-33,134	-35,584	-48,213	-56,976	-51,508	-287,065
<b>Ontario</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total Intraprovincial Migrants</b>	<b>56,135</b>	<b>56,341</b>	<b>55,841</b>	<b>67,148</b>	<b>82,858</b>	<b>107,963</b>	<b>98,863</b>	<b>525,149</b>

\*Census divisions are defined as municipalities in this blog. \*\*Data is for 12 months ending July 1 each year. Ranked from most to least in the twelve months ending 2023.

Source: CUR based on data from Statistics Canada



**Appendix Table 2: Net Intraprovincial Migration, Ontario Census Divisions\*,  
Average Annual 2017-2022 and 2023, Persons\*\***

<b>Census Division</b>	<b>2017 - 2022 Sum</b>	<b>2017 - 2022 Annual Average</b>	<b>2023</b>
Simcoe	62,422	10,404	12,782
Durham	46,286	7,714	10,416
Niagara	30,281	5,047	8,213
Brant	12,364	2,061	4,103
Haldimand-Norfolk	11,990	1,998	3,328
Middlesex	17,323	2,887	3,174
Hastings	11,484	1,914	3,152
Grey	11,528	1,921	3,110
Oxford	12,468	2,078	3,106
Wellington	13,436	2,239	2,991
Hamilton	14,782	2,464	2,938
Peterborough	9854	1,642	2,442
Northumberland	8534	1,422	2,371
Prescott and Russell	7316	1,219	2,175
Kawartha Lakes	9,146	1,524	2,133
Muskoka	8,788	1,465	2,127
Lanark	7942	1,324	2,092
Leeds and Grenville	6340	1,057	1,930
Renfrew	5390	898	1,915
Elgin	6984	1,164	1,909
Ottawa	13,065	2,178	1,816
Chatham-Kent	4168	695	1,639
Algoma	3388	565	1,586
Nipissing	4573	762	1,470
Bruce	6454	1,076	1,463
Parry Sound	3997	666	1,436
Frontenac	7084	1,181	1,318
Perth	4994	832	1,287
Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry	3231	539	1,164
Huron	3979	663	1,087
Waterloo	12840	2,140	1,084
Lambton	3248	541	1,065
Dufferin	5857	976	1,026
Haliburton	3285	548	977
Lennox and Addington	3049	508	932
Sudbury	1176	196	547
Greater Sudbury / Grand Sudbury	899	150	452
Prince Edward	2291	382	446
Timiskaming	1109	185	434
Halton	19,223	3,204	414
Manitoulin	1146	191	316
Cochrane	-1331	-222	262
Thunder Bay	-734	-122	234

<b>Appendix Table 2 continued</b>			
Rainy River	115	19	1
Kenora	-473	-79	-18
Essex	-1251	-209	-154
York	-22725	-3,788	-6,249
Peel	-161,758	-26,960	-40,934
Toronto	-235,557	-39,260	-51,508

\*Census divisions are defined as municipalities in this blog. \*\*Data is for 12 months ending July 1 each year. Ranked from most to least in the twelve months ending 2023.  
Source: CUR based on data in Appendix Table 1