



A LOOK AT DURHAM: TRENDS IN IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP



Funded by:



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Financé par :

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada



About the Durham Local Immigration Partnership

The Durham Local Immigration Partnership (DLIP) is one of the 87 Local Immigration Partnerships (LIP) across Canada. LIPs convene partners from across a city or region to improve the integration of immigrants in the local community. Together, partners work to strengthen the community's ability to address the needs of newcomers and help them settle in their new homes. LIPs are funded by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

The DLIP was first created in 2009 and has grown to a network of more than 100 community partners, including settlement and non-settlement service providers, agencies, organizations and institutions committed to the vision of creating a welcoming Durham Region. The DLIP sits within the Region of Durham's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Division in the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer.

The DLIP is guided by its [2020-2024 Community and Inclusion Plan](#), which identifies three strategic pillars to improve newcomer integration: economic prosperity, service integration, and community belonging. To achieve the goals outlined in each strategic pillar, the DLIP undertakes work in the areas of:

- **Partnership:** Convenes leadership tables, advisory groups, working groups, and other networks of settlement and non-settlement service providers to enhance coordination, collaboration and resource sharing.
- **Capacity building:** Provides training and education opportunities to enhance the settlement sector's knowledge, skills, and competencies required to assist newcomers.
- **Research and knowledge sharing:** Creates and mobilizes an evidence base on immigration and settlement in Durham.
- **Communications:** Raises awareness about the benefits of immigration and settlement in Durham, as well as the supports and services available for immigrants.

Introduction

Background

Durham Region is a place of growth. Nestled between lakes Ontario, Simcoe and Scugog, the Region consists of eight distinct municipalities: Ajax, Brock, Clarington, Oshawa, Pickering, Scugog, Uxbridge and Whitby. Durham's large and diverse landscape, economy and workforce positions the region as one of the fastest growing regions in both Ontario and Canada, with a population that is expected to almost double to 1.2 million by 2041.¹

Immigrants have long chosen Durham as their place to settle and call home – just under a quarter of Durham's current immigrant population arrived in the region before 1980.^{2,3} Today, 28% (192,600 people) of Durham's total population are immigrants, or individuals born outside of Canada, an increase of 4% since 2016.⁴ Immigration has and continues to enrich Durham's social and economic prosperity, bringing cultural and linguistic richness, an educated and skilled workforce, and a wealth of global talent.

Although Durham has a long history of welcoming immigrants, the community is also facing new trends in immigration and settlement. Not only is the pace of Durham's population growth increasing, but the demographic profile of newcomers, the immigration pathways through which immigrants are arriving, and their integration experiences are also changing. Simultaneously, the politics and public sentiment around immigration are also evolving, with support for immigration in Canada fluctuating over time. It is critical that discussions around immigration are rooted in localized data and evidence.

About this report

This report provides a broad picture of immigration in Durham Region, outlining key and emerging trends in immigration and settlement.

This report aims to:

- Educate stakeholders about the state of immigration, settlement and resettlement in Durham Region.
- Build an evidence base about immigration and settlement that can inform community planning, policy, and program and service decisions in Durham.
- Facilitate data-driven discussions about newcomers and immigrants in Durham and the impact they have on our communities.

The report is divided into three sections

1. **Citizenship and immigration**
Overall trends in immigration in Durham, with data broken down by admission category, municipality, and country of origin.
2. **Ethnocultural diversity**
Information about the demographic profile of immigrants in Durham, with data on ethnocultural, linguistic, and religious diversity.
3. **Educational attainment and economic potential**
Data on educational qualifications and labour market outcomes, such as labour market participation rates.

Citizenship and immigration

Durham's immigrant population is growing. Immigrants comprised approximately 28% of Durham's population in 2021 (192,600 people), an increase from 24% in 2016, 21% in 2011 and 2006, and 19% in 2001.⁵ Among the immigrants from the 2021 census, 19,675 arrived between 2016 and 2021, representing 10.6% of Durham's immigrant population. Recent immigrants, or persons who obtained a landed immigrant or permanent resident status up to five years prior to a given census year, made up 10.6% of Durham's immigrant population [\(See Figures 1 and 2\)](#).⁶

Durham's immigrant population growth as a percentage of its total population surpassed the provincial growth rates in the last census years. For example, while the percentage of Ontario's immigrant population grew from 28.5% in 2011 to 30% in 2021, representing a 1.5 increase in 10 years, Durham's grew by 6.1% during the same period [\(See Figure 3\)](#).⁷

In comparison to other GTHA Regions, Durham had one of the lowest percentages of immigrants in the GTHA, while Peel had the highest (51.8 %), followed by York (47.8%), Toronto (46.6%), Halton (34.2%), and Hamilton (8.9%) [\(See Figure 4\)](#).

Immigration By Admission Category

Immigrants come to Canada through different admission categories. Admission categories refer to the name of the immigration program under which an immigrant is granted the right to live in Canada by immigration authorities. Admission categories and the immigration levels permitted under each category are determined by the federal government. Canada's immigration policies have primarily focused on admitting immigrants to fulfill three key objectives:

- Enhance and promote economic development.
- Reunite families.
- Uphold Canada's international obligations and humanitarian tradition.

Around 47% of Durham's immigrants arrived in Canada through the economic admission category, which admits candidates for their potential to meet Canada's labour market needs, or create economic opportunities by owning, operating or investing in a business for their potential to meet Canada's labour market needs. This is followed by immigrants admitted through the family reunification class (35%), refugees (16%), and other admission categories (1.5%).⁸

Economic admissions were even higher for recent immigrants. Between 2016 and 2021, 53.7% of immigrants who arrived in Durham were economic immigrants, with the majority admitted as skilled workers (46.1%), followed by admissions through the Canadian experience class (30.6%), and the provincial nominee program (16.6%).⁹

Temporary residents

Durham, like many regions across Canada, are seeing their temporary resident populations grow. Temporary residents are individuals with temporary status, such as temporary foreign workers, international students, and refugee claimants. In 2016, Durham had approximately 3,045 temporary residents. This increased to 6,140 in 2021, representing a 101.6% change.

This trend aligns with the experiences of neighboring regions and municipalities. The Region of Peel experienced one of the highest increases, with its temporary resident population growing by over 200%, from 22,700 in 2016 to 68,190 in 2021. Toronto's temporary resident population increased by 55%, from 93,580 in 2016 to 145,250 in 2021, while York increased by 73% from 15,010 in 2016 to 26,020 in 2021.¹⁰

Immigration by municipality

Amongst the region's municipalities, Ajax has the highest share of the immigrant population, where 28% of Durham's total immigrants (53,955) have chosen to settle. This is followed by Oshawa with 21.3% (41,115) and 20.2% in Whitby (38,865). An overwhelming majority of immigrants in Durham (96.8%) live in the southern area municipalities (See Figure 4).

As a percentage of the total municipal population, Ajax remains the municipality with the highest percentage of immigrants (42.7%), followed by Pickering (37.3%), and Whitby (28.4%). Brock had the lowest with 8.2%.¹¹

More recent immigrants, or those who arrived within the last five years, are settling further east in Durham.

Immigration by country of origin

Durham welcomes immigrants from around the globe. In 2021, the top five places of birth of immigrants in Durham were India, followed by the United Kingdom, Jamaica, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines. Among recent immigrants, or those who arrived within the last five years, the top five places of birth are India, Pakistan, the Philippines, China and Nigeria. These trends align with the top places of birth of recent immigrants in Canada, which is also led by India, followed by the Philippines, China, Syria and Nigeria.¹²

Figure 1
Immigration In Durham

Immigration	Ajax	Brock	Clarington	Oshawa	Pickering	Scugog	Uxbridge	Whitby	Durham
Immigrants	52,750	985	15,305	38,520	35,780	2,240	2,890	37,985	186,460
Before 1980	9,135	445	5,185	9,655	8,955	1,160	1,485	9,300	45,325
1981 to 1990	6,940	180	1,925	4,125	4,805	275	385	4,580	23,210
1991 to 2000	13,560	135	2,595	6,705	8,480	300	430	7,120	39,320
2001 to 2010	13,245	140	2,815	8,350	7,830	290	375	8,305	41,365
2011 to 2015	4,850	40	1,365	4,230	2,895	75	105	4,010	17,565
2016 to 2021	5,010	45	1,430	5,455	2,815	140	115	4,665	19,675

Immigration	Ajax	Brock	Clarington	Oshawa	Pickering	Scugog	Uxbridge	Whitby	Durham
Americas	13,695	150	3,050	8,590	8,855	250	375	8,595	43,565
Europe	6,255	565	6,180	10,470	6,430	1,450	1,665	9,170	42,190
Africa	3,130	10	970	2,620	1,955	65	155	2,310	11,215
Asia	29,540	245	5,050	16,720	18,460	455	670	17,765	88,905
Oceania	130	15	55	125	85	20	15	150	595

Figure 2

Immigrant population in Durham as a percentage of the total population, 2001 to 2021

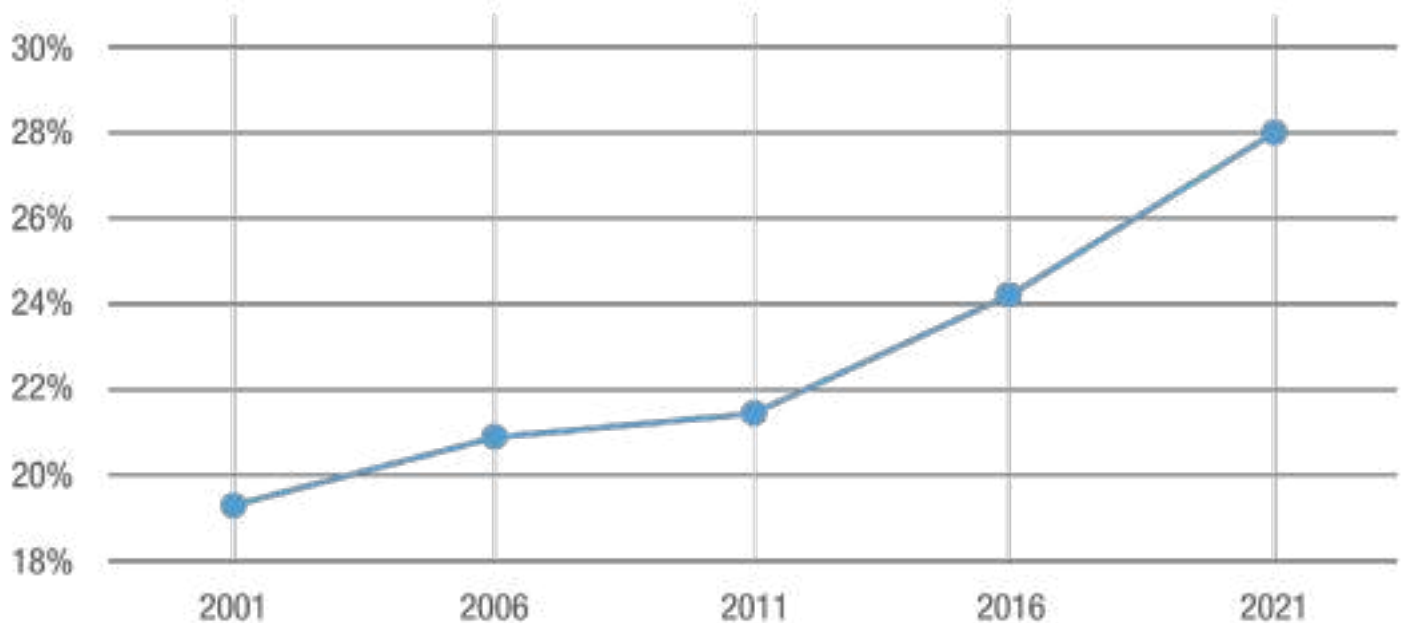


Figure 3

Percentage of the immigrant population in Durham, Ontario, Canada 2011 to 2021

Years	2011	2016	2021
Durham	20.9%	23.6%	27%
Ontario	28.5%	29.1%	30%
Canada	20.6%	21.9%	23%

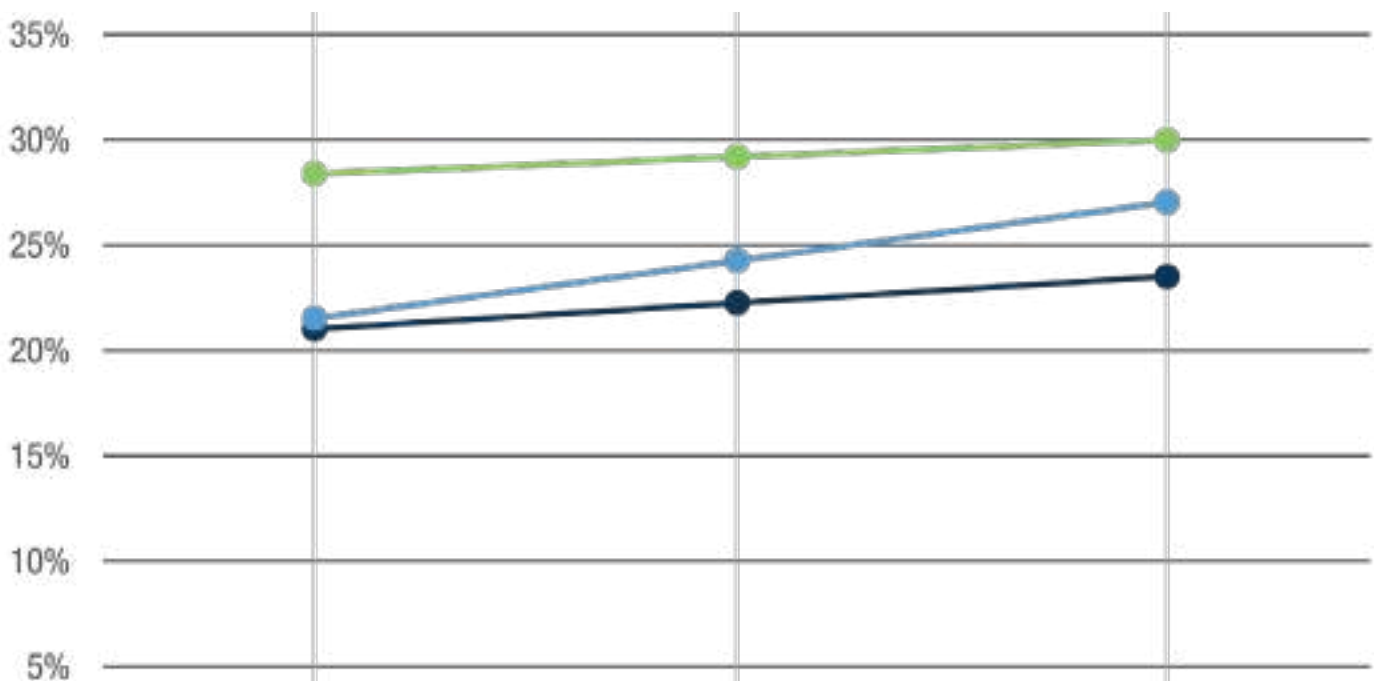


Figure 4
**Breakdown of immigrant population in
Durham**

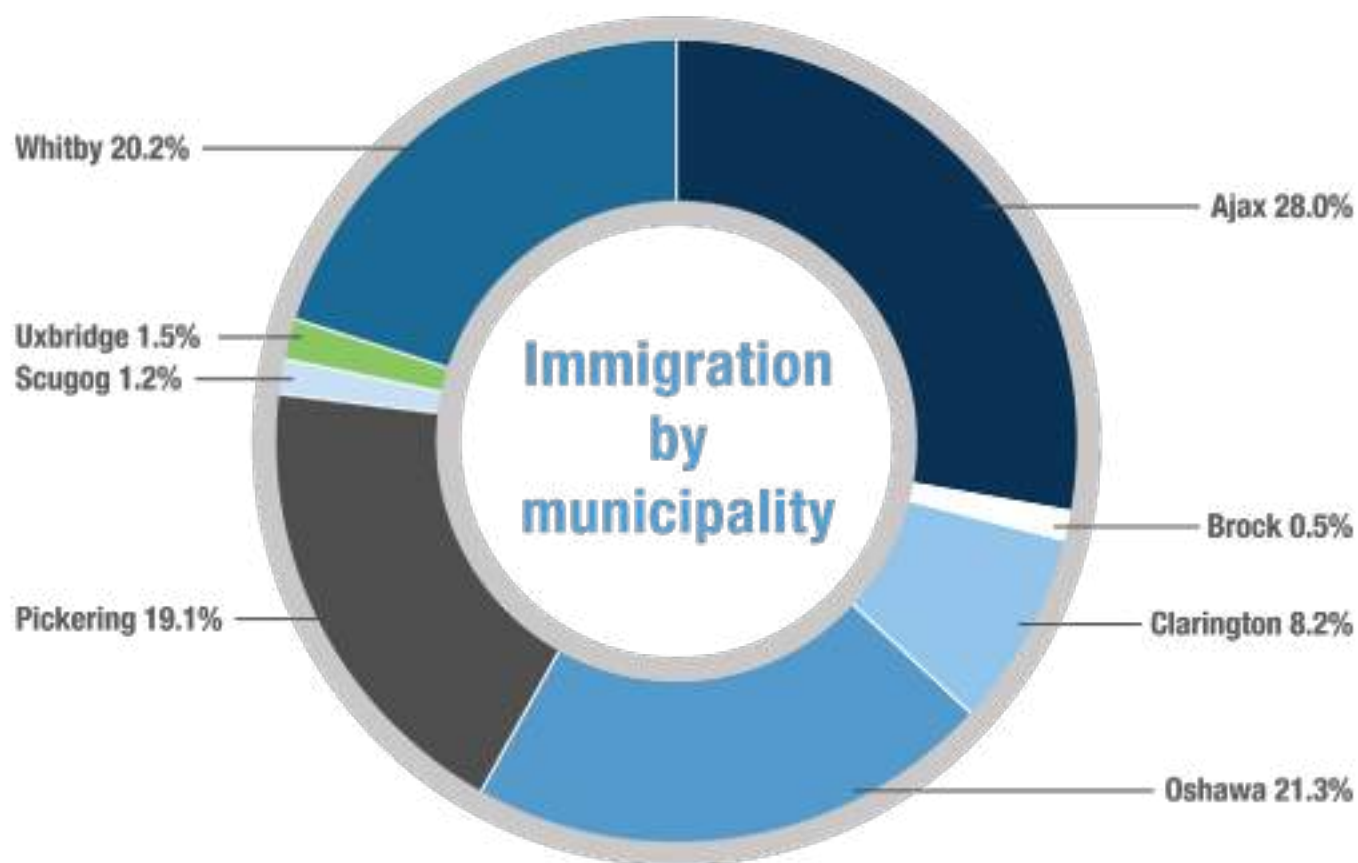


Figure 5

Top places of birth of recent immigrants in Durham

	Country		2021	2016	Rank in 2016
1		India	33.9%	14.0%	1
2		Pakistan	6.6%	9.9%	3
3		Philippines	6.0%	11.4%	2
4		China	5.4%	6.4%	4
5		Nigeria	4.8%	1.4%	14

Ethnocultural diversity

Visible minorities and ethnocultural origins

Changes in the place of birth of immigrants over time has contributed to Durham's diverse ethnocultural, religious and linguistic landscape. In 2021, visible minorities¹³ comprised 36.3% of Durham's population. This represents a 9.1% increase from 2016, and 15.6% from 2011. The largest groups of visible minorities include: South Asian (13.4%), Black (9.6%), Filipino (2.9%) and Chinese (2.4%) (See Figure 6).

Compared to Ontario (34.3%) and Canada (26.5%), visible minorities in Durham represent a higher percentage of its respective populations. However, Durham's visible minority population remains less than the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (52.3%), with the majority of Peel's population (68.8%) identified being a visible minority, followed by Toronto (55.7%), York (55%), and Halton (35.5%).

In 2021, the majority of Durham's population reported having ethnic origins of European (96.4%) and North American (27.7%) descents. This is followed by Asian (29.2%) and South American (7.6%). Comparatively, these rates are higher than the GTHA, with 67.5% of its population identifying as of European and 16% North American ethnic origin.¹⁴

Religion

The majority of residents in Durham identify with the Christian faith (52.7%), followed by Muslim (7.6%), Hindu (5.6%), Sikh (0.6%), Buddhist (0.5%) and Jewish (0.3%). Just over 32% of Durham's population do not identify with any religious or secular perspectives.¹⁵

Language

In 2021, 97.2% of Durham residents reported English as their first official language spoken. English was the language most frequently spoken at home for 86.1% of Durham's population in 2021, compared to the GTHA at 68.5% and Ontario at 77.4%.

Just over 18% of Durham's residents reported having one or more languages as their mother tongue that are different than either of Canada's two official languages. The top five most common non-official languages reported as mother tongue¹⁶ in Durham are: Tamil, Urdu, Tagalog, Spanish and Mandarin (See Figure 7).

Francophones

Durham has a growing Francophone population. In 2021, more than 9,300 individuals or 1.3% of Durham residents reported French as their first language, compared to 1% in the GTHA and 3.4% to the province of Ontario.^{17, 18}

Approximately 3,500 residents Durham residents reported French as the language most frequently spoken at home, and 580 residents reported French as their only language known.

The Francophone population in Ontario is also changing. Historically, most French-speaking immigrants came from Europe, with 37% of French-speaking immigrants arriving from Europe in 2011. This has decreased to 28% in 2016, with more than one-third of Francophone immigrants coming from Africa (35%) and one-quarter from Europe (28%).¹⁹

Figure 6
Census breakdown of visible minorities in Durham

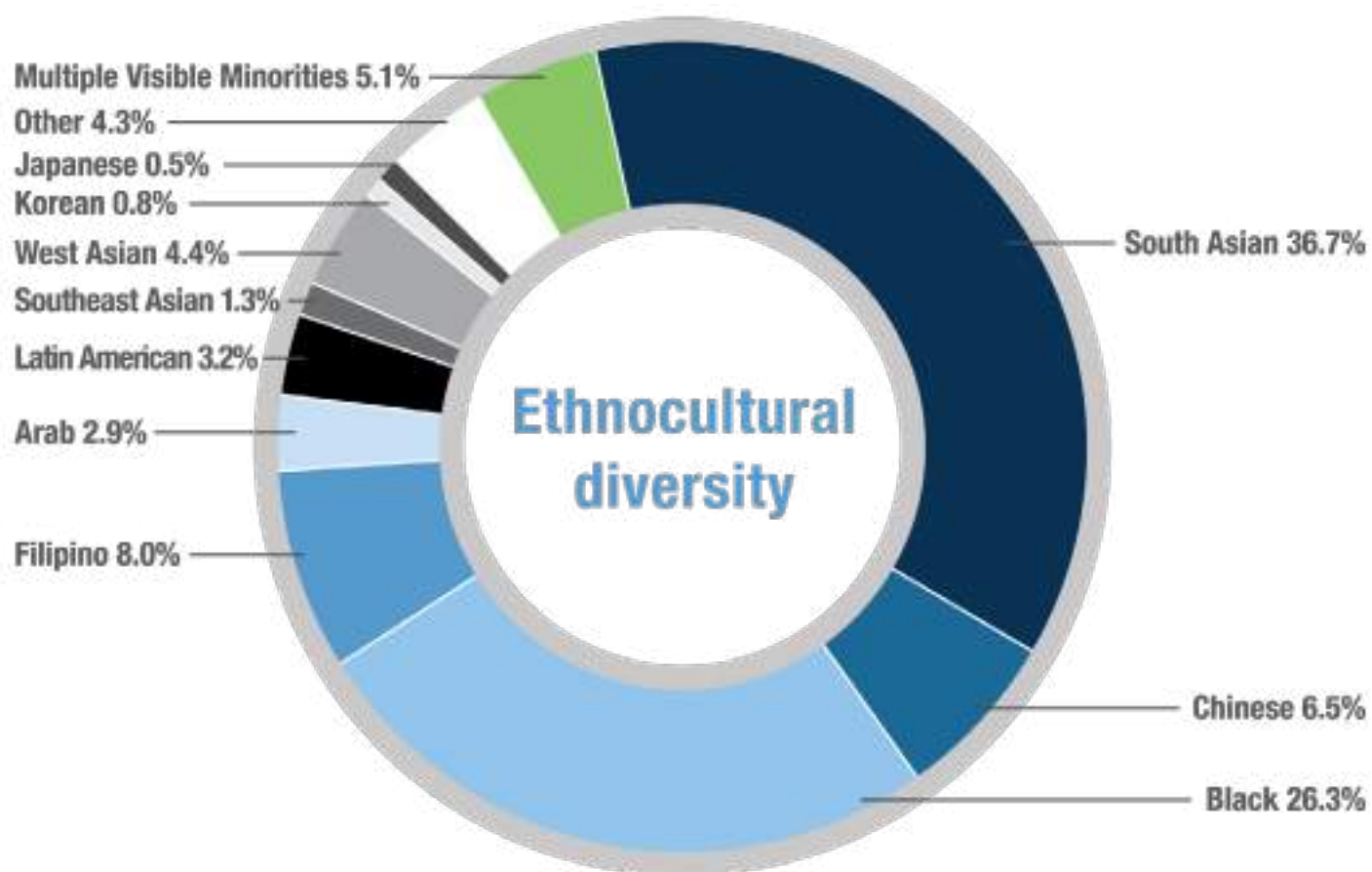
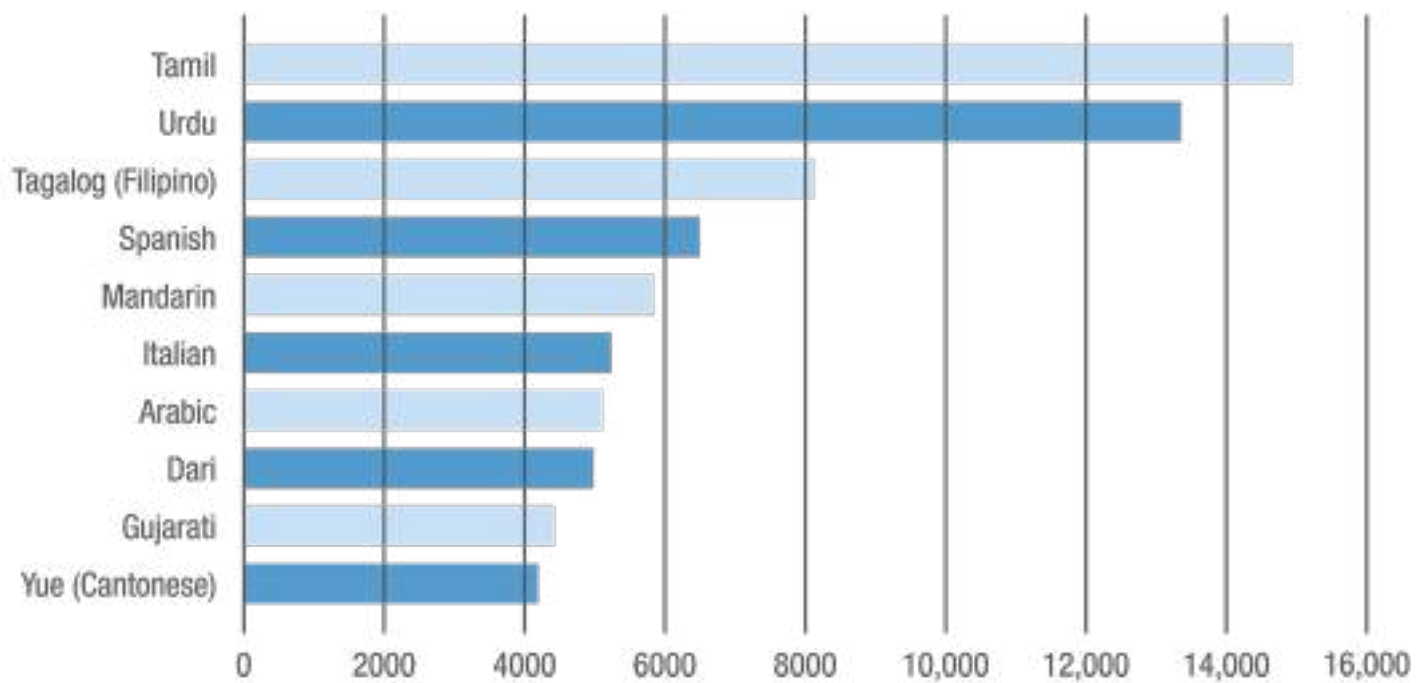


Figure 7

Top 10 non-official language reported as mother tongue



Educational attainment and economic potential

Immigrants in Durham are educated

Immigrants in Durham Region have high rates of educational attainment. Around 62.8% of immigrants in the region have a post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree, compared to 53.5% of non-immigrants in Durham.

Immigrant men in Durham are slightly more likely to have post-secondary education than immigrant women, as nearly 64.3% of immigrant men have a post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree, compared to 61.5% of immigrant women. These rates are higher than their non-immigrant counterparts, where 50.1% of non-immigrant men and 56.7% of non-immigrant women have a post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree.²⁰

This is consistent with the trends across the country. Overall, racialized groups in Canada tend to be highly educated. Findings from the 2021 Census demonstrate that while racialized groups made up one quarter of the population aged 25 to 64, they made up almost 40% of people in that age category with a bachelor's degree or higher.²¹

Despite this, immigrants face difficulties finding commensurate employment and getting their foreign credentials recognized in Canada. Immigrants tend to have above average rates of qualification, or when an individual is skilled or educated beyond what is necessary for a job. This trend is particularly prevalent among racialized people despite their high levels of education.²²

Immigrants in Durham bring economic potential

Most immigrants coming to the region are admitted as economic immigrants, selected for their strong ability to rejuvenate Canada's aging population and declining labour force. In 2021, approximately 47% of Durham's immigrants arrived in Durham under the economic admission category, followed by those under the family reunification category (35%), and refugees (16%).

More than 65% of recent immigrants to Durham are of core working age (between 25 to 54 years old). The overall labour force participation rate of immigrants in Durham is 60.7%, with some discrepancies between male and female participation rates.²³ Male immigrants have a 67% participation rate, while immigrant women are at 55.2%.

Immigrants in Durham are entrepreneurs

Immigrants in Durham are not only participating in the labour market as employees, but also as business owners and entrepreneurs. In a study commissioned by the DLIP, researchers found that Durham has a growing immigrant entrepreneur community. In this research, immigrant entrepreneurs refer to immigrants who report self-employment income as a source of earnings.²⁴

Durham's total number of self-employed immigrants has been steadily increasing with each consecutive year. Between 2008 and 2018, Durham's share of immigrants with self-employment more than doubled, from 5,415 to 11,310 individuals. In comparison to other GTHA municipalities analyzed in the research sample, Peel has the highest number of self-employed immigrants, followed by York, Halton, and Durham.²⁵

Business ownership and self-employment rates are prevalent in the immigrant community, and typically higher than non-immigrant counterparts. In 2016, 11.9% of immigrants in Canada aged 25 to 69 years either owned a private incorporated company or were primarily self-employed, compared to 8.4% of the Canadian born population (specifically Canadian-born individuals with Canadian-born parents).²⁶ Some possible reasons why business ownership rates are higher amongst the immigrant population include: greater difficulty finding suitable paid employment (and thus more turn to self-employment as a source of income); strong immigrant networks that serve as a source of collective business expertise and experience in immigrant communities; and strong educational backgrounds (especially for economic immigrants) that can increase their tendency to start and run their own businesses.

In addition to contributing to Durham's economic prosperity, immigrants and newcomers enrich the community's social fabric through community building and civic participation. Immigrants expand a community's cultural horizons through culinary diversity and traditions and customs such as celebrations and festivals. Immigrants are also eager to participate and give back to their community. On average, immigrants donate more to charity than Canadian-born citizens.²⁷ Almost 40% of immigrants aged 15 and older are volunteers. Immigrants noted that the top three reasons why they make financial donations were: to show compassion towards people in need; because they personally believed in the cause of the charity; and to make a contribution to the community.²⁸

Conclusion

Durham is a vibrant community that attracts new Canadians from around the globe. The trends in this report demonstrate that immigration has been and continues to be an integral part of Durham's growth and vitality.

Over the past two decades, Durham Region has experienced a steady increase in its immigrant population. Although Durham still has a smaller immigrant population than other regional municipalities, Durham's rate of growth is accelerating.

Durham's immigrant community brings renewed cultural richness to local communities, with almost one-quarter of the Region's population identifying as a visible minority. Immigrants in Durham also boast strong economic potential, with most immigrants bringing high levels of education and skill.

While Durham Region has made progress in welcoming immigrants, challenges still remain in unlocking their full potential. Although not discussed in this report, feedback from community partners and settlement and integration research attest that gaps in areas such as employment, housing, health care, language, and experiences of discrimination make successful integration difficult.

These systemic issues are best approached through collective action. Equipped with localized evidence about immigration trends in the community, the Durham Local Immigration Partnership will continue to harness and amplify the strengths of local service providers and community partners serving immigrants in Durham. It is through this co-ordinated and systemic effort, mobilized through the activities in the [2020-2024 Community and Inclusion Plan](#), that our community collective plans to make Durham an inclusive and prosperous home for both new and longstanding residents.

Notes

- ¹ [Durham Region Profile highlights the region's growth, development and progressive opportunities - Region of Durham](#)
- ² Haan, Michael. 2021. The Dynamics of Immigration to the Regional Municipality of Durham: Insights from Administrative Data.
- ³ Regional Municipality of Durham. Council Report. 2023. 021 Census of Population – Citizenship and Immigration, Ethnocultural and Religious Composition, Mobility and Migration (Release 6), File: D01-03
- ⁴ Regional Municipality of Durham. Council Report. 2023. 021 Census of Population – Citizenship and Immigration, Ethnocultural and Religious Composition, Mobility and Migration (Release 6), File: D01-03
- ⁵ In this report, we use Statistics Canada's definition of immigrants. Immigrants includes persons who are, or who have ever been, landed immigrants or permanent residents. Such persons have been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Immigrants who have obtained Canadian citizenship by naturalization are included in this category. This count also includes non-permanent residents currently residing in Durham as of the 2021 Census.
- ⁶ Regional Municipality of Durham. Council Report. 2023. 021 Census of Population – Citizenship and Immigration, Ethnocultural and Religious Composition, Mobility and Migration (Release 6), File: D01-03
- ⁷ Audino, Joseph and Laffin, Paul. "A Look at Durham 2021 Census: Citizenship, Immigration, Ethnocultural Diversity." Statistics Canada, November 2022.
- ⁸ Regional Municipality of Durham. Council Report. 2023. 021 Census of Population – Citizenship and Immigration, Ethnocultural and Religious Composition, Mobility and Migration (Release 6), File: D01-03
- ⁹ Statistics Canada. 2023.. Census Program Data Viewer dashboard (statcan.gc.ca)
- ¹⁰ [Conference Board of Canada. 2024. Where to? Mapping Immigrants' and Non-permanent Residents' Settlement in Canada - The Conference Board of Canada](#)
- ¹¹ Regional Municipality of Durham. Council Report. 2023. 021 Census of Population – Citizenship and Immigration, Ethnocultural and Religious Composition, Mobility and Migration (Release 6), File: D01-03
- ¹² Statistics Canada. 2022. [Focus on Geography Series, 2021 Census - Durham \(Census division\) \(statcan.gc.ca\)](#)
- ¹³ Statistics Canada refers to "visible minorities" as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour", as defined by the Employment Equity Act.
- ¹⁴ Regional Municipality of Durham. Council Report. 2023. 021 Census of Population – Citizenship and Immigration, Ethnocultural and Religious Composition, Mobility and Migration (Release 6), File: D01-03
- ¹⁵ Ibid
- ¹⁶ Statistics Canada refers to mother tongue as the first language learned at home in childhood and still understood by the person at the time the data was collected.
- ¹⁷ Statistics Canada. 2021. [Profile table, Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population - Durham, Regional municipality \(RM\) \[Census division\], Ontario \(statcan.gc.ca\)](#)

- ¹⁸ Statistics Canada. 2023. [Key facts on the French language in Ontario in 2021 \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://statcan.gc.ca)
- ¹⁹ Ministry of Francophone Affairs. 2019. [Profile of the Francophone population in Ontario – 2016 | ontario.ca](https://ontario.ca)
- ²⁰ Durham Workforce Authority. 2023. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in the Workforce. <https://durhamworkforceauthority.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/EDI-Report-Website.pdf>
- ²¹ Statistics Canada. 2023. [A portrait of educational attainment and occupational outcomes among racialized populations in 2021 \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://statcan.gc.ca)
- ²² Cornelissen and Turcotte. 2020. [Persistent overqualification among immigrants and non-immigrants \(publications.gc.ca\)](https://publications.gc.ca)
- ²³ In this case, participation rate refers to the labour force in Durham's immigrant population expressed as a percentage of the total immigrant population in Durham.
- ²⁴ Haan, Michael. 2021. The Dynamics of Immigration in the Regional Municipality of Durham: Insights from Administrative Data. Commissioned by the Durham Local Immigration Partnership.
- ²⁵ Haan, Michael. 2021. The Dynamics of Immigration in the Regional Municipality of Durham: Insights from Administrative Data. Commissioned by the Durham Local Immigration Partnership.
- ²⁶ [Immigrant entrepreneurs in Canada: Highlights from recent studies \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://statcan.gc.ca)
- ²⁷ Government of Canada. 2022. [Immigration matters in philanthropy - Canada.ca](https://Canada.ca)
- ²⁸ Government of Canada. 2022. [Immigration matters in philanthropy - Canada.ca](https://Canada.ca)



If this information is required in an accessible format, please contact
1-800-372-1102 ext. 2760 or e-mail us at: **ImmigrationPortal@durham.ca**
www.durhamimmigration.ca



Funded by:



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Financé par :

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada

