

From: ["Mochrie, Paul" <Paul.Mochrie@vancouver.ca>](mailto:Paul.Mochrie@vancouver.ca)
To: ["Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"](#)
Date: 12/12/2022 3:26:05 PM
Subject: [City of Vancouver 2021 Census – Immigration, Ethnocultural Diversity, Mobility and Migration](#)

Dear Mayor and Council,

The attached memo from Sandra Singh (ACCS) and Theresa O'Donnell (PDS) provides an update on City of Vancouver 2021 Census – Immigration, Ethnocultural Diversity, Mobility and Migration. This release focuses on the diverse cultural origins, racial identities, places of birth, religious affiliations, and experiences of migration among residents of Vancouver, with comparisons across Metro Vancouver and to other large cities in Canada.

Highlights: Immigration, ethnocultural diversity, mobility and migration:

- Vancouver continues to be among the most diverse cities in Canada, with 55% of its population being identified with one or more racialized groups, 50% born outside of Canada, and at least 244 different cultural origins identified by its residents.
- The number of newcomers to Vancouver is continuing to grow, with particularly high growth in the number of non-permanent residents, reflecting federal policies and global trends around labour markets, migration, unrest, and displacement.
- Compared to the previous census, 24% of the city's population are new to Vancouver, and another 21% have moved from one address to another within the city.

Census data is a foundational input into all of the City's plans, policies, and projects. Staff will continue to analyze the data from this and future releases and incorporate it into work across City departments.

Should you have any questions, please contact Sandra Singh (Sandra.singh@vancouver.ca) or Theresa O'Donnell (Theresa.o'donnell@vancouver.ca) and they will ensure the queries are responded to through the weekly Council questions process.

Best,
Paul

Paul Mochrie (he/him)
City Manager
City of Vancouver
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The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

MEMORANDUM

December 12, 2022

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Paul Mochrie, City Manager
Armin Amrolia, Deputy City Manager
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager
Rosemary Hagiwara, Acting City Clerk
Maria Pontikis, Chief Communications Officer, CEC
Teresa Jong, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office
Kareem Allam, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Trevor Ford, Director of Operations, Mayor's Office
David Grewal, Senior Advisor, Mayor's Office
Aftab Erfan, Chief Equity Officer
Mary Clare Zak, Managing Director, Social Policy and Projects, ACCS
Doug Smith, Deputy General Manager, PDS
Chris Robertson, Director, City-wide and Regional Planning, PDS

FROM: Sandra Singh, General Manager, ACCS
Theresa O'Donnell, General Manager, PDS

SUBJECT: City of Vancouver 2021 Census – Immigration, Ethnocultural Diversity, Mobility and Migration

RTS #: N/A

PURPOSE

This memo summarizes key indicators from the 2021 Census of Population, based on data released on October 26, 2022. This release focuses on the diverse cultural origins, racial identities, places of birth, religious affiliations, and experiences of migration among residents of Vancouver, with comparisons across Metro Vancouver and to other large cities in Canada. The census is the robust source of quantitative data on these trends, but not all identities and communities are reflected, so numbers should be grounded in community knowledge as well.

BACKGROUND

Statistics Canada conducted the 2021 Census in May 2021, and is releasing initial datasets through 2022. Council previously received memos on February 28 ([population and dwelling counts](#)), May 10 ([age, sex at birth, gender, and type of dwelling](#)), August 5 ([households, family, and income](#)), and October 14 (housing; Indigenous peoples and languages).

Data in this memo is from the long-form census, given to a 25% sample of private households. People in collective dwellings, such as shelters, healthcare or institutional residences, are not included, nor are people in precarious housing. The specific approach to collecting data varies for each topic and is described in each section.

Overall, this memo provides a descriptive snapshot of Vancouver’s diversity, showing that the city continues to be made up of people from different backgrounds, identities, and global origins. Staff are ordering further disaggregated datasets to explore different social and economic outcomes and inequities experienced by people in these groups.

DISCUSSION

Highlights: Immigration, ethnocultural diversity, mobility and migration

- Vancouver continues to be among the most diverse cities in Canada, with 55% of its population being identified with one or more racialized groups, 50% born outside of Canada, and at least 244 different cultural origins identified by its residents.
- The number of newcomers to Vancouver is continuing to grow, with particularly high growth in the number of non-permanent residents, reflecting federal policies and global trends around labour markets, migration, unrest, and displacement.
- Compared to the previous census, 24% of the city’s population are new to Vancouver, and another 21% have moved from one address to another within the city.

Cultural origins

The 2021 Census asked people to identify the ethnic or cultural origins of their ancestors. Unlike previous censuses, no specific prompts were given on the census itself, but people could consult an alphabetical list with examples of responses.¹ The initial data release has 250 categories, of which 244 are represented among the population of Vancouver.

Figure 1 visualizes the top 100 origins identified by Vancouver residents, with the most commonly-identified categories in larger and darker type. One in four Vancouverites identify Chinese origins, with English, Scottish, Irish, German and Filipino also frequently mentioned.



Figure 1 Top 100 cultural origins identified by Vancouver residents, 2021

¹ See examples provided at <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/ref/questionnaire/ancestry.cfm>

Racial identity

The 2021 Census asked people who do not identify as Indigenous to indicate whether they are White, South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Arab, Latin American, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean, Japanese, and/or another group. People who identify with the non-White groups are considered to be “visible minority”, following terminology from the federal *Employment Equity Act*. Although these categories and terms do not fully reflect how people may identify themselves, this concept is a proxy for understanding experiences of race and the impacts of racism. Figure 2 shows that 55% of people in Vancouver are identified with racialized groups. People with Indigenous identities are not included in the “visible minority” concept but make up an additional 2.3% of the city’s population, an increasing share.

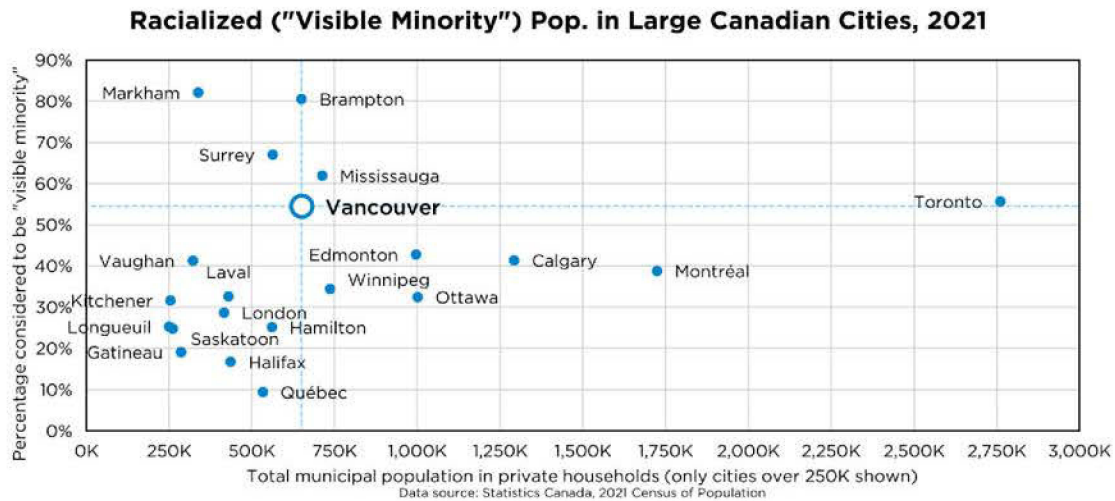


Figure 2 “Visible minority” population in large Canadian cities, 2021

Non-White people are a global majority; and, as shown in Figure 3, Vancouver has been a “majority-minority” city since at least 2006. The percentage of people in racialized groups has increased in both the city and the broader Metro Vancouver region since the last census.

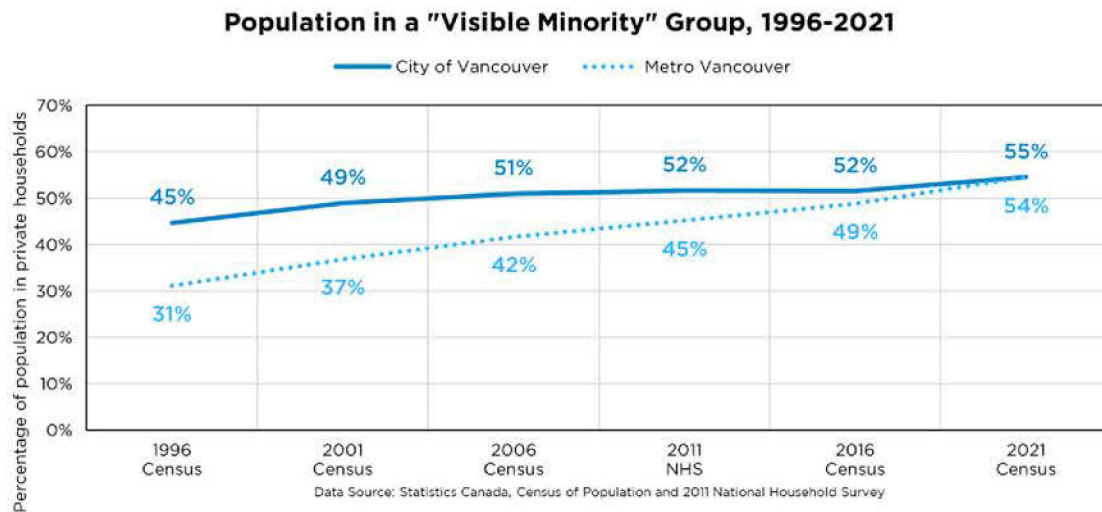


Figure 3 “Visible minority” population in Vancouver and Metro Vancouver, 1996-2021

Figure 4 provides a more detailed breakdown of the specific population groups reported in the 2021 Census, comparing the population in Vancouver to the broader region. This chart includes categories for people who report an Indigenous identity. As shown, Vancouver has a relatively larger Chinese population, and a smaller but growing South Asian population, than the rest of the region.

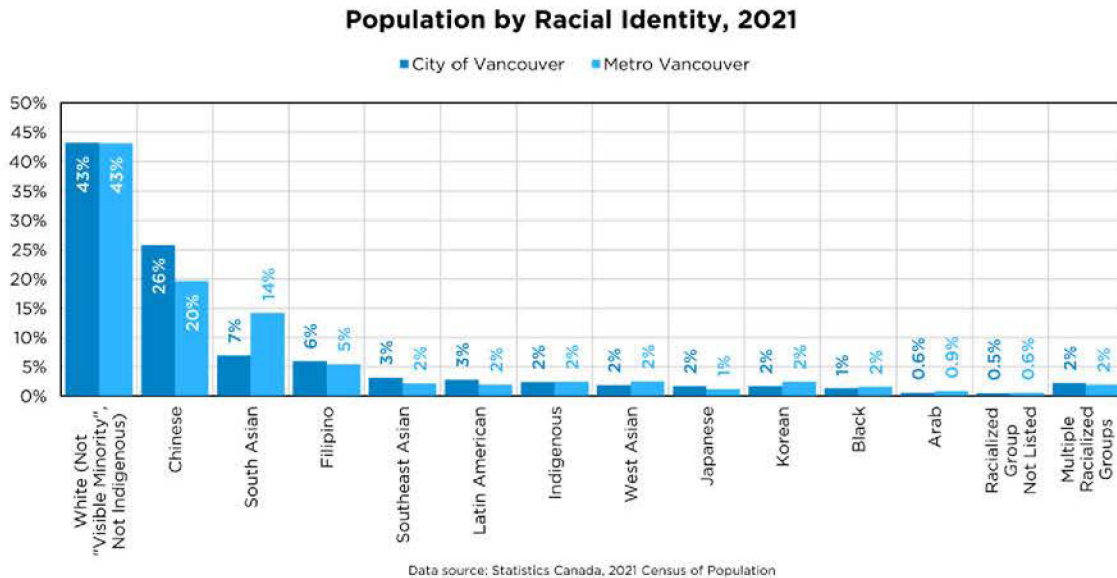


Figure 4 Population by racial identity categories in Vancouver and Metro Vancouver, 2021

Between the 2016 and 2021 Censuses, the overall population of Vancouver increased by about 5%. As shown in Figure 5, population estimates in all Indigenous and racialized groups, except for Chinese, showed a larger rate of increase. Latin American, West Asian, and Black populations, as well as people in other groups not individually reported by Statistics Canada, grew at particularly fast rates in this period.

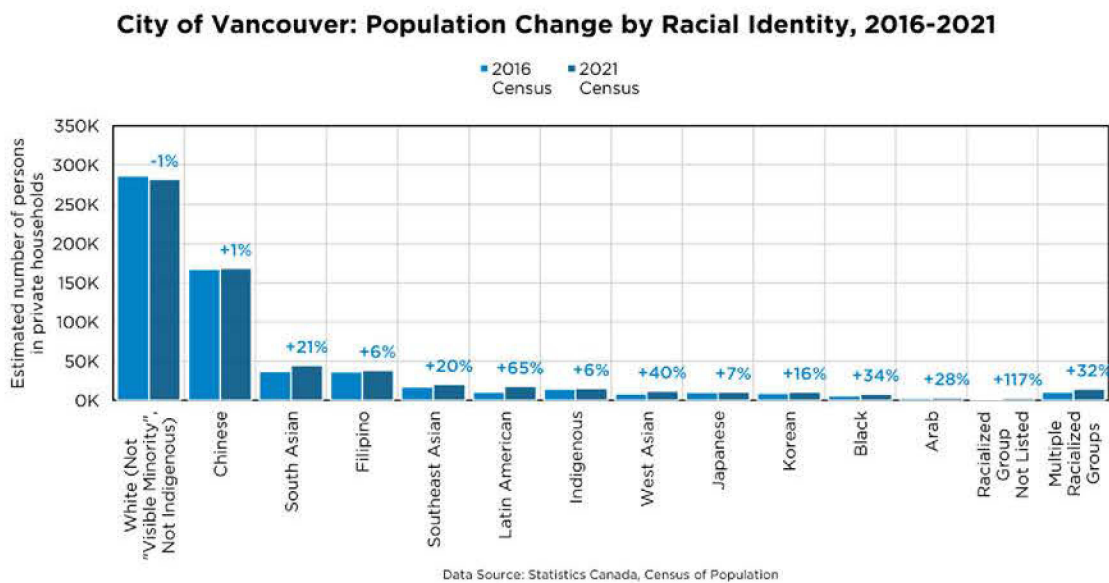


Figure 5 Rate of change in City of Vancouver population by racial identity categories, 2016-2021

Immigration, place of birth and citizenship

The 2021 Census asked people to self-report their place of birth, their parents' place of birth, and their citizenship. Data on immigration—including date of arrival in Canada, admission category and residency status—is no longer self-reported, but derived by linking census data to administrative data like landing records. This means that census data should be more valid and reliable for the overall population than in previous years, but this also means that people with undocumented or precarious immigration status are even less likely to be counted.

Generations in Canada

All non-Indigenous people in these lands have an immigration story, and for most Vancouverites this story is a recent one. As shown in Figure 6, just over half of Vancouverites were born outside of Canada, and half of those who were born in Canada have a parent that was born elsewhere. Compared to the rest of the region, Vancouver has somewhat larger share of first-generation Canadians and smaller share of third-or-more generation residents.

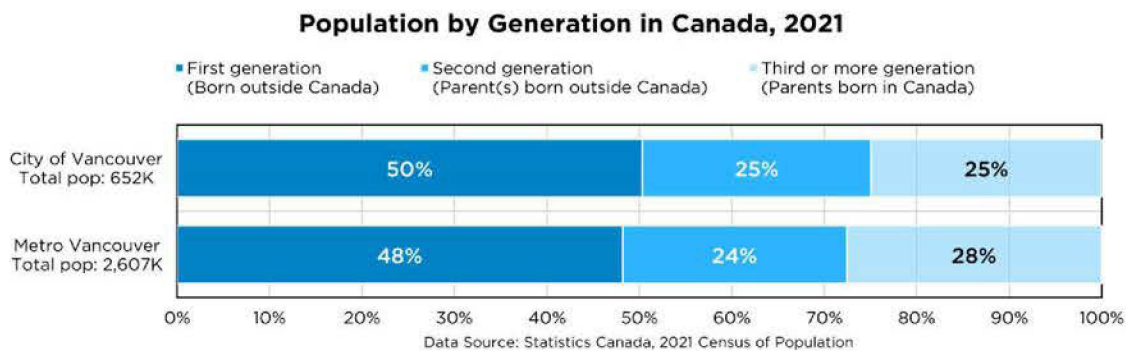


Figure 6 Population by generations in Canada in Vancouver and Metro Vancouver, 2021

Figure 7 compares first-generation populations across large Canadian cities, showing that Vancouver has a proportionately larger non-Canadian-born population than many peer cities. Cities in the Toronto and Vancouver regions, particularly some suburban municipalities, continue to have the highest share of their populations born outside of Canada.

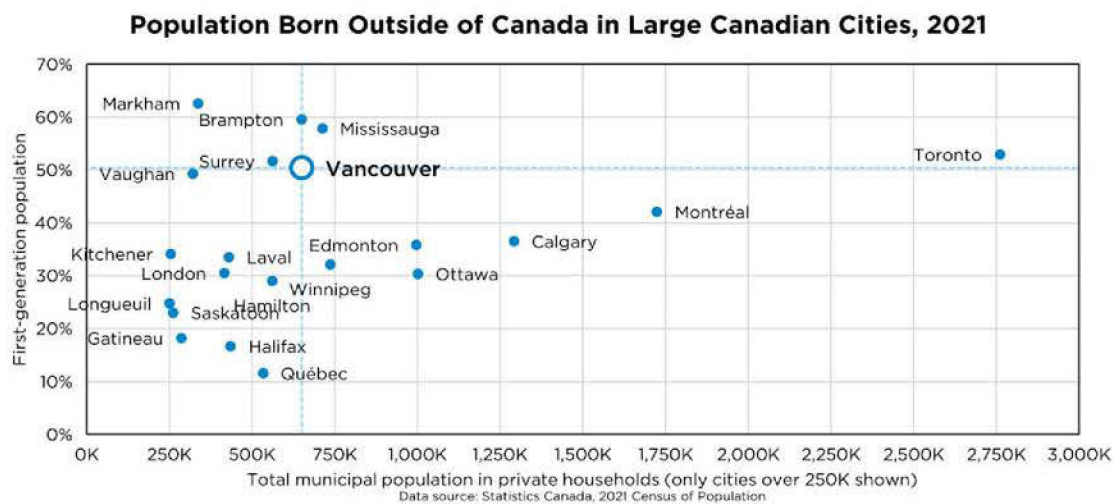


Figure 7 Population born outside of Canada in large Canadian cities, 2021

Immigration status and trends

As noted above, just over half of the population of Vancouver were born outside of Canada. Using data linked to landing records, the 2021 Census finds that 42% of Vancouverites are immigrants (Canadian citizens or permanent residents) and another 7% are non-permanent residents (people with work or study permits, or asylum seekers). Figure 8 shows a breakdown of the population in the city and the region by their immigration status.

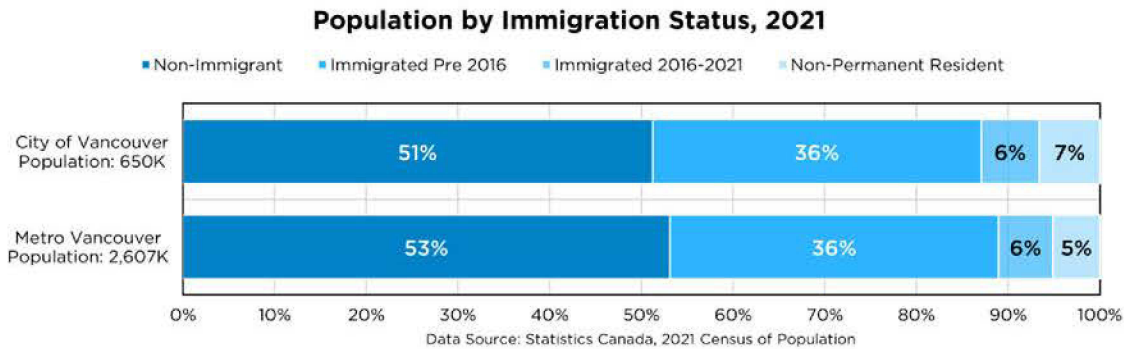


Figure 8 Population by immigration status in Vancouver and Metro Vancouver, 2021

The federal government has set targets to increase rates of immigration to Canada. In 2021, despite the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of new immigrants in Vancouver increased over the number counted in the 2016 Census. However, the number of non-permanent residents increased more substantially. As of 2021 there are about 43,000 non-permanent residents and 41,000 new permanent residents in Vancouver, for a total of 84,000 newcomers living in the city. These numbers are shown in Figure 9.

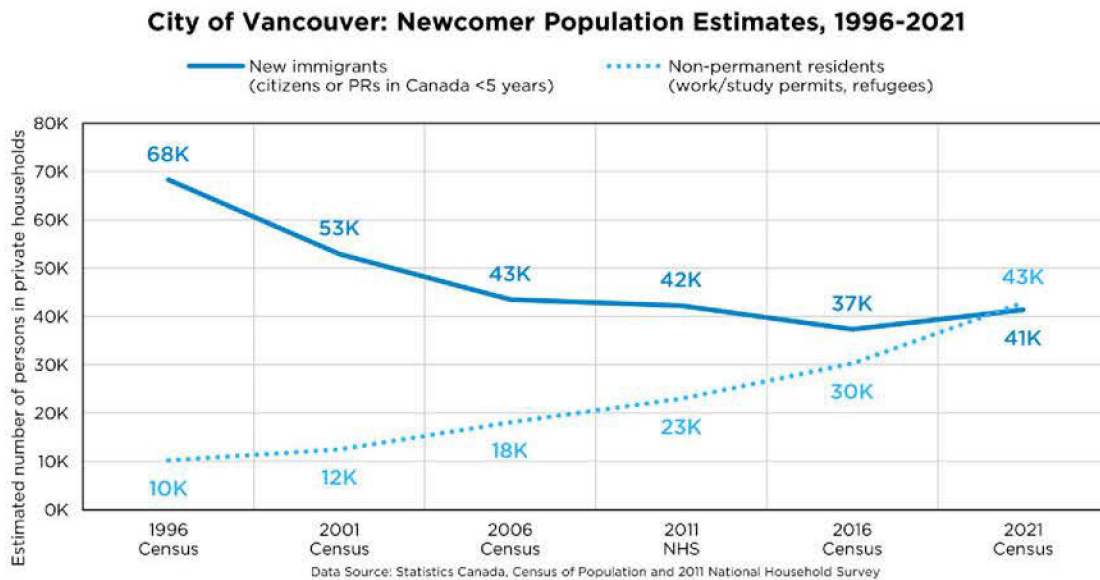


Figure 9 City of Vancouver newcomer population estimates, 1996-2021

An important trend caused by federal immigration policy is that new permanent residents are likely to have immigrated to Canada through economic programs rather than being sponsored as family-class immigrants or arriving as refugees. As shown in Figure 10, 61% of Vancouver immigrants for whom data are available arrived as economic immigrants.

Population that Immigrated After 1980 by Admission Category, 2021

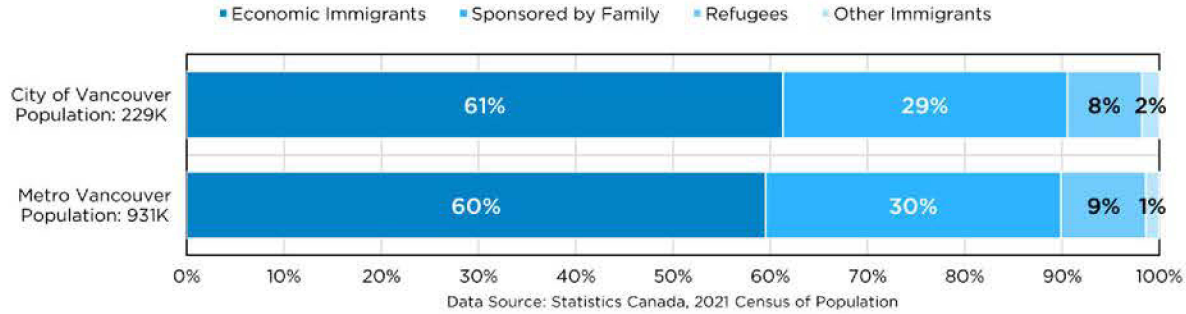


Figure 10 Immigrant population in Vancouver and Metro Vancouver by admission category, 2021

Immigrants and total population

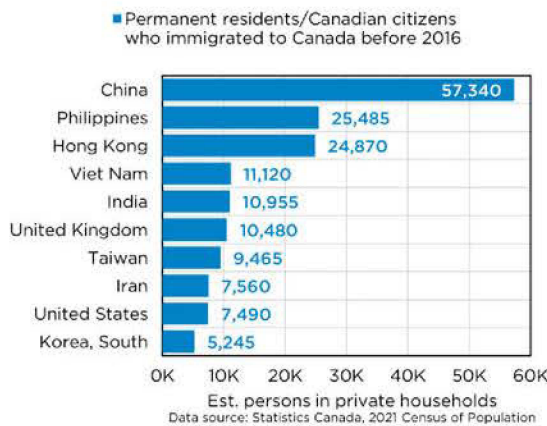
In 2021, Canada had the largest proportion of immigrants (23% of total population) since Confederation, and the highest among the G7 countries. As Vancouver population has reached to 662,248 in 2021, 42% of the population (274,360 residents) are immigrants. The trend remains stable with slight decline of 4% since 2001, while close to half of Vancouver population is comprised of immigrants.

Across the region, Vancouver accommodated the largest percentage (27%) of new immigrants, who received their immigration status in the past 5 years, comparing to the rest of the municipalities. The following municipalities with the largest number of new immigrants are Surrey, Burnaby and Richmond.

Place of birth

Figure 11 shows the top ten places of birth for both established immigrants and newcomers, including both new immigrants and non-permanent residents. While China is the most common country of birth for people in all these categories, there are shifts over time. Some non-Canadian born communities in Vancouver are increasingly made up of non-permanent residents. People in this category are making essential contributions to the city, but also face barriers to accessing settlement and integration services and supports.

City of Vancouver: Top Places of Birth for Established Imm., 2021



City of Vancouver: Top Places of Birth for Newcomers, 2021

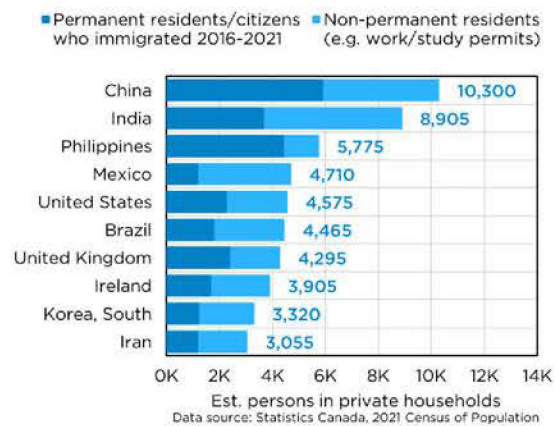


Figure 11 Top ten places of birth for established immigrants and newcomers in Vancouver, 2021

Religion

Statistics Canada includes a question on religion in every other census, so data is collected every ten years on this topic. The 2021 Census provided an open-ended question for people to report a religious affiliation, with some examples provided in the questionnaire and a more detailed list of examples available online.² Data is reported for six major religions, as well as Indigenous spirituality, other religions and spiritual traditions, and secular perspectives. As shown in Figure 12, Vancouver is a clear outlier with the population least likely to report a religion of any large city in Canada.

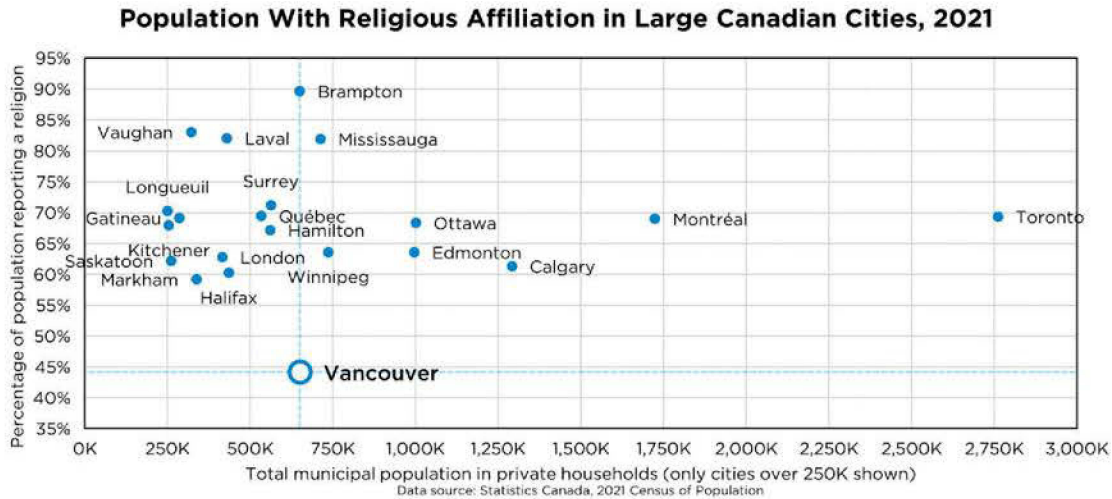


Figure 12 Population with religious affiliation in large Canadian cities, 2021

As shown in Figure 13, there has been a clear downward trend in the share of Vancouverites reporting a religion through many census periods.

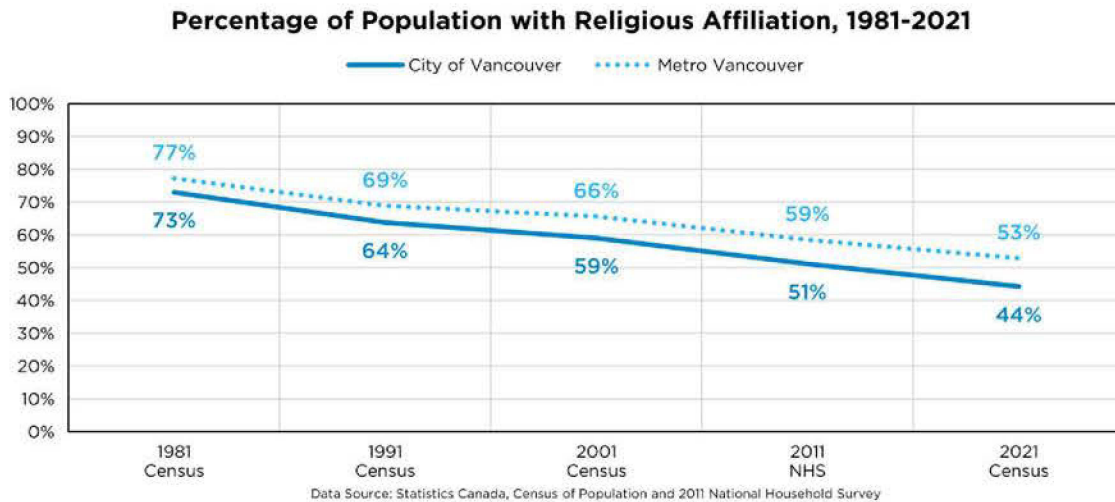


Figure 13 Percentage of population with religious affiliation in Vancouver and Metro Vancouver, 1981-2021

² See <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/ref/questionnaire/religion-eng.cfm> for this list.

Finally, Figure 14 shows the individual categories of religious affiliation reported by Statistics Canada.

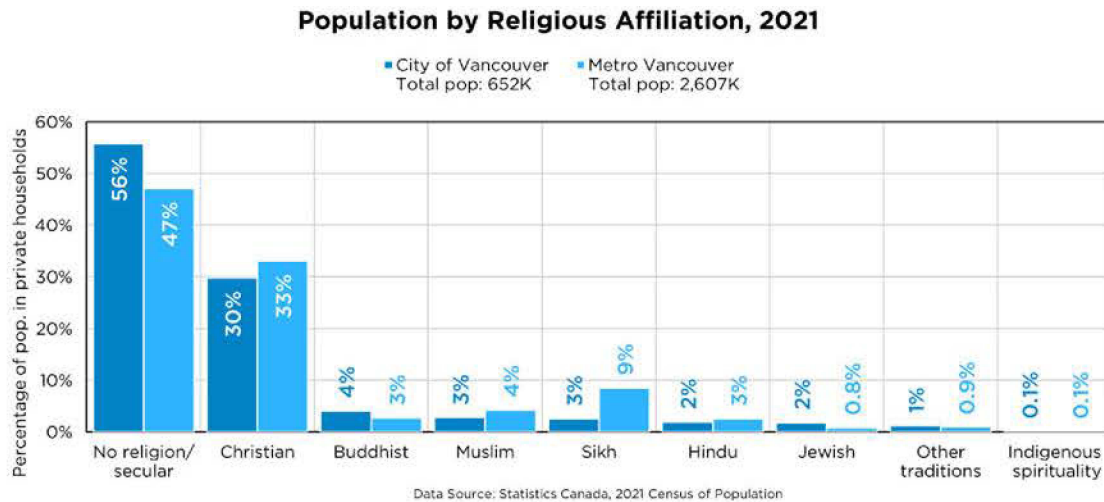


Figure 14 Population by religious affiliation categories, 2021

Mobility and migration **Error! Reference source not found.** Figure 15 below displays the top ten municipalities with largest population in Metro Vancouver, and the percentage of migrants³ within the past 5 years in each municipality among total population. Migrants or newcomers to the city constitute a larger portion of total population in New Westminister (36%) and Township of Langley (30%). In comparison, Vancouver, Surrey and Richmond shows a slightly lower representation in migrants of below 25%.

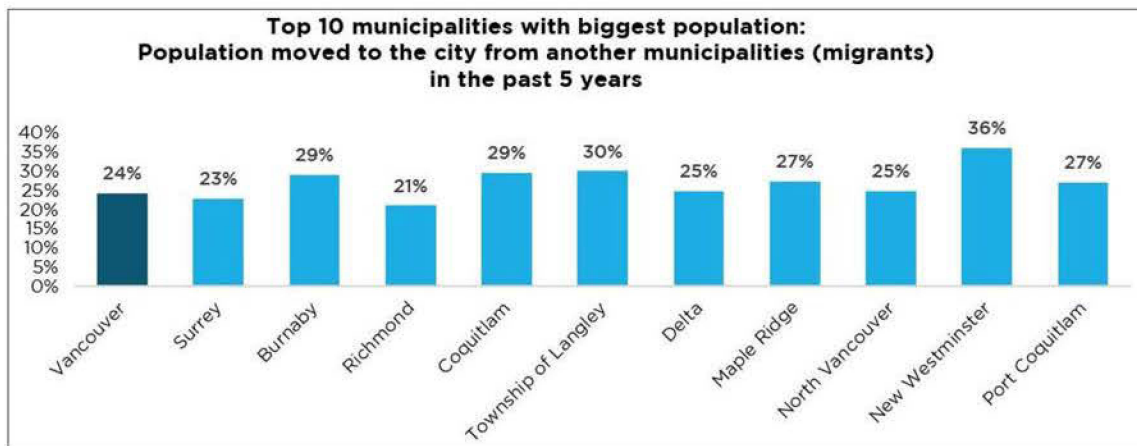


Figure 15 Percentage of migrants from another municipality, for municipalities with largest population in Metro Vancouver

Data source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population

Eighteen percent (18%) of the population living in Vancouver in 2021 have moved to the current address since 2020, and 45% of the population have moved in the past 5 years. This includes population moved from all destinations, within the city or from the rest of the world. Twenty-four percent (24%) of Vancouverites or 152,090 people are new to Vancouver.

³ Migrants are defined as population moved to the city from another destination within Canada or from the rest of the world.

Figure 16 below shows the mobility and migration status in the past one and five years of Vancouver residents in 2021.

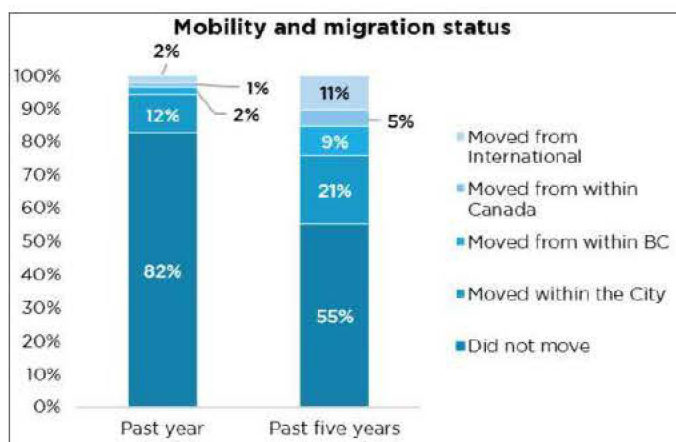


Figure 16 Mobility and migration status in city of Vancouver
Data source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population

We have seen an uneven distribution of population movement in the city. Figure 17 below shows the rate of people living in each census tract in 2021 who had moved in the previous five years. Across the city, higher rate of movers were seen in areas where higher density apartments are permitted, such as Downtown, Fairview, Mount Pleasant, South Cambie, and Marpole. This can be partially explained by the larger growth and availability of housing units in these areas, corresponding to the planning policies. In comparison, low-density home areas such as single family house zone shows less percentage of movers. Staff will conduct further research when data is available to understand the profile of movers.

Percentage of population moved in the past 5 years by census tract

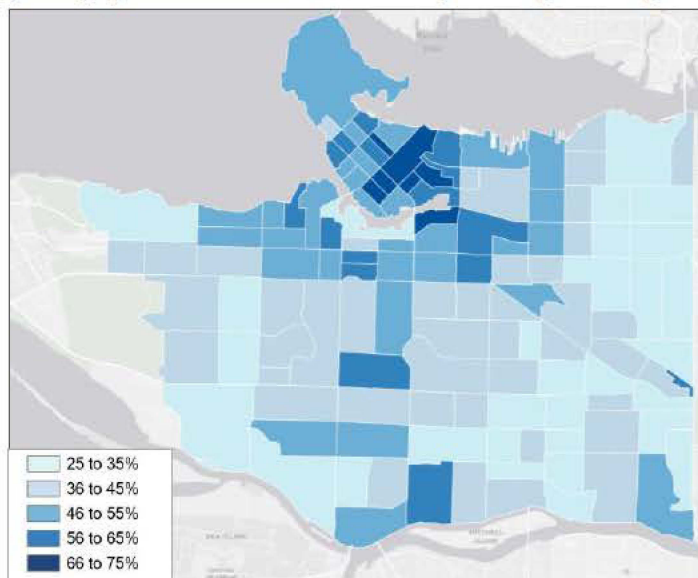


Figure 17 Percentage of population moved in the past 5 years by census tract
Data source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population

NEXT STEPS

Appendix A summarizes the initial 2021 Census releases; the next release on November 30 will include data on education, employment, transportation, and languages of work and school. Staff will prepare a memo to Council following this last release.

Beyond the initial releases, staff are making plans to acquire further datasets, including neighbourhood-specific profiles, disaggregated population data, custom tabulations, and data accessed through partnerships. This datasets will inform further policy and program work that will be brought to council beginning in 2023.

FINAL REMARKS

Census data is a foundational input into all of the city's plans, policies, and projects. Staff will continue to analyze the data from this and future releases and incorporate it into work across City departments.

If Council has any questions or requires further information, please contact Sandra Singh or Theresa O'Donnell and they will ensure responses through the weekly Council Q&As.



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2021 Census of Population initial data release dates

Release Date	Topic	Theme
February 9, 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population and dwelling counts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canada's growing population and where they are living
April 27, 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Sex at birth and gender • Type of dwelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canada's shifting demographic profile
July 13, 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families, households, and marital status • Canadian military experience • Income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portrait of Canada's families and households • Contemporary portrait of Canadian Veterans • Income profile of Canadians
August 17, 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linguistic diversity and use of English and French in Canada
September 21, 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous Peoples • Housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations Peoples, Métis and Inuit in Canada • Canada's housing portrait
October 26, 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immigration, place of birth, and citizenship • Ethnocultural and religious diversity • Mobility and migration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portrait of citizenship and immigration in Canada • Ethnocultural and religious composition of the population • Mobility and migration
November 30, 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Labour • Language of work • Commuting • Instruction in the official minority language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education in Canada • The changing dynamics of the Canadian labour force and how people get to work • Instruction in the official minority language

Additional information on census data is available on Statistics Canada's Census of Population website at <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/index-eng.cfm>.