

Our Growing Community

Chapter 1

York Region is located in the heart of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) in Southern Ontario (Map 1.1). The Region covers 1,762 square kilometres, stretching from Steeles Avenue in the south to Lake Simcoe and the Holland Marsh in the north. The Region is made up of nine area municipalities: Aurora, East Gwillimbury, Georgina, King, Markham, Newmarket, Richmond Hill, Vaughan and Whitchurch-Stouffville (Map 1.2).² More detailed maps of each municipality are in the Appendix to this report.

Population Characteristics

The population of York Region grew by 27% between 1996 and 2001, making it the fastest growing region in Ontario. The growth during that period represents an increase of 168,936 residents. As of July 2002, the total population of York Region had climbed to 817,300.³

More than two-thirds (69%) of York Region residents live in the three southern municipalities: Markham, Richmond Hill and Vaughan (Figure 1.1). However, the most densely populated municipalities are Newmarket with 1,728 people for every square kilometre (1,728 pop/km²), followed by Richmond Hill (1,308.7 pop/km²), Markham (981.8 pop/km²) and Aurora (809.7 pop/km²).⁴ The population density of an area is affected by the zoning. For example, where residential stock is mixed with small industrial stock, density would be lower than in areas that are predominantly residential. As well, residential areas with high rise apartments would be denser than those with single family houses.

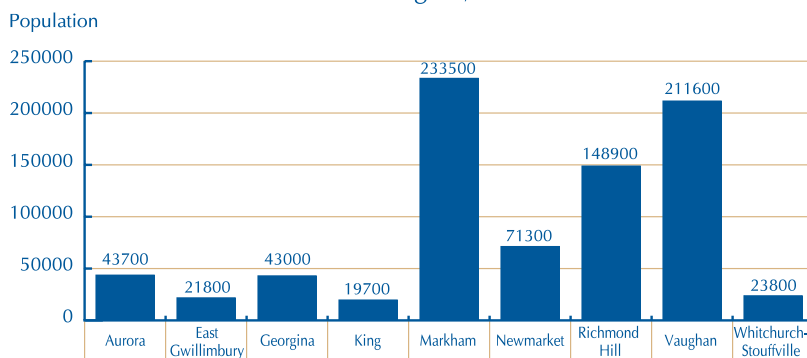
At a Glance

York Region's population growth between 1996 and 2001 was the highest in Ontario.

The number of York Region residents aged 65 and over is expected to more than triple between 2001 and 2026.

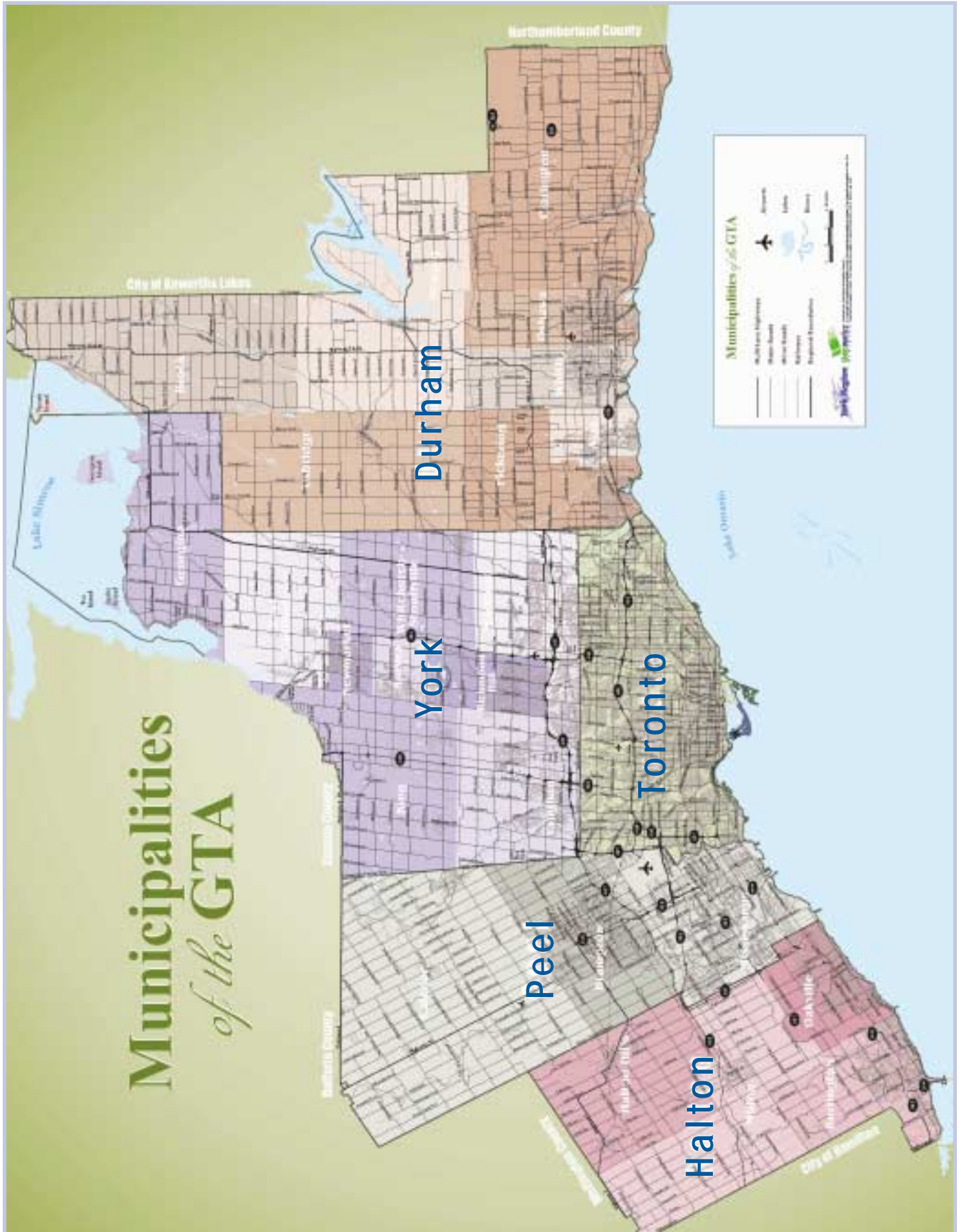
York Region has a relatively large number of immigrants. One in 2.5 residents are immigrants to Canada.

Figure 1.1 Area Municipality Population Estimates
York Region, 2002



Source: York Region Planning and Development Services Department based on Statistics Canada data and CMHC Housing Completion data, July 2002.

Map 1.1 Municipalities of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA)

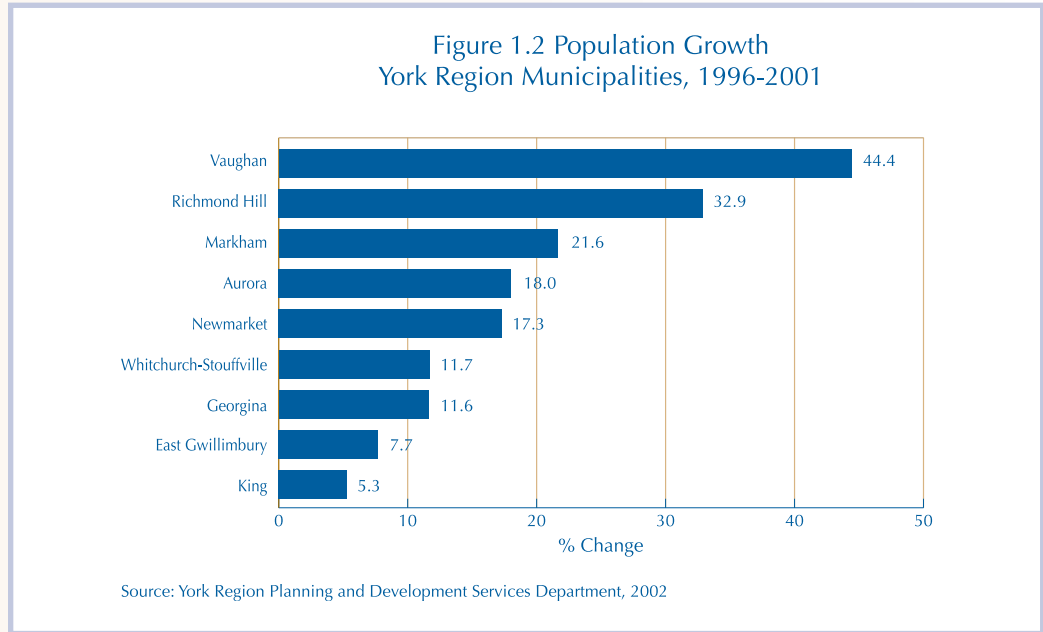


Map 1.2 Area Municipalities of York Region

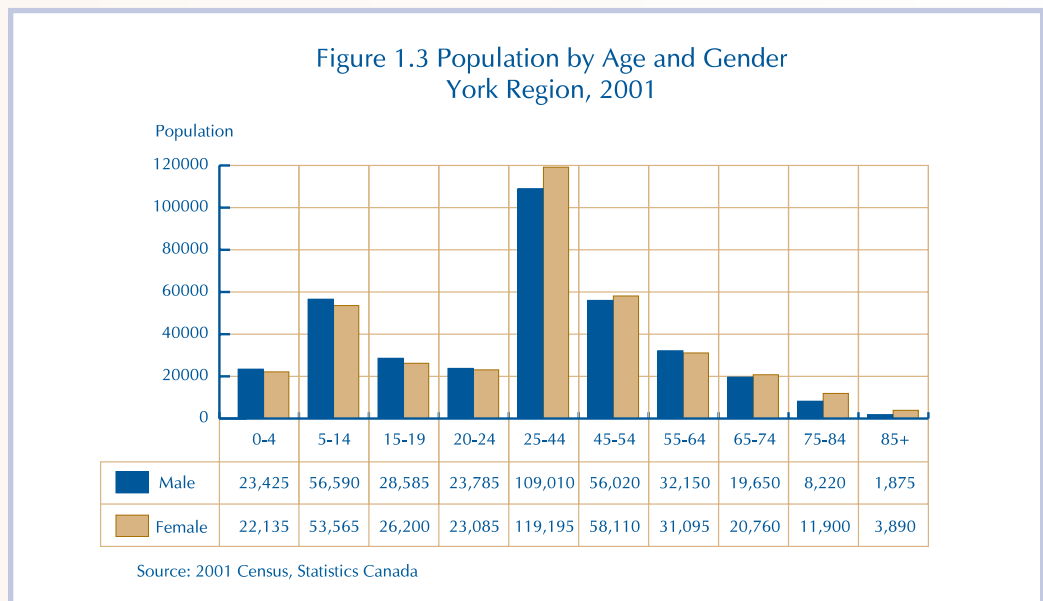




As shown in Figure 1.2, the fastest population growth in York Region between 1996 and 2001 occurred in Vaughan (44%) and Richmond Hill (33%).



In York Region, males outnumber females in age groups under 24 but there are more females than males in age groups 25 and over. The York Region population by age and gender for 2001 is presented in Figure 1.3.





The average age of York Region's residents has increased, from 31.3 years in 1986 to 35.5 in 2001. This aging of the population has increased mainly as a result of the decline in the average number of births among women. As well, longer life expectancy is now contributing to the aging trend. York Region has the highest life expectancy in the province, at 81.8 years.

By the year 2026, York Region's population is expected to reach 1.28 million, an increase of 510,000 people over the next 25 years. Most of this projected growth will be the result of migration, which historically has accounted for approximately 80% of York Region's population growth.⁵ The number of York Region residents 65 years of age and over in 2001 (68,000) is expected to more than triple by 2026, to 263,000. During this same period, the proportion of youth, ages 0 to 19 is expected to decrease from 27% to 21% of the total population.⁶ As the York Region population ages, health requirements will change and there will be a greater need for services.

Immigration

Immigrants to Canada are accounting for a larger proportion of the total population of York Region, with percentages increasing from 35.8% in 1996 to 39.1% in 2001. These percentages are greater than those for Ontario as a whole (25.6% and 26.8% respectively). Table 1.1 shows the distribution of immigrants across York Region's nine municipalities.

Table 1.1 Immigrant Population by Area Municipality
York Region, 1996 and 2001

Municipality	Immigrant Population as a Percent of the Total Population		
	1996	2001	Percent Change
Aurora	17.2	18.1	5.2%
East Gwillimbury	13.7	13.8	0.7%
Georgina	12.0	11.4	-5%
King	22.3	21.4	-4%
Markham	48.1	52.9	10%
Newmarket	18.0	18.8	4.4%
Richmond Hill	41.9	48.3	15.3%
Vaughan	41.8	41.9	0.2%
Whitchurch-Stouffville	17.1	16.8	-1.8%
York Region	35.8	39.1	9.2%
Ontario	25.6	26.8	4.7%

Source: 1996 Census of Canada, 2001 Census of Canada, Statistics Canada.





The proportion of York Region residents reporting themselves as immigrants to Canada was greatest in Markham, Richmond Hill and Vaughan. Markham and Richmond Hill had the largest growth in immigrant population from 1996 to 2001. Municipalities in the north end of the Region contain the lowest proportion of persons reporting to be immigrants.

Recent immigration arrival statistics from January to October 2002 indicate that York Region was the destination for approximately 5,300 permanent residents.⁷ Recent immigrants arrived from 127 different countries, with the most common countries of last permanent residence being China (15%), India (13%), Iran (7%) and Pakistan (6%).

Ethnicity and Language

The high rates of immigration to York Region contribute to a diverse mix of languages and ethnic origins. Individuals within particular ethnic or cultural groups often share common norms, beliefs, values, lifestyle behaviours, customs and roles, which may be different from the population as a whole. The main five ethnic origins that York Region residents reported they belonged to in 2001 were Italian (13.8%), Chinese (12.9%), Canadian (8.1%), English (4.4%) and East Indian (4.1%). These main ethnic origins and the distribution of the different ethnic groups by area municipality in York Region are displayed in Table 1.2. Georgina shows the highest percentage of residents reporting to be Canadian (20.9%). The highest proportion of persons who reported to be of Chinese origin were from Markham (28%) and Richmond Hill (20.5%). The highest proportion of persons who reported to be of Italian origin live in Vaughan (38.7%). In order to meet the needs of our ethnically diverse population, York Region Health Services Department strives to develop and provide culturally appropriate health programs and services throughout the Region.



Table 1.2 Proportion* of Selected Ethnic Origins by Area Municipality
York Region and Ontario, 2001

Municipality	Italian	Chinese	Canadian	English	East Indian	Scottish	Irish	German	French
Aurora	4.8	0.9	13.3	8.1	0.9	3.0	2.9	1.9	0.9
East Gwillimbury	2.5	0.6	17.0	10.6	0.2	3.7	2.8	2.0	0.5
Georgina	1.8	0.2	20.9	11.0	0.09	3.5	3.3	1.9	0.9
King	16.3	0.3	11.3	7.0	0.3	2.2	2.8	3.2	0.5
Markham	3.8	28.0	5.4	3.4	7.5	1.3	1.0	1.0	0.3
Newmarket	4.6	1.9	15.5	7.8	1.1	3.3	2.4	2.0	0.6
Richmond Hill	9.4	20.5	6.1	3.5	4.3	1.2	1.0	1.1	0.3
Vaughan	38.7	3.5	3.8	1.3	4.0	0.4	0.3	0.5	0.2
Whitchurch-Stouffville	3.5	1.0	17.3	9.0	0.4	2.9	2.5	3.3	0.8
York Region	13.8	12.9	8.1	4.4	4.1	1.6	1.3	1.2	0.4
Ontario	4.3	3.9	14.2	6.2	2.9	2.5	2.1	2.0	1.7

Source: 2001 Census of Canada, Statistics Canada. *Single Responses, % of total population.

Statistics Canada has estimated that in 2001, approximately 83% of York Region's population spoke English most often at home, up from 80% in 1996. The percent of the population reporting Chinese (8.1%) and Italian (2.1%) as their home language in 2001 decreased from the 1996 figures of 9.5% and 3.4% respectively. However, there are wide geographic variations in languages spoken most often at home. For example, 19.6% of Markham's population and 13.5% of Richmond Hill's population report Chinese as their home language while 7.1% of Vaughan's population speak Italian most often at home. In addition, nearly 24,000 York Region residents indicated they could not speak either official language (English or French), according to the 2001 Census.

York Region is the fastest growing region in Ontario and is a desirable destination for immigrants to Canada. Issues around ethnicity and language have implications for all of York Region's public health programs, since the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care directs that social, educational, and environmental barriers to accessing mandatory programs be reduced. The Region is working hard to offer services in a variety of languages and to make translation available. The characteristics of the Region's population also have implications for social factors that affect health (for example, income and education level) and the rates of chronic diseases (Chapter 8), infectious diseases (Chapter 10) and reproductive health (Chapter 6). York Region fares better than the provincial average on most indicators of health, and its life expectancy is the highest in the province.

Working for you

To meet the needs of York Region residents who do not speak English or French, the Health Services Department uses the services of a language interpretation agency.

In 2001, 424 telephone calls to the Health Services Department required interpretation into an average of 12 different languages.

The top 5 requested languages included Cantonese (50.5%), Mandarin (17.9%), Tamil (6.3%), Farsi (5.0%), and Korean (3.8%).

