

Where Hamilton Works: Local and Regional Commuting Trends

Understanding commuter flows within and between cities is important for urban planning and infrastructure investment. With the growing regionalization of the Greater Golden Horseshoe, this *UrbanInsights* bulletin looks at the flow of commuters in and out of Hamilton, Ontario to get a sense of the changing picture of employment flows. A commuter is defined as someone whose place of work is outside of their place of residence. All statistics are from the Statistics Canada 2016 Census unless otherwise stated.

Commuting From Hamilton

There are 212,230 commuters in the Hamilton Census Subdivision (CSD) which encompasses the city of Hamilton. Of that total, nearly 70 percent work in the city of Hamilton (Table 1). For the approximately 30 percent that commute out of Hamilton each day, Burlington is the most popular destination representing approximately 11.6 percent of commuters overall. Oakville, Mississauga, and Toronto are the next major destinations collectively representing just under 12 percent of commuters. Table 1 displays the top 20 commuting destinations from Hamilton.

Table 1: Top 20 Commuting Destinations From Hamilton, 2016 Census, Statistics Canada

DESTINATION (from Hamilton CSD)	Total	Percentage of Total
Hamilton	142,615	67.20%
Burlington	24,505	11.55%
Oakville	8,790	4.14%
Mississauga	8,260	3.89%
Toronto	8,120	3.83%
Brantford	2,530	1.19%
Milton	2,200	1.04%
Cambridge	1,955	0.92%
Guelph	1,505	0.71%
Brampton	1,470	0.69%
St. Catharines	1,345	0.63%
Haldimand County	1,290	0.61%
Grimsby	1,275	0.60%
Kitchener	655	0.31%
Vaughan	625	0.29%
Lincoln	565	0.27%
Brant	505	0.24%
Waterloo	435	0.20%
West Lincoln	330	0.16%
Niagara Falls	255	0.12%
Total (All cities)	212,230	100%
Total (Excluding Hamilton)	69,615	32.80%

Source: Statistics Canada

Commuting To Hamilton

Over 40,000 people commute into Hamilton each day. Of that total, over 35 percent (about 14,500) come from communities east along the lakeshore, including Toronto, Mississauga, Oakville, and Burlington. Burlington is the largest single source of commuters into Hamilton representing approximately 20% of in-commuters. Table 2 shows the top 20 commuter origin locations to Hamilton.

Table 2: Top 20 Commuting Origins To Hamilton, 2016 Census, Statistics Canada

ORIGIN (to Hamilton CSD)	Total	Percentage of Total
Hamilton	142,615	76.39%
Burlington	8,655	4.64%
Haldimand County	5,475	2.93%
Brantford	3,695	1.98%
Grimsby	3,405	1.82%
St. Catharines	2,400	1.29%
Oakville	2,200	1.18%
Mississauga	2,035	1.09%
West Lincoln	1,805	0.97%
Toronto	1,675	0.90%
Lincoln	1,605	0.86%
Brant	1,485	0.80%
Cambridge	1,185	0.63%
Norfolk County	840	0.45%
Milton	760	0.41%
Guelph	700	0.37%
Niagara Falls	685	0.37%
Welland	665	0.36%
Brampton	590	0.32%
Kitchener	550	0.29%
Total (All Cities)	186,690	100%
Total (Excluding Hamilton)	44,075	23.61%

Source: Statistics Canada

Regional Geographical Perspective

From a regional geographic perspective, the number of commuters from Hamilton that travel within the Hamilton CMA, which includes Burlington and Grimsby (39.7%) is smaller than those that travel to the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) – 43.23 percent. A much smaller percentage (18.03%) travel to the Western Greater Golden Horseshoe (WGGH, see Table 3). Conversely, commuters to Hamilton (see Table 4) come primarily from within the WGGH (52.21%), with the next largest source being from within the CMA (27.36%). A smaller number of commuters come from within the GTA – 18.49 percent. The general geographic boundaries of the regions are illustrated in Figure 1. A full list of what local municipalities and townships that fall under each category is provided in the appendix.

Table 3: Commuters from Hamilton by Geographic Region

DESTINATION (from Hamilton CSD)	Commuters	Percentage of Total
Hamilton CMA (Excluding Hamilton)	25,780	37.03%
GTA	30,095	43.23%
WGGH	12,555	18.03%
Other	1,185	1.70%
Total (Excluding Hamilton)	69,615	100%

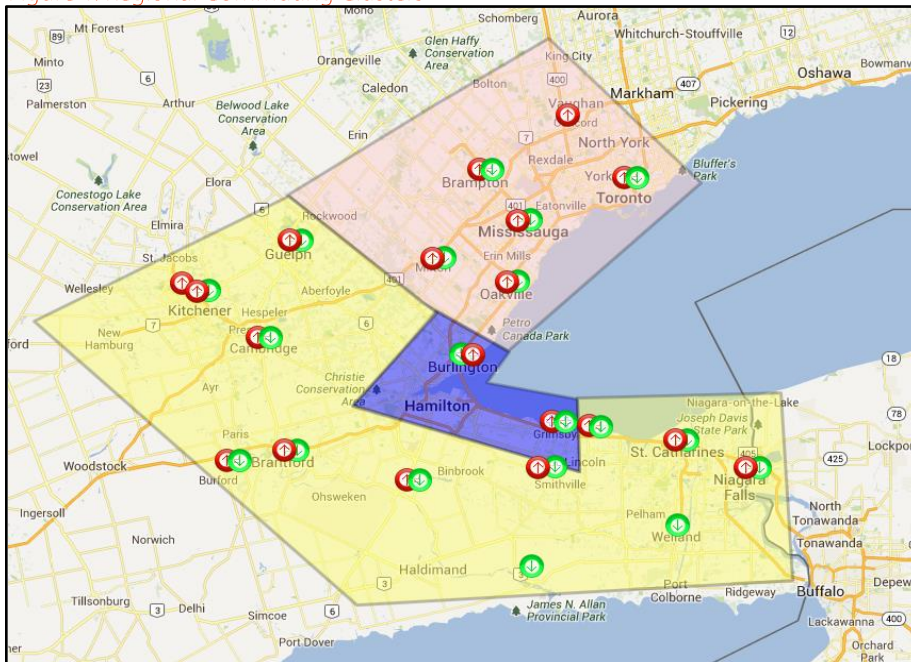
Source: Statistics Canada

Table 4: Commuters to Hamilton by Geographic Region

ORIGIN (to Hamilton CSD)	Commuters	Percentage of Total
Hamilton CMA (Excluding Hamilton)	12,060	27.36%
GTA	8,150	18.49%
WGGH	23,010	52.21%
Other	855	1.94%
Total (Excluding Hamilton)	44,075	100%

Source: Statistics Canada

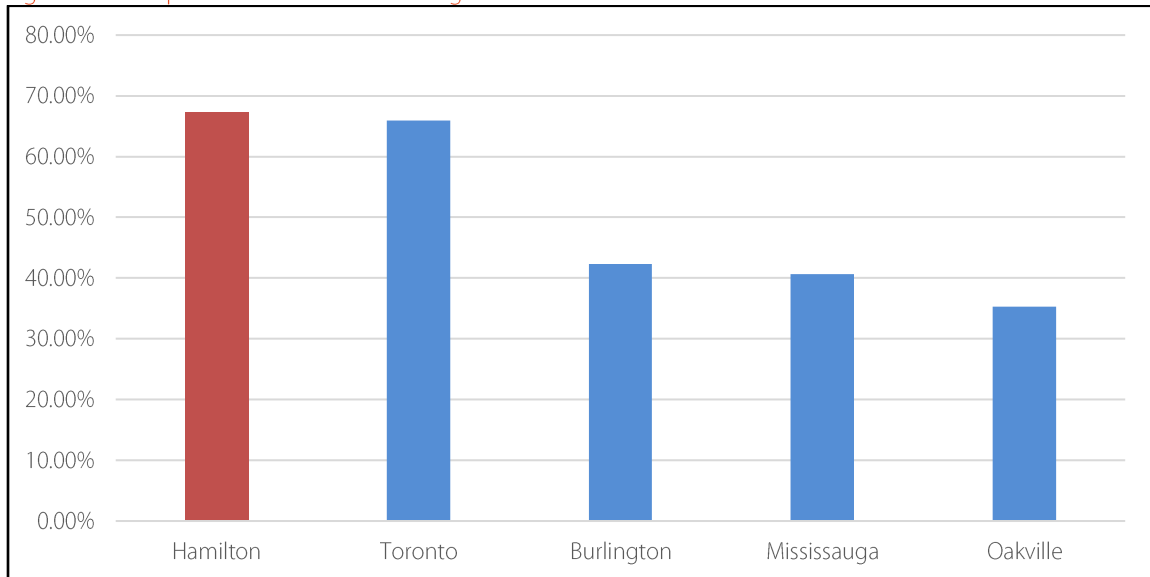
Figure 1: Regional Commuting Clusters



Comparison with Intra-Commuting in the GTA

Intra-commuting refers to commuting flows that occur within the same city. Figure 2 and Table 5 illustrate the regional comparison of intra-commuting in the GTHA. In this context, Hamilton still retains a high percentage of people who live and work within the city. Some of the areas traditionally deemed "bedroom communities" such as Burlington, Mississauga, or Oakville maintain approximately 42 percent or less of their workforce within their city boundaries, while Hamilton has maintained close to a 70 percent intra-commuting rate, albeit with a slight drop of about 3 percent from 2006. Of note, the latest data for both Toronto and Mississauga shows a large decrease in intra-commuting (Table 5).

Figure 2: Comparison of Intra-Commuting Rates in Hamilton vs. the Greater Toronto Area



Source: Statistics Canada

Table 5: Intra-commuting Rates in Hamilton and Select GTA Communities, 2006 vs. 2011 vs. 2016

Municipality	2006 Percentage	2011 Percentage	2016 Percentage
Hamilton	70.37%	69.43%	67.20%
Burlington	44.16%	44.06%	42.35%
Oakville	36.67%	35.82%	35.26%
Mississauga	54.59%	55.11%	40.66%
Toronto	80.58%	81.13%	65.94%

Source: Statistics Canada

Conclusions

Hamilton maintains a strong intra-commuting level with the vast majority of commuters (67.20%) living and working in the city. This is in contrast to bedroom communities in the GTA as where intra-commuting rates do not exceed 43 percent. In terms of commuting flows, more people commute out of Hamilton than commute in each day, although the proportion has fluctuated over the time period observed. In general, people commuting from Hamilton tend to travel within the CMA (Hamilton, Burlington, Grimsby) or east to the GTA, whereas people commuting to Hamilton come from a wider area including significant flows from communities to the west.

Appendix - Regional Definitions

CMA = Hamilton CMA, GTA = Greater Toronto Area, WGGH = Western Greater Golden Horseshoe

Burlington	CMA		St. Thomas	Other
Grimsby	CMA		Stratford	Other
Ajax	GTA		Thames Centre	Other
Aurora	GTA		Tillsonburg	Other
Barrie	GTA		Vancouver	Other
Brampton	GTA		Whitchurch-Stouffville	Other
Clarington	GTA		Windsor	Other
Halton Hills	GTA		Winnipeg	Other
Markham	GTA		Wood Buffalo	Other
Milton	GTA		Woodstock	Other
Mississauga	GTA		Blandford-Blenheim	WGGH
Newmarket	GTA		Brant	WGGH
Oakville	GTA		Brantford	WGGH
Oshawa	GTA		Caledon	WGGH
Richmond Hill	GTA		Cambridge	WGGH
Toronto	GTA		Centre Wellington	WGGH
Vaughan	GTA		Fort Erie	WGGH
Calgary	Other		Guelph	WGGH
Chatham-Kent	Other		Guelph/Eramosa	WGGH
Halifax	Other		Haldimand County	WGGH
Ingersoll	Other		Kitchener	WGGH
Innisfil	Other		Lincoln	WGGH
Kawartha Lakes	Other		New Credit	WGGH
Kincardine	Other		Niagara Falls	WGGH
Kingston	Other		Niagara-on-the-Lake	WGGH
Lambton Shores	Other		Norfolk County	WGGH
London	Other		Pelham	WGGH
Montréal	Other		Port Colborne	WGGH
North Bay	Other		Puslinch	WGGH
North Dumfries	Other		St. Catharines	WGGH
Norwich	Other		Thorold	WGGH
Orangeville	Other		Wainfleet	WGGH
Ottawa	Other		Waterloo	WGGH
Peterborough	Other		Welland	WGGH
Pickering	Other		West Lincoln	WGGH
Sarnia	Other		Wilmot	WGGH
South-West Oxford	Other		Woolwich	WGGH
Springwater	Other			