

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% |

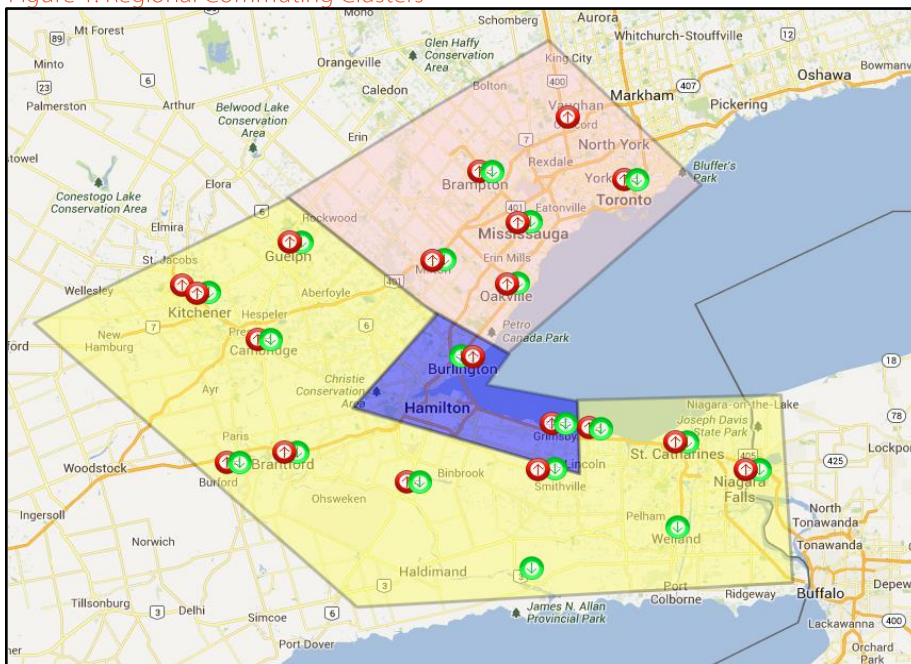
Source: Statistics Canada

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

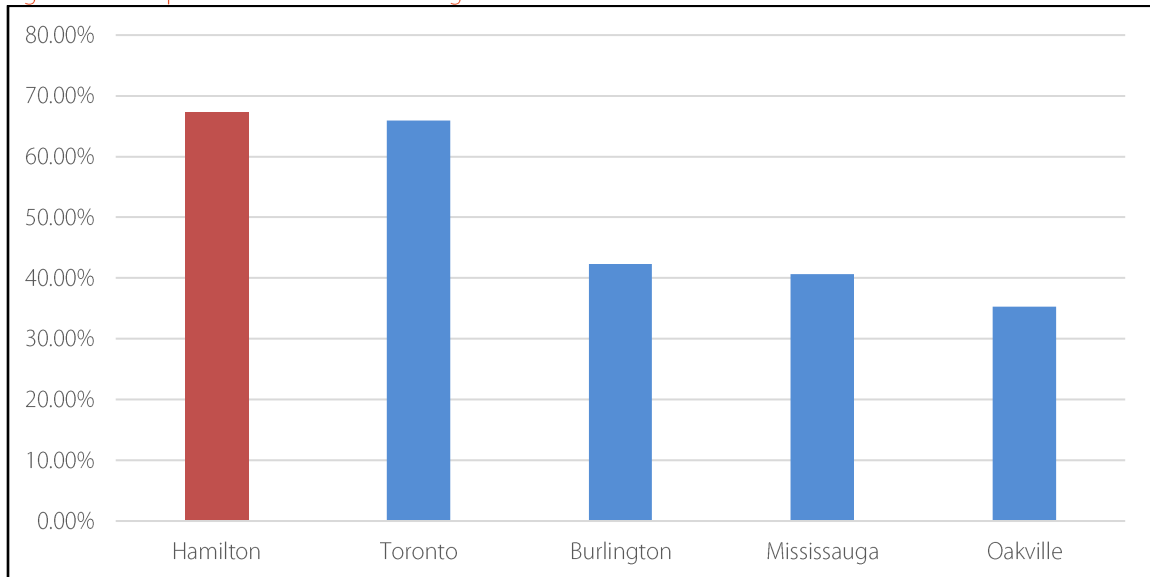
Figure 1: Regional Commuting Clusters



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 | | | |