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# Portrait of the Canadian Population in 2006, 2006 Census

## Population and Dwelling Counts, 2006 Census

Census year 2006



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Statistics Canada

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### Note of appreciation

Canada owes the success of its statistical system to a long-standing partnership between Statistics Canada, the citizens of Canada, its businesses, governments and other institutions. Accurate and timely statistical information could not be produced without their continued cooperation and goodwill.

## 2006 Census

# Portrait of the Canadian Population in 2006

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## Highlights of the 2006 Census of Population

- The Canadian population grew more rapidly between 2001 and 2006 (+5.4%) than in the previous intercensal period (+4.0%). This acceleration was due to an increase in international migration.
- According to the May 16, 2006, Census of Population, there were 31,612,897 people in Canada.
- Canada had a higher rate of population growth (+5.4%) than any other G8 country between 2001 and 2006. The population growth of the United States was second with +5.0%.
- Two-thirds of Canada's population growth was attributable to net international migration, while the U.S. population growth resulted mostly from natural increase, as fertility was higher in the United States than in Canada.
- Alberta and Ontario were responsible for two-thirds of Canada's population increase. Nearly all of the remaining third occurred in British Columbia and Quebec.
- Alberta is the Canadian province with the highest growth rate since 2001. Alberta's growth rate (+10.6%) was twice the national average (+5.4%).
- Overall, the population of the Atlantic provinces was essentially unchanged since 2001. However, the population of Newfoundland and Labrador shrank by 1.5%.
- Quebec's growth rate was three times as high as in the previous intercensal period, jumping from 1.4% between 1996 and 2001 to 4.3% between 2001 and 2006.
- Ontario's population increase has been steady for the last 15 years at just over 6.0% per intercensal period, which is above the national average.
- The growth of British Columbia's population between 2001 and 2006 (+5.3%) was slightly higher than during the previous intercensal period (+4.9%).
- For the first time, the territories have a population of more than 100,000.
- In 2006, nearly 25 million people, or more than four-fifths of Canadians, were living in urban areas.
- Between 2001 and 2006, the vast majority of Canada's population growth took place in census metropolitan areas.
- In the 2006 Census, Canada had six metropolitan areas with more than 1 million people: Toronto, Montréal, Vancouver, Ottawa - Gatineau and, for the first time, Calgary and Edmonton. Together, this "millionaire's club" had a total of 13.6 million residents, or 45% of Canada's population.
- Between 2001 and 2006, six of the 15 census metropolitan areas that had growth rates higher than the national average were in the Greater Golden Horseshoe: Barrie (+19.2%), Oshawa (+11.6%), Toronto (+9.2%), Kitchener (+8.9%), Guelph (+8.2%) and Brantford (+5.5%).
- Calgary's population has grown by 13.4% since 2001. Edmonton's growth rate at 10.4% was also among the highest in the country.
- Moncton is the only census metropolitan area in the Atlantic provinces whose growth rate surpassed the national average between 2001 and 2006. It now has a larger population than any other urban area in New Brunswick.

- Eight mid-size urban centres had a growth rate of more than 10%, about twice as high as the rate for Canada as a whole. Seven of the eight were in Alberta.
- Between 2001 and 2006, the growth rate of peripheral municipalities surrounding the central municipalities of Canada's 33 census metropolitan areas was double the national average (+11.1% versus +5.4%).
- The rural population increased by 1.0% since 2001. In 2006, just under one in five Canadians (6 million people) lived in rural areas.
- Rural areas close to urban centres grew much faster (+4.7%) than remote rural areas (-0.1%).
- Nearly half (47%) of the territories' population was living in one of the three capital cities in 2006.

## National portrait

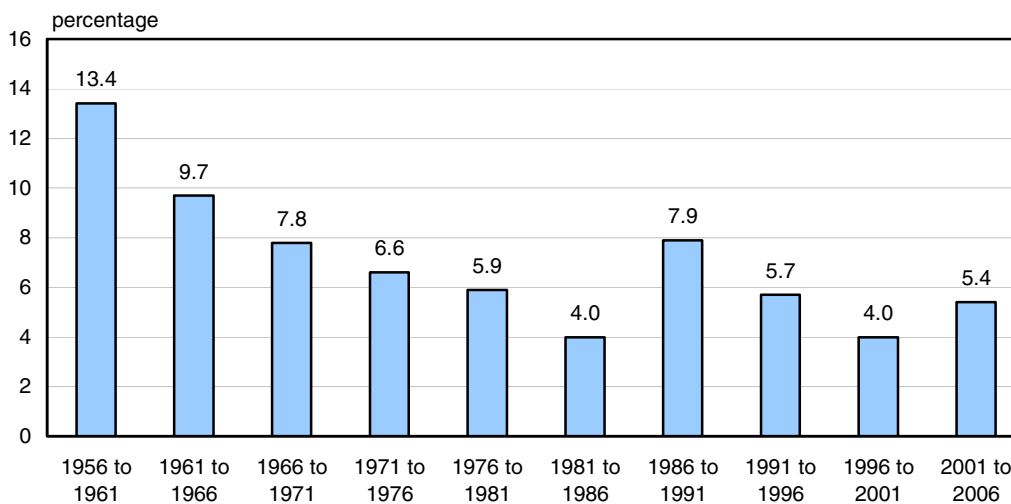
### Population growth is up

Between 2001 and 2006, Canada's population grew by 1.6 million, which translates to a growth rate of 5.4%. That is slightly higher than the rate for the period between the 1996 and 2001 censuses (+4.0%).

An increase in international immigration was responsible for the acceleration of Canada's growth rate over the last five years. Since 2001, an average of about 240,000 newcomers have arrived in Canada each year, for a total of some 1.2 million immigrants in five years. Roughly two-thirds of Canada's population growth now comes from net international migration.

The remaining one-third of the population gain is due to natural increase, the growth that results from there being more births than deaths. However, natural increase is becoming less important as a factor in population growth for two reasons: Canadian fertility has remained at about 1.5 children per woman for the last 10 years, and the population is aging, which means the annual number of deaths is increasing. According to population projections, net immigration may become the only source of population growth by about 2030.

**Figure 1 Canada's population growth during the last 50 years**



**Sources:** Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 1956 to 2006

Despite its recent increase, Canada's population growth rate remains much lower than it was 50 years ago. Between 1956 and 1961, the population expanded by 13.4%, roughly three times faster than in the last five years. At that time, in the middle of the baby boom, women were having an average of more than 3.5 children.

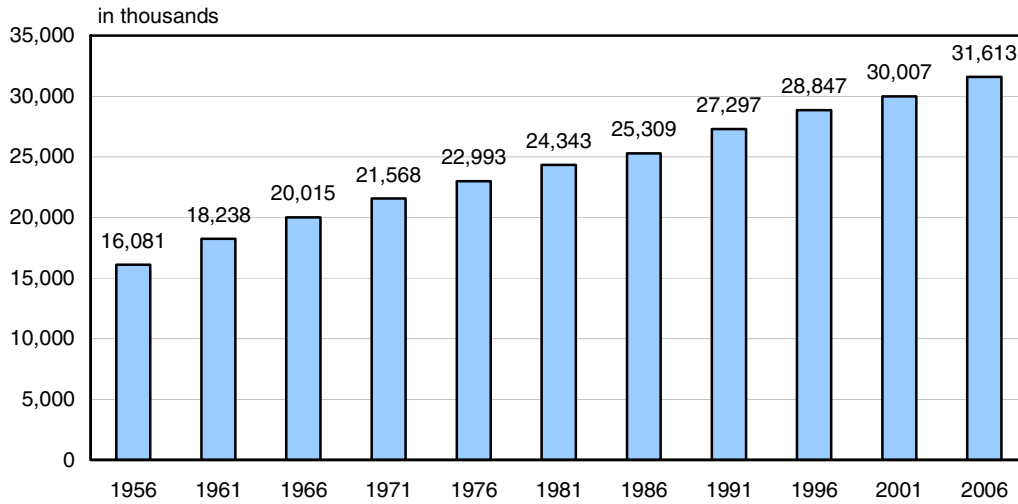
The post-baby boom decline in fertility and the increase in deaths due to population aging have both played a role in slowing the pace of population growth substantially. The brief reversal of this trend that occurred in the late 1980s was due to an increase in immigration which coincided with a slight rise in fertility.

### Census enumerates 31.6 million people

Canada's 2006 Census held on May 16th counted 31,612,897 Canadians. Fifty years earlier, in the first national quinquennial census, Canada's population was 16 million, about half of what it is today.

If current fertility, mortality and international migration trends continue, no population decline is expected in the next 50 years and Canada's population can be expected to number 43 million in 2056.

**Figure 2 Population of Canada in the last 50 years**



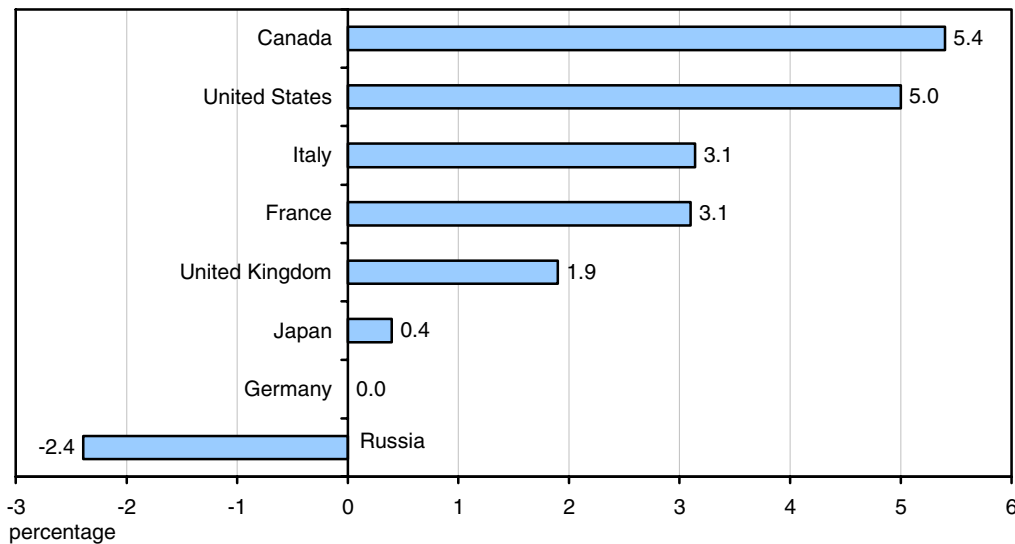
Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 1956 to 2006



## Fastest population growth in the G8

Canada experienced more rapid population growth than any other G8 country in the five years leading up to the 2006 Census. While the number of Canadians increased by 5.4%, the growth rate was 3.1% in Italy and France, 1.9% in the United Kingdom and nearly zero in Japan and Germany. During the same period, Russia's population shrank by 2.4%.

**Figure 3 Population growth in G8 countries from 2001 to 2006**



**Sources:** Statistics Canada, Census of population, 2006, U.S. Census Bureau - Population Estimates Program, Istituto Nazionale di Statistica, Institut National des Statistiques et des Études Économiques, United Kingdom National Statistics, Statistics Bureau of Japan, Federal Statistical Office of Germany and Federal State Statistics Service of Russia

Of the G8 countries, only the United States had a growth rate comparable to Canada's, at 5.0% between 2001 and 2006. The U.S. rate was, nevertheless, slightly lower than the Canadian rate, as has been the case for every intercensal period over the last 50 years except for the 1996 to 2001 period.

Nearly 60% of America's population growth is attributable to natural increase, as its fertility rate of close to two children per woman over the last few years is the highest of the G8. In Canada, two-thirds of the population growth stems from international immigration. Canadian women have an average of 1.5 children.

## Two out of three Canadians live near the southern border shared with the United States

With a land area of close to 10 million square kilometres, Canada is the second-largest country in the world, behind Russia. On the other hand, with 31.6 million people, it ranks about 35th in population size, well back of China and India, the most populous countries on the planet, with more than 1 billion people each.

At 3.5 people per square kilometre, Canada is sparsely populated. For comparison, the population density is nine times higher in the United States (31 people/km<sup>2</sup>), 31 times higher in France (109 people/km<sup>2</sup>) and 70 times higher in the United Kingdom (246 people/km<sup>2</sup>).

Yet Canada's population is not spread evenly over its territory. Most Canadians live in the southern part of the country, leaving the northern regions of Canada much less densely populated.

The southern part of the country is also home to Canada's large urban centres, where population density averages 245 people per square kilometre. The municipalities of Westmount, on the island of Montréal, and Vancouver have the highest population density in the country, at more than 5,000 people per square kilometre. Three of the five most densely populated municipalities are in the Montréal metropolitan area: Westmount along with Côte St-Luc and Montréal, which have 4,500 people per square kilometre.



In many cases, the zones with the highest population density are also the ones that met all the prerequisites for settlement: the proximity of major rivers, a favourable climate, fertile land and abundant natural resources. Over the course of more than three centuries, the Canadian population has moved steadily westward: from the Atlantic provinces to the St. Lawrence valley, then along the Great Lakes, and from there to the Prairies, with the construction of the railway through to the valleys and onto the Pacific coast of British Columbia and later to the Canadian north. Even today, the majority of Canada's population is spread out along those great settlement routes.

## Population of the provinces and territories

### Population growth is higher in most provinces, territories

The growth rate has risen since 2001 in every Canadian province except Prince Edward Island, where it was unchanged, and Saskatchewan and Newfoundland and Labrador, where it is still negative.

The increase in the growth rate for most provinces is attributable in some instances to higher international immigration, in others to gains in migration exchanges with other provinces, and in still others to both factors.

As was the case at the national level, natural increase declined in every province and territory because of population aging, except Alberta and Nunavut where natural increase was on the rise.

**Table 1 Population of Canada, provinces and territories in the last 50 years**

Year of census	Canada	N.L.	P.E.I.	N.S.	N.B.	Que.	Ont.	Man.	Sask.	Alta.	B.C.	Y.T.	N.W.T.	Nvt.
	in thousands													
1956	16,081	415	99	695	555	4,628	5,405	850	881	1,123	1,398	12	19	...
1961	18,238	458	105	737	598	5,259	6,236	922	925	1,332	1,629	15	23	...
1966	20,015	493	109	756	617	5,781	6,961	963	955	1,463	1,874	14	29	...
1971	21,568	522	112	789	635	6,028	7,703	988	926	1,628	2,185	18	35	...
1976	22,993	558	118	829	677	6,234	8,264	1,022	921	1,838	2,467	22	43	...
1981	24,343	568	123	847	696	6,438	8,625	1,026	968	2,238	2,744	23	46	...
1986	25,309	568	127	873	709	6,532	9,102	1,063	1,010	2,366	2,883	24	52	...
1991	27,297	568	130	900	724	6,896	10,085	1,092	989	2,546	3,282	28	36	21
1996	28,847	552	135	909	738	7,139	10,754	1,114	990	2,697	3,725	31	40	25
2001	30,007	513	135	908	729	7,237	11,410	1,120	979	2,975	3,908	29	37	27
2006	31,613	505	136	913	730	7,546	12,160	1,148	968	3,290	4,113	30	41	29

... not applicable

**Note:** In this table, Nunavut is included in the Northwest Territories until 1986.

**Sources:** Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 1956 to 2006

Two-thirds (66%) of Canada's population growth between 2001 and 2006 was concentrated in just two provinces: Alberta and Ontario. They were also the only two provinces that had a growth rate higher than the national average. Growth also exceeded the national average in the three territories.

At the other extreme, two provinces experienced a population decline between 2001 and 2006: Newfoundland and Labrador and Saskatchewan. For Newfoundland and Labrador, the decrease was smaller than in the 1996 to 2001 period.

The population decline in these two provinces is part of a general downward trend since 1986, when their populations peaked. Much of the downward trend is due to net losses in migration exchanges with other provinces.

**Table 2 Growth rate for Canada, provinces and territories in the last 50 years**

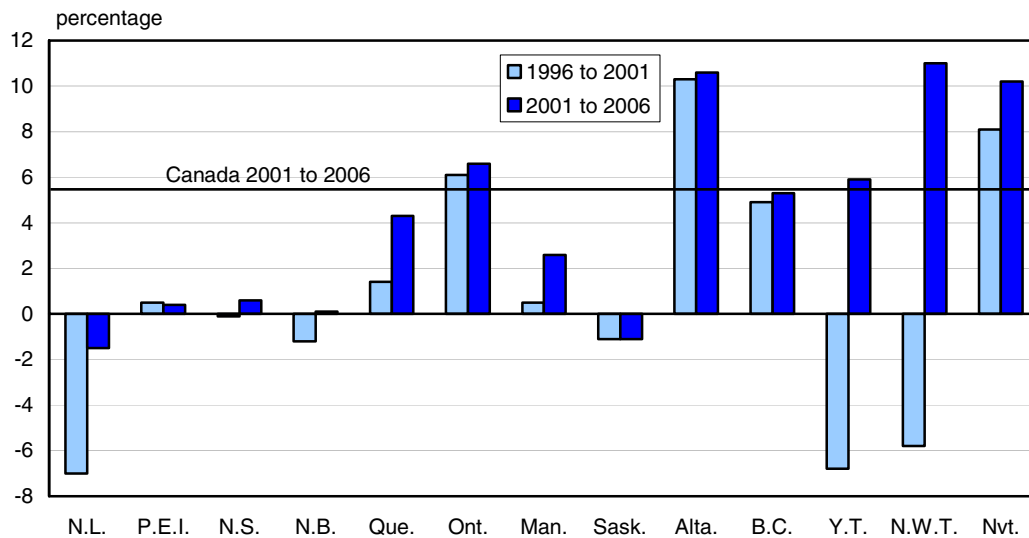
Year of census	Canada	N.L.	P.E.I.	N.S.	N.B.	Que.	Ont.	Man.	Sask.	Alta.	B.C.	Y.T.	N.W.T.	Nvt.
	percentage													
1956 to 1961	13.4	10.3	5.4	6.1	7.8	13.6	15.4	8.4	5.1	18.6	16.5	20.0	19.1	...
1961 to 1966	9.7	7.8	3.7	2.6	3.2	9.9	11.6	4.5	3.3	9.9	15.0	-1.7	25.0	...
1966 to 1971	7.8	5.8	2.9	4.4	2.9	4.3	10.7	2.6	-3.0	11.3	16.6	27.9	21.1	...
1971 to 1976	6.6	6.8	5.9	5.0	6.7	3.4	7.3	3.4	-0.5	12.9	12.9	18.7	22.4	...
1976 to 1981	5.9	1.8	3.6	2.3	2.8	3.3	4.4	0.5	5.1	21.7	11.3	6.0	7.3	...
1981 to 1986	4.0	0.1	3.4	3.0	1.9	1.5	5.5	3.6	4.3	5.7	5.1	1.5	14.2	...
1986 to 1991	7.9	0.0	2.5	3.1	2.0	5.6	10.8	2.7	-2.0	7.6	13.8	18.3	10.4	...
1991 to 1996	5.7	-2.9	3.7	1.0	2.0	3.5	6.6	2.0	0.1	5.9	13.5	10.7	9.0	16.4
1996 to 2001	4.0	-7.0	0.5	-0.1	-1.2	1.4	6.1	0.5	-1.1	10.3	4.9	-6.8	-5.8	8.1
2001 to 2006	5.4	-1.5	0.4	0.6	0.1	4.3	6.6	2.6	-1.1	10.6	5.3	5.9	11.0	10.2

.. not applicable

**Note:** The growth rate of the Northwest Territories for the period 1986 to 1991 includes Nunavut in 1986 and in 1991.

**Sources:** Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 1956 to 2006

**Figure 4 Population growth of provinces and territories, 1996 to 2001 and 2001 to 2006**



**Sources:** Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 1996, 2001 and 2006

## The number of people in the Atlantic provinces is unchanged

The population of the Atlantic provinces remained virtually unchanged, slipping slightly from 2,285,729 in 2001 to 2,284,779 in 2006.

As a proportion of Canada's total population, however, the population of the Atlantic provinces dropped from 7.6% to 7.2% between 2001 and 2006, as other parts of the country grew more rapidly. The Atlantic provinces accounted for 11.0% of Canada's population in 1956.

The four Atlantic provinces share many of the same demographic characteristics: for example, they all have low fertility and international immigration, and they are generally below the break-even point in their migration exchanges with the rest of Canada.



For Newfoundland and Labrador, the population count in the 2006 Census was 505,469, down 7,461 from 2001. The province's population has declined in the last three censuses.

However, the drop (-1.5%) in this province was smaller than in the 1996 to 2001 period, when the population decreased by 7.0%. Much of the improvement is due to smaller losses in its migration exchanges with other provinces, as fertility in Newfoundland and Labrador remained

the lowest in the country, averaging 1.3 children per woman since 2001.

Prince Edward Island's population was 135,851 in the 2006 Census, 557 more than in the 2001 Census. The population growth of Canada's least populous province has been slow but steady over the last 10 years (+0.4% between 2001 and 2006, compared with +0.5% for the previous five-year period). The decline in natural increase and in net in-migration from other provinces between 2001 and 2006 was offset by a slight increase in immigration.



The 2006 Census enumerated 913,462 people in Nova Scotia, which remains the most populous of the Atlantic provinces. The 2001 to 2006 period was characterized by a return to population growth (+0.6%) after an episode of zero growth between 1996 and 2001.





In New Brunswick, the size of the population was virtually unchanged since 2001. The province had 729,997 residents in 2006, compared with 729,498 in 2001, an increase of 499, or 0.1%.

This contrasts with the negative rate (-1.2%) observed for the preceding intercensal period. Between 2001 and 2006, the province's international immigration was double what it was in the previous period, reaching its highest level since the 1976 to 1981 period.

## Quebec: second-highest growth rate since the end of the baby boom

Quebec's population grew three times faster between 2001 and 2006 (+4.3%) than in the previous intercensal period (+1.4%). The province experienced its highest growth rate since the 5.6% increase between 1986 to 1991, and its second highest since the end of the baby boom in the mid-1960s. The difference between Quebec's population growth and the national average of 5.4% was also the smallest in 40 years.

The upswing was due to an increase in international immigration and to smaller net losses in migration exchanges with other provinces. The number of births was up in 2006, according to the province's vital statistics, but since the increase occurred at the very end of the intercensal period, it had little impact on overall population growth between 2001 and 2006.

The 2006 Census counted 7,546,131 people in Quebec, 308,652 more than in 2001. Quebec accounted for 23.9% of Canada's total population in 2006, down from 24.1% in the previous census. The decline is part of a downward trend that has been continuous since the 1966 Census, when Quebec's share of the total population was 28.9%.



## Ontario: half of Canada's population growth

Since 2001, Ontario's population increased by 750,236. That represents half of Canada's population growth (+1.6 million) during the period.



Alberta aside, Ontario was the only other province with a growth rate (+6.6%) above the national average (+5.4%). That trend has been in place since 1991, as Ontario's intercensal growth rate did not change a great deal (between +6.1% and +6.6%) over the period.

International immigration, from which Ontario benefits significantly, is responsible for much of its growth. According to data from Citizenship and Immigration Canada, more than 600,000 immigrants settled in Ontario between 2001 and 2006. This represents about half of all those who immigrated to Canada during that period.

Ontario was still Canada's most populous province by far in 2006. The 2006 Census enumerated 12,160,282 people, who accounted for nearly two-fifths (38.5%) of Canada's population.



## Alberta: the engine of population growth in the Prairie provinces

Close to 95% of the Prairie provinces' population growth between 2001 and 2006 took place in Alberta, which was the fastest-growing Canadian province during the period. Manitoba accounted for the rest of the growth, as Saskatchewan's population shrank between 2001 and 2006.

The number of Albertans increased by 10.6% between 2001 and 2006, double the national growth rate (+5.4%). Alberta's growth rate was similar to the rate for the 1996 to 2001 period (+10.3%). If the province continues to grow by 10% every five years in the future, its population will likely double between 2006 and the mid-2030s.



During the 2001 to 2006 period, Alberta's population passed the 3 million mark and 3,290,350 persons were enumerated on May 16, 2006. During the same period, Alberta's share of Canada's total population topped 10% for the first time.

While gains through migration exchanges with the rest of the country are still the main factor in Alberta's population growth, international immigration has been contributing increasing numbers of people over the last few years. Alberta is also the only Canadian province whose natural increase did not decline between 2001 and 2006. Alberta's booming economy, bolstered in particular by the strength of the oil industry, has clearly played a role in the province's rapid population growth.

Between 2001 and 2006, Manitoba's population (1,148,401 persons in 2006) increased at a faster pace (+2.6%) than during the previous intercensal period (+0.5%). This marks a return to a growth rate similar to the levels recorded between 1981 and 1996. The increase in population growth is attributable to higher international immigration in recent years.



In Saskatchewan, the population was 968,157 in 2006, down 10,776 from 2001. However, the rate of decline remained unchanged relative to the 1996 to 2001 period, at -1.1%. This is the second time in 50 years that Saskatchewan's population decreased in two consecutive intercensal periods; the first time was between 1966 and 1976.



Significant losses in migration exchanges with other provinces, especially neighbouring Alberta, accounted for much of the decline, which occurred despite the fact that Saskatchewan had higher fertility than any other province (an average of 1.9 children per woman since 2001). Saskatchewan's net migration losses to Alberta averaged more than 10,000 people a year between 2001 and 2006.

The total population of the three Prairie provinces in the 2006 Census was 5,406,908, which is 333,585 more than in 2001. The Prairie provinces' share of the country's total population increased slightly in the last five years, from 16.9% to 17.1%.

## Slight increase in the population growth of British Columbia



The growth of British Columbia's population between 2001 and 2006 (+5.3%) was slightly higher than during the previous intercensal period (+4.9%) and close to the national average (+5.4%).

International immigration remains the principal factor in the province's population growth, as it has one of the lowest fertility rates in the country (an average of 1.4 children per woman since 2001). The 2001 to 2006 period also saw an improvement in British Columbia's net migration exchanges with the rest of Canada, reversing the trend that was evident in the previous intercensal period.

The province went over the 4 million mark in population between 2001 and 2006. Its population of 4,113,487 in the 2006 Census represents 13.0% of Canada's population.

## 100,000 people in the territories

The population living in the three territories surpassed 100,000 for the first time. With a population of 41,464 in the 2006 Census, the Northwest Territories is the most populous of the three. Yukon Territory and Nunavut were very close in population size, with 30,372 and 29,474 respectively.

The three territories share a number of similar demographic characteristics. For example, each have sizable Aboriginal populations, a fertility rate that is usually much higher than the provincial rates (except recently for Yukon Territory), and experience relatively lower levels of international immigration compared with other areas in Canada. Natural increase is often the main factor contributing to population growth.

Because of an improvement in its migration exchanges with the provinces, Yukon Territory's population growth was positive (+5.9%) in the 2001 to 2006 period.

For the same reason, the Northwest Territories experienced an increase in its growth rate (+11.0%) during the last intercensal period.



Statistics Canada makes every effort to enumerate Canadians accurately in the census. Some regions may present greater challenges than others. The statistics for the Northwest Territories must be used with caution, as its net undercoverage in the 2001 Census (8.11%) was higher than the national average (2.99%). Because of the improved coverage of the Northwest Territories in 2006, population growth for the 2001 to 2006 period is probably overstated.

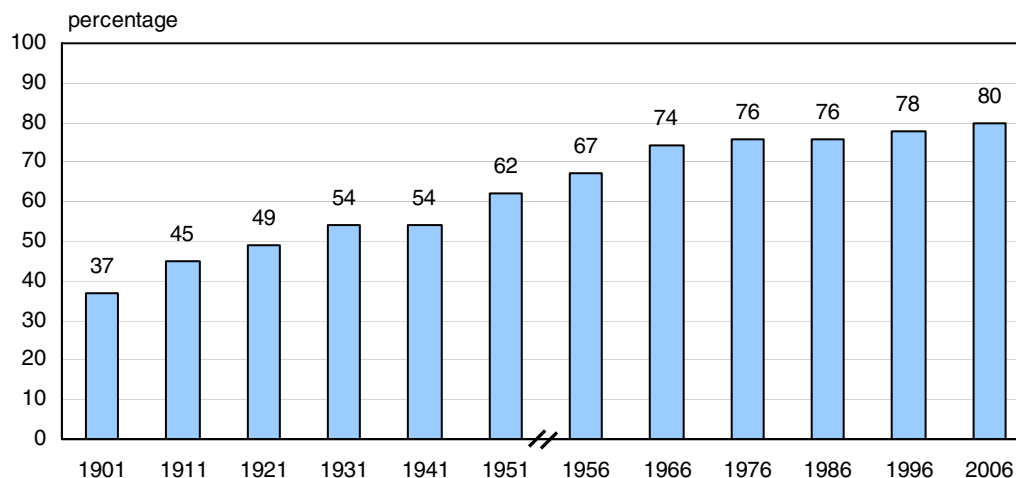
In Nunavut, growth remained strong between 2001 and 2006 (+10.2%), as it has been for a number of intercensal periods. Unlike the other two territories, Nunavut saw an upswing in its natural increase in the 2001 to 2006 period, as its fertility rate was twice the national average (an average of 3.1 versus 1.5 children per woman since 2001). Immigration and migration exchanges with the provinces had little effect on the territory's growth rate.

## Subprovincial population dynamics

### Canada's population becoming more urban

In 2006, nearly 25 million people, more than 80% of Canadians, were living in urban areas.<sup>1</sup> The proportion of urban residents is similar in the United States but smaller in the other G8 countries, with the exception of the United Kingdom, where it is close to 90%.

**Figure 5 Proportion of the Canadian population living in urban regions since 1901**



Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 1901 to 2006

Canada's urban population surpassed its rural population during the 1921 to 1931 period. At that time, the primary sector, mainly agriculture and exploitation of natural resources, was much more important in the Canadian economy than it is today.

Since then, the urbanization rate has been rising almost without a break in Canada. New employment opportunities generated by the development of the manufacturing sector and the service industry contributed to the rapid growth of the country's urban population. The high concentration of new immigrants in the country's largest cities was also an important population growth factor.

1. The distinction between urban and rural areas is used only in this section, for the purpose of describing historical trends. In the rest of the report, comparisons are made between metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas (see Note 2).

## Population growth has been uneven across the country

Most of Canada's population growth since 2001 has taken place in urban areas rather than in rural areas. Growth rates higher than the national average were concentrated in four large regions that have major metropolitan centres: the southern parts of Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia and the Calgary - Red Deer - Edmonton corridor.

In southern Ontario, population growth for the zone from Peterborough to London, including Oshawa, Toronto, Hamilton and Kitchener, was high between 2001 and 2006. This zone makes up a large portion of the Greater Golden Horseshoe administrative region.

In Quebec, there was a high rate of population growth in a large area surrounding the island of Montréal and encompassing Montérégie, the Eastern Townships and the Lower Laurentians.

In Alberta, growth rates above the national average were observed in a north-south corridor running from Edmonton to Medicine Hat, including Red Deer and Calgary.

In British Columbia, the lower mainland and southern Vancouver Island area, which contains three of the province's four CMAs (Victoria, Vancouver and Abbotsford), accounted for most of the province's growth, as it did in the 1996 to 2001 period.

In addition to those four major zones, a few other areas experienced significant population growth since 2001: the Ottawa - Gatineau area on the border between Ontario and Quebec; Moncton, New Brunswick; Québec City, Quebec; Winnipeg, Manitoba; and the Grande Prairie and Wood Buffalo areas in northern Alberta.

Since 2001, most rural areas grew at a slower pace than the country as a whole or, in some cases, suffered a population decline. In general, these areas are located far from the country's large urban centres. In most cases, they have natural resource-based economies, such as fishing, agriculture, forestry and mining.



## Vast majority of Canada's population growth is concentrated in large metropolitan areas

Since 2001, the population of Canada's census metropolitan areas (CMAs – see box) grew by 1.4 million, which represents nearly 90% of the 1.6 million increase in the country's total population over that period.

The rate of growth among CMAs' was well above the national average, reflecting their demographic vitality. Since 2001, the larger metropolitan areas have experienced population growth of 6.9%, compared with 5.4% for Canada as a whole.

In 2006, more than two-thirds (68%) of the population lived in one of the 33 census metropolitan areas. That represents 21.5 million Canadians. Of these, 14.1 million lived in one of the six metropolitan areas with a population of more than 1 million: Toronto, Montréal, Vancouver, Ottawa - Gatineau and, for the first time, Calgary and Edmonton.



**Table 3 Population of census metropolitan areas in 2006**

Order	Census metropolitan areas	Province	Population
1	Toronto	Ontario	5,113,149
2	Montréal	Quebec	3,635,571
3	Vancouver	British Columbia	2,116,581
4	Ottawa - Gatineau	Ontario / Quebec	1,130,761
5	Calgary	Alberta	1,079,310
6	Edmonton	Alberta	1,034,945
7	Québec	Quebec	715,515
8	Winnipeg	Manitoba	694,668
9	Hamilton	Ontario	692,911
10	London	Ontario	457,720
11	Kitchener	Ontario	451,235
12	St. Catharines - Niagara	Ontario	390,317
13	Halifax	Nova Scotia	372,858
14	Oshawa	Ontario	330,594
15	Victoria	British Columbia	330,088
16	Windsor	Ontario	323,342
17	Saskatoon	Saskatchewan	233,923
18	Regina	Saskatchewan	194,971
19	Sherbrooke	Quebec	186,952
20	St. John's	Newfoundland and Labrador	181,113
21	Barrie	Ontario	177,061
22	Kelowna	British Columbia	162,276
23	Abbotsford	British Columbia	159,020
24	Greater Sudbury / Grand Sudbury	Ontario	158,258
25	Kingston	Ontario	152,358
26	Saguenay	Quebec	151,643
27	Trois-Rivières	Quebec	141,529
28	Guelph	Ontario	127,009
29	Moncton	New Brunswick	126,424
30	Brantford	Ontario	124,607
31	Thunder Bay	Ontario	122,907
32	Saint John	New Brunswick	122,389
33	Peterborough	Ontario	116,570

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of population, 2006

Together, those six “millionaire’s club” areas were home to nearly half (45%) of all Canadians. Toronto, which passed the 5 million mark for the first time, remained the most populous CMA, followed by Montréal and Vancouver.

A census metropolitan area (CMA) is an area with a population of at least 100,000, including an urban core with a population of at least 50,000. Canada now has 33 CMAs, up from 27 in 2001. The six new CMAs are Barrie, Guelph, Brantford and Peterborough in Ontario; Moncton in New Brunswick and Kelowna in British Columbia.

### **Six of the fastest-growing CMAs are in the Greater Golden Horseshoe**

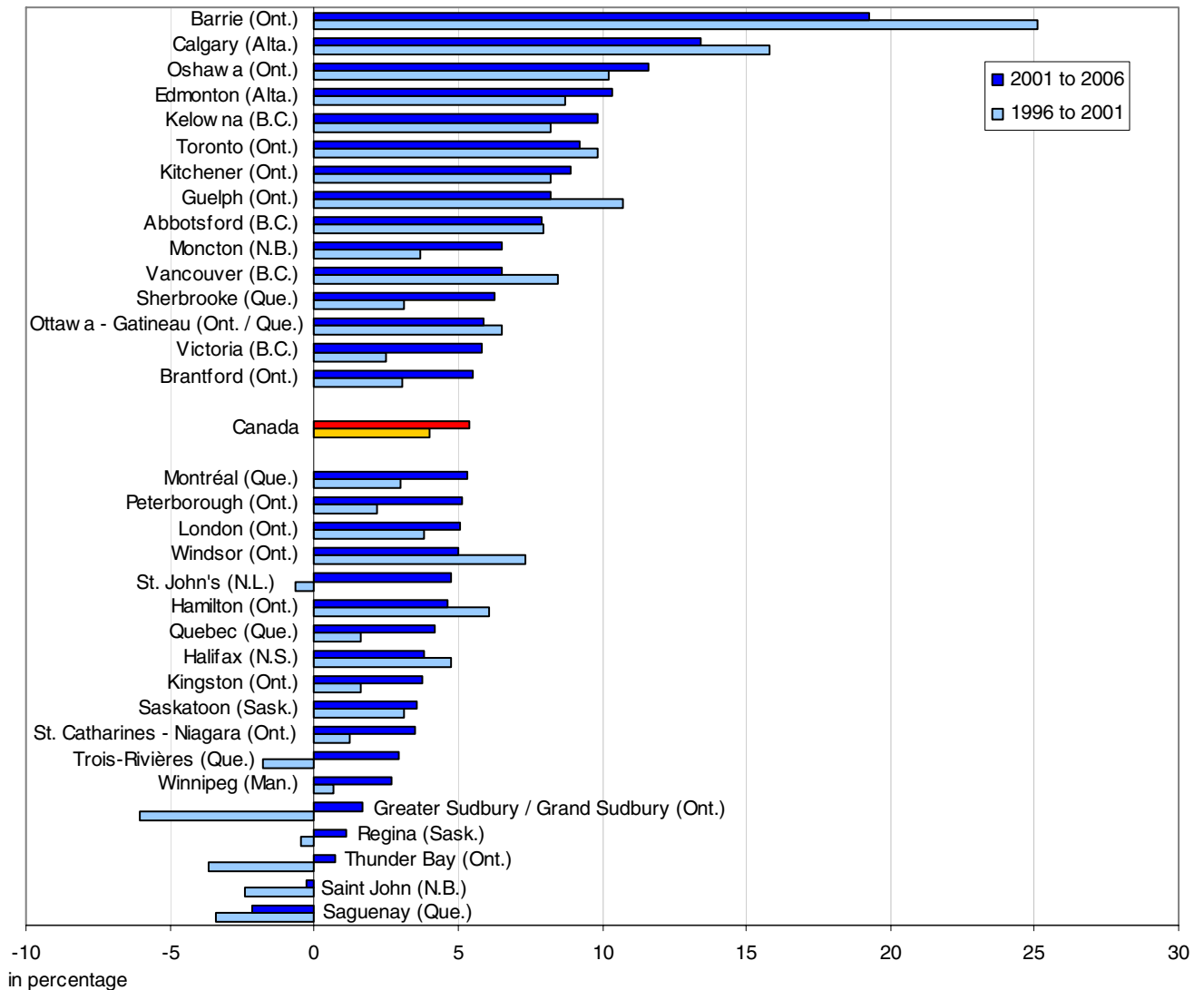
Between 2001 and 2006, fifteen census metropolitan areas had a higher rate of population growth than the national average. Of these, six are in southern Ontario and located in the Greater Golden Horseshoe region: Barrie (+19.2%), Oshawa (+11.6%), Toronto (+9.2%), Kitchener (+8.9%), Guelph (+8.2%) and Brantford (+5.5%). Barrie is the fastest-growing CMA since 2001, as its population increased nearly four times more rapidly than the national average.

Alberta’s two CMAs, Calgary and Edmonton, also experienced vigorous growth since 2001. Calgary’s population grew by 13.4% between 2001 and 2006, the second-highest growth rate among CMAs. Edmonton was the fourth fastest-growing CMA in the country (+10.4%).

The rapid population growth in Alberta’s two CMAs is attributable to the economic boom that the province has enjoyed for a number of years. The buoyancy of the province’s job market has attracted many workers from the rest of Canada, and large numbers of them have settled in the two major metropolitan areas. Immigration and relatively high fertility have also been significant factors in Calgary’s and Edmonton’s population boom.



Figure 6 Population growth of census metropolitan areas, 1996 to 2001 and 2001 to 2006



Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 1996, 2001 and 2006

British Columbia’s four CMAs (Vancouver, Victoria, Abbotsford and Kelowna) also outpaced the national rate of population growth between 2001 and 2006. Immigration continued to benefit Vancouver and accounted for more than half of the growth experienced by its neighbouring CMAs, Victoria and Abbotsford.

Sherbrooke is the only CMA located entirely in Quebec whose growth rate (+6.3%) was above the national average. It grew twice as fast as in the 1996 to 2001 period. Much of the increase is due to larger gains since 2001 in its migration exchanges with the rest of the province.

The Ottawa - Gatineau CMA (+5.9%), which straddles the Quebec-Ontario border, also had a population growth rate slightly above the national average in the 2001 to 2006 period. The Quebec part of the CMA, Gatineau, grew faster (+8.5%) than the Ontario portion, Ottawa (+5.0%). Gatineau’s higher growth rate is largely attributable to migration gains at Ottawa’s



expense, as many residents moved from the Ontario part of the CMA to the Quebec side of the Ottawa River between 2001 and 2006.



Moncton is the only CMA in the Atlantic provinces whose growth rate (+6.5%) was above the national average (+5.4%). Between 2001 and 2006, it even became New Brunswick's most populous metropolitan area, surpassing Saint John.

The population of the St. John's (+4.7%), Trois-Rivières (+2.9%), Sudbury (+1.7%), Thunder Bay (+0.8%) and Regina (+1.1%) CMAs increased since 2001, after declining in the previous intercensal period. All of these CMAs experienced an improvement in their net migration levels, especially their exchanges with other parts of their respective provinces. There was also a slight increase in the number of international immigrants who settled in Trois-Rivières compared with the previous period.

Since the population of the St. John's, Regina and Saskatoon CMAs increased in the last five years, the rural areas of Newfoundland and Labrador and Saskatchewan were mainly responsible for the decline in the provinces' population since 2001.

Only two CMAs experienced population losses between 2001 and 2006: Saint John, New Brunswick, and Saguenay, Quebec (-0.2% and -2.1% respectively). Both areas also had population declines between the 1996 and 2001 censuses. Net losses in migration exchanges with the rest of the country, combined with low or even negative natural increase, caused the population to shrink. However, the decline was smaller between 2001 and 2006 than in the previous intercensal period.

## Three large urban areas: the Montréal and Vancouver CMAs and the Greater Golden Horseshoe

In 2006, nearly half of all Canadians, 13.9 million people, were living in the country's three largest urban areas: the Montréal census metropolitan area, the Vancouver census metropolitan area, and the Greater Golden Horseshoe in southern Ontario.

Between 2001 and 2006, the population of these areas grew by 950,000 representing more than half of Canada's total population growth (+1.6 million). This growth rate (+7.3%) was above the national average (+5.4%) for the period.

The large urban centres of Montréal, Vancouver and the Greater Golden Horseshoe have a number of special demographic characteristics. For example, population growth is largely due to international immigration along with the pull these larger urban areas exert on the younger working age adults from other parts of the country who are likely to move there for economic reasons.



What also sets them apart is the fact that these metropolitan areas encompass large municipalities that are home to hundreds of thousands of people. Some municipalities located on the fringes of the municipalities of Montréal, Toronto and Vancouver have larger populations compared with many of the country's census metropolitan areas.

It is important to differentiate between census metropolitan areas (CMAs) and municipalities that form census subdivisions (CSDs). CMAs usually consist of many municipalities, one of which, called the central municipality, lends its name to the CMA. For example, the Montréal CMA includes nearly 100 municipalities, such as Laval, Longueuil, La Prairie and Mirabel. The municipality of Montréal, on the island of Montréal, is the central municipality, that is the census subdivision for which the CMA is named.

Of the 25 municipalities with the largest populations in Canada, nine are on the fringes of Montréal, Toronto or Vancouver.<sup>2</sup> Included, for example, are Mississauga (668,549), a suburb of Toronto; Surrey (394,976), a suburb of Vancouver; and Laval (368,709), a suburb of Montréal. The growth rate of these municipalities varies widely, even within the larger urban areas of which they form part.

2. The other 16 are all central municipalities of census metropolitan areas.

**Table 4 Most populous municipalities of Canada in 2006**

Municipalities	Province	Population
Toronto	Ontario	2,503,281
Montréal	Quebec	1,620,693
Calgary	Alberta	988,193
Ottawa	Ontario	812,129
Edmonton	Alberta	730,372
Mississauga	Ontario	668,549
Winnipeg	Manitoba	633,451
Vancouver	British Columbia	578,041
Hamilton	Ontario	504,559
Québec	Quebec	491,142
Brampton	Ontario	433,806
Surrey	British Columbia	394,976
Halifax	Nova Scotia	372,679
Laval	Quebec	368,709
London	Ontario	352,395
Markham	Ontario	261,573
Gatineau	Quebec	242,124
Vaughan	Ontario	238,866
Longueuil	Quebec	229,330
Windsor	Ontario	216,473
Kitchener	Ontario	204,668
Burnaby	British Columbia	202,799
Saskatoon	Saskatchewan	202,340
Regina	Saskatchewan	179,246
Richmond	British Columbia	174,461

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of population, 2006

## Montréal CMA

### Half of Quebec's population lives in the Montréal CMA

Canada's most populous metropolitan area prior to the 1976 Census, the Montréal CMA is now, with its population of 3.6 million, the second-largest CMA after Toronto. It still has considerable demographic significance for Quebec, as it is home to nearly half of the 7.5 million Quebecers enumerated in 2006.



Between 2001 and 2006, the Montréal CMA's population grew by 5.3%, slightly more rapidly than Quebec's population (+4.3%). International immigration was the main factor in the CMA's population growth as over the five year period it experienced a net loss in its migration exchanges with the other parts of the country.

The Montréal CMA encompasses nearly 100 municipalities with widely varying populations and growth rates. It includes municipalities with large populations, such as the municipality of Montréal (1.6 million), the municipality of Laval (368,709, the third-largest municipality in Quebec) and the municipality of Longueuil (229,330, the fifth-largest municipality in Quebec). In contrast, municipalities such as Senneville, Pointe-des-Cascades and Vaudreuil-sur-le-Lac had a population of less than 2,000 each.

Since 2001, the growth of the various municipalities located in the Montréal CMA has also varied. About 30 municipalities, with a total population of nearly half a million, experienced a growth rate of at least twice the national average. Among them are Vaudreuil-Dorion (+29.5%) to the west; Saint-Colomban (+34.8%), Blainville (+29.0%), Mirabel (+26.8%), Terrebonne (+17.6%) and Mascouche (+14.2%) to the north; St-Basile-le-Grand (+26.0%) to the east; and Candiac (+25.8%), La Prairie (+15.2%) and Chambly (+11.1%) to the south. All of these are located on the periphery of the island of Montréal, in some cases close to major highways, and most are adjacent to the CMA's boundaries.

On the island of Montréal, the growth rate of every municipality except Montréal-est was lower than the provincial average of 4.3%. That was the case for the city of Montréal, as its population grew by 2.3% between 2001 and 2006.

This pattern of development in urban centres, where the population of peripheral municipalities grows faster than that of the central municipality, is typical of urban spread.

It is also worth noting that Montréal's two largest suburbs, Longueuil and Laval, showed very different growth patterns since 2001. Longueuil's population was 229,330 in 2006, up slightly (+1.6%) from 2001. Laval's population grew much more quickly (+7.5%), reaching 368,709 in 2006. In fact, its 7.5% growth rate was higher than that of any other CMA in Quebec.

## Greater Golden Horseshoe

### Two-thirds of Ontarians live in the Greater Golden Horseshoe region

Extending along the western end of Lake Ontario, the Greater Golden Horseshoe is both the most populous and the most heavily urbanized region in Canada. It is home to 8.1 million people, two-thirds of Ontarians and one-quarter of all Canadians. It contains nine of the country's 33 census metropolitan areas and many census agglomerations.



The population of this major urban area grew by 630,631 between 2001 and 2006, and its growth rate of 8.4% was faster than the provincial average of 6.6%. Thus, the Greater Golden Horseshoe accounted for 84% of Ontario's population increase and 39% of the total national increase. International immigration is the main reason for the region's high population growth rate.

The Greater Golden Horseshoe consists of more than 100 municipalities, 16 of which have a population of more than 100,000. In 2006, the city of Toronto was the most populous, with 2.5 million people, followed by Mississauga (668,549), Hamilton (504,559) and Brampton (433,806). The other municipalities with more than 100,000 residents are Markham, Vaughan, Kitchener, Oakville, Burlington, Richmond Hill, Oshawa, St. Catharines, Barrie, Cambridge, Guelph and Whitby.

Eleven of the 16 municipalities with a population of more than 100,000 are in a corridor that runs from Hamilton to Oshawa. That corridor is the largest continuous urban network in Canada, and it is home to more than 5.3 million people, roughly one-sixth of Canadians.

Over the 2001 to 2006 period, five municipalities in the Hamilton-Oshawa corridor with a 2006 population of more than 100,000 had a population growth rate at least four times the national average (+5.4%): Brampton (+33.3%), Vaughan (+31.2%), Whitby (+27.2%), Markham (+25.4%) and Richmond Hill (+23.2%). Four of them are located just north of the city of Toronto.

Other large municipalities that are part of the Greater Golden Horseshoe also underwent rapid population growth since 2001. Among them are Milton (+71.4%), Barrie (+23.8%), Ajax (+22.3%), Aurora (+18.6%), Halton Hills (+14.7%), Oakville (+14.4%), Newmarket (+12.9%), Caledon (+12.7%), Waterloo (+12.6%), Clarington (+11.4%) and Mississauga (+9.1%).

Some municipalities experienced more modest growth between 2001 and 2006, including St. Catharines (+2.2%), Oshawa (+1.8%) and Toronto (+0.9%). Kitchener (+7.5%) also had a lower growth rate than the Greater Golden Horseshoe as a whole.

The rapid growth of Brantford and Waterloo to the west, Barrie to the north and Clarington to the east suggests that urban spread in the region will continue.

## Vancouver CMA

### More than half of British Columbia's residents live in the Vancouver CMA

The third-largest metropolitan area in Canada for many years, Vancouver passed the 2 million mark for the first time in 2006. British Columbia's biggest city, it is home to more than half of the province's population.



Though the province experienced net losses in its migration exchanges with the rest of the country, especially other parts of British Columbia, Vancouver is the destination of many international immigrants. Between 2001 and 2006, an average of 25,000 immigrants a year settled in the Vancouver area. Because of international immigration, Vancouver continued to experience a higher population growth rate than the provincial average in the 2001 to 2006 period (6.5% versus 5.3%).

The Vancouver area is made up of about 40 municipalities, five of which have a population of more than 100,000. The municipality of Vancouver is the largest, with a population count of 578,041 in the 2006 Census, followed by Surrey (394,976), Burnaby (202,799), Richmond (174,461) and Coquitlam (114,565).

Municipalities located within the Vancouver CMA are growing at different rates. Between 2001 and 2006, growth was particularly rapid in municipalities in the eastern and southern parts of the Vancouver CMA, especially Maple Ridge (+9.2%), Langley (+6.1%), New Westminster (+7.1%), Port Moody (+15.5%) and Surrey (+13.6%). Their growth rates were all above the national, provincial and Vancouver CMA's averages for the 2001 to 2006 period.

The municipalities of Burnaby (+4.6%) and Coquitlam (+1.5%) grew more slowly than the provincial average (+5.3%) since 2001. Richmond's population growth rate was higher, at 6.2%.

## Urban spread in Canada's six largest metropolitan centres

The bulk of Canada's population growth is concentrated in the larger metropolitan areas, a pattern generally found in most countries. Usually, this sustained growth in municipality populations leads to urban spread, that is, rapid development of the areas surrounding the central municipalities,<sup>3</sup> which turns them into suburbs. This urban spread presents many challenges for metropolitan centres, especially in the areas of transportation, public services and the environment.

Between 2001 and 2006, the growth rate of peripheral municipalities that surround the central municipality of Canada's 33 census metropolitan areas was double the national average (+11.1% versus +5.4%). During the same period, the central municipalities grew more slowly (+4.2%) than the Canadian population and less than half as fast as the peripheral municipalities.

**Table 5 Population growth of central municipalities and peripheral municipalities for the 33 census metropolitan areas, 2001 to 2006**

Region	2001	2006	Growth (in percentage)
Central municipalities	12,230,443	12,739,103	4.2
Peripheral municipalities	7,891,018	8,769,472	11.1
Total of census metropolitan areas	20,121,461	21,508,575	6.9

Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 2001 and 2006

Urban population spread usually occurs along the metropolitan area's major transportation routes.

In the Montréal CMA, for example, the Laurentian Autoroute (Highway 15) contributed to the development of municipalities such as Sainte-Thérèse, Blainville, Mirabel and even Saint-Jérôme and Saint-Colomban farther to the north. On the east shore, municipalities such as Boucherville, Sainte-Julie and Mont-Saint-Hilaire grew in part because of Highway 20, which linked them to the island of Montréal, just as Highway 10 for Brossard and La Prairie. Finally, Highway 40 in the east (Repentigny, L'Assomption) and in the west (Vaudreuil-Dorion, Saint-Lazare) is a major transportation route serving municipalities that have experienced rapid population growth for a number of years.

In Ottawa - Gatineau, the municipalities around the core have also developed up mainly along major roads. On the Ontario side, suburbs such as Orléans to the east and Kanata to the west have developed along the Queensway (Highway 417). To the south, suburbs have grown up along the Rideau River, notably Barrhaven and Gloucester. On the Quebec side, urban spread is most evident along the Highway 50/Highway 148 corridor.

In Toronto, the surrounding municipalities have grown up along a large network of expressways, including highways 401 (Mississauga, Oakville) and 407 (Brampton), which run east-west, and highways 400 (Vaughan) and 404 (Richmond Hill, Markham), which run north-south. Yonge Street is also an important development corridor extending 50 kilometres to the north.

Calgary's population increased rapidly between 2001 and 2006 (+12.4%). It spread out along the McLeod Trail to the south and the Crowchild Trail to the north, skirting such obstacles as the Nose Hill Natural Environment Park and the Foothills Industrial Park. The population of the municipalities around Calgary (for example, Cochrane, Chestermere, Airdrie and Crossfield) also grew at a rapid pace (+29.2%) in the 2001 to 2006 period.

3. The central municipality is defined as the municipality for which the census metropolitan area is named.

In the Edmonton area, urban spread occurred mainly along the Calgary Trail to the south, around the West Edmonton Mall, and in the districts north of the municipality.

Urban spread in Vancouver is unique because it is influenced by the area's mountainous terrain and the presence of the SkyTrain, which was built for Expo'86. Most of the development over the last few decades has taken place in municipalities to the south and east, such as Burnaby, Surrey and Coquitlam, as population growth in municipalities north of Vancouver is restricted by the mountains.

The development of efficient road or public transit infrastructure is a major factor in urban spread. In recent years, such infrastructure has led to rapid expansion for some small towns on the fringes of larger metropolitan areas. A case in point is the town of St-Jean-sur-Richelieu near the Montréal CMA. The rapid growth of such small towns in rural areas surrounding metropolitan centres is another recent manifestation of urban spread.



## Portrait of mid-size urban centres

### Seven of the eight mid-size urban centres with a population growth of more than 10% are in Alberta

In addition to its 33 census metropolitan areas, urban Canada has 111 mid-size urban centres (census agglomerations – see box), regions that have an urban core with a population of more than 10,000 but are not CMAs.

A mid-size urban centre, or census agglomeration (CA), is an urban area that has an urban core with a population of at least 10,000, but is not a CMA. Canada now has 111 CAs, down from 113 in 2001. Six CAs have become CMAs since 2001: Barrie, Guelph, Brantford and Peterborough (Ontario); Moncton (New Brunswick); and Kelowna (British Columbia). Eight new CAs were established: Bay Roberts (Newfoundland and Labrador); Canmore (Alberta); Centre Wellington, Ingersoll and Temiskaming Shores (Ontario); Miramichi (New Brunswick); Okotoks (Alberta); and Salmon Arm (British Columbia). Three 2001 CAs were no longer CAs in 2006: Gander and Labrador City (Newfoundland and Labrador); and Haileybury (Ontario). The Magog (Quebec) CA is now part of the Sherbrooke CMA.

In the 2006 Census, some 4.1 million people were living in these mid-size urban centres, compared with 3.9 million five years earlier. This amounts to a growth rate of 4.0% over five years, which is below the national average (+5.4%) and less than half the average for all CMAs (+6.9%).

**Table 6 Mid-size urban centres with the fastest population growth since 2001**

Order	Mid-size urban centres	Province	2001	2006	Growth (in percentage)
1	Okotoks	Alberta	11,689	17,145	46.7
2	Wood Buffalo	Alberta	42,581	52,643	23.6
3	Grande Prairie	Alberta	58,787	71,868	22.3
4	Red Deer	Alberta	67,829	82,772	22.0
5	Yellowknife	Northwest Territories	16,541	18,700	13.1
6	Lloydminster	Saskatchewan / Alberta	23,964	27,023	12.8
7	Canmore	Alberta	10,792	12,039	11.6
8	Medicine Hat	Alberta	61,735	68,822	11.5
9	Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu	Quebec	79,600	87,492	9.9
10	Joliette	Quebec	39,720	43,595	9.8
11	Chilliwack	British Columbia	74,003	80,892	9.3
11	Fort St. John	British Columbia	23,007	25,136	9.3
13	Parksville	British Columbia	24,285	26,518	9.2
14	Lethbridge	Alberta	87,388	95,196	8.9
14	Courtenay	British Columbia	45,205	49,214	8.9
16	Granby	Quebec	63,069	68,352	8.4
17	Nanaimo	British Columbia	85,664	92,361	7.8
17	Collingwood	Ontario	16,039	17,290	7.8
17	Kawartha Lakes	Ontario	69,179	74,561	7.8
20	Vernon	British Columbia	51,530	55,418	7.5
21	Centre Wellington	Ontario	24,260	26,049	7.4
22	Drummondville	Quebec	72,778	78,108	7.3
23	Ingersoll	Ontario	10,977	11,760	7.1
24	Whitehorse	Yukon	21,405	22,898	7.0
25	Woodstock	Ontario	33,269	35,480	6.6

Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 2001 and 2006



Eight mid-size urban centres had a growth rate of more than 10%, twice the rate for Canada as a whole. Seven of them were in Alberta: Okotoks, Wood Buffalo, Grande Prairie, Red Deer, Lloydminster, Canmore and Medicine Hat. The top four had rates of growth twice to four times the Alberta provincial rate. A flourishing job market and rising incomes in Alberta continued to attract many workers, increasing the province's population and, therefore, the population of its regions, at a pace unmatched anywhere else in Canada.

Of the other mid-size urban centres on the list of the 25 fastest-growing CAs since 2001, 12 are located less than 100 kilometres from the boundaries of the Montréal, Toronto and Vancouver CMAs. Six are in British Columbia (Chilliwack, Fort St. John, Parksville, Courtenay, Nanaimo and Vernon), five are in Ontario (Collingwood, Kawartha Lakes, Centre Wellington, Ingersoll and Woodstock) and four are in Quebec (St-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Joliette, Granby and Drummondville).

**Table 7 Mid-size urban centres with the fastest population decline since 2001**

Order	Mid-size urban centres	Province	2001	2006	Decline (in percentage)
1	Kitimat	British Columbia	10,285	8,987	-12.6
2	Prince Rupert	British Columbia	15,302	13,392	-12.5
3	Quesnel	British Columbia	24,426	22,449	-8.1
4	Terrace	British Columbia	19,980	18,581	-7.0
5	Williams Lake	British Columbia	19,768	18,760	-5.1
6	Campbellton	New Brunswick / Quebec	18,820	17,888	-5.0
7	North Battleford	Saskatchewan	18,590	17,765	-4.4
8	Kenora	Ontario	15,838	15,177	-4.2
9	Elliot Lake	Ontario	11,956	11,549	-3.4
9	Bathurst	New Brunswick	32,523	31,424	-3.4
11	Edmundston	New Brunswick	22,173	21,442	-3.3
12	Cape Breton	Nova Scotia	109,330	105,928	-3.1
13	La Tuque	Quebec	15,725	15,293	-2.7
14	Thetford Mines	Quebec	26,721	26,107	-2.3
15	Dolbeau-Mistassini	Quebec	14,879	14,546	-2.2
16	Prince George	British Columbia	85,035	83,225	-2.1
16	Miramichi	New Brunswick	25,274	24,737	-2.1
16	Amos	Quebec	18,302	17,918	-2.1
19	Baie-Comeau	Quebec	30,401	29,808	-2.0
20	Prince Albert	Saskatchewan	41,460	40,766	-1.7
21	Timmins	Ontario	43,686	42,997	-1.6
22	Estevan	Saskatchewan	11,297	11,135	-1.4
23	New Glasgow	Nova Scotia	36,735	36,288	-1.2
24	Alma	Quebec	32,930	32,603	-1.0
24	Matane	Quebec	16,597	16,438	-1.0

Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of Population, 2001 and 2006

Most mid-size urban centres whose population declined since 2001 are located in areas whose economy depends partly or completely on the exploitation of natural resources, especially forests. For example, the CAs with the fastest-declining populations are all in northern British Columbia (Kitimat, Prince Rupert, Quesnel, Terrace and Williams Lake), in a region dependent on the forestry industry.

## Portrait of small towns, rural areas and the territories

Canada's population in small towns and rural areas grew by 1.0% between 2001 and 2006, after declining by 0.4% in the previous intercensal period. In 2006, just under 20% of Canadians (6.0 million people) were living in rural areas, that is, in areas located outside urban centres with a population of at least 10,000.

Growth in rural areas was not ubiquitous and did not occur in every province. For example, the rural populations of the four Atlantic provinces and Saskatchewan declined since 2001. In Newfoundland and Labrador, the rural population shrank by more than 5% between 2001 and 2006. As the population of the St. John's CMA grew by 4.7% over the same period, the sharp decrease in the rural population is responsible for the decline in the province's total population (-1.5%).



Apart from the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, Alberta experienced the fastest-growing rural population between 2001 and 2006 (+3.8%). Even so, this rate of growth was still below the national average.

### Rural growth often depends on proximity to large urban centres

There are two types of rural areas: those close to urban centres, and those which are more remote. In rural areas close to urban centres, more than 30% of the labour force commutes to work in the urban centre.

In these rural areas, population growth between 2001 and 2006 (+4.7%) was close to the national average (+5.4%). Population growth in such locations is often associated with the presence of small towns that are easily accessible by highway from an urban centre.

In remote rural areas located farther from urban centres, the population remained nearly the same as in 2001 (-0.1%). These areas for example also lost population in the previous intercensal period. The lack of growth in such areas is often due to the fact that young adults move to metropolitan areas to pursue their education or find a job.

**Table 8 Population growth by region type, 2001 to 2006**

Regions	2001	2006	Growth (in percentage)
Metropolitan areas (CMA) and mid-size urban centres (CA)	24,084,698	25,631,557	6.4
Total of rural regions and small towns	5,922,396	5,981,340	1.0
Rural regions close to urban centres	1,289,265	1,350,098	4.7
Remote rural regions	4,578,298	4,571,530	-0.1
Territories	54,833	59,712	8.9
Canada	30,007,094	31,612,897	5.4

Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 2001 and 2006

## Growth of Canada's small towns and rural communities

Of the 25 fastest-growing small towns and rural communities since 2001, 14 are located less than 50 kilometres from Montréal, Toronto or Vancouver. Six others are found close to another CMA.



Sylvan Lake, near Red Deer, Alberta, is the fastest-growing small town since 2001, at 36.1%. It also grew by 44.5% between 1996 and 2001. Another small town in the region that experienced a rapid increase in population in the 2001 to 2006 period is Lacombe, north of Red Deer (+14.5%).

Strathmore (+34.2%) and Foothills No. 31 (+18.9%), towns to the east and south of Calgary, also experienced rapid population growth over the last five years. Strathmore had a very high growth rate in the previous intercensal period as well (+43.4%).

No fewer than nine of the 25 fastest-growing small towns were in Quebec, most of them north of Montréal in the Laurentians such as Prévost, Chertsey and Ste-Adèle. This area boasts many resort locations and continues to be a major attraction for those who may wish to relocate to these small towns.

Also on the list were other resort locations that are close to major urban centres and attractive to their residents, such as Wasaga Beach, on the shores of Georgian Bay, and Galway-Cavendish and Harvey, north of Peterborough, Ontario.

**Table 9 Small towns and rural communities with the fastest population growth since 2001**

Order	Small towns and rural communities	Proximity to an urban centre	Province	2001	2006	Growth (in percentage)
1	Sylvan Lake	Adjacent	Alberta	7,503	10,208	36.1
2	Strathmore	Remote	Alberta	7,621	10,225	34.2
3	Stanley	Remote	Manitoba	5,122	6,367	24.3
4	Prévost	Remote	Quebec	8,280	10,132	22.4
5	Shelburne	Adjacent	Ontario	4,213	5,149	22.2
6	Chertsey	Adjacent	Quebec	4,112	5,006	21.7
7	Wasaga Beach	Adjacent	Ontario	12,419	15,029	21.0
8	Galway-Cavendish and Harvey	Adjacent	Ontario	4,372	5,284	20.9
9	Nanaimo F	Adjacent	British Columbia	5,546	6,680	20.4
10	Lakeland County	Remote	Alberta	5,306	6,365	20.0
11	Steinbach	Remote	Manitoba	9,227	11,066	19.9
12	Saint-Hippolyte	Adjacent	Quebec	6,039	7,219	19.5
13	Tiny	Adjacent	Ontario	9,035	10,784	19.4
14	Foothills No. 31	Adjacent	Alberta	16,602	19,736	18.9
15	Capital G	Remote	British Columbia	4,307	5,101	18.4
16	Iqaluit	Remote	Nunavut	5,236	6,184	18.1
17	Rawdon	Remote	Quebec	8,648	10,058	16.3
18	Saint-Calixte	Adjacent	Quebec	4,912	5,687	15.8
19	Shefford	Adjacent	Quebec	5,133	5,941	15.7
20	Sainte-Sophie	Adjacent	Quebec	8,966	10,355	15.5
21	Sainte-Adèle	Remote	Quebec	9,215	10,634	15.4
22	Wilmot	Adjacent	Ontario	14,866	17,097	15.0
23	Winkler	Remote	Manitoba	7,943	9,106	14.6
24	Lacombe	Remote	Alberta	9,384	10,742	14.5
25	Saint-Lin-Laurentides	Adjacent	Quebec	12,379	14,159	14.4

Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 2001 and 2006

In contrast, all of the 25 fastest-declining small towns and rural communities were located far from large urban centres. A number of them were in the northern part of their province, such as Kapuskasing, Ontario, La Sarre, Quebec, and Flin Flon, Manitoba. Others were located in more mountainous areas, such as Banff and Crowsnest Pass, Alberta, and Trail and Kimberley, British Columbia. Still others were in agricultural areas, such as Oromocto, New Brunswick, or close to the ocean, such as Marystown, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Yarmouth, Nova Scotia.



Table 10 Small towns and rural communities with the fastest population decline since 2001

Order	Small towns and rural communities	Proximity to an urban centre	Province	2001	2006	Growth (in percentage)
1	Crowsnest Pass	Remote	Alberta	6,262	5,749	-8.2
2	Marystown	Remote	Newfoundland and Labrador	5,908	5,436	-8.0
3	Kapuskasing	Remote	Ontario	9,238	8,509	-7.9
4	Kenora, Unorganized	Remote	Ontario	7,631	7,041	-7.7
5	Stephenville	Remote	Newfoundland and Labrador	7,109	6,588	-7.3
6	Bulkley-Nechako A	Remote	British Columbia	5,696	5,290	-7.1
7	Inverness, Subd. B	Remote	Nova Scotia	5,769	5,369	-6.9
8	Flin Flon (Part)	Remote	Manitoba	6,000	5,594	-6.8
9	Melfort	Remote	Saskatchewan	5,559	5,192	-6.6
10	Labrador City	Remote	Newfoundland and Labrador	7,744	7,240	-6.5
10	Algoma, Unorganized, North Part	Remote	Ontario	6,114	5,717	-6.5
12	Alnwick	Remote	New Brunswick	6,566	6,152	-6.3
13	Banff	Remote	Alberta	7,135	6,700	-6.1
14	Kimberley	Remote	British Columbia	6,484	6,139	-5.3
14	Yarmouth	Adjacent	Nova Scotia	7,561	7,162	-5.3
16	La Sarre	Remote	Quebec	7,728	7,336	-5.1
17	Parry Sound	Remote	Ontario	6,124	5,818	-5.0
17	Oromocto	Remote	New Brunswick	8,843	8,402	-5.0
17	Happy Valley-Goose Bay	Remote	Newfoundland and Labrador	7,969	7,572	-5.0
20	Antigonish, Subd. B	Remote	Nova Scotia	6,819	6,509	-4.5
20	Chibougamau	Remote	Quebec	7,922	7,563	-4.5
20	Trail	Remote	British Columbia	7,575	7,237	-4.5
23	Chandler	Remote	Quebec	8,278	7,914	-4.4
24	Castlegar	Remote	British Columbia	7,585	7,259	-4.3
24	Kirkland Lake	Remote	Ontario	8,616	8,248	-4.3

Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 2001 and 2006

## Small towns and communities in the territories

Yukon Territory, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut together encompass more than a third of Canada's territory, which makes them larger in area than most countries, including Mexico and India. Those vast spaces remain sparsely populated, however. In 2006, nearly 97% of the territories' 101,310 residents occupied a mere 0.5% of their huge land mass.



Nearly half (47%) of the territories' population was living in one of the three capital cities in 2006. About 75% of Yukon Territory's population was in Whitehorse, 45% of the Northwest Territories' population was in Yellowknife, and 21% of Nunavut's population was in Iqaluit. Those proportions are up, as the three capital cities grew faster (an average of 10.7%) than the rest of the territories (+7.9%).

Statistics Canada makes every effort to enumerate Canadians accurately in the census. Some regions may present greater challenges than others. The statistics for the Northwest Territories must be used with caution, as its net undercoverage in the 2001 Census (8.11%) was higher than the national average (2.99%). Because of the improved coverage of the Northwest Territories in 2006, population growth for the 2001 to 2006 period is probably overstated.



The populations of a number of other towns, villages and hamlets in the territories are growing rapidly. Examples include Inuvik and Behchokò in the Mackenzie River Basin (Northwest Territories) and Igloolik, on the shore of the Arctic islands (Nunavut). Their populations grew by about 20% between the 2001 and 2006 censuses, nearly four times as fast as Canada's total population.

Almost all of the territorial communities with a population of more than 1,000 saw an increase in residents since 2001. The high fertility of the large Aboriginal population is the main growth factor.



## Notes

### 1. 2006 Census

The objective of a census is to provide detailed information at a single point in time on the demographic, social and economic conditions of the population. In this respect, one of its goals is to enumerate the entire population.

Inevitably, however, some people are not counted, either because their household did not receive a census questionnaire (for example, if a structurally separate dwelling is not easily identifiable) or because they were not included in the questionnaire completed for the household (for example, the omission of a boarder or a lodger). Some people may also be missed because they have no usual residence and did not spend census night in any dwelling.

In contrast, a small number of people may also be counted more than once (for example, a student living away from home may have been enumerated by his parents and by himself at his student address).

To determine how many individuals were missed or counted more than once, Statistics Canada conducts postcensal coverage studies of a representative sample of individuals.

Results of these studies, in combination with the census counts, are used to produce current population estimates which take into account net undercoverage.

In 2001, after these adjustments, the population estimate for Canada was 3.1% higher than the population enumerated in the census.

Postcensal coverage study results are usually available two (2) years after enumeration date. For the 2006 Census, preliminary postcensal study results will be released in March 2008. Final estimates of coverage error will be made available in September 2008. They will be used to revise and update the population estimates based on 2006 Census results.

## 2. Differences between urban/rural and metropolitan/non-metropolitan populations

Statistics Canada makes a distinction between the urban/rural concept and the metropolitan/non-metropolitan concept. In this report, the metropolitan/non-metropolitan concept is used unless otherwise noted.

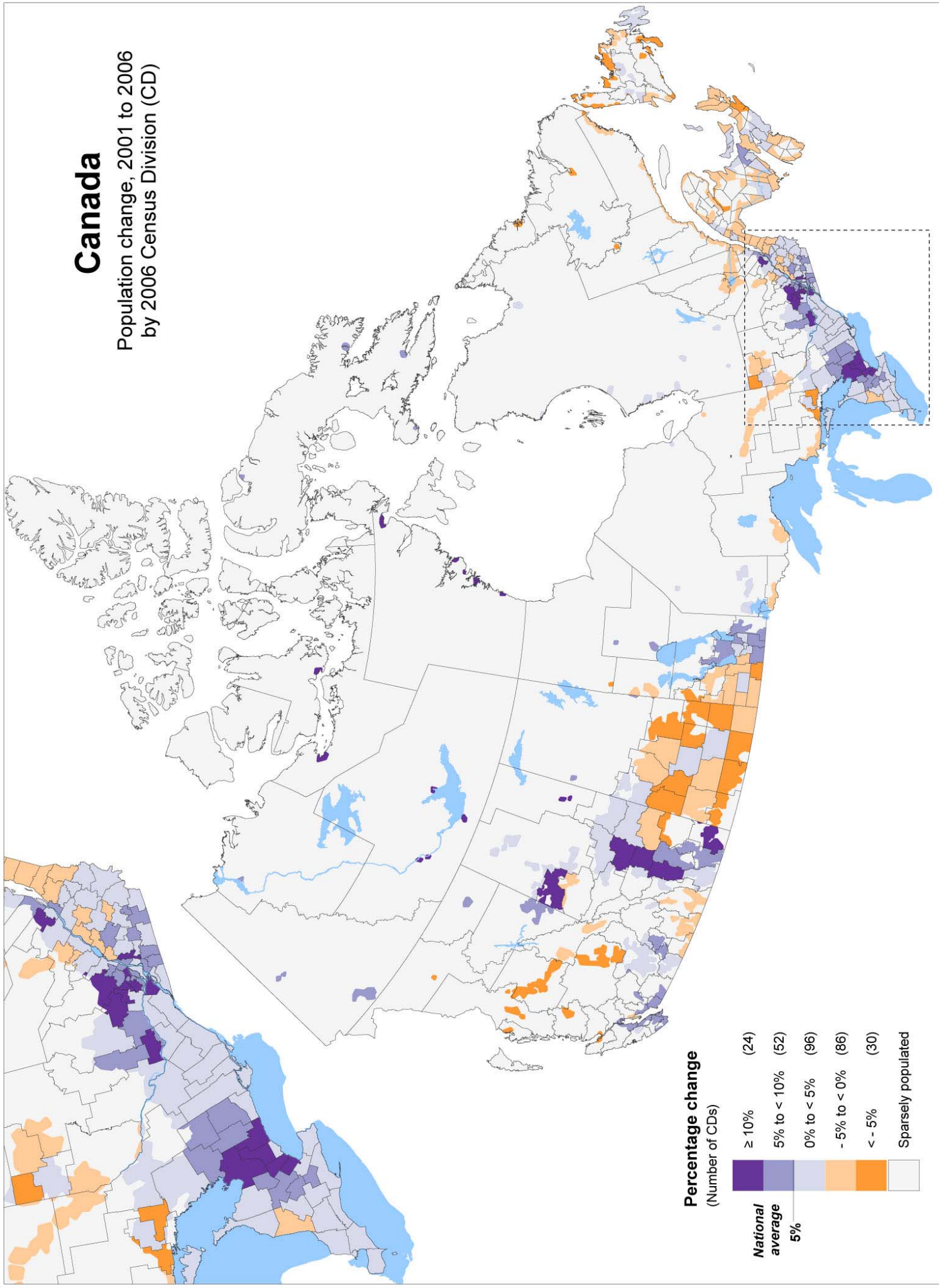
Urban areas have minimum population concentrations of 1,000 and a population density of at least 400 per square kilometre. Rural areas include all territory outside urban areas.

Metropolitan areas include census metropolitan areas (CMAs) and census agglomerations (CAs). They contain an urban core with a population of at least 10,000 and adjacent municipalities that have a high degree of integration with the urban core. The degree of integration depends on the percentage of commuters based on workplace data from the previous census.

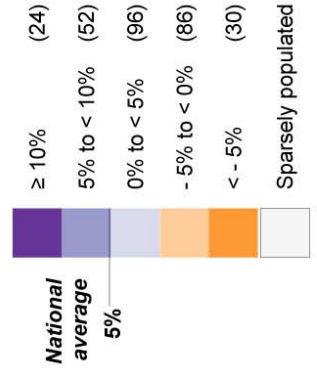
Some areas that meet the urban criteria are located outside metropolitan areas. Conversely, some metropolitan areas contain rural areas.

# Canada

Population change, 2001 to 2006  
by 2006 Census Division (CD)

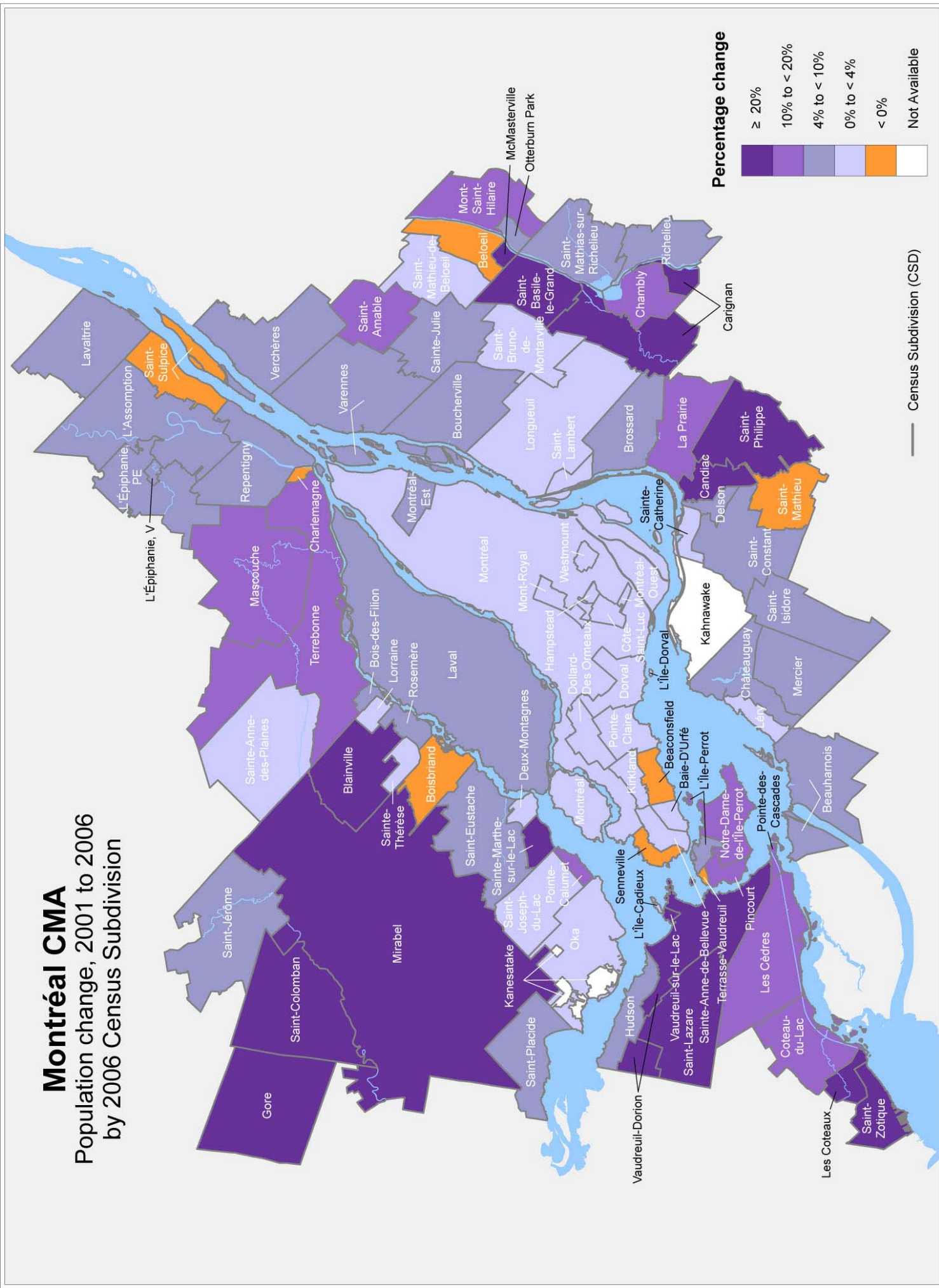


**Percentage change**  
(Number of CDs)



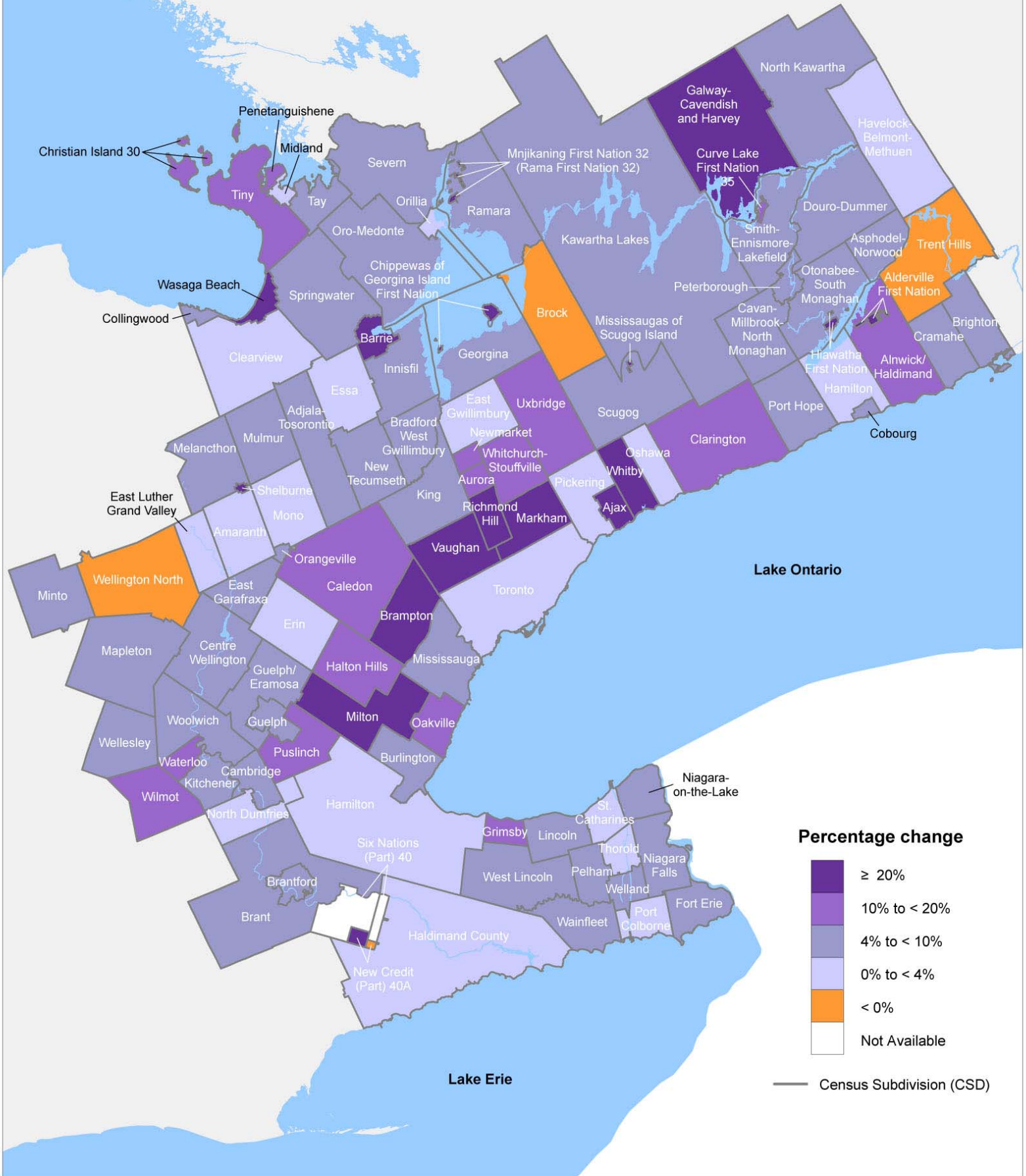
# Montréal CMA

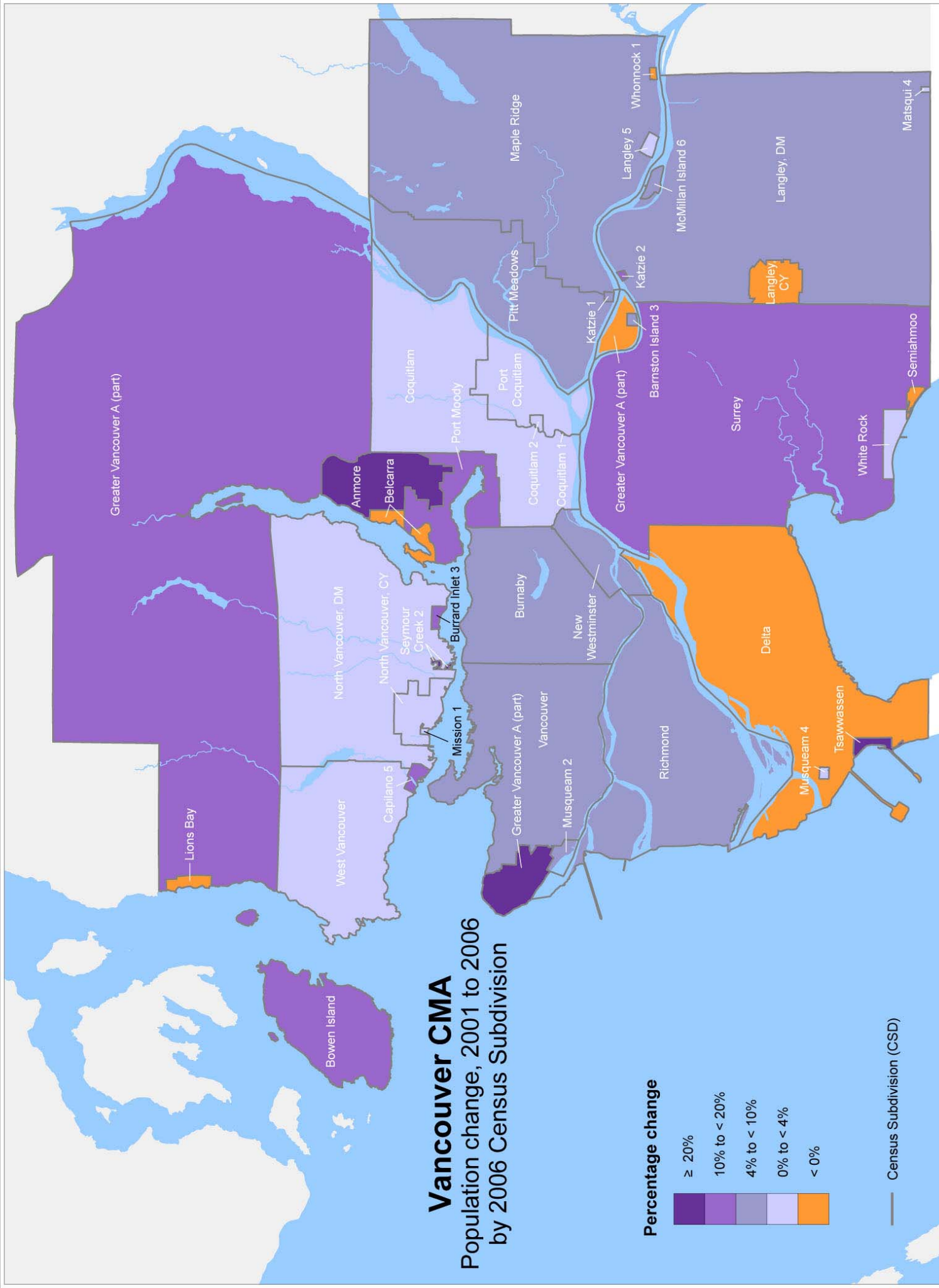
## Population change, 2001 to 2006 by 2006 Census Subdivision



# Greater Golden Horseshoe

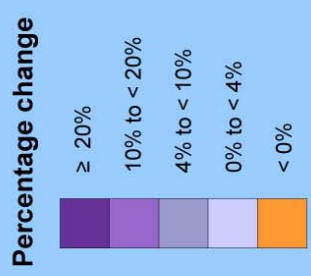
## Population change, 2001 to 2006 by 2006 Census Subdivision





# Vancouver CMA

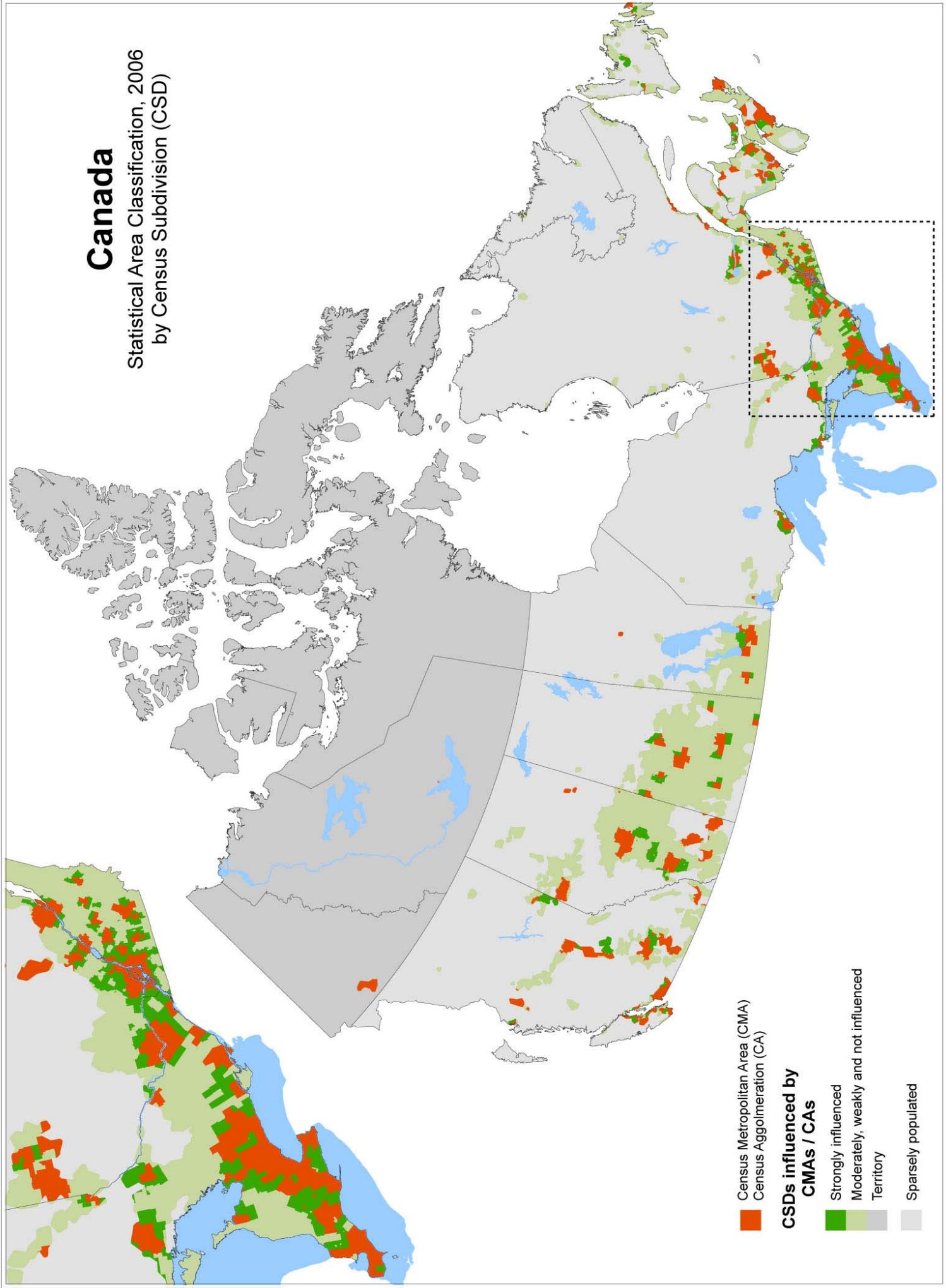
## Population change, 2001 to 2006 by 2006 Census Subdivision



— Census Subdivision (CSD)

# Canada

Statistical Area Classification, 2006  
by Census Subdivision (CSD)



Source: 2006 Census of Canada. Produced by the Geography Division, Statistics Canada, 2007.