

**To:** Mayor and Members of Council

**From:** Zaryab Ahmad, Economic Development Officer, Burlington Economic Development  
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**Cc:** Anita Cassidy, Executive Director, Burlington Economic Development  
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Brynn Nheiley, Executive Director of Community Planning, Regulation and Mobility  
Tim Commisso, City Manager

**Date:** January 23, 2023

**Re:** 2021 Census Release: Immigration, Place of Birth & Citizenship, Ethnocultural & Religious Diversity, and Mobility & Migration

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This memo presents the 2021 Census release on citizenship and immigration, ethnocultural and religious composition, and mobility and migration data for the City of Burlington. The memo was jointly prepared by Burlington Economic Development and Community Planning to present the latest data in one comprehensive document while providing some analysis relevant to the interests of each department.

## **Background**

On October 26, 2022, Statistics Canada released the 2021 Census data on Immigration, Place of Birth & Citizenship, Ethnocultural & Religious Diversity, and Mobility & Migration. This was the sixth release of 2021 Census data. The final census data release was published on November 30<sup>th</sup> (Education, Labour, Language of work, Commuting, Instruction in the official minority language). The Census of Canada commenced in May 2021, during a global pandemic, with Statistics Canada reporting an overall response rate of 98.3% for Ontario.

### Previous Census Release Memos:

February 25, 2022: [Population and Dwelling Counts](#)  
June 30, 2022: [Age, Sex at Birth and Gender, and Types of Dwellings](#)  
July 13, 2022: [Income, Canadian Military Experience, and Families, Households & Marital Status](#)  
October 28, 2022: [Language](#)  
December 9, 2022: [First Nations peoples, Metis and Inuit in Canada & Canada's Housing Portrait](#)

## 2021 Census Highlights:

- While Burlington has historically had lower rates of immigration compared to surrounding municipalities, growth in the number of immigrant residents in Burlington is increasing. Since 1980, the largest group of immigrants to settle in Burlington within a 10-year period did so in the last decade, at 11,020 new immigrant residents. This is a 16% increase compared to the previous decade.
- The majority (59%) of immigrants in Burlington are economic immigrants, or those who have been selected for their ability to contribute to Canada's economy through their ability to meet Canadian labour market needs. To continue this trend and boost the local economy through skilled talent attraction, Burlington Economic Development offers immigration support to employers through several programs, including the [Soft-Landing Program](#) at TechPlace, [Acceleration+](#), and the [Global Skills Strategy](#) initiative.

## Census Immigration, Place of Birth, and Citizenship:

### Immigration Status:

Over 47,000 (or 26%) of Burlington's 186,948 residents are foreign-born, 73% are Canadian-born, and the remaining 1% are non-permanent residents. Historically, the largest group (30%) of immigrants in Burlington arrived in Canada before 1980. Since 1980, the largest group of immigrants to arrive within a 10-year period did so in the last decade; between 2011 and 2021. During this period, over 11,000 of Burlington's residents came to Canada, with nearly 6,000 (12.6% of the total immigrant population) arriving within the last five years. This is larger than the overall net population growth in the city during the same period (+3,643 people).

Burlington Immigrant Residents by Period of Immigration

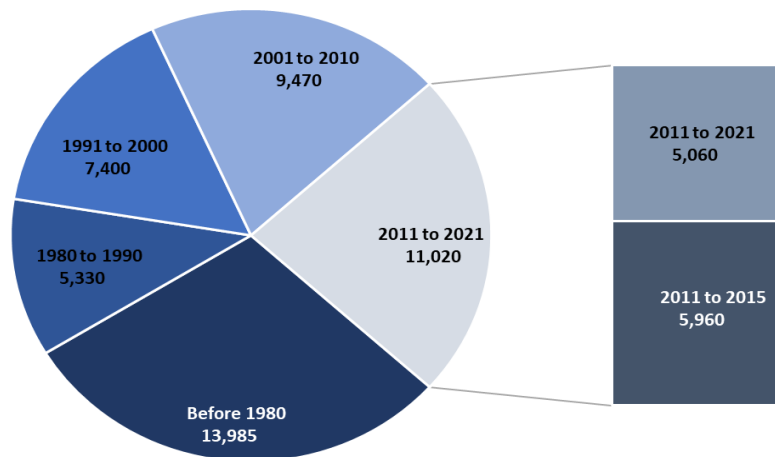


Figure 1: Number of immigrant residents in Burlington by period of immigration reported in 2021.

Compared to the rest of Halton Region, Burlington has the second smallest proportion of immigrants after Halton Hills. When isolating the immigrant population in each municipality, immigrants in Burlington were the second most likely to hold Canadian citizenship after Halton Hills, at 75% and 80% respectively.

## Immigrant vs. Non-Immigrant Status across Halton Region municipalities

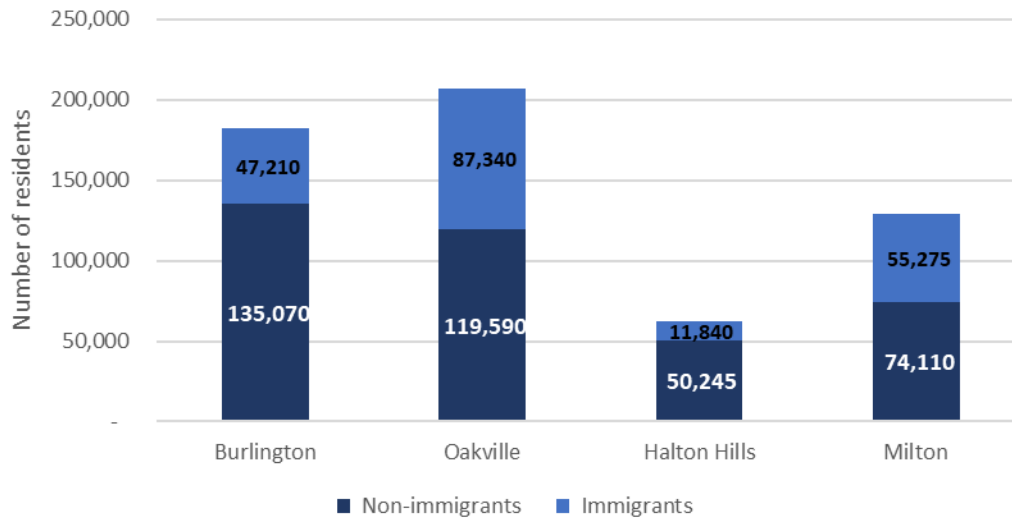


Figure 2: Number of residents across Halton Region municipalities reporting immigrant vs. non-immigrant status in 2021.

Compared to the previous decade (i.e., 2001-2010), the number of immigrant residents in Burlington has increased by 16.3% in the 2011-2021 period. The [Housing Needs and Opportunities Report](#), published in December 2021 considers immigration as one of the factors that will fuel the need for housing in the City and recommends providing housing options that support the housing needs of this segment of the population. Providing housing that meets the needs of all residents including new residents in addition to other required services to recent immigrant residents will build community and support creating a positive sense of place, inclusivity, and community in Burlington as an Engaging City.

### Generational Status:

Nearly half of Burlington residents are *third-generation or more immigrants* (i.e., those born in Canada with all parents born in Canada). Comparatively, 28% of residents are first-generation immigrants, and 25% are second-generation. The number and proportion of first-generation immigrant residents have increased since 2011 (+11,200 residents and +30%). Conversely, the number and proportion of third-generation or more residents have steadily decreased over the same period (-4,300 and -5%). As with the immigration status indicators for residents across Halton Region, Burlington ranks third after Milton and Oakville in attracting first-generation immigrants.

### Place of Birth:

Among all 47,000 members of Burlington’s immigrant population, the most common places of birth are the United Kingdom (17%), India (10%), and the Philippines (5%). Of this group, nearly 6,000 are *recent immigrants* (i.e., those who landed after 2016). The top places of birth reported for this group were India (25%), the Philippines (7%), and Egypt and China (5% each). In terms of growth in the number of immigrants compared to other Halton Region municipalities, Burlington ranked third after Oakville and Milton in attracting recent immigrants during the 2016-2021 period; attracting approximately 15,500 and 9,000 immigrants, respectively, compared to Burlington’s 6,000.

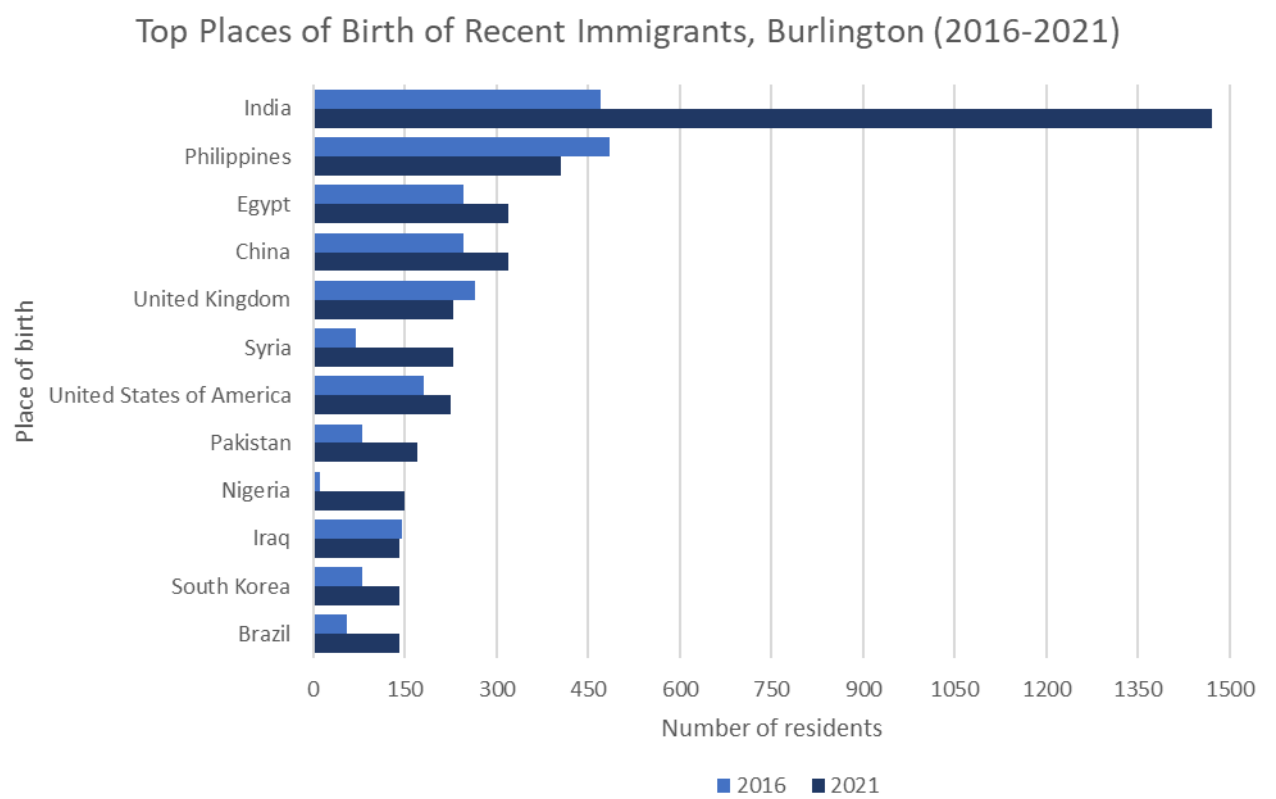


Figure 3: A comparison of the most frequently reported places of birth by recent immigrants in Burlington, listed in order based on 2021 ranking. 2016 numbers reflect recent immigrants that landed in Canada between 2011 and 2016.

#### Admission Category:

The 2021 Census was the second time that Statistics Canada released information on immigrants by *admission category*. This refers to the name of the immigration program under which an immigrant has first been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. The four main admission categories include economic immigrants<sup>1</sup>, “family-class” immigrants<sup>2</sup>, refugees<sup>3</sup>, and other immigrants<sup>4</sup>. Data reported here includes information on all immigrants admitted between 1980 and 2021, representing 33,200 Burlington residents.

The majority (59%) of immigrants in Burlington were admitted as economic immigrants. This group is followed by family-class immigrants (26%), refugees (14%) and other immigrants (1%). Between 2016 and 2021, there were no significant changes in the proportion of each immigration admission category, aside from a slight reduction (-3%) in the proportion of family-class immigrants.

<sup>1</sup> “Economic immigrants” includes immigrants who have been selected for their ability to contribute to Canada’s economy through their ability to meet labour market needs, to own and manage or to build a business, to make a substantial investment, to create their own employment, or to meet specific provincial or territorial labour market needs.

<sup>2</sup> “Family-class immigrants” refers to immigrants who were sponsored by a Canadian citizen or permanent resident and were granted permanent resident status on the basis of their relationship either as the spouse, partner, parent, grandparent, child, or other relative of this sponsor.

<sup>3</sup> “Refugees” includes immigrants who were granted permanent resident status on the basis of a well-founded fear of returning to their home country.

<sup>4</sup> “Other immigrants” includes immigrants who were granted permanent resident status under a program that does not fall under the economic immigrants, family-class, or refugee categories.

## Burlington Immigrants by Admission Category (2021)

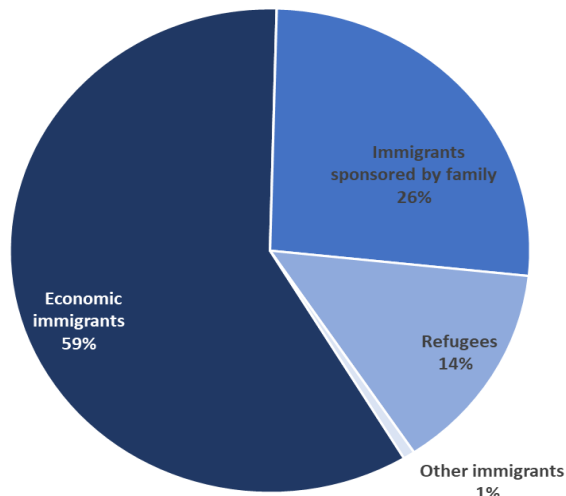


Figure 4: The share of Burlington immigrants who landed in Canada between 1980 and 2021 by admission category.

In its efforts to attract international companies looking to expand into the Canadian market, Burlington Economic Development offers several support programs to streamline immigration for economic immigrants.

- The [Soft-Landing Program](#) offered to international companies includes access to private offices at TechPlace, the opportunity to network with local businesses and post-secondary institutions and receive immigration support.
- Burlington Economic Development is also a designated partner of the [Global Skills Strategy](#) (GSS) initiative, introduced by the Canadian government to help innovative local and international businesses fill gaps in its workforce from abroad. The GSS attracts and expedites the entry of highly skilled and specialized talent in select occupations so that companies making significant contributions to the Canadian economy through investment and/or job creation can grow and scale here.
- Last year, Haltech (Halton Region), TechPlace (led by Burlington Economic Development) and Innovation Factory formed a partnership with LatAm Startups to promote economic growth in Southwestern Ontario through [Acceleration+](#). This program will provide specialized resources to high-potential startups designed to help them enter the Canadian market, create new jobs, and promote economic returns. In addition to providing office space, services, and programming available through the three organizations, companies will be provided with immigration and visa support to boost the local knowledge economy.

## Census Ethnocultural and Religious Diversity:

### Ethnic Origin:

In Burlington, the three most frequently reported ethnic origins in 2021 were English, Scottish, and Irish. Together these groups account for 61% of Burlington's population. These three groups also account for the largest ethnic origin groups in Halton Hills (65% total) and Oakville (38%). Conversely, Milton's most frequently reported ethnic origins were Pakistani, English, and Indian. Across Halton Region, people of English, Scottish and Irish ethnic origin account for 46% of the population.

### Visible Minority Population:

Burlington's visible minority population makes up nearly 21% (38,400) of the total population. This is a 33% increase from 2016 (28,800), and an 85% increase from 2011 (20,800). The visible minority population in Burlington is significantly younger than Burlington's overall population. In 2021, Burlington's overall median age was 43.6 years, whereas the median age of the visible minority population was 36 years. Between 2016 and 2021, the median age of the visible minority population grew at the same rate as the overall population (+5% or 2 years).

In 2021, the largest visible minority group in Burlington was South Asian, with nearly 12,000 people representing 6.5% of the total population. This was also the fastest growing visible minority group in absolute numbers compared to 2011 when there were 6,300 people reporting as South Asian, representing 3.6% of Burlington’s residents. The second and third largest visible minority groups identified as Black (2.5%) and Chinese (2.4%). Compared to other Halton Region municipalities, Burlington has a significantly smaller visible minority population than Milton (55%) and Oakville (42.5%) but ranks higher than Halton Hills (13.5%).

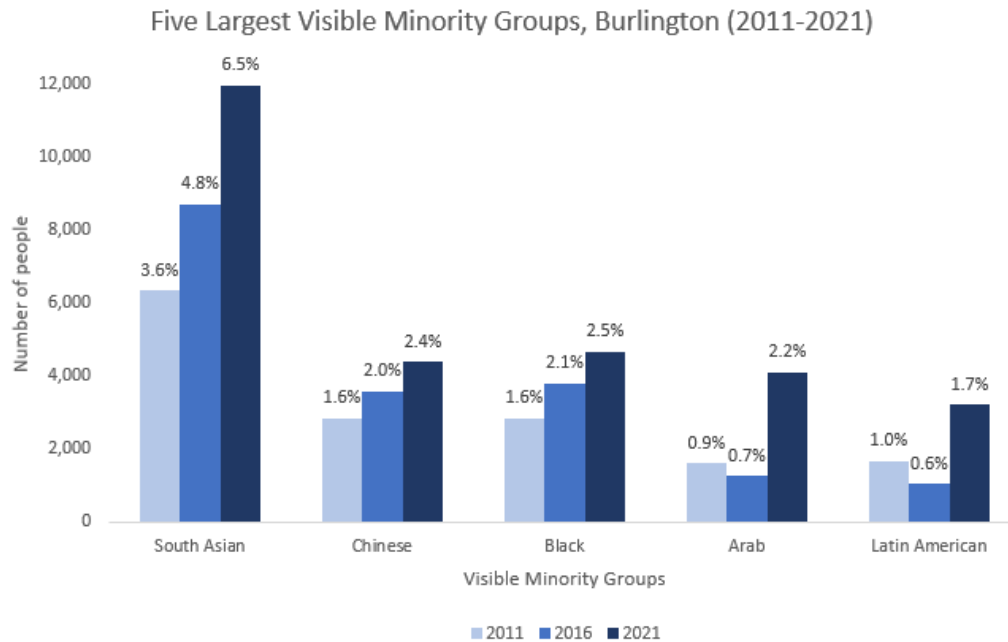


Figure 5: The five largest visible minority groups in Burlington between the 2011 and 2021 census periods. Percentages reflect the proportion of Burlington’s total population that each visible minority group comprises.

**Religion:**

In terms of religion, the most reported belief system across all of Halton Region’s municipalities was Christianity, specifically Catholicism, followed by atheism. In Burlington, 58% of residents reported being Christian, with 29.4% reported as Catholic. Nearly one-third of Burlington’s population declared no religion or secular perspectives; this is the highest proportion reported across Halton Region.

**Census Mobility and Migration:**

The 2021 Census information on mobility<sup>5</sup> and migration compares the status of individuals’ place of residence on the reference day May 11, 2021, in relation to their place of residence on the same date one and five years earlier. Detailed information on in- and out-migration is not published at the municipal level.

The figure below outlines the breakdown of mobility status as presented in the 2021 Census of Population.

<sup>5</sup> Mobility status refers to the status of a person with regard to their place of residence on Census Day (May 11, 2021) in relation to their place of residence on the same date 1 or 5 years earlier. Persons who, on Census Day, lived in the same residence as they did on the same date 1 year or 5 years earlier are referred to as *non-movers*, and persons who, on Census Day, did not live in the same residence as they did 1 or 5 years earlier are referred to as *movers*.

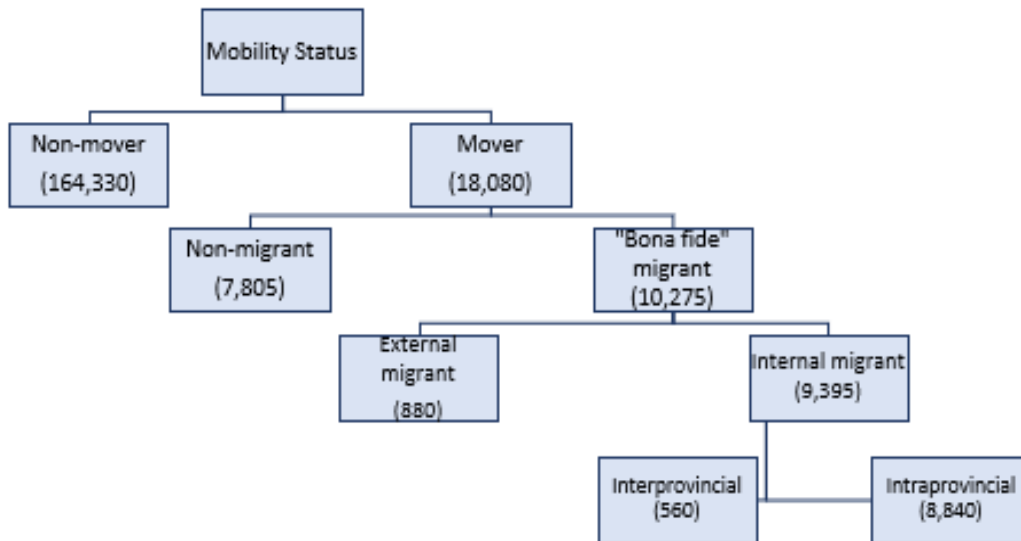


Figure 6: Breakdown of mobility status terminology used by Statistics Canada, with Burlington’s mobility counts included for the 2020-2021 period.

Between 2020 and 2021, 90% of Burlington residents did not move and 10% did. 43% of the movers were *non-migrants*, or people who moved residences, but remained within Burlington. The remaining 56% of the movers were *bona fide migrants*, or people who moved to Burlington. These migrants make up 5.6% of Burlington’s total residents. Of these bona fide migrants, the majority (9,395 people or 5.2%) were *internal migrants*, or people who moved within Canada and largely within Ontario. The remaining 0.5% of residents were *external migrants*, or people who lived outside of Canada in 2020. These numbers are largely similar across Halton Region, with slightly more active mobility seen in Milton.

Between 2016 and 2021, two-thirds of Burlington residents did not move, and the remaining third did. 38,000 (21.7%) of the population were bona fide migrants, with the majority moving to Burlington from within Ontario. Over 6,000 Burlington residents representing 3.4% of the population were external migrants<sup>6</sup>. Compared to the rest of the Halton Region, Burlington had a significantly smaller population of external migrants, trailing far behind Oakville’s 9% and Milton’s 7.4% external migrants.

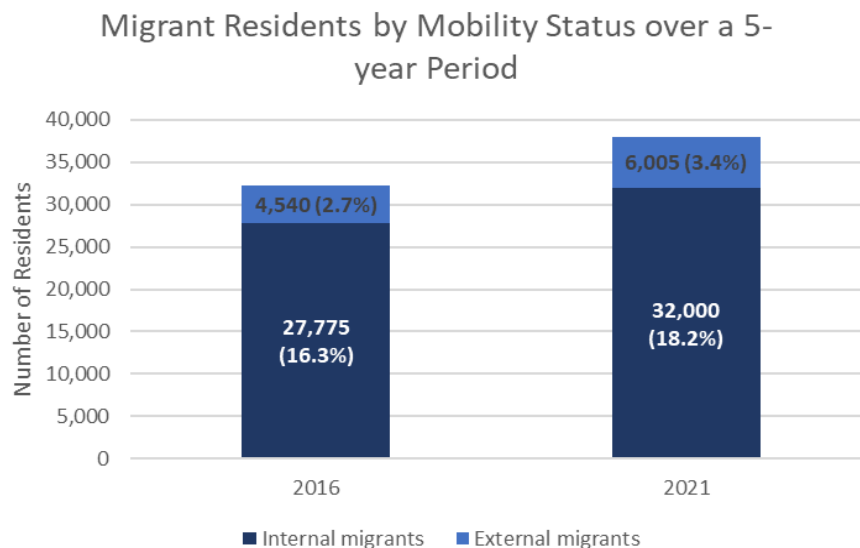


Figure 7: Number of migrant residents who moved to Burlington between 2016 and 2021. 2016 numbers reflect migrant residents that moved to Burlington between 2011 and 2016. Percentage values reflect the proportion of Burlington’s total population that each group accounts for in each census year.

<sup>6</sup> In this case, the term can be used interchangeably with “recent immigrants.”

Burlington's migrant population continues to grow, between 2016 and 2021, 5,700 more migrants moved to Burlington compared to the 2011-2016 period (increased by 18%). Detailed mobility data shows that the number of internal and external migrants has increased by 15% and 32%, respectively. In 2021, over one-fifth of Burlington residents had moved to Burlington within the last five years. As the population of Burlington continues to change and become more diverse, it will become increasingly important for the City to continue to support new resident engagement in Burlington's community and enable the City to provide and improve inclusivity as an engaging City.

## Next Steps

Staff will use this 2021 Census data as well as other data sources to support any growth-related studies and initiatives that would benefit from this data. Staff will update Council on the final 2021 Census data release, as appropriate.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.

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