

Key findings:

- ◆ More than four in ten of Hamilton’s seniors arrived to Canada as immigrants, but the immigration rate drops to 26% among adults under age 65, and 7% among Hamilton’s children.
- ◆ The most common age of arrival to Canada for Hamilton’s immigrants is in or near their 30s, but recently Hamilton has seen a big jump in the number of immigrants arriving at age 45 or later. Services for adults may need to adjust to meet this growing older newcomer population.
- ◆ Top non-English languages spoken at home include Italian, Spanish, Arabic, Polish and Serbian.

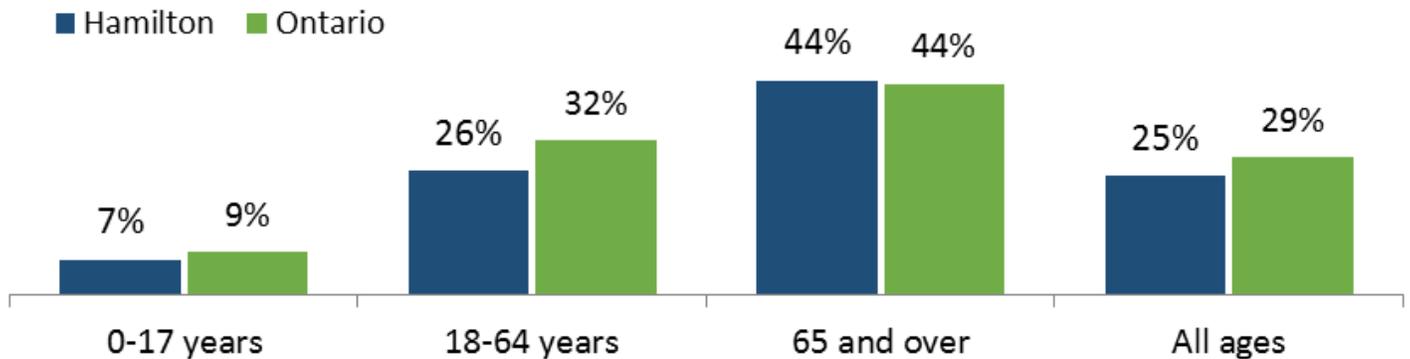
Introduction

The previous *Demographic Shifts* bulletin (issue 12) explored ethnic origin data, including growth in residents identifying Indigenous origins or with visible minority groups. This bulletin examines immigration and language data from the 2011 National Household Survey by age groups to help forecast potential differences that may become more apparent when the 2016 Census data is released next year.

Immigration

While Hamilton is one of the top cities in Canada with a foreign-born population, this is primarily due to strong immigration in the previous century, especially during Hamilton’s “steel rush” era of the 1940s to 1970s. Overall, 25% of Hamilton’s residents were born outside of Canada, but among persons aged 65 and over, the rate rises to 44%. In contrast, only 7% of Hamilton’s children were born outside of Canada. On average, Ontario has a higher proportion of immigrants than Hamilton in its general population (29%, vs. 25%).

Chart 1. Immigrants, by age group, City of Hamilton and Ontario (Statistics Canada, 2011 NHS)

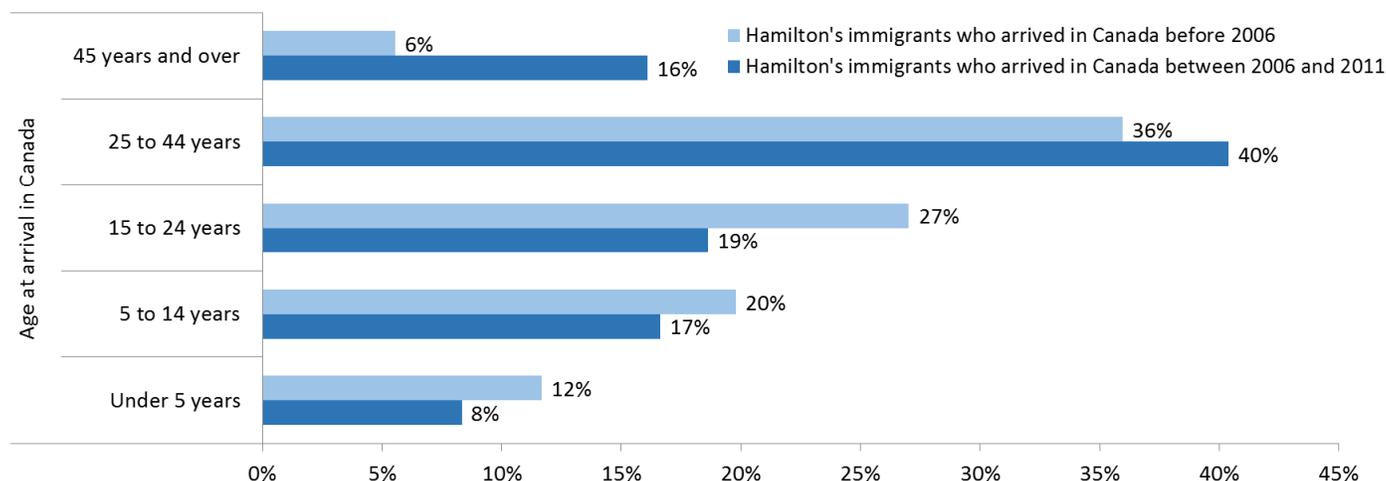


The low percentage of foreign-born children in Chart 1 reflects the fact that most immigrants who come to Canada arrive as adults (Chart 2). In Hamilton, 38% of immigrants arrived when they were in the 25 to 44 year old age group. When age at immigration trends are examined by immigration cohort, the data reveals a recent jump in immigrants arriving as older adults (45 and over). Among Hamilton’s immigrant residents who arrived to Canada before 2006 only 6% came when they were age 45 or older. But among Hamilton’s immigrants who arrived to Canada between 2006 and 2011, 16% were in this age group when they first settled in Canada. There is a corresponding decrease in the proportion of immigrants who are arriving as children and youth.

This aging of the Hamilton’s immigrant population is an important signal to services and programs for older adults that they may need to better tailor their services to meet the settlement needs of a growing population of older adult newcomers in their client base. English as a Second Language training programs may also need to adjust their curriculum to become more relevant and accessible to an older population.



Chart 2. Immigrants by age at arrival in Canada and period of immigration, City of Hamilton (Statistics Canada, 2011 NHS)



Conversely, the declining proportion of immigrants arriving as children belies the fact that the complexity of immigrant children's needs may be increasing. For many years, Hamilton's has welcomed a higher proportion of refugees in its immigrant population than Ontario, and refugees are more likely to arrive to Canada with children than other types of immigrants. Refugee children are more likely to have experienced trauma that may impact their health and potentially interfere with their success at school. Training in how to provide trauma informed services has been shown to improve outcomes for many groups that have faced adverse life events, and may be especially important for staff in the educational sector who support refugee children in their programs and classrooms

Languages

Among Hamilton residents overall (immigrants and non-immigrants combined), about 85% speak most often only English at home. Examining home languages by age group points to changing pattern of non-English languages within the city. Chart 3 shows that Italian continues to be the dominant non-English home language overall, due to high proportion of people aged 65 and over who speak Italian at home (just under 6%). Among working age people (15-64 years old), the top language after English is Spanish, but just 1% of residents are in that group. Among children 14 or younger the most common non-English home language is Arabic, with 1% of Hamilton's children speaking it at home on a regular basis. But even the most common non-English home languages are spoken by relatively few families, as once learned, English quickly becomes dominant among families from various linguistic backgrounds. Even among Hamilton's immigrant families, most of whom are from non-English speaking countries, over half speak only English most often at home (53%), according to the 2011 Census.

Chart 3. Five most common non-English languages spoken most often at home (all residents), by age groups, City of Hamilton (Statistics Canada, 2011 Census)

