

**Key findings:**

- ◆ There has been a steep decline in the number of children in Hamilton since 1996, which has led to the net loss of 32 schools.
- ◆ There is a higher proportion of Millennials in Hamilton compared to Ontario, analogous to the post-war period when the pre-Boomer generation flocked to Hamilton because of its strong economy.
- ◆ The number of seniors in Hamilton has now surpassed the number of children under age 14. The working age population (age 15-64) is now in decline due to the aging of the population and declining rates of immigration.

**Introduction**

This series of *Hamilton's Social Landscape* bulletins, *Demographic Shifts*, will help readers understand the overall demographic landscape in Hamilton and help to forecast potential differences that may become more apparent when the 2016 Census data is finally released next year. The first bulletin (issue 7) in this series gave an overview of the findings from all bulletins and the data sources used for the charts. This bulletin analyses annual population estimates data from Statistics Canada to gain insights into changes in ages and generations in the last two decades.

**Age groups and decline in number of children**

Hamilton's age pyramid continue to show the aging of the population, with a large increase in the 50-64 age groups due to the Baby Boom cohort reaching these ages. The second largest combined age group is residents aged 15-29, which are often the children of Baby Boomers and are commonly referred to as Millennials, since they became adults in the year 2000 or later.

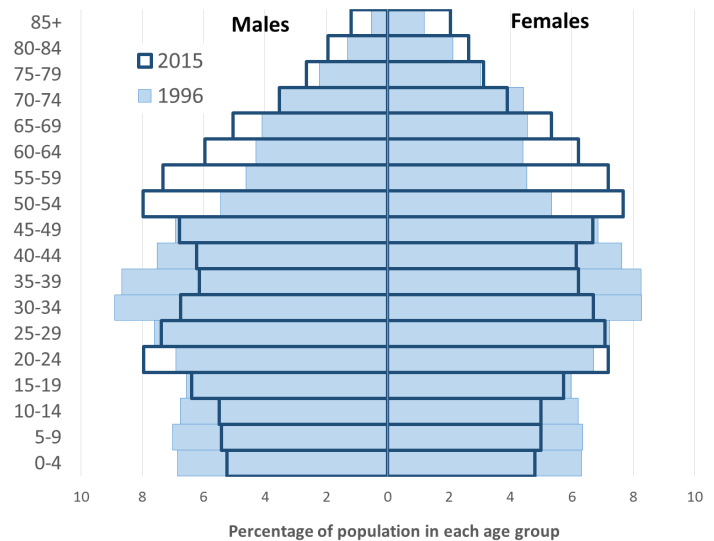
The steep decline seen in the 0-14 age groups (often the children of the smaller Generation X cohort) has been the major driver of school closures. Overall, Hamilton has experienced a net loss of 32 schools since 2011 across Hamilton's neighbourhoods (Chart 2), with about a dozen more school closures planned in the next few years. These population shifts are not unique to Hamilton, as across North America communities struggle to adjust services and infrastructure to better respond to an aging population.

For more detailed information about changes in the child and senior population in each of Hamilton's 15 wards in the 1996-2011 period, please refer to the *Children and Seniors* bulletin (2013) available at [www.sprc.hamilton.on.ca/sociallandscape](http://www.sprc.hamilton.on.ca/sociallandscape).

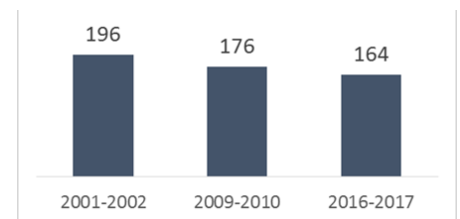
**Changes in generations compared to Ontario**

Table 1 provides insights into the generational cohorts that contribute to changes in Hamilton's population and how they differ in Hamilton and Ontario. In 1996, compared to the average for Ontario, Hamilton had a much higher proportion of residents who are part of the pre-boomer generation, born before the end of the Second World War. In 1996, all other generations were under-represented in Hamilton, compared to Ontario. The strong representation of people born before 1946 reflects Hamilton's post-war history, namely that Hamilton's economy was quite strong in the 1940s-1970s, a time when young and middle-aged people from across Canada and many countries came to settle in Hamilton, as the strength of the steel industry attracted many looking to work hard for decent wages. The higher representation of this age group continues, as many in this cohort continue to live in Hamilton as they retire.

**Chart 1. Age group pyramid, City of Hamilton, 1996-2015 (Statistics Canada, Estimates of population)**



**Chart 2. Number of schools in Hamilton (elementary and secondary, public and Catholic combined), 2001/02, 2009/10 and 2016/17**



By 2015, young adults in the Millennial generation joined the Pre-boomer generations in being strongly represented in Hamilton relative to the provincial average. Specifically, Millennials (now aged 15-34) accounted for 27.58% of Hamilton's population in 2015, compare to 26.84% of Ontario's population. This difference of 0.74 percentage points may seem small, but it is key to future population growth in Hamilton as this generation comes into its reproductive years and Millennials start their own families. However, as explored in issue 11 in this series, many young adults in Hamilton may be delaying having children in part due to precarious employment.

**Table 1. Difference between Hamilton's and Ontario's generation cohort proportions, 1996 and 2015 (Statistics Canada, Estimates of population)**

Generation	Ages	1996		2015		
		Hamilton	Ontario	Ages	Hamilton	Ontario
<b>Post-millennial (born 2001 or later)</b>	Not born yet	--	--	Age 0-14	15.5%	15.9%
<b>Millennial (born 1981 to 2000)</b>	Age 0-15*	21.3%	21.9%	Age 15-34	<b>27.6%</b>	26.8%
<b>Generation X (born 1966 to 1980)</b>	Age 16-30	21.1%	21.2%	Age 35-49	19.1%	20.1%
<b>Baby boom (born 1946 to 1965)</b>	Age 31-50	31.4%	32.6%	Age 50-69	26.4%	26.4%
<b>Pre-boomers (born 1945 or earlier)</b>	Age 51 and older	<b>26.2%</b>	24.3%	Age 70 and older	<b>11.5%</b>	10.8%

Data in **bold** = years where proportion in Hamilton was higher than in Ontario)

In 1996, not all Millennials were born yet, which explains why the proportion of Millennials had strong growth between 1996 and 2015.

### Change in the working age population

Working age is traditionally defined as people between the ages of 15 and 64. Although many people continue working past age 65, the size of the working age population is an important indicator economic health for a population. In Hamilton's case, the working age population was growing until recently. The year 2015, however, marked the first time that there were more people age 65 (exiting the working age group) than 14 year olds (entering the working age group), and the projection shows that the gap will continue to grow. This means Hamilton will need to become a stronger magnet of in-migration either from other regions, provinces or countries if it wants to prevent its working age population from declining. If the working age population does decline, this will lead to fewer children being born thus slower population growth, which can lead to economic stagnation as well. Once again, Hamilton is not unique. Canada's working age population as a whole is also projected to decline from about 69% of the population to 60% by 2030. (Statistics Canada, *Population Projections, 2013-2063*). Hamilton's decline in working age population however, is larger than Ontario due to recent declines in Hamilton's immigrant population (discussed in more detail in issue 10 in this series).

**Chart 2. Population change among residents aged 14 years old and 65 years old, City of Hamilton, 1996-2015 (Statistics Canada) and 2016-2020 (projection based on current trends)**

