

MANY FACTORS DRIVING CHANGE IN HOUSING TRENDS

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The following is Part 2 of a four-part series, 2021 Canadian Census — What the data means for Halton. Reporter Bambang Sadewo analyses the results as they are released throughout the year. Part 2 focuses on what the data tells us about the changing face of the average Halton household.

Getting a bigger house to accommodate his parents was always in the back of Umer Shabrati's mind. It's a step he ultimately took a decade ago by moving from Mississauga to a three-bedroom home in north Halton.

Despite the added responsibilities of caring for elderly parents, now both in their 80s, Shabrati never sees it as a burden.

"It's a blessing on us," he said, noting that it never crossed his mind to put them in a long-term care facility. "That's our mindset."

His three kids are happy to have their grandparents around, even with some language barrier, he said.

The Shabratis' situation is far from unique. More people throughout the region — including Halton Hills — and across the country are choosing to share a roof with their parents and other family members, according to the latest data by Statistics Canada.

"I think you're going to see more multi-generational homes and people more willing to try it."

— realtor Norm Paget

The 2021 census report shows that nearly one million Canadian households in 2021 were composed of multiple generations of a family, two or more families, or one family living with additional persons.

This has grown "rapidly" from 20 years ago, up by more than 45 per cent.

Locally, communal living arrangements are getting more common compared to the previous census in 2016.

In Halton Hills, the proportion of multi-generational households — at least three generations living together — went up from 4.1 to 4.7 per cent. The increase was 6.2 to seven per cent in Milton, four to 4.4 per cent in Oakville and 2.5 to 2.8 per cent in Burlington.

Margo Hilbrecht, executive director with the Vanier Institute of the Family, pointed out some driving factors for the multi-generational living "phenomenon" in the country, a list that includes housing cost, cultural preferences in the case of Indigenous and newcomer families, and family caregiving.



Ron Stiel photo

Realtor Norm Paget said due to the housing crisis there's more pressure to find alternate accommodations.

While data suggests it may trend even higher, she said this depends on how responsive developers are in designing and building for multi-generational families — and for municipalities to create accommo-

dating policies, including allowing garden suites to be built. "It's really good to see these numbers and I hope that they are noticed by policy-makers," she said. Halton has long enjoyed the reputation of being an affluent region. New data from Statistics Canada show that the median after-tax household income in Halton continued to rise from 2015 to

2020, outpacing the national growth rate of 9.8 per cent with \$73,000.

Halton Hills and Milton's figure was \$107,000 (up 18.8 and 20.1 per cent respectively), with Oakville at \$108,000 (up 13.6 per cent) and Burlington at \$94,000 (up 18.1 per cent).

But the region isn't immune to the housing crunch.

The affordable housing crisis and current high interest rates have resulted in a changing market, where "some young buyers are giving up" on getting a property due to the tougher stress test, said longtime realtor Norm Paget.

"They've actually moved in with mom and dad," said the Georgetown resident. "I think you're going to see more multi-generational homes and people more willing to try it."

This also extends to siblings.

"I have seen a few cases where two brothers and two sisters in their families will get together and buy a house. One lives up, one lives down," he said.

Hilbrecht noted that in these living arrangements "no one size fits all and families are diverse."

"It's up to each family to decide what's the best possible situation for them and with the resources that they have available or whether it's going to work at all. And it may also be

that family members would prefer to not live together," she said.

For newcomer Tunde Aluko, "the more is the merrier" when it comes to communal living — and it's all about having a good support system with shared values.

Aluko has been living with his wife and two children in north Halton for the past two years, while his parents spend their time between here, Lagos and Nigeria. That could become more permanent in the future.

"They're not used to the winter," he chuckled.

In his home country, it's very common for people to remain in their childhood homes, he said. If they do decide to raise a family elsewhere, it is the norm for the aging parents to eventually join them.

"We live together in harmony, peace and love," he said.

STORY BEHIND THE STORY: In light of information revealed in the 2021 Canadian Census, we wanted to examine the rise of multi-generational households in Halton and why families gravitate toward the lifestyle.



SCAN THIS CODE to view Part 1 of series focusing on challenges facing Halton's aging population.

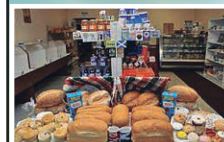


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