

Toronto's West-Central Neighbourhoods: A Profile of the St. Christopher House Catchment Area

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"Profiling the Community," December 2003

1. Introduction

In 2003, St. Christopher House (SCH) requested an updated profile of the neighbourhoods that make up their catchment area. The last profile was completed using 1996 census data. This one is based on the 2001 census data. Although the extent of change in only five years is limited, there are some trends worth noting.

St. Christopher House (SCH) is a neighbourhood-based, multi-service, non-profit organization that works in partnership with the surrounding community to promote personal and social change to achieve a safe, healthy and accepting society for all. St. Christopher House focuses on enabling less advantaged individuals, families, and groups in the community to gain greater control over their lives and their community.

Current services provided by SCH include adult literacy programs, a high-school diploma equivalency program for mature students, employment skills development programs, and support programs for families, children, the elderly, and abused women.

The map on page 2 shows the SCH catchment area bounded to the north by Bloor Street, to the east by Roncesvalles Avenue, to the south by Lakeshore Boulevard and to the west by Bathurst Street. The map also divides the SCH community into a number of smaller neighbourhoods, as defined by the City of Toronto.

Although technically part of the Niagara neighbourhood, the "Liberty-Exhibition" area (Toronto's census tract 8) was excluded from the analysis. The area contains a very small portion of the catchment area's population, and covers a large area. The inclusion of this census tract would skew statistics for population density, income, and immigration.

2. Demographic Overview

Population and density

The total population for the community served by St. Christopher House in 2001 was 106,984. This is roughly 4% of the City of Toronto's population. The area has grown by about 2,000 people since the last census, conducted in 1996, a change of 2%.

The population of three of the neighbourhoods – Dufferin Grove, Roncesvalles, and South Parkdale – grew slightly between 1996 and 2001. That of three others – Little Portugal, Palmerston-Little Italy, and Trinity-Bellwoods – declined. Niagara gained a significant number of new residents between the two census periods. The population of this neighbourhood was 35% larger in 2001 compared to 1996.

The densities of the SCH neighbourhoods have remained relatively constant. Niagara's growth, however, translates into the addition of 2,000 people per square kilometre. Compared to



other neighbourhoods, South Parkdale's density is much higher, but has changed little. Dufferin-Grove is still the least dense part of the catchment area, and has hardly changed at all.

Age structure

From 1996 to 2001, there were decreasing numbers of people aged 25 and younger in the catchment area as a whole. However, all other age cohorts experienced growth; especially adults aged 25 to 50. Compared to the City of Toronto, the area has a larger proportion of adults and seniors, and a smaller proportion of children.

The Trinity-Bellwoods and Little Portugal neighbourhoods had the highest concentrations of individuals over the age of 65. South Parkdale and Roncesvalles had the highest concentrations of children under the age of 15.

The age composition of the area is changing. The influx of large numbers of working-age adults is increasing their share of the population relative to other age cohorts. This trend is especially evident in Niagara.

Household type

The 2001 census provides data on three types of households: single-family, multi-family, and non-family households. The City of Toronto, the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area, and the province of Ontario all have a greater proportion of single-family households than non-family households. Only a small proportion (less than 4%) of their households are classified as multi-family.

The SCH study area differs from this pattern. There is a smaller proportion of one-family households and a larger proportion of non-family households than the wider city and province. Furthermore, the number of non-family households is growing faster than the num-

ber of one-family households. Also, whereas multiple-family households are increasing throughout the City of Toronto as a whole, they are decreasing in the catchment area.

This pattern is more or less repeated in the individual neighbourhoods. Niagara and South Parkdale have the fewest one-family households. Trinity-Bellwoods has the highest percentage of multi-family households, and South Parkdale has the highest percentage of non-family households. In Niagara and South Parkdale, single-family households do not constitute the majority of households.

Since the 1996 census, the catchment area has seen a slight increase in one-family households, a larger increase in non-family households, and a slight decrease in multi-family households.

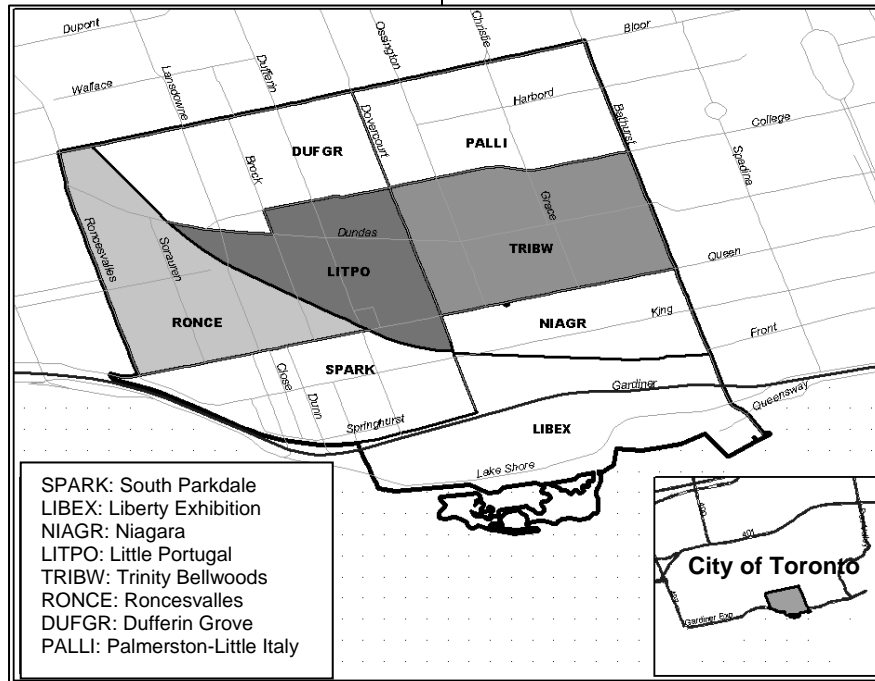
Given a slowly changing population overall, these shifts may be interpreted as a changing composition of household

types. However, in Niagara there was a large increase in all three types of households, as part of substantial growth in that neighbourhood, caused by the construction of new housing.

Household size

The average number of persons per private household in the study area is 2.4, below the average for the City, the Toronto CMA, and Ontario. Within the SCH community, South Parkdale has the lowest average number of persons per household at 2.1 people per household, while Little Portugal has the highest at 2.75.

The catchment area also has a larger proportion of one-person households than the City of Toronto, the Toronto CMA, and the province. The individual neighbourhoods in which one-person households represent the greatest proportion of household types are Ron-



cesvalles, South Parkdale, Niagara, and Dufferin Grove. In the other neighbourhoods, two-person households predominate.

Overall, the catchment area has a lower proportion of households of six or more persons than the city, CMA, and province. However, the neighbourhoods of Trinity-Bellwoods, Little Portugal, and Dufferin Grove all have a larger proportion of households with six or more people than the city, CMA, and province.

Census families in the study area have an average of 1.2 children. This is lower than the averages for the city, the Toronto CMA, and Ontario. The neighbourhood with the highest average number of children is Dufferin Grove at 1.9, and that with the lowest is Palmerston-Little Italy with 0.7.

Lone-parent households

In the catchment area and each of the individual neighbourhoods, the majority of lone parents are female. Uniquely, however, Niagara has a higher proportion of male single parents than the city, CMA, or province. Most lone-parent households in the catchment area and its component neighbourhoods have only one child. This is also true for the city, the CMA, and the province.

The number of lone-parent households has increased in all neighbourhoods between 1996 and 2001, except for South Parkdale. The greatest increase occurred in Niagara, and the smallest increase in Trinity-Bellwoods.

Education

In the catchment area, about 43 percent of 15-24-year-olds do not attend school – a greater proportion than the city, CMA, and province.

The proportion of individuals with a university background is higher than for the province and the CMA, and on a par with the City as a whole. However, there is important variation within the component neighbourhoods.

Residents of Niagara have attained the highest levels of formal education, whereas residents of Little Por-

tugal as a group have the lowest level of formal education. The Niagara neighbourhood experienced the greatest change since 1996 – there was a 216% increase in people who have at least a university education.

Income

Overall, the residents living in St. Christopher House’s catchment area have experienced an increase in average annual income of 29% between 1996 and 2001. However, this increase has not occurred evenly across the catchment area. Little Portugal and South Parkdale

lag behind more affluent neighbourhoods. Incomes in Little Portugal increased by 23% and those in South Parkdale increased by 16%. The situation in Niagara is very different, with average individual income increasing by 58%. Average individual incomes in the catchment

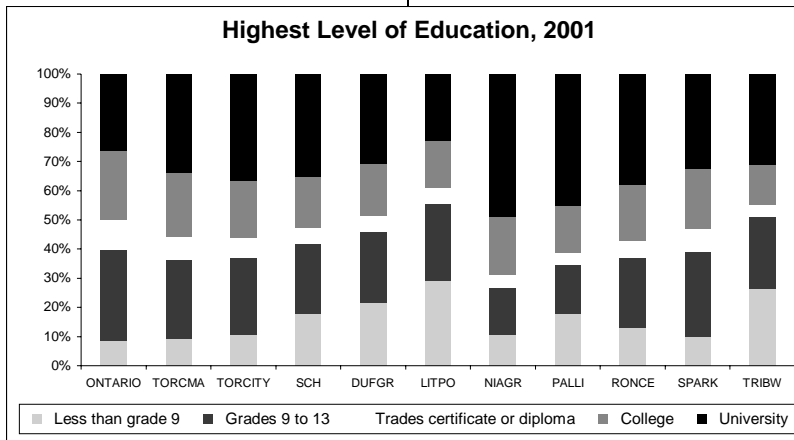
area, with the exception of the Niagara neighbourhood, are well below those in the City of Toronto, the Toronto CMA, and the province. The highest incomes are found in Niagara and the lowest in South Parkdale and Little Portugal.

Family income

Within the City of Toronto, 25% of families have a family income in the \$20,000-\$49,999 range, and 29% have incomes above \$100,000. In the catchment area, 37% of families have a family income in the \$20,000-\$49,999 range, and only 16% have incomes above \$100,000.

The only neighbourhoods that do not follow this trend are South Parkdale, Little Portugal, and Niagara. A much greater proportion of families in South Parkdale and Little Portugal fall into the lower income range, with far fewer families in the higher ranges. The opposite is the case in the Niagara neighbourhood.

Overall, income is lower in the catchment area than in the City of Toronto and the Toronto CMA, but has increased in every neighbourhood since 1996. Within the catchment area, South Parkdale and Little Portugal are not as wealthy as other areas.



Employment

The economic structure of the St. Christopher House catchment area is in transition. Residents are upgrading their skills and attaining better jobs, and young, well-educated residents are moving in. The most telling picture emerges from studying occupational share change between 1996 and 2001.

The number of people in sales and service jobs, which tend to involve low-paying, entry-level work, is decreasing and the number of those in more lucrative jobs in natural sciences and business is increasing. This trend is most pronounced in Niagara and least pronounced in Roncesvalles, which is the most stable neighbourhood.

Levels of blue-collar work are stable or declining, while the numbers of people engaged in occupations relating to the social sciences and culture are increasing. These changes are happening across the city, but are amplified in the catchment area. More and more individuals involved in creative industries are choosing this district as a place to live.

Unemployment

The unemployment rate declined in the whole city between 1996 and 2001, but the decline was twice as steep in the catchment area. Moreover, the labour force participation rate also improved at more than double the city's rate of increase.

Unfortunately, South Parkdale continues to lag. Despite posting one of the largest declines in unemployment, it still suffers from a high rate of joblessness compared to other neighbourhoods in the catchment area. Whereas all the other neighbourhoods are now at or below Toronto's average rate of unemployment, South Parkdale's unemployment rate is still 3 points higher. South Parkdale also registers the smallest increase in labour force participation.

Immigration

The St. Christopher catchment area is traditionally recognized as having a large Portuguese immigrant population. However, the composition of recent immi-

grant groups to the area has significantly changed between 1996 and 2001.

In 1996, the third-largest recent immigrant group in the SCH population for 1996 came from Portugal, after Vietnam and China. (Statistics Canada defines "recent immigrants" as those who have arrived within the last five years of the census period.) In 2001, the presence of Portuguese and other recent immigrants has significantly changed. The number of recent immigrants from China doubled from 1,690 to 3,760 individuals, placing it as the top recent immigrant group in the SCH population.

With the exception of recent immigrants from India, who now rank as the second-largest group, all other immigrant groups are decreasing in absolute numbers.

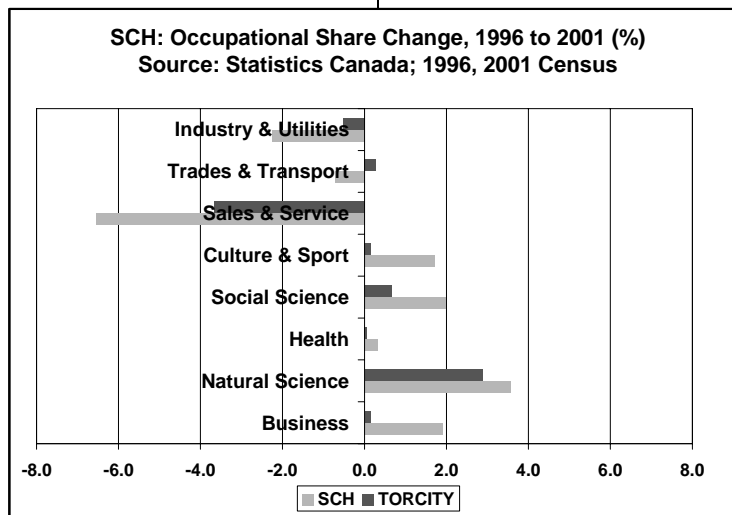
Interestingly, recent immigrants from Portugal did not even place in the top ten immigrant groups in 2001, although Portuguese continues to be the dominant non-official language in the SCH catchment area population. The proportion of recent

immigration from Southeast Asia to the catchment area is equivalent to the City of Toronto, CMA, and Ontario immigration patterns. China, India, and Pakistan were the top three originating countries of recent immigrants between the two census periods.

Overall, recent immigration to the St. Christopher community has decreased since the previous census, although some neighbourhoods are experiencing increases in the number of recent immigrants. This is especially true for South Parkdale.

In Little Portugal in 1996, the largest number of recent immigrants came from Portugal. In 2001, the largest recent immigrant group came from China, which has increased threefold from 170 residents in 1996 to 560 in 2001.

Pakistan, Bangladesh, and the United States also ranked higher in 2001, but the numbers of recent immigrants from those countries are significantly smaller. In fact, the overall number of recent immigrants moving to Little Portugal has decreased by almost 2% since 1996,



which is comparable to previous immigration trends in the SCH catchment area, the city, the CMA and the province.

Roncesvalles has also decreased in its proportion of recent immigrants between 1996 and 2001. Traditionally, this area is known for its heavy concentration of Polish immigrants. Even in 1996, most recent immigrants continued to come from Poland. Large numbers of recent immigrants also came from Vietnam and Sri Lanka.

Since then, the make up of recent immigrant groups have drastically changed in the area. In 2001, the highest proportion of recent immigrants originated from India, followed by China, Pakistan, and the Philippines. Poland dropped to seventh place.

Ethnicity

Changes in pattern of reported ethnicities are not as dynamic as changes in recent immigration data. Within the St. Christopher House catchment area, the Portuguese population remains strong as the top ethnic group at roughly 20% of the population in 2001.

An interesting trend is detectable in the number of residents within the community who describe themselves as “Canadian.” The number of residents choosing this category of ethnicity grew from 8.1% in 1996 to 13.3% in 2001, and is now the second-to-top ethnic group in the catchment area. There are at least two likely explanations: either more residents in the population are updating their self-identity to Canadian as they become more established, or more non-immigrants are moving into the catchment area.

Language

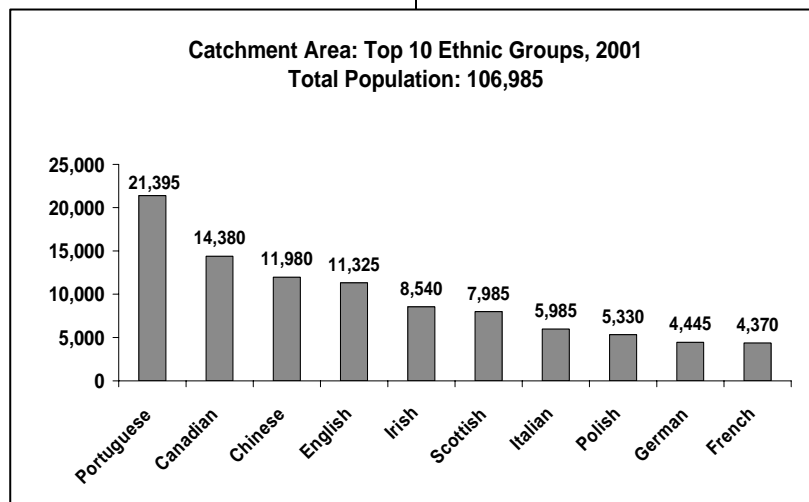
In 2001 the St. Christopher House catchment area had a larger proportion of the population that did not speak either of the official languages of Canada than populations living in the City of Toronto, the CMA, and the province as a whole. However, the proportion of those without knowledge of Canada’s official languages

decreased in each neighbourhood between 1996 and 2001.

In 2001, the most common non-official languages spoken within the St. Christopher House catchment area were Portuguese, Chinese, and Polish. The same languages were most widely spoken in 1996, except for Urdu, which surpassed Greek between the two census periods.

Eight of the most common non-official languages spoken in the city are the same as those spoken in the St. Christopher neighbourhoods – Portuguese, Chinese, Polish, Italian, Spanish, Tagalog, Tamil, and Greek. The other two commonly spoken languages in the catchment area are Vietnamese and Ukrainian.

St. Christopher House’s catchment area is a relatively good example of not only languages spoken within the city, but those spoken throughout the province as well. Portuguese speakers are still the most prevalent throughout the area that St. Christopher House services, but speakers of Chinese, Tagalog, Ukrainian, and Urdu are on the rise.



3. Neighbourhood by neighbourhood

Dufferin Grove

Dufferin Grove stands out from other neighbourhoods within the SCH community in a number of ways. First, it has the highest number of children per household than any other neighbourhood. The residents of Dufferin Grove are also finding better and more stable jobs, based on the changes in occupational share between 1996 and 2001. The share of residents employed in the sales and service sector is declining. Additionally, both average and median individual and household incomes have increased since 1996.

The immigrant structure of the area is also changing. Vietnamese immigration, which made up the largest immigrant group in 1996, decreased by 14% be-

tween the two census periods, and Chinese became the highest, increasing by 23% from its 1996 levels.

Little Portugal

Little Portugal is unique in that its population has one of the largest proportions of adult cohorts, especially aged 65 and older. It is also a relatively low-income area. The average household, individual, male, and female incomes are all at least 12% lower than those for the entire St. Christopher House catchment area.

Little Portugal also displays a high level of homeownership. However, in an environment of rising house prices, homeowners may have difficulty in covering annual property taxes.

Finally and most interestingly, Portuguese is no longer among the top ten nationalities of recent immigration, though it still makes up more than 40% of the 2001 ethnic composition. Chinese newcomers now make up 50% of the new immigrants arriving to the area.

South Parkdale

The most striking characteristic of South Parkdale is its large population, which is greater than any other neighbourhood within the St. Christopher House study area. South Parkdale has the highest density of all the neighbourhoods as well. Only 7% of the residents are homeowners.

The recent immigrant population is also larger than that in any other neighbourhood. More than 34% of those moving to the St. Christopher study area settle in South Parkdale. Considering these statistics and South Parkdale's 10% unemployment rate, higher than any other neighbourhood, South Parkdale residents will continue to require services provided by SCH.

Trinity-Bellwoods

Similar to Little Portugal, Trinity-Bellwoods has a large population aged 65 years and older. Trinity-Bellwoods also has the highest percentage of residents

without knowledge of either of Canada's official languages, with the most widely spoken non-official languages being Portuguese and Chinese.

Trinity-Bellwoods residents also had the smallest increase in the number of individuals with post-secondary education when compared to the other neighbourhoods in the SCH catchment area. Furthermore, this neighbourhood had the largest number of residents with a grade 9 education or lower. However, average household income increased between the two census periods and was higher than the average for the entire St. Christopher House area.

Niagara

Residents in Niagara are younger and more affluent than residents in other St. Christopher House neighbour-

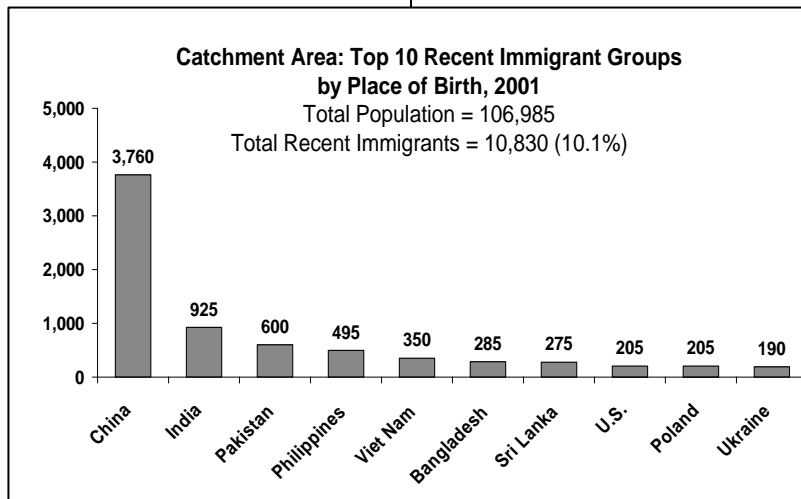
hoods. More than 50% of the individuals moving to Niagara are between the ages of 25 and 39 years old. As well, there was a large increase of individuals earning in excess of \$60,000.

Niagara's rate of unemployment fell to 5.4% between 1996 and 2001. This rate is lower than the other neighbourhoods in

the SCH catchment area, and is also lower than the average rate in the City of Toronto. This neighbourhood also contains the best-educated population in the catchment area. Not only do high numbers of postsecondary-educated persons live here, but trade and high school diplomas were also on the rise. At the same time, Chinese is replacing Portuguese as the dominant immigrant group.

Roncesvalles

Like Little Portugal and Trinity-Bellwoods, the population in Roncesvalles has a large population over people 65 years old and a lower proportion of youth. Although people in the community are working in different types of jobs in 2001 from those they held in 1996, traditional forms of employment are still important. The largest industry share in 2001 still belonged to manufacturing, while the industry share for sales and service, in-



dustry and utility, trade and transport, and health sectors all decreased. Education levels also increased between the two census years.

In this conventionally Polish neighbourhood, the number of people speaking Polish decreased, even though it still remained the most widely spoken non-official language. The number of Chinese speakers along with the number of recent immigrants from India has greatly increased since 1996.

Palmerston-Little Italy

The population of Palmerston-Little Italy is declining. Many residents in this neighbourhood were over the age of 65 and the average number of children per household has fallen.

Like many of the other neighbourhoods in the SCH study area, this neighbourhood has a growing Chinese population. Nevertheless, there is still a large proportion of the neighbourhood who are Portuguese-speaking. Additionally, postsecondary-educated people were increasing, while there was a decrease in the number of residents with a grade 9 education or lower. Like many of the neighbourhoods in the SCH study area, Palmerston-Little Italy has undergone some positive changes, such as increasing incomes and increasing levels of education.

4. Conclusion

The neighbourhoods served by St. Christopher House have undergone numerous changes. Across the area, levels of education and incomes are rising. There has also been a decrease throughout the study area in the share of traditional areas of employment, such as manufacturing and construction, and an increase in the share of cultural industries.

Despite these positive changes, two neighbourhoods lag behind the area as a whole – South Parkdale

and Little Portugal. These areas have not had the same level of income increase and still have lower educational attainments.

The Niagara neighbourhood has undergone significant changes. The population has increased rapidly and incomes in this area are the highest among the entire catchment area. The levels of education attained are also highest in Niagara.

Between these two extremes are Roncesvalles, Dufferin Grove, Palmerston-Little Italy, and Trinity-Bellwoods. These neighbourhoods have all undergone positive change since 1996 and have shown some improvement in terms of income, education levels, and employment. Nonetheless, the aging population in these neighbourhoods should be of concern to SCH staff.

The cultural make-up of the SCH population is slowly shifting. There has been a decline in the number of European immigrants and a rise in immigration from Asia, particularly from China. Nevertheless, those of Portuguese descent are still the dominant cultural group in the area. The data also demonstrates that the Portuguese are an aging population – special services may need to be provided to help these seniors and to ensure that they remain active in community life.

Acknowledgements

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