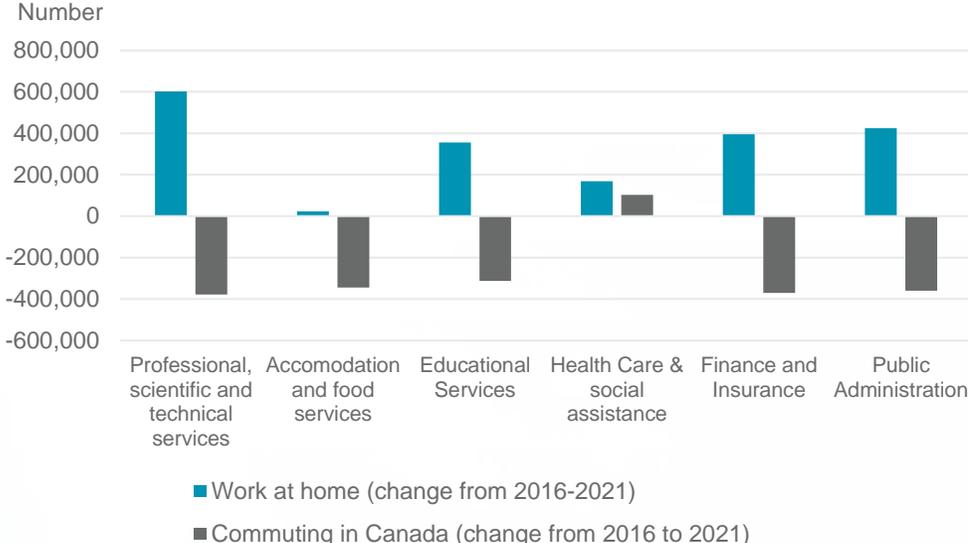


# COVID-19 IMPACT ON COMMUTING PATTERNS IN CANADA

Based on Statistics Canada 2021 Census Data

DECEMBER 2022

# Commuting Levels by Industry Employment



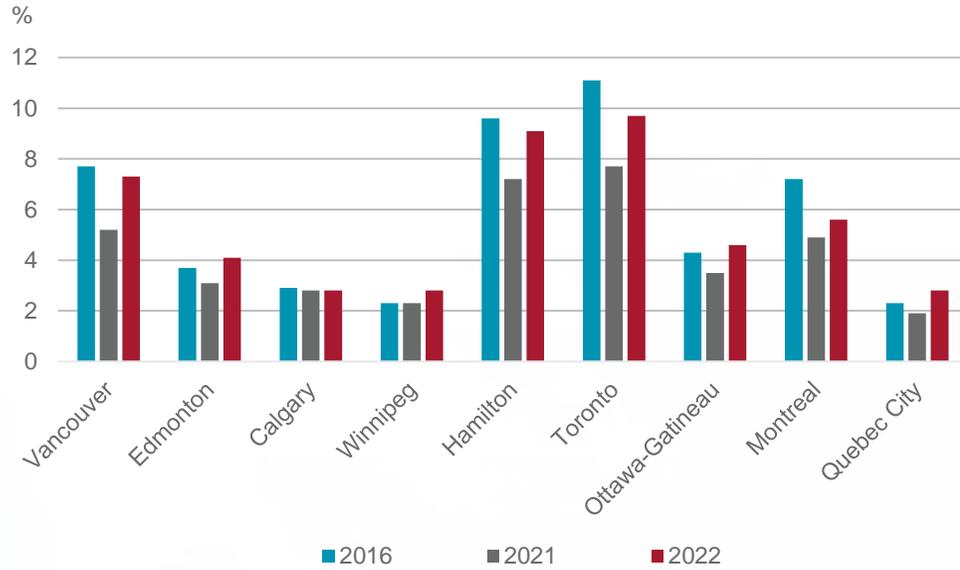
# Key Takeaways

- As a result of the pandemic and the lockdowns associated with “slowing the spread”, the way Canadians commuted to work changed in 2021.
- In May 2021, there were 4.2 million people usually working from home, over three times higher compared to May 2016.
- Increases in working from home were concentrated in industries such as professional, scientific and technical services; public administration; finance and insurance; and educational services.
- The number of commuters travelling to work by a vehicle that was not public transit (car commuters) declined by 1.7 million from five years earlier to reach 11 million in May 2021. With public health measures eased and businesses re-opening this number has climbed to 12.8 million in May 2022 – close to pre-pandemic levels.
- The number of people taking public transit to work fell from two million in 2016 to one million in May 2021. Despite the number of public transit commuters increasing to 1.2 million in May 2022, levels remain below pre-COVID-19 levels.
- Compared to five years ago, nearly 300,000 fewer workers were usually using active transit, such as walking or bicycling, as their main mode of commuting to work in May 2021. This has increased to 941,000 in May 2022 but is still lower than the 1.1 million recorded in May 2016.

# Number of Commuters by Mode of Travel 2016, 2021 and 2022

	Driver/ Passenger in a car	Bus	Subway	Train	Walk	Bicycle	Motorcycle
2022 (thousands)	12,768	797	271	103	726	215	37
2021 to 2022 (% change)	18.3	17.5	14.4	32.6	11.6	57.4	83.8
2016 to 2022 (% change)	2.5	-32.7	-48.1	-58.3	-14.5	-2.1	43.9
2021 (thousands)	10,790	678	237	78	651	137	20
2016 (thousands)	12,454	1,184	523	248	849	220	25

## Proportion of long car commutes (60 minutes or more)



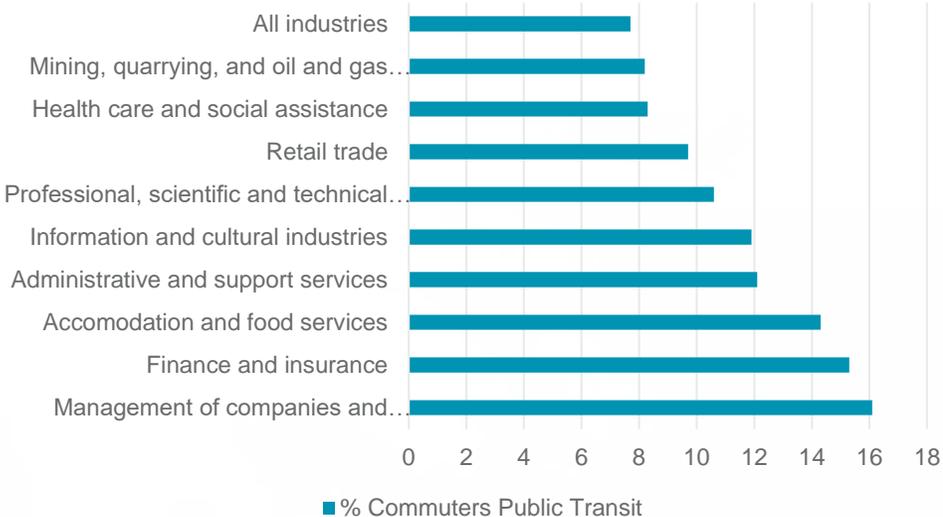
## Average car commuting time (minutes)



## Key Takeaways

- Every province and territory except Prince Edward Island and the Yukon saw fewer people usually commuting by car in 2021 compared to five years earlier. The number of car commuters in Ontario fell by approximately 20.2% to 3.8 million in May 2021, the largest drop nationally.
- Almost all of Canada's largest CMA's saw fewer car commuters, with many located in Ontario. Ottawa-Gatineau with a decline of 26.4% had the largest proportional decline among the CMA's, followed by Toronto (-24.3%), Hamilton (-23.1%) and Kitchener-Cambridge-Waterloo (-21.0%).
- The largest decline in car commuting in May 2021 compared to five years earlier occurred among Canadians working in public administration (-235,000 people or -28.2%) followed by finance and insurance (-224,000 or 47.8%).
- People working in other industries had no choice but to continue to commute. Compared to five years earlier, in 2021 more people working in health care and social assistance (+126,000 or +7.8%), construction (+69,000 or +6.4%), and transportation and warehousing (+20,000 or +2.8%) were commuting by car.
- Of car commutes that were at least sixty minutes, in 2021 there were 245,000 fewer commuters compared to May 2016.
- The decline in long commutes by car was most pronounced in the Toronto CMA, In 2016, 208,000 people spent one hour or more per day commuting by car. By 2021, this number had fallen to 108,000.

### Use of public transit commuting by Industry Employment (Top Ten)



### Proportion of downtown commuters who walk to work



### Key Takeaways

- The number of Canadians commuting by public transit saw its first decline since data began being collected in 1996; down by one-half in 2021 compared to 2016.
- All types of public transit were impacted by public health measures. Ontario had the largest proportional decline in public transit commuting, falling by 56.1% from 889,000 in 2016 to 390,000 in 2021. The number of Albertans commuting by public transit also fell by over half (-54.6%) from 195,000 to 88,000.
- Average commuting times declined for every type of public transit from May 2016 to May 2021. The average commute by bus declined by 1.4 minutes to 40.9 minutes, likely a result of less traffic on roadways.
- With more Canadians working from home, fewer were walking or cycling to work in 2021 compared to May 2016; declining by over one-quarter (-26.2%), falling from 1.1 million in 2016 to 811,000 in 2021.
- Canada’s largest cities – namely Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver – had the most commuters who mainly walked to work in May 2021.
- The likelihood of commuting on foot in the downtown cores of Canada’s largest cities varied in 2021. For example, 3 in 10 commuters living in downtown Ottawa-Gatineau usually walked to work in the spring of 2021, the highest rate among Canada’s largest cities with at least 15,000 commuters living downtown.

**For More Information, Contact Us Today.**

**Kristina Bowman**

Senior Manager of Research, Canadian Markets

Direct: +1 (416) 359-2419

[kristina.bowman@cushwake.com](mailto:kristina.bowman@cushwake.com)

