
Subject: 2021 Census Series: Population and Dwelling Counts

Report to: Planning and Economic Development Committee

Report date: Wednesday, April 6, 2022

Recommendations

1. That this Report **BE RECEIVED** for information; and
2. That this Report **BE CIRCULATED** to Local Area Municipalities, Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, Niagara Home Builders Association, Niagara Industrial Association, local Chambers of Commerce and School Boards.

Key Facts

- Population and Dwellings, from the 2021 Census of Population, were released by Statistics Canada on February 9, 2022.
- Niagara's population increased by 30,000 people between 2016 and 2021, the highest 5-year increase since the baby boom era (1951-1961).
- The City of Thorold had Ontario's fourth highest growth rate and 8th fastest in Canada, with a 27% increase in population between 2016 and 2021.
- All municipalities in Niagara experienced an increase in population during the census period for the first time since 2006.
- Nearly 40% of dissemination areas in Niagara experienced a decline in population over the last five years showing decline in more established neighbourhoods and growth in newly developing areas.

Financial Considerations

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Analysis

2021 Census and Topic Release Schedule

The Census of Population is conducted by Statistics Canada every five years. In the census year, the survey is sent out in May to every household in Canada for completion. The last survey was conducted in May 2021.

There will be seven major releases of Census data throughout 2022. The seven release dates and topics are summarized as follows:

Census Data Release Date	Census Topic
February 9, 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population and dwelling counts
April 27, 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Sex at birth and gender • Type of dwelling
July 13, 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families, households, and marital status • Canadian military experience • Income
August 17, 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language
September 21, 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous peoples • Housing
October 26, 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immigration, place of birth and citizenship • Ethnocultural and religious diversity • Mobility and migration
November 30, 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Labour • Language of work • Commuting • Instruction in the official minority language

This report is the first in a series of reports that will be prepared by staff throughout the year to summarize key findings, trends and data points from the 2021 Census topic releases.

The information provided in this report is based on the seven data points that were released for population and dwelling counts released on February 9, 2022. The seven data points are:

- Population, 2021
- Population, 2016
- Population percentage change, 2016 to 2021
- Total private dwellings
- Private dwellings occupied by usual residents
- Population density per square kilometre
- Land area in square kilometres

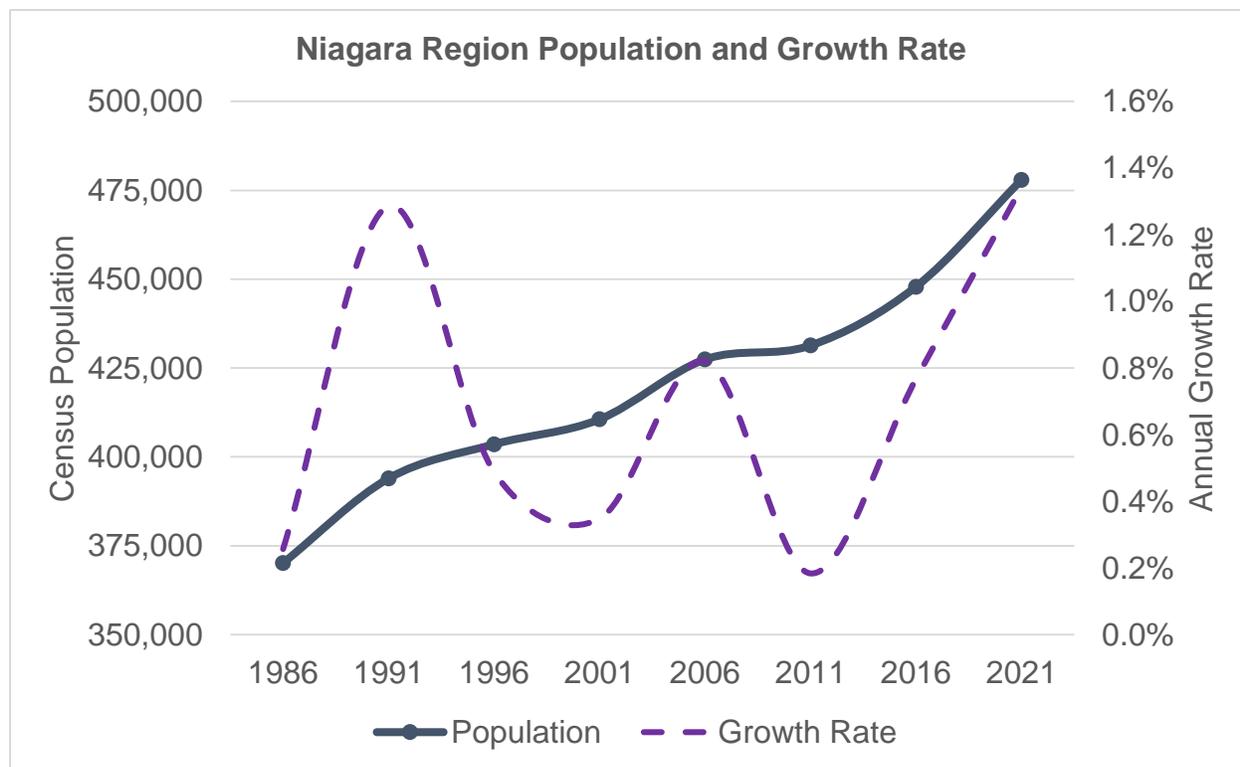
This report provides baseline data for further analysis as the remainder of 2021 census information is released throughout 2022.

Strongest Population Growth in 70 Years

Niagara Region added over 30,000 people between 2016 and 2021. This is the largest population increase in a five-year period since the baby boom era and highest annual growth rate (1.3%) since 1986.

As shown in Figure 1, the pace of population growth has been increasing since 2011. Between 2016 and 2021 Niagara added an average of 6,000 people per year.

Figure 1: Niagara Region population and growth rate (1986 to 2021)



The pace of growth between 2016 and 2021 is lower than what is needed to meet the 2051 population target of 694,000. Niagara needs to add an average of 6,750 people per year to achieve population forecasts identified in the draft Niagara Official Plan.

Niagara’s population increase of 30,000 is lower than comparative upper- and single-tier municipalities in Ontario. Table 1 shows Niagara’s growth is close to Hamilton (32,400) but well below Simcoe (53,500), Waterloo (52,000) and Halton (48,200). When comparing growth rate, Niagara is growing faster than Hamilton but below other municipalities in the Growth Plan outer ring (Waterloo, Simcoe and Middlesex).

Table 1: 2021 population and growth rate among comparative municipalities in Ontario.

Census Division	2021 Population	2016 Population	Population Change	Growth Rate
Halton	596,637	548,435	48,202	9%
Waterloo	587,165	535,154	52,011	10%
Hamilton	569,353	536,917	32,436	6%
Simcoe	533,169	479,635	53,534	11%
Middlesex	500,563	455,526	45,037	10%
Niagara	477,941	447,888	30,053	7%
Essex	422,860	398,953	23,907	6%

Municipal Population and Growth Rates

All 12 municipalities in Niagara experienced population growth between census periods for the first time since 2001-2006.

Niagara Falls had the largest increase in population (6,345), followed by Thorold (5,015), St. Catharines (3,690) and Welland (3,455).

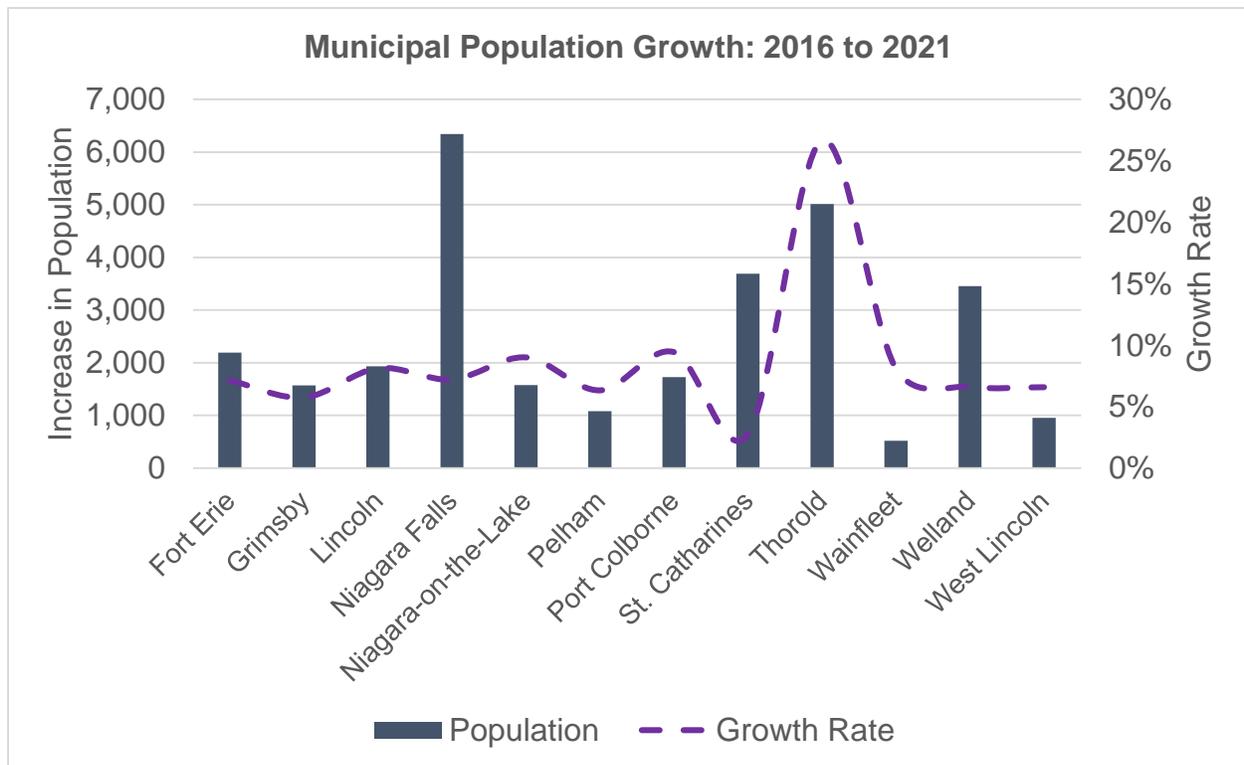
Thorold had the highest population growth rate with an increase of 27%, which is the highest municipal growth rate in Niagara, 4th in Ontario and 8th in Canada.

11 out of 12 municipalities had a population increase above 6%, excluding St. Catharines (3%). The lower growth rate in St. Catharines is not due to a lack of population growth as the City added the third most population. Rather, the lower rate of 3% is reflective of St. Catharines having the largest population base in Niagara.

Port Colborne had a 9% growth rate in the 2021 Census which appears to be attributed to a combination of new residents and a shift in seasonal residents now considering Port Colborne their usual place of residence.

Figure 2 provides a summary of population and growth rates for each municipality in Niagara.

Figure 2: 2021 population and growth rate by municipality



Growth Concentrated Along Highway Corridors and Designated Greenfield Areas

Appendix 1 and 2 identify population growth based on geography. Appendix 1 identifies population growth by municipality and Appendix 2 looks at Dissemination Areas¹ (DA).

As shown on Appendix 1, the greatest concentration of growth over the last 5 years has been located primarily along the 406 corridor in Niagara Falls, Thorold, and St. Catharines. Population growth remains strong along the QEW corridor but has slowed in Grimsby and Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Appendix 2 provides greater clarity on areas of population change within municipalities. The areas with the highest levels of population growth are situated within Designated Greenfield Areas and are made up of large developments that have been built over the

¹ A dissemination area (DA) is a small, relatively stable geographic unit with an average population of 400 to 700 persons based on data from the previous Census of Population Program

last five years. Such developments can be seen in west Smithville, west Welland, south Thorold and south Niagara Falls.

Appendix 2 also highlights the decline in population across more established neighbourhoods and the rural area. Nearly 40% of DA's in Niagara experience a decline in population of the last 5 years.

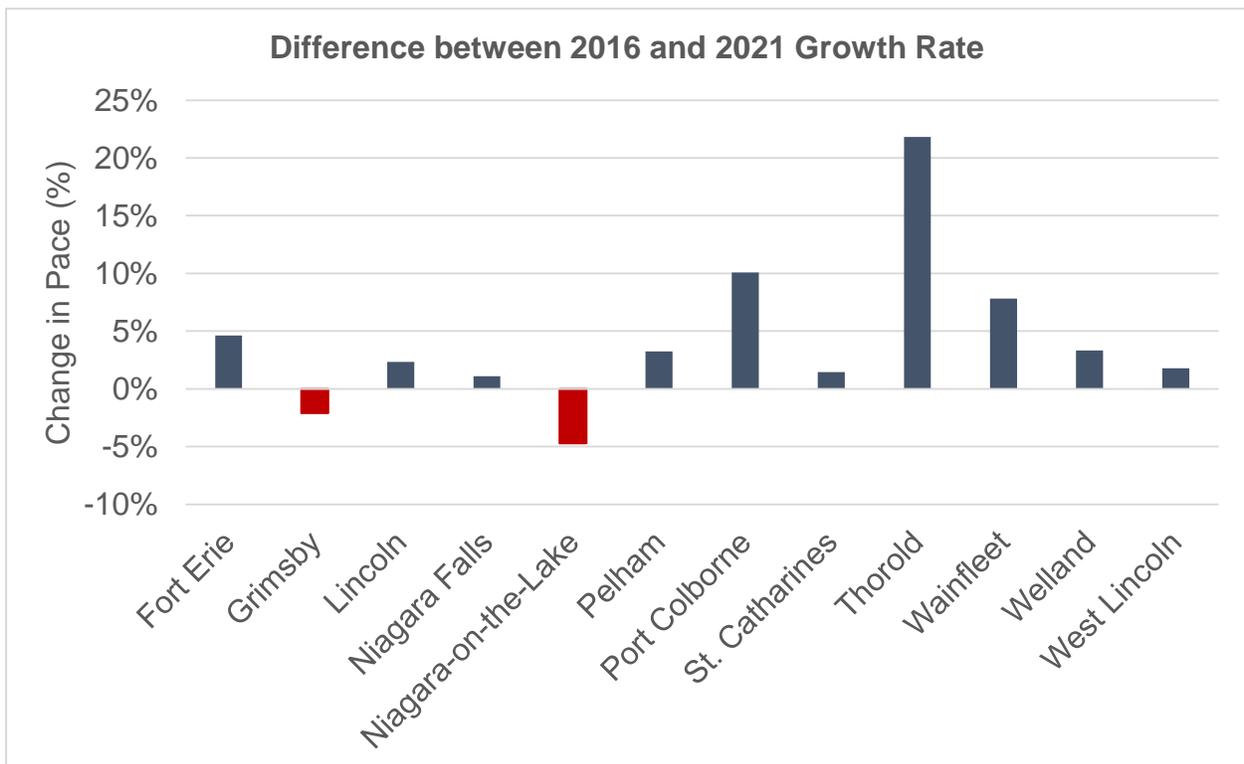
Pace of Growth Shifting to Central and South Niagara

One of the notable trends from the 2021 Census is the shifting pace of growth across municipalities in Niagara.

The highest municipal growth rates from the 2016 Census were primarily in north Niagara within Greenbelt municipalities. This trend has shifted over the last five years with most municipalities in Niagara having experienced an increase in population between 7% and 9%.

Figure 3 explores the difference in growth rate between the 2016 and 2021 Census.

Figure 3: Change in growth rate between 2016 Census and 2021 Census



As shown in Figure 3, the greatest change in growth rate was within Thorold (22%), Port Colborne (10%), Wainfleet (8%), and Fort Erie (5%).

Niagara-on-the-Lake experienced the largest decline in growth rate, going from 14% to 9%. The 9% growth rate in Niagara-on-the-Lake is still significant and the second highest in Niagara. Population growth in Niagara-on-the-Lake is likely to remain at this pace as development within the Glendale District Plan area continues.

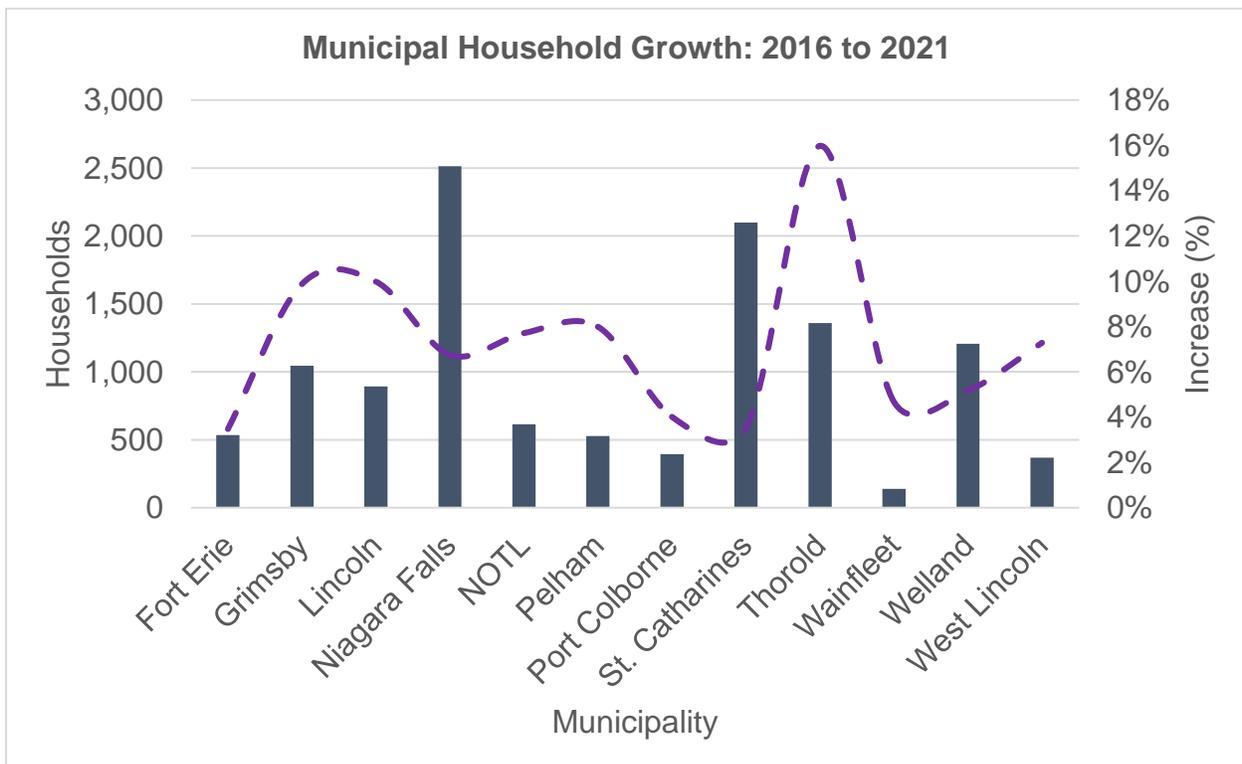
Growth in Total Dwelling Units

A total of 11,685 dwelling units were added to Niagara Region between 2016 and 2021, a 6% increase.

Niagara Falls (2,515), St. Catharines (2,100), Thorold (1,360), Welland (1,210) and Grimsby (1,045) added the most dwelling units over the census period.

Figure 4 highlights housing growth by municipality.

Figure 4: Municipal Household Growth between 2016 and 2021

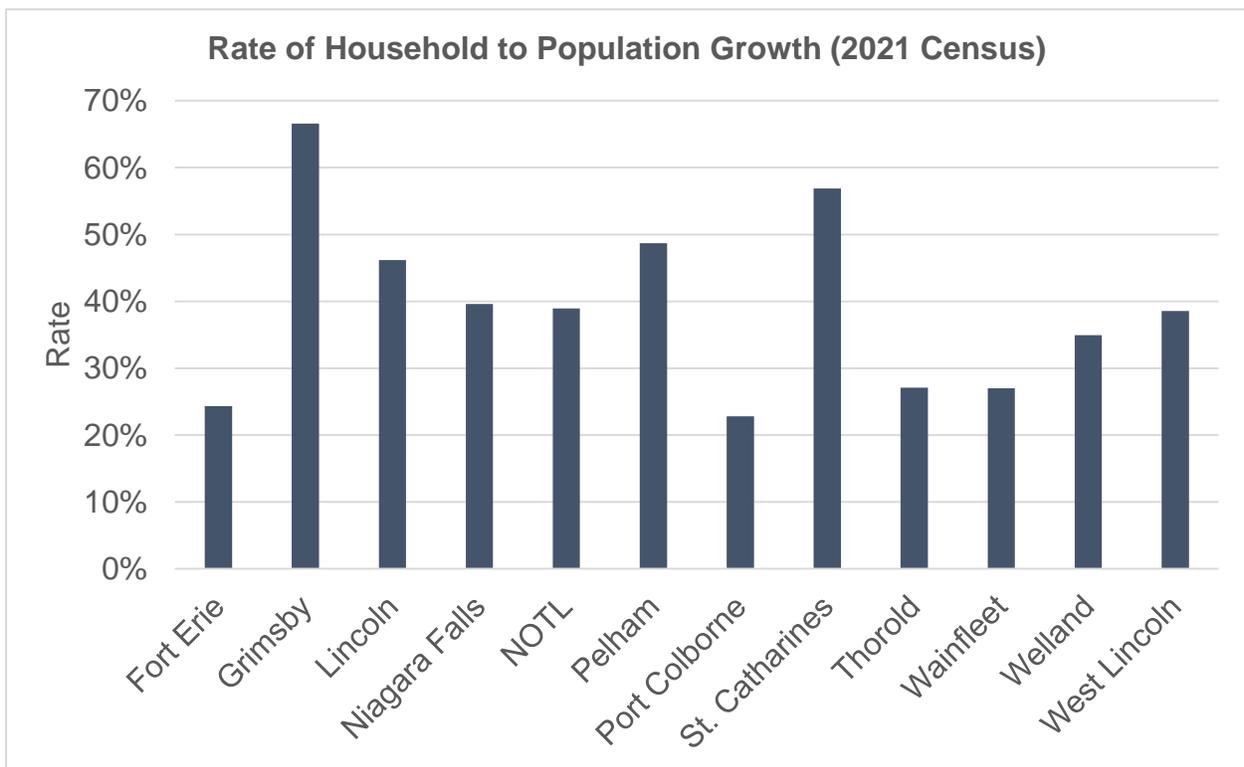


While information on housing mix will not be released until April 27, 2022, we can interpret a few trends from the limited information we do have. Figure 5 compares the rate of household growth to population growth. Higher rates in municipalities like Grimsby (67%), St. Catharines (57%) and Pelham (49%) imply housing growth has been within medium to high density unit types (townhomes and apartments) where there are few people per unit. It may also imply an aging demographic where, despite healthy housing growth, the population is declining within existing units.

Alternatively, lower rates such as Port Colborne (23%), Fort Erie (24%), Thorold (27%) and Wainfleet (27%) imply housing growth has been primarily in lower density housing types and/or population growth has been within existing units.

This topic will be revisited through future reports as we get additional information on housing mix and age.

Figure 5: 2021 rate of household to population growth



Alternatives Reviewed

This report provides Planning and Economic Development Committee a summary of the first release of data from the 2021 census. No alternatives were considered.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

- Supporting Businesses and Economic Growth

The census provides key information and details on business and economic growth trends. This topic is not addressed in this report but will be the subject of a future report once data is released in November, 2022.

- Healthy and Vibrant Community

The census provides key socioeconomic data. This topic is not addressed in this report but will be the subject of a future report once data is released throughout 2022.

- Responsible Growth and Infrastructure Planning

The census is the authoritative source for population data that is used by departments across the Region. This information is critical for monitoring the Official Plan and insuring to the Region plans growth and infrastructure responsibly.

- Sustainable and Engaging Government

This report, and forthcoming reports for this series, is aimed at providing Planning and Economic Development Committee information from the census so Council is engaged and aware of trends in Niagara.

Other Pertinent Reports

PDS 2-2022 Niagara Official Plan: Proposed Draft for Consultation

PDS 23-2021 2020 End of Year Growth Report and 5 Year Growth Trend

Prepared by:

Greg Bowie
Senior Planner
Planning and Development Services

Recommended by:

Michelle Sergi, MCIP, RPP
Commissioner
Planning and Development Services

Submitted by:

Ron Tripp, P.Eng.
Chief Administrative Officer

This report was prepared in consultation with John Federici, Planner and reviewed by Diana Morreale, Acting Director of Community and Long Range Planning.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 Population Growth by Municipality (2016 to 2021)
- Appendix 2 Population Growth by Dissemination Area (2016 to 2021)