
MARKET DIVERSITY

INDICATOR TYPE: Economic

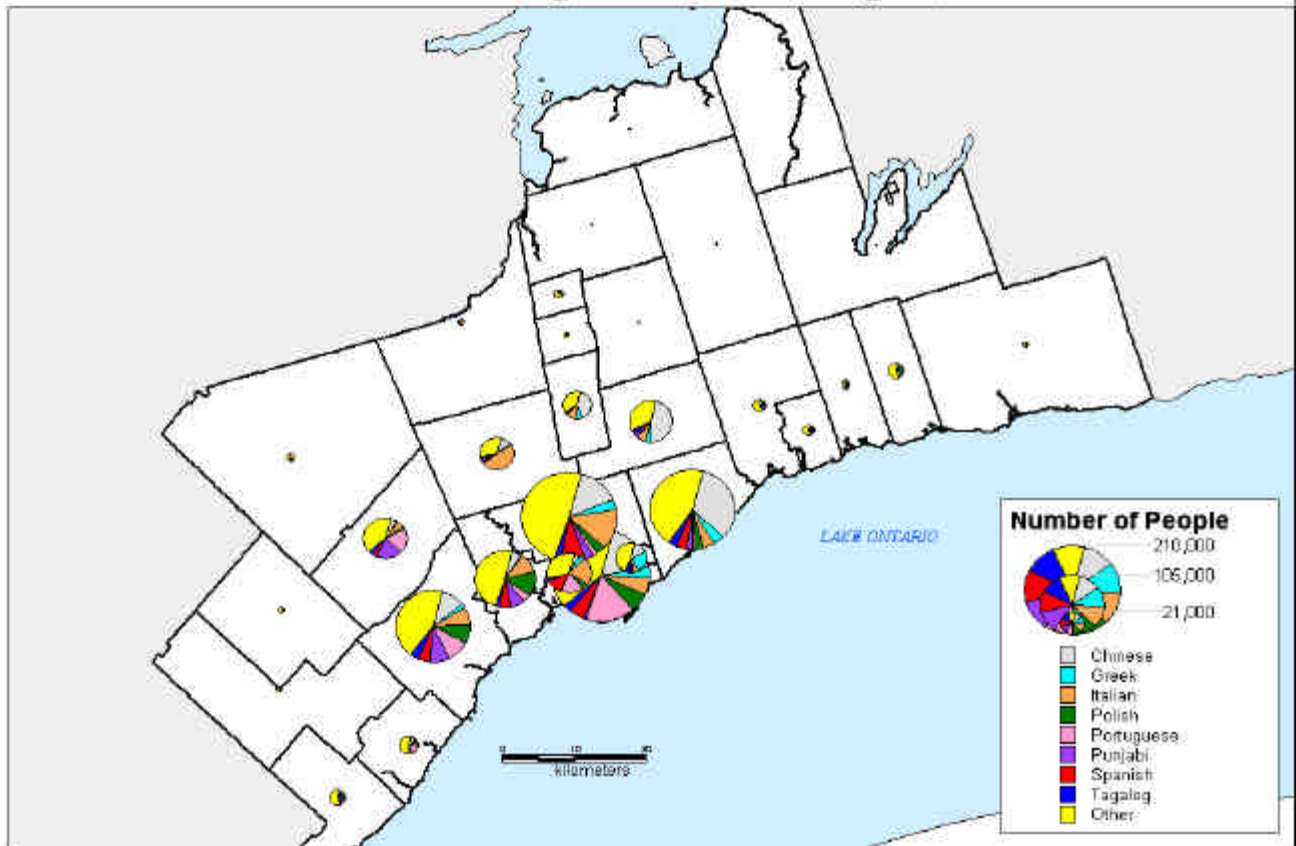
DOMAIN: Living

Cultural background and self-identity construction influence lifestyles and living situations, segmenting the market along cultural lines. Different cultural groups have specific characteristics and requirements that affect the formation of both supply and demand sides. Cultural background and self-identity certainly comprise much more than ethnocultural differentiation, as feminist and gay discourses also fragment the market along cultural lines. However, mother tongue is used here as an indicator of cultural diversity because it is particularly helpful not only for educational and community purposes but for marketing as well.

TRENDS

The GTA is a multicultural environment wherein about 80 languages are spoken. Over one million people, i.e. about 22% of the GTA population, have mother tongues other than English. French accounts for less than 1% overall. The percentage of people whose mother tongue is English ranges between 66% and 75% in the amalgamated city of Toronto and between 80% and 98% in the suburbs. Toronto is a highly diversified market while the suburbs are much less culturally diversified, except for Vaughan that has a concentration of people of Italian background, and Markham and Scarborough that have a concentration of Chinese people (Figure V). In the GTA, approximately 300,000 people speak Chinese and more than 200,000 speak Italian.

Dominant Mother Tongues Other Than English, 1999 Estimates



Source: Financial Post, Canadian Demographics, 1999 Estimates

LINKAGES

Since the 1970s the GTA has witnessed noticeable shifts in its cultural composition as many immigrants have chosen to live in Toronto. Cultural diversity is visible through many community events and in the retail environment of the city, creating a unique multicultural environment in the GTA. However, it is not always easy living in such a mixed environment. During school years or when looking for a job in Canada, minority cultural groups frequently experience racism and bigotry. Visible minorities, often immigrants, report suffering to some extent from wage disadvantage (Hum & Simpson 1998).

ACTION

Ontario legislation promoting multiculturalism came into force in 1982 when multiculturalism was formalized in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Since then all levels of government are committed to acknowledge and celebrate cultural diversity, ensure that people of all ethnocultural backgrounds are treated equally and deliver public services attuned to cultural values (Leman 1999). Although cultural

minorities frequently undergo discrimination to varying degrees, recent immigrant youth have found community agencies useful for socializing and outings in a relax environment (CCSD 2000).

Difficulties:

- Census information on population ethnocultural characteristics is extensive; however, data are only collected every five years which may not adequately reflect Toronto's fast changing ethnocultural dynamics.

Sources of Information:

Mother Tongue - Financial Post Markets, 1999 Canadian Demographics.

References:

CCSD, 2000. *Immigrant Youth in Canada*. Canadian Council on Social Development, Ottawa.

Hum, D. & W. Simpson, 1998. *Wage Opportunities for Visible Minorities in Canada*. Statistics Canada, Catalogue 98-17.

Leman, M. 1999. *Canadian Multiculturalism*. Political and Social Affairs Division, Library of Parliament, Ottawa.