THE THREE CITIES WITHIN TORONTO

Income Polarization Among Toronto’s Neighbourhoods, 1970-2005

BY J. DAVID HULCHANSKI, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
The Three Cities Within Toronto


It is one output of a multi-year project on neighbourhood change in greater Toronto over a 35 year period. The research is funded by the Community University Research Alliance and the Public Outreach Grant programs of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

The University of Toronto’s Cities Centre and St. Christopher House are the lead partners in the research alliance – the Neighbourhood Change and Building Inclusive Communities from Within Community University Research Alliance.  [www.NeighbourhoodChange.ca](http://www.NeighbourhoodChange.ca)


Richard Maaranen, Cities Centre Data Analyst, prepared the maps, graphs and tables; Philippa Campsie of Hammersmith Communications edited the text; Matthew Blackett of Spacing Media provided design and art direction.

Data sources for maps, figures and tables: (1) Statistics Canada, Profile Series, basic cross-tabulations, topic-based tabulations Census 1971 to 2006. (2) Statistics Canada, custom tabulations: E0985, E0982, E01171. (3) Social Housing Data: City of Toronto Social Development Finance & Administration Division, Social Policy Analysis & Research Section. (4) Crime Data: University of Toronto Map Library with permission from the Toronto Star.

Photos: Cover (fonds 124, file 2, id 157) and page ii (fonds 200, series 648, file 221, id 005) photos from Toronto Archives; page 13 and 14 photos by Jesse Colin Jackson.

J. David Hulchanski is the Associate Director of the Cities Centre and a professor of housing and community development in the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto. His PhD is in urban planning. He holds the Dr. Chow Yei Ching endowed chair in housing at the Faculty of Social Work.

© Cities Centre, University of Toronto, 2010  ISBN 978-0-7727-1478-7
Cities Centre Press, University of Toronto, 455 Spadina Ave., Suite 400, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 2G8

The author’s moral rights are protected with a Creative Commons license that allows users to quote from, link to, copy, transmit and distribute this report for non-commercial purposes, provided they attribute it to the author and publisher. The license does not allow users to alter, transform, or build upon the report. More details about this Creative Commons license can be viewed at [www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.5/ca](http://www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.5/ca)
WHAT IS A NEIGHBOURHOOD?

There is no one way to draw boundaries that define specific neighbourhoods. Defining a neighbourhood is, in the end, a subjective process. Neighbourhoods encompass each resident's sense of community life. There is no doubt, however, about the importance of neighbourhoods and their effects on health, educational outcomes, and overall well-being.

For statistical reporting and research purposes, Statistics Canada defines “neighbourhood-like” local areas called census tracts. In defining census tracts, Statistics Canada uses recognizable physical boundaries (such as roads, railway lines, or rivers) to define compact shapes, within which can be found a more or less homogeneous population in terms of socio-economic characteristics. The population of a census tract is generally 2,500 to 8,000. The City of Toronto encompasses 531 census tracts (as of the 2006 Census). Each has an average population of about 4,700 people. “Census tract” is used here interchangeably with the term “neighbourhood.”

In this study, our definition of a “neighbourhood” differs from that of the City of Toronto, which has defined and named only 140 neighbourhoods. Each represents a group of census tracts — on average, 3.8 census tracts and about 17,900 people. The city’s definition of neighbourhoods helps define and provide names for districts within the city, but they are too large to represent the lived experience of a neighbourhood. Individual census tracts come closer to that experience, even though they are statistical artifacts and do not always capture the true notion of neighbourhood.
NEIGHBOURHOOD POLARIZATION SINCE 1970: THREE DISTINCT CITIES EMERGE WITHIN TORONTO

The City of Toronto is huge: 632 square kilometres (244 square miles). With more than 2.5 million people living in its residential areas, a 20% increase since the early 1970s, the nature of its neighbourhoods has changed over time to reflect significant changes in the demographic characteristics and economic situation of their residents. Thirty-five years is an adequate period to examine the nature of change in neighbourhood characteristics and to identify trends.

Many of the questions asked in the 1971 census are still used in current census forms; therefore it is possible to analyse many aspects of neighbourhood change since that time.

Thanks to a research grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, a data analysis team at the University of Toronto’s Cities Centre (formerly the Centre for Urban and Community Studies) organized census data at the census-tract level for the Toronto CMA between 1971 and 2006. To avoid confusion with dates, note that incomes reported in the 1971 and 2006 censuses represent those of the preceding calendar years (1970 and 2005).

WHAT HAVE WE FOUND?

Over the course of 35 years, the pattern of who lives where in Toronto on the basis of socio-economic characteristics has changed dramatically. There has been a sharp consolidation of three distinct groupings of neighbourhoods in the city. No