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Ontario County

General Overview

Ontario County, first organized in 1789, is situated southeast of Rochester. Much of Canandaigua Lake and the northwest shore of Seneca Lake are located in Ontario County. Ontario is the second most populous county in the region after Monroe with just under 110,000 residents in 2016.

With a 9.6% increase in residents from 2000 to 2016, Ontario County is one of only two counties in the region (along with Seneca) to boast significant population growth. Ontario has a strong tourism sector, anchored by the high-end Eastview Mall, CMAC Performing Arts Center, and several wineries and breweries.

It also has the highest median income and home values in the region, along with the lowest poverty rate. Almost a third of residents hold a bachelor's degree or higher and the county has the lowest share of the adult population receiving less than a high school diploma in the region.

Demographic Overview

Ontario County experienced significant population growth over the decade, while most of the region had a steady or declining population. With just over 100,000 residents in 2000, Ontario County grew by 9.6% to 110,000 residents in 2016. This growth in population surpassed the growth rate of the region (1.1%) and the state (4.0%). Ontario County was home to 9% of the regional population in 2016.

Ontario County is aging faster than the region, state and nation:

- From 2000 to 2012-16, the number of residents 85 and older grew by 72% and the number 60-84 grew by 42% - both larger increases than the state, nation, region, and every county in the region.
- Meanwhile, the number of residents under 20 shrank by 6% from 2000 to 2012-16; this is a smaller decrease than the region and every county in the region.
- The smaller decrease in the young population and larger increase in the old population relative to the region is reflective of Ontario's comparatively strong overall population growth.

While the Asian, African American, and Hispanic populations have grown faster than the white population, the county remains overwhelmingly white:

- In 2012-16, 93% of Ontario residents were white, compared to 2% who were African American, 4% Hispanic, and 1% Asian.
- From 2000 to 2012-16, the Hispanic population grew by 32%, while the Asian population grew by 89% and the African American population rose by 32%. This compares to growth of 7% for white residents.

The distribution of household types in Ontario was similar to the state, nation, and region:

- In 2012-16, 18% of Ontario households were married with children, 31% were married without children, and 29% lived alone. Single adults with children made up 10% of the total households, slightly lower than the 11% share for the nation, region, and state.

Arts, Culture & Leisure

In 2016, Ontario had higher tourism spending per resident (\$1,863) than any other county besides Yates, an increase of 7% from 2005. This was higher than the regional rate (\$1,305) but lower than the state (\$3,240). Ontario County's tourism industry is expected to continue to grow with such attractions as the New York State Wine & Culinary Center, the renovated Constellation Brands Marvin Sands Performing Arts Center (also known as CMAC), and increased promotion of the Finger Lakes wine trails, winter sports venues, area museums and shops.

Per capita recreational spending (\$94) has been flat since 2005. While higher than the region (\$72), this was well below the statewide figure of \$363.

Children and Youth

Child poverty, while on the rise, was comparatively low in Ontario:

- In 2012-16, 13% of children in Ontario County were living in poverty, lower than the state (22%), region, and nation (both 21%), and the lowest of all counties in the region.
- The rate rose by 3 points from 2000 to 2012-16. The increase from 2000 was above the state (2 points) but below the nation and region (4 and 7 points respectively).

Similar to the region, state and nation, Ontario County has seen an increase in the number of single-parent families:

- In 2012-16, 35% of families were headed by single parents, an increase of 9 points from 2000. Ontario's rate was lower than the region (39%) and state (37%) and equal to the nation (35%).
- The 9-point increase from 2000 was larger than the region (8 points), state (4 points), nation (6 points), and was the second highest increase of the regional counties.

In 2015, 6.1% of births in Ontario were of low birth weight babies, below the nation (8.1%), region (7.6%) and state (7.8%). The 2015 rate was slightly lower than Ontario's rate in 2000.

Teen pregnancy rates have declined over the past decade, similar to all counties in the region. In 2015, the teen pregnancy rate in Ontario was 1.5%, lower than the region (2.2%).

Community Engagement

In 2016, voter registration in Ontario (84%) was higher than the state (80%), region (82%), and every other county in the region except Genesee. This rate, however, was a decrease of 5 points from 2000.

Consistent with statewide and regional trends, turnout in the 2014 midterm election was much lower than in the presidential election, but at 38% was still higher than every other regional county, the region, and the state. Midterm turnout fell from 42% in the 2010 midterm elections. Voter turnout in 2016 was 60%, above the state, region and every county except Monroe. This was 4 points higher than the turnout in the 2012 presidential election.

Ontario County's share of registered borrowers decreased by 34 percentage points since 2000, but library visits have increased:

- In 2016, 46% of residents of Ontario's county library system were registered borrowers, below the state (55%) and region (63%).
- The number of library visits has increased 38% in Ontario, a larger increase than for the state and region, but still smaller than increases for other counties in the region.

Average charitable giving in Ontario County increased by 6% from 2011 to 2015, a smaller increase than for the region (25%), the state (26%), and the nation (23%). On average, Ontario donors gave \$3,897 in 2016, the second highest level of giving in the region.

Economy

Ontario has posted strong job growth relative to the region:

- Total jobs grew by 13% from 2001 to 2016, lower than the state (18%) and nation (17%) but well above the region (4%).
- Sectors in which job growth outperformed the region and most individual counties include Education; Financial Activities, Other Services, Professional and Business Services. In the Manufacturing sector, the decrease of 8% was less than the decrease at the regional, state, and national level.
- Sectors in which job growth compared to the region included Construction and Natural Resources and Mining.

The growth in average total salary in Ontario has outpaced the state, nation, and region:

- In Ontario, the average salary grew by 20% from \$38,373 in 2000 to 45,898 in 2016; a larger increase than the state (8%), nation (9%), and region (3%).
- Ontario's average salary in 2016 was lower than the state and nation, but was higher than the region and all of the surrounding counties except Monroe.

Like the state, region and nation, Ontario's unemployment rate soared during the Great Recession and its aftermath. Each year it has moved closer to recovery, and is less than 1 point higher than in 2000:

- Unemployment jumped from 4.2% in 2007 to a high of 7.4% in 2010, but has since fallen to 4.3% in 2016.
- Ontario's rate in 2016 was lower than the nation (4.9%), state (4.8%), region (4.7%), and every other county in the region.

Education

Students in Ontario matched or outperformed their peers on most Common Core-aligned tests and high school Regents:

- In 2017, 39% of Ontario 3rd graders passed the English test, below the state (43%) and slightly above the region (37%), and 47% of 4th graders passed the math test, above the state and region.
- 8th graders lagged behind the state on the math test (with 18% passing), while 42% of Ontario 8th graders passed the English test, below the state but above the region.
- For both the Common Core Algebra 1 and English Regents test, a higher portion of students (87% and 91% respectively) passed than statewide and in the region.

Ontario County has made great progress in prekindergarten participation, and fares well compared the state and region:

- Ontario County's prekindergarten participation rate grew from 12% in 2001 to 47% in 2016. The growth of 35 points was larger than region but almost on par with the state.

Ontario had among the highest graduation rates in the region in 2017 at 90%; this is an increase of 8 points from 2008. The graduation rate in 2017 was above the state (82%) and region (85%).

Ontario County, along with Monroe, consistently had the highest levels of educational attainment in the region.

- In 2012-16, 64% of Ontario County residents 25 and older had attended at least some college, 5 points above the state and national figures. This was up from 56% of residents in 2000.
- In addition, Ontario had a lower share of those with less than a high school diploma (7%) compared to the state, nation, and region.

Spending per student by Ontario County school districts has increased 39% since 2000, a smaller increase than the state, region, and every regional county. At \$19,934 in 2016, per-student spending was lower than every regional county except Orleans.

Financial Self-Sufficiency

Despite a large decrease from 2000, median household income in Ontario was higher than any other county:

- Ontario's median income in 2012-16 was \$58,070, above the nation (\$55,320) and region (\$54,110) but below the state (\$60,740).
- From 2000 to 2012-16, inflation-adjusted median income in Ontario fell by 10%, a greater loss than the state and nation but less than the region.

Poverty has increased, but remains below the nation, state and region:

- In 2012-16, 10% of Ontario residents had incomes below the poverty line, compared to 15% for the state, 15% for the nation, and 14% for the region. Ontario's rate was below the nation, state, and region in 2000 and 2007-11.
- Ontario's rate has risen by 3 points from 2000 to 2012-16, a larger increase than the state (no change), below the region (4 points), and on par with the nation.
- In 2016, 1.3% of residents in Ontario received temporary assistance, lower than the state and region (2.9% and 2.8% respectively). The rate has increased slightly from 1.1% in 2001. Ontario's rate is consistently below the state and region, but above some counties surrounding Monroe.

Health

A relatively small share of Ontario residents lack health insurance –similar to most of the regional counties.

- In 2015, 6% of Ontario residents were uninsured, 3 points lower than the rate of 9% in 2008. Ontario's rate of uninsured in 2015 was lower than the nation (11%), state (8%), and equal to the region.

The mortality rate in Ontario has decreased since 2000:

- Ontario's rate in 2015 was 705 per 100,000 residents, higher than the state (634) and similar to the region (706).
- The rate fell by 10% from 2000 to 2015, a much smaller decrease than the state (21%) and slightly smaller than the regional decrease (13%).

In 2016, 2,900 individuals were admitted to alcohol and/or substance abuse treatment programs in Ontario, an increase from a low of 1,800 in 2012 and a 22% increase from the number in 2007.

Despite more than doubling from 2001 to 2016, the rate of chlamydia infections (314 per 100,000 residents) was lower than the state (555) and regional (496) rates.

Housing

In 2012-16 the median home value in Ontario (\$148,400) was 17% greater than in 2000; an increase similar to the nation (19%), and less than the 39% increase statewide. In contrast, median home values decreased by 2% in the region as a whole for that period.

Ontario's median home value was higher than the other eight counties in the region, but below the nation (\$184,700) and the state (\$286,300).

In 2012-16, median rent was \$821 in Ontario, little changed from 2000 when it was \$813. This was higher than every regional county in 2012-16, except for Monroe, but still below the nation (\$950) and state (\$1,160).

The ratio of median income to median home value, a measure of housing affordability, was 2.1 in 2012-16. This was just above the region (1.9) but below the nation (2.6) and state (3.4). A higher ratio means that housing is less affordable; a ratio above 2 or 3 is considered unaffordable.

In contrast, rent was relatively more affordable in Ontario: 32% of renters' income went to rent in 2012-16, on par with the national rate (32%) and a bit lower than the regional (34%), and statewide (36%) proportions. A rate less than 30% is considered affordable.

Ontario County had a homeownership rate of 73% in 2012-16, higher than the national (64%), regional (68%), and state (54%) rates.

At 4.1, Ontario County had a higher rate of residential building permits issued per 1,000 residents in 2016 than the state (1.7) and nation (3.7), and remained the highest among every other county in the region. The rate was a 15% decrease from 2000, but it marked a 20% increase from 2015.

Public Safety

Ontario's rate of serious crimes has fluctuated since 2000, but has decreased overall, in-line with the state, nation, and region:

- In 2016, there were 170 serious crimes per 10,000 residents in Ontario, below the national (284), and regional (215) rates but slightly above the state (166).
- The rate has decreased 14% since 2000, in contrast to the decreases of 31% or greater in the state, region, and nation.

The rate of violent crime in Ontario rose 40% since 2000, increasing to 15 per 10,000 residents in 2016. While there was a 17% increase for the region, the violent crime rate dropped 24% in the nation and 32% in the state. Ontario's rate was below the regional rate (26) and less than half of the state and national rates (37 and 39, respectively).

Ontario's property crime rate has fluctuated since 2000, but has decreased overall, in-line with the state, nation, and region:

- In 2016, the rate in Ontario was 155 per 10,000 residents, lower than the nation (245) and region (189) and very similar to the state (153).

The rate of juvenile delinquency intakes in Ontario, 58 per 10,000 children in 2016, more than doubled from 29 per 10,000 children in 2015 but declined 68% from 2000.

Note: Data research and analysis completed by [the Center for Governmental Research](#)