

ADEQUATE INCOME

◆ The before tax Low Income Cut-Off (LICO), is one of Statistics Canada's most widely available measures of low income, and used extensively as a poverty line. In 2011, the before tax LICO was \$22,229 for a single person, \$27,674 for a single parent with a child, and \$41,307 for a family of four, in large cities like Hamilton.

◆ Social assistance rates are far from being a basic standard of living. A single person on Ontario works receives less than \$8,000 per year, which is only 35% of the poverty line.

◆ Efforts to reduce child poverty in the last fifteen years have included increases in child tax benefits, which have helped lift many families out of poverty. But even with these increases, families on social assistance are still living well below the poverty line. The combined Ontario Works and tax credit incomes of a lone parent with one child and a two-parent family with two children are only 71% and 64% of the poverty line, respectively.

◆ A person working full time at minimum wage cannot lift themselves out of poverty, either as a single person or as a lone parent (even when taking into account all tax benefits). Only when a family has two full time minimum wage earners would their income be slightly above the poverty line, and only due to child tax credits.

◆ The minimum wage, at \$10.25, represents only 68% of the living wage of \$14.95, calculated by Living Wage Hamilton to afford a decent standard of living in Hamilton.

◆ There was a major increase in poverty during the 1990s recession. Between 1996-2007, the poverty rates in the Hamilton Census Metropolitan Area (includes Burlington and Grimsby) improved significantly. The 2008 recession has led to an increase in poverty rates in our community, and there is no evidence that the poverty rates have recovered yet. In real terms, social assistance rates are significantly lower now than they were in the 1990s and it is more difficult for workers to qualify for programs like Employment Insurance. The weaker social safety net makes climbing out of poverty more challenging today.

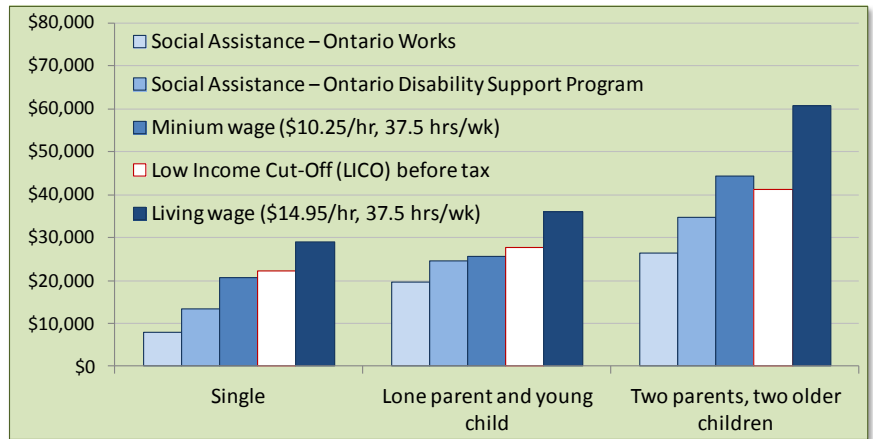


Chart 1. Comparison of maximum income thresholds (including all tax benefits), 2011

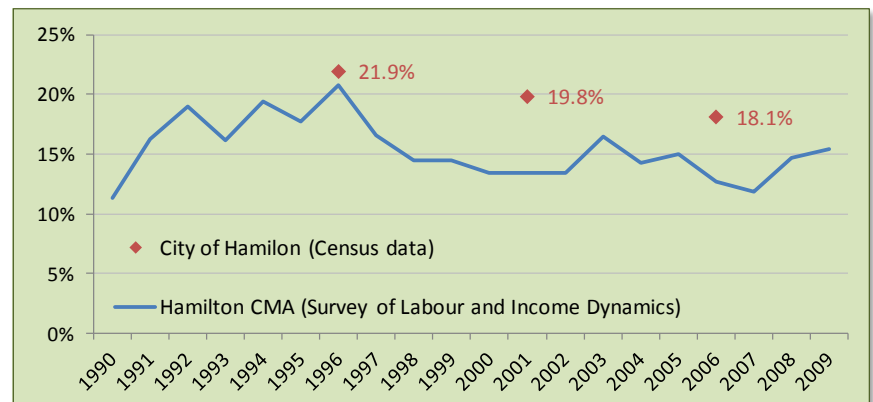


Chart 2. Proportion of population living on incomes below poverty line (before tax LICO), City of Hamilton and Hamilton CMA, 1990-2009

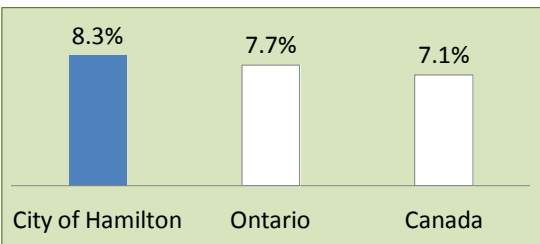


Chart 3. Persons living in households with severe or moderate food insecurity, Canadian Community Health Survey, 2007/2008

HEALTHY FOOD

◆ "Food security is commonly understood to exist in a household when all people, at all times, have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food for an active and healthy life. Conversely, food insecurity occurs when food quality and/or quantity are compromised, typically associated with limited financial resources" (Statistics Canada).

◆ Over 35,000 Hamiltonians are food insecure, which is over 8% of the population. The rates are even higher in women: 10.9% of Hamilton females over age 12 were food insecure in 2007/8. Teenagers and persons aged 35-64 are the age groups with above average rates of food insecurity.

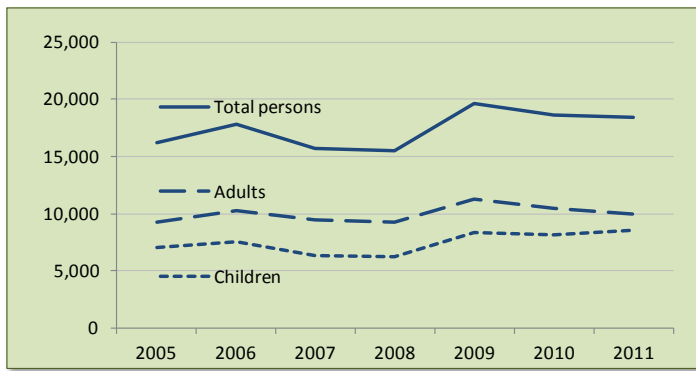


Chart 4. Food bank clients, Hamilton Food Share, 2005-2011

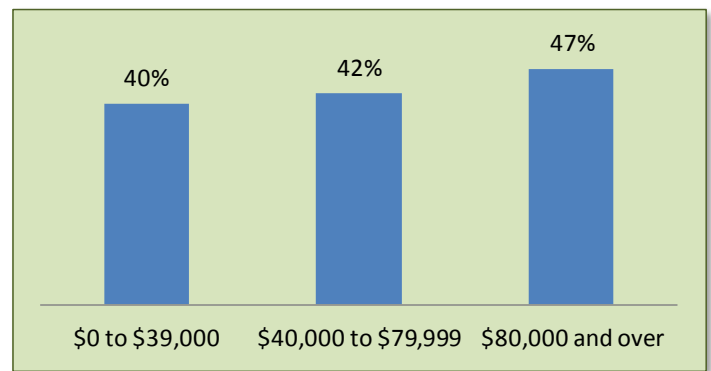


Chart 5. Vegetable and fruit consumption: 5 times or more per day, by household income groups, City of Hamilton, Canadian Community Health Survey, 2007

- ◆ Lone parent families are most likely to be food insecure: 23% of Canadian lone parent families in 2007/2008 were food insecure (Hamilton-specific data was not available).
- ◆ Most people who are food insecure do not access a food bank. Approximately four in ten Hamiltonians who are food insecure are food bank clients. There were 18,400 food bank clients in March 2011 counted by Hamilton Food Share.
- ◆ There has been a significant rise in the proportion of children accessing food from a food bank in Hamilton in the last few years. Approximately 40% of food bank users were children in 2008, and that has risen to 46% in 2011. In March 2011, 8,500 Hamilton children were part of families using food banks, breaking the previous record set in 2009 during the most recent recession.
- ◆ Vegetable and fruit consumption is also partly associated with income: while less than half of Hamilton households across all income groups eat vegetables or fruits 5 times a day, this percentage goes down with income, reaching just 40% in the lowest income bracket.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- ◆ Large families have an especially hard time finding suitable and affordable rental housing in Hamilton. The rate of overcrowding has been steadily increasing since at least 1991. In 2006, there were 6,550 renter households who didn't meet occupancy standards.
- ◆ In 2011, there were over 5,300 Hamilton households with an active application for the affordable housing waitlist. This represents a dramatic 48% increase since 2007, just before the recession. This jump in demand for affordable housing is among the highest in the province – the provincial average was a 25% increase in the number of affordable housing waitlist applications this same period.

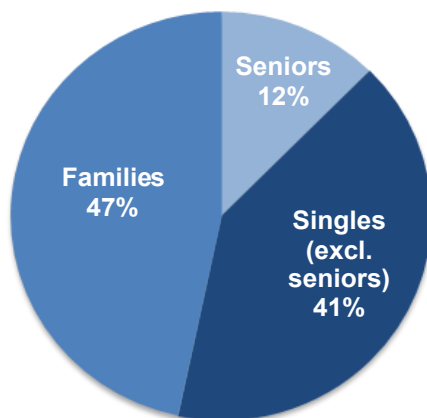


Chart 6. Household composition of affordable housing waitlist, City of Hamilton, Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, 2011

- ◆ Singles are disproportionately represented in the Hamilton population of households waiting for affordable housing. While singles under age 65 represent slightly more than 20% of the combined total of working age singles and families and senior singles and families in Hamilton, they represent 41% of Hamilton's affordable housing waitlist applicants.
- ◆ The high proportion of singles on Hamilton's affordable housing waitlist is directly connected to the very low social assistance income available for singles, and the enormous challenge single persons on social assistance have in finding affordable, stable and safe housing for themselves. The average rent for a bachelor apartment in Hamilton costs \$524/month in October 2011, representing 80% of the income of a single Ontario Works beneficiary (including tax credits).
- ◆ The upcoming changes to the provincial Community Start-up and Maintenance Benefit will reduce by half this funding which is designed to help families and individuals on social assistance establish a residence, prevent eviction, and prevent heat and utilities from being cut off. The Hamilton Community Legal Clinic has said the consequences will be dire for Hamilton's most vulnerable families and that the cuts will lead to an increase in homelessness.