

Key findings:

- ◆ Since 2010, Hamilton's estimated crude birth rate has dropped at the same time as an increase in residents in their prime reproductive years (ages 25-35).
- ◆ The trend in delayed-child rearing may be linked to increased precarious employment in Hamilton.
- ◆ McMaster's Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario study has developed many policy recommendations to support family formations in this era of rising precarious employment.

Introduction

Previous issues in this *Demographic Shifts* series has shown that Hamilton had a large boost in its population of residents part of the Millennial generation cohort (currently aged 19-35), but that the city is on track to miss meeting the provincial target of child population if the current trend continues.

This bulletin focuses on the age group most likely to be parents of young children: people in their prime reproductive years (aged 25-35 according to Statistics Canada), and what policies are needed to support residents in this age group who may be delaying having children because of their precarious employment.

Changes in birth rates and prime reproductive age residents

Despite the recent strong growth in residents in their prime reproductive years, there has not yet been a corresponding noticeable increase in the number of babies in Hamilton (chart 1). In previous decades, residents aged 25-35 would be starting families at this stage of their life, but in Hamilton, the estimated crude birth rate has dropped slightly since 2010, just when the number of residents aged 25-35 has been increasing.

The recent drop in Hamilton's approximate crude birth rate is larger than most other large cities and regions in Ontario (chart 2). Since 2010, Hamilton has had a 2.7% decrease in its crude birth rate, compared to a 0.7% average increase across Ontario. Among large regions, only Durham and Halton have had a larger drop. Among Ontario's large regions and cities, Hamilton now has the third lowest estimated crude birth rate, behind only Ottawa and Toronto (chart 3).

Chart 1. Number of residents in prime reproductive ages, number of infants and estimated crude birth rates, City of Hamilton and Ontario, 2001-2015 (Statistics Canada, Estimates of Population)

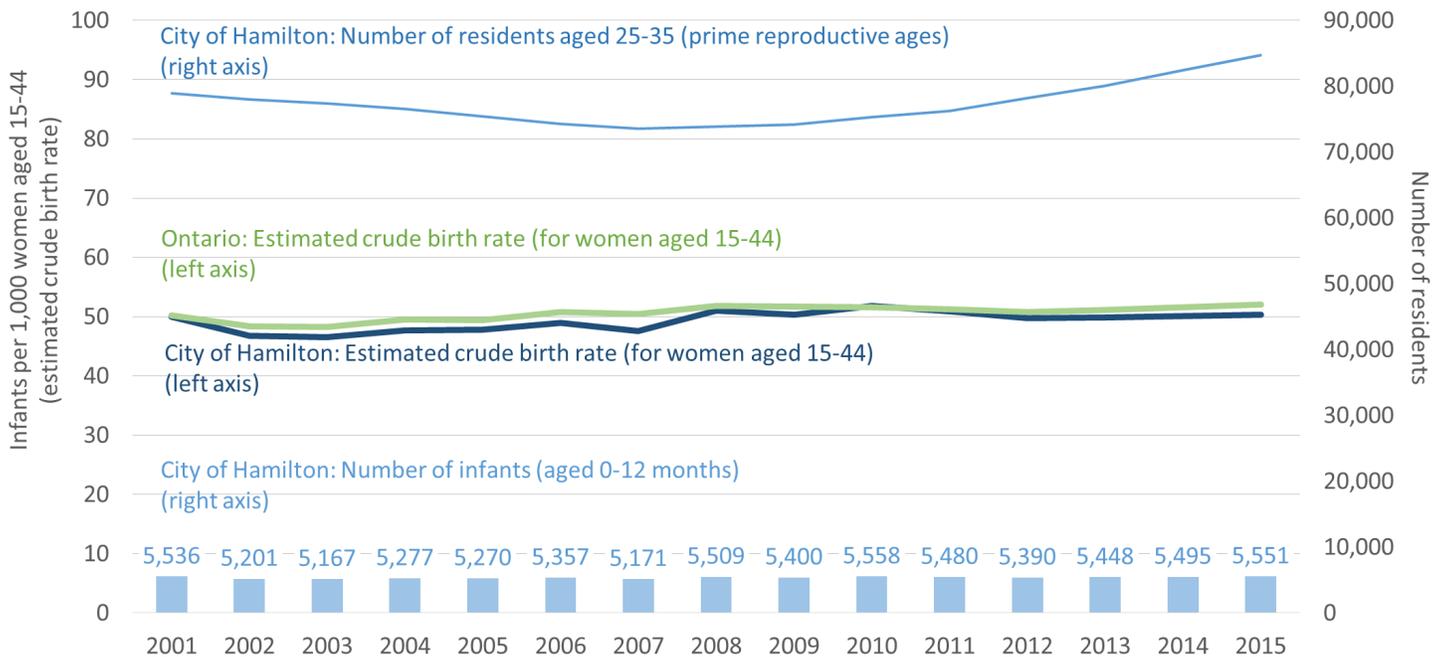


Chart 2. Change between 2010 and 2015 in the number of infants per 1,000 women aged 15-44 (estimated crude birth rate), Ontario cities and regions with populations over 250,000 (Statistics Canada, Estimates of Population)

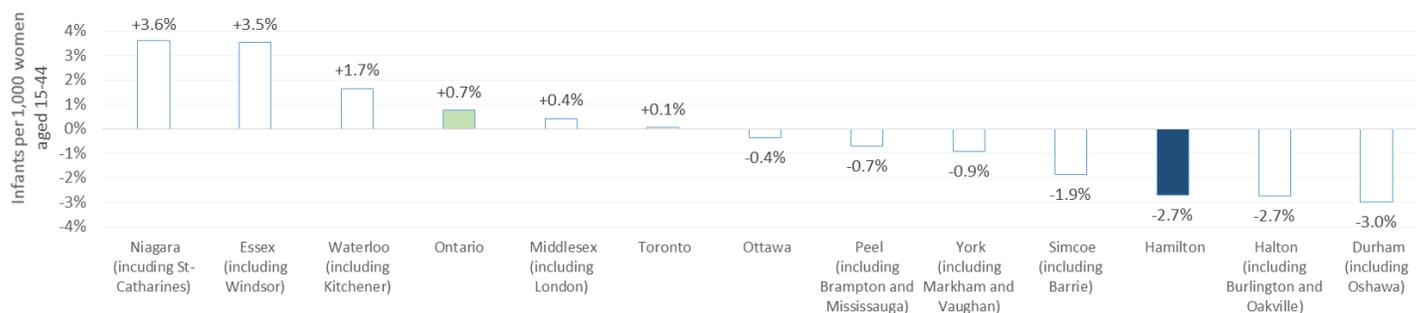
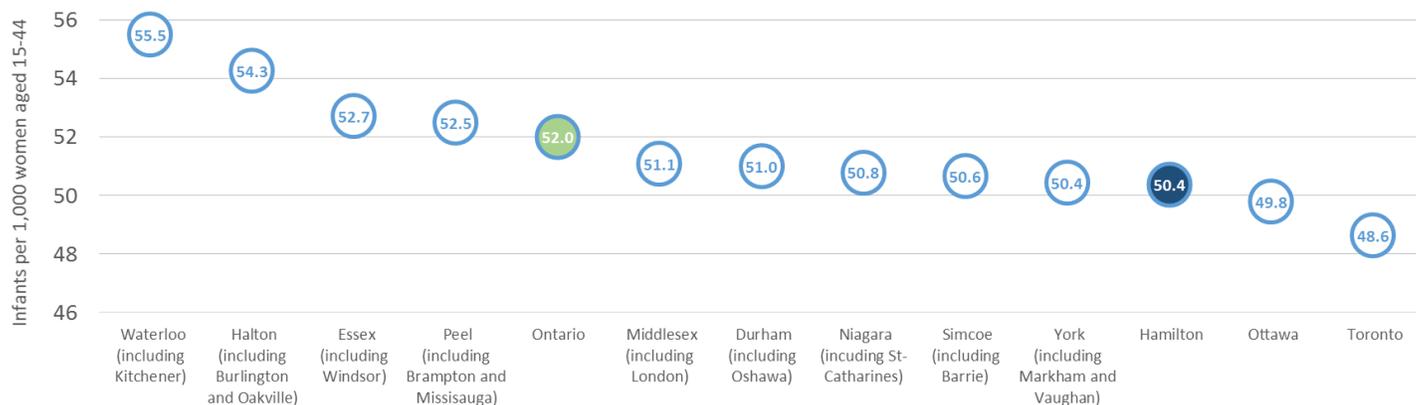


Chart 3. Number of infants per 1,000 women aged 15-44 (estimated crude birth rate), Ontario cities and regions with populations over 250,000 (Statistics Canada, Estimates of Population)



Data note: Crude birth rates are calculated by dividing the number of births in a population by the number of women aged 15-44. Due to data availability and comparability, charts in this bulletin use an estimated crude birth rate, calculated with the number of infants 0-12 months as a stand-in for the exact number of births in each year.

Economic insecurity and impacts on child-rearing

Economic uncertainty is having a major impact on family size in Canada, especially for young families. A 2015 Abacus poll revealed that 59% of Canadian Millennials agreed that due to financial pressures they will have to delay major life events including having children. In Hamilton, the rate of workers aged 25 to 65 reporting delaying having children was twice as high among insecure workers, as compared to secure workers (14% vs. 7%), according to the Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario (PEPSO) survey conducted in 2011 and 2014. Hamilton also has a higher than average rate of precarious and insecure employment (57% of workers aged 25-65 are in these types of jobs) than in the GTHA. And with Hamilton's vision recently confirmed to be "The best place to raise a child and age successfully" it becomes even more urgent to strengthen Hamilton's economy so that more young people feel secure enough to start a family, if they so desire.

The PEPSO study led by Dr. Wayne Lewchuk at McMaster, pointed to a range of policies that would support family formations in this era of rising precarious employment:

Building a dynamic labour market that supports workers in precarious employment	Ensuring that jobs are a pathway to income and employment security	Enhancing social and community supports for a new labour market
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building a workforce-development plan for a changing labour market Providing training opportunities for those in insecure employment Enabling more secure employment Addressing discrimination in hiring, job retention and advancement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modernizing employment standards Reducing the impacts of irregular work schedules for workers Improving income security for workers in precarious jobs Enhancing access to benefits for workers in insecure jobs Supporting voice at work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving access to community services Enabling flexible, quality child-care Creating accessible opportunities for children and youth Ensuring meaningful volunteer opportunities