

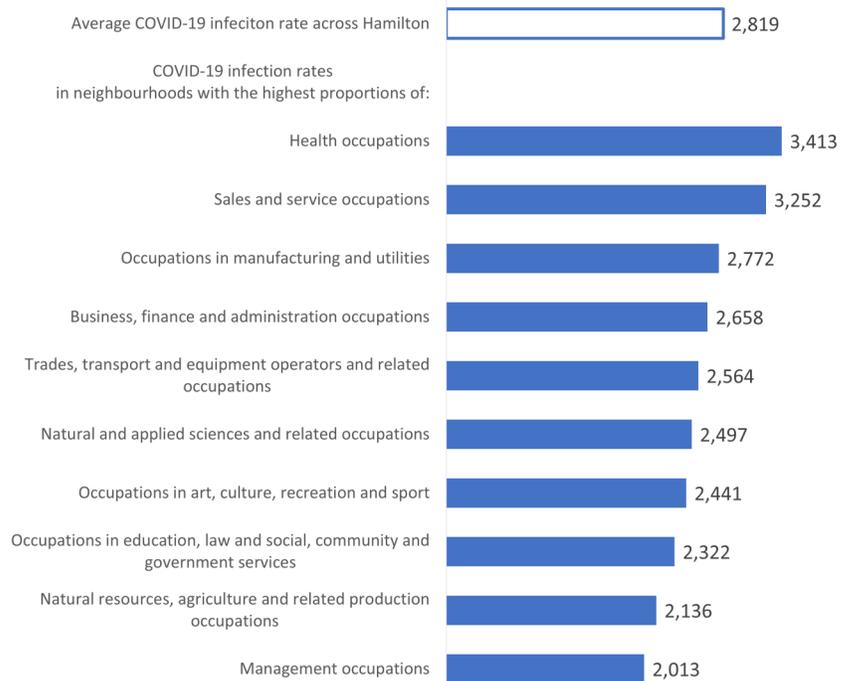
**Key findings:**

- ◆ Average COVID-19 infection rates are highest in neighbourhoods with high proportions of workers in healthcare and sales and service occupations and lowest in neighbourhoods with high proportions of management and natural resources workers.
- ◆ The economic impact of COVID-19 includes about 12,000 more unemployed people in the Hamilton CMA compared to before the pandemic.

**COVID-19's occupational risks**

Analysis from other communities and Hamilton's own workplace outbreaks has shown that workplace transmission is a common source of growth in COVID-19 infections. In the Public Health agency of Canada's "Intensification of Inequities" model (see Bulletin 21), inability to work from home, job insecurity, and no access to paid sick leave are occupational risk factors for COVID-19 infections. Occupations that involve close proximity to colleagues and clients and exposure to the public also put workers at higher risk. The Toronto's Star's investigations into workplace outbreaks have shown that many are at places of employment where low wage, precarious work is common, further intensifying inequality in COVID-19 transmission. ([Toronto Star, Ontario locks down on Boxing Day, but essential workers still work. Without protections like paid sick leave, it just won't work](#), December 23, 2020).

**Chart 1. Average COVID-19 infection rates per 100,000 population grouped in neighbourhoods with highest quintile of residents working in major occupational categories, Statistics Canada, 2016 Census and City of Hamilton COVID-19 infections by Census Tract. COVID-19 cases as of April 19, 2021. (City of Hamilton Public Health and 2016 Census data)**



To illustrate some of these trends with local data, data on occupational categories of residents across Hamilton's neighbourhoods was analysed from the 2016 Census. Chart 1 shows that neighbourhoods where the highest proportions of workers in health care and sales and service occupations live have rates of over 3,000 COVID-19 cases per 100,000. Neighbourhoods with the highest proportion of residents working in management or natural resources occupations had COVID-19 rates just over 2,000 cases per 100,000. It is important to note that these data show an association, and do not prove a causation between occupation and COVID-19. The findings, however, do support research in other communities that demonstrate that workplace outbreaks are most common in workplaces with high rates of precarious workers, which is common in sales and service occupations, and for many health care workers. The privilege of being able to work from home in some types of occupations is another important factor, or having paid sick days.

According to Workplace Safety and Insurance board data published by the [Toronto Star](#), more than 8,700 Ontario workers contracted COVID-19 on the job in 2020. In Hamilton, workplace infections have outpaced outbreaks in all other locations except for long-term care. This underscores the need to implement policies that specifically target better working conditions, access to meaningful paid sick leave, moratoriums on evictions and investing in infrastructure to support precarious and low paid workers.

## Economic Impact

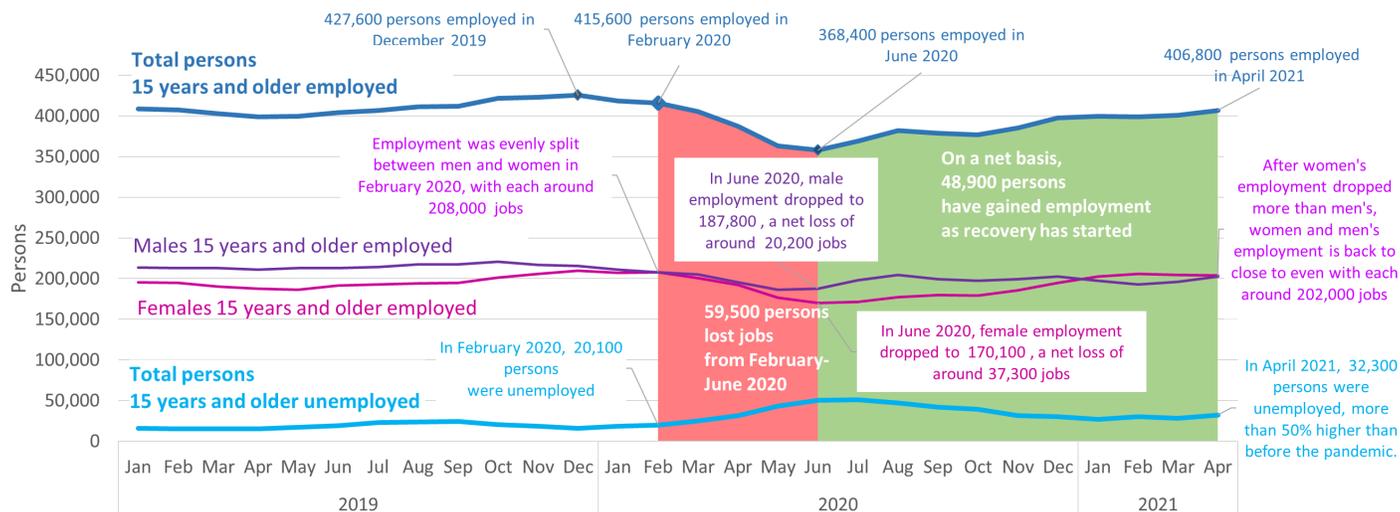
The pandemic's economic effects are ongoing, and the latest labour force data shows that the Hamilton Census Metropolitan Area (which includes Burlington and Grimsby) has approximately 8,800 fewer persons employed than before the pandemic (chart 2).

Chart 2 and 3 show that the pandemic had a disproportionate impact on younger and female workers by the summer of 2020. This local data is not available by racialization status, but it is expected that they are similarly suffering higher rates of job loss and lower rates of job recovery, as has been reported in national and provincial data.

The significant drop in employment during the pandemic hit service-sector jobs the hardest, a sector with high rate of female, racialized and young workers. Workplaces such as retail, restaurants, childcare centres, and hotels were particularly vulnerable to the shutdown, many of which closed down completely for some time. The Hamilton Chamber of Commerce with the support of McMaster University, Goodwill the Amity Group, Workforce Planning Hamilton, and YWCA Hamilton are conducting a "[Women out of Work](#)" research study that aims to collect and analyse qualitative and quantitative data that will aid in providing policy recommendations on how to help women successfully re-enter and remain in the labour market after COVID-19.

The recovery in more recent months has been positive for women, with women's employment now back to equal than men's employment in Hamilton (chart 2).

**Chart 2. Total employment, and employment by sex, Hamilton Census Metropolitan Area, 2019-2021, Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey**



Unemployment data shows young workers continue to have the highest unemployment rate among age groups. Chart 3 compares the months of April 2019 and April 2021 (since unemployment rates fluctuate seasonally, looking at same months in different years are best comparison points), with July 2020, the month where unemployment rate climbed highest during the pandemic. Workers aged 15-24 had a 13.5% unemployment rate in April 2021, more than five points higher than the same period in 2019 (8.2% in April 2019). The 25-44 age group saw a smaller increase in their unemployment rate during the pandemic, but the April 2021 rate of 7.1% is now more than double the pre-pandemic unemployment rate for that age group (3.1% in April 2019).

**Chart 3. Unemployment by major age group, Hamilton Census Metropolitan Area (CMA), March 2019, July 2020 and April 2021, Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey**

