

TACKLING POVERTY in HAMILTON *We can do it!*

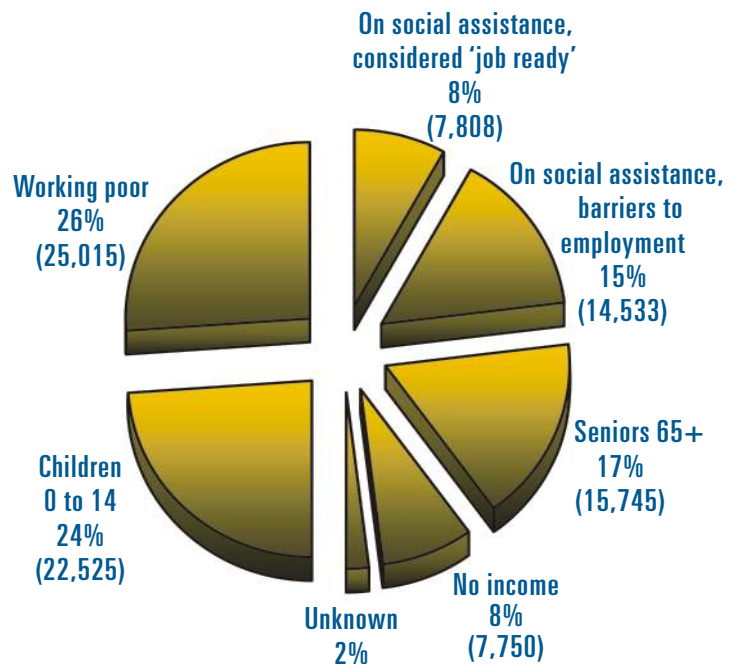
Quick Facts

Who Lives in Poverty?

Almost 20 per cent of Hamilton's population, or 95,650 residents, live in households with incomes below the poverty line (2001 census data).

Consider This...

- A person working 40 hours per week at minimum wage earns an income below the poverty line
- Forty-one per cent of those living in poverty are either too young or too old to work
- Women experience higher rates of poverty:
 - Sixty-nine per cent of seniors living in poverty are women
 - Fifty-two per cent of those earning low incomes are women
 - Eighty per cent of female-led, single parent families live in poverty
- Eight per cent of working-age individuals report no income from any source. This includes people who are homeless, using emergency shelters, or staying with a friend or family member on a temporary basis.



Some groups in our community experience disproportionately high levels of poverty:

People with disabilities	30%
Visible minorities	37%
Aboriginals	44%
Recent immigrants	52%

How Do We Define Poverty?

The most well-known measure of poverty in Canada is the Low Income Cut-Off, or LICO, developed by Statistics Canada. LICO calculates the average cost of basic necessities (including food, clothing and housing) for various sized households in communities of varying sizes. The measure then adds an additional 20 per cent to determine the low income cut-off for each household size.

The income remaining after food, clothing and housing is meant to cover all expenses, including heat and hydro, laundry, toiletries, school-related expenses, medication, transportation and other expenses.

Here's the before-tax, low income cut-off level by family size for Hamilton:

Before-Tax, Low Income Cut Offs by Family Size for the City of Hamilton (2003)

Family Size	Before-Tax, Low Income Cut Off
1	\$ 16,979
2	\$ 21,224
3	\$ 26,396
4	\$ 31,952
5	\$ 35,718
6	\$ 39,483
7	\$ 43,249

- Living below the poverty line often means having to decide between paying the rent or buying food.
- More than 15,000 Hamiltonians visit food banks every month.
- The definition of poverty is directly linked to income level, but it goes beyond that. Living in poverty is also linked to a lack of opportunities and choices.
- Over the past 10 years, income levels in Hamilton, especially among low and middle income groups, have not kept pace with increases in the cost of housing, taxes, utilities, food and other expenses.
- Poverty is a key determinant of health. Being poor is associated with more health problems and a lower life expectancy.