

**A profile of Hamiltonians experiencing food insecurity**

Hamilton's Emergency Food Network is made up of 12 food banks and 7 hot meal programs. As the hub of the Emergency Food Network, Hamilton Food Share raises 2.8 million pounds of food per year, distributing these supplies to agencies across the city. Together, the emergency food system procures over 5 million pounds of food per year and puts it on the tables of people who need it the most. The Hunger Count report is formulated using data directly from these frontline agencies.

**Food Bank Access Comparison**

All household visits across the community



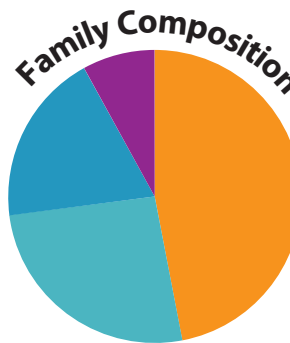
*"Living in poverty means choosing between the necessities of life; medicine or food, a place to live or feeding your kids, heating your home or eating that day. After struggling to cover the basics, come payday, there is no 'nice to have' on your household list - only what you can afford. For too many, too often, food will barely make an appearance on that list."*

**Joanne Santucci, Executive Director, Hamilton Food Share.**

**On a typical day in Hamilton**

Food equal to 8,902 meals is distributed by the Emergency Food Network

Children's Ages	Number of Children	% of Total Children
Babies (0-2)	1,235	15%
Preschoolers (3-5)	1,417	17%
School-Aged (6-11)	2,939	36%
Teenagers (12-18)	2,687	32%



**39% or over 8,200**  
Hamiltonians accessing a food bank are children

**On a typical day in Hamilton**

Over 700 People will access a food bank

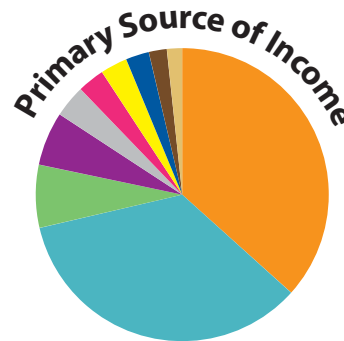
**On a typical day in Hamilton**

276 children will line up at a food bank

**Meal Programs**  
Public Meal Programs Meals Served in March 2018:  
**12,576**

**The root cause of food insecurity in our community is poverty**

While Hamilton has been described as going through a renaissance, the benefit of this growth will not reach every household in our city, especially those who access food banks. For instance, the top source of income for Hamiltonians who access food banks is disability benefits, one of the most vulnerable groups in the city. People in these households experience a myriad of health challenges that leave them unable to work.



**Health Risks:** Hamiltonians in low income households, like 863,492 other Canadians are turning to food banks for help to put food on the table. The average Canadian family spends \$7,035 a year on food, 10.4 percent of its total expenditures. A family in the poorest 20 per cent of the population only spends \$3,870 on food, but that amounts to 16.9 percent of its expenditures.<sup>2</sup> Deep anxiety, compromised quality of food and lack of food contributes to increase risk of poor mental and physical health. In Ontario, 1 in 8 households lives with food insecurity, however 1 in 3 hospitalizations due to mental health issues are people from food insecure households.<sup>3</sup> It has recently been found that food insecurity in itself greatly increases the risk of experiencing mental health issues, rather than food insecurity being a symptom of mental illness.<sup>4</sup>

# "Hunger is the price I pay for the roof over my head."

– Anonymous food bank client in Hamilton

## All Visits vs. Unique Households

In contrast to "All Visits," a unique count of food bank visits counts only information for each household who visits, even if they access a food bank several times in a month. Sixty-two percent of people using a food bank visit only once per month.

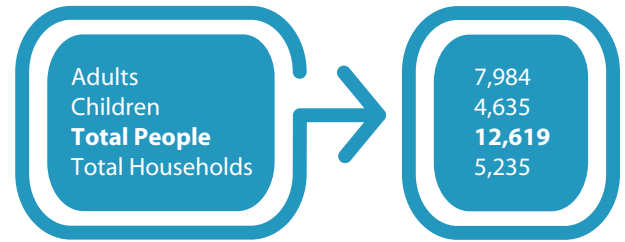
The table below reflects the 73% of unique households who pay market rent, and what percentage of income they pay towards rent. Paying 30% to 49% puts households at **high risk of homelessness**. Paying 50% or more of household income puts households at **extreme risk of homelessness**.<sup>5</sup> The chart below shows that **86% of these households are at high or extreme risk of homelessness**.

Income Spent On Rent	% Of Households	Top 3 Primary Income Sources in Category	% of Households in Category
Less than 30%	14%	ODSP OW Child Tax	33% 30% 12%
30-49%	35%	ODSP OW Child Tax	47% 25% 6%
More than 50%	51%	OW ODSP P/T Employment	47% 28% 4%

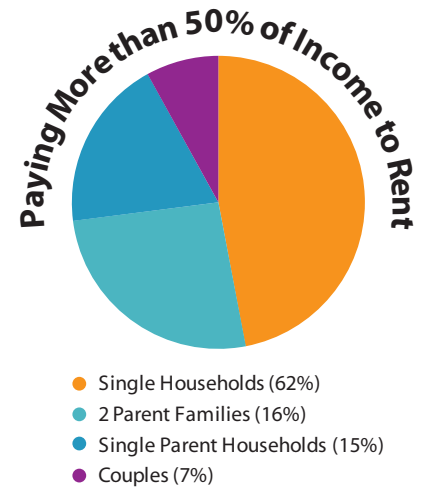
OW=Ontario Works (Social Assistance), ODSP=Ontario Disability Support Program

## Food Bank Access March 2018

Unique Households



\*Less than 1% variance over the year prior.



## On a typical day in Hamilton

33 seniors will seek help at a food bank

"If you are poor, you are essentially an illness, an accident, or a paycheck away from living on the streets." - National Coalition for the Homeless

## Depth of Hunger

Food banks in Hamilton give out 3-5 days' worth of food per visit. The Depth of Hunger chart shows how many people need one visit (3-5 days' worth of food) and how many need more. Although 12,619 unique people accessed food banks, 4,759 (38%) needed to visit more than once for food enough to bridge the hunger gap.

Days Worth of Food Needed	Number of Unique People
3-5	7,860
6-10	2,643
11-15	1,087
16-20	516
20+	513
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,619</b>

## 1,860 households live at extreme risk of homelessness

People living alone are at the greatest risk of homelessness based on their income to rent ratio. Most shelters in Hamilton operate at or over capacity.<sup>6</sup> Without the support of food banks, many more people would be unable to afford their housing and be forced to turn to this system, already stretched to its limit.

## On a typical day in Hamilton

106 households are at high risk of homelessness

<sup>1</sup>Food Banks Canada (2016) Hunger Count Report. Mississauga, ON. <sup>2</sup>Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (2009) The Affordability Gap: Spending Differences between Canada's Rich and Poor. Ottawa, ON. <sup>3</sup>Tarasuk V, Cheng J, Gundersen C, de Oliveira C, Kurdyak P. The relation between food insecurity and mental health care service utilization in Ontario. Can J Psychiatry. 2018. DOI: 10.1177/0706743717752879. <sup>4</sup>McIntyre L, Williams J, Lavorato D, Patten S. Depression and suicide ideation in late adolescence and early adulthood are an outcome of child hunger. J Affect Disord. 2012;150(1):123-9. <sup>5</sup>Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (2018) About Affordable Housing in Canada. Online. <sup>6</sup>Van Dongen, Matthew. "Shelter Operators Sound Alarm Over Funding Crunch." The Hamilton Spectator June 1, 2018.

## Emergency Food Programs Taking Part in the Survey

Ancaster Community Services / Good Shepherd Centres / Living Rock Ministries/ Mission Services Opportunity Centres of Hamilton  
The Native Women's Centre / Neighbour to Neighbour Centre / St. Matthew's House (2 Locations) / Salvation Army Hamilton  
Salvation Army, Dundas / Stoney Creek Community Food Bank / Wesley Urban Ministries / Welcome Inn Community Centre



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[www.hamiltonfoodshare.org](http://www.hamiltonfoodshare.org)