

## A snapshot of food insecurity in Hamilton

Over the past 30 years, Hamilton Food Share has been the city’s emergency food shipping and receiving hub for the network of 23 hunger relief programs it supports. Over the past two years, we have expanded our operations and our reach, providing food resources to 16 hunger relief organizations, and operating 23 emergency food programs. Our food acquisition and distribution program sees over 4.3 million pounds of nutritionally rich food, valued at almost 14 million dollars, distributed to food banks and hot meal programs operating across the city of Hamilton. Hamilton Food Share also manages the client intake database utilized by the network of agencies to collect data directly from frontline hunger programs. This report is formulated using that data.

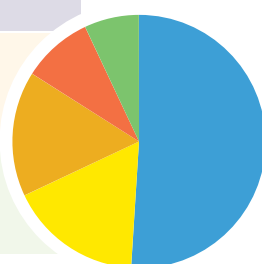
### Hunger and homelessness: The risk continues to grow.

Hamilton continues to have the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest per capita food bank access in the province, and the number of visits is continuing to increase. Each month in Hamilton, 4,220 people who access food banks are at a level of extreme risk of homelessness. This is an increase of 35% from last year. In a survey completed by Hamilton Food Share of households who access food banks, 62% of the respondents indicated they are able to pay rent each month because of the support received through emergency food banks. When asked, “Would you be at risk of losing your housing if you needed to purchase the food received from the food bank?” almost half (46%) of respondents indicated they would be at risk of losing their housing.

| Percent of Income Spent on Rent | % of Households | Top 3 Primary Income Sources in Category | % of Households in Category |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|--|-----------------------------|
| Less than 30%                   | 14%             | ODSP<br>OW<br>Child Tax Benefit          | 36%<br>21%<br>11%           |
| 30-49%                          | 31%             | ODSP<br>OW<br>Employed: Full Time        | 41%<br>18%<br>7%            |
| More than 50%                   | 55%             | OW<br>ODSP<br>Child Tax Benefit          | 34%<br>32%<br>5%            |

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

**On a typical day**  
140 households are at high risk of homelessness



**Paying more than 50% of income to rent**

- Single Households (51%)
- Two Parent Families (17%)
- Single Parent Households (16%)
- Couples with No Children (9%)
- Other (7%)

The figures above reflect the households that access emergency food banks in Hamilton who pay market rent. We can see here that 86% of these households are paying more than 30% of their total income on rent and utilities. Paying 30% to 49% puts households at high risk of homelessness. Paying 50% or more of their household income puts households at extreme risk of homelessness. Hamilton Food Share believes everyone has a right to the most basic necessities of food and shelter. However, inadequate incomes and soaring housing and food costs are making these basic necessities inaccessible for thousands of households<sup>1</sup>.

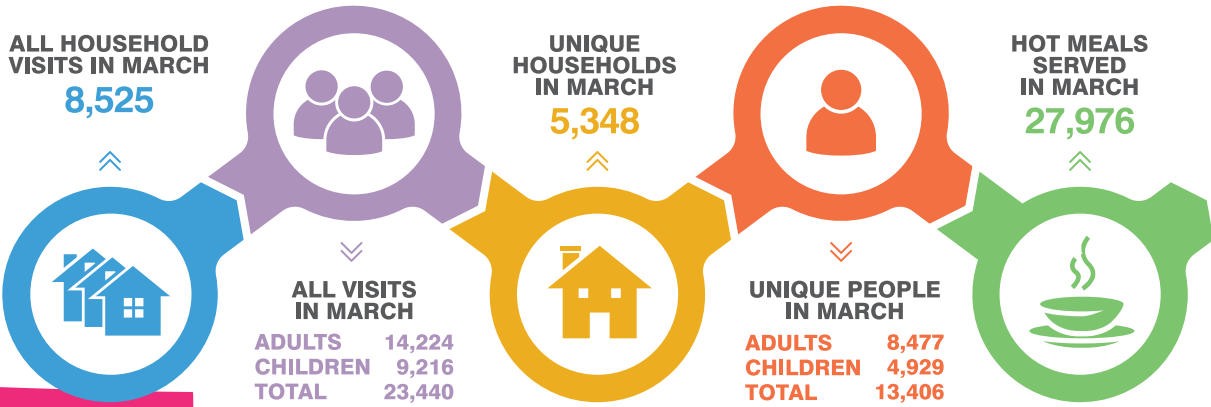
**On a typical day**  
53 seniors will seek help at a food bank

### Seniors Going Hungry

‘Despite growing research and implementation of diverse income-based policy measures, food insecurity among elderly people remains a major policy issue in Canada<sup>2</sup>. This is the reality faced by too many seniors in Hamilton. Throughout the past two years, visits made by seniors to emergency food bank programs increased by an alarming 34%, an increase of more than five times the increase we saw in adults as a whole. ‘Senior citizens are nearly twice as likely to access a food bank compared to adults under 65 years of age<sup>3</sup>.

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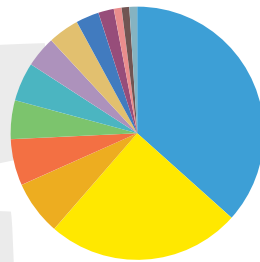
# Hunger in Hamilton: 1 in 5 people in Hamilton experiences hunger every day



On a typical day  
308 children will line  
up at a food bank

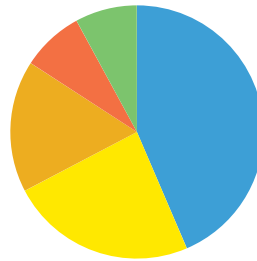
## Households with children continue to struggle

Children continue to represent 40% of food bank visits. Over the past year, there was an increase of over 21% in the number of visits made by households with children residing in them. While some measures have been put in place to reduce the number of children impacted by food insecurity, such as the Canada Child Benefit, a recent study completed by McMaster University showed that households who access Emergency Food Banks who are also receiving CCB still fall far below the Low-Income Measure (between 26-43% below, depending on income source)<sup>4</sup>.



### Primary Source of Income of Food Bank Service Users in Hamilton

- Disability\* (37%)
  - Ontario Works (OW) (25%)
  - Child Tax Benefit (7%)
  - Employed: Full-Time (6%)
  - Old Age Security (5%)
  - Other (5%)
  - Employed: Part-Time (4%)
  - CPP Retirement (4%)
  - No Income (3%)
  - EI (2%)
  - Resettlement Assistance Program (1%)
  - Private Pension (1%)
  - Immigration (1%)
- \* (ODSP, CPP Disability, Private Disability)



### Family Composition

- Single Households (43%)
- Two Parent Families (24%)
- Single Parent Households (17%)
- Couples with No Children (8%)
- Other (8%)

## The Hunger Gap

| Days Worth of Food Needed | March 2021 Number of Unique People |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 3-5 (1 Visit)             | 7,830                              |
| 6-10 (2 Visits)           | 2,979                              |
| 11-15 (3 Visits)          | 1,379                              |
| 16-20 (4 Visits)          | 785                                |
| 20+ (More than 5+ visits) | 433                                |

## Defining the Hunger Gap

The Hunger Gap refers to how many days' worth of food a household would need to receive from a food bank in order to meet their nutritional requirements for the month. At each food bank visit, a household will receive between 5-7 days' worth of food. Fifty-eight percent of people using a food bank visit only once per month. However, the number of people needing two or three visits has increased by thirty-one percent.

On a typical day  
Over 782 people  
will reach out  
for food support

<sup>1</sup>Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (2016, March 23). "What Is Core Housing Need?", Housing Observer Online. <sup>2</sup>Kansanga, M., Sano, Y., Bayor, I., Braimah, J., Nunbogu, A., & Luginaah, I. (2021). Determinants of food insecurity among elderly people: Findings from the Canadian Community Health Survey, Ageing and Society, 1-15. doi:10.1017/S0144686X20002081. <sup>3</sup>Feed Ontario Hunger Report 2021. How the pandemic accelerated the income and affordability crisis in Ontario. <sup>4</sup>Yin, Melanie (2021). The Impact of a child benefit increase on food bank usage and expenditures of food bank clients, McMaster University.

## Taking Part in the Survey: Emergency Food Network

Ancaster Community Services / De Mazenod Door Outreach / Flamborough Food Bank / Good Shepherd Centres / Hamilton Jewish Family Services / Living Rock Ministries / Mission Services of Hamilton / The Native Women's Centre / Neighbour to Neighbour Centre / Niwasa Kendaaswin Teg / Salvation Army Hamilton / Salvation Army Dundas / Stoney Creek Community Food Bank / Wesley / Welcome Inn Community Centre



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