

## Poverty in Guelph and Wellington County

### UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACTS OF POVERTY

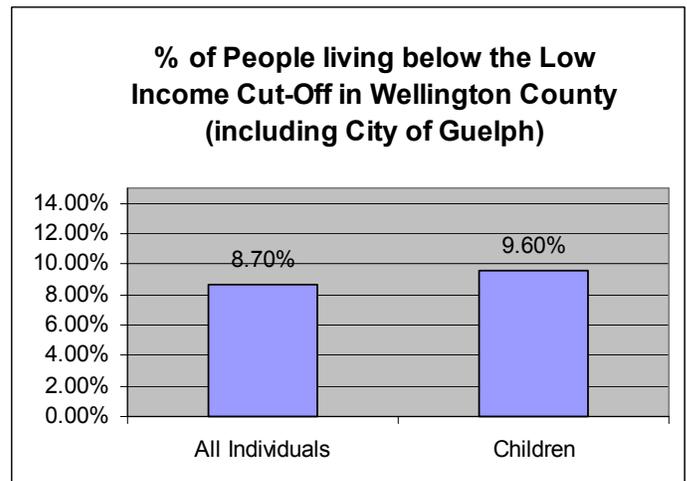
Poverty can be measured in two ways: absolute and relative. Absolute poverty is measured by taking a person's income and comparing it against the cost of a predetermined basket of goods. If that person's income is insufficient to cover the cost of the basket then they are considered to be living in poverty. Relative poverty compares a person's total income and spending patterns with those of the general population. People spending a larger proportion of their income than the threshold that is considered typical of the general population are considered to be living in poverty.<sup>1</sup>

Beyond the numbers and definitions, real people experience real impacts when they live in poverty. People living in poverty are more likely to have shorter life expectancies, low birth-weight children, and experience depression and stress<sup>2,3,4</sup>. Children living in low income families experience an increased likelihood of mental health issues (including hyperactivity), physical impairment, illness, and decreased school success<sup>5,6</sup>.

### Low Income Cut-offs (LICO)

The Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) is one of a number of measures of low-income that are used as indicators of poverty. LICOs are income thresholds, determined by analyzing family expenditure data, below which families will devote a larger share of income to the necessities of food, shelter and clothing than the average family. LICOs can differ depending on costs of necessities and community and family size.<sup>7</sup> For this report all LICO measures are the before tax figures.

- According to 2009 population estimates there are 214,389 people living in all of Wellington County. The population of the City of Guelph is 123,099 and the population of Wellington County is 91,290.<sup>8</sup>
- On the right is a graph that illustrates the percent of individuals and children living below the LICO in Guelph and Wellington County as reported in the 2006 census.<sup>9</sup>



### Food Security

*Food insecurity increases as people's incomes decrease<sup>10</sup>. This means that it is difficult to people living in poverty to regularly eat enough nutritious food.*

- The use of food banks has increased in both Wellington County and the City of Guelph. A survey completed by all member agencies of the *Ontario Association of Food Banks* shows that there was 30% increase in the number of individuals served through food banks in Wellington County (including the City of Guelph) during the month of March from 2005 to 2010.<sup>11</sup>
- Although the number of people recorded using the food banks in our community give us some indication of the need for emergency food, these same people and likely others, may also be accessing food at one or more of the over 30 other sources of emergency food (including food banks, pantries, and cupboards<sup>12</sup>) in Guelph and Wellington that are not members of the *Ontario Association of Food Banks*.
- A local survey of emergency food programs in Guelph found that many programs did not have an adequate supply of food to meet the demand, and healthy food was particularly lacking for many programs.<sup>13</sup>
- In 2009, 37% of food banks in Ontario did not have enough food to meet the needs of their clients.<sup>14</sup>

- The cost of healthy eating, as calculated by Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health, for a family of four living in Guelph, Wellington County and/or Dufferin County was \$170.73 per week in 2010.<sup>15</sup>

### **Employment and Income**

*Employment is an important social determinant of health that provides security and structure. Unemployment is associated with psychological stress, mental and physical health issues.*<sup>16</sup>

- The number of Employment Insurance (EI) Beneficiaries in the County of Wellington (including the City of Guelph) ranged from 3280 in June 2008 to 8570 in May 2009. From May 2009 to April 2011, EI beneficiaries declined most months, with 3,890 people receiving benefits in April 2011. This was a 54.6% decrease from the peak number of EI beneficiaries in May 2009.<sup>17</sup>
- Between August 2008 and August 2011 there was a 54% increase in the monthly Ontario Works caseload for all of Wellington County (including the City of Guelph). The highest number of Ontario Works' cases in the past four years, 1,928, were in July 2011. In August 2011 there were 1,445 individuals from the City of Guelph and 418 individuals from the County of Wellington on the Ontario Works caseload.<sup>18</sup>
- Having a job does not guarantee that a person will not live in poverty. A person making minimum wage for 35 hours/week would spend **at least half of their monthly earnings before tax** on rent.
- Housing is considered affordable if it costs less than 30% of household income<sup>21</sup>. Based on 2006 Canadian Census data:
  - **41.2%** of tenant households in Guelph CMA spend 30% or more of their income on rent.
  - **18.0%** of tenant households in Guelph CMA spend 50% or more of their income on rent<sup>22</sup>.
- Guelph and Wellington County have 2,754 social housing units (2,238 in Guelph and 516 in Wellington) of those 2,430 are Rent Geared to Income units.<sup>23</sup>
- There are 225 Rent Supplement Units (54 are subsidized units in affordable housing; 54 more units of Housing Assistance are available until March 2013).<sup>24</sup>
- Wait times for subsidized housing range from 2-9 years depending on the location and unit size requested.<sup>25</sup>

Wait Times for Subsidized Housing		
Unit size	Guelph	Wellington County
1 bedroom	3-9 years	3-5 years
2 bedrooms	3.5 years	2 years
3 bedrooms	4 years	2 years
4-5 bedrooms	6 years	2.5 years

### **Housing Security & Shelter Usage**

*Access to housing is a critical determinant for living a healthy life; lack of access to safe, affordable, and secure housing increases the likelihood of being affected by many health problems.*<sup>19</sup>

- As of April 2011, the average rent cost in the Guelph Central Metropolitan Area\* (CMA) was \$786 for a one bedroom apartment and \$892 for a two-bedroom unit. A single individual with no dependents receiving Ontario Works receives \$364 per month for shelter costs<sup>20</sup>.
- People continue to use shelters in Guelph and Wellington County. In 2010, 770 individuals stayed in a shelter. The average stay was 30.7 days for all individuals.<sup>26</sup>

### **Education**

*Education is an important social determinant of health. Higher levels of education are associated with positive outcomes such as better health, job security and working conditions.*<sup>27</sup>

- 14.8% of individuals aged 25 to 64 years living in all of Wellington County (including Guelph) do not have at least a high school certificate. This is higher than the provincial rate of 13.6% for the same population.<sup>28</sup>

\* This census population includes the City of Guelph and the Township of Guelph and Eramosa.

<sup>1</sup> Government of Canada (2006). Economic Concepts: Poverty. Retrieved from

<http://canadianeconomy.gc.ca/english/economy/poverty.html>

<sup>2</sup> Wilkins, R., Berthelot, J.M., and Ng, E. (2002). Trends in mortality by neighbourhood income in urban Canada from 1971 to 1996. *Health Reports*, 13 (Supplement), 1 -28.

<sup>3</sup> Smith, K.L.W., Matheson, F.I., Moineddin, R., and Glazier, R.H. (2007). Gender, income, and immigration differences in depression in Canadian urban centres. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 93(3).

<sup>4</sup> Mikkonen, J., Raphael, D. (2010). *Social Determinants of Health the Canadian Facts*. Toronto: York University School of Health Policy and Management. Retrieved from: <http://www.thecanadianfacts.org/>

<sup>5</sup> Public Health Agency of Canada (2008) *Are poor people less likely to be healthy than rich people?* Retrieved from <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ph-sp/determinants/qa-qr1-eng.php>

<sup>6</sup> Ontario Physicians Poverty Work Group (2008) Why poverty makes us sick: Physician backgrounder. *Ontario Medical Review*, May 2008

<sup>7</sup> Statistics Canada (2006/2007). *Low Income Cut-offs for 2007 and Low Income Measures for 2006*. Retrieved from

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75f0002m/75f0002m2008004-eng.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Statistics Canada (2009). *WDG Population Estimates*. Prepared by Patrick Seliske (WDG Public Health – April 2010)

<sup>9</sup> Statistics Canada. 2007. *Wellington, Ontario (Code3523) (table). 2006 Community Profiles*. 2006 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-591-XWE. Ottawa. Retrieved from:

<http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/92-591/index.cfm?Lang=E>

<sup>10</sup> Health Canada (2004). *Canadian Community Health Survey Cycle 2.2, Nutrition. Income Related Household Security in Canada*. Ottawa ON: Minister of Health Office of Nutrition Policy and Promotion Health Products and Food Branch Health Canada.

<sup>11</sup> Personal correspondence with Member Relations Coordinator, Ontario Association of Food Banks, November 2010. Data was collected as part of the National Hunger Count Survey, available at: [http://www.foodbankscanada.ca/documents/HungerCount2010\\_web.pdf](http://www.foodbankscanada.ca/documents/HungerCount2010_web.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health Food Assistance Directory. Retrieved from <http://communitylinks.cioc.ca/bresults.asp?UseCICVw=46&STerms=&S Type=A&CMType=L&CMID=429&CMID=171&CMID=433&CMID=1323&CMID=436&CMID=441&CMID=443&CMID=450&CMID=425&CMID=452&GHID=572>

<sup>13</sup> Martin, M., 2010. *A Survey of Guelph Emergency Food Programs: Overview and Analysis*. Guelph, ON: United Way of Guelph & Wellington.

<sup>14</sup> Ontario Association of Foodbanks (2009). Hunger Report. <http://www.oafb.ca/assets/pdfs/OHR2009Red.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (2010). *The cost of healthy eating in Wellington & Dufferin Counties*. Retrieved from <http://www.wdghu.org/CMSPDF/Cost%20of%20eating%20healthy%20oct%202010.pdf?CFID=2240111&CFTOKEN=59347326>

<sup>16</sup> Mikkonen, J., Raphael, D. (2010). *Social Determinants of Health the Canadian Facts*. Toronto: York University School of Health Policy and Management. Retrieved from: <http://www.thecanadianfacts.org/>

<sup>17</sup> Statistics Canada (April 2011). Employment Insurance, Wellington County Census Division (Includes Guelph), January 2008-April 2011 found in Table 2760006 - Employment Insurance Program (E.I.), beneficiaries by province, 2001 census division and sex, monthly (Persons)

<sup>18</sup> County of Wellington (2010) Retrieved from [http://www.wellington.ca/document\\_info.aspx?id=6850](http://www.wellington.ca/document_info.aspx?id=6850).

<sup>19</sup> Mikkonen, J., Raphael, D. (2010). *Social Determinants of Health the Canadian Facts*. Toronto: York University School of Health Policy and Management. Retrieved from: <http://www.thecanadianfacts.org/>

<sup>20</sup> Statistics Canada (2011) CMHC Rental Market Statistics. Retrieved from: [http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/odpub/esub/64725/64725\\_2011\\_B01.pdf?fr=1317666973515](http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/odpub/esub/64725/64725_2011_B01.pdf?fr=1317666973515)

<sup>21</sup> Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (2010). *What is the common definition of affordability?* Retrieved from [http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/corp/faq/faq\\_002.cfm#5](http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/corp/faq/faq_002.cfm#5)

<sup>22</sup> Statistics Canada (2006). *Gross Rent as a Percentage of 2005 Household Income*. Retrieved from <http://www40.statcan.ca/l01/cst01/famil129d-eng.htm>

<sup>23</sup> Personal Correspondence with Wellington County Social Services employee Heather Burke. January 2011.

<sup>24</sup> Personal Correspondence with Wellington County Social Services employee Heather Burke. January 2011.

<sup>25</sup> Personal Correspondence with Wellington County Social Services employee Heather Burke. January 2011.

<sup>26</sup> Personal Correspondence with Wellington County Social Services employee Sylvia Miller. March 2011.

<sup>27</sup> Mikkonen, J., Raphael, D. (2010). *Social Determinants of Health the Canadian Facts*. Toronto: York University School of Health Policy and Management. Retrieved from: <http://www.thecanadianfacts.org/>

<sup>28</sup> Statistics Canada (2006) Community Profiles: Wellington County: <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/92591/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CD&Code1=3523&Geo2=PR&Code2=35&Data=Count&SearchText=wellington>