

## POVERTY in Guelph and Wellington County

### UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACTS OF POVERTY

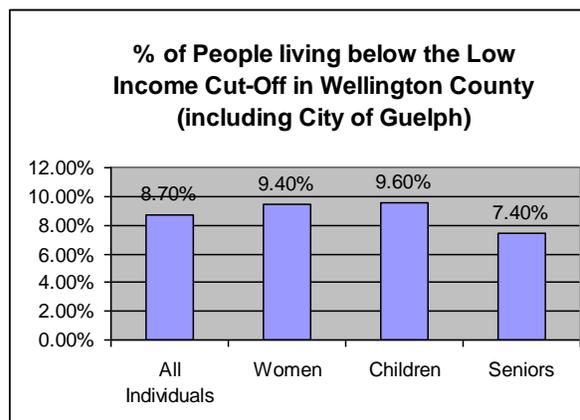
Poverty can be measured in two ways: absolute and relative. Absolute poverty is measured by taking a person's income and comparing it against the cost of a predetermined basket of goods. If that person's income is insufficient to cover the cost of the basket then they are considered to be living in poverty. 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 all individuals and children living below the LICO in Guelph and Wellington County.<sup>9</sup>

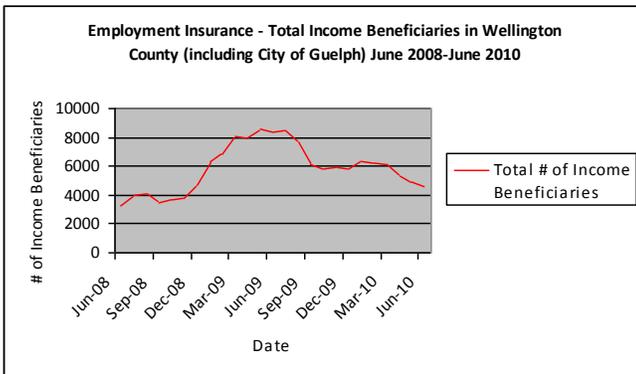


### Food Security

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 36.8% 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 2009.<sup>11</sup>
- Although the numbers 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.
- The number of Ontarians using food banks rose 19% between 2008 and 2009.<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 a basket of food for a family of 4 living in Guelph, Wellington County and/or Dufferin County was \$167.02 per week in 2009. This was an 11% cost increase from 2008 that reflected the calculation of the cost of a more nutritious food basket.<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 chart above shows the number of people receiving Employment Insurance per month from June 2008-June 2010 in all of Wellington County. 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-June 2010, EI beneficiaries declined most months, with 4610 people receiving benefits in June 2010. This was a 46.2% decrease from the peak number of EI beneficiaries in May 2009.<sup>17</sup>
- Between August 2008 and July 2010 there was a 55.3% increase in the monthly Ontario Works caseload for all of Wellington County (including the City of Guelph). This was 48.5% increase in the City of Guelph and 85.5% increase in the County of Wellington. As of July 2010 there were 1466 individuals from the City of Guelph and 410 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 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 2010, the average rent cost in the Guelph Central Metropolitan Area\* (CMA) was \$768 for a one bedroom apartment and \$876 for a two-bedroom unit. A single individual with no dependents receiving Ontario Works receives \$364 per month for shelter costs<sup>20</sup>.
- 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 (2238 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

- People continue to use shelters in Guelph and Wellington County. In 2009, 694 individuals, including 115 youth, stayed in a shelter. The average stay was 28.9 days for all individuals and 17.1 days for youth.<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 January 2009, 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 on July 13 <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 background. *Ontario Medical Review*, May 2008
- <sup>7</sup> Statistics Canada (2006/2007). Low Income Cut-offs for 2007 and Low Income Measures for 2006. <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 (2006/2007). Low Income Cut-offs for 2007 and Low Income Measures for 2006.
- <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> Ontario Association of Foodbanks Annual Survey results. Information retrieved: January 2009.
- <sup>12</sup> Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health Food Assistance Directory. Retrieved on July 29, 2010 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=445&CMID=450&CMID=425&CMID=4 52&GHID=572>
- <sup>13</sup> Ontario Association of Foodbanks (2009). Hunger Report. <http://www.oafb.ca/assets/pdfs/OHR2009Red.pdf>
- <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) Family Food Basket Increases 10%. Retrieved August 5, 2010 from <http://www.wdghu.org/page.cfm?id=2070>
- <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 (June 2010). Employment Insurance, Wellington County Census Division (Includes Guelph), January 2008-June 2010 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 September 10 2010 from [http://www.county.wellington.on.ca/document\\_info.aspx?id=5822](http://www.county.wellington.on.ca/document_info.aspx?id=5822).
- <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 (2010) CMHC Rental Market Statistics. Retrieved August 2010 from: [http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/odpub/esub/64725/64725\\_2010\\_B01.pdf?sid=fe8cb9da35034b18be1056b114113af4&fr=1280932394968](http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/odpub/esub/64725/64725_2010_B01.pdf?sid=fe8cb9da35034b18be1056b114113af4&fr=1280932394968).
- <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/01/cst01/famil129d-eng.htm>
- <sup>23</sup> Personal Correspondence with Wellington County Social Services employee Heather Burke. August 2010.
- <sup>24</sup> Personal Correspondence with Wellington County Social Services employee Heather Burke. August 2010.
- <sup>25</sup> Personal Correspondence with Wellington County Social Services employee Heather Burke. May 2010.
- <sup>26</sup> Personal Correspondence with Wellington County Social Services employee Goldie Barth. August 2010.
- <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>