

# Household food affordability

## Health indicator report

### Background

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- The purpose of this health indicator report is to provide information about household food insecurity and the cost of basic healthy eating in Halton Region.
- Household food insecurity refers to the inability of a household to access adequate and nutritious food due to a lack of money. A nutritious food basket reflects the cost of a basic healthy diet for a family of four (two parents and two children). It is used to monitor the affordability and accessibility of foods by relating the cost of the food basket to individual and household incomes.
- This health indicator report uses data from the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) for the section on household food insecurity, and data from Halton Region Registered Dietitians for the section on the nutritious food basket.

### Key findings

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- In 2013/14, 6.8% of Halton households were food insecure, which was lower than Ontario (12.2%).
- In 2019 the average weekly cost of a basic healthy diet for a family of four living in Halton was \$228. The average cost of a healthy diet in Halton has increased by 71% since 2003.
- Low income households in Halton continue to struggle to pay rent, buy food for a nutritious diet, and pay basic expenses.



# Household food insecurity

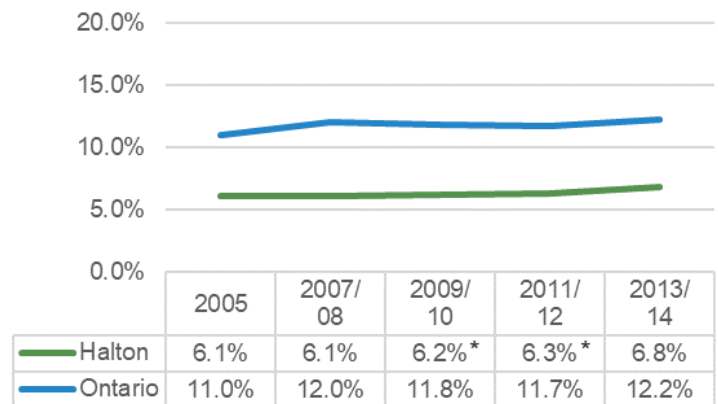
## Definitions

- Definitions related to food insecurity are provided in the table on the right.
- For this report, the food insecure category includes households that were marginally, moderately or severely food insecure. These categories were combined to ensure a large enough sample size for analysis.
- See Data Notes for more information on these categories.

Status		Definition
Food secure		No indication of difficulty with income-related food access
Food insecure	Marginal	Some indication of worry or barriers to adequate, secure food access
	Moderate	Compromise on quality and/or quantity of food consumed
	Severe	Reduced food intake and disrupted eating patterns

## Trends over time

- In 2013/14, 6.8% of Halton households and 12.2% of Ontario households were food insecure. This difference was **statistically significant**.
- There were no statistically significant changes over time in the percentage of households that were food insecure in Halton or Ontario.



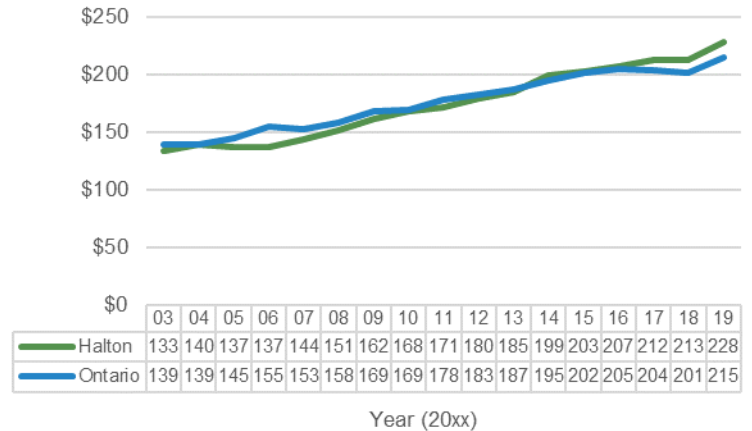
Percentage of food insecure households, Halton Region and Ontario, 2005-2013/14



# Cost of a nutritious food basket

## Trends over time

- In 2019, the cost of a nutritious food basket for a family of four (two parents and two children) living in Halton was \$228 per week.
- The average cost of a nutritious food basket in Halton has increased by 7% since 2018 and by 71% since 2003.
- The average cost of a nutritious food basket in Ontario increased from \$201 in 2018 to \$215 in 2019.



Cost of a nutritious food basket for a family of four (2 adults, 2 children) for one week, Halton Region and Ontario, 2003-2019

## 2019 Low income scenarios

The monthly low income scenarios for 2019 show that low income households continue to struggle to pay rent, buy food for a nutritious diet, and pay basic expenses.

	<b>Ontario Works</b> Single man, age 31	<b>Ontario Works</b> Single mother, age 35, with a boy age 14 and a girl age 8	<b>Ontario Disability Support Program</b> Single man age 45	<b>One full-time minimum wage earner</b> A family of 4: a man and woman age 35, a boy age 14 and a girl age 8 (one parent working at \$14/hr, 40 hrs/wk)
Income	\$733	\$1,057	\$1,169	\$2,008
Additional benefits & credits	\$97	\$1,347	\$107	\$1,324
Total monthly income	\$830	\$2,404	\$1,276	\$3,332
Average monthly rent in Halton	\$1180 (Bachelor)	\$1,417 (2 bedroom)	\$1,270 (1 bedroom)	\$1,643 (3 bedroom)
Cost of a nutritious diet in Halton (for one month)	\$333	\$747	\$333	\$989
Amount remaining to cover basic expenses	None, needs to find another \$683	\$240	None, needs to find another \$327	\$700

# About CCHS

- The Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) is a voluntary, cross-sectional survey that collects information related to health status, health system utilization and health determinants for the Canadian population. CCHS is conducted by Statistics Canada.
- Each year, CCHS surveys 65,000 people aged 12 and over from across Canada. The survey provides health information at the provincial and regional levels. CCHS is designed to provide reliable estimates at the health unit level every 2 years.
- For more information on CCHS methodology and limitations, see the CCHS Data Notes and Data Interpretation Guide at [halton.ca](http://halton.ca).

# Data notes

**Definitions:** **Food insecurity** data are from the CCHS's Household Food Security module, which consists of 18 questions about the presence of food insecure situations in the household over the past 12 months.<sup>1</sup> These situations range from worrying about running out of food to going a whole day without eating because of the inability to afford food. Prior to the 2017 Household Food Security & Cost of a Nutritious Food Basket Indicator Report, the food insecurity definition was based directly on the CCHS's derived variable "Household Food Security Status - Modified version", which categorized households with two or more affirmative responses to the food insecurity questions as "food insecure".<sup>2</sup> Beginning in 2017, the food insecurity definition was expanded to include "marginal" food insecurity, which includes households with one affirmative response to the CCHS's food insecurity questions. This expanded definition is based on the work of the [PROOF Food Insecurity Policy Research](#) program. 2013/14 is the most recent time period for which CCHS data are currently available.

**Additional benefits and credits** include the Canada Child Benefit, GST/HST credit, and the Ontario Trillium Benefit, where applicable.

**Basic expenses** could include: heat & hydro, telephone, transportation, child care expenses, laundry, non-prescription drugs, toiletries and cleaning products, and costs associated with children in school.

**Data Sources:** Canadian Community Health Survey [2005-14], Statistics Canada, Share File, Ontario MOHLTC

Halton Region Registered Dietitians.

**Methodology:** The nutritious food basket data are based on the methods outlined in the guidance document from the Ministry of Health.<sup>3</sup> The 2019 low income scenarios were calculated using the 2019 Income Scenario Spreadsheet provided by the Ontario Dietitians in Public Health Food Insecurity Work Group, adapted for Halton Region.

**Limitations:** After 2017, health units were no longer required to submit nutritious food basket data to the Ministry of Health. The provincial nutritious food basket costs presented in this report are based on the 28 Ontario health units that conducted the nutritious food basket survey in 2019 (out of a total of 35 health units). The 2019 low income scenarios are estimates and may not include all applicable subsidies or reflect the experience of all residents living in low income.

Estimates marked with an asterisk (\*) should be interpreted with caution due to high variability.

## References

1. Canadian Community Health Survey [2005-2014], Statistics Canada, Share File, Ontario MOHLTC.
2. APHEO. 2011. Food Insecurity Core Indicator. Accessed February 2017 from <http://core.apheo.ca/index.php?pid=80>
3. Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. 2010. Nutritious Food Basket Guidance Document. Accessed January 2017 from [http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/oph\\_standards/docs/guidance/nutritiousfoodbasket\\_gr.pdf](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/oph_standards/docs/guidance/nutritiousfoodbasket_gr.pdf)

For more health indicator and health status reports, visit the Halton Health Statistics webpage at [halton.ca](http://halton.ca).

*Last updated: August 2019*