

# Health Indicator Report

## Household Food Insecurity & Cost of a Nutritious Food Basket

### Background

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 that meets the nutrition recommendations of Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide and represents the average purchasing patterns of Canadians.<sup>1</sup> 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. The Nutritious Food Basket data are based on the methods outlined in the guidance document from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.<sup>1</sup>

### Household Food Insecurity

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

### Definitions

Food secure and marginally, moderately, or severely food insecure are defined in the table below. 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.

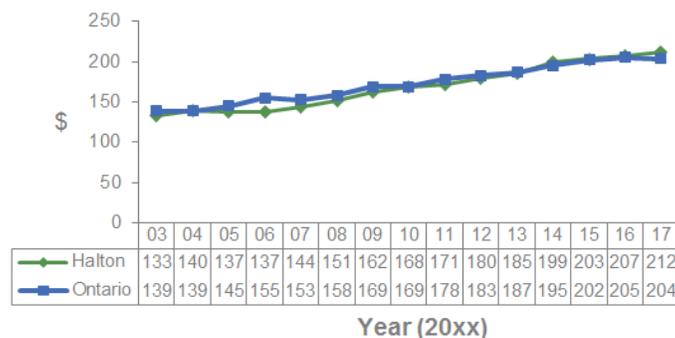
#### Household food insecurity definitions

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

See [Data Notes](#) for more information on these categories.

### Cost of a Nutritious Food Basket

In 2017, the cost of a basic healthy diet for a family of four (two parents and two children) living in Halton was \$212.47 per week. The average cost of a healthy diet in Halton has increased by 3% since 2016, and by 59% since 2003. The average cost of a nutritious food basket in Ontario decreased slightly from \$205.45 in 2016 to \$204.00 in 2017.



Cost of the Nutritious Food Basket for a family of four (2 adults, 2 children) for one week, Halton Region and Ontario, 2003-2017

## Low Income Scenarios for 2017

The monthly low income scenarios for 2017 show that low income households continue to struggle to pay rent, buy food for a nutritious diet, and pay basic expenses.

### Halton Monthly Low Income Scenarios for 2017

	<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 \$11.40/hr, 40 hrs/wk)
Income	\$706	\$1,019	\$1,128	\$1,691
Additional benefits & credits	\$89	\$1,319	\$102	\$1,384
Total monthly income	\$795	\$2,338	\$1,230	\$3,075
Average rent in Halton	\$904 (Bachelor)	\$1,324 (2 bedroom)	\$1,160 (1 bedroom)	\$1,562 (3 bedroom)
Cost of a nutritious diet in Halton	\$310	\$695	\$310	\$920
Amount remaining to cover basic expenses	None, needs to find another \$419	\$319	None, needs to find another \$240	\$593

## Data Notes

For more information on CCHS, methods, statistical significance and limitations associated with health indicator reports, please see the Data Notes and Guide available at [halton.ca](http://halton.ca).

**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>2</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>3</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](http://www.proof.ca) program. 2013/14 is the most recent time period for which CCHS data are currently available.

**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.

For the **one full-time minimum wage earner scenario** in the Halton Monthly Low Income Scenarios for 2017 table, the rate of \$11.40/hr reflects the minimum wage as of May 2017, to coincide with the month in which Nutritious Food Basket data were collected. In this scenario, income reflects the dollar amount after federal and provincial taxes, Employment Insurance and Canada Pension Plan have been deducted.

#### Data Sources:

Canadian Community Health Survey [2005-2014], Statistics Canada, Share File, Ontario MOHLTC.  
Halton Region Registered Dietitians.

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

#### References

1. 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)
2. Canadian Community Health Survey [2005-2014], Statistics Canada, Share File, Ontario MOHLTC.
3. APHEO. 2011. Food Insecurity Core Indicator. Accessed February 2017 from <http://core.apheo.ca/index.php?pid=80>

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

