

# 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 Income Survey 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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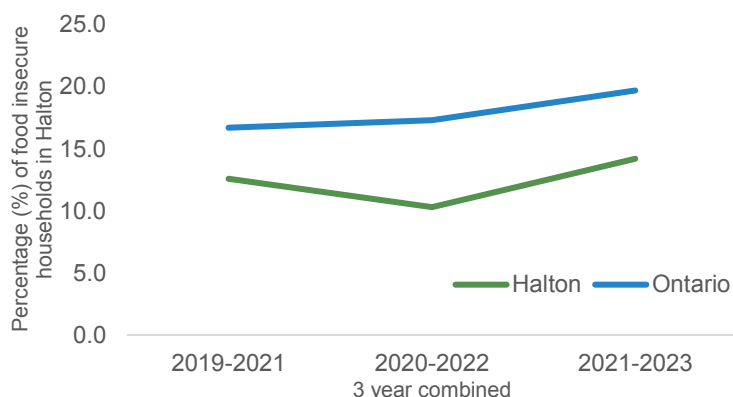
- In 2021-2023, 14.2% of Halton households were food insecure, which was lower (better) than Ontario
- In 2024, the average weekly cost of a basic healthy diet for a family of four living in Halton was \$290.57
- Low-income households in Halton continue to struggle to afford rent, food for a nutritious diet, and basic expenses.



## Household food insecurity

### Trends over time

- The percentage of Halton households that are food insecure increased from 12.6% in 2019-2021 to 14.2% in 2021-2023. However, this difference was **not statistically significant**.
- Combined three-year estimates are presented because single-year estimates of household food insecurity can be unstable.



Percentage of food insecure households, Halton Region and Ontario, 2019-2021 to 2021-2023



## Cost of a nutritious food basket

- In 2024, the weekly cost of a nutritious food basket for a family of four (two parents and two children) living in Halton was \$290.57 per week.
- Comparison prior to 2023 is not possible due to changes in methodology in 2022. Data will continue to be monitored over time.



Cost of a nutritious food basket for a family of four for one week, Halton Region, 2023 and 2024



# Cost of a nutritious food basket

## 2024 Low income scenarios

The monthly scenarios for 2024 show that low income households continue to struggle to pay rent, buy food for a nutritious diet, and pay basic expenses. Individuals and/or families relying on social assistance or earning minimum wage need to spend between 41 to 141% of their income on shelter, leaving little to no money to purchase nutritious food.

	Family of Four, Ontario Works	Family of Four, Full-Time Minimum Wage Earner	Single Parent Household, Two Children Over 6, Ontario Works	One Person Household, Ontario Works	One Person Household, Ontario Disability Support Program	One Person Household, Old Age Security/Guaranteed Income Supplement
Income	\$1,250	\$2,897	\$1,057	\$733	\$1,308	\$1,862
Additional benefits & credits	\$1,658	\$1,610	\$1,619	\$149	\$163	\$212
Total monthly income	\$2,908	\$4,507	\$2,676	\$882	\$1,471	\$2,074
Cost of a nutritious diet in Halton (for one month)	\$1,258	\$1,258	\$938	\$438	\$438	\$312
Average monthly rent in Halton	\$1,864 (3 bedroom)	\$1,864 (3 bedroom)	\$1,853 (2 bedroom)	\$1,243 (Bachelor)	\$1,623 (1 bedroom)	\$1,623 (3 bedroom)
Amount remaining to cover basic expenses (assuming market rent)	None, needs to find another \$214	\$1,385	None, needs to find another \$115	None, needs to find another \$799	None, needs to find another \$590	\$139

## About CIS

- The Canadian Income Survey (CIS) is a survey conducted by Statistics Canada that provides detailed information on the income, earnings, and living conditions of Canadian households. It collects data on various sources of income, such as employment income, government transfers, and pensions.
- The Household Food Security Survey Module (HFSSM) in the CIS is Canada's primary validated measure of food security. It contains 18 questions designed to measure food insecurity resulting from limited financial resources over the previous 12 months.

## Data notes

### Definitions:

**Food secure:** No indication of difficulty with income-related food access

**Food Insecure: Marginal:** Worry about running out of food and/or limited food selection due to a lack of money for food; **Moderate:** Compromise in quality and/or quantity of food due to a lack of money for food; **Severe:** Reduced food intake and disrupted eating patterns.

### Cost of a nutritious diet in Halton

The cost of a nutritious diet is based on nutritious food basket data for 2024 for Halton Region. The cost is based on 61 food items collected from 9 stores across the Region. Calculations for each scenario are based on the document "Monitoring Food Affordability in Ontario Methodology: Ontario Nutritious Food Basket Costing 2024 prepared by Ontario Dietitians in Public Health".

Percentage of income required for food is calculated by dividing the cost of a nutritious diet by the total monthly income.

### Income

For the first, third and fourth scenarios in the table, income is based on the basic and maximum shelter allowance rates as of May 2024 for individuals on Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program. Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement income is based on rates as of May 2024. Income for the sixth scenario also includes the Ontario Guaranteed Annual income rates as of May 2024. For the second scenario in the table, income is based on the minimum wage in Ontario in 2024, \$16.55 per hour, for an individual working 40 hours per week, excluding deductions for Employment Insurance and Canada Pension Plan.

### Additional benefits and credits

Additional benefits and credits include the Canada Child Benefit, GST/HST credit, Ontario Trillium Benefit and the Climate Action Incentive Payment, where applicable, estimated using the CRA Child and Family Benefits calculator for the 2023 tax year. The scenario involving minimum wage also includes the Canada Worker Benefit.

### Notes and limitations

- Actual income may be lower if residents do not file their income tax and/or do not apply for all available tax credits.
- The nutritious food basket is not culturally representative of all eating patterns.
- Due to changes in methodology beginning in 2022, nutritious food basket data from 2023 and 2024 should not be compared to previous years.
- Due to an increase in Estimated Energy Requirements for some individuals in 2024, 2024 nutritious food basket data should not be compared to past data without first adjusting for this change. The 2023 value in this report has been adjusted to reflect this change, and should not be expected to match previously reported values for 2023. Food prices were used to estimate the average cost of feeding a reference family of four (a man and woman each aged 31 to 50 years; a boy, 14 years of age; and a girl, eight years old), taking into account their Estimated Energy Requirements.

**Data Sources:** Statistics Canada, Centre for Income and Socioeconomic Well-being Statistics, Canadian Income Survey  
Halton Region Registered Dietitians.

### References

Public Health Ontario. Household Food Insecurity Estimates from the Canadian Income Survey: Ontario 2018-2020. (2023). Available from: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/Data-and-Analysis/Health-Equity/Household-Food-Insecurity>

Public Health Ontario. Health equity snapshot quick reference guide. Toronto, ON: King's Printer for Ontario; 2024. Technical notes: household food insecurity snapshot. Available from: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/Data-and-Analysis/Health-Equity/Household-Food-Insecurity>

Ontario Dietitians in Public Health. Monitoring Food Affordability in Ontario Methodology. Ontario Nutritious Food Basket Costing 2024, Version 5

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

