

Low Income and Healthy Eating

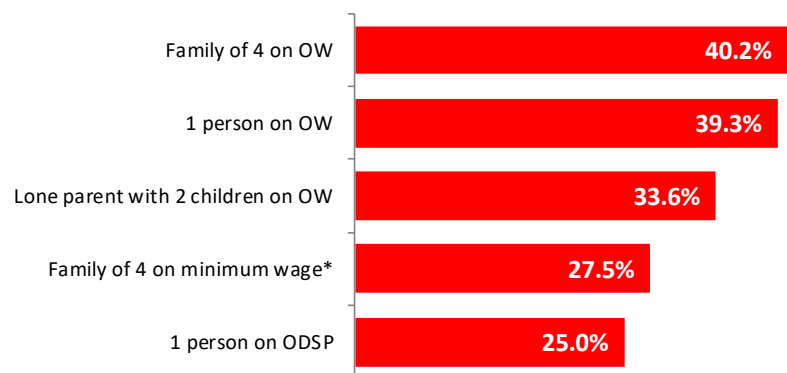
The importance of healthy eating cannot be overstated. According to Canada's Food Guide, healthy eating is eating from four food groups (vegetable and fruit, grain, milk and alternatives and meat and alternatives) to feel good and maintain health. Children need healthy food to support continued growth and physical development. Deprivation of healthy food can have lifelong consequences for children.

Maintaining a healthy diet can be a challenge to low income families. With limited financial resources, low income families have to make hard choices among major household expenses such as shelter, food, transportation and childcare. In 2014, an average Ontario household spent 9.5%¹ of their before-tax income on food. Families at the bottom 20% of the income scale spent 14% of their income on food. For these families, food and shelter together consumed almost half (49%) of their income.

In Halton, the estimated monthly cost for nutritious food for a family of four² is about \$896³. For low income families and individuals such those on Ontario Works (OW), Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) or minimum wage workers, their food costs can consume 25% to 40% of their tight budgets.

According to the Food Institute⁴ at the University of Guelph, food prices will continue to rise faster than general inflation. For example, prices for meat, vegetables and fruits rose by 4 to 4.5% between 2015 and 2016. This is an additional challenge to food security for low income families and individuals.

Percentage of Income Required to Purchase Healthy Food, Halton Region, 2016



* 1 full time wage earner

Source: Halton Region, Nutritious Food Basket Results, 2016

Among community-based organizations in Halton, Food For Life (FFL)⁵ and Fresh Food Box (FFB)⁶ focus their efforts and resources on healthy eating and access to fresh, local and affordable fruits and vegetables for the low income population. They provide over 120 distribution points or pick up sites. The following map shows their locations in relation to low income families. In general, the majority of the distribution points are located close to low income families with some exceptions in Milton and north Oakville.

1 Statistics Canada, Survey of Household Spending, 2014

2 Parents (31-50 years old), 1 boy aged 14 and 1 girl aged 8

3 Halton Region, Nutritious Food Basket Results 2016

4 The Food Institute, University of Guelph, Food Price Report, 2016, <http://foodinstitute.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Food-Price-Report-2016-English.pdf>

5 <http://www.foodforlife.ca>

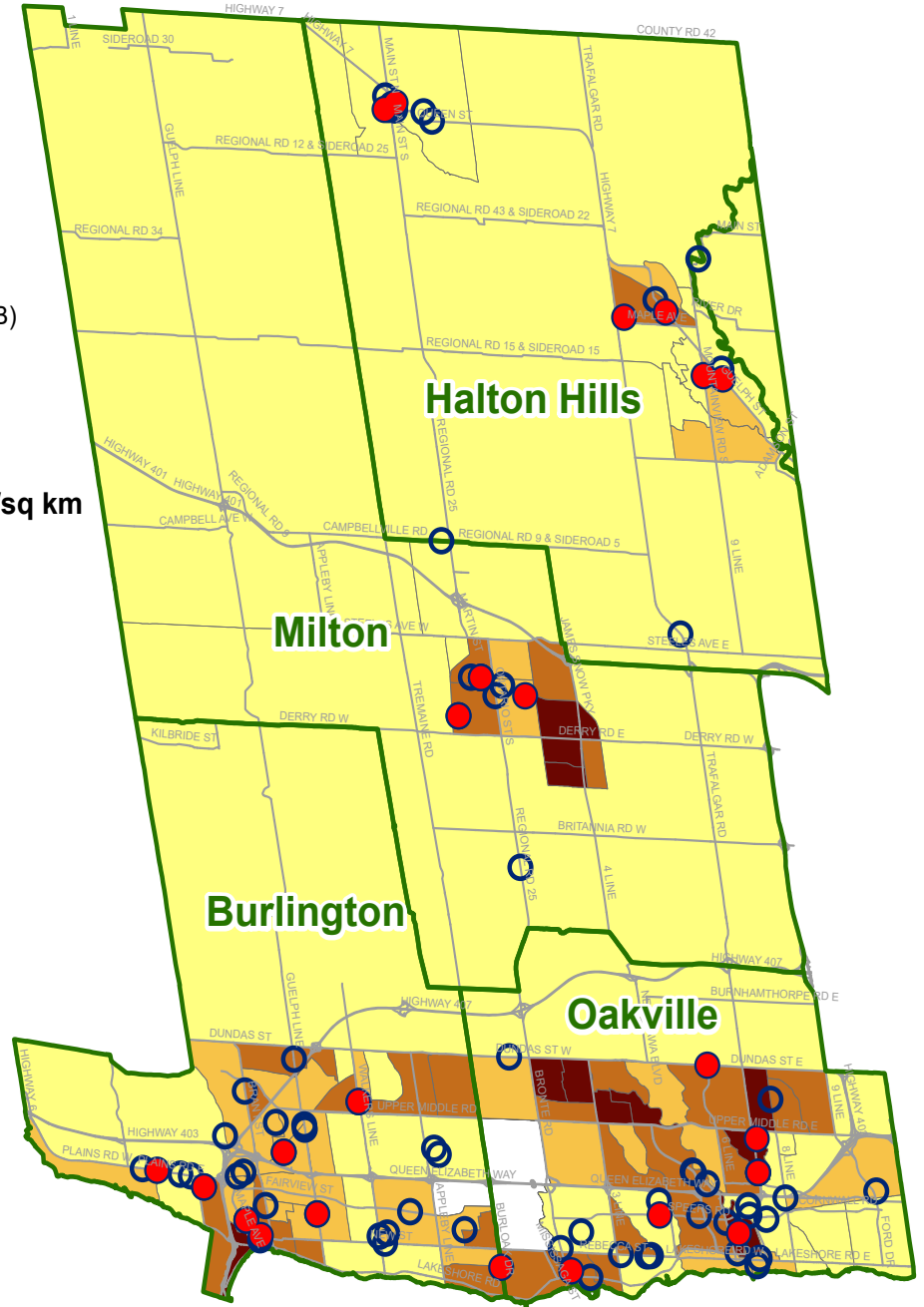
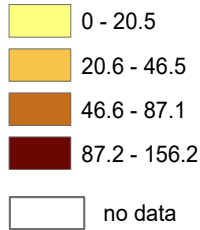
6 <http://haltonfreshfoodbox.com/>

Low Income Families and Selected Healthy Food Programs Halton Region

Legend

- Fresh Food Box (FFB)
- Food For Life (FFL)
- FFL and FFB

low income families/sq km by Census Tract (2014)



Source: Food For Life, Fresh Food Box, Statistics Canada

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