

Being Poor in Halton

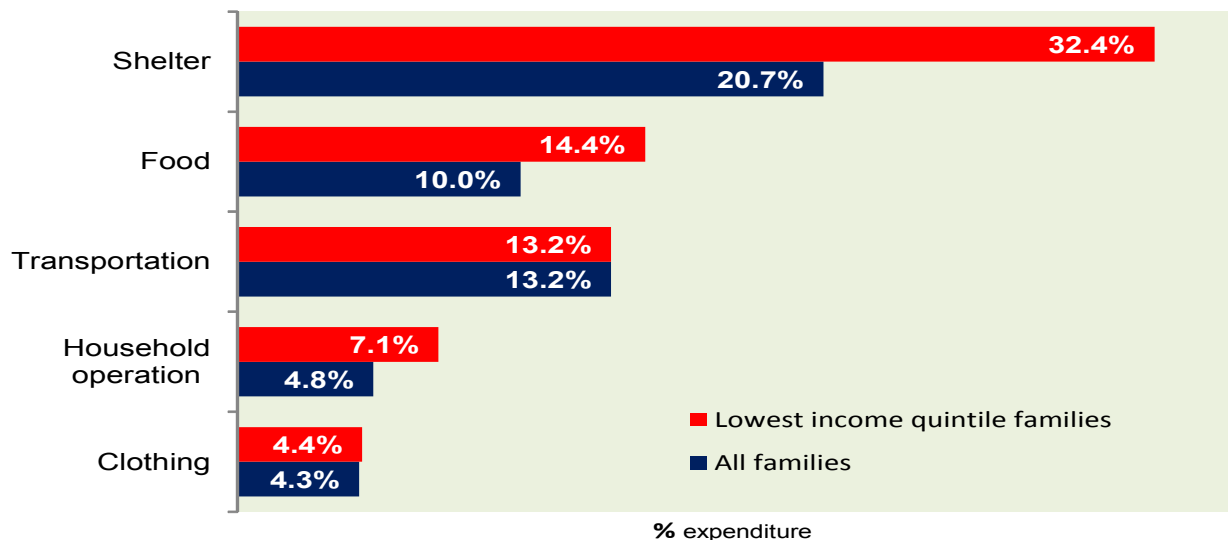


Overshadowed by Halton as an affluent community, there are thousands of families and individuals living in low income or poverty. They do not have sufficient financial resources for basic needs and necessities and have to make difficult choices on a daily basis.

As reported in various issues of Community Lens, in 2006, there were over 8,000 families and 37,000 individuals living in poverty in Halton. Between 2000 and 2005, the number of low income families has jumped by 40%. Families headed by single mothers, seniors, recent immigrants, visible minority persons fared worse than families in general.

What is life like for a family living in poverty in Halton? How do the numbers add up? The annual Survey of Household Spending (SHS) conducted by Statistics Canada provides important data for us to understand the spending pattern of low income families.

Proportion of major household expenditures Ontario, 2006



Source: Statistics Canada, Survey of Household Spending, 2006

The SHS divides families into quintiles according to their income. Each quintile represents 20%, or one fifth, of all families. The lowest income quintile families are those at the bottom 20% of the income scale. In Ontario, these families spent over 70% of their incomes on five major household expenses (shelter, food, transportation, household operation and clothing) compared to 53% spent by all families. Shelter cost is by far the highest expense which consumed almost one-third of their income.

Community Lens is prepared by Community Development Halton to disseminate and interpret important community data as it becomes available. For more information please contact us at data@cdhalton.ca or 905-632-1975

In Halton, a family of four (1 child in school and 1 child requires child care) with one parent working full-time and another working part time both at minimum wage would have an after-tax income of \$33,034 (including a Child Tax benefit of \$6,698).

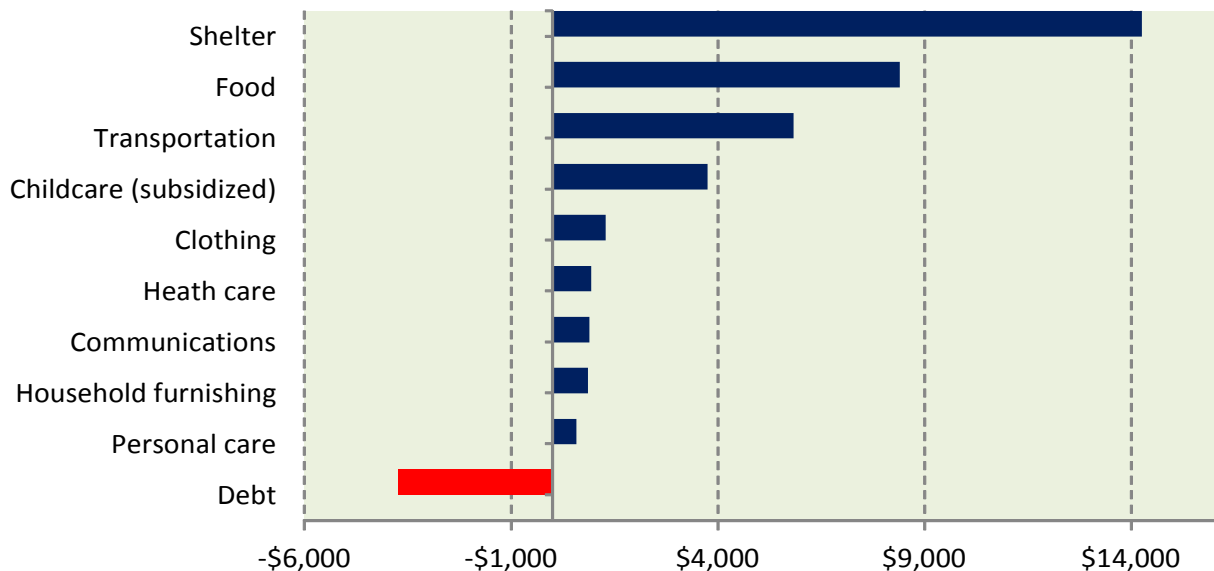
- To rent a 3 bedroom apartment in Halton would cost about \$14,250¹ which accounts for 43% of the after-tax income.
- To feed a family of four in Halton would cost about \$8,400² representing 25% of the after-tax income.
- To get to and from work, to the grocery store and to childcare would cost about \$5,800³ including owning and maintaining one used car and a bus pass for another adult in the family. The transportation cost accounts for 17% of the income.
- To place the two children in subsidized early childhood education and before and after school programs would cost another \$3,750.

Based on the SHS data, it would cost \$1,283 to provide clothing for the families in all seasons.

In order to pay for all the daily basics and necessities, the family of four would need an extra \$3,740. They would either be forced into debt or have to give up some of the essentials. How would that family handle unexpected costs or emergencies? How would they send their children to school activities and trips?

Go to the Community Development Halton website to view a video on ***Being Poor in Halton***.

Major household expenditures, low income family, Halton Region, 2008



Source: Statistics Canada, Halton Region

1 Halton Region, Halton Region Health Department, The Price of Eating Well, 2009

2 Ibid.

3 Statistics Canada, Spending Patterns in Canada, 2008 (Detailed table 2, 62FPY0032XDB)



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