

Caregivers, Part One: Halton

Introduction

To mark 2022 National Caregiver Day on Tuesday, April 5, CDH is publishing a two-part *Community Lens* series on caregivers. This issue, Part One, will look at caregivers in Halton. Next month in Part Two, we will look at the impacts of COVID-19 on caregivers during the pandemic.

The Ontario Caregiver Organization (OCO) defines caregivers as “ordinary people who provide physical and/or emotional support to a family member, partner, friend, or neighbour.” Funded by the Government of Ontario, the OCO is a nonprofit that was created in 2018 “to support Ontario’s estimated 3.3 million caregivers.”¹

Caregivers: An Invisible, but Indispensable, Economic Contribution

Caregivers perform at least two primary vital functions in Canada. First, there is the social function which enables “people to stay and age in their home, which is where they want to be.”² Secondly, caregivers perform an indispensable economic function “without [whom], Canada’s healthcare and social systems would collapse.”³ However, calculating a precise economic contribution remains difficult. Estimates are dependent on definition and calculation approaches, such as average caregiving hours and the rate of pay that caregiving is valued at. The unpaid contribution of caregivers to the Ontario economy is undoubtedly in the billions of dollars, perhaps even tens of billions, but estimates differ.

The OCO in its Spotlight Report for Ontario (2019) estimated that the contribution of caregivers to the Ontario economy is “the equivalent of between \$26 and \$72 billion to our society every year.”⁴ In the 2021 survey by OCO the contribution of carers to the Ontario economy is estimated at \$28.5 billion, factoring in “average time caregivers invest in providing care and multiply it, even just at minimum wage.”

Even using the more circumspect estimate of \$28.5 billion, and comparing it to other Ontario economic sectors, provides readers with a sense of the invisible contribution caregivers make to the provincial economy. Ontario’s financial services sector, for example, “which employs about 359,000 people”, is valued at approximately \$60 billion to the provincial economy.⁵ While the Ontario food and beverage manufacturing sector, which employs “over 104,800 people”, generates revenues of “more than \$48 billions.”⁶

¹The Ontario Caregiver Organization, *Spotlight Report, The Impact of COVID-19 on Caregivers: Year Two*, 2021

²The Ontario Caregiver Organization, *Spotlight Report, The Impact of COVID-19 on Caregivers: Year Two*, 2021

³The Petro-Canada CareMakers Foundation, *Caregiving in Canada: challenges and opportunities shaping a national conversation*, Discussion Paper 2020/21

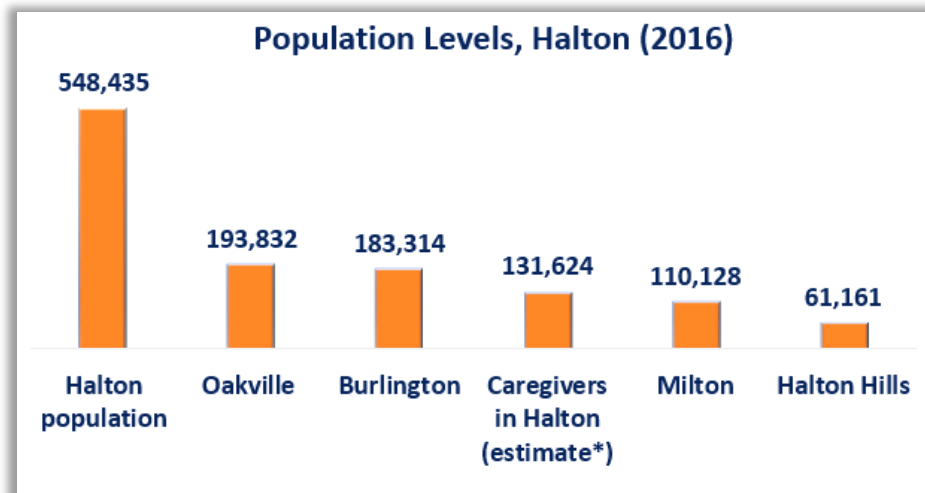
⁴Estimated “by using Ontario’s current [at the time] minimum wage (\$14/hour) and multiplying the average hours per week of caregiving (11-30) by the number of caregivers [3.3 million] in Ontario.” The Ontario Caregiver Organization, *Spotlight on Ontario’s Caregivers*, 2019

⁵Government of Ontario, *Financial Services, Invest Ontario*, accessed March 18, 2022

⁶Government of Ontario, *Food and Beverage Manufacturing Invest Ontario*, accessed March 18, 2022

How many caregivers live in Halton?

Approximately 24% of Ontario’s population are caregivers. This is based on an estimate of 3.3 million caregivers⁷ from a total provincial population of 13,448,494 in 2016.⁸ Census 2021 population data for Ontario of 14,223,942, is available. However, we are using 2016 Census population data since the OCO was created in 2018 and is likely using a 2016 Census population reference. Using 2021 population data, without calculating a revised caregiver estimate, may present a distorted estimate of caregivers in the province. Incidentally, this 24% caregiver estimate is similar to a national estimate provided by Statistics Canada in 2018, which found that “approximately one in four Canadians aged 15 and older (or 7.8 million people) provided care to a family member or friend with a long-term health condition, a physical or mental disability, or problems related to aging.”⁹



Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census

* Estimate. Using the OCO estimate of 3.3 million caregivers in Ontario (24% of total provincial population in 2016) and applying a 24% caregiver estimate to 2016 Halton Census population data.

In 2016, 548,435 people lived in Halton.¹⁰ Applying a 24% caregiver estimate to the municipality, there may have been as many as 131,624 caregivers in Halton in 2016. Putting this in a wider municipal population context, we can see that an estimate of 131,624 caregivers in Halton was larger than the 110,128 people living in Milton and over twice as large as the population of Halton Hills, which had 61,161 residents in 2016.¹¹

⁷The Ontario Caregiver Organization, ‘Spotlight on Ontario’s Caregivers. COVID-19 Edition’, 2020

⁸Statistics Canada, [2016 Census of Population](#)

⁹Statistics Canada, [Caregivers in Canada 2018](#)

¹⁰Statistics Canada, [2016 Census of Population](#)

¹¹Statistics Canada, [2016 Census of Population](#)

This two-part *Community Lens* series intends to raise awareness of the experiences of caregivers. In our view, an increasingly important, but often overlooked, area of life for many people and families across Halton.

In April 2022, we will release Part Two of this series, which will look at the impacts of COVID-19 on caregivers.

Further resources

If you are a caregiver, or know someone who is, and would like further information around resources and support, we recommend visiting the Ontario Caregiver Organization website:

<https://ontariocaregiver.ca>

As always, if you have any questions or feedback about this *Community Lens* or any of Community Development Halton's other social policy and planning work, you can email data@cdhalton.ca.

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



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