

Are We Hungry?

A report by the Oakville Community Foundation on
the current state of Food Security in our Community.

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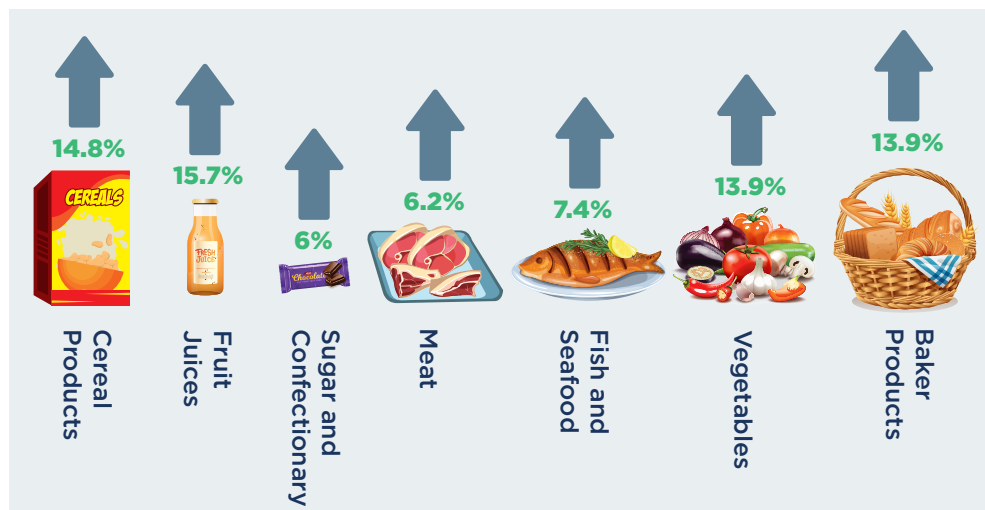
Outside looking in

Reports are rampant about the increased need for food in Canada, but the question is: **what about Halton and Oakville?**

For context, in the summer of 2021, nearly 1 in 5 Canadians aged 15 and older experienced difficulty in meeting necessary expenses like transportation, shelter and food. One year later and this number has trended upward to 1 in 4 Canadians.

Grocery prices have continued to rise, with Statistics Canada indicating supply constraints, unfavourable growing weather, food disease and higher costs — for example, animal feed and packing materials — as reasons for these higher costs.

Grocery price increases (February year-over-over)



Statistics Canada - Consumer Price Index, February 2023

As the costs are passed on to consumers, foods that were once staples are now out of budget for many Canadians.

In Ontario, the number of food bank users now increases at a faster rate than pre-pandemic. Between January and September 2022, the number of people accessing food banks in Ontario increased by 24%, year-over-year, with a 64% increase in first-time-visitors over pre-pandemic levels.¹

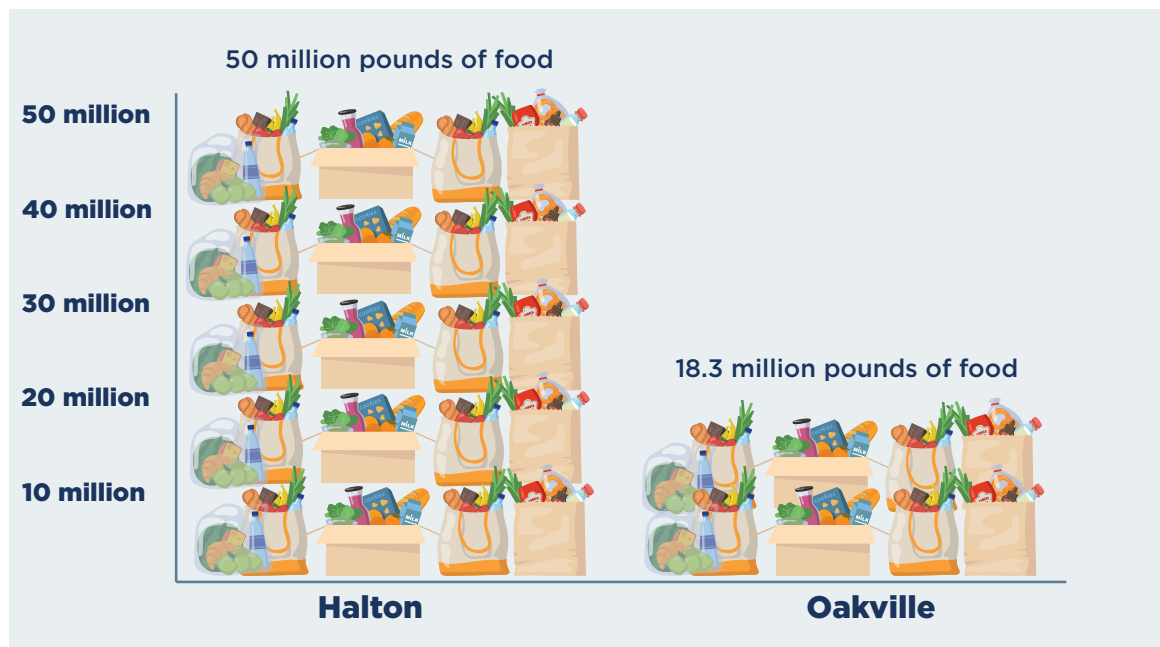
Just recently, April 2023, Neil Heatherington, the CEO of the Daily Bread Food Bank, indicated that more people had used their network of 128 locations throughout the Greater Toronto Area in March 2023 than any other year in their 40-year history.²

1. [Hunger Report, 2022 - pg. 10](#)
2. [CBC News - Toronto food banks are at 'breaking point,' says Daily Bread CEO, calling on province to boost social supports](#)

Halton

It is estimated that the total volume of food needed to meet the total demand of food insecure individuals across Halton is 51 million pounds of food per year. For Oakville, this would amount to approximately 18.3 million pounds of food per year, estimating 11% of individuals are food insecure¹.

Estimated food (in pounds) to meet total demand



Source: Halton Food Security Project

It is an unfathomable amount of food, when put in those terms and is, of course, estimated.

What is known, however, is that in October and November of 2020, 39% of respondents in Halton to the 2020 COVID-19 Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System survey indicated they found it somewhat or a lot harder to pay for one or more household expenses during the pandemic, including enough food to feed themselves or their family, the quality or variety of foods they wanted as well as bills and rent or mortgage payments.

¹ Halton Food Security Project - Consulting Services to Improve System Coordination and Capacity for Acquisition, Storage and Distribution in the Halton Food Security Sector

The same survey asked about their food situation in their household in the last 30 days, with respondents indicating:

Indications of Household Food Insecurity, Halton Region

13%

Could not afford balanced meals



11%

Food bought did not last



9%

Ate less than they felt they should

7%

Adults had to cut size of or skip meals

6%

Hungry but did not eat



2%

Accessed community food program



Source: Halton Region - Incidental Impact of COVID-19 Series: Food Insecurity

Additionally, 17% of survey respondents indicated they were concerned about the loss of food programs or services for themselves or others in their households.¹

Food banks and food rescue organizations in Halton are increasingly busy and demand for food continues to rise. **Organizations like the Kerr Street Mission indicated that, on average, 712 people benefitted from their Food Market in 2022, a 9% increase year-over year.²**

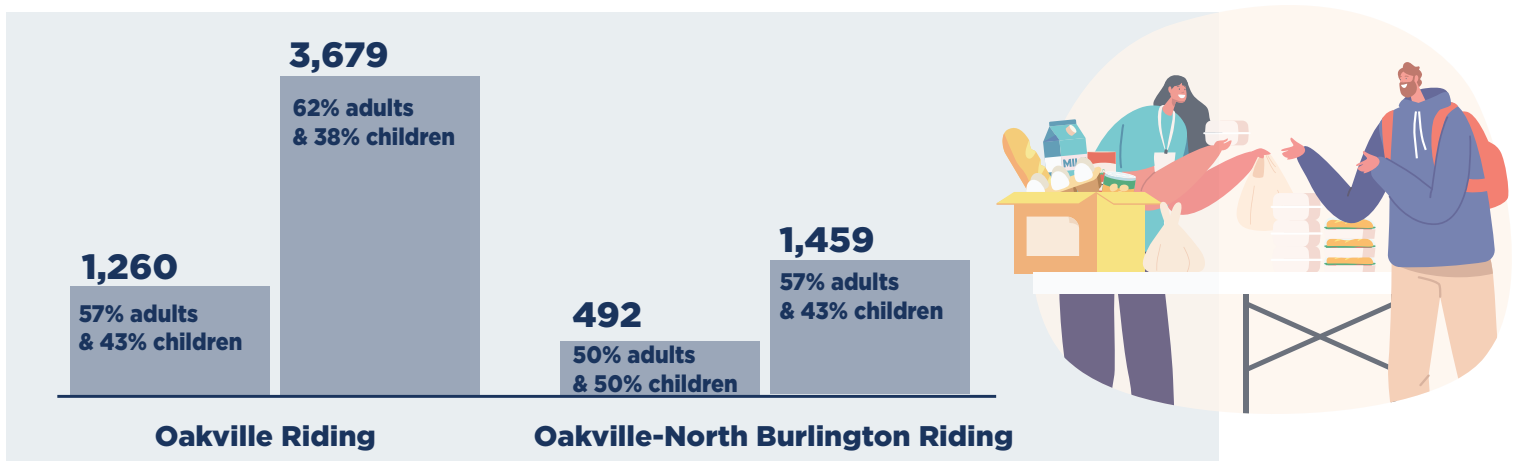
Food For Life supported 3,200 households per week, rescuing a total of 4,960,000 pounds of food that went back out into the community.³

We also know that 888 people accessed the **Oak Park Neighbourhood Centre Food Bank** in 2022, **with 640 meals for isolated seniors.⁴**

1. Halton Food Security Project - Consulting Services to Improve System Coordination and Capacity for Acquisition, Storage and Distribution in the Halton Food Security Sector
2. Kerr Street Mission Annual Report, 2022
3. Food For Life Annual Report, 2021
4. Oak Park Neighbourhood Centre Annual Report, 2022

People in Halton are accessing food banks at higher levels than ever before. In the riding of Oakville, food bank usage in the Feed Ontario network has increased by 65%, from 2018 to 2021. In Oakville-North Burlington, this has increased by 66%.¹

Food Bank visits, 2018 vs. 2021



Source: Feed Ontario - Hunger in my Riding, Oakville & Oakville-North Burlington

As shown in the graph, a considerable amount of visits to these food banks are made by children. In 2021, almost 3 in 10 children and youth experienced food insecurity in the last 12 months. The percentage is even higher for children and youth who identify as Indigenous and those who perceived their families as not being “well-off.”²

The Halton Youth Impact Survey asked seven questions around food insecurity, including:

- 21%** ➔ Goes to school or to bed hungry because there is not enough food at home
- 18%** ➔ Our family could not afford the food for more balanced meals
- 16%** ➔ I did not eat because there was not enough money for food

1. Feed Ontario - Hunger in my Riding, Oakville & Oakville-North Burlington
 2. Our Kids Network - Halton Youth Impact Survey

In 2022, **Food4Kids** indicated they supported 921 kids, an increase of 21% year-over-year. At the time of writing, only a few months into the new fiscal year, the number had increased to more than 1,000.

In tangible means, that's 24,386 food bags and \$204,600 worth of gift cards. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of children they have supported has increased by 26%.¹



If we circle back to the question:

➔ **Is there a problem here at home?** The data tells us, **YES.**

Oakville and Halton are not insulated from this feeling of hunger. We know that people are having to skip meals to make their food supply last; we know that it's getting harder to afford a healthy, balanced meal; we know that people are accessing local food programs; and we know that these local food programs are feeding community members more than ever before.

“A Community Where No One is Left Behind”

Food banks and food rescue organizations rely on our collective generosity to continue serving those most in need in our community.

1. Food4Kids Annual Report, 2022

Here are a few things you can do to help:

Research. Do a deep dive into the food organizations that exist near you. Learn about what they do and how they work. Not all organizations operate in the same way.

Spread the word. Tell your friends and involve your family. To make this a community where no one is left behind, it's up to all of us to pitch in and help.

Volunteer. Your time is valuable to any organization and they would be grateful to have you. Whether that's sorting food or packing bags and bins.

Donate. While you may think a monetary donation may seem impersonal, it's not. These organizations rely on monetary generosity to continue to support their staff, procure food and transport bags, baskets and more. Most food banks and food rescue organizations also list the items they are most in need of.

When we all work together, we can ensure everyone in our community is supported and feels like they belong.

Oakville Food Organizations

Fare Share Food Bank
Food4Kids
Food for Life
Halton Food for Thought
Kerr Street Missions
Oak Park Neighbourhood Centre

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