

# Social Determinants of Health in Haliburton County



*A Report Card*  
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Social Determinants of Health Advisory Committee

Mary-Lou Mills, Haliburton Kawartha Pine Ridge District Health Unit

Beth Archibald, Haliburton Highlands Family Health Team

Ann MacLeod, Trent-Fleming School of Nursing

Mark Skinner, Department of Geography, Trent University

Jenny Perrott, U-Links Centre for Community-Based Research

Heather Reid, U-Links Centre for Community-Based Research

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## The Project

This project was formally a partnership between the U-links Centre for Community-Based Research, Haliburton Highlands Family Health Team, HKPR District Health Unit, and Trent University through the Department of Geography and the Trent/Fleming School of Nursing. In addition, the following organizations joined an advisory committee to provide guidance and input into the project: Community Care Haliburton, Point in Time, SIRCH Community Services and Consulting, and Ontario Early Years. Health, social service, education and other community professionals who saw some major areas of need, but were unable to find data to support what they saw conceived this project. There was also a need to integrate information that had been collected in various reports from community organizations into one useable source. The purpose of this report card is to provide some information on how the region is doing on the social determinants of health indicators and how these results compare to Ontario data. This research process also involved a survey of health and social service professionals in the region.

It should also be stressed that this report is only a starting point. Further research to confirm some of the results in this report and to look at some of the information gaps identified is definitely needed. This report is meant to integrate existing information and identify areas that require more research.

## The Structure of the Report Card

There is an emerging trend in the health sector that health is not just the absence of disease, but includes total physical, mental and spiritual well being. The Public Health Agency of Canada says, “Health is determined by complex interactions between social and economic factors, the physical environment and individual behavior”.<sup>1</sup> These factors are known as the social determinants of health. The Public Health Agency of Canada lists the social determinants of health as: income and social status, social support networks, education and literacy, employment and working conditions, social environments, physical environments, personal health practices and coping skills, healthy child development, biology and genetic endowment, health services, gender and culture.<sup>1</sup>

This report is divided into sections for each social determinant, with some additional determinants added that are of particular concern to the region. Each determinant is examined by using indicators, which are areas of each determinants and help to show how Haliburton County compares to Ontario in general.



## General Demographic Information

The census data shows the age characteristics of the populations and how they are changing over time. This valuable information assists with planning for future programs and services such as education, health care, and social support services. The number of people per square kilometer shows how densely populated the area is, which in turn affects how services are provided and gives an indication of how far people have to travel to get services.

- Haliburton County had a population of 16,147 in 2006 as compared to 15,085 in 2001; that is a 7% increase in population. <sup>2</sup> Ontario had a population of 12,160,282 in 2006 and 11,410,046 in 2001; that is an increase of 6.6%.
- The median age of the population in Haliburton County is 50.4 years compared to 39 years for Ontario. <sup>2</sup>
- The percentage of the population that is over age 15 is 87.5% in Haliburton County and 81.8% in Ontario.
- There are approximately 4 people per square kilometer in Haliburton County compared to 13.4 in Ontario. <sup>2</sup>

## Family Characteristics

There are twice as many households containing a couple without children compared to those with children. The majority of children live in two parent families; however, a significant number live in lone parent families, who are more likely to have a lower income and thus at greater risk of living in poverty.

There are 1,480 married or common law couples with children compared to 2,985 couples without children. <sup>2</sup>

- Haliburton has 490 lone parent families, which is 9.6% of all families with children age 0-18 in the region. 73.4% of these lone parent families are headed by women. In Ontario, 15.8% of all families are lone parent families with the majority of these families also headed by women. <sup>2</sup>
- More than 57% of lone parent families with young children age 0-6 live in poverty. <sup>3</sup>










## Immigrant Status

Immigrant status and period of immigration	Haliburton (CD)			Ontario		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Total population	15,995	7,950	8,050	12,028,895	5,877,875	6,151,020
Non-immigrants	14,485	7,240	7,250	8,512,020	4,197,560	4,314,460
Immigrants	1,490	705	780	3,398,725	1,620,320	1,778,400
Before 1991	1,345	670	675	1,884,440	901,375	983,065
1991 to 2000	100	25	70	933,545	443,665	489,880
2001 to 2006	35	10	30	580,740	275,280	305,460

## Income and Social Status



Income has been identified by Health Canada as the single most important determinant of health (Caring for Our Children, HKPR District Health Unit 2003). An adequate income is needed to meet the basic needs for food, housing, clothing and other goods and services. Individuals and families are considered to be living poverty if their income falls beneath Statistics Canada low-income cut-off (LICO). People with low paying jobs, unstable jobs, insufficient hours of work and those who rely on government sources for income such as Ontario Works and Old Age Security are more likely to have a lower income. In Haliburton County one person would have to earn less than \$11,264 after taxes to be considered low income and a family of four would have to earn less than \$21,296 as per the 2006 LICO. <sup>5</sup>

After Tax Low Income Cut-Offs (LICOs) 2005					
Population of Community of Residence					
Family Size	500,000+	100,000 – 499,999	30,000-99,999	Less than 30,000	Rural
1	\$17,219	\$14,562	\$14,380	\$12,890	\$11,264
2	\$20,956	\$17,723	\$17,502	\$15,690	\$13,709
3	\$26,095	\$22,069	\$21,794	\$19,535	\$17,071
4	\$32,556	\$27,532	\$27,190	\$24,373	\$21,296
5	\$37,071	\$31,351	\$30,962	\$27,754	\$24,251
6	\$41,113	\$34,769	\$34,338	\$30,780	\$26,895
7+	\$45,155	\$38,187	\$37,713	\$33,806	\$29,539

-  In 2005, the median after tax income was \$45,469 in Haliburton County compared to \$59,377 for the province. <sup>2</sup>
-  The after tax income of lone parent families headed by women in Haliburton County was \$29,156, as compared to \$34,206 for Ontario. <sup>5</sup>
-  In Haliburton County, 23.2% of people rely on government sources for income. Haliburton County is ranked as the highest in Ontario for receiving these sources of financial support. <sup>5</sup>
-  19.7% of the residents receive their income from government transfers. <sup>2</sup>
-  In March 2009 there were 267 on the Ontario Works caseload. <sup>7</sup>
-  In 1998 in Ontario 8.97% of people receive some form of social assistance. <sup>8</sup>
-  A large number of children are believed to be living in poverty as estimated by the Ontario Ministry of Education. <sup>9</sup>

## Housing

Housing that is adequate and affordable is essential to health and well-being. Housing is considered affordable if a family spends no more than 30% of their income on housing costs. Inadequate housing conditions increases the risk of injury and illness due to safety issues if living in a structurally unsafe house, or if there are environmental health hazards such as molds. Low income is the primary factor that inhibits people from securing housing that is both adequate and affordable.

-  Average increase in house prices from 1996 to 2006 was 2.97% in Haliburton County compared to 12.97% in Ontario.
-  Average value of an owned house is \$233,387 in Haliburton County compared to \$297,479 in Ontario.

- 🌲 The average monthly payments for owned dwellings are \$534 in Haliburton County compared to \$1046 in Ontario.
- 🌲 The average monthly costs for rented dwellings is \$638 in Haliburton County compared to \$801 in Ontario
- 🌲 The average cost of renting an apartment with heat and hydro included is about \$1363 for a three bedroom, \$991 for a two bedroom and \$892 for a one bedroom. <sup>10</sup>

Housing costs as a percentage of income helps to show whether families can afford housing by showing how much of their monthly budget goes towards housing. Calculating housing costs involves several variables (utilities, insurance, maintenance, etc.) that may fluctuate seasonally. In Haliburton County, some service providers feel that housing costs for families with low incomes can increase to equal close to 50% of their income. <sup>14</sup>

Housing costs as a percentage of income for families renting housing

- 🌲 Haliburton County 19% <sup>2</sup>
- 🌲 Ontario 18.4% <sup>2</sup>

Housing costs as a percentage of income for single mothers renting housing

- 🌲 Haliburton County 25% <sup>2</sup>
- 🌲 Ontario 26.3% <sup>2</sup>



## Subsidized Housing

- 🌲 As of March 2009 there were there were 30 singles, 38 seniors and 24 families with dependents on the social housing waiting list in Haliburton County. <sup>7</sup>
- 🌲 3.62% of Ontario families are on a social housing wait list. <sup>11</sup>

## Rates of Homelessness

- 🌲 In Haliburton County about 3% of families are in immediate risk of becoming homeless or are already homeless. Homelessness rates in Ontario were about 0.5%. <sup>2</sup>

## Food Security

When a family lacks access to food or worries about getting enough safe, nutritious and acceptable food they are considered to have food security issues. Less money means less food and typically the types of foods secured is less nutritious. Lack of food security is one of the most obvious indications that a family lives in poverty.

- 🌲 11.5% of households in Haliburton County experience food insecurity. <sup>12</sup>
- 🌲 208 to 231 households in Haliburton County use one of the four local food banks on a monthly basis. That is about 4.1% to 4.5% of families in Haliburton County.
- 🌲 About 3% of Ontarians used food banks during an average one month period. <sup>13</sup>



## Employment and Working Conditions

Stable employment with an adequate income optimizes physical health and well-being. Employment can be difficult to find in the County so some people travel out of the County for employment. Others have precarious or seasonal employment and therefore rely on employment insurance at various times of the year.

- 🌲 The percent of people who work outside the county is 17% in Haliburton County and for Ontario it is 19.7%. <sup>2</sup>
- 🌲 Unemployment rates (not considering seasonal employment) were 7.5% in Haliburton County and 6.4% in Ontario. <sup>2</sup>
- 🌲 The provincial unemployment rate rose from 6.5% in March 2008 to 8.9% in March 2009. <sup>6</sup>



## Education and Literacy

Employment and education are strongly linked. The level of education attained indicates how skilled the work force is and is correlated with the income status of the population. Generally less education means people are more likely to earn less.

- 🌲 Those without any sort of post secondary certificate, degree or diploma, is 55.2% in Haliburton County <sup>2</sup> and it is 49.0% in the province. <sup>10</sup>
- 🌲 In Ontario 33% of people have not completed high school. <sup>9</sup>

## Social Support Networks

Health and well-being is dependent on a supportive community environment. Family, friends, and community resources that offer various programs and support services support well-being. There are many community resources available in Haliburton County, however, nearly all of these services need more funding to provide service to those in need or those who are in a period of transition. <sup>15</sup> This includes things such as education and training, health care services, and leisure and cultural activities. It also includes child care, as the availability and cost of child care influences whether people can afford to put their children in care which in turn can affect a parent's employment. The availability of elder care and transportation services are also important.

The availability of family doctors indicates the likelihood that patients will have access to a doctor if they need one and the state of the health system in that community. In Haliburton County, as many as half of the patients that attended a walk in clinic did not have a family doctor in the region. <sup>15</sup> It is unknown what portion of these patients is made up of seasonal residents who may have a doctor elsewhere.

- 🌲 There are 10 family physicians and 2 Nurse Practitioners that practice within the Haliburton County boundaries as of June 2009. <sup>4</sup>
- 🌲 In Haliburton County 63% of families use childcare of some sort. <sup>10</sup> It is not known what portion of the childcare is provided by family or friends at no cost. The amount of subsidized child care is also unknown.
- 🌲 There are 152 long term care beds available in Haliburton County, with an average wait time of 1 to 1.5 years.
- 🌲 In Ontario the waiting time for long term care is about the same, 1 to 1.5 years.
- 🌲 There is 1 respite bed in a long-term care facility in Haliburton County.

## Social Environments Including Geographical Isolation

Average time lived in the community, meaning the percent of people who have lived at the same address five years ago, measures how stable a community is and whether there is a lot of transition in the community and in resident's lives. It also can reflect the strength of social networks that one develops within their community.

- 64.4% of residents have lived at the same address and the provincial rate is Ontario 58.7%.<sup>2</sup>
- 1.6% of the residents of Haliburton County lived outside of the province five years ago and the provincial rate is 6.6%.<sup>2</sup>
- Although it is not quantified, access to transportation contributes to geographic isolation. In Haliburton County there is no public transportation system and distances between small communities limit opportunities for travel without a vehicle. Tertiary services and employment are often sought in the closest urban centre, which is approximately 1 ½ hours away. Without transportation this becomes a barrier, specifically for year round residents.

## Physical Environments

The availability of clean air to breathe, the quality of drinking water or clean unpolluted areas to swim in, and the safety of the community which includes crime rates and the perceived safety of the community are all factors influencing health.

- Second hand smoke exposure, is associated with a number of health concerns. In Haliburton County 34.6% were exposed to second hand smoke and in Ontario it is 35.8%.<sup>12</sup> (in the last month)
- Outdoor air quality (number of days of smog advisories in 2008), shows the generally quality of the air in the region. A high rate of smog exposure is linked to many respiratory and other health concerns. Haliburton County had 2 days of smog advisory in 2008<sup>16</sup> and Ontario generally had 17 days of smog advisory in 2008.<sup>16</sup>
- Crime rates show the safety of the community, or the perception of safety. There is no data for Haliburton County; however, in Ontario 14.5% of people think there is a serious crime problem in their neighborhood.<sup>17</sup>



## Personal Health Practices and Coping Skills

People, who eat healthy diets, exercise on a regular basis, don't smoke, and have positive coping skills with lifes' ups and downs generally will have better mental and physical health. There is also a correlation between education, income, and personal health practices and coping abilities. Higher education levels and higher income tends to mean better overall health, better food choices, and higher activity levels.

- The leading cause of mortality is heart disease. In Haliburton County the incidence of heart disease is 23.4%<sup>15</sup> and in Ontario it is 22.5%.<sup>18</sup>
- The suicide rate in Haliburton County is 4.4% and in Ontario it is 3.8%.<sup>18</sup>
- In Haliburton County, 37.3% are overweight and 17.1% are obese.<sup>15</sup> In Ontario, 34.9% are overweight and 17.9% are obese.<sup>18</sup>
- The rate of smoking is 26.5% in Haliburton County<sup>15</sup> and 22.5% in Ontario.<sup>18</sup>
- Excessive alcohol consumption (five or more drinks at one time, twelve or more times a year), is another indicator of coping skills. In Haliburton County the rate is 19.6%<sup>15</sup> and in Ontario it is 21.7%.<sup>18</sup>

## Healthy Child Development

Most children are born healthy. The rate of infant mortality and low birth weights remain low. Those vaccinated against vaccine preventable diseases helps to protect our children from those diseases that can cause serious illness and death.

🌳 Infant mortality rate is 0.71% in Haliburton County and in Ontario it is 0.46%.<sup>2</sup>

🌳 Low birth weight (less than 2500 grams, but more than 500 grams) increases the risk of infant mortality and morbidity. Low birth weights are more often seen if the mother had inadequate nutrition during her pregnancy or if she smoked. In Haliburton County 5.48% are low birth weight<sup>2</sup> and in Ontario the rate is 5.8%.<sup>2</sup>

🌳 Smoking during pregnancy continues to be an issue in Haliburton County as 23% smoked during pregnancy<sup>2</sup> and in Ontario 24.9% of women continued to smoke while pregnant.<sup>2</sup>

🌳 Child vaccination rates are 93.16% in Haliburton County<sup>14</sup> which is slightly below the provincial average of Ontario 96.1%.<sup>2</sup>

🌳 Dental care is not a publically funded health care service. Unless a parent has dental insurance or an adequate income to cover dental services children are at greater risk of not being adequately assessed and treated for dental health problems. In Haliburton County 14% of kindergarten children had cavities, and half of them were untreated.<sup>10</sup> The Ontario Dental Association's indication is that 6% to 10% of Ontario kindergarten children have cavities.<sup>10</sup>



## Health Professionals Survey

The survey of health professionals was designed to determine the main social determinants of health that were of concern to the health professionals' clients and to the community in general. It was also designed to determine the organizations' strengths in addressing these social determinants and to provide recommendations to better address the unmet needs relating to the social determinants

Fifteen health and social service professionals were surveyed, all female. The organizations included; Haliburton Kawartha Pine Ridge District Health Unit, SIRCH Community Services and Counseling, Haliburton Highlands Health Service, Five Counties Children Centre, Haliburton Highlands Family Health Team, Four Counties Addiction Services Team, Highlands Community Pregnancy Care Centre, Haliburton Highlands Learning Program, YWCA Women's Centre - Haliburton County, Center for Children, Youth and Parents - Point in Time, Haliburton Highlands Mental Health Services and Four Counties Brain Injury Association.

Based on what was known about the area, its isolation and the lack of employment, it was not surprising that the social determinants of most concern to the health and social service professions' clients were: income and social status, social environments (geographic isolation) and education and literacy (Figure 1). The social determinants that were thought to be of greatest concern to the community in general were nearly the same; income and social status, social environments (geographic isolation) and employment and working conditions (Figure 1). The fact that education and literacy were of greater concern for clients than for the community in general could be due to the fact that health and social service professionals see this issue in their daily dealings with clients, so this issue is seen as of greater concern with clients than with the general community. Respondents stated they had to provide all educational material at very low literacy levels. They also had to explain the information in the educational material to their clients due to their low literacy levels.

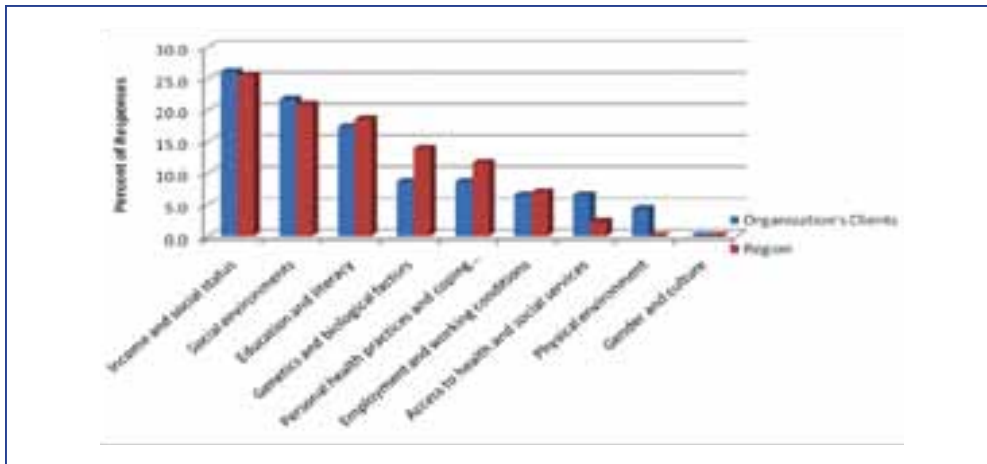


Figure 1: The Social Determinants of Health that were the Most Challenging for Community Organization Clients and the Community

There were a variety of suggestions made about how to resolve the unmet needs relating to social determinants which ranged from widening the mandate of organizations that already provide transportation support, to more creative ways for community organizations to work together (Table 1). These suggestions provide a useful starting point for developing programs to help elevate the issues noted. Overall, there were no major surprises regarding the findings of the research, but formally establishing what had before just been observations of health professionals helps to lay the groundwork for community organizations to plan their programming and to request funding.

Table 1: Suggestions Regarding How to Resolve Unmet Social Determinant of Health Needs

Lack of Jobs in General, Especially Well Paid Jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🚶 encourage people to be more creative in finding and creating jobs</li> <li>🚶 bring call centers to the area to provide jobs</li> <li>🚶 more financial support to help people increase their skills and retrain</li> <li>🚶 get people interested in working with seniors</li> <li>🚶 employers encourage literacy upgrading</li> <li>🚶 more valuing of trade jobs</li> <li>🚶 introducing high speed internet so people could work from home</li> </ul>
Lack of Access to Health Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🚶 more funding to enable health professionals to go to people</li> <li>🚶 listen more to what clients are telling us about their needs</li> <li>🚶 more creative ways for community organizations to work together and see patients</li> <li>🚶 more family doctors and nurse practitioners</li> </ul>
Lack of Information about Health and Community Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🚶 a 1-800 line about community services</li> <li>🚶 provide a one stop shop for health care organizations to help people navigate the system</li> </ul>
Lack of Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🚶 open up transportation services of the “Dyno” bus and the Community Care bus</li> <li>🚶 reintroduce the rural transportation network with Community Care</li> </ul>
Low Income Levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🚶 increase the amount of money people receive from Ontario Works and ODSP</li> </ul>
Low Education and Literacy Levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🚶 more flexible school system that enables kids to work at their own pace</li> </ul>
Lack of Ability to Afford Healthy Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🚶 every community should have a food bank and community kitchen</li> <li>🚶 relax food bank rules</li> <li>🚶 government control over the cost of food staples</li> </ul>
Generally Low SDOH Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🚶 more understanding about what low income means</li> <li>🚶 more funding in general</li> <li>🚶 increase resiliency in the area</li> </ul>

\*comments included in this chart are verbatim responses from the survey.

Generally this survey provided a useful starting place for the report card and some interesting information about the community. Hopefully further research into whether these results can be generalized with a larger survey group, or with the clients of the community services, can be done.

## The Next Steps

This report definitely illustrates some areas where there is a lack of available data for the Haliburton region. It is possible that this information exists, but it could not be located during this project. These areas provide a wonderful opportunity for future research in Haliburton County. Areas for further investigation include:

- 🏡 Perceptions of the safety of neighborhoods
- 🏡 Perceived quality of life
- 🏡 The nature or number of seasonal jobs and how this affects the unemployment rate
- 🏡 Geographic isolation as a factor for health
- 🏡 Information on the physical environment, such as water quality and recycling rates

Two other areas of note were identified. These should also be considered as the focus for future research.

## Women and Poverty



Generally women and children are more likely to experience poverty. Lone parent families headed by women have a lower income than two parent families and lone parent families headed by men, both in Haliburton County and in Ontario in general. The average after tax income of lone parent families headed by women in Haliburton County was \$29,156, compared to the average income of two parent families in the region, \$45,469. This means that lone parent families headed by women are more likely to fall below the low income bracket and are more likely to experience the other indicators

of poverty, from food insecurity to housing and dental problems. In Haliburton County 12.9% of families are lone parent families headed by women, so this issue has an impact on the community. Unfortunately this is not an issue that is limited to Haliburton County as the trend is seen throughout the province. Future research in Haliburton County would help to better understand this issue in a rural/remote context.

## Transportation

Transportation and its connection to the SDOH was a recurring theme that emerged in many of the interview and the documents reviewed. The lack of a public transportation system, combined with the geography of Haliburton County, arguably plays a role in the SDOH in the County. Future research aimed at documenting transportation habits and needs and then quantifying the relationship between transportation and the SDOH would be a valuable study for Haliburton County.

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