York Region

Regional Clerk's Office
Corporate Services Department

May 20, 2011

Regional Councillor John Taylor, Co-chair
Susan LaRosa, Co-chair
Human Services Planning Board
c/o Janet Rurak, Program Manager, Human Services Collaboration
Strategic Service Integration and Policy Branch
Community and Health Services
The Regional Municipality of York
17250 Yonge Street
Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1

Dear Co-chairs:

Re: Profile of York Region's Low Income Population: 2006 Census

Regional Council, at its meeting held on Thursday, May 19, 2011, adopted the following recommendations of the Community and Health Services Committee regarding the report entitled "Profile of York Region's Low Income Population: 2006 Census":

1. The Regional Clerk forward this report and attachment to the Community Reference Group, the Human Services Planning Board of York Region, the Community Partnership Council and local municipalities.

A copy of Clause No. 2, Report No. 5 of the Community and Health Services Committee is enclosed for your information.

For more information on this report, or if you have any questions with respect to this matter, please contact Cordelia Abankwa-Harris, Acting General Manager, Social Services at 905-830-4444, Ext. 2150.

Sincerely,

Denis Kelly

Denis Kelly
Regional Clerk

/C. Clark
Attachments

York Region

Clause No. 2 in Report No. 5 of the Community and Health Services Committee was adopted, without amendment, by the Council of The Regional Municipality of York at its meeting on May 19, 2011.

2
PROFILE OF YORK REGION'S LOW INCOME POPULATION: 2006 CENSUS

The Community and Health Services Committee recommends:

1. **Receipt of the presentation by Cordelia Abankwa-Harris, Acting General Manager, Social Services and Lisa Gonsalves, Acting Managing Director, Strategic Service Integration and Policy regarding 'Low Income Profile Update'; and**

2. **Adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report dated April 21, 2011, from the Commissioner of Community and Health Services.**

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. The Regional Clerk forward this report and attachment to the Community Reference Group, the Human Services Planning Board of York Region, the Community Partnership Council and local municipalities.

2. PURPOSE

The following report provides Council with an updated profile (see *Council Attachment 1*) of York Region's low income population prepared by the Community and Health Services Department (C&HS). This profile is one of the community data products developed through the York Region Community Social Data Strategy Consortium.

3. BACKGROUND

The low income profile builds on previous reports to raise awareness of issues and support human services planning

On June 2, 2004, Council approved the release of *A Profile of York Region's Low Income Population: Research Highlights* through the adoption of Clause 2 of Report No. 6 of the Community Services and Housing Committee. Based on 2001 Census data, the profile was the first comprehensive look at some of York Region's more vulnerable residents. The profile was used to raise awareness, and to support Regional and community service planning and program development.

The updated profile builds on this earlier publication using data purchased through York Region's Community Social Data Strategy, which includes the Region (consortium lead), the United Way of York Region, York Regional Police, York Catholic District School Board and York Region District School Board.

The Profile supports C&HS Multi-Year Plan and the Human Services Planning Board of York Region *Making Ends Meet in York Region* initiative

The action of providing research and data to support broader community planning and awareness of human services issues is included in the C&HS Multi-Year Plan, *Investing in Our Communities, 2010-2015.*

The low income profile also supports the Human Services Planning Board of York Region *Making Ends Meet in York Region* initiative, being presented to Committee and Council concurrently with this report. The initiative uses low income and other data to launch community engagement and action aimed at improving the well-being of these residents in York Region.

The profile uses Statistics Canada's Low Income Before Tax Cut-Offs and Census data, which is the most recent detailed data on low income residents, to understand low income

The 2006 Census is the most recent detailed data on the social and economic characteristics of low income residents and provides consistent information to track trends.

Low Income Before Tax Cut-Offs (LICO-BT) reflect the income levels where families are paying over 55% of their gross income on food, shelter and clothing. LICO-BT are adjusted to inflation and take into consideration the size of the family and the size of the community in which the family resides. Note that family income is different than household income. Family income is the total income of a group of two or more persons who live in the same dwelling and are related to each other by blood, marriage, common-law or adoption. Household income refers to the income of all persons residing in the same dwelling – which can include families or unrelated people living together.

Table 1 provides the LICO-BT table for 2005. Note that Census income data is collected for the full year before the Census year. All tables and charts used in the profile from the 2006 Census are for the calendar year 2005.

Table 1
Low Income Before Tax Cut-Offs for Families (2005)

	Community Size				
Size of the family unit	**Rural Area**	**Urban Area**			
		Less than 30,000	**30,000 to 99,999**	**100,000 to 499,999**	**500,000 and over**
1 person	$14,303	$16,273	$17,784	$17,895	$20,778
2 persons	17,807	20,257	22,139	22,276	25,867
3 persons	21,891	24,904	27,217	27,386	31,801
4 persons	26,579	30,238	33,046	33,251	38,610
5 persons	30,145	34,295	37,480	37,711	43,791
6 persons	33,999	38,679	42,271	42,533	49,389
7 or more persons	37,853	43,063	47,063	47,354	54,987

Source: Statistics Canada. Income Research Paper Series, *Low Income Cut-offs for 2006 and Low Income Measures for 2005.* Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 75F0002MIE, no. 004

Statistics Canada applies LICO-BT at the Census Subdivision level. In York Region, Community Social Data Strategy corresponds with local municipal boundaries. As Table 1 shows, in 2005 dollars, this would translate into a low income cut-off of $33,251 for a family of four living in Markham or $17,784 for a single person living in Aurora.

There are important considerations when using Census data

First, Census is not longitudinal data. This means people who were low income in 2000 are not necessarily the same people as in 2005. Many residents transition in and out of low income over time.

Second, there is a significant lag time between the 2006 Census data and the present. It can be expected that the recent economic recession will have some influence on low income rates; however, this can only be confirmed with the release of the 2011 Census and the new National Household Survey. C&HS will also investigate other data sources (e.g. income tax filer data) for future reporting.

Low income data is an indicator of families and individuals in York Region who face or are at risk of facing economic hardship and longer-term poverty

While LICO measures are commonly used to indicate low income, there is no official definition of poverty in Canada and low income is not necessarily synonymous with poverty. Low income can be episodic or short-term, while poverty reflects living persistently in low income over time and facing major barriers to changing one's circumstances. In either instance, the lack of income results in struggles to meet basic needs, manage periods of crisis or instability, and invest in the future. Low income can also be a barrier to accessing services that help all residents fully participate in their communities, such as recreation and public transportation.

4. ANALYSIS

KEY FINDINGS

York Region's low income residents reflect a range of social and economic backgrounds

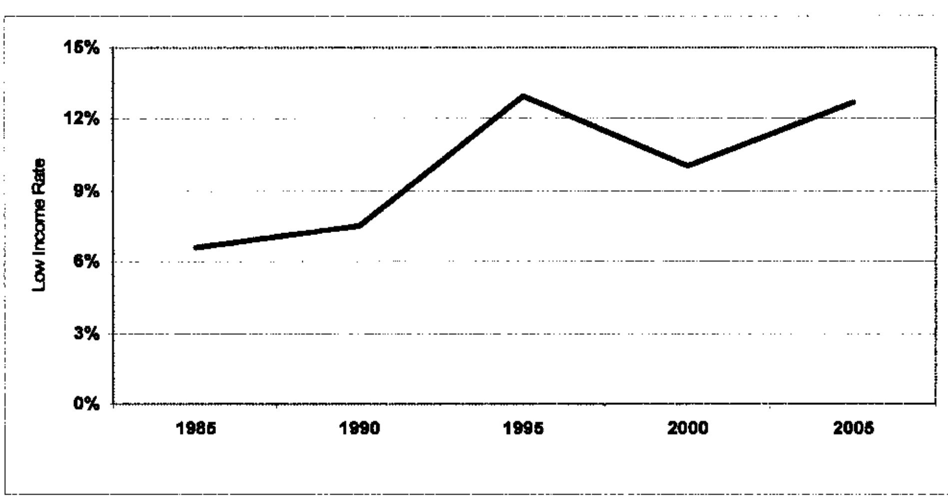
Similar to national low income studies, York Region low income residents included groups that are highly vulnerable to living on low income - lone parents, people living alone, recent immigrants, longer-term unemployed, and people with lower levels of education.

However, the majority of York Region low income residents had post-secondary education, worked, and owned homes. They lived in two parent families or as couples. They included both Canadian born and immigrants, and reflected York Region's growing ethno-racial diversity.

York Region is facing a growing low income population

As Figure 1 shows, the per cent of York Region's population living in low income, or the low income rate, has grown over the long term, albeit unevenly.

Figure 1
Low Income Rate for York Region, 1985 to 2005



Source: Statistics Canada, 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001 and 2006 Censuses, Custom Tabulations

Changing labour markets, economics, demographics, and government policy are all factors influencing low income rates over time. The recent economic downturn in 2009, which led to increases in unemployment rates, will likely increase pressures on low income residents based on historical trends. However, this can only be confirmed once 2011 Census information is available. C&HS will continue to monitor the impact of these factors on low income residents.

The overall trend is a growing low income population in York Region. As Table 2 shows, the change in the number of low income residents outpaced that of the total population in York Region except between 1995 and 2000.

Table 2
Percentage Change in Total Population and Low Income Population, By Census Period, York Region, 1985-2005

	Total Population Change, York Region	Low Income Population Change, York Region
1985-1990	45%	64%
1990-1995	18%	102%
1995-2000	23%	-5%
2000-2005	22%	55%

Source: Statistics Canada, 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001 and 2006 Censuses, Custom Tabulations

About 112,165, 12.7%, of York Region residents lived on low income in 2005.

The low income profile also highlights other key trends

The low income profile looks at other key trends related to the social and economic characteristics of low income residents, including:

- Persistent housing affordability issues among low income residents
- A growing "working poor" population
- Increasing low income rates among all family types and age groups – except seniors
- Changing patterns of where low income residents live

These trends provide important information on the changing needs of low income residents, and where human services planning can focus efforts.

IMPLICATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

York Region's growing low income population requires strategic approaches to promote opportunity while managing short-term pressures on Regional human services

The economic downturn of 2009 led to increased demand on Regional programs and services targeted to low income residents. As often reported, waiting lists for child care and subsidized housing are high and Ontario Works caseloads remain elevated despite signs of economic recovery.

C&HS continues to manage costs and staffing impacts related to increased needs. However to be most effective, the Region will need to more actively collaborate with the community, other levels of government, and business sectors to support low income residents and build more inclusive communities as the economic recovery continues.

The low income profile highlights the need for strategies that build on York Region's strengths to help low income residents maximize their labour market potential, improve their health, and participate fully in their communities.

C&HS Multi-Year Plan provides opportunity to move forward, but low income issues will also require action from other levels of government

C&HS provides a range of provincially-mandated and Council approved programs that support low income residents.

The C&HS Multi-Year Plan builds on these by identifying where the department can move forward through its own programs and in collaboration with others (e.g. Community Partnership Council) to think and act strategically regarding the needs of low income residents. The Human Services Planning Board will play a particularly critical role in addressing economic vulnerability in York Region along the economic continuum of need for low and moderate income residents.

However, income adequacy issues are part of a bigger policy context that requires all levels of government to re-assess how basic supports are provided and how labour market attachment can be sustained.

The Province's recent decision to establish a Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario (the Commission) provides a forum over the next 18 months to better understand low income issues as they relate to social assistance, including Ontario Works, and recommend options for policy change.

C&HS staff continue to monitor the Commission for opportunities to provide Regional government input.
From a community perspective, Council endorsed, in principle, the themes and recommendations of the York Region social audit report, *Behind the Masks – Testimonials from Those Marginalized by Income* on January 27, 2011, through the adoption of Clause 3 of Report No. 1 of the Community and Health Services Committee. As part of this endorsement, Council also forwarded the social audit report to the Ontario Minister of Community and Social Services to inform the Commission's social assistance review.

Low income profile will be circulated to support broader community service planning and advocacy

The low income profile will be made available to community partners to support service planning, program development and advocacy of York Region needs. Upon approval by Council, the profile will also be posted on the York Region Community Social Data website to raise broader public awareness of this issue.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications from this report. However, low income is an important indicator of potential demand for Regional human services.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Low income residents live in all York Region's nine local municipalities. Information on their social and economic characteristics is important background information for local analysis and community-level service planning. This report will be sent to York Region's nine local municipalities to assist in their planning.

7. CONCLUSION

York Region is experiencing rapid growth and a changing social fabric – including a growing number of low income residents. Responsive services support these residents to live and work in York Region, which has a positive impact on the quality of life for all residents and the local economy.

Regional human services play an important role in the provision of these supports but senior levels of government also have a responsibility to provide fair and adequate funding for human services.

The profile of the social and economic characteristics of low income residents raises awareness, and supports more effective service planning and advocacy about their needs.

For more information on this report, please contact Cordelia Abankwa-Harris, Acting General Manager, Social Services at Ext. 2150.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause is enclosed separately with this report.)

A Profile of York Region's Low Income Population:

Update

York Region

Mayor
Frank Scarpitti
Town of Markham

Regional Councillor
Jack Heath
Town of Markham

Regional Councillor
Jim Jones
Town of Markham

Regional Councillor
Gordon Landon
Town of Markham

Regional Councillor
Joe Li
Town of Markham

Mayor
David Barrow
Town of Richmond Hill

Mayor
Maurizio Bevilacqua
City of Vaughan

Chairman and CEO
Bill Fisch

Regional Councillor
Vito Spatafora
Town of Richmond Hill

A Message from York Regional Council

The Regional Municipality of York is a growing, diverse and economically vibrant community. But it is also home to a number of low income residents. York Region residents living on low income include families and individuals who work, are well educated and reflect our growing diversity. They are contributing members of our communities. With access to the right supports they can maximize their potential.

A Profile of York Region's Low Income Population: Update provides a better understanding of the Region's growing diversity and population with a focus on low income residents. This profile was developed in partnership with the Community Reference Group and Consortium. We thank them for their ongoing support in this work.

A key factor in the increase of the Region's low income population is changing economic conditions. York Region is responding to these changes to support better outcomes for all residents. By identifying challenges and opportunities, all organizations involved in human services are better equipped to plan for and provide much-needed supports to the individuals in our community who need them most.

York Region is committed to taking a proactive and strategic approach to human services planning by identifying areas where we can collaborate with community partners, organizations and other levels of government to help build stronger, more inclusive communities and a more productive economy.

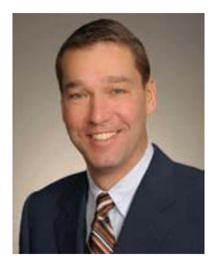
Regional Councillor
Gino Rosati
City of Vaughan

Regional Councillor
Michael Di Biase
City of Vaughan

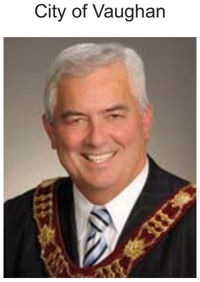
Regional Councillor
Deb Schulte
City of Vaughan

Regional Councillor
Brenda Hogg
Town of Richmond Hill

Mayor
Tony Van Bynen
Town of Newmarket



Regional Councillor
John Taylor
Town of Newmarket



Mayor
Robert Grossi
Town of Georgina

Regional Councillor
Danny Wheeler
Town of Georgina

Mayor
Geoffrey Dawe
Town of Aurora

Mayor
Virginia Hackson
Town of East Gwillimbury

Mayor
Steve Pellegrini
Township of King

Mayor
Wayne Emmerson
Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville

A Profile of York Region's
Low Income Population:
Update

Introduction

York Region is made up of some of the wealthiest residents in the province. It also has a growing number of low income residents. These residents include people who provide care to our elderly parents and to our children, work in the retail and service sector, and meet the labour needs of local businesses.

In 2004, a suite of York Region reports was published, including *A Profile of York Region's Low Income Population*. This was the first time a report provided a comprehensive look at York Region's more vulnerable residents. It gave insight into these residents and helped to identify the supports they needed to help them contribute more fully to our economy and community.

This report provides an updated profile of York Region's low income residents based on the 2006 Census of Population for Canada. The focus is on the social and economic characteristics and risk factors that are often related to a person's low income status. They include:

- Age, gender and family type
- Employment and education
- Immigration, language and visible minority status
- Housing affordability
- Income levels

Where possible, the profile also identifies key trends from the 2001 and earlier Censuses.
The 2006 Census is the most recent detailed data on the social and economic characteristics of low income residents and provides consistent information to track trends. However, the recent economic downturn in Ontario has led to major implications for many low income residents. The absence of more timely income data at the regional level makes it difficult to assess the impact of the recession on low income, but other more recent information provided later on in this profile highlights the challenges residents continue to face (e.g. higher need for income supports).

Key Findings:

This profile confirms many of the findings of the 2004 profile and additional trends namely:

- Most low income families are couples with children under 18 years of age
- Most low income families work for a living and are homeowners
- The majority of low income residents are well educated
- Low income residents reflect York Region's ethno-racial diversity
- Many low income families and individuals are at risk of homelessness
- Low income rates increased for all age groups except for people 65+

The need for action is clear as are the great opportunities the Region has to support these residents in continuing to contribute to our communities.

The goal of this profile is to support human services planning and raise public awareness

Low income residents are a significant population in York Region. They need a range of supports at different points in their lives. Better information on their social and economic circumstances will support more responsive service planning and delivery.

This profile has two primary goals. The first is to highlight key findings and identify major implications for planning and providing human services. It is also a useful starting point for more focused community-level planning. It is at the local level where people experience the realities of living on low income, and where Census data can help shape local understanding and solutions, particularly to identify community assets, challenges and opportunities.

The second goal of this profile is to raise broader public awareness of low income issues in York Region. While York Region is predominantly wealthy and economically vibrant, it is also facing rapid growth and a changing social fabric. And like elsewhere in Ontario, York Region low income residents have had to cope with the economic downturn of 2009. While income data beyond the 2006 Census data is limited to assess these more recent events, the struggles of living on low income are still often "hidden" from the mainstream and are not widely known. This profile provides a snapshot of this "hidden" population at a critical point before Canada faced the economic downturn. It will be updated once the 2011 Census data is available to better and more fully understand the impact of the economic downturn on York Region's low income residents.

Approach

What is low income?

This profile uses Statistics Canada's low income before tax cut-offs (LICO-BT) as the measure of low income. It is a consistent and well-defined methodology that identifies those who are substantially worse off than the average household.[1] According to Statistics Canada, a family that spends over 55% (20% more than an average family in Canada) of their gross income on food, shelter and clothing is considered to be below the low income cut-off. LICO-BT take the size of the family and the size of the community in which the family lives into consideration and are adjusted for inflation annually.

Table 1 provides the LICO-BT table for 2005. Census income data is collected for the full year before the Census year – this is called the reference year. The reference year for the 2006 Census is 2005. All tables and figures included in this profile reflect the reference year.

[1] Statistics Canada produces other low income measures or thresholds – including the after tax LICO and the low income measure (LIM). Each measure is calculated differently and provides varied estimates of the number of people living on low income in a given jurisdiction. For more on low income measures, see Statistics Canada. 2010. *Low Income Lines, 2008-2009*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 72F0002M-005. Ottawa.

Table 1: Low Income Before Tax Cut-Offs, 2005

	Community Size				
Size of the Family Unit	Rural Areas	Urban Areas			
		Less than 30,000	30,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 499,999	500,000 and over
1 person	$14,303	$16,273	$17,784	$17,895	$20,778
2 persons	$17,807	$20,257	$22,139	$22,276	$25,867
3 persons	$21,891	$24,904	$27,217	$27,386	$31,801
4 persons	$26,579	$30,238	$33,046	$33,251	$38,610
5 persons	$30,145	$34,295	$37,480	$37,711	$43,791
6 persons	$33,999	$38,679	$42,271	$42,533	$49,389
7 or more persons	$37,853	$43,063	$47,063	$47,354	$54,987

Source: Statistics Canada. 2007. *Low Income Cut-offs for 2006 and Low Income Measures for 2005*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 75F0002MIE, no. 004.

Statistics Canada applies LICO-BT at the Census subdivision (CSD) level. In York Region, CSDs correspond with local municipal boundaries.

What is the relationship between low income and poverty?

There is no official definition of poverty in Canada and low income is not necessarily synonymous with poverty. Low income can be episodic or short-term, while poverty reflects living persistently in low income. In either instance, the lack of income results in struggles to make ends meet.

The data in this profile falls under three population categories used by the Census to collect and report on low income:

- **Economic families** – a group of two or more persons who live in the same dwelling and are related to each other by blood, marriage, common-law or adoption. A couple may be of the opposite or same sex. For 2006, foster children are included.
- **Persons not in economic families or unattached individuals** –persons living alone or with non-relatives.
- **Persons living in private households** – includes all people living within economic families and persons not in economic families. It excludes people in collective households.[2]

The population category used depends on the type of data being considered. For example, employment and education data are reported for the working-age (25 to 64) population living in private households. Information on family types is reported for economic families.

Census data provides a snapshot of York Region's low income population in 2005 – however, changes in the economy since 2008 will influence low income rates

One of the strengths of Census data is providing detailed "point in time" social and economic information on the low income population which would otherwise not be available to track trends.

However, there are important considerations in using Census data. First, research shows that low income is dynamic. People transition in and out of low income and the length of time they spend in low income can vary. It can be for a short period of time or occasional, part of a certain stage in life, or longer-term or more chronic.[3] It is important to note that Census data is not longitudinal, meaning it does not track individuals or families over time. Those living in low income in 2000 may be different from those in 2005.[4]

Second, there is a significant lag time between the 2006 Census data and the present. While the recent economic recession has added to the challenges low income residents face in York Region (see Key Implications at the end of this profile), the long term impact on low income rates will only be confirmed with the release of the 2011 Census and the new National Household Survey. The Region will also investigate the availability of other income data for future reporting on low income trends.

[2] "Collective households" refers to a person or a group of persons who occupy a collective dwelling and do not have a usual place of residence elsewhere in Canada. Collective dwellings are of a commercial, institutional or communal nature. Included are lodging or rooming houses, hotels, motels, tourist homes, nursing homes, hospitals, staff residences, communal quarters (military bases), work camps, jails, missions, group homes, and so on. Collective dwellings may be occupied by usual residents or solely by foreign and/or temporary residents. Statistics Canada. 2010. *2006 Census Dictionary*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-566-X. Ottawa.

[3] According to a recent study by Statistics Canada on Canadian income, only 11% of people who lived in low income between 2002 and 2007 did so for all six of these years. Most, 40% and 21% respectively, did so for only one or two years. Young adults are the most likely to experience short-term low income than other age groups. Statistics Canada. 2009. *Income in Canada, 2007*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 75-202-X. pg 16-18.

[4] The Census also does not provide information on assets, debt or value of in-kind benefits.

Did you know?

The Ontario government approved a five year plan in December 2008, *Breaking the Cycle: Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy*, to reduce child poverty by 25% - or by around 100,000 children by 2013. The strategy aims for a province where every person has the opportunity to achieve his or her full potential, and contribute to and participate in a prosperous and healthy Ontario. The plan includes eight measures that will track provincial progress every year:

1. School readiness
2. Educational progress
3. High school graduation rates
4. Birth weights
5. Low income (based on the Low Income Measure)
6. Depth of poverty (based on the Low Income Measure)
7. Housing (based on the Ontario Housing Measure)
8. Standard of living (based on a deprivation index)

As part of the Strategy, the Province has also appointed a Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario. The review will take place between January 2011 and June 2012 to create an action plan to reform Ontario's social assistance system. According to the Province, a reformed system will have the following objectives:

- Help get people back to work
- Be part of a larger income security system that includes municipal, provincial and federal programs
- Share responsibility for improving the outcomes of low-income Ontarians with municipal and federal governments as well as the people who rely on social assistance
- Be simple to understand and access, and provide people in need with basic income support in a fair and equitable way
- Work well with other municipal, provincial and federal programs outside of social assistance – including education, training, housing, child care and health benefits – to support employment
- Respect the autonomy, responsibility and dignity of individuals and recognize that clients are best placed to decide how to spend their money to meet their needs
- Be efficient, financially sustainable and accountable to taxpayers, and
- Meet its intended purpose as a system of last resort.

Source: *Breaking the Cycle: The Second Progress Report. Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy 2010 Annual Report* and *Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario – Terms of Reference*.

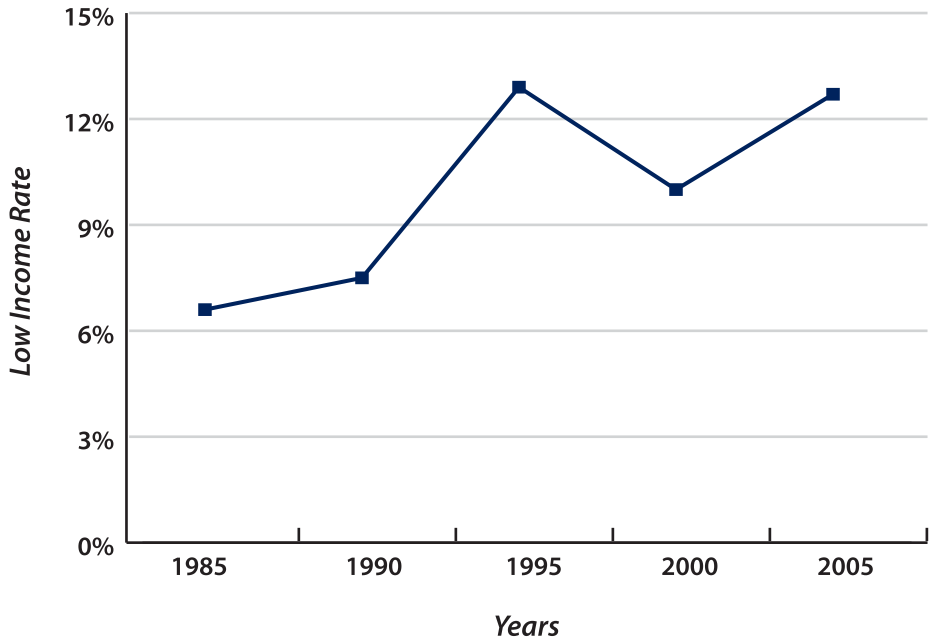
Long-Term Trends

York Region has experienced higher rates of low income over time – which may reflect changes in the economy, demographics or government policy

Since 1985, the proportion of York Region residents living in low income households, or **the low income rate**,[5] has increased – from 6.6% in 1985 to 12.7% in 2005 as shown in Figure 1. The upward trend has been uneven, peaking in 1995 at 12.9%, decreasing slightly in 2000 to 10% and rising again in 2005 to close to the same level as in 1995. York Region's rapid population growth has resulted in a growing number of residents of all income levels, including low income residents.

[5] The low income rate reflects the percent of a population living below the LICO-BT. Low income rates provide an indicator of the risk or likelihood of living in low income for a population.

Figure 1: Low Income Rate for York Region, 1985 to 2005



Source: Statistics Canada, 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001 and 2006 Censuses, Custom Tabulations

As Table 2 highlights, the change in the number of low income residents outpaced that of the total population in York Region except between 1995 and 2000.

Table 2: Percentage Change in Total Population and Low Income Population, By Census Period, York Region, 1985-2005

	Total Population Change, York Region	Low Income Population Change, York Region
1985-1990	45%	64%
1990-1995	18%	102%
1995-2000	23%	-5%
2000-2005	22%	55%

Source: Statistics Canada, 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001 and 2006 Censuses, Custom Tabulations

Why are there more low income residents in York Region?

There are four main reasons the low income population increased in York Region. A key factor is changing economic conditions. The recession of the early 1990s caused job loss or reduced working hours, while the economic upswing during the latter part of that decade helped pull people out of low income as labour markets improved. Given these past trends, the recent economic recession will likely drive low income rates higher.

However, the increase in low income rates between 2000 and 2005 occurred during a period of employment growth in York Region. This shows that demographic factors are also important. For example, certain groups are more at risk of living in low income than others. These include recent immigrants, lone parent families and persons living alone.

Government policy is also a factor. Between 1995 and 2005, the federal and provincial governments made significant changes to income and employment programs. These changes reduced support in some areas (e.g. social assistance, Employment Insurance) and improved others (e.g. old age and child benefits). The extent to which these programs impacted York Region residents could also help explain variations in low income rates.

Lastly, service-related jobs grew rapidly between 1998 and 2005 in York Region. Part-time employment also grew as a share of all employment. These trends are related to jobs that are typically lower paying compared to full-time employment or jobs in the goods-producing sector.[6] The impact of the recent economic uncertainty on labour markets could result in greater pressures on low income residents.

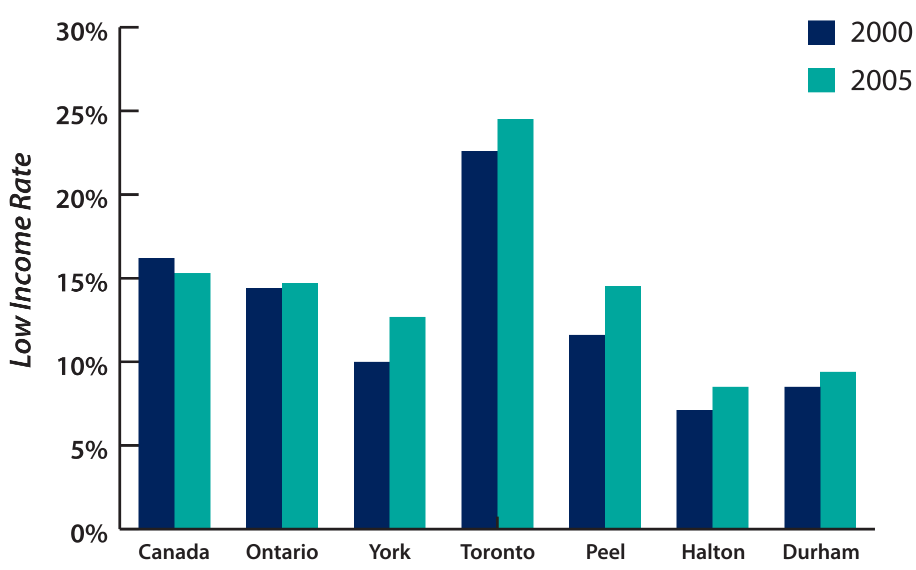
Greater Toronto Area, including York Region, seeing a growing "suburbanization" of low income

York Region is not alone in facing low income pressures. While the City of Toronto continued to have higher low income rates than surrounding areas, there has been a growing "suburbanization" of low income across the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). As Figure 2 shows, Peel Region and York Region had the largest increase in low income rates between 2000 and 2005 within the GTA, followed by the City of Toronto, Halton Region and Durham Region. All areas within the GTA experienced greater increases than Ontario as a whole during the same time period. York Region also experienced the highest growth rate in the overall number of low income residents between 2000 and 2005 – at 55%, followed by Peel Region (45%), Halton Region (38%), Durham Region (23%) and the City of Toronto (9%).

York Region's nine local municipalities have experienced different patterns of low income

As Figure 3 shows, low income rates varied among York Region's nine local municipalities. Some of the largest changes between 1985 and 2005 were in York Region's southern municipalities.

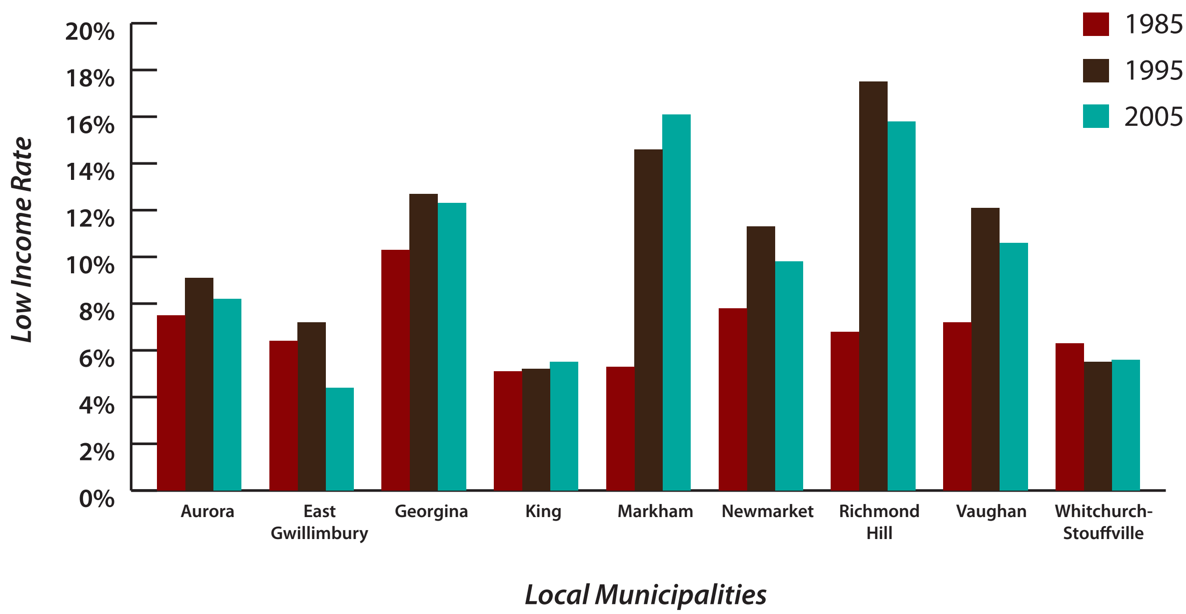
Figure 2: Low Income Rates, Canada, Ontario and GTA, 2000 to 2005



Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 and 2006 Censuses, Custom Tabulations

[6] The Regional Municipality of York. 2006. *Employment and Industry Review, 2005*. Newmarket. pg 14-16. For example, part-time work grew from 14.7% of all employment in York Region in 1998 to 17.8% in 2005. See also Verma, Anil. 2009. *Low Wage Service Workers: A Profile.* Toronto: Martin Prosperity Institute. Working Paper Series: Ontario in the Creative Age. Note that low income workers living in York Region could be employed within York Region or in other GTA municipalities. Their low income status is therefore at least partly influenced by broad GTA labour market trends.

Figure 3: Low Income Rates, York Region Local Municipalities, 1985 to 2005



Source: Statistics Canada, 1986, 1996 and 2006 Censuses, Custom Tabulations

Where do low income residents in York Region live?

As shown in the maps on pages 8 and 9, low income residents were dispersed throughout York Region in both 2000 and 2005. This is a positive sign that York Region has, to date, avoided the level of highly concentrated low income pockets more typical of the City of Toronto.

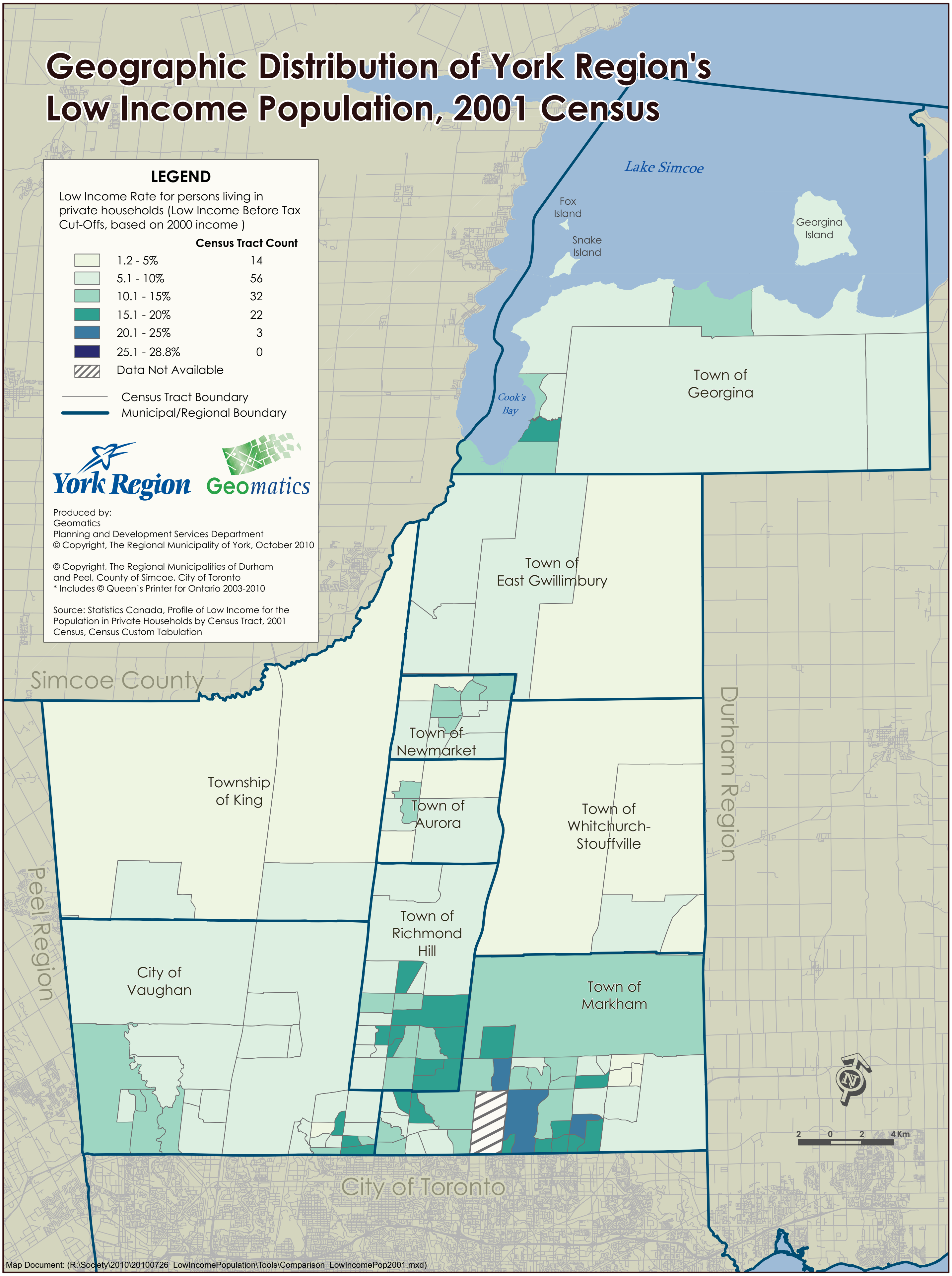
However, there is evidence of growing areas of low income in York Region. This is reflected in two ways. First, more low income residents were living in areas that had "moderately high" low income rates in 2005 as compared to 2000. These are shown on the maps as census tracts[7] where low income residents made up 20.1% to 30% of the total number of residents.[8] In 2000, the proportion of low income residents living in these areas was 5.6%. In 2005, this increased to almost 25%.

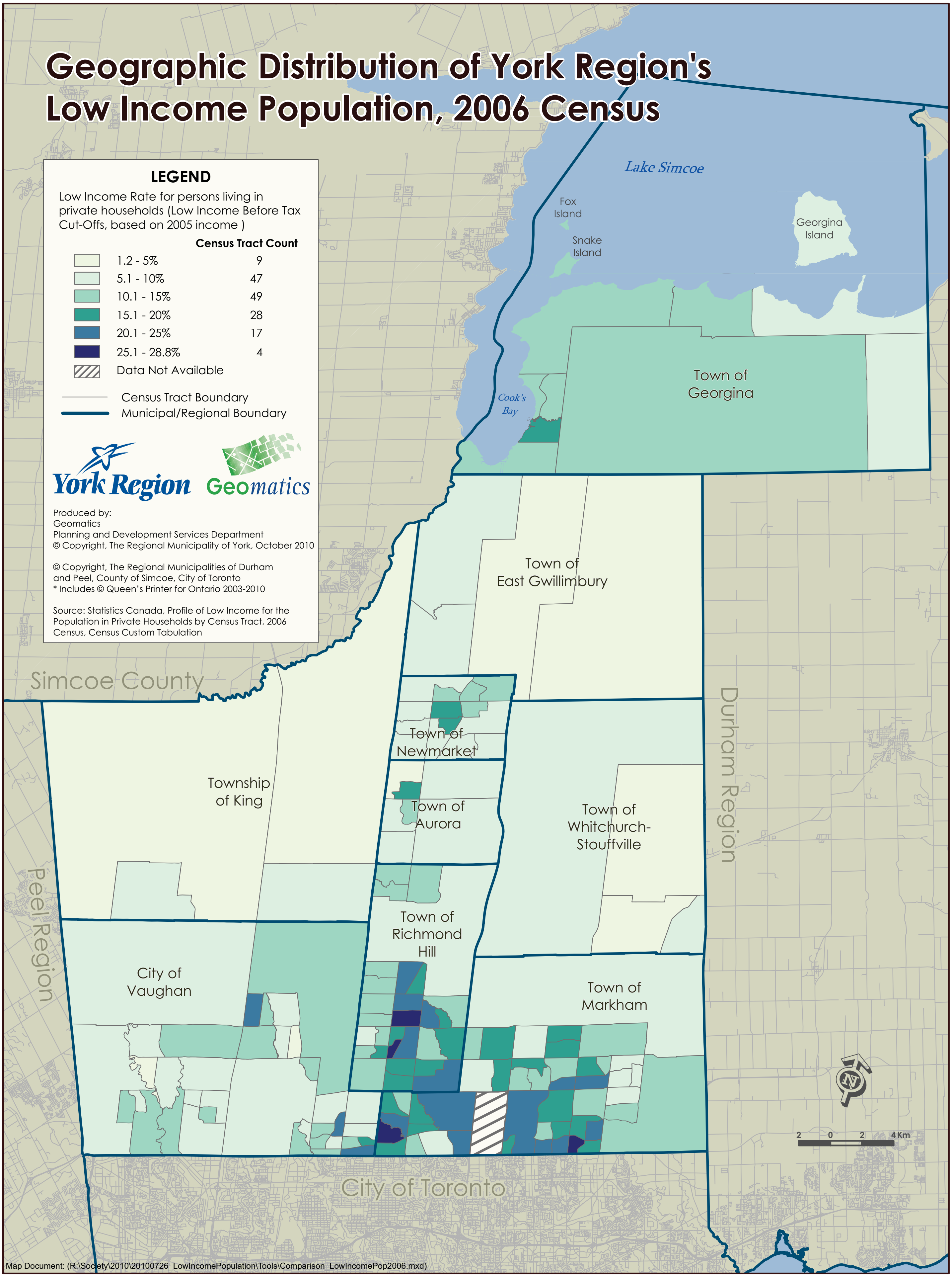
Second, the proportion of census tracts in York Region with "moderately high" low income rates increased from 2.4% in 2000 to almost 14% in 2005. This growing concentration of low income residents was most evident in York Region's southern municipalities of Markham, Richmond Hill, and Vaughan, where 83% (or 92,725) of low income residents in York Region lived in 2005.

[7] Census tracts (CTs) are small, relatively stable geographic areas that usually have a population of 2,500 to 8,000. They are located in census metropolitan areas and in census agglomerations with an urban core population of 50,000 or more in the previous census. They are defined to closely resemble what would be commonly understood as neighborhoods within a large urban area. Statistics Canada. 2010. *2006 Census Dictionary*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-566-X. Ottawa. pg 219; and Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD). 2007. *Poverty by Geography: Urban Poverty in Canada, 2000*. Ottawa. pg 4.

[8] "Moderately high" reflects classifications developed by CCSD to identify neighborhood poverty at the census tract level. These classifications include: Low = low income rates of zero to 9.9%; Moderate = low income rates of 10% to 19.9%; Moderately high = low income rates of 20% to 29.9%; High = low income rates of 30% to 39.9%; and Very high = low income rates of 40% or more. These classifications are slightly modified in this profile.

Geographic Distribution of York Region's Low Income Population, 2001 Census




Geographic Distribution of York Region's
Low Income Population, 2006 Census
LEGEND
Low Income Rate for persons living in private households (Low Income Before Tax Cut-Offs, based on 2005 income)
Census Tract Count
1.2 - 5% 9
5.1 - 10% 47
10.1 - 15% 49
15.1 - 20% 28
20.1 - 25% 17
25.1 - 28.8% 4
Data Not Available
Census Tract Boundary
Municipal/Regional Boundary
York Region
Geomatics
Produced by:
Geomatics
Planning and Development Services Department
© Copyright, The Regional Municipality of York, October 2010
© Copyright, The Regional Municipalities of Durham and Peel, County of Simcoe, City of Toronto
* Includes © Queen's Printer for Ontario 2003-2010
Source: Statistics Canada, Profile of Low Income for the Population in Private Households by Census Tract, 2006 Census, Census Custom Tabulation
Lake Simcoe
Fox Island
Snake Island
Georgina Island
Cook's Bay
Town of Georgina
Town of East Gwillimbury
Simcoe County
Town of Newmarket
Township of King
Town of Aurora
Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville
Durham Region
Town of Richmond Hill
City of Vaughan
Town of Markham
Peel Region
City of Toronto
2 0 2 4 Km
Map Document: (R:\Society\2010\20100726_LowIncomePopulation\Tools\Comparison_LowIncomePop2006.mxd)

Place matters and supports available matters even more

There are both benefits and challenges for low income residents based on where they live. Areas with higher concentrations of low income residents can develop more negative neighbourhood effects over time, particularly if there are few supports or employment opportunities available. However, these very same areas can offer advantages to people with shared experiences in living on low income. These include opportunities for mutual support and community development, particularly by working with service agencies to locate human services "hubs" tailored to the needs of low income residents.

Low income residents living in more affluent areas are more likely to benefit from a broad range of opportunities, including employment and access to recreational and community facilities. However, they may also face challenges in finding affordable housing, as well as finding and affording appropriate services and supports to participate fully in their community. For low income residents living in rural areas in York Region, the location of services and affordable transportation are often barriers to accessing supports and employment.

Key Findings – Long-Term Trends and Geography:

- York Region's low income rates increased over the last twenty years – from 6.6% of York Region's residents in 1985 to 12.7% in 2005. In 1985, over 22,800 residents were low income. In 2005, over 112,000 were low income, or the approximate population of Kingston, Ontario.
- While York Region's low income residents live in all nine local municipalities, there are growing pockets of low income concentrated in the southern communities.
- In 2005, 83% of York Region's low income residents lived in Markham, Richmond Hill and Vaughan.

Age, Gender and Family

Low income is often related to different stages in life, gender and family type

At different stages of life, people are more likely to face periods of low income than at other points. People can also face longer-term low income as a result of life events that impact on their future income potential. Examples of both include:

- Youth who are either in school or transitioning to employment. Their earnings may be low as they enter employment, but are likely to improve over time.
- Many women have fewer opportunities to earn during their lifetime as a result of care giving, a greater likelihood of working part-time or being a lone parent, and current/past gender discrimination in "moving-up" the employment ladder. This can result in having less retirement savings or pensions to support them in their later years, particularly after a death of a spouse.
- People who face chronic ill health, disability, or other barriers that reduce labour force participation.
- The type of families people live in. Resources between family members are often shared and expenditures are used to benefit all. People who lack these supports, such as people living alone or lone parents, will have greater income challenges.
- Family size is also a factor because the pressure on a family's income increases with the number of dependents.

The following highlights key demographic characteristics – age, gender and family type – of York Region's low income residents related to the life cycle.

Did you know?

According to the 2006 Census, almost 23,000 low income residents in York Region indicated that they had some sort of disability:

- 11% were children under 15
- 10% were youth 15 to 24
- 53% were working-age 25 to 64
- 26% were seniors 65 and over

Residents reporting disabilities were more likely to be living on low income – 17% compared to 12% who reported no disabilities.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2006, Custom Tabulations & Statistics Canada. 2010. *2006 Census Dictionary*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-566-X. Ottawa. pg 13.

Low income rates vary by age groups and gender

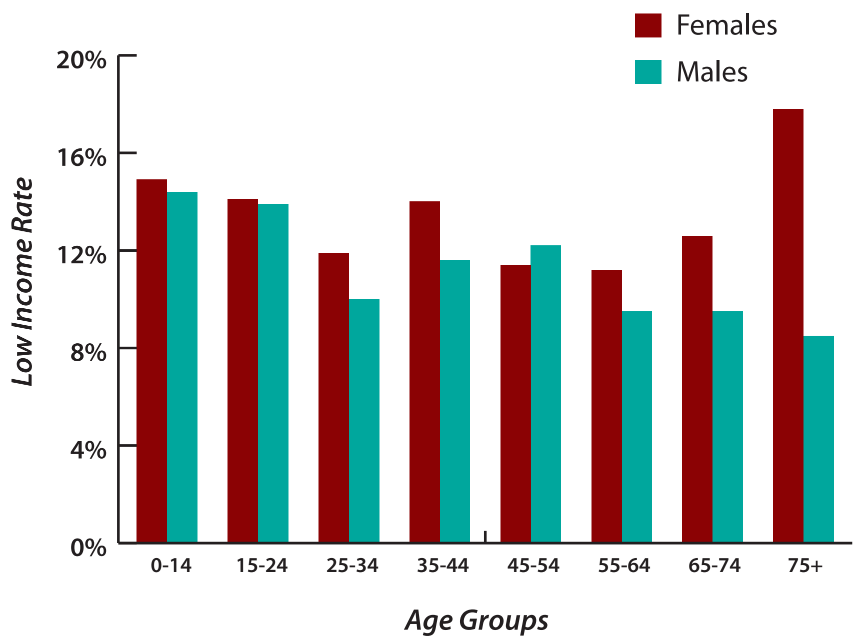
Of the total residents living in private households in York Region, 112,165 residents, or 12.7%, were living in low income in 2005. Of these[9]:

- 23%, or 25,975, were children under 15 years of age[10]
- Youth (ages 15 to 24) made up almost 16%, or 17,665
- Just over half (52%), or 57,830, were working-age (ages 25 to 64)
- Older residents (ages 65 and over) made up the smallest group – at about 10% of low income residents, or 10,705

As shown in Figure 4, low income rates vary by age groups. There are distinct differences between women and men as they age. Working-age women had higher low income rates than working-age men, except for those in the 45 to 54 age group (where men had a slightly higher low income rate than women). The "gender gap" was most pronounced for older residents – where women 75 years and over were more than twice as likely as their male counterparts to be living on low income.

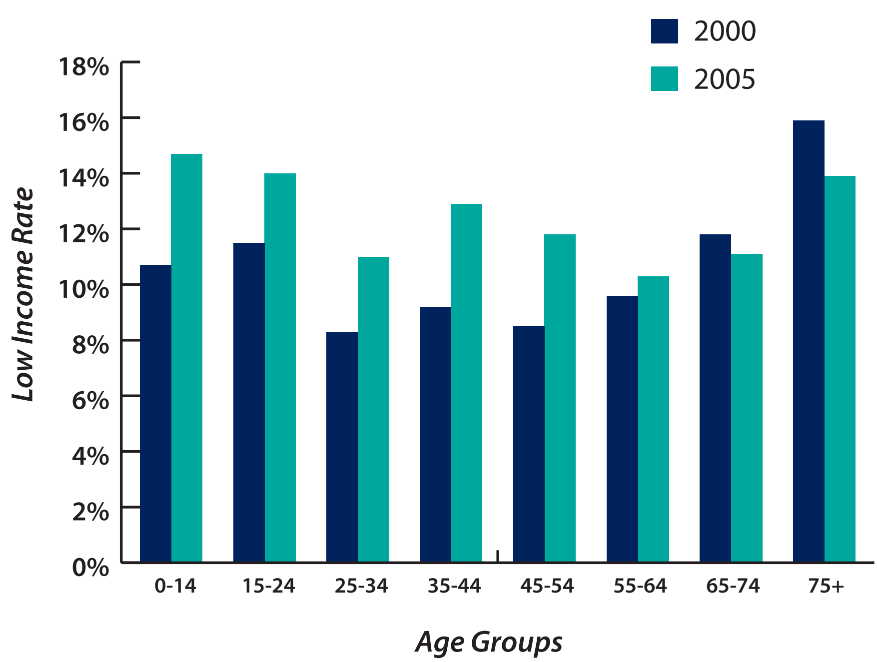
[9] Note percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.
[10] A child's low income status is determined by the low income status of the economic families they live in.

Figure 4: Low Income Rate by Age and Gender, York Region, 2005



Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census, Custom Tabulations

Figure 5: Low Income Rate by Age, York Region, 2000 and 2005



Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 and 2006 Censuses, Custom Tabulations

Low income rates increased for all age groups with the exception of people 65 and over

Low income rates increased between 2000 and 2005 for all age groups except for seniors. As Figure 5 shows, the biggest changes were among children, youth and adults between 25 and 54. Low income rates in 2005 were two and a half to four percentage points higher than the rates in 2000 for these population groups. "Near" seniors (ages 55 to 64) and early retirees (ages 65 to 74) saw little change. The low income rate for residents 75 and over decreased by two percentage points.

The decline in low income rates for seniors is part of a broader national trend. Improved old age benefits and greater labour force participation among women over the last three decades have helped.

The increasing low income rates for other age groups suggest that more families with children and working- age adults were facing challenges between 2000 and 2005 – a period of relative prosperity in York Region.

Most low income families in York Region are couples with children under 18 years of age – however, lone parents face the highest risk of being low income

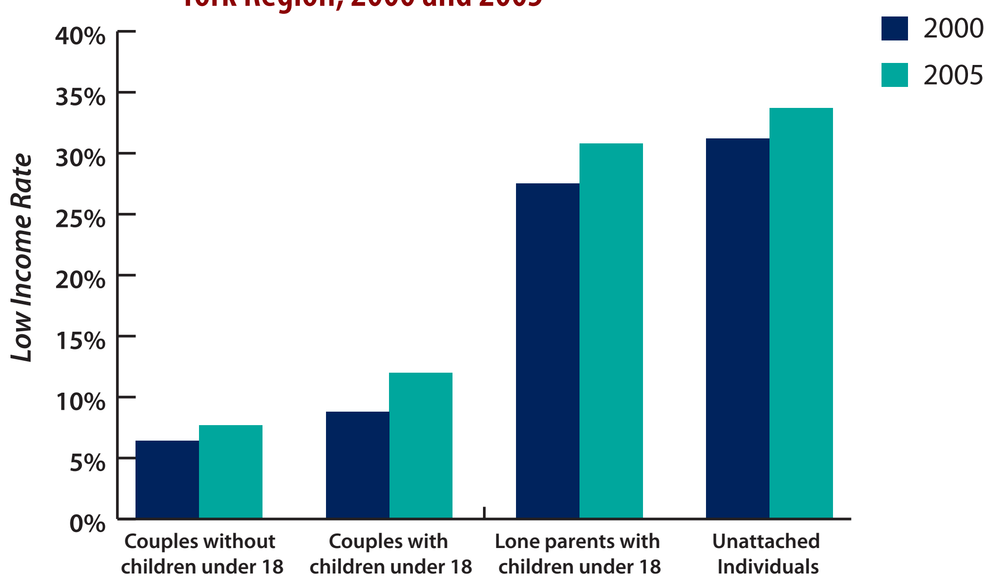
As Figure 6 shows, low income rates went up for all family types between 2000 and 2005, with the highest increases for families with children under 18 (both couple and lone parent families respectively).

Overall, the largest group of low income families in York Region in 2005 were couples with children under 18 – representing 47% (12,620) of the total. About 30% (8,025) were couples without children under 18[11], 15% (3,965) were lone parents with children under 18 years, and 9% (2,520) were other family types (e.g. two siblings living together; a youth living alone with a grandparent).

Lone parents with children under 18 had the highest low income rate (31%) among all family types - and were two and a half times more likely than couple families with children under 18 to be living on low income in 2005. Most lone parent families were led by women.

[11] Includes couples with children 18 and over and couples with no children.

Figure 6: Low Income Rate by Family Type and Unattached Individuals, York Region, 2000 and 2005



Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 and 2006 Censuses, Custom Tabulations

Did you know?

There were 30,580 York Region children under 18 in York Region living in low income families in 2005 – 78% of these lived in two parent families.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2006, Custom Tabulations

Unattached individuals are also at high risk of living on low income

As Figure 6 shows, unattached individuals are a very vulnerable group in York Region. They had a low income rate of almost 34% in 2005. These 16,000 residents included people living alone and unrelated singles sharing accommodation. Of these:

- About 19% were between the ages of 15 and 29
- 49% were between 30 and 64
- 32% were 65 and over

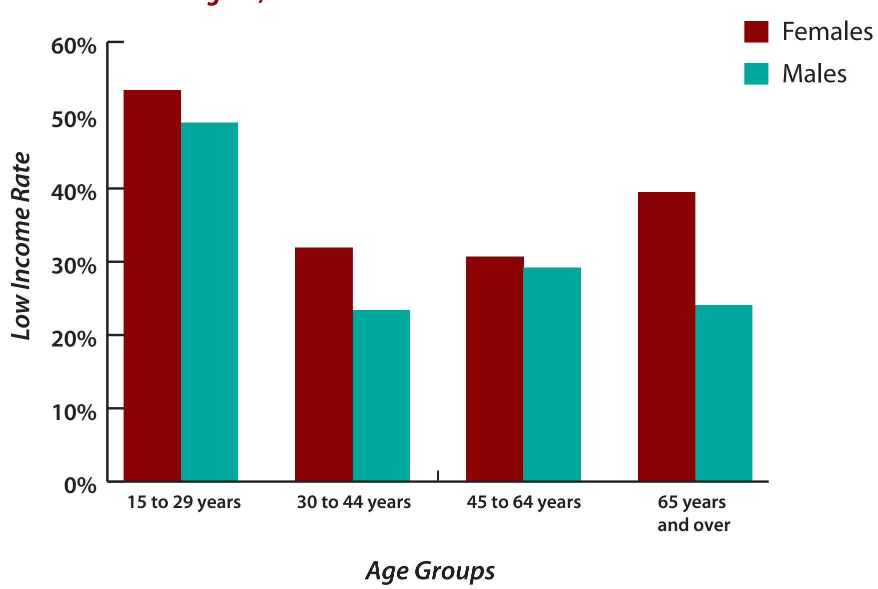
Unattached individuals are at higher risk of slipping into low income because they depend on only one person's income. If they become ill or lose a job, they are less likely to have the support of an additional adult earner or family member to help. There are generally fewer income benefits available to single people, particularly those who are working-age, compared to families with children.

As Figure 7 shows, the circumstances of unattached individuals in York Region varied by age. The youngest age group (15 to 29 years) had the highest low income rate - at 51%. Generally, the period of time youth spend living on low income is influenced by their ability to successfully get an education and transition to full-time employment. Older unattached individuals are likely to face more persistent low income, particularly if they have lower levels of education or face other challenges participating in the labour market over time.[12]

There is also a gender gap among unattached individuals. This was particularly the case for women 65 and over, who had a low income rate of almost 40% - close to two times higher than for men in the same age group (24%). Women 65 and over made up just over a quarter of all low income unattached individuals in York Region.

[12] Feng, Yan, Sangita Dubey, and Bradley Brooks. 2007. *Persistence of Low Income Among Non-Elderly Unattached Individuals*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 75F0002MIE – No. 005. Ottawa. Income Research Paper Series.

Figure 7: Low Income Rate for Unattached Individuals, By Age and Gender, York Region, 2005



Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census, Custom Tabulations

Key Findings – Age, Gender and Family Type:

- Low income residents include people of all ages, but over half were working-age (25 to 64) in 2005.
- Women were more likely to be living on low income than men, particularly among residents 75 and over.
- Two parent families with children under 18 made up 47% of all low income families in York Region.
- Low income rates increased for all age groups and family types in York Region between 2000 and 2005 – except among seniors 65 and over.

Employment and Low Income

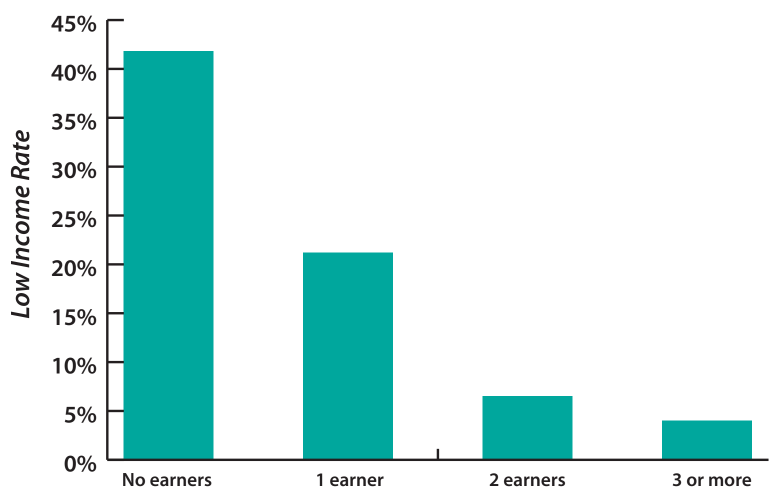
Most low income families in York Region work for a living

Paid work helps lift families and individuals out of low income, but it does not guarantee security. The economic security work provides depends on the type of employment available and the number of earners a family can rely on to contribute to household needs.

As Figure 8 shows, naturally, families with no earners had the highest risk of low income in 2005. As the number of earners increased, the risk declined. A family depending on only one earner, increased their vulnerability. These families had a low income rate over three times higher than the rate for families with two earners.[13]

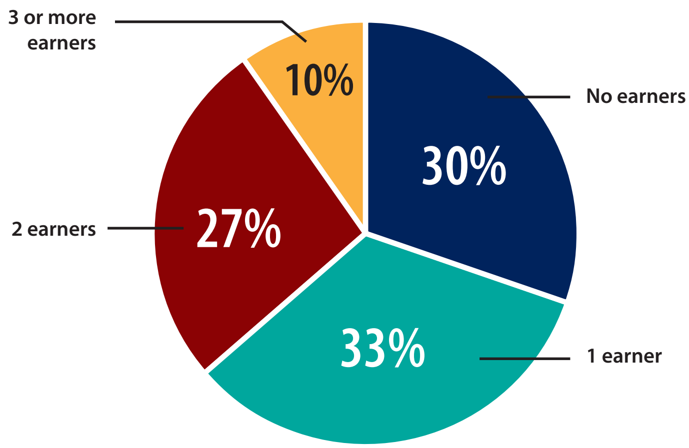
[13] Earners refers to persons 15 years of age and over, who received wages and salaries, net income from a non-farm unincorporated business and/or professional practice, and/or net farm self-employment income during calendar year 2005. Statistics Canada. 2010. *2006 Census Dictionary*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-566-X. Ottawa. pg 37.

Figure 8: Low Income Rate for Economic Families by Number of Earners, York Region, 2005



Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census, Custom Tabulations

Figure 9: **Distribution of Low Income Economic Families by Number of Earners, York Region, 2005**



Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census, Custom Tabulations

It is important to note that most low income families in York Region included people who worked. As Figure 9 shows, 33% (9,075) of families had at least one earner, and 37% (9,805) of families had two or more earners. Families with no earners are more dependent on government transfers and other income (e.g. pension, investment, spousal support) to meet their needs.

Low income unattached individuals had slightly different situations. In 2005, as with economic families, employment also helped to reduce the risk of low income for this group. Individuals with earnings had a low income rate of 22% compared to 56% for those without earnings. However, the majority of low income unattached individuals (59%) had no earnings. This could reflect the age of these residents – where just over 50% were either between the ages of 15 to 29, or 65 and over.

It is crucial to have stable work

The amount of work is also a key factor influencing low income. As Figure 10 shows, low income rates increase as work activity becomes less stable. In 2005, working-age residents (ages 25 to 64) with more work activity during the year (i.e., those who work full year either full or part-time) were at less risk of low income than those who worked fewer weeks per year.[14] Those with no work activity were the most at risk of low income.

This suggests that while employment helps reduce risk factors related to low income, the "right type of work" is also important. Employment that pays low wages, provides limited job security or irregular hours, and is contract, temporary or casual ("precarious jobs") is likely a factor influencing low income rates for some workers.[15]

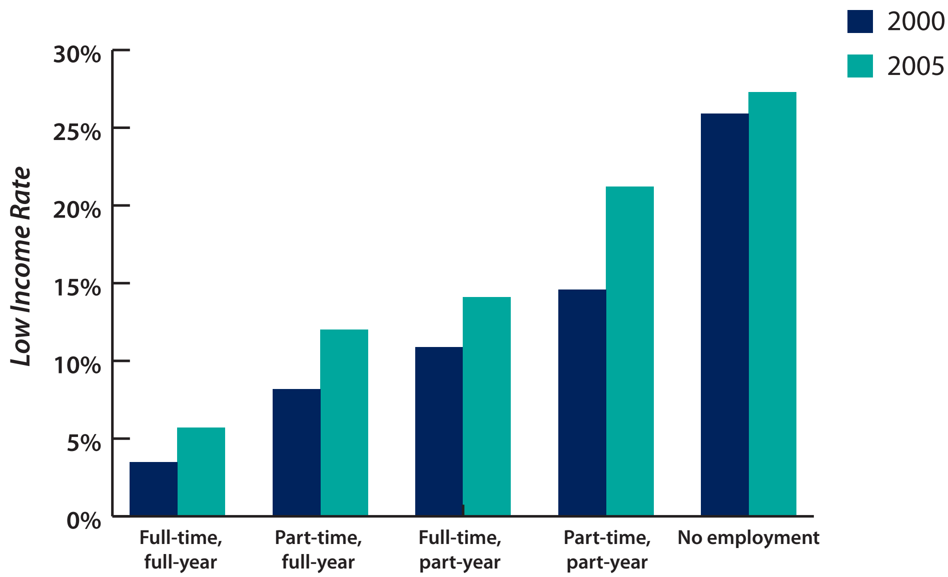
Ironically, low income rates increased more for residents who have jobs

As Figure 10 also shows, low income rates between 2000 and 2005 increased the highest – by 6.6 percentage points - for those who worked part-time, part-year. These would include some of the more vulnerable workers in York Region. However, even those working full-time, full-year had an increase in their low income rate – by 2.2 percentage points. This was higher than for people not working – which increased by 1.4 percentage points between 2000 and 2005.

[14] Full-time refers to work of 30 hours or more per week; part-time refers to work of less than 30 hours per week. Full-year refers to the equivalent of 49 to 52 annual weeks of employment; part-year refers to work of less than 49 weeks annually. Canadian Council on Social Development. 2007. *Employment and Education: Urban Poverty in Canada, 2000*. Ottawa. pg 14.

[15] Vosko, Leah F., Nancy Zukewich and Cythnia Crawford. 2003."Precarious jobs: A new typology of employment." *Perspectives on Labour and Income*. Vol. 4,, no. 10. October. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 75-001-XIE.

Figure 10: **Low Income Rate by Work Activity, Working-Age (25 to 64) Population, York Region, 2000 and 2005**



Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 and 2006 Censuses, Custom Tabulations

The majority of low income residents worked

As Figure 11 shows, as in 2000, the majority of working-age low income residents had work in 2005:

- 16,070 worked full-time, full-year
- 12,280 worked full-time, part-year
- 6,875 worked part-time, part-year
- 2,620 worked part-time, full year

A total of 19,985 working-age low income residents did not work in 2005.

York Region has a growing "working poor" population

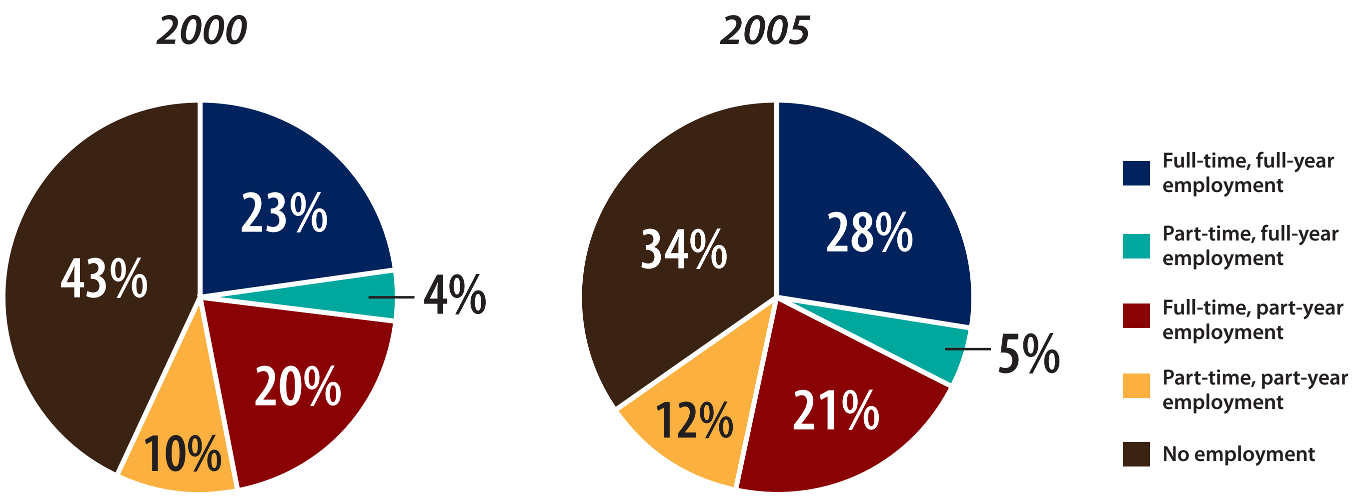
As Figure 11 also shows, the percentage of low income residents who worked increased between 2000 and 2005. The biggest shift was for those working full-time, full-year – from 23% in 2000 to 28% in 2005. The number who had no work decreased from 43% in 2000 to 34% in 2005. The impact of the recent economic recession will be particularly hard on low income residents who worked. Job loss or reduced hours will place growing pressures in making ends meet.

Did you know?

Like many residents, York Region low income residents are well-educated. However, they are often working in jobs that are not making full use of their education. For example, over 13,400 low income residents aged 25 to 64 in 2005 who worked had a university-level certificate, diploma or degree. Of these, 34% were working in lower skilled occupations. Workforce development strategies can help these low income residents find and keep employment that optimize their education and skills.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2006, Custom Tabulations

Figure 11: **Distribution of Low Income Working-Age (25 to 64) Population by Work Activity, York Region, 2000 and 2005**



Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 and 2006 Censuses, Custom Tabulations

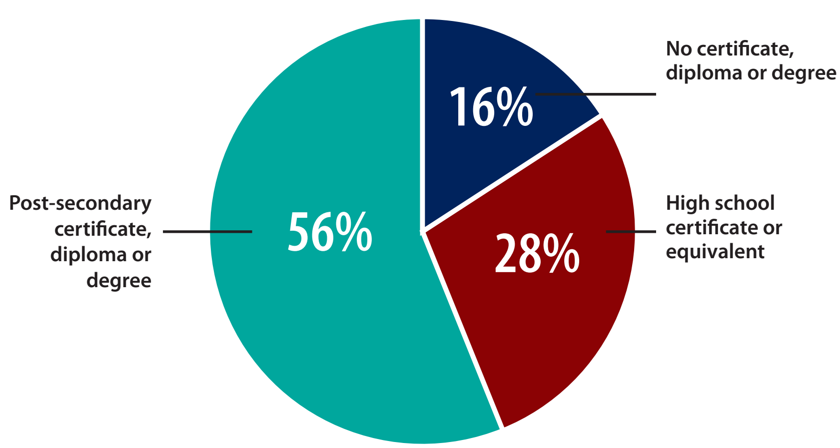
Education and Low Income

The majority of York Region low income residents are well educated

Like employment, higher education does not guarantee an escape from living on low income. As Figure 12 shows, in 2005 more than half (56%) of low income working-age residents (32,455) had post-secondary qualifications. This suggests that many York Region low income residents are not fully using their education and skills.

However, as in other jurisdictions, York Region working-age residents with lower levels of education are at greater risk of living on low income. The low income rate for people with no certificate, diploma or degree was close to 18% in 2005 – compared to 15% for those with a high school certificate or equivalent and 10% with a post-secondary certificate, degree or diploma.

Figure 12: **Distribution of Low Income Working-Age (25 to 64) Population by Highest Level of Education, York Region, 2005**



Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census, Custom Tabulations

Key Findings – Employment:

- The majority of low income residents 25 to 64 worked and the majority of low income families had one or more earners in 2005.
- The percentage of low income residents who worked increased from 57% to 66% between 2000 and 2005.
- Ironically, low income rates increased for residents who worked between 2000 and 2005.
- More than half (56%) of low income working-age residents had post-secondary qualifications in 2005 – this includes university, college, trade certificates, etc.

Immigration, Language and Visible Minorities

Low income residents reflect York Region's ethno-racial diversity

Residents who were not born in Canada are driving growth in York Region. They are also impacting on the ethno-racial make-up of York Region as more immigrants include people from visible minority groups. This diversity is naturally reflected in York Region's low income population.

Low income rates decline over time for immigrants

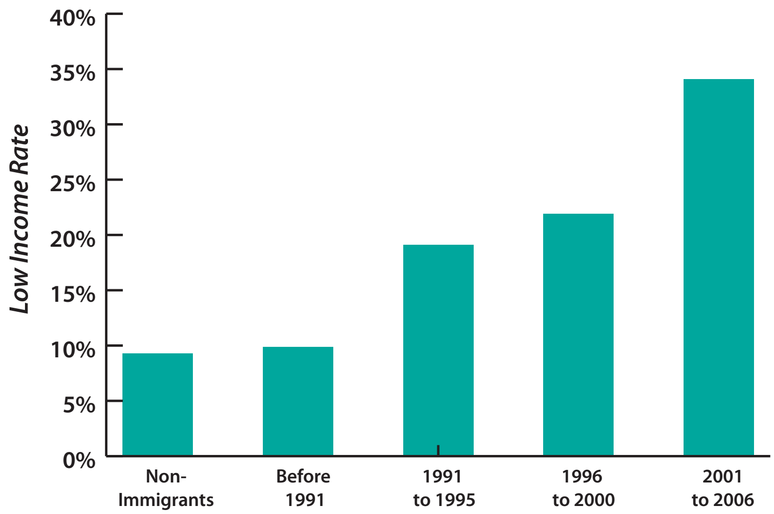
About 56%, or 62,605, of all low income residents in 2005 were immigrants to Canada, although the period of arrival varied. Of the total low income immigrants in York Region:

- 32%, or 20,145, arrived before 1991 – they reflect the most established immigrants.
- 21%, or 12,885, arrived between 1991 and 1995
- 22%, or 13,785, arrived between 1996 and 2000
- 25%, or 15,790, arrived between 2001 and 2006 – they reflect the most recent immigrants

As Figure 13 shows, the period of immigration is an important factor. Residents who are relatively new to Canada face a period of early settlement and integration that can impact on their income levels. In 2005, recent immigrants (2001-2006) had a low income rate of 34%, followed by 22% and 19% respectively for immigrants who arrived between 1996-2000 and 1991-1995. Established immigrants and Canadian born residents had similar low income rates – 10% for those who arrived before 1991 and 9% for non-immigrants.

This suggests that established immigrants living in York Region have successfully integrated into the broader economy – and that over time immigrants are less likely to experience low income. However, the pace of integration remains a concern. Low income rates in 2005 for immigrants who arrived in the 1990s were two times higher than for established immigrants. Recent immigrants were clearly the most vulnerable – with a low income rate of more than three and half times higher than for established immigrants. Given the rate of immigration, if the pace of integration for the most recent cohort of immigrants (2001-2006) does not improve, York Region is likely to face more persistent low income challenges over time.

Figure 13: Low Income Rate by Immigrant Status/Period of Immigration, York Region, 2005



Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census, Custom Tabulations

Lack of knowledge of an official language is a risk factor

Understanding the official languages of Canada is an important factor in finding and keeping jobs and accessing services.[16] This is reflected in the relatively high low income rate of 26% for residents with no knowledge of English or French in 2005. This percentage is over two times the rate for those with knowledge of English only (12%) and almost three times the rate for those with knowledge of both English and French (9%). About 8% (9,190) of low income residents had no knowledge of official languages in 2005.

Visible minority groups are more likely to face low income than non-visible minorities

Members of visible minority groups include both Canadian born residents and immigrants.[17] However, immigrants are increasingly driving the growth of visible minorities because the countries of origins of York Region's immigrant population continue to diversify over time. For example, 72% of recent immigrants (2001-2006) were from visible minority groups based on the 2006 Census. This was approximately the same proportion as reported in the 2001 Census.

Visible minorities made up 56% (62,530) of all low income residents in 2005. Their low income rate was 19% - more than twice the rate than for non-visible minorities (9%), despite the fact that most are highly educated. While period of immigration will help explain the higher low income rate for visible minorities, issues of employment, discrimination and barriers to access the professions or trades will also be factors.[18]

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[16] Refers to the ability to conduct a conversation in English only, in French only, in both English and French, or in neither English nor French. Statistics Canada. 2010. *2006 Census Dictionary*. Catalogue no. 92-566-X, Ottawa. pg 81.

[17] The Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as 'persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour'. Responses in the 2006 Census include Chinese, South Asian, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Southeast Asian, Arab, West Asian, Korean, Japanese, and Visible minority, n.i.e. (n.i.e. means 'not included elsewhere'). Statistics Canada. 2010. *2006 Census Dictionary*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-566-X. Ottawa. pg 121-122.

[18] Block, S. and Grace-Edward Galabuzi. 2011. *Canada's Colour Coded Labour Market: The Gap for Racialized Workers*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and Wellesley Institute. Ottawa and Toronto; Reitz, Jeffrey G., and Rupa Banerjee. 2007. "Racial inequality, social cohesion, and policy issues in Canada." *Belonging? Diversity, Recognition and Shared Citizenship in Canada*. K. Banting, T.J. Courchene, F.L. and Seidle,J. (eds.). Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy. p.489-546; Palameta, Boris. 2004. "Low income among immigrants and visible minorities." *Perspectives on Labour and Income*. Vol. 5, no. 4 April. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 75-001-XIE.

Housing Affordablity

Low income residents face high housing costs

Housing affordability is a key issue for many York Region residents but disproportionately impacts those living on low income. Lower income households are more likely to have fewer housing choices and face greater challenges in balancing their housing costs with paying for other basic or family needs.[19]

The majority of low income residents are homeowners

In 2005, most low income economic families were homeowners – 77% compared to 23% who were tenants. The same was true for low income unattached individuals but to a lesser extent – 62% were homeowners.

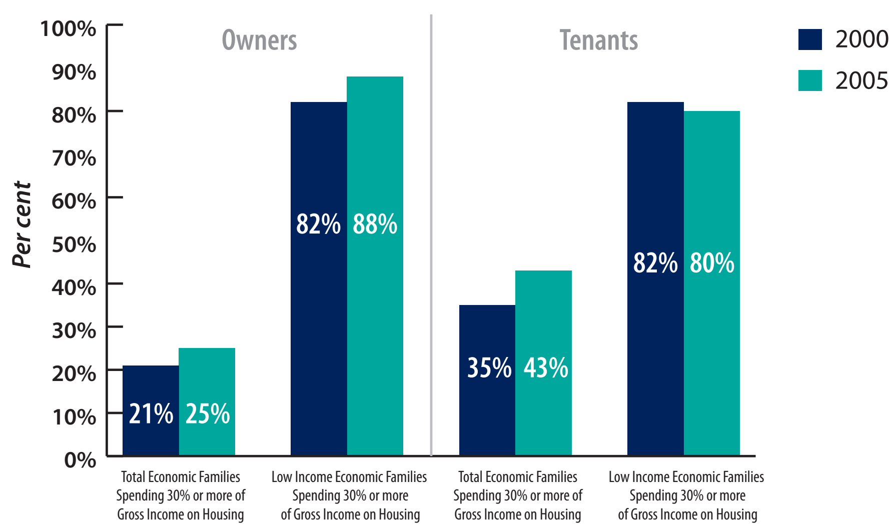
However, low income residents make up a large percentage of all tenants in York Region - 31% for economic families and 42% for unattached individuals.

Over 80% of low income families have housing affordability issues

As Figure 14 shows, in 2005, 88% (17,670) of low income economic families who were homeowners and 80% (4,850) who were tenants were paying 30% or more of their gross income on housing. There was a slight improvement for tenants – where the percentage paying 30% or more of gross income on housing decreased between 2000 and 2005 by about two percentage points (from 82% to 80%). The opposite was true for low income homeowners. The percentage paying 30% or more of gross income on housing increased by six percentage points between 2000 and 2005 – from 82% to 88%. The recent economic recession has likely placed pressures on income levels for both low income homeowners and tenants. It will be important to update these trends once comparable data from the 2011 Census is available.

[19] A household's housing affordability can change over time. For more, see: Luffman, Jacqueline. 2006. "Measuring housing affordability." *Perspectives on Labour and Income*. Vol. 7, no. 11. November. Statistics Canada Catalogue No. 75-001-X1E; Rea, Willa, Jennifer Yuen, John Engeland, and Roberto Figueroa. 2008. "The dynamics of housing affordability." *Perspectives on Labour and Income*. Vol. 9, no. 1. January. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 75-001-X1E.

Figure 14: Percentage of Economic Families Spending 30% or more of Gross Income on Housing, York Region, 2000 and 2005



Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 and 2006 Censuses, Custom Tabulations

Did you know?

Low income family homeowners and tenants throughout the GTA faced similar housing affordability challenges in 2005. However, York Region stands out in the per cent who were homeowners.

Greater Toronto Area	Low Income Economic Families Spending 30% or more of Gross Income on Housing	% Homeowners	% Tenants
York	22,520	78%	22%
Halton	6,855	64%	36%
Peel	32,215	59%	41%
Durham	9,960	58%	42%
Toronto	101,200	34%	66%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census, Custom Tabulations

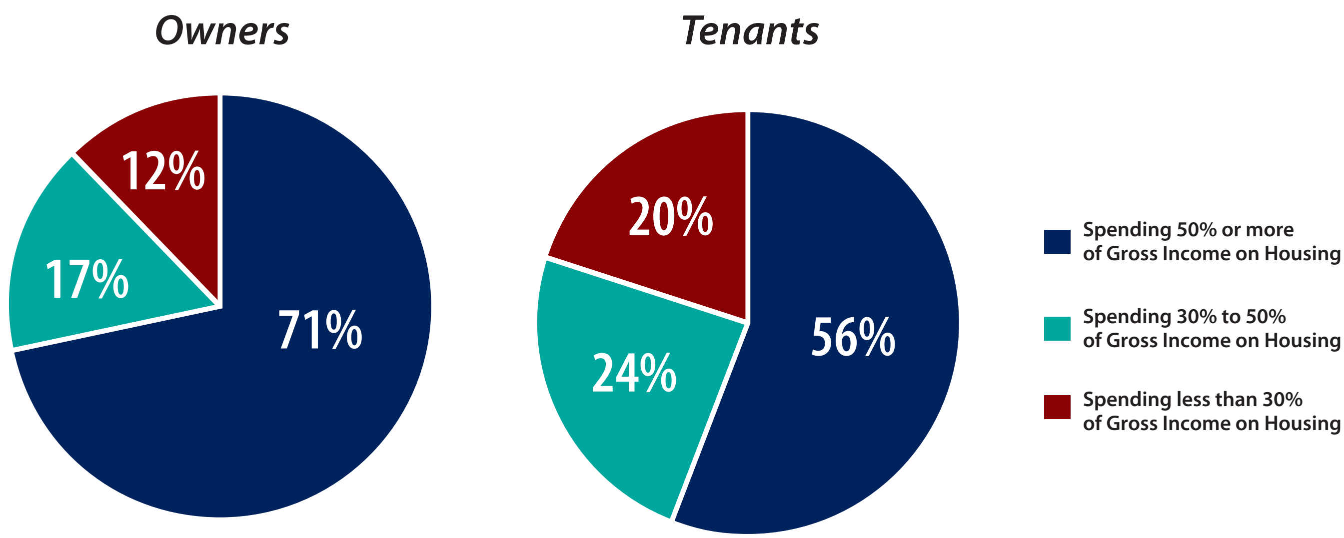
Did you know?

Housing prices for all dwelling types outpaced income growth for York Region households between 2001 and 2006. Housing prices continued to increase between 2006 and 2009 (median income for 2009 not available).

Average Prices of Dwelling Types and Median Household Income, York Region 2001, 2006 and 2009					
	2001	2006	% Change 2001-2006	2009	% Change 2006-2009
Detached Single	$ 317,999	$ 458,636	44%	$520,895	14%
Semi	$ 223,922	$ 317,029	42%	$358,664	13%
Town/Row/Attached	$ 217,320	$ 305,421	41%	$340,342	11%
Condo/Apt	$ 210,971	$ 236,943	12%	$268,055	13%
Median Household Income*	$ 75,719	$ 81,928	8%		
*Based on 2000 and 2005 income					

Source: York Region Planning and Development Services Department & Statistics Canada, 2001 and 2006 Censuses, Custom Tabulations

Figure 15: Housing Costs as Per Cent of Gross Income, Low Income Economic Families, Owners and Tenants, York Region, 2005



Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census, Custom Tabulations

Many low income families are at risk of homelessness

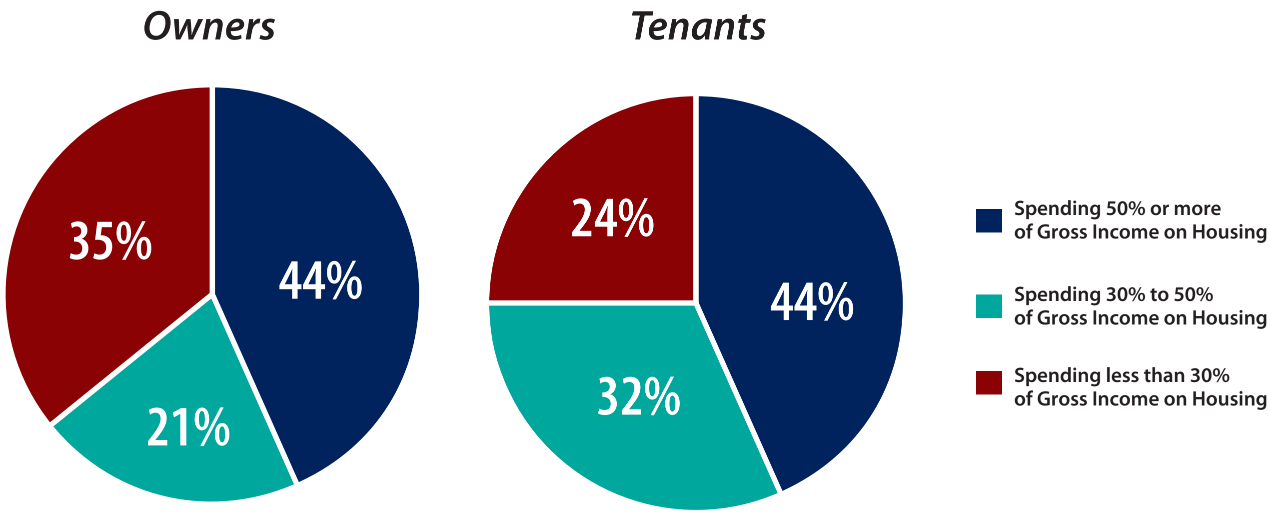
Low income residents who are paying more than 50% of their gross income on housing are at risk of homelessness if a financial or personal crisis that reduces their income occurs. As Figure 15 shows, a majority of low income economic families faced severe housing costs in 2005 – 71% for owners and 56% for tenants.

There was some improvement in housing affordability between 2000 and 2005 for low income tenant families paying 50% or more of their gross income on housing – with the percentage decreasing from 60% to 56%. However, the percentage of low income homeowner families who faced severe housing costs increased by 7 percentage points (from 64% in 2000 to 71% in 2005).

Key Findings – Housing Affordability:

- A large majority of low income residents are facing housing affordability issues.
- Among low income families, 88% of homeowners and 80% of tenants were paying 30% or more of their gross income on housing in 2005.
- Among low income unattached individuals, 64% of homeowners and 76% of tenants were paying 30% or more of their gross income on housing in 2005.
- Many low income residents are at risk of homelessness by paying 50% or more of their gross income on housing - 71% of low income families who were homeowners and 56% who were tenants in 2005. About 44% of low income unattached individuals, for both tenants and homeowners respectively, were paying 50% or more of their gross income on housing in 2005.
- Most low income families (77%) and unattached individuals (62%) were homeowners.

Figure 16: Housing Costs as Per Cent of Gross Income, Low Income Unattached Individuals, Owners and Tenants, York Region, 2005



Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census, Custom Tabulations

Low income unattached individuals also face significant housing affordability issues

As Figure 16 shows, in 2005, 65% (6,350) who were homeowners and 76% (4,560) who were tenants were paying 30% or more of their gross income on housing. In 2005, 44% for both tenants and homeowners respectively, were paying 50% or more of their gross income on housing.

Low income unattached individuals experienced similar trends as low income economic families in relation to their housing affordability. For example, the percentage of low income unattached tenants who were paying 50% or more of their gross income on housing decreased by one percentage point between 2000 and 2005 (from 45% to 44%). However, the percentage of low income unattached homeowners paying 50% or more of their gross income on housing increased by almost nine percentage points between 2000 and 2005 (from 35% to 44%).

Income

The gap between low income and non-low income residents is greater in York Region than in Ontario

In 2005, average annual income of York Region low income working-age families was $20,242 compared to $126,111 for non-low income working-age families. The average was $8,905 for working-age low income unattached individuals compared to $62,580 for those not living on low income. The difference was most likely due to lower relative earnings for low income residents. This income "gap" is an important indicator of the potential for social exclusion of low income residents. They have fewer resources to support basic needs and cannot participate in activities that other community members enjoy.

The story is somewhat different for the elderly. The income gap was less wide – $22,636 compared to $107,040 for elderly economic families and $16,021 compared to $47,609 for elderly unattached individuals. This reflects the key role that government transfers generally play in helping support income security for the elderly.[20]

[20] Government transfers refers to total income from all transfer payments received from federal, provincial, territorial or municipal governments. These include Old Age Security pension and Guaranteed Income Supplement, benefits from Canada or Quebec Pension Plan, Employment Insurance, Child benefits other income from government sources (e.g. social assistance payments, refundable tax benefits). Statistics Canada. 2010. *2006 Census Dictionary*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-566-X. Ottawa.

As shown in Table 3, in all family categories, the gap in York Region was greater than for the Ontario average.[21]

Table 3: Average Income for Select Family Types, Low Income and Non-Low Income, York Region & Ontario, 2005

Working-age Families	Average Income of Low Income Population	Average Income of Non-Low Income Population	% of Low Income to Non-Low Income
York Region	$20,242	$126,111	16%
Ontario	$18,798	$105,778	18%
Elderly Families			
York Region	$22,636	$107,040	21%
Ontario	$20,860	$79,292	26%
Working-age Unattached Individuals			
York Region	$8,905	$62,580	14%
Ontario	$8,952	$53,687	17%
Elderly Unattached Individuals			
York Region	$16,021	$47,609	34%
Ontario	$15,322	$40,623	38%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census, Custom Tabulations

Many working-age low income residents are facing severe financial hardship

The amount of income a family or individual has below LICO-BT is a factor in understanding the degree of hardship they face – those living well below these cut-offs will have even fewer resources available to them to meet basic needs than those just below the cut-offs.

Figure 17 shows the break down. In 2005, 37%, or 8,745, of working-age low income economic families and 57%, or 6,240, working-age low income unattached individuals lived on income that was 50% or below the LICO-BT. For a family of four living in Richmond Hill at that time, this would translate into an annual income below $16,626, for a person living alone, below $8,948. These reflect some of the most vulnerable residents in York Region.

The situation for low income elderly residents is different. In 2005, the majority of low income elderly families and unattached individuals had income within 25% below the LICO-BT. This again reinforces the importance of income security programs in helping to keep most of the elderly out of deep hardship.

Did you know?

Single people who rely on Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) have incomes well below low income cut-offs.

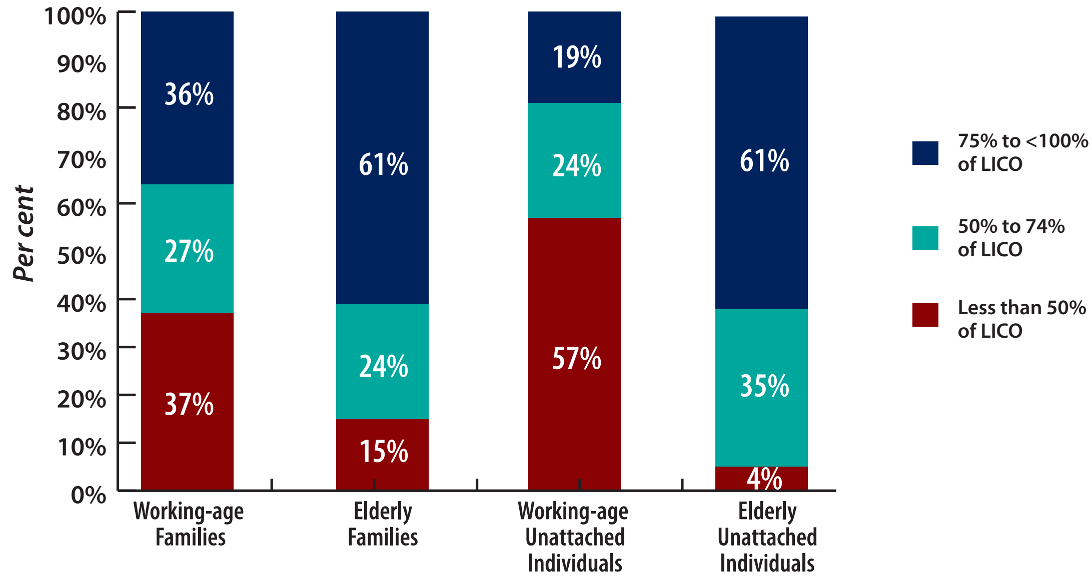
	OW*	ODSP*	LICO-BT
Single Person	$7,501	$12,905	$19,144

* Note: All figures for 2009. OW and ODSP annual rate includes value of federal and provincial tax credits.

Source: National Council of Welfare and Statistics Canada.

[21] Working-age families are where both the economic reference person and the spouse (if present) are under the age of 65. Elderly families are those where either the economic reference person or spouse (if present) are 65 years or older. Statistics Canada designates one person as the reference person for each economic family. Working-age unattached individuals are 15 to 64 years. Canadian Council on Social Development. 2007. *Dimensions of Income Among Poor Households: Urban Poverty in Canada, 2000*. Ottawa. pg. 6.

Figure 17: Distribution of Low Income Economic Families and Unattached Individuals Relative to LICO-BT, York Region, 2005



Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census, Custom Tabulations

Residents living just above LICO are also at risk

It is also important to note that about almost 12,440 economic families and 3,960 unattached individuals in York Region lived just above LICO in 2005 – at 100% to 124% of the LICO-BT. In 2005, this translated into an income between $33,251 and $41,231 for a family of four living in Markham. This group reflects residents who could easily fall into low income if faced with changes to their family structure or labour market participation (e.g. as a result of the recent economic downturn).

Key Implications

Low income residents are a key part of York Region's economy

Low income residents play a key role in the economy and community. In York Region, most low income residents work – they include those who care for our children and elderly, support our retail industries, and provide a range of other personal and community services. This section outlines the supports that are crucial to promoting the full participation and economic contribution of low income residents in York Region.

Key Findings – Income:

- The income gap between low income and non-low income residents is larger in York Region than in Ontario as a whole.
- In 2005, 37% of working-age economic families and 57% of working-age unattached individuals lived on income that is 50% below the LICO-BT. For a family of four living in Richmond Hill at that time, this translated into an annual income below $16,626, and for a person living alone, below $8,948. These reflect some of the most vulnerable residents in York Region.
- Almost 12,440 economic families and 3,960 unattached individuals in York Region lived just above LICO in 2005. At that time, this translated into an income between $33,251 and $41,231 for a family of four living in Markham. This group reflects residents who could easily fall into low income if faced with changes to their family structure or labour market participation (e.g. as a result of the recent economic downturn).

The Issues

York Region's low income residents are diverse – but with a shared challenge of making ends meet

York Region's low income residents reflect a range of social and economic backgrounds. They include groups at high risk of low income – lone parents, people living alone, recent immigrants, longer-term unemployed, and people with lower levels of education. However, the majority reflect the broader patterns of York Region. They include working families and individuals of all ages, people with post-secondary education, Canadian born and immigrants to Canada, and homeowners.

They face a shared challenge of having enough resources to make ends meet.

There is a need to maximize the labour market potential of low income residents

York Region is projected to grow – both in population and in employment. Like the rest of Canada, its workforce is also aging. It will be important to optimize the labour market potential of low income residents to meet these demands. They represent a key and under-used source of labour. However, there is little detailed information on the realities of the "working poor" in York Region, particularly changes to the labour market since the economic downturn. This diverse group includes:

- Families with full-time workers who need supplemental supports and affordable housing to make ends meet.
- "Harder-to-employ" residents who require more intensive supports to find and keep employment. These include youth, older unemployed workers, and people with limited work experience or job skills.
- Residents who are well-educated but under-employed, which is particularly a concern for foreign-trained immigrants. They can face challenges in advancing in the labour market due to difficulties in having their foreign credentials and work experience recognized.

There is a need to support low income families with children – both couple and lone parent led, and for both earners and non-earners

There is growing recognition of the importance of investing early in people's lives to establish positive pathways to school, promote healthy living and develop human capital. The right supports, including child care and services for children with special needs, will help families, children and youth reach their full potential and access opportunities. This helps in turn to build stronger communities and a more productive economy.

Recent economic recession has created even greater pressures

While Census data is not yet available to assess the impact of the recent economic recession on low income residents, it is clear that more are facing hardship. This is reflected by increased demands on Regional programs and services that:

- Help people meet basic needs and find employment
- Provide affordable housing and prevent homelessness
- Support access to affordable child care
- Respond quickly to emerging low income needs through community agencies.

With positive signs of economic recovery, these pressures may reduce over time. However, the extent will depend on how well low income residents are able to benefit from current and projected job growth in the regional economy.

What has been the impact of the recent economic recession?

Recessions are key factors influencing low income. The absence of timely income data at the regional level makes it difficult to assess the impact of Canada's most recent economic recession, but other information shows that York Region residents faced challenges:

- Higher unemployment rates for residents – from 5.7% in December 2008 to 7.7% in December 2009, dropping to 6.6% by the end of 2010. The recession will likely drive low income rates higher. Also, the number of residents working full-time decreased by about 2% between 2009 and 2010 and those working part-time decreased by close to 14%.

- Higher number of Employment Insurance beneficiaries – from 9,400 in December 2008 to 13,970 in December 2009, dropping to 11,750 in December 2010.

- Higher number of families and individuals on the social housing wait list – from 5,833 households in December 2008 to 7,626 in December 2010.

- Higher number of Ontario Works cases – from a monthly average of 4,535 in 2008 to 5,852 in 2010.

- Higher number of families on the child care fee subsidy wait list – from a monthly average of 3,527 in 2008 to 4,366 in 2010.

According to Statistics Canada, young workers, people with lower levels of education, and very recent immigrants were the hardest hit by the labour market downturn in Canada. These are also some of the most economically vulnerable residents in York Region. However, studies also show the impact was also felt by permanent workers facing job loss or reduced hours in the manufacturing sector – a key employment sector in York Region.

York Region has done well compared to other jurisdictions in managing through the economic downturn across all job sectors, and is projecting continued employment growth. The impact on low income residents will depend on the extent they are able to rebound from the recession and benefit as economic recovery continues:

- Those with lower levels of education will face growing competition for lower wage jobs as a result of the recession, and will face skills gap for newer and more technical jobs.

- Many who relied on manufacturing for stable jobs but faced lay-offs will need to adapt to other job sectors.

- Limited employment benefits for those working in lower wage employment.

- Prospect of federal and provincial fiscal restraint in the face of deficits – and the potential impact on the availability of supports.

- A level of uncertainty and risk to the economic recovery due to global events.

Many of the more recent challenges faced by York Region's most vulnerable low income residents were highlighted in York Region's first social audit convened by the Poverty Action for Change Coalition and the York Region Food Network in April 2010. Inadequate income, job loss, low wage employment, and need for re-training opportunities were all key themes.

Source: Data provided through The Regional Municipality of York Community and Health Services and Planning and Development Services Departments and Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey.

See also: Pearson, Tom and Yvonne Kelly. 2010. *"Behind the Masks" – Testimonials from Those Marginalized by Income*. Poverty Action for Change Coalition. Newmarket; Gilmore, Jason and Sébastien LaRochelle-Côté. 2011. "Inside the labour market downturn." *Perspectives on Labour and Income*. Vol. 23 no. 1. February. Statistics Canada Catalogue No. 75-001-X; LaRochelle-Côté, Sébastien and Jason Gilmore. 2009. "Canada's employment downturn." *Perspectives on Labour and Income*. Vol. 22 no. 1. December. Statistics Canada Catalogue No. 75-001-X; The Regional Municipality of York. 2011. *York Region Employment and Industry Report, 2010*. Newmarket.

Possible Solutions

Human services provide the "social infrastructure" where low income residents can access opportunities

Human services make up the "social infrastructure" of the community – the services, networks and facilities that meet the economic, social and health needs of people so they can maximize their potential, enhance their quality of life and contribute to their community. They can be provided to all residents or targeted at specific populations such as lower income groups.

As this profile shows, the number of low income residents in York Region is growing. Many will require support at different points in their lives to overcome challenges, manage periods of financial crisis – particularly the recent economic recession - and improve their overall health and well-being. A key goal of human services planning is to anticipate and respond to the changing needs and varying circumstances of York Region's low income residents. This includes continuing to help them meet their basic needs, adapt to changing labour markets, and take advantage of opportunities as jobs and the economy improves.

Did you know?

York Region's Community and Health Services Department (C&HS) provides a range of provincially-mandated and Council-approved programs that support low income residents at different points in their lives – including through the recent economic downturn and its on-going effects for many. The recently adopted C&HS Multi-Year Plan, *Investing in Our Communities*, builds on the Department's strengths by identifying strategic initiatives that will better meet the needs of low income residents in the future. For more on the Multi-Year Plan, visit www.york.ca.

There are a number of strategies where human services can help make a difference. Some of the most relevant in York Region are highlighted below. They reflect "possible" solutions in that they are inter-related and depend on collaboration. Regional human services do not operate in isolation. The needs of low income residents require holistic, people-centred approaches that help promote opportunity for low income residents and build more inclusive communities.

This means all levels of government, community agencies, business and other sectors working together to:

Support workforce development. Information on the various challenges faced by low income workers will help to better identify strategies that tap into their potential. One promising approach is workforce development partnerships – where human services, business, education, and economic development agencies integrate a range of services so low income workers develop the skills and access the supports needed to meet local labour market needs.

Invest in prevention. This is particularly important for families, children and youth to succeed and builds on the Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy to reduce and prevent chronic low income. Public health services are also critical to promote healthy residents and communities.

Provide a stronger social safety net. This means continuing to address gaps in services that help support the basic needs of people experiencing deep low income. They will continue to face challenges in balancing the costs of housing, food, transportation and other basic needs.

Invest in communities. The majority of low income residents live in communities with relatively low levels of low income. However, York Region is also facing overall growth in the number of low income residents and an increasing concentration of low income in certain areas. There are both benefits and risks related to these trends. York Region is in a good position to foster complete communities – where people of all income levels can access services, employment, transit, and other supports no matter where they live. Where there is a growing concentration of low income, place-based strategies – including "hubs" for human service delivery and community level planning – can help harness local strengths and assets to build economic opportunity, social cohesion and community vitality.

Improve housing affordability. Both low income homeowners and tenants face high housing costs relative to their income – with many at risk of homelessness if hit by economic shifts like the recent downturn. This underlines the need for a range of strategies to improve housing affordability for low income residents - e.g. increasing the supply of affordable housing units, improving income supports related to housing costs, investing in homelessness prevention programs for both homeowners and tenants, and providing housing support services that promote stability.

Focus on social inclusion. Low income is becoming reflective of York Region's growing diversity and is a particular concern among recent immigrants. While the basic human service needs are similar for all low income residents, there are other issues related to immigrant integration, discrimination and human rights that may impact more on certain ethno-racial groups. It will be important to develop a social inclusion perspective in service delivery and planning so all groups feel welcome, and access the resources available to them. This could include greater focus on outreach and targeted strategies to improve access to information and services.

Support vulnerable seniors. While the decreasing low income rates for people 65 and over is a positive trend, older single women are at high risk of low income. Their ability to "age at home" depends on the availability of supportive housing and social work services. It is also important to recognize the relationship between low income and the life cycle. The recent economic downturn has raised public debate over the adequacy of the future retirement income of working-age adults and "near" seniors despite the relatively stable income support system for seniors today. Over the next 20 years, with York Region's aging population, it will be important to develop strategies now that will help older working-age low income residents maximize their ability to work and transition to affordable housing and supports as they leave the labour market.

The impact of low income on health. With a growing low income population in York Region, a potential concern is the risk of emerging health inequalities. This refers to the differences in health status experienced by various groups or individuals. There is considerable research in Canada on the link between social and economic status to health – with groups and neighbourhoods at the lowest distribution reporting poorer health compared to those at the mid to higher points. This reflects the importance of income as a key determinant of health status. The lack of income can impact negatively on health by reducing access to basic needs and by creating financial and life stress which over time can lead to illness, poor health, and added costs to health care. More information on the health status of low income residents would provide a better understanding of the extent of health inequality in York Region and where social and public health services can work together.[22]

Support community planning through more targeted data. Community-led planning initiatives often focus on specific areas or sub-populations. It is important that where this relates to low income, data is available to help support evidenced-based plans and strategies.

[22] Public Health Agency of Canada. 2008. *The Chief Public Health Officer's Report on the State of Public Health in Canada 2008*. Ottawa: Minister of Health.

Conclusion

York Region is experiencing rapid population growth and a changing social fabric. This included a growing low income population between 2000 and 2005. The recent economic uncertainty has likely created even greater pressures – with more people facing low income and at risk of long term poverty if they are not able to access resources and supports. Inclusive and sustainable communities require strategies to prevent and reduce the risk of poverty for low income residents and the communities where they live.

York Region has consistently shown a capacity to foster vibrant communities and a high quality of life for residents. A contributing factor is a commitment to plan and deliver human services that respond to the changing needs of residents and communities. York Region is well positioned to draw on its strengths and successes – a resilient economy through the recent economic downturn, a diversified population, an educated workforce and strong communities – to develop strategies that support low income residents in adapting to change and participating fully in their community. This includes collaborative human services planning and key links to economic and workforce development so that low income residents have the opportunity to benefit and contribute to York Region's future prosperity.

York Region has developed a number of key strategies and documents to help meet the human services needs of residents built on the Region's *Vision 2026*:

- Sustainability Strategy, 2007
- Regional Official Plan, 2010
- Community and Health Services Multi-Year Plan, 2010
- Economic Analysis of Human Service Costs to 2031, 2010
- Human Services Planning Board – On-going
- York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy – in collaboration with Community Partnership Council (underway)
- Update *Vision 2026* to 2051.

Produced by The Regional Municipality of York Community and Health Services Department with the support of the York Region Social Data Strategy Consortium and Community Reference Group

York Region's Community Social Data Strategy Consortium

York Region's Community Reference Group

Aurora Chamber of Commerce, Big Brothers/Big Sisters of York, Catholic Community Services of York Region, Central Local Health Integration Network, Human Services Planning Board, The Regional Municipality of York, Town of Markham Planning & Urban Design Department, Richmond Hill Chamber of Commerce, United Way of York Region, Vaughan Chamber of Commerce, York Catholic District School Board, York Region District School Board, York Regional Police, Workforce Planning Board of York Region & Bradford West Gwillimbury

To view this document as well as other socio-economic information about York Region's residents, please visit York Region's Community Social Data website:

www.york.ca/yrcsd

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