

II. The People of Toronto

Toronto, with a population in 1996 of 2,385,421 people, is one of the most populous cities in North America – fifth after Mexico City, New York, Los Angeles and Chicago. It has a larger population than seven provinces in Canada and has more people than over 40 countries. About one-half of the U.S. population is within a one-day drive from Toronto. Each morning over 350,000 people enter the city, primarily from the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), to work at jobs in the city's core. (6)

While overall Toronto is a thriving, prosperous city, the social character and make-up are changing, which has a significant impact on the public health issues that lie ahead for us. Many of the fastest-growing demographic groups in the city are considered the most vulnerable or at-risk to what we call “poor health outcomes”. This, of course, poses challenges for TPH programming in the coming years.

As the city continues to grow in numbers, its population is aging. By 2021, we expect one-fifth of the residents to be over 65. Immigrants and refugees, many of whom have little or no English-language ability, continue to arrive in large numbers. The number of lone-parent families is growing faster than ever before.



Toronto has been enjoying a period of economic growth. Yet not everyone is benefiting equally from this boom. The number of homeless people remains high and more of our children are living in poor families as the disparity in income between the city's rich and poor continues to grow. (6) Recent research shows that income disparity in

Ontario is highest in Toronto. (7) Even our young people are facing special challenges in establishing independent lives, as the youth unemployment rate remains double that of older workers. (6)

Toronto's size and diversity make it unique. The statistics below (6) give us a better picture of Toronto's changing demographic profile:

- By 2011, we expect the population of Toronto to increase by 16% or 400,000 residents. Much of this growth will result from international migration, further enhancing Toronto's ethno-cultural diversity.
- Like most core cities, the demographic profile of Toronto's population contrasts with that of the larger region that surrounds it. Toronto has both a smaller proportion of children and a larger proportion of seniors than the rest of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). It also includes a significantly higher proportion of vulnerable groups. Toronto has:
 - 52% of the GTA population
 - 62% of the GTA lone-parent families
 - 66% of the GTA poor children
 - 69% of the GTA seniors living alone
 - 69% of the GTA low-income families
 - 75% of the GTA households receiving social assistance
 - 75% of the GTA tenant households
 - 78% of the GTA youth living on their own
 - 80% of the GTA recent immigrants
- In 1996, 72% of families with children in Toronto were two-parent families and 28% (117,340) were lone-parent families. This represents an increase of 23%, since 1991, for lone-parent families. At the same time, in Ontario, 22% of families with children were lone-parent families
- Toronto is one of the world's most culturally diverse cities, and it continues to be a primary destination for new immigrants. On an annual basis, Toronto receives approximately 36% of all new arrivals to Canada. According to the 1996 Census, 47% of the population were born outside the country and 37% were members of a visible minority*. While the majority of the recent arrivals have English language ability, close to 40% have little or no English.

* "Visible Minority" is a term used in the Canada Census to mean: persons (other than Aboriginal persons), who are non-caucasian in race or non-white in colour.

- Over 160 languages and dialects are spoken in Toronto. Approximately 29% of residents speak a language other than English or French in their homes, compared to 12% in Ontario. Six percent have no knowledge of English or French.
- Toronto's population is aging. In 1996, 319,800 people aged 65 and over lived in the city, making up 13% of the total population. Seniors are the fastest-growing age group, rising by 87% since 1971. By 2021, it is expected that one-fifth of the city's residents will be seniors. In 1996, 27% of people 65 years and over lived alone.
- In 1996, 296,205 people aged 15-24 lived in the city, making up 12% of the total population. After declining during the 1990s, the youth population is expected to grow by almost 20% over the next decade.
- The highest education level achieved in Toronto differs slightly from Ontario. Of people 15 years of age and over, 12% have less than a grade 9 education in Toronto (compared to 10% in Ontario) and 32% have a university degree or higher (compared to 24% in Ontario).
- In October 2000, Toronto's residential vacancy rate was 0.6%. This means that only 6 of every 1,000 rental units were available to rent. A "healthy" vacancy rate is considered to be 2 to 3%. This low vacancy rate is expected to continue due to the lack of new rental housing construction. The shortage of affordable housing contributes to homelessness and now there are more than 63,000 households on waiting lists for subsidized housing.
- Homelessness is getting worse. A growing number of people cannot find stable housing and are forced to rely on emergency shelters. In 1999 nearly 30,000 people stayed in emergency shelters; an increase of 40% since 1988. The number of children using shelters has increased by 130% to 6,200 since 1988.
- Toronto has experienced significant economic changes including a boom (1983 – '89), a bust (1989 – '94) and a jobless recovery (post 1994). Jobs only started to increase in Toronto in 1996. Not all groups are benefiting from the opportunities arising from this economic growth. Analysis of both income and employment data over time shows increasing polarization. There is growing concern regarding a pending downturn in the economy. Should this occur, the number of people affected by poverty could dramatically increase.
- According to the 1996 Census, 8% of Toronto's families had incomes below \$10,000 (compared to 5% in Ontario) and 13% had incomes of \$100,000 or more (compared to 12% in Ontario). Between 1995 and 1997 the number of families with incomes below \$10,000 increased as did the number of families in the highest-income categories, while the number in the middle-income categories decreased. In 1998, 18% of two-parent families, 41% of lone-parent families and 50% of persons living alone or with others to whom they were not related, had annual incomes of less than \$20,000.

Further statistics from the 1996 census can be found in Appendix E.

The statistics listed above, along with other social issues, are key determinants for the state of the city's health. TPH sees these issues as both challenges and opportunities for the path ahead and has recognized them in two of our guiding principles as described below:

Determinants of Health

Public Health addresses conditions affecting health including safe environments; adequate income, education and shelter; safe and nutritious food; and peace, equity and social justice. (1)

Diversity, Access and Equity

Public Health celebrates the diversity of the people of Toronto, promotes universal access to services and resources and works to eliminate health inequities. (1)

The programs and services outlined in following sections of this report are built on these guiding principles, and are aimed at meeting Toronto's changing health needs.