



2021 SERVICE HIGHLIGHTS



A message from General Manager, Tom Azouz

As we reflect on 2021, we recognise that the last year challenged us to continue to be flexible to ever changing circumstances, while delivering critical services to the public.

Despite many uncertainties, we strengthened relationships with our clients, ensured timely access to financial supports, and connected our clients to important services and supports.

We also invested time and energy into reviewing our organizational culture and made progress towards becoming a more inclusive, diverse and safe place to work.

We would not have been able to accomplish our goals if not for the resiliency of our staff who put forward great efforts to support our clients and each other through these difficult times.

This report celebrates some of Toronto Employment and Social Services' (TESS) major accomplishments and starts to pave the way for what we can achieve in 2022.

Tom



WHO WE SERVE




TESS provides financial benefits, employment and social supports to thousands of Toronto's most vulnerable residents through the Ontario Works (OW) program. Every day, our staff work alongside individuals and families in need to establish strong, trusting relationships to help them stabilize their circumstances so they can work towards living their best lives and becoming financially independent.

The type of supports TESS provides depends on the unique circumstances of each resident, ranging from connections to health and mental health care services, housing, childcare, education, training and employment opportunities necessary to find sustainable employment.

90,546

ONTARIO WORKS (OW) CASES WERE SERVED IN 2021 REPRESENTING 153,851 INDIVIDUALS.

DEMOGRAPHICS

	2018	2020	
GENDER 	MALE	50%	49%
	 FEMALE	50%	51%
AGE 	UNDER 30	27%	24%
	30 - 49	50%	51%
	50 AND UP	24%	25%

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

REPORTED	2018	2020
AT LEAST ONE BARRIER	85%	85%
POOR HEALTH	29%	28%
LACK OF CANADIAN WORK EXPERIENCE	26%	30%
LACK OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS	22%	22%

PLACE OF BIRTH



FAMILY TYPE



EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

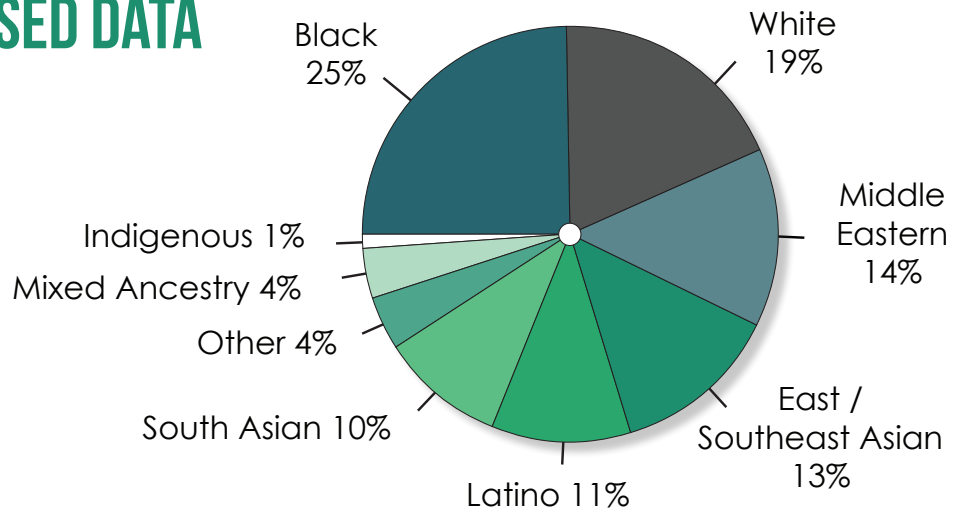


BORN IN CANADA	35%	33%
BORN OUTSIDE OF CANADA	65%	67%
SINGLE	66%	66%
SINGLE PARENTS	24%	24%
COUPLES WITH CHILDREN	8%	8%
COUPLES WITHOUT CHILDREN	2%	2%
DID NOT GRADUATE HIGH SCHOOL	30%	29%
HIGH SCHOOL AS HIGHEST LEVEL	36%	36%
POST-SECONDARY CREDENTIALS	32%	32%

At the time of publishing, this report 2021 caseload demographic data was not yet available. OW caseload statistics represent the number of cases, not the total number of individuals served by TESS at any point during the year (i.e. cases can have more than one family member). Demographic characteristics represent the primary applicant. Percentages may not add up to 100 per cent because of non-response to some variables or rounding.

RACE AND IDENTITY-BASED DATA

Identity based data analysis carried out in 2021 revealed that our caseload is made up of a disproportionate number of racialized clients. For example, one quarter of those surveyed identified as Black compared to 9% of the population of Toronto. This type of data analysis is critical to our understanding of who our clients are and will help to inform our ongoing program and policy development and implementation.



Information in the above chart is provided by our clients. In some cases information was not provided and therefore some groups may be underrepresented.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Although 2021 was characterized by ongoing uncertainty and change, there was also continuity. TESS' response has been guided by its ongoing commitment to our 3 strategic priorities to streamline access, improve service planning, and enable connections to services and supports; and 3 foundational investment areas of people, stewardship, and innovation and modernization. These priorities and investments remain at the core of TESS' work as they ensure that OW clients are connected to the supports and opportunities they need to pursue their best lives and that we continue to make investments in our teams. In 2021, we saw our hard work lead to many noteworthy achievements in the following areas:

CONNECTING CLIENTS TO VITAL SERVICES AND SUPPORTS



A focus on connecting our clients to meaningful and relevant services and supports persisted in 2021 as demonstrated by the following tangible achievements:

- 157,633 Service Plans were completed to better understand each individual client's life history and the full scope of their needs, concerns, wants and goals.
- With greater need for clients to access services online, TESS staff focused efforts to increase client enrollment in the provincial MyBenefits portal. As of December 2021, 76% of the TESS caseload had been registered for MyBenefits
- Supported 2,800 TESS clients to move to the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)
- Exceeded our initial target of 30 Work Based Learning placements by onboarding and placing 70 participants into paid learning opportunities with 18 divisions across the City of Toronto

- Introduced new mental health, wellness and harm reduction Innovative Case Management (ICM) pilots, resulting in over 450 referrals to critical services and supports, as well as 10 paid job placements
- Supported access to virtual programming in a pandemic environment by providing clients with an equipment and digital access benefits
- Provided a variety of training and work based learning opportunities for our clients and filled 2,204 seats in Purchase of Employment Services (POES), 1,453 seats in our wrap around programs and 244 placements in Investing in Neighbourhoods (IIN)
- Hosted 22 webinars to ensure staff are well informed and up-to-date on available services and supports for OW clients, with an average attendance of 120 staff per session

CONTINUED PANDEMIC RESPONSE



We demonstrated our adaptability and resilience in the face of a constantly changing and evolving environment. In 2021, we:

- Developed and implemented a Service Continuity Response Plan to provide services to clients through multiple channels of access in a continuously changing environment brought on by COVID-19 and related public health measures
- In partnership with the Application and Support Centre, responded to the OW application surge following the end of Covid-19 federal benefits (mid October to December 2021). At its peak, staff responded to 200-250 phone enquiries/applications and 140-160 online applications on a daily basis. This resulted in over 8,700 applications being granted during this period.
- Supported the delivery of critical City services through redeployment
- Continued to engage our Client and Job Seeker Advisory Committee to inform important elements of our services and supports and Service Continuity Response Plan

PREPARING FOR SOCIAL ASSISTANCE RENEWAL (SAR)



We continued to help shape the Province's Social Assistance Renewal (SAR) plans through our work in the following areas:

- Hosted engagement sessions with over 300 staff, 35 community partners and TESS Client Advisory Groups seeking input and feedback on various elements of the province's SAR vision
- Worked collaboratively with Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) to influence and support SAR through co-chairing provincial-municipal working groups focused on improving stability supports and service delivery, funding and accountability, and communication and engagement
- Created a joint municipal-provincial project team to plan and implement the Centralized Intake prototype in Toronto
- Established an interdivisional work group to advance the City's position in Employment Services Transformation (EST) and by year end had engaged with over 60 external stakeholders



INVESTING IN PEOPLE



We focused on developing and maintaining a committed, skilled and inclusive workforce that reflects the diversity of Toronto. TESS is proud of our staff's accomplishments in achieving the following:

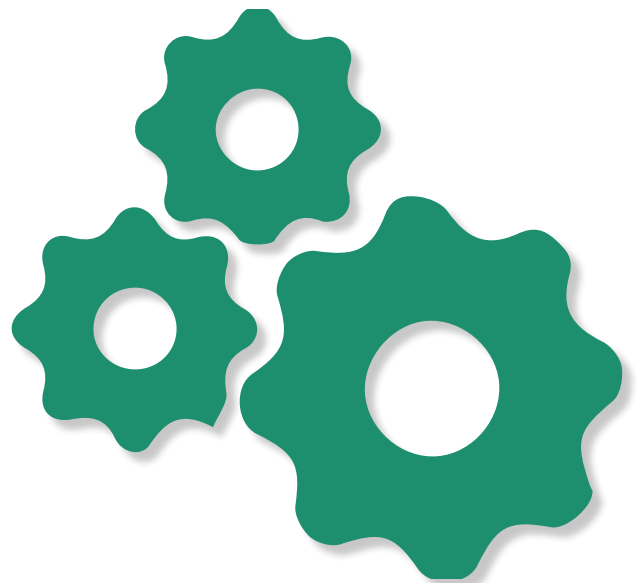
- Implemented several actions in the Diversity and Talent Management Plan including efforts to increase the representation of racialized and diverse staff in management positions
- Established a dedicated Equity, Diversity and Inclusion team
- Established an Indigenous Affairs Divisional Committee
- Developed a multi-year Confronting Anti Black Racism (CABR) Action Plan to be launched in 2022 led by CABR committees
- Initiated the development of a Zero Tolerance Framework to guide the division's response to dealing with incidents of harassment and discrimination
- Hosted a series of engagement, learning and development sessions, such as:
 - » Confronting Anti-Black Racism 101 training sessions for management
 - » Indigenous Affairs learning forums including a speaker series presented in partnership with the Ambe Maamowisdaa Employee Circle which represents Indigenous Staff (First Nations, Inuit and Metis) and allies throughout the City
 - » TESS Talks staff engagement forums focused on important topics such as CABR, Communities of Inclusion and Mental Health and well-being
- Continued to provide training and resources to support the enhancement of Service Planning practices

MODERNIZING THE WAY WE WORK



We continued our efforts to improve business processes and modernize our technologies. In 2021 we made significant improvements to the way we work and achieved the following:

- Developed plans for a hybrid working model to enable a flexible and accessible service model
- Co-led the Virtual Caseworker Pilot Project, partnering with divisions across the City and helping to inform a Corporate Virtual Services Playbook
- Developed an Integrated Performance Measurement Framework (IPMF) to align with the City's Result Based Accountability Framework
- Continued to carry out the Compliance and Integrity plan to review and strengthen compliance and integrity practices
- Prepared for the relocation of TESS offices to buildings and locations that better serve the needs of clients in their communities



LOOKING AHEAD

As we look ahead to 2022, we want to build on the important work we have done thus far, revisit the work we have had to pause due to the pandemic, and prepare for the iterative changes that Social Assistance Renewal will bring. This year will be a transitional time for us as we move towards recovery and renewal with a focus on:

PRIORITIZING AN INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE CULTURE

- supporting return to work through the full implementation of the hybrid work model;
- implementing the Confronting Anti-Black Racism Action Plan;
- advancing Equity, Diversity and Inclusion; and
- investing in the areas of staff development, mental health, wellness and engagement, including providing CABR and Indigenous Awareness training.

LEADING BUSINESS AND ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

- developing a divisional vision and change management strategy in preparation for broader Social Assistance Renewal (SAR) and Employment Services Transformation (EST);
- implementing Toronto's Centralized Intake prototype;
- continuing to develop the City's position on EST, through engagement with community agencies, partners, City Divisions and staff and a report to Council; and
- continuing to modernize information technology systems and data reporting approaches.

STRENGTHENING SERVICE PLANNING PRACTICES AND RELATIONSHIPS

- building staff knowledge of pathways for stability supports to help clients move towards independence;
- continuing to work with community partners to prepare clients for, and help secure, employment;
- pursuing opportunities to connect our clients to population-specific programs that are responsive to the needs and experiences of equity-seeking groups; and
- continuing to work through Human Services Integration (HSI) to improve service access and navigation for low income residents and clients.

We are optimistic about what we can accomplish in 2022 and look forward to applying our lessons learned in adaptability and resilience to whatever may come our way. We are committed to putting our clients first and making investments in areas we know will build an inclusive, diverse, skilled and adaptable workforce that sets us on a path for success. In 2022, our focus as an organization will be to initiate key recovery activities and support our workforce through the beginning of our transformational change.