

# The Community Health Reporter

From the [Community Health & Well-Being in Southwestern Ontario: A Resource for Planning](#) Report  
Volume 2, Issue 1

## Did you know ...

In the City of London,

- 15.2% of residents live in low income?
- More than 1 in 5 children under 5 years of age live in low income?
- On average, more than 24,000 residents received General Welfare Assistance each month in 1996?

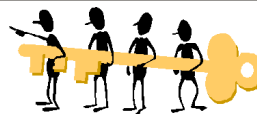
How Does London Compare?

London has a higher percentage of people living in low income than either Southwestern Ontario (SWO) or the Province of Ontario as a whole (1991):

London	15.2%
SWO	11.7%
Ontario	13.1%

This conflicts with the typical view of London as a "rich, up-scale" city. A recent telephone survey of Londoners found that only 8% thought London would be the area with the highest poverty burden, while 63% thought Ontario would have higher poverty.

What is "low income"?



## Your Health & Tomorrow's Health

### Care System

**Fact:** A high percentage of London residents are living in low income.

**Situation:** Health status is very closely related to social status. It has been found repeatedly that those with high incomes are usually healthier and live longer. Most chronic health problems, functional and activity limitations, disability days, dissatisfaction with health, and health care utilization are all more common as income decreases. Low income is also associated with risk-taking behaviours such as smoking, lack of regular exercise, and less preventive health care behaviours such as pap smears for women.

**Solution:** London needs to be a caring community. The negative stereotypes of people living in low income need to be broken down. Public and political support needs to be garnered and fostered. Initiatives such as the Mayor's Anti-Poverty Action Group are just the beginning of what we can do.

Community Resources  
What can I do?

- Become involved in your community.
- Volunteer your time to help those in need.
- Provide social and community support.

Low income, according to Statistics Canada, means that a family is spending at least 20% more of their income on basic needs, such as food and shelter, than the average family of similar size.



The calculation is also based on the population of the area in which a family lives. For example, in the City of London, a family of four would be considered low income if their total income was below \$24,662 annually (for 1991).

Low income is not concentrated in one area of London. The myth that the area "East of Adelaide" is a poorer community is simply not true. There are pockets of lower income throughout our city.

#### Children & Youth in low income

Younger people are hardest hit by these recessionary times, with high rates of unemployment and many minimum wage jobs. Among adults, the age group with the highest percentage of persons living in low income in the City of London is **20-24 years (25.6%)**, followed by those aged **25-34 years (15.6%)**.

20-34 year olds are also in their prime child bearing years, which explains why so many children are growing up in low income: **20.9% of children aged 0-4, and 19.3% of children aged 5-9**. This holds serious implications for these kids. If children are growing up in low income households, there may not be enough food to eat, no money for clothes, school supplies or other needs.

Low income has been shown to negatively influence many areas of child health and development, including increased mortality rates, greater risk of injuries, more chronic health problems and more educational difficulties.

#### General Welfare Assistance

In 1996 in London, there were almost 25,000 people each month on General Welfare Assistance (GWA), and more than a third of these were children. Of adult recipients who have children, the average number of kids is 2.1. Almost 1 in 5 of these adults have some post-secondary school education, and 85% are Canadian citizens. In addition, 17% have employment earnings, despite the fact that this money is deducted from their monthly Assistance payment.



These numbers conflict with the stereotypes some people have of assistance recipients. Many are **children, families**

- Break the stereotypes of people on income assistance.
- Insist that elected officials focus on the needs of low income families.

[Information London](#) has numerous resources for those looking **for** help or looking **to** help. They can be reached at (519)432-2211 or by mail at:

Information London  
210 Dundas Street  
London, ON  
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#### [Community Health and Well-being in Southwestern Ontario: A Resource for Planning](#)

To order a full copy of the report please contact:

#### [Population and Community Health Unit](#)

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Cost: \$14.95 (includes shipping & handling)

This newsletter is based on information from the above report. The report includes a detailed statistical analysis of health-related issues for the City of London and each county in Southwestern Ontario.

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**of average size**, some with **higher education**, some **employed**, and the great majority are Canadian citizens.

It is hard for many people to make it on the amount they are given to live, particularly with all the recent cuts in Ontario. On average in 1997, GWA beneficiaries were earning an annual income of roughly \$7,600. Before the 21% cut in welfare payments, only 16% of recipients paid more for housing than they received for a shelter allowance. Since the cuts, over 50% pay more for housing than they actually receive. Of course, this money has to come out of the funds set to be used for food and other necessities.

*Information throughout the newsletter is provided courtesy of Ms. J. Sarkella of the [Population & Community Health Unit](#) and Ms. P. Laframboise of the [Department of Community Services, Planning & Policy Division, The City of London](#).*



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