

Vital Signs®

A REFLECTION OF HAMILTON

MENTAL HEALTH & ADDICTION

A Vital Signs Update • FALL 2019



Hamilton's Vital Signs checks the pulse of our city. Under the guidance of a panel of community experts, it curates existing data from key areas of community life into research you can read. Its goal is to provide an insight into Hamilton's overall vitality and to identify significant trends that matter to all of us.



We encourage you to share this report widely and to learn more by visiting hamiltonvitalsigns.ca where you'll find expanded information on mental health and addiction in Hamilton, including links to the original research.

Mental health in Hamilton



Key findings

- Over two-thirds of Hamiltonians report very good or excellent mental health.
- Hamiltonians aged 50-64 are the most likely of all age groups to report their mental health as only fair or poor.
- The percentage of Hamilton senior kindergarten children who are vulnerable on the emotional maturity scale is increasing.
- The number of emergency room visits for self-harm is on the rise.
- The overall number of emergency room visits and the number of hospitalizations for issues related to mental health are on the rise.

Addiction in Hamilton



Key findings

- Fewer than half of Hamiltonians exceeded Health Canada's Low Risk Guidelines for consuming alcohol, similar to the provincial average.
- The percentage of daily smokers in Hamilton has decreased substantially over the past decade, and the percentage of youth who are not even trying smoking is rising.
- Emergency room visits for substance use have risen over the past eight years — most notably for opioids — and opioid deaths have escalated dramatically.
- The percentage of youth spending more than five hours a day on social media is increasing.

Mental health in Hamilton

Perceived mental health, ages 12 and over

In 2015-2016, 70% of Hamiltonians ages 12 and over reported very good or excellent mental health, similar to the 75% rate in 2007-2008. These percentages are also similar to provincial averages over the same time frame. Hamiltonians ages 18-34 had the highest percentage at 76.4%, while 50-64 year olds had the lowest percentage at 62.3%. Men between the ages of 50-64 had the lowest percentage of any age-gender group, with only 55.5% reporting excellent or very good mental health.

Perceived life stress, ages 15 and over

In 2015-2016, more than one in five Hamiltonians (22.1%) ages 15 and over reported “quite a lot” of life stress in the past year. This rate was similar to the provincial average of 22.0%, and has remained relatively unchanged over the past decade. Reports of high life stress varied widely by age group: from 10.6% for 12-17 year olds to 30.8% for 50-64 year olds.

| Age group | Self-reported mental health <i>good or excellent</i> | Perceived life stress <i>quite a lot</i> |
|-------------|---|---|
| 12-17 | 69% | 11% |
| 18-34 | 76% | 19% |
| 35-49 | 72% | 28% |
| 50-64 | 62% | 31% |
| 65 and over | 68% | 13% |

Source: Statistics Canada, Table 13-10-0452-01. Table 13-10-0013-01. Accessed August 2019.

Children’s mental health, emotional maturity

The Early Development Instrument is a government survey that measures developmental health, including emotional maturity, for all senior kindergarten students in Ontario. Emotional maturity includes pro-social behaviour, anxiety and fearfulness, aggression, hyperactivity and inattentiveness.

Overall, in Hamilton in 2018, the percentage of senior kindergarten students who were observed vulnerable on emotional maturity was 12.3%, unchanged from 2015, but up sharply from 9.4% in 2010.

Self-reported mental health, youth and young adult

A recent report by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health looked at regional data for high school students (Hamilton is included with Niagara, Brant, Haldimand, and Waterloo-Wellington) and found that 27% of students, Grades 9-12, reported poor mental health. This rate was not significantly higher than the rate for Ontario (21.5%). The percentage of Ontario students reporting poor mental health has increased substantially since 2007, when the percentages were between 11-13%. The same 2017 survey found that 16% of students, Grades 9-12, reported seriously considering suicide in the past year.

A recent report by McMaster researchers, Jeff Martin and Wayne Lewchuk, that focused on Hamilton millennials (born between 1982 and 1997) found that more than one in four reported their mental health was fair or poor, and only 10% rated their mental health as excellent. Their research demonstrated a strong link between millennials’ mental health and the predictability of work and amount of income. Millennials who had precarious work were three times more likely to report fair/poor mental health than those with secure employment (39.3% compared to 13%). Those with annual incomes less than \$40,000 were more than twice as likely to report fair/poor mental health than those with annual incomes over \$80,000 (38.1% compared to 16.4%).



Self-reported happiness, Two-Spirit and LGBTIQ+ community

A Hamilton-based research partnership between McMaster University, The AIDS Network, and researchers who are Two-Spirit and LGBTIQ+ reported that mental health and well-being vary greatly among members of the Two-Spirit and LGBTIQ+ community. Results of an in-depth survey of almost 1,000 community members found 44% of respondents said their happiness level was good or great. People who identified as lesbian or gay were the most likely to respond good or great (both over 50%), while people who identified as transgender, at 25%, were the least likely to respond this way.

Emergency room visits for self-harm

The rate of emergency room visits for self-harm increased to 150 per 100,000 people in 2017 from 118 per 100,000 people in 2010. Females under age 20 have the highest rates of all age groups with a rate of 410 per 100,000 — more than three times the general population — and an increase since 2014 when the rate was 321 per 100,000.

Hospital visits due to mental health

In 2017 in Hamilton, there were 2,753 hospitalizations due to mental health and psychiatric issues, the fourth leading cause of all hospitalizations (behind injuries, chronic disease, and infectious disease). Since 2011, hospitalizations for most mental health disorders have been rising. The rate for people over 12 with mood disorders has risen from 161 per 100,000 people to 198 per 100,000 people, an increase of 23%.

In recent years, there has been an especially sharp increase in mood and/or anxiety disorders among children and youth. Hospitalization rates for children and youth with a mood disorder increased to 222 per 100,000 people in 2015 from 95 per 100,000 in 2010, an increase of 134%. For children and youth with anxiety-related disorders, hospitalizations have risen to 187 per 100,000 people in 2015 from 20 per 100,000 in 2010, an eightfold increase.

Addiction in Hamilton

Percent of population who are heavy drinkers

In 2013-2014, according to the City of Hamilton's Community Alcohol Report, 43% of Hamiltonians reported exceeding the Low Risk Guidelines, similar to the 44% provincial average. According to the report, men, people with higher incomes and higher levels of education were more likely to exceed the guidelines. Over 60% of Hamilton youth reported exceeding the guidelines, which was the highest percentage of any age group.

Percent of population who are daily smokers

According to the 2015-2016 Canadian Community Health Survey, 13.6% of Hamiltonians reported smoking tobacco daily, similar to the 11.9% provincial average. This percentage is down substantially from a decade ago when 18.5% of Hamiltonians reported smoking daily, compared to 15.9% provincially. The City of Hamilton's Health Check 2018 found higher smoking rates in the lower city, among people with low incomes, and among lone parents. *Our Health Counts*, a report by the urban Indigenous community, found 68% of urban Indigenous Hamiltonians smoke daily.

Among youth, smoking abstinence (those who never start smoking) has increased to 88% in 2013-2014 from 72% in 2003. This progress translates into over 7,800 youth who will not start smoking. However, youth vaping rates are on the rise, and non-smoker youth who vape are up to five times more likely to initiate tobacco smoking.



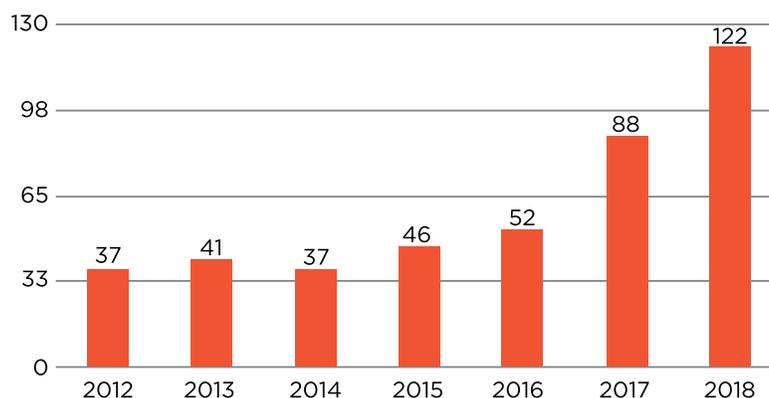
Emergency room visits for substance use

In Hamilton, between 2012 and 2017, emergency room visits for acute toxicity showed increases for all types of drugs except alcohol, which dropped slightly. Hamilton's opioid overdose rate of 87.2 visits per 100,000 population in 2017 was 59% higher than the provincial average of 55 visits per 100,000 population.

| Substance | 2012 | 2017 |
|-----------------|------|------|
| Cocaine | 36 | 73 |
| Methamphetamine | 31 | 72 |
| Cannabis | 21 | 64 |
| Alcohol | 83 | 75 |
| Opioids | 171 | 497 |

Number of opioid-related deaths

Deaths caused by opioid use have also increased dramatically. In 2018, there were 103 deaths in Hamilton (with an additional 19 still under investigation and likely to be added). This number compares to 37 deaths in 2012. While comparative data for 2018 is not yet available, the 2017 Hamilton rate of opioid deaths (15.4 per 100,000 population) was higher than the provincial average (9 per 100,000 population).



Percent of youth reporting problematic technology use (including gaming)

While local data is currently unavailable, a 2017 in-depth survey of high school students (Grades 9-12) by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health found 18% of Ontario students report symptoms of a moderate to severe problem with technology overuse. One in five (20%) students spent five or more hours per day on social media, up from 16% in 2015 and 11% in 2013. Almost one-third (30%) spent five or more hours on electronic devices in their free time.

About Hamilton Community Foundation

Hamilton Community Foundation has been working to drive positive change in Hamilton since 1954. We help people give in a way that has meaning to them and impact in the community, provide grants and financing to charitable organizations and initiatives, and bring people together to address priority issues that affect Hamiltonians.

To find out more about HCF, please call us or visit www.hamiltoncommunityfoundation.ca
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