

The persistent rise in poverty in the City of Toronto in the first half of this decade, after the huge increase in the 1990s is disturbing.

These trends must be turned around if Toronto is to remain a strong and healthy place for families to live, work and raise their children.

*Losing Ground
United Way Toronto 2007*



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The Changing Face of Poverty in Toronto

Global research studies have demonstrated a strong correlation between mental health concerns and the degree of social inequality that exists in a country. ¹

Children who grow up in poverty show almost 3 ½ times the number of conduct disorders, almost twice the chronic illnesses and over twice the rate of school problems, hyperactivity and emotional disorders as children who are not poor. ²

The loss of influence, status and respect experienced by those at the lower end of social status can cause significant physical and emotional distress. [For some young men with no economic or educational route to achieving the higher status and earnings required for full citizenship, the experience of daily life at the bottom of a steep social hierarchy can be enraging. ¹

One in four families in Toronto is struggling with poverty. Over half of Toronto's single parent families are living in poverty, compared to one in three in 1990. ³

Since 2001, poverty has become ever more concentrated in particular Toronto neighbourhoods, particularly in outlying suburban areas and the city is increasingly splitting into "have and have-not" communities.

The number of high-poverty neighbourhoods throughout Toronto quadrupled from 1981 to 2001, increasing from 30 to 120. ⁴

The proportion of these low-income neighbourhoods has increased from 19% to 50%. Middle-income neighbourhoods, meanwhile, have declined from 66% to 32% of the city and high-income neighbourhoods are generally located in the city centre, have increased in proportion from 15% to 18% and are communities that are 90% white. ⁵

Racialized groups are more likely to be poor and to live in low/very low-income neighbourhoods. ⁵ Over the last two decades, the number of racial minorities who live below the poverty line has risen by 360%. Over the same period, the poverty rate among white Canadians declined by almost 30%. ⁶

47% of Toronto's population is made up of racialized groups; by 2017, it is expected that they will account for the majority of the population. ⁷

Scarborough is the most rapidly changing area of Toronto. The total population is about 603,000 (2006 Census) and grew by 2.4% between 2001 and 2006 compared with 0.8% for the City as a whole.

Between 1981 and 2001, the population of Scarborough increased by 31% while the number of poor families in Scarborough increased by 137%. ⁴

In 2006, 27% of Scarborough households were low-income (220,220 households) – a 3% increase since 2001 census.

Scarborough's population today reflects the great wave of immigration over the past 25 years. The area receives the largest number of newcomers to Toronto where more than half of all newcomer Canadians settle. Two thirds of the population is comprised of racialized groups, compared with 40% for the rest of the City.⁸

In 2006, 57% of the total population were immigrants, and one in eight arrived in Canada between 2001 and 2006. The majority of new immigrants are from south, central or eastern Asia.⁹

YouthLink services and programs place special emphasis on reaching out to newcomer and racialized youth, particularly those in Scarborough's low-income communities.

Our services support youth and families dealing with cross-cultural conflicts, help youth build positive social networks and offer opportunities to pursue personal goals or become involved in community initiatives. □

Get Involved!

Visit **www.youthlink.ca** for ways that you can support street-involved and homeless youth.

Sources:

- 1 *The Spirit Level - Why Equality is Better for Everyone*, Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett. Penguin Books, London England 2009
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- 3 Losing Ground, United Way Toronto November 2007
- 4 Poverty by Postal Code, United Way Toronto 2004
- 5 David Hulchanski, The Three Cities within Toronto, Centre for Urban and community Studies Research Bulletin 41. www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca
- 6 The Colour of Poverty Campaign Fact Sheet #1 www.colourofpoverty.ca
- 7 "Visible Minorities Gaining", TheStar.com, April 3, 2008
8. "[When you want to know Scarborough, Ontario](http://www.scarboroughdirect.ca/about_scarborough/)". Scarborough Direct. http://www.scarboroughdirect.ca/about_scarborough/. Retrieved 2008-05-02.
9. City of Toronto Demographics <http://www.toronto.ca/demographics/index.htm>



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