

Chart 1. Recent population growth

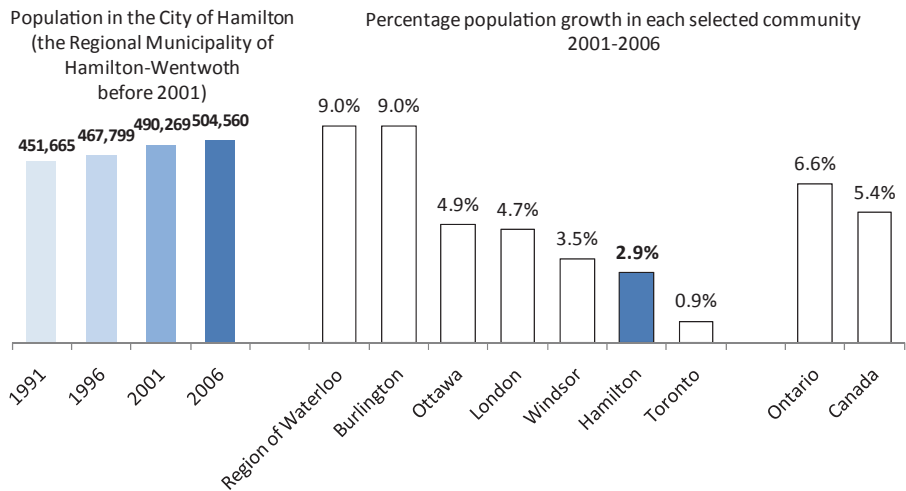


Chart 2. Young children

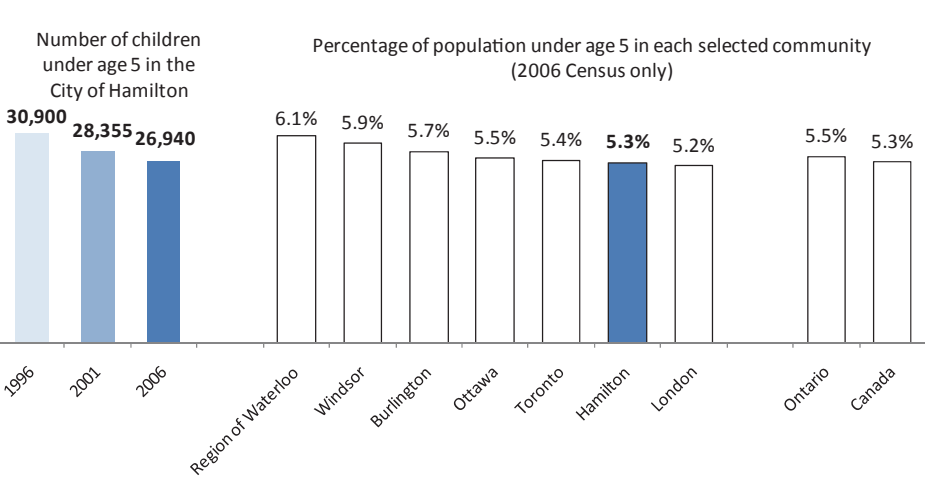


Chart 3. Seniors

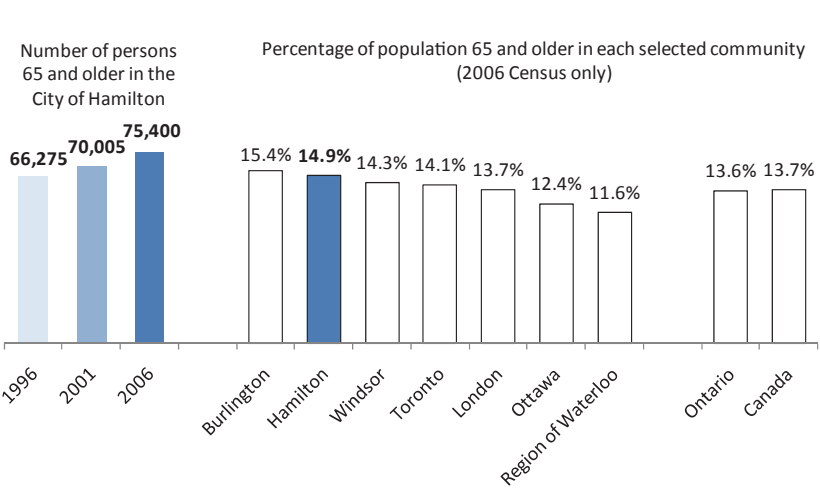


Chart 4. Recent immigrants

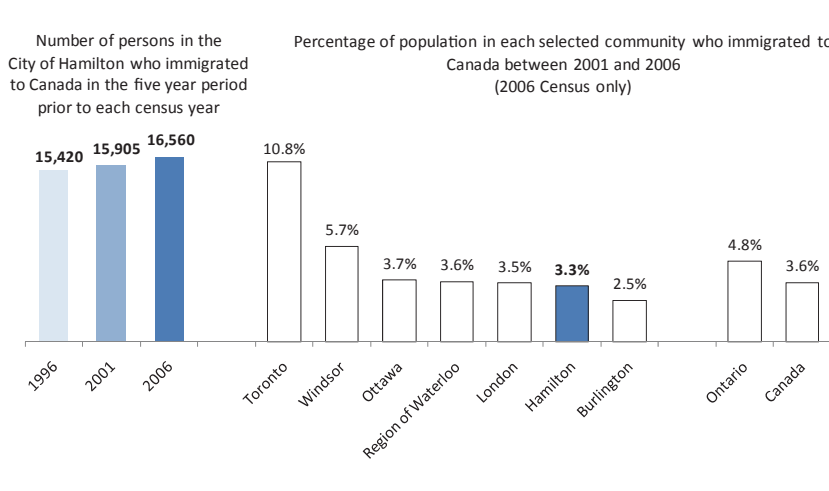


Chart 12. Poverty rates by selected groups, City of Hamilton and Ontario, 2006 Census

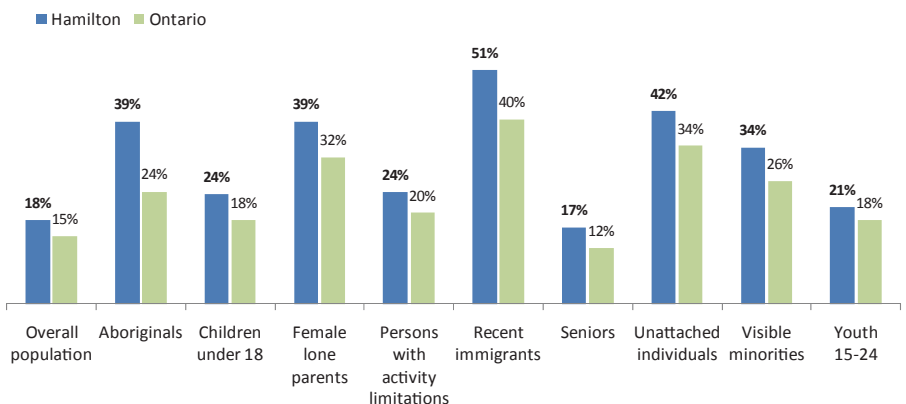


Chart 11. Persons living in poverty

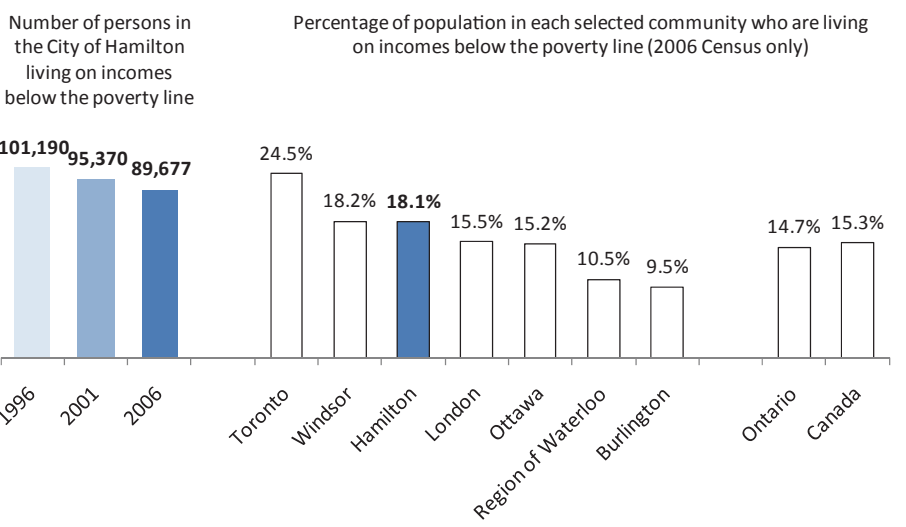


Chart 10. Persons working full-time yet still living in poverty

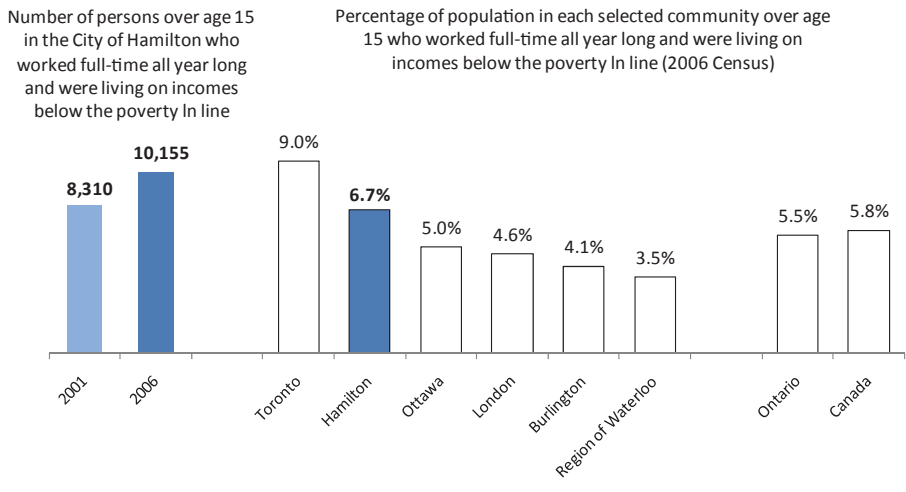


Chart 9. Persons who have contacted a health professional about mental health

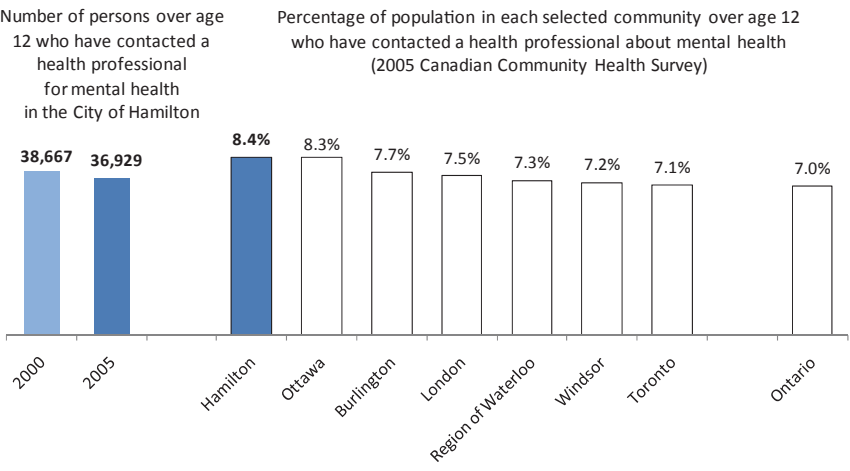


Chart 8. Persons under age 65 with self-declared activity limitations

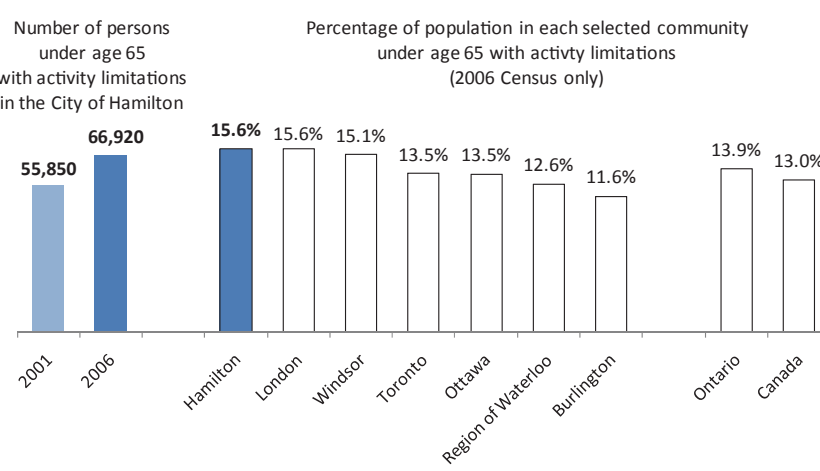
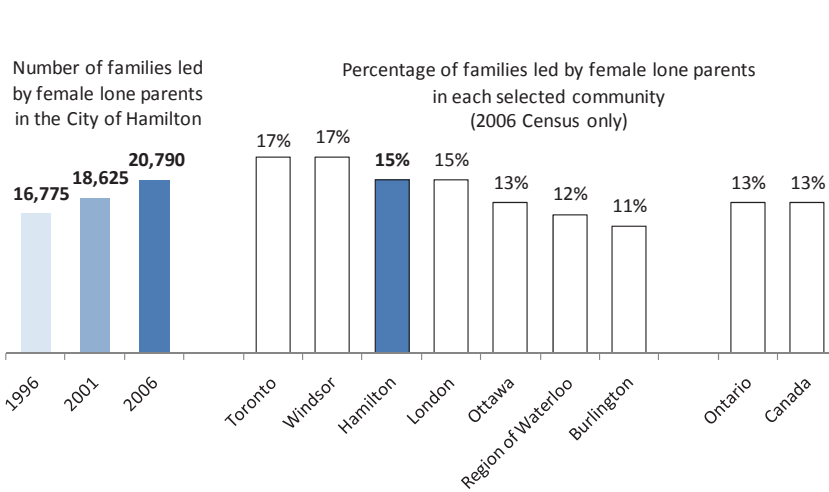


Chart 7. Families led by female lone parents



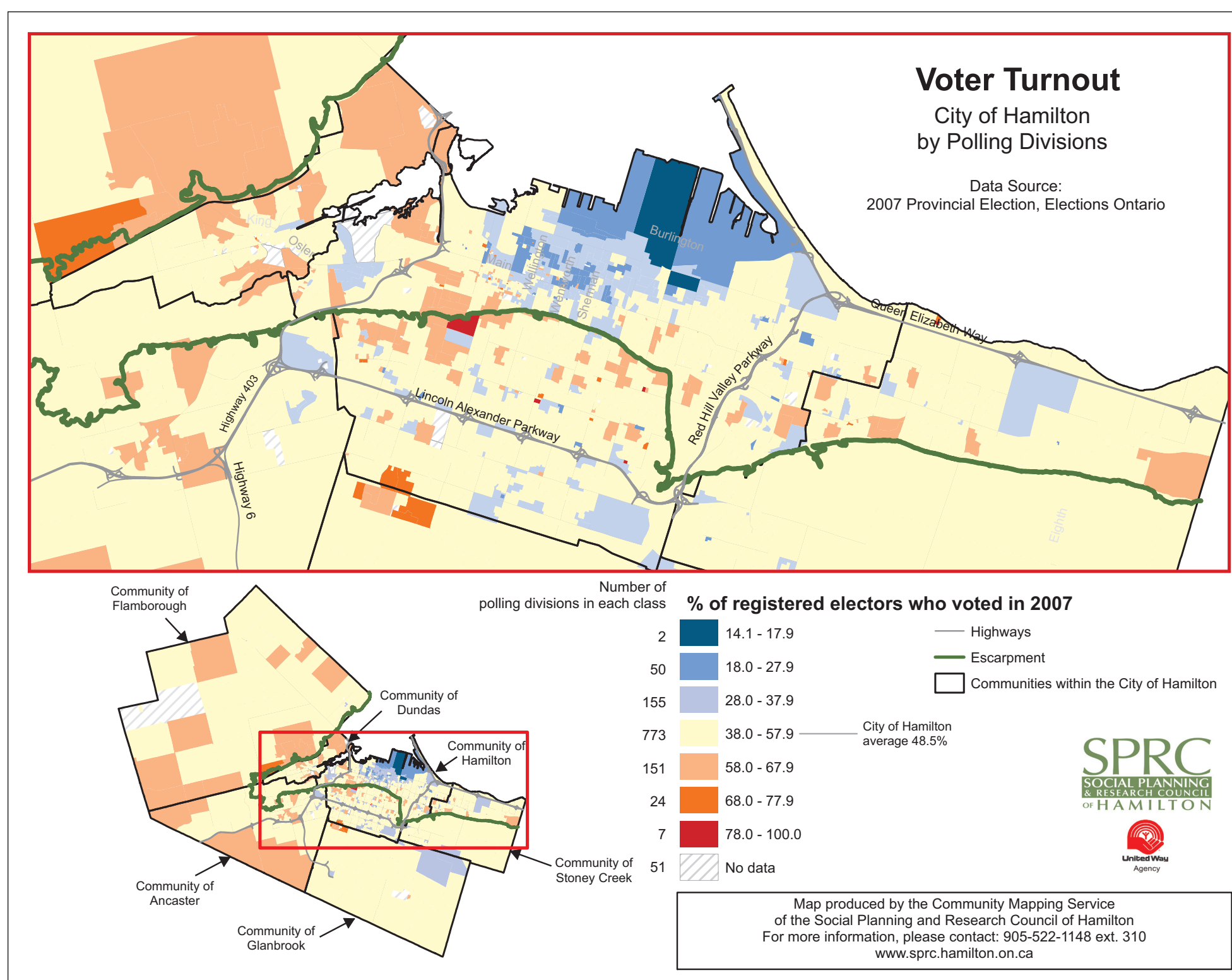
Key trends in Hamilton's social landscape

- Some trends are similar to challenges faced by communities across the country, such as a growing senior population and a shrinking population of young children.
- These two trends in particular are magnified in Hamilton with the city having both the second largest proportion of seniors in its population and the second smallest proportion of young children within the set of comparable communities.
- These factors combined with low rates of immigration have meant that Hamilton has experienced slow population growth, only higher than Toronto within the set of comparable communities.
- Though poverty rates in Hamilton declined overall between 1996 and 2006, many populations who experience the highest poverty rates are growing rapidly. These groups include Aboriginals, female lone parents, persons with disabilities, and visible minorities. The poverty rates for these groups are higher in Hamilton than the provincial average.
- Many Hamiltonians often face challenges beyond insufficient income to live healthy lives and participate fully in society. One of the major barriers for many persons living on low incomes is social exclusion, a trend that is illustrated by the map on the next page.
- Other barriers include discrimination and racism, child care, and the inaccessibility of our built environment.
- Responses to these trends must address the specific challenges and barriers faced by groups overrepresented in low income populations in order to improve the quality of life for all citizens.
- The disability and mental health indicators analyzed in this report are the only ones that show Hamilton ranked above all the other selected communities. This underscores the importance for Hamilton to better coordinate services and infrastructure with the needs of these populations in mind.

Data notes: All data, except for Chart 9, are from the Statistics Canada's Census (1996, 2001 and 2006). Data for Chart 9 are from the Canadian Community Health Survey. Special thanks to the members of the Community Data Consortium (www.communitydata.ca), including the City of Hamilton, for making data available locally.

A extra special thank you to all Hamiltonians who have faithfully completed their census forms over the years to allow this data to be the best reflection of social trends in our community.

For the full report, which includes additional findings and maps of selected indicators, please visit:
www.sprc.hamilton.on.ca



The map above illustrates one of the outcomes of the inequalities in our city.

The map shows voter turnout rates during the 2007 provincial elections in each of the over 1,000 polling divisions in Hamilton. There are striking differences between the poorest and wealthiest parts of our community, with the lowest voter turnout rates in some of the poorest neighbourhoods in Hamilton.

The general decline in voter turnout in Canada in the last two decades has most commonly been attributed to a marked disinterest in politics by younger generations. But the effect of rising social and income inequality has not received as much attention. Lower voter participation among residents who are struggling on low incomes creates a negative feedback loop: our city's most vulnerable aren't represented at the tables where policies that affect them are discussed and civic and political leaders don't hear their voices when making decisions, then those on the margins feel that the political system does not reflect their priorities and they become more disenchanted.

One of the findings of the Hamilton Social Landscape report is that many of the fastest growing groups in Hamilton are groups with the highest poverty rates. Many of these groups are not well represented in the city's leadership, in civic life, in business or in politics.

What can be done to change these dynamics?

The City of Hamilton has proposed that an **Inclusion Lens** be broadly adopted to help reverse the current trajectory.

What is inclusivity? According to the city it is "generating the feeling and the reality of belonging... and taking deliberate steps to welcome, accept and value all individuals, understand reverse exclusionary practices, and create opportunities for people from marginalized groups to participate in the planning and delivery of services."

The city encourages the inclusion lens to be used to analyze all programs, services and practices to ensure they promote the social and economic inclusion of individual families and communities.

This inclusion lens must also be used in practices that engage residents in meaningful activities to gather feedback and become involved in decision-making. **Engagement activities** should be more than passive and informal and can take many more participatory and empowering forms (Table 1).

The city has started to show leadership in improving community engagement practices. A recent example has been the Citizens' Forum on Area Rating of Property Taxes. Citizens were chosen at random from property tax records to be invited to be members and then applicants were selected to ensure the composition of the board reflected at least in part the geographic and demographic diversity of the city. The Citizens' Forum engaged in resident consultation activities of their own. They grappled over the complex and contentious issue of which parts of the city should pay for what services and were able to develop recommendations by consensus. These recommendations were debated by City Council and formed the basis of the final decision.

The city's recent neighbourhood development focus presents an opportunity to continue to build inclusion and strengthen resident engagement in civic life.

These are important steps that the city is taking, and it is imperative that other organizations, businesses and leaders continue in this path. Inclusion and engagement are not easy solutions; they take time, effort and investment. But they are worthwhile because they hold the promise that few other strategies can deliver: **for the people by all the people.**

Table 1. Community Engagement Framework

Inclusivity Lens				
PASSIVE (INFORM)	REACTIVE (Consult)	PARTICIPATORY (INVOLVE)	EMPOWERMENT (COLLABORATE)	LEADERSHIP (EMPOWER)
Citizens and organizations are informed of issues	Citizens and organizations provide input into planning priorities	Citizens and organizations influence planning priorities and decision-making	Citizens and organizations work together in shared planning and action	Citizens and organizations initiate and lead in issue identification, planning and action
Levels of Engagement				

Taken from *The Playbook: A Framework for Human Services Planning in Hamilton*, City of Hamilton (2010)
<http://www.hamilton.ca/HealthandSocialServices/SocialServices/HumanServicesPlan.htm>

Special report from the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton
and the United Way of Burlington and Greater Hamilton



Photo credit: Laura Bakody

Hamilton's Social Landscape

Hamilton has seen important economic and political changes over the last decades, such as the shrinking of the manufacturing workforce and amalgamation of the regional municipalities into one city. During this time, many broad social trends have also affected Hamilton.

This changing social landscape is the focus of this report.

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This is a summary of the full Hamilton Social Landscape report available at:
<http://www.sprc.hamilton.on.ca>

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