

**how does housing affect your health?** That's the main question we're trying to answer. This is the first study like this in Canada!

# GTA WEST HOUSING AND HEALTH STUDY

**thank you** for taking part in this study! Thanks to your participation, we're learning about people on the waiting list and their experiences. This kind of information has not been available before. Without your participation, this study wouldn't be possible.

Our research team, headed by Dr. Jim Dunn, contacted you and others who are on the waiting list for rent-geared-to-income, or RGI, housing, to learn about your life and experiences. The people that we talked to were on waiting lists in Toronto, Hamilton, Peel, and Halton. We are following up with people over the next few years, whether they remain on the waitlist or move into RGI housing, so that we can find out about how their housing, health and other parts of their lives might change. We

are committed to continuing this important work, and we hope that you'll be willing to stay involved in the study.



while on the waitlist, this is what you told us...

who we talked to... You are part of a group of 504 people who did our survey in 2010 to 2013. We talked to 176 people in Toronto, 146 in Hamilton, 114 in Peel, and 68 in Halton. All were adults between 18-75 years old. Most people (50%) were between 45-64 years old. We talked to more females (60%) than males (40%). 69% were born outside of Canada, and 40% said that at home they mainly spoke a language other than English. 47% of people reported that they were working. 57% reported that their yearly income (before taxes) was less than \$20,000.

## housing

75% of people said they were satisfied or very satisfied with their current dwelling. 84% said they were satisfied or very satisfied with their neighbourhood.

We asked about how difficult it is to pay your shelter/housing costs. 65% of people said that it was difficult or extremely difficult. 43% also said that they (or someone else in the household) had worried that there would not be enough to eat because of lack of money.

This research was funded in part by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC). The views expressed are those of the researchers, not the Government of Ontario, or the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

## physical health

33% reported that they had a physical disability. In addition, 38% said that there was at least one person (other than themselves) in their household that has a physical disability.

One third of the people we spoke to rated their health as 'fair' or 'poor' compared to people their own age. Almost half (48%) said that they were limited in the physical activity that they could do because of a long-term physical health condition.

- 39% reported **back problems**
- 38% reported **arthritis**
- 35% reported **high blood pressure**
- 18% reported **diabetes**

## mental health

We asked how people had been feeling lately. 48% said they had been bothered by emotional problems (feeling anxious, depressed or irritable) 'moderately', 'quite a lot', or 'extremely' in the past month. 39% said that personal or emotional problems had prevented them from doing their usual daily activities.

## what's next?

As we follow up with people, we'll compare results between those still on the waitlist and those that move into RGI housing. We'll share what we've learned with different levels of government to increase understanding of issues with RGI housing.

## other findings

Some of you also did a more in-depth interview with us. Some key things we heard:

Some people want to live in locations close to public transit and grocery stores or farmers' markets. Being close to support networks (any health care you use, family, friends) is also very important.

For people who have children, stability in children's lives is just as important as living in affordable housing. Some people will turn down offers of RGI housing if it means that kids must change schools, or be far from other family who support them.

## stay in touch

If you're a participant in Toronto or Peel Region, contact our St. Michael's Hospital team:

**1-888-868-5874**

If you're a participant in Hamilton or Halton Region, contact our McMaster University team:

**905-525-9140 ext. 23375**  
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