



## City of Hamilton

# COMMUNITY BENEFITS PROTOCOL SUB-COMMITTEE REVISED

**Meeting #:** CBPS 26-001

**Date:** April 20, 2026

**Time:** 1:30 p.m.

**Location:** Room 264, 2nd Floor, City Hall (hybrid) (RM)  
71 Main Street West

Matt Gauthier, Legislative Coordinator (905) 546-2424 ext. 6437

---

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. CEREMONIAL ACTIVITIES
3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA
4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
5. ADOPTION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING
  - 5.1 November 6, 2025
6. DELEGATIONS
7. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION
  - \*7.1 HSC26036  
Prototype Social Enterprise Registry – McMaster MBA GRIT (City Wide)  
*This item will be preceded by a presentation.*
  - 7.2 HSC26028  
Community Benefits Framework Update (City Wide)
8. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION
9. MOTIONS

10. NOTICES OF MOTION

11. ADJOURNMENT



## **COMMUNITY BENEFITS PROTOCOL SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES 25-001**

**3:00 p.m.**

**November 6, 2025**

Room 192/193 (Hybrid), 1<sup>st</sup> Floor

Hamilton City Hall

71 Main Street West

---

**Present:** Councillors C. Kroetsch (Chair), T. Hwang, N. Nann (Virtual), and M. Tadeson

K. Andrus (Vice-Chair), M. Ellerker E. Myrie (Virtual) and V. Nikolskaya

**Absent  
with Regrets:** Councillor M. Wilson – Personal

---

### **1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Kroetsch called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

### **2. CEREMONIAL ACTIVITIES**

There were no Ceremonial Activities.

### **3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

**(Andrus/Nikolskaya)**

That the agenda for the November 6, 2025, Community Benefits Protocol Sub-Committee be approved, as amended.

**CARRIED**

### **4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

K. Andrus declared a Non-Disqualifying interest to Item 6.1 – Amandeep Saini, Samanntha Lee, Andrea Michael and Rumaisa Binte Saad, Research Shop McMaster University, respecting an updated jurisdictional scan of Community Benefits initiatives across Canada as he was involved with the creation of the Community Benefits Jurisdictional Scan from McMaster University Research Shop.

**5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

**5.1 December 16, 2024**

**(Hwang/Nann)**

That the Minutes of the December 16, 2024, meeting of the Community Benefits Protocol Sub-Committee be adopted, as presented.

**CARRIED**

**6. DELEGATIONS**

**6.1 Amandeep Saini, Samanntha Lee, Andrea Michael and Rumaisa Binte Saad, Research Shop McMaster University, respecting an updated jurisdictional scan of Community Benefits initiatives across Canada**

**(Andrus/Nann)**

That the delegates be provided an additional 20 minutes to complete their delegation.

**CARRIED**

Amandeep Saini, Samanntha Lee, Andrea Michael and Rumaisa Binte Saad, Research Shop McMaster University, addressed Committee respecting an updated jurisdictional scan of Community Benefits initiatives across Canada.

**(Andrus/Nikolskaya)**

That the delegation from Amandeep Saini, Samanntha Lee, Andrea Michael and Rumaisa Binte Saad, Research Shop McMaster University, respecting an updated jurisdictional scan of Community Benefits initiatives across Canada, be received.

**CARRIED**

**(Nann/Tadeson)**

That staff be directed to consider the feasibility of implementing the recommendations contained within the jurisdictional scan that was provided by the delegation when developing the Community Benefits Framework.

**CARRIED**

**7. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

**7.1 HSC25050  
Community Benefits Framework: Phases 1 and 2 Summary Report  
(City Wide)**

**(Hwang/Andrus)**

That report HSC25050 respecting Community Benefits Framework: Phases 1 and 2 Summary Report (City Wide), be received.

**CARRIED**

**8. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

There were no Items for Consideration.

**9. MOTIONS**

There were no Motions.

**10. NOTICES OF MOTION**

There were no Notices of Motion.

**11. GENERAL INFORMATION / OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no General Information / Other Business.

**12. PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL**

There were no Private and Confidential Items.

**13. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the Community Benefits Protocol Sub-Committee was adjourned at 3:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Matt Gauthier  
Legislative Coordinator  
Office of the City Clerk

Councillor Cameron Kroetsch  
Chair  
Community Benefits Protocol Sub-Committee

CITY OF HAMILTON

# SOCIAL PROCUREMENT REGISTRY

# AGENDA

**Our Team**

**Proposed System**

**GRIT Week**

**Marketing Plan**

**Mandate**

**Financial Impact**

# OUR TEAM

---



**Prabhjot Rai**



**Jai Viswanathan**



**Kunal Manna**

**MBA Candidates at DeGroote School of Business**

# GRIT WEEK

GRIT Week is a signature McMaster DeGroote MBA program where student teams consult on real-world problems for real organizations over five intensive days

This proposal was developed by a five-person team working directly with HCBN, built specifically for the City of Hamilton



# OUR MANDATE

---

1. Design a self-identification registry and verification framework for social enterprises
2. Build a tiered procurement system that integrates the registry into City workflows
3. Develop a marketing and financial impact plan to drive adoption

# The Need for Social Procurement in Hamilton

---

Without a registry, diverse-owned businesses stay invisible to the City's \$1B+ in annual procurement



**\$103M**

Awarded to certified diverse suppliers in Toronto (2017-2023)

Hamilton's Cultural Pillar: "Courageous Change – we embrace innovation and risk taking" -  
Council Priority: "Economic Prosperity & Growth" with an equity and accessibility lens

***A Social Value Procurement Registry makes equity real - not just a promise.***

# PROBLEM STATEMENT

## No Verified Directory

The City lacks an organized business directory identifying social enterprises eligible for contracts.



## Unstructured Process

The current certification process is a known barrier, with no clear verification mechanism.



## Wealth and Talent Redistributed

Procurement contracts default to traditional vendors, missing opportunities for marginalized local businesses.



# IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

---

## **Social Procurement Registry**

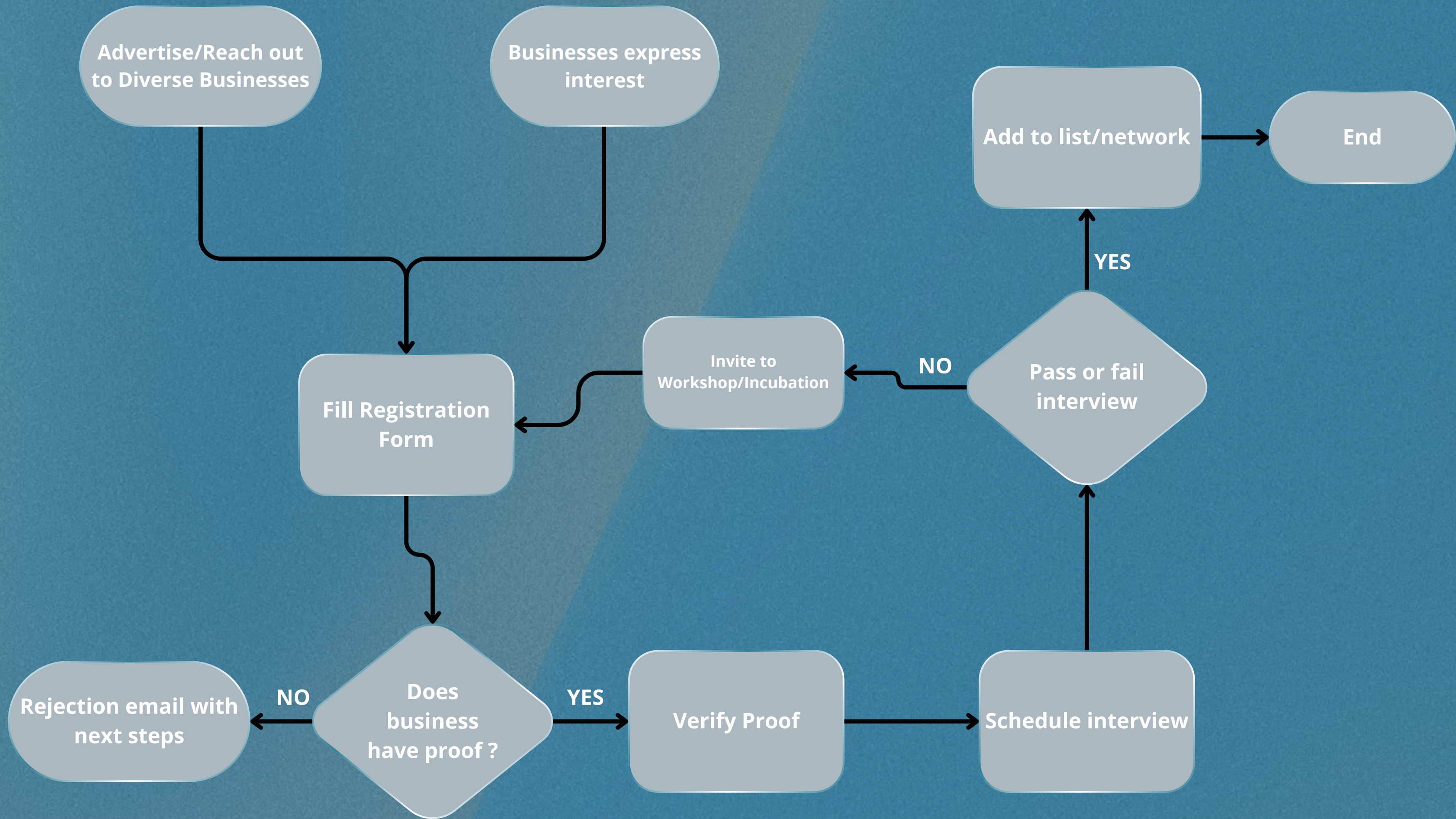
Portal for businesses to sign up if they consider themselves a social enterprise business

## **Social Procurement Framework**

Internal framework to help the Procurement Team award contracts in an equal manner



# SOCIAL PROCUREMENT REGISTRY



# REGISTRY ACCUMULATION

---

**Build a centralized, searchable database of verified social enterprises**

## Phase 1

- Restaurants, catering and events
- Cleaning, landscaping and facilities management

## Phase 2

- Skilled trades
- Professional and Consulting Services


PHASE 1 FOCUS

# Are you in one of these industries?


Phase 1 of the registry is prioritizing outreach to these sectors. If you're in one of them, now is the time to apply.


 **Restaurants & catering**  
Phase 1 priority

 **Events & hospitality**  
Phase 1 priority

 **Cleaning services**  
Phase 1 priority

 **Landscaping**  
Phase 1 priority

 **Facilities management**  
Phase 1 priority

 **Other sectors**  
Phase 2 – coming soon

# OUTREACH AND AWARENESS

---

**Partner with the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce and community organizations to actively recruit diverse businesses into the pipeline**

## Phase 1

Direct outreach to known social enterprises through HCC network and HCBN community partners

## Phase 2

Open promotion through City website, social media, community events, and word-of-mouth from registered vendors

# OUR APPROACH

---

**Simple, trusted, community-driven - meet businesses where they already are**



## Partner Channels

Leverage trusted organizations businesses already belong to (HCC, SCCC, Etc)

## Councillor Outreach

Equip every councillor office with a media kit - email outreach, social media posts, branded images

## Digital Campaign

City website, social media, and community events to drive awareness and make registration simple

# APPLICATION AND PROOF CHECK

---

**Collect self-identification data and verify documentation through a standardized checklist and fraud-screening protocol**

## Application Form

- Online application form informed by the City of Hamilton Social Value Questionnaire
- Answers to these questions will be supported with documents
- Questionnaire will help backend social procurement framework

## Document Verification

- Documents verified by City of Hamilton Staff
- Build platform to eventually auto verify some common documents



Step 1 of 5

## Tell us about your business

This information will be used to identify your application. All fields are required.

**Before you begin:** The information you provide in this questionnaire may be used by the City of Hamilton to inform future social value procurement strategies. Only summary or aggregated data with identifiers removed will be used for those purposes.

**Business name \***

Registered business name

**Contact person name \***

Full name

**Business registration number \***

e.g. 123456789

**Email address \***

you@yourbusiness.ca

**Phone number \***

(905) 000-0000

**Business address \***

Street address, city, province, postal code

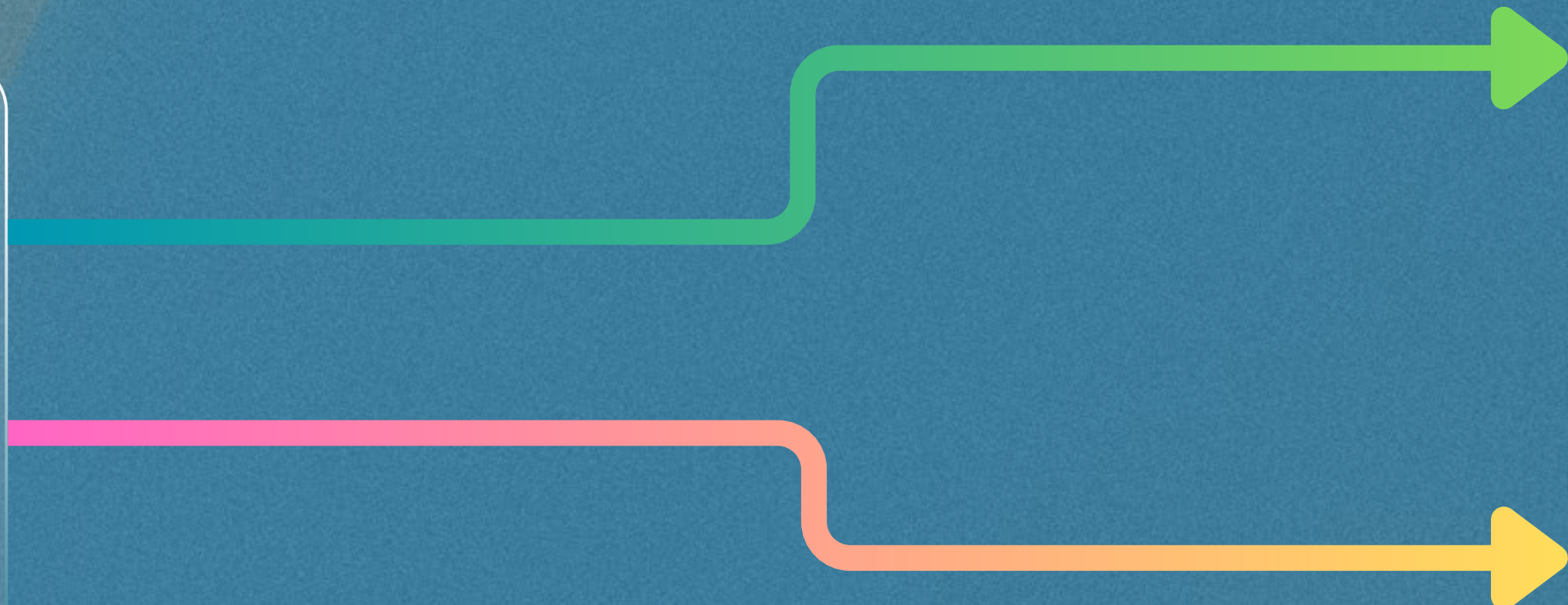
# INTERVIEW STAGE

---

**Conduct structured interviews to confirm legitimacy, assess contract-readiness, and identify capacity gaps**

## Verification Interview

Confirm ownership claims, business operations, and alignment with social procurement categories



# ONBOARDING AND INCUBATION

## Registry onboarding

- Tagged profile with digital badge, integrated into City procurement search tools
- Annual recertification set

## Incubation Track


- Workshops on scaling and procurement education
- Mentorship from established vendors
- Re-application pathway

Verified vendors join the registry with a digital badge



---

# SOCIAL PROCUREMENT FRAMEWORK

A faded, semi-transparent image of a person's face and hand is visible in the background on the right side of the page. The person appears to be looking down or at something out of frame, with their hand near their chin. The overall aesthetic is professional and modern.

# PROPOSED FRAMEWORK

---

- Suggested framework for City of Hamilton's backend
- Changing workflows or incorporating social procurement into workflows that already exist.
- Website can flow into City of Hamilton databases to make the process of choosing a social value business easier.

# MARKETING TIMELINE

Now

## Prep & Build

Finalize media kit, registration portal, and partner contact list

October  
2026

## Soft Launch

Mayor's Office email to councillors: chamber share with members

January  
2027

## Full Campaign Launch

Social media blitz, community events, workshops

January  
2028

## Evaluating Process

Track registrations, gather feedback, expand to new sectors

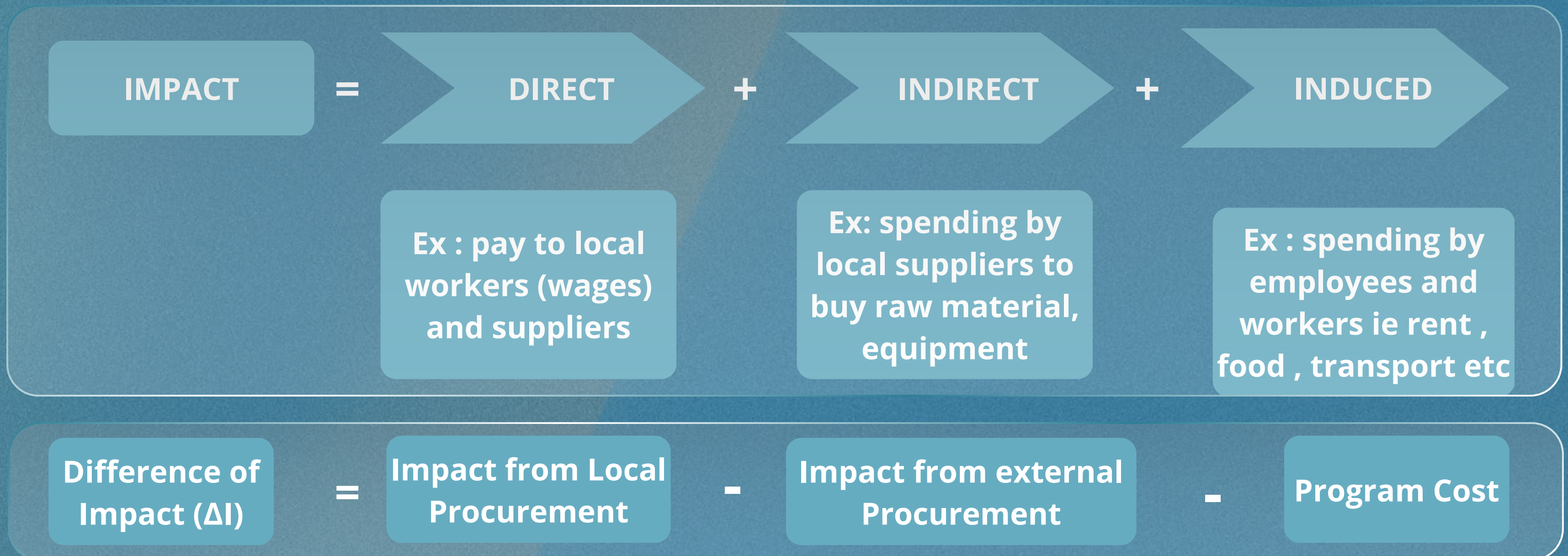


# FINANCIAL IMPACT



# FINANCIAL IMPACT OF LOCAL PROCUREMENT

Local procurement transforms the same spend into materially higher economic value by increasing retention, accelerating recirculation, and minimizing leakage. As a result, each contract delivers significantly greater financial returns, job creation, and sustained community wealth for Hamilton



75% : Retained Locally

25%: Leaves Hamilton

# LOCAL PROCUREMENT

Spend Share

Local Retention

Local Impact

WAGES

50 %

90 % of local spend

45 %

Local Services

20 %

75 % of spending

15 %

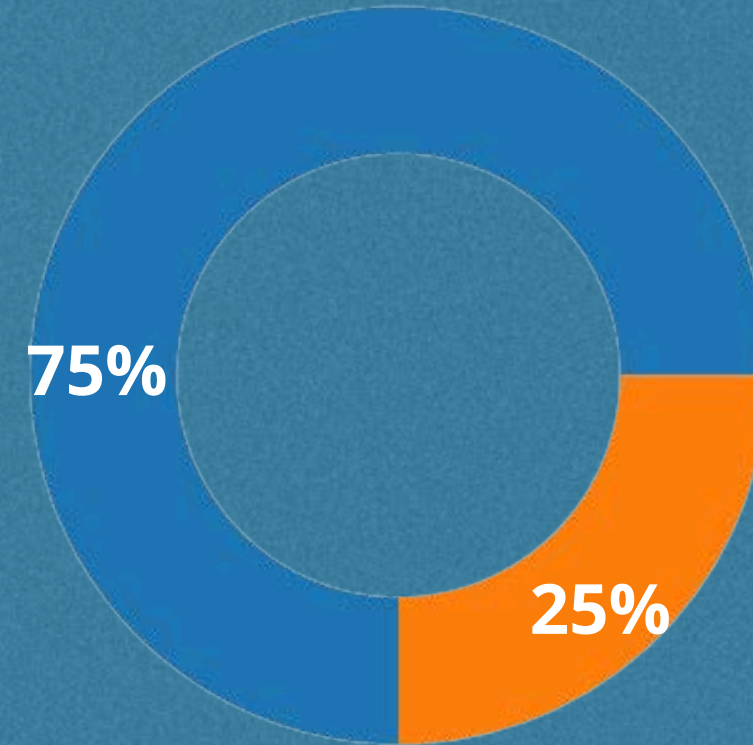
Local Suppliers

25 %

60 % of spending

15 %

RETAINED



Impact that stays in the community



Impact leakage that leaving the community

approx. 5% as imports / exports of local firms

35% : Retained Locally

65%: Leaves Hamilton

# EXTERNAL PROCUREMENT

Spend Share

Retention

Impact

WAGES

30 %

70 % of spend

21 %

Local Service

10 %

50 % of spend

5 %

Local Supplier

20 %

20 % of spend

4 %

Export / import / moving funds

40 %

8 % of spend

5 %

RETAINED

35%

65%



Impact that stays in the community



Impact leakage that leaving the community

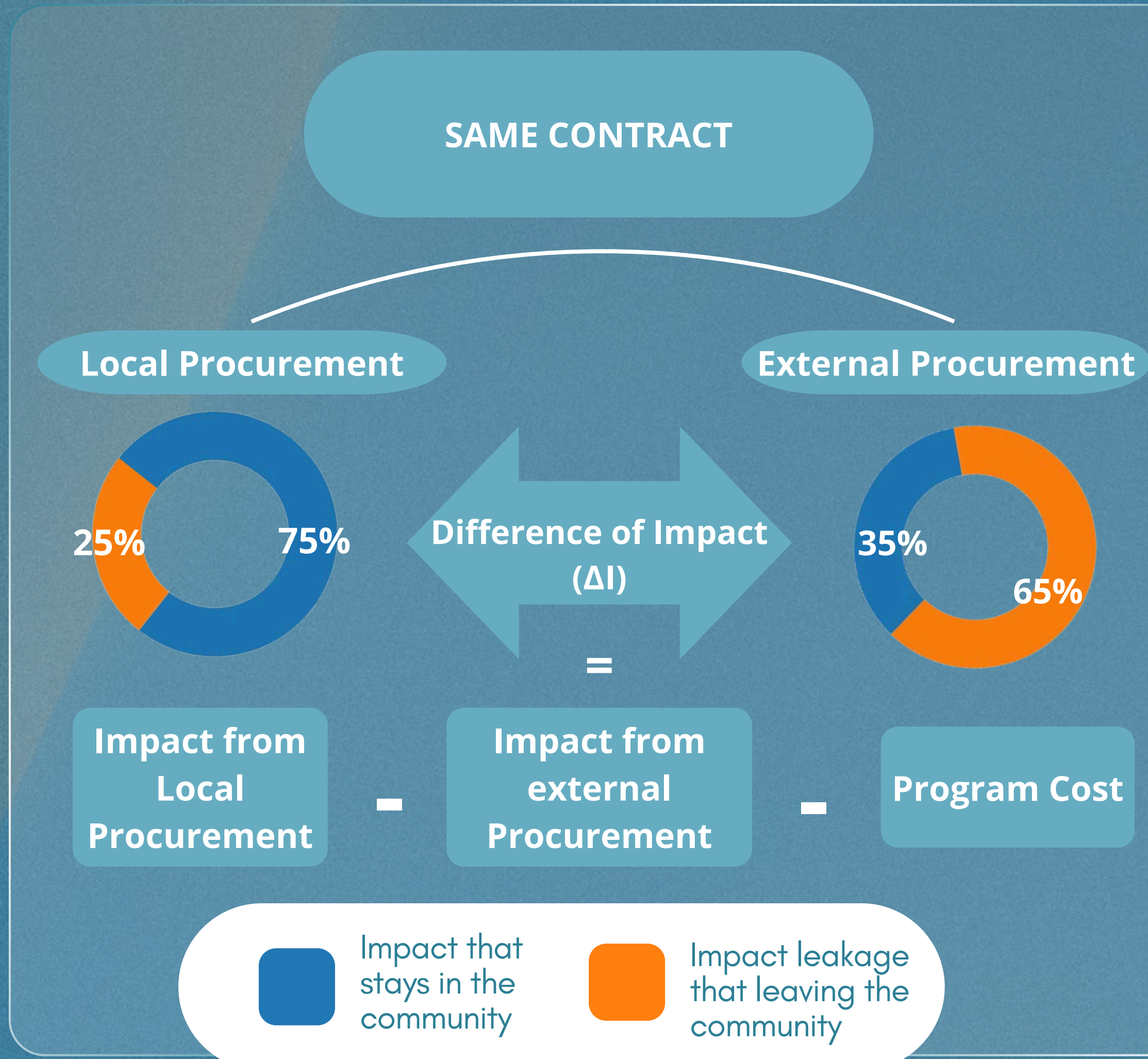
# A COMPARATIVE FRAMEWORK

Same contract, two paths—external spending leaks value, while local spending multiplies it within the community.  
 Choosing local procurement maximizes retention, jobs, and overall community wealth ( $\Delta I$ ).

Same Investment, Two Different Economic Paths : The decision point determines where the value flows

Local Procurement Generates Higher Economic Impact ; Local spending amplifies economic value

The framework calculates  $\Delta I$  (net impact difference) after costs ; Positive  $\Delta I$  leads to: more jobs , stronger local business and overall community wealth creation



**THANK YOU !**



# WEBSITE PROTOTYPE



# APPENDIX



# PROPOSED FRAMEWORK

---

Criteria	Weightage	Score out of 3	Weight x Score
Workforce Diversity	10%		
Execution Capability and History	40%		
Responsible Business Practices	10%		
Price	50%		
Total	100%		



## City of Hamilton Memorandum

**To:** Chair  
Community Benefits Protocol Sub-Committee

**Date:** April 20, 2026

**Report No:** HSC26036

**Subject/Title:** Prototype Social Procurement Registry – McMaster MBA  
GRIT Week

**Ward(s) Affected:** City Wide

---

### Information

Staff supporting the development of the Community Benefits Framework and the Hamilton Community Benefits Network participated in McMaster University's 2026 Generating Resilient and Integrative Thinkers (GRIT) Week, an initiative led by the DeGroot School of Business. GRIT Week is an intensive five-day experiential learning program for first year DeGroot MBA students, during which student teams partnered with organizations to gain insight into the complexities of non-profit operations and social entrepreneurship. The team assigned to work with staff designed a prototype tool for a self-identification and verification process that feeds into a registry of social enterprises, social-purpose businesses, and local and diverse-owned businesses. The proposed registry is designed to support implementation of the City's emerging Community Benefits Framework, with a specific focus on the Social Procurement pillar, and to function as an enabling tool for Procurement operations. Students designed a mechanism that explains how businesses can accurately self-identify, how the City can screen and validate claims to reduce fraud, and how Procurement staff can meaningfully use this data when evaluating and awarding contracts. The final presentation in Appendix "A" outlines the recommended process, registry design and proposed success metrics.

## **Consultation**

McMaster DeGroote School of Business MBA Students

McMaster DeGroote School of Business, Director of MBA Programs

Senior Project Manager - Special Procurement Projects, Procurement, Corporate Services

## **Appendices and Schedules Attached**

Appendix A: Social Procurement Registry Presentation

### **Prepared by:**

María Bedoya, Lead – Community Benefits Framework, Strategy & Continuous Improvement, Healthy & Safe Communities

Romas Keliacius, Manager, Strategy & Continuous Improvement, Healthy & Safe Communities

### **Submitted and Recommended by:**

Grace Mater, General Manager, Healthy & Safe Communities

---

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.



## City of Hamilton Report for Information

**To:** Chair  
Community Benefits Protocol Sub-Committee

**Date:** April 20, 2026

**Report No:** HSC26028

**Subject/Title:** Community Benefits Framework Update

**Ward(s) Affected:** City Wide

---

### Recommendations

- a) That Report No. HSC26028 respecting the Community Benefits Framework Update **BE RECEIVED** for information.

### Key Facts

- This report provides an update on the progress made in the development of a Community Benefits Framework for the City of Hamilton.
- Since the Community Benefits Protocol Subcommittee meeting on November 6, 2025, the Community Benefits Framework team has launched an internal staff survey, continued engagement with Leadership Teams and divisions across the organization and begun developing an external engagement strategy to connect with community partners and organizations.
- An updated Work Plan is included as Appendix “A.”
- Appendix “B” contains a data-driven analysis of Hamilton residents who face the greatest barriers to economic opportunity, highlighting demographic trends, labour-market challenges and social indicators that will guide where a Community Benefits Framework can have the most impact.

## **Financial Considerations**

There are no financial considerations respecting this information report.

## **Background**

On November 6, 2025, staff presented a summary report on Phases 1 and 2 of the Community Benefits Framework. Since that time, the project has nearly completed Phase 3: Internal Engagement and progressed into the initial stages of Phases 4 and 5. These phases include developing a comprehensive external engagement process with community partners, labour groups, businesses, and industry stakeholders, as well as summarizing key insights from the internal staff survey to inform the draft Community Benefits Framework (Phase 4).

These inputs, along with toolkit resources and findings from earlier phases, will be integrated into the final Framework and implementation roadmap under Phase 5. An updated workplan is detailed in Appendix “A” to this report.

## **Analysis**

### **Understanding the Need Report**

As staff continue developing the first draft of the Community Benefits Framework, the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton was engaged to provide a data-driven analysis that clarifies priority communities in Hamilton, the barriers they face, and the opportunities that can be advanced through development projects, workforce strategies, and community wealth-building initiatives. The resulting report, “Community Benefits Framework – Understanding the Need”, provides the evidence base for this work, using 2021 census data and other validated sources to identify population groups that stand to benefit most from a community benefits approach. It also highlights those disproportionately impacted by labour-market conditions such as unemployment, underemployment, and job precarity.

Key findings from the report include:

### **Demographic Trends**

- Hamilton's population reached 569,353 in 2021, growing 6% since 2016.
- Racialized residents make up 25% of the population, with the number tripling over two decades. This is driven by rapidly growing South Asian, Black, and Arab communities.
- Youth (12%) and seniors (18%) represent significant segments with differing labour-market needs.

### **Labour Market Overview**

- Hamilton's participation rate (61.9%) and employment rate (54.3%) trail provincial and national rates, while its unemployment rate (12.3%) is higher than Canada's 10.3%.
- Youth unemployment is particularly high at 24.1%, and seniors also experienced elevated rates during the pandemic.
- Precarious work is widespread:
  - 22% of workers are part-time.
  - 37% of youth hold temporary positions.

### **Social & Economic Indicators**

- One-parent families represent 19.2% of all families, with 80% led by women - higher than provincial and national averages.
- Nearly 205,000 residents aged 15+ report activity limitations (44%), a rate higher than both Ontario and Canada. Mental health related limitations are the most common.
- Income assistance use remains substantial: almost 14,000 Ontario Works and 22,000 Ontario Disability Support Program cases in the Hamilton census metropolitan area, with Ontario Works cases rising above pre-pandemic levels.

### **Groups Facing the Greatest Barriers:**

The report identifies several communities that disproportionately experience unemployment, underemployment, and job precarity:

- Racialized residents
- Recent immigrants
- Women-led single-parent families
- Residents with disabilities
- Youth (15–24)

These groups are therefore key priority populations for workforce, training, and hiring commitments within a Community Benefits Framework.

## Internal Survey

In December 2025, staff released an internal survey to gather input on current departmental priorities, potential pilot opportunities, support needs, and recommended community stakeholders for upcoming engagement activities. To date, 37 responses from different teams City-wide have been received. Common themes include:

a) Integrating community benefits principles:

Respondents expressed general interest in incorporating community benefit principles, such as equity, local employment, and social procurement, into existing or upcoming initiatives. Many identified opportunities to include local hiring and procurement targets as well as community-led public realm improvements. With the understanding that certain teams are limited in what they're able to contribute since spending depends on provincial and/or federal funds with stipulations. Overall, respondents were supportive of piloting the Community Benefits Framework, with examples including public art and placemaking initiatives, future construction projects, Indigenous procurement, and new housing developments.

b) Barriers to implementation

Commonly cited challenges included limited staff capacity, lack of knowledge or training, budget constraints, competing priorities, and absence of standard processes for evaluating outcomes as some of the leading reasons why this work might pose a challenge in the future.

c) Competing priorities

Those who identified competing priorities noted day to day workloads, Council-directed workloads, and pre-determined workplans may limit capacity to take on new requirements. Respondents emphasized the importance of clear guidance on when and how the Community Benefits Framework should be applied, along with practical tools that enable straightforward integration.

d) Definitions

One respondent noted that some of the current definitions are primarily focused on built infrastructure and recommended expanding them to include community-led activities or gatherings related to public space, as these can help shape long term goals for how those spaces are used. Others requested clearer distinctions between Community Benefit Agreements, standardized social procurement processes, and broader community initiatives. Additional feedback included integrating stronger references to climate resilience within the Framework and considering how investments for vulnerable populations are defined.

e) Clarity and alignment

Respondents highlighted the need for a clear implementation roadmap that demonstrates how the Community Benefit Framework relates to their work. For example, its application to affordable housing, accountability mechanisms, alignment with “Buy Local” policies, and educational resources for teams. Some emphasized that success would depend on clarity, practicality, measurable outcomes, and strong leadership alignment. With these elements in place, respondents noted that the Community Benefits Framework has potential to enhance both community well-being and organizational performance.

## External Engagement

Staff are collaborating with community partners to develop an engagement strategy that will gather input on how external stakeholders may interact with the CBF once it's implemented. External stakeholders include, but are not limited to, representatives from labour, community networks, businesses, social enterprises, organization's serving

equity deserving groups, and industry partners. Engagement activities are anticipated for late April 2026 and will consist of one virtual session, three in-person sessions, and a survey distributed to external partners. The draft stakeholder list has been developed in partnership with the Hamilton Community Benefits Network and refined through input from staff across multiple departments.

## **Alternatives**

None.

## **Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities**

The project will align with the 2022-2026 Council Priorities in the following ways:

1.2 Sustainable Economic & Ecological Development: Facilitate growth of the key sectors:

- With the uncertainty surrounding Canada–U.S. trade relations and the imposition of ongoing tariffs, the Framework offers a strategic pathway to bolster Hamilton’s economic resilience. By reinforcing the principles of the City’s updated Made-in-Canada procurement policies, the Framework will help safeguard local jobs, support domestic industries, and strengthen the regional economy.

2.1 Safe and Thriving Neighbourhoods: Increase the supply of affordable and supportive housing and reduce chronic homelessness:

- One of the key benefit streams enabled through Community Benefit Agreements is the inclusion of affordable housing targets in both new and existing development projects. This approach supports equitable growth and helps address housing insecurity at the neighbourhood level.

3.2 Responsiveness and Transparency: Get more people involved in decision making and problem solving:

- Community Benefit Agreements have historically empowered communities to influence development projects through democratic engagement. Hamilton’s CBF will continue this approach by involving a wide range of stakeholders, including labour, local businesses, organization’s serving equity-deserving groups, social

enterprises, and industry partners. This process is intended to help the framework reflect diverse community needs, broaden civic participation, and work towards identifying and reducing barriers to engagement.

## **Previous Reports Submitted**

[HSC25050](#) - Community Benefits Framework: Phases 1 and 2 Summary Report

## **Consultation**

- Karl Andrus - Hamilton Community Benefits Network and Vice-Chair of the Community Benefits Protocol Subcommittee
- Tina Iacoe – Director - Procurement, Corporate Services
- Ashley Evans – Senior Project Manager - Special Procurement Projects, Procurement, Corporate Services

## **Appendices and Schedules Attached**

Appendix A: Community Benefits Framework: Updated Work Plan Activities

Appendix B: Community Benefits Framework – Understanding the Need Report, Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton

### **Prepared by:**

María Bedoya, Lead – Community Benefits Framework, Strategy & Continuous Improvement, Healthy & Safe Communities

Romas Keliacius, Manager, Strategy & Continuous Improvement, Healthy & Safe Communities

### **Submitted and Recommended by:**

Grace Mater, General Manager, Healthy & Safe Communities

## **Community Benefits Framework: Updated Work Plan Activities**

### **Phase 1: Project Launch and Resource Recruitment**

1.1 Project Set Up and Planning

1.2 Lead Recruitment & On-Boarding

### **Phase 2: External Research and Jurisdictional Scan**

2.1 McMaster Research Shop engagement and presentation to Community Benefits Protocol Subcommittee

2.2 CityLab student onboarding and research on community benefit agreements.

### **Phase 3: Internal Stakeholder Information Gathering**

3.1 Development of engagement questions and plan for CityLab students to support the internal interviews and information gathering.

3.2 CityLAB Presentation with findings from the internal engagement.

3.3 Development of secondary survey distributed by staff to gather feedback on current departmental priorities, potential pilot opportunities, areas where support may be needed, and suggestions for community stakeholders to engage in upcoming sessions.

### **Phase 4: External Stakeholder Engagement**

4.1 Facilitate workshops and consultations with a variety of external stakeholders including:

4.1.1 Members of the Hamilton Community Benefits Network (HCBN) and other relevant Community Benefit Networks.

4.1.2 Local businesses, social enterprises, and diverse owned businesses.

4.1.3 The Hamilton/Brantford Building Trades Council, District Labour Council, and other labour affiliates.

4.1.4 Community organizations and advocacy groups.

4.1.5 Industry partners and suppliers.

4.2 Summarize findings from the external engagement.

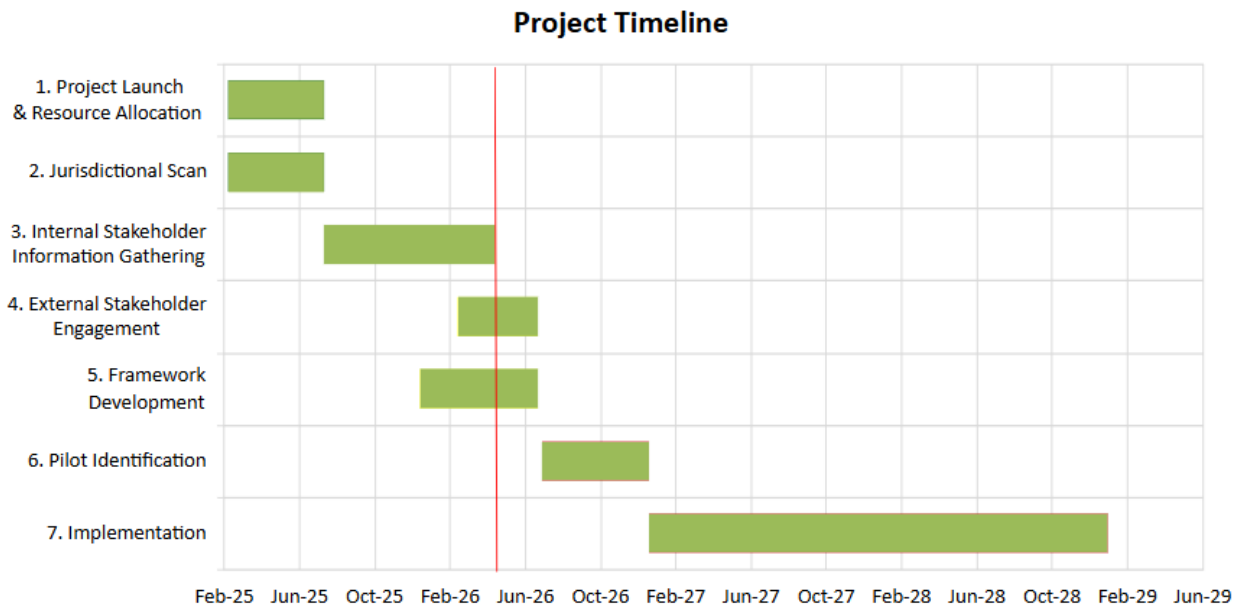
**Phase 5: Framework Development**

5.1 Develop Toolkit Resources including PowerPoint templates, FAQs, testimonials & internal briefs.

5.2 Compile findings from previous phases to develop final framework and implementation roadmap.

**Phase 6: Pilot Identification**

6.1 Following Council’s approval of the CBF recommendations, staff will collaborate with departments currently undertaking community benefits–related initiatives to identify suitable opportunities for piloting the CBF approach.



# Community Benefits Framework – Understanding the Need

March 2026

Prepared for:



Hamilton

Prepared by:



**SPRC**

Social Planning and  
Research Council of  
**Hamilton**

## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge that the land on which we work this work is situated upon the traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee, and Mississaugas. This land is covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, which was an agreement between the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabek to share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. We further acknowledge that this land is covered by the Between the Lakes Purchase, 1792, between the Crown and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. We hope to honour the spirit of the Dish With One Spoon agreement by working to build a nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous communities in Hamilton.

## ABOUT SOCIAL PLANNING AND RESEARCH COUNCIL OF HAMILTON

The Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton (SPRC) is an independent non-profit and community-based research organization. SPRC promotes equity, informs policy and planning decisions, and increases community engagement to improve social conditions. We accomplish this through research and program evaluation, policy analysis, community partnerships, and program delivery. SPRC is funded by the United Way Halton Hamilton, The City of Hamilton City Enrichment Fund and through independent service contracts.

To learn more about SPRC, visit [sprchamilton.ca](http://sprchamilton.ca)

This report was prepared by the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton, Social Planning Team: Ted Hildebrandt, Senior Social Planner. For more information, please contact Ted Hildebrandt at [sprc@sprchamilton.ca](mailto:sprc@sprchamilton.ca).

© Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton 2026

Creative Commons License: CC BY-NC

This license enables re-users to distribute, remix, adapt, and build upon the material in any medium or format for non-commercial purposes only, and only so long as attribution is given to the creator.

Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton  
350 King Street East, Suite 104  
Hamilton, ON, L8N 3Y3

(905) 522-1148

Email: [sprc@sprchamilton.ca](mailto:sprc@sprchamilton.ca)

Web: [www.sprchamilton.ca](http://www.sprchamilton.ca)

## Executive Summary

The *Community Benefits Framework – Understanding the Need* report provides a data-driven foundation to guide Hamilton's development of a Community Benefits Framework (CBF). Using 2021 Census data and other validated sources, this report identifies population groups and labour-market conditions that point to who faces inequitable access to economic opportunities and who stands to benefit most from a community benefits approach.

### Purpose

Phase One of the CBF focuses on building a shared understanding of priority communities, the barriers they face, and the opportunities that can be mobilized through development projects, workforce strategies, and community wealth-building initiatives.

### Key Insights

#### Demographic Trends

- Hamilton's population reached **569,353 in 2021**, growing 6% since 2016.
- Racialized residents make up **25% of the population**, with the number tripling over two decades. This is driven by rapidly growing South Asian, Black, and Arab communities.
- Youth (12%) and seniors (18%) represent significant segments with differing labour-market needs.

#### Immigration & Language

- Immigrants represent **25.9%** of Hamilton's population; **20,145 are recent immigrants (2016–2021)**.
- India, Syria, and the Philippines are the top recent source countries.
- Over **10,000 residents** have no knowledge of English or French; Arabic, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Punjabi are the most common mother tongues among them.

#### Labour Market Overview

- Hamilton's **participation rate (61.9%)** and **employment rate (54.3%)** trail provincial and national rates, while its **unemployment rate (12.3%)** is higher than Canada's 10.3%.
- Youth unemployment is particularly high at **24.1%**, and seniors also experienced elevated rates during the pandemic.
- Precarious work is widespread:
  - 22% of workers are part-time.
  - 37% of youth hold temporary positions.

- Sectors such as accommodation & food services and retail rely heavily on part-time employees.

### **Social & Economic Indicators**

- One-parent families represent **19.2% of all families**, with 80% led by women - higher than provincial and national averages.
- Nearly **205,000 residents aged 15+** report activity limitations (44%), a rate higher than both Ontario and Canada. Mental-health-related limitations are the most common.
- Income assistance use remains substantial: almost **14,000 Ontario Works** and **22,000 ODSP cases** in the Hamilton CMA, with OW cases rising above pre-pandemic levels.

### **Economic & Business Landscape**

- Hamilton's largest industries are **health care & social assistance, retail trade, and manufacturing**.
- Small businesses dominate the employer landscape: **58%** of firms with employees have **1–4 workers**, and most local businesses fall within small-to-medium size ranges.

### **Groups Facing the Greatest Barriers**

The report identifies several communities that disproportionately experience unemployment, underemployment, and job precarity:

- Racialized residents
- Recent immigrants
- Women-led single-parent families
- Residents with disabilities
- Youth (15–24)

These groups are therefore key priority populations for workforce, training, and hiring commitments within a CBF.

### **Implications for a Community Benefits Framework**

To achieve equitable economic outcomes, Hamilton's CBF should:

- Establish **clear, enforceable workforce targets** tied to development projects.
- Ensure **strong recruitment, training, and wrap-around supports** for priority groups.
- Build partnerships between **educational institutions, labour unions, employers, and community organizations**.

Such strategies can create equitable pathways into stable employment and advance community wealth-building.

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	iii
Table of Contents .....	v
Table of Figures .....	vi
Table of Tables .....	vi
Background .....	1
Phase One – Understanding the Need .....	1
Data source.....	1
Community Identification .....	2
Age and Gender .....	2
Racialized Population.....	4
South Asian and Black are Hamilton’s largest racialized groups.....	5
Employment status .....	8
Full-time and Part-Time Work.....	11
Social Factors:.....	16
Family structure.....	16
Recent Immigrant (arrived 2016-2021).....	17
Place of birth .....	18
Knowledge of official languages (top 3-5).....	19
Language spoken most often at home .....	21
Disability (activity limitation).....	22
Income Assistance Program Participation .....	25
Ontario Works, ODSP, and other relevant supports .....	25
Employment Data .....	27
Industry .....	27
Underemployment.....	28
Groups with potential for career advancement through a Community Benefits Framework .....	30
Business Landscape .....	32

Number of employees (small businesses with employees 1-99) .....	32
Industry sector .....	33

## Table of Figures

Figure 1. Age Groups (15+), Hamilton, 2021 .....	3
Figure 2. Age Groups and Sex, Hamilton, 2021 .....	4
Figure 3. Number and percentage of residents who identify with a visible minority group, City of Hamilton.....	5
Figure 4. Number of persons identifying with specific racialized groups, City of Hamilton, 2001, 2011 and 2021 Censuses .....	7
Figure 5. Labour Force Participation Rates, Hamilton.....	9
Figure 6. Unemployment Rates by Broad Age Groups, Hamilton .....	10
Figure 7. Hamilton Unemployment Rate 2006-2025.....	11
Figure 8. Work Activity, Hamilton, 2020 .....	12
Figure 9. Working Full-time vs. Part-time by Industry, Hamilton.....	13
Figure 10. Permanent vs. Temporary Positions, Hamilton .....	14
Figure 11. Main reasons people did not work full year, Hamilton .....	15
Figure 12. Ontario Works and ODSP Cases, Hamilton CMA .....	26
Figure 13. Workers by Industry, Hamilton .....	27
Figure 14. Unemployment rates for select groups, 2020 .....	28
Figure 15. Working Full Time vs Part Time, Hamilton, 2020 .....	29
Figure 16. Permanent vs. Temporary Positions, Hamilton .....	30
Figure 17. Number of Businesses by Number of Employees, Hamilton, June 2025 .....	32
Figure 18. Hamilton Business by Number of Employees (%), June 2025.....	33
Figure 19. Businesses by Industry, Hamilton, June 2025 .....	34

## Table of Tables

Table 1. Labour Force Status by Age Groups, Hamilton, 2021 .....	8
Table 2. Top places of birth of recent immigrants, Hamilton, 2016 and 2021 .....	18
Table 3. Mother tongue of those with no knowledge of official languages.....	20
Table 4. Language spoken most often at home, Hamilton, 2021 .....	21

## Background

The development of the Community Benefits Framework (CBF) will follow a multi-step approach, beginning with the creation of a prototype framework that the City can pilot upon completion. To support this, Hamilton Community Benefits Network (HCBN) and the City of Hamilton engaged the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton's (SPRC) expertise to help build a data-driven understanding of the communities that stand to benefit most from the CBF.

The goal of this phase is to craft both a compelling narrative and a strong policy foundation for the initiative. SPRC's support is instrumental in describing Hamilton's economic landscape and identifying the populations that would benefit most from a Community Benefits Framework, particularly through a community wealth-building lens.

### Phase One – Understanding the Need

This phase focuses on building a shared understanding among City staff, the Community Benefits Protocol Subcommittee, and City Council regarding who would benefit the most from a Community Benefits Framework (CBF), and which communities should be prioritized.

### Data source

The primary data source for this report is the 2021 Census conducted by Statistics Canada. The Census provides detailed, high-quality, and reliable information about Canada's population, making it essential for evidence-based decision-making. It is also the only data source that consistently offers reliable information for both small geographic areas and small population groups. The next Census will take place in May 2026, with data releases beginning in 2027.

Although the 2021 Census had a very high response rate (98%), data collection that year was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Pandemic-related supports, including the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), influenced income and employment patterns for many households, making some indicators – such as labour market and income data – unusual compared to non-pandemic years.

## Community Identification

This section identifies priority communities in Hamilton and any intersections among them, based on who stands to benefit most from a Community Benefits Framework (CBF).

In 2021, Hamilton's population was 569,353, representing a 6.0% increase from 2016. This compares to population growth of 5.8% at the provincial level and 5.2% at the national level.

### Age and Gender

For the purposes of this document, the age groupings used are 15-24, 25-64, and 65 and over, reflecting youth, working-age adults, and seniors.

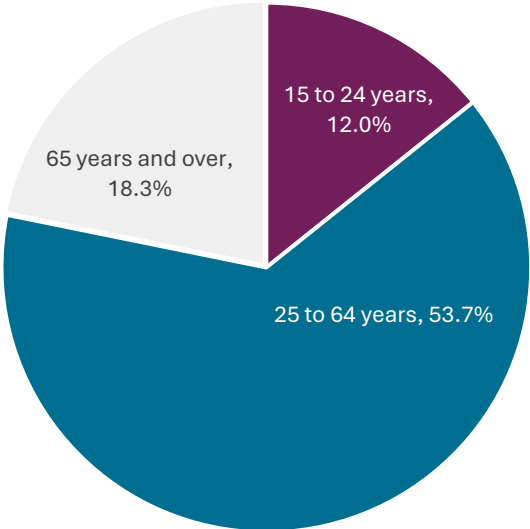
The 15–24 age group numbered 68,200 in 2021, comprising 12% of Hamilton's total population—similar to this age group's share of Ontario's population (11.9%) and Canada's population (11.4%).

The 25–64 age group consisted of 305,635 people, making up 53.7% of Hamilton's population, matching the proportion in Ontario (53.7%) and closely aligning with the Canadian proportion (53.4%).

There were 104,290 residents aged 65 and over, representing 18.3% of Hamilton's population, similar to Ontario (18.5%) and Canada (19%).

Figure 1. Age Groups (15+), Hamilton, 2021

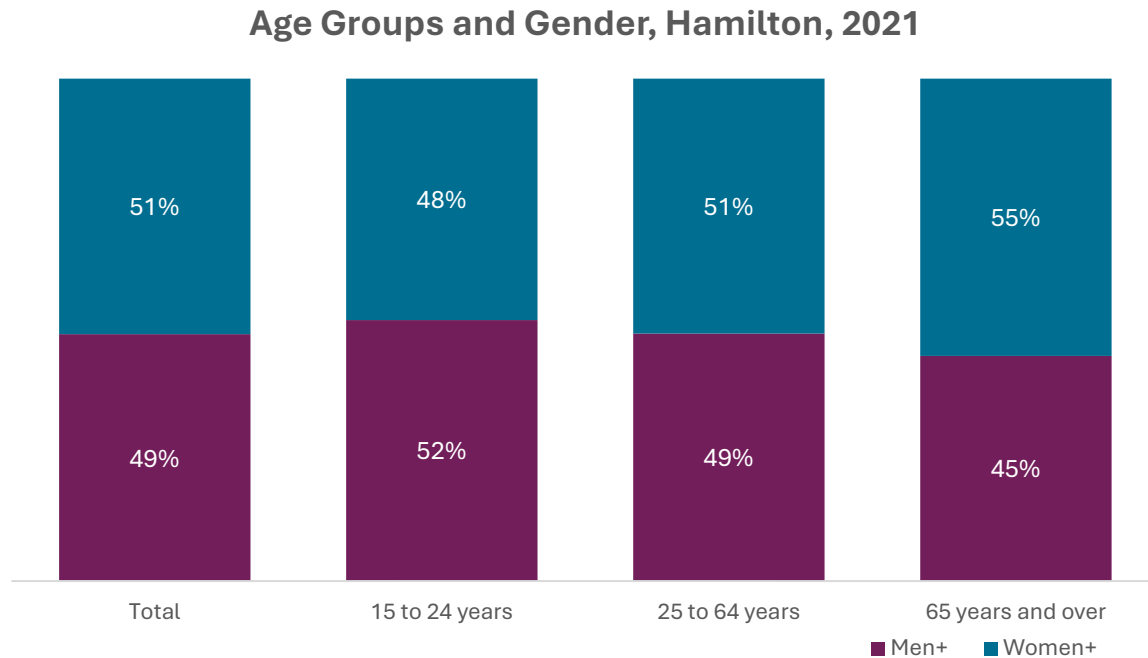
**Age Groups (15+), Hamilton, 2021**



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

Within Hamilton’s population overall, distribution is nearly even between men+ and women+. Women+ comprise 51% of the population, mirroring provincial and national patterns. Men+ represent a slightly higher share of the 15–24 age group (52%), while women+ outnumber men+ in the 65 and over age group (55%).

Figure 2. Age Groups and Sex, Hamilton, 2021



## Racialized Population

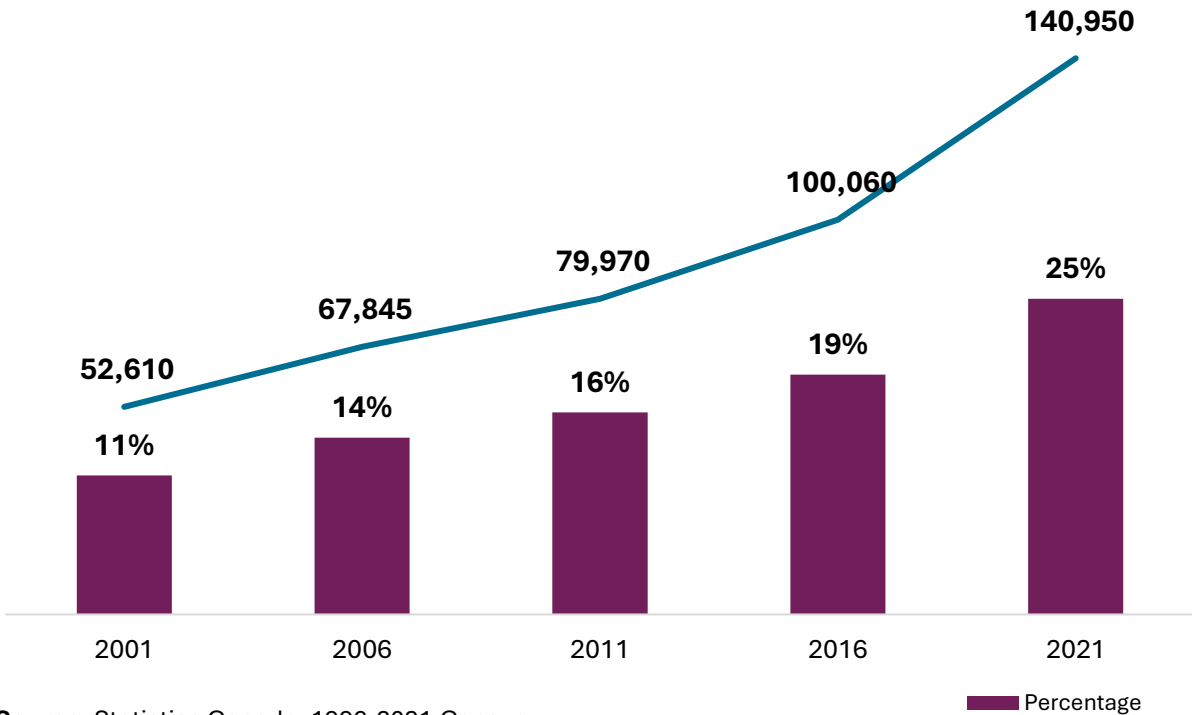
While this section uses the term racialized population or persons, it is based on Census data collected using the visible minority term and are still measured using the detailed “visible minority” variable. Visible minorities include people, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour. The visible minority population consists of the following groups: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Arab, Latin American, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean, and Japanese, as outlined in the Employment Equity Act. These data, however, do not include Indigenous residents. Visible minority is becoming an outdated term as many communities and cities in Canada, such as Toronto and Vancouver, have more than half of residents identifying with a visible minority group. Statistics Canada recently carried out a consultation on the visible minority concept and is further testing options as a lead-up to the 2026 Census.<sup>1</sup>

Hamilton’s racialized population has nearly tripled over the past 20 years, reaching just over 140,000 residents in 2021. Racialized residents now make up 25% of Hamilton’s population. By comparison, 34% of Ontarians and 27% of Canadians identify as belonging to a racialized group.

<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada. [Report and Draft Recommendations - Results of the Consultative Engagement on the Visible Minority Concept](#), June 14, 2024.

Between 2016 and 2021, Hamilton’s racialized population grew by more than 40,000 people, representing a 41% increase over five years. This rate far exceeds the provincial growth rate of 24% and the national growth rate of 26% during the same period.

Figure 3. Number and percentage of residents who identify with a visible minority group, City of Hamilton



Source: Statistics Canada, 1996-2021 Census

### South Asian and Black are Hamilton’s largest racialized groups

#### South Asian Population Growth in Hamilton

The South Asian population represents just under 35,000 residents in Hamilton. Between 2001 and 2011, the South Asian population grew by 57%, compared to the overall city growth of racialized persons at 52% growth. From 2011 to 2021, the South Asian population grew by 102%, compared to the overall city growth of racialized persons of 76%. In the twenty years from 2001 to 2021, the South Asian population grew by 216%. This compares to an overall racialized population growth between 2001 and 2021 of 167%. South Asian Population growth has consistently outpaced overall city racialized growth in the twenty years between 2001 and 2021.

#### Black Population Growth in Hamilton

The Black population represents just over 28,000 residents in Hamilton. Between 2001 and 2011, the Black population grew by 54%, a marginal increase over the 52% overall city

growth of racialized persons. From 2011 to 2021, the Black population grew by 76%, which was on par with the overall city growth of racialized persons in the city. In the twenty years from 2001 to 2021, the Black population grew 171%, outpacing the overall racialized growth, which was 167% in this period.

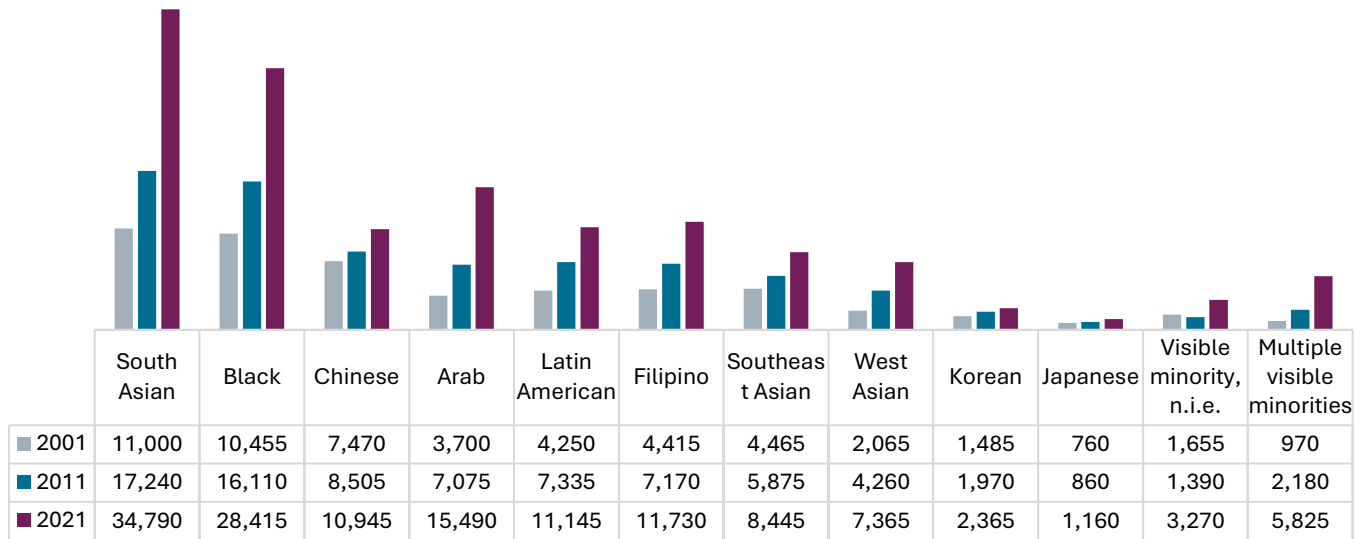
#### *Arab is the fastest-growing racialized group in Hamilton*

The Arab population is the fastest growing racialized group, representing 15,490 residents in 2021. Between 2001 and 2011, the Arab population grew by 91%, nearly double the overall growth of 52% for racialized persons in Hamilton. From 2011 to 2021, the Arab population grew by 119%, compared to the overall city growth of racialized persons of 76%. In the twenty years from 2001 to 2021, the Arab population grew 319%. This compares to an overall racialized population growth between 2001 and 2021 of 167%. Arab population growth has consistently outpaced overall city racialized growth in the twenty years between 2001 and 2021.

#### *Slowest Growth Groups*

The Chinese and Korean racialized groups had the slowest growth between 2011 and 2021. The Chinese population, representing 10,945 residents in 2021, grew by 29% between 2011 and 2021. Likewise, the Korean population of 2,365 residents in 2021 grew by 20% in the period between 2011 and 2021. Both growth rates are below the overall growth of 52% overall city growth of racialized persons.

Figure 4. Number of persons identifying with specific racialized groups, City of Hamilton, 2001, 2011 and 2021 Censuses



Source: Statistics Canada, Census.

## Employment status

According to the 2021 Census, Hamilton had 469,795 individuals aged 15 and over. Of these, 290,990 were in the labour force, resulting in a participation rate of 61.9%. This is slightly lower than the participation rates for Ontario (62.8%) and Canada (63.7%). Hamilton's unemployment rate was 12.3%, similar to Ontario's rate (12.2%) and higher than Canada's (10.3%).

*Table 1. Labour Force Status by Age Groups, Hamilton, 2021*

Labour force status	Total	15 to 24	25 to 64	65 and over
Total population aged 15 years and over	469,795	67,815	303,405	98,575
In the labour force	290,990	40,080	236,930	13,975
Employed	255,075	30,435	212,555	12,090
Unemployed	35,910	9,650	24,375	1,885
Not in the labour force	178,810	27,735	66,475	84,600
Participation rate (%)	61.9	59.1	78.1	14.2
Employment rate (%)	54.3	44.9	70.1	12.3
Unemployment rate (%)	12.3	24.1	10.3	13.5

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census

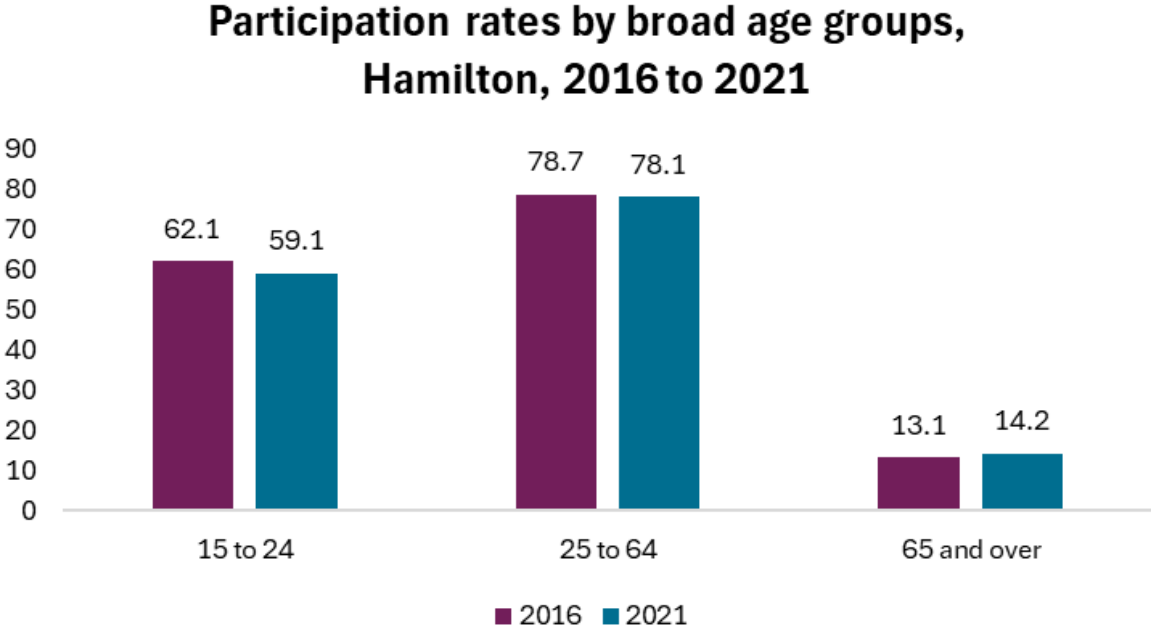
- In the labour force includes both employed and unemployed (actively looking for work).
- Participation rate is the share of the age group in the labour force.
- Employment rate is the share employed of the total age group.
- Unemployment rate is the share unemployed among those in the labour force.

When examining participation rates by age group in 2021:

- Participation was highest among those aged 25 to 64 at 78.1%, a rate very similar to 2016.
- Participation among 15 to 24-year-olds dropped from 62.1% in 2016 to 59.1% in 2021.
- Participation for those 65 and over increased slightly from 13.1% to 14.2%.

Provincial and national patterns reflect similar trends. In Ontario, participation in 2021 was 57.4% for ages 15–24, 79.6% for ages 25–64, and 15.6% for those 65 and over. For Canada, the rates were 60.3%, 80.5%, and 15.8%, respectively.

Figure 5. Labour Force Participation Rates, Hamilton



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

All the age groups experienced an increase in the unemployment rate from 2016 to 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was changed the most for those aged 65 and over, increase by 8.1%. This was followed by the 15 to 24 age group experiencing an increase of 7.7% and 5% for those aged 25 to 64.

All age groups experienced increases in unemployment rates between 2016 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The largest increase occurred among those 65 and over, rising by 8.1 percentage points.
- Youth aged 15 to 24 experienced a 7.7-point increase.
- Adults aged 25 to 64 saw a 5-point increase.

This mirrors patterns across Ontario and Canada. In Ontario, unemployment rose:

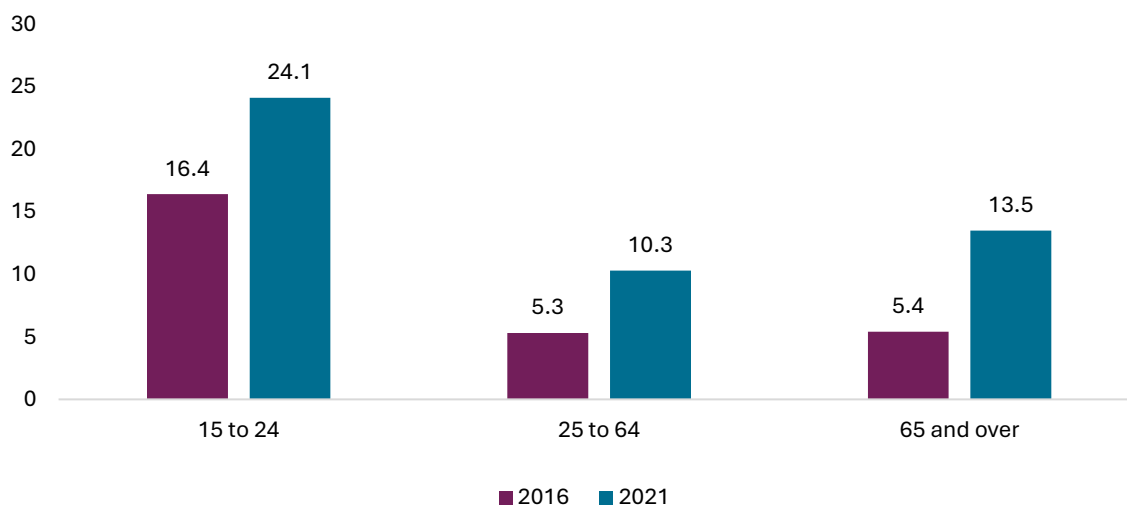
- From 5.1% to 13.4% for those 65+,
- From 17.6% to 25.3% for youth 15–24,
- From 5.8% to 10.1% for adults 25–64.

In Canada, unemployment increased:

- To 13.5% for ages 65+,
- To 19.5% for ages 15–24,
- To 8.6% for ages 25–64.

*Figure 6. Unemployment Rates by Broad Age Groups, Hamilton*

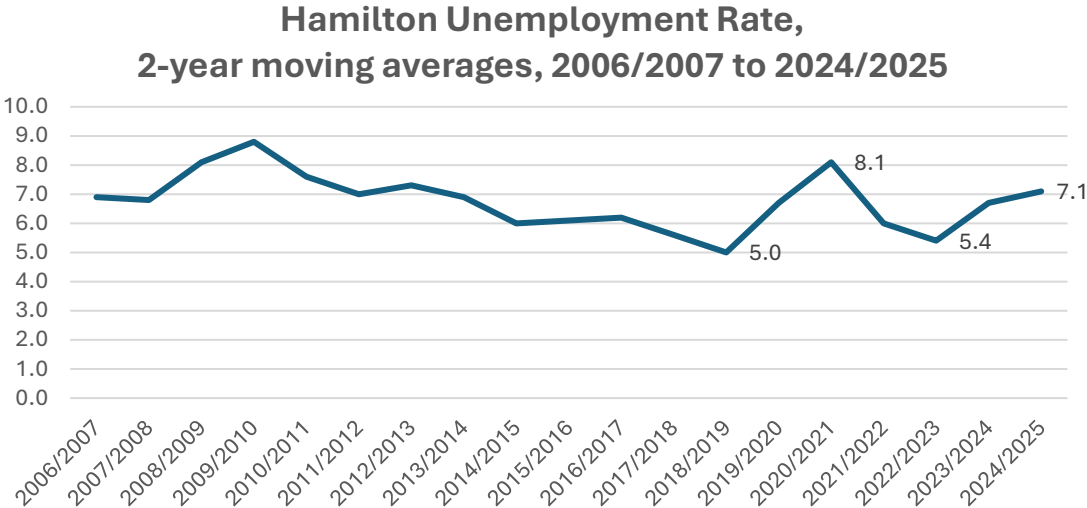
### Unemployment Rates by Broad Age Groups, Hamilton, 2016 to 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

When examining long-term unemployment trends, the two-year moving average shows that Hamilton’s unemployment rate was 7.1% in 2024–2025. Over the previous seven periods, the unemployment rate fluctuated significantly due to the pandemic, dropping from 5% in 2018-2019, rising to 8.1% in 2020-2021, falling again to 5.4% in 2022-2023, and increasing over the most recent two periods. This mirrors Ontario’s pattern, where the unemployment rate was 7.3% in 2024-2025.

Figure 7. Hamilton Unemployment Rate 2006-2025

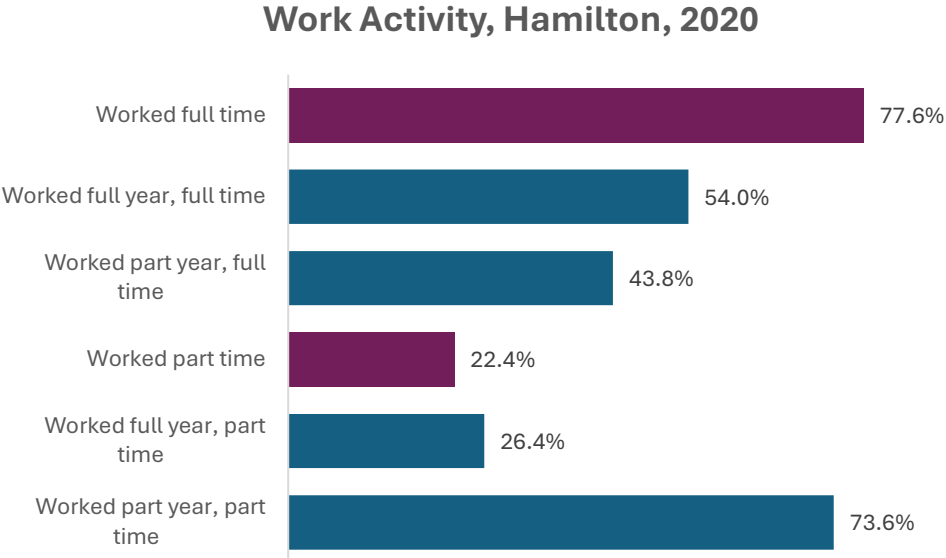


Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey

### Full-time and Part-Time Work

For the reference year 2020, 288,220 Hamilton workers reported work activity. Of these, 77.6% worked full-time, while 22.4% worked part-time. Among full-time workers, 69.5% worked full-year, a rate similar to Ontario (69%) and Canada (68%). Among part-time workers, 73.6% worked part-year, which also aligns closely with Ontario (75%) and Canada (74%).

Figure 8. Work Activity, Hamilton, 2020

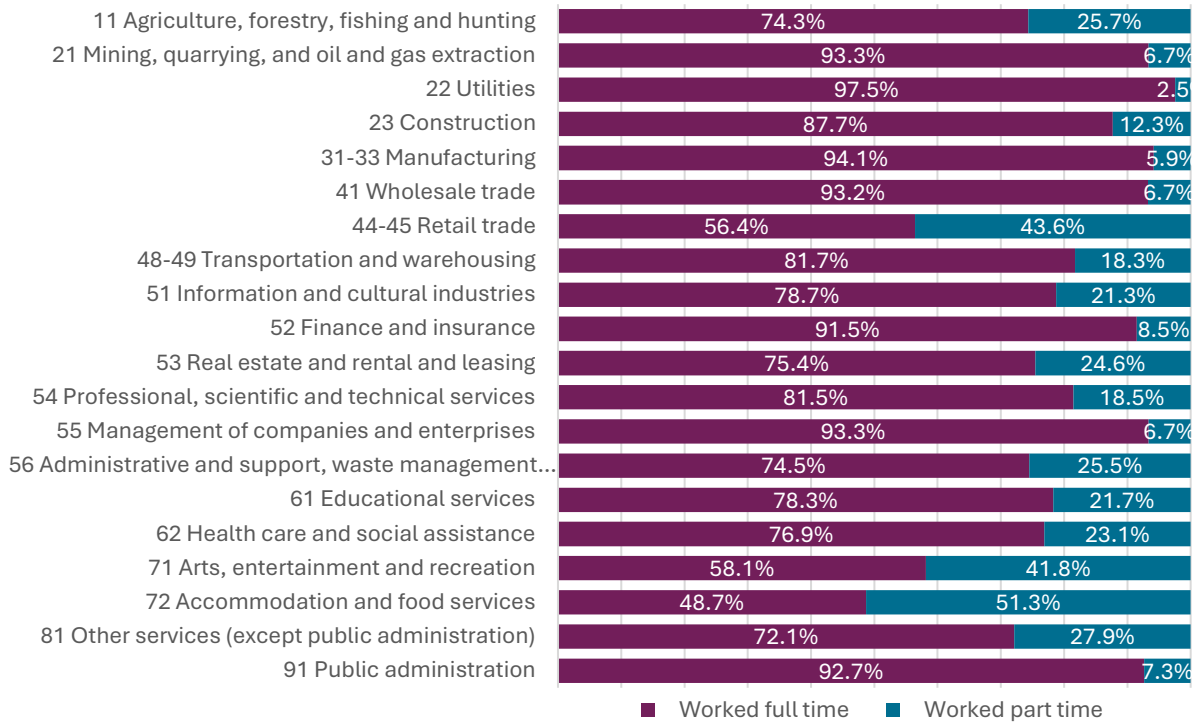


Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

Those working in accommodation and food services had the highest percentage of part-time workers (51.3%), followed by retail trade at 43.6% and arts, entertainment and recreation at 41.8%.

Figure 9. Working Full-time vs. Part-time by Industry, Hamilton

### Working Full-Time vs. Part-Time by Industry, Hamilton, 2021

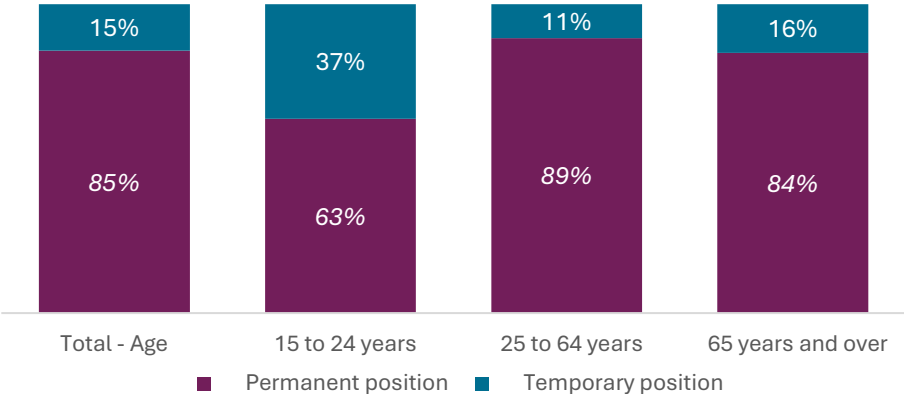


Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

When examining employment precarity, 85% of employees overall held permanent positions. However, among those aged 15–24, 37% worked in temporary roles.

Figure 10. Permanent vs. Temporary Positions, Hamilton

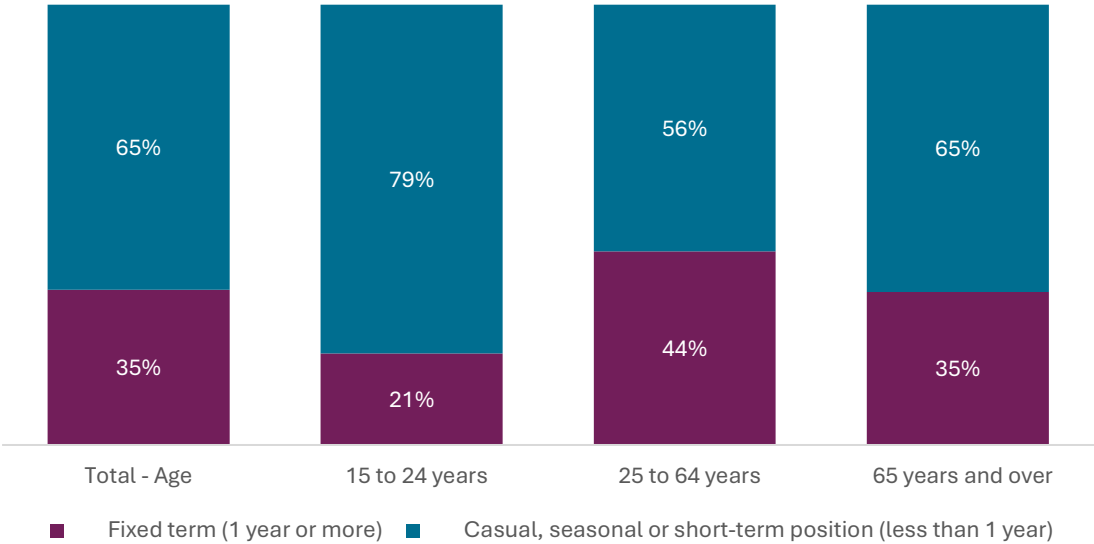
### Permanent vs. Temporary Positions, Hamilton, 2020



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

Among workers in temporary positions, 65% were in casual, seasonal, or short-term jobs of less than one year. For youth aged 15–24, this proportion was even higher at 79%.

### Temporary Positions, Hamilton, 2020

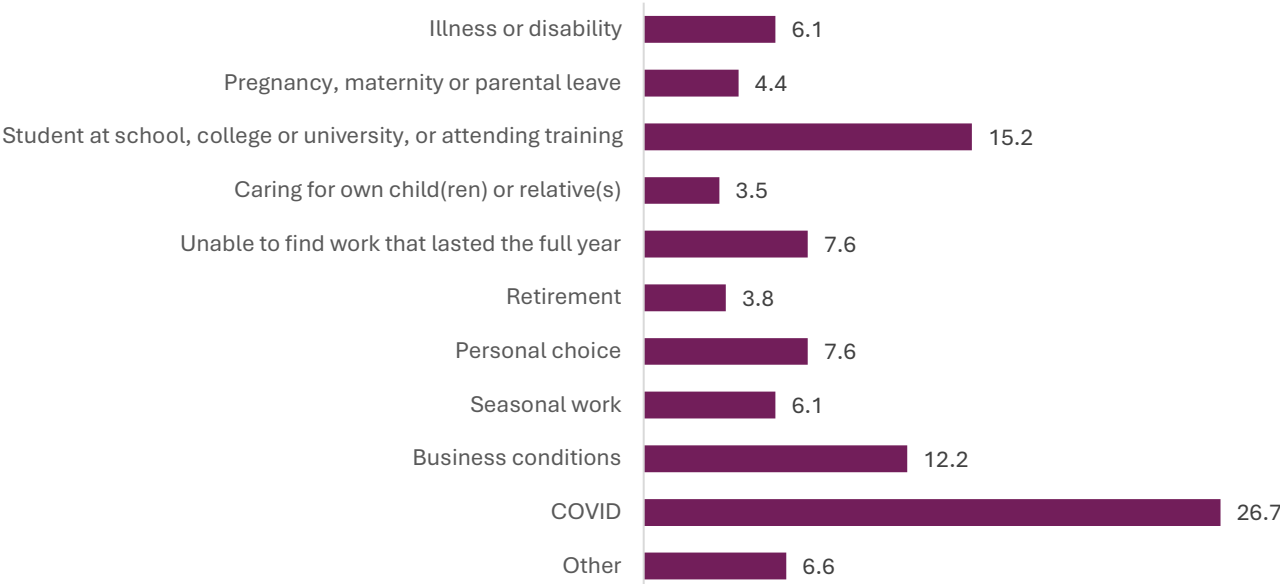


Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

For workers who did not work a full year in 2020, over one-quarter (26.7%) reported COVID-19 as the reason. Other prominent reasons included being a student, illness or disability, seasonal work, and business conditions.

Figure 11. Main reasons people did not work full year, Hamilton

**Main reasons people did not work the full year, Hamilton, 2020**



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

## Social Factors:

### Family structure

Statistics Canada defines families as people related by blood, marriage, common-law or adoption living in private households. The total number of census families in Hamilton was 157,125 in 2021.

Family structures in Hamilton were distributed as follows:

- Two-parent families (couples with or without children) were the most common, comprising 80% of all families, slightly lower than the Ontario rate (83%) and the Canadian rate (84%).
- Married or common-law couples without children accounted for 50,885 households (37% of all families).
- Couples with children made up 68,780 households (54% of all families).
- One-parent families represented 19.2% of census families (30,135 households), higher than Ontario (17.1%) and Canada (16.4%).
  - Of these one-parent families, 79.6% were led by women, similar to Ontario (79%) and Canada (77%).
- The average family size was 2.9 persons, with families averaging 1.8 children.

Among Hamilton residents aged 15 and over in private households in 2021:

- 54.5% were currently married or living common-law (45.3% married, 9.2% common-law).
- 45.5% were not in a married or common-law union.

Among census families living in Hamilton in 2021, 66.8% were married couples, 14% were common-law couples, and 19.2% were one-parent families. Of the one-parent families, 80% are women-led.

Other household characteristics included:

- 13.2% of adults aged 15+ lived alone—slightly lower than 13.5% in 2016.
  - This compares to 12.3% for Ontario and 14.5% for Canada.
- In total, Hamilton had about 222,805 households, with an average household size of 2.5 people.

Additional household types included:

- Multigenerational households (~3.7%).
- Households with multiple unrelated families or individuals (small but notable proportions).

- About 11.1% of all residents lived alone.

## Recent Immigrant (arrived 2016-2021)

Recent immigrants in Hamilton are very diverse coming from all parts of the world and linguistic communities. Their trajectories are also diverse. Some are economic class immigrants, selected for their labour skills and economic contributions to Canada's growth, some are family class immigrants who are sponsored by family members of current settled immigrants in Canada, and some are refugees, fleeing persecution and repression in their home countries.

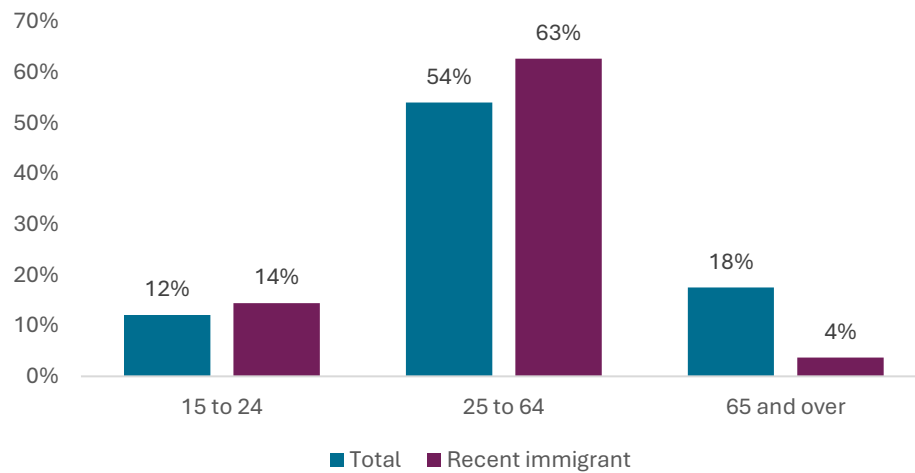
In 2021, Hamilton was home to 145,550 immigrants, representing 25.9% of the city's population. The largest proportion of immigrants (57%) arrived before 2000, while 43% arrived between 2001 and 2021.

Excluded from this data are non-permanent residents as they are not considered immigrants. Non-permanent residents include temporary workers, foreign students, seasonal agricultural workers, and asylum claimants for instance.

Recent immigrants (those who arrived between 2016 and 2021) represent 13.8% of Hamilton's immigrant population and 3.6% of the city's total population. In 2021, Hamilton had 20,145 recent immigrants. This is consistent with broader trends: recent immigrants made up 13.9% of Ontario's immigrant population and 4.2% of its total population, while nationally they accounted for 15.9% of the immigrant population and 3.7% of the overall population.

Among recent immigrants, the median age is 31.6, compared to 40 for Hamilton's overall population. At both the provincial and national levels, the median age for recent immigrants is 32.4.

### Population by Age Groups, Hamilton, 2021



Median employment income for recent immigrants was \$28,000 for 2020, compared to \$37,500 for the overall population.

### Place of birth

The top three places of birth among immigrants living in Hamilton in 2021 were the United Kingdom, India, and Italy. Among recent immigrants living in Hamilton, they were India, Syria, and the Philippines.

Nationally, the top three places of birth for recent immigrants in 2021 were India, the Philippines, and China, while for Ontario they were India, China, and the Philippines.

*Table 2. Top places of birth of recent immigrants, Hamilton, 2016 and 2021*

	2016 - Number	2016 - %	2016 - Rank	2021 - Number	2021 - %	2021 - Rank
Recent immigrants (2016: 2011 to 2016 / 2021: 2016 to 2021)	13,150	100	...	20,145	100	...
India	1,005	7.6	4	3,205	15.9	1
Syria	1,245	9.5	1	2,640	13.1	2
Philippines	1,080	8.2	3	1,790	8.9	3
Nigeria	110	0.8	26	915	4.5	4

	2016 - Number	2016 - %	2016 - Rank	2021 - Number	2021 - %	2021 - Rank
Iraq	1,095	8.3	2	905	4.5	5
Pakistan	695	5.3	5	665	3.3	6
United States of America	540	4.1	7	615	3.1	7
China	645	4.9	6	580	2.9	8
Jamaica	310	2.4	9	525	2.6	9
United Kingdom	370	2.8	8	340	1.7	10

The 2021 data show notable shifts in the origins of recent immigrants:

- India rose from 4th to 1st place, increasing from 7.6% to 15.9% of recent immigrants.
- Syria remained a leading source country, representing 13.1% in 2021.
- The Philippines remained 3rd, accounting for 8.9% in 2021.
- Nigeria rose dramatically from 26th to 4th place.
- Iraq, once a top source country, fell from 2nd to 5th.
- The United States, China, Jamaica, and the United Kingdom remained among the top ten but shifted in rank.

This distribution reflects Hamilton's increasingly diverse immigrant population, influenced by global migration patterns, refugee resettlement initiatives, and economic immigration pathways

Of the 16,290 recent immigrants aged 15 and over, 67% were in the labour force, compared to 62% for the total population. However, the unemployment rate for recent immigrants was 13.8%, compared to 12.3% for the total population aged 15 and over. In Ontario, the unemployment rate among recent immigrants was 13.9%, and 11.9% at the national level.

### Knowledge of official languages (top 3-5)

Knowledge of official languages refers to whether a person can conduct a conversation in English only, French only, in both English and French, or in neither language. In 2021, 92% of Hamilton's population reported knowledge of English only, 0.1% reported knowledge of

French only, and 5.8% reported knowledge of both official languages. About 2% of Hamilton's population, approximately 10,400 people, had no knowledge of either English or French. For Ontario, 2.4% of the population reported no knowledge of English or French, compared to 1.9% for Canada.

Among those whose mother tongue (the first language learned at home in childhood and still understood) was neither English nor French, the most common non-official languages were Arabic, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Punjabi.

Nationally, the top non-official mother tongues in 2021 were Mandarin, Punjabi, Yue (Cantonese), Spanish, and Arabic. In Ontario, the most common were Mandarin, Punjabi, Yue (Cantonese), Arabic, and Tagalog (Filipino).

*Table 3. Mother tongue of those with no knowledge of official languages*

Arabic	<b>1,385</b>	14.0%
Italian	<b>930</b>	9.4%
Spanish	<b>915</b>	9.2%
Portuguese	<b>750</b>	7.6%
Punjabi (Panjabi)	<b>685</b>	6.9%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census

## Language spoken most often at home

In the 2021 Census, "home language" refers to the language(s) a person speaks most often or on a regular basis at home.

In Hamilton, English was the language most often spoken at home by 87% of residents. Among recent immigrants, 40% primarily spoke English at home. In 2021, there were 2,165 residents who spoke French most often at home.

The top five non-official home languages spoken in Hamilton were Arabic, Spanish, Serbo-Croatian, Punjabi, and Mandarin. Among recent immigrants, the top five were Arabic, Punjabi, Spanish, Gujarati, and Mandarin.

In Ontario, the most common non-official home languages were Mandarin, Punjabi, Yue (Cantonese), Arabic, and Spanish. Nationally, they were Mandarin, Punjabi, Yue (Cantonese), Spanish, and Tagalog (Filipino).

*Table 4. Language spoken most often at home, Hamilton, 2021*

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Recent Immigrants</b>	<b>Total %</b>	<b>Recent Immigrant %</b>
English	467,080	6,925	86.6%	40.1%
French	2,165	235	0.4%	1.4%
Arabic	8,230	3,190	1.5%	18.5%
Spanish	5,760	655	1.1%	3.8%
Serbo-Croatian	5,090	190	0.9%	1.1%
Punjabi (Panjabi)	4,730	655	0.9%	3.8%
Mandarin	3,785	395	0.7%	2.3%

## Disability (activity limitation)

In the Canadian Disability Survey, Statistics Canada explains the social model of disabilities:

The premise of the social model is that disability is the result of the interaction between a person's functional limitations and barriers in the environment, including social and physical barriers that make it harder to function day-to-day. Thus, disability is a social disadvantage that an unsupportive environment imposes on top of an individual's impairment.

Statistics Canada's definition of disability includes anyone who reported being "sometimes", "often" or "always" limited in their daily activities due to a long-term condition or health problem.

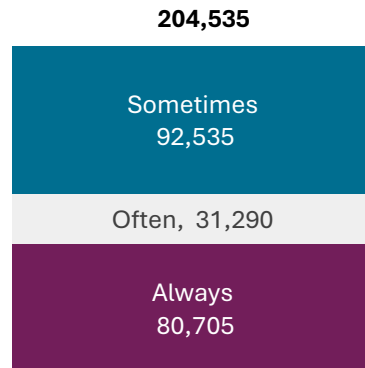
This report uses these definitions to provide a baseline of information on the population of persons with disability in Hamilton.

Using this definition, the 2021 Census found that nearly 205,000 persons aged 15 and over in Hamilton reported activity limitations—representing 44% of the population aged 15 and over. This rate is higher than Ontario (36%) and Canada (40%).

Among Hamilton residents with activity limitations:

- 92,535 reported being limited sometimes (often referred to as "episodic disabilities"),
- nearly 81,000 reported being always limited, and
- just over 31,000 reported being limited often.

### Persons reporting activity limitations aged 15+, Hamilton, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

Among persons with activity limitations in Hamilton (always, often, and sometimes combined), mental health related limitations were the most common, at 47% of respondents. Other prominent types included:

- Other health conditions (43%),
- Cognitive limitations (35%),
- Physical limitations (37%),
- Seeing limitations (31%), and
- Hearing limitations (21%).

Patterns vary significantly by age group:

#### Ages 15–24

- Mental-health-related limitations were most common (~70%).
- Cognitive limitations were reported by 39%.
- Seeing limitations were reported by 27%.

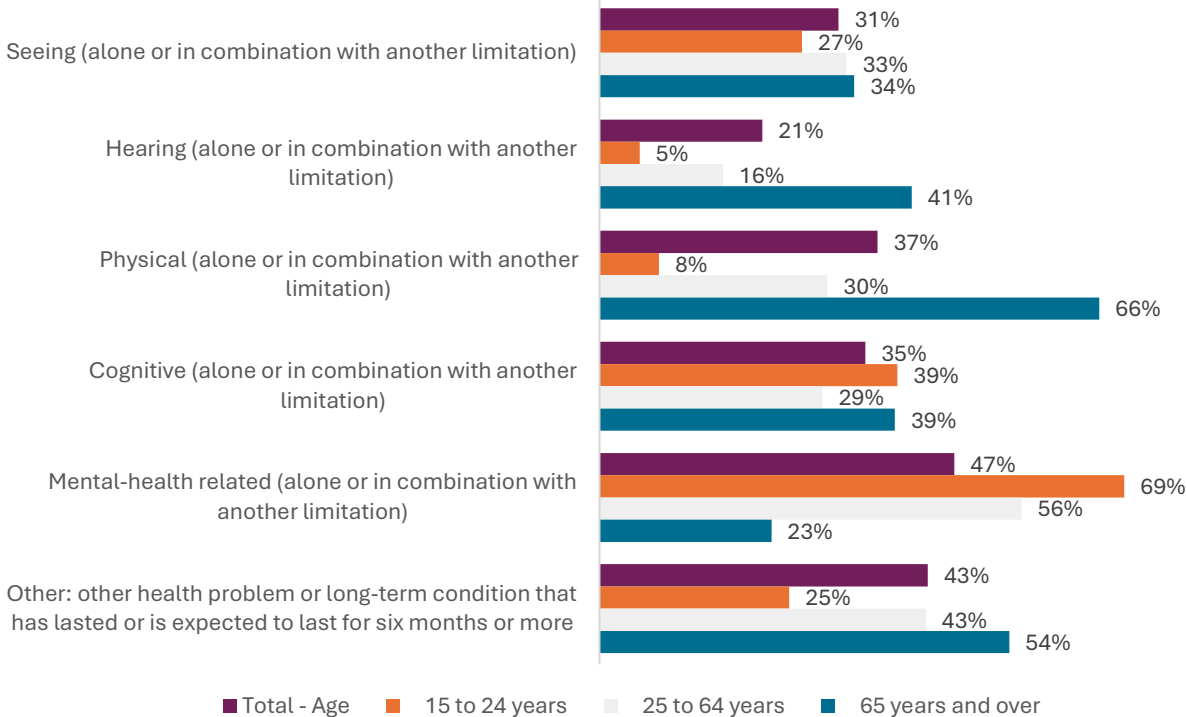
#### Ages 25–64

- Mental-health-related limitations remained most common (56%).
- Limitations categorized as “Other” were reported by 43%.
- Seeing limitations affected 33%.

#### Ages 65 and over

- Physical limitations were most common (66%).
- “Other” limitations followed at 54%.
- Hearing limitations were reported by 41%.

### Types of Activity Limitation by Age Groups (15 and over), Hamilton, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

## Income Assistance Program Participation

### Ontario Works, ODSP, and other relevant supports

Ontario Works (OW) is a provincial income support program that offers:

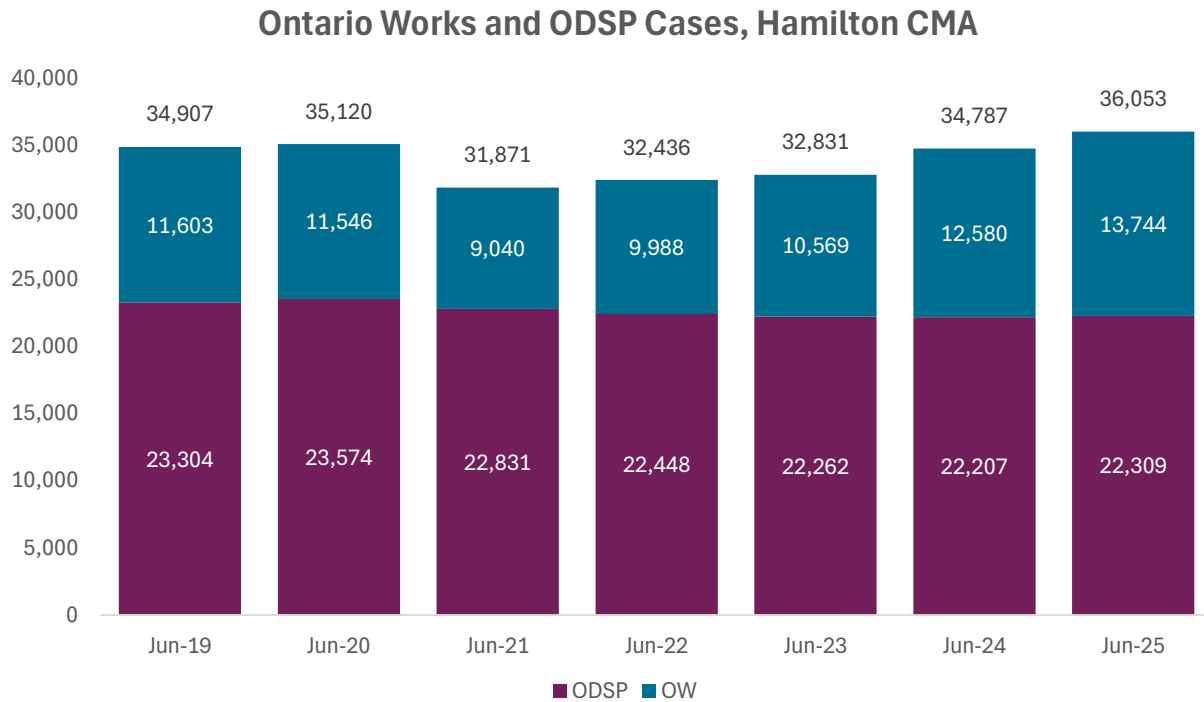
- money to help individuals and eligible family members with living expenses, including food, and rent
- health benefits for individuals and eligible family members
- employment supports to help individuals find and keep a job (such as workshops for resume writing, job counselling, job-specific training, and basic education)

Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) provides similar support as Ontario Works for those with a disability.

As of July 2025, maximum monthly ODSP rates for a single person are \$1,408 (\$809 basic needs + \$599 maximum shelter), reflecting a 2.8% inflation-based increase. Ontario Works (OW) rates remain frozen for the seventh consecutive year, with a single person typically receiving up to \$733 monthly.

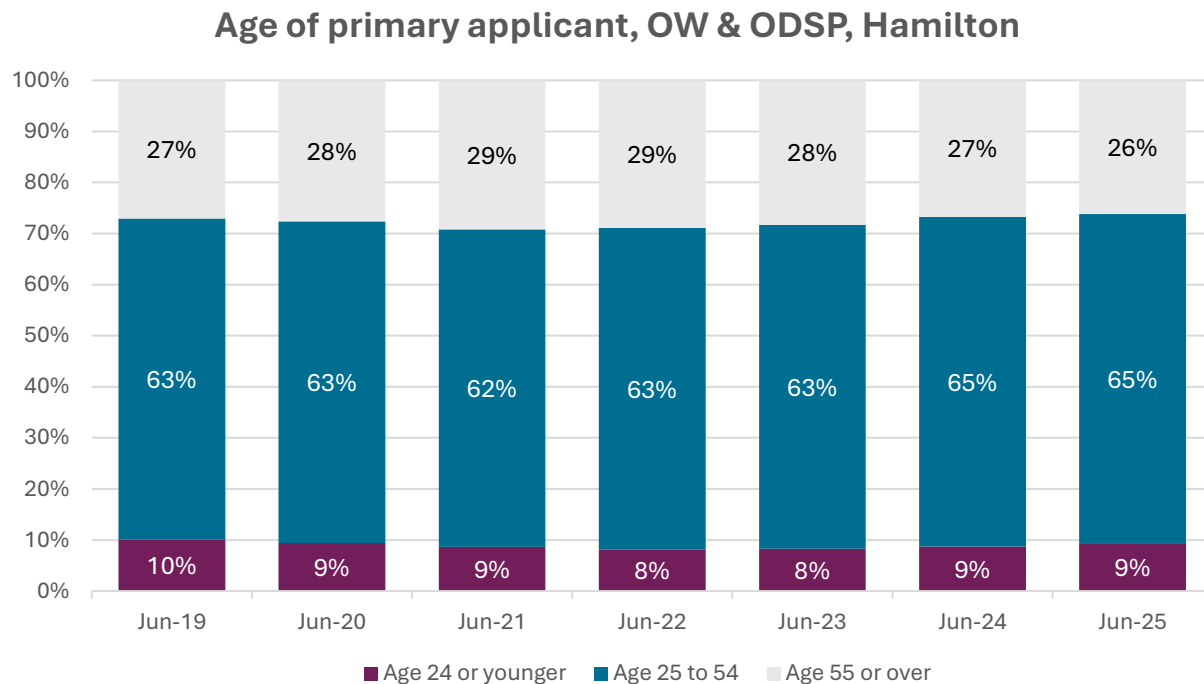
According to recent provincial data, there are just under 14,000 OW cases and over 22,000 ODSP cases in Hamilton. There was a dip in the number of OW cases in 2021, reflecting pandemic supports that would have been available to individuals. OW cases then rose to a higher number of cases in 2025 than in 2019 (pre-pandemic).

Figure 12. Ontario Works and ODSP Cases, Hamilton CMA



Source: Open Government Ontario, Ontario Social Assistance case characteristics by census metropolitan area

When looking at the age of primary applicant for OW and ODSP, about two-thirds are aged 25-54, while over a quarter are aged 55 and over.



Source: Open Government Ontario, Ontario Social Assistance case characteristics by census metropolitan area

## Employment Data

### Industry

When examining the number of workers by industry in Hamilton, the largest industry sector is health care and social assistance, followed by retail trade, and manufacturing. At the national level, the top sectors were health care and social assistance, retail trade, and professional, scientific and technical services—a pattern also reflected in Ontario.

Figure 13. Workers by Industry, Hamilton

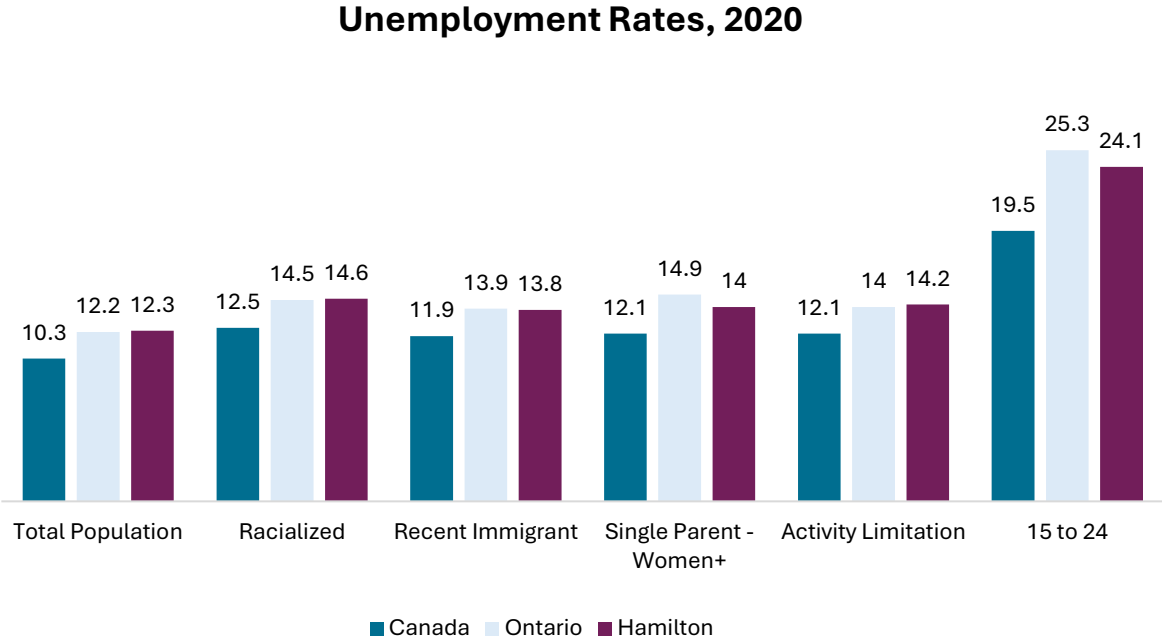
#### Total Number of Workers by Industry, Hamilton, 2020



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

As reflected in the chart below, identified communities have higher unemployment rates when compared to the overall population in Hamilton. This was also reflected in the Ontario and Canadian rates for these communities, although the Ontario and Hamilton rates were consistently higher than the Canadian rates across all the communities.

Figure 14. Unemployment rates for select groups, 2020



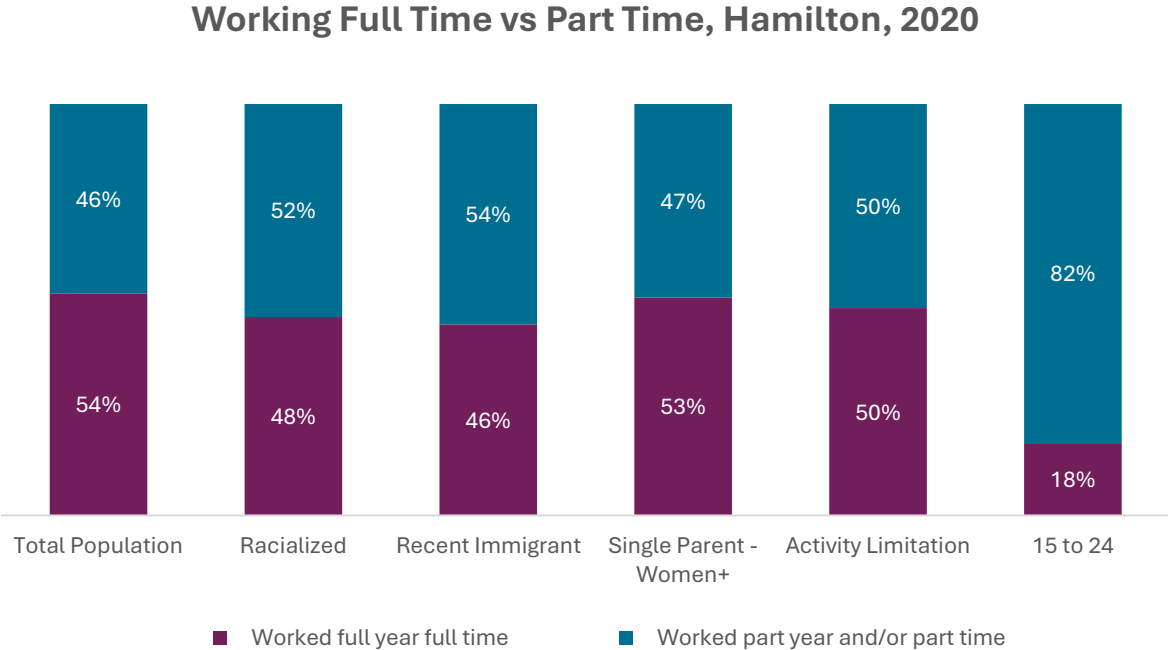
Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

### Underemployment

Overall, 54% of those working in Hamilton in 2020 were employed full time, full year. This rate was similar across many of the selected demographic groups, except for those aged 15 to 24, among whom eight in ten worked part year and/or part time. These patterns closely resemble both Ontario and Canadian trends.

For those who were employed, full-time, full-year work offered greater stability and more opportunities. Among all workers, 87% were employees, while 13% were self-employed.

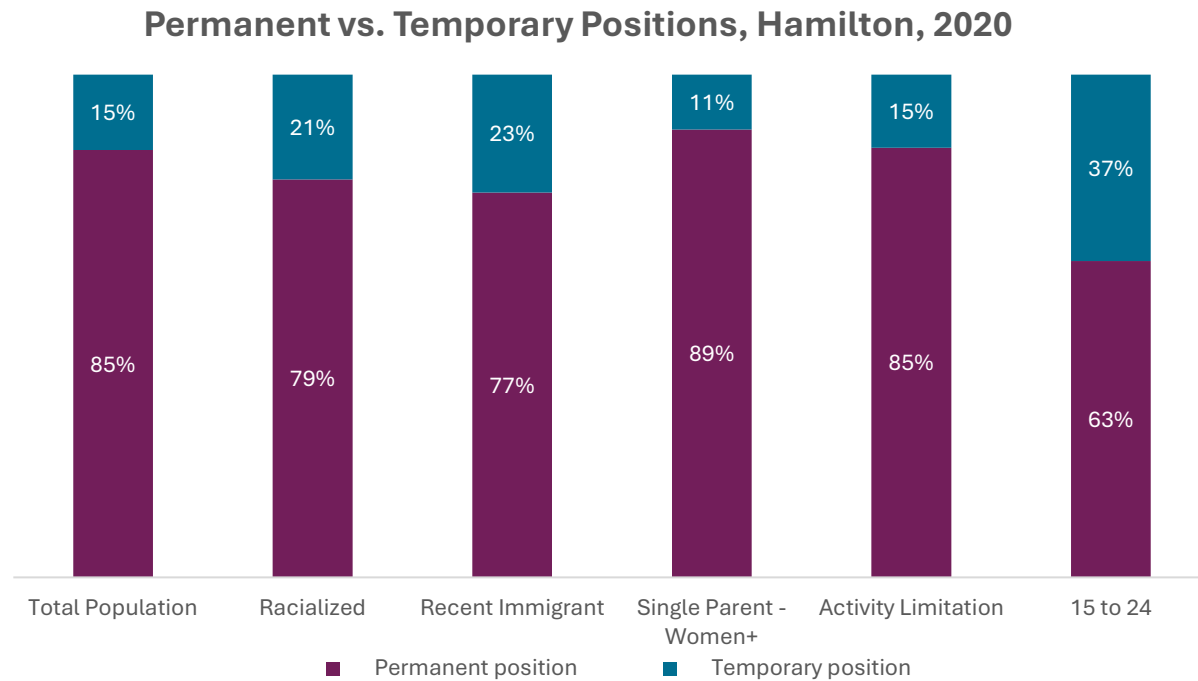
Figure 15. Working Full Time vs Part Time, Hamilton, 2020



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

When examining permanent versus temporary employment, 85% of employees overall held permanent positions. Most groups showed a similar pattern, with the exception of youth aged 15–24, of whom only two-thirds were in permanent positions. These experiences were consistent with trends observed in Ontario and Canada.

Figure 16. Permanent vs. Temporary Positions, Hamilton



## Groups with potential for career advancement through a Community Benefits Framework

A Community Benefits Framework (CBF) would support groups that have historically faced systemic barriers to employment and advancement. The data presented in this report highlights several populations that experience disproportionate challenges in the labour market, including racialized residents, recent immigrants, women-led single-parent families, individuals with activity limitations, and youth.

Over time, full-time employment has declined, while contract, seasonal, and temporary work has increased. Employment opportunities are critical for those groups facing barriers to employment, along with needs for training, mentoring, and wraparound supports. In addition, additional benefits can be realized through policies, agreements, workforce development, and inclusive hiring practices tied to development projects, economic inclusion strategies, and labour market investments through a Community Benefits Framework.

As articulated in the *Community Benefits for York Region Working Framework*<sup>2</sup>, providing workforce opportunities for these targets groups will require:

- Appropriate targets for workforce opportunities that are clearly defined, monitored, and enforced, and that are informed by a strong understanding of the number and types of potential workforce opportunities associated with contracts, in particular for infrastructure and development projects
- The right supportive infrastructure to recruit, prepare, and connect jobseekers from target groups with available opportunities that contractors and all employers can access
- Building key partnerships between educational institutions, labour unions, and employers.

Such strategies can create pathways into stable, long-term employment and help advance equitable economic outcomes across Hamilton

---

<sup>2</sup> Community Benefits for York Region Working Framework (2019), p. 4

## Business Landscape

Canadian business counts data provide the number of active establishments by industry classification and employment size categories. The data are compiled from the Business Register, which is a repository of information on the Canadian business population.

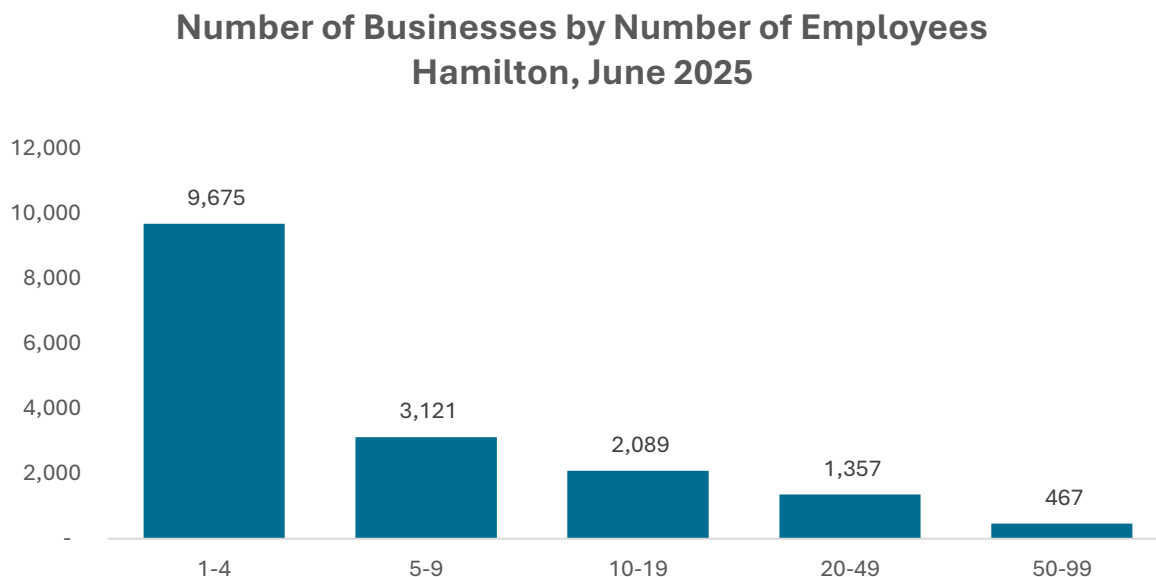
Included in the Business Register are all Canadian businesses which meet at least one of the three following criteria:

- Have an employee workforce for which they submit payroll remittances to CRA; or
- Have a minimum of \$30,000 in annual revenue; or
- Are incorporated under a federal or provincial act and have filed a federal corporate income tax form within the past three years.

### Number of employees (small businesses with employees 1-99)

The majority of businesses with 1–99 employees in Hamilton are small businesses with 1-4 employees, representing 58% of all small and medium-sized firms in this size range.

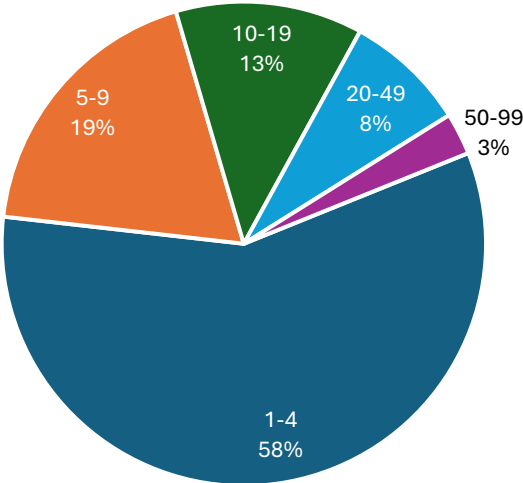
*Figure 17. Number of Businesses by Number of Employees, Hamilton, June 2025*



Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Business Counts, June 2025

Figure 18. Hamilton Business by Number of Employees (%), June 2025

### Hamilton Businesses by Number of Employees, June 2025



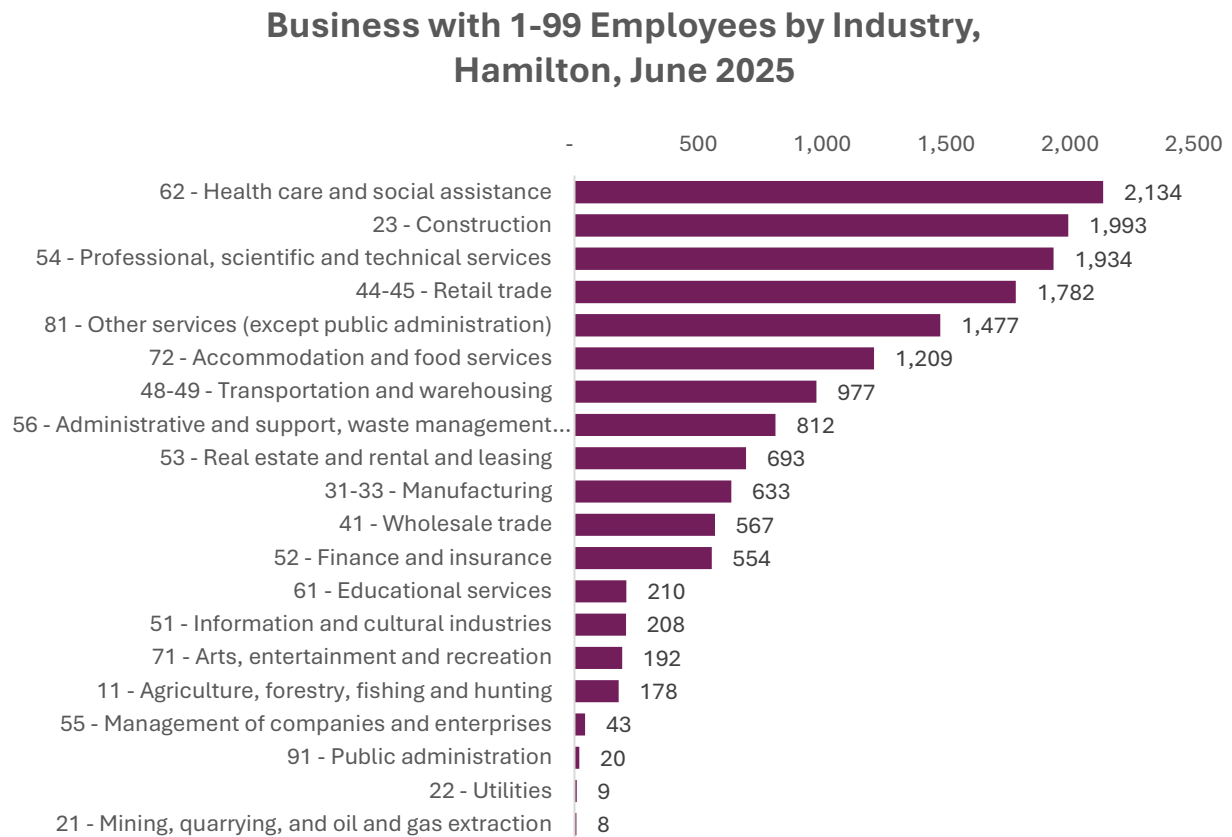
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Business Counts, June 2025

### Industry sector

As shown in the chart, health care and social assistance is the largest industry in Hamilton by number of businesses. This is followed by construction, and then professional, scientific and technical services.

These sectors represent the core of Hamilton’s business landscape and reflect the city’s mix of service-oriented and skilled-trade-driven economic activity.

Figure 19. Businesses by Industry, Hamilton, June 2025



Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Business Counts, June 2025