



Hamilton Ontario Works Caseload Profile 2022-2024

City of Hamilton
Healthy and Safe Communities Department
Ontario Works Division

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Introduction

The Hamilton Ontario Works Caseload Profile provides an overview of key demographics, shows trends within the caseload, and will assist program management in local service delivery planning and oversight. Additionally, the report supports work with local community agencies providing programming and supports for low-income residents.

The Ontario Works program provides financial support to individuals and families to cover living expenses, such as food and shelter, as well as additional benefits for health needs and employment assistance activities. The monthly amount received for living expenses depends on the individual or family's specific situation, including deductions for applicable non-exempt income sources. Examples of non-exempt income include 50% of employment earnings after the first \$200.00, spousal support, and income from benefit plans such as the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.

The table below outlines the maximum monthly financial support available by case type for individuals with no deductions for earnings or other non-exempt income. Please note that this information does not include additional benefits from other exempt income sources, such as the Canada Child Tax Benefit for families with children. The information on the maximum eligibility for the case types referenced below helps provide context for the demographic and key trends within the caseload, as outlined in the Caseload Profile Report.

Case Type	Basic Needs	Shelter	Maximum
Single	\$343.00	\$390.00	\$733.00
Couple	\$494.00	\$642.00	\$1136.00
Family with 2 children under 18 years of age	\$494.00	\$756.00	\$1250.00
Sole Support Parent with 2 children under 18 years of age	\$360.00	\$756.00	\$1116.00

Data Sources

The information included in this report is primarily based on data extracted in September 2024 from the Social Assistance Management System (SAMS) and Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) reports. Specific reports used within the report were:

- OW-Social Assistance Operations Performance Report v.5.2 September 2024 – Hamilton Region (January 2022, January 2023, January 2024 data)
- Ontario Works Caseload at a Glance – June 2024 (January 2024 data)
- CRS100 – Integrated Case Summary
- CRS 355 Weekly Action Plan Details Report

The report provides a summary of select case-related and primary applicant demographics for Ontario Works cases in Hamilton in January 2022, January 2023, and January 2024.

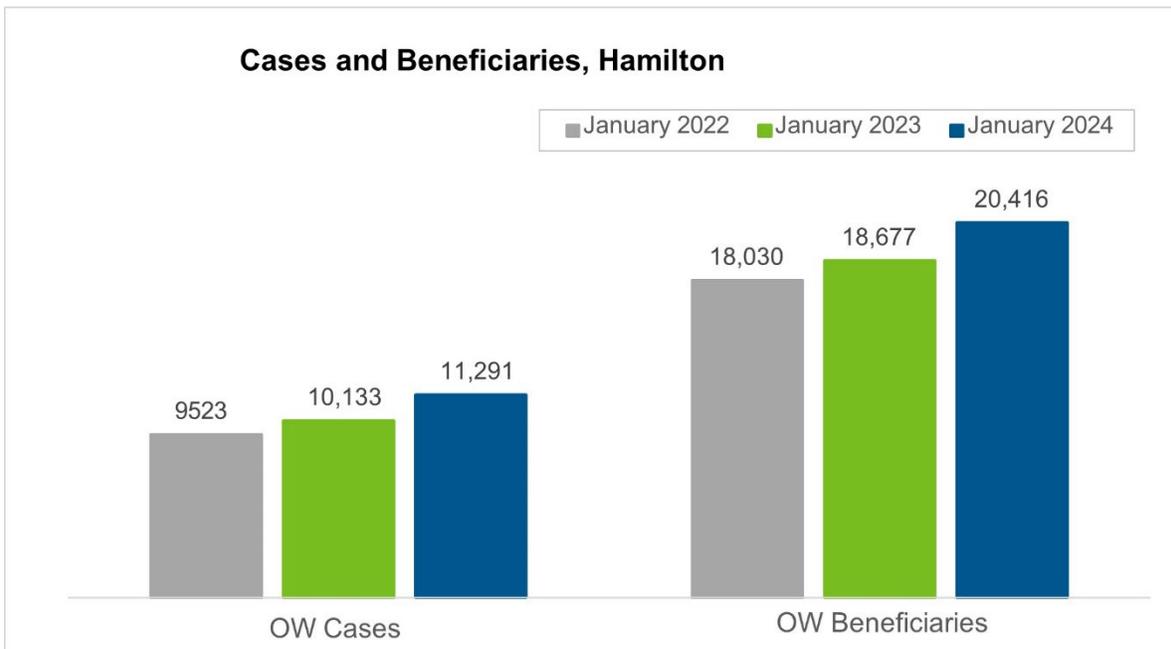
There are notations included within the report related to 'known' issues or circumstances that may have impacted the data and where caution should be used with the results.

Caseload Demographics

Cases and Beneficiaries

An Ontario Works case refers to a single individual or a family unit on social assistance (e.g., a family is counted as one case) A beneficiary is an individual member of a case.

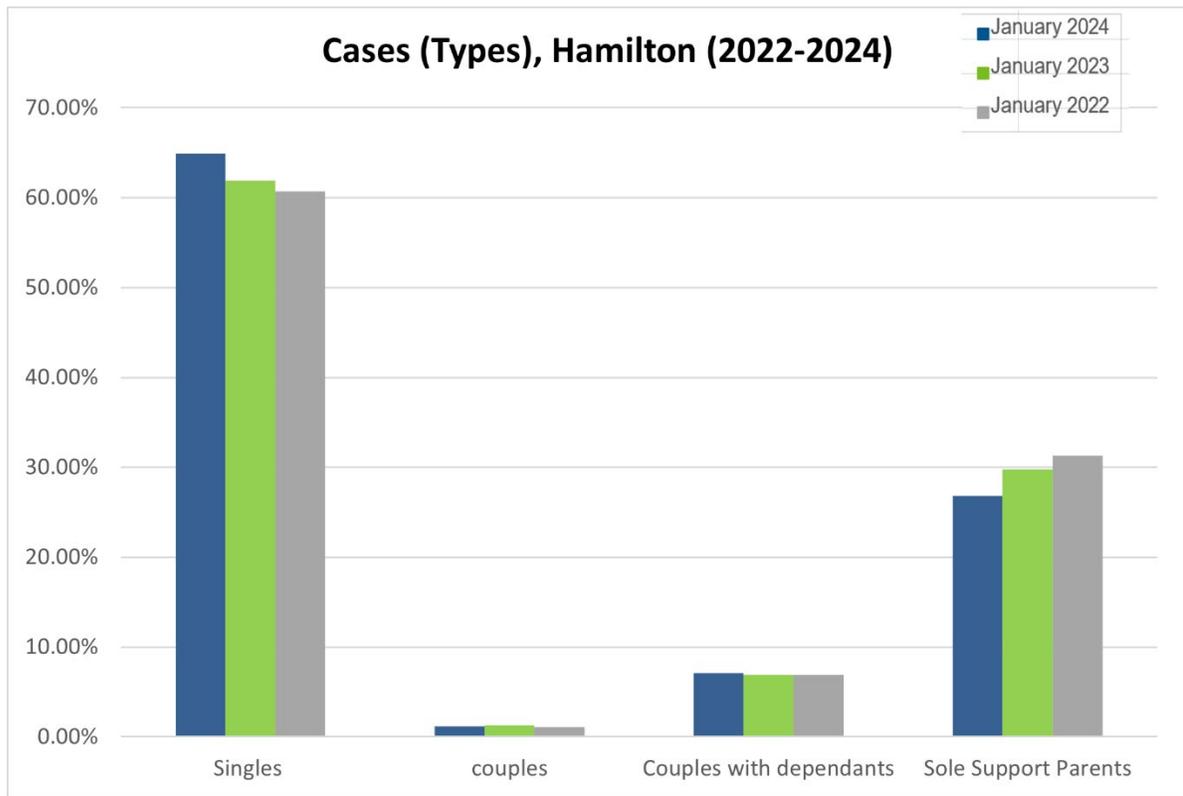
In Hamilton the Ontario Works caseload has been increasing since 2022. Between June 2023 and June 2024, the caseload in Hamilton increased approximately 20%, which is above the provincial increase during that time of 16.4%. The upward trend in the Ontario Works caseloads in Hamilton and across Ontario highlights the significant challenges facing many individuals and families.



Case Type

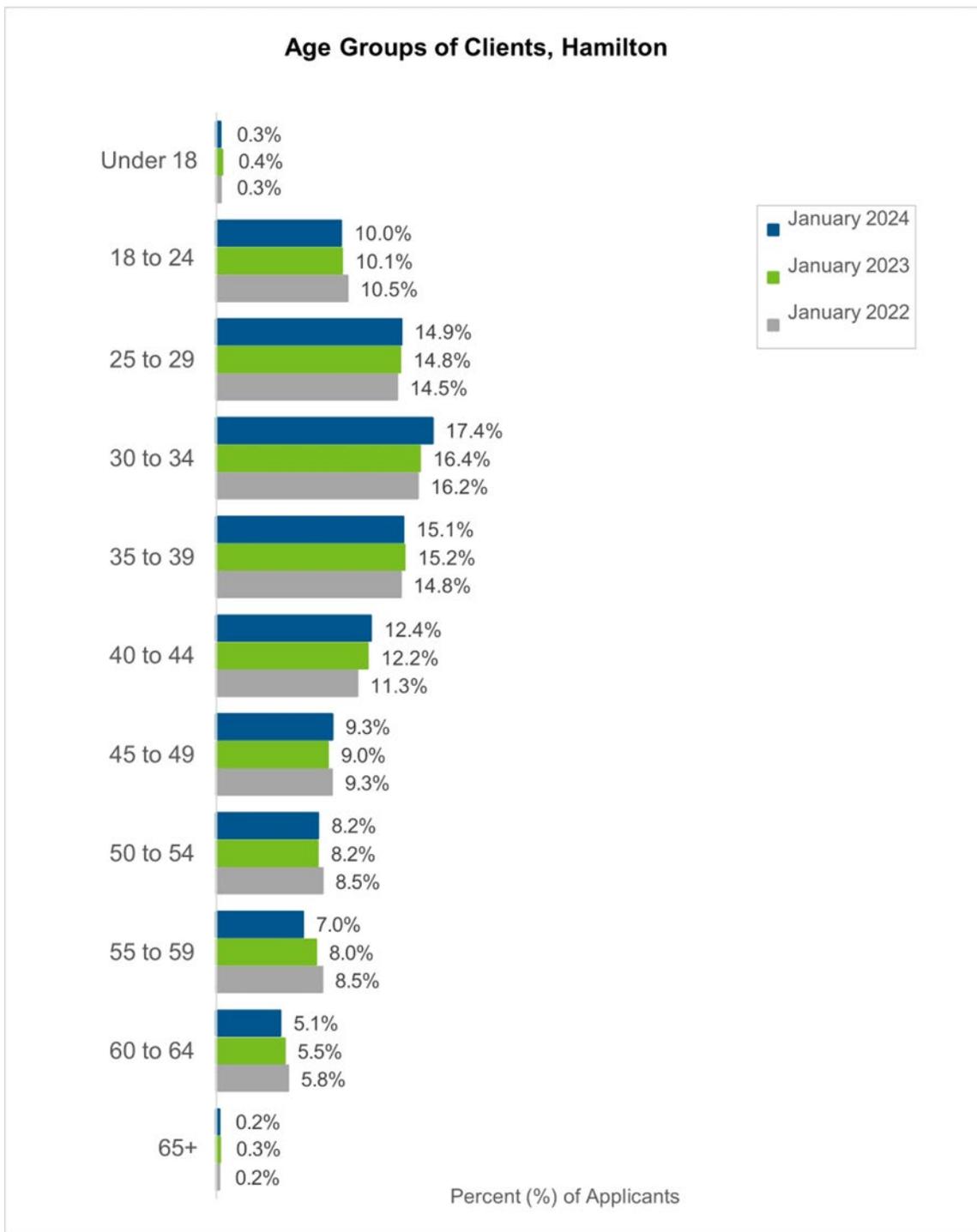
The Hamilton caseload has historically been comprised primarily of singles and sole support parents.

Since 2022, there has been an increase in the proportion of single cases from 60.7% to 64.9% and a decrease in sole support parent cases from 31.3% to 26.8%.



Age Groups

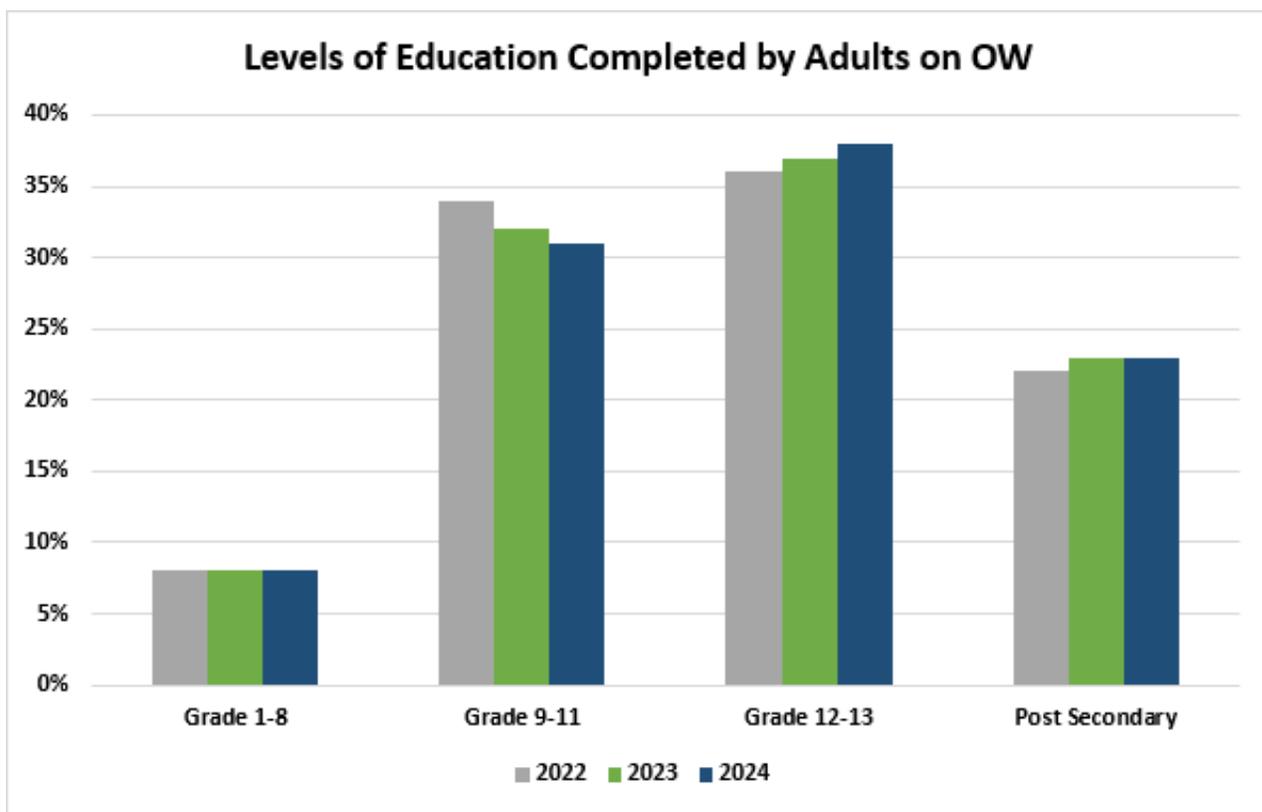
The age distribution of clients on the caseload in Hamilton has not changed significantly since 2022.



Highest Level of Education Completed

The following chart shows the highest grade completed for adults on the caseload.

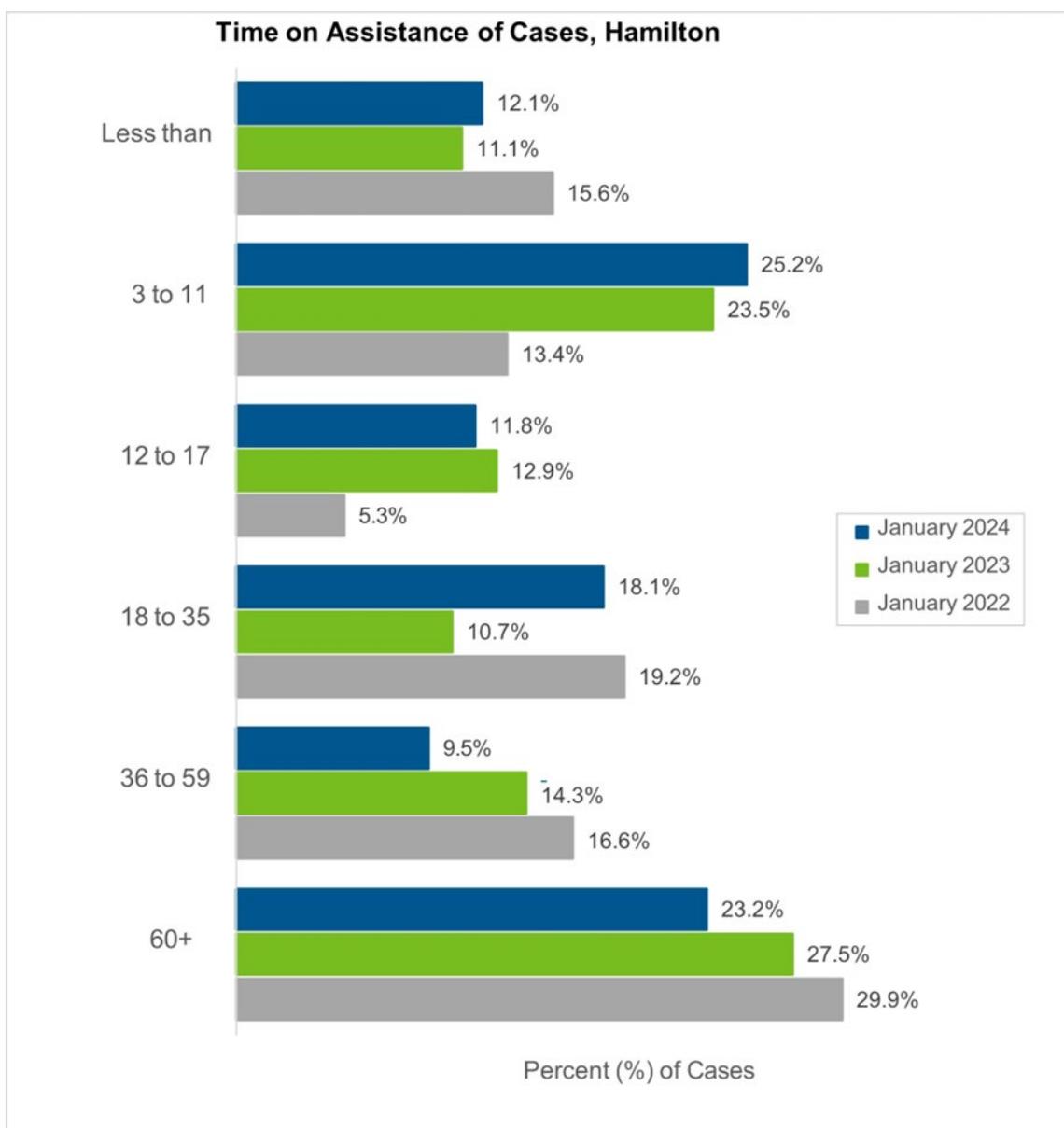
Data Note: Some concerns about this data include conflicting and/or different information for the person between cases and conflicting information in the evidence records between student status field and the highest grade completed field. Caution should be taken when drawing conclusions from this data.



Time on Assistance

Since 2022, there has been a decrease in the proportion of the cases that have been on assistance for 60+ months.

Data Note: Time on assistance data is taken from the CRS100M reports generated by MCCSS and is based on individual case “start dates”. When a case closes and the applicant reapplies, a new start date is created. For example, benefits offered during the pandemic response are likely impacting this data due to clients exiting the program and then returning once Federal benefits ended.

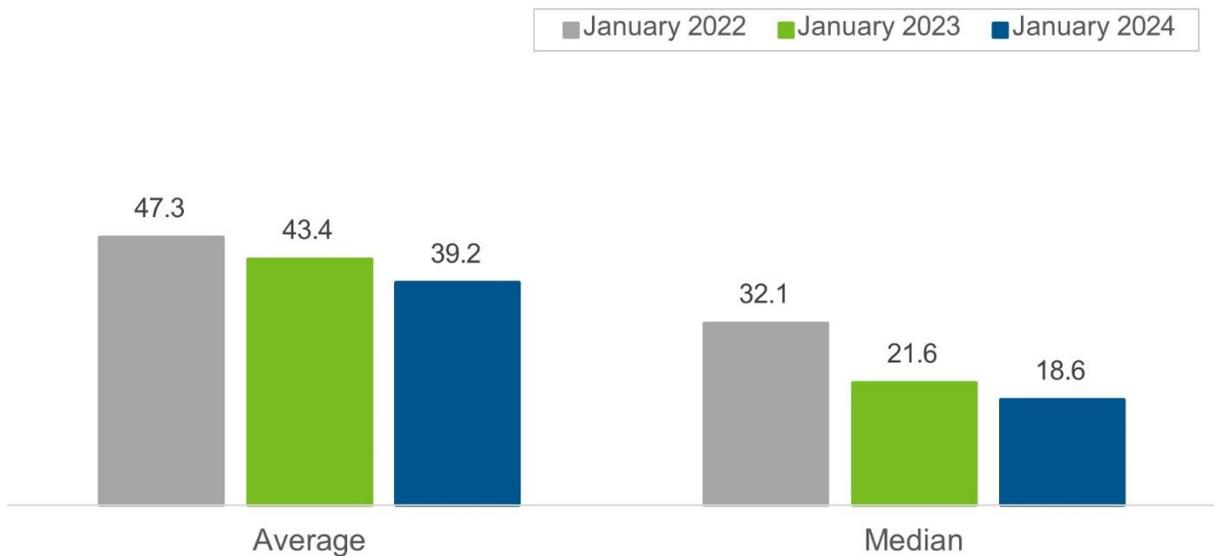


Average and Median Time on Assistance

Since 2022, the average time on assistance for clients in Hamilton has decreased from 47.3 months to 39.2 months. This is consistent with the provincial decrease from 39 months to 36 months.

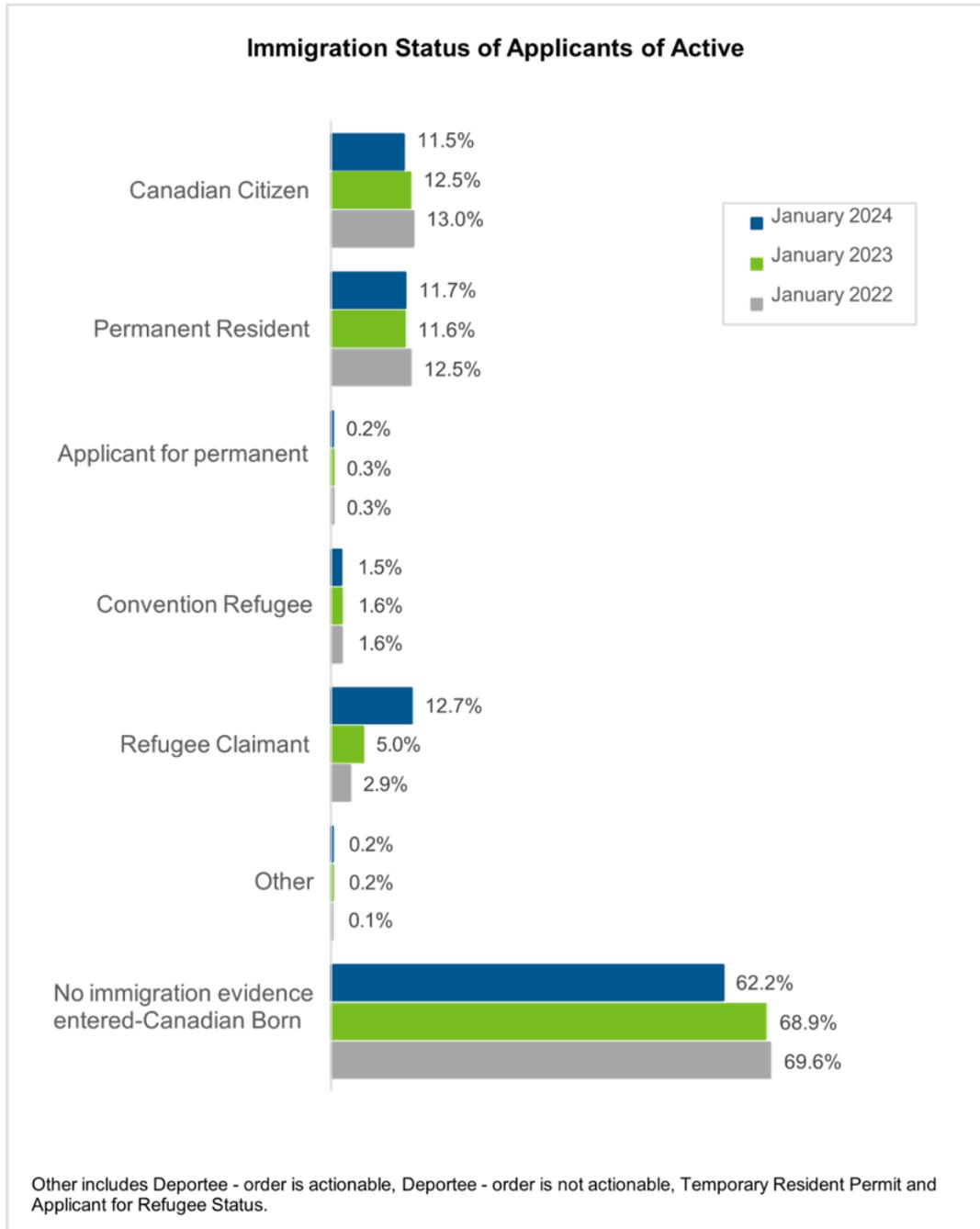
While both the average and median has decreased, the much lower median time on assistance is an indicator that there remain cases with a much higher than average length of time on assistance.

Average and Median Months on Assistance of Active OW Cases,



Immigration Status

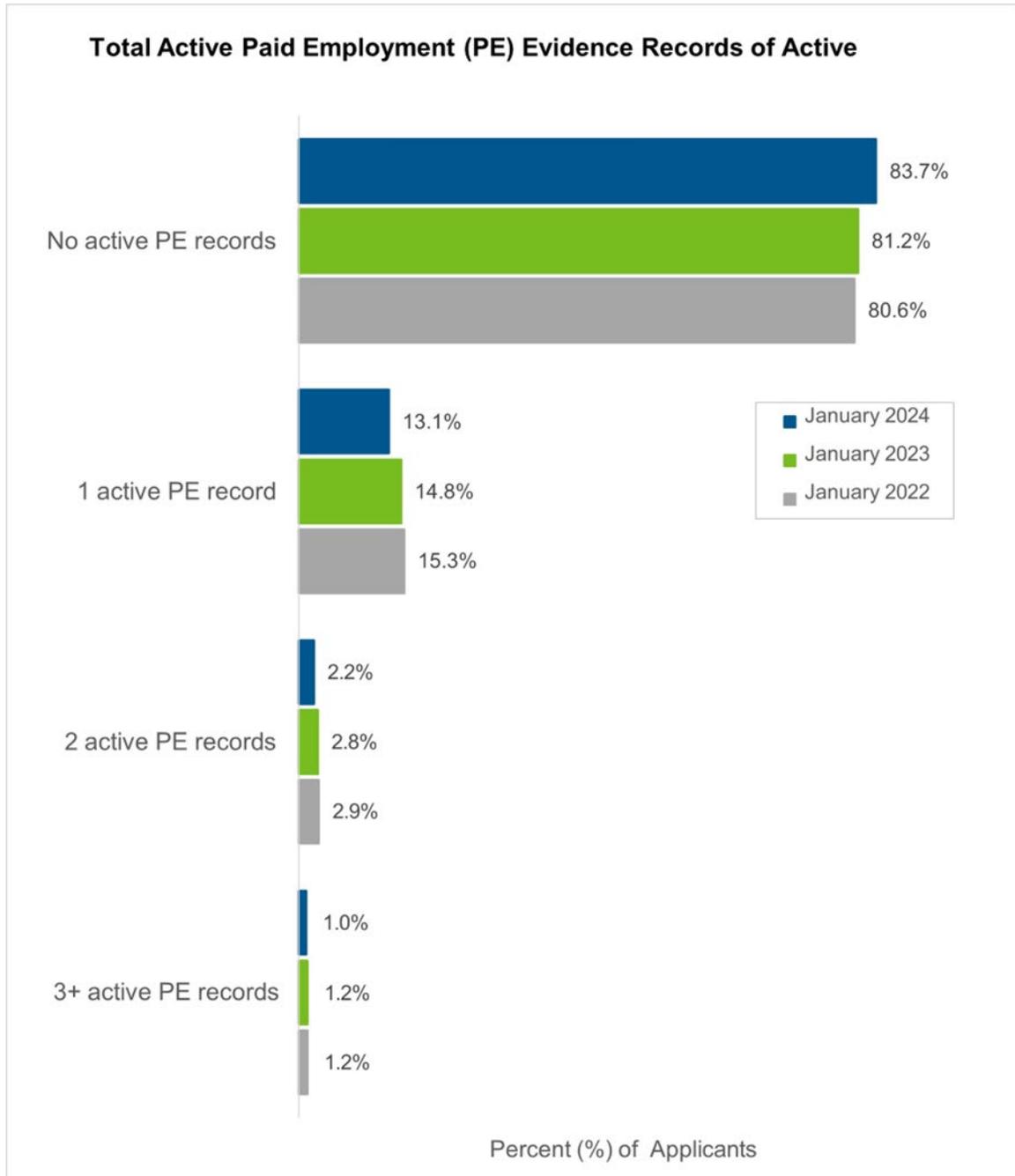
One of the eligibility criteria for Ontario Works is having legal status to remain in Canada. The chart below provides information from the Immigration Evidence for applicant's legal status in Canada. Hamilton Ontario Works has seen a significant increase in Refugee Claimants during 2024 compared to previous years. There are many potential explanations for the increase in applicants within this category, such as: federal or sponsorship periods ending or increased time for decisions to be made on an individual's refugee claim.



Paid Employment

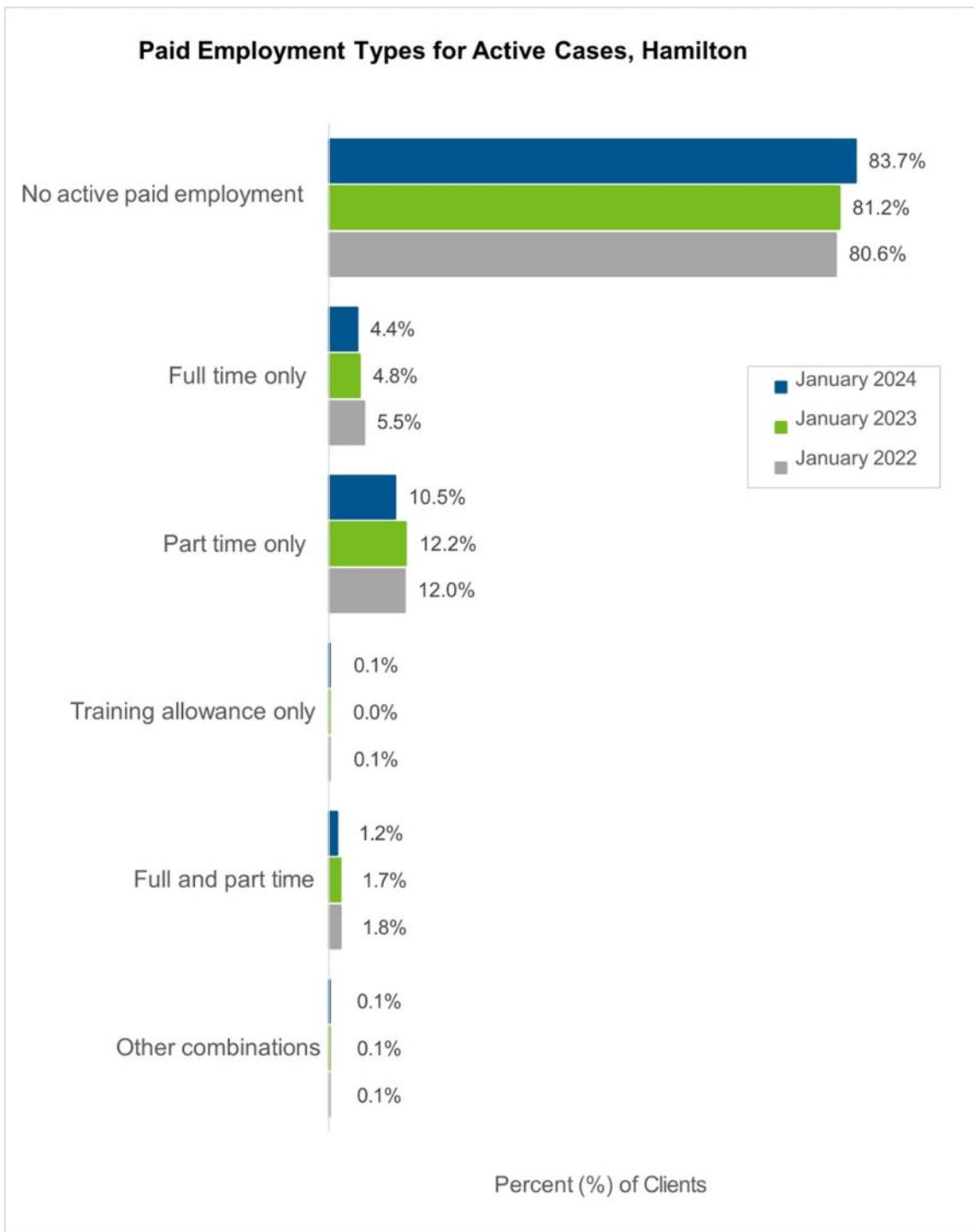
In 2024, the percentage of active clients who had at least one active paid employment record recorded in SAMS dropped to 16.3% from 19.4% in 2022.

Data Note: Due to data entry issues, a small portion of paid employment evidence records aren't accurate and there may be a slight over-representation in the data.



Paid Employment Types

Of the approximately 16% of clients that are employed, there are more with part-time paid employment than full time paid employment.



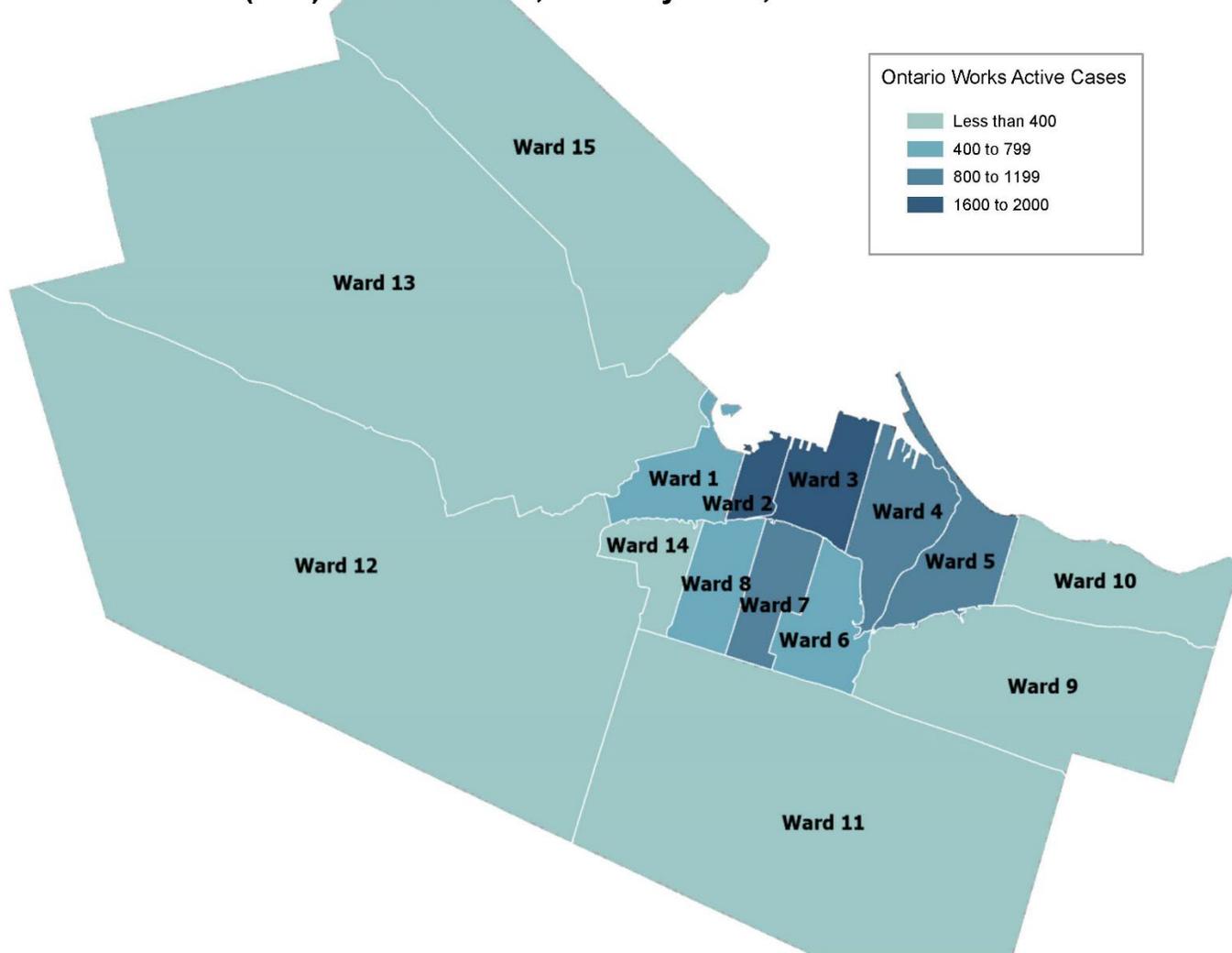
Case Distribution Across the City of Hamilton

The following map shows the January 2024 OW case distribution across Hamilton and is based on primary addresses entered in SAMS.

It is important to note that all un-housed clients have office addresses entered as their primary address (250 Main St E/350 King St E), but they aren't necessarily staying in this area.

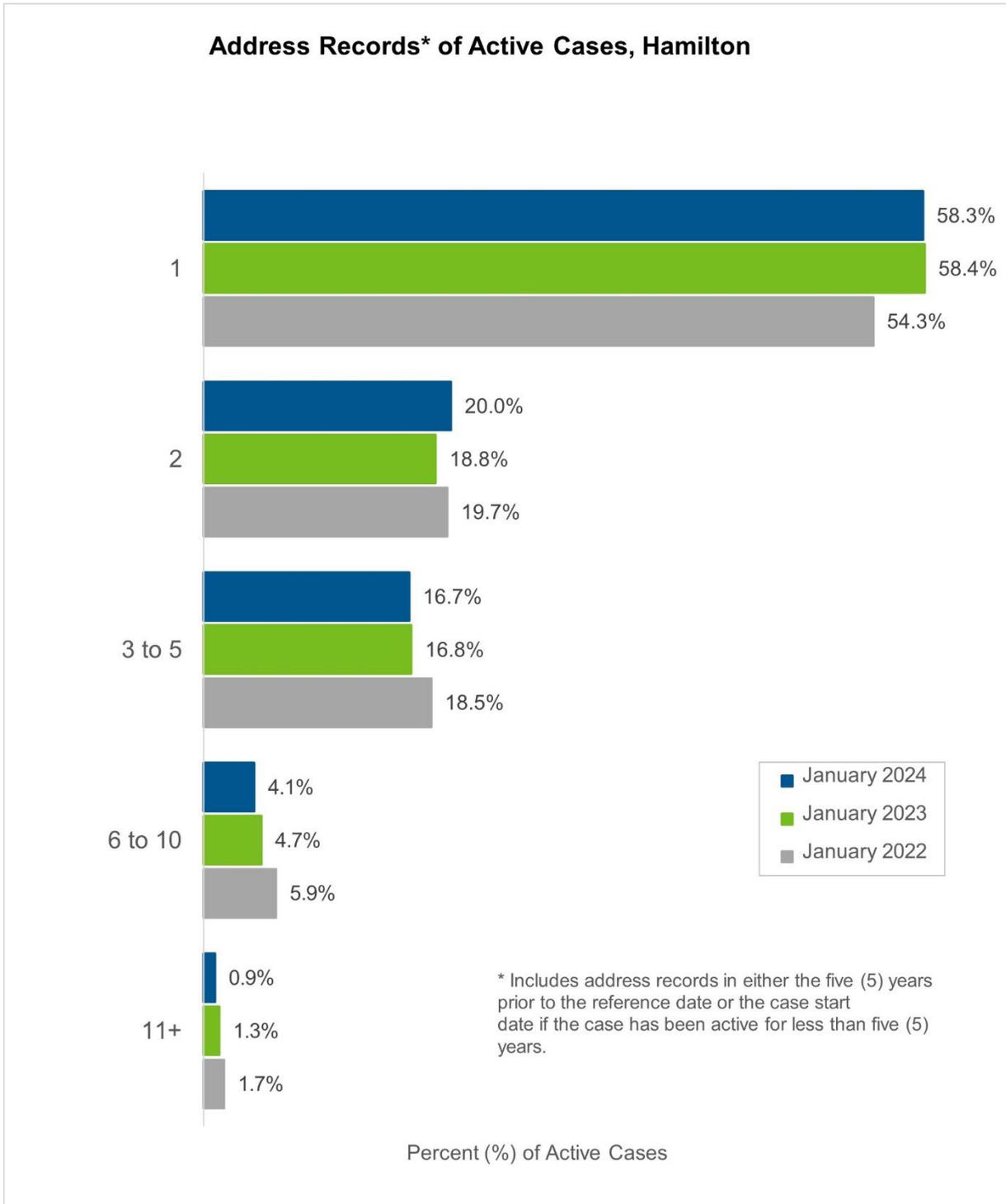
Much of the caseload is distributed below the escarpment. Wards 2, 3 and 4 have the highest distribution of the caseload. Wards 11, 13 and 15 have the lowest distribution of the caseload. Note: The map reflects 98.6% of the active OW cases as there were 1.4% (133) address that did not geocode to a valid Hamilton address due to data entry issues.

Ontario Works (OW) Active Cases, January 2024, Hamilton



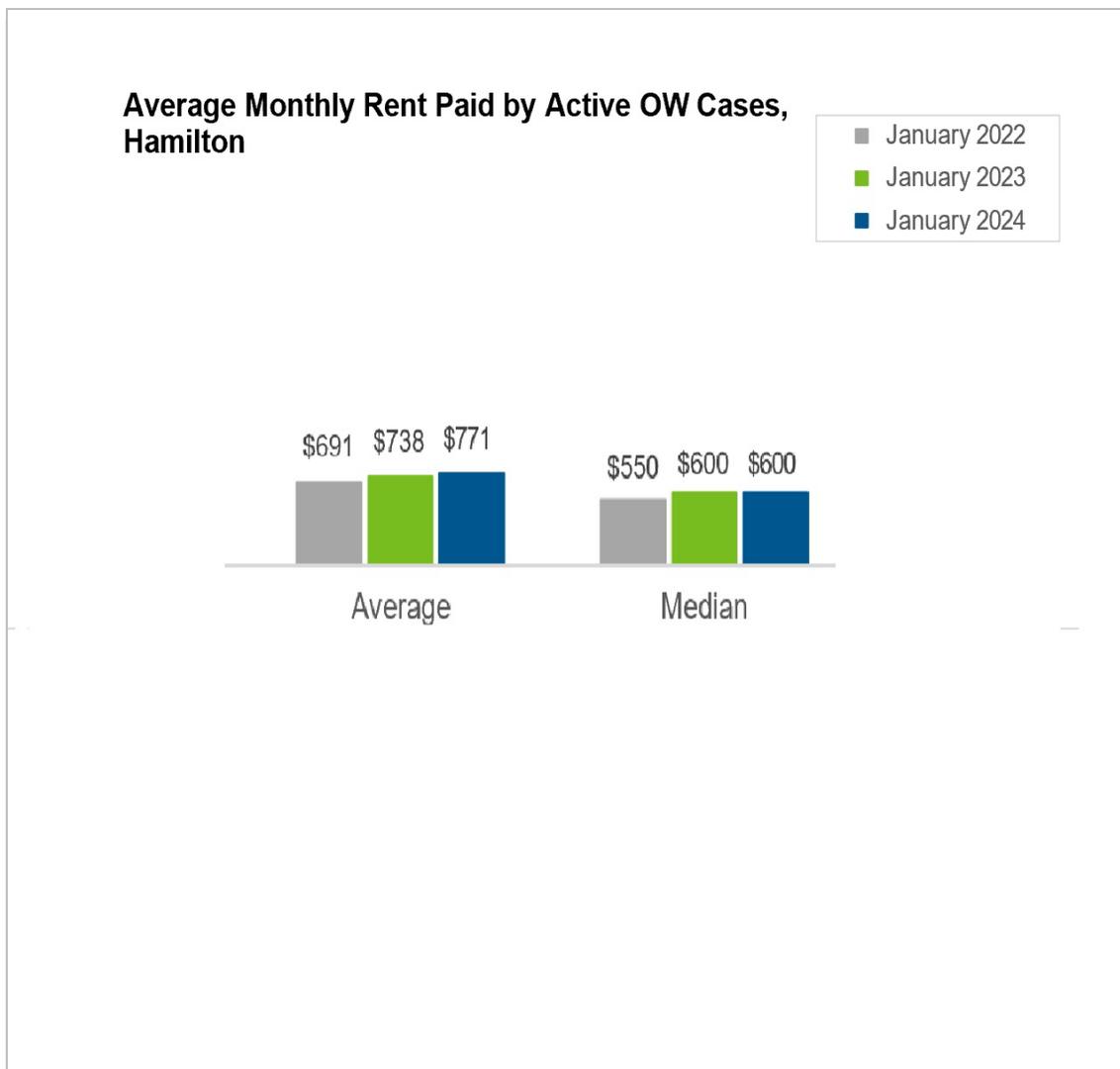
Address Changes

Over 40% of all people receiving Ontario Works in Hamilton have moved two or more times in the last five years.



Shelter Expense - Rent Paid

The following is a summary of the rent amounts from shelter expense evidence entered into SAMS. Information in the SAMS system showed an average rent in January 2024 of \$771.00/month for people on Ontario Works. This demonstrates that Ontario Works households do not have adequate funds for all shelter and food expenses. Ontario Works rates have not increased since 2018. As per *Statistics Canada (Consumer Price Index: Annual Review, 2023)* the cost of living has increased by 14.1% in the last three years.

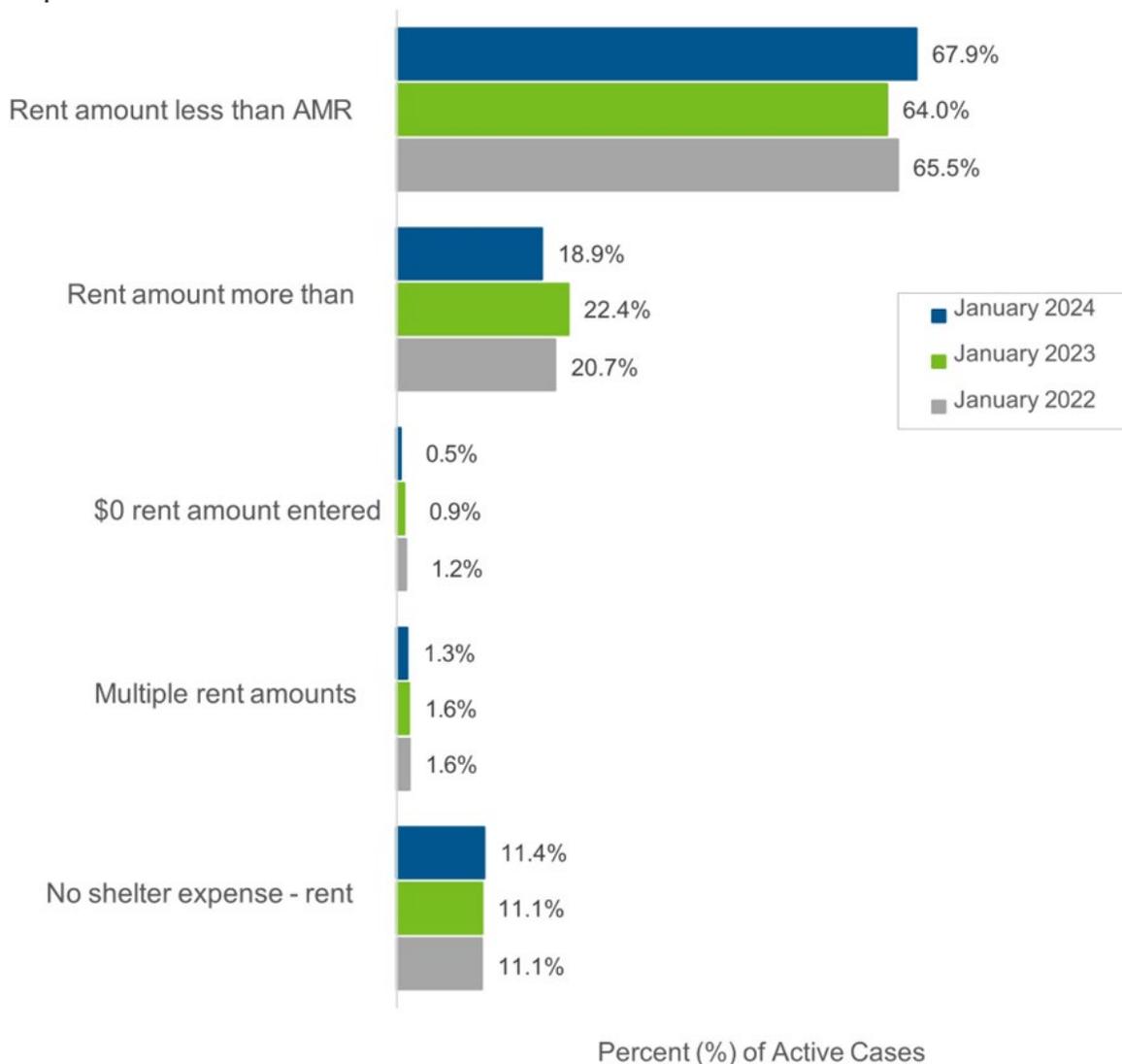


Shelter Expense - Rent Paid and Average Market Rent

Most clients in Hamilton on Ontario Works are renting. Of the 89% of clients paying rent only 5% are renting a subsidized unit. The average market rent (AMR) in Hamilton for a bachelor unit rose from \$919.00 per month in 2023 to \$1017.00 per month in 2024. The following is a summary of the rent amounts from shelter expense evidence compared to the average market rent (AMR) of a bachelor unit in Hamilton.

A common reason why the rent amount entered in the Social Assistance Management System would be lower than the average monthly rent is when accommodations are shared with others who may or may not be on Ontario Works.

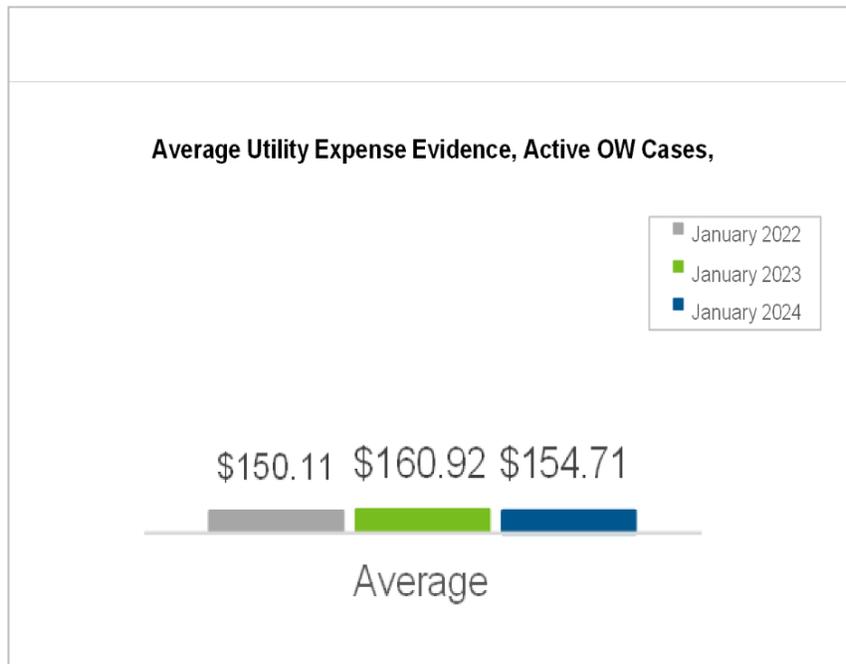
**Monthly Rent Paid by Primary Applicant
Compared to Average Market Rent of Bachelor Unit
Active Cases, Hamilton**



Utility Expense Evidence

Approximately 30% of Ontario Works cases in Hamilton have utility expenses in addition to rent. The following is the average from utility expense evidence entered into the Social Assistance Management System.

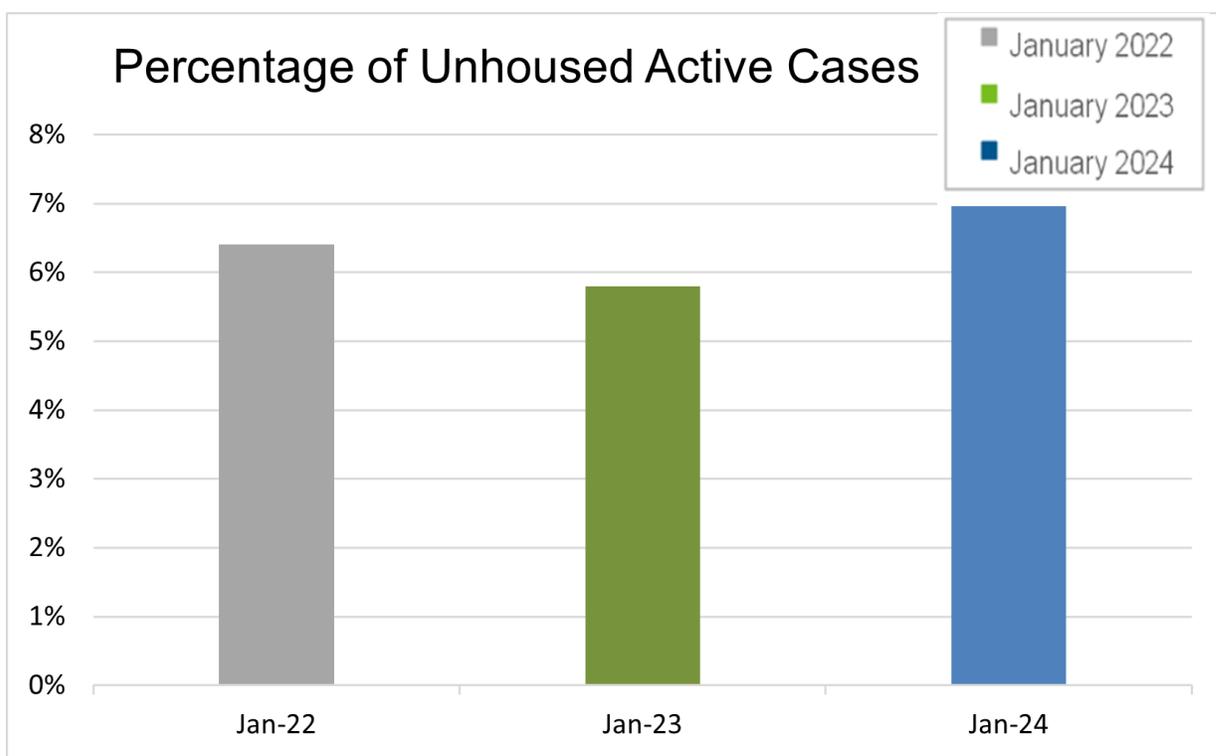
With an already strained budget, an average additional expense of \$155.00 per month for utilities increases the likelihood that clients will fall behind on payments and be at increased risk for disconnection of service and housing instability.



Unhoused (Emergency Shelters and Un-Sheltered)

The percentage of clients using emergency shelters (including Violence Against Women), declaring that they are un-sheltered or living in a temporary situation and relocating frequently is increasing in 2024.

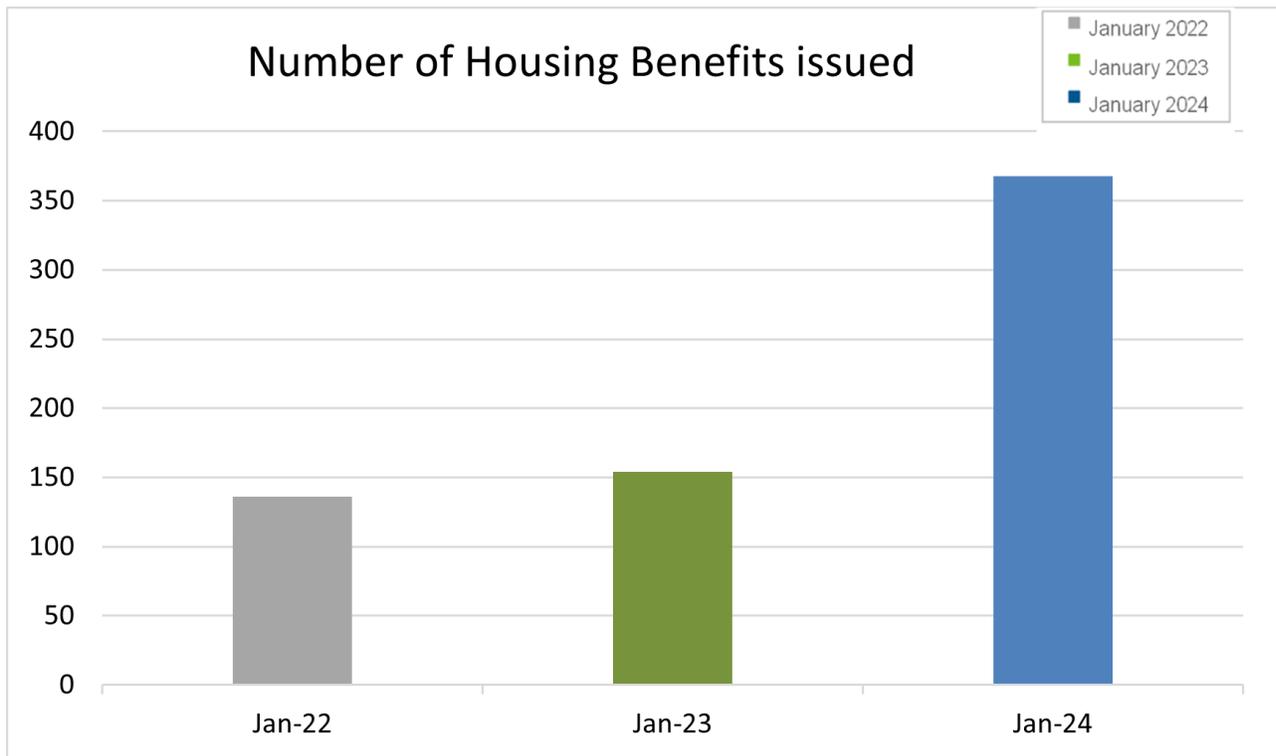
In January 2024, 793 cases on the caseload were unhoused, meaning they were residing in an emergency shelter or in unstable housing with no permanent address.



Benefit Issuance to Support Housing

The following graph provides a combined total of additional housing benefits issued in January of each year to households in receipt of Ontario Works assistance.

From 2022 to 2024 there has been an increase of 170.6% in cases requiring additional funds to maintain their housing.



Client Support Needs

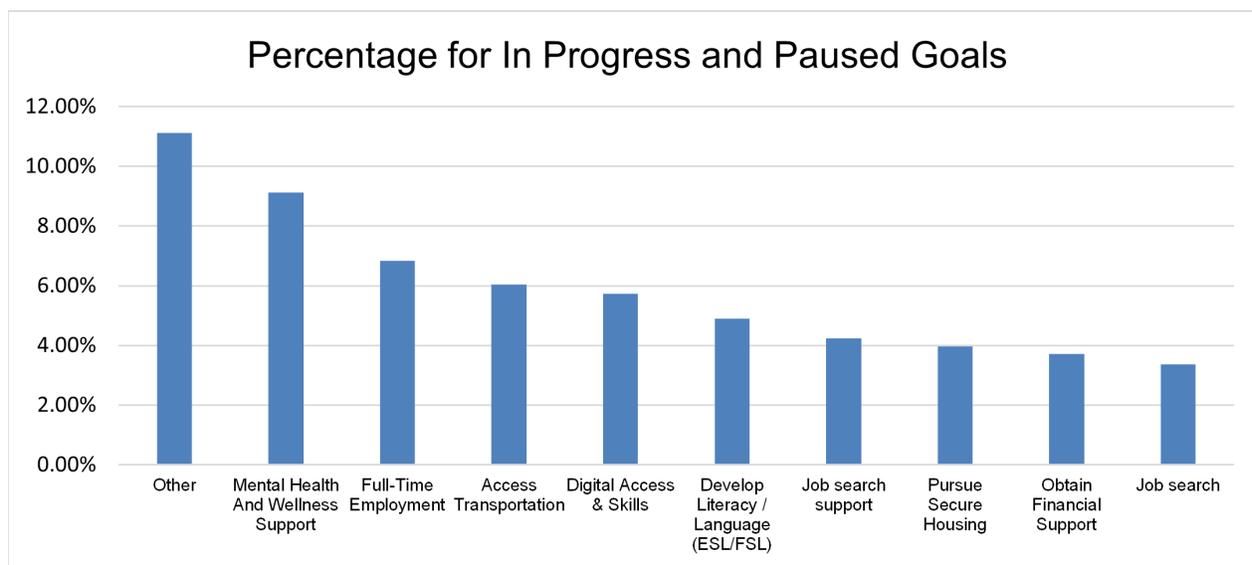
Ontario Works is an employment focused program with employment as the goal for clients. Sometimes client’s need to take smaller incremental steps to stabilize their current circumstances prior to employment. Information obtained during assessment and case management meetings is utilized to build person-centered case management plans based on clients acknowledged support needs and their goals toward moving off Ontario Works. These plans are referred to as Action Plans.

It is important to understand the complex needs of clients and how this may impact achieving goals. One barrier for clients is a lack of services in the community and clients are often held up by lengthy waitlists. The case management support to assist clients to research referral options, follow-up on referral status and navigate waitlists for various health and human services systems is a critical piece of information that is not easily quantified or reflected in the data in SAMS.

Data Note: The information contained below is taken from the Ministry of Community and Social Services, January 29, 2024, CRS 355 Weekly Action Plan Details Report.

Goals

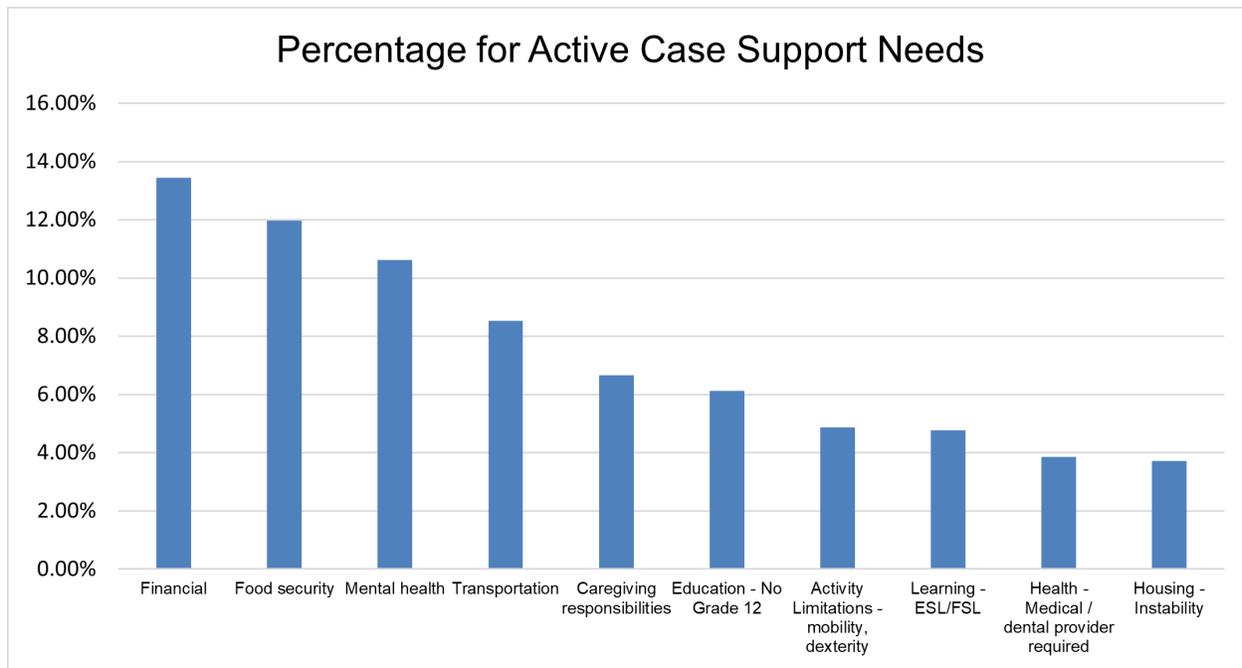
The following graph shows the top client Goals included during January 2024.



“Other” goals are specific to a client’s circumstances that don’t fit into a specific category. An example may be working on a daily household task list to help with personal motivation and to improve self-confidence.

Support Needs

The following graph shows the top client support needs included in Action Plans during January 2024.



Waitlisted Provider Types

The following graph shows the top waitlisted provider types for clients in January 2024.

