



Selected Findings of Income Security Advocacy Centre's 'In Their Own Words' Report (2026)

Prepared for discussion at Income &
Employment Security Action Group Meeting
16 June 2026



BRUCE GREY
POVERTY
TASK FORCE
Our Voice Is Power

Key Findings

- 83% of respondents live on less than \$30,000 annually.

- 82% of OW recipients lost purchasing power due to inflation

- 67% of ODSP recipients saw no meaningful benefit from indexation with rent increases outpacing any benefit gain.

- Recipients consistently want work, dignity and stability

Why This Matters for Bruce-Grey



INCOME INSECURITY DRIVES
HOUSING INSTABILITY, FOOD
INSECURITY AND POOR
HEALTH



RURAL RESIDENTS FACE
GREATER INFORMATION
AND SERVICE ACCESS
BARRIERS



LOCAL ADVOCACY CAN
INFLUENCE PROVINCIAL
REFORMS AND LOCAL
SERVICE DESIGN

About the Report & Methodology

- Anonymous survey findings from 200 Ontario social assistance recipients in urban and rural areas.
 - Oct to Nov 2024
 - Supplemented by focus group discussions facilitated by community legal clinics and partner organizations.
 - Participants included Indigenous people, newcomers, people with disabilities and single parents.
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Employment Reality

65% of OW recipients reported health/ disability barriers to work

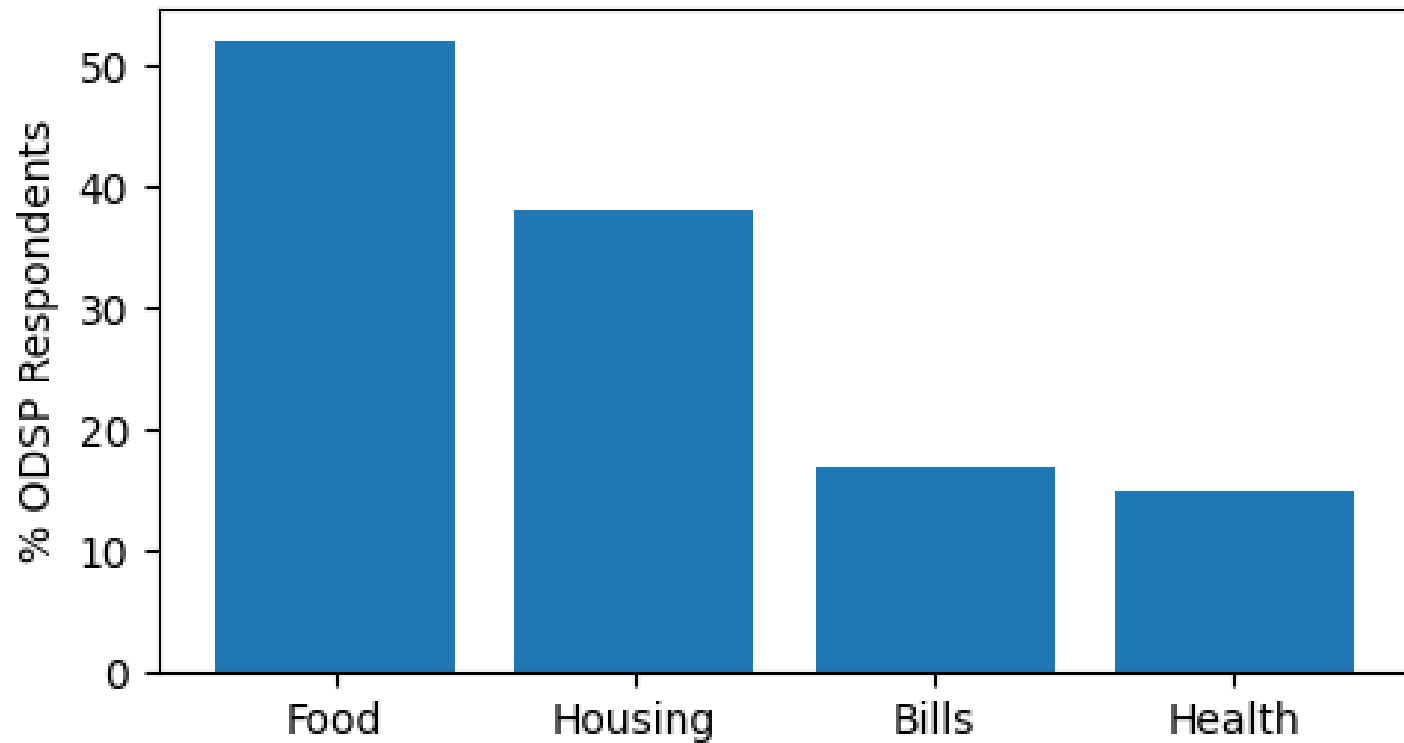
43% of all respondents cannot work due to disability

Only 19% reported employment income

56% of workers lacked paid sick leave



How Additional Income Would Be Used



What Increased Income Would Support

Recipients would use additional income primarily for essential needs.



Housing & Poverty

- 47% of OW recipients would direct more income toward rent
 - Housing costs frequently exceed shelter allowances
 - Participants described homelessness and housing instability risks
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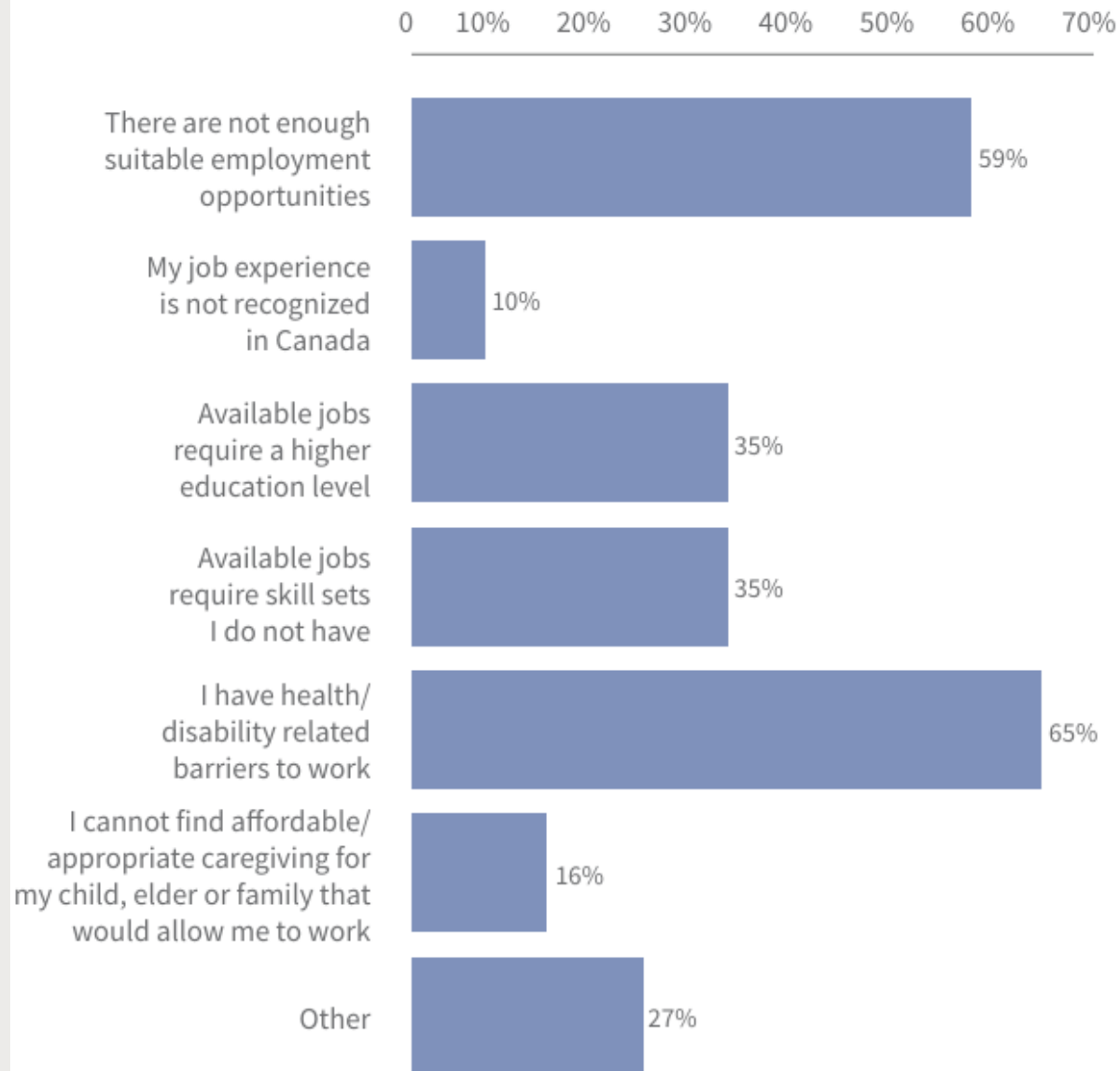
Service Delivery Challenges

- 39% reported caseworker accessibility/communication issues
- 29% experienced dehumanizing interactions
- 26% reported administrative delays or errors
- 46% of rural ODSP recipients had negative experiences relation to information access vs 27% of respondents in large urban centres
- Indigenous recipients reported substantially higher discrimination rates





Table 5: What challenges do you face in transitioning out of the Ontario Works (OW) program?

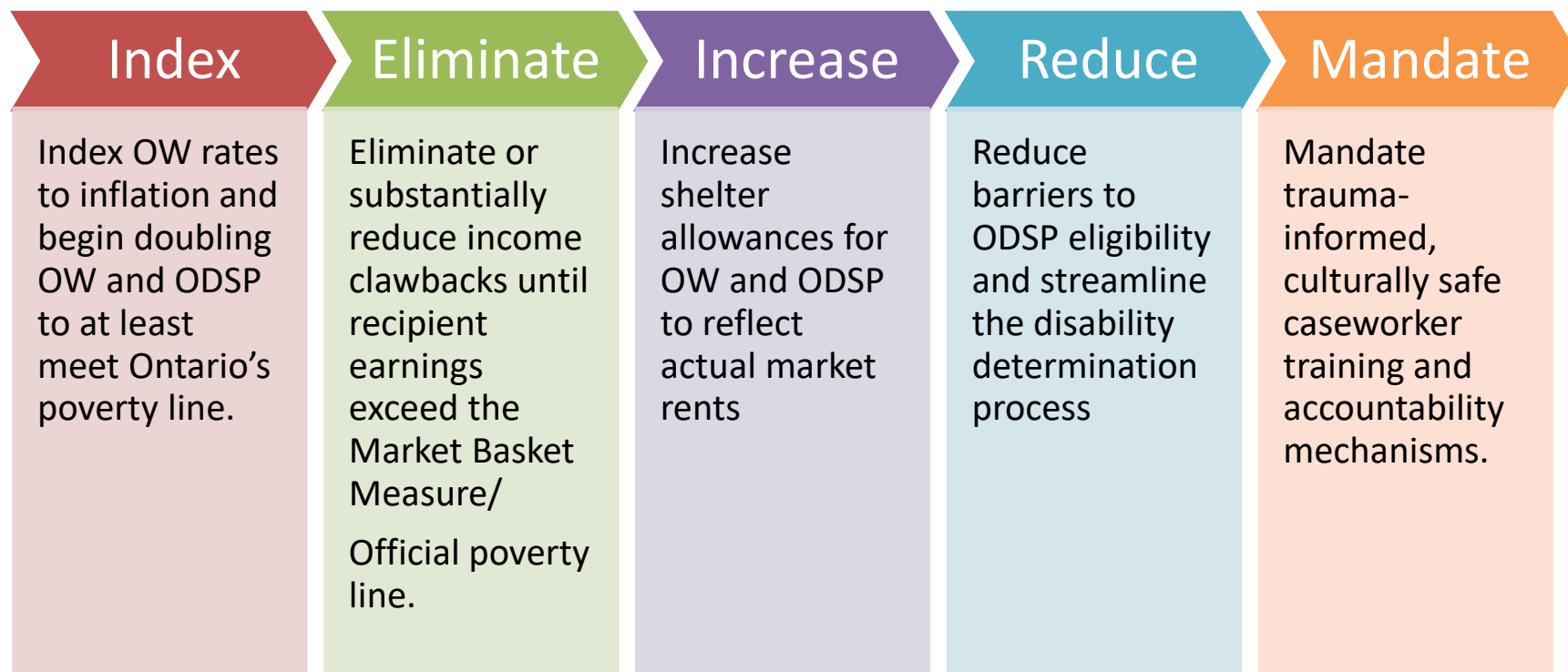




What Recipients Are Asking For

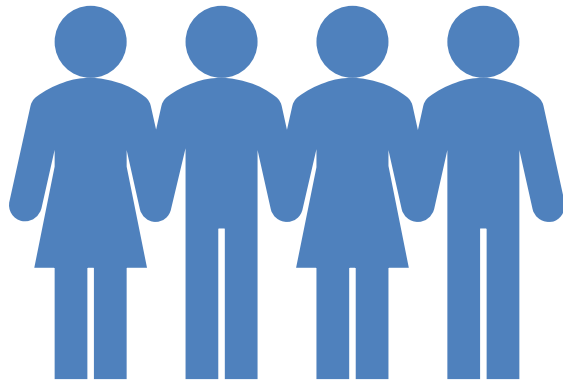
- Increase OW and ODSP rates
 - Reduce or eliminate clawbacks
 - Increase shelter allowances
 - Expand disability and health supports
 - Improve dignity-centred service delivery
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ISAC Solutions & Recommendations





Implications for Income & Employment Security Action Group



- Advocate for adequate income supports
- Support employment pathways and workforce inclusion
- Address rural access barriers
- Promote housing and poverty reduction strategies

In Their Own Words: The State of Social Assistance in Ontario – Report Launch and Community Discussion

THURSDAY, JUNE 25, 2026

10:30 AM – 12:00 PM via Zoom

Register here: <http://bit.ly/3Sm0X9D>

Join us for the launch of the Income Security Advocacy Centre's new report, In Their Own Words: The State of Social Assistance in Ontario, including a community discussion about the findings AND how to turn this data into action! Panelists include:

Asif Khan Research and Policy Analyst, ISAC

Sara Mayo Social Planner, Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton

Janet Paterson President, Ontario Injured Workers Group (ONIWG)

Peter T. Community Advocate

Jill Umbach Coordinator, Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force



Questions about the event? Email claudia.calabro@isac.clcj.ca

www.incomesecurity.org

Discussion & Next Steps



What advocacy priorities should the Action Group support?



What local evidence can complement these findings?



How can partners amplify recipient voices?