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Toronto loses top status as incomes fall, poverty rises

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TORONTO – Canada's largest city has outperformed every municipality in the country in a new growth industry – the production of low-income households – new figures show.

Toronto experienced the largest jump in the percentage of residents who spend more than 54.7 per cent of their incomes on food, clothing and shelter, according to Statistics Canada.

In 1990, 15 per cent of households were classified as low-income. By 1995, that figure had jumped to 21.1 per cent.

Worse, the economic fortunes of Toronto families as a whole declined by 10 per cent between 1990 and 1995, the largest such decrease in Canada. In 1990, the average family income was \$71,180. By 1995, the total income dropped to \$64,044.

Despite the increase in low-income families, Toronto ranked second behind Ottawa-Hull in a measurement of family incomes across the country. The average income in Ottawa-Hull was \$64,243 in 1995.

The results came as a shock to many of Toronto's most experienced social workers – many of whom long have harboured suspicions that the economic recovery has not

trickled to every financial class. The new data, which compared Canadian incomes in 1990 to those in 1995, confirmed this fear.

"This is what a deregularized economy looks like," said Andy Mitchell, a program director with the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto. "The economy is growing, but so is poverty."

The statistics also confirm what many people have feared, that full-time jobs are losing out to part-time work. The census showed that full-time jobs decreased 5.6 per cent from 1990 to 1995, and the number of people with part-time jobs jumped 5 per cent.

The article EM9809 reprinted above is the fifth of six articles used in Figure 2.2f of the STAT 332 Course Materials.