

# Fact Sheet

## Toward a Housing and HIV Strategy in Eastern Ontario\*



Community-based research exploring HIV, housing & health

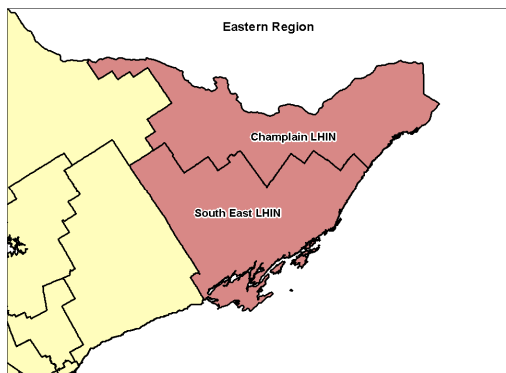


HIV is a serious health problem in Ontario. HIV continues to be a life threatening illness with no cure. An estimated 24,891 Ontarians are currently infected with HIV, 8,799 have died and over 1,000 new cases are diagnosed each year. Historically, the populations most at risk of HIV across the province have been:

- men who have sex with men
- people who share contaminated equipment to inject drugs
- people from countries in Africa and the Caribbean where HIV is widespread
- Aboriginal people.

### HIV at a Glance in Eastern Ontario

Between 2003 and 2006, about 650 people were newly diagnosed with HIV in Eastern Ontario.



Most of the people recently infected (39%) are gay men, just over a quarter are from countries where HIV is widespread, and 13% were infected

through injection drug use. Many have complex health and social needs – including the need for affordable, appropriate housing.

### The Income and Housing Gap

When data gathered through Positive Spaces, Healthy Places – a longitudinal study of 600 people with HIV across Ontario – is compared with census data, the income and housing gap between people

living with HIV and the general population in Eastern Ontario is clear.

- Over 8 out of 10 people living with HIV rely on money they receive from government programs as their main source of income compared to the general population for whom government programs account for a small proportion (9% to 14%) of their income.
- 2 of every 3 people with HIV are spending more than 30% of their income on housing compared to 1 of every 4 in the general population (in fact, almost 30% are spending more than 50% of their income on housing).
- More than 6 of 10 people with HIV in Eastern Ontario has difficulty buying food or clothing – compared to around 1 in 10 in the general population.

	People Living with HIV in the Eastern Region (Ontario)	General Population in the Eastern Region (Ontario)
% relying on government programs <sup>1</sup> as main source of income	85%	9% -14% <sup>2</sup>
% spending >30% of income on housing	68%	22% - 24%
% having difficulty buying food or clothing	63%	10% - 11% <sup>3</sup>
% unemployed	85%	6% - 7%
% with post secondary education	8%	32% - 33%
% age 45 and over	42%	50%

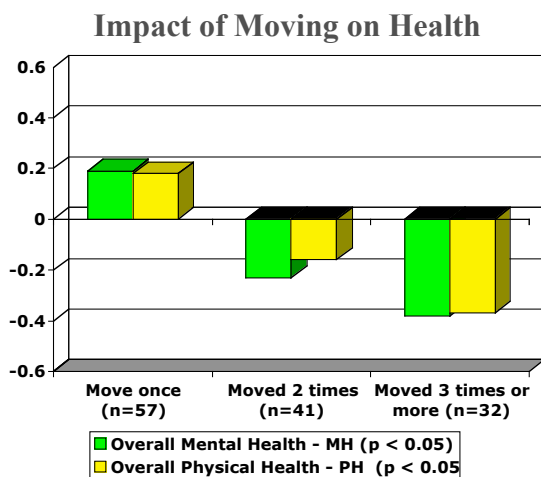
\* Eastern Ontario includes 2 LHINs (Champlain and South East)

## The Education, Employment and Age Gap

- About 8% of people with HIV have a post secondary degree, compared to more than 30% of the general population in Eastern Ontario.
- More than four of five people with HIV are unemployed – usually due to their illness – compared to fewer than one in 10 people in the general population.
- People with HIV in Eastern Ontario tend to be somewhat younger than the general population. About 58% are between the ages of 20 and 44. Because of their age, they often do not have savings, housing stability or other resources to manage a long illness.

## The Bigger Picture

People living with HIV in Eastern Ontario are trying to manage a life-threatening illness with lower incomes and less education, and without the employment opportunities their neighbours enjoy. They are generally satisfied with the health and social services they receive, but almost 1 out of every 2 report needing more psychological services and support, and 4 of 10 believe they would benefit from more primary care and psychiatric services.



Only 13% of people living with HIV in the Eastern region are housed with support services – despite the fact that supportive housing is key to helping people maintain both their housing and their health. A significant proportion of people living with HIV in Eastern Ontario (48%) have experienced discrimination in finding housing and almost 1 in 3 have moved three times or more in the last year, which has an extremely negative effect on both physical and mental health.

## The Research Team

### Principal Investigators

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## Notes to Table

- 1 Includes Social Assistance, Disability Pension, Pension, Employment Insurance and Worker's compensation.
- 2 For the general population, data provided indicates social assistance as % of total income where as the data for PHAs indicates percent of PHAs whose main source of income is Government transfer.
- 3 Percent of people below the Low Income Cut-off (LICO) is used as a proxy for difficulty in buying food and shelter for the general population. LICO is the minimum amount (defined by Statistics Canada) of income that a family or household needs to cover basic necessities (food, clothing, and shelter).