

# Toward a Housing and HIV Strategy for the Greater Toronto Area<sup>1</sup>



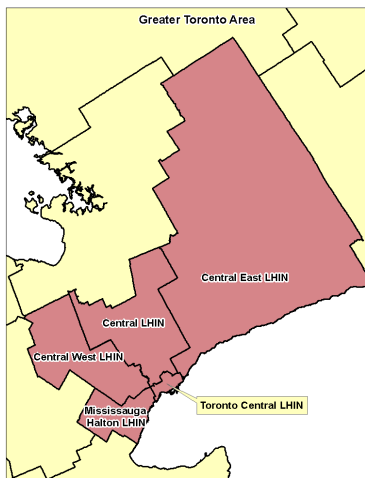
HIV is a serious health problem in Ontario. HIV continues to be a life-threatening illness with no cure. An estimated 26,490 Ontarians are currently infected with HIV, 9472 have died and over 1,100 new cases are diagnosed each year. Historically, the populations most at risk of HIV across the province have been:

- men who have sex with men
- people who share contaminated equipment to inject drugs
- people from regions where HIV is endemic
- Aboriginal people

Community-based research exploring HIV, housing & health



## HIV at a Glance in the GTA



Between 2003 and 2007, about 3,824 people were newly diagnosed with HIV in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

Over half of these new infections were in gay men, about a quarter were in people from countries where HIV is endemic, and about 5% were in people who inject drugs. Many

people with HIV in the GTA 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 605 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 the GTA is clear.

- Almost 8 out of 10 people living with HIV in the study 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 (7% to 11%) of their income.
- People with HIV in the GTA are twice as likely to spend more than 30% of their income on housing (in fact 16% spend more than 50% of their income on housing).
- More than 1 of every 2 people living HIV in the GTA has difficulty buying food or clothing – compared to around 1 in 10 in the general population.

	People Living with HIV in the GTA	General Population in the GTA
% relying on government programs* as main source of income	78%	7% - 11%**
% spending >30% of income on housing	53%	24% - 33%
% having difficulty buying food or clothing	57%	8% - 18%***
% unemployed	78%	5% - 7%
% with post secondary education	20%	44% - 56%
% age 45 and over	35%	48%

\* Includes Social Assistance, Disability Pension, Pension, Employment Insurance and Worker's compensation. \*\* 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. \*\*\* 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).

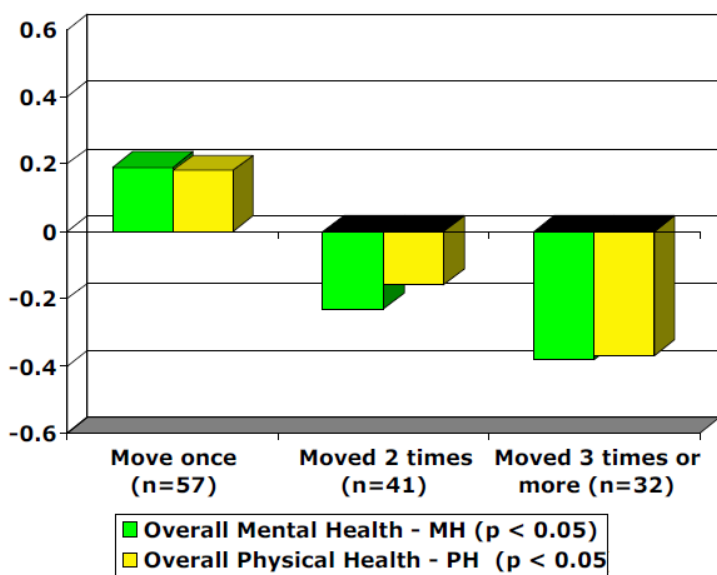
## The Education, Employment and Age Gap

- People with HIV are half as likely as the general population in the GTA to have a post secondary degree.
- 3 of 4 people with HIV are unemployed – usually due to their illness -- compared to about 1 out of every 20 people in the general population.
- People with HIV in the GTA tend to be younger than the general population. About 64% 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-term illness.

## The Bigger Picture

People living with HIV in the GTA 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 4 of every 10 report needing more psychological services and support, and 3 of 10 believe they would benefit from more psychiatric services.

### Baseline - Impact of Moving on Health



Only 15% of people living with HIV in the GTA 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 the GTA (31%) have experienced discrimination in finding housing and almost 1 in 4 has moved three times or more in the last year, which has an extremely negative effect on both physical and mental health.

## The Research Team

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<sup>1</sup>GTA Region includes 5 LHINs (Central East, Central, Toronto Central, Central West, and Mississauga Halton)