

# Fact Sheet

## Toward a Housing and HIV Strategy for Northern Ontario\*



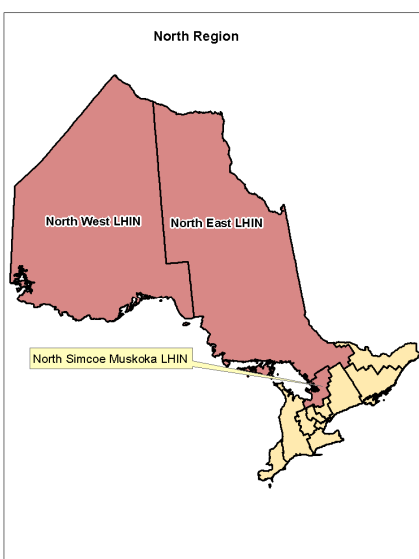
Community-based research exploring HIV, housing & health



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 Northern Ontario



Between 2003 and 2006, about 163 people were newly diagnosed with HIV in Northern Ontario. The profile of HIV infection in the north is different than in other parts of the province.

Almost half (47%) of the people recently infected inject drugs, about one quarter are gay

men, and about 4% are people from countries where HIV is widespread. Many are Aboriginal people, and 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 – are compared with census

data, the income and housing gap between people living with HIV and the general population in Northern Ontario is clear.

- Almost everyone 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 (12% to 16%) of their income.
- 8 out of 10 people with HIV spend more than 30% of their income on housing, compared to 2 of 10 in the general population (in fact, 1 in 4 are spending more than 50% of their income on housing).
- More than 1 of every 2 people living HIV in northern Ontario has difficulty buying food or clothing – compared to around 1 in 10 in the general population.

	People Living with HIV in the Northern Region (Ontario)	General Population in the Northern Region (Ontario)
% relying on government programs <sup>1</sup> as main source of income	99%	12% -16% <sup>2</sup>
% spending >30% of income on housing	80%	19% - 24%
% having difficulty buying food or clothing	54%	9% - 13% <sup>3</sup>
% unemployed	87%	9% - 10%
% with post secondary education	6.50%	43%
% age 45 and over	62%	54%

\* Northern Ontario includes 3 LHINs (North Simcoe Muskoka, North East, and North West)

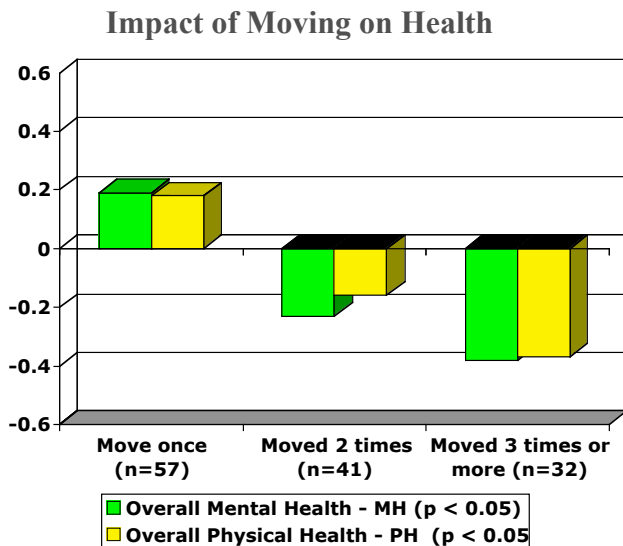
## The Education, Employment and Age Gap

- Fewer than 7% of people with HIV in Northern Ontario have a post-secondary degree, compared to more than 40% of the general population.
- Almost 9 out of 10 people with HIV are unemployed – usually due to their illness – compared to about 1 out of every 10 people in the general population.
- People with HIV in Northern Ontario tend to be somewhat older than the general population. About 62% are 45 or older, compared with 54% of the general population.

## The Bigger Picture

People living with HIV in Northern Ontario are trying to manage a life-threatening illness with lower incomes and less education, and without the employment opportunities their neighbours enjoy. About half are satisfied with the health and social services they receive, but they report needing more family physician, psychological and psychiatric services.

Only 2% of people living with HIV in the Northern Ontario 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 Northern Ontario (44%) have experienced discrimination in finding housing and almost one in five 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

### 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).