

# Housing and HIV in the South West Region of Ontario

(Niagara Region, St. Catherine's, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara Falls, Hamilton-Wentworth, Middlesex-London, Halton, Waterloo, Wellington-Dufferin, Haldimand, Brant, Bruce Grey-Owen Sound, Elgin-St. Thomas, Huron, Kent Chatham, Lambton, Oxford, Perth, Windsor-Essex)



Community-based research exploring HIV, housing & health

HIV is still a life-threatening illness with no cure. About 26,490 Ontarians are currently living with HIV, 9,472 have died and over 1,100 new cases are diagnosed each year.

Between 1985 and 2007, a total of 3,698 people in the four Southwestern Local Health Integration Networks – Waterloo Wellington, Erie St. Clair, South West, and Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant – were diagnosed with HIV: 160 in 2007 alone.

## The Income, Housing and Health Gap Among People with HIV

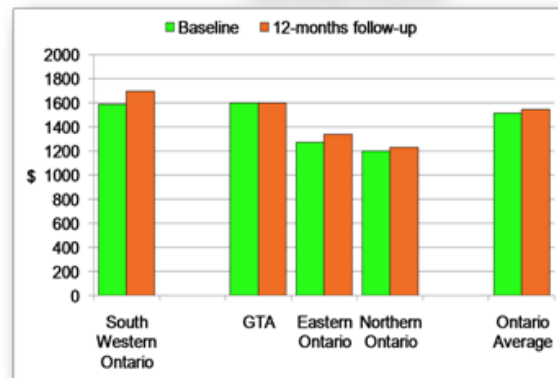
Positive Spaces, Healthy Places – a longitudinal study of 605 people with HIV across Ontario – compared data from people with HIV in the South West region with people with HIV across Ontario. The good news: people living with HIV in the South West Region are more likely to be employed than their peers in other parts of the province (30% employed compared to the provincial average of 25%) and their monthly incomes are higher (\$1,695 compared to \$1,545).

The bad news: people with HIV in South West Ontario spend a larger proportion of their income on housing than their peers in the rest of the province (except Northern Ontario), and more are worried about losing or being forced to move out of their housing (34% compared to 29%).

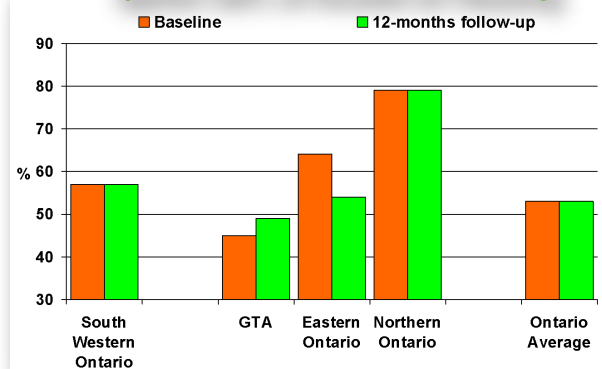
Over half (57%) of people with HIV in South West Ontario are spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs – compared to 49% in the Greater Toronto Area. It appears that housing costs may be higher in the South West than in other parts of the province. At the same time, only 44% of people with HIV in the South West Region are living in a rent-geared-to-income (RGI)



Monthly Income



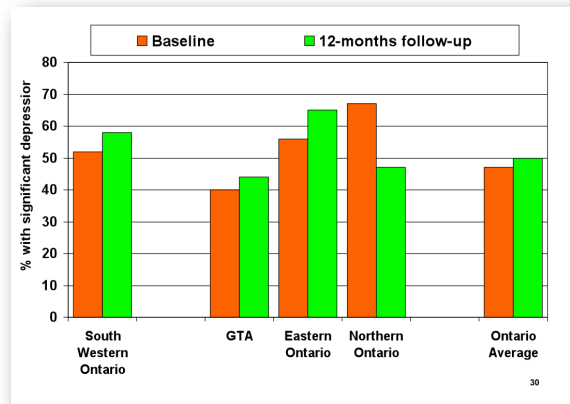
Spend >30% of Income on Housing



unit or are receiving subsidy and that proportion dropped over the 12-month period that people were followed. This suggests that people with HIV do not have equitable access to affordable housing.

People with HIV in the South West are also experiencing higher than average rates of depression.

**Experiencing Significant Depression**



**The Income and Housing Gap Between People with HIV and the General Population in South West Ontario**

People with HIV in South West Ontario may be faring better than their peers in other parts of the province in terms of employment and income, but they are doing significantly worse than the general population in the South West – despite the fact that they are more likely to have a high school diploma or higher education (80% compared to 75%):

Characteristic	General Population in South West Ontario	People with HIV in South West Ontario
% unemployed	5% - 8%	70%
% relying on government programs* as their main source of income**	9% - 12%	65%
% spending >30% of income on housing	20% - 24%	57%
% having difficulty buying food or clothing***	10% - 14%	55%

\* includes social assistance, disability pension, pension, employment insurance and worker’s compensation  
 \*\* Data for the general population indicates social income from government programs as % of total income, while data for people with HIV indicates the percentage whose main source of income in government programs  
 \*\*\* % of people below the low income cut-off (LICO) is used as a proxy for difficulty buying food and clothing. LICO is the minimum amount of income a family/household needs to cover basis necessities as defined by Statistics Canada.

**The Big Picture**

People with HIV in South West Ontario face higher housing costs that people with HIV in the rest of Ontario and may not have enough access to rent-geared-to-income housing or housing subsidies – particularly given that the majority are unemployed and face complex health and social needs, including higher than average rates of depression. People with HIV in the region are much worse off than their neighbours who do not have HIV. They are significantly more likely to be unstably housed and to struggle financially. Planning for health, housing and social services must take into account the urgent unmet needs of people living with HIV.