

Fact Sheet

Toward a Housing and HIV Strategy for South West Ontario*



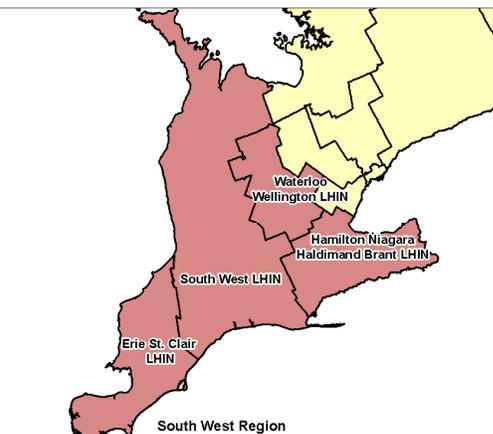
Community-based research exploring HIV, housing & health



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 South West Ontario



Between 2003 and 2006, about 638 people were newly diagnosed with HIV in South West Ontario.

Over one-third of the people recently diagnosed are gay men, about one quarter are people from countries

where HIV is widespread, and about 10% use injection drugs. 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 South West Ontario is clear.

- About 8 of every 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 12%) of their income.
- People with HIV in South West Ontario are more than two times as likely to be spending more than 30% of their income on housing (in fact, 19% are spending more than 50% of their income on housing).
- 1 of every 2 people living with HIV has difficulty buying food or clothing – compared to around 1 in 10 in the general population in South West Ontario.

| | People Living with HIV in the South Western Region (Ontario) | General Population in the South Western Region (Ontario) |
|--|--|--|
| % relying on government programs ¹ as main source of income | 80% | 9% -12% ² |
| % spending >30% of income on housing | 58% | 21% - 24% |
| % having difficulty buying food or clothing | 54% | 8% - 12% ³ |
| % unemployed | 76% | 5% - 7% |
| % with post secondary education | 11% | 43% - 47% |
| % age 45 and over | 51% | 61% |

* South West Ontario includes 4 LHINs (Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant, Waterloo Wellington, South West, and Erie St. Clair)

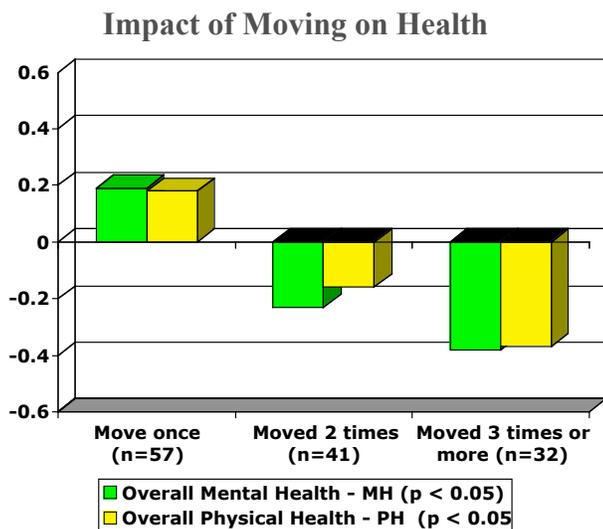
The Education, Employment and Age Gap

- Only 1 in 10 people with HIV has a post secondary degree, compared to almost half the general population.
- Three of four 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 South West Ontario are slightly younger than the general population. About half are under age 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 South West Ontario are trying to manage a life-threatening illness with lower incomes and less education, and without the employment opportunities their neighbours enjoy.

Six of 10 people with HIV are generally satisfied with the health and social services they receive, but 4 of every 10 report needing more psychological services and support, and 1 of 3 believe they would benefit from more primary care and psychiatric services.



Only 16% of people living with HIV in southwestern 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 (35%) 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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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).