



### The questions we asked:

- How many women living with HIV in Ontario experience depression? How many men?
- Are there differences in how women and men living with HIV experience severe depression?
- Are there other factors that influence depression among women and men living with HIV?

### The answers we found using OCS data

By using the results from a depression screening scale administered to OCS participants, we found that women had higher depression scores than men. Of participants who were screened, 13% of women and 10% of men showed symptoms indicative of mild to moderate depression and 31% of women showed symptoms indicative of severe depression, compared to 23% of men.

### Why is this issue important?

Previous research has shown that depression can have a negative impact on the lives of people living with HIV. Knowing the risk factors for depression among people living with HIV can help clinicians identify who among their patients might need treatment or support. Helping people living with HIV manage their depression can improve their overall health outcomes.

### What else did we learn?

The impact of age on depression varied among women and men. Female participants reported more depression with increased age (i.e., over 40) while male participants reported less depression as they aged. Men currently using antiretroviral therapy also showed lower overall depression scores.

# GENDER DIFFERENCES IN THE SEVERITY OF DEPRESSION

We also identified other factors that influence depression among people living with HIV, specifically: having less education, living with a disability, having low family income, having high overall stigma scores and having a higher number of life stressors. These factors were significantly associated with higher depression scores in both men and women.

## How was this study conducted?

The OCS administers two different questionnaires across Ontario: the Core and the Extended. As part of the Extended Questionnaire, participants are asked to complete the Centre for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale—a 20-question measure that screens for depressive symptoms. We used the scores from this scale and ranked them as neutral, mild-moderate or severe. We then compared the depression scores against other responses from OCS participants such as age, health variables, HIV-related stigma and life stressors.

## What's next?

It's important to develop depression screening measures that recognize the differences between women and men as well as gender-specific factors associated with depression among people living with HIV.

## Want to know more?

This study was published by the Journal of the International Association of Providers of AIDS Care. The summary version is available at: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24899261>

## Full title

*Gender differences in severity and correlates of depression symptoms in people living with HIV in Ontario, Canada*

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