

# Fact Sheet

## Toward a Housing and HIV Strategy for the Greater Toronto Area



Community-based research exploring HIV, housing & health

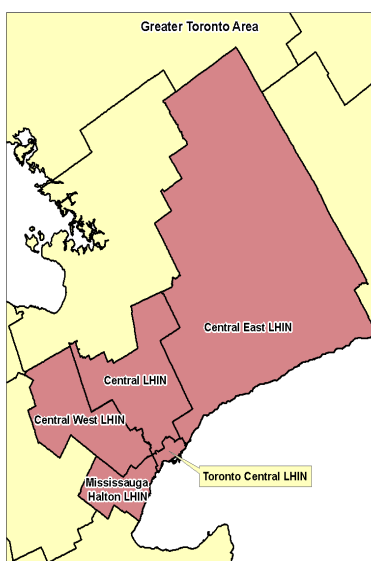


HIV is a serious health problem in Ontario. HIV continues to be a life threatening illness with no cure. An estimated 24,891 Ontarians are currently infected with HIV, 8,799 have died, and over 1,000 new cases are diagnosed each year.

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 the GTA



Between 2003 and 2006, about 3,100 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 widespread, 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 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 the GTA is clear.

- Almost 8 out of 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 (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 with HIV in the GTA has difficulty buying food or clothing – compared to around 1 in 10 in the general population.

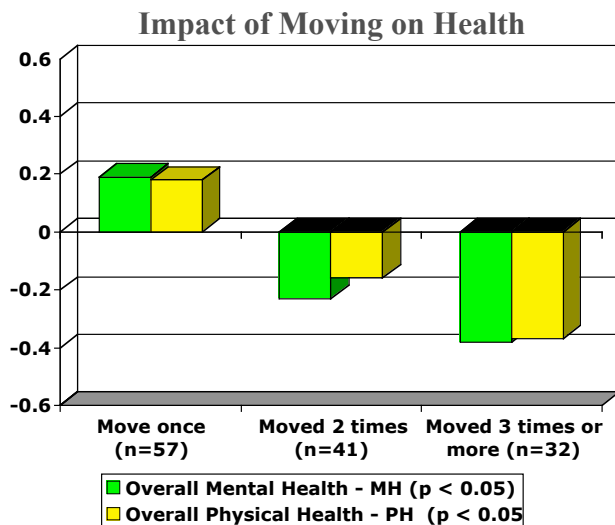
|  | People Living with HIV in the GTA | General Population in the GTA |
|--|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| % relying on government programs <sup>1</sup> as main source of income | 78%                               | 7% - 11% <sup>2</sup>         |
| % spending >30% of income on housing                                   | 53%                               | 24% - 33%                     |
| % having difficulty buying food or clothing                            | 57%                               | 8% - 18% <sup>3</sup>         |
| % unemployed   | 78%                               | 5% - 7%                       |
| % with post secondary education  | 20%                               | 44% - 56%                     |
| % age 45 and over  | 35%                               | 48%                           |

## 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 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.



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

### Principal Investigators

Ruthann Tucker, Expert Advisor, CBR Initiatives, OHTN  
 Saara Greene, Fife House  
 Dale Guenter, McMaster University, CLEAR

### Co-Investigators

Jay Koornstra, Bruce House  
 Michael Sobota, AIDS Thunder Bay  
 LaVerne Monette, Aboriginal AIDS Strategy  
 Steve Byers, AIDS Niagara  
 Lea Narciso, Ontario AIDS Network  
 James Dunn, CRICH, University of Toronto  
 Stephen Hwang, CRICH, University of Toronto  
 Sean B. Rourke, OHTN, CRICH, University of Toronto

### Peer Research Assistants

D. Hintzen, Central/GTA Region  
 M. Hamilton, South West Region  
 M. Kayitesi, South West Region  
 J. Truax, Central/GTA Region  
 J. Watson, Central/GTA Region  
 P. White, Northern Region

### Research Coordinator

Amrita Ahluwalia, Fife House

For more information on the HIV, housing and health project, including other Positive spaces, Healthy places fact sheets, contact: Ruthann Tucker [ruthann.tucker@shaw.ca](mailto:ruthann.tucker@shaw.ca) or Saara Greene at [sgreene@fifehouse.org](mailto:sgreene@fifehouse.org)  
[www.healthyhousing.ca](http://www.healthyhousing.ca)  
 Tel: (416) 205-9888, EXT 225  
 (866) 301-2548

## 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).