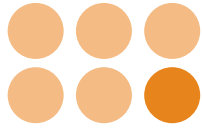


## THE FACTS IN BRIEF

### ? How many women are living or diagnosed with HIV?

The Public Health Agency of Canada estimates that there are **between 5,100 and 8,000** women living with HIV in Ontario.



Each year, about **1 of every 6 people diagnosed with HIV** in Ontario is female.

**The good news:** the number of women in Ontario newly diagnosed with HIV has been declining over time.

### ? Who is most affected?



The majority of women in Ontario newly diagnosed with HIV live in the **Toronto Health Region**, followed by **Central East, Ottawa** and **Southwest Regions**.

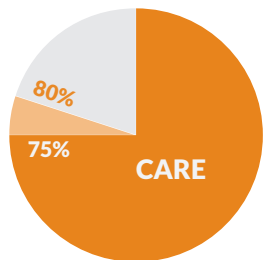
- + In Ontario, **African, Caribbean and Black women**, and **women who use injection drugs** are two of the main groups of women affected by HIV\*.
- + We do not know the ethnicity of all women newly diagnosed with HIV. Of those we do know, **61%** are black, **25%** are white and **4%** are Indigenous.
- + Currently about 2 out of every 5 women recently diagnosed with HIV is **between the ages of 30 and 39**.
- + The proportion of women diagnosed with HIV **after age 45** has increased over time.

\* Trans women may be another of the main groups affected by HIV, but we don't yet have the data to describe this trend in Ontario.

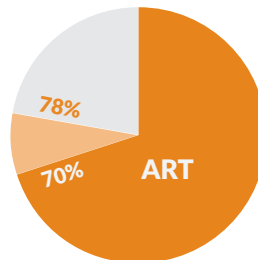
### ? What is the care experience of women living with HIV?

Among women who attend specialty HIV care clinics, most are engaged in care, according to OHTN Cohort Study data. Women with lower incomes, and women struggling with mental health or substance use problems have challenges engaging with HIV care and treatment.

**The good news:** the number of women on antiretroviral therapy and with a suppressed viral load has increased over time.



- Over **80%** have at least one HIV care visit a year.
- **75%** have at least 2 HIV care visits a year.



- In 2012, **78%** were on antiretroviral therapy (up from 61% in 2001).
- In 2012, **70%** had a suppressed viral load (up from 38% in 2001).

### ? What about prenatal testing?



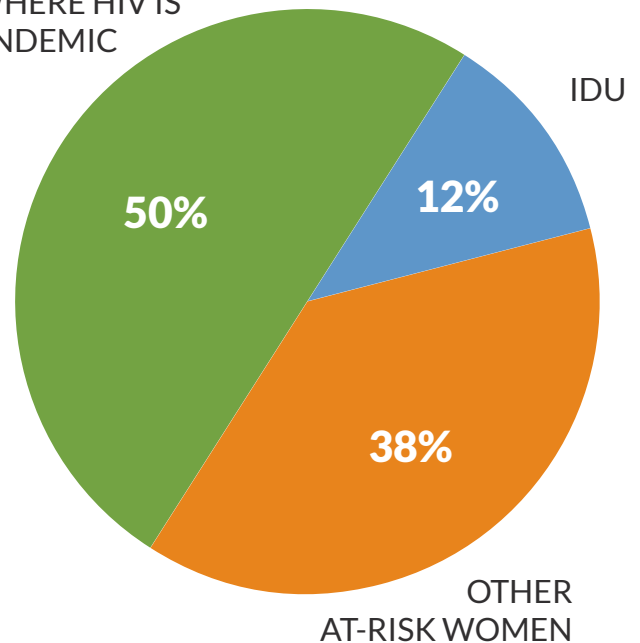
**97% of all pregnant women in Ontario are tested for HIV.** Almost all pregnant women with HIV receive antiretroviral medications at the time of birth to prevent HIV transmission to their child.

## HOW MANY WOMEN ARE LIVING OR DIAGNOSED WITH HIV?

The term “prevalence” refers to the total number of women living with HIV at a certain point in time. In 2011, the Public Health Agency of Canada estimated that there were **6,546 women living with HIV in Ontario**. However, there is a lot of uncertainty with this number: it could range **between 5,100 and 8,000 women**.

Of those, **50% were women from countries where HIV is endemic** (the majority being African, Caribbean and Black women), **12% were women who use injection drugs** and **38% were other at-risk women**.

COUNTRIES  
WHERE HIV IS  
ENDEMIC



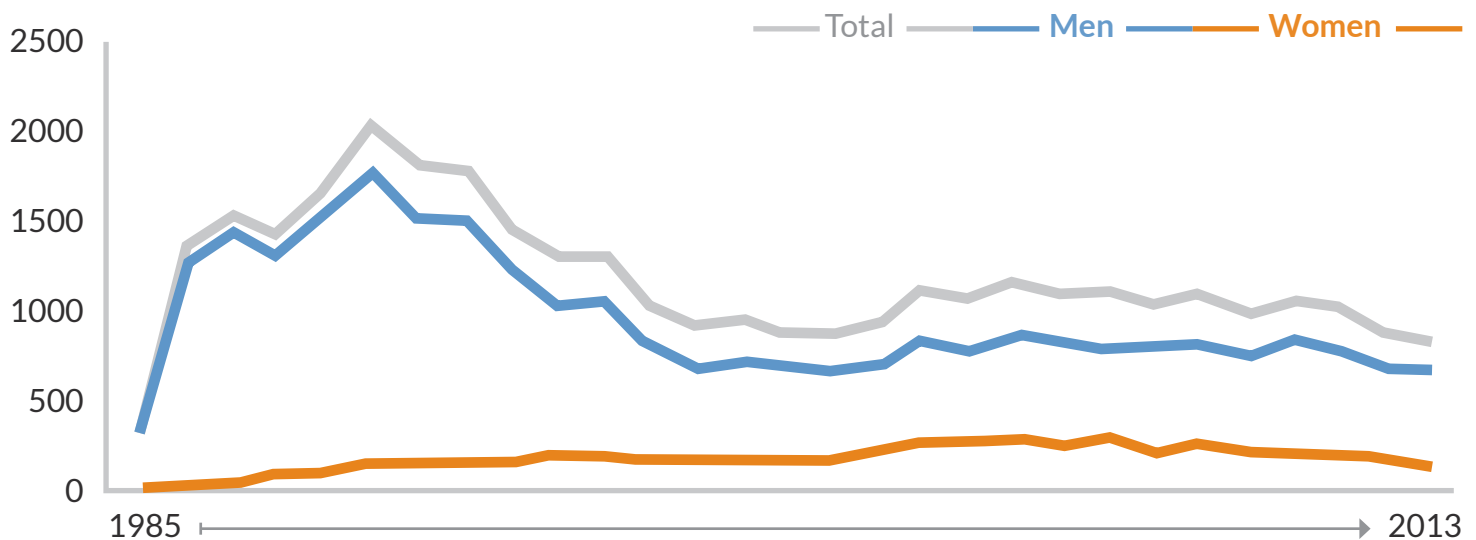
A new diagnosis is not the same thing as a new infection, as some people can be diagnosed with HIV one or more years after they were infected with HIV.



**Women account for about 1 of every 6 new HIV diagnoses.**

The number of women diagnosed with HIV in Ontario each year has decreased over the past decade, from a high of 299 in 2004 to 141 women in 2013.

The number of new HIV diagnoses in men has not decreased as much so **women now make up a smaller proportion of HIV diagnoses each year**: from 27% (or over 1 in 4 diagnoses) in 2004 to 17% (or 1 in 6 diagnoses) in 2013.



## WHO IS MOST AFFECTED?

Information on new HIV diagnoses in Ontario comes from the HIV test requisition form as well as a follow-up questionnaire sent to each health care provider who ordered an HIV test that turned out to be positive.



From that information, we know that HIV affects three main groups of women in Ontario. As of 2013:

- about 57% are women from countries where HIV is endemic or widespread (primarily African, Caribbean and Black women) ■
- 32% are other at-risk women, including women who have sex with men with or at risk of HIV such as men who inject drugs, men from countries where HIV is endemic, and gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men ■
- 11% are women who use injection drugs ■

The good news is that **the total number of new HIV diagnoses in women in these three groups has decreased** in the past decade.

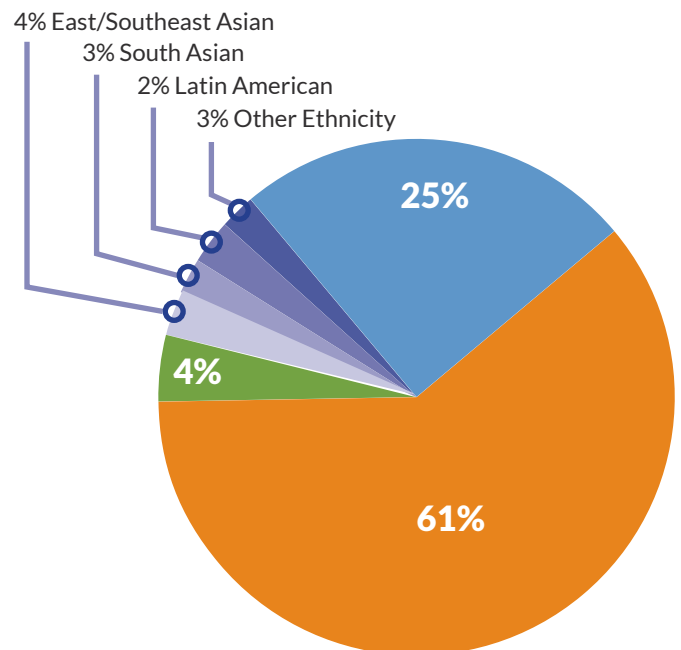
### ? What about ethnicity?

Improving the quality of ethnicity information is a provincial priority.

Some of the information we have on people who test HIV positive is limited. For example, the test requisition form doesn't ask about the ethnicity of the person being tested. The follow-up questionnaire does ask about ethnicity but not all health care providers complete the questionnaire. As a result, **we do not have ethnicity data for up to 40% of people with a new HIV diagnosis** in Ontario.

For women diagnosed with HIV over the past five years whose ethnicity is known:

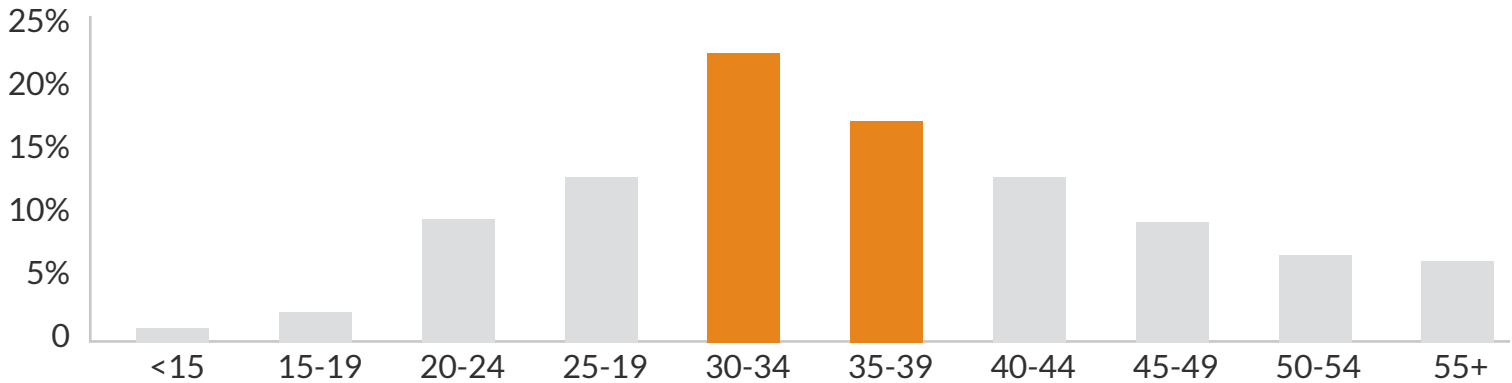
- 61% were black women ■
- 25% were white ■
- 4% were Indigenous ■



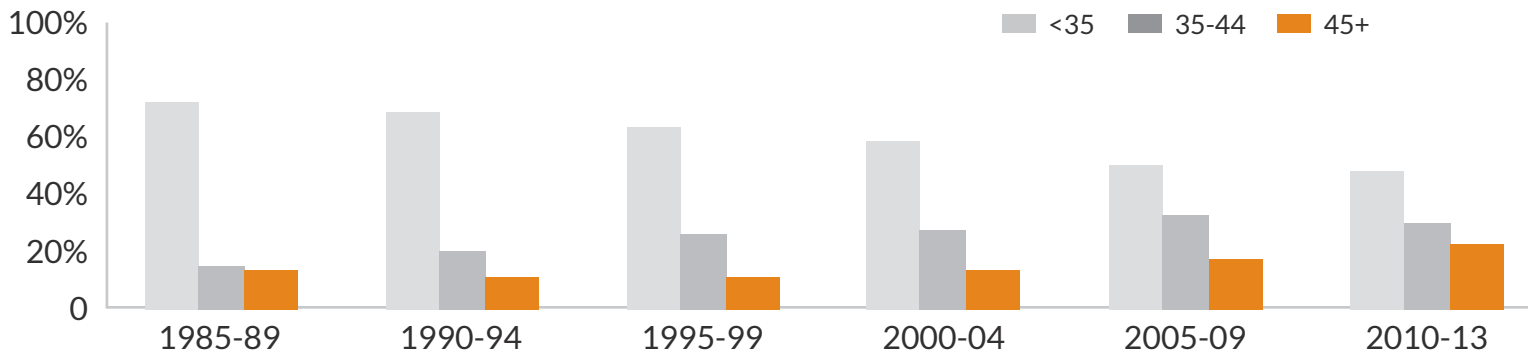
## WHO IS MOST AFFECTED?

### ? What about age?

Most women with HIV in Ontario were diagnosed in their 30s. Over the past 4 years, about **2 out of 5 women diagnosed with HIV were between 30 and 39** years of age (39%).



Over time, women are being diagnosed later in life. Each year, we see **more new diagnoses in women age 45 and older**.



### ? Where do women diagnosed with HIV live?

Most women diagnosed with HIV in 2013 lived in **the Toronto health region (40%)**, followed by **Central East (21%)** and **Ottawa (15%)** health regions. This pattern has been similar over the years.



data provided by the Public Health Ontario Laboratory

### ? What about prenatal testing?

**Prenatal testing helps prevent transmission to infants.**

Ontario has had an active prenatal HIV testing program for women for 17 years.

- In 2011, **97% of all pregnant women** in Ontario (146,695) were tested for HIV.
- Of those 146,695 pregnant women tested, **94 tested HIV positive** – 26 were new diagnoses while 68 were women who had been diagnosed before the pregnancy.
- Over a five-year period from 2007-2011, 414 HIV-positive women accessed care when their infants were born, and **over 99% received antiretroviral medications** to prevent HIV transmission to their infant.
- In total, **3% of the infants born to these women were infected with HIV**. Note: without antiretroviral treatment, up to 25% of infants born to HIV positive women could be infected with HIV.

## WHAT IS THE CARE EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN LIVING WITH HIV?

The following information is based on women with HIV who are part of the OHTN Cohort Study (OCS).

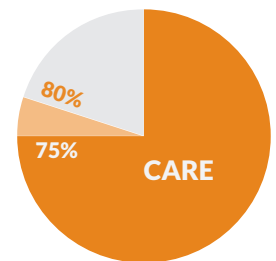
### ? Who is in the OHTN Cohort Study?

As of December 2013, the OCS had enrolled 6,408 participants, including 1,016 women. Among this group, 39% are from a country where HIV is endemic and 17% have a history of injection drug use. In terms of ethnicity, 32% of these participants are African, Caribbean or Black, 39% are white and 10% are Indigenous. The majority are between the ages of 30 and 39.

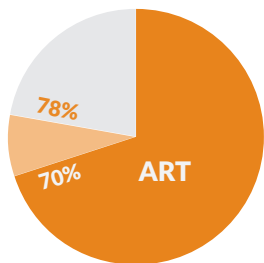
### ? Are women engaged in care?

Between 2001-2012, rates of engagement in care have mostly remained stable. In 2012, over **80%** of women had had at least one HIV care visit during the previous year, and **75%** had had at least two visits.

Women are less likely to be engaged in care if they struggle with **stress or depression**, **use substances** or **smoke**.



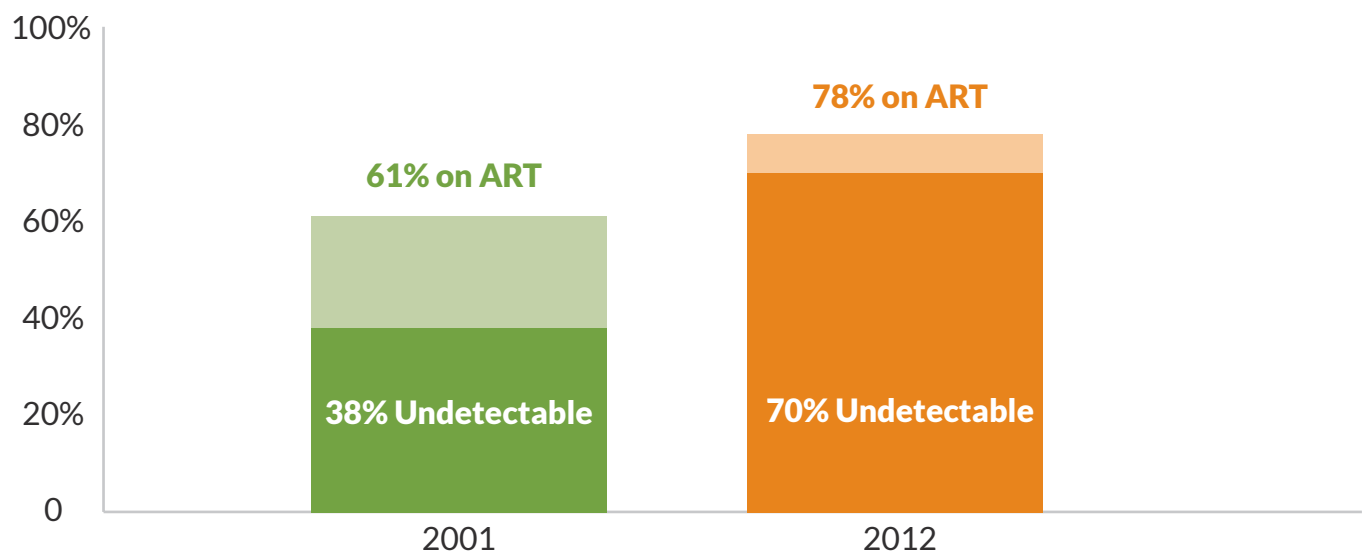
### ? How likely are women to be virally suppressed?



Compared to gay men, women in the OCS are **4% less likely** to be on antiretroviral therapy (ART), but those on ART are, overall, equally likely to be virally suppressed. **Immigrant women are 6% more likely to be on ART** than are women born in Canada. Women with low incomes are less likely to be virally suppressed.

In 2012, **78%** of women enrolled in OCS were on antiretroviral therapy, and **70%** had a suppressed viral load.

Between 2001 and 2012, we have seen an increase in the proportion of women who are on ART and virally suppressed



## HOW DID FRONT LINE AGENCIES REACH ONTARIO WOMEN IN 2013/14?

The following information is based on OCHART data.

### ? How many women in Ontario were reached by front line agencies in 2013/14?

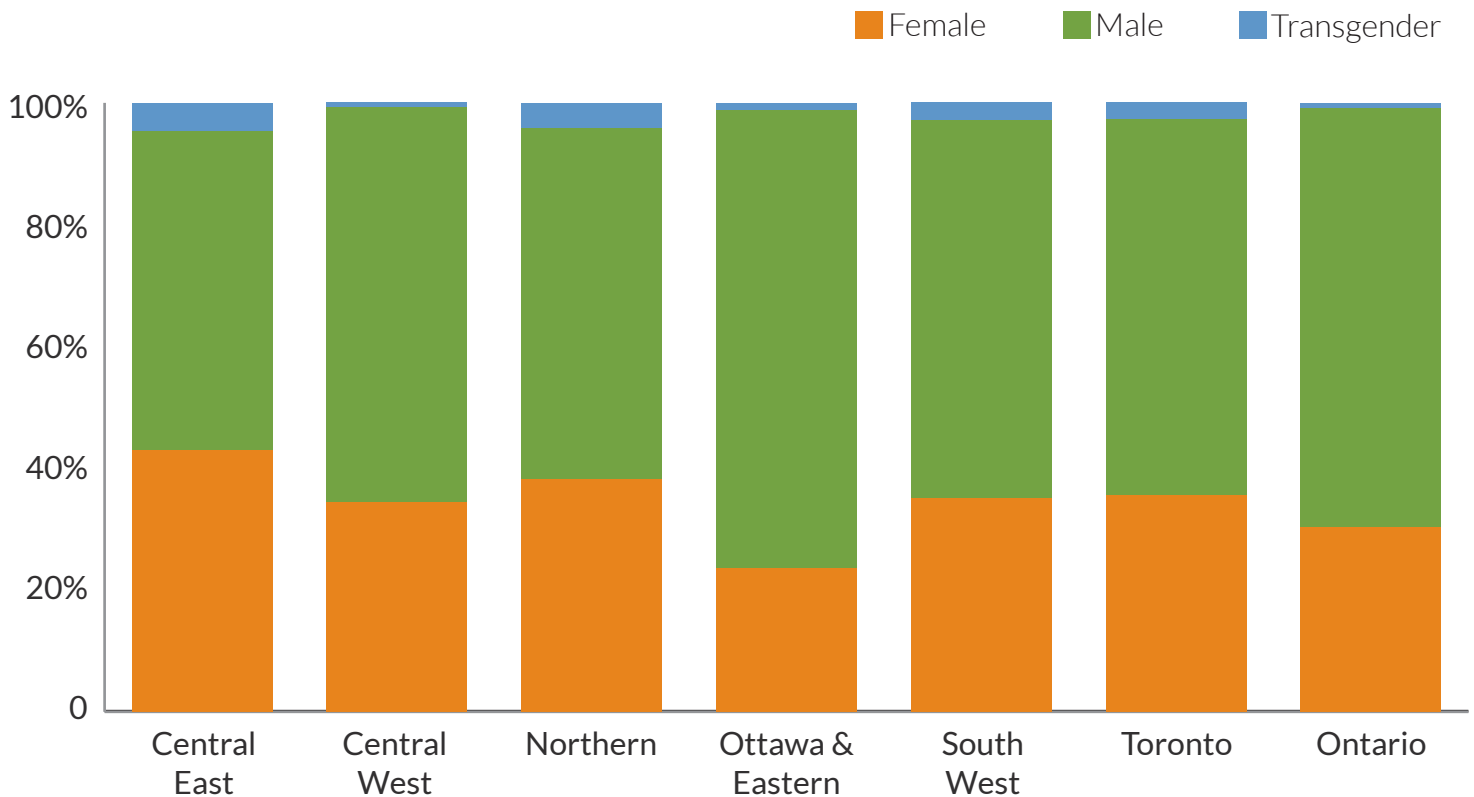
- + 5,125 women accessed HIV/AIDS support services, which represents 35% of all people accessing support services.
- + Women made up 30% of new clients in 2013/14, despite representing only 17% of new diagnoses.
- + 409 trans clients accessed HIV/AIDS support services, the majority of which were trans women.
- + Additionally, 8,409 women received IDU outreach services, and 7,260 women used IDU in-service programs.

### ? Which services are women using?

Both men and women use practical assistance, case management, health promotion, food programs and referrals. Women are more likely than men to use **interpretation and settlement services**, suggesting that a larger portion of female clients are newcomers.

### ? Where in Ontario are women accessing support services?

The Central East region has the highest proportion of female service users at 43%. The Ottawa and Eastern region has the lowest proportion, at 24%.



## WHERE DO THESE NUMBERS COME FROM?

This fact sheet uses information recently provided by the Public Health Ontario Laboratory, as well as previously published information from the Report on HIV/AIDS in Ontario 2011 (preliminary report) from the Ontario HIV Epidemiologic Monitoring Unit at the University of Toronto. This report can be accessed here: <http://www.ohemu.utoronto.ca/>. The numbers presented here are adjusted to account for missing data.

Estimates of HIV incidence and prevalence overall for Ontario and the breakdown for women are provided by the Public Health Agency of Canada. We have changed some of the names of different groups from those used by the Public Health Agency of Canada, for consistency.

### OCS data:

Burchell AN et al. Engagement in HIV care among persons enrolled in a clinical HIV cohort in Ontario, Canada, 2001-2011. *JAIDS*, 2015, In Press.

Gardner S et al. *Impact of Social Determinants of Health and Substance Use on HIV Viral Suppression (sVL)*. Canadian Association for HIV Research, May 2015 (Oral Presentation).

Benoit A et al. *Association between stress, depression and antiretroviral therapy adherence among women living with and accessing care for HIV in Toronto, Ontario between 2007 and 2012*. Canadian Association for HIV Research, May 2015 (Poster Presentation).

### OCHART data:

Ontario Community HIV and AIDS Reporting Tool (OCHART). The View from the Front Lines (2014): Annual summary & analysis of data provided by community-based HIV/AIDS services in Ontario. Toronto, ON: AIDS and Hepatitis C Programs, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Public Health Agency of Canada, Ontario Region; (2014). [https://www.ochart.ca/documents/Resources\\_Reports.htm](https://www.ochart.ca/documents/Resources_Reports.htm).

### Ontario Health Regions:

