



OCS QUICK FACTS

Injectable ARVs among People Living with HIV (PLWH) in Ontario

In 2022, 2,180 OCS participants answered the OCS questions about injectable antiretroviral (ARV) use.

Of the 2,158 respondents (99%) who are currently taking ARV:

- 2% are already taking an injectable form of ARV
- 57% probably or definitely would choose an injectable form of ARV
- 33% probably or definitely would not choose an injectable form of ARV
- 8% don't know or prefer not to answer

Of the 37 respondents (2%) who are already taking an injectable form of ARV:

- 73% are gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (GBMSM)
- 22% are African, Caribbean or Black (ACB)
- 19% are women
- 54% had private drug coverage, while 46% had public drug coverage
- 49% had an income of <\$50,000 per year

Of the 1,248 respondents (57%) who probably or definitely would take an injectable form of ARV:

- 70% are ACB
- 65% are GBMSM
- 65% are women
- 59% are people who use injection drugs

Of the 2,180 respondents who answered the questionnaire, 65% would prefer to receive an injectable at an HIV clinic while 40% would prefer it at a pharmacy.

In terms of how frequently they would want to receive injections:

- 46% would prefer it once every six months
- 34% would prefer it once a month
- 33% would prefer it once every three months

Quarterly Update
July 2023



OHTN Evidence Report on Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia

17th of May marks the annual International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia. In recognition of the day and in solidarity with the communities we support, OHTN used a literature review and OCS data to put together an evidence brief on how discrimination impacts the health outcomes of people living with and at risk of HIV.

In order to end gender- and sexual orientation-based discrimination and improve prevention of HIV and the wellbeing of people living with HIV, we need interventions and policies that specifically address homophobia, transphobia and biphobia. Read and download the full evidence brief [here](#).

OCS Governance Committee Updates

OCS Governance Committee members – Jason Brophy, Y.Y. (Brandon) Chen, Ruth Cameron, and Aaron Bowerman – have kindly agreed to serve an additional three-year term (from June 2023 to June 2026). We are grateful for their time, continued dedication, service and contributions to the OCS. For the full list of committee members, visit [here](#).

Updates on Two OCS Sub-Studies

The OCS provides researchers interested in HIV/AIDS with a platform for study recruitment. By recruiting through the OCS, researchers can be connected to members of specific populations. (Learn more about how to access the OCS data [here](#))

Tele-Coaching Community-Based Exercise Intervention

The Tele-Coaching study, led by Dr. Kelly O'Brien, Associate Professor in the Department of Physiotherapy at the University of Toronto, is a mixed-method study designed to evaluate the implementation of an online Community-Based Exercise (CBE). It is assessing participants' long-term engagement in exercise, the ability of adults living with HIV to integrate exercise into their daily lives over time and the study's ability to integrate online CBE into the community. Two OCS sites have recruited people living with HIV (PLWH) for this study.

The authors published their study design/protocol in the [British Medical Journal](#) Open. Findings from qualitative interviews conducted with 10 women living with HIV were published recently in the journal of [Plos One](#). Further analyses of study data are underway.

Cannabis Use Sub-Study

This sub-study is led by Dr. Sergio Rueda, a Senior Scientist with the Institute for Mental Health Policy Research at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). It is designed to better understand the unique use and service needs of Ontarians living with HIV who use cannabis for recreational and/or medical purposes. As of June 2023, 339 OCS participants have indicated interest in participating in this sub-study. Of those, 244 were contacted and 208 were enrolled.

Responses from the first 117 participants showed that: 51% used cannabis for recreational purposes only, 11% used it for medical purposes only, and 38% used it for both medical and recreational purposes. When asked how legalization of cannabis impacted their cannabis use, 34% reported that they now used more frequently and 28% said they used greater amounts due to easier access to safer products and greater social acceptability. When asked how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted their cannabis use, 30% indicated using cannabis more frequently due to stress/anxiety, boredom and loneliness.

Sergio and colleagues presented preliminary data on cannabis use patterns in the past year at the 32nd Annual Conference Canadian Association on HIV/AIDS Research (CAHR) (Access the poster abstract [here](#)). His team also presented a study delineating different cannabis use trajectories before recreational legalization among people living with HIV using OCS data at the [9th Annual Conference](#) of the Canadian Consortium for the Investigation of Cannabinoids in Clinical Practice.

Annual OCS Questionnaire Review Meeting- Feedback Requested

Each year, the OCS team reviews and revises the OCS Questionnaire in an effort to respond to community needs and values as well as emerging scientific evidence. As part of the review process, the OCS team draws on experiences of the data collectors, the participant feedback survey and advice from our Scientific Steering Committee. We have also created an anonymous survey to gain insights from our larger community about how to prioritize existing topics and add new relevant questions. Please complete the survey [here](#).

Changes to the OCS Study Team

We are excited to welcome a new site co-investigator, Dr. Maheen Saeed, to the OCS study team at Byward Family Health Team (BFHT) in Ottawa. Dr. Saeed, an infectious disease doctor working in Ottawa since 2011. We are grateful for her willingness to join the OCS team.

We are also excited to welcome two new data collectors to the team:

- Keisha Velcich at Sudbury Regional Hospital (Health Sciences North).
- Sarah Pugh at Lakeridge Positive Care Clinic

Data collectors are the heart of the OCS team. We are very grateful to all of them for their dedication and commitment to the work.

The Ontario HIV Treatment Network Cohort Study (OCS) is an ongoing research study that collects clinical, social and behavioural information about people living with HIV (PHA) in Ontario. Participation in the study is voluntary, and all personally identifying information of study participants is removed to ensure confidentiality. The OCS was established to improve our understanding of HIV and inform HIV prevention, care and treatment strategies for people living with HIV and groups at risk of HIV infection. For more information about the OCS, please visit ohtncohortstudy.ca or email ocs@ohtn.on.ca.