



OCS QUICK FACTS

STI and HIV Testing Before Being Diagnosed with HIV

We analysed data from 460 OCS participants who were diagnosed with HIV for the first time in Ontario between 2011 and 2021 and who answered questions about their HIV and STI testing history between 2020 and 2021. Of those:

- 20% were diagnosed between 2011-2012, 33% between 2013-2015, 29% between 2016-2018, and 18% between 2019-2021.
- 33.7% reported testing routinely, 34.1% had tested once/twice and 32.3% had never tested.
- The proportion of those never tested for HIV prior to diagnosis has **declined** over time.

Our analyses* showed that among 460 newly diagnosed OCS participants:

- Gay, bi, queer males were significantly more likely than females to be routine testers or to have tested once/twice.
- OCS participants diagnosed more recently were more likely to have tested routinely or once/twice.
- Race, income, age, or being a heterosexual male were not significantly associated with frequency of testing.

While HIV testing rates have improved over time, this analysis identified missed opportunities for HIV prevention, especially for participants who did not test for HIV prior to their HIV diagnosis.

For more information, see the [2023 CAHR poster](#) at www.ohtncohortstudy.ca/research.

Quarterly Update
October 2023



OCS 2024 Questionnaire Update

Throughout the year, the OCS team asks OCS participants, data collectors, researchers and other partners for feedback on our questionnaire. That information helps us respond to any participants concerns, and ensure the questionnaire reflects community needs and values as well as the emerging scientific evidence concerning HIV treatment and prevention.

In light of this year's feedback and in an effort to streamline some sections and minimize the burden on participants, we removed: the Internet Access Section; questions about ready-to-return-to-work (Employment, Income, and Education); questions on types of vaccines and doses received (COVID 19); and questions on participants' romantic relationships and sexual practices (Relationships and Sexual Practices).

We added questions on: injectable antiretroviral medications (ARV Therapy); hospital admission and polypharmacy use (Co-Morbidities); long-COVID symptoms and uptake of booster doses and reasons for not taking a booster dose (COVID 19); challenges participants face in accessing primary care physicians and specialists (Patient Experience); and testing for sexually transmitted diseases and type of swab/specimen (Preventative Treatment).

We also introduced two new sections:

- Lung Cancer Screening to assess uptake of lung cancer screening and history of diagnosis
- Sleep Quality to assess quality and sleep apnea issues.

We are very grateful for the time and efforts of those who shared their feedback and recommendations with us throughout the year. The OCS 2024 Questionnaire will be launched in January 2024.

OCS Governance Committee Updates

Ivan Bello completed his term on the committee. Ivan's knowledge and dedication have been vital to the OCS and we will always be grateful to him.

We also want to express our gratitude to all of our GC members for their time, continued dedication, service and contributions to the OCS. For the full list of committee members, visit [here](#).

OCS Data on Childhood Bullying at the 2023 CBRC Summit

David Brennan, OCS Scientific Steering Committee member, is going to present the OCS data on childhood bullying at the 2023 Community-Based Research Centre (CBRC) summit in Vancouver, BC, November 16 to 17.

The goal of CBRC's submit is to promote 2S/LGBTQ+ health care, research, and social services, as well as share best practice applications of, and new research informing 2S/LGBTQ+ culturally responsive health care. This year's theme is Together in Action with a nod to the importance – and power – of queer, trans, and Two-Spirit people mobilizing together to push for progress on the freedoms, health, and wellbeing of all 2S/LGBTQ+ people. For more information, visit [here](#).

We express our gratitude to David for representing the OCS and sharing the OCS findings on childhood bullying with the community and a wider audience through this important summit.

Two OCS Research Proposals Explore Issues Faced by People Living with HIV

OCS Governance Committee approved two distinct research proposals in September 2023 to use OCS data:

- Nadia Rehman, Dr. Lawrence Mbuagbaw and colleagues will use OCS data to investigate the “Effect of virtual visits on adherence on antiretroviral therapy, and health outcomes of people living with HIV”.
- Drs. Haneesha and Lena Serghides and colleagues will use OCS data to understand the “Implications of antiretrovirals on body weight in people living with HIV”.

We congratulate the researchers and thank them for engaging with the OCS in these important works.

Welcoming a new OCS research intern at the OHTN

The OCS provides internship opportunities to students who are interested in doing HIV research and using OCS data to contribute to the community.

Nicholas Bauer is a second-year medical student at the University of Toronto and holds a Bachelor of Sciences degree from the University of Saskatchewan. Born and raised in Saskatoon, Nicholas' mother's family is from Northern Saskatchewan with Red River Métis heritage and the traditional names of Ledoux and Moreau. Nicholas is working with Dr. Sean Hillier from York University, who is an OCS Scientific Steering Committee member, to investigate the health and experiences of ageing among Indigenous people living with HIV.

We feel very lucky to have Nicholas as an intern at the OHTN. We encourage those students interested in an internship opportunity at the OHTN to contact us at ocs@ohntn.on.ca

Changes to the OCS Study Team

OCS is pleased to welcome new data collectors to the team:

- Saniya Tendon and Ghania Uwimana at the Ottawa General Hospital.
- Sara Smith, Allison Johnston and Veronica Proper at Elevate NWO.

We bid farewell to Nana Frimpong (Ottawa General Hospital), Brie Fraser (Kingston General Hospital) and Candida Sinoway (Elevate NWO) and wish them success in their future endeavours. We thank all of our data collectors for their dedication and commitment to the work.

In Memoriam: Joanne Lindsay

With sadness we share the news of the passing of Joanne Lindsay, a former co-chair of the OCS Governance Committee. Joanne made outstanding contributions to HIV/AIDS research, treatment, and prevention in her lifetime. For that, she was honoured with the Red Ribbon Award at the CAHR conference in April 2023. We send our condolences to her family and friends.

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 ohntcohortstudy.ca or email ocs@ohntn.on.ca.