BACKGROUND: Teen mothers, defined as ≤20 years old at the time of first birth, are an at-risk population characterized by multiple psychosocial difficulties. Teen mothers may experience mental health problems during adolescence and later life. We know little about the prevalence and types of mental health problems among teen mothers in Canada, and less about their mental health service use. In this poster, we use quantitative data collected to date for objective (i).

METHODS: We are recruiting 450 young mothers in Hamilton, Ontario from a variety of agencies serving young mothers. The target population is (i) females ≤20 years old, (ii) pregnant or ≤24 months since birth, (iii) able to speak and understand English, (iv) living in Hamilton region and surrounding areas, and (v) agreeable to the study. Mothers can be recruited pre-natally and postpartum. If a mother agrees to participate, basic demographic and contact information, including alternative contacts, is collected. Gifts of appreciation are available for agreeing to participate in the study and at each point of data collection.

Quantitative data are being collected on 450 young mothers, including information on sociodemographic, mental health and mental health utilization (e.g., Mini International Neuropsychiatric Interview for Children and Adolescents, Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale; service utilization using Canadian Community Health Survey). We also collect quantitative data from two comparison groups (non-pregnant teens, pregnant non-teen women).

RESULTS: FIGURE 1 shows the results of recruitment efforts to date. TABLE 1 shows participant characteristics to date. Most young moms have not completed high school. TABLE 2 shows mental health disorders endorsed. Young women report on average 3-4 disorders, most commonly depression and agoraphobia. TABLE 3 shows the number of times participants have seen a provider for mental health needs in the last 12 months.

DISCUSSION: This research project is almost complete.

Young mothers participating in the study are disadvantaged in terms of education and income. Young mothers participating in the study endorse multiple psychiatric disorders, and a range of disorders; comparison women endorse fewer disorders. Young mothers generally do not endorse greater service utilization (yes/no) but increased number of contacts with given service. When completed, this research will be novel, as mental health needs of teen mothers have not been well studied in Canada. These results will provide the most current, comprehensive information available on mental health disorders among teen mothers, mental health service use and unmet needs, and will provide the basis for future research.