

Health Fact Sheet

Heavy drinking, 2016

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Health Fact Sheets

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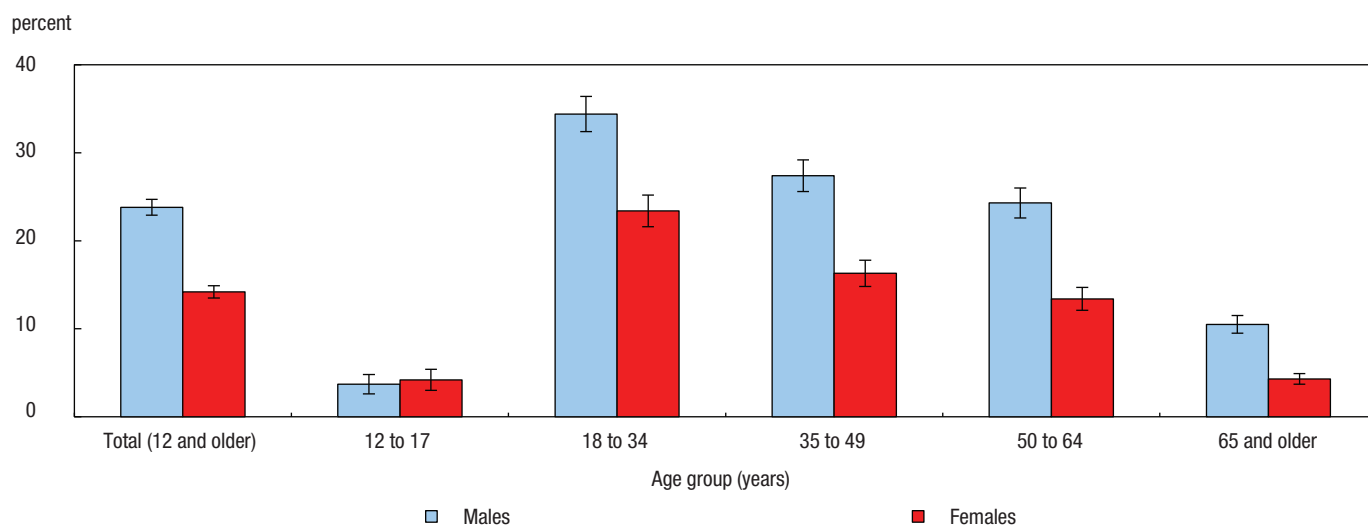
Heavy drinking, 2016

In 2016, 19.0% of Canadians aged 12 and older (roughly 5.8 million people) reported alcohol consumption that classified them as heavy drinkers.¹ The proportion aged 12 and older who reported alcohol consumption that classified them as heavy drinkers remained stable between 2015 and 2016.²

Overall, males were more likely (23.8%) to report heavy drinking than females (14.2%) in 2016.

The highest proportion of heavy drinking for both sexes was among those aged 18 to 34. In this age group, 34.4% of males and 23.4% of females were heavy drinkers (Chart 1).

Chart 1 Heavy drinking, by age group and sex, household population aged 12 and older, Canada, 2016



Note: Heavy drinking refers to males who reported having 5 or more drinks, or women who reported having 4 or more drinks, on one occasion, at least once a month in the past year. 95% confidence intervals are denoted by vertical lines overlaid on the bars in this chart. They indicate the degree of variability in the estimates.

Source: Canadian Community Health Survey, 2016.

Despite the fact it is illegal to sell alcohol to anyone under 18 in Canada,^{3,4} 27.9% of Canadian youth aged 12 to 17 reported consuming an alcoholic beverage in the previous 12 months. Among those who did drink, 41.8% of them did so at least once a month. Overall 4.0% of youth were classified as heavy drinkers.

The 2016 Canadian Community Health Survey included questions on alcohol use during the last week. According to Canada's Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines, 16.6% of Canadians are consuming alcohol at a level that puts their long term health at risk.⁵

About heavy drinking

Excessive alcohol consumption can have serious health and social consequences, especially when combined with other behaviours such as driving while intoxicated. For males, heavy drinking refers to having consumed five or more drinks, per occasion, at least once a month during the past year. For females, heavy drinking refers to having consumed four or more drinks, per occasion, at least once a month during the past year.

According to Canada's Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines, long term risks for alcohol consumption are liver disease and certain cancers. Males are classified at risk if they had more than 15 drinks in the week of reporting or at least one day with 4 or more drinks. Females are classified at risk if they had more than 10 drinks in the week of reporting or at least one day with 3 or more drinks.

For analysis of heavy drinking with other healthy behaviours see the 'Healthy Behaviours Fact Sheet' (<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-625-x/2017001/article/54865-eng.htm>).

Notes

1. Estimates in this article referring to the national average or Canada rate exclude the territories. This is because the coverage of CCHS in 2016 does not represent the entire population of the territories. Only half of the communities in the territories were visited in 2015, and the other half in 2016 so analyses based on the territories is only available for two year cycles of the CCHS (e.g. 2015-2016).
2. In this article when two estimates are said to be different this indicates that the difference was statistically significant at a 95% confidence level (p-value less than 5%).
3. The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse. (<http://www.ccsa.ca/Eng/topics/alcohol/Pages/Legal-Drinking-Age-for-Alcohol-in-Canada.aspx>) (accessed December 30, 2016).
4. The legal drinking age for alcohol is 18 in Alberta, Manitoba, and Quebec. In the other provinces and territories, the drinking age is 19.
5. Research has shown that recall based surveys on alcohol consumption are at risk of under-reporting. This limitation affects estimates produced with the CCHS, and is meant to highlight the difference in the drinking habits of heavy drinkers versus non-heavy drinkers, rather than to establish a precise measure of alcohol consumption.

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Data

Additional data from the Canadian Community Health Survey are available from CANSIM table 105-0508 (<http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/a26?lang=eng&retrLang=eng&id=1050508>).

For more information on the Canadian Community Health Survey, please contact Statistics Canada's Statistical Information Service (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 613-951-8116; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca).