

## Health Fact Sheets

# Heavy drinking, 2015



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- not available for any reference period
- .. not available for a specific reference period
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- 0 true zero or a value rounded to zero
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- <sup>P</sup> preliminary
- <sup>r</sup> revised
- X suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*
- <sup>E</sup> use with caution
- F too unreliable to be published
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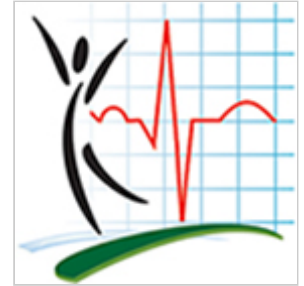
## Correction Notice

On October 19, 2017, the estimate of Canadians who were at risk due to their past week alcohol consumption was revised. The estimates were originally 74.0% for heavy drinkers and 54.0% for non-heavy drinkers. After correcting an error, the estimates are 58.4% and 6.7%, respectively.

The estimate of Canadian youth who drank alcoholic beverages in the past 12 months was also revised. The estimate was originally 74.9%, but this estimate excluded those who had not drunk alcohol in their life. If all youth are included, the correct estimate is 27.0%



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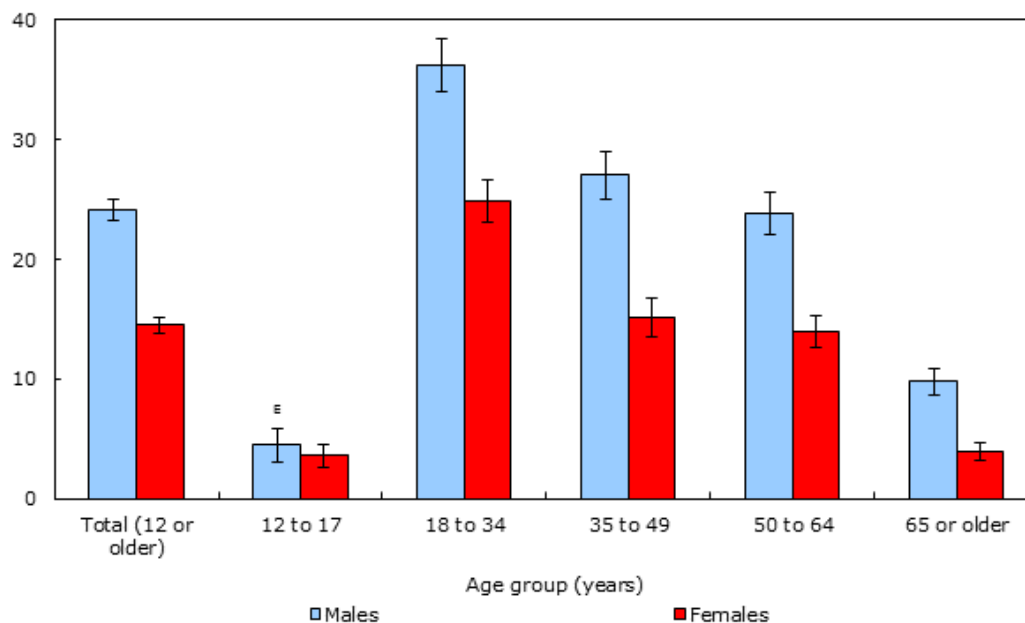


In 2015, 19.2% of Canadians aged 12 and older, or roughly 5.8 million people, reported alcohol consumption that classified them as heavy drinkers.<sup>1</sup> Overall, males were more likely (24.1%) to report heavy drinking than females (14.5%) in 2015.<sup>2</sup>

The highest proportion of heavy drinking for both sexes was among those aged 18 to 34. In this age group, 36.2% of males and 24.9% of females were heavy drinkers (Chart 1).

**Chart 1**  
**Heavy drinking, by age group and sex, household population aged 12 or older, Canada, 2015**

percent



⊕ use with caution (these data have a coefficient of variation between 15.1% and 35.0%)

**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.

**Source:** Canadian Community Health Survey, 2015.

Given that it is illegal to sell alcohol to anyone under 18 in Canada,<sup>3,4</sup> the amount of heavy drinking among 12 to 17 year olds is expectedly low (4.1%). Despite the laws that prevent underage drinking, youth are still able to consume alcoholic beverages. In 2015, 27.0% of Canadian youth drank an alcoholic beverage in the previous 12 months and 40.8% of them did so at least once a month.

The proportion of residents who reported heavy drinking was **lower** than the national average (19.2%) in British Columbia (17.3%).

The proportion of residents who reported heavy drinking was **higher** than the national average in:

- Newfoundland and Labrador (25.6%)
- Quebec (20.2%)

- Saskatchewan (21.7%)

The proportion of residents who reported heavy drinking was the same as the national average in the other provinces.

The 2015 Canadian Community Health Survey also included questions on alcohol use during the last week. Of the 5.8 million heavy drinkers in 2015, 58.4% reported a level of alcohol consumption in the last week that put their long term health at risk. Among Canadians who were not heavy drinkers, 6.7% reported a level of consumption in the last week that poses long term risks. On average, Canadians who were classified as heavy drinkers had 9.8 drinks in the past week, compared to non-heavy drinkers who consumed 1.6 drinks.

## 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.

## References

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## Data

Additional data from the Canadian Community Health Survey are available from CANSIM table 105–0508 ([www.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/a26?lang=fra&retrLang=fra&id=1050508](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/a26?lang=fra&retrLang=fra&id=1050508) ) .

## 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 2015 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.