

Health Indicator Report

Awareness of the Health Effects of Alcohol Consumption During Pregnancy

Background

The purpose of this health indicator report is to provide information on knowledge and beliefs about the effect of drinking alcohol during pregnancy among adults aged 18 and over living in Halton Region.

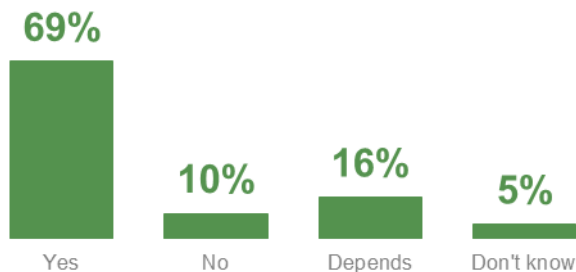
Alcohol use during pregnancy has the potential to harm an unborn baby; it is dangerous during all stages of pregnancy, but especially the first trimester. The effect of alcohol on the unborn baby varies depending on many factors such as the stage of the pregnancy and the frequency, quantity, and pattern of maternal consumption. Health Canada recommends that women abstain from alcohol use throughout pregnancy.¹

This health indicator report uses data from the Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System (RRFSS).

Awareness of the Effects of Alcohol on an Unborn Baby

Overall Findings

In 2016, 69% of Halton adults thought that drinking alcohol during pregnancy is harmful to an unborn baby, 10% thought it is not harmful, 16% thought that it depends, and 5% did not know.



Percentage of adults aged 18 and over who thought that drinking alcohol during pregnancy is harmful to an unborn baby, Halton Region, 2016

Sex

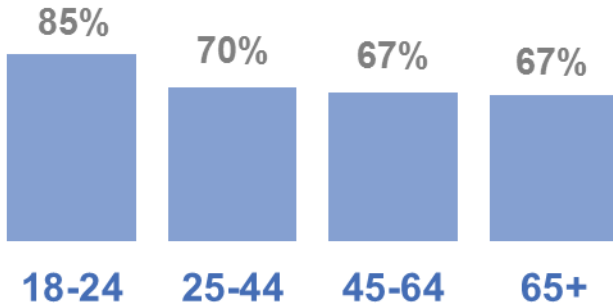
In 2016, there was no statistically significant difference by sex in the percentage of Halton adults who thought that drinking alcohol during pregnancy is harmful to an unborn baby.



Percentage of adults aged 18 and over who thought that drinking alcohol during pregnancy is harmful to an unborn baby, by sex, Halton Region, 2016

Age

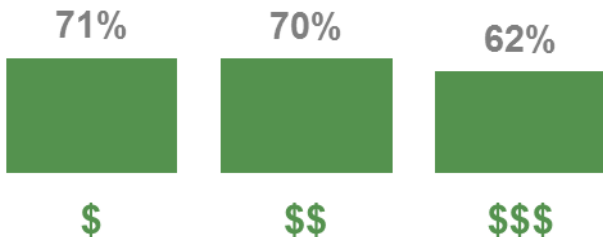
In 2016, Halton adults aged 18-24 were more likely than adults of all other age groups to think that drinking alcohol during pregnancy is harmful to an unborn baby. This difference was **statistically significant** when comparing adults aged 18-24 to adults aged 45-64 and 65+.



Percentage of adults aged 18 and over who thought that drinking alcohol during pregnancy is harmful to an unborn baby, by age, Halton Region, 2016

Income

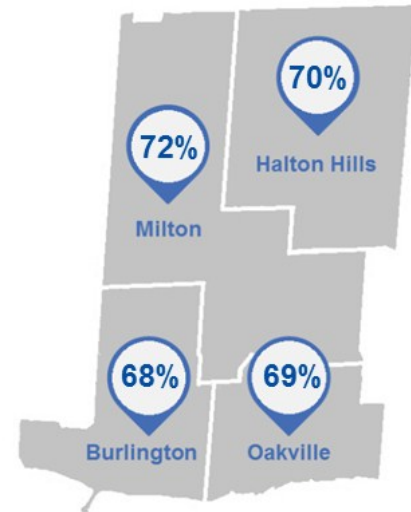
In 2016, there were no statistically significant differences by income in the percentage of Halton adults who thought that drinking alcohol during pregnancy is harmful to an unborn baby.



Percentage of adults aged 18 and over who thought that drinking alcohol during pregnancy is harmful to an unborn baby, by income, Halton Region, 2016

Municipality

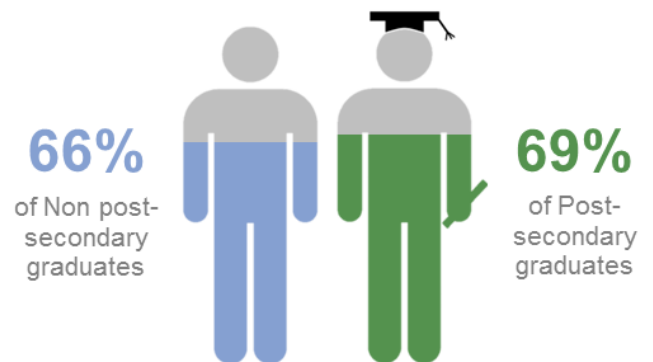
In 2016, there were no statistically significant differences by municipality in the percentage of Halton adults who thought that drinking alcohol during pregnancy is harmful to an unborn baby.



Percentage of adults aged 18 and over who thought that drinking alcohol during pregnancy is harmful to an unborn baby, by municipality, Halton Region, 2016

Education

In 2016, there were no statistically significant differences by education in the percentage of Halton adults who thought that drinking alcohol during pregnancy is harmful to an unborn baby.

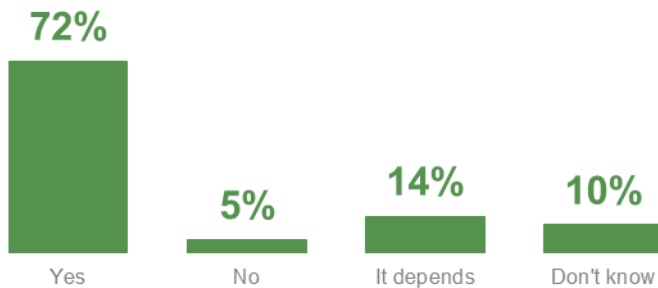


Percentage of adults aged 18 and over who thought that drinking alcohol during pregnancy is harmful to an unborn baby, by education, Halton Region, 2016

Effects of Alcohol Consumption During Pregnancy on the Unborn Baby

Brain Damage

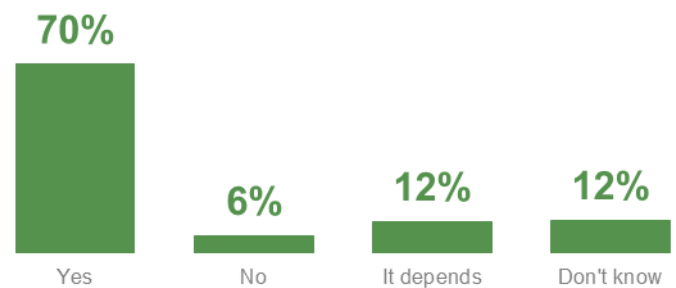
In 2016, among Halton adults who answered “yes” or “it depends” when asked if alcohol consumption during pregnancy is harmful, 72% thought that if a woman drank during pregnancy her baby could be born with permanent brain damage, 5% thought that it could not cause permanent brain damage, 14% thought that it depends, and 10% did not know.



Percentage of adults aged 18 and over who thought that if a woman drank alcohol during pregnancy, her baby could be born with permanent brain damage, Halton Region, 2016

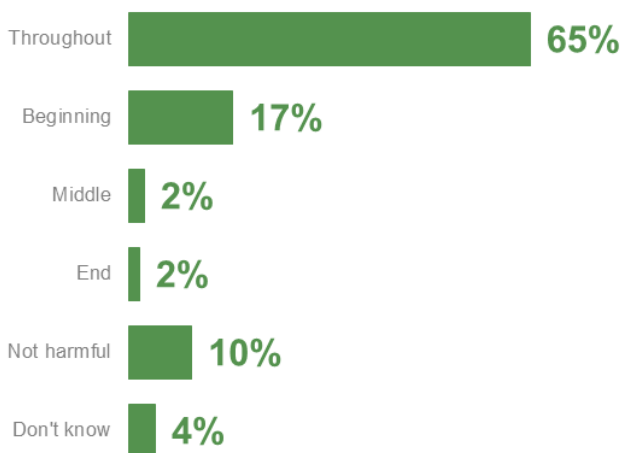
Birth Defects and Deformities

In 2016, among Halton adults who answered “yes” or “it depends” when asked if alcohol consumption during pregnancy is harmful, 70% thought that if a woman drank alcohol during pregnancy her baby could be born with permanent birth defects or deformities, 6% thought that it could not cause permanent birth defects or deformities, 12% thought that it depends, and 12% did not know.



Percentage of adults aged 18 and over who thought that if a woman drank alcohol during pregnancy, her baby could be born with permanent birth defects or deformities, Halton Region, 2016

Perceptions of Time Periods During Pregnancy when Alcohol is Most Harmful



Percentage of adults aged 18 and over who thought that alcohol was most harmful at certain time periods throughout a pregnancy, by time period, Halton Region, 2016

In 2016, Halton adults who answered “yes” or “it depends” when asked if alcohol consumption during pregnancy is harmful, reported on when they thought alcohol is most harmful to an unborn baby:

- 65% thought that alcohol use at any time throughout a pregnancy was harmful
- 17% thought that alcohol is most harmful at the beginning of a pregnancy
- 2% thought that alcohol is most harmful in the middle of a pregnancy
- 2% thought that alcohol is most harmful at the end of a pregnancy
- 10% thought that alcohol use during a pregnancy is not harmful
- 4% did not know when alcohol was most harmful

For more information on RRFSS, methods, statistical significance and limitations associated with health indicator reports, please see the Data Notes and Guide available at www.halton.ca.

Data Source: Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System [2016], Halton Region Health Department and Institute for Social Research, York University.

Limitations: If respondents provided answers such as “it depends”, “it depends on how much alcohol” etc., when asked if they thought that drinking alcohol during pregnancy is harmful to an unborn baby, the interviewer specified by saying “even one drink such as 1 can or bottle of beer, 1 glass of wine, 1 can or bottle of wine cooler, 1 cocktail, or 1 shot of liquor.” Respondents may have answered the question differently depending on whether or not the interviewer prompt was used.

Only respondents who answered “yes” or “it depends” when asked if they thought that drinking alcohol during pregnancy is harmful to an unborn baby were asked the following questions regarding brain damage, and birth defects or deformities. It is possible that those who reported “no” or “don’t know” to the initial question “If a woman drank alcohol at any time during her pregnancy, do you think it could be harmful to the unborn baby?” could still think that alcohol in greater quantities could cause these adverse effects in an unborn baby, however, these opinions could not be captured.

References

1. PHAC. Alcohol Use and Pregnancy: An Important Canadian Public Health and Social Issue. Accessed July 2017 from <http://www.addictionresearchchair.ca/wp-content/uploads/Alcohol-Use-and-Pregnancy-An-Important-Canadian-Health-and-Social-Issue.pdf>.

For more health indicator and health status reports, visit the Halton Health Statistics website at www.halton.ca.

*Last Revised: July 25th, 2017
Expected Update: 2021*