

Awareness of the link between alcohol availability and consumption

Health indicator report

Background

- The purpose of this health indicator report is to provide information about the awareness of the link between alcohol availability and consumption among Halton adults aged 18 and over.
- From 2015 to 2024, the government of Ontario expanded privatized sale of alcohol to include convenience, grocery and big-box stores.^{1,2}
- Alcohol is a leading preventable cause of death, disability and social problems, including cancer, cardiovascular disease, liver disease, and violence.^{3,4} As availability increases, so does consumption and the associated harms, an effect which is pronounced among younger populations.⁵ In 2019-2020, data from the Canadian Community Health Survey showed that 49% of Halton adults aged 19 and over reported that they consumed alcohol in the past week.⁶ Based on Halton's population in 2021, it is estimated that each year alcohol use results in \$66,226,707 of direct healthcare costs.⁷
- This health indicator report uses data from the Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System (RRFSS). In this health indicator report individuals who strongly or somewhat agreed with each statement have been referred to as agreeing.

Key findings

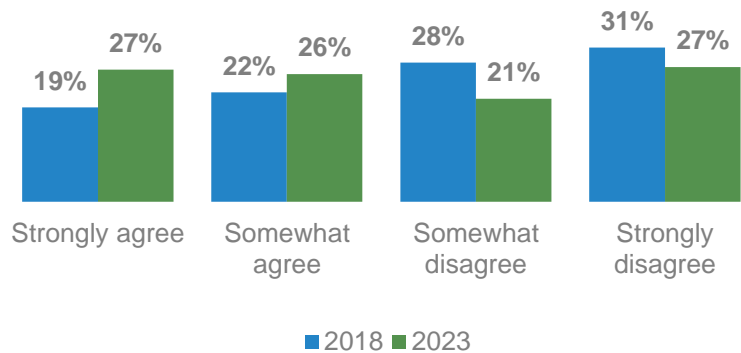
- In 2023, 52% of Halton adults aged 18 and over agreed that the more places there are to buy alcohol, the more people will drink.
- Compared to 2018, in 2023, a higher proportion of adults aged 18 and over agreed that the more places there are to buy alcohol, the more people will drink.
- In 2023, adults aged 45-64 were less likely than all other age groups to agree that the more places there are to buy alcohol, the more people will drink. There were no significant differences by sex, income, or education.



Awareness of the link between alcohol availability and consumption

Overview

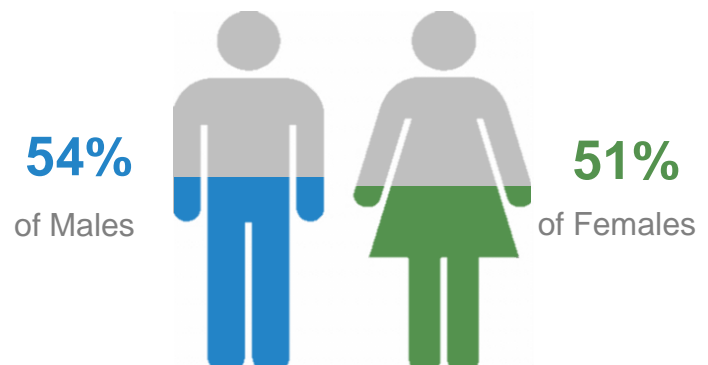
- In 2023, 27% of Halton adults 18 and over strongly agreed that the more places there are to buy alcohol, the more people will drink; 26% somewhat agreed with this statement; 21% somewhat disagreed; and 27% strongly disagreed.
- Compared to 2018, in 2023, a higher proportion of adults aged 18 and over strongly agreed that the more places there are to buy alcohol, the more people will drink. Compared to 2018, in 2023, a lower proportion of adults aged 18 and over somewhat disagreed that the more places there are to buy alcohol, the more people will drink. Both differences were **statistically significant**. Between 2018 and 2023 there were no differences among respondents who somewhat agreed or strongly disagreed.



Agreement that the more places there are to buy alcohol, the more people will drink, adults aged 18 and older, Halton Region, 2018 and 2023.

Sex

- In 2023, there was no statistically significant difference by sex in the percentage of adults 18 and over who agreed that the more places there are to buy alcohol, the more people will drink.



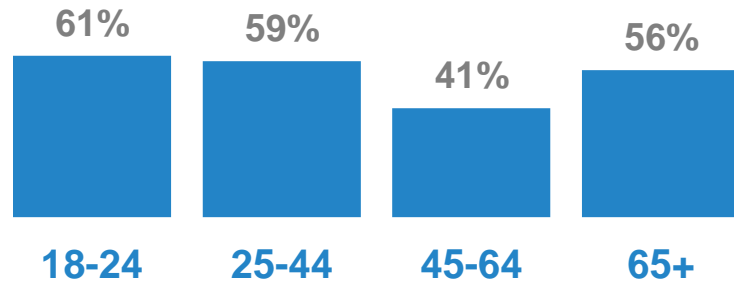
Percentage of adults aged 18 and older who agreed that the more places there are to buy alcohol, the more people will drink, by sex, Halton Region, 2023



Awareness of the link between alcohol availability and consumption

Age

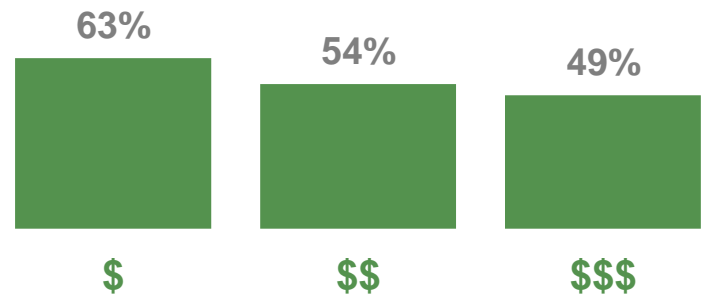
- In 2023, adults aged 45-64 were less likely than all other age groups to agree that the more places there are to buy alcohol, the more people will drink. This difference was **statistically significant** when comparing adults aged 45-64 to all other age groups.



Percentage of adults aged 18 and older who agreed that the more places there are to buy alcohol, the more people will drink, Halton Region, 2023

Income

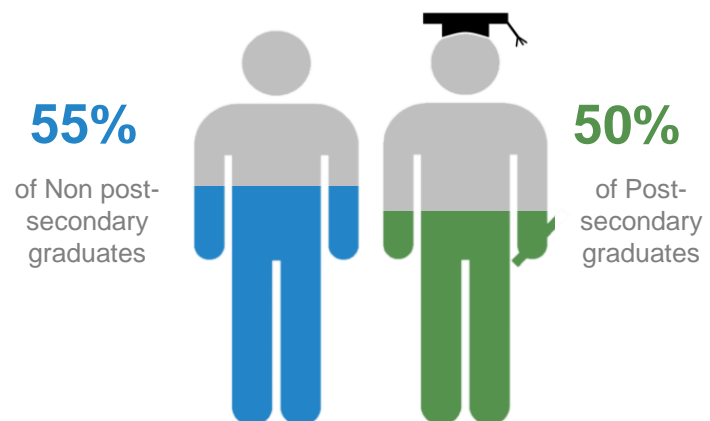
- In 2023, there were no statistically significant differences by income in the percentage of adults 18 and over who agreed that the more places there are to buy alcohol, the more people will drink.



Percentage of adults aged 18 and older who agreed that the more places there are to buy alcohol, the more people will drink, by income, Halton Region, 2023

Education

- In 2023, there was no statistically significant difference by education in the percentage of adults aged 25 and over who agreed that the more places there are to buy alcohol, the more people will drink.



Percentage of adults aged 25 and older who agreed that the more places there are to buy alcohol, the more people will drink, by education, Halton Region, 2023

About RRFSS

- The Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System (RRFSS) is an on-going telephone survey (land line and cell phone) used to collect information on attitudes, behaviours, knowledge and awareness of issues related to health in Halton. RRFSS is conducted by the Institute of Social Research and York University.
- Each year, a random sample of approximately 1,200 adults aged 18 and over are surveyed in Halton Region.
- In 2016, RRFSS underwent changes in sampling and analysis methodology. Therefore, it is not recommended to compare data from 2016 onwards to past years of RRFSS data.
- RRFSS also underwent changes in sampling and analysis methodology in 2023 due to an over-representation of residents aged 65 and older in prior survey cycles. In 2022, 33% of respondents completed the survey by cell phone and 67% of respondents completed the survey by landline. In 2023, 60% of respondents completed the survey by cell-phone and 40% completed the survey by landline. While there was an overall younger sample in 2023 compared to 2022, residents aged 65 and older continue to be over-represented and residents 25-44 year olds continue to be under-represented.
- For more information on RRFSS methodology, limitations and statistical terms see the Data Notes and Data Interpretation Guide at www.halton.ca/For-Residents/Public-Health/Health-Statistics.

Data notes

Definitions:

Agreement in this health indicator report includes individuals who strongly or somewhat agreed.

Sex is defined as sex at birth as identified by the respondent. Respondents who didn't know or refused to identify their sex at birth have been excluded from the analysis by sex only.

Direct Healthcare Costs is defined based on a 2019 report,⁷ which estimates that alcohol use in Canada costs \$111 per person each year in direct healthcare costs. This cost estimate was applied to Halton's population according to the 2021 census.

Data Source: Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System [2023], Halton Region Public Health and Institute for Social Research, York University.

References

1. Schwartz, N., Smith, B. T., Fu, S. H., Myran, D., Friesen, E. L., & Hobin, E. (2024). The Impacts of Selling Alcohol in Grocery Stores in Ontario, Canada: A Before-After Study. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 85(1), 109-119. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37650840/>
2. Office of the Premier (2024). Ontario Delivering Choice and Convenience by Expanding the Sale of Alcoholic Beverages Starting this Summer. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1004633/ontario-delivering-choice-and-convenience-by-expanding-the-sale-of-alcoholic-beverages-starting-this-summer>
3. Paradis, C., Butt, P., Shield, K., Poole, N., Wells, S., Naimi, T., Sherk, A., & the Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines Scientific Expert Panels. (2023). Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health: Final Report. Ottawa, Ont.: Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction. https://www.ccsa.ca/sites/default/files/2023-01/CCSA_Canadas_Guidance_on_Alcohol_and_Health_Final_Report_en.pdf
4. Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). Second-hand harms from alcohol. Toronto, ON: King's Printer for Ontario; 2025
5. Canadian Alcohol Policy Evaluation [CAPE]. (2023) Canadian Alcohol Policy Evaluation (CAPE) 3.0: Methodology and Evidence (Federal and Provincial/Territorial). Victoria, BC: Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research, University of Victoria. <https://www.uvic.ca/research/centres/cisur/assets/docs/cape/cape3/methodology-en.pdf>
6. Halton Region. (2023). Alcohol use – Health indicator report. Halton Region Public Health. <https://www.halton.ca/Document/Health-Statistics/Alcohol-use/Alcohol-Use-Indicator-Report>
7. CCO and Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). *The burden of chronic diseases in Ontario: key estimates to support efforts in prevention*. Toronto : Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2019.

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

Last updated: March 2025