

Lyme Disease: Personal Protection

Health indicator report

Background

- The purpose of this health indicator report is to provide information on the risk behaviors and protective measures related to Lyme disease among adults aged 18 and over living in Halton Region.
- Lyme disease is a bacterial infection transmitted by the bite of an infected blacklegged (deer) tick.¹ Blacklegged ticks are most commonly found in wooded, brushy, or tall grassy areas.¹ Wearing long pants and shirts, taping or tucking pants into socks, wearing closed footwear, and wearing insect repellent with DEET can all reduce the chances of getting bitten by a tick when in grassy fields or wooded areas. For more information visit the [Halton Region Lyme Disease webpage](#).¹
- This health indicator report uses data from the Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System (RRFSS).

Key findings

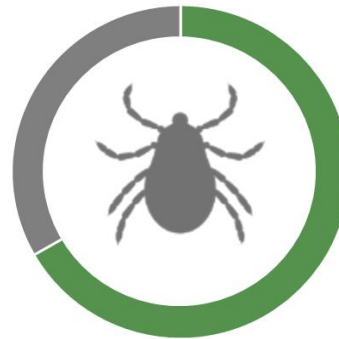
- 67% of Halton adults reported spending time in areas where they were at risk of getting Lyme disease.
- Halton males were more likely than females to report spending time in areas where they were at risk of getting Lyme disease.
- The percentage of Halton adults who reported spending time in areas where they were at risk of getting Lyme disease decreased as age increased.
- The percentage of Halton adults who reported spending time in areas where they were at risk of getting Lyme disease increased as income increased, and increased with education.



Spends time in grassy/wooded areas

Overview

- In 2018, 67% of Halton adults reported spending time in areas where they were at risk of getting Lyme disease (grassy fields/wooded areas) during the spring or summer, and 33% did not.



67% of Halton adults reported spending time in areas where they were at risk of getting Lyme disease

Percentage of adults aged 18 and over who reported spending time in grassy/wooded areas during the spring and summer months, Halton Region, 2018

Sex

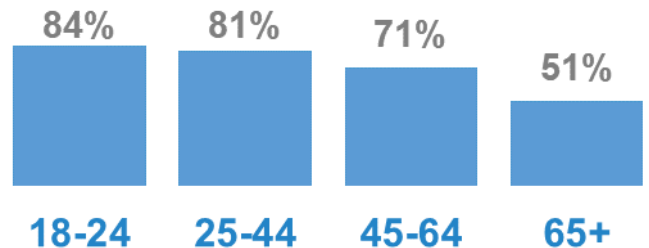
- In 2018, Halton males were more likely than females to report spending time in areas where they were at risk of getting Lyme disease. This difference was **statistically significant**.



Percentage of adults aged 18 and over who reported spending time in grassy/wooded areas during the spring and summer months, by sex, Halton Region, 2018

Age

- In 2018, the percentage of Halton adults who reported spending time in areas where they were at risk of getting Lyme disease decreased as age increased. These differences were **statistically significant** when comparing adults aged 65+ to all other age groups.



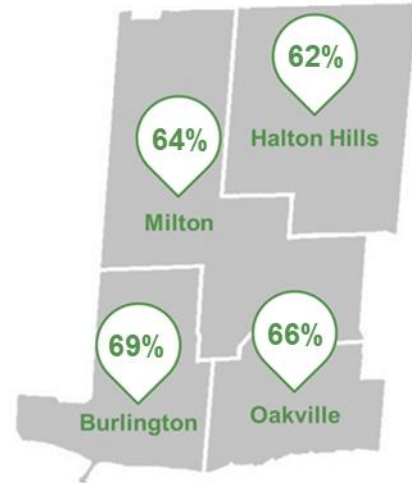
Percentage of adults aged 18 and over who reported spending time in grassy/wooded areas during the spring and summer months, by age group, Halton Region, 2018



Spends time in grassy/wooded areas

Municipality

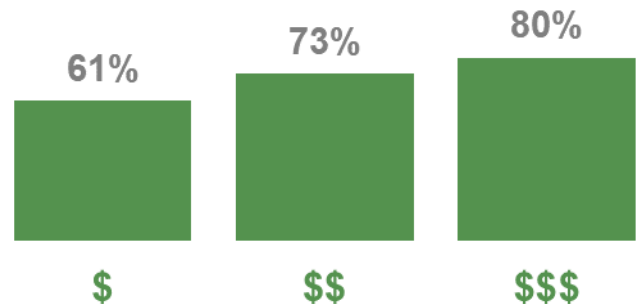
- In 2018, there were no significant differences by municipality in the percentage of Halton adults who reported spending time in areas where they were at risk of getting Lyme disease.



Percentage of adults aged 18 and over who reported spending time in grassy/wooded areas during the spring and summer months, by municipality, Halton Region, 2018

Income

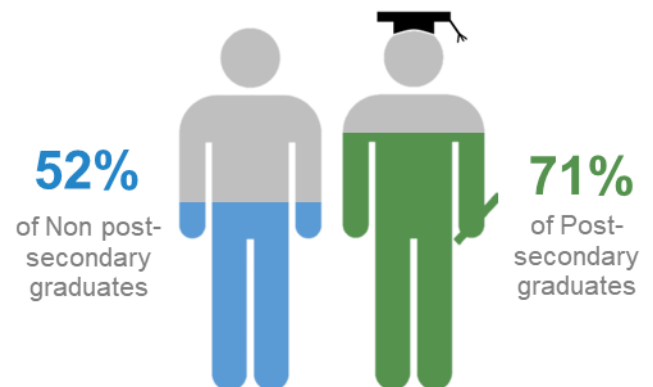
- In 2018, the percentage of Halton adults who reported spending time in areas where they were at risk of getting Lyme disease increased as income increased. These differences were **statistically significant** when comparing adults in the low income group to adults in the middle and high income groups.



Percentage of adults aged 18 and over who reported spending time in grassy/wooded areas during the spring and summer months, by neighbourhood income group, Halton Region, 2018

Education

- In 2018, the percentage of Halton adults who reported spending time in areas where they were at risk of getting Lyme disease was higher among those who were post-secondary graduates compared to those who were not post-secondary graduates. This difference was **statistically significant**.



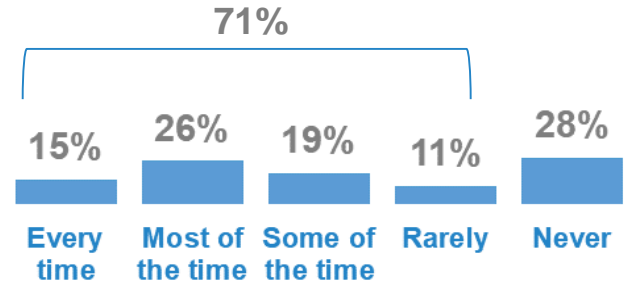
Percentage of adults aged 25 and over who reported spending time in grassy/wooded areas during the spring and summer months, by education, Halton Region, 2018



Protective behaviours

Personal protection from ticks

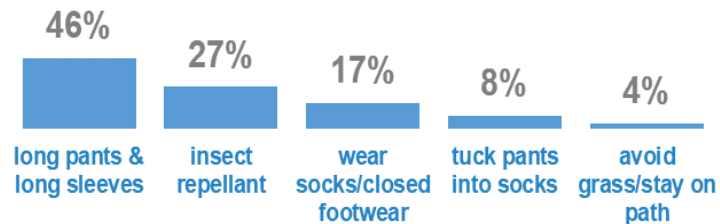
- In 2018, 71% of adults who spent time in areas where they were at risk of getting Lyme disease took steps to protect themselves from tick bites and 28% did not. Of those who took steps to protect themselves:
 - 15% took protective steps every time
 - 26% took protective steps most of the time
 - 19% took protective steps some of the time
 - 11% rarely took protective steps



Percentage of adults aged 18 and over who reported spending time in grassy/wooded areas during the spring and summer months, who took steps to protect themselves from ticks, Halton Region, 2018

Types of protection

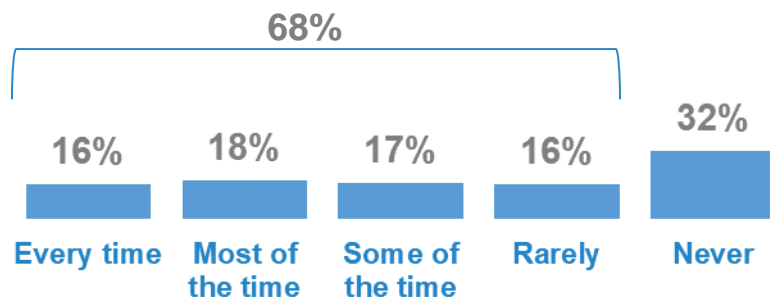
- In 2018, Halton adults who reported spending time in areas where they were at risk of getting Lyme disease took the following recommended steps to protect themselves from ticks:
 - 46% wore long pants and shirts
 - 27% wore insect repellent/DEET
 - 17% wore closed footwear/socks
 - 8% tucked pants into socks
 - 4% avoid the grass/stay on the path



Percentage of adults aged 18 and over who reported taking steps to protect themselves when spending time in grassy/wooded areas during spring and summer months, by type of protection, Halton Region, 2018

Tick checks

- In 2018, 68% of Halton adults checked themselves for ticks after leaving areas where they were at risk of getting Lyme disease and 32% did not. Of those who checked themselves for ticks:
 - 16% checked every time
 - 18% checked most of the time
 - 17% checked some of the time
 - 16% checked rarely



Percentage of adults aged 18 and over who checked themselves for ticks after leaving grassy/wooded areas during spring and summer months, Halton Region, 2018

About RRFSS

- The Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System 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 the 2016 onwards to past years of RRFSS data.**
- For more information on RRFSS methodology and limitations, see the RRFSS Data Notes and Data Interpretation Guide at halton.ca.

Data notes

Definitions:

Adults were asked, “during this past spring or summer did you spend any time outdoors in grassy fields or wooded areas. If they responded “yes”, they were considered to have spent time in areas where they are at risk of getting Lyme disease.

Data Source: Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System [2018], Halton Region Health Department and Institute for Social Research, York University.

Estimates marked with an asterisk (*) should be interpreted with caution due to high variability. Estimates marked with a double asterisk (**) are not reportable.

References

1. Halton Region. Lyme Disease. Accessed November 2019 from <https://www.halton.ca/For-Residents/Immunizations-Preventable-Disease/Diseases-Infections/Lyme-Disease>

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

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