

HEALTH SURVEILLANCE INDICATORS: YOUTH DRINKING



Public Health Relevance

Alcohol consumption during adolescence, particularly heavy drinking, can have negative effects on the developing brain and body. Youth who drink heavily are also at risk for intoxication-related problems, such as driving accidents and unintentional and violent injuries. Heavy drinking is associated with increased risk of illness and death from liver disease. Liver, throat, breast, and other cancers as well as high blood pressure and stroke are more common among heavy drinkers.

Highlights

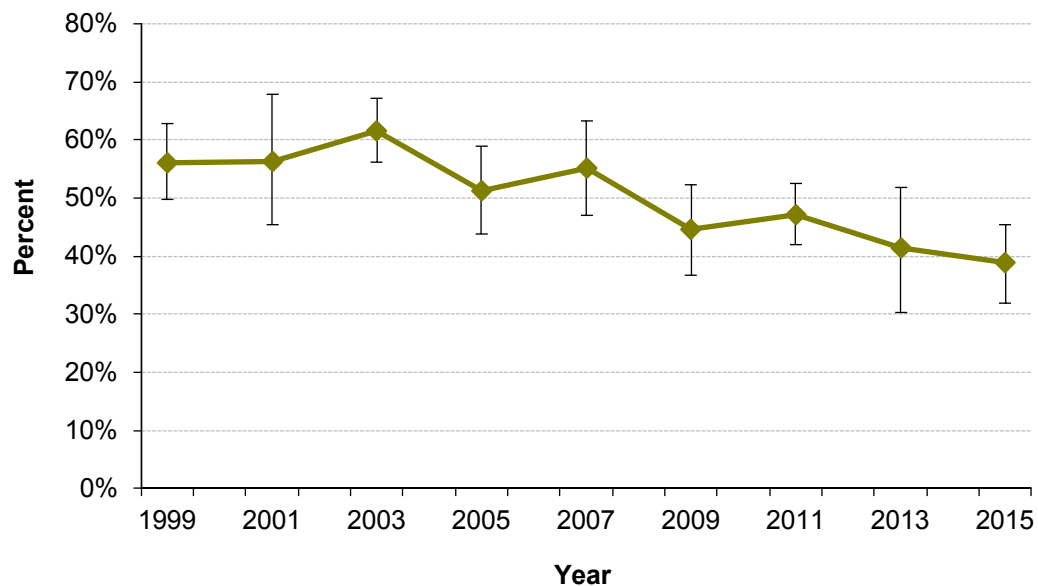
1. Past-year alcohol use among youth in Toronto decreased significantly lower from 1999 to 2015.
2. Heavy drinking among youth in Toronto maintained relatively stable from 1999 to 2015.
3. Lower prevalence of alcohol use and heavy drinking among Toronto students than those from other regions of Ontario.

Trends Over Time

Past-year alcohol use among youth in Toronto decreased significantly lower from 1999 to 2015. Heavy drinking among youth in Toronto maintained relatively stable from 1999 to 2015.

Figure 1 shows the percent of Toronto students in grades 7 to 12 who reported drinking alcohol in the past year, from 1999 to 2013. The percent of students in grades 7 to 12 who reported drinking alcohol in the past year decreased significantly from 1999 to 2015. In 2015, 39% of students reported drinking alcohol in the past year.

Figure 1: Past Year Alcohol Use, Grades 7 to 12 Students, Toronto, 1999 to 2015.

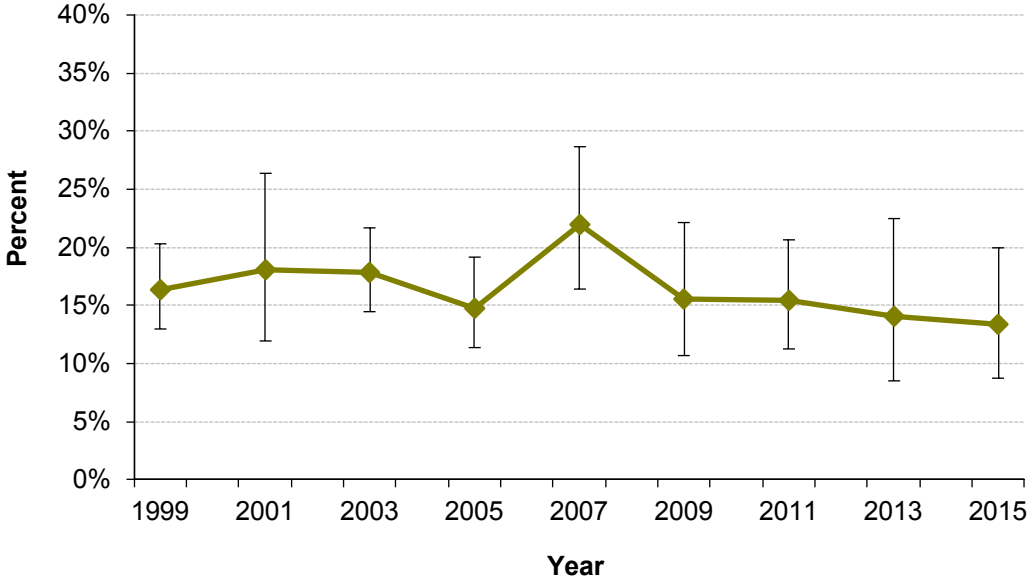


Error bars (I) represent the 95% confidence intervals.

Data Source: see Data Notes.

Figure 2 shows the percent of Toronto students in grades 7 to 12 who reported having at least one heavy drinking episode (five or more drinks on one occasion) in the past month, from 1999 to 2015. The percent of students in grades 7 to 12 who reported having at least one heavy drinking episode in the past month did not change significantly from 1999 to 2015. In 2015, 13% of students reported having at least one heavy drinking episode in the past month.

Figure 2: Past Month Heavy Drinking Episodes, Grades 7 to 12 Students, Toronto, 1999 to 2015.



Error bars (I) represent the 95% confidence intervals.

Data Source: see Data Notes.

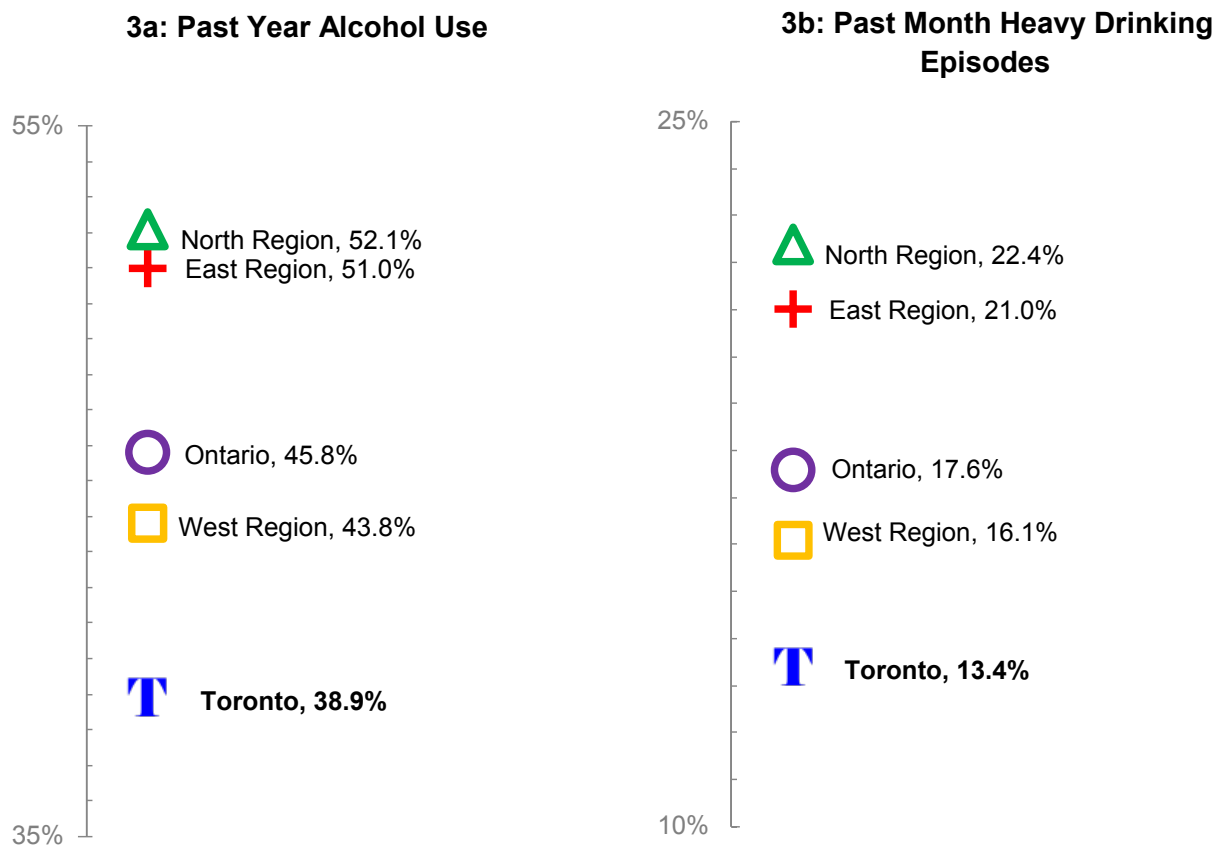
Provincial Comparisons

There was a lower prevalence of alcohol use and heavy drinking among Toronto students compared to those from other regions of Ontario.

Figure 3a shows the percent of students in grades 7 to 12 who reported using alcohol in the past year in Toronto, Ontario, and Ontario's North, West, and East Regions in 2015. The percent who used alcohol in Toronto was significantly lower than among students in the North region of Ontario. It was not significantly different from the East or West regions of Ontario or the overall Ontario percent.

Figure 3b shows the percent of students in grades 7 to 12 who reported having at least one heavy drinking episode (five or more drinks on one occasion) in the past month in Toronto, Ontario, and Ontario's North, West, and East Regions in 2015. The percent having at least one heavy drinking episode in Toronto was significantly lower than among students in the North region of Ontario. It was not significantly different from the East and West regions of Ontario or the overall Ontario percent.

Figure 3: Alcohol Use, Grades 7 to 12 Students, Selected Regions in Ontario, 2015



Data Source: see Data Notes.

Data Notes

Notes

- The estimates in this indicator page are self-reported data from the Centre for Addictions and Mental Health (CAMH) Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS). Self-reported data have a number of limitations. People do not always remember their behaviours, and may under-report or over-report certain behaviours or characteristics that they think are undesirable. For example, youth may not disclose that they are drinkers if they are ashamed of their habit. In addition, surveys do not always provide a representative picture of the whole population. OSDUHS surveys a sample of all students in attendance in Ontario's public and Catholic regular school systems. Thus, it excludes those enrolled in private schools, those institutionalized for correctional or health reasons, those on First Nations reserves, military bases, and in the far northern region of Ontario (a total of about 7% of Ontario students).
- Significant differences were estimated using overlapping confidence intervals. Although this method is conservative ($\alpha < 0.01$) and most appropriate when comparing mutually exclusive groups, it was chosen as an objective means of making conclusions on survey data. Also note that the multiple comparisons performed in the analysis were not taken into consideration when choosing the level of significance to test.
- Where a respondent did not respond to a survey question relevant to the analysis presented, they were excluded from both the numerator and the denominator.
- Time trend analysis is based on data from the most recent 9 data points over 1999 to 2015, from the earliest available data point of complete and reliable data. The number of data points available for reporting is determined by the frequency of data collection.

Definitions

95% Confidence Interval is the range within which the true value lies, 19 times out of 20.

Heavy drinking episode is defined as consuming five or more drinks on one occasion.

Past-month heavy drinking episodes is defined as drinking five or more drinks on a single occasion in the month before the survey, among students in grades 7 to 12 in Ontario's public and Catholic regular school systems.

Past-year alcohol use is defined as drinking alcohol in the 12 months before the survey among students in grades 7 to 12 in Ontario's public and Catholic regular school systems. This estimate excludes those who only had a sip or tried alcohol, but does include those who drank only on a special occasion.

Regions of Ontario:

North refers to the Ontario regions of Parry Sound, Nipissing and farther North.

West refers to the Ontario regions of Peel, Dufferin and farther West.

East refers to the Ontario regions of Simcoe, York and farther East

Toronto refers to the City of Toronto

Sources

OSDUHS: Boak, Hamilton, H.A., Adlaf, E.M. and Mann. R.E.(2015), Drug Use among Ontario Students, 1977-2015: Detailed OSDUHS Findings (CAMH Research Document Series No. 41) Toronto, ON: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

Used in Figures 1, 2 and 3

Health Surveillance Indicator: Youth Drinking

Category: Chronic Disease, Child Health

Prepared: July, 2017

This indicator report is part of a series that informs the ongoing assessment of Toronto's health status. For a full list of the indicators, please go to: www.toronto.ca/health