

# Huron Health Report

## ALCOHOL USE

May 2010



### SUMMARY

- In 2008, over 80% of surveyed respondents in Huron County reported drinking alcoholic beverage during the past 12 months.
- More males than females reported having a drink in the past 12 months.
- A higher proportion of respondents under 65 years old reported drinking alcohol in the past 12 months compared to seniors (65+ years).
- Among the respondents who reported drinking alcohol in the past 12 months, 13% reported drinking alcohol every day.
- A higher proportion of seniors (65+ years) reported drinking alcohol every day when compared to those aged 18-64 years.
- Among the respondents who reported drinking alcohol in the past 12 months, almost 10% reported drinking more than three days per week. A higher proportion of males reported drinking alcohol more than three days per week.
- Nearly 30% of respondents who reported drinking alcohol in past 12 months indicated they had an average of two or more drinks on the days they had a drink. The proportion of males who had an average of two or more drinks was significantly higher than females.

### BACKGROUND

Alcohol is a psychoactive drug. It affects your senses, thoughts, emotions and behaviour. In Canada, the most commonly used drug is alcohol. 80% of the alcohol drunk by Canadians is in the form of beer.<sup>1</sup> However it is the amount of alcohol that you drink, no matter what type it is, that affects you. A recent landmark report by Cancer Care Ontario (CCO) described alcohol consumption as a convincing cause of cancers of the mouth, pharynx, larynx, oesophagus, female breast, and male colorectal cancer, and a probable cause of liver cancer, and female colorectal cancer.<sup>2</sup>

This report provides current population-level information on the experience, perception and behaviour of Huron County residents, reported through the Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System (RRFSS). The RRFSS is a random-digit-dial telephone survey of adults 18 years and older, conducted by the Institute

of Social Research (ISR) at York University on behalf of the Huron County Health Unit.<sup>3</sup>

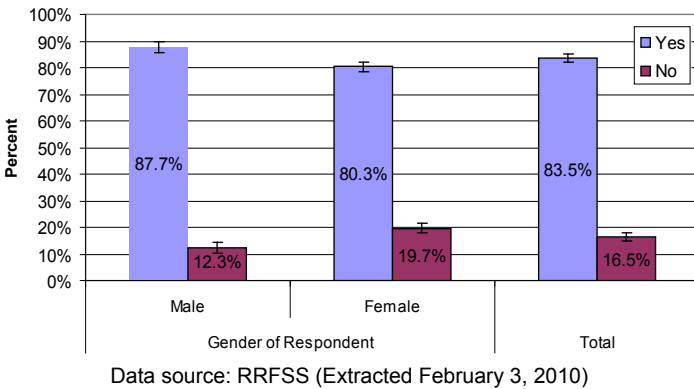
**The specific objectives of this report are to estimate:**

- **the proportion of the total Huron County residents aged 18 and over who drink alcohol;**
- **the frequency of alcohol consumption in Huron County residents age 18 years and over; and,**
- **the average amount of alcohol consumed by Huron County residents aged 18 years and over.**

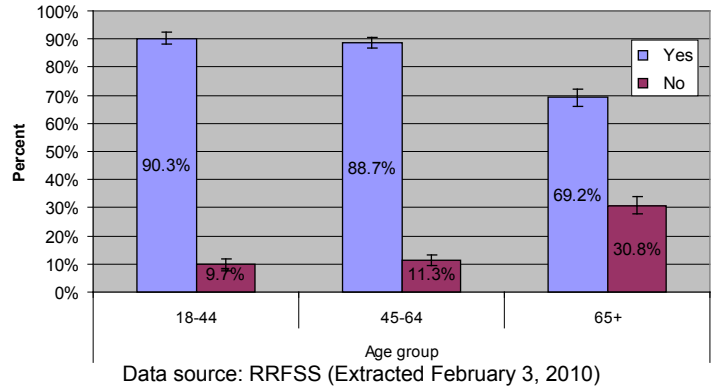
This analysis was done using data collected between January and December 2008. A total of 717 interviews were conducted in Huron County during that period, giving an overall response rate of 64%. Estimates are presented with 95% Confidence Intervals (CI). CIs are reported in brackets or presented as I in the graphs. The sample was weighted to correct for unequal probabilities of selection within households.

## RESULTS

**Figure 1a: During the past 12 months, have you had a drink of beer, wine, liquor or any other alcoholic beverage? Huron - 2008 - by gender**



**Figure 1b: During the past 12 months, have you had a drink of beer, wine, liquor or any other alcoholic beverage? Huron - 2008 - by age group**

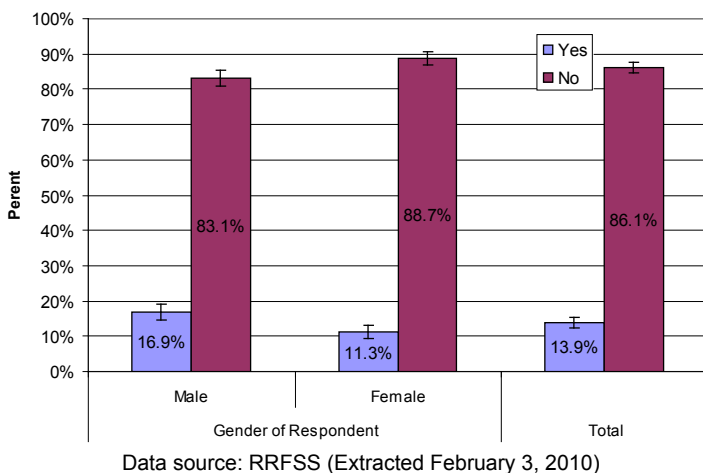


83.5% (80.8, 86.2) of respondents indicated that they had a drink of alcoholic beverage during the past 12 months (One drink is 1 can/bottle of beer, 1 glass of wine, 1 can/bottle of wine cooler, 1 cocktail, or 1 shot of liquor). The proportion of males that had a drink during the past 12 months was significantly higher than

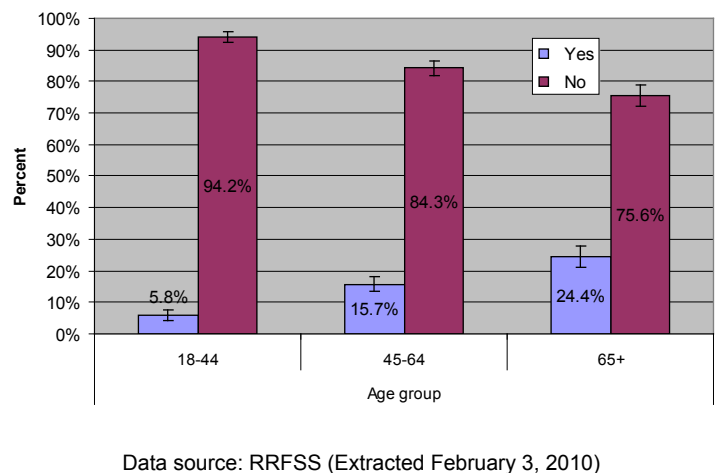
females ( $p=0.008$ ) (Figure 1a).

A higher proportion of adults under 65 years old reported drinking alcohol in the past 12 months when compared to persons aged 65+ years ( $p\text{-value}<0.001$ ) (Figure 1b).

**Figure 2a: Do you drink alcohol everyday? Huron - 2008 - by gender**



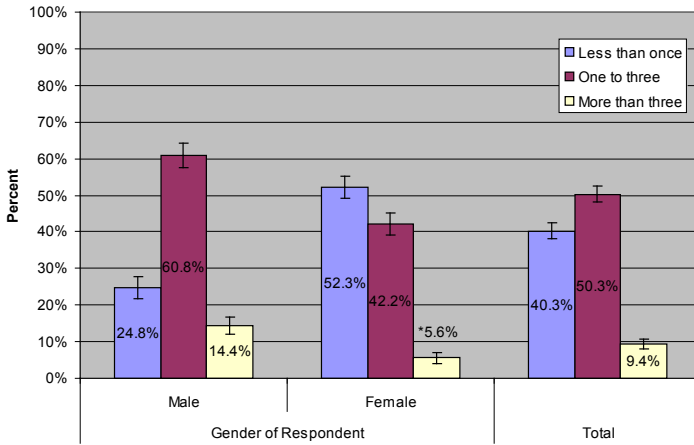
**Figure 2b: Do you drink alcohol everyday? Huron - 2008 - by age group**



13.9% (11.1, 16.7) of respondents who said they drank alcohol during the past 12 months indicated that they drink alcohol every day. There was no significant difference between the proportion of males and females who reported drinking alcohol every day ( $p\text{-value}=0.057$ ) (Figure 2a).

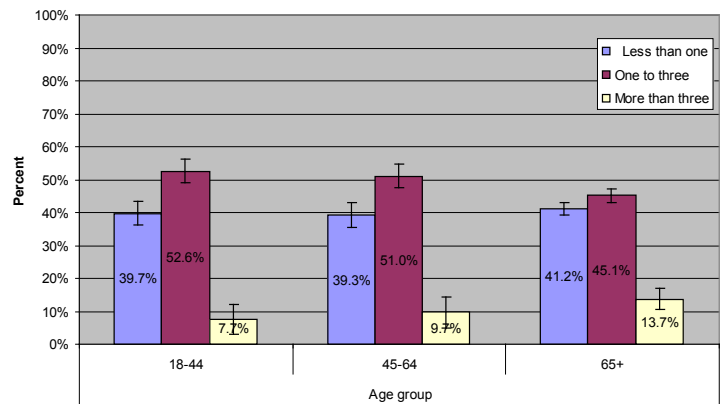
24.4% (17.6, 31.2) of respondents age 65+ years who drank alcohol in the past 12 months reported drinking alcohol everyday. This is significantly higher than the other age groups ( $p\text{-value}<0.001$ ) (Figure 2b).

**Figure 3a: How many days a week do you drink alcohol?  
Huron - 2008 - by gender**



Data source: RRFSS (Extracted February 3, 2010)  
\*Interpret with caution, high sampling variability

**Figure 3b: How many days a week do you drink alcohol?  
Huron - 2008 - by age group**

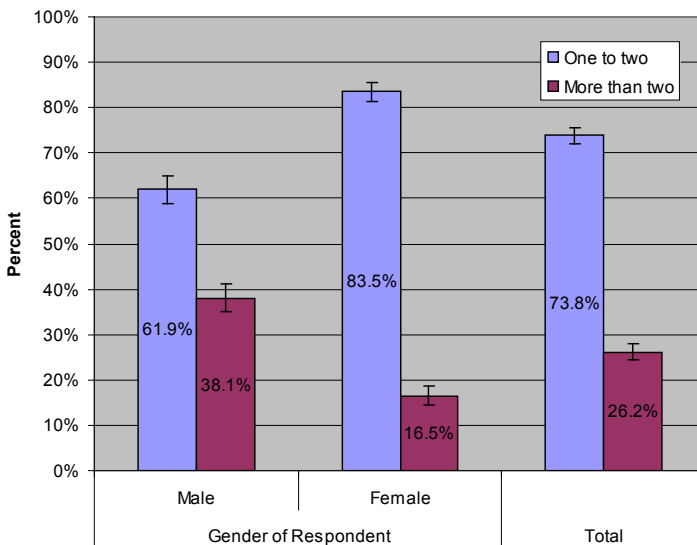


Data source: RRFSS (Extracted February 3, 2010)

50.3% (45.9, 54.7) of respondents who said they drank alcohol during the past 12 months reported drinking alcohol one to three days per week. 9.4% (6.8, 12.0) indicate drinking more than three days per week. A higher proportion of males (14.4%, CI 9.7, 19.1) compared to females (5.6%, CI

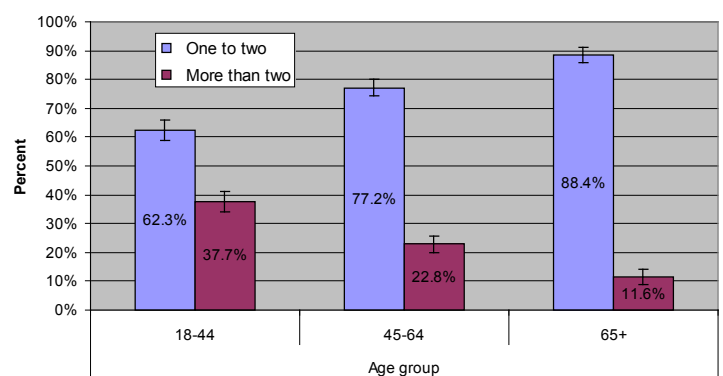
2.9, 8.3) indicated that they drink alcohol more than three days per week (p-value=0.002) (Figure 3a). There is no significant difference between the age groups in the proportion of respondents who reported drinking alcohol more than three days per week (p-value=0.43) (Figure 3b).

**Figure 4a: On average, how many drinks did you have on the days you had a drink?  
Huron - 2008 - by gender**



Data source: RRFSS (Extracted February 3, 2010)

**Figure 4b: On average, how many drinks did you have on the days you had a drink?  
Huron - 2008 - by age group**



Data source: RRFSS (Extracted February 3, 2010)

26.2% (22.6, 29.8) of respondents who said they drank alcohol during the past 12 months reported having more than two drinks on average on the days they had a drink. A significantly higher proportion of males (38.1%, CI 32.1, 44.1) than females (16.5%, CI 12.4, 20.6) indicated having more than two drinks on average on the days they had a drink (p-value<0.001) (Figure. 4a).

37.7% (30.9, 44.5) of respondents between the ages 18 and 44 years old reported having more than two drinks on average on the days they had a drink, which is significantly higher than the other age groups (p-value<0.001) (Figure 4b).

## LIMITATIONS

RRFSS results are based on respondents self-reporting and they may not necessarily have accurate recall. Households without telephones were excluded from the survey (about 3% of all Ontario households).

Thus the percentages may not represent the true estimates for the general population as respondents may have different characteristics than people that have not been included in the survey.

## REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Canadian Public Health Association, 2006. [www.drinkingfacts.ca](http://www.drinkingfacts.ca) . Extracted Feb.3, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Alcohol consumption and cancer risk (Feb. 2008), Cancer Care Ontario. [www.cancercare.on.ca](http://www.cancercare.on.ca). Extracted Feb. 3, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System. <http://www.rfss.on.ca>.