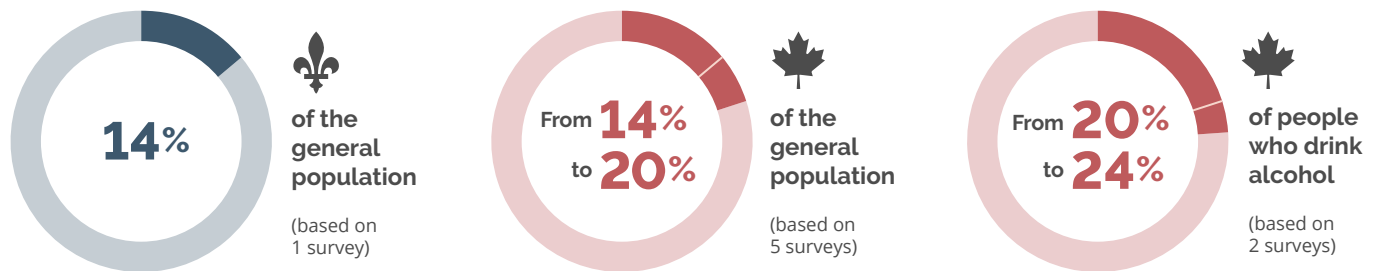


Alcohol consumption during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic in Québec and Canada

The data in this fact sheet have been derived from six probability surveys conducted from March 29, 2020 to April 28, 2021 throughout Canada (including Québec) and one survey carried out exclusively in Québec. The surveys were conducted with people aged 15 and older (3 surveys), 18 and older (3 surveys), and 25 and older (1 survey). The changes in alcohol consumption are based on self-reported data. Only those related to an increase in consumption and its associated characteristics are presented.

In Québec and Canada, what proportion of the population increased its alcohol consumption?



In Canada, what proportion of people who drink alcohol drank heavily?

18% of people who drink alcohol said that they had had **5 or more standard drinks** on days when they drank during the month prior to the survey*

(based on 1 survey)

In Canada, a **standard drink** is:

Beer
12 oz or 341 ml



Based on a 5% alcohol content

Wine
5 oz or 142 ml



Based on a 12% alcohol content

Spirits
1.5 oz or 43 ml



Based on a 40% alcohol content

*The measure of heavy drinking used in this Statistics Canada survey applies solely to the context of the pandemic. Usually, it corresponds to the consumption of 5 or more drinks among men and 4 or more drinks among women, per occasion, at least once a month in the past year.

In Canada, which characteristics were most commonly associated with increased alcohol consumption?

Sociodemographic characteristics

30 ↔ 49

Being in one's thirties or forties



Being male



Not being a member of a racialized group or an immigrant



Having one or more children under 18 years of age



Having worked in the past week

(instead of not having a job or not having worked in that period)



Having a university diploma

(rather than a Diploma of Vocational Studies, a Secondary School Diploma or less)



Having a high household income

Characteristics related to mental health status



Perceiving one's mental health as fair or poor



Seeing one's welfare as being affected by financial worries related to the pandemic



Having symptoms of moderate or severe generalized anxiety disorder

Having symptoms of major depressive disorder

In Canada, which reasons were mentioned most frequently by people who drink alcohol to explain their increased consumption?



- Boredom
- Stress
- Loneliness
- Insomnia



- Lack of a regular schedule
- Staying at home more often
- Ease of access to alcohol

NOTE: Using alcohol to deal with a difficult situation (coping strategy) entails the greatest risk of harms, including development of an alcohol use disorder (addiction).

How to take these results into account in public health actions?

The surveys revealed that an appreciable proportion of the population saw an increase in their alcohol consumption during the pandemic. In some cases, alcohol seems to have been consumed for coping motives. Therefore, it would be useful to take the following actions:



Surveillance

Continue the surveillance of alcohol consumption, its consequences and associated characteristics, including those that suggest alcohol is being used for coping motives.



Prevention

Interventions to prevent harms associated with alcohol consumption must pay special attention to people who reported drinking more during the pandemic, especially those who probably did so for coping motives.



Collaboration within the health and social services network

Ensure a continuum of interventions by strengthening collaboration between public health, primary care and specialized mental health and addiction services

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