

# MDM4U Health Mini-Project - Using the Canadian Community Health Survey Microdata Are Canadians Drinking Too Much?

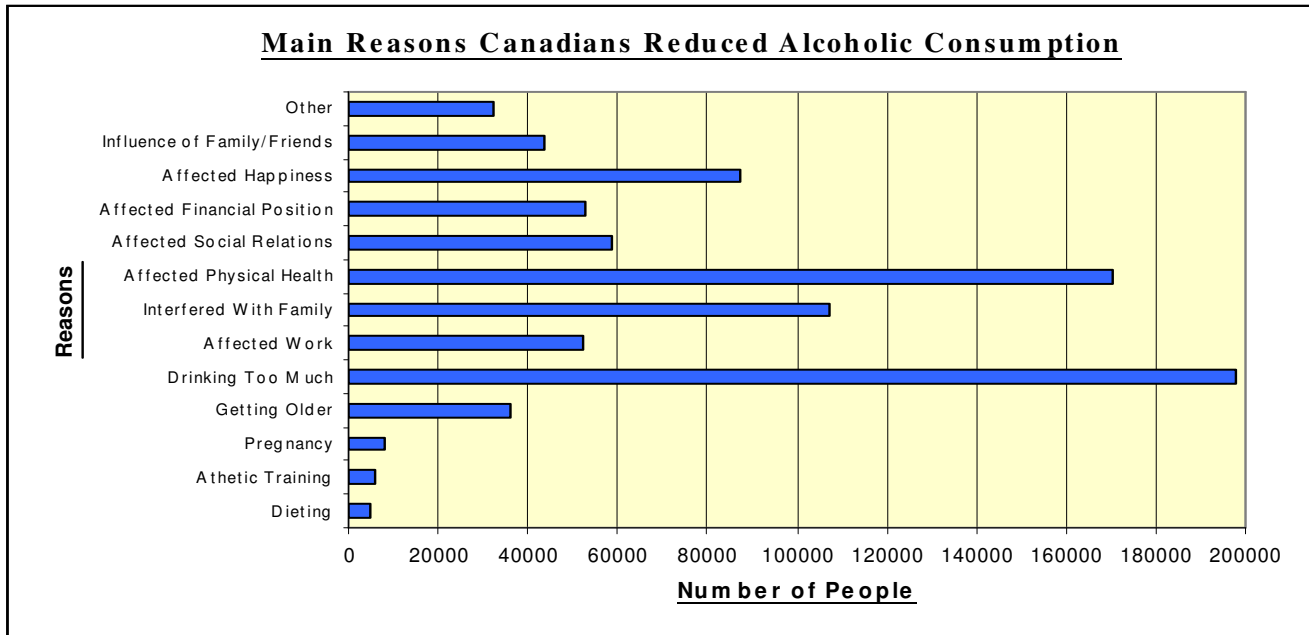
Natasha Arksey and Christopher Arksey, March 01, 2004

Earl of March Secondary School

Submitted to MDM4U teacher Mary Saunders

## **PART 1: Beyond 20/20 CCHS – GRAPHS**

Graph 1

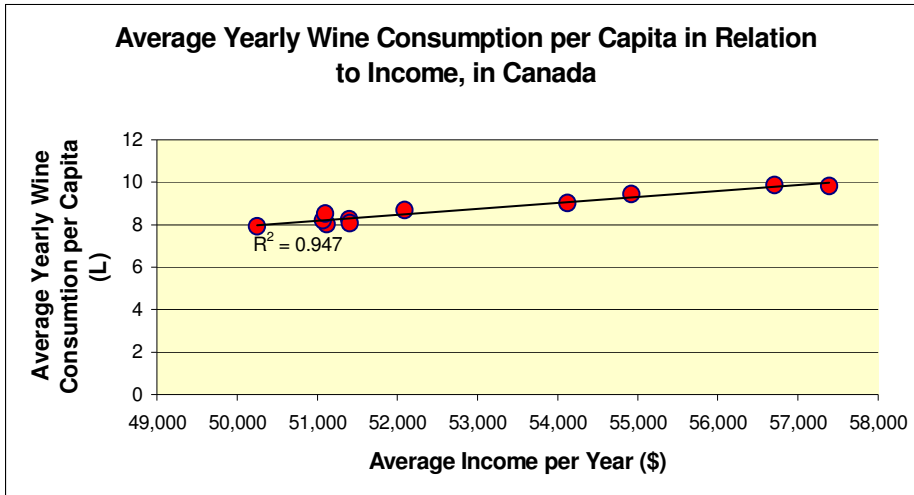


Social Life	209553 people
Health Issues	189156 people
Drinking Too Much	197671 people

### Conclusion:

The main reason Canadians reduced their drinking was because they felt they were drinking too much. Unfortunately, we don't know the exact reason why these people felt this way. Perhaps they selected this category because they reduced their drinking due to a combination of reasons. We also do not know how each person defined drinking "too much". The people who selected this category might have felt they were drinking too much because they woke up with a headache after drinking, or became sick, or maybe because they believe they are an alcoholic. This category is so undefined that it is impossible to arrive at a valid conclusion.

When looking at reasons that relate to social life (*Influence of Family/Friends, Social Relations, Interfered with Family*) and reasons that relate to health issues (*Physical Health, Pregnancy, Athletic Training, Dieting*) one can conclude that the majority of Canadians that reduced their drinking because it was affecting their social life. Either way, the drinking habits of these Canadians were affecting others around them as well as themselves, which proves they were drinking too much.



Graph 2

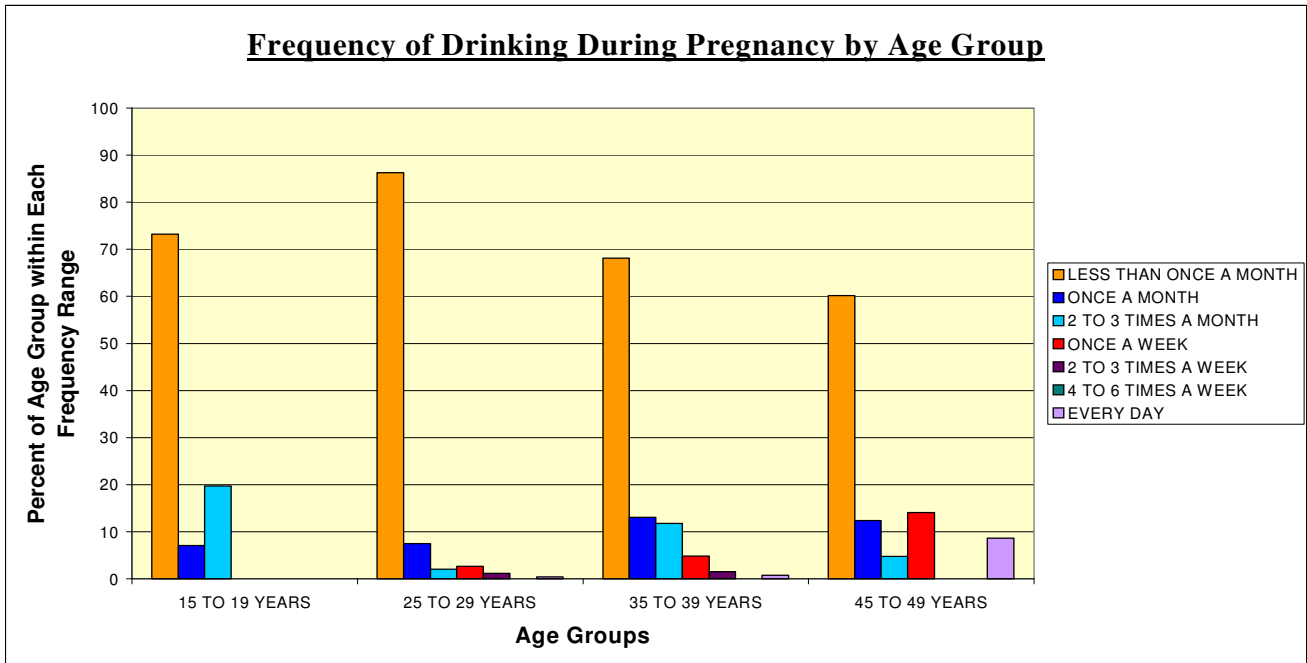
Conclusion:

First, it necessary to state that there is a strong positive relationship between degree of education and alcohol consumption\*. Therefore, considering that one typically needs a higher degree of education in order to achieve a higher paying job, we thought there might be a strong positive relationship between income status and alcohol - in this case, wine- consumption. But, it takes time to work up the business ladder and, consequently, people in these higher positions generally have had more life experience. With that said, people with a higher income should be able to make correct decisions and have control impulse and dependence when it comes to drinking.

The strong relationship between income status and average yearly wine consumption displayed by the graph says that the higher the income status, the higher the wine consumption. One could further assume that these higher income people must also have higher overall alcohol consumption. This translates into the fact that some of the most important people in control of the projects or companies that affect our daily lives, and have some of the highest responsibility, are drinking too much (possibly due to stress). Depending on where these people drink, how much they drink, and how often throughout the day, this habit may be affecting their performance at work.

\* Information provided by the Statcan Website, [www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca)

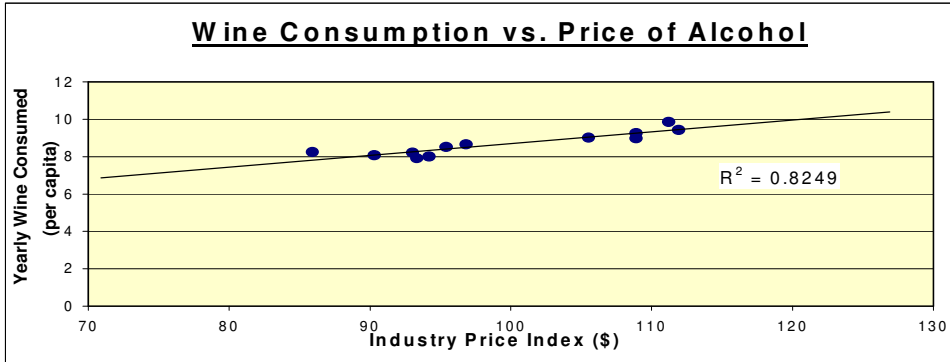
Graph 3



Conclusion:

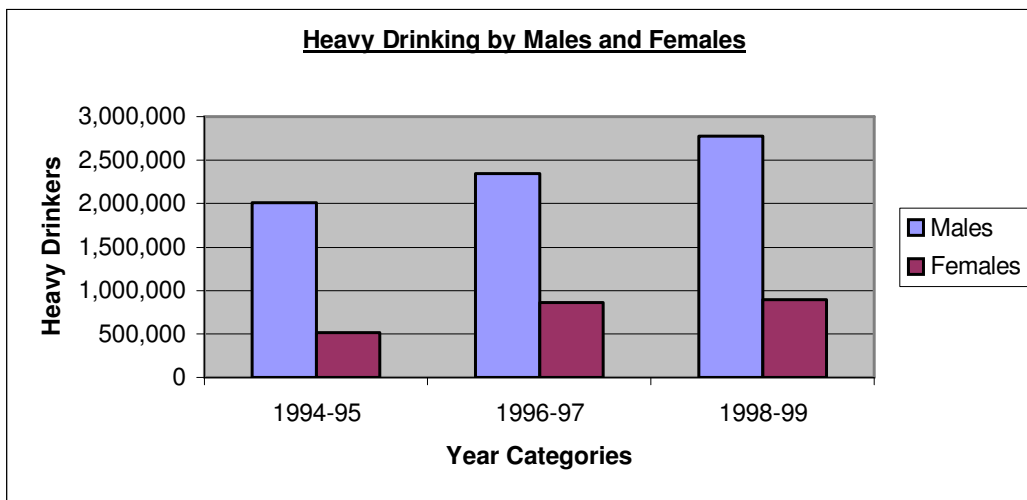
Based on the graph, the youths aged 15-19 never drank more than 2 to 3 times a month. In the more experienced age groups of those 45-49, a moderate percentage (around 10%) of these people drank once a week or everyday. Therefore, the youths were more responsible than adults when it came to drinking while pregnant. This shows that adults drink too much if teenagers can make better choices considering they have much less life experience. Drinking while pregnant is a concern to the baby's health directly and indirectly by means of the pregnant woman injuring herself while pregnant. Areas not considered are how much each age group drinks and at what age people are more likely to get pregnant. If more people are pregnant from age 45-49 then that could be a reason as to why more people would have answered that they do drink on a regular basis while pregnant; a comparison of the percent of the pregnant population who drank often to the total pregnant population would have been more accurate.

Graph 1



Conclusion:

Firstly, since wine comprises the majority of alcohol consumed, almost any conclusions drawn from a graph based on wine is valid for conclusions based on general alcohol. This graph displays a strong relation between yearly wine consumption and the industry price index; as the price increases, the consumption of wine does as well. This means that consumers buying alcohol would rather pay the extra money for an unnecessary product such as alcohol than live without it. A flat lined graph could have also come to this conclusion, but the fact that the graph increases emphasizes a more troubling thought. The increase says that alcohol is may not be so unnecessary any more, that the average Canadian is becoming more dependent on this form drug and cost is no longer a factor.

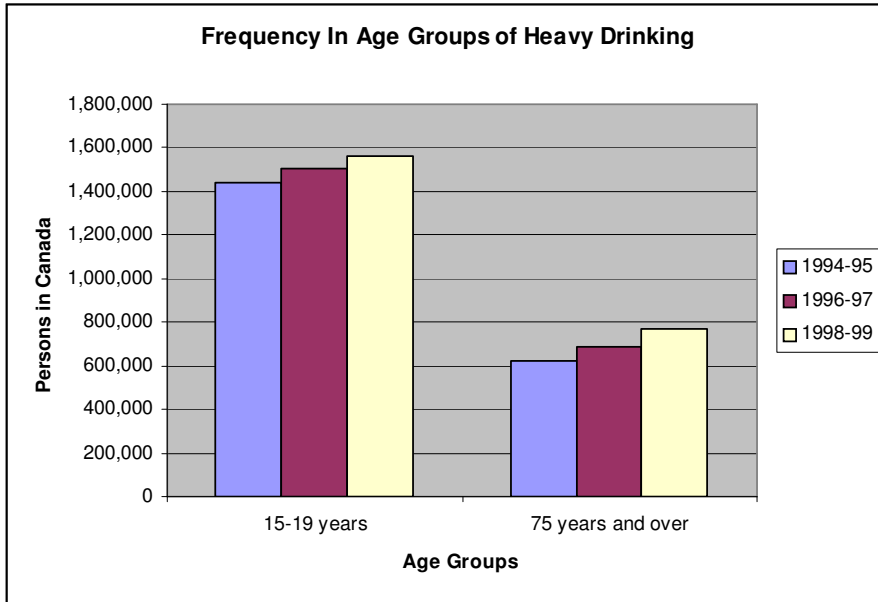


Graph 2

Conclusion:

With the conclusion that Canadians are drinking too much, one can conclude that males are the main cause. Since males and females compose approximately the same percentage of the population, we can say that the trends taken from this data are fairly accurate without having to change the number of males and females that are heavy drinkers into percentages within the male and female population that belong in this category. As the number of female heavy drinker begins to level off, the number of male heavy drinkers is increasing. The increasing rate of the males is faster than the decreasing rate of females. So, not only is the number of heavy drinkers in Canada increasing, but the percentage of these heavy drinkers that are male is also increasing.

Graph 3



Conclusion

The two age groups, 15-19 years and 75 years and over, are the most fragile groups. These are the groups that are at risk for serious problems due to heavy drinking, because their bodies are either too young and not used to alcohol (inexperienced) or their bodies (liver and other organs) are too weak to handle large amounts of alcohol. The trend which is visible in the graph above is that there is an increase in heavy drinking involving these groups. If the groups which are most likely to suffer health problems from heavy drinking are increasing, it could be concluded that Canadians drink too much. The population of each group will affect these trends because they are not percentages of the population within the individual groups. From past studies (Chp. Problem 1 from the textbook) people aged 75 and older are increasing, therefore this could explain the trend. People aged 15-19 are decreasing and therefore there is an even more drastic increase in percentage of 15-19 year olds who are drinking heavily.

## ***Final Conclusions***

With the data provided by Statscan and CCHS, it is not quite possible to come to a solid conclusion. Many Canadians did reduce their alcohol consumption because they felt they were drinking too much. But the definition of “too much” varies with every person, and therefore such a simple survey does not lead to a simple conclusion. Although, many did find that their drinking habits were affecting their physical health, we do not know to what extent they were physically impeded. More useful and sound data would be the number of cases of alcohol-related health issues that family and emergency doctors see in a year. An increasing slope in the graph would show that Canadians are consuming alcohol at life-threatening or hazardous levels. But, this could be misleading. The few Canadians that drink such dangerously high levels of alcohol may be on the rise, but the average Canadian may be drinking less. We would need to distinguish between the two and see how their drinking habits are affecting others around them, such as the number of cases where negative effects on an unborn child during pregnancy were the cause of alcohol abuse. Once again, problems arise as many of the reasons for complications during birth and reasons for birth defects are medically unknown. Also, any conclusions based on graphs pertaining to wine consumption or wine price may not always be valid for conclusions based on general alcohol.

It is, however, possible to determine the types of people that are drinking the most; based on gender, geography, age, income status, education etc. The amount of alcohol consumed daily or weekly, the percentage of times one gets physically ill from drinking, the number of people who have had relationships or friendships broken by one’s alcohol habits, and the frequency that one drinks more than a certain amount of alcohol, are quantitative data unlike the ambiguous statement of “drinking too much”. But, with many of these approaches, the data is not very accurate as one has to rely on human honesty about a subject with which one may be ashamed. This is why statistical data that is not dependent on verbal responses, such as the number of car and other accidents that were the result of alcohol abuse, and the trend in the number of members belonging to Alcoholics Anonymous, could be investigated

In order to come to any sort of conclusion about Canada’s drinking habits further in depth investigations would have to be performed. The data obtained for this mini project are insufficient to provide a solid conclusion but the main idea is that Canadians, in general, are drinking too much and their alcohol consumption is on the rise.

File: Are Canadians drinking too much?

Folder: Data/ Health Microdata School Pilot project / Student min-project samples