

CANADIAN SENIORS AND ALCOHOL

In 2008, there were over 4.5 million seniors in Canada. There were about 2,007,800 senior men and 2,555,200 senior women.

The 2004 Canadian Addiction Survey provides some interesting insights into today's seniors.

That year, over two thirds (67.8%) of people aged 65 and over in Canada said they consumed alcohol, occasionally or regularly.

A slightly lower percentage (64.8%) of adults aged 75 and over consumed alcohol.

The number of seniors in Canada who consume alcohol increased by 42% between 1991 and 2006.

In 2008, there were approximately 3.08 million senior drinkers in Canada.

There were approximately 1.62 million senior women drinkers and 1.46 million senior men drinkers.

Drinking is more common among

- older men than older women
- younger senior women than older senior women,
- people with higher income or higher education

There can be a 2-15% difference in percentage of

men and women drinkers depending on the age group.

Did You Know?

- Over 3 million seniors in Canada consume alcohol occasionally or regularly.
- In 1989, 58% of seniors in Canada were drinkers. In 2004, about 68% of seniors were.
- Most seniors are light frequent drinkers.
- Overall, a greater percentage of older men drink than older women. The gap is shrinking, especially for younger seniors.
- There are 166,700 more senior women drinkers in Canada than senior men drinkers.

Most Seniors Drink in Moderation

According to the Canadian Addiction Survey, 85.4% of 65-74 year old drinkers say they have 1-2 drinks on a typical drinking day.

So do over 87.2% of people aged 75+ who drink. On the other hand, a sizable proportion of Canadian seniors may not drink in moderation.

Overall, 1 in 9 seniors who consumes alcohol exceeds the low risk drinking guidelines of 1-2 drinks .

About 1 in 8 of 65-74 years old drinkers

and 1 in 9 of senior drinkers aged 75+ said they have 3 or 4 drinks on a typical drinking day.

Just over 2% of senior drinkers report having 5 or more drinks on a typical drinking day. That percentage represents about 61,600 seniors in Canada.

Seniors Are More Likely to Drink Several Times a Week

While 6.6% of men aged 25 to 34 drink four or more times a week, 41.0% of men 75 years or older report this drinking pattern.

More than one tenth of women drinkers over 65 report having alcohol four or more times a week.

SENIORS AND GAMBLING

What are the gambling activities of Alberta seniors?

Approximately 68% of Alberta seniors reported that they had participated in some form of gambling activity in the past year.

As shown below, the most common gaming activities of those seniors who had gambled in the past year were buying lottery tickets and buying raffle tickets.

Overall, more males (74%) than females (65%) participated in some form of gambling activity.

Gaming Activities of Seniors Who Gambled

- Lottery tickets 77%
- Raffle tickets 57%
- Instant scratch/Pull tickets 26%
- Coin slot machines 21%
- Bingo 18%
- VLTs 12%
- Cards/Board games 11%
- Other casino games 4%

Why do Alberta seniors gamble?

The most common reasons for gambling cited by seniors who gamble are to win money (42%), for entertainment or fun (33%), and to support a good cause (23%).

Most seniors who gamble (76%) rate gambling as “not important at all” when compared to other activities.

How many problem gamblers are there among Alberta seniors?

The study indicates that most seniors are non-gamblers (32%) or non-problem gamblers (66%).

Less than 2.0% of seniors are problem gamblers or probable pathological gamblers.

This means that slightly more than 5,000 Alberta seniors could be considered as problem gamblers or probable pathological gambler.

Prevalence of Non-Gamblers, Non-Problem Gamblers and Problem Gamblers Among Alberta Seniors

The majority of gamblers (59%) report that they gamble the same amount now as they did 10 years ago.

The remainder indicate they gamble less (22%) or more (19%) than they did 10 years ago.

The majority of the seniors who participated in the focus groups did not think gambling was a major problem among seniors.

However, the majority of survey participants (83%) indicated they believe that gambling can become an addiction for seniors like alcoholism, drug addiction, or smoking.

How to help seniors with gambling problems?

Of the seniors surveyed, 42% indicated that they did not know where to turn if they or someone they knew had a gambling problem.

The most common responses for where to turn for help were family (17%), Gamblers Anonymous (16%) and AADAC (9%).

Seniors identified discussion groups or a lecture/guest speaker at a seniors’ drop-in centre (or some other place where seniors gather) as the most effective means of reaching seniors with messages about gambling or alcohol related issues.

Seniors also suggested that other seniors would have more influence with respect to assisting seniors with gambling problems than would younger people.