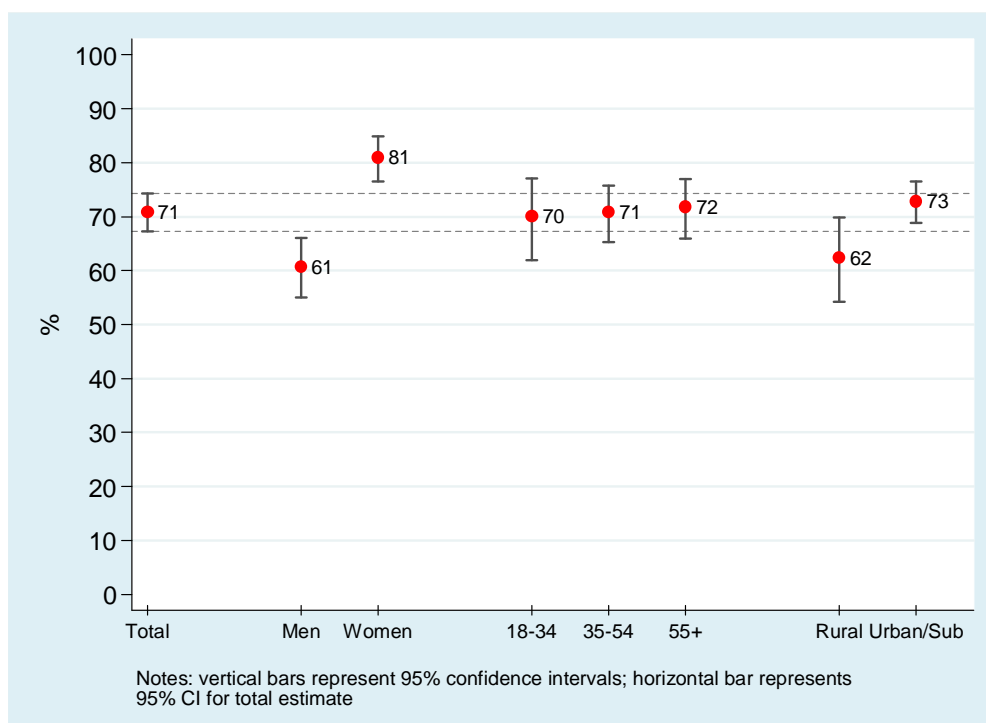


Access to Alcoholic Beverages in Ontario: Highlights from a Survey of Public Perceptions

This *eBulletin* presents highlights from a new CAMH research report about public opinion on alcohol policy in Ontario and related topics. Presented here are opinions to four questions about the availability or ease of access to alcohol. Specifically, questions asked about where alcohol should be sold, hours of sale, and the number of liquor licenses issued. The authors used data from the 2006 cycle of the CAMH Monitor, which is an anonymous, telephone survey of Ontario adults. The survey sample was representative of the general adult population (aged 18 or older) in Ontario.

Respondents were asked whether they think alcohol should be available in corner stores. About 71% (95% CI: 67%-74%) of adults felt that alcohol should not be available in corner stores. As seen in Figure 1, women were more likely than men to hold this opinion, as were those who resided in urban or suburban areas of the province. Although there was some variation by age group, these differences were not statistically significant.

Figure 1.
Percentage of Ontario Adults Opposed to Selling Alcohol in Corner Stores, by Sex, Age Group, and Rural/Urban Location (N=937), 2006 CAMH Monitor



Another question asked about whether liquor and beer store hours should be altered. The majority (74%; 95% CI: 70%-77%) of all respondents felt that store hours should remain as they are, about 10% (8%-13%) felt that store hours should be decreased, while 16% (12%-19%) felt they should be increased (Figure 2).

Regarding hours of sale in licensed establishments such as restaurants and bars, the majority (69%; 95% CI: 65%-72%) of all respondents felt that hours should remain as they are. About 22% (19%-25%) felt that hours of sale should be decreased, while 9% (7%-12%) felt that they should be increased (Figure 2).

When asked if more or fewer liquor licences should be issued to restaurants to serve alcohol, below half (42%; 95% CI: 38%-47%) of all respondents indicated that there should be no change to the number of licences. About 29% (25%-33%) felt that fewer licences should be issued, while the same proportion (29%; 25%-33%) felt that more should be issued (Figure 2).

The authors conclude that the majority of Ontarians supports the current level of control related to alcohol availability and ease of access, although certain demographic subgroups (e.g., men, younger adults) would like to see increased availability. It is noteworthy that about 3 out of 4 respondents opposed the idea of selling alcohol in corner stores. The authors also show that opinions about alcohol policies have not changed substantially over time.

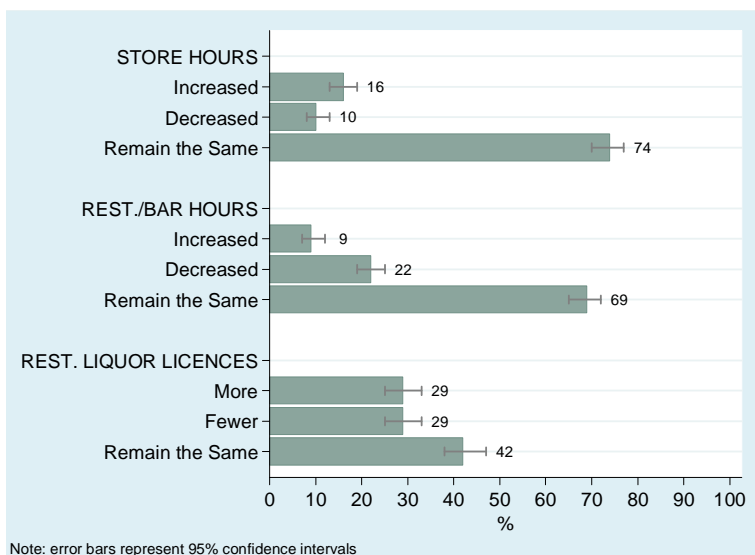
Survey Design:

The *CAMH Monitor* is an addiction and mental health random, anonymous telephone survey of the Ontario population aged 18 and older, administered by the Institute for Social Research, York University. The *CAMH Monitor* is conducted on an ongoing monthly basis and employs a stratified (region) two-stage (household, respondent) probability sample design. The following 6 regional strata are used in the design: Toronto, Central East, East, Central West, West, and North. The total sample size in 2006 was 2,016 (61% of eligible respondents). The alcohol opinion questions were asked only between July and December 2006, and therefore the results were based on a half-sample of 937 adults. All survey estimates were weighted, and variance and statistical tests were corrected for the sampling design.

Terminology:

- **Alcohol Policy Opinion** questions presented here were: (1) “Do you think alcoholic beverages should be available in corner stores?”; (2) “Do you think beer and liquor store hours should be increased, decreased, or remain the same?”; (3) “Do you think hours of alcohol beverage service/sale in restaurants, bars, taverns and other licensed premises should be increased, decreased, or remain the same?”; (4) “Do you think there should be more or fewer licenses issued for restaurants to serve alcoholic drinks with meals?” (the option of “no change” was also available to respondents).
- **Rural vs. Urban/Suburban Residence** was determined using the respondent’s self-reported Forward Sortation Area (first 3 digits of a postal code).
- **95% Confidence Interval (CI)** can be crudely interpreted as being 95% likely to include the “true” value if every Ontario adult was surveyed.
- **Statistically Significant Difference** refers to a difference between two percentages that is not likely due to chance. For example, a difference found at the $p < .05$ level of statistical significance is one that is less than 5% likely to occur by chance alone.

Figure 2.
Percentage of Ontario Adults Reporting Opinions about Hours of Alcohol Sales and Number of Liquor Licences Issued (N=937), 2006 CAMH Monitor



Source:

Schmidt, R., Giesbrecht, N., Ialomiteanu, A. & McAllister, J. (2009). *Public opinion on alcohol policy issues, alcohol and cancer, perceived harm caused by alcohol, and personal experience of problems relating to other people’s drinking: Findings from the 2006 and 2007 CAMH Monitor survey of Ontario adults*. Research Document No. 26. Toronto: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

To receive future issues of the *eBulletin*, please contact Christine Vrbanac via email at: christine_vrbanac@camh.net

Previous issues of the *eBulletin* are available at: http://www.camh.net/research/population_life_course.html

Media Enquiries: Tel: 416-595-6015