

MEDIA RELEASE

Social acceptance of No/Low drinks sees boom in zero-alcohol beers

The NZ Alcohol Beverages Council (NZABC) says a turning point in Kiwi's attitudes toward balance and moderation has seen no- and low-alcohol drinks become more socially acceptable, as evidenced by the recent boom in zero-alcohol beers sales. A 322% increase in zero-alcohol beer was seen in the span of a year (June 2020-June 2021). Over 2.14 million litres of zero-alcohol beer was produced in that period, equivalent to more than 6.5 million 330ml bottles.

"Kiwis are making better decisions about alcohol, and our behaviours are changing, particularly how we drink and socialise and our purchasing decisions. It's being driven by a shift in positive social attitudes toward no- and low-alcohol beverages, which are now seen as socially acceptable. Forty per cent of Kiwis consumed low-alcohol drinks last year. They are choosing drink options that better suit their lifestyle or personal situation, as seen by the recent boom in zero-alcohol beer sales," says Bridget MacDonald, NZABC's executive director.ⁱ

"Research earlier this year found 91% of Kiwi males wouldn't care if a friend chose not to drink alcohol on a night out, and 65% of Kiwis say they feel comfortable not drinking alcohol on a night out. This suggests that Kiwis' current attitudes and behaviours are more focused on moderation and being sociable, and the social pressures to drink are becoming less acceptable," says Bridget.ⁱⁱ

"This is a positive story – one of moderation, innovation and consumer choice. Around 80% of Kiwis say they would like to alternate more between drinking non-alcohol and alcohol-based drinks when socialising with their friends – so it's important people have choices whether they are out with friends in a bar or at a family BBQ. With increasing consumer demand for lower-alcohol drinks, we are seeing a rapid expansion of no/low category products," Bridget says.ⁱⁱⁱ

"Beer and wine producers are working hard to meet changing consumer needs. The craftsmanship and dealcoholization technology behind zero-alcohol beer brands like Speights, Asahi and Heineken shows there is no compromise on quality or flavour. Kiwi winemakers have similarly perfected crafting 0% and lighter wines. And, I have it on good authority that other big brands will be launching 0% brews and wines just in time for summer," Bridget says.

"Our alcohol consumption has been trending downward for some time, and global consumption declined 6% last year. We are drinking around 25% less today than in the 70s and 80s, seeing less hazardous drinking, fewer younger people drinking, and consumption decreasing. We consume less alcohol per capita than the OECD average. It's a positive shift to a more moderate and responsible drinking culture," Bridget says.^{iv v vi}

How New Zealanders are drinking is also changing more broadly with a move to more premium wine, beer and spirits – so although people are drinking less, some consumers are still drinking full-strength beverages yet drinking them in a more moderate and mindful way.^{vii}

"The pandemic has prompted people world-over to think about their health and wellbeing. The majority of New Zealanders drink moderately and sensibly. Still, it's always good to check our consumption of alcohol is part of a balanced lifestyle, consider no- and low-alcohol options, and support others to do the same," says Bridget.

ENDS



Need more information?

- Check out cheers.org.nz and alcoholandme.org.nz for more information on what a standard drink is and how to make better drinking decisions.
- A good rule of thumb is 'Go no, low or slow'. It's okay to choose no or low alcohol drinks. If you choose to drink, pace yourself and enjoy your drink slowly.
- Ministry of Health/HPA Guidelines: [Low-risk alcohol drinking advice](#) to reduce your long-term health risks by drinking no more than:
 - **Two** standard drinks **a day for women** and no more than **10** standard drinks **a week**,
 - **Three** standard drinks **a day for men** and no more than **15** standard drinks **a week**,
 - **AND** have at least **two alcohol-free days** every week.

Need help?

Call the Alcohol Drug Helpline on 0800 787 797, free txt 8681, or visit alcoholdrughelp.org.nz.

CONTACT

For more information, please contact:

Bridget MacDonald, NZABC | Mob. 021 345 973 | bridget@nzabc.org.nz

About NZABC

Formed in early 2018, the [NZ Alcohol Beverages Council](#) (NZABC) is a pan-industry group that speaks for those Kiwis who want to see a fair and balanced approach to alcohol attitudes, laws and regulation in New Zealand. At NZABC, we believe partnerships between local and central government, communities, and the alcohol sector, along with great education, are the best ways to reduce harm and maximise enjoyment from alcohol for everyone.

NZABC is an associate member of International Alliance for Responsible Drinking (IARD) a not-for-profit organization dedicated to reducing harmful drinking and promoting understanding of responsible drinking. www.iard.org

ⁱ NZ Alcohol Beverages Council, *New Zealander's attitudes to alcohol*, December 2020, poll of 1000 New Zealanders. They were asked: Do you drink low-alcohol beverages, and if so have you consumed more or less in the past year compared to 12 months ago? 40% of respondents say they drink low-alcohol beverages. 25% say they are drinking the same amount of low-alcohol beverages, 8% more and 8% less than a year ago. The most common reasons for drinking low-alcohol beverages were: they prefer low-alcohol (22%), health and wellbeing (18%) and driving (17%), to be social (12%), avoid being intoxicated (5%), and looking for a lower calorie drink (5%).

ⁱⁱ Consumer research by 3Gem on behalf of Lion NZ, August 2021, sample size 1,000 New Zealanders aged 18-65 years.

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^{iv} Euromonitor International Proprietary Alcoholic Drinks data, You Gov Plc,

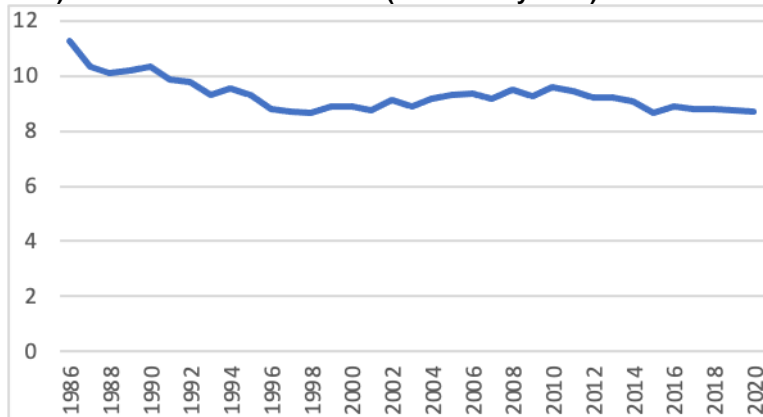
The International Alliance for Responsible Drinking (IARD), of which NZABC is a member, found new data from over 100 countries shows consumers worldwide bought 15.8 billion fewer litres of alcohol beverages in the past year. Lockdowns, closure of hospitality venues, and restrictions on socialising with friends and family contributed to alcohol sales volumes declining by more than 6%.

New Zealand government data shows a similar decline, with alcohol available for consumption at 8.719 litres of alcohol available per head of population in December 2020 compared to 8.752 litres in December 2019.

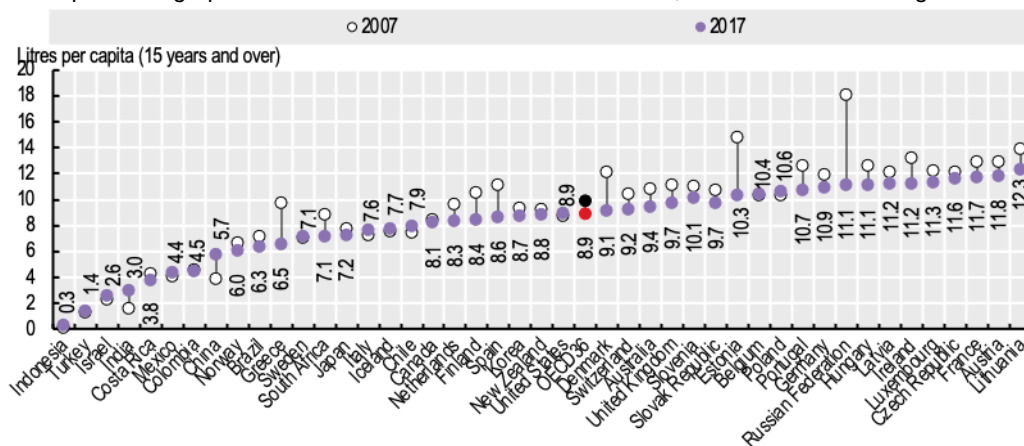
^v **Decreasing alcohol consumption:** StatsNZ Infoshare, Alcohol available for consumption to December 2020 (published 25 February 2021), <http://archive.stats.govt.nz/infoshare/>.

Alcohol available for consumption has been trending downward for a number of years. Data shows alcohol available for consumption was 8.719 litres per head of population (15 years and older) in December 2020 and a 22.7% decrease since 1986 when the data was first collected where there was 11.282 litres per head of population (15 years and older) in December 2020 (see *graph 1 below*). The per head of population (15 years and older) is the measure used by the OECD.

Graph 1. Litres of Alcohol Per Head of Population in New Zealand (Annual-December 1986-2020, 15 years and over) Source: Stats NZ Infoshare (25 February 2021)



NZ consumption below OECD average: OECD Alcohol Consumption, <https://data.oecd.org/healthrisk/alcohol-consumption.htm>. Alcohol consumption is defined as annual sales of pure alcohol in litres per person aged 15 years and older. The OECD average consumption is 8.9 litres/capita (aged 15 and over). New Zealand is at 8.8 litres/capita. See graph 2 below. Source: OECD Health Statistics, 2019. New Zealand figures as at 2018.



^{vi} Ministry of Health, New Zealand Health Survey 2019/20, November 2020, <https://www.health.govt.nz/publication/annual-update-key-results-2019-20-new-zealand-health-survey> Four in five adults (81.5%) drank alcohol in the past year and are moderate drinkers.

^{vii} NZ Alcohol Beverages Council, New Zealander’s attitudes to alcohol research, December 2020, poll of 1000 New Zealanders: 62% saying they had a premium drink in the past year. Premiumisation is about choosing a quality drink that may cost a little more, such as a craft beer, a fine wine, cocktail or a premium spirit or liqueur, and then taking a ‘sip and savour’ approach to enjoy the flavours and the experience of the drink in a slow and relaxed way. A discerning palate was the main reason for choosing a more expensive or premium drink, with 42% saying it was for taste. 40% said it was for a special occasion, and 16% for a quality drink. While 47% said they consumed a premium drink at the same speed as a regular drink, 42% said they drank a premium drink slower – only 3% said they drank it faster.