

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 24 March 2021

Alcohol consumption relatively unchanged even as Kiwis switch beverage preferences

Just released figures from Statistics NZ show alcohol beverages available for consumption has remained relatively unchanged on the same period last year, indicating New Zealanders are continuing the trend of moderation. There were 8.734 litres of alcohol available per head of population (15 years and older) in December 2021 compared to 8.727 litres in December 2020. Overall, New Zealanders are consuming around 25% less than the 70s and 80s.ⁱ

“The alcohol available for consumption has remained fairly static over the past year. This supports what we’ve been seeing for some time: people aren’t drinking more – they’re drinking more moderately. Interestingly, they are switching what they drink and are exploring other categories. As a result, wine consumption decreased (-4.3%) as did beer (-0.3%), and spirits increased (+12%),” says NZ Alcohol Beverages Council (NZABC) Executive Director, Bridget MacDonald.

Bridget says some of the rise in spirit volume can be attributed to what would usually be purchased duty-free moving into the domestic market since duty-free trade is virtually zero at the moment. However, a global trend toward premiumisation is likely driving the increase in spirits.

“We’re changing how we are drinking. Trends like premiumisation are about choosing a quality drink that may cost a little more, such as a premium or 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 their drink in a slow and relaxed way. Consumer research shows that 56% of Kiwis say they had a premium drink in the past year. People have also become a little more adventurous with trying new flavours like indigenous botanicals in a gin made by local distillers or making their own cocktails,” says Bridget.ⁱⁱ

“The health and wellbeing trend seen globally and in New Zealand, particularly amongst young adults, is influencing demand for ‘better for me’ drinks, such as zero-alcohol beers, lighter wines, low-alcohol seltzers, and lower carb and sugar options. Consumer research shows nearly half (47%) of adults had a low-alcohol beverage in the past year, that’s up 7% on the previous year.ⁱⁱⁱ Zero-alcohol beers (under 1.15% abv) continue to be popular, with the category increasing 177% on the previous year.

“Overall, we’re seeing a shift to moderation and better drinking decisions, and there is a wider range of beverages for people to choose whatever the occasion based on their personal situation, circumstances and lifestyle,” says Bridget.^{iv}

The data shows little change in standard drinks consumed per person (+0.1%). Other research by the Health Promotion Agency shows 82% of New Zealanders drink at or below the recommended weekly limit advice of no more than three standard drinks per day for men or no more than two standard drinks per day for women. The advice also calls for two alcohol-free days a week, which the research says 92% of people are doing.^v



“Alcohol can be enjoyed in moderation and as part of a balanced lifestyle, but it is important to take time to think about ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘why’ we are drinking, consider no- and low-alcohol options, and check out online information at cheers.org.nz and alcoholandme.org.nz that can help us make better drinking decisions,” says Bridget.

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

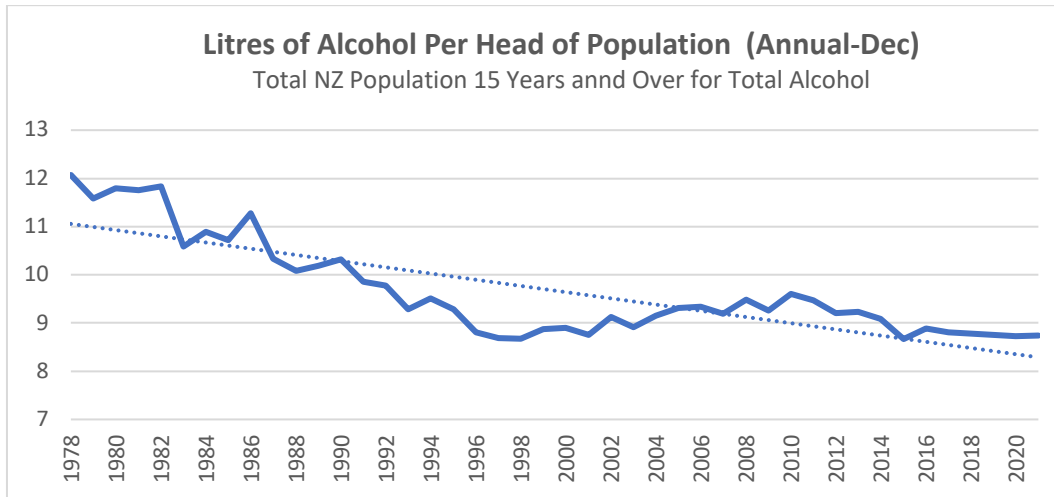
About NZABC

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 the International Alliance for Responsible Drinking (iard.org), a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to reducing harmful drinking and promoting understanding of responsible drinking. It is supported by leading global beer, wine, and spirits producers, who have come together for a common purpose: to be part of the solution in combating harmful drinking.

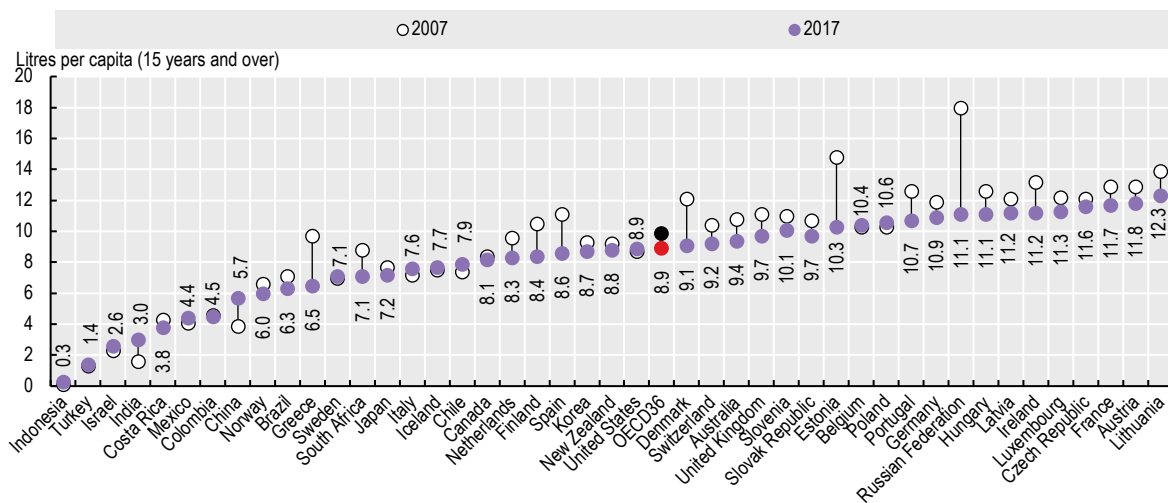
ⁱ **Decreasing alcohol consumption:** StatsNZ Infoshare, Alcohol available for consumption to December 2021 (published 24 February 2022), <https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/alcohol-available-for-consumption-year-ended-december-2021> and <http://archive.stats.govt.nz/infoshare/> and <https://teara.govt.nz/en/graph/40691/consumption-of-pure-alcohol-1960-2011>. Alcohol available for consumption has been trending downward for a number of years. Data shows alcohol available for consumption was 8.734 litres per head of population (15 years and older) in December 2021. There has been a 27% decrease since 1978 when was 12.07 litres per head of population (15 years and older) and a 22.6% decrease since 1986 when there was 11.282 litres per head of population (15 years and older), (see *graph 1 below*). Note: 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, 2010-2021, 15 years and over)
 Source: Stats NZ Infoshare (February 2022)



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 vs UK 9.7 litres/capita. See graph 2 below. Source: OECD Health Statistics, 2019. New Zealand figures as at 2018.

Graph 2. Litres of Alcohol Per Head of Population in New Zealand
Recorded alcohol consumption among adults, 2007 and 2017 (or nearest year)



- ii **Premiumisation:** NZ Alcohol Beverages Council consumer research, *New Zealander's attitudes to alcohol research*, December 2021, poll of 1,250 New Zealanders undertaken by Curia Market Research.
 - o 56% had a premium drink in the past 12 months and 44% did not.
 - o A discerning palate was the main reason for choosing a more expensive or premium drink with 42% saying they choose it for taste and 33% for a special occasion.
 - o While 36% said they consumed a premium drink at the same speed as a regular drink, 30% said they drank a premium drink slower – only 2% said they drank it faster.
- iii **No- and low-alcohol consumption:** NZ Alcohol Beverages Council consumer research, *New Zealander's attitudes to alcohol research*, December 2021, poll of 1,250 New Zealanders undertaken by Curia Market Research. For the statement "Do you drink low-alcohol beverages and have you consumed more or less in the past year compared to 12 months ago?", 47% say they drink low-alcohol beverages (+7% on 2020).
- iv New Zealand Health Survey 2019/20, 19 November 2021, <https://www.health.govt.nz/publication/annual-update-key-results-2020-21-new-zealand-health-survey> Four in five adults (78.5%) drank alcohol in the past year. The majority (80.1%) are moderate drinkers and one in five drinking (19.9%) in a hazardous way. https://minhealthnz.shinyapps.io/nz-health-survey-2020-21-annual-data-explorer/_w_fc7d32a5#!/explore-indicators
- v *Alcohol Use in New Zealand Survey (AUiNZ) 2019/20 – High-level results 2019/20* (10 February 2021) <https://www.hpa.org.nz/research-library/research-publications/alcohol-use-in-new-zealand-survey-auinz-2019-20-%E2%80%93-high-level-results-2019-20>