

AlcoholNZ article

Title

Types of alcoholic beverages – What is available and who drinks what types?

At a glance

- This article was published in print form in HPA's June 2017 *AlcoholNZ* magazine (available on alcohol.org.nz/alcoholnz).
- It provides information on what types of alcoholic beverages (eg, beer, wine, spirits, cider) are consumed, who drinks them and how much total pure alcohol is available for consumption in New Zealand.
- On the last drinking occasion, two-thirds of women reported drinking wine and two-thirds of men reported drinking beer.
- The 18 to 24-years-old age group was more likely to report drinking spirits, RTDs (ready-to-drink spirits) and cider on their last drinking occasion than people of other age groups.
- These results are from HPA's combined 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16 Attitudes and Behaviour towards Alcohol Survey.
- In the year ending December 2016, 34.7 million litres of pure alcohol were available for consumption.

Citation

Health Promotion Agency. (2017). Types of alcoholic beverages – What is available and who drinks what types? *AlcoholNZ* (7)1, p5–7.

Types of alcoholic beverages

What is available and who drinks what types

The types of alcoholic beverages (ie, beer, wine, spirits and cider) that people consume often vary by sex, age and ethnicity. Preferences can also change over a lifetime and be influenced by changes in the popularity and availability of different drinks. New beverages come onto the market; for example, RTDs (ready-to-drink spirits) became available in larger volumes from the mid-1990s and more recently there has been an increase in the range of beers of different strengths.

Several data sources can be used to form a population-level picture of who is drinking what type of alcohol beverages. This includes data on:

- alcohol available for consumption, which is collected by Stats NZ (formerly Statistics New Zealand)

- reported types of alcoholic beverages consumed, which is collected:
 - » periodically in the Ministry of Health's New Zealand Health Survey (Ministry of Health, 2012)
 - » annually in the Health Promotion Agency's (HPA's) Attitudes and Behaviour towards Alcohol Survey (ABAS).

Alcohol available for consumption

Stats NZ measures the volume of pure alcohol (ethanol or ethyl alcohol) and the volume of alcoholic beverage available for consumption (ie, released to the domestic market). Actual consumption is not measured but the amount available is a close proxy measure, as alcoholic beverages are usually released close to the time of sale. Stats NZ data also provides information on beverage type (ie, beer, wine and spirits) available and changes in the amount available, indicating changes in drinking preferences.

In the year ending December 2016, 34.7 million litres of pure alcohol were available for consumption in New Zealand. By comparison, 26.3 million litres of pure alcohol were available in the year ending June 2000. It is usual, however, to standardise data as a rate per capita to take account of population changes. Between 2010 and 2015 the volume of alcohol per capita (using the population aged 18 or older) decreased steadily, from 10.2 litres per capita to 9.2 litres per capita. This increased to 9.4 litres per capita in 2016 (Stats NZ, 2017).

Information on pure alcohol available for consumption is also provided by alcoholic beverage types. As illustrated in Figure 1, the proportions of pure alcohol available for consumption have changed over time. The most significant change is for beer, which decreased 10 percentage points from 2000 to 2016, although beer remains the most popular beverage type and provided 12.6 million litres of pure alcohol available for consumption in the year ending December 2016. Wine and spirits increased to a total of 11.4 and 9.7 million litres of pure alcohol available for consumption, respectively. The increase in pure alcohol from spirits is largely driven by spirit-based RTDs (Stats NZ, 2017).

Types of alcohol consumed by adults on their last drinking occasion

HPA's ABAS provides information on the self-reported types of alcoholic beverages consumed on the last drinking occasion. The following analysis combines results from three years (2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16). On average, 73% of New Zealanders aged 18+ years had consumed alcohol in the last 12 months and 55% had consumed two or more alcoholic drinks in the past three months. The following results are based on the last drinking occasion in the past three months where two or more alcoholic drinks were consumed. Respondents could choose as many types of drinks as were consumed on that occasion (multiple responses).

Most people (70% of women and 66% of men) consumed one type of alcoholic drink (eg, wine or beer), and almost a quarter (24%) consumed two types of drinks. One-third of 18 to 24-year-olds consumed two types of alcoholic drink and 13% consumed three types of alcoholic drink. This age group was more likely to report drinking spirits (50%), RTDs (36%) and cider (19%) on their last drinking occasion than people of other ages. There are, however, differences by sex and age.

Women and men typically drink different types of alcohol. On the last drinking occasion, two-thirds of women reported drinking wine and two-thirds of men reported drinking beer. Women were more likely to report drinking RTDs (13%) and cider (10%) than men (10% and 6%, respectively). These differences are mostly because younger women are more likely to consume these types of drinks. The most common type of drink consumed on the last occasion by young women aged 18 to 24 years was spirits (52%) followed by RTDs (41%). Women in all other age groups most commonly reported drinking wine.

Young men aged 18 to 24 years most commonly reported drinking beer (66%) on their last drinking occasion, similar to men aged 25 to 44 years (71%) and 45 to 64 years (70%). Older men aged 65 and over reported drinking wine or beer in equal proportions (53%).

Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the types of alcoholic drinks consumed by women and men across different age groups.

ABAS and analysis methods

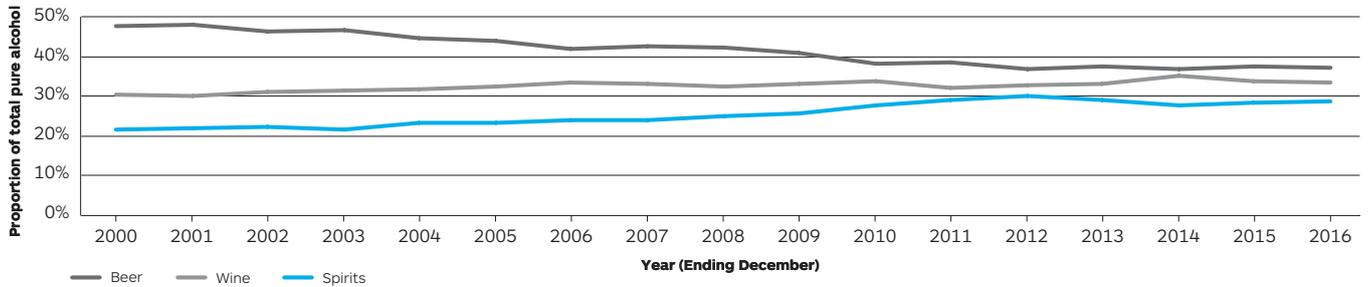
HPA's ABAS is a national telephone survey of people aged 15 years and over about alcohol consumption patterns, and alcohol-related behaviour and attitudes. The results provided in this article are from combined 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16 ABAS surveys and are based on respondents aged 18 years and over who had consumed two or more drinks on any one occasion in the last three months (n=6,270). Results from the combined three surveys can be considered an average value across the three-year time period. Results presented are weighted so that they are representative of the total New Zealand population. Differences between sub-population groups were identified using confidence intervals, and statistically significant differences (when p -value < 0.05) are noted in the report as 'more likely/less likely'.

References

Ministry of Health. (2015). *Alcohol use 2012/13: New Zealand Health Survey*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

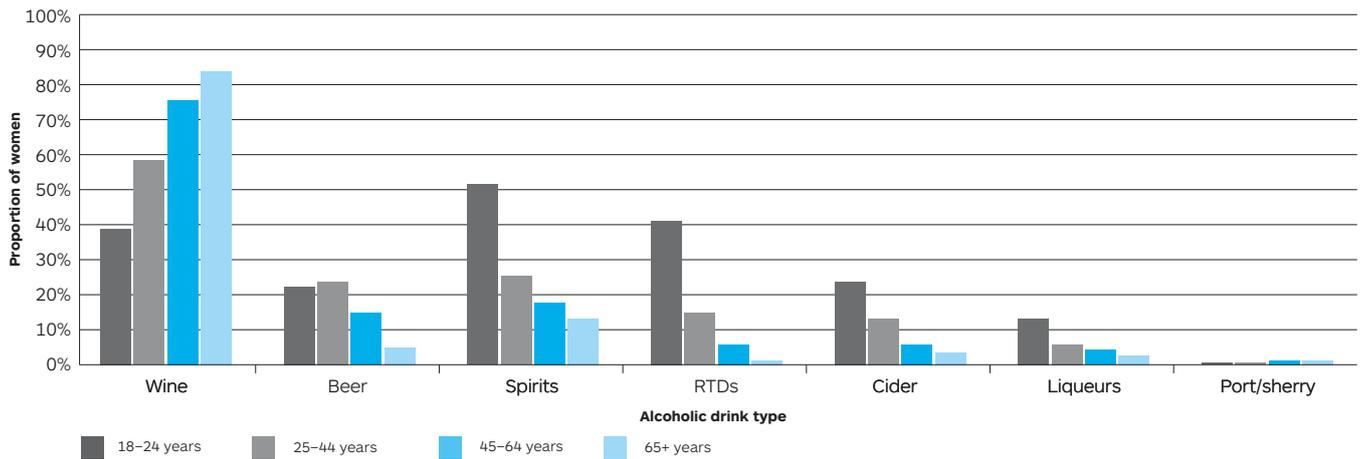
Stats NZ. (2017). *Stats NZ Infoshare data tables: Alcohol available for consumption*. Retrieved from <http://www.stats.govt.nz/infoshare/>.

Figure 1: Beverage type as a proportion of total pure alcohol available



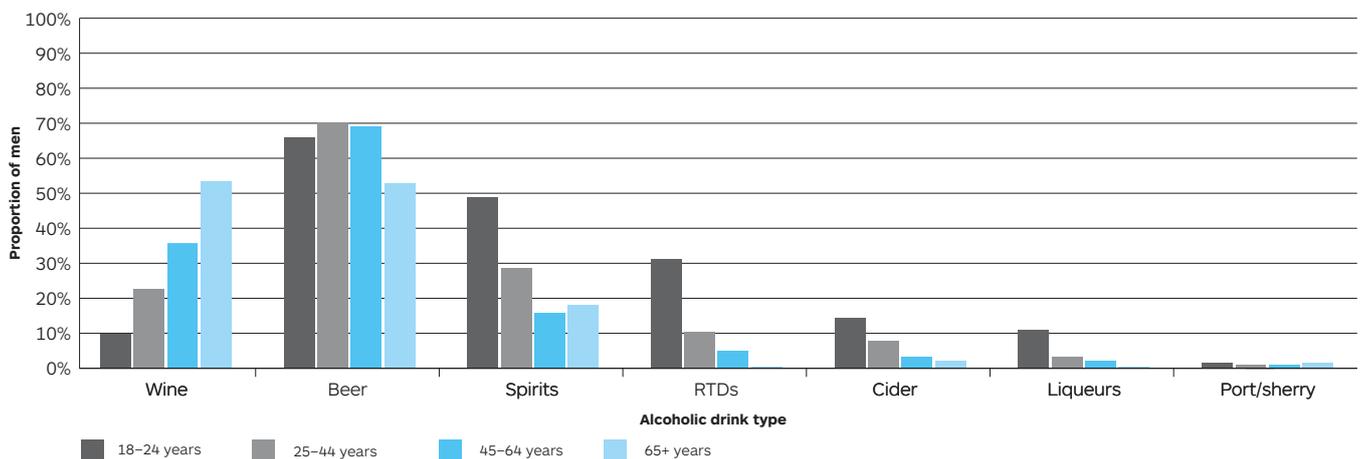
Source: Stats NZ.

Figure 2: Types of alcoholic drinks consumed by women, by age group, during last drinking occasion (multiple responses allowed)



Source: Combined 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16 ABAS.

Figure 3: Types of alcoholic drinks consumed by men, by age group, on last drinking occasion (multiple responses allowed)



Source: Combined 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16 ABAS.