

ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

The health burden related to harmful alcohol consumption, both in terms of morbidity and mortality, is considerable. Alcohol use is associated with numerous harmful health and social consequences, including an increased risk of a range of cancers, stroke, and liver cirrhosis, among others. Foetal exposure to alcohol increases the risk of birth defects and intellectual impairment. Alcohol also contributes to death and disability through accidents and injuries, assault, violence, homicide and suicide.

Definition

Alcohol consumption is defined as annual sales of pure alcohol in litres per person aged 15 years and over. Survey-based estimates of the amount of alcohol drunk by the 20% heaviest drinkers rely on the data analysis of the latest available national health surveys for 13 OECD countries.

Comparability

The methodology to convert alcoholic drinks to pure alcohol may differ across countries. Official statistics do

not include unrecorded alcohol consumption, such as home production.

Overview

Alcohol consumption stands at 8.9 litres per adult per year, on average, across OECD countries, based on the most recent data available. Austria, Estonia and the Czech Republic, reported the highest consumption of alcohol with 11.5 litres or more per adult per year in 2013. The lowest alcohol consumption was recorded in Turkey and Israel, as well as in Indonesia and India, where religious and cultural traditions restrict the use of alcohol in some population groups.

Although average alcohol consumption has gradually fallen in many OECD countries since 2000, it has risen in Poland, Chile, Sweden, Mexico, Norway, the United States, Finland, Canada, Iceland and New Zealand, as well as in China, India, Indonesia, Russia and South Africa.

However, national aggregate data does not permit to identify individual drinking patterns and the populations at risk. OECD analysis based on individual-level data show that hazardous drinking and heavy episodic drinking are on the rise among young people and women especially. Men of low socioeconomic status are more likely to drink heavily than those of a higher socioeconomic status, while the opposite is observed in women. Alcohol consumption is highly concentrated, as the large majority of alcohol is consumed by the 20% of the population who drink the most, with some variation across countries. The 20% heaviest drinkers in Hungary consume about 90% of all alcohol, while in France the share is about 50%.

Sources

- OECD (2015), *OECD Health Statistics* (Database).

Further information

Analytical publications

- Devaux, M. and F. Sassi (2015), "Alcohol consumption and harmful drinking: Trends and social disparities across OECD countries", *OECD Health Working Papers*, No. 79, OECD Publishing, Paris.
- OECD (2015), *Tackling Harmful Alcohol Use*, OECD Publishing.
- WHO (2011), *Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health*, World Health Organization, Geneva.

Statistical publications

- OECD (2015), *Health at a Glance*, OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2014), *Health at a Glance: Asia/Pacific*, OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2014), *Health at a Glance: Europe*, OECD Publishing.

Websites

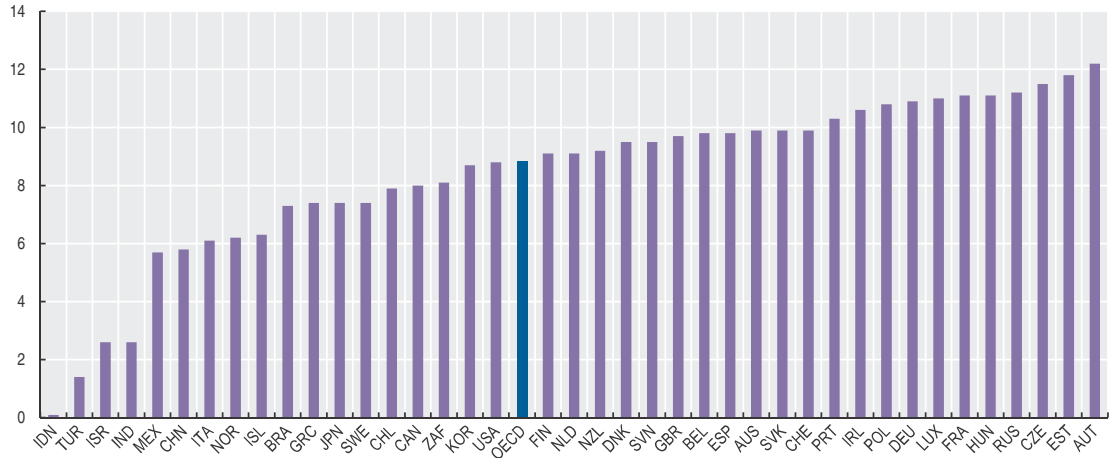
- Health at a Glance (supplementary material), www.oecd.org/health/healthataglance.
- OECD Health Statistics (supplementary material), www.oecd.org/els/health-systems/health-statistics.htm.
- The Economics of Prevention, www.oecd.org/health/prevention.



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Alcohol consumption among population aged 15 and over

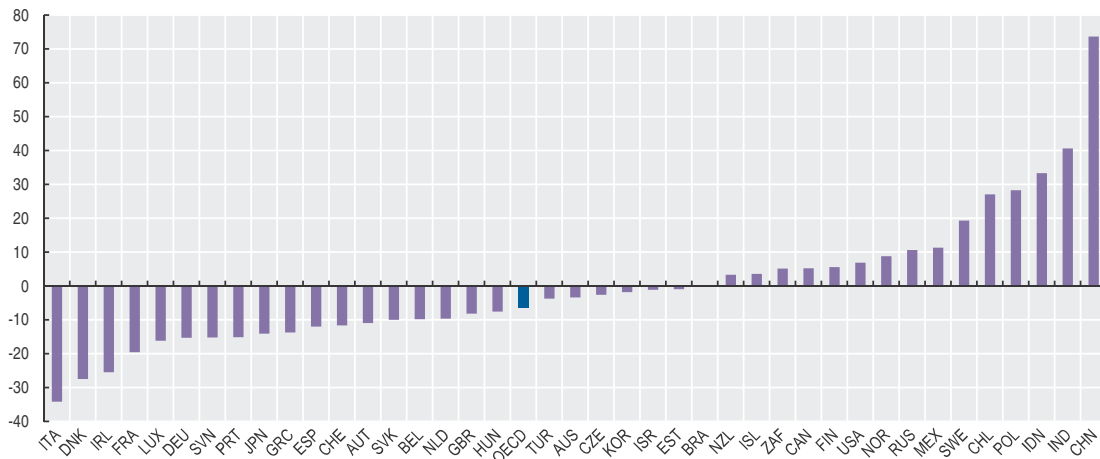
Litres per capita, 2013 or latest available year



1 2 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933334837>

Change in alcohol consumption among population aged 15 and over

Percentage change in litres per capita over the period 2000-2013 or latest available period



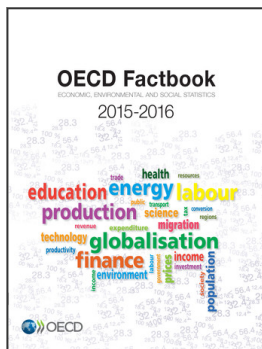
1 2 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933335756>

Share of total alcohol consumed by the 20% of the population who drink the most

Share, 2012 or latest year available



1 2 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933335903>



From:
OECD Factbook 2015-2016
Economic, Environmental and Social Statistics

Access the complete publication at:
<https://doi.org/10.1787/factbook-2015-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2016), "Alcohol consumption", in *OECD Factbook 2015-2016: Economic, Environmental and Social Statistics*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/factbook-2015-90-en>

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