

Alcohol available per person lowest in 18 years

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The total volume of pure alcohol available for consumption, expressed in terms of the number of standard drinks per person, fell 4.1 percent in 2015, to the lowest level in the last 18 years, Statistics New Zealand said today.

“New Zealanders aged 18 and over are now drinking on average the equivalent of two standard drinks per person per day, down from 2.1 in 2014,” international statistics senior manager Jason Attewell said. “This is the equivalent of 500ml of 5 percent alcohol beer, or two glasses of wine per person per day.”

The total volume of pure alcohol available for consumption in New Zealand fell 2.2 percent in 2015, after a 0.3 percent fall in 2014.

In contrast, the total volume of alcoholic beverages available for consumption showed little change in 2015, as a decrease in total wine (down 3.3 percent) was offset by a rise in total spirits and spirit-based drinks (up 3.0 percent). The volume of beer available for consumption showed little change, down 0.1 percent.

“Although the volume of beer available was similar to that in 2014, low-strength beer was up on 2014,” Mr Attewell said. “High-strength beer is also up, and has doubled in the last five years, reflecting the growing demand for craft beers.”

Wine decreased in volume in 2015. Wine from grapes was down on 2014, but wine from other fruits and vegetables (mostly cider) was up on 2014.

The fall in table wine available for consumption coincided with a rise in the value and quantity of wine exports from New Zealand, reflecting the larger proportion of locally produced wine exported.

Alcohol statistics are compiled from figures on alcoholic beverages produced for local consumption, on which duty is paid, and imports less re-exports. Alcohol statistics provide information on the volume of alcoholic beverages released to the market, and therefore available for consumption, rather than actual consumption.

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For media enquiries contact: Stuart Jones, Christchurch 04 964 8700, info@stats.govt.nz
Authorised by Liz MacPherson, Government Statistician, 26 February 2016