

Alcohol

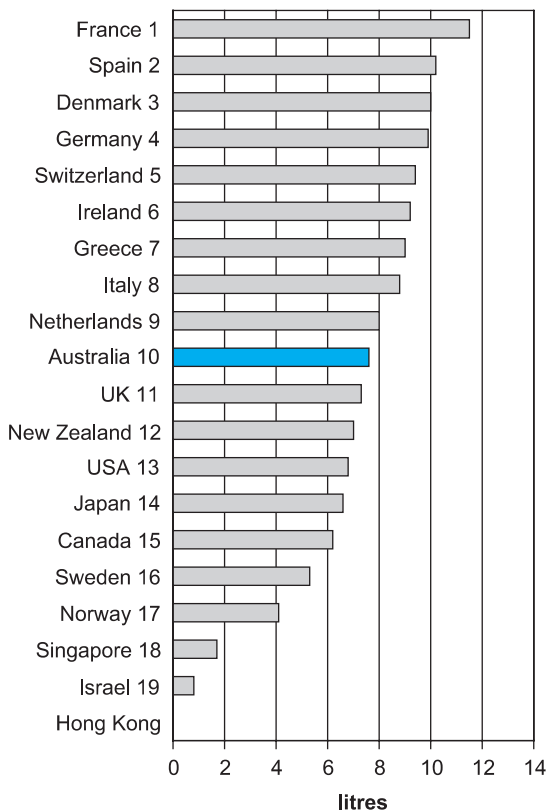


Figure 1: Apparent alcohol consumption per capita, 1995

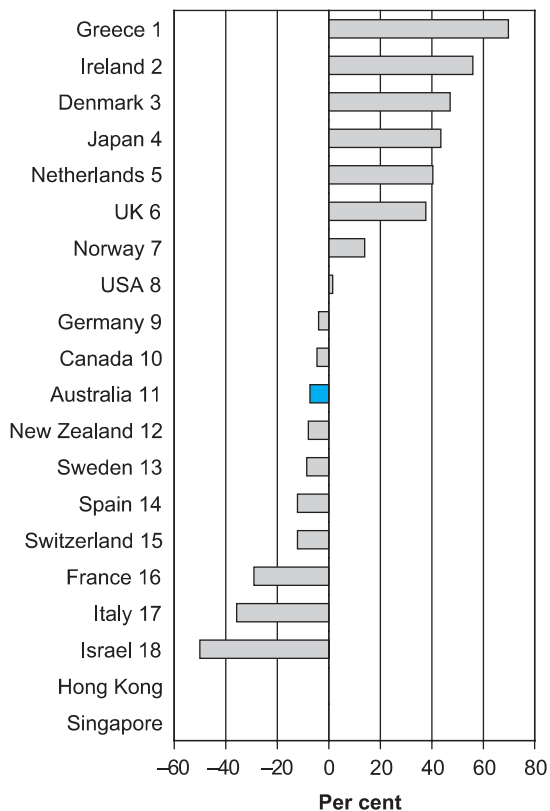


Figure 2: Changes in apparent alcohol consumption per capita, 1970-1995

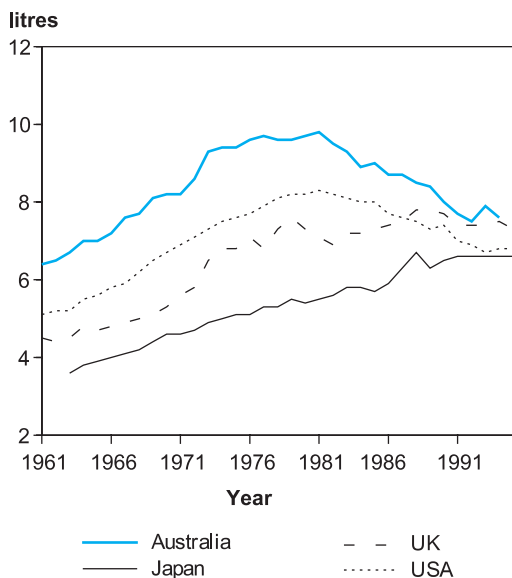


Figure 3: Trends in apparent alcohol consumption per capita, 1961 to 1995

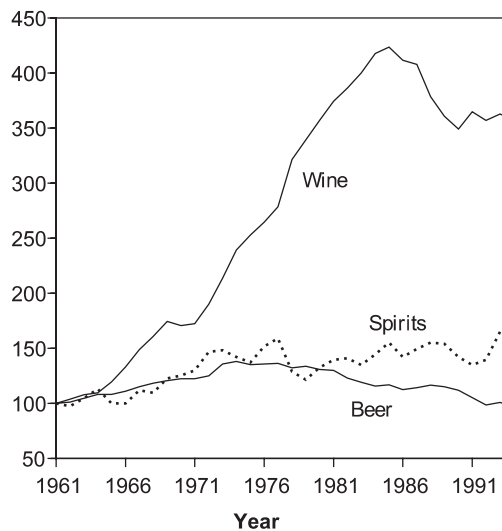


Figure 4: Trends in alcohol consumption in Australia (base year 1961-62 = 100)

Alcohol

Apparent per capita consumption of alcohol (in litres), by beverage type, 1995

Country	Beer	Wine	Spirits (pure alcohol)	Total (pure alcohol)
Australia	95.4	18.2	1.35	7.6
Canada	70.0	8.2	1.75	6.2
Denmark	120.1	27.6	1.07	10.0
France	39.1	63.5	2.52	11.5
Germany	137.7	22.2	2.20	9.9
Greece	42.2	34.5	2.70	9.0
Hong Kong	—	—	—	—
Ireland	141.3	16.1	1.70	9.2
Israel	8.4	3.1	—	0.8
Italy	25.4	60.4	0.90	8.8
Japan	58.0	1.0	2.00	6.6
Netherlands	85.8	16.6	1.74	8.0
New Zealand	98.8	16.8	1.13	7.0
Norway	53.5	7.1	0.81	4.1
Singapore	22.0	0.7	0.50	1.7
Spain	66.6	36.3	2.50	10.2
Sweden	64.5	12.7	1.46	5.3
Switzerland	62.2	43.6	1.49	9.4
UK	102.7	12.8	1.33	7.3
USA	87.9	6.8	1.97	6.8

Note: Calculated by converting the amount of beverage consumed into litres of pure alcohol based on an average alcoholic strength of 5% for beer and 12% for wine unless official strengths were known for the country concerned. Spirits are shown in terms of pure alcohol.

Source: Produktschap voor Gedistilleerde Dranken 1996.

- Alcohol abuse is a dominant drug problem in developed countries. Its excessive use can lead to serious health problems, including liver disease, gastrointestinal cancers and cardiovascular disorders. It plays a major role in deaths and disabilities due to injury, and is a leading cause of road traffic accidents. Fetal exposure to alcohol may also cause mental retardation.
- Data for apparent per capita consumption of pure alcohol indicate that in 1995, Australia ranked tenth amongst 20 developed countries (Figure 1)—it also ranked sixth for beer consumption, eighth for wine consumption and 12th for spirits consumption per capita. Alcohol consumption per capita peaked in Australia and the United States in the early 1980s. However, it continues to rise in many countries, including the United Kingdom and Japan (Figures 2 and 3).
- Ireland, Germany and Denmark had high per capita consumption of beer in 1995. France and Italy had high per capita wine consumption, and Greece, France and Spain high per capita consumption of spirits. It should be noted that the 'French paradox' of low ischaemic heart disease mortality despite a high saturated fat intake has been at least partly attributed to high alcohol consumption and the intake of antioxidant vitamins, both being supplied by wine (Burr 1995).
- Per capita data regarding alcohol consumption give little information as to the number of persons engaging in risk drinking behaviour. Drinking patterns, including binge drinking, frequency of intoxication and amount of consumption, are revealed through population-based surveys, which by and large are not comparable between countries.
- In Australia, the 1995 National Drug Strategy Household Survey revealed that 28% of males and 33% of females aged 14 or more usually consumed alcohol at hazardous or harmful levels. In the two weeks prior to the survey, 8% of male current drinkers and 5% of female current drinkers had consumed alcohol at very harmful levels, i.e. more than 8 standard drinks for females, and more than 12 for males.

For more information, see:

Lader M, Edwards G, Drummond DC (eds.) 1992. The nature of alcohol and drug related problems. Society For the Study of Addiction Monograph No. 2. Oxford: Oxford University Press.