

Tuesday, 20 April 2021

Number of Australians drinking alcohol increases for first time in four years in 2020 – powered by wine, spirits and RTDs

New data from [Roy Morgan's Alcohol Consumption Report](#) shows the proportion of Australians who drink alcohol increased by 0.8% points to 67% in 2020 – the first year-over-year increase since 2016 when 69.6% of Australians drank alcohol, up 0.7% points on 2015.

In 2020 a total of 13,337,000 Australians (67.0%) aged 18+ consumed alcohol in an average four-week period, up from 13,021,000 (66.2%) a year earlier.

Driving this increase were significant increases for wine and spirits during the COVID-19 pandemic impacted 2020. The number of Australians drinking wine increased from 8,065,000 Australians (41.0%) to 8,814,000 (44.3%) – an increase of 3.3% points over the year.

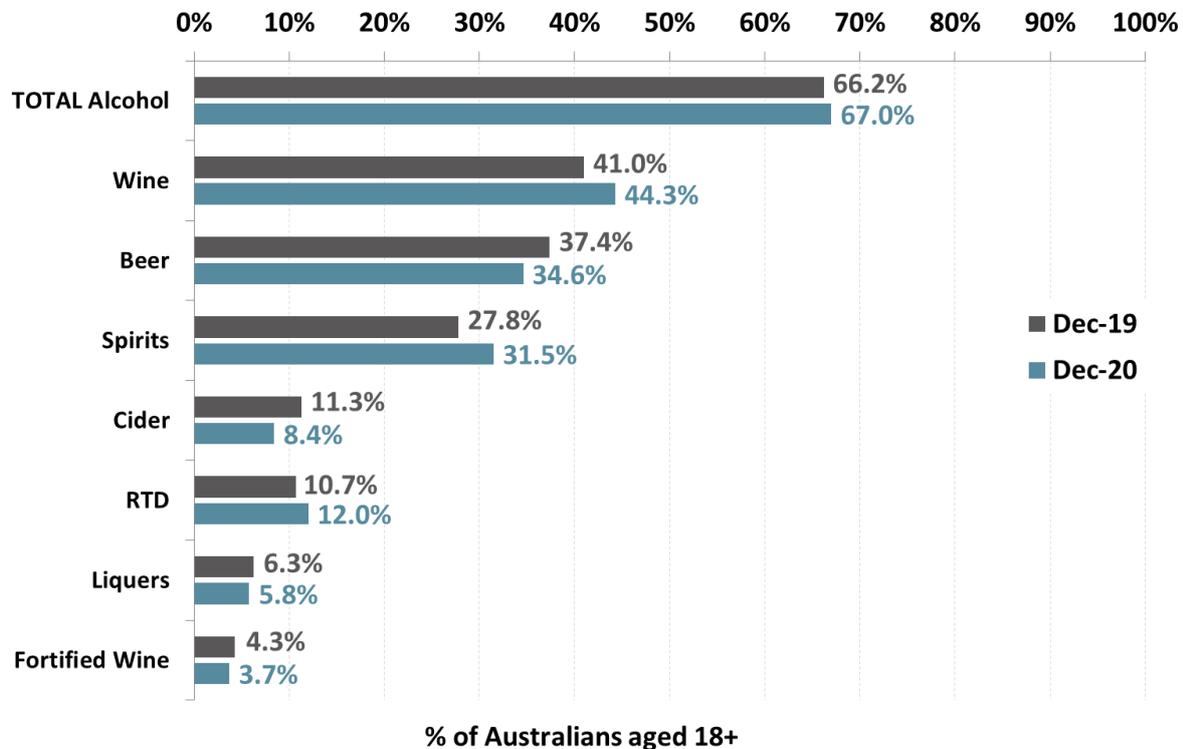
In addition there were 6,277,000 Australians (31.5%) drinking spirits in 2020, up from 5,465,000 (27.8%) a year earlier – an increase of 3.7% points. Also increasing was consumption of Ready-to-drinks (RTDs) which increased from 2,101,000 Australians (10.7%) up to 2,392,000 Australians (12.0%).

However, outside these three categories the long-term trends continued with fewer Australians drinking beer, cider, liqueurs and fortified wines in 2020.

Beer led the decline and was down from 7,353,000 Australians (37.4%) in 2019 to 6,878,000 (34.6%) in 2020. If the trends of last year were to continue this year the number of Australians drinking spirits would overtake those drinking beer.

The findings are from the Roy Morgan Single Source survey, Australia's most trusted and comprehensive consumer survey, derived from in-depth interviews with 50,000 Australians each year.

Proportion of Australians who consume alcohol in an average four-week period



Source: Roy Morgan Single Source Australia, Jan-Dec 2019, n= 15,197. Jan-Dec 2020, n= 39,953.
Base: Australians aged 18+.

Roy Morgan CEO Michele Levine says the increase in the consumption of wine and spirits during 2020 has reversed the trend of declining consumption of alcohol by Australians – but will the unprecedented nature of a year dominated by COVID-19 and lockdowns prove an aberration?

“Australians experienced an unprecedented year in 2020 with a nation-wide lockdown in March-- May 2020 followed by a longer second lockdown in Victoria between July and October and a series of shorter lockdowns in response to local outbreaks of COVID-19 around the country.

“In a year like no other many Australians found time to enjoy their favourite alcoholic beverage – and reversed the downward trend of the past three years – registering the first increase in the number of Australians (up 0.8% points to 67%) drinking alcohol in a calendar year since 2016.

“Driving this increase was an increasing proportion of people consuming wine, up 3.3% points to 44.3% of all Australians aged 18+ and spirits, up 3.7% points to 31.5% of Australians. Those enjoying Ready-to-drink beverages (RTDs) also increased, by 1.3% points to 12% of Australians.

“The popularity of wine during a year of lockdowns was broad-based with an increasing share of both genders drinking wine. Although more women than men drink wine the increase in the number of men drinking wine (up 4.5% points on 2019) was larger than for women (up 2.1% points). The number of people drinking wine also increased across the age spectrum and perhaps surprisingly the largest increase by age group was for those aged 80+ - up 6.7% points on a year ago.

“The increasing number of Australians drinking spirits has continued the trend of recent years ([Roy Morgan: Gin and vodka drive spirits higher as other alcoholic beverages decline – March 10, 2020](#)) and if the consumption trends of 2020 were to continue this year the number of Australians drinking spirits would overtake beer for the first time. The incidence of drinking spirits was up for both genders and across all age groups with the largest increase by age for people aged 25-34 (up 7.7% points on a year ago).

“A new emphasis on ‘health-conscious drinking’ has given a boost to the ‘Ready-to-drink’ (RTDs) market with RTDs overtaking cider among Australians for the first time since 2013. The number of Australians drinking RTDs rose for both genders and across all age groups in 2020 as alcoholic seltzers entered the market offering a healthier alternative lower in calories and carbohydrates than beer or wine.

“Other alcoholic beverages weren’t so fortunate with the number of Australians consuming beer, cider, liqueurs and fortified wine all declining from a year ago with beer taking the biggest hit down 2.8% points to 34.6% of Australians with pubs closed during the lockdowns and for several months on end in Victoria.

“Roy Morgan will be keeping a keen eye on the developing trends in the alcohol market during 2021 as an increasing proportion of Australians are vaccinated against COVID-19 and the threat of further lockdowns and border closures becomes less likely.

“The big question for the alcohol market going forward is can the trend in 2020 of an increasing number of Australians consuming alcohol (in particular wine, spirits and RTDs) continue or will the longer-term trends of declining alcohol consumption resume in a post-COVID environment?”

Related research findings

View the [Alcohol Consumption Currency Report](#), as well as [targeted profiles on Australians based on what alcohol they drink, how much alcohol they drink, where they buy their alcohol from, and much more.](#)

For further comment or more information about Roy Morgan’s alcohol data please contact:

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About Roy Morgan

Roy Morgan is Australia's largest independent Australian research company, with offices in each state, as well as in the U.S. and U.K. A full-service research organisation, Roy Morgan has over 75 years' experience collecting objective, independent information on consumers.

Margin of Error

The margin of error to be allowed for in any estimate depends mainly on the number of interviews on which it is based. Margin of error gives indications of the likely range within which estimates would be 95% likely to fall, expressed as the number of percentage points above or below the actual estimate. Allowance for design effects (such as stratification and weighting) should be made as appropriate.

Sample Size	Percentage Estimate			
	40%-60%	25% or 75%	10% or 90%	5% or 95%
10,000	±1.0	±0.9	±0.6	±0.4
20,000	±0.7	±0.6	±0.4	±0.3
50,000	±0.4	±0.4	±0.3	±0.2