

Estimates of alcohol consumption per adult in 2012 and recalculation for 2007 to 2011 based on CSO revisions to population levels

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Introduction

This paper has two objectives; to calculate the 2012 level of average per adult consumption of alcohol and to present revised estimates for the period since 2007 based on the revised CSO population estimates for those years. The data used are from the CSO Population and Migration Estimates for April 2012 (September 2012) and the Revenue Commissioners' alcohol clearances data (the 2012 figures were made available in March 2013). The level and trend in average alcohol consumption are important elements in policy evaluation and design.

Methodology

The measurement approach follows standard international practice. The aggregate alcohol content of the different beverages are based on 5% alcohol by volume for cider, 12.5% alcohol content for wine and the actual alcohol estimates provided in the clearances data for spirits and beer. Some international and national estimates would use lower alcohol contents for wine and cider. The international convention of defining the adult population as 15 years and over is used. The population data refer to April of each year. Consumption is equated with clearances as is normally done although clearances are not an exact measure of consumption due to factors such as unrecorded out of state sourcing, stock changes and tourism.

The CSO publishes estimates of the population for the non-census years. These estimates are revised in light of the results of the latest census. The September 2011 CSO Population and Migration Estimates noted the need to revise the existing 2007 to 2011 estimates and this was done in the September 2012 edition. The actual census population in 2011 was higher than expected from the previous Estimates which created the need to revise the years since the 2006 census. The 2011 population estimate is from the 2011 census except that the Estimates presents data on the "usually resident" basis while the census of population is on a "de facto" basis. Consequently the 2011 population measure used here, and contained in the 2012 Estimates, is slightly different from the census total.

Average alcohol consumption per adult 2006 to 2012

The data are presented in Table 1. The aggregate alcohol clearances and the "adult" populations are presented. These two combine to provide the average per adult consumption. The 2007 to 2010 average consumption levels are different to those

previously estimated for DIGI due to the population revisions. The 2011 estimate is slightly different due to using the usually resident basis. This is necessary to maintain comparability with the other years.

Table 1. Average per adult alcohol consumption 2006 to 2012

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Million litres of pure alcohol, Total consumption	45.451	46.605	43.944	40.042	42.182	42.255	41.943
Population aged 15 and over, millions	3.3679	3.4916	3.5718	3.5970	3.5971	3.5983	3.5906
Litres of pure alcohol per adult (lpa)	13.495	13.348	12.303	11.132	11.727	11.743	11.681

Sources. CSO Population and Migration Estimates Sept 2012, Revenue Commissioners' Clearances data

Total alcohol consumption slightly in 2012. The number of adults also declined slightly.

Average per adult alcohol consumption declined slightly in 2012, It was 11.681 lpa in 2012 compared with 11.743 lpa in 2011, a decline of 0.5%. It is also lower than the 2010 average consumption level but is higher than the 2009 level. It is substantially lower than the 2006 and 2007 levels. Between 2007 and 2012 average alcohol consumption per adult declined by 12.5%.

Summary

Average per adult alcohol consumption declined slightly in 2012 compared with 2011 from 11.743 lpa to 11.681 lpa, a decrease of 0.5%. Between 2007 and 2012 average per adult consumption declined by 12.5% based on the revised population figures.

For additional information on the data and calculations please contact tony.foley@dcu.ie