

Wednesday, 10 March 2021

## Roy Morgan shares evidence-based insights about alcohol consumption with liquor industry leaders

**Don't guess, ask; rely on data, not on assumptions or 'anecdotal'. That has been the guiding principle of research company Roy Morgan for eight decades, and it's the reason leaders from industries across the board turn to Roy Morgan to understand what's really going on.**

Using data gathered from its continuous survey of tens of thousands of Australians, the company's CEO, Michele Levine, says that widespread fears about alcohol consumption during 2020 proved baseless. Her insights are featured in the 2021 Annual Industry Leaders Forum issue of National Liquor News.

Panic-buying in liquor stores and screenshots of Zoom happy hours in the early part of the COVID-19 pandemic triggered a flood of warnings that Australians' alcohol consumption was on the rise. However the data showed something different. In fact, alcohol consumption continued to decline gently during 2020 as it has done for the past decade and a half - although there were notable exceptions last year including wine and spirits which both picked up during the course of the year.

### Alcohol consumption continued falling during 2020, but spirits consumption is up

In a rolling survey conducted over a 12-month period with more than 15,000 people, respondents were asked whether they had drunk any alcohol during the previous four weeks, and if so what kinds of alcohol and how many drinks.

Back in 2006, when Roy Morgan began collecting this data to produce the Alcohol Report, 73.5% of Australians enjoyed a drink in an average four-week period. In the 12 months to September 2020 that was down to 66.4%.

However while overall consumption is down, the percentage of Australians drinking spirits is up, rising from 25.3% in 2006 to 30.8% in 2020. In terms of age-breakdowns, 18- to 24-year olds are proportionally the most likely to choose spirits, with 37.5% doing so compared to 28.1% of 50- to 64-year olds — so much for the stereotypes of Boomers with a G&T or Scotch on the rocks in hand. (Wine is by far the most popular Boomer choice.)

### Roy Morgan CEO Michele Levine says packaged liquor sales spiked during 2020 but that doesn't mean overall consumption rose:

*"There was a lot of hypothesising about the changes to various purchasing and consumption habits that might result from the pandemic. Some of that speculation proved accurate — for instance the huge shift to shopping online. But some did not, and our data shows the dire warnings about huge rises in the level of alcohol consumption fall into that category.*

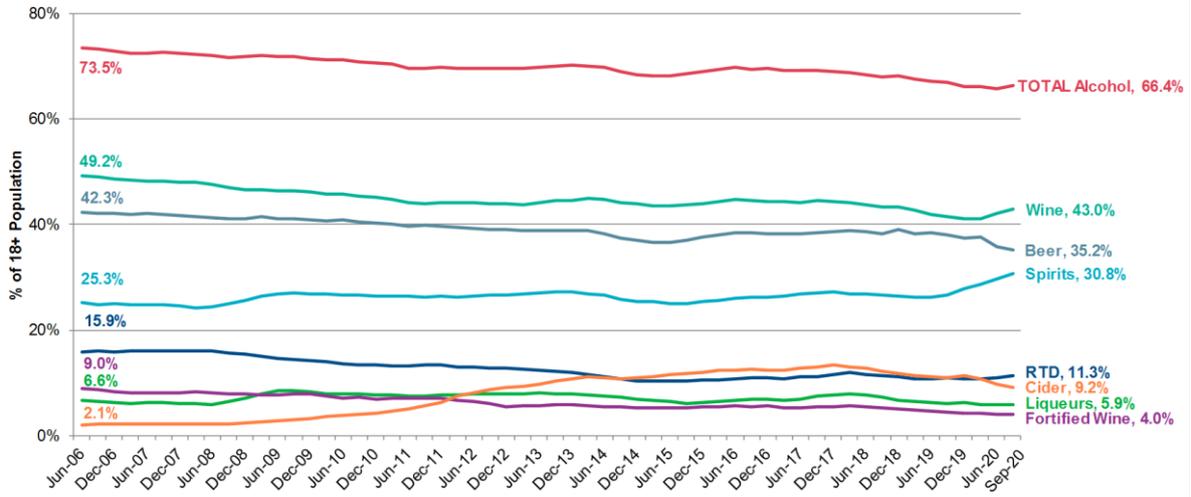
*"It's true that alcohol retailers had a boom year. Retail turnover figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics show that alcohol retail sales reached \$15.6 billion in 2020, a 26.7% increase on 2019. However there are two factors at play here, one obvious, one less so. First, people might not have been drinking more, but they were certainly drinking differently, with the option to go out to bars or have wine over dinner much reduced or simply not available to millions of people for months at a time.*

*"The less obvious factor is the move towards premiumisation we've seen among the high-spending group of 'NEO consumers' identified in our research. This significant part of the population isn't drinking more, in fact many are drinking less, but they are spending more on higher quality product."*

**Michele Levine is available for interview.**

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## Alcohol Consumption in Australia – Long Term Trends



**Source:** Roy Morgan Single Source (Australia): July 2005–Sept 2020. Interviews last 12 months, n=27,352.  
**Base:** Australians aged 18+ who have consumed each type of alcohol in a four-week period.

For more information about Roy Morgan’s wealth of industry and consumer 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