

Alcohol in Romania: Beer, Wines & Spirits

Best known internationally for its cheap yet good wine, Romania also offers some decent beer and very strong spirits.

Wine

The story of the Romanian wine industry is a long and complicated one. In short, it was very good, then the communist regime ruined it through under-investment and over-production, and now, back in private hands, it is improving apace. Almost two per cent of Romania's total agricultural land is given over to vineyards, making Romania one of the world's top 10 wine producers. As a general rule the best whites are made in the north and in Transylvania, while the country's best reds are made in the south. There are many exceptions, however.

The best known wine making regions in Romania are Dobrogea (reds) and Murfatlar (which makes good reds and decent whites) in the south east, Dealul Mare around Buzau (which makes excellent reds, probably the country's best, in fact), Tarnava in central Transylvania (whites) and Cotnari (whites) in Moldova. In the west, the deep reds of the Recas vineyards have an increasingly loyal following.

While Romania grows (very well) international varieties of grape from *Sauvignon Blanc* to (some extraordinarily good) *Merlot*, the country also boasts a number of excellent native grapes. The best local varieties are probably the noble, blackcurrant-tinged *Feteasca Neagra* (red), *Feteasca Alba* (white), *Feteasca Regala* (white) and the aromatic, honey-like *Tamaioasa Romaneasca* (white).

Some Romania's best wines include the *Chardonnay* and *Feteasca Regala*-based brut from the Halewood/Prahova Valley winery, the *Tamaioasa Romaneasca* on the Domeniile Tohani label, and the semi-sweet red Rai de Murfatlar, a *Cabernet Sauvignon* from *Murfatlar*.

Also worth looking out for is *Busuioacă de Bohotin*, which, while too sweet for many tastes is a unique wine and one of few roses made in Romania. Another somewhat unique Romanian wine is *Lacrima lui Ovidiu*, a bold, strong, yet sweet and syrupy wine from *Murfatlar*, made from grapes harvested deliberately late.

Other labels which can usually be taken as a sign of quality include Davino from Dealul Mare, Stirbey and Jidvei (especially its *Feteasca Regala*), Corcova and Domeniul Coroanei.

Perhaps our favourite wine, however (at the moment) is the *Merlot* sold on the Vitis Metamorfosis label, a joint venture between Halewood and Marchesi Antinori.

With prices usually reflecting quality, you are advised to spend as much as possible when choosing a Romanian wine. The good news is that you will rarely have to spend much: prices remain relatively low and should stay so given the increasing abundance of great choice.

Beer

Romania has a long, proud history of brewing good beer, and while today there are just 20 breweries in the country (there were more than 120 breweries in 1989), such statistics do not tell the whole story of beer in Romania, which is far from being a sorry one. With large amounts of

investment from big foreign brewers the country's best known beers have been saved from extinction and improved, and in a number of cases new brews launched: the current trend for unfiltered and lemon beers (see below) is one such example.

Fortunately for the visitor, improvements in quality have not increased prices: Romania remains home to one of the cheapest pints of beer in Europe. (We have long suggested that the country's marketing people use the fact in their international campaigns!)

The best known local brands of beer are probably Ursus, Ciuc and Timisoreana. *Ursus* has been brewed since the 1870s, and if you ask ten Romanians what the national beer is, it is likely that at least nine will respond *Ursus*. Both *Ursus* and *Timisoreana* (brewed since 1718) are now owned by SAB Miller, which also produces the smaller brands *Ciucas*, *Azuga* and *Stejar*. *Ciuc* (along with *Silva*) is owned by *Heineken*, while *Carlsberg's* locally brewed Tuborg is also ubiquitous and very popular. Other notable beers include Interbrew's Bergenbier.

Unfiltered wheat beers (bere nefiltrata) are very popular in Romania, the best probably being *Ciuc's*, though you should also keep a look out for *Paulaner's* white beer, found on tap in a number of Bucharest bars and pubs.

Also worth trying is the dark, bitter *Ursus Black*, a very different beer to most local brews. *Silva's Strong Dark* is similar and equally good. During the summer, look out for lower alcohol *radler* or lemon beers. Most of the local breweries produce one. A few venues in Bucharest have microbreweries, producing their own beer, or at least serve their own bespoke brew made elsewhere: Caru cu bere, Oktoberfest and Biutiful are three such places. Meantime, Beer O'Clock stocks the city's best selection of exotic beers.

Imported beers are popular amongst young, wealthy urbanites, and you should never have too much trouble finding the major international brands: *Heineken*, *Carlsberg*, *Peroni*, *Lefte*, *Hoegaarden* and *Stella Artois* are all popular in Romania. And while imported beer is usually a couple of lei more expensive than the local stuff, no beer in Romania is likely to cost more than 10-12 lei, even in a club or trendy bar. A pint (or the local equivalent) of local draught (la halba) beer costs from 7-8 lei, often even cheaper. The one exception is *Guinness*. Found all over the country (it is very popular amongst Romanians, who have taken to it like ducks to water) it is also relatively expensive.

Key Romanian words on the beer front include *la halba* (draught) and *la sticla* (bottled). Make sure you know what you are ordering: you really wouldn't want to end up with a bottle of *Guinness* now, would you? In most bars and restaurants the menu lists draught and bottled beers separately.

Spirits

Do not leave Romania without trying the local firewater, *tuica* (drink too much on the other hand and you might not be in any fit state to leave). Made (usually, but not always) with prunes and fermented in wooden casks this strong smelling spirit is lethal yet ubiquitous. Every male in the country has a supply (even if he doesn't drink it) and will insist that his father's/father-in-law's/uncle's etc. is the best. When made from other fruits, *tuica* is usually called *rachiu*.

Similar to *tuica* is *palinca*, a more refined (it is distilled twice) spirit made usually from a mixture of fruits. Both *tuica* and *palinca* have exceptionally high alcohol content.

In Maramures, *tuica* is called *horinca*, but is essentially the same spirit, although many people will insist that the drink should be distilled three times before it can be named *horinca*.

Other local spirits include the less alcoholic *afinata*, *visinata* and *zmeurata*. These are pseudo-liqueurs often served as aperitifs or a dessert, or simply as a lighter alternative to *tuica* when the occasion calls for 'unu mic' (a shot of something). These drinks are made by taking small garden fruits (bilberries - *afine* - for *afinata*, cherries - *visine* - for *visinata* and raspberries - *zmeura* - for *zmeurata*) and leaving them to ferment in large glass bottles placed in the sun for two-three months, with lots of sugar added. Alcohol can be added to the liquid which forms to make them stronger, and these drinks can sometimes be served with some of the original fruit in the glass.

Other spirits made in Romania include two herbal concoctions from Transylvania, both similar to the Hungarian drink *Unicum*. *Salvator* is made in Csiksomlyo (Sumuleu Ciuc) and is probably slightly better than *Transilvanicum*, made in Miercurea Ciuc. Like *Unicum* they're a bit of an acquired taste.

We should also mention *vinars* (which translates literally as *Burnt Wine*).

ALCOHOL AND TEENS

Romanian law forbids the sale of any type of alcohol to youth under the age of 18 (Law no. 61 from 1991, modified and republished on M.O. 387/18.08.2000).

But according to the specialists young people have the first contact with alcohol at 13-14years

What are the causes and risk factors of teen alcoholism?

Family risk factors for teenagers developing drinking problems include low levels of parental supervision or communication, family conflicts, inconsistent or severe parental discipline, and a family history of alcohol or drug abuse. Individual risk factors include problems managing impulses, emotional instability, thrill-seeking behaviors, and perceiving the risk of using alcohol to be low. Girls who drink, as well as teens who begin drinking prior to 14 years of age and those whose mothers have drinking problems, are more likely to develop alcoholism. Teen risk factors for alcoholism differ a bit between the 14- to 16-year-old and 16- to 18-year-old age groups, in that 16- to 18-year-olds tend to be less likely to drink in excess when they have a close relationship with their mothers. Among the motivations that lie at the origin of consumption are : curiosity, 60% , followed by escape search 32,2% the need to increase self-confidence 19,1%. On the following position are: the pressure group 17,2% and the need for safety 14,2% . The age when the young have the first contact with alcohol has dropped greatly in recent years

Facts about the societal risk factors for adolescent alcoholism include peer pressure and the portrayal of teen drinking in the media. For example, research demonstrates that the Internet and advertising, including that which occurs on social media, promotes drinking behaviors in teenagers.

What are the dangerous effects of alcohol use in teens?

Just a few of the many dangers of alcohol use in teens include the following:

- Alcohol decreases teens' ability to pay attention.
- Teens who have experienced alcohol withdrawal tend to have difficulties with memory.
- The teenage brain that has been exposed to alcohol is at risk for being smaller in certain parts.
- In contrast to adults, teens tend to abuse alcohol with other substances, usually

marijuana.

- Male teens who drink heavily tend to complete fewer years of education compared to male teens who do not.
- The younger a person is when they begin drinking, the more likely they are to develop a problem with alcohol.
- Each year, almost 2,000 people under the age of 21 die in car crashes in which underage drinking is involved. Alcohol is involved in nearly half of all violent deaths involving youth.
- 56% of drivers 15 to 20 years of age who were killed in motor-vehicle crashes after drinking and driving were not wearing a seat belt.
- More than three times the number of eighth-grade girls who drink heavily said they have attempted suicide compared to girls in that grade who do not drink.
- Intoxication is associated with suicide attempts using more lethal methods, and positive blood alcohol levels are often found in people who complete suicide.
- Teens who drink are more likely to engage in sexual activity, have unprotected sex, have sex with a stranger, or be the victim or perpetrator of a sexual assault.
- Excess alcohol use can cause or mask other emotional problems, like anxiety or depression.
- Drinking in excess can lead to the use of other drugs, like marijuana, cocaine, or heroin.

How can parents prevent alcohol use?

Clear communication by parents about the negative effects of alcohol, as well as about their expectations regarding drug use, has been found to significantly decrease teenage drinking. Adequate parental supervision has also been found to be a deterrent to alcohol use in youth. Alcohol, and other drug use, has been found to occur most often between the hours of 3 p.m. and 6 p.m., immediately after school and prior to parents' arrival at home from work. Teen participation in extracurricular activities has therefore been revealed to be an important measure in the prevention of alcohol use in this age group. Parents can also help educate teens about appropriate coping and stress-management strategies. For example, 15- to 16-year-olds who use religion to cope with stress tend to use drugs significantly less often and have less problems as a result of drinking than their peers who do not use religion to cope. Since effective treatment of teen depression can be a deterrent to alcohol use, parents who seek help for their depressed teen in a timely manner can also help prevent their adolescent from engaging in underage drinking.

What are the symptoms and signs of alcohol intoxication?

Signs that indicate a person is intoxicated include the smell of alcohol on their breath or skin, glazed or bloodshot eyes, the person being unusually passive or argumentative, and/or deterioration in the person's appearance or hygiene. Other symptoms of intoxication include flushed skin and memory loss.

Over 15,000 people die each year in our country due to alcohol consumption. Although Romanians are not Europe's top drinkers, we are rated the top in terms of mortality caused by alcohol. The Romanian Association for Promoting Health conducted a national survey to raise awareness related to the negative impact of alcohol consumption.

In our country, 10 to 12 liters of pure alcohol are consumed annually per capita, according to the World Health Organization. They estimate that in Romania over 15 thousand people die annually due to drinking that is more than 3500 women and 11 600 men.

Romania ranks first in the EU on alcohol related deaths among women and is rated 4th place after Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in alcohol related death among men.

Europe is world leader in alcohol consumption. In the EU, over 23 million people are addicted to alcohol and drinking is considered the second risk factor affecting the health of Europeans, after tobacco.

Recorded adult (15+) alcohol consumption by type of alcoholic beverage (in % of pure alcohol) is: beer =39%, spirits=39%, wine=22%

Beer includes malt beers. Wine includes wine made from grapes. Spirits include all distilled beverages. Traditional and local beverages in Romania include tuica, palinca and rachiu. There are no known problems from the use of surrogate alcohol (i.e. alcohol which is not intended for human consumption such as industrial alcohol, aftershave, or antifreeze).

In Romania, adult per capita consumption of alcohol is mainly characterized by consumption of beer and spirits. Wine is also consumed, but to a lesser extent. Recorded adult per capita consumption is around 11.3 litres of pure alcohol and appears to have remained stable in recent years. Some unrecorded alcohol production is also seen in the country, adding around 4.0 litres to recorded consumption and giving a total adult per capita consumption of pure alcohol in Romania of around 15.3 litres.

Death Rate caused by alcohol consumption in Romania

Due to the fragmentation of the Information system regarding the death rate and the inconsistency of data about consumption, we only know estimates done in international studies, which used mainly data regarding the death rate.

From the point of view of the burden of this disease – ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION- Romania is characterised by an average risk (on a scale from 1 to 5). The death rate caused by alcohol is illustrated in table 1.

Report on the State of alcohol consumption and health at European Level 2010 by WHO (World Health Organisation)

Table no.1. Prevalence estimated on 12 months in 2004)	MEN	WOMEN
Illnesses due to alcohol consumption (ages 15-64 , per 100.000 population)	13.505,7	2.204,7
Illnesses due to alcohol consumption (15-64 ani), European area WHO	9,1%	2,0%

According to an estimate presented by the Health Ministry : „ in Romania there are around 17,000 deaths caused by alcohol consumption, over 50% of which dying in the active stage of their lives (people aged 20-64).

Mortality at the adult age (20-64 de ani), attributed to alcohol consumption is 3 times higher among the male population, respectively 1.5 times higher among the female population, Data valid for Romania compared to the EU 15 (member states before 2004).

Among the death causes attributed to alcohol consumption we can mention accidents (mortality that is 3 times higher than the EU average). Heart diseases (mortality average EU 10- new member states- and 8 times higher average EU 15). Cirrhosis (mortality over the double of the EU5)”. Data from the Health Ministry of Romania , Public Health Department, 21 March 2011]

Standardized death rates of persons older than 15 / 100.000 inhabitants records the following values between 2000-2005:

*Liver Cirrhosis : between 60,2-71,6 male incidence, 28,1-33,1 female incidence;

- *Alcoholic Liver Disease : 6,1-9,2 male incidence , 1,8-2,4 female incidence ;
- *Traffic Casualties/ accidents: 19,4-21,5 male incidence, 5,4-6,8 female incidence;
- *Poisonings: 5,7-7,8 male incidence , 2,7-3,6 female incidence;
- *Violence acts: 4,2-6,6 male incidence, 1,4-2,3 female incidence.

Relevant results from national Studies, European data, international information

There is a tendency of a slow growth of alcohol consumption at world level comparing to the past decades;

Europe is the region with the most numerous alcohol consumers in the world;

The level of unrecorded alcohol consumption is crucial (approximately 30% of the total alcohol consumption), difficult to be estimated and accompanied by serious risks for health due to impurities and contamination;

While alcohol consumption among the adult population is relatively constant between 2000-2005, it is significantly higher among teenagers and young people in general (71% for teenagers, 80% for the young population);

The young population drinks large quantities of alcohol on the same episode comparing to the adult population (25 % of the young people drinking over 5 doses of alcohol during an episode , comparing to only 11% of the adults);

Approximately 90% of the drinkers consume alcohol constantly all year round;

In România, between 2003-2005 we recorded a total consumption of 15,3 litres of pure alcohol /inhabitant aged 15 + / year, value superior to the EU average valid for the same interval of study, 12.2 litres pure alcohol/inhabitant;

The quantity of alcohol consumed in România by the people who declare themselves drinkers is high (31.75 litres of pure alcohol among males, 15.02 litres alcohol by women);

There are strong associations that are significant from a statistical point of view, between the alcohol consumption and the occupational status., the socio-economical level, marital status and being a smoker or not .

Useful data for national interventions, European or International ones

The level of the harmful effects of alcohol consumption, especially among the vulnerable persons, on roads and at the work places remains high within the member states. According to estimates, 15% of the EU adult population consume alcohol at a high level and periodically, between 5 and 9 million children from the EU families are negatively affected by alcohol, and the harmful and dangerous alcohol intake is the factor that causes around 16% of the cases of neglect of children and abuses against them and approximately 60,000 births of underweight children are born every year due to exaggerated alcohol consumption.

The Impact of abusive alcohol consumption is high among the younger generations of both sexes;

In the past 40 years we have recorded a uniformisation at the alcohol intake level, with rising figures in the Northern and Central Europe, as well as a considerable decrease of its consumption in Southern Europe;

The way of selling/trading alcohol, together with the influence of other relevant factors, combined with the role of the family and the social level is a factor that rises the probability of cases of teenagers starting to intake alcohol or consuming larger quantities once they became consumers.

The availability of alcohol has risen in the EU between 1996-2004. National Policies for establishing alcohol prices, especially when they are associated with other prevention measures can influence the level of harmful alcohol consumption and the associated effects, especially among young people.

Aspects regarding alcohol are of communitary importance, because of the cross-border element and the negative effect upon the economical development, as well as upon public health.

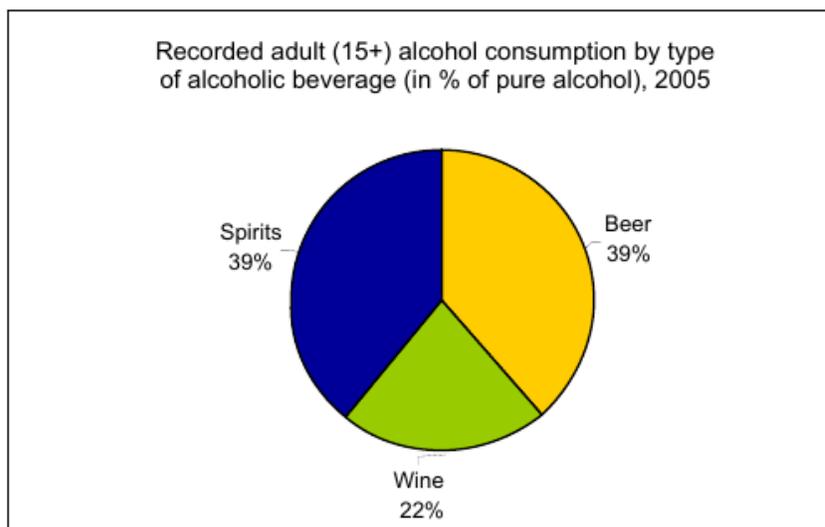
ROMANIA

SOCIOECONOMIC CONTEXT

Total population	21,532,000	Annual population growth rate	-0.5%
Population 15+ years	85%	Adult literacy rate	97.3%
Population in urban areas	54%	Income group (World bank)	Upper-middle Income

Data source: United Nations, data range 1990-2006

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

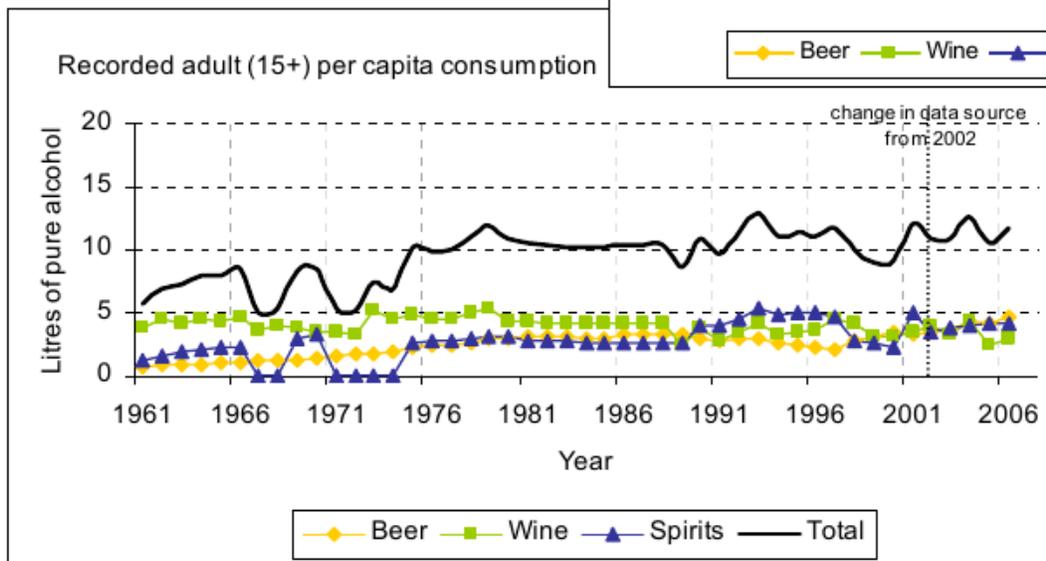
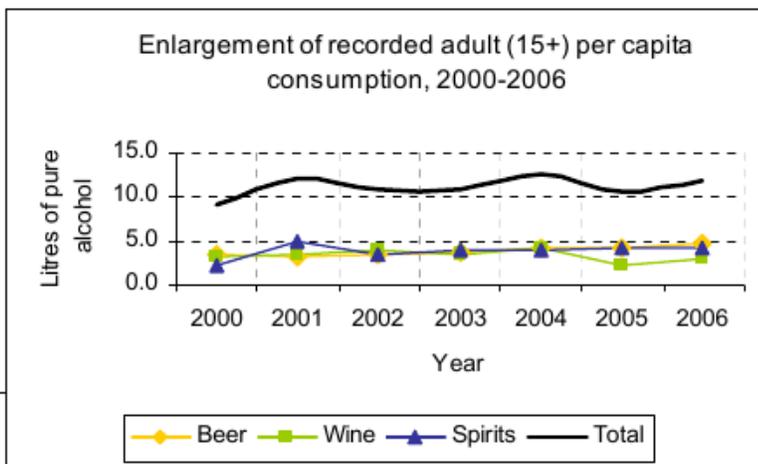


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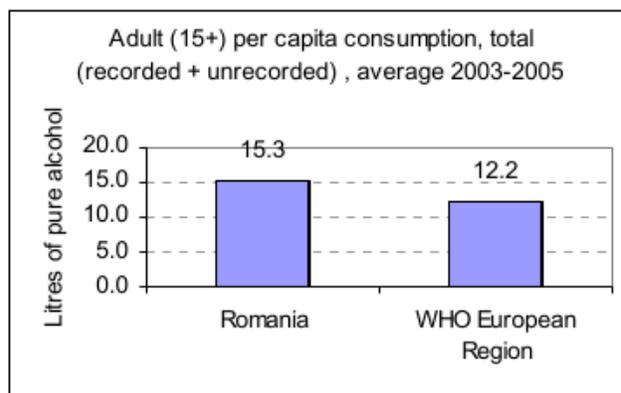
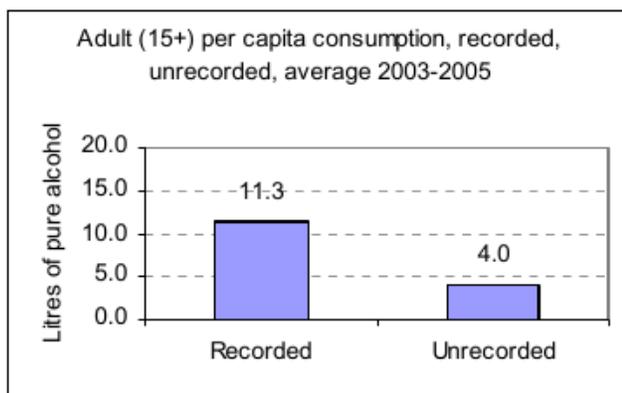
ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

POPULATION DATA

(refer to the population 15 years and older and are in litres of pure alcohol)



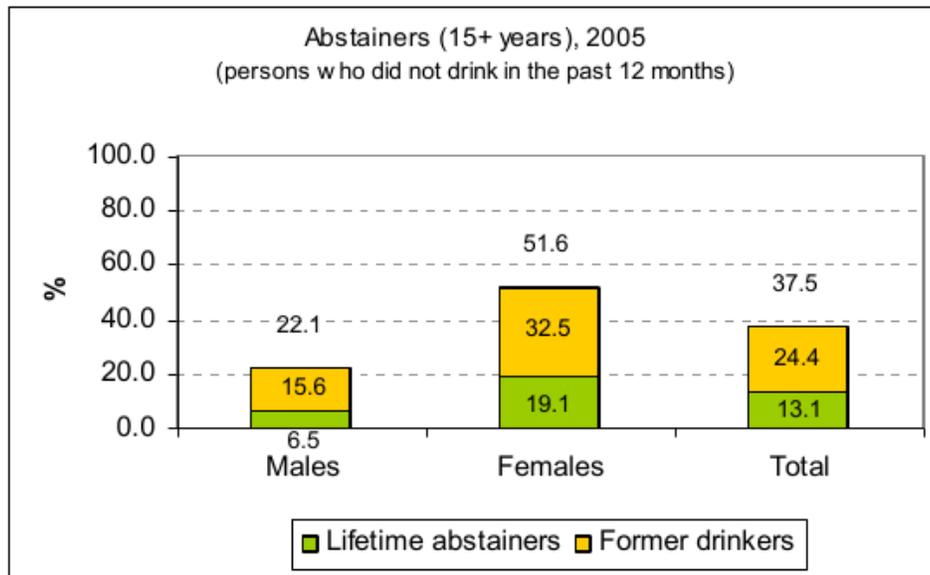
Robust estimate of five-year change in recorded adult (15+) per capita consumption, 2001-2005	<p>Increase</p> <p>Stable</p> <p>Decrease</p> <p>Inconclusive</p>
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In Romania, adult per capita consumption of alcohol is mainly characterized by consumption of beer and spirits. Wine and is also consumed, but to a lesser extent. Recorded adult per capita consumption is around 11.3 litres of pure alcohol and appears to have remained stable in recent years. Some unrecorded alcohol production is also seen in the country, adding around 4.0 litres to recorded consumption and giving a total adult per capita consumption of pure alcohol in Romania of around 15.3 litres.

PATTERNS OF DRINKING

ABSTAINERS



HEAVY EPISODIC DRINKING*

Heavy episodic drinkers, males	--
Heavy episodic drinkers, females	--

* had at least 60 grams or more of pure alcohol on one occasion in the past 7 days

DRINKERS ONLY

Adult (15+ years) per capita consumption*, total	24.48
Adult (15+ years) per capita consumption*, males	31.75
Adult (15+ years) per capita consumption*, females	15.02
Heavy episodic drinkers**, males	--
Heavy episodic drinkers**, females	--

* (recorded + unrecorded) in litres of pure alcohol, average 2003-2005

** had at least 60 grams or more of pure alcohol on one occasion in the past 7 days

PATTERNS OF DRINKING SCORE

Patterns of drinking score*	Least risky	1	2	3	4	5	Most risky
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* Given the same level of consumption, the higher the patterns of drinking score, the greater the alcohol-attributable burden of disease for the country.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES

MORBIDITY

Prevalence estimates (12-month prevalence for 2004)

	Males	Females
Alcohol use disorders (15-64 years, per 100,000 population)	13,505.7	2,204.7
Alcohol use disorders (15-64 years), WHO European Region	9.1%	2.0%
Alcohol dependence (18-65 years)	--	--

ALL CAUSE MORTALITY

Age-standardized deaths rates, 15+ years (per 100,000 population)

	2000		2001		2002		2003		2004		2005	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Liver cirrhosis	62.0	29.8	69.4	33.1	71.6	33.0	66.2	31.0	64.1	29.4	60.2	28.1
Alcoholic Liver disease	6.1	1.8	6.8	1.9	9.2	2.3	8.5	2.4	8.5	2.2	8.1	2.1
Road traffic accidents (1)	20.1	6.3	21.7	5.7	19.4	5.4	20.1	5.5	20.1	5.6	21.5	6.8
Poisoning	7.8	3.4	7.8	3.6	7.6	3.1	7.2	3.0	7.0	2.7	5.7	2.7
Violence	6.4	2.0	6.1	1.9	6.1	2.3	6.6	2.3	5.1	2.2	4.2	1.4

Data source: WHO Mortality Database, based on data as reported by countries

(1) refer to transport accidents

SOCIAL COSTS

Estimates for 2006

Total cost (millions US dollars)	--
Direct healthcare costs (millions US dollars)	--
Direct law enforcement costs (millions US dollars)	--
Other direct costs (millions US dollars)	--
Indirect costs (millions US dollars)	--

HEALTH INDICATORS MONITORED

Alcohol liver cirrhosis	NO
Alcohol-related road traffic injury	YES
Ethanol poisoning	NO
Methanol poisoning	NO
Alcohol use disorders	NO
Liver cirrhosis	NO
Road traffic injury	YES
Alcohol-related recorded crime	NO

There are no other health indicators monitored.

ALCOHOL POLICY

Total ban of alcohol	NO
Adopted written national policy on alcohol	YES (adopted 2005)
National control of production/sale: Monopoly	NO/NO
National control of production/sale: Licensing	YES/YES
Excise tax on beer	YES
Excise tax on wine	YES
Excise tax on spirits	YES
National legal minimum age for off-premise sales of alcoholic beverages (selling) (beer/wine/spirits)	18/18/18
National legal minimum age for on-premise sales of alcoholic beverages (serving) (beer/wine/spirits)	18/18/18
Restrictions for on-/off-premise sales of alcoholic beverages:	
Time (hours and days)	NO
Location (places/density)	YES/NO
Specific events	YES
Intoxicated persons	YES
Petrol stations	NO
National maximum legal blood alcohol concentration (BAC) when driving a vehicle (general/young/professional)	ZERO TOLERANCE
Legally binding regulations on alcohol advertising	YES
Legally binding regulations on alcohol product placement	NO
Legally binding regulations on alcohol sponsorship	NO
Legally binding regulations on alcohol sales promotion	NO
Treatment policy for alcohol use disorders	YES

There is a written national policy on alcohol in Romania which was adopted in 2005. There are restrictions on places of on-/off-premise sales of alcoholic beverages, as well as sales restrictions at specific events and to intoxicated persons. There are also national and legally binding regulations on alcohol advertising.

European Union, monitoring of the EU alcohol strategy

Consumer information on alcohol's impact on health on points of sale (supermarkets, pubs/bars)	YES
Server training at a regular basis	NO
Within the health system:	
Counseling to children in families with alcohol problems	NO
Counseling to pregnant women with alcohol use disorders or alcohol problems	YES
Brief interventions as a method of health promotion and disease prevention	NO
Training of health professionals at a regular basis in screening and brief interventions for alcohol problems	NO
Prevention or counseling programs at workplaces to employers with alcohol problems	NO
Community based interventions/projects involving stakeholders	NO
Interventions/projects actively involving young people and the civil society	NO
Nationwide educational programs as a part of school curriculum	YES
Publicly funded alcohol research and monitoring programs at national or sub-national level	NO
National surveys on drink-driving	NO