

# Booze cheaper than water in New Zealand: study

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Alcohol has become cheaper than bottled water in New Zealand, a study showed Friday, with researchers warning there could be major implications for public health.

Otago University researchers found wine cost as little as 62 cents (47 US) per standard drink, compared to 67 cents for 250ml of bottled water and 43 cents for the equivalent amount of milk.

The study, published in the New Zealand Medical Journal, also found the relative price of [alcohol](#) had plummeted over the past decade as average wages increased.

"Our analysis suggests alcohol is now probably the cheapest recreational drug in New Zealand and has become increasingly affordable, at the same time as concern about [binge drinking](#) culture has grown," associate professor Nick Wilson said.

"International scientific evidence strongly indicates that cheap alcohol is a factor in promoting binge drinking by young people, and in increasing the overall size of the health and social harm from [alcohol misuse](#)."

He said heavy discounting at supermarkets and liquor stores was exacerbating the problem, making alcohol more readily available.

A grape glut in New Zealand has driven down the price of wine in recent years as winemakers seek to offload excess stock.

Wilson and co-researcher Fiona Gunasekara said cheap alcohol was taking a toll on New Zealanders' health and placing a burden on the publicly-funded [health system](#).

They argued the government should adopt the same policies that helped curb [tobacco consumption](#) -- raising taxes and controlling marketing and sponsorship activities, as well as limiting the opening hours of retailers.

The researchers also called for a minimum price per unit of [alcohol](#), particularly in cask wine and alcopops.

"These policies will have little impact on moderate drinkers and will help curb the down-side of New Zealand's binge drinking culture," they said.

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