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TOM TOM ENGLISH



Are you drinking more, or less these days?

VOCABULARY

Lubrication =
oil or grease to make
machinery run more
smoothly

Facilitate =
To make an action or
process easier

Portmanteau =
A word made by
combining 2 other
words or parts of
words

Beverage =
Formal word for drink
(including non-
alcoholic drinks)

Read the article overleaf and discuss these questions:

1. This article contains several different words and expressions that mean “drink”. Can you find them all?
2. The article mention portmanteau words. Can you think of some other examples in English? In Japanese? (there is one more portmanteau word in the article. Can you find it?)
3. Why do you think people are drinking less alcohol than before?
4. How about you? Do you drink more or less these days? Why?
5. Why do you think young people in particular are drinking less? Is this a good thing?
6. Do you think this trend will continue? Why? Why not?

VOCABULARY

Dub =
Give an unofficial name
or nickname to
something or someone

Abstain =
To restrain oneself from
doing something

Apathy =
Lack of interest,
enthusiasm or concern

Frisky =
Playful, full of energy
(sometimes used in a
sexual context)

Duh =
Expression indicating
that another person is
stupid

One of the things you may notice when you come to Japan is how much drinking seems to be going on. Certain Japanese societal circles (the workplace, university clubs, etc) run more smoothly with the help of alcoholic **lubrication** in the form of after-hours “drinking parties” to **facilitate** team-building and bonding—it’s called nomication (or nomination), a **portmanteau** of “nomu” (to drink) and “communication”.

So we were quite surprised to discover recently that Japan’s level of alcoholic **beverage** consumption is actually way, way down. But why?

The new findings, **dubbed** the “Alcohol Report”, came to light following research conducted by the National Tax Agency in May this year. The report details the average alcohol consumption per person per year for the period 1989–2013.

Booze consumption has been dropping pretty steadily for the past several decades. The peak time for alcohol **imbibing** seems to have been the early ’90s, specifically 1992 when the average person was **knocking back** some 108 liters (24 gallons) of alcoholic beverages per year. In 2013, that number was down to 82.8 liters. We should also point out that, while Japan’s birth rate is dropping, the number of adults of drinking age has actually increased since 1992. It would appear, therefore, that today’s young people are increasingly **abstaining** from alcohol at the age when you would realistically expect them to be doing most of their chugging.

So what’s the cause of all this? Healthier living? Rising costs? Social apathy? And is there any connection between Japan’s falling birthrate and the decline in alcohol consumption?

So what’s the cause of all this? Healthier living? Rising costs? Social **apathy**? And is there any connection between Japan’s falling birthrate and the decline in alcohol consumption? (Maybe people would be feeling a little **friskier** if they were **knocking back** a few more?)

The survey also identified Japan’s booziest prefectures. Japan’s capital leads the way for drunkenness, but since it’s also so densely populated, that’s not so surprising. We were always led to believe that Osakans have a fondness for the sauce, but these figures don’t really reflect that, since Kansai’s most vibrant city is in 7th place.

Here’s what Japanese netizens had to say about the report:

“If you want us to drink more, then lower the tax on it. ”

“It’s expensive because of the TAX, **duh.**”

“Isn’t it a good thing if we’re drinking less?”

“It’s because you can’t drive at all if you drink, plus booze is expensive, plus we’re too busy these days.”

“Well, we’ve been raised with the knowledge that cigarettes and alcohol are bad for you.”

“Only scum drink; when you drink you inconvenience everyone around you.”

“It’s not for health reasons, it’s because it’s too darn expensive.”

“Stop blaming the cost, you can get cheap beer for less than bottled water.”

“When drinking with friends, it’s good to just knock back cheap stuff when you’re drinking a lot. At home, I like to pair a delicious meal with something classier.”

Whatever the reason is, we suppose this means there’s more for the rest of us.

Kanpai!