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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

**Knock back =**  
To drink quickly

**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 in Japan is how much drinking goes on. Certain Japanese society circles (the workplace, university clubs, etc) run more smoothly with the help of alcoholic **lubrication**. There are many after-hours drinking parties to **facilitate** team-building and bonding. It's called *nomination*. *Nomination* is 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 going down. But why?

The new findings, **dubbed** the "Alcohol Report", are from 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 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. Although Japan's birth rate is dropping, the number of adults of drinking age has actually increased since 1992. So it seems that today's young people are increasingly **abstaining** from alcohol. Usually we would expect them to drink more.

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 heaviest drinking prefectures. Tokyo leads the way for drunkenness. This is not so surprising because it's so densely populated. We always thought that Osakans drank a lot, but these figures don't really reflect that. Osaka is only in 7th place.

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

"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!