

WHO: Russians Are Not the Biggest Drinkers in the World

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The  **Moscow Times**

A longstanding myth about Russia was debunked by the World Health Organization, which ranked the country only fourth in the world by alcohol consumption — though the first for alcohol-related deaths.

The world's most drink-prone place is Moldova, with 18.2 liters of pure alcohol consumed annually per capita, the UN health watchdog said in this month's [Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health 2011](#).

The Czech Republic was second with 16.4 liters per capita, and Hungary third with 16.2 liters, trailed by Russia with 15.7 liters, the report said.

But the number of deaths attributable to alcohol stood in Russia at a record 20 percent for men and six percent for women.

The report, released Feb. 11, used the data for 2005 and took into account only the population aged 15 or older.

Russia's dismal record on alcohol mortality is to be blamed on predominance of strong spirits, not wine or beer, and the low quality of available alcohol, Igor Beloborodov, head of the Institute for Demographic Studies, told The Moscow Times.

Spirits account for 63 percent of pure alcohol consumed by Russians, compared with 33 percent for beer, a meager 1 percent for wine and 3 percent for all other types of alcoholic beverages, the UN report said.

In Moldovan alcohol consumption, wine, beer and spirits account for about a third each. Beer leads with the Czechs at 57 percent, and Hungarians obtain 40 percent of their alcohol from wine, 35 percent from beer and 24 percent from spirits.

Factors that contribute to the high level of alcohol consumption are low income and severe climate, Beloborodov said.

Alcohol consumption in the United States stood at 9.4 liters per capita, and in Britain at 13.3 liters. The world's least enthusiastic drinkers live in Afghanistan (0.02 liters), Kuwait (0.10 liters) and Mauritania (0.11 liters).

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