

Malawian

men consumed 8 litres of pure alcohol in 2012

By Kondwani Hilary Chitosi

A baseline research has revealed that Malawian men drunk an average of 8.05 litres while women drunk 1.51 litres of pure alcohol in 2012.

The research was conducted by the University of Malawi, the National Statistical Office, the University of Oslo and Hedmark University for the Norwegian Research Council-funded Fighting Poverty Through Alcohol Misuse Prevention in Malawi (ALMA) project.

One litre of pure alcohol, according to Dr. Alister Munthali from the University of Malawi's Centre for Social Research who led the team of researchers, can range from 2.5 litres of 40 percent alcohol gin to 20 litres of 5 percent alcohol beer.

"In this report, alcohol is coded as 100 percent alcohol per year. Thereby we get one litre of pure alcohol out of 20 litres of 5 percent beer, or from 10 litres of 10 percent wine, as well as 2.5 litres of 40 percent gin," he said.

According to the research, which covered 31,675 households country-wide based on the national population distribution of 13 percent in the North, 42 percent in the Centre and 45 percent in the South, men in the Southern Region consumed the most litres of alcohol followed by

those in the centre who drunk 7.2 litres while those in the North consumed the least.

"There is a variation in total consumption of 100 pure alcohol per year in that males from the southern region scored the highest with 9.7 litres, followed by central region with 7.2 litres and lastly the northern region with 7.0 litres with women following the same pattern," reads the report.

The research also revealed that women are more likely to adhere to drinking norms when compared to men. The report says women are less likely to drink with lower nutrition intake and that there is an increase in alcohol with the level of education and that women drink more as they age.

"Women with the lowest social economic status are associated with the highest level of alcohol use," reads the report.

It also says alcohol use in 100 per cent pure alcohol by age group revealed significant associations; there is an increase by age group for females peaking in the age category of 55-60 years and then drop again for the two oldest ages.

It further says for males, the pattern is different in that the youngest group scored the lowest, followed by a marked increase and then a gradual reduction with increasing age.

Minister of Health Catherine Gotani Hara described the research findings as vital in addressing alcohol abuse in the country.

"The Ministry of Health has a very difficult task in fighting against public impact of alcohol. This is based on the fact that in previous years, there has never been any effort to address any challenges that are associated with alcohol consumption as there were no statistics," she said, adding:

"The first task on our hand is to create awareness of this information so that government, non-state actors and players in the alcohol industry promote responsible drinking."

Mike Thiart, Business Development and Export Manager for Carlsberg Malawi, which produces different Carlsberg brands and several gins, said his company promotes responsible drinking.

"Carlsberg Malawi believes in responsible drinking and promotes the same," he said. "Our products have the recommended level of methylene implying that our products are not health hazards."

The research findings ranked opaque beer as the most consumed alcohol followed by kachasu and sachets. Clear beer, such as Carlsberg and Kuchekuche, are the third most consumed alcohol while wine is the least consumed.