

Changes in Government and Trends in Alcohol Consumption in Sri Lanka between 1989 and 2013

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Introduction

Successive governments in Sri Lanka have had policies to decrease alcohol consumption, but the effectiveness of these policies had not been independently assessed. Outcome of policy interventions are difficult to assess using commonly used statistical methods as it is not possible to find an appropriate comparison group. Interrupted time series analysis has been shown to be a useful technique in this situation.

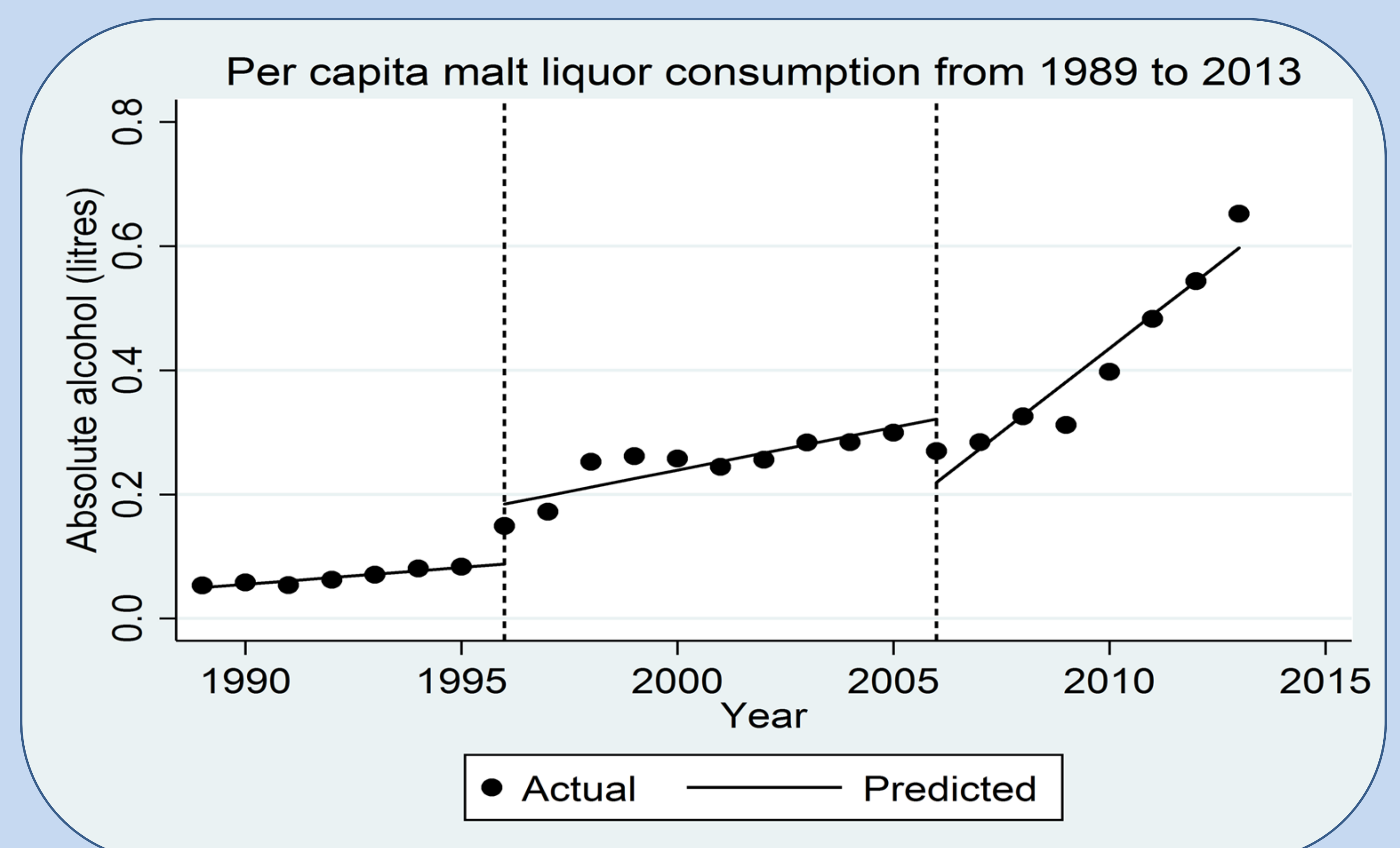
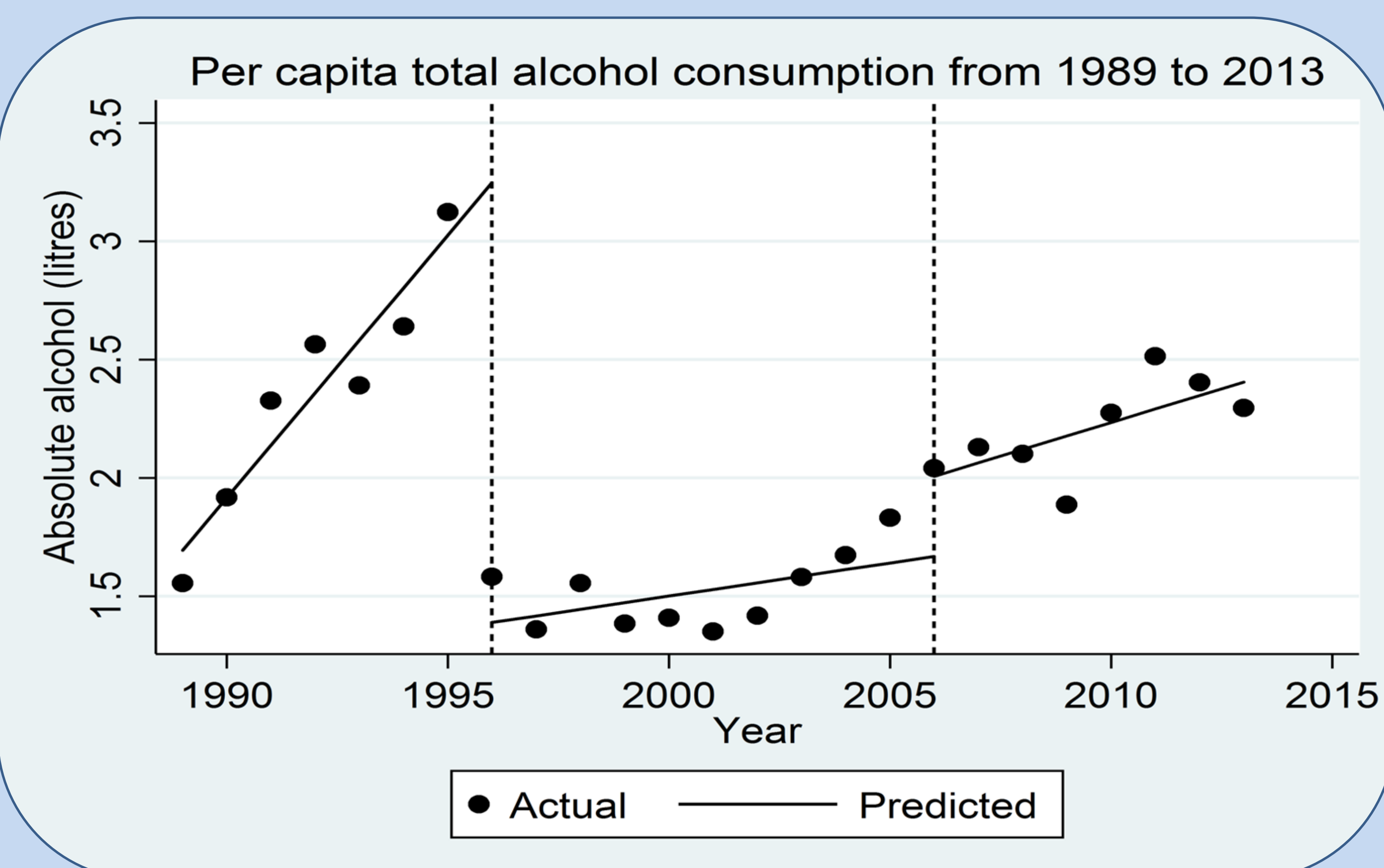
Objective

To assess the impact of recent changes of government in Sri Lanka on population alcohol consumption using production data as an indirect measure of consumption.

Methods

Interrupted time-series regression was performed to assess the impact of changes of government on alcohol production. The data on yearly hard liquor and malt liquor production was obtained from the annual reports of the commissioner of excise for the years 1989 to 2013. Population aged over 14 years for these years was calculated based on the department of census and statistics data. The years 1994 and 2005 in which new executive presidents were elected were taken as the years of changes in government. But 1996 and 2006 were used as intervention years to account for the lag between change of governments and introduction of new policy measures.

Results



Per capita consumption of total absolute alcohol in 1989 and 2013 was estimated as 1.7 and 2.4 litres respectively. There was a significant drop in consumption in 1996 followed by no significant trend till 2005. There was an increase in consumption by 60 ml per year from 2006 and this trend was significant.

Per capita consumption of absolute alcohol from

malt liquor for 1989 and 2013 was estimated as 50 ml and 600 ml respectively. There was a rise in consumption in 1996 followed by an increase in consumption by 14 ml per year till 2005. There was a 100 ml drop in consumption in 2006 followed by an increase in consumption by 54 ml per year from 2006. All these changes in malt liquor consumption were significant.

Discussion

These official data do not cover the contribution of illicit alcohol. This analysis does not take into account changes in socio economic and cultural factors that influence alcohol consumption. In spite of these limitations the results highlight the trends in alcohol consumption during this period.

Conclusion

During the last 25 years there had been an overall increase in per capita consumption of 41% in terms of total alcohol and 1100% in terms of malt liquor consumption. It appears that changes in government are associated with mostly unhealthy changes in the trend in alcohol consumption