

Thirst for craft beer increasing in U.S.

By Alison Griswold, Slate

America's craft breweries are thirsty for a lot more market share. By 2020, the trade association representing small and independent brewers in the U.S. says its members will satisfy 20 percent of the country's beer consumption.

That's quite a bit when you consider that in 2014 beer giant Anheuser-Busch (which includes Budweiser, Rolling Rock, Corona, Stella Artois, and other brands) made up an estimated 45 percent of the U.S. market and MillerCoors another 25 percent or so. But according to the Brewers Association, craft beer might already be more than halfway there – in 2014, its market share flowed into the double digits (at 22.2 million barrels, or 11 percent of volume) for the first time.

Estimates from Beer Marketer's Insights, an industry research group and publication, are more conservative, putting craft beer's volume share closer to 8.9 percent in 2014.

But numbers-parsing aside, the point everyone agrees on is that craft beer is popular, growing fast, and unlikely to slow down any time soon. The Brewers Association put craft beer's 22.2 million barrels in 2014 at an 18 percent increase in volume and a 22 percent increase in sales over the previous year.

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