vinetur

Only 11 states allow interstate beer shipping despite strong consumer demand, report finds

A new industry study says 78% of regular craft beer drinkers would likely buy direct from breweries if more states permitted it.

Tuesday, August 4, 2026



A new industry report says consumer interest in direct-to-consumer beer shipping remains strong in the United States, even as state laws continue to limit the practice to a small part of the country.

The 2026 Direct-to-Consumer Beer Shipping Report, released by Sovos ShipCompliant in collaboration with the Brewers Association, found that many regular craft beer drinkers say they would buy beer shipped directly from breweries to their homes if more states allowed it. But as of March 2026, interstate direct beer shipping was permitted in only 11 states and the District of Columbia, often with restrictions that narrow who can ship and under what conditions.

The report frames that gap between demand and regulation as a major obstacle for small breweries trying to reach customers beyond their local markets. It is the sixth annual edition of the study and combines legal analysis with new consumer research conducted by The Harris Poll.

Direct-to-consumer shipping, often called DtC, allows alcohol producers to sell online or during a brewery visit and then send the order to the buyer’s home through a carrier. The system still requires licensing, tax payments, reporting and compliance with state alcohol laws. The issue for brewers is not whether shipments should be regulated, but whether breweries should be allowed broader access to a channel that wineries have used for years.

That contrast is central to the report. While direct wine shipping was authorized in 48 states and the District of Columbia as of March 2026, beer could be shipped across state lines directly to consumers in only 11 states and Washington. Nine states had what the report described as clear legal authority for out-of-state breweries to take remote orders and ship beer: Alaska, Kentucky, Nebraska, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Vermont and Virginia. The District of Columbia also allows it.

Two other states had narrower rules. In Pennsylvania, a brewery must hold a specific wholesaler or retailer license for off-premise sales because a manufacturing license alone is not enough. In Rhode Island, beer can be shipped only if the customer bought it in person at the brewery. Alaska also limits its license to producers making fewer than 300,000 barrels a year.

The legal map did not change during 2025. Bills were introduced in Texas, Hawaii and Illinois, but none became law. The report says that lack of movement came even as some states expanded direct shipping access for wine and spirits. It points to California,

which extended direct shipping rights to out-of-state distilleries starting in 2026.

For breweries, especially smaller ones, that stalled legislative picture matters because many rely on taprooms, tourism and limited local distribution rather than broad wholesale networks. A traveler may discover a brewery on vacation or at a festival, buy a few cans on site and then find there is no legal way to order more once back home. The report argues that direct shipping could help breweries maintain those customer relationships and sell seasonal releases or small-batch beers that do not fit easily into traditional distribution.

The consumer survey behind the report was conducted by The Harris Poll from Jan. 6 through Jan. 8, 2026, among 2,051 U.S. adults age 21 and older. That group included 703 regular craft beer drinkers, defined as people who drink craft beer at least once a month. The report gives the full sample a credibility interval of plus or minus 2.7 percentage points at a 95% confidence level, with larger variation for smaller subgroups.

The findings reflect stated intentions rather than actual purchases. That distinction matters because both organizations behind the report have an interest in expanding the channel: Sovos ShipCompliant provides compliance services for alcohol shipping, and the Brewers Association represents craft brewers.

Even with that caveat, several measures have remained steady over multiple years. Among regular craft beer drinkers, 78% said they would likely buy beer through direct shipping in the future. That matched the figure reported in 2024 and 2025 and was just below the 2023 level. Within that group, 34% said they were very likely to do so.

Interest in having beer delivered to the home also remained relatively high compared with other consumer categories measured in the survey. Beer reached 58%, close to personal care products and not far behind food and cleaning supplies at 61%. Clothing ranked highest at 66%. Beer has slipped slightly from 61% in both 2023 and 2024 and from 60% in 2025, but the report describes demand as broadly stable.

Spending intentions were another focus. Among respondents who said they wanted to buy craft beer through direct shipping, 72% said they would spend at least $50 a month and 50% said they would spend $100 or more monthly. The average stated monthly spend was $104, equal to about $1,249 a year. That was little changed from $106 per month in the prior year’s survey.

The report does not convert those responses into revenue forecasts or account for shipping costs and packaging expenses that can affect actual buying behavior. Still, it uses those figures to argue that there is meaningful economic potential in serving consumers who want access to beers unavailable near where they live.

Many respondents also said direct shipping would increase their overall craft beer purchases rather than simply replace store visits. According to the report’s detailed data tables, 77% of regular craft beer drinkers said they would buy more craft beer if they could have it shipped directly to their homes. That figure was similar to prior years. The report contains one inconsistency on this point: an infographic lists the 2026 figure at 72%, while another section gives it as 77%.

Interest in out-of-state brands remained especially strong. The survey found that 83% of likely DtC buyers said direct shipping would lead them to try beers from breweries outside their home state. That was down slightly from 86% a year earlier but still suggests broad interest in discovery beyond local shelves. Another 75% said they had tried a beer while traveling that they later wanted to buy at home but could not find.

That travel connection is important for brewery tourism. Taproom visits, brewery trails and beer festivals often introduce consumers to brands with little or no distribution outside their region. For small producers making limited runs of barrel-aged stouts, seasonal ales or one-off collaborations, wholesale distribution may not make economic sense. Direct shipping offers a way to extend sales after the trip ends.

The Brewers Association also argues that DtC shipping does not have to undermine the three-tier system of producers, distributors and retailers that governs most alcohol sales in the United States. Survey responses suggest many consumers see direct purchases as a way to discover brands they may later seek out elsewhere.

Among regular craft beer drinkers who said they would likely buy through direct shipping, 91% said they would probably look for a brand in bars, restaurants or stores after first trying it through a shipment from the brewery. Nearly half, or 49%, said they would be very likely to do so. Those figures were slightly lower than in 2025 but still support the industry's argument that direct shipping can complement retail and on-premise sales rather than replace them.

The survey also found broad support for deeper engagement with breweries that offer legal home shipping. Among likely DtC buyers, 84% said they would try a new beer from such a brewery, 76% said they would buy more often and 69% said they would probably join a beer club subscription program. Another 85% said they would recommend the brewery to friends or family, 71% said they would post about it on social media and 86% said legal home shipping would improve their opinion of the brewery.

Subscription interest could be especially relevant for small breweries looking for recurring revenue without trying to secure permanent shelf space across multiple states.

The survey also outlined who these likely buyers are. Among regular craft beer drinkers interested in DtC shipping, 65% were ages 21 to 44, 59% lived in households earning $100,000 or more annually and 56% had college degrees. Men made up 57%, women accounted for 40% and another 3% identified otherwise. Homeowners represented 74%. Regionally, 43% lived in the South, followed by 26% in the West, 17% in the Northeast and 14% in the Midwest.

Support for changing state laws extended beyond frequent craft drinkers. The report found that 81% of regular craft beer consumers want more states to allow direct beer shipping. Among all U.S. adults age 21 and older surveyed, support reached 63%.

That broader backing may give brewers an argument as state legislatures revisit alcohol policy. But any expansion is likely to remain slow and highly local because each state sets its own rules on licensing, taxes and how direct sales fit within long-established relationships among producers, wholesalers and retailers.

The pressure is greatest on smaller breweries with limited leverage in distribution markets. The Brewers Association says there are more than 9,000 craft breweries in the United States and that more than two-thirds produce fewer than 1,000 barrels annually. For many of them, getting attention from wholesalers is difficult because distributors tend to favor brands with faster turnover and lower inventory risk.

The report cites the National Beer Wholesalers Association’s Beer Purchasers Index as evidence that distributor purchasing of craft brands has declined for three straight years. It does not provide full national sales totals tied to that trend but uses it to argue that alternative routes to market are becoming more important for independent brewers.

Any future expansion of DtC beer shipping will depend on state-by-state legislation defining who can ship, what licenses are required and how taxes are collected and enforced. Even where legal access grows, breweries will still face administrative costs and compliance burdens that can be significant for small operators.

Still, the report presents a clear picture of an industry where consumer demand appears stronger than current law allows. For now, wine remains widely available through direct shipment across most of the country while craft beer remains bound by a patchwork system that leaves many interested buyers without access once they return home from a brewery visit or discover a brand outside their local market.