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Wine and spirits volume fell 6.7% over 12 months, WSWA says

The trade group said consumers grew more selective, leaving bottles priced above $16 more resilient than the broader market.

Wednesday, September 30, 2026



The Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America said Tuesday that its August SipSource data shows a more selective consumer is reshaping the beverage alcohol market, with overall demand for wine and spirits still under pressure even as some higher-priced wine segments hold up better.

According to WSWA, combined wine and spirits volume fell 6.7% over the past 12 months, while revenue declined 5.8% over the same period. The figures point to a market where consumers are still buying, but doing so more carefully and with a narrower focus.

WSWA said wine has shown stronger resilience than the broader market in price tiers at $16 and above. That suggests some buyers are continuing to spend on bottles they see as worth the money, even as total category demand weakens. The data indicates that the pressure is not falling evenly across the market and that price matters more than ever in how consumers are making decisions.

The August reading adds to a pattern of softer performance across beverage alcohol, with revenue falling less sharply than volume. That gap can suggest that products with higher price points, or mixes tilted toward more expensive items, are helping cushion sales even as unit demand slips. In wine, the ability of bottles priced at $16 or more to perform better than the rest of the market stands out at a time when many producers and distributors are trying to judge how far consumers will trade down.

WSWA’s update also points to resilience in some channels, although the broad trend remains negative. The group’s message was that buyers are becoming more selective rather than exiting the category altogether. For companies across the beverage business, that distinction can matter. If consumers are pulling back in volume but still responding in certain price bands or shopping environments, producers, importers, wholesalers and retailers may need to adjust their pricing, promotions and product mix with more precision.

That could be especially important for the wine trade. In a softer market, evidence that wine is holding up better in tiers of $16 and above may shape decisions on where to focus inventory, how to position brands and whether to protect pricing in some parts of a portfolio while becoming more aggressive in others. The same logic can affect shelf strategy, restaurant placements and distributor priorities, since resilience in specific price points can be more valuable than broad but weak demand.

The data also underscores a challenge for the wider beverage alcohol market. A 6.7% drop in volume is a deeper decline than the 5.8% fall in revenue, which suggests that selling fewer cases is still the central problem. That can put pressure on suppliers and distributors that depend on scale, especially if consumers are buying less often or concentrating spending on fewer brands. It can also favor companies with stronger positions in premium tiers, where demand appears to be more stable.

WSWA released the August SipSource figures through a public posting. The organization framed the results as evidence that consumer behavior is changing in ways that are likely to continue shaping sales patterns across wine and spirits. While the report highlighted the relative strength of wine at $16 and above, the broader picture remained one of contraction, with both volume and revenue lower on a rolling 12-month basis.

For beverage companies watching how to manage the next phase of demand, the latest numbers offer a practical signal: overall consumption is weakening, but not every segment is weakening in the same way. That kind of split market can push businesses to make more careful choices on pricing and portfolio mix, particularly in wine, where pockets of resilience may help offset a more difficult sales backdrop.