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# European shoppers drove beverage sales up 2.9% by buying more nonalcoholic drinks

Circana found alcohol sales fell 0.8% across six major grocery markets despite heavy discounting

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Shoppers in six of Europe’s biggest grocery markets spent more on beverages over the past year, but the increase did not come from alcohol. A new analysis by Circana found that total beverage sales in supermarkets and other mass-market retail channels rose

2.9% from June 2025 to June 2026, reaching about €180 billion across France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom.

The report said the growth reflected a shift in consumer habits as more people cut back on alcohol and spent more on soft drinks and low- or no-alcohol alternatives. Across the six markets, spending on alcoholic beverages fell 0.8%, while sales of alternative drinks with low or no alcohol content increased 7.3%.

Traditional alcohol categories all moved lower in grocery retail. Wine purchases declined 1.5%, beer fell 0.9%, cider dropped 1.2% and spirits were down 2.2%, according to Circana. At the same time, sports drinks, energy drinks and yogurt-based beverages helped lift nonalcoholic beverage sales by 5.4% to €109 billion.

Circana linked the change to a broader focus on healthier lifestyles. In its consumer survey, 43% of respondents said they had reduced their alcohol consumption by buying less, postponing purchases or giving them up altogether. Among people ages 25 to 39, that share rose to 50%. Bottled water was among the most commonly purchased beverages, cited by 44% of respondents, followed by juices and smoothies at 31% and tea and coffee at 29%. Only 15% said they had bought more alcoholic drinks.

The pullback in alcohol came even though retailers leaned heavily on promotions. Over the 12-month period covered by the study, 41% of beer and 37% of alcoholic beverages were sold on promotion, compared with 25% of beverages overall. The figures suggest discounting helped support sales, but did not reverse the broader decline in demand for alcohol.

Ananda Roy, senior vice president for strategic growth insights at Circana, said alcohol has been losing popularity since the pandemic and that younger consumers are drinking much less than earlier generations. He said there is little evidence that this behavior will change as those consumers get older. In his view, alcohol producers will need to do more than cut prices. He said companies will need to expand products with lower alcohol content, less sugar and fewer calories if beer, wine and spirits are to keep their place in a market where drinking habits are changing.

The report also found that private-label products are taking a larger share of the beverage business. Store brands now represent 35% of beverage spending across the six markets, with retailer labels gaining ground in categories including coffee, wine, Champagne and milk-based drinks.

Even with the increase in spending, actual consumption grew only slightly. Beverage volumes sold rose 0.5% during the period, while average prices increased 2.3%. That means most of the 2.9% growth in sales value came from higher prices rather than a large increase in the amount consumers bought.

The country data showed different patterns across the region. The United Kingdom, which accounted for 30% of total beverage spending in the six-country group, posted a 3.2% increase in purchases to €54 billion. Circana said the U.K. represented only 19% of total beverage volumes sold across the group, highlighting a higher-value market. In Italy, spending rose 2.9%, and in the Netherlands it increased 2%, even though volumes were flat in both countries. Spain showed a more balanced picture, with prices up 2.4% and volumes up 2.6%. In France, spending growth was driven mainly by stronger purchasing activity, as volumes rose 3.3% while prices increased only 0.4%. Germany was the only one of the six countries to record a drop in beverage volumes, which fell 2.7% while prices climbed 4%.

Some categories still expanded despite the higher price environment. Volumes of yogurt-based drinks rose 12.3%, ready-to-drink spirits increased 12.9%, and still water and plant-based beverages both grew 5.2%. Circana said the overall market improved in the second quarter of 2026, when average prices slipped 0.2% and beverage volumes sold increased 1.6%.