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A U.K. survey found beer is adults’ preferred alcoholic drink

It also found 18.5% chose no- and low-alcohol beer over alcohol-free wine or spirits in the previous 12 months

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Beer ranked as the preferred alcoholic drink among U.K. adults in a survey released Monday, November 16, with respondents also putting no- and low-alcohol beer ahead of alcohol-free wine and spirits when they were asked about lower-alcohol alternatives.

The findings came from research commissioned by Budweiser Brewing Group and carried out online by OnePulse between September 29 and October 5 among 1,719 adults in the United Kingdom aged 18 and older. Because the study was commissioned by a major brewer, the results offer a snapshot of consumer attitudes rather than an independent measure of national sales.

According to the survey, 30% of respondents selected beer as their first-choice alcoholic drink, ahead of wine and spirits. The study also found that 18.5% of all respondents chose no- and low-alcohol beer in the previous 12 months, compared with 11% for non-alcoholic spirits and 10% for non-alcoholic wine.

The results suggest that moderation is not necessarily moving drinkers away from beer altogether. Among people who said they drink beer, 31% said they also choose no- or low-alcohol beer when they want to moderate their alcohol intake. For beverage companies, retailers and hospitality operators, that could matter because it points to competition not only between beer, wine and spirits in their traditional forms, but also within the growing market for lower-alcohol substitutes. The findings may help inform product development, shelf space and pub and restaurant menus, especially as producers try to respond to changing drinking habits.

Taste was the leading factor for consumers choosing a no- or low-alcohol beer. A third, or 33%, of those drinkers said the most important consideration was getting a taste as close as possible to full-strength beer. That put flavor ahead of factors such as brand trust, packaging and branding, according to the survey.

The study also pointed to differences by age. Among respondents ages 18 to 29 who drink no- and low-alcohol beer, 25% said value for money was a leading factor in their choice, second only to taste. Among respondents older than 62, that figure fell to 8%.

Older consumers were more likely to say familiarity and availability mattered. Among respondents older than 62, 47% said they wanted to see more well-known brands offer no- and low-alcohol beer, and 37% said they wanted more of those products available on draft.

The survey also tied moderation to everyday responsibilities. Among respondents ages 30 to 61, 35% said work, family or other commitments the following day were a leading factor in their decision to cut back on alcohol.

Women who drink no- and low-alcohol beer placed a particular emphasis on both availability and flavor. The survey found that 31% wanted better availability in shops and supermarkets, while 35% wanted more choice in pubs, bars and restaurants. It also found that 30% of women said distinctive flavors were the main driver in their choice of no- and low-alcohol beer, compared with 21% of men.

Budweiser Brewing Group used the survey release to highlight its own investment in that part of the market. The company said it refreshed its U.K. no-alcohol portfolio in 2025, including the introduction of Stella Artois 0.0 on draft at the 2025 Wimbledon Championships before expanding the product into pubs. It also said it invested £2.93 million in a de-alcoholization unit at its Magor Brewery in South Wales, which opened in December 2025 and allows the company to produce no- and low-alcohol beers in the U.K., including Corona Cero.

Maria Neves, commercial strategy director at Budweiser Brewing Group, said in the release that consumers want alcohol-free options without giving up taste and that the company’s investment in Magor was aimed at producing those products locally.

The company said the online sample was split evenly between men and women. Budweiser Brewing Group UK&I is the trading name of AB InBev UK Limited, part of Anheuser-Busch InBev. In Britain, the company says it employs more than 1,500 people across breweries in Magor, Samlesbury and Enfield, along with its London headquarters.