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Bordeaux growers removed 21,000 hectares of vines after demand for everyday wines weakened

A 14% drop in export value added to a broader retreat from still wine among buyers under 35

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Bordeaux wine producers are trying to regain their appeal as exports fall, vineyards shrink and younger consumers move away from still wine, raising new pressure on one of France’s best-known wine regions.

An analysis published Tuesday, November 17 by the Belgian magazine So Soir described a region struggling to move beyond an image that still carries prestige for gift buyers but much less appeal for everyday drinking. According to the report, the strongest resistance is no longer aimed at the top names of Bordeaux, such as Margaux or Pomerol, but at the region’s more accessible wines, including generic Bordeaux bottles and appellations such as Castillon and Côtes-de-Bourg.

That shift is showing up in the numbers. Between August 2023 and May 2026, 21,000 hectares of vines were removed in Gironde, according to French state services cited by So Soir. By the end of July 2026, Bordeaux exports had fallen 7% by volume over 12 months and 14% by value. Exports to China, once one of the region’s most important foreign outlets, were down 16% by volume.

The downturn appears to go beyond Bordeaux itself. FranceAgriMer data cited in the report showed that 62% of households under age 35 bought still wine in 2025, down from 68% two years earlier. The decline suggests that Bordeaux is facing not only a regional branding problem but also a broader drop in wine buying among younger adults.

That matters for the beverage industry because Bordeaux’s lower- and mid-priced wines have long been a large-volume part of the market. If younger drinkers keep turning away and export value keeps falling, the region’s everyday wines could face growing questions about pricing, shelf position and long-term viability, while broader wine producers may need to adjust how they market still wine against other alcoholic drinks.

The So Soir report said the image problem is especially sharp in casual consumption. Belgian wine merchant Simon Pirard told the magazine that customers often reject Bordeaux when he suggests a bottle for dinner, saying it no longer feels current for younger social settings. In his view, the region’s classic formula of merlot, cabernet sauvignon and oak aging now feels outdated to many buyers.

Yet the same reputation still works in another part of the market. Consumers remain willing to spend 40 or 50 euros on a recognized Bordeaux label when they want to bring a respectable bottle as a gift, the report said. That leaves the region in an uneven position: the high-end names retain social value, while more ordinary Bordeaux wines are losing ground.

Catherine Papon-Nouvel, who has produced wine for four decades in Saint-Émilion and Côtes-de-Castillon, gave So Soir a blunt assessment of the current market. She said that simply managing to sell wine now feels like an achievement. Her daughter, Agathe, has recently joined her in handling the business's finances, a sign of both family succession and the practical strain now facing producers.

The market pressure is also exposing a divide inside Bordeaux. The world-famous châteaux continue to draw attention and preserve much of the region's aura, but they do not reflect the reality facing producers in less celebrated appellations. Those growers often depend on bottles priced roughly between 7 and 15 euros, precisely the segment described as the hardest to move.

The data on export value suggest that the problem is not just fewer bottles shipped abroad, but weaker returns on what is sold. A 14% drop in value compared with a 7% fall in volume points to pressure on prices, product mix or both. For producers already coping with lower demand at home, that makes recovery more difficult.

China's retreat is particularly significant because Bordeaux once benefited heavily from demand there. The 16% drop in export volume to China cited in the report adds to evidence that past reliance on large external markets can no longer be taken for granted. With domestic consumption patterns also changing, the region has less room to offset weakness in one market with strength in another.

The removal of 21,000 hectares of vines in Gironde over less than three years underlines how structural the adjustment has become. Vineyard destruction on that scale is not just a short-term response to one poor season. It points to growers and public authorities accepting that part of Bordeaux's planted area is no longer economically sustainable under current demand conditions.

The challenge now is as much cultural as commercial. Bordeaux remains one of the most famous names in wine, but its reputation was built in a market where tradition, classification and aging style carried more weight with average buyers. The latest figures suggest those strengths are not enough to secure younger drinkers, who are buying less still wine overall and may be looking for different styles, price points or occasions for consumption.

For producers across wine and other alcoholic beverages, Bordeaux’s struggle is being watched closely because it shows how even a category with global recognition can lose relevance if it fails to connect with a new generation of consumers.