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Non-Alcoholic Beverages Boom: 4% Growth Predicted

Lighter Drinking Trends Surge in Global Markets

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A recent forecast from IWSR, released in February 2025, shows a marked shift in global drinking habits, driven by an increasing tendency toward moderation among consumers of different ages and from diverse regions. Following a period in 2023 when more people chose to abstain from alcohol entirely, 2024 saw a return to drinking, yet with markedly different consumption patterns and an emphasis on greater control. Among the most significant findings is the rise of lighter drinkers, a category that now

represents the largest segment in 15 critical markets, surpassing both medium and heavy drinkers. Lighter drinkers focus on consuming smaller quantities per occasion and often opt to limit themselves to one type of beverage each time they drink. Many also embrace temporary abstinence, with India standing out for its high percentage of young people in major cities who take periodic breaks from alcohol, reaching 72% among respondents.

According to the data, the variety of beverages consumed on a single occasion has also shrunk, dropping from an average of 2.4 categories of drinks in 2023 to 1.8 in 2024. This suggests that individuals are not only reducing their overall intake but also opting for more focused drinking occasions. In parallel, the market for both non-alcoholic and low alcohol options is steadily growing, with the latest projections predicting a 4% combined increase in volume through 2028. Zero-alcohol beverages are set to expand by an estimated 7%, with this combined segment likely to gain an additional four billion dollars in global value. Many younger drinkers who adopt these options report consuming them regularly and intensively, while reducing their intake of traditional beer and wine. Across ten key markets, the total per capita consumption of pure alcohol has now fallen to 80% of what it was at the turn of the century.

IWSR's findings reveal that growth prospects differ depending on the specific category. Beer and wine with zero alcohol are expected to record zero growth, which may stem from challenges in consumer perception or a lack of innovative products. Zero-alcohol spirits, in contrast, appear poised to contract by 4%, suggesting obstacles in satisfying consumer preferences and establishing a strong market position. However, low alcohol categories show considerably more promise, with ready-to-drink offerings predicted to jump by 17% and low alcohol wine to climb by 10%. This may point to consumers searching for beverages that contain less alcohol but do not eliminate it entirely, reflecting a desire for middle-ground options. The growth in these lower alcohol choices underscores the opportunity for brands to invest in product development, marketing, and outreach strategies aimed at enhancing the appeal of balanced drinking.

As consumer preferences trend toward more measured and mindful alcohol consumption, the findings indicate clear avenues for innovation and brand positioning. IWSR highlights the importance of meeting these evolving demands through products

that align with lighter drinking habits and deliver flavor experiences that resonate with this changing market. The shift is multi-layered, spanning multiple regions and demographics, and underscores an environment in which adaptation is increasingly essential for industry players seeking sustained relevance and success.