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Millennials Overtake Boomers as Largest U.S. Wine-Drinking Group, Now Making Up 31%

Survey reveals overall wine consumption drops by 9 million adults, with younger generations reshaping industry preferences and habits

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A new study from the Wine Market Council has found that Millennials, defined as Americans aged 29 to 44, are now the largest group of wine drinkers in the United States. The findings come from the Council’s 2025 U.S. Wine Consumer Benchmark

Segmentation Survey, which was released this week and is considered one of the most comprehensive studies of American wine consumers. The survey included nearly 5,000 adults over the age of 21 and was balanced to reflect U.S. census data for age, income, education, gender, and ethnicity.

According to the survey, Millennials now make up 31% of U.S. wine drinkers, surpassing Baby Boomers, who account for 26%. This marks a significant change from 2023, when Boomers held a 32% share. Gen Z's presence among wine drinkers also increased from 9% to 14%, even though only about half of that generation is currently old enough to legally purchase alcohol.

Liz Thach, President of the Wine Market Council, presented the results with Research Director Christian Miller during a recent webinar for Council members. Thach noted that while Millennials and Gen Z are increasing their participation in wine drinking, overall wine consumption in the U.S. is declining. The survey found that only 29% of Americans of legal drinking age now say they consume wine at least every two to three months, down from 34% in previous years. This translates to about 76 million adult wine consumers in the country—nine million fewer than in 2023.

Miller pointed out that the largest drop in wine consumption came from Baby Boomers, those over age 60. He said this decline was expected as older consumers reduce alcohol intake with age. However, he also noted that this trend presents challenges for the industry as it seeks to connect with younger generations.

The study also highlighted some positive developments. Gen Z is drinking wine more frequently than two years ago, and the ethnic makeup of American wine drinkers is now more closely aligned with the overall adult population. The number of men reporting wine consumption has also increased since the last survey.

Millennials are entering life stages associated with higher spending on alcoholic beverages, such as marriage and homeownership. However, their preferences differ from previous generations. Many Millennials and Gen Z consumers say they do not like the taste of wine or prefer other alcoholic beverages. Thirty-five percent of Millennials surveyed said they do not like wine's taste, while 39% said they prefer other drinks. Miller linked this to confusion about what flavors different wines offer.

Thach described this as a wake-up call for winemakers and marketers. She emphasized the need for clearer communication about flavor profiles and styles so consumers know what to expect before making a purchase.

The survey found notable differences in varietal preferences between generations. Baby Boomers tend to favor bold red wines like Cabernet Sauvignon, while Millennials prefer merlot, pinot noir, chardonnay, muscat, rosé and sweet rosé wines. Gen Z shows a preference for grenache, chardonnay, muscat and rosé styles as well. Both younger groups are more likely than older generations to drink sparkling wines such as Prosecco, Champagne and Cava.

Another shift identified by the study is how Americans view wine occasions. More than 40% now say they choose wine to make occasions feel special—a change from past surveys where relaxation at home was the main reason for drinking wine. Thach said weekday dinner and relaxing-at-home occasions have declined and suggested that the industry needs to better communicate that wine can be enjoyed in moderation as part of everyday life.

Health and wellness trends are also influencing drinking habits. Twenty-four percent of Gen Z and 21% of Millennials reported changing their alcohol consumption in the past year to improve mood, sleep or energy levels—compared with just 11% of Gen X and 5% of Boomers. Miller explained that these changes are driven more by wellness concerns than medical advice.

The survey also found that many Americans are reducing sugar intake and avoiding additives or processed foods in their diets. Thach said there is a perception among some consumers that wine contains high levels of sugar or unnecessary additives and called for greater transparency from producers.

The full report on the Wine Market Council’s latest survey will be available to members in the coming weeks. It will include detailed data on changes in consumption by category, purchasing channels, varietals, price points and regions—as well as information on wine tourism and wellness factors analyzed by demographic segment.

The Wine Market Council is a non-profit organization focused on research and education for the American wine industry. It provides ongoing studies to help its members understand evolving consumer trends and market dynamics across the country.