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Half of Gen Z and Millennials Plan to Join Dry January as Non-Alcoholic Beer Sales Surge 65%

Younger Americans drive shift toward moderation, prompting brands to expand creative alcohol-free and low-ABV drink options year-round

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Dry January is seeing strong participation in the United States, with new data showing that younger consumers are leading the movement toward alcohol moderation and abstention. According to the latest US On-Premise Impact Report from NIQ, four in ten Americans who visit bars and restaurants say they are likely to take part in Dry January in 2026. The survey, conducted in early December 2025 among 1,600 legal drinking age consumers across Texas, New York, Florida, and California, highlights a significant

shift in drinking habits, especially among Gen Z and Millennials.

The report finds that 50% of Gen Z and 49% of Millennials plan to participate in Dry January, compared to 38% of Gen X and 44% of Boomers. While one-third of respondents say they are unlikely to join the trend, the data points to a meaningful level of engagement across all age groups. For those taking part, soft drinks (57%) and hot or iced drinks (41%) are the most popular alternatives to alcohol. Sparkling water (29%) and mocktails (15%) also see notable interest, while alcohol-free beer (13%), wine (12%), and spirits (11%) remain smaller but growing categories.

Despite the popularity of non-alcoholic options, about 10% of Dry January participants say they plan to avoid bars and restaurants altogether during the month. This underscores the challenge for beverage brands and hospitality venues: making non-alcoholic offerings appealing enough to keep customers coming through the doors.

The trend toward moderation extends beyond January. Even among those not participating in Dry January, two-thirds say they intend to moderate their alcohol consumption throughout the year. This “less, but better” approach is reflected in recent on-premise choices, where soft drinks (56%), coffee (44%), and iced tea (39%) are common selections. Alcohol-free beer, wine, and spirits remain niche but are gaining traction.

Innovation is also playing a key role. Nearly four in ten consumers tried a new drink last month, with experimentation highest among Gen Z (60%) and Millennials (58%). Cocktails (24%), beer (20%), soft drinks (17%), and coffee (16%) were the most common new beverages sampled. This appetite for variety presents an opportunity for brands to introduce creative non-alcoholic or low-ABV options.

Dry January has become a major driver for non-alcoholic beer sales. In January 2025, sales velocity for non-alcoholic beer increased by 65% compared to the previous year’s January figures. The momentum continued through the first half of the year as more venues expanded their selection of alcohol-free products.

Beverage brands are responding by offering more low-ABV drinks such as spritzes and lighter beer styles, as well as smaller serving sizes. These options cater to consumers who want to reduce their alcohol intake without giving it up entirely. At the same time, brands are focusing on engaging younger audiences by encouraging experimentation and highlighting bartender creativity.

Matthew Crompton, Vice President On-Premise Americas at CGA by NIQ, said that Dry January represents more than just a temporary dip in alcohol consumption—it is a strategic opportunity for suppliers. “Consumers are signaling that they want choice, quality, and experience, whether that’s zero-proof or low-ABV,” Crompton said. “Brands that respond with elevated offerings and creative activation will not only protect share in January but build loyalty for the long term.”

The findings suggest that Dry January is not about abstaining from social experiences but about reframing them. Younger consumers especially continue to seek out sociable and flavorful experiences; they are simply exploring a wider spectrum of beverage choices that include premium non-alcoholic and low-ABV options alongside traditional alcoholic drinks. Brands that focus on quality, ritual, and discovery stand to benefit not just during Dry January but throughout the year as consumer preferences continue to evolve.