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Boomers Drive TBA Declines as Gen Z Steps Up

by The IWSR Drinks Market Analysis, www.theiwsr.com

Reduced participation by the Boomer age cohort was a major cause of beverage alcohol's deepening consumption decline in 2025, but there are encouraging signs that Gen Z is becoming more engaged and increasing participation.

Generational shifts are having a pronounced impact on total beverage alcohol (TBA) consumption trends around the world with contrasting fortunes for Boomers at one end of the age spectrum and Gen Z at the other.

IWSR's *Bevtrac 2026 Consumer Insights: Wave 1* report, based on consumer research undertaken in key markets around the world* in March 2026, points out that, while consumer confidence is recovering, TBA consumption remains under pressure thanks to embedded moderation trends, generational behavior changes and rising engagement with no-alcohol options.

TBA volumes in the top 15 (T15) markets declined by -3% in 2025 compared to a -2% fall in 2024. All major categories registered declines in 2025, except for RTDs and no-alcohol.

Bevtrac consumer research indicates that moderation among Boomers (those aged 61-plus) is a key element in this continued volume contraction, partially offset by more positive trends among Gen Z (LDA-28) who are becoming more engaged with beverage alcohol.

"Boomers are the only generation not only reducing participation, but also drinking less frequently and consuming fewer drinks per occasion," said Marten Lodewijks, IWSR Managing Director & President. "Boomers' moderation is driven by cost considerations, as well as lifestyle changes, including health concerns and fewer socializing occasions.

"At the same time, Gen Z participation is growing as a larger proportion of consumers reaches legal drinking age. Although digital entertainment captures a significant share of their leisure time, drinking remains relevant in social contexts. Gen Zs favor cocktails, RTDs and no-alcohol alternatives that provide the experience and inclusivity while staying in control."

Boomers: cost and lifestyle drive embedded moderation

Moderation is now firmly established across all T15 markets but is especially pronounced among Boomers who are more likely to say they are drinking less in key markets such as Brazil, India and the U.S.

Total participation is at 76% in March 2026, significantly higher than April 2023 (75%), but it has softened slightly since a high in 2024. Frequency is stable, while intensity shows the sharpest decline. The average number of drinks per occasion fell from 4.4 in March 2024 to 3.9 in March 2026.

Within this context, Boomers are the both lowest-consuming age cohort and the only one to register declines across participation, frequency and intensity, exerting a disproportionate drag on TBA volumes.

"Actively choosing to drink less has become the default position in the world's leading TBA markets," said Lodewijks. "Strong moderation stability across the T15 suggests this behavior has become structural, rather than a cyclical or trend-driven phenomenon, but older cohorts are consistently the most likely to report drinking less in general. This trend is accelerating among Boomers in Brazil and among both Boomers and Gen X in India."

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NABCA June 2026 Control States Results

Control States posted solid gains in June benefiting from additional selling days across several markets. Spirits sales strengthened with 9L volume increasing +4.8% and $Vol rising +3.2% resulting in a -1.6% price mix. Overall, Control States experienced six additional selling days during the month, including two more selling days in Michigan and one additional selling day each in Alabama, Montana, North Carolina and Utah. Despite June's positive performance, rolling 12-month spirits results remained negative, with 9L volume down -0.5% and $Vol down -2.5%, producing a -2.0% price mix.

Category performance was broadly positive. Cocktails, led by canned ready-to-drink (RTD) products, continued to be the primary growth driver with 9L volume increasing +33.7% and $Vol rising +35.6%. Cordials, Domestic Whiskey, Irish, Tequila and Vodka also reported gains. Tequila posted growth in every Control State except Mississippi. Scotch remained challenged with 9L volume declining -3.0%.

Wine sales showed modest improvement in June with 9L volume increasing +0.1% and $Vol rising +0.8% yielding a positive price mix of +0.7%. Wine performance benefited from the six additional selling days and the presence of only four Sundays during the month. On a rolling 12-month basis, however, wine trends remained negative with 9L volume declining -4.2% and $Vol decreasing -2.7%, partially offset by a positive +1.5% price mix.

The on-premise channel delivered strong spirits results in June with 9L volume increasing +6.2% and $Vol rising +4.0%. All but one Control State reported growth during the month. Rolling 12-month on-premise spirits performance was mixed with 9L volume up +0.8% but dollar volume down -1.3% resulting in a -2.1% price mix.

On-premise wine results were mixed in June. Volume was flat year over year while $Vol increased +2.6% generating a positive price mix of +2.6%. Longer-term trends remained challenging with rolling 12-month 9L volume declining -4.1% and $Vol decreasing -2.7%, partially offset by a positive +1.4% price mix.