

## **WINE GAINS MOMENTUM AS AMERICANS' FAVORITE ADULT BEVERAGE**

For the first time in Gallup's measurement of Americans' drinking preferences, there is a statistical tie between wine and beer as the alcoholic beverage adult drinkers say they drink most often. As recently as last year, beer edged out wine as Americans' standard drink. Today, according to Gallup's annual Consumption Habits poll, 39 percent of drinkers in the United States say they drink wine most often, while 36 percent say they usually drink beer.

Overall, 63 percent of Americans say they drink alcohol, which is consistent with the rate of drinking recorded for most of the six decades Gallup has asked this question. The major exception is the period from 1976 through 1981, when 69 percent-71 percent said they drank alcohol.

Most of the latest change in Americans' preference for type of drink is seen in the percentage naming wine, up six points from 33 percent in 2004. This is the first significant shift in wine preferences recorded in the last eight years.

When Gallup asked Americans about their drinking preferences in 1992, beer was the runaway leader, with 47 percent naming it; just 27 percent named wine. Liquor has consistently ranked third, with between 18 percent and 24 percent naming it as their preferred drink.

Given the overall trends, one might assume that beer drinkers have merely switched over to wine. But a close review of the data suggests a more complicated pattern of changes in alcohol consumption since 1992. With one demographic group, beer drinking is giving way to liquor, while among another, beer is losing ground to wine; with still another, the preference for liquor is declining while wine is gaining.

The net result is a decrease in the percentage of drinkers naming beer as their standard drink (from 47 percent in 1992 to 36 percent today) and a commensurate increase in wine drinkers (from 27 percent to 39 percent), with no change in those preferring liquor (21 percent).

### **In Search of a Keg Party**

One of the biggest trends Gallup sees in drinking patterns over the past decade is a crumbling of the once-dominant positioning of beer among young adults.

It appears that young adults are trading in their beer mugs for martini glasses, in droves. Beer is still the preferred drink of nearly half of adults aged 18-29, but the figure is down compared with 10 -- and even five -- years ago. In contrast, the percentage saying they usually drink liquor has more than doubled, from 13 percent to 32 percent.

Beer is also losing ground among middle-aged Americans. The percentage of those 30-49 who most often drink beer has declined from 48 percent in the early 1990s to 40 percent in the last two years. Both liquor and wine have made corresponding gains among this age segment as a result.

The percentage of beer drinkers among older Americans -- those 50 and older -- appears stable at around 30 percent. Wine consistently has been the top drink preferred by this age category, although since 1994, the percentage choosing wine has increased further (from 37 percent to 45 percent), while the percentage for liquor has declined (from 30 percent to 20 percent).

Despite the downward trend in the percentage of young adults whose preferred drink is beer, it remains their top choice as of Gallup's July 2005 survey. Wine and beer are closely matched as the preferred drink of those 30-49, while wine is the clear leader among those 50 and older.

### **The Gender Gap in Drinking**

Men prefer beer; women prefer wine. That has been the case throughout Gallup's tracking of this measure. Even in 1992, when beer was chosen by nearly 2-to-1 over wine among all drinkers, only 27 percent of women named beer as their standard drink, while 43 percent named wine. Since then, wine has gained in popularity among both sexes, but especially among men.

This advance for wine has come at the expense of beer. There has been virtually no change in preference for liquor among men and women, but the percentage naming beer has declined since 1992/1994 by 12 points among men, and by 6 points among women.

### **Minorities Switching to Wine**

The national shift from beer to wine is especially pronounced among the nonwhite population. The long-term increase in preference for wine (since 1992/1994) has been +7 percentage points among white Americans, but +17 points among nonwhites. Similarly, the percentage of those preferring beer has fallen by 10 points among whites, but by 15 points among nonwhites.

**What's it to Radio?** This study's results make your station a valuable ally not only for the beer advertisers in your market, but for wine advertisers as well. After all, Radio can be instrumental both in turning around a sales decline and in bolstering rising sales figures. *Source: Gallup News Service, 7/18/05*