

International Alliance for Responsible Drinking (IARD) U.S. and U.K. Survey Data Fact Sheet - May 2026

Mindful moderation is becoming a mainstream drinking mindset across countries and generations

New survey data commissioned by IARD from the United States and United Kingdom points to a shared shift in how people who choose to drink think about moderation. Across both countries, adults who choose to drink still plan to take part in social and summer occasions involving beer, wine, cider or spirits, but they are building in balance, personal choice, pacing, and practical moderation habits. Younger adults often connect moderation to well-being, sleep, cost, fitness, social image, and lifestyle management, while older adults emphasize established moderation practices such as drinking slowly, eating while drinking, choosing quality over quantity, and making self-directed choices.

Moderation is becoming more deliberate across both countries and generations

Across age groups in both the U.S. and U.K., people who choose to drink are thinking more about how alcohol fits into their lives. The shift is strongest among younger adults, but the data shows a broader cross-generational movement toward intentionality.

Key Data Points:

- 49% of U.S. respondents and 49% of U.K. respondents say their approach to moderate drinking has become more intentional over time.
- In the U.S., 64% of Gen Z say their approach has become more intentional, followed by 49% of Millennials, 43% of Gen X, and 39% of Boomers.
- In the U.K., Gen Z and Millennials show the strongest intentionality shifts at 57% and 56%, followed by 47% of Gen X and 35% of Boomers.

Key Takeaway: Moderation appears to be becoming a more conscious and established behavior and shared across generations

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Adult drinkers are connecting moderation to well-being, balance, and quality of life

The leading motivations for moderate drinking suggest adults who choose to drink are intentionally connecting alcohol choices to how they want to feel, function, spend, and socialize.

Key Data Points:

- In the U.S., the top motivations are emotional well-being (30%), preferring quality over quantity (28%), and better sleep (28%).
- In the U.K., the top motivations are preferring quality over quantity (28%), emotional well-being (28%), and wanting to achieve a well-balanced lifestyle in general (27%).
- Cost is also part of the moderation story: 22% of adults who choose to drink in both the U.S. and U.K. say saving money motivates them to drink moderately.

Key Takeaway: The moderation mindset appears to be aligned with everyday lifestyle goals: feeling better, sleeping better, spending wisely, and choosing quality experiences.

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Generations approach moderation differently, but the goal is the same

Gen Z and Millennials are more likely to connect moderation with lifestyle management, while Boomers are more likely to define moderation through established practical behaviors and quality cues. These differences point to distinct paths toward the same broader outcome: more mindful drinking.

Key Data Points:

- In the U.S., 38% of Gen Z cite emotional well-being as a motivation for drinking moderately, compared with 20% of Boomers; 34% of Gen Z cite saving money, compared with 9% of Boomers.
- In the U.K., Millennials (34%) and Gen Z (33%) are most likely to cite emotional well-being, while Boomers are most likely to cite preferring quality over quantity (36%).
- Boomers are more likely to say nothing in particular motivates their moderation: 35% in the U.S. and 30% in the U.K., compared with 10% of Gen Z in both markets.

Key Takeaway: Younger adults are viewing moderation more expansively to include well-being, money, work, fitness, and social identity, while older adults reinforce moderation through established routines and quality-oriented choices.

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Adult drinkers define moderation through control, planning, and practical habits

Across both markets, adults who choose to drink tend to define moderate or reasonable drinking through behaviors that help them stay in control before, during, and after social occasions.

Key Data Points:

- Drinking slowly is the leading definition of moderate drinking in both markets, cited by 52% of U.S. respondents and 52% of U.K. respondents.
- Eating prior to and while drinking is also central, cited by 48% in both the U.S. and U.K.
- Planning a safe way home is cited by 41% in the U.S. and 38% in the U.K.; paying attention to body and mood is cited by 40% in the U.S. and 33% in the U.K.

Key Takeaway: Adult drinkers are viewing moderation as a set of practical choices: pacing, eating, planning ahead, monitoring how they feel, and setting limits - not simply counting drinks.

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Adult drinkers are prioritizing personal choice over social pressure

A strong majority of respondents in both markets say alcohol-related decisions should feel personal and self-directed rather than influenced by others.

Key Data Points:

- In the U.S., 64% say it is very important that drinking choices feel fully self-directed, and 28% say it is somewhat important.
- In the U.K., 60% say self-direction is very important, and 35% say it is somewhat important.
- Boomers give the strongest very important response in both markets, at 70% in the U.S. and 70% in the U.K.

Key Takeaway: Mindful moderation is not only behavioral; it is also personal. Adults who choose to drink want choices that reflect their own priorities, limits, and values.

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Summer occasions remain social, with moderation built in

The data does not suggest adult drinkers are stepping away from alcohol occasions. Instead, many are incorporating moderation and responsibility into the way they plan to socialize and celebrate.

Key Data Points:

- 86% of U.S. respondents and 89% of U.K. respondents plan to drink beer, wine, cider or spirits during summer events and occasions.
- Among those planning to drink this summer, 62% in the U.S. and 52% in the U.K. say wanting to drink moderately or responsibly will shape their behavior.
- When forced to choose the single most important summer drinking factor, moderation/responsibility leads in both markets: 35% in the U.S. and 32% in the U.K.

Key Takeaway: Moderation is part of the summer occasion experience, not a barrier to it. Adults who choose to drink still plan to participate, but with intentional thought behind how they drink.

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Taste, socializing, and cost still matter, but moderation is part of the decision

Adult drinkers continue to value enjoyment and connection, but those priorities now appear to sit alongside responsibility, cost, and personal control.

Key Data Points:

- In the U.S., the top factors shaping summer drinking are taste (67%), wanting to drink moderately or responsibly (62%), socializing (56%), and cost (45%).
- In the U.K., the top factors shaping summer drinking are socializing (58%), taste (56%), wanting to drink moderately or responsibly (52%), and cost (49%).
- The single most important factor differs by generation: in the U.S., taste leads among Gen Z (38%), Millennials (33%), and Gen X (34%), while moderation/responsibility leads among Boomers (49%); in the U.K., moderation/responsibility leads among Gen X (34%) and Boomers (42%), while taste leads among Gen Z and Millennials (27% each).

Key Takeaway: Mindful drinking is not about removing enjoyment from social occasions. It is about balancing taste, socializing, cost, responsibility, and personal control.

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Adult drinkers plan to use concrete moderation strategies at summer events

The same practical habits adults who choose to drink associate with moderation are also the behaviors they plan to use during summer events and sporting occasions.

Key Data Points:

- At summer events, the top U.S. strategies are drinking slowly (52%), eating prior to and while drinking (49%), planning a safe way home (41%), paying attention to body and mood (40%), and setting a personal drink limit (37%).
- At summer events, the top U.K. strategies are drinking slowly (50%), eating prior to and while drinking (47%), planning a safe way home (35%), avoiding rounds or pressure to keep up (33%), and counting or tracking drinks (31%).
- At sporting events, planning and pacing remain strong: in the U.S., 52% plan to drink slowly, 52% plan to eat while drinking, and 45% plan a safe way home; in the U.K., 49% plan to drink slowly, 46% plan to eat while drinking, and 35% plan a safe way home.

Key Takeaway: Moderation strategies are tangible and easy to communicate: Slow down, eat, plan transportation, set limits, track intake, alternate with water or non-alcoholic options, and pay attention to how alcohol affects body and mood.

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Summer plans show broad social relevance for media and stakeholders

Summer drinking behavior should be understood in the context of social connection. Friends and family, hospitality, travel, parties, sports, and community events all create real-world settings where moderation behaviors can matter.

Key Data Points:

- Spending time with friends and family is the leading summer plan in both markets: 70% in the U.S. and 74% in the U.K.

- Restaurants, bars, or clubs are a major setting in both markets: 56% in the U.S. and 61% in the U.K. plan to go to these venues.
- Parties, sports, and community events are also important: in the U.S., 43% plan to attend a party, 39% plan to watch or attend sporting events, and 37% plan to attend a community event, festival, or fan event; in the U.K., 33% plan to attend a party, 34% plan to watch or attend sporting events, and 28% plan to attend a community event, festival, or fan event.

Key Takeaway: The moderation story is highly relevant to the places where people actually gather -- homes, restaurants, bars, clubs, sporting events, festivals, vacations, and community occasions.

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Generational nuance creates stronger stakeholder messaging

The data shows a shared moderation trend, but the most effective message may differ by generation and market.

Key Data Points:

- Gen Z is a strong signal of lifestyle-led moderation: in the U.S., Gen Z over-indexes on emotional well-being (38%), saving money (34%), work responsibilities (28%), fitness goals (27%), and social image (30%); in the U.K., Gen Z also over-indexes on social image (25%), work responsibilities (20%), fitness goals (19%), and avoiding regret (21%).
- Boomers are more likely to emphasize established practices: in the U.S., 68% define moderation as drinking slowly and 58% as eating before and while drinking; in the U.K., 64% define moderation as drinking slowly and 51% as eating before and while drinking.
- Millennials and Gen X provide important middle-ground signals: U.S. Millennials lead on better sleep as a motivation (36%), while U.K. Millennials lead on emotional well-being (34%); U.S. Gen X leads on cost shaping summer drinking (51%), while U.K. Gen X is most likely to cite drinking moderately/responsibly as a summer behavior factor (58%).

Key Takeaway: The strongest stakeholder story is not one generation replacing another. It is that each generation is bringing a different vocabulary to moderation: lifestyle, responsibility, practicality, quality, and personal control.

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Bottom Line

Across the U.S. and U.K., people who choose to drink are becoming more mindful in how they approach their relationship with alcohol. Nearly half in each market say their approach to moderate drinking has become more intentional over time, and large majorities still plan to drink during summer occasions. Gen Z and Millennials are helping expand the conversation by linking moderation to well-being, sleep, money, fitness, responsibilities, and social image, while Boomers and older adults demonstrate that moderation is also rooted in practical habits such as drinking slowly, eating while drinking, planning ahead, choosing quality, and making self-directed choices.

Overall, the data points to a broader cultural shift: moderation is becoming intentional, personal, practical, and compatible with enjoying social occasions. Moderation is not a niche behavior or a rejection of social drinking, it is a mainstream mindset that shapes how adults who choose to drink plan, pace, choose, socialize, and stay in control.

Research methodology

United States: Talker Research surveyed 2,000 Americans aged 21+ who choose to drink beer, wine, cider or spirits and have access to the internet. The sample was evenly split by generation: Gen Z n=500, Millennials n=500, Gen X n=500, and Baby Boomers n=500. The survey was commissioned by the International Alliance for Responsible Drinking and administered online by Talker Research between April 10 and April 20, 2026.

United Kingdom: Talker Research surveyed 2,000 U.K. respondents aged 18+ who choose to drink beer, wine, cider or spirits. The sample was evenly split by generation: Gen Z n=500, Millennials n=500, Gen X n=500, and Baby Boomers n=500. The survey was commissioned by the International Alliance for Responsible Drinking and administered online by Talker Research between April 10 and April 20, 2026.

Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number. Generational comparisons are directional and based on the generation sample sizes included in the source tables.

To view the complete methodology as part of AAPOR's Transparency Initiative, please visit the Talker [Research Process and Methodology page](#).