



Press Release

WINE: UIV-VINITALY OBSERVATORY: UNEXPECTED ASSIST FROM YOUNG PEOPLE: GEN-Z & MILLENNIALS SPEND MORE THAN GEN-X AND BOOMERS

COMMONPLACES OVERTURNED: UNDER-44S IN ITALY AND USA OFFSETTING THE DECLINE IN CONSUMPTION CONSIDERING WINE A STATUS SYMBOL. OVER-44s SLIPPING AWAY

Rome, 27 March 2025 They raise glasses from table, turning wine into a status symbol. They are willing to spend on super Premium labels but do not necessarily become attached to brands- They uncork a bottle in company but do not want to give up cocktails. This is the snapshot of under-44 American and Italian wine consumers illustrated today in Rome by the Uiv-Vinitaly Observatory during the Press Conference presenting the 57th International Wine and Spirits Exhibition scheduled at Veronafiere 6-9 April.

Italian and US markets went under the lens (together equal to 60% of overall revenue for Italian wine sales): wine must be able to intercept and understand younger segments of the population in a general context of falling consumption posting the fourth consecutive year of contraction in Italy and the third in the United States. According to analysis by the Uiv-Vinitaly Observatory based on IWSR data which dispels many clichés about the relationship between wine and young people, Millennials (between 28 and 44 years old) and GenZ (from *legal drinking age* to 27) are the 'promised land' of a necessary and complicated generational change, a territory that is still largely off the radar of Italian wine. The study disproves many commonplaces that consider new generations as being distant and not very interested in wine and consequently immune to its evocative power. Nothing further from the truth: under-44s spend the most and are effectively keeping above water a premium market threatened by the downturn among Boomers (61-79 years old) and GenX (45-60).

Wine as a status symbol? It is for young people!

The combination of wine and food is still important but seems to be losing its key role for *young American and Italian wine lovers*. While it is true that "wine enhances food" for the vast majority of over-44s, less than half among Millennials and GenZ agree with this statement. On the other hand, the percentage of very young Italians who see wine as a "fashion statement" is exactly double (56%) that of boomers (28%), while Millennials also stand out from GenXers by 16 percentage points (45% versus 29%). A significant trend, for which IWSR has coined a new category: "*Status Seekers*". Despite representing only 11% of regular wine consumers, this group in the United States covers 24% of volume and 35% of value generated by *regular wine drinkers*.

According to data processed by the Uiv-Vinitaly Observatory, approximately 31% of the overall value of wine purchases in America can be attributed to Ultra-Premium products, bought in 6 cases out of 10 by under-44 consumers. The situation is different in Italy, where high-end wines account for only 10% of purchases, although even here about half of total involve young



consumers. Young Americans and Italians alike, when compared to older age groups, clearly say that they are less loyal to specific brands: approximately one in two among the under 44s are not particularly loyal to brands, while this drops to one in three above this age threshold. Socialising is still a fundamental aspect of the *wine experience*, especially for young Americans who, in 7 cases out of 10, have increased consumption precisely for this reason.

Consumption is holding up among under-44s but falling back among older age groups

Millennials and GenZ demonstrate an undeniable (yet also inter-generational) passion for cocktails, while also looking at wine with an interest that challenges many clichés. First of all, it is not true that “wine does not appeal to young people”. In Italy, the profile of wine consumers by age faithfully reflects the demographic distribution of the population (*legal drinking age*), with people under 44 at 35%, while in the USA Millennials and GenZ - who represent only one-third of the population - post 47% of wine consumers, denoting a higher penetration rate for wine among young people than among more mature consumers.

Even as regards consumption frequency and quantity, the belief that young people are more moderate and more inclined to occasional consumption is also dispelled. In both countries, the tendency (high at around 80%) to keep consumption to 2-3 times a month seems to be fairly equally distributed across the various age groups. In terms of quantity, both in the US and - with a smaller margin of difference - in Italy, the percentage of those who customarily drink two or more glasses of wine is higher among younger people than among the over-44s. The belief that “consumption is falling because of young people” is also shown not to be true. The Observatory notes in America that it is precisely mature consumers who are cutting back on consumption. Whereas, among young people under 44, there are more who have increased consumption (31%) than those who have decreased it (26%). In the older age groups, only 9% have increased wine consumption, while those who have decreased rise to 29%. The downturn in Italy seems more transversal and inter-generational and involves more than one quarter of the population (27%) in both age clusters. Even here, however, the under-44s are offsetting the decline (14% of those who have increased consumption compared to 7% in the over-44 group).

Sober curiosity...temporary non-drinking prevails

In both countries, almost half of all teetotallers belong to the Boomer generation, followed by GenX (23% in the US and 30% in Italy). GenZ and Millennials combined represent only 3 out of 10 teetotallers in the United States and 2 out of 10 in Italy. The *sober curious* trend is reversed in the case of so-called “*dry periods*”, with the under-44s in the forefront in the US, with a share willing to temporarily abstain that among the youngest people (GenZ) reaches 60% in the US and 46% in Italy. The propensity of older age groups is lower, with shares standing at around 30% in the USA and 25% in Italy.