

# Moderate Drinking On Rise, Survey Says

Moderate drinking has risen sharply in the last decade among adults in the United States, according to a new Gallup Poll.

While the overall percentage of Americans who drink has remained about the same—around 60 percent—imbibers are consuming alcohol more often and in greater quantities, according to the study released Friday.

About 68 percent of drinkers said they had taken at least one drink in the past week, 20 percent more than said they drank at least weekly in 1992. The fastest rise in drinking occurred in the last three years, from 57 percent in 2000 to 68 percent today.

Just 30 percent of drinkers reported zero drinks in the previous seven days, compared to 43 percent three years ago.

Despite drinking more frequently, most Americans report doing it in moderation, according to the poll. Nearly nine in 10 men (87 percent) said they had consumed no more than 14 drinks in the past week, the equivalent of two a day, which doctors consider a moderate amount. For women the acceptable range is seven drinks per week, and 89 percent said they fall within that range.

Still, 24 percent of drinkers said they occasionally drink too much, and 31 percent said drinking has at some point been a cause of trouble in their family.

While much publicity has been generated by controversial studies over health benefits of moderate alcohol consumption, the Gallup survey found little connection between those reports and the rise in drinking.

Americans are as likely to think that moderate drinking is bad for one's health (25 percent) as to believe it is beneficial (24 percent). The largest segment, 49

percent, said it makes no difference.

The survey results are based on telephone interviews with a randomly selected national sample of 1,006 adults, aged 18 and over, conducted July 7-9. The margin of error is 3 percent.

Beer remains the beverage of choice for Americans who drink alcohol. According to the survey, 42 percent said beer is the alcoholic beverage they most often consume, 2 percent less than last year. Wine, meanwhile, is becoming more popular among drinkers; 33 percent picked it as their favorite drink, up 3 percent 2002. Twenty-two percent prefer hard liquor, the same percentage as last year.