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BeerBoard: Nationwide Draft Beer Sales +3.8% vs. Late July, But -31% vs. 2019

Jessica Infante August 16, 2021 at 5:10 PM

Draft beer sales are on the rise nationwide, but are still down by nearly one-third compared to 2019 levels, according to draft beer insights firm BeerBoard.

Nationwide draft beer volume increased +3.8% during the August 12-15 weekend compared to the weekend of July 22-25, according to BeerBoard's biweekly draft sales report. Nevertheless, draft beer sales volume for the weekend declined by -31% compared to the same weekend in 2019, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic forcing the restriction of the on-premise channel.

The spread of the highly contagious Delta variant may have consumers rethinking their activity as some states and cities reinstate mask mandates. Of the 10 markets BeerBoard tracks, seven had varying degrees of volume growth compared to the July 22-25 weekend:

- Nevada +17%;
- New York +6.5%;
- Georgia +6.3%;
- Tennessee +6.5%;
- Florida +3.5%;
- Illinois +2.1%;
- Texas +1.9%.

Draft sales volume declined in three states: Minnesota (-0.6%), South Carolina (-6%), Michigan (-8%).

Most tracked markets are about one-third off compared to 2019 levels with the exception of Nevada (-19% from the same weekend in 2019), South Carolina (-39%) and Minnesota (-56%).

“Open rate (locations open and pouring beer held firm at 91% of locations open for the second consecutive period, and the same rate it was exactly a year ago,” BeerBoard wrote. “The rate has consistently registered at 90% or above since late January.”

The open rate for bars and restaurants peaked at 93% for two survey periods (May 20-23 and June 3-6) before beginning to tick downward as the Delta variant spread.

The average number of taps pouring per location nationwide has hovered at 19 for the past two BeerBoard survey periods, a decline of -50% compared to the same weekend in 2019. Most markets’ open taps were flat.

“Texas was the only state tracked to see an increase, adding one handle to check in at 19 per location,” BeerBoard wrote. “Three states (Michigan, New York and South Carolina) dropped a handle each, while six states held firm.”

On-premise establishments have been slow to return to prior draft handle capacity, and at -30% compared the same weekend in 2019, Nevada taps are farthest along the path to recovery. Tennessee (-51.4%) and South Carolina (-51.5%) have been slowed to recover tap handles, followed by Florida and Georgia (both -50%).