

## Think You Drink a Lot?

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Granted the topic isn't specifically business related -- although I could argue that since work is part of life and therefore anything lifestyle-related is relevant -- but the findings of this study are too amazing not to share.

I promise you'll say, "Wait & what?!"

First there was a pretty dry (intentional, albeit weak, pun) survey on alcohol consumption in the U.S. conducted by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Then Philip Cook performed a little data analysis, broke down alcohol consumption per week into deciles, and voila! dull is now fascinating. (For more info and a handy chart check out Christopher Ingraham's article in The Washington Post.)

Let's check out Philip's results:

"The bottom three deciles, or 30% of Americans, say they don't drink at all. That figure could be a little high since some people probably say they don't drink but occasionally do & but let's go with it.

"The fourth decile consumes .02 drinks per week. Since it's likely no one is doing shots from eyedroppers that's about a drink a year. (Birthday? New Years?)

"The fifth decile consumes .14 drinks per week. That's about seven drinks a year. Maybe that office party you're forced to attend and try to make the best of. (Or am I the only one who has done that?)

"The sixth decile consumes .63 drinks per week. We're still only up to a little over half a drink a week, or 32 drinks a year.

That means 60% of Americans age 18 and over consumer half a drink or less a week. Surprising? (It was to me; based on the relative footprint of the beer and wine section at the grocery store I assumed the number would be higher.)

Now it gets more interesting:

"The seventh decile consumes 2.17 drinks per week. More, sure, but not a lot. If the activities depicted in the average beer commercial are any indication that means people are climbing mountains, surfing, riding the range, or hanging with their best buds at low-key yet somehow super cool places once or twice a week.

"The eighth decile consumes 6.25 drinks per week. Finally we're close to a drink a day or a fair number of drinks on weekends. If you have a nightly glass of wine or beer you're in the top 30% of adults in terms of alcohol consumption. While one drink a day isn't much -- especially since some health experts say a glass of red wine a day can reduce the risk of heart disease -- that still means this decile drinks more than 70% of Americans.

"The ninth decile consumes 15.28 drinks per week. Two drinks a day, top 20% in terms of alcohol consumption. If this is you, you're knocking on the door of the top 10%.

But let's say you've never met a list you didn't try to top and your goal is to break into the tenth decile so you can be in the top 10% of

American drinkers.

Here's what it takes to join that club:

"The tenth decile consumes 73.85 drinks per week. Yep. Over 73 drinks a week. That's 10 drinks a day. Forget a glass or two of wine with dinner; you need to drink roughly two bottles of wine with dinner. Forget a couple of beers; you need to pound down close to a 12-pack of beer every day to qualify. (Tell me your bladder -- and your wallet -- aren't cringing at the thought.)

Some basic conclusions:

"The median consumption is 3 drinks per week among those who do drink (tossing out the 30% who don't drink at all.) That means...

"The top 10% of drinkers account for more than half of all alcohol consumed in the U.S. And that means...

"According to Cook, "... the heaviest drinkers are of greatly disproportionate importance to the sales and profitability of the alcoholic beverage industry. If the top decile could be induced to curb their consumption to that of the next lower group (the ninth decile) then total ethanol sales would fall by 60%."

Maybe you're not surprised by the last point; power users are critical to the health of many businesses. The top 20 to 30% of purchasers/users often generate 70 to 80% of sales for many products/services. So it makes some sense that "power drinkers" make up such a huge proportion of alcohol sales.

But still. One out of ten adults consume more than 10 drinks a day? (Take that, D. Draper and R. Sterling.)

Please note I'm in no way judging. I don't care how much anyone drinks. Whether people drink, or how much they drink, is definitely their business.

I just think it's amazing how important the top 10% of drinkers are to the alcoholic beverage industry, and how big the jump in consumption is between the 80th percentile and the 90th.