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UK pubs sold 28.2 million pints over the spring bank holiday

Warmer weather and a long weekend lifted trading, with cider sales surging 42.7% across the holiday period

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Pubs across the United Kingdom sold 28.2 million pints over the spring bank holiday weekend, a gain of 11.5% from the same four-day period last year, according to data from Oxford Partnership and BevMetrics/Vianet.

The figures covered May 22 through May 25 and showed that the holiday brought a clear lift in trading for the on-trade as warmer weather and a long weekend drew more customers into pubs. The average pub poured about 860 pints during the period and took in an average of £4,449 in drink sales, the data showed.

Customers also stayed longer. Average dwell time rose by 10 minutes from a year earlier to 154 minutes, while overall occupancy reached 65.8%, suggesting that many drinkers treated the holiday as a longer social outing rather than a quick stop for a single round.

Trading was strongest on Monday, when occupancy rose by 6 percentage points from last year. That pointed to a broader spread of visits across the full weekend, instead of activity being concentrated mainly on Saturday.

City center pubs remained the busiest venues, with occupancy at 70.6%. Rural pubs also saw a notable improvement, with occupancy up by 3 percentage points year on year as consumers looked for destination-led and leisure-focused visits outside urban areas.

The mix of drinks sold shifted with the weather. Cider was the standout category, rising 42.7% from last year and outpacing every other major drink type. World lager sales increased 26.4%, while total lager sales were up 17.2%. Premium lager rose 16.2%, and premium 4% lager increased 14.4%, showing continued demand for branded beers with higher price points.

By contrast, ale volumes fell 8.8% and stout dropped 16.4%, underscoring how warmer conditions pushed some drinkers away from heavier styles that tend to perform better in colder months.

Alison Jordan, chief executive of Oxford Partnership, said the holiday showed how weather and social behavior are shaping pub trade. She said consumers were increasingly choosing longer, more experience-led occasions when they went out, creating opportunities for operators and suppliers that match those preferences.