vinetur

U.K. spirits exports to the United States plunged 60% in value

New trade data showed broad weakness in British drinks shipments to America despite the removal of 10% tariffs on whisky

Friday, June 26, 2026



U.K. spirits exports to the United States fell sharply in the first quarter, with the value of shipments dropping 60% from a year earlier to £12.1 million, according to new trade data from the Food and Drink Federation, a sign of continued strain in a key transatlantic drinks market even as some tariffs have been lifted.

The federation’s Trade Snapshot for the first three months of 2026 showed that export volumes of U.K. spirits to the U.S. declined 37.3%. The downturn extended across several beverage categories. U.K.-made whisky exports to the U.S. fell 14% by volume, while value dropped 27% to £182.1 million. Gin volumes to the American market fell 24%, and value declined 17.8% to £39.6 million.

The report also showed weakness in U.K. wine exports to the U.S. In one measure, the value of those exports fell 64.7% and volume dropped 47.8%, placing wine eighth among the top 10 U.K. food and drink exports to the American market, just ahead of spirits in ninth place. Elsewhere in the same report, U.K.-made wine exports to the U.S. were listed as down 19.5% in value to £23.6 million and 14.9% in volume.

Globally, however, Britain’s two biggest spirits categories were more resilient. Whisky, the country’s largest food and drink export overall, posted a 5.4% increase in export volumes in the quarter, while value slipped 1.1% to £1.2 billion. Gin export volumes rose 4.4%, and value increased 2.2% to £133.3 million.

The figures point to uneven conditions for beverage producers that depend on the U.S.-U.K. trade lane. For distillers and wine exporters, the swings may add pressure on margins and complicate planning at a time when tariff changes are reshaping competition between British and American suppliers.

The federation said the removal of 10% tariffs on U.K. whisky by the U.S. “offers an opportunity to grow exports,” suggesting that some of the first-quarter weakness may not reflect longer-term demand.

At the same time, American producers gained ground in Britain. The federation said total U.S. food and drink imports into the U.K. rose 11.5% in the quarter, with strong gains for salmon, spirits and chocolate.

U.S. spirits exports to Britain surged 144.5% in value to £16.9 million, while volumes jumped 202.2%. That contrasted with U.S. whiskey exports to the U.K., which fell 24.2% in value to £13.2 million and declined 13.7% by volume.

In the European Union market, U.K. whisky exports rose 0.9% in value to £334.3 million, though volumes edged down 2.7%, offering a more stable picture than trade with the United States.

Across all categories, the value of U.K. food and drink exports fell 4.8% globally in the first quarter, while volumes dropped 8.9%, which the federation said was their third-lowest level since 2000.

Karen Betts, chief executive of the Food and Drink Federation, said British producers face higher costs than many overseas rivals, including energy and labor expenses, and said shifting regulation adds further pressure.

“There is plenty the government can do to improve the competitiveness of our food and drink exporters, many of which are SMEs, from helping companies to access the benefits of trade deals to lowering the cost of doing business in the U.K.,” Betts said.