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# U.S. beer sales fell 3.9% in late summer, extending the category’s yearlong slump.

NielsenIQ attributed 71% of the losses to weaker demand, with non-alcoholic beer standing out as a rare growth segment.

Wednesday, August 12, 2026



U.S. beer sales lost more ground in the four weeks ending Aug. 1, with late-summer demand failing to reverse a broader slowdown that has weighed on the category for much of the year, according to NielsenIQ’s latest Beer Pulse report.

Dollar sales for beer fell 3.9% from a year earlier in the period, while case volume dropped 5.2%. NielsenIQ said weaker demand remained the main reason for the decline, accounting for 71% of the category's total losses. Distribution limits added another 23%, showing that lower consumer pull, more than shelf availability, continues to shape the market.

The slowdown also showed up in week-to-week performance. Beer dollar sales slipped to $918.9 million from $935.1 million the previous week, a 1.7% decline. NielsenIQ said seasonal drinking occasions were still offering some support, but they were not enough to offset what it described as broader consumption challenges across the category.

Much of the weakness remained concentrated in traditional beer segments. Domestic premium beer posted some of the steepest declines, with dollar sales down 7.7% and volume off 8.2%. Craft beer also remained under pressure, with value down 6.5% and volume down 8.1%. Import beer performed somewhat better than those segments, but still declined, with dollar sales down 2.9% and volume down 3.8%.

The strongest pockets of growth were limited to a smaller set of brands and segments. Domestic super premium beer rose 1.3% in dollar sales and 1.1% in volume, one of the few traditional beer areas to stay in positive territory. Cider also advanced, with dollar sales up 1.8% and volume up 1.3%. Non-alcoholic beer again stood out as the category's fastest-growing segment, with value up 10.1% and volume up 9.7%. NielsenIQ said that performance reinforced non-alcoholic beer's role as one of the most consistent growth drivers in the broader beer market.

Among manufacturers, Anheuser-Busch remained the largest by dollar sales, though it posted a 3.6% decline and lost 2.5 million cases from a year earlier. Constellation held the No. 2 position, with dollar sales down 1.8% and case sales lower by 623,500. Molson Coors Beverage Co. ranked third and saw one of the sharper pullbacks among major suppliers, with dollar sales down 6.7% and case volume lower by 2.3 million. Heineken USA, in fourth place, posted an 8.5% drop in dollar sales and lost 416,900 cases.

New Belgium Brewing was the only company in the top five manufacturers by dollars to post growth in the period. Its dollar sales rose 6.0%, and it added 58,400 cases. The company also led the top five manufacturers by dollar growth. Sapporo Breweries Ltd. followed with a 21.0% increase in dollar sales and an additional 25,300 cases. Diageo posted 3.5% dollar growth, Athletic Brewing Co. rose 4.8%, and Asahi Beer USA recorded the fastest percentage gain among the group, with dollar sales up 42.5%, though from a smaller base.

At the brand level, Modelo remained the top-selling beer brand by dollars despite a 2.8% decline and a loss of 528,800 cases. Budweiser ranked second and posted a steeper drop, with dollar sales down 9.8% and case volume down by 2.0 million. Michelob was the only one of the top five brands by dollars to grow in the period, with dollar sales up 4.7% and volume increasing by 560,400 cases. Corona, the No. 4 brand, declined 5.3% in dollar sales and lost 491,300 cases. Coors, in fifth place, saw dollar sales fall 4.6% and case sales decline by 707,900.

Michelob also led the list of top brands by dollar growth. Pacifico followed with an 18.7% rise in dollar sales and 308,200 more cases sold. Victoria increased 15.7% in dollars and added 74,700 cases. New Belgium brand beer rose 6.8% and gained 48,200 cases. Garage Beer posted a 29.2% increase in dollar sales and added 45,000 cases, making it one of the fastest-growing labels in the latest period.

The report points to a beer market that is still searching for stable growth even as parts of the business continue to expand. Traditional domestic and craft segments remain the biggest source of weakness, while premium extensions, selected import labels and non-alcoholic beer are taking a larger share of the category’s limited gains. The data covers total beer sales excluding flavored malt beverages and hard seltzer in NielsenIQ’s retail measurement for the four weeks ended Aug. 1.