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Spirits sales in Great Britain's managed venues fell 16.5% in early September.

The category swung 17.3 points from the previous week, diverging from gains across the broader drinks market.

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Spirits sales in managed pubs, bars and other licensed venues in Great Britain fell sharply in early September, reversing a brief gain from the previous week and underlining how uneven consumer spending remains in the hospitality trade.

Data from NIQ’s Daily Drinks Tracker showed that spirits sales were down 16.5% year over year in the week ending Saturday, September 12. That followed a 0.8% increase in the week ending September 5, a swing of 17.3 percentage points in seven days.

The figures were published by NIQ on September 25 and refer only to managed venues, not the whole British drinks market. The tracker measures sales in the on-premise sector, covering businesses such as managed pubs, bars and other licensed operators.

The drop in spirits stood out because overall drinks trading was still positive in the same week. Average sales across all drinks categories in managed venues were 2.5% above the comparable week in 2025 in the seven days to September 12. In the previous week, total drinks sales had risen 7.6%.

That meant spirits underperformed the wider market as consumers spent more on longer and more refreshing serves. Beer sales rose 5.7% in the week to September 12 after an 8.4% increase in the prior week. Cider was up 7.3% after a 13.3% rise. Soft drinks also grew, increasing 4.6% after an 11.9% gain. Wine was mixed, with sales up 2.9% in the week to September 5 before falling 6.0% in the week to September 12.

NIQ said the first half of September was helped by good weather and, in the earlier week, by the August Bank Holiday weekend. It also said beer and cider benefited from football fixtures in the Premier League and Champions League, which supported sales in venues showing live sports.

For spirits, however, that broader improvement in trading did not hold. The move from a modest 0.8% gain to a 16.5% fall suggests that the category did not share fully in the spending recovery seen elsewhere in the market. NIQ did not provide a breakdown by spirit type, so the data does not show how whisky, vodka, gin, rum or other segments performed individually.

The September volatility followed a difficult August for the on-premise sector. According to NIQ, average drinks sales in managed venues were down 9.7% year over year in the week ending August 29. That was the sixth straight negative weekly reading since the end of the football World Cup in mid-July. NIQ said extreme heat, more cautious consumer spending and the fading effect of tournament-driven trade had

weighed on the market.

The daily pattern of sales in late August and early September also showed how much trading was driven by specific occasions. NIQ reported that sales on Sunday, August 30, were up 39.3% from the same day in 2025, while Monday, August 31, rose 59.4%. It noted that those comparisons were affected by the timing of the Bank Holiday in 2025. Later in the period, Wednesday, September 9, posted a 15.9% increase and Thursday, September 10, was up 8.9%.

Rachel Weller, NIQ's commercial lead for the U.K. and Ireland, said the stronger start to September would have brought some relief to operators and to beer, cider and soft drink suppliers after August's weakness. But she also warned that conditions were likely to remain difficult as the sector moved toward the final quarter of the year, adding that confidence among consumers and hospitality businesses could depend heavily on the British government's October budget.

The tracker indicates that the broader improvement in drinks sales did not last through the whole month. NIQ said average sales across all drinks categories were down 2.0% year over year in the seven days to Saturday, September 19, as cooler and wetter weather spread across many parts of Britain. But that later figure was published only for the total drinks market. NIQ did not release a separate spirits reading for the week to September 19, so no direct conclusion can be drawn about whether the category recovered after the sharp drop recorded to September 12.

That leaves the most recent category-specific picture for spirits as one of abrupt weakness. In the space of a week, a small year-over-year increase disappeared and gave way to a double-digit decline, even as beer, cider and soft drinks continued to post gains. For operators, suppliers and investors watching Britain's hospitality sector, the data points to a market where spending remains highly sensitive to weather, sporting schedules and shifting consumer choices from one week to the next.