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British whisky exports reached £2.5 billion despite a drop in average value

Shipment volume rose 5.8% in the first half of 2026, outpacing the 2.2% increase in customs value.

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British whisky exports increased in the first half of 2026, but the gains in physical shipments outpaced the rise in export revenue, pointing to a lower average value per unit sold overseas. Gin exports also moved higher, though at a slower pace, and unlike whisky they showed a small rise in implied average value.

The figures come from the Food and Drink Federation’s Trade Snapshot for the first half of 2026, published September 25 and based on HM Revenue & Customs data. The report tracks U.K. exports to the world during January through June and measures both customs value and changes in export volumes. It does not publish the absolute physical volumes for each drinks category.

Whisky exports reached £2.5 billion in the first six months of the year, up 2.2% from the same period in 2025. Export volume rose 5.8% over the same period. The gap between those two growth rates suggests that the average customs value of whisky exports fell by about 3.4%, based on a comparison of value growth and volume growth.

Using the published annual rate, the comparable export value for whisky in the first half of 2025 would have been about £2.446 billion. That means the increase this year was roughly £54 million, although the 2026 total is reported as a rounded £2.5 billion figure.

Gin exports also rose in both value and volume. Customs value reached £306.9 million in the first half, up 2.8% from a year earlier, while export volume increased 1.3%. On that basis, the implied average value per exported unit rose by about 1.5%.

Based on the same calculation, gin exports were worth about £298.5 million in the first half of 2025, meaning the category added roughly £8.4 million this year.

The figures stand out because they run against the broader weakness that has weighed on parts of British trade. For spirits, however, the data suggest that whisky and gin are moving in different ways. Whisky producers appear to be shipping more product abroad, but at a lower average return per unit. Gin producers, by contrast, posted more modest shipment growth while preserving or slightly improving average value.

That difference does not necessarily mean that the price of a comparable bottle of whisky fell or that gin makers simply raised prices. Trade data reflect a mix of factors, including the kinds of products being exported, changes in destination markets, pack sizes, premium versus standard labels, contract timing, and exchange-rate effects. A shift toward lower-priced whisky expressions, for example, could pull down the average export value even if some brands held retail prices steady. A move toward more premium gin or stronger sales in higher-value markets could lift the average value in

that category without a broad-based increase in shelf prices.

The report’s structure also limits how far the figures can be taken. Because the snapshot does not give the absolute physical volume for whisky or gin exports, it is not possible to say from this release alone how many bottles, liters, or cases were shipped in total, only how those volumes changed from a year earlier. The value figures are customs-based export values, which are useful for measuring trade flows but are not the same as final consumer prices.

Even with those caveats, the first-half data show that the U.K.’s two best-known spirits categories continued to expand internationally through June. Whisky remained by far the larger business, with export revenue more than eight times that of gin during the period. But the shape of that growth differed sharply. Whisky added more revenue overall, yet its faster rise in volume than in value points to weaker mix or pricing. Gin’s increase was much smaller in cash terms, but its value grew faster than volume, indicating firmer positioning in overseas markets during the first half of the year.

The numbers were published by the Food and Drink Federation on September 25 in its H1 2026 trade snapshot, using HMRC data covering U.K. exports to global markets from January through June.