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U.S. beer shipments fell 5% through August, Beer Institute estimates.

August volumes dropped 3.5% to 10.9 million barrels, extending monthly declines through the summer peak season.

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U.S. domestic beer shipments continued to fall through August, with taxable removals down 5% in the first eight months of 2026 compared with the same period a year earlier, according to an unofficial estimate released Tuesday by the Beer Institute.

The trade group said brewers shipped an estimated 10.9 million barrels in August, down 3.5% from 11,296,310 barrels in August 2025. For the year to date, shipments totaled 91,461,227 barrels, compared with 96,312,962 barrels in the same January-through-August period last year. That is a decline of 4,851,735 barrels.

Taxable removals are a closely watched measure of beer shipped into the market on which federal excise taxes are paid. Because the figures track beer moving out of breweries and into distribution channels, they are often used as an early read on demand and industry activity in the United States.

The August estimate extends a run of year-over-year declines in 2026. According to the Beer Institute’s data, January shipments fell 15.2% from a year earlier, February declined 3.1%, March slipped 0.5%, April fell 3.7%, May dropped 6.8%, June declined 5.5%, July was down 2.8%, and August fell 3.5%.

March was the closest month to flat, while January posted the steepest drop of the year so far. Even with some moderation after the start of the year, the broader trend remains negative through the end of the summer peak selling season.

The Beer Institute said the decline reflects multiple market factors, including changes in consumer preferences and variation in supply-chain conditions. The organization did not provide a more detailed breakdown by product segment, brand, or region in the release.

The report matters beyond beer alone because it may offer another sign of continued pressure in the broader beverage market. If the lower shipment trend continues, brewers, distributors, retailers, and other beverage companies could use the data to adjust production plans, inventory levels, and purchasing decisions heading into the final months of the year.

A slowdown in taxable removals does not necessarily translate one-for-one into retail sales, since shipments can also be influenced by distributor stocking patterns, timing differences, and inventory movements. Still, the Beer Institute’s monthly estimate is widely followed because it provides one of the earliest national indicators of shipment volume in the brewing business.

The year-to-date decline is notable because it comes after steady monthly pressure rather than a single sharp break. Outside March, every month through August showed a drop from the comparable 2025 period. The volume loss has been especially large in absolute terms at the start of the year, with January down by more than 1.6 million barrels from the same month in 2025.

By comparison, the August decline amounted to 396,310 barrels year over year. That was smaller than the losses recorded in January, May, and June, but it still kept the market on a weaker annual path.

The report was based on the Beer Institute’s preliminary estimate of taxable removals by beer brewers for August 2026. The group said its next monthly estimate, covering September 2026, is scheduled for release on November 4.