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U.S. taxable beer shipments fell 3.5% in August

The Beer Institute said removals totaled 10.9 million barrels, leaving 2026 volumes 5% below a year earlier through August.

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U.S. taxable beer shipments continued to decline in August, extending a yearlong run of lower volumes and leaving the market down by 4.85 million barrels over the first eight months of 2026, according to the Beer Institute.

The trade group said estimated taxable removals in August totaled 10.9 million barrels, down from 11.30 million barrels in August 2025. That was a drop of 396,310 barrels, or 3.5%, from a year earlier. The August figure was published by the Beer Institute on Oct. 6 as part of its monthly report on taxable removals, a measure of beer shipped for sale and subject to federal excise tax.

From January through August, taxable removals reached 91.46 million barrels, compared with 96.31 million barrels in the same period last year. That amounts to a decline of 5%, or 4.85 million barrels. The data covers beer with more than 0.5% alcohol and is reported in U.S. barrels of 31 gallons.

The August result marked a slightly weaker performance than in July. The Beer Institute’s July estimate showed a 2.8% year-over-year decline, meaning the August contraction widened by 0.7 percentage points. Even with that change, the monthly drops seen in recent months have remained smaller than the sharp fall recorded at the start of the year.

Every month reported so far in 2026 has shown a year-over-year decrease. January remained the weakest month, with shipments down 15.2% from a year earlier. March was the closest to flat, with a decline of 0.5%. The pattern indicates that while the pace of decline has eased from early 2026, the industry has not yet returned to growth on this measure.

The Beer Institute described the August and July numbers as unofficial estimates. The group’s taxable removals data is widely followed as a timely indicator of beer volumes moving into the market, but it does not measure final consumer purchases. It tracks beer removed for sale and taxed, which means it can differ from retail sales and on-premise consumption trends. The measure also excludes beer with 0.5% alcohol or less.

Because the indicator reflects shipments rather than direct consumer buying, the figures do not by themselves show how much beer Americans drank in August or over the first eight months of the year. Still, the continued decline in taxable removals points to lower volume moving through the U.S. beer market than in the same months of 2025.

The new report adds to a broader 2026 pattern of persistent pressure on beer volumes in the United States. After the steep drop in January, the year-over-year decreases narrowed, but they never turned positive. August’s reading showed that the market was still losing ground as the summer period ended, with cumulative shipments remaining well below last year’s level.