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Premium Beer Sales Drop 2% Globally in 2025, Ending Four-Year Growth Streak

Economic uncertainty and rising prices drive declines in major markets, but India and Mexico buck the trend with strong gains

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Global sales of premium and super-premium beers declined in the first half of 2025, ending a four-year streak of growth for the category. The drop was most pronounced in major markets such as the United States, China, and Brazil, according to new data from IWSR, a leading beverage alcohol market analyst. The report attributes the downturn to ongoing economic uncertainty, reduced consumer spending, and increased competition from other beverage categories.

IWSR data shows that total beverage alcohol volumes in the world's top 20 markets fell by 1% in the first six months of 2025 compared to the same period last year. Beer volumes overall declined by 1%, while wine saw a sharper drop of 5%. Spirits volumes rose by 1%, excluding national spirits. The premium-and-above beer segment, which had been growing steadily since 2019 after a brief setback during the Covid-19 pandemic, saw a 2% decline in volume.

Marten Lodewijks, Managing Director and President at IWSR, explained that while there has been a long-term shift toward higher-priced beer offerings, the premiumization trend paused this year. "Premium-and-above beer peaked in the first half of 2024," Lodewijks said. He noted that super-premium beers were somewhat more resilient but still faced challenges. Factors such as muted consumer confidence, poor weather in some regions, and increased competition from ready-to-drink (RTD) beverages contributed to the slowdown.

In the United States, premium beer sales were hit by both competition from RTDs and the closure of many craft breweries. Mexican beer imports suffered due to tariffs imposed by the Trump Administration, leading to reduced spending among Hispanic consumers. Rising prices have also played a role; premium beer prices in the U.S. are up about 20% compared to four or five years ago. With more Americans feeling cost-of-living pressures, many are opting for less expensive options.

China also reported a decline in premium beer volumes, down 3% in the first half of 2025 after a modest increase last year. The decrease is linked to fewer restaurant visits and permanent closures of some dining establishments. Germany and Brazil experienced similar declines.

Despite these setbacks in large markets, there are signs of growth elsewhere. Of the top 20 global markets tracked by IWSR, 12 recorded volume gains for premium-and-above beers during the first half of this year. India led with an 8% increase in premium beer sales, outpacing its overall beer market growth of 7%. Strong demand was noted especially in southern India until heavy rains arrived in June.

South Africa and Mexico also saw robust growth in their premium beer segments, with non-alcoholic beers performing particularly well. In Mexico, beer was a key driver of total beverage alcohol growth during this period.

The United Kingdom posted gains as well, supported by continued interest in world beers and stouts. In Japan, tourism and tax changes that made traditional beers more affordable helped boost premium beer consumption.

Across Europe—excluding Germany and Spain—premium-and-above beers generally held up better than lower-priced options despite an overall decline in beer volumes on the continent. Economic caution and changing consumer preferences continue to challenge brewers across Europe.

Lodewijks emphasized that while global growth for premium beers has paused for now, opportunities remain in many markets. “Premium-and-above beer recorded volume gains in the majority of the world’s top 20 markets,” he said. “Many opportunities for future growth still remain.”