New Zealand wine exports fall 18% as bulk shipments halve in March

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Wine exports dropped to $181.3 million in March 2026, down 17.9% year-on-year, driven by a collapse in bulk shipments and sharp contractions across major markets including the United States, United Kingdom and Australia.

Sharp decline in March shipments

New Zealand exported $181.3 million worth of wine in March 2026, with volume declining 28.8% year-on-year to 26.0 million litres. The average price per litre rose to $6.97, reflecting a significant shift in the product mix. Wine reached 58 destination markets during the month.

Despite the monthly fall, the rolling 12-month total to March 2026 reached $2,103.2 million, up a modest 0.3% on the previous year, indicating the annual performance remains near-flat.

Major markets contract sharply

The United States remained the largest destination with $66.3 million in shipments, accounting for 36.6% of total exports, but the market declined 19.3% year-on-year. The United Kingdom, the second-largest market at $36.5 million (20.1% share), fared worse with a 24.7% drop.

Australia, New Zealand's third-largest wine export destination, posted the steepest decline among major markets, falling 42.9% to $22.6 million. The market now represents 12.5% of total exports. China continued its downward trajectory with a 20.8% decline to $4.9 million.

Growth concentrated in smaller markets

Canada bucked the trend among significant destinations, growing 28.5% to $12.4 million and claiming a 6.9% market share. Germany delivered the strongest performance among established markets, more than doubling to $10.8 million-a 102.3% year-on-year surge that lifted its share to 6.0%.

Several smaller markets recorded dramatic growth. Singapore jumped 177.4% to $2.6 million, while Thailand surged 157.6% to $0.8 million. Hong Kong climbed 57.8% to $1.7 million, and Ireland grew 14.7% to $4.5 million, securing a 2.5% market share.

Japan and Denmark both recorded declines exceeding 50%, falling to $0.7 million and $0.8 million respectively.

Bulk shipments collapse, bottled wine advances

The packaging mix shifted dramatically in March. Bottled wine (in containers of two litres or less, including sparkling) totalled $133.8 million, up 6.0% year-on-year. Bulk wine shipments (in containers exceeding 10 litres) halved to $47.3 million, a 50.0% decline that saw bulk's share of total export value fall to 26.1%.

The price differential between formats remained stark: bottled wine averaged $10.43 per litre compared to $3.61 per litre for bulk. The collapse in bulk shipments, typically destined for bottling overseas, suggests reduced demand in markets where New Zealand wine competes at lower price points or under foreign labels.

Provisional data subject to revision

These figures are drawn from Statistics New Zealand customs data for March 2026. As with all recently released trade statistics, the most recent month's figures are provisional and subject to revision as late declarations are processed and classifications finalised.