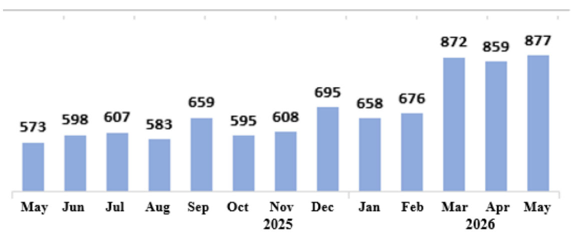
- May 2026 Exports Reach Monthly Record of $87.8 Billion -

The Ministry of Trade, Industry and Resources (MOTIR, Minister JK Kim) announced that in May 2026, Korea's exports rose 53.2 percent year-on-year to USD 87.8 billion, while imports increased 20.8 percent to $60.8 billion, resulting in a $27.0 billion trade surplus.

Exports in May reached a monthly record and topped $80.0 billion for the third consecutive month. Semiconductor exports rose 169.4 percent, while exports excluding semiconductors increased 16.0 percent. Average daily exports, adjusted for working days, rose 60.7 percent to $4.3 billion, exceeding $4.0 billion for the first time.

【Monthly exports ($100M)】



【Monthly export growth (%)】

By product, exports increased in 12 of Korea's 20 key export items. Semiconductor exports reached $37.2 billion, up 169.4 percent, setting a new monthly record and topping $30.0 billion for the third consecutive month. DRAM exports rose to $18.6 billion, up 369.8 percent, and NAND exports to $1.7 billion, up 206.8 percent. Other IT items also increased, with computers rising to $4.2 billion, up 290.7 percent; wireless communication devices to $1.5 billion, up 12.6 percent; and displays to $1.5 billion, up 9.4 percent.

Automobile exports fell to $5.8 billion, down 5.9 percent, while ship exports rose to $2.6 billion, up 16.7 percent. Petroleum product exports increased to $5.3 billion, up 46.6 percent, although export volumes fell 23.8 percent. Petrochemical exports rose to $3.7 billion, up 11.1 percent, while export volumes declined 25.5 percent. Steel exports edged down to $2.0 billion, down 2.1 percent; nonferrous metals rose to $1.7 billion, up 41.5 percent; and general machinery fell to $3.8 billion, down 6.3 percent. Among consumer goods, biohealth exports rose to $1.4 billion, up 5.2 percent; cosmetics increased to $1.2 billion, up 24.2 percent, setting a new May record; and agricultural and fisheries products rose to $1.1 billion, up 4.7 percent.

【15 major export items ($100M, %)】

Trade /Item	Semicond.	Displays	Wireless comm.	Computers	Autos	Car parts	General machinery
Exports	371.6	14.7	14.6	41.8	58.3	16.1	38.2
Growth (%)	+169.4	+9.4	+12.6	+290.7	△5.9	△2.5	△6.3
Ranking	1st	-	-	1st	-	-	-
Trade /Item	**Ships**	**Petroleum products**	**Petrochem.**	**Bio- health**	**Home appliances**	**Textiles**	**Steel**
Exports	26.1	52.5	37.0	14.4	4.8	8.5	20.4
Growth (%)	+16.7	+46.6	+11.1	+5.2	△21.7	△6.6	△2.1
Ranking	-	2nd	-	2nd	-	-	-
Trade /Item	**Secondary battery**	**Electronic equipment**	**Nonferrous metals**	**Agricultural & fisheries**	**Cosmetics**	**Daily consumer goods**	**Total**
Exports	6.9	13.3	16.7	10.7	11.8	6.5	877.5
Growth (%)	+31.4	△1.7	+41.5	+4.7	+24.2	△4.9	+53.2
Ranking	-	2nd	1st	1st	1st	-	1st

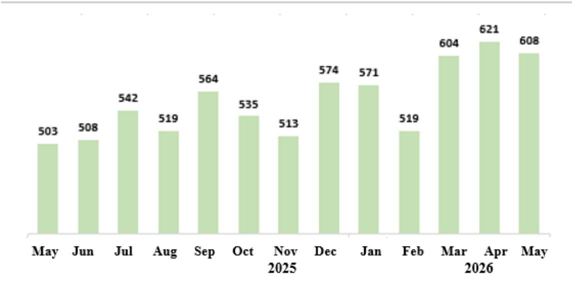
By destination, exports increased in seven of Korea's nine major markets. Exports to China rose to $18.9 billion, up 80.9 percent, extending their growth streak to seven consecutive months. Exports to the United States increased to $16.0 billion, up 59.1 percent, while exports to ASEAN rose to $15.9 billion, up 58.4 percent, setting a new monthly record. Exports to the EU increased to $6.2 billion, up 2.4 percent, extending their growth streak to six consecutive months. Exports to the Middle East fell to $1.3 billion, down 7.7 percent.

【Exports to 9 major regional markets ($100M)】

Trade/ Region	US	China	ASEAN	EU (27)	Japan	Latin America	India	Middle East	CIS	Total
Export value	159.7	189.0	158.5	61.9	26.5	31.6	20.2	12.7	9.3	877.5
Growth (%)	+59.1	+80.9	+58.4	+2.4	+11.8	+43.2	+25.1	△7.7	△19.2	+53.2
Ranking	1st	1st	1st	1st	-	-	1st	-	-	1st

Imports rose 20.8 percent year-on-year to $60.8 billion. Energy imports increased to $11.8 billion, up 15.9 percent, while non-energy imports rose to $49.1 billion, up 22.0 percent. Crude oil imports increased to $8.5 billion, up 25.0 percent, with import volumes rising month-on-month from 62.6 million barrels in April to 69.8 million barrels in May. Among non-energy imports, petroleum products rose to $2.6 billion, up 71.0 percent, and semiconductor equipment to $2.6 billion, also up 71.0 percent.

【Monthly imports ($100M)】



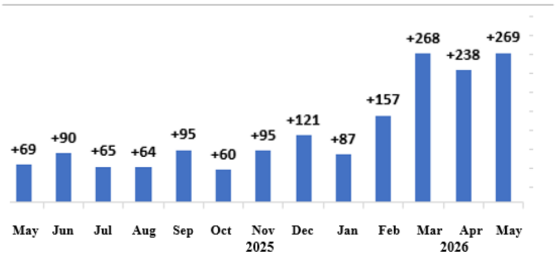
【Monthly import growth (%)】

The trade surplus in May reached $27.0 billion, up $20.0 billion from May 2025. Korea's cumulative trade surplus from January to May reached $101.9 billion, surpassing the previous annual trade surplus record.

【Trade data ($100M, %)】

Trade	2025	2026		
	May	Mar	Apr	May
Exports	573 (△1.3)	872 (50.2)	859 (48.0)	877 (53.2)
Imports	503 (△5.2)	604 (13.3)	621 (16.7)	608 (20.8)
Trade balance	+69	+268	+238	+269

【Monthly trade balance ($100M)】



Minister JK (Jung-Kwan) Kim stated, “With exports increasing again in May, Korea has maintained export growth for 12 consecutive months since the current administration took office. The cumulative trade surplus for January to May has also surpassed Korea’s previous annual trade surplus record.”

He added, “This reflects exports growing at a faster pace despite higher imports caused by rising oil prices from the conflict in the Middle East. IT items led by semiconductors, as well as consumer goods such as cosmetics and agricultural and fisheries products, continued to perform well.”

Minister Kim also noted that uncertainty remains over the conflict in the Middle East, U.S. tariffs, and the EU’s steel tariff-rate quotas (TRQs). He said the government will continue close consultations with major economies to reduce trade risks for Korean companies and maintain a stable export environment. The government will also support companies’ production and export activities by securing stable supplies of key imported raw materials, including crude oil and naphtha, and monitoring supply chains.