



Summary

Introduction

This report compiles data on the sales of alcoholic beverages in Sweden during the period 1861–2023. The report analyses older statistics and merges them with current data. The time series on sales encompasses 162 years.

Results

Total sales

There have been large changes in the choice of beverages. At the start of the period, sales of spirits dominated, but at the end of the period, wine was the most sold beverage, measured in pure alcohol. During the first two decades of the period, total sales averaged almost 9 litres of pure alcohol per citizen aged 15 years or older. In 1874, the highest sales were registered, at 11.3 litres.

Sales have been affected by various factors over time. In financial boom times, sales have increased. In recessions, times of poor harvests, and when restrictions have been introduced, sales have decreased.

After the year 1900, several social and alcohol policy measures were taken that decreased consumption. The period of restrictions during the First World War clearly impacted sales.

When the rationing system called ‘motbok’ was used, sales were approximately 4 litres per citizen aged 15 years or older. After the Second World War, sales increased, reaching a peak following the abolition of the ‘motbok-system’ in 1955. Sales then decreased somewhat, only to turn upward again when mid-strength beer was introduced in 1965, with a peak of 7.7 litres in 1976. When mid-strength beer was abolished in 1977, sales decreased and were for a period steady at just over 6 litres. During the 2000s, sales increased again, and during the 2010s, they were fairly steady at just over 7 litres.

Sales of spirits

Spirits dominated sales up until 1989, when beer became the most sold beverage, measured in pure alcohol. The dominance of beer continued up until 2002, at which time beer was surpassed by wine. Since then, wine has been the most sold beverage in the country.

The share of sales contributed by spirits was around 90 percent at the start of the period. Then, sales of spirits decreased up until the end of the Second World War, after which they remained at about the same level until the mid-1970s. At



the end of the period, spirits contributed about 15 percent of the total sales of alcoholic beverages, measured in pure alcohol.

Sales of wine

Wine has had the opposite development. Sales were very low up until the mid-1950s, at which time they began to increase. Wine sales then continued to increase up until the 2010s, when they stabilised. From that time, wine has contributed about 50 percent of total sales, measured in pure alcohol.

Sales of beer

The sales of beer increased during the late 1800s and up until the turn of that century, after which it stayed at a lower level up until the introduction of mid-strength beer in 1965. At that time, beer sales increased greatly. When mid-strength beer was abolished in 1977, total beer sales decreased, but sales of both low-alcohol-beer called 'folk beer' and strong beer increased. 'Folk beer' reached a peak in the middle of the 1990s. After that, sales have decreased steadily. However, the sales of strong beer continued to increase, stabilising at a high level in the first decades of the 2000s. The total beer sales were then at roughly the same level as during the mid-strength beer period.