



# Project Think Before Drink 2013 – 2015

## Sweden report 2014-05-30

### Abstract

Since the Viking ages (700-1100 AD) alcohol has been used in Sweden. The period between the sixteenth and the nineteenth century has been called the great northern intoxication. In the middle of the nineteenth century laws were settled that regulated both selling and serving alcohol and banned homemade liquor. The temperance movement grew stronger and wider and became influential and became more of a soberness strive- in labor, liberal and revival movements. With a ration book that prevented men from buying more than 4 four litres of alcohol beverages per month the efforts to decrease drinking were successful until 1955 when the limitation ended. The state monopoly for selling alcohol continued and is still working but

• Spirit +25% • wine sales no change • Drunkenness cases + 100% • involuntary commitment for alcohol abuse +17% • mortality from cirrhosis' + 25%

The Swedish government owned Systembolaget has had the monopoly of selling alcohol for more than 150 years. As Sweden entered the EU in 1995, drinking habits started becoming more continental, and regulations were relaxed. Systembolaget introduced box wine and new laws allowed private companies to import and market alcohol—though the retail monopoly remained. Consumption of alcohol increased by 30 percent from 1995 to 2005. Greater quantities than before of alcoholic beverages were allowed to be brought into the country from abroad. This undoubtedly also increased the amount of unrecorded alcohol consumption. Also smuggled alcohol plays a part in the unrecorded alcohol consumption. Since 2009 the consumption is decreasing, especially among teenagers.. Young people are drinking less than before. 55 percent of the boys and 58 percent of the girls aged sixteen have drunk alcohol.

Sweden belongs to the Vodka belt, but vodka has been supplanted by beer as the alcoholic drink of choice since the early 21st century. The consumption of beer is now twice the consumption of vodka in terms of pure alcohol. The number of microbreweries in Sweden has tripled in the last three years. The aims are finding new and existing tastes in beer.

Wine is the most popular alcoholic drink in Sweden, accounting for 41 percent of the total consumption of alcohol, followed by beer and spirits on 35 and 22 percent respectively. Beverages are taxed by alcohol percentage, vodka 40 percent, wine 14 percent and beer 4.5 percent

Despite the small total decline in recent years, alcohol consumption remains relatively high in a longer historical perspective. Women are drinking almost as much as men and more often after work. Elderly people as a group seem to have different habits than previous generations and can afford to drink more. There is a strong correlation between consumption and injuries.

The total financial consequences of alcohol consumption in Sweden is estimated to 5 billion Euro per year approximately 1,3 percent of GDP. That includes acute accidents, injuries, sickness and absences from work related to alcohol.

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## Historical background

The alcohol history of Sweden is old and goes back to the pagan period, when it was believed that God came down to man during the intoxication. At this time they drank mostly mead and beer. Liquor came to Sweden during the second half of the fifteenth century, but it was expensive and regarded a luxury when it was produced by imported wine. The period between the sixteenth and the nineteenth century has been called 'the great northern intoxication'. Liquor was attributed a number of positive characteristics, a panacea against all kinds of diseases and ailments.

In the sixteenth century the distillation process was brought to Sweden. It is believed that Swedish soldiers during battles in Russia learned to make brandy from corn, and this new knowledge was brought back to Sweden. This, in many cases fatal event, increased drinking in the 18th and 19th century. In 1746 brandy was first produced from potatoes, and this further-increased drinking. In the Swedish average consumption of brandy 45 liters a year and person. As Sweden was industrialized and urbanized during the 19th century, industrially produced liquor called Brännvin became more available, and alcohol caused increasing health and social problems.

The Swedish people were about to drink themselves to death, and in the end it was necessary to take action. A settlement in 1855 adopted new laws that regulated the selling and serving of alcohol. The Swedish government owned alcohol retail monopoly *Systembolaget* was established in 1850. In a law that was passed in 1905, it was declared that no individual should be allowed to earn money selling liquor. We still have that same law and retail monopoly. House-distilling was banned in 1860 and the Temperance movement grew stronger and became influential. Temperance ideals also began to assert themselves within the labor movement, the liberal movement, the revival movement and alcohol consumption decreased progressively as a result of this. The Bratt system, a system of laws and restrictions, and the Liquor Ration Book was introduced in 1917-. This reform program contained three items: 1. The manufacture and sale of alcoholic drinks would take place within the framework of State monopolies. 2. Open Temperance care. 3. Individual sales control.

Generally Ration Books were issued only to men and was set at four litres of distilled liquors per month and very rarely to women. Married women were expected to share their husband's allocation. Unmarried women and young males had a smaller monthly rations than adult men. The minimum age for getting the ration book was 25 years. This ration book permitted the purchase of alcohol in only one monopoly shop and in this book all purchases were recorded (Holder et al., 1998) Additional allocation could occur within solemn occasions.

In 1922 a referendum on a total ban of alcohol was held. The result in the referendum was 49 percent for a total ban and 51percent against a ban. Thus won the opponents of prohibition with a small margin. Soon one began to realize the shortcomings of the ration book. Despite a decreased drug use, the total consumption increased, as smuggling and illicit distilling were common. When the Bratt system was abolished in 1955, alcohol consumption increased

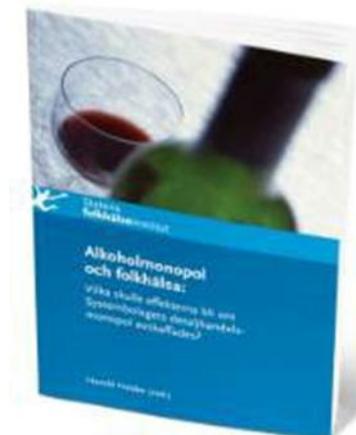
drastically. A report that compared the Swedish public health before and after 1955 gave the following result..

- Liquor sales +25%, wine sales no change, Drunkenness + 100%, involuntary commitment for alcohol abuse +17%, mortality from cirrhosis + 25% . Now other regulatory instruments such as price hikes to curb consumption were introduced.

As Sweden entered the EU in 1995, drinking habits became more continental, and regulations were relaxed. The retail monopoly Systembolaget introduced box wine and new laws allowed private companies to import and market alcohol—though the retail monopoly remained. Consumption of alcohol increased by 30 percent from 1995 to 2005.

The import quota from other EU countries is unlimited for personal use.<sup>1</sup> Due to the taxes many Swedes supply themselves in the Baltic countries or at the German borders. Limited rations of duty-free shopping is allowed on the ferries between Sweden and Finland provided they dock at Åland which is an autonomous part of Finland, and has a special treaty with the EU.

Recorded data on alcohol consumption understate the real level of alcohol consumption because wine and beer may be produced legally at home. There is also a substantial quantity of distilled beverages that are produced illicitly. Since Sweden became a member of the European Union (EU), greater quantities of all alcoholic beverages may be brought into the country from abroad. This undoubtedly increased the amount of unrecorded alcohol consumption. Also smuggled alcohol plays a part in the unrecorded alcohol consumption.



## Swedish policy on alcohol

Although there are many who enjoy alcoholic beverages and drink them in moderation, one cannot ignore the fact that alcohol is one of our greatest public health problems. The more alcohol consumed by the population in our country, the more illnesses, accidents and social problems we have as a direct consequence. The objective of the Swedish alcohol policy is therefore to reduce the overall consumption.

A means for reducing alcohol consumption is to restrict availability. The government owned Systembolaget is a non-profit retail monopoly for alcohol in Sweden. Systembolaget has sole rights to sell strong beer, wine and spirits and ensures that sales of alcohol takes place without profit. This is a crucial prerequisite for being able to understand the alcohol policy that the Swedish Parliament has passed.

### **Public health instead of profit.**

There is a tremendous force in a free market, where many competing players are trying to sell as much as possible. It's generally a good thing, but not when it comes to alcohol. If you want to promote the overall goal of prosperity and well-being it is rational and natural to eliminate the sales driving forces. Systembolaget may operate as single player with public health goals instead of striving for as much profit as possible. The purpose of a monopoly is sometimes to protect domestic production of goods. However, this has never been the purpose of Systembolaget. A fundamental prerequisite for the Swedish alcohol monopoly to be compatible with the EU competition rules is that Systembolaget observe equal treatment, objectivity and transparency. This means inter alia that Systembolaget may not favour Swedish products.

In 2010 a new alcohol law was enforced. The changes mainly concern service conditions. A restaurant, for example, no longer need to serve hot food to be allowed to also serve alcohol and small quantities for tasting are allowed at fairs and on farms that manufacture alcoholic drinks. When it comes to actual conditions it will multiple license holders to be able to get a license for communal dining room. They have to demonstrate sufficient knowledge of the alcohol law by passing a special test.

The issue of alcohol and health is becoming increasingly topical, even in an international perspective. The European Commission published its first report on the implementation of the EU alcohol strategy in September 2009. In 2010 it also adopted a resolution on the WHO global strategy for reducing the harmful use of alcohol. The WHO notes that alcohol is the world's third largest risk factor for injury and premature death, and the strategy lists operating countermeasures as taxes and availability decreasing monopoly.

### **Alcohol behind the wheel and on board**

Driving while intoxicated, according to the Swedish justice is largely disgraceful. Yet the Transport Department calculates that there are at least 15,000 drunk drivers every day in traffic. This represents 0.2 percent of the total traffic. The fourth largest cause of death in Sweden is alcohol drug-related. Depth studies since 1997 is made of all fatal accidents on the roads. Statistics show that young men between 20 and 29 years old are most affected. 75 percent of 20-29 year olds deaths where drug related. Of all drivers who die in drug-related accidents are 95 percent men. The Road and Transport Research Institute says-based on deep studies how much the risk of having an accident increases for an intoxicated driver compared to a sober one. In the range 0.2 – 0.4 per mille of alcohol in the blood , 1 – 0.2 milligrams per

gallons of alcohol in exhaled air, the risk is twelve times higher than for a sober driver. The risk of dying in traffic increases dramatically with increasing alcohol content. When the driver has 2.0 – 2.4 per mille alcohol in the blood the risk for an accident is 1300 times higher for a sober driver

The first conviction for drunk driving is considered to have been handed down in England in 1897. Fines for drunk driving came in 1925 and in 1941. In 1990 the limits for drunk driving were lowered to 0.2 per mille in the blood (or 0.1 milligrams of alcohol in the breath sample). Before that the limit was 0.5 per mille. Norway, Estonia and Poland have 0,2 per mille limit just like Sweden. The most common limit for drunk driving is 0.5 per mille. A number of countries, including England, New Zealand and the United States have 0.8 as lowest penalty limit. In the United States the limit for young drivers and professional drivers is lower. The Swedish limit for when the crime is considered aggravated drunken driving is since 1994 1.0 mg/ml. Previously it was 1.5 mg/ml. There is zero tolerance for drug driving.- Every year around 12 000 drivers are convicted for drunk driving. An increasing part of those drivers are under influence of drugs.

In 1999 tests with ignition interlock devices started. This means that the person convicted for drunk driving may continue driving if he/she pays for and installs an ignition interlock device in his car. The interlock comes with a requirement for repeated medical examinations and blood tests prove a sober living. It is a known fact that practically everyone who is caught drunk driving has problems with alcohol. The judgment for drunk driving is in normal cases fines, at most 120 day fines.. The amount varies with income. Each day fine corresponds to one thousandth of the income. On aggravated drunken driving the punishment usually is imprisonment from one month up to two years. Sweden has now put in place the same demands on sobriety for boaters. The 0,2-limit applies to all who handle boats over ten meters length and/or the maximum speed of 15 knots.

## **Traditions and habits**

The official holidays in Sweden can be divided into Christian and non-Christian holidays. The Christian holidays are Christmas, Easter, Ascension Day, Pentecost and All Saints' Day. New Year's Eve and Midsummer are non-Christian holidays. Most adults drink beer or wine at these holidays.

The second most important festivity in the Swedish calendar, or perhaps for many the most important, Midsummer's Eve, is celebrated on the eve of the Friday between the 20 and 26 June. Most Swedes try to spend this special day in the countryside. They eat pickled herring, boiled potatoes as well as strawberries and drink alcohol. Many traditional Swedish songs are sung that day while drinking "brännvin" and schnapps.

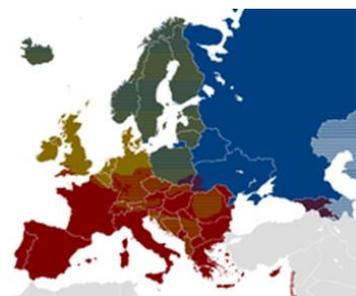
In early August the crayfish season starts. It used to follow the crayfish fishing season, but as most crayfish are imported nowadays, the exact dates of crayfish parties have become more flexible. At these parties beer and liquor are served.

Some, but not all, Swedes have fermented Baltic herring, the most exotic food in the Swedish cuisine, in late August.



For many people it is necessary to drink beer and schnapps to endure the foul smelling fish. Although the tradition says you should drink milk with this dish.

## Beverages and brands



### The Vodka belt

The Vodka belt is an informal term for some of the Nordic countries: Finland, Sweden, Norway and Iceland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and in Belarus, Ukraine and Russia. The southern boundary of the "vodka belt" roughly corresponds to  $-2^{\circ}\text{C}$  January isotherm. With the exception of Ukraine, some regions of southern Russia, cultivation of grapes is impossible or very difficult in the Vodka belt.

However, in many countries historically belonging to the vodka Belt, vodka has been supplanted by beer as the alcoholic drink of choice since the early 21st century. In Finland and in Sweden residents consume twice as much beer as vodka (in terms of pure alcohol).

According to Swedish laws beer is- divided into three groups.

*Lättöl* ("light beer"), contains less than 2.25 percent alcohol. Light beer is not considered an alcoholic drink and there are no restrictions on who can sell it and who can buy it.

*Folköl* ("people's beer"), contains between 2.25 and 3.5 percent alcohol. People's beer is sold in ordinary grocery stores, but with a minimum age of 18 for purchasing.

*Starköl* ("strong beer"), contains more than 3.5 percent alcohol. The strong beer is sold only in the government owned alcohol retail monopoly Systembolaget's stores. The minimum age for buying is 20.

Today Lager beer is the most popular beer, both with meals and in bars. In restaurants and bars it is usually served as a *stor stark* (literally "large strong"), a glass usually containing 40 - 50 cl of *starköl* ("strong beer"). *Lättöl* ("light beer") - is very popular in lunch restaurants as the vast majority of people can drink it and still stay below the legal limits for drunk driving.

Most beer is produced by large scale industrial breweries, but handmade small scale brewing is becoming more popular.

The number of microbreweries in Sweden have more than tripled over the last three years. The reason is the increased interest from both restaurants and consumers. Three years ago the total number of Swedish microbreweries were estimated to about twenty or so. Today there are more than 100, but the market share of the small breweries are still just about 4 percent of the total beer market in Sweden. The aims of microbreweries are not only commercial penetration but as much about finding new and exciting taste sensations. And this passion for artisanal and small scale has grown stronger with tavern visitors and restaurants.

The main Swedish specialty is Brännvin, liquor. When first introduced into Sweden, the drink was distilled from wine, but later the base became grain, and then potatoes. Until the late 19th century the quality of distilling was not always high, and there was often an unpleasant taste from some of the materials used. A common way of concealing this was to add various herbs and spices. Vodka is the highest grade of brännvin, used in *Absolut Vodka* for example.

Brännvin flavoured by herbs is known as akvavit (latin *aqua vitae*- the water of life). In Sweden it is usually drunk as a schnapps in a small shot glass with a traditional meal like pickled herring or crayfish.

Alcoholic beverages are taxed by content of alcohol. The tax is higher than in most countries. For example:

For one liter of vodka containing 40 percent alcohol the tax is approximately 23 euros.  
For one liter of wine containing 14 percent alcohol the tax is approximately 2.50 euros.  
For one liter of beer containing 4.5 percent alcohol the tax is approximately 70 cents.  
Beer with less than 2.8 percent alcohol is not considered an alcoholic drink and therefore has no tax except for VAT.

In both restaurants and retail shops VAT for alcoholic drinks is 25 percent, and for other drinks and food 12 percent.

-Sweet cider is also common. As of July 1, 2005, new rules established that only fermented juice from apple and pear allowed to be called 'cider'. Before this change, any fruit-based beverage could be called cider, alcopop from other countries could be sold as cider in Sweden.

## Alcohol consumption in Sweden

### Reduced alcohol consumption since 2004

By 2012 the total consumption of alcoholic beverages was 9.1 litres of pure alcohol per capita 15 years and over. That's 3 percent more than in 2001. The consumption increased by 20 percent between 2001 and 2004. Between 2004 and 2012 it fell by 14 percent

Alcohol consumption in Sweden

Beverage	Percent	Period	Increase Percent
Wine	42	1996- 2012	+65
Strong beer	28	1996 -2012	+50
Spirits	22	1996 – 2010	- 25
Light beer	6		
Cider	6		

Despite the small total decline in recent years, alcohol consumption remains relatively high in a longer historical perspective. An average Swede drank 2009 5 litres of spirits 30 litres of wine, 69 litres of strong and medium strength beer and around 3 litres of cider and mixed drinks About 13 percent of Swedes, about 1 000 000 people, is considered having risky alcohol habits.

The sales in the Systembolaget is accounted for 62 percent of total sales while import and smuggling is accounted for 14 and 6 percent respectively; 10 percent was consumed in restaurants, 6 percent was accounted for beer sold in grocery retail stores, and 2 percent was homemade.

### Alcohol and women

In the image of the society that marked the beginning of the 20th century it was not for women to drink alcohol. Women who drank were defined as fallen, immoral, which served as a way to exert control over them. Explanations for why women started drinking more alcohol has been assigned to the role of women in society that has changed and that the women has received a greater economic freedom. During the second half of the 20th century alcohol became a part of women's emancipation from traditional gender roles

With liberation alcohol becomes an expression of sovereignty -. The large increase in substance abuse among women occurred from the mid-sixties until 1980 and is considered to be an effect of improvements in individual economy. Since then, it has leveled off, among both men and women.

In the Nordic countries, women are drinking almost as much as men, unlike in most of Europe. This means that almost 90 percent of the Swedish women have drunk alcohol in the past year. Women, particularly 28–38 years old, are reported drinking more often and in greater amounts. Furthermore, the prevalence of female abstainers had decreased from 18 to

13 percent. The group that drink the most alcohol, are women and girls under the age of 25. Increased stress is likely to be a strong contributor to women drinking more alcohol.

A thesis from 2007 show that every tenth middle-aged woman is drinking so much that it is considered risky for health. Now women age 30-35 drink as men do - beer and wine after work and on weekends - but they didn't start drinking as early as men the same age. The question is how the girls who begin drinking regularly already at 14- will consume twenty years later?

### **Young people and alcohol.**

The average age for starting drinking alcohol is now 13.5 years in the County of Gävleborg in Sweden. At the same time the number of children in ninth grade who do not drink alcohol at all has increased.

Swedish young people are drinking less and less and it applies to both boys and girls. A survey from 2011 indicated that 55 percent of the boys and 58 percent of the girls in ninth grade had consumed alcohol in the last 12 months. Just a few years earlier, in 2007, the numbers were 61 percent of the boys and 68 percent of the girls. In addition, the total consumption in the most recent poll has fallen to the lowest level in many years for both boys and girls. This trend is also present in binge drinking.

### **Elderly people and alcohol**

Elderly people in Sweden are drinking less than other age groups, but are drinking more than they did before. Alcohol related detriment has increased more for elderly people than in other groups. There is a strong correlation between consumption and injuries. One possible factor is the cohort effects, that today's elderly have entirely different alcohol habits than previous generations. Today's elderly are also a resourceful group, which means that they can afford to drink – a hypothesis supported by research on the relationship between income and alcohol purchases. Furthermore, one can imagine that many seniors has taken in the frequent media reporting on alcohol's health benefits, and that this mainly affects older people..

## **Consequences**

### **1 percent of GDP**

Accidents and other injuries, which may be related to alcohol, is estimated to cost our society around 5 billion euros annually. Examples of costs are acute, as in the case of accidents, the medical care of people with alcohol problems and the costs of illness, absence and loss of work time. Above these costs are the human suffering caused by alcohol problems and alcohol-related accidents, which of course are impossible to measure in money.



80 percent of youngsters age 18-19 said that the purpose of drinking is to get drunk and have fun.

Public Health developers at Gävleborg County Council find that the alcohol is what gives the most damage to both people and society directly and indirectly.

The author Isabelle Sundström concludes, “when you know how your body is affected by alcohol, the brain's signal turns out, heart, liver and pancreas is affected, it is odd that alcohol is a drug approved by society. Given the restrictions implemented in the case of smoking, corresponding measures ought to be implemented to limit alcohol drinking. This is particularly important for young people when the teenage brain development is out of step.

## **Treatment**

Five methods are used in Sweden

- Minnesota (AA:s 12 steps) – a Swedish model for open care and boarding care
- Cognitive psyko terapi
- Transaktion analysis, TA
- Environmental terapi
- Learning teori

## **Advertising**

The Alcohol Act is the statutory regulation. There are also two non-statutory codes adopted by the alcohol industry. The Alcohol Act states that all marketing to consumers must be distinct moderate and are not allowed to be intrusive or seeking. Alcoholic beverages as gifts are not allowed. Advertisement in periodical publications is allowed for alcoholic beverages that are not stronger than 15 percent. The advertisement must be moderate and can only express the product or its content of raw products. An advertisement must hold a text with information about the risks that are connected with alcohol consumption (for example: "alcohol can damage your health"). There are 11 different texts to choose between in a statutory ordinance.

Outdoor advertisement is not considered distinctly moderate and therefore not seen in Sweden. The same goes for advertisement for example in cinemas, sports centres, hospitals and buses. Marketing of alcoholic beverages must not state or give the impression that alcohol consumption raises the physical or mental ability, promotes social or sexual success or solve problems as loneliness and boredom.

Marketing of alcoholic beverages has increased significantly in recent years, not at least in digital media. By social media marketing message is spread rapidly mostly to young people. Because it is prohibited to direct advertising of alcohol to persons under the age of 25, it is not the drink itself that is advertised. Instead the brand and entertainment are used to attract young

people. Young people like to participate in events with alcohol-related content. At campaign sites the brand is merged with entertainment by, for example, allowing visitors to listen to music, create playlists, or play games. At the same time, surveys show that alcohol advertising caused young people to trying and drinking more alcohol.

### **Alcohol advertising on television and radio**

Advertising alcoholic beverages on radio and television is prohibited. It is also prohibited to air programs sponsored by alcohol manufacturers. But foreign broadcasters, such as those broadcasting from the United Kingdom, follows its country's rules and prevalent yet TV advertising of alcoholic drinks on some channels broadcast in Sweden. The foreign broadcasters have been asked to follow Swedish rules for the marketing of alcohol, but nevertheless decided to continue to follow the British policies. In alcohol advertising on video and clothes research shows that young people who watch movies and TV programs become alcohol drinkers more often and intoxicates themselves more often than other young people.

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