

Statistics on pharmaceuticals 2018

More and more people are receiving antidiabetic drugs, mainly due to an increase in the number of patients taking medication for type 2 diabetes. There is also a continued increase in the prescription of antidepressants. The proportion of girls aged 10–14 who were prescribed antidepressants increased by almost 60 percent between 2014 and 2018, compared to just over 40 percent for boys in the same age group.

About the statistics

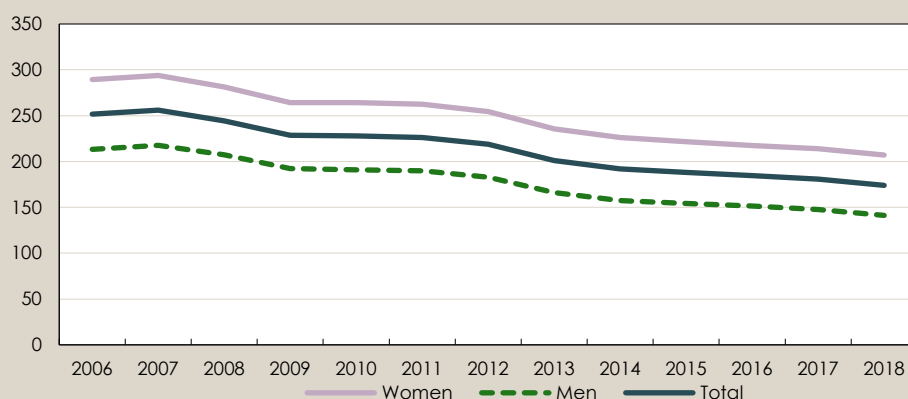
The statistics show the number of individuals who have received the relevant drugs from a pharmacy at least once during the year.

Decrease in antibiotics prescriptions

The number of people prescribed antibiotics in Sweden has been steadily falling for several years. In 2018, 174 patients per 1,000 inhabitants received antibiotics at some point, compared with 252 per 1,000 in 2006. These prescriptions are most common amongst children and the elderly, and are more frequent overall amongst women than men. A reduction is seen in all age groups during the period, but primarily amongst children aged 0–9 years old, where the prescription of antibiotics has fallen by 44 percent since 2006.

Figure 1. Prescription of antibiotics 2006–2018

Number of patients per 1,000 inhabitants.



ATC-code: J01 exkl. J01XX05

Source: The Swedish Prescribed Drug Register, the National Board of Health and Welfare

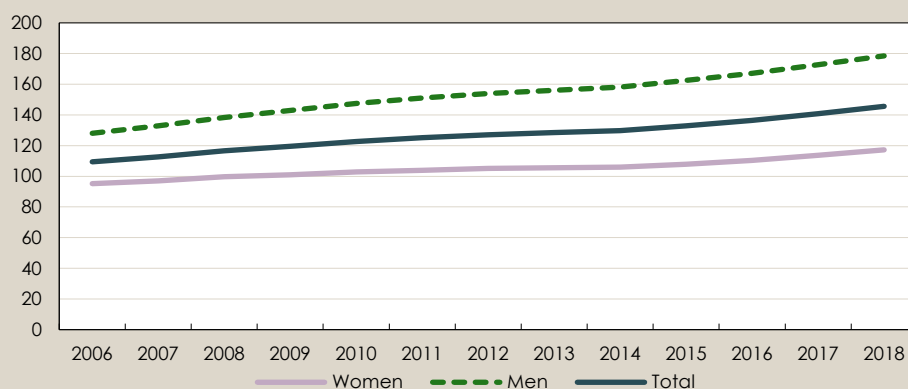
Of the three largest groups of antibiotics, tetracyclines and beta-lactamase sensitive penicillins are markedly reduced, whilst prescriptions of extended-spectrum penicillins have been more stable over time. On the other hand, prescriptions of other antibacterials have almost doubled since 2006.

More people are receiving antidiabetics

Almost 500,000 patients received medication for treating diabetes at some point in 2018, which is almost 180,000 more than in 2006. The number of patients aged 65 or older taking antidiabetic drugs was over 290,000 in 2018, which equates to 146 per 1,000 inhabitants in that age group. In 2006, the equivalent figure was 109 per 1,000 inhabitants.

Figure 2. Antidiabetics for the elderly 2006–2018

Number of patients per 1,000 inhabitants, 65 years and older.



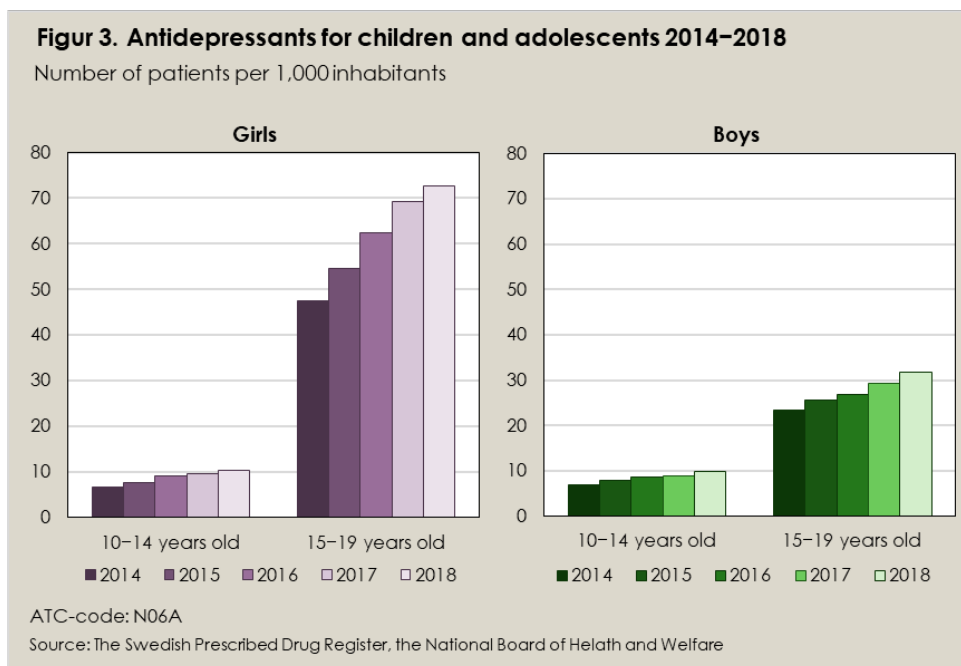
ATC-code: A10

Source: The Swedish Prescribed Drug Register, the National Board of Health and Welfare

Almost all of the increase in recent years is due to the fact that more people are receiving medication for type 2 diabetes. In 2018, nearly 56,000 more patients aged 65 or over received at least one prescribed drug for type 2 diabetes than in 2014. The increase in recent years applies mainly to the prescription of biguanides and DPP-4 inhibitors. The largest decrease in antidiabetic drugs is seen in sulphonylureas.

Increase in prescriptions for antidepressants

Prescriptions of antidepressant drugs continued to increase in 2018. Prescriptions were given to the elderly to a greater extent than to younger people, and to more women than men. One third of all women aged 85 or older were given some kind of antidepressant drug at least once in 2018. The greatest increase over the last years, however, has been with regards to children. The proportion of girls aged 10–14 who were prescribed antidepressants increased by almost 60 percent between 2014 and 2018. For boys in the same age, the increase was just over 40 percent.

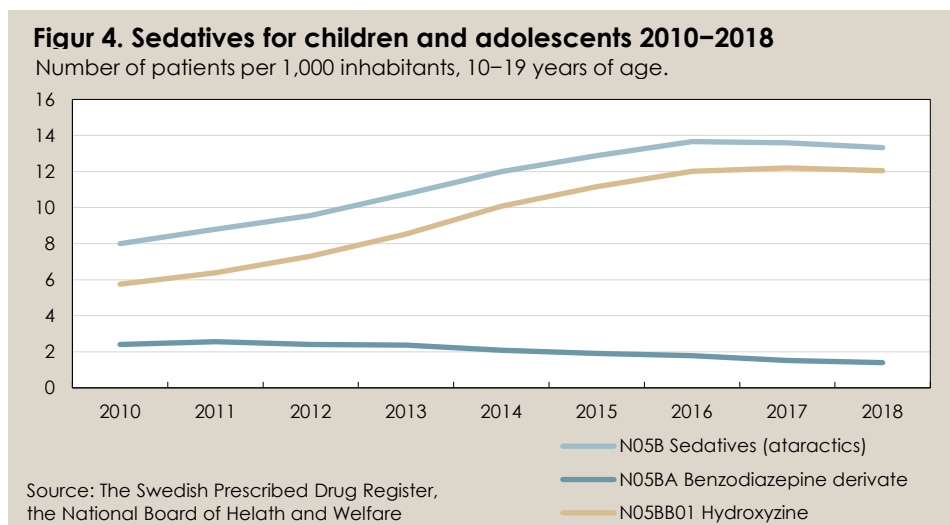


Amongst teenagers, the difference between girls and boys is considerable. It was more than twice as common for girls aged 15–19 to receive antidepressants at least once in 2018 compared with boys in the same age group.

Sedatives for children

Prescriptions of sedatives for children and adolescents aged 10–19 was on the rise for a number of years but has fallen slightly the last year.

The increase until 2017 was mainly due to a growing number of prescriptions for the non-addictive medication hydroxyzine. On the other hand, prescriptions for addictive benzodiazepine derivatives have fallen every year since 2011. The trend is the same for boys and girls.



Hepatitis C medication is subsidised for all patients

In 2018, approximately 6,500 patients prescribed medication for treating Hepatitis C, which is almost three times as many as the previous year. The medication is prescribed to about twice as many men as women.

In October 2017, treatment recommendations were updated, and since January 2018, Hepatitis C medication has been subsidised for all patients [1, 2]. Each individual treatment has become cheaper in recent years, but the total cost for these drugs has nevertheless risen, and was more than two billion Swedish kronor in 2018.

Increase in emollients for children

Emollients and protectives (ATC code D02) reduce dryness, prevent eczema and are prescribed for various sorts of skin disease. The use of these medications is fairly stable across the population in general, but prescriptions to children and the elderly is increasing. The largest increase was in children aged 0–4, for whom prescriptions doubled between 2015 and 2018. In total, almost 69,000 children in that age group were prescribed emollients in 2018. The equivalent number for 2015 was 31,000. Since January 2016, medication and items included in the pharmaceutical benefits scheme are free of cost for children younger than 18.

References

1. The Swedish Reference Group for Antiviral Therapy (RAV). Läkemedelsbehandling av hepatit C-virusinfektion hos vuxna och barn 2017 – Behandlingsrekommendation (Medication for hepatitis C infections in adults and children 2017 – treatment recommendation). 2017.
2. The Dental and Pharmaceutical Benefits Agency. Downloaded on 25 March 2019 from <http://www.tlv.se/beslut/beslut-lakemedel/begransad-subvention/arkiv/2017-12-15>.

More information

More tables, graphs and information can be found in the following Excel file (in Swedish, but with an English list of terms):

www.socialstyrelsen.se/publikationer2019/2019-4-8

For those who would like to search our statistical database:

www.socialstyrelsen.se/statistik/statistikdatabas/lakemedel

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