

Statistics on pharmaceuticals 2020

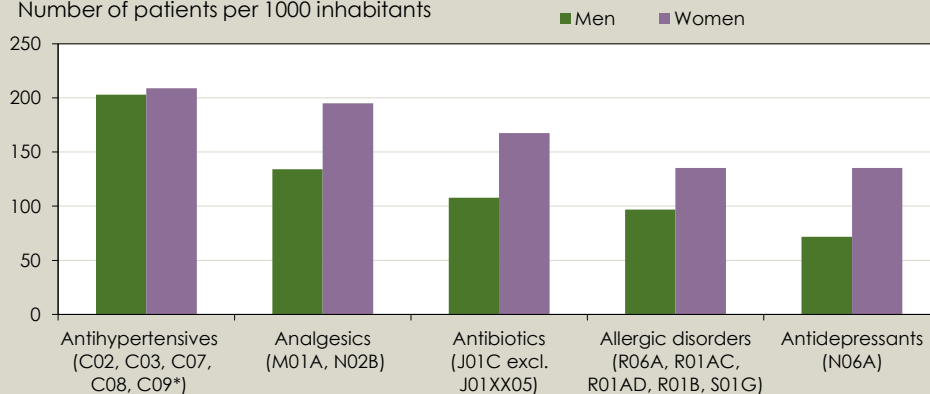
Antihypertensive drugs are the group of pharmaceuticals that are prescribed to the largest number of patients. More women than men retrieved antidepressants, antibiotics and analgesics. The proportion of children that retrieved antibiotics from a pharmacy decreased with 34 percent 2020.

Antihypertensive drugs are most commonly retrieved

During 2020, 65 percent of the Swedish population retrieved at least one type of pharmaceutical. For women the proportion was 73 percent including contraceptives. The corresponding number for men was 57 percent. Antihypertensive drugs is the most commonly retrieved group. In total 2.1 million retrieved this type of pharmaceutical last year. Other commonly retrieved groups are analgesics (opioids not included), antibiotics, drugs treating allergic disorders, and antidepressants, all of them are more often given to women than to men. This tendency is particularly pronounced for antidepressants, where 14 percent of the women has retrieved this type of pharmaceutical compared to 7 percent of the men.

Figure 1. The five most common drug groups 2020, divided by sex

Number of patients per 1000 inhabitants



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

* Excl. C02AC02 and C07AA07

About the statistics

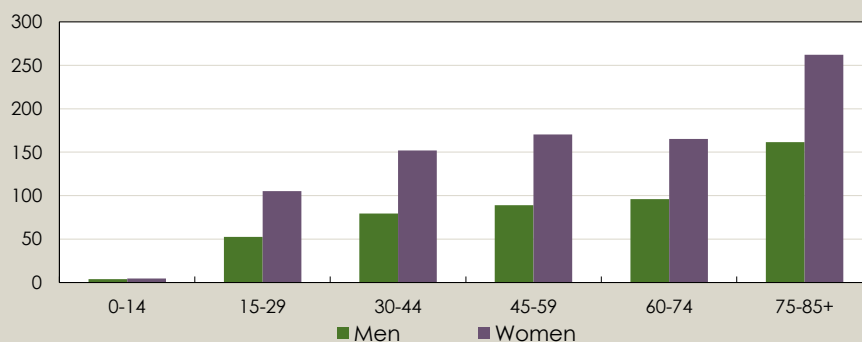
The statistics show the number of persons that has retrieved the pharmaceutical in question at least once during one year from a pharmacy. It does not include pharmaceuticals without prescription nor those distributed by institutions with their own pharmaceutical stocks such as hospitals.

More women than men use antidepressants

More women than men use antidepressants in all age groups. About 695 000 women and 372 000 men retrieved antidepressants at least once during 2020. The largest difference in gender is seen in the age bracket 15 – 29, where the proportion of women retrieving these pharmaceuticals are 11 percent compared to 5 percent among the men. The use of antidepressants is most common among those over 75, where 26 percent of the women and 16 percent of the men retrieved this type of pharmaceutical.

Figure 2. Antidepressants divided by age-groups, 2020

Patients per 1000 inhabitants



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

The use of antibiotics decline among children

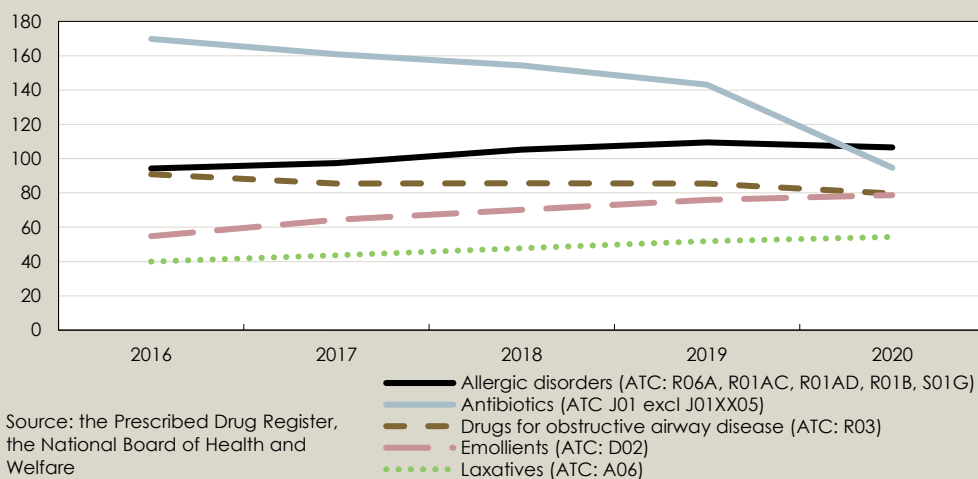
The largest drug groups among children include drugs treating allergic disorders, antibiotics, drugs for obstructive airway disease, laxatives and emollients. The proportion of children who got antibiotics prescribed has gone down with 34 percent last year. The corresponding proportion for all ages is 18 percent. Prescription of antibiotics has decreased every year since 2007, but last year's reduction was much larger than the previous years. This is probably caused by fewer infections due to social distancing combined with improved hygiene routines, as well as reduced numbers of visits to health centres which may have caused a further reduction in the number of prescriptions of antibiotics. However, the reduced level of prescription does not seem to have caused an increase in serious infections [1].

For drugs treating allergic disorders, a slight decrease can be seen last year, after several years of increased use. These pharmaceuticals are also available without prescription. The proportion of children that retrieved drugs for obstructive airway disease has gone down with 13 percent since 2016, while the proportion that retrieved emollients has gone up 44 percent during the same period. In total about 170 000 children got emollients prescribed during 2020. However, these products are as well sold without prescription, but since January 2016,

pharmaceuticals and goods included in the pharmaceutical benefits are free of charge for children under the age of 18.

Figure 3. Common drug groups among children, aged 0 – 17, 2016 – 2020

Patients per 1000 inhabitants



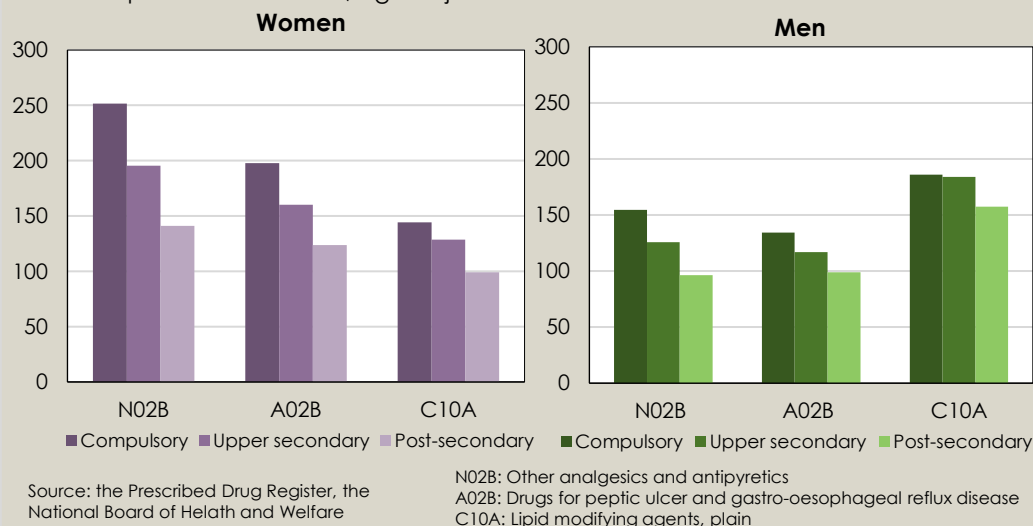
Analgesics are prescribed more to people with lower education

Analgesics are the most commonly used painkillers and are often prescribed against long-lasting pain. In this drug group, paracetamol is almost exclusively prescribed, although it is also available without prescription. Among the three most common groups of pharmaceuticals in the age group 35-79, *analgesics* have biggest difference in prescription between people with different levels of education. Among women with only elementary education, 25 percent receive this type of painkillers compared to 14 percent of women with post-secondary education. The corresponding numbers for men are 15 and 10 percent respectively.

The group *Cardiac glycosides* is used more by men, but here the difference between education levels is less pronounced. These pharmaceuticals retrieved by 19 percent of men with solely elementary education compared to 16 percent of those with post-secondary education. In this case, as well, the difference between education levels is larger among women where the corresponding numbers are 14 and 10 percent respectively.

Figure 4. Drug groups, aged 35 – 79, by sex and level of education 2020

Patients per 1000 inhabitants, age adjusted numbers



References

1. (In Swedish) Socialstyrelsen/Folkhälsomyndigheten, Minskad antibiotikaanvändning under covid-19-pandemin har inte lett till fler allvarliga infektioner. <https://www.socialstyrelsen.se/globalassets/sharepoint-dokument/artikelkatalog/ovrigt/2020-12-7119.pdf>

More information

You can find more tables, graphs and information here:

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