

Statistics on pharmaceuticals 2021

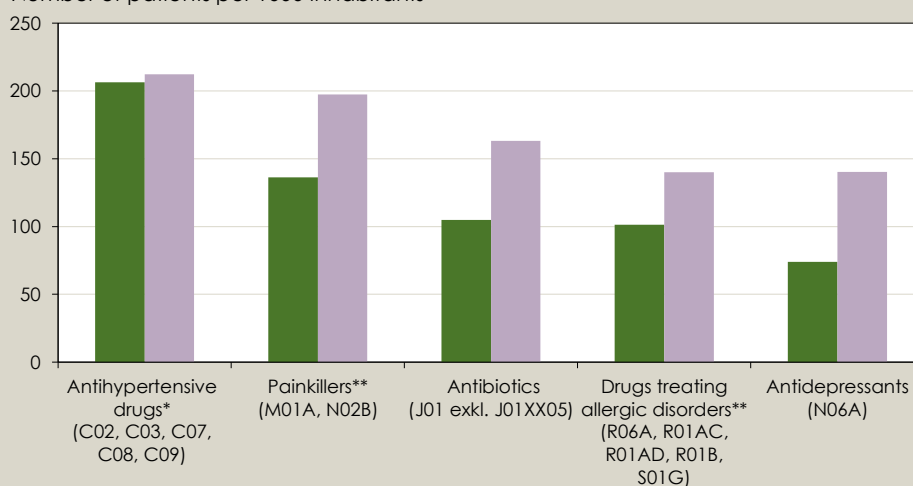
Antihypertensive drugs are the group of pharmaceuticals that are prescribed to the largest number of patients. There are more women than men who retrieve pharmaceuticals. Drugs treating allergic disorders are the group most commonly prescribed to children. A higher proportion of those who are prescribed painkillers are people with compulsory school as the highest level of education.

Antihypertensive drugs are prescribed to the largest number of patients

During 2021, 65 percent of the Swedish population retrieved at least one type of pharmaceuticals. For women the proportion was 73 percent including contraceptives. The corresponding number for men was 57 percent. Antihypertensive drugs are the most common type of drug retrieved. In total 21 percent of the retrieved pharmaceutical was of this type 2021. Other commonly retrieved drugs were analgesics (opioids not included), antibiotics, drugs treating allergic disorders, and antidepressants. The use of these drug groups has increased over time, with the notable exception of antibiotics, where there has been a decrease over several years. All of these drugs were administered to more women than men. The highest gender difference was for antidepressants, retrieved by 14 percent of the women and 7 percent of the men.

Figure 1. The five most common drug groups 2021, divided by sex

Number of patients per 1000 inhabitants



* Exkl. C02AC02 och C07AA07

** The group contains certain pharmaceuticals that are available over the counter

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

About the statistics

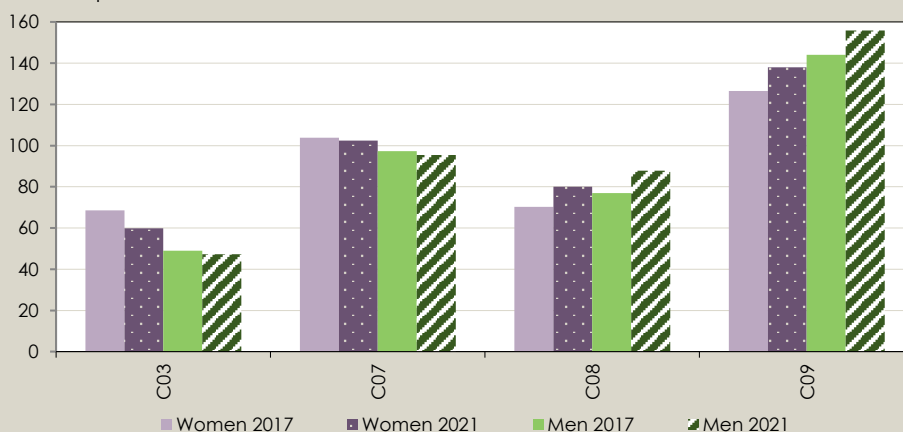
The statistics show the number of persons that has retrieved the pharmaceutical in question at least once during one year from a pharmacy. It does not include pharmaceuticals without prescription nor those distributed by institutions with their own pharmaceutical stocks such as hospitals. Some pharmaceutical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

The use of antihypertensive drugs is increasing

In total the use of antihypertensive drugs has increased by 5 percent among men and 3 percent for women over the last five years. The most common type of antihypertensive drugs are *agents acting on the renin-angiotensin system*. Retrieval of this group is higher among men, but has increased for both sexes since 2017. The use of *calcium channel blockers* has risen by 14 percent for both women and men over the last five years. Also, for this group the use is slightly higher among men. The retrieval of *beta blocking agents* is slightly higher among women and has gone down for both women and men since 2017. The use of *diuretics* or water pills has decreased with 13 percent for women since 2017 whereas the use has been more stable among men. However, there is still more women than men who get these pharmaceuticals prescribed. It is common to prescribe a combination of different antihypertensive drugs to these patients.

Figure 2. Antihypertensive drugs, divided by sex, 2017 and 2021

Patients per 1000 inhabitants



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

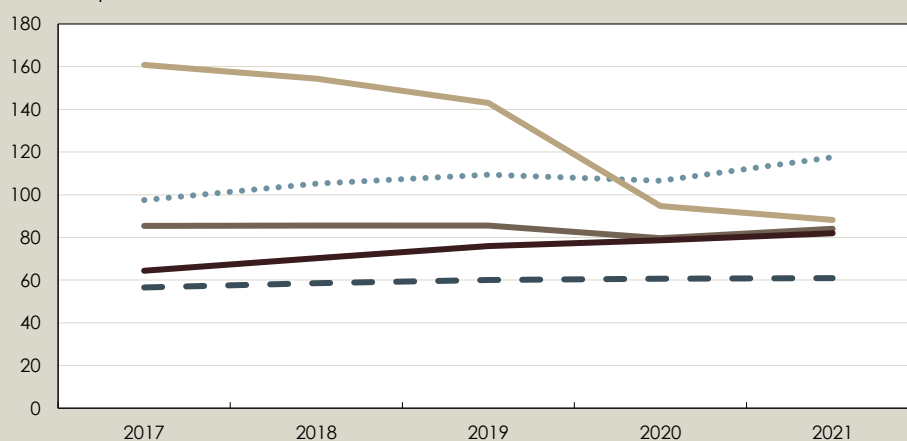
C03: Diuretics
 C07: Beta blocking agents
 C08: Calcium channel blockers
 C09: Agents acting on the renin-angiotensin system

Drugs treating allergic disorders most common drug group among children

The largest drug groups among children include drugs treating allergic disorders, antibiotics, drugs for obstructive airway disease, emollients and topical corticosteroids. The group that's prescribed to the most children are since 2020 drugs treating allergic disorders. They have increased slightly compared to 2020, during 2021 roughly 12 percent of the children retrieved these pharmaceuticals. Retrieval of emollients for children has risen with 27 percent over the last five years, whereas the corresponding number for topical corticosteroids is 8 percent. During 2020 the prescription of antibiotics to children went down notably, whereas last year's decrease was similar to previous years. Antibiotics were prescribed to 9 percent of children during 2021. Also drugs for obstructive airway disease decreased during 2020, but the use returned during 2021 to the same levels as previous years, just over 8 percent.

Figure 3. The most common drug groups among children, aged 0–17, 2017–2021

Patients per 1000 inhabitants



* The group contains certain pharmaceuticals that are available over the counter

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

●●●●● Drugs treating allergic disorders*
 — Antibiotics
 — Drugs for obstructive airway disease
 — Emollients*
 - - - Topical corticosteroids*

Painkillers are prescribed more to people with lower education

Painkillers are, for example, prescribed against persistent pains. This type of pharmaceuticals is prescribed to a larger extent to patients with compulsory school as the highest level of education, compared to those with upper secondary or post-secondary education. The difference is the largest for the group *other analgesics and antipyretics* (ATC-code N02A e.g. paracetamol). Among women with compulsory education 25 percent had this type of pharmaceutical prescribed, compared to 14 percent of those with post-secondary education. Corre-

sponding numbers for men are 16 percent and 10 percent respectively. The proportion of women who retrieve these medicines are 50 percent higher than the proportion of men. The group *anti-inflammatory and antirheumatic products, non-steroids* (ATC-code M01A, e.g. ibuprofen) paints a similar picture. Among women with post-secondary education 14 percent were prescribed these painkillers compared to 19 percent of those with compulsory education. Corresponding numbers for men are 11 and 13 percent, respectively. *Opioids* (ATC-code N02A e.g. oxycodone) are stronger painkillers that are exclusively sold on prescription. This group follow the same patter as the other groups. Among women with compulsory education 13 percent retrieve these pharmaceuticals compared to 8 percent of women with post-secondary education. Among men 9 percent with compulsory education had these pharmaceuticals prescribed compared to 6 percent of those with post-secondary education.

Figure 4. Painkillers, 35–79 years old, divided by sex and level of education 2021

Patients per 1 000 inhabitants, age adjusted numbers



More information

You can find more tables, graphs and information here:

www.socialstyrelsen.se/statistik-och-data/statistik/statistikammen/lake-medel. If you want to use our statistical database: www.socialstyrelsen.se/en/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistical-databases

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