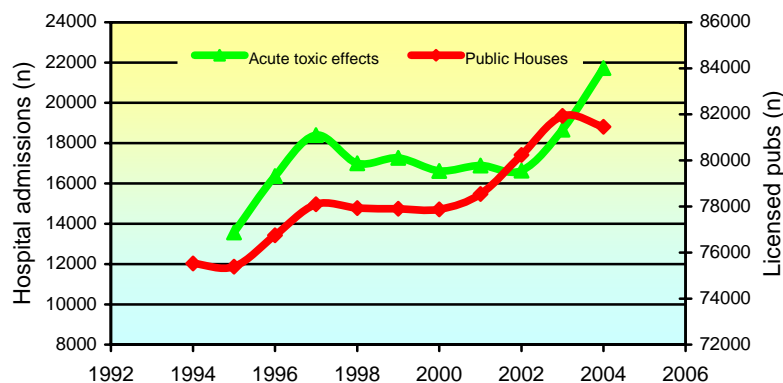


Manage the sale of alcohol

Regulating retail outlets for alcohol. Alcohol can be purchased through “off-premise” or “on-premise” sales. For off-premise sales, where alcohol is consumed elsewhere, regulations can be made on the type, strength and packaging of the alcoholic beverage and the time, costs and location of alcohol sales. For on-premise sales, where alcohol is consumed in the bar or café, regulations can specify drink sizes, disallow discount drink promotions or require on-premise staff to receive training in responsible beverage service. They may also regulate the design of the bar or café. A **licence** issued by a local or central administration is required in many countries before some types of alcoholic drinks can be sold, either on licensed premises or from off-licences. There are many reasons and benefits for licensing retail sales. One is to make sure that outlets observe other regulations such as age limits and opening times. Another is to ensure that tax is collected on every drop of alcohol sold. When the system is used to restrict the number of outlets, most often the aim is to prevent health and public order problems by limiting the alcohol supply. Licensing systems have also been used to control the standard of licensed premises, for instance to deny licences to places that are perceived to encourage harmful drinking and to grant licences to outlets that appear to encourage less harmful drinking.

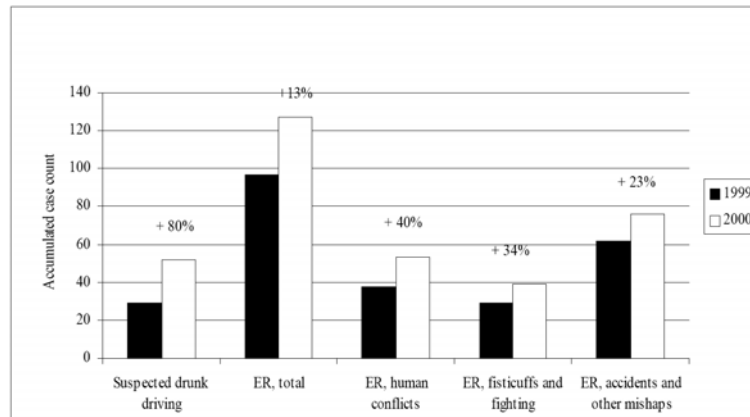
One means to regulate sales of alcohol is through government-owned alcohol outlets, **retail monopolies**, which still operate in the Nordic countries. Off-premise monopoly systems reduce alcohol consumption and alcohol-related problems. Studies of privatisation of sales of alcoholic beverages show substantial increases in consumption. Finland changed from selling beer only in government monopoly stores to selling it also in grocery stores in 1968. In the following year, alcohol consumption increased by 46%. In the following five years, mortality from liver cirrhosis increased by 50%, hospital admissions for alcoholic psychosis increased by 110% for men and 130% for women, and arrests for drunkenness increased by 80% for men and 160% for women. Total alcohol consumption in Sweden was substantially higher when medium-strength beer could be purchased in grocery stores between 1965 and 1977, rather than only in state monopoly stores.

Number of retail outlets/outlet density Outlet density refers to the number of outlets available for the retail purchase of alcohol. The smaller the number of outlets for alcoholic beverages, the greater the difficulty in obtaining alcohol, a situation that is likely to deter alcohol use and problems. Recent years have seen the transformation of the night-time economy, for example, in British cities and towns with an increase in the number of licenses, and with older pubs being replaced by large branded drinking warehouses run by national or international chains. In Manchester, the capacity of licensed premises increased by 240% between 1998 and 2001, whilst the number of assaults reported to the police increased by 225% between 1997 and 2001.



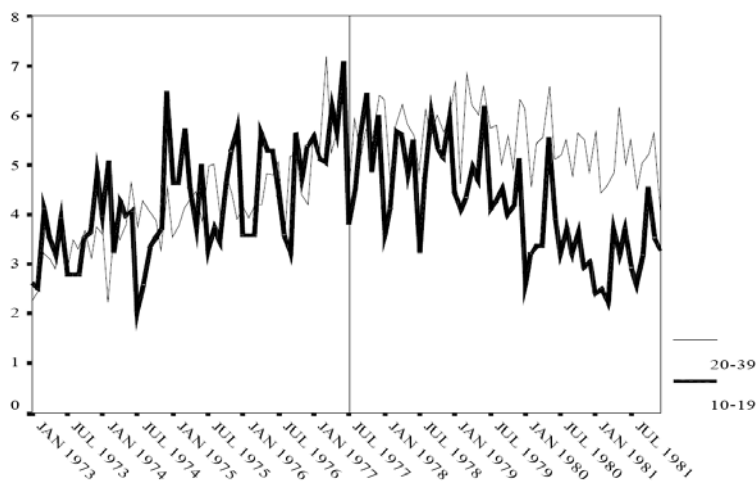
The number of licensed pubs and the number of emergency admissions to hospital for the acute toxic effects of alcohol, England¹

Hours and days of retail sale A number of studies have indicated that although changing either hours or days of alcohol sale can redistribute the times at which many alcohol related crashes and violent events related to alcohol take place, it does so at the cost of an overall increase in problems. Around-the-clock opening in Reykjavik, for instance, produced net increases in police work, in emergency room admissions and in drink-driving cases.



Iceland: impact of 24 hour opening of bars and restaurants²

There is also evidence that restricting days and hours of sale reduces problems. In the 1980s Sweden re-instituted Saturday closing for spirits and wine off-premise sales after studies showed that Saturday sales were associated with increased rates of domestic violence and public drunkenness. Some 20 years later, when Saturday opening of government alcohol stores was re-instituted, there was a 3.6% increase in alcohol sales.



Impact of abolition of beer purchases in grocery stores on hospitalizations for alcohol intoxication/100,000 people, Sweden³

Sales to minors Almost all countries legally restrict alcohol sales to minors. There is very strong evidence that changes in minimum drinking age laws can substantially effect youth drinking and alcohol-related harm, particularly road traffic accidents; however, the full benefits of a higher drinking age are only realized if the law is enforced.

¹ The Information Centre (2006). Statistics on alcohol: England, 2006. <http://www.ic.nhs.uk/pubs/alcoholeng2006>

² Ragnarsdottir, T., Kjartansdottir, A. and Davidsdottir, S. (2002) Effect of extended alcohol serving hours in Reykjavik, Iceland. In: Room, R., ed. The Effects of Nordic Alcohol Policies, pp. 145– 154. NAD Publication 42. Helsinki: Nordic Council for Alcohol and Drug Research.

³ Olsson O. and Wikström P.H. (1982) Effects of the experimental Saturday closing of liquor retail stores in Sweden. Contemporary Drug Problems 11, 325-353.