In 1908, the “Durban System” was imposed, which gave local governments monopolies over brewing grain beer and selling it through municipal beer halls. The substantial profits derived from these enterprises were then plowed into the development of strictly segregated African residential ghettos known euphemistically as townships. Not surprisingly, elements of this system were widely adopted in the east, central, and southern African British dependencies, creating a strong fiscal dependency on alcohol. In the 1930s, even the Witwatersrand abandoned its prohibition policies in favor of the beer hall system. African consumers were less attracted to the beer halls, and they referred to the experience of visiting these establishments as “drinking in a cage.” In time, however, urban residents even managed to put their cultural stamp on these large-scale and impersonal establishments, and they became important elements in vibrant urban cultures, even as they resonated with alcohol abuse and despair.

In the years after the second world war, increasingly intrusive state forces clashed continually with Africans attempting to produce and consume beer outside the law. In South Africa and the British territories, a growing population of relatively well-educated and affluent Africans demanded the right to drink European beers, wines, and spirits in more decorous surroundings than those provided by beer halls. At the same time, the mostly female legion of illicit brewers resisted police as they sought to protect one of the few opportunities for women to earn cash in urban areas. Beginning in the 1920s and climaxing in the large-scale demonstrations in Cato Manor near Durban in 1959, the brewers fought aggressively to protect their interests. The illegal shebeens that sprang up in South Africa’s urban areas not only provided the chance for people to drink beyond the scrutiny of the state, but also helped to sustain a vibrant subculture that emerged in the shadow of the establishment of apartheid. The glamour of high-class shebeens contrasted sharply, however, with the misery caused by police repression and alcohol abuse. The number of convictions for liquor offenses exceeded 200,000 annually during the 1950s in South Africa. And while many Africans fought to abolish racially defined alcohol regulations, many others, especially active Christians, abstained from alcohol and pressed for even stricter control. Some of that fervor fired the demonstrators who ignited the Soweto rebellion in 1976. There and in the protests that spread across urban South Africa, state-owned liquor stores were among the initial targets of attack.

In the 1960s, the South African state reformed alcohol regulations, making bottled beer and wine available to Africans while keeping the alcohol commerce firmly in the hands of white businessmen and municipalities. The independence of the former British dependencies brought an end to racial discrimination in alcohol regulation, but across the region the state revenues derived from liquor sales became increasingly important. Not surprisingly, these changes did not benefit the women who had dominated the illicit trade. Businessmen gained control over legal distribution and the bar trade. Across southern Africa, production and consumption grew very rapidly after the 1960s, and the signs of alcohol abuse became more visible; but efforts aimed at restricting consumption threatened critical commercial interests and vital state revenue sources. Before the 1960s, disease models of alcoholism found considerable favor in the treatment of excessive drinking in the white population. In contrast, social-service providers tended to define alcohol abuse among blacks in collective, racialized terms, as a provolity or as a symptom of the stresses associated with modernization. South African efforts to address alcohol abuse problems among the majority black population were inevitably compromised by the racial assumptions that shaped many policies and by the very nature of the regime that promoted them. With the gradual decolonization of health services, limitations on resources meant that there would be fewer funds to support prevention or treatment programs. Across the region, as economic decline cuts into consumption levels, historically formed patterns of excessive drinking reinforce a range of social and health problems, including domestic violence and HIV/AIDS.

Charles H. Ambler

See also: Shebeens (Southern Africa); South African Breweries (SAB)

References

**Alcohol, Consumption of (Russia)**

Reliable data on alcohol consumption in Russia are available from the late eighteenth century; the rate of drinking of Russians in the earlier periods can only be estimated. Up to the late
1850s and early 1860s, the Russian government had a very vague notion of the amount of alcohol sales in the country, as the official data in many cases were compiled from the reports sent in by otkupshchiki (private concessionaires running the alcohol trade before 1863), who were not interested in showing real incomes from the alcohol trade.

Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries

According to the unreliable data provided by these reports, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the average level of alcohol consumption in Russia was 5 liters of pure alcohol per year, in vodka only (1 U.S. gallon is equivalent to 3.785 liters). Consumption of other alcoholic drinks in most of the provinces up to the Soviet period was very low and did not significantly influence the general drinking situation in Russia. Between 1819 and 1826, when the first Russian alcohol monopoly was introduced, there was an insignificant decrease in consumption. After the abolition of the monopoly, the rate of consumption returned to the previous level.

Around this time, the rate of alcohol consumption in the St. Petersburg and Moscow areas (the so-called capital provinces) was higher than in other Great Russian provinces. Thus, in the St. Petersburg province in 1837 the average per capita consumption of vodka was estimated at 33.5 liters (approximately 13.4 liters of pure alcohol) per year, and consumption of various liqueurs was 1.85 liters; of brandies, 1.28 liters; and of beer, 1.78 liters. In the Moscow province, the per capita consumption of vodka was 13.9 liters (5.56 liters of pure alcohol), of liqueurs, 0.47 liter; of brandies, 0.41 liter; and of beer, 3.13 liters. For comparison, in Voronezh province per capita consumption of vodka was 4.92 liters (1.97 liters of pure alcohol); of liqueurs, 0.05 liter; of brandies, 0.03 liter; and of beer, 0.3 liter.

In provinces and areas annexed to Russia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the level of alcohol consumption up to the 1860s was traditionally also higher than in Great Russia on average. This fact is usually explained by the more severe fiscal control of the alcohol production and trade in the Great Russian provinces at that time. Just before the introduction of the excise system of alcohol trade in 1863, the average annual per capita alcohol consumption in the Russian Empire was estimated at 4.31 liters of pure alcohol, in vodka only. In Great Russian provinces, average consumption was 2.83 liters; in the Don area, 4.55 liters; in the Baltic provinces, 5.53 liters; in Ukrainian, Belorussian, and Novorussian provinces (so-called former privileged provinces) and in Polish provinces, 7.38 liters. In Siberia the alcohol consumption was very low—2.34 liters of pure alcohol in vodka.

Consumption after 1863 under the Excise

In 1863, the first year of the excise system, there was registered for the Russian Empire a very high rate of average vodka consumption—6.05 liters of pure alcohol per capita annually. In 1864, per capita vodka consumption decreased to 4.33 liters, and it stayed at around that level for the next fifteen years, gradually decreasing to 3.25 liters in 1884. This decrease, which continued into the 1890s, was the most noticeable in western, formerly privileged provinces; alcohol consumption in the Great Russian provinces was growing, though not considerably, until the mid-1870s. In the 1880s, a decrease was observed in the Great Russian provinces, too. During the period 1885–1891, per capita vodka consumption in Russia decreased noticeably, from 3 to 2.41 liters of pure alcohol per capita annually. This was the low point in alcohol consumption in prerevolutionary Russia. In the following years, consumption remained at this low level, with increases noted in 1905–1907 (up to 3.10 liters of pure alcohol annually in 1907) and in 1912–1913 (up to 3.05 liters). The difference between the average levels of annual per capita vodka consumption in the Russian Empire as a whole and its European provinces before the revolution fluctuated from between 0.05 and 0.3 liter more in the former. Values of per capita vodka consumption in Russian provinces in 1913 ranged from 1.65 to 8.15 liters of pure alcohol. The first third of this range (1.65 to 3.82 liters) covered thirty-seven provinces (the Polish provinces excluded); the second third (3.83 to 5.99 liters) covered twelve provinces—Don Region and Vladimir, Kherson, Kaluga, Smolensk, Kharkov, Lифlandia, Yaroslavl, Arkhangelsk, Tula, Estlandia, and Ekaterinoslav provinces; and only the two capital provinces were found in the third segment (6 to 8.17 liters). The gap in the alcohol consumption values for the provinces of Moscow and Ekaterinoslav was as large as 2.95 liters, whereas in the first two segments the gaps in the values between any two provinces next to one another in the list was not more than 0.35 liter.

In beer, Russians in 1900 consumed approximately 0.17 liter of pure alcohol per capita (given the average strength of beer, which was 4 percent), with this value growing to 0.3 liter by 1913. The precise data on beer consumption in various regions are not available for that period because the fiscal competence of the Russian Finance Ministry did not cover this sphere. The main centers of beer production were St. Petersburg, Moscow, Vilna, Kovno, Grodno, and Kazan provinces. Per capita consumption of pure alcohol in wines, brandies, and liqueurs before the Bolshevik Revolution averaged approximately 0.2 liter.

In several regions, homemade alcoholic drinks were traditionally consumed in large amounts (homemade beer was widely spread in rural areas, first of all in the west and south; homemade wine was used in Moldavia, Caucasus, and Novorussia; milk-based mash kumys was popular among the minor nations of the Volga, South Urals, and Kazakhstan regions; as was grain mash kumyska among national minorities of the Urals region. Consumption of these beverages has never been estimated.

Urban Alcohol Consumption

Alcohol consumption among the urban population in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries surpassed dramati-
cally the general level of consumption in the Russian Empire. The highest level of alcohol consumption was reported in the towns of Kostroma (17.9 liters of pure alcohol, in vodka only), Arkhangelsk (17.45 liters), Novgorod provinces (16.2 liters), and Estlandia (16.2 liters). The lowest level was observed in the western areas—including the Kovno (3.4 liters), Grodno (4.6 liters), and Bessarabia (now Moldavia) provinces (4.7 liters). Consumption in the biggest cities of the Russian Empire—Moscow (population 1.5 million) and St. Petersburg (population 2 million)—did not differ much from that in other Russian cities and towns: 9.05 liters of pure alcohol per capita in St. Petersburg and 9.40 liters in Moscow. Some prerevolutionary researchers estimated that average vodka consumption was 3.4 times higher in urban areas than among peasants.

Alcohol consumption in Russia during the decades before the revolution was more regular in urban areas than in rural parts of the country. Russian peasants drank mainly in religious festivals, at weddings, and at funeral repasts. During Lent, alcohol consumption in the rural areas decreased 60 to 80 percent, whereas consumption in towns and cities only rarely fell by more than 50 percent. The diversity of alcoholic beverages in urban areas was far greater than in rural areas. Peasants usually consumed only vodka, except for homemade drinks. In contrast, 50–60 liters of beer was consumed per capita in St. Petersburg in the early twentieth century, a very high rate for the Russian Empire.

Social Groups and Classes

According to studies on the budgets of peasants (Shcherbina 1900) and workers (Prokopovich 1909), both the most and the least prosperous groups in these classes featured higher alcohol consumption than the medium stratum did. The statistical data of St. Petersburg clinics for 1886–1897 collected by N. I. Grigor’ev (1900) indicate that the biggest susceptibility to alcoholism among people of various professions was observed among clerks and draughtsmen (297 alcoholics per 10,000), bricklayers (236.2 per 10,000), and workers engaged in the construction and maintenance of the waterways and in the shipping trade (197.4 per 10,000). Factory workers accounted for only 76.4 alcoholics per 10,000. Among women, the professions where drinking was most prevalent were laundresses (260.6 per 10,000) and factory workers (93.2 per 10,000). The districts in such big cities as St. Petersburg and Moscow subject to the most alcohol abuse were areas inhabited by craftsmen, street-mongers, odd-job workers, and outcasts.

Women accounted for approximately 25 percent of the alcohol-caused chronic diseases in this period, which could be regarded as circumstantial evidence that they consumed the same share of the alcohol sold in Russia as men. Among 2,970 alcoholics treated in Moscow in the early twentieth century, 1.7 percent had begun drinking vodka before they were five years old; 8 percent began at ages six to ten; 25 percent began before they were fifteen years old; 47 percent began at sixteen to twenty; and only 4.2 percent began at an age above twenty-five. The number of abstainers among Russian Orthodox people did not exceed 5–7 percent. Several religious and ethnic groups of the Russian Empire were considered to be abstainers (Muslims, Old Believers, and some sectarians) or very temperate drinkers (Jews). According to official data, the number of Muslims, Old Believers, and Jews in prerevolutionary Russia did not exceed 20 percent of the Russian population, although several prerevolutionary publications made unsubstantiated claims that 40 percent of Russians were abstainers.

The Soviet Era

Tsarist Russia imposed a Dry Law in 1914 as part of the mobilization of the troops and to improve the social and moral condition of the populace during the war. The law, which remained in effect until the Stalin era, prohibited the sale of alcohol, including vodka, except in clubs, assemblies, and certain other drinking establishments (which, after the Bolshevik Revolution, of course, were scarce). It also prohibited the sale of wine that was more than 15 percent alcohol and beer that was more than 3.7 percent alcohol. The punishments for violations, and for public drunkenness, were made considerably more severe.

It is difficult to assess the effects of this law in the history of alcohol consumption in Russia. Officially, there was almost no alcohol on sale, except in first-class restaurants and clubs. At the same time, the use of various substitutes for alcohol increased markedly. After the establishment of a state alcohol monopoly under the Soviets in 1925, the level of alcohol consumption was incredibly low: 0.88 liter of pure alcohol per capita, in vodka only, in 1925; 1.04 liters in 1932; 1.9 liters in 1940; and 1.85 liters in 1950. This low level of consumption could be explained by continued use of alcohol substitutes or homemade drinks, by the very scanty purchasing capacity of the broad masses of the population, and by “paramilitary” discipline on the Soviet collective farms and industrial enterprises.

From the 1950s to the 1970s, per capita consumption in the USSR grew steadily: to 4.82 liters of pure alcohol in various drinks in 1960, 9.22 liters in 1970, 9.9 liters in 1975, and 10.5 liters in 1980. The structure of alcohol consumption changed as compared with the prerevolutionary period. Apart from vodka, Soviet people drank cheap cognacs and dry and fortified wines. For example, in 1980 Soviets consumed 2,072 million liters of vodka and liqueurs, 2,747 million liters of wine, 76 million liters of champagne, 52 million liters of cognac, and 3,346 million liters of beer. The difference between rural and urban consumption smoothed out, with alcohol abuse in villages in many cases being even more considerable than in towns. The share of abstainers for religious reasons decreased, represented mostly by traditionally minded people in the Middle Asia and Caucasus regions. Consumption of alcohol by women grew significantly and was only slightly below men’s consumption. At the same time, alcoholism was uncharacteristic of young people, especially in urban areas. As shown by a study carried out by
sociologists at the Russian Academy of Science in the early 1980s, 32 percent of senior pupils at schools and 30 percent of students at professional and technical colleges had never tried alcoholic drinks.

After 1985, the level of reported alcohol consumption per capita decreased to 4 liters of pure alcohol in 1987 due to Mikhail Gorbachev’s antialcohol campaigning. At the same time, the use of homemade alcoholic drinks and substitutes was growing. Information on alcohol consumption in the early 1990s is especially unreliable, since on the eve of—and after—the collapse of the USSR there emerged a huge black (and gray) market for alcohol. These years featured a very high mortality rate related to the use of poor-quality alcohol. In 1990, official statistics reported the level of per capita consumption at 5.6 liters of pure alcohol; in 1991, 5.6 liters; in 1992, 5 liters; and in 1993, 6 liters. When in the mid-1990s the state control of the alcohol trade was toughened, the official index of per capita alcohol consumption stabilized at the level of 10 liters of pure alcohol, in various drinks, per capita. Some experts who tried to estimate the consumption rate of homemade alcoholic drinks and substitutes in late-Soviet and post-Soviet Russia (A. V. Nemtsov and V. Treml, for example) claim that the total amount of per capita consumption did not fall below 10 liters of pure alcohol even in Gorbachev’s period and reached 14 liters in several years of the 1980s and early 1990s.

Ivan Krasnov

See also: Russia, Imperial, Temperance in; Soviet Union and Russia since 1917, Alcohol and Temperance in; Vodka

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Alcohol, Consumption of (United Kingdom)

In modern times, a majority of the adult British population has drunk beer of one kind or another or, less often, other alcoholic beverages. Working-class males drink more than most other people, with the peak in beer drinking taking place in the 1870s. In recent decades, there has been a dramatic change in what drinkers consume, notably, the new popularity of lager beer.

Statistics and Their Problems

Statistical comparisons between the United States and the United Kingdom must take into account different meanings for the same terms. The British drinks statistician George B. Wilson