

Spirits Sales Tax

RCW 82.08.150, 82.08.155, 82.08.160, and 82.08.170

Tax Base Sales of spirits to consumers and restaurant licensees in unopened original packaging. The term “spirits” means any beverage containing alcohol obtained by distillation, except flavored malt beverages, and wines with more than 24 percent alcohol by volume.

Tax exemptions may reduce the tax liability for this tax base. For more information, refer to the [Tax Exemption Study](#).

Tax Rate The overall tax rate on sales to consumers is 20.5 percent:

Tax	Sales to Consumer	RCW
Base Tax	15%	82.08.150(1)
Surtax, 14% of base tax	2.1%	82.08.150(4)
Additional	3.4%	82.08.150(6a)

The overall tax rate on sales to restaurant licensees is 13.7 percent:

Tax	Sales to Licensees	RCW
Base Tax	10%	82.08.150(2)
Surtax, 14% of base tax	1.4%	82.08.150(4)
Additional	2.3%	82.08.150(6b)

Retail sales tax does not apply to purchases of liquor by consumers. An establishment that sells any unopened spirits, strong beer, beer, and wine for consumption on the premises must obtain a restaurant license.

Recent Collections (\$000)

Fiscal Year	Collections	% Change	% of All State Taxes
2018	\$156,304	5.2%	0.7%
2017	\$148,589	5.0%	0.8%
2016	\$141,573	6.7%	0.8%
2015	\$132,646	3.8%	0.8%
2014	\$127,826	1.0%	0.8%
2013	\$126,539	16.7%	0.8%
2012	\$108,465	6.2%	0.8%
2011	\$102,158	1.9%	0.7%
2010	\$100,301	3.8%	0.7%
2009	\$96,592	5.2%	0.6%

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Distribution of Receipts	<p>Receipts from the base tax are distributed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 65% to the State General Fund• 35% to the Liquor Excise Tax Fund, which is split 80%/20% between cities and counties respectively <p>All Receipts from the surtax and additional taxes are deposited into the State General Fund.</p>
Levied by	State
Administration	Department of Revenue.
History	<p>2011 Voters passed initiative 1183, which privatized all liquor sales. Before this initiative passed, the Liquor Control Board was the sole supplier of spirits in the state and sold spirits at a bottle price that included the spirits tax, which was then remitted to the Department of Revenue. The initiative made the Department of Revenue responsible for collecting the spirits sales tax.</p> <p>2009 Those additional taxes dedicated to health care in 1993 shifted to the State General Fund.</p> <p>2003 Strong beer (more than 8 percent alcohol by weight) shifted from liquor sales tax to the beer excise tax.</p> <p>1993 Additional tax rates phased-in for the health services account. The full phased-in amount of 3.4 percent for consumers and 2.3 percent for restaurants reached on July 1, 1997.</p> <p>1982 14 percent surtax added to the basic rate. The definition of strong beer increased from 4 percent to 8 percent alcohol by weight.</p> <p>1959 Rate increased to 15 percent for sales to consumers.</p> <p>1951 Liquor sales tax adopted at a rate of 10 percent and liquor exempted from the retail sales tax.</p> <p>1949 Liquor sales tax repealed.</p> <p>1943 Additional “war liquor tax” of 10 percent.</p>

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1939 Retail sales tax extended to sales by the Liquor Control Board.

1935 Liquor sales tax adopted.
