



News Release

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Low income areas have most shops selling alcohol and tobacco

Scotland's most economically deprived neighbourhoods have more off-licences and shops selling tobacco than wealthier parts of the country, a study suggests.

Areas with the lowest average household incomes have the highest number of alcohol and tobacco outlets per head of population, researchers found. The most well-off neighbourhoods have the fewest.

The pattern may be a contributing factor to inequalities in rates of alcohol and tobacco-related disease, researchers say. One in five deaths in Scotland is caused by tobacco use, while one in 20 is linked to alcohol. In addition, deprived neighbourhoods have higher rates of death and ill health caused by alcohol and tobacco use than more affluent areas.

Reducing the concentration of shops selling these products could help improve public health and address existing health inequalities, the team says.

The findings will be presented at an event tomorrow (Wednesday 7 October) at which Scotland's First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, will deliver the keynote speech. The Global Alcohol Policy Conference takes place in Edinburgh from 7-9 October.

Researchers at the University of Edinburgh, who led the study, are urging policymakers to consider the links between deprivation, outlet density and disease when drawing up tobacco and alcohol policies.

The team used alcohol licensing data and a tobacco retail register to calculate the density of outlets in regions across Scotland. Links with deprivation were assessed using figures from the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, which show the proportion of people across the country receiving means-tested benefits and other government support.

The study, published in the journal *BMC Public Health*, was funded by the Scottish Collaboration for Public Health Research and Policy. The research was carried out in collaboration with the University of Glasgow. Data and maps from the study are available at www.cresh.org.uk/webmap.

Dr Niamh Shortt, Senior Lecturer in Human Geography at the University of Edinburgh, who led the study, said: "We already knew that alcohol and tobacco-related illnesses disproportionately affect people in deprived areas, and this study confirms that these areas also have the highest concentrations of alcohol and tobacco outlets. We need to alter the

environments in which people live, including restricting the availability of these products. Failing to tackle a broader set of factors, including retail environments, may exacerbate health inequalities.”

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