

Scottish people 'living dangerously'

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Almost the entire adult population of Scotland (97.5%) are likely to be either cigarette smokers, heavy drinkers, physically inactive, overweight or have a poor diet. Researchers writing in the open access journal *BMC Public Health* also found a strong association between the presence of several of these risk factors and low income.

David Conway, from the University of Glasgow, Scotland, worked with a team of researchers to study data from 6574 participants in the Scottish Health Survey 2003. He said, "Our analysis shows that around two-thirds of the Scottish population is overweight or obese, a similar proportion are not sufficiently physically active, and most people have a poor diet - it is just that it is not the same majority for each factor. The most important determinants of multiple risk factors were low educational attainment and residence in our most deprived communities".

The prevalence of multiple behavioural risk factors was high, with 86% having at least two risk factors; 55% having three or more risk factors; and nearly 20% having four or all five risk factors. Furthermore these [risk factors](#) are strongly associated with low socio-economic circumstances. The researchers caution that, as the behaviours were self-reported, the real situation may be even worse than these figures suggest. According to Conway, "Respondents might tend to give answers that would convey more favourable behaviours. This was confirmed for [alcohol consumption](#) by an analysis comparing self-reported [alcohol intake](#) in the Scottish Health Surveys with alcohol sales estimates, which suggested that surveys may understate alcohol consumption by as much

as 50%".

More information: Is the Scottish population living dangerously? Prevalence of multiple risk factors: the Scottish Health Survey 2003, Richard Lawder, Oliver Harding, Diane Stockton, Colin Fischbacher, David H Brewster, Jim Chalmers, Alan Finlayson and David I Conway, BMC Public Health (in press), www.biomedcentral.com/bmcpublichealth/

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