

Tobacco sales ban near schools cuts licensed shops by 70 percent

November 5 2020



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Banning the sale of cigarettes close to schools and playgrounds would

reduce the number of shops allowed to sell [tobacco products](#) in Scotland by more than 70 percent, a study suggests.

Preventing [tobacco sales](#) within 300 meters of children's spaces would greatly reduce availability, and could aid efforts to prevent young people taking up smoking, researchers say.

A team from the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow examined ways of reducing the number of places where people can buy tobacco products in Scotland.

Digital maps

Researchers created digital maps of all the country's registered tobacco retailers—of which there are more than 9,000—and simulated how different policies would alter the number of outlets.

The report also looked at how new approaches might affect existing inequalities in tobacco availability. Previous work has shown that Scotland's most deprived areas have more shops selling tobacco per head of population than wealthier areas.

The team studied the impact of regulating the type of shops allowed to sell tobacco, or where it can be sold. Researchers also looked at the effects of introducing caps on numbers of retailers in certain areas.

Blocking sales

The findings show that, as well as blocking sales near children's spaces, several measures could lower the number and density of outlets and reduce inequalities in availability. These include stopping sales in small local shops—where tobacco products are most often bought—or

restricting sales to supermarkets only.

However, some measures to reduce tobacco retailers could increase inequalities in availability, researchers found. For instance, limiting sales to off-licenses would increase inequalities in availability because deprived areas tend to have more of these shops than wealthier neighborhoods.

Teenagers

Earlier work by the team showed that children in Scotland's most economically deprived neighborhoods spend more time in or near shops selling tobacco than those from less deprived areas. The team also previously revealed that teenagers are more likely to smoke if they live in neighborhoods with a large number of tobacco retailers.

The study, published in the journal *Tobacco Control*, was funded by Cancer Research UK.

"We need to identify ways to reduce smoking rates, particularly in young people, the most recent data shows us that smoking rates in [young people](#) have leveled off and are no longer falling. One way to address this is to reduce the number of retailers permitted to sell tobacco. We do not need to sell known cancer-causing products alongside everyday products like bread and milk," says Professor Niamh Shortt, School of GeoSciences, University of Edinburgh.

"Measures to reduce tobacco availability should form part of the Scottish Government's efforts to create a [tobacco-free](#) generation by 2034. However, it is important to understand which policies would be most effective while ensuring [social inequalities](#) aren't being exacerbated," says Dr. Fiona Caryl, University of Glasgow.

More information: Fiona M Caryl et al. Simulating the density reduction and equity impact of potential tobacco retail control policies, *Tobacco Control* (2020). [DOI: 10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2020-056002](https://doi.org/10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2020-056002)

Provided by University of Edinburgh

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