

Corner shop tobacco sales halved in three years

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A team led by Edinburgh researchers analyzed sales data from almost 1,400 convenience stores in England, Scotland and Wales. They compared transactions that took place during typical weeks in March,

June, September and December 2016 with those from the same periods in 2019.

Tobacco sales

As well as [tobacco products](#), the team also assessed sales of other items people frequently buy from convenience stores, including milk, bread, newspapers and alcohol.

Their findings show sales of [tobacco](#) products dropped 47% over the three years. In 2016, 11% of [transactions](#) involved only tobacco, but this fell to 6% in 2019.

The proportion of sales containing a mix of tobacco products and other items also declined, falling from 14% to 9%.

Common items

While average weekly sales in convenience stores fell by 16% between 2016 and 2019, sales of tobacco products fell more steeply than any other item.

The next biggest decline was a 25% fall in newspapers and magazines sales. In contrast, sales of some products—including e-cigarettes, alcopops and spirits—increased during the three-year period.

Despite tobacco products increasing significantly in price between 2016 and 2019, the proportion of total weekly store turnover that came from these sales fell by 8%—from 47% to 39%.

Nationwide decline

Retailers' declining reliance on [tobacco sales](#) was seen across all areas of the U.K., the team says.

Tobacco product sales, and their contribution towards weekly turnover, were higher in shops in urban, more economically deprived areas compared with rural stores and those in affluent areas. However, these stores saw the greatest reductions over time, narrowing the differences between areas.

Data used in the study, published in the journal *Tobacco Control*, was provided by The Retail Data Partnership.

"The [tobacco industry](#) has long presented tobacco products as essential to the survival of [convenience stores](#) across the country. Our new research shows that tobacco is decreasingly important to the business model of smaller retailers and undermines the arguments made by the tobacco industry. The findings emphasize the need to reduce the local availability of tobacco products in order to meet government targets for eliminating smoking over the next decade," says Professor Jamie Pearce.

More information: Helena Tunstall et al, Is tobacco a driver of footfall among small retailers? A geographical analysis of tobacco purchasing using electronic point of sale data, *Tobacco Control* (2022). [DOI: 10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2021-057089](https://doi.org/10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2021-057089)

Provided by University of Edinburgh

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