Medical Xpress

Alcohol sales fall due to ban on multi-buy promotions

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(Medical Xpress)—A report published today shows a 2.6% decrease in the amount of alcohol sold per adult in Scotland in the year following the introduction of the Alcohol etc. (Scotland) Act in October 2011.

Researchers at NHS Health Scotland and the University of Glasgow found that the Act, which included a ban on multi-buy promotions, was associated with a 4% drop in the amount of wine sold in Scotland's supermarkets and off-licences, equivalent to almost 4.5 million bottles. The Act was also associated with an 8.5% decline in the amount of pre-mixed alcohol drinks (including alcopops) sold in Scotland, although these account for only 1% of the total alcohol market.

Mark Robinson, Public Health Information Manager at NHS Health Scotland and study lead, said:

"These findings show that the Alcohol Act has had the intended impact of reducing alcohol consumption in Scotland by placing restrictions on how alcohol is displayed and promoted. We know that some retailers responded to the multi-buy discount ban by selling individual bottles of wine for £3.33 instead of offering 3 bottles for £10. However, the incentive for people to buy more alcohol than they may otherwise have bought was removed and wine sales decreased. Although these effects are welcome, alcohol consumption in Scotland remains high and a large proportion of alcohol is still sold at relatively low prices. There is good evidence to show that the positive effects of the Alcohol Act would be enhanced by minimum unit pricing, which would prevent the sale of

cheap, high strength alcohol."

Dr Jim Lewsey, Senior Lecturer in Medical Statistics at the University of Glasgow and report co-author, added:

"Similar declines were not observed in England & Wales, where the Alcohol Act does not apply, and the possible impacts of other factors, such as changes in income and alcohol prices, were taken into account. This provides evidence that the effects were associated with the Act and not some other factor."

The full report, Monitoring and Evaluating Scotland's Alcohol Strategy: The impact of the Alcohol Act on off-trade alcohol sales in Scotland is available to download at: www.healthscotland.com/scotlan … /planning/MESAS.aspx

Provided by University of Glasgow

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