

Health campaigners call on Scottish Government to regulate alcohol packaging

New research from the University of Stirling has highlighted how alcohol packaging appeals to young people and captures their attention.

Current drinkers aged 18 to 35 were asked about a range of alcoholic products in focus groups. They recalled products that appeared different, interesting, or aesthetically pleasing. Some reported buying products solely due to the appeal of their packaging.

The participants discussed seeing alcohol packaging in different settings – typically shops and drinking venues – and via marketing, particularly advertising. They frequently recalled seeing it featured in the media – with most reporting exposure on television, in movies, on social media and the internet.

Alison Douglas, Chief Executive of Alcohol Focus Scotland, said: “To turn the tide of alcohol-related harm we need to introduce measures to restrict and regulate all forms of alcohol marketing, in line with World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations. Mandating health warnings on alcohol products would help to counter the attractiveness of packaging and address current low levels of knowledge of alcohol harm.”



Find out more.



Access the study.



Read a Twitter thread by the lead author, Daniel Jones.



UPDATE

Young people expose harmful industries' "dark marketing" tactics

Young people identified 5169 instances of "dark marketing" for harmful products, including alcohol.

"Dark marketing" is targeted marketing which appears only to specific people via social media, using data points such as gender, socio-economic status, and location. These ads are not published on advertiser social media accounts and so are visible only to targeted individuals, making them difficult to track and regulate.

The new study from Queensland University, commissioned by VicHealth, recruited 204 young people aged 16 to 25 who took screenshots of the advertisements that appeared on their social media feeds across a two-week period. The researchers found that 97% of the ads seen and shared by the young people were "dark" to some degree.

Fifty-four participants were aged 16-17 and 67% of them were targeted with alcohol ads. The young people described dark marketing as "manipulative", "creepy", and "annoying", with 81% of participants calling for a reduction and regulation around the advertisements from unhealthy industries they see on social media.

VicHealth is calling on the Australian government to legislate higher standards to protect children and young people from the marketing of harmful products.

 **Read more.**



House of Lords calls for MUP in England

UK Ministers have been asked to review the impact of minimum unit pricing (MUP) in Scotland and Wales in a report on the UK's alcohol licensing system.

The report highlights research demonstrating a reduction in alcohol sales since MUP was implemented in Scotland in 2018 and in Wales in 2020 by 7.7% and 8.6% respectively.

The committee recommends that a formal review should assess the benefit of implementing MUP in England and should be published within one year after publication of the Scottish Ministerial review on MUP in Scotland.

 **Read the House of Lords report.**



Differential impact of minimum unit pricing on alcohol consumption between Scottish men and women: controlled interrupted time series analysis

Compared with England, Scottish respondents reported a 6.2% drop in alcohol consumption associated with MUP according to a study published in the BMJ Open.

Reductions were larger for women than for men and were greater among heavier drinkers than for lighter drinkers, except for the 5% of heaviest drinking men for whom an increase in consumption was found. Secondary before-and-after analyses found that reductions in consumption were greater among older respondents and those living in less deprived areas. The introduction of MUP was not associated with a reduction in consumption among younger men and men living in more deprived areas.

 **Read the study.**



Exploring the effects of COVID-19 restrictions on wellbeing across different styles of lockdown

Tight lockdown restrictions in Scotland led to more unhealthy behaviours compared to the less rigid approach taken by Japan, according to a joint study from the University of the West of Scotland and the University of Tsukuba in Japan.

In both Scotland and Japan, a period of self-isolation was associated with an increase in alcohol consumption and a change to an unhealthier diet. Negative changes to health behaviours were typically associated with poorer mental wellbeing and isolation. Japanese participants reported more negative mood but not isolation, despite the less-restrictive lockdown.

Alison Douglas, Chief Executive of Alcohol Focus Scotland said, "It is concerning, yet not surprising to see that lockdown restrictions led to increased unhealthy behaviours in Scotland. It has not been an easy few years for anyone, and during lockdowns many of us were drinking more due to the loss of routine, added stress and anxiety as well as social isolation."



Find out more.



Read the study.



Stakeholder views of current laws surrounding alcohol at UK football matches: Is it a case of using a 'sledgehammer to crack a nut'?

Most stakeholders support review of alcohol laws at UK football stadia but concerns persist.

Currently, football fans in England can purchase alcohol which cannot be consumed within view of the pitch, in comparison to Scotland where alcohol sales are prohibited at football venues, apart from within hospitality settings.

A new study from the University of Stirling found that stakeholders believe current laws cause unintended consequences, such as fans in Scotland arriving late in large numbers, and suggested that club revenues could increase if alcohol sale restrictions were eased. However, others said they felt that ‘a break in drinking’ on matchdays was positive, and that any easing would present a significant risk, as greater alcohol sales would mean continuous and higher alcohol consumption by some fans.

The study considered the existing laws in focus groups with football fans and through engaging with stakeholders such as government and police representatives.

 **Find out more.**



CONSULTATIONS

Safety at Major Sporting Events inquiry

The UK Parliament Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee has launched an inquiry on safety at major sporting events.

As part of the inquiry, the Committee will also examine the effectiveness of legislation concerning football, including the issues of safe standing and alcohol consumption at matches, and whether there need to be changes to regulations governing fans at matches.


The inquiry closes on 8 September.

 Find out more.

CONSULTATIONS

Pre-budget scrutiny call for views

A number of Scottish Parliament subject committees are undertaking pre-budget scrutiny with the aim of influencing the Scottish Government's thinking when preparing its forthcoming budget.

 Find out more and respond to the committees' call for views:


- **Finance and Public Administration Committee** – by 19 August
- **Health, Social Care and Sport Committee** – by 24 August
- **COVID-19 Recovery Committee** – by 9 September



RESEARCH

Solitary alcohol use in adolescence predicts alcohol problems in adulthood: A 17-year longitudinal study in a large national sample of US high school students

The study, published in *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, found that solitary alcohol use in adolescence and young adulthood was associated with binge drinking and increased the risk of alcohol use disorder (AUD) symptoms at age 35, particularly among women.

 Access the study.

