

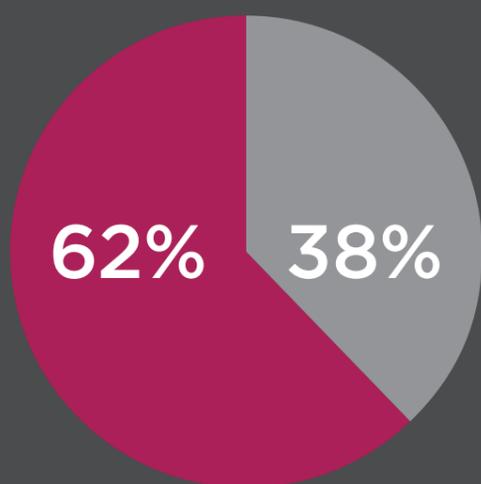
Non-Communicable Disease Prevention: Priorities for 2021/22

Supporting people in Scotland to live healthy lives through tackling health harming products.



One in five deaths caused by non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are preventable in Scotland. We, a group of ten of Scotland's leading health charities, are calling for immediate and urgent action on health harming products such as alcohol, tobacco and unhealthy food and drink to prioritise public health in the Covid-19 recovery.

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs), such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes, stroke, liver disease and lung disease are the leading cause of death and disability in Scotland. More than 40,000 deaths were attributed to these diseases in 2020 – more than 62% of all deathsⁱ.



PIE CHART KEY

- Deaths from NCDs, such as heart disease, cancer, stroke, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes
- All other deaths

British Heart Foundation Scotland analysis of National Records of Scotland figures suggest that as many as 7,800 of deaths from these NCDs could be prevented through public health initiatives. That amounts to around one in five of all NCD deathsⁱⁱ.

Reducing the consumption of health harming products such as alcohol, tobacco and unhealthy food and drink is one of the key ways in which we can reduce the number of lives lost to, or affected by, NCDs.

We know that burden of obesity, tobacco use and alcohol consumption is higher in the most deprived areas and this contributes to a 20-year gap in the healthy life expectancy between Scotland's most and least deprived communitiesⁱⁱⁱ.

More widely, this ill-health and disability caused by tobacco, alcohol and overweight and obesity, have a huge impact on Scotland's economy. Previous work to evaluate this damage estimates that the combined economic cost of these factors is as much as between £5.6 and £9.3 billion every year^{1, iv, v, vi}.



Ill-health and disability caused by tobacco, alcohol and overweight and obesity, is estimated to cost the Scottish economy between £5.6 and £9.3 billion every year.



1. Separate analyses show the cost of each factor. Smoking (£1.1billion) Overweight and obesity (£0.9–4.6 billion) Alcohol (£3.6 billion)

Covid-19 has also had a profound impact on our relationship with health harming products. Surveys conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic show that:

- **36% of smokers increased the amount that they smoked in lockdown^{VII}.**
- **39% of people reported eating more unhealthy, discretionary food and drink during the Covid-19 pandemic^{VIII}.**
- **27% of people also reported drinking more alcohol during the first lockdown period^{IX}.**

Scotland did not go into the pandemic fighting fit and there is a real risk these behaviour changes will persist and create significant long-term health risks for many people in Scotland.

We believe that all Scots have the right to a healthy life and that Scottish Government has a duty to protect, promote and fulfil that right. Urgent action is required to tackle the use of health harming products, not only to prevent NCDs but to also reduce the impact of future epidemics.

As an integral part of the nation's recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, we call on the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government to take meaningful action to reduce the impact of health harming products and to build a healthier Scotland for future generations.

Where and How to Act on Health Harming Products

Bold and decisive population-level action from the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government is critical to tackle preventable NCD deaths from health harming products. We have identified specific priorities on which progress must be made in the first year of this Parliament.

The international evidence is clear about what countries can and should do to prevent the negative impacts of tobacco, alcohol, and unhealthy food and drinks: increase the price, reduce the availability and restrict the marketing of these products. This should be accompanied by person-centred treatment and support.

We believe the recommendations below provide an evidence-based and realistic first step in that journey and should be achieved before this parliamentary year ends in June 2022.

These calls are the first step in our mission to change the landscape of Scotland's health and we will call for further actions each year. There is no quick fix, but rather many important steps towards ensuring that Scotland is the healthy and equal nation we want to see for the future.



Recommendations

We call on the Scottish Government, in 2021/22, to:

1. Introduce regulations to Parliament on the domestic advertising of e-cigarettes following a public consultation on the measures.
2. Consult on restricting the advertising and promotion of alcohol as was committed to in the 2020-2021 Programme for Government.
3. Review the minimum unit price for alcohol in line with the Scottish Government commitment and uprate the minimum unit price for alcohol to at least 65p per unit.
4. Introduce a bill to restrict promotion of high fat, sugar and salt food and drink.
5. Publish an Out of Home (healthy food choices when eating out) Strategy with clear actions.
6. Improve weight management, alcohol treatment, and smoking cessation services so they meet people's needs, ensuring they become core services in the Covid-19 recovery.

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