What the evidence tells us:
Reducing inequalities in alcohol consumption and harm

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Reducing alcohol-related harm
Effectiveness of alcohol control policies

Alcohol control policy
- Taxation and price regulation
- Regulating marketing
- Regulating availability
- Providing information and education
- Managing the drinking environment
- Reducing drink driving
- Brief interventions and treatment

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Measures impact across socio-economic groups
- Taxation & Minimum Unit Pricing
- Reducing outlet density
- School-based programmes
- Screening and brief intervention

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Best evidence for effectiveness

Reducing inequalities in alcohol consumption and harm
Taxation and pricing policies
Reducing affordability

- Policies that affect the affordability of alcohol.
- 10% increase in price = 5% decrease in consumption.
- Greater impact on heavier drinkers, lower income drinkers
- WHO “best buy” for reducing alcohol harms

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{↓ Alcohol-related mortality} & \quad \text{↓ Traffic crash deaths} \\
\text{↓ Alcohol-related hospitalisations} & \quad \text{↓ Violence and crime}
\end{align*} \]
Taxation and pricing policies
Evidence for effectiveness

**Finland:** decrease in taxes (2004) has most effects on consumption and harm in **low educated** groups.

**UK:** modelling studies of taxation and minimum unit price show greatest effects on consumption and harm among heavy drinkers in **low socio-economic / occupational** groups. Strength-based approaches most effective.

**Canada:** Increase in minimum price has most effect on alcohol-related hospital admissions among those with **low family income**.

Low socio-economic groups affected the most.
Minimum Unit Price legislation
Scotland - Background

- Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP) based on strength of alcohol
- MUP 50p due to come into effect 1st May 2018
- Modelling work: greatest effects among heavy drinkers in low income groups
- Evaluation planned: effects on individuals, businesses and society
- Any adverse effects on harmful drinkers?
Restricting availability
Reducing outlet density

• Regulates number of alcohol outlets in community
• Increases effort to obtain alcohol; limits competition between venues
• Higher density of alcohol outlets in more deprived communities
• Potential to reduce inequalities if targeted in deprived neighbourhoods with high outlet densities.
• Effectiveness in reducing inequalities unclear
Increasing education
School-based programmes

• Aim to:
  o Increase knowledge
  o Change attitudes
  o Develop life and social skills

• Effectiveness in reducing inequalities unclear but some evidence that effects can be greater for pupils in low SES areas.

• Protects against wider risky behaviours and adverse childhood experiences that can increase risk of alcohol use/harm later in life.

Reducing inequalities in alcohol consumption and harm
Identification of harmful drinkers, short feedback and motivational session

Effectiveness in reducing inequalities unclear
  - Equally effective across different population groups
  - But do inequalities exist in access to and uptake of services?

May be effective if targeted at lower socio-economic status groups

Reducing inequalities in alcohol consumption and harm
Gaps in evidence
Other potential interventions

- Multi-component community programmes
- Restrictions in advertising
- Increasing access to health and social services
Summary: what works to reduce inequalities

- Evaluations measuring inequalities are scarce
- Best evidence for effectiveness is for policies that affect affordability (e.g. minimum unit pricing)
- Reducing alcohol outlet density, school-based education and screening and brief intervention may also have potential but more research is needed
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