

PARALLEL SESSION 3A

Safety, security and smoking

The changing patterns of alcohol and smoking related harms

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Behaviours associated with clubbing and nightlife can have serious detrimental health effects. In England, the harms caused by smoking and alcohol are closely associated with social deprivation. Closing the gap in life expectancy between the poorest and wealthiest is high on the agenda of all Governments and smoking bans in bars and clubs will reduce inequalities, which will ultimately help to close this gap. However, only recently have measures of ill-health and harms related to alcohol begun to emerge.

There are massive differences across England in the extent of harm caused by alcohol; 217,000 men and 146,000 women are admitted to hospital each year for alcohol related conditions, with the north of the country having double the rate of admission compared to the south. Alcohol-related admission to hospital is predominantly for chronic conditions in older people but also for accidents and violence in younger people (aged under 45). In England, 363,000 alcohol-related violent crimes are recorded each year and the rates are strongly associated with deprivation. Binge drinking is also much greater in the northern parts of England and is correlated with alcohol-related ill health and violence and with deprivation.

Alcohol is having devastating effects on the health and well-being of young people in some parts of England, and on the population as a whole. Improvements in life expectancy gaps due to reduced smoking-related conditions are being virtually wiped out by increases in alcohol-related conditions; perpetuating the huge North-South divide and health inequalities that exist across England.