

Fastfacts

Smoking and health inequalities

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Smoking is both a cause and an effect of health inequalities:

- There is a large difference in smoking prevalence by area of deprivation in Scotland - 32% of the most deprived compared to 6% of the least deprived quintile smoke
- Incidence of lung cancer is around three times higher in the 20% most deprived areas of Scotland than in the 20% least deprived
- Children growing up in the most deprived areas are significantly more likely to become life-long smokers. Whereas, at age 15, there is a minor difference in smoking prevalence between the most and least deprived quintile (3%), by early adulthood this increases to 19%
- Smoking attributable hospital admissions rates in the most deprived areas are four times higher than in the most deprived areas
- Almost half of adults who are permanently sick or disabled (48%) are current smokers
- People with mental health problems are far more likely to smoke and smoke more than those in good health. This is further magnified by area of deprivation
- Recent mapping work at the University of Edinburgh has shown that shops selling tobacco are more common in more deprived areas, a factor associated with smoking prevalence and tobacco consumption
- Although smoking causes ill health, so can the reverse. Mental and physical health challenges, including (financial) stress can increase smoking and reduce quitting success.

Smoking in pregnancy perpetuates health inequalities:

- The poorer you are, statistically the more likely you are to smoke and continue to smoke during pregnancy with subsequent health implications including miscarriage, stillbirth, and cot death
- Mothers from the most deprived fifth of areas are five times more likely to smoke compared to mothers from the most advantaged fifth of areas. Their chances of quitting are greatly improved with support from those around them.
- Children born to parents who smoke are much more likely to smoke themselves

Smoking contributes to and exacerbates poverty:

- 20 cigarettes a day at £10 per packet of prerolled cigarettes, cost around £3650 a year
 - If the smoking rate in the 20% most deprived areas of Scotland fell just 1% (from 32% to 31%) Scotland's poorest communities could save approx £16 million a year*
- * 1% reduction is 8584 fewer smokers saving £1875 on average – see our briefng 'Calculating the cost of Smoking'