

# Local bottle shops linked to mental health

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Robyn Preston

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The number of neighbourhood liquor outlets has been linked to harmful drinking behaviour.

While being within walking distance of your local corner bottle shop may be convenient, a Perth university has found a link between the number of neighbourhood liquor outlets and harmful drinking behaviour, in first-of-its-kind research.

People with more liquor shops close by were found to have higher levels of harmful drinking and worse mental health than those who live further away.

In a study of nearly 7000 adults, the University of Western Australia used geographical mapping to connect people to the location of all licensed alcohol outlets in Perth – with the data producing some concerning results.

Harmful behaviour and higher levels of alcohol consumption was more common if people could buy alcohol close to their home, said Associate Professor Lisa Wood, deputy director of UWA's Centre for the Built Environment and Health.

"We found that the average number of standard drinks per day and the rate of harmful alcohol consumption increased for each additional alcohol outlet in a neighbourhood."

Research also showed the likelihood of being treated in hospital for anxiety, stress or depression increased as the number of alcohol outlets within walking distance (1600m) of the home increased.

"Our findings underscore the importance of limiting both the number of liquor store licences and the geographic density of outlets as a way to improve mental health and reduce other alcohol-related harm," Associate Professor Wood said.

The study reinforced the WA Health Department's five-year plan for a healthier WA.

"One of the suggestions in the five-year plan is limiting the density of alcohol outlets," she said.

"While the association between alcohol outlet density and injury, crime and violence are well documented, this is one of the first studies internationally to specifically look at how this might impact on mental health disorders."

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Poll: **Do you think the number of bottle shops in an area should be limited?**

Yes. I think having too many liquor stores has a negative affect on society 43%  
No. It's up to the individual to drink responsibly. 57%

Total votes: 223 | Poll closed 25 Jan, 2013

Disclaimer: These polls are not scientific and reflect the opinion only of visitors who have chosen to participate.

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»»«

*»I lived next door to a bottle'o and I, along with my housemates, drank way too much 'cos it was too easy to grab another slab. As a crutch, it was useful, but it helped destroy a couple of good relationships within the house too. Is this the only way to make money from mental illness?«*

»«

**2muchBooze** | January 24, 2013, 4:57AM

»»«

*»Sadly ,especially for democracy , people dont know how to look after themselves or their children properly.Drugs , alcohol, tobacco, overeating, obesity, unwanted pregnancies, bad marriages, disappointing work choices and of course the trendy dysfunctional extended(and now) nuclear family relationships are just the tip of the gargantuan iceberg of floating failures that families would all deny apply to them.However , where profits are too bad from negatives, from sickness, divorce, econmic dependency and so on Government will congratulate everyone on how well they are doin, and laugh behind their backs, even though they are no better, but are so obsessed with their workplace image they dont give a toss about reality.«*

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**Kane** | January 24, 2013, 6:28AM

»»«

*»You don't think that they put bottle shops where people are likely to use them.«*

»«

**Don't feed the Animals** | Makes Them Dependant January 24, 2013, 7:31AM

»»«

*»Correlation doesn't equal causation. In fact, the causality here could be backwards from what the researchers are assuming. If I was wanting to make money and had a choice of where to build a bottle shop I wouldn't build it in a wealthy area where people work and have to be responsible and not drink too much, I'd build it in a lower socio-economic area where I'd get better turnover in my business. The fact that mental health problems are related to socioeconomic status means that I'd be building my bottle shop where there are more people with mental health problems.«*

»«

**Guy** | Bull Creek January 24, 2013, 8:49AM

»»«

*»I agree with Guy. Perhaps people with mental health and alcohol issues are more likely to chose to live near a bottle shop. I've actually read the published study and the researchers have made no mention of this causation issue. «*

*»They also state "We observed strong evidence for a small association between residential exposure to liquor stores and harmful consumption of alcohol, and some support for a moderate-sized effect on hospital contacts for anxiety, stress, and depression" Note the 'small association'. «*

*»Just because there's a small association doesn't not give the researchers the right to make judgement calls on public policy about the availability of a legal substance that the majority of the population consume responsibly.«*

»«

**Emily** | January 24, 2013, 2:50PM

»»«

*»so if you live near a brothel or a church or a casino .god help us.who are these people doing these surveys where do they get the funding to entertain themselves.how about you do something usefull like survey why people should or shouldnt be responsible for their own actions«*

»«

**john the** | southern river January 24, 2013, 10:35AM

»»«

*»I can't think of a time when I've decided not to have a drink because the bottle shop is too far away. I think Guy from Bull Creek (above) is correct. I wonder if they accounted for socioeconomic, age, education, employment status and other key factors.«*

»«

**Nick** | Perth January 24, 2013, 12:31PM

»«

*»Another study released by the Institute of the Bleeding Obvious. Well done!«*

»«

**Alkiehole** | January 24, 2013, 12:45PM

»«

*»Finally it's out in the open what I knew all along. Just look at these European countries where alcohol is available in all the supermarkets, corner stores and 24h service stations. The effects are unmistakable: they are all full blown alcoholic lunatics. No wonder the whole of Europe is in social and moral decline while in WA we still have a civilized culture with high moral standards. It's all about rationing the availability of alcohol to the public, because, we all know that the public can't be trusted with making their own decisions. Just look at the government we elected.«*

»«

**Marco Poo** | January 24, 2013, 1:29PM**Comments are now closed**[Email article](#)[Print](#)[Reprints & permissions](#)