

# Proximity to take-home alcohol outlet increases harm, depression

Sunday, 10 February 2013 06:00

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**A RECENT Perth-based study has shown new evidence that people with greater access to liquor outlets were more likely to consume harmful levels of alcohol and develop mental health disorders.**

The [study](#), published in US journal PLOS One, was based on survey data from almost 7000 Perth-based adults for the period 2006-2009.

The number of liquor outlets within 1600 metres from home was measured against levels of alcohol consumption for each participant as well as hospital contacts for anxiety, stress and depression.

The study found that participants with more liquor outlets in their neighbourhood were more likely to have higher levels of harmful drinking and worse mental health than those who live further away from such outlets.

Co-author Associate Professor Lisa Wood, Deputy Director of UWA's Centre for the Built Environment and Health, says that the study is important because it is the first of its kind to look in detail at the relationship between mental health disorders and alcohol.

"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," she says.

Liquor outlets were the focus of the study rather than alcohol consumed on-premises at licensed public venues such as bars and pubs.

The study points to previous research that shows there is a stronger link between the sale of packaged alcohol and chronic alcohol-caused hospitalisation, than for alcohol consumed on-premises.

Dr Wood says that the findings emphasise the importance of the WA Health Department's five-year plan to improve WA health.

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

"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," she says.

"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."

"While public health alcohol issues involve a complex web of different factors, the findings in this study are quite compelling that liquor availability is an important factor."

Dr Wood says that limiting alcohol advertising and sale of special promotions may also help to curb harmful drinking levels.



"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." —Dr Wood. Image: [Alex Rabb](#)

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