



University for the Common Good

## The impact of the Scottish ban on smoking in public places upon nightclubs and their patrons

Forsyth, Alasdair

*Published in:*  
Journal of Substance Use

*DOI:*  
[10.3109/14659891.2012.688396](https://doi.org/10.3109/14659891.2012.688396)

*Publication date:*  
2012

*Document Version*  
Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication in ResearchOnline](#)

*Citation for published version (Harvard):*  
Forsyth, A 2012, 'The impact of the Scottish ban on smoking in public places upon nightclubs and their patrons', *Journal of Substance Use*, vol. 17, no. 3, pp. 203-217. <https://doi.org/10.3109/14659891.2012.688396>

### General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

### Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please view our takedown policy at <https://edshare.gcu.ac.uk/id/eprint/5179> for details of how to contact us.

# **The Impact of the Scottish Ban on Smoking in Public Places upon Nightclubs and their Patrons**

Abbreviated title: Smoking bans and late-night drinking premises

Dr Alasdair J M Forsyth PhD,  
Senior Research Fellow  
Scottish Centre for Crime and Criminal Justice Research  
Glasgow Centre for the Study of Violence  
Glasgow Caledonian University  
Cowcaddens Road,  
Glasgow G4 0BA

Correspondence: Dr Alasdair J M Forsyth, Department of Psychology, Glasgow Caledonian University, Cowcaddens Road, Glasgow G4 0BA, UK Tel. 0141-331-8301. Fax: 0141-331-3636. E-mail: [Alasdair.forsyth@gcal.ac.uk](mailto:Alasdair.forsyth@gcal.ac.uk).

# **The Impact of the Scottish Ban on Smoking in Public Places upon Nightclubs and their Patrons**

## **Abstract**

In many jurisdictions around the world the policy of banning tobacco smoking from public places has been progressively introduced. This has included the prohibition of smoking on premises licensed for the sale and consumption of alcohol, such as bars, restaurants and pubs. Of all these types of venues the one which would appear to present the greatest challenge for operators attempting to manage the impact of this policy is nightclubs. This paper examines how the introduction of a comprehensive nationwide smoking ban in Scotland was managed by city centre nightclubs and how this was viewed by their patrons. On the plus side there was a high level of compliance and support for the ban among nightclub patrons, who had quickly accepted the (tobacco) smoke-free environment as normal. However, there were also some problems, including door management difficulties, the stretching of security staff resources, increased fear of drinks 'spiking' and the prospect that outdoor smoking scene (i.e. 'smirting' - smoking and flirting) had very quickly become a desirable part of the nightclub experience.

Keywords: Smoking-ban, licensed premises

# **The Impact of the Scottish Ban on Smoking in Public Places upon Nightclubs and their Patrons**

## **Introduction**

On March 26<sup>th</sup> 2006 the Scottish Government banned smoking from all enclosed public spaces, including all of the nation's licensed premises, in order to safeguard the health of those working in such environments. This paper will report findings from an observational study of alcohol-related disorder (violence) conducted within Scottish nightclubs over the period of this smoking ban. The research was conducted in Glasgow, a city with historical and internationally high levels of tobacco smoking and alcohol-related problems (e.g. see Bauld et al, 2006; Hanlon et al, 2006).

The Scottish ban, as defined in the 'Smoking Health and Social Care (Scotland) Act' (2005), covered all "wholly and substantially enclosed public spaces", and unlike similar bans or proposed bans in other jurisdictions (e.g. England) this legislation included all licensed premises. This legislation was intended to protect the health of bar workers. However the blanket nature of the Scottish ban did raise some concerns that these health gains maybe offset by the displacement of smoking, or drinking, practices towards private enclosed spaces (e.g. the family home), which might expose children or other non-smokers to smoke and smoking behaviours (e.g. Adda & Cornaglia, 2005; Haw et al, 2006). Concerns about this would seem particularly salient in Scotland as the weather and climate in this country are not the most conducive to outdoor smoking and drinking. Additionally there were concerns that the ban would harm the alcohol and licensed trade industry, one of Scotland's largest employers and revenue generators (Adda et al, 2006; Tran, 2006).

Of all sectors of the on-trade, nightclubs are seen as the type of licensed premises that might be expected to be the most affected by this legislation as, unlike say pubs or restaurants, customers who had paid an entrance fee (late at night) would not be free to simply vacate and then re-enter the premises whenever they wanted to smoke a cigarette (see Picken, 2006; Perrett, 2006). Additionally, in comparison to pubs or restaurants, nightclubs are usually quite large and employ 'smoke machines' (dry ice) to add to their visual effects, thus creating extra difficulties for staff charged with enforcement of the ban, should intoxicated customers decide to flout it. Thus nightclubs in Scotland would appear to represent an extreme example of the difficulties faced in imposing smoking bans in licensed premises, both in terms of their likely impact to the industry and in the potential for resistance by patrons (e.g. violence resulting from enforcement attempts).

This research used a combination of observation and interview methods to measure the impact of the ban, with half of these observations being conducted in the weeks before it came into effect, half afterwards. The research aimed to assess the level of compliance with the ban amongst smoking patrons, how different nightclub premises managed the ban and what patrons (both smokers and non-smokers) felt about the issues it had raised. As well as looking at the positive (health) aspects of the ban, this paper will also look at some of its other, unintended, consequences upon this sector, including the impact on disorder risk, levels of violence, level of smokers' group affinity, changing attitudes to outdoor smoking, patterns of drinking and illegal drug consumption.

## **Method**

The observational phase of research involved two teams of two fieldworkers (one female, one male in each) visiting a sample of eight of Glasgow's 70 nightclubs for

three hours, twice each, once on a Friday and once on a Saturday night (midnight to 3.00AM – which approximates to 100 hours observation taking into account ‘drinking up time’). These observations were supplemented by 32 in-depth interviews with Glasgow nightclub patrons conducted by the author.

The eight nightclubs observed were selected in consultation with the local police force (Strathclyde Police) to represent the range of call-outs to disorder which they received from such premises in the city centre (i.e. including some premises with high and some with low levels of recorded violent crime). The selected premises all held an Entertainment License (i.e. they were open till 3.00 AM at weekends), charged admission and offered mainstream ‘high street’, regular dance promotions (i.e. the sample excluded niche venues such as Gay clubs, Strip clubs, Comedy clubs or ceilidhs). Each of the observed premises are assigned a suitable pseudonym for the purposes of this paper.

The smoking ban came into effect at 6.00 AM on Sunday 26th March 2006, and so to measure its impact, half of the nightclub observations were conducted before this date and half afterwards. That is the observational research was divided into two sweeps of data collection, during which both teams of observers visited each of the nightclubs in the sample once before, and once after, the smoking ban. The first sweep of observations began on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> of February and ceased on Saturday 25th March, that is the night that the smoking ban was implemented. Observations resumed on Friday 21st of April (by which time smoking ban management practices were assumed to have settled into place) before finishing on Saturday 27th May. So as not compromise the observational fieldwork, all interviews with nightclub patrons were conducted post-ban.

Observers made extensive field-notes about what they had witnessed on each occasion that they visited a nightclub. They also completed two extensive research instruments (questionnaires or checklists) on returning home after each observational session. These instruments have been extensively used in work of this nature in Canada and elsewhere (see Graham, 1999 & 2000). One of these, 'Form 2', was used to record any incidents of violence witnessed, the other, 'Form 1', was used to detail the nightclub (barroom) setting in each of the premises (including a measure of "smokiness" and other environmental features all scored 0 to 9, and various percentage scores including estimates of the percentage of patrons who were observed smoking). Additional items were added to this form to gauge the impact of the smoking ban (including items relating to whether the ban was being complied with by both staff and patrons).

Interviewees were recruited firstly via the observers handing out project recruitment cards to clubbers ( $n = 8$ ), then via chain-referral from students ( $n = 17$ , not the students themselves) and finally from direct approach by the author on the streets of Glasgow city centre, targeting any demographic types, apparent from observations but not already recruited for interview ( $n = 7$ ). All interviews were, semi-structured, taped and, with the exception of the first interview, conducted at the university. All interviewees were first required to read an information sheet about the project, before completing a consent form. The interview topic guide included the prompt "Views on smoking ban". Fuller details of this research, its rationale, methods and findings can be found elsewhere (Forsyth, 2006).

## Results

### *Observations in nightclubs (impact on premises management)*

During the first sweep of field observations (i.e. during the month before the smoking ban came into effect), and in especially on the night of the ban (Saturday 25th March 2006), observers paid particular attention to how the nightclubs in the sample were preparing for it. For example, whether they informed patrons of this new law and how it would be managed. How this was handled appeared to vary greatly. Only one of the eight nightclubs ('Saturn') provided detailed information more than a week in advance of the ban. Others seemed to ignore it completely, with at least one ('Sinatra's) even failing to mention it on the night that the ban came into force. The observers' field-notes below illustrate these two extremes in the provision of information about how the ban would impact upon nightclub patrons.

*"No one really mentioned the smoking ban, there weren't any signs up or announcements made. The tables all still had ashtrays on them and a lot of people were smoking."* (Male Observer Team B, at 'Sinatra's' nightclub – on the night of the ban)

*"There were posters about the club informing patrons about the smoking ban and warning that patrons who smoked risked a fine as did the club. It stated that they intended to issue all patrons with a wristband so that they could leave to smoke outside the club entrance. It also stated due to the ban on drinking in public patrons should remember not to take their drinks outside with them. This was a notice made by 'Saturn' themselves rather than being provided by a company or the Scottish Executive. There was also a similar sign in the female toilets warning patrons about drink spiking and to avoid leaving drinks unattended or accepting drinks from strangers."* (Female Observer Team A, at 'Saturn' nightclub – one week before ban)

The second field-note above, concerning 'Saturn', is of particular interest as this nightclub's operators had taken it upon themselves to produce posters and print leaflets informing their patrons about the ban. Only one other nightclub ('Chocolate') was observed giving out information about the ban, though only on the night that it came



into force (it remains possible that some of the remaining five premises in the sample may have done so on the night of the ban).

Table 1, below, details the eight nightclubs observed and summarises how the ban impacted upon them. It should be noted that the difference in overall estimated proportion of patrons observed smoking before and after the ban was non-significant (from 16.1% smoking inside before to 15.8% smoking outside afterwards, by Paired  $t$ -test  $p = 0.772$ , figures derived from the means of all four observers' estimated percentages, made at each nightclub before and after the ban). Also that this figure was easier for observers to estimate before the ban, as post-ban this involved making trips to outdoor smoking areas (during most of their 100 hours of observation, observers' had little else to do but to calculate this and other percentage questions on 'Form 1').

<Table 1>

As is also indicated in the above field-note, 'Saturn' nightclub intended to use a wristband door-pass system to allow patrons to go outside to smoke and then re-enter without having to pay again. This approach, or something similar (e.g. a hand stamp), was also adopted by three other nightclubs, 'Xanadu', 'Rapture' and 'Sinatra's' to allow patrons to smoke on the street. At one nightclub, 'Tropicana', (which had the lowest door price) patrons appeared to be allowed to come and go on to the street simply by asking the door stewards (security staff) if they could go out and then "to hope that they recognise you on your way back in" (Female Observer Team A). However it was managed, there was no doubt that nightclub patrons leaving to smoke on busy city streets could lead to a number of problems, as is illustrated by the following field-note.

*"The pass out system here is a bit of a farce. You collect a wristband from the pay-in counter which allows you in and out the club. In theory this should work.*

*Patrons enter club, pay, get wristband at same time and then come and go as they please. In reality, people pay and enter the club. After about an hour decide they want a cigarette so go back out to cash desk to collect a band and either barge into everyone still waiting to pay to get into the club in first place or have to queue up with people still to come in and then have to convince cash desk staff that they have already paid. Chaos ensues. Once you finally get your band and make it outside you are sent right across the road to mingle with beggars and parked cars. I guess this is so the club doesn't have to take responsibility for all the dropped fag ends. While outside I saw people from the club smoking who still had their drinks with them. On re-entering the club you have to undergo another search. When I was going back in a male went to go up the stairs, female steward shouted on him to come back but he ignored her. She looked around for male stewards for support but he was too busy searching someone else to even notice. Male patron therefore got back in without being searched which I don't think the female steward was very happy about.” (Female Observer Team A, ‘Xanadu’)*

The remaining three observed premises, ‘Armageddon’, ‘Chocolate’ and ‘Idols’ were lucky in this respect, in that they had back courts (yards to the rear of these premises) which could be converted into smoking areas. At these three nightclubs patrons could come and go for a smoke as they pleased, as described in the field-note below.

*“About 40% were going out. Went to a wee [small] decking style area with tables and ashtrays fenced off at back of club.” “...saw male smoking a joint in smoking area.” (Female Observer Team A, ‘Armageddon’)*

The above field-note also illustrates how the smoking ban has provided a new opportunity for patrons choosing to smoke cannabis during a night’s clubbing. As will be seen from subsequent patron interviews, this was just one of many unintended consequences of the ban, not all of them positive, which allowing patrons to leave and then re-enter nightclubs throughout the night had brought about.

The environmental impact of this outdoor smoking on the streets outside each nightclub was measured by observers being asked to take note of how much evidence of smoking there was in the vicinity of the entrance / exit door of each premises as they left at the end of the night. To this end, the presence or absence of smoking materials (e.g.

cigarette ends) was measured on simple three point scale, “none” (i.e. no evidence), “some” (i.e. a few cigarette ends or matches lying on the pavement) and “lots” (a large amount of smoking-related ‘litter’) (Note that on two occasions prior to the ban this task was made difficult by the presence of fresh snow). When these scores were examined, there was less difference between observations before and after the ban than what might have been anticipated (though this did reach statistical significance, Chi-square = 7.77,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = 0.020$ ). As can be seen from Table 2, this change was less dramatic than might have been anticipated largely because smoking-related ‘litter’ was also present, and observed, before the ban came into effect.

<Table 2>

It is hypothesised that the presence of smoking-related ‘litter’ outside nightclubs prior to the ban was because patrons also smoke while waiting in line in the queue to pay to get into them (i.e. a practice which was in place before the ban). Additionally, that after the ban these queues may be able to use the new smoking boxes (outdoor ashtrays or ‘ciggy bins’, Doward & Biggs, 2007), introduced, post-ban, specifically for outdoor smokers to use. As might be expected, it can also be seen from Table 2 that the external environmental impact was less obvious at nightclubs which had a designated outdoor smoking area to the rear of the premises, though even at these smoking-related ‘litter’ was observed at their street entrance before and after, presumably from queue smoking.

Inside the nightclubs in the sample, compliance with the ban was almost universal. Observers witnessed attempts to flout the ban in only three nightclubs. In every case this was quickly enforced. In two nightclubs, ‘Armageddon’ and ‘Rapture’, this occurred only “once” and on both occasions the patron concerned was asked to leave and did so without causing any further problems. In the third, ‘Xanadu’ this was noted “more than

once”, though here the stewards merely pointed the offenders towards the smoking exit. ‘Xanadu’, was also the only nightclub where any smoking-related ‘litter’ was observed after the ban (two separate observations, recorded in a similar fashion to the data on Table 2). No serving staff were observed smoking inside any of the nightclubs before or after the ban, and staff smoking outside, post-ban, was observed at only three nightclubs (‘Chocolate’ 8 observations, including 2 entertainers, ‘Idols’ 3 observations and ‘Xanadu’ 1 observation).

Table 3, shows the scores for each of the environmental risk factor for disorder scales measured by ‘Form 1’ (after Graham, 1999 & 2000), “smokiness”, “ventilation”, “noise”, “movement” and “crowdedness” (which might have been expected to change), before and after the ban. (These were scored from 0 to 9 by each observer for every nightclub each time they visited.) Unexpectedly, the only one of these scales which changed significantly between these times was “crowding” (which reduced). The decline in levels of “smokiness” did not reach statistical significance. This lack of difference in “smokiness” scores, between before and after the ban, appeared to be because of the presence of smoke machines which observers felt had been ‘turned up’ post-ban (the question on ‘Form 1’ did not specify “tobacco” smokiness).

<Table 3>

Another possible reason as to why the environment in nightclubs did not appear to be significantly less smoky post-ban was that some nightclub operators were allowing other substances being emitted into the air to cover up ‘new’ smells (e.g. body odours) which had become more apparent in the absence of cigarettes fumes, as is illustrated in the field-notes below.

*“The club (ground floor especially) was definitely not as smoky but upstairs the smoke machine was on full and you could hardly see anything or anyone, so you couldn’t differentiate from before the smoking ban was implemented (couldn’t tell if there was a smoking ban or not).”* (Female Observer Team B)

*“Less smoky than last time but they seemed to be pumping artificial perfume through the smoke so the whole place seemed like sweet plastic.”* (Female Observer Team A, ‘Chocolate’)

Also shown in Table 3, are the estimated mean numbers of patrons attending any of the nightclubs in the sample, before and after the smoking ban. This did show a significant difference, dropping from of 252 to 210 individuals. This effect was not as powerful as that for the decline in levels of crowdedness, before and after the ban, perhaps suggesting that the crowding situation in nightclubs had been helped both because fewer patrons were attending and because there were always likely to be some patrons outside smoking.

Table 3 also shows the numbers of violent incidents witnessed before and after the smoking ban (as recorded on ‘Form 2’). Interestingly, these declined sharply from 22 to 12. It is not possible to relate this decline to the smoking ban, it could have been due to the better weather, exam-time or chance, but it may have been assisted by there being less patrons (especially if deterred smokers were more likely to be troublemakers), less crowding and the ability for patrons to move outside these nightclubs (e.g. to cool down or to avoid trouble).

On the other hand, as also shown on Table 3, three of the five post-ban incidents were rated as ‘severe’ (i.e. potentially requiring medical attention) by a panel of independent violence risk expert assessors (who assessed each incident from observers’ written accounts of each incident, see Forsyth, 2006). Alternatively that is one in eleven incidents were rated ‘severe’ before the ban, compared with one in four afterwards.

Interestingly, on the actual night of the ban, unusually, no aggressive incidents were witnessed in either of the premises observed that night ('Chocolate' and 'Sinatra's) or outside on the streets at closing time.

Although it also is impossible to relate the effect of smoking ban to the five 'severe' incidents, observers did feel that the extra door management duties which it had imposed on stewards could lead to more serious violence. In this scenario, security resources are more stretched because stewards now had to monitor smokers leaving and entering nightclubs for the duration of the night. This meant that if a fight did break out inside it would take longer for these stewards to respond or even notice. This situation was felt to be particularly acute with female stewards whose numbers were limited to begin with and who were now required to search female smokers throughout the night.

*"However hardly saw much of the stewards in terms of monitoring the club. I saw two bouncers walking about the entire night. The only time I saw more than one in the same vicinity was when a fight was kicking off. This is more or less the same situation as last time, but I think it may be made worse by the smoking ban, as at all times you need at least four stewards working the door: two for outside and two inside for re-searching all the patrons who are coming back inside. In addition at least one of the four has to be female for the searching of female patrons. So in effect, all night you're going to have four stewards short of a full set, which is serious in 'Xanadu' because they weren't doing a brilliant job of monitoring the club last time we were here, before the ban."...*  
*"Whenever I accidentally bumped into some guy I would automatically turn round and profusely apologise as it seemed like something could kick off at anytime, and if it did it would take a good few minutes for the stewards to realise I was getting battered, and as this research has shown me: you can do a lot of damage in two minutes." (Male Observer Team A, 'Xanadu')*

#### *Interviews with patrons (impacts on smokers and non-smokers)*

Another potential way in which the smoking ban was felt to increase the likelihood of more serious crime occurring was raised during interviews with nightclub patrons. Specifically, that it may have inadvertently created opportunities for drink-spikers, because smokers often left their drinks unattended when they went outside to smoke on

the streets owing to a bye-law in Glasgow which prohibits the consumption of alcohol in public places.

*“I’ve found a lot of people leave their drinks, right? Girls especially, say for instance in [a non-observed nightclub]? Everyone, you’ve probably been in [that nightclub] I’m sure. You know the wee, as you go in on the left there’s that window with the window sill? Everyone leaves their pints stacked up there and goes outside. It’s begging for someone to Rohypnol that or you know as far as I can see. Everyone is worried about date rape and stuff and yet the smoking ban seems to be a perfect opportunity for people.”* (Male Patron, #13)

To allay such fears, some non-smokers could be designated the task of watching over their smoker friends’ drinks in order to ensure that these were not tampered with or stolen. Non-smokers also complained about being left inside nightclubs on their own, while their smoker friends or partner went outside, as this could sometimes leave them feeling conspicuous or vulnerable to the unwanted attentions of strangers (e.g. trying to ‘pull’ or pick a fight). Interestingly for these reasons non-smokers were happier being left inside nightclubs which offered visual entertainment to watch while their friends smoked.

*“[In a non-observed night club] and ‘Tropicana’ ...they [friends] go out for a smoke and you’re sitting on your own there’s always something to watch where if you go to some of these, other one’s you’re not going to watch people dancing because they might get the wrong idea or whatever, so.”* (Male Patron, #9)

In the absence of such distractions (smokers’ drinks or entertainment to watch) the logical response was for lone non-smokers to go outside to the smoking area or street with their smoker friends. However, this increased the likelihood of both patrons ‘losing’ their seats or drinks while they went outside, again leading to frustration.

*“...if you both go then you lose your seats so it can be quite annoying there but that’s the only time. Now it gives me an opportunity to speak to people outside a club. Go cool down if it’s too hot inside the club or, even if you ran out of money go the bank machine. Or you can go to the pub, it’s cheaper!”* (Male Patron, #13)

In the above quote, interviewee #13 also hints that not everyone allowed outside was (only) leaving the nightclub for a quick cigarette. Interviewees stated that it was now possible to arrive at a nightclub early (i.e. before midnight), when some door prices were cheaper and the pubs are still open, obtain a smokers wristband and then leave to visit a pub for cheaper alcohol, consume it rapidly, then return to the nightclub.

*“Well, that’s the other thing [laughs] it’s like £2.50 for a shot of Sambucca [in ‘Saturn’ nightclub] and you can jump into next door [to a pub] and get it for £2.00.” (Male Patron, #13)*

This was one of several reasons which emerged as to why even non-smokers were taking advantage of the door-pass systems set up to allow smoking patrons to leave and re-enter nightclubs (non-smoking observers were allowed outside). Others included to visit shops or the bank (cash machine), to cool down (some interviewees complained about high temperatures inside some nightclubs), to escape the music (some complained about high noise levels in some nightclubs), to socialise and to ‘pull’.

*“See a lot of non-smokers like my ex-girlfriend doesn’t smoke but she ended up coming out and smoking, not smoking, coming out just for the conversation” (Male Patron, #13)*

In this way it can be seen that, in the post-ban era, non-smokers continued to be exposed to others’ smoking behaviour and second hand smoke albeit in a better ventilated environment when they attend nightclubs.

*“I found myself, I’m not a smoker but I’ll go out to the little bit where they smoke. I just say to my friends I’m out for some fresh air but I just go out there anyway and I just, cos’ the smokers, the non-smokers don’t go there so I better go and see what it’s like and I went up there and they were all standing there and eh for five minutes to see what it’s all about really or else maybe start chatting to some people or”... [asked if wants to ‘chat up’ smokers] “Aye that’s the problem when you’re in the club you don’t know who smokes and who doesn’t smoke sometimes.” (Male Patron, #3)*



Both smokers and non-smokers spoke at length about the growth of the outdoor smoking scene or ‘smirting’. This is a term derived from the words smoking and flirting, which has previously been noted in jurisdictions with similar smoking bans such as several in US states and the Republic of Ireland (Patience, 2004; Hughes, 2005; Doward & Biggs, 2007).

*“Because I think it’s [‘smirting’] a, it’s a good way to actually meet women I think and the new smoking ban.” (Male Patron, #9)*

In Glasgow it was clear that ‘smirterers’ often spent a great deal of time outside nightclubs, time spent away from the bar which would seem likely to impact upon levels of crowdedness inside (presumably helping to explain the figures in Table 3) and perhaps even on bar takings or intoxication (assuming not all ‘smirting’ patrons simply drink more rapidly while they are inside the premises).

*“It was weird last night when I was out last night at ‘Chocolate’ and I went out for a fag for about, took me about 45 minutes. I just meet a few guys and we just stood outside and we just smoked and chatted for ages and then went back in.” (Male Patron, #32)*

Indeed, in a very short space of time, smoking outside had become an integral part of the nightclub experience, which, at the very least, would seem to increase group cohesion and identity amongst smokers, perhaps reinforcing the perceived benefits of this behaviour. The following quote from the first person to be interviewed took place only five weeks after the ban had come into effect and illustrates how rapidly this phenomenon had arisen.

*“I think it’s really sociable, but what I’ve found when I’ve gone out for a cigarette, which is much less than I would normally have one, is that everyone seems, has this affinity that they are all stuck out in the cold and everyone’s like having a good laugh, especially at ‘Saturn’ where a lot of people are quite high and just talking away. You can actually speak to someone without music, it’s quite nice.” (Male Patron, #1)*

In his statement above, interviewee #1 also implies that he smokes less frequently when he is out clubbing now in comparison to what he did before the ban. This impact of the ban was mentioned by several smoking interviewees.

*“I’ll smoke less, like you need to go outside so I’ll only make a couple of journeys whereas before I’d be smoking ten in a nightclub or something.” (Male Patron, #10)*

*“I don’t smoke as much when I’m out. I do not smoke anywhere near as much. There’s a downside as well though cos’ I have smoked indoors after like getting drunk and you get thrown out which is a bit.”... “I was turfed out of [a pub]. It was just one of those silly things that I just completely forgot. Sparked it, and it was just the bouncer happened to be there cos’ I think my friend would have noticed before he did but.” (Male Patron, #7)*

Rather than bothering to stop dancing and go outside one interviewee had resorted to using a ‘bridging product’ while in nightclubs.

*“I just use nicotine chewing gum if I’m really, well, I keep wanting to give up so I’ve always got nicotine chewing gum with me, so.” (Male Patron, #24)*

Interestingly, although no interviewee claimed to have stopped smoking because of the ban, one did state that she had started again because of the publicity surrounding it coupled with the draw of the ‘smirting’ scene.

*“I had actually stopped smoking in January and I started smoking around about the smoking ban cos’ mainly I was fed up hearing people talking about cigarettes all the time and it just actually kept it going in my head so I then started smoking and I actually thought it was quite novel this going outside to have a cigarette cos’ you would chat to people outside so it became quite sociable thing to do. So since then I’ve been kind of one and off, on and off, smoking.” (Female Patron, #20)*

Some smokers stated that, although they supported the ban, it nevertheless put them off going to nightclubs, perhaps helping to explain some of the drop in attendance at the sampled venues noted by observers (see Table 3).

*“Ultimately I think it’s a good thing. It’s, I would say it’s the biggest off point of going to a pub or a club is the fact I can’t smoke in it.” (Male Patron, #7)*

Since the ban came into effect this interviewee (#7) had become more favourable towards attending unlicensed dance parties because he was free to smoke at these, while engaging in the entertainments on offer at nightclubs.

*“I like the socialising bit and it’s a different atmosphere at a party, even if people are playing decks [DJ-ing] and things and you’ve still got the loud music. It’s still a different atmosphere. You can sit down and you can smoke without having to think, “Oh, am I breaking the law?”” (Male Patron, #7)*

However, other smokers, especially those who were more music, than socialising, orientated ‘scenesters’ stated that things such as whether there was a smoking ban or not would be unlikely to influence how frequently they attended nightclubs.

*“I think that maybe the kind of places [nightclubs including ‘Saturn’] like I said I go to for the music, people will go for the music regardless of whether they can smoke yeah.” (Male Patron, #1)*

Non-smokers were usually positive about the ban and some indicated that they were likely to go out to nightclubs (or to go out drinking in other types of licensed premises) more often now that the ban was in place.

*“The only thing is I can say about it is the main thing for me is the smoking it encourages me to go out a lot more as well cos’ I find myself going out a lot more now there’s no smoking, it’s good, it’s good for me.” (Male Patron, #3)*

Overall, interviewees were very positive about the ban regardless of whether they smoked or not. As well as obvious reasons such as health (passive smoking) and the smell of smoke in their hair or clothes the next morning, banning lit cigarettes from the nightclub environment was also felt to increase levels of safety (though candles replacing ashtrays on barroom tables may counter this).

*“But the smoking ban is quite good, see when you’re out and you’ve got like, people are walking, like when I’m out any way if I’m passing someone with a fag, watch it in case they come near me. It’s accidental I know but at the end of the day it burns your, if it burns a £50.00 top, then they’re no gonnae be happy with that. See when you’re going out with during the week, when you come out*

*of places with strobes and dry ice, there's burns, burns, burns."* (Male Patron, #12)

One negative consequence of the ban, which both observers and interviewed patrons had quickly become aware of was that unpleasant smoky smells had been replaced by other unpleasant aromas, including the toilets, damp, food / cooking, flatulence and in particular body odour, the latter of which appeared to be an especially salient problem in the smoke-free nightclub environment owing to the amount of sweat produced by dancing and other exertions.

*"There's good things and bad things about it [the smoking ban], because I think the smoke before used to cover up smells but, like you never noticed before like people and now it's away you smell a lot more different things, but like [a non-observed nightclub] have covered that up because they've got candles and stuff now, so, but it's definitely good because the next day your clothes don't smell and your hair doesn't smell and stuff, and passive smoking."* (Male Patron, #16)

*"Err. Actually prefer it [the smoking ban] to be honest with you. But a lot of clubs I notice have a big change in the smell. As in a worse smell, a BO [body odor] smell kinda thing. It's like a just no a pleasant smell but a lot of clubs have got like I think [a non-observed nightclub] put strawberry into the, the, what do you call it, the smoke machines."* (Male Patron, #12)

As is apparent from the above interviewees' quotes, like the field observers, patrons had become aware that some nightclubs were using aromatic substances (including scented candles, incense, air-fresheners, 'smoke' machines and perfumes) to cover up the unpleasant smells uncovered by the smoking ban. One patron was unhappy about this as she felt it ruined the taste of her drink.

*"Oh, well the only thing is [a non-observed nightclub] have air fresheners cos' people are so used to having the smoke around they're putting this air freshner in. I know it's like the smoke gets rid of all the kind of like smells from the nightclub so they're putting in air fresheners that are like strawberry and things. I remember being in and it was quite a quiet night, I think it was during the exams and stuff like that and it was really, really strong and it was quite off putting cos' you've bought your drink and there's this strawberry smoke going into it and it kind of affects the taste of the drink but generally it's [the smoking ban] fine."* (Female Patron, #19)

## **Discussion**

This research found a high level of compliance with Scotland's smoking ban in nightclubs. This was observed in a location type which prior to the ban being implemented might have been thought to represent a potentially troublesome sector for its management. The high level of compliance found in this study would appear to concur with other research highlighting the potential health benefits of this legislation to bar staff (e.g. Cancer research UK, 2006; Menzies et al, 2006). In the nightclub context, this level of compliance is noteworthy as, unlike say pubs or restaurants, patrons who have paid to enter a nightclub cannot simply leave for a few minutes to smoke and then re-enter.

Interviewed nightclub patrons who were smokers appear to have been happy to comply with the smoking ban. This finding would appear to corroborate field observations, which indicated that attempts to flout the ban were rare and that security staff had little or no trouble enforcing it. Even those who smoked were generally in favour of the policy, even if in some cases they felt it would limit their future attendance at nightclubs. In contrast non-smokers were likely to go out clubbing more often.

Both smokers and non-smokers interviewed took advantage of their new opportunities to be able to leave nightclubs supposedly 'to smoke' for a short time before re-entering (without having to pay the entrance fee again). There were many reasons why patrons left nightclubs in this way, including cooling down, getting fresh air, taking a break from (loud) music and to socialise or 'pull' (meet new sexual partners).

This new found freedom would appear to risk both reinforcing smoking behaviour, amongst smokers, and exposing others to it, perhaps also making it seem more attractive, especially to ex-smokers. The ‘smirting’ scene’s impact would seem to be particularly potent upon nightclub culture. Being allowed to leave a nightclub, by for example obtaining a special wristband seems to have the potential to strengthen bonds between smokers, making them appear to themselves and others to be a special in-group, rather than seemingly excluded individuals (as may be the case at restaurants or pubs). Given that non-smokers or ex-smokers might also wish to use the smokers’ door-pass system, this would seem to raise the possibility that such people could become involved in the ‘smirting’ scene. Indeed, one ex-smoker interviewed in this study had already relapsed for reasons relating to the attractions of ‘smirting’. On the other hand, although no interviewees had stopped smoking because of the ban, several stated that they now smoked less on a night out clubbing than they had done previously.

Despite this new outdoor smoking behaviour, this research found its exterior environmental impact to be less severe than might have been expected, with only modest increases in smoking ‘litter’, overall, outside nightclubs. This seems to be in part due to some premises having designated smoking areas to their rear (three of the eight observed were physically fortunate, to be able to provide such a facility), coupled with an existing problem of patrons dropping smoking materials on the street while they queued to get in and the introduction of special boxes or ‘ciggy bins’ at premises entrances in the post-ban era (though at some premises this may also have been down to patrons being directed to smoke far away from the club’s entrance).

The issue of whether having large groups of smokers congregating outside licensed premises contributes to existing levels of alcohol-related disorder on the street and who should deal with this, also needs consideration. Although, no conflicts between smokers at outdoor smoking areas ('smighting', see Doward & Biggs, 2007) were witnessed, it was felt that the severity of some violent disorder inside nightclubs could be worsened because of the ban, as nightclub stewards now spent much more of their time at the entrance monitoring smokers and other patrons who were allowed outside temporarily and then they had to search these patrons when they re-entered in case they attempted to misuse the door-pass system to smuggle in contraband (e.g. weapons, alcohol or other drugs). These duties inevitably meant that stewards who were at the door would be less likely to spot and slower to respond to trouble inside the nightclub. Given that at least one female steward is required to do door searches, and their numbers tend to be more limited than that of male stewards in the first place, this situation would seem to be likely to impact most heavily upon their duties inside the nightclubs (where a large proportion of violent disputes involved female patrons, see Forsyth et al, 2006).

An increased fear of drinks spiking was another unexpected consequence of the smoking ban, with some interviewees feeling that the ban had increased the amount of time that smoker's drinks were left unattended. Although the prevalence of drinks spiking is controversial (e.g. see Benger & Carter, 2007; Hindmarch et al, 2001; Payne-James & Rogers, 2002), there was no doubt that this is a cause for concern among many clubbers. This must raise concerns that some patrons may finish their alcoholic drinks more rapidly in order to prevent this (or drinks theft) from happening while they are outside smoking. One interviewee suggested that a solution to this problem might be to improve the availability of plastic bottles with caps (much like sports drinks containers),

which could be given to smokers to seal their drinks or take them outside (some observed premises were already selling an alcopop in such containers, the design of which was also seen as being very advantageous for dancing or moving around nightclubs without spillage). However, this possibility could not be measured here, as there is a bye-law in the City of Glasgow banning alcohol drinking in the street.

## **Conclusion**

This Scottish research has implications for other states considering introducing smoking bans in public places, specifically for how these may impact upon licensed premises. For example it was noteworthy, given the peculiar management difficulties that the ban presented to the nightclub sector, that the task of informing patrons about how they would be affected by this legislation was left to individual operators, rather than being dealt with by some responsible public body (e.g. the Scottish Executive, health board, local authority, licensing board or police) especially those authorities who had supported the ban. However, despite this and other shortcomings, including the stretching of security resources, increased opportunities for drink-spikers and some non-smokers' feelings of being excluded (if they were left alone inside premises while their smoking friends are allowed to go outside), on the whole the findings of this nightclub research were very positive about the Scottish Executive's ban on smoking in enclosed public spaces. Despite the extra management problems that this initiative has presented for nightclub operators and the added inconvenience imposed on smokers, both interviews and field observations indicated a very high level of compliance with this new law. The observed nightclubs did appear less busy in the post-ban period (and perhaps also less disorderly), though much of this may have been down to the newly introduced door pass-out systems allowing patrons outside (to 'smoke') reducing levels



of crowding inside premises. On the evidence of this research, the policy of banning smoking from public places, as introduced in Scotland, would seem likely to be successful if applied to nightclubs and other licensed premises elsewhere.

**Statement of competing interest**

This paper is based on research funded by the Alcohol Education Research Council (AERC).

**Acknowledgement**

The author would like to thank Andy Boyd, Jemma Lennox, Katie O’Neil and Tom Woods, the observers in this research, and also the anonymous interviewees.

## References

- Adda, J., Berlinski, S. & Machin, S. (2006) Short-run economic effects of the Scottish smoking ban. *International Journal of Epidemiology*, December.  
<http://ije.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/dyl258?ijkey=Xz91O4MDULuKEtr&keytype=ref>
- Adda, J. & Cornaglia, F. (2005) The Effect of Bans and Taxes on Passive Smoking Centre for Microdata Methods and Practice, Working Paper 20/05  
[http://cemmap.ifs.org.uk/publications.php?publication\\_id=3523](http://cemmap.ifs.org.uk/publications.php?publication_id=3523)
- Bauld, L., Ferguson, J., Lawson, L., Chesterman, J. & Judge, K. (2006) *Tackling Smoking in Glasgow: Final Report*. Report to the Glasgow Centre for Population Health. Glasgow, University of Glasgow.  
<http://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/documents/TacklingSmoking-FinalReport27-1-06.pdf>
- Benger J. & Carter, R. (2007) *Pilot Study of Inter-Agency Working to Reduce Binge Drinking and Acute Healthcare Demand*. A report to Alcohol Education Research Council. London: AERC.  
[http://www.aerc.org.uk/documents/pdf/finalReports/043%20AERC%20pilot%20study%20final%20report%20\\_Benger\\_.pdf](http://www.aerc.org.uk/documents/pdf/finalReports/043%20AERC%20pilot%20study%20final%20report%20_Benger_.pdf)
- Cancer Research UK (2006) Scottish bars healthier since the smoking ban. September 11<sup>th</sup>.  
<http://info.cancerresearchuk.org/news/pressreleases/2006/september/215495>
- Doward, J. & Biggs, J. (2007) Pub shelters offer a haven for smokers left in the cold. *The Observer*, February 18<sup>th</sup>.  
[http://observer.guardian.co.uk/uk\\_news/story/0,,2015669,00.html](http://observer.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,,2015669,00.html)
- Forsyth, A. J. M. (2006). *Assessing the relationships between late night drinks marketing and alcohol-related disorder in public space*. A report to the Alcohol Education Research Council. London: AERC.
- Graham, K. (1999) *Safer Bars: Assessing and Reducing Risks of Violence*. Toronto: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.
- Graham, K. (2000) *Safer Bars: Training Manual for Observers on the Safer Bars Study*. Toronto: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.
- Hanlon, P., Walsh, D. & Whyte, B. (2006) *Let Glasgow Flourish: A comprehensive report on health and it's determinates in Glasgow and West central Scotland*. Glasgow, Glasgow Centre for Population Health.  
[http://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/documents/LetGlasgowFlourish\\_full.pdf](http://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/documents/LetGlasgowFlourish_full.pdf)
- Hindmarch, I., El Sohly, M., Gambles, J. & Salamone, S. (2001) Forensic urinalysis of drug use in cases of alleged sexual assault. *Journal of Clinical Forensic Medicine*, 8: 4, 197 – 205.

Hughes, S. (2005) Smoking ban lights up love life. *The Observer*, International, October 30<sup>th</sup>.

<http://observer.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,6903,1604620,00.html?gusrc=rss>

Menzies, D., Nair, A., Williamson, P. A., Schembri, S., Al-Khairalla, M. Z. H., Barnes, M., Fardon, T. C., McFarlane, L., Magee, G. J. & Lipworth, B. J. (2006) Respiratory Symptoms, Pulmonary Function, and Markers of Inflammation Among Bar Workers Before and After a Legislative Ban on Smoking in Public Places. *JAMA*, 296: 1742 - 1748.

Patience, M. (2004) Outcast 'smirters' have a new way to find the light of their lives. *San Diego Union Tribune*, April 18<sup>th</sup>.

[http://www.signonsandiego.com/uniontrib/20040418/news\\_lz1c18smoker.html](http://www.signonsandiego.com/uniontrib/20040418/news_lz1c18smoker.html)

Payne-James, J. & Rogers, D. (2002) Drug facilitated sexual assault, 'ladettes' and alcohol. *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 95: 326 - 327.

Perrett, M. (2006) There's not enough time, says pub chief. *The Publican*, December 4<sup>th</sup>.

<http://www.thepublican.com/story.asp?storyCode=53615>

Picken, A. (2006) Club owners warn of security chaos under smoking crackdown. *The Scotsman*, January 10<sup>th</sup>.

<http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=663&id=43752006>

Scottish Executive (2005) *Smoking Health and Social Care (Scotland) Act (2005)*. Edinburgh, Scottish Executive.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/consultations/health/shscrc-00.asp>

Tran, M. (2006) Scottish smoking ban leaves landlords fuming. *The Guardian*, Business, August, 23<sup>rd</sup>.

<http://business.guardian.co.uk/story/0,,1856619,00.html>

**Table 1: Impact of the smoking ban inside individual nightclubs**

<b>Venue</b>	<b>% patrons smoking inside pre-ban</b>	<b>% patrons smoking outside post-ban</b>	<b>Patrons observed flouting the ban</b>
Xanadu	12.0	15.4	“More than once”
Armageddon	20.8	15.0	“Once”
Rapture	18.1	14.3	“Once”
Tropicana	11.3	4.0	Never
Chocolate	16.9	12.5	Never
Idols	10.6	27.5	Never
Sinatra’s	15.9	15.6	Never
Saturn	23.1	17.4	Never
<b>mean</b>	16.1	15.8	-

**Table 2: Impact of the smoking ban outside individual nightclubs**

Venue	Pre-ban Evidence			Post-ban Evidence			How post-ban smoking managed
	none	some	lots	none	some	lots	
Xanadu	0	3	0	0	4	0	Wristband to street
Armageddon	1	3	0	1	1	2	Own outdoor area
Rapture	1	3	0	0	3	1	Hand stamp to street
Tropicana	1	3	0	0	3	1	Open exit to street
Chocolate	1	3	0	2	2	0	Own outdoor area
Idols	2	2	0	1	3	0	Own outdoor area
Sinatra's	1	2	1	0	2	2	Hand stamp to street
Saturn	1	2	0	0	1	3	Wristband to street
<b>total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>9</b>	-

**Table 3: Impact of the smoking ban on the nightclub environment**

	<b>Pre-ban score</b>	<b>Post-ban score</b>	<b><i>p</i> (t-test)</b>
<b>‘Smokiness’</b> (0-9)	5.1	4.3	0.062
<b>‘Ventilation’</b> (0-9)	4.2	4.1	0.951
<b>‘Noise’</b> (0-9)	6.0	6.0	1.000
<b>‘Movement’</b> (0-9)	6.3	5.6	0.079
<b>‘Crowdedness’</b> (0-9)	6.1	4.9	<b>0.003</b>
<b>Aggressive Incidents</b>	22 (2 ‘severe’)	12 (3 ‘severe’)	-
<b>Numbers attending</b>	252	210	<b>0.013</b>