

# Tobacco Retailer Density in the Northern Territory

## Abstract

Smoking prevalence in the Northern Territory (NT) is the highest in Australia, estimated at 13.3% compared to 8.3% nationwide. Average daily smoking prevalence among First Nations people was recently estimated at 37.3%, This is a decrease of nearly 10% over the previous 15 years, however, there is considerable diversity in smoking prevalence and variations between major cities and regional and remote areas. Greater densities of tobacco retailers are found in areas with greater levels of disadvantage, both globally and in Australia and have been linked to higher smoking prevalence. Restricting the availability of tobacco was identified in the National Tobacco Strategy 2023-2030 as a priority area; however, no state or territory currently regulates the location or density of tobacco retailers. With data from Licensing NT and the Australian Bureau of Statistics, we used geographic software QGIS (Quantum Geographic Information System) to geolocate tobacco retailers and allocated remoteness (outer regional, remote & very remote) and socioeconomic status (SES). We report on the density of retailers by remoteness and SES. We found that there are 439 tobacco retailers in the NT with a density per 1,000 persons ranging from 1.25 in outer regional areas (including Darwin) to 2.05 in remote areas and 3.24 in very remote areas. Tobacco retailer density increased with geographic remoteness, consistent with findings in other parts of Australia. In remote areas where smoking prevalence is both the highest in the country and not declining like other areas, high retailer density is a major challenge to reduce disparities. Future work will include qualitative interviews with retailers and communities to investigate possible avenues for change and an analysis of tobacco control policy in the Northern Territory.