

INDUSTRY ARGUMENT BINGO

Some common arguments that are presented to policymakers by the alcohol, tobacco and unhealthy food and drink industries are laid out below. Listen out for these arguments that are often used to try to undermine effective health policies.

“This will affect the poorest the hardest.”

Fact: Those on low incomes are most likely to suffer health harms and die early due to consumption of alcohol, tobacco and unhealthy food and drinks.

Health inequalities are reduced by public health regulations.

“More regulation will lead to job losses.”

Fact: There is no evidence, internationally, showing that marketing restrictions have had a negative impact on jobs and/or the economy. In fact, the opposite is true.

“These issues are very complex.”

Fact: There is robust, longstanding evidence that regulations to restrict marketing and availability and to reduce affordability of alcohol, tobacco and unhealthy food and drinks save lives.

The greatest barrier to implementation is the opposition of these industries.

“This industry forms the backbone of the economy and should be supported.”

Fact: The health costs and loss of productivity due to alcohol, tobacco and unhealthy food and drinks far exceed tax revenue generated.

“Harms from these products affect a small number of people.”

Fact: Harms related to consumption of tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy food and drinks affect families, not just the individual consumer.

“This policy interferes with individual choices – this is the ‘nanny state.’”

Fact: People become dependent on nicotine, alcohol and many unhealthy food and drinks, making healthier choices for individuals less likely.

“Industry should be encouraged to regulate itself.”

Fact: Over many years, it has been consistently found that voluntary codes of practice are ineffective.

“Most people can consume responsibly and safely.”

Fact: Decisions are greatly affected by the affordability, accessibility and acceptability of healthier options. There is no risk-free way to consume alcohol or tobacco.

“We just need better and more education.”

Fact: All studies show that education can only be part of the solution. Actions to restrict availability and marketing and to reduce affordability are generally more effective than education.

