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# Midlife Drinkers, Exclusion, and the Night-time City.

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## Abstract

The night-time economy in the UK is strongly articulated with youth and youth cultures. Midlife consumers, defined here as 40-60 years of age, are still to be found in suburban pubs and restaurants but town and city centres have for almost two decades now been almost entirely geared towards a younger clientele.

The absence of older participants in British urban nightlife has been the subject of some concern from policy leaders as well as industry. Correspondingly, past decades have seen a notable rise and prevalence of home-drinking amongst older consumers. Whether drinking at home is a driver or a consequence of the lack of age-inclusive venues is unclear. Equally, while certain normative assumptions about older consumers are made, such as increasing domestic responsibilities or the desire for more home-based entertainment, these have not been fully tested in research. Little is therefore known about why older consumers avoid city and town centres at night, their leisure experiences in nightlife, or the impact their absence on town and city centres is having.

This paper explores how the night has become a key site for age division within the UK and examines some of the reasons why midlife drinkers might feel excluded from participating in British cities after dark. It works from the assumption that alcohol consumers who are now midlife were once the subject of considerable research in the 1990s when Britain's night-time economy rapidly expanded. What happened to this cohort over the past two decades, how they now spend their leisure time at night, and how city centres might become more age inclusive at night, are some of the themes explored.

**Keywords:** nightlife, inclusion, midlife

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