

PREVALENCE AND PREDICTORS OF ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION AMONG OLDER AUSTRALIANS

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Introduction and Aims: In recent years demographic shifts have resulted in unprecedented changes in the number of older Australians. This has been accompanied by concomitant changes in their patterns of alcohol use. Despite these changes, research and intervention efforts continue to focus primarily on younger age groups. This paper examines patterns, predictors, and implications of risky alcohol consumption among older Australians over the past decade.

Design and Methods: Secondary analyses were conducted on large nationally representative datasets (NDSHS) from five time points (2004, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016). Frequency analyses examined the prevalence of risky drinking in three age groups (50-59, 60-69, 70+). Logistic regression explored the predictors of risky drinking.

Results: The proportion of Australians who drank at risky and/or high risk levels increased significantly ($p < .05$) over time in all age groups. Predictors of risky consumption varied by age group, and included being a smoker, younger, married, reporting high levels of psychological distress and poor health, and living in a rural area or alone.

Discussions and Conclusions: In contrast to younger age groups where risky alcohol use has declined, use among older Australians is significantly increasing. Despite this, the issue of risky consumption among older people has been largely overlooked. Reducing alcohol-related harm among older age groups will improve health outcomes and reduce healthcare costs.

Implications for Practice or Policy: These major changes in the prevalence of alcohol consumption among older people have important implications for health care providers, policy makers and carers. Tailored strategies to identify indicators of problematic consumption among their older clients, and provide sensitive age-appropriate responses, will be outlined.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

None to report