

## THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN PROBLEMATIC ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION, OTHER RISK BEHAVIOURS AND HEALTH OUTCOMES AMONG PEOPLE WHO INJECT DRUGS, 2017-2019

Emanuel E<sup>1</sup>, Ibitoye A<sup>1</sup>, Croxford S<sup>1</sup>, Edmundson C<sup>1</sup>, Slater L<sup>1</sup>, Njorge J<sup>1</sup>, Desai M<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> UK Health Security Agency, London, UK

### Background:

People who inject drugs (PWID) face structural and social barriers limiting their engagement with health services, and untreated alcohol dependency is often overlooked. We examined the association between high-risk alcohol consumption, other risk behaviours and health outcomes among people reporting injecting in the last year.

### Methods:

The Unlinked Anonymous Monitoring Survey is a cross-sectional bio-behavioural survey of PWID in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Between 2017-2019, an alcohol risk score was generated based on the "AUDIT-C" tool: (1) Alcohol consumption frequency, (2) Units consumed on a typical drinking day, and (3) Frequency of consuming  $\geq 6$  (women) or  $\geq 8$  (men) units in the last year. Scores of 0 indicate never consuming alcohol, 1-3 (men)/1-4 (women) indicates low-risk consumption;  $>3$  (men)/ $>4$  (women) indicates high-risk consumption. PWID who reported never consuming alcohol and/or not injecting in the last year were excluded. Here we measured the association between high-risk alcohol consumption, other behaviours and health outcomes using logistic regression adjusting for survey year, age, sex and region of recruitment.

### Results:

During 2017-2019, 72% (2,174/3,012) of PWID reported high-risk alcohol consumption. High-risk alcohol consumption was associated with other risky behaviours including: crack (adjusted odds ratio: 1.58, 95% confidence interval: 1.29-1.93) and/or powder cocaine (1.44; 1.07-1.92) injection in the last month, sexualised drug use (1.47; 1.11-1.96) and/or multiple sexual partners (1.71; 1.32-2.22) in the last year, and sharing needles or syringes in the last month (1.45; 1.13-1.87). PWID reporting high-risk alcohol consumption had greater odds of reporting homelessness in the last year (1.28; 1.06-1.55), ever imprisonment (1.32; 1.12-1.59), being hepatitis C antibody-positive (1.28; 1.08-1.53), and overdosing in the last year (1.80; 1.44-2.23).

### Conclusion:

Problematic alcohol consumption is common among PWID and is associated with adverse health outcomes, such as HCV infection and non-fatal overdose. Interventions must address overlapping risk behaviours in PWID.

### Disclosure of Interest Statement: *See example below:*

There are no conflicts of interest.