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AUSTRALIA

# Psychological distress, loneliness and alcohol consumption among employed women

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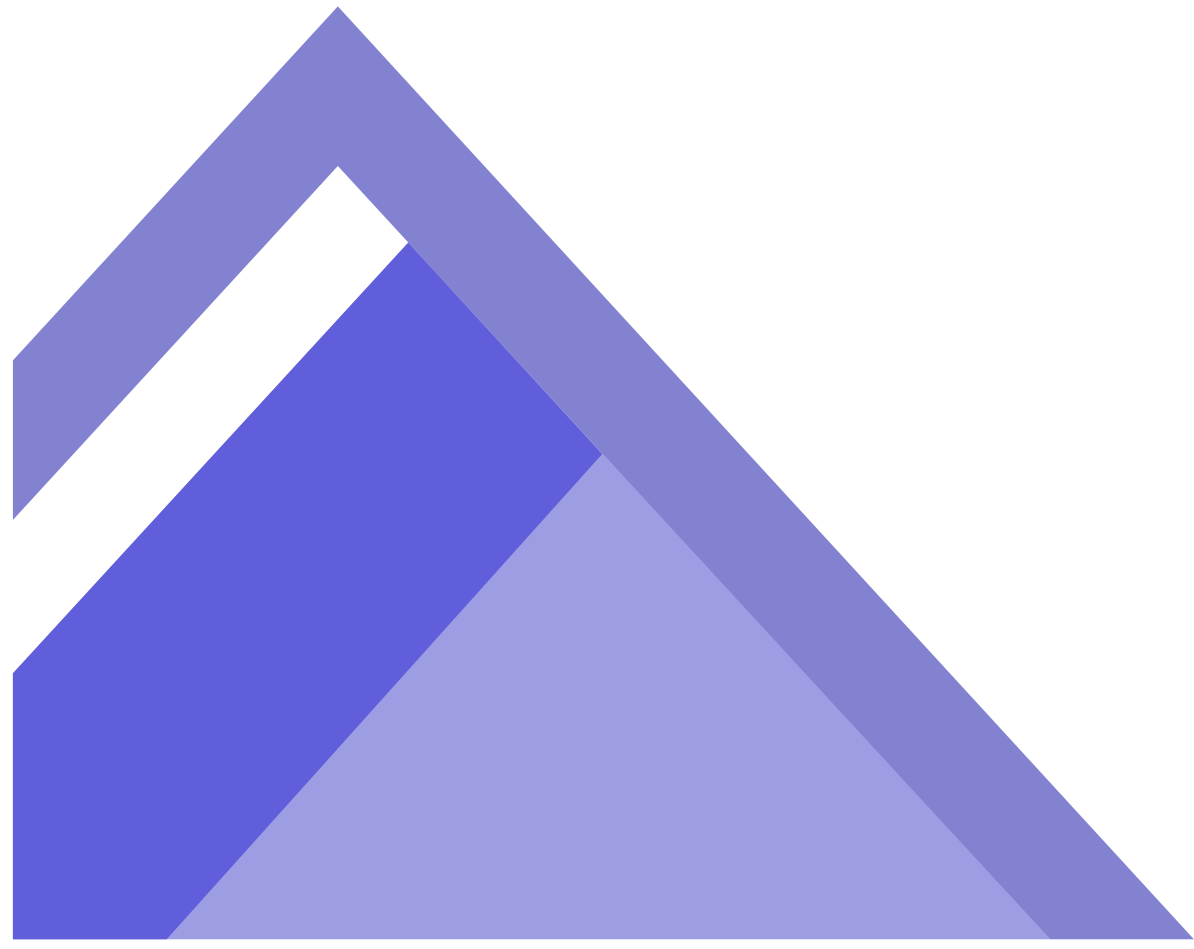
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# Disclosure of interest

I have nothing to disclose.





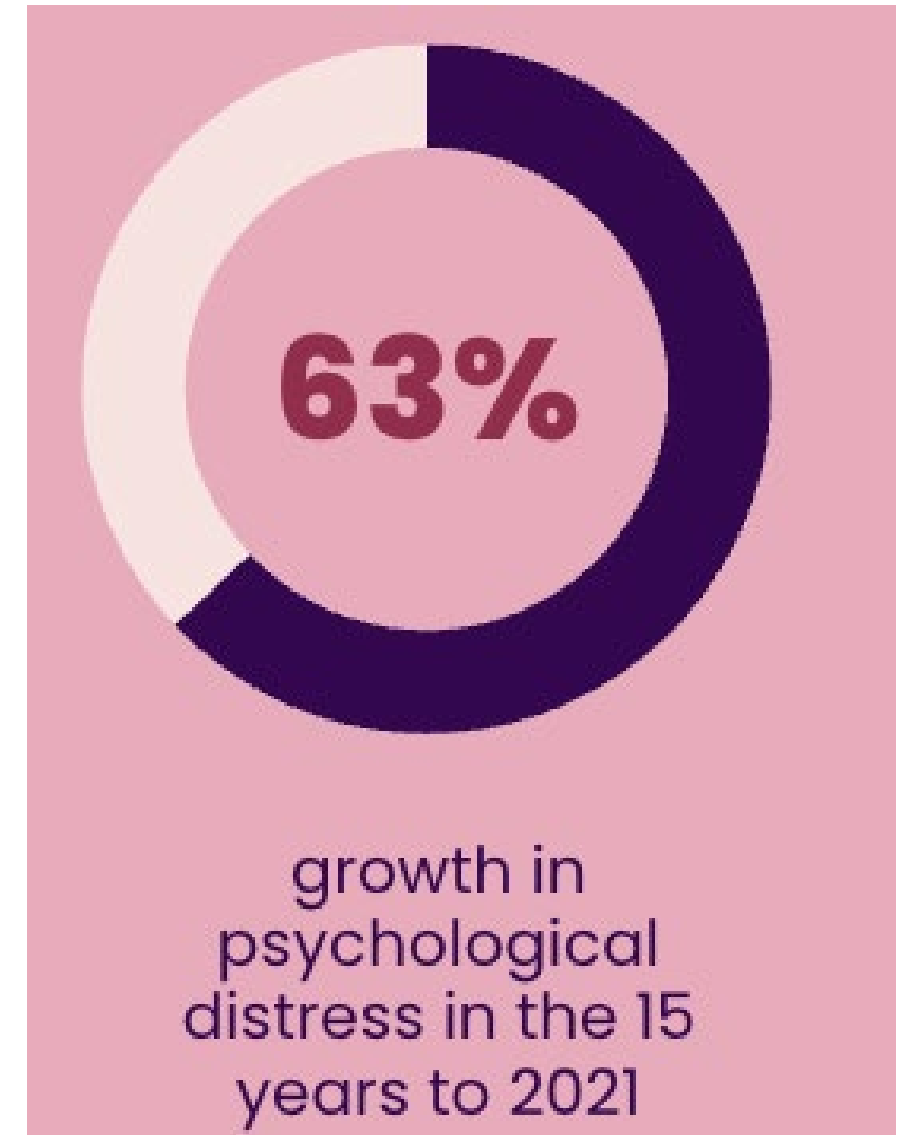
# Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and recognise the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. I would like to pay my respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and to Elders past and present and any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here today.

I also want to acknowledge and thank the community of people who have generously participated in this research.



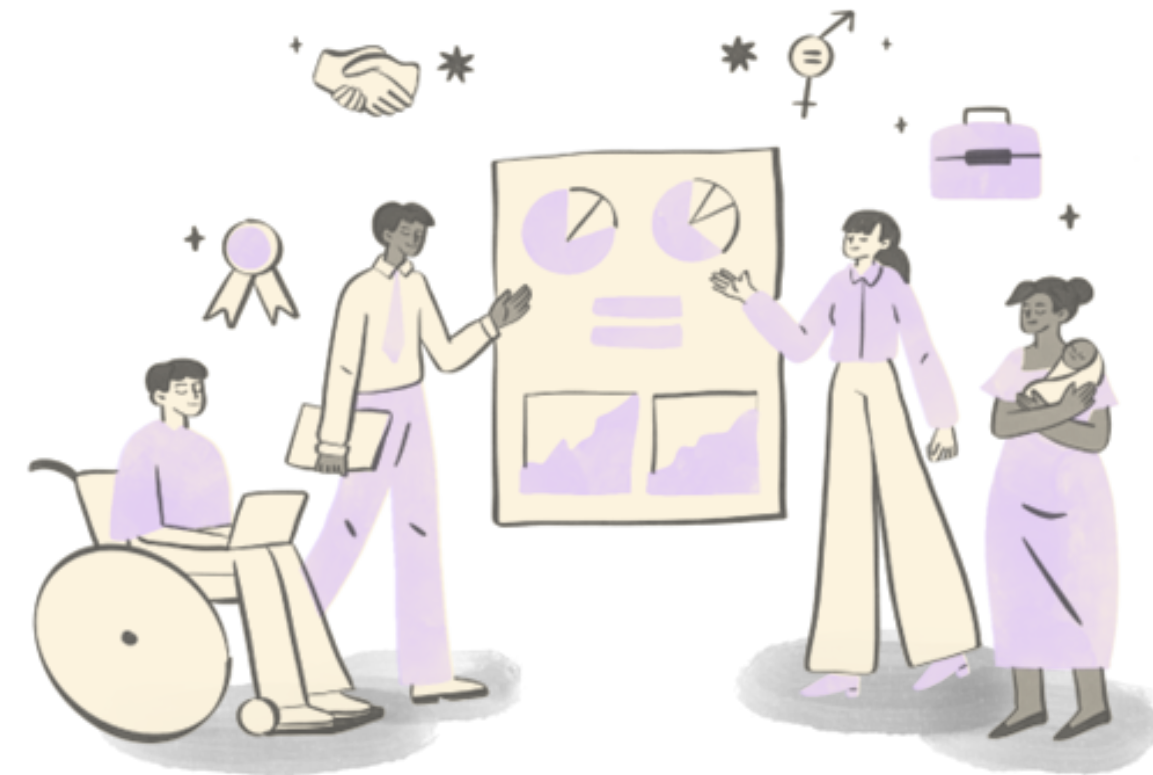
# Background



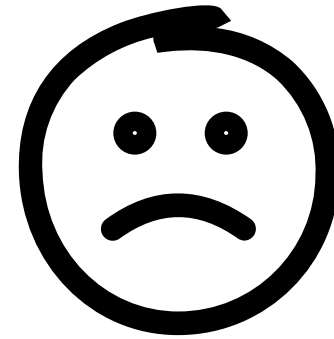
1 in 6 people experience loneliness

MENTAL HEALTH  
CONCERNS

Increased from  
13% in 2009 to 19% in 2019



# Loneliness, mental health & alcohol



Loneliness is higher among those with a substance use problem



High rates of comorbid mental health concerns and problematic substance use



Employed individuals often drink alcohol at higher rates



Multiple roles (family, life, work, study) increase demands



Women regularly report that they drink alcohol to cope with stress and demands

# Aims

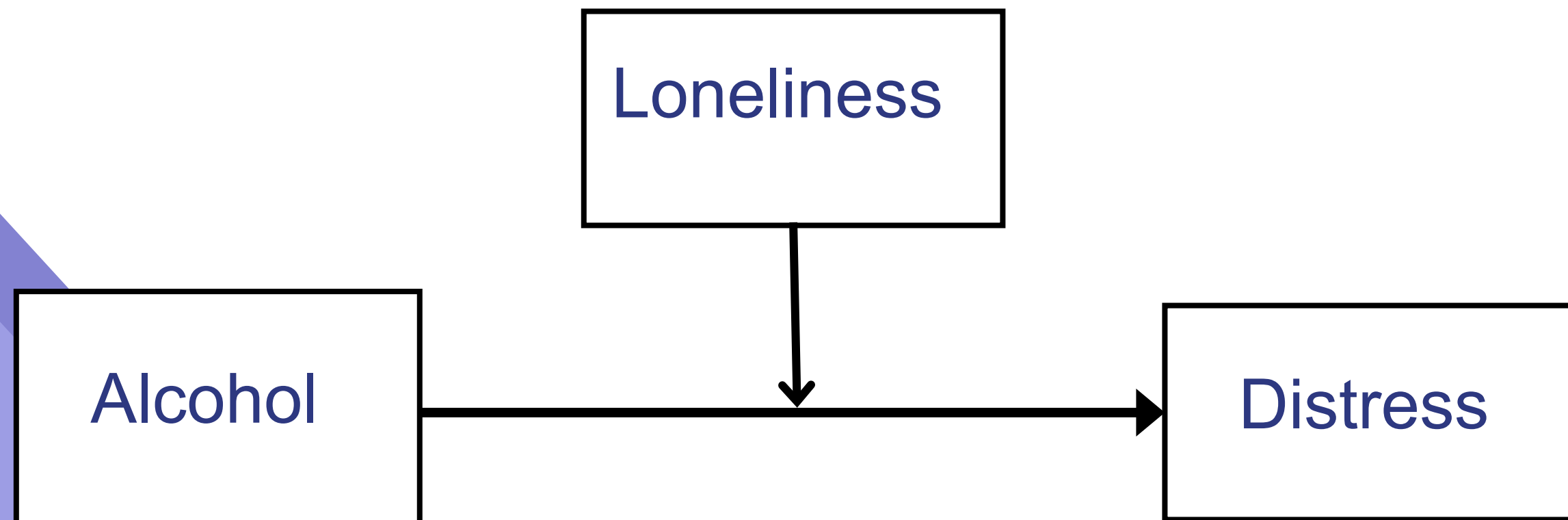
In a sample of Australian women who are employed:

01

- to explore the relationships between loneliness, psychological distress, and alcohol consumption; and

02

- to examine the moderating role of loneliness in the relationship between alcohol consumption and psychological distress.



# Methodology



## Data

- Wave 21 of the Household Income Labour Dynamics Australia (HILDA) study.
- N = 3,828 employed Australian women.

## Key Variables

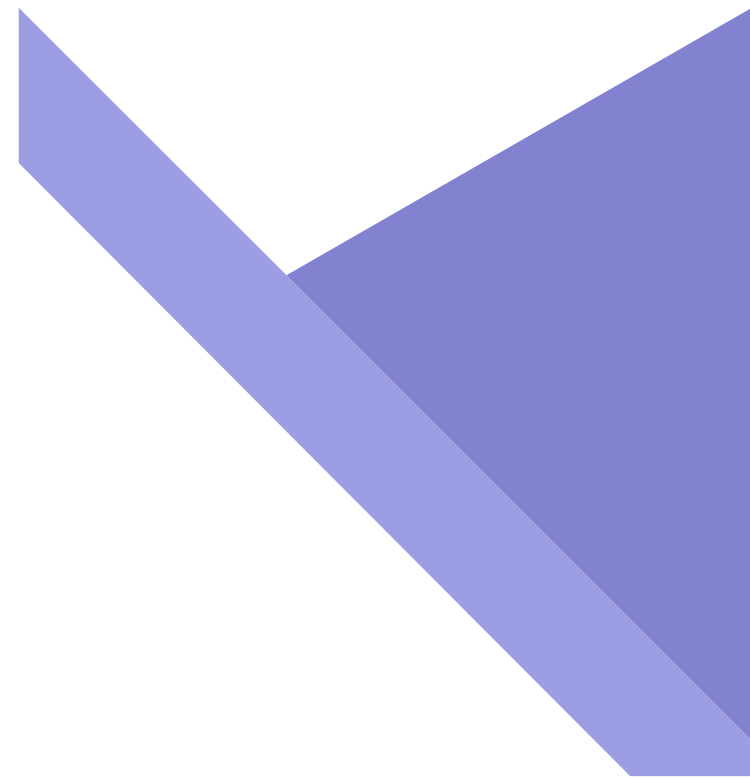
- Loneliness, Psychological Distress (K10), Alcohol Consumption (standard drinks per occasion).

## Analysis

- Regression analysis to examine the relationships and moderating effects.
- Covariates: SEIFA, education, and age

# Demographic characteristics

- **Mean age 40.63 (SD=13.78 years)**
- **Education**
  - 44.1% tertiary
  - 29.2% diploma/certificate
  - 26.7% up to year 12
- **Mean number of standard drinks per occasion 2.39**  
(sd=2.07)





# Regression model results examining the relationship between alcohol consumption, loneliness, and the dependent variable, psychological distress

	B (SE)	p	95% CI[LL,UL]
Loneliness	1.91 (.05)	<.001	[1.807, 2.019]
Drinks per day	.29 (.09)	<.001	[.116, .454]
Age	-.12 (.01)	<.001	[-.129, -.102]
SEIFA	-.03 (.03)	.417	[-.091, .038]
Education	.32 (.31)	.178	[-.190, 1.023]
Year 11 and below	.18 (.27)	.514	[-.358, .715]
Year 12 Diploma/ Certificate	.32 (.22)	.144	[-.108, .745]
Tertiary	0		

Note. SEIFA Index of economic resources

# Figure 1: The moderating role of loneliness on the relationship between psychological distress and standard drinks per day

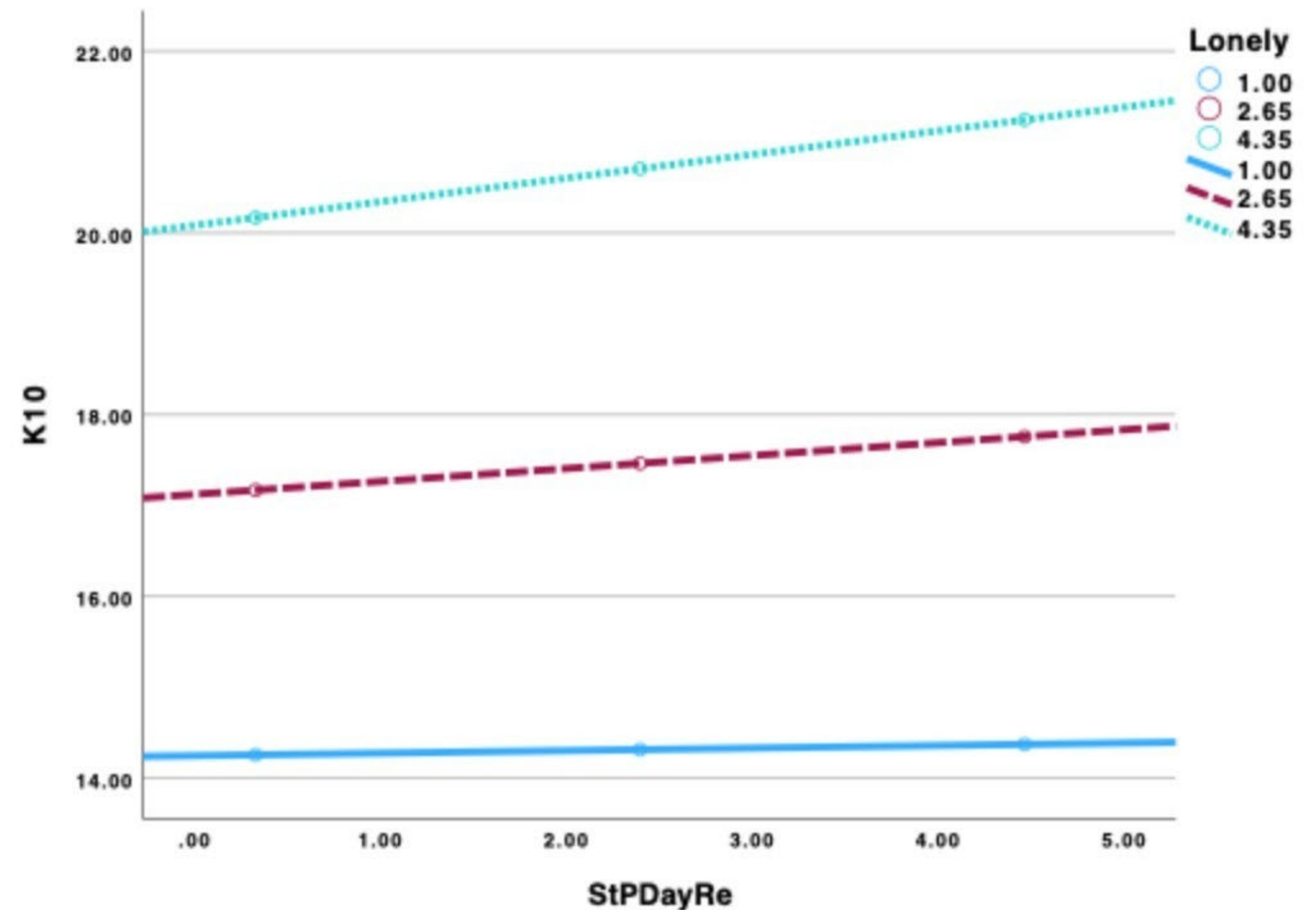
Loneliness was a significant moderator ( $B = .07(.02)$ ,  $p = .024$ , 95%CI [.022, .117]).

At the 1SD below the mean of loneliness, not significant.

( $B = .03(.06)$  95%CI [-.099, .155]).

At the mean, positively significant ( $B = .14(.05)$ , 95%CI [.053, .232]).

At 1SD above the mean also positively significant ( $B = .26(.06)$ , 95%CI [.149, .371]).



Standard drinks/ day

K10: Psychological distress; higher scores -> higher distress

Higher loneliness scores -> greater reported loneliness

# Discussion & Implications

## KEY FINDINGS:

Among employed Australian women:

- Psychological distress is associated with both high loneliness and alcohol consumption.
- Loneliness intensifies the relationship between alcohol consumption on psychological distress.

## IMPLICATIONS

- Supports that foster connection
- Awareness
- Build evidence base to inform policies and interventions - often overlook general population alcohol use

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Longitudinal approach
- Perceptions of relevance of Australian drinking guidelines
- Grey-area drinking - stigma?



# Thank you!

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