

Social isolation, loneliness and alcohol consumption in a cohort of adults aged 50-70: Findings from the Beyond 50 Study

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Introduction Social isolation and loneliness are known factors that impact health behaviors, such as alcohol consumption. While often used interchangeably, social isolation and loneliness are different social phenomena and may have different influences on individuals' alcohol consumption. Older adults are at an increased risk of social isolation and loneliness, and of the harms associated with alcohol consumption, and as such are priority population for research.

Methods: Hierarchy regression analysis was conducted to determine how social isolation and loneliness influence alcohol consumption in a cohort of 1059 adults aged 50-70 that live in the Frankston and Mornington Peninsula region of southeast Melbourne.

Results: The regression model explained 14.3% of the variation of alcohol consumption across the cohort. Social health ($p=0.001$), demographics ($p=0.000$), other substance use ($p=0.000$), and physical health ($p=0.020$) were all significant factors to explaining alcohol consumption patterns. Significant interactions were found to be present between social isolation and loneliness. Low social security was a significant predictor for changes in alcohol consumption depending on the level of loneliness.

Discussions and Conclusions: There is scope to further investigate the relationship between social isolation and loneliness, so that we can identify at risk sub-population of older adults that may be at risk of alcohol related harms.

Implications for Practice or Policy: Identification of at-risk sub-populations will help inform evidence-based strategies to reduce the burden of alcohol related harms in older adults

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