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Beyond 50

Health & social outcomes in
Frankston and the Mornington Peninsula

Social Isolation, loneliness and substance use in older adults

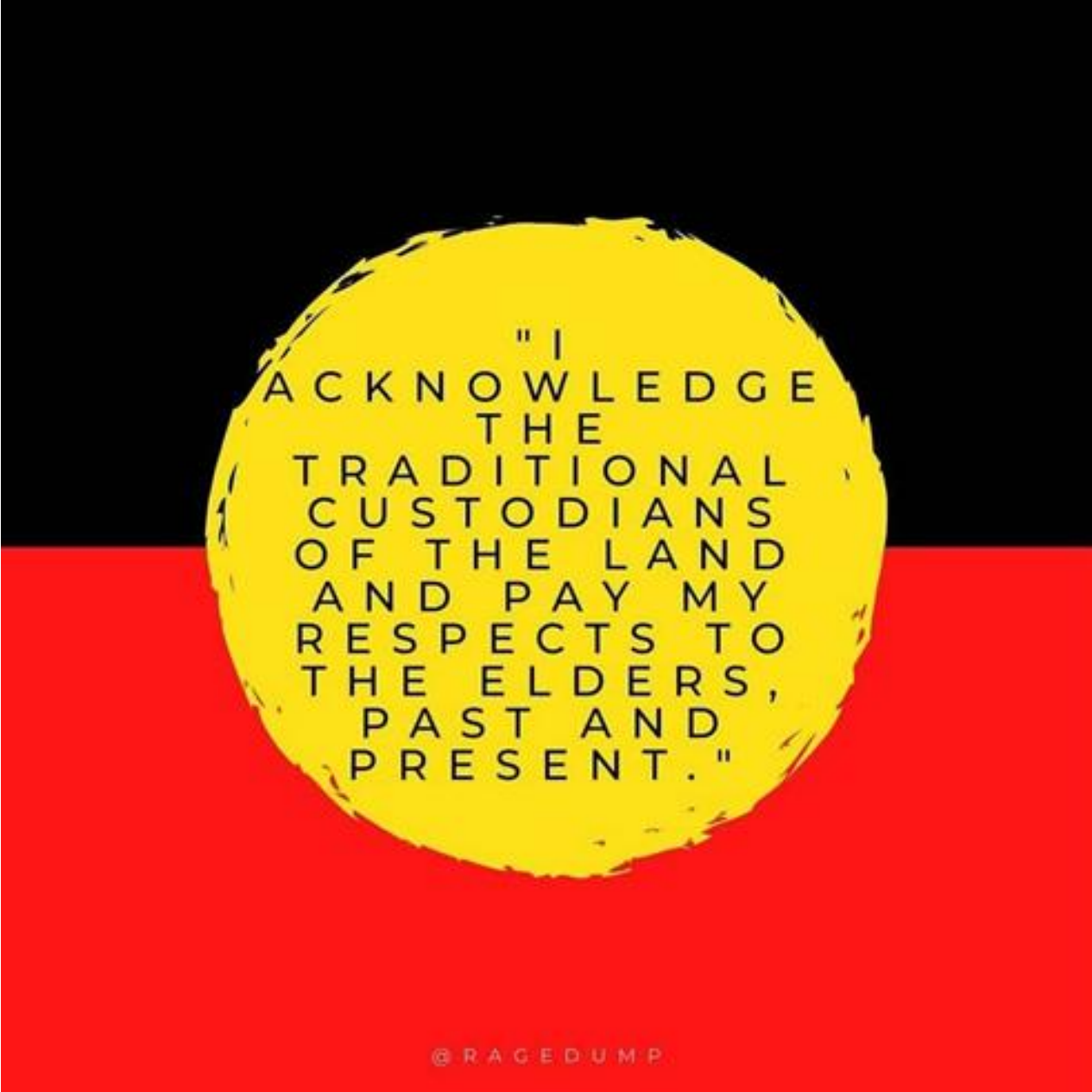
Findings from the Beyond 50 Study

Rose Laing, PhD Candidate

14 February 2025

VAADA Conference





"I
ACKNOWLEDGE
THE
TRADITIONAL
CUSTODIANS
OF THE LAND
AND PAY MY
RESPECTS TO
THE ELDERS,
PAST AND
PRESENT."

@RAGEDUMP

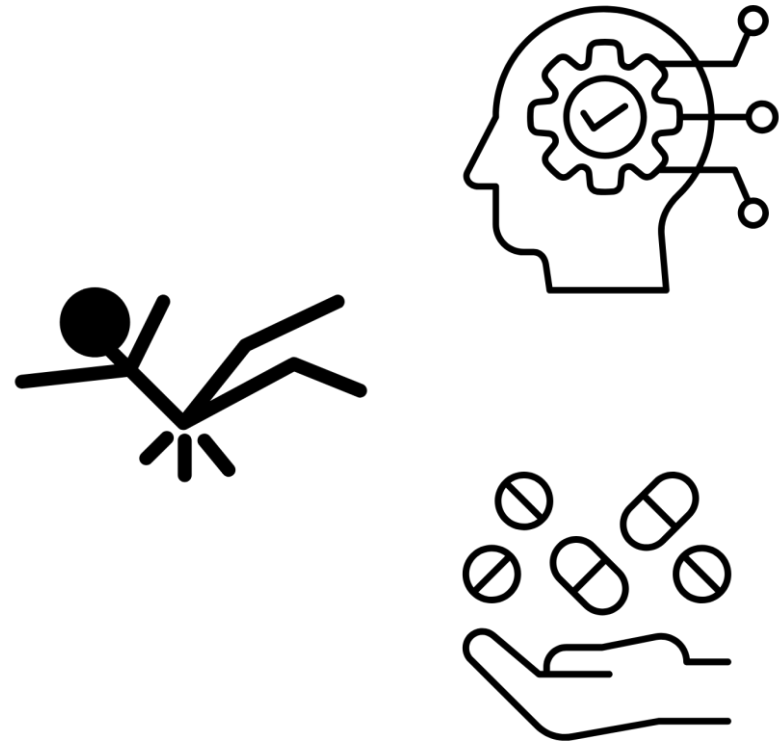
Substance use in Australian older adults

- Older cohorts have higher drinking participation than younger cohorts
- Increase in the use of cannabis and increase in the rate of treatment episodes with cannabis dependence
- Use of other illicit drugs remains low, but evidence of increase in stimulant and opioid harms.
 - 13-fold increase in amphetamine type stimulant hospitalizations and deaths
 - 8-fold increase in opioid agonist treatment



Substance Use in Older Adults

- Cognitive and metabolic changes
- Increased risk of falls
- Comorbidities
- Other medications
 - Polysubstance use
- Overlooked cohort in substance use research

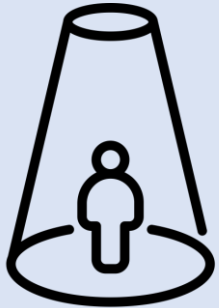


Social Isolation and Loneliness

Older adults have a unique risk of social isolation and loneliness

Social Isolation

- Lack of personal connections and interaction (physically remote, lack of social network)
- Can be associated with loneliness, but not always



Loneliness

- Subjective feeling of being lonely
- Can be lonely while in a crowded room
- Can be independent of social connection



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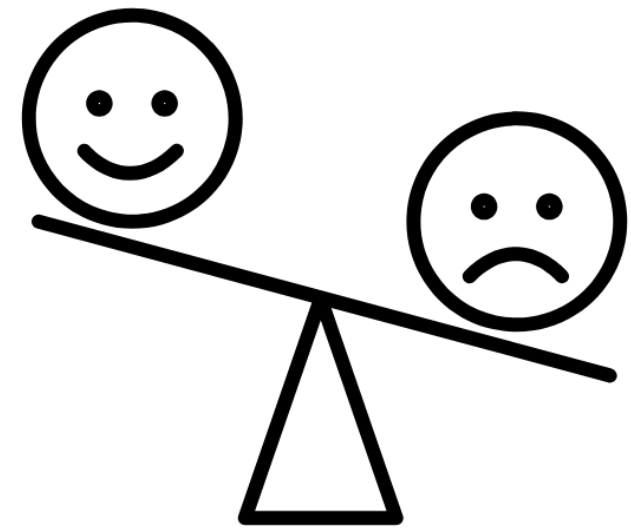
Social isolation, loneliness and substance use

- Social isolation and loneliness increases mortality risk
 - 25% increased risk for premature mortality
- Thought to influence health related behaviours such as diet, physical activity and substance use



Mental health and substance use

- In healthy adults, alcohol can have a positive, short-term impact on mood
 - Reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression
- Long term use has negative effects on mood
 - Increase in symptoms of anxiety and depression
- Bidirectional and complex



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National Centre for Healthy Ageing



A partnership between



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Aims of the Study

1. Develop a detailed understanding of trajectories of physical health, mental health and substance use patterns.
2. Identify key risk and protective factors associated with the development of poor physical and mental health and substance use disorders.
3. Understand the impact of social isolation and loneliness on the development of physical, mental health and substance use disorders.

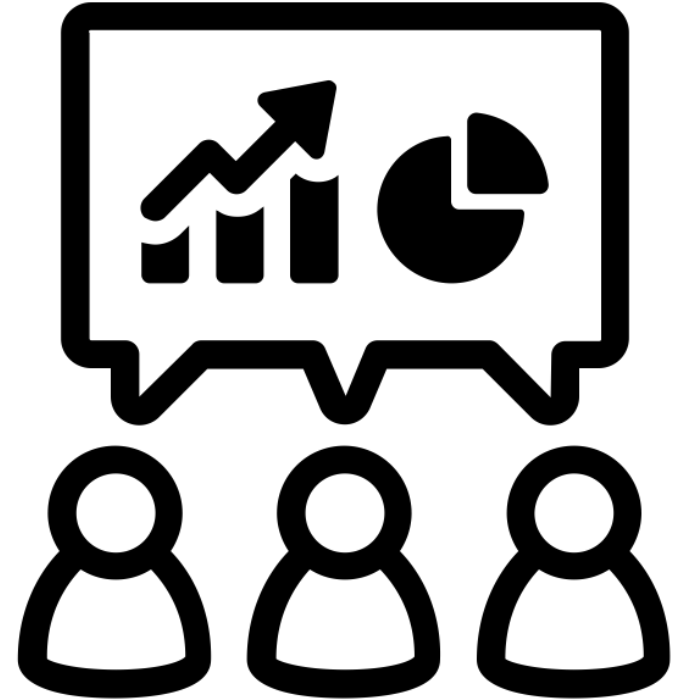
The Beyond 50 Study

- Frankston and Mornington Peninsula LGAs
- Higher percentage of population in later life
- Mostly water-bound geographical area
- Peninsula Health sole public health provider
- Includes some of the highest and lowest levels of advantage



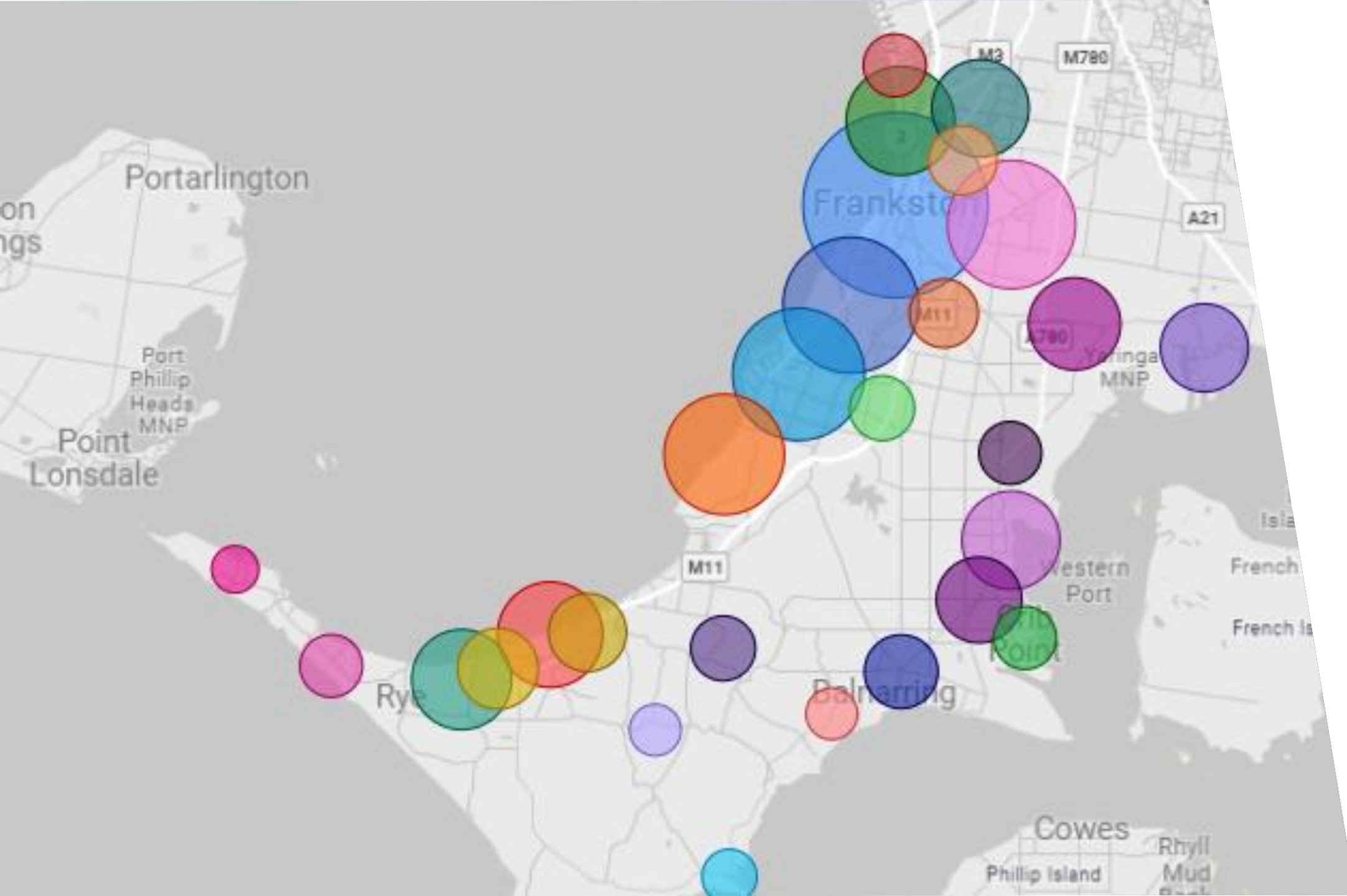
Datasets

- Quantitative data collection (n=1059)
 - Structured self-administered surveys
 - Baseline, 12 months and 24 months
- Data Linkage (n≈1000)
 - Hospital utilization data
 - National Centre for Healthy Ageing Data Platform
- Qualitative data collection (n =48)
 - In-depth interviews with subset of participants



Where our cohort is located

Frankston 21%
Mornington 9%
Rosebud 4%
Hastings 4%
Somerville 4%



Measures

Demographics



Single Items from ABS
Census

Social Isolation



Duke Social Security
Index

Depression



PHQ-9

Alcohol



AUDITC

Physical Health



Single Items from ABS
Census and SF-12

Other Substances



ASSIST-lite

Loneliness



UCLA-LS-4

Anxiety



GAD-7

Cannabis



CUDIT-SF

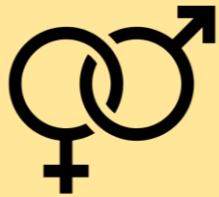
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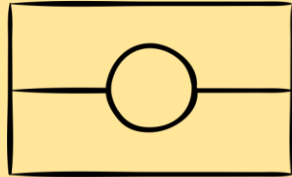
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Demographics



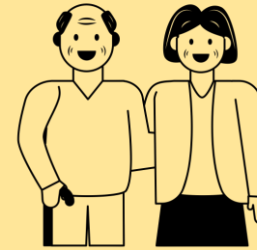
Gender

*53%/47%
Male/ Female*



Aboriginal and/or
Torres Strait Islander

*1.5% Aboriginal and/or
Torres Strait Islander
origin*



Age

*Mean age 61,
Evenly distributed*



LOTE

*8% speak a language
other than English at
home*

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Mental Health/ Social Health



Anxiety

*13% moderate to severe anxiety
Woman twice as likely to suffer from severe anxiety*



Depression

*16% moderate to severe depression
Woman 30% more likely*



Loneliness

1 in 3 classed as 'very lonely'



Social Isolation

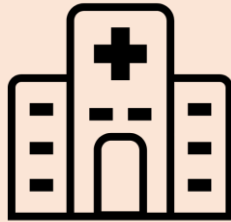
1 in 4 people are dissatisfied with their social connections

Physical Health



Overall Health

*17% Excellent
40% Very Good
30% Good
12% Fair
2% Poor*



Service
Utilization

*62% seen specialist
17% emergency department
20% admitted to hospital
physical health
8% required ambulance*



Limitations

*30% physical health
limited their work or
activities*



Social Life

*45% social life was
affected by physical or
emotional health*

Substance Use



Alcohol

*84% current use
52% positive screen for
hazardous use
16% abstained*



Tobacco

8% current use



Cannabis

4% recent use



Other illicit
drugs

<5% recent use

Hierarchy Regression Analysis

Group 1

Demographics

Gender
Age
Education
Relationship status
Income
Retirement status
Voluntary work

Group 2

Social Health

Social Security (DSSI)
Loneliness (UCLA-LS-4)

Group 3

Mental Health

Anxiety (GAD-7)
Depression (PHQ-9)

Group 4

Physical Health

Comorbidities
Self-reported health
Limited in activities

Group 5

Substance Use

Tobacco
Other Illicit Substances

Hierarchy Regression Analysis

Group 1 Demographics

Gender
Age
Education
Relationship status
Income
Retirement status
Voluntary work

Significant Association
 $P < 0.000$
 $R^2 = 0.085$

Group 2 Social Health

Social Security (DSSI)
Loneliness (UCLA-LS-4)

Significant Association
 $P = 0.007$
 $R^2 = 0.099$

Group 3 Mental Health

Anxiety (GAD-7)
Depression (PHQ-9)

No Association
 $P = 0.141$
 $R^2 = 0.106$

Group 4 Physical Health

Comorbidities
Self-reported health
Limited in activities

No Association
 $P = 0.147$
 $R^2 = 0.113$

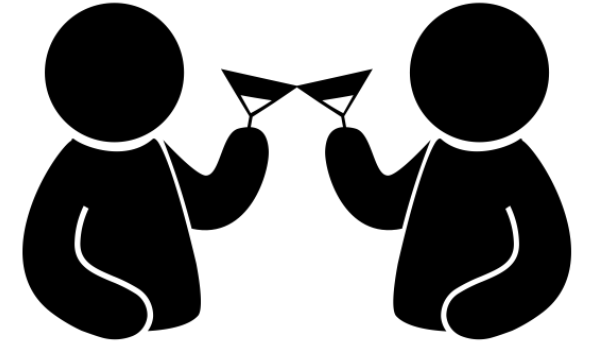
Group 5 Substance Use

Tobacco
Other Illicit Substances

Significant Association
 $P < 0.000$
 $R^2 = 0.142$

Interpretation

1. Demographic and substance use characteristics consistent with what we know so far
2. Social isolation and loneliness positively correlated with higher AUDIT-C scores, *HOWEVER* people with high social security have higher alcohol consumption
3. Not associated with mental health



What's next...

1. Understand experiences of people who suffer from social isolation and loneliness and how it influences their substance use
2. Investigate objective social isolation and substance use characteristics
3. Investigate the relationship between anxiety and depression and substance use in more detail



The Beyond 50 Research Team

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Beyond 50 Updates

To keep up to date with study findings,
please visit the Beyond 50 website

www.beyond50.study

