Method

• Anonymous postal questionnaire sent to all patients aged 50+ registered with 30 general practices (family doctors) in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

• 16,678/76,342 (22%) completed questionnaires were returned

• Questions specifically designed to examine drinking behaviour in later life
AUDIT Categories

77% of respondents drank alcohol, 280 higher risk drinkers

Gender of Higher Risk Drinkers

More likely to be male than lower risk drinkers ($p < 0.0005$)
Age Group of Higher Risk Drinkers

Younger than lower risk drinkers ($p < 0.0005$)

Reasons for Drinking Alcohol
20% say that on no occasion has relative, friend or health worker been concerned about drinking or suggested cut down

Drinking More than in the Past

• 49% higher risk drinkers drink more now than in the past

• Five most common reasons for increased drinking (all risk categories) are age-related

  ➢ Retirement (40%)
  ➢ Bereavement (26%)
  ➢ Loss of sense of purpose in life (20%)
  ➢ Fewer opportunities to socialise (18%)
  ➢ Change in financial circumstances (18%)
Negative Consequences Alcohol Use
Higher Risk Drinkers

- Impacts negatively on ability to get out and socialise: 13% to 44%
- Impacts negatively on memory: 31% to 41%
- Impacts negatively on mood: 41%
- Impacts negatively on sleep: 24%
- Impacts negatively on energy levels: 31%
- Impacts negatively on finances: 44%
- Impacts negatively on relationships: 30%
- Impacts negatively on health: 45%
- Alcohol use has negative consequences: 88%

61% don’t think that they need help or advice for drinking

Life Circumstances Associated with
Higher Risk Drinking

- Health limits daily activities: 2.68 (2.09-3.44)
- Felt downhearted/depressed in last month: 3.62 (2.71-4.86)
- Aren’t coping with stresses in life: 5.22 (3.86-7.05)
- Aren’t happy with life: 3.77 (2.81-5.06)
- Don’t get emotional help/support need from family: 3.26 (2.47-4.30)
- Don’t have special person can share joys/sorrows with: 2.81 (2.14-3.70)
- Doesn’t feel part/proud of community live in: 2.42 (1.86-3.15)
- Don’t engage in activities that find fulfilling: 4.30 (3.24-5.71)
- Has worries about money: 2.10 (1.62-2.72)

Results of nine separate multivariate models, each adjusted for gender and age
Implications for Interventions

- Deliver interventions to reduce loneliness, provide a sense of purpose in life and provide opportunities to socialise
- Address chronic pain and sleep problems
- Provide resilience training and preparing for retirement workshops
- Motivating factors are likely to include improvements in memory, sleep and energy levels

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