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Psychosocial and economic influences on health risk behavior: a cross national comparison of older men and women in Australia and South Korea

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Gender differences in alcohol use

- Alcohol use is framed by strong social and cultural expectations, which may differ for men and women
- Women are more likely to be non-drinkers than men and those who do drink consume less alcohol than men
- The male:female ratio for any drinking varies across countries
- In more developed and gender-equal societies women drink at rates more similar to men (GENACIS, Rahav et al., 2009)
- Gender differences in heavy drinking are harder to predict from national indicators



Gender Empowerment Measure (UNDP)

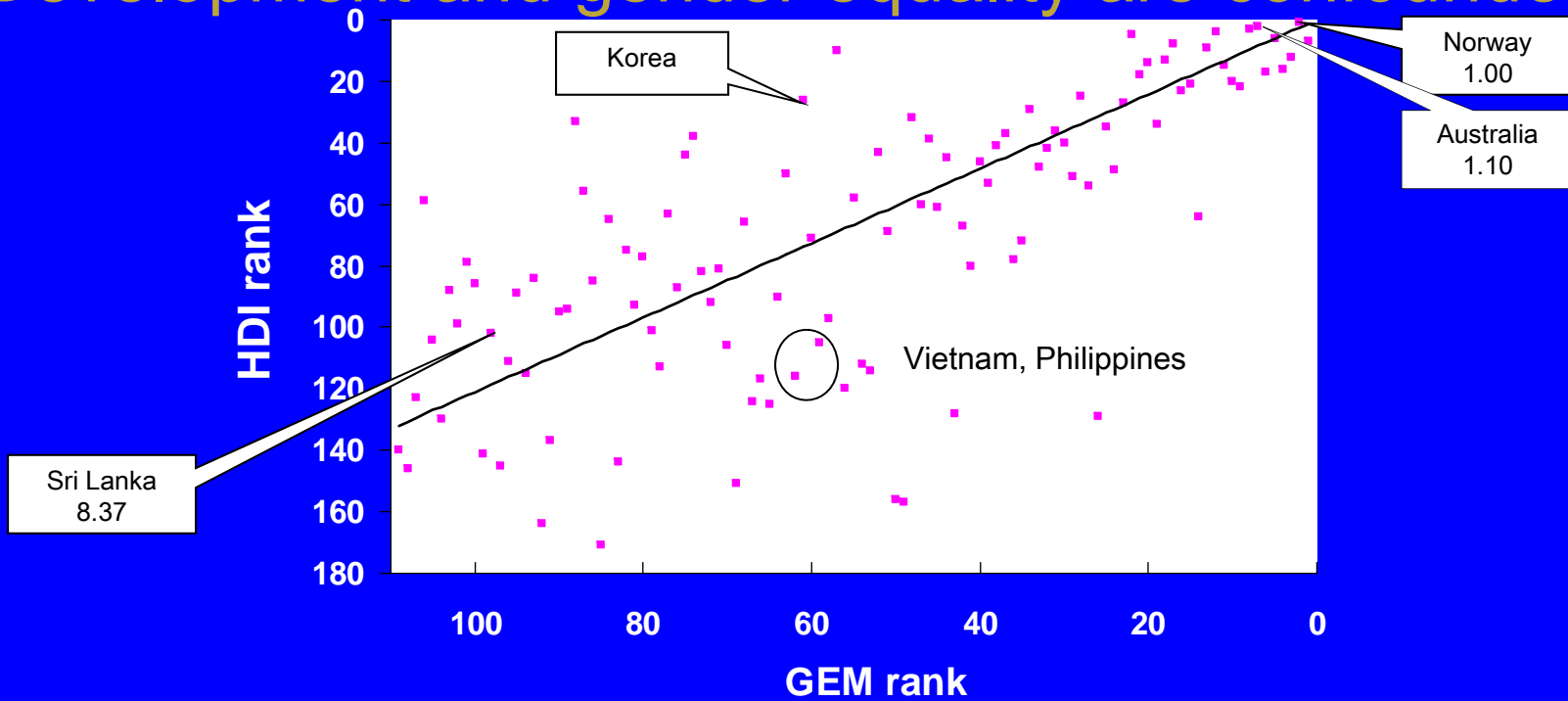
Women's share of

- Parliamentary seats
- Legislative, managerial and professional jobs
- Income

Correlated about 0.7 with Human Development Index
(GDP + life expectancy + literacy rates)



Development and gender equality are confounded



Drinking ratios from 18-65 year olds; GENACIS, Wilsnak et al., (2009)



Age and Gender expectations for drinking in Korea:

- For men drinking is a social lubricant; offering and acceptance of alcohol is a ritual (Kim & Kim, 2008)
- For women drinking alcohol (and especially becoming drunk) is contrary to women's roles as wife and mother (Kim & Kim, 2008)
- Heavy episodic drinking declines with age in Western samples but men's misuse of alcohol may be socially sanctioned as a privilege of seniority in some non-Western cultures (Wilsnak et al., 2009).



Study aims:

- 1) to examine gender differences in drinking behaviour among middle aged and older adults in Australia and Korea
- 2) to examine economic and psychosocial correlates of heavy drinking for men and women in these countries.



Samples

Large nationally representative surveys with population weights

South Korea

Korean Longitudinal Study of Ageing (KLoSA)

Aged 45 - 105 years (mean age 61.7 years)

N = 9870 (56.6% female)

Australia

Household, Income & Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA)

Aged 45 - 93 years (mean age 60.3 years)

n = 5381 (53.1% female)



Alcohol consumption

NHMRC (Australian) 2009 Guidelines:

- > 14 standard (10g) drinks/week is associated with potential harm for both males and females
- extra caution among older people

Frequency and quantity of alcohol consumption

- non-drinkers
- light drinkers (up to 7 drinks/week) - 'safe' drinking
- moderate drinkers (>7 - 14 drinks/week)
- heavy drinkers (> 14 drinks/week) - 'risky' drinking



Harmonized Variables:

Gender

Marital status currently living with a partner or not

Education primary school or less; high school; post-secondary education

Net wealth quintiles; adjusted for PPP and household size

Age years

Self-rated health *'In general, would you say your health is...'*
excellent/very good; good; fair; poor

Smoking current smoker or not



Drinking by men and women in Australia and Korea

	Australia		Korea	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Non-drinker	14.7%	25.6%	35.1%	83.1%
Light drinker	42.9%	54.1%	23.5%	13.8%
Moderate drinker	20.0%	14.0%	13.0%	1.6%
Heavy drinker	22.4%	6.3%	28.4%	1.5%
Mean/week (all)	9.8	4.0	12.9	1.0
Mean/week (drinkers)	13.4	7.7	19.5	5.7



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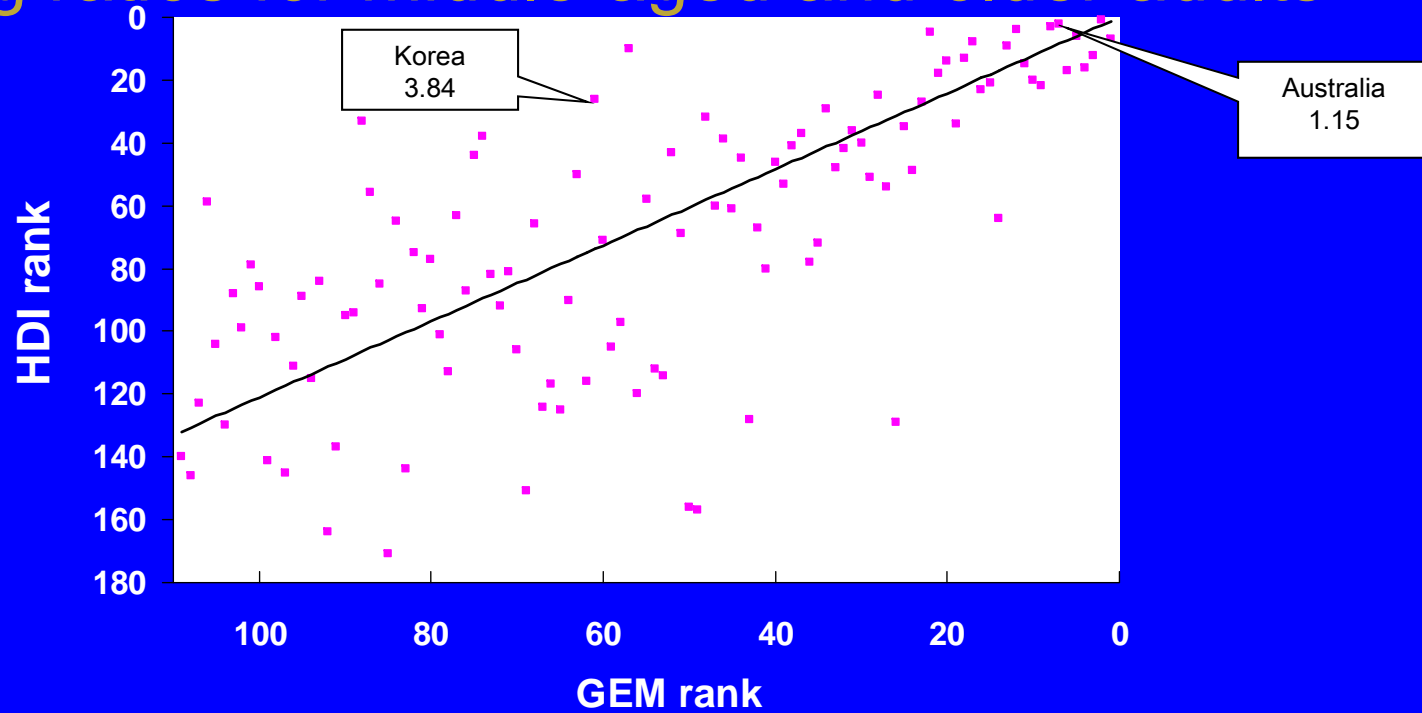


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Drinking ratios for middle-aged and older adults





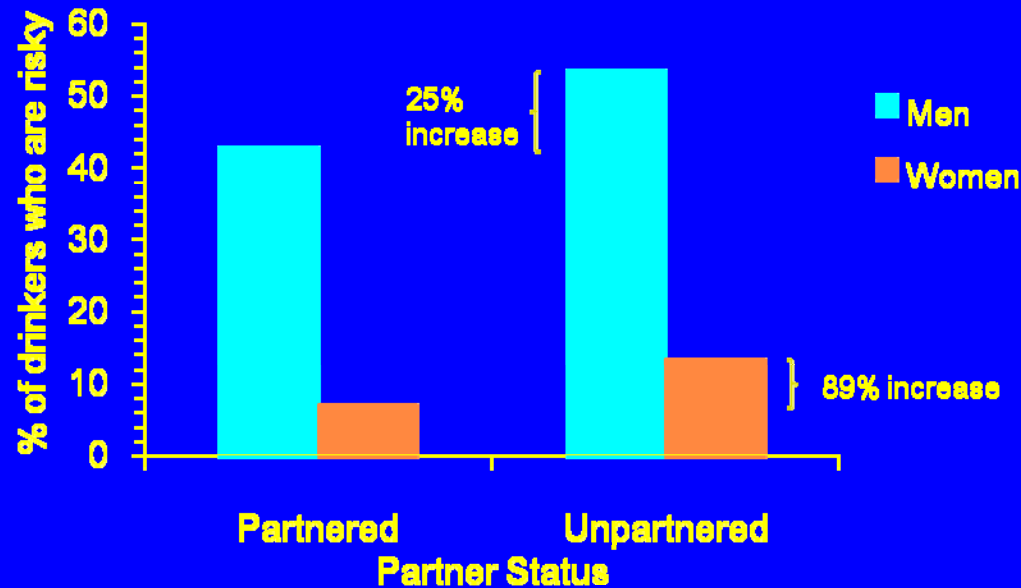
'Risky' drinkers vs 'safe' drinkers

Predictor (reference group)	Australia		Korea	
	OR (95% CI)	Wald χ^2 (DF) p	OR (95% CI)	Wald χ^2 (DF) p
Gender (male)	0.22 (0.16-0.30)	15.16 (3) $p < .001$	0.17(0.07-0.42)	32.39 (3) $p < .001$
Partner (partnered)		1.19 (3) $p = .31$	1.53 (1.03-2.27)	3.51(3) $p = .015$
Wealth	1.21 (1.10-1.33)	29.11 (3) $p < .001$		1.71(3) $p = .16$
Education (highest)		3.37(6) $p = .003$		0.35 (6) $p = .91$
Gender x partner		0.45(3) $p = .71$		7.33 (3) $p < .001$
Nagelkerke's R ²	.184		.376	

Regressions include age, health, smoking, gender x wealth and gender x education



Drinkers in Korea



Partner Status	Men (Mean drinks/wk)	Women (Mean drinks/wk)
Partnered	19.6	5.0
Unpartnered	22.5	7.8

Repeating the regression separately by gender

Men:

Wald $\chi^2=3.31$ (3) $p=.025$

OR 1.51 (1.02- 2.24)

Women:

Wald $\chi^2=7.15$ (3) $p<.001$

OR 2.18 (1.08- 4.39)



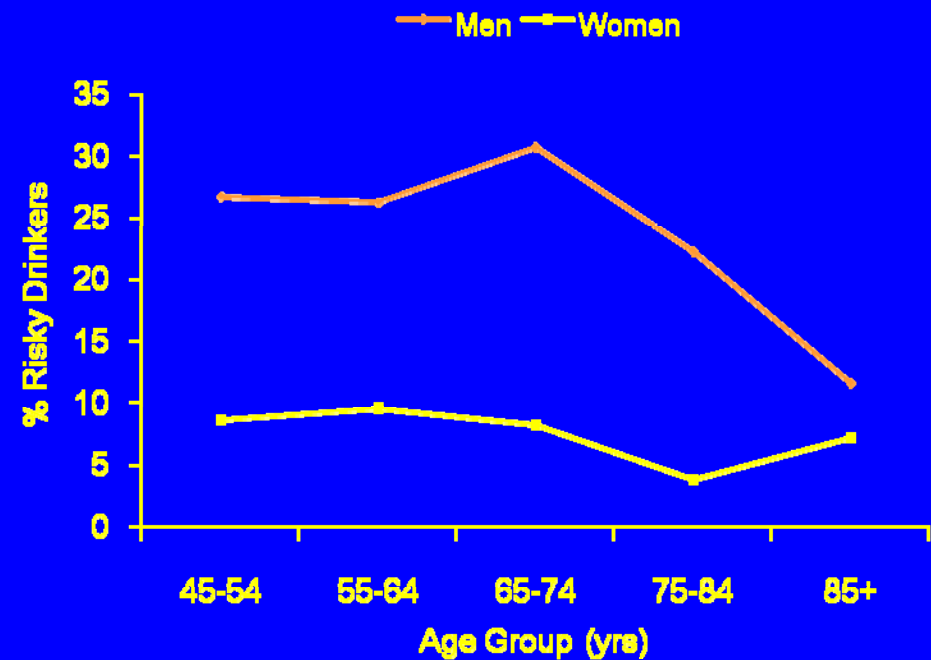
Conclusions

- Gender ratios in Korea are consistent with a cultural explanation for alcohol consumption rather than an economic one
- Unpartnered Koreans (>80% widowed) were more likely to report heavy drinking and this effect was larger for women.
- Social expectations that prohibit heavy drinking for women in Korea emphasize their roles as wife and mother. Older Korean women may be less subject to these social constraints.



Implications for Australia

- Risky drinking is relatively common among middle-aged and older adults
- Age-related decline is late
- Current health promotion messages may not be effective for older workers and early retirees.





Implications for Korea

- As Korea modernizes it is currently facing two major challenges:
 - A rapidly rising divorce rate
 - Rapid population ageing
- Economic change has occurred more rapidly than social change
- Understanding the changing social and cultural influences on alcohol consumption is of critical importance



Limitations

- Harmonized partner status variable obscures differences between widowed, divorced and never married individuals.
- Survival effects; our respondents are likely to be the healthier members of their birth cohort.
- Korean women's reporting (as well as their behaviour) may be constrained by expectations



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