

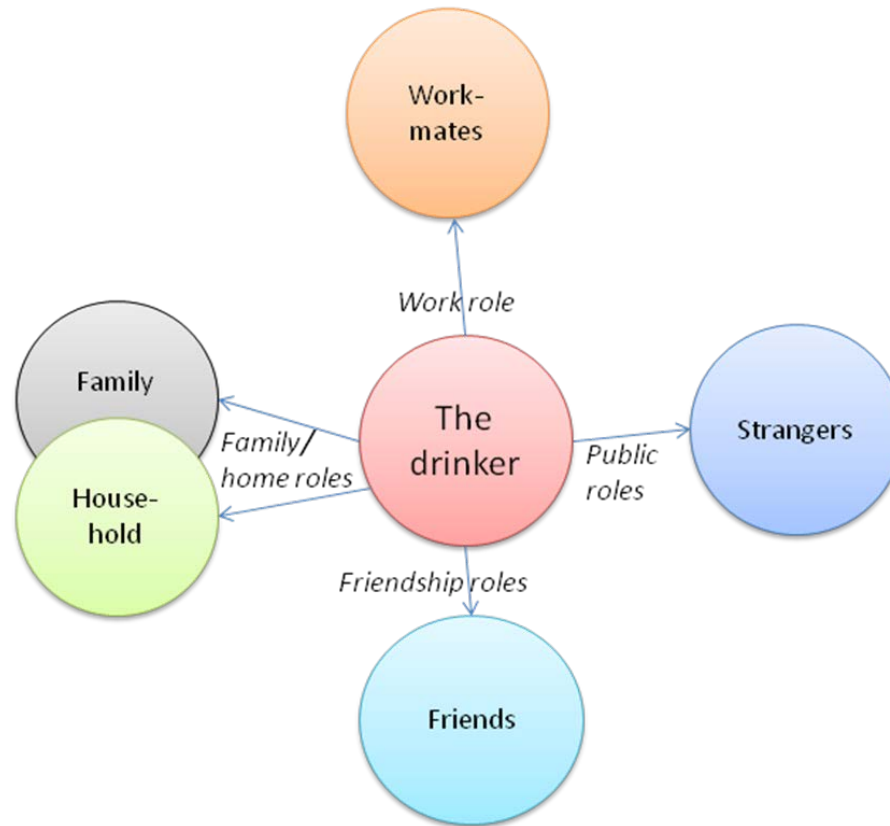


centre for alcohol
policy research

NATIONAL ESTIMATES OF ALCOHOL-RELATED CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT: A PROBLEM FOR MARGINALISED FAMILIES OR A SUBSTANTIAL MINORITY?

Anne-Marie Laslett

Alcohol's harm to others





Avlöningsdagen (1912)

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Reviewing parental heavy drinking and child maltreatment

- Many children are exposed to their parents' drinking (Grant, 2000; Manning et al., 2009; Maloney et al., 2010)
- Severe harms for children of mothers who misuse alcohol and other drugs are rare but substantial (e.g., removal from families, injuries, deaths - Raitasalo and Holmila, 2010-2013)
- Limited understanding of the level of alcohol-related child maltreatment in the child protection system, even less in the general population (Adamson and Templeton, 2012)
- Child maltreatment occurs along a spectrum of harm in Australia (Laslett et al, 2011)

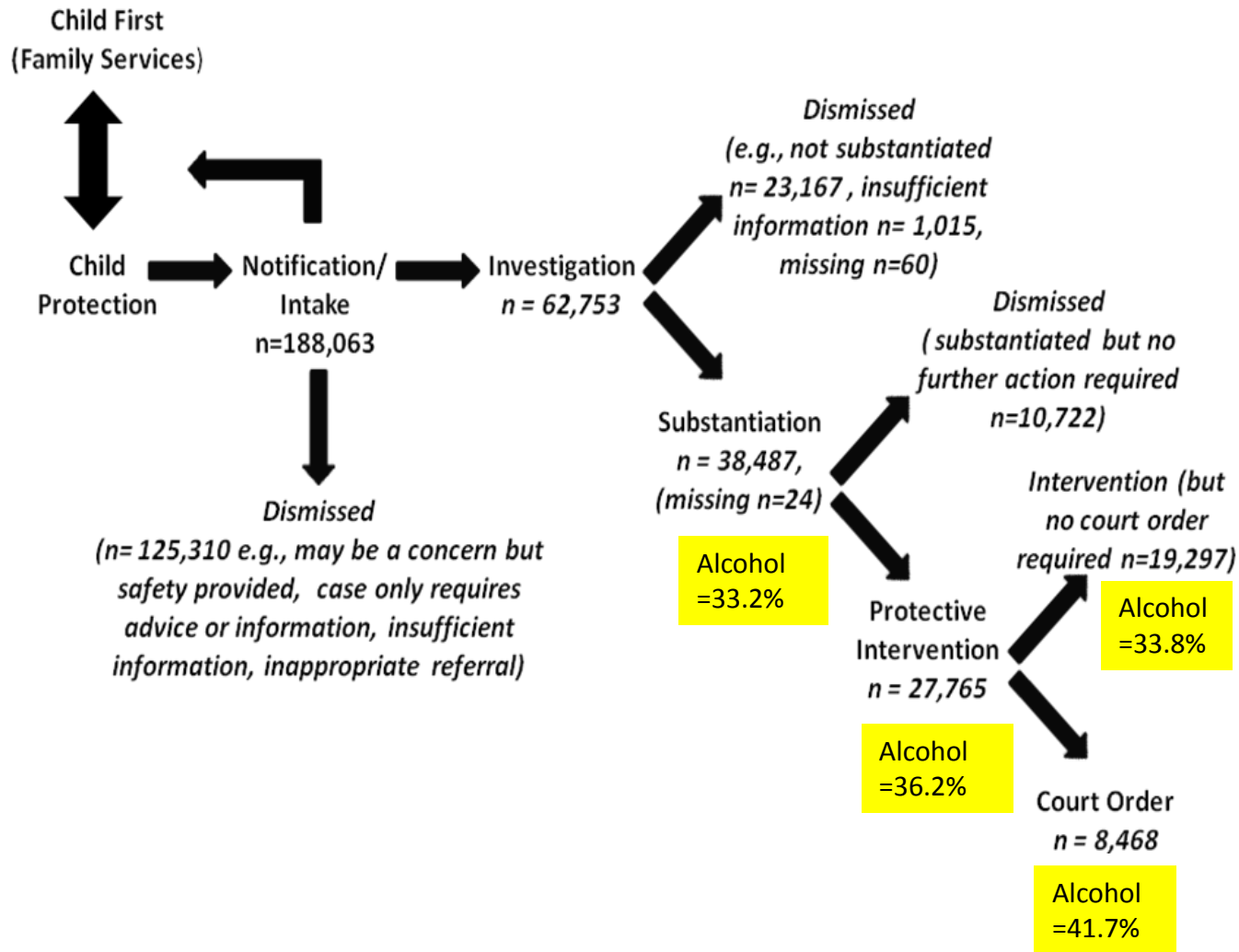
Aims

- Estimate the prevalence of alcohol-related child abuse and maltreatment in survey and system data
- Compare the social location of child maltreatment identified in the system and the general population survey
- Discuss whether harm to children is a problem for marginalised families or a broader cross-section of the population
- Discuss how these estimates of alcohol-related harms to children influence our conduct of harm prevention and management strategies

Methods

- **2008 HTO general population survey:** 1142 computer assisted telephone interviews of respondents in families with children or responsible for children
- Respondents reported specific harms and whether their children were affected a lot or a little because of others' drinking
- **Child protective services data:** 38,511 confirmed cases of child abuse and neglect (2001-2005)
- Child protection workers assess “when a child has been, is being or, is likely to be abused, neglected or otherwise harmed (AIHW, 2008),” and mandatorily recorded “carer likely alcohol abuse”

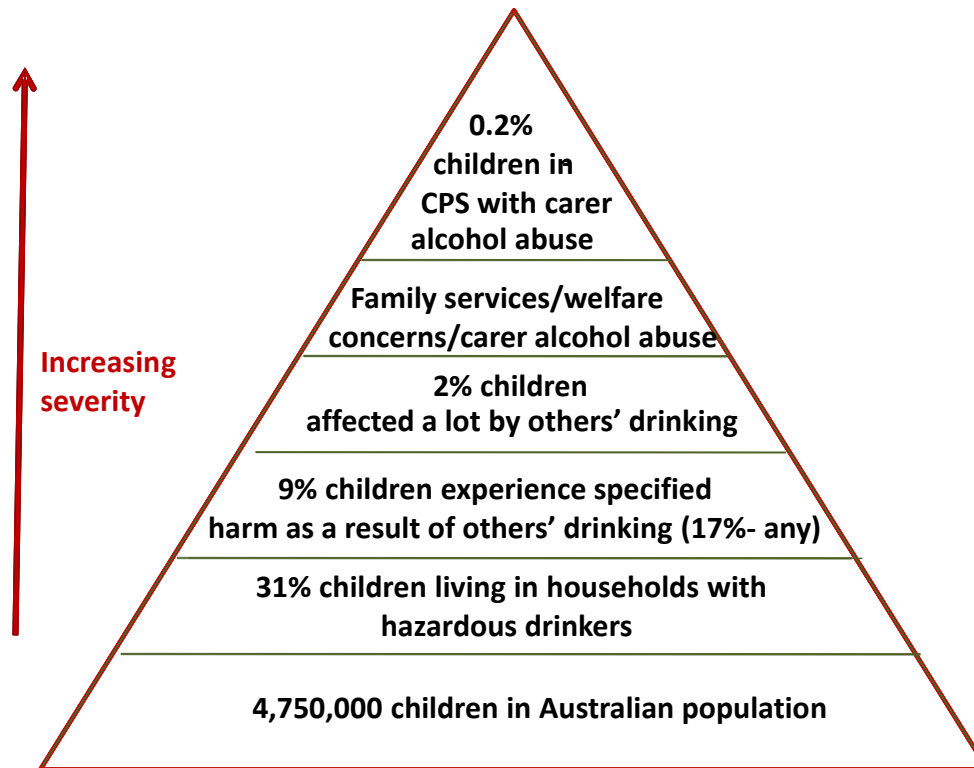
System findings



Survey findings

	Total (n)	Total (%)	95% CI (%)
<i>“Because of someone else’s drinking how many times in the last 12 months.....”</i>			
Were children left in an unsupervised or unsafe situation?	40	3	(2, 5)
Were children yelled at, criticised or verbally abused?	97	9	(7, 11)
Were children physically hurt?	16	1	(1, 2)
Did children witness serious violence in the home?	34	3	(2, 4)
Was a protection agency or family services called?	5	0.3	(0.1, 0.8)
A. Reporting one or more of above¹	135¹	12	(10, 14)
<i>“How much has the drinking of other people negatively affected your children/the children you are responsible for?”²</i>			
A lot	40	3	(2, 4)
A little	168	14	(12, 16)
B. A lot or a little	208	17	(15, 19)
Specifically affected in any way or affected a lot or a little (A or B)	258	22	(19, 24)

Alcohol-related harm to children in Australia in a year



Social disadvantage and social bias in the pyramid of alcohol-related risks to children

Household income group	Low	Middle	High
HTO survey data			
% Of HTO sample in income group (n=924)	20.9	20.9	58.3
HTO sample affected a lot or a little			
% of those harmed (lot or little), % in income group (n=208)	27.8	19.0	53.9
% of income group affected a lot or a little (Col. %)	23.9	16.7	18.3
OR, harm (lot or little) by income group (n=924)	Ref	0.52 (0.30, 0.88)*	0.59 (0.39, 0.90)*
HTO sample affected a lot			
% of HTO affected a lot sample in income group (n=36)	46.7	15.4	37.9
% of income group affected a lot (Col. %)	8.3	2.8	2.4
OR, substantial harm (a lot) (n=924)	Ref	0.31 (0.10, 0.98)*	0.27 (0.12, 0.61)**
Child Protective Services data (total sample)			
% Children where carer alcohol abuse-related maltreatment substantiated in income group (n=9,194)	86.9	11.9	1.1

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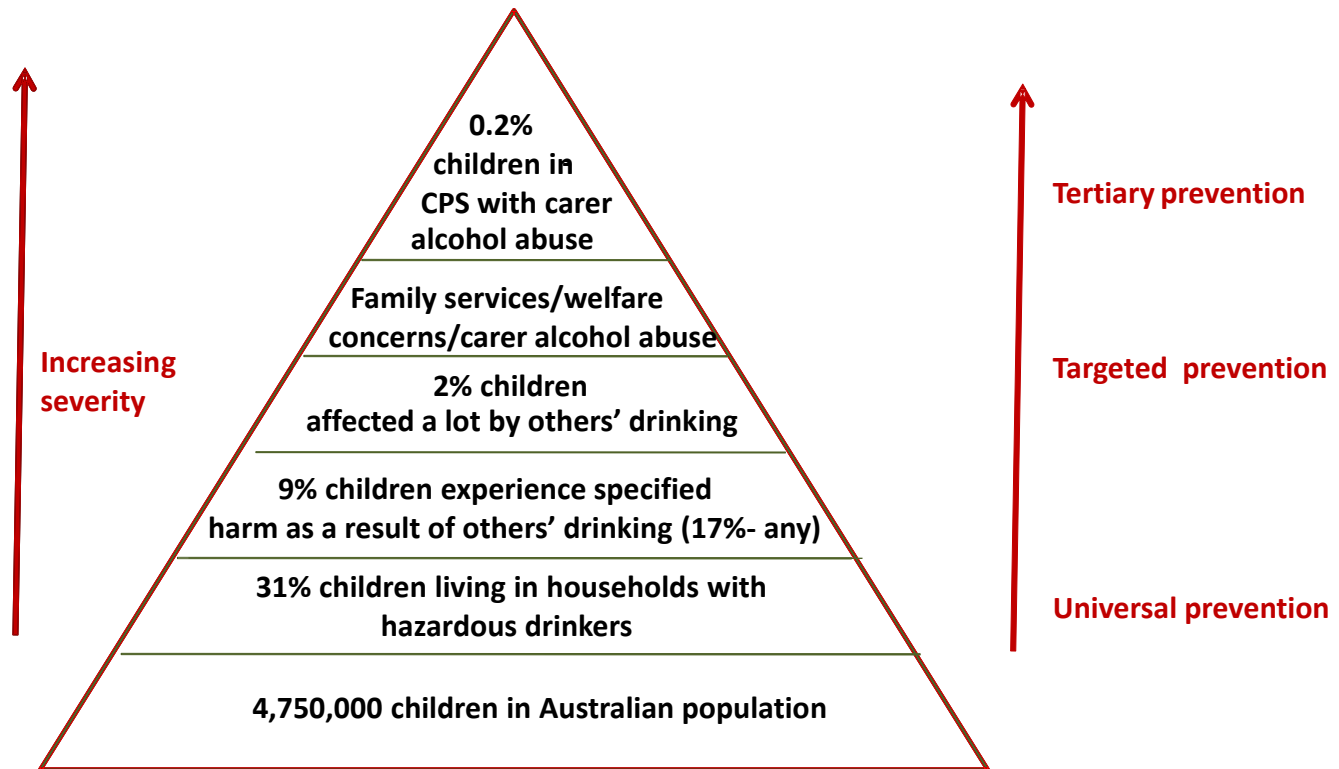
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Discussion

- Large numbers of children affected, many substantially
- Social disadvantage and social bias are apparent in alcohol-related child maltreatment
- Not just a problem for a marginalised group although, low income families appear to report greater risks and harms and targeted prevention is indicated
- Develop strategies that decrease harm to children associated with parental heavy drinking and need to investigate policy options at each level of the pyramid

Alcohol-related harm to children in Australia in a year



In conclusion

- Alcohol-related harms to children are not just a problem for a marginalised disadvantaged proportion of the population
- However, low income families appear to report greater risks and harms and may need additional supports
- Alcohol's harms to children provide a clear example of externalities of others' drinking
- Governments acknowledge their role to intervene when others (and particularly children) are affected, providing a strong lever for governance and universal, targeted and tertiary interventions

International HTO studies



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Participants



Mixed methods study: children affected ‘a lot’

- On average harmed 25 times in past year
- ‘A lot’ – children may experience abuse but witnessing conflict more common

“When [my adult son – the drinker]’s under the influence of alcohol he threatens to kill himself, kill other people, he really hurts animals badly.... [My younger son] used to wake up during the night sometimes and my [adult] son had knives at his throat.... It’s ripping us apart.... He knows how to work the system and it’s ripping his sister apart because we said we would stand by him, get him out of jail, put a roof over his head for a fresh start on the condition that he stayed away from alcohol, and he’s broke that and he’s up to three bottles of vodka a day (Yvonne).”

Mixed methods study: children affected ‘a little’

- ‘A little’ – witness drinking and inappropriate behaviour
- On average harmed 2 times in the last year

“He would always ring up on the phone and that’s when I knew he was drunk and it was always hard to get off the phone. So that’s when the kids knew, oh mum’s friend. They used to refer to him as mum’s drunk friend (Lola).”

“[Their mother] went out a few times and came back a little bit tipsy and that’s all they noticed (Michael).”

“I suppose the impact happened when he actually one night was physically abusive to [their] mother and the three of them witnessed it.... They'd been out to a party and something she said to him, stop drinking or something... and when he got in the door he actually tried to strangle her (Margaret).”