

Drinking Problems Index (DPI)

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The DPI is a 17-item measure designed to assess drinking problems among older adults. The need for a specialized instrument for older adults has been suggested by analyses of life areas in which older persons are less likely to be at risk for adverse consequences from drinking than are younger persons. For example, an item tapping “difficulties at work” related to drinking may be less appropriate for older persons who are more likely to be retired and thus at lower risk for work-related drinking problems. Similar concerns have been raised with respect to such areas as “problems with spouse” and “driving while intoxicated.” Thus, general population instruments may not be sufficiently sensitive when applied to older samples. To remedy this situation, some analysts have urged incorporating items that tap adverse consequences that are more likely to occur as a result of drinking among older adults. Suggested item content has included falls, isolation as a result of drinking, and neglecting appearance of self and/or living quarters. In addition, some research suggests that escapist drinking may be an indicator of problem drinking among older individuals. The DPI taps adverse consequences from drinking, excessive consumption, dependence symptoms, and escapist drinking. The scale is made up of newly developed items targeted at older adults, as well as the most relevant of Cahalan’s (1970) items, and several items that were adapted from the MAST (Selzer, 1971).

TARGET POPULATION

Adults

Adolescents

Groups for which this instrument might be especially helpful?

Adults age 55 and older; the validation sample was made up of adults ages 55 to 65

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

Number of items: 17

Number of subscales:

Format(s): Pencil-and-paper self-administered

Interview

Observation

Computer self-administered

Other

Time required for administration: 3 to 5 minutes

Administered by: *Self*

Training required for administration? yes no

SCORING

Time required to score/interpret: *Minimal*

Scored by: *Research assistant/technical nonprofessional*

Computerized scoring or interpretation available? yes no

Norms available? yes no

Instrument normed on subgroups? yes no

Comments: *Data available on 1,614 men and women ages 55 to 65*

PSYCHOMETRICS

Have reliability studies been done? yes no

What measure(s) of reliability was used?

Test-retest

Split half

Internal consistency

Have validity studies been done? yes no

What measures of validity have been derived?

Content

Criterion (predictive, concurrent, "postdictive")

Construct

RESEARCH APPLICABILITY

The DPI does not offer the kind of comprehensive and quasi-diagnostic assessment that a specialized screening instrument for older adults would provide. Nevertheless, the evidence accumulated thus far suggests that it is a valid and reliable measure for assessing problem drinking in surveys of community-residing older adults. As such, the DPI may be able to isolate more precisely some of the factors associated with the onset and maintenance of late-life problem drinking.

SOURCE, COST AND COPYRIGHT ISSUES

Copyright: yes no

Cost: *None*

Source: *The DPI can be obtained by writing:*

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SOURCE REFERENCE

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SUPPORTING REFERENCES

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