



Are there good alternatives or add-ons to surveys?

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The dilemma of current survey research

The idea of surveys:

Relevant research question

→ survey

 → valid results

Alternative, less problematic tools?

→ research questions suitable to these tools

→ valid results to wrong questions?

What do survey researchers study?

Study types of risk behavior

(6+, risky drinking, max amounts,..)

Compare population subgroups

Follow change in time

The aims with these=?

- Monitoring of change
- Identification of opportunities and ways of intervention
- Understanding mechanisms and connections

Potential alternatives to surveys and/or for validation and triangulation of survey data?

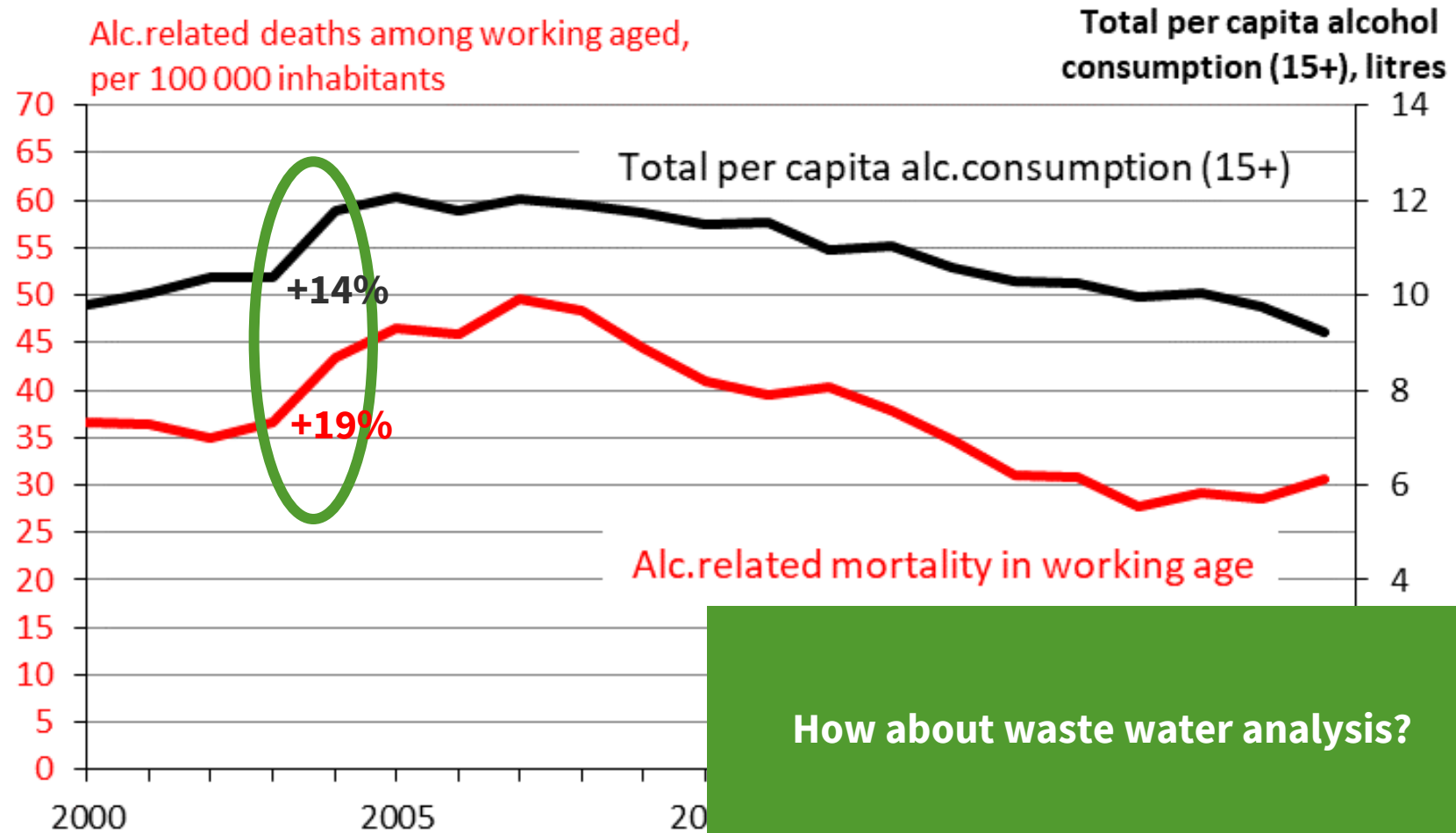
Administrative data / data that is created for other purposes

- sales data
- mortality and hospitalization data
- “Big data”, e.g. club card or sales receipt data
- Waste water analysis!

Other types of designs

- qualitative study on an under-represented population (e.g. young urban men)
- experimental studies

Monitoring of policy impacts: surveys (no change) vs. statistics, Finland 2004



Triangulation/validation or alternative data sources: when needed or useful? (examples)

- Estimating the **level** of a key parameter (e.g. number of heavy drinkers or volume of drinking)
 - E.g. estimates of global burden of alcohol (per capita consumption)
 - From drug research: capture – recapture methods?
- Specific research questions (rather than monitoring and prevalence)
 - new technologies, sensors

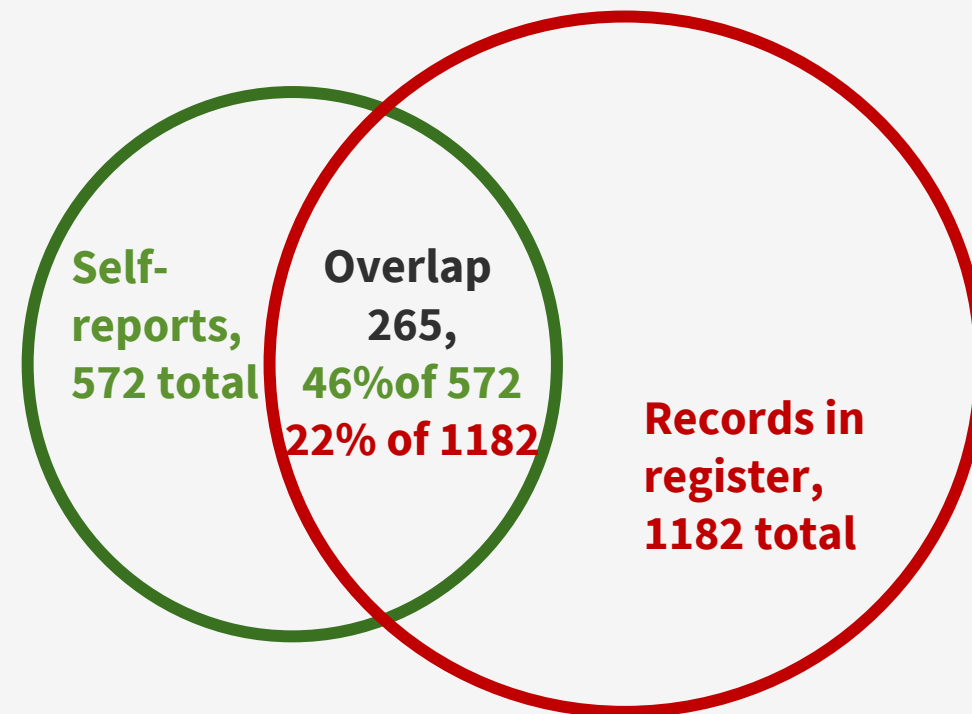
Triangulation/validation or alternative data sources: challenges?

- Statistics/register data not necessarily available for relevant divisions like socioeconomic status
 - or gives a different picture: alcohol harm paradox
- Long delays to get statistics / register data
- Mortality /registered hospitalizations a narrow extract from all harms, and not a good proxy of amounts drunk/drinking patterns
- Hospitalizations: treatment systems and practices vary even within countries and over time

Comparison of the **prevalence of treatment for alcohol problems** in two data sources (Finland, same individuals):

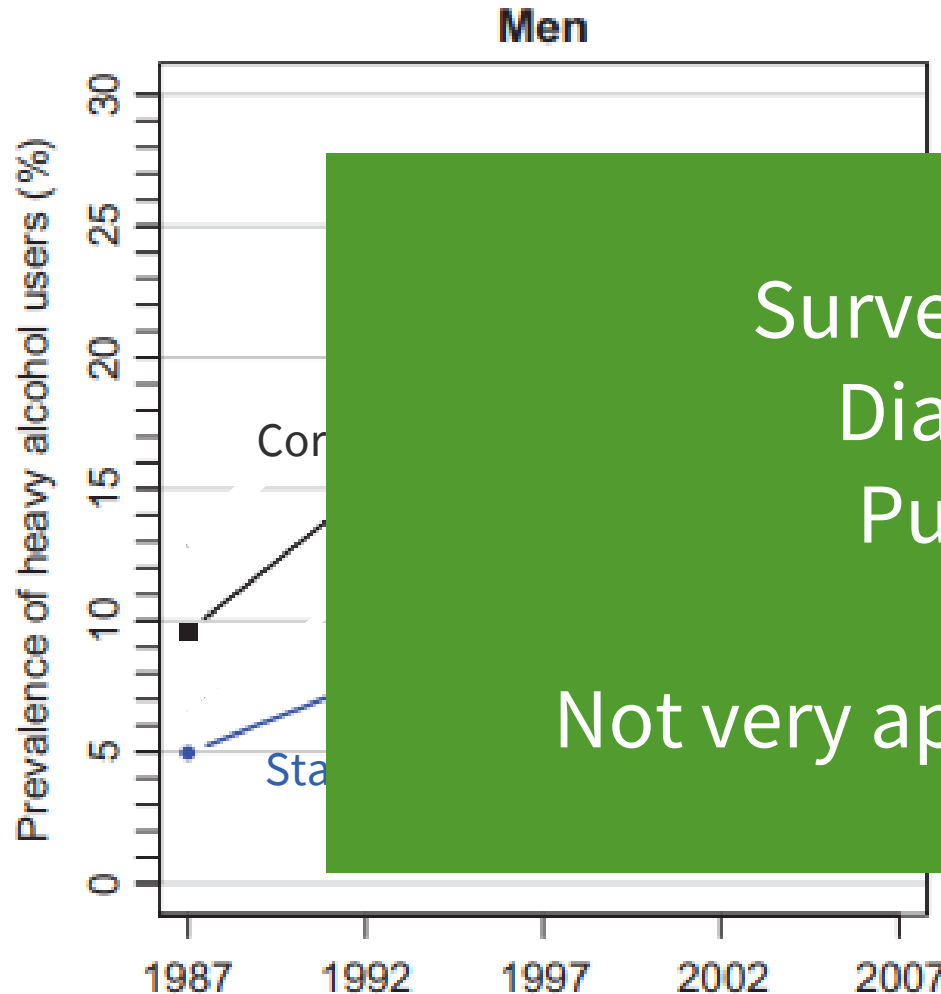
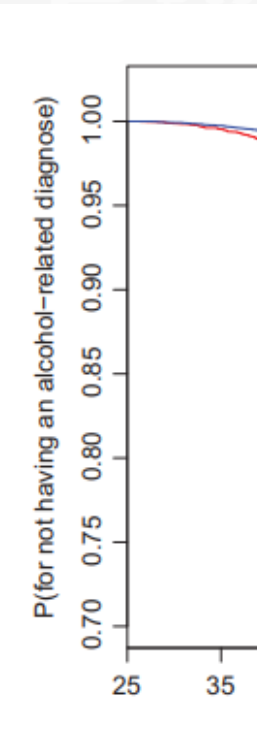
- as reported in a survey (12 months)
- as seen in health care registers (response year + preceding year)

No golden standard!



Using register data to correct prevalence estimates? (% heavy drinkers)

Survival cur



Alcohol and Alcoholism, 2018, 53(5) 586–596
doi: 10.1093/alcalc/agy019
Advance Access Publication Date: 24 March 2018
Review



Survey data: 1987-2007
Diagnoses: -> 2014
Publication: 2018

Not very applicable to monitoring!

from 0 to 9 percentage points for men and from 0 to 2 percentage points for women.
Conclusion: The proposed approach improves the prevalence estimation but requires follow-up data on non-participants and Bayesian modelling.

Conclusions?

- Hard to find a replacement for surveys to find out how population's drinking patterns change
- No easy solutions available (yet?) to replace surveys, and many solutions cannot be used in monitoring efforts in practice