



Public Health  
England

# Dry January

## Does it work?



# Research report

- University of Sussex, School of Psychology undertook an evaluation of Dry January 2014.
- 3,791 people participating in Dry January completed the baseline questionnaire
- 857 (23%) people completed the 6 month follow-up questionnaire
  - Similar numbers of men and women participated
- All participants were asked about:
  - Did they complete Dry January
  - Alcohol intake following Dry January
  - AUDIT score (WHO developed alcohol screening test)
  - Drink refusal skills
  - Rebound effect



# Results

- 71.1% completed Dry January
  - 73.5% of men
  - 70.1% of women
- At 6 month follow-up
  - 57.6% reported a decrease in drinking days per week
  - 31.4% no change in drinking days per week
  - 11.0% drank more days per week
  
  - 48.5% drank fewer drinks per drinking day
  - 36.1% reported on change
  - 15.4% drank more drinks per drinking day



# Results

- For both those who SUCCESSFULLY or UNSUCCESSFULLY completed Dry January – at 6 month follow-up reported:
  - Significant **reductions** in frequency of drunkenness
  - Significant **reductions** in AUDIT score
  - Significant **increase** in drink refusal skills
- A minority of people who unsuccessfully completed Dry January reported “rebound effects” :
  - Men reported more drinking days per week
  - Women – 13% reported an increase in drunkenness



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# Results

- 82% reported **Felling a Sense of Accomplishment**
- 49% **Lost Weight**
- 62% **Slept Better**
- 79% **Saved Money**
- 62% had **More Energy**



# The small print

- This is the first report of its kind (it does not yet constitute a “body of evidence”)
- There was no “control group” to compare changes with
- The sample was “self-selected” – people voluntarily registered to take part in the research
- Further research will be conducted on Dry January 2015



# Conclusions

- Despite the small print, the results are encouraging
- Even a failed attempt at Dry January led to many positive changes in behaviour observed in those who successfully completed Dry January
- It appears that participation in Dry January has a lasting effect - based on the 6-month follow-up
- Very few participants experienced rebound effects
- **Taken together, these findings suggest that abstinence challenges such as Dry January can lead to changes towards healthier drinking and enhance participants beliefs in their ability to manage their alcohol use, and are unlikely to result in undesirable “rebound effects”**