

# More teens abstaining from alcohol

April 10 2014, by Marion Downey

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(Medical Xpress)—A broad change in drinking behaviour has occurred among Australian adolescents in the last decade. The percentage of Australians aged 14-17 who do not drink alcohol has increased from almost 33% in 2001 to over 50% in 2010, research from UNSW's National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC) shows.

This trend has occurred broadly across a wide range of regional, socio-economic, and demographic subgroups.

The trend was spotted by NDARC's Dr Michael Livingston, who analysed survey responses from more than 2,500 young Australians.

Dr Livingston says there are several possible explanations: "The shift in [drinking behaviour](#) is likely the result of broad cultural factors. We have seen similar recent trends in the Nordic countries and the United States of America, all countries with strong temperance traditions and increasing public concerns about adolescent drinking.

"Also, the Australian population is increasingly multicultural, with a steady rise in residents from typically lighter-drinking cultures. So the trend toward alcohol abstinence among Australian adolescents could have something to do with deep cultural beliefs, increased social concerns about young drinkers, and subtle changes in immigration."

This shift in drinking behaviour is good news in a country where twenty years ago one in five drinkers aged 16-17 reported [alcohol](#)-related injuries and one in ten regretted sexual experience linked to their drinking.

The reduction in [drinking](#) among Australian adolescents does not seem to have been offset by increases in illicit drug use or smoking.

Dr Livingston's paper was published online by the journal *Addiction*.

**More information:** Livingston M. Trends in non-drinking amongst Australian adolescents. *Addiction*, 109: doi: 10.1111/add.12524

Provided by University of New South Wales

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