

Smoking among Australian youth hits record low: study

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Cigarette smoking among Australian youth has hit a record low, researchers said Thursday as they hailed a possible "smoke-free generation" thanks to an aggressive public health drive deterring people from lighting up.

The decline was applauded as a success story, with plain cigarette-packaging laws and higher prices credited as factors, according to a report published in the *Public Health Research and Practice* journal.

The research found smoking rates among young people aged 12-17 had fallen to record lows, with only 3.4 percent lighting up daily. The report did not provide data to compare smoking rates in previous years.

"I think that these data are giving us hope that within our lifetime, we could actually see smoking push close to one or two percent amongst [young people](#) and we've never seen smoking this low amongst adolescents," the paper's lead author Anita Dossaix told AFP.

"It is potentially the start of a smoke-free generation for us, which is very exciting."

The researchers found that reported [smoking rates](#) were continually declining among 12- and 17-year-olds. Smoking rates in the most populous state, New South Wales, among youths had plunged from 23.5 percent two decades ago to 6.7 percent in 2014, the paper noted.

"Similar trends are being mirrored across Australia amongst secondary school students. At an adult population level we've also got smoking at record lows, sitting at about 15 percent," Dessaix, the cancer-prevention manager at the state government-funded Cancer Institute NSW, added.

"So all of these are very encouraging signs that the different policy and programme measures that are in place in tobacco control are contributing to these declines."

The researchers, who also came from NSW's health ministry, found that factors supporting the reduced smoking levels included higher prices for cigarettes, smoke-free zones, plain-packaging laws, restricted tobacco advertising and public education campaigns.

But Dessaix said despite the "true [public health](#) success story", authorities could not be complacent as tobacco was being marketed through new avenues such as video games.

"Continuing to monitor tobacco promotions through these non-traditional media and looking at potential control measures and ensuring we've got an anti-smoking presence there is going to be important moving forward," she said.

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