

New study shows a generational shift toward lighter drinking in Australia

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Alcohol consumption in Australia has declined steadily during the past decade, with per capita consumption in 2013-14 reaching its lowest level since the early 1960s. A new study published today by the scientific journal *Addiction* shows that the overall decline in drinking is due mainly to less drinking among people in their teens and early twenties.

A study led by Dr Michael Livingston of Australia's Centre for Alcohol Policy Research at La Trobe University analysed the [drinking](#) habits of 124,440 Australians aged 14 to 79 years, surveyed over 18 years. The results show that recent declines in per-capita [consumption](#) appear to be driven by two major changes: (1) the ageing of heavier drinking cohorts into lighter drinking stages of the life-course and (2) sharp reductions in drinking among recently born cohorts.

Alcohol consumption among Australians peaks in middle-age, between 40 and 60 years. As drinkers move into their 60s and 70s, they tend to ease up, a trend that helps to explain the recent decline in drinking.

But the main driver of reduced drinking in Australia is the markedly less drinking among Australians born in the 1990s, suggesting that a significant generational shift is underway.

This shift has the potential to create long-term public health gains, given the body of research showing that the drinking patterns established while people are young are strong predictors of drinking problems later in life.

More information: Livingston M, Raninen J, Slade T, Swift W, Lloyd B, and Deitze P (2016) Understanding trends in Australian alcohol consumption: An age-period-cohort model. *Addiction* 111: [DOI: 10.1111/add.13396](https://doi.org/10.1111/add.13396)

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