

## Tracking the decline in adolescent drinking into adulthood, an Australian analysis

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**Introduction and Aims:** It is well established that adolescent drinking in Australia (and many other countries) has declined substantially since the early 2000s. This study aims to test whether these declines have been maintained as these cohorts of adolescents age into adulthood and whether they are consistent across sub-groups defined by sex and socio-economic status.

**Methods:** We use data from seven waves of Australia's National Drug Strategy Household Survey (2001-2019) to assess how cohort differences in drinking vary by socio-economic status and by age. We focus on three outcome measures: any drinking, drinking volume and risky drinking and use a mix of logistic and linear regression to examine cohort differences.

**Results:** Drinking declines were consistent across socio-economic groups on all measures, while for risky drinking, declines were steeper for women than men (interaction p-value = 0.01). More recent birth cohorts had significantly lower levels of drinking across all three measures (p-values all <0.01). There were significant interactions between birth cohort and age for past-year drinking and past-year regular risky drinking, with cohort differences diminishing as age increased.

**Discussions and Conclusions:** Lighter drinking adolescent cohorts partly 'catch up' to previous cohorts by early adulthood, but maintain significantly lower levels of drinking and risky drinking up to the age of 24. These ongoing reductions in drinking are spread evenly across socio-economic groups and are likely to lead to substantial public health benefits for these generations across their life course.

**Disclosure of Interest Statement:** This work was supported by a National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Career Development Fellowship (1123840) and an ARC Discovery Project (DP160101380).