



MEDIA RELEASE

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NEW RESEARCH: MORE THAN ONE IN FOUR ADOLESCENTS UNDER 18 YEARS OLD ALLOWED TO DRINK AT HOME

Parents who let their underage kids drink at home are putting them at increased risk of harm, a new report by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) finds.

Based on interviews with close to 3,000 teenagers and their families across the country for *Growing Up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC)*, an estimated 28% of Australian teens aged 16–17 had permission from their parents to drink at home.

Lead researcher on the report, Dr Brendan Quinn, said the findings reveal the risks of permitting underage alcohol use at home or allowing them to take alcohol to parties, and highlight the importance of parents encouraging their children to delay their first drink for as long as possible.

‘All alcohol use is associated with a risk of experiencing associated harms.

‘In some cases, parents may be allowing their teenagers to drink at home in the belief that supervised alcohol consumption could facilitate a more responsible relationship with alcohol and reduce potential harm, however research suggests early alcohol use could lead to harmful drinking practices, both now and later in life.’

Around one-fifth of teenagers aged 16–17 years were allowed to take alcohol to parties or social events.

Among teens who had ever drunk alcohol, those with permission to drink at home were significantly more likely to have drunk in the past month (77%, compared to 63%) and in the past week (49%, compared to 34%).

Importantly, alcohol-related harms were more common among this group: of teens who had ever drunk alcohol, 23% of those with permission to drink at home had ever experienced any alcohol-related harm, compared to 17% of those without permission.

‘Parental practices and attitudes towards alcohol can play an important role in shaping the relationship that young people have with alcohol and preventing alcohol-related harms,’ Dr Quinn said.

Study findings showed that more frequent alcohol consumption by parents was associated with a greater likelihood of allowing teens to drink at home.

‘Parents and teenagers need to be aware of the National Health and Medical Research Council’s current guidelines, which recommend delaying alcohol use until at least the age of 18 – even in environments or circumstances that might be considered low risk,’ Dr Quinn said.

‘Parents and carers can play a critical role in helping prevent – or delay – a young person’s initial use of alcohol.

‘Open conversations about alcohol between parents and their children will help prepare young people to make informed decisions for times when they encounter alcohol outside of the home, whether that be with friends or in other social settings.’

The report *Alcohol use among teens allowed to drink at home* is available at:

<http://www3.aifs.gov.au/institute/media/docs/BtfhlRWam/lsac-snapshot-2-drinking-at-home.pdf>

Growing Up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC) has been following the lives of the same 10,000 children since 2004. Australian teens aged 16–17 years are the focus of this snapshot asking them about their experiences with alcohol and for the first time in 2016, their parents were asked about their children's alcohol consumption.

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AIFS conducts original research to increase understanding of Australian families and the issues that affect them, see aifs.gov.au