

## **Zero-alcohol and young people: A study of residential college student behaviour and attitudes**

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**Background:** The rate of hazardous drinking and related harms among students living in residential colleges exceeds that observed among emerging adults in the general population. There is increasing interest in the potential for zero alcohol drinks to reduce harm among this population, but no data to date has examined how young people interact with and view this new category of beverages.

**Method:** The first-year cohort of six Australian residential colleges participated in an online survey that included questions relating to zero alcohol beverages, as part of a larger AOD intervention randomised controlled trial.

**Results:** Of the residential students that participated in this trial (n = 597), the majority (63.5%) had not tried zero alcohol beverages. Of those who had, most (53.7%) had done so in the past three months. Novelty was the most frequently nominated reason for consuming zero alcohol drinks, and preference for alcohol or soft drinks was the most frequently cited reasons for not trying zero alcohol beverages. Few students indicated utilising zero alcohol beverages to reduce their alcohol consumption.

**Conclusions and Next Steps:** Zero-alcohol beverages are sparsely utilised by young people residing in university residential colleges. Use is predominantly driven by curiosity, and preference for alcoholic beverages and other drinks are given as barriers for trying zero alcohol beverages. Further research should explore if zero alcohol beverages are more effective as part of a broader holistic intervention for hazardous drinking targeting young people.

**Implications for Practice or Policy:** A strong focus on zero-alcohol beverages to reduce hazardous drinking amongst young people may not be warranted given existing data indicating lukewarm interest.