



# Trends in adolescent smoking, drinking, cannabis use and sexual behaviour

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# Thesis aim: To describe and explain trends in adolescent risk behaviour 1990-2017



Secondary-school  
age, particularly <16  
years

- New Zealand
- Australia
- USA
- England

# Prevalence (%) of weekly/monthly tobacco smoking



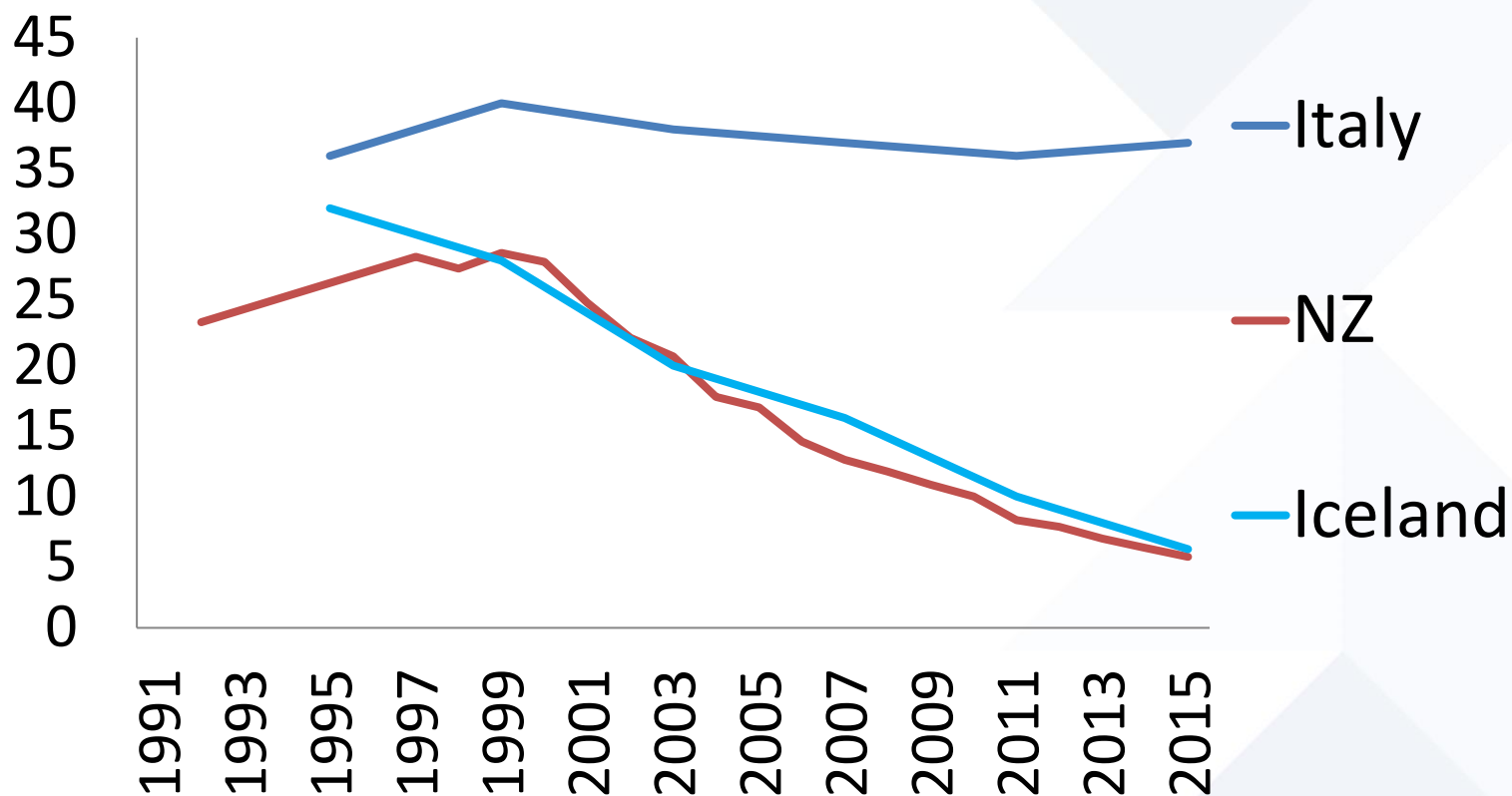
**USA:** Monitoring the Future, Grade 8, 13-14 years, past month

**NZ:** ASH Year 10, 14-15 years, past month

**Aust:** ASSAD, 12-15 year olds, past month

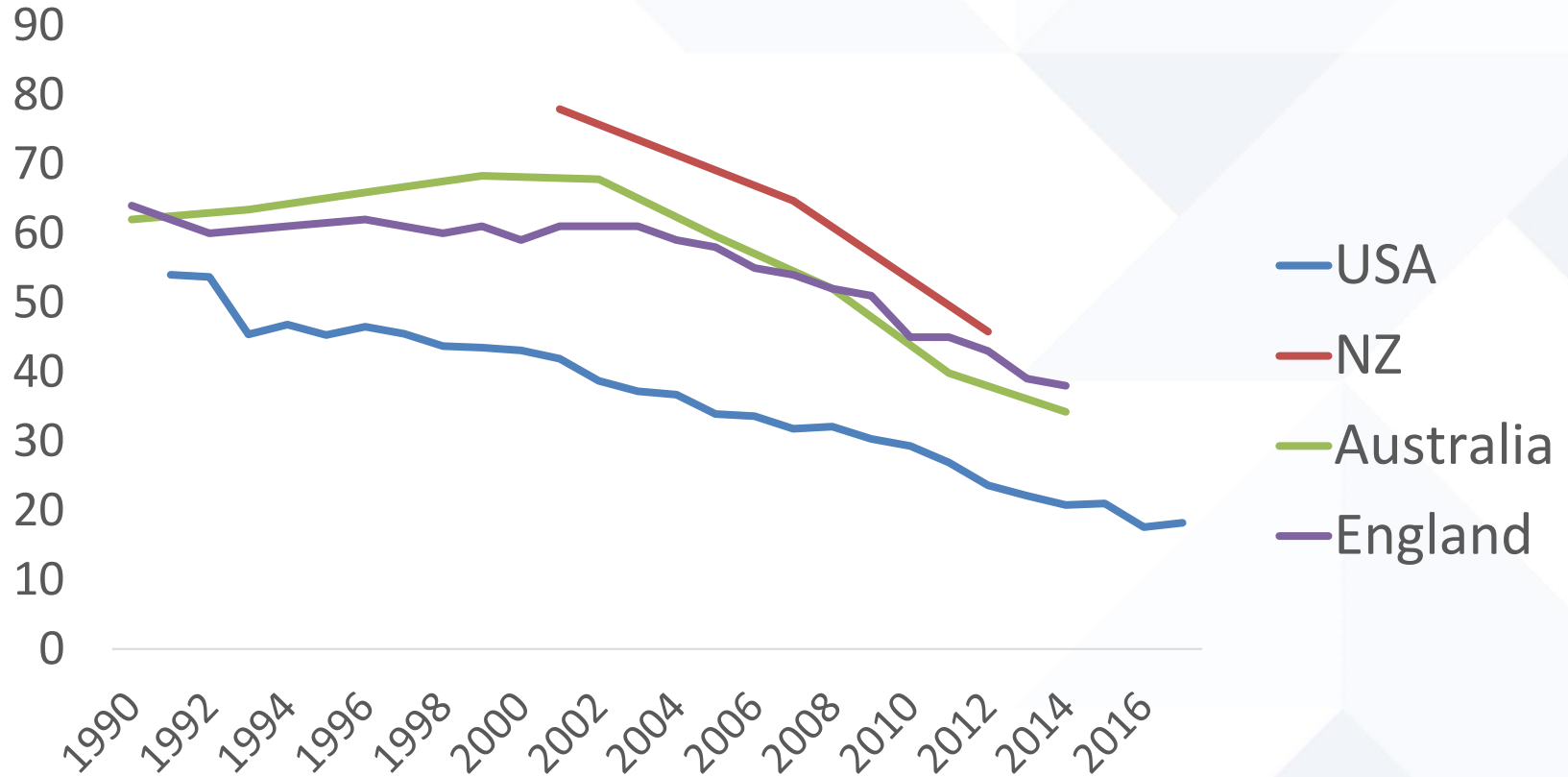
**England:** SDD survey, 11-15 year olds, at least weekly

# Past month smoking: international trends



Source: European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD) 15-16 year olds

# Prevalence of past year/ever alcohol use, 1990-2017



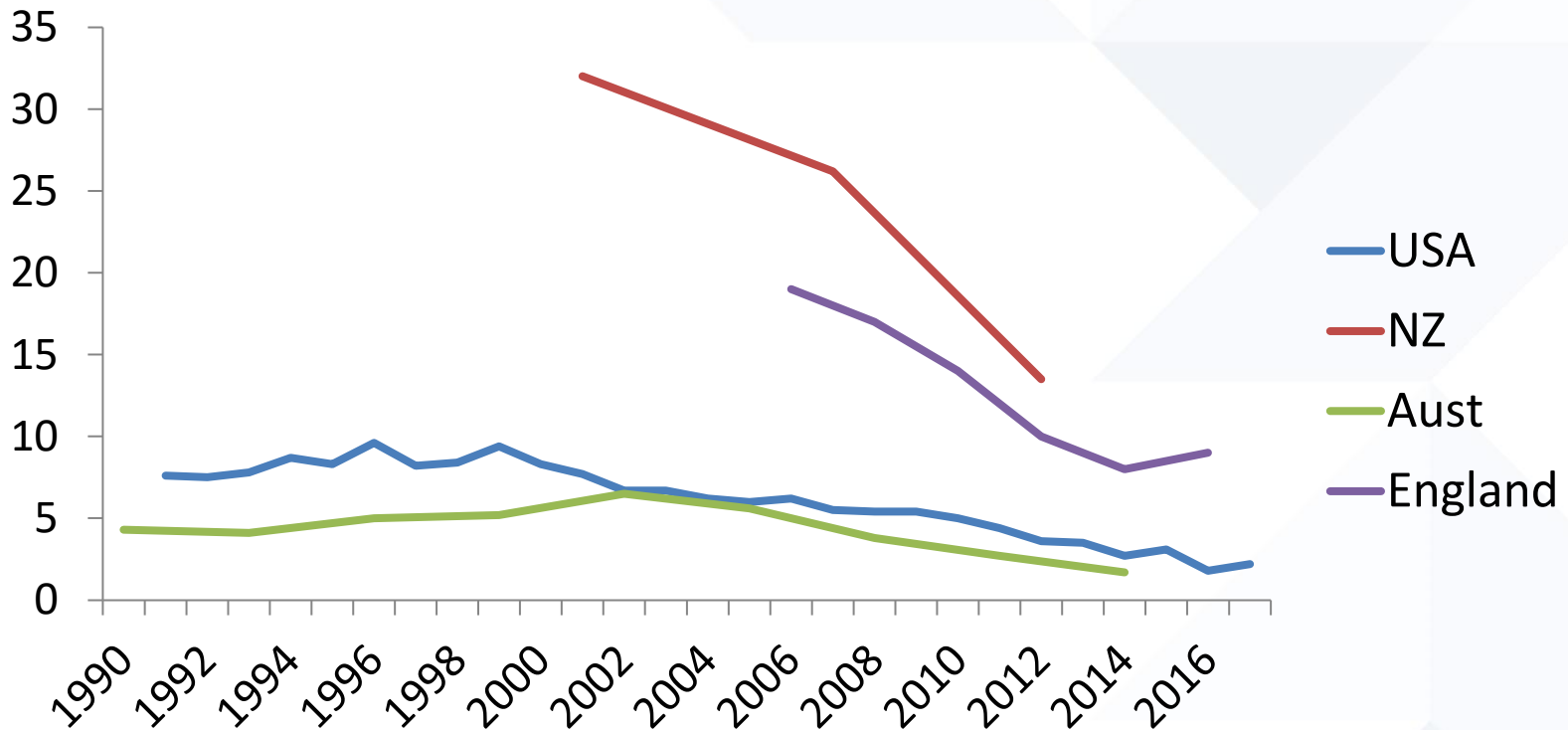
USA: MTF 8th grade 13-14 year olds - past year

NZ: Youth 2000, aged 12-15 - ever

Aust: ASAAD 12-15 year olds - past year

England: SDD 11-15 year olds - ever

# Prevalence (%) of binge drinking in population



USA: MTF, 8th Grade, 13-14 years, 'been drunk' past 30 days

Aust: ASAAD, 12-15 years, 5+ drinks in one day in past 7 days

NZ: Youth 2000, 12-15 years, 5+ drinks/session, past 4 weeks

England: SDD, 11-15 years, 'been drunk' in past 4 weeks

# Prevalence (%) past year/lifetime cannabis use



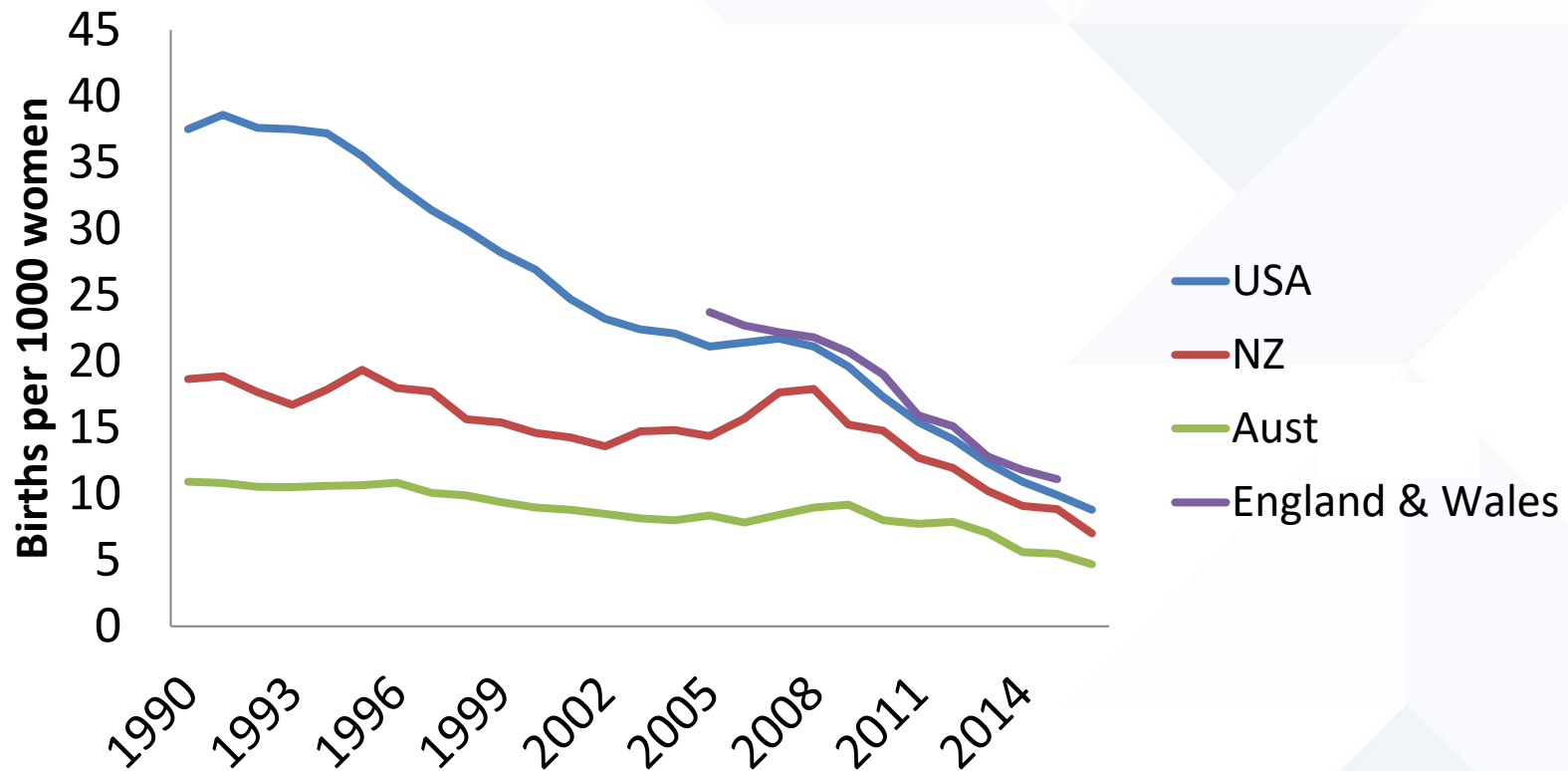
USA: MTF, 8th Grade, 13-14 years, past year

NZ: Youth 2000, 12-15 years, lifetime

Aust: ASSAD, 12-15 years, past year

England: SDD, 11-15 years, past year use

# Birth rate: 15-17 year old women



USA: National Vital Statistics Report.

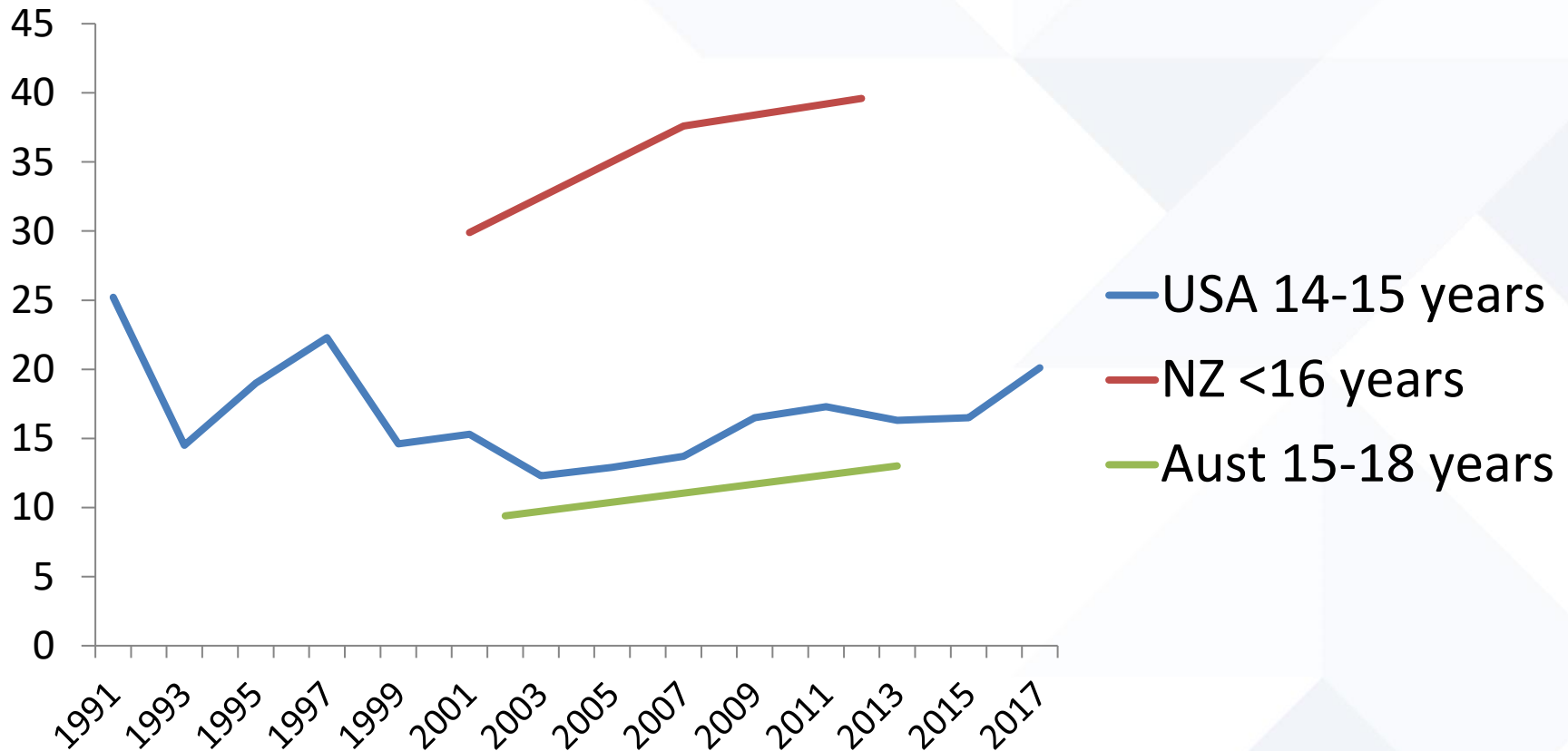
NZ: Statistics NZ

Australia: Australian Bureau of Statistics

England: Office for National Statistics



# Proportion who DID NOT use ANY contraception, most recent sex, sexually active adolescents

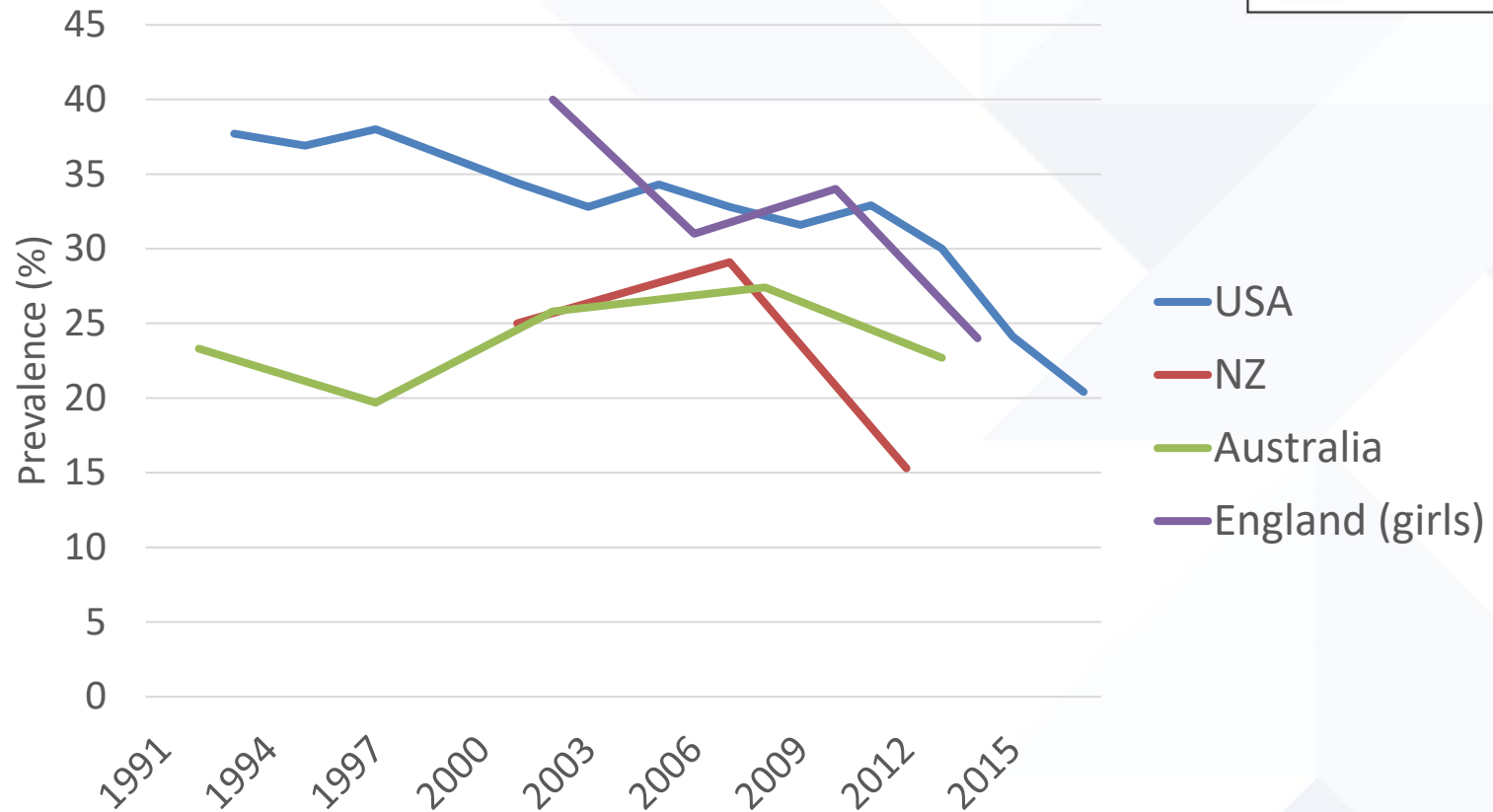


USA: Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (YRBS)

NZ: Youth 2000

Aust: National Survey of Aust. Secondary Students, HIV/AIDS and Sexual Health (NASSSH)

# Ever had sexual intercourse



USA: YRBS, 14-15 years

NZ: Youth 2000, 12-15 years

England: Health Behaviour in School-age Children (HBSC), 15 years

Australia: NSASSH, 15-16 years

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Other indicators that are improving:

- Juvenile crime
- Physical fighting
- Truancy
- Road safety

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Other indicators that are NOT improving:

- Condom use
- Obesity
- Nutrition
- Physical activity
- Mental health

# Marked decrease in teen risk behaviour since 2000



- But NOT improved mental health, diet or exercise
- Many (but not all) high income countries

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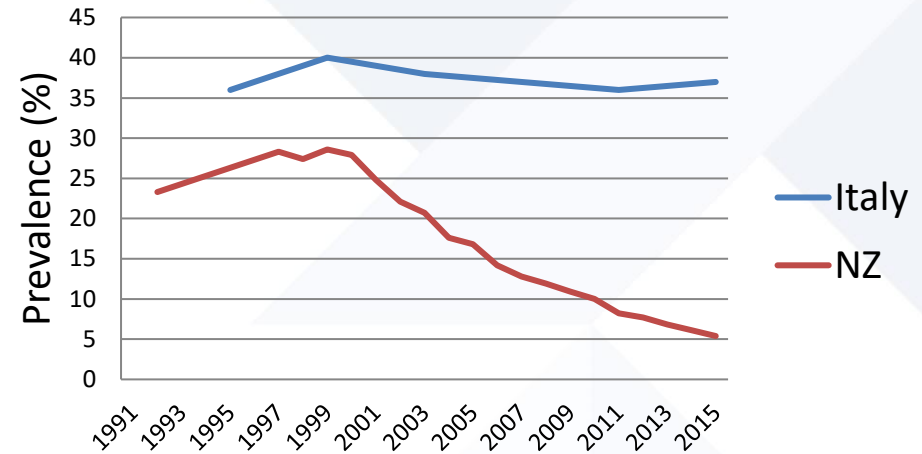
# Italy



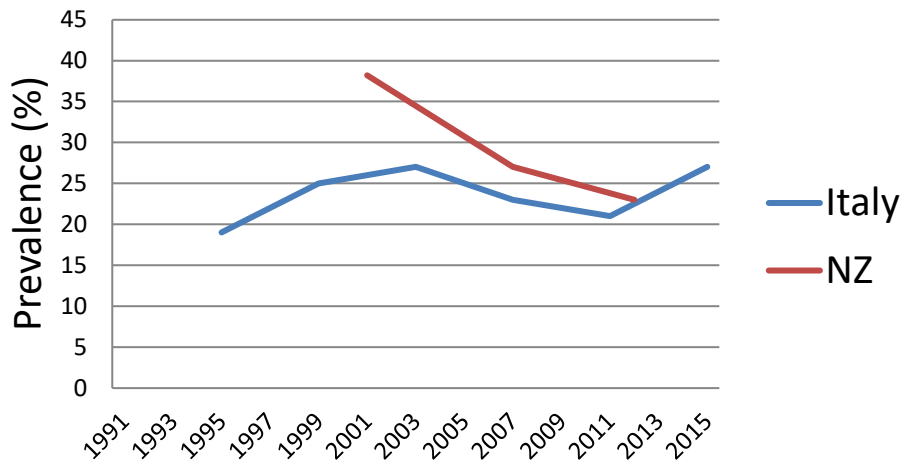
90% of teens active on social media



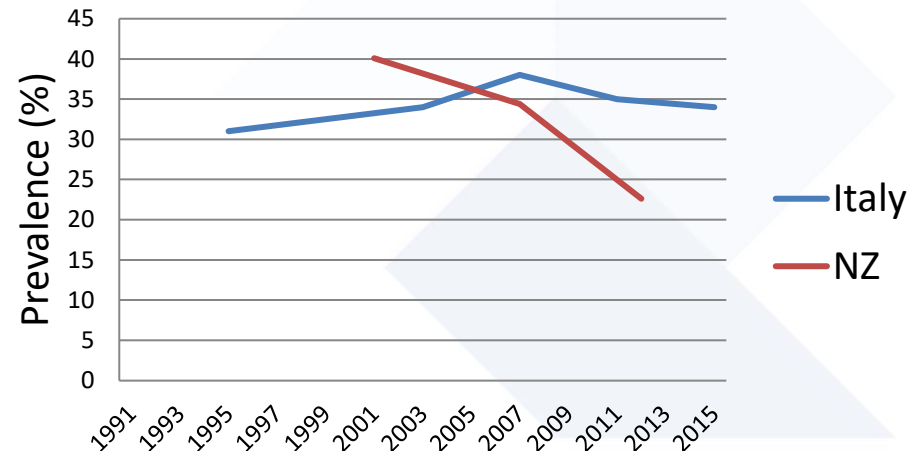
## Monthly smoking, 1991-2015



## Lifetime cannabis use, 1991-2015



## Binge drinking, 1991-2015



Source: ESPAD, 15-16 year olds

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- Tobacco/marijuana first, alcohol later
- Declines in all socioeconomic and ethnic groups
- Adolescent & young adult specific; different from adult trends
- 'Outlier' countries suggest the digital revolution is not the key driver
- **Teens aren't healthier in general**

# Conclusion



- Declining adolescent risk behaviour is an international phenomenon, worthy of research attention
- Unitary trend, coincidence of independent trends, or cascade from one behaviour to another?
- Patterns provide some clues, but rigorous testing of hypotheses is needed.

# Acknowledgements



- Supervisors and advisors
  - Prof Richard Edwards
  - Dr Hera Cook
  - Dr Dalice Sim
  - Dr Terry Fleming
- Data owners, especially:
  - Adolescent Health Research Group
  - Cancer Council, Victoria

“Moral panics about youth behaviour are a historical constant, but now they are especially unmoored from reality”

‘Kids these days’ by Malcom Harris (2017).