

Example of lowering us drinking age to 18 research paper

[Health & Medicine](#), [Alcoholism](#)



Lowering US Drinking Age to 18

The problem of teenage crimes have rapidly caused concerns in the government, private sector and even in the communities for the past couple of years due to the increasing severity of these crimes. Police records and investigations show that many of these crimes are done under the influence of alcohol. For the United States, the legal drinking age is set to 21 years old. Despite this law, teenagers under 21 could gain access to alcohol with or without guardians and easily purchase alcohol without any warning. Talks of changing the legal drinking age in the country to 18 years old are dominating various discussion boards and even the two legislative branches of the US government, arguing the pros and cons of approving such change. However, it cannot be denied that there is a need for a more sustainable and detailed law that would enforce strict guidelines for teenagers to resist the temptation of drinking.

Supporters to changing the drinking age to 18 pointed out some advantages to the idea of allowing 18 year old teenagers drink alcohol. Most groups such as the National Youth Rights Association argue that the reduction of the drinking age to 18 with the addition of accepting moderate drinking in society would reduce the phenomenon known as the “ forbidden fruit”, which is normally done by teenagers once they wish to try out something illegal and find out why it is being regulated. According to Smith and Brogan (2008) the Association believes that teaching only about the risks, policies, and showing that alcohol is an evil substance, it would only cause teenagers to be curious. Like any other activity in life, drinking is something that must be

learned by one's self and the responsibilities attached to it. The Association believes that the government is denying teenagers this healthy way to learn about life's many activities and entice temptation . Youngerman and Kittleson (2005) supported Smith and Brogan's argument by quoting Ruth Engs, a professor of Applied Health Sciences at Indiana University, who is known as a major supporter for reducing the legal drinking age. According to Engs, the main reason why many young teenagers start drinking and drink irresponsibly is because drinking is seen as an enticing " forbidden fruit", a means to rebel against adults and authority; and a symbol of initiation to adulthood. If the drinking age is reduced or changed, the policy would enable adults to regulate teenage drinking habits as it would be done under their supervision and guidance until they reach their maturity .

For Peck (2009), lowering the drinking age would shift the responsibility away from the state to the parents, who should be the ones to handle teenager's drinking habits and guide them. With parents' supervision, children can grow up into fine adults and understand the risks involved in alcohol consumption and drinking moderately. According to Radley Balko, a known libertarian journalist, it is better letting children, and teenagers learn how to drink moderately with the supervision of their parents rather than learn it on their own and far from their parents. Drinking without supervision is one of the major causes of teenage-related accidents and casualties, which is why a lowered drinking age would give parents enough leverage to influence their children. In another position noted by Peck by quoting Marc Fisher, Fisher wrote two possible benefits of lowering the drinking age. The

first benefit is pushing drinking into a more private context which normally is supervised by adults and the second benefit eliminates the taboo that adults would not regulate the younger generation on their drinking. Instead, adults would be able to entice teenagers and adolescents to drink moderately under their supervision and with reason .

White and Rabiner (2011) pointed out that the current Minimum Legal Drinking Age Law is ineffective and has served as a deterrent for alcohol consumption. Both authors quoted John McCardell's position over the issue of college drinking with McCardell noting that alcohol is a way of life for many American teenagers. Restraining them from drinking alcohol would only entice them to find ways to acquire alcohol illegally. McCardell also explains that with alcohol as a common factor in American life, it should not be denied and legislated. There would also be a rift between those teenagers ages 18 to 20 to those teenagers already 21 as the regulation separates their legal rights under the law .

Opponents to the age change for alcohol drinking to 18 contradict the supporter claims that it would entice parents to monitor their children's drinking habits can control teenage alcohol abuse. The main argument that is being raised with regards to the lowering of drinking age to 18, as noted by Maisto, Galizio, and Connors (2010) is that there is no clear proof that it would lower the chances of teenage binge drinking. There is a possibility that college students would be most likely drink more now that they can drink at an earlier age, especially in the beginning of their college schooling.

Teenagers currently under the age 18 and 20 would most likely be subjected

to initiation by drinking to be considered part of their age group would increase those who would be addicted to alcohol. There might also be cases that there are already teenagers who enter college who already started binge drinking. Should the age be lowered to 18, it would not impact these teenagers and would make the provision useless in its intention to prevent and regulate teenage drinking .

According to Hyde and Setaro (1999) when the legal drinking age in the United States was still 18 in the early 1970s, cases of increased fatalities have been reported especially in 48 states in the United States caused by the low drinking age as victims were aged 18 and younger. States have also recorded an increase of 11 percent worth of fatalities in the age group as seen in the 1978 National Study of Adolescent Drinking Behavior. The study has pointed out that 10th to 12th graders in states that have lower drinking ages were prone in drinking more than their average capacity Teenagers were also drunk more often, causing erratic behaviour and recklessness. The study has also pointed that teenagers are less likely to abstain from drinking considering that they are legally allowed to purchase and drink them. The study, along with many others, have consolidated that the reason why the drinking age must be raised to 21 is due to the concern that the number of teenage-drinking problems may continue to increase if the age is not changed to 21 .

Von Wormer (2010) and Biglan, Brennan, Foster, and Holder (2005) support Hyde and Setaro's arguments as to why the legal drinking age should remain in 21. One of the most common reasons of teenage deaths is usually related

to alcoholism and binge drinking. Deaths can range from alcohol poisoning, mixing drugs with alcohol and to accidents both vehicular and accidental. Most of these cases are normally due to teenagers being younger than 21, which is considered still immature than those aged 21 and over . Kivisto (2010) added the position of groups such as the Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), the American Medical Association, the Governor's Highway Safety Association, the National Transportation Safety Board, and others that rendering the 21 age requirement to a much lower and younger requirement would constitute to more teenage casualties. These groups have noted that studies have proven that the 21 drinking law saved many teenagers' lives and shows that these teenagers are less likely to continue drinking as they grow older. If teenagers younger than 21 are allowed to drink, the more likely they would become dependent to the substance and drive drunk often, which may cause to more accidents .

In addition to this, Bonnie and O'Connell (2004) stated that a reason as to why the drinking age is set to 21 is to delay underage alcohol consumption as long as possible, or if it has already started, restrain the teenager from consuming more alcohol. This policy would then support parents in watching and protecting their children especially in the risks that can be caused by drinking. The only problem with the implementation of this law is how to apply the law without suppressing the teenager and supervising.

Nevertheless, the authors argue that having the drinking age set to 21 has saved 18, 220 lives and reports have concluded that the 21 year age requirement for drinking was the main proponent for reducing 19% casualties involving teenagers ages 20 below .

Regardless which age requirement is allowable for drinking, it is still important that alcohol presents enough risks for both young and adult drinkers. The federal government, alongside all state departments and organizations, must create a stricter and specific policy to restrict alcohol drinking in all aspects. On the one hand, reducing the age requirement to 18 would be able to entice parents to become stricter and hands on in dealing with their children on their drinking habits. Legalization of a younger age drinking requirement would also force the government to enforce the law to ensure that teenagers would be regulated in their drinking habits. On the other hand, there is a reason as to why the age for drinking is set to 21 years old. Teenagers in this age are more informed to the risk involved with alcohol, and it becomes a deterrent for many teenagers to resist alcohol consumption. However, both positions would be in vain if proper education with the risks and effects of alcohol would not be done. Without proper education and policy implementation, it is plausible that any form of action on teenage drinking would become irrelevant as education would enable people to understand the importance of knowing the risks of alcohol and drinking.

References

Biglan, A., Brennan, P., Foster, S., & Holder, H. (2005). *Helping Adolescents and Risk: Prevention of Multiple Problem Behaviors*. New York: Guilford Press.

Bonnie, R., & O'Connell, M. E. (2004). *Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility*. Washington, D. C: National Academies Press.

Hyde, M., & Setaro, J. (1999). *Alcohol 101: An Overview for Teens*.

Minneapolis: Twenty-First Century Books.

Kivisto, P. (2010). *Illuminating Social Life: Classical and Contemporary*

Theory Revisited. Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press.

Maisto, S., Galizio, M., & Connors, G. (2010). *Drug Use and Abuse*. Belmont:

Cengage Learning.

Peck, G. (2009). *The Prohibition Hangover: Alcohol in America from Demon*

Rum to Cult Cabaret. Piscataway: Rutgers University Press.

Smith, T. P., & Brogan, R. (2008). *Alcohol*. New York: Infobase Publishing.

von Wormer, K. (2010). *Alcohol Problems: Practice Intervention*. London:

Oxford University Press.

White, H. R., & Rabiner, D. (2011). *College Drinking and Drug Use*. New York:

Guilford Press.

Youngerman, B., & Kittleson, M. (2005). *The Truth About Alcohol*. New York:

Infobase Publishing.