

Cons of lowering the legal drinking age

Law



To Lower or Not To Lower?

Curiosity to appear more grown up may be the reason why most adolescents take their first drink of an alcoholic beverage. The ability to seem more grown up can intensify drinking at a younger age. Consequently, as alcohol is seen as the “Forbidden Fruit,” it encourages the want to drink for people under the age of twenty-one. The only thing adolescents are unaware of are the consequences of underage drinking. The legal drinking age should not be lowered due to the increased chances of alcohol related car crashes, becoming an alcoholic, and alcohol inhibiting the development of the brain.

With the drinking age at 21, there has been an 11% decrease in fatal car crashes in underage drivers (The Legal Drinking Age Policy Has Been Effective 2). Zero- Tolerance policies are not only in effect for underage drinkers, but also for those with fake identification. All 50 states have laws against fake ID's, however; only some have laws with viable punishments. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration states that between 1975 and 1998, 18, 220 lives were saved by the legal drinking age being raised to 21. These lives would have been lost in fatal car crashes (Arnold-Burger 1).

If people start drinking before the age of 21, they are more likely to develop an alcohol addiction. As stated by “The Legal Drinking Age Policy Has Been Effective,” ‘40% of those who started drinking before the age of 15 met criteria for alcohol dependence at some point in their lives,’ (LDAPHBE 4). Teens are not educated on how irrational it is to begin drinking as an adolescent. There should be programs in place for those adolescents that

think that drinking until intoxicated is ‘cool’, especially since these are the most impacted age group for alcohol dependence.

The part of the brain that controls judgement is not fully developed until 21. Arnold- Burger states that “research indicates that alcohol or drug use during these formative years [before 21] can cause long term, irreversible damage” (Arnold-Burger 2). If the brain is not fully developed and teens are drinking; the decisions they make, the way they function, the amount they drink, the way they drink, how they act when they are intoxicated is at stake. When the prefrontal cortex is not fully developed the ability to have good judgement and weigh the risks and consequences of our actions are at stake. Due to the undeveloped brain combined with the use of alcohol, this is the reason many underage drinkers get into a driver’s seat at the end of the night (Arnold-Burger 2).

Some may argue that at 18 teenagers are legally adults. While this is technically and lawfully true, just because they can join the military or get married doesn’t mean that they should be able to make consequential decisions. LDAPHBE states that eighteen-year-olds are only eligible for the military due to their physique and their impressionable minds (LDAPHBE 3).

To conclude, teenagers should not only be educated on the consequences of drinking, but how and when to drink responsibly. If these are not enforced, not only will they become alcoholics, but they will also be involved in a fatal car crash, and their brain will not function like it should be able to. If the drinking age were lowered it would be detrimental to the people it would be lowered for.