

A persuasive essay on underage drinking

[Health & Medicine](#), [Drug Abuse](#)



Because underage drinking is related to easy access to alcohol, an alcohol-related problem associated exclusively with young people is that of underage drinking in licensed premises. Young people may enter bars, subject to the licensee's permission, once they are 18 years of age in England, Scotland and Wales.

The corresponding age in the United States is 21. Survey findings show that between 10 and 20 per cent of 13 year olds report that their usual location for drinking is in a public bar, club or disco. The proportion drinking in these establishments rises steadily with age, until at 17 years of age, between 50 and 90 per cent of young people choose licensed places in which to conduct their drinking (Wagenaar and Wolfson 1994).

This paper argues that there is need in the determination of the extent to which raising the minimum drinking age results in reduction in use and problems among young adults.

Policies to restrict the minimum drinking age at which licensed sales to underage youth are permitted are intended to restrict youth access to alcohol and prevent the early onset and rapid development of drinking problems among youth and young adults. It is of some interest in this regard to also determine the effects of lower minimum drinking ages on alcohol problems.

There is now a strong and consistent body of knowledge in relation to the impact of drinking age laws for public drinking and making legal purchases of alcohol. This was influential in assisting community advocacy groups to push successfully for the drinking age to be raised to 21 in many US States,

following experiences with earlier periods of relaxation (Wagenaar and Wolfson 1994).

These drinking age laws stand as the highest in the world, being shared with Malaysia, South Korea and Ukraine. Most countries for which information is available have 18 as the legal drinking age and a handful of European countries have adopted 16 (Austria, Belgium, France, Italy and Spain).

There is persuasive evidence that changes to the minimum legal drinking age directly result in corresponding changes in levels of a variety of problems relating to alcohol intoxication, including road traffic fatalities, juvenile crime, serious assault and drunkenness convictions for the affected age groups (Yu 1998).

The US General Accounting Office (1987) conducted a systematic review of this topic and, on the basis of 14 studies judged to be methodologically sound, estimated reductions in fatal road crashes among young drivers to be 5-28%. In one study of changes in drinking age laws across four Australian states, reductions were significantly associated with increases in assaults.

Following the drop in drinking age from 21 to 18 in Western Australia in 1970, rates of serious assault increased by 231% for juveniles in comparison with Queensland (O'malley and Wagenaar 1991).