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



Should the United States government lower the Minimum Legal Drinking Age (MLDA) from 21 years to 18 years? This is a question that has elicited much debate in the recent years. Recent studies by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) indicate that there has been a significant rise in the number of young people engaged in alcohol drinking (NIAAA, 2). It is for this reason that many people are for the idea that the MLDA should be revised from the current 21 to 18. Proponents of this move argue that at 18 years, young people are adults and are required to have certain rights which should be respected. They also argue that this new MLDA would make the young adults safer as they would not be engaging in alcohol drinking secretly. In sharp contrast, the opponents of such a move argue that maintaining the MLDA at 21 helps in the preventing of alcohol-related deaths and also control binge drinking. In actual fact, the United States Government should not lower the Minimum Legal Drinking Age to 18 years because drinking at an early age not only negatively affects the teenagers' health but also their decisions and behavior.

The first reason as to why the United States government should not lower the Minimum Legal Drinking Age is the negative effects alcohol has on young people's health. Alcohol drinking has been proven to have several detrimental effects on several key body organs, especially the liver. Alcohol causes liver disease (cirrhosis) and disorders due to the accumulation of fats brought about by prolonged and heavy drinking (NIAAA, 12). The malfunction of these key bodily organs may eventually lead to death. Given this information, it is important for people to consider the effects of alcohol drinking and control their intake so as to maintain healthy lives. Given that

the young people are vulnerable, maintaining the MLDA at 21 would help them lead healthy lives.

In addition to damaging the liver, drinking of alcohol may also hamper brain development at this early stage of development. It has been noted that problems related with thinking, learning or even alcohol addiction stem from alcohol drinking. When people engage in alcohol drinking, they are at a very high risk of developing these complications. Research has found out that the brain continues developing until the age of 20 (NIAAA, 5). When young people engage in drinking at an early age, they stand the risk of developing learning difficulties and alcohol addiction. This information only means that the brains of young people are vulnerable when they engage in early drinking. Since the brain is one of the most important organs in the body, the lack of normal functioning would greatly affect a young person's life.

Learning difficulties, for example, may lead to school dropouts that may become menaces to the society. It is therefore necessary to maintain the MLDA at 21 so as not to put young people in jeopardy.

With a damaged brain functioning, it would be expected that the decisions and behaviors of these young people would be risky. A young person's decision making process would be greatly hampered and would most likely engage in risky behavior such as crime, committing suicide, unprotected sex or sexual crimes. It has been noted that young people who do not engage in alcohol drinking are less likely to be involved in risky behavior than their counterparts who drink alcohol. Alcohol may make it worse for young individual to make sound decisions and may lead them to make unwise decisions that may have a toll on their life. After facing difficulties in life, as a

result of alcohol drinking, these young people may become stressed and depressed which may lead to cases such as committing suicide. The high number of cases of suicide in the United States can be majorly attributed to cases involving alcohol drinking. Alcohol drinking is also the primary reasons for teenagers to involve in early sexual activity and unprotected sex, or may be victims or perpetrators of sexual crimes. In view of these facts, it may be noted that teenagers may not be in full control of their lives when they engage in alcohol drinking at this early stage of life. It is hence a solid reason for the maintaining of MLDA at 21 years.

On the other hand, it is important to note the arguments put forward by the proponents of lowering the MLDA to 18. The first reason is that an 18-year old is an adult with rights that should be respected. They argue that 18 is the legal age by which a person can be tried as an adult, vote or join the military among other issues, and hence should also be accorded the right to drink alcohol. They argue that not granting this right would be a gross violation of the rights that adults have. The other key reason for the support of this move is that it would offer safety to these young adults as they would not have to drink in secrecy. They suggest that not allowing these teens to drink would force them into uncontrollable drinking in secret locations which might ultimately lead to dire consequences. While these points are valid, it should be noted that at 21 years old is when someone is allowed to carry a firearm, adopt a child or gamble. This means that at 18 years old, a person is not mature enough. It should also be noted that lowering the MLDA may not make the teens safer as they may engage in binge drinking. It is therefore logical to maintain the MLDA at 18 as it offers the best option for the safety

of our teenagers.

Personally, this is an issue of great interest to me as I have had close friend that died as a result of excessive alcohol drinking at an early age. Losing a close friend is not an easy thing to deal with. The toll my friend's death had on me was significant and having the opportunity to research on this topic would be able to highlight the key issues teenagers face as a result of drinking alcohol at an early stage and also provide solid points on why the MLDA should not be lowered. In return, I hope to convince those who propose the lowering of the MLDA to think otherwise. I always held the view that 18 was the perfect age for alcohol drinking but when my friend died at this age, I was convinced it was not mature age for such. Now I know that truly, at the age of 18, one does not qualify for this right.

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