

Arguments for a lower drinking age 18 years essay examples

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



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Introduction

The drinking age debate has become a pervasive debate that elicits mixed reactions from different quotas. Proponents of a lower drinking age limit, mostly teenagers and college students, argue that the minimum legal age for drinking should be 18 while proponents of a higher drinking age limit, mostly parents and other authorities, favor 21 years as the most appropriate age for a drinking debut. While the legal drinking age for all states in the U. S. is 21, a state by state exception exists which allows individual under 21 years to consume alcohol on necessary occasions, like religious occasions, medical necessity and others, but only under the direct supervision of adults (Saunders & Rey, 111). This debate has proved to be a hot potato in the political and social scenes since it presents more of an ethical and moral dilemma just like abortion and euthanasia. This paper examines the arguments from both perspectives while at the same time offering considerable critique of both arguments.

Individuals on this side of the debate argue that 18 is the age for adulthood.

As such one is legally qualified to take adult responsibility for various actions like marriage, bidding contracts, jail terms, voting and even go to war to protect the country. If one is mature enough to make such life defining and sometimes risky decisions, why is it that they cannot be allowed to legally buy and enjoy a bottle of beer? Others argue that legally denying individual in this group from drinking does not solve the problems associated with drinking. By making it illegal, most of the ' underage' will take to unsafe drinking habits that expose themselves to poor quality alcohol that is more harmful to their health. This, they argue can be prevented if it becomes legal for them to drink since they will do so in well regulated environments where they can be properly supervised (Wagenaar, 12).

Prohibiting alcohol on the basis of age does not discourage the act but rather triggers the ' forbidden fruit syndrome' that attracts more youths to trying alcohol. It must be noted that the ages between 18 and 20 are characterized with individuals full of hormones, high risk takers, sense of invincibility and bravado and thus prone to doing silly things. Most of them are also in their college life where there is limited supervision by parents and teachers thus making it easier for them to indulge in drinking illegally. This is further compounded by the fact that an older relative or friend is allowed to purchase the alcohol on behalf of the underage. This makes the law restrictive and ineffective. Proponents of this argument have also indicated that the assumption that a higher drinking age limit reduces the rate of drunken-driving and the dangers associated with it is just a myth. This is because there are higher rates of traffic accidents and fatalities in the first drinking years regardless of the age. This therefore takes the debate over

accidents away from age to other factors (NIAAA, 11).

Since it is apparent that more youths still consume alcohol regardless of the fact that it is illegal, reducing the age limit will encourage more youths who are ailing from alcohol related issues to seek medical attention and help thus avoiding deaths and further damage. With the current prohibition, more of them are forced to hide due to the fear of being arrested and subjected to the law for committing illegal acts. A blanket prohibitive law is also unfair since it does not put into consideration the unique demographic, historical, cultural and legal contexts of the people. This is so, for instance, because there are parents who feel that they have the cultural obligation to introduce their children to alcohol consumption at an early stage since the same happened to them. As such, states should be allowed to regulate the age limit without the overreach of the federal government (Wagenaar, 27).

Lowering the minimum legal drinking age to 18 will also be advantageous to the economy since more individuals will be able to do so in licensed establishments like bars and restaurants thus improving on the amount of revenue collected through taxation to these businesses. Lastly, drinking is a leisure activity and there is no justification for denying individuals between 18 and 20 years of age to enjoy themselves especially since they are allowed to indulge into other legal pleasurable activities after they attain the age of 18 (Gottfried, 67).

Arguments for a minimum drinking age limit of 21

Proponents of this argument assert that while 18 is the age for attaining adulthood, the youths are not mature enough to take alcohol responsibility

and are therefore more likely to harm themselves if they indulge before they are 21. The argument here is that the frontal lobes of their brains, that are responsible for essential functions like planning, emotional regulation and organization, are still developing and could therefore be seriously damaged by alcohol consumption. This can further lead to chronic problems like addiction, memory loss, suicide, violence, hazardous risk-taking behavior and reduced decision making ability. Allowing this would be medical irresponsibility (Saunders & Rey, 93).

The issue of age is still paramount since many rights in the U. S. are enjoyed when one attains the age of 21. A person is, for example, legally allowed to purchase and handle a handgun, adopt a child, gamble at a casino at the age of 21, and run for presidency at the age of 35. This is so because it is generally assumed that at a certain age, an individual has accumulated enough experience and knowledge to know that his or her actions have an effect on others as well as themselves. Higher drinking age is also associated with low alcohol consumption. This has an implication in the number of accidents and incidents related to drunk driving as well as their degree of fatality (Gottfried, 64). In reality, individuals whose drinking debut is delayed to 21 years or above, tend to drink less in their entire adulthood thus avoiding some of the debilitating conditions that come with alcohol addiction later in life.

Raising the minimum legal drinking age to 21 exerts more social pressure on potential underage alcohol consumers to avoid the habit. Since most of the underage drinkers indulge as a result of peer pressure, the legal restriction will reduce the chances of exposure to alcohol thus avoiding their

recruitment to the drinking club. Even though older relatives and friends can purchase alcoholic drinks to the youth, the likelihood and frequency will still be marginalized as a result of the legal prohibition (Wagenaar, 24).

People tend to be more responsible and mature at age 21 than 18 since the latter are entering a new face of independence and are thus prone binge drinking and other irresponsible behavior like risky sexual behavior. It is also important to note that drinking impairs judgment especially to the younger drinkers which can increase their chances of indulging in other illicit drugs apart from alcohol. Delaying alcohol debut to 21 years has been known to save lives lost through drunken driving accidents as well as other chronic illnesses that result from alcoholism. It also inculcates personal responsibility for the youths especially in their formidable years of life (NIAAA, 17).

Responses to both arguments

In order to arrive to the most appropriate conclusion to the debate, it is important to observe the ethical considerations inherent in the debate. This implies that responsibility to others and self should be considered in determining the minimum legal drinking age. As such, while one is allowed to participate in legally binding activities at the age of 18, their ability to take up responsibility for the harm caused to their bodies as well as others is largely compromised by the virtue of their age. It would be ethically irresponsible and immoral to, therefore, allow underage consumption of alcohol since it not only endangers the youth, but also other people who might get caught up in their drunken driving accidents. The medical perspective also justifies the need to raise the minimum legal drinking age to

21 since at this age, one becomes psychologically and emotionally capable of making decisions that regard drinking behavior (Wagenaar, 12).

On the other hand, while the blanket laws prohibiting alcohol consumption by youth under the age of 21 is well meaning, its application is also wanting. Implementation of the law might also make it very hard to regulate the illegal consumption which is more dangerous in the long run. The laws can also discourage the youths with the drinking problems from seeking help thereby negating the advantages that it is supposed to have. As such, it is imperative for the authorities to think of better ways of handling the laws so as to make sure that it is productive rather than counter-productive (Saunders & Rey, 111).

Considering the arguments, it is very clear that the issue is not drinking but responsibility. The point is if the youths at 18 years have the capacity to make sound judgments with regard to alcohol or whether they are mature enough to take up alcohol responsibility. This is where other stakeholders like the parents, community and the governments come into the equations since the divide between a responsible and irresponsible age is not definite. It is therefore the prerogative of these stakeholders to arrive to a decision that puts into consideration all of the delicate considerations so as to arrive to a generalizable conclusion.

Conclusion

The fact that alcohol has serious personal and social consequences is undisputable. The age at which individuals are initiated into its consumption is therefore important since it determines their drinking behavior in the

future and also the extent of the consequences. It is also clear that individuals below the age of 18 are physiologically in the process of maturation and therefore are likely to develop complications as a result of alcohol consumption. This brings us to the conclusion that the minimum drinking age should not be lowered to 18 since it is more beneficial, responsible and socially commendable.

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