

# Should the drinking age be lowered to 18? essay sample

[Food & Diet, Alcohol](#)



Narration: The MLDA affects you; it affects me, all of us. Imagine being invited to a party and feeling uncomfortable because those around you are drunk and disorderly. Imagine going to college and not being able to focus on your school work because campus partying is even more common than before; the only difference is that now it's legal. That's not something I see benefiting us as young adults. Lowering the MLDA to 18 years old is not what is going to help make our generation and future generations mature and thrive as young adults.

Claim #1: Higher legal drinking ages are associated with lower rates of traffic accidents. Support #1:

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration released that when the MLDA was increased to 21 in 1984, it decreased the number of fatal traffic accidents for 18- to 20-year-olds by 13%; which saved approximately 27,052 lives up to 2008. Because the legal driving age is over 16, 18 year olds have just started driving and are still learning control and the ways of the open road and their car. According to the NHTSA motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for 15-20 year olds alone. By allowing them to drink at such a young age, not only are they learning to drive but they also have to learn their limit and how alcohol will affect their driving. Recently New Zealand lowered its drinking age to 18, giving researchers an opportunity to watch the effects. The rate of alcohol related crashes among young people rose significantly compared to older drivers.

Claim #2: It's not working for European countries

Support #2:

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It is argued that the United States should mirror some European countries and lower their MLDA to 18 or even younger. But the idea that European countries are doing fine with their MLDA is false. The rate of drinking among US teenagers is lower than most European countries. US teenagers also show equal or lower rates of intoxication/binge drinking than do adolescents from most European countries, and most European countries report higher rates of intoxication and binge drinking for youth under 13. I don't think the solution to the issue is to have 13 year old adolescents binge drinking.

Claim #3: Underage has easier access to alcohol because of peers being legal  
Support #3:

Not many of us hang out with 21 year old adults because they are not in school with us every day. If we did, underage drinking would be a lot more common. If the MLDA were lowered to the age of 18, our peers would be of age to drink and purchase alcohol. This would increase underage drinking. So by allowing 18 year old young adults to drink we would also be allowing 17, 16, or even younger adolescents to drink. Not only can 18 year olds distribute alcohol, but they can put more pressure on school authorities by making it necessary to monitor teens at school functions such as dances and sporting events. A little partying before the game would be perfectly legal before they go out into the public and onto school grounds.

Claim #4: Causes rebellious age to be lower

Support #4:

21 year old adults tend to be more mature and responsible than 18 year olds. A typical 18 year old is entering a new phase of independence as they

move on to college or into the workforce. With this new freedom and lack of maturity comes disaster. They become more susceptible to binge drinking at parties and with drinking games. The proportion of current drinkers that are binge drinkers is highest in the 18- to 20-year-old group at 51% according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This just shows the immaturity of this age group because this statistic is while the law is still in place. If drinking were legal for them the percentage of binge drinkers is likely to rise in their age group. Binge drinking is associated with alcohol poisoning, liver disease, unintended pregnancies, fetal alcohol syndrome, neurological damage, and more. Drinking at a younger age increases ones likeliness to become addicted to the toxin, which increases the before mentioned risks as well as others.

Claim #5: Disregard for the law

Support #5:

If the MLDA is changed now, current and future teens will get the impression that the laws are subject to change. Because of this they may be less likely to respect the law and it can lead to further behavior problems with young adults. This may lead to rising crime rates of that age group or even older. Lowering the MLDA will hurt the respect for the law that increasing the age actually established. Since 1984 studies indicate that when the drinking age is 21, those younger than 21 drink less and continue to drink less through their early 20s, and that youth who do not drink until they are 21 tend to drink less as adults.

Claim #6: More likely to use other illicit drugs

Support #6:

A study from the Journal of Studies of Alcohol and Drugs found that the younger a person begins to drink alcohol the more likely it is that they will use other illicit drugs. Lowering the MLDA to 18 would increase the number of teens who drink and therefore the number of teens who use other drugs. As teens use dangerous drugs they are more likely to be involved in criminal behavior or less concerned with school work and other responsibilities.

Claim #7: Development in frontal lobe is affected in young adults Support #7:

At the age of 18 a part of the teenager's brain called the frontal lobe is not fully developed. The frontal lobe is not fully developed until the mid-20's. This lobe is responsible for planning, forming ideas, making decisions, and using self-control. Drugs and alcohol target this under developed part of the brain. The alcohol affects the "white-matter" of the brain which contains nerve fibers and is involved in transmitting messages between brain cells. Because the alcohol targets this part of the brain and it is already not fully mature, the self-control function of the brain is easily disrupted. This could result in further irresponsible behavior. When alcohol affects the frontal lobes of the brain, a person may find it hard to control his or her emotions and urges. The person may act without thinking or may even become violent. Drinking alcohol over a long period of time can damage the frontal lobes forever. The consequences of the damage can affect the quality of life far beyond adolescence.

The effects of lowering the MLDA to 18 years old have consequences that can affect our lives, and those who come after us, for forever.

### Cross Examination

Does it really make one an adult because of their age, or does it take more than just a number? Many decisions are not granted until one is above the age of 18, 19, or 20.

Are maturity levels really capable of handling alcohol at eighteen? Maturity levels obviously get better the older one gets, so the younger the drinking age, the less maturity an adult has, granting less responsibility while one is under the influence.

Doesn't lowering the drinking age push children into drinking in more unsafe environments at younger ages?

Since underage drinkers are a problem within many countries, wouldn't lowering the drinking age cause a push into a younger age bracket of underage drinkers?

### Rebuttal

Refutation #1: Are you an adult at eighteen?

Proof #1: Legally, turning eighteen does mean one becomes an adult, but the maturity levels and responsibilities actually determine one's adulthood. Many responsibilities and eligibilities do not occur until one is older than 20; such as, gambling (21), renting a car (usually 25), renting a hotel room

(usually 21), purchase a handgun (21), adopt a child (21), run for President (35). While documentation shows that one truly becomes an adult when one turns 18, however, many huge decisions cannot be made until above the age of 20.

Refutation #2: Driving statistics are better with a higher drinking age. Proof #2: A U. S. district court ruled that the drinking age of 21 has reduced highway crashes. From a NHTSA, which is the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, an analysis showed the percentage of weekend nighttime drivers were found in 2007 with 3. 2% lower blood-alcohol concentration level than in 1986.

Refutation #3: Lowering the drinking age wouldn't actually take away the rebellious attitude for younger ages. Proof #3: While many children act rebelliously and find a thrill by drinking underage illegally, the chances of underage drinkers are less likely. Underage drinkers feel much more social pressure with MLDA 21 because alcohol being illegal causes younger drinkers to be more cautious about the decisions they make and where they drink. Lowering the drinking age also indicates easier access of liquor to younger ages because peers surrounding them have access to alcohol, granting underage children with access to alcohol much simpler than now.

Refutation #4: Mirroring the morals and laws of many other countries around the world could be harmful. Proof #4: If the United States mirrored many European countries and lowered the drinking age to 18, people would be more likely to start drinking at younger ages. A U. S. Department of Justice

held a study in 2005 showing that U. S. teens drank equal to lower amount of intoxications compared to European countries. European countries also reported rates of intoxication for individuals under the age of 13. So lowering the drinking age also lowers the bracket of underage drinkers and perhaps causing many dilemmas within younger age groups.

Refutation #5: Teens would not be able to handle their alcohol responsibly.

Proof #5: Teenagers are more likely to harm or even kill themselves when intoxicated at younger age because the levels of maturity, but even more importantly, level of alcohol is more unknown and less understood by younger adults. Drinking at a younger age would cause there to be more injuries and accidents due to a lack of understanding and proper handling of alcohol.

Refutation #6: Would many people support lowering the drinking age to 18?

Proof #6: A Gallup poll in 2007 stated that “ 77% of Americans would oppose a federal law that lowers the drinking age in all states to age 18.” While individuals do support lowering MLDA 21 to 18, a public vote shows that more favor would be given to sustaining the drinking age at 21.

Closing of Rebuttal:

So I conclude you all with this last thought: lowering the drinking age causes children to have easier access to alcohol from peers as well as lowers the age of “ rebellion” to a younger age. Just think of when you have children of your own, the situations you would want them to encounter, and that keeping the drinking age at 21 keeps him or her a much safer individual.