

# Lowering the drinking age

Life



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“ Nearly 10 million youths, ages 12 to 20, in this country report they have consumed alcohol in the past 30 days. ” (“ City Council”) Teens use alcohol for a numerous amount of reasons, ranging from celebration to stress to boredom and underage drinking has now become a hobby done behind closed doors. The legal limit today in the United states has been 21 since the 1984, requiring all states to raise the minimum age for purchase and possession of alcohol to 21, but that is not stopping teens from underage drinking. The Minimum Legal Drinking Age is largely ineffective because teens are going to drink whether it is legal or not.

The minimum drinking age limit should be lowered to 18 because 18 year olds are adults, teens would drink in a more controlled manner, and there would be less unsafe incidents. In the US, 18 is the age of adulthood, so adults should have the right to make their own decisions, especially pertaining to alcohol consumption. “ Turning 18 entails receiving the rights and responsibilities of adulthood to vote, smoke cigarettes, serve on juries, get married, sign contracts, be prosecuted as adults, and join the military. ” (Chiappetta) Some of these rights even put you at the risk of death.

If at the age of 18, you are allowed to make all of those decisions for yourself, then why not with alcohol? This question still remains unanswered. Republican Richard Marron states, “ It just doesn't sit right with me that people [at the age of 18] have the right to do everything else, including serve their country, but don't have the right to consume alcohol, it's a form of age discrimination. ” Being an adult means making your own choices. If 18 year olds are held mature old enough to enlist or vote, it should be held consistent allowing them to buy and drink alcohol.

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Many argue against the claim that you are old enough to drink at 18. Opponents of lowering the drinking age argue that teens have not yet reached an acceptable age where they can handle alcohol responsibly. " The discrepancy between the MLDA and the age of majority--and its many responsibilities and authorities--along with continued incidents of alcohol abuse reported on college campuses have fueled debate that setting the MLDA at 21 is fair, smart, and effective. " (Drinking Age Procon. org) The age of 21 should not make a significant impact on anything. A three year age difference doesn't decide whether someone is mature or responsible enough to drink. That is solely based off their decision, and if they make that choice to drink, then they will face any of the consequences that may come with it. Lowering the drinking age would also increase teens drinking in a controlled, responsible manner. " Prohibiting this age group from drinking in bars, restaurants, and other licensed locations causes them to drink in unsupervised places such as fraternity houses or house parties where they may be more prone to binge drinking and other unsafe behavior. " (" The Time Has Come to Address the Reality of Alcohol in America").

Young adults will sneak around if they are not allowed the chance to drink responsibly in a supervised situation. It is no secret that teens drink, so why not just make it legal instead of them taking the risk of trying to hide it? " Reality is reality and the fact is that 18-20 year olds drink. We need to create a safe and open environment for that reality to take place. " (Henig) Teens do not want to hide it, but if they want to drink they have to, and being supervised is going to result in less binge drinking and engaging in less dangerous activities.

The age of 21 treats them and causes to handle things in an untrusting way. How are they ever going to act responsibly if they aren't trusted? It is argued that lowering the drinking age is only going to create even more dangerous incidents, and that the 21 age minimum is preventing them from happening. " MLDA 21 helps prevent underage binge drinking. " (" Drinking Age Pro Con") Statistics show that " Binge drinking peaks among 21- to 25-year-olds at 45. 9%, while the binge drinking rates of those aged 12-13, 14-15, 16-17, and 18-20 are 1. 5%, 7. 8%, 19. 4%, and 35. 7% respectively. (" Results from the 2007 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National Findings") If the age limit were change, that would not necessarily raise the percentage, especially if the teens are supervised and being responsible enough. Even if the teens are responsible though, people still think that, " Lowering the drinking age would make alcohol more accessible to teens and increase the amount of binge drinking. " (Dean-Mooney) While the age limit may make it more difficult for them to buy it, teens already have access to alcohol, being 21 or not. It is in their homes, their friends homes, restaurants, and everywhere else they go.

Teens are constantly surrounded by alcohol, and there is no stopping them from obtaining it, and being around an adult with it is only going to make it more safe, stopping them from making any destructive decisions. Another reason the limit should be lowered is because there would be an decrease in unsafe activities. There are less traffic accidents with countries who have a Minimum Legal Drinking Age of 18. " Although the United States increased the MLDA to 21 in 1984, its rate of traffic accidents and fatalities in the 1980s decreased less than that of European countries whose legal drinking

ages are lower than 21. (Dee, Evans). That is because allowing them to drink younger where they are supervised is going to stop them from getting in a car. They will have that consent over them to make sure that they do not, but it is not just 18 year olds that are at risk. " In 2009, the 21- to 24-year-old age group had the highest percentage of drivers in fatal crashes with blood-alcohol concentration (BAC) levels of .08 or higher - 35 percent. " (Asch, Levy). Anyone who drinks is at risk, whether you're a new drinker, or you have been drinking your whole life.

If anyone is at risk, then why is lowering the drinking age raising so many problems? With lowering the drinking age, it is proposed that the right to drink needs to be a higher age due to the dangers posed by drinking. " 100 of the 102 analyses (98%) in a 2002 meta-study of the legal drinking age and traffic accidents found higher legal drinking ages associated with lower rates of traffic accidents. " (Wagenaar, Toomey). This is a major proponent for why the age limit should remain at 21, but again, anyone is in danger of an accident if they drink and drive.

While an older aged person may be more experienced with alcohol and with driving, all the same risks still remain. Underage drinking is also said to be more linked to risky behavior and injury. According to the U. S. Surgeon General, " About 5, 000 kids under 21 die every year as a result of underage drinking - from crashes, homicides, and suicides. " (" Did You Know? Dangers of Teen Drinking") It has actually been proven though, that alcohol is not statistically rates of homicides or suicides, despite claims that lowering the legal drinking age to 18 would increase suicide and criminal activities by adolescents.

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Evidence proves to show that the Minimum Legal Drinking Age should be lowered to the age of 18 because 18 is the age of adults, young adults drinking in a controlled manner, and a decrease in unsafe drinking activities. Lowering the drinking age is definitely something that should be considered. The issues that come with lowering the age limit may be evident but being in control of these issues will help the success of passing this new law.