

# Should the drinking age be raised to 21 essay sample

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



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According to a report, " Health First: An evidence-based alcohol strategy for the UK". " The personal, social and economic cost of alcohol has been estimated to be up to £55bn per year for England and £7. 5bn for Scotland," Research carried out by Sheffield University for the government shows a 45p minimum would reduce the consumption of alcohol by 4. 3%, leading to 2, 000 fewer deaths and 66, 000 hospital admissions after 10 years.

Researchers also claim the number of crimes would drop by 24, 000 a year. From an economic perspective, we say that alcohol is a demerit good.

1. People may underestimate the personal costs of drinking alcohol to excess (especially amongst young people)
2. There are external costs to society, e. g. costs of health care, costs of treating accidents, days lost from work. Therefore the social cost of alcohol is greater than the private cost. These two factors give a justification for government intervention to deal with some issues related to alcohol. Raising the legal drinking age could help reduce these personal and social costs because it is more difficult to purchase. Arguments against raising the drinking age to 21

At 18, people can vote and are considered adults, so we should allow them to have a personal decision on whether to consume alcohol. Alcohol in moderation isn't necessarily harmful. Rather than a blanket ban, the government could focus on tackling binge drinking through making alcohol more expensive and tackling the drinking culture. Drinking alcohol is so embedded in the culture, raising the legal age to 21, will make the majority of young people break the law. It will encourage people to find ways to

circumnavigate the law. Black market alcohol supplies, which may be harder to monitor. Arguably, there are better ways to deal with problems of alcohol. Will Raising the drinking age to 21 be effective?

Raising the drinking age to 21 will reduce consumption amongst young people because it will be harder to buy alcohol. Also, young people are the most likely group to misuse alcohol; e. g. drinking to excess, which causes accidents, death and health problems. If people start drinking later in life, they may be more likely to drink in moderation and not get addicted at an early age. However, it will still be possible for young people to drink at home. People will find ways to avoid the legislation e. g. asking older people to buy alcohol for them. Nevertheless, it will be more difficult. For example, a 16 year old may not be able to get away with drinking in a pub any more. If the age is 18, it is much easier for a 16 or 17 year old to get away with drinking alcohol.

This policy doesn't address the underlying problem of why people want to drink to excess. For that education may be a better solution; education could help to explain the dangers of excess drinking and therefore encourage young people to drink moderation.. However, previous education policies have not seemed to be very effective. Young people don't want to hear lectures from the government about the dangers of alcohol.

### Other Solutions

Higher taxes increase the cost of alcohol and may have a significant effect in reducing demand amongst young people, who have lower disposable

incomes. If demand is reduced by say 20% this may reduce many of the problems of over-consumption. This policy also raises revenue for the government. But, on the other hand, it may increase the incentive to import low duty alcohol from abroad. Demand for alcohol may also be inelastic and not effective in stopping consumption. See also: Tax on alcohol

Minimum price for alcohol - pros and cons

In practise there is very little that the government can do to change social and individual attitudes to alcohol, which is the root cause of most alcohol abuse. In the US the legal drinking age is 21. They still have many alcohol related problems, but, it is significantly more difficult for young people to regularly drink alcohol. What do you think - should alcohol be illegal for under 21s?