

# Keeping the drinking age at 21

Life



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Listening to the news on television, hearing other students talk about it, is it really true, or are they going to lower the drinking age to 18? This is not just a rumor but nowhere have they actually lowered the age. The debate has been talked about for the last few years. The nation has always tried different things to solve the irresponsible drinking problems. In order to try and prevent this problem America has tried a national prohibition in the 1920's and state prohibitions in the 1850's. Many believe that raising the drinking age has saved lives of many young adults.

There has been evidence that the drinking age of 21 has decreased the amount of tragic car accidents related to alcohol between young adults. Since 1987 the decrease of drinking and driving problems have gone down. If they did lower the drinking age to 18 or 19 the more health related problems the young adults would deal with once they get older. On the other hand the current law of the minimum drinking age at 21 leads to problems behind the scenes. The amount of students at colleges under the age 21 are more likely to be binge drinkers, which means they have more than five drinks in a row.

This can be very dangerous to the body. Many also argue that if a person is old enough to fight for the country they should be old enough to have a beer. Also if a people are expected to be able responsible and live on their own at eighteen they should be able to be responsible enough to drink on their own. There are many pros and cons to lowering the drinking age, but the most important reason not to lower the drinking age is to protect the lives of young adults. A survey found that out of 1, 881 surveyed college students 88 percent of males and 86 percent of females said they were drinkers (Gonzalez 2).

Many adults have noticed the problem of underage drinking and want to fix the problem. If the states were to lower the drinking age we would be putting many lives at risk. Many studies have shown that the minimum drinking age of 21 has saved many lives when it turns to drinking and driving. In the article College-age Drinking Problems states “ the age limit at 21 has saved 16, 500 lives in traffic crashes alone since 1975” (Hingson 1). Traffic crashes are one of the leading causes of deaths in America for people under the age 25. 10, 431 people between ages 15 and 24 died in 1996 from fatal traffic crashes and 45% of them were related to alcohol (1). By leaving the drinking age to 21 it will continue to save many lives from traffic crashes. The amount of alcohol related accidents doubles if a person has a . 02 percent increase in blood alcohol level. For people under 21 drinking and driving increases the risk of being involved in a fatal traffic crash with each alcoholic drink they have. As Hingson says “ For young drivers, drinking is like throwing gasoline on a fire” (1).

It is illegal for anyone under 21 to drive with blood alcohol level more than . 0 percent. With this law alcohol related traffic deaths has dropped 57 percent from 5380 in 1982 to 2315 in 1996 with people ages 15 to 20 (2).

Lowering the legal limit for the amount allowed of blood alcohol content (BAC) for drivers will continue to save lives. The lowering of BAC has shown a 5 to 8 percent decrease in alcohol related traffic crashes (Wagenaar 6).

Drivers under 21 who are intoxicated are more likely to get involved in traffic crashes, because they have less experience on the road.

Communities have noticed the problem with underage drinking and driving and started The Saving Lives Project, which was designed to reduce alcohol  
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impaired driving and related problems (Holder 2). This project uses media and education to get the word out about the risk of drinking. The communities that are apart of this project have shown a 40 percent reduction in alcohol related fatal crashes (Holder 2). The project has been shown that older teens ages sixteen to nineteen are now less likely to drink and drive after learning about the risks in alcohol related classes.

Colleges that have set a week to focus on education and prevention of alcohol have shown a five-fold increase (Gonzalez 4). Not only does alcohol affect a person once they drink a beverage but it also affects them in their future. If people start drinking at a younger age the more problems they will encounter in their future. Over the life of many people it has been proven that most people drink the most in their late teens and early twenties (Chen 1). Drinking in young adults is turning to be a serious concern with public health. By exceeding the daily drinking limit is about four or more drinks in a single day, and college teens shown that they binge drink. Binge drinking is when a person consumes more than five drinks in one setting (Hingson 1). People who binge drinks are more likely to do things they regret, fall back in schoolwork and become hurt or injured. Alcohol can cause risky behaviors and immediate and long-term problems with health. Becoming stricter on under age drinking laws can prevent this. If the cops gave more MIP's out to parties with underage drinking teens would be less likely to drink. Even though many would agree to keep the drinking age at 21, many would also have many reasons why to lower the drinking age to 18.

One main argument is if a person is old enough to fight for the country, vote or live on their own they should be old enough to drink (Johnson 1). If a man  
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and women is old enough to go to war and put their life at risk they should be able to drink on their own. People would argue if they are old enough to vote for the person who runs the country, then what's the difference in choosing the responsibility of drinking. Colleges have also debated the fact of lowering the drinking age. College president McCardell says " it does not reduce drinking. It simply puts young adults at greater risks. (2) Many agree with McCardell and say that the drinking age of 21 does not prevent college students from drinking. It just causes them to drink under ground. If young adults do drink under ground they are more likely to binge drink and put their life at risk. " 85 percent of 20 year old Americans reported that they have used alcohol, and two out of five said they have binge drank" (2). Johnson believes that if they lowering the drinking age young adults would learn to drink responsibly and stop binge drinking. Even though they are great arguments, raising the drink to 21 has proof with statistics that it has saved lives of many each year.

It is more important to save the lives of people than it is to let them drink. Educating young adults about the risks of drinking can also prevent binge drinking. If the community worked together to have alcohol awareness days more people would be aware of the problem of underage drinking. The more people know about the problem the more people will work together to stop the problem. It can also stop underage drinking by creating more laws towards the people who sell to minors. If more people got in trouble for selling to minors the less people would sell to minors.

The communities who have taken the step up in stopping underage drinking problems have noticed a huge change in the amount of deaths related to

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alcohol. By keeping the age at 21, it will continually save lives of accidents related to alcohol. If there was not a problem with the drinking age at 21 they would have never raised the age to 21, the law was set in place for a reason and it has been shown that it is a good law. As a parent many are worried about their children and want to make sure they will not ruin their life with alcohol related problems.