

Question: Should the alcohol drinking age be lowered to 18?

Thesis: The drinking age of twenty-one should remain the way it is, because young adults decision making with alcohol is usually poor to moderate at best, the amount of wild drinking parties would only rise if eighteen were to become the legal drinking age, and fatalities and other consequences of alcohol abuse would rise as well.

Outline of Main Points:

1) Teenagers do not know it all, especially when it comes to the proper use of alcohol, and even without alcohol their mental faculties are limited more than a mature adults.

a) Students can vote, they can smoke, and they can go to war, but that doesn't mean they can make smart decisions about drinking alcohol.

b) According to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), "Humans brains don't fully develop until 25 years old."

c) Alcohol is a depressant, and teenagers can have negative health effects from alcohol heightened at a younger age including alcohol poisoning and impaired motor skills.

d) Letting teens have more access to alcohol earlier will increase the amount of alcohol poisonings, and it will encourage the consumption of alcohol instead of warning against it.

2) Alcohol is used as a deadly substance by 18-21 year olds, it will only enhance the availability of binge drinking.

a) According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 1,825 college students die each year from drinking, and half of them are related to binge drinking.

b) According to Middlebury College President John Mccardell, "The law has driven binge drinking underground, making underage drinking more secret and dangerous." However, keeping the drinking age at 21 will keep teenagers accountable for their binge drinking, and the law will still hang over their head.

c) Law enforcement can't stop binge drinking, but it would have an even harder time trying to police a much larger population of drinkers, and possible binge drinkers.

d) Alcohol would be more available for "pre-games," and other events where students get heavily intoxicated with alcohol, and possibly other harmful drugs.

3) Alcohol touches many facets of life other than binge drinking, and the increased circulation of alcohol will increase the likelihood of these facets being negatively affected.

a) According to the State University of New York, "28 percent of alcohol related traffic accidents were from people that are between the ages of 18 and 25." This statistic shows the inability for young adults to separate themselves from the disastrous nature of drunk driving.

b) Alcohol consumption and driving are closely related, and the increased availability of alcohol would increase the likelihood of drunk driving related deaths.

c) The lowered drinking age would also have an effect on the circulation of alcohol to minors under 18, and in general. Because more people are able to buy alcohol, companies will produce more alcohol, leading to a prospective increase in drunk driving accidents, drug usage accompanied with alcohol, and many other harmful uses and applications of alcohol.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "88,000 people die of events and actions stemming from alcohol abuse every year in the United States." The number of people who die from alcohol abuse every year is ridiculous. If this many people die every year from alcohol abuse, than why should we allow less mature people to obtain it legally at such a young age? The consequences of lowering the drinking age to eighteen far outweigh the benefits. The drinking age of twenty-one should remain the way it is, because young adults decision making with alcohol is usually poor to moderate at best, the amount of wild drinking parties would only rise if eighteen were to become the legal drinking age, and fatalities and other consequences of alcohol abuse would rise as well.

The problem with eighteen year olds drinking alcohol starts with their decision making. Teenagers do not know it all, especially when it comes to the proper use of alcohol, and even without alcohol their mental faculties are more limited than a mature adult. Students can vote, they can smoke, and they can go to war, but that doesn't mean they can make smart decisions about drinking alcohol. According to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), "Humans brains don't fully develop until twenty-five years old." The way teenagers and young adults make decisions is not comparable to the way that the majority of the mature alcohol drinking population make decisions when intoxicated. Young adults are more likely to make questionable decisions with alcohol the younger they get, because human brains are naturally less developed the younger they are, starting at the baseline age twenty-five. Furthermore, once young adults have made these questionable decisions, the effect that alcohol has on their body is more potent the younger they are. Alcohol poisoning and impaired motor skills are both deadly, as the former can kill you or leave you hospitalized, and the latter can make you more susceptible to being hit by cars and to being injured by result of a fall, as well as being more susceptible to pick-pocketing, kidnapping, or even rape in sever cases of intoxication. All these negative consequences are underlined by an unsettling message that might arise from a lowered drinking age, the message that alcohol consumption is perfectly alright in every way, and that the country trusts every young adult to be responsible with alcohol. This message would be the absolute wrong message.

According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, "1,825 college students die each year from drinking." This statistic can be almost directly attributed to binge drinking. Alcohol is used as a deadly substance by eighteen to twenty-one years old, and the major way that college students abuse alcohol is binge drinking. Whether it is twenty beers, or twelve shots of hard liquor, college students that are under twenty-one who are influenced by students over twenty-one are resorting to getting wasted as a form of enjoyment. One form of enjoyment through binge drinking is called "pre-gaming." Alcohol would be more available for "pre-games," and other events where students get heavily intoxicated with alcohol, and possibly other harmful drugs. All of this "enjoyment" could be attributed to the current law of twenty-one being the drinking age, because if teenagers really wanted to drink under a system that allowed it, than they might choose to drink less. According to Middlebury College President John Mccardell, "The law has driven binge drinking underground, making underage drinking more

secret and dangerous." However, keeping the drinking age at twenty-one will keep teenagers accountable for their binge drinking, and the law will still hang over their head. Even if they thought they could make the right decision, risking that would be too fatal. Besides, even though law enforcement can't stop binge drinking, it would have an even harder time trying to police a much larger population of drinkers.

Alcohol touches many facets of life other than binge drinking, and the increased circulation of alcohol will increase the likelihood of these facets being negatively affected. According to the State University of New York, "twenty-eight percent of alcohol related traffic accidents were from people that are between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five." This statistic shows the inability for young adults to separate themselves from the disastrous nature of drunk driving. Alcohol consumption and driving are closely related, and the increased availability of alcohol would increase the likelihood of drunk driving related deaths. The lowered drinking age would also have an effect on the circulation of alcohol to minors under eighteen, because then eighteen year olds who had younger brothers or sisters who wanted alcohol could get it more easily and be able to enjoy it in their homes. The lowered drinking age would also have an effect on the circulation of alcohol in general. Because more people are able to buy alcohol, companies will produce more alcohol, leading to a prospective increase in drunk driving accidents, drug usage accompanied with alcohol, and many other harmful uses and applications of alcohol.

Overall, the drinking age is fine just where it is. Even though we can't predict the future, I would hedge my bets on teenagers not being able to handle alcohol in a mature fashion as many adults do. But instead of just leaving the age limit where it is, I would propose a few changes as well to the focus of all schools alcohol education programs. I would like to see schools give an unbiased view of alcohol, and instead of skirting around the issue of consuming it, they need to get down to the minute details of alcohol. More rigorous alcohol training in school is needed, because students don't really understand the real effects of alcohol. Too many teenagers I know tune out health teachers because of the biased approach that many teachers take towards alcohol education. They believe that the teacher is just telling them what not to do, instead of giving them the facts and letting them decide. I think when teenagers feel that they are making their own decisions, they are more inclined to make the responsible one because they don't feel pressured. When the age of twenty-one comes for prospective drinkers, I believe with proper training that we can actually reduce deaths and misfortunes that come with alcohol usage.

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