SB 3 Articles/Lowering the Drinking Age Act:

Why the drinking age should be lowered: Articles: Alcohol Research and Health History: Indiana University

Why the drinking age should be lowered: An opinion based upon research

Engs, Ruth C. (1997, 2014). “Why the drinking age should be lowered: An opinion based upon research. Indiana University: Bloomington, IN. Adapted from: IUScholarWorks Repository: http://hdl.handle.net/2022/17594

Summary

The legal drinking age should be lowered to about 18 or 19 and young adults allowed to drink in controlled environments such as restaurants, taverns, pubs and official school and university functions. In these situations responsible drinking could be taught through role modeling and educational programs. Mature and sensible drinking behavior would be expected. This opinion is based upon research that I have been involved in for over thirty years concerning college age youth and the history of drinking in the United States and other cultures.

Although the legal purchase age is 21 years of age, a majority of college students under this age consume alcohol but in an irresponsible manner. This is because drinking by these youth is seen as an enticing "forbidden fruit," a "badge of rebellion against authority" and a symbol of "adulthood." As a nation we have tried prohibition legislation twice in the past for controlling irresponsible drinking problems. This was during National Prohibition in the 1920s and state prohibition during the 1850s. These laws were finally repealed because they were unenforceable and because the backlash towards them caused other social problems. Today we are repeating history and making the same mistakes that occurred in the past. Prohibition did not work then and prohibition for young people under the age of 21 is not working now.

The flaunting of the current laws is readily seen among university students. Those under the age of 21 are more likely to be heavy -- sometimes called "binge" -- drinkers (consuming over 5 drinks at least once a week). For example, 22% of all students under 21 compared to 18% over 21 years of age are heavy drinkers. Among drinkers only, 32% of under-age compared to 24% of legal age are heavy drinkers.

Research from the early 1980s until the present has shown a continuous decrease, and then leveling off, in drinking and driving related variables which has parallel the nation's, and also university students, decrease in per capita consumption. However, these declines started in 1980 before the national 1987 law which mandated states to have 21 year old alcohol purchase laws.

The decrease in drinking and driving problems are the result of many factors and not just the rise in purchase age or the decreased per capita consumption. These include: education concerning drunk

driving, designated driver programs, increased seat belt and air bag usage, safer automobiles, lower speed limits, free taxi services from drinking establishments, etc.

While there has been a decrease in per capita consumption and motor vehicle crashes, unfortunately, during this same time period there was an INCREASE in other problems related to heavy and irresponsible drinking among college age youth. Most of these reported behaviors showed little change until AFTER the 21 year old law in 1987. For example from 1982 until 1987 about 46% of students reported "vomiting after drinking." This jumped to over 50% after the law change. Significant increase were also found for other variables: "cutting class after drinking" jumped from 9% to almost 12%; "missing class because of hangover" went from 26% to 28%; "getting lower grade because of drinking" rose from 5% to 7%; and "been in a fight after drinking" increased from 12% to 17%. All of these behaviors are indices of irresponsible drinking. This increase in abusive drinking behavior is due to "underground drinking" outside of adult supervision in student rooms, houses, and apartments where same age individuals congregate. The irresponsible behavior is exhibited because of lack of knowledge of responsible drinking behaviors, reactance motivation (rebellion against the law), or student sub-culture norms.

Beginning in the first decade of the 21st century, distilled spirits [hard liquor] began to be the beverage of choice rather than beer among collegians. Previously beer had been the beverage of choice among students. A 2013 study of nursing students, for example, revealed that they consumed an average of 4.3 shots of liquor compared to 2.6 glasses of beer on a weekly basis.

This change in beverage choice along with irresponsible drinking patterns among young collegians has led to increased incidences of alcohol toxicity - in some cases leading to death from alcohol poisoning. However, the percent of students who consume alcohol or are heavy or binge drinkers has been relatively stable for the past 30 years.

Based upon the fact that our current prohibition laws are not working, the need for alternative approaches from the experience of other, and more ancient cultures, who do not have these problems need to be tried. Groups such as Italians, Greeks, Chinese and Jews, who have few drinking related problems, tend to share some common characteristics. Alcohol is neither seen as a poison or a magic potent, there is little or no social pressure to drink, irresponsible behavior is never tolerated, young people learn at home from their parents and from other adults how to handle alcohol in a responsible manner, there is societal consensus on what constitutes responsible drinking. Because the 21 year old drinking age law is not working, and is counterproductive, it behooves us as a nation to change our current prohibition law and to teach responsible drinking techniques for those who chose to consume alcoholic beverages.

Research articles that support this opinion are found in the Indiana University Repository at: https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/handle/2022/17133/browse?type=title

and https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/handle/2022/17130/browse?type=title

Some material here also used in: Engs, Ruth C. "Should the drinking age be lowered to 18 or 19." In Karen Scrivo, "Drinking on Campus," *CQ Researcher* 8 (March 20,1998):257.

https://alcohol.iu.edu/articles/drinking-age/index.html

The legal drinking age should not be lowered

Sebastian Anguiano, Opinions Editor • November 30, 2023

The legal drinking age should not be lowered in the U.S.

I say this because it helps reduce alcohol-related accidents and promotes safer drinking habits. High school and college students, being the most vulnerable people when it comes to the illegal consumption of alcohol, is why I want to write this. Young adults may not have the same level of maturity and judgment as older individuals and a higher drinking age helps protect their health and safety. The age should not be lowered due to the social and health problems caused by drinking. The main cause for accidents in the U.S is led by being under the influence. How many of those accidents are caused by illegal drinking, you might ask?

It is crazy to think what the country would be like if the legal drinking age was lowered. Studies have shown that a higher drinking age is associated with reduced traffic fatalities and alcohol related injuries.

“Car crashes are a leading cause of death for teens, and about a quarter of fatal crashes involve an underage drinking driver. In 2021, 27% of young drivers from the ages of 15 to 20 years old who were killed in crashes had BACs of .01 g/dL or higher.”

Delaying access to alcohol can promote healthier lifestyle choices and protect young people from the potential long-term effects of excessive drinking. Furthermore, the current age limit of 21 in the U.S has helped to decrease in binge-illegal drinking among young people. It ensures that alcohol is out of minors reach, decreasing the burden on law enforcements and parents.

It’s common for people to inquire about the legal drinking age when they are planning to travel to a different country. The legal drinking age varies widely from one country to another.

Cultural attitudes towards alcohol can differ, so travelers may want to be mindful of social norms related to drinking in the places they visit.

It’s absurd that we have to argue about lowering the legal drinking age. But how is it that people still argue about lowering the age while the voting and draft eligibility age is 18. At 18, Americans are able to assume the responsibility of choosing their government representatives and risking their lives for their country. It’s seen as inconsistent that young adults can make such important decisions but cannot legally consume alcohol.

The suffrage that innocent people have been through due to irresponsible drinking should be enough to keep the legal drinking age at 21 years-old. I don't see any pros that lowering the drinking age would bring. I think it would even target and attract younger audiences to drink more.

https://www.theskylineview.com/opinions/2023/11/30/the-legal-drinking-age-should-not-be-lowered/