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Pros and cons of lowering the drinking age

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Pros

1. Turning 18 entails receiving the rights and responsibilities of adulthood to vote, serve on juries, get married, sign contracts, join the military - which includes taking on the responsibilities of life and death - and be prosecuted as adults. Adults from the age of 18 should therefore also be trusted to make decisions about alcohol consumption.
2. When adolescents are not taught to drink in moderation, they end up binge drinking.
3. Traffic fatalities in the 1980s decreased less than that of European countries whose legal drinking ages are lower than 21.
4. Lowering the drinking age will make alcohol less of a taboo, take away the thrill that many young people get from breaking the law.
5. Prohibiting teens from drinking in bars, restaurants, and public locations has the effect of forcing them to drink in unsupervised places such as fraternity houses or house parties. Lowering the drinking age will allow teens to drink alcohol in regulated environments with supervision.
6. Moving the age to 21 has simply shifted the risk of fatal accidents from teens to young adults.
7. Enforcing the 21 year drinking age is expensive and inefficient. It would be more effective to spend money on educating youth about alcohol than to spend it on enforcement of drinking laws for 18- to 20-year-olds.
8. Setting the drinking age at 21 is unconstitutional because it is discrimination against the particular age group of 18- to 20-year-olds.

Cons

1. States that previously lowered the drinking age to 18, such as Massachussets, Michigan, and Maine, experienced an increase in alcohol-related crashes among the 18 to 20 age group.
2. Raising the drinking age back to 21 has decreased the percentage of fatal traffic accidents for those between 18 to 20 by 13 percent and has saved approximately 21,887 lives from 1975-2002.
3. Because teens are simultaneously undergoing physical changes, peer pressure, and new situations and urges, allowing them to consume alcohol can make them more vulnerable to drug and substance abuse, unplanned and unprotected sex, depression, violence and other social ills.
4. The percentage of underage drinkers has decreased since 1984.
5. When teens drink alcohol, they are more likely to binge drink than people above the age of 21, thus demonstrating that teens are more prone to alcohol abuse than older demographics and should not be allowed to consume alcohol.
6. Since teens who drink alcohol have a higher chance of academic failure, allowing teens to drink will negatively affect more students' academic performance.
7. Lower drinking ages to 16, 17, or 18 like the drinking age in some European countries is inappropriate for U.S. standards because American teens generally start driving at earlier ages and drive more often than their European counterparts. American teens are thus much more likely to drive under the influence of alcohol if the drinking age were lowered in the U.S.
8. The earlier a person begins alcohol use, the greater the chances are of that person becoming an alcoholic later in life.

Source: www.procon.org

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