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Should the Drinking Age be Lowered

80% of the college students admitted drinking despite the law stating that the minimum age for drinking alcohol should be 21 (NPR, 2014). The set limit of drinking alcohol is 21 among the states. The exceptions differ by state-by-state basis on aspects like medical requirements, adult supervision, home consumption, and others. This debate continues to evoke several reactions with no end in sight on an agreeable solution. Both sides of the debate raise significant issues regarding the drinking age. However, this paper offers an opposing opinion about lowering the drinking age. Reducing the age limit is associated with harm to young people, such as the negative impact on brain development, sexual assault, and increased unintentional accidents like car crashes.

The first reason for not lowering the age limit for drinking is that it will affect the brain development of young people. The “National Survey on Drug Abuse and Health” revealed that approximately 65% of students in college within the ages 18-22 engage in drinking alcohol each month (CNN, 2014). A majority of the students engage in binge drinking. Binge drinking may negatively impact the developing brain. Increased exposure to alcohol may lead to irreversible brain damage as well as cognitive deficits that also include memory issues. The most important time that is suitable for brain development is the teenage years. Brain neurons in this period grow and strengthen. Also, connections develop, allowing the brain to transmit information faster. Additionally, the development assists the brain process in processing complex thoughts. It is at this point that the brain undergoes a process that removes the infrequently used synapses. These developments in the brain significantly impact one's development as well as mental health. Another explanation related to harm is that during this time, adolescents experience lapses in judgment when they attempt to figure out what it takes to be an adult. The part of the brain that processes responsible for processing social as well as emotional information usually grows earlier in adolescents. However, the part dealing with abstract thought, impulse control, and judgment is not completely developed until the latter part of the 20s. The age limit should not be reduced due to this serious medical reason.

The second reason explaining why drinking should not get lowered is that drinking is associated with sexual assault. It is a pervasive issue within the colleges, and drinking is the primary reason for that. A study that involved 5,500 college females found out that almost 20% of them were victims of sexual assault in college (White & Hingson, 2013). There are young women who report getting raped while intoxicated. Most of the cases involving rape are usually when the victim is under alcohol influence and is incapacitated by it. Getting involved in alcohol heightens the chance that one can become a victim in several ways, like the reduction of ability to resist sexual aggression and impairment of perception of danger. Drinking should get restricted to avoid such issues.

Reducing the age of drinking alcohol will pose risks to young people due to dangers associated with drinking like car accidents. Prior to the minimum drinking age regulation, the age that was mostly associated with drink-driving was between age 16 and 20 years. After the age of drinking got raised, there was a significant reported reduction in the number of fatal road accidents between the years 1982 to 1995 from 61% to 31%, respectively (CNN, 2014). This age group saw a massive improvement more than other age groups. Also, drinking below age 21 years is greatly linked with impaired driving under the influence of alcohol (CDC, nd). Thus, drinking by people below the minimum age is strongly associated with unintentional injuries like car crashes. The minimum age limit should not get reduced to save lives.

Reducing the age limits for alcohol consumption will only cause harm to young people. The lives of these young individuals are at stake, and it is fair if the federal government can step in to offer protection to the public. The set age limit will help avoid the issues associated with excess alcohol consumption among the youth. The minimum age has been effective in attempting to solve several challenges linked with youth drinking. Changing the law would be a fatal mistake.

References

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