

Should The Minimum Drinking Age Be Lowered?

Posted on July 31, 2022

Introduction

The topic of lowering the drinking age has been under discussion for many decades. Alcohol undoubtedly has various negative effects, especially on children and young adults, if it is allowed without any supervision or age restriction. However, the proponents of lowering the minimum drinking age to 18 consistently argue that adults under the age of 18 years are conscious enough to use alcohol in a controlled way.

Previously, the age limit was lowered by 29 different states between 1970 and 1976, but the results were very destructive as highway deaths increased exponentially. This forced governments to increase the age limit to 21 in 1984 when the Uniform Drinking Act was passed, and all states were restricted to keeping the minimum drinking age at 21 to receive federal highway funds. The minimum drinking age has been 21 since then, and this matter has not yet been closed. In this regard, the following essay provides an in-depth analysis of the topic to conclude whether the minimum drinking age should be lowered or not by considering different social, health, and legal factors.

Descriptive Analysis

Alcohol is probably the most extensively used drug in the world, as when people become addicted, even if it does not take much time, it is highly likely that they will begin to use it as a regular drinking beverage. Contrary to popular belief that alcohol is a stimulant, it, in fact, damages the living cells, most importantly those in the brain. Also, it is one of the primary causes of other drug and substance abuse, risky sexual behaviour, and many other negative consequences, as reported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Therefore, if people are allowed to drink at a lower age, young adults are prone to many social and health disturbances.

Moreover, drinking reduces the reaction time, making it very difficult for an alcoholic person to control his or her body which leads to an increasing number of rapes at a young age. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 90% of college rapes directly or indirectly involve the use of alcohol by either or both individuals, while about 97,000 students face sexual assault due to alcohol use each year. So, in case if the drinking age is lowered and students are legally allowed to use alcohol, these numbers will increase significantly (Carpenter, 2011).

The consumption of alcohol is also a major reason for the increasing number of deaths every year. For

example, recent statistics show that about 1,100 deaths resulting from traffic crashes and 300, in general, are caused by alcohol use. Further, it is evident that young adults lose control of their wheels immediately under the influence of alcohol, which ultimately results in traffic accidents as well as poisoning, falls, drowning, and burns (Carpenter, 2011).

The most catastrophic result of lowering the drinking age would result in health issues among young adults. Even a small amount of alcohol can damage the human body cells significantly. For example, alcohol poisoning was once such a common issue that can result in the death of the individual owing to many heart diseases. The harmful effects of alcohol on the brain are also evident, which further results in memory loss, destruction of brain cells, and inefficient muscle coordination. The fragile brains of teenagers, thus exposed to the harmful chemicals of alcohol, are prone to permanent damage.

The routine life of individuals is also heavily influenced by the increasing consumption of alcohol as they lose control of their day-to-day activities (Hart & Ksir, 2018). This disturbs the social and emotional behaviour of teenagers and young adults who are not mentally able to control their drinking habits. Therefore, if the voting age is 18, it does not necessarily mean that adults are also able to handle destructive chemicals such as alcohol at this age.

On the other hand, lowering the minimum drinking age can improve the legal activities among college students as they mostly start drinking alcohol in college and, therefore, can take responsibility for their habits (Walters, 2010). This will encourage the safe consumption of alcohol in a regularized environment under complete supervision.

Moreover, as proponents argue, it will significantly decrease alcohol-related accidents among underage drinkers as they usually do not take medical facilities in case of severe injuries, fearing legal consequences. As the minimum voting age is 18, as well as for buying tobacco, young adults should also be permitted to consume alcohol in an organized manner. As far as traffic fatalities are concerned, the number of traffic accidents involving alcohol consumption is far higher in the US as compared to many European countries that have a minimum age of 18.

Conclusion

By comparing all the advantages and disadvantages of lowering the minimum drinking age, as discussed above, it can be concluded that alcohol is not naturally a beneficial substance for teenagers and young adults who have limited control over their minds and actions. Moreover, it has a lot more negative consequences in terms of the health, social, sexual, and emotional behaviour of individuals. Thus, to promote the safe consumption of alcohol, the minimum age of drinking should now be lowered and kept at 21 to promote its safer consumption. However, at the same time, the authorities should regularize alcohol use among college students by taking strict actions and involving college administration as well as parents to discourage its use so that they do not involve themselves in

illegal activities and other issues concerning growing drug use.

References

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