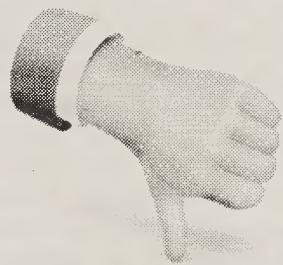


# Point Counterpoint

## Should the drinking age be lowered to 18?



**Madison Campbell**  
Reporter

When individuals turn 18, they consider that special day as a milestone in life. The right to vote, to own a car, and to move out on one's own are all new experiences and opportunities available, but when is there too much power? The

drinking age should most certainly remain at age 21.

Acquiring too much freedom at one time may result in catastrophic consequences. Statistics show that young adults are more likely to smoke and drink within the first few months of moving out on their own. Poor financial management and other negative habits usually develop during that time and often continue throughout life.

According to [www.aa.org.au/new-to-aa/message-for-young-people.php](http://www.aa.org.au/new-to-aa/message-for-young-people.php), "Alcoholism is an illness. It can hit anyone: young, old; rich, poor; black, white. Alcoholics aren't just those old guys sit-

ting on park benches. Young, successful people can ruin their lives with alcohol, too."

One's brain is not fully developed until a person reaches the age of 25; before this time, the frontal lobe, along with other major brain structures, is still experiencing some of the most important periods of development. The frontal lobe is the control center for major decision-making and other rationalizations that people take for granted everyday. When a person experiences damage to his frontal lobe, he or she has a much higher likelihood to take risks.

Alcohol is, in fact, a drug, which causes chemical changes and in-

hibits motor skills, decision-making, and other important aspects of functionality. Blood alcohol levels are irrelevant when judging if a person is impaired. Although a blood alcohol level of .08% is the national legal limit to operate a motor vehicle, any amount of alcohol causes at least some level of physical and mental impairment.

Effects of alcohol actually remain present several days after an individual partakes in its consumption. Thus, chemical changes frequently result in headaches, dehydrations, slow/groggy movement, and sore muscles with cramping.

As published at [\[alcohol-affects-the-brain.php\]\(http://alcohol-affects-the-brain.php\), "When alcohol reaches the brain, it interferes with communication between nerve cells by interacting with the receptors on some cells. The alcohol suppresses excitatory nerve pathway activity and increases inhibitory nerve pathway activity. Among other actions, alcohol enhances the effects of the inhibitory neurotransmitter GABA. Enhancing an inhibitor has the effect of making a person sluggish. Also, alcohol weakens the excitatory neurotransmitter glutamine, which enhances the sluggishness even farther."](http://www.bloodalcohol.info/how-</a></p>
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**Jacob Sechter**  
Opinion Editor

Debated in heated arguments for years, the legal drinking age remains at age 21 with no signs of it being reduced to 18. Though many assume teenagers just want this law changed merely so they can buy and drink

alcohol, there is a much more valid argument. First of all, the United States is only one of five countries where the drinking age is 21. In the majority of nations, the legal drinking age is 18; some countries declare 16 as a viable age, and a handful of countries hold no age restrictions at all. The latter situation is quite extreme.

One major contention for changing the drinking age in the United States is that the legal age for voting age and serving in the military are both 18. If a citizen is considered mature

enough to serve his or her country and to vote in important elections, why can't such an individual be trusted to consume alcohol? Yes, young people have a reputation for over-consumption and driving while intoxicated, but these realities affect drinkers of all ages. Inappropriate behavior depends upon the maturity of the individual; some can handle the responsibility to drink responsibly, and others cannot.

In all honesty, the legal drinking age will not impede students from acquiring and drinking al-

cohol. They frequently ask older friends to buy the products for them or steal it from their parents; clearly, they have little difficulty accessing liquor. If adults focused more on educating youth about the dangers of excessive drinking and informed them about the concept of moderation, there would be fewer petty crimes and DUI charges. Many young people do not understand how little alcohol they need to be intoxicated and end up binge drinking, which leads to sickness and in the worst cases, death.

Young people often find themselves enticed by the "danger element" of drinking. They know they are underage and should not be partaking in such a bad habit, but teensoften as sociate drinking with being "cool." If the drinking age were reduced to 18, maybe youth culture would not over-glamorize alcohol because it would be easily accessible and not such a dare or thrill. One could make the analogy to young children purposely behaving badly because they know their parents do not approve, yet when the adults later accept the behavior, the children lose interest.

## Is Organic really the better choice?

**Caroline Grandis**  
Reporter

Many people have been debating whether or not organic foods are healthier than non-organic products. Organic foods have barely any nutritional difference from non-organic, and recent discoveries verify that high levels of arsenic are present in some organic products, such as cereal bars, toddler formulas, and even energy shots that contain rice products.

Arsenic is a very toxic chemical that can cause fatalities if too much of the substance enters the body. The

main source of this arsenic is in a main ingredient called brown rice syrup. Studying this issue with brown rice syrup, research scientists at Dartmouth College have discovered that the arsenic levels in some of the products contain six times more arsenic than the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) allows in normal drinking water.

Certain groups of people are at higher risk than others, according to [discoverynews.com](http://discoverynews.com). The first group includes infants and toddlers because they are much smaller and cannot handle large amounts of poison. Another high-risk group

involves people with gluten intolerance and those who eat rice-heavy diets.

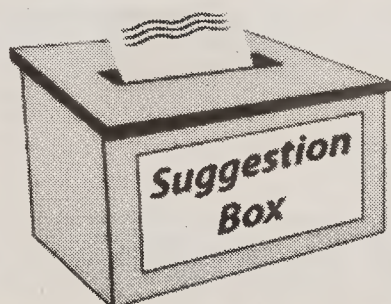
In addition to this disturbing finding, organic products are often very pricey. According to [organicfacts.net](http://organicfacts.net), organic foods cost anywhere from 20% to 100% more than non-organic products, which may be a strain on consumers' pockets. UK's Soil Association revealed that consumers in the United Kingdom spent a record \$3.7 billion on organic products in 2006, which is more than 20 percent growth on 2005 spending on organic goods including food, drinks and health and beauty products.

Even though organic foods call for higher prices, they still remain in high demand. Regardless of the high demand and the costs to produce the products, they are still entirely too expensive, especially considering their high levels of arsenic. Few nutritional differences exist between organic and non-organic products.

One difference is that farmers who grow organic foods apply natural fertilizers, such as manure or compost, to feed soil and plants, unlike farmers of nonorganic produce, who sometimes use chemical fertilizers to stimulate growth of their goods. Organic farmers

also give their livestock organic feed, allow them access to the outdoors, and use preventive measures like rotational grazing, a balanced diet, and clean housing to minimize disease of the animals. Non-organic farmers give their livestock antibiotics, growth hormones, and medications to prevent disease, as clarified on [mayoclinic.com](http://mayoclinic.com).

Based upon these characteristics, shoppers must think long and hard about what chances they are willing to take in their grocery shopping. Money is not the only consideration, for consumers' health is also at risk.



### Suggestion Box

Is there a question you have been longing to ask? How about an article idea you can't wait to read about? A comic or drawing you want to see? Submit ideas, suggestions, artwork, or writing to [highlifepaper@gmail.com](mailto:highlifepaper@gmail.com) and you may find your ideas in the next issue!