



MYTH: “If we change the minimum drinking age back to 18 instead of 21, it would reduce problems with underage drinking.”

REALITY: Researchers consider the 21 minimum drinking age to be one of the most successful public safety & public health policies in United States history. Since the minimum drinking age was changed to 21 in 1984, deaths from drinking and driving accidents have decreased by thousands, saving an estimated 20,000 lives.

MYTH: “In Europe, youth drink more responsibly than in the US.”

REALITY: According to data collected from 15– and 16-year-olds in 35 European countries, European teens actually drink more often, drink more heavily, and get drunk more often than American teens.

MYTH: “At least alcohol is safer than other drugs.”

REALITY: The teen brain is especially vulnerable to addiction due to the rapid growth and development that takes place during adolescence. 40% of teens who begin drinking at age 15 will become addicted to alcohol versus 7% who begin at age 21. And alcohol kills 6.5 times more youth than all other illegal drugs combined.

MYTH: “It’s OK as long as they don’t drive. Most teen alcohol-related deaths are from drinking & driving.”

REALITY: Underage drinking is illegal, so this falls in the category of “not OK.” Additionally, only one-third of underage drinking deaths involve auto crashes. The remaining two-thirds involve alcohol poisoning, homicides, suicides, and intentional injuries such as burns, drowning and falls. Taking away the car keys doesn’t make underage drinking safe. AND the law in Massachusetts is clear —parents are liable as a SOCIAL HOST if they allow underage guests to consume alcohol in their home/on their property.

MYTH: “Kids are going to drink anyway; it’s a right of passage.”

REALITY: Contrary to popular belief, most kids don’t drink. In the Tri-Town, anonymous student surveys show that the majority of teens—including 68% of Masco high school aged youth—did not consume alcohol during the 30 days prior to survey administration (2016 YRBS). Research shows that the misperceptions of “everybody is doing it” actually make young people more likely to drink alcohol. On the other hand, when these misperceptions are corrected, and youth realize that “NOT everybody is doing it”, they are less likely to drink alcohol.

MYTH: “It’s better for kids to start drinking young so they can learn how to handle it.”

REALITY: Alcohol impacts a teenager differently than an adult because the adolescent brain is still developing—especially the part of the brain that deals with decision-making. Drinking before the age of 21 places kids at higher risk for academic failure, depression, suicide, and sexual assault. It also increases their risk for alcohol dependence. Young people who begin drinking at the age of 15 vs. those who begin by age 21 are more than four times more likely to develop dependence.

MYTH: “I can’t really do anything about whether or not my kids drink. They don’t listen to me.”

REALITY: A recent study by SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) showed that parents often underestimate their influence over their teens. Youth who believe their parents would disapprove are significantly less likely to drink or use drugs. In fact, 80 percent of teens indicated that their parents were the leading influence on whether or not they would drink.