

Three-Quarters of Americans Say Don't Lower the Drinking Age

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Three-quarters of Americans say they would oppose legislation to lower the drinking age from 21 to 18, a new Gallup poll finds.

Federal legislation passed in 1984 withheld a portion of federal highway funds from states that did not have a minimum drinking age of 21.

A major goal of the law was reducing driving deaths involving young adults, Gallup reports. Before the law was passed, neighboring states often had different minimum drinking ages.

This meant those old enough to drive, but not allowed to drink in their own state, would drive to a nearby state with a lower drinking age to buy or consume alcohol.

A review of studies published in February found raising the minimum drinking age to 21 has been associated with a reduced rate of drunk driving crashes among young Americans.

The increased legal drinking age has also led to a reduction in other health threats associated with heavy drinking, including unsafe sex, suicide and dating violence.

Some experts have argued that lowering the drinking age and teaching teenagers and young adults to drink responsibly at a young age might help reduce binge drinking. They say lowering the drinking age could reduce the allure of alcohol for those not allowed to drink it.

The poll found that among people who describe themselves as liberal, 34 percent would support lowering the drinking age, compared with 18 percent of those who call themselves conservative. Among those who drink alcohol at least on occasion, 29 percent favor lowering the drinking age, compared with 18 percent of those who never drink. Among those who drink at least weekly, 35 percent would like to see the drinking age lowered.

Younger adults were no more likely than older adults to support a lower drinking age, the poll found.