

## Drunk Driving Crashes Reduced Since Drinking Age Was Raised to 21

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Raising the minimum drinking age to 21 has been associated with a reduced rate of drunk driving crashes among young Americans, according to a new review of studies.

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, *HealthDay* reports.

In one study, researchers found 36 percent of U.S. college students said they had engaged in binge drinking (five or more drinks in one sitting) in the past two weeks in 2011, compared with 43 percent in 1988—the first year all states implemented a legal drinking age of 21. Among high school seniors, binge drinking decreased from 35 percent in 1988, to 22 percent in 2011.

The findings are published in the *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*.

"The evidence is clear that there would be consequences if we lowered the legal drinking age," lead researcher William DeJong of Boston University School of Public Health, said in a journal news release. He called for increased enforcement of the legal drinking age, instead of lowering the age, to further decrease alcohol-related health threats among young adults. "Some people assume that students are so hell-bent on drinking, nothing can stop them. But it really is the case that enforcement works," he said.

In 2008, a group of more than 100 U.S. university presidents and chancellors called for re-evaluating the legal drinking age, pointing to a hidden culture of heavy drinking among college students.

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