

Minimum Legal Drinking Age: What is ideal for South Africa?

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Basis for discourse

- Does early drinking cause problems?
- Is this related to adolescence?
- Is Age 18 not enough?
- How well are we implementing and monitoring current legislation? Are our resources coordinated?
- Who are the stakeholders? Civil Society; DTI; SAPS; Correctional Services; D Justice, Education, Health and Social Development, Transport?
- What about the liquor industry? Any partnerships?

Alcohol Consumption

- In many developing countries, levels of alcohol consumption have increased in recent years.
- change in drinking patterns from traditional use of home-brews with low alcohol content to more frequent, recreational use of commercial alcoholic beverages

(Gureje, 2000; Parry, 2000).

KEY CONCERNS & TRENDS

- Underage Drinking
- Binge Drinking
- Motor Car Accidents leading cause of death
- High Number of severe injuries to the head and body
- Blood Alcohol Level of 0.08 or higher
- Increase in School Drop-out Rate
- Increase in Sexually Transmitted Diseases and HIV/AIDS
- Increase in Social Violence
- Foetal Alcohol Syndrome
- Alcohol and Infectious Diseases
- Increase in Using Other Substances

OVERVIEW OF EFFECTS OF UNDERAGE DRINKING

- More young people die from illegal drinking than use of illegal drugs
- Drinking and driving: leads to most deaths and morbidity among youth
- Suicide due to depression and stress 3rd leading cause of death 14 – 25 age group
- Sexual assault including rape: high in females
- High-Risk sex: multiple partners; fail to use condoms; unwanted pregnancies and STDs linked to amount consumed and related effects
- Poor academic achievement
- Increase in social violence and
- POTENTIAL TO DEVELOP ALCOHOL DEPENDENCE IN THE FUTURE

Polemics: Dynamics

- Alcohol has been part of society for years
- It is easily available – embedded in culture of celebrations of all sorts
- Very nice but cannot say so loudly
- Major contributor to national revenue for many countries
- Most countries have regulations in place for sales points, age restrictions and hours of business – enforcement is an issue
- Questions abound about advertising – no real proof that restrictions lead to less use. But advertising improve sales
- Taxation route adopted but sales still go up
- Age of use has come much lower than 18 in many countries

Polemics: Dynamics

- Tends to be associated with smoking; loss of inhibitions and reckless behaviour
- Dynamics of underlying personality types not fully explored: who ends up abusing or addicted?
- Industry has sponsored major events in the world including education and sports
- Love – hate relationship with Governments
- Purists still have problems similar to those who partake of alcoholic beverages

EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL USE

- Intoxication: impairs brain function and motor skills
- Reduces inhibitions (promotes socializing)
- Affects every organ of user's body and can harm foetus
- Heavy use linked to increase of certain cancers, stroke and liver disease
- Moderate use associated with decreased cardiovascular problems and delayed onset of dementia

Alcoholism/ Dependence

- Strong craving for alcohol and /or continued use despite harm or personal injury
- Abuse leads to Alcoholism: A pattern of drinking that results in harm to one's health, interpersonal relationships or ability to work
- Harms: physical illness, frequent accidents; school drop out; absenteeism and poor work performance; marital instability

Prevalence of Alcohol Abuse

- 15.1 Million people abuse / dependent (USA)
- 4.6 Million of whom are women (NIAAA)
- [South Africa](#) 2,467,543 [WARNING! \(Details\)](#)
44,448,470²
- SACENDU – SADC : Alcohol most abused substance in the region followed by cannabis
- Accounts for most admissions for treatment throughout the region
- Complicated by use in combination with other substances

Adolescent Alcohol Use

- Current use ranges between 21.5% - 62%
- Binge drinking between from 14 – 40%

University students

Current Use (22 – 80%)

Past use (6% - 43%)

Past month binge drinking (17.1% - 58%)

Peltzer K & Ramlagan S (2009)

Binge drinking

- Having five or more drinks in a row at one setting in the past two weeks
- Declined among 8th graders
- Unchanged among 10th graders
- Increased slightly among high school seniors
- Patterns seem to be associated with availability of alcohol (access and money)

Trends in Binge Drinking

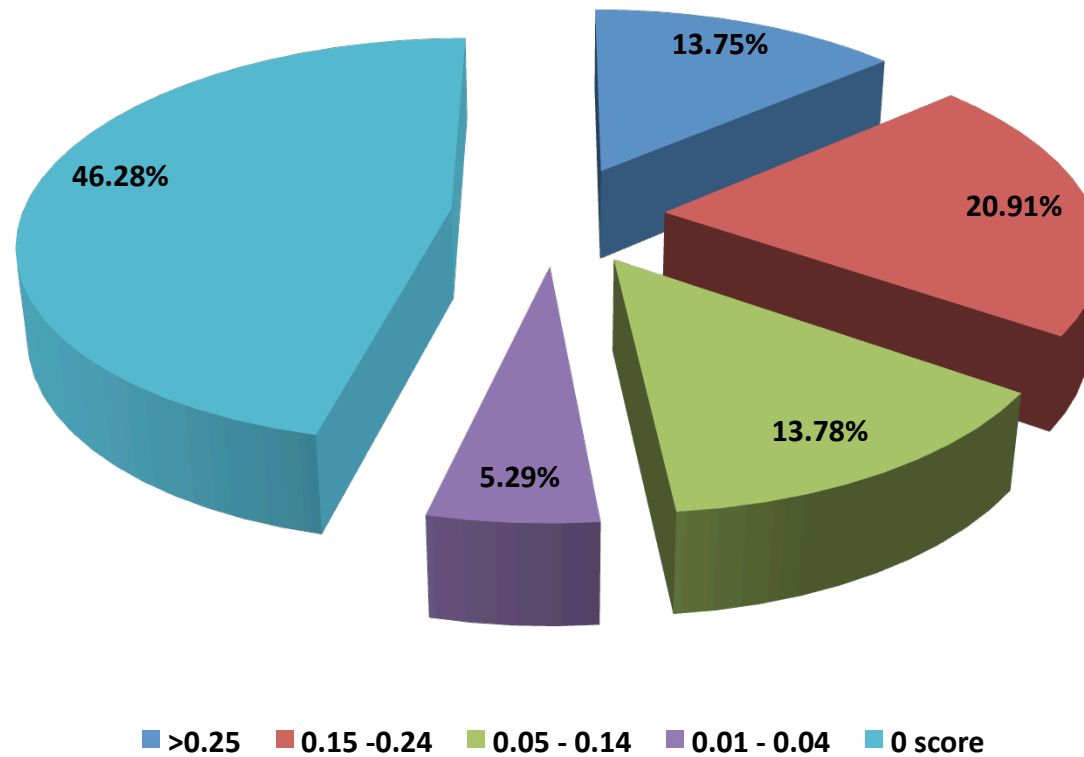
- Higher levels of drinking among rural than urban women)
- Province with highest male binge drinkers was Western Cape (24%)
- Northern Cape (20%)
- Gauteng (16%)
- Free State (15%)

Alcohol and Road Accidents

- High proportion (46%) of mortality cases due to non-natural causes have had blood alcohol levels greater than or equal to 0.05 g/100 ml, the legal limit for driving

(Matzopoulos, 2003).

**Percentage Blood Alcohol Levels (BAC) n=10613
National Injury Mortality Surveillance System
NIMSS, 2009)**



31177 fatally injured cases were recorded but BAC levels were obtained in 10613 cases

Blood Alcohol Levels per Apparent Manner

Apparent Manner	BAC's done n(%)	BAC positive n(%)	Mean BAC	Std Deviation
Violence (9381)	4291 (43.65)	2597 (60.52)	0.18	0.09
Suicide (3125)	1274 (40.77)	519 (40.74)	0.14	0.1
Transport (9153)	3062 (33.45)	1706 (55.72)	0.18	0.09
Non transport (5444)	1215 (22.32)	537 (44.20)	0.19	0.11
Undetermined (3624)	771 (21.27)	342 (44.36)	0.18	0.11
Total	10613	5701	0.17	0.1

National Injury Mortality Surveillance System (NIMSS, 2009)

BAC levels in cases where test was done show a mean score of 0.17.

Blood Alcohol Levels per Transport User

Transport User	BAC's done n(%)	BAC positive n (%)	Mean BAC	Std Deviation
Driver (1667)	748 (44.87)	431 (57.62)	0.17	0.08
Passenger (2107)	449 (21.31)	203 (45.21)	0.13	0.09
Pedestrian (3044)	1131 (37.16)	708 (62.6)	0.21	0.09
Railway Case (299)	155 (51.84)	63 (40.65)	0.20	0.09
Cyclist (337)	162 (48.07)	70 (43.21)	0.16	0.08
Unspecified (1666)	397 (23.83)	231 (58.19)	0.17	0.09
Total	3042	1706	0.21	0.1

NIMSS, 2009

Alcohol and risky sexual behaviour

- Alcohol use has also been associated with unsafe sexual practices and increased risk of contracting HIV

(Zuma et al., 2003)

- Emerging data on the link between alcohol use and risky sexual behavior of great concern, given the high-prevalence estimate of 12% for HIV/AIDS in South Africa among persons of all ages

Department of Health, 2003).

Foetal Alcohol syndrome

- Rates of FAS in SA estimated to be 18 -141 times greater than for various populations in the U S

(May et al., 2000).

- More than 40 cases per 1000 children (Western and the Northern Cape Provinces)
- More than 20 cases per 1000 children in Gauteng Province
- Figures represent some of the highest rates of FAS in the world

LEGAL DRINKING AGE

AFRICA

Country/Region	Drinking age	Purchase age
Algeria		18
Angola		None
Botswana		18
Burundi		18
Cameroon	18	21
Cape Verde		18
Central African Republic		18
Comoros		None
Egypt	18 (beer), 21 (wine/spirits)	
Equatorial Guinea		None
Eritrea		18
Ethiopia		18

Africa continues

Country/Region	Drinking age	Purchase age
Gabon		18
Gambia		18
Ghana		18
Guinea-Bissau		None
Kenya		18
Lesotho		18
Libya		Illegal
Malawi		18
Mauritius		18
Morocco	None	16
Mozambique		18
Namibia		18
Niger		18
Nigeria		18
Republic of the Congo		18

Africa continues

Country/Region	Drinking age	Purchase age
Rwanda	18	
Seychelles	18	
South Africa	18	
Swaziland	None	18
Sudan	16	
Tanzania	18	
Togo	None	
Uganda	18	
Tunisia	18	
Zambia	18	
Zimbabwe	18	

NORTH AMERICA AND SOUTH AMERICA

Country/Region	Drinking age	Purchase age
Argentina ; Bahamas Belize ; Bermuda ; Bolivia ; Brazil		18
Canada		18
Canada		19
Chile ; Colombia ; Costa Rica		18
Cuba	None	18
Dominican Republic ; Ecuador ; El Salvador ; Guatemala ; Guyana ; Honduras ; Mexico Panama ; Peru ; Puerto Rico ; Trinidad and Tobago ; United States Virgin Islands ; Venezuela		18
Haiti		16
Jamaica	None	16
Nicaragua		19
Paraguay		20
United States (50 states and integral territories)		21
Uruguay	None	18

ASIA

Country/Region	Drinking age	Purchase age
Afghanistan ; Brunei ; Bangladesh ; Iran ; Kuwait ; Saudi Arabia ; Yemen		Illegal
Armenia ; Cambodia ; Vietnam		None
Azerbaijan ; China ; Hong Kong ; Israel ; Jordan ; Kyrgyzstan ; Lebanon ; Maldives ; Mongolia ; Singapore ; Syria ; Republic of China (Taiwan) Thailand ; Turkmenistan ; Turkey		18
Georgia		16
India	18–25 (varies between states)	
Indonesia ; Kazakhstan ; Oman ; Pakistan ; Philippines ; Sri Lanka ; Tajikistan ; United Arab Emirates		21
Japan		20 ^l
Macau	None	None
Malaysia	None	18
Nepal	18 ^[citation needed]	None
North Korea	18 ^[citation needed]	
South Korea		19

EUROPE

Country/Region	Drinking age	Purchase age
Albania	None ^l	
Austria	16, 18 for distilled beverages in some areas.	
Belarus ; Bulgaria ; Croatia ; Czech Republic ; Estonia ; France ; Gibraltar ; Hungary ; Ireland ; Latvia ; Lithuania ; Moldova ; Ukraine ; Spain	18	
Belgium ; Germany ; Liechtenstein	16 for beer and wine, 18 for spirits	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	16 ^[citation needed]	18 ^[citation needed]
Cyprus	17	
Denmark	18	16
Finland	18 for possession and purchase of < 22% ABV 20 for possession and purchase of ≥ 22% ABV 18 for all in bars and restaurants	
Greece	18	none
Iceland	20	
Italy ; Luxembourg	16	
Macedonia	None	

Europe continues

Country/Region	Drinking age	Purchase age
Slovenia Slovakia Serbia Russia Poland Russia United Kingdom Ukraine	18	
Switzerland	16/18 for beer, wine and cider; 18 for spirits	
Sweden	None (less than 2.25% ABV) 18 (bars and restaurants) 18 (2.25%–3.5% ABV in normal shops), 20 (Systembolaget shops/stores)	
Romania	None	18
Portugal	18 as of 2012	
Montenegro	None	18 ^[citation needed]
Netherlands	16 (under 15% ABV); 18 (15% ABV and over)	
Norway	None ^l	18; 20 ($\geq 22\%$ ABV)

Oceania

Country/Region	Drinking age	Purchase age
American Samoa ; Guam ; Micronesia, Federated States of ; Northern Mariana Islands ; Palau ;	21	
Australia ; New Zealand ; Samoa ; Papua New Guinea Vanuatu	18	
Fiji	18	21
Solomon Islands	21	None
Tonga	18	None
Tokelau	16	

US: TOP 5 REASONS TO KEEP MLDA @ 21

- **21 SAVES LIVES - L**
- **THE BRAIN DOES NOT FULLY DEVELOP UNTIL AT LEAST 21**
- **THE LONGER WE CAN DELAY ALCOHOL USE, THE BETTER THE CHANCE THAT A PERSON WILL NEVER HAVE A PROBLEM WITH ALCOHOL**
- **THE POLICY DOES WORK, PREVENTING “LOW-HANGING FRUIT.”**
- **DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE REGULATIONS ALLOW MEMBERS OF THE ACTIVE MILITARY WHO ARE UNDER 21 TO CONSUME ALCOHOL IN CONTROLLED SITUATIONS**

Evidence for 21

- **Resulted in reduction of alcohol-related crashes and fatalities among youth as well as deaths from suicide, homicide, and non-vehicle unintentional injuries**
- **Pre-frontal brain maturation (area that controls judgments and weighing risks and consequences) now confirmed by recent studies to be about 25 and not 18 as stated before. Below 25 there is more thrill seeking and impulsive behaviour. Alcohol impairs judgment and heightens risk-taking behaviour (possibility of long term irreversible damage**
- **Addiction sets early in teenagers (6 – 18 months) but later in adults (+- 5yrs). Delaying underage drinking for as long as possible and reducing its frequent use and quantity of use reduces early onset of harmful effects – suicide, homicide, accidents and so on**
- **1978 US National Study of Adolescent Drinking: 10th & 12th graders in low MLDA states were drunk more often; drank significantly more and were less likely to abstain from alcohol. Where 21 MLDA was maintained there was less use of alcohol and less problematic behaviours**
- **18 yr olds serve in the Military but 21 MLDA age usually maintained**

Ages of Initiation (USA)

- ages of initiation vary in this country — one may vote at 18, drink at 21, visit the local casino at 21, rent a car at 25, and run for president at 35. These ages may appear arbitrary, but they take into account the requirements, risks, and benefits of each act. The national minimum legal drinking age of 21 has survived the test of time and is firmly supported by current scientific research. The lives and futures of our children depend on its continued support.

WHAT THEN FOR SOUTH AFRICA?

- Situation Analysis must be re-visited
- Compare with best practice eg. USA
- Coordinate available resources
- Implement & Monitor current legislation rigorously
- Establish partnerships involving civil society and private sector
- May have to increase to 21 in the long term