

the RED CUP Q&A



separating alcohol fact from fiction
EVERY TUESDAY IN THE DAILY WILDCAT

Q Do you think the drinking age will go back to 18 in our lifetime?

A. After consulting our Magic Eight Ball the only answer we get is, "Reply hazy, try again later."

Actually, there are three parts to our answer. The first is, can youth effect legislative change? Many Millennials we asked responded that there is too much apathy among their age group to make sweeping changes. However, younger generations have effected great legislative transformation. One need only look at the young activists in the 70's who were significantly responsible for ending the war in Vietnam. In modern times, 18-29 year olds were the largest demographic to elect Barack Obama in 2008 (66%) and 2012 (60%). This demonstrates that a focused youth movement does have explicit power.

The second part is, why would you want the drinking age to go back down to 18 if it would mean even more people your age would experience harm and death? The facts are clear. Ever since the Uniform Drinking Age Act was established in the 80's, there have been 61% fewer under-age drinkers involved in fatal crashes. Research also supports that heavy alcohol consumption, and especially binge drinking, can impact brain development, effecting memory retention and judgment in the still-developing teenage brain.

The final part to this answer is to imagine what it would take to lower the drinking age to 18 while avoiding higher risks? If the rational to having it raised to 21 in the first place was to improve and save lives, then what social and behavioral changes would Millennials have to embrace to advocate change? Certainly, a more persuasive argument to present to political representatives would be to demonstrate a clear association between youth and safer outcomes from their drinking behaviors.

So while our Magic 8 Ball "cannot predict now" your future, we do ask you to believe in yourselves, your capacity for moderation, and positive change. Then, couple that with the true political power your youthful demographic already has. Be the change you desire.

wildfact

FINAL SURVIVAL! May 7th
11:30am-1:30pm • UA Mall



Got a question about alcohol? Email it to redcup@email.arizona.edu

www.health.arizona.edu

The Red Cup Q&A is written by Lynn Reyes, LCSW, LSAC, David Salafsky, MPH, Lee Ann Hamilton, MA, CHES, and Spencer Gorin, RN, in the Health Promotion and Preventive Services (HPPS) department of the UA Campus Health Service.