

Abstract

The MA thesis “Minimum Legal Drinking Age in the U.S.: A Reasonable Exception to Age of Majority?” examines the U.S. legal limit for consumption of alcohol from the perspective of policies aimed at controlling drunk driving because the minimum drinking age was set to twenty-one – higher than the age of majority – in order to reduce drunk-driving fatalities. The thesis analyzes different aspects of this issue and concludes that the high minimum legal drinking, which constitutes a severe limitation of personal freedom of those aged eighteen to twenty, did not fulfill the expectations with which it was introduced in 1984. The thesis suggests alternatives to the high age limit, and examines how and if they are implemented or what prevents their frequent use. The thesis has four parts: one provides basic facts about drinking, driving, and drunk driving in the U.S. society including the attitudes of the public toward the issue. The following part looks into the legal developments of the drinking age limits and legal challenges to the law arranging the age limit for its supposed unconstitutionality. The third chapter looks at the results of scientific research and suggests ways to deal with drunk driving more efficiently. The last part examines what prevents these more effective measures from being widely used and the power the public activist movements have on forming the public view on the issue, which has proven important for creating official policies.