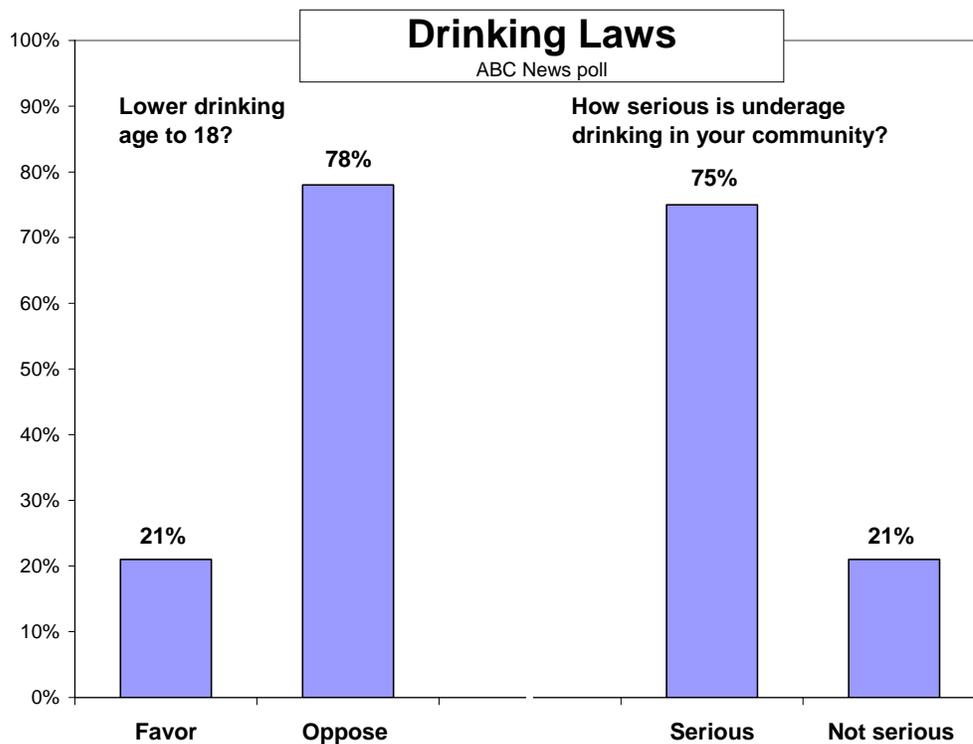


After 21 Years of Age-21 Drinking Public Support Remains Strong

Twenty-one years after federal legislation made 21 the national minimum drinking age, Americans by a wide margin continue to support the restriction – and three-quarters see underage drinking as a serious problem in their communities.

Nearly eight in 10 Americans oppose lowering the drinking age in all states to 18. Even among young adults, age 34 and under, 73 percent oppose allowing 18-, 19- and 20-year-olds to drink alcohol.

Part of the issue is that, although illegal, underage drinking is seen as a problem. Not only do 75 percent say it's a serious problem in their communities, but one-third call it "very" serious, rising to 44 percent of lower-income Americans.



The current age restriction was signed into law by Ronald Reagan on July 17, 1984. Its support today is nearly identical to its level then – 79 percent in a Gallup poll in June '84.

GROUPS – There are some differences among other groups: Southerners and Westerners are more likely than those in the Northeast to say underage drinking is a very serious

problem in their communities. And women are somewhat more likely than men to call it a very serious problem, 37 percent to 28 percent.

Support for lowering the drinking age, while still low, is a bit higher in the Northeast than elsewhere, and a bit higher among men than women. Republicans are more likely than Democrats or independents to see underage drinking as a problem in their communities, but they're not significantly more likely to oppose lowering the legal drinking age.

	Drinking age		Underage drinking a "very" serious problem
	Keep at 21	Reduce to 18	
All	78%	21	33
Men	76	24	28
Women	81	18	37
18-34	73	27	31
35-up	80	18	33
Northeast	70	29	23
Midwest	80	19	30
South	79	20	35
West	81	18	41

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News poll was conducted by telephone May 18-22, 2005, among a random national sample of 1,003 adults. The results have a three-point error margin. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, Pa.

Analysis by Jon Cohen.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollvault.html>.

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Full results follow (*= less than 0.5 percent).

1-7 previously released.

8. As you may know the minimum drinking age in this country is 21. Would you favor or oppose a federal law that would lower the drinking age in all states to 18?

	Favor	Oppose	No opinion
5/22/05	21	78	1

9. How serious of a problem is underage drinking in your community - very serious, somewhat serious, not too serious or not serious at all?

	-----Serious-----			-----Not serious-----			No opin.
	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Not too	Not at all	
5/22/05	75	33	43	21	18	4	4

END