

Policy Summary

Minimum Ages for Off-Premises Sellers

This policy summary is excerpted from:
The September 2016 Report to Congress on the Prevention and Reduction of Underage Drinking

Minimum Ages for Off-Premises Sellers

Policy Description

Most states have laws that specify a minimum age for employees who sell alcoholic beverages in off-premises establishments such as liquor stores. A small number require sellers to be at least 21, but most states permit sellers to be younger. Some states allow any person to sell alcohol regardless of age. Other variations across states include minimum age requirements for conducting sales transactions with customers and allowing younger employees to stock coolers with alcohol or bag purchased alcohol. Age restrictions may also vary based on the type of off-premises establishment or type of alcohol being sold. For example, younger persons may be allowed to sell beer but not wine or distilled spirits. Younger persons may also be allowed to sell alcohol in grocery or convenience stores rather than liquor stores. Some states permit younger minimum selling ages only if a manager or supervisor is present.

State laws specifying minimum ages for employees who sell alcoholic beverages for on-premises consumption are described in the “Minimum Ages for On-Premises Servers and Bartenders” section of this report.

Status of Age of Seller Policies

Minimum Age of Sellers and Types of Beverages

Most jurisdictions specify the same minimum age for sellers of all types of alcoholic beverages (see Exhibit 4.3.23). As of January 1, 2015, 10 states specify that off-premises sellers must be 21 or older. Three states (Idaho, Indiana, and Nebraska) require off-premise sellers to be 19 or older; 16 states and the District of Columbia have set the minimum age at 18. Four states (Arizona, Maine, Nevada, and New Hampshire) set the minimum age between 16 and 17. Four states (California, Georgia, Louisiana, and Virginia) do not specify any minimum age for sellers.

Minimum age requirements in the remaining 14 states vary by type of alcohol, with age requirements generally higher for the sale of distilled spirits and lower for beer. Florida, New York, and North Carolina set a minimum age of 18 for the sale of spirits and have no age minimum for beer or wine. Alabama and South Carolina have a minimum age of 21 for the sale of spirits but no minimum for beer and wine. Vermont sets a minimum age of 16 for selling beer and wine, but does not specify a minimum age for selling spirits.

Manager or Supervisor Presence

Thirteen states require that a supervisor or manager be present when an underage seller conducts an alcoholic beverage transaction.

Trends in Age of Seller Policies

There were no changes in age of seller policies across states between 2003 and 2015 (see Exhibit 4.3.24).

Exhibit 4.3.23: Minimum Age To Sell Beer for Off-Premises Consumption as of January 1, 2015

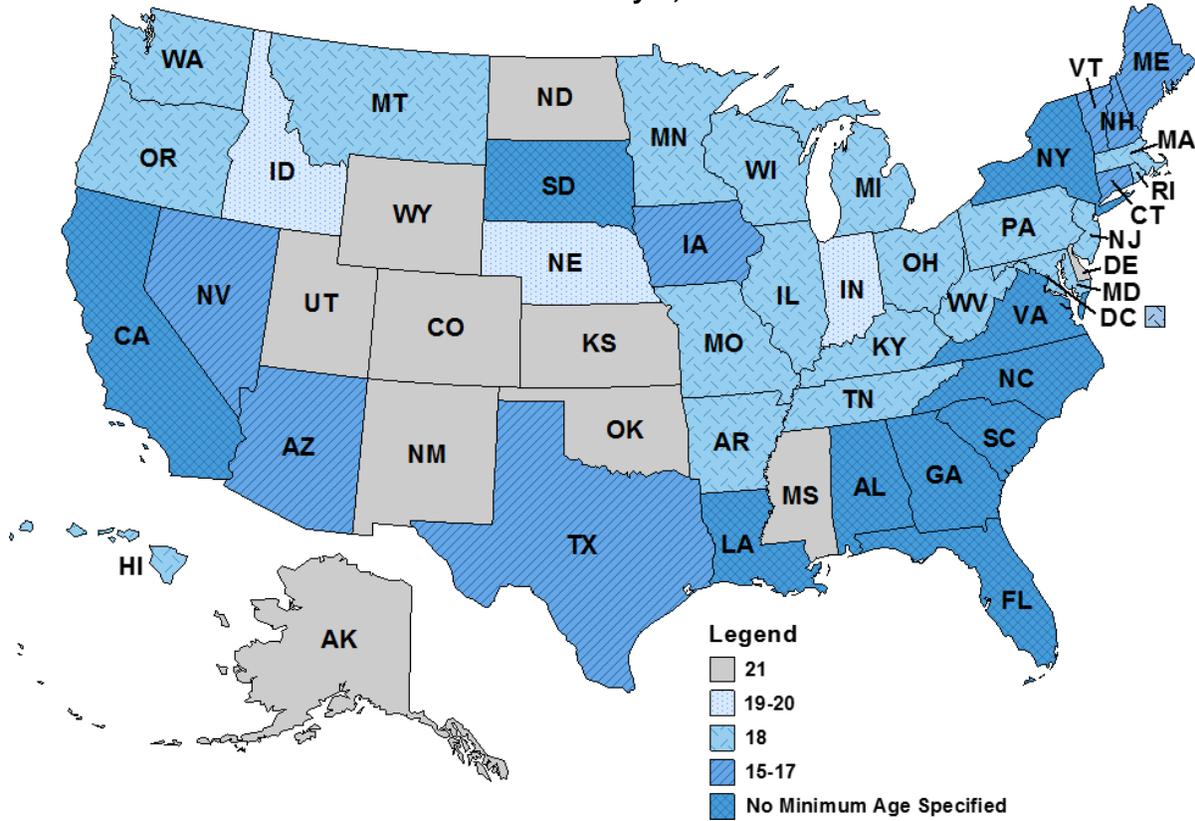
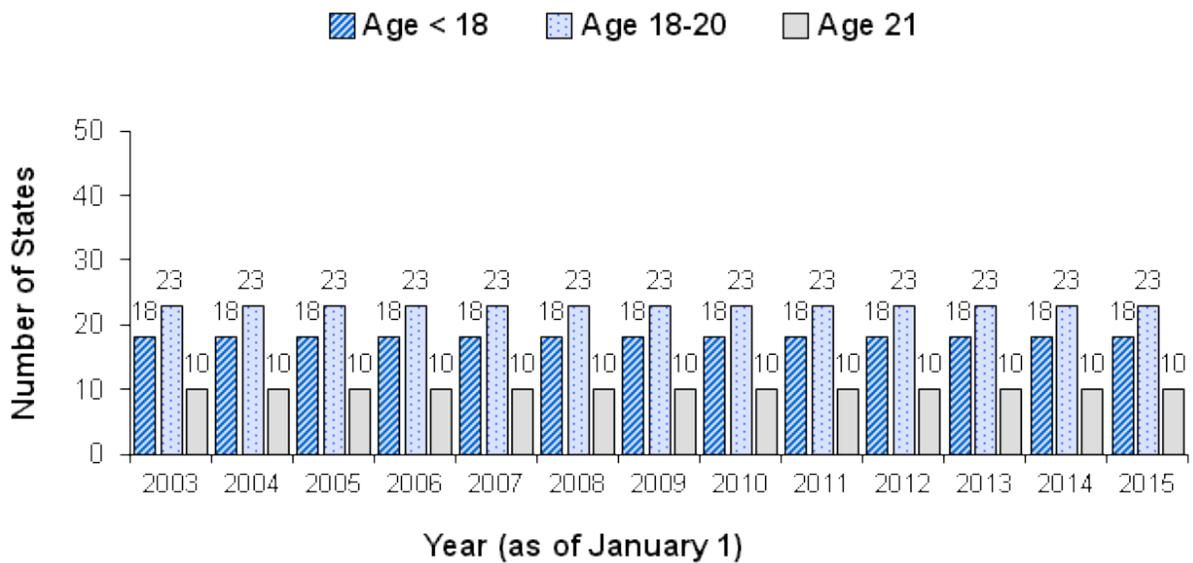


Exhibit 4.3.24: Distribution of Minimum Ages for Off-Premises Sellers of Beer, January 1, 2003, through January 1, 2015



References and Further Information

All data for this policy were obtained from the Alcohol Policy Information System (APIS) at <http://www.alcoholpolicy.niaaa.nih.gov>. Follow links to the policy titled “Minimum Ages for Off-Premises Sellers.” APIS provides further descriptions of this policy and its variables, details regarding state policies, and a review of the limitations associated with the reported data. To see definitions of the variables for this policy, visit stopalcoholabuse.gov and go to Report to Congress, Supplemental Information, “Definitions of Variables.”

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. (2006). Young adult drinking. Alcohol Alert, No. 68. Retrieved from <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/aa68/aa68.htm>

National Research Council (NRC) and Institute of Medicine (IOM). (2004). *Reducing underage drinking: A collective responsibility*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.

Reboussin, B. A., Song, E. Y., & Wolfson, M. (2011). The impact of alcohol outlet density on the geographic clustering of underage drinking behaviors within census tracts. *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, 35(8), 1541–1549.

Wagenaar, A. C., Toomey, T. L., & Erickson, D. J. (2005). Complying with the minimum drinking age: Effects of enforcement and training interventions. *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, 29(2), 255–262.