

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. In some states, the minimum age for sellers is 21. In many states, however, off-premises sellers may be younger than 21, and in a few states no minimum age is specified.

In some cases, persons under 21 may be allowed to sell alcohol only in certain types of off-premises establishments (e.g., grocery stores, convenience stores), or may be allowed to sell only some beverage types (e.g., beer, wine). In some cases, sellers of alcohol must be at least 18, but younger employees may be allowed to stock coolers with alcohol or to bag purchased alcohol.

Several states place conditions on off-premises sellers under 21 years old. These include requirements that a legal-age manager or supervisor be present when the underage person is selling alcoholic beverages.

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

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 I.23). As of January 1, 2017, 10 states specify that off-premises sellers be 21 or older. Two states (Idaho and Indiana) require off-premises sellers to be 19 or older; 19 states and the District of Columbia have set the minimum age at 18. Nine states set the minimum age between 15 and 17. Ten states do not specify any minimum age for sellers.

Among states with requirements, the minimum age varies by type of alcohol, with age requirements generally higher for the sale of distilled spirits and lower for beer.

Manager or Supervisor Presence

Fourteen 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 2016. As of January 1, 2017, Connecticut added a “manager or supervisor presence” to their Age of Seller, Off-Premises requirement, and Nebraska reduced the minimum age of seller age for beer, wine, and distilled spirits from 19 to 16 (see Exhibit I.24).

Exhibit I.23: Minimum Age To Sell Beer for Off-Premises Consumption as of January 1, 2017

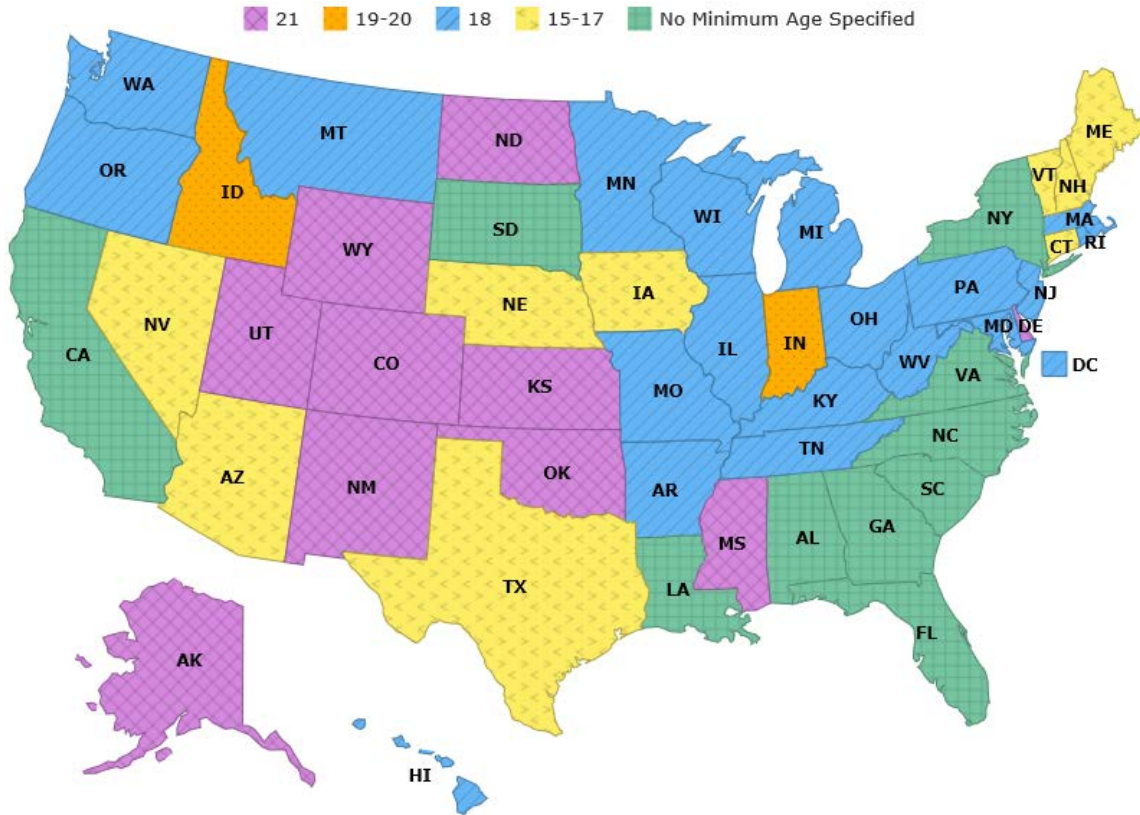
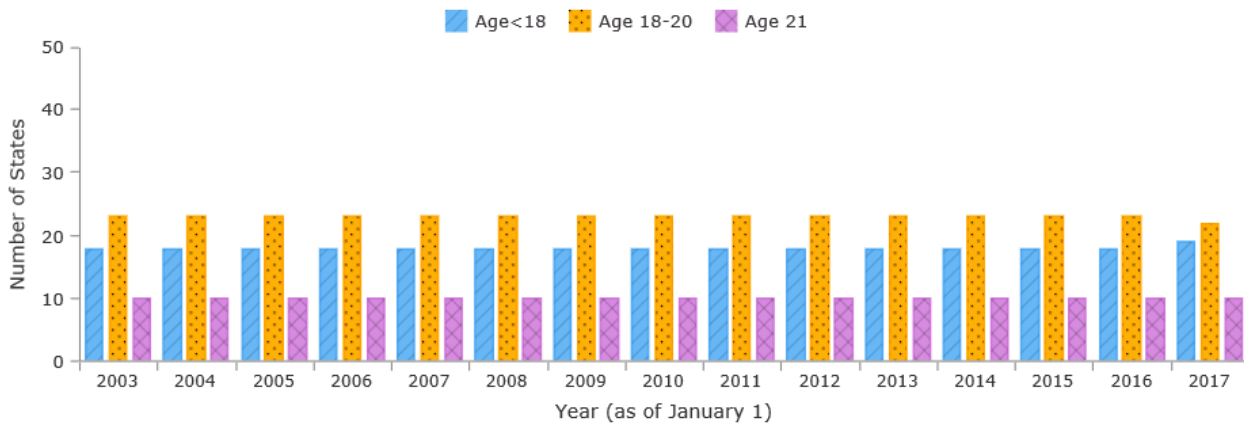


Exhibit I.24: Distribution of Minimum Ages for Off-Premises Sellers of Beer, January 1, 2003, through January 1, 2017



Data Sources and Citations

All data for this policy were obtained from <http://www.alcoholpolicy.niaaa.nih.gov>, NIAAA's APIS. Follow links to the policy titled "Minimum Ages for Off-Premises Sellers" for further descriptions of this policy and its variables, details regarding state policies, and a review of the limitations associated with the reported data.

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