Economic theory predicts that harsher drunk driving laws should deter drunk driving. Previous research on adults, however, finds that tougher drunk driving laws reduce the intensity of heavy episodic drinking but do not directly deter self-reported drunk driving (e.g. Kenkel 1993, Sloan et.al. 1994). I revisit this question by considering the effects of age-targeted drunk driving laws on the alcohol behaviors of high school students in the 1991-2001 Youth Risk Behavior Surveys (YRBS) which provide more objective measures of alcohol-involved driving than have been previously used. I estimate two-way fixed effects models that can condition on unobserved heterogeneity across states, and I use youths below their state's minimum driver's license age as a comparison group. Unlike previous research, I find evidence of a large and robust deterrent effect: lower legal limits reduced past month drinking and driving by young males by 15%. I find a corresponding decrease in past month riding with a drinking driver by young females of about 12%. Consistent with previous research, I also find that tougher drunk driving laws reduced alcohol consumption by young males. The results suggest that youth alcohol behaviors -- including drunk driving -- are highly responsive to alcohol control policies in the form of tougher drunk driving laws.

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