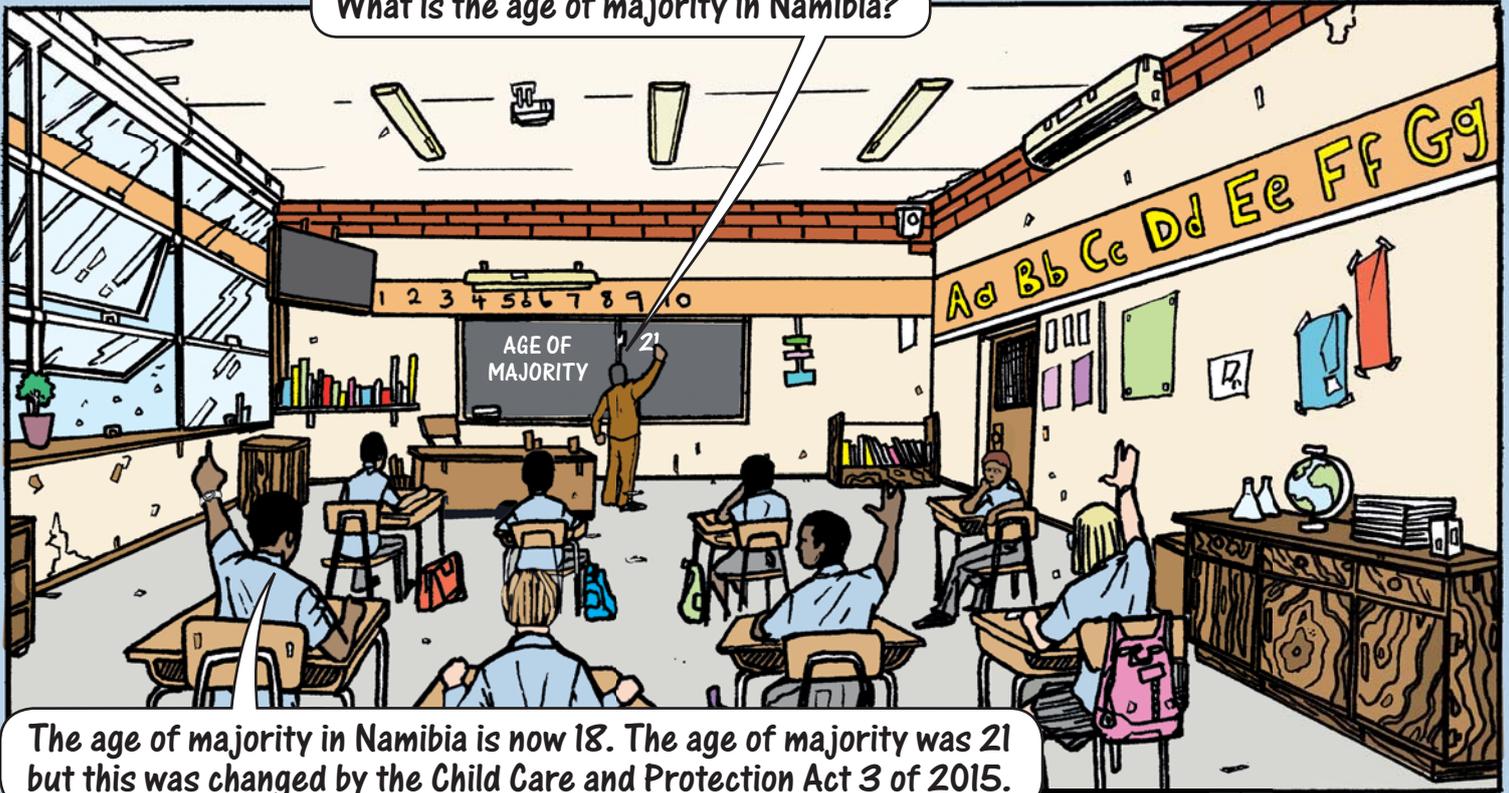


# When a child becomes an adult: the AGE OF MAJORITY in Namibia

What is the age of majority in Namibia?



The age of majority in Namibia is now 18. The age of majority was 21 but this was changed by the Child Care and Protection Act 3 of 2015.

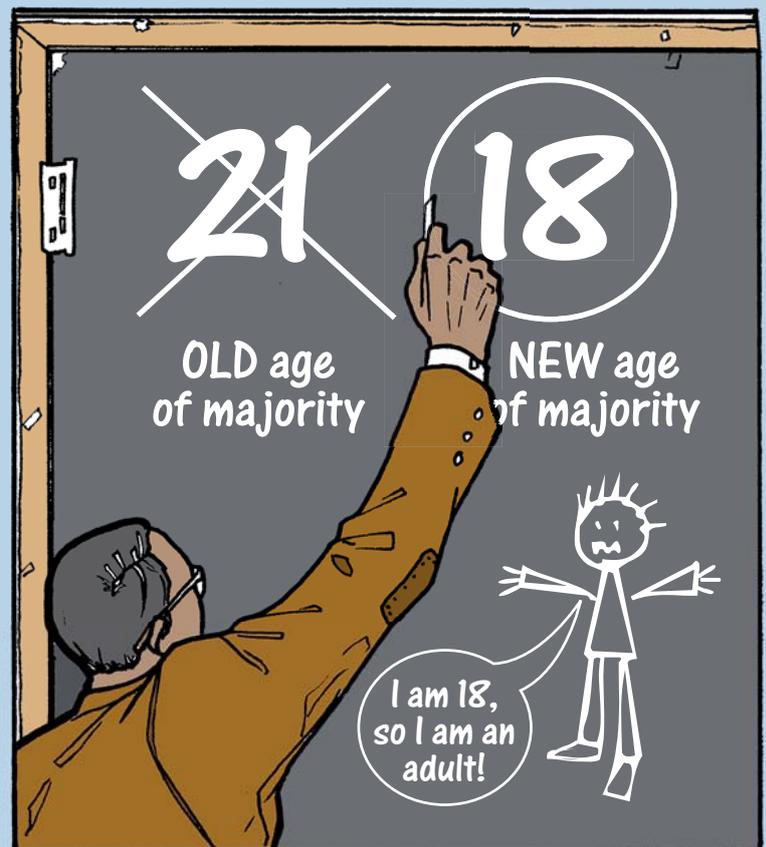
The age of majority is when a person becomes an **adult**, or a “**major**”.

The concepts of “minor” and “major” relate to what legal actions a person is able to perform independently.

A person who is a “major” is legally an adult and has full legal powers.

A person who is a “minor” is not an adult and does not have full legal powers.

A “minor” can perform some legal actions only with the help of his or her parents or guardian.



Minors can perform certain legal actions only with the consent or assistance of a parent or guardian. A minor needs help from a parent or guardian to enter into a contract, to bring or defend a court case, to buy or sell land, to take out loans and to manage inherited money or property.

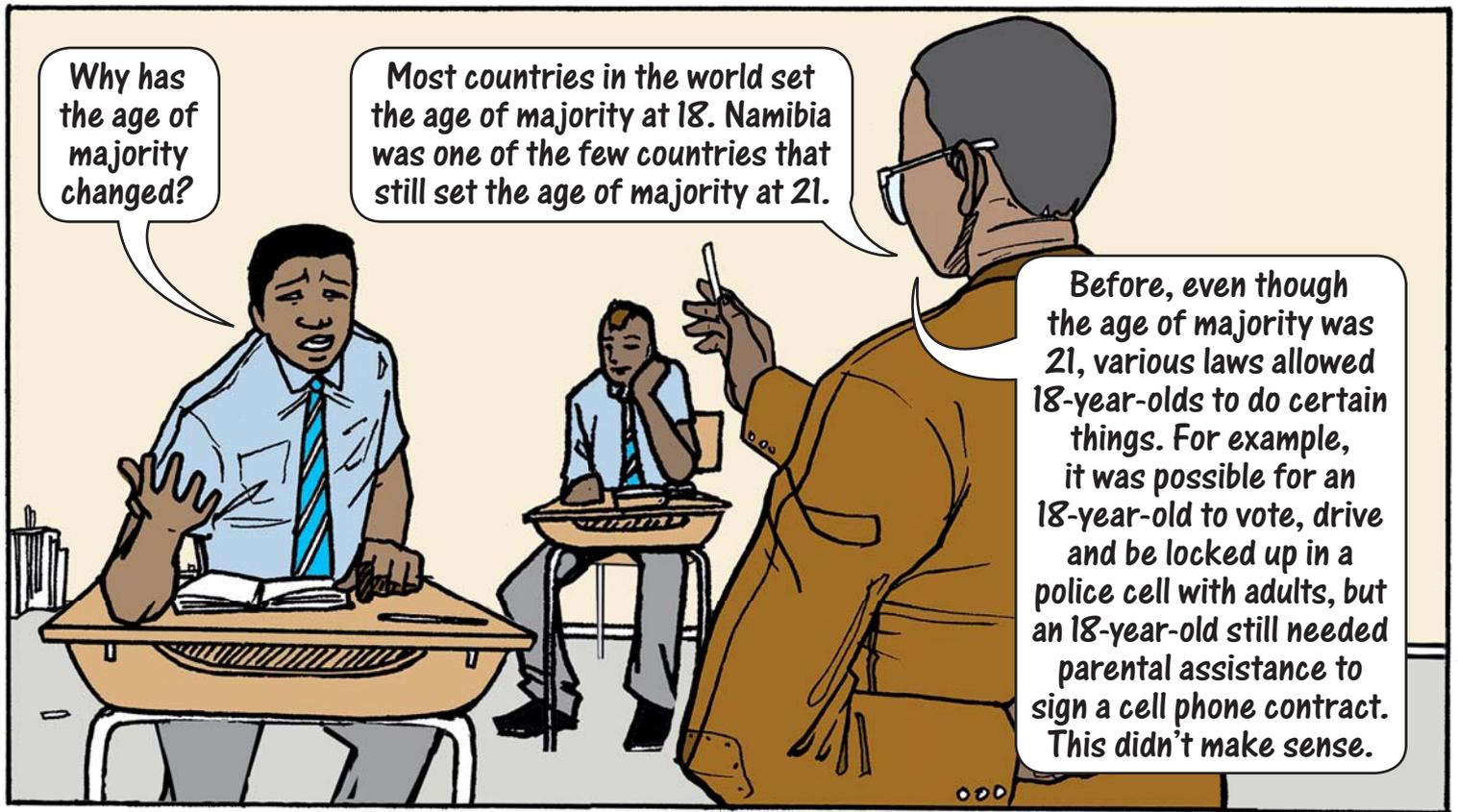
When you are over the age of 18, and legally an adult, you are old enough to:

- vote
- enter into legal contracts or bring a court case on your own
- receive and manage inherited money and property
- work in any type of job
- drive
- have a firearm licence
- buy alcohol
- gamble
- be tried for a crime as an adult and be locked up in a prison with adults.

Wow, that is a lot of legal powers! I think I should have a big birthday party next year when I turn 18 to celebrate all the things I can do!

The law allows you to make many decisions on your own from age 18. But an adult is supposed to be mature enough to make wise decisions. I hope you will not waste your money on gambling. I hope you will not abuse alcohol. And I certainly hope you do not end up in prison!

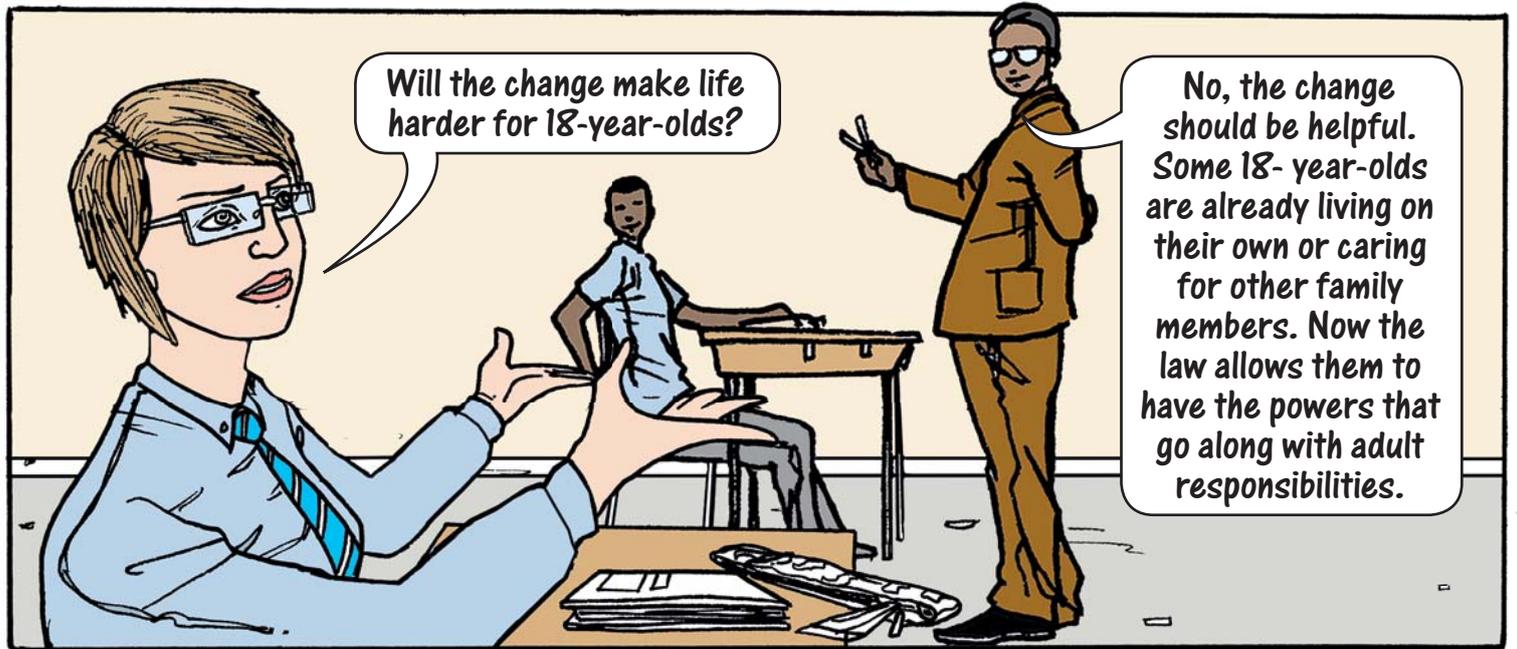




Why has the age of majority changed?

Most countries in the world set the age of majority at 18. Namibia was one of the few countries that still set the age of majority at 21.

Before, even though the age of majority was 21, various laws allowed 18-year-olds to do certain things. For example, it was possible for an 18-year-old to vote, drive and be locked up in a police cell with adults, but an 18-year-old still needed parental assistance to sign a cell phone contract. This didn't make sense.

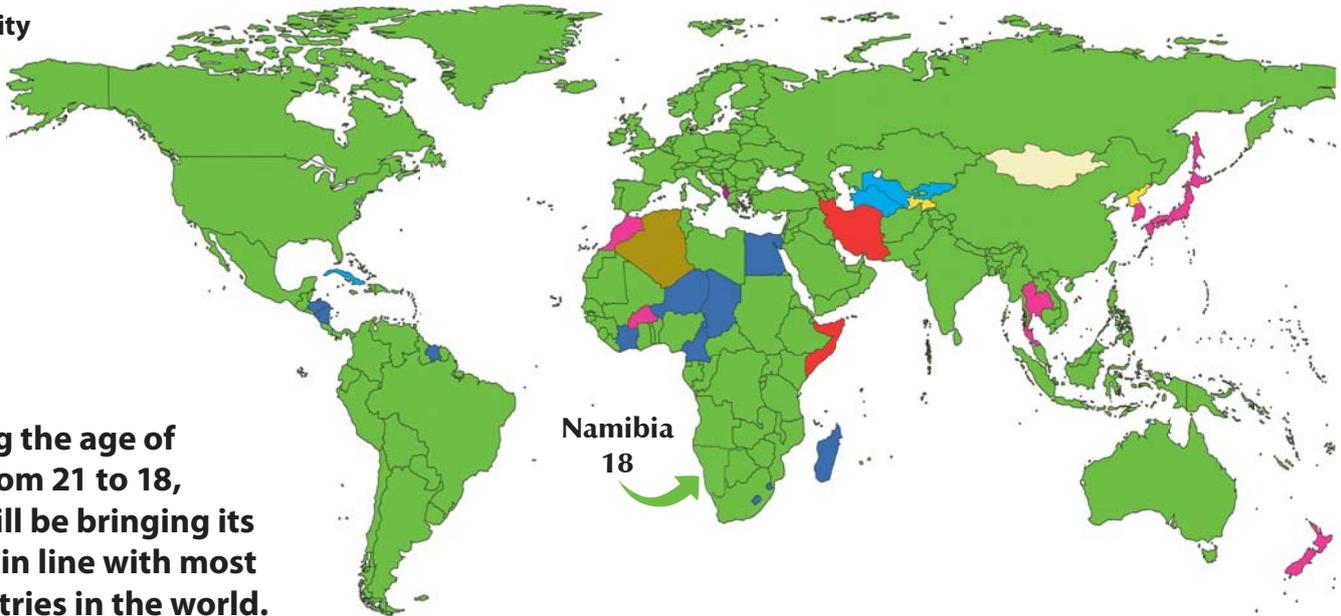


Will the change make life harder for 18-year-olds?

No, the change should be helpful. Some 18-year-olds are already living on their own or caring for other family members. Now the law allows them to have the powers that go along with adult responsibilities.

**Age of Majority**

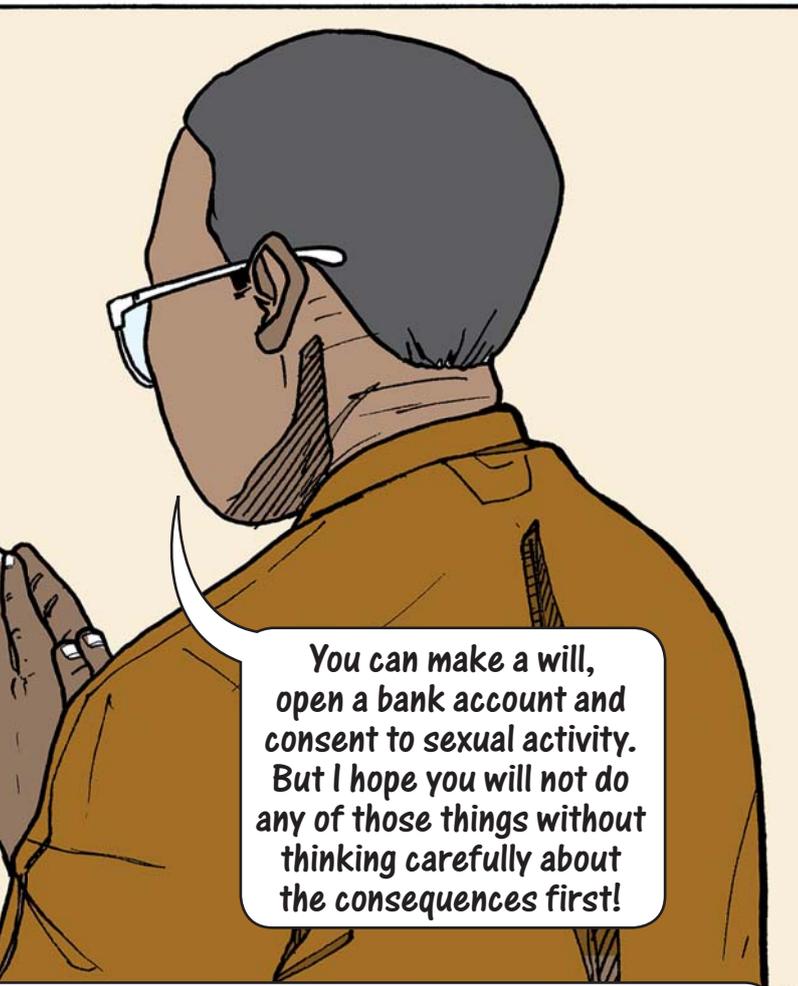
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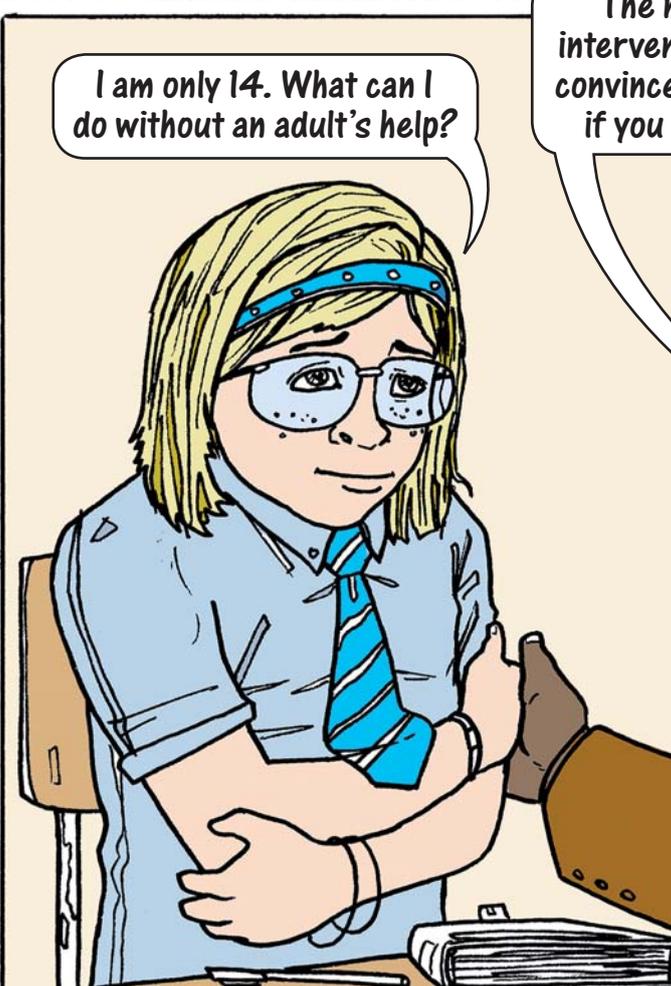
**By lowering the age of majority from 21 to 18, Namibia will be bringing its legislation in line with most other countries in the world.**



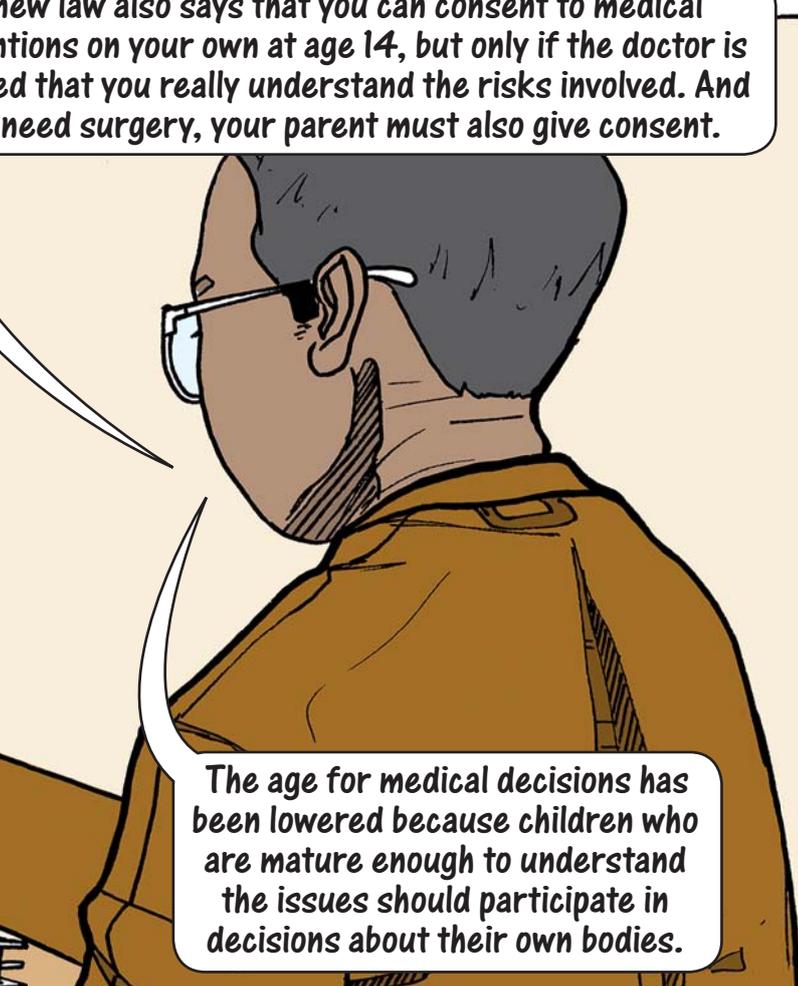
I am only 16. What can I do without an adult's help?



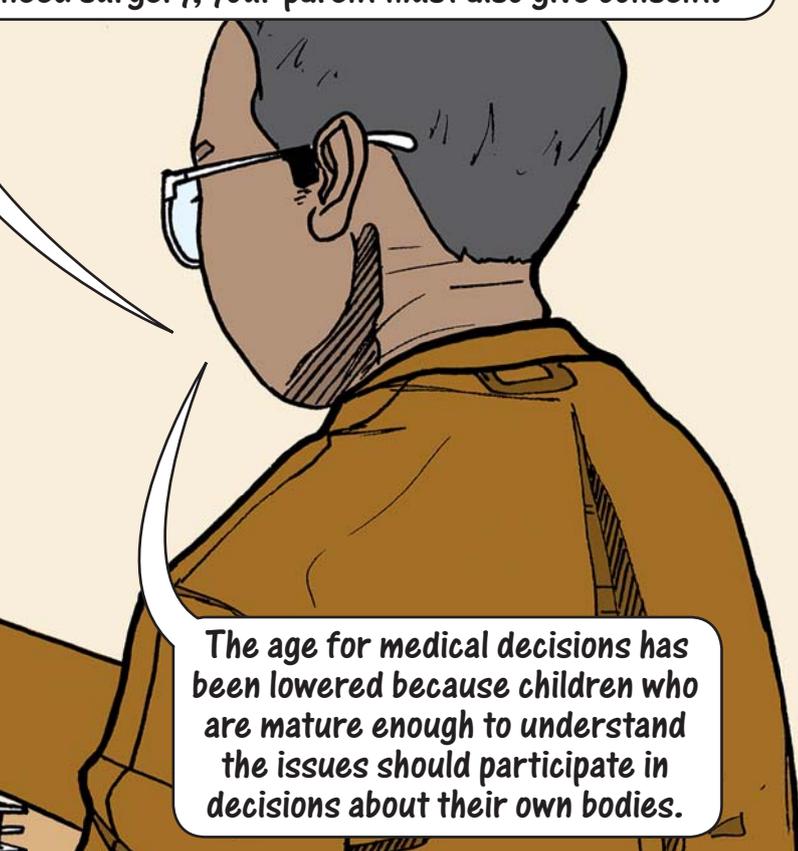
You can make a will, open a bank account and consent to sexual activity. But I hope you will not do any of those things without thinking carefully about the consequences first!



I am only 14. What can I do without an adult's help?



The new law also says that you can consent to medical interventions on your own at age 14, but only if the doctor is convinced that you really understand the risks involved. And if you need surgery, your parent must also give consent.



The age for medical decisions has been lowered because children who are mature enough to understand the issues should participate in decisions about their own bodies.

The law gives children additional powers and duties little by little, as they become more mature. **BUT REMEMBER:** Even if the law allows you to do something on your own, you can still ask an adult for advice.



Hello Pastor John. Did you know that our country's law has changed the age of majority? The age of majority is now 18. When I turn 18, I can do everything!

Yes, but there are some exceptions. For example, even though the age of majority is 18, the new law says that a person under the age of 21 must get permission from his or her parents to get married.

That will not be a problem for me. I do not want any serious relationships until I have finished my studies. I want to focus on passing all of my exams. Then I can get a good job and become famous and maybe even be President someday!

That reminds me of another exception. Even though the age of majority is 18, you can't run for public office before you turn 21.

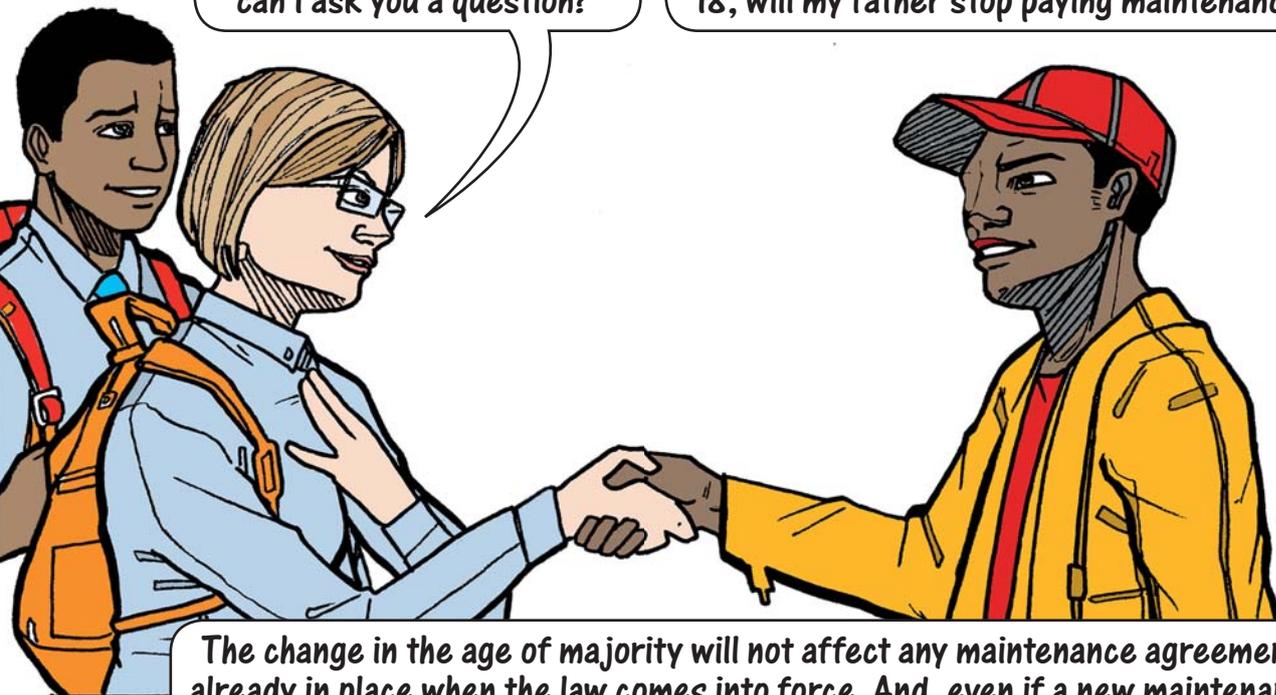
That is okay with me. I might need to go to university before I run for President.

Good idea. And remember, the legal powers that come with being an adult come with responsibilities as well.



Hello Mr Timms. Since you are a maintenance officer, can I ask you a question?

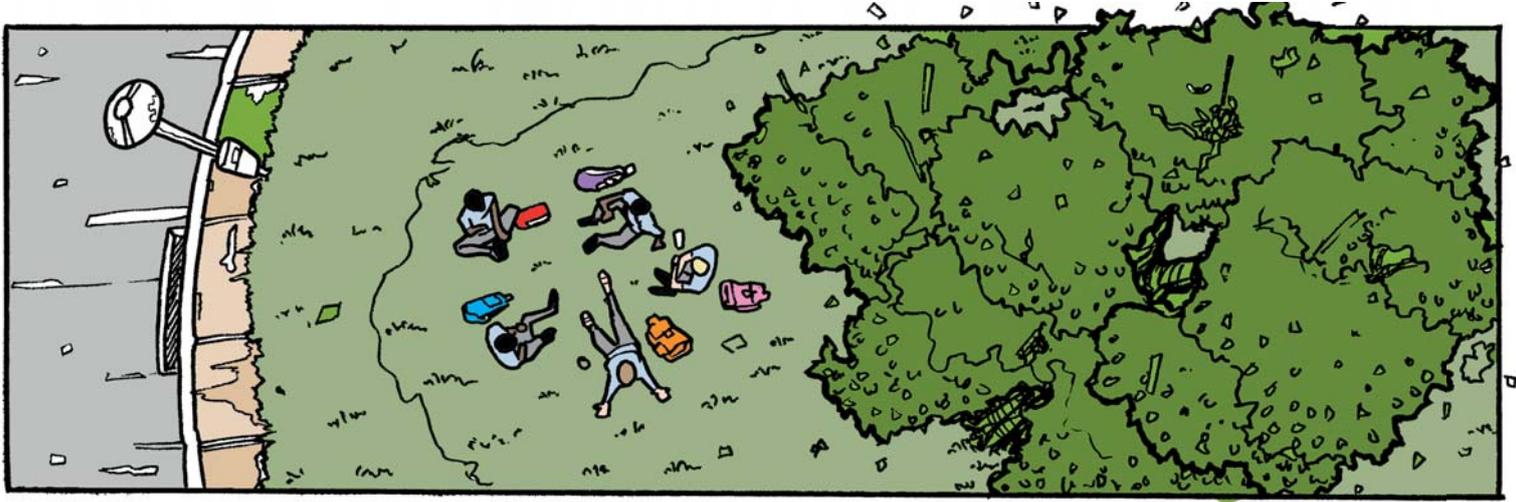
I am almost 18 years old. I want to study at the university next year. Now that the age of majority is 18, will my father stop paying maintenance for me?



The change in the age of majority will not affect any maintenance agreement that is already in place when the law comes into force. And, even if a new maintenance order is made now, the court can still order a parent to pay maintenance up to the age of 21 if the child is studying a course that will help him or her become self-sufficient.



That is a relief. I will be able to go to university after all - as long as I pass my exams! Come, we must go home and study.



It seems strange that we will be adults at age 18!

It doesn't change much though. We could already work in any type of job at 18.

And we could already take a test to get our drivers licence.

And we could already vote.

Then what is different?



The new age of majority means that we will be able to sign contracts independently when we turn 18. A contract is a binding agreement. It is a serious matter because there can be consequences for failing to follow the provisions in a contract.



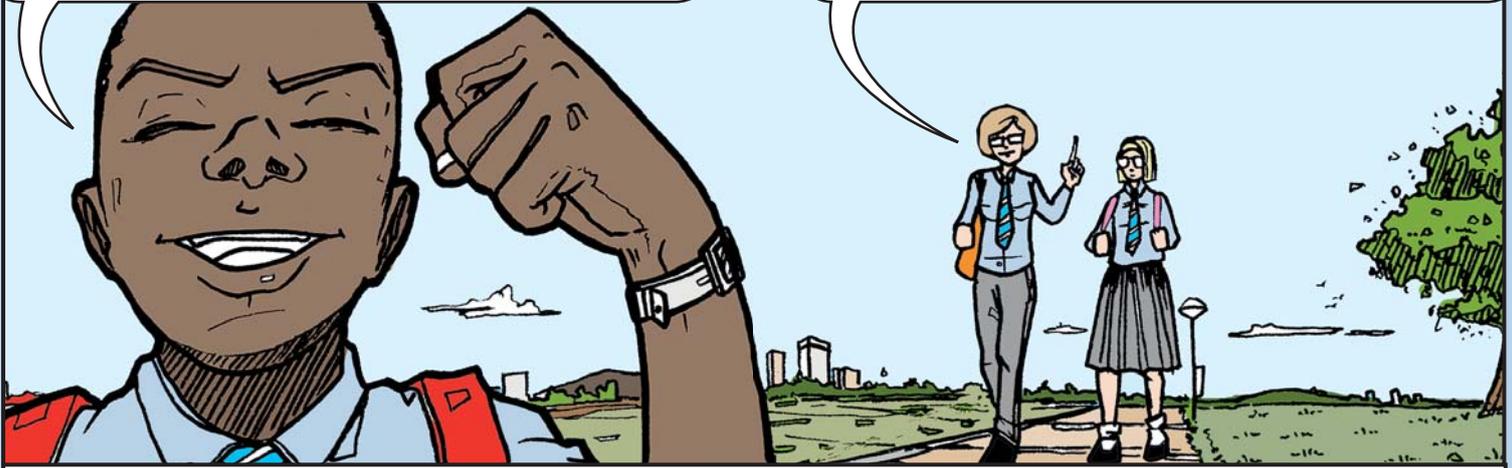
Even when the law allows us to act independently, we can still ask for help. I know that my mother is always very careful when she signs a document. I have even seen her read a contract three times before signing it. Sometimes she asks a friend for advice about documents like contracts and leases. She always asks a lot of questions!



Even if we are adults in the eyes of the law, we can still learn things from our parents!!!

It is my birthday next month. I will be 18. I am nervous but excited because I will be an adult.

Being an adult comes with responsibilities but we know that we have people who can help us.



## The definition of a child

Namibia's Child Care and Protection Act defines a "child" as being a person under 18 years of age. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child also define a "child" as a person under the age of 18.

## The age of majority

The age of majority is when a person becomes an adult, or a "major". The concepts of "minor" and "major" relate to what legal actions a person is able to perform independently. A person who is a "major" is legally an adult and has full legal powers. A person who is a "minor" is not an adult and does not have full legal powers. A "minor" can perform some legal actions only with the help of his or her parents or guardian.

## Exceptions

A person under the age of 21 needs parental consent to marry. A person must also be at least 21 years of age to run for public office.

## Transitional provisions

Documents such as trusts, wills, maintenance orders and divorce orders which refer to majors and minors will be interpreted in light of the law as it stood at the time that the document was written. This respects the intentions of the persons involved. The Child Care and Protection Act also provides protections to ensure that the change in the law does not disadvantage anyone who is between the ages of 18 and 21 when the law comes into force.

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