

## Suffrage age of 16 years

### Why should the suffrage age be reduced to 16 and not 17 or 15?

The reason lies in the formation of the Danish state schools and society's age limits.

#### 16 years old – finished with lower secondary school

The average age of finishing lower secondary school education in Denmark is 16.1 years. This means that young people, when they reach 16, have completed the obligatory education provided by society. They will have been taught history, social studies, Danish and other subjects, which enable them to function as responsible social citizens.

For one fifth of all young people, secondary education is the only education they will get. Despite a common political target of 95 percent of Danish youth completing a secondary education, almost 20 percent of young people still do not manage to go through the Danish sixth form ('Gymnasium') or a vocational edu-

cation. The share of young people that get a secondary education has declined from 83 percent in 2000 to 80 percent in 2010.

#### 16 years and adult

In formal terms, you go from being a child to being an adult as an 18 year old in Denmark. On your 18th birthday you reach the age of majority. But the significance of the legal age has drastically decreased in the last few years. Today it is really the age of 16 that counts because of the other age limits in society.

As the overview of significant age limits in society shows, 16 year olds are subjected to a series of laws similar to those applicable to legal citizens in society. Most notably is that a 16 year old can be punished in the same way as an adult, if they break society's laws. Just as they have the right to enter sexual relations, with subsequent consequences of having children and becoming responsible for a child's upbringing. Overall, the list of legislation a 16 year old is subjected to is long. 16 year olds are, based on the responsibility they are given by society, de facto viewed as equal to all other citizens, but just without any democratic rights.

#### FORMATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOL

The objective article in the Law about secondary school, section 3: School prepares pupils for participatory democracy, co-responsibility, rights and obligations in a society with freedom and democracy. The school's teaching and complete everyday life must therefore build on freedom of spirit, equality and democracy.

## AGE LIMITS FOR YOUTH IN DENMARK

Area	Age limit	Remarks
Adoption and divorce	12 years	Right to hearing
Minimum age of criminal responsibility	14 years	Children who commit a crime can be punished according to the social legislation. Young people under 18 will often receive a reduced sentence.
Work	15 years	Right to holiday jobs of two hours a day. There are exceptions within certain areas, where children between 13 and 15 years can work in a limited timeframe. For 15-18 year olds there are limits when using certain machinery and chemicals
Sexual minimum age	15 years	Sexual intercourse or other sexual relations with people over 15 but under 18 – can be an offence if the person under 18 is in a position of upbringing, of if there is talk of gross abuse of age and experience. In case a person is a subordinate or financially dependent, the circumstances become harder if the victim is under 21.
Life-sustaining treatment	15 years	You have right to deny life-sustaining treatment. 15 year olds also have the right to determine whether they want to be buried or cremated.
Tax	15 years	Tax return obligation.
Lay representative	15 years	As a 15 year old you can be a lay representative.
Part status	15 years	You have part status in connection with court trials.
Purchase of medication	15 years	Have right to purchase over-the-counter medication.
Payment to ATP ( A pension scheme)	15 years	
Gliding	15/16 years	Right to fly a glider (15 and 16 years dependent on glider type).
Parachuting	16 years	Right to independent parachute jump.
Purchase of alcohol in a retail outlet	16 years	Except for alcohol over 16.5%.
Purchase of game licence	16 years	If you are a member of a shooting club you can also purchase weapons.
Purchase of tractor driver's licence	16 years	
Purchase of motorbike licence	16 years	
Speedboat license	16 years	As a 16 year old you have the right to sail a motor or speed boat with a body length of up to 15 metres. Proficiency certificate permit can be obtained as a 15 year old.
Purchase of cigarettes	18 years	
War/military service	16 years	Young people from 16 years old can be called to service in the civil defence during war time or war situations.
Home Guard	17 years	
Purchase of alcohol in restaurants, bars and public buildings	18 years	
Marriage	18 years	People under 18 can get an exemption.
Abortion	18 years	If a woman under 18 wants an abortion, it must normally be approved by her parents, unless she is married.
Driver's licence	18 years	The age limit is 21 years for a driver's licence for larger motorbikes, lorries etc.
Purchase of weapons	18 years	If you are a member of a shooting club, you may have permission from the age of 16 or 17.
Conscription	18 years	Young people from 16 years old can be called to service in the civil defence during war time or war situations.
Right to become an organ donor	18 years	
Family reunification	24 years	