

## **When is a Person Considered an Adult?**

In many cultures and religions, people perform rites to celebrate an individual's transition from childhood to adulthood. For instance, the Jewish faith has bar (bat) mitzvahs, which occur at the age of thirteen years. The Catholic Church also has confirmations that occur at the age of thirteen years. Both rituals denote a level of maturity in regard to their respective faiths. As it would seem, the age of confirmation and bar mitzvah do not necessarily match the secular assumptions of maturity.

In the United States, several established standards indicate that an individual is considered to have entered the legal age of an adult. For instance, turning eighteen years of age enables an individual to vote or join the military without parental consent. However, in criminal offenses, adulthood is defined by the type and nature of the crime. The age at which someone can be prosecuted as an adult is fifteen years when accused of committing felony crimes of violence, such as bank robbery, murder, and aggravated sexual assault (United States Department of Justice, 1997).

Let's continue our discussion on gender and ethnicity in adult development.