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## **Marriage and Cohabiting Pattern in Sweden- Cohorts Born in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

This paper is an extract from a report that describes the demographic development and development of society in Sweden through comparisons of the cohorts born during the 20th century. The report focuses on those born in the years 1905, 1915, 1925, 1935, 1945, 1955, 1965, 1975 and 1985. The demographic behaviour changes when society changes and during the 20th century several events, changes in the law and in attitudes in society have occurred and they have influenced life for those born during the 20th century. These events and changes have influenced the different birth cohorts in different ages and thus have had different effects on their demographic behaviour. One example is the expansion of childcare, which has made it easier for those born in 1945 than those born in 1935 to combine work and childbearing. Examples of other events that have influenced the birth cohorts to various degrees are: the 1918 Spanish flu, the change in the divorce law in 1974, the abolition of the widow's pension in 1989 and the economic crisis during the 1990s. In this paper the focus is on the change from marriage to cohabitation.

The data is from many different register and publications from Statistics Sweden.

- Publications on population statistics from 1911–1968.
- Register data, register of total population, is used after 1969.
- Population and Housing Census in 1980 and 1990
- Census in 2011

Society has changed in many ways over the past 100 years. The events, legislative changes and attitudinal changes that have occurred have affected the lives of those born during the 1900s. The changes have affected different generations in different ways because they occurred when they were in different ages and life stages

Following born every ten years, from 1905 to 1985, we can see how, for example, the courting process has changed between generations. The changes have occurred in several ways, both when in life to start a family, and if you choose to marry or not varies from birth cohorts. For those born during the earlier part of the 1900s reflects the proportion of married family formation rather well as it was rare to



live together without being married, while those born later in greater lived together as cohabiting partners.

We start by looking more closely at the marriage. Those born in 1935 are the birth cohort that married at the youngest ages, and it is also the cohort with the largest share ever married. At age 24, half had married and at age 60, nine out of ten has ever been married. Those who were born earlier than 1935 started a family later and it was also more common for them to never start a family. This is also reflected in the proportion of childless women that was higher in the older birth cohorts, those born in 1915 remained about 20 per cent of women childless, compared with 13 percent among women born in 1935.

The conditions for family formation were varying during the early 1900s, and some had no financial means to raise a family. It could for instance apply to women working as maids or seamstresses and men who worked as farmhands, which were common occupations at the time. There were relatively few with higher education, especially among women. Among the women with high education it was more likely to remain single. Having no family could have resulted in larger possibilities to acquire a higher education at the same time it may have been difficult for high educated women to find a partner.

The industrial sector grew ever larger, which meant that more and more people worked outside the home and after the Second World War followed an economic boom that continued into the 1960s. It was during this period those born in 1935, was in the 20's and many had financial means to leave the parental home early and found a family. In the 1960s, also grew the public sector and women entered the labour market to a greater extent. Additionally publicly funded childcare expanded which made it easier for women to combine children and work. This is part of what contributed to the cohort born in 1935 to a large extent formed a family and that they did it early.

These conditions apply even more for those born ten years later, but those born in 1945 also took advantage of the expansion of the education system and the introduction of student aid system in the mid-1960s, which allowed higher education to many more people than before. A higher education brings a later entry into the labour market and also later childbearing. A slighter higher percent born in 1945 had a baby than the cohort born in 1935, only 12 percent of women born in 1945 remained childless. In terms of the proportion of married born in 1945 followed the pattern of the generation before roughly until the age of 25. At that age, more than half of women and nearly half of the men were married. Then marked a clear break in the trend and the percentage of ever married is no longer increasing at the same rate as for those born in 1935. It is the 1970s and the increasing frequency of cohabitation situation that has put its mark.

The trend toward marrying later in life and a lower proportion of married continuing with the generations born in 1955 and 1965

Among those born in 1975 is a lower proportion of married in younger ages than in previous generations, but at age 37, they have come up to the same share as those born 10 years earlier, and they have an equal proportion ever married as those born in 1965. They are thus the first generation in 40 years where the proportion married is not lower than the generation before. During the 2000s the number of marriages increased, an increase can be partly explained by a marriage trend. It is possible that it is this trend that underlies the more born in 1975 married in recent years. So far, born in 1985 following the same trend.

For those born in the late 1900s, it is common to live together without being married. Statistics on how common it is to be cohabiting are only available for some years. This means that we must change our perspective and we are now strikes at certain ages for the birth cohorts we study, instead of following them across all ages. Unlike the statistics of marriage, it is not possible to report the percentage that had ever been cohabiting, data show the situation at a given time.

Living together without marriage became more common in the 1960's, but it is not until the Population and Housing Census 1975 as cohabitation, first reported in the statistics. Cohabitation grew rapidly in popularity, particularly among the young.

It is definitely the most common being partner in a young age. For example, it is a significantly higher proportion of cohabiting at age 25 than at 45, among those born in 1965. Many of those who begin cohabiting married eventually and there is a higher proportion of the cohort who are living together with a partner, whether they are married or not, at age 45 than at age 25.

Although the proportion of cohabiting is lower among older people, it is clear that the long term trend is that it has become increasingly common with cohabitation. At the age of 35, just over 10 per cent of those born in 1945 cohabiting compared with between 25 and 30 percent at the same age among born in 1975. At age 55, it is small percentages that are cohabiting, only a few percent of those born in 1925. For the cohort born in 1955, the share passed 10 percent of all couples livening together.

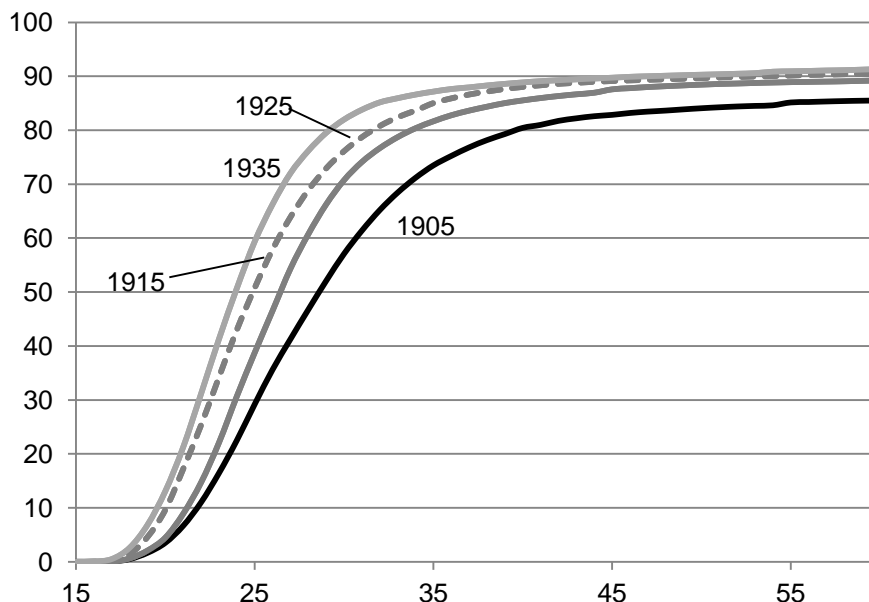
After the last Population and Housing Census in 1990, not until 2012 was statistics on cohabitation available, through the apartment register and civil registry on the apartment In 2012 the youngest cohort we are studying, born in 1985, attained the age of 27 and they are cohabiting in the same extent as those born in 1965 were at the same age.

The proportion of cohabiting (with or without marriage) has declined overall between the different generations. At age 25, 53 per cent of those born in 1955 cohabiting compared with 48 per cent of births in 1985, and at age 55 was 77 per cent of births in 1925 cohabiting compared with 63 per cent born in 1955. The number of people living together without being married therefore do not weighs the reduction in the number of married to the fullest. One explanation for this is that the divorce rate has also increased. The proportion of cohabiting at age 55 is lower for those born in 1955 than previous generations because there are more people in this birth cohort that has been through a divorce.

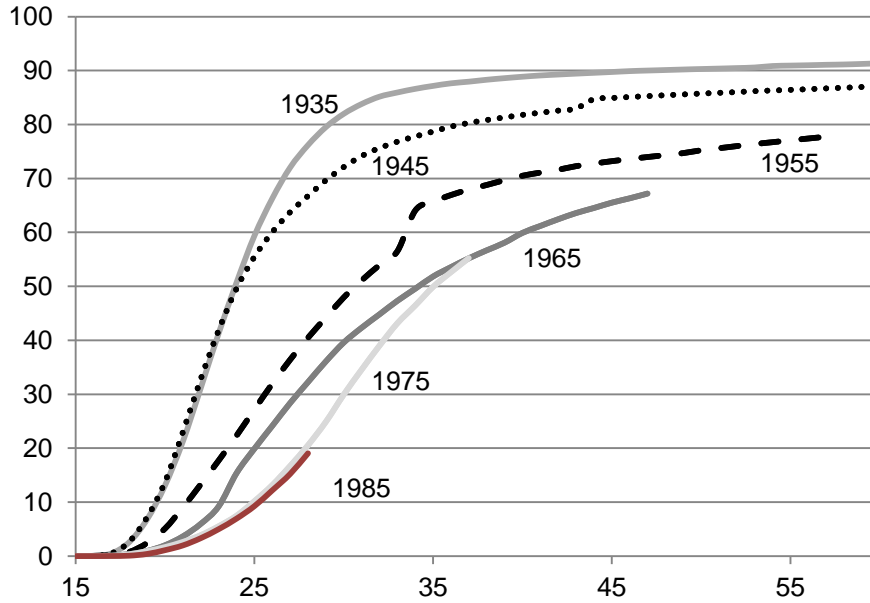
Maybe, the development of a reduced share cohabiting has stalled. The youngest generation in the study was born in 1985, at age 25 they were cohabiting in a somewhat greater extent than those born 1965.

The full report is published in Swedish, with summary and diagram / table headings in English. <http://www.scb.se/en/Finding-statistics/Publishing-calendar/Show-detailed-information/?publobjid=23730>

#### Share ever married by age, cohort born 1905, 1915, 1925 and 1935



**Share ever married by age, cohort born 1935, 1945, 1955, 1965, 1975 and 1985**



**Share cohabiting (married or not) at different ages, by birth year**

