



Young

The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs

Sweden

# Contents

- 3 Sweden
- 4 Young Swedes
- 7 Education
- 13 Working Life
- 16 Financial Support
- 17 General Compulsory Service
- 19 Home and Family
- 23 Culture and Leisure
- 27 Health
- 30 Crime
- 31 Rights and Duties
- 33 Sweden's Constitution – A Parliamentary Democracy
- 38 Sweden's Youth Policy
- 39 Sweden in Europe

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# Sweden

- 8.9 million people live in Sweden, of whom just over 10 per cent are aged between 16 and 24. During the first half of the 20th century, children and young people constituted 50 per cent of Sweden's population.
- The majority of Sweden's population live in the southern part of the country, whilst about 15 per cent live in northern Sweden.
- Nine out of ten Swedes belong to the Swedish church, which is Lutheran, but few participate actively.
- The capital city is called Stockholm.
- The land area covered by Sweden is just over 450,000 square kilometres, about as big as Spain or California. The average population density is 21 inhabitants per square kilometre of land. Half of the land area of Sweden is covered with forest, and less than a tenth is under cultivation.
- There are more than 100,000 lakes and many large rivers. The longest, the Torne, is 540 kilometres long.
- Sweden's highest mountain, Kebnekaise, is 2,111 metres above sea level.
- Sweden is a rectangular-shaped country, approx. 1,300 kilometres from north to south and 400 kilometres (max.) from east to west
- Along Sweden's coast there are several large archipelagos, the best known being those around Stockholm, Bohuslän [on the west coast] and Luleå.
- Sweden has 26 national parks with a total land area of 642,000 hectares. There are also about 2,000 nature reserves to protect and maintain plant habitats, animal life, the cultural landscape and recreation areas.
- Sweden has 9 cultural relics registered on UNESCO's world heritage list, the equipment at Drottningholm castle being one of these.
- Sweden's proximity to the Atlantic gulf stream means that it has a milder climate than the rest of the Nordic area and average temperatures in the capital city are 18 degrees Celsius in July, despite the fact that Stockholm lies at approximately the same latitude as southern Greenland. The climate varies a great deal between the northern and southern parts of the country. North of the arctic circle the midnight sun shines throughout June and July.

## This proportion of Sweden's young people live in ...

	Region	Percentage
1	<b>Stockholm region</b>	<b>19.68%</b>
2	Uppsala region	3.81%
3	Södermanland	2.76%
4	Östergötland	5.03%
5	Jönköping region	3.77%
6	Kronoberg region	2.18%
7	Kalmar region	2.55%
8	Gotland	0.66%
9	Blekinge	1.75%
10	<b>Skåne</b>	<b>12.96%</b>
11	Halland	3.03%
12	<b>Västra Götaland</b>	<b>16.89%</b>
13	Värmland	2.65%
14	Örebro region	3.13%
15	Västmanland	2.74%
16	Dalarna	3.01%
17	Gävleborg region	2.96%
18	Västernorrland	2.72%
19	Jämtland	1.44%
20	Västerbotten	3.39%
21	Norrbottn	2.87%





## Young Swedes

There are 0.9 million young Swedes aged between 16 and 24 today, and by about 2010 the figure is expected to exceed a million.

The majority of these young people were born in Sweden and have Swedish nationality. 10 per cent of them have one Swedish and one foreign parent. A further 10 per cent were born abroad, and of these 5 per cent still retain their foreign nationality. After Swedish the most common nationalities are Finnish, Bosnian, Iraqi, Turkish, Yugoslavian and Somalian. This means that slightly more than one young person in five living in Sweden was born abroad his/herself or has at least one parent who was.

## Young people today

Young people in Sweden today have the same interests and problems as young people in the rest of Western Europe. In today's communication society news and trends spread very quickly. International comparisons show that there is not a lot to make Swedish young people unique. Perhaps that they are both tolerant and intolerant at the same time. Studies of young people's values and attitudes show a surprising tolerance as regards issues such as abortion, religion and homosexuality. By contrast, young Swedes have a negative

attitude to the misuse of allowances or cuts in spending in the health and education sector. Sweden has the reputation of being amongst the most emancipated countries in the world. Most young Swedes consider equality to be a matter of course. But if we look at the statistics we see that there are still a lot of differences between the sexes. Young men and women are still quite distinct in terms of their choice of career and training, of how they prioritise family and work, there is gender differentiation in salaries and also a difference in getting established on the labour market.

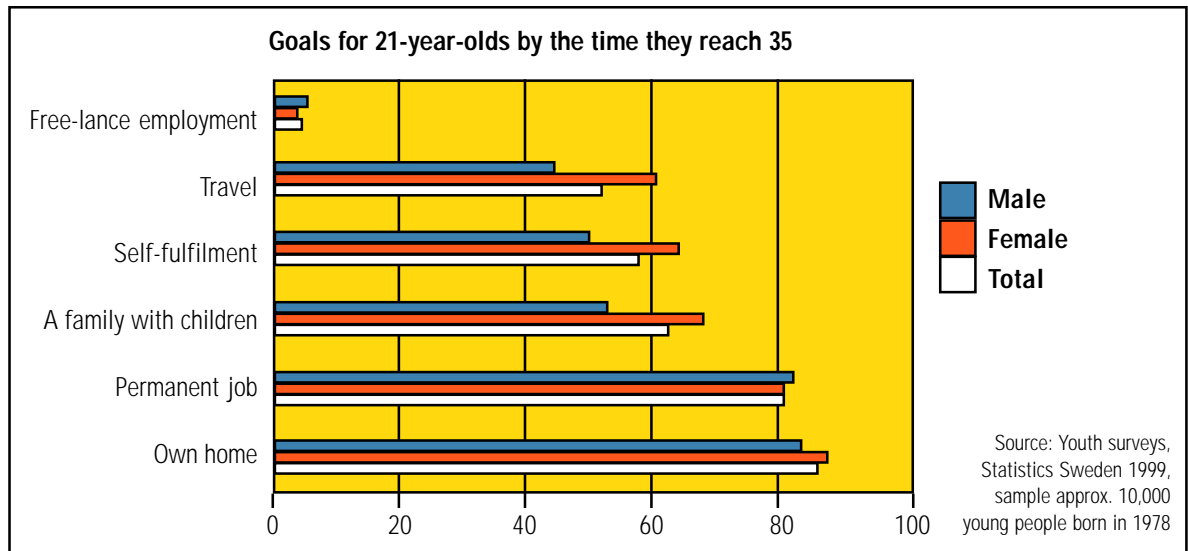
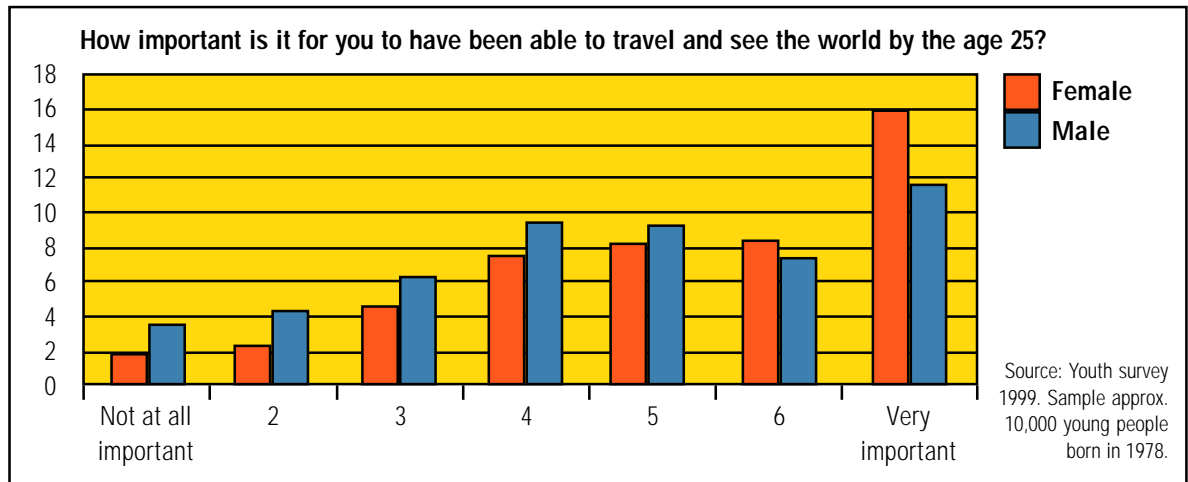




photo: Ingrid Bohlin

# Education

## Basic compulsory school

Sweden has had compulsory schooling for 150 years. The basic compulsory school lasts nine years, but the majority of youngsters today also go to pre-school for one year, which is voluntary. Children start school aged 6 or 7. It is usual for the pupils to have one teacher for all subjects from the first to the sixth year (from ages 7–12). From the seventh year onwards they have subject-specialised teachers.

About 3 per cent of the country's compulsory school pupils go to private schools, which are located, in the main, in or around the larger cities in Sweden.<sup>1</sup>

Grades are awarded from the eighth year onwards at the close of each semester. The Swedish school system has two semesters, an autumn and a spring semester. The school year finishes with the spring semester. In the ninth year the pupils receive a leaving certificate from the compulsory school. One in ten pupils who complete the compulsory school do so without receiving a full certificate.

## Upper secondary school

Most 15–16 year olds continue directly to the upper secondary school after the compulsory school. In 1999, 95 per cent did so.<sup>2</sup> The pupils can choose between national and specialised secondary school study programmes, for example focussing on sport or industry. About 10 per cent of all secondary school pupils opt for specialised study programmes. All the programmes last for a minimum of three years.<sup>3</sup> There are significant differences in the programmes chosen by young men and women. About 50 per cent choose vocational study programmes, rather more men than women. More men choose vocational study programmes in areas such as automotive technology, electrical engineering or civil engineering. Women predominate in nursing, craft, childcare and leisure programmes. There are also gender differences within academic programmes, with young women choosing sociologically oriented studies and men leaning toward technology. About the same numbers of men and women choose the sciences.

Gender split in choice of Gymnasium	no. of people applying for these as 1 <sup>ST</sup> -choice	%-age women applying for these as 1 <sup>st</sup> choice
<b>Childcare and leisure</b>	<b>4 259</b>	<b>69</b>
Nursing	3 289	79
<b>Craft</b>	<b>3 171</b>	<b>82</b>
Sociology/social studies	21 171	63
<b>Media</b>	<b>5 100</b>	<b>49</b>
Sciences	14 286	44
<b>Commerce and administration</b>	<b>4 321</b>	<b>51</b>
Technology	6 776	9
<b>Civil engineering</b>	<b>3 228</b>	<b>2</b>
Electrical engineering	4 832	2
<b>Automotive engineering</b>	<b>4 133</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>97 769</b>	<b>46</b>

Source: Swedish Board of Education 2000

<sup>1</sup> Swedish Board of Education 2000

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Sweden 1999

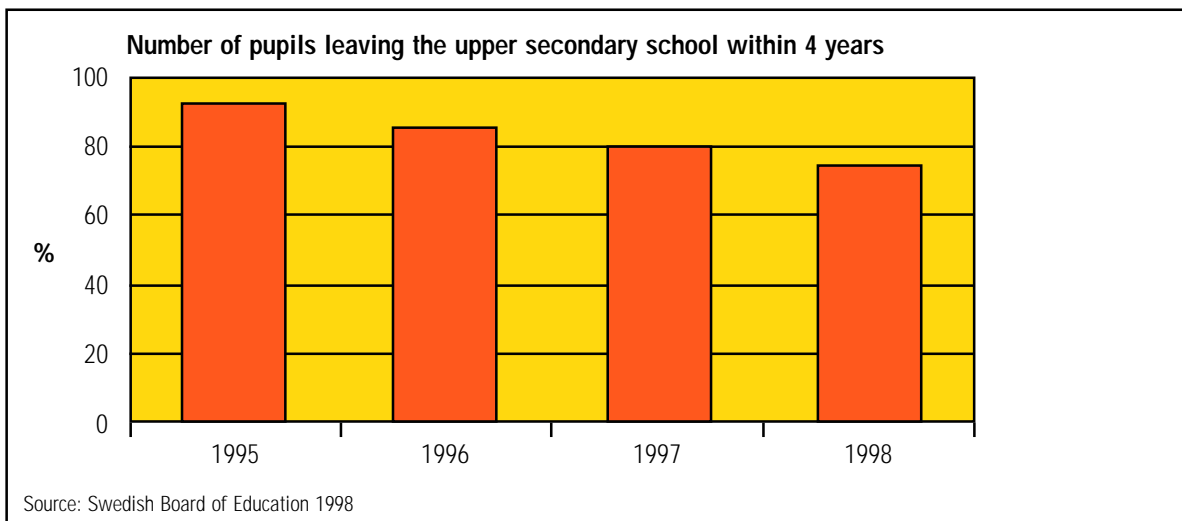
<sup>3</sup> Swedish Board of Education 2000

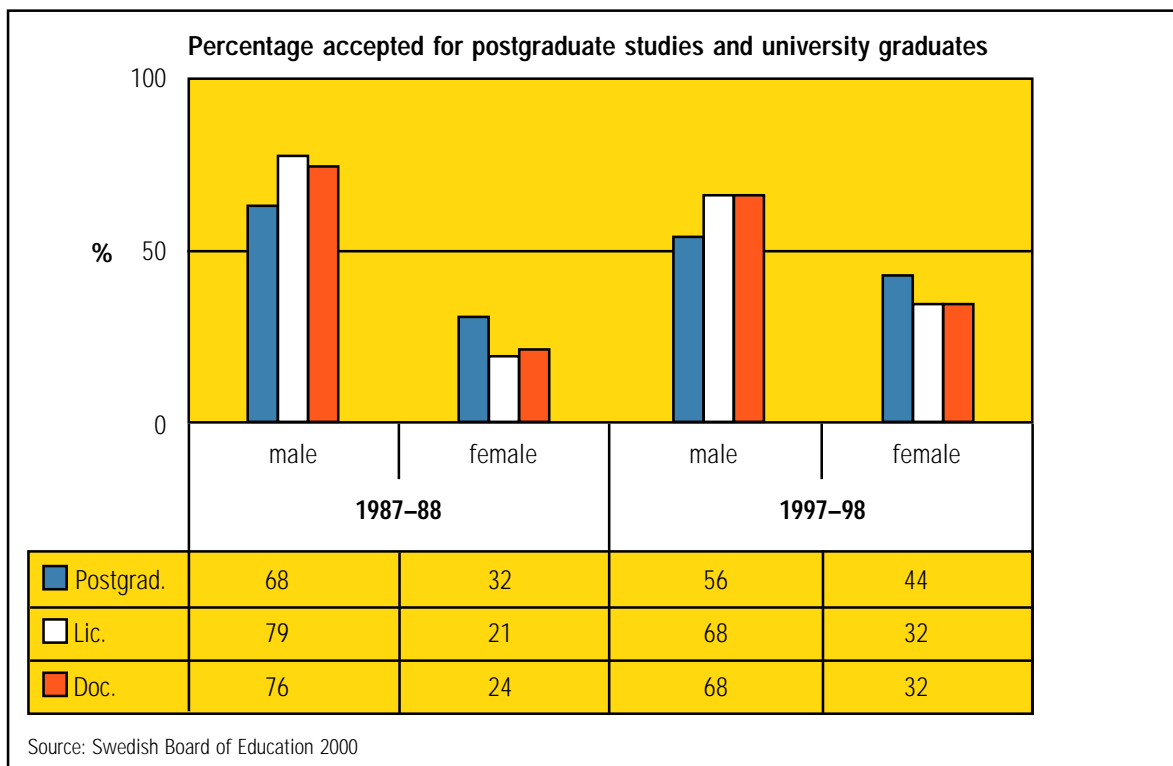


photo: Ingrid Bohlin

The final grade from the Gymnasium includes the final marks from between 30 and 40 different courses. These marks constitute the qualification needed to proceed to higher studies at colleges and universities. Almost 25 per cent of the pupils leaving the upper secondary school in 1999 did so without obtaining a full leaving certificate.

Many schools in Sweden have pupils and representatives from various pupil organisations on their management boards. In this way it is hoped to increase young people's influence within school and to make the most of their skills.





### Colleges and universities

Directly after completing their Gymnasium education, 14 per cent begin studying at college or university. A good 20 per cent start at college or university within three years of completing Gymnasium. More women than men both apply to and begin studies at college or university.<sup>4</sup>

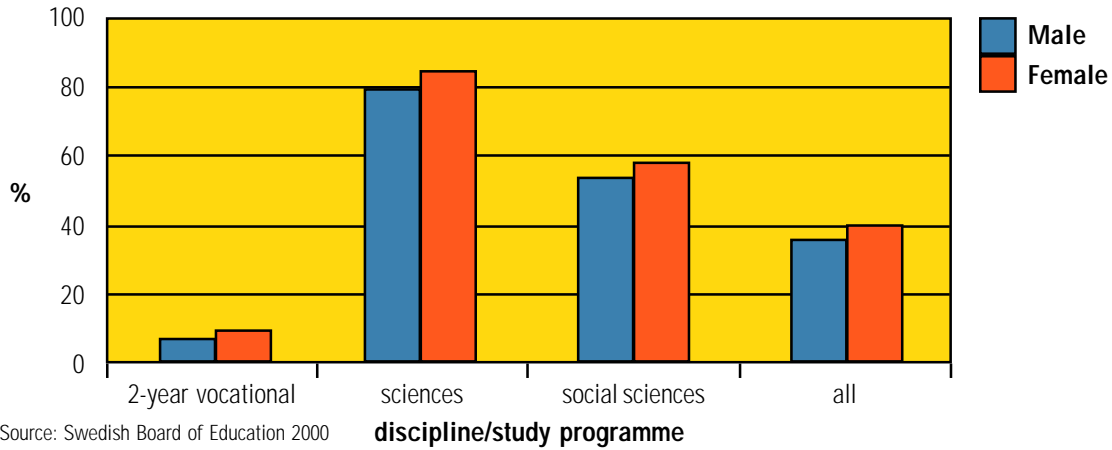
Of the roughly 300,000 who applied to university or college for the autumn semester of 1999, more than half were women. A quarter of those applying were 19 or less and applied directly after finishing secondary school. At the time of applications for 1999, the most popular courses for both women and men were economics and computing/programming courses.

However, larger numbers of women are studying humanities and social sciences compared with men, who are studying technology and law. In reply to the question of why they chose a particular course, women more frequently cited an interest in the subject, which they chose for further study. Men were more inclined to emphasise the jobs market. The most common explanation given by young people for not studying further was that they wanted to work instead.<sup>5</sup> University and college students must belong to a students' union. This represents the students in various decision-making bodies within the university or college.

<sup>4</sup> The Swedish National Board For Youth Affairs 2000

<sup>5</sup> Young people born in 1978 questioned in a survey in spring 1999. SCB 2000

**Transfer to higher education within 3 years of leaving the secondary school.  
Leavers in academic year 1995/1996**

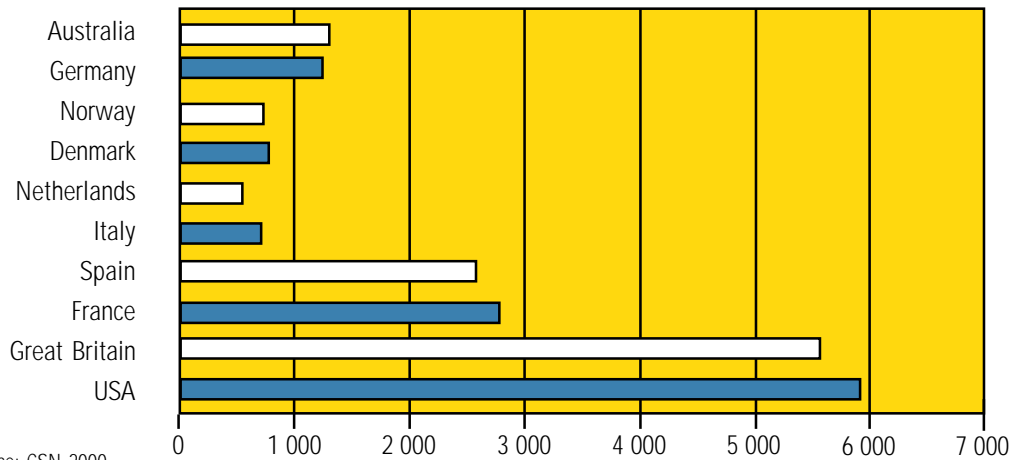


**International studies and training programmes**

Young Swedes have the opportunity to take part in the EU's Socrates or Leonardo training programmes. The programmes are intended to stimulate further education and are geared towards Gymnasium-level students, the unemployed and young people at university or college.<sup>6</sup>

The Swedish system of study allowances also makes it possible to study abroad using Swedish study allowances. There is no restriction on places to which the students may travel. The majority of those studying abroad do so outside the programmes.

**Most popular country chosen for study abroad by secondary school students with study aid, 1998/1999**

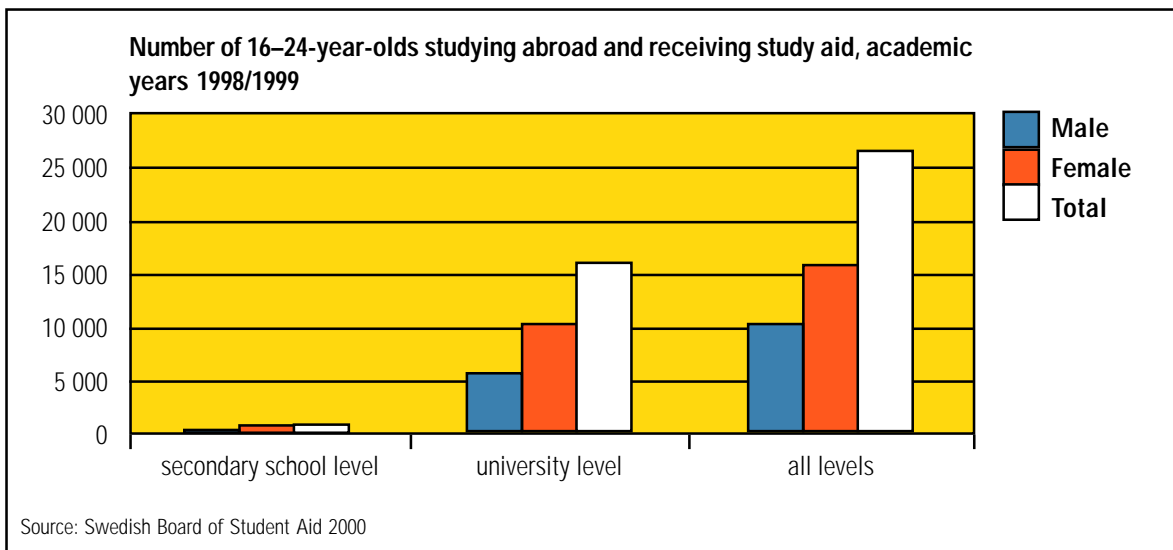


<sup>6</sup> The body responsible is the International programme office.

## Study aid

Young Swedes over the age of 16 who continue to further studies after the compulsory school receive student grants. Students over the age of 18 can apply for study aid, which are composed partly of grants and partly of loans which

have to be repaid. Study allowances can be applied for up until the age of 50. Funds can be obtained for studying at university or college or to attend vocational courses and supplementary training programmes.





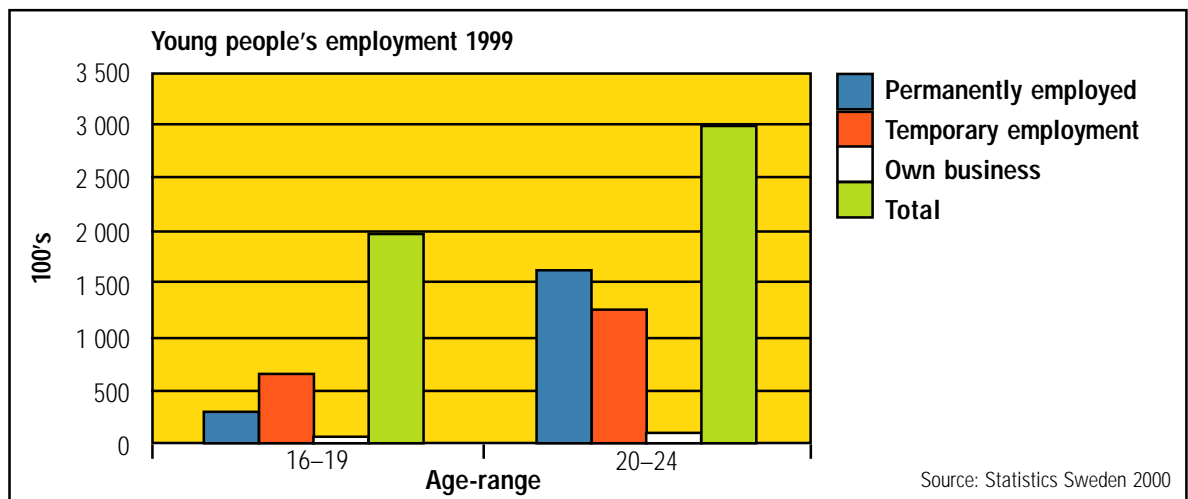
*photo: Cristián Serrano*

## Working Life

About 40 per cent of the graduates start work directly after finishing upper secondary school, which means that about the same number who take vocational study programmes at also start working directly after. Generally speaking young people work in the same professions as older people. However, it is more common for young people and especially young women to take temporary positions, part-time work and project-based posts. Young people change jobs more frequently. Unemployment amongst young people between 16 and 24 was 8.8 per cent of all those in the age-group in the first half of 2000. For Sweden as a whole there was 5.1 per cent unemployment.<sup>7</sup> Austria has the lowest unemployment in the EU in 2000 with 4.2 per cent, and Spain the highest with 26.6 per cent. The average in the EU is 16.3 per cent. Youth unemployment, in line with the general level of unemployment, fell in all EU countries in 1999.<sup>8</sup>



photo: Cristián Serrano

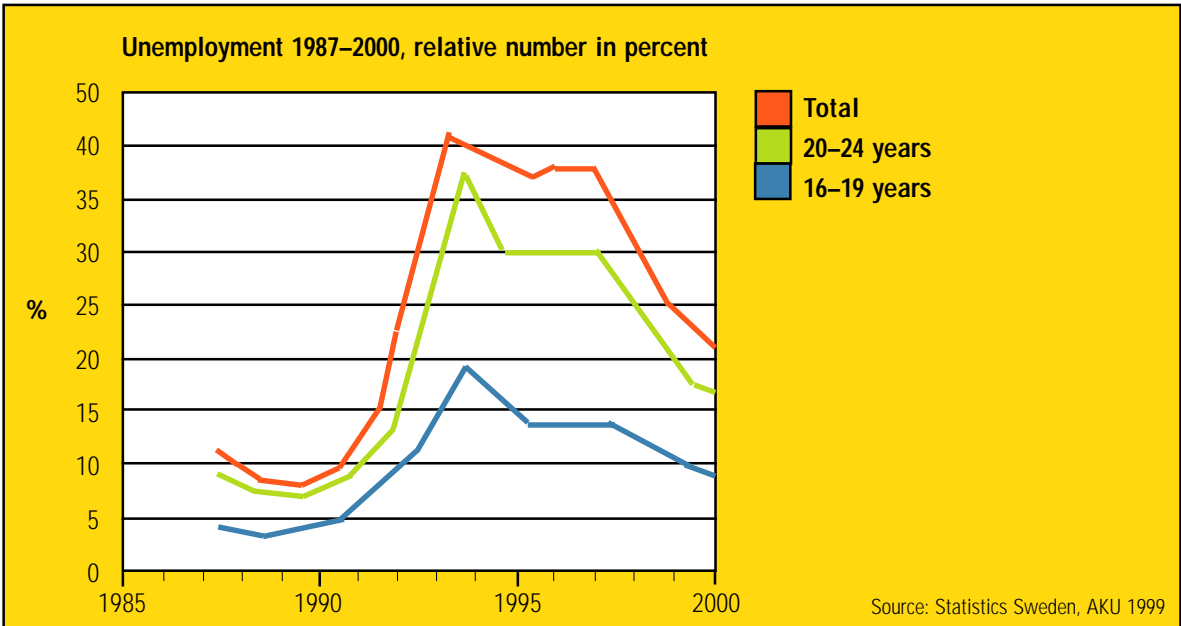


<sup>7</sup> Statistics Sweden 2000

<sup>8</sup> EUROSTAT 2000

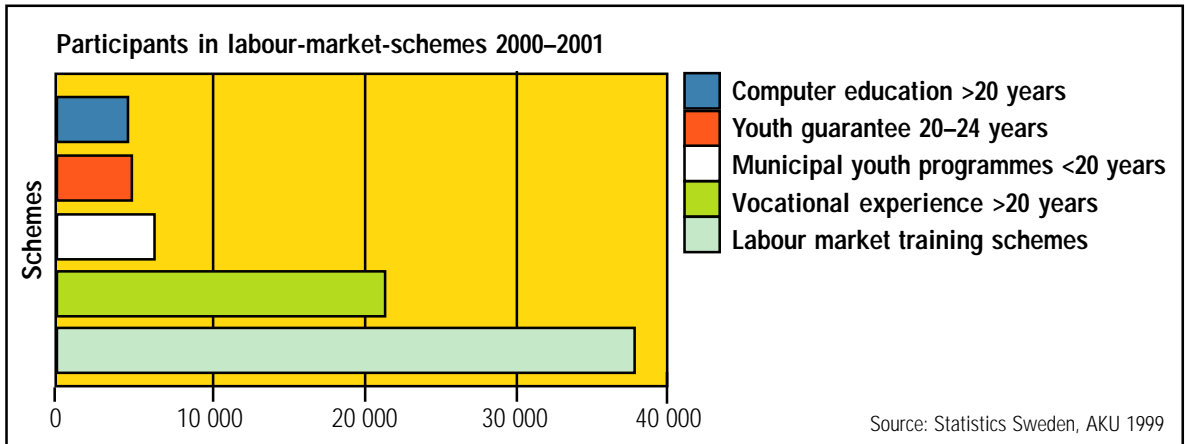


photo: Cristián Serrano



## Labour market programmes

Since 1996 the municipalities have been responsible for labour market schemes for young people. They are responsible for finding young unemployed people under 20 an occupation. The idea is that job opportunities should be created using the individual municipalities' knowledge of the local labour market and in conjunction with local businesses.



The youth guarantee was introduced on 1 January 1998.

This gives the municipalities the possibility of taking over responsibility for young people between the ages of 20 and 24 for whom the Employment Office is unable to find work within 90 days. The youth guarantee is structured so that it gives the municipalities complete freedom to combine training, work experience and different types of courses so that the chosen combination is suited to the unemployed person. The intention is to break the vicious circle of schemes, benefits and unemployment.



photo: Anette Persson



## Financial Support

### The unemployment benefit fund and KAS

The unemployed can draw two types of benefit. In order to have access to the unemployment benefit fund in Sweden, applicants must have been members for at least a year, and have worked for at least six months of that period. Unemployed people who do not qualify for the can obtain a basic form of assistance, KAS, which gives a significantly lower level of benefit.

### Social security benefits

Young people have a lower average income than adults, largely due to the fact that it takes longer to establish

oneself of the labour market nowadays than it did ten years ago. If someone is unable to live on their income, or has none at all, for instance if they are unemployed and receive no benefits, then they are entitled to social security benefits. In the mid-1990s the level of social security benefits drawn by young people increased, but now it has begun to drop again. In the 20–24 year-old age-group unemployment without entitlement to benefits was the most usual reason for drawing social security benefits. Eight per cent of all young people in the 20–24 age-group received social security benefits in 1999 for that reason.<sup>9</sup>

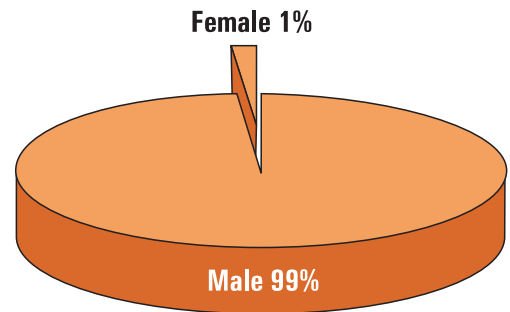
photo: Cristián Serrano

<sup>9</sup> National Board of Health and Welfare 2000

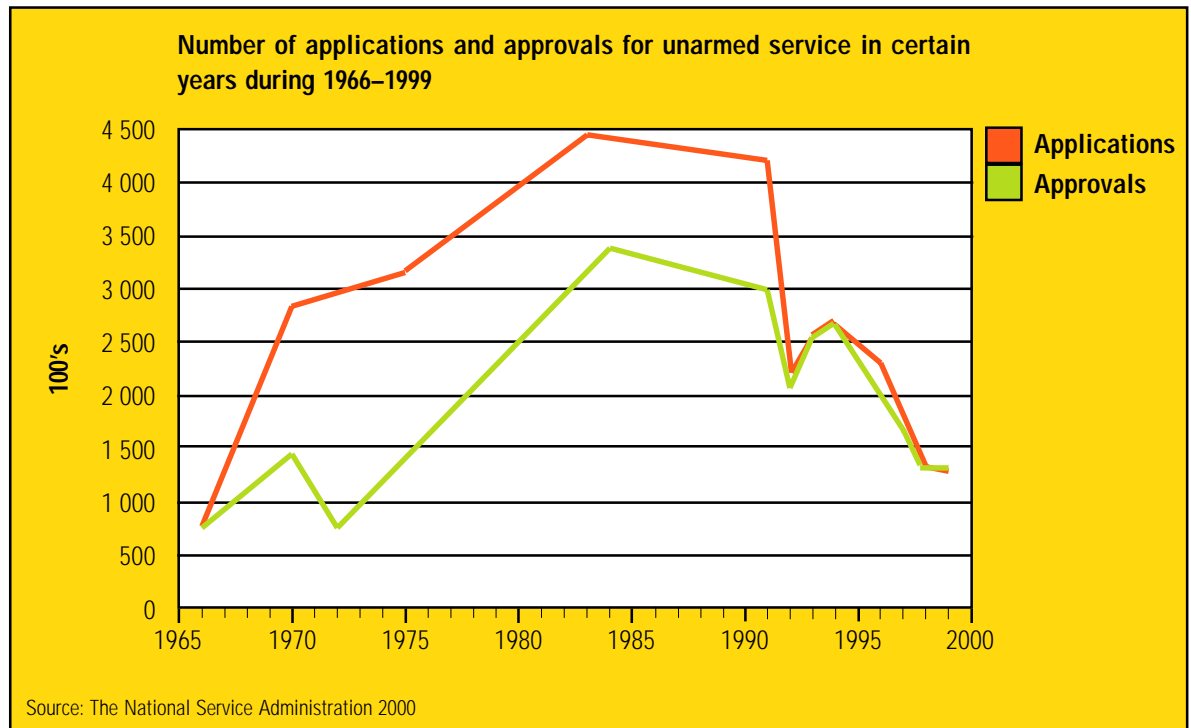
## General Compulsory Service

Sweden has a neutral defence policy based on the principal of non-alignment. All men are obliged to enrol for civil duty or military service, whilst for women it is voluntary. All men in Sweden must enlist between the ages of 18 and 24. Most do so after completing their upper secondary schooling at about the age of 18. The basic training programme lasts between 3 and 15 months depending on the assignment one is given. Every year about 45,000 young men enrol, a third of whom are assigned for military or civil duty. When carrying out civil services, young people are responsible for ensuring that important civil functions are operational in the event of war, and no combat duties are involved.

### Percentage of women registering in 1999



Source: The National Service Administration 2000



### Peace-keeping forces

One of the defence force's main roles is the task of international peace-keeping. In 2000 there were more than 1,000

Swedish men and women in Kosovo, East Timor, Kuwait and Lebanon. Assignments abroad can vary a great deal, from mine-clearance to observation.



*photo: Cristián Serrano*

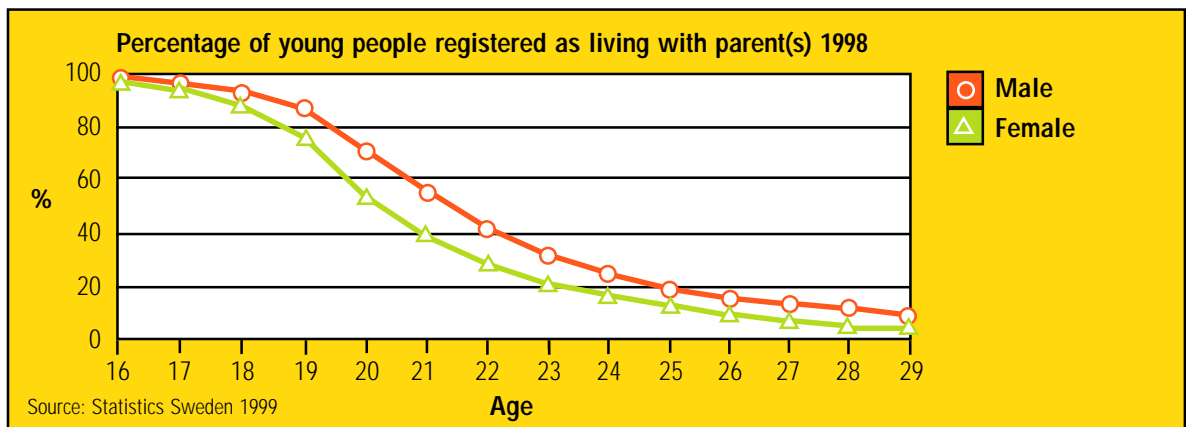
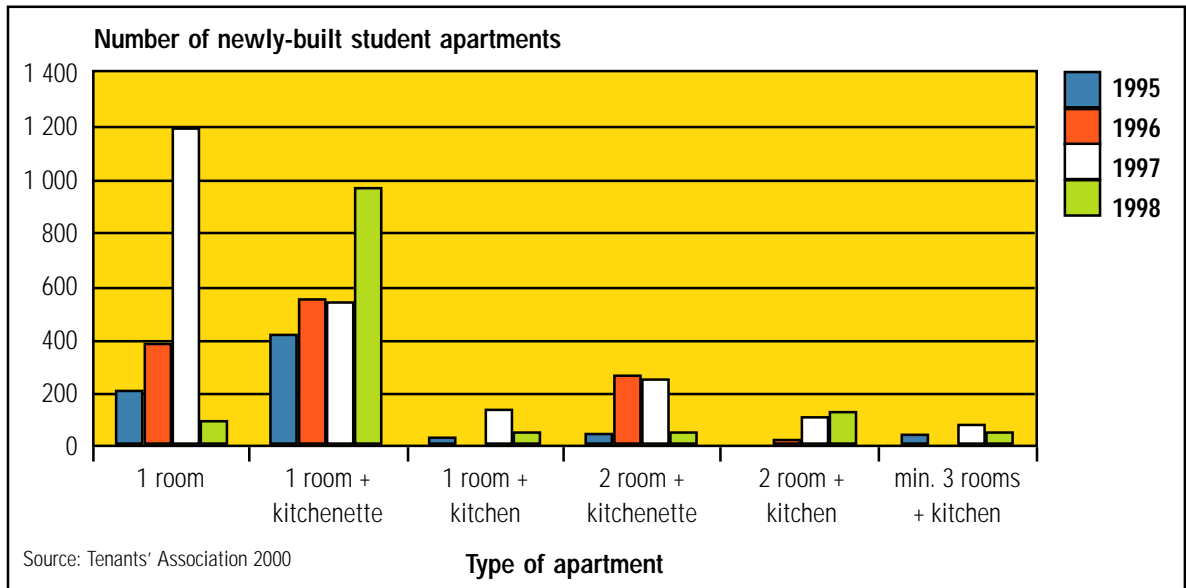
## Home and Family

These days' young people leave their parents' home for their own home sooner than they did 30 years ago. The age at which young people leave home varies from region to region. Young women leave home sooner than young men.

Extended periods of study and the subsequent delay in establishment on the jobs market associated therewith has to a certain extent made it more difficult for young people to get their own home. In the larger towns and cities,

especially university towns, there is a shortage of smaller, cheaper apartments. This has an influence on the choices available to young people.

In Sweden it is unusual for young people to remain in their parents' home after they have started a family. It is also unusual to move directly from the parental home to a partner. The first step is usually to have their own home, most often a rented flat or student apartment.<sup>10</sup>



<sup>10</sup> Statistics Sweden, Survey of Housing and Rented Accommodation 1998

## Accommodation costs

Housing is the largest single cost for most households. Young people spend a somewhat larger proportion of their income on housing compared with the average household. Young

people under 25 living alone in rented accommodation spend 35 per cent of their income on housing. For young people living together the figure is 29 per cent.<sup>11</sup>

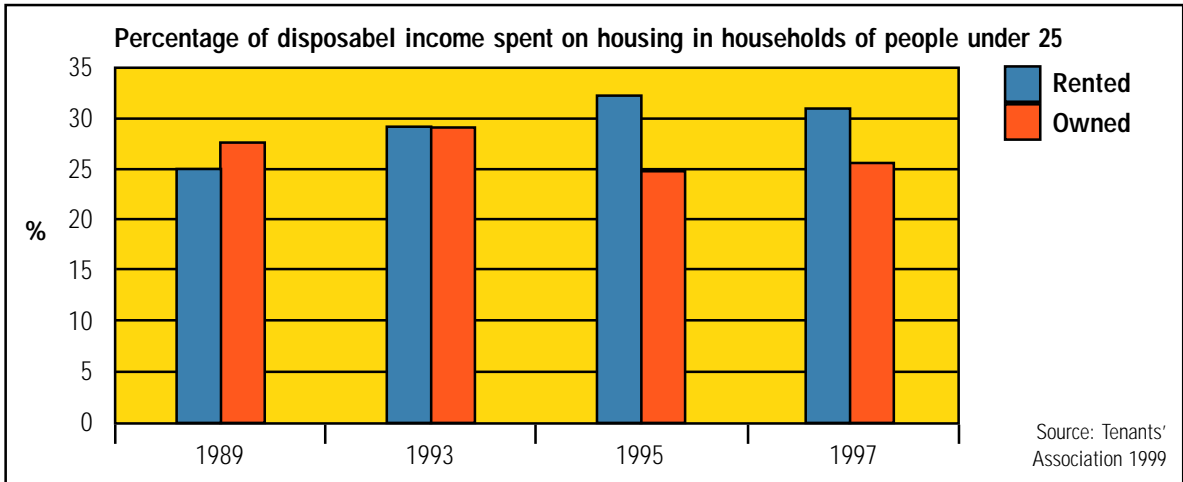
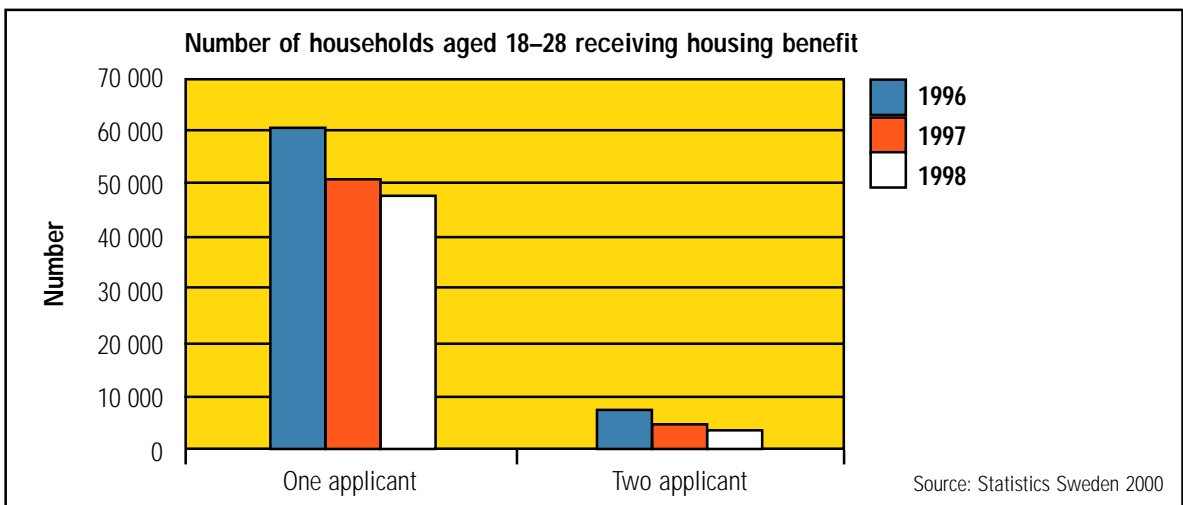


photo: Christián Serrano



<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

## Partners

When young people leave home they normally live by themselves for a while. Most young people under 25 are single, that is to say they either live at home with their parents or by themselves. Nowadays it can also be many years from the time that young people begin living together until the time they have any children. About one in five men and one in three women between the ages of 20 and 24 lived together with a partner in 1999.

## Children

The number of children born in Sweden has decreased since the beginning of the 1990s. The largest drop is in women under 30 having their first child. The average age for first-time mothers is 27. In the 20 to 24 year-old age-group these days, 12 per cent of the women have children and only about 4 per cent of the men.<sup>12</sup>

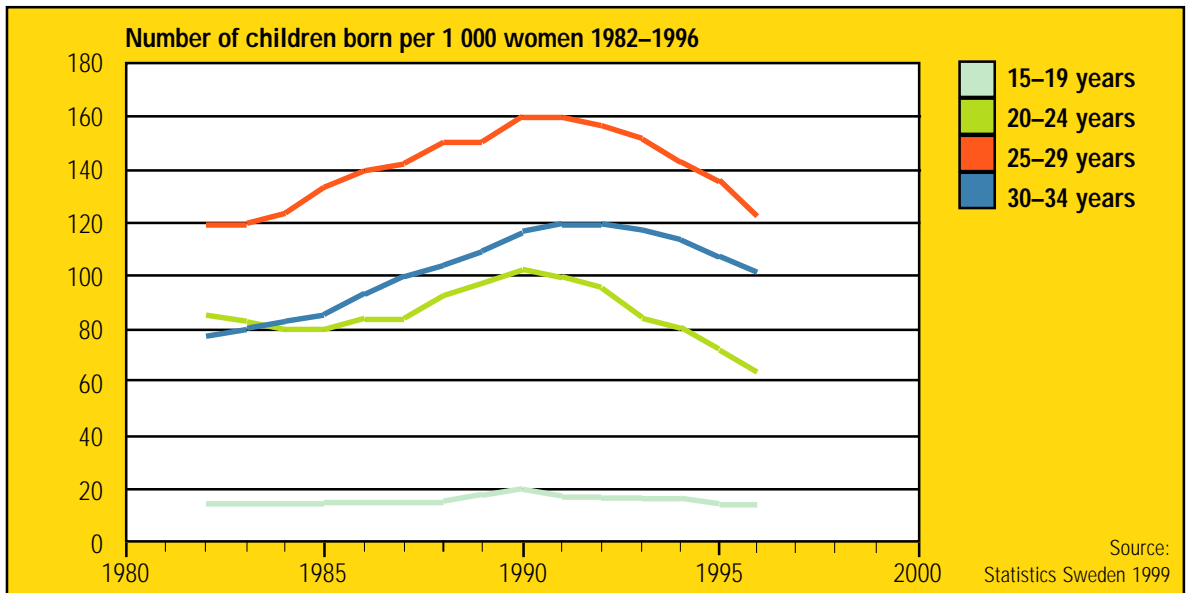


photo: Christián Serrano

<sup>12</sup> Statistics Sweden 2000

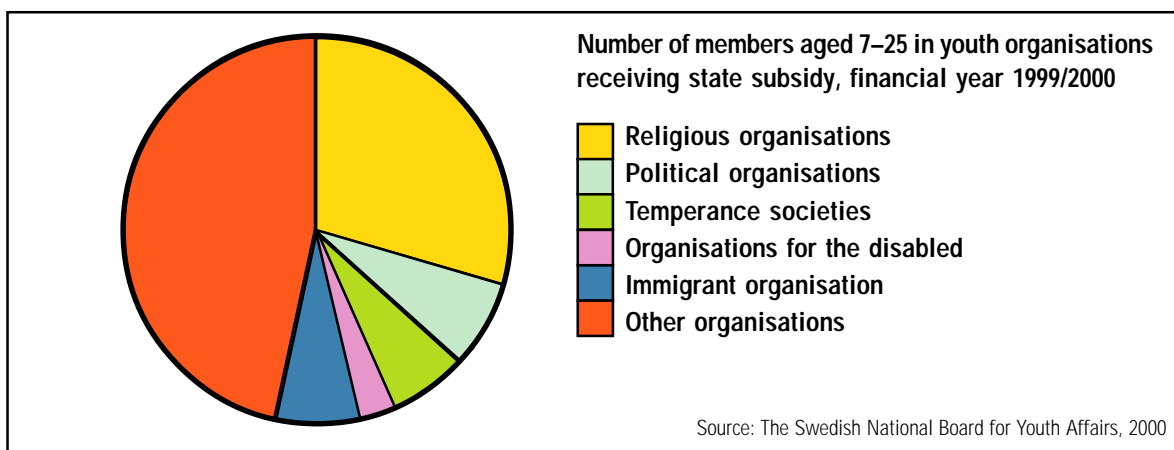


*photo: Cristián Serrano*

## Culture and Leisure

### Non-governmental organisations

Non-governmental organisations have a long history in Sweden. There are over 200,000 different organisations and associations and the majority of people living in Sweden belong to at least one. Trade unions and sports clubs have the largest number of members. Over 800,000 children and young people between the ages of 13 and 25 belong to different voluntary non-profit-making associations, and over 600,000 belong to sports clubs.<sup>13</sup> Many belong to several organisations.



Youth organisations are associations where at least 60 per cent of the members are aged between 7 and 25. They receive a basic state subsidy. Just over 60 organisations received a subsidy in 2000. This group includes everything from political youth organisations to the Swedish Association of Role Playing and Conflict Enactment.

A large proportion of young people's cultural and leisure activities revolve around non-governmental organisations.



photo: Cristián Serrano

<sup>13</sup> Swedish Sports Federation 2000



photo: *Christián Serrano*

### **Culture and leisure activities**

Young people's cultural and leisure activities are constantly changing. Nowadays the choices on offer are enormous and growing all the time. The fragmentation within popular music, the media and various sports activities is particularly noticeable.<sup>14</sup>

There is a tendency for young people to spend an increasing amount of time at home. They listen to music, watch television and videos, play computer games, devise computer programs and read newspapers and books, do handicraft, do things together with their friends and family, meet up with their boyfriends and girlfriends, play in rock bands etc. In Gothenburg the number of young people in the age-group 9 to 15 who regularly play some form of sport dropped by an average of 3 per cent between 1996 and 1999. At the same time the proportion of young people who use computers regularly has increased by 20–25 per cent.<sup>15</sup>

Young people choose to spend a lot of time on certain activities and to neglect other ones completely. This applies to young people's sporting activities, for instance. Some young people do a lot of physical activity whilst others do not do any regular form of physical activity at all. The latter group, those who do not exercise or do sport regularly, has increased significantly over recent decades, and today includes about one third of 16-year-olds.<sup>16</sup>

### **IT and the media**

Sweden is a long way ahead in the use of the Internet. The government's decision to introduce a countrywide broadband network shows the importance society attaches to new technology.

IT-related technology, such as that used in mobile telephones, computers and the Internet, is increasing rapidly. This development has been particularly marked in the second half of the 1990s. The proportion of young people aged 15–24 with access to a mobile telephone in their home was 84 per cent in 1999. In Sweden there are now over 5 million registered mobile phones.

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<sup>14</sup> Leisure in different worlds 1998

<sup>15</sup> Survey of leisure practices Gothenburg 1999

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

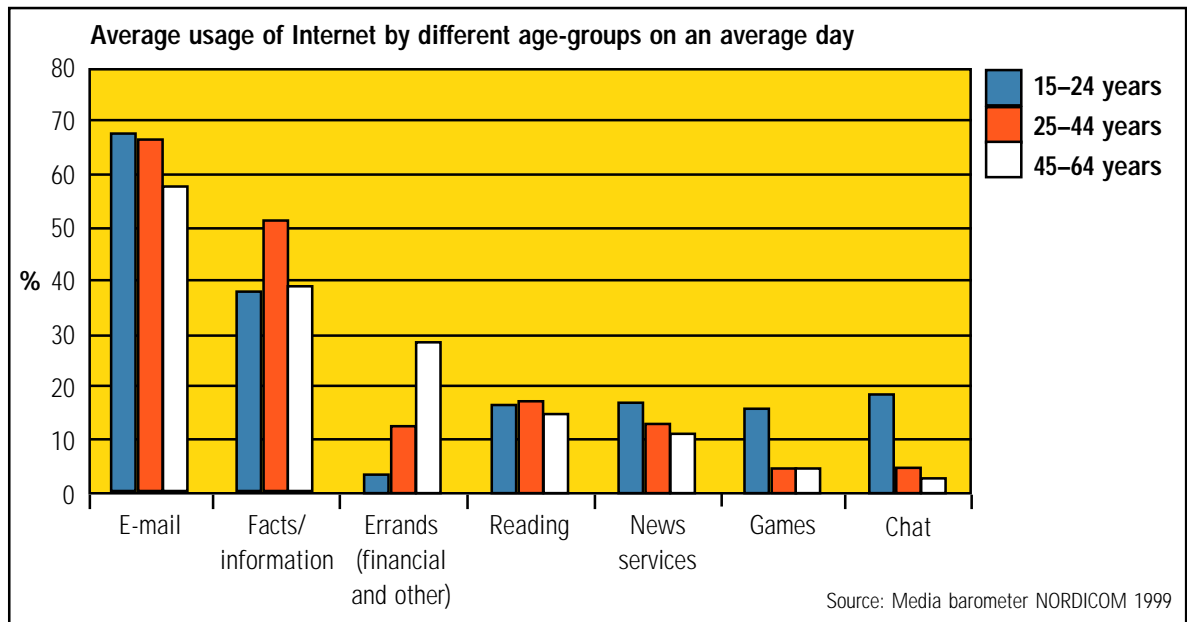
Almost half the population, 47 per cent, has access to the Internet in their household. This means that the proportion of people connected to the Internet almost trebled between 1997 and 1999. If this growth continues it will not be long before the percentage of Internet consumers is at the same level as television viewers, that is to say 75–80 per cent.<sup>17</sup>

Internet use is most common amongst the young and the middle-aged and those with a medium-level or advanced level of education (72 per cent). But the most important factor is age, with Internet use varying greatly between the generations. Amongst older people there is a perception that it is too complicated, and only 11 per cent of people aged 65 or above have Internet connection.

The way in which the Internet is used also varies greatly with age and with gender, to a degree. The overwhelming area of use is e-mail. This is followed by research for facts and information. A slightly higher percentage of women use the Internet to look for information.

Using the Internet for entertainment is most common amongst young people, men and people with a low or medium-level of education. It is young people who chat and create most contacts, and in this area there is no difference between the sexes.

Internet usage has not had any impact on the level of use of the other media, such as TV, radio, newspapers and books.<sup>18</sup>



<sup>17</sup> Mediesverige [Swedish media] 1999/00, NORDICOM-Sweden 1999.

<sup>18</sup> Mediesverige [Swedish media] 1999/00, NORDICOM-Sweden 1999.



# SJUKVÅRD



photo: Anette Persson

# Health

## State of health

From an international perspective, young Swedes are healthy and have good habits, both according to their own testimony and objective statistics such as the incidence of sickness and death, etc. In a 1998 survey 92 per cent of men aged 16–24 and 85 per cent of women in the same age-group considered their health to be good.

The state of health of young Swedes shows both positive and negative trends. Certain types of accidents and causes of death have decreased. At the same time, the number of young people who are overweight is increasing.

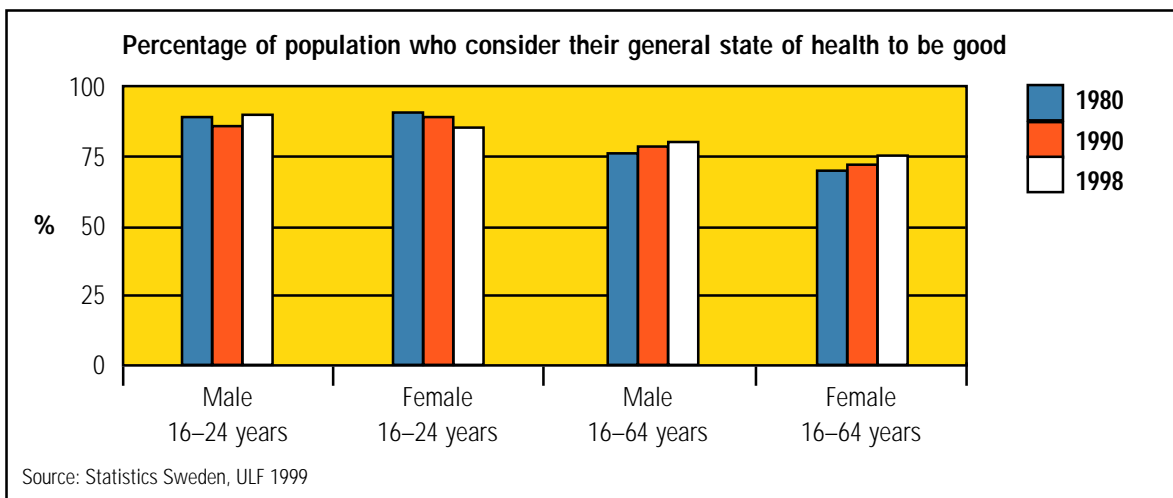
Addiction to alcohol, drugs and tobacco is found to varying degrees amongst young people.

In an international survey, involving 22 countries, carried out in 1997 in which 15 and 16 year-old boys and girls answered the question whether they had ever tried drugs, 7 per cent of boys and 5 per cent of girls in Sweden admitted they had tried them. The equivalent figure in Great Britain was about 40 per cent. The average for all countries was 15 per cent for boys and 10 per cent for girls.<sup>19</sup>

The number of serious addicts in Sweden in 1992 was about 17. The share under 25 years old was 10 per cent. Of these about 20 per cent were women. Cannabis and amphetamines are the most common drugs. Drug addiction has a serious effect on health, and in 1999 about 100 cases of hepatitis-B were diagnosed. About 15 new HIV-positive individuals are registered each year, of whom 7 per cent are needle-users.

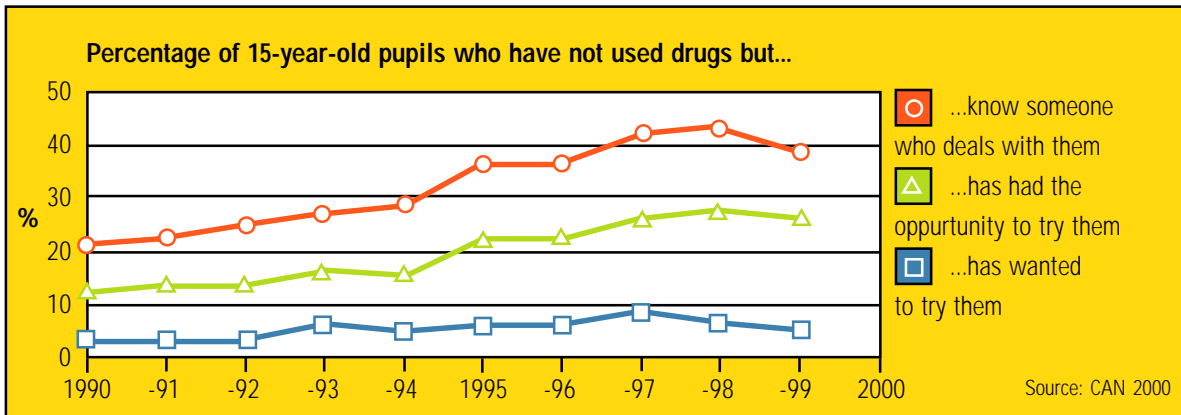
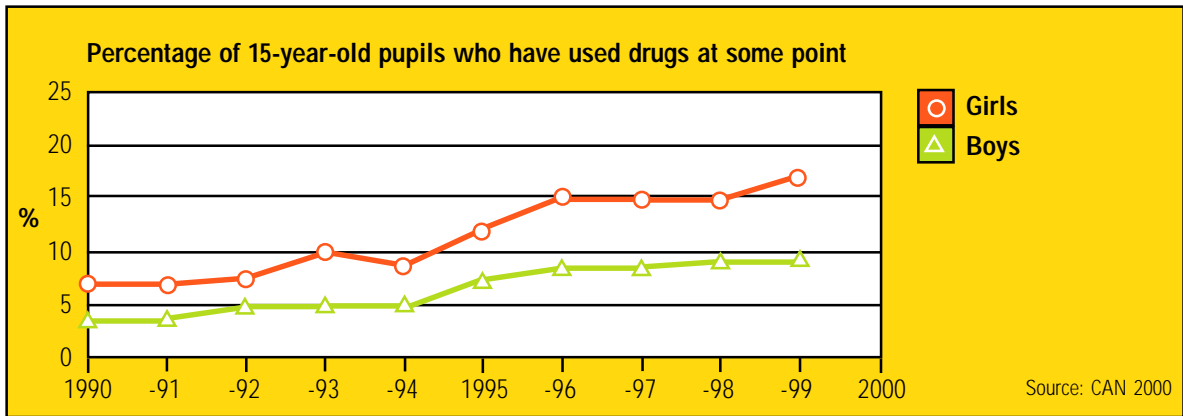
Levels of drug usage amongst Sweden's young people are low from an international perspective, but by contrast they consume more alcohol. The international survey quoted above revealed that young Swedes consume more than average quantities of alcohol. The percentage of 15–16 year-old boys and girls who have been drunk more than ten times in a year was just under 20 per cent in Sweden compared with an average of 10 per cent. The highest figure was found in Denmark, with just over 30 per cent.<sup>20</sup>

A high level of alcohol consumption has an impact on health, but over a longer period than drugs. The use of alcohol is also closely related to accidents and crimes of violence.



<sup>19</sup> ESPAD 1997

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.



The age-group with the largest number of drivers affected by alcohol in relation to the total number of drivers involved in traffic accidents in 1999 was the 16–19 age-group, with just over 15 per cent.

An increase in annual alcohol consumption by one litre of 100 per cent alcohol per adult and per year increases the number of cases of assault by about 10 per cent.<sup>21</sup>

On an international scale, 15–16 year-old Swedes are in sixth place (out of 22) in terms of the percentage who smoke. Roughly 30 per cent of Swedish boys and girls admitted that they had smoked cigarettes on at least 40 occasions, with the percentage of girls being higher than that of boys. The highest percentage was found in the Faroe Islands, with

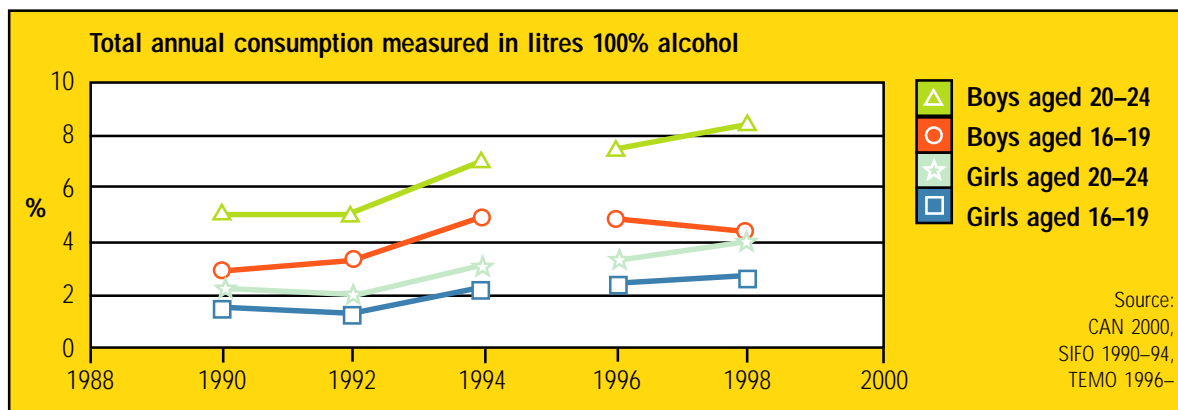
just over 40 per cent, and the lowest was Portugal with just over 10 per cent.

Just as is the case with the rest of the population, the level of health is unevenly spread, even amongst young people, and these inequalities are tending to increase.

Studies carried out in the 1990s show that young people's physical health, as experienced by themselves, has deteriorated. Further studies are focussing mainly on the question of whether this can be linked to the poor economic situation and the high level of youth unemployment in the 1990s.

However, generally speaking the younger population is healthier than the older people. By contrast, injury through

<sup>21</sup> Central association for alcohol and drug information, CAN, 2000.

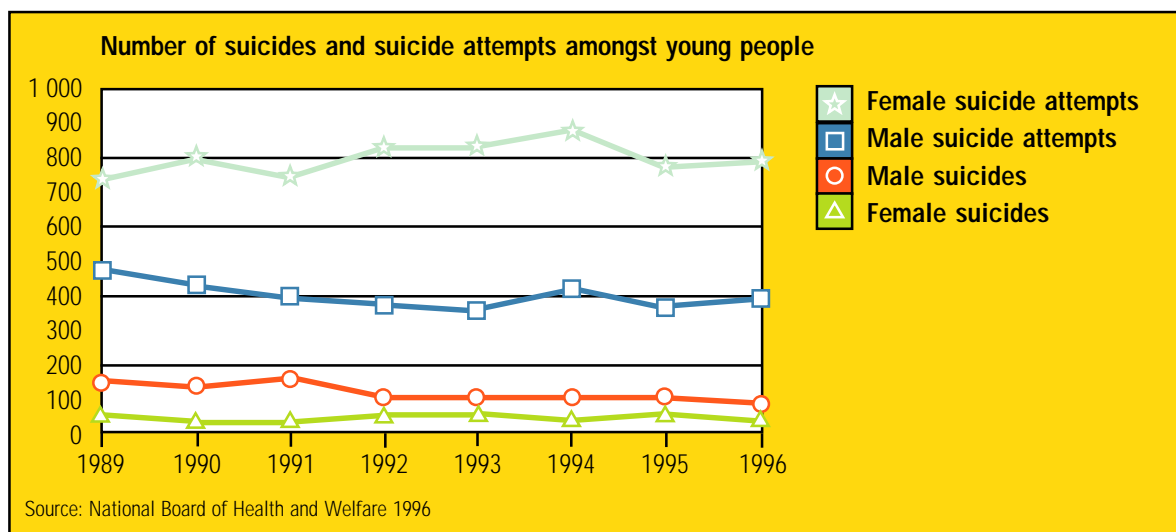


accident, injuries caused by violence, certain sexually transmitted diseases and eating disorders are more common amongst the young.

Children and young people have free dental care through the county council until they reach the age of 19. In 1999 16 of the 18 county councils had free healthcare for children and young people up to the age of 20, each county council determining its own healthcare expenditure. There are often special youth clinics in the municipalities, where young people can get help and advice.

### Mortality

Between 1985 and 1992 the number of deaths amongst young people dropped from just over 600 to about 400, and has stayed at around 400 every year since. The most common causes of death are motor cycle accidents and suicide.<sup>22</sup> The reduction is mainly due to improved road safety. The number of accidents has not changed, but the number of fatalities on the roads has decreased. Of the young people who died prematurely in 1999, 71 per cent were male.



<sup>22</sup> National Board of Health and Welfare 1999

## Crime

Generally speaking, criminal activity in Sweden is at about the same level as in the rest of Europe, that is to say roughly one Swede in four is a victim of a crime of some kind each year. The type of crime that prevails varies from country to country. Sweden, Holland and Switzerland are amongst the countries where a large proportion of the crimes committed are less serious. Theft, for example bicycle theft (for which Sweden and Holland top the list) and theft of personal possessions such as wallets or handbags, is the most common. The number of cases of assault, intimidation and sexual assault is close to the international average, whilst other types of crime such as car crime and more serious offences constitute a relatively small percentage.

### Youth crime

Young people up to the age of 20 are the most criminally active group in Swedish society in terms of crimes per capita. However, most are of the opportunistic variety, as figures drop greatly after they cease to be teenagers.

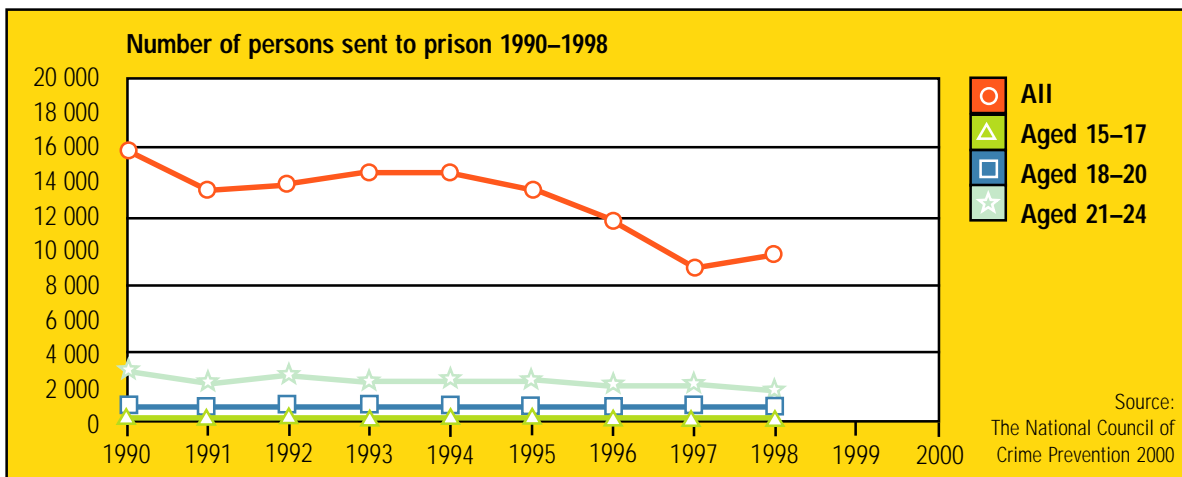
It is common for both the culprit and the victim to be under the influence of alcohol at the time of the crime.

### Sanctions

In Sweden the age of criminal responsibility is 15, but it is unusual for young people under the age of 20 to be sent to prison. A punishment order in the form of a fine and/or a conditional sentence which is issued by the prosecutor without any judicial proceedings is the most common sanction. Usual sanctions when legal proceedings are instigated against persons not yet of the age of responsibility are fines and supervision by the social services. Offenders aged between 18 and 20 receive a conditional sentence, or are put on probation or into prison, more frequently than younger offenders.

### Crime-prevention measures

During the 1990s crime-prevention measures have taken on an ever more important role in terms of society's attempts



The fact that young people are over-represented does not mean that most crimes are committed by young people, and of those prosecuted for criminal activity, 21 per cent were in the 15–20 age-group in 1999. The most common types of youth crime are vandalism, car theft, shoplifting and assault.<sup>23</sup>

to combat crime. A large number of local projects aimed at involving more citizens in measures to prevent crime receive state subsidy nowadays. The intention is to support local initiatives and ideally introduce crime-prevention measures aimed at everyday crime such as theft, criminal damage and mugging.

<sup>23</sup> BRÅ 1999

## Rights and Duties

It is during adolescence that most social rights and duties come into effect. Here is a selection.



photo: Claudia Torres

### Age 15

Age of criminal responsibility and legal age for sexual intercourse. Age of permission to ride a moped, give public performances and see adult-rated films.

### Age 16

As a sixteen-year-old in Sweden you have the right to claim disability benefits and pension. You can take a driving test for a tractor and a low-powered motorcycle. You can register with a social insurance office and work full-time, that is to say 40 hours per week. Child benefit and compulsory school attendance both cease. You may start a business. Those who are members are entitled to vote in the Swedish Church.

### Age 18

At this age young people come of age, that is to say they are no longer subject to the custody of their parents. The parental duty of support ceases if the child is not studying and does not resume studies before its 19th birthday. At 18 you may marry or enter a partnership (the equivalence of marriage for homosexuals). You are entitled to vote in national, local and regional elections. You can take a driving test for a car and men are obliged to enlist. You can be served alcohol and buy beer and tobacco. You have the right to stand for election as a member of the national, regional or local government

or as a Swedish representative in the European Parliament. At 18 you have the right to receive study loans for further education. Young people can apply for acceptance in or resign from religious associations/communities without their parents' consent.

### Age 19

The entitlement to free dentistry and healthcare ceases when you reach the age of 19.

### Age 20

You can purchase spirits, wine and strong beer from a shop. You can apply to the police academy.

### Age 21

Parents' obligation to support their children ceases and young people are no longer considered as adolescents in the legal sense and are not treated according to the special rules which apply to young offenders.

### Age 25

At 25 you may adopt a child with the court's consent. You may also be sterilised free of charge. By contrast, you are no longer entitled to receive an allowance as member of a youth organisation.

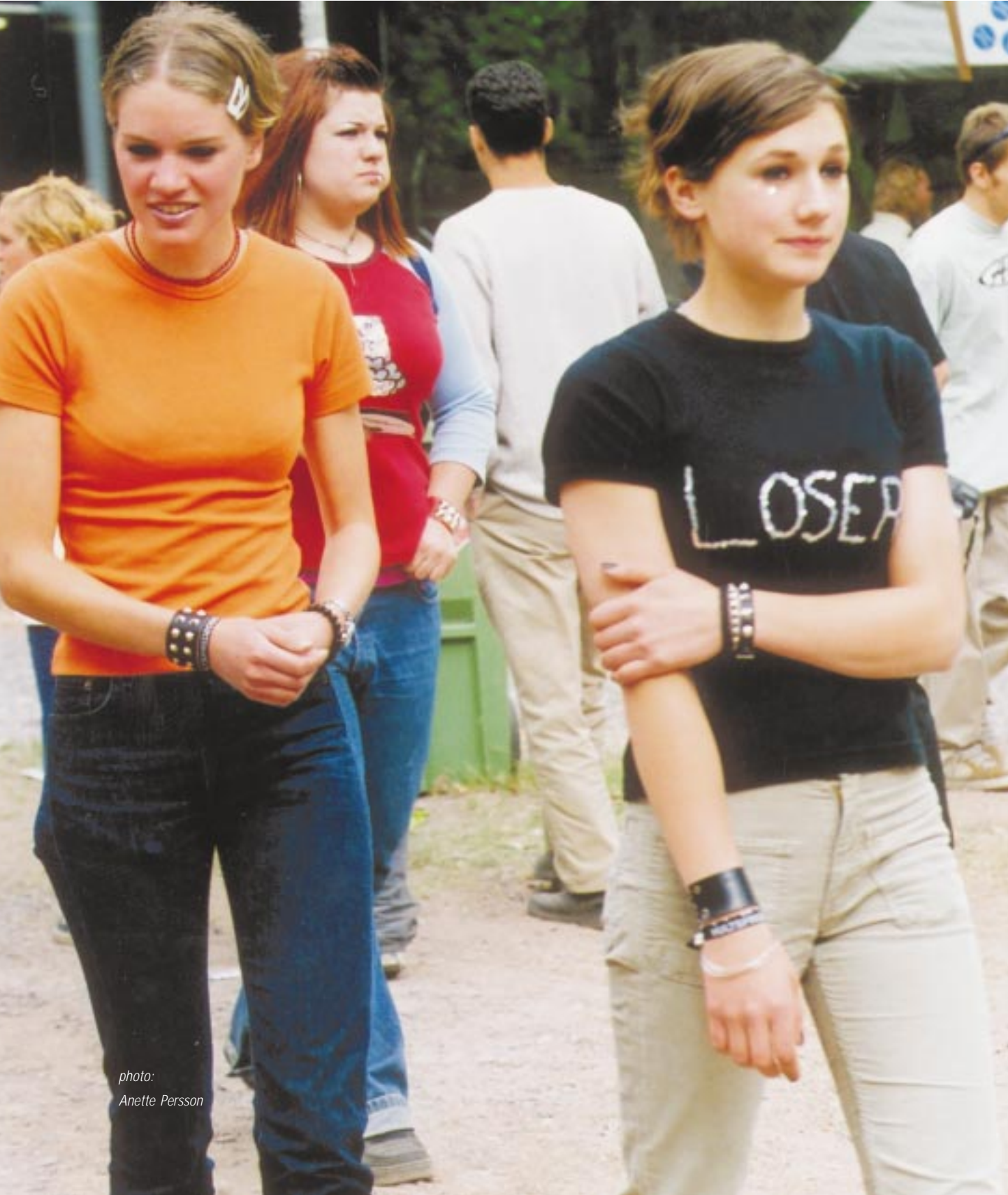
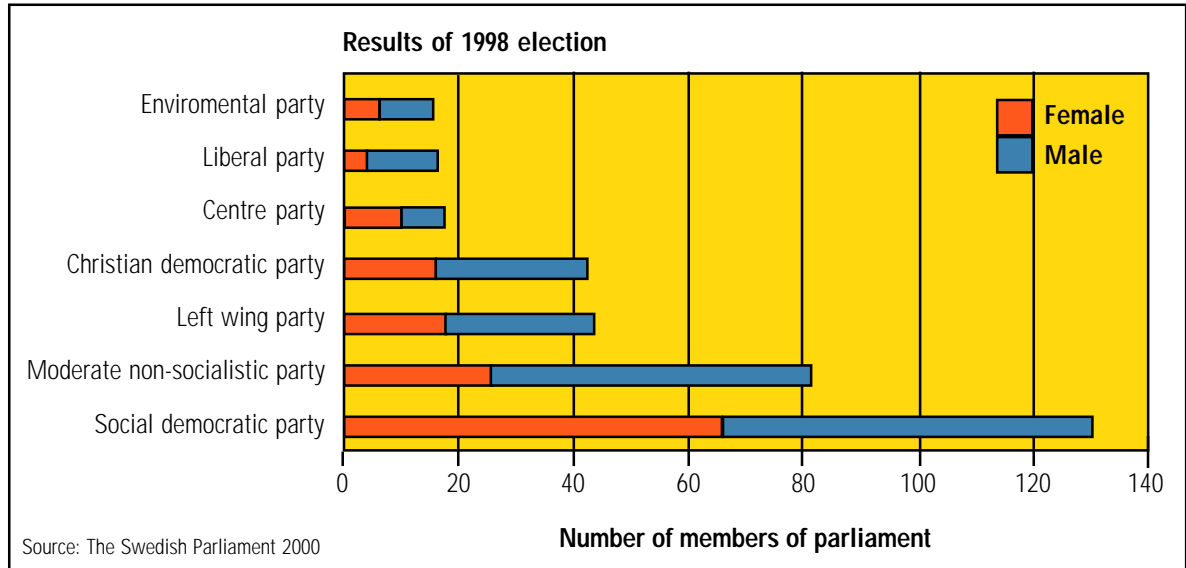


photo:  
Anette Persson

# Sweden's Constitution - A Parliamentary Democracy

Sweden is a constitutional monarchy with parliamentary rule. His Majesty Carl Gustav XVI is the head of state. Nowadays this means only ceremonial functions. Sweden holds general elections every four years, the next one being in 2002.



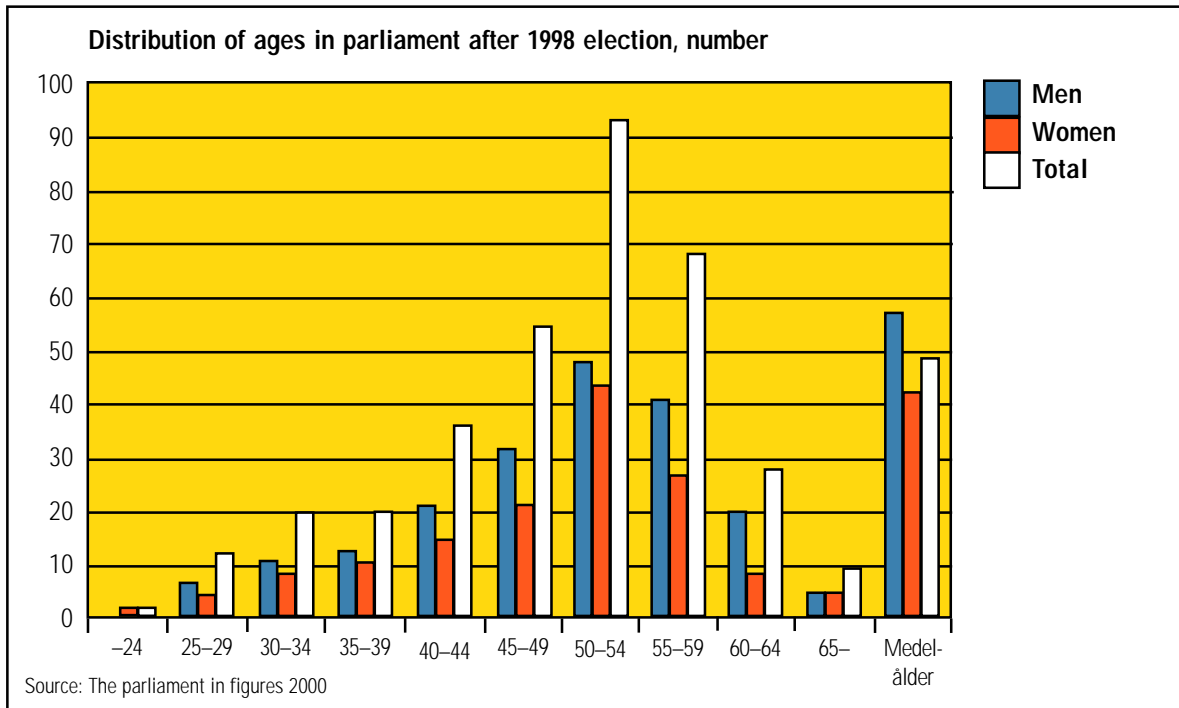
## Sweden's parliament

Sweden's parliament is a legislative body and is elected every four years in a general election at the same time as the elections for local and regional representatives. The parliament elects ministers of state in accordance with the election result and the ministers of state appoint the government.

Since the 1998 election Sweden's government comprises seven parties. The social democrats lead a minority government supported by the Left party (Vänsterpartiet) and the Environmentalist party (Miljöpartiet). The prime minister and leader of the social democrats is Göran Persson.

In 2000 there were 249 members of the government, 6 women and 7 men (3.7 per cent) in the 18–29 age-group. The average age taking all members into account was 50.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> The parliament in figures 2000



### Ministries and official bodies

Within the government there is a Cabinet Office which is subdivided into ten ministries with different areas of specialism. The main job of the ministries is to prepare the government's decisions when it comes to parliamentary proposals, legislation, Sweden's international relations, and certain high-level appointments.

- Ministry of Justice
- Foreign Office
- Ministry of Defence
- Department of Social Security
- Ministry of Finance
- Education Department
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Department of Culture
- Ministry of the Environment
- Ministry of Economics

In Sweden there are more than 400 boards, departments, official bodies and nationalised enterprises which are administered by the government and are subject to the supervision of the various ministries. It is their task to implement in practical terms the decisions made by the parliament and the government.

The government determines the objectives, guidelines and distribution of resources for the activities of these authorities. The government does not determine how the authorities should apply a law or how they should decide in various matters.

These are some of the official bodies involved in activities concerning young people:

- National Board for Youth Affairs
- National Labour Market Board
- Swedish Board of Education
- National Agency for Higher Education
- National Service Administration
- National Board of Housing, Building and Planning
- Children's Ombudsman
- National Council for Crime Prevention
- National Board of Student Aid
- The Disability Ombudsman
- National Institute of Public Health
- National Integration Office
- National Board of Health and Welfare



photo: Cristián Serrano

### Average age and percentage aged under 30 in political bodies at national and local level

	1995/96		1998/99	
	Average age	Percentage under 30, %	Average age	Percentage under 30, %
Swedish Parliament	49	4	49	3
Official boards	54	1	54	1
Government committees	54	3	52	2
Municipal council	47	8	50	6
Municipal administration	48	5	51	4
All municipal committees	47	8	50	6

Source: Swedish Parliament, the Cabinet Office, Swedish Union of Local Authorities, Statistics Sweden

In Sweden there are three democratically elected levels: the government at national level, the county councils at regional level, and the municipality at local level – all of which have different areas of responsibility and functions.

### **Local and county council assemblies**

Both the municipalities and the county council are governed by popularly elected assemblies which are called the municipal and county council respectively. These consist of politicians who are directly elected by the electorate every four years. The election takes place at the same time as the



*photo: Rebecka Gunner*



*photo: Cristián Serrano*

government elections, that is to say on the third Sunday in September. The next election will take place in 2002.

At regional level the state is represented by the county administrative board, which can be said to be the extended arm of the state in the regions. The county administrative board's most senior official is the county governor, who is appointed by the national government. The members of the county administrative board are appointed by the county council. Unlike the county administrative board, the county council and the municipalities have their own power of taxation and their own right to make decisions. This is regulated by local government legislation, amongst other things.

The municipality constitutes the popularly elected local level in the country. There are 289 municipalities in Sweden. They are responsible for local issues which directly affect the electorate, such as primary and secondary education, childcare, libraries, social services, roads, power supply, etc. They also issue various types of permits, for example wine and spirits licences.

The municipal council comprises popularly elected politicians who act as the municipal parliament. The municipal administration is the municipality's government. There are also a number of bodies which have the task of handling various matters which are to be dealt with by the council. They also execute the decisions which have been made.

The percentage of members under the age of 29 in the country's municipal councils and municipal administrations is 6 and 4 per cent respectively.

Most of the country's municipalities have set up youth councils or similar bodies in order to increase the influence of young people. The idea is that they should function as a link between the municipality's young people and the decision-makers. In 2000 just over 80 municipalities and 6 county councils had some form of forums of influence for young people.<sup>25</sup>

The county council constitutes the popularly elected regional level in the country, which has the task of looking after the region's joint undertakings which are too costly for a single municipality to deal with. There are 18 county councils, two regional and one municipality with no county council. Their chief task is to take responsibility for all the

healthcare in the country. The county council is also responsible for planning Swedish dental care, both private and publicly funded. The county council also manages education in the Gymnasiums, nursing colleges and folk high schools. They also work on regional growth and development and give support to the economy, amongst other things. Apart from this, the county council is also responsible together, with the municipalities, for the region's public transport system.



*photo: Christián Serrano*

<sup>25</sup> National Board for Youth Affairs 2000

## Sweden's Youth Policy

Sweden has had a Minister for Youth since 1986. 1994 saw the first government bill, with the second following in 1999. Youth policy has one target group, young people and their needs.



*In Swedish Review of National Youth Policy, you get a report on the living conditions of young people in Sweden. You will find basically everything on the goals of Swedish youth policy, what measures have been taken and relevant statistics. The report is available in Swedish, English and French. SEK 360. You can order the report from:*

*The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs*

*tel: +46 8 462 53 50 or e-mail: [info@ungdomsstyrelsen.se](mailto:info@ungdomsstyrelsen.se)*



*photo: Christián Serrano*

In December 1999 the parliament decided on a new national youth policy. The idea is that this new policy should create a comprehensive strategy to monitor and improve young people's living conditions. All municipalities are responsible for the young people within their area. There are 3 overall objectives and 41 sub-objectives which should together constitute the basis for all municipalities' youth-policy-related initiatives.

### **The objectives are that:**

- young people should have equal opportunities of living an independent life
- young people should have a real opportunity to power, influence and participation
- young people's commitment, creative power and critical thinking should be utilised

The objectives should be regarded as a general aim, something to be striven for.

They have since been given concrete form in 41 sub-objectives. The sub-objectives affect individual policy areas such as education, work and housing and should be monitored by the relevant municipality. The monitoring process is co-ordinated by the National Board for Youth Affairs, which is to report each year to the government on the development of young people's living conditions in relation to the objectives.

The National Board for Youth Affairs also works to stimulate the development of a cross-sectoral youth policy in the country's municipalities.

In the past decades Sweden's youth policy has increasingly developed from being restricted to grants to youth organisations and investigation of young people's leisure-time, to monitoring and influencing young people's living conditions within society. The youth policy has become cross sectoral and depends on creating a strategy which transcends traditional sectoral boundaries and which builds on co-operation between various official bodies.

## Sweden in Europe

Young people's international contacts do not constitute a specialised field in their own right. Support for young people's international contacts occurs within a number of political areas, partly stemming from various objectives and motives. Support within the specific youth policy field has hitherto largely been motivated by causes such as understanding for various cultures and in order to promote international co-operation. The most comprehensive state support is to be found in the context of university and college-level education. A range of different types of initiatives is to be found even in the labour market field.

Since its entry into the EU in 1995, Sweden has also participated in the EU's youth programme and youth initiatives. Responsibility for providing information concerning the various opportunities for travel abroad falls on the relevant official body, although informal co-operation often occurs.<sup>26</sup>

### The EU -programme YOUTH

The Youth programme is a new venture by the European Commission which is dedicated to active participants and young people outside the field of education. Support is given, amongst other things, to exchanges between different youth groups within and outside Europe. Young people can also become volunteers in another country. Innovative activities and youth leader training are also included in the Commission's sphere of interests.

In 1999 about 3,000 young people from Sweden and the rest of Europe took part in joint exchange projects within the Youth for Europe scheme, which was the Youth programme's predecessor. At the same time, 150 volunteers travelled to or from Sweden in order to take part in a project in another country.<sup>27</sup>

The intention is to provide young people with alternative training and work experience, language skills and the opportunity to experience new environments. The Youth programme will run for seven years, from 2000 to 2006. It aims to stimulate joint projects and exchanges between countries in order to promote the creation of a tolerant Europe and to encourage young people's own initiatives, ideas and creativity.<sup>28</sup>



### Co-operation in the Baltic region

There is also a collaboration programme between the Nordic countries, the Baltic states, Russia, Poland and Germany, a total of eleven countries in all. The Baltic region co-operation scheme in youth matters means, amongst other things, that youth organisations and groups can obtain support for exchanges within the Baltic region. The main aim is to increase knowledge and understanding of the region's historical, social and cultural circumstances and opportunities.

Since 1999 there has been a Baltic Secretariat for Youth Co-operation based in Kiel, the aim of which is to co-ordinate and spread information about young people's collaboration and projects in the Baltic region. 50 or so projects involving Swedish participation are currently ongoing as at autumn 2000.

<sup>26</sup> Centrum för internationellt ungdomsutbyte [The centre for international youth exchanges], CIU, is a body which is concerned with providing information directly to young people about various possible types of overseas experience.

<sup>27</sup> The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs 2000

<sup>28</sup> The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs is Sweden's national office for the EU-programme YOUTH.

## Mission statement of The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs

The Swedish Parliament's youth policy objectives are that young people in Sweden should be given the pre-requisites to live independent lives, that they should have real influence, and that society should make use of the resources that young people offer. The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs is a government agency that collaborates with others to achieve these objectives.

- We co-ordinate the follow-up of central and local government initiatives for youth.
- We follow the development, we analyse and we propose measures to improve living conditions for youth.
- We work to encourage regeneration of youth activities organised by local government and organisations.
- We are responsible for the EU programme YOUTH and other forms of international youth co-operation.
- We distribute public funds to youth organisations.
- We supply information and generate public opinion on youth policy issues.
- We provide civic information on our web site Ungdomskanalen (The Youth Channel).

Our target groups are primarily decision-makers and people working with youth issues.



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