

Sweden Bahá'í Summer School, July 2026

Why Marriage and Family?

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Marriage Transformation®

Learning Together



“Learning in action is becoming the outstanding feature of the emerging mode of operation.”

(Universal House of Justice, January 17, 2003)

“Endeavors are pursued in a **humble posture of learning....**”

(Universal House of Justice, December 27, 2005)

Today's Topics



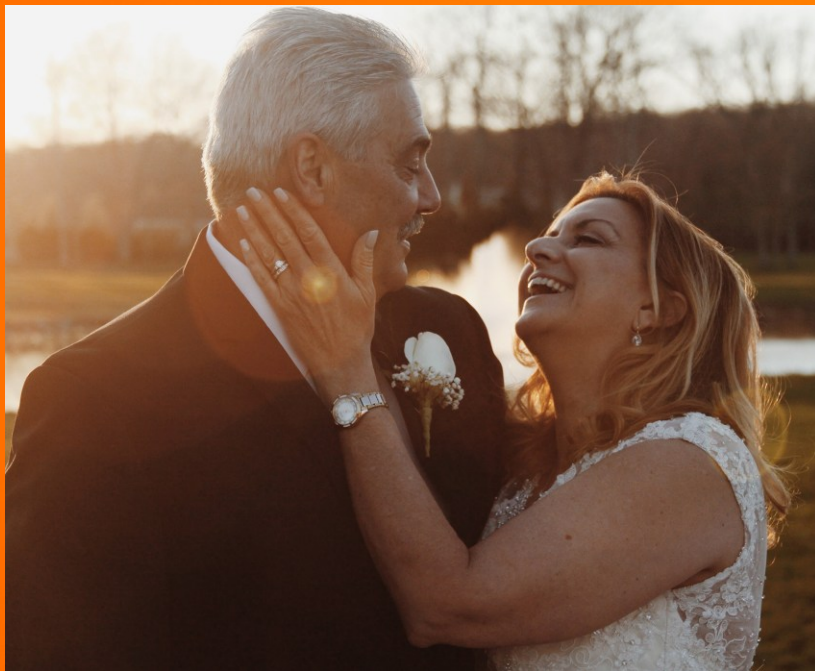
- Marriage and Family as a foundation for flourishing communities
- Marriage and cohabitation in Sweden
- Some benefits of marriage
- Changing the conversations in our lives and in society about marriage and family



Marriage

“Marriage Creates Family”

~ Universal House of Justice, March 19, 2025



Family

“The nature of the flourishing communities that the Bahá’í world is striving to raise has profound implications for the family. ... **The family unit is the basic building block of community, and beyond, of the entire social order.**”

(Universal House of Justice, March 19, 2025)

“In Bahá’í marriage, love, equality, intimacy, fidelity, sexual relations, childbearing, and childrearing are integrated and their interconnection strengthened, establishing a fortress for personal and social well-being.”

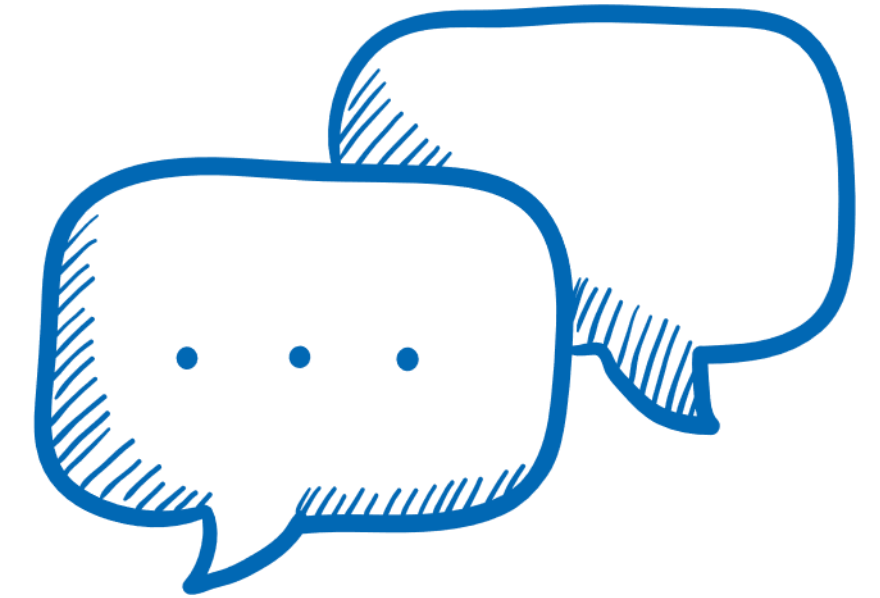
(Universal House of Justice, March 19, 2025, para. #7)

* growing vigorously, thriving, prosperous, healthy, successful

*Essential Features of Human Flourishing**



Activity



“What is the distinctive nature of Bahá’í marriage and how does it foster family life?”

(Universal House of Justice, March 19, 2025, para. #4)

“Vad kännetecknar bahá’íernas familjeliv och hur skiljer sig detta från hur man ser på familjeliv i dagens samhälle?”

(Universella rättvisans hus, 19 mars, 2025, § 4)

Reading Our Reality **(in Sweden)**

Marriage and Family in Sweden

“Historically, the family has taken different forms in response to the exigencies of the various stages of human social development.”

(Universal House of Justice, March 19, 2025)

The Sambo System (Government Rules)

“The cohabitation model, called sambo in Swedish, has become the dominant way Swedes structure their partnerships. Nearly 20% of the Swedish population lives in a cohabiting couple.... Among young adults between 20 and 34 years old, that figure reaches 29%.”

“Those who do marry are waiting longer to do so. Swedish men averaged 36.8 years at their first marriage in 2023, while women averaged 34.9 years. Sweden ranks among the highest in Europe for marriage age, alongside Spain and Norway.”

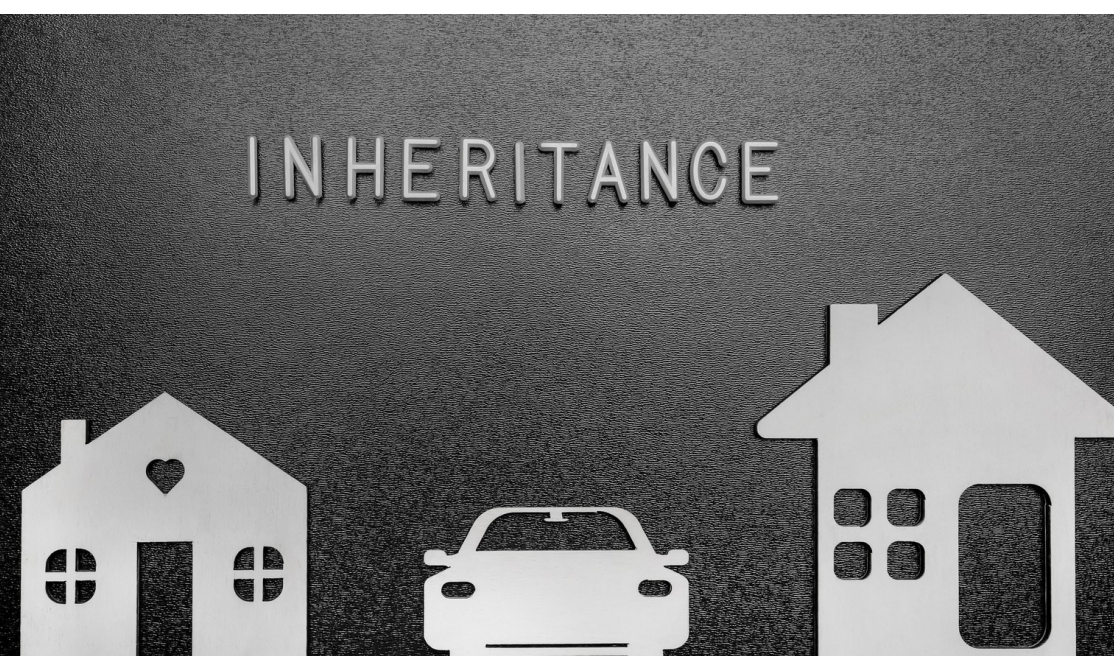
(swedishfreak.com/2026/the-state-of-dating-and-romantic-relationships-in-sweden/)





Cohabitation in Sweden

- Cohabitees have no obligation to pay **maintenance** for each other, even after a very long-term relationship.
- The right to the **division of property** between cohabitees only includes what is called joint property (samboegendom). The joint dwelling and joint household goods of the cohabitees that have been acquired for joint use can constitute joint property. Other property, for example bank deposits, cars and summer cottages are not included in the division of property. On separation, they are retained by the cohabitee who owns the property.
- Two cohabitees are also not entitled to **inherit** each other unless they have written wills setting out who will inherit from whom.
- From birth, the mother of a child of unmarried parents has sole **custody** of the child, even if the parents are cohabitees. [They can apply for joint custody]



government.se/government-policy/family-law/cohabitee-relationships/

Marriage in Sweden



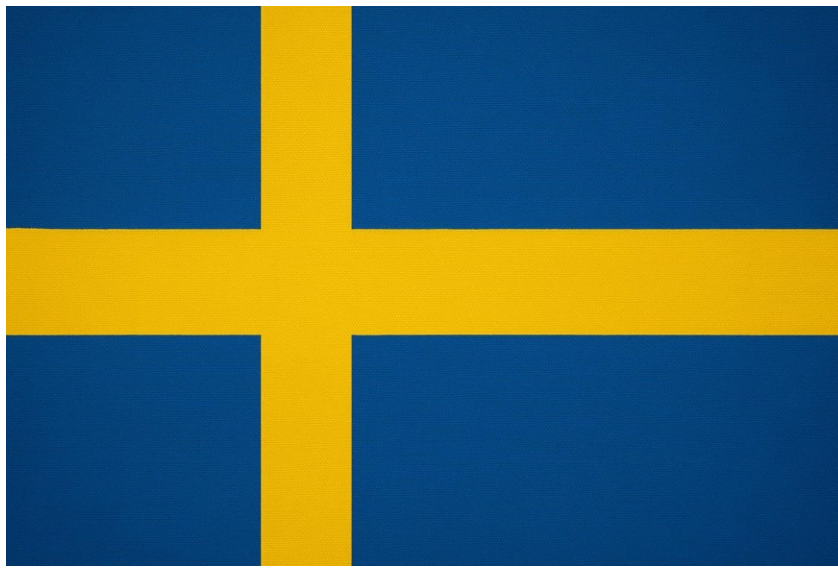
***And yet...Between January and October 2024,
Sweden registered 39,340 marriages.
Also has formal rules and procedures.***

“Despite the high prevalence of cohabitation in Sweden, marriage has seen a resurgence since the end of the 1990s (Ohlsson-Wijk et al., 2020), and over 50% of cohabiting unions that have not dissolved transition into marriage within 10 years of their formation (Andersson et al., 2017).”

(<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10680-024-09722-6>)



How Do We Talk About Marriage?



The State of Religion in Sweden

“Sweden once set the global benchmark for secular rationality, and everybody expected the world to follow our path. Now the quiet stirrings of faith here in the north—more confirmations, new memberships, conversations once unthinkable—show that history has a way of humbling even the most confident narratives.”

“The annual Youth Barometer (2025), which surveys fifteen thousand people aged fifteen to twenty-four, reported a growing interest in religion and spirituality in this group.”

(Joel Halldorf, “Not So Secular Sweden” essay, <https://comment.org/not-so-secular-sweden/>)



God and Marriage

“And when He desired to manifest grace and beneficence to men, and to set the world in order, He revealed observances and created laws; among them He established the law of marriage, made it as a fortress for well-being and salvation....”

(Bahá'u'lláh, “To Set the World in Order”, #14)

“Regarding the question of marriage, know thou that the command of marriage is eternal. It will never be changed or altered. This creation is divine, and it is not possible for that which is created by God to be changed or altered.”

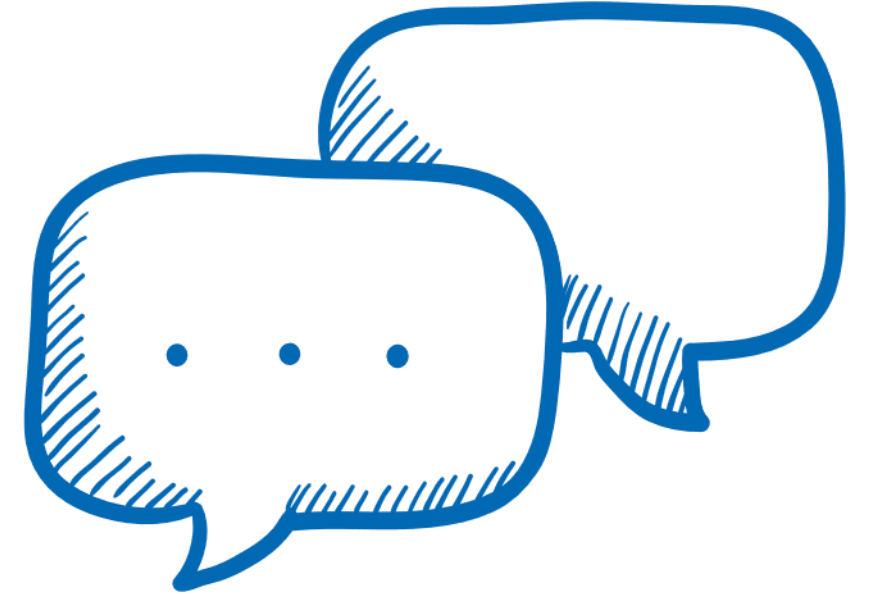
(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, “To Set the World in Order”, #7)

Bahá'í View of Marriage

“... [M]arriage is regarded as both a spiritual and a social institution which affects not only the couple and their children, but also the parents, grandparents, grandchildren and other collateral relations. Indeed, it affects (or, in a healthy society, should affect) all other community associations that surround it.”

(On behalf of the Universal House of Justice; “To Set the World in Order”, #26)

Activity



How can we encourage people toward marriage?

Hur kan vi uppmuntra människor till äktenskap?

Harmonizing Science and Religion



Some Marriage Benefits

- **Emotional Support & Mental Well-being:**
 - Having a lifelong partner to share joys and sorrows (and laughter)
 - Reduced stress, anxiety, and depression due to a built-in support system
 - Feeling seen, understood, and valued, which deepens your bond
- **Financial Stability & Security:**
 - Combining incomes and sharing expenses for better savings
 - Building equity together, like homeownership, and pooling resources for goals
 - Inheritance
- **Physical Health:**
 - Lower rates of heart disease, lower blood pressure, healthier weight
 - Encouraging healthier habits and monitoring each other's well-being
 - Partner support can reduce the perception of physical pain
 - Lower mortality rate, especially for men





Some Marriage Benefits

- **Companionship & Belonging:**

- A built-in companion for life's journey, creating shared memories
- A sense of belonging and being part of a team and extended family
- Shared experiences that deepen friendship, intimacy, and connection



- **Advantages for Couples and Children:**

- An expanded social circle with shared friends
- Legal protections/decision-making power, such as in medical crises
- A stable environment, often considered ideal for raising children (healthier, less poverty, better educational outcomes; less likely to be abused, less likely to misbehave at school and with the law)



- **Spiritual Growth:**

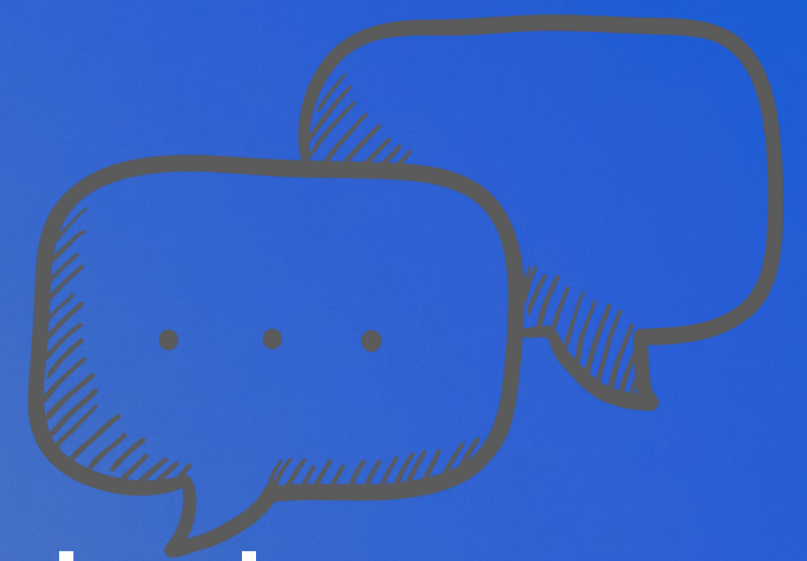
- Creates opportunities to practice virtues
- Accountability and mutual encouragement
- Deeper faith and purpose through shared prayer, service, parenting, and overcoming challenges together



“... [M]arriage is not simply an institution that collects relatively hardworking, socially adept, and happy people. It is also an institution that transforms people, bonding men and women to a particular person, to a whole way of life. In doing so...it endows their lives, day in and day out, with more meaning, prosperity, stability, and solidarity, all of which typically boost the sense of satisfaction that men and women take from their lives after they enter our civilization’s most fundamental institution.”

(Brad Wilcox, *Get Married*, Ch. 3, p. 91)

Activity



Take turns pretending to talk to a friend who wants to live with a partner (Sambo System).
Share with the person:

What is good about marriage?

Vad är bra med äktenskap?

Invitation

**Du inbjuds till att bli en
äktenskaps-, familje-
och samhällsbyggare!**

**Be a Marriage, Family,
and Community Builder!**



**Practice: Share with people what you love
about your partner, children, marriage, and family.**

Topics for the Week



Morning Sessions:

- Marriage Preparation, Courtship/Character, and Parental Consent
- Marriage As a Fortress for Well-Being and Salvation
- Creating New Marriages & Families – Changing the Culture
- Equality in Marriages and Families
- Building and Practicing Consultation Skills
- Envisioning a New Future and Setting Goals

Topics for the Week



Afternoon Workshops:

- **Thursday:** Creating Unity with Friendship, Laughter, and Social Vitality
- **Friday:** Positive Communication Practices That Build Unity
- **Saturday:** Parenting Children to Live Meaningful and Purposeful Lives; Family Meetings

Topics for the Week



Youth Afternoon Workshops:

- Self-preparation for relationships and marriage
- Friendship
- Service As Partners
- Dating and Courtship
- Chastity
- Parental Consent



Our Hope: That Summer School Empowers You to:

1. Appreciate "**Marriage and Family Life As a Building Block of Society**" (Theme set by the National Spiritual Assembly of Sweden)
2. **Align** your approaches to relationships, marriage, and family with **guidance** from the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith
3. Strengthen your **learning-in-action practice** of new behaviors in marriage and family
4. Have **conversations** with those you know about the importance of marriage and family life and "new" behaviors
5. Include marriage and family life as part of **building flourishing communities**



Thank You Tack

Susanne M. Alexander

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