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Lundh, Christer

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LUND UNIVERSITY

PO Box 117
221 00 Lund
+46 46-222 00 00

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Christer Lundh

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Department of Economic History, Lund University

Postal address: P.O. Box 7083, S-220 07 Lund, Sweden

Telephone: +46 46 2227475

Telefax: +46 46 131585

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Regional Variations in Age at First Marriage in Sweden, 1870 – 1900*

Christer Lundh

To most Nordic scholars of historical demography, Gustaf Sundbärg's division of Sweden into three demographic regions depending on the degree of marital fertility is well known.¹ Eastern Sweden was characterised by low marital fertility, while Western Sweden was characterised by high and Northern Sweden by very high marital fertility. However, according to Sundbärg there were also other differences between the regions. As far as marriages were concerned, Sundbärg claimed that Eastern Sweden was characterised by a high marriage frequency, a small proportion of never married and early marriages, while Western Sweden was characterised by fewer and later marriages. In Northern Sweden marriages were even fewer. Sundbärg is not explicit about the marriage ages that characterised Northern Sweden, but from the logic of his argument one would expect that the very few marriages were accompanied by very late marriages, just like few and late marriages were a joint feature of Western Sweden. This would also rank the three demographic regions in the same order, regardless of whether the criterion was the marriage pattern or marital fertility.

Since no systematic comparison of the marriage patterns in different parts of Sweden has yet been done, we do not know whether Sundbärg was right when he claimed that the marriage patterns varied in the three demographic regions of Sweden. In this study, information from the

* This is a revised version of a paper that was presented to the session "Historical Fertility and Nuptiality Patterns (1700–1900)" at the 14th Nordic Demographic Symposium in Tjøme, Norway, 3–5 May 2001. The research was conducted within the project "Age at Marriage in Sweden, 1750–1900. Trends and Regional Variations" funded by the Swedish Council for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

¹ Sundbärg 1910, p. 4–9.

Table 1: Sweden's three demographic regions according to Sundbärg.

Eastern Sweden	Western Sweden	Northern Sweden	Split between Eastern and Western Sweden	Split between Eastern and Northern Sweden
Gävleborg county	Blekinge county	Västerbotten	Kalmar county	Västernorrland
Gotland county	Elfsborg county	County	Örebro county	County
Jämtland county	Göteborgs och	Norrbottnen	Östergötland	
Södermanland	Bohus county	County	county	
county	Halland county		Kopparberg county	
Stockholm city	Jönköping			
Stockholm county	county			
Uppsala county	Kristianstad			
Västmanland	county			
county	Kronoberg			
	county			
	Malmöhus			
	county			
	Skaraborg county			
	Värmland county			

Source: Sundbärg 1910, p. 4–9.

censuses of 1870, 1880, 1890 and 1900 is used for calculations of the singulate mean age at marriage (*smam*) for men and women in the different counties.² Thereby, it is possible to scrutinise Sundbärg's thesis, at least for the late nineteenth century.

The singulate mean age at marriage is an indirect measure, calculated from the population structure (or, more precisely, the population distributed by age and civil status). Calculations are sensitive to rapid changes in the population structure from one census to the next, thus constituting a likely problem in areas where migration is considerable. For instance, extensive in-migration of married people into the area of investigation gives the false impression of a decrease in the average marriage age, and extensive out-migration of unmarried people has the same result. Hajnal used the *smam*-method for entire countries, for which migration was of less importance. Here the method is used for counties. Since migration was considerable in urban areas, only rural parishes are included in the study. Even though differences in marriage age between urban and rural areas are very interesting, we refrain from doing this comparison during the period of urbanisation.

In table 1, the counties are distributed by demographic region according to Sundbärg's classification. Stockholm city, in Eastern Sweden, is totally urban, and is therefore excluded in this study. Note that some of the counties are divided between two regions. In this study,

² The method was presented in Hajnal 1953.

when regional averages are calculated, split counties are either excluded altogether or included in cases when more than two thirds of the population lived in one of the involved regions. Thus, Östergötland county is counted as “Eastern”, Kalmar county is “Western” and Västernorrland county is “Northern”.

The results of the regional *smam*-calculations are presented in tables 2–4 and figures 1–4. The first impression is that, for both sexes, there was a general difference in the age at first marriage between Western Sweden and Eastern and Northern Sweden. In Western Sweden people were generally older when they married than in counties in the rest of Sweden. The pattern of later marriages in Western Sweden than in the rest of Sweden was more obvious for women than for men, and also more manifest in 1870/1880 than in 1900. Any significant difference in the marriage age between counties in Eastern and Northern Sweden is hard to find in tables 2–4, which could be regarded as contradictory to Sundbärg’s expectations. The difference in age at marriage between the sexes varied less systematically between counties in different regions. However, it seems like the age gap was less in Western counties than in the rest of Sweden.

The regional differences in the marriage age became more obvious when the counties were ranked. The procedure was to rank the counties for each census-year from the highest to the lowest marriage age, and to create a final ranking based on the counties’ ranking position in all four censuses. The results are presented in tables 5–7.

As can be seen in table 6, on average the female *smam* of nine out of ten (or ten out of eleven) Western counties was higher than the *smam* of the seven (or eight) Eastern and the two (or three) Northern counties. Blekinge and Gotland counties were ranked in almost the same average position, and represent the point where the Western and the Eastern marriage pattern meet.

For men, the *smam* figures on average fit the Sundbärg Eastern–Western dichotomy to a large degree – most Western counties had higher rankings than most Eastern and Northern counties (see table 4). However, there were two outliers, Jämtland county (defined by Sundbärg as Eastern) with quite high marriage age, and Blekinge county (defined as Western) with quite low.

Also, when the counties were ranked according to the difference in marriage age between the sexes, the outline of a pattern could be discerned (see table 7). Seven Western counties were ranked lower than the Eastern and Northern counties. But Western counties like Göteborg& Bohus and Halland were ranked high, having a marriage pattern characterised by quite large age gaps between the sexes.

Table 2. Singulate mean age at marriage of men in in 1870, 1880, 1890 and 1900, distributed by county. Rural communities.

COUNTY	1870	1880	1890	1900	mean
Stockholm county	29.1	28.5	28.4	28.2	28.5
Uppsala county	28.8	28.4	28.2	28.2	28.4
Södermanland county	28.4	28.1	27.8	27.7	28.0
Östergötland county	29.3	28.9	28.7	29.0	28.9
Jönköping county	29.3	29.3	29.7	30.2	29.6
Kronoberg county	29.2	29.3	29.8	30.1	29.6
Kalmar county	29.1	29.1	29.7	30.0	29.5
Gotland county	28.8	28.8	29.5	29.7	29.2
Blekinge county	28.3	28.7	28.8	29.1	28.7
Kristianstad county	30.4	30.0	30.0	30.1	30.1
Malmöhus county	30.4	29.6	29.4	28.7	29.5
Halland county	30.4	30.4	30.5	30.1	30.3
Göteborg & Bohus county	30.9	30.7	30.4	29.7	30.4
Älvsborg county	30.4	30.4	30.5	30.4	30.4
Skaraborg county	29.8	29.9	30.3	30.8	30.2
Värmland county	30.3	30.3	30.4	30.3	30.3
Örebro county	29.5	29.7	29.6	29.7	29.6
Västmanland county	28.5	28.1	28.2	28.2	28.2
Kopparberg county	28.1	28.0	28.5	28.6	28.3
Gävleborg county	28.6	28.3	28.1	28.5	28.4
Västernorrland county	29.8	29.0	28.7	29.3	29.2
Jämtland county	30.2	30.0	29.8	31.2	30.3
Västerbotten county	29.6	28.8	28.8	29.2	29.1
Norrbottn county	28.7	28.7	28.9	28.4	28.7
SWEDEN	29.6	29.3	29.4	29.4	29.4

Table 3. Singulate mean age at marriage of women in 1870, 1880, 1890 and 1900, distributed by county. Rural communities.

COUNTY	1870	1880	1890	1900	mean
Stockholm county	27.2	26.7	26.9	26.1	26.7
Uppsala county	27.1	26.4	26.0	26.1	26.4
Södermanland county	26.7	26.2	25.9	25.9	26.2
Östergötland county	27.7	27.2	27.4	26.9	27.3
Jönköping county	27.6	27.4	27.8	27.9	27.7
Kronoberg county	27.8	27.5	27.9	27.9	27.8
Kalmar county	27.6	27.3	27.6	27.4	27.5
Gotland county	27.5	27.2	27.5	27.3	27.4
Blekinge county	27.4	27.3	27.3	27.3	27.3
Kristianstad county	28.6	28.4	28.3	28.0	28.3
Malmöhus county	28.6	28.2	27.9	26.9	27.9
Halland county	28.7	28.1	28.5	28.0	28.3
Göteborg & Bohus county	29.0	28.6	28.0	27.0	28.2
Älvsborg county	29.0	29.3	28.8	28.5	28.9
Skaraborg county	28.6	28.8	29.1	29.1	28.9
Värmland county	28.9	28.5	28.6	28.1	28.5
Örebro county	27.9	27.8	28.0	27.6	27.8
Västmanland county	26.8	25.9	26.0	26.3	26.2
Kopparberg county	27.0	26.5	26.6	26.2	26.6
Gävleborg county	27.0	25.9	25.8	26.1	26.2
Västernorrland county	27.5	26.2	25.5	26.5	26.4
Jämtland county	27.2	26.3	26.1	27.0	26.7
Västerbotten county	27.7	27.0	26.8	26.3	27.0
Norrbottn county	26.9	26.7	26.1	25.3	26.2
SWEDEN	28.0	27.5	27.4	27.1	27.5

Table 4. The age gap at marriage between the sexes in 1870, 1880, 1890 and 1900, distributed by county. Rural communities.

COUNTY	1870	1880	1890	1900	mean
Stockholm county	1.9	1.8	1.5	2.1	1.8
Uppsala county	1.7	2.0	2.2	2.1	2.0
Södermanland county	1.7	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.8
Östergötland county	1.6	1.7	1.3	2.1	1.7
Jönköping county	1.7	1.9	1.9	2.3	1.9
Kronoberg county	1.4	1.8	1.9	2.2	1.8
Kalmar county	1.5	1.8	2.1	2.6	2.0
Gotland county	1.3	1.6	2.0	2.4	1.8
Blekinge county	0.9	1.4	1.5	1.8	1.4
Kristianstad county	1.8	1.6	1.7	2.1	1.8
Malmöhus county	1.8	1.4	1.5	1.8	1.6
Halland county	1.7	2.3	2.0	2.1	2.0
Göteborg & Bohus county	1.9	2.1	2.4	2.7	2.3
Älvsborg county	1.4	1.1	1.7	1.9	1.5
Skaraborg county	1.2	1.1	1.2	1.7	1.3
Värmland county	1.4	1.8	1.8	2.2	1.8
Örebro county	1.6	1.9	1.6	2.1	1.8
Västmanland county	1.7	2.2	2.2	1.9	2.0
Kopparberg county	1.1	1.5	1.9	2.4	1.7
Gävleborg county	1.6	2.4	2.3	2.4	2.2
Västernorrland county	2.3	2.8	3.2	2.8	2.8
Jämtland county	3.0	3.7	3.7	4.2	3.6
Västerbotten county	1.9	1.8	2.0	2.9	2.1
Norrbottn county	1.8	2.0	2.8	3.1	2.4
SWEDEN	1.6	1.8	2.0	2.3	1.9

Table 5. Ranking of the counties from highest to lowest mean age at marriage of men.

COUNTY	1870	1880	1890	1900	average
Älvsborg county	3.5	2.5	1.5	3.0	2.6
Halland county	3.5	2.5	1.5	7.0	3.6
Göteborg & Bohus county	1.0	1.0	3.5	11.0	4.1
Värmland county	6.0	4.0	3.5	4.0	4.4
Jämtland county	7.0	5.5	7.5	1.0	5.3
Kristianstad county	3.5	5.5	6.0	7.0	5.5
Skaraborg county	8.5	7.0	5.0	2.0	5.6
Jönköping county	12.0	10.5	9.5	5.0	9.3
Kronoberg county	14.0	10.5	7.5	7.0	9.8
Örebro county	11.0	8.0	11.0	11.0	10.3
Malmöhus county	3.5	9.0	13.0	17.0	10.6
Kalmar county	15.5	12.0	9.5	9.0	11.5
Västernorrland county	8.5	13.0	17.5	13.0	13.0
Västerbotten county	10.0	15.5	15.5	14.0	13.8
Gotland county	17.5	15.5	12.0	11.0	14.0
Östergötland county	13.0	14.0	17.5	16.0	15.1
Norrbottn county	19.0	17.5	14.0	20.0	17.6
Blekinge county	23.0	17.5	15.5	15.0	17.8
Stockholm county	15.5	19.0	20.0	22.0	19.1
Uppsala county	17.5	20.0	21.5	22.0	20.3
Gävleborg county	20.0	21.0	23.0	19.0	20.8
Kopparberg county	24.0	24.0	19.0	18.0	21.3
Västmanland county	21.0	22.5	21.5	22.0	21.8
Södermanland county	22.0	22.5	24.0	24.0	23.1

Table 6. Ranking of the counties from highest to lowest mean age at marriage of women.

COUNTY	1870	1880	1890	1900	average
Älvsborg county	1.5	1.0	2.0	2.0	1.6
Skaraborg county	6.0	2.0	1.0	1.0	2.5
Värmland county	3.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.3
Halland county	4.0	7.0	4.0	4.5	4.9
Kristianstad county	6.0	5.0	5.0	4.5	5.1
Göteborg & Bohus county	1.5	3.0	6.5	12.5	5.9
Örebro county	8.0	8.0	6.5	8.0	7.6
Kronoberg county	9.0	9.0	8.5	6.5	8.3
Malmöhus county	6.0	6.0	8.5	14.5	8.8
Jönköping county	12.5	10.0	10.0	6.5	9.8
Kalmar county	12.5	11.5	11.0	9.0	11.0
Gotland county	14.5	13.5	12.0	10.5	12.6
Östergötland county	10.5	13.5	13.0	14.5	12.9
Blekinge county	16.0	11.5	14.0	10.5	13.0
Västerbotten county	10.5	15.0	16.0	17.5	14.8
Jämtland county	17.5	20.0	18.5	12.5	17.1
Stockholm county	17.5	16.5	15.0	20.0	17.3
Kopparberg county	20.5	18.0	17.0	19.0	18.6
Västernorrland county	14.5	21.5	24.0	16.0	19.0
Uppsala county	19.0	19.0	20.5	20.5	19.8
Norrbottn county	22.0	16.5	18.5	24.0	20.3
Västmanland county	23.0	23.5	20.5	17.5	21.1
Gävleborg county	20.5	23.5	23.0	20.5	21.9
Södermanland county	24.0	21.5	22.0	23.0	22.6

Table 7. Ranking of the counties from largest to smallest age gap at marriage between the sexes.

COUNTY	1870	1880	1890	1900	average
Jämtland county	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Västernorrland county	2.0	2.0	2.0	4.0	2.5
Göteborg & Bohus county	4.0	6.0	4.0	5.0	4.8
Norrbottn county	7.0	7.5	3.0	2.0	4.9
Västerbotten county	4.0	14.0	10.0	3.0	7.8
Gävleborg county	15.0	3.0	5.0	8.0	7.8
Uppsala county	11.0	7.5	6.5	15.5	10.1
Halland county	11.0	4.0	10.0	15.5	10.1
Västmanland county	11.0	5.0	6.5	19.5	10.5
Jönköping county	11.0	10.0	13.5	10.0	11.1
Kalmar county	17.0	14.0	8.0	6.0	11.3
Stockholm county	4.0	14.0	21.0	15.5	13.6
Södermanland county	11.0	10.0	13.5	22.0	14.1
Gotland county	21.0	18.5	10.0	8.0	14.4
Kronoberg county	19.0	14.0	13.5	11.5	14.5
Kristianstad county	7.0	18.5	17.5	15.5	14.6
Örebro county	15.0	10.0	19.0	15.5	14.9
Värmland county	19.0	14.0	16.0	11.5	15.1
Kopparberg county	23.0	20.0	13.5	8.0	16.1
Östergötland county	15.0	17.0	23.0	15.5	17.6
Malmöhus county	7.0	21.5	21.0	22.0	17.9
Älvsborg county	19.0	23.5	17.5	19.5	19.9
Blekinge county	24.0	21.5	21.0	22.0	22.1
Skaraborg county	22.0	23.5	24.0	24.0	23.4

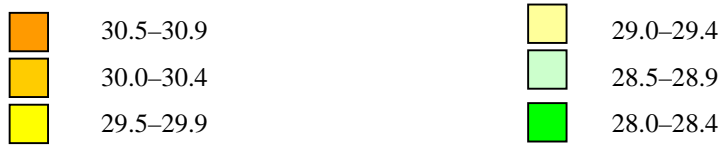
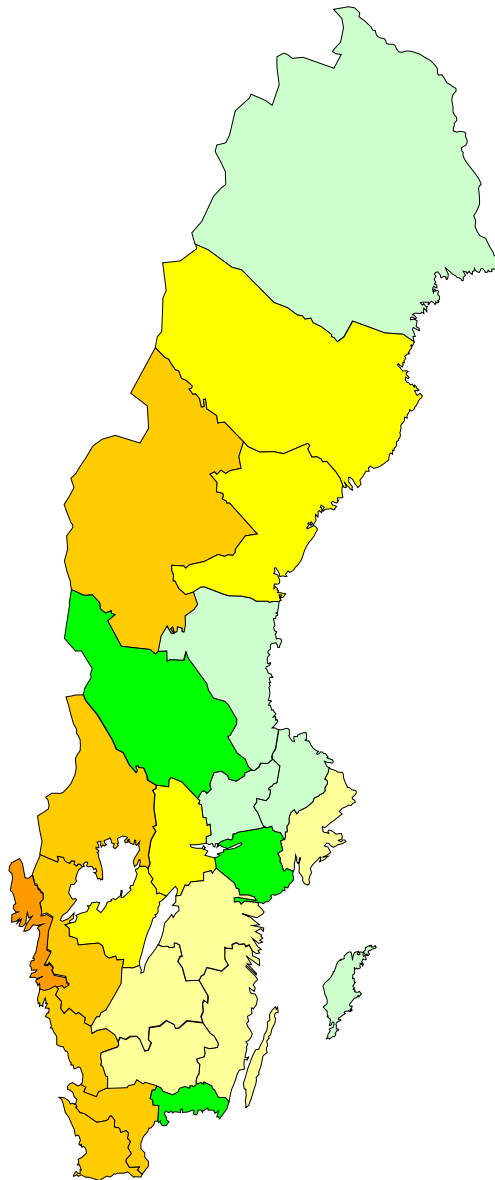


Figure 1. Singulate mean age at marriage for men in 1870, distributed by county. Rural communities.

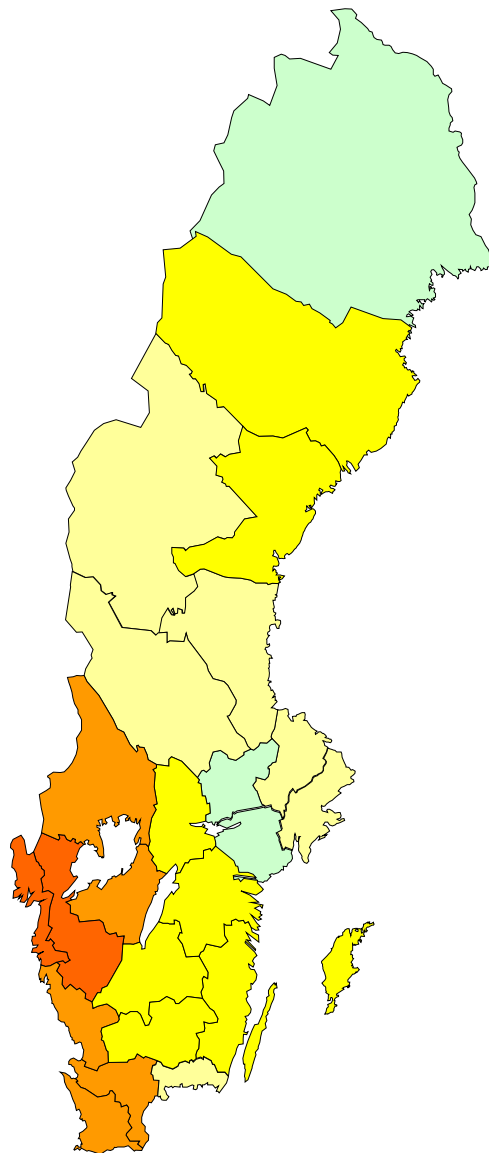


Figure 2. Singulate mean age at marriage for women in 1870, distributed by county. Rural communities.

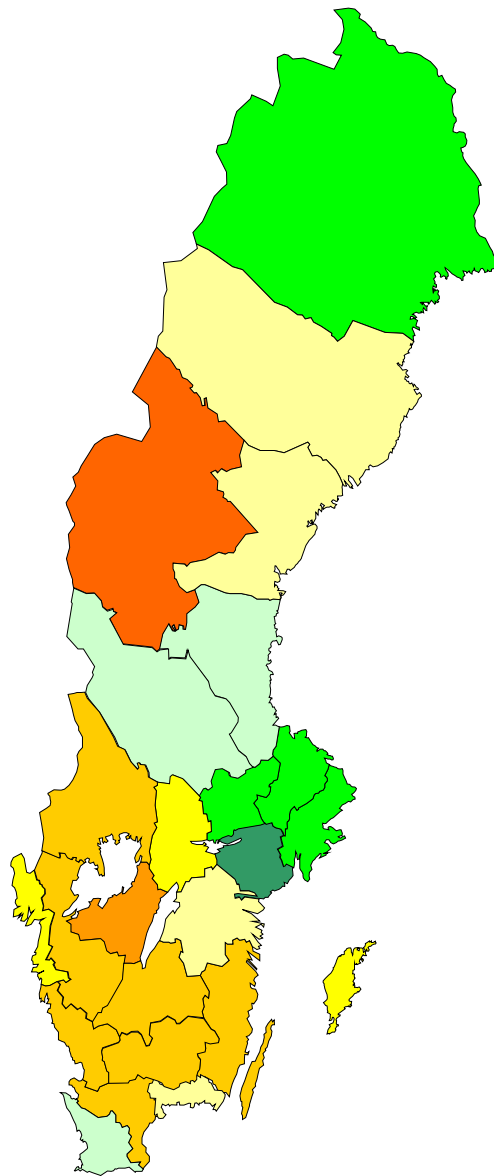


Figure 3. Singulate mean age at marriage for men in 1900, distributed by county. Rural communities.

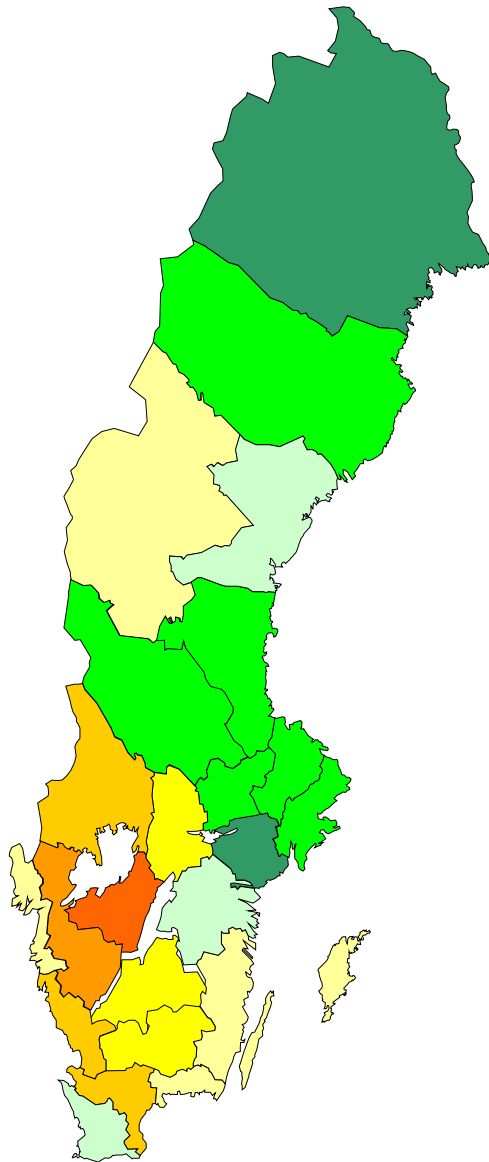


Figure 4. Singulate mean age at marriage for women in 1900, distributed by county. Rural communities.

The fit of the marriage pattern to the Sundbärg Eastern–Western dichotomy was at its best in 1880. In 1900, the original pattern was still there, but the number of outliers had increased. Among women, a substantial decline in the age at marriage after 1880 occurred in Malmöhus and Göteborg & Bohus counties (Western), while the marriage age increased in Jämtland county (Eastern). Among men, an increase in the *smam* occurred in Jämtland and Gotland (Eastern), while there was a drop in the marriage age in Malmöhus and Göteborg and Bohus counties (Western). The increasing number of outliers disturbed the almost perfect fit to the Eastern–Western dichotomy that had characterised the census of 1880, and might be interpreted as a sign of erosion of Sundbärg’s demographic regions. In 1900, the top position of highest male marriage age was held by an Eastern county, Jämtland!

As was mentioned, the age difference between men and women was often smaller in Western Sweden than in the rest of the country, while no difference between Eastern and Northern Sweden could be observed in this respect. In 1870–1900 there was an increase in the average age gap between the sexes of about 40 percent in rural areas, and some counties experienced even larger changes (e.g. Blekinge 100 percent, Gotland 85 percent). However, the pattern of a smaller age gap in Western Sweden and a larger age gap in Eastern Sweden seems to have been quite stable.

The average marriage ages and the age difference between the sexes lead us to believe that there were substantial differences between Western and Eastern Sweden, while the marriage pattern in Northern Sweden seems to have been quite similar to the Eastern pattern. To test this impression, the county-specific *smam* and the age difference in *smam* that were presented in tables 2–3 and 4 respectively were grouped to fit Sundbärg’s regional classification and mean values were calculated.³ This was done for the four censuses altogether (see table 8) and for each census separately (see tables 9–11). An F-test was undertaken to check whether the observed difference between two mean values, for instance for Eastern and Western Sweden, was statistically significant. The result of this test is presented in table 12.

This calculation confirms the above impressions. There was a distinct difference in the marriage pattern between Western Sweden and the rest of Sweden. Men were on average about one year older when they married and women about one and a half older. The difference in

³ Note that in this calculation the county-specific marriage ages were not weighted by the county's population.

Table 8: Singulate mean age at marriage for men and women and the age difference at marriage between sexes in different regions in 1870/1900. Rural communities.

	M A L E S		F E M A L E S		AGE DIFFERENCE	
	smam	std.dev.	smam	std.dev.	smam	std.dev.
Eastern Sweden						
no split counties incl.	28.7	0.81	26.5	0.56	2.19	0.69
incl. Östergötland	28.8	0.77	26.6	0.59	2.12	0.67
Western Sweden						
no split counties incl.	29.9	0.63	28.2	0.62	1.75	0.39
incl. Kalmar	29.9	0.63	28.1	0.63	1.78	0.40
Northern Sweden						
no split counties incl.	28.9	0.36	26.6	0.71	2.20	0.55
incl. Västernorrland	29.0	0.41	26.5	0.72	2.45	0.53

Table 9: Singulate mean age at marriage for men in different regions in 1870, 1880, 1890 and 1900. Rural communities.

	1870		1880		1890		1900	
	smam	std.dev.	smam	std.dev.	smam	std.dev.	smam	std.dev.
Eastern Sweden								
no split counties incl.	28.9	0.61	28.6	0.66	28.6	0.76	28.8	1.22
incl. Östergötland	29.0	0.58	28.6	0.62	28.6	0.71	28.8	1.13
Western Sweden								
no split counties incl.	29.9	0.79	29.9	0.63	30.0	0.56	30.0	0.63
incl. Kalmar	29.9	0.79	29.8	0.64	30.0	0.54	30.0	0.59
Northern Sweden								
no split counties incl.	29.2	0.64	28.8	0.07	28.9	0.07	28.8	0.57
incl. Västernorrland	29.4	0.59	28.6	0.15	28.8	0.1	29.0	0.49

Table 10: Singulate mean age at marriage for women in different regions in 1870, 1880, 1890 and 1900. Rural communities.

	1870		1880		1890		1900	
	smam	std.dev.	smam	std.dev.	smam	std.dev.	smam	std.dev.
Eastern Sweden								
no split counties incl.	27.1	0.27	26.4	0.46	26.3	0.64	26.4	0.53
incl. Östergötland	27.2	0.33	26.5	0.52	26.5	0.70	26.0	0.52
Western Sweden								
no split counties incl.	28.4	0.59	28.2	0.65	28.2	0.54	27.9	0.67
incl. Kalmar	28.3	0.62	28.1	0.68	28.2	0.54	27.8	0.65
Northern Sweden								
no split counties incl.	27.3	0.57	26.9	0.21	26.5	0.49	25.8	0.71
incl. Västernorrland	27.4	0.42	26.6	0.40	26.1	0.65	26.0	0.64

Table 11: Average difference in marriage age between men and women in different regions in 1870, 1880, 1890 and 1900. Rural communities.

	1870		1880		1890		1900	
	age diff.	std.dev.	age diff.	std.dev.	age diff.	std.dev.	age diff.	std.dev.
Eastern Sweden								
no split counties incl.	1.84	0.54	2.23	0.70	2.26	0.69	2.14	0.82
incl. Östergötland	1.81	0.50	2.16	0.67	2.13	0.72	2.38	0.77
Western Sweden								
no split counties incl.	1.52	0.32	1.65	0.40	1.76	0.33	2.08	0.30
incl. Kalmar	1.52	1.30	1.66	0.39	1.79	0.33	2.13	0.32
Northern Sweden								
no split counties incl.	1.85	0.07	1.90	0.14	2.4	0.57	3.00	0.14
incl. Västernorrland	2.00	0.26	2.20	0.53	2.67	0.61	2.93	0.15

Table 12: F-test of the equality of a pair of mean values.

		1870	1880	1890	1900	1870/1900
Eastern - Western						
Male smam	no split counties incl.	***	***	***	***	***
	incl. Östergötland and Kalmar	***	***	***	***	***
Female smam	no split counties incl.	***	***	***	***	***
	incl. Östergötland and Kalmar	***	***	***	***	***
Age difference	no split counties incl.		**	*		***
	incl. Östergötland and Kalmar		*			***
Eastern - Northern						
Male smam	no split counties incl.					
	incl. Östergötland and Västernorrland					
Female smam	no split counties incl.					
	incl. Östergötland and Västernorrland					
Age difference	no split counties incl.					
	incl. Östergötland and Västernorrland					
Western - Northern						
Male smam	no split counties incl.		**	**	**	***
	incl. Kalmar and Västernorrland		**	***	**	***
Female smam	no split counties incl.	**	**	***	***	***
	incl. Kalmar and Västernorrland	**	***	***	***	***
Age difference	no split counties incl.			**	***	***
	incl. Kalmar and Västernorrland	**	*	***	***	***

Significance level: * 10 %, ** 5 %, *** 1 %.

Note: The interpretation of the table is that the difference in the male *smam* between Eastern and Western Sweden (no split counties included) in 1870 was statistically significant at the 1 % level.

age at marriage between the sexes was less in Western Sweden than in the rest of the country – 1.75 years compared to 2.20 years. The difference in the marriage pattern between Western Sweden on the one hand and Eastern and Northern on the other was statistically significant at the one-percent level when figures for all four censuses were brought together. It was also significant for calculations based on most of the censuses individually.

As far as Eastern and Northern Sweden are concerned, the difference in age at marriage of men and women and in the age gap between the

sexes was small and not statistically significant. Thus, there seems to have been no or little difference in the marriage pattern between Eastern and Northern Sweden.

For Sweden as a whole, tables 2–4 indicate that the average marriage age for men was quiet stable over the period 1870–1900 while it decreased by nearly one year for women. As a result the age gap between the sexes increased from 1.6 to 2.3 years.

Tables 9–11 show that there were regional variations of this development. While the marriage age for men was quiet stable in Western and Eastern Sweden, it decreased by about half a year in Northern Sweden. For women the development of the age at marriage in Northern Sweden was special, too. While the decrease from 1870 to 1900 was about half a year in Eastern and Western Sweden, it was one and a half years in Northern Sweden. Consequently, the increase in the age gap between the sexes in age at marriage was over a year in Northern Sweden while it was 0.6 year in Western Sweden and 0.3 in Eastern Sweden. A more cautious interpretation would be that the increase in the age gap between the sexes was smaller in Western and Eastern Sweden than in Northern Sweden.

To conclude, it seems obvious that there were distinctive regional differences in the marriage pattern in Sweden in the period 1870–1900, like Sundbärg suggested. However, this study does not confirm the ranking of regions from highest to lowest marriage age suggested by Sundbärg: Northern, Western and Eastern Sweden. Instead, it indicates a marriage pattern that was different in Western Sweden from the rest of the country. This marriage pattern included later marriages in Western Sweden for both men and women and a smaller age gap between the sexes. The marriage pattern seems to have been more stable over the period in Western Sweden than in the other two regions.

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