

About child marriage – laws and rules in Sweden

**In Swedish law everyone under the age of 18 is a child.
It is forbidden to marry a child. Foreign child marriages are generally not recognised as valid in Sweden**

Children have the right to go to school and to an education, to have opportunities for leisure interests and to develop as an individual. Living in a marriage means responsibilities that a child should not have. Early marriages might also lead to physical and mental ill health.

This is what applies in Sweden

All children, both girls and boys, have the same rights. The following also applies:

- Children under the age of 15 have an absolute right to be protected from sexual acts.
- Everyone must have access to information about sex, pregnancy and childbirth.
- A pregnant girl or woman has the right to an abortion if she wishes to terminate a pregnancy.
- Having sex with someone against their will is rape, even within marriage.
- Everyone who is married has the right to separation or divorce, even if their partner does not want it.

On reaching the age of 18, a person has the right to decide for him/herself.

Foreign child marriages are not recognised as valid in Sweden

Foreign child marriages are not recognised as valid in Sweden from 1 January 2019. Exceptions can only be made if both parties are adults and there are exceptional circumstances. If one party is under the age of 18, no exceptions can be made.

The parents or a guardian have the responsibility for a child

Primarily it is the parents, as guardians, who have the responsibility for ensuring that children grow up in safety and have their needs met. If necessary, the social services in the municipality can offer support.

Everyone under the age of 18, who is seeking asylum without parents or guardian, is considered to be an unaccompanied child. A guardian is appointed, for example to help the child to manage their contacts with the authorities and handle his/her finances. A person who is reported as being married to a child does not have the decision-making power over the child that a guardian has.

Sex with someone under the age of 15 is a crime

Children under the age of 15 have an absolute right to be protected from sexual acts. It is a crime to have sex with someone under the age of 15. This also applies if the child is reported to be married. Anyone who has sexual intercourse or performs other sexual acts with a child under the age of 15 is guilty of rape of a child. The crime can lead to imprisonment for between two and ten years.

Contact with Swedish authorities

The Swedish Migration Agency handles all asylum applications. The social services are responsible for investigating the needs of a child and for providing support and protection. The authorities must cooperate with the child and with the person who has responsibility for the child. They must ensure that the child can express his/her opinion, such as where to live and what he/she wants to happen.

Everyone working in an activity involving children and young people, such as schools and health services, is under a legal obligation to immediately report any concerns to the social services if they suspect a child is being treated badly.

If you are new in Sweden

Your case officer at the Swedish Migration Agency or the social services can give you more information about what applies in Sweden.

On the website www.informationsverige.se you can find information about Swedish society in several languages.

**Information for children:
www.kollpasoc.se/barnaktenskap**