

IN BRIEF:

# Crime trends in Sweden until 2015

**brå**

The background of the page features a collection of silhouettes of people in various poses and activities, rendered in shades of teal and black. Overlaid on these silhouettes are several line graphs. Some lines are solid teal, while others are dashed teal. The lines represent crime trends, showing fluctuating patterns across the bottom half of the page. The overall design is clean and modern, with a focus on human figures and data visualization.

**IN BRIEF:**

# **Crime Trends**

**IN SWEDEN UNTIL 2015**

**bra**

National Council for Crime Prevention

# Contents

- CRIME TRENDS IN SWEDEN UNTIL 2015 3
- AN INTRODUCTION TO CRIME TRENDS IN SWEDEN 4
- SWEDISH CRIME TRENDS 6
- LETHAL VIOLENCE 7
- ASSAULT 9
- ROBBERY 11
- SEXUAL OFFENCES 13
- THREATS AND HARASSMENT 15
- FRAUD 17
- THEFT OFFENCES 19
- NARCOTICS OFFENCES 21
- DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE 23
- A closer look 25
- FIREARMS-RELATED CRIMINALITY 25
- YOUTH CRIMINALITY IN SWEDEN 26
- CRIMINALITY AND INSECURITY IN CITIES AND RURAL AREAS 27
- FINANCIAL CRIMES 28

## CRIME TRENDS IN SWEDEN UNTIL 2015

Since 1976, Brå has published the *Crime Trends in Sweden* report series for the purpose of providing a current view of the trends and structure of the main types of offences. The most recent report contains descriptions and analyses of a number of types of offences until 2015.

Crime Trend reports are intended for interested members of the general public, researchers, politicians, and criminal justice agencies. We welcome you to read it.

The pamphlet you hold in your hand contains a selection of all of the information regarding crime and criminality which you can read in the report.

You can order the complete version or download it from Brå's website, [www.bra.se/brottsutvecklingen](http://www.bra.se/brottsutvecklingen).

## AN INTRODUCTION TO CRIME TRENDS IN SWEDEN

One of Brå's central tasks is to disseminate knowledge about criminality, and this includes the Crime Trends report. Crime Trends is a compendium of Brå's assessment of trends and changes in criminal behaviour over time. Knowledge from reports and statistics – published primarily by Brå, as well as by other participants in the criminal policy arena – is compiled in the report.

The primary selection of the types of offences or groups of offences which are included is made from among offences which are serious and/or have many victims. The focus in this report is on the 21<sup>st</sup> century and issues regarding change in the scope and structure of criminality, who the perpetrators are, who the victims are, administration by the criminal justice system, and the crime prevention and criminal policy measures which are employed.

### Underreporting and hidden criminality

The criminal justice system never learns of a large number of the offences which are committed, and the actual criminality involved in many types of offences is significantly more extensive than that which appears in official criminal statistics. The report is therefore based, in part, on victim and self-reporting studies such as the Swedish Crime Survey (*NTU*) and the School Survey on Crime (*SUB*) and, in part, on criminal statistics (*KRIMSTAT*).

The report addresses the background of, and changes in, the criminal justice system since 2000, as well as crime trends in general and for various categories of offences. An in-depth section also discusses various dimensions of criminality. Underreporting is not uniform, and may be influenced by anything from changed societal attitudes and changed insurance rules to the priorities of the criminal justice system and other agencies. For example, a more rigorous view of sexual offences or greater media attention afforded to these offences can lead to a greater number of these incidents being noticed and reported to the police without the actual number of offences having increased.

### NTU, SUB, and criminal statistics

The NTU is based on documentation collected from almost 12,000 individuals who answered questions (in telephone interviews and via survey forms) regarding exposure to crime, insecurity and anxiety about crime, trust in the criminal justice system, and experience with contacts with the criminal justice system. The SUB is a survey conducted among year-nine students at a selection of schools in Sweden. It comprises a printed survey form which the students complete anonymously during the school day. Almost 5,000 students participated in the 2015 survey. The overall purpose is to investigate the students' exposure to crime as well as participation in crime and other risk behaviours.

The criminal justice statistics are divided into reported offences, processed offences and offences with person-based clearances, persons suspected of offences, persons convicted of offences and sanctions, prison and probation service statistics, and recidivism. The official statistics for which Brå is responsible are collectively referred to as crime statistics. The criminal justice

statistics also report statistics regarding the judicial system's activities; the Swedish National Courts Administration is responsible for generating these statistics.

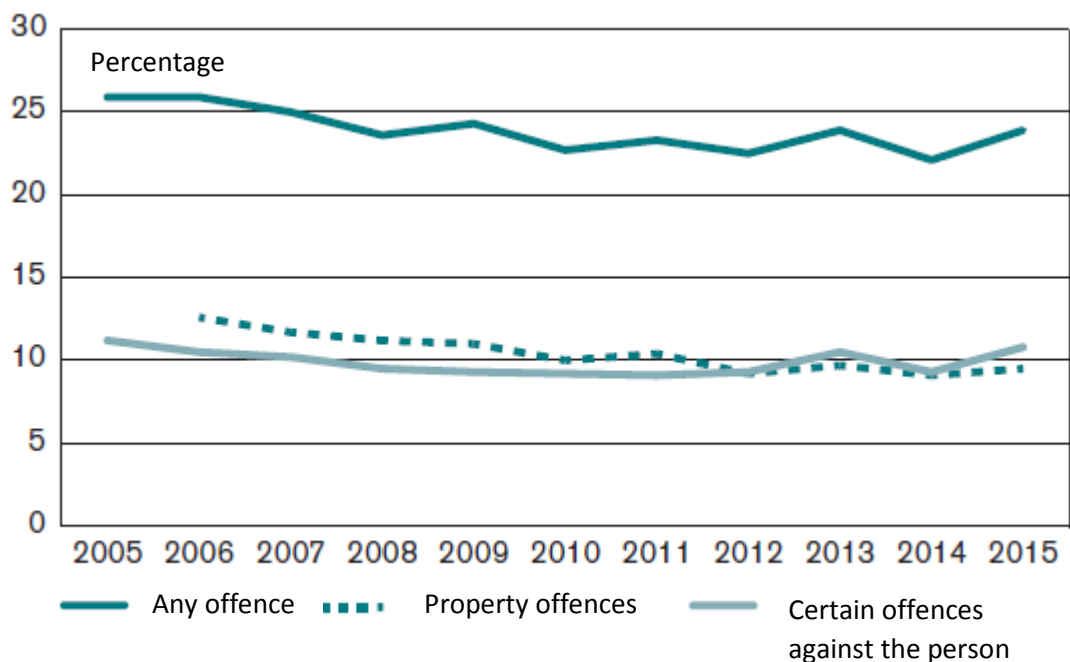
## SWEDISH CRIME TRENDS

During a ten-year period (2005-2015), the percentage of persons who stated that they had been exposed to any crime dropped from 26 per cent to 24 per cent. The primary decline was in the percentage of persons who were victims of property offences (comprising bicycle theft, home burglary, car theft, and theft from vehicles) – from 13 per cent to 10 per cent from 2006-2015. The percentage of victims of offences against the individual (comprising assault, sexual offences, mugging, threats, and harassment) declined from 11 per cent in 2005 to 9 per cent from 2009-2012. During the most recent three years, the percentage of victims has varied between 9 per cent and 11 per cent.

### The difference between women and men has increased

Crime trends since 2000 are different for women and men; since 2012, a greater percentage of women than men have been victims of offences against the individual. The percentage of men who have been victims has dropped since 2005, while the number of women has grown. Offences against the person have decreased in groups which have generally higher exposure (young, unemployed, and single) but increased among individuals born in Sweden for whom both parents were born abroad.

Exposure to crime among the population. Source: NTU



### More reports of crime since 2000

Reports of crime have increased since 2000, from approximately 1.2 million to approximately 1.5 million. The primary increase occurred up to and including 2008 and does not apply to property offences, which were almost halved during the period. In respect of offences against the person, there has been a substantial increase in reports of threats and harassment.

## LETHAL VIOLENCE

Since 2000, there have been approximately 91 cases of lethal violence each year in the form of murder, manslaughter, and assault with a lethal outcome. Lethal violence has declined over the past 20 years, which is also seen in many other European countries.

The reduction is greatest in cases in which victims are younger than 15 years of age. The percentage of lethal violence from firearms has gone in the opposite direction and increased in recent years. Lethal violence often occurs in socially marginalised environments, and it is relatively frequent that both perpetrators and victims have substance abuse and/or psychological problems. Since 2000, the percentage of perpetrators under the influence of alcohol has dropped, while the percentage of perpetrators under the influence of narcotics has risen somewhat. Men, above all, are victims of lethal violence; the same is true of perpetrators, where 90 per cent are men. In the case of lethal violence in intimate relationships, in the majority of the cases a woman is the victim and a man is the perpetrator. Approximately one-half of the total (average) 25 women per year who are victims of lethal violence are victimised in intimate relationships.

### **Knives are the most common weapon but firearms have increased**

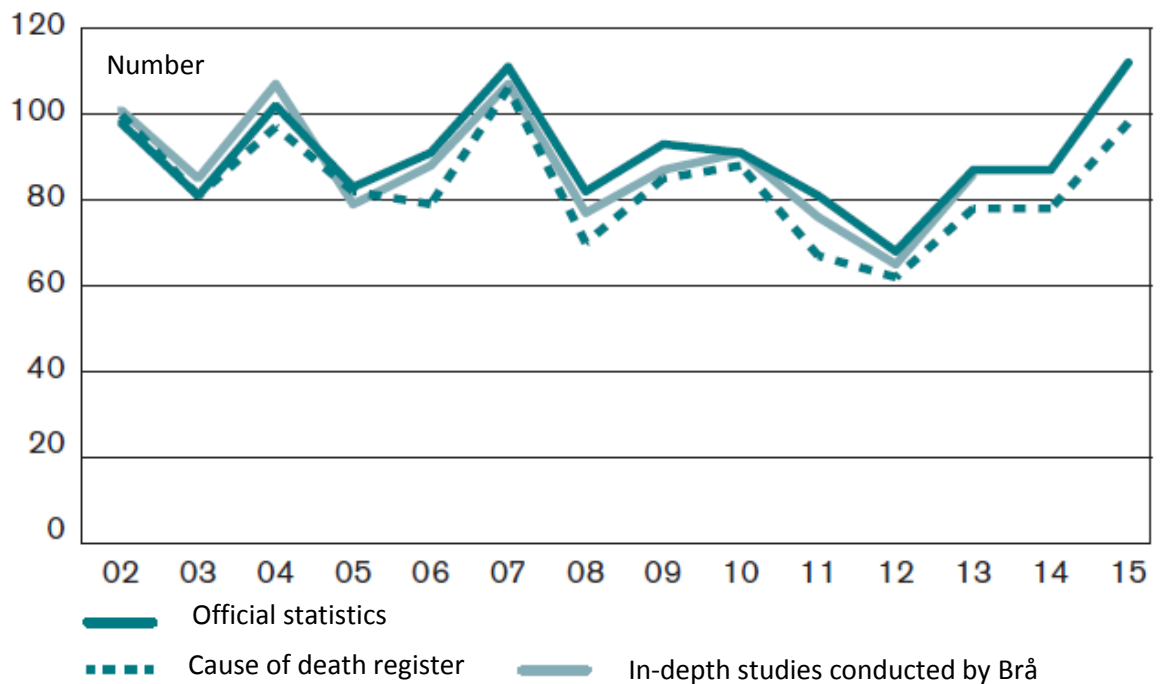
In two-thirds of the cases, the parties involved know each other. The number of cases within families has fallen somewhat during the period, while the number of cases which occur within the scope of conflicts in the course of criminal activities and other feuds has increased. Lethal violence is mainly committed with some form of weapon, most frequently a knife. The percentage of lethal violence with a firearm within criminal-related conflicts has increased during recent years.

Since 2000, there have been clearances for an average of 80 per cent of offences involving lethal violence – this figure is higher than for many other types of offences. Nevertheless, this figure has declined over time, particularly in the major metropolitan counties.

Approximately 80 per cent of the perpetrators are sentenced to prison, and this figure represents a substantial increase. Fewer perpetrators than before are sentenced to forensic psychiatric care.



Total number of cases of lethal violence in Sweden according to official criminal statistics (2002-2015), Brå's data on lethal violence (2002-2013) and the National Board of Health and Welfare cause of death statistics (2002-2015). Source: Brå and National Board of Health and Welfare.



### Crime prevention measures and strategies

Since lethal violence is a small class of offences, it is difficult to find crime prevention strategies. The offences often occur in a residential environment between people who know each other and, to a large extent, without witnesses, which provides little opportunity for insight and intervention. At the same time, lethal violence is one of the most serious crimes we know. Community crime prevention, enhanced work against violence in intimate relationships, and limited access to illegal firearms are some examples of preventive measures.

## ASSAULT

According to the major victim surveys, approximately 2-3 per cent of the population state that they have been the victim of some type of assault. Total exposure declined somewhat from 2009-2015 when compared with the start of the century. On average, 2,400 persons per year are admitted for in-patient hospital treatment for injury due to assault or even more serious criminal offences. In 2014, this figure was 1,902 persons, which was the lowest figure since 2000.

Although victim surveys and hospital data indicate reduced exposure to assault, the number of reported offences has increased substantially, by a total of approximately 45 per cent between the years 2000 and 2015. Research shows that important explanations for this are new working methods and routines within the police, as well as generally increased attention to, and reduced tolerance for, violent offences.

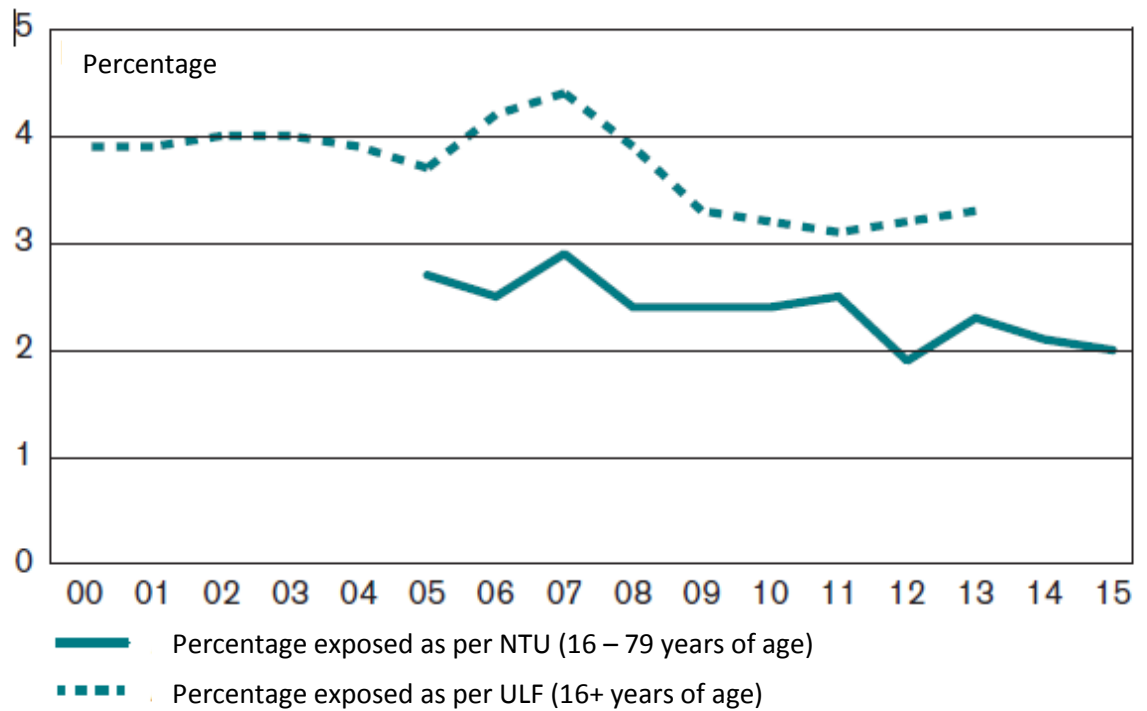
### **Men and women are exposed in different contexts**

The most common type of assault is alcohol-related, takes place in a public place, and often occurs between previously unknown persons. Both perpetrators and victims are customarily young men. This is the primary form of assault that has dropped since 2000. The percentage of exposed women is unchanged during the period. While men are more often victimised by someone unknown, women are primarily the victims of assault by someone they know. Individuals from households with relatively low financial and social resources are more often victims and perpetrators of assault when compared with others; for example, exposure is more than twice as high among those who not completed upper secondary education when compared with those who have higher education.

### **Relatively few offences have person-based clearances**

Although assault is an offence which is prioritised within the criminal justice system, relatively few cases have person-based clearances, specifically only 13 per cent of those offences which were processed during 2015. There has been a clear decline in the person-based clearance rate during the researched period. The most common sanction for those who are found guilty of assault is a conditional sentence, while imprisonment is the next most common.

Percentage exposed to assault (2005-2015, as well as percentage exposed to some form of violence, (2004-2014). Sources: NTU and ULF.



### Crime prevention measures and strategies

Crime prevention work in respect of assault is conducted on many levels; for example, by dense police presence and prompt custody of intoxicated individuals outside of bars in urban environments. Victim support services and women's support services, in their turn, conduct important work in respect of women who have been victims of violence in intimate relationships; this work has been enhanced since 2000.

## ROBBERY

According to the NTU, approximately 1 per cent of Sweden's population are victims of robbery each year. The level has been relatively stable over the period 2005-2015. Men are more exposed than women, and younger persons are more exposed than older persons. The number of robberies which are stated to be work-related has declined from 9 per cent to 4 per cent during the period. Persons in major metropolitan regions are exposed more often than residents of smaller localities, and apartment residents are exposed more often than residents of single-family homes. The SUB also shows a downward trend in respect of both exposure and participation.

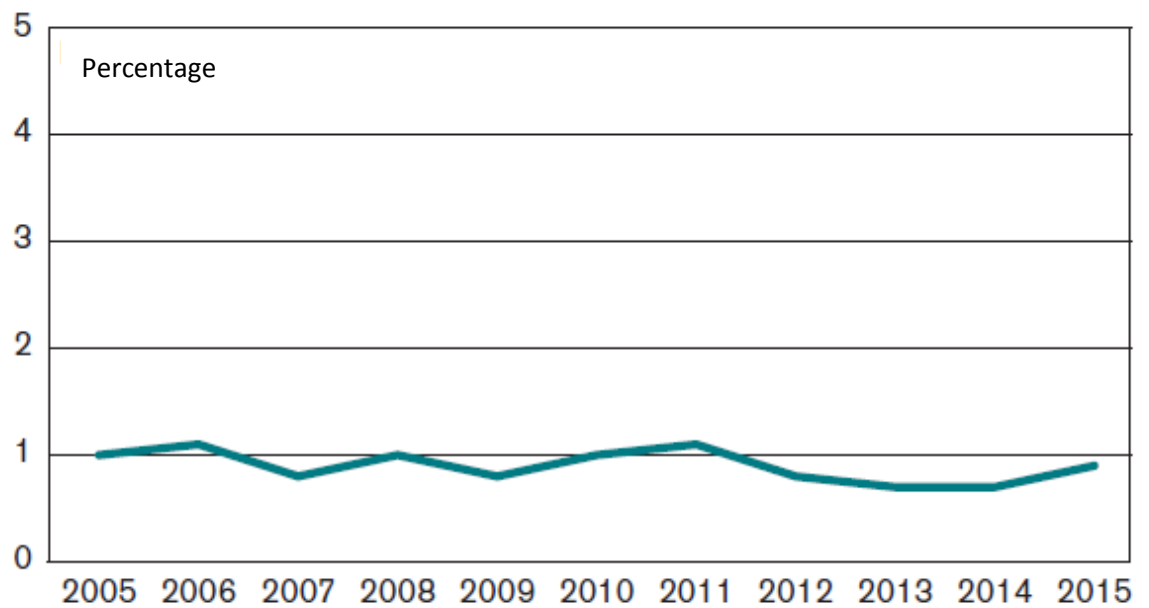
### **Bank robbery and armoured car robberies have declined**

in 2015, approximately 8,500 robberies were reported to the police. The total number of reported robberies has been relatively stable since 2000, with a certain reduction during the most recent two years. Robbery from the person is most common and constituted 71 per cent of the reports. There were approximately 800 shop robberies in 2015 (approximately 10 per cent of all reported robberies), which corresponds to the same level as 2000. In 2015, 23 bank robberies and 11 armoured car robberies were reported (approximately 0.5 per cent of all reported robberies). Armoured car robberies, like bank robberies, declined during the period, with the exception of a spike in 2008. The decline is primarily attributed to increased technical security and reduced cash handling. Targeted police efforts may have also been significant. Many of the individuals who commit robberies are young (maximum 24 years of age) and, among those who are convicted of robbery, the percentage who return to criminality is high when compared with many other offences.

### **Person-based clearance for slightly more than one in ten robberies**

The person-based clearance rate has, on average, hovered around 13 per cent during the most recent 15 years. There is a difference between different types of robberies and it is higher for bank or shop robberies than for robberies from the person. The sanctions differ depending on the age of the convicted person. Imprisonment is the predominant sanction for individuals 21 years of age and older, specifically 78 per cent of convictions with the main offence of robbery. For individuals between 15 and 20 years of age, the sanctions are more varied; youth care is most common (32 per cent), followed by probation (25 per cent), imprisonment (20 per cent), and juvenile community service (40 per cent).

Percentage of individuals 16-79 years of age exposed to robbery, 2005-2015.  
Source:NTU.



### Crime prevention measures and strategies

Preventing robbery requires measures on several levels. Among other things, situational and technical crime prevention may be significant, primarily for bank robberies and shop robberies. This may involve physically obstructing execution of the offence by limiting cash in shops, using closed cash systems, avoiding unaccompanied work and night work, installing surveillance cameras, installing good entrance lighting, and so forth. Community measures also appear to be important – not in the least in respect of robberies from the person committed by one youth against another youth.

## SEXUAL OFFENCES

Various data sources point in different directions in respect of sexual offence trends during recent years. Given their sensitive nature, sexual offences are particularly difficult to study – reasonable assumptions should be made with caution based on a weighting of data from various sources. After a longer period at a stable level, self-reported victimisation has been observed to have increased during the past three years. According to the NTU, it is estimated that 1.7 per cent of the population were victims of sexual offences in 2015, which corresponds to 129,000 victims. A previous increase in police reports has slackened – between 2014 and 2015 there was a reduction. Register data from the healthcare system shows no increase in the number of individuals who sought medical care as a result of sexual assaults. Other than a possible actual increase, primarily of less serious sexual offences, there are probably additional explanations. One partial explanation may be attention focused on sexual offence issues.

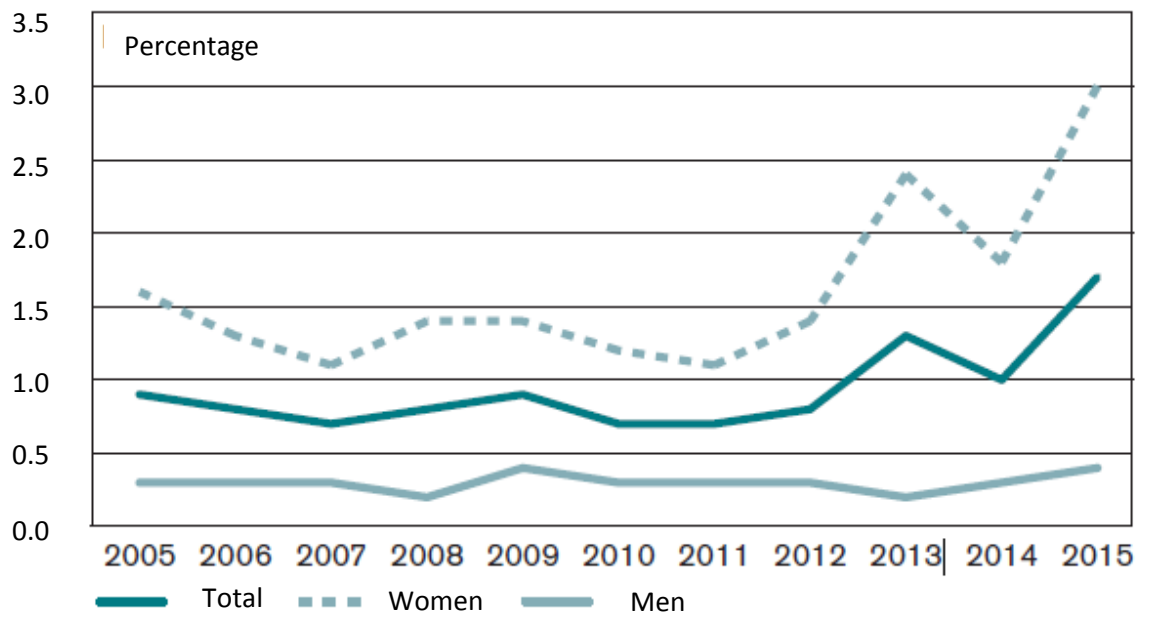
### **Young women are more exposed**

The percentage of victims is several times higher among women than among men – in the most recent measurement, 0.4 per cent of men and 3 per cent of women stated that they had been the victim of some type of sexual offence during 2015. Younger women are overrepresented among sexual offence victims, while perpetrators are predominantly younger men. Only 3 per cent of individuals suspected of sexual offences were women in 2015. In absolute figures, there has been a noticeable increase in reporting, suspects, person-based clearances, and convicted sexual offences since 2000. Most of these metrics have doubled in 15 years. In 2015, 22 per cent of all processed sexual offences led to convictions, a summary sanction order or a waiver of prosecution, and convictions were handed down in almost 2200 sexual offences.

### **The sanctions differ between various sexual offences**

Seen in total, perpetrators of sexual offences are most often sentenced to fines or prison but the sanctions vary depending on the offence – 88 per cent of the judgments for rape of an adult led to prison, while 98 per cent of the judgments for buying sexual services led to fines.

Percentage (%) exposed to sexual offences in total and broken down by gender.



### Crime prevention measures and strategies

Preventive measures involve changed societal norms (regarding increased awareness and better response to victims), support to potential perpetrators (support lines, information and treatment, for preventive purposes and to prevent recidivism) and support to victims (improve the care of sexual crime victims in the healthcare system and the criminal justice system).

## THREATS AND HARASSMENT

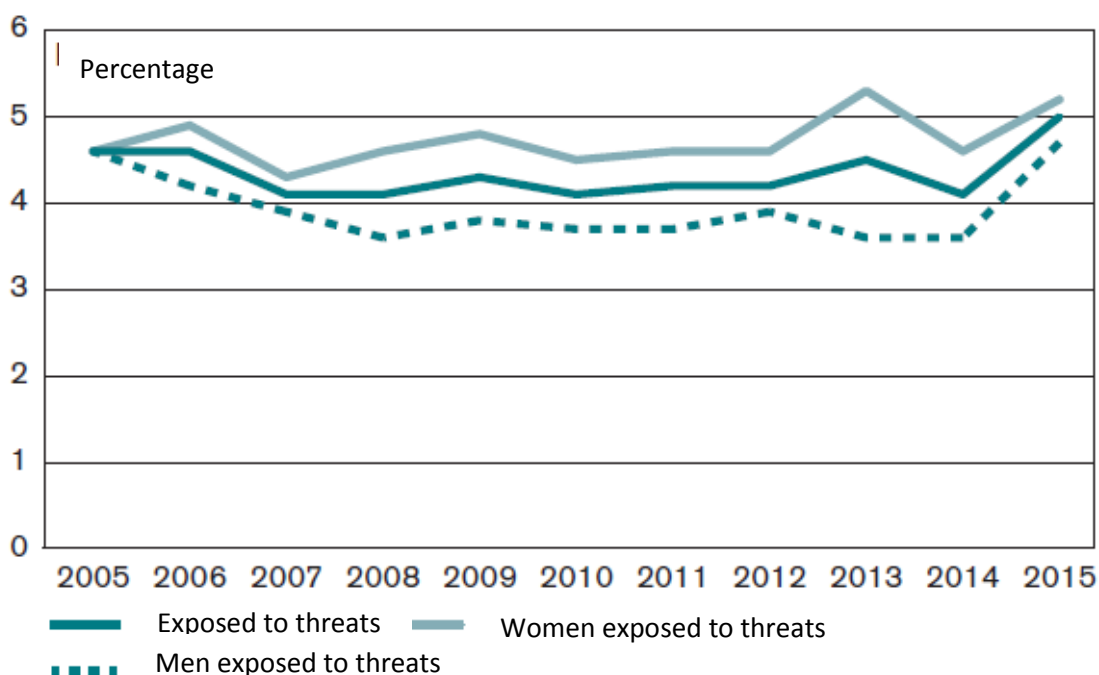
According to the NTU, threats and harassment are the types of offences against the person to which the greatest number of victims state they are exposed; 5 per cent for each type of offence in 2015. Women are more exposed than men, while most perpetrators are men. The NTU shows that younger persons are more exposed than older persons. Gender differences in respect of crime scene and relationship to the perpetrator also emerge. Women are more exposed in the home and by a closely-related person, while men are more often threatened by an unknown person and in a public place. In Brå's most recent SUB, 11 per cent of year-nine students stated they were exposed to threats and 13 per cent stated that they had been bullied.

### Low tendency to report threats and harassment

The tendency to report is low; approximately one-fifth of threats and incidents of harassment in 2015 were stated to have been reported to the police. Following a continuing increase since 2000, the number of police reports for threat and (non-sexual) molestation has stabilised in recent years. The number of reports of unlawful stalking has declined each year since the criminal provision was instituted in October of 2011.

The person-based clearance rate has declined since 2000. Fines are the most common sanction for convictions with unlawful threat or (non-sexual) molestation as the main offence. Prison is the most common sanction for unlawful stalking.

Exposed to threats, total and broken down by gender, 2005-2015





### **Crime prevention measures and strategies**

Threats and harassment can be prevented on numerous levels and in many different forms. In recent years, measures have been taken, among other things, to prevent threats and harassment of public employees and elected officials, and to prevent bullying in schools. Moreover, there has been a review of the criminal provisions involving threats and harassment via the Internet.

## FRAUD

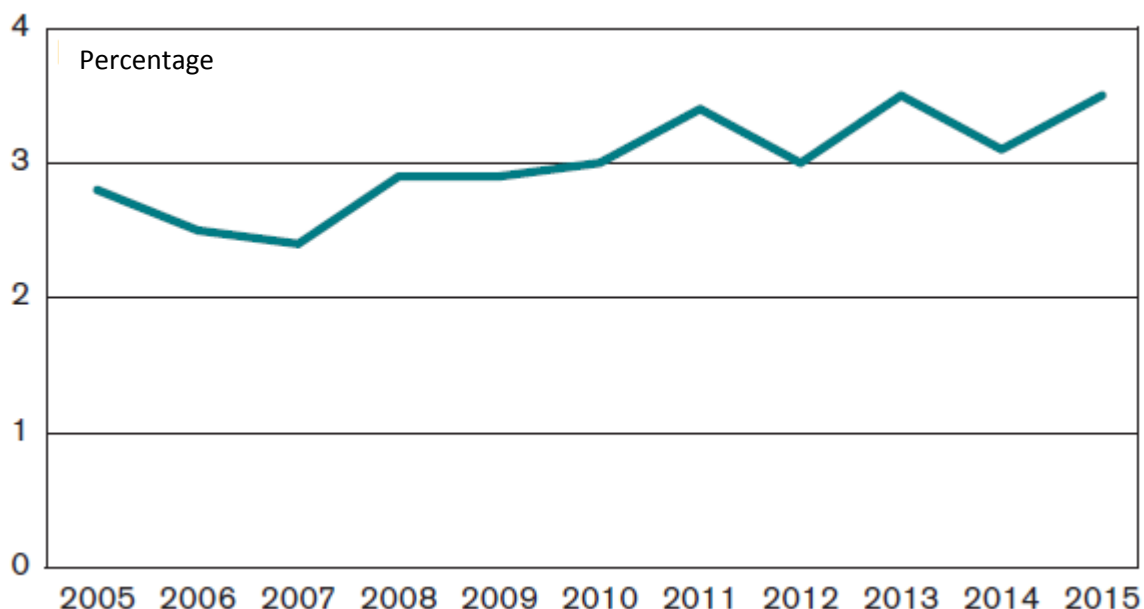
According to the NTU, there has been an increase in exposure to fraud during the most recent ten years. In 2015, 3.5 percent of the population were victims. The number of frauds reported to the police has more than tripled during the past ten years; in 2015, 174,000 frauds were reported. According to the NTU, more than four out of ten frauds occur via the Internet and the percentage is almost as great for fraud using bank account cards. The exposure is greater among men, younger adults, residents of multiple family dwellings, and residents of large cities. Younger men are overrepresented among the perpetrators as well; of 3,700 suspects in 2015, 35 were between 21 and 29 years of age, and only one-fourth were women.

### The criminal justice system requires large volumes of offences

The number of person-based clearances for fraud offences increased gradually since 2000 at the same time as the person-based clearance rate dropped – the latter is the result of insufficient investigatory resources. Brå's 2016 survey of criminality in respect of fraud shows that large volumes of offences place very high demands on the criminal justice system. Notwithstanding increased resources, there is a significant imbalance between the number of reported offences and the possibility to investigate and prosecute such offences.

Almost every second conviction for fraud results in probation or a conditional sentence. The next most frequently imposed sanction is prison, with an average sentence of 4-5 months for offences of the normal degree.

Development of percentage of persons exposed to fraud, 2005-2015 Source: NTU



### **Crime prevention measures and strategies**

The primary focus of efforts to reduce the damage from fraud offences must be on preventive work in order to reduce the influx of reports. One important development in the work against fraud offences during recent years is the launching of the police's National Fraud Centre (*NBC*), the purpose of which is to increase the effectiveness and structure of both police work and preventive measures in respect of fraud.

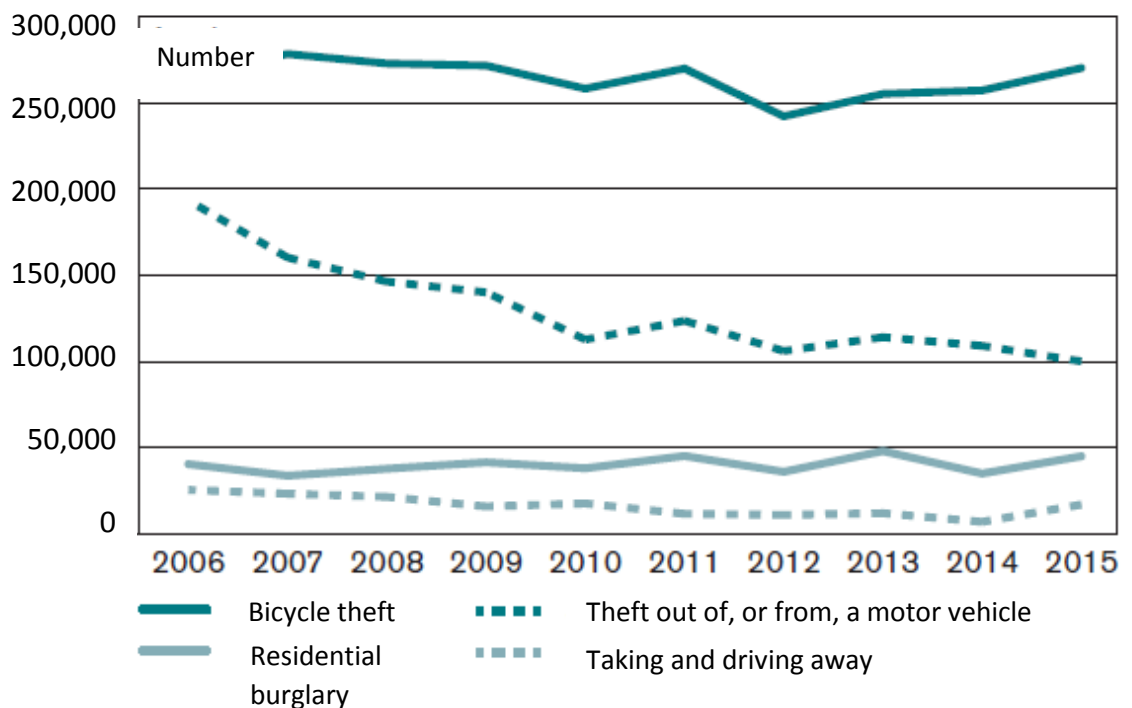
## THEFT OFFENCES

Statistics show that theft offences have declined in recent years. The decline began at the beginning of the 1990s but the level has stabilised over the past five years. The greatest decline in theft offences has been in theft of cars and theft from motor vehicles. The primary cause is believed to be a 1998 EU directive that all newly manufactured cars must have electronic theft protection. Cars have become more difficult to steal and break into as the car fleet has been replaced.

### Thefts have declined but burglary has increased

Residential burglaries have increased during recent years and are currently at the same level as during the 1990s. Despite the fact that a relatively small percentage of the population has been exposed to burglary, the NTU shows that almost every fifth respondent was somewhat, or very, worried about residential burglary. Exposure to both residential burglary and motor vehicle-related offences are relatively evenly distributed across society but certain groups are more exposed than others. Single parents, apartment residents, individuals in large cities and residents of socio-economically vulnerable areas are exposed more often.

Total number of households exposed to theft offences, 2006-2015. Source: NTU



### **Crime prevention measures and strategies**

The crime prevention work in terms of theft offences can be divided into different categories. In respect of individual perpetrators, where direct deterrence of, or interference with, theft are most interesting, this may involve neighbourhood watch, improved perimeter protection, work to prevent display of theft-prone goods, and alarms and locks. In a bigger picture, attention is paid to the causes of the criminality and perpetrators' motivation; in this respect community support of persons with substance abuse problems is important, as is the ability of the Prison and Probation Service and the Swedish National Board of Institutional Care to assist convicted persons in order to prevent recidivism.

## NARCOTICS OFFENCES

A narcotics offence is primarily a surveillance offence and thus the reported criminality is contingent on government agency prioritisation. Since, by definition, a narcotics offence is committed each time narcotics are used, there are millions of these offences annually but only a fraction reach the criminal justice system and crime statistics. Reported narcotics offences are thus primarily more a description of criminal justice system efforts than existing criminality.

Data regarding narcotics-related mortality, healthcare data, new rehab patients, and the fact that young people represent the primary increase in the percentage of both rehab patients and convicted individuals, indicate that a continued increase of problematic abuse may have taken place since 2000.

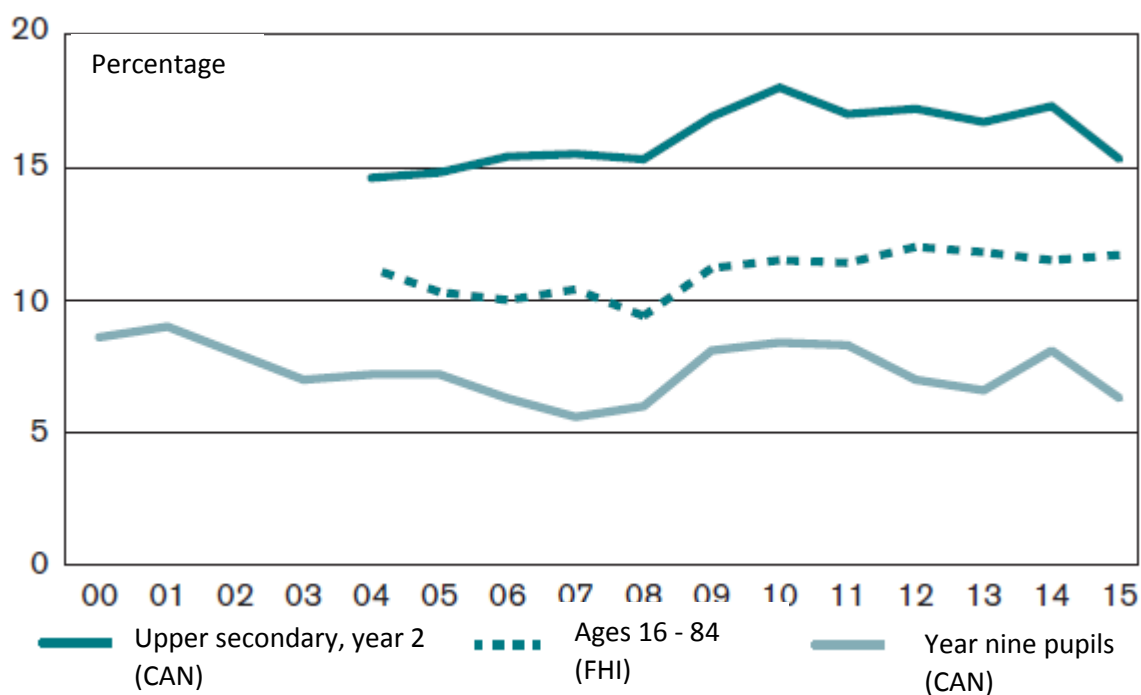
### **Number of reported narcotics offences has tripled**

The number of reported narcotics offences has increased substantially in recent years; between 2000 and 2015, the number of reported violations of the Narcotics Act tripled, primarily in respect of possession and use. The increases are entirely consistent with the increase in police resources for combating narcotics abuse. In 2015, own use accounted for 52 per cent of all reporting and possession accounted for 38 per cent. Cannabis is the most common drug in narcotics conviction statistics, and more than one in four reported narcotics offences takes place in the Stockholm police region. The typical person suspected of a narcotics offence is a man in early middle age, living in one of the three major metropolitan regions.

### **Fines are the most frequent sanction**

Fines are the most common sanction in the conviction decisions where a narcotics offence is the primary offence, specifically 63 per cent in 2015. The second most common sanction is waiver of prosecution at 21 per cent, while the sanction is imprisonment in 5 per cent of the cases. Many people who are convicted of narcotics offences relapse into crime.

Percentage of year nine pupils and year 2 upper secondary students who have stated that they have tried narcotics at some time, as well as the percentage of the population (16-84 years of age) who have used cannabis at some time. 2000-2015. Source: CAN and Public Health Agency of Sweden.



### Crime prevention activities and strategies

The overall goal of the alcohol, narcotics, doping, and tobacco policy (*ANDT policy*) has long been a narcotics-free and doping-free society, reduced alcohol-related health and social damage, and reduced tobacco usage. The ANDT strategy for 2016-2020 includes working towards national coordination and effective, knowledge-based work, being responsible for aggregated operational reporting, and management and continued development of the necessary follow-up systems.

## DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE

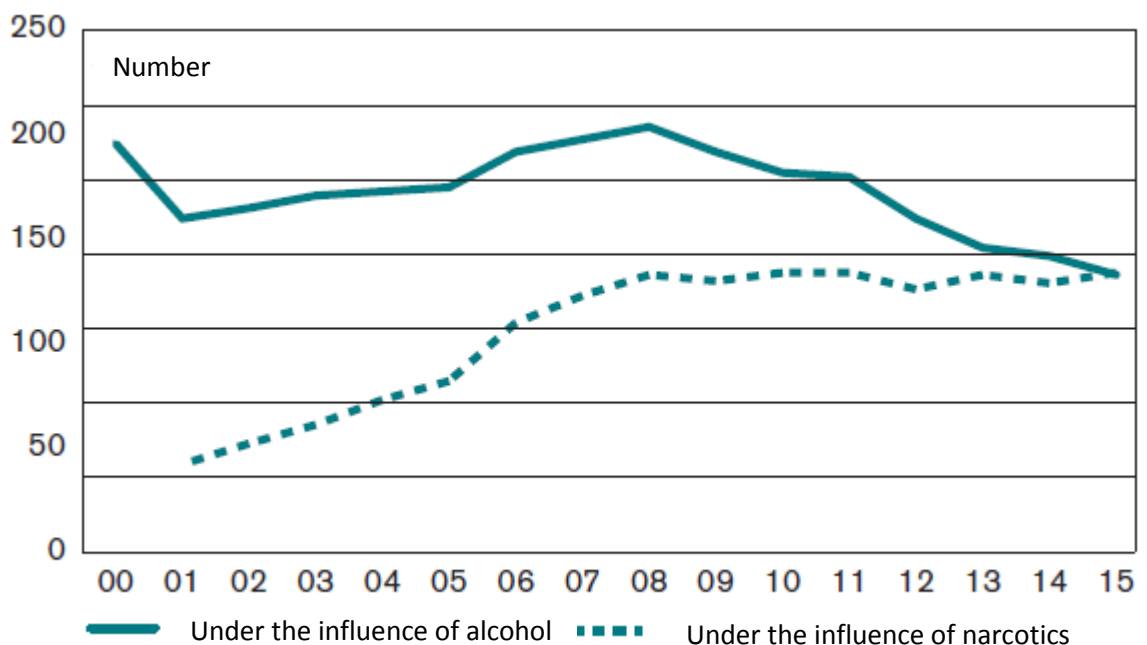
Several indicators show a reduction in driving under the influence of alcohol in the early 2000s. Among other things, total alcohol consumption declined during the period and measurements show that the percentage of sober driving has increased somewhat. From 2010 – 2015, the downward trend became less clear.

Trends in driving under the influence of narcotics are more difficult to assess since there is less research on the subject. The indicators which do exist point towards a relatively stable level. However, more studies are necessary in order to draw any conclusions with certainty.

### Nine out of ten suspects are men

Approximately nine out of ten persons suspected of driving under the influence are men. The age breakdown differs depending on whether one is driving under the influence of alcohol or under the influence of narcotics. The former reflects a more diverse age range while the latter has a smaller group of younger persons who are suspects. The most common sanction for offences of driving under the influence is fines, either through summary sanction order issued by a public prosecutor or imposed by a court. The most common sanction for aggravated driving under the influence is imprisonment, with 1.5 months as the average sentence.

Number of reported offences of driving under the influence per 100,000 residents, 2000-2015. Note that the time series for reported offences of driving under the influence of narcotics are reported as from 2001.





### **Crime prevention measures and strategies**

Crime prevention work is conducted through, among other things, Vision Zero – a long-term vision that no person will die or be seriously injured in road traffic. Prevention of driving under the influence is an important element of this since 29 per cent of the individuals who died in traffic accidents in 2015 did so as a result of alcohol-related or narcotics-related accidents. There are a number of different programmes for young people and to prevent recidivism in respect of driving under the influence. Ignition interlock devices have become more common as a condition for continued possession of a driving licence and by companies and organisations in order to ensure that their transports are carried by sober drivers. Police checks with a random breath tests are also believed to have a deterrent, and thus preventive, effect.

## A closer look

### FIREARMS-RELATED CRIMINALITY

Lethal violence involving the use of firearms has had both distinct increases and distinct decreases over the last 25 years. The current level is approximately the same as at the end of the 1990s. However, one clear difference is that, over time, men have been increasingly exposed while women's exposure has decreased. This is consistent with criminal conflicts becoming a more common underlying reason while, at the same time, violence against women in intimate relationships has decreased.

#### More people with gunshot wounds

Hospital data shows that the number of individuals who are treated at hospitals for gunshot wounds from attacks has increased during recent decades (28 individuals in 1997, 61 individuals in 2014). According to a Brå study regarding firearm discharge in police reports (regardless of whether it led to any injury), there were also more shootings in 2014 (365) than in 2006 (306). The results from the study also showed that there were more victims of gunshot wounds in 2014 (111) than in 2006 (75). A review conducted by the police shows that the number of shootings in Gothenburg, Malmö, and Stockholm did not increase during the period from 2011-2015.

In 2015, 2,500 persons were suspected of having committed weapons offences, of which 91 per cent were men and 9 per cent were women. The largest group of suspects (31 per cent) comprised individuals between 21 and 29 years of age.

#### International cooperation is important

Firearms-related criminality is generally difficult to investigate. Many investigations into aggravated weapons offences are commenced when a police or customs official encounters an illegal weapon. On three occasions, Sweden has instituted a short-term weapon amnesty which has generated a relatively large number of weapons. However, to a great extent, the weapons which were turned in were manufactured prior to the 1940s and are not the type of weapons which are usually used in conjunction with shootings in the criminal environment.

## YOUTH CRIMINALITY IN SWEDEN

Studies, including the SUB, have shown that criminality among young people declined between the 1990s and the 2000s. This is primarily attributable to the fact that increasingly fewer young people commit theft-related offences. Participation in serious violence has also declined among young people. The NTU also shows that exposure among people 16-19 years of age declined during the period from 2005-2015. The decline primarily relates to exposure to assault.

### **The number of convictions for narcotics offences has increased**

While the levels for the number of individuals 15-20 years of age who are suspected of participation in vandalism and violent offences remains the same, there has been an increase in respect of narcotics offences. One can also see an increase, since 1995, in narcotics offences among convicted persons 18-20 years of age as well as an increase, since the middle of the 2000s, among convicted persons 15-17 years of age. The number of convictions for property offences has, however, been reduced by more than one-half since 1995 in relation to the size of the youth population. The total level of convictions among youth 18-20 years of age was at a relatively stable level from 2000-2012, and thereafter declined somewhat.

### **Youth care and juvenile community service are equally common**

Among individuals 15-17 years of age who are convicted by courts, the sanction of youth care has increased gradually since the youth sanctions reform in 2007, while juvenile community service (which was introduced as a separate sanction) has declined. Both of these are now equally common and also comprise the most common sanctions upon conviction. Fines and waivers of prosecution remain unchanged since 2007. Among 18-20 year-olds since 2007, the changes have, instead, been more fines and fewer sanctions in respect of probation and conditional sentences. The latter sanctions are still, however, the predominant sanctions upon conviction for that age bracket.

## CRIMINALITY AND INSECURITY IN CITIES AND RURAL AREAS

There are 290 municipalities in Sweden. Brå has used a breakdown whereby 47 of these municipalities are defined as major metropolitan municipalities, 88 as larger cities, and 101 as smaller cities. There are 54 rural municipalities in the country. Exposure to a number of types of offences differs between these different groups of municipalities, as does the sense of insecurity and anxiety about exposure to crime. Exposure, regardless of the type of offence studied, is greatest in major and larger cities, and lowest in rural areas. The difference in exposure is greatest for robbery of the person, and lowest for car theft.

### **The difference between cities and rural areas has declined**

In terms of the offences of assault, robbery, and car theft, it is clear that the past ten years have seen a decline in differences between, on the one hand, major metropolitan areas and larger cities and, on the other hand, rural areas. The decline is primarily attributable to reduced exposure in the cities, which thus approach the lower levels of rural areas. Exposure to sexual offences has, instead, increased, most clearly in the major metropolitan areas. Exposure to fraud is also greatest in the major metropolitan areas but has increased most in rural areas. Exposure to residential burglaries is lowest in rural areas. The analysis also shows that insecurity and anxiety about becoming the victim of crime is greatest in major metropolitan areas and larger cities and lowest in rural areas. However, the gap has narrowed over time and is currently less than at the beginning of the 2000s.

### **More municipalities now think in terms of crime prevention**

Like criminality and insecurity, local crime prevention work differs depending on the residential municipality, size, location, and culture. Between 80 and 90 per cent of Sweden's municipalities currently have some form of strategic organisation to address crime prevention issues. In 2004, the corresponding figure was 67 per cent. These are often called local crime prevention councils (Sw. *lokala brottsförebyggande råd*), but may also be called safety boards (Sw. *trygghetsråd*) or public health boards (Sw. *folkhälsoråd*). The focus on these boards varies but they traditionally address young people, particularly young people who are at risk of getting caught in a criminal lifestyle. In many cases, the crime prevention work is coordinated with anti-alcohol, anti-narcotics, anti-doping, and anti-tobacco work, pursuant to the national ANDT strategy.

## FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crimes refers, as a rule, to offences committed within the scope of a legal activity – namely, a business. There are also a great number of regulations that a business owner can violate, not in the least in order to reduce the costs, including taxes and fees, involved in doing business.

### **The company as a tool of criminality**

The Swedish Tax Agency states that there has been a decline in unreported taxes (including, among other things, as a result of criminality). At the same time, the trend indicates more cunning tax criminality. One explanation is the move towards increased orderliness with a greater emphasis on statements of earnings and deductions and better monitoring systems. Simultaneously, there is a parallel development with elements of more sophisticated criminality – one which pushes the boundary between financial crime (as just stated, offences committed within the scope of a legal activity) and organised crime (in which the activity itself is illegal). One societal reason for this is that over the past 20 years, various regulatory frameworks have made companies into a springboard for criminality.

This entails both smuggling and large-scale unreported employment. In more sophisticated circles, one sees advanced accounting bordering on aggravated fraud and aggravated accounting offences. A large percentage of financial crimes involve misleading activities – VAT money is refunded under false pretences, the accounting is misleading, tax returns are incorrect, erroneous information is disseminated – and this development is accentuated when companies are misused and the rules are exploited.

### **Coordination within the criminal justice system is increasingly important**

The tendency for cooperation between financial criminals and individuals who are based in organised crime or who have later taken a step towards organised crime (which has a relatively low risk, low sanctions, and high profit) has existed since the 1970s.

Nevertheless, the challenge entailed in financial crime lies in the increasingly vague boundary between financial crime and other criminality. The cooperation between organised crime and financial crime in terms of network structure challenges the criminal justice system's ability to identify and combat criminal activity on a broad front. When criminality becomes more complex, when companies are used and the rules are misused, the perpetrators' need for assistance from inside of public agencies and operations increases. This lays the ground for corruption and other forms of impermissible influence in order to recruit insiders.

So what are the countermeasures? There is much to indicate that the crime prevention perspective and greater coordination will gain increased importance

in conjunction with financial crime. A preventive effect can be attained if the public agencies consolidate their strength against a specific industry or a specific type of activity. An additional measure is to crime-proof rules and systems. This refers not only to legislation (although this, too, should be worded in order to impede financial crime). Such a development also aims at company self-governance and the introduction of self-authorisation systems for members of industry organisations.

*Crime trends in Sweden until 2015* describes trends in respect of a number of main types of offences including, among others, lethal violence, assault, and sexual offences.

The sources are, firstly, the Swedish Crime Survey (*NTU*), which reports exposure to crime among the population, followed by crime statistics, which report the offences which come to the attention of the criminal justice system. Other relevant sources are also used to shed light on crime trends.

Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå)  
ADDRESS Box 1386, 111 93 Stockholm  
TELEPHONE +46 8-527 58 400  
E-MAIL [info@bra.se](mailto:info@bra.se)  
[www.bra.se](http://www.bra.se)  
URN: NBN: SE: BRA-703

