

Police and judicial administrative data



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Developing knowledge on VAW by collecting police and justice data on crime (Sweden)

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The overall objective of Swedish gender equality policy is that women and men are to have the same power to shape society and their own lives. One of the 4 sub-goals is that men's violence against women must stop. Counteracting men's violence against women is today a question of the highest priority in gender equality policy.

In this context the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brottsförebyggande rådet BRÅ) plays an important role by producing Sweden's official crime statistics. The council is an agency under the Ministry of Justice and a centre for research and development within the judicial system. The council primarily works to reduce crime and improve levels of safety in society by producing data and disseminating knowledge on crime and crime prevention work. The council has been in existence since 1974. Data include all events reported and registered with the Swedish Police, the Swedish Prosecution Authority, Swedish Customs and the Swedish Economic Crimes Authority.

Data concerning rape, sexual coercion, sexual abuse, etc., sexual molestation, gross violation of woman's integrity /gross violation of integrity (the gender neutral version) and unlawful persecution (stalking) can be found on the council's home page. Official crime statistics are based on 2 different classifications on registering offences. Reported offences, processed offences and suspected individuals are based on crime codes, while persons found guilty and recidivism are based on law section references.

Additional information is available for some data based on crime codes, for example the sex and age of the victim. Data based on references to the penal code include information of the sex of the perpetrator, but no information of the victim, if it is not evident from the wording of the law section references. In both cases it is usually possible to follow the development on the national level over several years, but also sometimes to compare counties and municipalities.

The results are a basis for decision makers within the judicial system, the parliament and the government. Development work will lead to an integrated data system where each case and each individual will be searchable with the same ID-number and be followed through the chain of justice.

Swedish gender equality policy

New gender equality goals were decided by the Swedish parliament in 2006 and they are still the same today. The overall objective of gender equality policy is that women and men are to have the same power to shape society and their own lives. One of the 4 sub-goals is that men's violence against women must stop. Women and men, girls and boys, must have the same right and access to physical integrity. The rest of the goals concern equal division of power and influence, economic equality, and equal distribution of unpaid housework and provision of care. The wording shows that the government's intention is to describe and make clear that the basic analysis is that men's violence against women is both a manifestation of the power relation between women and men and a means to uphold it.

During the term of office 2007 – 2010 men’s violence against women became the area within gender equality policy that was the most prioritised, both to resources and to assignments. An Action plan for combating men’s violence against women, violence and oppression in the name of honour and violence in same-sex relationships was presented in 2007. The government’s higher level of ambition was summed up in the form of 56 assignments aimed at 13 public authorities. All in all, slightly more than 1 billion SEK (€0.1 billion) was allocated in order to realise the measures in the action plan 2007 – 2010.

In the government’s communication “The aim of gender equality policy 2011 – 2014”, violence and other assaults against women are seen as the most acute problems for gender equality policy and to counteract men’s violence against women is a question of highest priority in gender equality policy. During the term of office 2011 –2014 assignments were given to 15 public authorities. The allocated resources declined somewhat to around SEK 220 million (€22.4 million) per year, compared to around SEK 250 million (€25.5 million) per year during 2007 – 2010.

New national strategy to end men’s violence against women

In 2014, the government appointed a special investigator to propose a new national strategy to end men’s violence against women. The result was presented in 2015.

The Swedish policy in this area is in line with the EU strategy for equality between women and men, which includes the implementation of the Stockholm Programme and puts emphasis on the protection of victims of crime, including female victims of violence and genital mutilation, and announces a comprehensive EU strategy on gender-based violence.

The Minister for Gender Equality is responsible for coordinating the policies. Gender mainstreaming is the government’s principal strategy for gender equality work, however, as far as men’s violence against women is concerned special active measures are prevalent.

The development of indicators to follow up gender equality policies

In 2010, the government gave Statistics Sweden the task to develop indicators in order to follow up gender equality policies. The indicators were presented on Statistics Sweden's website in January 2012. Of a total of 88 indicators, 14 are related to men's violence against women. The following 7 indicators are to be followed up yearly:

- persons 16 – 79 years exposed to assault according to place
- persons 16 – 79 years exposed to assault according to relation to the perpetrator
- persons 16 – 79 years exposed to sexual offences according to age
- reported number of assaults
- reported number of gross violations of a woman's integrity
- reported number of rapes
- number of persons with legal proceedings taken against them.

The 3 first mentioned are from the Swedish Crime Survey (Nationella trygghetsundersökningen NTU), which is carried out yearly by the National Council for Crime Prevention.

The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention

The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention produces Sweden's official crime statistics. - Data include all events reported and registered with the Swedish Police, the Swedish Prosecution Authority, Swedish Customs, and the Swedish Economic Crimes Authority. Data concerning rape, sexual coercion, sexual abuse, etc., sexual molestation, gross violation of woman's integrity /gross violation of integrity (the gender neutral version) and unlawful persecution (stalking) can be found on the council's home page.

Data can be found concerning:

- reported offences
- processed offences
- number of persons suspected of offences
- number of persons found guilty, sorted by type of conviction
- persons monitored by the Prison and Probation Services' noncustodial organisation
- persons admitted into detention centres.

Data regarding recidivism describe the number of persons who relapse into a new convicted offence within 1, 2, and 3 years after an initial event.

Statistics regarding reported cases of rape, sexual coercion, sexual abuse, sexual molestation, gross violation of (women's) integrity and unlawful persecution are mostly available from 1975 until today for the whole country and for the counties. However, it should be pointed out that changes in, and introduction of new legislation influences the availability of data. When data are based on crime codes, additional information is available for some crime codes concerning the sex and the age of the victim, whether the crime took place indoors or outdoors etc. ([1]). The statistics show the total number of reported offences; in other words, it also includes events which after investigation were not found to constitute an offence, as well as situations in which an offence could not be proved.

Statistics regarding reported offences of lethal violence (including femicide) are misleading since they show all reported incidents with a lethal outcome where there was initially reason to investigate whether lethal violence may have been used. There is therefore a special study of lethal violence that only includes reported cases of lethal violence where lethal violence is highly likely to be the cause of death.

Data on the number of processed offences of lethal violence (femicide), rape, sexual coercion, sexual abuse, sexual molestation, gross violation of (women's) integrity and unlawful persecution are available. These data are sex disaggregated for the victims. Data on the number of persons suspected of offences are sex disaggregated for both the victims and the offenders in relation to the above mentioned offences. Data on number of persons found guilty of offences and sentenced to imprisonment and admitted to prison are sex disaggregated as far as the offenders are concerned, but not the victims. Data on the offenders where legal proceedings were taken are also often disaggregated according to age and in some cases according to other variables. Data are usually presented for several years, and to varying degrees per quarter or months and for the whole country and to different degrees for the counties and the municipalities.

A common system: the judicial system's information support

Statistical production is one of the main tasks of the council and the data are the main source and reference when it comes to crime statistics. The data are generally considered being of high quality. The council works closely with the delivering authorities to ensure this, and they collect and compile almost all data registered in their databases. The authorities they work with are generally centralised at a national level, facilitating coordination and an effective high-quality data collection. The council also conforms and adapts to international regulations and standards. Development work is taking place continuously. Each year instructions and rules are overhauled and the results published.

On the basis of the data the council also evaluates reforms, conducts research to develop new knowledge and provide support to local crime prevention work. For example, the council presents short analyses in order to describe volume and flow of crime through the judicial system. This means, among other things, cross-section descriptions of the number of reported offences, the number suspected, found guilty and sentenced to imprisonment.

A major development project is going on with the aim of coordinating the involved authorities' data collection processes. The idea is that it should be possible to follow a matter electronically through the judicial system. This is an extensive project called The judicial system's information support (Rättsväsendets informationsförsörjning RIF). Information about crime, suspicion and on the relevant persons will be structured and handled in a uniform way by 11 authorities. The aim is a common system where each case and each individual is given a separate ID – the same throughout the whole chain of justice – which would make it possible to follow a case or an individual (victim or offender) more closely. This will also mean less administrative work.

The National Council for Crime Prevention is also responsible for the Swedish Crime Survey, an annual survey regarding exposure to crime, fear of crime and confidence in the justice system.

Evaluation of Action plan for combating men's violence against women, violence and oppression in the name of honour and violence in same-sex relationships

The National Council for Crime Prevention was given the task by the government to evaluate how the Action plan for combating men's violence against women, violence and oppression in the name of honour and violence in same-sex relationships was implemented. The council's report was presented in December 2010. It showed that the plan had substantially increased awareness and knowledge about men's violence against women among professionals in many different areas. It also showed that the actual support for women who are victims of violence has improved, even if it still needed to be developed. The improved support had made more women motivated to report to the police when they were exposed to violence, but the report also indicated that the measures taken had not yet had any visible effects on the total number of women exposed to violence by men. Another problem with interpreting the effectiveness of the measures against violence towards women was that there was no information at all about how many women were exposed again once they had reported an incident to the police.

Swedish legislation has gone through major changes in recent years in order to strengthen the protection of women exposed to violence. Legislation concerning sexual offences has for example been extended and more acts are now included in rape crime. Legislation has also become gender neutral. In general, legislation, instructions etc. are good enough in order to make visible, prevent and take actions against men's violence against women. The main problems are rather the application of legislation, priorities and resources, ignorance, inability or lack of leadership in the work of the authorities. More knowledge, research and data are also available, even though data need to be extended and elaborated.

Crime statistics only reflect what has been reported to the police.

In this context it is also relevant to point out that during the last decade or so children's exposure to men's violence against women is recognised in a new way as is children who have witnessed violence. Earlier studies have focused on violence against women by a man with whom she has or has had an intimate relationship. This has been, and to certain extent also is, the usual picture of violence in intimate relationships. However, during later years it has become more common that the concept refers to several different types of relationships, among them violence against men by women. This is partly a result of research, which shows that both women and men are exposed to violence in intimate relationships, but the types of violence are different.

One major problem with crime statistics on men's violence against women is that data only reflect what has been reported to the police. Official crime statistics must, therefore, be combined with other types of knowledge and research, such as the findings of victim surveys. Comparing administrative data with survey data from the National Survey on Crime and Safety indicates that only a small percentage of those who are exposed to violence in an intimate relationship report the incidence or incidents.

Crime statistics do not provide a simple reflection of the level of crime. They are influenced by both legal and statistical factors, and by the extent to which crime is reported and registered. Reported sexual offences have increased more or less continuously since the second half of the 1970s.

As a matter of fact, while during the period 2005-2012 the National Survey on Crime and Safety showed a stable level of those exposed to sexual offences the number of cases reported in administrative data not always used for statistics showed an increase of almost 30 per cent. It is not likely that the development of reported sexual offences reflects an actual increase in sexual offences; a large part of the increase can be interpreted as a growing tendency to report sexual offences.

[1] Crime codes are based on a classification system of 4-digit codes used by the police and prosecutors to register offences. The classification reflects offences in the penal code and other special penal legislation.

Contacts/Further Information

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Further information

Data are available on the council's home page. Microdata for research can be provided.



More on good practices

Administrative data collection on violence against women: Good practices (publication)



EIGE's collection of good practices



EIGE's approach to good practices



Downloads



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EN (PDF, 1.09 MB)

Metadata

TOOL: Administrative dataset, Awareness-raising, Monitoring