

**NON.
NO.
NEIN.**

Say No!
Stop
violence
against
women

Violence against women is rooted in women's unequal status in society, and that status reflects the unbalanced distribution of social, political, and economic power among women and men in society. It is one of the most pervasive human rights violations of our time and a form of discrimination that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women (1). Violence against women undermines women's dignity and integrity and imposes serious harms on families, communities and societies. In the EU, estimates suggest that 1 in 3 women (or 61 million out of 185 million) have experienced physical or sexual violence, or both, since the age of 15 (2).

The full extent of violence against women is difficult to estimate, as it continues to be under-reported and stigmatised, meaning that what actually gets reported is only a fraction of the reality. In Sweden, 84 % of the population tend to trust the police (3).

In EIGE's Gender Equality Index 2015 it was found that where people tend to have more trust in justice institutions, levels of disclosed violence are higher (4). It is estimated that in Sweden, 46 % of women have experienced violence, which is 13 % higher than in the EU overall (5).

The European Institute for Gender Equality has estimated that the cost of intimate partner violence against women in Sweden could amount to EUR 2 billion per year. This figure was calculated according to the methodology used in EIGE's 2014 study (6), which Member States can replicate, as done by Estonia in 2016 (7).



What are the facts?

In 2014, a national prevalence study on violence in Sweden found that:

- 20 % of women and 5 % of men have, at some time during their life, been subjected to severe sexual violence.
- One in ten women and one in a hundred men reported experiencing severe sexual violence since the age of 18.
- 14 % of women and 5 % of men have been subjected to violence or threats of violence by a current or former partner since the age of 18.
- 20 % of women and 8 % of men have lived with exposure to repeated and systematic psychological violence exerted by a current or former partner⁽⁸⁾.

In addition to the prevalence study, a national survey (commissioned by the government and conducted by Brå, the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention) regarding offences in intimate relationships is conducted on an annual basis, within the framework of the Swedish Crime Survey (NTU)⁽⁹⁾.

The 2014 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights survey data results showed that since the age of 15:

- 46 % of women in Sweden have experienced physical and/or sexual violence.
- 33 % of women in Sweden have been stalked.
- 81 % of women in Sweden have experienced sexual harassment⁽¹⁰⁾.

According to the 2015 Swedish Crime Survey:

- 1.8 % of women and 0.3 % of men state that they were exposed to sex crimes in the previous year; experience of sexual offences is significantly more common for women than men and most common in the 16—19 and 20—24 age brackets.
- 64 % of women who experienced a violent assault were 'acquainted with' or closely related to the perpetrator⁽¹¹⁾.

According to Eurostat, from 2010 to 2012, an estimated 1.1 per 100 000 people in Sweden were registered as victims of human trafficking⁽¹²⁾.

When trust in police is low, victims are less likely to report violence.



Is violence against women a crime in Sweden?

Swedish legislation on violence against women is integrated into the penal code⁽¹³⁾. Additional legal provisions target particularly the protection of, and support to, victims of violence⁽¹⁴⁾.

Legislation in Sweden generally does not differentiate domestic violence from violence in other societal domains, or between crimes by the sex of the perpetrator or the victim. The gender-based crime 'gross violation of a woman's integrity' is an exception, as it also exists in the gender neutral form, 'gross violation of integrity'. The offence 'gross violation of a woman's integrity' came into force in 1998⁽¹⁵⁾ and covers repeated criminal acts directed by men against women with whom they have, or have had, a close relationship. The provision is intended to increase the penal value of offences, which together constitute a serious violation of a woman's integrity. This is often the case regarding domestic violence. Alongside this specific provision, crimes such as assault, murder and sexual crimes, including rape, may of course also apply.

All forms of female genital mutilation (FGM) are prohibited in Sweden. A special act prohibiting FGM was passed in 1982 and over the years has gradually become stricter⁽¹⁶⁾.

A new penal provision, 'unlawful persecution', came into force in October 2011; the provision covers persecution that consists of repeated, less serious criminal acts that violate the victim's integrity. The purpose of this legal reform was to strengthen protection against harassment and persecution, and to increase the level of penalties for crimes of this kind.

What is being done to eliminate violence against women in Sweden?

In 2011, the Swedish government announced three action plans for gender equality (2011—2015)⁽¹⁷⁾. The 'action plan for combating men's violence against women, violence and oppression in the name of honour, and violence in same-sex relationships'⁽¹⁸⁾ was adopted in 2007 and focused particularly on women with mental and physical disabilities, substance abuse or addiction problems, women from ethnic minorities and older and younger women.

Good practices show the way

Sweden is one of the few countries where national helplines for women meet the Council of Europe standards⁽¹⁹⁾. The state-run helpline service, Kvinnofridslinjen, also runs a website. The website primarily supports women survivors of violence and their families but also assists professionals working in the field.

In addition to the two national women's helplines, most of the crisis centres and women's shelters in Sweden run helplines and online chats that women all over Sweden can access. In total, more than 100 helplines are run by crisis centres and women's shelters⁽²⁰⁾.

The 'action plan against prostitution and human trafficking for sexual purposes' was adopted in 2008 and included 36 measures ⁽²¹⁾.

The 'action plan on forced marriage' was adopted in 2009 ⁽²²⁾.

Sweden signed the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) on 11 May 2011 and ratified it on 1 July 2014 ⁽²³⁾. The Istanbul Convention is the most far-reaching international treaty to tackle this serious violation of human rights.

A new 10-year national strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women will take effect from 2017 ⁽²⁴⁾. The overarching objective is that men's violence against women must come to an end and is broken down into four guiding targets: more and effective preventive work against violence; improved detection and stronger protection of women and children being victims of crime; more effective law enforcement; and improved knowledge and working methods. The strategy's main focus, departing from an intersectional perspective, is on the perpetrator rather than the victim, on girls' and young women's exposure to crime and on improved cooperation and knowledge-based working methods. Within the framework of the strategy a detailed four-year action programme will be launched, with a broad number of actions to be undertaken by responsible authorities.

How are women and girls protected?

Women experiencing domestic or sexual violence in Sweden do not have access to emergency barring orders, but non-contact (restraining) orders are available that do not have to be tied to a criminal prosecution ⁽²⁵⁾. In October 2011, amendments to the Non-Contact Order Act came into force, aimed at improving the situation for people who in various ways are at risk of being subjected, or have been subjected, to violence, threats or harassment, often repeatedly (stalking). The act introduces inter alia electronic surveillance to ensure compliance with certain non-contact orders. Under the act, four types of protection orders are covered: a restraining order, an extended restraining order, a specially extended restraining order, and a domestic exclusion order ⁽²⁶⁾.

Civil protection orders are provided in the Marriage Code ⁽²⁷⁾ and the Cohabitants Act ⁽²⁸⁾, which means that they are only available in cases of divorce or separation ⁽²⁹⁾.



Kvinnofridslinjen is a national women's helpline (020 50 50 50) that is available 24/7, is free to call and offers help in multiple languages. Women can also access help via text or online (www.kvinnofridslinjen.se).

Terrafem is a helpline (020 52 1010) that specialises in serving migrant women, providing help in 43 languages. It is free to call and is open from 08:00 to 17:00 ⁽³³⁾.



What help is available in Sweden?

For women and children experiencing domestic violence, Sweden has 161 shelters with 631 beds ⁽³⁰⁾.

Sweden has two national helplines and women victims of any kind of violence can also get help via texts and online (www.kvinnofridslinjen.se) ⁽³¹⁾.

For women who have experienced sexual violence, there are at least eight women's centres providing specialist support ⁽³²⁾.


Endnotes

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- (¹⁵) <https://sweden.se/society/gender-equality-in-sweden>
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European Institute for Gender Equality

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is the EU knowledge centre on gender equality. EIGE supports policymakers and all relevant institutions in their efforts to make equality between women and men a reality for all Europeans by providing them with specific expertise and comparable and reliable data on gender equality in Europe.

Contact details

<http://eige.europa.eu> 

<http://www.twitter.com/eurogender> 

<http://www.facebook.com/eige.europa.eu> 

<http://www.youtube.com/eurogender> 

<http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu> 



European Institute for Gender Equality, EIGE
Gedimino pr. 16 LT-01103
Vilnius, LITHUANIA
Tel. +370 52157444
Email: eige.sec@eige.europa.eu



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