

English summary of Brå report No 2008:3

The Swedish Crime Survey 2007

Victimization, fear of crime and public confidence
in the criminal justice system

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Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention

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The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå) – centre for knowledge about crime and crime prevention measures.

The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå) works to reduce crime and improve levels of safety in society by producing data and disseminating knowledge on crime and crime prevention work.

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Foreword

Crime and the fear of crime are social issues that are attracting an increasing amount of attention, and the demands being made on society's capacity to prevent these problems are increasing. There is also a growing need to monitor and analyze crime and the fear of crime.

In 2005, the Swedish Government commissioned the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå) and other criminal justice agencies to plan and implement an annual survey of exposure to crime and levels of public safety (the Swedish Crime Survey) in Sweden. The first wave of data collection took place in 2006 and the principal findings were presented in a report in 2007. This publication is a summary of the second report of principal findings, based on the second wave of data collection which was conducted in 2007.

The Swedish Crime Survey covers a very broad range of issues, and this report presents the overall results relating to victimization, fear of crime and public confidence in the criminal justice system. The report contains few detailed analyses or explanations of the findings presented. Research of this kind based on the survey is instead presented separately in the form of special studies. Several such studies are underway or are being planned, including for example work focusing on reporting propensities and the significance of segregation for public perceptions of safety.

This year's report includes for the first time results relating to crime victims' contacts with the justice system, levels of confidence in the justice system among people who have been exposed to various types of crime, and region by region presentations of the survey's central findings.

Knowledge of victimization, fear of crime and public confidence provides an important basis for developing and improving the criminal justice system and other agencies, and may help to reduce crime and increase perceptions of safety.

The principal authors of the report and the english summary are Annika Töyrä and Jennie Wigerholt, both research analysts/statisticians working at Brå. The chapter presenting comparisons of different Swedish municipalities has been written by Katarina Eriksson, a research analyst at Brå. Professor Hanns von Hofer of the Department of Criminology at Stockholm University and Assistant Professor Maria Oskarson, of the Department of Political Science at Göteborg University, have reviewed the report and provided valuable feedback.

Finally, we would like to thank the 15,000 or so people who took part in the second wave of the Swedish Crime Survey, thereby making studies of this kind and reports such as this one possible.

Stockholm, February 2008

Jan Andersson
Director-General

Gabriella Bremberg
Head of Division

Introduction

Crime and the fear of crime constitute social issues that are attracting an increasing amount of attention, and the demands being made on society's capacity to prevent these problems are increasing. Exposure to crime, the fear of crime and public confidence in the criminal justice system all thus constitute a natural focus for crime policy. Reducing levels of victimization and of the fear of crime constitute important objectives for government initiatives. In this context, it is important to develop a more detailed knowledge of the groups that are most commonly exposed to different types of offences, the groups that are most negatively affected by the fear of crime, and the groups that profess the lowest levels of confidence in the criminal justice system. This knowledge provides opportunities for society and politicians in general, and for the agencies of the criminal justice system in particular, to implement crime prevention measures where they are most needed.

In 2005, the Swedish Government commissioned the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå) and other agencies of the criminal justice system to plan and implement an annual survey of levels of exposure to crime and public safety. The survey, known as the Swedish Crime Survey, is based on telephone interviews conducted with a large random sample of the population (aged 16–79). This summary presents the central findings relating to levels of exposure to crime, fear of crime and public confidence in the criminal justice system from the second (2007) wave of the survey. Almost 80 percent of the 20,000 individuals aged between 16–79 years who were included in the 2007 survey sample completed the interview (for the most part by telephone).

In the long term, the Swedish Crime Survey will reflect the progress of the overall crime policy goals of reducing crime and improving perceptions of public safety. Even at this early stage, however, the findings can provide answers to a number of concrete questions, such as:

- What proportion of the population is exposed to crime over the course of a year? What differences exist between different groups in the population?
- What types of victimization are least often reported to the police?
- How do crime victims who have reported their victimization to the police perceive their contacts with the justice system?
- Which population groups are most affected in their everyday lives as a result of concerns about crime?
- Is the level of confidence in the agencies of the criminal justice system similarly high across different social groups?
- Are there regional differences in exposure to crime, fear of crime and levels of confidence in the justice system?

Background to the Swedish Crime Survey

National crime victim surveys have long constituted an important source of knowledge in a number of other Western countries. A number of different surveys on victimization and fear of crime are currently carried out in Sweden. It has become clear, however, that these surveys do not provide a sufficient basis for analyzing people's experiences of crime to the extent that is actually required. One of the prime objectives of the Swedish Crime Survey is that of producing a new data series that can serve as a complement to official data on reported offences when assessing crime trends. Other important objectives include developing an indicator of trends in people's perceptions of safety, and acquiring knowl-

edge about both exposure to crime and the experiences of crime victims in areas such as their contacts with the criminal justice system. Another objective is that of producing an overview of public confidence in the different agencies of the criminal justice system.

Objectives and questions addressed

The report presents the overall results from the second wave of data collection that took place in the spring of 2007. It is now possible to present more, and more detailed, results than was the case when the first report from the Swedish Crime Survey was published, particularly with regard to exposure to crime. For the first time, for example, the presentation includes results comparing the situation at the level of individual counties, results on crime victims' experiences of the criminal justice system, and results focusing on levels of confidence in the criminal justice system among people who have been exposed to different types of crime. After a few years it will be possible to study crime trends and make closer comparisons with crime statistics.

Objectives

The presentations in this report have four overall objectives, specifically to describe

- exposure to crime
- fear of crime
- public confidence in the criminal justice system
- regional variations in relation to these different issues.

Questions

The central questions addressed in the report are:

- What proportion of the population was exposed to crime over the course of 2006 and how is this exposure to crime distributed across different types of offences? Are there differences in levels of exposure to crime across different groups in the population, and what are the circumstances surrounding the offences? How do crime victims who have been in contact with the criminal justice system describe their experience of these contacts?
- How prevalent is the fear of crime in the Swedish population, and how much do people worry about different types of offences? Does the fear of crime affect people's behaviour and if so in what ways? Are there differences between different segments of the population, and are there differences associated with people's own experiences of crime and their attitudes towards the criminal justice system?
- How high is public confidence in the criminal justice system as a whole, in the individual agencies of the justice system and in how well they perform their respective functions? Are there differences between different segments of the population? Are there differences associated with people's own experiences of crime and whether or not they have themselves been in contact with the criminal justice system?
- How do these results vary at the regional level? Are there differences in levels of exposure to crime, fear of crime and confidence in the justice system across different Swedish counties?

Method

This section describes the methods employed in the Swedish Crime Survey in 2007. For a more detailed presentation of the survey methods, see the Technical Report for the 2007 wave of the Swedish Crime Survey (Brå, 2008:5).¹

Content of survey questionnaire items

Exposure to crime

The section of the survey dealing with exposure to crime begins with a number of “screening” questions, whose objective is to determine whether the respondent has experienced exposure to a number of different types of crime – and if so, on how many occasions – over the course of the previous year (in this case 2006).

The screening questions contain ten types of offences. To simplify the questions, the act is usually described rather than naming the type of offence. The choice of offence types was to some extent determined by the crime categories used in the official crime statistics that allow for the formulation of unambiguous questions. Otherwise, the choice has been influenced by the types of offences that have been considered most relevant for various reasons, such as offences that are very common or particularly serious, or that generally invoke fear. The Swedish Crime survey focuses on the following ten offence types:

Threats; Assault; Sexual offences; Robbery; Harassment; Car theft; Theft from motor vehicles; Bicycle theft; Burglary and Fraud

For some offences types, the respondents were asked whether anyone in their household had been victimized. This is the case for those property offences where several people in the household are considered to have been victimized in some way and where they have knowledge of the offence; the offences include vehicle-related crimes, burglary and bicycle thefts. For offences against the person such as threats and assault, the survey items focus exclusively on whether the individual respondent has been victimized him- or herself.

The offence categories included in the survey allow for the study of a broad range of types of exposure to crime. Offences against the public at large, the government and businesses are not covered by the survey however. In the official statistics on reported offences, the crime categories included in the Swedish Crime Survey account for slightly over 40 percent of the penal code offences reported to the police.² In addition to these offence categories, the survey interview also includes a question asking respondents whether they have been subject to one or more other offences during the period covered by the survey.

One of the factors that steered the formulation of most of the screening questions was a desire to facilitate comparability with official statistics on reported offences. However, the formulation of the items does not correspond exactly with the official crime statistics, since this would have made them too complex. Previous experience also shows that it is unrealistic to attempt to capture exactly the same type of incidents as those recorded in official statistics on reported offences. The ambition has thus been to create a sufficient degree of conformity to allow for a comparison of trends in the relevant crime categories over time. The possibilities for comparing levels of crime are limited, however.

¹ The technical report is at present only available in Swedish.

² The total number of crimes against the penal code also includes offences that do not victimize specific individuals, such as shoplifting offences, for example, frauds committed against businesses and break-ins affecting public buildings.

The respondents who answered that they had been subjected to one or more of the ten selected offence types were asked additional questions about the offence or offences in question. The follow-up questions are slightly different for each offence type, but usually ask where and when the crime took place, whether the crime was reported to the police, about possible injuries, damage or loss, resulting from the offence, the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, the victim's need for support, etc. Thus the follow-up questions focus on both the circumstances surrounding the crime and the victim's experiences.

In order to avoid subjecting the respondents to excessively long interviews, the follow-up questions have been asked in relation to a maximum of three of the offences disclosed by the respondent. Previous experience shows that most people report only one or a few different offences and the majority of respondents can therefore be expected to provide a more detailed account of all of the offences that they have experienced. A specific order of priority was used to determine the types of offences about which the respondents were asked follow-up questions. For the most part, more serious and unusual types of offences were given priority over less serious and more common offence types, and people who had experienced a number of different types of crime were not asked follow-up questions exclusively in relation to the same type of offence. Within each category of offences, the most recent incident or incidents were given priority.

Fear of crime

As had been mentioned, the Swedish Crime Survey also includes questions about feelings of insecurity and fear of crime. These questions are not limited to a concrete fear of exposure to crime but also focus on a more general sense of insecurity, provided that this is associated with crime. The questions deal with fear of being exposed to crime oneself, as well as fears relating to the victimization of friends and relatives and with fear of crime in general. The survey also asked whether the respondents' insecurity had affected their behaviour. Most of the questions refer specifically to crime. In cases where the questions do not specifically refer to crime, the expectation is that the context of the question will indicate that it is this form of insecurity that is referred to. As regards the most general questions on insecurity, however, there is a risk that other aspects of insecurity than those specifically associated with concerns about crime may have affected the respondents' answers to some extent.

Public confidence in the criminal justice system

The third section of the survey focuses on confidence in the criminal justice system. It includes items about confidence in the criminal justice system in general, and in the various agencies of the justice system in particular (the police, the prosecution service, the courts and the Prison and Probation Service). Since the public has limited contact with these agencies, however, not all respondents can be expected to have definite views. Finally, there are also a number of items that focus on the respondents' confidence in the way the criminal justice system performs various tasks (such as its treatment of suspects and crime victims).

Survey design and implementation

The sample

The Swedish Crime Survey is based on a nationally representative, random sample of people aged between 16 and 79 years. Crime victim surveys usually require large samples because the majority of respondents have not been victim-

ized. In 2007, 20,000 people were selected from the population³ register administered by Statistics Sweden.

Young persons and the elderly have been over-sampled, and are thus over-represented in the survey sample. When analyzing the material, cases are weighted both to account for this over-representation and also to adjust for differences in levels of non-response among different groups within the sample. The weighting procedure ensures that the survey results are as representative as possible of the survey population as a whole.

Implementation and data collection

The survey items have been formulated by the National Council in consultation with other agencies within the criminal justice system. Feedback has been provided by scientific advisors. The questions were also tested in Statistics Sweden's technical test lab and in a small pilot survey conducted in the spring of 2006.

The data collection was carried out by Statistics Sweden, for the most part by means of telephone interviews. Shorter questionnaires were sent to members of the sample who could not be reached, and to those who did not wish to be interviewed over the telephone.

The data were collected between February and May 2007. A cover letter was sent to those included in the sample a few weeks prior to their being contacted by phone by the interviewers employed by Statistics Sweden. The cover letter described the survey and explained that participation was voluntary but important. In addition to the interview data, certain data were also collected from existing registers including the respondents' age, place of residence and level of education.

Non-response

Questionnaire surveys always involve a certain level of non-response because not everyone who is included in the sample wants, or is able, to participate (unit non-response), or because some people who do participate do not answer all of the questions (item non-response).

Unit non-response

Several measures have been taken to reduce the level of unit non-response. For example, the respondents were given the opportunity to choose when their interviews would take place. They could also choose to be interviewed in English and to receive a copy of the cover letter in different languages. A shorter questionnaire (excluding follow-up questions) was also sent to those members of the sample who could not be reached or did not want to answer the questions by telephone, but who could consider answering in writing.

The total non-response for the 2007 wave of the survey amounted to 24 percent of the sample (Table 1), giving a response rate of 76 percent. Around four percent participated by completing a postal questionnaire. A response rate of almost 80 percent is to be considered very high for this type of survey.

³ The population size amounts to approximately 7 million people.

Table 1. Sample and non-response.

	N	Percent
Total sample	20 000	
– over-sample (deceased/moved abroad)	289	
Net sample	19 711	100
Respondents	14 945	76
thereof		
via questionnaires	800	4
Non-response	4 766	24
thereof		
unable to take part	469	2
not found	1 866	10
declined	2 431	12

An analysis of the non-response shows that respondents differ somewhat from non-respondents. For example, women and people born in Scandinavia were generally somewhat more likely to respond than men and people born outside of Scandinavia (see the Technical Report for more information, Brå, 2008:5). To reduce the skewing effect of the non-response, and to reduce sampling and coverage errors, weights were calibrated for use when analyzing the material. Briefly, this technique employs a number of auxiliary variables (based on register data) to increase the weight assigned to the answers provided by groups that are under-represented in the sample. The following auxiliary variables were used as the basis for this calibration: county, gender, age, country of birth, marital status, income and metropolitan area. The weighting procedure also takes account of the deliberate over-sampling of certain groups of respondents (see above).

Item non-response

The item non-response in the survey includes the answer alternatives *Don't know/Don't want to answer*. The item non-response for the postal questionnaires includes cases where answers have been left blank. Where the item non-response is low (at most 5 percent), this is not noted in the report. Where the item non-response is greater than five percent, this is noted in connection with the presentation of the results. High levels of item non-response were primarily noted in relation to the items concerning public confidence in the criminal justice system.

Reliability and comparability

Reliability

The sources of error that affect sample surveys comprise sampling errors, coverage errors, non-response, measurement errors and processing errors. To reduce measurement errors, the length of the questionnaire was restricted and questionnaire items have been tested in several different ways. The interviewers have been specially trained for the survey and are able to assist the respondents if anything is unclear. The questionnaire is stored in a computer system to ensure that the jumps between different items automatically follow the correct pattern. During the interview, the interviewer enters the answers into the computer and possible mistakes can for the most part be directly identified in the system, which minimizes processing errors.

The main problems are rather associated with the respondents' desire and ability to provide correct answers. The survey contains questions about sensitive incidents that victims may not wish to recall. Above all, this constitutes a problem in relation to different types of violent and sexual offences, particularly those that have taken place in the context of intimate relationships. But other questions too, such as those relating to attitudes, can be difficult to answer and respondents will sometimes provide "socially desirable" answers, for example that an offence has been reported to the police. A respondent may also answer incorrectly unintentionally as a result of memory errors. Incidents can be repressed, forgotten or their timing may be remembered incorrectly. Respondents may not be familiar with incidents that have affected other household members, and incidents can be incorrectly defined as offences. The number of criminal incidents may be subject to both over- and under-reporting. The survey employs a recall period of one year, which previous experience has found to be appropriate and which is also the most common recall period employed in surveys of this kind. One difference with the Swedish Crime Survey in relation to many other similar surveys, however, is that it asks about exposure to crime during the *calendar year prior to the interview*, whereas other surveys often ask about exposure to crime *during the past twelve months*. The interviews were conducted during the first half of 2007, however (between February and May), which produces a lower risk for misreporting as a result of memory errors than would be the case if the survey had been conducted later in the year, when more time had passed in relation to the recall period. It should nonetheless be noted however that the survey asks about incidents that may have occurred up to seventeen months prior to the survey interview.

The most common data collection methods employed in crime victim surveys are face-to-face interviews or postal questionnaires. The fact that interviews in the Swedish Crime Survey are conducted by telephone rather than face-to-face may mean that sensitive crimes are underreported if the respondents do not trust the interviewer over the phone, or if the surrounding environment is distracting. Telephone interviews also involve a greater risk of respondents providing answers that have not been thought through than do face-to-face interviews. As has already been mentioned, a number of steps have been taken to minimize problems of these kinds, such as the training of interviewers and the use of a cover letter to explain that respondents can themselves choose the time of their interview or can elect to fill in a postal questionnaire.

How confident can we be in the results?

The 15,000 or so people (of the 20,000 in the sample) who answered the questions in the 2007 wave of the Swedish Crime Survey are highly representative of the Swedish population aged between 16 and 79 years and of their perceptions of public safety and attitudes towards the criminal justice system – as well as in terms of their experiences of crime at the national level. The 2007 wave of the Swedish Crime Survey also provides an opportunity to study differences between different groups in the population with a high degree of certainty, particularly in relation to the fear of crime and confidence in the criminal justice system, since the results in these areas are based on all those participating in the survey. Uncertainties arise in relation to comparisons between different groups primarily when these comparisons focus on the more unusual types of offences where the number of victims interviewed is low. Breaking down the results for several subgroups of respondents while at the same time studying the circumstances surrounding the offence, e.g. looking at the experiences of serious assault specifically among young men in metropolitan areas, is associated with a substantial degree of uncertainty in the current data set. The larger the number of victims

involved, and the greater the differences between the different groups examined, the higher the level of certainty associated with the results.

Comparability with other sources

Since the report is based on data collected in wave two of the Swedish Crime Survey, it is now possible to conduct certain comparisons with data collected in the previous wave. It should however be born in mind that the two waves of data collection differ in a number of respects and that comparisons should therefore be conducted with some caution. The main differences between the two waves of data collection relate to the size of the samples involved and the times at which the two surveys were conducted. Differences in the findings from the two survey waves may mean that there has been a real change, but they may also be due to natural variations around a level that is in fact stable. Given the circumstances of the survey, then, it will not be possible to arrive at any conclusions regarding long-term trends until additional waves of data collection have been conducted. Once the survey has been repeated over a number of years, however, trends will become the prime focus for the presentation of findings.

The Swedish Crime Survey is one of several sources that can be used to describe crime, fear of crime and public confidence in the criminal justice system. In general, at this early stage of a survey when only two waves of data collection have been completed, comparisons with findings based on other sources should be viewed with caution.

Presentation of results

The presentation of the main results is broken down into sections relating to victimization, fear of crime and public confidence in the criminal justice system. Confidence intervals and significance tests are not presented in this report (with the exception of the analyses relating to regional variations, where significance tests are presented). For further discussion and tables with the approximate size of the confidence intervals, please see the technical report (Brå, 2008:5). It may also be noted that statistical significance testing is usually employed to ensure that differences between different groups, such as men and women, are not the result of random fluctuations. The large sample employed in the Swedish Crime Survey means that even small differences are often significant, provided that the comparisons are based upon answers from a large number of respondents. This is one of the reasons why significance levels are not presented, and an assessment of whether the differences noted are large or small can instead be made on the basis of the size of the percentages presented in the tables, and also from the description of the findings presented in the text.

Reference groups

The findings are for the most part presented on the basis of the following background information and sub-groups of the population:

- *gender*
- *age* (intervals: 16–19, 20–24, 25–34, 35–44, 45–54, 55–64, 65–74, 75–79)
- *Swedish/foreign background* (born in Sweden with one/both parents born in Sweden, born in Sweden with both parents born outside of Sweden, foreign-born)
- *level of education*, the highest level attained (pre-further education, further education or post further education)
- *marital status* (living with partner or single, with or without children)

- *type of housing* (house or apartment building)
- *size of locality/degree of urbanization*, based on “H regions” (cities, larger towns, smaller towns/rural)

Most of the information about the respondents’ background has been collected from existing registers. The only background information collected in the Swedish Crime Survey itself relates to marital status, type of housing and in some cases the level of education.

Different units employed in the survey

With regard to victimization, it is important to remember that the survey units – and therefore the presentation – are different for the different types of offences.

People who are victimized

Questions relating to offences against the person (assault, threats, sexual offences, robbery and harassment) and fraud, refer to the victimization of the individual respondent. The presentation of results for these types of offences is thus based on the proportion of the population who were victimized in 2006.

Households who are victimized

Questions relating to property offences, with the exception of fraud, (i.e. car theft, theft from motor vehicles, bicycle theft and burglary), refer to the victimization of the respondent’s entire household. The results for these offence types are presented on the basis of the proportion of *households in the population* that were victimized over the course of 2006.⁴

The use of different survey units for different types of offences affects estimations of the number of offences involved.

Number of offences (incidents)

For each type of offence, the respondent is asked how many times the incident occurred during the year. The answers are not limited by fixed intervals but there is a limit (a maximum of between 20 and 365 incidents can be reported depending on the type of offence). As regards offences against the person, the number of such offences committed against the population as a whole is estimated on the basis of the information collected on the number of times the incidents occurred within the sample. For the offence categories threats, assault and sexual offences, up to 365 incidents of victimization may be reported. In order to produce more stable estimates of the incidence (i.e. the number) of these types of offences occurring within the population, the distributions are truncated at a maximum of 52 incidents per respondent (which corresponds to an average of one incident of victimization per week).

⁴ The presentation of regional differences included towards the end of this summary, however, is not based on the exposure of households and for technical reasons all analyses in the section on regional differences have been conducted at the individual level. There the presentation is thus focused on *individuals* who have experience of exposure to different types of crime, amongst other things as a result of *household* exposure to property crime. In later reports the intention is to be able to present findings in the same way for all areas covered by the survey.

Results

Victimization

The Swedish Crime Survey data indicate that 26 percent of the population (aged 16–79) were exposed to crime⁵ in 2006. The differences between the different types of offences are substantial, however, and victimization is not evenly distributed within the population. By specifically asking about ten different types of offences, the survey captures a substantial proportion of the crimes to which the public were exposed in 2006.

Offences against the person

Threats and harassment are the most prevalent types of offence against the person. Almost five percent say that they have experienced incidents of these kinds over the course of 2006 (Table 2). Only one quarter of the offences against the person that were reported in the Swedish Crime Survey were also reported to the police, but there are substantial differences between the different types of offences involved. For example, the results indicate that only a small proportion of sexual offences (17 percent) were reported to the police.

Table 2. Victimization within the population (aged 16–79) for different types of offences against the person, estimated number of incidents and proportion of incidents reported to the police in 2006 according to the Swedish Crime Survey data.

	Percentage victimized	Estimated number of victimized persons in the population	Estimated number of incidents within the population	Percentage of incidents reported
	10.5	740 000	1 772 000	25
Threats	4.6	321 000	716 000	22
Assaults	2.5	175 000	470 000	33
of which serious ¹	0.6	39 000	78 000	63
Sexual offences	0.8	54 000	173 000	17
Robbery	1.1	74 000	93 000	44 ²
Harassment	4.6	320 000	320 000 ³	19 ⁴

1. Refers to serious injury that required medical or dental treatment.

2. Reported robberies of the person as a proportion the number of such robberies committed in Sweden.

3. Estimated number of victimized individuals.

4. Proportion of victims who reported one or more incidents to the police.

Threats

According to the survey, 4.6 percent of the population (aged 16–79) were subjected to threats in 2006. Exposure to threats is equally common among male and female respondents.

Public places represent the most common type of location in which the reported threats have occurred. Women report being victimized at home to a significantly greater extent than men however. In more than half of the cases, victims report that the offender was a complete stranger; in a third of the cases, the offender was a casual acquaintance and in ten percent the offender was someone

⁵ In addition to offences against the person, this figure also includes exposure to burglary, and car and bicycle thefts among other members of the household.

the victim knew well. Once again, there are significant differences between men and women. Women report that the offender was someone they know well significantly more often than men.

Assaults

Further, 2.5 percent of the population (aged 16–79) report having been exposed to an assault at some point during 2006. Of these, around twenty-five percent (or 0.6 percent of the population) report that the assault was serious (requiring medical or dental treatment). Twice as many men as women report they have been subjected to assault.

The circumstances surrounding assault offences are similar to those found in relation to threats. As was the case with threats, public places are the most common crime location in relation to assaults as well. Being assaulted in somebody's home is more common among women than it is among men. Women also report being exposed to assault by somebody with whom they are acquainted, or by someone close to them, to significantly greater extent than men. Given that women are more often victimized by someone they know well in their homes, and given that this type of offence is notoriously difficult to talk about, it is very likely that the level of victimization among women is higher than is shown by the results of the survey.

Sexual offences

Slightly under one percent of respondents reported that someone had “forced, attacked or molested them sexually” over the course of 2006. Women reported that they were subject to sexual offences to a significantly greater extent than men. Younger women predominate among those reporting this type of victimization.

As was the case with threats and assaults, half of the sexual offences occurred in a public place, around one-sixth at the victim's workplace or school, and around one-fifth in the home. The offender was a stranger in over half of these incidents, a casual acquaintance in one-third, and was well-known to the victim in slightly more than one-tenth of incidents. There is also reason to suspect that incidents where people were victimized by someone they know well are under-represented in the survey data because experiences of this kind can be difficult to talk about, particularly if they occurred so recently as within the past year.

Robbery

As regards robbery, 1.1 percent report being exposed to this form of victimization in 2006. Most victims were subject to a single incident of robbery over the year. In around 30 percent of the robberies, the victims say they were hit, kicked or exposed to some other kind of physical violence in connection with the offence. The use of knives, firearms or other weapons is not unusual in robberies (45 percent).

Harassment

Harassment is described as “repeated incidents of being pursued or of unsolicited visits, telephone calls, messages and similar”. Almost five percent say they were subjected to harassment over the course of 2006. About half experienced these incidents as very or fairly alarming. Victimization of this kind appears to be particularly common among young women.

In about 40 percent of the cases, the perpetrator was a stranger and in one-third of cases the victim was acquainted with the perpetrator. Just over one-tenth of victims reported that the perpetrator was someone close to them. Almost one-

fifth of the victims say they were harassed because of their occupation. Most (two-thirds) of the harassment victims were subjected to ten incidents or less. A small group (around one-tenth of the victims), however, reported having experienced a very large number of incidents (100 or more).

Property offences

The results show that thirteen percent of households reported being subjected to one of the property offences included in the survey in the course of 2006 and 2.5 percent of the population (aged 16–79) report having been exposed to fraud during the same period (Table 3). The most common forms of victimization involve households having been subjected to bicycle theft or theft from a vehicle (five percent), whereas burglary and car theft are the least common offence types (around one percent). Generally speaking, property offences are reported to the police significantly more often than offences against the person. Not surprisingly, car theft and burglary are the offences that are reported most often.

Table 3. Proportion of persons in the population (aged 16–79) exposed to different types of property offences, estimated number of incidents and proportion of incidents reported to the police in 2006, Swedish Crime Survey.

	Proportion of households victimized	Estimated number of victimized households/	Estimated number of incidents within the population	Proportion of incidents reported
Burglary	1.0	40 000	50 000	74
Car theft	0.9 ¹	26 000	27 000	98
Theft from vehicle	5.0	193 000	238 000	61
Bicycle theft	6.9	267 000	331 000	40
All property offences against households	12.6	489 000	646 000	53
Fraud	2.5 ²	173 000 ²	260 000	32
All property offences	–³		907 000	48

1. Among households that owned a car in 2006.

2. Proportion/number of victimized individuals in the population (aged 16-79).

3. A combined figure for the total proportion exposed to property crime cannot be presented since fraud is presented at the individual level and the remaining offence types at the level of the household.

Vehicle-related offences

According to the Swedish Crime Survey data, five percent of households were subject to theft from vehicles and seven percent of households were exposed to bicycle theft. For most vehicle-related offences (over 60 percent), the victims reported that the incident took place in their own neighbourhoods. Sixty percent of the bicycle thefts reportedly occurred in public places and 40 percent on private property.

Burglary

According to the Swedish Crime Survey data, one percent of the population (aged 16–79) live in households that were burgled over the course of 2006. Marital status and type of housing do not account for any differences in burglary

victimization. People living in cities and single parents reported experiences of burglary to a slightly greater extent than others, however.

Fraud

The Swedish Crime Survey respondents were asked whether “you as a private person were defrauded of money or other valuables during the past year”. Less than three percent reported having been subjected to fraud over the course of 2006. The most common amount lost was between SEK 500–2,000, a figure that was reported by around one-third of the respondents. One quarter reported losing SEK 2,000–10,000. There are many different methods for defrauding individuals. One-fifth of the incidents reported in the Swedish Crime Survey involved bank or credit card fraud, and a similar proportion involved internet fraud.

Repeated victimization

Multiple victimization is more prevalent for offences against the person than for property offences; twelve percent and two percent of victims respectively reported having been subject to four or more offences in 2006. Over 70 percent of offences against the person affect individuals who are victims of more than a single offence. The corresponding figure for property offences is around 40 percent. A significant proportion of offences against the person (48 percent) affect a very small proportion of the population (0.9 percent) comprised of individuals who report having experienced five or more offences over the course of 2006.

Crime victims' contacts with the justice system

Slightly over one-fifth of the population (aged 16–79) have been the victim of a crime that has been reported to the police over the past three years. The majority of these individuals report positive experiences of their contacts with the agencies of the justice system.

The police constitute the justice system agency with which the largest number have been in contact. Generally speaking individuals who have been exposed to threats or violent crime report more negative experiences of the police than individuals who have been exposed to other types of crime (Table 4). The size of the proportion reporting positive experiences of the police increases with the age of the group being studied. The proportion of men reporting negative experiences is larger than the corresponding proportion of women. In addition, individuals from small towns and rural areas who have been exposed to threats and violence more often report negative experiences of the police than the corresponding group of victims living in larger towns or metropolitan areas.

Table 4. Experiences of the police in connection with exposure to crime according to the Swedish Crime Survey 2007. By gender and age and whether or not the incident involved threats or violence. Proportions for each group in percent (n=2,761).

	Threats or violence (20 %)		No threats or violence (80%)	
	Very/quite positive	Very/quite negative	Very/quite positive	Very/quite negative
All individuals (aged 16-79) who have been in contact with the police as a result of exposure to crime during past three years.	58	23	56	13
GENDER AND AGE				
Men, 16–79 years	58	26	53	15
16–24 years	52	25	44	16
25–44 years	62	26	52	13
45–64 years	61	26	54	18
65–79 years	50	26	62	16
Women, 16–79 years	58	20	59	10
16–24 years	45	27	47	12
25–44 years	58	17	56	10
45–64 years	68	20	62	11
65–79 years	59	11	71	9

Over the past three years slightly less than two percent of the population (aged 16–79) have attended court as plaintiffs as a result of exposure to crime. The results presented in this area illustrate respondent’s perceptions of prosecutors and lawyers who have worked as aggrieved party counsel (in those cases where one has been appointed). In addition, the survey asks respondents about their perceptions of the way they were received by the court, their assessment of the information they had been given, and whether they felt that they understood what had happened during the court case. In all these respects the majority report positive experiences, and experiences of aggrieved party counsel are particularly good.

Fear of crime

Fear of crime⁶ does not represent a single unitary concept, but rather involves a complex set of feelings and attitudes. This complexity makes fear of crime difficult to measure and describe. The Swedish Crime Survey captures many – but by no means all – of the dimensions of fear and concern about crime that, prior to the Swedish Crime Survey, had never been measured at the national level. In general, the survey indicates that most of the adult population feels safe. For example, four out of five people feel quite or very safe when they go out alone after dark in their own neighbourhoods (Table 5). Further, most respondents (85 per cent) do not consider concern about crime to have a negative effect on their quality of life.

⁶ The Swedish report employs a concept similar to “security” instead of “fear of crime”. Since the Swedish concept cannot really be translated into English in a workable fashion, the concept “fear of crime” is employed here instead.

Table 5. General fear of crime, Swedish Crime Survey 2007. Proportion in per cent.

Are you anxious about crime in society?		If you go out late one evening in the area where you live, how safe do you feel?	
Yes, to a great extent	25	Very safe	36
Yes, to some extent	52	Fairly safe	43
No, not at all	22	Fairly unsafe	8
		Very unsafe	2
		Do not go out due to feeling unsafe	6
		Do not go out for other reasons	5

The figures presented in Table 5 provide an indication of the general level of concern and insecurity among the Swedish population (aged 16–79). In order to prevent feelings of insecurity among those affected by them, however – and to focus measures where they are most needed – it is useful to identify potential risk groups, i.e. those who report feeling insecure or concerned about exposure to crime to an unusually large extent.

Different groups worry about different types of crime

The results of the Swedish Crime Survey confirm that there are differences in levels of fear of crime across different groups within the population. Within all the groups examined, however, the majority report rarely or never worrying about being exposed to the specific types of crime asked about in the Swedish Crime Survey. Worrying about close friends and family is more common than worrying about being exposed to crime oneself, but here too the majority report feeling such concerns only rarely or never. Given these findings, there are nonetheless two factors that appear to be of special significance in relation to study of fear of crime – gender and age.

Most women report that they feel considerably more unsafe than men. In the Swedish Crime Survey, this difference is manifested quite clearly in the findings relating to the general level of anxiety about going out late at night, concern about friends and family and the fear of being attacked or assaulted (Table 6). Among women, the prevalence of concern about exposure to crime is similar irrespective of the type of crime at issue, whereas men are most concerned about exposure to car crime, and least concerned about being exposed to violent offences.

Table 6. Concern about crime by gender and age, Swedish Crime Survey 2007. Proportion reporting being fairly or very concerned in percent.

	Burglary	Attack/ Assault	Car theft/ Vandalism	Concern about family and friends
All, 16–79 years	15	13	18	30
GENDER				
Men	12	7	17	23
Women	18	19	19	37
AGE				
16–19 years	5	16	5	17
20–24 years	9	22	22	28
25–34 years	14	17	25	28
35–44 years	16	12	19	31
45–54 years	18	10	18	40
55–64 years	18	10	18	33
65–74 years	19	11	18	26
75–79 years	15	8	15	22

The results indicate that fear of crime exists across all age groups but that the nature of this fear differs slightly. Young people are particularly concerned about violent offences, whereas middle-aged respondents express more concern than their younger counterparts in relation to burglary. Age is also linked to the way in which people deal with the fear of crime they feel in relation to going out. The older the age-group examined, the larger the proportion that reports that they stay at home because they feel unsafe. Thus a larger proportion of younger people report that they feel fairly or very unsafe *when they go out*, whereas older people tend to answer *that they do not go out* because they feel unsafe. Differences are small among the remainder of the groups examined, but one systematic finding is that persons born outside Sweden more often report concerns about being exposed to crime than Swedish born respondents.

Respondents who have been victimized during the past year more often express concern than those who have not (nine percent and four percent respectively, see Table 7). This is particularly true of the victims of offences against the person. People with indirect experience of victimization, such as those who have witnessed a crime or those with a relative who has been the victim of a serious crime, are also more worried than those with no such experience. Most of the respondents who report that they are worried about crime have no experience of victimization however.

Table 7. Concern about crime (index) among persons with varying experiences of victimization, Swedish Crime Survey 2007. Proportion reporting being particularly worried about crime in percent.¹

EXPERIENCE OF VICTIMIZATION	Percentage who feel particularly concerned
Not victimized	4
Victimized	9
Victim of specific offences affecting personal integrity ²	13
Reported an offence to the police in the past three years	8
Has a close friend or relation who has been victimized	8
Witness to violence	9

1. Please note that the categories in this table are not mutually exclusive.

2. Offences that include threat, assault, sexual offences, robbery, harrassment and/or burglary during 2006 (n= 1 755). Threats and harrassment account for almost 60 per cent of these offences.

Those who feel that crime has increased over the past three years are clearly more concerned⁷ than those who feel that the crime level has remained unchanged or fallen (Table 8). Those who feel that crime has increased dramatically report particularly high levels of concern. Among these respondents, nine percent are found in the “particularly concerned” category, which can be compared with two percent of those who feel that crime levels have remained unchanged or have fallen.

Table 8. Concern about crime (index) presented by perceptions of crime trends and the criminal justice system, Swedish Crime Survey 2007. Proportion reporting being particularly concerned about crime in per cent.

Perceptions of crime trends over the past three years	Percentage who feel particularly concerned	Confidence in the justice system	Percentage who feel particularly concerned
Increased dramatically (37 %)	9	Very or fairly low (15 %)	11
Increased slightly (40 %)	4	Neither high nor low (25 %)	6
Unchanged or decreased (23%)	2	Very or fairly high (59 %)	4

People’s concern about crime also varies in relation to their confidence in the criminal justice system. The proportion of respondents who report feeling particularly concerned about crime is almost three times as large in the group reporting little confidence in the justice system as it is in the group reporting a high level of confidence in the criminal justice system.

Public confidence in the criminal justice system

Previous research shows that public confidence in the criminal justice system and in some of its constituent parts is relatively high in Sweden. The Swedish Crime Survey however provides a more complete picture of public confidence in the criminal justice system and its various agencies.

⁷ The index has been constructed by combining the variables “going out late at night”, “worry about being exposed to violent crime” and “chosen an alternative route/means of transport as a result of being worried about being exposed to crime”.

The results from the survey show that confidence in the justice system is relatively high among the Swedish population. The proportions reporting high levels of confidence are consistently larger than those reporting low levels of confidence. Among the individual justice system agencies, the largest proportion reporting high levels of confidence is found in relation to the police (60 percent), followed by the courts, the prosecution service and the Prison and Probation Service. The largest proportion reporting low levels of confidence is found in relation to the Prison and Probation Service (20 percent), followed by the police, the courts and the prosecution service (Figure 1). In other words, the majority of people have a positive view of the criminal justice system. One notable finding is that many citizens, around one-quarter to one-fifth, have no definite view as to how much confidence they have in the prosecution service and the courts or in the Prison and Probation Service.

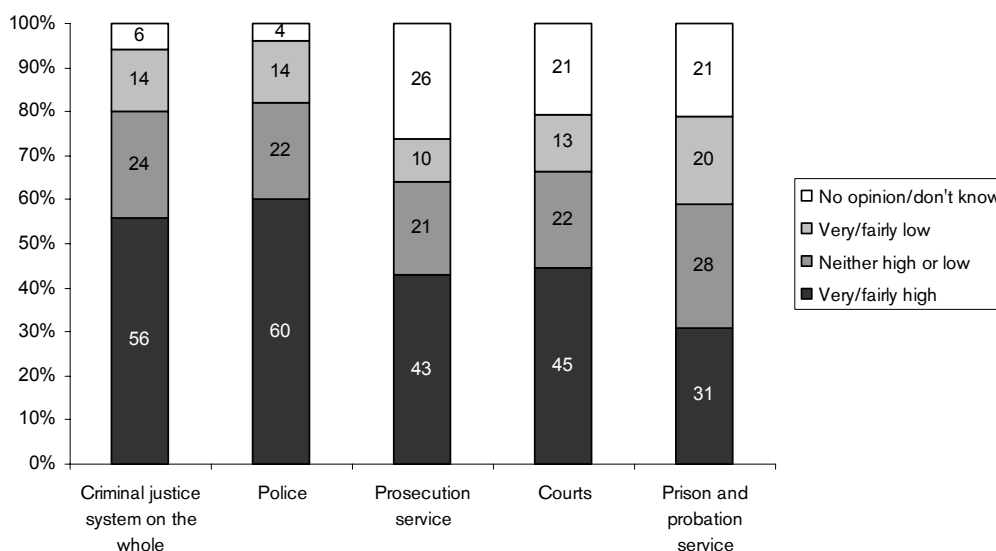


Figure 1. Public confidence in the criminal justice system, Swedish Crime Survey 2007. Proportion in per cent.

In general, the survey indicates only minor differences across various social groups. The background factors that appear to have the greatest impact on levels of confidence in the justice system are age and whether the respondents have a Swedish/non-Swedish background. The proportions reporting high levels of confidence are often highest among the youngest respondents, i.e. those aged 16–19, than among the remaining age groups, and this difference is most notable in relation to confidence in the prosecution service. Respondents born outside Sweden report lower levels of confidence in the justice system, both in relation to Swedish-born respondents and in relation to other factors examined. The remaining background factors appear to have less influence on levels of confidence in the justice system.

The lowest levels of confidence are reported in relation to the question of how well the criminal justice system treats crime victims. One-third of the population report high levels of confidence in this respect (Figure 2). No matter which sub-group of the population is studied, comparatively few report that they are fairly or very confident that the various agencies of the criminal justice system treat crime victims well. As regards the question of whether the criminal justice-system treats suspects fairly, almost half of the population is very confident that this is the case.

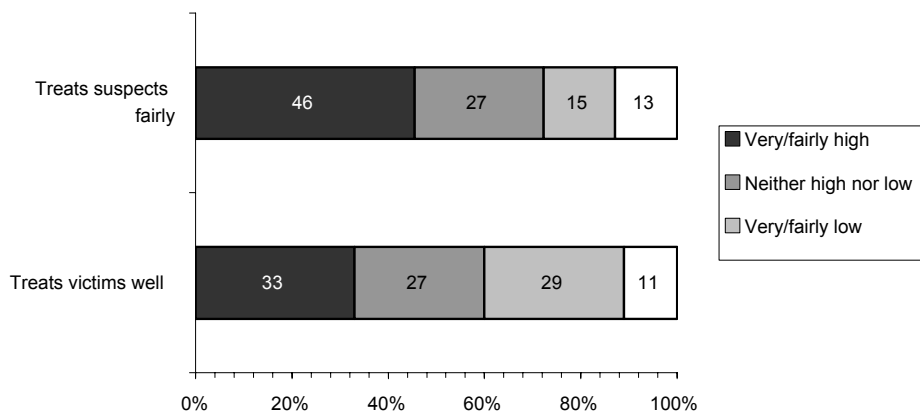


Figure 2. Public confidence in how well the criminal justice system performs its various tasks; Swedish Crime Survey 2007. Proportion in percent.

Factors associated with people's experience of crime, and particularly with offences against the person, appear to play a somewhat more important role. Respondents who have experienced exposure to crime, property offences as well as offences against the person, report lower levels of confidence both in the justice system as a whole, and in the various agencies and their ability to carry out their tasks. This is manifested by smaller proportions of high confidence as well as greater proportions of low confidence, which is clearly illustrated in figure 3 below. This is particularly true of people who have been exposed to crimes such as sexual offences, robberies against the person or assault.

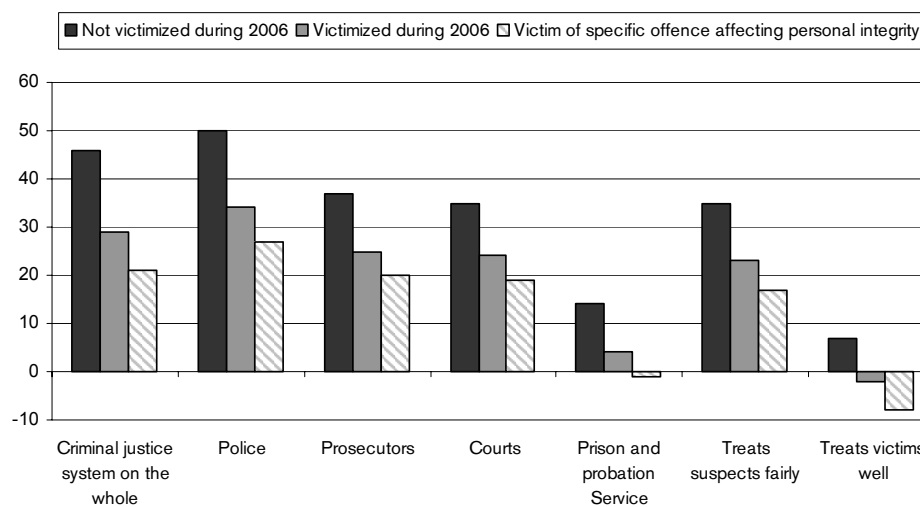


Figure 3. Confidence in the criminal justice system among people with different experiences of crime, Swedish Crime Survey 2007. Presentation by confidence balance (proportion very/fairly high confidence minus proportion very/fairly low confidence, answer categories "don't know" and "no answer" included).

The strongest relationships are found between exposure to crime and confidence in the police and the criminal justice system as a whole. Having a friend or relative who has been exposed to crime, or believing that crime is rising sharply also have a negative effect on levels of confidence. This does not however signify the existence of a major crisis of confidence among the Swedish population. Even the majority of those with experience of crime have confidence in the criminal justice system. The group that reports the lowest levels of confidence in almost all of the

different agencies of the justice system comprises those respondents who have themselves been indicted for criminal offences.

One factor that is highly significant for variations in levels of confidence relates to different groups' perceptions of crime trends. Confidence in the criminal justice system is considerably lower among people who say they believe that crime is on the increase, than it is among those who say that crime levels have not increased (Figure 4).

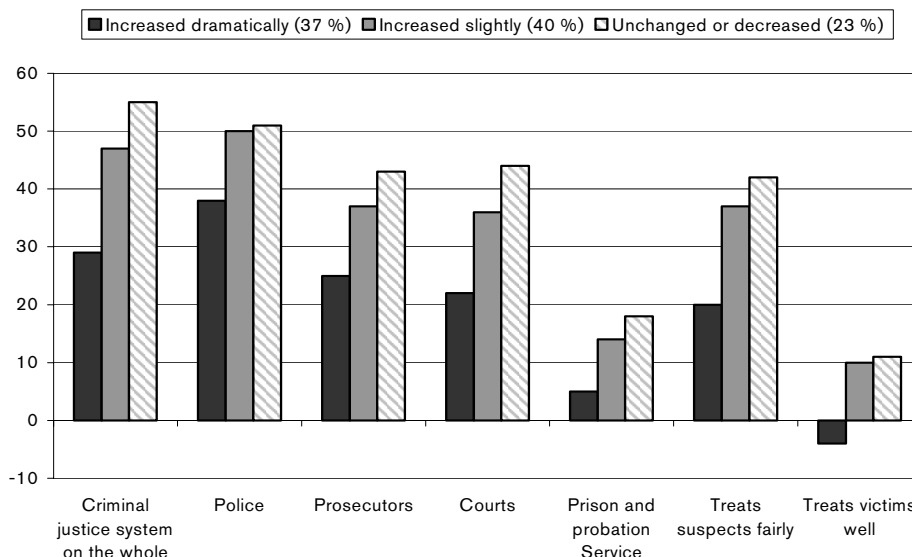


Figure 4. Confidence in the criminal justice system among people with different perceptions of crime trends over the past three years, Swedish Crime Survey 2007. Presentation by confidence balance (proportion very/fairly high confidence minus proportion very/fairly low confidence, answer categories "don't know" and "no answer" included).

Regional similarities and differences

One of the objectives of the report is that of describing regional differences in levels of exposure to crime, insecurity and confidence in the justice system across different parts of the country. In order to allow for the presentation of findings at the regional level, data from both the 2006 and 2007 waves of the Swedish survey were combined. The analyses are thus based on responses from a total of almost 23,000 respondents.

The geographical units chosen for the regional presentation comprise the 21 Swedish counties, which also serve as administrative areas. A further, limited division of the data has been conducted on the basis of the largest municipalities in each of the counties, in all comprising 45 of Sweden's 290 municipalities.⁸ Statistics at the municipal level are only presented in the form of an appendix of tables in the main report, however. The reason for not presenting information for a larger number of individual municipalities, or even smaller areas, is that the reliability of the estimates presented decreases as the size of the areas examined becomes smaller and smaller. Counties on the other hand are relatively large areas both geographically and in terms of population size, and they contain a large degree of heterogeneity. The objective is to *describe* this variation, and not

⁸ The Swedish police service is organised to follow county borders, and is divided up into county police authorities, which is one reason why it is of interest to use the county as the geographical unit for the comparisons. The counties constitute administrative units whose primary responsibility is that of healthcare provision. Like the counties, the municipalities are also organs of local government with a significant amount of autonomy. The municipalities bear responsibility for basic areas of welfare such as schools, childcare and the provision of care for the elderly.

to *explain* the similarities and differences observed. It is likely that variations in the composition of the population of the different counties, and in the degree of urbanisation, are important explanatory factors in relation to the differences observed.

In general regional differences are small

Levels of exposure to crime, perceived insecurity and confidence in the justice system vary somewhat across different counties and different parts of the country. Certain counties stand out to a certain extent, and when individual counties are compared the differences can appear to be quite large in certain cases. In the majority of counties however, the proportions reporting exposure to crime and perceived insecurity, and variations in levels of confidence in the justice system, are on a level with the national average. The principal conclusion is thus that the similarities between counties are more prominent than the differences.

Exposure to crime

On average, eleven percent of the adult population (aged 16–79) have been exposed to some form of crime against the person over the course of 2005 or 2006. The size of this proportion varies between seven percent (in the counties of Värmland, Gävleborg and Västernorrland) and thirteen percent (Skåne). The proportion exposed to property offences varies between ten percent (Gävleborg) and 20 percent (Skåne). The national average lies at sixteen percent. The difference between the counties with the largest and smallest proportions of inhabitants reporting exposure to crime is relatively large, but the majority of counties do not deviate significantly from the national average (Figures 5 and 6). The rural north counties of Gävleborg and Västernorrland present significantly smaller proportions of respondents reporting exposure to crimes against the person and property offences than those in the country as a whole. The metropolitan county of Skåne presents a significantly higher proportion of respondents reporting victimization in both categories of offences.

Insecurity and fear of crime

Differences in levels of perceived insecurity and fear of crime are generally large between the counties with the largest and smallest proportions of inhabitants reporting insecurity/concerns about crime respectively, but the majority of counties do not deviate significantly from the national average. Whether or not one feels insecure when one is out of doors late at night in one's own neighbourhood is one of the most common questions employed to measure insecurity in surveys of this kind (Figure 7). The proportion experiencing this form of insecurity varies from 10 percent (Jämtland) to 22 percent (Stockholm, Skåne and Västmanland), which can be compared with the national average of 18 percent. The proportion of inhabitants reporting feeling insecure when they are out late at night is significantly smaller in the rural north counties (Värmland, Dalarna, Gävleborg, Västernorrland, Jämtland, Västerbotten and Norrbotten) than it is in the country as a whole.

Public confidence in the criminal justice system

The differences between the counties with the largest and smallest proportions of inhabitants reporting confidence in the justice system and in justice system agencies are large, but the majority of counties do not deviate significantly from the national average (Figure 8). Levels of confidence in the justice system as a whole vary between 48 percent (in Dalarna) and 65 percent (in the county of Västerbotten). The national average lies at 55 percent. Confidence in the justice system

and in the agencies of the justice system is systematically higher than the national average in the county of Västerbotten and is lower than the national average in the county of Dalarna.

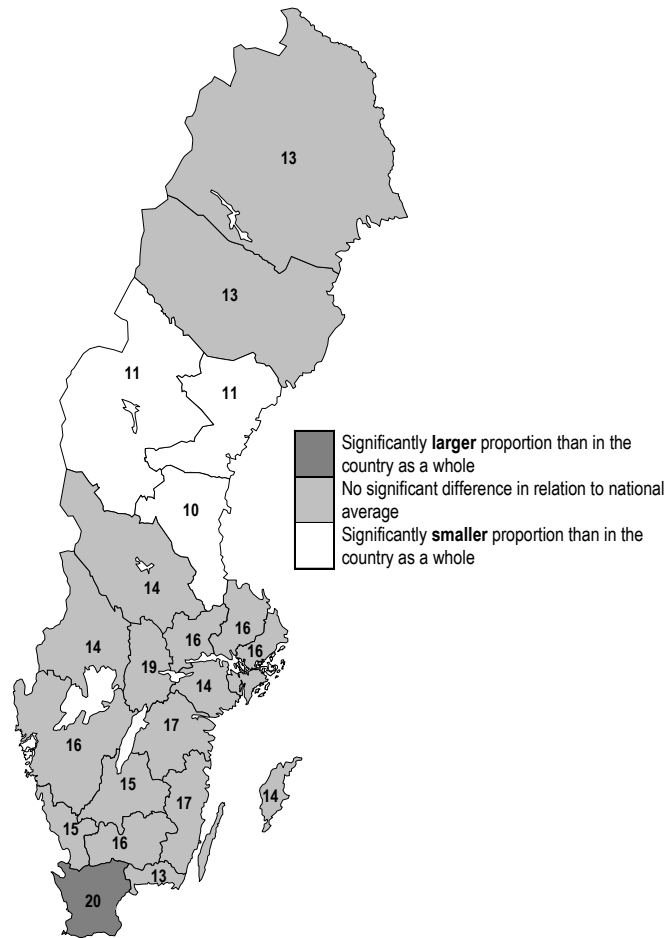


Figure 6. Mean proportion of the population (aged 16–79) who report exposure to property crime during 2005–2006. Swedish Crime Survey 2006/2007. National average 16 percent, minimum 10 percent and maximum 20 percent. Significance tested using an alpha-level of 1 %.

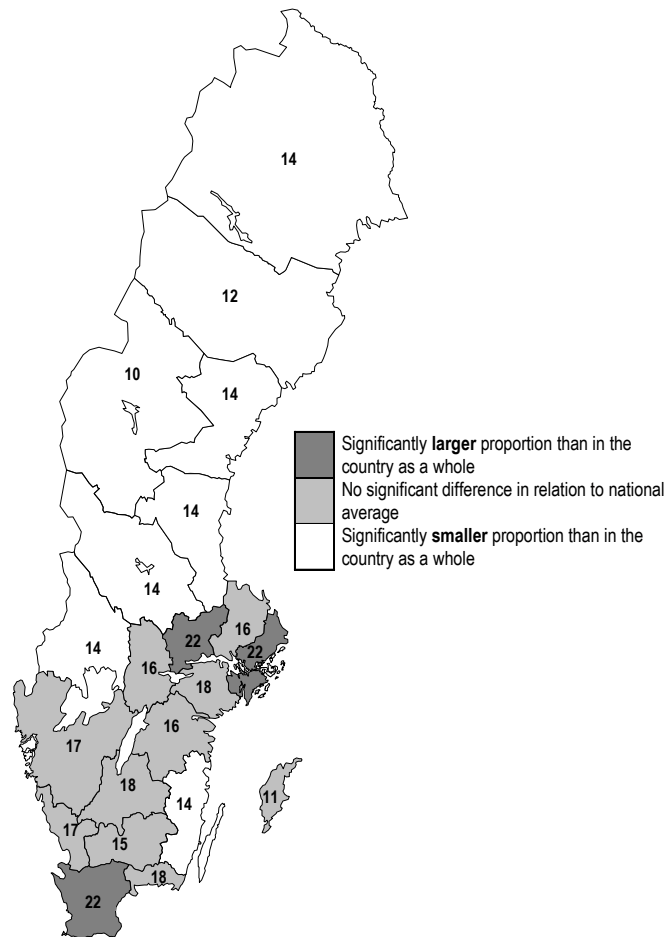


Figure 7. Mean proportion of the population (aged 16–79) who feel fairly insecure or very insecure when they are out late at night in their own neighbourhood, or who don't go out due to feelings of insecurity. Swedish Crime Survey 2006/2007. National average 18 percent, minimum 10 percent and maximum 22 percent. Significance tested using an alpha-level of 1 %.

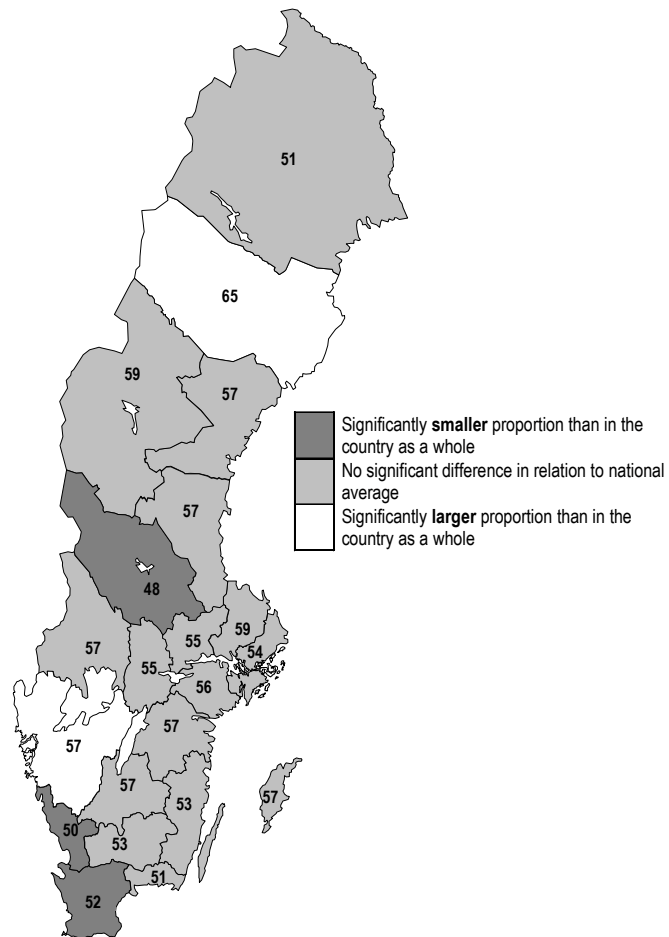


Figure 8. Mean proportion of the population (aged 16–79) who report fairly high or very high levels of confidence in the criminal justice system as a whole. Swedish Crime Survey 2006/2007. National average 55 percent, minimum 48 percent and maximum 65 percent. Significance tested using an alpha-level of 1 %. (NB: White areas represent a significantly larger proportion than in the country as a whole, black areas a significantly smaller proportion.)

Future possibilities

One of the most important tasks of the Swedish Crime Survey is to monitor crime trends and levels of fear of crime and public confidence in the justice system over the longer term and across different groups within the population. A more detailed study of the propensity to report offences to the police is planned in connection with the 2007 wave of the Swedish Crime Survey, so that the survey can serve as the complement to the official crime statistics that is currently needed in order to better monitor the development of crime trends in Sweden.

It may also be of interest in the future to supplement the Swedish Crime Survey findings with qualitative studies focusing on people's fear of crime, for example, or their confidence in the justice system. Other research methods such as the use of focus groups could be employed to explore the factors that underlie the experiences of a specific group or that are associated with specific attitudes, such as elderly people's fear of crime or lack of confidence, or why people hold no definite view of a certain agency within the criminal justice system.

In a few years' time – once the survey database has grown sufficiently to provide a stable foundation – it will also be possible to include a special focus on certain areas of interest, offence types or population groups in the survey questionnaire, either on a regular or a one-off basis.

Over the longer term, the results from the Swedish Crime Survey will come to constitute an invaluable tool for monitoring trends, identifying problems and finding solutions both within and outside of the criminal justice system. Knowledge relating to the public's exposure to crime, fear of crime and their levels of confidence in the justice system will provide an important basis for developing and improving the criminal justice system and its agencies, and may help to reduce crime and to improve perceptions of public safety.