



Processed hate crimes

Investigation and prosecution decisions for reported offences with an identified hate crime motive in the years 2013-2016 and 2018

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

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Summary

Hate crime constitutes crime where the motive can be attributed to fear of or hostility or hate towards a certain nationality, ethnicity, skin colour, religion, sexual orientation or transgender identity or expression. It can be aimed at individual persons, but also at associations and institutions or their representatives. Hate crime represents a lack of respect for the principle of equality, and is fundamentally an attack on human rights. It is therefore important for hate crimes to be studied and for statistics to be presented.

The purpose of this report is to examine processing decision types for those reported offences for which the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå) has identified as featuring a hate crime motive during the years 2013-2016 and 2018. The presentation of processing decision types on the basis of motive and type of crime provides more detailed knowledge about the legal system's treatment of hate crime.

The basis of the report is offences reported to the police during 2013-2016 and 2018 for which Brå, as part of the production of ongoing hate crime statistics, has identified a hate crime motive.

Processing decisions and crime structure per motive

The results of this report show that the proportion of reported offences with an identified hate crime motive that were processed without a criminal investigation having been initiated increased somewhat during this period, from 41 per cent in 2013 to 48 per cent in 2018. At the same time, there was a decrease in the proportion of reported offences for which an investigation was initiated but then closed, from 54 per cent in 2013 to 46 per cent in 2018. During the same period, the proportion of reported offences with person-based clearance remained at a relatively stable level of 3.4-5.2 per cent.

The number of reported offences with no suspect increased from just over 4,200 in 2013 to just over 5,700 in 2018. The number of reported crimes with a suspect, however, remained at a stable level throughout the entire period (around 1,300 crimes per year).

Among the offences reported during this period, the most common type of offence was the making of unlawful threats and non-sexual molestation. Regarded as a whole, the number of offences with an identified hate crime motive that were aimed at a person (violent crime, unlawful threats and non-sexual molestation, defamation and unlawful discrimination) decreased during this period, regardless of hate crime motive. In 2013, crimes against an individual accounted for 75 per cent of all crimes with an identified hate-crime motive, whilst the equivalent proportion in 2018 was 63 per cent. During the same period, there was an increase in the proportion of reported crimes for which there is typically no physical injured party, or where the injured party is a legal person (agitation against an ethnic group, the infliction of damage and graffiti), from 21 per cent in 2013 to 33 per cent in 2018.

The results that indicate an increase over time in the number of reported offences without a physical injured party or where the injured party is a legal person are therefore consistent with the increasing extent to which reported offences with an identified hate crime motive comprise damage, graffiti and agitation against an ethnic group, which are seldom aimed at a physical

person. It is likely that this is one of the reasons for the increase in reported offences for which there is no suspect, and for the increase in offences being processed without a criminal investigation having been initiated. There are certain variations in the trends over time when the offences are examined on the basis of the specific hate crime motives – see, for example, offences with an identified Christophobic motive. This is likely to be due to the number of reported offences with identified hate crime motives being too small for certain specific hate crime motives.

Processing decisions and crime structure per police region

The regional focus of this report concerns the situation in the police regions in 2018. In 2018, the proportion of reported crimes with an identified hate crime motive with person-based clearance varied between the police regions. The proportion of offences with person-based clearance was greatest in Police Region Nord and Police Region Öst, and smallest in Police Region Syd and Police Region Stockholm. The proportion of offences for which an investigation had been initiated but then closed also varied between the police regions. The proportion was greatest in Police Region Mitt, and smallest in Police Region Bergslagen. The proportion of offences that were processed without a criminal investigation having been initiated was relatively similar in comparisons of the police regions, although there were minor variations. The proportion was greatest in Police Region Stockholm, Police Region Bergslagen and Police Region Nord, and smallest in Police Region Mitt.

There was also a difference in the crime structure between the different police regions. The proportion of violent crimes was greatest in Police Region Mitt and Police Region Väst, and smallest in Police Region Syd. The proportion of unlawful threats and non-sexual molestation was also greatest in Police Region Mitt and Police Region Väst, although it was smallest in Police Region Stockholm. For reported crimes involving defamation, the proportion was greatest in Police Region Syd, and smallest in Police Region Nord. Reports involving damage and graffiti were most common in Police Region Stockholm, and least common in Police Region Bergslagen. The proportion of reported crimes involving agitation against an ethnic group was greatest in Police Region Bergslagen, and smallest in Police Region Mitt.

Processing decisions for reported crimes with an identified hate-crime motive compared with other reported crimes

Within the framework of this report, Brå has compared the processing decisions for both reported crimes with an identified hate crime motive and corresponding crime categories in the crime statistics for processed offences during the years 2014-2018. The comparison reveals that the distribution of the different processing decisions appears to be broadly similar for the offence categories violent crime, graffiti and damage, and unlawful discrimination. Conversely, a different pattern emerges for the distribution for the crime categories unlawful threats and non-sexual molestation, and defamation during the period studied. With regard to unlawful threats and non-sexual molestation with an identified hate crime motive, there was an increase in the proportion of offences for which an investigation was initiated but then closed, whilst there was a decrease in the proportion of crimes that were processed without a criminal investigation having been initiated. The crime statistics for processed offences do not reveal any clear patterns. With regard to defamation, there is no clear pattern in the variation for crimes

with an identified hate crime motive, while the proportion of defamation crimes in the crime statistics for processed offences both where an investigation was initiated but then closed and that were processed without a criminal investigation having been initiated remained at a stable level during the period.