

English summary of Brå report 2017:1



Swedish Crime Survey 2016

**brå**



# Swedish Crime Survey 2016

English summary of Brå report 2017:2

**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.

This report is a summary of the Swedish report  
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The Swedish report can be ordered from Brottsförebyggande rådet, [info@bra.se](mailto:info@bra.se)

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# Summary

This report presents the overall results of the 2016 Swedish Crime Survey (SCS). Approximately 11,900 persons responded to the questions, which is a 60 per cent response rate to the survey. The vast majority participated through telephone interviews, but a smaller percentage participated through posted questionnaires or Internet questionnaires. The results of the report are summarised below, broken down into five overall objectives: *exposure to crime, fear of crime, public confidence in the criminal justice system, and crime victims' contacts with the criminal justice system.*

## Exposure to crime

Questions regarding exposure to crime refer to victimization over the course of the previous year. This means that victimization reported in the 2016 SCS reflects victimization during 2015. 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. Questions relating to property offences (i.e. car theft, theft from motor vehicles, bicycle theft and burglary) refer to the victimization of the respondents' entire household. The results for these offence types are presented on the basis of the proportion of households in the population that were victimized during the course of 2015.

### *Offences against the person*

- Of those who answered the questions in the 2016 SCS, 13.3 per cent state that during the course of 2015, they were exposed to one or more of the types of offences referred to in the report as offences against the person: assault, threats, sexual offences, robbery, fraud or harassment. This is an increase as compared with the preceding year (in 2014 the percentage was 11.3%), but is approximately the same level as in 2005. When compared with 2014, the increase was greatest for threats, sexual offences, and harassment. The results from coming years will show whether the increase for the most recent year is the beginning of a new trend, or a temporary deviation from an otherwise relatively stable level.
- The most common types of offences are threats and harassment, while robbery and serious assaults are least common.
- Of the offences against the person reported in the 2016 SCS, approximately one-fourth (26%) were reported to the police. The reporting rate increased from 24 per cent in 2005 to 33 per cent in 2010. It then remained at approximately the same level until 2014, when the percentage of police reported offences against the person declined and returned

to the same level as when the survey was first conducted. The greatest reporting rate is for serious assault (61%) and the lowest is for sexual offences (9%).

- The majority of those who had been exposed to offences against the person state that they were exposed once during 2015, while 14 per cent (corresponding to 1.9% of the population ages 16–79) state that they were exposed four times or more. This group was exposed to somewhat more than one half (57%) of all incidents of offences against individual persons.

#### *Assault*

- In 2015, 2.0 per cent of the population (ages 16–79) were exposed to assault. This level is similar to the preceding year, when 2.1 per cent were exposed. Over time, exposure to assault has decreased somewhat, and the percentage of victims has declined by 0.7 percentage points since the survey was first conducted in 2005. However, it should be pointed out that the primary reduction has been among young men.
- Exposure to assault is more common for men than women, and most common in the 20–24 age bracket.
- Assault is most common in a public place and in most cases the perpetrator is unknown to the victim.

#### *Threats*

- In 2015, 5.0 per cent were exposed to threats, which is an increase compared with the preceding year (4.1% in 2014). The percentage of persons exposed to threats remained at a relatively stable level between 2005 and 2014. The results from coming years will show whether the increase in 2015 is the beginning of a new trend or a temporary deviation from an otherwise relatively stable level.
- Exposure to threats is more common among women than men, and most common in the 20-24 and 25-34 age brackets.
- Threats are most common in a public place and in most cases the perpetrator is unknown to the victim.

#### *Sexual offences*

- In 2015, 1.7 per cent of persons stated that they had been exposed to a sexual offence. This is an increase as compared with 2014, when 1.0 per cent stated that they had been exposed. Sexual offences remained at a relatively stable level for the period 2005-2012 with approximately 1 per cent exposure, and an increase occurred thereafter.
- Exposure to sexual offences is significantly more common among women than men, and most common in the 20-24 age bracket.
- Sexual offences are most common in a public place and in most cases the perpetrator is unknown to the victim.

#### *Robbery*

- Exposure to robbery has been relatively unchanged over the past few years. In the 2016 SCS, 0.9 per cent of respondents state that they were robbed in 2015.
- Exposure to robbery is more common among men than women, and is most common in the 16–19 and 20–24 age brackets.

*Fraud*

- The percentage of persons exposed to fraud has gradually increased from 2.5 per cent in 2006 to 3.5 per cent in 2015.
- Exposure to fraud in 2015 is more common among men than women. The greatest percentage of exposed persons is in the 25–34 age bracket.

*Harassment*

- The percentage of persons exposed to harassment in 2015 was 4.7 per cent. This is an increase as compared with 2014, when 4.0 per cent stated that they had been exposed. Between 2005 and 2010, the percentage of exposed persons gradually declined from 5.2 per cent to 3.5 per cent. Thereafter, the percentage increased between 2011 and 2015 to the same level as when the survey was commenced (when the percentage of exposed persons was 5.0%).
- Exposure to harassment is more common for women than men, and most common among the youngest in the survey (in the 16–19 age bracket).
- It is most common for the perpetrator to be unknown to the victim.

*Property offences*

- The responses show that in 2015, 9.5 per cent of households were exposed to car theft, theft out of or from a vehicle, bicycle theft, or burglary (all referred to as property offences). Exposure to these crimes has declined since 2006 (when the percentage was 12.6%). The most common property offence is bicycle theft while burglary and car theft are the least common.
- Of the property offences reported in the SCS, approximately one-half (48%) were reported to the police. The highest reporting rate is for burglary (74%) and the lowest is for bicycle theft (37%).
- Like burglary, car theft is a type of offence which has a high rate of police reporting. The percentage of reported incidents has been relatively stable since 2006.
- An overwhelming majority of those who were exposed to property offences state that they were exposed once in 2015, while a smaller percentage of the exposed households (2%) stated that they were exposed four times or more.

*Burglary*

- In 2015, 1.0 per cent of households were exposed to burglary. This is an increase as compared with 2014, when 0.8 per cent of households were exposed. Since the survey was commenced in 2006, the percentage of households exposed to burglary has been relatively stable at approximately 1 per cent.

*Car theft*

- In 2015, 0.5 per cent of households were exposed to car theft. This is an increase as compared with 2014, when 0.2 per cent of households were exposed. However, since the survey was commenced in 2006, the percentage of households exposed to burglary has been almost halved (from 0.9% in 2006 to 0.5% in 2015).

### *Theft out of or from a vehicle*

- The percentage of households exposed to theft out of or from a vehicle was 2.4 per cent in 2015. This is a small reduction as compared with 2014, when 2.6 per cent of households were exposed. During the period 2006-2010, the percentage of households exposed to theft out of or from a vehicle declined dramatically (from 5.0% to 2.8%) and exposure has continued to decline since then, albeit not as sharply.

### *Bicycle theft*

- In 2015, 6.3 per cent of households were exposed to bicycle theft. This is essentially the same level as 2014, when 6.1 per cent of households were exposed. Between 2006 and 2011, the percentage of exposed households remained relatively stable. In 2012, the percentage declined somewhat and, in the most recent surveys, exposure has remained stable at a somewhat lower level.

### *Fear of crime*

- Fear of crime<sup>1</sup> 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 (SCS) captures many – but by no means all – of the dimensions of fear and concern about crime that, prior to the SCS, had never been measured at the national level.

### *Feeling unsafe outdoors late at night*

- Four out of five people (81%) feel quite or very safe when they go out alone late in the evening in their own neighbourhood. The percentage of people who do not feel safe when they are outdoors alone late in the evening in their own neighbourhood has increased from 15 per cent in 2015 to 19 per cent in 2016.
- It is significantly more common for women to feel unsafe than for men. The percentage of persons who feel unsafe is particularly high among the youngest and oldest women in the survey.

### *Concern about crime in society*

- The percentage of persons with great concern about crime in society has increased from 22 per cent in 2015 to 25 per cent in 2016. However, since the survey commenced in 2006, the percentage has declined from 29 per cent.
- It is more common for women to have great concern about crime in society than for men. The percentage of persons with great concern about crime in society is lowest among the youngest age brackets and highest among the oldest age brackets.

### *Concern that family or friends will be the victim of crime*

- Almost one in three persons (29%) state that they are fairly often or very often worried that someone close to them, like a friend or family member, will be the victim of crime. This is 4 percentage points higher than the 2015 SCS.

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<sup>1</sup> The Swedish report employs a concept similar to "security" (trygghet) 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.

- It is more common for women to be worried that friends of family will be the victim of crime than for men. For both men and women, the percentage of those who fairly often or very often worry is greatest in the 45-54 age bracket.

#### *Concern of being exposed to crime*

- In 2016, 19 per cent state that they are concerned about being exposed to burglary, which is the same percentage as in 2015.
- It is slightly more common for women to be concerned about being exposed to burglary than for men. The percentage of persons who are concerned about burglary is greatest in the 45–55 age bracket.
- The percentage of persons anxious about being a victim of an attack or assault has increased from 11 per cent in 2015 to 15 per cent in 2016, which is the same level as in 2006.
- It is significantly more common for women to be anxious about being the victim of an attack or assault than for men. However, the percentage of women who are anxious varies a great deal depending on the age bracket. The highest percentage is among women in the 20–24 age bracket.
- The percentage of persons who are concerned of theft of, or vandalism to, their vehicle has declined from 22 per cent in 2006 to 14 per cent in 2016.
- The percentage of persons who state that they are concerned is essentially the same for women and men. The percentage of persons who are concerned about vehicle-related offences is greatest among persons in the 25–34 age bracket, while the youngest age bracket is least worried.

#### *Consequences of concern and fear of crime*

- Approximately one in three persons (34%) state that at some point during the year they chose another route or another means of transportation as a result of concern about crime, while slightly more than one in ten persons (12%) refrained from an activity as a result of this concern.
- Approximately two in ten persons (23%) believe that their quality of life is affected as a result of fear of crime, which is 10 percentage points greater than last year's survey.

## Public confidence in the criminal justice system

The criminal justice system comprises several different public agencies and the SCS asks questions about the criminal justice system as a whole as well as more specific questions regarding four of its agencies – the police, public prosecutors, the courts, and the prison and probation service.

#### *Public confidence in the criminal justice system and the different agencies*

- The results show that public confidence in the criminal justice system is relatively high among the population; 61 per cent state that they have a high degree of confidence in the criminal justice system as a whole. This is 3 percentage points lower as compared with 2015, but an increase of 7 percentage points since this was first measured in 2006.
- Trust in the police is the same as for the criminal justice system as a whole (61%). This is a decrease of 4 percentage points as compared

with the preceding year (65% in 2015) but a 6 percentage point increase as compared with 2006 (55%).

- One-half of the population ages 16–79 has a high degree of trust in the public prosecutors (50%), which is the same level as the preceding year. The percentage of persons with a high degree of confidence in the public prosecutors has increased from 42 per cent in 2006 to 50 per cent in 2016.
- The percentage of persons with a high degree of confidence in the courts has increased from 43 per cent in 2006 to 52 per cent in 2016.
- The greatest increase can be seen in the prison and probation service, where the percentage of persons with a high degree of trust has increased from 29 per cent in 2006 to 44 per cent in 2016.
- It is somewhat more common for women to have a high degree of trust in the criminal justice system than for men.
- The greatest percentage of people with very or fairly high confidence in the criminal justice system as a whole and for each individual agency are the youngest persons in the survey (16–19 age bracket).

*Confidence that the justice system treats those who are suspected of crimes fairly*

- The percentage of people with a high degree of confidence in that the criminal justice system, as a whole, treats those suspected of offences fairly has increased from 45 per cent in 2006 to 52 per cent in 2016, which is the same level as in 2015. A similar percentage (54%) have a high degree of confidence in that the police treats suspects fairly. Confidence in the police in this respect is somewhat lower for 2016 as compared with 2015 but, over time, the percentage has remained at a relatively stable level since the question was introduced in 2008.
- There are slight differences between the genders on the issue of trust in the police treating persons suspected of crime well. Men, however, tend to have a higher degree of confidence in that the criminal justice system as a whole treats those suspected of crime fairly.
- The greatest percentage with a high degree of confidence that the criminal justice system treats suspects fairly is in the 16-19 age bracket, while the lowest percentage with a high degree of confidence is among the oldest, the 75–79 age bracket.

*Confidence that the justice system treats those exposed to crime in a good way*

- The percentage of persons with a high degree of confidence in that the criminal justice system, as a whole, treats victims well has increased from 30 per cent in 2006 to 41 per cent in 2016, which is approximately the same level as in 2015.
- Confidence that the police treat victims well has been stable since the question was introduced in 2008 and was 53 per cent in 2015.
- It is essentially equally common for women and men to have a high degree of confidence that victims are treated well by both the police and the criminal justice system.
- The highest percentage of persons with confidence that the criminal justice system treats victims well is among the youngest while the lowest degree of trust appeared among the 65–74 age bracket.

## Crime victims' contacts with the justice system

When a person who has been the victim of an offence decides to report the incident to the police, they come in contact with, and gain experience of, one or more of the agencies within the criminal justice system. The experience is customarily limited to the person's contact with the police in connection with the police report, but may also comprise contact with public prosecutors, counsel for injured parties and, in the event the offence comes to trial, courts.

### *Experience of the police in connection with reporting a crime to the police*

- Slightly less than one in five persons aged 16-79 (17%) states that he or she was in contact with the police as a result of having been a victim of crime sometime during the last three years. Slightly more than one-half (55%) of these persons state that overall, they have positive experience of the police, and 18 per cent state that they have negative experience. The percentage of those who state that they have positive experience with the police has been more or less stable since 2007.
- Women state that they have positive experience of the police more often than men, and this difference can be observed throughout the entire measurement period. The difference between the genders was 11 percentage points in 2016.
- In those cases where the incident involved threats or violence, the experience with the police was more negative than in other cases.
- Results are mixed in respect of more specific aspects of contact with the police. Significantly more persons are satisfied with police accessibility and received treatment than with the information they received about the matter and with the way the police have gone about investigating and clearing up the crime.

### *Experience with public prosecutors or courts*

- Approximately 1.7 per cent of the population state that they have been in contact with public prosecutors as a result of having been the victim of crime sometime during the last three years, even if the investigation did not subsequently lead to trial. Slightly more than one-half of these individuals (51%) state that they experienced their contact with public prosecutors positively.
- Of the population aged 16-79, 1.3 per cent state that they have participated as an injured party in a trial during the most recent three years. Almost two-thirds (66%) of these persons state that they are satisfied with the way they were treated in court.
- Slightly more than half (55%) of those who participated in trial had a so-called counsel for the injured party. Of these persons, 77 per cent describe their experience of the counsel for the injured party as positive.
- Slightly more than two-thirds (71%) of those who were asked state that they felt that it was very easy or fairly easy to understand what happened during the trial, and the same percentage (71%) felt that they received sufficient information prior to the trial.