



School Survey on Crime 2019

On crime victimisation and
participation in crime

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English summary of report 2020:11

Brå – a knowledge centre for the criminal justice system

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Summary

The overall purpose of this survey is to describe trends in self-reported exposure to crime and participation in crime among students in year 9 over time. Year 9 is the last year of compulsory education in Sweden with students aged 15–16. The report is descriptive in nature and therefore does not provide answers as to underlying factors behind being a victim of crime or committing crime. Deeper analysis and explanation of the results may instead be presented in other more in-depth studies.

The survey was conducted in a sample of schools in Sweden using a questionnaire completed anonymously in school hours. A total of 5,826 students filled in the School Survey on Crime 2019.

The questions, which concern exposure to crime and participation in crime, address different types of crime. In terms of exposure to crime, the survey includes questions about different types of theft, assault, threats, robbery and sexual offences. It also studies experience of online harassment and of bullying. In terms of participation, the survey mainly studies theft, violence (including both assault and robbery), vandalism and narcotics offences. Additionally, it studies participation in certain other criminal behaviours (such as burglary, illegal file sharing and use of a fake ID or someone else's ID). Other types of risk behaviours are also addressed, e.g. truancy for a whole day or drinking to the point of intoxication. The reference period applied, both for exposure to crime and participation in crime, is the twelve months prior to answering the survey.

As a result of the major change in methodology introduced ahead of the data collection in 2015, the results in this report should be studied from 2015 onwards (read more on this in Brå 2016a). Appendix 5, however, conducts certain analyses and comparisons with previous results and other studies on participation in crime, as guidance for users interested in analysing trends over a longer period.

Almost half the students state that they were victims of an offence

The results of the School Survey on Crime 2019 show that almost half (48 percent) the students state that they were victims of theft, assault, threats, robbery or a sexual offence at least once in the previous twelve months. This is a slightly lower proportion than in 2017 when almost 51 percent stated that they had been victims of these offences, but is at the same level as in 2015.

Girls and boys state that they have been victims of a crime to roughly the same extent, but here the structure differs. It is most common for girls to have experienced theft, followed by sexual offences, while for boys theft is the most common offence experienced, followed by assault. Students born in Sweden with two parents born abroad stated being victims of a crime to a greater extent than a) students born in Sweden with at least one parent born in Sweden and b) students born abroad. The largest proportion of victims is found among students whose parents are divorced or separated and among students with limited financial resources.

It is common to be exposed to crime in the school environment

When asked where the crimes the students experienced took place, the results show that crime is prevalent in the school environment. This is the most common location for both minor and aggravated assault, as well as for physical offensive sexual behaviour among boys. Since 2015 the proportion stating that they have experienced minor assault in the school environment has increased, both among girls (from almost 38 percent in 2015 to just over 47 percent in 2019) and boys (from just over 58 percent to just over 65 percent).

Being forced to perform a sexual act is most common in someone else's home, while the most common location for threats is online/on social media.

Fear of crime has major consequences

In 2019 it was common for fear of crime to lead to students staying away from school for a whole day, avoiding going out in the evenings or avoiding specific people or places. It is most common for fear of crime to have some form of consequence among girls (56 percent compared with 46 percent among boys). On the other hand, the level among girls has remained stable since 2015, while the proportion among boys has risen (from 37 percent). When the results are

studied based on whether the student was exposed to crime in the past twelve months, it emerges that the increase since 2015 among boys can mainly be attributed to those who experienced being the victim of threats, assault, theft or sexual offences. For example, the proportion of boys who were victims of assault in the past twelve months and who stated that they had avoided particular places has increased from just over 35 percent in 2015 to just over 50 percent in 2019.

More than half of the students state that they participated in crime

In 2019, about half (52 percent) of students stated that they had committed a crime (theft, violent offences, vandalism or narcotics offences) on at least one occasion in the past twelve months, which is at about the same level as in 2017 and 2015.

All types of crime are most common among boys. However, the differences between the sexes are relatively small for theft and narcotics offences and greater for violent offences and vandalism. A slightly higher proportion of students born in Sweden with two parents born abroad stated that they have participated in crime, apart from theft, which is more common among students born in Sweden with at least one parent born in Sweden. It is also more common for students with divorced parents to participate in crime, and above all for students whose families have limited financial resources.

Common for students who participate in crime to also be victims of crime

Of the students who state in the School Survey on Crime 2019 that they committed any crime, the majority also state that they were the victim of a crime in the same year. Seen in terms of type of crime, for example, the proportion of victims is generally higher among girls and boys who committed narcotics offences.

Just over 58 percent of girls who committed narcotics offences state that they were the victim of sexual offences, which can be compared with just over 21 percent for girls as a whole. Among boys, almost 13 percent of those who committed narcotics offences were victims of robbery, which can be compared with 4.1 percent for boys in total.

Differences in views of friends' behaviour

When it comes to students' opinions on the behaviour of their friends, a large proportion of students in 2019 state that it would be completely OK/fairly OK for their friends to drink to the point of intoxication, and the result is similar between girls and boys (almost 42 percent for girls and just over 45 percent for boys). Otherwise there are generally major differences in attitudes between girls and boys.

For example, a little over 15 percent of girls and almost 32 percent of boys state that it would be completely OK/fairly OK if their friends hit someone who said insulting things. Furthermore, almost 10 percent of girls and almost 21 percent of boys state that it would be completely OK/fairly OK if their friends stole something from a shop.

Slight fall in the proportion who think the police do a good job

When asked if the police do a good job overall, half of the girls (just over 50 percent) and just over 43 percent of the boys in the School Survey on Crime 2019 state that they agree completely/to some extent. On the other hand, about one in four (just over 28 percent of the girls and 25 percent of the boys) stated that they neither agree nor disagree. Since 2015, the proportion agreeing that the police do a good job has fallen slightly among both girls (by 3 percentage points) and boys (by 5 percentage points).



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