



Sweden's response to the letter from the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, of 6 November 2020 concerning collection of information on femicide or gender-related killings of women

1. Existence of, or progress in, the creation of a national femicide watch and/or observatory on violence against women, or plan to do so.

The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention and The National Board of Health and Welfare are commissioned by the Government to provide statistics and basis in this area.

The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention is responsible for Sweden's official criminal statistics. The agency publishes annual information on the number of confirmed cases of lethal violence, including the total number of cases where the victim was a woman, and if the victim and the perpetrator were or had been in an intimate relationship. Regarding further information of domestic violence and violence against women (including homicide of women), such data is produced within the scope of specific studies. The latest study from the council includes information until the year 2014¹. Given the Covid-19 pandemic, the next study regarding domestic violence and violence against women (including homicide of women) will preliminary be conducted in 2022.

The National Board of Health and Welfare has a legal duty (Act 2007: 606) to conduct investigations on children who have died as the result of a crime and adults who have died as the result of a crime by someone next-of-kin or previously next-of-kin. In both cases, a prerequisite for investigation is the

¹https://www.bra.se/download/18.9eaaede145606cc8651ff/1399015861526/2014_8_Brott_i_nara_relationer.pdf

establishment of a likely connection between the crime and the child's or adult's need of protection. The aim of the law is to provide the government with helpful information on how to take further actions in order to prevent violence against children and intimate partner violence. Each investigation is initiated by the police or a prosecutor, with a duty to report to the board in cases of legally binding judgement in this area. The National Board of Health and Welfare has so far published five investigations – the latest report² includes data from 2016-2017. Since the first of January 2019 the Act (2007: 606) has changed to also include cases of gross violation of domestic violence against children and adults. This change seeks to progress more information in severe cases and to be more efficient with following measures. Experts from Governmental Agencies are under certain conditions obligated to participate in the investigations and to undertake an internal investigation connected to the investigation carried out by the Board.³ Given the Covid-19 pandemic, the next report has been delayed and will be published 31 January 2022.

In June 2018, the Government appointed a public inquiry to analyse the need for a special criminalisation of incitement or other mental influence to commit suicide (SOU 2019 32). In November 2020, the Government referred a proposal to the Council on Legislation in which the Government proposed a special criminalisation for urging and other mental influence to commit suicide. The question of incitement to suicide and enforced suicide is considered to be of particular importance in an honour-related context. The proposal is not yet decided upon.

Overall, it is difficult to make reliable assessments of the extent of the problem regarding honour-related violence, including fatal honour-related crimes. In July 2019, the Government appointed a committee of inquiry on, among others, honour-related violence and oppression. The committee presented its final report in October 2020 (SOU 2020:57), in which a new honour-based offence was proposed. The proposed offence could possibly generate more reliable statistics, as well as improved opportunities to protect victims of honour-related violence in an earlier stage. The inquiry's proposal is currently being circulated for formal consultation and is not yet decided upon.

2. Other measures or research and studies undertaken to prevent femicide or gender related killings of women, or homicide of women, by intimate partners or family members.

² <https://www.socialstyrelsen.se/globalassets/sharepoint-dokument/artikelkatalog/ovrigt/2018-1-37.pdf>

³ <https://www.regeringen.se/artiklar/2018/04/fler-fall-av-vald-mot-barn-och-narstaende-ska-utredas/>

Historically, measures on gender-based violence have tended to deal with the consequences of violence rather than the causes. The Swedish Government's ambition is to further strengthen the work on preventing violence and gender-related killings. This requires effective measures to prevent both the use and reoccurrence of violence. It also requires broader and more constructive involvement of men and boys, and breaking with norms that justify violence, the purchase of sexual services and other restrictions on the freedom of action and life choices of women and girls.

Since 2017, Sweden has had a ten-year national strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women (The National Strategy to End Men's Violence Against Women, 2017-2026). The strategy is based on several government inquiries, the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention, 2011), and previous work carried out in this area. The previously mentioned study regarding domestic violence (including homicide of women), is one of many important investigations for the strategy. The area of application of the strategy is all forms of physical, psychological and sexual violence and threats of violence against women and girls, including honour-related violence and oppression, prostitution and human trafficking. The strategy has four objectives: i) increased and effective preventive work to combat violence; ii) improved detection of violence and stronger protection for and support to women and children subjected to violence; iii) more effective crime-fighting and iv) improved knowledge and methodological development.⁴

In January 2018 the Swedish Gender Equality Agency was established to contribute to effective implementation of Swedish gender equality policy in following domains; i) analysis and follow-up of the development towards gender equality, ii) support to government agencies, regions and municipalities and iii) coordination and implementation of certain assignments in the area of gender equality and violence against women. Among other things, the agency is commissioned to prevent female genital mutilation and strengthen and develop preventive measures against violence against women, honour-related violence and oppression, prostitution and trafficking violence in close relationships.

Unequal gender power relations and traditional gender stereotypes can shape the likelihood of men and boys experiencing or perpetrating violence.

⁴ <https://www.government.se/information-material/2016/11/fact-sheet-national-strategy-to-prevent-and-combat-mens-violence-against-women/>

Therefore, more focus has been placed on challenging gender stereotypes and gender norms that justify violence. By this, the Government aims to prevent gender-related killings of women. The Government has taken steps to lowering the threshold for men to seek help to change violent behaviour, for example with a hotline for persons that seek help with their controlling and violent behaviour. The hotline for adults at risk of using violence against intimate partners was established in 2019. The hotline motivates actual perpetrators of gender-based violence to seek professional treatment and has already managed to reach a significant number of callers who had never previously contacted anyone about their violent behaviour. Moreover, investments in universal violence prevention in schools to change norms and attitudes associated with masculinity, violence and sexist behaviour are in progress. Among other things, the Government supports manual-based mentoring programmes provided in schools with the aim of changing norms to promote gender equality.

In June 2015, Linköping University was commissioned by the Government to gather and spread knowledge on violence and other abuses against children. The university has set up Barnafriid – a national knowledge centre on violence against children. Barnafriid is to promote the development of knowledge across professional boundaries and encourage and support collaboration and submit proposals for action to the Government. Barnafriid also has a specific remit regarding honour-related violence and oppression and trauma care.

Honour-related violence and oppression

Work against honour-related violence and oppression is a high priority for the Government. The main focus in recent years has been to conduct a coherent, multi-annual initiative to prevent and combat honour-related violence and oppression and improve support for victims. The initiative has several different elements, including mandates to the County Administrative Boards and other administrative bodies, and supporting local action and preventive action. Negative gender stereotypes which link masculinity to violence need to be counteracted. The Government intends to increase awareness of the issues and strengthen work in schools and social services.

The 21 County Administrative Boards have a strategic role in implementing the Government's national strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women. In addition to this, Östergötland County Administrative Board has a national mandate to prevent and combat honour-related violence and oppression, child marriage, forced marriage and genital mutilation of women and girls. As a pilot, five county administrative boards have started a work to

collaborate in the regions to detect and protect persons abused for honour-related violence. The initiative is a commission from the Government since 2018. In the Budget Bill for 2021, to be decided by the Parliament in December 2020, the Government proposes that the National Expert Team Against Honour-Related Violence and Oppression at the Östergötland County Administrative Board will be developed and made permanent in the form of a national centre of expertise on honour-based violence and oppression.

In the work to draw up indicators for following up the 2030 Agenda, Statistics Sweden has proposed that an indicator on honour-based violence and oppression be drawn up for the Swedish context.⁵

3. Information on the results of analysis of femicide cases, including the review of previous court cases and actions undertaken in this respect

As noted in question 1, the National Board of Health and Welfare has a legal duty (Act 2007: 606) to conduct investigations on children who have died as the result of a crime and adults who have died as the result of a crime by someone next-of kin or previously next-of-kin. As for the latest report from the National Board of Health and Welfare (data from 2016-2017), the Board has investigated 18 cases of female adults who have been killed by their male partner or former male partner and two more cases where a woman and a man was killed by another family member. Further, six cases of killed children have been investigated. In one of the child-cases, the legal prosecutor had been able to prove that the death was a result of a crime but not who the perpetrator was. The other perpetrators were sentenced – all men. Starting in 2008, the National Board of Health and Welfare have so far investigated altogether 46 children as victims, of which 45 percent were girls and 55 percent boys. With regard to adults, 52 investigations have been carried out of which 95 percent of the victims were women and 98 percent of the perpetrators were men.

Furthermore, the latest report states that most adult victims had been subjected to repeated acts of violence and had also been in contact with at least two agencies or administrative bodies a short time before their deaths. In none of the cases did the anyone at the agencies ask the victims any questions about potential experiences of violence. In addition to this, The National Board of Health and Welfare has conducted a survey (2015-2018) regarding the administrative routines, within the social services and the medical services, for asking about experiences of violence (both as a victim and as a perpetrator).

⁵https://www.scb.se/contentassets/b728ff73802041aea5b104c38a7ed2a6/mi1303_2017a01_br_x41br1702.pdf

The survey showed that very few asked such questions as a routine. Not even when there were indications of violence were such questions asked to a sufficient extent. Since these reports were published, the Government has undertaken action in this respect.

In August 2019, the Government commissioned five agencies, including the National Board of Health and Welfare, to improve their work with the detection of violence. This includes changing and improving their routines for asking about experiences of violence. By introducing this measure to strengthen the work against violence, the Government hopes to increase the prospects of saving lives.

4. Administrative data (numbers/percentage) on homicide/femicide or gender-related killings of women for the last 3 years (2018-2020), disaggregated as follows:

4.1 Total number of homicides of women and men

4.2 Number of intimate partner homicides/femicides (i.e. based on the relationship between victim and perpetrator, the number of women and number of men killed by their partners/ex-partners, husband/ex-husband etc.)

4.3 The number of family related homicide/femicide of men and of women (i.e. based on the family relationship between the victim and perpetrator, the number of women and number of men killed by family members, but not by intimate partners)

4.4 Other femicides or killings of women by unrelated perpetrator/s but gender-related or with a sexual motive;

Year	Total number of homicides of women/men (% incl)	Total number homicide/femicide of women/men killed by intimate partners*	Total number homicide/femicide of women/men killed by a family member	Other gender related killings of women by unrelated perpetrator
2018	In total 108 cases. 33 women (31 %)/75 men (69 %)	In total 26 cases. 22 women/4 men.	N.a.	N.a.
2019	In total 111 cases. 25 women (23 %)/86 men (77 %)	In total 18 cases. 16 women/2 men.	N.a.	N.a.
2020	No available data	No available data	No available data	No available data

* by intimate partner or by previous intimate partner

It is not uncommon that deaths first reported as lethal violence prove to have other causes. Therefore, all cases of lethal violence that are reported in one year are analyzed manually by the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, and the result is published in March the following year. In 2019, the victim was a woman in 25 of the cases of confirmed lethal violence (23 %). In 16 of these cases, the perpetrator was, or had been, an intimate partner to the victim. Reliable data on lethal violence against women by an intimate partner in 2020 will be available in March 2021. However, preliminary statistics of reported assault and reported sexual offences is published monthly on the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention's website.

4.5 Data if available, disaggregated as above, of femicide during the Covid-19 pandemic (indicating the time period e.g. since March 2020 to the end of October 2020) and its comparison with such data before the Covid-19 pandemic.

Restrictions regarding the Covid-19 pandemic in Sweden were implemented gradually in mid-March 2020. There are no official orders of a lockdown or curfew in Sweden. However, the general recommendations are to limit social contacts and to stay at home in case of symptoms of a cold and, whenever possible, to work from home. Since March 2020 students at university (initially including high school) have studied from home. The societal and economic effects due to uncertainties caused by financial stress and disruption of everyday activities and routines, are affecting individuals, including women and children who are victims of domestic or gender-based violence.

Crime statistics are influenced by both legal and statistical factors, and by the extent to which crime is reported and registered. When analyzing Swedish crime statistics, one is advised to consider that all reported events are recorded as crimes even if some of them are later found not to have constituted criminal offences, and that several offences of the same kind against a single victim will be counted separately. This means that for example if a woman reports to the police that she has been assaulted by her husband every day the past year, this will be registered as 365 offences in Swedish crime statistics.

As noted in question 4.4, reliable data on lethal violence will not be available until March 2021. However, preliminary results indicate that the number of reported cases of assault against women by intimate partner has increased during some of the months during the pandemic. Due to the implementation of new crime codes on assault against women in January 2019 and changes in the Police's systems for handling crime reports in February 2020 it is difficult to interpret changes in the sub-categories of reported assaults of women by

someone familiar to the victim, including assault against women by intimate partner. Together with the Swedish Police Authority and the Swedish Prosecution Authority, the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention analyses the ongoing development of reported cases. The council currently plans to conduct further in-depth studies. This said, it should be noted that the levels of unreported crimes are particularly high when it comes to domestic violence, meaning that it is difficult to draw conclusions about the levels of actual crime.

In June 2020, the Government assigned the County Administrative Boards to coordinate the situation in the municipalities in order to prevent social problems and exposure during the Covid-19 pandemic. In the second report published in October 2020, 12 out of the 21 County Administrative Boards noted that reports of concern to social services regarding domestic violence was at a regular level. Four County Administrative Boards reported an increase in exposure to violence and honour-related violence in a few municipalities. In addition, the report also indicates an increased demand on women's shelters and helplines in the counties.