



Crime Prevention in Sweden

Current status and development needs 2024

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This report is a summary of the Swedish report Det brottsförebyggande arbetet i Sverige.

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English Summary

Summary

Since 2017, Brå has been commissioned by the Government to describe, each year, crime prevention in Sweden. This report is part of a series of annual reports, the purpose of which is to provide an overall description of the way in which crime prevention proceeds and develops on the local, regional and national levels.

The report is mainly based on documentation from surveys carried out by Brå in 2023, directed at municipalities, local police districts, county administrative boards and police regions, as well as a sample of national authorities. The report also describes the results of Brå's national monitoring, networking and other ongoing work, and case-processing related to Brå's allocation of government grants.

Much crime prevention at local, regional and national level during 2023 was focused on the Municipal Responsibility for Crime Prevention Act (Lagen om kommuners ansvar för brottsförebyggande arbete (2023:196)), which took effect in the summer of 2023, as well as the Police Authority's strategy for crime prevention, decided on in 2022. This annual report thus emphasises these policies, as their impact on crime prevention in Sweden can be decisive in the long term.

The Municipal Responsibility for Crime Prevention Act (2023:196) is referred to below as the Act (2023:196), while the Police Authority's strategy for crime prevention is referred to as the police crime-prevention strategy.

Local crime prevention

Municipalities and local police districts are key stakeholders in local crime prevention work. For that reason, since 2017, municipal officials and police have separately responded to a Brå survey each year, and these surveys provide the basis for the chapter on local crime prevention. The Act (2023:196) took effect immediately after the survey of municipalities and local police districts was concluded.

Brå discerns numerous indications that, even before coming into effect, the law has had some impact on the work of municipalities. Many municipalities have strengthened their HR resources, with increasing numbers of employees undergoing crime prevention training, and the number of municipal co-ordinators dedicating in excess of 50 percent of their working hours to crime prevention has increased to a certain extent, compared to previous measurements. Collaboration between municipalities and the police is also deemed to have continued to develop, which is significant as the Act (2023:196) entails statutory responsibility for local crime prevention on the part of both parties.

The majority of municipalities have in place the organisational resources prescribed by the act. Slightly more than nine out of ten municipalities have an explicit collaboration agreement, representing an increase in the last two years. Most of these collaboration agreements are between municipalities and the police. Nearly nine out of ten municipalities have a crime prevention council, a slight increase from the previous year, and almost all local police districts report participating in one or several crime prevention councils. These crime prevention councils are often represented by a breadth of stakeholders, both representatives of municipal activities and external parties. A large share of municipalities had also designated a co-ordinator for crime prevention issues, as prescribed by the act, before the act had come into effect.

Municipalities must generate a situational picture regarding local crime, which scarcely one in four municipalities had done prior to the act coming into effect. A situational picture includes needs analysis as well as root-cause analysis. Based on the situational picture, municipalities must develop an action plan to be followed up at least on a biennial basis. Scarcely one half of municipalities had an action plan prior to the entry into effect of the act.

The measurement of knowledge-based crime prevention by municipalities and local police districts shows the lowest result in many years in terms of stakeholders carrying out needs analysis or root-cause analysis. Many municipalities attribute this to their use of needs analysis carried out by other stakeholders, or report having a problem description which is not considered a formal needs analysis. Lack of time is the most common reason why municipalities have not carried out root-cause analysis. The share of municipalities and local police districts with an action plan is in line with previous measurements, upon asking the question for the first time. The share following up measures already taken has fallen.

On the other hand, the number of municipalities carrying out measures to prevent crime has clearly increased since previous years, and 93 percent of municipalities reported doing so in 2023. This clearly represents an increase since 2018 and 2019, when roughly half of municipalities reported carrying out such measures.

In their responses to open-ended questions, many municipalities indicate that one benefit of the Act (2023:196) is that it clarifies the requirement that crime prevention be knowledge-based. Yet many municipalities also report their extensive needs for support in complying with the act, especially municipalities with limited resources to devote to crime prevention.

Regional crime prevention

The regional co-ordinators for crime prevention in the 21 county administrative boards and in the seven police regions are key stakeholders in providing support to local stakeholders carrying out crime prevention. For several years, these co-ordinators have responded to a survey by Brå, which forms the basis of the chapter on regional crime prevention.

During 2023, the regional crime prevention co-ordinators working in county administrative boards and the police regions have also made preparations and increased resources, based on the entry into effect of the Act (2023:196) and implementation of the police crime-prevention strategy. The county administrative boards have been given a new assignment by the Government to provide municipalities with support which is coordinated, adapted to their needs, and practical. This assignment places new demands on the resources of the country administrative boards and their ability to provide support, but the law has also facilitated providing more support to local stakeholders. During 2023, the work of police region co-ordinators has focused on various aspects of implementing the strategy. This includes raising the level of knowledge regarding crime prevention to numerous ranks and positions within the Police Authority. Many police region co-ordinators report that one challenge of providing regional support for crime prevention is the prioritisation of and focus on organised crime at the national level. This entails a redistribution of resources within the Authority, which results in the de-prioritisation of long-term crime prevention.

Regional co-ordinators are now greater in number, both in country administrative boards and in the police regions, in order to provide support at the local and regional levels regarding crime prevention issues. Because work based on knowledge and problem-solving must be strengthened at the local level, it is all the more important that future efforts ensure that support from regional co-ordinators reaches those who need it the most.

National crime prevention

Several Government initiatives were undertaken in 2023 regarding crime prevention at the national level, resulting in numerous new assignments for national authorities as well as new inquiries dedicated to crime prevention issues. The Police Authority is the public authority with the most explicit mandate for crime prevention, and its new crime prevention strategy, which is intended to suffuse the entire public authority, makes it possible for crime prevention to have a big effect in the future.

Several public authorities have received the same or complementary assignments, in order to prevent certain types of crime, such as financial crime and organised crime as well as unlawful influence. Regional centres to combat workplace crime have also been established, with numerous public authorities involved in this work. On 1 January 2024, the Payment Authority was established, in order to reduce cheating and benefit fraud in the welfare system. Prior work resulted in assignments to numerous public authorities, as well as a new inquiry regarding the possibility of connecting municipal activities to the Payment Authority.

Crime prevention directed towards children and young people has been one focus. Among other efforts, numerous public authorities were assigned to establish a new structure for collaboration at national, regional and local levels in late 2023, related to children and young people in organised crime (“BOB”).

Work going forward must adopt reforms which have been ongoing for several years and are expected to result in new social services legislation in 2024, granting social services a greater role and mandate in crime prevention issues. The role and responsibility of schools, with regard to crime prevention, is also the subject of an inquiry, with proposals expected in 2024 regarding how statutory responsibility for crime prevention should be instituted in the school system.

Engaging in collaboration to ensure that the knowledge and resources of various organisations and activities are used properly is crucial for crime prevention, both now and in the future.

Brå's development work during 2023

Brå's development work has largely been based on the Government assignment which Brå received in early 2023, and which aims to develop national support for crime prevention. Pursuant to this work Brå has, among other things, set up an organisation for providing needs-based, practical support to municipalities and other stakeholders; carried out support interventions directed at county administrative boards; and increased the number of training places for Brå's web-based crime prevention training.

As one part of the new Government mandate, Brå must now track the work of municipalities based on the Act (2023:196). Brå will do so using the same local surveys on which this report is based, a process which will include providing feedback to municipalities. Development work has been carried out to this end during 2023, resulting in initial feedback to municipalities, during spring of 2024, regarding their status prior to the law coming into effect.

The new Government assignment also includes continued coordination and development of the national coordination of crime prevention, as well as contributing to knowledge development regarding crime prevention measures. Brå has also continued its work pursuant to two previous Government assignments with initiatives directed at municipalities which encompass particularly disadvantaged areas and municipalities engaged in implementation of the Group Violence Intervention strategy.

Furthermore, the Government decided on a new mandate, in June of 2023, regarding a new regulation concerning government grants for municipal crime prevention work. This financial aid, together with previous regulations, entails a tenfold increase in Brå's allocation of government grants.

Given the various circumstances of individual municipalities, Brå has strengthened resources through 2023 in order to offer a breadth of interventions and various forms of support, which Brå will offer starting in 2024.

Conclusions and closing remarks

The year 2023 has been demanding for those engaged in crime prevention issues, not least with the new Act (2023:196) which has come into effect. For years, greater ambition has been notable at many levels, as increasing numbers of stakeholders are given and assume responsibility in crime prevention issues, both in collaboration and on their own.

Brå sees a need to remark on certain shortcomings in crime prevention. The first of these is the absence of collaboration with or support to the local level from the regions, e.g., health and psychiatric care providers. The other shortcoming which Brå wishes to remark on is the need for more explicit collaboration between municipal and national stakeholders, in order to reduce recidivism rates, among youth as well as adults, following imprisonment or placement under the Care of Young Persons Act ("LVU").

During 2023, much attention has been paid to interventions and reforms directed against financial crime and organised crime. This prioritisation is certainly justified by the increase in serious crime seen in criminal milieux, as such crime has an extensive impact on society. Yet while it is important to combat financial crime and organised crime with crime prevention, such crime is not the sole focus, nor is it present everywhere. It is of supreme importance that all municipalities and local police districts ensure that they have a situational picture enabling them to make decisions and take measures which are based on strong evidence, in order to prevent crime on the basis of the local context at present. Furthermore, new reforms are currently underway or the subject of inquiries regarding the roles and responsibilities of social services and schools in crime prevention issues, which are expected to impact municipal crime prevention as a whole.

Concerning the results presented from the local, regional and national levels, Brå wishes to indicate the extent of work which is imminent or already underway, as well as the fact that all stakeholders, not least municipalities, must receive the necessary time and support to implement new working methods and routines.



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