



School Survey on Crime 2023

On crime victimisation and participation in crime

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

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This report is a summary of the Swedish report School Survey on Crime 2023 2024:10
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urn:nbn:se:bra-1212
ISSN 1100-6676

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English summary of Brå report 2024:10

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Summary

The overall purpose of this survey is to describe trends over time in self-reported exposure to crime and participation in crime among students attending lower-secondary schools in year 9. The report is descriptive in nature and therefore does not provide answers as to underlying factors behind being a victim of crime or participating in crime. More detailed analyses and explanations 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 during school hours. A new feature of this year's survey is that it was conducted using a web-based questionnaire instead of a postal survey, which was the previous procedure. In parallel, extra sampling was carried out by postal survey in order to evaluate the change of method. The evaluation found no significant differences between the results of the two surveys. The results of the 2023 School Survey on Crime are therefore based solely on the online survey, in which a total of 4,228 students participated.

The questions, which relate to exposure to crime and participation in crime, to some extent address different types of crime. In terms of exposure to crime, the survey includes questions on different types of theft, assault, threats, robbery and sexual offences. It also studies experiences of online harassment and exposure to bullying. In terms of participation, the survey mainly studies theft, violence (including both assault and robbery), vandalism and narcotics offences. In addition, it studies participation in certain other criminal behaviours (such as burglary, illegal file sharing and the 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 in relation to both exposure to crime and participation in crime is the twelve months prior to answering the questionnaire.

Almost half the students report having been victims of an offence

The results of the 2023 School Survey on Crime show that 45.3 per cent of the students stated that they had been victims of theft, assault, threats, robbery or a sexual offence at least once in the previous twelve months. The

proportion of victimised students is at about the same level as in 2021, but before that, victimisation has been at a higher level. In 2023, victimisation for sexual offences is at its lowest level for the entire measurement period (12.5%).

Boys and girls report that they have been victims of a crime to roughly the same extent. Both boys and girls are most likely to be victims of theft (26.2% and 25.9% respectively). After that, boys are most commonly victims of assault (21.4%), while among girls sexual offences are most common (17.9%). Foreign-born students and students born in Sweden to foreign-born parents stated that they had been victims of a crime to a greater extent than students born in Sweden with at least one Swedish-born parent. The largest proportion of victims is found among students from homes with limited financial resources, students whose parents are divorced or separated, and students with one or both parents out of a job.

Exposure to crime is common in the school environment

Students who report being victims of crime are asked a follow-up question regarding where the crime took place. In this year's survey, several response options were added to this question, which means that the results are not comparable historically.

The surveyed students who were victims of a crime often report that it occurs in the school environment. This is the most common location for boys exposed to both minor and aggravated assault, as well as for offensive physical sexual behaviour. It is also common to be threatened in the school environment as well as online or on social media. For girls, being subjected to offensive physical sexual behaviour in someone else's home is most common. Those students who are exposed to being forced to perform a sexual act report that this also takes place in someone else's home or in their own home. Students who have been victims of robbery report that it often took place outdoors.

Girls commonly victims of offensive sexual behaviour in digital environments

Girls generally report a higher rate of victimisation in digital environments than boys, and the clearest gender difference emerges in the question regarding whether they have received unwanted sexual or nude pictures

sent by someone. Four out of ten girls, or 41.9 per cent, report having been victimised, while the corresponding figure for boys is 11.3 per cent. Around 5.4 per cent of boys and 6.9 per cent of girls report having been exposed to someone photographing them in a sensitive context.

Among girls, the share of those who have experienced someone writing something offensive about them has increased significantly over the measurement period, from approximately 29-30 per cent, in 2015-2021, to 37.2 per cent, in 2023. The proportion of girls who have been the victims of someone posting pictures or film clips of them against their will has varied over the years. Among boys, the proportion who have been exposed to someone writing something offensive about them has also increased during the measurement period, from around 19-20 per cent, in 2015-2021, to 25.2 per cent, in 2023, while the proportion of boys who have been victims of someone posting pictures or film clips of them against their will has varied during the measurement period without any clear trend.

The perpetrator is often a friend or acquaintance

Students who report having been victims of crime are also asked about their relationship to the perpetrator at the time of the most recent incident. In the case of assault, both boys and girls are most commonly victimised by a friend or acquaintance. For minor assault, the proportion of victims who were assaulted by a friend or acquaintance is 45.6 per cent among boys and 30.4 per cent among girls. Among victims of aggravated assault, a total of 32.0 per cent were victimised by a friend or acquaintance.

Similarly, in terms of offensive physical sexual behaviour among boys, a friend or acquaintance is most frequently the perpetrator (55.8%). Among girls who are victims of offensive physical sexual behaviour, the perpetrator is most commonly a stranger (26.9%), but just over one in ten (11.5%) report being victimised by a romantic partner or someone they are dating. Students who have been subjected to being forced to perform a sexual act report that the perpetrator was a romantic partner or someone they date (21.8%), or that the perpetrator was a friend or acquaintance (21.2%), to roughly the same extent. Among students who have been threatened, it is most common to be threatened by a stranger (41.2% among victims who are boys and 23.3% among victims who are girls).

The student usually tells a friend about the incident

A large proportion of students who report being the victim of one of the offences referred to in the questions also report that they have told someone about the most recent incident. Most often they tell a friend, but a relatively large proportion also tell one or both of their parents. However, as regards to sexual offences, fewer students generally tell their parents; it is much more common to tell a friend. A smaller proportion of boys than girls who were victims of offensive physical sexual behaviour told anyone at all about the incident, 45.8 per cent of the victims who are boys and 72.9 per cent of the victims who are girls.

Increased fear of crime has major consequences

Among students, it is common for fear of crime to lead to students avoiding specific people or places, avoiding going out in the evenings or staying away from school for a whole day. It is most common for fear of crime to have some form of consequence among girls (61.8%, compared with 51.1% among boys). Compared to 2021, the proportion has increased for both boys and girls (from 44.3% and 57.0% respectively), but since 2015 the proportion among boys has increased significantly more than among girls.

When the results are studied based on whether the student had been exposed to crime in the past twelve months, it is clear that the increase among boys can be attributed to all types of crime studied (with the exception of robbery, which could not be broken down by gender in all years). For example, the proportion of boys who had been victims of assault in the past twelve months and who also stated that they had avoided particular places has increased from 35.4 per cent, in 2015, to 52.3 per cent, in 2023. Overall, the proportion of students reporting that fear of crime has had some consequence has increased, among both boys and girls and regardless of whether they have been victims of a crime.

Similarly, the proportion of students reporting that fear of crime has had consequences is greater among those who say they have been bullied to some extent in the past 12 months. For example, 58.4 per cent of boys who have been bullied and 68.6 per cent of girls who have been bullied report that they have avoided certain places for fear of being the victim of a crime. This compares to 32.2 per cent of boys and 42.6 per cent of girls who report not having been bullied in the last 12 months.

Half of the students report that they have participated in crime

Roughly half (51.3%) of the 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 about the same proportion as the rest of the measurement period.

All types of crime, with the exception of theft, are most common among boys, but overall the same proportion of boys and girls report having participated in crime (51.3 and 51.2% respectively). This differs from previous years, when boys were more likely than girls to report participation in crime. Differences between the genders are relatively small for narcotics offences and are larger for violent offences and vandalism. A slightly greater proportion of students born in Sweden to two foreign-born parents and foreign-born students stated that they had participated in aggravated violent offences, serious theft and narcotics offences, while reporting participation in other forms of theft and vandalism is more common among students born in Sweden to at least one Swedish-born parent. It is also more common for students with divorced or separated parents to participate in crime, and above all for students whose families have limited financial resources.

Students who participate in crime are also commonly victimised

Among the students who stated that they committed at least one crime in the 2023 School Survey on Crime, a large proportion also stated that they had been the victim of a crime. Viewed in terms of participation in different types of crime, the proportion of victims is generally higher among girls and boys who have committed narcotics offences.

Among boys, 20.7 per cent of those who had committed narcotics offences have been victims of sexual offences, which can be compared with 2.6 per cent of boys who have not committed any crime. Of the boys who have committed narcotics offences, 43.1 per cent have also been victims of assault, which can be compared with 10.4 per cent of boys who have not committed any crime.

Among girls who have committed narcotics offences, 51.8 per cent report being victims of sexual offences, which can be compared with 7.9 per cent of girls who have not committed any crime. Of those who have committed

narcotics offences, 39.3 per cent have been victims of assault, which can be compared with 6.7 per cent of girls who have not committed any crime.

Differences in views of friends' behaviour

The response options to the questions concerning acceptance of different types of behaviour have been reformulated in this year's survey, which means that the results are not comparable historically.

Overall, there are large differences between boys and girls in the acceptance of different types of behaviour; the acts referred to in the questions are commonly considered OK by a greater proportion of boys than girls. For example, 38.7 per cent of boys say they would consider it completely OK or fairly OK if their friend hit someone who said insulting things, while the corresponding proportion among girls is 23.3 per cent.

High level of confidence in the police

The response options to the questions concerning students' perceptions of the police have been reformulated in this year's survey, which means that the results are not comparable historically.

When asked whether the police do a good job overall, 67.4 per cent of boys and 69.1 per cent of girls stated that they agree completely/to some extent. A large proportion of boys and girls also agree with the statement that it is important to report school vandalism to the police (64.2 and 67.5% respectively). In terms of the proportion of students who agree with the statement that they would be treated fairly by the police if they were suspected of a crime they did not commit, a larger proportion of boys than girls (72.6 and 68.2% respectively) agree.



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urn:nbn:se:bra-1212