

An illustration in shades of green and black. In the background, there is a school building with several windows and a set of double doors. In the middle ground, a group of stylized human figures is walking. In the foreground, two young women are shown in profile, looking towards the right. The style is minimalist and graphic.

School Survey on Crime 2021

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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English summary of Brå report 2022:5

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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 in year 9. Year 9 is the final 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. 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 total of 5,050 students completed the 2021 School Survey on Crime.

The questions, which relate to exposure to crime and participation in crime, 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 of 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 survey.

As a result of a major change in the survey methodology introduced prior to the data collection in 2015, the results presented in this report should be studied from 2015 onwards (read more on this in Brå 2016a).

Almost half the students report having been victims of an offence

The results of the 2021 School Survey on Crime show that 45 percent 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. This is a slightly lower proportion than in 2019, when 48 percent stated that they had

been victims of these offences, and it is the lowest proportion recorded since 2015.

Boys and girls state that they have been victims of a crime to roughly the same extent, but the structure of their victimisation differs. For boys, it is most common to have experienced theft, followed by assault. For girls, the most common offences are sexual offences, followed by theft.

Students born abroad and those born in Sweden to two parents who were born abroad 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, followed by students whose parents are divorced or separated.

Exposure to crime is common in the school environment

When asked where the incidents of victimisation had taken place, the results show that crime is prevalent in the school environment. This is the most common location for exposure to both minor and aggravated assault, as well as for offensive physical sexual behaviour among boys. Since 2015 the proportion stating that they have experienced minor assault in the school environment has increased among both boys (from 58 percent to 68 percent) and girls (from 38 percent to 50 percent).

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

Fear of crime has major consequences

In 2021 it was 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 (57 percent compared with 44 percent among boys). On the other hand, since 2015 this proportion has increased somewhat more among boys than among girls. Compared to 2019, however, the percentage among girls has increased slightly, while it is at about the same level or slightly lower for boys.

When the results are studied based on whether the student had been exposed to crime in the past twelve months, the increase noted among boys since 2015 can mainly be attributed to those who have experience of being the victim of threats, assault, theft or sexual offences. 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 just over 35 percent in 2015 to 46 percent in 2021. During the same period, the percentage of boys exposed to sexual crimes and who stated that they deliberately avoided certain places has increased from 36 percent (2015) to 49 percent (2021). However, the proportion reporting consequences of fear of crime in 2021 is roughly the same as, or slightly lower than, it was in 2019, regardless of the type of exposure to crime.

Half of the students state that they have participated in crime

In 2021, half (50 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 about the same proportion as in 2017 and 2015 but is slightly lower than in 2019 (52 percent).

All types of crime, with the exception of theft, are most common among boys. However, the differences between the sexes are relatively small for narcotics offences and are larger for violent offences and vandalism. A slightly higher proportion of students born in Sweden to two foreign-born parents stated that they had participated in violent offences, vandalism and narcotics offences, while theft is more common among students born in Sweden to at least one Swedish-born parent. 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.

A clear overlap between victimisation and participation in crime

Of the students who stated that they committed at least one crime in the 2021 School Survey on Crime, the majority 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, 50 percent of those who had committed narcotics offences had been victims of assault, which can be compared with 21 percent for boys in total. Also, of those who had committed narcotics offences, 42 percent had been victims of theft, compared to 26 percent for boys in total.

Among girls, 66 percent of those who had committed narcotics offences stated that they had been the victim of sexual offences, which can be compared with 24 percent for girls as a whole. Also, of those who had committed narcotics offences, 49 percent had been victims of theft, compared to 17 percent for girls in total.

Differences in views of friends' behaviour

When it comes to students' opinions on the behaviour of their friends, a large proportion of the participating students in 2021 stated that it would be completely OK/fairly OK for their friends to drink to the point of intoxication, and this proportion is similar for boys and girls (43 percent for both). Otherwise there are generally major differences in attitudes between boys and girls.

For example, 34 percent of boys and 20 percent of girls stated that it would be completely OK/fairly OK if their friends hit someone who said insulting things. Further, 22 percent of boys and 12 percent of girls stated that it would be completely OK/fairly OK if their friends stole something from a shop.

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

When asked whether the police do a good job overall, around half (48 percent of the boys and 52 percent of the girls) stated that they agree completely/to some extent. On the other hand, about one in four (26 percent of the boys) and almost one-third (30 percent) of the girls stated that they neither agree nor disagree. Compared to 2019, the proportion agreeing that the police do a good job has increased slightly, primarily among boys.



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