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Nationella trygghetsundersökningen

English summary of Brå report No 2009:2

# The Swedish Crime Survey 2008

Victimization, fear of crime and public confidence  
in the criminal justice system

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Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention

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Victimization, fear of crime and public confidence  
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**English summary of Brå report No 2009:2**

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

The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå) works to reduce crime and improve levels of safety in society by producing data and disseminating knowledge on crime and crime prevention work.

This report is a summary of the Swedish report *Nationella trygghetsundersökningen 2008. Om utsatthet, trygghet och förtroende, report nr 2009:2*. The Swedish report can be ordered from Brottsförebyggande rådet, [info@bra.se](mailto:info@bra.se)

Production:  
The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå)  
Information and Publications Division  
Box 1386, SE-111 93 Stockholm, Sweden  
Tel: +46 (0)8 401 87 00, fax: +46 (0)8 411 90 75  
E-mail: [info@bra.se](mailto:info@bra.se)  
Brå on the internet: [www.bra.se](http://www.bra.se)  
Authors: Jennie Wigerholt, Åsa Irlander  
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# Foreword

Crime and the fear of crime are social issues that are attracting an increasing amount of attention, and the demands being made on society's capacity to prevent these problems are increasing. There is also a growing need to monitor and analyze crime and the fear of crime.

In 2005, the Swedish Government commissioned the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå) and other criminal justice agencies to plan and implement an annual survey of exposure to crime and levels of public safety (the Swedish Crime Survey) in Sweden. The first wave of data collection took place in 2006 and the principal findings were presented in a report in 2007. This publication is a summary of the third report of principal findings, based on the third wave of data collection, which was conducted in 2008.

The Swedish Crime Survey covers a very broad range of issues, and this report presents the overall results relating to victimization, fear of crime and public confidence in the criminal justice system. The report contains few detailed analyses or explanations of the findings presented. In depth studies of this sort are instead presented separately in the form of special studies. A few recent examples are studies on reporting propensities and the significance of segregation for public perceptions of safety (Brå reports 2008:12 and 2008:16). Furthermore, studies on confidence in the criminal justice system and crime victims' experiences of their contacts with the criminal justice system are underway.

This year's report includes new results accounting for perceptions of safety and fear of crime among victims of specific types of crime, such as assault or robbery, and also results on the general populations' level of confidence in the police's ability to treat victims well and suspects fairly.

Knowledge of victimization, fear of crime and public confidence provides an important basis for developing and improving the criminal justice system and other agencies, and may help to reduce crime and increase perceptions of safety.

The principal authors of the report are Jennie Wigerholt and Åsa Irlander, both research analysts/statisticians working at Brå. Professor Hanns von Hofer of the Department of Criminology at Stockholm University has reviewed the report and provided valuable feedback.

Finally, we would like to thank the 15,000 or so people who took part in the third wave of the Swedish Crime Survey, thereby making studies of this kind and reports such as this one possible.

Stockholm, May 2009

*Jan Andersson*  
Director-General

*Louise Ekström*  
Acting Head of Division

# Introduction

It is rare for a day to go by without concerns about crime or public safety being raised in some way – and it is often the most serious types of crime that receive publicity. In 2008, a series of high-profile incidents occurred in Sweden, several of which involved serious violent offences against children. Examples include the homicides in Arboga, where two small children lost their lives and their mother was seriously injured following an attack in their home, and the case of a ten-year-old girl in Dalarna who disappeared whilst riding her bicycle, and was later found murdered.

In the light of events such as these, it is reasonable to assume that perceptions of safety, of confidence in the agencies of the justice system or of trends in crime may be affected among those exposed to media reports of the incidents in question.

Citizens' exposure to crime, their perceptions of safety and their experiences of the justice system have long been a natural focus of crime policy measures. Reducing levels of exposure to and fear of crime are important goals for any society. In this context, it is important to develop a more detailed knowledge of the groups that are most commonly exposed to different types of offences, the groups that are most negatively affected by the fear of crime, and the groups that profess the lowest levels of confidence in the criminal justice system. This knowledge provides opportunities to implement crime prevention measures where they are most needed.

## Background to the Swedish Crime Survey (SCS)

In 2005, the Swedish Government commissioned the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå) and other agencies of the criminal justice system to plan and implement an annual survey of levels of exposure to crime and public safety. The survey, known as the Swedish Crime Survey, is based on telephone interviews conducted with a large random sample of the population (aged 16–79). This summary presents the central findings relating to levels of exposure to crime, fear of crime and public confidence in the criminal justice system from the third (2008) wave of the survey.

National crime victim surveys have long constituted an important source of knowledge in a number of other Western countries. A number of different surveys on victimization and fear of crime are currently carried out in Sweden. It has become clear, however, that these surveys do not provide a sufficient basis for analyzing people's experiences of crime to the extent that is actually required. The development of the SCS means that there is now a national, annual survey that focuses specifically on this area of concern.

## Objectives and questions addressed

One of the prime objectives of the SCS is that of producing a new data series that can serve as a complement to official data on reported offences when assessing crime trends. Other important objectives include developing an indicator of trends in people's perceptions of safety, and acquiring knowledge about both exposure to crime and the experiences of crime victims in areas such as their contacts with the criminal justice system. Another objective is that of producing an overview of public confidence in the different agencies of the criminal justice system.

This report presents a summary of the central findings from the third wave of data collection that took place in the spring of 2008. The aim of the report is primarily to describe general findings and to point to areas where further research is needed. More in depth analyses are presented as and when they are completed in a variety of research reports.

### **Objectives**

The presentations in this report have four overall objectives, specifically to describe

- exposure to crime
- fear of crime
- public confidence in the criminal justice system
- regional variations in relation to these different issues.

### **Questions**

The central questions addressed in the report are:

- What proportion of the population was exposed to crime over the course of 2007 and how is this exposure to crime distributed across different types of offences? Are there differences in levels of exposure to crime across different groups in the population, and what are the circumstances surrounding the offences?
- How prevalent is the fear of crime in the Swedish population, and how much do people worry about different types of offences? Does the fear of crime affect people's behaviour and if so in what ways? Are there differences between different segments of the population, and are there differences associated with people's own experiences of crime and their attitudes towards the criminal justice system?
- How high is public confidence in the criminal justice system as a whole, in the individual agencies of the justice system and in how well they perform their respective functions? Are there differences between different segments of the population? Are there differences associated with people's own experiences of crime and whether or not they have themselves been in contact with the criminal justice system?
- How do crime victims who have been in contact with the criminal justice system describe their experience of these contacts?



# Method

This section describes the methods employed in the Swedish Crime Survey (SCS) in 2008. For a more detailed presentation of the survey methods, see the Technical Report for the 2008 wave of the Swedish Crime Survey.<sup>1</sup>

## Content of survey questionnaire items

### Exposure to crime

The section of the survey dealing with exposure to crime begins with a number of “screening” questions, whose objective is to determine whether the respondent has experienced exposure to a number of different types of crime – and if so, on how many occasions – over the course of the previous year (in this case 2007).

The screening questions contain ten types of offences. To simplify the questions, the act is usually described rather than naming the type of offence. The choice of offence types was to some extent determined by the crime categories used in the official crime statistics that allow for the formulation of unambiguous questions. Otherwise, the choice has been influenced by the types of offences that have been considered most relevant for various reasons, such as offences that are very common or particularly serious, or that generally invoke fear. The SCS focuses on the following ten offence types:

Threats; Assault; Sexual offences; Robbery; Harassment; Car theft; Theft from motor vehicles; Bicycle theft; Burglary and Fraud.

For some offence types, the respondents were asked whether anyone in their household had been victimized. This is the case for those property offences where several people in the household are considered to have been victimized in some way and where they have knowledge of the offence; the offences include vehicle-related crimes, burglary and bicycle thefts. For offences against the person such as threats and assault, the survey items focus exclusively on whether the individual respondent has been victimized him- or herself.

The offence categories included in the survey allow for the study of a broad range of types of exposure to crime. Offences against the public at large, the government and businesses are not covered by the survey however. In the official statistics on reported offences, the crime categories included in the SCS account for 38 per cent of the penal code offences reported to the police.<sup>2</sup> In addition to these offence categories, the survey interview also includes a question asking respondents whether they have been subject to one or more other offences during the period covered by the survey.

One of the factors that steered the formulation of most of the screening questions was a desire to facilitate comparability with official statistics on reported offences. However, the formulation of the items does not correspond exactly with the official crime statistics, since this would have made them too complex. Previous experience also shows that it is unrealistic to attempt to capture exactly the same type of incidents as those recorded in official statistics on reported offences. The ambition has thus been to create a sufficient degree of

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<sup>1</sup> Brottsförebyggande rådet, Brå (2009:3). Teknisk rapport för Nationella trygghetsundersökningen 2008 (Technical report for the Swedish Crime Survey 2008). Authors: Irlander, Å. and Wigerholt, J. Report 2009:3. Stockholm: Brottsförebyggande rådet. *The technical report is only available in Swedish.*

<sup>2</sup> The total number of crimes against the penal code also includes offences that do not victimize specific individuals, such as shoplifting offences, frauds committed against businesses and break-ins affecting public buildings.

conformity to allow for a comparison of trends in the relevant crime categories over time. The possibilities for comparing levels of crime are limited, however.

The respondents who answered that they had been subjected to one or more of the ten selected offence types were asked additional questions about the offence or offences in question. The follow-up questions are slightly different for each offence type, but usually ask where and when the crime took place, whether the crime was reported to the police, about possible injuries, damage or loss, resulting from the offence, the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, the victim's need for support, etc. Thus the follow-up questions focus on both the circumstances surrounding the crime and the victim's experiences.

In order to avoid subjecting the respondents to excessively long interviews, the follow-up questions have been asked in relation to a maximum of three of the offences disclosed by the respondent. Previous experience shows that most people report only one or a few different offences and the majority of respondents can therefore be expected to provide a more detailed account of all of the offences that they have experienced. A specific order of priority was used to determine the types of offences about which the respondents were asked follow-up questions. For the most part, more serious and unusual types of offences were given priority over less serious and more common offence types, and people who had experienced a number of different types of crime were not asked follow-up questions exclusively in relation to the same type of offence. Within each category of offences, the most recent incident or incidents were given priority.

### **Fear of crime**

As has been mentioned, the Swedish Crime Survey also includes questions about feelings of insecurity and fear of crime. The questions deal with fear of being exposed to crime oneself, as well as fears relating to the victimization of friends and relatives and with feelings of insecurity in general. As regards the question of perceptions of insecurity, it is thus conceivable that the respondents' answers are also affected by factors that are not directly linked to crime. The survey also asked whether the respondents' perceptions of insecurity had affected their behaviour or their quality of life.

### **Public confidence in the criminal justice system**

The third section of the survey focuses on confidence in the criminal justice system. It includes items about confidence in the criminal justice system in general, and in the various agencies of the justice system in particular (the police, the prosecution service, the courts and the Prison and Probation Service). Since the public has limited contact with these agencies, however, not all respondents can be expected to have definite views. Finally, there are also a number of items that focus on the respondents' confidence in the way the criminal justice system performs various tasks (such as its treatment of suspects and crime victims).

## **Survey design and implementation**

### **The sample**

The Swedish Crime Survey is based on a nationally representative, random sample of people aged between 16 and 79 years. Crime victim surveys usually require large samples because the majority of respondents have not been victimized. In 2008, 20,000 people were selected from the population register administered by Statistics Sweden.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The population size amounts to just over 7 million people.

Young persons and the elderly have been over-sampled, and are thus overrepresented in the survey sample. When analyzing the material, cases are weighted both to account for this over-representation and also to adjust for differences in levels of non-response among different groups within the sample. The weighting procedure ensures that the survey results are as representative as possible of the survey population as a whole.

### **Implementation and data collection**

The survey items have been formulated by the National Council in consultation with other agencies within the criminal justice system. Scientific advisors have provided feedback. The questions were also tested in Statistics Sweden's technical test lab and in a small pilot survey conducted in the spring of 2006.

The data collection was carried out by Statistics Sweden, for the most part by means of telephone interviews. Shorter questionnaires were sent to members of the sample who could not be reached, and to those who did not wish to be interviewed over the telephone.

The data were collected between January and May 2008. A cover letter was sent to those included in the sample a few weeks prior to their being contacted by phone by the interviewers employed by Statistics Sweden. The cover letter described the survey and explained that participation was voluntary but important. In addition to the interview data, certain data were also collected from existing registers including the respondents' age, place of residence and level of education.

## **Non-response**

Questionnaire surveys always involve a certain level of non-response because not everyone who is included in the sample wants, or is able, to participate (unit non-response), or because some people who do participate do not answer all of the questions (item non-response).

### **Unit non-response**

The total non-response for the 2008 wave of the survey amounted to 24 per cent of the sample (Table 1), giving a response rate of 76 per cent. Around four per cent participated by completing a postal questionnaire. A response rate of almost 80 per cent is to be considered very high for this type of survey.

Several measures have been taken to reduce the level of unit non-response. For example, the respondents were given the opportunity to choose when their interviews would take place. They could also choose to be interviewed in English and to receive a copy of the cover letter in different languages. A shorter questionnaire (excluding follow-up questions) was also sent to those members of the sample who could not be reached or did not want to answer the questions by telephone, but who could consider answering in writing.

An analysis of the non-response shows that respondents differ somewhat from non-respondents. For example, women and people born in Scandinavia were generally somewhat more likely to respond than men and people born outside of Scandinavia (see the Technical Report for more information, Brå, 2009:3). To reduce the skewing effect of the non-response, and to reduce sampling and coverage errors, weights were calibrated for use when analyzing the material. Briefly, this technique employs a number of auxiliary variables (based on register data) to increase the weight assigned to the answers provided by groups that are under-represented in the sample. The following auxiliary variables were used as the basis for this calibration: county, gender, age, country of

birth, marital status, income and metropolitan area. The weighting procedure also takes account of the deliberate over-sampling of certain groups of respondents (see above).

Table 1. Sample and non-response, Swedish Crime Survey 2008.

	N	Percent
Total sample	20 000	
– over-sample (deceased/moved abroad)	270	
Net sample	19 730	100,0
Respondents	14 973	75,9
thereof		
via questionnaires	858	4,4
Non-response	4 757	24,1
thereof		
unable to take part	490	2,5
not found	1 923	9,7
declined	2 344	11,9

### Item non-response

The item non-response in the survey includes the answer alternatives *Don't know/Don't want to answer*. The item non-response for the postal questionnaires includes cases where answers have been left blank. Where the item non-response is low (at most 5 per cent), this is not noted in the report. Where the item non-response is greater than five per cent, this is noted in connection with the presentation of the results. High levels of item non-response were primarily noted in relation to the items concerning public confidence in the criminal justice system.

## Reliability and comparability

There is reason to take up a number of general limitations with the survey. The sample is not representative of all age-groups in the population, and misses for example youths aged under sixteen and the oldest members of the population who are aged over 79 years. The same is true for people staying in institutions (e.g. in the healthcare sector or the prison system). It is also unlikely that the most marginalised groups within the population, such as the homeless, drug abusers and serious offenders are sufficiently well-represented. In general, this type of survey is viewed as reflecting the conditions found among the normal adult population (even though 16–17-year olds may be categorised as children/youths).

### Reliability

Measurement errors constitute the principal source of error in survey studies. The extent to which the results of the survey reflect the true picture is primarily dependant on the extent of these measurement errors. The problems are first and foremost caused by the formulation of the questionnaire, the circumstances surrounding the interview, or the interviewer or the respondent, and they can lead to both over- and underestimates in the findings.

In the context of the SCS, the main problem is deemed to be the respondents' willingness and ability to provide correct answers. It may be difficult to remember exactly when an incident occurred, and thus crimes that should not be included in the survey may nonetheless be reported. Another factor may be that

respondents may choose to adjust their responses, either in order to give the “right” answer, e.g. that a crime has been reported to the police even though this is not in fact the case, or because the interview occurs when the respondent is not alone, and therefore does not wish to speak openly about his or her experiences.

Errors may also occur as a result of ignorance. The respondent may have been exposed to incidents that are not defined as crimes in the penal code (which may be the case for example in certain instances perceived as threats or harassment), but which are perceived as crimes by the victim.

A further type of problem relates to the follow-up questionnaire, which contains follow-up questions about the crimes to which the respondent has been exposed. Follow-up questions are asked in relation to a maximum of three crimes per person, which means that crimes that are common in cases of repeat victimisation will be under-represented in the results.<sup>4</sup> As has already been mentioned, a number of steps have been taken to minimize problems of these kinds, such as the training of interviewers and the use of a cover letter to explain that respondents can themselves choose the time of their interview or can elect to fill in a postal questionnaire. Further information about sources of error and the measures taken to minimise these can be found in the technical report from the survey (Brå 2009:3).

### **Room for interpretation and comparability**

The 15,000 or so people (of the 20,000 in the sample) who answered the questions in the 2008 wave of the Swedish Crime Survey (SCS) are highly representative of the Swedish population aged between 16 and 79 years and of their perceptions of public safety and attitudes towards the criminal justice system – as well as in terms of their experiences of crime at the national level. The 2008 wave of the SCS also provides an opportunity to study differences between different groups in the population with a high degree of certainty, particularly in relation to the fear of crime and confidence in the criminal justice system, since the results in these areas are based on all those participating in the survey. Uncertainties arise in relation to comparisons between different groups primarily when these comparisons focus on the more unusual types of offences where the number of victims interviewed is low. Breaking down the results for several subgroups of respondents while at the same time studying the circumstances surrounding the offence, e.g. looking at the experiences of serious assault specifically among young men in metropolitan areas, is associated with a substantial degree of uncertainty in the current data set. The larger the number of victims involved, and the greater the differences between the different groups examined, the higher the level of certainty associated with the results.

Since the report is based on data collected in wave three of the SCS, it is possible to conduct certain comparisons with data collected in the previous waves. The SCS 2007 and 2008 are completely comparable, whereas the 2006 SCS differs on a number of points (differences between the first and the subsequent waves of data collection mainly relate to the size of the samples involved and the times at which the surveys were conducted). Comparisons with other sources are not generally presented in the report, but such comparisons are made and published in the context of more focused studies. In time, however, comparisons between the SCS and official crime statistics will become possible, and the primary objective is to be able to compare the results of the SCS and the official

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<sup>4</sup> One example is assaults against women, which probably take place in the home and at the hands of a perpetrator with whom the victim is intimately acquainted to a greater extent than that shown by the Swedish Crime Survey. Women's exposure to assault in the home often takes the form of repeated offences over time (see e.g. Brå 2002).

crime statistics in relation to crime trends. Direct comparisons of the volume of crime are not appropriate however.

## Presentation of results

The presentation of the main results is broken down into sections relating to victimization, fear of crime, public confidence in the criminal justice system and crime victims experiences from contacts with the criminal justice system. Confidence intervals and significance tests are not presented in the main report<sup>5</sup> nor in this summary, mainly due to the large sample employed in the Swedish Crime Survey. The large number of respondents ensures that even small differences for the most part become significant. This is one of the reasons why significance levels are not presented, and an assessment of whether the differences noted are large or small can instead be made on the basis of the size of the percentages presented in the tables, and also from the description of the findings presented in the text.

### Reference groups

The findings are for the most part presented on the basis of the following background information and sub-groups of the population:

- *gender*
- *age* (intervals: 16–19, 20–24, 25–34, 35–44, 45–54, 55–64, 65–74, 75–79)
- *Swedish/foreign background* (born in Sweden with one/both parents born in Sweden, born in Sweden with both parents born outside of Sweden, foreign-born)
- *level of education*, the highest level attained (pre-further education, further education or post further education)
- *marital status* (living with partner or single, with or without children)
- *type of housing* (house or apartment building)
- *size of locality/degree of urbanization*, based on “H regions” (cities, larger towns, smaller towns/rural)

Most of the information about the respondents’ background has been collected from existing registers. The only background information collected in the Swedish Crime Survey itself relates to marital status, type of housing and in some cases the level of education.

### Different units employed in the survey

With regard to victimization, it is important to remember that the survey units – and therefore the presentation – are different for the different types of offences.

#### People who are victimized

Questions relating to offences against the person (assault, threats, sexual offences, robbery, harassment and fraud) refer to the victimization of the individual respondent. The presentation of results for these types of offences is thus based on the proportion of the population who were victimized in 2007.

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<sup>5</sup> With the exception of regional presentations, where the data sets are smaller and thus subject to higher levels of statistical uncertainty.

#### Households who are victimized

Questions relating to property offences (i.e. car theft, theft from motor vehicles, bicycle theft and burglary) refer to the victimization of the respondents' entire household. The results for these offence types are presented on the basis of the proportion of *households in the population* that were victimized over the course of 2007.

The use of different survey units for different types of offences affects estimations of the number of offences involved.

#### Number of offences (incidents)

For each type of offence, the respondent is asked how many times the incident occurred during the year. The answers are not limited by fixed intervals but there is a limit (a maximum of between 20 and 365 incidents can be reported depending on the type of offence). As regards offences against the person, the number of such offences committed against the population as a whole is estimated on the basis of the information collected on the number of times the incidents occurred within the sample. For the offence categories threats, assault and sexual offences, up to 365 incidents of victimization may be reported. In order to produce more stable estimates of the incidence (i.e. the number) of these types of offences occurring within the population, the distributions are truncated at a maximum of 52 incidents per respondent (which corresponds to an average of one incident of victimization per week).

#### Reference periods

The areas covered by the questions in the survey focus on varying periods of time. A summary description is provided below.

- **Exposure to crime**

The reference period employed in relation to exposure to crime is the preceding calendar year (when the source named is the Swedish Crime Survey 2008, then, this relates to victimisation in 2007).

- **Fear of crime**

– Questions about concerns on being subjected to different types of crime relate to the past twelve months (reckoned from the date of the interview).

– Questions relating to whether the respondent has witnessed an assault or whether a close relative has been exposed to crime relate to the preceding calendar year (2007).

– The more general questions relate to the respondent's perceptions at the time of the interview.

- **Confidence in the justice system**

In the section on public confidence in the justice system, the questions relate to the respondent's perceptions at the time of the interview.

- **Crime victims' contacts with the justice system**

In the section on crime victims' contacts with the justice system, the presentation relates to experiences during the past three years (reckoned from the date of the interview).

# Results

## Victimization

The Swedish Crime Survey data indicate that 25 percent of the population (aged 16–79) were victims of a crime in 2007. The differences between the different types of offences are substantial, however, and victimization is not evenly distributed within the population. By specifically asking about ten different types of offences, the survey captures a substantial proportion of the crimes to which the public were exposed in 2007.

### Offences against the person

Threats and harassment are the most prevalent types of offence against the person. Around four per cent say that they have experienced incidents of these kinds over the course of 2007 (Table 2). Only one quarter of the offences against the person that were reported in the Swedish Crime Survey (SCS) were also reported to the police, but there are substantial differences between the different types of offences involved. For example, the results indicate that only a small proportion of sexual offences (14 per cent) were reported to the police.

Table 2. Victimization within the population (aged 16–79) for different types of offences against the person, estimated number of incidents and proportion of incidents reported to the police in 2007 according to the Swedish Crime Survey data (SCS 2008).

	Percentage victimized	Estimated number of victimized persons in the population	Estimated number of incidents within the population	Percentage of incidents reported
Threats	4,1	290 000	687 000	21
Assaults	2,9	204 000	513 000	27
of which serious <sup>2</sup>	0,7	47 000	92 000	55
Sexual offences	0,7	52 000	165 000	14
Robbery	0,8	55 000	84 000	42 <sup>3</sup>
Fraud	2,4	169 000	213 000	35
Harassment	4,3	306 000	- <sup>4</sup>	18 <sup>5</sup>
<b>All offences against the person<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>11,9</b>	<b>844 000</b>	<b>1 968 000</b>	<b>24</b>

1. Presentation based on gross figures. This means that one and the same person may have been exposed to several different types of offence. Thus the offence types do not sum to give 844,000 individuals.

2. Refers to serious injury that required medical or dental treatment.

3. Reported robberies of the person as a proportion the number of such robberies committed in Sweden.

4. Estimated number of victimized individuals.

5. Proportion of victims who reported one or more incidents to the police.



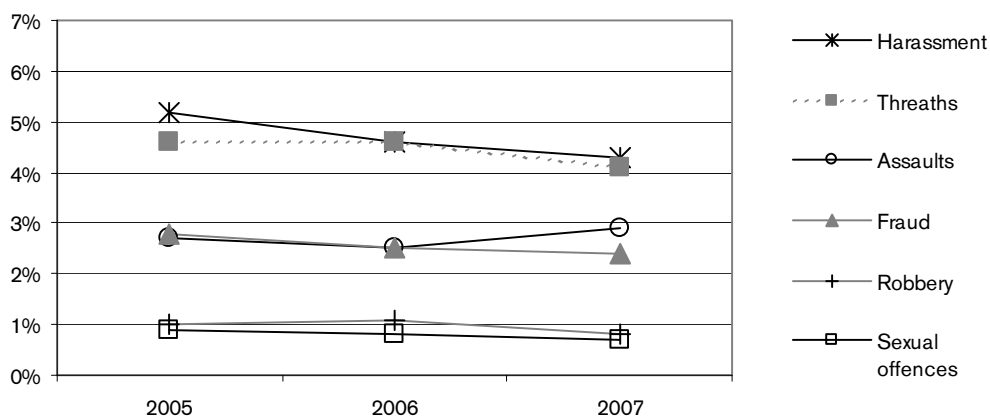


Figure 1. Victimization within the population (aged 16–79) for different types of offences against the person, in 2005–2007 according to the Swedish Crime Survey data (SCS 2006–2008).

### Threats

According to the survey, 4.1 per cent of the population (aged 16–79) were subjected to threats in 2007. Exposure to threats is equally common among male and female respondents.

Public places represent the most common type of location in which the reported threats have occurred. Women report being victimized at home to a greater extent than men however. In more than half of the cases, victims report that the offender was a complete stranger; in a third of the cases, the offender was a casual acquaintance and in twelve per cent of the cases the offender was someone the victim knew well. Once again, there are significant differences between men and women. Women report that the offender was someone they know well significantly more often than men (19 and 4 per cent respectively).

### Assaults

Further, 2.9 per cent of the population (aged 16–79) report having been exposed to an assault at some point during 2007. Of these, 23 per cent (or 0.7 per cent of the population) report that the assault was serious (requiring medical or dental treatment). Twice as many men as women report they have been subjected to assault.

The circumstances surrounding assault offences are similar to those found in relation to threats. As was the case with threats, public places are the most common crime location in relation to assaults as well. Being assaulted in somebody's home is more common among women than it is among men. Women also report being exposed to assault by somebody with whom they are acquainted, or by someone close to them, to significantly greater extent than men. Given that, in their homes, women are more often victimized by someone they know well, and given that this type of offence is notoriously difficult to talk about, it is very likely that the level of victimization among women is higher than is shown by the results of the survey.

### Sexual offences

Slightly under one per cent (0.7 per cent) of respondents reported that someone had “forced, attacked or molested them sexually” over the course of 2007. Women reported that they were subject to sexual offences to a significantly

greater extent than men. Younger women (16–24 yrs) predominate among those reporting this type of victimization.

Just over one third of the sexual offences occurred in a public place, one-fifth at the victim's workplace or school, and just over one in four sexual offences took place in the home. The offender was a stranger in over half of these incidents, a casual acquaintance in one-third, and was well known to the victim in slightly more than one-tenth of incidents. There is also reason to suspect that incidents where people were victimized by someone they know well are under-represented in the survey data because experiences of this kind can be difficult to talk about, particularly if they occurred so recently as within the past year.

### Robbery

As regards robbery, 0.8 per cent report being exposed to this form of victimization in 2007. Most victims were subject to a single incident of robbery over the year. In around 30 per cent of the robberies, the victims say they were hit, kicked or exposed to some other kind of physical violence in connection with the offence. The use of knives, firearms or other weapons is not unusual in robberies (27 per cent).

### Harassment

Harassment is described as “repeated incidents of being pursued or of unsolicited visits, telephone calls, messages and similar”. 4.3 per cent say they were subjected to harassment over the course of 2007. About half experienced these incidents as very or fairly alarming. Victimization of this kind appears to be particularly common among young women.

In about 40 per cent of the cases, the perpetrator was a stranger or an acquaintance of the victim. One in ten victims reported that the perpetrator was someone close to them. Around one-fifth of the victims say they were harassed because of their occupation. Most (two-thirds) of the harassment victims were subjected to ten incidents or less. A small group (around one-tenth of the victims equivalent to almost 25 000 persons), however, reported having experienced a very large number of incidents (100 or more).

### Fraud

The SCS respondents were asked whether “you as a private person were defrauded of money or other valuables during the past year”. Just over 2 per cent reported having been subjected to fraud over the course of 2007. The most common amount lost was between SEK 2,000–10,000, which was reported in close to 40 per cent of the fraud cases. One in five reported losing between SEK 500—2,000, and about 3 per cent reported having lost SEK 100,000 or more. There are many different methods for defrauding individuals. One-fourth of the incidents reported in the SCS involved bank or credit card fraud, and a similar proportion involved Internet fraud.

### Property offences

The results show that 13 per cent of households reported being subjected to one of the property offences included in the survey in the course of 2006 and 2.5 per cent of the population (aged 16–79) report having been exposed to fraud during the same period (Table 3). The most common forms of victimization involve households having been subjected to bicycle theft or theft from a vehicle (5 per cent), whereas burglary and car theft are the least common offence types (around one per cent). Generally speaking, property offences are reported to the police

significantly more often than offences against the person. Not surprisingly, car theft and burglary are the offences that are reported most often.

Table 3. Proportion of persons in the population (aged 16–79) exposed to different types of property offences, estimated number of incidents and proportion of incidents reported to the police in 2007, Swedish Crime Survey (SCS 2008).

	Proportion of households victimized	Estimated number of victimized households	Approximate estimate of number of incidents within the population	Proportion of incidents reported
Burglary	0,9	34 000	39 000	78
Car theft	0,8 <sup>1</sup>	23 000	24 000	96
Theft from vehicle	4,1	160 000	185 000	65
Bicycle theft	7,1	278 000	342 000	35
<b>All property offences</b>	<b>11,7</b>	<b>459 000</b>	<b>591 000</b>	<b>50</b>

1. Among households that owned a car in 2007

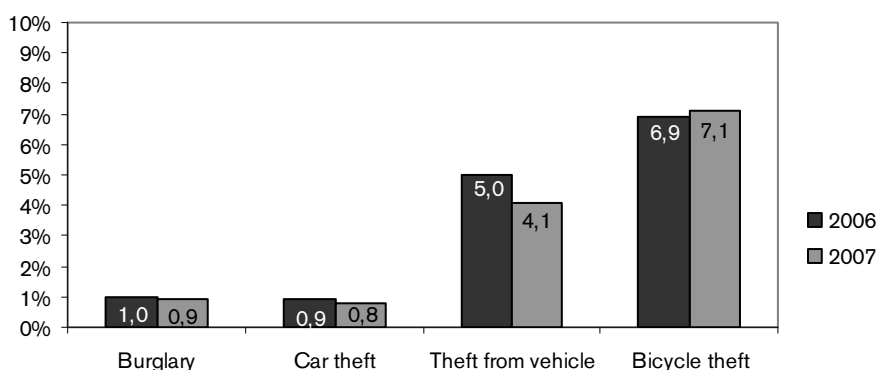


Figure 2. Proportion of persons in the population (aged 16–79) exposed to different types of property offences in 2006–2007, Swedish Crime Survey (SCS 2007–2008).

#### Vehicle-related offences

According to the SCS data, 4 per cent of households were subject to theft from vehicles and 7 per cent of households were exposed to bicycle theft. For most vehicle-related offences (over 60 per cent), the victims reported that the incident took place in their own neighbourhoods. 60 per cent of the bicycle thefts reportedly occurred in public places and 40 per cent on private property.

#### Burglary

Just under one per cent of the population (aged 16–79) live in households that were burgled over the course of 2007 (SCS 2008). Marital status and type of housing do not account for any differences in burglary victimization. People living in cities and single parents reported experiences of burglary to a slightly greater extent than others, however.

#### Repeated victimization

Repeated victimization is more prevalent for offences against the person than for property offences; 11 per cent and 1 per cent of victims respectively reported having been subject to four or more offences in 2007. Over 70 per cent of of-

fences against the person affect individuals who are victims of more than a single offence. The corresponding figure for property offences is around 40 per cent. A significant proportion of offences against the person (49 per cent) affect a very small proportion of the population (1.3 per cent) comprised of individuals who report having experienced four or more offences over the course of 2007.

### Crime victims' contacts with the justice system

Slightly over one-fifth of the population (aged 16–79) have been the victim of a crime that has been reported to the police over the past three years. The majority of these individuals report positive experiences of their contacts with the agencies of the justice system. The police constitute the justice system agency with which the largest numbers have been in contact.

Generally speaking individuals who have been exposed to threats or violent crime report more negative experiences of the police than individuals who have been exposed to other types of crime (Table 4).

Table 4. Experiences of the police in connection with exposure to crime according to the Swedish Crime Survey 2008. By gender and age and whether or not the incident involved threats or violence. Proportions for each group in per cent (n=2,531).

	Threats or violence (19 %)		No threats or violence (81 %)	
	Very/quite positive	Very/quite negative	Very/quite positive	Very/quite negative
<b>All individuals (aged 16-79) who have been in contact with the police as a result of exposure to crime during past three years.</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Men, 16–79 years</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>16</b>
16–24 years	52	28	49	15
25–44 years	58	18	49	13
45–64 years	47	41	46	17
65–79 years	33	47	56	23
<b>Women, 16–79 years</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>9</b>
16–24 years	59	24	47	13
25–44 years	68	18	56	7
45–64 years	64	20	67	9
65–79 years	74	x	66	10

(x) Less than 4 observations

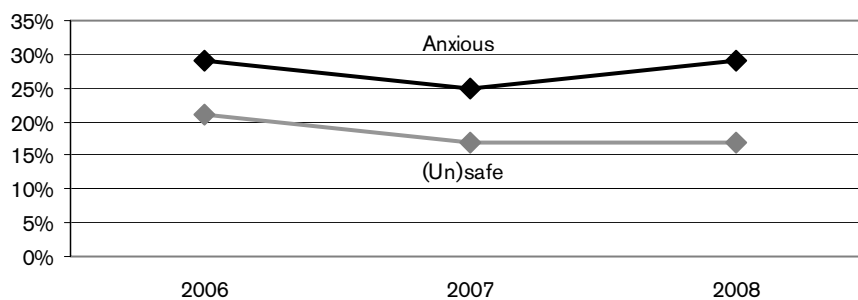
This is particularly true for men over the age of 45 of whom more than two out of five report negative experiences. Women report having more positive experiences, as well as less negative experiences than men regardless of type of crime.

Over the past three years 1.6 per cent of the population (aged 16–79) report that they have attended court as plaintiffs as a result of exposure to crime. The results presented in this area illustrate respondent's perceptions of prosecutors and lawyers who have worked as aggrieved party counsel (in those cases where one has been appointed). In addition, the survey asks respondents about their perceptions of the way they were received by the court, their assessment of the information they had been given, and whether they felt that they understood what had happened during the court case. In all these respects the majority report positive experiences, and experiences of aggrieved party counsel are particularly good.

## Fear of crime

Fear of crime<sup>6</sup> does not represent a single unitary concept, but rather involves a complex set of feelings and attitudes. This complexity makes fear of crime difficult to measure and describe. The Swedish Crime Survey (SCS) captures many – but by no means all – of the dimensions of fear and concern about crime that, prior to the SCS, had never been measured at the national level.

Table 5. General fear of crime, Swedish Crime Survey 2006–2008. Proportion who are anxious to a great extent/ proportion fairly or very worried or who have stated that they do not go out as a result of feeling unsafe, per cent.



Are you anxious about crime in society? (2008)		If you go out late one evening in the area where you live, how safe do you feel? (2008)	
Yes, to a great extent	29	Very safe	36
Yes, to some extent	52	Fairly safe	44
No, not at all	19	Fairly unsafe	8
		Very unsafe	2
		Do not go out due to feeling unsafe	6
		Do not go out for other reasons	5

In general, the survey indicates that most of the adult population feels safe. For example, four out of five people feel quite or very safe when they go out alone after dark in their own neighbourhoods (Table 5) and the trend has been stable over the years in which the survey has been conducted. Further, most respondents (85 per cent) do not consider concern about crime to have a negative effect on their quality of life.

The results of the SCS show that it is significantly more common to be concerned about crime in society at large, than to express concerns on one's own behalf. As can be seen from Table 5, four out of five respondents express feeling concerns about the level of crime in society at large, whereas a significantly smaller proportion (one in five) report that they feel unsafe when they are out alone in their neighbourhood late at night.

The figures presented in Table 5 provide an indication of the general level of concern and insecurity among the Swedish population (aged 16–79). In order to prevent feelings of insecurity among those affected by them, however – and to focus measures where they are most needed – it is useful to identify potential risk groups, i.e. those who report feeling insecure or concerned about exposure to crime to an unusually large extent.

<sup>6</sup> The Swedish report employs a concept similar to “security” (trygghet) instead of “fear of crime”. Since the Swedish concept cannot really be translated into English in a workable fashion, the concept “fear of crime” is employed here instead.

### Different groups worry about different types of crime

The results of the SCS confirm that there are differences in levels of fear of crime across different groups within the population. Within all the groups examined, however, the majority report rarely or never worrying about being exposed to the specific types of crime asked about in the SCS. Worrying about close friends and family is more common than worrying about being exposed to crime oneself, but here too the majority report feeling such concerns only rarely or never. Given these findings, there are nonetheless two factors that appear to be of special significance in relation to study of fear of crime – gender and age.

Women report considerably more often than men that they feel unsafe. In the SCS, this difference is manifested quite clearly in the findings relating to the general level of anxiety about going out late at night, concern about friends and family and the fear of being attacked or assaulted (Table 6). Among women, the prevalence of concern about exposure to crime is similar irrespective of the type of crime at issue, whereas men are most concerned about exposure to car crime, and least concerned about being exposed to violent offences.

Table 6. Concern about crime by gender and age, Swedish Crime Survey 2008. Proportion reporting being fairly or very concerned in per cent / proportion feeling very/fairly safe or that they do not go out due to feeling unsafe (proportion does not go out due to feeling unsafe).

	Burglary	Attack/ Assault	Car theft/ Vandalism	Concern about family and friends	If you go out late one evening in the area where you live, how safe do you feel?
<b>All, 16–79 years</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>17 (6)</b>
GENDER					
Men	13	8	19	24	7 (1)
Women	18	20	18	37	27 (12)
AGE					
16–19 years	5	15	4	17	14 (3)
20–24 years	7	19	20	25	18 (4)
25–34 years	12	17	25	28	17 (4)
35–44 years	18	13	18	33	14 (4)
45–54 years	18	13	18	40	13 (5)
55–64 years	20	13	19	33	19 (8)
65–74 years	20	11	19	28	22 (13)
75–79 years	15	10	16	24	30 (21)

The results indicate that fear of crime exists across all age groups but that the nature of this fear differs slightly. Young people are particularly concerned about violent offences, whereas middle-aged respondents express more concern than their younger counterparts in relation to burglary. Age is also linked to the way in which people deal with the fear of crime they feel in relation to going out. The older the age-group examined, the larger the proportion that reports that they stay at home because they feel unsafe. Thus a larger proportion of younger people report that they feel fairly or very unsafe, whereas older people tend to answer because they feel unsafe. Differences are small among the remainder of the groups examined, but one systematic finding is that persons born outside Sweden more often report concerns about being exposed to crime than Swedish born respondents.

Respondents who have been victimized during the past year more often express concern than those who have not (8 per cent and 4 per cent respectively, see Table 7). This is particularly true of the victims of offences against the person. People with indirect experience of victimization, such as those who have

witnessed a crime or those with a relative who has been the victim of a serious crime, are also more worried than those with no such experience. Most of the respondents who report that they are worried about crime have no experience of victimization however.

Table 7. Concern about crime (index) among persons with varying experiences of victimization, Swedish Crime Survey 2008. Proportion reporting being particularly worried about crime in per cent.<sup>1</sup>

EXPERIENCE OF VICTIMIZATION	Percentage who feel particularly concerned
<b>Not victimized</b>	<b>4</b>
Victimized	8
Victim of specific offences affecting personal integrity <sup>2</sup>	11
Reported an offence to the police in the past three years	6
Has a close friend or relation who has been victimized	8
Witness to violence	7

1. Please note that the categories in this table are not mutually exclusive.

2. Offences that include threat, assault, sexual offences, robbery, harassment and/or burglary during 2007 (n= 1 730). Threats and harassment account for almost 60 per cent of these offences.

Those who feel that crime has increased over the past three years are clearly more concerned<sup>7</sup> than those who feel that the crime level has remained unchanged or fallen (Table 8). Those who feel that crime has increased dramatically report particularly high levels of concern. Among these respondents, 8 per cent are found in the “particularly concerned” category, which can be compared with 2 per cent of those who feel that crime levels have remained unchanged or have fallen.

People’s concern about crime also varies in relation to their confidence in the criminal justice system. The proportion of respondents who report feeling particularly concerned is just over twice the size as in the group reporting low confidence in the justice system as it is in the group reporting a high level of confidence in the criminal justice system (table 8).

Table 8. Concern about crime (index) presented by perceptions of crime trends and the criminal justice system, Swedish Crime Survey 2008. Proportion reporting being particularly concerned about crime in per cent.

Perceptions of crime trends over the past three years	Percentage who feel particularly concerned	Confidence in the justice system	Percentage who feel particularly concerned
Increased dramatically (41 %)	8	Very or fairly low (14 %)	9
Increased slightly (39 %)	3	Neither high nor low (26 %)	5
Unchanged or decreased (21%)	2	Very or fairly high (60 %)	4

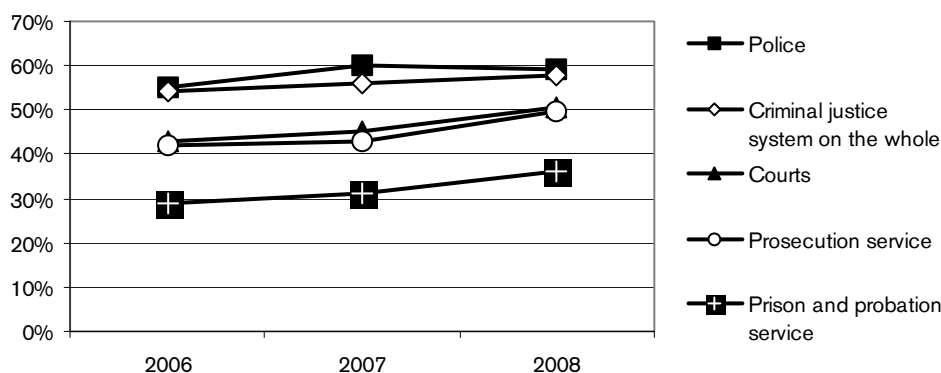
<sup>7</sup> The index has been constructed by combining the variables “going out late at night”, “worry about being exposed to violent crime” and “chosen an alternative route/means of transport as a result of being worried about being exposed to crime”.

## Public confidence in the criminal justice system

Previous research shows that public confidence in the criminal justice system and in some of its constituent parts is relatively high in Sweden. The Swedish Crime Survey (SCS) however provides a more complete picture of public confidence in the criminal justice system and its various agencies.

The results from the survey show that confidence in the justice system is relatively high among the Swedish population. The proportions reporting high levels of confidence are consistently larger than those reporting low levels of confidence. Among the individual justice system agencies, the largest proportion reporting high levels of confidence is found in relation to the police (59 per cent), followed by the courts, the prosecution service and the Prison and Probation Service. The largest proportion reporting low levels of confidence is found in relation to the Prison and Probation Service (17 per cent), followed by the police, the courts and the prosecution service (Table 9).

Table 9. Public confidence in the criminal justice system, Swedish Crime Survey 2006–2008. Proportion in per cent.



SCS 2008 Confidence in the:	Neither high nor low		Very/fairly low	No opinion/ don't know
	Very/fairly high	Very/fairly low		
Criminal justice system on the whole	58	25	13	4
Police	59	24	14	3
Prosecution service	49	22	9	20
Courts	50	23	11	15
Prison and probation service	36	29	17	18

In other words, the majority of people have a positive view of the criminal justice system. One notable finding is that many citizens, around one-fifth, have no definite view as to how much confidence they have in the prosecution service and the courts or in the Prison and Probation Service.

In general, the survey indicates only minor differences across various social groups. The background factors that appear to have the greatest impact on levels of confidence in the justice system are age and whether the respondents have a Swedish/non-Swedish background. The proportions reporting high levels of confidence are often highest among the youngest respondents, i.e. those aged 16–19, than among the remaining age groups, and this difference is most notable in relation to confidence in the prosecution service. Respondents born outside Sweden report lower levels of confidence in the justice system in relation to Swedish-born respondents. The remaining background factors appear to have less influence on levels of confidence in the justice system.



The SCS also asks about the public's attitude to the way the judicial system treats suspects and those exposed to crime. As of the SCS 2008, these questions are also asked in relation to the police. In terms of trust in the criminal justice system (CJS) and whether the police handle suspects fairly, the results show that confidence is fairly high, with one in two stating great confidence. However, with regard to confidence that the CJS treats people exposed to crime well, the results are more disheartening – here, we consistently find the lowest levels of confidence noted in the survey (37% declare high confidence and 25% declare low confidence, Figure 3). No matter which sub-group of the population is studied, comparatively few report that they are fairly or very confident that the CJS treats crime victims well. However, there are noticeable differences here when the question relates to the police, since considerably more people report high levels of confidence in the police treating those exposed to crime well (52% and 15% respectively). This indicates that for the most part it is justice system actors other than the police that are the reason for the justice system scoring so poorly on the issue.

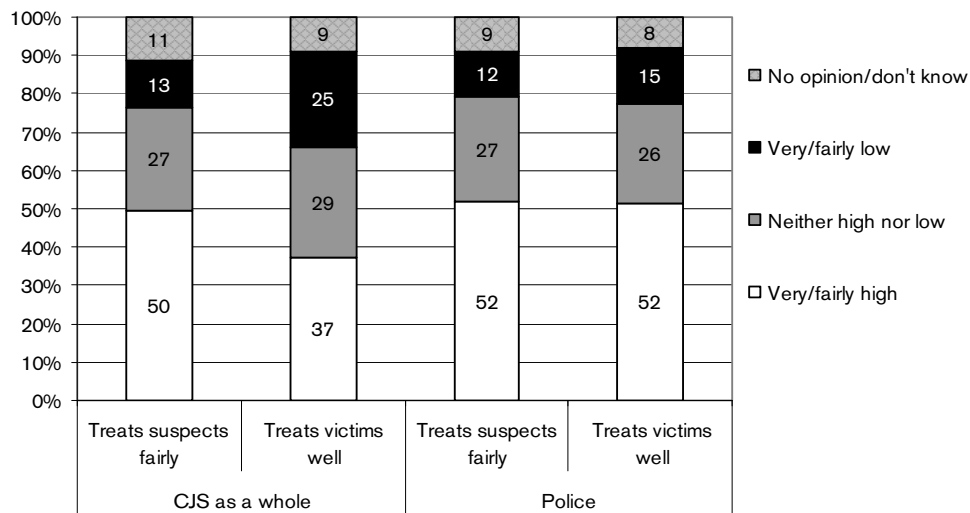


Figure 3. Public confidence in how well the criminal justice system (CJS) and the police performs their various tasks, Swedish Crime Survey 2008. Proportion in per cent.

Factors associated with people's experience of crime, and particularly with offences against the person, appear to play a somewhat more important role. Respondents who have experienced exposure to crime, property offences as well as offences against the person, report lower levels of confidence both in the justice system as a whole, and in the various agencies and their ability to carry out their tasks. This is manifested by smaller proportions of high confidence as well as greater proportions of low confidence, which is clearly illustrated in figure 4 below. This is particularly true of people who have been exposed to crimes such as sexual offences, robberies against the person or assault.

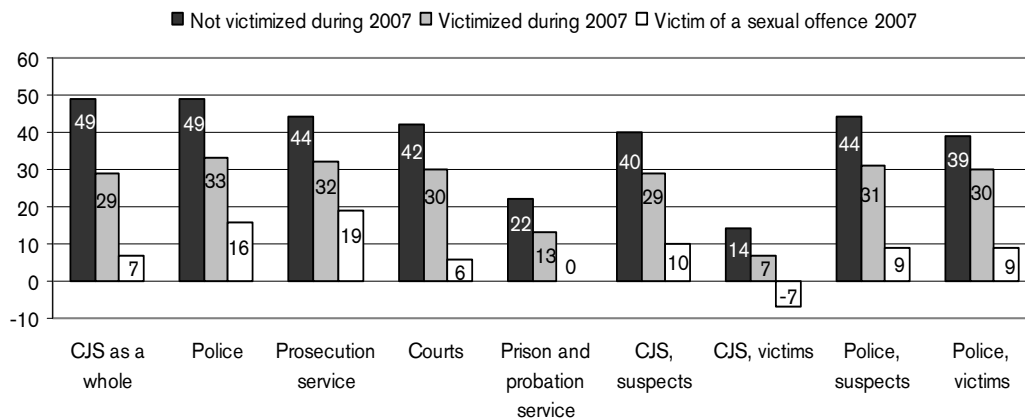


Figure 4. Confidence in the criminal justice system (CJS) among people with different experiences of crime, Swedish Crime Survey 2008. Presentation by confidence balance (proportion very/fairly high confidence minus proportion very/fairly low confidence, answer categories “don’t know” and “no answer” included).

The strongest relationships are found between exposure to crime and confidence in the police and the criminal justice system as a whole. Having a friend or relative who has been exposed to crime, or believing that crime is rising sharply also have a negative effect on levels of confidence. This does not however signify the existence of a major crisis of confidence among the Swedish population. Even the majority of those with experience of crime have confidence in the criminal justice system. The group that reports the lowest levels of confidence in almost all of the different agencies of the CJS comprises those respondents who have themselves been indicted for criminal offences.

One factor that is highly significant for variations in levels of confidence relates to different groups’ perceptions of crime trends. Confidence in the CJS is considerably lower among people who say they believe that crime is on the increase, than among those who say that crime levels have not increased (Figure 5).

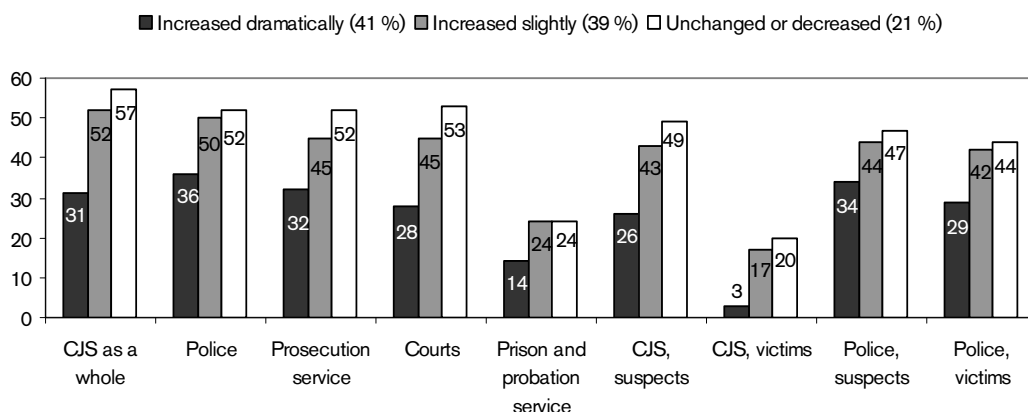


Figure 5. Confidence in the criminal justice system among people with different perceptions of crime trends over the past three years, Swedish Crime Survey 2008. Presentation by confidence balance (proportion very/fairly high confidence minus proportion very/fairly low confidence, answer categories “don’t know” and “no answer” included).

## Regional similarities and differences

Regional results from the Swedish Crime Survey are presented for Sweden’s counties (see the map below, Figure 6) and some municipalities. It is important

to remember that even apparently large differences between some counties may be random, and also that great differences may exist between municipalities within an individual county. The objective is to describe the variation, and not to *explain* the similarities and differences observed. It is likely that variations in the composition of the population of the different counties, and in the degree of urbanisation, are important explanatory factors in relation to the differences observed.

### **Exposure to crime**

The proportion of persons exposed to crime against individuals is lowest in Dalarna, Kronoberg and Västernorrland counties (9 %) and highest in Skåne, Västra Götaland, Kalmar and Stockholm (13 %). The proportion reporting that they have been exposed to property crime is also highest in Skåne (17 %) and lowest in Blekinge (7 %).

### **Insecurity and fear of crime**

When it comes to security and worry about crime, the regional map looks slightly different, depending on what is asked for. When it comes to worry about crime, people worry about different things in different counties. Inhabitants in Stockholm and Skåne counties worry more about being the victims of violence, while inhabitants in Blekinge worry more about burglary of homes. The proportion that feels insecure while outdoors in the own housing area in the evenings is lowest in Jämtland County (9 %) and highest in Skåne (22 %). The proportion worrying about crime in society is lowest in Uppsala County (22 %) and highest in Kalmar County, where just over a third state that they are worried in general (36 %).

### **Public confidence in the criminal justice system**

When it comes to trust in the judicial system as a whole, it is lowest in Blekinge County (49 %) and highest in Västerbotten County (66 %). When studying trust in the police, Blekinge County stands out as having the lowest level of confidence (47 %), while Västernorrland has the highest level of confidence (66 %). When it comes to the prosecutors, the trust level is lowest in Blekinge, Gotland and Södermanland (45 %) and highest in Örebro County (59 %). The courts attract the lowest level of trust in Södermanland County (45 %) and the highest in Örebro County (59 %). Finally, the prison and probation service attracts the lowest level of confidence in Stockholm (32 %) and highest level in Örebro (49 %). Here, the counties are ranked in order of greatest trust. If consideration is also taken of the proportion of little confidence, the ranking may change slightly; see confidence balances in the yearbook for SCS 2008 (Brå 2009:2).

Figure 6. Map of Sweden by counties.



## Concluding remarks

One of the most important tasks of the Swedish Crime Survey is to monitor crime trends and levels of fear of crime and public confidence in the justice system over the longer term and across different groups within the population. The more waves of SCS data that are collected, the more central a role it will assume in the work of the justice system in reducing exposure to crime and increasing public safety. In addition to the comprehensive yearbook, of which this is a summary, additional research is conducted based on the SCS data which has resulted in a number of more narrowly focused reports relating to amongst other things reporting propensities and segregation and insecurity. Several studies relating to confidence in the justice system and crime victims' experiences of their contacts with the justice system are planned.

In a few years' time – once the survey database has grown sufficiently to provide a stable foundation – it will also be possible to include a special focus on certain areas of interest, offence types or population groups in the survey questionnaire, either on a regular or a one-off basis.

Over the longer term, the results from the Swedish Crime Survey will come to constitute an invaluable tool for monitoring trends, identifying problems and finding solutions both within and outside of the criminal justice system. Knowledge relating to the public's exposure to crime, fear of crime and their levels of confidence in the justice system will provide an important basis for developing and improving the criminal justice system and its agencies, and may help to reduce crime and to improve perceptions of public safety.