

## **Crime in Sweden – the difficulties in making international comparisons**

Sometimes, simplistic or inaccurate information can be read about crime in Sweden. It is easy to misinterpret crime statistics, and this is especially true when it comes to making international comparisons. Here are the reasons why.

### **There are no international standards**

Crime statistics are influenced by both legal and statistical factors, and by the extent to which crime is reported and registered. These factors can vary from one country to another. There are no international standards for how crime statistics should be produced and presented and this makes international comparisons difficult.

### **Three important factors to remember**

1. Swedish statistics record **all reported events as crimes** even if some of them are later found not to have constituted criminal offences.
2. Several offences of the same kind against a single victim will be counted in some countries as a single crime. By contrast, in Swedish crime statistics **every offence** occurring under these circumstances **is counted separately**.
3. In Swedish statistics, attempted offences are in most cases **counted together** with completed crimes.

The legal factors that influence crime statistics include the way offences are defined in the relevant legislation, for example, as well as the rules and guiding principles that obtain for the work of the police and prosecutors.

### [The Swedish Criminal Code](#)

The statistical factors that exert an influence include the principles that determine when a crime is recorded in the statistics. In some countries an event is only recorded in the crime statistics if, after investigation, it can legitimately be considered a crime or where there is sufficient evidence that a crime has been committed. Swedish statistics, on the other hand, record all reported events as crimes even if some of them are later found not to have constituted criminal offences.

### **Counting crime**

Every country has its own principles about what is to be recorded as a criminal act. In some countries, if several offences are committed on the same occasion, only the most serious of these will be recorded. In Sweden, every offence committed on a single occasion is recorded in principle.

Methods of counting crime also vary from one country to another. Several offences of the same kind against a single victim will be counted in some countries as a single crime.

By contrast, in Swedish crime statistics every offence occurring under these circumstances is counted separately.

The statistical classification of different types of incidents also varies. This is true of attempted offences, for example, which are in Sweden counted together with completed crimes. In a number of other countries, attempted offences are either recorded separately or ignored for statistical purposes.

### **Willingness to report crime**

Crime statistics are also influenced by public willingness to report crime, and by the efforts made by the police to deal with reported crime in the light of the way they prioritise different types of offences. This too may vary from country to country, making international comparisons more difficult.

[The Swedish Crime Survey](#) (a survey of self-reported victimization) constitutes a valuable indicator of exposure to crime (for example in relation to the official crime statistics), as a means of describing perceptions of safety (or fear of crime) or confidence, and also as a national reference point for other surveys.

### **Contact**

If you have any questions about Swedish crime statistics, please contact us at [info@bra.se](mailto:info@bra.se).