

# Leaving no one behind

Statistical review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Sweden, October 2020



**THE GLOBAL GOALS**  
For Sustainable Development

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Source: Statistics Sweden, Leaving no one behind – Statistical review of  
the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Sweden, October 2020

ISSN: 0000-0000 (Online)  
URN:NBN:SE:SCB-202041BR2002\_pdf

This publication is only available in electronic form at [www.scb.se](http://www.scb.se).

# Foreword

The statistical review published by Statistics Sweden in October 2019 pointed to some major challenges in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Sweden. One of these was that inequalities between different groups are not diminishing, and that they are growing in a number of areas. Based on that insight, Statistics Sweden decided that the next statistical review would focus entirely on the issue of inequalities between groups; that is to say, the principle of leaving no one behind. This has resulted in the report now being presented.

Sweden – and the world at large – is currently in the midst of a pandemic that is impacting all people and activities. UN Secretary General António Guterres has pointed out that the 2030 Agenda is the roadmap that has been defined by world leaders and that can help to guide countries in managing these difficult times. In Guterres' opinion, the pandemic also presents an opportunity to intensify efforts to fulfil the goals, by proceeding on the basis of the pillars and principles of the Agenda regarding respect for human rights and leaving no one behind.

This year's statistical review therefore aims to highlight groups for whom the goals have not been reached as much as for others, and among whom a relatively higher proportion of individuals are not getting their human rights fulfilled.

GD-Forum, a network of government agency heads engaged in the work to implement the 2030 Agenda, has concluded that the pandemic has demonstrated the importance of authorities' ability to deal with complex challenges in society, and that cooperation between authorities can help to manage and redress the situation. The crisis also clearly demonstrates how the various dimensions of sustainability and the goals of the Agenda impact each other and how they are interdependent – but also the possibilities of transitioning to a more sustainable society. (GD-Forum, 2020)

In Statistics Sweden's work on preparing this report, cooperation with other parties has been crucial. Other government authorities, civil society organisations and other entities have provided input, shared their insights and, not least, provided statistics and data that have enabled this follow-up.

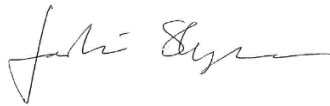
As in previous reports on the status of the implementation of the Agenda in Sweden, we have conducted the work with a pragmatic approach. We have used what we know and what we have, and have taken on board insights for our continuing work. In some cases there are aspects we have identified but that we have no possibility of reporting on or producing for this report, and aspects we would like to

know that we need to investigate further, and we save these for follow-up in the future.

In many respects, this report resembles the very first review of Sweden's status in relation to the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda that was published in April 2017. It is an initial attempt to gain an overview of both the groups for whom the goals of the 2030 Agenda are not being reached as much as for others, and the availability of statistics for measuring this.

To our knowledge, this report is unique globally. We hope that we can inspire others to develop their efforts on following up on the principle of leaving no one behind.

Statistics Sweden, Stockholm 30 October 2020

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joakim Stymne', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Joakim Stymne  
Director General

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**Abbreviations of statistical surveys**

ULF/SILC – Living Conditions Surveys (Statistics Sweden)

NTU – The Swedish crime survey (Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention)

HLV – Health on equal terms (Public Health Agency of Sweden)

AKU – Labour force surveys (Statistics Sweden)

EHIS – European health interview survey

SRHR17 – Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in Sweden 2017

# Summary

The goals of the 2030 Agenda are about creating decent and sustainable living situations and conditions for all people.

In this report, we have chosen to focus on the principle of leaving no one behind – a principle that pervades the entire Agenda and which obliges each country to eradicate poverty in all its forms, end discrimination and reduce inequalities and vulnerabilities that leave people behind in development and undermine individual and human potential.

When governments around the world adopted the 2030 Agenda, they undertook to implement it in accordance with their circumstances and nationally relevant goals. Since prospects are local and differ to varying degrees among countries, while the goals are global, the challenges and strengths of each country are unique. In other words, Sweden's fulfilment of targets should be seen in relation to both national goals and the objectives agreed upon at the international level.

The purposes of focusing, in this year's statistical review, on the principle of leaving no one behind are:

- to make visible groups for whom the goals of the 2030 Agenda are not being reached as much as for others, and among whom a relatively higher proportion of individuals are not having their human rights fulfilled
- to learn more about how we can integrate experiences from these in-depth analyses in the ongoing and more general follow-up, so that these groups are better visible in future follow-ups
- to obtain a summary of the statistics that are missing in Sweden to enable following up, in a relevant way, on the Agenda's intention of leaving no one behind.

## The state of vulnerabilities in Sweden

### Children's health is not equal

Living situations and conditions, such as the state of families' finances, can affect children's wellbeing. More girls than boys state that they feel bad.

- An estimated 10 percent of Swedish children might have been subjected to psychological or physical abuse or neglect. Around 3,000 children annually receive hospital care due to abuse.



- Among schoolchildren in the fifth, seventh and ninth grades who stated that their family's financial circumstances were not good, eight out of ten girls, and more than half of the boys, had both psychological and somatic difficulties several times a week (school year 2017/2018). Irrespective of the family's financial circumstances, the proportion experiencing problems is 20–27 percentage points higher among girls than among boys.

### **Highly educated people, those cohabiting and women live longer**

It is clear that level of educational attainment, gender and whether or not a person lives alone affect life expectancy.

- During the period 2012–2019, life expectancy increased in all surveyed groups, but most for cohabiting people and least for single people with upper secondary or compulsory educational attainment.
- Among older people, the risk of ill health and premature death is higher for those with a low level of educational attainment. There are, for example, also differences in medication and survival following a cancer diagnosis depending on level of education.
- In all surveyed groups, life expectancy for women is higher than for men, although the difference between the sexes has narrowed somewhat in the past few years.

### **Unequal mental health**

Mental ill health more often affects girls and women, people without gainful employment, people on low incomes and people of impaired intellect.

- Use of antidepressants increased substantially during 2013–2017. It is much more common for girls and young women to take antidepressants than boys and young men.
- 41 percent of 20–64-year-olds who are not in the labour force and who are on sickness and activity allowance or early retirement pension, experience reduced mental wellbeing compared with 15 percent among gainfully employed people.
- The highest proportion of people with reduced mental wellbeing is found among unemployed 18–24-year-olds who have a low income and who, at the same time, state that they are not heterosexual: around 40 percent. The most senior age group, 60–84-year-olds, has the lowest proportion of people with reduced mental wellbeing, at 9 percent.
- Mental ill health is common among people with an intellectual impairment.

### **Some refrain from healthcare more often than others**

Personal finances and any disabilities can affect whether or not we refrain from healthcare.

- The proportion of people who have refrained from healthcare for financial reasons is highest among the unemployed – 15 percent, followed by people born outside of Europe or who have a non-heterosexual identity, 10 percent. The lowest proportion is found among people born in Sweden, at 2 percent.
- People with disabilities have much poorer health than the rest of the population. They also refrain more often from healthcare and treatment than others do.

### **Shortcomings in sexual health and rights**

Knowledge and vulnerability in the area of sexual and reproductive health and rights are unequally distributed.

- Newly arrived immigrants aged 16–29 often lack knowledge about sexual and reproductive health and rights, SRHR. According to a study, one in five did not know where they could obtain contraception, more than half responded that they lacked knowledge about how the body works, and almost one in four were not aware of sexual rights in Sweden. In general, men expressed a greater need for knowledge than women, apart from in terms of family planning.
- The Public Health Agency of Sweden highlights that foreign-born young women are a particularly vulnerable group at an elevated risk of forced marriage, sexual exploitation, sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies, because they often lack knowledge of SRHR, according to a survey.

### **Clear disparities between groups in the suicide statistics**

It is more common for men, people from our neighbouring Nordic countries, unmarried people, those without gainful employment and people in same-sex marriages to commit suicide.

- During the period 2015–2019, death by suicide did not change to any great extent, with the exception of among older men, where it decreased by almost one quarter, and among women and men aged 15–29, among whom it increased.
- The statistics show clear differences in the number of suicides based on level of education and country of birth: the death rate is highest for people born in Nordic countries other than Sweden, and people only with compulsory education: 24–25 per 100,000. The death rate is lowest for people born outside of Europe: 7 per 100,000.

- The suicide rate is much higher for men than women: 21 and 9, respectively, per 100,000.
- People who become unemployed, who live on financial assistance rather than earned income, or who do not have earned income due to sickness, and receive sickness or activity allowance, are at a much higher risk of suicide. Groups who have been proven to be at an elevated risk of suicide are people in same-sex marriages and unmarried people.

## Freedom from violence

### Children and youths

There are several linked factors surrounding vulnerable children; for instance any substance abuse and sickness among the parents have an impact. Bullied children have often also been subjected to crimes such as assault, robbery and sexual offences.

- In a survey, four out of ten pupils state that they have, at some point, been subjected to child abuse. In the relatively small group of youths that state that they do not fit in with the gender breakdown boy or girl, seven out of ten state this.
- The same survey indicates that around 10 percent of children are multiple-subjected, meaning that they have been subjected to violence at least three times. Multiple-subjection is often linked to the children's own alcohol, narcotics and tobacco habits, mental health, performance at school and bullying.
- According to a school survey from the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, it is more common for pupils who have been subjected to bullying to also have been subjected to various crimes. Boys are subjected to a greater extent to assault, theft and robbery, and girls are subjected to a greater extent to sexual crimes and threats.
- In 2019, 106 human trafficking crimes for sexual purposes were reported. Twelve of them concerned human trafficking of children. It can, however, be assumed that unreported cases are high.

### Women's subjection to crime is multifaceted

A lack of social networks and dependence on the perpetrator could be reasons for the particular vulnerability of girls and women who are subjected to violence. Threats and violence affect more women with disabilities, and sexual crimes affect more commonly women and younger people.

- Women and girls subjected to violence can be particularly vulnerable due to circumstances such as age, substance abuse, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, foreign background and the values of relatives regarding the right of self-determination in sexuality and

relationships. According to the National Centre for Knowledge on Men's Violence against Women, this could for instance be due to a lack of social networks, discrimination, legal status, or dependence on the perpetrator.

- There is a lot to suggest that women with a disability are subjected to a greater extent to threats or violence than women without a disability.
- According to a study by the Public Health Agency of Sweden, sexual harassment, sexual assault and sexual violence are common and affect women and younger people to a much greater extent than men and older people.

### **Homosexual and bisexual women are particularly vulnerable**

According to a study by the Public Health Agency of Sweden, homosexual, bisexual and transgender people are subjected to sexual assault to a greater extent than heterosexual people. Subjection to sexual harassment is most common among bisexual women, while subjection to the most severe forms of sexual violence is most common among homosexual women. Homosexual men are subjected to the same extent as heterosexual women.

### **Fear of violence is greatest among young women**

Young women and people with disabilities express greater fear of subjection to violence and threats, according to surveys by Statistics Sweden and the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention.

- Around one person in ten aged 25–64 express fear of being subjected to assault. The proportion is higher among younger women and lower among older people, both women and men.
- Almost half of women aged 16–24 state that they feel worried about being subjected to rape or other sexual assaults.
- People with disabilities state to a greater extent that they have refrained from going out in the evening due to fear of being subjected to violence or threat of violence. Here too, there are substantial differences between women and men.

### **Subjection to hate crimes varies depending on the type of hate crime**

Homophobic hate crimes occur more often in the home, and people from Africa are most vulnerable to xenophobic hate crimes according to the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention.

- The risk of being subjected to the xenophobic hate crimes is highest among people with an African national background. The crimes most commonly consist of threats and harassment, although among men, assault is equally common.

- Subjection to homophobic hate crimes differs from other hate crimes in that the perpetrator is more commonly a relative and the crime is committed in a home.

### **Deadly violence is on the rise**

According to reports by the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, the age and gender breakdown among victims of crime is changing as deadly violence in criminal environments is on the rise. It is also very common for a woman to be killed by a person with whom she is, or has been, in a relationship, according to the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention.

- Deadly violence has increased in recent years, after a long period of decline. The reason is deadly violence in criminal environments. This has caused the gender breakdown among victims of deadly violence to change from two thirds men and one third women in the 1990s and 2000s, to three quarters men and one quarter women.
- Among deadly violence in criminal environments, there is a sharp over-representation in socially deprived areas, and the victims are younger than in other types of deadly violence.
- Out of the cases of deadly violence observed in 2019, 25 of the victims were women and 86 men. When women were the victims, the perpetrator in just under two thirds of the cases was someone with whom the woman had been, or was, in a couple relationship. Among men, the corresponding figure was 2 percent.

## **Educational equality**

### **School and education level**

Children's socioeconomic background, preschool attendance and their results in compulsory school affect their education level as an adult. Fewer adults with some form of disability have post-secondary education, than adults without a disability.

- In 2019, 78 percent of all 1–3-year-olds and 94 percent of 4–5-year-olds attended preschool. There are differences in the proportion of children enrolled in preschool depending on foreign background and the parents' education level.
- There is a clear link between grade value from compulsory school and completed post-secondary education. For pupils with a grade value of between 240 and 320 points in the ninth grade, 98 percent of 21–23-year-olds had completed at minimum a three-year upper secondary programme in 2019. The corresponding figure for those with a grade value of below 80 was 25 percent.
- Children with neuropsychiatric disabilities are over-represented among children with unexcused absence.

- It is more common for young adults with highly educated parents to commence a higher education programme than it is for those whose parents have a low level of education.
- There are great disparities in the proportion who commence higher education programmes between different counties and municipalities.
- In 2019, 50 percent of all women and 38 percent of all men aged 25–64 had a post-secondary education.
- For people aged 30–64 with some form of disability, 37 percent of women and 29 percent of men have post-secondary education.
- In the 2019/20 school year, around 12,300 children attended compulsory learning-disability schools, and around 700 children attended special-needs schools. This corresponds to just over 1 percent of all pupils in compulsory school.

#### **Pupils' family background has gained greater significance**

Pupils' socioeconomic background has gained greater importance to their grades since the end of the 2000s. This is more the case for foreign-born pupils than for those born in Sweden.

- Since the beginning of the 1990s, the span of the learning outcomes of schools has widened sharply. This is largely due to increased segregation between schools.
- In 2019, 84 percent of pupils who completed the ninth grade were eligible for a vocational programme: 86 percent of girls and 83 percent of boys. There are differences between pupils depending on Swedish or foreign background, as well as year of immigration.

#### **Support can equalise unequal conditions**

The possibility of obtaining support at school, the parents' education level and grade value from compulsory school affect the level of educational attainment.

- In 2019, the majority of pupils who did not have pass grades in several subjects in the sixth grade had not attained pass grades in all subjects in the ninth grade either. Just over half the pupils who completed the ninth grade and who did not attain pass grades in several subjects in the sixth grade have not received special support at the time of measurement in the seventh, eighth or ninth grade.
- Children who have been placed in care under the Social Services Act are at a greater risk of other problems, such as health problems, criminality, drug abuse and a weak foothold on the

labour market as an adult. Pass grades at compulsory school have proven to be a strong protective factor against such a negative course of events.

- 43 percent of women and 34 percent of men who had been placed according to the Social Services Act throughout the entire ninth grade had completed a three-year upper secondary programme at the age of 20. The corresponding figure for youths without such placement is 81 percent for females and 75 percent for males.
- In 2019, 20,000 students in higher education received pedagogical support. 75 percent of them have dyslexia or various neuropsychiatric variations.

### **Stress and cyberbullying give rise to ill health**

Stress from school is creeping down the ages and affects more girls than boys, and students with disabilities feel more out of place in higher education than other students do.

- Stress from school is on the rise in almost all surveyed ages. Among older pupils – grades seven to nine, and upper secondary school, it is more common for girls to experience stress from school.
- In 2018, 3–7 percent of schoolchildren aged 11, 13 and 15 stated that they had been subjected to cyberbullying.
- Out of responding students with disabilities in a survey by the Swedish Council for Higher Education in 2018, many feel a great deal of stress about managing to gain sufficient higher education credits to continue receiving study aid, are less satisfied with their programme, have a more negative experience of their studies and feel more out of place in higher education than responding students without a disability do.

### **Employment form and competition affect equality**

A higher proportion of foreign-born gainfully employed people have weak establishment on the labour market compared with people born in Sweden. A higher proportion of women than men have temporary employment and the majority of those who are willing and able to work more than they actually do are women. Employers in certain sectors feel forced to bend the rules to cope with competition, which affects their employees.

- In 2018, 4.6 million people in Sweden were gainfully employed. Out of these, 6 percent of those born in Sweden and 9 percent of those born abroad had a weak establishment on the labour market.

#### **Decent working conditions**

- In 2019, 18 percent of all employed women and 15 percent of all employed men had temporary employment. 31 percent of all temporary employees were born abroad while at the same time 19 percent of all permanent employees were born abroad.
- In 2019 there were around 140,000 underemployed people; that is to say, people who are both willing and able to increase their working hours, in Sweden. 61 percent of them were women.
- In 2018, five out of ten employers in the cleaning sector stated that they are forced to compromise their work environment and working hours rules to cope with competition. In 2017, three out of ten employers in the construction, transport, hotel and restaurant sector, and in the agricultural and forestry sector, stated the same thing.

### **The most vulnerable people on the labour market**

Young people, migrant workers, asylum seekers, paperless migrants and people with disabilities are particularly vulnerable on the labour market.

- Young people who neither work nor study are a group with generally lower possibilities than others to enter the labour market, and hence risk long-term exclusion. Among women aged 20–29 in this group, the most common type of income comes from care of a child or close relative. Among men in the same group and age range, the income of most of those born abroad comes from financial assistance. For people born in Sweden, sickness or activity allowance are most common, together with a small earned income.
- In 2018, there were 127,000 migrant workers in Sweden who were not registered. Some of them are found in industries in which working conditions are not always good. 29 percent of migrant workers were women. Of these, 21 percent work primarily at cleaning companies. The men worked in the construction industry, at cleaning companies and in hotels and restaurants. Also, asylum seekers and paperless migrants are highly vulnerable on the labour market although there are practically no statistics at all on this group.
- In 2017, just over eight out of ten people with a disability worked even though they were ill. They stated to a much higher extent than other employees that they worked despite illness because they could not afford to be ill. Nearly nine out of ten people with disabilities and reduced capacity to work had worked even though they were ill. Just over 40 percent of them stated that they could not afford to be ill. 17 percent of them worked despite being ill because they were afraid of losing their job, compared with 6 percent among employees as a whole.



### **Discrimination in the workplace**

People with disabilities and people born abroad suffer discrimination in the workplace to a higher degree than employees as a whole.

- In 2017, nearly three in ten people with disabilities and reduced capacity to work experienced that they had been subjected to discrimination. Almost one in ten felt that they were subjected to discrimination due to their disability. Out of employees as a whole, just over one in ten experienced that they had been subjected to discrimination.
- Subjection to violence, threats and bullying at work are more common among people with disabilities.
- Around one in four employees born abroad experienced some kind of discrimination, compared with one in ten born in Sweden.

### **More people with a low economic standard, but the income standard is on the rise**

The proportion of people with a low economic standard has increased, while at the same time the income standard has risen. The greatest disparities are found between the gainfully employed and non-gainfully employed.

- In 2018, 15 percent of the population had a low economic standard, meaning that they live in households with a disposable income that is less than 60 percent of the median income. The figure has doubled from 1995, and is due to people on a medium and high income having had better income growth than those on a low income.
- The income standard has risen – mainly for people on a high income, but also for those on a low income, which has led to a reduction in the proportion of people with a low income standard. A low income standard means that income is not sufficient to pay necessary expenses such as housing, home insurance, childcare and local travel. The largest proportion of people with a low income standard is found among those who lack gainful employment; the proportion is 19 times higher than among those who are gainfully employed.
- In 1996 almost one fifth of the population lived in households with a low income standard. In 2018 it was one twentieth – 5 percent.
- Among the most elderly, the proportion of women living alone who have a low economic standard is almost twice that of men living alone. It is however more common for men living alone to have long-term financial assistance, a low income standard or excessive debts.

#### **Economic equality**

### **Who are financially vulnerable?**

Children, single mothers, people born abroad people with disabilities are the most financially vulnerable. A severe consequence of financial vulnerability is homelessness.

- Viewed based on the indicators low economic standard, low income standard, long-term financial assistance and excessive debts, it is more common for children than for adults to live in financial vulnerability. Children of single parents run a greater risk of financial vulnerability than children with parents who live together.
- Single women with children are financially vulnerable to a much higher degree than single men with children.
- Financial vulnerability is much more common among people born abroad than those born in Sweden. The greatest difference is found in long-term financial assistance, with the proportion being almost seven times higher among people born abroad than those born in Sweden.
- It is 26 times more common for children of parents born abroad to live with long-term financial assistance compared with children of parents born in Sweden.
- There is much to indicate that people with disabilities are financially vulnerable to a greater extent than people without disabilities.
- In 2017, just over 33,000 people were homeless in Sweden. A common reason for them not being accepted into the regular housing market was that their income was too low or they lacked any kind of income acceptable to landlords. Financial assistance is an example of income that is sometimes not accepted.

### **Socioeconomic segregation is on the rise**

More people in socioeconomically challenged areas have a low economic and material standard, and more live in overcrowded conditions compared with in other areas.

- Socioeconomic segregation has increased in Sweden since the 1990s. Segregation is most notable in the large cities and suburbs.
- In socioeconomically challenged areas, over 50 percent of people in the 0–19 age group lived in a household with a low economic standard in 2018. The corresponding percentage in other areas was 14 percent.

- In 2019, Sweden was one of the EU countries that had the lowest share of people living in severe material deprivation, apart from in socioeconomically challenged areas, where the proportion was on a par with the EU average, at just under 7 percent. In other areas, the share was just over 1 percent.
- Out of the population aged 16 and above who live in socioeconomically challenged areas, 15 percent live in households with more than two residents per bedroom. In other areas, 4 percent live in overcrowded conditions according to the same definition.
- People born outside of Europe live in overcrowded conditions to a greater extent than both people born in Sweden, and people born in the rest of Europe. In socioeconomically challenged areas, 30 percent of people born outside Europe live in overcrowded conditions.

#### **Other conditions for growing up, lower voter turnout and better public transport**

The conditions in which pupils grow up affect the eligibility of many of them for upper secondary school more than their housing area, fewer talk politics and fewer vote.

- In socioeconomically challenged areas, fewer pupils are eligible for upper secondary vocational programmes than in other areas. For children with a foreign background, the reason is rather linked to differences in conditions for growing up, than the area in which they live; there is no difference in eligibility between areas when considering differences in conditions for growing up. For children with a Swedish background, however, eligibility is poorer for those in socioeconomically challenged areas than those in other areas.
- In 2018–19, 29 percent of the population aged from 16 years old in socioeconomically challenged areas stated that they mostly participate in discussions and speak their minds when the conversation turns to politics, compared with 38 percent in other areas. The proportion of people who are members of a political party is however the same, around 5 percent irrespective of area.
- In the 2018 general election, 77 percent of the electorate in socioeconomically challenged areas voted, compared with 90 percent in other areas.

#### **More unease, feelings of insecurity and deadly violence**

In socioeconomically challenged areas, more people are worried about assault and threats, women express more unease than men, and a greater number of serious crimes are committed in such areas compared with in others.

- In 2016–2017, 20 per cent of the population aged 16 years and above in socioeconomically challenged areas stated that they have at some point during the last 12 months refrained from going out at night due to fear of being assaulted or threatened, compared with 15 percent in other areas.
- Women feel unsafe to a higher degree than men. Almost one in three women in socioeconomically challenged areas stated that she had refrained from going out at night due to unease.
- Serious crimes such as shootings and deadly violence have increased in recent years, and are committed to a greater extent in socially deprived areas. They can increasingly be linked to conflicts in the criminal world.

#### **Better access to public transport**

In 2018 the proportion of the population in towns and urban areas that had easy access to public transport was 96 percent in socioeconomically challenged areas compared with 89 percent in other areas.

### **Sustainable environment for all**

#### **Air pollution, noise and climate change threaten health**

Air pollution and noise are two of the greatest environmental health problems in Sweden. Environmental health problems and climate-related health problems affect certain groups that are already vulnerable in other ways more than others.

- There are currently no overall statistics on how exposure to air pollution differs between different social or socioeconomic groups. However, surveys show that some regions as well as urban areas and cities are more exposed to air pollution.
- Surveys show that people on a low income and people born abroad are more exposed to noise in and around their home. This is shown by the responses to a public health survey by the Public Health Agency of Sweden in 2018. There is also a greater proportion of women than men who experience sleeping difficulties due to noise.
- Because of climate change, heatwaves are becoming more common and can have harmful effects on health, especially for particularly vulnerable groups. A study shows that the risk of dying from coronary artery disease in heatwaves is higher in more socially deprived areas.

#### **Voter turnout and representation in the Swedish parliament are unequal**

Voter turnout is high but unevenly distributed, few are members of a political party, and most parliamentarians are on a high income.

- Swedish voter turnout is high and has increased in the last four general elections.

### **Participation in political decision-making**

- Voter turnout in the 2018 general election was lowest among foreign-born people, those with no more than compulsory education, and among people on a low income.
- The probability of people voting increases if others in their surroundings vote.
- Around 5 percent of the population from the age of 16 is a member of a political party.
- The vast majority of parliamentarians are on a high income. This is partly due to the fact that the fee from the parliament exceeds the high income threshold. However, even among newly elected parliamentarians, around 80 percent are on a high income.
- Among the members of the parliament, it is primarily the groups the elderly, the young, foreign-born people, those with upper secondary and compulsory education, and women who are under-represented.

#### **Age, sex and socioeconomic factors affect the death rate from covid-19**

More people on a low income, with a low level of educational attainment, the elderly and residents of homes for the disabled have died during the pandemic. Gender and underlying illnesses have also affected the death rate.

- Death from covid-19 was, in the spring of 2020, higher among people on a low income, people who had immigrated from low-income countries, people with a low level of education and unmarried elderly people.
- Age, gender and underlying illnesses are significant factors in death from covid-19. The proportion of deaths rose with increasing age for both sexes. More men than women have died from covid-19.
- The death rate among people over 70 years old residing in homes for the elderly was higher during the period March–June 2020 than during the same months in 2016–2019.
- Death from covid-19 among people with housing assistance under the Act concerning Support and Service for Persons with Certain Functional Impairments was almost three times higher than deaths among the rest of the population. The death rate in the group was also higher for people below the age of 70 than for those over the age of 70.

### **Risk factors in covid-19**

People over 70 years old more often become severely ill from covid-19. Socially vulnerable groups and some professions also run a higher risk of infection.

- Illnesses that pose a risk of severe symptoms from covid-19 are more common in the group aged over 70 years than in the group aged below 70 years. The illnesses are over-represented among people who have died from covid-19.
- Many risk factors in becoming infected by covid-19 are present in socially vulnerable groups, who often live in overcrowded conditions and lack the possibility of social distancing. Some professions also run a greater risk of infection, such as taxi drivers, those working in pizzerias and bus and tram drivers.

### **Children and covid-19**

Children with special needs have had greater difficulty in coping with the switch to distance learning, and more have contacted emergency contact centres for girls and youths since the pandemic started.

- Among children with neuropsychiatric disabilities who attend school, it is reported that 62 percent experience that problems with school have worsened, according to a survey by the Swedish organisation for people with neuropsychiatric disabilities Attention from the spring of 2020. Children who used to go to school are now at home full time, schools are not meeting pupils' needs, support and adaptations are absent and many pupils have not coped with the transition to distance learning.
- In a survey by the Swedish Disability Rights Federation, 27 percent stated that their child's access to school and education had been affected during the covid-19 pandemic. 17 percent of those queried stated that their personal finances had been adversely affected by the pandemic. 55 percent stated that they manage day-to-day finances by using their savings.
- At the beginning of the covid-19 pandemic in 2020, the number of contacts with emergency contact centres for girls and youths increased by 20–40 percent compared with 2019.

### **Crime and subjection to violence during the pandemic**

Since covid-19 struck Sweden, the number of reported cases of sexual crimes against children has sharply increased. The number of cases of domestic violence has also risen.

- The number of people who were assaulted by someone they knew increased during the period March–July 2020, while the number of women assaulted by an unknown person decreased.

- The number of reported sexual crimes in the group aged over 18 years old decreased by between 15 and 5 percent during March–May 2020 compared with 2019. However, sexual crimes against children rose over the same period by between 3 and 39 percent depending on the month. The increase in sexual crimes against children was 40 percent in June and 21 percent in July, which is much higher than the increase for adults, which was 4 and 12 percent, respectively.

### **The consequences of the pandemic for companies and the labour market**

The pandemic has hit many companies hard and unemployment has risen, mainly among young people.

- According to a panel survey by The Swedish Federation of Business Owners in June 2020, many companies have needed to reduce staff costs to avoid redundancies during the pandemic. 39 percent state that they have required government support measures. Nonetheless, the number of unemployed people in the entire population aged 15–74 years old increased from 405,800 in the first quarter to 489,200 in the second quarter.
- Unemployment increased in the second quarter most among people aged 15–24 compared with older age groups.

### **The impact of the pandemic on public health**

According to the Public Health Agency of Sweden, the potential consequences of the covid-19 pandemic on public health are:

- that reduced access to preschool and school is having an adverse impact on some children's safety, development and possibility of obtaining an education.
- poor prospects of a livelihood among groups with a low level of education and who are socially vulnerable.
- that health disparities between population groups in society are on the rise, as there is a risk of an increase in the use of tobacco, alcohol, drugs and gambling for money among socially vulnerable groups.
- that people who are already experiencing mental ill health will be particularly vulnerable.
- that the forced isolation increases the risk of psychiatric diagnoses.
- that more people who are on sick leave, become unemployed or in need of financial assistance will commit suicide.

## Gaps in the statistics

### A lack of statistics gives knowledge gaps

There are many areas in which there is a lack of statistics for obtaining a complete picture of vulnerabilities. Examples of such areas are:

- people with disabilities, including children with disabilities
- national minorities
- people who are working temporarily in Sweden but who are registered in another country
- asylum seekers awaiting a decision
- paperless migrants (for instance asylum seekers who have been rejected but who remain in the country, working without a permit)
- children in general, and children's health in particular
- children in care
- LGBT people
- women and children who have been subjected to human trafficking for sexual purposes, and
- honour related violence and oppression.

## Conclusions

### Important conclusions

Some of the most important conclusions that can be drawn from the content of this report are that

- on an overarching level, it can be said that people with different types of disabilities, children of people who are vulnerable in some way and people born abroad from certain parts of the world or who have been residing in Sweden for a short time are particularly susceptible to certain types of vulnerability that leave people behind in development towards a more sustainable society. Women and girls are also often vulnerable to a greater extent, particularly when different vulnerabilities and susceptibilities overlap.
- There are challenges in the statistical follow-up regarding for instance people with disabilities, children, domestic violence and sexual violence. There are very limited statistics available on honour related violence and oppression, national minorities, paperless migrants and LGBT people.
- Leaving no one behind means that efforts and initiatives are needed on many different levels. Equal school and education seems to be a strong protective factor with respect to a number of surveyed areas. Making susceptibility visible can also help



achieve a better general understanding of the mechanisms behind vulnerability. Developing statistics might be complex, resource-intensive and time-consuming, but it presents an opportunity in the context.

# The principle of leaving no one behind

*“As we embark on this great collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind. Recognizing that the dignity of the human person is fundamental, we wish to see the Goals and targets met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society. And we will endeavour to reach the furthest behind first.”*

Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, paragraph 4 (UN, 2015)

When the 2030 Agenda and the 17 Global Goals were adopted, countries across the world pledged not only to eradicate extreme poverty, to solve the climate crisis and to promote peace and justice, but also to reduce inequalities in the world. World leaders pledged to “Leave no one behind” in development and that they would endeavour to reach the furthest behind first. This represented an unequivocal promise from all UN Member States to eradicate poverty in all its forms, end discrimination and reduce inequalities and vulnerabilities that leave people behind and undermine individual and human potential. (UNSDG, 2019)

The principle is founded on the UN’s normative standards, such as equality and non-discrimination, which are fundamental principles in the Charter of the United Nations. It is also founded on international commitments regarding human rights and equality and on national judicial systems worldwide. It is important to remember that the principle applies to everyone; that is to say, also people who are living in a society without permission (paperless migrants).

## **What does leaving no one behind mean?**

From the political declaration of the Agenda, it can be seen that the principle of leaving no one behind means that all people in a society shall have equal opportunities to benefit from developments, have their human rights fulfilled and realise their human potential.

When people are left behind, not only does this pose risks in relation to their human rights, but also social and economic risks in the form of wasted human and productive potential and a heightened risk of ill health. Economic growth is for instance generally slower in countries with large or growing inequalities, and can also generate heightened social tensions and political turmoil. (UNSDG, 2019)

The Swedish Government (2020) set forth, in a report published in connection with the UN High-Level Political Forum on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the main features of how Sweden is broadening its efforts to demonstrate results in terms of the principle of leaving no one behind. Seven key messages were formulated on what is to be achieved by 2030 at the latest.

- Realisation of human rights and equality
- Strengthened empowerment and participation
- Promotion of the transition to resource-efficient, resilient and climate-neutral economies
- Promotion of poverty-reduction on many different levels
- Promotion of dialogue between social partners in the labour market and of decent work
- Gradual realisation of social protection for all
- Better data and follow-up

In terms of follow-up, this means that the living circumstances and conditions of individuals must be made visible. This means going beyond assessing averages and progress on an aggregated level. This requires breaking down data and statistics to identify who is being left behind, how and why, and who is experiencing multiple forms of vulnerability at the same time.

### **Who is at risk of being left behind?**

People at risk of being left behind, as expressed in the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, often belong to social groups that are more vulnerable than others. In the declaration of the Agenda, children, young women and girls or people with disabilities are mentioned for example. In the Agenda, particular reference is made to people in vulnerable situations and to the specific risk of such people of being left behind developments towards an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable society.

Poverty is a fundamental problem, but far from the only reason for why people are left behind. Discrimination can also prevent people from realising their potential. In many countries, women and girls, refugees, migrants and LGBT individuals face severe obstacles in the form of discrimination, exclusion and curtailed rights.

Geography and access to infrastructure, and to education, also affect people's possibilities of harnessing their civil, cultural, economic, political or social rights.

LGBT, standing for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual, is an umbrella term for individuals with such orientation, identity or expression.

Anyone can be subjected to something that limits their development opportunities or enjoyment of their human rights. For instance, a person might be unemployed, sick, have a low income or be subjected to threats and violence. In the statistics, we can see that, within certain social and/or socioeconomic groups, there are more individuals who are vulnerable to a certain circumstance than in other groups. In some groups, there are also factors that could mean vulnerability having particularly severe consequences or leading to a person being vulnerable in multiple ways at the same time. These groups are considered to be particularly susceptible.

### **Vulnerability and susceptibility in the statistics**

In the follow-up of the principle of leaving no one behind, statistics are used based on an understanding of structural conditions that are present in the population and which entail heightened vulnerability and risk. It is for instance known that certain factors affect people's health and financial and social situation, which means that we can follow people who find themselves in life situations that are characterized by vulnerability. At the same time, it is important to point out that this does not mean that an individual person in a group that is considered vulnerable will automatically be particularly susceptible.

In practical terms, this means that, in the statistical follow-up, we study in particular groups in which the proportion of individuals who can be assumed to be susceptible to certain circumstances is greater than in other groups in society, and measure the actual vulnerability in these groups compared with other groups.

### **The purpose of the review**

In light of the principle of leaving no one behind, how it can be interpreted and what the principle entails in purely practical terms when follow-up is to be performed, Statistics Sweden has drawn up a number of intentions that have formed the basis for work on the report.

- I. This year's statistical review aims to make visible groups for whom the goals of the 2030 Agenda are reached to a lesser extent than for others, and among whom a relatively higher proportion are not getting their human rights fulfilled.
- II. A further purpose of the report is to learn more about how we can integrate experiences from these in-depth analyses in the ongoing and more general follow-up, so that these groups are better visible in future follow-ups.
- III. Also, work with the review provides an opportunity to obtain a summary of the statistics that are missing in Sweden to enable following up, in a relevant way, on the Agenda's intention of leaving no one behind.

## Analysis framework

*"People get left behind when they lack the choices and opportunities to participate in and benefit from development progress. All persons living in extreme poverty can thus be considered 'left behind', as can those who endure disadvantages or deprivations that limit their choices and opportunities relative to others in society."*

What does it mean to leave no one behind? (UNDP, 2018)

Vulnerability is complex. Knowledge about how vulnerability manifests itself for women and men and boys and girls in different groups is fundamental to designing effective action plans and measures to counteract vulnerability, inequality and disparities.

To capture some of the complexity in the term "vulnerability", Statistics Sweden has used Sida's multidimensional poverty analysis framework when analysing the results, but also in the selection of indicators and areas analysed. This has concerned:

- 1) ensuring that as many relevant aspects and circumstances as possible that could lead to a heightened risk of being left behind are included in the analysis, and
- 2) having a framework, including terms, to adhere to in the analysis of different types of vulnerability and how various circumstances can cause heightened susceptibility.

The model defined by Sida is based on a theory that is often used in quality-of-life analyses, *the Capability approach* – a theory developed by economist Amartya Sen and philosopher Martha Nussbaum. The theory is based on two important principles: that freedom to achieve improved quality of life is of primary moral importance; and that freedom to achieve improved quality of life is to be understood in terms of people's *capabilities*; that is, their real opportunities to develop. The theory forms a basis for many of the sets of indicators and analyses performed in the field of quality of life at, for instance, Eurostat and OECD.

The theory has then been further enhanced by Sabina Alkire and James Foster at the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) for analyses of multidimensional poverty. The model is a flexible technique for measuring poverty or quality of life that can encompass multiple dimensions and indicators to create a measure that is adaptable to specific contexts.

### Dimensions of vulnerability in Sida's multidimensional poverty analysis framework

#### Resources

Resources that can be used to uphold a decent standard of living, fulfil basic needs and improve life. Resources can be both material and non-material.

#### Opportunities and choice

Opportunities to develop and/or use resources to uphold a decent standard of living or improve life.

#### Power and voice

Power and voice are about people's ability to formulate their concerns, needs and rights in an informed manner and to participate in decision-making that affects these problems in the household, in local communities and at national level.

#### Human security

Physical, sexual and/or psychological violence and feelings of insecurity pose limitations to the possibilities of various groups and individuals to exercise their human rights.

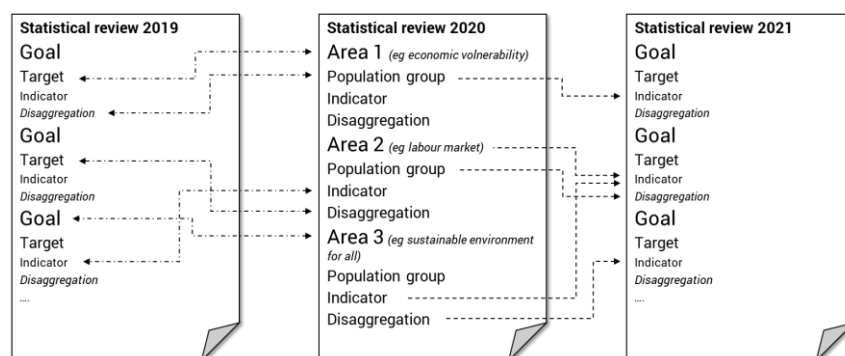
### The report diverges from the goal structure of the Agenda

We have chosen to not systematically go through all targets to identify who might be left behind in terms of a particular goal. Instead, we have identified a number of areas that we have found to be of interest to study in a Swedish context. An analysis of the Agenda's goals, known vulnerable groups and the theoretical framework resulted on the whole in the chapter breakdown of the report. Some aspects have been considered to be so cross-cuttingly relevant that they should be included in all areas. Conditions for growing up, conditions late in life, gender equality and the disability perspective are studied in all chapters where relevant and insofar as the statistics allow.

Within these areas, one or several of the 169 targets of the Agenda have then been picked out as relevant to study based on the principle of leaving no one behind. For this reason, not all targets are addressed in this review.

**Figure 1. How the 2020 review fits into the goal structure of the 2030 Agenda**

Description of the structure in annual reviews



By diverging from the goal structure of the Agenda and instead studying some important areas and circumstances in which inequalities are

already known to arise, we hope to learn more about which aspects are possible and relevant to add or adapt to the continuing regular follow-up of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Sweden. Going forward, we also see a possibility that this review could be followed by a similar review on some occasion(s) in the next decade. That way, this study can be seen as a kind of baseline to use in following the implementation of the Agenda in terms of the principle of leaving no one behind.

### **Discrimination, gender equality and human rights**

Both grounds for discrimination and human rights are intricately linked to the principles of leaving no one behind. Gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls are seen as crucial for all people and societies to develop their full potential. This is reflected in the 2030 Agenda.

To a great extent, human rights are about the equal worth of all people, and about all people possessing fundamental rights. This concerns for instance the right to a livelihood, the right to a home of one's own, having enough food to eat and learning to read and write. Everybody also has the right to feel safe, live a life free from violence, believe what they wish, choose themselves if, when and whom they will marry and decide over their own body and own life.

The grounds for discrimination are adopted in Swedish law and regulate how discrimination is assessed legally. It is forbidden to discriminate on grounds of gender, transgender identity or expression, ethnic origin, religion or other faith, disability, sexual orientation or age.

### **Discrimination and human rights in the statistics**

To some extent, follow-up is performed on discrimination in national sample surveys and The Equality Ombudsman follows up on reports of breaches of the Discrimination Act. Neither the grounds for discrimination nor human rights are however suitable for structuring the statistical follow-up of the 2030 Agenda. Many of them are also very difficult to capture in statistical surveys and in other quantitative information collection. In Sweden, as a rule no statistics are collected on for instance ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation. This is considered to be sensitive personal data and collection of such information must always be considered very carefully in relation to human integrity.

However, human rights, grounds for discrimination and a gender equality perspective alike have served as underlying references both in the analysis of the results and in decisions on which indicators, breakdowns and chapter divisions are reported. Human rights as an underlying reference means for example that we study, or attempt to study, the situation for all people who are in the country; that is to say, even people who are in the country without permission (paperless

migrants). The grounds for discrimination and the gender equality perspective are based on an understanding of power structures in society and are, as such, important background references. They also serve as background references in the analysis of which statistics are absent in Sweden to enable us to follow up comprehensively on the principle of leaving no one behind. It might be necessary to examine grounds for discrimination and human rights to understand which groups are not sufficiently studied, or which groups do not have the same possibilities of having their human rights fulfilled.

### **Leaving no one behind in a Swedish context**

The goals in the 2030 Agenda are about creating decent and sustainable living situations and conditions for all people. Since prospects are local and differ to varying degrees among countries, while the goals are global, the challenges and strengths of each country are unique. It is therefore important to also put the principle of leaving no one behind into a national context.

Besides the goals of the agenda, there are a number of parliamentary goals, strategies and instructions to authorities that target equality. This applies for instance to the overarching public health goal to “Create societal conditions for good health on equal terms for the entire population and to close avoidable health gaps within one generation” (Prop. 2017/18:249); the instruction to the Inquiry for better equality in schools to propose measures for increased equality through reduced school segregation and improved resource allocation (Dir. 2018:71); the instruction to the Swedish Equality Commission to submit proposals aimed at increasing, in the long term, economic equality and improving opportunities for social mobility (Dir. 2018:74); the overall objective of gender equality policy is to ensure that women have equal power to shape society and their own lives (Prop. 2005/06:155); and the government’s long-term strategy to reduce and counteract segregation (Ministry of Culture, 2018). These also tie in with the principle of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind and much of the analysis relates to these very national targets, strategies and instructions to authorities. The chapter headings have, in most cases, also been inspired by these goals and strategies.



# About the statistics in the report

The purpose of the report is to follow up on Sweden's implementation of the 2030 Agenda with a particular focus on the groups that are at risk of being left behind in the developments towards a more long-term sustainable society. Overall, the access to statistics is good. This has also been reported in prior reviews of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

In this report, we need to identify which groups might be susceptible or vulnerable in relation to relevant targets and, as far as possible, make them visible in the statistical follow-up. It is of course impossible to claim that everything has been included, even though the goals are worded that way. Therefore, based on the wordings of the goals and the national list of indicators for the 2030 Agenda in Sweden, we have collected information and statistics that are available, often in the form of in-depth studies. In many cases, this has meant retrieval of information from sources outside of the system for the official statistics and beyond what has been defined as the national list of indicators for the 2030 Agenda in Sweden (Statistics Sweden, 2019). To supplement the statistics presented in the report, there are tables published on Statistics Sweden's website (<https://scb.se/om-scb/scbs-verksamhet/agenda-2030/statistisk-uppfoljning/>) – in some cases with more study domains than those presented in the report.

In the report, we have used already completed analyses to a great extent. These analyses have, in some cases, been performed based on questions that differ from those we want answered in this review. This means that the statistics that are available do not always exactly suit our purposes. Sometimes, we find a point estimate where we would rather have had a time series, and sometimes we might present a time series when we would rather have dug deeper into statistical breakdowns into several different groups. This can of course sometimes affect the conclusions, although we have attempted to avoid this as far as possible by studying the phenomenon from different angles.

## When no statistics are available

There are several life conditions or groups that recur as being particularly vulnerable in surveys of, for instance, the prevalence of violence. The same circumstances can make these groups both vulnerable and difficult to study. Besides the factors described in the chapter of this report on groups that are difficult to study, there might be further reasons for difficulties in measuring certain life conditions. It might for instance be the case that certain groups are too small for the results to be representative – in particular when non-response is high.

In light of this, a number of small and targeted surveys have been carried out by various authorities or on their behalf. Such surveys have, as a rule, purposes other than claiming generalisation on statistical grounds. Therefore, we have not always provided detailed results – the reports are available for those who wish to read them. In this report, they provide an overall depiction of life conditions that could entail particular susceptibility or vulnerability, but it is not possible to follow these using indicators. In other contexts, the need for more long-term statistical follow-up of particularly vulnerable groups has been raised by various authorities. Development efforts are also in progress, often as part of various government instructions, which could enable better visibility of vulnerable groups in the national follow-up of the 2030 Agenda in future.

### **Criteria when choosing source materials**

The criteria used when statistics and information have been selected is that they must be able to say something about the groups in society that we, based on an understanding of vulnerability, have considered to be more susceptible to being vulnerable in different dimensions, while at the same time the statistics must also be linked to the goals of the 2030 Agenda. The targets have been used as a fairly loose boundary. To some extent, existing national strategies and objectives have also served as a framework for what we have studied.

First of all, we have studied which official and other government statistics are available. Second, we have used other sources. Another criterion for selecting statistics for inclusion in the report is that the quality of the material or the background material is clearly described in the source documentation.

The presentation of the indicators from the national list of indicators has in some cases been adjusted somewhat from the previous report. This has been done to capture the groups that are at risk of being left behind and could, for instance, mean that more study domains have been added.

### **Information about the quality of the statistics**

The indicators that exist to follow up on the 2030 Agenda vary greatly in nature. Transparency and documentation of the statistics are therefore paramount to the users' ability to interpret and evaluate them.

The production and quality of the statistics are described in metadata documents published on Statistics Sweden's website (<https://scb.se/om-scb/scbs-verksamhet/agenda-2030/statistisk-uppfoljning/>), or through the source materials listed in the references.

### **Why is talking about the quality of the statistics important?**

The indicators for sustainable development are a core element in following up on the global sustainability goals. Decision-makers, the

media, researchers and the general public are just some examples of users of the statistics. The indicators are used as a basis for evidence-based decision-making, advanced analysis and add to transparency in following up on the Agenda. Transparency in terms of how the indicators are produced, and how reliably, is therefore important.

An indicator can be based on quantitative or qualitative information, or both. It can for example be produced by combining several different data sources with existing statistics and/or using more advanced methods. There may thus be challenges in production that affect the quality. This is something that needs to be considered when using the statistics.

## **How we proceeded**

Work on this report began with a study of compilations of factors linked to vulnerability and vulnerable groups based on texts of the Agenda and work performed by Inter Agency and Expert group on SDG Indicators (UNDESA, 2020) and the UNECE Steering group on SDG Statistics (UNECE, 2020). Other material produced by various UN organisations was also studied.

Thereafter, a list was created of groups potentially at greater risk of vulnerability in different dimensions. The list was supplemented with possible sources and some proposals for analyses of potential interest.

The list was then used in a broad consultation with the government agency network for 2030 Agenda follow-up and with the organisations that have signed the letter of intent of civil society regarding the 2030 Agenda. The latter was distributed through Concord, which is an umbrella organisation for civil-society organisations. In the consultation, we requested input on analyses, vulnerable groups and supplementary information on sources and further information in the area.

The next step of the work was to study Sida's multidimensional poverty analysis framework and other theoretical frameworks for following up on quality of life and living conditions.

Based on this study, and based on the goals and targets of the Agenda, a decision was then made on the areas we wanted to write about. In a dialogue with experts at Statistics Sweden and other authorities, summaries of intended analyses were written. These summaries resulted in an initial draft outline of the report which we checked with the external working group of representatives from other authorities and ministries that had been formed ahead of the reporting.

In a further consultation with experts at Statistics Sweden and other authorities, and using the theoretical framework as a background, a decision was then made on which indicators would be collected and

analysed, and with which breakdowns. Data and statistics were collected during June to September 2020.

In September, the information was compiled and analytical texts were prepared. October was spent on text production and consultation with the external working group. The report was published on Statistics Sweden's website on 3 November 2020.

# Equality of health

Goal 3 in the follow-up of the 2030 Agenda is good health and wellbeing for everyone at all ages. Health and wellbeing is a broad term, as shown in the various targets and indicators included in goal 3. In this report we have chosen in particular to study the areas children (target 3.2), reduced mortality and prevention of mental ill health (target 3.4), sexual and reproductive health and rights (target 3.7) and universal affordable healthcare (target 3.8).

Follow-up using the selected indicators clearly shows that there are disparities in health and life expectancy between different groups in the population. However, health and healthcare for groups that are furthest behind, such as the acute homeless, paperless migrants and asylum seekers, can essentially not be followed using existing indicators. To a great extent, they are not able to benefit from the services offered by healthcare and social services providers. Here, we describe almost exclusively the health and wellbeing of groups who are registered in Sweden and for whom register data and large surveys are available.

## Starting points

When the Commission for Equitable Health submitted its final report, some main areas were listed that, in various ways, cause differences in health and life expectancy (SOU 2017:47). The conclusions of the report are largely linked to the overarching public health policy goal to “*Create societal conditions for good health on equal terms for the entire population and to close avoidable health gaps within one generation*” (Prop. 2017/18:249). Areas in which reducing health disparities is assumed to be possible are found in the eight public health policy goals, primarily different life conditions, lifestyles and healthcare (Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2020a). The public health policy goals touch on some of the goals of the 2030 Agenda, but seize on areas where it is possible to reduce disparities in health and wellbeing, see margin to left.

## Good care on equal terms

An important aspect for equal health is the healthcare service. The National Board of Health and Welfare works continuously with national reports in many different areas, including equal care. The goals of the healthcare service are set out in the text to the left. Follow-up is often carried out on the basis of specific diseases and/or health problems among known patient groups, or based on various initiatives or themes within the healthcare service. The main focus of a substantial part of the follow-up and evaluation performed is interaction with the development of various knowledge sources. A compilation of the state of knowledge in the matter of equal healthcare, the most important challenges in the healthcare service and proposals for measures are

The public health policy goals: (1) conditions of early life, (2) knowledge; competence and education; (3) work, working conditions and work environment; (4) possibilities of income and livelihood; (5) housing and neighbourhood; (6) lifestyles; (7) control, influence and participation; (8) equal and health-nurturing healthcare.

Under the Public Health Act, healthcare shall strive to achieve good health and care on equal terms, and prioritise those with the greatest need. Equal healthcare means that care and treatment shall be offered on equal terms, that everyone is well-received, irrespective of where they live, age, gender, disability, education, social standing, ethnicity or religious affiliation or sexual orientation.

presented in the report *Unequal terms of health and care* (National Board of Health and Welfare, 2011).

The National Board of Health and Welfare's six dimensions of good health and social care:

**Safe:** The healthcare service shall be safe, in which risk-mitigating activities shall prevent injury. Activities shall also comply with rule of law.

**Adapted to the individual:** The healthcare service shall contribute to providing care with due respect for the individual's specific needs, expectations and integrity. The individual shall be given the opportunity for involvement.

**Knowledge-based:** The healthcare service shall be based on the best available knowledge and build on both scientific and tried-and-tested experience.

**Equal:** The healthcare service shall ensure that care is provided and allocated on equal terms.

**Accessible:** The healthcare service shall seek to ensure that care is available and administered within a reasonable amount of time. No one shall need to wait for an unreasonably long time for the care they need.

**Effective:** The healthcare service shall use available resources optimally to fulfil set goals.

The National Board of Health and Welfare has also been commissioned by the government to publish and disseminate open comparisons of the quality of the healthcare service and social services throughout Sweden using indicators, regarding equal health and social care, and to analyse national guidelines from an equality perspective for both health and social care. To this end, a framework of six dimensions is used, see the margin to the left, defining what good health and social care is (National Board of Health and Welfare, 2009, 2020a). Overarching indicator-based follow-ups, which have overlapping areas with the targets in the 2030 Agenda, are carried out on recurring basis in many focus areas.

No selection of indicators for following up on whether any groups are excluded more than others from the possibility of benefiting from the measures of the healthcare service and social services is reflected in this statistical review.

### Several factors contribute to the development of public health

There are activities that are aimed at counteracting vulnerability with preventive, therapeutic and supportive measures. These mainly concern the healthcare service, social services and the Swedish Social Insurance Agency. Changes in vulnerability over time, for instance a lower proportion of acutely homeless people, could be a result of these activities.

The indicators selected in the review have a focus on public health indicators, mainly the Public Health Agency of Sweden's follow-up of the public health policy goals. Behind changes in various indicators, such as increased life expectancy, there are several different contributing factors from various activities; improved life conditions, healthier lifestyle, better treatment methods and more effective preventive measures.

Health and ill health vary with, for example, age. For this reason, reporting is broken down by children and adults. There is less data on children, and neither are there very many global indicators that focus on children's health and wellbeing.

### Health disparities among children and youths

There is inadequate access to statistics for the indicators on health and wellbeing among children and youths in the 2030 Agenda. During the first years of life, only mortality indicators are available.

Sweden has reached the global goal in terms of neonatal mortality and mortality among the under-fives. In 2018, there were two children per

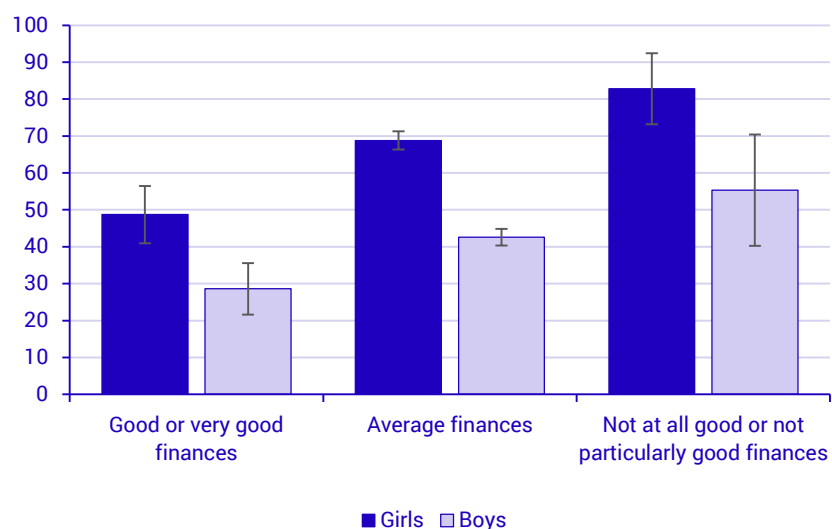
3.2 By 2030, end preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 per 1,000 live births and under-5 mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1,000 live births.

1,000 live births who died before their first birthday. That level has been more or less unchanged since the mid-2000s. There are slight differences in neonatal mortality between groups in Sweden. The Public Health Agency of Sweden has calculated a statistically significant higher neonatal mortality rate if neither parent has a level of educational attainment higher than compulsory schooling compared with if at least one parent has post-secondary education, 4.3 compared with 1.6 per thousand. Neonatal mortality is also higher if the mother was born outside of Europe compared with the mother being born in Sweden, 3.1 compared with 1.7 per thousand.

In the Public Health Agency of Sweden's survey on the health habits of school-aged children (2019a), conducted among children in the fifth, seventh and ninth grades, major social differences are apparent in the proportion that report at least two psychological or somatic disorders more often than once a week in the past six months. The greatest differences are found between groups with different financial circumstances in the family. Among boys, the difference in health problems between those with the best and worst financial circumstances was 26 percentage points, 55 compared with 29 percent. For girls, the difference was 34 percentage points, 83 percent for girls with the poorest financial circumstances compared with 49 for girls with the best financial circumstances. The next largest is in health differences among school-age children between boys and girls. Irrespective of the family's financial circumstances, the proportion with disorders is 20 to 27 percentage points higher among girls than among boys.

**Graph 1. Proportion of school-age children who cite at least two psychological and somatic disorders by gender and the family's financial circumstances, 2017/18**

Percent



Source: Health behaviour in school-aged children, Public Health Agency of Sweden. The error bars give a 95 percent confidence interval. The proportion with disorders refers to at least two of the following eight disorders: headache, stomach ache, backache, dizziness (somatic) and depression, nervousness, sleeping difficulty, and irritation/bad mood (psychological).



Target 3.4 By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being.

In 2019, there was a difference of 8.9 years in life expectancy counted from the age of 65 between the group with the highest life expectancy (women who live with a partner with post secondary education) and the lowest (men who live alone with compulsory education). In 2012, the difference was less, at 8.1 years.

There are also clear differences in psychological and somatic problems that are associated with family situation. The proportion with psychological and somatic problems is lowest among girls and boys who live with both parents and highest among those who live mostly with one parent. Another study among Swedish teenagers showed that the proportion who feel depressed was higher among teenagers who only live with just one parent or mostly with one parent and only sometimes with one of them, compared with those who live with both parents or alternate between the two (Ma et al., 2020).

## Health and wellbeing among adults

Target 3.4 of the Agenda is aimed at preventive measures and treatment that will reduce premature mortality. This means that measures are to lead to higher life expectancy. As a national overall measure, remaining life expectancy is used, counted from birth and from higher ages for women and men in different groups.

### Life expectancy is increasing unevenly

Life expectancy has clearly increased in Sweden over the entire period 1970–2019 (Statistics Sweden, 2020a). Nowadays, it is the increasingly lower death rate in the ages 65 and above that is the main factor in the rising life expectancy. Preventive, nurturing and therapeutic initiatives among older age groups are also the factor that can contribute most to a further increase in life expectancy.

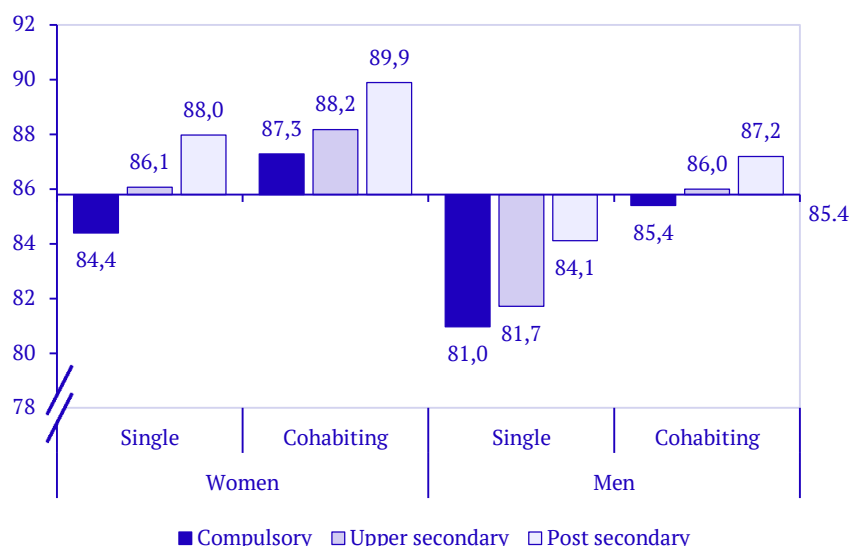
There are clear differences between all education levels; higher for those with upper secondary education than those with compulsory education, and even higher for the group with post-secondary education. The differences exist among both women and men who live alone, and those who live with a partner.

There are also clear differences between people who live alone and those who live with a partner, with life expectancy generally being higher for people who live with a partner than for those who live alone, and between women and men. Differences in life expectancy by level of educational attainment are clearly higher among people who live alone than those who live with a partner, and differences between people who live alone and those who live with a partner are more pronounced for men than for women.

Life expectancy statistics for women and men in different social groups are available for the period 2012–2019. Life expectancy has risen in all groups, but most in the groups that live with a partner and least in the groups that live alone with only upper secondary or compulsory education (Statistics Sweden, 2020b). In general, we see a greater increase in life expectancy among groups that already had relatively high life expectancy in 2012 compared with those who had relatively shorter life expectancy.

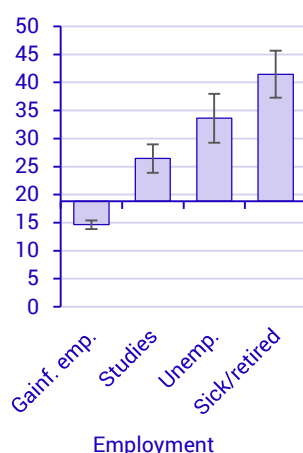


**Graph 2. Average age of deceased by gender, type of household and education level compared with the entire population counted from the age of 65, 2019**  
Average age of the deceased



Source: Statistics Sweden. The number in average remaining years from the age of 65 in a life expectancy table has been recalculated to average age among the deceased. The thicker blue line shows the average age of the deceased and the entire population born in Sweden aged 65 and older in 2019, 85.4 years. The direction of the bars shows whether the average age of the group of deceased is higher (upwards) or lower (downwards) than the average.

**Graph 3. Proportion with reduced mental wellbeing by state of employment compared with the proportion in the population aged 25–64, 2018**  
Percent



Source: National public health survey, Public Health Agency of Sweden. Error bars show the 95 percent margin of error and the bars are based on the average in the population sample 25–64 years, 18.8%. "Sick" means that the person has sickness and activity allowance and is not gainfully employed. Retirement pension before the age of 65 is included in the same group as those with sickness and activity allowance.

It would thus appear that preventive and therapeutic initiatives, changes in life conditions and lifestyle that can increase life expectancy are currently leading to increased disparities in life expectancy between different groups in Sweden, at least when reported by level of education and type of household. The difference between the sexes has however decreased somewhat.

These groups include some that are seldom used in statistical follow-ups, that are not mentioned among the public health policy goals, and which have not been monitored in the National Board of Health and Welfare's follow-up on equal care. This concerns people who live alone or those who have never been married. As a group, they have a shorter life expectancy and often lack resources in the form of close relatives. This can be particularly important at older ages when the need for care often increases, particularly if they not only lack a partner but also children of their own.

## Great differences in mental health

There are also clear differences in mental wellbeing by age, gender, country of birth, employment, whether a cash margin is lacking and sexual orientation. The differences by state of employment are greatest. The proportion with reduced mental wellbeing is 15 percent among gainfully employed people and 41 percent among people who are not gainfully employed due to illness or drawing retirement pension before the age of 65 – a difference of 26 percentage points, see the diagram in the margin. A high proportion of people with reduced mental wellbeing

is also found among those who responded that they were not heterosexual, 30 percent, and those who lack a cash margin, 27 percent. It should be mentioned that the proportion with reduced mental wellbeing is at the very lowest in the oldest age group, 65–84 years, at 9 percent.

The Public Health Agency of Sweden (2018a) shows in a report that, by combining several different group affiliations concurrently, disparities in ill health are greater. They reported a high proportion with reduced mental wellbeing in the group with a low income who stated that they were not heterosexual and at the same time unemployed and in the age group 18–24 years, approximately 40 percent.

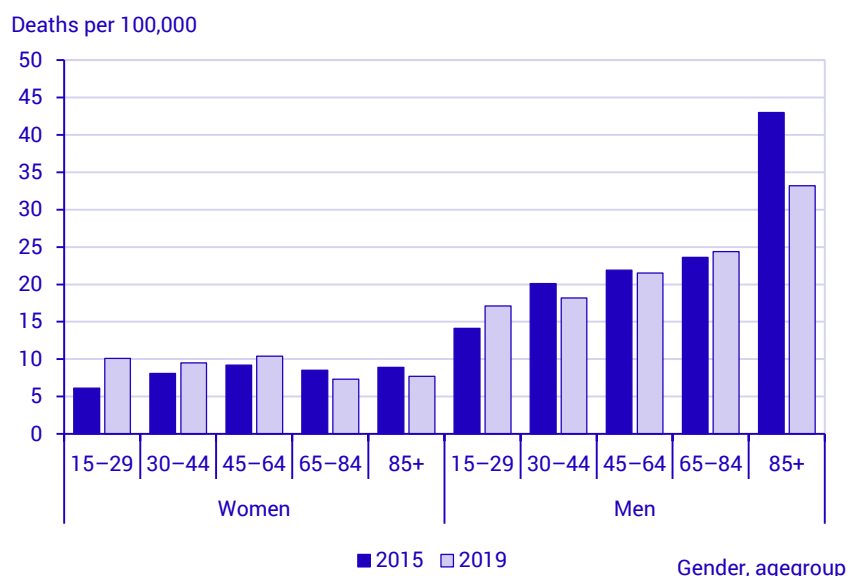
### **Suicide is on the rise among the young and declining among older people**

During the period 2015–2019, death by suicide did not change to any great extent, with the exception of among older men, where it decreased by almost one quarter, and among women and men aged 15–29, where it increased (Public Health Agency of Sweden 2020b).

Developments in the past few years have led to a somewhat lesser difference between women and men, on the whole a slight decrease for men and a slight increase for women. Disparities between age groups have narrowed, especially for men. In Sweden there is almost no difference in suicide rates between age groups for women.

**Graph 4. Death by suicide by gender and age group, 2015 and 2019**

No. per 100,000



Source: The cause of death register, National Board of Health and Welfare and Population Statistics, Statistics Sweden, compiled by the Public Health Agency of Sweden. Unclear intent is not included in the statistics.

On an annual basis, the Public Health Agency of Sweden follows the development of the rates of mortality by suicide according to level of

education and country of birth. There are clear differences in suicide rates by both level of education and country of birth. The highest is found among people born in other Nordic countries besides Sweden and people with only compulsory education, 24–25 per 100,000, and lowest for people born outside of Europe, 7 per 100,000. Suicide rates are also much higher for men than for women, 21 compared with 9 per 100,000 inhabitants.

People who become unemployed, who live on financial assistance rather than earned income, or who do not have earned income due to sickness, and receive sickness or activity allowance, are at a much higher risk of suicide (Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2020c). The suicide rate is clearly elevated for people who withdraw from working life due to illness, although unemployment too increases the risk of suicide almost threefold compared with people who remain in gainful employment. In its analysis, the Public Health Agency of Sweden also found that, for people who find gainful employment, the risk of suicide decreases compared with those who remain in the group that are not gainfully employed.

Great disparities in the rate of deaths by suicide have also been reported by civil status, for instance in Italy (Masocco et al., 2008) and Northern Ireland (Corcoran & Nagar, 2010). In these studies, married people have the lowest death rates by suicide, whereas the death rate by suicide is higher among people who have never been married, who are divorced or widowed.

A group that has been proven to be at an elevated risk of suicide is people in same-sex marriages. Women and men in same-sex marriages in Denmark and Sweden have clearly higher death rates by suicide than women and men in opposite-sex marriages (Erlangsen et al., 2020). The study also found that the risk of suicide following dissolution of marriage, divorce or widowhood, increased more for same-sex compared with opposite-sex marriages. The heightened suicide rate was statistically significant also among opposite-sex couples following dissolution of marriage.

## Universal healthcare

Target 3.8 focuses on the availability and capacity of the healthcare service, and that there should not be large financial obstacles to healthcare.

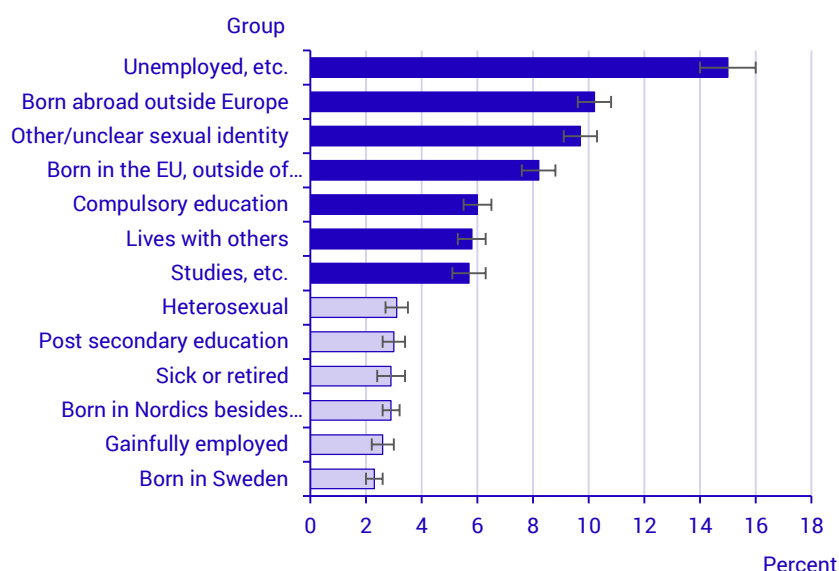
A national indicator within the target is the proportion who have refrained from healthcare for financial reasons. This question is put in the European health interview survey (EHIS) and shows differences according to factors such as employment, type of household, sexual identity, level of education and birth country. The proportion of people who have refrained from healthcare for financial reasons is highest among the unemployed – 15 percent, followed by people born outside

Target 3.8 Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.

of Europe or who have not defined themselves as heterosexual, 10 percent. The lowest proportion is found among people born in Sweden, at 2 percent.

**Graph 5. Proportion of groups who have been in need of healthcare but who have refrained for financial reasons, 2019**

Percent



Source: European Health Interview Survey (EHIS), Public Health Agency of Sweden. Error bars show the 95 percent margin of error. The darker blue bars show groups with a higher proportion of people who have refrained from care compared with the population as an average, and the paler blue bars show groups with lower proportions than the population as an average. Data for education level refers to the ages 25–84 years, state of employment ages 25–64 years, and other groups refer to the ages 16–84 years.

The National Board of Health and Welfare performs continual work on goal levels using indicators as part of the national guidelines and then, in follow-up and evaluation of adherence thereto, partially defines how large a share of patient populations at group level ought to be given various treatment recommendations. The approach in the goal-level work entails a quantified assessment of how large a share of patient populations should receive various treatments, and relates to the approach of leaving no one behind (National Board of Health and Welfare's website: <https://www.socialstyrelsen.se/regler-och-riktlinjer/nationella-riktlinjer/malnivaer/> [2020-10-13]).

The National Board of Health and Welfare (2018a) has carried out extensive follow-up of the results of the healthcare service. It showed somewhat declining proportions of people who had not received specialist care within 90 days of each commenced examination, and treatment at the paediatric and youth psychiatry service within 30 days, and some variation between counties. In international comparisons, healthcare in Sweden has proven to be good, although many of the indicators used by the National Board of Health and Welfare show some inequality in healthcare in terms of availability and capacity, most clearly reported by county.

The National Board of Health and Welfare (2019a) has also analysed developments in paediatric and youth psychiatric care and treatment. This shows for instance that the number of outpatients for psychiatric conditions increased over the period 2013–2017 and that there are regional disparities in the care and treatment of different conditions. The National Board of Health and Welfare also observes that there has been a great increase in the use of antidepressants, and that such use is much more common among girls and young women than among boys and young men. Furthermore, it is shown that access to paediatric and

youth psychiatry services has deteriorated; the proportion who receive an initial visit within 30 days has declined somewhat.

However, there is an absence of recurrent and systematic overall follow-up on the healthcare system with reports on unjustified disparities (National Board of Health and Welfare, 2019b). Enhancing such analyses could help to better identify more groups and determine whether they are considered to be less able to access recommended health and social care.

In a special development project presented in the report of the National Board of Health and Welfare, *Working methods for equal care* (2020b), differences are studied in recommended treatments that have high priority in national guidelines, according to a number of sociodemographic groupings. The most prominent differences were according to the municipality groups of the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions. Other differences that were also identified were based on age, disposable income and birth country. The included patient populations belong to the group that should be eligible for various treatments according to the recommendations in the national guidelines. There are however always medically justified reasons for why some patients included in the patient population should not receive the recommended treatment.

The Swedish Agency for Health and Care Services Analysis also works on analyses of unjustified disparities in care and treatment. For instance, they show that there are both socioeconomic and regional differences within oncology (Swedish Agency for Health and Care Services Analysis).

## **Sexual and reproductive health and rights**

Target 3.7 concerns sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). The Public Health Agency of Sweden bears national responsibility for coordination, building knowledge and follow-up within the area. They also have the task of limiting the spread of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV (Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2020d).

### **Lack of knowledge is most common among young, newly arrived immigrants**

The Public Health Agency of Sweden highlights that foreign-born young women are a particularly vulnerable group with an elevated risk of forced marriage, sexual exploitation, sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies. In a survey conducted by the Public Health Agency of Sweden among newly arrived immigrants aged 16–29, it emerged that they often lack knowledge about SRHR (Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2020d). For instance, one in five did not know where they could obtain contraception, more than half of respondents answered that they lacked knowledge about how the body works, and

Target 3.7 By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes.

almost one in four were not aware of the sexual rights that people have in Sweden.

In general, men expressed a greater need for knowledge than women, apart from in terms of family planning. Use of modern contraceptive methods is one of the indicators under target 3.7. Compared with the population in general, there was a higher proportion of recent immigrants who had not used contraception the last time they had intercourse, 27 percent compared with 7 percent overall in the population. It was more common to use safe periods and the withdrawal method instead.

## **Vulnerable groups with little presence in the statistics**

Both the National Board of Health and Welfare and the Public Health Agency of Sweden regularly report on differences in public health, in health determinants and in healthcare. This is generally performed broken down by gender, age, level of education, region and in some cases by various foreign-born people and people born in Sweden. There is also number of groups that are usually seen as vulnerable but which can largely not be reported due to low availability of statistics. Some of these groups are listed below with examples of the findings of special studies.

### **Children in care**

In a comprehensive report, the National Board of Health and Welfare has presented a number of vulnerable groups among whom availability of statistics on health and healthcare is not particularly good (National Board of Health and Welfare, 2011). One such group is children in care. The review of the National Board of Health and Welfare shows that they are often in need of psychiatric care. As many as 15 percent of children placed in foster care lacked one of the vaccines in the national vaccine programme when they started school, compared with approximately 2–3 percent among all children aged two years old. Furthermore, it has been observed that children placed in foster care, compared with children general, have often not undergone eyesight and hearing tests.

Another group of children mentioned are those subjected to violence and other abuse. The National Board of Health and Welfare (2011) refers to estimations that 10 percent of Swedish children might have been subjected to psychological or physical abuse or neglect, and around 3,000 children receive hospital care annually following abuse by another person. This can have implications for the how the health of these children develops later in life.

### **The vulnerable elderly**

Among the elderly, the higher risk of ill health and earlier death among those with a lower educational attainment level is mentioned in particular. Nonetheless, highly educated older people make more

hospital visits including visits to specialist clinics (National Board of Health and Welfare, 2011). There are differences in medication and survival following a cancer diagnosis depending on level of education. This is a factor that probably contributes to the greater increase in life expectancy that was observable in Sweden for the group with post-secondary education. It does not appear that the group of elderly people who live alone has been studied to the same extent by the National Board of Health and Welfare in terms of healthcare and survival following an illness diagnosis. The weaker increase from the age of 65 in life expectancy among women and men who live alone with only upper secondary or compulsory education indicates that they might be particularly vulnerable.

### **People with disabilities**

Which people have a disability is often defined based on one or several measures of long-term ill health. It can therefore be considered a matter of course that people with disabilities have poorer conditions for good health. People with disabilities also consider to a much lower extent their general state of health to be good or very good compared with people who do not have a disability (Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2016). The National Board of Health and Welfare has also found that the proportion of people who have been in need of, but refrained from, healthcare, rehabilitation, medication or dentistry is higher among those with disabilities compared with the population in general (National Board of Health and Welfare, 2011).

In a later report, the National Board of Health and Welfare (2020c) calls particular attention to the high occurrence of mental ill health among people with an intellectual impairment. Furthermore, long-term follow-up shows that people who have received care for certain psychiatric illnesses, depression or schizophrenia, have a much higher mortality rate both from external causes of illness and death, including suicide, and other causes of death (Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2018a).

Another measure of impaired function is the occurrence of long-term ill health that prevents daily activities, so-called impaired aptitude for activity. That measure is sometimes used to estimate the number of remaining health-weighted years of life. In Sweden, impaired aptitude for activity is much more common in groups with a lower compared with a higher level of educational attainment. The remaining (several years shorter) life expectancy for women and men with compulsory education compared with those that have a post-secondary education also consists of several years of long-term ill health which impairs activity (Statistics Sweden, 2018a).

### **LGBT people**

A group captured very little in official statistics is LGBT people. Sexual orientation is a grounds for discrimination but often cannot be used in the statistics. In this report we have been able to show that people who



do not have a heterosexual orientation appear to have higher rate of mortality by suicide, poorer mental wellbeing and have, to a greater extent, refrained from seeking healthcare for financial reasons despite being in need of such care, compared with heterosexual people. The National Board of Health and Welfare mentions that transgender people and those who are uncertain about their sexual orientation have less confidence in the healthcare system than others (National Board of Health and Welfare, 2011, p. 15).

### **National minorities**

Ten years ago, the Swedish National Institute of Public Health (2010) presented a report on national minorities' health, lifestyle and life conditions. One difficulty that exists is that it is complicated to define and distinguish people who belong to the different minorities. The results do not unambiguously show poorer or better health than the population at large. After 2010, some further studies have been performed with a focus on the individual groups.

Compared with the population in general, people of Finnish origin in Sweden (Finnish-speaking Swedes, Finns and Swedish-speaking Finns) did not have a poorer general state of health, although there was a lower proportion with anxiety, worry or distress, and a higher proportion with musculoskeletal aches and certain long-term illnesses, such as diabetes and hypertension (Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2019b). The study of the Public Health Agency of Sweden also showed that Finns had a higher proportion of people with at-risk alcohol consumption and used drugs to a greater extent than the population at large.

A higher proportion with a good general state of health was reported in the Jewish group compared to the population in general (Swedish National Institute of Public Health, 2010).

There are several special studies on the Sami group. Compared with the population, they appear to have a heightened risk of certain causes of death, although overall there does not seem to be such great differences in health for the Sami people compared with the population as a whole.

The Romany group appears to be most vulnerable but is also the most difficult to study. The Swedish National Institute of Public Health (2010) refers to studies from other countries which show much shorter life expectancy than for the population as a whole. In a study among just over 300 Romany girls and women, it is reported that the Romany group of women have somewhat poorer health than women in general, but not for all types of ill health and disorders (Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2015).



### Groups with very high mortality

Furthermore, we have been able to see that mortality is very high among people who are homeless or who were born in Sweden but for whom no information is available on education level (Statistics Sweden, 2016a). These are groups that are particularly vulnerable and have a much shorter life expectancy than the population at large. People born in Sweden who did not complete compulsory education probably did not do so due to severe illness or a difficult upbringing, which also pose a high risk of premature death.

According to the definition of the National Board of Health and Welfare, homelessness includes everything from people with an acute need for a roof over their heads, to more long-term housing forms in the secondary housing market. People in acute homelessness are those who are referred to emergency accommodation, hostels for the homeless, shelters, refuges or equivalent. This also includes people who sleep in public places, outdoors or in stairwells, tents, cars or equivalent (National Board of Health and Welfare, 2017).

The National Board of Health and Welfare has been commissioned by the government to map out homelessness in Sweden and has done so since 1993. The latest mapping process was carried out in 2017 and concluded that just over 33,000 people were homeless in Sweden, 6,000 of whom were acutely homeless. The mapping process covered Swedish citizens and people with residence permits or right of residency over 18 years of age during one week in April 2017. Interviews were also held with people who work with seeking out EU and EEA citizens who are staying in Sweden temporarily and who live in acute homelessness. (National Board of Health and Welfare 2017)

The National Board of Health and Welfare writes that there are still a diminishing number of people for whom homelessness is linked to mental ill health and drug abuse. It is primarily men who are in need of, and receive treatment for, drug abuse and addiction.

Acute homelessness had not decreased since the previous mapping process in 2011. Among men in acute homelessness, four out of ten were considered to be in need of treatment for drug abuse and addiction, a factor that has also been a probable cause of homelessness. Domestic violence was a contributory cause of acute homelessness for one third of the women. Men and people born abroad are over-represented among the acutely homeless.

# Freedom from violence

Signatories to the Agenda imagine a world with peaceful, fair and inclusive societies that are free from fear and violence. A world that invests in its children and where every child grows up free from violence and exploitation. On the whole, the goals of the Agenda cover all forms of violence against all people and in all places.

In this chapter, four of the Agenda targets are studied; two within goal 5 regarding gender equality (5.2 on eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls, and 5.3 on eliminating harmful practices) and two within goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions (16.1 on significantly reducing all forms of violence and 16.2 on ending all forms of violence and abuse against children). It also ties in with target 11.7 on inclusive and accessible green and public spaces.

## Particular subjection to violence

Anyone can be subjected to violence, and violence can have far-reaching consequences. In the introduction to this report, there is a more general discussion on particular vulnerability and exploitation. In terms of subjection to violence, the National Centre for Knowledge on Men's Violence against Women (NCK) at the University of Uppsala (2020) writes that some groups might find themselves in a particularly vulnerable situation as a consequence of society's discrimination and marginalisation, and that there may be different reasons for a group to be described as "particularly subjected to violence". It could be the case that persons in the group are subjected to violence to a great extent, that the violence has particularly severe consequences for the victim, or that victims do not have the possibility of altering their situation or making it known. NCK also argues that the term "particular subjection" is problematic; on the one hand it could highlight how people might be subjected to violence or discrimination, requiring specific support measures, while on the other hand it could be considered as a generalisation. The groups are heterogeneous in terms of different life experiences and needs, and there is also a risk that the rationale regarding particularly subjected groups ascribes the causes to the victims while making the perpetrators invisible.

## Statistics on subjection to violence

It is not possible to claim that everything has been included within the bounds of this report, even though the Agenda goals are worded in such a way. We have used what is available, based on the wordings of the goals, often looking at sources such as in-depth studies. The chapter on gaps in the statistics describes the rationale behind this and accounts for what is missing today, but also of development efforts in progress.

### **About sources**

There are essentially two types of sources for the statistics on subjection to violence. One is based on different types of register data from the judicial system and the other is from individual surveys. Statistics on reported crime are not suitable for use in studying the level of human exposure. Many crimes are never reported to the judicial system. An in-depth study recently conducted by the National Council for Crime Prevention (2019a) shows that there are different reasons for why crime victims choose to refrain from reporting a crime, known as silencing mechanisms. These are divided into three overarching categories; perceptions of crime and the judicial system, the emotional state of the victim and affinity with the perpetrator. The National Council for Crime Prevention also describes five different areas in which “silencing cultures” occur: crimes in an honour related context, domestic violence, criminal networks, crimes in socially deprived areas and crimes against and within organisations. Many of these areas are particularly relevant here because they are explicitly included in the national follow-up of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In terms of reported crimes, it can also be the case that an investigation ends up being closed, for instance due to the reported incident not being considered a crime in the eyes of the law. In terms of deadly violence, the statistics on reported crimes give an overestimated picture (Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention), and for this reason this report uses statistics on observed cases.

In terms of instances of violence, there is not only the victim of violence, but also at least one perpetrator. At the same time the statistics, with certain exceptions, usually concern the victims. In some cases, there is supplementary information on for instance the relationship between the victim and perpetrator, or place of the incident.

The Swedish Crime Survey now contains follow-up questions concerning the perpetrator. The results were presented very recently and show patterns whereby the perpetrator is usually a man, but with certain differences in age and potential influence of alcohol or drugs for different types of crime included in the survey (see the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention 2020b).

There are some larger and recurrent population studies that include questions about subjection to violence (NTU, ULF/SILC and HLV). Besides the large and recurrent surveys of the entire population, certain targeted studies are carried out, regularly or intermittently, that also contain questions about subjection to violence. Ad hoc surveys have also been performed.

### **About particular subjection and statistics**

Besides the characteristics described in the section of this report on quality, there might be further factors that make it difficult to measure

certain life conditions. This could for instance be a case of certain groups being too small for the results to be representative in population studies – in particular when non-response is high. Many small and targeted surveys have been carried out on particular subjection to violence. Such surveys have, as a rule, purposes other than claiming generalisation on statistical grounds. For this reason, we do not provide detailed results from such studies in this chapter, but focus on providing an overall picture of life conditions that could entail particular subjection or vulnerability.

## **Men's violence against women**

The sixth target of Swedish gender equality policy is for men's violence against women to end. The communication on gender equality policy *Power, goals and agency – a feminist policy* (Government Communication 2016/17:10) describes how many women live in conditions that make them particularly subjected to violence. Disability, drug and addiction problems and circumstances linked to foreign background and age are highlighted as factors that could pose a heightened risk of subjection to violence, or particularly severe consequences of violence. The communication also describes how women and girls subjected to violence can find themselves in particularly vulnerable situations due to factors such as age, drug abuse, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, foreign background and the values of relatives regarding the right of self-determination in sexuality and relationships. Life conditions and circumstances addressed in the communication are also present in many of the source materials, and NCK (2020) describes in general terms the factors to which particular subjection can be related. It could for instance be due to a lack of social networks, discrimination, legal status, or dependence on the perpetrator.

Target 5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation

The follow-up of target 5.2 of the Agenda includes a couple of global indicators on violence against women and girls. For the national follow-up, new statistics that specifically concern domestic violence in particular are awaited.

Both the Swedish Agency for Participation (2017) and the Swedish Gender Equality Agency (2020a) have highlighted the lack of statistics on men's violence against women that could enable satisfactory analysis of the situation for people with disabilities. Both the national public health survey of the Public Health Agency of Sweden, used by the Swedish Gender Equality Agency (2020a), and statistics from ULF/SILC (Statistics Sweden 2018b) demonstrate a pattern whereby people with disabilities are subjected to threats or violence to a greater extent than people without disabilities. However, none of these surveys contain in-depth questions that enable analysing domestic violence.

### **Subjection to sexual crimes**

The Public Health Agency of Sweden's (2019c) population study on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) shows that many types of sexual harassment, sexual assaults and sexual violence are common in the population and that they affect both women and men. Women are however subjected to a much greater extent than men and younger people cited subjection to a greater extent than older people. In terms of self-reported subjection to violence, it can at the same time be assumed that there is a certain degree of under-reporting among older women due to generational norms or difficulties in remembering incidents that took place a long time ago (see NCK 2020).

The report also shows that homosexual, bisexual and transgender people reported subjection to sexual assaults to a greater extent than heterosexual people. Bisexual women were the group that reported subjection to sexual harassment to the greatest extent, while subjection to the most severe forms of sexual violence was most common among homosexual women. Homosexual men report subjection to the same extent as heterosexual women.

In a relatively new study on the work of the judicial system with rape cases, around half of the plaintiffs are described as particularly vulnerable due to addiction problems, cognitive disability or psychosocial difficulties. The National Council for Crime Prevention (2019b) also writes that the extent to which this depends on actual higher subjection, or a greater inclination to report such crimes is not entirely clear, but that international studies support the view that the over-representation is due at least partly to greater subjection.

### **Prostitution and human trafficking**

In the 2030 Agenda, human trafficking is included both in target 5.2 and in target 16.2. According to the European Institute for Gender Equality EIGE (2018), human trafficking for sexual purposes is the most common form of human trafficking in the EU, which primarily affects women and girls (95 percent of the victims of human trafficking for sexual purposes registered in the EU are, according to EIGE, women or girls). At the national level, the register-based statistics do not enable reporting by gender because the data is not included in the crime code.

However, information on whether the human trafficking offence concerns children or adults is included. In 2019, 106 offences of human trafficking for sexual purposes were reported, 12 of which concerned trafficking children (Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, 2020c). As described in previous reports, it can be assumed that unreported cases are high. The Swedish Gender Equality Agency (2020a) is currently commissioned to identify the scope of prostitution and human trafficking for sexual purposes in Sweden. In the population studies carried out in the past 20 years, the proportion of adult men who state that they have, at some time, paid for sex is between 8 and 13

percent (Public Health Agency of Sweden 2018b). In the survey SRHR17, 9.4 percent of men and 0.5 percent of women stated that they had at some time paid for sexual favours. The response rate was 31 percent and the results should, despite calibration weights, be interpreted with caution (Public Health Agency of Sweden 2019c).

The Department of Social Work at Malmö University recently conducted a survey on SRHR among people who have sex for payment, commissioned by the Public Health Agency of Sweden (see Holmström et al. 2020). The study is small, has methodological challenges and concerns a heterogeneous group. At the same time, a group of people is identified that is described as particularly subjected to repetitive violence. The majority have not reported the incidents or sought care out of fear or because they do not trust authorities.

The pattern largely follows that which occurs in other contexts too, with people with disabilities reporting subjection to a greater extent than people without disabilities, women to a greater extent than men, homosexuals to a greater extent than heterosexuals, people born abroad to a greater extent than people born in Sweden, and younger people to a greater extent than older people.

### **Honour related violence and oppression.**

As described in previous reports, target 5.3 is among those on which performing follow-up using statistics has been most difficult, and possibilities for national follow-up have been considered to coincide with the possibility of including honour related violence and oppression in the statistical follow-up of the government's strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women. The Swedish Gender Equality Agency (2020a) observes that there is no recurring survey in Sweden concerning self-reported subjection to honour related violence and oppression.

In Sweden, larger quantitative studies of honour related violence and oppression against young people in Sweden's four largest cities have been conducted. The city of Stockholm and the cities of Gothenburg and Malmö have commissioned Örebro University to carry out a mapping process of the nature and scope of the violence in an intersectional perspective, and also the organisation Rights of Girls in Society (*Tjejers rätt i samhället – TRIS*) has carried out a study on the subjection of young people to honour related violence and oppression, commissioned by the Uppsala social services administration and county administrative board. The surveys concern pupils in the ninth grade. (National Board of Health and Welfare, 2019c)

In the surveys, the analyses proceed on the basis of, for instance, questionnaires on virginity norms or virginity requirements. The three surveys carried out by Örebro University also include violence norms. The estimations of the proportion of young people who live with

Target 5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

honour related norms and oppression amount in these three studies to somewhere between 7 and 20 percent depending on how the questions are asked, the definition used and the study and city in question.

In the study from Uppsala, one girl in five and one boy in ten stated that they were subject to virginity requirements, with proportions being higher among girls and boys with parents born outside of the Nordic region (two thirds and one third, respectively). Among the girls who were subject to such requirements, just over one in four stated that it is her family who decides on her future partner. Among boys, the corresponding proportion was 7 percent.

The data from all four studies is compiled in the final report of the National Board of Health and Welfare on the commission to carry out a national mapping process of honour related violence and oppression (2019c). In the same communication, the National Board of Health and Welfare concludes that, in order to draw any conclusions about the scope and consequences of honour related violence and oppression in the population as a whole, a national population study combined with collection and analysis of indirect data is needed.

Target 16:2: End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.

## **The subjection of children and young people to violence**

In Sweden, there are to date two large recurrent surveys among pupils that study violence against children and youths; the Children's Welfare Foundation Sweden's survey among pupils, and the National Council for Crime Prevention's School Survey on Crime (SUB). The results of the study by the Children's Welfare Foundation Sweden largely concern the respondents, and there are hence no measures of inaccuracy.

According to the survey among pupils carried out by the Children's Welfare Foundation Sweden (2017) in cooperation with researchers at Karlstad University in 2016, four out of ten pupils had been subjected to child abuse at some point. The definition of child abuse is based on the interpretation of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, and includes in this context any of physical or mental abuse, witnessing violence against a parent, neglect or sexual assault. The person who subjected the child need not be a parent or guardian. In the relatively small group of youths who stated that they did not fit in with the gender breakdown of boy or girl, seven out of ten stated that they had been subjected to child abuse according to the definition.

The survey also forms the basis of an in-depth study on children who have been subjected multiple times to violence while growing up (Children's Welfare Foundation Sweden 2020). Multiple-subjection means subjection to violence on at least three occasions. Around 10 percent of the children in the study are considered to be multiple-subjected and researchers show a covariance between multiple-



subjection and the child's own alcohol, drug and tobacco habits, mental health and performance at school. Multiple-subjected children also state that they have been bullied, and that they have themselves bullied others, to a greater extent. It is more common for girls to be multiple-subjected than boys. There is also a much higher proportion of youths who are multiple-subjected among those who state that they have a disability or chronic illness of some kind, which is most obvious for youths with some form of eating disorder. Young people who, at some point, have lived with a parent with drug abuse problems or mental illness also state to a much higher degree that they have been subjected to three or more assaults while growing up. The covariance is even clearer for children who have lived with suicidal parents and parents who have been sentenced for multiple crimes.

Researchers at Linköping University have also used results of the survey among pupils of the Children's Welfare Foundation Sweden in a mapping of child neglect (Nilsson and Tingberg 2020). According to the study, neglect leads to high costs for society and tremendous suffering for the victims.

According to the National Council for Crime Prevention's (2018a) School Survey on Crime, bullying is widespread among both girls and boys (note that the source and question differ from the national indicator 4.a.2 which was already included in the follow-up), and it is more common for pupils who have been subjected to bullying to also have been subjected to various crimes. Boys are subjected to a greater extent to assault, theft and robbery, while girls are subjected to a greater extent to sexual crimes and threats. Subjection to crime is greater among children born abroad, among children who grow up in an apartment, compared with a house, and among children whose parents do not have post-secondary education or whose parents have separated. Also, children who state that their family has poor finances say to a greater extent that they have been subjected to different types of crime. In terms of sexual crime however the pattern is partly different in that children who live in a house or who have at least one parent with post-secondary education cite a higher degree of subjection.

### **Subjection among young people**

The proportion who state that they have been subjected to violent crime varies somewhat between different surveys and depends on the population surveyed and the questions asked. Young people are in general the group that is most subjected to violence, and there is an overall difference in the degree of subjection to violence between girls and boys in terms of type of violence, place of the incident and relationship with the perpetrator. In a survey by the Public Health Agency of Sweden (2017a), the proportion of young people who cite subjection to violence is higher among people who have responded that they wish to refrain from categorising themselves based on gender. The estimate is highly uncertain, however. Subjection among young people



overlaps of course with all targets in this chapter, including men's violence against women.

The Public Health Agency of Sweden (2018c) has conducted a study on young people residing in state institutional care facilities. The report is based on a survey carried out in 2016. The Public Health Agency of Sweden writes that the results of the study cannot be generalised for all young people residing in juvenile or rehabilitation homes, but they can give an indication of the state of health in the group and that the group has experienced violence to a great extent. In the study, just under two thirds of girls and four out of ten boys stated that they had been subjected to physical violence in the past 12 months. At the same time, 85 percent of the girls and 33 percent of the boys had been subjected to some kind of sexual act against their will. More than one girl in three and one boy in seven had, at some point, received compensation or payment for a sexual favour. At the same time, 29 percent of the boys and 8 percent of the girls stated that they had paid for sex.

A couple of years ago, the Ombudsman for Children conducted a survey among youths aged 15 to 17 who were placed in the Swedish National Board of Institutional Care's special residential homes for juveniles. In the study, around 40 percent of the girls and just over 20 percent of the boys stated that they had been subjected to violence in their residential facility. Furthermore, almost 60 percent of the girls and just over 30 percent of the boys stated that they had been subjected to verbal victimisation and threats at the home. (The Ombudsman for Children 2019)

## Subjection to violence and security

The national follow-up of target 16.1 includes deadly violence and perceived security, but also subjection to other types of violent crime. There are also overlaps and boundaries with other sections of the report or targets. For instance, freedom from violence is also included in the chapter on decent working conditions. Domestic violence can also have an impact on work situation, a factor highlighted in the convention to eradicate violence and harassment in the world of work adopted by the International Labour Organization (ILO).

There are also overlaps with several targets in that subjection to violence can also have particularly severe consequences for health and finances. In the latest mapping process of homelessness by the National Board of Health and Welfare (2017), it was for instance stated that, for almost one third of the 2,400 women in the study who found themselves in acute homelessness, domestic violence was a contributory cause of their situation of acute homelessness. The Public Health Agency of Sweden (2019d) also highlights freedom from threats and violence as a condition for fulfilling the public health policy objectives.

Target 16.1: Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.

## Subjection to hate crime

Issues concerning racism and hate crimes are included in many of Sweden's international commitments (Ministry of Culture, 2016). In 2017 the government presented a national action plan against racism and hate crimes and, in the appropriation directions of the following year, the National Council for Crime Prevention (2018b) was commissioned with conducting a study to deepen knowledge about the scope and nature of hate crimes, the needs of subjected groups and individuals, and the justice system's handling of hate crimes.

In the Swedish Crime Survey, questions about potential motives for hate crime have been asked, to a slightly varying extent, since 2005. The statistics are presented based on xenophobic, homophobic and, since 2011, also anti-religious hate crimes. The proportion of people who report that they have been subjected to hate crimes is on average 0.2–1.5 percent depending on motive and period\*, with slight differences between women and men. Data from the Swedish Crime Survey 2006–2017 (refers to subjection during 2005–2011) shows that the risk of being subjected to xenophobic hate crimes according to the National Council for Crime Prevention (2018c) is greatest among people with a national background from Africa, followed by Asia. Since 2011 and onwards, an increase is visible in the proportion of men who report that they have been subjected to hate crimes with xenophobic and/or anti-religious motives. The crimes usually consist of threats or harassment, although among men subjected to xenophobic hate crimes, assault is equally common. Subjection to homophobic hate crimes differs from others in that the perpetrator is more commonly a relative and the crime is committed in a home.

\*The average for xenophobic and homophobic hate crimes is calculated for the period 2005–2016, while the average for anti-religious hate crimes is calculated for the period 2011–2016.

## Deadly violence

In the past few years, the National Council for Crime Prevention (2020a) has published several reports on shootings and deadly violence in criminal environments. After a lengthy period of decline, deadly violence has now been on the rise in recent years. Different types of deadly violence have however developed in different ways and the increase is due to deadly violence in criminal environments (National Council for Crime Prevention 2020d). The latter has also caused a change in the gender breakdown among victims of deadly violence, from two thirds men and one third women in the 1990s and 2000s, to three quarters men and one quarter women in the past few years. The National Council for Crime Prevention writes that, in terms of deadly violence in criminal environments, substantial variations between years are more commonplace. There is also a sharp over-representation in socially deprived areas, and the victims are younger than in other types of deadly violence (National Council for Crime Prevention 2020d). See also the section of this report on reducing and counteracting segregation.

Since a few years back, the statistics on observed cases of deadly violence can be reported according to the relationship of the victim with the perpetrator. Changes between individual years should be interpreted with caution, particularly when the statistics are divided up into different categories. Out of the cases of deadly violence observed in 2019, 25 of the victims were women and 86 were men. When women were the victims, the perpetrator in just under two thirds of the cases was someone with whom the woman had been, or was, in a couple relationship. Among men, the corresponding figure was 2 percent. (National Council for Crime Prevention 2020a)

### Security

Both in the Swedish Crime Survey, for which the National Council for Crime Prevention is responsible, and in the Living Conditions Survey, which is carried out by Statistics Sweden, questions are asked about perceived security. Feeling unsafe, like fear of being subjected to certain crimes, differs between women and men. There is a higher proportion of women than men who state that they feel unsafe when out late at night. In terms of fear of subjection to crime, around one woman and man in ten aged 25 to 64 state a fear of being subjected to assault. Among younger women, the proportion is higher, and among older people – both women and men – it is lower. At the same time, almost half of the women aged 16 to 24 state that they feel worried about subjection to rape or other sexual assaults (Statistics Sweden 2020i). One of the measures is broken down into different areas and shows that the proportion of women and men alike who have refrained from going out due to fear of threats and violence is higher in socioeconomically challenged areas (see the section of this report on reducing and counteracting segregation). All indicators also showed that people with a disability, to a greater extent than people without a disability, state that they have refrained from going out at night out of fear of subjection to violence or threats of violence – still with substantial differences between women and men (Statistics Sweden 2018b).

Target 11.7 By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.

# Educational equality

Through Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda, world governments commit to ensuring inclusive and equal education of good quality and promoting universal lifelong learning.

Target 4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

In the report of the inquiry for better equality in schools (SOU 2020:28), it is concluded that major socioeconomic gains can be achieved by having a school system in which all pupils are given good opportunities to develop based on their own situation and in which everyone is given access to an education, personal development and conditions for active participation in the labour market and a democratic society.

Good and equal education is often an important basis for improving people's opportunities on the labour market and in society. Difficulties in compulsory and upper secondary school can curb opportunities on the labour market. Certain groups in society are already in a worse-off situation when they are born. These groups could therefore benefit from well-functioning and equal schooling.

This chapter describes how different groups manage through the education system, such as in the form of results and continuation into higher education.

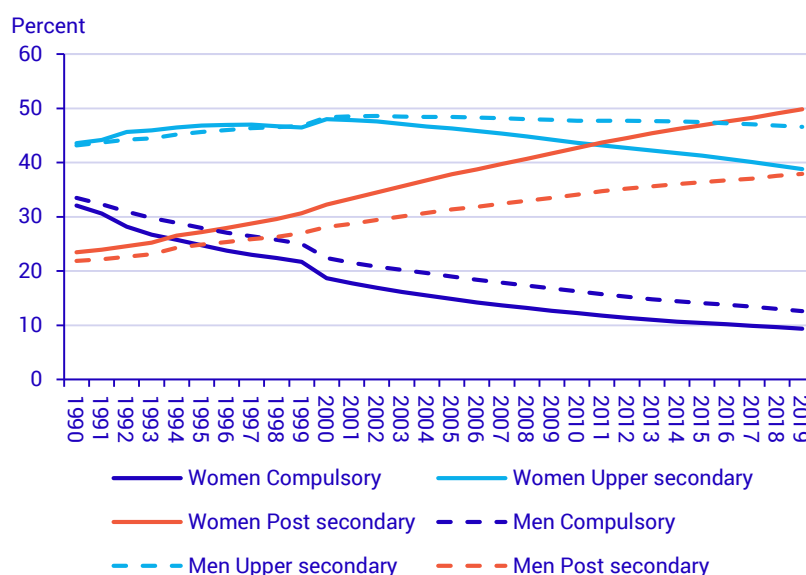
## **The level of educational attainment among adults has increased in the past 30 years**

Target 4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

It is clear in the statistics that level of education among the adult population aged 25 to 64 has increased sharply since 1990. Requirements on the labour market in terms of education have also increased in the past few decades, and today a longer education is an important condition for improving prospects for people on the labour market.

The proportion of adults with no more than compulsory education has decreased since 1990, while the proportion with post-secondary education has increased. The proportion of people with only compulsory schooling aged 25–64 was 11 percent in 2019, which equals slightly more than half a million adults. The increase in the proportion of people with only post-secondary education is much greater among women than among men. The proportion of women with only post-secondary education aged 25–64 was 50 percent while the corresponding proportion for men was 38 percent. The total proportion of the population aged 25–64 with only post-secondary education was 44 percent in 2019.

**Graph 6. Proportion of people aged 25–64 by level of education and gender, 1990–2019**  
Percent



Source: Register of Education 1990–2019, Statistics Sweden

## Children and youths

In the section on children and youths, the education system is presented from preschool to upper secondary school; support in the school system and experience of stress and bullying are also presented.

### Preschool

An overview of research by the Institute for Evaluation of Labour Market and Education Policy (2018) has collected and analysed studies from 12 countries with preschools of the kind found in Sweden (Sweden was however not included in the 12 countries). The research overview shows that children who have attended preschool do not have greater cognitive skills, but that they remain in education for longer and enjoy greater employability and a higher salary as an adult compared with children who do not attend preschool. These effects are somewhat more favourable for children of parents with a low level of education. Many of the studies in the overview take account of differences in the parents' education level in their analyses.

Sweden generally has high preschool attendance. Out of all children aged one to three, 78 percent were enrolled in preschool, and out of children aged four to five, 94 percent were enrolled in 2019. There are differences in the proportion of children enrolled in preschool depending on foreign background and the parents' education level (see the table annex). The proportion of children aged four and five of parents who had no more than compulsory schooling who attended preschool was 91 percent. The corresponding proportion for those whose parents had post-secondary education at most was 95 percent. There are no substantial differences in attendance for girls and boys.

Target 4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.

The National Agency for Education's study (2018a) on preschool attendance shows tremendous disparities in terms of preschool attendance between children with a foreign background, especially in terms of children who recently immigrated to Sweden. The newly immigrated children who had been registered in Sweden for four years or less attend preschool to a lesser extent than children with a foreign background who had been in Sweden for longer.

The proportion of children enrolled in preschool aged four to five with parents who had no more than compulsory education increased during 2016 to 2019 from 85 to 91 percent. This means that the disparities among children enrolled in preschool between those of highly educated parents and those of parents with a low level of education have decreased somewhat in the past four years.

### Compulsory school

Many studies show that equivalence in Swedish compulsory school has deteriorated in the 2000s. Equivalence can be divided into three different terms: equal access to education, equal quality of education and that education shall compensate for pupils' different backgrounds and situations. The National Agency for Education's report (2018b) "Analyses of the importance of family background to school results and disparities between schools" shows that the measurable socioeconomic background of pupils gained greater significance to the grades of ninth-grade pupils between 2006 and 2016. The importance of socioeconomic background has increased to a much greater extent for pupils born abroad than those born in Sweden. Important reasons for the sharp rise for those born abroad, highlighted in the report of the National Agency for Education, is that the age of immigration has risen and that the parents' socioeconomic status has worsened for pupils born abroad. Because the group foreign-born pupils has grown due to increased immigration, this largely explains the greater significance of socioeconomic background for pupils.

A report by the inquiry for better equality in schools (SOU 2020:28) points out how important it is for a pupil's possibility of succeeding in school not to systematically depend on family background, where in Sweden the pupil lives or the school attended by the pupil. The report shows that there has been a sharp increase in the span of schools' learning outcomes since the beginning of the 1990s, and that this can largely be explained by greater segregation between schools; that is to say, the pupils have been increasingly divided up between schools based on their socioeconomic background.

From that angle, it is interesting to take a closer look at eligibility for upper secondary school among pupils who have completed the ninth grade. For pupils who completed the ninth grade in 2018/19, 84 percent were eligible for a vocational programme. For girls, the proportion was 86 percent and for boys 83 percent. There are differences between

Target 4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

pupils depending on Swedish and foreign background, as well as year of immigration. There are relatively small differences between pupils with a Swedish background, pupils with a foreign background who were born in Sweden, and pupils with a foreign background who immigrated before 2010; that is to say, during compulsory school's first three grades. The lowest proportions were found among those who immigrated in 2010 or later.

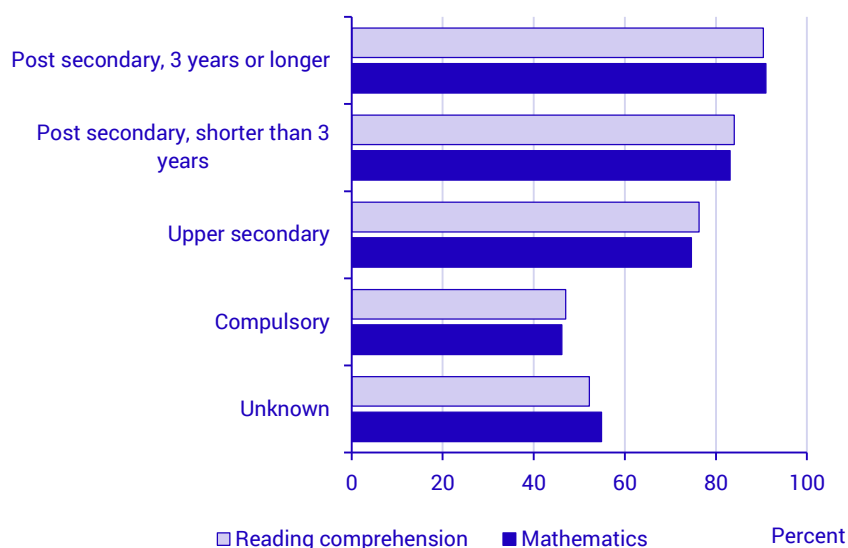
**Table 1. Proportion of pupils who are eligible for an upper secondary vocational programme out of pupils who completed the ninth grade, 2018/19**  
Percent

	Total	Girls	Boys
Total	84.3	85.8	82.9
Swedish background	90.1	91.0	89.2
Foreign background	68.3	71.3	65.5
Of which			
Born in Sweden	83.4	84.0	82.8
Born abroad, immigrated before 2010	83.6	85.5	81.4
Born abroad, immigrated in 2010 or later	47.1	50.4	44.5

Source: The National Agency for Education's pupil register

International studies on knowledge in mathematics and Swedish for 15-year-old pupils also show disparities in learning outcomes depending on the parents' level of educational attainment. This supports earlier findings on the significance of the parents' education level to learning outcomes.

**Graph 7. Proportion of 15-year-old pupils who achieve at least knowledge level 2, by parents' education level, 2018**  
Percent



Source: PISA 2018, National Agency for Education

### Upper secondary school

The parents' education level and foreign background have implications in upper secondary school too. The same tendencies that are visible for results in compulsory school can also be seen for completed upper secondary education, with the proportion who completed upper secondary school being highest among young adults aged 21–23 with parents who have post-secondary education and those who were born in Sweden (see table annex).

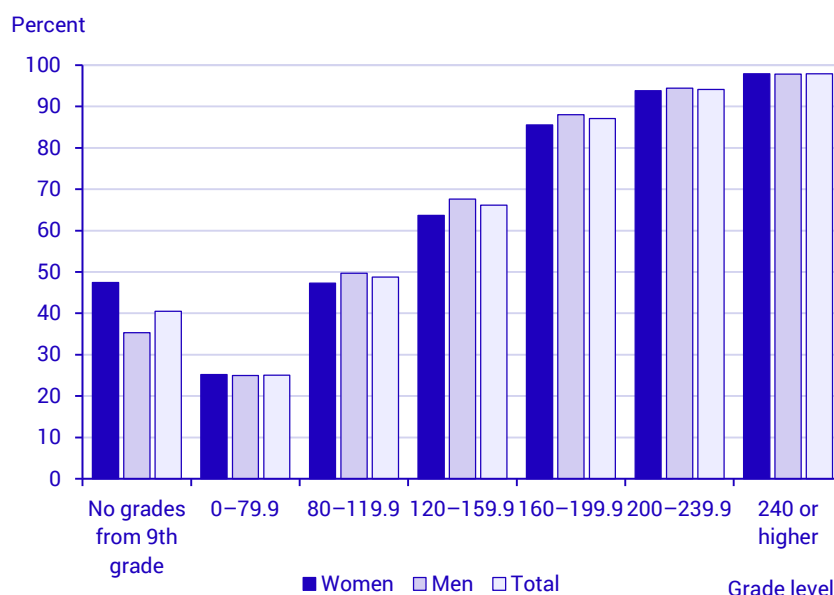
The results attained in compulsory school are greatly significant to possibilities of completing at minimum a three-year upper secondary programme within three to five years after normal completion of an upper secondary programme. There is a clear trend in grade value and completed upper secondary schooling. For pupils with a grade value of 240–320 points in the ninth grade, 98 percent of 21–23-year-olds in 2019 had gone on to complete at least a three-year upper secondary programme, which can be compared with 25 percent of those with a grade value below 80. This indicates that support in compulsory school might be important in evening out disparate conditions. For pupils among whom most gain pass grades in all or almost all subjects, and who have a grade value of 160–200 points, around 13 percent have not completed at least a three-year upper secondary programme, which suggests that there is a continuing need for support also in upper secondary school. Out of those who lack grades from the ninth grade, 40 percent have completed upper secondary school when they are between 21 and 23 years old. In this group, around 80 percent were born abroad and arrived in Sweden after the age of 15, so there may not have been



enough time to complete an upper secondary programme within eight years or less.

**Graph 8. Proportion who completed at minimum a three-year upper secondary programme out of people aged 21–23 about whom information on education level is available, by grade value from the ninth grade, 2019**

Percent



Source: Education register, Statistics Sweden.

## Pedagogical support at school

The steering documents for the preschool and school system such as the Education Act, ordinances and curricula regulate, in many places, the right to different kinds of support. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities also strengthen the rights of children and pupils in practice.

In the Children’s Panel report by the National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools (2019) and in inspections by the Swedish Schools Inspectorate (2019), deficiencies emerge in extra adaptations, special support and systematic quality work. This in turn leads to barriers to participation and learning.

In the inquiry (SOU:2016:94) “Missing! – Turn attention to pupils’ absence, and act”, it is discussed that deficient support can also manifest itself in greater unexcused absence from school. For example, children with neuropsychiatric disabilities are over-represented among children with unexcused absence. This might be because teaching is not adapted to these pupils. In a survey by Karolinska Institutet, the majority of regular teachers and special-needs teachers stated that they lack knowledge about neuropsychiatric diagnoses.

The information available refers to the proportion of children and youths who receive support within the compulsory school system and in

higher education. For other types of school, there is no information on support. The statistics show that pupils who do not meet the knowledge goals in the ninth grade fail, to a greater extent, to complete a three-year upper secondary programme. This suggests that pupils in need of support probably need it both in compulsory school and upper secondary school.

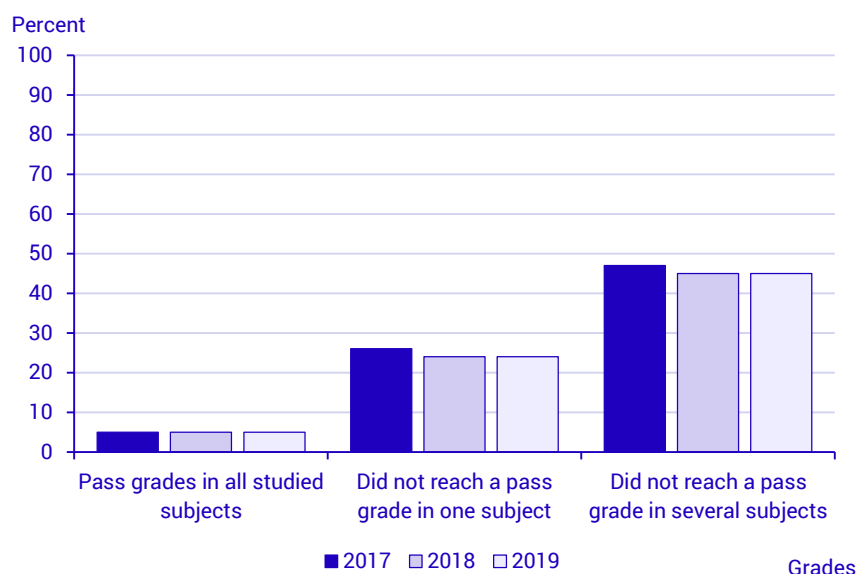
The National Agency for Education (2020a) has, in a study, examined the progression of results between the sixth and ninth grades and the scope of special support for pupils who completed the ninth grade, in 2017 to 2019. The progression of results between the sixth and ninth grade shows that the majority of pupils who did not have pass grades in several subjects in the sixth grade had not attained pass grades in all subjects in the ninth grade either. The opposite is the case for pupils who had pass grades in all subjects in the sixth grade; that is to say, the majority of the pupils also have pass grades in all subjects in the ninth grade.

The statistics suggest that the scope of the support probably does not match the needs of pupils, as there are many pupils without pass grades in one or several subjects in the sixth grade who did not receive special support during the seventh to ninth grades while, at the same time, a large proportion of them finish the ninth grade without pass grades in one or several subjects.

Just over half the pupils who completed the ninth grade and who did not attain pass grades in several subjects in the sixth grade have not received special support at the time of measurement in the seventh, eighth or ninth grade. However, they may have received extra adaptations that the school deemed sufficient or received special support later on in the school year.

**Graph 9. Proportion of pupils with special support in the seventh, eighth and/or ninth grades, by the pupils' results in the sixth grade, pupils who completed the ninth grade, 2017–2019**

Percent



Source: National Agency for Education, 2020a

Looking at eligibility for upper secondary vocational programmes, and the proportion who received special support in at least one year in the seventh, eighth or ninth grade, 9 percent of those eligible in 2019 had received support. The corresponding proportion for those who were not eligible was 57 percent. Almost half of the pupils who received special support received it for one year in the seventh, eighth or ninth grade. It is not particularly common to receive special support in all years in the last three grades of compulsory school (seventh to ninth). Out of those who were not eligible, slightly more boys than girls had received special support. Looking at the significance of the parents' education level and foreign background in terms of whether pupils with and without eligibility have received special support in the seventh to ninth grade, there are no major differences (see table annex).

### **Learning-disability schools and special-needs schools**

Children who, due to an intellectual impairment, cannot attain the knowledge requirements of compulsory school have the right to attend a learning-disability school. Children who are deaf and blind, have a visual impairment combined with another disability, are deaf, have impaired hearing or a severe speech defect have the right to be accepted into a special-needs school. Until the 2019/20 school year, information on special-needs schools and learning-disability schools has only been collected at group level. It has therefore not been possible to follow the pupils at individual level, and hence neither has it been possible to perform many of the analyses that can be done for other groups of pupils.

Target 4.a Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.

In the 2019/20 school year, around 12,300 children attended learning-disability compulsory schools (this it also includes children who are integrated into compulsory school but follow the curriculum of learning-disability schools), which equals around 1.1 percent of all pupils in compulsory school. The number of pupils has been between 9,000 and 12,000 in the past ten years. Out of pupils attending learning-disability compulsory school, 63 percent were boys and 37 percent girls; the gender breakdown has been more or less the same in the past ten years (National Agency for Education 2020b).

Around 700 children attended special-needs schools in the 2019/20 school year, 60 percent of whom are boys. The gender breakdown has varied between 40–46 percent, and 54–60 percent girls in the past ten years. Since 2012, there has been an increase in the number of pupils in special-needs schools (National Agency for Education 2020c).

### **Stress and victimisation at school**

The National Agency for Education's survey "Attitudes to school" (2018c) and the Public Health Agency of Sweden's survey "Health behaviour in school-aged children" (2019a) show that more children are experiencing bullying than before. In "Attitudes to school", a higher proportion of younger children can be seen than older ones, with 12 and 6 percent, respectively, who experience bullying. In "Health behaviour in school-aged children", there was only a significant difference between 11- and 15-year-old girls, with 11-year-old girls experiencing bullying to a greater extent (10 percent among 11-year-old girls and 6 percent among 15-year-old girls, respectively).

School-related stress has risen in several groups in the past few years; in "Attitudes to school", an increase can be seen over time in all groups (grades 4–6, 7–9 and upper secondary school). In "Health habits of school-aged children", a statistically significant increase can be seen for 11-year-old girls and for both sexes of 13- and 15-year-olds since 2009/10. There is no significant difference between the sexes in the fourth to sixth grade in the latest surveys. Among older pupils – from the seventh to ninth grades, and upper secondary school – it is more common for girls to experience school-related stress than boys. (National Agency for Education 2018; Public Health Agency of Sweden 2019a; Statistics Sweden 2020c)

In "Health habits of school-aged children" (Public Health Agency of Sweden 2019a), 3–7 percent stated that they had been subjected to cyberbullying at the ages of 11, 13 and 15; there are no significant differences between girls and boys or age groups.

### **Children and youths placed in care**

Children and youths who have been taken into full-time care under the Social Services Act (2001:453) or under the Care of Young Persons (Special Provisions) Act (1990:52) during compulsory school complete

compulsory and upper secondary school to a lesser extent than children who have not been taken into care. They also proceed to higher education to a lesser extent. (National Board of Health and Welfare 2019d)

Children who have been taken into care under the Social Services Act run an increased risk of, for instance, health problems, criminality, drug abuse and a weak foothold on the labour market as an adult. Pass grades at compulsory school have proven to be a strong protective factor against such a negative course of events (National Board of Health and Welfare 2010 and Berlin 2020). Out of the approximate 1,300 girls and boys who were in care throughout the entire ninth grade, 85 and 84 percent, respectively, had completed compulsory school by the age of 17. Out of the approximate 4,700 children who were in care throughout part of the ninth grade, the equivalent proportions were 85 and 69 percent, respectively. Among other pupils of the same age (not in care), 95 percent completed compulsory schooling. Looking at the proportion of 20-year-olds who have completed a three-year upper secondary programme, the differences between the groups are even greater.

**Table 2. Proportion of 20-year-olds who have completed a three-year upper secondary programme, 2019**  
Percent

In care entire ninth grade		In care not entire ninth grade		Not in care	
Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
43	34	32	16	81	75

Source: National Board of Health and Welfare, open comparisons 2019. The education level and health of children and youths in care

Causes of poorer school results can, according to the research, depend on factors such as a poor home environment at an early stage, growing up in an unstable environment, switching schools multiple times, less support and pessimistic expectations of school results from the adults in a pupil's environment. (National Board of Health and Welfare 2010; Berlin 2020)

## Education in national minority languages

In Sweden there are five national minorities: Jews, Roma, Sami, Swedish Finns and Tornedalers. The national minorities have special rights by law. People who belong to the national minorities have the right to develop their language, culture and religion.

Data on ethnicity is not registered in Sweden. This means that no statistics are available on how many pupils from the national minorities study within different types of school. The data that is available concerns mother-tongue tuition in the national minority languages. In 2015, the law regarding mother-tongue tuition in the national minority

languages in compulsory schools, learning-disability compulsory schools, special-needs schools and Sami schools, was amended such that it also applies to children who belong to one of the national minorities but who do not speak the minority language at home.

In the 2019/20 school year, approximately 13,000 children were reported to be entitled to mother-tongue tuition in one of the minority languages. Around 1.2–1.4 percent of all compulsory school pupils were reported to be entitled to mother-tongue tuition in national minority languages during 2001/02–2019/20 (National Agency for Education 2017, 2018d, 2019, 2020d).

In the inquiry “Improved opportunities for pupils to develop their national minority language” (SOU 2017:91), it emerges that there are certain shortcomings in the statistics as only the children about whom the schools have received information are included. Estimates show that the number could be three to four times higher. Around 6,000 of the 13,000 pupils with reported entitlement took part in mother-tongue tuition. One reason for why approximately half of the children do not take part is a lack of teachers.

In tertiary education, institutes of higher education that so wish can offer courses in the language and culture of the national minorities. In addition, the government has issued special commissions to four institutes of higher education. This includes offering teacher training with subject specialisation in Sami, Finnish, Meänkieli and Romani chib.

## Participation in higher education

In Sweden, young men commence higher education to a lesser extent than young women. In the past few years, it has become more common for young women to commence higher education, while the proportion of young men has been more stable. It was already known that direct transition to higher education after upper secondary school has, irrespective of gender, been declining for several years (Swedish Higher Education Authority 2019).

Social factors are important. It is more common for young adults with highly educated parents to commence a higher education programme than it is for those whose parents have a low educational attainment level; this applies both to young women and men. Regional factors are also important as there are great differences between Sweden’s counties and municipalities in the proportion of people who commence higher education (Swedish Higher Education Authority 2019). In counties where a lower proportion of young adults generally commence higher education, there is also a lower proportion of young adults with highly educated parents who commence higher education. However, the difference between the counties is not as large for young adults whose parents have a low educational attainment level.

Target 4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.

The grades obtained at upper secondary school by young adults are an important factor in the transition to higher education. Those with low grades commence higher education to a lesser extent. It is less common for young adults with low grades and whose parents have a low level of education to commence higher education, than for young adults with low grades and highly educated parents. The Swedish Higher Education Authority has, in an analysis, shown that there is potential to recruit into higher education more young adults with good grades who come from homes that are unaccustomed to studies (Swedish Higher Education Authority).

**Table 3. Proportion transitioning into higher education by grades and parents' level of education out of those born in 1994**  
Percent

Parents' education level	<11	≥11 – <13	≥13 – <15	≥15 – <17	≥17 – <19	≥19	No grades from upper secondary school	Total
Compulsory	17	36	52	71	82	96	5	22
Upper secondary	12	27	43	63	77	87	6	32
Post-secondary < 3 years	21	42	58	76	87	92	14	53
Post-secondary ≥ 3 years	29	52	71	84	91	97	24	67
Total	17	36	54	73	86	94	10	44

Source: Higher Education Register and Register of Education, Statistics Sweden

People with a foreign background are well-represented among entrants into higher education, and the proportion has grown over time. Compared with ten years ago, the proportion of entrants with a foreign background has increased from 17 to 26 percent. As the proportion with a foreign background in the population has increased to the same extent, this could explain the gradual increase in entrants with a foreign background (Swedish Higher Education Authority 2020).

It is more common for men, people with low grades and students with a foreign background to drop out of their studies, as shown by an analysis of the major vocational programmes. The education level of parents appears to have less of a bearing on dropping out. (Swedish Higher Education Authority 2017).

To enable universal higher education, irrespective of socioeconomic background, a student can apply for study aid that consists partly of grants and partly of loans. The government's aim is for study aid to prompt a high participation rate in education and equalise disparities

between individuals and groups in the population, hence helping to attain better social justice (Prop. 2019/20:1).

### **Students with disabilities in higher education**

The country's institutes of higher education are to set aside 0.3 percent of their appropriations for undergraduate- and postgraduate-level teaching for the cost of special pedagogical support for students with disabilities in their study situation. Also, the institutes of higher education can apply for national funding. Both the number of students who received support, and costs for the initiatives, have increased sharply since 2017. Part of the reason for the increase could be that the institutes of higher education have improved in communicating information about the possibility of receiving pedagogical support. In 2019, 20,000 students received such support. The largest group is students with dyslexia and various neuropsychiatric variations. They make up 75 percent of the students with support.

The proportion of women and men who receive support more or less corresponds to the gender breakdown in higher education; that is to say, just over 60 percent goes to women and just below 40 percent goes to men. (Stockholm University, 2019).

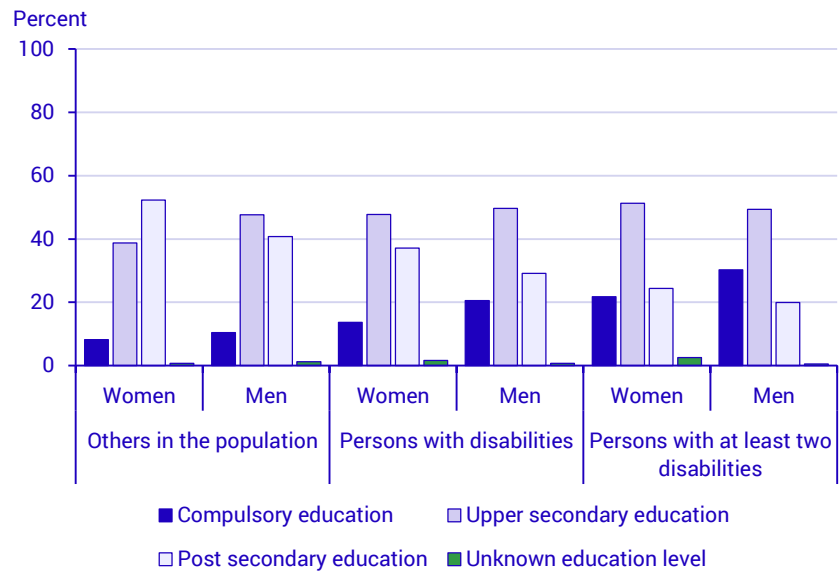
The survey Eurostudent VI shows that there is a difference between responding students with disabilities and other responding students. Students with disabilities experience financial difficulties more often. Many feel great pressure in having to succeed in gaining a sufficient amount of higher education credits to continue receiving study aid. Responding students with disabilities are also less satisfied with their education and feel more out of place in higher education. (Swedish Council for Higher Education 2018).

### **Education level for adults with disabilities**

There are differences in education level between adults with some kind of disability compared to those without a disability. For people aged 30–64 with some kind of disability, it is most common to have upper secondary education for both women and men, while post-secondary education is most common for women without a disability and upper secondary education for men without a disability. Having compulsory education is also more common among adults with some kind of disability compared with those without a disability. It should be added that, for pupils who follow the curriculum of learning-disability schools, it is not possible to apply to college/university.



**Graph 10. Distribution of the highest level of education in percent for the adult population aged 30–64, by disability and gender, 2016–2017**  
Percent



Source: Living Conditions Surveys (ULF/SILC), Statistics Sweden

# Decent working conditions

Target 8.5 of the Agenda stipulates that we shall, by 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.

The UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Swedish International Accord 1971:41) stipulates that full and productive employment with decent working conditions means equitable income, safety in the workplace and social protection for families. It promotes both sustainable economic growth and individuals' ambitions in working life, and provides better prospects for personal development and social integration. A labour market with decent working conditions is equal and enables freedom for people to express their concerns, organise themselves and take part in the decisions that affect their lives, and provides equal opportunities and treatment for all women and men, young and old.

This chapter describes the state of employment and working life for different groups in our society. Focus is on highlighting statistics related to people who are more vulnerable than others on the labour market. A great deal of statistics are available, but for several groups in society, there is insufficient data to illuminate their particular situation. For example, there is no data at individual level for national minorities. The availability of data is also very limited for people who work in Sweden but who are not registered in the country, and for people with disabilities.

## Employment

Having a job is key to making societies more equal and inclusive and to reducing poverty and inequality between both regions and social groups (OECD, 2018). Among people who are not fully employed, there are different degrees of participation in the labour market. Some have a stronger foothold from working part-time for instance, while others have temporary or needs-based employment. There are also those who neither work nor study. The reason for a person not being fully employed can vary, and the situation can also be self-determined. Neither need it be the case that working conditions are poor just because a person is not fully employed. However, those who are involuntarily without full employment are at a greater risk of financial and social vulnerability.

## Weak establishment

Having weak establishment on the labour market causes vulnerability in that the risk of exclusion from the labour market is greater than for those who are properly established (Statistics Sweden, 2018c). A

Target 8.5 By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.

gainfully employed person who has a weak establishment has earned income that, in a certain year, is below 60 percent of the median income, with income calculated based on people with compulsory education of the same age and sex. When using register statistics, there is no official definition of the unemployed and people outside of the labour force. For this reason, the establishment measure is used to illuminate a person's level of establishment on the labour market. Out of Sweden's 4.6 million gainfully employed people in 2018, 286,000 had a weak establishment, 5.5 percent of people born in Sweden and 8.9 percent of those born abroad.

Irrespective of background and gender, it was most common among the weakly established to have low earned income as their primary source of livelihood, such as from part-time work. This shows that many of the people with a weak establishment do not obtain a livelihood from elsewhere, but mainly live on a low income. For people born abroad, the proportion was higher than for people born in Sweden of the same gender. This can for instance be because it is more common for people born abroad to have work of a more temporary nature. Among people born in Sweden with a weak establishment, more care for children or receive sickness benefit than those born abroad, which could suggest that their weak establishment on the labour market is more temporary. The longer the people born abroad have lived in Sweden, however, the more the figures resemble those for people born in Sweden.

**Table 4. Gainfully employed people (employees) with a weak establishment, by background and primary source of income, aged 20–64, 2018**  
Percentage distribution and number

Activity	Born in Sweden		Born abroad	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Gainful employment	39	72	59	85
Studies	9	9	3	2
Care of children/relatives	31	2	22	2
Sickness benefit	17	11	12	6
Unemployment benefit	1	1	2	2
Sickness and activity allowance	1	1	1	0.4
Financial assistance	0.03	0.1	0.3	1
Labour market policy measure	1	1	1	1
Old age pensioner	1	3	0.4	0.4
Total, percent	100	100	100	100
Total, number	125499	81068	39448	40376

Source: Statistics Sweden Register-based activity statistics (RAKS) and Longitudinal integration database for health insurance and labour market studies (LISA).

Out of the women with a weak establishment, irrespective of their background, around one third worked in Health and social care followed

by Education. Among men, Business services was the most common economic activity, followed by Trade for people born in Sweden and Hotels and restaurants for people born abroad.

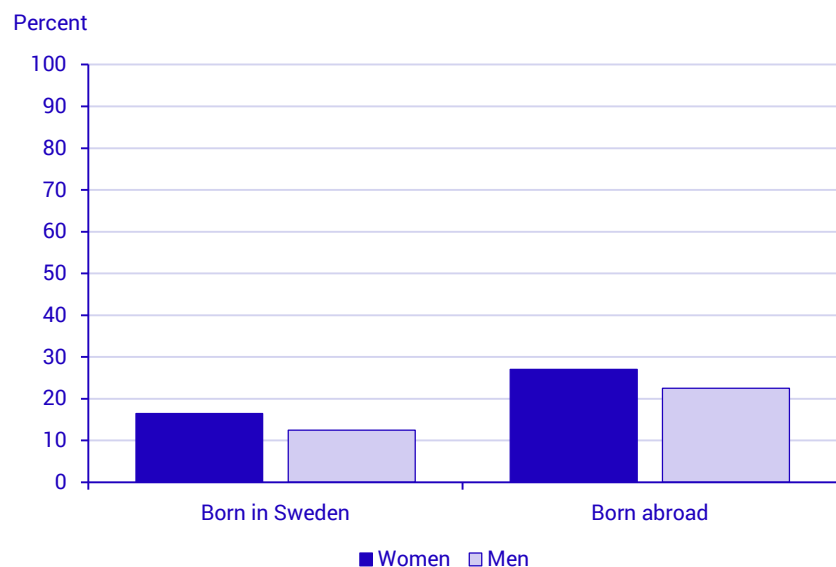
### Temporary employment

Another way of measuring establishment on the labour market is to look at temporary employment according to the Labour Force Survey (LFS). This type of employment is less certain than permanent employment and hence increases the risk of vulnerability. It is possible that people with temporary employment are also included in the group with a weak establishment, as people with a weak establishment on the labour market might have had temporary employment during the year.

In 2019, 766,000 people had temporary employment, which equals 17 percent of all employees. There was a higher proportion of women than men who had temporary employment – 18 percent of employed women compared with 15 percent among men.

Among people born abroad, one quarter of all employees had temporary employment in 2019. The corresponding figure among people born in Sweden was one out of seven employees. People born abroad made up 31 percent of all temporary employees, which can be compared with only 19 percent of all permanent employees having been born abroad.

**Graph 11. Temporary employees by background, aged 20–64, 2019**  
Percentage of employees



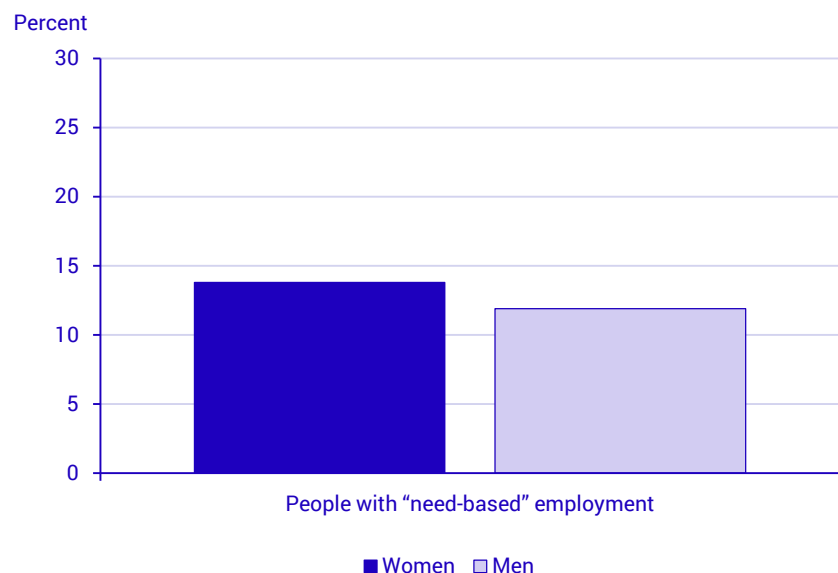
Source: Statistics Sweden Labour Force Surveys (LFS)

Other types of employment that can be more or less temporary but that make the employee more vulnerable on the labour market are gig jobs and zero-hours contracts. Gig jobs include freelancers and independent professionals, but also people who take on temporary short-term work or employment by the hour. The number of people who work in this way

is unknown, but according to statistics from Statistics Sweden, in 2019 there were just under 900,000 companies with fewer than one employee. It is reasonable to assume that, behind many of these, there are people who make a living out of freelancing.

In zero-hours contracts, the number of hours per week for an employee has been agreed for instance between zero and 38 hours, and the employer is not obliged to offer the employee any working hours at all. Statistics Sweden does not have any statistics on how many people have this type of employment. However, there are statistics on people who are both willing and able to increase their working hours. In 2019, there were around 140,000 underemployed part-time employees in Sweden, 61 percent of whom were women. Around one in ten people with temporary employment had positions in which they were called in as needed.

**Graph 12. Temporary employment with needs-based employment, aged 20–64, 2019**  
Percentage of temporary employees



Source: Statistics Sweden Labour Force Surveys (LFS)

### People who neither work nor study

Youths who neither work nor study are a group who have poorer conditions than others for entering the labour market. A long period of time without studies and work can have long-term implications for both the individual and society, for instance worsened prospects of getting a job, financial vulnerability and poorer health. In the register-based statistics on youths who neither work nor study, the method is applied to the entire population, which enables defining everyone who neither works nor studies in the population irrespective of age. In 2018 there were 150,000 people aged 20–29 in this group.

Irrespective of background, it was most common among women who neither work nor study aged 20–29 to receive their income through care

Target 8.6 By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training.

of a child or a close relative. For women born in Sweden, irrespective of where the parents were born, the second most common source of income was from sickness or activity allowance. For women born abroad who neither work nor study, financial assistance was the second most common source of income.

Among men aged 20–29 who neither work nor study, financial assistance was the most common source of income among those born abroad. Among people born in Sweden, irrespective of where the parents were born, sickness or activity allowance was most common, together with low earned income.

For a large proportion of people, irrespective of their background, Statistics Sweden has no information on activity. There are many reasons for why a person may lack income in registers, for instance because they have been supported by a partner/parent, work in another country but are registered in Sweden, work on an untaxed basis or have left the country without reporting this to the Swedish Tax Agency. It is therefore uncertain how large a share of those without any activity actually do live in a vulnerable situation in society. However, the figures show that the proportion is higher among people born abroad than those born in Sweden, which could imply that it is more common for this group not to have their own livelihood. We also see that the phenomenon is more common among men than women irrespective of background.

**Table 5. People who neither work nor study, by background and primary source of income, aged 20–29, 2018**  
Percentage distribution and number

	Born abroad		Born in Sweden with two foreign-born parents		Born in Sweden with at least one parent born in Sweden	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Activity						
Low income*	9	14	13	20	12	17
Care of children/relatives	31	1	23	1	27	1
Sickness benefit	1	1	4	2	7	4
Unemployment benefit	1	3	2	2	1	2
Sickness and activity allowance	4	7	16	20	23	28
Financial assistance	10	17	10	14	8	13
Labour market policy measure	3	4	5	7	5	8
Without activity	43	54	26	34	17	28
Total, percent	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total, number	29,684	23,675	5,113	6,665	42,977	41,986

\*Having a low income as a person who is not gainfully employed means that the person has received a statement of earnings and deductions from the Swedish Tax Agency but that the total earned amount does not suffice to be classed as gainful employment.

Source: Statistics Sweden Register-based activity statistics (RAKS) and Longitudinal integration database for health insurance and labour market studies (LISA).

Older people too can be in a situation of neither working nor studying. Previous studies have shown that the older a person is when they stop working (not retirement pension), the fewer there are who return to gainful employment later on. Among the 653,000 people who, in 2018, were between 30 and 64 years old and neither worked nor studied, it was most common to receive sickness or activity allowance irrespective of gender or background. Among people born abroad, this is then followed by financial assistance irrespective of gender, while women born in Sweden received sickness benefit. Men born in Sweden with a foreign background had financial assistance as the second most common source of income, while the equivalent for men born in Sweden with a Swedish background was retirement pension. In this group too, the proportion without activity was higher among people born abroad compared with those born in Sweden, and among men compared with women.

**Table 6. People who neither work nor study, by background and primary source of income, aged 30–64, 2018**  
Percentage distribution and number

Activity	Born abroad		Born in Sweden with two foreign-born parents		Born in Sweden with at least one parent born in Sweden	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Low income*	6	6	5	7	5	6
Care of children/relatives	13	2	12	2	9	1
Sickness benefit	5	4	13	8	14	8
Unemployment benefit	4	6	4	5	2	3
Sickness and activity allowance	19	16	33	30	39	33
Financial assistance	15	13	7	12	5	8
Labour market policy measure	6	7	5	6	5	5
Retirement pension	2	2	5	6	11	16
Without activity	30	43	16	25	11	19
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Number	137734	127320	11044	10802	193627	172872

\*Having a low income as a person who is not gainfully employed means that the person has received a statement of earnings and deductions from the Swedish Tax Agency but that the total earned amount does not suffice to be classed as gainful employment.

Source: Statistics Sweden Register-based activity statistics (RAKS) and Longitudinal integration database for health insurance and labour market studies (LISA).

Target 8.8 Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.

### People who are not registered, but receive salary

People who have come to Sweden to work can find themselves in a vulnerable situation on the labour market. There is a risk of a foreign employee ending up dependent on the employer, and staying there despite poor working conditions.

Many migrant workers are highly qualified individuals who are in high demand from occupations with shortages, where working conditions are as a rule good. However, this is not the case for everyone, and some

employees are found in sectors that do not normally require a high level of education. In 2018 there were 127,000 people in Sweden who were not registered but who nevertheless had received a salary. 29 percent of these were women and they worked primarily in Business services (21 percent), followed by Education (16 percent) and Health and social care (14 percent). The men worked in the Construction industry (21 percent) followed by Business services (16 percent) and Hotels and restaurants (12 percent). Within Business services, it is primarily work at cleaning companies where employment is found, while for those within Education, it relates to work at universities and colleges.

**Table 7. Non-registered people who have received a statement of earnings and deductions, by sector, aged 20–64, 2018**

Breakdown by percent, number and distribution of the sexes

Industry	Percentage		Gender distribution	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	7	9	24	76
Manufacturing and mining industry	3	6	17	83
Companies in energy and environment	0.1	0.3	13	87
Construction industry	2	21	4	96
Trade	7	6	31	69
Transport companies	2	6	13	87
Hotels and restaurants	10	12	24	76
Information and communication enterprises	3	3	31	69
Financial and insurance companies	1	1	35	65
Property management	1	1	26	74
Business services	21	16	34	66
Public administration and defence	3	2	39	61
Education	16	8	46	54
Health and social care	14	4	60	40
Personal and cultural services, etc.	8	4	42	58
Unknown	1	0.2	52	48
Total	100	100	29	71
Number	36243	90642		

Source: Statistics Sweden Gross pay statistics based on income statements (LSUM)

There are also people other than migrant workers who live in Sweden without being registered in the country. For instance, asylum seekers who have not yet received a decision on their application. But, this also applies to other groups, commonly known as paperless migrants. This can include asylum seekers who have had their application rejected but who remain in the country, or people who have come to Sweden to work



but who do not have a work permit, or who have come for other reasons (for instance to study or as a tourist), and stayed on to work but have not obtained a permit to do so. It can be assumed that such people are in a highly vulnerable situation on the labour market, although there are no statistics available to confirm actual vulnerability.

## **Work environment**

Decent working conditions mean a safe and sound work environment without risks of occupational injuries and fatal accidents. Decent working conditions also encompass reasonable working hours, reasonable performance requirements and no discrimination and bullying, to name a few areas.

A poor work environment is often due to the employer's ignorance, indifference or negligence, although there are also activities in which employers gain financial benefits in relation to competitors by ignoring work environment rules and laws. This is called unhealthy competition.

## **Work-related disorders**

Statistics from the survey Work-related disorders 2018 show that around 5 percent of all employees aged 16–74 had disorders following an occupational accident. One person in four had a disorder for other reasons, such as due to a heavy workload, strenuous working posture or having unclear or conflicting requirements from the employer. Employees in healthcare and education had a high degree of work-related disorders.

There was more or less an equally high proportion of women as men who had disorders due to an occupational accident. In terms of disorders for other reasons, women had such disorders to a higher degree than men; 30 percent of the women compared with 20 percent of the men in 2018. A heavy workload was the most common cause of disorders among women and men alike. Accidental fall was the most common cause of occupational accidents among both women and men. There are no clear differences in the results in terms of the proportion with disorders based on whether the person was born in Sweden or abroad.

## **Working in spite of illness**

In the Work Environment Survey, a question is asked about working in spite of illness; that is to say, the person has worked despite the fact that, in their own opinion, they were ill and should not have done so. If a person feels forced to do so, this could be a sign of poor working conditions. If the reason for a person working in spite of illness is fear of losing their job or not being able to afford to stay home, this also gives an indication of a weak situation on the labour market for the employee.

In 2017, around seven out of ten employees had, at least on one occasion in the past year, worked despite the fact that, in their own

opinion, they were ill and should not have done so. The proportion was slightly higher among women than men.

Among people with disabilities, just over eight out of ten had worked even though they were ill, and among people with disabilities with reduced capacity to work, almost nine out of ten had done so. People with disabilities stated, to a much greater degree than employees in general, that the reason was that they could not afford to be ill. The proportion who cited that reason was highest among people with a disability with reduced capacity to work, with just over 40 percent working despite being ill for that reason. The corresponding figure among all employees was just under 25 percent. People with disabilities also stated that they feared losing their job to a greater extent than employees on the whole. The proportion was highest among people with reduced capacity to work, with 17 percent of those who had worked despite being ill having done so because they were afraid of losing their job. Among all employees, the corresponding proportion was 6 percent.

A comparison by country of birth shows that the proportion of employees who had worked despite being ill was somewhat higher among people born in Sweden than among those born abroad. Just over 70 percent of those born in Sweden compared with 60 percent of those born in non-Nordic European countries, and just over 60 percent of those born in the rest of the world. There is too little data to report the causes.

**Table 8. Working despite illness, and reasons, 2017**  
Percentage of employees

	All employees aged 16–74						People with disabilities						People with disabilities with reduced capacity to work					
	Women		Men		Both sexes		Women		Men		Both sexes		Women		Men		Both sexes	
	%	±	%	±	%	±	%	±	%	±	%	±	%	±	%	±	%	±
Has worked despite illness in the past 12 months	73	2	67	2	70	2	84	4	78	5	81	3	91	5	85	6	88	4
Reason:	6	1	5	1	6	1	13	4	11	3	12	3	19	6	16	6	17	4
–Fear of losing their job																		
–Cannot afford to be ill	28	3	21	2	24	2	40	6	32	6	37	4	45	9	35	8	41	6

Source: Work Environment Survey 2017

## Discrimination

A person who is subjected to victimisation at work often has reduced self-esteem and can suffer physical and mental ill health.

According to the Work Environment Survey 2017, people with disabilities experienced subjection to discrimination to a greater extent

than other employees. Nearly three out of ten people with disabilities and reduced capacity to work experienced that they had been subjected to discrimination due to one of the following: gender, gender identity, ethnicity, religion or other faith, disability, sexual orientation or age. Among all employees aged 16–74, just over one in ten experienced this. Almost one in ten people with a disability with reduced capacity to work experienced discrimination due to their disability.

**Table 9. Employees who have been subjected to discrimination, by gender, disability and capacity to work, 2017**  
Percentage of employees

	All employees aged 16–74						People with disabilities						People with disabilities with reduced capacity to work					
	Women		Men		Both sexes		Women		Men		Both sexes		Women		Men		Both sexes	
.	%	±	%	±	%	±	%	±	%	±	%	±	%	±	%	±	%	±
Experiences discrimination	15	2	9	1	12	1	23	5	15	4	19	3	34	8	20	6	28	5
Discrimination due to disability	1	1	1	0	1	0	5	2	4	2	4	2	9	5	7	4	8	3

Source: Work Environment Survey 2017

People born outside of Sweden experienced discrimination to a greater extent than those born in Sweden. Around one in four employees born abroad experienced some kind of discrimination, compared with one in ten born in Sweden. 15 percent of those born outside of Europe and 12 percent of those born in Europe experienced that they had been subjected to discrimination at work because of their ethnic background.

**Table 10. People subjected to discrimination, by country of birth, 2017**  
Percentage of employees

Country of birth	Both sexes							
	Sweden		Rest of the Nordics		Europe excl. the Nordics		Rest of the world	
.	%	±	%	±	%	±	%	±
Experiences discrimination	10	1	.	.	23	4	26	4
Discrimination due to ethnicity	1	0	.	.	12	4	15	4

Source: Work Environment Survey 2017

## Violence and victimisation

Almost two out of ten women and one in ten men had been subjected to violence or threats of violence at work on at least one occasion in the past 12 months. Among women with disabilities, the proportion was even higher; around one in four women with a disability had been subjected to violence or threats of violence at work.

People with disabilities were also subjected to bullying to a greater extent than employees in general. In particular, people who also had reduced capacity to work were subjected to bullying; around two in ten stated that they had been subjected to cruel words and actions from their boss or colleagues compared with almost one in ten among all employees.

**Table 11. Employees who have been subjected to violence, threats of violence, victimisation, by gender, disability and capacity to work, 2017**

Percentage of employees

	All employees aged 16–74						People with disabilities						People with disabilities with reduced capacity to work					
	Women		Men		Both sexes		Women		Men		Both sexes		Women		Men		Both sexes	
.	%	±	%	±	%	±	%	±	%	±	%	±	%	±	%	±	%	±
Violence or threats of violence: at least once in the past 12 months	18	2	9	1	14	1	24	5	10	3	17	3	26	7	14	5	20	5
Victimisation (cruel words and actions) from bosses/colleagues in the past 12 months	10	2	8	1	9	1	16	4	13	4	14	3	18	6	17	6	18	4

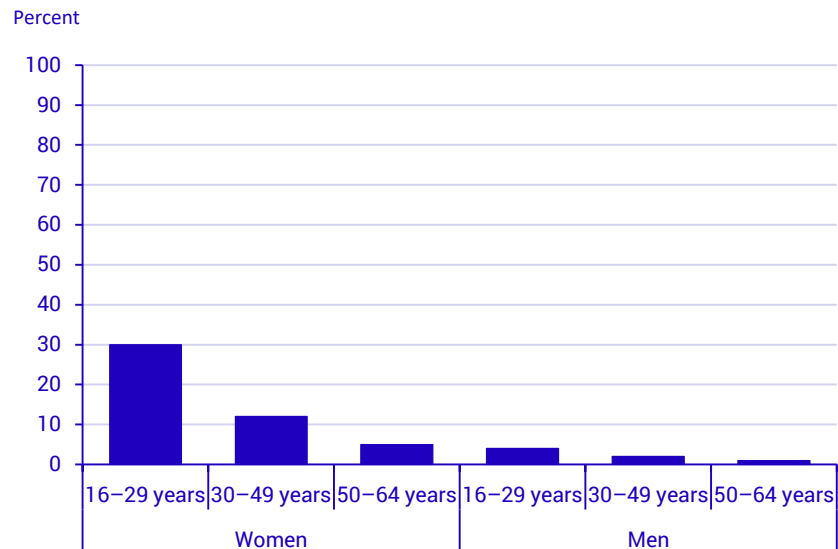
Source: Work Environment Survey 2017

Just over 10 percent of people born outside of the Nordics had been subjected to violence or threats of violence at work in the past 12-month period. Among people born in Sweden, the proportion was almost 15 percent, but the difference between people born in Sweden and abroad is not statistically significant. In terms of victimisation (cruel words and actions) from bosses and colleagues, there was a certain difference however. The proportion who had been subjected was somewhat higher among people born abroad. Almost 15 percent of people born in a non-Nordic European country and in the rest of the world stated that they had been subjected to such bullying compared with just below 10 percent of people born in Sweden. (The information for people born in a Nordic country other than Sweden is too uncertain to report).

### Sexual harassment at work

Almost one in ten employees had, in 2017, been subjected to sexual harassment by bosses/colleagues and/or other people at work in the past 12 months. The proportion was highest among young women aged 16–29, among whom 30 percent had been subjected.

**Graph 13. Employees subjected to sexual harassment at work by bosses/colleagues and/or others in the past 12 months by gender and age, 2017**  
Percentage of employees



Source: Statistics Sweden Work Environment Survey 2017

### Unhealthy competition

There is a clear link between unhealthy competition and a poor work environment. Unhealthy competition is more common in certain industries, including the construction, transport, cleaning and restaurant industry.

In 2018 the Swedish Work Environment Authority conducted a survey in the cleaning industry which showed that five out of ten employers experienced a need to compromise work environment and working hours rules to cope with the competition. In 2017, employers in the construction, transport, hotels and restaurant industries, as well as farming and forestry operations, were surveyed. The survey showed that three out of ten employers experienced the same thing. (Swedish Work Environment Authority, 2020)

# Economic equality

Economic resources are needed to uphold a decent standard of living, to fulfil basic needs and to enable people to improve their lives. In the 2030 Agenda, world governments undertake to eliminate all forms and dimensions of poverty and hunger and ensure that all people can realise their potential with dignity and equality and in a healthy environment (UN, 2015).

The first goal of the 2030 Agenda is about eradicating poverty in all its forms everywhere. Poverty is usually described as a lack of resources meaning that a person does not have the standard of living that is considered generally accepted in society. Usually, however, financial poverty or financial vulnerability is meant, i.e. that a person has a low income and meagre financial assets.

## Indicators for measuring financial vulnerability

Financial vulnerability is to some extent a hidden problem because not all individuals who live in Sweden are visible in the statistics. Income is measured for the registered population. This means that homeless people who lack a registered address and paperless migrants fall outside of the statistics. The same applies to asylum seekers who have not yet received a residence permit, or EU migrants who are temporarily in Sweden.

This chapter looks at economic equality in Sweden by means of studying how financial vulnerability is distributed across different demographic groups mainly using register statistics. Financial vulnerability is studied primarily using four different indicators – low economic standard, low income standard, long-term financial assistance and excessive debts.

“Low economic standard” is an internationally accepted relative measure of income showing how many people live in households with a disposable income that is below 60 percent of the median income of the country.

“Low income standard” is an absolute measure published in the official Swedish income statistics. The measure describes the extent to which the household’s income suffices to pay necessary expenses such as housing, home insurance, childcare, local travel and so on. A low income standard means that income does not suffice to pay for these living expenses.

Financial assistance is a needs-tested benefit that people can apply for if they have difficulty in providing for themselves and their family. “Long-term financial assistance” is received by people who live in a

Disposable income refers to the sum of all taxable and non-taxable income and transfers minus taxes and other negative transfers. In order to enable comparisons between households with different compositions, disposable income per consumption unit is used.

Income standard is the household’s disposable income/the household’s basic consumption. Basic consumption consists of the following components: National norm for income support in 2017, Standardised housing cost, Costs for household electricity by size of household, Childcare costs (maximum capped charge), Local transport for people aged 18 or older, Trade union and unemployment insurance fees for employees aged 20–64 who are employed and work at least part time, and Home insurance. Basic consumption is adjusted for annual changes in prices.

household that has received financial assistance for at least ten months of the year.

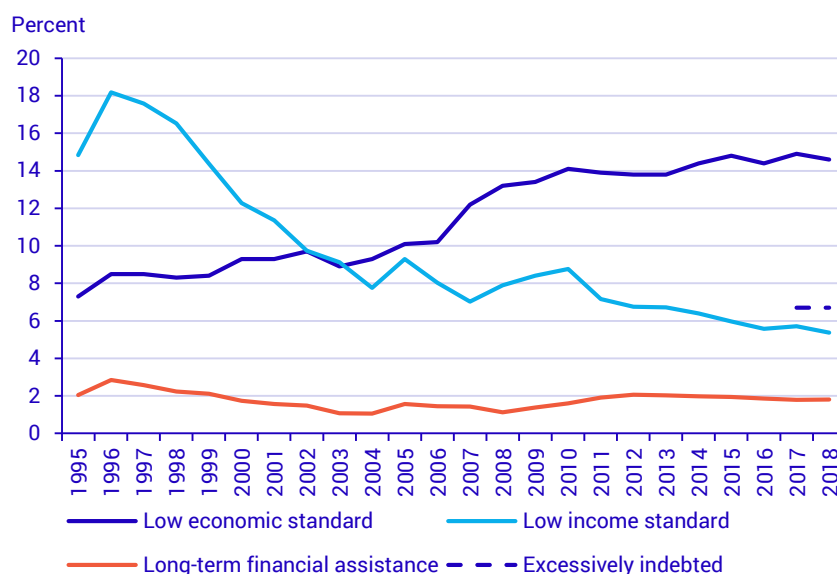
“Excessive debts” applies to people who live in a household in which at least one person has had difficulty paying their bills, which then ended up with the Swedish Enforcement Authority.

## The proportion of financially vulnerable people has fallen and risen

Target 1.2 By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.

The graph below shows how the various indicators stand in relation to each other and the progression over time in the proportion of people in each indicator. For the indicator “excessive debts”, information is only available for one year, 2018.

**Graph 14. Indicators of financial vulnerability, 1995–2018**  
Percentage of the population



Source: Statistics Sweden, Income and Taxation Register and the Swedish Enforcement Authority's debt recovery and collection database

### More people have a low economic standard

The proportion of people with a low economic standard – that is to say, the proportion with an income below 60 percent of the median income, has risen in Sweden. In 2018, 14.6 percent of the Swedish population had a low economic standard, which is double that of 1995.

A reason for this increase is that people in the lower income tiers have had weaker income growth and that, to a great extent, they live on different types of social benefits that are adjusted in line with price progression or through political decisions. These types of income have risen somewhat over time, but have not matched the good growth in earned income and capital income.

The disparity in economic standard between those who work and those who do not has also increased due to changes in taxation. Earned tax credit was introduced in 2007 and has since then been increased. It entails a tax benefit whereby earned income is taxed at a lower rate than unearned income, such as pension, labour market assistance or sickness benefit.

### **Fewer have a low income standard**

The economic standard has improved in Sweden. Income has increased most in the higher income tiers, although people on a low income also had a higher economic standard in 2018 than before. Because of this, the proportion of people with a low income standard has declined. In 1996, during the financial crisis of the 1990s, around one fifth of the Swedish population lived in a household with a low income standard. In 2018 the proportion had fallen to 5.4 percent.

The proportion of the population receiving long-term financial assistance has been relatively unchanged in the past 30 years. The proportion was highest in the midst of the crisis of the 1990s, at 3 percent. Since then, the proportion has varied between 1 and 2 percent. In terms of the latter of the selected indicators – excessive debts – data is only available for one year. In 2018, just under 7 percent of the Swedish population lived in an excessively indebted household.

### **Who are financially vulnerable?**

There are tremendous disparities in the proportion of people who are financially vulnerable between different groups of the population. This is the case irrespective of the indicator studied.

Households with two or more adults have more potential income earners, which reduces the risk of financial vulnerability. The group “cohabiting without children” has the very lowest risk of financial vulnerability. Conversely, the risk of financial vulnerability increases for single people. If in addition a person is responsible for providing for one or several children, the risk increases further. Single women with children are financially vulnerable to a much higher degree than single men with children.

The group “women living alone” has a higher proportion of people with a low economic standard than men living alone. The difference is greatest among the most elderly, where the proportion is almost double for women compared with men. It is however more common for men living alone to have long-term financial assistance, a low income standard or excessive debts.

### **More people born abroad are in a financially vulnerable situation**

Financial vulnerability is much more common among people born abroad than those born in Sweden. This applies to all of the studied



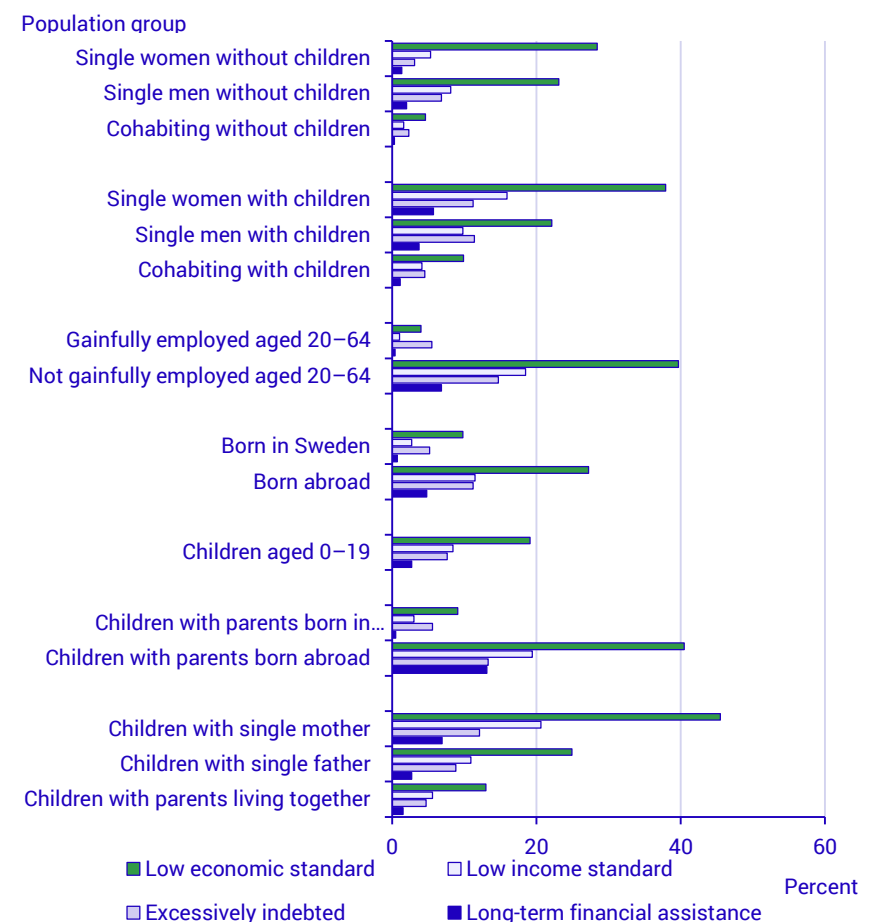
indicators. The greatest difference is found in long-term financial assistance, with the proportion being almost seven times higher among people born abroad than those born in Sweden. Also, there are large differences within the “foreign-born” group. People born in Africa have the highest proportion of financially vulnerable people, followed by those born in Asia. People who have been in Sweden for a short time run a higher risk of financial vulnerability than those who have been in Sweden for longer.

### More children than adults live in financial vulnerability

It is more common for children than for adults to live in financial vulnerability. Just like for adults, there are substantial disparities between different groups. Children of parents who live together live in financial vulnerability to a lesser extent, while children of single parents are at a greater risk of financial vulnerability.

**Graph 15. Proportion of financially vulnerable people by indicator and population group, 2018**

Percentage of the population



Source: Statistics Sweden, Income and Taxation Register and the Swedish Enforcement Authority's debt recovery and collection database

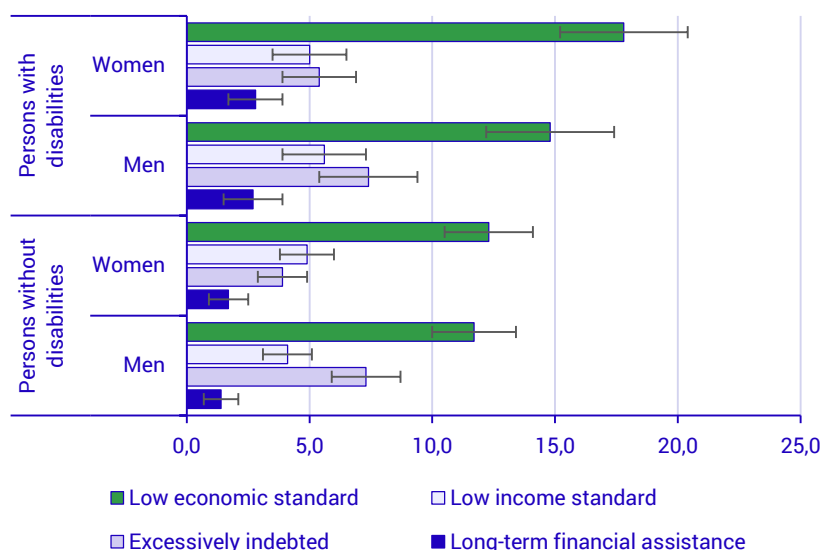
For children, the difference depending on whether their parents were born in Sweden or abroad is even greater than for the adult population.

Children of parents born in Sweden are at a lower risk of all the studied indicators of financial vulnerability than the population at large, while children of parents born abroad display a much higher risk of financial vulnerability. The greatest difference between children of parents born in Sweden and of those born abroad is found among those on long-term financial assistance. It is 26 times more common for children of parents born abroad to live in a household with long-term financial assistance than children of parents born in Sweden.

### Financial vulnerability among people with disabilities

There is much to indicate that people with disabilities are financially vulnerable to a greater extent than people without disabilities. Most estimations are however within the statistical margin of error. It is only the difference in the proportion with a low economic standard among women that is statistically significant.

**Graph 16. Proportion of financially vulnerable people by gender and disability, 2018**  
Percentage of each population



Source: Statistics Sweden, Living Conditions Survey

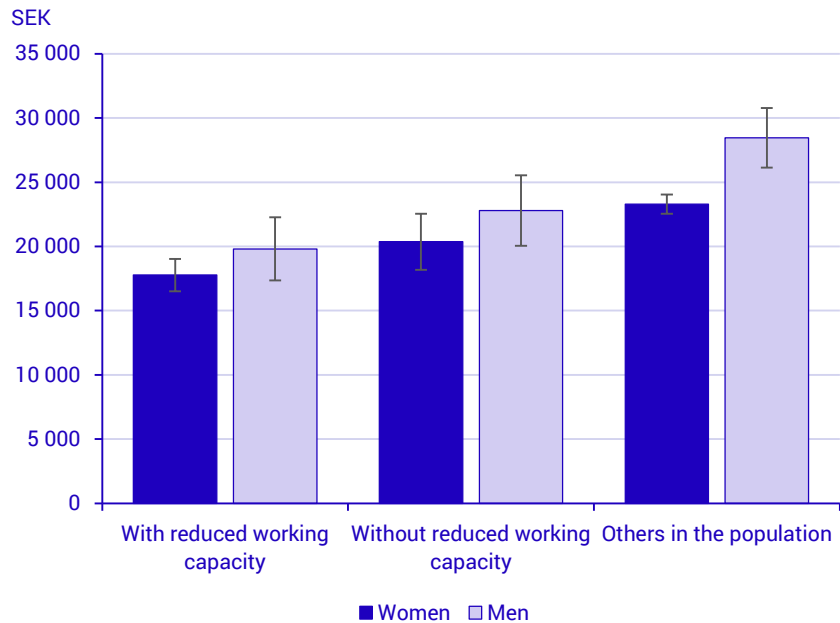
People with disabilities are presented as a separate graph as this information is based on the sample survey ULF/SILC rather than register statistics counted as a whole on which the other information in this chapter is based.

"Disability" here refers to having at least one of the following disabilities: impaired vision, impaired hearing, reduced mobility, severe symptoms of asthma or allergy, serious problems with anxiety, worry or distress, serious problems with dyslexia/dyscalculia or a neuropsychiatric diagnosis.

The Swedish Gender Equality Agency and the Swedish Agency for Participation (2019) have, in a mapping process, shown that women with disabilities are worse off than men with disabilities in terms of both participation in the labour market and working conditions, and hence have lower income and poorer possibilities of financial independence.

**Graph 17. Average individual disposable monthly income for people aged 16–64 with disabilities with/without self-reported reduced capacity to work and the rest of the population, 2017**

Swedish kronor



Source: Statistics Sweden's income and taxation register, FASIT and the Labour Force Survey Swedish Gender Equality Agency and Swedish Agency for Participation (2019)

There are differences in the size of income and conditions on the labour market when women with disabilities are compared to, on the one hand, men with disabilities and, on the other hand, women and men in the rest of the population.

### Homelessness due to financial vulnerability

The mapping process of homelessness of the National Board of Health and Welfare (2017) shows that a common reason for why homeless people are not accepted on the regular housing market was that their income was too low or they lacked any kind of income acceptable to landlords. An example of such income could be financial assistance.

Among people in acute homelessness who have not been approved on the regular housing market (just below 1,500 people), 41 percent of the men and 55 percent of the women stated that one reason had been that the landlord does not accept financial assistance or other benefits as steady income.

# Reducing and counter-acting segregation

Both the causes and consequences of segregation can be linked to several different goals of the 2030 Agenda and to the principle of leaving no one behind, and it has therefore been considered a relevant area to study in this report even though the phenomenon is not directly mentioned in the Agenda itself. The goals concerned in this chapter are goal 1 on eradicating all forms of poverty, goal 4 on universal quality education, goal 10 on reduced inequalities, goal 11 on sustainable cities and communities and goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions.

## The term segregation

Segregation is the geographic division of different population groups. The term often includes processes that create and sustain this division. In this chapter, housing segregation is meant although the term segregation can also apply to schools or the labour market.

There are different aspects of geographic segregation. Three common ones are demographic segregation (geographic division by factors such as age, gender or type of household), socioeconomic segregation (division by factors such as education, income and profession) and ethnic segregation (whereby people who share certain ethnic, religious or physical characteristics are distinguished from people with other such attributes). The two latter aspects of segregation have dominated both international and Swedish research according to a mapping process by the Swedish Research Council (2018). Although demographic segregation is obvious in many cases, it is rarely linked to vulnerability. A concentration of people at the same stage of life, such as families with children, students or pensioners can, in many cases, be considered positive. Neither is ethnic segregation necessarily negative, although there is a link between ethnic and socioeconomic segregation. This is particularly the case in metropolitan areas, with worse-off areas often having a high proportion of people born abroad, and born in Sweden with a foreign background (Brandén, 2018).

Socioeconomic segregation means that people with for instance different levels of income or education are unevenly dispersed geographically. Focus is usually on the areas where a relatively high proportion of the population has a low income or low education level, although areas with an over-representation of people with a high income or high level of education also form part of the segregated society. When the consequences of segregation are studied in relation to leaving no one behind, this primarily relates to the first of the aforementioned groups.

There are different terms for describing areas with poorer socioeconomic conditions. This chapter mainly uses the breakdown prepared by the Delegation against segregation (Delmos) to classify areas with different conditions, with worse-off areas being called “socioeconomically challenged areas” (the breakdown is based on “demographic statistical areas” – DeSO, and is described in more detail in Delmos, 2019). The chapter compares the situation for people living in socioeconomically challenged areas with the rest of the population, in order to study whether residents of socioeconomically challenged areas are left further behind than residents of other areas.

## **The research indicates that segregation has increased**

A great deal of research studies on the progression of segregation in Sweden have been performed and, in the past few years, research overviews on segregation have been prepared by Maria Brandén (2018) as a part of the Swedish Trade Union Confederation’s inquiry on equality and by Ramboll (2020) on behalf of Delmos. According to these overviews, the research suggests that socioeconomic segregation has increased in Sweden since the 1990s, although studies of developments in recent years show more ambiguous results. The results vary depending on, for instance, the method used and how the residential areas are defined. It is mainly in the large cities and their suburbs that segregation is most apparent (Ramboll, 2020).

Both Brandén and Ramboll describe that increased income inequality is behind the increased segregation and that one reason for segregation between the areas is an uneven distribution of types of homes and forms of tenure.

In 2016, the government developed a long-term programme of reforms to curb segregation (Government Offices of Sweden, 2016) which has subsequently been further developed into a long-term strategy to reduce and counteract segregation over the period 2018–2028 (Government Offices of Sweden, 2018). The overall objective is “Reduced segregation, equivalent childhood and living conditions, and good chances in life for everybody” and the strategy highlights five priority areas: housing, education, labour market, democracy, and civil society and crime. It is emphasised that these areas are interlinked and that, in order to break segregation, long-term efforts are needed at the national, regional and local level, with a variety of participants (such as the state, civil society and researchers) working individually and together.

## **Substantial differences in income level**

Socioeconomically challenged areas are defined based on a relatively low proportion of gainfully employed people, a high proportion of people with no more than a compulsory education, a high proportion of long-term unemployed people, a high proportion of people on income

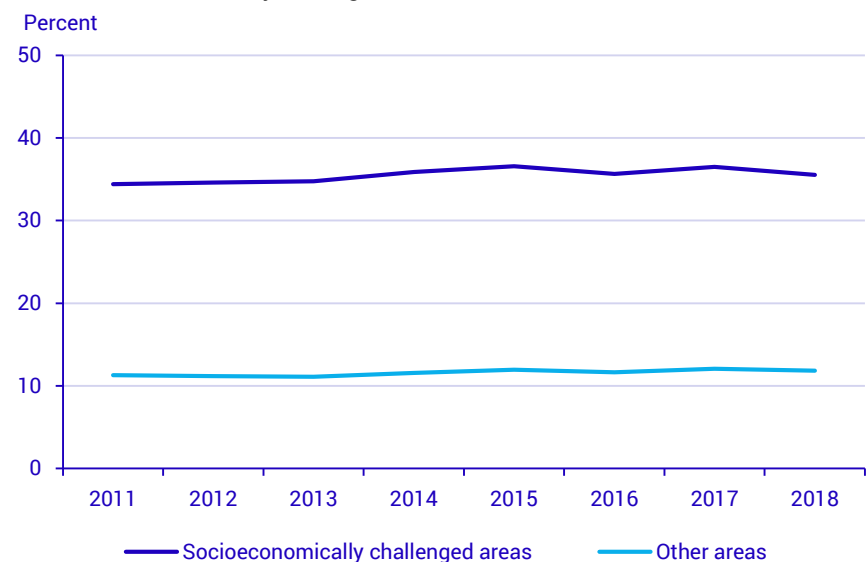
Target 1.2 By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.

support and a high proportion of people who neither work nor study. These are factors that are linked to a lower income level and these areas also feature a lower income level compared with other areas. Indicator 1.2.1a, proportion of the population with a low economic standard, shows the proportion of people in households with a disposable income per consumption unit that is below 60 percent of the median value for everyone. The proportion with a low economic standard was 36 percent in socioeconomically challenged areas, and 12 percent in other areas in 2018.

Life situation is significant to income level, with for instance families with children generally having a lower economic standard than households without children. For children and youths, the difference between areas also appears to be greater than for the population as a whole. In socioeconomically challenged areas, over 50 percent of people in the 0–19 age group lived in a household with a low economic standard in 2018. The corresponding percentage in other areas was 14 percent.

When the proportion of the population with an income below 60 percent of the median is compared over time, the difference between socioeconomically challenged areas and other areas has essentially been unchanged since 2011.

**Graph 18. Proportion of the population with an income below 60 percent of the median income, socioeconomically challenged areas and other areas 2011–2018**



Source: Statistics Sweden, Income and taxes

Other measures of poverty also show large differences between residents of socioeconomically challenged areas and other areas. The EU has prepared a measure of *severe material deprivation* (indicator 1.2.2b) that refers to the proportion who state that they cannot afford at least four out of nine selected expenses, such as unforeseen expenses, heating their home and paying debts on time. Sweden is one of the EU

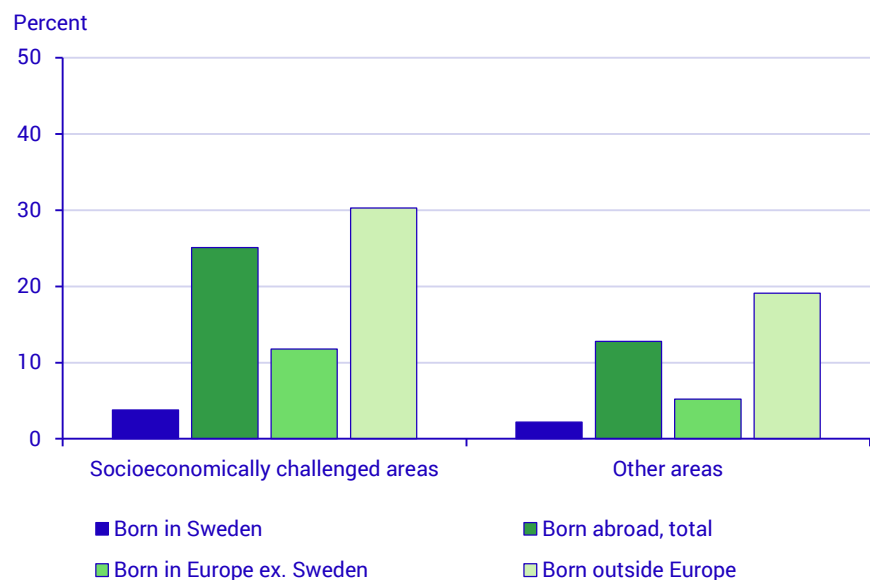
countries with the lowest proportion of severe material deprivation (Statistics Sweden, 2019), although in socioeconomically challenged areas, the proportion is on a par with the EU average. Just under 7 percent of the population of socioeconomically challenged areas lived in severe material deprivation in 2019. In other areas, the proportion is just over 1 percent.

## High proportion of people living in overcrowded conditions

Target 11.1 By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums.

One of the targets linked to goal 11 – Sustainable cities and communities, is target 11.1 which concerns access to adequate, safe and affordable housing. From a Swedish perspective, it is primarily a housing shortage that is a problem within this target and overcrowded living conditions could be a consequence of the housing shortage. Access to housing differs between socioeconomically challenged areas and other areas, and overcrowded living conditions are far more commonplace in socioeconomically challenged areas. Out of the population aged 16 and older who live in socioeconomically challenged areas, 15.4 percent live in households with more than two residents per bedroom. In other areas, 3.9 percent live in overcrowded conditions according to the same definition.

**Graph 19. Proportion of people living in overcrowded conditions according to norm 2 in socioeconomically challenged areas and other areas, 16 years and older, by birth country groups, 2018–2019**  
Percent



Source: Statistics Sweden, ULF/SILC

Norm 2 defines a household as overcrowded if there are more than two people per room (bedroom), not including kitchen and living room. This does not apply to single people, however, who are not considered to be in overcrowded living conditions irrespective of the number of rooms. Example: according to norm 2, a household of four people shall have at least three rooms and a kitchen in order to not be in overcrowded conditions (the 1965 Housing Construction Inquiry).

Overcrowded conditions are more manifest within certain population groups, with people born outside of Europe enduring overcrowded conditions to a greater extent than both people born in Sweden and those born in a European country other than Sweden. This is also the case in socioeconomically challenged areas, where 30 percent of people born outside of Europe live in overcrowded conditions.

Socioeconomically challenged areas feature a high proportion of rented accommodation. Around two out of three people in socioeconomically challenged areas live in rented accommodation in apartment blocks, which can be compared with 20 percent in other areas. There is a connection between overcrowded living conditions and type of home, with overcrowded conditions being more common in apartment blocks with rented accommodation than in houses for instance.

### **Good access to public transport**

The proportion of the population in towns and urban areas that had easy access to public transport was higher in socioeconomically challenged areas compared with other areas. In 2018, 96 percent of the population of socioeconomically challenged areas lived no more than 500 metres from a public transport stop. The corresponding percentage in other areas was 89 percent.

There is a higher proportion of the population in metropolitan areas who live in socioeconomically challenged areas compared with other parts of Sweden. In the large cities, access to public transport is greater and here, disparities between different areas are also lesser than in towns and urban areas as a whole.

### **Conditions for growing up have a bearing on pupils' school results**

A report from Delmos (2019) shows that both the proportion of pupils eligible for upper secondary vocational programmes, and the proportion who graduate from upper secondary school, are lower in socioeconomically challenged areas than in Sweden as a whole. Also in Statistics Sweden's report "Conditions for growing up for children with a foreign background" (Statistics Sweden, 2020d), eligibility for upper secondary vocational programmes is studied, broken down by factors such as socioeconomically challenged areas and other areas. The results show that the difference in the proportion of eligible pupils residing in socioeconomically challenged areas, and those in other areas, can largely be explained by disparities in the conditions for growing up, such as the parents' level of education, the family's level of income and pupil composition at school. This applies in particular to children with a foreign background. In this group there is no difference between residents of socioeconomically challenged areas and other areas when disparities in the conditions for growing up are considered.

Target 11.2 By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.

Target 4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.



The research often shows a link between the area where an individual grows up and their results from school or level of education. According to Brandén (2018) it is not fully determined that there is a causal link, whereby the area affects educational outcome, even though there are studies that demonstrate this. The link appears to be stronger when the school environment or individualised neighbourhood (for instance the 400 closest neighbours) are studied, than in area-level studies. From an educational perspective, school segregation might therefore be more relevant to study than housing segregation.

### **Equally common to be a member of a political party**

It is less common to take part in political discussions in socioeconomically challenged areas than in other areas. In 2018–19, 29 percent of the population aged 16 and older in socioeconomically challenged areas stated that they mostly participate in discussions and speak their minds when the conversation turns to politics. In other areas, the corresponding proportion was 38 percent. However, there are no significant differences between residents of socioeconomically challenged areas and of other areas in terms of the proportion who state that they are a member of a political party. The proportion is around 5 percent in both groups.

Target 16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.

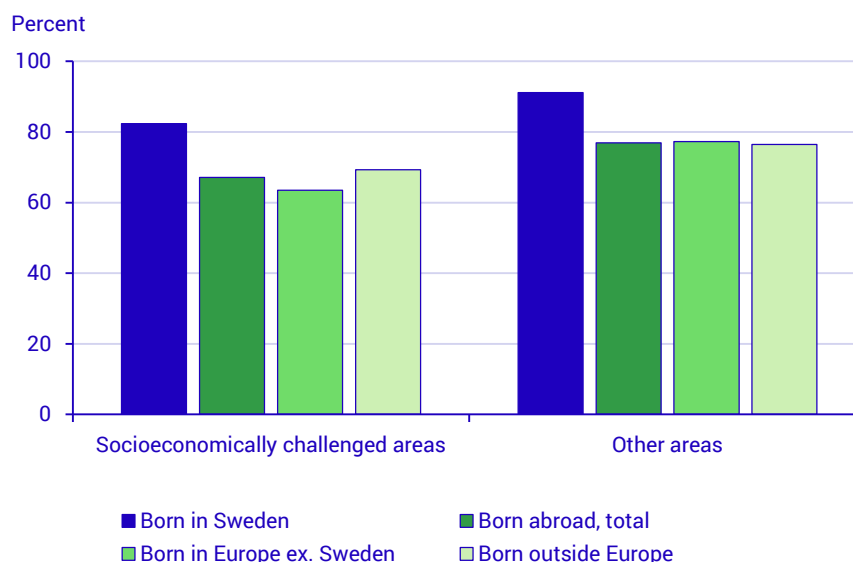
Delmos (2020a) has conducted a survey with questions regarding participation in democracy, perceived participation and attitudes and trust. The results often show disparities between different types of area, with residents of socioeconomically challenged areas stating, to a lower degree than for Sweden as a whole, interest in politics, engagement in civil society and trust in society's institutions, to name some examples. Disparities between different types of area persist even when account is taken of factors such as gender, age and education level, which could be interpreted as the area itself potentially having a bearing on conditions for participating in democracy.

Voter turnout is lower in socioeconomically challenged areas than in other areas. In the general election, 76.5 percent of the electorate residing in socioeconomically challenged areas voted. In other areas, voter turnout was 89.6 percent.

There are further differences in voter turnout; for instance people born abroad vote to a lesser extent than those born in Sweden. The proportion of foreign-born people in the population is higher in socioeconomically challenged areas than in other areas, but this is of less significance to the comparison between the areas. Irrespective of birth-country group, voter turnout is lower in socioeconomically challenged areas than in other areas.

**Graph 20. Voter turnout in socioeconomically challenged areas and other areas, Swedish general election 2018**

By birth-country groups



Source: Statistics Sweden, Voter participation survey. Only Swedish citizens who are registered in Sweden are included in the compilation.

In Statistics Sweden's report *Conditions for growing up for children with a foreign background* (Statistics Sweden, 2020d), voter turnout among first-time voters is studied. Voter turnout is lower among young adults who, while growing up, lived in socioeconomically challenged areas. When consideration is given to other factors, such as the family's income level and the young adults' upper-secondary field of studies, the type of area is only significant for young people with a Swedish background.

## Greater feeling of insecurity and subjection to crime

Subjection to crime has consequences not only for the victim; it can also have reverberations at group and community level. A higher crime rate in certain areas causes a feeling of insecurity, which can in turn lead to limitations in freedom of movement. Another potential consequence is lower confidence in the police. (Government Offices of Sweden, 2018)

The results from Statistics Sweden's Living Conditions Surveys (ULF/SILC) show that feeling unsafe in public spaces is more prevalent in socioeconomically challenged areas than in other areas (see table annex). Out of the population aged 16 and older residing in socioeconomically challenged areas in 2016–2017, 20 percent stated that they had, sometime in the past 12 months, refrained from going out at night due to fear of being assaulted or threatened. In other areas, the corresponding proportion was 15 percent. Women feel unsafe to a higher degree than men, and out of women living in socioeconomically

Target 11.7 By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.

challenged areas, around one in three stated that she had refrained from going out at night because she was afraid.

There are several reports on feelings of insecurity and subjection to crime in socially deprived areas. Serious crimes such as shootings and deadly violence have increased in the past few years, and this type of crime is committed to a higher extent in deprived areas and can be increasingly linked to conflicts in the criminal environment (see for example the National Council for Crime Prevention 2015, 2018c and 2019c and the Police Authority 2017 and 2018).

Based on the result of the Swedish Crime Survey, the National Council for Crime Prevention has studied insecurity and subjection to crime in what they call *socially deprived areas in the urban environment* (National Council for Crime Prevention, 2018c). Both the proportion of people who feel unsafe and the proportion subjected to crime are higher in socially deprived areas than in other urban areas. During the period studied, 2006–2017, the differences between areas are more often than not relatively unchanged or slightly declining. In both types of area, a certain increase can be seen in feelings of insecurity and subjection to crimes against individuals in the past few years.

# Sustainable environment for all

In the 2030 Agenda, goals are expressed on protecting the planet, managing its natural resources and taking immediate action against climate change, so that the planet can fulfil the needs of present and future generations (UN, 2015). We humans rely on a sustainable environment for our health and livelihood. This chapter studies how various environmental health problems and climate change can affect different groups in society to varying degrees.

Focus is on environmental health problems such as air pollution and noise. Also, access to green spaces and potential effects of climate change are studied. These problems tie in with goal 3 on good health and wellbeing, goal 11 on sustainable cities and communities and goal 13 on climate action.

There are little, or no, statistics on differences in exposure to noise and air pollution between various groups in society. Exposure is difficult to measure because it depends on where and for how long a person is in different places, and because of this complexity, no exposure estimates for various groups are currently available. Here, we use instead disorders from noise and air pollution in the proximity of the home as an approximation for exposure, because these disorders could indicate how the problems change and whether there are any differences between groups in society.

## Air pollution

Air pollution is one of the greatest environmental health problems in Sweden, as it increases the risk of cardiovascular and respiratory diseases. Children, the elderly and people with underlying illnesses are more vulnerable to the health effects of air pollution (Scientific Council for Sustainable Development 2018). Studies have also indicated that long-term exposure to air pollution might have caused higher mortality rates during the covid-19 pandemic (Ogen 2020 and Wu et al. 2020).

In densely populated areas, road traffic is the largest source of nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>) and particulate matter – PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> – the air pollutants most harmful to health. Particulate matter is also emitted from burning wood. Fine particles (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) originate mainly from long-distance transport on the continent. Ground-level ozone is another common harmful air pollutant, which is formed by oxygen, hydrocarbons and NO<sub>x</sub> in strong sunlight.

The amount of air pollution to which a person has been exposed is affected by factors such as where their home is located. If the home is

Target 3.9 By 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination.

Target 11.6 By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management.

near streets with heavy traffic, air pollution levels can be high indoors too. The proportion of people who report fairly bad or very bad air quality is also higher among people whose home has windows facing a main street or road.

### **Exposure, health effects and disorders differ between regions**

The population of southern Sweden is more exposed to fine particulate matter (PM2.5) than the population in the northern part of the country, because this mainly comes from the continent and southern Sweden is affected more by winds from the rest of Europe.

Wood burning can also cause high levels of air pollution locally, and the prevalence of wood burning varies substantially between different regions. This is an environmental health problem particularly in local communities where inversion is more common..

The Swedish Environmental Research Institute (IVL 2018) has calculated that around 7,600 people in Sweden died in 2015 due to air pollution. The effect can also be expressed as curtailed average life expectancy, which is calculated to be six months on average, nine months in Stockholm and lowest in northern Sweden.

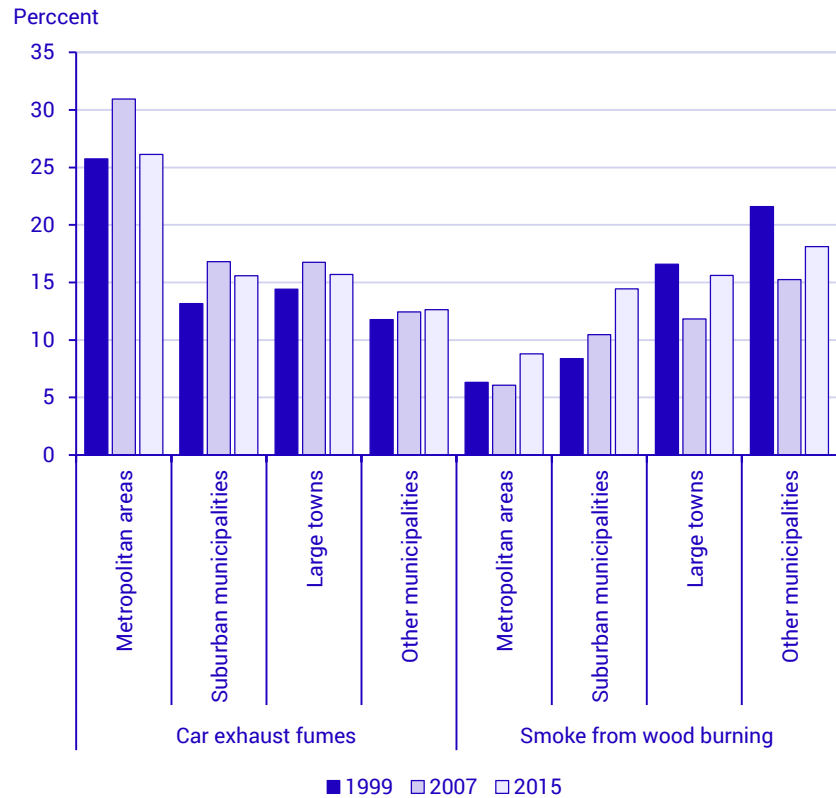
**Table 12. Deaths due to exposure to NO2, PM2.5 and PM10 in the outdoor air, 2015**  
Number of deaths in the age group 30+

PM2.5 (regional background)	NO2 (local)	PM2.5 (wood burning)	PM10 (road dust)
3,616	2,848	935	215

Source: IVL 2018

Looking instead at disorders from air pollution from traffic in the proximity of the home, this is most common in metropolitan areas. In the Public Health Agency of Sweden's environmental health report (2017b), 26 percent of people residing in metropolitan areas stated that they experienced discomfort in the form of the smell of exhaust fumes outdoors, compared with 12–15 percent in other municipality groups. For smoke from wood burning there is an opposite relationship and the proportion of people who experienced discomfort is higher in suburban municipalities, large towns and other municipalities compared with metropolitan areas.

**Graph 21. Proportion of people troubled by the smell of car exhaust fumes and smoke from wood burning outside their home, by type of municipality**  
Percent



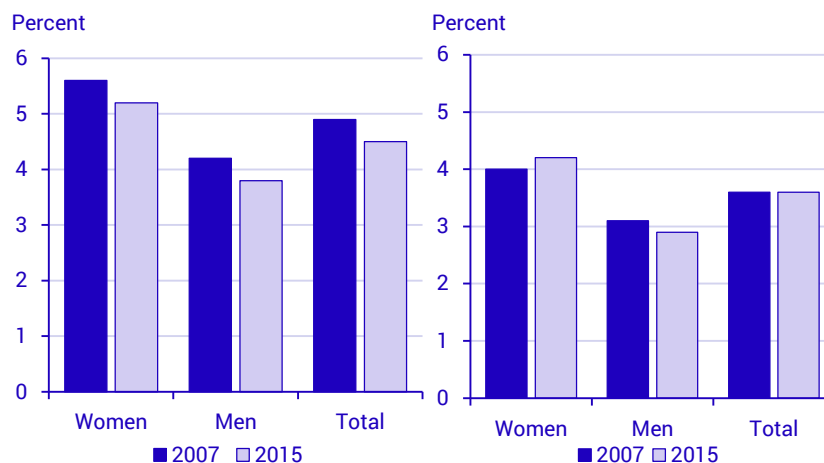
Source: Public Health Agency of Sweden, environmental health survey

### **Uncertain whether there are differences in exposure to air pollution between different groups in society**

No statistics are currently available on how exposure to air pollution in Sweden differs between different groups in society. How much an individual is exposed is mainly affected by where they live and how much time they spend in street environments. A study by IVL (2018) found that children and the elderly are somewhat less exposed to high levels of NO<sub>2</sub> in the background environment compared with the age category 15–64 years.

A somewhat higher proportion of women than men state that they find they have fairly bad or very bad air quality in the proximity of, and in, their home.

**Graph 22. Proportion who state that they have fairly bad or very bad air quality in the proximity of (left) and in (right) their home, by gender**  
Percent



Source: Public Health Agency of Sweden, environmental health survey

Some studies have shown that people who are socioeconomically better off in Sweden tend to live in places where they are more exposed to both air pollution and noise (Scientific Council for Sustainable Development 2018). This is probably because city centres are the most attractive areas to live in despite having the highest level of air pollution, although this can vary between cities. A study from Malmö shows that children from areas with a lower socioeconomic status were more exposed to NO<sub>2</sub> both in the home and at school (Chaix et al. 2006). Another study from Skåne showed that the link between socioeconomic status and NO<sub>2</sub> exposure varied between different towns (Stroh et al. 2005). A report on differences in exposure for air pollution in Stockholm showed that highly educated, younger people (18–39 years old), people born abroad and people living in apartment blocks were particularly exposed to air pollution (Gruzieva et al. 2020).

## Noise

Noise is another environmental disturbance that affects people's health, primarily in metropolitan areas where exposure tends to be higher. Ambient noise can lead to curtailed learning and performance, general noise disturbance, sleep disorders and physiological stress reactions. Researchers also indicated that long-term exposure to noise from traffic can lead to a heightened risk of cardiovascular disease, overweight and diabetes. Children and youths are particularly vulnerable, especially in terms of reduced learning and performance (Scientific Council for Sustainable Development 2018)

One person in five is exposed to a high level of noise from traffic in the proximity of their home. The Swedish Transport Administration (2016) has estimated that noise from road and rail traffic caused 500 premature deaths and 50,000 cases of cardiovascular disease in 2011. The new Traffic Noise Ordinance (SFS no. 2015:216) allows construction in noisy

Target 3.4 By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being.

locations, which could lead to a rise in the proportion of people exposed to high levels of noise from traffic. Although soundproofing limits the noise level indoors, people residing in homes in noisy locations have lesser possibilities of leaving windows and doors open or being outside of their home without being exposed to noise.

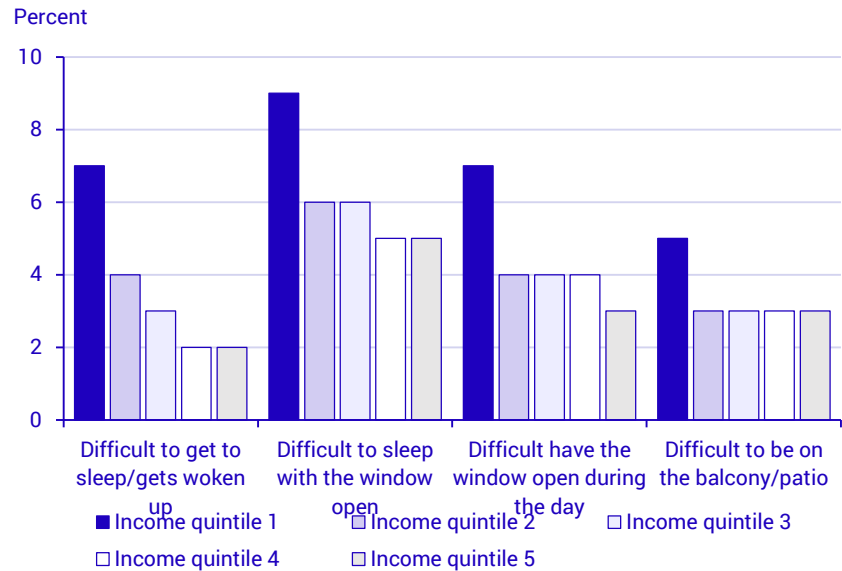
### **People on a low income and foreign-born people are most exposed to noise in and around their home**

There are different types of noise and different types of follow-up measures. The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (2017) has identified where and how much noise there is in Sweden's urban areas. However, the analysis does not examine whether it is more common for vulnerable groups to live in these areas.

The Public Health Agency of Sweden (2018d) has, in national public health surveys, asked individuals if they are troubled by noise from traffic in different situations; for instance, if it causes sleeping difficulties, makes it difficult to sleep with the window open, difficult to have the window open during the day or if it makes it difficult to be outside of their home. The answers to the survey show that a higher proportion of people on a low income have difficulty in all of these situations, and that the proportion with difficulties declines for each income quintile (see graph 23). There are also differences in the proportion who are bothered by noise between groups with different birth countries. Graph 4 shows that a greater proportion of foreign-born people are bothered by noise than those born in Sweden or the Nordics. This indicates that people on a low income and people born abroad are more subjected to noise. Furthermore, a higher proportion of women than men stated that they experience sleeping difficulties due to noise. Otherwise, there are only slight differences between women and men in the statistics. In the age groups 16–29, 30–44, 45–64 and 65–84, the proportion bothered by noise declines somewhat as age increases, see graph 25.

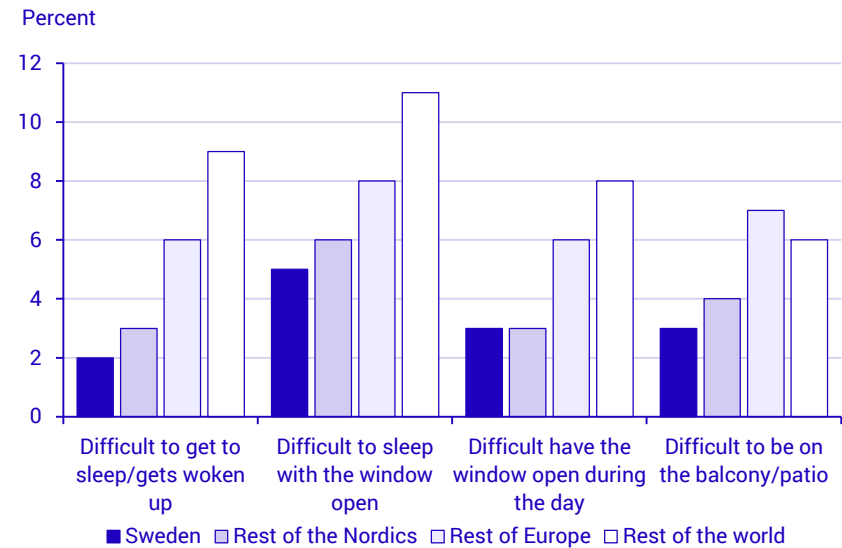


**Graph 23. Proportion who are troubled by noise by income quintile (lowest quintile=1, highest quintile=5), 2018**  
Percent



Source: National public health survey, Public Health Agency of Sweden

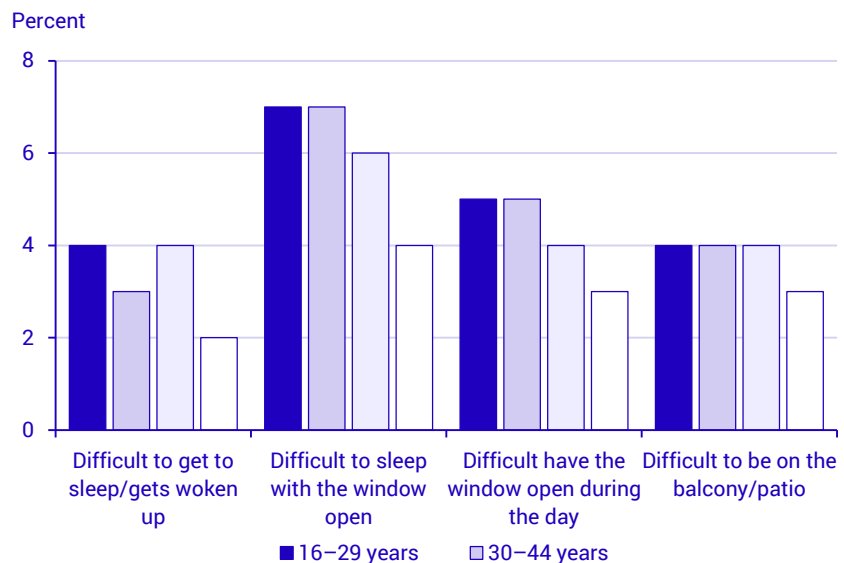
**Graph 24. Proportion who are troubled by noise by birth country (grouped), 2018**  
Percent



Source: National public health survey, Public Health Agency of Sweden

**Graph 25. Proportion who are troubled by noise by age group, 2018**

Percent



Source: National public health survey, Public Health Agency of Sweden

Target 11.7 By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.

## Access to green spaces

Urban green spaces can help improve health. Studies have shown that being in green spaces in urban areas can have a de-stressing effect, which in turn can have a positive impact on the immune system. Green spaces also give better opportunities for physical activity, which can bring positive health effects such as reduced obesity. Green spaces tend to be quieter than other urban environments, which can reduce people's exposure to noise, as the studies have shown that green spaces close to the home reduce the risk of sleeplessness (Scientific Council for Sustainable Development 2018)

According to a compilation by the Scientific Council for Sustainable Development (2018), research suggests that the health benefits of green spaces in urban areas are greater for groups with a lower socioeconomic status. For people with disabilities, accessible green spaces can be particularly important for maintaining good health through physical activity (Swedish National Institute of Public Health, 2009).

## Most people are in walking distance of a green space

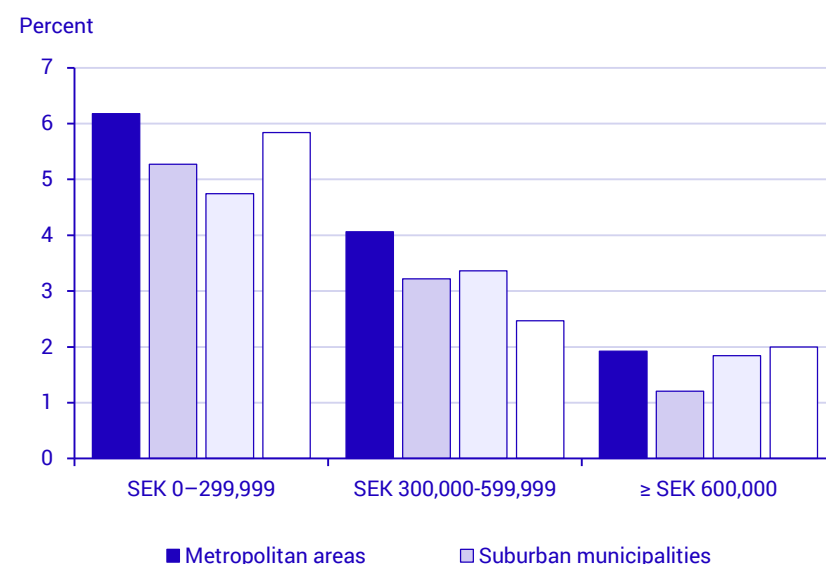
A high proportion of the population in large cities, 94 percent, had access to a green space within 200 metres of their home in 2015, which did not mark any change compared with 2010. The proportion of children and youths who live close to green spaces is somewhat higher than the proportion of adults and elderly people, 96 percent compared with 94 percent. At the national level, there is no difference between women and men in access to green spaces within 200 metres of the home, with little difference between individual towns.

### People on a low income live further away from green spaces

A greater proportion of people on a low income stated in 2015 that they did not have a green space within walking distance, compared with groups on a higher income. This might be because homes in green areas tend to be more expensive, which limits the possibilities of people on a low income to settle close to green spaces. A study on the connection between income and access to green spaces in Stockholm showed that higher income correlated with less green space in the city centre, while the link was opposite in the suburbs (Persson et al. 2018).

**Graph 26. Proportion of people living in urban environments (in metropolitan areas and in large towns) who state that they have no green space within walking distance from their home, by household income, 2015**

Percent



Source: Environmental Health Survey, Public Health Agency of Sweden

### Room for improvement in access for people with disabilities

Proximity to green spaces is just one of the factors affecting how much time individuals spend in nature. The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (2019) studied in a survey people's outdoor lives and found that people with disabilities spend time in nature more seldom than those without disabilities. Out of people with disabilities, 59 percent stated that an obstacle to outdoor activities is that it is too physically demanding compared with 15 percent of people without disabilities. Also, a lack of transport options and feeling unsafe are more frequently cited as obstacles to outdoor activities by people with disabilities.

Better adaptation of green spaces for people with disabilities could improve their opportunities for visiting them. The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (2013) has published a handbook for planning and implementation of accessibility measures in outdoor environments. The handbook contains proposals for improvement

measures such as even footpaths, handrails, ground markings, accessible toilets and adapted information materials.

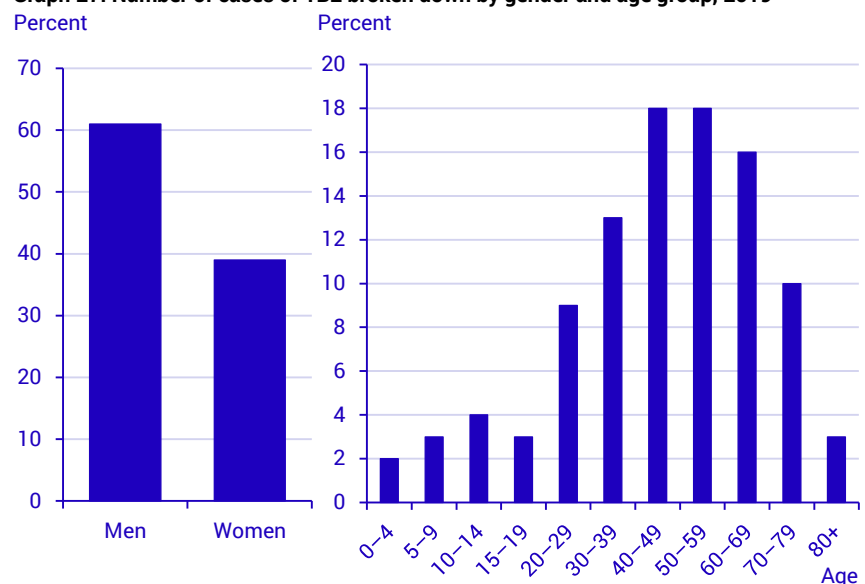
## Effects of climate change

Already today, climate change is manifest in many parts of the world, including Sweden, in the form of aspects such as a warmer climate, more frequent extreme temperatures and the spread of disease-carrying insects. The effects of climate change risk affecting different groups to varying degrees, due to different levels of vulnerability and exposure. Those who are children and young today also risk being affected more by future climate change than the present generation, as the effects escalate. This chapter illuminates how the spread of disease from ticks, livelihood possibilities from reindeer husbandry, and heatwaves have a varying impact on groups in society.

### Climate change and disease-carrying insects

As the climate in Sweden heats up, the spread of disease-carrying insects can increase. One example is that this has benefited ticks, which has increased the transmission of TBE, in terms of both number of cases and geographically. According to the Public Health Agency of Sweden (non-dated), incidence has increased since 2010 and the virus has spread to more areas. More men than women contracted TBE in 2019, and TBE was most common among 60–69-year-olds.

**Graph 27. Number of cases of TBE broken down by gender and age group, 2019**



Source: Public Health Agency of Sweden (non-dated)

### Income affects TBE vaccination

There is a vaccine against TBE today but it is voluntary and not subsidised. A survey has estimated that the average proportion of people who have been vaccinated in TBE risk areas is 33 percent, and 18 percent in other areas (Slunge, 2015). Income and age proved to have a positive correlation with demand for the vaccine, and the proportion of

Target 13.1 Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries.

people vaccinated out of those on a low income in risk areas was just 15 percent. Out of those who had not been vaccinated, average willingness to pay for three doses of the vaccine was estimated at 40 percent of the market price. The study also calculated that, had the vaccine been subsidised so that it was free of charge, the proportion of vaccinated people would increase to approximately 78 percent, with the greatest effect among people on a low income. The Public Health Agency of Sweden (2018a) has conducted a health economics analysis of subsidising the TBE vaccine fully or partially in Stockholm county, which is one of the risk areas. They concluded that it is not currently economically viable for society to subsidise the TBE vaccine.

### **Reindeer-herding Sami are vulnerable to climate change**

Climate change increases vulnerability in reindeer herding, particularly through altered snow and grazing conditions, which can cause greater difficulty in moving herds and inability to reach certain winter grazing grounds. Sami whose livelihood depends on reindeer herding therefore form a group that is particularly vulnerable to climate change. Climate adaptation will be needed to prevent a deterioration in the ability to live on reindeer herding (Löf et al. 2012).

A compilation of insights on the psychosocial ill health of the Sami people (Sami Parliament 2016) indicates that reindeer-herding Sami are particularly vulnerable to symptoms of anxiety and depression. The report also shows that certain studies have found that instances of suicide have been higher among reindeer-herding Sami in the past, but that more studies are needed to find out what the situation is today. Kaiser et al. (2010) found that higher levels of work-related stress could explain the greater prevalence of depression and anxiety among Sami engaged in reindeer herding than in many other groups, such as northern Swedish rural dwellers and town dwellers. Furberg et al. (2011) has interviewed Sami engaged in reindeer herding on their future situation, and found a recurring theme: that the reindeer herders felt like they were close to breaking point. Many stated that climate change is already causing problems and is a threat to their way of life.

### **Heatwaves are increasingly common and hit vulnerable groups harder**

Because of climate change, periods of unusually high temperatures are becoming increasingly common. Heatwaves can cause both health problems and increased mortality, especially when it is hot during a full 24-hour period. The health effects include both mild symptoms such as dehydration and a poorer general condition, but also more severe symptoms such as heat stroke and heart attacks (Public Health Agency of Sweden 2020e). It is estimated that the death rate increases by around 8 percent during a heatwave compared with that on days with normal summer temperatures, for the population as a whole according to a Swedish study by Oudin Åström et al. (2020). In the 2018 heatwave, the Public Health Agency of Sweden (2018f) estimated excess mortality

of around 700 deaths compared with previous summers. Individuals' underlying state of health affects how well they cope with heatwaves, and particularly vulnerable groups are the elderly, chronically ill, people with disabilities, small children, pregnant women and people on medication that affects the body's ability to regulate body heat and fluid balance (Public Health Agency of Sweden 2020e).

One way for people to protect themselves against the health effects of heatwaves is to cool down as much as possible, for instance by using air conditioning or seeking shade outdoors. Such possibilities can vary between groups and measures might be needed from, for instance, landlords or property owners. Town planning and consideration when building new homes can also make it easier for people to protect themselves from the heat. (Public Health Agency of Sweden 2019e)

Oudin Åström et al. (2020) has also studied whether the increased mortality in heatwaves is higher in areas with a greater proportion of residents on a low income, with a low level of education, and who are unemployed. The study did not find any significant effect at the regional level, although at the national level the risk of dying from coronary artery disease in heatwaves was estimated to increase more in the most socioeconomically deprived areas than in areas with a higher socioeconomic status. This indicates that individuals with a low socioeconomic status might also be particularly vulnerable.

# Participation in political decision-making

Decision-making that has a great impact on people's lives occurs everywhere – in associations, in the operations of the public and private sector, and in the personal sphere. This chapter concerns people's possibilities of taking part in political decision-making – an area that fully or partly ties in with a number of the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda. It relates in particular to target 16.7, which is about ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels. This chapter studies voter turnout and membership of political parties in different population groups, and representativeness in decision-making assemblies.

There is nothing to say that people in Sweden have to vote or that politicians must be representative of the population as a whole. According to social scientists however, there are risks in the gap between the population, and those representing it, being too wide. This can have consequences in the form of reduced legitimacy of the political system, and an absence of bills and reforms that would benefit the less-represented groups (SOU 2015:96 Research anthology).

## High, but unequal, voter turnout

The Swedish Instrument of Government stipulates that “All public power in Sweden proceeds from the people, and the Swedish parliament is the foremost representative of the people”. Because Sweden is a representative democracy, the right to vote in Swedish general elections is thus the most basic form of taking part in Swedish political decision-making.

The electorate for the Swedish general election consists of Swedish citizens who reached 18 years of age no later than on the election date. There are thus two groups who do not have access to this basic form of participation in decision-making when we proceed on the basis of the Swedish population: young people who, on the election date, have not yet turned 18 years of age, and also foreign citizens who are in Sweden, but who are not entitled to vote in the general election.

Besides the general election, we also have local elections to appoint representatives of municipal and regional assemblies. In these elections – which are crucial for how municipalities and regions decide on resources and direction, and also organise their operations – foreign citizens may also vote according to certain criteria.

However, entitlement to vote in an election is not the same thing as actually voting in it. In the field of political science, the level of voter

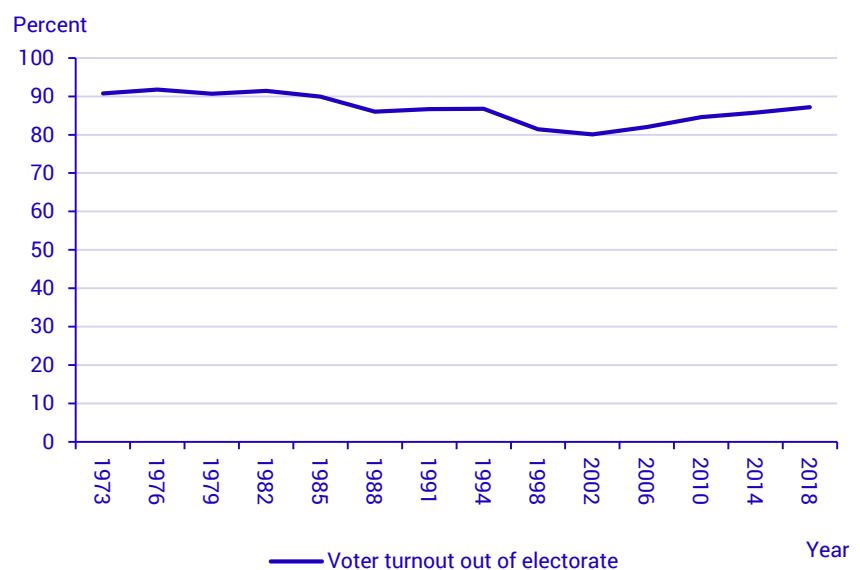
turnout is seen as an important indication of political integration in society.

The reasons for voter turnout can be discussed in institutional, contextual and individual terms. Institutional reasons essentially concern how the political system is organised, and ease of voting. Contextual reasons instead concern how much the election is of interest; that is to say, what is at stake, and thus how it motivates voting. Contextual reasons can also concern to a greater extent the social context surrounding the voter. Finally, the individual reasons concern the individual voter and are usually reported based on demographic conditions and situation in terms of integration and resources (Oscarsson & Holmberg, 2013).

In Sweden, we have a common election day on a Sunday, voting cards are dispatched in ample time ahead of the election date, and do not require any advance registration. Furthermore, there are plenty of places for advance voting. All of these are favourable factors that affect the high voter turnout in Sweden. There is a national action plan to better adapt polling stations and voting to meet the needs of people with various disabilities. In the 2018 election, new rules regarding accessibility were applied for the first time, for instance in the form of mobile vote collection stations to make it easier for voters who had difficulty in getting to the polling station due to illness, disability or age. It is the municipalities that are responsible for accessibility at polling stations (Statistics Sweden 2020e).

**Graph 28. Voter turnout in general elections 1973–2018**

Voting as a percentage of the electorate



Source: Statistics Sweden's election statistics

The contextual reasons relate partly to the political context; that is to say, the extent of polarisation between the views represented by the



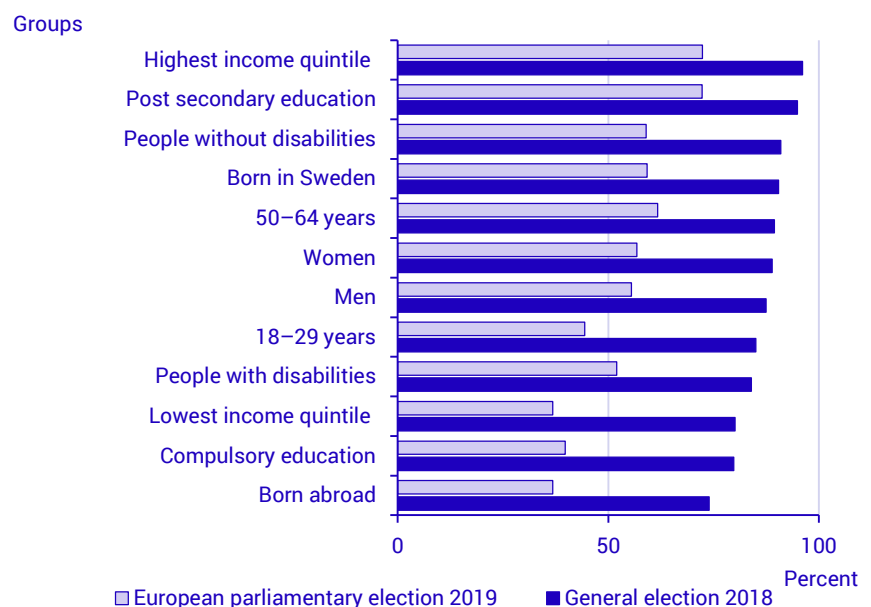
parties. Wider polarisation is, in that case, considered to prompt increased voter turnout according to this conceptual model. A more polarised political debate could be a reason for why voter turnout has increased in the past four general elections.

The second contextual reason for voter turnout concerns voting in the individual's surroundings, which is an issue that has drawn more attention lately in research on why people vote. Danish researchers formulated the theory that voting is primarily a social action when they studied voter turnout among young voters (Y. Bhatti & K. Hansen 2012). Put simply, the probability of people voting increases if those around them also vote. Statistics Sweden's voter turnout survey also indicates that this is the case in a Swedish context too (Statistics Sweden 2020e).

Based on extensive studies on voter turnout in Sweden and other countries, we can establish that there are clear differences in the extent to which different groups vote. These mainly concern the situation of the individual and are essentially differences that are stable over time. One change over time in Sweden is however that voter turnout among women has exceeded compared to that among men. This applies particularly to younger age groups.

**Graph 29. Groups with highest and lowest voter turnout in the European Parliamentary election 2019 and the Swedish general election 2018**

Voting as a percentage of the electorate



Target 16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.

Source: Statistics Sweden's election statistics. Voter turnout among people with and without disabilities is based on estimations from Statistics Sweden's living condition surveys (ULF/SILC).

We have high voter turnout in Sweden. However, if we divide people into different groups based on factors such as gender, age, birth country, level of education and income, voter turnout will not be as

high in all groups. This is not something that is unique to Sweden. The fact that Sweden has high voter turnout from an international angle ought, on the contrary, to mean that it is more equal in an international perspective.

If for example we study Swedish voter turnout in the European Parliamentary election, which is at a much lower level, we see that the differences are greater between the groups that vote to a high and low extent.

## Elected by the people – appointed by the parties

The political parties have a core role in political decision-making in Sweden and ultimately in parliamentary democracy. They are bearers of several characteristics that are crucial in this respect. They design the legislation and reforms aimed at steering Sweden's development. However, the parties must harness people's political engagement by recruiting members, and furthermore they must fill their lists with suitable candidates for elections.

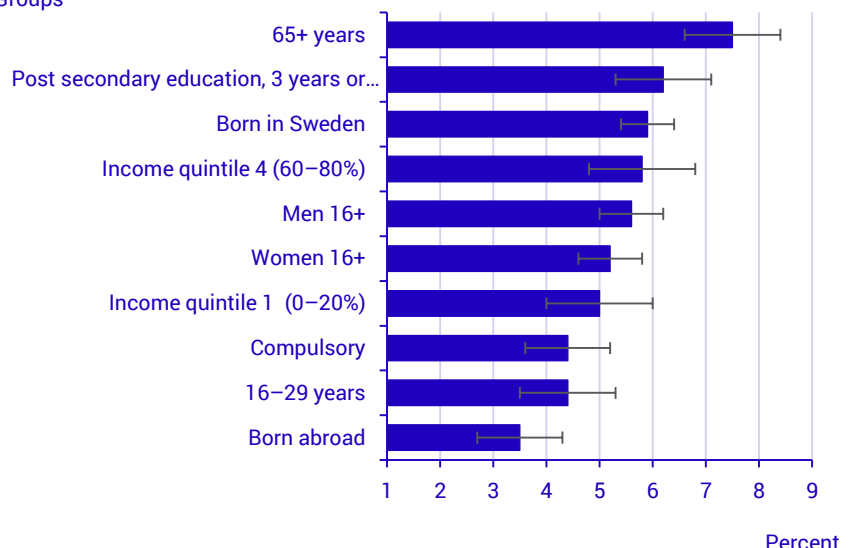
As we go on to study which groups participate in political decision-making, we therefore do so by looking, to start with, at which groups are represented as members of political parties, and then by looking at who are appointed into our elected assemblies.

Target 10.2 By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

**Graph 30. Groups with the highest and lowest membership of political parties, 2018–2019**

Percentage of the population

Groups



Source: Statistics Sweden' Living Conditions Surveys (ULF/SILC)

The proportion of members of political parties has declined over time (Statistics Sweden 2018d). Based on Statistics Sweden's Living

For a more informed discussion on membership of political parties and developments over time, see part 1 of the research anthology *Let more people shape the future* (SOU 2015:96).

Conditions Surveys (ULF/SILC), we can see which groups are members of political parties.

The survey indicates that around 5 percent of the population are members of a political party. Because the survey is a sample survey, there is some statistical uncertainty linked to the results. The only differences in which we can observe significant disparities are between the groups young people aged 16–29, compared with those age 65 and older, between people who were born in Sweden and abroad, and between people with post-secondary education, three years or more, and people with only compulsory education.

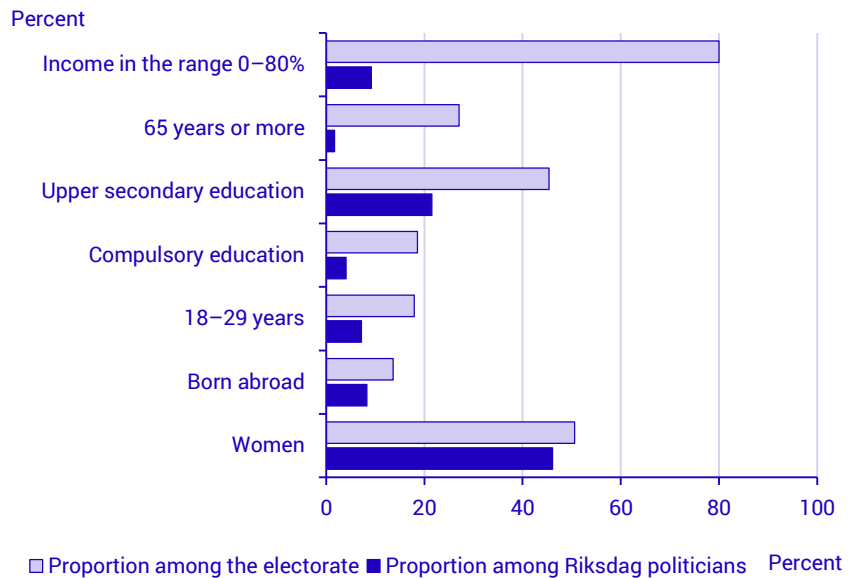
The parties' recruitment of members makes up the pool from which the parties' candidates are nominated and, ultimately, appointed into our elected assemblies. Exactly how the parties appoint their candidates differs and is not regulated outside of the parties. Because the Swedish system of electing individuals is relatively weak, it is largely up to the parties to determine which candidates are ultimately also appointed into our elected assemblies (Berg & Oscarsson 2015).

The issue of representativeness is also a topic that is discussed by the parties. In a study conducted by Statistics Sweden for the term of office 2010–2014 among elected representatives in municipal councils, around eight out of ten responded that the parties were actively working on increasing the number of members from under-represented groups to some or to a high extent (Statistics Sweden 2016b).

Also when we study the situation in terms of representativeness among members of the parliament, we see tendencies similar to those among voters and among members of political parties, albeit with some differences. It is clear that the vast majority of parliamentarians belong to the highest income quintile. This is probably not surprising; income data is retrieved from the year before the election and, since a large proportion of parliamentarians are re-elected and have thus received the parliamentary salary in that year, a salary which by far exceeds the lower limit for belonging to the 20 percent with the highest income. However, also among new parliamentarians – who hence do not have a salary from the parliament from before – around eight out of ten belong to the 20 percent with the highest income. Among members of the Swedish parliament, older people – and also younger people – make up a lower proportion than in the population. This also applies to people born abroad and people with upper secondary and only compulsory education. It is also the case for women, which differs from voter turnout, with women voting to a somewhat higher degree than men.

**Graph 31. Groups who are less represented in the Swedish parliament compared with the size of equivalent groups in the electorate, 2018**

Proportion as a percentage of the population and of parliamentarians



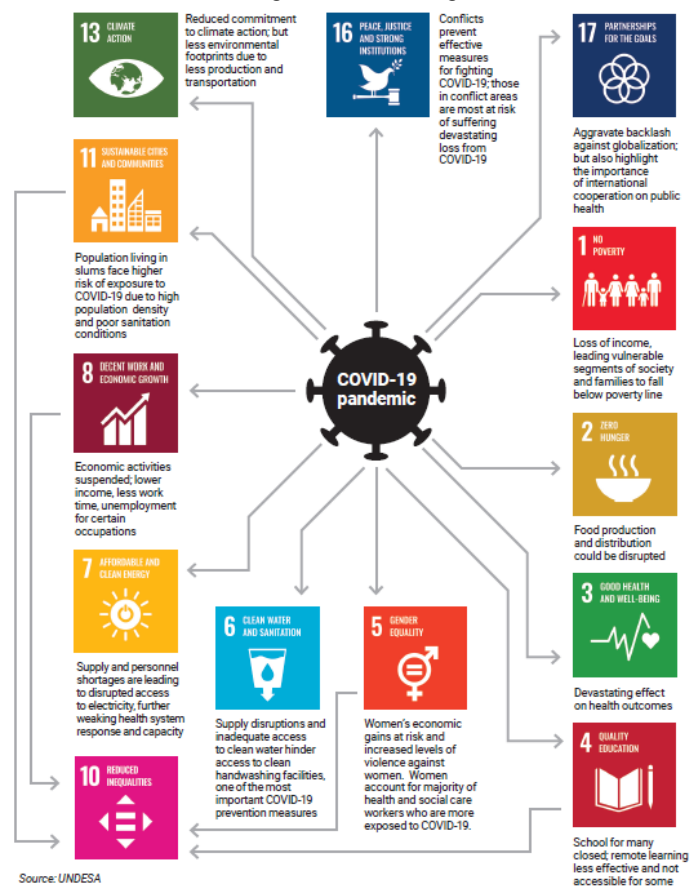
Source: Statistics Sweden's election statistics

There is also a similar pattern when we compare elected representatives in municipal and regional assemblies, albeit to a more varying extent. A clear difference is that the proportion of people aged 65 and older is much higher, particularly among municipal assembly members compared to among members of the parliament. Another difference is that foreign citizens are also entitled to vote in municipal and regional assembly elections, and the difference compared to the population in this respect is hence greater even though the proportion of people born abroad is at a comparable level. The differences in income and education level between elected representatives and the electorate are greatest in the national parliament and smallest in municipal assemblies. For a thorough review of representativeness among elected representatives in the parliament, municipal and regional assemblies, see Elected representatives (Statistics Sweden 2020f).

# Effects of the covid-19 pandemic

The pandemic that struck Sweden and the world at large in 2020 is having, and will probably continue to have, far-reaching consequences in many parts of society. In March 2020, the UN summarised in a report how the social effects should be dealt with, and showed that almost all of the sustainable development goals in the 2030 Agenda were affected by the covid-19 pandemic.

**Figure 2. Covid-19 affects all targets of the 2030 Agenda**



Source: UNDESA (United Nations 2020a).

The effects of the pandemic are impacting all groups in society, although the adverse effects might affect the most vulnerable people in our society more than others. In the diagram above, we can see that already vulnerable groups are at risk of more severe consequences from for instance higher unemployment, poorer access to education and subjection to violence. Consequently, it is in our view important, already at this early stage, to attempt to describe already visible and

potential effects that the current pandemic has or could have on vulnerable groups in society.

It is important to note the difference between being ill from covid-19 and being impacted by the effects of the pandemic on society (Settersten et al. 2020). People who get infected and fall ill are directly affected, with varying effects on health. Indirect effects can emerge when for instance people lose their jobs and income, or are forced to change their way of life due to the pandemic. The economic consequences for society can also make it harder to maintain social safety nets. Individuals and societies are suffering the indirect effects of Covid-19, which can be far-reaching and impact large groups of people and countries socially and economically for a long period of time.

### **Potential future consequences of the pandemic**

In June 2020, the Public Health Agency of Sweden compiled a report that summarised potential consequences of the covid-19 pandemic on public health (Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2020g). The report describes how access to preschool and school can have an impact on some children's safety, development and possibility of obtaining an education. Job opportunities are declining in several sectors and this gives poor prospects of a livelihood among groups with a low level of education and who are socially vulnerable. Other elements of lifestyle that have an adverse impact on public health (use of tobacco, alcohol, drugs and gambling for money) risk increasing among socially vulnerable groups with little possibility of control over their life situation. That way, health disparities between population groups in society may widen.

The Centre for Epidemiology and Community Medicine also established a forecast in April 2020 on short- and long-term effects of the covid-19 pandemic (CES, 2020). This forecast showed that people who already experience mental ill health are particularly vulnerable, as worry increases and vital contacts with the healthcare system are cancelled for various reasons. The forced isolation can increase the risk of psychiatric diagnoses. It is also pointed out that the economic crisis can have far-reaching consequences for mental ill health due to unemployment, reduced income and ability to pay debts. Unemployment and a worsened economy are important determinants of mental health. People who are signed off sick, become unemployed or are in need of financial assistance are also at a heightened risk of suicide (Public Health Agency of Sweden 2020c).

### **International overview**

In the second quarter of 2020, the value of global trade declined by 27 percent and the number of hours worked by 10.5 percent, resulting in rising unemployment (CCSA, 2020). The effects of the pandemic will be particularly severe in countries that are economically weak or with a population living in overcrowded conditions, further aggravating

existing inequalities in the world. The indirect effects that emerged in the wake of the pandemic are far-reaching, and internationally this has affected young people particularly greatly.

Financial vulnerability is especially high among people who do not have permanent employment and work on temporary contracts (Glauber, 2013). In OECD countries, which have used lockdowns to reduce the spread of covid-19, sectors that engage part-time workers, the self-employed and employees on temporary contracts make up around 40 percent of total employment (OECD, 2020a).

Households consisting of younger people with a low level of education and who have children are at risk of succumbing to poverty if they lack an income for a period of three months (OECD, 2020b). In the survey – which included 12,605 people aged 18–34 from 112 countries and which was conducted during April and May 2020 – during the covid-19 pandemic, 23 percent had their working hours reduced, and 17 percent of the group cited disorders from worry and depression (ILO, 2020a). The group “young people” also often resort to insecure forms of employment and rely on access to social benefits and social protection (ILO, 2020b).

A survey published on 10 September 2020 regarding the impact on children globally during the covid-19 pandemic showed that disparities and inequalities for socially vulnerable children have increased during the crisis (Save the Children Sweden, 2020). The data in the study was collected from 37 countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, the Pacific and North America, and a total of 17,565 parents and 8,069 children aged 11–17 were questioned. 77 percent of households that took part in the survey stated that they have a reduced income due to the pandemic and 93 percent of those with a reduced income also experienced difficulty in obtaining healthcare. The respondents were not randomly selected and the results can thus not be generalised for all children.

After several countries closed their schools to curb transmission of the virus, there has been a considerable deterioration in access to education. The survey showed that 80 percent of the children think they have learned little or nothing, and 37 percent find that they lacked someone who could help them with their assignments when the schools were closed. 17 percent of the children who were not able to attend school experienced violence at home, which is more than double the proportion who experienced violence at home when the schools were open (7 percent). (Save the Children Sweden, 2020)

The possibility of seeking asylum has declined drastically because many countries have closed their borders in the pandemic. The limitation on the right to seek asylum has been evaluated in a UN report (United Nations, 2020b) which shows that the pandemic has given rise to several crises which, combined, can aggravate the situation for already

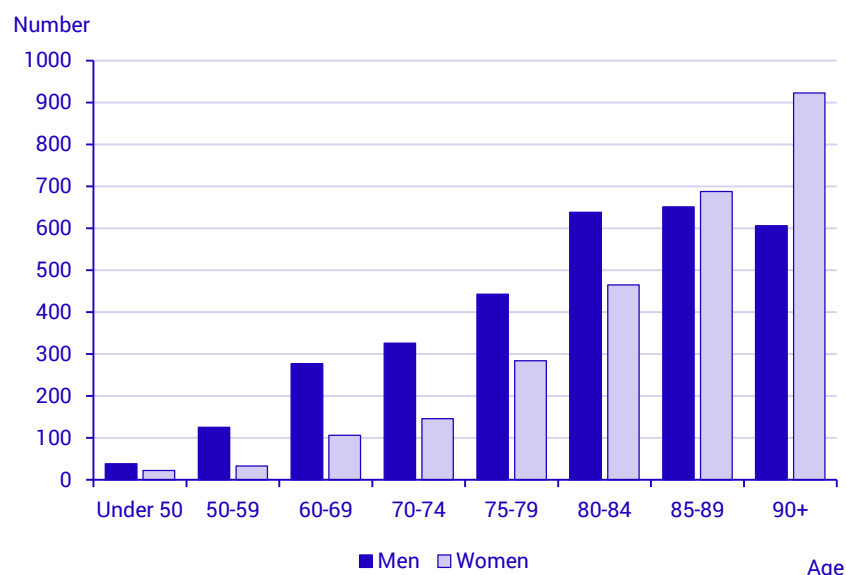
vulnerable groups. People who are fleeing have limited possibilities of protecting themselves from transmission, and are at risk of infection. They also have very limited access to healthcare for treatment if they fall ill. Social vulnerability rises as people flee, and there is no access to social protection measures. In this case, women and children are particularly vulnerable. The rights of fleeing people have been sharply curtailed during the crisis. People risk ending up in highly dangerous situations when they attempt to cross national borders and get sent back to a perilous situation. The report highlights in particular the conclusion that no one is safe from covid-19 before everyone on earth is safe.

## Inequalities in excess mortality

Several of the health effects witnessed during the covid-19 pandemic have been direct, with vulnerable groups having been affected more compared with the rest of the population. Studies conducted in Sweden have confirmed social differences between population groups resembling those highlighted internationally. Mortality in Sweden in the spring of 2020 among population groups has proven to be higher among people on a low income, people who have migrated from low-income countries and among people with a low level of education (Drefahl et al. 2020). There has also been a higher mortality rate among unmarried people than among those who are married, if they are older.

**Graph 32. Number of deceased from covid-19 by age and gender according to cause of death certificate, received until 14 September 2020**

Number of deceased from covid-19



Source: National Board of Health and Welfare, cause of death certificates.

Statistics from the Public Health Agency of Sweden and the National Board of Health and Welfare have shown excess mortality and a higher proportion of people falling ill from covid-19 among certain groups. Age, gender and underlying illnesses have proven to be important

Target 3.3 By 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases.

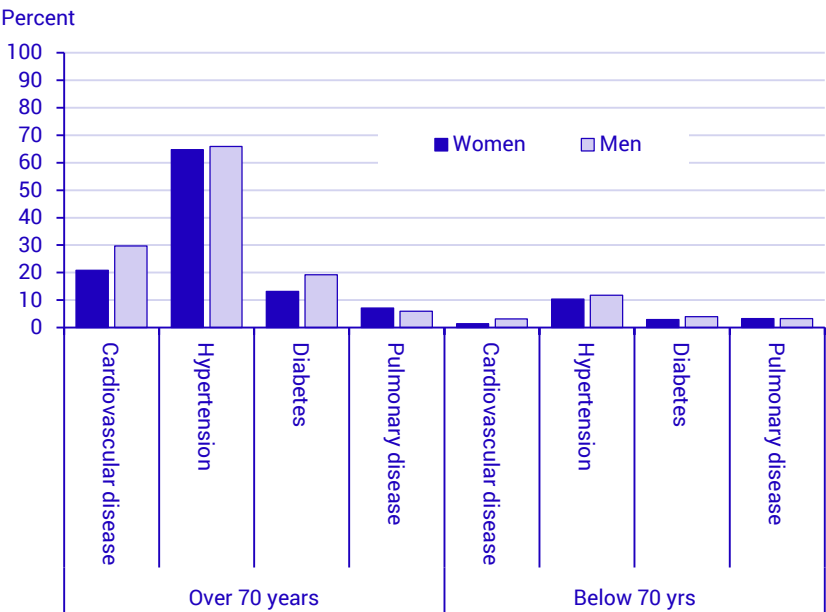


Target 3.4 By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being.

factors that have been significant in explaining death from covid-19. The proportion of deaths rose with increasing age for both sexes. Out of the deceased, the proportion of men was higher than that of women.

The National Board of Health and Welfare highlights certain states of health that pose a heightened risk of severe illness from covid-19 (National Board of Health and Welfare 2020d). In the group people over 70 years old, the presence of illnesses that pose a risk of severe symptoms from covid-19 (cardiovascular disease, hypertension, diabetes and pulmonary disease) is higher compared with the group below 70 years old. Differences in the presence of these illnesses between men and women are small.

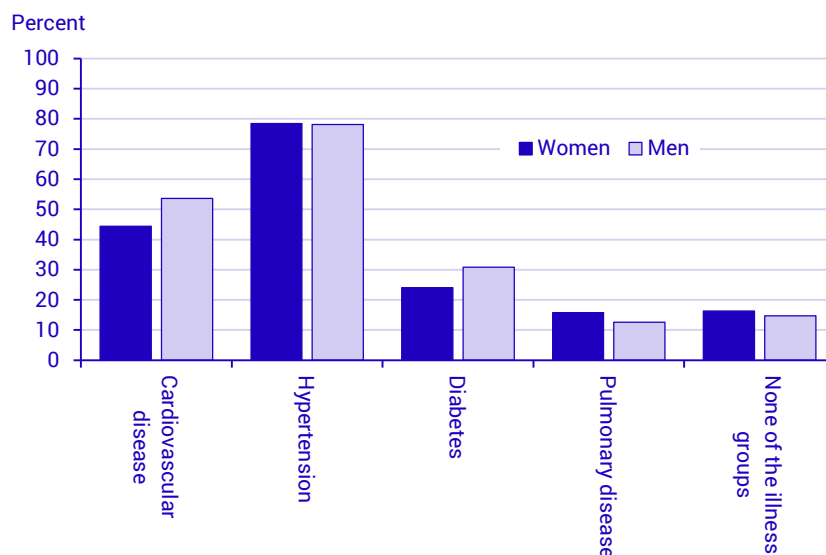
**Graph 33. Proportion of the total population in groups with illnesses that pose a risk of severe symptoms from covid-19, 2019**  
The population, 31 December



Source: National Board of Health and Welfare, Patient Register, Pharmaceuticals Register, and Statistics Sweden, Total Population Register

These illnesses are also over-represented among people who have died from covid-19.

**Graph 34. Number of deceased from covid-19 by illness groups according to cause of death certificates received until 14 September 2020**  
Percentage of total number of deceased from covid-19



Source: National Board of Health and Welfare, Cause of Death Register Patient Register and Pharmaceuticals Register

Target 11.1 By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums.

### Living conditions and mortality from covid-19

Several birth countries were over-represented among those who had fallen ill and died from covid-19 (13 March–7 May 2020) compared with the population in general (Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2020f). After the surveys were conducted, it has been possible to further explain excess mortality linked to birth country with factors that interact with birth country. An example is overcrowded living conditions, which are more common in population groups born outside of Europe than among both people born in Sweden and those born in a European country other than Sweden (see the chapter on segregation). Overcrowded living conditions are an important risk factor in the spread of respiratory infections, such as covid-19 (WHO, 2018).

In an article in the medical journal *Läkartidningen* (Hansson et al. 2020), the authors highlight factors which have proven to be important in how people have been affected by covid-19 that are present in groups that are already socially vulnerable, and minority groups have been hit particularly hard by the pandemic (Hansson et al. 2020). The socially vulnerable groups often live in overcrowded conditions and have not had the possibility of social distancing, which is an important factor in limiting infection transmission (Hansson and Jakobsson, 2020). Other occupation groups that have been exposed to many social contacts in their jobs (taxi drivers, those working in pizzerias, bus and tram drivers) have been at a greater risk of infection compared with people in other occupations (Public Health Agency of Sweden 2020h).

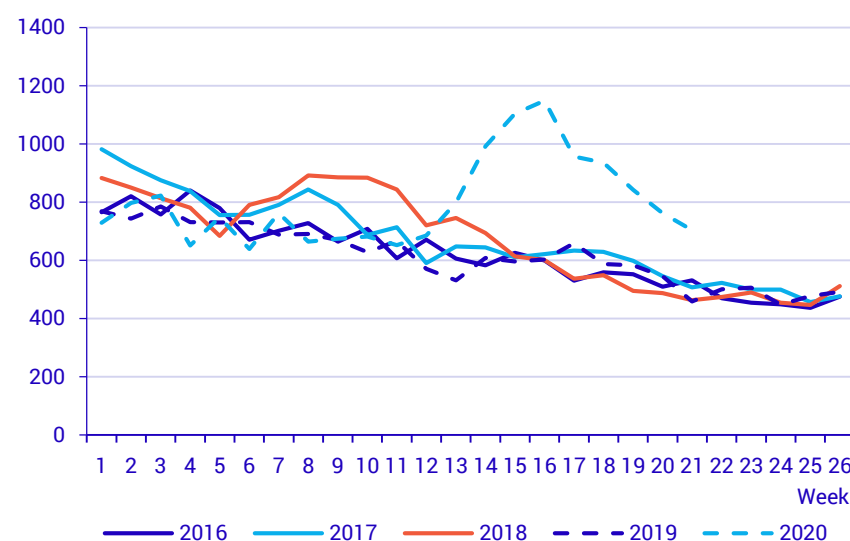
### Higher mortality among the elderly in nursing homes

Nursing homes for the elderly are home to people who have a great need for support and care. Besides their advanced age, these groups also often have underlying illnesses (Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2020i). Mortality between March–June in 2020 among people over the age of 70 in care homes was higher than in the equivalent months of 2016–2019.

**Graph 35. Mortality among people (aged 70 or older) in nursing homes during the weeks 4 January 2016–24 May 2020 (age- and gender-standardised figures).**

Number of deaths per 100,000 per week

Number of deaths

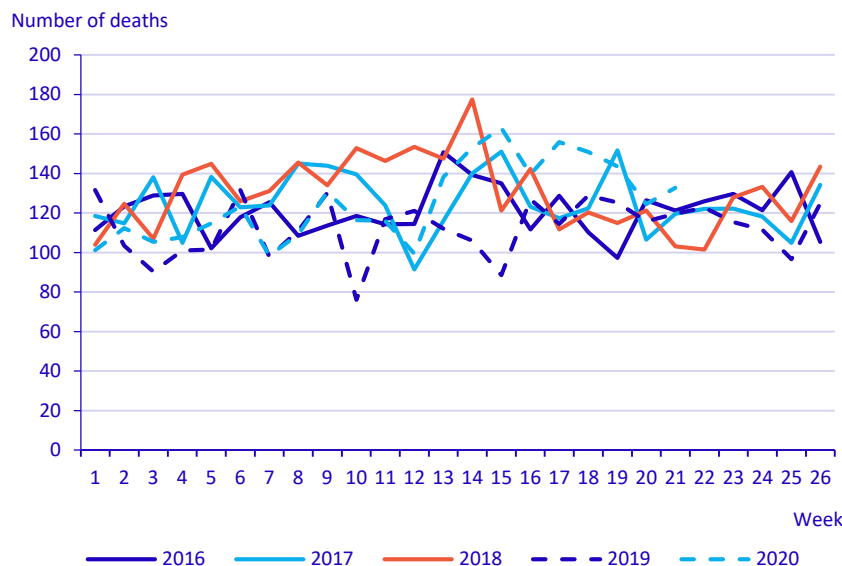


Source: National Board of Health and Welfare, cause of death register and register of measures under the provisions of the Social Services Act for the elderly and people with disabilities. Statistics Sweden, Total Population Register

However, mortality during the period March–June 2020 among people aged over 70 who did not reside in nursing homes or had home care has not deviated from mortality during the equivalent months of 2016–2019. One reason for the heightened mortality at homes for the elderly could be that residents have several underlying illnesses and difficulty maintaining good social distancing. People who live at home can also better control their situation.

**Graph 36. Mortality among people (aged 70 or older) not in nursing homes or with home care during the weeks 4 January 2016–24 May 2020 (age- and gender-standardised figures).**

Number of deaths per 100,000 per week



Source: National Board of Health and Welfare, cause of death register and register of measures under the provisions of the Social Services Act for the elderly and people with disabilities. Statistics Sweden, Total Population Register

### **Mortality from Covid-19 for people with housing assistance (under the Act concerning Support and Service for Persons with Certain Functional Impairments)**

Mortality from covid-19 among people who have housing assistance under the Act (1993:387) concerning Support and Service for Persons with Certain Functional Impairments has been almost three times higher than mortality in the rest of the population. Data collected until 14 September 2020 showed that the number of deceased from covid-19 with such housing assistance was 48, which is 0.16 percent of the total number of residents (29,609 individuals) (National Board of Health and Welfare, 2020b). This can be compared with equivalent figures for the entire population in Sweden, with 5,865 deaths from covid-19 reported to the Public Health Agency of Sweden (between 11 March and 17 September 2020), which is only 0.06 percent of the entire population (Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2020j). Mortality in the group with housing assistance also deviates from the population in general, with a higher death rate from covid-19 among people younger than 70 compared with the group older than 70.

### **Unequal effects on public health**

Besides the consequences of the virus on morbidity and death rates, the pandemic and protective measures against transmission are affecting society in different ways, which can have indirect implications for health. The Public Health Agency of Sweden has pointed out that there

are substantial inequalities in health between groups based on conditions linked to socioeconomic situation, grounds of the Discrimination Act and other vulnerability. There is a risk that these inequalities will grow as an effect of the covid-19 pandemic. (Public Health Agency of Sweden 2020g)

### **Effects on mental health**

To date, there have been no extensive systematically conducted studies in Sweden to demonstrate effects of the pandemic on the mental health of the population. In 2020, the Public Health Agency of Sweden summarised the results of a survey on mental health and lifestyles during the covid-19 pandemic. The survey was based on randomly selected participants (1,602 participants) from a panel who, in a survey, responded to health-related questions (Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2020k). The majority of respondents (93 percent) cited a good or very good general state of health and 6 percent stated a poor or very poor general condition. In the spring of 2020, many people – particularly older people – were concerned about the covid-19 pandemic and that they would not receive care if they needed it. Although the majority of respondents in the survey stated that they were in good health, it was common to cite various types of mental strain. Almost 40 percent stated that they had mild troubles from stress and felt depressed, while just over 30 percent cited sleeping difficulties. However, these results do not differ from other similar surveys carried out before the pandemic.

### **Access to healthcare**

The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) points out, in the communication “Interaction and renewal – eyes on the transition” that the healthcare service in Sweden has, in the spring of 2020, reprioritised its resources to care for covid-19 patients. Because of the combination of a loss of staff due to sick leave, a diminished inclination to seek care and limitations in physical contacts to reduce transmission of the infection, both planned and unplanned care measures declined drastically because of the pandemic in the spring of 2020. (SALAR, 2020)

The Public Health Agency of Sweden points out that there is a risk that the covid-19 pandemic and society’s protective measures against transmission will lead to down-prioritising and suppressing health-nurturing activities within healthcare and dental services, such as screening for cancer and lifestyle counselling. The suppression effects in the healthcare service and access to other activities of importance to health – together with individuals themselves foregoing activities relevant to public health within and outside of the healthcare service – will probably, according to the Public Health Agency of Sweden, have a varying impact on different groups based on gender, age, socioeconomic situation and other social position. (Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2020g)

Target 3.8 Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.

## Vulnerability for people with disabilities

The Swedish association Attention, which is an interest group for people with neuropsychiatric disabilities and their relatives, conducted a survey over the period 30 March–5 April 2020 aimed at its members to find out how they have been affected by the covid-19 pandemic (Swedish National Association Attention, 2020). The 2,050 survey responses received showed that already known problems – such as deficient support from schools, the healthcare system, social services and other bodies – have worsened. Out of the responses from the target group, 79 percent stated that they were affected to a high or to some degree, and more than 80 percent cited that their home and family situation had been impacted by the effects caused by the crisis.

Target 4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

For children with neuropsychiatric disabilities who attend school, 62 percent of the target group stated that school-related problems had worsened. Children who used to go to school are now at home full time, schools are not meeting pupils' needs, support and adaptations are absent and many pupils have not coped with the transition to distance learning.

Between 23 and 29 July, Novus conducted a survey, on behalf of the Swedish Disability Rights Federation – an umbrella body for organisations that gather together people with disabilities and their relatives – on how people with disabilities or relatives of people with disabilities experienced the initial months of the covid-19 pandemic. Out of the 1,122 interviews held, 32 percent stated that health and social care services that are not linked to the covid-19 pandemic have been cancelled or postponed, and 6 percent found that access to medicines has been delayed or absent. 27 percent stated that their child's access to school and education had been affected during the covid-19 pandemic. 17 percent of respondents stated that their personal finances had been adversely affected by the covid-19 pandemic, and 55 percent described that they manage day-to-day finances using their savings. (Swedish Disability Rights Federation, 2020)

## Subjection to violence and sexual assault

Statistics on reported crimes from the National Council for Crime Prevention in March to July 2020 show a reduction in the number of reported crimes in March until the end of May, but that they then increased during June and July compared with the same months of 2019 (National Council for Crime Prevention, 2020f). The proportion of assault crimes shows that the decrease in March through May was smaller for girls and women (between 5 and 2 percent) compared to for boys and men (between 14 and 7 percent) and that the increase during the period June–July was greater for girls and women (between 4 and 10 percent) compared to for boys and men (between 1 and 3 percent). Assault in which the perpetrator is known to the victim increased throughout the entire period March–July. The increase can be seen for both women and men. During the equivalent period, the proportion of

Target 5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation

Target 16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.

Target 16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.

reported assaults against women in which the perpetrator was unknown to the victim declined however.

For sexual crimes too, a reduction was seen in the number of reported crimes for adults during March–May compared with 2019 (between -15 and -5 percent) while reported sexual crimes against children increased during the same period (between 3 and 39 percent). The increase in sexual crimes against children was also much greater in June (40 percent) and July (21 percent) compared with the increase among adults (4 and 12 percent, respectively).

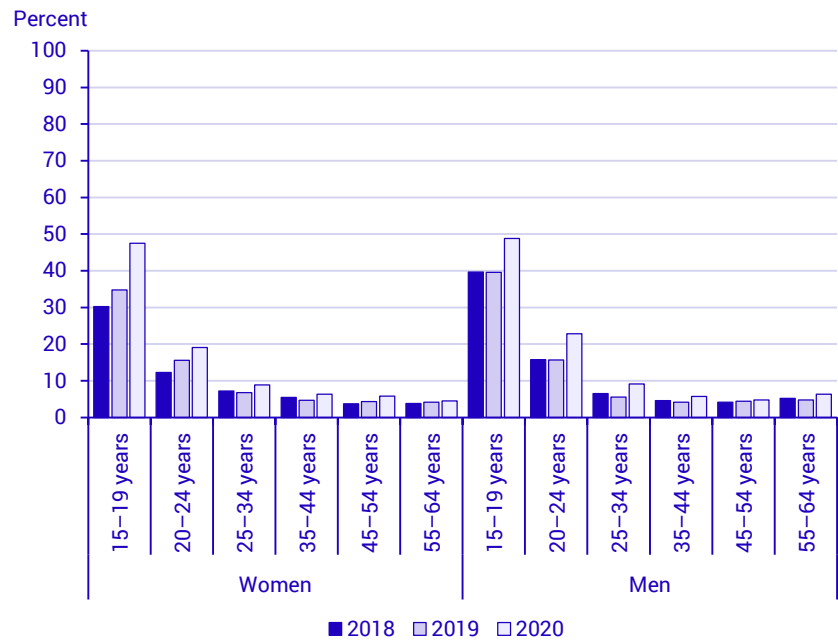
Information from the organisation Unizon (which gathers women's refuges, emergency contact centres for girls and other support operations working for an equal society free from violence) shows a 20–40 percent increase in the number of contacts with emergency contact centres for girls and youths at the beginning of the covid-19 pandemic compared with the year before. A number of women's refuges also witnessed heightened pressure on safe houses, while several refuges describe how requests for places in safe houses has declined. Emergency contact centres for girls and youths experienced heightened pressure at the end of the spring compared with the same period the year before, but less pressure compared with the start of the pandemic. In the summer of 2020, one third of the responding women's refuges had an increased number of people seeking a place compared to the summer before, and one third had the same number of people seeking places this summer as last summer.

Target 8.5 By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.

### Effects on economic equality

In the second quarter of 2020, Sweden's GDP declined by 8.3 percent compared with the first quarter as a consequence of a sharp drop in exports and household consumption (Statistics Sweden, 2020g). The economic decline that has taken place in Sweden in connection with the covid-19 pandemic has had clear effects on the labour market. In a panel survey carried out in June by the Swedish Federation of Business Owners, which represents 60,000 business operators among small and medium-sized enterprises, in which they were asked how they had been affected in the covid-19 pandemic (Swedish Federation of Business Owners, 2020), 39 percent stated that they had needed government support measures during the pandemic. The companies had needed to reduce their staff costs to avoid having to make people redundant. Nonetheless, the number of unemployed people in the entire population aged 15–74 years old increased from 405,800 in the first quarter to 489,200 in the second quarter (Statistics Sweden, 2020h). Developments in the second quarter show that unemployment increased most among people aged 15–24 compared with older age groups.

**Graph 37. Unemployment in the population aged 15–64, by gender and age in the second quarter**  
Percent



Source: Statistics Sweden, Labour Force Survey



# Gaps in the statistics

Not all is measurable, and not all that is measurable is measured. There are gaps in the statistics, and these are mostly well-known. Therefore, this chapter does not make any revelations. Rather, it should be read as an overview of the gaps in the national statistics that have a bearing on following up on the 2030 Agenda and specifically on the follow-up of the principle of leaving no one behind.

## **What is the data available to us?**

Data that is found in registers provides an excellent basis for distributing statistics across different population groups. Registers provide us with information such as on income, education level, foreign background and birth country, residential address, children and parents, services such as income support and certain services and support for people with disabilities.

However, some data cannot be found in comprehensive population registers – which is how it should be. Information on ethnicity, sexual orientation, trade union membership, political party membership, subjection to crime and disability are examples of information that is not registered. In registers, neither can we see for instance the reasons for why a person has a meagre income; we can only see where the income that does exist comes from.

Some information of this kind is instead collected in sample surveys. The results collected can then be distributed based on different background variables and the outcome can then be generalised for the entire population. That way, we can for instance study subjection to crime or public health by gender, age, level of education and so on.

However, there are limitations in what we can study based on registers and large national sample surveys. One of the limitations concerns sample sizes. If a relatively small number of people in the sample have responded in a certain way to a question, it will be difficult to make a generalisation for the entire population broken down by several variables. Therefore, the large national sample surveys are also designed to enable responding to certain specific questions regarding phenomena in the population. Furthermore, a high level of non-response can cause problems related to representativeness and the ability to generalise.

There are also other limitations in terms of sample surveys. Sensitive personal data, such as information on ethnic origin, political views, health and sexual orientation may not be collected and processed either without the consent of the individual or specific support from

legislation. The scope for authorities to base their processing of sensitive personal data on consent is highly restricted.

On the whole, this makes it difficult to use statistics to describe certain groups that we might suspect are particularly susceptible or vulnerable.

There are also other challenges in the use of register statistics. One example is that people's measurable income does not always show the whole truth about their economic standard. People might work on an untaxed basis or work and pay tax abroad despite being registered in Sweden. Neither do the income statistics capture gifts between people and households, for instance parents who provide financial support to their children who have moved out of their home.

Because register statistics are based on information that needs to be collected for reasons other than preparing statistics, aspects that are not somehow regulated in legislation also often fall outside of the statistics. This means for instance that the income statistics can no longer be supplemented with information on wealth since wealth tax has been removed.

In register-based statistics, people who are not registered in Sweden also fall outside of the statistics. This is the case for groups such as homeless people and paperless migrants as well as asylum seekers who have not yet been granted a residence permit, and EU migrants who are temporarily in Sweden. The same applies when the register of people who are registered in Sweden provides the frame for sample surveys, which is almost always the case in large national sample surveys.

Another challenge is that smaller groups can "hide" in larger groups when we analyse register statistics (and other statistics). It is for instance most common that the group of people in the education register who lack an education were born abroad, and is hence interpreted as a group that we actually know very little about in terms of education level. Yet, there are also just over 17,500 people aged 30–99 who were born in Sweden and who lack an education level in the register. Some of them might be people who were educated abroad, but the vast majority are people who did not complete compulsory schooling, either due to severe illness or disabilities, or a very difficult home situation. This group is hidden effectively and systematically in almost all statistics if people born abroad are also present in the total sample.

### **Small and intermittent studies**

There can be difficulties in collecting statistics on certain groups, life conditions or other circumstances. The chapter on groups that are difficult to study describes potential reasons for this, and the possibilities that might nevertheless be available to collect information. Often, it is a case of conducting carefully designed, small, intermittent

studies which perhaps cannot be generalised for the entire population, but which can nevertheless say something about the group or the specific circumstances studied.

Large and complex sample studies are often very expensive to conduct. For this reason, some are carried out only occasionally or intermittently with a long time in between. Such studies can also provide valuable information that can be used together with other information for many years ahead.

Many small and individual surveys are conducted among people who have themselves chosen to be part of a panel or who are for instance members of an interest group. Such studies can provide certain important insights, although drawing conclusions from them with some degree of certainty is difficult.

### **People with disabilities**

There are a number of challenges linked to statistics on the conditions of people with disabilities. Information is not collected in some of the large national sample surveys, and there is no register of people with disabilities that could serve as a comprehensive frame for special surveys specifically for people with disabilities. Statistics Sweden has proposed that a new variable be prepared for people who receive benefits/services linked to their disability. However, several people with disabilities do not receive benefits or services linked to their disability, and therefore cannot be identified through registers. A potential future variable could therefore not serve as a frame for surveys, but could potentially serve as a background variable for statistical tables from either registers or sample surveys.

Another challenge is that different definitions of disability are used in different surveys, so the proportion of people in the population with a disability varies between different surveys.

Global Activity Limitation Instrument (GALI) is a way of measuring impaired aptitude for activity.

Based on the sample survey ULF/SILC, Statistics Sweden reports statistics on people with disabilities. According to the survey, in 2018–2019, just over one out of three of all women and men aged 16 and older had a disability according to the current measurement method. The group includes people with impaired vision, hearing or mobility, with severe allergies, people severely troubled by worry and anxiety, and people severely troubled by dyslexia and neuropsychiatric diagnoses. It also includes people with “greatly impaired aptitude for activity”.

The group “greatly impaired aptitude for activity” is based on questions from a standardised measurement instrument (GALI) and is sometimes used as a measure of disability. Around one in 20 women and men had, in 2018–2019, an enduring and greatly impaired aptitude for activity due to health problems.

As of 2021, questions designed by the UN Washington Group on Disability Statistics will be included in ULF/SILC. From 2022, the questions will be harmonised throughout Europe. These questions are intended to measure the difficulties of a person in, for instance, using stairs or hearing and are designed to give international comparability.

### **Areas where disability statistics are flawed**

Above are described some of the reasons why the statistics on the conditions of people with disabilities are flawed. The following describes some of the most important areas in which the statistics are flawed to some extent.

- The statistics on conditions for people with disabilities on the labour market have certain shortcomings. This is because a lot of the statistics about conditions on the labour market are based on registers, and the largest sample survey (the Labour Force survey, LFS) on the area does not include questions about disability. On behalf of the Swedish Public Employment Service, Statistics Sweden performs a special supplementary survey linked to the LFS with questions about the situation on the labour market for people with disabilities. The sample of the survey is however limited to a small part of the LFS sample, which limits the breakdowns that can be performed, for instance into different types of disability.
- We cannot currently obtain information on people with disabilities in a relevant manner from presentations of representativeness in decision-making assemblies either. Attempts are however in progress to prepare statistics for the indicator “16.7.1 Proportions of positions in national and local institutions, including (a) the legislatures; (b) the public service; and (c) the judiciary, compared to national distributions, by gender, age, persons with disabilities and population groups”.
- There are flaws in the statistics on the conditions for children and youths with disabilities at school. Read more in the section below on children and youths.
- The Swedish Agency for Participation (2017) has presented a compilation of knowledge on men’s violence against women with disabilities. One of the aspects it brings up is the lack of statistics. Read more in the section on men’s violence against women below.

### **National minorities**

In Sweden there are five national minorities: Jews, Roma, Sami, Swedish Finns and Tornedalers. The national minorities have special rights by law. People who belong to the national minorities have the right to develop their language, culture and religion. Information on ethnicity is

not registered in Sweden, so there is no individual data about people who belong to the national minorities. There is also largely an absence of other data for following up on the national minorities' health, lifestyles and life conditions because defining and distinguishing people who belong to the national minorities is very difficult. More about these and similar phenomena are described in the chapter "Groups that are difficult to study".

### **Paperless migrants and the homeless**

There are people who live in Sweden without being registered in the country, for example people who are working temporarily in Sweden but who are registered in another country, and asylum seekers who have not yet obtained a decision on their application. But, it also applies to other groups. These other groups are usually called paperless migrants. These can for instance include asylum seekers who have had their application rejected but who remain in the country, or those who have come to Sweden to work but who do not have a work permit, or who have come for other reasons (for instance to study or as a tourist) and stayed on to work but have not obtained a permit to do so. The situation of these people can be assumed to be highly vulnerable in many different ways, although there are essentially no statistics on the group.

Also people who live in homelessness are very difficult to capture in the ordinary collections for statistics. They often fall outside of the frame used to create the sample. However, there is some information on this group in the recurrent mapping process of homelessness by the National Board of Health and Welfare.

### **Children and youths**

In a comprehensive report, the National Board of Health and Welfare has presented a number of vulnerable groups among whom availability of statistics on health and healthcare is not particularly good (National Board of Health and Welfare, 2011). One such group is children in care. This can probably be attributed to the fact that information on children's health and life conditions at the individual level is largely absent. Children are often not included in the populations studied in large national sample surveys, partly because young children cannot be expected to respond to questions themselves, and partly because it could be perceived as too great an intrusion of personal integrity. For these reasons, there are instead some large national surveys specifically aimed at children (Health behaviour in school-aged children, Attitudes to school, Living Conditions Survey of Children) that cover some of the statistical needs, although not all. There is for instance no register-based information on children's health from paediatric health centres and the school healthcare service, a factor that poses difficulty in obtaining many of the indicators on children for the follow-up of the 2030 Agenda.

Information on support at school is absent for both preschool and upper secondary school, and for children with disabilities in certain types of school. There is no information at all on special adaptations at school. In the statistics on types of education for children and youths, no information on disabilities is collected because the legislation defines this as sensitive information.

Until the 2019/20 school year, information on special-needs schools and learning-disability schools has only been collected at group level. It has therefore not been possible to follow these pupils at individual level, and hence neither is it possible to perform many of the analyses that can be done for other groups of pupils. As of the 2019/20 school year, information is collected at individual level, which enables analyses over time on the process of passing through the education system and out onto the labour market.

Another group of children mentioned are those subjected to violence and other abuse. There is information on the number of children treated in hospital following abuse from another person, and a number of school surveys are conducted regularly. These are mainly directed at older children, however.

As part of the follow-up on the national strategy for preventing and combating men's violence against women, the Swedish Gender Equality Agency (2020b) has performed an analysis on children's rights. A conclusion in the report is that there is currently no coherent action plan addressing violence against children in the strategy, which the Swedish Gender Equality Agency writes would be desirable, also in light of the 2030 Agenda and target 16.2. "End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children".

### **Men's violence against women**

There are some large and recurrent population studies that include questions about subjection to violence; the National Crime Survey (NCS) carried out annually by the National Council for Crime Prevention contains the most detailed questions about different violent crimes. In the follow-up of both goals 5 and 16, the statistics have previously been retrieved from the NCS and from the in-depth study on crime in close relationships. Because the NCS has undergone changes, and the result of the follow-up questions is published at around the same time as the completion of this report, it has not been possible to include detailed information from that source. The changes to the NCS can enable new breakdowns of the indicators. At the same time, the NCS does not enable breakdowns by many of the groups that could be relevant in this follow-up, for instance on disability or sexual orientation.

Two other population surveys do so instead to somewhat varying degrees: The Living Conditions Surveys (ULF/SILC) conducted by

Statistics Sweden, and the national public health survey – Health on equal terms, for which the Public Health Agency of Sweden is responsible. These surveys do not contain equally detailed questions on subjection to violence, but instead enable reporting by different living conditions. This means for example that there is some possibility of presenting statistics on subjection to violence for people with and without a disability. However, in that case, more detailed information about the crime itself – including the relationship with the perpetrator – is absent.

Reporting in the NCS is done based on incidents and follow-up questions being asked for a maximum of three incidents per person based on an order of priority, in which mugging is followed by sexual crimes, assault, threats, internet trolling and harassment (National Council for Crime Prevention 2020e). Violence in close relationships is often repetitive; that is to say it is a matter of multiple incidents. The statistics are therefore not always suitable to use for following up on this type of violence.

In the reporting of the Swedish Gender Equality Agency (2020a) on the work on following up on the government's strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women, it can be seen that the follow-up has so far not managed to satisfactorily include people with disabilities. Statistics from the national public health survey of the Public Health Agency of Sweden, used by the Swedish Gender Equality Agency (2020a), demonstrate – as do statistics from ULF/SILC (Statistics Sweden 2018b) – a pattern whereby people with disabilities are subjected to threats or violence to a greater extent than people without disabilities (with certain differences within the statistical margin of error). None of these surveys however contain in-depth questions of the kind present in the NCS or in the former supplementary module on crimes in close relationships. In terms of disabilities, varying measures are also used in different surveys and the statistics are therefore often not comparable.

### **Subjection to sexual crimes**

Subjection to sexual crime is included in the follow-up of the Agenda and the statistics are obtained from the National Crime Survey (NCS). It is currently the only indicator available for following up on target 5.2, which concerns violence against women and girls. On an overarching level, the National Council for Crime Prevention (2019a) reports an analysis of the progression of sexual crimes for the period 2005 to 2016/2017. Since then, the NCS has undergone changes and it is hoped that the new NCS will enable more breakdowns and hence the ability to report more indicators.

In the 2030 Agenda, human trafficking is included both in target 5.2 and in target 16.2. According to the European Institute for Gender Equality EIGE (2018), human trafficking for sexual purposes is the most common



form of human trafficking in the EU, which primarily affects women and girls. At the national level, the register-based statistics do not enable reporting by gender because the data is not included in the crime code.

### **Honour-related violence and oppression**

Target 5.3 of the Agenda concerns honour-related violence and oppression. Statistics Sweden has, in previous reports (see e.g. Statistics Sweden 2017) expressed that it would be desirable to have a supplementary indicator for this target that was adapted to the national context. The National Board of Health and Welfare's (2018b) initial proposal for establishing indicators for following up on the strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women included such a measure, with the intended source being the extensive survey on sexual and reproductive health (SRHR) carried out by the Public Health Agency of Sweden in 2017 on behalf of the government. The Swedish Gender Equality Agency (2020a) has now considered that the questionnaire had not been worded such that it could clearly be associated with subjection to honour-related violence and oppression in particular. The indicator has therefore been removed from the follow-up of the national strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women. The Swedish Gender Equality Agency (2020a) furthermore observes that there is no recurring survey concerning self-reported subjection to honour-related violence and oppression.

From the inquiry reported by the National Board of Health and Welfare (2019c) on behalf of the government, it can be seen that definitions of honour-related violence and oppression, and questions that aim to measure incidence thereof, vary between different studies and they are hence not comparable. The National Board of Health and Welfare furthermore writes that subjection to honour-related violence and oppression is often included as a subset in other statistics, but that it cannot be distinguished specifically.

The National Board of Health and Welfare concludes that, in order to express anything about the scope and consequences of honour-related violence and oppression in the population as a whole, a national population study combined with collection and analysis of indirect data is needed. As shown in the National Board of Health and Welfare's report, methodology-related problems meant that the study originally planned could not be carried out.

### **LGBT people**

We have in this report been able to present some information that suggests that LGBT people are a particularly vulnerable group, especially in the field of health. The group is however captured very little in official statistics. Sexual orientation is a ground for discrimination but often cannot be used in a statistical breakdown.



### **Developments in segregation**

Research suggests that socioeconomic segregation has risen in Sweden since the 1990s, although studies of developments in recent years show more ambiguous results. One reason for the variations in findings is that different measurement methods have been used and that residential areas have been defined in different ways. The Delegation against segregation has been commissioned to prepare a system for following up on the progression of segregation at national, regional and local level, and in 2021 it will launch an online follow-up system (Delmos, 2020b) – a factor that should better enable following up on both the progression of segregation and consequences ahead.

### **Exposure to air pollution**

No statistics are currently available on how exposure to air pollution in Sweden varies between different groups in society. The results of the Environmental Health Survey have however, according to the Public Health Agency of Sweden, been analysed and will, to a greater extent than before, be reported based on equality aspects. The Environmental Health Reports will be published at the turn of the year 2020/2021. This means that future follow-up of environmental health will also contain equality analyses.

# Groups that are difficult to study

Following up on the principle of leaving no one behind is about making active choices in order to bring visibility in the statistics to groups and individuals who live in vulnerability, who are discriminated, excluded or who are at risk in some other way of being left behind in the progression towards an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable society.

## **Some groups are difficult to study**

Some of the groups that risk being left behind in the implementation of the Agenda are also difficult to study. The 2030 Agenda is a global commitment and groups that are difficult to study vary between countries.

In Sweden, some of the challenges concern the lack of collection of information on certain sensitive variables, which for instance makes it difficult to identify and study in more detail the national minorities' conditions. The use of the population register as a basis also means that some groups, such as paperless migrants and the homeless, fall outside of many statistical surveys. Despite the challenges, there are nevertheless ways to go about collecting information, with due respect for people's personal integrity and safety, that can give important insights. Depending on the studied group and the difficulties present, there are various possibilities. Tourangeau (2014) gives an account of certain difficulties that are present and certain characteristics potentially found among a group that is difficult to study.

## **Absence of a frame**

Ideally, there is a list of all individuals on the desired group to be studied, known as a frame. If a frame of all individuals exists, a sample of individuals can be drawn from it. In practice however, there is often no frame for groups that are difficult to study. To enable generalising the results from a survey; that is to say, expressing something about the entire group despite only studying a sample of individuals from the group, all individuals in the group must have a chance to be selected. Because this is rarely the case for groups that are difficult to study, there is a risk that it will not be possible to generalise the results from the survey for the entire group.

In the absence of a frame, one could attempt to identify individuals using an existing frame of a larger population that contains more individuals than those from the desired study group. It can however be very expensive or, in certain cases, impossible, as on the whole a very

large number of individuals might be required to capture a sufficient number of individuals from the actual desired study group.

#### **Difficulties in identifying the group**

Individuals can feel uncomfortable about disclosing group affiliation if they run the risk of, for instance, ridicule, victimisation or threats if they become publicly identified. Because of this, they might be cautious in choosing to participate in a survey. Individuals should therefore be carefully informed of the obligations incumbent upon those conducting the survey, both in terms of confidentiality and risk of disclosure.

For these groups, self-administered data collection methods might work better than interview-led collection methods. An anonymous online survey could in some cases increase the proportion of credible responses, although use of this approach might make it difficult to generalise the results for the entire group.

#### **Difficulties in contacting individuals from the group**

Also when individuals from a group are identified and phone numbers or addresses are known, contacting them can be difficult. Today, many people do not answer when they receive a call from an unknown number. Non-response has increased sharply in all large sample surveys in the past decades, and increased non-response causes heightened uncertainty in the results.

There might be possibilities of increasing the chance of contact by for instance informing of the survey in social networks and/or other online services directed at the group to be surveyed.

#### **Difficulties in getting individuals to take part**

Once an individual has actually been contacted, there may be difficulties in getting the individual to want to take part in the survey. For instance, a person's legal status might make them reluctant to have any contact with authorities. The risk of disclosure probably affects the inclination of individuals to take part in surveys. Many surveys are carried out by authorities, which can influence willingness to take part among individuals who distrust the social system. It can also be difficult to determine how large a proportion of the individuals who cannot be contacted actually do not wish to take part in the survey.

For these difficulties also, anonymous online surveys directed at social networks and other online services might in some cases improve willingness to take part. This approach can however lead to difficulty in generalising the results from the survey for the entire group.

#### **Difficulty in interviewing individuals**

Some individuals can be difficult to interview, for example people with language difficulties, children or people with certain illnesses.

It is important that the survey is adapted so that all individuals in a group studied are given the chance to participate. Such measures could include translation of the questionnaire or use of adaptive aids.

### **Studying such groups is nevertheless important**

It is nevertheless of interest to examine groups that are difficult to study, not least to enable living up to the commitments of the 2030 Agenda of leaving no one behind. It might be a case of estimating how many individuals are included in a group or how different political decisions affect a group. Depending on the group to be studied and the difficulties that are present, different measures are needed.

Although it can be hard to measure connections numerically, and generalise with certainty the results from surveys aimed at groups that are difficult to study, this need not mean that surveys should not be conducted among such groups. For example, one can collate observations from several different sources, supplement the sample with another sample or make different types of statements than those that apply to the entire group.

In some surveys, the purpose is to gain a deep understanding of the specific situation of the individuals studied, which means that there is not the same need to comment on the entire group.

A qualitative method, such as conducting in-depth interviews with certain individuals from the group, is appropriate when there is greater interest in gaining a deep understanding of a specific situation, and often provides information of great value. The sample of individuals can, in such cases, be small and it is not equally important for all individuals in the group to have the possibility of being selected for the survey. The conclusions from a qualitative survey can, in some cases, also serve as input to enable a quantitative survey at a later stage.

There are also several methods that have been developed to conduct surveys among groups that are difficult to study. One possibility is to make a sample of individuals based on the judgement of those conducting the survey; for instance, people could be stopped in the street according to certain criteria. Another possibility, when the group of interest is expected to have a natural gathering point, is to use a sample of places and times. If some individuals in the group are known, there is also a possibility that the individuals, when they have taken part in the survey, recruit new individuals from the group to be included in the sample. However, even though there are a number of different methods to use, all of them have their difficulties. It can still be difficult to generalise the results and comment on the entire group, or to present the results of a survey if only a few individuals participate because of too few observations. Often, these methods require more resources too.

### **Knowledge is essential to enable conducting surveys**

In order to decide on how the survey is to be conducted, it is important to consult people who work with or who have some other connection with the group. When a method for conducting a survey among a group that is difficult to study has been established, it is important to carefully investigate and decide on how the survey should be conducted, adapted to the individuals included in the group. This can concern data collection method, contact strategy, question design, form design or whether some kind of adapted aid is needed to give the individuals the right conditions to take part in the survey.

It is also important to communicate the obligations incumbent upon the party conducting the survey. For instance, that information on the personal circumstances of the individual is protected by secrecy and that everyone working on the survey must observe confidentiality, or that there is a requirement to minimise the risk of disclosure of individual personal data, as exposing individuals could lead to harm or detriment for them.

# Conclusions

Leaving no one behind is both an overarching objective of the 2030 Agenda and a condition for implementing its 17 goals. An overall challenge for Sweden in the implementation of the Agenda is that disparities between different groups are not diminishing. Rather, they are rather growing in several areas (Statistics Sweden, 2019). For this reason, Statistics Sweden has prepared a statistical review focusing on the Agenda's principle of leaving no one behind. With this review, we wish to make visible the groups for whom the goals are not being reached as much as for others, and among whom a relatively higher proportion of individuals are not getting their human rights fulfilled.

## Inequalities in all studied areas

We find that there are inequalities between groups with different backgrounds and life conditions within all areas and with respect to most targets studied in the report. The inequalities manifest themselves in all dimensions in the framework used for the analysis.

### Income

Relative financial vulnerability has been growing in Sweden for very many years. Income has increased both in the higher and lower income tiers, but income in the higher income tiers has risen more than that in the lower income tiers.

The vast majority of financially vulnerable people are found in the household type single women with children. Financial vulnerability is much more common among people born abroad than those born in Sweden. For children, the difference depending on whether their parents were born in Sweden or abroad is even greater than for the adult population.

For children and youths, the disparity between areas with different socioeconomic conditions also appears to be greater than for the population as a whole. In socioeconomically challenged areas, over 50 percent of people in the 0–19 age group lived in a household with a low economic standard in 2018. The corresponding proportion in other areas was 14 percent.

Sweden is one of the EU countries with the lowest proportion of severe material deprivation (Statistics Sweden, 2019), although in socioeconomically challenged areas, the proportion is on a par with the EU average.

There is much to indicate that people with disabilities are more financially vulnerable than people without disabilities.

Resources that can be used to uphold a decent standard of living, fulfil basic needs and improve life

## Education

Already in preschool, we see that children of parents born abroad participate to a lower degree, especially children who recently immigrated to Sweden. In compulsory school, pupils' socioeconomic background has gained greater importance to their grades in the past decade. This is more the case for foreign-born pupils than for pupils born in Sweden. International studies also show that there are disparities in learning outcomes depending on the level of education attained by the parents. The same tendencies that are visible for results in compulsory school can also be seen for completed upper secondary education, with the proportion who completed upper secondary school being highest among young adults with parents who have post-secondary education and those who were born in Sweden. It can also be seen that results in compulsory school have a major bearing on the completion of three-year upper secondary schooling within three to five years after starting the final year of upper secondary school.

It is more common for young adults with highly educated parents to commence a higher education programme than it is for those whose parents have a low level of education; this applies both to young women and men. It is less common for young adults with relatively good grades and whose parents have a low level of education to commence higher education, than for young adults with relatively good grades and highly educated parents.

Regional factors also have a bearing. In counties where a lower proportion of young adults generally commence higher education, there is also a lower proportion of young adults with highly educated parents who commence higher education.

Children who are placed in care outside of their own home by the social welfare board under the Social Services Act during compulsory school have a lower completion rate for compulsory and upper secondary schooling than children who have not been placed in care. They also proceed to higher education to a lesser extent. Children who have been taken into care are at a greater risk of, for instance, various health problems, criminality, drug abuse and a weak foothold on the labour market as an adult. At the same time, pass grades in compulsory school are a strong protective factor against such a negative course of events.

The statistics that are available on compensatory measures such as support and special adaptations suggest that the scope of the support probably does not match the needs of pupils, as there are many pupils who have not attained pass grades in one or several subjects in the sixth grade who did not receive special support during the seventh to ninth grades, and a large proportion of them finish the ninth grade without pass grades in one or several subjects.

There are differences in education level between adults with some kind of disability compared to those without a disability. Most people with a disability have upper secondary education, but it is more common to have only compulsory education among adults with disabilities compared to adults without disabilities.

### **Health**

Follow-up clearly shows that there are disparities in health and life expectancy between different groups in the population. We do not only need to look to the most vulnerable groups who are at risk of premature death, such as the homeless or people sectioned within mental health services, to see that health and life expectancy are unevenly distributed. There are systematic and clear differences according to most social groupings, for instance education level, income, marital status, type of household and birth country. We also see clear differences in health between people with disabilities and those without.

### **Environment and climate**

The effects of climate change have a varying impact on different population groups to some degree; for instance, the elderly are a vulnerable group in heatwaves. A study shows that the risk of dying from coronary artery disease is higher in socially deprived areas than in other areas during heatwaves. Climate change also benefits the spread of TBE and fewer people on a low income get vaccinated than those on a high income.

The differences in exposure to environmental health problems, such as air pollution and noise, in different groups are relatively small in Sweden. Some patterns are discernible however. Many of those who belong to the lowest income quintile are troubled by noise compared to those on a high income; low-income households more commonly lack a green space within walking distance than higher-income households, and people with disabilities more frequently experience obstacles to being outdoors in nature compared to people without a disability

### **Access to healthcare**

Indicators such as remaining life expectancy and death by suicide might be due to factors such as developments in the healthcare system. Some indicators within the healthcare system also exhibit inequalities which are largely in line with disparities in health, for instance in terms of refraining from seeking healthcare for financial or other reasons. Healthcare does not appear to be on entirely equal terms. The National Board of Health and Welfare describes for instance regional differences in accessibility. Differences in the outcome of healthcare for cancer and mental illness can also be seen according to, for instance, education level.

Opportunities to develop  
and/or use resources to uphold  
a decent standard of living or  
improve life



Power and voice are about people's ability to formulate their concerns, needs and rights in an informed manner and to participate in decision-making that affects these problems in the household, in local communities and at national level

### **Labour market and working conditions**

We can determine that different demographic groups appear to have different conditions on the Swedish labour market. People born abroad are, to a higher extent, in a more vulnerable situation on the labour market than people born in Sweden, both in terms of establishment on the labour market and the proportion with temporary employment. It is also more common for women to have more precarious employment than men.

### **Housing environment**

Access to housing differs between socioeconomically challenged areas and other areas, and overcrowded living conditions are far more commonplace in socioeconomically challenged areas. Overcrowded conditions are more manifest within certain population groups, with people born outside of Europe enduring overcrowded conditions to a greater extent than both people born in Sweden and those born in a European country other than Sweden. This is also the case in socioeconomically challenged areas, where over 30 percent of people born outside of Europe live in overcrowded conditions.

### **Participation in democracy**

The high voter turnout in Sweden indicates that the country has relatively good political integration overall and that it is fairly straightforward for most people to vote in Sweden. Two groups do not have access to this type of participation in democracy – people under the age of 18 and foreign citizens who are in Sweden but not entitled to vote in general elections. Foreign citizens may however vote in regional and municipal assembly elections according to certain criteria.

If we divide the electorate into different groups based on gender, age, birth country, education level and income, we see that there are clear disparities between the extent of voting of different people. Those on a higher income vote to a greater extent than those on a low income, highly educated people go to the polls more than those with a low level of education, and people born in Sweden vote more often than people born abroad. Irrespective of birth-country group, voter turnout is lower in socioeconomically challenged areas than in other areas.

Also when we study representativeness among parliamentarians, we see similar tendencies as among voting. We can also observe that the groups that participate in the political decision-making process to a lesser extent do so recurrently over time.

Also, there are often disparities between different types of area, with residents of socioeconomically challenged areas expressing, to a lower degree than the country as a whole, an interest in politics, engagement in civil society and trust in society's institutions, to name some examples. Disparities between different types of area persist even when account is taken of factors such as gender, age and education level,

which could be interpreted as the area itself potentially having a bearing on conditions for participating in democracy.

### **Working conditions and discrimination**

It is more common for women to experience work-related difficulties than men, and they are also subjected to violence or threats of violence at work more than men are. People born abroad experience subjection to discrimination in the workplace more than those born in Sweden.

People with disabilities find more than other employees that they cannot afford to be ill and fear losing their job. People with disabilities also experience, more than other employees, subjection to discrimination and bullying.

### **Violence and feelings of insecurity**

Anyone can be subjected to violence, and violence can have far-reaching consequences. At the same time, in surveys on the prevalence of violence there are life conditions that recur as being particularly susceptible. People can find themselves in particularly vulnerable situations due to life conditions that are related to factors such as age, drug abuse, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, foreign background and the values of relatives regarding the right of self-determination in sexuality and relationships.

Serious crimes such as shootings and deadly violence have increased in the past few years, and this type of crime is committed to a higher extent in deprived areas and can be increasingly linked to conflicts in the criminal environment. This has also caused a change in the gender breakdown among victims of deadly violence, from two thirds men and one third women in the 1990s and 2000s, to three quarters men and one quarter women in the past few years. When women are subjected to deadly violence, the perpetrator is usually a relative.

Both subjection to crime and feeling unsafe in public spaces are more widespread in socioeconomically challenged areas than in other areas. At the same time, women generally feel more unsafe than men, and people with disabilities have refrained more from going out due to fear of subjection to violence or threats of violence than people without a disability.

### **Effects of the covid-19 pandemic**

The clearest conclusion from the statistical source materials prepared is that vulnerable groups that are directly affected by the covid-19 pandemic are older people, and people with underlying illnesses. People who live in socially deprived environments with a high level of overcrowded living conditions and little possibility of social distancing are also at a heightened risk of particularly severe effects. An important indirect impact has been shown in the surveys of the National Council for Crime Prevention, which demonstrate that women and children

Physical, sexual and/or psychological violence and feelings of insecurity are limitations to the possibilities of various groups and individuals to exercise their human rights

have been subjected more to violence and sexual violence during the months of the pandemic in Sweden.

We can also observe that finances have shrunk and that unemployment has risen – factors which tend to have the most adverse effects on already vulnerable groups. It is as yet too early to corroborate with statistics many of the indirect effects that can be expected. A number of surveys are in progress, for instance among Swedish authorities, to study the effects of the pandemic on Swedish society, although many of these have not yet been completed.

### **Gaps in the statistics**

Lots of statistics are available in registers in Sweden. Likewise, there are quantities of information to retrieve from large recurrent national sample surveys. However, there are some challenges in the availability of statistics for enabling follow-up on the 2030 Agenda's principle of leaving no one behind.

The statistics on conditions of people with disabilities need to be developed to cover more areas – a fact has been known for a long time. Both the Swedish Agency for Participation and the Swedish Gender Equality Agency have for instance pointed out the lack of statistics on people with disabilities in the follow-up of the government's strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women. Different definitions of disability in different surveys also limit possibilities of comparing various sources with each other. Statistics Sweden currently has a government commission to prepare the application in Sweden of the questions of the UN Washington Group on Disability Statistics, which are frequently used internationally. The legislation coming into force at the European level at the turn of the year 2020/2021 also harmonises the area, as several large sample surveys will introduce one or two question concepts for measuring disability. Statistics Sweden has also submitted a proposal for developing a register variable in the area, even though this could not capture the entire group.

Furthermore, there are no statistics for following up on the prevalence of honour-related violence and oppression and there are limitations in the follow-up of men's violence against women, and of sexual crimes. Greater cooperation between authorities that produce statistics, and authorities tasked with contributing to the implementation of the government strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women, would appear to be a way of improving the availability of statistics and to enable filling in the gaps that exist with respect to following up on target 5.2 of the Agenda.

Another group for which the statistics exhibit shortcomings is children and youths. Registers structured according to information from the paediatric and school healthcare system would remedy some of these shortcomings.

Statistics that can be attributed to paperless migrants, LGBT people, and those who belong to the national minorities are also entirely, or at least largely, absent. There are methods to use for remedying these shortcomings to some extent. Surveys that are conducted that concern information that could be perceived as sensitive, or among groups that cannot easily be defined or reached using regular surveys, need to be very carefully designed. Surveys can also be conducted to collect information that could provide a number of insights without imposing a requirement to generalise the results for the entire group.

## **Leaving no one behind**

As we go through the results, it is clear that the same groups recur as being particularly vulnerable to most of the studied circumstances. It is also evident that circumstances that pose greater vulnerability overlap each other in the studied groups, which means it is highly probable that there are, in practice, actually greater disparities between groups than those seen when groups and circumstances are presented one at a time. This is evident for instance when studying average life expectancy from the age of 65. The gap in average life expectancy from the age of 65 is currently growing between different social groups. When we study overlapping vulnerability and susceptibility, we also see a clearer picture of the inequality that exists in society. Among people with disabilities, a higher proportion of women than men have a low economic standard for instance, and women with disabilities experience a higher degree of discrimination than men with disabilities, while at the same time people with disabilities in general experience discrimination more than people without disabilities.

The mechanisms behind the differences in outcome for different groups are complex. We know that different life conditions entail different vulnerability and we also know that the way in which the economy, schools and the healthcare system work can be a factor in greater or lesser inequality between social and socioeconomic groups. It is more difficult to corroborate how much discrimination and marginalisation contribute to this.

Some groups in the population can be said to be particularly susceptible to different types of vulnerability. It could be a case of the group being highly vulnerable, that vulnerability has particularly severe consequences, or that victims have little possibility of altering their situation or making it known. On an overarching level, it can be said that people with different types of disabilities, children of people who are vulnerable in some way and people born abroad from some parts of the world or who have been residing in Sweden for a short time are particularly susceptible to certain types of vulnerability that leave people behind in development towards a more sustainable society. Women and girls are also often vulnerable to a greater extent, particularly when different vulnerabilities and susceptibilities overlap.

There are also challenges in the statistical follow-up. This concerns the difficulty in studying certain groups, but we also see gaps in relation to statistics about people with disabilities and to statistics on children. There are limitations in the statistics on violence in close relationships and sexual violence. There are essentially no statistics available on honour-related violence and oppression, national minorities or paperless migrants.

Leaving no one behind thus means that efforts and initiatives are needed on many different levels in society. Equality of schools and education seems to be a strong protective factor in relation to many of the studied areas. Making susceptibility visible in different groups of the population can also help attain a better understanding of the mechanisms behind vulnerability on a more general level. Developing statistics might be complex, resource-intensive and time-consuming, but it presents an opportunity in the context.

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# Appendices

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TARGET	TAB	CHAPTER
<b>1.2 By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.</b>		
	1.2 Low economic standard	Economic equality
	1.2 Low income standard	Economic equality
	1.2 Long-term financial assistance	Economic equality
	1.2 Excessive debt	Economic equality
	1.2 Financial vulnerability, disability	Economic equality
	1.2 Low economic standard	Segregation
	1.2 Risk of poverty	Segregation
	1.2 Severe material deprivation	Segregation
<b>3.2 By 2030, end preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 per 1,000 live births and under-5 mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1,000 live births.</b>		
	3.2 Neonatal mortality	Health
<b>3.3 By 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases.</b>		
	3.3 Deaths from covid-19	Effects of covid-19
	3.3 70+ in nursing homes	Effects of covid-19
	3.3 70+ not in nursing homes	Effects of covid-19
<b>3.4 By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being.</b>		
	3.4 Mental and somatic disorders	Health
	3.4 Life expectancy	Health
	3.4 Self-assessed health	Health
	3.4 Mental health	Health
	3.4 Suicide	Health
	3.4 Noise	Environment
	3.4 Comorbidity, covid-19	Effects of covid-19
<b>3.5 Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol</b>		
	3.5 Alcohol consumption	Health
	3.5 Alcohol-related deaths	Health
	3.5 Substance -related deaths	Health
<b>3.8 Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.</b>		
	3.8 Cannot afford care	Health

**3.9 By 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination.**

3.9 Deaths from air pollution	Environment
3.9 Air pollution	Environment
3.9 Air quality	Environment

**4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.**

4.1 Eligibility, 9th grade	Education
4.1 Int knowledge measurements	Education
4.1 Completed upper sec	Education
4.1 Support in grades 7 to 9	Education
4.1 Pupils in learning-disability schools	Education
4.1 Pupils in special-needs schools	Education
4.1 Children in care	Education
4.1 National minority languages	Education

**4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.**

4.2 Preschool	Education
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**4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.**

4.3 Registered higher education	Education
4.3 Transition upper sec higher ed	Education

**4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.**

4.4 Education level	Education
4.4 Education level, disability	Education

**4.a Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.**

4.a Bullying	Education
4.a Stress	Education

**8.5 By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.**

8.5 Weak establishment	Decent working conditions
8.5 Temporary employment	Decent working conditions
8.5 Needs-based employment	Decent working conditions
8.5 Unemployed	Effects of covid-19

**8.6 By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training.**

8.6 Not working or stud 20–29 yrs	Decent working conditions
8.6 Not working or stud 30–64 yrs	Decent working conditions

**8.8 Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.**

8.8 Migrant workers	Decent working conditions
8.8 Working despite illness	Decent working conditions
8.8 Discrimination, disability	Decent working conditions
8.8 Discrimination, country of birth	Decent working conditions
8.8 Threats and violence at work	Decent working conditions
8.8 Sexual harassment at work	Decent working conditions

**10.2 By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.**

10.2 Belongs to a political party	Segregation
10.2 Political discussions	Segregation
10.2 Political parties, groups	Decision-making

**11.1 By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums.**

11.1 Overcrowded living conditions	Segregation
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**11.2 By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.**

11.2 Public transport	Segregation
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**11.7 By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.**

11.7 Refrained from going out	Segregation
11.7 Access to a green space	Environment
11.7 Green space within walking distance	Environment

**13.1 Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries.**

13.1 Cases of TBE	Environment
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**16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.**

16.7 Voter turnout, groups	Segregation
16.7 Voter turnout	Decision-making
16.7 Voter turnout, groups	Decision-making
16.7 Riksdag representation, groups	Decision-making

## **2. Members of external working group**

Ministry of Employment

National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools

National Board of Health and Welfare

Ombudsman for Children

Public Health Agency of Sweden

Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis

Swedish Agency for Participation

Swedish Gender Equality Agency

Swedish National Agency for Education

Swedish Social Insurance Agency

Systembolaget

**Statistics Sweden describes Sweden**

Statistics Sweden provides society with statistics for decision-making, debate and research. We do so on behalf of the Government, authorities, researchers, and business and industry. Our statistics contribute to fact-based social debate and well-founded decisions.