



Crime in Sweden: What the Data Tell Us

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Debate persists inside and outside of Sweden regarding the relationship between immigrants and crime in Sweden. But what can the data actually tell us? Shouldn't it be able to identify the pattern between the number of crimes committed in Sweden and the proportion of those crimes committed by immigrants? The answer is complicated by the manner in which the information about crime is collected and catalogued. This is not just an issue for Sweden but any country interested in providing security to its citizens. Ultimately though, there is no information that supports the claim that Sweden is experiencing an “[epidemic](#).”

In a [recent piece](#) in the *Washington Post*, we addressed some common misconceptions about what the Swedish crime data can and cannot tell us. However, questions about the data persist. These questions are varied but are related to two core issues: (1) what kind of data policy makers need to inform their decisions and (2) what claims can be supported by the existing data.

Who Commits the Most Crime?

Policymakers need accurate data and analytical strategies for using and understanding that data. This is because these tools form the basis for decision-making about crime and security.

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When considering the reports about Swedish crime, certain demographic groups are unquestionably overrepresented. [In Sweden, men, for example, are four times more likely than women to commit violent crimes.](#) This statistical pattern however has not awoken the same type of media attention or political response as other demographic groups related to ethnicity or migrant status.

Secret Police Data: Conspiracy or Fact?

In the past, the Swedish government has collected data on ethnicity in its crime reports. The most recent of these data were [analyzed](#) by the [Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention's \(BRÅ\)](#) for the period 1997-2001. The Swedish police no longer collect data on the ethnicity, religion, or race of either perpetrators or victims of crime. There are accusations that these data exist but are being withheld. Such ideas are not entirely unfounded: in the past, the Swedish police have kept secret—and illegal—registers, for example about [abused women or individuals with Roma background](#). Accusations about a [police conspiracy](#) to suppress immigrant crime numbers tend to center around the existence of a [supposedly secret criminal code](#) used to [track this data](#). This code is not

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secret and, when considered, reveals no evidence for a crime epidemic.

For the period of November 11, 2015 through January 21, 2016 the Swedish police attempted to gauge the scope of newly arrived refugees involvement in crime, as victims, perpetrators, or witnesses. It did so by introducing a new criminal code—**291**—into its database. Using this code, police officers could add to reports in which an asylum seeker was involved in an interaction leading to a police report. Approximately **1% of police reports** filed during this period contained this code. It is important to note here that only a fraction of these police incident reports actually lead to criminal charges being filed.

The data from these reports are problematic because there are over 400 criminal codes in the police's STORM database, which leads to **miscoding or inconsistent coding**. Coding errors occur because the police officers themselves are responsible for determining which codes to enter in the system. The police note that there was variation in **how the instructions for using this code were interpreted**. The data show that **60% of the 3,287 police reports** filed took place at asylum-seeker accommodation facilities, and that the majority of the incidents contained in these reports took place between

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asylum seekers. Are these numbers evidence of a crime epidemic?

Is there any Evidence for Crime Epidemic in Sweden?

If asylum-seekers are particularly crime-prone, then we would expect to see crime rates in which they are overrepresented relative to how many are living in Sweden. Sweden hosted approximately **180,000 asylum-seekers** during this period and the population of Sweden is **approximately 10 million**.

Therefore, asylum-seekers make up approximately 1.8% of the people living in Sweden, while 1% of the police reports filed in STORM were attributed to asylum-seekers.

While the Code 291 data are problematic because of issues discussed above, the data actually suggests that asylum seekers appear to be committing crime in lower numbers than the general population and does not provide support for claims of **excessive criminal culpability**. There were four rapes registered with code 291 for the 2.5 month period, which we find difficult to interpret as indicative of a “**surge**” in refugee rape. We in no way want to minimize the impact that these incidents had on the individual victims, but considering wider patterns, we consider a rate of four reports of rape over 76 days

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for a asylum-seeking population of 180,000 as not convincing evidence of an “[epidemic](#)” perpetrated by its members.

There is no doubt that crime occurs in Sweden. This is a problem for Swedish society and an important challenge for the government to address. It is a problem shared by all other countries. There is also no doubt that refugees and immigrants have committed crimes in Sweden, just as there is no doubt that Swedish-born citizens have committed crimes in Sweden as well. But if policy initiatives are to focus on particular demographic groups who are overrepresented in crime statistics, then it is essential that the analysis of the crimes committed by members of these groups be based on careful data analysis rather than anecdotes used for supporting political causes.

The Government of Sweden’s Facts about Migration and Crime in Sweden: <http://www.government.se/articles/2017/02/facts-about-migration-and-crime-in-sweden/>

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the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University.

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Salman on March 4, 2019 at 2:51 am

Very good [article](#) . i will look another information in this site...nice [post](#)

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