

TEMPLATE POLICY PAGE

Category:	Youth Crime
Country:	Sweden
Year:	/

Main policy page:	/
Relevant legislation:	<p>In Sweden the age of criminal responsibility is 15 years. The crucial age is the age when the crime is committed, not the age when prosecution is initiated.</p> <p>The fact that a crime has been committed by a child under the age of 15 who cannot be punished for the crime does not prevent the child from incurring liability in damages or such as forfeiture effect from being triggered.</p> <p>In Sweden, as well as in most countries, certain provisions are given concerning young offenders. The 1st of January 2007 a number of changes in these provisions, relating to interventions and treatment for young offenders, entered into force. The purpose was to further develop and improve the system of penalties.</p> <p>Pursuant to the Penal Code, the sanctions are fines and imprisonment, conditional sentence, probation and transfer to special care. In principle, all sanctions can be applied to young offenders but there are certain sanctions only applicable to juveniles. These sanctions are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- youth care (transfer to care within the Social Services),- closed juvenile care and,- since January 2007, community service for young offenders. <p>The fundamental principle is that young offenders should first be subjected to measures under the Social Services rather than be transferred to the Prison and Probation Service.</p> <p>The court may only sentence a person to imprisonment for an offence committed by him before his 18th birthday on exceptional grounds. The court may only sentence a person to imprisonment for a crime committed by him after his 18th birthday, but before his 21st birthday, if the act particularly merits sanction or there are other special grounds in favour thereof. No offender can be sentenced to lifetime imprisonment for a crime committed before he has attained the age of 21.</p> <p><i>Youth care</i></p> <p>If a person who is under the age of 21 and has committed an offence, and he or she is in special need of care or other measures under the social legislation, the court may sentence the young person to youth care. This means that the court may leave it to the Social Services to be in charge of the necessary care according to a youth contract, in which the measures planned are described. Such transfer of responsibility is only possible if the measures planned can be</p>

deemed sufficiently intervening in the light of the type of offence and the sanction merited by it as well as the offender's criminal record. If required, youth care may be supplemented with day-fines or a special decision on community service for young offenders

Community service for young offenders

It is also possible to sentence a young person under the age of 18, and between 18 and 21 if there are special grounds for doing so, to community service for young offenders as an independent sanction, e.g. if there are no preconditions for youth care. This possibility was introduced in January 2007. The penalty comprises unpaid work and other specially arranged activities for a minimum of 20 and a maximum of 150 hours. For a community order to be issued, the young person must agree.

Closed juvenile care

If a juvenile has committed an offence before his 18th birthday and the court finds that the sanction should be imprisonment, such sanction must instead be transformed into closed juvenile care for a specific period unless there are special reasons not to do so. Committal to a secured youth institution is time-limited, at least 14 days, and not more than four years. The National Board of Institutional Care (Statens institutionsstyrelse, SiS) is responsible for the enforcement.

Trends:

It is difficult to know exactly how much crime is actually committed by young people. *Official crime statistics* show that the number of youths aged 15–17 suspected of offences in Sweden declined in the 1990s, but has increased continuously since then. The increase is primarily found in violence and drug offences. The number of youths suspected for thefts has continued to decline during the same period. The pattern is the same for the number of youths convicted of offences.

Self-report studies show that the general proportion of youths aged 15 reporting having committed criminal acts included in the studies has not increased since 1995 to 2008 (the latest year with available data), and there are several categories of offences where this proportion has decreased (<http://www.bra.se>).

The proportion of youths reporting some kind of theft has successively declined since 1995. The most prominent decreases have occurred in relation to the most common theft crimes, such as thefts from school and from shops. However, the proportions who report having participated in shoplifting or thefts from school or from their own homes were a couple of percentage points higher in the 2008 survey compared to 2005.

Involvement in vandalism has also decreased over time – primarily in relation to criminal damage and graffiti (non-mural) offences. The proportion of youths reporting having committed some form of violent offence has remained constant around 10 percent over this period, but the proportion who report that they have carried knives has decreased. Youths reporting some form of drug offence during the period and the level of involvement in "other offences" have remained constant.

The *self-report studies* also show that just under one-third of the youths in the

	<p>2008 survey report that they have been exposed to one of the three types of theft specified in the study. No change can be seen in this regard over time. The proportion of youths reporting that they have been hit, kicked or exposed to some other form of violence so that they were hurt but did not need to seek medical attention has remained relatively constant, around 23 percent since 1999. Between 1995 and 2008 between 5 and 6 percent of youths report having been exposed to more serious violence requiring them to seek medical attention (e.g. seeing a nurse). No major changes can be seen since 1995 in relation to exposure to threatening behaviour.</p> <p>The number of cases of lethal violence where perpetrator aged 15-17 kill other youths is between one and three per year. The number has been unchanged since the beginning of the 1980:s, but reflects a slight decrease in relation to the rise in the number of inhabitants and youths in the nation during this period</p>
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