

considered them generally effective.

Section 6. Discrimination and Societal Abuses

Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: Rape of a person, regardless of gender, including spousal rape and domestic or intimate partner violence, are illegal and the government enforced the law effectively. Penalties for violations range from two to 10 years in prison.

The National Council for Crime Prevention (NCCP) reported 9,962 cases of rape in 2021, an increase of approximately 4 percent from 2020. Ninety-four percent of the cases were against women and girls. Domestic or intimate partner violence remained a problem, and approximately 36,500 cases between adults who knew one another were reported during 2021, a 120 percent increase from 2020. Of these, approximately 23,500 (64 percent) were cases against women.

The law provides for the protection of survivors from contact with their abusers. When necessary, authorities helped survivors protect their identities or obtain new identities and homes. National and local governments helped fund volunteer groups that provided shelter and other assistance for abused women.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): The law prohibits FGM/C for women and girls and the government enforced the law efficiently. Penalties for violation range from two to six years in prison. A report from the National Board of Health and Welfare stated that approximately 5,000 women with the diagnosis FGM/C sought treatment between 2012 and 2018. Ninety-seven percent came from one country in Africa and 87 percent were between the ages of 18 and 39. The government has had an action plan against FGM/C since 2018 and several government agencies actively work to eradicate the practice.

Other Forms of Gender-based Violence: Honor-related violence often involved immigrants from the Middle East, Africa, or South Asia. The national support line for those who need advice in situations concerning so-called honor-related violence reported an increase of reported cases from 784 cases involving 907 suspected survivors in 2020 to 817 cases involving 884 suspected survivors in 2021. The calls mostly concerned child or forced marriage, abduction or being held abroad, or FGM/C.

Sexual Harassment: The law prohibits sexual harassment and provides for criminal penalties ranging from a fine to up to two years in prison. The government generally enforced this law. On January 7, the Coalition for Women in Journalism reported that a local journalist was fired from Expressen, one of the country's largest newspapers, because she spoke out about sexism and harassment in the workplace.

Reproductive Rights: There were no reports of coerced abortion or involuntary sterilization on the part of government authorities.

The government provided access to safe, effective, and equal reproductive healthcare regardless of gender or sexual orientation, as well as access to contraception of choice. Emergency contraception was also available.

NGOs known as the Association for Sexuality Education and Never Forget Pela and Fadime reported on virginity testing and hymenoplasty done by private medical practitioners. The government condemned these practices and stated they were not compatible with health and medical care legislation.

The government provided access to sexual and reproductive health services for survivors of sexual violence. Emergency contraception was available as part of clinical management of rape.

Discrimination: Women have the same legal status and rights as men, including under family, religious, personal status, labor, property, nationality, and inheritance law. The government enforced the laws effectively.

Systemic Racial or Ethnic Violence and Discrimination

The constitution charges public institutions with promoting equality in society and combating discrimination. The constitution prohibits unfavorable treatment of anyone based on ethnic origin, color, or other similar characteristics, and the government generally respected these rights.

Police registered reports of xenophobic crimes, some of which were linked to neo-Nazi or white supremacy ideology. Police investigated and the district attorney's office prosecuted race-related crimes. The Security Service concluded that right-wing extremism was on the rise in the country; right-wing propaganda spread more widely and more individuals were interested in it. Neo-Nazi groups operated legally (see section 2.a.). The Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM) and Nordic Strength (NS) are the largest white supremacy groups with approximately 200 active members in total. The NRM is registered as a political party and participated in the parliamentary and local elections in 2022 but did not win any seats.

There were problems involving vulnerable EU citizens, the vast majority of whom were Roma from Romania and Bulgaria who resided in the country. Roma were subjected to discrimination in healthcare, education, and employment, as well as perceived exclusion from societal functions due to stereotypes. Roma were often denied the right to rent apartments and the right to home language teaching. As EU citizens they are allowed to stay in the country without permission for no more than three months, but authorities did not enforce this limit.

The country's official minority languages are all varieties of Finnish, Yiddish,

Meankieli, Romani Chib, and Sami. Swedish sign language has a legal status similar to the official minority languages. On April 28 the government allocated approximately 40 million kronor (\$3.72 million) per year between 2022 and 2024 to preserve and promote the official minority languages.

Basic training for police officers included training to identify and investigate hate crimes. Emergency call responders were continuously trained to identify hate crime motives in crime reports. Police cooperated with the NGO Victim Support Sweden that helps and supports survivors, witnesses, and others affected by crime.

Police in Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmo have democracy and anti-hate crime groups. The National Center for Preventing Violent Extremism, under the auspices of the NCCP, serves as a clearinghouse for information, best practices, and support of municipalities, agencies, and other actors.

Indigenous Peoples

The constitution charges public institutions with promoting opportunities for the Sami people, ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities, to preserve and develop cultural and social lives of their own. The approximately 20,000 Sami in the country are citizens who have the right to vote in elections and participate in the government, including membership in the country's parliament. They are not represented as a group in parliament, however. A 31-member elected administrative authority called the Sametinget (Sami parliament) represents the Sami people. The Sami parliament acts as an advisory body to the government and has limited decision-making powers in matters related to preserving the Sami culture, language, and schooling. The national parliament and government regulations govern the Sami parliament's operations.

On March 1, the national parliament adopted the Sami Parliament Consultation Order requiring that the government, government agencies, and municipalities

consult with the Sami Parliament or other Sami representatives on issues of special significance to the Sami people. Sami and human rights groups welcomed the increased consultation but criticized the law for not specifying how much influence Sami representatives would have over the decision-making process after the consultation has been carried out.

Longstanding tensions between the Sami and the government over land and natural resources persisted, as did tensions between the Sami and private landowners over reindeer grazing rights. Certain Sami have grazing and fishing rights, depending on their history. The Church of Sweden presented a second official apology to the Sami during an October 21-23 public gathering in Lulea for past abuse committed in the name of the Church.

On March 28, the government gave Beowulf Mining a concession to mine in an area located on traditional Sami grazing land. UNESCO and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed concern about the mine's impact on the environment and reindeer husbandry. Several additional approvals will be required before mining can begin.

Children

Birth Registration: Citizenship is derived from a child's parents. The tax authority immediately registered all children born in the country, regardless of their parents' citizenship or immigration or residency status in the country.

Child Abuse: The law prohibits parents or other caretakers from abusing children mentally or physically. Penalties range from a fine up to 10 years in prison. Cases of child abuse were reported. Authorities may remove abused children from their homes and place them in foster care. Rape of a child carries a penalty of two to 10 years in prison. During 2021 there were 24,310 child abuse cases reported.

Child, Early, and Forced Marriage: The minimum age of marriage is 18, and it is illegal for anyone under 18 to marry. The government legally recognizes as valid the marriage of anyone who comes to the country after the age of 18, even if they were married abroad before the age of 18. The government does not recognize a foreign child marriage if either of the parties was a Swedish citizen or resident in Sweden at the time of marriage. Compelling or allowing a child to marry is punishable by up to two years in prison. Municipalities' social welfare services can petition administrative courts to issue travel restrictions to protect at-risk children from being taken out of the country for marriage. Such children are not to be issued passports and passports that were issued are to be rescinded. The law makes it a crime to take a child who is subject to travel restrictions out of the country with punishment of up to two years in prison for violations.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The law criminalizes “contact with children under 15 for sexual purposes,” including internet contact intended to lead to sexual assault. Penalties range from fines to one year in prison. The law prohibits the sale of children with penalties ranging from two to 10 years in prison. It also bans child pornography with penalties ranging from fines to six years in prison. Authorities enforced the law. The minimum age for consensual sex is 15.

Antisemitism

Leaders of the Jewish community estimated there were 15,000 Jews and approximately 6,000 registered members of Jewish congregations in the country. In its report on hate crime from December 2021, the NCCP registered 170 cases of antisemitic hate crimes in 2020 that constituted five percent of all hate crimes. Most antisemitic hate crimes took place on social media. In 8 percent of cases the hate crime took place near a Jewish place of worship.

Antisemitic hate crimes included threats, verbal abuse, vandalism, graffiti, harassment in schools, and Holocaust denial. Antisemitic incidents were often

perpetrated by groups associated with neo-Nazi movements or corresponded with events in the Middle East. Local Jews were often targeted for antisemitic attacks based on the actions of the Israeli government.

The most reported incidents of antisemitism were hate speech (52 percent of complaints), unlawful threats or harassment (15 percent), vandalism or graffiti (11 percent), and defamation (10 percent).

On January 19, the Expo Foundation reported protesters against COVID-19 restrictions compared themselves to Jewish victims during the Holocaust and wore yellow Stars of David. The messaging was echoed by a local politician. Demonstrators also linked COVID-19 restrictions, vaccinations, and COVID-19 certificates to conspiracy theories of “Jewish World Domination” and the Rothschild family, common antisemitic tropes.

On January 31, the Expo Foundation reported that antisemitic organizations spread their messaging via 15 podcasts on the streaming site Spotify.

On March 2, the Expo Foundation reported a Stockholm politician shared several antisemitic statements on social media that trivialized the Holocaust and alluded to conspiracy theories about a Zionist world order.

On June 20, a report from Malmo University stated antisemitism in Stockholm schools was prevalent and teachers often lacked the tools to address it. On August 11, media reported the new political party Nuance spread antisemitic conspiracy messages via social media, referring to “crushing the heads of Jews.” Nuance received 0.4 percent of the vote in the 2022 general elections but in several suburbs of Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmo, and Orebro, Nuance received between 17 and 30 percent of the vote in municipal elections.

On August 31, the Swedish Labor Court determined that the 2021 firing of a

Jewish neurosurgeon at Nya Karolinska University Hospital (NKS) had no valid grounds.

Police, politicians, media, and Jewish groups stated that antisemitism has been especially prevalent in Malmo. On June 15, the media reported that an imam in Malmo was charged with incitement to racial hatred for spreading antisemitic messages calling Jews “offspring of monkeys and pigs.” Between 2019 and 2023 the municipality is scheduled to allocate 20 million kronor (\$1.9 million) to combat antisemitism in collaboration with the Jewish congregation.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center because Jews in Malmo could be “subject to antisemitic taunts and harassment.”

The Living History Forum is a public authority commissioned to address societal problems related to religious and ethnic tolerance, democracy, and human rights, using the Holocaust and other crimes against humanity as its starting point. The forum sensitized the public, particularly the young, to the need to respect the equal value of all persons, with a specific focus on teaching about the Holocaust as a means of fighting Holocaust denial and antisemitism.

Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State’s *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

Acts of Violence, Criminalization, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity or Expression, or Sex Characteristics

Criminalization: There are no laws criminalizing consensual same-sex sexual conduct between adults or so-called cross-dressing, including de facto

discrimination, such as laws covering “debauchery.”

Violence against LGBTQI+ Persons: LGBTQI+ persons were at higher risk of being subjected to physical violence than the general population. According to the most recent statistics released by NCCP, there were 429 reports of hate crimes against LGBTQI+ persons in 2020.

Discrimination: The law prohibits discrimination by state and nonstate actors against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) persons. The government generally enforced such laws.

Availability of Legal Gender Recognition: There is a legal gender recognition law, but legal gender recognition procedures are not based on self-determination. The right to change one’s legal gender requires a psychiatric or psychological evaluation, but it does not require surgery.

Involuntary or Coercive Medical or Psychological Practices Specifically Targeting LGBTQI+ Individuals: According to a March 1 study, one out of five LGBTQI+ persons between 16 and 25 had experienced someone trying to have that person change, permanently hide, or refrain from living in accordance with their sexual orientation or gender identity or express their gender in the way the person wanted. Five percent had experienced more serious forms of so-called conversion therapy. The most severe cases included physical abuse, lack of access to food, and sexual violence. So-called conversion therapy practices are not banned.

Restrictions of Freedom of Expression, Association, or Peaceful Assembly: There were no restrictions on those speaking out about LGBTQI+ issues.

Persons with Disabilities

Persons with disabilities were able to access health services, public buildings, and

transportation on an equal basis with others. Government regulations require new buildings and public facilities to be fully accessible. The government enforced these provisions. Observers reported cases of insufficient access to privately owned buildings used by the public, such as apartments, restaurants, and bars. Some means of public transportation remained inaccessible.

In 2021 the Equality Ombudsman received 1,212 reports on discrimination related to disability, of which 437 reported accessibility deficiencies. The complaints were mainly about perceived discrimination in working life, education, social services, and trade in goods and services. A large proportion of the complaints concerned the lack of reasonable accommodations in the workplace. In the education system, many cases concerned children and young persons with reading and writing difficulties not receiving sufficient support at school. With respect to trade in goods and services, many of the cases concerned access to premises or services and inadequate communication tools.

On January 27, the Agency for Participation reported persons with disabilities were encountering difficulties obtaining employment due to lack of coordination between the Swedish Public Employment Agency and the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, lack of clear information, and the time-consuming transfer of cases between different officers. The agency also reported the level of education was lower among persons with disabilities than among others in the population. Agency reports revealed two reasons for this report: special support was provided too late and students with disabilities felt more insecure than other students. Among persons ages 30 to 64 with disabilities, 33 percent had postsecondary education compared with 47 percent for the rest of the population. Within the group of persons with disabilities between the ages of 20 and 36, 9 percent had dropped out of upper secondary school compared with 3 percent in the rest of the population. In 2020 almost 13,500 students with disabilities enrolled in compulsory special school, constituting about 1.2 percent of all students in this age

group. Of this group, approximately 5,130 students attended upper secondary special school and 1,250 students with disabilities attended special resource school. On April 19, media reported that a municipality had to pay compensation to a child with a disability due to a lack of wheelchair access that led to isolation and the inability to maintain personal hygiene.

The Agency for Participation noted that some polling stations in the general elections of 2018 were inaccessible for persons with disabilities. In the 2018 elections, 84 percent of persons with disabilities voted, compared with 91 percent of the rest of the population. On September 9, the Swedish Association of the Visually Impaired reported that the Election Authority had distributed faulty braille ballot papers to those visually impaired and, as a result, many visually impaired voters may have voted for the wrong party. The Association urged its members to re-vote, but it is unclear how many successfully did so on such short notice.

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

Societal discrimination and violence against immigrants continued to be a problem.

Several districts where most of the population was of immigrant origin or parentage suffered social segregation from the rest of the country. The result was lower levels of education, higher levels of unemployment, and separation from the country's mainstream culture. This was mainly due to poor Swedish-language skills.

In 2021 the NCCP identified 3,398 police reports from 2020 with hate-crime or xenophobic motives. Of the reports, 15 percent were Afrophobic and 9 percent were Islamophobic.

According to two 2022 Stockholm County Board research reports conducted by Uppsala University and Lund University, discrimination against immigrants from

Africa is widespread in the labor market. The reports found the probability of a person with one or two parents from Africa attaining a managerial position was five times lower than for the rest of the population, regardless of educational background. The average salary for individuals who did not have one or two parents from Africa was 50 percent higher than for persons with one or two parents from Africa, despite having an equivalent level of education.

On September 20 media reported that a school in Upplands Väsby was accused of discrimination after moving newly arrived migrant students from the school to nearby barracks where they were instructed separately from the other students.

Section 7. Worker Rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The law provides for the right of workers to form and join independent unions, bargain collectively, and conduct legal strikes. The law prohibits antiunion discrimination and provides for protection of workers from being fired because of union activity. If a court finds a dismissal to be unlawful, the employee has the right to reinstatement. Foreign companies may be exempt from collective bargaining provided they meet minimum working conditions and levels of pay. Public sector employees enjoy the right to strike, subject to limitations in the collective agreements protecting the public's immediate health and security. The government mediation service may also intervene to postpone a strike for up to 14 days for mediation. The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) claims the law restricts the rights of the country's trade unions to take industrial action on behalf of foreign workers in foreign companies operating in the country. The law allows unions to conduct their activities largely without interference.

The government effectively enforces laws protecting freedom of association, collective bargaining, and the right for workers to strike. The Labor Court settles

any dispute that affects the relationship between employers and employees. An employer organization, an employee organization, or an employer who has entered into a collective agreement on an individual basis may lodge claims. The Labor Court may impose penalties for violations commensurate with those under other laws involving denials of civil rights. Penalties are regularly applied against violators. Administrative and judicial procedures are not subject to lengthy delays and appeals.

Workers and employer exercise all legal collective bargaining rights that are protected by the government. The government and employers respect freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. ITUC reported no serious violations of worker rights in 2021 and from January to September in 2022.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor, including child labor, and the government effectively enforced the law. Penalties of imprisonment were generally commensurate with those for similar serious crimes. Forced labor involving adult trafficking victims occurred in the agriculture sector and included companies that provided foreign labor for berry picking, construction, hospitality, and domestic work (see section 7.c.). In some cases, employers or contractors providing labor seized the passports of workers and withheld their pay. There were reports of cases where foreign workers were tricked into coming to the country to work in the restaurant or construction sectors only to be paid less than was promised when they arrived. Resources and inspections were adequate. In May 2022, the law on labor exploitation was used for the first time since its implementation in 2018 to convict a restaurant owner for exploiting two foreign workers from Bangladesh. There were reports of cases when undocumented migrants were forced to work when they were sick and were subjected to verbal abuse.

Also see the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The law prohibits all the worst forms of child labor. It permits full-time employment from the age of 16 under the supervision of local authorities. Employees younger than 18 may work only during daytime and under adult supervision. Children as young as 13 may work part-time or perform light work with parental permission. The law limits the types of work in which children may or may not engage. For example, a child may not work with dangerous machinery or chemicals. A child may also not work alone or be responsible for handling cash transactions. The law considers a violation of these limits a civil rather than a criminal violation.

According to the law, forcing a child to work may be treated as coercion, deprivation of liberty, or child abuse, and it carries a wide range of penalties, including fines and imprisonment. The government effectively enforced these laws and regulations. Criminal penalties are commensurate with those for other serious crimes, such as kidnapping, and inspection was sufficient to enforce compliance. Penalties were regularly applied against violators.

On August 10, media reported that 10 children from Bulgaria were exploited as berry pickers in Alvsbyn. According to the most recent government statistics from the NCCP, 196 suspected human trafficking cases were reported to police in 2020. There were 15 cases of child sex trafficking, five cases of child forced labor, one case of child forced begging, one case of forced child war service, and 25 cases of other forms of child trafficking.

Boys were mainly subjected to forced begging and forced petty theft. Girls were mainly subjected to sexual exploitation, forced begging, and child marriage.

Police and social services reportedly acted promptly when these prohibited cases were reported.

d. Discrimination with Respect to Employment and Occupation

The law prohibits discrimination with respect to employment and occupation based on religion, sex, ethnicity (including race, national origin, color, and in some cases refugee status), disability (including HIV and AIDS status), age, and sexual orientation or gender identity. The government effectively enforced applicable law and penalties were commensurate with similar violations. Penalties were regularly applied against violators. The law requires equal pay for equal work. The government effectively enforced the law prohibiting gender discrimination by investigating and prosecuting complaints.

The equality ombudsperson investigated complaints of gender discrimination in the labor market. In 2021 the ombudsperson received 849 complaints of discrimination in the labor market, of which 263 were related to gender, 68 to sexual harassment, 187 to disability and 331 to ethnicity. The World Economic Forum estimated that earned income for women was less than that for men. Complaints may also be filed with the courts or with the employer. Labor unions generally mediated in cases filed with the employer.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

Wage and Hour Laws: There is no national minimum wage law. Annual collective bargaining agreements set wages within industries, which were greater than the poverty income level. By regulation, both foreign and domestic employers must offer conditions of employment on par with the country's collective agreements. Nonunion establishments generally observed these contracts as well.

The labor law and collective bargaining agreements regulate overtime and rest periods. The law allows a maximum of 200 hours of overtime annually. Collective agreements determined compensation for overtime, which could take the form of money or time off. The law requires a minimum period of 36 consecutive hours of rest, preferably on weekends, over a seven-day period.

Occupational Safety and Health: Occupational safety and health (OSH) standards were appropriate for the main industries. The responsibility for identifying unsafe situations remains with OSH experts and not the worker.

If an employee finds that the work involves an immediate and serious danger to life or health, the employee must immediately notify the employer or safety ombudsperson. Workers have the right to remove themselves from unsafe conditions without jeopardy to their employment. Safety ombudspersons have authority to stop unsafe activity immediately and to call in an inspector. An employer may be fined for violating OSH regulations.

Foreign seasonal workers, including berry pickers from Asia and Bulgaria, faced poor living and working conditions. The guidelines of the Swedish Retail and Food Federation cover EU citizens who pick berries in the country but not workers from outside the EU. Under the guidelines, berry pickers are to be informed that they have the right to sell their berries to all buyers and that nobody has the right to control how, when, and where they pick wild berries. A foreign company providing berry pickers to a local company must also demonstrate how it expects to pay workers in case of limited work or a bad harvest. The guidelines task food and retail organizations and brokers with ensuring their implementation.

On September 1, the Swedish Construction Workers' Union criticized the normalization of using cheap labor for major construction projects, such as in the city of Linköping. The union argued that working conditions for foreign workers in the construction sector had deteriorated over time. There were reports of 20 to

30 workers living in the same apartment and sleeping in shifts.

The Work Environment Authority reported industrial accidents caused the deaths of 48 workers in 2021. The construction, transport, and manufacturing sectors had the greatest number of deaths caused by industrial accidents between 2011 and 2021. Vehicles were often involved in the accidents.

Wage, Hour, and OSH Enforcement: The Work Environment Authority effectively enforced wage, overtime, and OSH laws. Penalties were commensurate with those for similar crimes, such as fraud or negligence. Penalties were regularly applied against violators.

In 2021 the Work Environment Authority conducted approximately 17,877 inspections. Inspectors had the authority to conduct unannounced inspections and initiate sanctions. In 2021 the authority started a cooperation with seven other government agencies and carried out 2,007 cross-agency visits to check on work permits, taxes, and working environment regulations. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Work Environment Authority conducted approximately half of its inspections at a distance using video meetings or telephone. The Work Environment Authority conducted most inspections in construction, retail, education, production, transport, and healthcare.

The Work Environment Authority issued occupational health and safety regulations and trained union stewards and safety ombudsperson whom government inspectors monitored. The number of labor inspectors was not sufficient to enforce compliance. In 2021, there were 267 labor inspectors for approximately 5.1 million workers. ILO standards call for one inspector per 10,000 workers, while the country only had one inspector per 18,726 workers. Inspections by the union Byggnads, presented in January, claimed serious shortcomings, such as lacking safety standards and economic corruption. There was a partial moratorium on physical inspections during 2021 as a result of the

COVID-19 pandemic.