

# Sweden - Human Rights Scorecard <sup>1</sup>

Sweden, officially the Kingdom of Sweden, is a Scandinavian country in Northern Europe. It borders Norway and Finland, and is connected to Denmark by a bridge-tunnel across the Öresund. Sweden is the third-largest country in the European Union by area. With the ending of the Cold War, Sweden joined the European Union, but declined NATO membership.<sup>2</sup>

**Official language:** Swedish

**Ethnic groups:** There are no official statistics on ethnicity, but according to Statistics Sweden around 20.1 per cent of inhabitants of Sweden were of a foreign background in 2012. The most common countries of origin were Finland (2.38%), former Yugoslavia or post Yugoslav states (2.06%), Iraq (1.74%), Poland (0.91%) and Iran (0.84%).

**Government:** Unitary parliamentary constitutional monarchy

- King: Carl XVI Gustaf
- Speaker: Urban Ahlin
- Prime Minister: Stefan Löfven

**Death penalty:** Abolitionist for all crimes

**Population:** 9,801,616

**Life expectancy:** 81.98 years

**Under-5 mortality:** 2.6 deaths per 1,000 births

**Adult literacy:** 99 percent



## Section 1: Respect for the Integrity of the Person

Respect for the integrity of the individual is the most fundamental of human rights groupings. It guarantees protection of the person to ensure the right to life, and freedom from torture. It also prevents arbitrary detention, and disappearances, and ensures the right to a free and fair trial when accused.

### Freedom from arbitrary or unlawful deprivation of life



**Respected**<sup>3</sup>

There are no reports the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings in Sweden in 2013.

### Freedom from disappearance



**Respected**<sup>4</sup>

There are no reports of politically motivated disappearances, abductions, or kidnappings.

### Freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment



**Respected**<sup>5</sup>

The constitution and law prohibit torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. In 2013 the national prosecutor's office received 6,200 reports of alleged misconduct and excessive use of force by security forces. Most cases were dropped due to lack of evidence.

### Freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention



**Respected**<sup>6</sup>

The constitution and law prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention, and the government generally observes these prohibitions.

### Freedom from denial of fair public trial



**Respected**<sup>7</sup>

The constitution provides for the right to a fair trial, and an independent judiciary generally enforces this right. Defendants have the right to be present at their trial and to consult an attorney in a timely manner. If convicted, defendants have the right of appeal.

### Freedom from arbitrary interference with privacy, family, home or correspondence



**Respected**<sup>8</sup>

The constitution and law prohibit arbitrary interference with privacy, family, home or correspondence, and there are no reports the government failed to respect these prohibitions.

## Section 2: Respect for Civil Liberties

*Civil liberties are a basic category of internationally recognized human rights. They include the freedoms of expression, assembly, association, education, and religion. These are inalienable rights which should not be breached by government, and should ensure the rights of all, including women and minority groups.*

### Freedom of speech and press (*Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index*)<sup>9</sup>



**Score: 9.47, Rank: 5 / 180 – Largely free, diverse and independent**<sup>10</sup>

The constitution provides for freedom of speech and the press. The law criminalizes expression considered to be hate speech or threats. Sweden's media are independent. The ethnic minority press is entitled to the same subsidies as the Swedish-language press.

### Freedom from academic censorship



**Respected**<sup>11</sup>

There are no government restrictions on academic freedom or cultural events.

### Freedom of peaceful assembly and association



**Respected**<sup>12</sup>

The constitution provides for the freedoms of assembly and association, and the government generally respects these rights.

### Freedom of religion



**Respected**<sup>13</sup>

The constitution and other laws protect religious freedom. In practice, the government generally respects religious freedom. There are some limitations on religious practice, such as a ban on kosher slaughter and the prohibition of home schooling on religious or philosophical grounds.

### Protection of refugees and stateless persons



**Respected**<sup>14</sup>

The law provides for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government has established a system for providing protection to refugees. Stateless persons in Sweden can be granted permanent residence and obtain citizenship through the same naturalization process.

### Overall protection of civil liberties (*FreedomHouse Civil Liberties Index*)<sup>15 16</sup>



**1 / 7 – Free**<sup>17</sup>

Freedoms of speech, assembly and association are respected in law and practice. Religious freedom is constitutionally guaranteed. Academic freedom is ensured for all. Sweden's judiciary and media are independent.

## Section 3: Respect for Political Rights

*Political rights ensure all members of society are able to influence the political process. The assessment of political rights includes an examination of the electoral process and the selection of representatives, the political empowerment of the general public, the tolerance of dissent, the accountability of government, etc..*

### Overall protection of political rights (*FreedomHouse Political Rights Index*)<sup>18</sup>



**1 / 7 – Free**<sup>19</sup>

Sweden's principal religious, ethnic, and immigrant groups are represented in the parliament. The approximately 20,000 Sami (indigenous people) in the country are full citizens with the right to vote in elections and participate in the government, including as members of parliament.

## Section 4: Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

*The civil, political, economic and social rights exercised within a country are often modulated by the degree of transparency and freedom from corruption. Various international metrics assess transparency and corruption, including the OECD anti-bribery convention, the Bribe Payers Index, and the Open Budget Index.*

### Transparency and freedom from corruption (*Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index*)<sup>20</sup>



**Score: 87%, Rank: 4 / 175 – Very limited corruption**<sup>21</sup>

Corruption rates in Sweden are low. The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, and the government generally implements these laws effectively. The country has one of the most robust freedom of information statutes in the world.

## Section 5: Governmental Response to Criticism

*This section deals specifically with the response heads of state have to civil society or international human rights reports.*

### Governmental attitudes vis-à-vis independent investigations of alleged human rights violations



#### Respected<sup>22</sup>

A variety of domestic and international human rights groups generally operate without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials are often cooperative and responsive to their views.

## Section 6: Discrimination and Societal Abuses

*Legal and social discriminatory practices related to sex, race, creed or sexual orientation, are violations of human rights. Countries with strong civil liberty traditions should have a fair legal system that ensures the rule of law, allows free economic activity, and ensures equality of opportunity for all.*

### Rights of women (World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index)<sup>23</sup>



#### Score: 81.7%, Rank: 4 / 136 – Almost Equal Rights<sup>24</sup>

Women have the same legal status and rights as men. Although women are underrepresented in high-ranking positions in both the public and the private sectors, during the first half of 2013, there were 152 women among the 349 parliamentarians, and 12 women in the 24-member cabinet.

### Rights of Children (KidsRights Index Overall Score)<sup>25</sup>



#### Score: 83.3%, Rank: 8 / 165 – Protected<sup>26</sup>

Adults, including parents, are subject to prosecution if they physically punish a child, including slapping or spanking. The minimum age of marriage is 18 years, and 15 years for consensual sex. Authorities may remove abused children from their homes and place them in foster care.

### Rights of persons with disabilities



#### Partly respected<sup>27</sup>

The law prohibits employers and universities from discriminating against persons/students with disabilities. The law does not cover accessibility. Regulations for new buildings require full accessibility, yet many buildings and some means of public transportation remain inaccessible.

### Rights of national/racial/ethnic minorities (e.g. discrimination, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism etc.)



#### Partly respected<sup>28</sup>

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race and ethnicity, but the government fails to effectively enforce these prohibitions. There are reports of discrimination and violence against members of ethnic and religious minorities, such as Roma, Muslims, and Indigenous people.

### Freedom from abuse and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity



#### Respected<sup>29 30</sup>

Although there are isolated incidents of societal violence and discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people, the government is working on curtailing discrimination against the LGBT community. Antidiscrimination laws do exist and are generally enforced.

## Section 7: Workers' Rights

*Workers' rights are a group of legal rights relating to labour relations between workers and their employers. At their core are things like the ability to negotiate pay, benefits, terms of employment, and safe working conditions. These rights often devolve from the right to unionize and access to collective bargaining.*

### Rights to freedom of association and to collective bargaining



#### Respected<sup>31</sup>

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 workers cannot be fired because of union activity. Trade union federations are strong and well organized.

### Freedom from forced or compulsory labour



#### Respected<sup>32</sup>

The law prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor, including by children, and the government enforces these laws. Resources and inspections were adequate. Penalties range from two to 10 years in prison and are comparable with other serious violations.

## Freedom from forced labour for children, and a minimum age of employment



### Respected<sup>33</sup>

There are no reports of child labor. The law permits full-time employment from the age of 16. Employees under the age of 18 may work only during the daytime and under supervision. The government implements these laws and regulations. Resources for enforcement are adequate.

## Right to acceptable conditions of work



### Respected<sup>34</sup>

There is no national minimum wage law, but annual collective bargaining agreements set wages, and regulate overtime and rest periods. The law sets a 40-hour workweek and provides employees with a minimum of five weeks' paid annual leave. Authorities effectively enforced these rules.

## Right to employment



### 8.2% - Reasonable unemployment<sup>35</sup>

Sweden's unemployment rate between 2011 and 2014 remained relatively constant, hovering between 7.8 and 8.2.

<sup>1</sup> A hybrid human rights and freedoms model, leveraging both legal principles and intuitive classifications, has been used for this human rights assessment. The CJPME Foundation has sought to integrate as many independent sources and metrics into its summary analysis as possible. In many cases, for qualitative material pertaining to the respect for a particular right in a country, the CJPME Foundation has drawn on material from Human Rights Watch and the US State Department country reports. Human Rights Watch (HRW) publishes a World Report which assesses the respect for human rights in each country. HRW uses a methodology of local reporting and interviewing, combined with research and analysis to assess the level of respect of human rights. The U.S State Department keeps an updated publication on the state of human rights internationally. Their system of research and accountability draws from the research of official US State Department officials, as well as local civil-society and international human rights organizations.

<sup>2</sup> Commonly-known information on the country is drawn from various Internet sources, including Google country pages, and Amnesty International. For death penalty see: "Death sentences and executions in 2013." Amnesty International. March 24, 2014. Accessed July 24, 2015.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/act50/001/2014/en/>.

<sup>3</sup> "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 Sweden." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2013. Accessed July 24, 2015.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=236582#wrapper>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State. For purposes of the present analysis, a "disappearance" is different than simple arbitrary detention because a "disappearance" is considered permanent.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State.

<sup>9</sup> The Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders ranks the level of freedom of information in 179 countries. This is determined through the polling of local NGOs and freedom of expression civil society organizations across the globe. This index is also determined by local correspondents and follow-up work done on reports of infringement to press freedom where ever it takes place. Their methodology looks at six different indicators: 1) Media pluralism, 2) Media independence, 3) Media atmosphere and self-censorship, 4) the Law around media, 5) Media transparency, and 6) Media infrastructure. The score from these six indicators is combined with a rating for the violence against journalists in the country to create an overall score. The CJPME Foundation classifies the Press Freedom Index as follows: 0 – 14.99 (25 countries), Largely free, diverse and independent; 15 – 24.99 (29 countries), Mostly free, diverse and independent; 25 – 29.99 (32 countries), Partially free, diverse and independent; 30 – 39.99 (49 countries), Partially controlled, limited or intimidated; 40 & higher (42 countries), Highly controlled, limited or intimidated.

<sup>10</sup> "World Press Freedom Index." Reporters Without Borders: For Freedom of Information. January 1, 2015. Accessed July 24, 2015. <https://index.rsf.org/#!/index-details/SWE>

<sup>11</sup> "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 Sweden." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2013. Accessed July 24, 2015.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=236582#wrapper>

<sup>12</sup> "Sweden." World Report 2014: Sweden. January 1, 2014. Accessed July 24, 2015.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=236582#wrapper>

<sup>13</sup> "Sweden." International Religious Freedom Report for 2013. January 1, 2013. Accessed July 24, 2015.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2013&dliid=222273#wrapper>

<sup>14</sup> "Sweden." World Report 2014: Sweden. January 1, 2014. Accessed July 24, 2015.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=236582#wrapper>

<sup>15</sup> Freedom House is an internationally recognized NGO based in the U.S which documents and rates the quality of democratic practice in a given country. Freedom House splits its grading system between the two areas of civil and political rights in a country. On each scale, the Freedom House rating is 1-2.5 (free), 3-5.5 (partly free) and 6-7 (not free).

<sup>16</sup> Freedom House's Civil Liberties index measures things such as a) freedom of expression and belief, b) associational and organizational rights, c) the rule of law, and d) personal autonomy and individual rights. Freedom House rates countries as 1-2.5 (free), 3-5.5 (partly free) and 6-7 (not free). Accessed July 24, 2015.

<https://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2014/methodology#.VldwWzHF98F>.

<sup>17</sup> "Sweden." Freedom in the World 2015: Sweden. January 1, 2015. Accessed July 24, 2015. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2014/cameroon#.VVtjEQa9ho>.

<sup>18</sup> See footnote about the Freedom House organization above. The Freedom House Political Rights assessment looks at a) the electoral process, b) political pluralism and participation, and c) the functioning of government. Accessed July 24, 2015. <https://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2014/methodology#.VldwWzHF98F>

<sup>19</sup> "Sweden." Freedom in the World 2014: Sweden January 1, 2014. Accessed July 24, 2015. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2015/sweden#.VbJSCc6OZho>

<sup>20</sup> Transparency International (TI) publishes a "Corruption Perceptions Index" annually, which is based on independent research and polling. The main categories of corruption are broken down within the index to provide particulars on issues including things such as perceptions of corruption, control of corruption, and financial secrecy. A country receives a score on 100; the higher the score, the less corrupt the society. The CJPME foundation has classified them into categories as follows: 80-100 (11 countries): Very limited corruption; 60-79 (27 countries): Limited corruption; 40-59 (41 countries): Some corruption; 20-39 (80 countries): Highly corrupt; 0-19 (15 countries): Extremely corrupt

<sup>21</sup> "Sweden." Corruption by Country. January 1, 2014. Accessed July 24, 2015. <http://www.transparency.org/country#SWE>

<sup>22</sup> "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 Sweden." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2013. Accessed July 24, 2015. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=236582#wrapper>

<sup>23</sup> This metric is based on the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index. 0.00 denotes inequality between the sexes, and 1.00 denotes fully equality between the sexes. This index looks at four subdomains: economic participation and opportunity; educational attainment; health and survival; and political empowerment. Each country is given a percentage score; the higher the percentage, the better the protections. The CJPME Foundation classed the percentages as follows: 80-100% (5 countries): Almost equal rights; 70-79% (60 countries): Somewhat unequal rights; 0-69% (77 countries): Very unequal rights

<sup>24</sup> "Sweden." World Economic Forum. January 1, 2014. Accessed July 24, 2015. <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2014/economies/#economy=SWE>

<sup>25</sup> This metric is based on the KidsRights Index Overall Score. This index has five subdomains: life expectancy and maternal mortality; health; education; protection; and child rights environment. Each country is given a percentage score; the higher the percentage, the better the protections. KidsRights classes the countries according to these percentages, and the CJPME Foundation has given each class a term as follows: 70-100% (77 countries): Protected; 60-70% (29 countries): Somewhat protected; 45-50% (33 countries): Slightly vulnerable; 30-45% (12 countries): Highly vulnerable; Lower than 30% (11 countries): Extremely vulnerable

<sup>26</sup> "The KidsRights Index: Overall Score." The KidsRights Index. January 1, 2014. Accessed July 24, 2015. <http://www.kidsrightsindex.org/Portals/5/pdf/Pdf-documenten%20juli%202014/The%20KidsRights%20Index%20-%20overall%20score%20-%20juli%202014.pdf>.

<sup>27</sup> "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 Sweden." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2013. Accessed July 24, 2015. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=236582#wrapper>

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State.

<sup>29</sup> "ILGA World Map." International Lesbian Gay and Intersex Association. January 1, 2014. Accessed July 24, 2015. <http://ilga.org/>. See also Ibid. U.S Department of State.

<sup>30</sup> ILGA, the International, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, was founded in 1978 on the principle of highlighting state sponsored homophobia where it exists around the world. ILGA annually publishes a map with an accompanying report on sexual and gender based harassment, which focuses on both the legal and non-legal acts of state sponsored discrimination.

<sup>31</sup> "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 Sweden." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2013. Accessed July 24, 2015. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=236582#wrapper>

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State. See also a well-done Wikipedia comparison of wage, income and work week metrics across countries at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_minimum\\_wages\\_by\\_country](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_minimum_wages_by_country)

<sup>35</sup> "Global Employment Trends." International Labour Organization. January 1, 2013. Accessed July 24, 2015. [http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-employment-trends/2014/WCMS\\_233936/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-employment-trends/2014/WCMS_233936/lang--en/index.htm)