

Sweden 2023 Human Rights Report

Executive Summary

There were no significant changes in the human rights situation in Sweden during the year.

There were no credible reports of significant human rights abuses.

The government took credible steps to identify and punish officials who may have committed human rights abuses.

Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person

a. Arbitrary Deprivation of Life and Other Unlawful or Politically Motivated Killings

There were no reports that the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings, including extrajudicial killings, during the year.

There were widespread killings by criminal groups. The government continued its offensive against organized crime by allocating extensive resources to the judiciary and law enforcement.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of disappearances by or on behalf of government

authorities.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and Other Related Abuses

The constitution and law prohibited such practices and there were no credible reports that government officials employed them.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Prison conditions were generally safe, and prisoners were generally well treated. There were cases of overcrowding, prolonged isolation, and detention for periods longer than the legal limit.

Abusive Physical Conditions: Detention centers, jails, and prisons suffered from overcrowding and, at times, stopped visits from family members due to the lack of staff resources. Media reported in November 2022 there was an increase in the number of minors isolated in detention centers for periods longer than the legal limit of three months. Based on statistics from the Swedish Prison and Probation Service, media reported July 13 that violence and threats in women's prisons had significantly increased.

The justice ombudsperson on February 14 criticized the prison in Mariefred for isolating inmates without proper cause.

Administration: Authorities conducted investigations of credible allegations

of mistreatment.

Independent Monitoring: The government permitted monitoring by independent, nongovernmental observers. The Red Cross conducted weekly visits to prisons and detention centers, including visits with individuals held in custody by the Swedish Migration Agency.

Improvements: The government expanded prison cell capacity by more than 500 cells.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The constitution and law prohibited arbitrary arrest and detention and provided for the right of any person to challenge the lawfulness of their arrest or detention in court. The government generally observed these requirements.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

Police were required to file charges within six hours against persons who were detained for disturbing public order or who were considered dangerous, and within 12 hours against individuals detained on other grounds. Police could hold a person six hours for questioning, or up to 12 hours without a court order if it was deemed necessary for the investigation. Police could hold a person under age 15 for three hours for questioning, or up to six hours without a court order if it was deemed necessary for the

investigation. After questioning, authorities were required either to arrest or release an individual, based on the level of suspicion. If a suspect was arrested, the prosecutor had 24 hours (or three days in exceptional circumstances) to request continued detention. Authorities were required to arraign an arrested suspect within 48 hours and begin initial prosecution within two weeks unless there were extenuating circumstances. Authorities generally respected these requirements. In its 2021 report, the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) expressed concern that, despite authorities' assurances to the contrary, notification of custody of detainees was frequently delayed, often until the first court hearing and sometimes up to the full four days in police custody. Police officers with whom the CPT delegation spoke confirmed this was routine practice and expressed their belief that the matter lay with the senior investigators or prosecutors in charge of a case.

Although there was no system of bail, courts routinely released defendants pending trial unless authorities considered them dangerous, had reason to believe they would tamper with witnesses or evidence, or believed the suspects might leave the country. The law limited pretrial detention to a maximum of three months for children and nine months for adults. The law afforded detainees prompt access to lawyers. The CPT report noted that access to legal counsel was at times delayed. A suspect had a right to legal representation when the prosecutor requested their detention beyond 24 hours (or three days in exceptional circumstances). Detainees could retain a

lawyer of their choice. In criminal cases the government was obligated to provide an attorney, regardless of the defendant's financial situation. Suspects were frequently detained incommunicado for longer periods than the law permitted.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The constitution and law provided for an independent judiciary and the government generally respected judicial independence and impartiality.

Trial Procedures

The constitution provided for the right to a fair and public trial, and the judiciary generally enforced this right.

While defendants had a right to a public trial, cases of a sensitive nature, including those involving children, rape, and national security, could be closed to the public.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

f. Transnational Repression

Not applicable.

g. Property Seizure and Restitution

Not applicable.

h. Arbitrary or Unlawful Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The constitution and law prohibited such actions, and there were no reports that the government failed to respect these prohibitions.

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties

a. Freedom of Expression, Including for Members of the Press and Other Media

The constitution provided for freedom of expression, including for members of the press and other media, and the government generally respected this right. An independent media, an effective judiciary, and a functioning democratic political system combined to promote freedom of expression, including for media members.

Freedom of Expression: The law criminalized expression considered to be “hate speech” and prohibited threats or statements of contempt for a group or member of a group based on race, color, national or ethnic origin, religious belief, or sexual orientation. Penalties for hate speech ranged from

fines to a maximum of four years in prison. The country's courts held it was illegal to wear xenophobic symbols or racist paraphernalia or to display signs and banners with inflammatory symbols at rallies.

Violence and Harassment: On August 23, Reporters Without Borders reported that journalists who lived in exile in Sweden were regularly followed and threatened. On March 19, unidentified individuals in Stockholm assaulted journalist Ahmet Dönmez, who lost consciousness and was treated in intensive care. Dönmez left Türkiye in 2015 and reported on alleged links between organized crime and the Turkish state.

Censorship or Content Restrictions for Members of the Press and Other Media, Including Online Media: An espionage law that entered into force on January 1 criminalized the unauthorized disclosure of secret information that could damage the country's relations with other countries or international organizations. Although outlets could escape penalties if the purpose of an act was deemed justifiable, for example for journalistic and opinion-forming purposes or to reveal abuse against an individual, that determination was up to the courts. Critics including the Swedish branch of the nongovernmental organization (NGO) International Commission of Jurists and major media companies SVT and Radio Sweden argued the amendment could encourage self-censorship and discourage sources from stepping forward because whistleblowers might not be protected. Member of the European Parliament Abir Al-Sahlani, RSF, and the newspaper

Journalisten warned the country's Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation legislation was insufficient to protect journalists and explained that media often used geo-blocking to avoid lawsuits from actors in other countries.

Libel/Slander Laws: Defamation was a criminal offense punishable by fines or a maximum of two years in prison in the case of gross defamation. Media reported few cases of libel or slander reached courts.

Actions to Expand Freedom of Expression, Including for Members of the Press and Other Media: Parliament enacted new legislation to protect journalists from threats, effective August 1. The new law enhanced criminal penalties for crimes against media professionals.

Internet Freedom

The government did not restrict or disrupt access to the internet or censor online content. Companies that acquired a publisher's license were exempt from data protection laws and could publish residents' personally identifiable information, including addresses and financial information.

b. Freedoms of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The constitution provided for the freedoms of peaceful assembly and association, and the government generally respected these rights.

c. Freedom of Religion

See the Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report* at <https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/>.

d. Freedom of Movement and the Right to Leave the Country

The constitution and law provided for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights.

e. Protection of Refugees

The government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to refugees, returning refugees, or asylum seekers as well as other persons of concern.

Access to Asylum: The law provided for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government had established a system for providing protection to refugees. Applicants could appeal unfavorable asylum decisions.

Refoulement: On August 4, the Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Rights reported the Swedish Migration

Agency (SMA), the Migration Court, and the Migration Court of Appeal had systematically denied lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) refugees asylum and extradited them to countries where they risked the death penalty. The report alleged the criteria which authorities used in credibility assessments for these cases were contrary to Swedish and international law. The SMA denied these allegations. Between November 2020 and May, authorities denied asylum claims in 1,305 out of 1,360 such cases (96 percent) that were examined.

Access to Basic Services: Ukrainian refugees under the Temporary Protection Directive older than 18 only received emergency medical and dental care.

Durable Solutions: The government accepted refugees for resettlement, offered naturalization to refugees residing on the country's territory continuously for two to five years, and assisted in refugees' voluntary return to their homes with logistical and monetary support.

Temporary Protection: The government provided temporary protection to approximately 45,000 individuals from Ukraine who might not have qualified as refugees.

f. Status and Treatment of Internally Displaced Persons

(IDPs)

Not applicable.

g. Stateless Persons

According to the UNHCR's 2022 *Global Trends Report*, 42,511 stateless persons were in the country. This was due to the influx of migrants and refugees and the birth of children to stateless parents who remained stateless until either one parent acquired citizenship or a special application for citizenship (available for stateless children under the age of five) was made. The country lacked a definition of a stateless person as well as a statelessness determination procedure in domestic law. The country had not acceded to the Council of Europe Convention on the Avoidance of Statelessness in Relation to State Succession or the Convention on the Rights of all Migrant Workers and their Families, and there was no specific procedure to determine the nationality of children at birth. In 2021, the UNHCR recommended the country "introduce a definition of a stateless person in Swedish law, establish a statelessness determination procedure, and ensure that children born stateless in Sweden will acquire citizenship automatically or as soon as possible after birth."

Stateless persons who were granted permanent residence could obtain citizenship through the same naturalization process as other permanent residents. Gaining citizenship generally took four to eight years, depending

upon the individual's grounds for residency, ability to establish identity, and lack of a criminal record.

Section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process

The constitution provided citizens the ability to choose their government in free and fair periodic elections held by secret ballot and based on universal and equal suffrage.

Elections and Political Participation

Abuses or Irregularities in Recent Elections: National elections in 2022 were widely reported to be fair and free of abuses and irregularities.

Section 4. Corruption in Government

The law provided criminal penalties for corruption by officials, and the government generally implemented the law effectively. There were isolated reports of government corruption.

For additional information concerning corruption in the country, please see the Department of State's *Investment Climate Statement* for the country, and the Department of State's *International Narcotics Strategy Control Report*, which includes information on financial crimes.

Section 5. Governmental Posture Towards International and Nongovernmental Monitoring and Investigation of Alleged Abuses of Human Rights

A variety of domestic and international human rights groups generally operated without government restriction to monitor or investigate human rights conditions or cases and publish their findings. Government officials were often cooperative and responsive to the views of these groups.

Government Human Rights Bodies: The country had nine national ombudspersons: four justice ombudspersons; the chancellor of justice; the children's ombudsperson; the consumer ombudsperson; the child and school student ombudsperson; and the equality ombudsperson with responsibility for ethnicity, gender, transsexual identity, religion, age, sexual orientation, and persons with disabilities. There were normally ombudspersons at the municipal level as well. The ombudspersons enjoyed the government's cooperation and operated without government or party interference. They had adequate resources, and observers considered them generally effective. In the spring of 2022, the government created a truth commission to investigate the abuses of the Indigenous Sami community by the state.

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 were illegal, and the government enforced the law effectively. Penalties for violations ranged from two to 10 years in prison.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): The law prohibited FGM/C for women and girls and the government enforced the law efficiently. Penalties for violation ranged from two to 10 years in prison. The National Board of Health and Welfare estimated in June that approximately 68,000 women and girls may have been exposed to some form of FGM/C. The government had an action plan against FGM/C and several government agencies actively worked to eradicate the practice.

Other Forms of Gender-based Violence or Harassment: Honor-related violence often involved immigrants from the Middle East, Africa, or South Asia. Cases mostly concerned child or forced marriage, abduction or being held abroad, or FGM/C.

Discrimination: The law provided the same legal status and rights for women as for men, and those laws were generally respected.

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 health care regardless of gender or sexual orientation, as well as access to contraception of choice. Emergency contraception was also available. The government continued an investigation into how virginity testing and hymen reconstruction surgery could be banned, and on July 3, the investigating committee reported that the practices took place in the country, within a cohort of private medical practitioners.

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

Systemic Racial or Ethnic Violence and Discrimination

The constitution charged public institutions with promoting equality in society and combating discrimination. The constitution prohibited unfavorable treatment 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.

There were cases of discrimination targeting vulnerable EU citizens, most of whom were Roma from Romania and Bulgaria who resided in the country. Roma were subjected to discrimination in health care, education, and employment, as well as 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, these individuals were allowed to stay in the country without permission for up to three months, although authorities did not enforce this limit.

The country's official minority languages were varieties of Finnish, Yiddish, Meankieli, Romani Chib, and Sami. The government allocated funds to preserve and promote the official minority languages.

Police officers received training to identify and investigate hate crimes. Emergency call responders received continuous training to identify hate crime motives in crime reports. Police cooperated with the NGO Victim Support Sweden that helped and supported survivors, witnesses, and others affected by crime.

Police in Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmo had democracy and antihate crime groups. The National Center for Preventing Violent Extremism, under the auspices of the National Council for Crime Prevention, served as a clearinghouse for information, best practices, and support of municipalities,

agencies, and other actors.

Indigenous Peoples

The constitution charged public institutions with promoting opportunities for members of the Indigenous Sami people to preserve and develop cultural and social lives of their own. The approximately 20,000 to 40,000 Sami in the country held citizenship and had the right to vote in elections and participate in the government, including through election to the country's parliament. They were not represented as a group in parliament. A 31-member elected administrative authority called the Sametinget (Sami parliament) represented the Sami community. The Sami parliament acted as an advisory body to the government and had limited decision-making powers in matters related to preserving the Sami culture, language, and schooling. The national parliament and government regulations governed the Sami parliament's operations.

The Sami Parliament Consultation Order required the government, government agencies, regions, and municipalities to consult with the Sami Parliament or other Sami representatives on issues of special significance to the Sami community. Sami and human rights groups welcomed this consultation but criticized the law for not specifying how much influence Sami representatives had over decision-making after consultations occurred.

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 held grazing and fishing rights, depending on their history.

In March 2022, 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 regarding the mine's impact on the environment and reindeer husbandry.

Threats against the Sami and the killing of their reindeer took place. The National Council for Crime Prevention continued to investigate crimes targeting the Sami. In February, police reported a high number of unrecorded hate crimes against Sami individuals. Hate crimes often originated from disputes surrounding land rights.

Children

Child Abuse: The law prohibited individuals from abusing children mentally or physically. The government enforced the law effectively and penalties ranged from a fine up to 10 years in prison. Cases of child abuse were reported. Authorities could remove abused children from their homes and place them in foster care. Rape of a child carried a penalty of two to 10 years in prison.

Child, Early, and Forced Marriage: The minimum age for marriage was 18, and it was illegal for anyone younger than 18 to marry. The government

effectively enforced the law. The government legally recognized the marriage of anyone who came to the country after the age of 18 as valid, even if they were married abroad before the age of 18. The government did not recognize a foreign child marriage if either of the parties was a Swedish citizen or resident in the country at the time of marriage. Compelling or allowing a child to marry was punishable by up to two years in prison. Municipalities' social welfare services could petition administrative courts to issue travel restrictions to protect at-risk children from being taken out of the country for marriage. Such children were not to be issued passports and passports that were issued were to be rescinded. The law made it a crime to take a child who was subject to travel restrictions out of the country with punishment of up to two years in prison for violations. Girls with a migrant background and LGBTQI+ children were especially vulnerable. Forced marriages were used to prohibit some LGBTQI+ children from living in accordance with their gender identity.

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

Antisemitism

Leaders of the Jewish community estimated there were 15,000 Jews and 6,000 registered members of Jewish congregations in the country.

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 government effectively enforced laws to counteract antisemitism.

On January 5, media reported that a Jewish school in Gothenburg hired security guards for protection in response to threats. On April 5, the artist Dan Park was accused of incitement to ethnic or racial hatred after putting a can with the text “Zyklon-B” on a fence outside the Gothenburg Synagogue. In May, a Sweden Democratic politician questioned the existence of the Holocaust and media outlets reported several Sweden Democrat politicians purchased anti-Jewish propaganda online.

On January 25, the government increased financial support to the Living History Forum (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) to increase knowledge regarding antisemitism among youth. On January 26, the government launched an initiative to fight antisemitism and strengthen “Jewish life” in the country through education efforts, increased security for members of the Jewish community, and promotion of Jewish culture.

For further information on incidents in the country of antisemitism, whether or not those incidents were motivated by religion, and for reporting on the ability of Jews to exercise freedom of religion or belief, please see the Department of State’s *International Religious Freedom Report* at <https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/>.

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 were no laws criminalizing consensual same-sex sexual conduct between adults, cross-dressing, or other sexual or gender characteristic-related behaviors including de facto discrimination.

Violence and Harassment: LGBTQI+ persons were at higher risk of being subjected to physical violence than the general population but received protection by the police. According to the most recent statistics released by the National Council for Crime Prevention, there were 429 reports of hate crimes against LGBTQI+ persons in 2020.

Discrimination: The law prohibited discrimination by state and nonstate actors based on sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics. The law explicitly recognized LGBTQI+ couples and their families and granted them rights equal to rights of other persons. The government generally enforced these laws and supported efforts to promote equality and counteract discrimination. A 2022 report by the Swedish Agency for Environment Expertise stated that transgender persons perceived a higher level of exclusion in male-dominated employment sectors and that both bisexual and transgender persons perceived a higher level of discrimination overall. Inappropriate jokes, lack of trust, and discriminatory statements based on lack of knowledge were the issues most commonly cited in the report.

Availability of Legal Gender Recognition: There was a legal gender recognition law, but legal gender recognition procedures were not based on self-identification. The right to change one's legal gender required a psychiatric or psychological evaluation, but it did not require surgery.

Involuntary or Coercive Medical or Psychological Practices: According to a

2022 study, one out of five LGBTQI+ persons between 16 and 25 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; 5 percent experienced more serious forms of so-called conversion therapy. The most severe cases included physical abuse, withholding food, and sexual violence. So-called conversion therapy practices were not banned. Surgeries were not performed on children or nonconsenting adult intersex persons.

Restrictions of Freedom of Expression, Association, or Peaceful Assembly:

There were no laws or other restrictions on individuals speaking or media reporting on LGBTQI+ matters, on the ability of LGBTQI+ individuals to assemble in public or private or to form associations, or on the ability of LGBTQI+ organizations to legally register or convene events.

Persons with Disabilities

The law prohibited discrimination based on disability and the government enforced it effectively. Persons with disabilities were able to access health services, public buildings, and transportation on an equal basis with others and access education and employment to a certain extent. Only 52 percent of persons with disability were employed according to Statistics Sweden's April 28 report. Government regulations required new buildings and public facilities to be fully accessible. The government enforced these provisions.

Government information and communication on disability concerns were provided in accessible formats. 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.

The Agency for Participation reported the level of education was lower among persons with disabilities than among others in the population and rates of attendance for children with disabilities differed between elementary and secondary school. Agency reports revealed two reasons: special support was provided too late and students with disabilities felt more insecure about participating in school than other students. Depending on the level of disability, children attended schools with their peers or attended special resource schools. On May 31, the equality ombudsperson required that a swimming pool facility in Malmo pay compensation for refusing a person with disability and their personal assistant entry.

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.

According to two 2022 Stockholm County Board research reports conducted by Uppsala University and Lund University, discrimination against immigrants from Africa in the labor market was widespread.

Section 7. Worker Rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The law provided for the right of workers to form and join independent unions, bargain collectively, and conduct legal strikes. The law prohibited antiunion discrimination and provided for protection of workers from being fired because of union activity. If a court found a dismissal to be unlawful, the employee had the right to reinstatement. Foreign companies could be exempted from collective bargaining provided they met minimum working conditions and levels of pay. Public sector employees enjoyed the right to strike, subject to limitations in the collective agreements protecting the public's immediate health and security. The government mediation service could also intervene to postpone a strike for up to 14 days for mediation. The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) claimed the law restricted 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 allowed unions to conduct their activities largely without interference.

The government effectively enforced laws protecting freedom of association, collective bargaining, and the right for workers to strike. The Labor Court settled any dispute that affects the relationship between employers and employees. An employer organization, an employee organization, or an employer who had entered into a collective agreement on an individual basis could lodge claims. The Labor Court could impose penalties for violations commensurate with those under other laws involving denials of civil rights. Penalties were regularly applied against violators. Administrative and judicial procedures were not subject to lengthy delays and appeals.

Workers and employers exercised all legal collective bargaining rights that were protected by the government. The government and employers respected freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. ITUC reported no serious violations of worker rights in the year through October.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

See the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at

<https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

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

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

Some boys were subjected to forced begging and errands for criminal gangs, including killings. Some girls were subjected to sexual exploitation, forced begging, and child marriage. Police and social services reportedly acted

promptly when these prohibited cases were reported.

d. Discrimination (see section 6)

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

Wage and Hour Laws: There was 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 were required to 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 regulated overtime and rest periods. The law allowed 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 required 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. Responsibility for identifying unsafe situations remained with OSH experts and not the worker.

If an employee found that the work involved an immediate and serious danger to life or health, the employee had to immediately notify the

employer or safety ombudsperson. Workers had the right to remove themselves from unsafe conditions without jeopardy to their employment. Safety ombudspersons had the authority to stop unsafe activity immediately and to call an inspector. An employer could be fined for violating OSH regulations.

Foreign seasonal workers, including berry pickers, faced poor living and working conditions and were at risk of labor trafficking. Guidelines of the Swedish Retail and Food Federation covered EU citizens who picked berries in the country but not workers from outside the EU. Under the guidelines, berry pickers were to be informed that they had the right to sell their berries to all buyers and that nobody had the right to control how, when, and where they picked wild berries. A foreign company providing berry pickers to a local company also was required to demonstrate how it expected to pay workers in case of limited work or a bad harvest. The guidelines tasked food and retail organizations and brokers with ensuring their implementation.

The construction, transport, and manufacturing sectors had the greatest number of deaths caused by industrial accidents. 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 2022, the Work Environment Authority conducted approximately 24,000 inspections. Inspectors had the authority to conduct unannounced inspections and initiate sanctions, but the number of labor inspectors was not sufficient to enforce International Labor Organization compliance. The Work Environment Authority issued occupational health and safety regulations and trained union stewards and safety ombudspersons whom government inspectors monitored.

The government continued to implement a national strategy to counter work-related crime in the informal labor sector. Such crime mainly occurred in construction, restaurant, transport, and cleaning industries, as well as in health care and social services. The Work Environment Authority founded regional centers in Gothenburg and Umea and worked with the EU to counteract work-related crime. There were no data on the size of the informal labor sector.