



Exploratory study: filling in the knowledge gaps and identifying strengths and challenges in the effectiveness of the EU Member States' minimum income schemes

Country Fiche - Sweden

Written by Kenneth Nelson
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Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

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Summary

The Swedish National minimum income scheme is constructed and assessed in relation to other part of the welfare system such as housing allowance, unemployment insurance, establishment allowance and pensions. Social assistance is the only minimum income scheme in Sweden that targets individuals and families with low-income. The benefit is financed and administered by the municipalities, via the social services.

Social assistance is means-tested and takes both income and assets into account. All residents in Sweden may be eligible for social assistance. The national social assistance scale rates are set at levels below the EU at-risk-of-poverty threshold, but according to the national guidelines people may also qualify for social assistance outside these rates. Social assistance is rights-based, in so far as it is possible to appeal against decisions of social services to the administrative court.

Recipients who are fit to work but are further away from the labour market need to register with the public employment service, actively seek employment, and be prepared to accept available job offers. At the discretion of social services, they may also be required to participate in active labour market policy measures.

Eligibility for social assistance is based on an individual assessment while considering the financial situation of the household, but there is no legal requirement to set up individual action plans. However, a majority of municipalities and city districts have an individual action plan ready within three months.

Although social services offer various types of counselling and support measures to help recipients fulfil the underlying conditions for receiving social assistance, many municipalities have formal co-operation arrangements with other service-providers (such as the public employment service, the National Social Insurance Office, and the healthcare sector).

There is no regular monitoring of the poverty-reducing effects of social assistance, and there are only a few studies on the effectiveness of active labour market policy in getting recipients off the welfare rolls and into employment. Most evidence suggests that local active labour market policies targeting social assistance recipients have only weak effects on employability.

There is no political debate in Sweden about extending the coverage of social assistance (i.e. increasing take-up), nor about making benefits more generous. The COVID-19 pandemic did not result in any changes to social assistance legislative frameworks; nor were there any major changes in caseloads. The main reason was that other benefits either responded directly to the increased need for financial support, or were temporarily reformed to meet the increased need.

The following sections, first, outline the features of the MI support in place; secondly, describe the eligibility criteria and coverage and consider the adequacy of the financial support provided and the links with other benefits; thirdly, examine the extent of integration with labour market measures to help those supported into employment; fourthly, consider the access provided for the people concerned to social services; fifthly, summarise the governance mechanisms in place; and, finally, review the evidence on the impact on reducing poverty and assisting beneficiaries to find work.

An annex outlines the underlying situation in terms of the relative number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion and the changes that have occurred over recent years, as well as the characteristics of the people concerned – their gender, age, employment status, education level, country of birth and the structure of the households in which they live. As such, it provides the context in which MI support is operating and indicates the groups on which support needs to be targeted.

1 Description of national schemes providing minimum income support

Social assistance (*ekonomiskt bistånd*) is the only benefit of last resort targeted at the working-age population in Sweden. Social assistance is available to households with no other means of supporting themselves., and applicants need to apply for all other relevant benefits in order to be eligible. According to data from the National Board of Health and Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*), around 374,000 people received social assistance in 2020, or 3.6% of the Swedish population (5.6% of the working-age population aged 15-64). Expenditure on social assistance was 0.24% of GDP in 2020. Spending on unemployment benefits was slightly more than twice this amount, or 0.49% of GDP.

No significant changes have been made to the social assistance legislative frameworks in recent years, not even during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although employment levels fell and unemployment rates increased, the policy responses to the pandemic were primarily to temporarily strengthen benefits in other welfare systems, that's why the reasons for claiming social assistance didn't change much (Fritzell *et al.*, 2021).

1.1 Eligibility

Eligibility for social assistance is determined at the level of the household, which is considered to include only nuclear families (i.e. parents and children aged under 18, or up to 20 if still attending upper secondary education). Grandparents and other people living under the same roof are treated as independent households, and are not taken into account in the means test.

As a general rule, all the income and benefits of households, whatever their nature or origin, are taken into account in the means test for social assistance. The only exception is the separate income-tested housing benefit (see more below). Individual's that have received social assistance for a period of six consecutive months are entitled to have 25% of their earnings from employment exempted (for a period of up to two years). Annual income below one 'price base amount' (*prisbasbelopp*) earned during vacations by young people of school age is also exempt.¹ In 2021, the price base amount was SEK 47,600 (€4,733). Household income is normally calculated on the basis of incomes in the previous month, as social assistance in Sweden is intended only to meet short-term needs. Assets are taken into consideration in the means test, if they are not regarded as essential for the household to become self-sufficient. Typical examples are stocks or bonds, a car, a summer house, or expensive consumer electronics (that is, assets that relatively easy can be converted into cash).

All people with the right to stay in the country may be eligible for social assistance. As such, permanent residence is not required. Refugees are entitled to social assistance on equal terms with other residents, as long as their residence permit is valid. Asylum-seekers are not eligible for social assistance. Instead, they receive an allowance from the Swedish Migration Agency. Older people seldom receive social assistance, as there is a separate low-income benefit at national level for those with very low pensions (*äldreförsörjningsstöd*). Full-time students are normally not eligible for social assistance, as they instead receive a universal student allowance (often in combination with state-provided student loans).

It should be noted that parents are obliged by law to financially support their children (up to age 20 if the child is in secondary education). However, social assistance may in exceptional cases be paid to children – for example, where there is domestic

¹ The price base amount is used in Swedish tax and social security legislation to establish various income thresholds. It is calculated based on changes in the consumer price index, in accordance with the National Insurance Act (2010:110). It is established for the entire calendar year.

violence or sexual assault in the household. Adults who are fit to work must actively look for work, be registered as unemployed with the public employment service (*arbetsförmedlingen*), accept available job offers, and participate in national labour market programmes or other municipal activation measures if necessary. Failure to comply with these work-related requirements may result in the complete withdrawal of, or a temporary reduction in, benefits. No special arrangements for eligibility were made in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Social services are required by law to help people apply for social assistance. Most municipalities have special forms that applicants need to fill in, either digitally or at social services offices. Except for personal details, most municipalities require a statement of circumstances. Bank statements and proof of rent expenses are also required in order to show eligibility. After the application has been submitted, the person is usually scheduled for an interview. The waiting times for new applications varies across municipalities, and there are no national targets in this regard. According to a survey by the National Board of Health and Welfare (2021), waiting times for new applications were less than two weeks in 95 percent of 312 municipalities and city districts. Waiting times are affected not only by administrative procedures and the workload of social services, but also by the complexity of each individual case.

1.2 Coverage

In principle, all people residing in Sweden may be eligible for benefits if they have an income below the national scale rates and have no other financial assets. However, as with many other means-tested benefits, there are indications (see below) that a large share of eligible households does not receive any benefits, for one reason or another.

Unfortunately, there are no official data on take-up (i.e. the extent to which eligible families receive a benefit). Nor are there any recent in-depth investigations on the issue. According to one estimate, only around two thirds of single-person families with an income below the threshold for social assistance were eligible in 2018. Of those eligible, only 28% actually received a benefit (Nelson and Nieuwenhuis, 2021).² The reasons for this non-take-up of social assistance are unknown, but probably include a combination of factors (such as stigma, lack of information, short-term financial assistance from family and friends, and administrative errors). It should be noted that the figures on eligibility and non-take-up above should be interpreted cautiously, as it is very difficult to simulate benefit eligibility using the available micro-level survey and register data. One reason being that micro-level survey data seldom fully capture savings and other assets.

The Swedish Board of Health and Welfare regularly publishes data on the main reasons for which people receive social assistance. In 2020, unemployment was the main reason in 53% of all cases; for 18%, it was reduced work capacity due to social reasons; and for 14% it was sickness. There have been no national action campaigns to increase social assistance benefit take-up in recent years.

1.3 Adequacy

The national scale rates of social assistance are set by reference to reasonable living costs, calculated by the Swedish Consumer Agency. Municipalities are allowed to pay more, but not less. The national scale rates are not indexed but are generally updated on 1 January each year according to changes in consumer prices, subject to ad hoc decisions by the government.

² Estimates based on simulations using EU-SILC. Besides household income, the simulations included a proxy for capital (based on capital income) and work status. People considered to be studying full time, and people with capital, were assumed to be ineligible, even if they had an income below the social assistance scale rates. Due to a lack of necessary input data, take-up of other household types was not simulated.

The national scale rates include reasonable costs for: food; clothes and shoes; play and leisure; health and hygiene; a daily newspaper and a telephone; and consumables. After an individual assessment, municipalities often provide additional support to cover the costs of; accommodation; electricity; work travel; home insurance; trade union membership; and unemployment insurance fund membership. Social assistance is granted for one month, after which a new application needs to be made. Generally, there is no review or adjustment to payments in between, even if circumstances change.

The national scale rates take into consideration: the number of people in the household; the age of children; whether children eat lunch at home; and whether the adults are single or co-habiting. It should be noted that Sweden is one of those few countries in the world that provide free school lunches to all children. In 2020, the national scale rates (without supplements for lunches of children) were as follows: a single person without children, SEK 4,160 (€414); a couple without children, SEK 6,800 (€676); a couple with two children (aged 4 and 8), SEK 12,760 (€1,268); and a single parent with two children (aged 4 and 8), SEK 10,230 (€1,017).

For a single person without children, the 2020 national social assistance scale rates correspond to 32% of the EU at-risk-of-poverty threshold for Sweden, and 48% of the EU extreme at-risk-of-poverty threshold for Sweden. For the other household types, the corresponding rates are; a couple without children, 52% and 78%; a couple with two children (aged 4 and 8), 98% and 146%; and a single parent with two children (aged 4 and 8), 78% and 117%.³

(Note that these percentages are calculated based on the equivalised median disposable household income from the EU-SILC⁴ (provided by Eurostat) and the equivalised national social assistance scale rates. We have not included a comparison between social assistance and minimum wages, as the latter are negotiated in Sweden – there is no statutory minimum wage.)

Ratios between social assistance scale rates and poverty thresholds should be interpreted cautiously. In Sweden, housing costs are usually covered in full, often in combination with a separate income-tested housing benefit. In addition, recipients often receive supplements for other costs not included in the national scale rate (see above). If these additional cost categories are included in the calculations, it is not unusual for social assistance to be provided at twice the level of the national scale rates.⁵ Lump-sum payments to cover special one-off needs are also available (such as replacement of a broken refrigerator) on a discretionary basis.

Redistributive effects are difficult to assess without using more sophisticated statistical techniques. One obvious reason is that the anti-poverty effects of social assistance are the result of numerous factors besides legislative frameworks and implementation practices, such as the size and composition of financially vulnerable groups, and changes in other parts of social policy, and notably the social insurance system. Generally, relative income poverty in Sweden is much more sensitive to changes in contributory benefits than in social assistance (Nelson, 2004). The seemingly low take-up of benefits works against the idea of using means-tested social assistance as the main instrument to fight low income and poverty in Sweden.

1.4 Links with other benefits

As noted above, all incomes and assets, including benefit transfers are considered when assessing eligibility. Social assistance is sometimes also used as a top-up for other benefits, such as activity support (*aktivitetsersättning*) – a state benefit

³ Own calculations.

⁴ European Union statistics on income and living conditions.

⁵ See: <https://www.spin.su.se/datasets/samip>.

available to those participating in the labour market policy programmes organised by the public employment service. According to a government report prepared within the framework of the Parliamentary Social Insurance Investigation (*Socialförsäkringsutredningen*), around 4 out of 10 people who received activity support in 2012 received social assistance as a top-up (SOU, 2015:21).

Social assistance is designed to cover the most basic needs of low-income families for a short period in time. The objective is not to provide a minimum acceptable standard of living, but rather reasonable living conditions. Social assistance is thus paid at levels above the subsistence minimum (*existensminimum*), as defined by the Swedish Enforcement Agency. The subsistence minimum is used in the context of foreclosure.

2 Links with labour market activation

All applications for social assistance are subject to an individual assessment, whereby social services on a discretionary basis decide whether the applicant is considered able to work and should participate in a labour market activation programme. In most cases, able-bodied people are required to participate in the job-search activities and active labour market programmes offered by the public employment service (similar to other unemployed people). In those cases, the applicant may qualify for activity support, and receive social assistance as a top-up.

If it is not possible to find a suitable active labour market programme at national level, social assistance recipients who are considered capable of working may be required to participate in activation programmes organised at municipal level. These local labour market activation programmes differ extensively across municipalities, but may include: language training; up-skilling; help with job-search; motivational support; work training; traineeships; and various measures aimed at preparing recipients to participate in the active labour market policy programmes of the public employment services. Evaluations of the local programmes are lacking. The few evaluations that have been carried out generally report weak effects (if any) on employability and self-sufficiency (Panican and Ulmestig, 2017). Recipients are often very concerned at the quality of services. They would much rather participate in the labour market programmes of the public employment service, or look for a job on their own.

Evaluations of national active labour market policies do not make a distinction between recipients of social assistance and recipients of unemployment benefits. No data are even compiled on the number of social assistance recipients who participate in active labour market policy programmes, either at national or local level. Nor are there any data on the average number of clients per case worker. As noted above, non-compliance with the work-related requirements may result in reduced benefits, or benefits being withdrawn in full.

Despite the lack of data, a few differences between recipients of social assistance and recipients of unemployment benefit are worth mentioning. According to interviews with people at the National Board of Health and Welfare, social assistance recipients are often farther away from the labour market than those in receipt of unemployment benefits. The requirement to participate in work-related activities typically appears earlier in the job-integration process for those on social assistance. People in receipt of unemployment benefit are generally only in contact with the public employment service, and not the municipal social services – they cannot be required to participate in work-related activities organised by the municipalities.

As noted above, all income of the household (except the housing allowance) is deducted in full of the social assistance benefit. However, to increase job incentives further, the government introduced, in July 2013, an exempt in the means test of social assistance. For those in receipt of social assistance benefit for six consecutive months, 25 percent of earnings are exempt from the means test (as noted above). It is possible to use this exemption on earned income for up to two consecutive years.

According to a study conducted by the National Board of Health and Welfare (2016), 1.8% of all social assistance recipients received this tapering of benefits. Among those specifically targeted by the reform (i.e. social assistance recipients capable of working), 3.6% received a tapering of benefits. Around 60% of those who received a tapering of benefits had dependent children. There was no major difference between men and women.

There is no detailed analysis on the tapering of benefits and transitions out of social assistance in Sweden. According to the study by the National Board of Health and Welfare above, only one out of 167 municipalities reported that the introduction of the taper resulted in more social assistance recipients getting a job. There were 128 municipalities that believed the reform did not have any effects on employability. In 38 municipalities, there were not enough data to give a definitive answer. Several municipalities (it is unclear how many) reported problems of lock-in effects, and prolonged social assistance dependency due to the reform.

3 Links to social services and integrated provision of targeted social services

Eligibility for social assistance is based on an individual assessment, but there is no detailed regulation concerning implementation. However, a multidimensional perspective is recommended by the National Board of Health and Welfare, particularly if dependency is considered to be long-lasting. In those cases, social services are recommended to perform a wider and more detailed screening of the underlying circumstances for claiming social assistance. The objective is to identify appropriate support measures at an early stage and to set adequate requirements on the people concerned. These underlying circumstances may include: financial debt; alcohol or drug abuse; cognitive or other disabilities; a lack of language skills; sickness or ill-health; a lack of social networks; a poor housing situation; and a lack of education.

There is no legal obligation on social services to establish an individual action plan, according to which case workers define the goals of counselling, steps in the integration process, and agreed activities. Nonetheless, individual action plans are used in many municipalities. Unfortunately, there are no data on the actual number of social assistance recipients who receive an individual action plan, nor any data on the average number of meetings before an individual action plan is established, or the frequency of follow-ups. However, according to a survey by the National Board of Health and Welfare (2020), 258 out of 312 municipalities or city districts carried out multidimensional assessments and established individual action plans within three months. The individual action plan was followed up at least every third month in 221 municipalities or city districts (14 municipalities or city districts did not respond to the survey). The National Board of Health and Welfare provides guidelines on how to carry out multidimensional assessments of social and financial needs, including a structured assessment template (*förutsättningar för arbete* – FIA). According to the survey above, 45 municipalities or city districts used the FIA framework in the assessment of social and financial needs, whereas 191 municipalities or city districts used other structured interview templates.

A large set of services beside those specifically related to labour market activation is provided by social services and is available to social assistance recipients. Examples include budget and debt counselling, and family counselling. There are no data on the number of social assistance recipients who are using such services, nor how much they cost the municipalities.

Receipt of social assistance does not automatically grant access to other types of services and support, which are often provided on a universal basis in Sweden and have comparatively low user fees. However, many social assistance recipients have complex problems that require collaboration between social services and other service-providers. One-stop-shops are implemented in some municipalities, and are in

those instances often used to target specific user groups (such as families with young children). Even in situations where one-stop-shops are not implemented, municipalities have often established collaboration with other service-providers. Collaboration with the healthcare sector (such as psychiatric care and counselling for substance abuse) requires a co-ordinated action plan for each individual case. It should be noted that social services are not allowed to condition receipt of social assistance on any other activity besides labour market activation.

Besides the legal obligation of social services to establish co-ordinated action plans with the healthcare sector on a case-by-case basis, many municipalities collaborate with other service-providers at organisational level. According to the survey carried out by the National Board of Health and Welfare above, 88 out of 312 municipalities or city districts have formal collaboration agreements with the National Social Insurance Agency (*Försäkringskassan*). Agreements with the public employment service, similar to those above, exist in 132 municipalities or city districts, whereas 103 municipalities or city districts have established formal collaboration with the National Social Insurance Agency. Collaboration at organisational level with adult psychiatric care exists in 89 municipalities or city districts, whereas 14 municipalities or city districts had established formal collaboration with the housing sector.

4 Governance mechanisms

Social assistance is financed and administered at local level by the municipalities, but the legislative frameworks are at national level (*Socialtjänstlagen*, 2001:453 and *Socialtjänstförordningen*, 2001:937). The National Board of Health and Welfare has a supervising role, provides guidance for the municipalities, and is responsible for national statistics on social services. The provision of services may be outsourced to private providers. However, those activities that involve the exercise of a statutory authority cannot be outsourced. For example, this includes decisions on social assistance eligibility and participation in work-related activities. Appeals against decisions on social assistance eligibility can be made to the administrative court.

According to statistics from the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, 26,100 social care workers (*socialsekreterare*) were employed by the municipalities in 2020. Not all of those were directly involved in the assessment of social assistance. In total, 35,300 people were employed in social services (around 4% of all personnel of the municipalities and the regions). In Sweden, two main tasks of the regions are to organise healthcare and public transport.

In terms of monitoring frameworks for social services, the National Board of Health and Welfare carries out qualitative assessments, or 'open comparisons' (*öppna jämförelser*). Various aspects are included in this monitoring, such as: waiting times; collaborative frameworks with other service-providers; and assessment procedures and routines. According to these data, around one third of all municipalities or city districts use systematic reviews of social services to improve their operation, including payments of social assistance (National Board of Health and Welfare, 2021). Besides the open comparison, the National Board of Health and Welfare and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, as well as individual municipalities, carry out ad hoc investigations of various aspects related to the payment of social assistance.

There is no regular monitoring of the poverty-reducing effects of social assistance. In fact, Sweden has no official definition of poverty. In government reports and investigations, reference is seldom made to poverty, but instead to low income. There is no income threshold to define the latter. Officially, the number of low-income families in Sweden simply equals the number of families in receipt of social assistance.

5 Impact of MI schemes

Social assistance is administered and financed by the municipalities but governed by legislation at national level. Social assistance has wide coverage, and the adequacy of benefits should be evaluated against the whole package of support – which, besides the national scale rates, may include support to cover housing costs and municipal supplements for budget items that are not considered in the national scale rates. If reasonable, housing costs are met in full by the municipality, sometimes in combination with the national housing benefit. Thus, the impact of social assistance must be assessed in relation to measures in the social insurance system as well as in active labour market policies.

There is no regular monitoring of the anti-poverty effects of social assistance, nor how effective measures are at getting people off benefits and into work. The few studies that exist of local active labour market programmes report very weak effects on employability. The most immediate problem of social assistance in reducing poverty is the seemingly low take-up-rates, which are well below those for unemployment benefit (Nelson and Nieuwenhuis, 2020).

Although joblessness is the main reason why people receive social assistance, many recipients have more complex problems. One-stop-shops are used in some municipalities, but they are not necessarily open to all social assistance recipients. By no means all municipalities have established formal co-operation between social services and other service-providers, such as the public employment service, the National Social Insurance Agency, and the healthcare sector. Lack of clear rules for collaboration between service-providers governed by separate legislative frameworks may complicate a multidimensional assessment and treatment of the underlying factors for claiming social assistance.

Public debates on social protection in Sweden seldom focus on the provision of social assistance. By comparison, social insurance receives much more attention in the media and in political circles. Recently this debate has concerned the continuation of some temporary COVID-19-related changes to the system of contributory benefits. No changes to social assistance legal frameworks were made during the pandemic. Although the rise of income inequality is a major issue in Sweden (especially for parties on the left of the political spectrum), there is no political priority given to extending the coverage (i.e. reducing non-take-up) of social assistance, nor to making benefits more generous.

6 Sources

Legal sources

Socialtjänstlagen, 2001:453

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Statistical sources

https://sdb.socialstyrelsen.se/if_ekb/val.aspx

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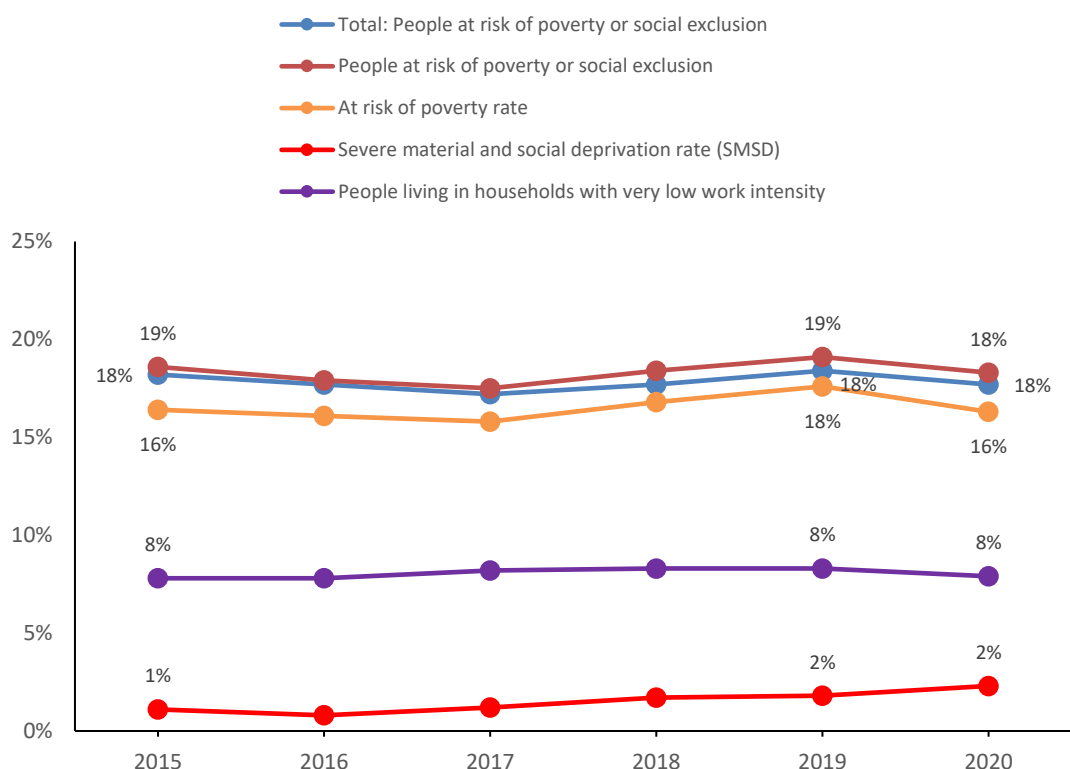
Interviews

Anna-Karin Sandén, National Board of Health and Welfare

Samira Aqil, National Board of Health and Welfare

7 Annex

Figure 1. AROPE indicator and components, Sweden, 2015-2020 (%)

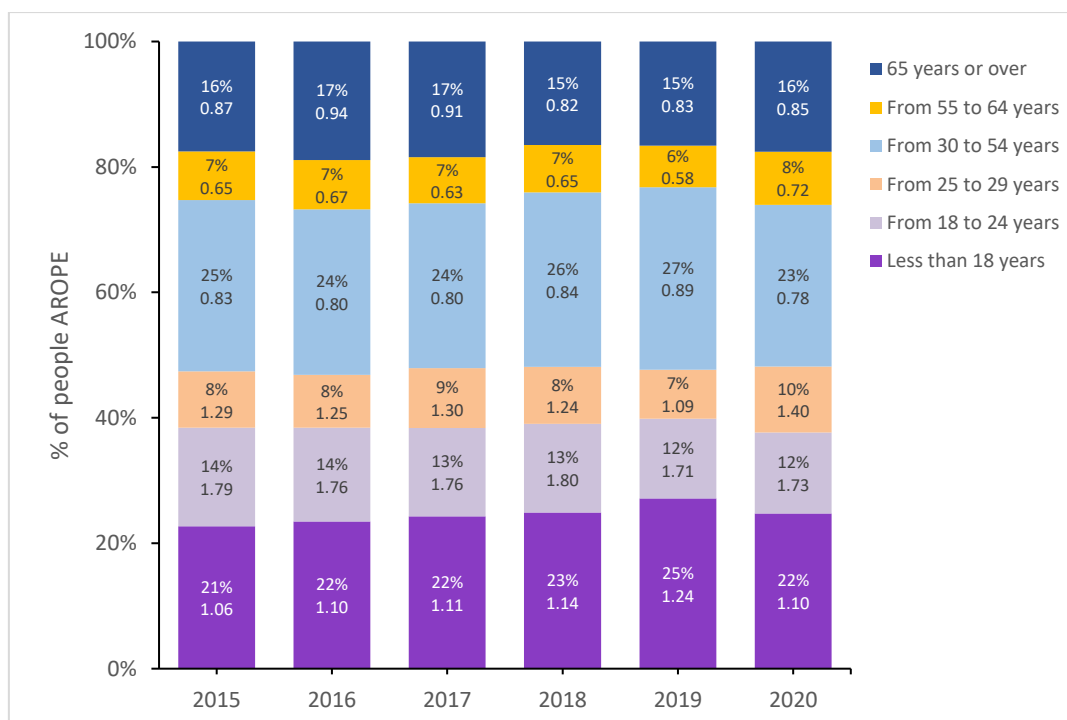


Note: The line for "Total: People at risk of poverty or social exclusion" indicates the trend for overall population, while the other lines show the figures for individuals aged 0-64.

Source: Eurostat EU-SILC indicators [ilc_peps01n], [ilc_li02], [ilc_mdspd11] and [ilc_lvhl11n]. Data downloaded on 14/02/2022.

- In 2020, the share of total population at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) in Sweden stood at 17.7%, while that of those aged 0-64 was slightly higher at 18.3%, reflecting the relatively low risk among older people of 65 and over. Over the period 2015-2020, the share for both remained much the same.
- Almost all of the people aged 0-64 at risk of poverty or social exclusion, 16.3% of the age group had household disposable income of below 60% of the median (I.e. they were at risk of poverty), the proportion changing relatively little over the 2015-2020 period in line with the AROPE rate.
- Just over 40% of those at risk of poverty or social exclusion lived in households with very low work intensity in 2020, 7.9% of those aged 0-64, the proportion also remaining much the same over the 2015-2020 period.
- Just 13% of those at risk of poverty and social exclusion were affected by severe material and social deprivation, only 2.3% of those aged 0-64, the proportion increasing slightly between 2015 and 2020.

Figure 2. *Division of people aged 0-64 at risk of poverty or social exclusion by age group, Sweden, 2015-2020 (%)*

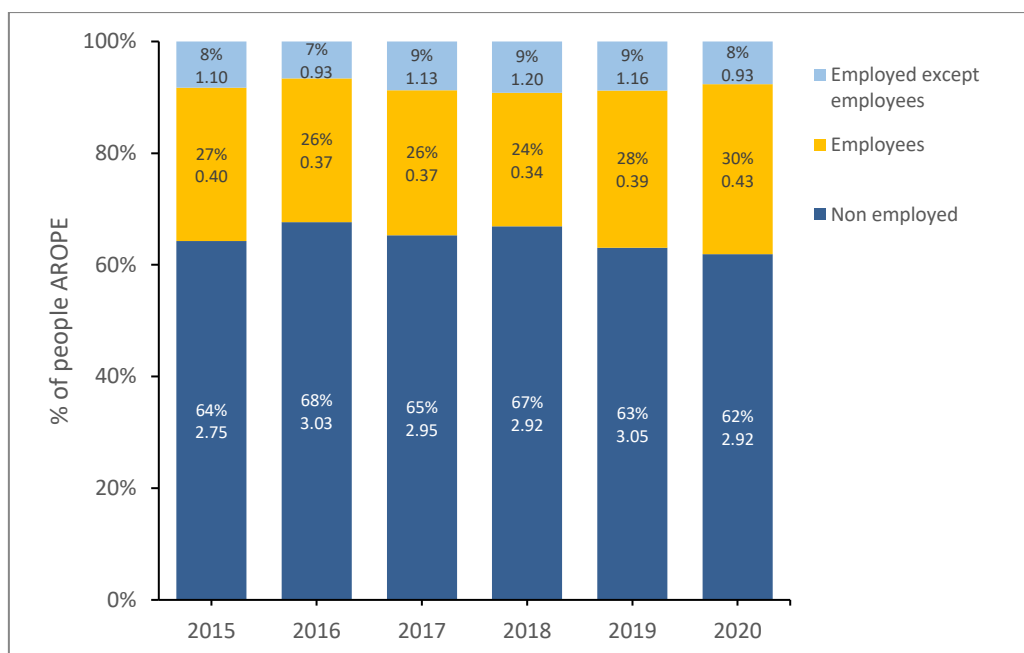


Note: Figures below the percentage figures in the bars show the ratios of the share at risk to the share of the age group in total population, which indicate the relative likelihood of the age group being at risk.

Source: Eurostat EU-SILC indicators [ilc_peps01n], own calculation. Data downloaded on 14/02/2022.

- Slightly more men than women aged 0-64 were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2020 (just under 51% % of the total. Since the number of men was larger than the number of women to a slightly greater extent (accounting for just over 51% of the age group), men were marginally less likely to be at risk than women.
- As implied by Figure 1, older people of 65 and over are less likely to be at risk of poverty or social exclusion than those younger, these making up 16% of the total at risk in 2020.
- Children under 18, by contrast, are more likely to be at risk of poverty or social exclusion than average, these making up 22% of the total at risk in 2020.
- Young people aged 18-24 are far more likely to be at risk than children. The same goes for those aged 25-29, the two age groups together making up 22% of the total at risk, i.e. the same as children.

Figure 3. *Division of people aged 18-64 at risk of poverty or social exclusion by most frequent economic activity status, Sweden, 2015-2020 (%)*

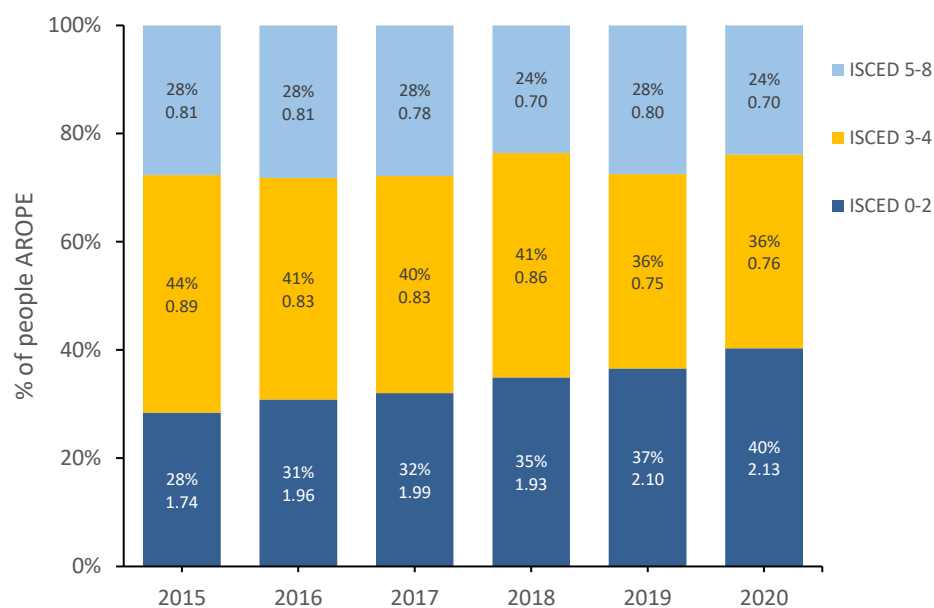


Note: Figures below the percentage figures in the bars show the ratios of the share at risk to the share of the age group in total population, which indicate the relative likelihood of the age group being at risk.

Source: Eurostat EU-SILC indicators [ilc_peps02n] and [ilc_lvhl02], own calculation. Data downloaded on 14/02/2022.

- People of working age (18-64) not in work are may time more likely to be at risk of poverty or social exclusion than those in employment, these making up 62% of the total at risk in 2020.
- Among those in employment, the self -employed are significantly more likely to be at risk than employees, though their relatively small numbers mean that they made up only 8% of the total at risk in 2020.

Figure 4. *Division of people aged 18-64 at risk of poverty or social exclusion by education level, Sweden, 2015-2020 (%)*

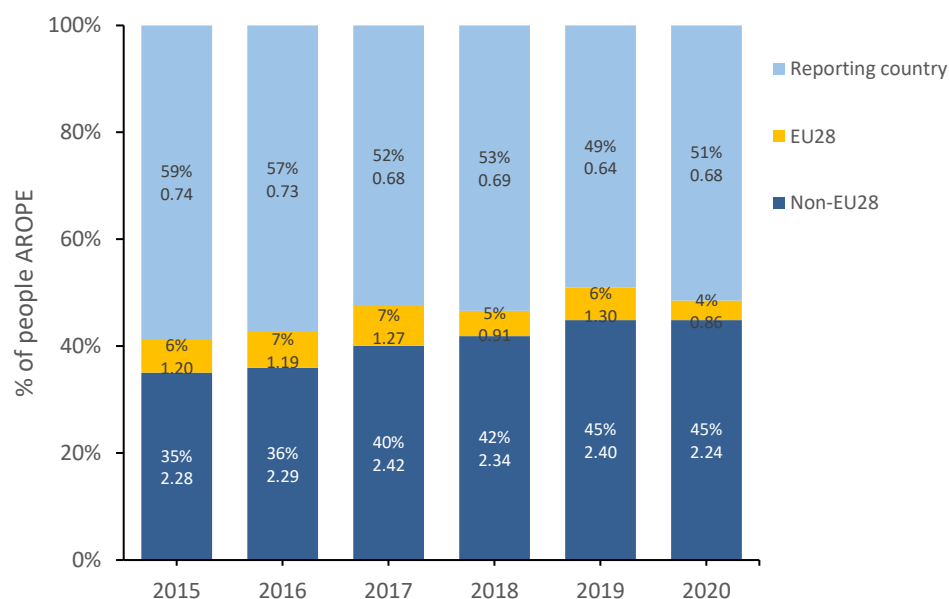


Note: Figures below the percentage figures in the bars show the ratios of the share at risk to the share of the age group in total population, which indicate the relative likelihood of the age group being at risk.

Source: Eurostat EU-SILC indicators [ilc_peps04n] and [ilc_lvps04], own calculation. Data downloaded on 14/02/2022.

- People aged 18-64 with only basic schooling (ISCED 0-2) are considerably more likely to be at risk than those with higher education levels, the likelihood increasing over the period 2015-2020. So that by the latter year, they made up 40% of the total at risk.
- Those with tertiary education (ISCED 5-8) were only slightly less likely to be at risk than those with upper secondary education level (ISCED 3 and 4) in 2020, when they made almost a quarter of the total at risk.

Figure 5. *Division of people aged 18-64 at risk of poverty or social exclusion by country of birth, Sweden, 2015-2020 (%)*

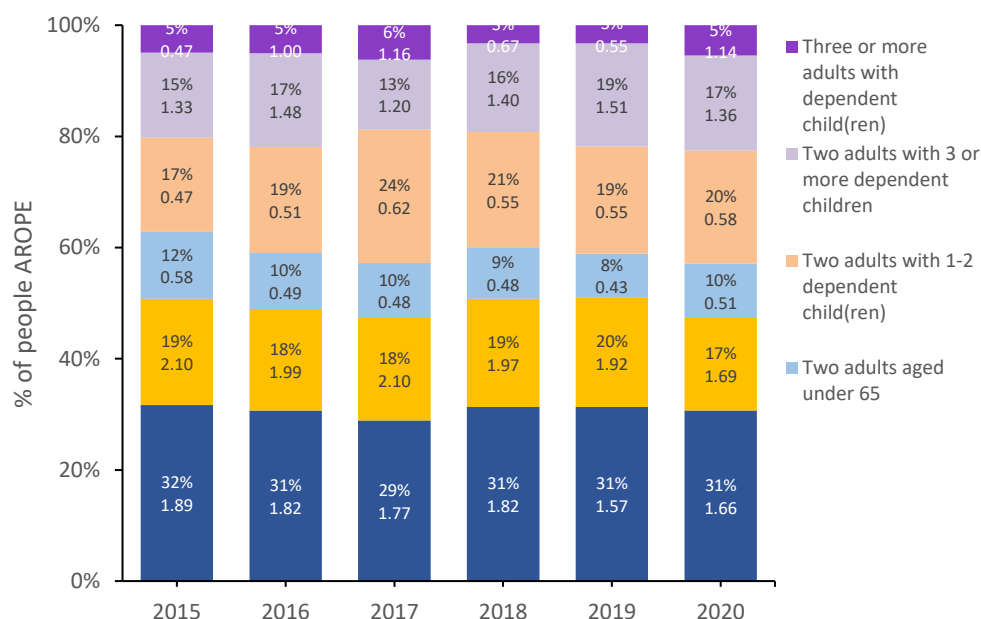


Note: Figures below the percentage figures in the bars show the ratios of the share at risk to the share of the age group in total population, which indicate the relative likelihood of the age group being at risk.

Source: Eurostat EU-SILC indicators [ilc_peps06n] (Data downloaded on 14/02/2022) and EU-SILC microdata, own calculation.

- People aged 18-64 born outside the EU are substantially more likely to at risk of poverty or social exclusion than those born in Sweden, these making up 45% of the total at risk in 2020, far more than their share of population.
- Those in this age group born in another EU country were also more likely to be at risk than Swedish born, but their small numbers mean that they made up only 4% of the total at risk in 2020.
- Nevertheless, it means that people born outside Sweden accounted for almost half (49%) of the total at risk in 2020.

Figure 6. *Division of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion by household type, Sweden, 2015-2020 (%)*



Note: Figures below the percentage figures in the bars show the ratios of the share at risk to the share of the age group in total population, which indicate the relative likelihood of the age group being at risk.

Note that the chart does not include all household types. In particular, it excludes those aged under 65 living in a household with three or more adults without children, who are difficult to distinguish in the published data.

Source: Eurostat EU-SILC indicators [ilc_peps03n] and [ilc_lvps02], own calculation. Data downloaded on 14/02/2022.

- People aged under 65 living alone are far more likely to be at risk of poverty or social exclusion than others. The same goes for those living alone with children, the two groups together making up just under half (48%) of the total at risk in 2020.
- Couples with 1-2 children are no more likely to be at risk than those aged under 65 without, the two making up a much smaller share of the total at risk in 2020 than their share of population.
- On the other hand, couples with 3 or more children are significantly more likely than average to be at risk of poverty or social exclusion than average, these making up 17% of the total at risk in 2020.

Table 1. At risk of poverty rate before and after social transfers, excluding old age benefit, for those aged 0-64, Sweden, 2015-2020

	Before social transfers, excl. old-age benefits (%)	After social transfers (%)	Effect of social transfers on atrop rate (%-point change)
2015	30.5	16.4	-14.1
2016	30.6	16.1	-14.5
2017	30.1	15.8	-14.3
2018	30.1	16.8	-13.3
2019	29.9	17.6	-12.3
2020	29.1	16.3	-12.8

Source: Eurostat EU-SILC indicators [ilc_li02] and [ilc_li10]. Data downloaded on 14/02/2022.

- Social transfers had the effect of reducing the at-risk-of-poverty (atrop) rate by 13 percentage points in 2020, cutting the number at risk by 44%. This is broadly in line with the reduction in the preceding 5 years, when it varied between 41% and 47%.

Table 2. At risk of poverty rate and persistent at risk of poverty rate for those aged 18-64, Sweden, 2015-2020

	At risk of poverty rate (%)	Persistent at risk of poverty rate (%)	Persistent rate as % of annual rate
2015	15.8	6.6	41.8
2016	15.1	6.0	39.7
2017	14.8	5.8	39.2
2018	15.9	4.3	27.0
2019	16.1	6.8	42.2
2020	15.4	5.3	34.4

Source: Eurostat EU-SILC indicators [ilc_li02] and [ilc_li21]. Data downloaded on 14/02/2022.

- Only just over a third (34%) of the people of working age (18-64) at risk of poverty in 2020 were at persistent risk, i.e. they were consistently at risk for a number of years rather than being at risk for only one year, or temporarily. This is smaller than the proportion in the preceding 5 years, except 2018 (27%), though in all years a significant majority of those at risk had income below the poverty threshold for only a year at a time.

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