

SWEDEN

● Recent data on homelessness

National data on homelessness are collected every six years, during one week in April, by the National Council for Health and Social Protection. The definition of homelessness on which the survey is based is broad and detailed, covering most of the operational categories of the ETHOS typology, including persons living with family or friends, persons leaving institutions and people privately subletting for less than three months³⁹.

In 2017, 33,000 homeless people were counted during the survey week. Data collection does not take into account mobile EU citizens, undocumented people and unaccompanied minors. In 2011, the same survey counted 34,000 homeless people. This apparent drop must be treated with circumspection: 18% of local authorities did not respond to the 2017 survey. On the other hand, it can be observed that the profiles of homeless people have changed in recent years as more and more parents with minor children find themselves in a critical homeless situation, and while the majority of homeless are men, the proportion of women is increasing. In Malmö, families with children accounted for 10% of the homeless population in 2009; in 2016, this rate was 34%⁴⁰.

● Housing market situation in Sweden

In the 2017 Country Specific Recommendation for Sweden (CSR), the Council of the European Union issued a warning about the lack of affordable housing: "Sweden has experienced rapid and persistent house price growth since the mid-1990s. [...] Key drivers include generous tax treatment of home ownership and mortgage debt, accommodative credit conditions coupled with relatively low mortgage amortisation rates, and an ongoing supply shortage. This shortage is related to structural inefficiencies in the housing market.

Total population as of 1 January 2016:
9,851,017 people

GDP/resident in 2016
(purchasing power parity): 36,000

Number of homeless people known:
33,000 in 1 week in 2017

Percentage of poor households: 16.2%

Housing construction has continued to increase but remains insufficient to address the sharply rising housing demand. The authorities have put forward a 22-point plan in respect of the housing market tackling certain factors which underlie the housing shortage. It includes increasing land available for development, reducing construction costs and shortening planning permission times. This shortage is linked to structural inefficiencies in the housing market, including limited competition in the construction sector. There are also barriers to efficient usage of the existing housing stock. [...] The shortage of available and affordable can also hamper labour mobility, as well as the successful integration of migrants in this market, and can contribute to intergenerational inequality"⁴¹. Construction costs in Sweden are the highest in Europe. Low-income households and people in insecure jobs are particularly affected by the lack of affordable housing. The already high levels of household debt have increased further: an increase of 7.1% in 2016, close to 86% of GDP, and representing about 180% of disposable income.

In 2016⁴², 65.2% of the Swedish population were homeowners (54.8% with a mortgage, 29.8% without a mortgage) and 34.8% were renters (34% at market price, 0.8% at a lower price or free).

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See FEANTSA's country profile for Sweden for more information. <http://www.feantsa.org/en/country-profile/2016/10/19/country-profile-sweden?bcParent=27>

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European Observatory on Homelessness (2017), *Family Homelessness in Europe*, EOH Comparative Studies on Homelessness, No. 7. http://www.feantsa-research.org/download/feantsa-studies_07_web33861275400_64828685.pdf

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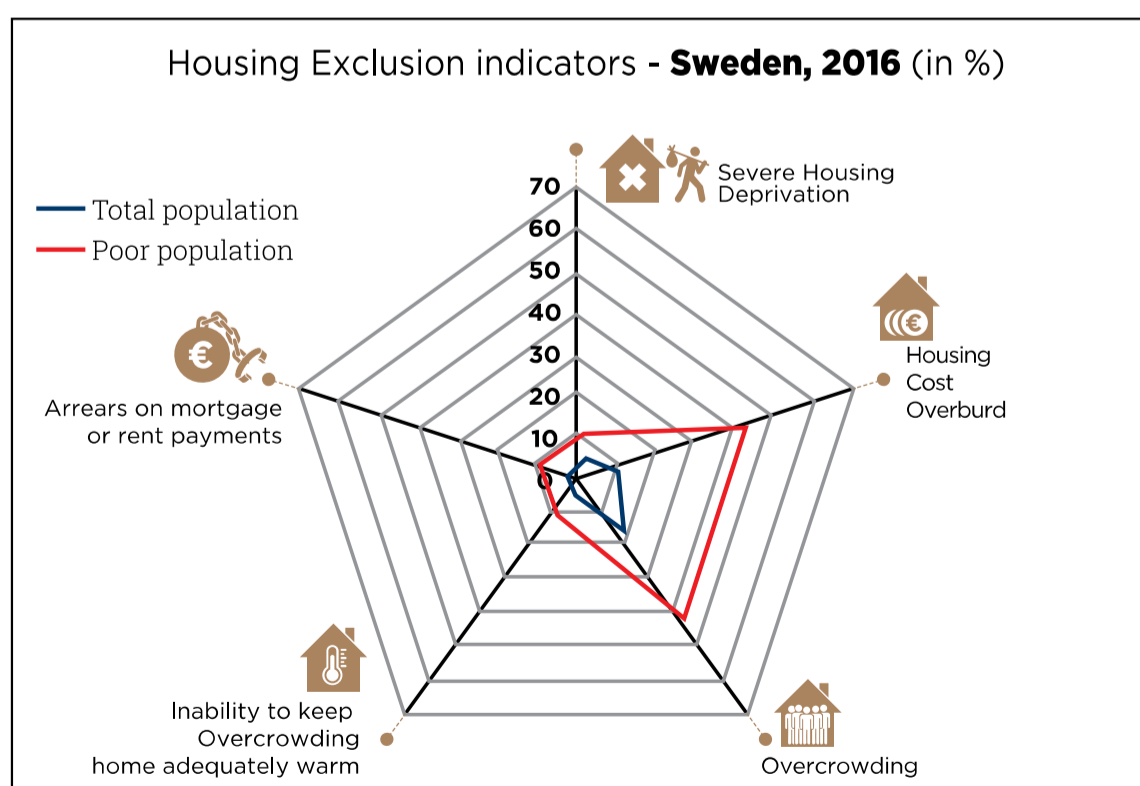
2017 European Semester, Country Specific Recommendation / Council Recommendation – Sweden. https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2017-european-semester-country-specific-recommendations-council-recommendations_fr

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Eurostat/EU-SILC 2016.

● Key statistics to housing exclusion and changes between 2010 and 2016

| General population | | | | |
|---|--------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|
| Indicator | 2016 | | Change 2010-2016 | |
| | Total | Poor | Total | Poor |
| Housing cost overburden rate | 8.5% | 38.7% | + 31% | - 2% |
| Total cost of housing (PPP) | 527.3 | 483.9 | + 12% | + 19% |
| Mortgage/rent arrears | 2.3% | 8.3% | 0% | + 22% |
| Overcrowding | 14.4% | 41.3% | + 30% | + 38% |
| Severe housing deprivation | 2.7% | 6.8% | + 69% | + 51% |
| Inability to maintain adequate home temperature | 2.6% | 4.6% | + 53% | + 7% |
| Young people | | | | |
| Housing cost overburden rate (aged 18-24) | 18.4% | 54.3% | + 8% | - 2% |
| Overcrowding (aged 16-24) | 30.4% | 57.2% | + 5% | + 11% |
| Non-EU citizens | | | | |
| | 2016 | | Change 2010-2016 | |
| | Aged 18+ | Aged 16-29 | Aged 18+ | Aged 16-29 |
| Housing cost overburden rate | 21.4% | 25.6% | + 39% | + 90% |
| Overcrowding | 48.4% | 59.2% | + 66% | + 52% |



FOCUS ON...

The rise in homelessness among children and families in Sweden

In May 2017, a report entitled Save the Children Sweden – [*A place to call home: Families with children in the shadow of the housing crisis*](#)– sounded the alarm about how a growing number of families with children in Sweden are facing housing exclusion. The report discusses the causes and consequences of this shift in profile among people facing housing exclusion and homelessness.

Despite the Swedish government acknowledging the fact that every child has the right to adequate living conditions, the number of children living in emergency shelters has increased by more than 60% in the last six years. During one week in April 2017, at least 1,480 households with children were temporarily housed in homeless shelters, camps or other inappropriate facilities according to the standards established by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR). In total, during the same month, the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare estimates that there were between 10,500 and 15,000 homeless children in Sweden. The majority of these children were in long-term temporary accommodation and some lived as tenants with at least one parent. About 10,000 other children had a parent who was homeless, but did not live with that parent. More and more children and mothers who are victims of domestic violence are excluded from the housing market after spending time in women's refuges or homeless shelters. Homelessness is also on the rise among newly arrived families, where parents are still settling in or have temporary jobs. These may include families who initially stayed with relatives or friends, or families who had a short-term lease when housed by the local authority. It is also important to remember that homeless statistics among families in Sweden are limited to families known to social services or charities. Many homeless families are not entitled to any help and are therefore not always known to the authorities.

Homeless families who receive help from social services are often placed in different types of temporary accommodation such as hotels, apartments rented by social services, hostels, flatshares or camps. There are also those, known to social services, who live temporarily with friends or relatives. Some local authorities apply principles of conditionality to accommodation; it is not unusual for families with young children to be evicted from emergency shelters if social services consider that these households have not been sufficiently active in their search for housing. Appeals can be lodged, but they are often rejected by social services. If claims are instigated, the process can take months during which the families concerned have no home. When their financial situation allows, most families rent a room or apartment on the ever-expanding black market. This increases the risk of having to move often, not having a permanent address, and not being able to benefit from social security benefits or housing allowances. It also reinforces the vulnerability of these families who may end up in temporary, overcrowded and inadequate housing.

The report by Save The Children Sweden highlights the risk of eroding the trust of children who are homeless or facing housing exclusion in an adult world and in social institutions, which could have dramatic consequences for their future. The report shows that the groups of children who are at highest risk of growing up in poverty and homeless are children of single mothers and children of parents born in non-EU countries. Inadequate or unsanitary housing has an impact on the physical health, well-being and development of children: lack of privacy, excessive stimulation and interaction, risk of family conflict, uncertainty, lack of continuity and routine at school, which causes many physical and mental disorders, anxiety, sleep disorders, concentration problems, and the symptoms of stress and trauma.