



FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2020

Sweden

100

FREE

/100

<u>Political Rights</u>	40 /40
<u>Civil Liberties</u>	60 /60

LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS

100 /100 **Free**

Global freedom statuses are calculated on a weighted scale. See the methodology.



Overview

Sweden is a parliamentary monarchy with free and fair elections and a strong multiparty system. Civil liberties and political rights are legally guaranteed and respected in practice, and the rule of law prevails.

Key Developments in 2019

- In January, after over four months without a functioning government, the Swedish Social Democrats (SAP) managed to form a functioning government with the Green Party, the Centre Party, and the Liberals, with Stefan Löfven of SAP continuing as Prime Minister.
- Over the course of one week in June, multiple bombs went off in the city of Malmö, damaging over 250 apartment blocks, and injuring 25 people.

Political Rights

A. Electoral Process

A1 0-4 pts

Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections?	4/4
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The prime minister is the head of government and is appointed by the speaker of the freely elected parliament, or Riksdag, and confirmed by the body as a whole. Prime Minister Stefan Löfven of the SAP was appointed in January 2019 following parliamentary elections in 2018. King Carl XVI Gustaf, crowned in 1973, is the ceremonial head of state.

A2 0-4 pts

Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free	
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and fair elections?

4/4

The unicameral Riksdag is comprised of 349 members who are elected every four years by proportional representation. A party must receive at least 4 percent of the vote nationwide or 12 percent in an electoral district to win a seat. Swedish elections are broadly free and fair.

In the September 2018 parliamentary elections, neither main bloc won a majority, with the center-left bloc winning 144 seats and the center-right bloc winning 143 seats. The populist, anti-immigrant party, Sweden Democrats, won 62 seats, up from 49 previously. However, the party's gains fell short of the expectations of many analysts. Parties in both the center-right and center-left blocs refused to form a coalition government with the Sweden Democrats (SD). In January 2019, after over four months without a government, Stefan Löfven, leader of the SAP, formed a government together with the Green Party, the Centre Party, and the Liberals.

A report published in November 2018 by election monitors from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) stated that although the integrity of the elections was not in doubt, the secrecy of the vote was sometimes compromised.

A3 0-4 pts

Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies?

4/4

Elections are regulated by the Swedish Election Authority, which effectively upholds its mandates.

B. Political Pluralism and Participation

B1 0-4 pts

Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings?

4/4

Political parties may form and operate without restriction.

B2 0-4 pts

Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections?

4/4

Sweden has a strong multiparty system with a robust opposition. Eight political parties secured representation in the Riksdag in 2018, with the SAP, the Moderates, and the Sweden Democrats holding the most seats.

B3 0-4 pts

Are the people's political choices free from domination by forces that are external to the political sphere, or by political forces that employ extrapolitical means?

4/4

People's political choices are generally free from domination by actors that are not democratically accountable.

B4 0-4 pts

Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities?

4/4

The country's principal religious, ethnic, and immigrant groups are represented in the parliament, as are many women. There are 161 women (out of 349 members) in parliament, however, some parties maintain more gender parity than others. Since 1993, the indigenous Sami community has elected its own legislature, which has

significant powers over community education and culture, and serves as an advisory body to the government. There are, however, calls for greater political autonomy of the Sami parliament, which have been echoed by the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples.

C. Functioning of Government

C1 0-4 pts

Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government?	4/4
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Sweden's freely elected representatives develop and implement policy. The strong performance by the far-right Sweden Democrats in the 2018 parliamentary elections, and the refusal of both the center-right bloc and center-left bloc to work with the party, contributed to the failure to form a functioning government for over four months after the general election in 2018. The SAP managed to form a functioning government with the Green Party, Centre Party, and Liberals in January 2019 after a vote in parliament. Three parties abstained from the vote, however.

C2 0-4 pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective?	4/4
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Corruption is relatively low in Sweden. Anticorruption mechanisms are generally effective. The country's lively free press also works to expose corrupt officials. However, Sweden has faced some criticism for insufficient enforcement of foreign bribery laws.

C3 0-4 pts

Does the government operate with openness and transparency?	4/4
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The country has one of the most robust freedom of information statutes in the world, and state authorities generally respect the right of both citizens and noncitizens to access public information.

Civil Liberties

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media?	4/4
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Sweden's media are independent. Most newspapers and periodicals are privately owned, and the government subsidizes daily newspapers regardless of their political affiliation. Public broadcasters air weekly radio and television programs in several minority languages.

Threats and intimidation of journalists have increased in recent years, particularly against those who report on organized crime, religion, extremist groups, or other sensitive topics.

D2 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private?	4/4
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Religious freedom is constitutionally guaranteed and generally respected. State authorities document religious hate crimes, investigate and prosecute cases, and provide adequate resources for victims. The police force includes a permanent unit trained to handle hate crimes.

Members of the Sweden Democrats and other parties have proposed legislation to prohibit the Muslim call to prayer (*adhan*), the wearing of the hijab (headscarf) by students and teachers, the importing of kosher and halal meat, and the nonmedical circumcision of boys.

Despite the authorities' capacity to document and pursue legal action for such events, hate crimes and violence against Jews and Muslims are often unreported. A 2018 survey from Uppsala University found that 52 percent of Muslim congregations had received death threats and 45 percent had reported at least one attack against their properties in 2017. In the summer and fall of 2018, Jewish-owned houses were set on fire on two occasions in Lund. Reported hate crime statistics from 2018 show an overall increase in events from 2017, especially those in relation to islamophobia and antisemitism.

D3 0-4 pts

Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination?	4/4
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Academic freedom is generally respected.

D4 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution?	4/4
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Private discussion is open and vibrant.

E. Associational and Organizational Rights

E1 0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly?	
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4/4

Freedom of assembly is generally respected in law and in practice. However, violence has occasionally erupted between far-right demonstrators and counterprotesters.

E2 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work?

4/4

Nongovernmental organizations of all kinds function freely.

E3 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations?

4/4

The rights to strike and organize in labor unions are guaranteed. Trade union federations, which represent approximately 70 percent of the workforce, are strong and well organized.

F. Rule of Law

F1 0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary?

4/4

The judiciary is independent.

F2 0-4 pts

Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters?

4/4

The rule of law prevails in civil and criminal matters. Defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty, and the state must provide legal counsel to people accused of criminal offenses.

F3 0-4 pts

Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies?	4/4
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Following a 2017 attack in which a man drove a truck through central Stockholm and into a department store, killing 5 people and wounding 10 others, the government introduced new antiterrorism measures. The law focused on tighter security in public places, greater information sharing between government agencies, and tighter controls on individuals deemed to pose a security threat.

There has been an increase of deadly shootings, arson attacks, and use of hand grenades in many Swedish cities in recent years, mainly in the poorest neighborhoods with large immigrant populations. Over the course of one week in June 2019, multiple bombs went off in the city of Malmo, damaging over 250 apartment blocks, and injuring 25 people. Authorities have failed to stem the violence with relatively few cases being prosecuted and little information on who is involved in the attacks and why.

Conditions in prisons and temporary detention facilities are adequate, but concerns have been raised about excessive use of long detention periods. Changes to the law regarding detention have been proposed in the parliament. Swedish courts have jurisdiction to try suspects for genocide committed abroad.

F4 0-4 pts

Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?	4/4
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The Swedish state works to ensure equal protection and rights for all members of the population. An equality ombudsman oversees efforts to prevent discrimination on

the basis of gender, ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation. However, the United Nations has called for the ombudsman's powers to be strengthened and has noted problems with discrimination by police and correctional personnel.

In 2017, in the wake of growing right-wing sentiment and increasing immigration from abroad, the Swedish government voted to place limits on parental leave benefits for immigrants. In 2016, the parliament passed a law that tightened restrictions on asylum seekers, which included limiting family reunification.

The 2018 *Report on International Religious Freedom* noted that while Sweden has antidiscrimination legislation, antisemitism and anti-Muslim sentiment remain persistent problems. In recent years, multiple reports of members of the Sweden Democrats and other parties making antisemitic and anti-Muslim remarks have emerged: their remarks included denials of the Holocaust, antisemitic conspiracy theories, and extreme anti-Muslim rhetoric, sometimes calling for violence. Jewish and Muslim community leaders in Sweden have claimed that the far-right is an indirect but real threat to their communities.

In February 2019, a member of the Swedish Academy (the body which selects the Nobel Prize in Literature) resigned in relation to a sexual assault scandal that emerged in 2018.

G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights

G1 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education?

4/4

Freedom of movement is legally guaranteed and generally respected in practice. However, asylum seekers may be assigned to a place of residence, and at times may

be forced to change locations. Sweden continues to maintain checkpoints on its external borders that were instituted during the 2015 refugee crisis.

G2 0-4 pts

<p>Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors?</p>	<p>4/4</p>
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The government respects the rights of individuals to own property and establish private businesses. A 2011 Supreme Court ruling granted Sami reindeer herders common-law rights to disputed lands.

G3 0-4 pts

<p>Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance?</p>	<p>4/4</p>
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Same-sex couples are legally allowed to marry and adopt; lesbian couples have the same rights to artificial insemination and in vitro fertilization as heterosexual couples. The Lutheran Church allows same-sex marriage ceremonies.

The United Nations has criticized Sweden for not doing enough to prevent domestic violence against women and children. Despite the country's reputation in the eyes of many as a model for gender equality, Sweden suffers from persistently high levels of rape and sexual assault. To address the issue, the parliament passed a groundbreaking law in May 2018 which legally recognizes that sex without consent amounts to rape. The law distinguishes Sweden from most other European countries, which continue to legally define rape in terms of force, threats, and coercion.

G4 0-4 pts

<p>Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation?</p>	<p>4/4</p>
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People in Sweden generally enjoy equality of opportunity. Women earn the equivalent of 88 percent of men's wages, or 95.5 percent when differences in age, sector, and experience are taken into account. However, unemployment is higher among immigrants than it is among people who were born in Sweden.

Sweden is a destination and, to a lesser extent, a transit point for women and children trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation, but the Swedish government is proactive in combatting the problem. The government has established antitrafficking working groups and action plans on the municipal level. Nevertheless, the United Nations (UN) has pointed out that Sweden lacks robust methods to prevent individuals, especially unaccompanied immigrant children, from falling victim to human trafficking. According to the US State Department's 2019 *Trafficking in Persons Report*, Sweden meets the minimum standards for prevention of trafficking however the authorities are not proactive enough in identifying trafficking victims, notably among asylum seekers and unaccompanied children.



On Sweden

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Country Facts

Global Freedom Score

100/100 Free

Other Years

2019

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