

Sexuality Education in the WHO European Region

SWEDEN

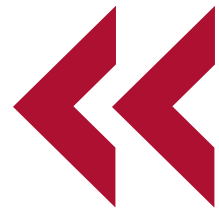
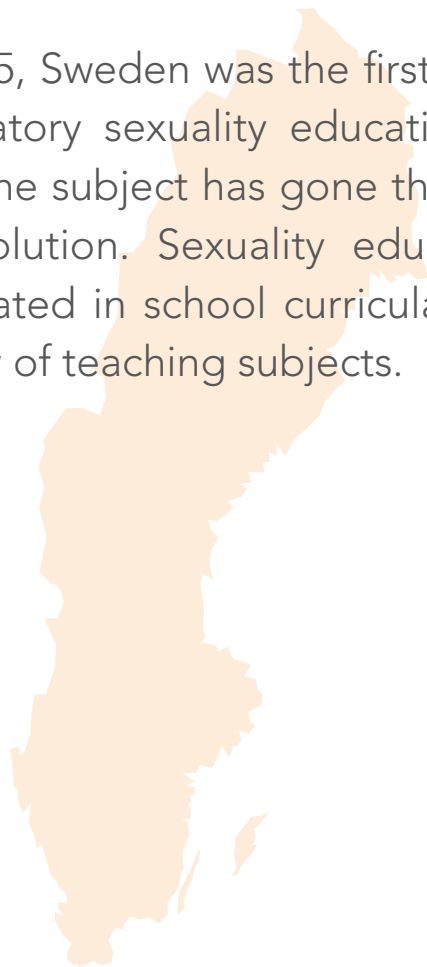


SWEDEN



Status of sexuality education

In 1955, Sweden was the first country to introduce mandatory sexuality education in schools. Since then the subject has gone through a long process of evolution. Sexuality education is today fully integrated in school curricula and addressed in a variety of teaching subjects.





Laws and policies

The current teaching of sexuality education is based on the Education Act (2010) on gender equality¹. It led to the development of two new curricula (2011): the Curriculum for the Compulsory School, Preschool and the Recreation Centre, and the Curriculum for Upper Secondary School. Sexuality education is generally referred to as ‘Sexuality and Relationships Education’.

Implementation of sexuality education

The Swedish National Agency for Education is the central administrative authority for the public school system and is responsible for the development of syllabi. Input into this process is also provided by consultation groups, which include teachers and education professionals, young people, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and authorities such as the Public Health Agency of Sweden and the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society.

Biology and science studies are the subjects that deal with knowledge of the human body, reproduction, sexuality and sexually transmitted infections. Terms such as gender equality, responsibility and relationships were added to the course syllabus of these subjects in 2011, which reinforces the cross-disciplinary perspective. Thus, sexuality education is spread throughout the entire educational programme, starting in pre-school and continuing through upper secondary school. Most schools focus on sexuality education in grades 5–6 (11–13 years) and 8–9 (14–16 years). Topics that are included extensively in the curriculum are biological aspects of sexuality and body awareness, pregnancy and birth, contraception, abortion, HIV and sexually transmitted infections, love, long-term relationships and partnership, sexual orientation, gender roles and equality, mutual consent to sexual activity, and human rights and sexuality.

NGOs are sometimes invited to give lectures in schools. There is also a link to sexual and reproductive health services through direct visits and referrals to the webpages of youth-friendly services.

Training of teachers on sexuality education

Most teachers have received some training for sexuality education and issues related to gender and discrimination. In pre-service teacher training, preparation for teaching of sexuality education is compulsory for teachers only for grades 4–6. Some schools have specially trained ‘gender educators’. Many teachers participate in various short in-service training courses or seminars on sexuality education, arranged by counties, universities, municipalities and NGOs.

Teachers’ guidelines and other educational materials are available, and these reflect comprehensive and participatory learning approaches. They were developed by NGOs and the Swedish National Agency for Education.

Sexuality education outside the formal school setting

Several organisations, including NGOs and youth centres, provide sexuality education outside the school setting and for underserved young people, including young lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, HIV-positive young people, sex workers and young people living with disabilities. There is also non-formal provision via various media (see good-practice examples).



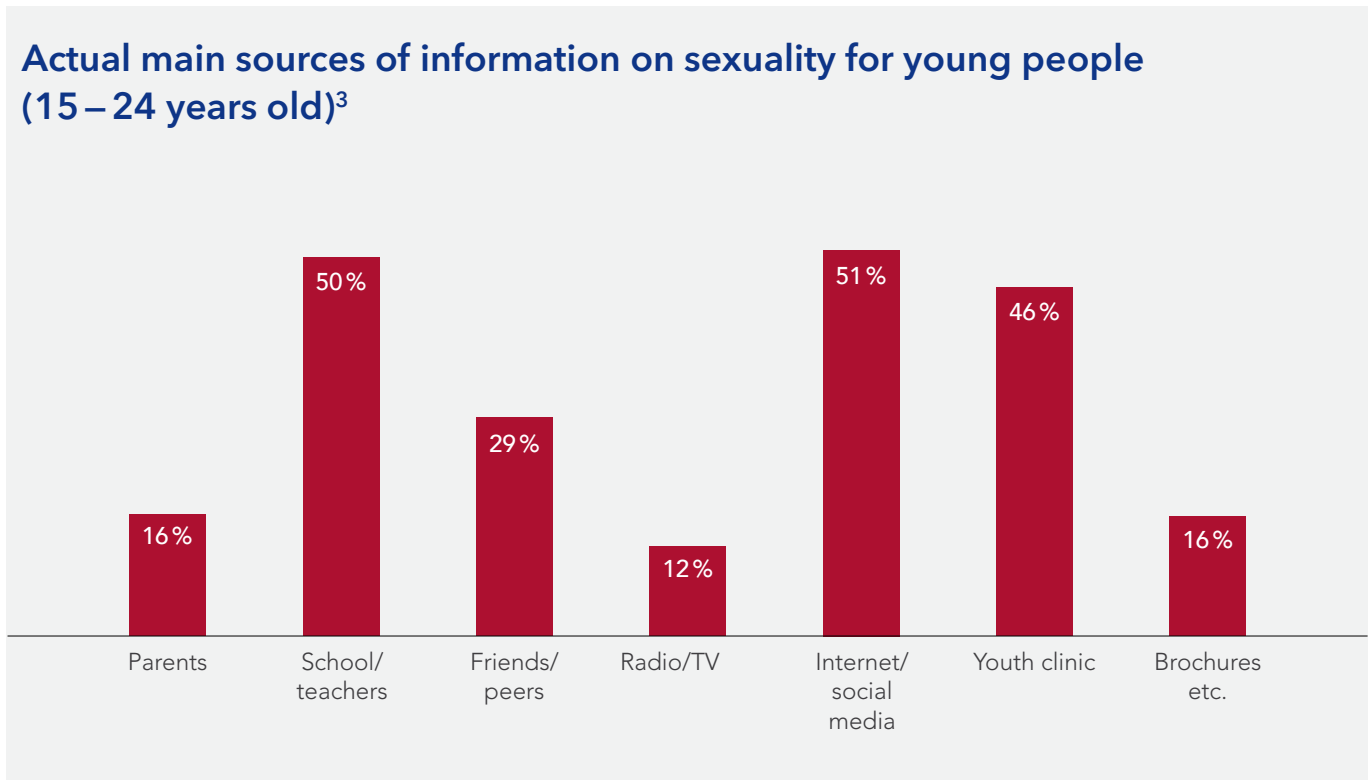
Challenges

There is no significant opposition to sexuality education in Sweden. However, a number of further improvements have been suggested by experts in the field: more detailed monitoring and evaluation of sexuality education, research on didactic issues, e.g. classroom research on delivery of sexuality education, and compulsory training for all teachers.

Good-practice examples

- ‘Sexuality Education in Easy Swedish’ – teacher guidelines for people working with migrants and 3 x 3-hour sessions for newly arrived migrants (both school students and adults).
- ‘Sex on the Map’ – an animated educational film for schools created by the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education (RFSU, IPPF member association)
- ‘The World’s Most Important Book’ – a textbook for sexuality education for 10 – 13-year-old learners².
- ‘UMO.se’ – a very extensive website about sexuality, health, body, relationships and more.

Actual main sources of information on sexuality for young people (15 – 24 years old)³



Country facts



Sweden

Total population ⁴	9 645 000
Population aged 15–19 years (% of 15–19-year-olds in total population) ⁴	544 000 (5.6 %)
Government expenditure on education (% of GDP) ⁵	7.7
Youth unemployment rate (% of labour force aged 15–24 years) ⁶	20.8
Gender Inequality Index rating ⁷	0.048
Births per 1 000 women aged 15–19 years ⁸	6
% of 15-year-olds who have had sexual intercourse ⁹	boys: 24 % girls: 26 %
Average age of mother at birth of first child ¹⁰	29.1

For references go to last page

References / Definitions

- 1 http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/skollag-2010800_sfs-2010-800, accessed 25 March 2017.
- 2 **Learner:** a child or young person who is enrolled or attends classes in school, including primary (basic/elementary), secondary (middle) and high school.
- 3 Tikkanen, R. H., Abellsson, J., Forsberg, M.: UngKAB09. Kunskaper, attityder och sexuella handlingar bland unga (Knowledge, attitudes and sexual practices of young people). Skriftserien 2011:1, Göteborgs universitet, Institutionen för socialt arbete. Göteborg 2011.
- 4 Population by age, sex and urban/rural residence, 2016 [online database]. New York: United Nations Statistics Division; 2017 (<http://data.un.org/Data.aspx?d=POP&f=tableCode%3A22>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- 5 Human development report 2016: human development for everyone. New York: United Nations Development Programme; 2016 (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/2016-report>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- Government expenditure on education:** current, capital and transfer spending on education, expressed as a percentage of GDP. Range in the region is approx. 2.0–8.5.
- 6 Human development data, 2015 [online database]. New York: United Nations Development Programme; 2017 (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/data#>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- Youth unemployment rate:** percentage of the labour force population aged 15–24 years that is not in paid employment or self-employed, but is available for work and has taken steps to seek paid employment or self-employment.
- 7 Human development report 2016: human development for everyone. New York: United Nations Development Programme; 2016 (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/2016-report>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- Gender Inequality Index:** a composite measure reflecting inequality in achievement between women and men in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market. It varies between zero (when women and men fare equally) and one (when men or women fare poorly compared with the other in all dimensions).
- 8 Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1 000 women ages 15–19). Washington (DC): World Bank; 2016 (<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.ADO.TFRT>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- 9 Growing up unequal: gender and socioeconomic differences in young people's health and well-being. HBSC 2016 study report (2013/2014 survey). Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2016 (<http://www.euro.who.int/en/publications/abstracts/growing-up-unequal.-hbsc-2016-study-20132014-survey>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- 10 Women in the EU gave birth to their first child at almost 29 years of age on average. Luxembourg: Eurostat; 2015 [2013 data] (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6829228/3-13052015-CP-EN.pdf/f7e9007fb-3ca9-445f-96eb-fd75d6792965>, accessed 25 March 2017).