



Know  
Before  
You  
Go

## SWEDEN

# A Guide to Keep You Safe Abroad

Provided by Sexual Assault Support and  
Help for Americans Abroad (SASHAA)

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**SASHAA**  
Sexual Assault Support &  
Help for Americans Abroad

Let's be perfectly clear, the number one way to prevent sexual assault is to **not rape**. While the responsibility of ending sexual gender-based violence is on the perpetrators, this guide will offer general safety tips, country-specific information, and resources to help prevent and prepare travelers for the possibility of sexual assault abroad.

## GENERAL SAFETY TIPS:

1. Use the **buddy system** and travel with friends!
2. Be aware of **social and cultural norms**. For example, looking at someone in the eyes when you speak to them is perfectly normal in the U.S., but in another country that could signify you're interested in the person.
3. **Recognize controlling behavior** when entering a relationship. Most rape survivors recall feeling "uncomfortable" about some of their partner's behaviors such as degrading jokes/language or refusal to accept "no" as an answer, whether in a sexual context or otherwise.<sup>2</sup>
4. **Avoid secluded places** where you could be more vulnerable. Meet new people in public spaces and let a trusted friend know where you'll be beforehand.
5. **Trust your gut**. Many victims have a "bad feeling" right before an assault takes place.



## ALCOHOL AND DRUG AWARENESS:

- Always be sure to watch your drink being poured and carry it yourself, even to the bathroom.
- Be aware of "drug-facilitated sexual assault drugs," also referred to as 'roofies' or 'club drugs,' which may turn your drink bright blue, cloudy, or slightly salty. Effects such as impaired judgment, lost sense of sight, sound, or consciousness can be felt within 15 minutes and up to 4 hours.<sup>3</sup>
- There is no legal drinking age in Sweden, but it is illegal to sell, lend or give alcohol to a minor, except if served and supervised in private and in moderation. Many clubs choose to have higher age limits than 18, commonly 20 or 23.<sup>4</sup>

## CULTURAL INFORMATION:

**Major Religions:** Lutheran 87%, other 13% (includes Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Baptist, Muslim, Jewish, and Buddhist).<sup>5</sup>

**Legal System:** Sweden is a civil law country. It is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary form of Government.<sup>6</sup>

**Social/Cultural Norms:** Practice Sweden's societal code of conduct 'lagom' which translates to 'just enough', 'in moderation', or 'appropriate'. Blend in appropriately, avoid extreme displays of emotion, and refrain from wearing flashy clothing.<sup>7</sup>

**Gender Equality:** A 2015 survey by the World Economic Forum ranked Sweden 4th out of 145 countries in terms of gender equality.<sup>8</sup> The government prides itself on having the 'first feminist government in the world.' There is a focus on gender equality, both in national and international work.<sup>9</sup>



## Sexual Assault and the Law: Swedish Context

The Democratic government has introduced a new sex-crime law with the world's most expansive definition of rape.<sup>10</sup> The Swedish Penal Code defines *rape* as "violence or threat which involves, or appears to the threatened person to involve an imminent danger, forces another person to have sexual intercourse or to engage in a comparable sexual act, that having regard to the nature of the violation and the circumstances in general, is comparable to enforced sexual intercourse" and is punished by imprisonment for two to six years. The punishment for *sexual coercion* is at most two years and at most four years for *gross sexual coercion*.<sup>11</sup>

### If You Experience Sexual Assault...

Don't blame yourself! **Sexual assault is never the fault of the victim.** You may be unsure of how to proceed, and that's okay. First, consider taking the following actions:

1. If you are in a safe place, **call someone you trust** to be with you. If you are not safe, call someone you trust to come and get you.
2. Do **self-collection of evidence**. Put all of the clothes you were wearing, bed sheets, and so on in a paper bag. If you have any injuries, **take pictures**. If there is semen present, collect what you can in a hotel glass or cup and put it in the paper bag.
3. **Call a SASHAA advocate** internationally toll free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They can help you through the ordeal, honoring your decisions. (See Resources)

### Medical Care and Reporting Sexual Assault in Sweden

To report a sexual crime in Sweden contact the local police and the U.S. Embassy at +(46) (8) 785-5300. Local authorities are responsible for investigating and prosecuting the crime. Seek the nearest police station or call 11414. If it is an emergency or taking place, call 112. The police can answer questions or refer you to a relief organization. Non-profit organizations with hotlines for crime victims are found in most districts in the country. The police will write up a report, which you will need in order to receive compensation from the Swedish Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority in cases where the offender cannot be tied to the criminal act. The Swedish medical system does not cover people who don't live in Sweden; nonresidents are expected to pay their own medical costs. The Swedish medical system is state-run, so instead of visiting a local private general practitioner, you can visit a local medical center or clinic, called an "Akutmottagning" or "Vardcentral."<sup>12,13</sup>

#### LGBTQ VICTIM CONCERNS



Homosexual activity has been legal in Sweden since 1944. Sweden was the seventh country to legalize same-sex marriage. LGBT discrimination in Sweden is illegal, even though the act does state a finite list of areas in which individuals are protected, it virtually covers all aspects of life. Homosexuals serving openly in the military is legal and the Swedish Armed Forces even ran a campaign encouraging LGBT people to serve openly.<sup>14</sup>

#### POST EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS, EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION, AND ABORTION

##### Q. Are post exposure prophylaxis and emergency contraception available?

**A:** UPA EC and LNG EC can be purchased over-the-counter from pharmacies, family planning clinics, and hospitals. Health care providers do not require a pregnancy test or a pelvic exam before prescribing EC.<sup>15</sup>

##### Q: Is abortion legal in Sweden?

**A:** Yes, an abortion may be requested up to 18 weeks of gestation on a wide variety of grounds: to save the life of the woman, to preserve physical health, to preserve mental health, for economic or social reasons, due to rape or incest, and risk of fetal impairment, provided that the procedure will not seriously endanger the woman's life or health.<sup>16</sup>

## Resources

### SASHAA

#### SASHAA International Crisis Line:

To call our confidential, toll-free, International Crisis Line first dial the country specific AT&T access code for **Sweden (020-799-111)**. Then, at the prompt, enter our phone number: **866-USWOMEN (866-879-6636)**.

#### Crisis Email:

To reach a SASHAA advocate, you can email us at [crisis@866uswomen.org](mailto:crisis@866uswomen.org). All crisis emails will be responded to within 24 hours. However, if you need to get in touch with us immediately, please call the international toll-free crisis line.

#### Live Chat:

SASHAA online chat services are available 24/7 at our website <https://sashaa.org>.

### U.S. EMBASSY

#### Embassy of the United States

Dag Hammarskjölds väg 31, 115 89 Stockholm  
Tel: +46 8 783 53 00  
Email: [stkacsinfo@state.gov](mailto:stkacsinfo@state.gov)

### HOSPITALS

#### Capio Sankt Görans Hospital - Stockholm

Sankt Göransplan 1, 112 81  
Tel: +46 08-5870 1000

#### Södersjukhuset, South General Hospital - Stockholm

Sjukhusbacken 10, 118 83  
Tel: +46 8 616 10 00

#### Karolinska University Hospital - Solna

Karolinska vägen, 171 76 Solna  
Tel: +46 8 517 700 00

#### Sahlgrenska University Hospital - Göteborg

Blå stråket 5, 413 45 Göteborg  
Tel: +46 31 342 10 00

#### Swedish National Health Care Hotline

Tel: 1177 from within Sweden  
Tel: + 46 771 11 77 00 from abroad

### SUPPORT CENTERS

#### Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority

Storgatan 49, Umeå, Sweden  
Tel: +46 (0)90-70 82 00  
Website: <http://www.brottsoffermyndigheten.se/eng>

#### Stödcentrum BEDA (Support Centre BEDA)

Folke Bernadottes gata 2, 4128  
Tel: +46 031 133666 or +46 031 133585  
E-mail: [info@stodcentrum-beda.nu](mailto:info@stodcentrum-beda.nu)

#### Support Centre Humlegården

Folke Bernadotte Street 2, 411 28, Göteborg  
Tel: +031-13 14 17 or 0703-13 26 94  
E-mail: [kontakt@stodcentrumhumlegarden.se](mailto:kontakt@stodcentrumhumlegarden.se)

#### Victim Support Association National Office

Hammarby Fabriksväg 25, 6th FL., 120 30, Stockholm  
Victim Support National Call Center: **0200-21**  
E-mail: [info@brottsofferjouren.se](mailto:info@brottsofferjouren.se)  
Website: [www.brottsofferjouren.se](http://www.brottsofferjouren.se)

#### Kvinnofridslinjen National Helpline

Tel: 020-50 50 50  
Website: <http://kvinnofridslinjen.se/>

#### Stockholm University Student Health Services

Studentpalatset, Norrtullsgatan 2, Stockholm  
Tel: Nurse: 08-674 77 00  
Tel: Counselor: 08.674 76 99  
Email: [info@studenthalsanistockholm.se](mailto:info@studenthalsanistockholm.se)

#### Student Health Center at Lund University

Paradisgatan 5B, Lund  
Tel: +46 (0)46 222 4377

### POLICE

**Emergency Police: 112**

**Non-emergency Police: 114 14**

(if calling from abroad: +46 77 114 14 00)

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