

National action plan to combat female genital mutilation

Female genital mutilation is a serious health problem and a violation of girls' and women's human rights. This is why, in June 2018, the Government adopted a national action plan to combat female genital mutilation. Sweden, like the UN, the EU and other organisations, sees female genital mutilation as a form of honour-related violence and oppression.

Female genital mutilation is based on the same norms and values as other forms of honour-related control systems intended to preserve girls' and young women's virginity and protect the family from rumours that could jeopardise the family's reputation and honour. The aim of the action plan is to prevent and combat female genital mutilation and improve victim support, to achieve the Government's goals for gender equality policy, child rights policy and youth policy, as well as the goals of the 2030 Agenda. A national action plan can also further strengthen cooperation and coordination in the area.

How common is female genital mutilation in Sweden?

In 2012, the number of girls and women subjected to genital mutilation in Sweden was approximately 38 000, according to estimates from the National Board of Health and Welfare. Of these, approximately 7 400 were under 18. Approximately 19 000 girls are estimated to be at risk, with custodial parents who have a positive or ambivalent attitude towards genital mutilation, even after migration. Since 2015, Sweden has experienced a considerable increase in immigration, including from areas where female genital mutilation is practised. This means that the number is now probably higher than the estimated 38 000.

Female genital mutilation is prohibited in Sweden

In Sweden, female genital mutilation is prohibited under the Act Prohibiting the Circumcision of Women (1982:316). The prohibition applies to all forms of female genital mutilation, from the

most comprehensive to the least intrusive, and applies regardless of whether or not consent has been given. Female genital mutilation is a punishable offence in Sweden, even if it is carried out in a country where it is not prohibited, but there is a link to Sweden when the offence is committed.

Four objectives

The measures in the action plan, and the ongoing work at government agencies, are presented under four objectives set out in the national strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women (Govt Communication 2016/17:10):

- Increased and effective prevention efforts
- Improved detection and stronger protection and support for vulnerable girls and women
- More effective law enforcement
- Improved knowledge and methodological development

The action plan contains measures on various levels of prevention carried out by actors that complement one another. Some measures are specifically intended to prevent and combat female genital mutilation, whereas other measures are part of broader efforts to combat men's violence against women.

In November 2016, the Government presented a ten-year national strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women (Govt Communication 2016/17:10). The action plan aims to further strengthen and complement the work initiated through the strategy, with a specific focus on measures against female genital mutilation.

[The full action plan is available on the Government website \(Swedish\).](#)