

FRYSHUSET

2024

BRAVE  SPACE

NEEDS ANALYSIS

Personal sustainability and resilience in
Sweden's local Youth, Peace and Security work

Summary

Many young people in Sweden have low trust in public institutions and increasingly seek support from civil society through safe spaces, engaged mentors, and skills training in areas such as crisis preparedness and conflict resolution. This report examines the needs of youth, and youth workers who work with peace and security on the local level in Sweden. Based on the findings, three key recommendations are presented:

Empower young people and youth workers as key actors in peace and security efforts

By drawing on young people's unique perspectives and experiences, we can strengthen their role in preventing future conflicts, creating inclusive and peaceful societies, and addressing challenges such as radicalisation, unemployment, and inequality. Youth engagement in peace processes not only contributes to conflict resolution, but also plays a crucial role in creating sustainable peace, where their voices and experiences are integrated into solutions.

Strengthen youth workers' emotional and professional resilience


Place a particular focus on mental health, processing and recovery practices as a necessity for navigating complex and emotionally demanding environments. Implement structured support systems that provide access to psychological support, guidance and mentoring to prevent burnout and promote long-term sustainability. Offer training and practical tools in strengthening youth workers' emotional and professional resilience, including personal leadership, digital literacy and trauma-informed training.

Secure long-term and stable funding for youth work

Establish larger multi-year funding models that prioritise long-term stability and development for organisations operating in vulnerable areas. Strengthen civil society's capacity to seek and utilise resources effectively by offering training in funding strategies and project development for peace and community building. Combine financial support with mentorship and network-building initiatives.

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Background

In the face of increasing global challenges, young people play a key role in promoting peace and security. Climate change, socioeconomic inequality, local and global conflicts, as well as navigating digitalisation and its effect on democracy, are all critical areas where young people play a pivotal role. United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security, adopted on December 9, 2015, was the first resolution to recognise the central role of youth in peace and security issues.



**Youth, Peace
& Security**

Despite this, young people often face significant obstacles and systemic barriers that limit their effectiveness, such as a lack of platforms for engagement, decision-makers speaking about youth rather than with them, and the exhaustion (compassion fatigue) that arises from the constant influx of information in the digital age. At the same time, young people encounter stereotypical narratives that portray them as a threat rather than a resource, leading to counterproductive strategies that increase their alienation and distrust in political systems.

The 2024 Youth Barometer's Generational Report shows that a large proportion of young people in Sweden have low trust in politicians' ability to address societal issues. Among the 15,000 youth aged 15–24 who participated in the survey, 56 percent reported low trust in politicians, reflecting a growing skepticism toward the effectiveness of democracy. This can be interpreted as an expression of frustration over the lack of concrete solutions to societal challenges and a sense of powerlessness about the future.

Civil society and youth workers play a key role in addressing societal crises where larger institutions often fall short. They act as a bridge between individuals, decision-makers, and society, creating platforms where young people can be heard and participate in shaping the future. By offering locally and culturally rooted solutions, they contribute to fostering dialogue, building trust, and strengthening social cohesion. Therefore, it is increasingly important to understand their needs and how best to support them in carrying out their work sustainably.

About Brave Space

What do you need to be brave? Brave Space doesn't shy away from the difficult work required for navigating conflicts, complexity and change, but at the same time, it acknowledges that creating space for well-being is essential for the sustainability of those working for it.

The idea for Brave Space was born during the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum in December 2022, where the Swedish youth organization Fryshuset and the Ukrainian organization STAN met for the first time. Their discussions covered a range of topics, from how organizations tend to grow faster in times of crisis to the need for greater support for youth workers, who, in turn, empower youth. Recognizing the importance of ongoing exchange, they identified a need for a more structured, long-term collaboration. With the addition of a third partner, the Armenian organization Armenian Progressive Youth (APY), the project gained an even stronger foundation for cross-cultural learning and understanding.

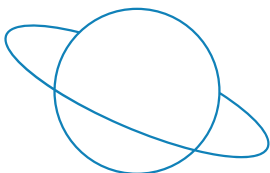
In 2024, young people and youth workers from Ukraine, Armenia and Sweden contributed their perspectives and experiences to needs analyses, shaping the foundation of this initiative. This report forms the Swedish context. By comparing data from all three countries, the Brave Space platform fosters an intercultural exchange that addresses both shared and unique challenges faced by youth workers worldwide. The findings highlight the universal need for environments that cultivate resilience and well-being.

Brave Space is a youth-centered peacebuilding platform built on three central areas



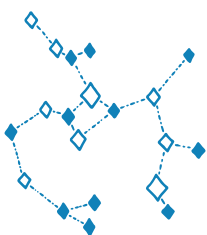
BRAVE SPACES

We create spaces that allow young leaders and youth workers to process and recover, focusing on their personal sustainability, resilience and wellbeing.



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR RESILIENCE & SUSTAINABILITY

We equip individuals with the tools to live and work more sustainably in complex and conflict affected communities through training in areas such as mental health, trauma awareness, personal leadership, and digital resilience.



CROSS-BORDER, CROSS-SECTOR, MULTI-LEVEL NETWORK

We connect young peacebuilders with policymakers, professionals and organizations across sectors and levels, from local to global. Our focus is promoting youth well-being and engagement as part of peacebuilding efforts that strengthen the resilience of communities.

Methodology

The purpose of this report is to understand the key needs of young people, young leaders, and youth workers engaged in peace and security at the local level in Stockholm, Malmö, and Helsingborg. The study employs both qualitative and quantitative methods, including focus groups, in-depth interviews, and survey responses, to provide a comprehensive picture of the needs and challenges faced by young people and youth workers.

In this report, young people are defined as individuals aged 16–25. Young leaders are individuals within this age group who engage in social issues through projects or initiatives aimed at creating change in their local communities or at the national or international level. Youth workers are defined here as professionals who work with young people, by leading, supporting or organising young people in their engagement and strengthening their opportunities to influence society.

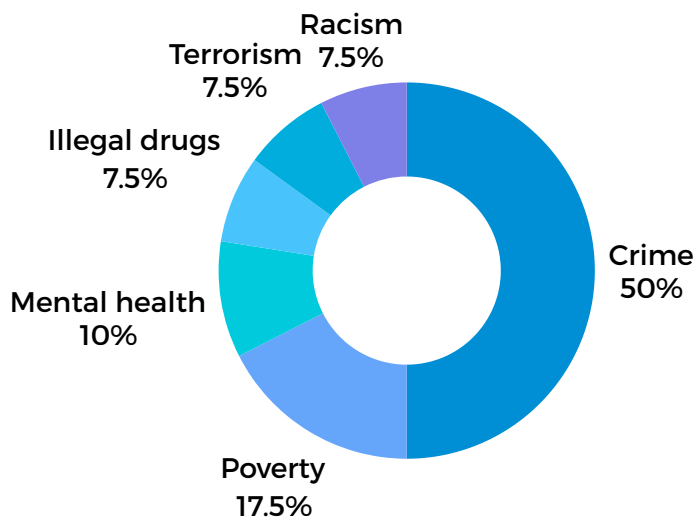
To understand the context in which youth workers operate, a survey was conducted with young people aged 16–25. Among the respondents, 26 were women and 14 were men. In terms of geographic distribution, 27 participants were from Malmö, 8 from Helsingborg, and 4 from Stockholm. The survey aimed to explore their perspectives on the challenges they see in Sweden and their cities, as well as to examine their trust in public institutions and politics. Participants were also asked about how civil society can better support them. Additionally, the Youth Barometer's Generations Report 2024, based on responses from over 15,000 young people in Sweden aged 15–24, was used to validate the data. The data collection for the Youth Barometer took place between October 5 and November 23, 2023.

To gather insights from youth workers, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 individuals: 7 young leaders (3 men and 4 women) aged 17–21 from Stockholm and 7 professionals in civil society (2 men and 5 women) working with young people in Stockholm, Malmö, and Helsingborg. The goal was to create an up-to-date picture of their work and identify the needs they have to work more sustainably.

Youth Perspectives

These perspectives highlight the key challenges faced by youth in Sweden, both nationally and in the cities of Stockholm, Malmö, and Helsingborg.

Key challenges in Sweden



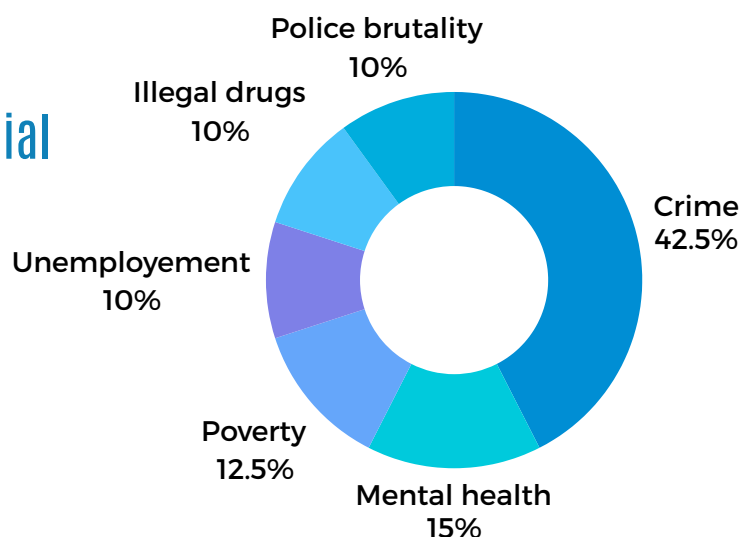
The data reveals that young people view crime the largest challenge in Sweden and their local cities. This reflects a broader societal concern, as highlighted in Generation Report, 2024 which shows that crime prevention and increasing police resources are ranked as the second most important issues by young people. Poverty, mental health, illegal drugs, unemployment, racism and police brutality are also identified as key challenges in Sweden by the participants.

Key challenges in your local area

Top five most important social issues when young people only have to choose one

The Generation Report 2024

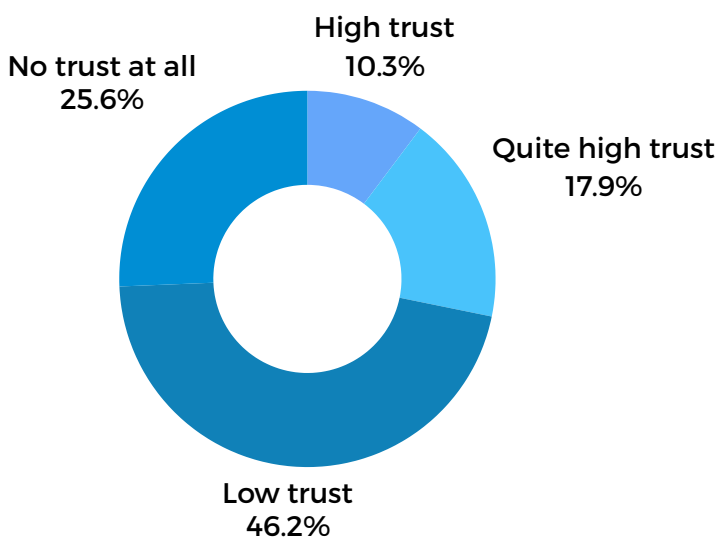
1. Environmental and climate issues
2. Increased resources for the police and fighting crime
3. Increased resources for healthcare and care
4. Increased resources for schools
5. Improved integration



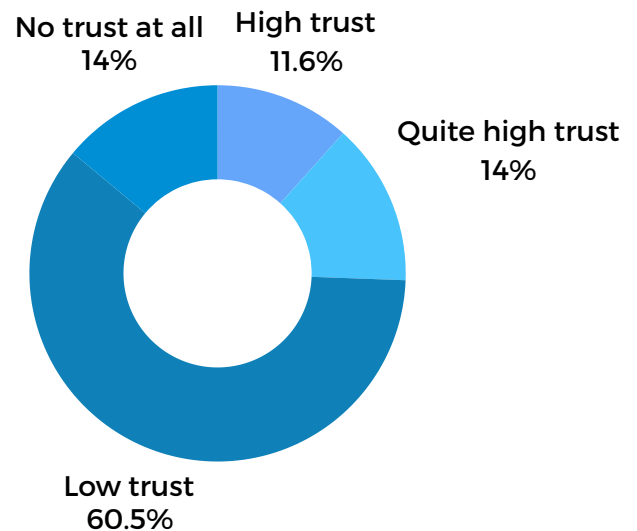
Youth Perspectives

These perspectives highlight the views of youth on trust in Swedish authorities and politicians.

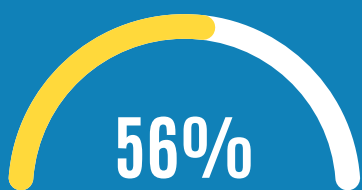
Trust in politicians



Trust in authorities



The results highlight a deep distrust in both political leaders and public institutions among youth. A majority of young participants have little or no trust in politicians' ability to solve societal problems. Similarly, most report low or no trust in authorities like the police and social services, indicating even weaker confidence in institutions. These findings align with the 2024 Generation Report, where over half of young people believe politicians cannot solve Sweden's problems.



More than every second young person agrees completely or partially with the statement "Politicians cannot solve the problems that exist in Sweden."
-The Generation Report 2024

Youth Perspectives

These findings highlights the support and resources that young people think that civil society can provide.

Engaged Adults

Many responses highlight the need for adults who care and can build safe relationships with young people.

Social Support

Having the opportunity to talk and process their experiences is seen as essential. Many participants expressed the need for supportive conversations.

Safe Meeting Places

Several responses focus on safe spaces and youth centers where young people can spend their free time. Participants also emphasised the need for better accessibility with extended open hours.

Crisis preparedness and conflict resolution

Access to "knowledge on how to handle crises and conflicts" was a recurring theme, indicating a need for training and courses to enhance young people's ability to manage difficult situations.

Employment Opportunities

Many highlighted the need for more jobs and employment opportunities, with requests for help with CVs and employment opportunities.

Young Leaders

Young leaders often face the challenge of navigating a dual role as both friends and leaders, which can make it difficult to maintain authority and set boundaries. The following needs were highlighted to support youth leaders in their work.

Capacity Building

Many young leaders asked for practical tools to strengthen their self-confidence and leadership identity, such as training in leadership, conflict resolution, and setting boundaries.

Collaboration and New Networks

Collaborations and new networks for learning from each other and sharing best practices are highlighted as an important aspect. The emotional support they can provide each other is also crucial for their long-term ability to work in challenging environments.

Emotional Support

The ability to handle stressful situations calmly and in a controlled manner is seen as essential to avoid burnout. Support to cope with the emotional strain they face in their roles is also requested.

Youth Workers

For a lot of youth workers, working with young people in crisis and conflict-prone areas is more than just a job – it involves taking personal and professional risks to create positive change. This highlights the profound sense of responsibility that often defines their work, especially when youth workers are the only ones young people in certain areas can turn to. The following points were identified as youth workers needs.

Greater Recognition of Their Work

Many youth workers express a desire for their work to gain greater recognition, not only within their organisations but also at the societal level. Especially considering the emotional and sometimes physical risks they take to support youth in high risk environments.

Capacity Building

Tools for managing stress and preventing burnout are requested, as are skills in areas such as trauma awareness, conflict management and leadership, which are crucial for being able to work sustainably.

Psychological and Emotional Support

Sharing experiences and receiving support from colleagues who understand the unique challenges are seen as essential resources for managing stress and preventing burnout. The youth workers also ask for help in implementing boundaries and the emotional responsibility.

Sustainable Funding and Stability

Securing stable financing opportunities and creating long-term sustainability is seen as crucial. Achieving this requires not only focusing on financial resources but also building skills and networks to strengthen operations in other ways.

Conclusion & recommendations

To ensure that youth and youth workers can effectively contribute to peacebuilding and societal security, a multi-stakeholder approach is needed. Governments, international organizations, civil society, and the private sector must work together to provide the necessary support, recognition, and resources. Continuous training and opportunities for professional and personal development allow youth workers to remain adaptive and innovative. Investing in youth and those who empower them is an investment in a more peaceful, resilient, and inclusive future.

Empower young people and youth workers as key actors in peace and security efforts

By drawing on young people's unique perspectives and experiences, we can strengthen their role in preventing future conflicts, creating inclusive and peaceful societies, and addressing challenges such as radicalisation, unemployment, and inequality. Youth engagement in peace processes not only contributes to conflict resolution, but also plays a crucial role in creating sustainable peace, where their voices and experiences are integrated into solutions.

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Acknowledgements

Thank you,

To the young people and youth workers who shared their experiences, insights, and perspectives - your voices are at the heart of this work. To our partners, STAN and Armenian Progressive Youth, for your collaboration and dedication to youth, sustainable peace, and societal security. And to Svenska Institutet, whose generous support made this project possible.

What do you need to be Brave?



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