



Swedish
Defence
University

Centre for Societal Security

Total flip-flop

A Swedish story of recapturing resilience



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Agenda

- A primer on the Swedish total defence system.
- How did we get here?
A brief historical rollercoaster
- The individual in the system.
Personal preparedness,
responsibility, will to defend.

The total defence concept and system

Bringing all of society to bear

Total defence

Military defence

Armed forces
- 5½ regions

Adjunct agencies (coast guard, intelligence agencies, defence industry agencies).

Civilian component of the total defence effort

12 sectors of coordination
40+ “readiness” agencies
300+ other agencies

6 CIVO (civilian regions)
21 county boards
21 regions

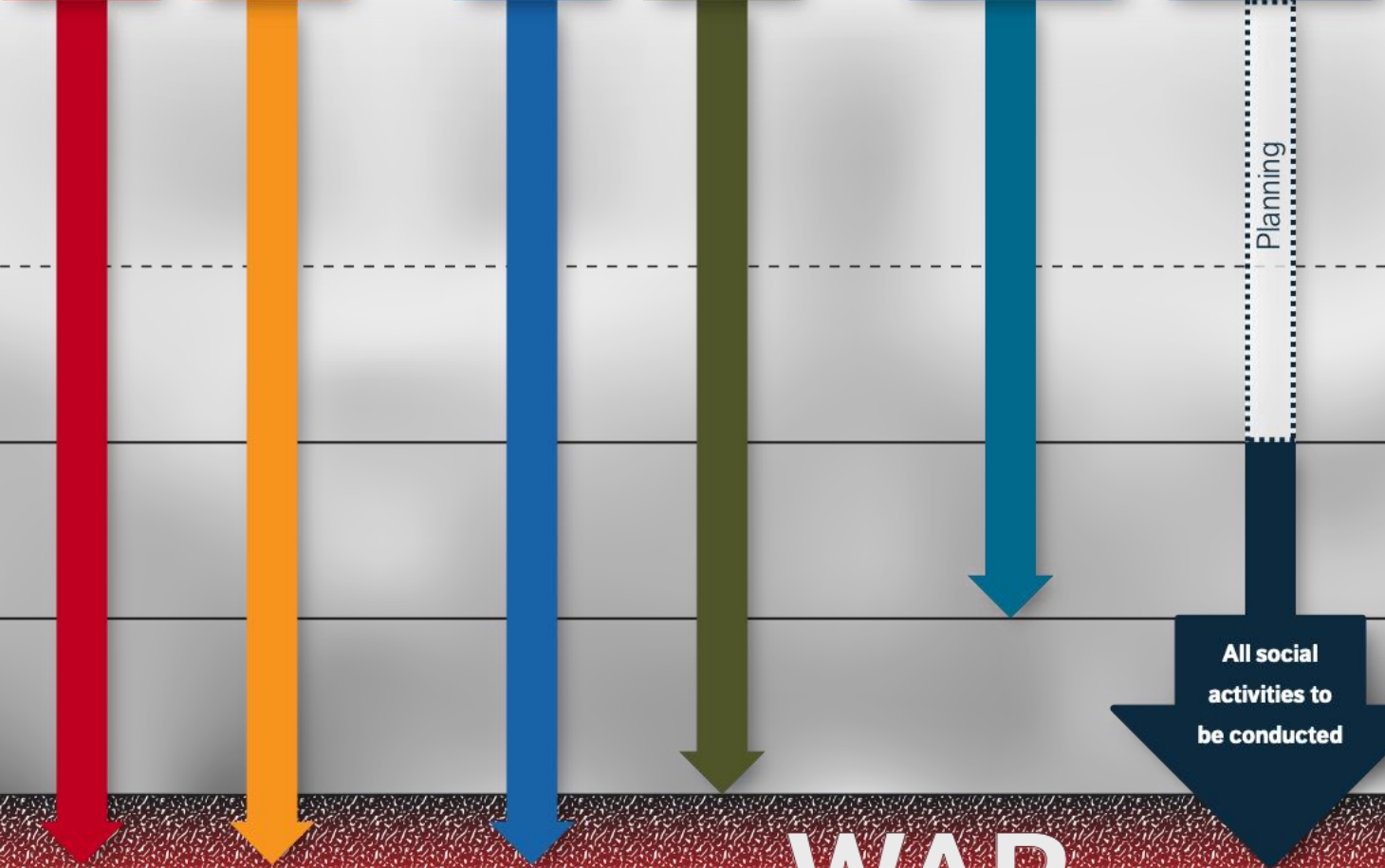
290 municipalities
7+ million individuals aged 16–70

So, what is(n't) it?

- Not “military defence and total defence” – one is part of the other.
- Not “civil-military cooperation” – a mode of operation in international missions to include civilian (often local) actors and divide the workload.
- Nor “private-public cooperation” – the private sector is an indivisible part of the whole of society.
- Not “civil defence” or “civil protection” (i.e. the protection of civilians, rescue services during war) but civil society’s contribution to the defence effort.
- Not “crisis management, but more” – it has its own distinct set of laws and ordinances, partially codified in the constitution.
- An all-of-society approach to maximise the combined defensive posture of the entire nation.
- Above all: it is obligatory!

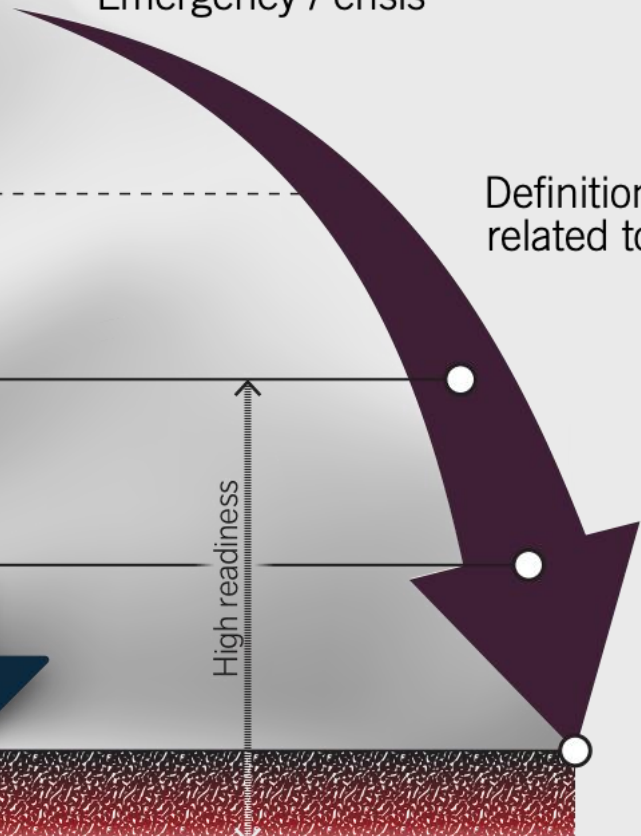
GREY ZONE

Legal regulations and the structures for handling emergencies and war



WAR

Emergency / crisis



Definition of threat as related to war/danger of war

Heightened readiness

Highest readiness

Declaration of war

High readiness

Planning

All social activities to be conducted

The goals of the crisis management system

- Reduce risks related to crises and accidents that may threaten our societal security.
- Safeguard lives and individuals' health, and protect foundational values such as democracy, rule of law, and human rights and liberties by maintaining critical functionality for all of society or by reducing harm and damage to property and to the environment when a crisis occurs.

The goals of the total defence

- Maintain a capability to defend Sweden against armed aggression and to safeguard our security, liberty, sovereignty, and self-determination.
- Participants in total defence activities must be able to operate individually, in collaboration with others, within and outside of the national borders.

Note in particular how life and the health of the individual is no longer a priority and how the core values have shifted.

The goals and purpose of the civil component

- Protect the civilian population
- Uphold the most critical functions of society
- Maintain a supply of necessary goods
- Support the capabilities of the military in case of armed aggression towards or near the nation
- Maintain a societal resilience against external pressure and strengthen the will to defend
- Contribute to the societal resilience against hardships in peacetime and
- ... contribute resources and capabilities in international missions of peace and humanitarian aid

The goals and purpose of the military component

- Defend Sweden in case of armed aggression and attacks
- Maintain the territorial integrity and protect the sovereign rights and national interests in Sweden as well outside Swedish territory in line with international law
- Promote our security and pre-empt and manage conflicts and war while at peace by operating within and near our territory, as well as by participating in international peace missions, and
- ... protect and preserve a functional society by contributing capabilities and resources in peacetime as well as during High Readiness.

The events that formed Swedish societal security

Cold war, crisis, new security challenges



“Threat and risk assessment”
– pivot to crisis management, all hazards

Civil preparedness no longer a public function; territorial defence not a priority; no further conscription

A constant and persistent problem with doing two things at once.

Gold-plating and over-commitment, especially when we “compete” with our Nordic neighbours.

Civil preparedness
Brigade system
Civil commanders

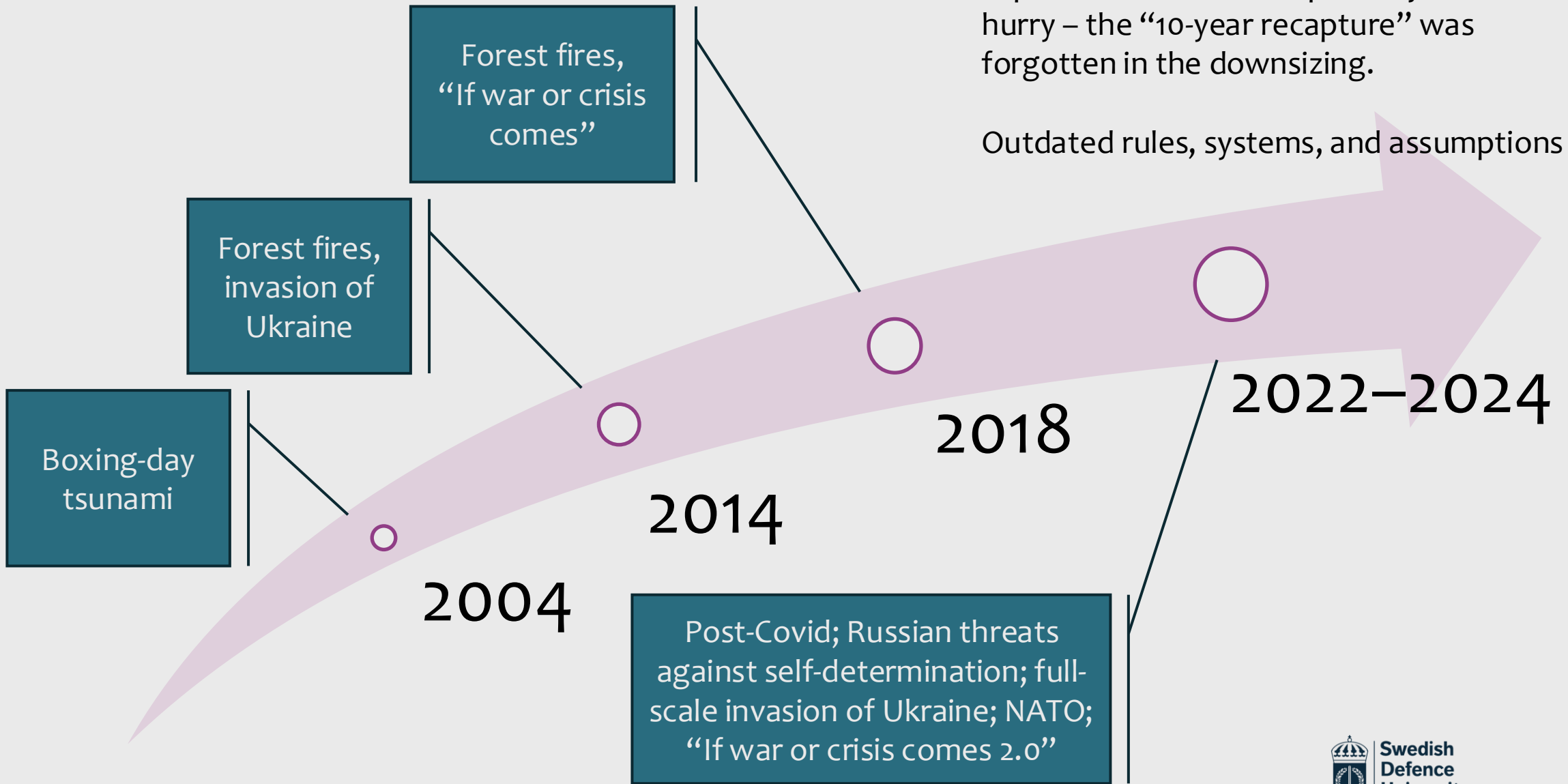
1944–1951

1995

2002

2015

Total defence system reinstated



A dawning realisation that we sold out capabilities we now desperately need in a hurry – the “10-year recapture” was forgotten in the downsizing.

Outdated rules, systems, and assumptions

What did we learn?

- 2004 tsunami
 - 2014 forest fires
 - 2018 forest fires
 - 2020 pandemic
- You are responsible for your own safety and security
 - Also, we are very vulnerable to supply chain disruptions and how to accept that help.
 - Also also, the private sector is really quick to respond

The private citizen and the will to defend

Personal responsibility and volunteerism
in an age of individualism

The paradox of public unpreparedness

- 10.5M residents; 2.3M children at teens, 2.2M elderly.
- 265,000+ associations, clubs, hobby/interest groups, and non-profit organisations employing nearly 200k *for the purpose of those associations alone* – almost 4% of the national workforce.
- 90% of the population is a member of at least one such association; on average, each person is a member of 1,8 associations. The vast majority is volunteer work.
- We are already organised to support each other – the question is how the public sphere can leverage this massive pre-existing support network.

But on the other hand...

- How can it ever be equitable?
 - Socio-economic situation – who can afford to be prepared?
 - Housing situation – who can *physically* maintain a supply cabinet?
 - Gender distribution in the workforce vs. prioritised workload
 - Geographic self sufficiency vs. access to services
- What baseline skills and sufficiencies are needed?
 - Source critique / information hygiene
 - Mobility, reskilling, offloading critical sectors (e.g. health care)
 - What is at stake, personally and societally?
- Time to act – time to change – forecasting

Instrument of Government (1974:159)

Chapter 1. The foundations of the State

1§ All public power in Sweden proceeds from the people.

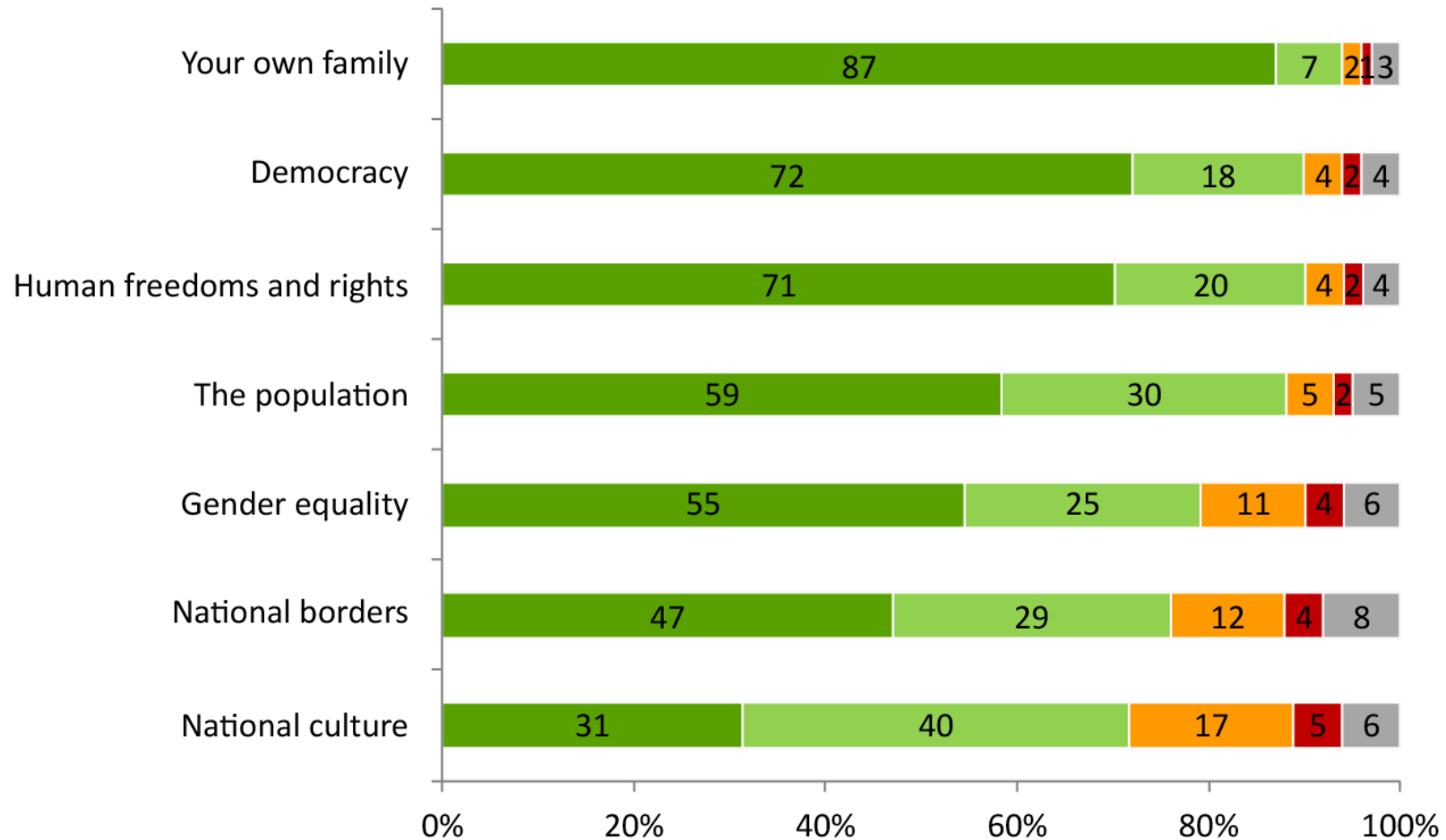
Swedish democracy is founded on the free formation of opinion and on universal and equal suffrage. It is realised through a representative and parliamentary form of government and through local self-government.

Public power is exercised under the law.

2§ Public power shall be exercised with respect for the equal worth of all and the liberty and dignity of the individual.

The personal, economic and cultural welfare of the individual shall be fundamental aims of public activity. In particular, the public institutions shall secure the right to employment, housing and education, and shall promote social care and social security, as well as favourable conditions for good health.

How important is it for you to defend the following values?



Very important

Fairly important

Not all that important

Not important at all

No opinion



Försvarshögskolan

Centrum för totalförsvar och samhällets säkerhet

2018

 **VIKTIG INFORMATION TILL SVERIGES INVÅNARE**



**OM KRISEN
ELLER KRIGET
KOMMER**



2024

 **Viktig information till Sveriges invånare**



**Om krisen eller
kriget kommer**

2026

 **Viktig information till Sveriges företag**



Beredskap för företag

**Om krisen eller
kriget kommer**

 **Myndigheten
för civilt försvar**

“The brochure”

- 32 pages of information and basic preparedness instructions
- Focus on the individual’s role, responsibilities, and means and methods for self-help
- “We will get to you, but in the meantime...”

 Important information to all residents of Sweden



In case of crisis or war


Total defence duty

From the year you turn 16 until the end of the year you turn 70, you are part of Sweden's total defence and required to serve in the event of war or the threat of war.

Total defence duty applies to all Swedish citizens living in Sweden or abroad. Total defence duty also applies to foreign nationals residing in Sweden. Total defence duty consists of:

- Military or civil defence service. During a heightened state of alert, you are to proceed immediately to the place you have been designated in your wartime posting.
- General national service. If the Swedish government activates general national service, you are to remain at work or carry out other tasks in support of Sweden's total defence system.

During a heightened state of alert, go to work as usual unless you are assigned a specific wartime posting.



Together we make Sweden stronger

During times of crisis or war, we all need to contribute to Sweden's resilience.

Government agencies, regional authorities and municipalities assume major responsibilities when our security is threatened. Municipalities, for example, care for the sick and elderly, and ensure that childcare and rescue services remain uninterrupted as far as possible. The private sector also contributes to our preparedness.

If a serious incident does occur, aid must be primarily focused on those who need it the most. This means that most of us must be able to manage on our own for at least a week.

Here are some examples of how you can get involved in our collective preparedness:

- Join a voluntary defence organisation that has specific duties within the framework of Sweden's total defence system. There are also other non-profit organisations and faith communities that play important roles.
- Complete a course in emergency CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation).
- Donate blood if you can.
- Talk to other people in your local community about how to strengthen your collective preparedness – for example, with neighbours in your block of flats or residential area.

Home preparedness

You contribute to our collective preparedness if you can manage on your own for at least one week.

Adapt the advice in the checklists to your specific needs and situation. You may be able to share some things with others – for example, with your neighbours. In times of crisis or war, we all must help one another.


Prepare ahead of time, so you don't have to rush out when something serious happens.

Water

You require at least three litres of water a day, mainly for drinking and cooking. In case of a drinking-water shortage, your municipality can provide public water tanks. However, you still need to keep some water at home for emergencies.

- Get water storage containers or buckets with lids for collecting water.
- Buy bottled water or fill up storage containers.
- Store water in a dark and cool place. Check if the water tastes or smells unusual once or twice a year. Change the water when necessary.
- If you are unsure if water is safe to drink, boil it until it comes to a rolling boil.

Store water in plastic bottles and put them in your freezer. The bottles can be used as ice packs if the electricity cuts out. When the ice has melted, you can drink the water. Don't fill the bottles all the way to the top – they may crack when frozen.



... and for businesses

- The role of the private sector as a puzzle piece in societal resilience
- Understanding the scope of the problem
- What needs to be done to build basic resilience
- Responsibilities, opportunities and legal frameworks

Important information for businesses in Sweden



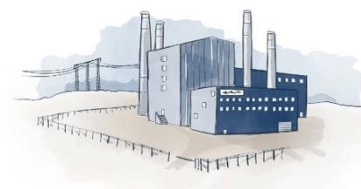
Preparedness for businesses
In case of crisis or war

Swedish Civil Defence and Resilience Agency

To do

- Plan and exercise** to manage the consequences of serious crises and war.
- Identify what your operations** depend on in order to continue functioning and what can strengthen them, for example back-up power, stockpiling and alternative routines.
- Analyse staffing requirements:** key positions, remote working, redistribution and reinforcements.
- Establish a war organisation** with clear roles and lines of communication.
- Systematically address cybersecurity.** Review authorisations and logins and make regular back-ups.
- Strengthen psychological defence.** Provide training in source criticism and the handling of disinformation.
- Train and conduct exercises regularly.** Even simple exercises have an impact.
- Be prepared to adapt in order to contribute to societal needs.** Establish cooperation with government agencies and other actors in advance.

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Improve resilience in your business

You and your business need to be able to operate in any situation. This may require preparations so you can adapt when needed.

This brochure outlines actions you may need to take. Not everything will apply to every business, but most should consider the following questions:

- Which parts of our business must always function?
- What will we do if our staff can't get to work?
- Do we have procedures in place if something serious occurs?
- How do we protect our digital data and physical records?

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Assume a more complex threat scenario

Threats to society take different forms and come from different directions. Hybrid threats such as cyber attacks and interference campaigns are on the rise, while society is also being challenged by other crises.

Everyone must be prepared for the security environment to deteriorate further at a rapid rate. Joint planning assumptions for Sweden's total defence have been established to facilitate cooperation, training, and planning to address the broad and complex threats facing society. These assumptions provide a framework for actions by civil preparedness agencies, businesses, and other actors. They outline consequences that your company can incorporate into its planning and exercises.

Examples of such consequences include

- disruption to electronic payments and communications
- power outages lasting for days, weeks, or even months
- limited access to fuels and energy supplies
- impact on foreign trade and shortages of essential inputs
- disruption to air, rail and road traffic and public transport
- staff experiencing difficulty getting to or from work.

In September 2025, the Swedish Armed Forces and the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency issued *Planning assumptions for the development of Swedish total defence 2025-2030*, as commissioned by the Government. Threats to Sweden are also described in the *National risk and vulnerability assessment (NRFSA)*, published by the Swedish Civil Defence and Resilience Agency, and in annual reports by the Swedish Security Service, the National Defence Radio Establishment (FRA) and the Military Intelligence and Security Service (MUST).

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Tools at our disposal

- **“Civil preparedness sectors”**
Headed by one agency coordinating 5–10 others (but still very public-sector focused).
- **Cross-municipality collaboration**
Consolidation of costs, capability and functionality for pragmatic reasons
- **“Campus total defence”**
A strategic collaboration platform to give universities a role in the total defence system as providers of expert knowledge, education, innovation etc.
- **Psychological defence & strategic communication**
Community outreach, individual preparedness, but also a lot of research into how citizens are organised, societal “mood” and will to defend — what do people need to know and understand, how to make national defence a personal responsibility
- ... but still stumbling on including the private sector on a strategic level. Networks for collaboration and information sharing in crises exist, but will they work for a wartime scenario?

Finally

Remember that we all need to demand much more from ourselves in war than in peace. You are more capable than you believe. Strength grows in the face of danger.

Keep calm.

Put trust in yourself.

Help your fellow countrymen.

Support the authorities.

Fight on with determination.

We never surrender

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Till sist

Kom ihåg, att vi alla måste ställa mycket större krav på oss själva i krig än i fred. Du kan mer än Du tror. I farans stund växer krafterna.

Bevara Ditt lugn

Lita till Dig själv

Hjälp andra landsmän

Bistå myndigheterna

Kämpa beslutsamt vidare

Vi ger aldrig upp



In case of crisis or war

- Private citizen version

<https://www.mcf.se/en/advice-for-individuals/the-brochure-in-case-of-crisis-or-war/>

- Business version

<https://www.mcf.se/sv/publikationer/preparedness-for-businesses--in-case-of-crisis-or-war/>



The end?

Questions