

# Policing stalking in rural areas

## – Experiences from the Swedish police



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# Stalking and intimate partner violence in rural areas

- There is evidence that rates of intimate partner violence in rural communities are similar to or greater than those in urban communities (Edwards, 2015; Breiding, Ziembroski, & Black, 2009; Lanier & Maume, 2009; Peek-Asa et al., 2011; Van Hightower & Gorton, 1998).
- Women living in rural areas reported continuous and more severe IPV prior to obtaining a restraining order compared to women in urban areas (Logan et al 2003).
- Rates of intimate partner homicide have been found to be higher in rural areas (Edwards, 2015).
- Stalking reported to the police had similar motives for reporting comparing a large and a small city in Italy (Maran & Varetto, 2017).
- ***Is stalking a similar problem as IPV in rural areas?***

# Stalking definition and behaviour

*An unwanted and repeated communication, contact or other behaviour with the intention, or without any concern of, cause fear for the victims, or those who are close to them, safety. (SAM Kropp, Hart & Lyon, 2008).*

## • **Unwanted communication**

- SMS, phone calls
- Different kinds of messages
  - Notes, Letters, Fax, E-mail
- Unwanted orders placed in your name
- To submit lots of complaints

## • **Unwanted contact**

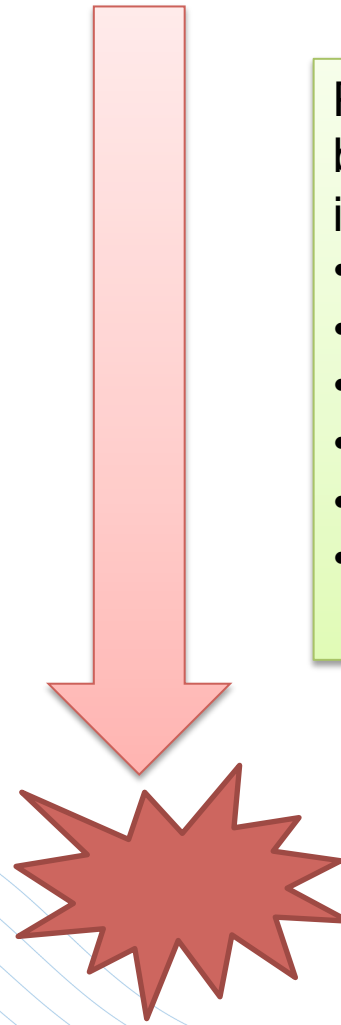
- To wait outside the victims home, work place or the children's school
- Spying or following by car or feet
- Approaching
- Physically entering the victims home without permission

## • **Violence**

- Threats
- Physical violence
- Murder

Prevalence of stalking has been shown to be 5-14% in western societies

- Sweden 9% (BRÅ, 2006)
- Germany 11% (Wurm, 2013)
- Austria 11% (Stieger et al., 2008)
- U.K 9% (Finney, 2006)
- USA 4,5% (Basile et al., 2006)
- Australia 14% (ABS, 2006)



# The outcome of the Swedish law (BRÅ, 2015)

## Criminal acts that stalkers were reported for before the stalking law was enacted

Violence

Threats

Property damage

Harassment

These behaviour is not stalking per se, but can be part of the stalking behaviour

Difficulties to get stalkers convicted for stalking

## Stalking law (enacted October 1<sup>st</sup> 2011)

- *Reported crimes*  
2012 N=916 2013 N=780
- *Prosecuted crimes*  
2011-2013 N=263, 16% of reported crimes
- *Verdicts*  
2011-2013 N=127, 7% of reported crimes
- *Type of crimes in the verdicts*
  - Harassment
  - Breaching a restraining order
  - Unlawful threats
- *Sentence*  
2011-2013 50% prison, 25% probation  
14% forensic psychiatric care

## Fear of the stalker affects reporting to the police

- Women are more afraid than men, 60% vs 30%, and to be stalked by a stranger is more scary due to the myth of them being more violent, which is somewhat a misperception (Reyns & Englebrecht, 2012; Dietz & Martin, 2007; Sheridan & Lyndon, 2010).
- 28% of the victims were afraid in the beginning of the stalking compared to 15% when it continued (Reyns and Englebrecht, 2012).
- Victims tend to be less afraid of female stalkers, which also is a misperception. Research shows that female stalkers are as violent as men (Strand & McEwan, 2011; 2012; Purcell et al., 2005; Weller et al., 2013).

### Questions that need to be addressed when working with stalking cases

- The more severe stalking the more afraid are the victims.
- Stalking might not be recognised until there is any kind of aggression or violence,.
- Negative coping strategies can be consequences of being stalked, which makes risk management more difficult.
- ***How does fear and rurality affect reporting stalking to the police?***

## Study aims

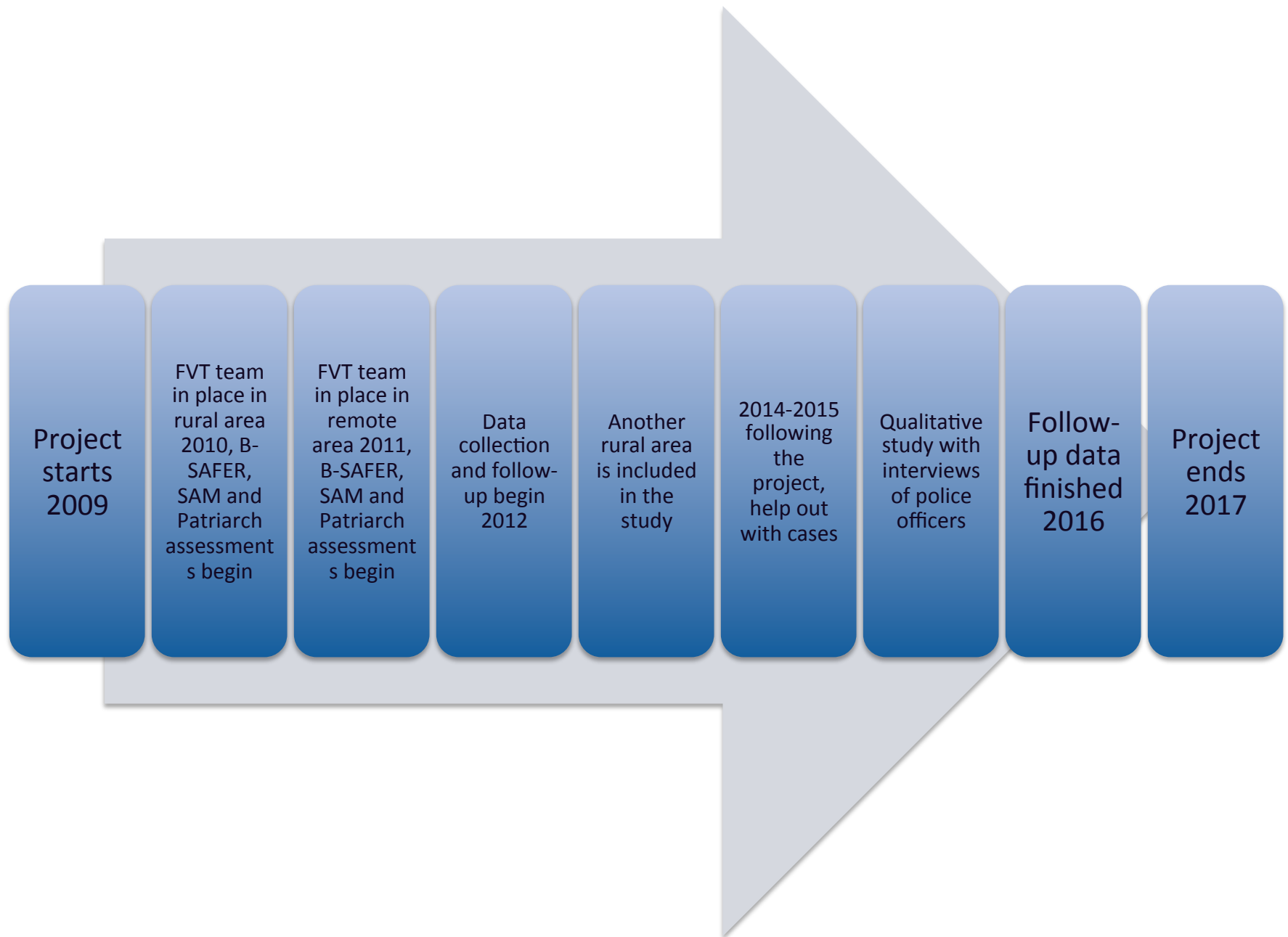
Criminal Justice System



Violence Risk Assessment



Risk management strategies



# Policing stalking in Sweden

1. A crime is reported
2. A crime is identified as a stalking case

## Protection



3. Initiating a risk assessment with the SAM.
4. Conducting a risk assessment with the SAM.
5. Recommendation for risk management.
6. Protective actions according to the risk management plan is put in place.
7. Follow-up the case.
8. Case closed

## Crime investigation



3. Crime investigation
  - Index crime decision
  - Prosecution m m
4. Court
  - Dismissed
  - Charge in court
5. Verdict
  - Found not guilty
  - Sentenced for a crime
6. Sentence
  - In prison
  - Probation



# Risk Assessment and Management of Stalking

## All risk assessment should lead to prevention!

- Stop crimes from happening.
- Evaluate the risk and prioritise what to do.
- Make a risk management plan.
- Implement protective actions and follow-up.

## Stalking Assessment and Management, SAM

Kropp, P.R., Hart, S.D., & Lyon, D.R. (2008). *Guidelines for Stalking Assessment and Management (SAM) – Manual*. Toronto, Canada: Multi-Health Systems.

### *Parts to assess*

Nature of stalking  
Perpetrator Risk Factors  
Victim vulnerability factors

### *Overall assessed judgement of*

Stalking  
Violence  
Severe/lethal violence

## Sample and rurality

All stalking risk assessments conducted by the Swedish police between 2005-2006 in urban areas and 2010 - 2014 in rural and remote areas were examined.

<b>Sweden</b>		<b>24 persons/sqkm</b>
Urban ( $n = 153$ )	District of Stockholm	342 persons/sqkm
Rural ( $n = 29$ )	Region Västernorrland	11 persons/sqkm
Rural ( $n=26$ )	Region Dalarna	10 persons/sqkm
Remote ( $n = 18$ )	Region Jämtland	3 persons/sqkm
Finland		16 persons/sqkm
Region of Helsinki		374 persons/sqkm
Australia		3 persons/sqkm
Melbourne		443 persons/sqkm

# Before and after the law was enacted

## RURAL

73 SAM over 5 years (2010-2014)

## URBAN

153 SAM over 2 years (2005-2006)

	<i>rural</i>	<i>urban*</i>
<b>Stalkers</b>		
• Men	85%	84%
• Women	15%	16%

## Victim

• Men	11%	-
• Women	89%	-
• Same gender	6%	-

## At the time of the assessment victim had:

	<i>rural</i>	<i>urban*</i>
• Children under 18	42%	
• Restraining order	37%	22%

## Victims reported the following index crimes:

	<i>rural</i>	<i>urban*</i>
• Assault	7%	9%
• Unlawful threat	13%	29%
• Harassment	41%	47%
• Gross violating of a woman's integrity	6%	
• Breach RO	15%	15%
• <b>Stalking</b>	<b>16%</b>	
• Threat, authority	1%	
• Missing	6%	

\*Belfrage, H. & Strand, S. (2009). Validation of the Guide for Stalking Assessment and Management (SAM) In Swedish law enforcement. *International Journal of Police Science and Management*, 11 (1) 67-76

## Type of stalker

	<i>rural</i>	<i>urban*</i>	$\chi^2 (1), p$
• Ex-intimate	57%	76%	8.10, $p < 0.001$
• Acquaintances	30%	14%	7.45, $p < 0.001$
• Strangers	13%	10%	0.4, ns.

\*Belfrage, H. & Strand, S. (2009). Validation of the Guide for Stalking Assessment and Management (SAM) In Swedish law enforcement. *International Journal of Police Science and Management*, 11 (1) 67-76

# Stalking Assessment and Management, SAM

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## ***Nature of stalking***

1. **64%** Communicates about victim
2. **89%** Communicates with victim
3. **80%** Approaches victim
4. **71%** Direct contact with victim
5. **64%** Intimidates victim
6. **49%** Threatens victim
7. **32%** Violent towards victim
8. **77%** Stalking is escalating
9. **94%** Stalking is persistent
10. **39%** Stalking involves supervision violations

## ***Perpetrator risk factors***

1. **72%** Angry
2. **86%** Obsessed
3. **74%** Irrational
4. **90%** Unrepentant
5. **50%** Antisocial lifestyle
6. **92%** Intimate relationship problems
7. **84%** Non-intimate relationship problems
8. **80%** Distressed
9. **64%** Substance use problems
10. **60%** Employment and financial problems

## ***Victim vulnerability factors***

1. **42%** Inconsistent behavior
2. **21%** Inconsistent attitude
3. **5%** Inadequate access to resources
4. **57%** Unsafe living situation
5. **46%** Concerns related to dependants
6. **22%** Intimate relationship problems
7. **7%** Non-intimate relationship problems
8. **41%** Distressed
9. **7%** Substance use problems
10. **18%** Employment and financial problems

## Outcome of the risk assessment

Overall risk judgement for 73 cases of stalking assessed by the Swedish police 2010-2014 in rural areas and 153 cases of stalking assessed by the Swedish police 2005–2006 in urban areas (in brackets) (Belfrage och Strand, 2009).

Risk of	Low	Moderate	High
Stalking	6% (9%)	36% (31%)	58% (59%)
Violence	68% (44%)	30% (44%)	2% (12%)
Severe/ lethal violence	89% (82%)	9% (16%)	2% (2%)

## Recidivism in stalking related crimes

Recidivism data for 73 cases of stalking assessed by the Swedish police 2010-2014, follow- up 10 months - 6 years

County	Rurality	Recidivism
Västernorrland	rural	16%
Jämtland	remote	35%
Dalarna	rural	60%
Total		37%

$$\chi^2 (2, 67) = 10.39, p < 0.01$$

No correlations between assessed risk and recidivism were found.

# Risk management strategies

**Several risk management strategies were initiated with focus on the victim**

- contacting social services or crime victim support centre,
- providing a victim advocate,
- initiating a restraining order,
- performing a security talk,
- providing a safety phone, or an alarm package,
- providing shelter

Few were documented  
Few were enacted  
Few were followed up



# Limitations for policing stalking in rural areas

- Few police officers
- Other crimes may be prioritised when the victims report the crimes
- Long distances
- Few social workers and other health facilities are present
- Few reports of stalking and IPV cases in general in rural areas
- In a small community, police may know the people well, including perpetrator and victim
- There are few risk management strategies to work with
  - It takes too long for the police to respond to the victim if called upon
  - Restraining orders most often require someone to move from the area
  - Alarm package have little effect since the police cannot respond quick enough
  - Shelters are not often available, if so they are usually far away from the resident of the victim.

# Policing stalking

## Criminal justice system

- Few are convicted
- Few were incarcerated
- High degree of recidivism

## Risk Assessment

- Difficulties identifying stalking
- Many risk factors were present
- Few correlations with overall risk and outcome

## Risk Management

- No routines were used implementing protective actions
- Important to follow up effects

## Type of victims

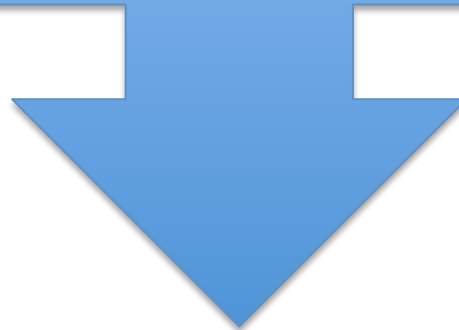
- A majority were ex partners
- A lack of knowledge for non-ex partners

## Rurality

- Less recidivism in remote areas?
- Different access to protective actions

# Conclusion on policing stalking

- Policing IPV in rural and remote areas is difficult.
- Victims need to have a safety plan that they can handle by themselves.
- The police have difficulties to identify stalking cases
- The police have difficulties to do risk assessments in the cases they identify as stalking, they lack knowledge on stalking.
- Few risk management strategies were implemented.
- The effect of the protective actions needs to be further researched



**More knowledge on stalking is needed within the police organisation, not only by specific police officers.**

# Thank you for listening!



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