



Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

## Social Inclusion

The goal of the government's policy against discrimination is a society free from discrimination. Measures aimed at preventing and counteracting discrimination are fundamental for ensuring that all persons are equal in dignity and rights. Preventing all forms of discrimination, including age discrimination, is therefore an important part of the work for participation and equality.

As stipulated in the Discrimination Act, there are seven prohibited grounds of discrimination in Sweden, including sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation, and age. The Equality Ombudsman supervises compliance with the Act and may, on behalf of an individual, bring an action to court. According to the Equality Ombudsman there is often an intersectional element to discrimination. The complaints that the Ombudsman has received show that age-based discrimination often interacts with sex-based discrimination. In 2021 the Equality Ombudsman received 3 278 complaints, of which 624 concerned discriminations related to age. The most frequent sector for complaints related to age was working life, followed by the sector for goods, services and housing.

In addition to the Discrimination Act, there are other legal provisions and national strategies that have an impact on older people. For example, there is a national policy goal on gender equality stipulating that women and men, including older women and men, should have the same power to shape society and their lives. According to the national goal for disability policy, society should be based on diversity with equal living conditions and full participation in society for persons with disabilities. Since 2021, there is a

strategy for systematic monitoring of the national goal for disability policy. Further, there are measures in place to financially support older people in risk of poverty. For example, retired people with low incomes can receive a guarantee pension as a supplement to income-based pension. Around 80 percent of those who receive guarantee pension are women.

An important part of ensuring inclusion and active participation of older people is ensuring that those who can and want to participate on the labour market are allowed to do so. Longer working lives are also essential for the sustainability of our welfare systems, as the population ages. Transition and skills development throughout life is an essential part of enabling longer working lives. In Sweden, there is no upper age limit for studying at tertiary or university level, and higher education is, regardless of age, free of charge. However, a student must be below the age of 60 to be eligible for student grants and loans, and the entitlement to borrow decreases from the year you turn 51. This is primarily due to the fact that the loan must be repaid in full by the end of the year you turn 64. Another example of policies that promote longer working lives is that the age limit in the Employment Protection Act has been raised successively in the last few years, reaching 69 on 1 January 2023.

Older people's ability to influence society is important also for those who are not participating on the labour market. According to the national goals for policy on older people, older people should be able to live an active life and influence society and their everyday lives. Essential for the compliance of these goals, are the skills and competence of people working in elderly care. The government has taken several measures to enhance skills in the sector. For example, the government adopted an Elderly Care Initiative through which those working in the sector are able to train as nursing assistants or assistant nurses during working hours. Further training such as skills-enhancing courses in health care and social care of older people is also included in the initiative.

The Swedish welfare system is based on the principle of universality, where all citizens are given access to welfare services of high quality. Funds specifically targeted at older people includes grants aimed at civil society organisations gathering older people and at research on older people and age-related diseases. Further, state funds are used to support municipalities in their responsibility of care of older people.