

Sweden's elder rape scandal

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In autumn last year, Sweden was shaken by a scandal that shares some disturbing similarities with the grooming-gangs scandal in Britain. It is on a far smaller scale. But in Sweden, as in Britain, it seems that many vulnerable individuals have been raped and sexually abused, while the people whose job it should have been to protect them failed to do so. What's more, those in positions of authority sometimes downplayed or hushed up allegations because of their low view of the victims and, potentially, [the identity](#) of some of the perpetrators.

The big difference between what happened in the UK and what happened in Sweden is that the victims were not young girls. They were elderly ladies dependent on outside carers to look after them. They claim that some of these carers brutally exploited their position of trust.

The scandal broke properly in early September last year, when 84-year-old Elsa (using the pseudonym, 'Vera') decided [to speak](#) out in an interview with the regional daily newspaper, *Uppsala Nya Tidning* (UNT).



Elsa lives in Uppsala, a city just north of Stockholm. In 2023, a foreign-born carer sent to her home by Uppsala

municipal council started to be unpleasantly intimate with her. . .

One day when I was sitting here by my dining table, he took out a tube of lubricant, which he said was especially for the elderly. Then he pulled down his trousers and showed me his erect penis. At that moment, the doorbell went. Two missionaries who wanted to preach the word of God showed up. I have never been so thankful for such people as that time.'

Elsa contacted the manager responsible for organising her home care and reported what had happened. She said that she didn't want to have any more visits from that carer. The manager agreed to her request. Elsa felt reassured that matters had been taken care of, especially after the carer appeared to have been replaced. But she was mistaken. After several weeks, he returned. It turned out the manager hadn't dealt with the incident at all. There is certainly no record in the council's files of Elsa's complaint.

Elsa tried to call the manager many times, but she either did not pick up the phone or, when she heard that it was Elsa, put down the receiver.

Then in spring 2024, the carer attacked Elsa. 'I feel so ashamed', Elsa told the UNT:

'I tried to push him away, but he was strong, and I am very weak. He raped me here in my own bed, in my own flat. I shower myself extra carefully. I feel so dirty. But it doesn't go away.'

Initially, Elsa didn't say anything about what had happened. But a few weeks after the attack she broke down in front of a social worker who had come to check up on her. He promptly contacted the head of the home-care service. The manager said he believed Elsa's account and said the man would no longer be

visiting her. But he also said that her attacker would still be working elsewhere with elderly people because dismissal was a decision that only the HR department could take.

The police were also involved. But due to a lack of evidence – it had been weeks since the rape – Sweden's prosecutors [decided](#) that a criminal case against him couldn't proceed.

When *UNT* interviewed Elsa last September, she used the pseudonym, 'Vera', because she was so frightened of what people would think of her. But her courage proved to be a wake-up call for Uppsala and, in many ways, for Sweden as a whole. Within days, [more elderly ladies](#) started to come forward to allege that they, too, had been abused by their carers.

In particular, there was [Siv](#), also from Uppsala. She told reporters how she was regularly raped by three different carers 'from the same country'. One of these men was the man who raped Elsa. . . Siv says she was in shock and was fearful of saying anything to anyone – that is, until Elsa gave her interview.

...the government-backed Swedish Gender Equality Agency began [compiling](#) a report on the violent abuse of the elderly. . . It turned out that [councils across Sweden](#) had received a staggering 45 reports. Some of these reports involved more than one perpetrator abusing a single victim. Others involved several victims reporting a single perpetrator. It's clear that there are even more cases of elder abuse than those recorded by the IV0. I have discovered a further nine cases just through looking at reports in local newspapers.

In 2024, television channel TV4 [interviewed](#) an 80-year-old lady called Ylva. Sitting in a wheelchair, Ylva said that she was raped twice in 2023 by her carer. When she spoke to her home-care management, they told her to keep quiet and not say

a word to anyone. She did as she was told. It was only when she saw the *UNT* article about Elsa a year later that she plucked up the courage to speak about it. 'Elsa is a hero', she said.

The cases of elder abuse just keep coming. On 13 January this year, [Baasim Yusuf](#), a 28-year-old of Somali origin, was sentenced by an Uppsala court to eight years in prison for two cases of rape and three cases of sexual assault, all of which he filmed. Some of his victims, suffering from poor memory, did not recall what had happened to them until the police showed them the video recordings.

The public anger after Elsa spoke out, unleashing a torrent of horrific allegations, has been palpable. It has been matched only by the determination of the authorities to suppress the scandal.

Towards the end of last year, two women organised a mass protest on a Saturday outside Uppsala city hall. They wanted to show their solidarity with Elsa and the other victims of elder abuse. But some local politicians, concerned about the bad publicity, tried to stop the protest. They wanted to move it to another place and time – to somewhere less public and sometime in the middle of the week – in order to reduce its impact. To their credit, the organisers refused.

Given the scale of the scandal that has slowly emerged over the past six or seven months, the main question is why reports of elderly abuse were ignored for so long. No doubt one reason is the low view of the elderly held by too many in positions of authority in Sweden

But there's another equally troubling reason. And that is the fact that some of the carers accused of abuse and rape come from migrant backgrounds. It seems more than plausible that too many have been wary of bringing the cases to light out of fears of stoking a racist or anti-immigrant backlash among the

public.

It shouldn't need to be said, but the rape and abuse of the elderly is not a crime solely or even largely committed by migrants. But because Sweden welcomed a large number of migrants from Afghanistan, Lebanon, Syria, Somalia and Eritrea over recent years and many came to work in the care sector, it means that [a disproportionate number of perpetrators](#) are indeed migrants. (*and migrants from Islamic countries where women are not respected, at any age*)

The official determination to hush-up the scandal has been striking. . . . Nearly eight months on, there is still far too much about this scandal that remains out of sight.