

VICTIMIZATION AMONG ADOLESCENTS LIVING IN FOSTER FAMILY CARE: PREVALENCE, PATTERNS, AND TRENDS 2002-2022

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It is well-known that experience of out-of-home care (OHC; foster-family care and residential care) is linked to numerous negative life-course outcomes, including poor health, premature death, criminal involvement and poor employment prospects. However, especially in the Swedish context, it remains unclear to what extent adolescents living in foster-family care have elevated risks for victimization compared to peers. Mirroring the decline in crime, studies show a drop in victimization rates in Sweden. While a socioeconomic gradient in victimization is recognized in the general population, it is unclear if differing trends exist. However, given the downward trend in crime, it is likely that such disparities also affect victimization. Considering the vulnerability of OHC-experienced, and previous findings indicating disadvantageous trends among less privileged groups, it is reasonable to expect distinct victimization patterns in this population. Drawing on repeated cross-sectional data from more than 120,000 Stockholm adolescents 2002-2022, of which around one percent report that they live in foster family care, the presentation discloses the prevalence and patterns of victimization in adolescents living in foster-family care, and if there have been any changes over time. Results from multivariable regression analyses show that adolescents living in foster-family care face a substantially elevated risk of experiencing various forms of victimization, including multiple types of harm, compared to peers of the same age living in different family settings. This elevated risk, particularly noticeable among girls, persists even after accounting for confounding factors related to their own risk behaviors. Although on a higher level, care-experienced largely followed the same trend in victimization as their peers. The alarmingly high risks of victimization are concerning and call for action from policymakers and practitioners.

Key words: Foster care, Longitudinal, Victimization.