The Rise of the Issue of Law and Order in Sweden

A study of party competition between three parties 2014-2022

Bianca Cattermole

Abstract

In recent times there has been a general trend of shifting party competition, with new issues being brought to the foreground. Sweden has undergone multiple changes, both societal and political, paving the way for the issue of law and order to emerge. This thesis examines how the said issue has helped the right-wing populist party, the Sweden Democrats, reinforce their position in the general election of 2022. It is a descriptive case study examining the developments relating to the issue from 2014 to the general election of 2022, by applying concepts within issue competition, salience and ownership, as well as PSO-theory and a previous study on party competition on law and order. In line with PSO-theory the niche party, the Sweden Democrats, is studied in relation to the two biggest mainstream parties on the centre-left and centre-right, the Social Democrats and the Moderates. Primary material is mainly utilised, incorporating surveys and election manifestos, complemented with secondary material. Studying the issue emphasis among the parties, a qualitative content analysis of their election manifestos is performed. The conclusions demonstrate multiple factors related to the issue of law and order that have reinforced the Sweden Democrats' position in the general election of 2022.

Key words: Law and order, Sweden, Sweden Democrats, Social Democrats, Moderates, Issue competition, Issue salience, Issue ownership, PSO-theory
Words: 9994

Table of contents

1   Introduction

The subject of the thesis will be presented, as well as the research question to be answered. This will be followed by a background and then a disposition of the thesis structure.

1.1   Introductory words

In recent times the political landscape in Sweden has changed dramatically with the entry of a right-wing populist party, the Sweden Democrats. Following a general trend of shifting party competition, new issues have been brought to the foreground. The general election in September 2022 manifested this, where issues that previously had not been as high on the political agenda took centre stage.

1.2   Objective and research question

The purpose of this thesis is to gain a greater understanding of the outcome of the recent general election in Sweden, held in September 2022, looking at the developments since 2014 with new issues advancing their positions on the political agenda. The issue of law and order is a clear example of this, gaining increased attention from voters, media and political parties.

This thesis aims to answer the following research question: *How has the issue of law and order helped the Sweden Democrats reinforce their position in the general election of 2022?* The focus is on the right-wing populist party, the Sweden Democrats, in relation to the two biggest mainstream parties on the centre-left and the centre-right, the Social Democrats and the Moderates. This relationship is interesting since there appears to have been a shift among all these parties concerning the issue of law and order. The framing of the issue also appears to have changed during the period 2014-2022, being linked to immigration and integration, which has been favourable for the Sweden Democrats in terms of ownership. The choice of parties will be explained further under 'Scope'.

The research question has interdisciplinary relevance, being based on theory, building on previous research on party competition and applying this to the case of

Sweden. It also has relevance outside the field of research. Examining the changing dynamics of Swedish party competition with a country where certain issues related to the left-right political dimension have long been dominating gives an insight into societal and political development. It also sheds light on recent party strategies in responding to the relatively new addition to the party system the Sweden Democrats.

1.3   Background

In the latest election, the issue of law and order became one of the main issues raised in the election campaign. Since 2014, law and order has become subject to increased political debate. Historically, this is a relatively recent development, which breaks a pattern where issues related to healthcare, welfare, education and employment have been dominating (SNES 2020, p. 1). This, therefore, leads to the question; how did we get here?

Sweden has undergone multiple changes in recent times. Politically, the entry of the Sweden Democrats into parliament in 2010 has challenged the status quo (Oscarsson et al. 2021, p. 13). The Sweden Democrats have a right-wing populist profile, with an emphasis on authoritarianism and nationalism regarding sociocultural issues (Ibid, p. 33, 53). The party was founded in 1988 with a focus on the migration issue viewed negatively in relation to nationalistic values (Hansson et al. n.d.b.). It also emphasised its opposition to globalisation and EU-membership. When the party entered parliament, a tough stance on immigration was their core issue. They also promoted a restrictive criminal policy (Andersson – Nilsson 2017, p. 212). In their latest party programme from 2011, the party describes itself as social conservative with a nationalistic ethos (Hansson et al. n.d.b.). Welfare issues are raised in a nationalistic frame. Immigration still permeates their overall politics and multiculturalism is seen as a negative effect of mass immigration. This is visible in the issue of law and order being linked to immigration and integration.

With the Sweden Democrats entering parliament, the other parties formed a 'cordon sanitaire' against it, entailing no cooperation with this party (Jungar 2022). The aim was to isolate and delegitimise it due to its background and its profile in the migration and integration issue. With the migration crisis in 2015, the immigration issue became subject to political debate. From primarily being promoted by the Sweden Democrats, the issue was recognised by other parties as well, leading to a gradual acknowledgement of the Sweden Democrats.

In recent times the issue of law and order has also become prominent in the political debate. The said issue is related to crime policy (Andersson et al. 2021, p. 1). The number of reported crimes has increased marginally; from 1.44 million crimes (BRÅ 2015, p. 2) in 2014 to 1.48 million in 2021 (BRÅ 2022a, p. 3-4).

Comparing the number of reported crimes in the first half year of 2021 and 2022, there has been a 6% decrease to 685,624 (BRÅ 2022b, p. 3). Reported crimes are defined as "all incidents that have been reported and registered as crimes (with prison on the penalty scale) to the investigating authorities" (Ibid, p. 7 [author's own translation]). Population growth and new methods of reporting crime impact this (Statista 2022a). Taking a growing population into account, the number of crimes per 100,000 inhabitants has decreased slightly since 2014, from 14,890 to 14,215 in 2021 (Statista 2022b).

While crime has declined overall, certain types have increased, such as gang crime and gun violence, with the latter increasing in the past five years (Haglund 2022). Sweden is ranked as the country with the most fatal shootings in Europe. Yet, the number of cases of other types of aggravated violence has declined in total.

Sweden has changed at a political and societal level in recent times, laying the foundation for law and order gaining ground as a subject of political debate.

1.4 Disposition

The thesis is structured as follows: introduction, theoretical framework, methodology and material, results and analysis, ending with a summary and conclusions. The introduction given above will be followed by a theoretical framework, with previous research and the theories utilised in this thesis. Then, considerations related to methodology and material will be presented. The foundation laid proceeds to the following section where the results will be presented and analysed. In the final section, the study will be summarised and conclusions presented, followed by reflections and suggestions for future research.

2 Theoretical framework

An overview of the previous research within the field will be presented, followed by an exposition of the concepts and theories used.

2.1 Previous research

Previous research demonstrates a common trend in Western European democracies of shifting party competition (Green-Pedersen 2007, p. 607). Historically, positional, also called spatial, competition has dominated, with parties adopting different positions on a policy dimension (Downs 1957, p. 140-141). This dimension has traditionally been equivalent to the left-right scale, which revolves around economic policy issues. It encapsulates the traditional divide, between workers and employers, highlighted by Lipset and Rokkan, where class is prominent (1967, p. 14). In addition to this social cleavage, they highlight the following three as important for the development of party systems: centre-periphery, church-state, and rural-urban.

On a societal level, party identification has declined and new issues have been brought to the foreground relating to new dimensions. A cultural dimension adds complexity to the previously hegemonic economic, left-right, dimension, by incorporating issues related to lifestyle, ecology, multiculturalism, nationalism and immigration (Hooghe et al. 2002, p. 976). This is often referred to as the GAL (Green, Alternative, Libertarian) – TAN (Traditional, Authoritarian, Nationalist) dimension. From the 1970s and onwards, this dimension has manifested itself in Western Europe, though depending on country, some issues are more prevalent than others (Marks et al. 2006, p. 157). Parties channelling these issues, including far-right parties emphasising issues related to the TAN-pole, have benefitted from this development (Kitschelt – McGann 1995, p. 257; Vachudova 2021, p. 475).

Similarly, parties increasingly compete on issues. Issue competition pertains to what should constitute the party-political agenda, where the issue salience is competed (Green-Pedersen 2007, p. 607). The political agenda widens in scope and grows in complexity, as parties feel compelled to respond to issues arising on the agenda (Ibid, p. 608). This works in reciprocity by the parties affecting the agenda with the issues they promote and at the same time needing to consider which issues are currently on the agenda (Ibid, p. 610).

The two forms of party competition discussed above are linked and can be complementary (Green-Pedersen 2007, p. 610). This becomes evident in the

ambition of differentiation between parties, for example by adopting different policy positions when competing over issues. In contrast, parties can converge in their policy stances aiming to draw away attention from an issue currently on the agenda.

In the Swedish context, a shift in party competition has been observed, from being a stable party system with competition along the left-right dimension (Lindvall et al. 2020, p. 482). More parties have entered parliament and the entry of the Sweden Democrats has changed the political status quo (Oscarsson et al. 2021, p. 13). Traditionally, the dominating parties, the Social Democrats and the Moderates, have set the agenda, which has been challenged by this newcomer. The mainstream parties are based on the left-right dimension, with the centre-left party, the Social Democrats, deriving from the labour movement promoting socialistic values (Gustafsson et al. n.d.). Meanwhile, the centre-right party, the Moderates, is built on conservative and liberal values (Hansson et al. n.d.a.). The left-right dimension has been complemented by a sociocultural dimension where issues such as immigration, multiculturalism, as well as law and order, are raised (Oscarsson et al. 2021, p. 38). This has been accompanied by a change in the electorate, with class voting declining (SNES 2018, p. 1).

With new issues becoming important to party competition, studies have looked at how mainstream parties respond to right-wing populist parties and their implications. These strategies range from disengagement to engagement, alternatively exclusion to inclusion, adopted by mainstream parties (Heinze 2018, p. 287). Looking at the Nordic countries Heinze finds that mainstream parties have tended to switch from disengagement strategies to engagement over time (Ibid, p. 303). Sweden is an exception, with the 'cordon sanitaire' against the Sweden Democrats. Opposite to its intention, this is highlighted as facilitating the party's electoral success in 2014, by mainstream parties failing to respond to voters' demands (Loxbo 2015, p. 171). At the same time, mainstream parties adopting engagement strategies, have also been shown to favour right-wing populist parties (Spoon – Klüver 2020, p. 287).

Regarding law and order, a study has looked at Sweden and the general election in 1991, where the issue was dominant (Wenzelburger 2020, p. 139). The party competition between the right-wing populist party, New Democracy, and the mainstream parties, the Social Democrats and the Moderates, was examined (Ibid, p. 131). Law and order has traditionally been a right-wing issue owned by the Moderates (Ibid, p. 146-147). The study showed that when the issue salience increased, the right-wing parties emphasised it more, using being in opposition to portray themselves as more competent than the left-wing government (Ibid, p. 150). Thereby the issue became subject to more electoral competition. However, the Social Democrats did not engage in the increased issue competition. Instead, this was mainly utilised by the Moderates and New Democracy, where the latter connected the issue to migration. Another finding was that the right-wing populist party had a limited effect on the actions of the mainstream parties since they did not perceive it as a huge threat (Ibid, p. 151).

Previous research has demonstrated a shift in party competition on a general level as well as in Sweden, with issue competition playing an important role in the political sphere today. With new prerequisites for party competition, new parties have emerged, such as right-wing populist parties. Here, studies have shown that mainstream parties' strategies towards right-wing populist parties impact the latter's electoral outcome, as well as the right-wing populist party having an impact on the issue emphasis by mainstream parties. Compared to the right-wing populist party New Democracy, the Sweden Democrats are more established, being one of the biggest parties. It is therefore expected to impact the mainstream parties more than its predecessor.

2.2 Theory

This thesis will use the theoretical framework of Meguid and Wenzelburger in studying the three parties in relation to the issue of law and order. This will be presented in the following section after key concepts within issue competition, issue salience and ownership, have been defined.

2.2.1 Issue salience

The salience of issues is equivalent to the perceived importance of an issue (Van der Brug 2004, p. 212). Issues can be distinguished in positional or valence terms, which correlates with the degree of conflict or consensus around the issue among voters (Wenzelburger 2020, p. 37). The issue of law and order is mostly a valence issue, due to its connection to security which is generally perceived as something desirable (Ibid, p. 38). In line with this logic, parties compete over issue emphasis instead of taking different positions on the issue.

Bélanger and Meguid highlight that the issue salience impacts to what extent the issue ownership influences the vote choice (2008, p. 480). When issues are salient among voters, parties can benefit by emphasising these, by so-called "riding the wave", which can increase the salience (Wenzelburger 2020, p. 39). In combination, a party that owns a salient issue is therefore in a favourable position (Walgrave – De Swert 2007, p. 37).

Multiple factors impact the issue salience, linked to the interplay between supply and demand. Contextual factors and timing are important, as well as the parties' ability to get the issue on the political agenda and the amount of news coverage it receives (Paul – Fitzgerald 2021, p. 376-379). In contrast to issue ownership, issue salience is viewed as being more changeable over time (Walgrave

et al. 2009, p. 154). Voters have become more volatile and issues that are considered salient can also vary over time (Green-Pedersen 2007, p. 608).

2.2.2 Issue ownership

Issue ownership implies that parties are judged by the electorate based on competence in handling an issue (Van der Brug 2004, p. 211). The bottom line is that parties differ regarding competence in policy areas. Parties aim to get their stronger issues to dominate the political agenda. Issue ownership can be derived from different outlets (Walgrave – De Swert 2007, p. 39). Parties can convey this through public statements, speeches, election manifestos and party programmes. Another way is through media coverage linking parties to issues.

Acquiring ownership of an issue is about reputation, including a party's background and past actions (Walgrave – De Swert 2007, p. 38). This relates to cleavage theory where parties are based on social cleavages and represent different interests in relation to these. From this perspective, ownership is seen as something stable. However, recent research suggests that issue ownership is changeable (Walgrave et al. 2009, p. 155). Parties can take different approaches in emphasising issues to affect the ownership in their favour. The type of party system is highlighted as having a potential impact on the stability of issue ownership, where multi-party systems tend to lead to a fluctuation in ownership (Ibid, p. 155-156).

2.2.3 Position, salience and ownership theory

The two concepts presented above, issue salience and ownership, can be applied to the dynamics between mainstream and niche parties. Meguid's modified spatial theory combines positional and issue competition. Mainstream parties are theorised to affect niche parties' electoral outcomes by manipulating three factors: position, salience and ownership (hereafter PSO-theory). Niche parties are defined as having a narrow issue focus and competing over non-traditional issues, on a new policy dimension (Meguid 2005, p. 347-348). Mainstream parties are seen as the well-established and "most powerful set of party actors" traditionally competing on the left-right dimension.

Meguid puts forward three different strategies mainstream parties can utilize in response to a niche party: dismissive, accommodative or adversarial (2005, p. 349). The dismissive strategy is predicted to decrease the salience of the niche party's issue, by ignoring the issue (Ibid, p. 350). The issue ownership is predicted to be unchanged. The accommodative strategy implies converging on the niche party's policy position and thereby increasing the salience in hope of the mainstream party gaining ownership. The adversarial strategy increases the issue salience when the

mainstream party adopts a divergent position, which strengthens the niche party's ownership.

The choice of strategy has different implications, where the first two are predicted to decrease the niche party's electoral support, opposite to the adversarial strategy. However, Golder highlights that there is a temporal aspect regarding the accommodative strategy, where there might be the opposite effect to what Meguid posits if the niche party already has established ownership of an issue (2016, p. 487). Hence, how long time the niche party has been perceived to 'own' an issue, can make it more difficult for other parties to contest the ownership.

2.2.4 Party competition on law and order

Elaborating on Wenzelburger's aforementioned study he looks at party competition in relation to the issue of law and order (2020, p. 7). When the saliency of security-related issues among the public increases, the more the parties will emphasise the issue (Ibid, p. 45). Furthermore, he looks at the effects of two-party and multi-party systems and the existence of right-wing populist parties. Focusing on Sweden, which is a multi-party system this aspect alone will be highlighted. When security-related issues are salient in multi-party systems, with right-wing populist parties, the issue owner party is predicted to put a strong emphasis on law and order in their election manifesto. The remaining parties will put a medium emphasis. In addition to this, he highlights that there will be strong competition, especially on the right. When the issue is not salient, the issue owner party will put a medium emphasis and the remaining parties a weak emphasis. Competition on the right will be present.

3 Methodology and material

Methodological considerations will be raised, followed by a presentation of the material used.

3.1 Research design

The research design of this thesis will be a case study of descriptive nature looking at the developments around the issue of law and order in Sweden. This will be examined in relation to the theoretical framework presented under 'Theory'. In line with descriptive studies, the aim is to describe and gain an understanding of how the issue has helped the Sweden Democrats reinforce their position in the general election of 2022 (Gerring 2012, p. 722-723). Descriptive and explanatory types of studies are connected, with the former being a prerequisite for the latter that builds on descriptions to explain causality (Ibid, p. 724). Two requirements are highlighted by Esaiasson and others for descriptive studies to meet scientific research standards (2017, p. 37-38). The study should be anchored in theory and have the prospect of serving as a foundation for future research. The generalisability is also highlighted as desirable. Since this is a case study focusing on one case only, conclusions about other cases might be limited, which will be elaborated on under 'Case'.

In addition to this, a central aspect of the study is text analysis, namely a qualitative content analysis in studying the issue salience among the parties. This is presented as a suitable method for identifying patterns or comparing texts (Boréus – Kohl 2018, p. 51-52). The issue emphasis in their election manifestos in 2014, 2018 and 2022 will be measured. The method is used to systematically process material and categorise it by employing a coding frame (Ibid, p. 50). Processing the material implies reading it multiple times, to get an overview and gain a deeper understanding of the content. As will be elaborated on under 'Operationalisations' the Manifesto project's coding of the issue will be used as a guideline in analysing the material.

3.1.1 Scope

To sharpen the study's focus, this thesis only concentrates on certain aspects in context, time, political issue, parties and theories. Regarding context, this thesis will only examine the case of Sweden. The period studied will be from 2014 to the general election in 2022. This is motivated by the societal and political change related to the chosen issue, law and order. The study will focus on three parties' responses to this issue. In line with PSO-theory, a niche party has been chosen in relation to two mainstream parties. The niche party is the right-wing populist party the Sweden Democrats. The mainstream parties are the Social Democrats and the Moderates. This is motivated by a changing dynamic over the period studied, where the said issue has gained attention from all these parties. The theories encompass party competition, with a focus on key concepts within issue competition, as well as the theoretical framework of Meguid and Wenzelburger.

3.1.2 Case

In the spotlight for the study is Sweden. It is a multi-party system, which illustrates shifting party competition, where new issues have gained importance. The issue in focus, law and order, highlights this. This makes Sweden an interesting case to study through a party competition perspective, incorporating both positional and issue competition, since the latter appears to have become more significant in recent times. The increased importance of issue competition is also highlighted by the growing right-wing populist party, the Sweden Democrats, which has redrawn the political landscape.

An important part of choosing a case is thinking about its generalisability to other cases. Here the following question becomes relevant: what are the common themes of this case? Parallels to Sweden could be drawn with other multi-party systems which have demonstrated a shift in party competition. For example, other Western European democracies with increasing issue competition in line with what Green-Pedersen highlights in his article (2007, p. 607). A part of this trend has also been the growth of right-wing populist parties. This type of party has especially challenged the mainstream parties in Sweden. Making more specific comparisons, countries where right-wing populist parties have gained electoral support are more relatable to Sweden, with certain issues, related to the TAN-pole, gaining increased attention.

3.1.3 Operationalisations

A central part of the research is transforming the research question into something measurable, which is the operationalisation. This is connected to validity, which refers to two aspects: the conceptualisation and results (Esaiasson et al. 2017, p. 58). These affect the study's reliability. The first aspect incorporates partly on what basis the operationalisation is formulated, and partly its relation to empirics using multiple measures (Ibid, p. 61, 63). The second aspect concerns the final product and the agreement between what was intended to be measured and what was measured (Ibid, p. 58). The validity comes down to the relation between theory and empiricism, where the operationalisation strives for a maximal overlap. The key concepts and theoretical framework presented under 'Theory' will be operationalised using multiple indicators.

In line with the definition of issue salience as the perceived importance of an issue, voter surveys on 'most important issues' will be used, which is a common measurement (Dennison 2019, p. 439). The Swedish Crime Survey will also be used to get a picture of the concern about crime in society among the general population. Looking at the issue salience among the parties, the issue emphasis in their election manifestos will be examined in line with Wenzelburger's study. For the election manifestos, the space that is given to the issue as a separate chapter will be looked at. In addition to this, the Manifesto Project's coding of a positive view towards law and order will be used as a guideline in looking at the issue emphasis. This incorporates the following, where the three aspects stated will be looked at:

> Favourable mentions of strict law enforcement, and tougher actions against domestic crime. Only refers to the enforcement of the status quo of the manifesto country's law code. May include:
> • Increasing support and resources for the police;
> • Tougher attitudes in courts;
> • Importance of internal security. (Manifesto Project 2020, p. 21)

Similarly, in line with the definition of issue ownership as a party's perceived competence in handling an issue, voter surveys on the perception of party issue ownership will be used as a measurement. The PSO-theory will be integrated by looking at the predictions posited and their effect on ownership and electoral support. The election results will serve as an indicator of electoral support.

3.2   Material

Material can be distinguished as primary and secondary (Esaiasson et al. 2017, p. 292). Both types of material will be utilised. The former includes the parties' election manifestos from 2014, 2018 and 2022, as well as different types of surveys. The surveys incorporate voters' most important issues from 1979-2018 by the Swedish National Election Studies (SNES) 2020, the polling station surveys from 2014, 2018 and 2022 with voters' most important issues conducted by the Swedish public service television company (SVT), the national survey by the SOM-Institute in Gothenburg on citizens perception on society's development, the Swedish crime survey 2022 conducted by the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (BRÅ), and surveys on voters perception on the best party in political issues 2014, 2018 and 2022 conducted by Novus.

The latter includes scientific presentations on the topic, a news article, and statistics. The scientific presentations encompass research articles, as well as reports from Gothenburg University and the Swedish National Election Studies. The following books are also utilised for parties, party competition and Swedish criminal policy: *Demokratirådets rapport 2021: Polarisering i Sverige, Svensk kriminalpolitik, Party systems and voter alignments: cross-national perspectives, The Radical Right in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis,* and *The Partisan Politics of Law and Order.* In addition to this, a news article from *Svenska Dagbladet* is used. A scientific article about descriptive studies, as well as two textbooks *Metodpraktikan* and *Textens mening och makt* are utilised in the section 'Research design'. For the operationalisation, the Manifesto Project's codebook is used. The Swedish National Encyclopedia is utilised for information on Swedish parties. Statistics from BRÅ, Statista and the Swedish Election Authority are also used for reported crimes and election results.

3.2.1   Source criticism

The use of different types of material is in line with the study's descriptive aim of giving an overview of the developments in 2014-2022 related to the issue of law and order. This is also supported by the different materials required for the operationalisations. It is important to be aware that the choice of material will affect the results.

Reflecting upon the sources strengths and weaknesses four criteria can be used: authenticity, dependency, time and tendency (Esaiasson et al. 2017, p. 288). The material's authenticity refers to it being true to its claim (Ibid, p. 291). In addition to using both primary and secondary sources, only established sources will be utilised. Dependency concerns the source's stance in relation to other sources,

where primary material is prioritised over secondary material (Ibid, p. 292). The main material used for the results and analysis is primary material in the forms of election manifestos and surveys. Secondary material will serve as a complement. Time relates to how suitable the source is in relation to the study's scope (Ibid, p. 294). As mentioned, the primary material that will be used is relevant, being published during the period studied. Tendency highlights the underlying aim of the source's presentation (Ibid, p. 294-295). One of the main materials used, election manifestos, has a tendency, by being ideologically coloured. In this case, it is not a weakness since the material has been chosen to study a potential shift in the issue emphasis on law and order. Surveys are also one of the main materials and these are chosen from established sources that are politically independent.

In addition to this, the sources can affect the validity and reliability. The Moderates were part of a collaboration '*Alliansen*' in 2014 and published a shared election manifesto with the other members: the Centre Party, the Liberals and the Christian Democrats. This can make it difficult to pinpoint the Moderates' stance, being a coalition with parties compromising on their policies, which could affect the study's validity. However, since they chose to partake, the manifesto should still demonstrate their policies and political stance.

Another aspect relates to the choice of election manifestos. The election manifestos are accessed from the Swedish National Data service (SND) or the parties' web pages. The Sweden Democrats have two documents for 2018 and 2022. For 2018 they have one document where the election manifesto is combined with their electoral platform. These are similar in content and therefore the election manifesto only was chosen. For 2022 they have one document called election manifesto and one called election platform. The election manifesto incorporates their four most prioritised issues, compared to the electoral platform which covers more policies. This can be seen as the Sweden Democrats extending their policies in attempting to become more mainstream. The election manifesto was chosen since this highlights the emphasis on certain issues over others compared to the other parties studied that only have one document.

Related to the reliability, the survey conducted by Novus on issue ownership missed data from the election month of 2018 and therefore the month closest to the election, August, was chosen instead. Data from different months is a weakness, however, this was the most relevant data available for the period studied. The next survey in November supports the data for August.

4 Results and analysis

In this section, the results will be presented and analysed.

4.1 General election results

Starting off, the election results are presented in table 1 below. As illustrated, the electoral support for the Sweden Democrats has increased from 2014 to 2022. For the Social Democrats a decline is seen from 2014 to 2018, and then an increase from 2018 to 2022. The Moderates have displayed a gradual decline from 2014 to 2022. During 2014-2022 the Social Democrats have been in government and the other parties have been in opposition (The Riksdag 2022).

Table 1: General election results 2014, 2018 and 2022.

	2014	**2018**	**2022**
Sweden Democrats	12.86%	17.53%	20.54%
Social Democrats	31.01%	28.26%	30.33%
Moderates	23.33%	19.84%	19.10%

Source: The Swedish Election Authority 2022.

4.2   Issue salience

Looking at the salience of the issue of law and order there has been a gradual increase on multiple levels since 2014.

4.2.1   Voters

Looking at the general population's perception of the importance of the issue of law and order a shift can be observed, following the increased attention the issue has received with a particular focus on gang crime and gun violence (Haglund 2022). Table 2 below shows the ranking of voters' ten most important issues, where law and order has climbed the rankings 2014-2022, from the last place to one of the top issues (SVT 2022). Seen from a wider perspective the traditional issues have been related to healthcare, welfare, education and employment (SNES 2020, p. 1). In 2014 these issues dominated the agenda (SVT 2022). A shift can be observed in 2018, when the issue of law and order, as well as immigration, start climbing the rankings. In 2022 the issue of law and order is among the top issues, accompanied by a newcomer, energy and nuclear power.

Table 2: Voters' ten most important issues 2014, 2018 and 2022.

2014	2018	2022
School and education (59%)	Healthcare (56%)	Healthcare (54%)
Healthcare (55%)	School and education (54%)	School and education (50%)
Swedish economy (54%)	Gender equality (48%)	*Law and order (50%)*
Employment (51%)	Social welfare (47%)	Energy and nuclear power (45%)
Social welfare (51%)	*Law and order (45%)*	Swedish economy (44%)
Elderly care (49%)	Swedish economy (45%)	Social welfare (43%)
Personal finances (40%)	Elderly care (44%)	Gender equality (42%)
Pensions (40%)	Pensions (41%)	Elderly care (41%)
Gender equality (38%)	Immigration (41%)	Immigration (39%)
Law and order (35%)	Employment (37%)	Pensions (37%)

Source: SVT 2022.

Note: Author's own translation of issues.

According to the national survey performed by the SOM-institute at Gothenburg University, the overall perception in which direction society is going is dominantly negative; society is going in the wrong direction (Martinsson – Andersson 2022, p.

4). Since 2014 the issue of law and order has gained increased attention and is ranked as the most important societal problem in 2021 (Oleskog Tryggvason 2022, p. 5). The Swedish Crime Survey 2022 demonstrates an increased concern about crime in society among people aged 16-84 years old since 2014 (Viberg 2022, p. 30). In addition to seeing crime as a more important issue, the general view on measures countering crime is favouring harsher measures, emphasising punishments, over 'soft' that underlines the preventive side (Andersson et al. 2022, p. 127). The right-wing is generally more focused on the former, in contrast to the left-wing which emphasises the latter.

4.2.2 Parties

The issue emphasis on a positive attitude towards law and order in the parties' respective election manifestos from 2014, 2018 and 2022 will be analysed using the Manifesto Project's coding as a guideline.

The Sweden Democrats' election manifesto from 2014 is 24 pages long (SND). Out of 18 chapters, after an introduction, the first concerns crime: 'A safer Sweden' (*'Ett tryggare Sverige'*) (Ibid, p. 5). This is one page in total, amounting to about 4% of the manifesto. The first aspect, increased support and resources for the police, is mentioned, with more capabilities and better cooperation between and within authorities.

The second aspect, tougher attitudes in courts, is raised with a clear focus on harsher punishments, ignoring preventive measures (SND 2014, p. 5). A tough stance towards crime is demonstrated through harsher punishments for serious and repeated crimes, as well as for organised crime, break-ins, and the breach of domestic peace. Introducing life imprisonment, deporting foreign criminals who commit serious crimes, removing penalty discounts, and prohibiting participation in terrorism are stated. Better witness protection and support for the victim of crime are highlighted as well. Harsher punishments are also stated outside of this chapter, in the chapter about gender equality relating to gender mutilation, forced marriage and so-called "honour-related" violence, as well as the chapters about the countryside and animal welfare (Ibid, p. 17, 19). The third aspect, the importance of internal security, is underlined (Ibid, p. 5). The title of the chapter dedicated to crime includes the word 'safer' and different measures, mainly punishments, are highlighted in combating crime to reach security.

Their election manifesto from 2018 is 29 pages with 23 chapters (SND). The fourth chapter, as the title says, concerns crime policy (*'Kriminalpolitik'*) and is two pages long (Ibid, p. 8-9). The chapter amounts to about 7% of the manifesto. Crime is also mentioned in the chapters about the labour market and family policy (Ibid, p. 10, 14).

The first aspect is presented in the chapter regarding criminal policy (SND 2018, p. 8-9). An aim to make the police a more accessible and attractive profession

with higher salaries is highlighted. Increasing the safety of the police is emphasised, by an extended right of emergency protection and harsher punishments for crimes against policemen. In addition to this, more resources and capabilities are raised, such as camera surveillance, investigating the possibility of increasing arrests made by police, as well as making it easier to carry weapons outside of service. Increased support and resources to the police are also mentioned under the chapters concerning migration, gender equality and defence (Ibid, p. 7, 18, 22).

Looking at the second aspect, a tougher stance towards crime can be observed, where crime is described as deriving from mass immigration (SND 2018, p. 8). Harsher punishments are promoted, with higher minimum penalties for repeated, serious and cross-border crimes, as well as introducing life imprisonment (Ibid, p. 9). Supporting the victim of crime is also highlighted. In addition to this, obligatory deportation for serious foreign criminals and the ability to revoke citizenship for terror crimes is stated, as well as prohibiting begging and criminalising participation in criminal networks and organisations. Harsher punishments are also mentioned under the chapters concerning migration policy, disability rights, health insurance, gender equality and the countryside (Ibid, p. 6, 15-16, 18, 24). The third aspect is emphasised and under the title of the chapter, security is mentioned in relation to crime and punishments (Ibid, p. 8).

Their election manifesto from 2022 is 12 pages long with four chapters (The Sweden Democrats). The third chapter is dedicated to crime: 'Safety needs to get a special position in politics' *('Tryggheten måste få en särställning i politiken')* and it is two pages (Ibid, p. 8-9). The chapter amounts to about 17% of the manifesto. Crime is also mentioned in the introduction and under the chapter regarding migration (Ibid, p. 2, 10). Immigration being the cause of rising crime rates is emphasised, blaming a failing migration and integration policy (Ibid, p. 8).

The first aspect is raised under the chapter concerning crime (The Sweden Democrats 2022, p. 9). It is stated that they need to be given the right tools to do their job and be supported by society through a strong judiciary. Simplified rules regarding confidentiality are highlighted as facilitating the cooperation between police and other authorities.

Looking at the second aspect, the criminal policy is wanted to be fundamentally reformed, with new judicial tools and harsher punishments (The Sweden Democrats 2022, p. 8). In connection with this, measures dealing with the "failed migration and integration policy" are stated, where parallel societies are described to have emerged because of high immigration. Harsher punishments concern for example organised crime, violence and sexual offences, with an emphasis to serve the penalty in prison (Ibid, p. 8-9). Removing the reduction of sentences and premature releases as well as lowering the age for criminal responsibility is raised (Ibid, p. 8). Additionally, supporting the victim of crime, strengthening witness protection, and introducing the possibility to witness anonymously are underlined. A tougher stance towards crime is also shown in deporting foreign criminals and increasing the responsibility of the parent with revoked citizenship as a potential consequence if the child commits a serious crime (Ibid, p. 9). It is also mentioned that people

seeking asylum or a residence permit should leave biometrical data in a register that could be used by authorities.

The third aspect relating to internal security is raised, where an increase in violence and insecurity is considered the most important societal problem (The Sweden Democrats 2022, p. 2). Their main election promise is to make Sweden safe again. The title of the chapter includes 'safety' and forceful measures are stated to be needed to accomplish this, with more police, security guards, camera surveillance and lighting (Ibid, p. 8-9). Internal security is raised in relation to foreign criminals, where the former should be prioritised.

The Social Democrats' election manifesto from 2014 is 52 pages, with four chapters after an introduction. In the third chapter about welfare *('En pålitlig välfärd. För alla.'*), under the heading 'Diminish the divides' (*'Minska klyftorna'*), crime is raised under 'Combat crime and its causes' (*Bekämpa brotten och brottens orsaker'*) and 'Men's violence against women needs to be combatted' (*'Mäns våld mot kvinnor måste bekämpas'*) (The Social Democrats 2014, p. 39-41). The paragraphs cover roughly half a page, which amounts to about 1% of the manifesto. Being placed under this heading indicates that crime is seen as deriving from inequality.

The first aspect, increased support and resources for the police, is raised under 'Combat crime and its causes' (The Social Democrats 2014, p. 40-41). There is a call for increasing efficiency through better management, as well as developing methods and competence. In addition to this, the police programme should be reformed into higher education. The second aspect, tougher attitudes in courts, is observed with a tougher stance towards organised crime (Ibid, p. 40). Under 'Men's violence against women needs to be combatted' the support for the victim is highlighted, as well as harsher punishments for sexual offences (Ibid, p. 41). This is the only time that 'punishment' is mentioned. The third aspect, the importance of internal security, is not discussed.

Their election manifesto from 2018 is 36 pages (The Social Democrats). There is a separate chapter dedicated to crime: 'A society strong enough to combat crime' (*'Ett samhälle starkt nog att besegra kriminaliteten'*) (Ibid, p. 3). This is the third out of four, after an introduction. The chapter covers two and a half pages, which amounts to about 7% of the manifesto (Ibid, p. 27-29). Three parts are highlighted: 'A historical investment in the police', 'Combat the organised crime and its causes', and 'Harsher measures against sexual offences and more support to the victims' (*'En historisk satsning på polisen', 'Bekämpa den organiserade kriminaliteten – och dess orsaker', 'Hårdare tag mot sexualbrotten – och starkare stöd till dess offer'*). Crime is also mentioned outside of the chapter in the introduction and the chapters related to work, segregation, welfare, international cooperation, terrorism and extremism (Ibid, p. 5, 14, 16, 24-26, 32-34).

The first aspect is raised under the first heading (The Social Democrats 2018, p. 27). Improving and expanding education is mentioned, as well as better working conditions. Under the second heading more resources, such as camera surveillance, are stated (Ibid, p. 29). Increasing police capacity is also mentioned in the chapter

concerning international security (Ibid, p. 33). For the second aspect, harsher punishments are raised under the second and third headings (Ibid, p. 28-29). Removing sentence reduction for minors is mentioned, as is making the minimum sentence higher for abuse in court and rape. The third aspect is now raised in contrast to the previous manifesto. Here, internal security in relation to preventive measures, where social security and equal opportunities are highlighted as ways to prevent criminality (Ibid, p. 28).

The election manifesto from 2022 is 32 pages (The Social Democrats). There are five main chapters, after an introduction, where the first is dedicated to crime: 'Leave no stone unturned in combatting crime and break segregation' (*'Vända på varje sten för att knäcka kriminaliteten och bryta segregationen'*) (Ibid, p. 3). The chapter is divided into two headings concerning combatting crime and combatting segregation (*'Kampen mot kriminaliteten och våldet ska vara kompromisslös', 'Bryt segregationen för att hålla ihop Sverige'*) (Ibid, p. 7, 9). The chapter covers six and a half pages, which amounts to about 20% of the manifesto (Ibid, p. 6-12). Crime is also mentioned outside of the chapter in the introduction and the final chapter concerning international cooperation (Ibid, p. 5, 29-30).

The first aspect is presented under the first heading, with increased powers (The Social Democrats 2022, p. 7). For example, possibilities to listen in and house search, as well as removing obstacles related to confidentiality between authorities. Looking at the second aspect, once again the preventive side is underlined linked to combatting segregation and improving integration, while also highlighting harsher measures to combat crime (Ibid, p. 7-12). Segregation is stated as being a driving force in the development of crime, where the integration has failed to meet high immigration, leading to economic inequalities (Ibid, p. 9). A tougher stance towards crime is highlighted, such as organised crime, professional crime, honour-related violence and sexual offences (Ibid, p. 8). In all the settings where the word 'punishment' is used, it is in terms of harsher punishments. This concerns sexual offences, gang crime, persons committing multiple and serious crimes, persons supporting organised crime and double punishment for serious weapons offences (Ibid, p. 7-8). The third aspect is emphasised and serious crimes are described as undermining Swedish security and interpersonal trust (Ibid, p. 7). Powerful measures are stated as important to combat crime and increase security.

Shifting attention to the Moderates, the election manifesto from 2014 will be looked at. As previously mentioned, this was shared with '*Alliansen'*. The manifesto is 128 pages (The Alliance 2014). There is a specific chapter dedicated to crime: 'A safer society' (*'Ett tryggare samhälle'*), which after an introduction, is the eighth out of 14 (Ibid, p. 5). The chapter covers 12 pages, which amounts to about 9% of the manifesto (Ibid, p. 82-93). The chapter contains seven headings; 'Clear reactions towards crime', 'A good start in life', 'A safer everyday life', 'Violence in close relationships', 'Safety and gender equality for young', 'More efficient police', and 'Strong and knowledgeable consumers' (*'Tydliga reaktioner mot brott', 'En bra start i livet', 'En tryggare vardag', 'Våld i nära relationer',*

'Trygghet och jämställdhet för unga', *'En effektivare polis'*, *'Starka och kunniga konsumenter'*). Crime is also mentioned in the introduction (Ibid, p. 7, 14).

The first aspect, increased support and resources for the police, is mentioned with the police needing the right conditions to work with creating safety and combatting crime (The Alliance 2014, p. 14). The efficiency of the police is raised under the sixth heading (Ibid, p. 91). Previous actions of the government *'Alliansen'* are underlined, supplying the police with about 5 billion Swedish kronor in additional resources. Measures to facilitate the police's work on their core tasks of preventive work, callouts and investigation are mentioned. The second aspect, tougher attitudes in courts, is raised with harsher punishments even though the preventive side, with security, education and work opportunities is mentioned as well (Ibid, p. 82, 86). A societal reaction against violence and violations is highlighted with harsher punishments, where criminals are punished and victims of crime are supported (Ibid, p. 14). Harsher punishments are highlighted under the first, third, fourth and fifth headings in the chapter concerning crime (Ibid, p. 82-91). Higher minimum sentences are emphasised, as well as a tougher stance towards crime, criminalising certain activities and introducing new crime classifications for 'break-ins' (*'inbrottsstöld'*). The third aspect, the importance of internal security, is raised in relation to crime, where an aim is to make Sweden safer, by diminishing criminality and strengthening the defence (Ibid, p. 7). The chapter concerning crime contains the word 'safer', demonstrating a link (Ibid, p. 82). Creating security is stated as complex, with multiple courses of action, where the preventive side and punishments are highlighted.

Their election manifesto from 2018, only presented by them, is 44 pages (SND). There is a specific chapter dedicated to crime, 'Law and order' (*'Lag och ordning'*), which covers four pages (Ibid, p. 10-13). This chapter is the second out of nine. The chapter amounts to about 9% of the manifesto. The chapter is divided into six headings; 'Present police', 'A stronger judiciary', 'Combat gang crime', 'Harsher punishments for sexual offences', 'Stop foreign gangs', and 'Prohibit begging' (*'Närvarande polis'*, *'Ett starkare rättsväsende'*, *'Bekämpa gängkriminaliteten'*, *'Skärpta straff för sexualbrott'*, *'Sätt stopp för utländska stöldligor'*, *'Förbjud tiggeri'*) (Ibid, p. 3). Crime is also mentioned outside of the chapter in the introduction, as well as in the chapters regarding migration and integration, and democracy in relation to honour-related oppression (Ibid, p. 5, 17, 38).

Looking at the first aspect, strengthening the police is raised. In combating crime, they put forward the "biggest investment in the police and judiciary in 20 years" (SND 2018, p. 10 [author's own translation]). Under the first heading of the chapter, it is stated that the police need more resources, increased capacities, and better conditions (Ibid, p. 11). This is also highlighted under the third and fifth headings (Ibid, p. 11, 13). Looking at the second aspect, harsher punishments are emphasised as the crucial solution to combating crime (Ibid, p. 10). Harsher punishments are raised for example concerning attacks against police, sexual offences, burglary, serious weapons offences, murder and gang crime. Under the chapter regarding migration and integration, a restrictive migration policy is

underlined in combating crime from an emerging parallel society due to asylum seekers without permission to stay (Ibid, p. 17). The third aspect is raised under the chapter regarding crime (Ibid, p. 10). The feeling of safety is described as a foundation for a well-functioning democratic state.

Their election manifesto from 2022 is 40 pages (The Moderates). There is a specific chapter dedicated to crime, 'So we sort out the safety and judiciary' (*'Så får vi ordning på tryggheten och rättssystemet'*), which is the second out of nine following the introduction (Ibid, p. 2). It is six pages, which amounts to 15% of the whole election manifesto (Ibid, p. 10-15). The chapter is divided into nine headings; 'We will make the biggest investment ever to prevent crime', 'We will put the victim of crime in the centre', 'Rape should not give a discount – we will make punishments for serious crimes harsher', 'Everybody wants more police – we have a concrete plan for making it happen, 'We will strengthen the judiciary to investigate and solve more crimes', 'We will stop the gang violence, shootings and explosions', 'We will stop men's violence against women', 'We will stop youth robbery', and 'We will support elderly from crime' (*'Vi ska göra den största satsningen någonsin för att förebygga kriminalitet', 'Vi ska sätta brottsoffret i centrum', 'Våldtäkt ska inte ge rabatt – vi ska skärpa straffen för allvarliga brott', 'Alla vill ha fler poliser – vi har en konkret plan för hur det ska bli verklighet', 'Vi ska rusta upp rättsväsendet för att utreda och klara upp fler brott', 'Vi ska stoppa gängvåldet, skjutningarna och sprängningarna', 'Vi ska stoppa mäns våld mot kvinnor', 'Vi ska stoppa ungdomsrånen', 'Vi ska upprätta äldrefrid'*). In addition to this, crime is mentioned under the chapters for economy and jobs, environment, immigration and integration, education, and democracy (Ibid, p. 9, 21, 26, 34, 38-39).

Looking at the first aspect, making the police profession more attractive is mentioned under the fourth heading in the chapter concerning crime, with higher salaries and harsher punishments for crimes committed against police (The Moderates 2022, p. 11, 13). In addition to this, increased capacities are highlighted by removing obstacles related to confidentiality, as well as rolling out visitation zones (Ibid, p. 10, 14).

Examining the second aspect, harsher punishments against crime are raised under the first, second, third, sixth, eighth and ninth heading (The Moderates 2022, p. 10-15). Harsher punishments concern for example gang crime, sexual offences, crimes against police, weapons offences, and crimes against the elderly. This is also stated outside the chapter concerning subsidies and environmental crimes (Ibid, p. 9, 21). A tougher stance against criminal clans is emphasised in the chapter concerning immigration and integration, as well as actions against honour-related oppression under the chapter concerned with democracy (Ibid, p. 26, 38-39). A more restrictive migration policy is promoted to secure that the integration works (Ibid, p. 24). It is also underlined as crucial that people, whose asylum applications have been rejected, leave the country, otherwise, there is a risk that this leads to the growing parallel society with criminality. Introducing anonymous witnesses,

investigating a lower age of criminal responsibility, and strengthening the victim of crime are also mentioned (Ibid, p. 11, 15).

The third aspect is emphasised, where security is described as "our times biggest question of freedom" (The Moderates 2022, p. 10 [author's own translation]). The chapter concerning crime also includes the word security as an aim. Here imprisonment of criminals and reforming the justice policy are mentioned to re-establish security (Ibid, p. 3, 10).

4.3   Issue ownership

Traditionally, the issue of law and order has been owned by the Moderates (SNES 2021, p. 1). In connection to the election of 2014 and 2018, the Moderates owned the issue of law and order, measured as the voters' perception of the party with the best policies within the issue (Novus 2019, p. 1). This changed in the latest election 2022, where the Sweden Democrats took over the ownership of the issue (Novus 2022, p. 2). Looking at the increased issue salience and the connection made between the issue of law and order, and the issue of immigration and integration, the picture of the problem has been redefined. The Sweden Democrats have established ownership in the issue of immigration and integration; in all three elections 2014-2022 they are perceived to own the issue. Linking the issues, therefore, appears to have had an impact, where the Moderates' previously hegemonic position in the issue of law and order is challenged by the Sweden Democrats. The development of the issue ownership in the issues raised is illustrated in table 3 below.

Table 3: Voters' perception of the best party in political issues 2014, 2018 and 2022.

	Issue Ownership over years		
Issue	**2014 (September)**	**2018 (August)**	**2022 (September)**
Law and Order	Moderates	Moderates	Sweden Democrats
Immigration/Integration	Sweden Democrats	Sweden Democrats	Sweden Democrats

Source: Novus 2019; Novus 2022.

Note: Author's own translation of issues. There is no data from Novus for the election month of September 2018, hence the latest data in connection to the election, from August 2018, was chosen.

4.4   Analysis

The results presented above will now be analysed with the theoretical framework outlined under 'Theory'.

Looking at the issue salience, multiple indicators point to an increased salience of the issue of law and order among voters as well as among the three parties. For voters the issue has become more important since 2014, being top two in 2022, measured by SVT's polling station survey of voters' most important issues. Other indicators point to the same; the dominating view is that society is going in the wrong direction, law and order is seen as a more important societal problem since 2014, and the Swedish Crime Survey shows a raised concern about crime in society among the general population.

For all three parties, an increased emphasis on a positive attitude towards the issue of law and order can be observed in 2014-2022, which is in line with Wenzelburger's predictions. When the issue was less salient in 2014 the emphasis among the issue owner party was not as strong and for the remaining parties, in this case the Social Democrats, there was a weak emphasis. The right-wing populist party has especially put a strong emphasis on the issue, which has led to the other parties being challenged and increasing their emphasis. Looking at the space dedicated to crime as a separate chapter in the manifestos all parties show an increase, with the Social Democrats showing the biggest development concerning the issue and period studied. In 2014 they did not have a separate chapter, unlike the two other parties, which changed in the two following election manifestos. An interesting aspect is that the Social Democrats have taken the issue on, traditionally not an issue they focus on. In their latest election manifesto, it is one of their highest priorities. This could also highlight the relation of them being in government from 2014-2022 versus the other parties being in opposition, where the traditional right-wing issue becomes subject to party competition.

Today it appears there is a consensus on harsher measures to combat crime, where the Sweden Democrats were early emphasising this only instead of the preventive side. This can be linked to ideology, where there are differences between the left- and right-wing as previously mentioned with an emphasis on either preventive measures or harsher punishments. Another aspect is that in the election manifestos from 2022, all parties touch upon immigration and integration when talking about the issue of law and order, even parties that have previously not done this, such as the Social Democrats especially instead highlighting inequality.

Looking at the issue ownership, the Sweden Democrats overtook this from the traditional owner, the Moderates, in the election 2022. The Moderates have gradually emphasised the issue more, which is clear in looking at the change between the election manifestos from 2014 and 2018. This could also have to do with them being part of '*Alliansen'* and having to compromise on policies with other parties. The Sweden Democrats established ownership in immigration and

integration appears to have helped when law and order gained salience and these issues were linked. Compared to the two right-wing parties, none of these issues are on the Social Democrats 'home turf', which therefore puts them in a disadvantaged starting position.

Connecting this to PSO-theory, the mainstream parties have demonstrated an accommodative strategy in relation to the Sweden Democrats. The Social Democrats have gradually included the issue, which was not emphasised in their 2014 election manifesto. The Moderates have as stated before emphasised the issue more and both parties have adopted the Sweden Democrats discourse to some extent. Contrary to what Meguid predicts the temporal aspect highlighted by Golder appears to be important. When the issues of law and order, and immigration and integration are linked, the Sweden Democrats established ownership in the latter reinforces their position by gaining electorally, instead of the opposite and transferring ownership to mainstream parties.

5 Summary and conclusions

Against the background of the results and analysis, the conclusions will be presented, followed by a few reflections and suggestions for future research.

5.1 How has the issue of law and order helped the Sweden Democrats reinforce their position in the general election of 2022?

Linking back to the research question and theory, the results and analysis have demonstrated multiple factors related to the issue of law and order that have reinforced the Sweden Democrats' position in the general election of 2022. Since 2014, the issue salience has increased among voters, as well as the issue emphasis in the parties' election manifestos which is in line with Wenzelburger's predictions. The issue being connected to immigration and integration, where the Sweden Democrats have an established ownership, has worked in their favour and gaining ownership of the issue of law and order.

The Sweden Democrats have 'succeeded' in getting their owned issue of immigration and integration to become dominant and figure in other issues, such as the issue of law and order studied. It becomes clear that the immigration and integration issue permeates most of the Sweden Democrats' policies. They connect all problems to this, where for example organised crime takes the starting point in their original core issue. The Social Democrats and the Moderates have incorporated this to some extent, which displays the accommodative strategy and convergence towards the Sweden Democrats. This has benefitted the latter, which goes against what Meguid predicted, where the temporal aspect that Golder highlights appears to be important in terms of ownership.

5.2 Reflections

Challenges encountered along the way have been the thesis' limited scope in time and space, for example compared to the Manifesto Project where experts code election manifestos measuring issue salience in more detail, which also entails more resources.

Studying a recent development is positive by contributing to something new. This also implies that there is limited research already done and therefore more data will be available once more time has passed. The Manifesto Project's coding of law and order could be used once this is published. This thesis however aims to contribute with current knowledge on the area with available material.

Overall, the internal validity is assessed to be high, by answering the research question and utilising multiple sources in doing so. Things that could potentially affect the validity have been mentioned under 'Source criticism'. The external validity concerns the generalisability. Given that the focus has been on Sweden, generalising has not been the study's main aim, but against the background of what was raised under 'Previous research' there appears to be potential with the general tendency of increased issue competition and the rise of right-wing populist parties.

5.3 Suggestions for future research

This study has highlighted the recent trend of an issue gaining importance and parties responding to this. Since issue competition appears to have become more important today it is highly relevant to continue looking at this development. For example, in line with this study, looking at future elections and seeing if the trend so far continues. An aspect here is studying the issue ownership and whether the ownership changes again and perhaps returns to the previous issue owner, the Moderates. Which issues are salient at times can vary between countries, which could also be studied. Here it is interesting looking at different contexts that the same issue is salient or similar contexts but different issues.

Another aspect is going more in-depth into the shift in discourse or the framing of the issue, which against the background of this study appears to have changed during the period.

Along with a rise in issue competition, right-wing populism has also become more prominent. Looking at the party competition with this party included is therefore also an interesting, continued line of research.

6   References

Andersson, Felix – Marie Demker – Caroline Mellgren – Patrik Öhberg, 2021. "Kriminalpolitik – lika hett som man kan tro." in Andersson, Ulrika – Anders Carlander – Marie Grusell – Patrik Öhberg (ed.), *Ingen anledning till oro (?)*. Gothenburg: The SOM-Institute, University of Gothenburg, p. 333-344.

Andersson, Robert – Roddy Nilsson. 2017. *Svensk kriminalpolitik*. 2nd ed. Stockholm: Liber.

Andersson, Felix – Klara Wärnlöf Bové – Patrik Öhberg, 2022. "Brott, men inga straff? Svenska folkets inställning till våldsbrott och hur de ska förhindras." in Andersson, Ulrika – Henrik Oscarsson – Björn Rönnerstrand – Nora Theorin (ed.), *Du sköra nya värld*. Gothenburg: The SOM-Institute, University of Gothenburg, p. 119-134.

Bélanger, Éric – Bonnie M. Meguid, 2008. "Issue salience, issue ownership, and issue-based vote choice", *Electoral Studies*, vol. 27, no. 3, p. 477-491.

Boréus, Kristina – Sebastian Kohl, 2018. "Innehållsanalys" in Boréus, Kristina – Göran Bergström (ed.), *Textens mening och makt*. 4th ed., Lund: Studentlitteratur AB, p. 49-89.

Dennison, James, 2019. "A Review of Public Issue Salience: Concepts, Determinants and Effects on Voting", *Political Studies Review*, vol. 14, no. 4, p. 436-446.

Downs, Anthony, 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper and Row.

Esaiasson, Peter – Mikael Gilljam – Henrik Oscarsson – Lena Wängnerud, 2017. *Metodpraktikan: Konsten att studera samhälle, individ och marknad*. 5th ed., Stockholm: Norstedts juridik.

Gerring, John, 2012. "Mere Description", *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 42, no. 4, p. 721-746.

Golder, Matt, 2016. "Far Right Parties in Europe", *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol. 19, p. 477-497.

Green-Pedersen, Christoffer, 2007. "The Growing Importance of Issue Competition: The Changing Nature of Party Competition in Western Europe", *Political Studies*, vol. 55, p. 607–628.

Gustafsson, Agne – Anders Hansson – Sofie Blombäck, (n.d). "Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti" in the National Encyclopedia. [Electronic] Available: https://www.ne.se/uppslagsverk/encyklopedi/l%C3%A5ng/sveriges-socialdemokratiska-arbetareparti. Download date: 2022-11-30.

Haglund, Anja. 2022. "Trots gängen - totalt ökar grova våldet inte". Svenska Dagbladet. News Article. 2022.09.10. [Electronic] Available:

https://www.svd.se/a/q1L41w/trots-gangen-totalt-okar-grova-valdet-inte. Download date: 2022-12-01.

Hansson, Anders – Frans af Schmidt – Fredrik Melander – Marja Lemne – Olof Ehrencrona, (n.d.a.). "Moderata samlingspartiet" in the National Encyclopedia. [Electronic] Available: https://www.ne.se/uppslagsverk/encyklopedi/l%C3%A5ng/moderata-samlingspartiet. Download date: 2022-11-30.

Hansson, Anders – Anders Sannerstedt – Anna-Lena Lodenius – Bo Bjurulf – Gissur Erlingsson, (n.d.b.). "Sverigedemokraterna" in the National Encyclopedia. [Electronic] Available: https://www.ne.se/uppslagsverk/encyklopedi/l%C3%A5ng/sverigedemokraterna. Download date: 2022-11-30.

Heinze, Anna-Sophie, 2018. "Strategies of mainstream parties towards their right-wing populist challengers: Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland in comparison", *West European Politics*, vol. 41, no. 2, p. 287-309.

Hooghe, Liesbet – Gary Marks – Carole J. Wilson, 2002. "Does Left/Right Structure Party Positions on European Integration?", *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 35, no. 8, p. 879-989.

Jungar, Ann-Catherine, 2022. "Swedish Elections and the Mainstreaming of the Far Right". Article. [Electronic] Available: https://www.greeneuropeanjournal.eu/swedish-elections-and-the-mainstreaming-of-the-far-right/. Download date: 2022-11-24.

Kitschelt, Herbert – Anthony J. McGann, 1995. *The Radical Right in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Lindvall, Johannes – Hanna Bäck – Carl Dahlström – Elin Naurin – Jan Teorell, 2020. "Sweden's Parliamentary Democracy at 100", *Parliamentary Affairs*, vol. 73, no. 3, p. 477-502.

Lipset, Seymour M. – Stein Rokkan, 1967. *Party systems and voter alignments: cross-national perspectives*. New York: Free Press.

Loxbo, Karl, 2015. "Sverigedemokraterna: Framgångsrikt enfrågefokus", *Statsvetenskaplig tidskrift*, vol. 117, no. 2, p. 169–187.

Manifesto Project, 2020. "Codebook". [Electronic] Available: https://manifesto-project.wzb.eu/down/data/2020a/codebooks/codebook_MPDataset_MPDS2020a.pdf. Download date: 2022-12-05.

Marks, Gary – Liesbet Hooghe – Moira Nelson – Erica Edwards, 2006. "Party Competition and European Integration in the East and West", *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 39, no. 2, p. 155-265.

Martinsson, Johan – Ulrika Andersson (ed.), 2022. "Svenska trender 1986-2021". [Electronic] Available: https://www.gu.se/sites/default/files/2022-04/1.%20Svenska%20trender%201986%20-%202021.pdf. Download date: 2022-12-01.

Meguid, Bonnie M., 2005. "Competition between Unequals: The Role of Mainstream Party Strategy and Niche Party Success", *American Political Science Review*, vol. 99, no. 3, p. 347-359.

Novus, 2019. *Rapport: Bästa parti i de viktigaste frågorna*. Novus Group International AB, June 2019. [Electronic] Available: https://novus.se/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/790c140d10871346cf08c1f56ade459b.pdf. Download date: 2022-12-02.

Novus, 2022. *Novus rapport: Bästa parti i de viktigaste frågorna*. Novus Group International AB, September 2022. [Electronic] Available: https://novus.se/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/novusrapportbastapartiseptember2022.pdf. Download date: 2022-12-02.

Oleskog Tryggvason, Per, 2022. *Viktiga samhällsproblem i valmanskåren 1987–2021*, Report from the Swedish National Election Studies Program: 6. Gothenburg University: Department of Political Science.

Oscarsson, Henrik – Torbjörn Bergman – Annika Bergström – Johan Hellström, 2021. *Demokratirådets rapport 2021: Polarisering i Sverige*. Stockholm: SNS Förlag.

Paul, Hannah L. – Jennifer Fitzgerald, 2021. "The Dynamics of Issue Salience: Immigration and Public Opinion", *Polity*, vol. 53, no. 3, p. 357-520.

Spoon, Jae-Jae – Heike Klüver, 2020. "Responding to far right challengers: does accommodation pay off?", *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 27, no. 2, p. 273-291.

Statista, 2022a. "Crime in Sweden - statistics & facts". [Electronic] Available: https://www.statista.com/topics/7088/crime-in-sweden/#dossierKeyfigures/. Download date: 2022-12-30.

Statista, 2022b. "Number of crimes per 100,000 inhabitants in Sweden from 2011 to 2021". [Electronic] Available: https://www.statista.com/statistics/533790/sweden-rate-of-crimes/. Download date: 2022-12-30.

Swedish National Data service (SND), (n.d.). "Nu tar vi tag i Sverige - Valmanifest 2018. Moderaterna Valmanifest - Riksdagsval 2018". [Electronic] Available: https://snd.gu.se/sv/vivill/party/m/v/2018. Download date: 2022-11-25.

Swedish National Data service (SND), (n.d.). "Sverigedemokraternas valmanifest 2018 + Sverigedemokraternas valplattform 2018. Sverigedemokraterna Valmanifest - Riksdagsval 2018". [Electronic] Available: https://snd.gu.se/sv/vivill/party/sd/v/2018. Download date: 2022-11-25.

Swedish National Data service (SND), (n.d.). "Vi väljer välfärd! Sverigedemokraterna Valmanifest - Riksdagsval 2014". [Electronic] Available: https://snd.gu.se/sv/vivill/party/sd/v/2014. Download date: 2022-11-25.

Swedish National Election Studies (SNES), 2018. "Minskande klassröstning". [Electronic] Available: https://www.gu.se/sites/default/files/2020-06/2018-19%20Klassro%CC%88stning%201956-2014.pdf. Download date: 2022-11-24.

Swedish National Election Studies (SNES), 2020. "Viktiga frågor för partivalet 1979–2018". [Electronic] Available: https://www.gu.se/sites/default/files/2020-03/2020%204%20Viktiga%20fra%CC%8Agor%20fo%CC%88r%20partivalet%201979-2018.pdf. Download date: 2022-12-02.

Swedish National Election Studies (SNES), 2021. "Sakfrågeägarskap 1979-2018". [Electronic] Available: https://www.gu.se/sites/default/files/2021-02/2021%203%20Sakfra%CC%8Agea%CC%88garskap%201979-2018.pdf. Download date: 2022-12-02.

The Alliance, 2014. "Vi bygger Sverige Alliansens valmanifest 2014-2018". [Electronic] Available: https://www.alliansen.se/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Vi-bygger-Sverige-Alliansens-valmanifest-2014-2018.pdf. Download date: 2022-11-25.

The Moderates, 2022. "Moderaternas valmanifest 2022 - Så får vi ordning på Sverige". [Electronic] Available: https://moderaterna.se/app/uploads/2022/08/moderaternas_valmanifest_2022_web version.pdf. Download date: 2022-11-25.

The Riksdag, 2022. "Tidigare regeringsbildningar och statsministrar". [Electronic] Available: https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/sa-funkar-riksdagen/demokrati/sa-bildas-regeringen/tidigare-regeringsbildningar-och-statsministrar/. Download date: 2022-12-09.

The Social Democrats, 2014. "Ett bättre Sverige. För alla. Valmanifest 2014". [Electronic] Available: https://www.socialdemokraterna.se/download/18.12ce554f16be946d04640800/1568881613666/valmanifest-2014.pdf. Download date: 2022-11-25.

The Social Democrats, 2018. "Det största trygghetsprogrammet i modern tid. Valmanifest 2018". [Electronic] Available: https://www.socialdemokraterna.se/download/18.12ce554f16be946d04641321/1568881590668/valmanifest-2018.pdf. Download date: 2022-11-25.

The Social Democrats, 2022. "Socialdemokraternas valmanifest 2022. Vårt Sverige kan bättre". [Electronic] Available: https://www.socialdemokraterna.se/download/18.36cb33a81817fcdd3ec50a0/1661417788892/Valmanifest%20tryck%20(1).pdf. Download date: 2022-11-25.

The Sweden Democrats, 2022. "Valmanifest". [Electronic] Available: https://sd.se/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/valmanifest.pdf. Download date: 2022-11-25.

The Swedish Election Authority, 2022a. "Valresultat 2014". [Electronic] Available: https://www.val.se/valresultat/riksdag-region-och-kommun/2014/valresultat.html. Download date: 2022-12-09.

The Swedish Election Authority, 2022b. "Valresultat 2018". [Electronic] Available: https://www.val.se/valresultat/riksdag-region-och-kommun/2018/valresultat.html. Download date: 2022-12-09.

The Swedish Election Authority, 2022c. "Valresultat 2022". [Electronic] Available: https://www.val.se/valresultat/riksdag-region-och-kommun/2022/valresultat.html. Download date: 2022-12-09.

The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (BRÅ), 2015. "Anmälda brott". [Electronic] Available: https://bra.se/download/18.366ea42214d6cb5d9d422fb0/1432649452367/Sammanfattning_anmalda_2014.pdf. Download date: 2022-11-30.

The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (BRÅ), 2022a. "Anmälda brott". [Electronic] Available: https://bra.se/download/18.146acb6517fd55784016f2/1653313416347/Statistikrapport_anmalda_2021.pdf. Download date: 2022-11-30.

The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (BRÅ), 2022b. "Anmälda brott". [Electronic] Available: https://bra.se/download/18.4cb26e92181aeeeee50aa5/1657715624300/2022_Statistikrapport_anmalda_prel_halvar_2022.pdf. Download date: 2022-11-30.

The Swedish public service television company (SVT), 2022. "Väljarnas viktigaste frågor". [Electronic] Available: https://www.svt.se/datajournalistik/valu2022/valjarnas-viktigaste-fragor/. Download date: 2022-12-02.

Vachudova, Milada Anna, 2021. "Populism, Democracy, and Party System Change in Europe", *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol. 24, p. 471-498.

Van der Brug, Wouter, 2004. "Issue ownership and party choice", *Electoral Studies*, vol. 23, no. 2, p. 209-233.

Viberg, Johanna, 2022. *Swedish Crime Survey 2022*, Report from the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention: 9. Stockholm: The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention.

Walgrave, Stefaan – Knut De Swert, 2007. "Where Does Issue Ownership Come From? From the Party or from the Media? Issue-party Identifications in Belgium, 1991-2005", *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, vol. 12, p. 3-133.

Walgrave, Stefaan – Jonas Lefevere – Michiel Nuytemans, 2009. "Issue Ownership Stability and Change: How Political Parties Claim and Maintain Issues Through Media Appearances", *Political Communication*, vol. 26, no. 2, p. 153-172.

Wenzelburger, Georg, 2020. *The Partisan Politics of Law and Order*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.