



Understanding Swedish Prepping

– A Mixed-Method Study on Resilience, Trust,
and Incentives to Prepare for Crises

*Förstå svensk prepping – En blandad metodstudie om resiliens,
förtroende och incitament för att förbereda sig för kriser*

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Abstract

The focus of this thesis is individual emergency preparedness – *prepping* - in Sweden. Due to several threats and crises in recent years, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the Swedish Parliament chose to resume emergency preparedness planning in 2017, but few Swedes are prepared themselves. This thesis, therefore, focuses on people that are interested in prepping and self-identify as prepared, with the aim of investigating how we can understand Swedish prepping today. The aim is also to reflect the results based on the concepts of resilience and trust. To guide this effort, the study examines who is interested in preparedness, what motivates them to be, and how they define being prepared for crises. Furthermore, it investigates how citizens interested in preparing for the future view Swedish emergency preparedness and their own role in it, as well as what roles social resilience and trust play in prepping. To approach these research questions, an online survey was created and distributed in four Facebook groups, followed by semi-structured interviews with members of the same groups. In total, 464 people completed the survey, and ten interviews were conducted.

The result of this study finds that people preparing for crises are not a homogenous group. They differ in age, level of preparedness, interests, political standpoint, and background and they live all over Sweden. To some, prepping is about meeting basic needs, stocking up on food and gear, and planning for different events. To others it is a question about attitude and mental preparations, learning helpful skills, and how to deal with uncertainties. Preparing is, to some, a hobby that provides value when life runs on as usual and there is no crisis. Preparing for a crisis is therefore not only about the *crisis* but also about the act of *preparing*. Swedish prepping originates from upbringing and previous experiences, in combination with low emergency preparedness, which has contributed to the informants feeling that they must take responsibility, partly or completely, for themselves. Trust is important in this study, since the trust we have in organizations, political parties, and people stems from our previous experiences with those groups. Norms, social networks, and trust allow individuals to draw on social resources in their community to solve collective problems. The most resilient communities tend to be those that work together towards a shared purpose. This approach seems to be stronger in the countryside. Furthermore, the actions of preppers can contribute to resilient living conditions and increase a community's resilience as well. But for a community to cope with and adapt to changes, more actors than just individuals such as preppers need to be involved. "Preppers" are an important part of increased community resilience, but so are the civil society, the civil defense, businesses, and agencies. The distribution of responsibility prior, during and after a crisis must be clearer. Only then can Sweden become resilient to future crises.

Keywords: Prepping, emergency preparedness, crisis, social resilience, community resilience, vulnerability, trust, social capital

Sammanfattning

Fokuset i den här uppsatsen är individuell krisberedskap – *prepping* – i Sverige. Till följd av flertalet hot och kriser de senaste åren, inklusive COVID-19-pandemin, valde Riksdagen 2017 att återuppta beredskapsplaneringen, men få svenskar är förberedda. Den här uppsatsen fokuserar på människor som är intresserade av prepping och identifierar sig som förberedda för kriser, i syfte att undersöka hur vi kan förstå samtidens intresse för prepping. Syftet är också att analysera resultaten baserat på begreppen social resiliens och tillit. För att vägleda denna studie undersöks vilka som är intresserad av krisberedskap, vad som motiverar dem att vara det och hur de definierar vad det innebär att vara förberedd för kriser. Vidare undersöks hur medborgare som är intresserade av att förbereda sig för framtiden ser på Sveriges krisberedskap och sin egen roll i denna, samt vilken roll social resiliens och tillit har i prepping. För att närma sig de här forskningsfrågorna skapades en internetenkät som distribuerades i fyra Facebook-grupper, följt av semistrukturerade intervjuer med medlemmar i samma grupper. Totalt genomförde 464 personer undersökningen och tio personer intervjuades.

Resultaten av den här studie visar att personer som förbereder sig för kriser inte är en homogen grupp. De skiljer sig åt i ålder, beredskapsnivå, intressen, politiska ståndpunkter och bakgrund och de bor över hela Sverige. För vissa handlar beredskap om att möta grundläggande behov, lagra mat, införskaffa redskap samt planera för möjliga kriser. För andra är det en fråga om attityd och mental förberedelse, att lära sig hjälpsamma färdigheter och hur man hanterar ovisshet. Förberedelser är för vissa en hobby de ägnar sig åt i vardagen som ger ett värde i sig när livet pågår som vanligt och det inte är någon kris. Förberedelser inför en kris handlar därför inte bara om krisen i sig, utan också om förberedelserna. Intresset för prepping härstammar från uppväxt och tidigare erfarenheter, i kombination med låg krisberedskap generellt i Sverige, vilket har lett till att informanterna känner att de måste ta ansvar, helt eller delvis, för sig själva. Tillit är viktigt i den här studien eftersom det förtroende vi har till organisationer, politiska partier och andra människor härstammar från våra tidigare erfarenheter av dessa grupper. Normer, sociala nätverk och tillit möjliggör för individer att dra nytta av sociala resurser i samhället för att lösa kollektiva problem. De mest resilienta samhällena tenderar att vara de som arbetar tillsammans för ett gemensamt syfte. Denna mentalitet verkar vara starkare på landsbygden. ”Preppers” handlingar kan bidra till resilienta levnadsförhållanden och kan dessutom öka ett samhälles resiliens. Men för att ett samhälle ska kunna hantera och anpassa sig till förändringar behövs fler aktörer än bara individer så som preppers vara inblandade. Preppers är en viktig pusselbit i ökad samhällsresiliens, men likaså är civilsamhället, det civila försvaret, företag och statliga myndigheter. Ansvarsfördelningen före, under och efter en kris måste vara tydligare. Först då kan Sverige visa resiliens i framtida kriser.

Nyckelord: Prepping, individuell krisberedskap, kris, social resiliens, samhällsresiliens, sårbarhet, tillit, socialt kapital

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1. Introduction

1.1 Bad moon a-rising

While preparing to write this thesis, I came across a subcategory on individual emergency preparedness on the Swedish Internet forum *Flashback*. The thread I was reading discussed which staple foods the users had stored in the event of a crisis. Among these, to me, new perspectives on food, I saw something I recognized. One of the anonymous users used a signature in their posts, which read:

I see the bad moon a-rising, I see trouble on the way. I see earthquakes and lightnin', I see bad times today. Don't go around tonight, well it's bound to take your life. There's a bad moon on the rise. (Credence Clearwater Revival, 1969)

In 1969, the American rock band Credence Clearwater Revival sang *Bad Moon Rising*. The lead singer of the band, John Fogerty, stated that the song was about the impending apocalypse that would visit upon us (Goldberg 1993). Simultaneously as the song topped the Billboard 100, the survivalist movement started to take form in the United States (Mills 2019a). This allegedly gave the song an even deeper apocalyptic subtext. The song became a hit and lives on today, just like the prepper movement that stems from the original survivalists, albeit in altered form. Survivalists, and later preppers, can be viewed as the basis of the movements around individual emergency preparedness, or prepping, seen today. *Prepping* is a verb used to describe the act of preparing for crises of various sorts, often performed by individuals to increase their own preparedness to be more resilient in a crisis. The word *crisis* means different things for people, and will be further developed in this study by the informants, but what crises have in common is that they threaten basic functions and values such as our electricity supply, our health or our freedom (Krisinformation 2021). Storms, fires, attacks, unemployment, financial crisis and pandemics are examples of crises. They can vary in size and impact, effecting one household, a community or all of society. Prepping, or *preparing for crises* is therefore a broad concept which will be explored in this thesis.

Swedes prepare for crises too. Though, in what way and why is not always apparent. Sweden has not been at war for a few hundred years and rarely

experiences impactful crises. Today, however, Swedish emergency preparedness is more relevant than it has been for a long time, as the security policy situation has deteriorated in Europe and Sweden's immediate area in the last decade (Försvarsdepartementet 2017). Sweden is closely intertwined with the outside world. This, with the fundamentally positive development it entails, means that individual events quickly can get regional and worldwide repercussions. The security policy's deterioration was therefore brought on by several threats to the global economy, such as the financial crisis in 2008 and economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, societal polarization brought on by misinformation, and lack of trust in democratic institutions in many countries. Global refugee- and migration flows are expected to increase due to conflicts, inequalities and a strive for a better life. Climate change is a growing threat that is feeding new conflicts. A global redistribution of power is underway, shifting towards Asia. In Europe, Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 challenged European security systems (ibid). Terrorist attacks have increased, affecting several European countries, including Sweden. IT attacks pose an increasing threat. After not having an active plan for crisis and war, the Swedish government decided to resume total defense planning in 2017. Total defense includes military- and civil defense and consist of all activities needed to prepare Sweden for crisis or war (MSB 2020). One part of the civil defense is the recommendation for all citizens to be able to manage for one week without help from the state if an impactful crisis were to happen (Försvarsdepartementet 2017). Since the total defense decision was made in 2017, it has been discovered how few Swedes would be able to manage by themselves for one week. Newspapers articles, based on surveys conducted by the Swedish state and market research companies, have investigated the level of home preparedness around the country (see TT 2017; Rosén 2019; MSB 2021). The survey reveals how few are prepared, by not having food and water stored or non-electrical heating possibilities. In other words – many Swedes are not prepared for crises.

Today, in 2021, Swedish emergency preparedness is relevant, as we are living through an impactful crisis: the COVID-19 pandemic. There has been many eyes on Sweden's emergency preparedness, both domestic and foreign, as Sweden has chosen to take another path in dealing with the pandemic, which has been seen as controversial (Cohen & Sahlin 2021). This might also have led to a shift in the trust towards the state. The pandemic has also led to an increased interest in individual emergency preparedness among Swedes, visible in new surveys (see MSB 2021). The pandemic is not the focus of this thesis, but it is a reason as to why this thesis exists: Because we are experiencing a crisis right now. An increased interest in prepping is visible, but still, only a minority of Swedes define themselves as prepared. This thesis therefore focuses on people that are interested in prepping and self-identify as prepared, aiming to see how we can understand Swedish prepping

of today. If the tunes of Credence's *Bad Moon Rising* can get you interested in this, be my guest and give it a listen.

1.1. Aim & research questions

This thesis aims to analyze individual emergency preparedness in Sweden to answer the question of how we can understand Swedish prepping today. To do so, I focus on a sample of people who, with different entrances to prepping, self-identify as "prepared citizens". Through a survey and interviews, the thesis examines who is prepared and how preppers themselves view preparedness, both on an individual level and a national level. To understand individual emergency preparedness in a wider social context, the results are reflected with the concepts of resilience and trust. The following research questions guide this effort:

1. Who is interested in preparedness, what motivates them to be and how do they define being prepared for crises?
2. How do citizens interested in preparing for the future view Swedish emergency preparedness and their own role in it?
3. What roles do social resilience and trust play in prepping?

1.2. Thesis outline

This thesis is structured as follows. It begins with a description of my theoretical framework and concepts, which is central to the study. These are also necessary to be familiar with before reading the following literature review, where the theoretical concepts, together with existing research on my topic is explained further. After this, an overview of Swedish emergency preparedness is presented. These context sections, together with the literature review, results in presenting and discussing the branches of prepping that I have chosen for this study. The methodological framework is then be presented, by describing my approach, the methodological choices, limitations, and ethical considerations. These chapters lead to the results, analysis, and discussion, which weaves together empirical findings, existing literature, and the theoretical framework. This chapter is divided into two subchapters. The first one revolves around the first research question, the second revolves around the second research question. The third research question is discussed in both subchapters. Finally, the research questions are answered, and the study is concluded.

2. Concepts & context

The purpose of this chapter is to convey the context of this thesis. This will be done by firstly explaining the two main theoretical concepts that will be used throughout the study. A theoretical framework is beneficial when wanting to take the empirical knowledge from one specific study and use it in a more general discussion (see Teorell & Svensson 2007). The concepts, which in this study are very much integrated with each other, are social resilience and trust. These two will help in understanding prepping, both individually and in a broader social context, as well as prepping's role in Sweden today. The following section is the literature review, where previous research on this subject will be described. The theoretical concepts will also be accounted for further here. To further approach the aim of this thesis - how Swedish prepping can be understood today – Swedish emergency preparedness will be briefly described. Finally, the chapter will account for the branches of prepping that I have chosen to focus on in this study.

2.1. Concepts

2.1.1. Social resilience

Social resilience concerns organizations', communities', and individuals' abilities to cope with, adapt to, and transform with various threats and crises (Keck & Sakdapolrak 2013). In this thesis I will mainly look at individual- and community resilience. The more resilient a community or an individual, the greater disturbances it can absorb and adapt to (Trærup 2012). These disturbances can be grouped into three categories: 1) natural hazards and disasters, such as floods, storms, and fires, 2) long-term stressors, such as resource inadequacy, wars, and effects of climate change, and 3) social change and development issues, such as migration, economic crisis, and health-related risks (ibid). Social resilience has been defined by many researchers, but Keck & Sakdapolrak (2013) summarizes it into three types of capacities: coping capacities, adaptive capacities, and transformative capacities. Coping concerns the ability to manage crisis as it occurs, adapting is about learning from past experiences and adjusting for future challenges, and transformation is the ability to create institutions that can withstand

future crisis (Keck & Sakdapolrak 2013). Huddleston (2017) argues that preppers' lifestyles are often seen as resilient, both economically and socially. In this thesis, I further engage with the role social resilience plays in prepping, both on an individual and a community level.

Resilience is related to vulnerability as they are both concerned with how systems respond to change (Miller et al. 2010). Yet they approach responses to crisis and disturbances in different ways. Vulnerability means “to be wounded”, which implies sensitivity to distress (Lei et al. 2014). In this thesis I will use the definition of vulnerability that defines it as the opposite of resilience, meaning where resilience is low, vulnerability tends to be high (Mayunga 2007). When a community loses resilience, it instead increases its vulnerability to disturbances (Kasperson et al. 2001), which could be the case in areas or communities that do not handle crisis well. In this study, I will use both vulnerability and resilience as these two are interconnected concepts essential when looking at individual- and community preparedness and disaster risk reduction (Lei et al. 2014).

2.1.2. Trust

Social resilience is influenced by insights from the social sciences, such as relations and networks (Miller et al. 2010; Keck & Sakdapolrak 2013). Pelling & High (2005) and Trærup (2012) also emphasize social relations and highlight the critical role of trust for building resilience. To maintain a community's social resilience, informal social interactions though social capital are crucial (Rothstein 2003; Pelling & High 2005; Trærup 2012). Social capital is considered key in reducing vulnerability by implementing trust, norms and networks that can build and maintain social resilience (Pelling & High 2005; Mayunga 2007; Trærup 2012). Trust is necessary when building community resilience and trust has also been found to be one of the most important variables when coping with and adapting to crises (Longstaff & Yang 2008). Trust means to have a positive perception of an individual or an organization and believing in the acts performed by them (OECD 2013). When your expectations are being fulfilled, your trust is strengthened, but if your expectations are not being met your trust in that institution is weakened and trust is therefore also affected by personal and collective experiences (ibid). Previous experiences are relevant in this study, since the Swedish government has recently changed its plans for emergency preparedness (Försvarsdepartementet 2017) and a shift in responsibility has been acknowledged (Larsson 2019). This shift, I believe, can have affected the informants' trust towards the state both positively, by engaging in emergency preparedness again, and negatively, by not having done it sooner.

In this thesis I will look at preppers' trust both towards the state or government and towards other people. *Trust in government* concerns citizens' confidence in the actions done by the government and if these are perceived as “right” (Donovan et

al. 2008; OECD 2013). *Trust between people* concerns individual's honesty, integrity, and reliability. People are more inclined to engage in civil society and their community if there is trust between the participants, and so without trust, cooperation is difficult to achieve (Rothstein 2003). The trust and social capital between people in a community can help us understand why some disaster-affected communities display resilience and others no not (Aldrich 2010). In this study I aim to use social capital and trust to answer my research questions regarding individual emergency preparedness, and to investigate what role trust plays in prepping.

2.2. Context

2.2.1. Literature review

This section is a summary of existing literature relevant to the aim of this study. The section will provide an overview of individual emergency preparedness (prepping) and preppers, as well as previous research on prepping in relation to my theoretical concepts of social resilience and trust.

Most of the previous research on individual emergency preparedness has been conducted on American prepping and preppers, much due to the movement originating from, and being much bigger, in the United States. American sociologists Amanda Sims and Mary Grigsby explores how and why people engage in prepping in the Midwest US in their article *Prepper-Worthy Identity Work: A Cultural Repertoire for Constructing a Secure Self in an Insecure World* (2019). The authors use a grounded-theory approach to describe how preppers create their identities by implementing self-sufficiency, responsibility, and independence into their lives.

Michael F. Mills, a researcher in criminology and sociology has written about American "Doomsday" prepping. In his article *Preparing for the Unknown... Unknowns: "Doomsday" Prepping and Disaster Risk Anxiety in the United States* (2019b), he describes prepping as a growing American phenomenon centered on storing food, water and gear to better manage crisis and survive disasters. With the help of qualitative interviews with preppers, Mills argues that preppers are oriented around risk communications and risk management that must be understood in relation to United States' cultural context, rather than preppers being the apocalyptic cult that media portrays them as. The same year, Mills published an article that examines the rise of American "doomsday" prepping during Barack Obama's presidency (Mills 2019a). In *Obamageddon: Fear, the Far Right, and the Rise of "Doomsday" Prepping in Obama's America* (2019a), Mills argues for a new understanding of prepping that includes nuances of the prepping culture beyond the dated survivalist movement.

Another researcher focusing on prepping is the American anthropologist, Chad Huddleston. In 2018 he wrote the article *For Preppers, the Apocalypse is Just Another Disaster* in the digital anthropology magazine *Sapiens* (Huddleston 2018). From his observations and interviews, he argues that most preppers are “normal people” that have taken precautions to manage adverse events such as a natural disaster, power outage or attacks. This is executed by obtaining a variety of gear, as well as learning skills needed to hunt, live in more secluded areas, and protecting themselves and their families. In Huddleston’s article *Preppers as Resilient Citizens: What Preppers Can Teach Us About Surviving Disaster* (2017) he raises the aspect of prepping as a way to overcome vulnerability and build social resilience within a community. Huddleston argues that preppers can construct resilient systems, mainly by having different survival knowledge and skills. That expertise can then be shared with others and applied in a crisis to manage better together and avoid large-scale assistance. However, Huddleston also highlights that, given the fact that many communities lack resources or are subject to structural inequalities, the most beneficial way to deal with crisis is multi-level governance where communities, government and organizations work together.

Chris Ellis merges the two terms *prepper* and *resilience* together in the article *The Noah Virus: Who is Infected With High Resiliency for Disaster?* (2020). Ellis brings up the COVID-19 pandemic as an event that has actualized prepping activities, and possibly increased the number of preppers in the United States. There is also some literature on the relationship between resilience, trust, and social capital. One of them is *Fixing Recovery: Social Capital in Post-Crisis Resilience* by Daniel P. Aldrich (2010). He argues that social capital, networks, and trust between citizens can help us understand why some disaster-affected places are more resilient than others. Trust towards the government and between people is relevant in Sweden as well. In Trägårdh et. al.’s book *The calm Swedish trust* (sv: *Den svala Svenska tilliten*) (2013), the authors declare that the interest in research regarding trust and social capital in Sweden has increased in recent decades. They analyze what trust looks like in Sweden, a country where citizens have a relatively high trust towards others and the State.

In a Swedish context, much less research has been done about prepping. In 2017, the Ministry of Defense decided to resume total defense planning, and with it they published the report *Resistance - The Focus of Total Defense and the Design of Civil Defense 2021-2021* (sv: *Motståndskraft – Inriktningen av totalförsvaret och utformningen av det civila försvaret 2021-2021*) (Försvarsdepartementet 2017). In the report the global security policy situation is assessed, which is characterized by increased instability and unpredictability. Furthermore, the goals and tasks for the new Swedish total defense is accounted for. In the report, the Ministry of Defense suggest that citizens should be able to manage for one week without support from the public and collaborate with each other to cope with a crisis better. Based on this

report, Swedish researcher Larsson wrote the article *Shifting responsibilities and liberal governmentality in the creation and governance of the prepared citizen* (2019), arguing that there has been a shift in responsibility in Swedish security and crisis management from state to individuals. Larsson argues that the shift has been achieved without using restrictions or economic incentives, but rather through dissemination of information and knowledge to influence Swedish citizens in a way that promotes a sense of freedom. Hence, he argues that this has been executed using liberal governmentality: a way to govern where power and freedom is not opposites but rather presuppose each other (ibid).

Swedish research on individual emergency preparedness is limited. However, in the ongoing MSB funded project *Emergency Preparedness in Everyday Life and Consumption for Unstable Futures*, ethnologist Elias Mellander studies the emerging Swedish prepper culture. The project is expected to be completed in June 2022, but initial results show that people that prepare tend to have a relatively high socio-economic status (Göteborgs universitet 2021). Just like Ellis' (2020), Mellander connects the growing interest in prepping in Sweden with the current pandemic. My thesis aims to approach the gap that exists in Swedish research on individual emergency preparedness, or prepping.

2.2.2. Swedish emergency preparedness

To place Swedish prepping in a wider social context, a brief account of Sweden's emergency preparedness is needed. It has evolved and changed several times in the last century, often corresponding to events in Sweden and the outside world (Försvarshögskolan 2019). As a response to the Second World War, the Swedish *total defense* was developed where military and civil defense were to collaborate and coordinate with each other to achieve maximum defense (ibid). (Försvarshögskolan 2019:26). After the war, Sweden's war organization was transformed to a defense organization and even though the practical aspects continued to be developed throughout the Cold War, the basic idea of the total defense, *collaboration*, was kept (Försvarshögskolan 2019). In 1989, The Berlin Wall fell, the Soviet Union was dissolved in 1991 and Sweden joined the European Union in 1995. The improved security situations in countries close to Sweden led to a new defense reform in 2000. It was decided that less resources would be going towards the total defense (Försvarshögskolan 2019). This decision came to be a distinct step away from the defense organization that had been built up during the Second World War and further developed during the Cold War.

Critical events and threats have come closer to Sweden during the past decade (MSB 2019b). Russia opposed a threat after the annexation of Crimea in 2014, aggression in Ukraine and military presence in the Baltic Sea region. Sweden was also largely affected by extensive migration in 2015 and impactful natural disasters such as the storm Gudrun in 2005. The effects of climate change has led to extreme

weather such as heatwaves and fires which affected the agricultural sector (Naturvårdsverket 2020) and led to impactful fires and a water shortage in 2014 and 2018. Sweden has experienced a lack of information security which has caused leakage in sensitive information. Another urgent threat is a growing exclusion both socially and economically, which can lead to a decreased trust in our democracy (MSB 2019b). Terrorist attacks have increased around the world, and with it, the attack in Stockholm in 2017. This contributed to a reformulation of the Swedish emergency preparedness and the total defense planning was resumed in 2017 (ibid). Since then, the focus is once again on the total defense, which is the operation needed to prepare Sweden for crises and war. The responsibility for strengthening Sweden's ability to prevent and manage a crisis is divided between a large number of public and private actors. (Försvvarshögskolan 2019; MSB 2019a). The Swedish Parliament is Sweden's highest decision-making assembly, both in peace and war (Försvvarsdepartementet 2017). The total defense is then made up of two branches: military defense and civil defense, both of which consist of several agencies and organizations. Citizens, which is the focus of this thesis, have traditionally always had duties towards the state, especially during heightened security situations (Larsson 2019). According to the Ministry of Defense (2017), the basis for total defense is Sweden's population; our will to defend and ability to handle situations of heightened preparedness is crucial in achieving a total defense.

A clear difference between past and present Swedish emergency preparedness, especially before and after the Cold War, is the design. From mostly concerning war and attacks, it today includes protecting the state's function and freedom, citizens' rights, lives, and health, both in peacetime and during crises. The Ministry of Defense's report (2017) is based on protecting democracy and judiciary, the economy, freedoms and rights of the people and sovereignty of the state. The threats described are both structural - such as conflict, natural disasters, and migration, and antagonistic – such as actions performed by foreign states, organized criminals, and terrorists (Försvvarshögskolan 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic is the current threat with big consequences to our everyday lives. Sweden is a safe country compared to many others, but threats are still present. These threats might have led to an increase in prepared citizens, or at least an increased interest in being more prepared. Regardless, there are people that do prepare and movements that encourage it in different ways, which I will delve into in the next subchapter.

2.2.3. The selected branches

To choose what branches of prepping to focus on in this study, to try to understand Swedish prepping, I looked at the context: Previous research and Swedish conditions. From the literature review, it is clear that previous research argue for a broader view of prepping, than the obsolete image of survivalists from the second half of the 1900s (Huddleston 2018; Mills 2019a; Sims & Grigsby 2019). Prepping

is also defined by a few core things in newly conducted research: Storing food, water and gear (Huddleston 2018; Mills 2019b), self-sufficiency and independence (Sims & Grigsby 2019), as well as learning skills needed to hunt and to live in more secluded areas (Huddleston 2018). All this is done to manage short- to long-term crises. In the Swedish context, emergency preparedness has differed throughout history and was just recently put on the agenda again (Försvarsdepartementet 2017). The current preparedness planning is broader than in the 1900s, including protection of the state's function and freedom, citizens' rights, lives, and health, both in peacetime and during crises. It is clear that the state argues for the individual's responsibility as an important part of Sweden's overall emergency preparedness, and emphasizes collaboration to cope with crisis (Försvarsdepartementet 2017). This background and context of emergency preparedness has influenced me in choosing who to survey and talk to for this study, limiting myself to four groups focused on 1) preppers, 2) prepping in line with government recommendations, 3) living in more secluded areas and 4) self-sufficiency. What follows is a differentiation between the groups, though, these differences will not be the focus of this study. The four could however provide four different entrances to prepping, whom I will use in my methodology, chapter 3.

The first group is the prepper movement, originally from the United States. Prepping can be defined as a set of activities performed by those planning to independently manage medium- to long-term scenarios (Mills 2019a). Prepping activities can take on a range of forms but are often centered around six core needs: hydration, nutrition, security, shelter, hygiene, and medicine. Prepping therefore often involves stockpiling water, medicine, food, and gear needed to manage for unknown periods of time without government help. Some categorize preppers as the third wave of survivalists, (Bennett 2009; Andersson 2010) as survivalism is a lifestyle movement centered around preparing for long-term crises (Mills 2019a). The first wave of survivalism occurred in the 1950s and 60s, following the Second World War and coincided with the Vietnam war and the back-to-the-land and peace movement, all of which deeply affected the United States. The second wave of survivalists was largely made up of extremists that distanced themselves from the government (ibid). The movement drew substantial media attention when a member, Timothy McVeigh, detonated homemade explosives in front of a government building in Oklahoma in 1995, which killed nearly 170 persons (Nationalencyklopedin n.d.). This incident, together with a few others, led American media to address survivalism as anti-government, conspiracy minded and right-wing (Mills 2019a). Survivalism's third wave can be seen in the United States today: People who do not want to be too dependent on the state but be able to take care of themselves if a crisis comes, and therefore prepares in different ways (ibid).

The second group is people prepping in line with government recommendations. This group often prepare for short-term crisis, such as natural disasters and personal crisis, and can be referred to as crisis preparedness (Mills 2019a). Crisis

preparedness concerns working towards strengthening society's ability to prepare for and handle crisis and war (MSB 2019a). The responsibility is shared between several public and private actors and there is an emphasis on working together. As an individual, it is important to be able to manage for at least one week by storing water, food, and fuel, and by having alternative ways of communication (MSB 2015).

The third group is centered around living in more secluded areas. One way to manage independently in a crisis, according to preppers, is to retreat from populated areas to more rural or remote areas (Mills 2019a). This could sometimes be channeled into an off-grid lifestyle. Off-grid" or "off-the-grid" refers to not being connected to the electrical grid but can also include not being connected to public or private utilities in general, such as water and gas (Miriam-Webster u.å. n.d.). Living off-grid therefore implies producing or collecting these utilities on your own and thereby living more independently. Living off-grid allows people and buildings to be self-sufficient, which is beneficial in rural and isolated places. This is a kind of lifestyle, and movement, that has existed for a long time, but that has been getting more attention in recent years. This is probably due to it being a way of living that is seen as beneficial to the environment, our ecological footprint, and the cost of living.

The fourth group I will include in this thesis is self-sufficiency. It is a mindset which includes many different skill and that is considered important both in prepping (Nationalencyklopedin u.å. b.) and the off-grid lifestyle. Being self-sufficient means being able to provide what you need without the help of others (Cambridge Dictionary u.å.). There is usually an emphasis on food and not having to buy food from others but instead growing, hunting, or collecting it yourself. There is also a built-in idea that self-sufficiency is connected to rurality (Halfacree 2007) due to the access of resources such as land, water, and forest. Some deeper understanding of self-sufficiency can be found when looking at one of the movements related to it. The back-to-the-land movement is one of those, originating from the American 1960s (Halfacree 2007). In it, the most central to practitioners is the ability to feed oneself based on what one can produce. Studying self-sufficiency becomes a way to investigate the relationship between producing- and consuming food on an individual level (Prody 2015).

The base of these four groups – preppers, people prepping in line with government recommendations, people living in more secluded areas and practicing self-sufficiency - is to manage better on their own. There are of course many ways to prepare, and many degrees to it. However, these four groups are thus, in different ways and with different motives, working towards managing crises partly or completely by themselves. These four groups, based on four themes that can be separated or overlap, is the focus of this thesis.

3. Methodological framework

3.1. Method

To approach my research questions, I created and distributed an online survey in four Facebook groups and followed up my findings with semi-structured interviews with members of the same groups. This makes this an explanatory sequential mixed method, meaning that quantitative data sampling is followed by qualitative data sampling (Creswell 2014). In total, 464 people completed the survey and I conducted ten interviews. Using a mixed-method approach is useful when wanting to collect data from a larger group of people to get a general idea of the themes they bring up, as well as developing a more detailed image of the individuals of that same group (ibid). Used this way, mixed methods are beneficial, as they can “give meaning to the numbers” (Hesse-Biber 2010:3).

3.1.1. The sampling

To find and connect with people interested in crisis and emergency preparedness, I turned to Facebook. Given the size of Facebook, the ability to reach many people and the easiness of quick communication, make the platform the preferred social networking site (SNS) to survey (Brickman Bhutta 2012). Since 80 % of Swedes have a Facebook account (Internetstiftelsen 2020) I believed Facebook to be a useful platform to identify communities and individuals who are interested in individual emergency preparedness. Sampling informants through SNS also allowed me to encounter people which would otherwise be more difficult to meet, given that the study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the four groups described in the background, I chose four Facebook groups, one for each theme described in the background. A Facebook group is community-based and can be centered around anything, ranging from specific interests, shared workplaces, or with a certain event in mind (Brickman Bhutta 2012; O’Bannon et al. 2013). Groups are created by individuals, run by group administrators, and joined by anyone. The Facebook groups I have chosen are independent groups, meaning they are not affiliated with any authorities or civil society groups. The

group names in the first column of Table 1 are what the Facebook groups will be referred as further on.

Table 1: The Facebook groups and their characteristics.

Group	Core characteristic	Other characteristics	Facebook group's purpose
Preppers	People performing a set of activities to independently manage medium- to long-term crises.	Third wave of survivalism. Six core needs: hydration, nutrition, security, shelter, hygiene, and medicine.	To be a platform for preppers in Sweden. Posts in the group should be related to practical prepping.
Crisis preparedness	Preparing for short-term crisis, such as natural disasters and personal crisis.	Work towards strengthening society's ability to prepare for and handle crisis and war, by preparing themselves.	A forum for those interested in emergency preparedness in peacetime, i.e., preparedness for minor and major crises.
Self-sufficiency	Being able to provide what you need without the help of others.	There is usually an emphasis on food and not having to buy food from others but instead growing, hunting, or collecting it yourself.	To be a platform for those interested in becoming more self-sufficient. Content can be about farming, animals, and producing electricity.
Off-grid	Retreating from populated areas to more rural or remote areas to be more self-sufficient.	Off-grid refers to not being connected to the electrical grid but can also include public or private utilities in general as a way to manage more independently.	A group for those wanting to live off-grid or already does. The posts' concern sharing information, giving advice, and general thoughts regarding life off-grid.

As explained in section 2.2.3., I chose these Facebook groups based on their purpose to share knowledge about self-sufficiency, managing on their own and preparing for short- and long-term crises. In my Facebook posts, when introducing myself and the study, I specifically asked for members that were interested in individual emergency preparedness to answer the survey. This specifically served a purpose in the self-sufficiency group and the off-grid group, as they are only indirectly linked to prepping through the activities they promote, compared to the two other groups where prepping is the focus of the groups. There could therefore be people in the groups on self-sufficiency and off-grid that are not interested in emergency preparedness and therefore they were not encouraged to answer the survey. What all survey respondents had in common was therefore an interest in prepping.

The purpose of using Facebook groups as my sampling was to find and approach my target group: people that are interested in preparing for emergencies. In chapter 4, the similarities and differences between the groups will be highlighted when needed, but which group the informants belonged to was never the focus. During the interviews, it even became apparent that some of the informants belonged to several of the groups, which is also the reason the groups will not be compared more than necessary. The purpose of sampling participants from four groups was

above all to acknowledge that there are different ways to be prepared and that the path there can be taken through different interests.

3.1.2. The survey

First, I constructed a survey in the online survey tool Netigate; a tool specifically aimed at creating and analyzing surveys. The survey questions were divided into six sections, from background to inspiration and preparations, to clarify the layout to the respondents (Persson et al. 2016). Many of the questions had a textbox as the final answer alternative, where the respondents could formulate their own answer if none of the alternatives felt right. Including this was important, as open-ended answers can provide information beyond the fixed alternatives and generate a qualitative aspect to a quantitative survey (Wärneryd 1993; Persson et al. 2016).

After getting permission from the administrators of all four Facebook groups to post the survey in their group, I created four links to the survey and posted one link in each of the four Facebook groups. Creating the links allowed me to later insert the Facebook groups as background information, being able to compare the groups to each other if I felt the need, while all the survey respondents still answered the same survey. To motivate future respondents to answer the survey as well as instill trust in the survey results (Teorell & Svensson 2007), I presented myself and the purpose of the survey together with the link. The survey was mainly answered in the first few days that it was open, with 56 % of the answers on day one, 34 % on day two, and 8 % on day three, with answer rate declining the following days. The survey was open for one week and got 464 respondents: 169 from the prepper group, 129 from the crisis preparedness group, 101 from the self-sufficiency group and 71 from the off-grid group. The difference in respondents from each group likely depends on that the number of group members differs between the groups, as well as a perceived higher interest in emergency preparedness among the members in the prepper- and emergency preparedness groups.

I analyzed the survey results using Excel. When exporting the raw data from Netigate to Excel, the data came already coded. I used descriptive analysis, used to show variations, means and tendencies in quantitative data, to demonstrate the data in a meaningful way and for patterns to emerge (Heeringa et al. 2017). Through the descriptive analysis, several consistent themes and patterns became visible which I wanted to explore further. I built my interview questions on these patterns to deepen the results and asked my interview informants further about these.

3.1.3. The interviews

The second part of my methodology was follow-up interviews. In the concluding section of the survey, I asked informants to state their email addresses if they wanted to participate in an interview with me. Many did, which made me choose who to interview. In a study with relatively few interview informants, it is justified

to strategically select these (Teorell & Svensson 2007). I picked a few people from each Facebook group, and selected people that represented a variation in age, gender, and geographical location. The purpose was to get a wide group of people that could have different views of preparedness. I interviewed ten people, three on the digital meeting tool Zoom and seven over telephone. The interviews were semi-structured to make room for the informant to speak freely. The interviews were recorded with permission from the informants. I used a phenomenological approach, which focuses on the content of the interviews and how they express their lifeworld (Kvale & Brinkmann 2014). This allowed for my interviews to revolve around the informants and their experiences with home preparedness, as well as how these individuals perceive and understands the world around them regarding emergency preparedness (Creswell 2014; Kvale & Brinkmann 2014; Inglis & Thorpe 2019). Table 2 illustrates the people that were interviewed.

Table 2: The interview informants.

Pseudonym	Facebook group	Sex	Age span	Living area	Region
Sara	Self-sufficiency	F	70-79	Rural area	Västra Götaland
Otto	Off-grid	M	60-69	City	Norrbottn
Christian	Crisis preparedness	M	50-59	City	Stockholm
Stefan	Self-sufficiency	M	50-59	City	Stockholm
Sonja	Self-sufficiency	F	50-59	Rural area	Gävleborg
Carin	Crisis preparedness	F	40-49	City	Uppsala
Simona	Self-sufficiency	F	40-49	Rural area	Västernorrland
Oscar	Off-grid	M	30-39	City	Stockholm
Peter	Prepper	M	30-39	Town	Västra Götaland
Carl	Crisis preparedness	M	<20	Rural area	Västra Götaland

When all ten interviews were conducted, I used Braun and Clark's (2006) thematic analysis to analyze my data due to the analysis's flexibility and thoroughness. This thematic analysis includes six phases: 1) Transcribing the data, 2) generating initial codes, 3) searching for themes in the codes, 4) reviewing themes in relation to codes and the entire data set, 5) defining and naming themes, and 6) producing the report (ibid). Coding the material with keywords is beneficial when wanting to get an overview of the material as it is being organized into different groups (Braun & Clarke 2006; Kvale & Brinkmann 2014). It will also simplify the process of finding patterns or themes and to understanding the material (Braun & Clarke 2006). When the thematic analysis was implemented, all quotes were translated from Swedish to English, while trying to keep the essence of the statements.

3.2. Limitations

Early on in this study, I delimited the empirical material to derive from a few of the themes in individual emergency preparedness, specifically preppers, crisis preparedness, off-grid, and self-sufficiency. Other themes connected to individual emergency preparedness are for example security- and weapon issues, hunting, information, and medical issues. If I would have chosen to contact other Facebook groups, for example a group concerning security, the result of this study might have been another. These themes are however mentioned in the survey and interviews, even though they are not the focus. The four themes I have chosen to focus on were however the most predominant in previous research and therefore the most relevant to this study. This delimitation was also done due to the type of groups I was able to find on Facebook. Both the survey- and the interview informants were contacted through Facebook groups. In that way, the groups I chose play a big part in my data collection. I excluded Facebook groups that cater to a defined geographical area, other than Sweden. To answer my first research question, I did not want to limit myself to certain areas or demographics. I also chose Facebook groups that, in their field, have the largest number of members. There are for example several groups on self-sufficiency, but I chose the biggest one seen to the number of members. Naturally, there are other groups that can hypothetically have an interest in this subject, such as the Scouting organization and people engaged in the military. I did, however, exclude these for a few different reasons. For some groups with an interest in emergency preparedness, I could not find any independent Facebook groups (organized by individuals rather than an organization) for people in that field. The independent Facebook groups that do exist target a certain geographical area and/or are dedicated to a certain group or year which was a limitation I did not want to make. Being that Scouting is a youth organization means it could be trickier to survey which is why I deselected it.

Even though most Swedes are on Facebook, the prepared individuals that are not on Facebook or in the groups I contacted could not participate in the survey or the interviews. There is also the question of who answers a survey. This study is about home preparedness, but it is based on people that answer surveys. Many factors affect who takes a survey. The amount of time it takes to answer it is one important factor (Persson et al. 2016) and the number of open- and closed-ended question is another (Zhou et al. 2017). There is also a risk that the participants that are the most interested in this subject are the ones that answered the survey and wanted to be interviewed and those with less experience did not, even though this factor was not important to me. It is also be important to consider who sees a survey. Facebook posts disappear in people's feeds quickly (Peruta & Shields 2017). Since the survey was mainly answered in the first few days that it was open, the timing of when to post the survey comes into play as well as who was on Facebook those initial days. If I had reposted the survey, it could have gotten more participants, but that was not

in the agreement with the group administrators. The number of participants were however sufficient for the limitations of the study. In conclusion, posting the survey in these Facebook groups was the best way for me to reach my target group.

The final limitation is the interview informants. When I asked survey respondents to state their email addresses if they were interested in participating in an interview, many did. This led me to having to choose who to interview, as explained in section 3.1.3. By doing so, I most certainly lost perspectives, experiences, and stories. I adapted the number of informants for a study of this size and chose informants that represented a diversity in age, gender, and geographical location, to achieve a variation of perspectives in the time restrictions I had. Still, some respondents that I contacted later declined being interviewed, which resulted in more informants from one group and less from another. As seen from my results, I did however manage to connect with people with many different perspectives on prepping, and the survey together with the interviews both played important roles in that.

3.3. Ethical considerations

To make sure this study was made in an ethical way, I had the Swedish Research Council's Research Ethics Guidelines (Vetenskapsrådet 2002) in mind when conducting this study. The guidelines are based on four main requirements. The first one is the information requirement. To ensure this I started by asking for permission from the group administrators before posting the survey in the groups. I also explained the purpose of the survey, the study, and who I was. I repeated this information when posting the survey link in each Facebook group, in the emails to people interested in participating in interviews, as well as in the beginning of each interview. The second guideline is the consent requirement, which allows the informant to withdraw from the study at any time. A few people that had said that they wanted to be interviewed in the survey later changed their minds when contacted, which led me to contacting someone else instead. To fulfill the consent requirement, the informants should also be able to read the transcribed interview. One informant requested this, read it, and returned it with some minor changes which I amended. The third guideline is the confidentiality requirement that ensures all informants are kept confidential. Research ethics exists to protect and respect the participants (Halse & Anne 2005) and therefore I am using pseudonyms for both the Facebook groups and the interview informants (Kvale & Brinkmann 2014). I am also deliberately hiding certain details from their stories in the written text to protect the informants. The fourth and final guideline is the utilization requirement which means that data collected on individuals can only be used for research purposes, which they will be. (Vetenskapsrådet 2002; Teorell & Svensson 2007)

4. Result, analysis & discussion

Chapter 4 is dedicated to the empirical findings from the survey and interviews, analyzed with descriptive statistical analysis and thematical analysis, and discussed together with existing literature and my theoretical framework. The two subchapters are dedicated to one research question each and the results from the first subchapter is used to delve into the second. In 4.1, I will look at who is interested in preparedness, how they define being prepared for emergencies, their motivations, and different ways to be prepared. In 4.2, I will put prepared people in a wider social context by investigating how citizens interested in preparing for the future view Swedish emergency preparedness and their own role in it. The third research question is incorporated throughout both subchapters. The chapters will be summarized and all three research questions will be answered in the conclusion, section 5.

Throughout this chapter I will use my theoretical concepts, consisting of social resilience and trust to deepen the analysis and take empirical knowledge from my specific case and use it in a more general discussion, to understand prepping in society today.

4.1. " I am not a prepper."

Subchapter 4.1 addresses the empirical findings and discussions surrounding the first research question: Who is interested in preparedness, what motivates them to be and how do they define being prepared for crises? I will look at gender, age and living area and how long the informants believe they would manage in a crisis. I will also investigate what it means to be prepared, to someone that is, and their views on the Swedish- and American prepper identity. Then, different ways to approach preparedness will be explored. Finally, incentives to prepare are studied. These aspects are explored further with the use of social resilience and vulnerability theory, as well as examining what role these concepts play in prepping.

4.1.1. Who are we talking about?

Let us start with the four Facebook groups. There are some similarities and some differences between them, as stated in the previous chapters. The most important

similarity though, was for the informants to be interested in prepping. Figure 1 confirms that most of the people in this study are interested and have, to different degrees, taken preventative measures.

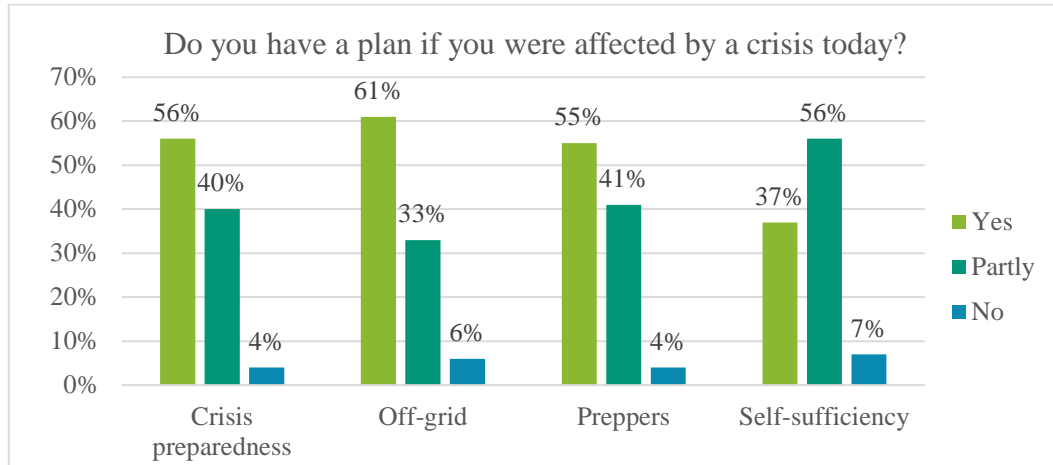


Figure 1: The Facebook groups' plan for crisis.

The response rates are similar between the groups. It is only in the self-sufficiency group that a larger proportion partly have a plan, than in the other groups where more people have a plan. The reasons behind this can only be speculated on. In total, 95 % of the respondents say that they are in some way prepared for, what they define, as a crisis. What they perceive as a crisis will be delved into later in this chapter, but for now, this percentage clarifies who we are dealing with.

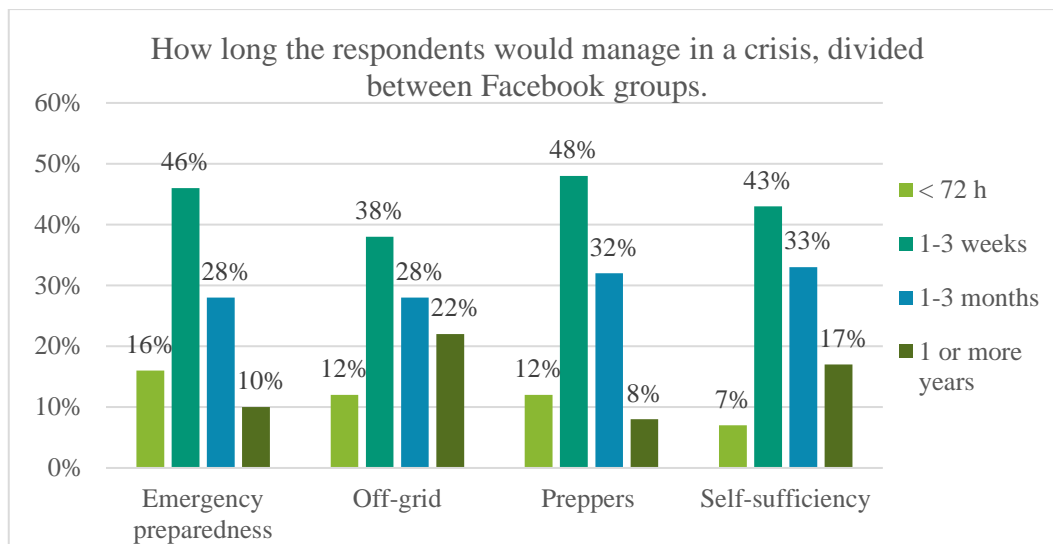


Figure 2: How long the Facebook groups would manage in a crisis.

The members of the Facebook groups are similar in other ways too. When looking at how long the members of the different Facebook groups would manage in a crisis, there are no significant differences, which can be seen in Figure 2. The most

noticeable differences are in the off-grid group, where fewer members would manage for “just” a few weeks and a larger number of members would manage for one or more years, compared to the other groups. This can also partly be seen in the self-sufficiency group. This aspect might be explained by looking at the differences between urban and rural residents, which will be deepened further into the thesis. In summary, the members of the Facebook groups share many commonalities, despite originating from different groups. This could be because what they have in common is their interest in prepping, which this study focuses on. Throughout much of chapter 5, the groups will be treated as one informant group, however when differences exist, these will be highlighted.

When zooming out from this group of prepared people, there is no overlapping statistics on how many that are prepared for crises. American researcher Chris Ellis tried to compile the number of preppers in the United States, but found this difficult as the definition of both *prepping* and *crisis* is in the eyes of the beholder (Ellis 2020). In Sweden, the same issues concerning definitions exist, and there is no overlapping data on people prepared for crises. To approach my first research question, defining who made up the group of “prepared people” in my study therefore became increasingly important. Out of the 464 survey respondents, 61 % identified as women as opposed to 37 % that identified as men. When looking at the gender distribution within the Facebook groups, the distribution between men and women is even in three of the groups. From the preppers, crisis preparedness, and off-grid groups, all have around 50 % men and 50 % women responding to the survey. The big difference is in the self-sufficiency group, where 91 % of the respondents identify as women. The reasons for this unevenness could be many, but an important one might be that more women in general are members of that Facebook group. In 2020, 76 % of male Internet users in Sweden were on Facebook, compared to 85 % of female Internet users (Internetstiftelsen 2020). (ibid). This might have an impact on the statistics in Figure 2. In some previous research on prepping (see Bengtsson 2014), men are often overrepresented in prepping activities, but this is not accurate in this study. Even if the self-sufficiency group would be ignored, 53 % of the respondents identify as women.

75 % of the respondents are employed or self-employed, 5 % are students, 9 % are retired, and the remaining 11 % are either unemployed, on sick leave or parental leave. When looking at age groups, these vary greatly from five people younger than twenty years old to two people older ninety years old. Most of the respondents, 90 %, are however between thirty and sixty-nine, which corresponds with the large group stating that they are working. Even though elderly people have increased their presence on social media during the pandemic, young people’s presence has consistently been high, with over 80 % of people between 16-25 using Facebook in the last year (Internetstiftelsen 2020). This is however not visible among my survey respondents, where only 6 % are under 29 years old. This can once again maybe be

explained by the, to me, unknown age distribution in the Facebook groups, as well as who is more inclined to answer a survey, but there can also be more to it. MSB conducted a survey as a response to the pandemic, which showed that young people between the ages of 18-29 are the ones least prepared for crisis; Only 29 % rate their home preparedness as good (MSB 2021). Corresponding figure in age groups 50-64 years as well as 65-74 years is 52 %. People in the age group 18-29 is however also the target group where most people plan to increase their preparedness in the light of the pandemic (ibid).

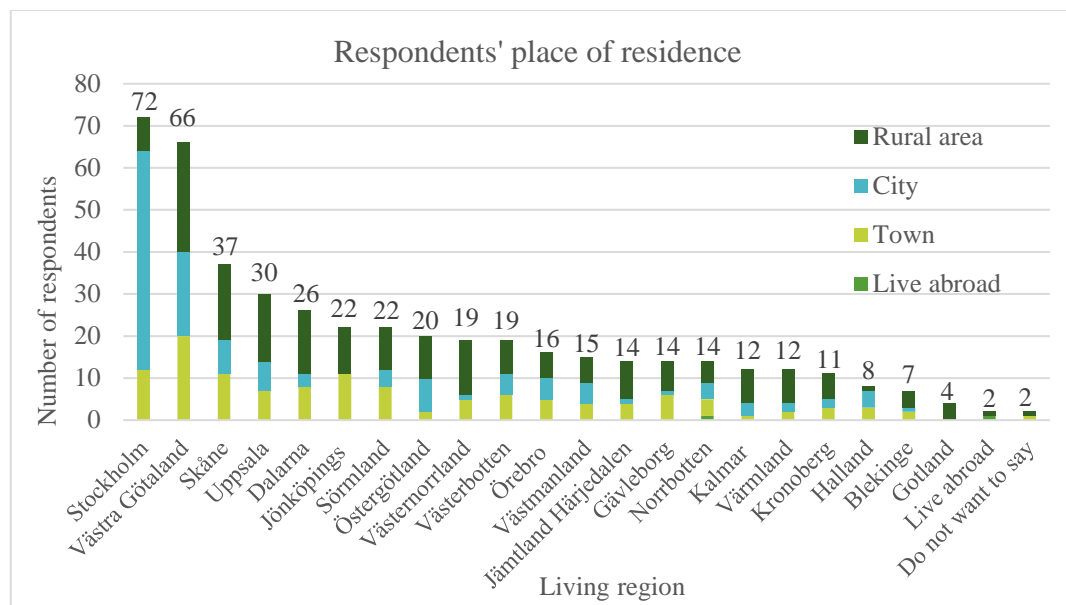


Figure 3: Survey respondent's place of residence.

As can be seen in Figure 3, the respondents live all over Sweden. The four largest regions in terms of inhabitants - Stockholm, Västra Götaland, Skåne, and Uppsala, also had the highest representation among the survey respondents. In addition, all regions are represented, which can be seen in Figure 3. Regarding if the respondents live in an urban or rural setting, which they have been divided into in Figure 3, the definitions need to be clarified. Today, there is not one definition to define an urban or rural area in Sweden, in fact, depending on which definition is being used, the percentage of Swedes living in a rural area differs from 13 to 75 % (see Hela Sverige Ska Leva 2018). This is because different definitions are used in different types of initiatives and shaped to fit the purpose of the study or program. A problem with all these definitions, however, is that they are made from a top-down perspective and only visible when studying a map, instead of asking the locals how they would define their living area (ibid). We know that there is not just *one* urban or rural area, but many, with different difficulties and opportunities. I therefore let the respondents self-identify as either rural residents, town residents, or urban residents. This has been done successfully previously as well (see Hela Sverige Ska

Leva 2018). Within the Facebook groups, the distribution of urban-, rural-, and town residents differ slightly. In the prepper- and crisis preparedness groups, around one third of the members self-identify as rural residents. In the off-grid group and the self-sufficiency group, that number is about two thirds. This does however not come as a surprise, as the focus of the last two groups is centered around rurality. When looking at the survey respondents as one group, 43 % self-identify as rural residents, 26 % as town residents and 29 % as city residents. These numbers do not say anything about where the respondents live in Sweden, but for the public debate and the continuation of this study, it is helpful to know how many identify as rural residents, urban residents, and something in between.

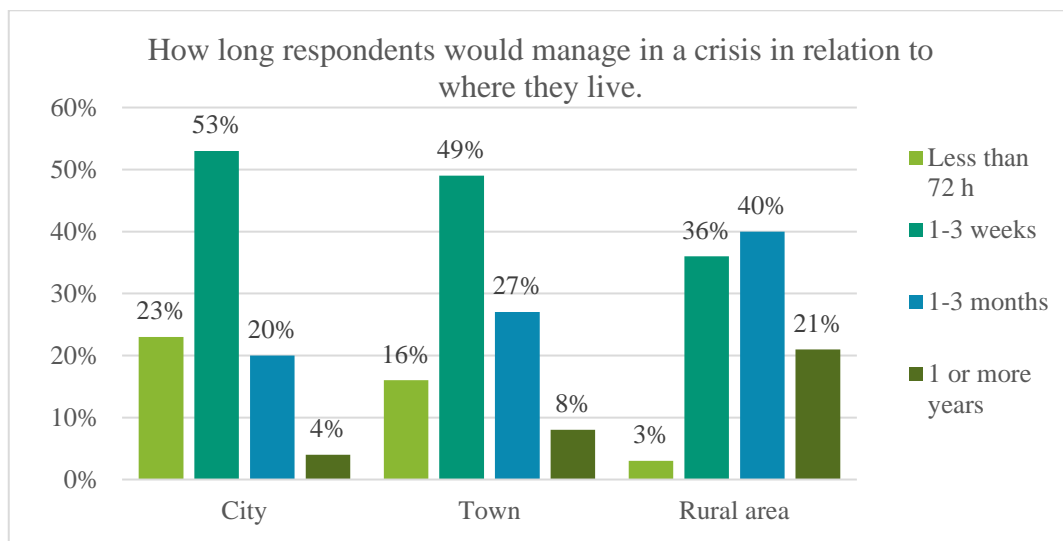


Figure 4: Respondents estimated time based on basic needs such as food, water, and heating. The survey was distributed in February, which might have affected how long the rural residents that are self-sufficient estimated how long they would manage for.

Knowing how the respondents identify their setting, one can see that there is a great difference between rural and urban residents when looking at how long they would manage in a crisis, as seen in Figure 4. 23 % of urban residents would manage for less than 72 hours. The corresponding number among rural residents is three percent. When looking at respondents that would manage for a year or more, those numbers switch places; Four percent of people in cities and 21 % of people in the countryside would manage for that long. The longer time passes, the fewer urban residents state that they would be able to fend for themselves in a crisis. At the same time, an increasing number of rural residents' state that they would survive for a longer period of time, as seen in Figure 4.

There is clearly a relationship between where the respondents live and how long they state they would manage for in a crisis. In interviews, this relationship is further confirmed. Peter believes that people living in the countryside are almost guaranteed to cope with a crisis much better than many others. He believes this is due to the possibilities connected to rurality when it comes to water access,

collecting-, hunting- and growing food as well as storage. Living in a rural area does of course not have to mean living on a farm or a croft. It can however imply that there is a stronger sense of community in towns and villages, which has been shown in some countries (Hofferth & Iceland 1998). Among the informants of this study, this relationship between rurality and community is perceived as correct as well, which can have an impact in emergency preparedness. Many of the informants that live in the countryside are used to managing by themselves for longer periods of time if something happens, due to reasons that will be discussed further in subchapter 5.2. The rural informants are used to helping each other instead of waiting for someone else to come, which creates a stronger community and is consistent with the article by Hofferth & Iceland (1998). Having a strong community can increase community resilience, which is communities' and individuals' collective efforts to maintain and strengthen societal security, wellbeing and adaptation before, during, and after a crisis (Linnell 2014).

A larger proportion of rural residents than urban residents would manage for longer than one month, but some people living in cities and towns would as well. What is also interesting about Figure 4 is that, opposite of what my informant Peter said, many have found a way to manage for a long time, regardless of the kind of area they live in. When looking at what type of household or home respondents live in, in relation to how long they would manage in a crisis without outside help, many living in smaller spaces such as apartments, would still manage for a long time. People living on farms and in villas make up a large portion of the people who would manage for a week or more, but out of the 114 people that live in apartments, 78 % would manage for a week or more. Among the interview informants who live in a city, there were however some who stated that if a crisis comes, they have a house in the countryside where they would go. There, they themselves believe that their conditions are better than in their home in the city. This puts the previously mentioned numbers a bit on the end. There are however still many urban residents that say they would manage well in their current housing. This is an indicator that it is possible to manage for at least a week, in line with government recommendations, even without exclusive access to water or large areas for farming.

In this section, I have identified who is prepared for crisis in Sweden. As shown, there is no overlapping statistics on how many or who that are prepared for crisis. In this study, there is an over-representation of women preparing, which goes against previous estimates and preconceived ideas of prepping. The reasons behind the numbers shown are most likely linked to that women, to a higher degree, are present on social media which is important as that is where the participants of this study came from. It can however also show a changed view of prepping, where self-sufficiency is important where women are also present. Social media statistics is however not in line with the representations on young people answering the survey.

This is however consistent with previous surveys which show that young people are the group least prepared for crisis.

The result from the survey show that prepared people live all over Sweden. 43 % of the respondents self-identify as rural inhabitants but people living in towns and cities are present to a high degree as well. There is however a noticeable difference between how long they would manage in a crisis, compared to people living in rural areas. This is an indicator that preparing for crisis comes more naturally to people that live further from state authorities, in more tight-knit communities and are used to manage by themselves for longer, both in stable times and during crisis.

4.1.2. What it means to be prepared

People preparing for crisis are often portrayed as extreme in their measures, longing for disaster (Huddleston 2018). As mentioned in the background chapter, this image comes from preppers in the United States, the second wave of survivalism and later reproduced by media (Mills 2019a). Huddleston (2018) argues that only a minority of preppers can be described as right-wing, anti-government and doomsday-obsessed and most of the preppers he has met are “normal” people, preparing for undesirable events. To understand what Swedish emergency preparedness is, and what it means to be prepared to Swedes that identify as prepared, I asked my interview informants to break it down for me. For the youngest among them, Carl, it means meeting basic needs, such as food, water, sleep, and access to information by having gear in his home that would help him manage if anything were to happen. Christian, who lives in the outskirts of Stockholm, thinks along the same lines as Carl and has thought through different scenarios.

If the electricity should stop working for several days, many things would be affected. I have made sure to have a lot of cash at home. Then I thought through what we would need, such as food and water for one or two weeks. We need somewhere to sleep so I got warm sleeping bags for everyone in the family. Then I tried to think through what we would need if something needed to be charged. So, I bought a solar cell charger. Then I have stored a few cans of petrol for the car to be able to get somewhere. Thus, I have been trying to think through and fix a supply so we would manage well for about two weeks. (Christian)

The way Christian describes his prepping corresponds with Keck and Sakdapolrak’s (2013) definition of social resilience, in it being a way to not only respond to events that have occurred, but also to prepare for events that have not yet happen with the aim to handle them better in the future. Christian’s actions to prepare for power failure shows transformative capacities as he is setting up a system which can aid him and his family to withstand future crisis (Keck & Sakdapolrak 2013). Christian has a good risk assessment in the time leading up to a possible crisis. The same goes for my informant Carin. She lives in an apartment

in a larger city and calls herself an “apartment prepper”. Still, she believes her family and herself would manage for quite a long time, longer than most, much due to planning. She has created a matrix with different scenarios, for example if the house burns down, if there is a pandemic or if there is a nuclear power plant accident. Carin and her family look through their resources, food, heating, and information and updates it for different scenarios. She points out that different people will need to have many different types of prepping. It is not possible for everyone to do the same, she says. Some must live at home in their apartments, for example, not everyone can move to the forest.

There are experts that can fend for themselves in the woods for a month without much more than an axe. Those who already know these things, they like to belong to an exclusive group. It is an identity thing for them. [...] If people want to learn what it is like to manage in the forest, that is great. But if all of Sweden’s population would move to the forests we would die immediately. There would not be enough food for everybody. [...] Then it feels cool to be able to say that I live in an apartment and can store water anyway. It might make people feel that they can do the same. (Carin)

Believing that one can manage in a crisis regardless of living conditions or previous experience is something my informant Oscar believes in as well. He says that emergency- and home preparedness is a question about attitude. He also believes that you should stock up and make sure you have food, water, and medicines at home, since this is good to a certain extent. But above all he believes that it is important to be mentally prepared for things. He argues that one of the biggest problems during the pandemic is that people have not been doing well, mentally, which is confirmed by the Swedish Public Health Agency (Folkhälsomyndigheten 2020). Oscar believes that one way to prepare mentally is to have activities at home, such as games and books that can entertain in times of loneliness to pass the time. Preparing mentally is a way to reduce vulnerability, focusing on coping capacities to manage a crisis better as it happens (Miller et al. 2010; Keck & Sakdapolrak 2013).

Another one of the social resilience capacities is the transformative capacity, which Christian, as mentioned, is working on, and so are additional informants as well. This is expressed through an interest in growing their own food and living in remote areas, which are both ways to manage crisis better on their own, from a more long-term perspective. These two interests are common to all four Facebook groups. Many of the informants also highlight that these interests are not only a way to prepare for crises, but also a hobby and a lifestyle. Preparing for crisis is, directly or indirectly, a part of their lives and something they prioritize, to different degrees. However, most of them do not want to be seen as *preppers*. Among most of the interview informants, regardless of how they define preparing, *prepper* is a dirty word. The adjective has, to many, connotations with the survivalists and right-wing political opinions. In the beginning of the 2000s, many survivalists who were not

politically oriented instead started using the term “prepper” (Huddleston 2018). American media and TV-shows still made direct connections between survivalists and preppers which shaped the public’s perception of preppers as having the same political opinions as survivalists (ibid). As the prepper movement and the term *preppers* came to Sweden, those connotations seem to have followed. However, the people I have talked to for this study seem to have a range of different political opinions. They have different views of the Swedish state and politics, many are open to sharing resources and helping others, some care about open borders for trade and people and some think the state should prioritize Sweden in a crisis. Perhaps this range of opinions and perceived political views is the reason why many do not want to identify as a prepper, since that adjective comes with associations which they do not want to relate to. However, there are many other elements of prepping that they identify with, the most important one being stocking up on food, gear, and skills to manage a crisis better. These contradictions show a clear difference between the adjective *prepper* and the verb *prepping*. According to Huddleston (2018), prepping is a movement made up of individuals or groups aiming to increase social resilience for themselves, for their families and within their communities. This is visible in my study as well, where the goal of prepping is to manage in a crisis and adapt to short-term and long-term transformation where the informants live, regardless of if they identify with the traditional adjective or not.

4.1.3. Two ways to approach home preparedness

Even though there are many different views of what emergency preparedness can mean, the informant Stefan believes that there are just two currents among people interested in home preparedness that influenced how they became interested in preparing. One, he thinks, are those who have grown up with nature or lived in rural areas, and the other current are those who in different ways have become hooked later in life, either through a lifestyle change, an interest or fixed idea. Another way to name these two currents, is to make a distinction between those that grew up with this mindset and those who have learned through experiences. This is also visible in the survey. When asked what made the respondents become interested in individual emergency preparedness, 116 people, or 25 % of the respondents, stated that it has been a natural part of their upbringing. The remaining 75 % started preparing due to reasons related to experiences, either self-experienced or concerns that left them starting to prepare.

Among the people that have grown up with being prepared, or where emergency preparedness has been a natural part of their lives, a few different trends can be seen as to what that upbringing looked like: 1) growing up with parents or grandparents that have experienced war, 2) growing up in internal- or external uncertainties, for example with a lack of money or during the Cold War, 3) an interest forming from

activities done as a child such as being a scout or being in nature as a child, and 4) growing up on a farm or in rural areas. Among the interview informants, the fourth trend is most common. Stefan, who earlier recognized the two currents in emergency preparedness, grew up on a farm and believes that if you grow up in the countryside, you also grow up with the idea that things can happen and that you need to be prepared for it.

[To be prepared] is an attitude, and for me, it has a background in that I grew up on a larger farm. Sometimes a tree fell over a power line, and we did not have electricity for a few days. For instances like these, we always had water stored and our wood stoves came in handy. [...] If you live far away and something happens, you must be able to fend for yourself for a few days. (Stefan)

Sonja and her husband also live in a rural area and have done so for most of their lives. They are completely self-sufficient, due to their own work as farmers as well as what is provided by the land they are on, like a river that flows through their lands and enables easy water access. Since the 90s they have lived in Sonja's husband's grandmother's croft. To Sonja, self-sufficiency and emergency preparedness go hand in hand. As she, together with her husband, has created this life for themselves, the interest in emergency preparedness has come naturally. It was not an active choice to start preparing, but rather a consequence of the life they were already living.

For Carin, her upbringing was what started it for her. She grew up with a mother that was prepared. The mother had stockpiled food in the basement and carried around an emergency bag with her. Carin also had one as a child, with band-aids, candles, and candy. As a grown-up she took a few courses to learn more, and so an interest was formed that had been in the back of her mind since she was little, but which then blossomed into adulthood. Today, preparing for crisis is a big part of her life.

The second current is to start preparing due to experiences, both self-experienced and ones heard or read about. In the survey, the reasons differ between concerns about food and water access, concerns about the climate, previous and ongoing pandemics, personal crisis, mistrust of the state's role and responsibility, a pessimistic view of Sweden, and the will to manage on their own. This is a wide range of reasons, and the main commonality is that they are just that – experiences. For Simona, her preparations started as a result from several of these. Today, emergency preparedness comes naturally for her. However, this has not always been the case. She says that to her, it is not so much about being prepared for the sake of it, but rather being prepared because you have experienced a crisis before and do not want to live through that again, unprepared. This is an example of social resilience's adaptive capacity, which concerns learning from past experiences and adjust for future challenges (Keck & Sakdapolrak 2013). Simona's experience took

place when she lived in the region Skåne and hurricane Gudrun struck, which she learned from when much did not work properly for a long time. Gudrun was a hurricane that travelled through south of Sweden in January of 2005 that created great devastation to roads, electricity, telephone lines and rail traffic, and seven people lost their lives (SMHI 2011). At most, 415 000 households were without electricity, which also affected Simona. Today, Simona lives in northern Sweden in a croft that her grandparents build in 1920. She moved back there after some years in Skåne, and today she grows parts of her own food and has sheep and chickens. Her basement is filled with root vegetables, and she believes her son and herself would manage for one month if they would, for example, experience a power failure. Together with 42 % of the respondents, she is concerned with the access to food and water and therefore prioritizes this. In summary, she started to prepare due to her experience of hurricane Gudrun and has continued since.

The aspect of rurality in crisis preparedness is noteworthy. Of course, there is a rural focus in two of the four Facebook groups, but in the two remaining groups, the countryside is also central, as a place where crisis preparedness is taken for granted, or at least perceived as easier to achieve than in urban areas. I wanted to put this to the test, by investigating what role living area played in relation to how long the respondents have been interested in preparedness. Among people living in cities and towns, the proportion that have been interested in emergency preparedness for longer than ten years is 36 %. Among rural residents, that number is 53 %. There is therefore a visible difference between where the respondents live and how long they have been preparing, as seen in Figure 5.

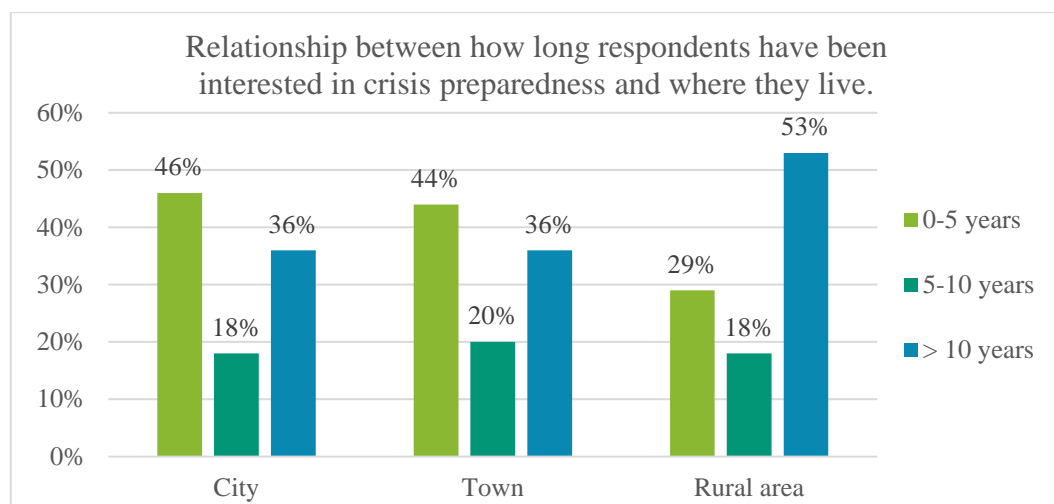


Figure 5: Relationship between how long the respondents have been interested in preparing for crisis and where they live.

The rural residents in my survey and interviews have been prepared for longer than those who live in cities and towns (see Figure 5), and they would manage for a longer time in a crisis (see Figure 4). The reasons why could, as discussed, be

several. Many state authorities and organizations are located in cities, and in the last twenty years, many of them have decreased their physical presence in towns and rural areas (Erlingsson et al. 2020). This has had negative consequences for the residents' welfare (ibid) and waiting for assistance or help in a crisis takes much longer, which my informants testify to. This means that rural residents more often must manage on their own. But it also means that they build stronger communities where they live and help each other (Hofferth & Iceland 1998). Home preparedness therefore also come more naturally to rural residents as they are more likely to take care of themselves, once again also testified to by the informants of this study. This shows a certain level of resilience. Building communities is a way to create institutions to better cope with unexpected events, which is a transformative capacity in resilience (Keck & Sakdapolrak 2013). Social resilience is in this way tightly knit together with how well individuals or communities deal with, and respond to, risks (ibid). In cities, on the other hand, it is closer to authorities and help. People are less willing to take care of themselves if a crisis comes, perhaps because they are not used to it (Majlard 2017). This might also be why prepping exists in towns and cities. To link this to the previous discussion on experiences: Experiencing that you are not prepared for something that happens to you might make you start preparing for the future.

In summary, a quarter of the people I have talked to for this study say that emergency preparedness has been present throughout their lives in different ways. To them, emergency- and home preparedness is in their backbone, always present in decision-making and everyday life. The remaining 75 % have started preparing due to experiences or exposure to global, national, societal, or personal crisis of different kinds. Prepping is therefore a consequence of both global events and individual encounters. Common to both upbringing and experiences later in life is the will to create a room for maneuver when a crisis comes and to be more resilient to it.

4.1.4. Five incentives to prep

“Preparedness is a learning curve in a spiral shape”, my informant Carin says, and many agrees with her. Just like any interest, hobby or chosen lifestyle, a big part of preparedness, according to my informants, originates from motivation, previous experiences, and inspiration from different places. This subchapter will delve into what inspires prepared people to evolve in their preparedness. My research suggests that five overlapping objectives motivate people to start and continue to prepare for emergencies. These are 1) improving the ability to manage when a crisis occurs, 2) fears of what could happen if they are not prepared, 3) preparedness as a hobby, 4) wanting to teach others, and 5) living a more sustainable lifestyle.

The first one, improving the ability to manage when a crisis comes, is the most common factor as to why the informants prepare. This does not come as a surprise,

as this is the fundamental base of prepping. To manage in a crisis also concerns coping capacities, a key factor in social resilience (Keck & Sakdapolrak 2013). The informants of this study therefore clearly exercise social resilience.

The second factor, fears of what could happen if they are not prepared, is mentioned by both survey respondents and interview informants and therefore they tend to home preparedness. One reason to prepare may therefore be to avoid being vulnerable. If vulnerability is seen as the opposite of resilience, then the informants' fear being vulnerable and therefore strive towards being resilient (see Mayunga 2007). Trying to move away from vulnerability is also a way to better deal with risk reduction (Lei et al. 2014). When vulnerability and resilience is applied to fears as an incentive to prepare for crises, it becomes clear that the two concepts are essential when understanding Swedish prepping. My informant Carin's experience is that there has been more talk in the media about home preparedness since Swedish Civil Contingency Agency (MSB)'s pamphlet was distributed in 2018, which might have scared people, according to her. The pamphlet was distributed to all households and included easily accessible information about Sweden's total defense, warning systems and what individuals can do to be more prepared (MSB 2018). Reading about what to do in a crisis might have reminded people of how vulnerable they were, Carin says. She believes that people began to see things that the state had not taken care of in the event of a crisis, such as food supply. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, these shortages became visible, like the lack of some foods in supermarkets, she says. Carin tells me about how several Facebook groups concerning emergency preparedness and prepping saw an upswing in the beginning of 2020. According to her, who is well acquainted with one of the Facebook groups, emergency preparedness related groups exploded in conjunction with the COVID-19 pandemic. The Facebook group that Carin is a member of saw an increase in new members. People that had previously not been interested in emergency preparedness now wanted general information, advice on what to do for themselves and for others and some simply wanted to discuss this new, absurd situation we were all in.

People got scared and worried in the beginning. [...] Then you need to both try to explain what they need to have at home, and so on, but also keep an eye on all discussions to see if there was a conflict in any of the posts. Often, they [the conflicts] were based on fear. Then we had to try to be calm in that situation, even though we thought the whole thing [with the virus] was unpleasant as well. (Carin)

Several of the informants return to fear as, if not an inspiration, at least a driving force. But not always a positive one. Carin talks about fear as something that makes us take bad decisions. She believes that if there is a disturbance of some sort that makes people afraid, that is enough for shelves in the supermarket to become empty. Sonja, who has a farm and would manage for a month if a crisis were to happen,

does not like to talk about her preparedness too much. She says that she does not want to scare people that are already scared of the unknown. “The worst thing you can do is to lower people with fear” Sonja says. She adds that fear is nothing that brings anything forward. “In the long run, fear is not a driving force that can have a positive outcome”, she says.

One incentive that can have a positive outcome, however, is when prepping is not done out of fear, but rather due to a genuine interest or it being a hobby. This third factor, preparedness as a hobby, was also touched upon in subchapter 5.1.2. and can be read between the lines in several of my interviews. Carin explains how learning through social and traditional media works for her:

You "level up" a little in what you can and what you are interested in all the time. I might for example see a discussion on Facebook or a newspaper article that describes something and suddenly I have bought a new gadget or learned something new. (Carin)

To Otto, traditions and “old knowledge” is important. He grew up with a mindset where skills were highly valued. He says that knowledge everyone had a hundred years ago, like hunting and fishing, is uncommon today. Otto practices some old skills today and believes that the lack of knowledge and lack of skills will mainly become a problem the day that we cannot heat our house without electricity, use Internet to search for tutorials or use out phones to call for help. And this, many of the informants agrees with. Some believe that you can prepare and take height for things, but it will not take you far if you do not invest in skills. This is also mentioned by Huddleston (2018), who has noticed a common saying in prepping: “The more you know, the lighter your bag” (ibid).

But for people not initiated in preparedness, these statements about investing in skills can make prepping seem unapproachable. Some of the interview informants mention the importance of more people becoming more prepared as essential in the work towards Sweden increasing its level of preparedness. Therefore, several of the informants talk about the will to teach others about prepping as an incentive to prepare. Carin says that she wants to be the one who teaches people who know nothing. She believes that it gives more in the long run if there should be a societal crisis, than that those who know a lot learn a little more. This corresponds with community resilience, where the more resilient a community, individual or household, the greater disturbances it can absorb and adapt to (Trærup 2012), which will be explored further in subchapter 5.2. Carin thinks that it is more important to get those who have zero days of preparedness to get to seven days of preparedness, and that this is perhaps doable through Facebook groups where questions can be asked and answered by others. In the survey, respondents were asked where they themselves get their inspiration for preparedness from. “People on social media” inspire prepared people the most, followed by “internet forums”, “books about crisis” and “people around me”. “Social media is absolutely central when it comes

to increasing knowledge about home preparedness”, my informant Oscar says. Even though my informants are biased as they are all part of Facebook groups, many strongly believe that social media is a good place to teach each other and to learn more. Another aspect of teaching other people about preparedness is to start early. Otto believes that schools could play a bigger role when it comes to preparedness. “Society in the form of schools should teach basic skills through practical exercises, such as sleeping outside, finding eatable things in nature and navigating using a map”, he says. 47% of the survey respondents have children under the age of 18. How many of them that talk to their children about preparing for crisis I do not know, but several of the interview informants that have kids talk to me about the importance of teaching them. Christian teaches his 18-year-old son about preparedness; Simona teaches her 10-year-old son the same. Sara has grown children and grandchildren who she tries to talk to about the importance of being prepared. Perhaps they are taking this responsibility because schools do not. But maybe also because preparedness is a hobby, an interest among the informants, and a lifestyle they want to bring onto their children.

The fifth and final incentive to prepare for emergencies is the will to live a more sustainable lifestyle. This also shows signs of social resilience’s transformative capacity: the ability to create institutions that can withstand future crisis (Keck & Sakdapolrak 2013). Several of the interview informants bring up the climate crisis as an additional crisis to the pandemic that we are living through right now. Simona does not want to keep sustainability and emergency preparedness separate from each other. “Sure”, she says, “we should be prepared if something happens, but the most important thing must still be that we strive to live a bit more sustainably”. To my informant Carin, emergency preparedness has two different tracks. She says that it is a lot about the short-term crisis, like a power outage or a water shutdown. But due to her environmental interest, she is also interested in the long-term prepping, which she defines as living more self-sufficiently by growing her own food and managing for a longer period than a week.

It is also quite exciting with this combination of having the short-term but at the same time living sustainably. I like that. Many people think that it is about having the largest stock of cans and some seeds they never use. I want to learn how to grow these crops and get better at it every year. Both in the long-term and in the short-term. (Carin)

Eating healthy and sustainably is one aspect many mentions when wanting to look at preparedness in a long-term perspective. Sara emphasizes the importance of eating good food in both peace and war. For her that means eating Swedish produce and meat, both to ensure the products are good, and to make sure they will be available in the future. Carin wants to learn how to farm and become better at it each year and replace the food cans she has in her apartment. To her, and others, preparedness is not a short-term thing, but rather a lifestyle. Simona and Carl both

talks about the same thing and believes that in the long run, instead of keeping water bottles in our freezers, we should see the whole picture in how we eat, how we raise animals, and how we farm.

My research suggests that five overlapping objectives motivate people to start and continue to prepare for emergencies. These are 1) improving the ability to manage when a crisis occurs, 2) fears of what could happen if they are not prepared, 3) preparedness as a hobby, 4) wanting to teach others, and 5) living a more sustainable lifestyle. These five are also interconnected with social resilience's different capacities: coping with-, adapting to-, and transforming after a crisis. These five can also be read in this order, from the first to the last, like a set of steps. Most of the informants start with wanting to manage better in a crisis. When they can, they can tackle their own and others' fears better, by knowing what to do by being more prepared. Then, preparedness becomes a hobby, an interest, more than a need. When they realize prepping is enjoyable, they want to show, inspire, and teach others to be prepared, and share their interest with others. For those that have been interested in preparing for some time, where prepping is a part of their everyday lives, they start thinking about the long-term aspect of preparing which, to many, implies seeing preparedness as a lifestyle. This often comes with being able to manage for longer without help, which to some looks like a more sustainable lifestyle, and one often connected to long-term sustainability.

4.2. "The state cannot do this alone."

This chapter addresses the empirical findings and discussions surrounding the second research question: How do citizens interested in preparing for the future view Swedish emergency preparedness and their own role in it? The responsibility for emergency preparedness is discussed, as well as my informants' experiences with, and trust in, authorities, organizations, community, other individuals, and themselves. This is explored further with the use of trust, by looking at how trust in agencies and in other people is portrayed in my data. Social resilience and vulnerability are also used to investigate what these thoughts and relationships do with a society's ability to handle and adapt to crises.

Swedish emergency preparedness is made up of two parts: military defense and civil defense, and within these two there are agencies, organizations, companies, and people. The Swedish Parliament has the overall responsibility for these. Together, these units make up the total defense which include all activities needed to protect and safeguard Sweden and its citizens. Dividing the responsibility among many actors is a way to make sure a total defense is met and that Sweden as a country and its citizens are protected and cared for in the event of crises or war (Försvarshögskolan 2019). However, this broad division can make responsibility unclear to the people it is supposed to protect (Larsson 2019). Even though the

responsibility for different areas of emergency preparedness has been distributed to several units, that does not mean that Swedes know who is responsible or trust their work, which becomes apparent in my data and among my informants.

4.2.1. Perceptions of the state

From my empirical material it is evident that to many of my informants, it is not clear who oversees emergency preparedness. During the 1990s and beginning of 2000s, many state-owned industries became deregulated (Statskontoret 2004). Industries responsible for electricity, mail, railway, and telecommunications, among others, that had previously been controlled by state monopoly were now exposed to competition. To my informant Carin, this is important in the crisis debate because she argues that a consequence of these deregulations is that there is a widespread responsibility, which makes it feel like no one has the overall responsibility. She talks about the pharmacy as an example, which was deregulated in 2009 (Apoteket n.d.) and questions who would be responsible for medicines in a crisis. Several of the informants likewise blame the uncertainty in responsibility on privatizations. They claim that much has been privatized, outsourced, and exposed to competition and as a result, no one has the overall responsibility, neither in peace- nor in wartime. This erodes the trust in authorities, according to several of the informants. For the state to be able to deal with challenges and threats to society, trust is necessary (Statskontoret 2017). One's level of trust can be connected to experiences of who took responsibility, who did not take responsibility and what the outcome was (Longstaff & Yang 2008). Trust is required in both stable and unstable times, but it is more important than ever in times of crisis when many institutions in society are on display (OECD 2013). When I ask the interview informants about experiences with crises it comes naturally for many of them to refer to the COVID-19 pandemic, as it is a crisis we are living through right now. Their experiences from the pandemic's first year are many. Otto believes that the pandemic has awakened a thought amongst people, that we are mortal and not always protected. Feeling protected, or cared for by our state or government has been a signum for Swedes, and for a long time Sweden has been synonymous with trust in the government and institutions (Statskontoret 2017). However, perhaps this is not the case anymore, as both Christian and Sara declare that the pandemic has showed how ill-prepared, we are for a crisis. Christian explains: "We know that there are no emergency stocks, just in-time thinking has taken over completely. It shows a real vulnerability, especially now when the pandemic came." Just-in-time, JIT, is originally an industrial production method with the aim of producing and delivering goods in the right quantity and at the exact time they are needed with the purpose to lower inventory costs (Nationalencyklopedin n.d.a). The downsides of JIT became visible in the healthcare sector during the corona crisis, where the responsibility for ensuring that there is enough goods rests with the care providers

(Holmqvist 2021). The same principle exists within the food sector, where private actors provide the customers with what is needed and replenishes their stock as the goods are consumed (ibid). This has been the reality for a long time but has been brought to light to more people during the pandemic when this proved to be a vulnerable system (Brakman et al. 2020).

The JIT-method has gotten consequences also among people's perception of the state. Sara believes that those who are in power probably knows that the people's trust in them has decreased during 2020. "They have invested resources in other things and the negative consequences of that [non-action], they [politicians] will have to live with for a long time to come", she says. Otto believes that the public administration that is visible is the one you think of and then either have confidence in or not. Sara and Otto's views of trust complies with previous research on trust, related to experiences. After the financial crisis in 2008, countries that were members of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD, lost trust in their governments (OECD 2013). Four year later, in 2012, only four out of ten people in OECD countries had confidence in their governments. As these governments tried to establish economic stability again, the trust their citizens had in them made a difference in the successfulness of their implementations in their country (ibid). Societies are built on trust, and without it, institutions and the civilian society would disrupt (Holmberg & Weibull 2013).

Another one of my informants with low trust in the state's crisis abilities is Oscar, former military, and part-time employed by the Swedish defense sector. He thinks that the total defense is inconsistent. "There is no long-term plan for [total defense]. All those thoughts were put down at the end of the Cold War", he says. In an article in the newspaper Göteborgs-Posten, senior analyst at Swedish Defense Research Agency, FOI, Ann Ödlund confirms Oscar's suspicion. She says that nobody wanted to talk about crisis and war anymore, the Berlin Wall had fallen and times were good (Holmqvist 2021). This new vision was the starting point for the dismantling of emergency preparedness in the 1990s. It was no longer considered necessary to have large warehouses to protect Sweden and its inhabitants (ibid).

Oscar's low trust is also due to the defense issues varying from year to year, which he sees as purely political. He feels that it is often reactive to what is happening in the world and that since the government changes about every fourth year, there is no possibility to have a long-term plan for defense.

One moment they would put down the total defense completely. But then came the Georgia crisis and the state invested in the military defense again. Then they [the state] decided to shut down the defense, but then there was conflict on the Crimean Peninsula, and they rebuilt again.
(Oscar)

Many of the informants are unhappy with the inconsistency in emergency preparedness shown by the state, expressed through back-and-forth action

explained by Oscar above. One action many agree on as well executed however, is the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB): s pamphlet from 2018. If the division of responsibility was not already clear to citizens, the pamphlet assisted in it becoming clearer that all Swedes should be able to manage for one week on their own in a situation of heightened preparedness (MSB 2018). Many informants thought the pamphlet was helpful, easy to read and a step in the right direction. However, Stefan is critical to the emphasis that the pamphlet put on surviving for only one week. He believes that saying that we must manage for one week is a way for MSB to abdicate responsibility. Managing for one week is the recommendation from the government (Försvarsdepartementet 2017), but to several of my informants, a week is a short period of time. Peter has thought about the time aspect of preparedness as well. “And what is the next step, after that one week?”, he wonders. Simona looks at the mistrust the government has gotten with more ease, and refers to the pandemic again:

Nothing will come overnight. We have a hard time getting vaccines to people, so to think that we could get food to people... we can just forget about that right now, but everything that takes us in the right direction is good. We can calm down and hope that we have wise decision-makers, it is after all we who have chosen them.

As demonstrated above, the interview informants do not feel the same about the state regarding Sweden’s emergency preparedness. Some of the informants do however have a desire for Sweden to be more prepared. Carin is determined: “I wish we could learn from other countries, be faster, more prepared, put this on the agenda and tackle it.” That “other country” is, according to several informants, Finland. “The Finnish have a crisis awareness due to their history”, Otto says. He continues: “It is about the memory you carry with you for a number of generations before it is forgotten.” Several other informants also talk about Finland as an exemplary and describes the country as a role model when it comes to preparedness on a national level. In Finland, maintenance of basic societal functions, such as food storage and supply, is an area of priority to the Finnish state (Försvarsdepartementet 2017). When the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991, Finland became a member of the European Union. The EU membership was considered a way to strengthening security in Finland, but Finland still kept its strong defense and stockpiled goods for security reasons (SRR 1/1995 see Bovin 2018). “In the light of the pandemic, it turns out that Finland still has a system where taxes are put towards preparedness” (see Försvarsdepartementet 2017), Christian says. He continues: “Finland has considered what can happen if you are not prepared and they do not want to relive what happened in the 1900s.”

To Sweden, the import dependency was viewed as the largest vulnerability in emergency preparedness from the 1970s to 1990s and was the basis for Sweden’s contingency planning for supply (SJV 1988 see Eriksson 2018). Sweden therefore

stockpiled food and fuel to use in an emergency. In the mid-90s, emergency preparedness politics was discontinued but in comparison with Finland, the emergency stockpiles were dismantled. Oscar believes that this also changed individual's view of emergency preparedness.

If we look back at the Cold War, or even further back when shelters were built, the civil defense, our interest and sense of responsibility was deeply rooted in the population. It was something you talked about at home, it was something you were brought up with at home. (Oscar)

This is, to most Swedes, not the case anymore. Carin says that in Sweden, we are not used to crisis and war, and that is exactly why we are so bad at it: because we have not practiced. The state's role in this is criticized by many of my informants. Among the survey respondents, about 30 % have a large or quite large trust in the state and military defense's ability to help Swedes during a crisis, while almost 70 % have a low or quite low trust. The low trust is recognized by many of my interview informants as well. Otto believes that "people do not trust that politicians will solve the big questions because there are so many questions they have not solved". Peter talks about something similar:

After MSB came out with clear guidelines for private individuals, they [MSB] disappeared out in the periphery again. Confidence in the state is low because they repeatedly show that they cannot handle the situation. They have no legislation, no preparation, no stocks; There are no margins at all to go on. Some parts of society have been prioritized in favor of other things, which has for example led to the healthcare system not being able to take care of the sick. A direct consequence of this is that confidence decreases. (Peter)

What Peter talks about can be connected with literature on trust that show that trust is built through previous experiences, but also reliant on dependency in institutions (Holmberg & Weibull 2012). This distrust towards the state is not visible among all my informants, but to some, it seems to be a large part of what drives their preparedness. The reason behind low confidence in the state mentioned by Oscar is visible in other settings as well. Although Sweden and the United States are different countries with distinct politics, there are similarities between American preppers' opinions and opinions of some prepared people in Sweden, regarding the mistrust towards the state and government. The American researcher Michael Mills wrote an article in 2019 about American prepping that stems from the years with President Obama (Mills 2019a). Mills met with preppers at the Expo *PrepperFest* to explore this further.

”INTERVIEWER: A short while ago, you briefly mentioned that concerns with government shaped your prepping. Could you say more about what those concerns are, and why they're important?

P R E P P E R : It's the seeming inability of the current administration to handle ... pretty much any crisis. I sit there and I see a very ... a very ... I think he [Obama] probably has good intentions, but just a very poorly executed ability. [...] “ (Mills 2019a:11)

This statement is similar to many of my informants' opinions and statements of the Swedish state and their low trust in the state's abilities during a crisis, like Peter's quote above for example. As mentioned in subchapter 4.1 on the prepper identity, many that I have talked to for this study do not want to identify as a prepper, due to the correlations that exists to American prepping which some Swedes want to dissociate from. Once again, it is less about *being* a prepper and more about *prepping*. It is, however, interesting to explore how two statements can be that reminiscent of each other. The interest in prepping in America has grown post-2008, which is visible in the rise of prepping events, sales of preserved “prepping foods”, sales of books on prepping and in social media (Mills 2019a). The reasons behind this growth of the prepper movement are the long history of prepper activities together with a recent wave of extremist politics to which American prepping can be linked (ibid). The prepper movement is, as described in the background section, derived from the right-wing survivalist movement popular in the 1970s, 80s and 90s. It is mostly known to Americans as violent, due to a deadly shootout in the 90s, an apocalyptic cult in Texas and a bombing by an antigovernment terrorist, which made mass media address survivalists and later preppers as an anti-government, conspiracy-minded subculture (Mills 2019a). It is this specific association, to right-wing survivalists, that prepared Swedes want to distance themselves from, according to my informants. But just because the prepper movement stems from this, does not mean this is what the American movement looks like today. There are still many American preppers who have extreme views reminiscent of those of the survivalists (ibid). But the movement has also grown and has more branches today. And this might be why the quotes above from Mills' article (2019a) and my interview with Oscar are so similar – because some parts of the movements are not so different from each other after all. But what does it mean for the Swedish state, that the trust in it is so low among some people? MSB identifies one of the most urgent threats in Sweden to be growing exclusion, both economically, socially, culturally, and politically, which for some groups can lead to a lower confidence in democracy (MSB 2019b). This can lead to a decreased trust in Sweden's ability to withstand outside pressure and lead to a decreased will among individuals to help others in crises (ibid). Sweden's democracy is also threatened by an intolerance towards the open society which creates grounds for polarization through disinformation (ibid). Some statements from interview informants and survey respondents show this type of decreased trust in the state. When asked why the survey respondents started preparing, some stated that it had to do with the non-existent preparedness that the state has at present, politicians' lack of ability to plan for a long-term functioning society or a general lack of

confidence in Sweden's development. One respondent wrote that “over the years, I have felt less and less confidence in Sweden's preparedness and felt that I at least want some kind of preparedness for a period of time.” Another person stated that:

The thought has come to me in the last 10 years, that I cannot trust that society will take care of me if a crisis should occur. Having worked on the issue in my own workplace and previous employment, I am convinced that I must ensure that my family has food and water at home to survive if the crisis or war comes. I have zero confidence in Sweden's ability to resolve a crisis in a good way. (Survey respondent)

This disbelief in the state’s abilities to protect Sweden and help its citizens can come from many places, as mentioned earlier. These statements are however signs of that decreased confidence in the state, which can lead to reduced trust in democracy which creates grounds for polarization through disinformation (MSB 2019b). This might curb the mistrust that already exists, and, like MSB (2019b) predicted, lead to a decreased will among individuals to help others in crises.

If we look a little closer at the trust prepared Swedes have in the state's capabilities in a crisis, it becomes clear that some of the informants believes that the lack of trust relates to where people live. “I get the feeling that the further up and the further in [geographically] you get, the more aware you are that the *someone else* can take a while”, Simona says. With the “someone else”, she is referring to help from the state. Simona’s suspicion corresponds with previous reports on trust towards the Swedish government, where the trust is lower in rural areas compared to urban areas (Statskontoret 2017; Erlingsson et al. 2020). I analyzed my survey data for those same aspects as well, visible in Table 3, but could not find the same tendencies among my respondents.

Table 3: Trust in the state in relation to living area.

Categories	Total	Rural area	Town area	Urban area
Respondents	100 %	44 %	27 %	29 %
Respondents with high or very high trust	30 %	26 %	37 %	30 %
Respondents with low or very low trust	67 %	69 %	61 %	68 %
No answer/do not know	3 %	4 %	2 %	2 %

The differences in percentage points are small. The one number that stands out the slightest is the trust towards the state among people living in towns, who have a higher trust in the state's abilities during crisis or war. This aspect was however not elaborated on further in the interviews. The differences between my results and previous reports (Statskontoret 2017; Erlingsson et al. 2020) could be explained in a few different ways. In the previous reports mentioned, researchers asked about trust in general, while I asked specifically about trust towards the state in a crisis. Some previous international research has however looked at the polarization

between rural and urban areas and seen that dissatisfaction is growing in the rural areas (see Erlingsson et al. 2020). Consequently, anti-establishment movements have grown stronger in rural areas, and this has, according to some studies, partly led to right-wing political parties being successful in France with Le Pen, in USA with Donald Trump and in Great Britain with Brexit (ibid). These happenings were brought on by polarization between urban and rural areas through disinformation, which is consistent with MSB's report (2019b) on current threats in Sweden. In the United States, there is an impression of the prepper movement being an anti-establishment movement, as mentioned earlier (see Hay 2019; Mills 2019). This image is also reproduced in Sweden and among the informants in this thesis, as discussed earlier. In Sweden, where rural areas have experienced relocation of inhabitants and where the state has reduced or phased out its presence, tendencies of mistrust and anti-establishment are however still not as present as in France, Great Britain or the United States, according to Erlingsson et al. (2020). The general trust towards the state has previously been shown to be low amongst people in rural areas in many countries and this can have several explanations. One is that the confidence is lower in rural areas because the state's presence has decreased in several places in the last decades (Erlingsson et al. 2020). Another reason might be because people in the countryside, time and time again, have experienced that they do not get the help they feel that they are entitled to once a crisis hits, as described by a few of my informants in subchapter 5.1. In my data, the trust in the state's ability to help Swedes with protection and necessities in crisis is however not lower among rural residents than among urban residents, as seen in Table 3. Instead, there is, regardless of living area, a lack of trust towards the state visible in my data, both statistically from the survey and confirmed in interviews. In summary, the trust is low towards the state among people living in urban areas, towns and in the countryside. Perhaps the difference is small between the different areas because Swedish emergency preparedness has not been successful anywhere, according to my informants. It is, according to most of them, insufficient regardless of where they live. As seen from the financial crisis in 2008, the trust towards governments in several countries was still low after four years (OECD 2013). "What took a few years to demolish takes decades to rebuild", my informant Peter adds.

In this extensive subchapter on perceptions of the state, it is evident that many of the informants are unhappy with the inconsistency in emergency preparedness shown by the state, expressed through privatizations and back-and-forth action since the end of the Cold War. This erodes the trust in authorities. Instead, many look up to Finland that, due to a different history, have a completely different system for crisis preparedness. Among the informants, the trust in the Swedish state's capabilities during a crisis varies, but among many, trust is low. The danger of this is that it could create grounds for polarization which could lead to a lower confidence in democracy. In several countries, anti-establishment movements have grown stronger due to polarization in rural areas which has partly led to right-wing

political parties being successful. In Sweden, where rural areas have experienced relocation of inhabitants and where the state has reduced or phased out its presence, tendencies of mistrust and anti-establishment are however still not as present as in France, Great Britain or the United States. In my data, the trust in the state's ability to help Swedes with protection and necessities in crisis is however not lower in rural areas than in urban areas. There is instead, regardless of living area, a lack of trust towards the state visible in my data, which can take a long time to rebuild.

4.2.2. The importance of community

When the total defense was demolished in the beginning of the 2000s, the civil defense was as well. The civil defense is not one single organization, but consists of a large number of actors such as public authorities, private companies, voluntary organizations and citizens, with the main purpose of protecting society from threats during heightened preparedness (Jonsson et al. 2019). 30 % of the survey respondents state that they have a big or quite big trust in the civil defense's ability to protect and help Swedes in a crisis. 66 % have a low or quite low trust in the civil defense and the remaining four percent do not know. Looking at the numbers from the survey can be misleading, since the civil defense is a broad term that the respondents might connect to different actors. They also have different relationships to the civil defense. Among the survey respondents, 35 % have been, or are, involved in some type of civil defense organization, and 62 % have never been involved. This might affect how they view the civil defense as well. When comparing the trust in the civil defense between the Facebook groups, the numbers are similar in all groups, except in the crisis preparedness group. There, the trust in the civil defense is slightly higher than in the other groups. One explanation for this can be that members of the group to a greater extent themselves have been part of non-profit organizations that are part of the civil defense. In the interviews, however, there is a context to our conversation and what the informants mean becomes clearer. When they talk about the civil defense, they usually mean one of two things: 1) local municipalities and non-profit organizations or 2) civil society and individuals that help when something happens. The first one of these two is discussed in the first section of this chapter and the second one in the remaining part of the chapter.

A few of the interview informants have greater trust in the civil defense than the state- and military defense. Carin's experience is that it takes a long time for decisions to be made in Sweden, with many detours. She believes that the civil defense is better at handling urgent matters. Additional informants have a bigger trust in the civil defense as well, as they have more local responsibility and are closer to people that need their help, compared to the state that has more of a national responsibility. Many of the informants come back to that the civil defense

can make a difference since the scale is smaller and the work is done by people often emotionally invested in it, if they work in their own local area.

A few other informants do not have as much trust in the civil defense. Peter believes there is no civil defense left. He says that they are limited in their capacity and are driven by enthusiasts but without margins. He is skeptical of the state's role in the civil defense and his trust is low, much due to the civil defense, both non-profit organizations and individuals' emergency preparedness, being demolished so quickly after the Cold War. Other informants talk about how the civil defense's largest resource is time, but that they are unfortunately limited in economic resources.

Many of my informants instead emphasize the importance of community and helping each other in a crisis. Christian says that he believes in cooperation between people since it characterizes the human species. One message in MSB's pamphlet has stuck with him: One of the best ways to prepare for a crisis is to get to know your neighbors. He strongly believes that this cooperation is what will help us through the crisis, and it is possible if people trust one another. Trust is not only important towards the government, but also between people, and if there is no trust there will be no social exchange and no sense of community (Statskontoret 2017). The opposite is when strong relations and social capital, which is the networks and social resources available to us, exists in the community (Aldrich 2010). Both Sonja and Oscar would collaborate with, and help, people close to them in a crisis. Sonja says that if there would be a crisis, she, and her husband, who are self-sufficient, would take care of their grown children and grandchildren. Oscar clarifies that when he says that he has three months of food supply in his apartment, really there is only food for a few weeks since he believes he will help his friends out too. "When you can take responsibility for yourself, you can take responsibility for others as well", he says, which is an altruistic outlook on life which several of my informants share. Informant Carl watches YouTube for inspiration and advice on emergency preparedness. On that platform, there are many who are alone that advocate for being able to fend for themselves and to be self-sufficient. "But I think you have to work together to cope with crisis", Carl says. Carin emphasizes the same thing. She says that if something happens and you have everything you and your family need at home, it is your responsibility to help society and do something for others.

In a society where people are engaged in civil society and trust each other, social and emotional bonds exist due to social capital which can be beneficial in a crisis situation (Holmberg & Rothstein 2020). It can also explain why some disaster affected communities display resilience and others do not (Mayunga 2007; Aldrich 2010; Linnell 2014). Social capital plays a crucial role during and after a crisis. When a disaster strikes, the first respondents are rarely emergency personnel but rather local residents, which has been seen after the Kobe earthquake in 1995, hurricane Katrina in 2005, the Haiti earthquake in 2010 (Aldrich 2010) and among

the informants of this study. Several of them refer to the forest fires in Sweden during the summer of 2018 when talking about community and helping each other. The fires ravaged in Gävleborg county, Jämtland county and Dalarna county and several villages had to be evacuated (Krisinformation 2018). During that summer, the average temperature was high for long periods of time and the affected areas received little to no precipitation which meant that the risk of fire was exceedingly high (ibid). Simona has friends who were directly affected by the fires where the flames came as close as 300 meters from their farm. She says that everyone helped. Farmers transported water to take out the fires, even though there was a water shortage. Friends, neighbors, and locals stood fire watch for each other and the community. “When there is a crisis, I have bigger trust in the civil society and the community instead of waiting for someone else to come and help”, she says. “We do it all the time for each other.”

These examples, of people helping each other during the forest fires, would not be possible without trust. In the weeks and years of rebuilding following a crisis, social networks continue to play an important role. First, it can help provide locals with information and help, both financial and physical. Second, communities that are organized have an easier time overcoming barriers following the crisis, such as housing, security and loans (Aldrich 2010). Third, if social capital exists in a community, residents are also more likely to join forces in efforts to rebuild the community, both materially and physically (ibid). For people to help each other to the extent described by my informants, there must already be social capital among the inhabitants affected by the fires, as described by Robert Putnam (Holmberg & Rothstein 2020).

Carin’s mother was also affected by the fires. She says that the civil society built an incredible organization by driven people during that summer. There were volunteers, sleeping arrangements, donations, and food. Bedding was donated, a “free shop” was created, and the local pizza baker baked pizzas that he gave to people affected and involved. Her explanation? “I come from the countryside originally, and for me it is not surprising that this is done. If you live in the countryside, you help people around you”, she says. This image is only strengthened in my interview with Stefan, who grew up in the countryside but lives in a larger city today. He talks about the social contract that exists when you live in a rural area.

There is a social contract that makes you want to do a good job; this is what the [rural] culture looks like. In the countryside, it is always like this: if you have a problem, you ask people around you and you will get the help. I think there are completely different types of so-called social communities there [compared to urban areas]. (Stefan)

The social contract Stefan is describing, and the way many of the informants talk about rural communities is a sign of community resilience. Since the United

Nations came out with the *Hyogo Framework for Action* in 2007 (UNDRR 2007), the main purpose of hazard planning has shifted from focusing on reducing vulnerability to instead focus on building community resilience (Mayunga 2007). Mayunga (2007) argues that social capital can contribute to doing just that.

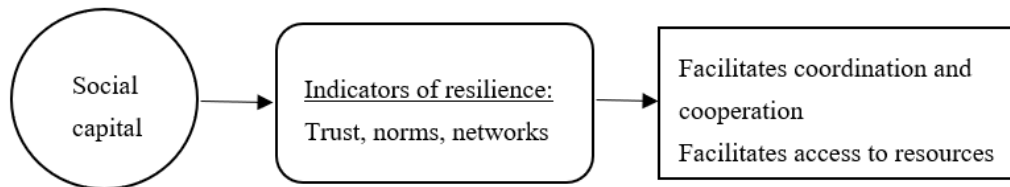


Figure 6: Conceptual framework of how social capital can increase community disaster resilience. (Reworked from Mayunga 2007)

Mayunga (2007) uses a capital-based approach to assess community disaster resilience since capital is an important and useful concept in the research on crises. As shown in Figure 6, social capital contributes to collective action by creating norms, social networks, and trust (ibid). These three allow residents to draw on social resources in their community to solve collective problems. Where characteristics such as trust and networks are missing, a community tends to be more vulnerable to crises and the aftermath of it. The most resilient communities, however, tend to be those that work together towards a shared purpose (Mayunga 2007). Several of my informants talk about how urban and rural areas differ in this aspect, like Stefan’s quote above about social communities. They argue, based on experiences, that people living in the countryside trust each other, apply under similar norms, take part in social networks, and therefore have a high social capital. These are indicators that social resilience exists to a higher degree in rural areas and that this could be one of the reason rural residents manage crises together.

In this subchapter I have shown that many of the informants have a low trust in the overlapping term *the civil defense*, but that many of them instead emphasize the importance of community and helping each other in a crisis. Much of the discussion circles back to the importance of trust. Without trust there will be no social exchange and no sense of community. In a society where people are engaged in civil society and trust each other, social and emotional bonds exist due to social capital which can be beneficial in a crisis. Social capital can also explain why some disaster affected communities display resilience and others do not, in other words community resilience. The most resilient communities tend to be those that work together towards a shared purpose. Some of the informants argue that this mentality is stronger in the countryside. Drawing on literature and theory, this view is strengthened and may indicate that social resilience exists to a higher degree in rural areas than in urban ones and that this could be one of the reason rural residents manage crises together.

4.2.3. Individual responsibility

Even though collective efforts are important to be resilient in a crisis, several informants mention the importance of managing on their own. Sara is certain that it is the individual's responsibility to be prepared. Carin also argues that managing on your own is the foundation of emergency preparedness. According to Otto, this is nothing new. "Those who could not get food have gone hungry, those who have not been able to get dressed have frozen their feet", he says. He thinks that discussions about emergency preparedness have been actualized in recent years, since it has become clear that Sweden does not have safety rooms, stockpiled foods, reliable electricity supply, or functional infrastructure where he lives, in Northern Sweden.

When Christian read MSB's pamphlet, he understood that if a crisis were to happen, the system or society will have to take care of large groups of people who cannot take care of themselves the way he can. "Then it is my responsibility as a citizen to do what I can to not be a burden to society", he says. In 2018, after MSB's pamphlet was distributed to every Swedish household, the Swedish Defense Research Agency, FOI, conducted a survey, asking over 2000 people about their attitudes and behaviors towards crisis and war situations (Wedebbrand 2019). 90 % of the respondents stated that personal liability in crisis or war is reasonable (ibid). The fact that not everyone acts on it (see TT 2017; Rosén 2019; MSB 2021) is a different question for another time, but as of 2018, most of the Swedes thought, just like my informants, that individual responsibility is important in a crisis. However, this has not always been a priority to individuals. Larsson (2019) argues that this view of the personal liability in emergency preparedness is a consequence of the shift in responsibility, from state to individual, that the government has tried to carry out in the last ten years. This process has, according to Larsson (2019), been carried out without using force, laws or financial incentives, but instead by using conscious attempts to influence the way citizens think by spreading information and knowledge in a way that promotes a sense of freedom. This information has been distributed in podcasts, reality TV-shown, websites and social media. As mentioned previously, citizens have always has a responsibility towards the state, especially during situations of heightened preparedness (Larsson 2019). The difference today, is that as safety and preparedness is becoming more central in politics, that puts a greater responsibility on the individual in peacetime as well. As MSB's pamphlet showed up in people's mailboxes, emergency preparedness was once again actualized to individuals and reminded them of preparing (Larsson 2019). This might be the reason behind the high percentage of people in FOI's survey viewing individual responsibility in crisis reasonable.

Several studies have shown that many states see possibilities in strengthening society's resilience by improving citizen's ability to face and handle crisis (see Joseph 2013; Larsson 2019). Researcher Jonathan Joseph argues that resilience,

despite the connection to collective efforts, rather is a way to govern people that emphasizes individual responsibility (Joseph 2013). In resilience, the emphasize is on stressing the importance of self-awareness and active citizenship where people take responsibility for themselves and their own wellbeing rather than relying on the state. Joseph (2013) continues by arguing that resilience encourages this by constructing an image where society is beyond our control. This does not mean that people should give up, but rather must learn how to manage. This point of view is both positive and negative. My informant Oscar considers individual responsibility as good in general, but he wonders how it should be implemented. He believes that most people, that are not already prepared, are not inclined to sacrifice their own convenience to prepare for themselves. My informant Peter works in healthcare and draws parallels to society moving towards a more selfish view of things:

I see the selfishness when I talk to patients who do not understand why they cannot get an ambulance. They think they are entitled to it, but instead they take resources that someone else benefits from. (Peter)

Neither Oscar nor Peter is convinced that unprepared people will do what is necessary to increase their preparedness. Even though they trust their community to help each other in crisis, their trust is low towards other people taking the needed precautions to prepare on their own. Peter continues, saying he is sceptic to non-prepared Swedes in general. “Many people have an overconfidence in society's ability, they do not think about the responsibility they themselves have to take in the event of a crisis or conflict.” Still, Peter is preparing. For him, it is due to personal experiences that have made him feel like emergency preparedness is not prioritized by the government, but rather that it is attended to once the crisis hits, and then it is too late. Peter does not believe that preparing by yourself is the solution, but rather he thinks it is the result of the situation we have ended up in - that you must deal with the crisis yourself.

Simultaneously, several of the other informants believe that teaching others how to prepare is an important part of preparedness, as written about in subchapter 5.1. The informants have different worldviews which is understandable, but in this aspect, one of them can be harmful. Some of the interview informants and survey respondents seem to have opinions and worldviews with destructive tendencies. These can be summarized as a distrust towards the state and other people, which can weaken confidence in democratic processes. Meanwhile, democracy is retreating in many countries (Freedom House 2019). The Freedom House report from 2019 ranks Sweden as a stable democracy, but these tendencies exist in Sweden as well which MSB also mentions in their report on risks in Sweden (MSB 2019b). The Swedish prime minister Stefan Löfven wrote a debate article (2021) following the storming of the Capitulum in Washington D.C. earlier this year. There, he writes that if even one of the world strongest democracies can be damaged

by polarization, populism, and extremism, then Sweden can be subject to this as well.

In this subchapter, I have shown that even though collective efforts are important to be resilient in a crisis, several informants argue that the basis of emergency preparedness is to manage on their own. They believe that discussions about emergency preparedness have been actualized in recent years, since it has become clear that Sweden does not have the same level of preparedness as during the 1900s. This has made many Swedes start to think about their own responsibilities. Today, most Swedes view individual responsibility as important in a crisis, just like my informants do. The personal liability in emergency preparedness comes from a shift in responsibility, from the state to the individual. Strengthening the individual's resilience can be seen as a way to improve society's ability to face and handle crisis. Still, some of the informants show distrust in other people's abilities to prepare, a mindset that can have negative consequences by, once again, polarization.

5. Conclusion: Swedish prepping

The survey respondents and interview informants of this study have aided in creating a multifaced, perspective-rich, and thorough image of who is prepared, what motivates them to be and how they define being prepared for crises. In summary, people preparing for crises are not a homogenous group. They differ in age, level of preparedness, interests, political standpoint, and background and they live all over Sweden. There are differences between where people live and their experiences towards prepping. It is for example evident that rural residents have been prepared for longer and therefore would manage for longer than urban and town residents. This has to do with access to resources, but it is also an indicator that preparing for crisis comes more naturally to people that live further from state authorities, in more tight-knit communities, and are used to manage by themselves for longer, both in stable times and during a crisis. What is also interesting, is how many that have found a way to manage for a long time, regardless of the kind of area they live in, and many residents that live in smaller spaces such as apartments, would also manage for a long time. Among urban residents preparing, there were however some who stated that if a crisis comes, they have a house in the countryside where they would go. The countryside is then represented in two ways in the empirical material: As a place where some of the informants have learned about preparing and as a place to go when crisis strikes. In the countryside, urban residents believe that their conditions would be better than in their homes in a city. Rural residents also see their surroundings as an asset in individual emergency preparedness. There are however still many urban residents that say they would manage well in their current housing. This is an indicator that it is possible to manage in a crisis, in line with government recommendations, even without exclusive access to water or large areas for farming.

My research suggests that five overlapping objectives motivate people to start and continue to prepare for emergencies. These are 1) improving the ability to manage when a crisis occurs, 2) fears of what could happen if they are not prepared, 3) preparedness as a hobby, 4) wanting to teach others, and 5) living a more sustainable lifestyle. These five can also be read in this order, to look at how prepping evolves, from wanting to manage better in a crisis to find ways to live a more sustainable life. To some, prepping is about meeting basic needs, stocking up on food and gear, and planning for different events. To others it is a question about

attitude and mental preparations, learning helpful skills, and how to deal with uncertainties. Some do not see their actions as prepping. Instead, they have a genuine interest in for example outdoor activities, self-sufficiency, or hunting, which then prepping becomes a consequence of. Preparing for a crisis is therefore not only about the *crisis* but also about the act of *preparing*. Preparing is, to some, a hobby to engage in in everyday life that provides value when life runs on as usual and there is no crisis. The quest to learn and pursue traditional crafts and knowledge, to cultivate and to become self-sufficiency is perhaps not primarily survival tactics but rather lifestyles.

A quarter of the people in this study say that emergency preparedness has been present throughout their lives in different ways. To them, emergency- and home preparedness is in their backbone, always present in decision-making and everyday life. The remaining 75 % have started preparing due to experiences or exposure to a global, national, societal, or personal crisis of different kinds. Prepping is therefore a consequence of both global events and individual encounters. Common to both upbringing and experiences later in life is the will to create a room for maneuver when a crisis comes and to be more resilient to that crisis, whatever it looks like. The three concepts of social resilience – coping, adapting, and transforming, are all visible in the actions and attitudes among the informants. In this study, it becomes clear that prepping is a movement made up of individuals or groups aiming to reduce vulnerability and increase social resilience for themselves, for their families, and sometimes within their communities. Social resilience does therefore play an important part in prepping. One aspect of prepping that many seem to feel similar about is the bad connotations to the movement's original name *prepper*. Due to the associations that the adjective has, the verb *prepping* is more neutral since it refers to something they do, rather than who they are. This is important to keep in mind since how we refer to things affects how we perceive them. The word *prepper* is not bad on its own, we might just have to rethink what it means.

There are different reasons to be prepared and ways to approach prepping. In Sweden, prepping originates from upbringing and previous experiences, but also in combination with low emergency preparedness in Sweden. To understand prepping further, we need to delve into the bigger picture and look at how citizens interested in preparing for the future view Swedish emergency preparedness and their own role in it. To many of my informants, it is not clear who oversees emergency preparedness. Consequently, they feel that they must take responsibility, partly or completely, for themselves and for people around them. The theoretical concept of trust has helped to explain why Swedish emergency preparedness is not working on some levels and working well on others. Trust in the state- and government's capabilities during a crisis vary among informants, but for many, trust is low. This can be traced back to previous experiences where the state failed to adequately

respond to crises, as well as to the government's recent uptake of preparedness planning, which has affected the informants' view of the state and their trust in it, both positively and negatively. Regardless of living area, there is a lack of trust towards the state's ability to help Swedes with protection and necessities in crises visible in my data. Perhaps the difference is small between the areas because crisis preparedness has not been successful anywhere. It is, according to most of the informants, insufficient regardless of where they live. Investing in trust should be an important aspect of the government's work, to restore trust in themselves, improve emergency preparedness, and show that they have learned from previous crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

The same tendencies regarding low trust exist towards the overarching term *the civil defense*. Many instead emphasize the importance of community and helping each other and view collective efforts as important to be resilient in a crisis. Several informants also argue that the basis of emergency preparedness is to manage by themselves, to ensure they will manage in a crisis. In conclusion, trust is important in all parts of the total defense and therefore also plays an important role in prepping. The trust we have in organizations, political parties, and people stems from our previous experiences with those groups. Without trust, there will be no social exchange and no sense of community. This is visible among some of the survey respondents and interview informants that have opinions and worldviews with destructive tendencies. These can be summarized as distrust towards the state and towards other people. The danger of this is that it could create grounds for polarization through disinformation which could lead to lower confidence in democratic processes. Democracy is retreating in many countries, and these tendencies exist in Sweden as well. This might exacerbate the mistrust that already exists and, as MSB has already predicted, lead to a decreased will among individuals to help others in crises. Where characteristics such as trust and networks are missing, a community tends to be more vulnerable to crises and their aftermath. The most resilient communities, however, tend to be those that work together towards a shared purpose. These bonds, also referred to as social capital, can also explain why some disaster-affected communities display resilience and others do not. Some of the informants argue that this mentality is stronger in the countryside. They argue that people living in the countryside trust each other, apply under similar norms, take part in social networks, and therefore have high social capital. These are indicators that social resilience exists to a higher degree in rural areas and that this could be one of the reasons rural residents manage crises together. These examples, of people helping each other during crises, would not be possible without social capital and trust, which is why they both are so important in prepping and emergency preparedness.

So, how can we understand Swedish prepping today? People preparing for crises are often portrayed as extreme in their measures, longing for disaster. But that is

not the whole truth. American scholars argue that only a minority of preppers can be described as right-wing, anti-government, and doomsday-obsessed and most preppers are “normal” people, preparing for undesirable events. I have found the same conclusion in my study. “The prepper” has many different faces and can be your neighbor, your family member, your friend, or your child. And that is a good thing. Because preppers are resilient people on their own and can increase a community’s resilience as well. Even though the prepping community is made up of a few people that prioritize themselves, prepping in general concerns strengthening society rather than abandoning it. Few preppers live after the saying “one man for himself” and most of the people in this study want to increase their own preparedness, both practically and mentally, to be able to be there for other people. So, to the final question: What is a crisis? From this study, it is evident that the informants prepare for a range of crises; They are prepping for the idea of crisis. Now, as of June 2021, we have experienced a collective crisis in the form of the COVID-19 pandemic. Perhaps the chance is now greater that emergency preparedness will be retained and that the sense of preparedness will stay than it previously has been since we now have a common frame of reference. Only time will tell.

For future research, it would be interesting and relevant to investigate what consequences the COVID-19 pandemic might have had on citizens all over Sweden. Furthermore, it could look at if the effects of the pandemic have made Swedes more interested in preparing for emergencies and if this approach differs depending on the consequences and changes one has had to live with due to the pandemic. Future research could also explore how unprepared Swedes view emergency preparedness, their attitudes towards preparing, why they have decided to not prepare and what is needed for them to start.

As a final remark, I want to touch on something a few articles have mentioned about prepping and that I have thought about as well. Even though prepping is a way to overcome vulnerability and to build social resilience within a community and in society, individuals cannot be the only responsible agents for a community’s resilience or society overall. For a community to cope with and adapt to changes, many actors need to be involved. Given the fact that many communities lack resources or are subject to structural inequalities, the most beneficial way to deal with crisis is multi-level governance where communities, government and organizations work together. “Preppers” are one important piece of the puzzle, but so is the civil society, the civil defense, businesses, and agencies. The distribution of responsibility must be clearer. Only then can Sweden become resilient to future crises.

6. References

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