

## CRIME POISONS THE SUBURBAN BUSINESS CLIMATE

### CONCLUSIONS:

- The Stockholm Chamber of Commerce interviewed nearly 300 business owners in areas with high degrees of social exclusion.
- In these areas, one third of business reported a high degree of exposure to crime.
- Approximately one in ten businesses are considering moving or shutting down due to crime.
- One out of three businesses want more police in the local area, and one out of seven want security guards.

# SUMMARY

## AND CONCLUSIONS

**The town square defines the neighborhood. A square surrounded by bustling streets with restaurants and well-stocked shops feels safe and welcoming, while an empty space with shuttered windows attracts criminals and gangs. Once a square starts to feel unsafe, a negative spiral begins: businesses can no longer attract customers, they shutter, and the space attracts yet more criminal elements. This process has already started in areas with high degrees of social exclusion.**

The spiral needs to be reversed. To do so, we need to listen to the people who are always present by the square and by the streets: the shop owners. In June 2017, Demoskop, on behalf of the Stockholm Chamber of Commerce, therefore conducted nearly 300 interviews with shop owners in areas with high degrees of social exclusion.

Our survey found that businesses in these areas face unacceptably high levels of victimization. One third of

those interviewed reported a high degree of exposure to crime, and 25 per cent said a lack of security is the single largest problem they face. The situation is getting worse: forty per cent of all businesses state that their area has become less safe. It is therefore no surprise that one out of ten businesses are considering moving or shutting down, and that one out of three businesses are clamoring for more police presence.

But the situation is not uniformly bleak: Södertälje municipality has reduced crime and improved safety. Other areas can learn from Södertälje, as well as from successful cities abroad. This report distills some insights, but most important of all is to have a constant and responsive police presence.

The squares can, and should, be made safe again. Small businesses and neighborhoods require a vibrant center. Preventing and combatting crime is a vital part of revitalizing socially excluded areas.