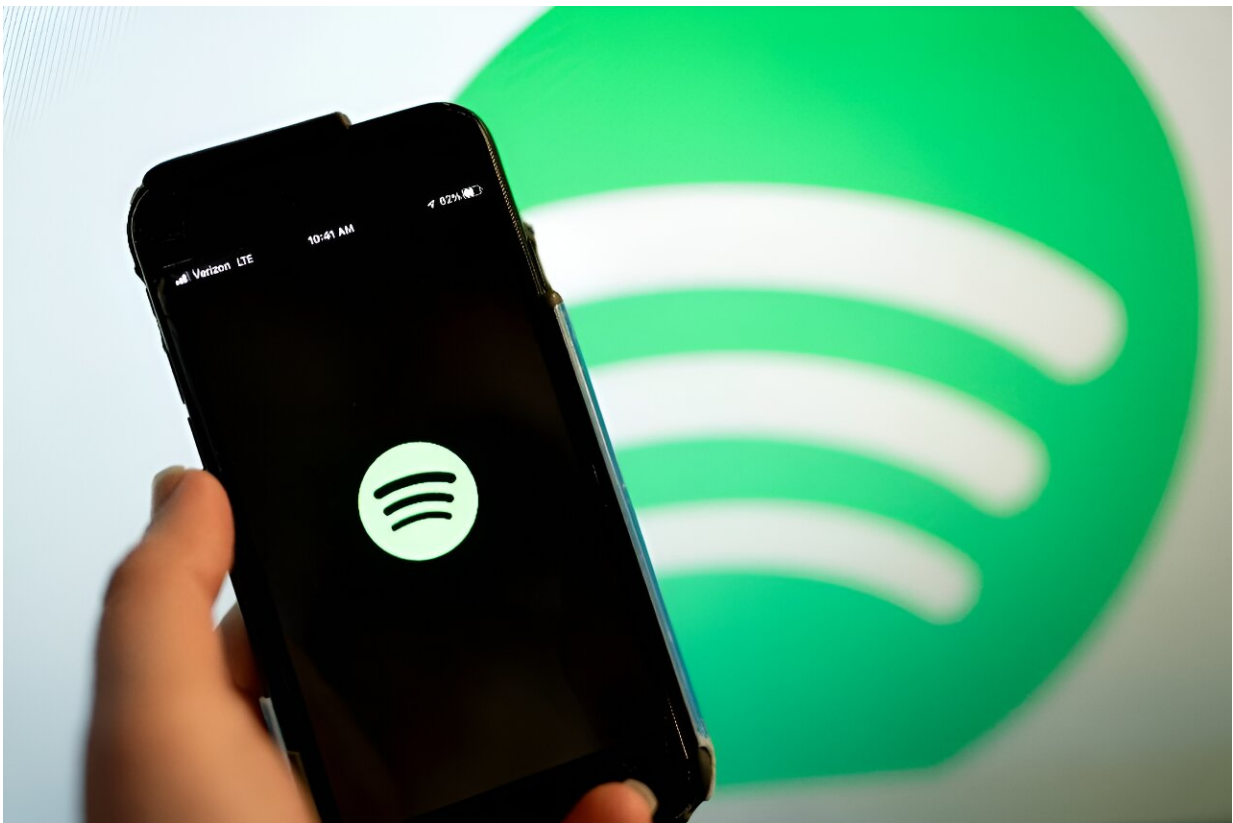


Swedish criminal gangs laundering money through Spotify: media

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Spotify says that users manipulating streams is 'an industry-wide challenge'

Criminal gangs behind a surge of bombings and shootings in Sweden in recent years are using fake Spotify streams to launder money, a Swedish newspaper reported Tuesday.

Criminal networks have for several years been using money from drug deals, robberies, fraud and contract killings to pay for false Spotify streams of songs published by artists with ties to the [gangs](#), an investigative report in Svenska Dagbladet claimed.

They then get paid by the platform for the high number of streams, thereby laundering the money.

The newspaper said its information had been confirmed by four [gang members](#) from separate criminal networks in Stockholm, as well as an anonymous police investigator.

"I can say with 100 percent certainty that this goes on. I have been involved in it myself," SvD quoted one anonymous gang member as saying.

He said his [gang](#) began using the music streaming giant Spotify for [money](#) laundering in 2019, around the time Swedish gangster rap became popular in the country and started winning music awards.

"We have paid people who have done this for us systematically," he said.

Describing the process, he said the gangs would convert their dirty cash to bitcoin, then used the cryptocurrency to pay people who sold fake streams on Spotify, which is a Swedish company.

They "made sure we ended up at the top of the charts," he said, adding that the fake streams also led to an uptick in real streams.

Higher streams lead to higher payouts from Spotify.

The newspaper said that in Sweden, a million streams pays about 40,000 to 60,000 kronor (\$3,600 to \$5,400).

The anonymous investigative police officer told Svenska Dagbladet he contacted Spotify in 2021 to discuss the matter but the company never returned his call.

"Spotify has become a bank machine for the gangs. There's a direct link to the gangs and the deadly violence," he told the paper.

In 2022, Sweden registered 90 blasts and another 101 cases of attempted bombings or preparations for bombings, as well as 391 shootings, 62 of them fatal, according to police data.

Spotify told AFP in a statement that manipulated streams were "an industry-wide challenge and Spotify has been working hard to address this issue."

"Less than one percent of all streams on Spotify have been determined to be artificial and those are promptly mitigated prior to any payouts," it said.

The Swedish company said it was not aware of any contact made by [law enforcement](#), nor had it found "any data or hard evidence that indicates that the platform is being used at scale in the fashion described."

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