



2021/22

CONFIDENCE, INTEREST & PODCASTS

VA Barometer 2021/22 – VA Report 2021:5

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More information about the survey can be found at www.v-a.se

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These are some of the results of this year's VA Barometer:

- Women and men are interested in research in different fields
- Record numbers of Swedes have very high confidence in researchers
- A growing number consume research news on a weekly basis
- Podcasts are becoming an increasingly important channel for research news
- Swedes who know someone who works in research are more interested in research, consume research news more frequently, and are more likely to consider working as a researcher than those who don't know someone who works in research.

The VA Barometer 2021/2022 is based on 1,016 telephone interviews with a representative sample of the Swedish population aged 16–74. It is the 20th Barometer survey since VA was founded in 2002. Read more about the survey on page 34.

LAST YEAR THROUGH SWEDISH EYES

Due to the corona pandemic, the Nobel Festival is cancelled for the first time since the Second World War. An award ceremony is broadcast online from Stockholm City Hall instead.



Hundreds of Trump supporters storm the US Capitol Building in Washington D.C.

The Delta coronavirus variant is detected in India.



The European Medicines Agency approves the Pfizer/BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine.



Hundreds of people gather in Stockholm for an illegal protest against corona restrictions. Six police officers are injured trying to break up the protest.



Over one million confirmed Covid-19 cases in Sweden.



Copernicus, the EU's Centre for Climate Monitoring, declares that 2020 is the warmest year ever recorded in Europe.

The Swedish Government presents a five-step plan to phase out coronavirus restrictions.



The Swedish Parliament ousts Prime Minister Stefan Löfven and the government in a vote of no-confidence.

Haiti is hit by an earthquake measuring 7.2 on the Richter scale. Two days later, the country is hit by Hurricane Grace.

Oct Nov Dec 2021 Jan Feb March April May June July Aug Sept

The global death toll from Covid-19 exceeds one million.



Joe Biden beats Donald Trump in the US presidential election.

Over 10,000 confirmed deaths from Covid-19 in Sweden.



A temporary Covid-19 law is introduced in Sweden which, among other things, allows the government to limit the size of gatherings and to close bars and restaurants.



The cargo ship Ever Given runs aground and blocks the Suez Canal.

The Swedish National Audit Office states that Sweden incorrectly excluded a large number of students from the PISA survey in 2018.

The cherry blossom season, Japan's traditional sign of spring, peaks at the earliest date since records began 1,200 years ago.

Half of the Swedish population over the age of 18 has received at least one dose of the Covid-19 vaccine.



Extreme heat in Canada as the 1937 heat record is broken by a new record of 47.9 degrees Celsius.

Severe flooding in Europe, causing the death of over 190.

The US ends its military operation in Afghanistan and the Taliban subsequently returns to power.

Major forest fires in several European countries, including Turkey, Greece, Italy and Finland.



Pandemic-related events

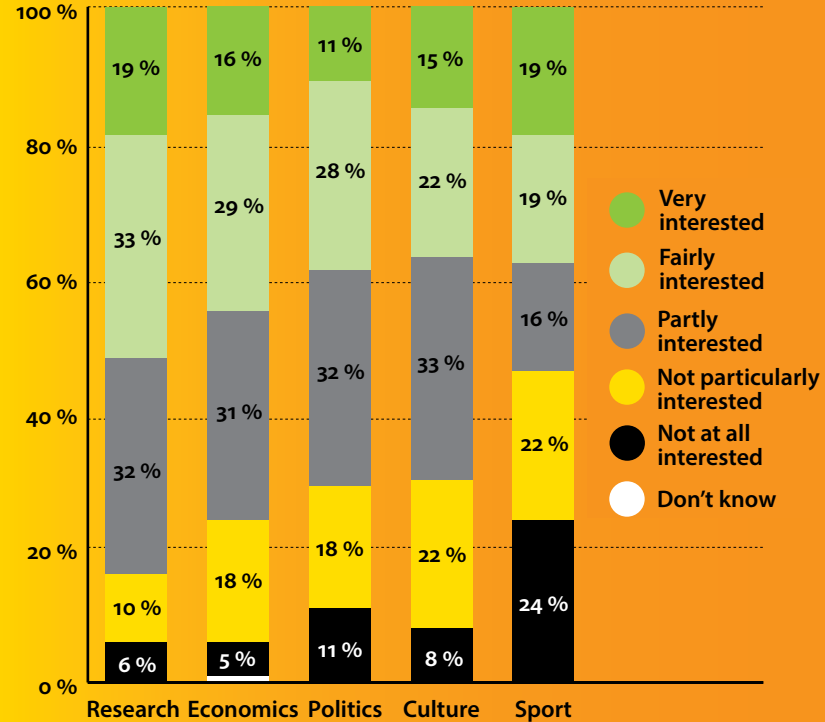
RESEARCH: INTEREST UNCHANGED

Half of the respondents (52 percent) in this year's VA Barometer say that they are *fairly* or *very interested* in research. Interest in research is unchanged from 2019, when the question was last asked.

Interest in research is greater among Swedes with a university education. Here, 63 percent state that they are fairly or very interested, compared with 44 percent of those without a university education. Highly educated people are also more interested in politics and culture than others, but less interested in sport. Those living in smaller cities/towns and rural municipalities have a lower interest in research than others.

*The graph shows responses to the question **How interested are you in each of the following subjects?***

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 1,016



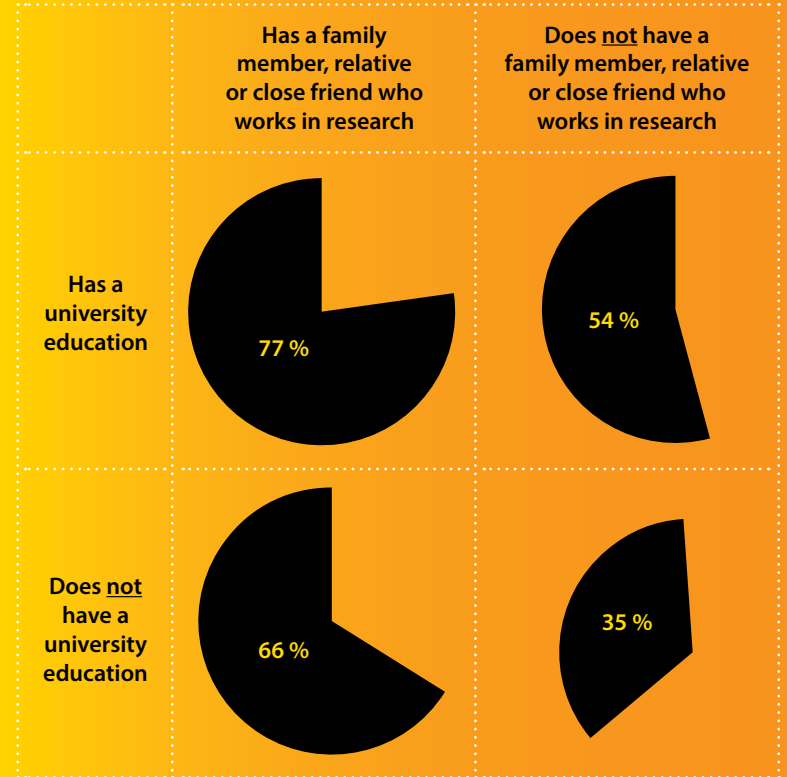
CLOSENESS PLAYS A ROLE

Interest in research is greater amongst Swedes who have a family member, relative or close friend who works in research. Among these, 72 percent are *fairly* or *very interested* in research, compared with 41 percent among other respondents. The proportion that is *not particularly*, or *not at all interested* is 8 percent among those with a family member, relative or close friend who works in research, compared with 20 percent among others.

The effect of having someone close to you who works in research can be seen both among people who have, and don't have, a university education.

*The graph shows combined proportions of those very or fairly **interested in research**, split into people with or without a university education, and who have or don't have someone close working in research.*

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 110 (ELEMENTARY/UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL WITH SOMEONE CLOSE WORKING IN RESEARCH)
310 (ELEMENTARY/UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL WITHOUT SOMEONE CLOSE WORKING IN RESEARCH)
255 (UNIVERSITY WITH SOMEONE CLOSE WORKING IN RESEARCH)
319 (UNIVERSITY WITHOUT SOMEONE CLOSE WORKING IN RESEARCH)



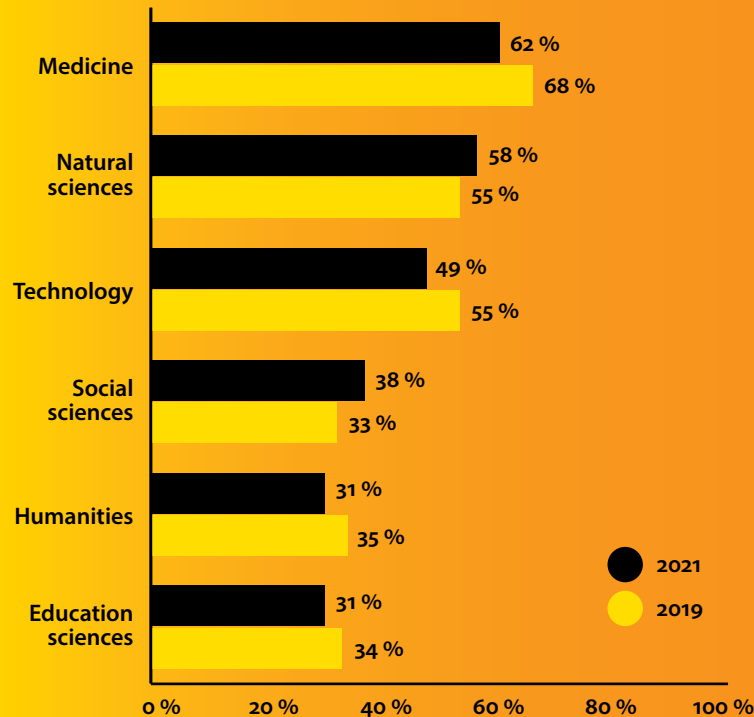
MEDICINE OF MOST INTEREST

Different scientific subjects rouse different levels of interest. Swedes have the greatest in research in medicine, of which 62 percent are *fairly* or *very interested*. The corresponding proportion for the natural sciences is 58 percent, followed by technology (49 percent), social sciences (38 percent), the humanities and the education sciences (both 31 percent).

Interest in research in the social sciences has increased since 2019, whereas it has decreased for medicine, technology and the humanities. For other subjects, no statistically significant changes can be seen.

The graph shows the level of interest in research in different subjects in 2019 and 2021. The bars show the combined proportions of those that are fairly or very interested (Five-point scale: Very interested, Fairly interested, Partly interested, Not particularly interested, Not at all interested).

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 1,021 (2019) 1,016 (2021)

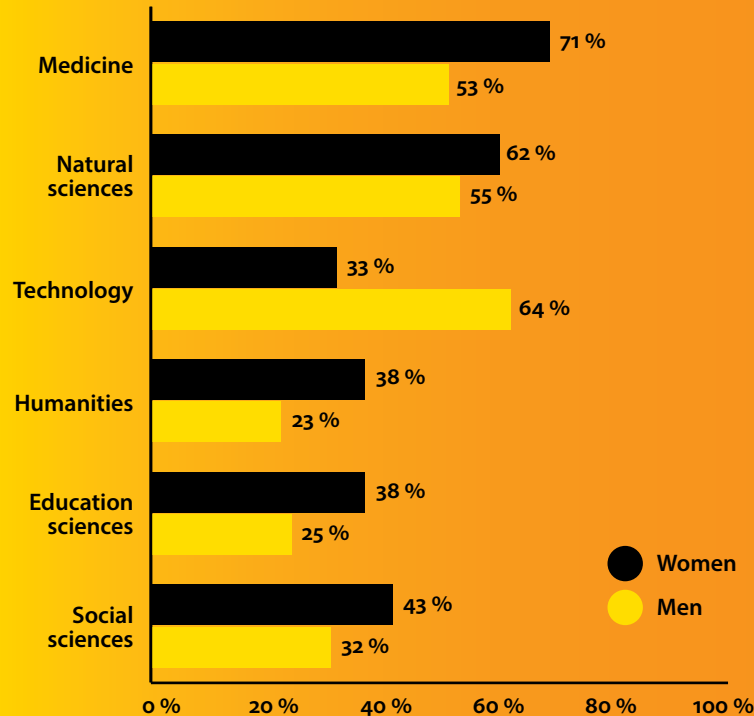


WOMEN HAVE BROADER INTEREST

Men and women are equally interested in research in general, but clear gender differences can be seen in Swedes' interest in different research subjects. Almost twice as many men are *fairly* or *very interested* in technology compared to women (64 and 33 percent, respectively). But women have greater interest than men in all other research subjects.

The graph shows men's and women's level of interest in research in different subjects. The bars show the combined proportions of those that are fairly or very interested. (Five-point scale: Very interested, Fairly interested, Partly interested, Not particularly interested, Not at all interested).

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 510 (MEN) 506 (WOMEN)



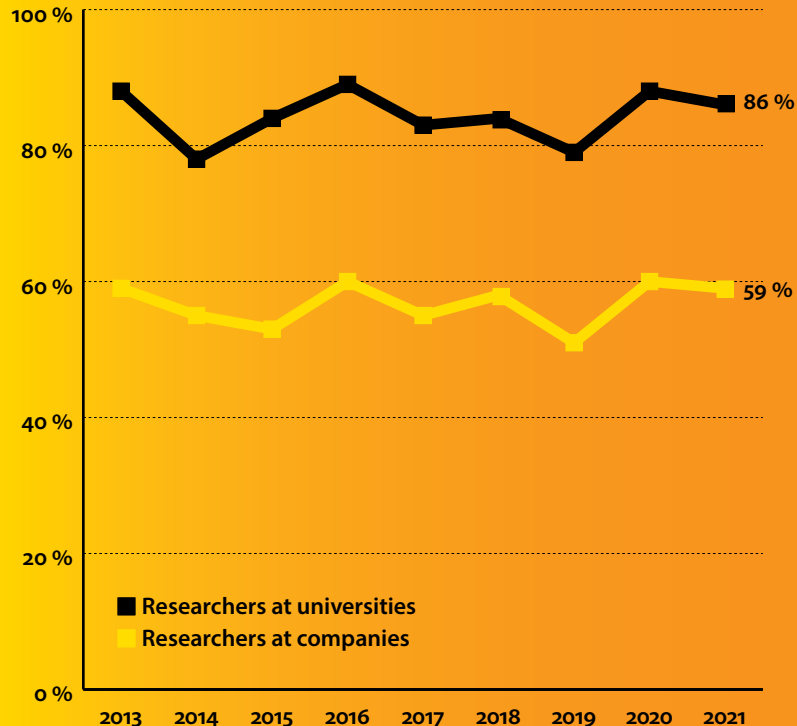
CONFIDENCE REMAINS HIGH...

Nearly nine out of ten (86 percent) of Swedes have *fairly* or *very high* confidence in researchers at universities, while six out of ten (59 percent) have the corresponding levels of confidence in researchers at companies. None of the figures differ statistically from last year.

As in previous years, respondents' level of education plays a role, with Swedes with a university education having greater confidence. The proportion with fairly or very high confidence in researchers at universities this year is 91 percent among those that are university-educated and 84 percent for others.

The graph shows the proportion that has fairly or very high confidence in researchers at universities as well as in researchers at companies from 2013–2021.

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS 2021: 1,016



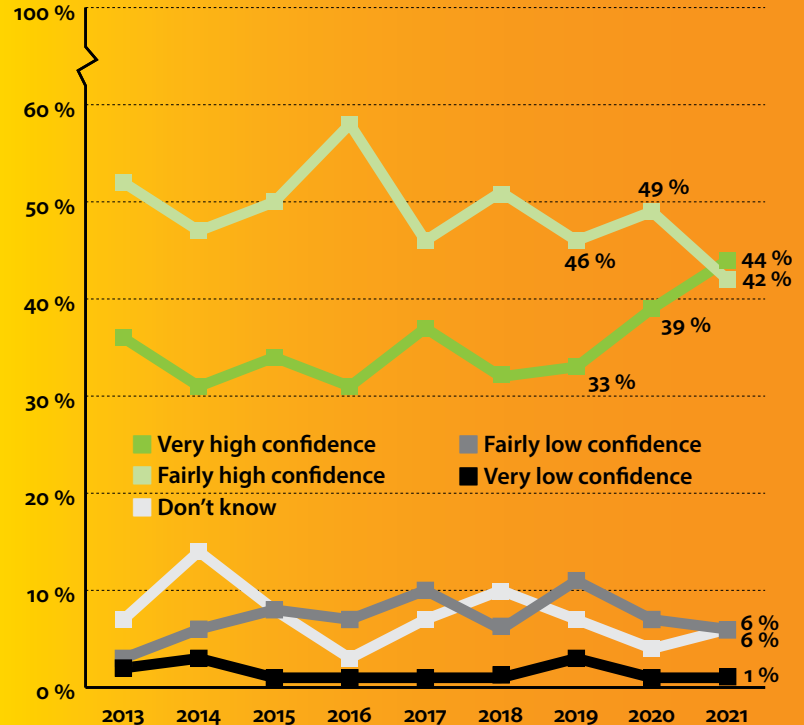
...AND IS STRONGER THAN EVER

Although the *combined* proportion of Swedes with fairly or very high confidence in researchers at universities is unchanged, the distribution of these has changed in recent years. A growing proportion say they have *very high* confidence in researchers at universities. The proportion saying very high this year is 44 percent, the highest figure since the survey began in 2002, and for the first time similar to the proportion that respond *fairly high* (42 percent).

This change indicates that confidence in researchers at universities has grown in recent years and is particularly evident among those with a university education. Among these, those with very high confidence has increased by 15 percentage points since 2019, while those with fairly high confidence has decreased by 9 percentage points.

The graph shows responses to the question of how much confidence do you have in researchers at universities from 2013–2021.

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS 2021: 1,016



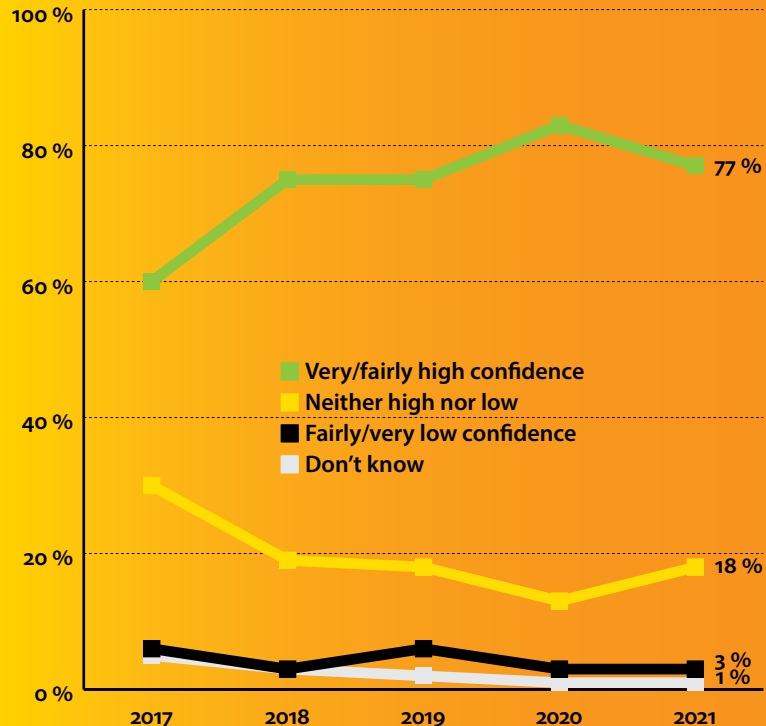
HIGHLY-EDUCATED — GREATER CONFIDENCE

Last year, the proportion of Swedes with *fairly* or *very high* confidence in research was 83 percent, the highest since the question was first asked in 2017. In this year's survey, the proportion has decreased to 77 percent and is comparable to results from 2018–2019.

As in previous years, and as seen in relation to interest in research, respondents' level of education plays a big role, with highly-educated people having greater confidence. Women have a greater confidence than men: 81 percent of women, compared with 74 percent of men, have a fairly or very high level of confidence in research. The difference between men and women was not visible in the years 2017–2019 but is clear in 2020–2021.

*The graph shows responses to the question **Generally speaking, how much confidence do you have in research?***

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 1,021 (2017) 1,052 (2018) 1,021 (2019) 1,018 (2020) 1,016 (2021)



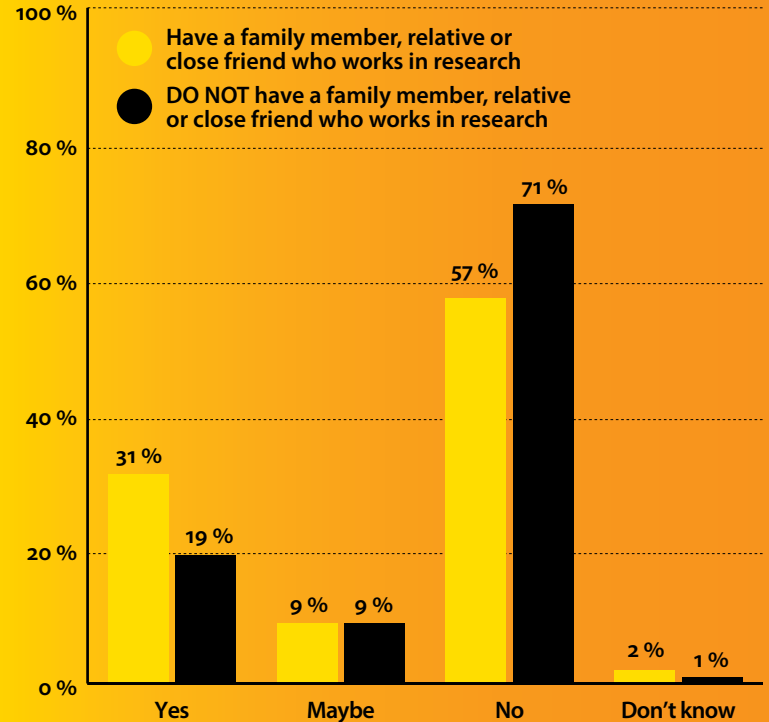
1 IN 4 WANT TO WORK AS A RESEARCHER

Would you want to work as a researcher in the future? This question was asked to people aged 16–65, and no differences can be seen in the responses of people of different ages. Just under one in four people (23 percent) aged 16–29 answered yes, as did just over a quarter (27 percent) of those aged between 60 and 65. The proportion who responded yes has not changed from last year in any age group.

Swedes who have a family member, relative or close friend who works in research are particularly likely to consider research as a profession. Among these, 31 percent answered yes, compared to 19 percent of those who don't. University graduates are equally likely to answer yes as those without a university education.

*The graph shows responses to the question **Would you want to work as a researcher in the future?** split into those who have a family member, relative or close friend who works in research and those who do not.*

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 329 (HAVE SOMEONE CLOSE WORKING IN RESEARCH)
544 (DOESN'T HAVE SOMEONE CLOSE WORKING IN RESEARCH).



RESEARCH INTO MEDICINE PLEASE!

People who answered *yes* or *maybe* to the question of whether they would want to work as a researcher in the future were asked a follow-up question about what they would then be interested in researching. The most common answer is *medicine*, followed by *technology*. *Psychology*, *language* and *culture* are also common. The answers vary a lot and many state quite specific subjects, such as *new types of fuel*, *statistics*, *social media* and *nutrition*.

One in ten (9 percent) respondents do not know and did not come up with any specific subject.

The word cloud shows the most common answers to the question of what would you like to research? The question was asked to people who answered yes or maybe to the question of whether they would want to work as a researcher in the future.

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 314



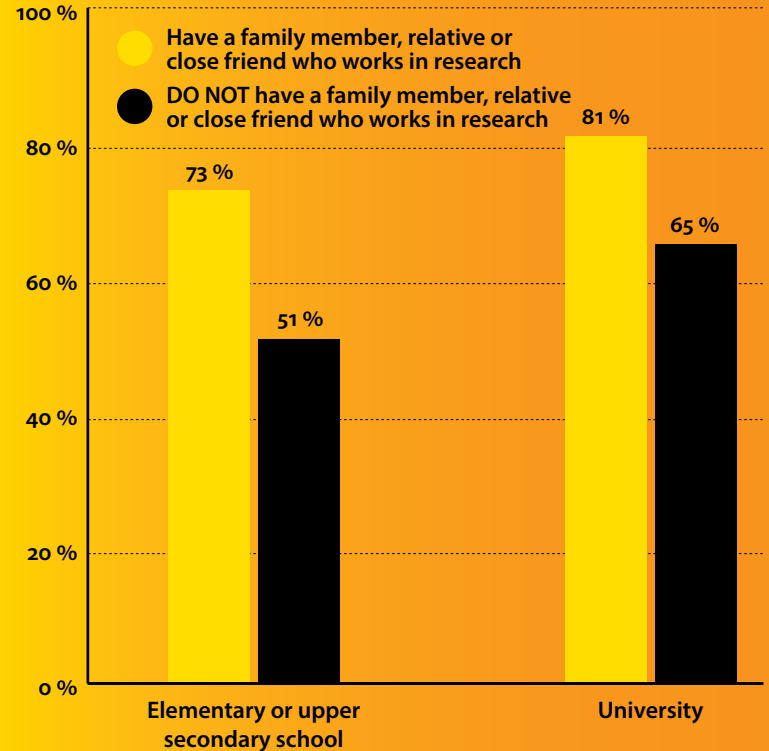
RESEARCH NEWS CONSUMED BY MANY

Six out of ten Swedes (63 percent) consume research news on a weekly basis. This is a clear increase from 2019, when the corresponding proportion was 53 percent. The change is particularly evident among people without a university education. Among these, the proportion who consume research news on a weekly basis has risen from 44 percent in 2019 to 57 percent in 2021.

People who have a family member, relative or close friend who works in research consume research news more often than people that don't have researchers close by. It is a pattern that is seen both among people with and without a university education.

*The graph shows the proportion who **consume research news on a weekly basis**, split by educational level and if they have a family member, relative or close friend who works in research.*

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 110 (ELEMENTARY/UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL WITH SOMEONE CLOSE WORKING IN RESEARCH) 310 (ELEMENTARY/UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL WITHOUT SOMEONE CLOSE WORKING IN RESEARCH) 255 (UNIVERSITY WITH SOMEONE CLOSE WHO WORKS IN RESEARCH) 319 (UNIVERSITY WITHOUT SOMEONE CLOSE WHO WORKS IN RESEARCH)



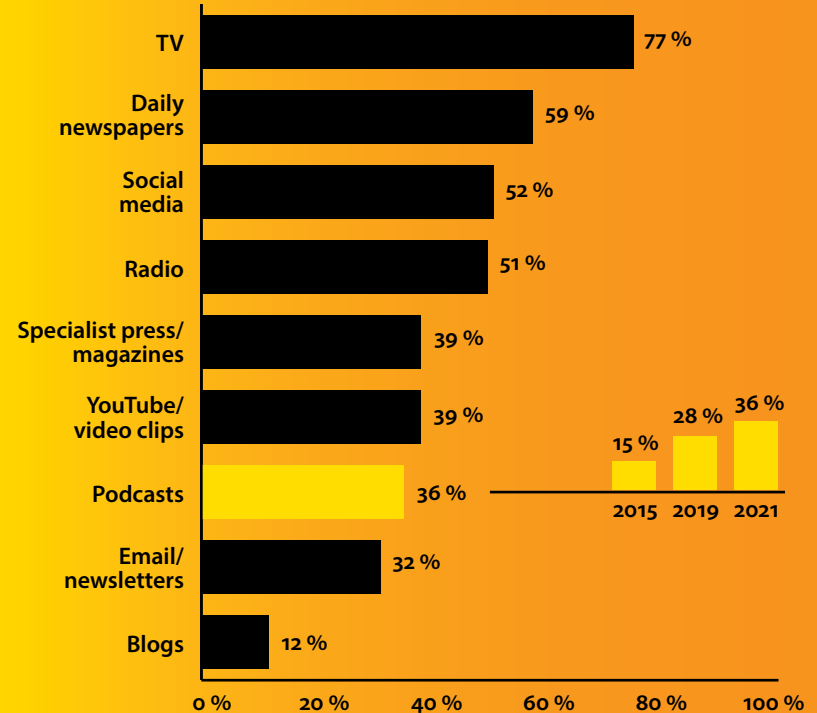
UPSWING FOR PODCASTS

The most common channels for accessing research news are *TV* and *newspapers*, which are accessed by 77 and 59 percent of Swedes respectively, followed by *social media* and *radio* (52 and 51 percent).

The channels for research news have not changed significantly since 2019 – with one exception: *podcasts*. This year, 36 percent say they get research news from podcasts; a clear increase from 2019 (28 percent) and 2015 (15 percent). Today, one in two people aged 16–44 gets research news via podcasts. Increased podcast listening is noticeable in all age groups, although it is less common among people over 44 years old. Among those aged between 60 and 74, one in ten (11 percent) gets research news via podcasts.

*The graph shows responses to the question **Do you access news about research and science via?** (Each channel includes web-based versions). The bars show the proportion that responded yes.*

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 1 016

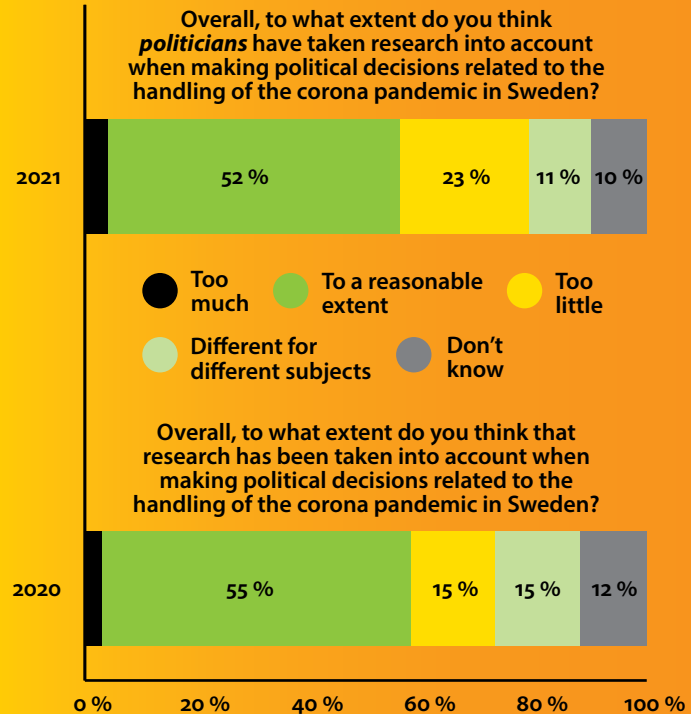


RESEARCH AND POLITICAL DECISIONS

Around one in two Swedes thinks that politicians have taken research into account *to a reasonable extent* when making political decisions regarding the pandemic in Sweden. This is similar to last year's VA Barometer, even though the question was then worded slightly differently. However, this year, a larger proportion, 23 percent, believe that research is taken *too little* into account, compared with 15 percent last year. A greater percent of women (63 percent) think that research is taken into account to a reasonable extent in the handling of the pandemic, compared with 41 percent of men. In 2020, 53 percent of women and 56 percent of men thought that politicians took sufficient account of research.

*The graph shows responses to two questions about **the extent that research has been taken into account in the handling of the corona pandemic in Sweden** asked in 2020 and 2021.*

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 510 (2021) 506 (2020)



ABOUT THE SURVEY

The VA Barometer has been conducted annually since 2002. The survey is conducted via telephone interviews with a stratified random sample of the Swedish population, around 1,000 people (this year 1,016), aged between 16 to 74 years old. The response rate in this year's survey was 42 percent. Respondents are representative in terms of gender, age and place of residence. The results have been weighted retrospectively since 2014 (2013 for confidence in researchers) to ensure representativeness in terms of level of education. Only statistically significant comparisons between the response groups are published.

Interviews are conducted between August and October and completed before the yearly announcement of the Nobel Prize winners due to media attention surrounding the Nobel Prize. For this year's survey, the field period ran from 23 August to 3 October 2021.

Exquiro Market Research has carried out the interviews since 2012. A reference group with expertise in survey methodology helps to formulate the questions. The interview questions can be downloaded at www.v-a.se.

VA (Public & Science) promotes dialogue and openness between researchers and the public. The organisation works to create new and engaging forms of dialogue about research. VA is also developing new knowledge on the relationship between research and society through surveys and studies. Its members consist of some 100 organisations, including including authorities, companies and associations. In addition, it has a number of individual members.



Vetenskap & Allmänhet

Read more at www.v-a.se