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VA Barometer 2024/25 – VA Report 2024:4

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More information about the survey can be found at www.vetenskapallmanhet.se

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Since 2002, Public & Science Sweden has conducted the annual VA Barometer to investigate the Swedish public's views on science and researchers. In Sweden, confidence in both research and university researchers remains consistently high, with nearly nine out of ten people expressing significant confidence in university researchers. These figures have remained virtually unchanged for over a decade.

The strong standing of science among the Swedish public is further reflected in other responses. This year, we have focused particularly on the relationship between science and politics. A clear conclusion is that people consider scientific evidence important for political decision-making. A large majority of Swedes believe researchers should express opinions on political issues related to their areas of expertise. The belief that scientific evidence is a crucial political argument is further supported by the fact that nearly half of respondents feel their own party gives sufficient consideration to research findings, while an equal number believe politicians, in general, pay too little attention to research. Relatively few believe their own party gives too little consideration to research overall.

This trend is particularly evident in political parties' key policy issues. In criminal policy, half of Tidö bloc voters believe the party they support gives significant consideration to research findings, while considerably fewer opposition voters feel the same about their own parties.* When asked a similar question regarding climate policy, the pattern is reversed: more than half of opposition party supporters believe their party gives significant consideration to research findings, whereas a smaller proportion of Tidö bloc voters share that view about their party.

Another noteworthy result this year is a significant decline in confidence in research among the youngest age group (16–29 years). However, it is too early to determine whether this represents a trend or a temporary anomaly. Other responses also suggest a potential decrease in confidence in science and technology. While the majority still agree that scientific and technological advancements make life better, optimism has declined, particularly regarding technological development.

Ulrika Björkstén, Secretary-General,
Public & Science Sweden

* The Tidö bloc is a political coalition in Sweden comprising right-wing parties, including the Moderate Party (M), the Christian Democrats (KD), the Liberals (L), and the Sweden Democrats (SD), which supports a minority government led by the Moderate Party. The opposition consists of left-wing parties: the Left Party (V), the Social Democrats (S), the Green Party (MP) along with the Centre Party (C), which is generally considered a right-wing party.

ABOUT THE VA BAROMETER

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 1,009), aged between 16 to 74 years old. The response rate in this year's survey was 42 percent. The response rate has decreased over time since the survey began, but has stabilised somewhat in the last five years, remaining between 42 and 46 percent. Respondents are representative in terms of gender, age and place of residence. The results have been weighted since 2014 to ensure representativeness in terms of level of education.

Only statistically significant comparisons are commented on in the text, however, for the sake of clarity, the graphs sometimes display non-significant differences between categories and individual years. 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. This year's interviews were conducted between 12 August to 29 September 2024. Exquiro Market Research has carried out the interviews since 2012. A reference group helps to formulate the questions.

The interview questions can be downloaded at www.vetenskapallmanhet.se

LAST YEAR THROUGH SWEDISH EYES

Anne L'Huillier of Lund University is announced as the 2023 Nobel Prize laureate in Physics. She becomes the fifth woman to receive the prize, sharing it with Pierre Agostini and Ferenc Krausz.

Astronaut **Marcus Wandt** travels to the **International Space Station**, becoming the third Swede in space. During his mission he conducts research on stem cells.

Over 140 people are killed in a **terrorist attack at a concert hall in Moscow**. The IS-affiliated group IS Khorasan claims responsibility.

The Swedish Parliament passes a decision to introduce a **new and controversial gender identity law** aimed at simplifying the process of changing legal gender.

Following tens of thousands of civilian deaths in Gaza, the Chief Prosecutor of the **International Criminal Court** issues arrest warrants for **Israel's Prime Minister and Defence Minister, plus three Hamas leaders**.

European Parliament elections are held across EU member states, with right-wing nationalist parties in France, Italy, and Germany achieving strong results.

U.S. President **Joe Biden** withdraws as the Democratic candidate for the presidential election on 5 November.

Oct Nov Dec 2024 Jan Feb March April May June July Aug Sept

Nearly 1,200 people are killed and around 250 taken hostage when **Hamas carries out multiple coordinated terrorist attacks in southern Israel**. These attacks prompt Israel to declare war on Hamas, launching massive airstrikes and a ground invasion in Gaza.

The trade union **IF Metall** initiates a **historic strike against electric car manufacturer Tesla in Sweden**, demanding that Tesla's Swedish subsidiary, TM Sweden, sign a collective agreement.

Sweden becomes a full member of the defence organisation NATO, marking the end of 200 years of neutrality.

Oppenheimer, the film about the physicist who led the development of the atomic bomb, **wins seven awards at the Oscars**.

India holds the largest parliamentary election in history, with around 650 million people voting over four weeks. Incumbent Prime Minister Narendra Modi secures victory.

Republican presidential candidate **Donald Trump** is the target of an **assassination attempt** during a campaign rally.

Several international organisations declare **famine in parts of Sudan after 15 months of war in the country**. In the Zamzam camp in North Darfur, hundreds of thousands of refugees struggle for survival.

For the first time ever, a **temperature exceeding 30 degrees Celsius is recorded in Sweden during September**.

This year's **VA Barometer** interviews are conducted.

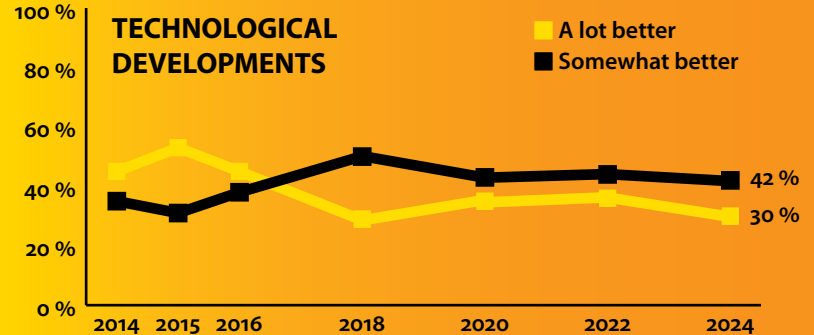
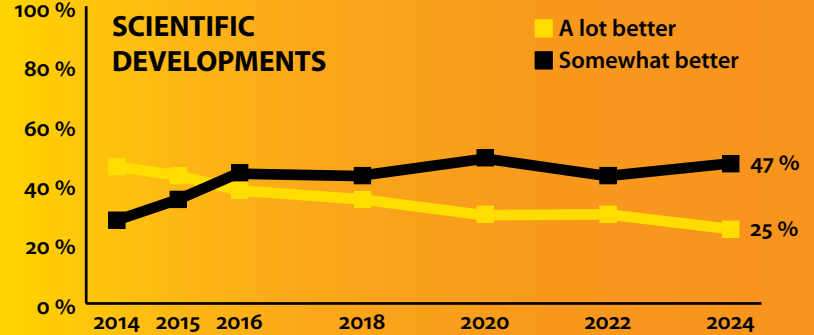
SCIENCE SEEN TO MAKE LIFE BETTER

Most Swedes (72 percent) believe that scientific and technological advancements have made life *somewhat* or *a lot better*. However, only around half as many (25 percent) believe that scientific developments have made life *a lot better*, compared to 2014 (46 percent).

Supporters of a Tidö party (L, M, KD, SD) have a less positive view of *technological developments*. Fewer Tidö voters than opposition voters (V, S, MP, C) believe that advancements have made life *somewhat* or *a lot better* (64 percent compared to 81 percent), while more Tidö supporters feel that developments have made life *somewhat* or *a lot worse* (15 percent and 5 percent respectively).

The graph shows the proportion of Swedes that think that scientific/technological developments in the last 10–20 years have made life somewhat or a lot better. Five point scale: A lot better, Somewhat better, Neither better nor worse, Somewhat worse, A lot worse.

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 1,007 (2014) 1,011 (2015) 1,023 (2016) 1,053 (2018) 1,018 (2020) 1,009 (2022) 1,009 (2024)

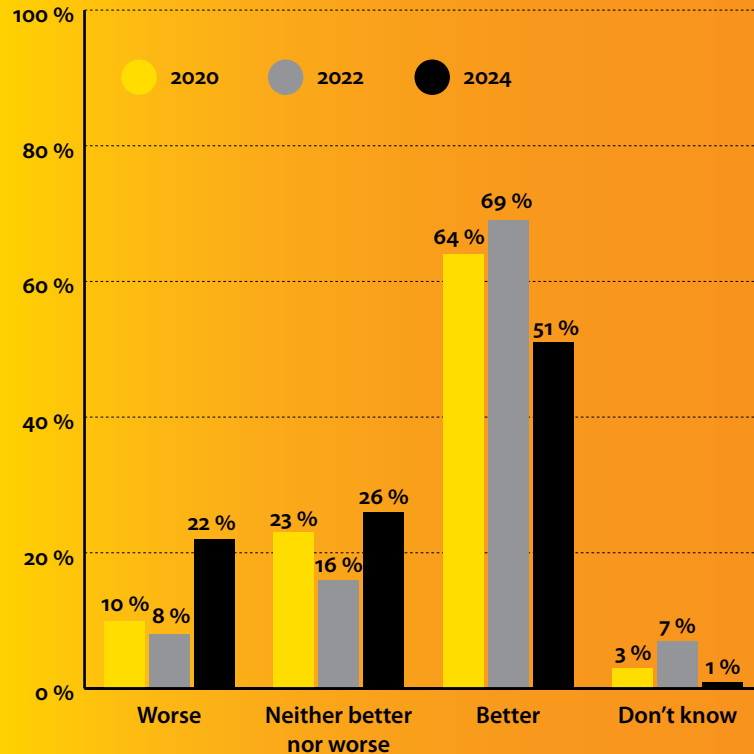


... BUT TECHNOLOGY OPTIMISM DECLINES

Half of Swedes still believe that technological developments will make life *better*, but optimism has sharply declined in recent years. Most striking is the rise in outright pessimism. More than one in five (22 percent) now believe that technological developments will make life *worse*, compared to just 8 percent in 2022. There are no statistically significant differences based on age, gender, or education level. However, more Tidö bloc voters (27 percent) than opposition voters (15 percent) think that technological developments will make life *worse*.

The graph shows the proportion of Swedes that think that technological developments in the next 10–20 years will make life better or worse. Better includes the perception of somewhat or a lot better, while worse includes somewhat or a lot worse. Five point scale: A lot better, Somewhat better, Neither better nor worse, Somewhat worse, A lot worse.

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 1,018 (2020) 1,009 (2022) 1,009 (2024)



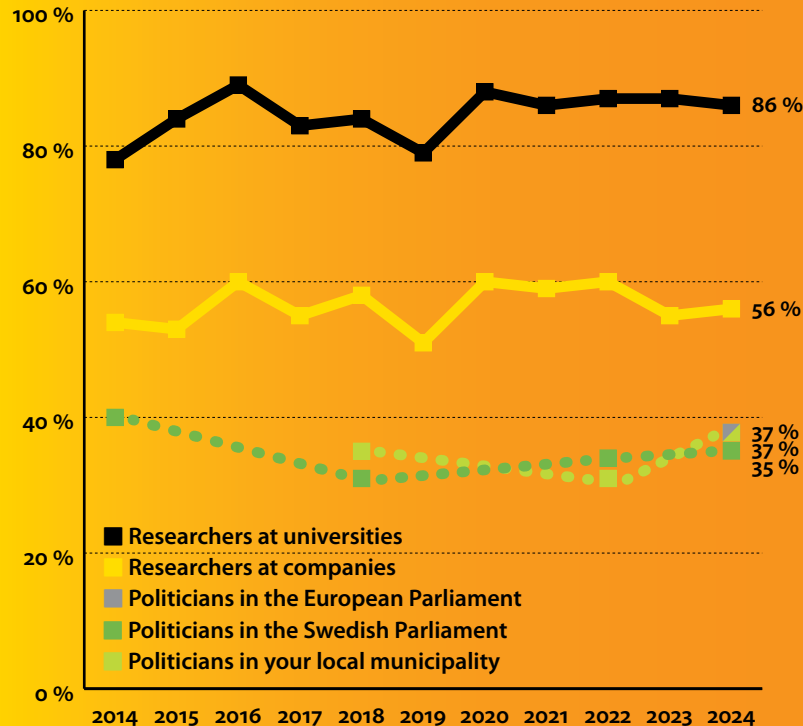
HIGH CONFIDENCE IN RESEARCHERS

Swedes' confidence in researchers remains high with nearly nine out of ten (86 percent) reporting *high* confidence in researchers at universities. However, the corresponding figure for researchers at companies is significantly lower (56 percent).

A slightly higher proportion of women (89 percent) than men (82 percent) express *high* confidence in researchers at universities, consistent with women's generally higher confidence in both local and EU politicians. However, no statistically significant differences between women and men are observed regarding confidence in researchers at companies or national politicians.

The graph shows the proportion of Swedes with high confidence in... High confidence includes the perception of having fairly and very high confidence. Four-point scale: Very high, Fairly high, Fairly low, Very low.

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 1,007 (2014) 1,011 (2015) 1,023 (2016) 1,021 (2017) 1,053 (2018) 1,021 (2019) 1,018 (2020) 1,016 (2021) 1,009 (2022) 1,017 (2023) 1,009 (2024)



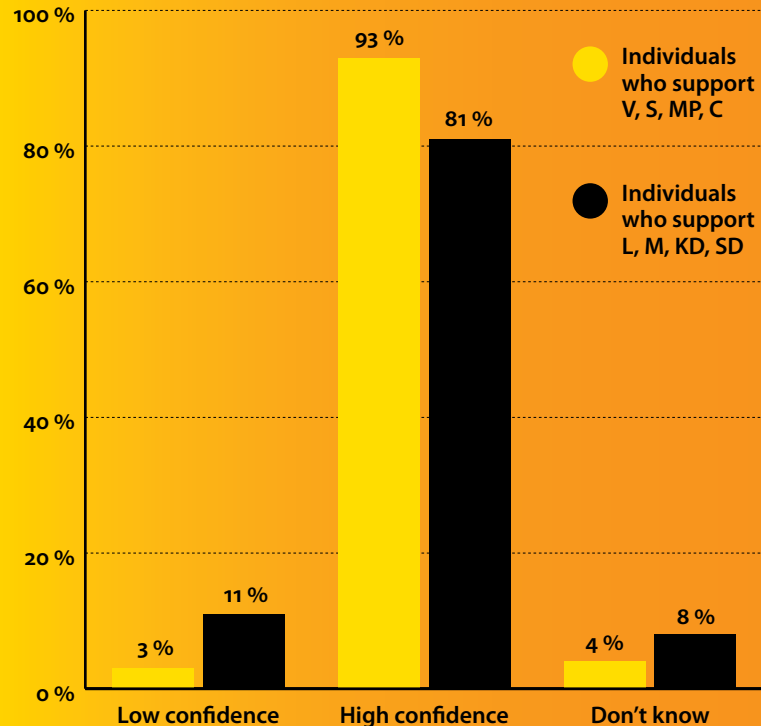
... & HIGHER AMONG OPPOSITION VOTERS

More supporters of opposition parties (V, S, MP, C) than of Tidö bloc parties (L, M, KD, SD) express *high* confidence in researchers at universities (93 percent compared to 81 percent).

Additionally, a higher proportion of opposition voters than Tidö voters report *high* confidence in local politicians (45 percent compared to 33 percent) and EU politicians (46 percent compared to 33 percent). However, no statistically significant differences are observed regarding confidence in researchers at companies or national politicians.

*The graph shows how respondents, who say they would vote for an opposition party versus a Tidö bloc party, answer the question: **How much confidence do you have in researchers at universities?** High confidence includes the responses **fairly** and **very high**, while low confidence includes the responses **fairly** and **very low**. Four-point scale: Very high, Fairly high, Fairly low, Very low.*

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 372 (THOSE WHO SUPPORT V, S, MP, C) 273 (THOSE WHO SUPPORT L, M, KD, SD)

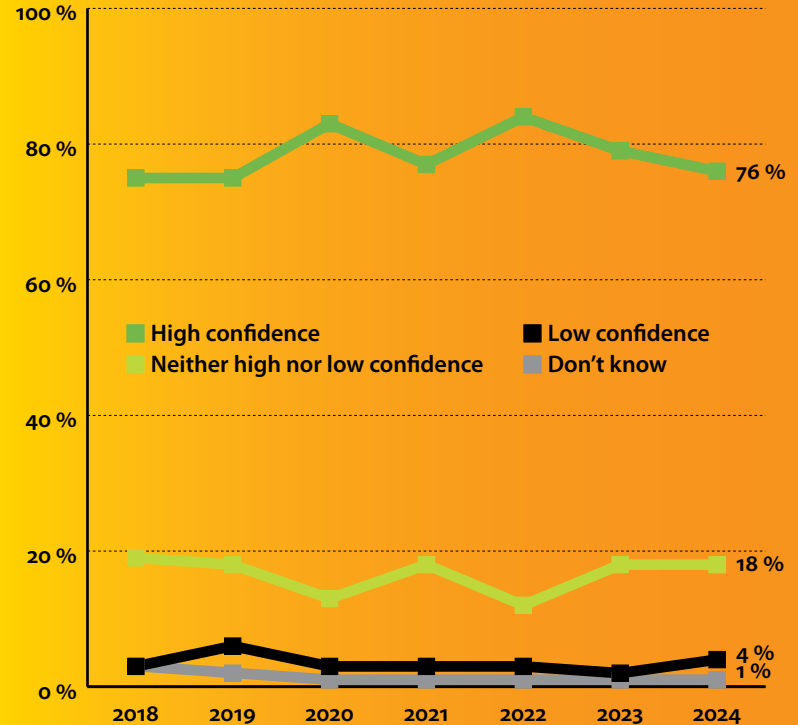


HIGH CONFIDENCE IN RESEARCH

Confidence in *research* as a whole remains consistently high, though slightly lower than in *university researchers*. Opposition voters (V, S, MP, C) are more likely than Tidö bloc voters (L, M, KD, SD) to express *high* confidence in research (83 percent vs. 73 percent). The gap between those *with* and *without a university education* is now the largest since 2018. Nearly nine out of ten (88 percent) of university-educated individuals report high confidence versus 67 percent of those without. Confidence among young people (aged 16–29) has also sharply declined from 81 to 66 percent since last year.

*The graph shows responses to the question: **Generally speaking, how much confidence do you have in research?** High confidence refers to the responses **fairly** and **very high** confidence, while **low** includes the responses **fairly** and **very low**. Five point scale: Very high, Fairly high, Neither high nor low, Fairly low, Very low.*

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 1,053 (2018) 1,021 (2019) 1,018 (2020) 1,016 (2021) 1,009 (2022)
1,017 (2023) 1,009 (2024)



HIGHEST CONFIDENCE IN NATURAL SCIENCES

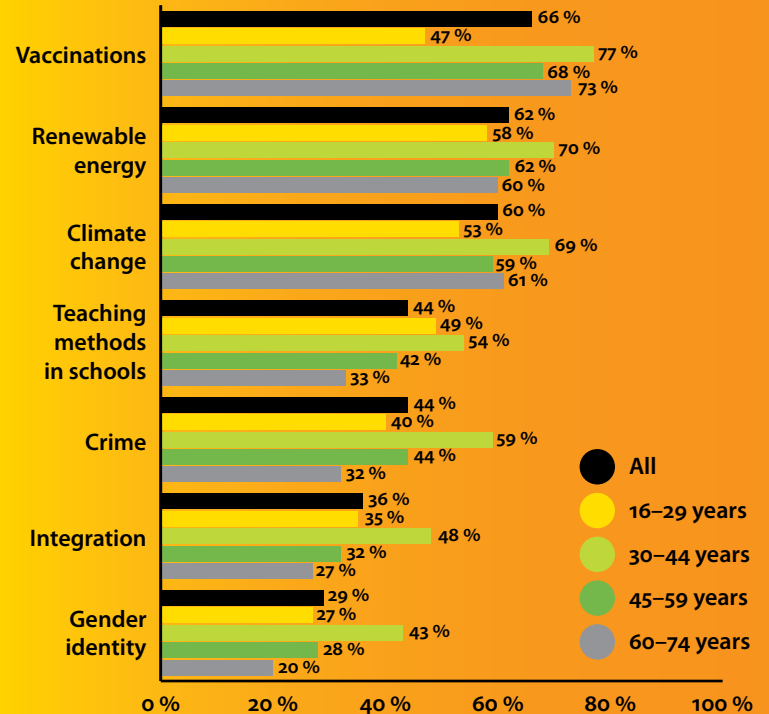
Swedes have greater confidence in researchers' statements on topics related to the natural sciences (vaccinations, renewable energy, and climate change) than on issues associated with the social sciences (teaching methods, crime, integration, and gender identity).

This difference is most pronounced in the 60–74 age group, where approximately twice as many express *high* confidence in statements about vaccinations, renewable energy, and climate change compared to statements on teaching methods, crime, and integration. Confidence is lowest for statements concerning gender identity.

The graph shows the proportion of respondents who report having high confidence in university researchers' statements on... High confidence refers to the responses fairly and very high confidence.

Five point scale: Very high, Fairly high, Neither high nor low, Fairly low, Very low.

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 1,009 (ALL) 248 (16–29 YEARS) 265 (30–44 YEARS) 264 (45–59 YEARS) 232 (60–74 YEARS)



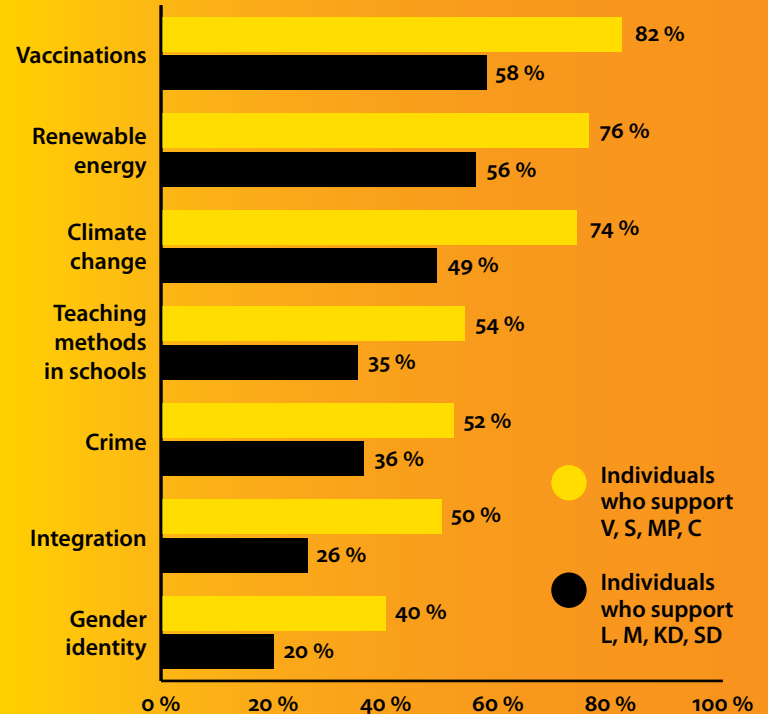
OPPOSITION VOTERS' CONFIDENCE HIGHER

Confidence in researchers' statements on various societal issues varies between opposition voters (V, S, MP, C) and supporters of Tidö bloc parties (L, M, KD, SD).

The most significant differences are seen in topics related to integration and gender identity, where opposition voters are twice as likely as Tidö voters to express *high* confidence in researchers' statements.

The graph shows the proportion of supporters of opposition parties versus Tidö bloc parties who report having high confidence in university researchers' statements on.... High confidence includes the responses fairly and very high confidence. Five point scale: Very high, Fairly high, Neither high nor low, Fairly low, Very low.

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 372 (INDIVIDUALS WHO SUPPORT V, S, MP, C)
273 (INDIVIDUALS WHO SUPPORT L, M, KD, SD)



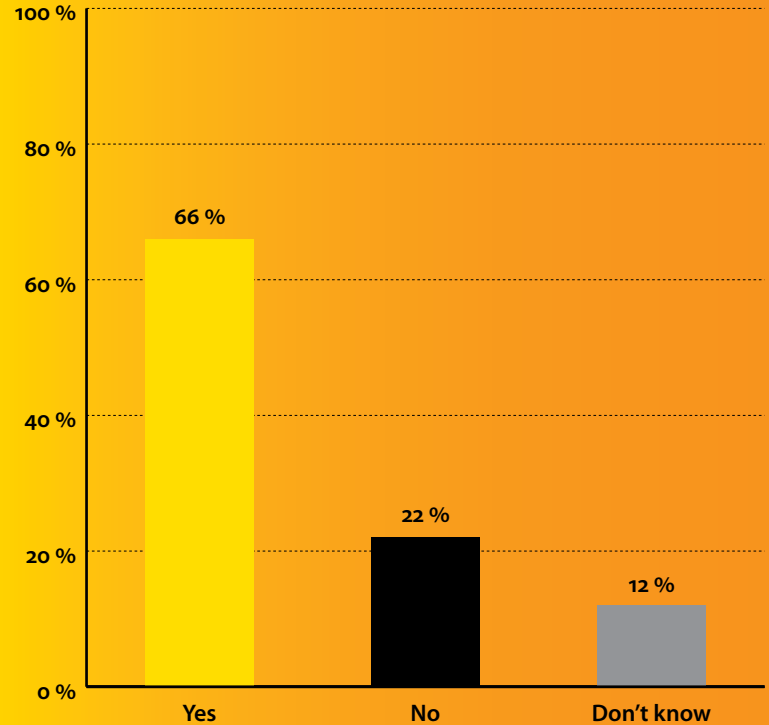
RESEARCHERS SHOULD EXPRESS OPINIONS

A majority (66 percent) believe that researchers should express their opinions on political issues related to their research. No statistically significant differences are observed based on gender, age, income, political affiliation, or whether individuals are born in Sweden or abroad.

Over half of those who support researchers sharing their opinions believe that it contributes to better policymaking. Some argue that researchers, like everyone, have a democratic right to express their views. A few believe it helps the public assess the reliability of research. Roughly half cite the importance of research being objective and neutral. Regardless of their stance, many do not provide a reason for their answer.

*The graph shows responses to the question: **Do you think researchers should express their opinions on political issues related to their research?***

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 1,009



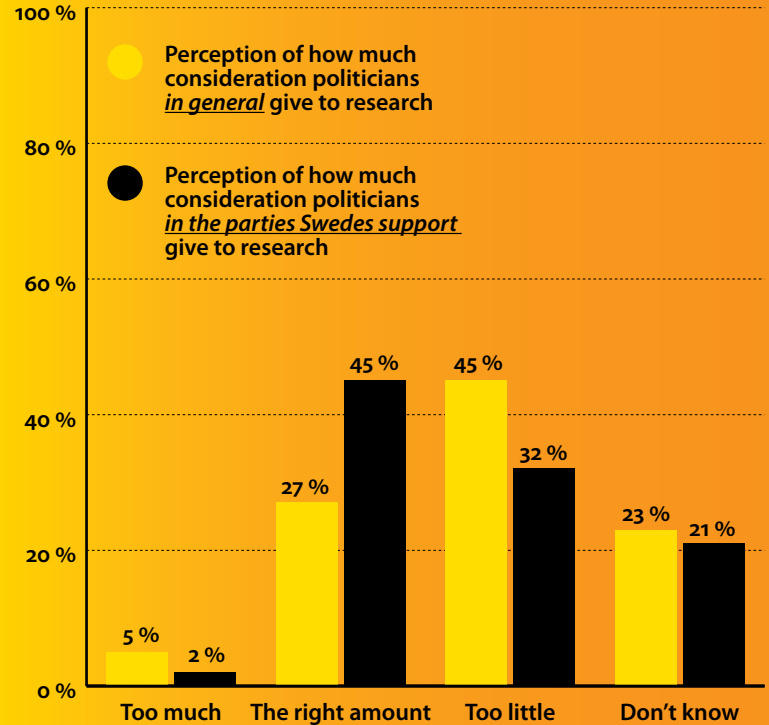
OWN PARTY SEEN AS MORE SCIENCE-BASED

Nearly half of Swedes (45 percent) believe that politicians in the parties they support give the *right amount* of consideration to research findings. At the same time, an equal proportion feel that politicians, in general, give *too little* consideration to research. Only a small number think politicians take research into account *too much*.

Opposition voters (V, S, MP, C) are more likely to believe *both* that politicians, in general, give *too little* consideration to research *and* that their own party gives the *right amount* (22 percent vs. 12 percent). Among Tidö bloc voters (L, M, KD, SD), a higher proportion respond “don't know” to both questions (19 percent vs. 10 percent).

The graph shows responses to the question: Do you think Swedish politicians in general, and the parties you support, give too much, the right amount, or too little consideration to research findings in their opinions and positions?

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 1,009 (ALL) 372 (INDIVIDUALS WHO SUPPORT V, S, MP, C)
273 (INDIVIDUALS WHO SUPPORT L, M, KD, SD)

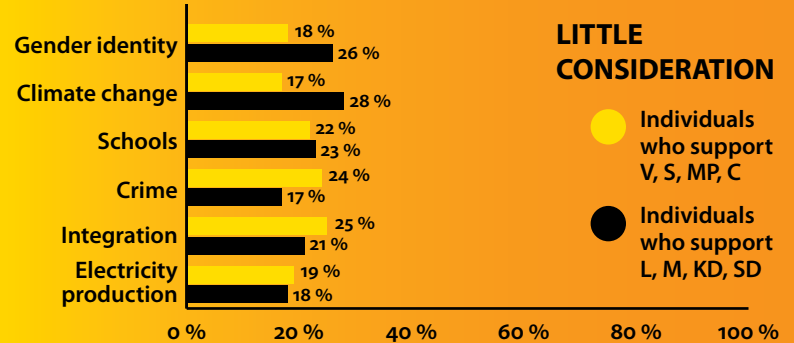
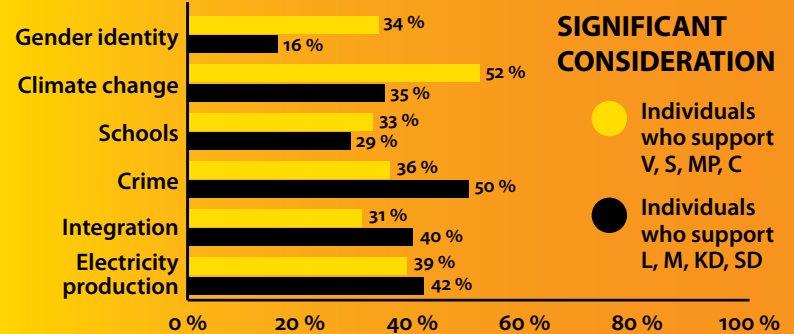


... ESPECIALLY ON KEY POLICY ISSUES

Tidö bloc voters (L, M, KD, SD) are more likely than opposition voters (V, S, MP, C) to believe that their politicians give significant consideration to research on issues such as crime and integration. For topics like gender identity and climate change, the pattern is reversed, with opposition voters more likely to feel that their politicians give significant consideration to research. This suggests that voters from both blocs tend to perceive their parties as more evidence-based on key policy issues.

The graph shows the proportion of respondents supporting a Tidö bloc party or opposition party who believe that politicians in the parties they sympathise with give either a lot or little consideration to research when expressing opinions on... Significant consideration includes fairly and very significant, while little includes fairly and very little. Five-point scale: Very significant, Fairly significant, Neither significant nor little, Fairly little, Very little.

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 372 (INDIVIDUALS WHO SUPPORT V, S, MP, C)
273 (INDIVIDUALS WHO SUPPORT L, M, KD, SD)

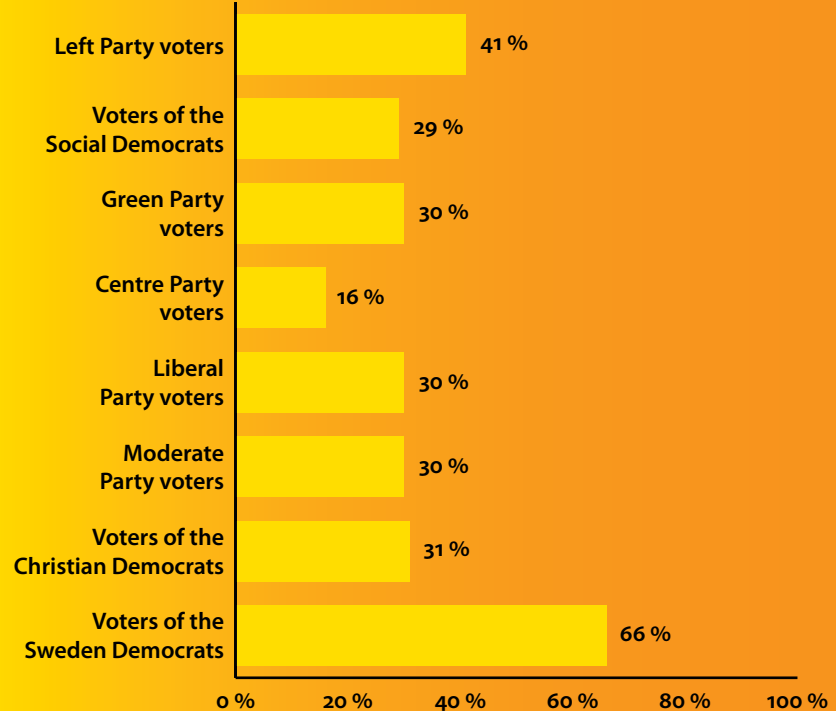


SD VOTERS STAND OUT ON INTEGRATION

Supporters of the Sweden Democrats (SD) stand out in their perception of their party's reliance on research regarding integration. Compared to supporters of the Social Democrats, Green Party, Centre Party, Liberals, Moderates, and Christian Democrats, SD supporters are more than twice as likely to believe that their party's politicians give *significant* consideration to research when addressing integration.

The graph shows the proportion of respondents supporting a specific party who believe that politicians in the parties they sympathise with give significant consideration to research findings when addressing integration. Significant consideration includes fairly and very significant. Five-point scale: Very significant, Fairly significant, Neither significant nor little, Fairly little, Very little.

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 83 (V VOTERS) 188 (S VOTERS) 68 (MP VOTERS) 33 (C VOTERS) 40 (L VOTERS) 139 (M VOTERS) 31 (KD VOTERS) 63 (SD VOTERS)

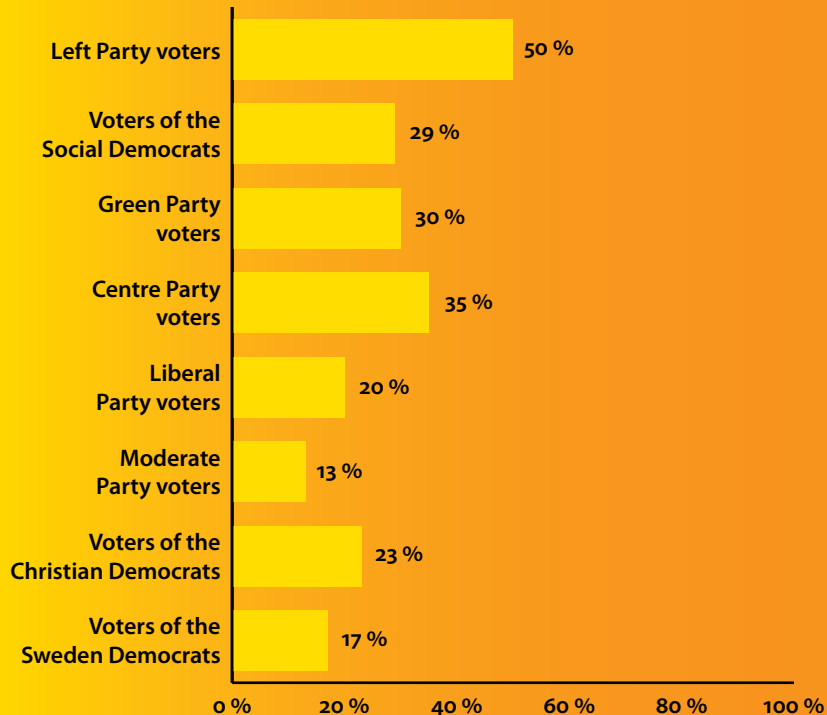


...AND LEFT VOTERS ON GENDER IDENTITY

Similarly, supporters of the Left Party stand out in their perception of their party's reliance on research regarding gender identity. Half of Left Party voters believe that their party's politicians give *significant* consideration to research findings when addressing gender identity. In contrast, only 13 percent of Moderate Party supporters share this view about their own party.

The graph shows the proportion of respondents supporting a specific party who believe that politicians in the parties they sympathise with give significant consideration to research findings when addressing gender identity. Significant consideration includes fairly and very significant. Five-point scale: Very significant, Fairly significant, Neither significant nor little, Fairly little, Very little.

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 83 (V VOTERS) 188 (S VOTERS) 68 (MP VOTERS) 33 (C VOTERS) 40 (L VOTERS)
139 (M VOTERS) 31 (KD VOTERS) 63 (SD VOTERS)



Public & Science Sweden promotes dialogue and openness between researchers and the public. The organisation works to create new and engaging forms of dialogue about research.

Public & Science is also developing new knowledge on the relationship between research and society through surveys and studies.

Its members consist of over 100 organisations, including authorities, companies and associations. In addition, it has a number of individual members.



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