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Swedish Science Barometer 2025/26 – Report 2025:4

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In the annual Swedish Science Barometer (previously the VA Barometer), Public & Science has, since 2002, investigated the Swedish public's views on science and researchers. The most striking result is that, in Sweden, confidence in both research and university researchers remains consistently high.

The strong standing of science among the Swedish public is also reflected in several other responses. For the second consecutive year, we have placed particular focus on the relationship between science and politics. A clear finding is that people consider scientific evidence important for political decision-making. A large majority of Swedes believe that researchers should express opinions on political issues related to their areas of expertise. Confidence in research and in university researchers is high across the board, but certain differences can be seen between supporters of the two current political blocs. Among Tidö-bloc* voters, considerably more report *fairly* high confidence in university researchers than *very* high confidence. Among opposition voters, the pattern is reversed: a majority say they have *very* high

confidence in university researchers, and significantly fewer report *fairly* high confidence.

Confidence in researchers' statements is higher among opposition voters than among Tidö-bloc voters across all subject areas, but the difference is especially marked when it comes to researchers' statements on certain social science-related issues. Confidence in statements concerning the natural sciences and technology is higher in both voting groups.

Despite this continued high confidence in research and researchers, a shift in trend has emerged in recent years. In both this year's and last year's surveys, significantly fewer Swedes than previously believe that technological development will, in the long term, lead to a better society. During the pandemic years (2020–2022), up to 70 percent of Swedes believed that technological advances would improve people's lives. Last year that proportion had fallen to just over 50 percent, and in this year's results technological optimism remains at that lower level.

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) and the Green Party (MP) – along with the Centre Party (C), which is generally considered a right-wing party.

ABOUT THE SCIENCE BAROMETER

The Swedish Science 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 1,014), aged between 16 to 74 years old. The response rate has decreased over time since the survey began and in this year's survey it was 36 percent. Respondents are representative in terms of gender, age and place of residence. Since 2014 the results have been weighted to ensure representativeness in terms of level of education.

This year's questions are the same as in last year's barometer, enabling us to track how public attitudes to issues related to research and politics develop in the run-up to the 2026 Swedish election. The comparisons highlighted in the text are statistically significant. Response distributions have been rounded to whole percentages, which means that combined results may differ slightly from individual response categories. Interviews are carried out between August and October (this year from 11 August to 28 September) and are completed before the announcement of the Nobel Prize winners due to the extensive media attention surrounding the prize. Exquiro Market Research has carried out the interviews since 2012.

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

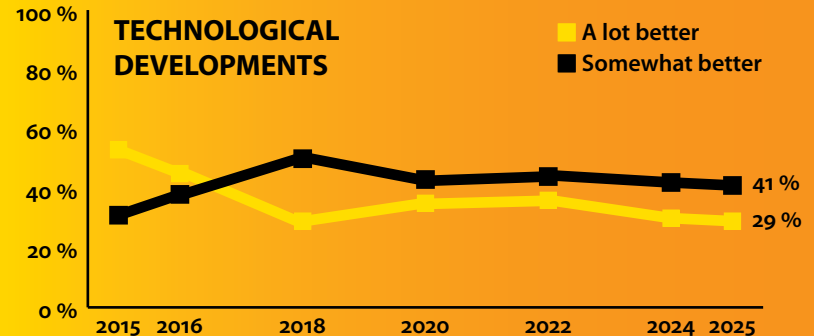
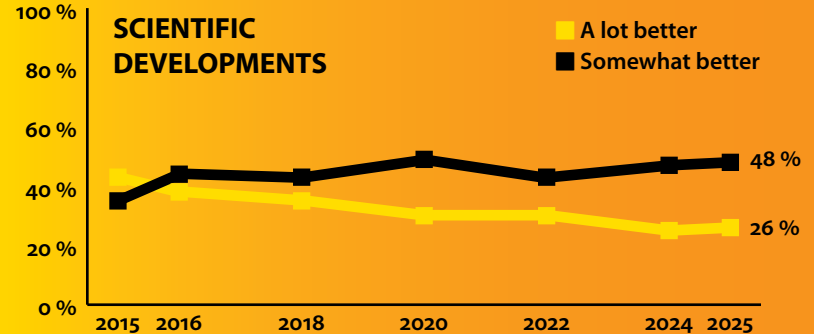
SCIENCE SEEN TO MAKE LIFE BETTER

Nearly three-quarters of Swedes (74 percent) believe that scientific developments have made life *somewhat* or *a lot* better. The corresponding figure for technological developments is almost as high (71 percent).

Over the past decade, however, we have seen a clear shift towards a more cautious view of scientific and technological developments. More respondents now say that these developments have made life *somewhat* better, whereas ten years ago it was more common to answer *a lot* better.

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 worse, Somewhat worse, Neither better nor worse, Somewhat better, A lot better.

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 1,011 (2015) 1,023 (2016) 1,053 (2018) 1,018 (2020) 1,009 (2022) 1,009 (2024) 1,014 (2025)

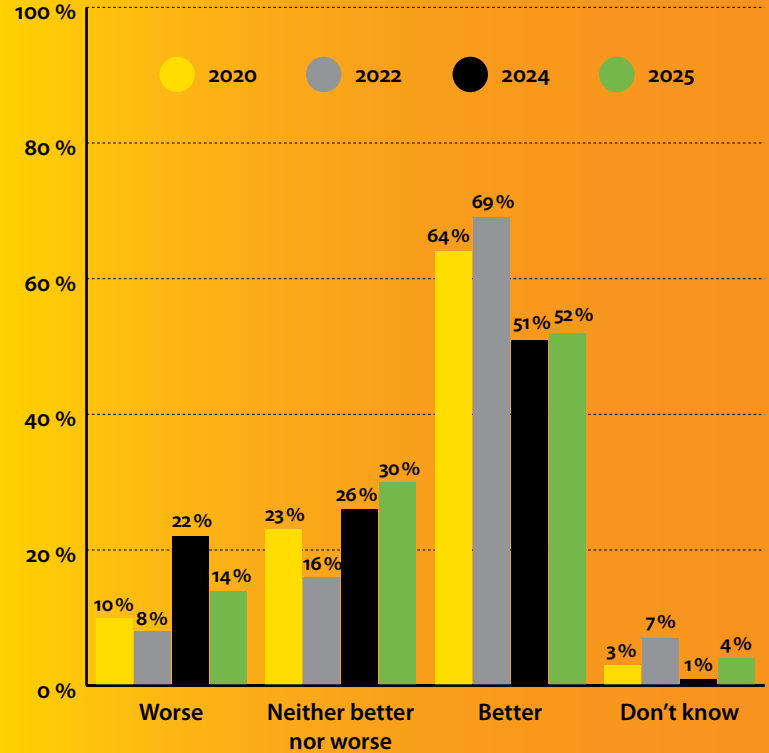


... BUT TECHNOLOGY OPTIMISM DECLINES

A more cautious confidence in technology's positive impact on life is also evident in responses about future technological developments. Admittedly, fewer now believe that technology will make life worse (the proportion has fallen from 22 to 14 percent), and just over half of Swedes (52 percent) still think that technological developments will make life better. Even so, results from the past two years show that optimism about the future has declined markedly (in 2022, 69 percent responded positively).

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 worse, Somewhat worse, Neither better nor worse, Somewhat better, A lot better.

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 1,018 (2020) 1,009 (2022) 1,009 (2024) 1,014 (2025)

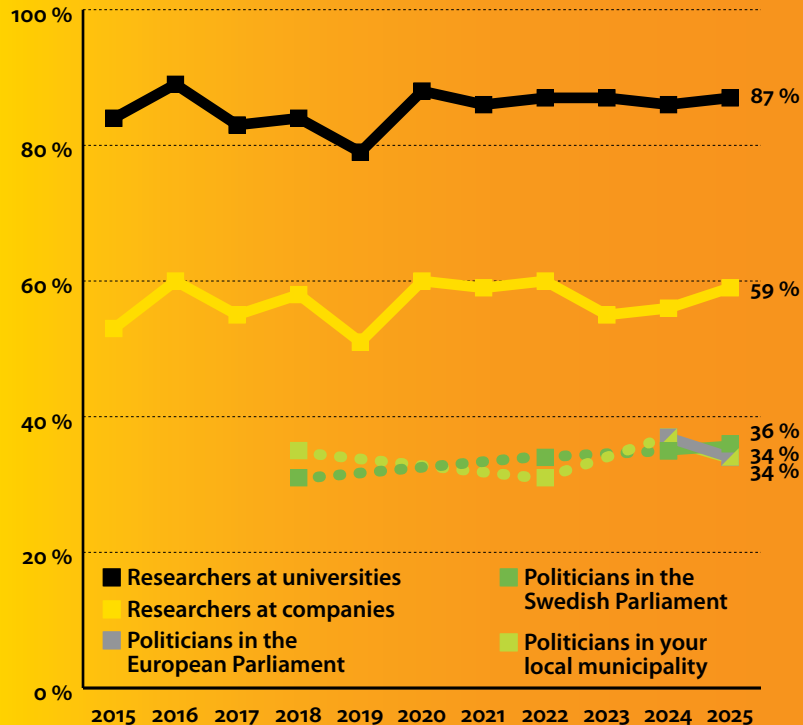


HIGH CONFIDENCE IN RESEARCHERS

The Swedish public's confidence in researchers remains high. Nearly nine out of ten (87 percent) report high confidence in researchers at universities. Confidence in researchers in industry is considerably lower (59 percent), but still higher than confidence in politicians in their local municipality (34 percent), in the Swedish Parliament (36 percent) or in the European Parliament (34 percent).

*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 low, Fairly low, Fairly high, Very high.***

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 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) 1,014 (2025)



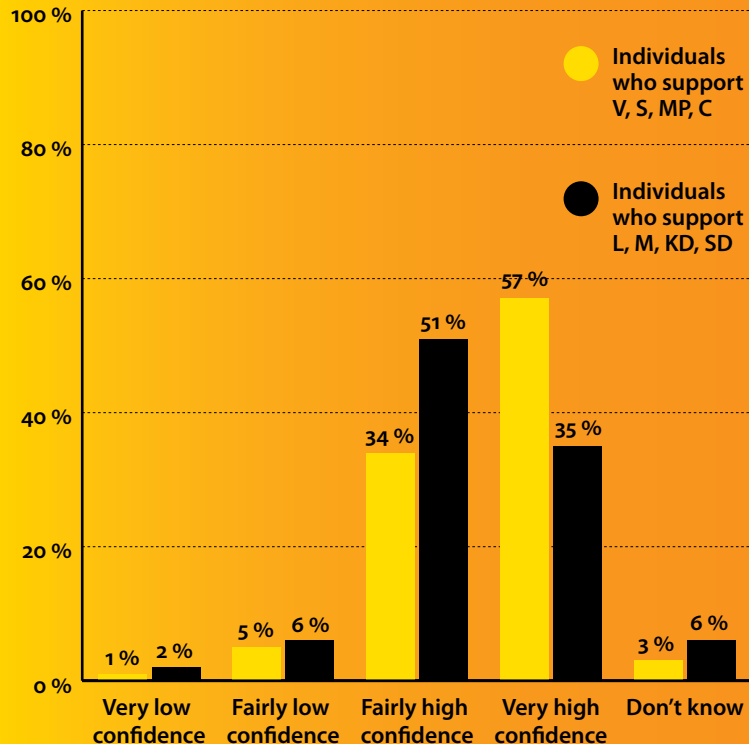
...AND HIGHER AMONG OPPOSITION VOTERS

In this year's survey, a higher proportion of supporters of opposition parties (V, S, MP, C) than of Tidö-bloc parties (L, M, KD, SD) express *very* high confidence (57 compared with 35 percent). Conversely, Tidö voters are more likely than opposition voters to report *fairly* high confidence (51 compared with 34 percent).

Unlike last year, however, no statistically significant differences are observed between supporters of the opposition and the Tidö-bloc parties when the results for *fairly* and *very* high confidence are combined.

*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?** Four-point scale: Very low, Fairly low, Fairly high, Very high.*

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 344 (INDIVIDUALS WHO SUPPORT V, S, MP, C)
214 (INDIVIDUALS WHO SUPPORT L, M, KD, SD)



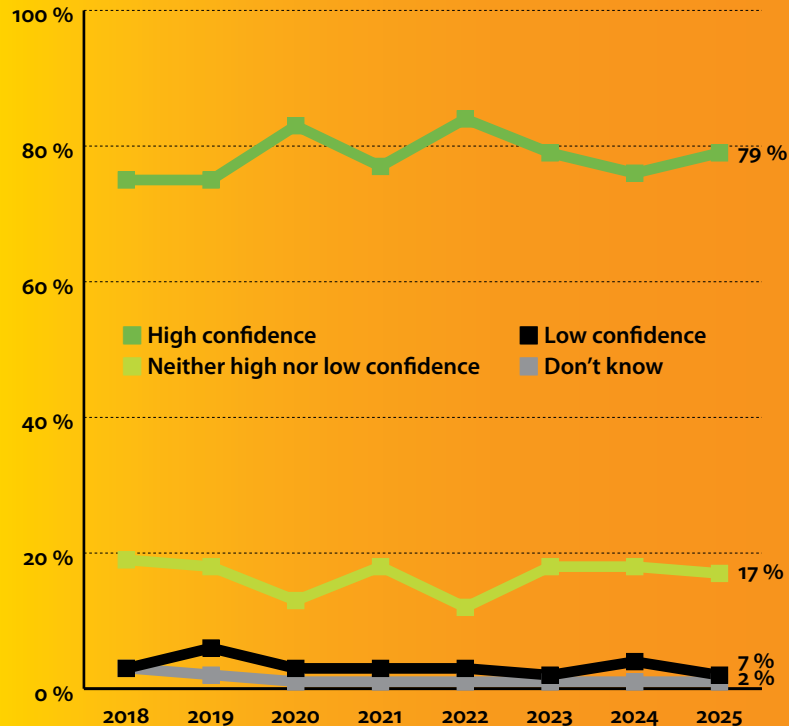
HIGH CONFIDENCE IN RESEARCH

Confidence in research itself also remains steadily high. This year, 80 percent of young people (aged 16–29) report high confidence in research – the same level as in previous years, aside from last year’s decline. That decrease appears to have been temporary, and may be related to the small sample size.

As in earlier surveys, respondents with a university education are somewhat more likely than those without to report high confidence in research (85 compared with 75 percent).

*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 low, Fairly low, Neither high nor low, Fairly high, Very high.*

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 1,053 (2018) 1,021 (2019) 1,018 (2020) 1,016 (2021) 1,009 (2022) 1,017 (2023) 1,009 (2024) 1,014 (2025)



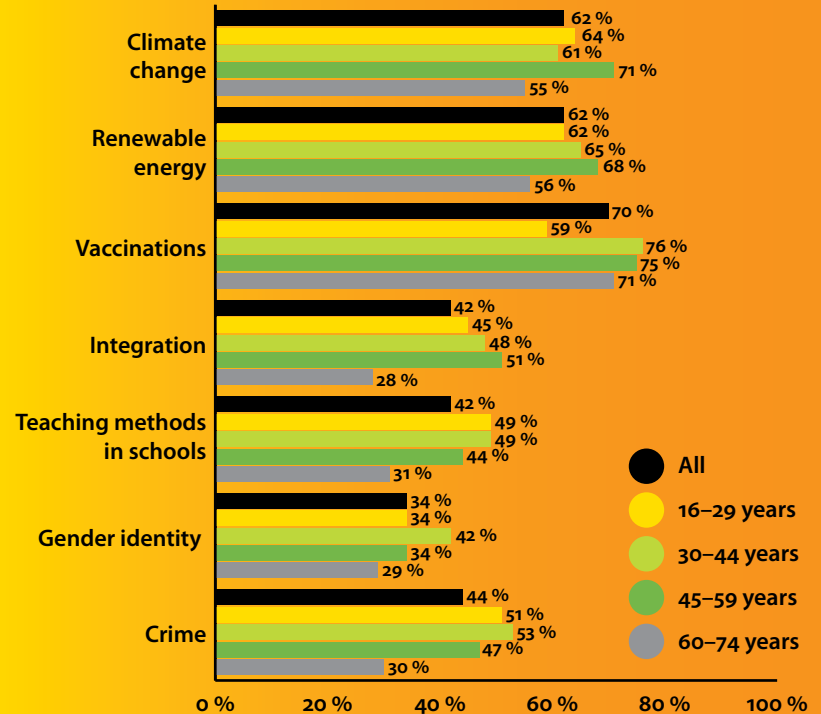
HIGHEST CONFIDENCE IN NATURAL SCIENCES

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

The difference is most pronounced in the 60–74 age group, where roughly twice as many express high confidence in statements on vaccinations, renewable energy and climate change as in statements concerning teaching methods, crime, integration and 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 low, Fairly low, Neither high nor low, Fairly high, Very high.

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 1,014 (ALL) 252 (16–29 YEARS) 261 (30–44 YEARS)
264 (45–59 YEARS) 237 (60–74 YEARS)



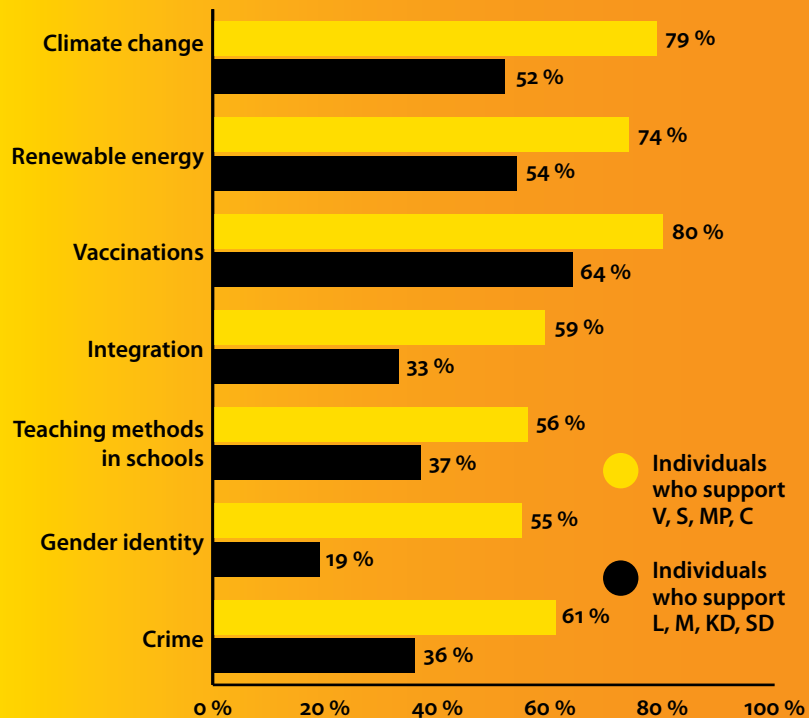
OPPOSITION VOTERS' CONFIDENCE HIGHER

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

The largest differences are seen in matters relating to gender identity, where opposition voters are almost three times as likely as Tidö voters to express high confidence in researchers' statements (55 compared with 19 percent). The gap is also notable when it comes to integration (59 compared with 33 percent).

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 low, Fairly low, Neither high nor low, Fairly high, Very high.

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 344 (INDIVIDUALS WHO SUPPORT V, S, MP, C)
214 (INDIVIDUALS WHO SUPPORT L, M, KD, SD)

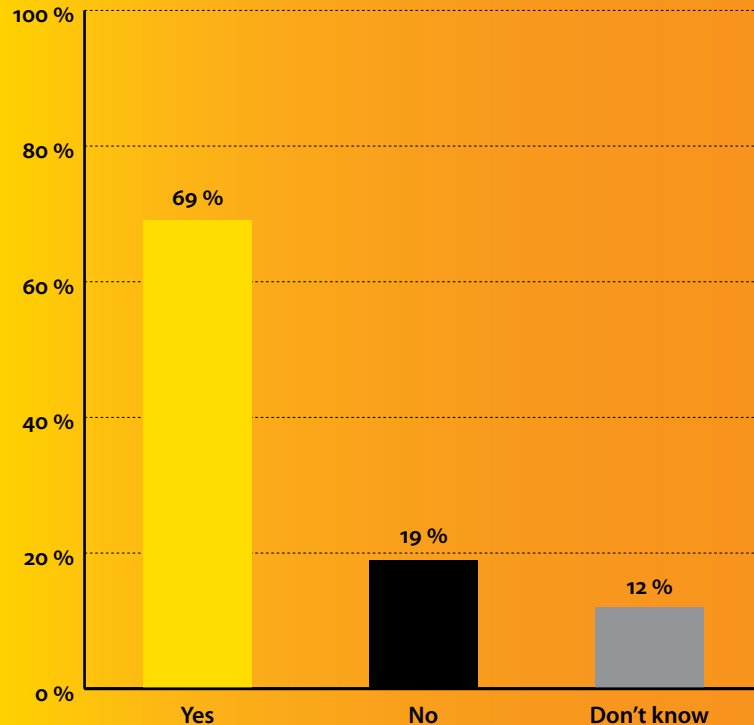


RESEARCHERS SHOULD EXPRESS OPINIONS

A large majority (69 percent) believe that researchers should express their opinions on political issues related to their research. This view is more common among opposition voters than among Tidö-bloc voters (80 compared with 69 percent). No statistically significant differences are observed based on gender, age or income. More than half of those who think researchers should speak out justify this by saying it leads to better policymaking. Some argue that researchers, like everyone else, have a democratic right to express their views, while a few believe it helps the public assess the reliability of research. Among those who think researchers should not express their opinions, almost half state that research ought to remain objective and neutral. Many respondents, especially in the 'no' group, 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: 1,014

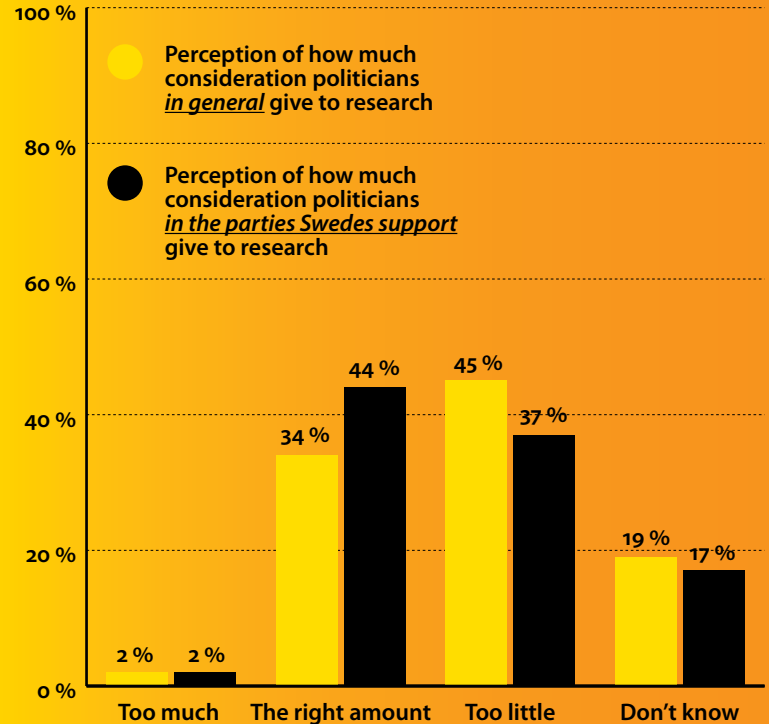


OWN PARTY SEEN AS MORE SCIENCE-BASED

Nearly half of Swedes (44 percent) believe that politicians in the parties they themselves support give the right amount of consideration to research findings. At the same time, roughly as many feel that politicians in general pay too little attention to research (45 percent). Only a very small proportion think that politicians give research too much consideration (2 percent).

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

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 1,014

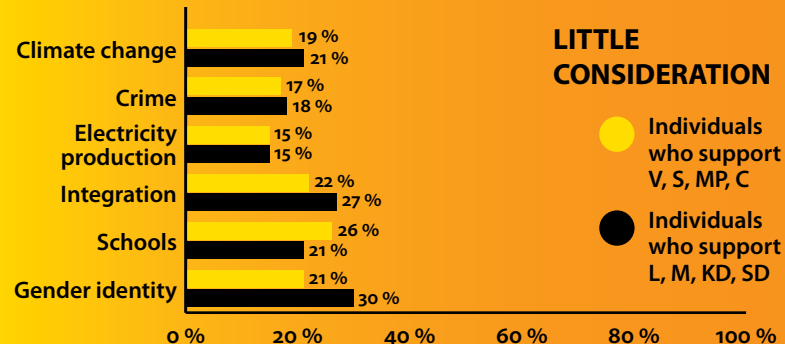
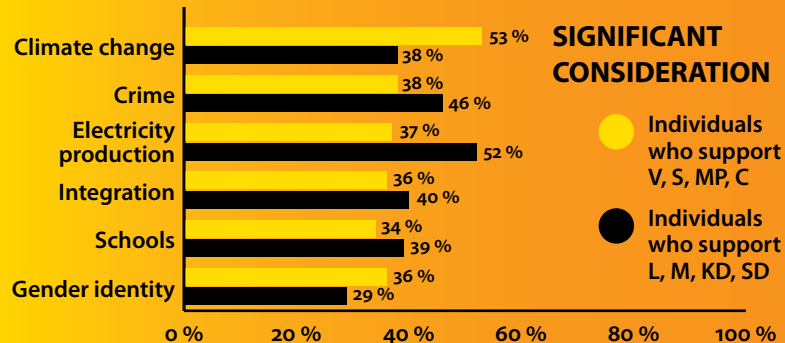


... ON ELECTRICITY & CLIMATE ESPECIALLY

More supporters of Tidö-bloc parties (L, M, KD, SD) than of opposition parties (V, S, MP, C) believe that politicians in the parties they support give significant consideration to research when expressing views on electricity production. For climate change, the pattern is reversed: in this area, opposition voters are more likely than Tidö voters to feel that their supported parties give significant consideration to research.

The graph shows the proportion of respondents supporting a Tidö bloc party or opposition party who believe that politicians in the parties they support give either significant 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 little, Fairly little, Neither significant nor little, Fairly significant, Very significant.

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 344 (INDIVIDUALS WHO SUPPORT V, S, MP, C)
214 (INDIVIDUALS WHO SUPPORT L, M, KD, SD)



Public & Science Sweden promotes dialogue and openness between researchers and the public. The organisation works to create different forms of engagement with research.

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

The association has over 100 member organisations, including authorities, companies and associations.

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