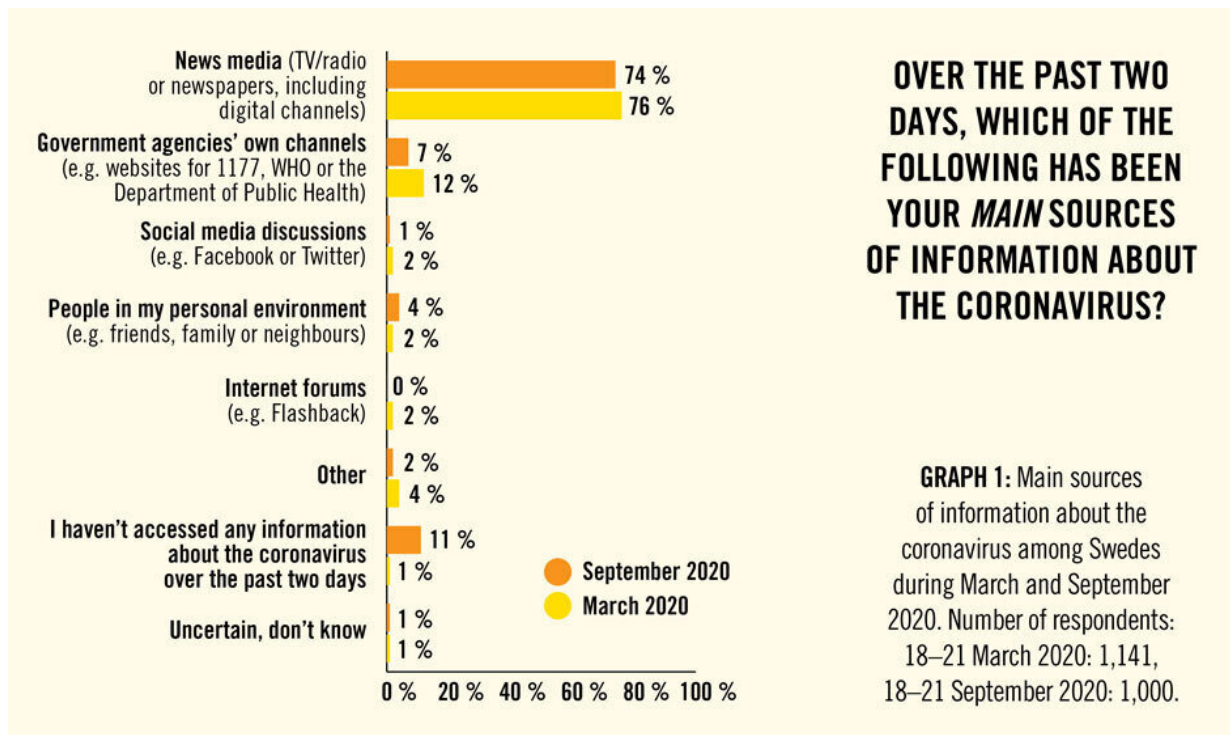


Swedish study highlights high public confidence in researchers amid pandemic

December 17 2021



Credit: Vetenskap & Allmaenhet

Researchers belong to the professional groups that most Swedes trust, when they comment on the coronavirus in the media. This is one of the findings of a new study recently published by the non-profit Swedish organization VA (Public & Science).

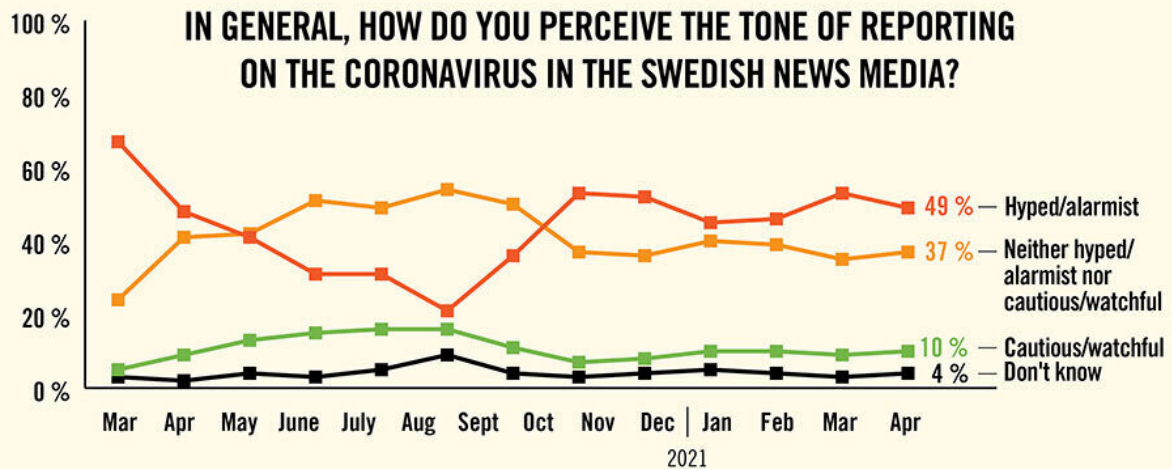
Healthcare professionals and researchers are the professional groups that the Swedish public had the greatest confidence in when they commented in the media during the pandemic. The public has the least confidence in politicians and journalists.

"The coronavirus pandemic has been characterized by a multitude of voices, opinions and information, during which correct, uncertain and sometimes even false information has been widely disseminated. This is why it is encouraging to see that [public confidence](#) in researchers is so strong," said Gustav Bohlin, a researcher at VA and responsible for the study.

In the study, "Communication about coronavirus—media reporting and trust during the COVID-19 pandemic," VA studied how people in Sweden received and interpreted communication about the pandemic and their level of confidence in the media and different professional groups during the period March 2020–April 2021.

The study also includes a content analysis of the Swedish media's reporting of research on the coronavirus and related research during the pandemic, based on online articles from Swedish Television (SVT) and the newspapers Aftonbladet and Dagens Nyheter.

GRAPH 2: Perception of the tone of reporting on the coronavirus in the Swedish news media. The graph shows the combined proportions for respondents who answered fairly or very hyped/alarmist or fairly or very cautious/watchful. The number of respondents in each survey varied between 1,000– 1,002.



Credit: Vetenskap & Allmaenhet

Swedes' perception of reporting on the coronavirus

Women have a slightly higher confidence in researchers that comment in the media than men, and people with a university education have greater [confidence](#) in researchers than people without a higher education.

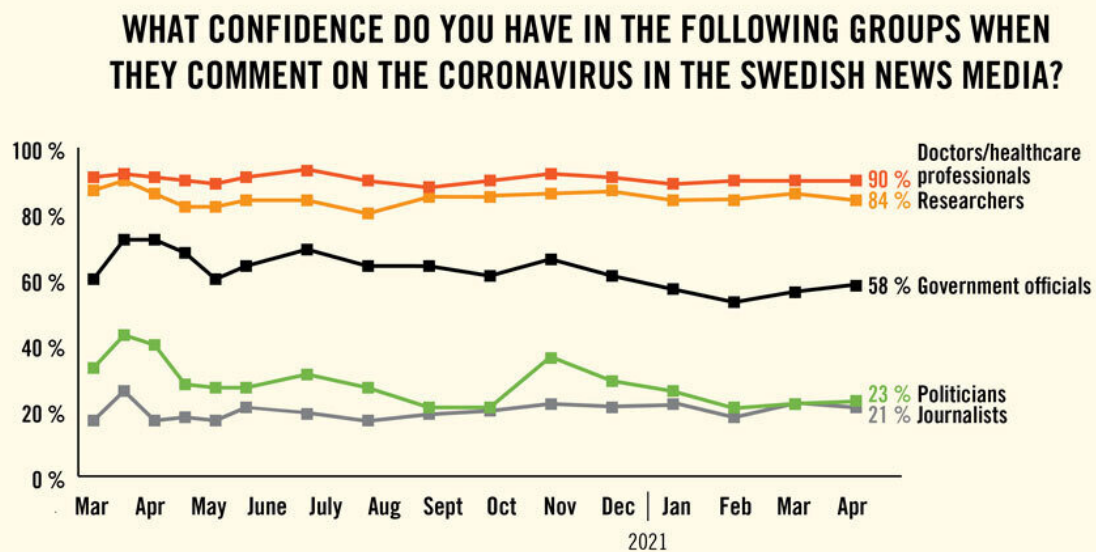
Confidence in government officials, politicians and journalists who comment on the coronavirus rose at the beginning of the pandemic and then dropped to previous levels shortly afterwards.

"It is a well-known phenomenon that citizens stand behind their country's institutions in times of crisis," said Anna Maria Jönsson, Professor of media and communication studies at Södertörn University, who worked with VA on the study.

Three out of four Swedes turned mainly to traditional news media, such as TV, newspapers and the radio to get information during the pandemic. The public service channels Swedish Television (SVT) and Swedish Radio enjoyed the highest level of trust throughout the period, while the public had the lowest level of trust in foreign/international media alongside the tabloids Aftonbladet and Expressen.

Supporters of the Sweden Democrats felt, to a lesser extent than other parties' supporters, that the reporting on the coronavirus provided the information they needed. They also considered to a lesser extent than others that the media coverage was transparent or accommodated different perspectives.

GRAPH 3: Confidence in different professional groups when they comment on the coronavirus in the Swedish news media. The graph shows the proportions that have fairly or very high confidence (Five-point scale: Very high, Fairly high, Neither high nor low, Fairly low, Very low). The number of respondents in each survey varied between 1,000–1,002.



Credit: Vetenskap & Allmaenhet

Media reporting on the coronavirus

In a content analysis of online reporting on the pandemic in Dagens Nyheter, Aftonbladet and on Swedish Television, 1,173 articles relating to research or researchers were studied. The time periods for the analysis coincided with three peaks and two falls in the infection rate and hospital admissions in Sweden.

"The [media](#) coverage followed the development of the pandemic, with the greatest focus at the beginning being on the spread of infection, followed by mostly reporting about restrictions and guidelines, and then finally vaccines becoming the most common topic," explained Gustav Bohlin.

The tone of the reporting was predominantly neutral. One in five articles contained 'alarming' elements and one in ten had a calming tone. Three out of four articles take the form of 'reporting.' The proportion of articles that were investigative in nature was just under one percent. One in five articles addressed new research findings, and this was particularly common at the beginning of the [pandemic](#).

Provided by Vetenskap & Allmaenhet

Citation: Swedish study highlights high public confidence in researchers amid pandemic (2021, December 17) retrieved 27 June 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-12-swedish-highlights-high-confidence-pandemic.html>

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