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Fact Sheet: News Media and Political Attitudes in Sweden

FOR MEDIA OR OTHER INQUIRIES:

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RECOMMENDED CITATION

Pew Research Center, May, 2018, "In Western Europe, Public Attitudes Toward News Media More Divided by Populist Views Than Left-Right Ideology"

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News Media and Political Attitudes in Sweden

Below are specific findings about news media attitudes and habits in Sweden. The findings come from a Pew Research Center survey about news media and politics across eight Western European countries conducted from Oct. 30 to Dec. 20, 2017. The survey covered five countries in the north (Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom) and three in the south (France, Italy and Spain).

Views of the news media in Sweden

The sense of importance of and trust in the news media vary considerably by country. In general, adults in northern European countries – for example, Sweden and Germany – are more likely to say the news media are very important and that they trust the news media, while people in France and Italy are the least likely to say this.

In Sweden, the majority of adults (61%) consider the news media *very* important to society. About the same portion (64%) say they trust the news media. This includes 12% who say they trust the news media *a lot*.

About six-in-ten Swedish adults believe the news media are very important, and about the same proportion trusts them

% of adults in Sweden who say the news media are ___ important to the functioning of the country's society



% who trust the news media ...



Source: Survey of eight Western European countries conducted Oct. 30-Dec. 20, 2017.

"In Western Europe, Public Attitudes Toward News Media More Divided by Populist Views Than Left-Right Ideology"

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In most of the countries surveyed, people who hold populist views are less likely to say the news media are important and to trust the news media than people who don't hold populist views. In general, the differences in these attitudes about the news media are small when comparing between people on the left and right of the ideological spectrum.

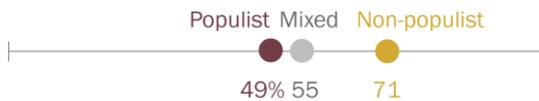
Populist divides in media attitudes are strong in Sweden as well: 49% of those with populist views say the news media are very important for society in Sweden, compared with 71% of those with non-populist views. On the question of trust, 49% of people with populist views say they trust the news media, compared with 74% of those without populist views.

Divides in Sweden between those with and without populist views in their attitudes toward the news media

% of adults in Sweden who say ...

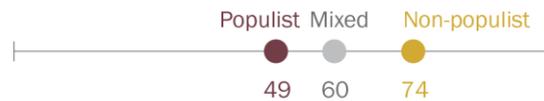
News media are very important

Among those who hold __ views



They trust the news media

Among those who are on the __ ideologically



Note: Respondents are classified as holding populist views if they answered: "Most elected officials don't care what people like me think" and "Ordinary people would do a better job solving the country's problems than elected officials."

Source: Survey of eight Western European countries conducted Oct. 30-Dec. 20, 2017.

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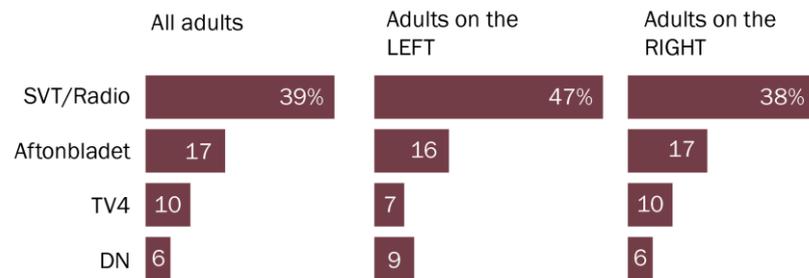
Main sources used for news in Sweden

When it comes to the news sources people say they turn to most frequently, the divide between adults with and without populist leanings are not as strong as those seen for attitudes about the news media more generally. And in the southern countries, there tend to be larger divides in main news source preference between people on the left and right of the ideological spectrum than between those with and without populist views.

In Sweden, people on both sides of the left-right ideological spectrum are most likely to name Sveriges Television/Radio (SVT/Radio) as their main source, followed by Aftonbladet.

Swedes across the ideological spectrum generally share the same main news source

% of adults in Sweden who name each outlet as their main news source



Note: Only sources named by 5% of adults or more are shown. Respondents were asked to name the outlet they turn to the most for news. For the purposes of this analysis, major channels or brands were grouped into their larger news organization. For example, in Sweden, SVT, which is asked about specifically on a separate question, is coded as Sveriges Television/Radio (SVT/Radio) in this analysis of main news source.

Source: Survey of eight Western European countries conducted Oct. 30-Dec. 20, 2017.

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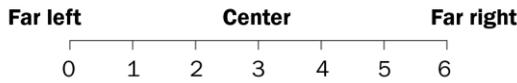
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Where users place outlets' ideologies, on the right and on the left

For many of the news outlets across the eight countries, people who use an outlet to get news tend to think the outlet is closer to their own left-right ideological position. In Sweden, this is true for one outlet asked about: SVT. For this outlet, news users on the right place it closer to their own ideology. For four news outlets – TV4, Aftonbladet, Dagens Nyheter (DN) and Svenska Dagbladet (SvD) – right-aligned and left-aligned news users agree on their left-right placement. One outlet in Sweden, Expressen, follows a unique pattern: right-aligned users are more likely to place the outlet on the left than left-aligned users. Flashback and Nya Tider are not included in this analysis, because they did not have a large enough sample of left or right users to analyze.

Ideological placement of news outlets in Sweden

Users of each outlet were asked to place the outlet on a left-right scale



% of users on the left and right who place the outlet at position ...



Sveriges Television

90% of adults use this outlet at least once a week

PLACEMENT BY:

Users on the left	18%	65	6
Users on the right	23%	48	20

Left users and right users ARE different in their placement of this outlet

Expressen

45% of adults use this outlet at least once a week

Users on the left	8%	24	58
Users on the right	15%	22	54

Left users and right users ARE different in their placement of this outlet

TV4

79% of adults use this outlet at least once a week

Users on the left	7%	49	33
Users on the right	9%	43	38

Left users and right users are NOT different in their placement of this outlet

Dagens Nyheter

42% of adults use this outlet at least once a week

Users on the left	11%	37	44
Users on the right	12%	33	50

Left users and right users are NOT different in their placement of this outlet

Aftonbladet

61% of adults use this outlet at least once a week

Users on the left	53%	24	18
Users on the right	56%	20	12

Left users and right users are NOT different in their placement of this outlet

Svenska Dagbladet

32% of adults use this outlet at least once a week

Users on the left	9%	25	56
Users on the right	7%	20	68

Left users and right users are NOT different in their placement of this outlet

Note: Some outlets are not included, because their audience sample sizes are too small to analyze. Left and right users' outlet placements are considered different if the percentage of left and right users that place the outlet on the left (from 0 to 2), on the right (from 4 to 6), or both are significantly different. The survey asked respondents a series of questions about eight specific outlets in their country, which in some cases are part of a larger news organization. Therefore the outlets listed here may differ from the main news source outlets analyzed. For example, in Sweden the survey asked specifically about SVT, which is part of Sveriges Television/Radio.

Source: Survey of eight Western European countries conducted Oct. 30-Dec. 20, 2017.

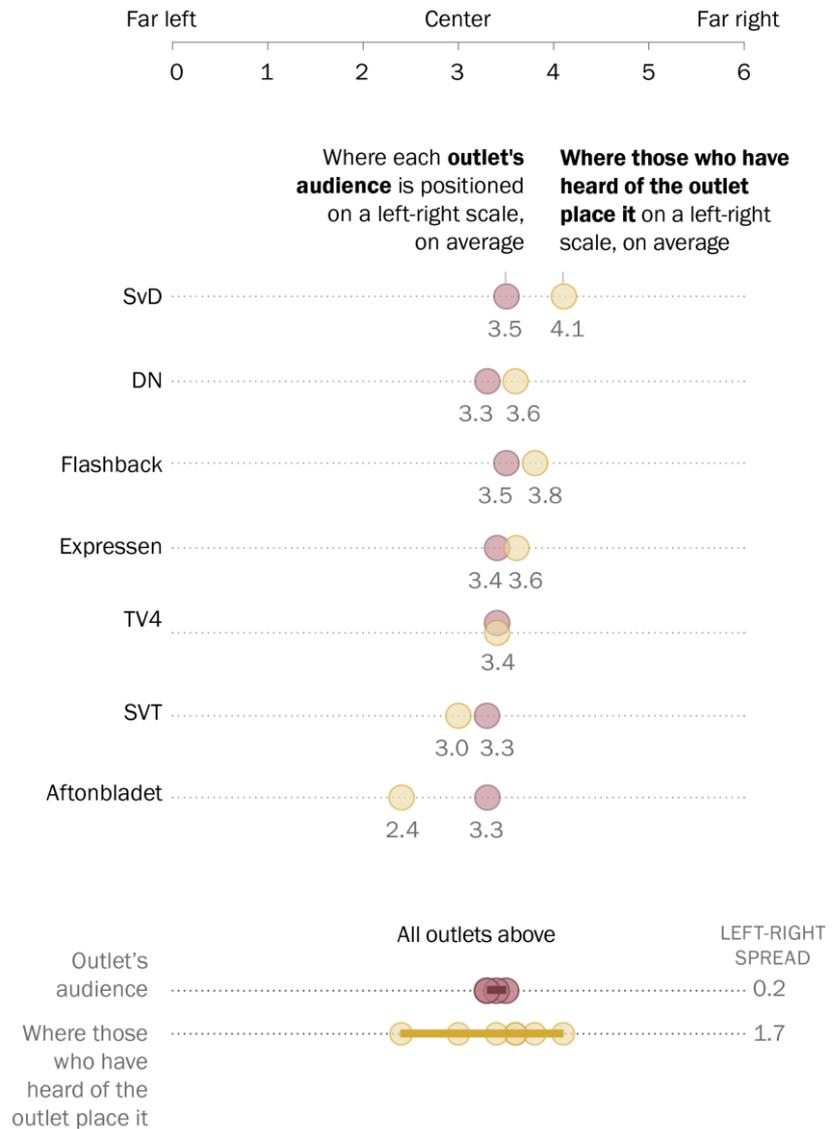
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In general, where the public places an outlet tends to differ from where the average audience actually sits ideologically. For each of the news outlets asked about in the survey, the average audience (based on self-reported usage) tends to fall near the ideological center. People who have heard of each outlet, however, tend to place the outlet either farther to the left or farther to the right than the actual ideological position of the outlet's audience.

In Sweden, most of the outlets studied follow this pattern. In many cases, while the outlet's news audience is near the center, people who have heard of the outlet tend to think it leans slightly more to the right or left. Svenska Dagbladet, for example, has an audience that sits at about the middle of the left-right spectrum (3.5 on the 0-to-6 scale), but when asked to place the outlet on the same left-right scale, people who have heard of SvD place it farther to the right (at 4.1).

Swedes tend to think news outlets in Sweden are more partisan than what their average audiences actually are

Mean placement of each outlet's audience on a 0-to-6 left-right scale compared with where those who have heard of the outlet place it on that same scale



Note: An outlet's audience is defined as respondents who say they get news regularly from that outlet. The survey asked respondents a series of questions about eight specific outlets in their country, which in some cases are part of a larger news organization. Therefore the outlets listed here may differ from the main news source outlets analyzed. For example, in Sweden the survey asked specifically about SVT, which is part of Sveriges Television/Radio. Nya Tider is not included in this analysis because its audience sample size is too small to analyze. Left-right spread is the difference between the outlet farthest to the left and the outlet farthest to the right.

Source: Survey of eight Western European countries conducted Oct. 30-Dec. 20, 2017.

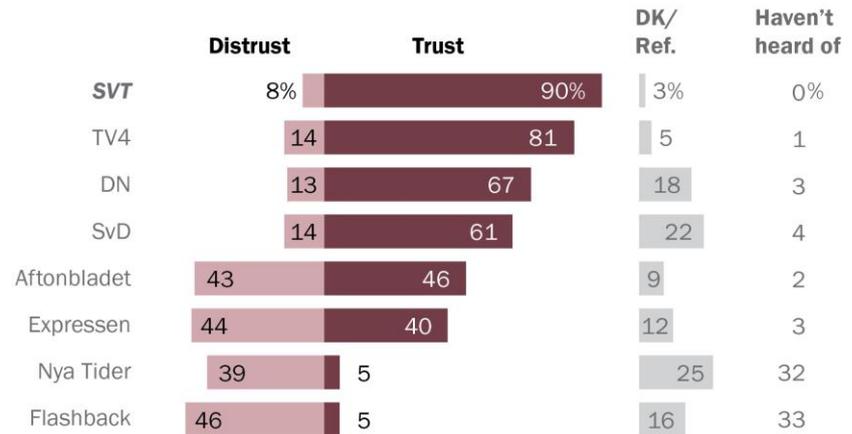
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Trust in news media outlets

In seven of the eight countries surveyed, the most trusted news outlet asked about is the public news organization in each country. In Sweden, an overwhelming majority (90%) say they trust the public broadcaster SVT, followed by 81% who say they trust the private broadcaster TV4.

In Sweden, a large majority trusts the public news organization

% of adults in Sweden who generally trust or distrust each news outlet



Note: People who said they had not heard of an outlet or refused to respond to the question about whether they get news from an outlet are grouped under "Haven't heard of" here. Respondents were asked about eight specific outlets, which in some cases are part of a larger news organization. In Sweden the survey asked specifically about Sveriges Television (SVT), which is part of Sveriges Television/Radio. Public broadcaster is in **bold**.

Source: Survey of eight Western European countries conducted Oct. 30-Dec. 20, 2017.

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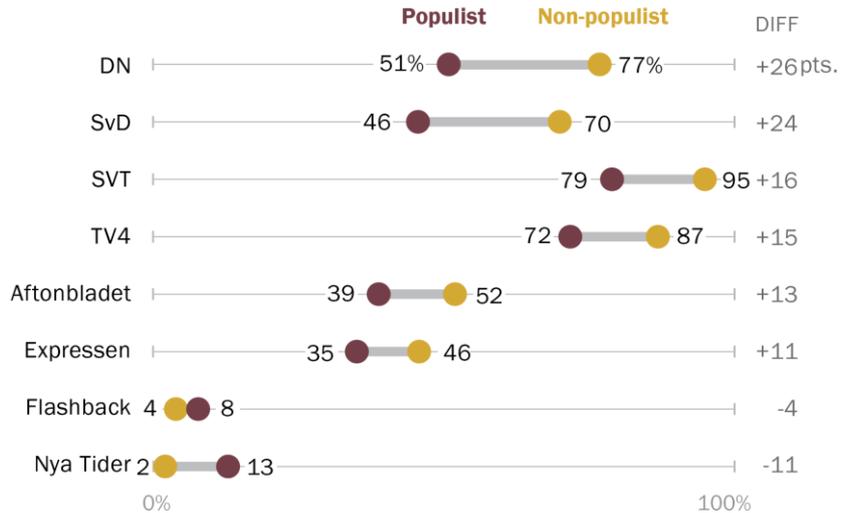
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As with trust in the news media generally, trust in specific outlets varies by populist leanings, with those who hold populist views expressing lower levels of trust than those who don't.

In Sweden, populist views relate to trust in most outlets studied, but left-right ideology is not a key driver. For example, those with populist views are 26 percentage points less likely than those with non-populist views to say they trust Dagens Nyheter. When it comes to left-right ideological differences, though, there are divides for only three outlets (SVT, Aftonbladet and Nya Tider), and they are generally smaller in magnitude than the divides based on populist views.

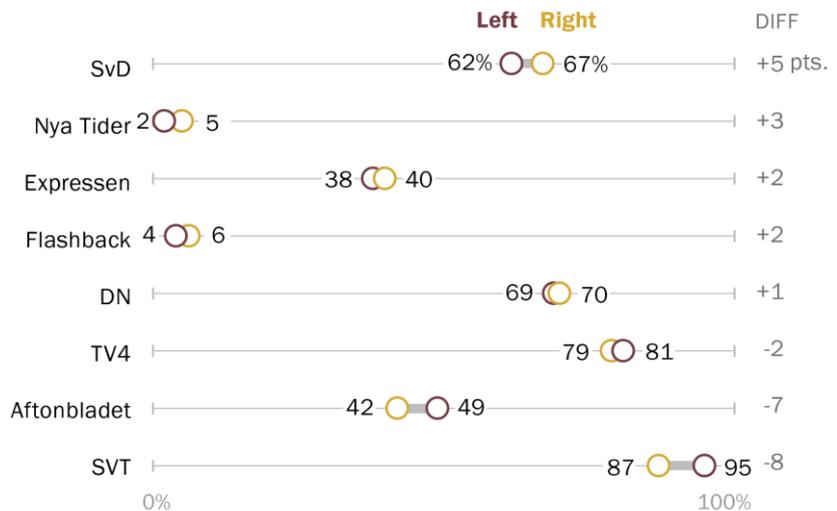
In Sweden, those with populist views trust most news outlets less than those without such views

% of adults in Sweden who hold ___ views and generally trust each news outlet



While left-right ideology plays little role in trust

% of adults in each ideological group who generally trust each news outlet



Note: Respondents are classified as holding populist views if they answered: "Most elected officials don't care what people like me think" and "Ordinary people would do a better job solving the country's problems than elected officials." Respondents were asked about eight specific outlets, which in some cases are part of a larger news organization. In Sweden the survey asked specifically about Sveriges Television (SVT), which is part of Sveriges Television/Radio. Source: Survey of eight Western European countries conducted Oct. 30-Dec. 20, 2017.

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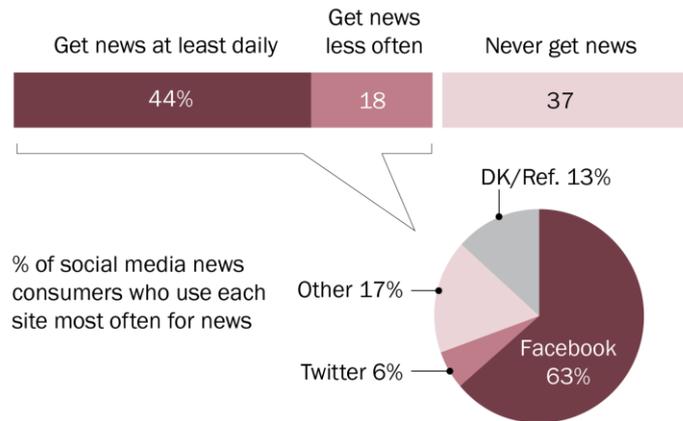
Social media usage and views

Many people in Western Europe get news through social media, with Facebook cited as the most widely used platform for news.

A majority of adults in Sweden (62%) get news on social media, including 44% who get news on social media *daily*. Facebook is the most common social network used for news: 63% of social media news consumers use it most often. In Sweden, young people (those 18 to 29 years old) are more likely to get news on social media daily than those 50 and older (68% vs. 31%).

Majority of Swedes get news on social media, mainly from Facebook

% of adults in Sweden who _____ from social media



Note: "Other" includes social media sites mentioned by 5% or less of respondents across all countries studied. Numbers may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Survey of eight Western European countries conducted Oct. 30-Dec. 20, 2017.

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About half or more social media news consumers in each of the eight countries surveyed say they are familiar with the sources they see on social media. Still, sizeable minorities say they typically do not pay attention to the source of the news they encounter there.

Social media news consumers in Sweden are similar to other Western Europeans – 65% are familiar with the news sources they find on social media, while 16% do not pay attention to the sources there.

A small portion of Swedes who get news on social media don't pay attention to sources there

% of social media news consumers in Sweden who say most of the news they see on social media comes from news source they ...



Note: "Don't know" responses not shown. Question asked: "In general, does most of the news you see on social media come from news sources you are familiar with, sources you are not familiar with, or do you not pay attention to the sources?"

Source: Survey of eight Western European countries conducted Oct. 30-Dec. 20, 2017.

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Find out more

Read the full report online for the methodology and more on Sweden:

<https://pewrsr.ch/WesternEuropeNewsAttitudes>.

To view this information online, as well as data on the seven other Western European countries included in the survey, visit: <https://pewrsr.ch/SwedenNewsAttitudes>.