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Communicating Science in Sweden

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UNICOM ERASMUS+, NOV 6, 2023, LUND



Legal basis for science communication and cooperation in Sweden

- Swedish Higher Education Act - Higher Education Institutions in Sweden are required to "collaborate with the surrounding society as well as inform others about their activities and ensure that research findings produced by the university are utilised"
- Also grounded in the Government Inquiry on Governance and Resources (Febr 2019) and the National Research Bills



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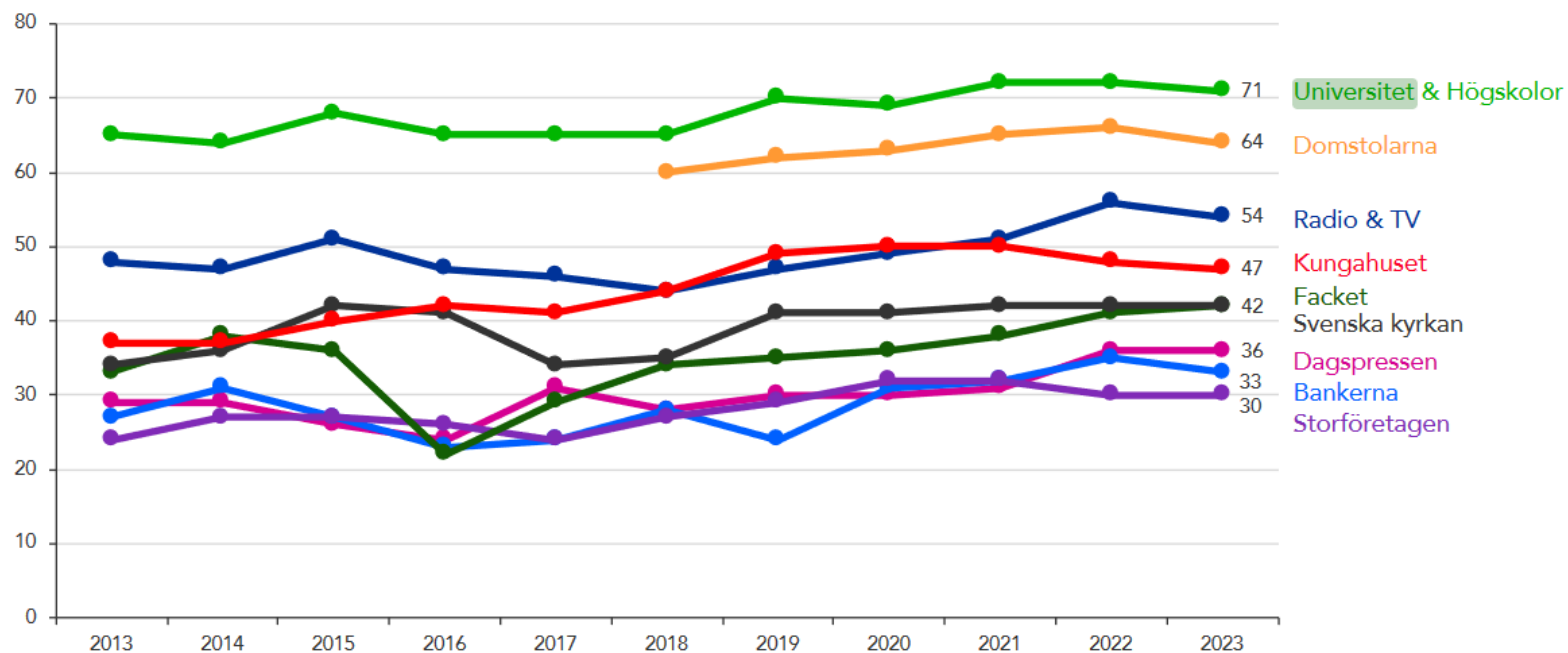
Public opinion and trust in science in Sweden

FÖRTROENDEBAROMETERN 2023

KANTAR PUBLIC | Medieakademin

FÖRTROENDE FÖR SAMHÄLLSINSTITUTIONER

Ingen eller liten förändring sedan 2022



Procentandel mycket/ganska stort förtroende



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Swedish scholars' view about science comms

- Study performed by the NGO Science & Public, in collaboration with the main public funders of research at the national level
- Survey of 3,699 researchers at 31 Swedish universities
- Similar to other studies done in Germany, the Netherlands, and the US.
- You can read the full report (in Swedish) or a summary (in English) at [this](#) link.



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Main takeaway results

Most scientists want to communicate with the wider society, but feel that they do not have the time and resources to do so.

Nine out of ten researchers (**90 percent**) are **positive** about communicating their research to the outside world. Older and more senior researchers are generally more positive than their younger colleagues.

Over half (**51 percent**) of the surveyed researchers would like to spend **more time** on science communication than they do today, especially researchers in the arts and humanities and women more than men.



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How to communicate science

30% of the researchers have held **open lectures or panels** aimed at the general public in the past year.

21% of the researchers wrote printed and web-based **popular scientific content** for the public.

69% use **social media** in one way or another in the context of their work as a researcher. The most common social media is ResearchGate, followed by LinkedIn and Facebook.

Twitter is the fourth most common medium, albeit the channel that is used for the most purposes (to inform others about their research and to communicate within academia, for advocacy work and opinion forming, as well as for communicating with the media)

Motivation for science comms

- The most important reason for communicating their research is to **improve society**.
- The second most important reason is to ensure that research **contributes to public debate**
- The third reason is to **raise awareness about research** within society.
- Difference: To enable research to contribute to public debate is a more important reason for researchers in the humanities and social sciences than those in other research fields.



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Target audience for science comms

- the most important target audiences to communicate with are **policy makers and politicians**, followed by the **general public** and specific **professional groups** that are directly affected by the research being carried out (e.g. lawyers, engineers or doctors).
- The most common group that researchers currently communicate with are **their own academic communities**.
- Communication with **business/ industry** is much more common among researchers in technology than among those in the natural sciences or the arts and humanities.



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Barriers to outreach

- 64% of the researchers asked say that the most common barrier to engaging in communication is having **too many tasks that have higher priority**
- 37% say that a barrier is the **lack of allocated resources** for communications work
- 28% name **difficulties finding suitable opportunities and/or target**
- 5% see concerns about **threats and harassment** as an important barrier (esp. for women under 30 (12 %) and among female researchers in the arts and humanities (10 %)).

Solutions to overcome the barriers to outreach

46% say that to get researchers to do more communication there should be specifically allocated **resources** for communication work

29% want more **invitations to participate** in communication activities

29% would do more outreach if it was **valued more for promotion/** recruitment

More women than men say that if they had **more personal knowledge about how to do communication effectively**, whereas more men than women say if the outside world showed a **greater interest** in their research



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Training and support for science comms

- Less than a third (27 percent) of the researchers have undertaken a course or training in how to communicate their research to the outside world.
- Almost half (48 percent) of the researchers have poor knowledge about the type of support they can get from communication professionals at their institution and a fifth say they have very poor knowledge.



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