

Swedish mass media

In international comparison, the Swedes (total population: 9.1 million) are large-scale consumers of mass media, dedicating about six hours a day to press, radio and TV. On weekdays, 87 percent of the population read a daily newspaper, as a paper copy or online.

Mass media are extremely changeable but the Swedish mass media topography is still dominated by the traditional daily press, radio and TV even if the conditions they exist under have changed enormously.

Television

State-sponsored SVT1 and SVT2, mandated to provide public service viewing, dominate Swedes' viewing alongside privately owned TV3, TV4 and Kanal 5.

The five biggest TV channels

(SVT1, SVT2, TV3, TV4 and Kanal 5) still dominate, but five smaller channels (Eurosport, TV6, TV4 PLUS, Discovery and MTV) and all the so-called niche channels (48 different smaller channels) are making progress. Especially the for-profit children's channels have registered strong gains over the last year.

In late 2005, following a parliamentary decision, Sweden began a gradual change-over to digital TV broadcasts via the terrestrial network. Analogue broadcasting will cease by

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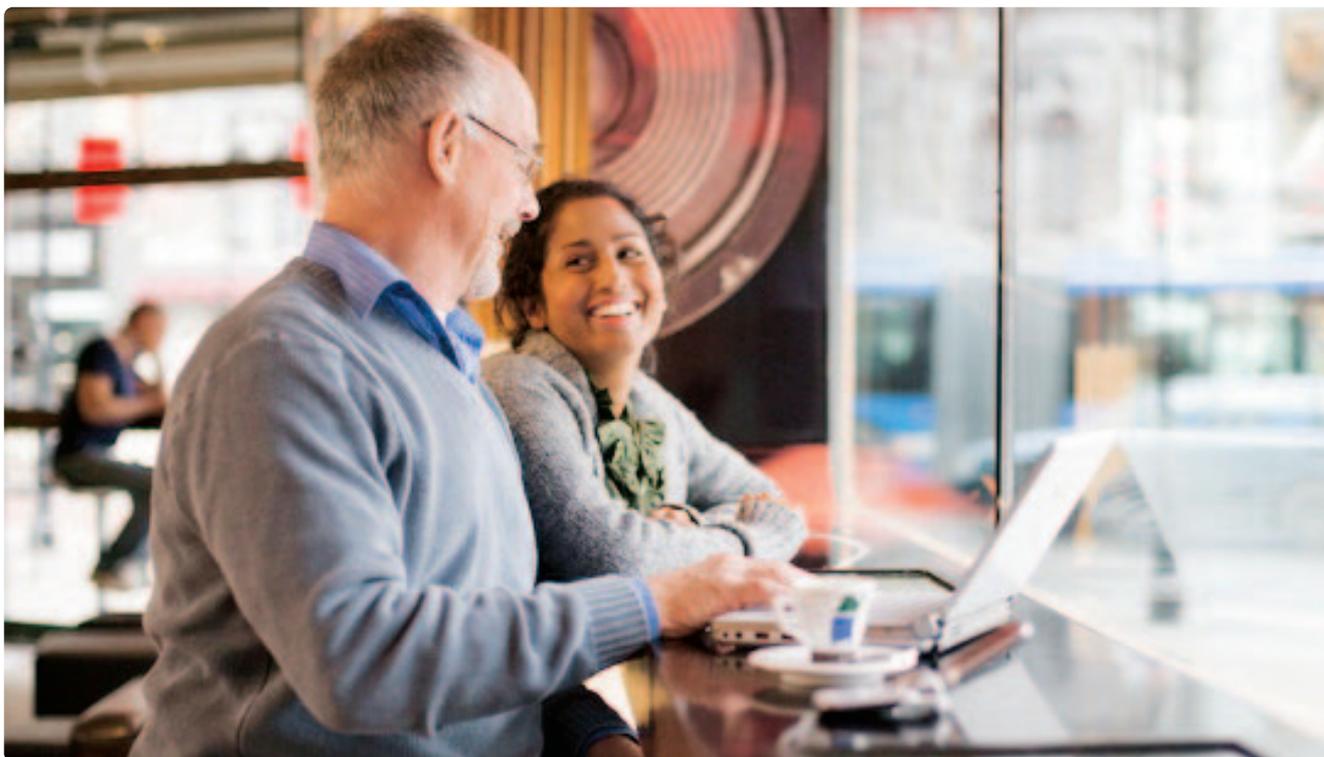
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Bar chart of viewer segments

'The Big Five' (SVT1, SVT2, TV3, TV4 and Kanal 5) had 79.6% in July 2005 and 73.7% in July 2006.

'The Small Five' (Eurosport, TV6, TV4 PLUS, Discovery and MTV) had 9.7% in July 2005 and 11.2% in July 2006.

'The Niche Channels' (48 different small channels) had 10.7% in July 2005 and 15.1% in July 2006.



The biggest Swedish web-based newspapers are read by 1.8–2.0 million every day. Photo: Hans Bjurling

February 2008 at the latest. This has stimulated increasingly intense competition between distributors of satellite, cable and terrestrial broadcasting.

Radio

The state-sponsored Swedish Radio Company (*Sveriges Radio, SR*) is overwhelmingly biggest in terms of budget and listeners. SR has four national stations (P1, P2, P3 and P4), 26 local stations and a number of digital outlets, all streamed via the Internet. The flagship is P4, reaching 35 percent of listeners daily (SR has a daily total of 65 percent) but P3 faces strong competition from commercial stations. Privately owned local radio has a 30-percent listener segment with a main demographic spread of 9 to 34 years of age. SR reaches 80 percent of the 65- to 79-year demographic.

Newspapers

Sweden's definition of a daily newspaper is loose, with some 'dailies' published only once a week. The background is to be found in the rules for state press subsidies.

Magazines

Sweden's magazine market is characterised by both tradition and renewal. Tradition is represented by a group of family magazines that, after several decades, retain a sales base of a million copies. Institutionally owned magazines, for example trade union magazines, also retain wide distribution. Renewal is represented by established publishers who adapt content and periodicity or start completely new titles. The Swedish magazine

The biggest newspapers

Name	Circulation*	Owner	Political allegiance
Aftonbladet	429 000	Schibsted	Social democratic
Dagens Nyheter	363 100	Bonniers	Independent liberal
Expressen	339 400 (incl. GT and Kvällsposten)	Bonniers	Liberal
Stockholms City	294 600	Bonniers	-
Metro, Stockholm	269 100	Stenbeck group	-
Göteborgs-Posten	245 900	Hjörne group	Liberal
Svenska Dagbladet	187 100	Schibsted	Independent conservative
Sydsvenskan	129 300	Bonniers	Independent liberal
Dagens Industri	117 500	Bonniers	Business

* Distribution figures refer to weekdays, throughout 2005 (*Tidningsstatistik, TS*).

market is strongly varied with a large number of titles and publishers. Titles are introduced and shut down in rapid succession. In 2005 alone, 150 new titles were launched.

Magazine distributor Tidsam distributes annually 3,200 editions of approx. 275 titles as well as approx. 90 'one-offs' to 10,000 outlets. Its competitor Interpress distributes 200 Swedish niche magazines and 1,800 international titles.

Swedish film

Over the last decade, the Swedish film market has changed radically with the arrival of new outlets such as cable and pay-per-view television as well as sales and rental of DVDs and VHS cassettes, alongside traditional cinema and television viewing. Svensk Filmindustri (SF) is owned by the Bonnier group and is a leading actor with a market share of about 50% of cinema showings in Sweden. SF's main competitor is Astoria Cinemas (formerly Sandrews), owned by Tri-

angelfilm, S/S Fladen and Atlantic Film. Triangelfilm also runs the art cinema organisation, Folkets Bio. The Nordic market's biggest actor is Egmont, represented in Sweden by distribution companies and film labs.

Major owner groups

The Swedish state, Bonniers, Schibsted and Stenbeck are the major owners on the Swedish media market. The state principally controls the foundation that owns Swedish Television, the Swedish Radio Company and the educational UR channel. Bonnier AB is the biggest private media owner in newspapers, magazines, film and business press, and has a strong position in book publishing. In practice, Bonniers also controls TV4.

Norwegian company Schibsted moved into Sweden in the mid-1990s and today owns 49.9% of the successful tabloid Aftonbladet and a majority share position in morning daily Svenska Dagbladet.

The Stenbeck group includes a number of companies and is the biggest commercial actor in TV, owning 17 channels including TV3, TV1000 and its spinoff channels and TV6 (formerly ZTV), as well as a production company, Strix.

Schibsted also owns the free newspaper Metro (61 editions in 19 countries in 18 languages) and a number of radio stations.

State press subsidies

Press subsidies were introduced in

Swedish daily newspapers belong to five main categories

1. The morning newspapers of the major cities, sold mainly by subscription. The biggest papers in Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö respectively are Dagens Nyheter, Göteborgs-Posten and Sydsvenskan.
2. The evening newspapers of the major cities (now on sale in the mornings), sold mainly at outlets. The biggest are Expressen, Aftonbladet, Kvällsposten and Göteborgs-Tidningen (GT).
3. The regional press, that is, all the high-frequency (6-7 issues a week) and mid-frequency (3-5 issues/week) newspapers outside the major cities. The biggest are Östgöta Correspondenten and Nerikes Allehanda.
4. Low-frequency (1-2 issues/week) papers distributed both regionally and in cities, e.g. Arbetaren and Mölndals-Posten.
5. Free newspapers, in two subcategories: the daily Metro, distributed in Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö, and local free papers, normally published weekly, e.g. Mitt i Huddinge.

A recent survey (July 2006) showed that television viewing is becoming increasingly atomised and that there are large generational differences

In age group 16-25

91%	watch	TV4
82%	watch	Kanal 5
65%	watch	SV1
51%	watch	TV6 (formerly ZTV)

In age group 26-45

92%	watch	TV4
83%	watch	SVT1
78%	watch	SVT2
61%	watch	Kanal 5
59%	watch	TV3

In age group 46-65

94%	watch	SVT1
91%	watch	TV4
90%	watch	SVT2
52%	watch	TV3
34%	watch	Kanal 5

Sweden in the 1960s to stem a trend of newspaper bankruptcies and especially to support second-ranked newspapers in various regions with the justification that press plurality is vital for a functioning democracy. The leading papers in a region often take the lion's share of advertising.

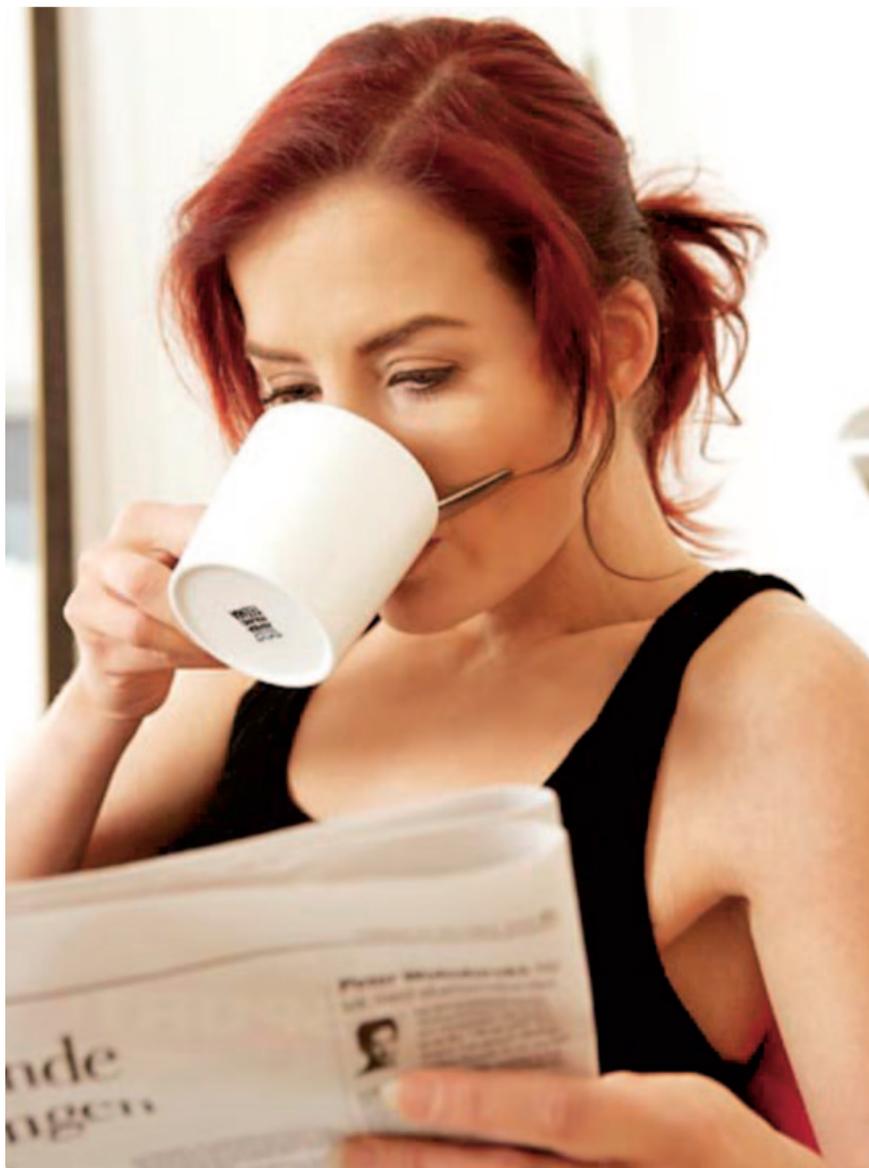
The subsidy system has not been uncontroversial since many claim that selectively subsidising newspapers contravenes the law on freedom of the press and that newspapers should not be economically dependent on the state.

In 2006, a total of SEK 527 million was earmarked for newspapers with a maximum circulation share of 30% in their markets. The subsidies are helpful mostly for low-frequency provincial newspapers.

Ethical guidelines for the press

Sweden's ethical guidelines assume broad freedom of expression and complete freedom from state or government interference. The guarantor is the Cooperation Council of the Press (*Pressens Samarbetsnämnd*), founded by the Publishers' Club (*Publicistklubben*, itself founded 1874), the Swedish Union of Journalists' (*Journalistförbundet*, founded 1901), and the Swedish Newspaper Publishers' Union (*Tidningsutgivarna, TU*), the publishers' trade organisation.

Responsibility for monitoring press



Always appreciated – the morning newspaper over a cup of coffee. Photo: Lars Trangius/Johnér

adherence to the guidelines belongs with the Swedish Press Council (*Pressens Opinionsnämnd*, founded 1916) and the Press Ombudsman (*Allmänhetens Pressombudsman*, 1970). There is consensus among Swedish media on the importance of defending "good publishing practices".

Similar systems and rules exist elsewhere in Western Europe and the United States, albeit less comprehensive since not all media participate.

There is current debate in Sweden about the need for more legal precedent or tougher voluntary measures for when the media go too far.

Freedom of expression and freedom of the press in Sweden

The basic principles for freedom of expression and freedom of the press are the following:

- *Freedom of establishment:* Every Swedish citizen has the right to start a printed newspaper if it has authorisation to publish and an individual responsible by law for what is printed. The state shall also strive to restrict radio frequencies to those who promote freedom of expression and information.
- *Pre-censorship ban:* Every form of

preliminary examination of printed material is forbidden, as is the obstruction of its printing or distribution.

- *Protection of anonymity and sources:* The identity of persons who provide information to a news outlet is protected and all media workers have the right to anonymity. State and local government organs are forbidden to search for the identities of people who provide information to the media. Similar protections exist in several EU countries.
- *Responsibility rules:* Every publication and every television and radio programme must have a person responsible by law. This individual, not the person who wrote or produced the item, can be made responsible for its content.
- *Legal procedures:* Unauthorised statements or unauthorised publication of information that implies a breach of national security, breaches of law and order, defamation of individuals, etc., are to be dealt with by the courts. Offences are listed in an Act and no other offences can be prosecuted.
- *The principle of public access:* A vital principle in the freedom of the press legislation is the principle of public access to official information. This was unique when it entered into Swedish law in 1766 and remains singular in international comparison. It implies that all documentation kept by the authorities must be accessible to the public, including databases and similar technological or electronic documents.

New phenomena – blogs and chat rooms

Most daily newspaper publishers and broadcast companies now have websites. These provide comprehensive

Important dates and events

- Sweden's and the world's first freedom of the press laws came in 1766. Wide restrictions followed quickly.
- Modern freedom of the press legislation is largely intact since 1949 with the major principles established in 1766, 1810 and 1812.
- In 1925, state-run Swedish Radio started broadcasting, remaining sole actor until 1981.
- In 1954 and 1968, the TV channels now known as SVT1 and SVT2 started broadcasting. Both are non-commercial and are still financed by public licence fees.
- In 1967, legislation laid down principles for the operation of radio and television in Sweden, including demands for impartiality and objectivity; that responsibility for content is to reside with an individual person; and for protection of sources and the right to anonymity.
- On New Year's Eve 1987 a forestry and steel group, Kinnevik, launched a satellite-broadcast channel, TV3.
- Another privately owned, advertising-funded TV channel, TV4, started in 1990 with permission to broadcast terrestrially in return for providing a news service and local broadcasting.
- The A Press, grouping the labour movement's daily newspapers, went into bankruptcy in 1992. New, non-socialist owners took over in 2000, guaranteeing that the editorial pages would continue to propagate social democratic views.
- A constitutional law governing freedom of expression came into force in 1992 and encompasses radio, TV, film and video but also publicly accessible databases.

supplementary material to their own texts. The daily papers are increasingly using web-TV and podcasts for interviews, for example, while broadcasters put texts on their websites. There is increasing use of interactivity with consumers.

Many Swedish newspapers have their own blogs, linked to one of the news desks. The word blog comes from web-log, as in logbook. Format and tone are informal and Sweden has a number of blogs of varying quality commenting on trends and phenomena. The blog phenomenon has been criticised for amateurism while its supporters say it is a parallel media world with an important watchdog function and quick to disseminate information.

Chatting is a conversation in real time via IRC (Internet Relay Chat, a virtual room) or a website. Chatting is most frequent among youth but it is becoming common to open chat forums in connection with TV case studies or discussions on current issues raised by the press.

Further reading

Massmedier. En bok om press, radio & TV by Stig Hadenius & Lennart Weibull. Stockholm: Bonnier, 2005

Den svenska mediemarknaden 2006 by Staffan Sundin. Göteborg: Nordicom-Sverige, 2006

MedieSverige 2004. Statistik och analys by Ulla Carlsson & Ulrika Facht (ed). Göteborg: Nordicom-Sverige, 2004

Links

Media research:

www.mms.se (in Swedish only)

Some of the biggest newspapers:

www.dn.se

www.svd.se

www.gp.se

www.sydsvenskan.se

Swedish Union of Journalists:

www.sjf.se (also in English)

Swedish Film Institute:

www.sfi.se (also in English)

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