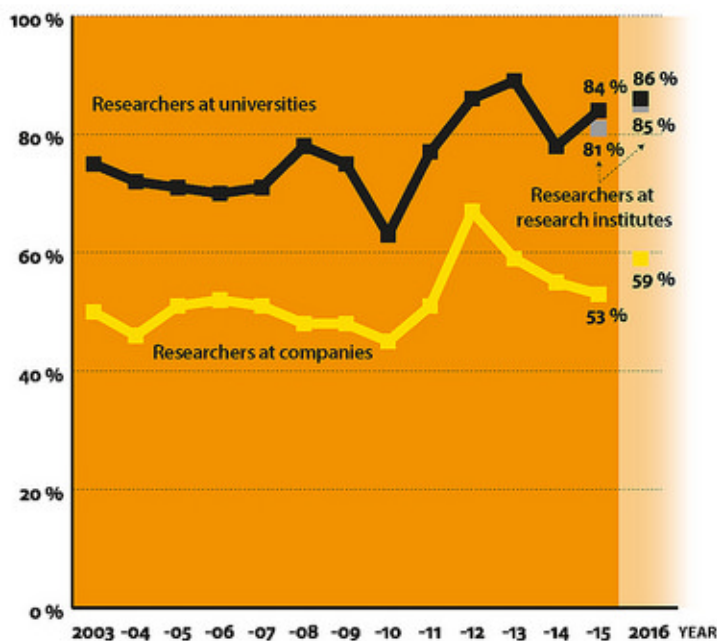


Swedes' trust in researchers remains high, despite Macchiarini affair

April 6 2016



The graph shows the percentages that have fairly or very high trust in researchers (Options: Very high, Fairly high, Fairly low, Low, Don't know)

The 2015 survey was carried out by Exquiro Market Research as a part of VA's annual VA Barometer. 1,011 people aged 16-74 were surveyed during the period 20 September-4 October 2015.

The 2016 survey was carried out by TNS Sifo between 22-25 February 2016. 1,000 people were surveyed aged 15 and older.

Both surveys were conducted via telephone interviews with a nationally representative sample of the Swedish population, with regard to gender, age and place of residence. For the VA Barometer, the respondents' level of education was also taken into account.

The questions about trust in researchers at universities and companies were asked in a random order. However, the question about trust in research institutes was asked for the first time in 2015 and was therefore asked after the other alternatives in both surveys.



Despite the Swedish public being aware of the extensive media coverage about the researcher Paolo Macchiarini, trust in researchers remains high, according to a new survey conducted by the Swedish non-profit

association Vetenskap & Allmänhet, VA (Public & Science).

VA (Public & Science) has been studying the Swedish public's attitudes to research and researchers every year since 2002. The surveys show a high level of [trust](#) in research that is undertaken as well as for researchers as a profession. In the latest annual survey, conducted by the company Exquiro Market Research over two weeks during September/October 2015, 84 percent of Swedes had very or fairly high trust in researchers at universities.

In order to investigate whether this trust has been affected by the publicity surrounding the researcher and surgeon suspected of scientific misconduct, Paolo Macchiarini, the market research company TNS Sifo was asked to undertake an additional poll in the last week of February.

In the new survey, 86 percent of respondents said that they had very or fairly high trust in researchers at universities. However, there was a slight decrease in the proportion that had "very high" trust and a slight increase in the proportion that had "fairly high" trust, compared with the previous survey.

One in four respondents said that they had a more negative attitude towards researchers and research as a result of something they had seen or heard in the media over the previous month. When the question was asked in autumn 2014 (it was not asked in 2015), only seven percent gave the same answer. Both then and now, a large number had either seen news that had positively influenced them, or news that had influenced them in both ways.

Altogether, barely half of the respondents felt that they had been influenced by the media's reporting. These people were subsequently asked what aspect of the reporting had influenced them. Out of 373 responses, 271 can be directly linked to the events surrounding

Macchiarini.

"Paradoxically, the reason that the overall level of trust in [researchers](#) has not fallen more is the extensive media coverage itself," said Cissi Billgren Askwall, Secretary General of VA.

"The fact that scientific wrongdoers get discovered and that misconduct results in consequences, gives important signals that the system as a whole works. The mass media has a crucial role to play, as conveyors of information, investigators and as a forum for debate," said Cissi Billgren Askwall.

Provided by Vetenskap & Allmaenhet

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