

**Analysis of Sweden:**  
**Spring 2022 Pew Research Center Global Attitudes & Trends**  
**John Ferreira and Gavin Barro**

**Background of Sweden**

Sweden, known for its growth industries and strong welfare state, is ranked in the top ten countries for life expectancy, access to education, and quality of life.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Sweden's wide range of government benefits including free education, shorter work days, and free health and dental services for minors<sup>2</sup> contributes to consistently high rankings in the Global World Happiness Report.

With a current population of roughly 10.6 million people,<sup>3</sup> present-day Sweden is known for its natural beauty, as well as strong economics and social programs.<sup>4</sup> As a member of both the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Sweden holds a strong diplomatic network, with embassies spanning all across the world<sup>5</sup>. Historically, Sweden's international policy has been focused on mitigating threats and preventing risks,<sup>6</sup> and is typically achieved through policies of neutrality and non-alignment, as well as connections in the EU and NATO.<sup>7</sup>

Sweden has a mixed economic system in which there are a variety of private freedoms combined with centralized economic planning and government regulation.<sup>8</sup> Currently ranked as the 7th

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<sup>1</sup> Facts about Sweden. "Facts about Sweden." Accessed December 5, 2023.

<sup>2</sup> "Health and Happiness: What We Can Learn from Sweden – The Blog Chain," October 3, 2021.

<sup>3</sup> "Sweden Population (2023) - Worldometer." Accessed December 5, 2023.

<sup>4</sup> "Social Assistance in Sweden | Nordic Cooperation." Accessed December 5, 2023.

<sup>5</sup> Sweden Abroad. "Embassies." Accessed December 5, 2023.

<sup>6</sup> Regeringskansliet, Regeringen och. "Foreign and Security Policy." Text. Regeringskansliet, November 7, 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Greene, Owen. "Sweden: A History of Neutrality Ends after 200 Years." The Conversation, May 26, 2022.

<sup>8</sup> "Sweden: Introduction." Accessed December 5, 2023.

strongest economy in Europe,<sup>9</sup> and the 24th strongest in the world,<sup>10</sup> Sweden's economy has been thriving in recent history. Being mostly export-oriented: machinery, vehicles, and oil are foundational to said economic success.<sup>11</sup> However, despite success on paper, the strict labor laws of the country make it expensive for companies to employ people.<sup>12</sup> As a result, the cost of living is expensive, ranking 31st among countries in the world.<sup>13</sup>

Politically, Sweden shares a similar structure to its Nordic neighbors. Foundationally, Sweden is a Parliamentary Democracy. Elections are held not at the presidential level, but rather at the Parliamentary level.<sup>14</sup> The members of parliament will select a Prime Minister, who serves as the head of executive authority. Overseeing him is the king (Carl XVI), “who receives foreign dignitaries, represents Sweden on state visits abroad, and presents awards including the Nobel Prizes.”<sup>15</sup> At the local level, Sweden is divided into 290 municipalities, each with an elected assembly or council. “Municipalities are responsible for a broad range of facilities and services including housing, roads, water supply and wastewater processing, schools, public welfare, elderly care, and childcare.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> “Sweden Economy: Population, GDP, Inflation, Business, Trade, FDI, Corruption.” Accessed December 5, 2023.

<sup>10</sup> Worlddata.info. “Economics in Sweden Compared to the EU.” Accessed December 5, 2023.

<sup>11</sup> “Sweden Exports By Category.” Accessed December 5, 2023.

<sup>12</sup> Routes North. “Is Sweden Expensive?” Accessed December 5, 2023.

<sup>13</sup> Pagallu, Lakshmi Lavanya. “Cost of Living in Sweden: A Comprehensive Guide.” GetGIS (Global Immigration Services), August 21, 2023.

<sup>14</sup> admin. “Democracy in Sweden.” sweden.se, August 29, 2023.

<sup>15</sup> “Things to Know about Sweden’s Monarchy as King Carl XVI Celebrates 50 Years on the Throne.” Accessed December 5, 2023.

<sup>16</sup> Si. “Swedish Government.” sweden.se, July 3, 2023.

## **Data**

As previously mentioned, Sweden consistently scores very highly on the World Happiness Report. However, despite the apparent success of Sweden in generating happiness amongst its general population, it is essential to dive deeper into the factors that contribute to individuals' overall happiness and their satisfaction with the government. Due to the government playing a pivotal role in providing social benefits and maintaining a robust welfare state, it is plausible that Swedish citizens' economic perceptions influence their overall satisfaction with the government.

Looking in another direction, the rise of the internet over the past twenty years has forever changed the accessibility of knowledge. Today we can use the internet to access all sorts of information sources. Despite the overall happiness of Swedes, all countries, no matter how satisfied their citizens may be, still have internal conflicts that they must deal with and the increased usage of the internet can potentially lead to both information and misinformation about these conflicts being spread very quickly. Focusing internally, we wonder if the increased usage of social media and the internet in general has affected the perception of internal conflicts amongst Swedes.

This study aims to answer the following questions: "How is economic perception related to satisfaction with the government?" and "How does internet usage affect the perception of worldwide conflicts?" Based on personal observations, our research questions, and our own experiences we generated two hypotheses: (1) That individuals in Sweden who have a positive economic perception will report higher levels of satisfaction with the government compared to those with a negative economic perception, and (2) that increased internet usage among

individuals in Sweden is associated with a heightened perception of internal conflicts, potentially due to greater exposure to news and information.

To properly answer these questions and come to the correct conclusions, we will be using questions and responses from the Pew Research Center Global Attitudes from the Spring of 2022. The Pew Research Center conducts public opinion surveys across the globe on a broad array of subjects ranging from people's assessments of their own lives to their views on the current state of the world<sup>17</sup>. Respondents from the aforementioned survey were given a list of questions and asked to respond to them with particular options. For example, a set of possible options include: "Very good", "Somewhat good", "Somewhat bad", "Very bad", "Don't know", or "Refused", which were encoded in our data set as a number (example. 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, or 9). For the sake of our study, we used just conclusive answers from Swedish respondents and ignored any responses that were undecided or a refusal to answer the question.

In hypothesis one, we used question one of the Pew Research Survey, "Thinking about our economic situation, how would you describe the current economic situation in (Sweden) - is it very good, somewhat good, somewhat bad, or very bad?", as our predictor variable, and we used questions 6A, 6B, and 6C which asked "Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or a very unfavorable opinion of \_\_\_" for the Swedish Social Democratic Party, Moderate Party, and Swedish Democrats as our response variables. For our second hypothesis, our predictors were questions 26 "Some cell phones are called 'smartphones' because they can access the internet and apps. Is your cell phone a smartphone, such as an

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<sup>17</sup> NW, 1615 L. St, Suite 800 Washington, and DC 20036 USA 202-419-4300 | Main 202-857-8562 | Fax 202-419-4372 | Media Inquiries. "Global Indicators Database." *Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project* (blog). Accessed December 5, 2023.

iPhone, or Android, ?", 10D "Do you think that each of the following is a major threat, minor threat, or not a threat at all to (Sweden) - the spread of false information online", and 30 "In general, do you think social media is a very effective, somewhat effective, not too effective, or not at all effective to do the following - Raise public awareness about political or social issues". Our response variable was question 32, which asked, "In all countries, there are differences or conflicts between different social groups. In your opinion, in (Sweden), are the conflicts between people who support different political parties very strong, strong, not very strong or are there no conflicts at all?".

## **Analysis**

To determine the relationships described in our two hypotheses, we used the Chi-Squared test of independence to determine if, and how strongly our variables were related to one another. In total we conducted 6 Chi-Squared tests, 3 for each hypothesis, using the aforementioned predictors and responses to determine if our variables were related to one another. Multiple variables and tests were conducted for each hypothesis to increase the depth of our study, capture the broadness of our hypothesis, and strengthen the validity of our conclusions.

### *Hypothesis 1*

Our first hypothesis was that individuals in Sweden who have a positive economic perception will report higher levels of satisfaction with the government compared to those with a negative economic perception. Our first Chi-Squared test of this hypothesis compared individuals' opinions of the Swedish Social Democratic Party to their description of the current economic state of Sweden. This first test of independence had a p-value  $< 0.0001$ , with a Cramer's V score of 0.2374. This result indicates to us that opinions of the Swedish Social Democratic Party are

moderately dependent on opinions on the Swedish economy. The frequency tables provided in the output show that the most common answer among those surveyed was a “somewhat good” economic situation with a “somewhat favorable” opinion of the Swedish Social Democratic Party.

To further test the validity of our first hypothesis, a second Chi-Squared test was run to determine the level of dependence between respondents' opinions on the Swedish Moderate Party and their description of the current economic situation. This test had a p-value of 0.0305, showing that opinions on the Swedish Moderate Party were independent of their description of the current economic situation. Of the 1014 respondents, the frequency of answers was widely spread when asked about the Moderate Party, however, the description of the current economic situation was mostly “somewhat good.” This created a wide variety of answers, leading to no clear showing of dependence.

Our final test of hypothesis 1 was once again determining the relationship between respondents' descriptions of the current economic situation and a political party. However, this final test was of the Swedish Democrats. The P value of this test was  $<0.0001$  and had a Cramer's V value of 0.158. This result shows that there is a dependency between the variables, however, it is a moderately weak relationship. When assessing the frequency of answers, the most common response was a “somewhat good” description of the economy, with a “very unfavorable” opinion of the Swedish Democrats.

## *Hypothesis 2*

To assess our second hypothesis, that increased internet usage among individuals in Sweden is associated with a heightened perception of internal conflicts, we completed another set of Chi-Squared tests of independence. Our first test compared the type of phone that respondents owned to their opinions on the strength of political conflicts within Sweden. This Chi-Square test had a p-value of 0.547, signaling that there is no relationship between the two variables. Responses in the frequency table were relatively even across the board, further signaling that there was no dependency.

Our second test for hypothesis 2 compared the relationship between respondents' opinions on the threat of false information being spread online, to their perception of internal political conflicts. This test obtained a p-value  $< 0.0001$ , signaling that there is a relationship, however, a Cramer's V score of 0.14 suggests that it is a weak one. Of the 1014 respondents, the frequency tables show that the most common response was that online misinformation was a "major threat", but that there were "not very strong" internal political conflicts.

Our final test for hypothesis 2 compared the respondents' opinions of social media as a tool for spreading awareness about political/ social issues, and once again the perceptions of political conflicts within Sweden. This last test rendered a p-value of 0.0045 and a Cramer's V value of 0.089. This suggests that a relationship between these two variables is present but very weak. This is further emphasized in the frequency tables where a majority of respondents deemed social media to be an "effective" tool for raising awareness but shared differences in opinion

about internal political conflicts. The majority of respondents answered in the middle, saying that there were “strong conflicts” or “not very strong conflicts”.

## **Conclusion**

In analyzing the results of our Chi-Squared tests, insights were revealed about the validity of our hypothesis. In assessing hypothesis 1, (that individuals in Sweden who have a positive economic perception will report higher levels of satisfaction with the government compared to those with a negative economic perception,) we expected that these relationships would be present regardless of political affiliation. In assessing the results of our Chi-Squared test, we were partially incorrect. The results showed that the opinions of the Swedish Social Democratic Party and the Social Democrats had a relationship with respondents' economic perception, but the opinions of the Moderate Party did not. Within these relationships, a somewhat good economic perception was most commonly associated with a somewhat favorable opinion of the Swedish Social Democratic Party. However, when asked about the Swedish Democrats, the most common answer was a somewhat good economic perception tailored with a very unfavorable or somewhat unfavorable view of the Swedish Democrats. Our hypothesis did predict that these variables would be related, however, the differences of opinion across political parties were significantly more impactful than we hypothesized.

When assessing hypothesis 2 (that increased internet usage among individuals in Sweden is associated with a heightened perception of internal conflicts,) the Chi-Squared results partially disagreed. We used three different survey questions to encapsulate the entirety of our question, and out of the three tests, two proved to be insignificant. The predictors' type of cellphone of



respondent and respondent's opinions on social media as a tool to raise public awareness of social issues came back as independent of the perceptions of internal political conflicts.

However, we did find a relationship when testing respondents' opinions of the threat level of online misinformation and their opinions on internal political conflicts. There was a dependency in this test and the frequency table showed a very common answer being misinformation online being a major threat, and not very strong internal political conflicts. Even with this dependency, our hypothesis was incorrect. We predicted that increased internet usage and awareness would lead to heightened awareness of internal political conflicts, but this was not the case.

The results of our Chi-Squared tests illustrate an interesting relationship in the data and a possible area for further research. Our assessment of hypothesis 1 resulted in the judgment that political affiliations vary widely across those surveyed. Opposing political parties were viewed in a negative light, with certain responses being "very unfavorable." In the assessment of our second hypothesis, the frequency tables showed that across the board, Swedes did not assess that there were significant political conflicts within Sweden. The frequency tables reported that the most common answer by far was that of "not very strong conflicts." These two responses are somewhat contradictory, and an interesting area of further research would be dissecting Sweden's political layout, to further understand to what extent political polarity is significant.

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