



**2012/13**

# SOME UPS, SOME DOWNS

## VA Barometer 2012/13 – VA Report 2012:5

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More information about the survey can be found at [www.v-a.se](http://www.v-a.se).

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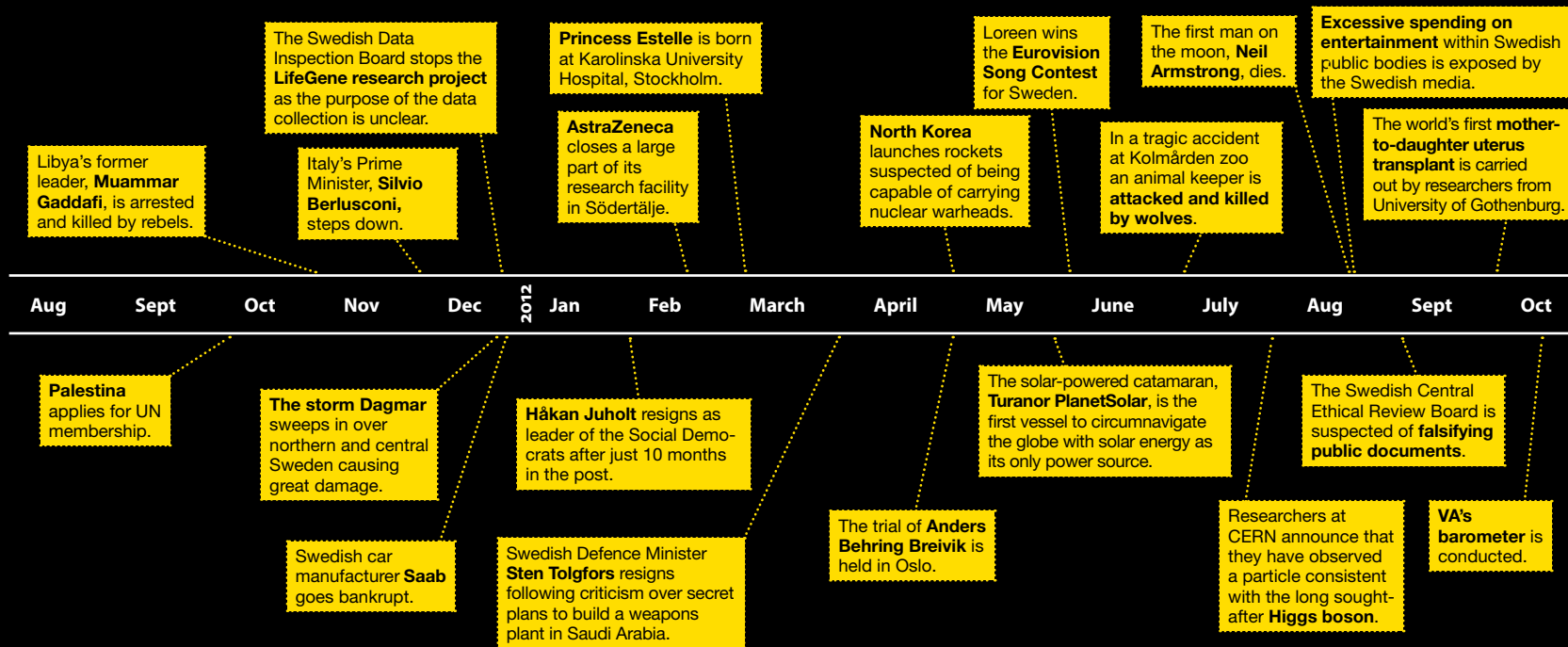


Here are some of the results from VA's latest barometer:

- Confidence in researchers at universities and in companies increases.
- People's view on the degree to which scientific and technological advances affect their lives remains stable.
- Support for register-based research is widespread.
- A career in research is seen as less attractive.

The VA barometer is based on 1,000 telephone interviews with a representative sample of the Swedish population aged 16–74. The interviews were carried out by market research company Exquiro between 29th September and 6th October 2012. The questions can be found on VA's website: [www.v-a.se](http://www.v-a.se). It is the 11th survey to be conducted since VA was founded in 2002.

# LAST YEAR THROUGH SWEDISH EYES



# CONFIDENCE IN RESEARCHERS HIGH

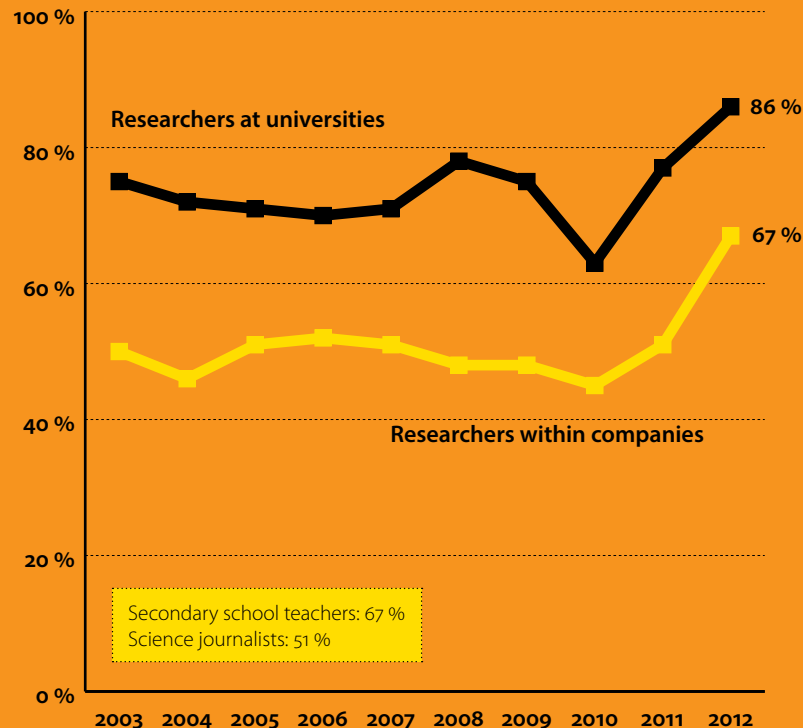
Last year we saw a rise in Sweden's level of confidence in researchers after a marked decline in 2010. This year the level is even higher.

Confidence in researchers has fluctuated over the past ten years and appears easily affected by external events. No big scandals preceded this year's survey. Instead the Swedish media has diligently reported Governmental support for research in the national budget and new research and innovation bills. The opposition parties have also declared support for investment in knowledge to tackle the economic crisis.

The graph also shows confidence levels in two groups included this year for the first time – secondary school teachers and science journalists.

*The graph shows the percentages who have a **high** or **very high** level of confidence in researchers (on a scale of five from 'A high level of confidence' to 'No confidence at all'). Also shown are figures for science journalists and secondary school teachers.*

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 1,003



# UPSWING IN SUPPORT FOR BASIC RESEARCH?

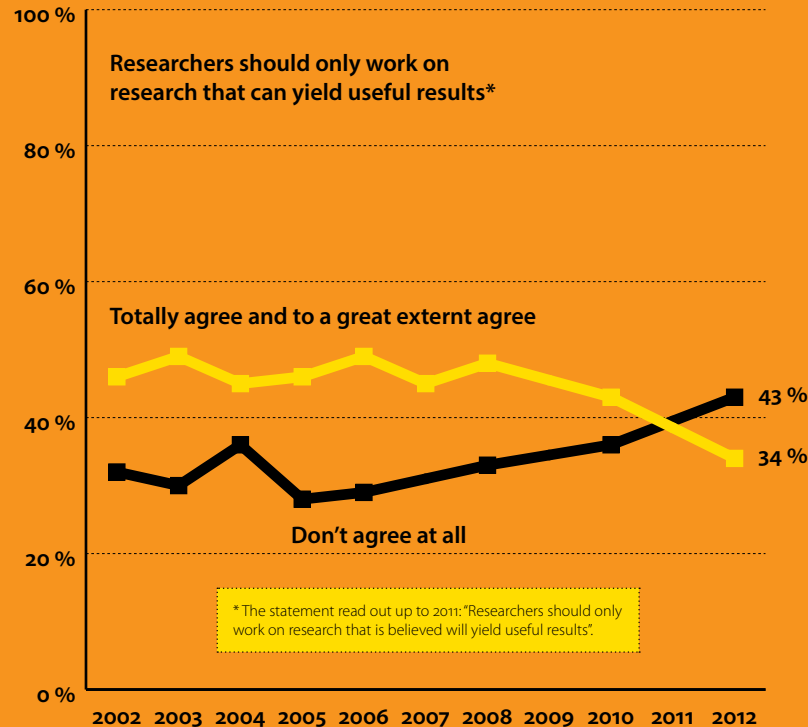
Each year VA measures to what extent the public believe that Sweden should only invest in research that can yield useful results. Fewer people in 2012 agree that we should only invest in “useful” research than in previous years. Moreover, the figure is higher for those who don’t agree at all – 43 percent compared with 36 percent in 2010.

It is mainly people with a university education and those aged 16–44 who maintain that research should not be limited to just “useful” research.

These changes could indicate that more people realise that immediate relevance is not always a measure of long-term usefulness.

*The graphs show the percentages of respondents who **totally** or to a great extent agree, and who **don't agree at all** (response scale of 1–4 from 'Agree totally' to 'Don't agree at all').*

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 1,003



# MEDICINE THE MOST SCIENTIFIC

Opinion on the scientific nature of different subjects varies, with medicine and chemistry perceived as the most scientific.

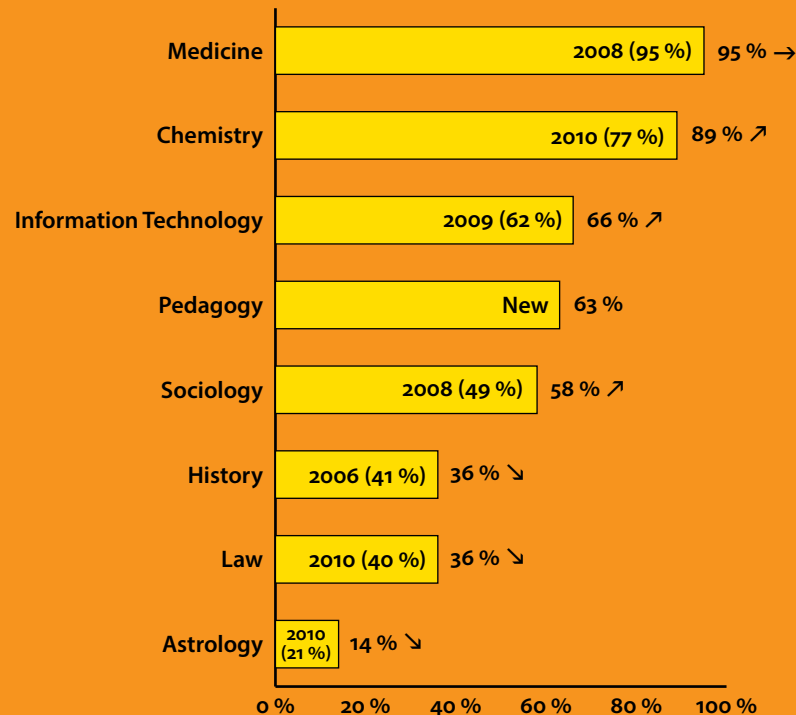
These results are in line with findings from previous years. In general, people with a university education consider the different subjects to be more scientific than people with a lower level of education, but the differences are not particularly large.

The percentage of people who consider astrology to be scientific has decreased from 21 percent in 2010 to 14 percent this year.

An explanation of all the subjects was given to avoid misunderstandings. For example, astrology is explained as being “the study of the impact of the signs of the zodiac on our lives”.

*The figures show the percentages who answer 4 or 5 on a scale of five (1= 'Not at all scientific' and 5 = 'Very scientific') to the question “To what degree do you consider the following research disciplines to be scientific?”*

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 1,003

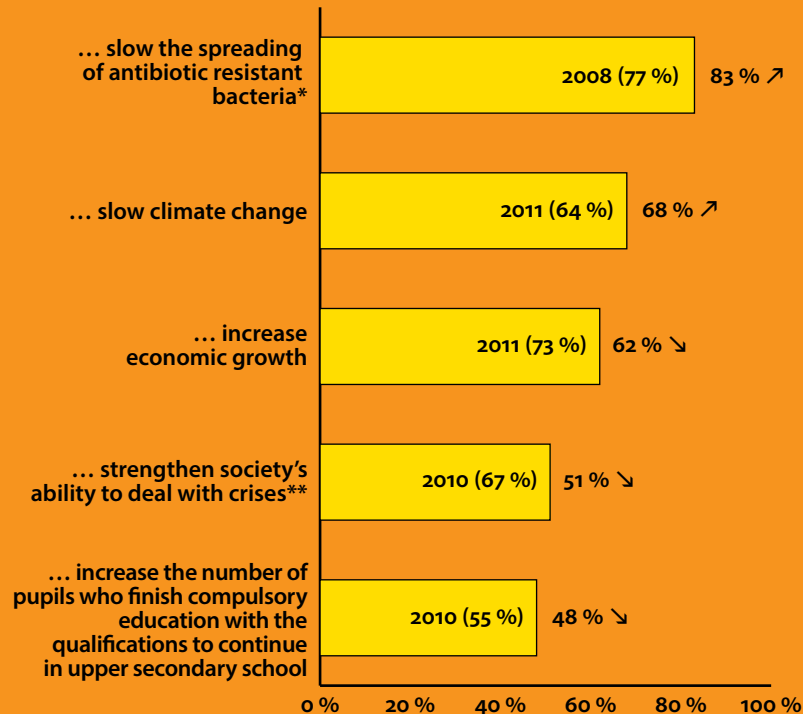


# VARYING POTENTIAL ACROSS DISCIPLINES

Swedes' confidence in the potential of research is stronger in certain areas but weaker, and decreasing, in others. There is decreasing public confidence in the potential of research to increase economic growth, most likely explained by the ongoing economic crisis and the state of the world economy. The same reasons can also explain to some degree the decreasing confidence in research's potential to help society deal with crises. Differences in opinion between men and women are often small but more men than women believe that research can aid economic growth. In general, older people are more pessimistic in their views on the potential of research.

*Figures show the percentages of respondents who believe that over the next decade there is a good chance that research will help to ... (Choice of answers: 'Yes', 'No', 'Don't know').*

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 1,003



\* In 2008 the statement was "to slow the growth of".

\*\* In 2010 the question included "for example, terrorism or economic crisis".

# SWEDES WANT TO INVEST IN RESEARCH

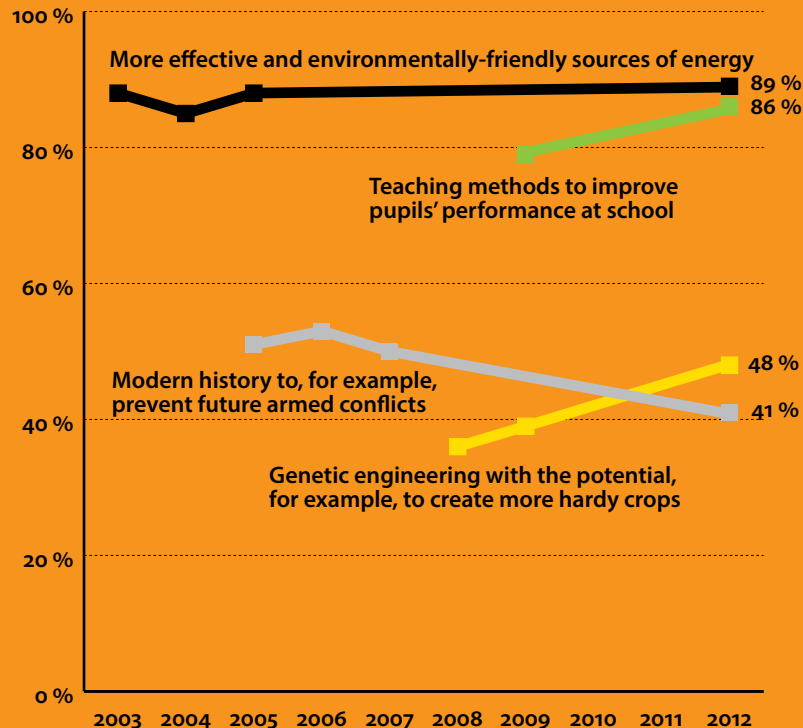
There is strong support in Sweden for government investment in research. Support is particularly strong in areas which concern people in their everyday life, for example schools and energy.

Historical researchers received a lower level of support this year, although support for historians is comparatively strong amongst young people and those with a higher level of education. This year, a higher percentage of people support investment in genetic engineering for developing more hardy crops. Earlier surveys have shown that genetic engineering is viewed more positively when it relates to curing disease (81 percent in 2007) than when aimed at developing more hardy crops.

This rise is most notable amongst young people (aged 16–29).

*The graph shows the percentages who answer 4 or 5 on a scale of five (1= 'Not at all important' and 5 = 'Very important') to the question "How important is it that Sweden invests public money in these areas?"*

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 1,003





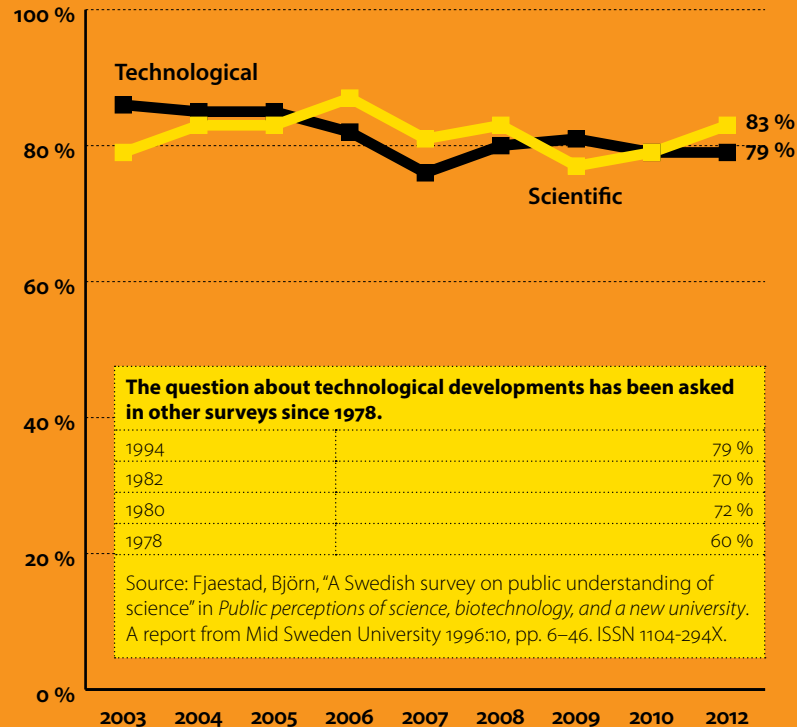
# SCIENCE AND TECH MAKE LIFE BETTER

People's attitudes to whether science and technology have made life better for ordinary people have remained stable over the years. These attitudes vary much less than those relating to, for example, confidence in researchers. Attitudes to scientific or technological advances appear to be more ingrained and more likely to reflect our attitude to modern society.

People with a higher level of education have a slightly more positive attitude to scientific advances. Older people and those with only compulsory-level education are more negative to technological developments.

*The graph shows the percentages who respond **a lot** or **somewhat better** (on a scale of five from 'A lot better' to 'A lot worse'). Separate questions were asked to each half of the sample, i.e. around 500 people.*

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 502 (SCIENTIFIC) 501 (TECHNOLOGICAL)



# FEWER CONCERNED BY SCAREMONGERING

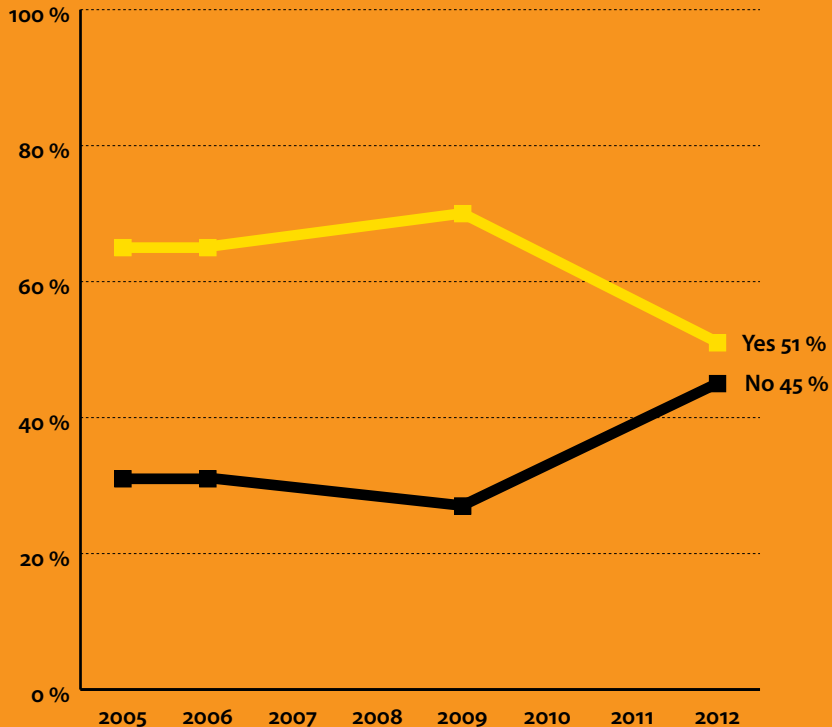
The percentage who believe that the media publish too many scare stories has decreased significantly this year.

Women and people aged 45 years and older believe to a greater extent that there is too much scaremongering in the media. Men and those aged 30–44 hold the opposite view.

It is difficult to determine the reason for this change. Perhaps fewer scare stories are being published, or the general public is less concerned by them and has learnt to filter out scaremongering over the years. VA intends to investigate this issue further and research the ways and extent to which the media covers science.

*The graph shows the percentages who select **yes** or **no** to the question of whether too many scare stories are being published (the percentage of 'Don't know's is not shown). This question was posed to half the sample, i.e. around 500 people. The other half were asked the question found on the next page.*

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 501



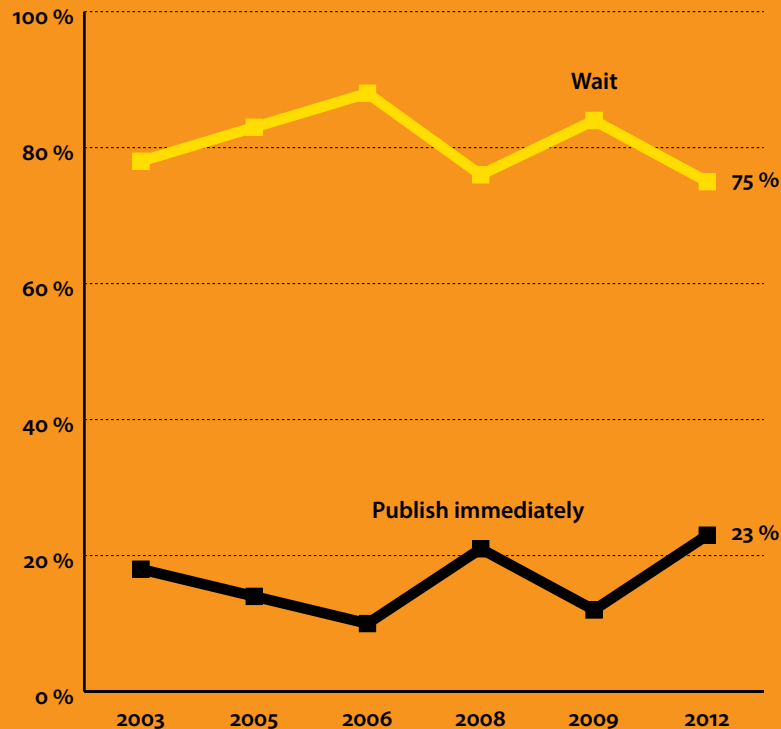
# FEWER WANT TO DELAY PUBLISHING

Half of the respondents were asked whether research results relating to people's health should be made public immediately or held back until other studies corroborate the findings. The majority would prefer to wait, although this percentage has decreased again following a sharp rise when last measured in 2009. Mirroring this is an increase in the percentage of people who want research published immediately.

People in the age category 45–59 want research findings to be made public immediately to a greater extent than other age categories, whereas older people would prefer to wait.

*The graph shows the percentages of respondents who select **publish immediately** and **wait**. The percentage of 'Don't knows' is not shown in the graph. The question was asked to half of the sample, i.e. around 500 people. The other half were asked the question showed on the previous page.*

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 502



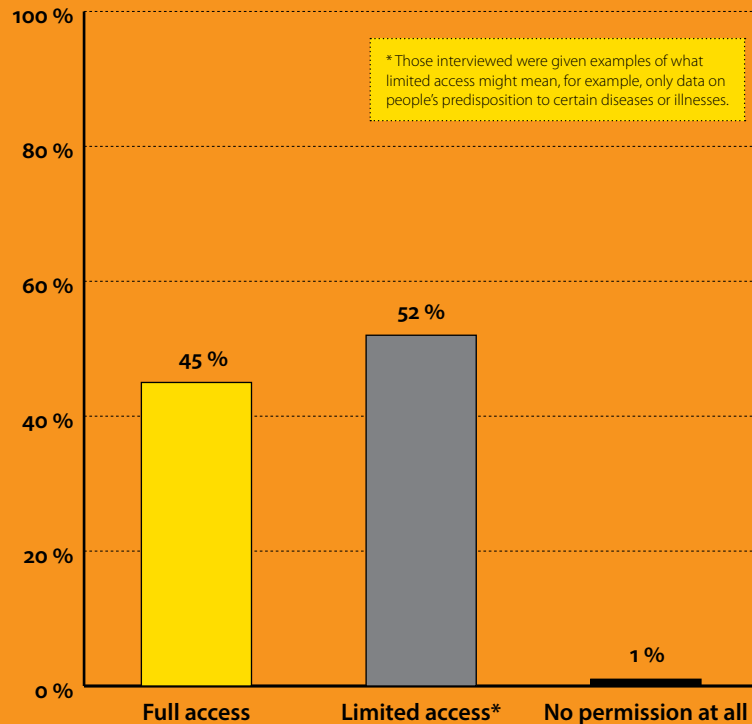
# YES TO REGISTER-BASED RESEARCH

There has been much discussion in recent years about whether researchers should have access to databases containing information about people's genetic predisposition to illnesses and their medical conditions. Surrounding the debate is the issue of whether the use of such databases violates personal privacy, even if people have consented to being part of the database.

The VA barometer 2012 has researched public opinion on whether researchers should be given access to databases containing personal information on health and genetics. The results indicate strong support for register-based research aimed at improving people's health.

*The graph shows the percentages who answer **full access**, **limited access** or **no permission at all** to whether researchers should have access to databases on individual people's genetic predisposition to illnesses and their medical conditions. The percentage of 'Don't knows' is not shown in the graph.*

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 1,003



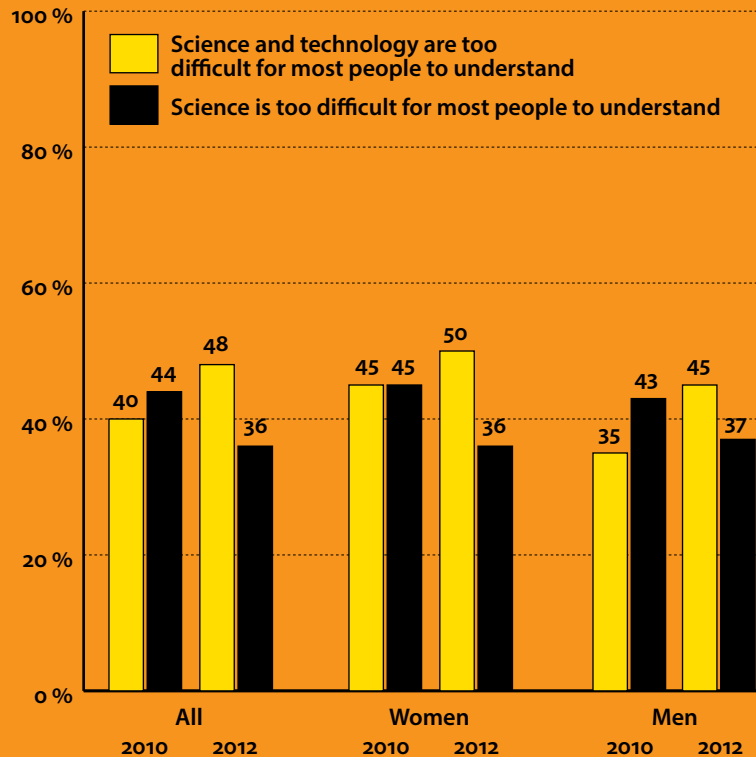
# SCIENCE AND TECH — TOO DIFFICULT

Each year VA asks to what extent people agree that science and technology are too difficult for most people to understand. In the 2010 barometer, half were asked whether science only is too difficult for most people to understand. The same split was made this year. Science and technology are seen as more difficult to understand, whereas science alone is seen as easier.

Older people and those with only a compulsory-level education agree with both statements to the greatest extent. Gender differences are less this year but generally follow the same pattern. However, more men than women agree that science is too difficult for most people to understand.

*The graph shows the percentages who **totally agree** and **to a great extent agree** with the statement “Science and technology are too difficult for most people to understand” and “Science is too difficult for most people to understand”, respectively (scale of four from ‘Totally agree’ to ‘Don’t agree at all’).*

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 502 (SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY) 501 (SCIENCE)



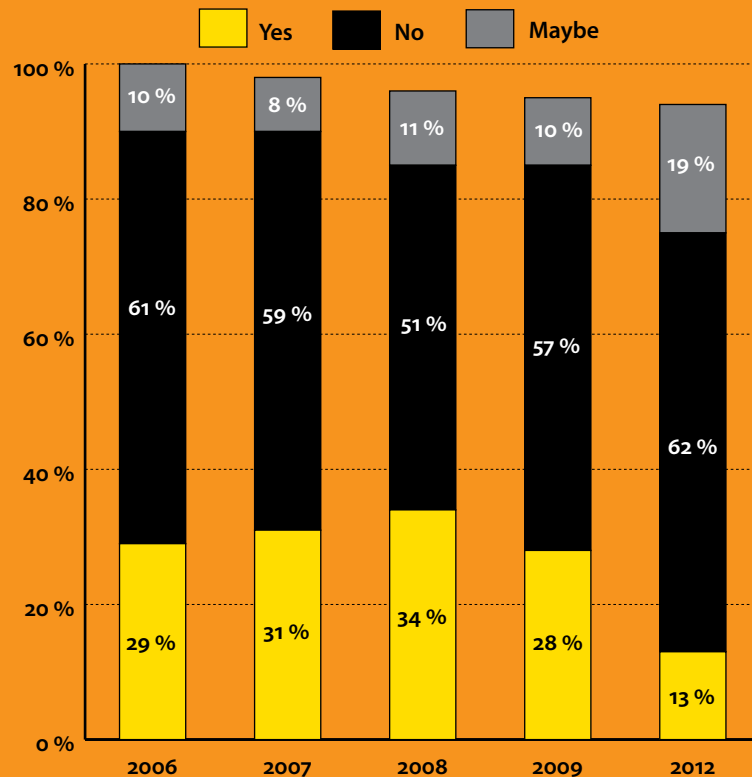
# RESEARCH CAREERS LESS ATTRACTIVE

This year, fewer young people (aged 16–29) than previously would consider a career in research. The percentage responding “no” to this question has remained relatively stable in previous years but this year there is greater uncertainty.

Young men are both more positive (15 percent compared with 10 percent for women) and more uncertain (22 percent compared with 16 percent for young women). 58 percent of men and 66 percent of women answer no.

*The graph shows the percentages who respond **yes**, **no** and **maybe** to the question “Would you like to work as a researcher in the future?” The question was only asked to young people between 16 and 29 years old. The percentage of ‘Don’t knows’ is not shown.*

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 248



VA (**Public & Science**) aims to promote dialogue and openness between the public – particularly young people – and researchers. The organisation works to create new models that facilitate discussion about research. VA also develops new knowledge about the relationship between research and society through opinion polls and surveys. Its members consist of 79 organisations, public authorities, companies and associations. It also has individuals as members.



Vetenskap & Allmänhet

*Read more at [www.v-a.se](http://www.v-a.se)*