



**Vetenskap & Allmänhet**  
**How Journalists view Science**  
**Science in the Press**  
**VA-reports 2005:5 and 2005:6**

# Facts about the two studies

## 1 550 telephone interviews, conducted in Sweden 26 Aug – 15 Sept 2005

### *Interview groups:*

- Journalists (all media, all areas)
- Science journalists
- Journalism students

### *Focus:*

- Attitudes to science and scientists
- Contacts with researchers
- Access to scientific information
- The journalists' "wish list"

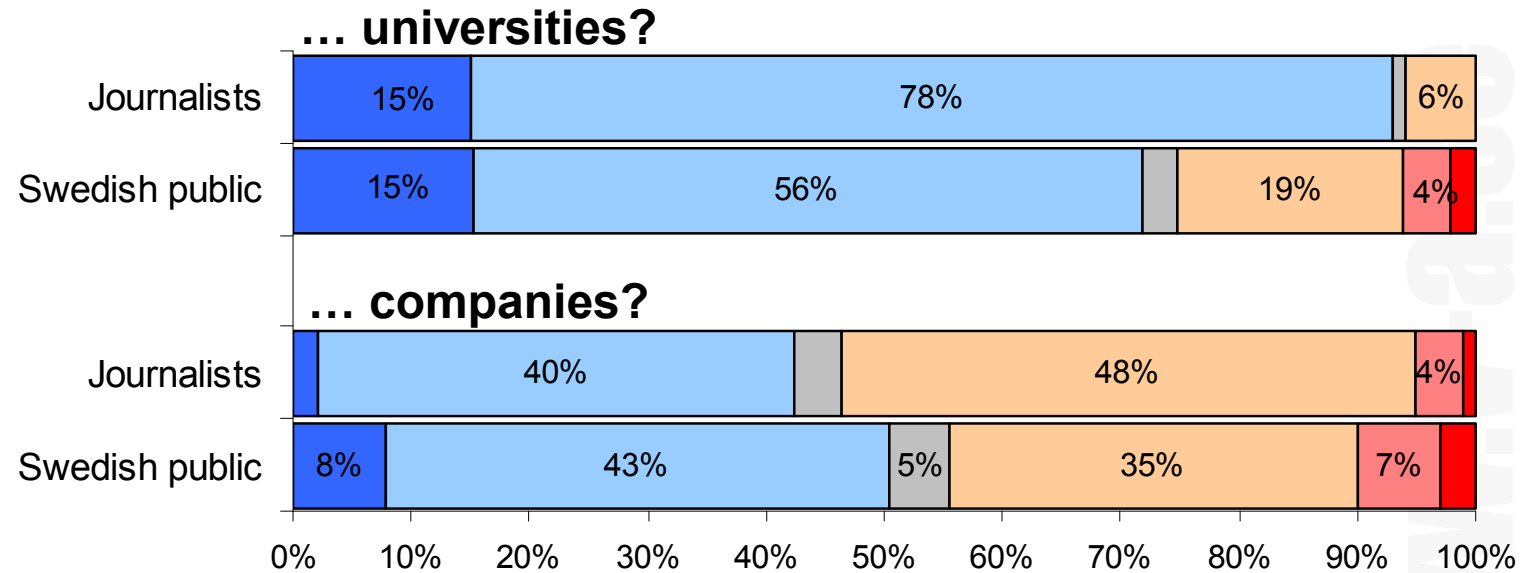
## 2 Analysis of scientific content in a selection of Swedish youth and family magazines and regional newspapers. 8600 pages in total (articles + ads).

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# Journalists trust researchers

Q: How much trust do you have in researchers at...



■ Very great trust ■ Great trust ■ Don't know ■ Little trust ■ Very little trust ■ No trust at all

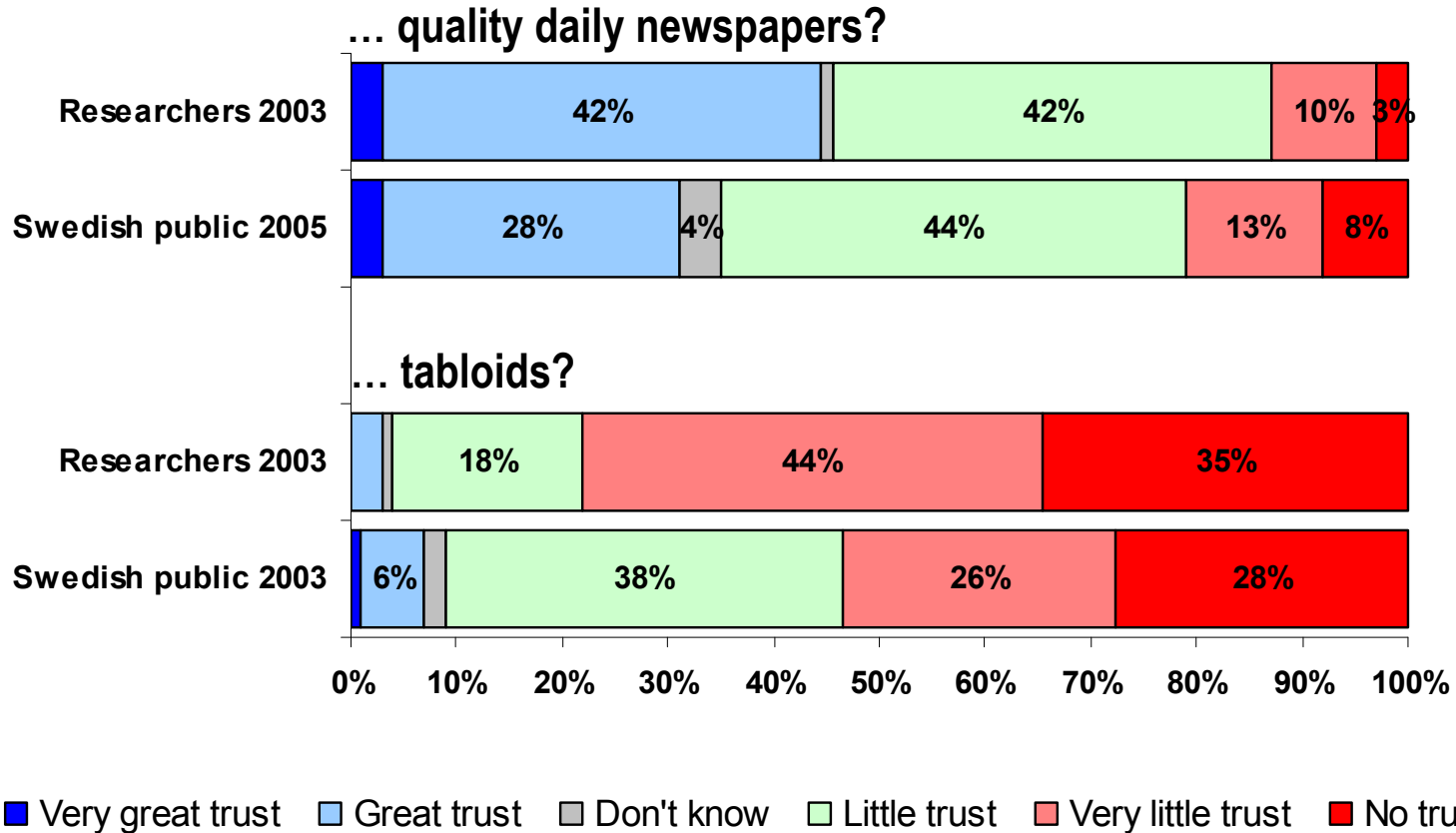
Sources: VA-report 2005:6, 2005:4



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# Researchers have less trust in journalists

Q: How much trust do you have in journalists working for...



Source: VA-report 2003:4, 2005:4



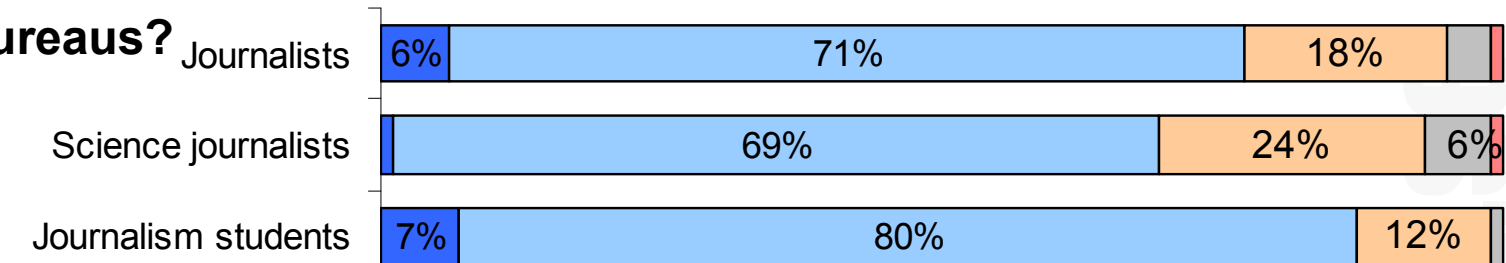
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# Journalists don't trust "blogs"

Q: How much trust do you have in information from...

... news

bureaus?



... "blogs"?

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

Very great trust Great trust Little trust  
Don't know Very little trust No trust at all

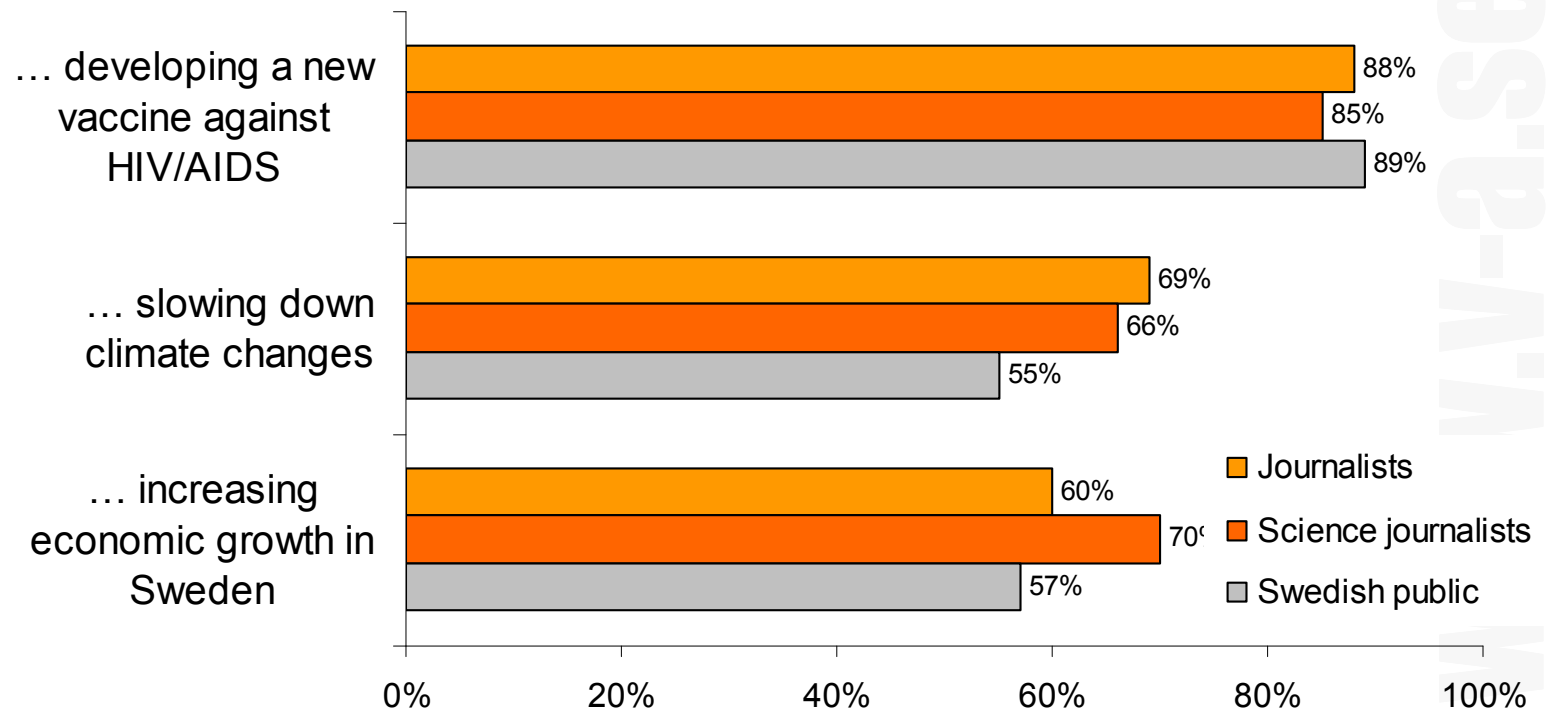
Source: VA-report 2005:6



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# Journalists have a high level of confidence in the potential of science

Q: Do you believe that within ten years research has the potential to contribute to...



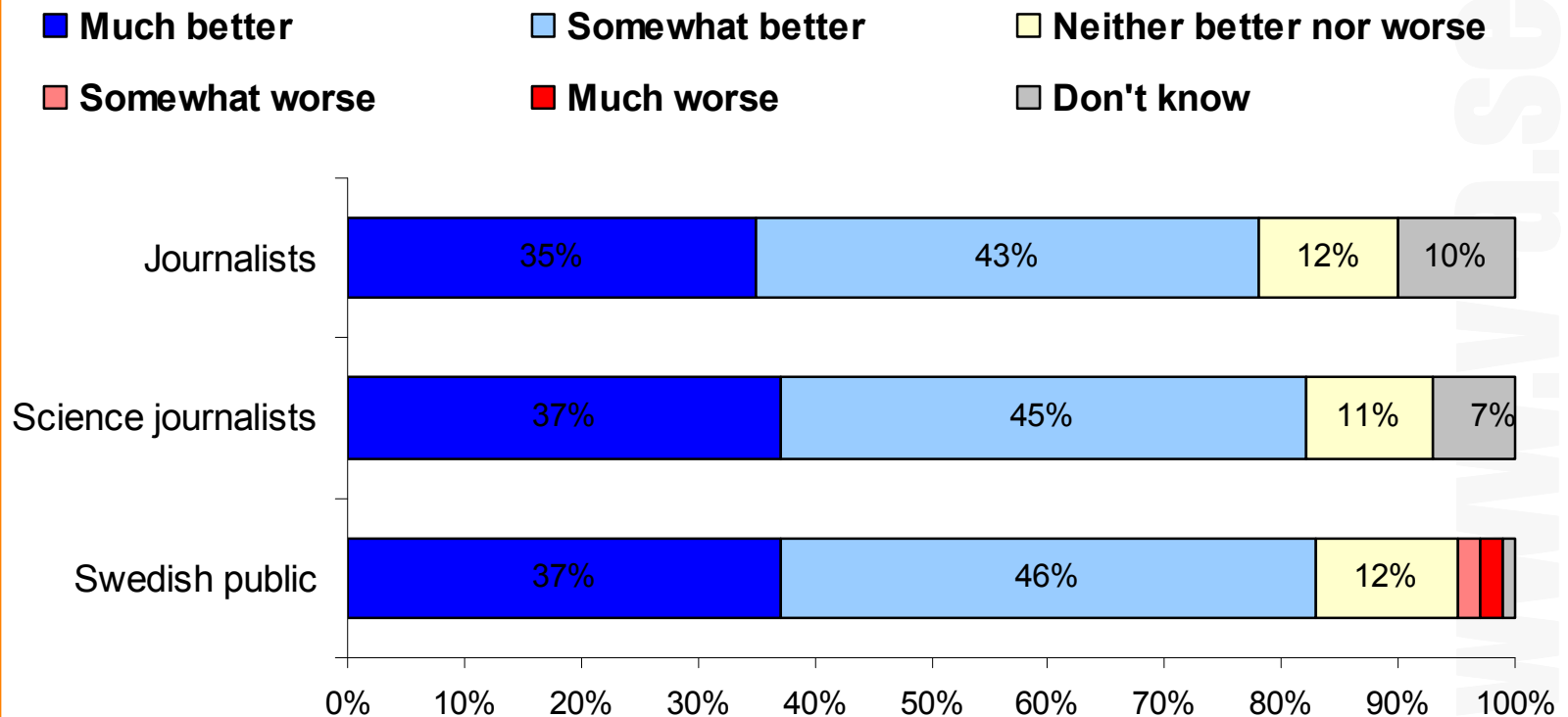
Sources: VA-report 2005:6, 2005:4



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# Positive attitude to scientific development

Q: Do you think that scientific developments over the last 10 to 20 years have made life better or worse for ordinary people?



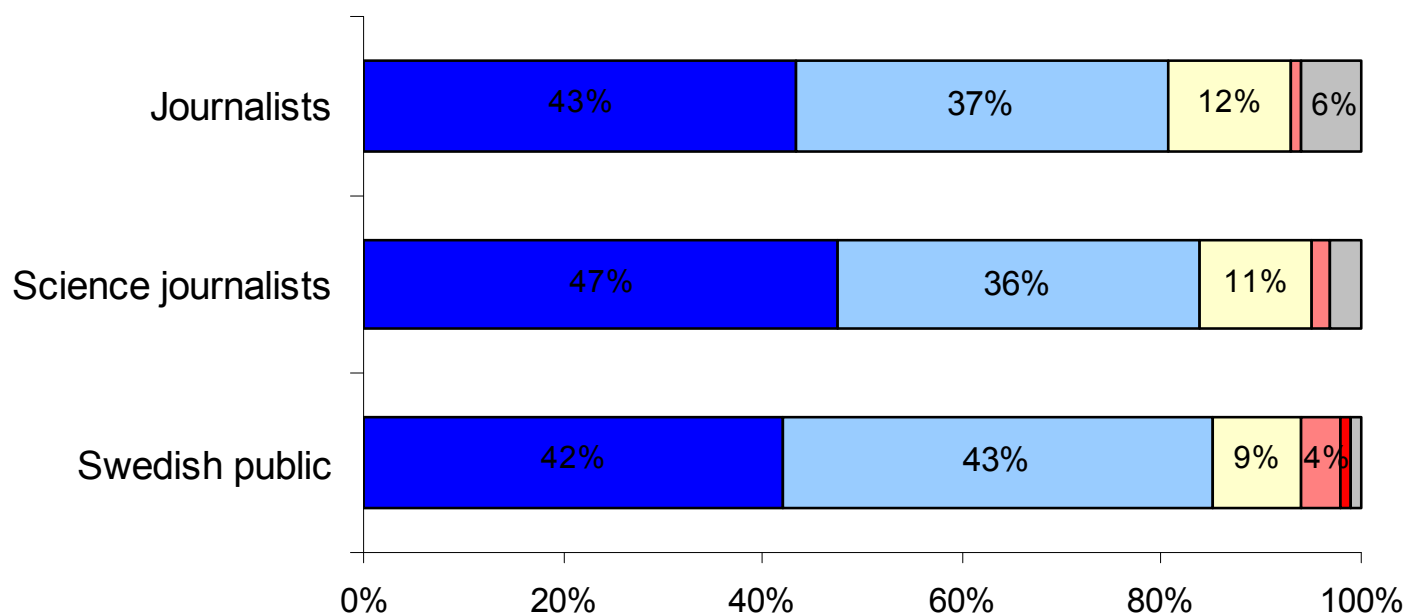
Sources: VA-report 2005:6, 2005:4



# Positive attitude to technological development

Q: Do you think that technological developments over the last 10 to 20 years have made life better or worse for ordinary people?

■ Much better      ■ Somewhat better      ■ Neither better nor worse  
■ Somewhat worse      ■ Much worse      ■ Don't know



Sources: VA-report 2005:6, 2005:4

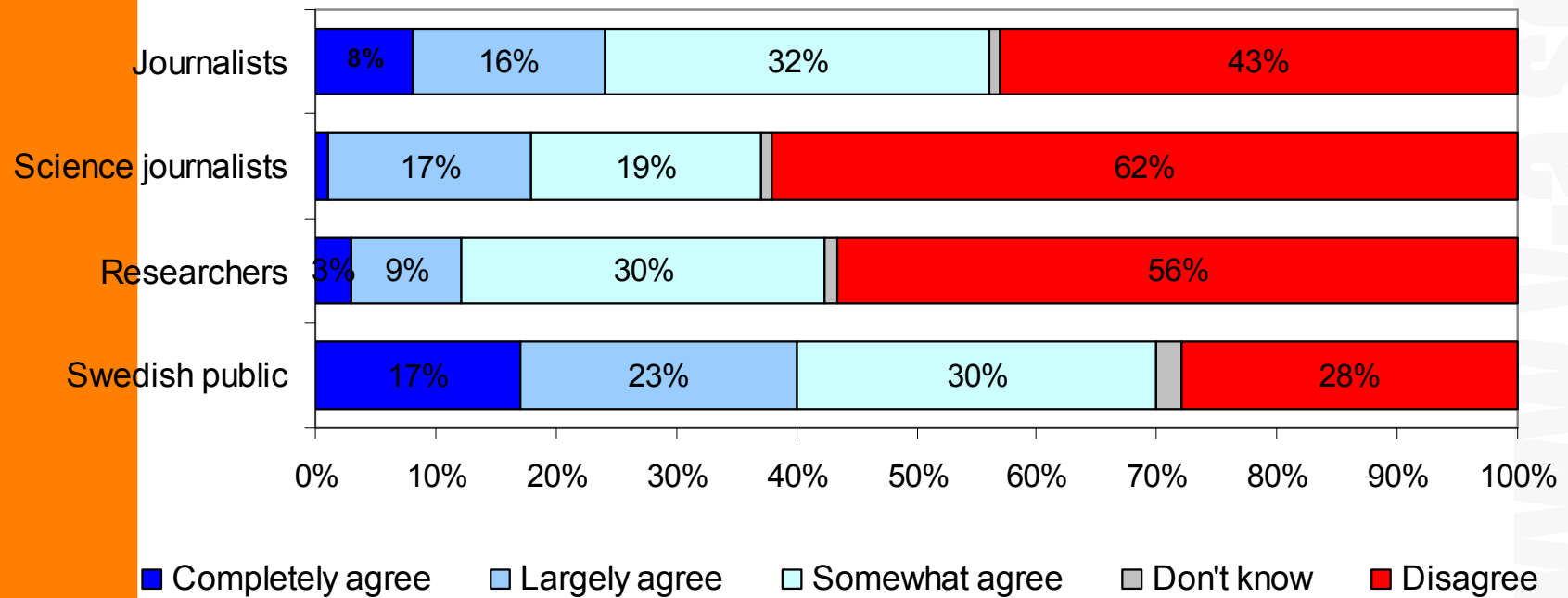


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# Are Science & Technology too difficult?

Q: "Science and technology are too hard for most people to understand"

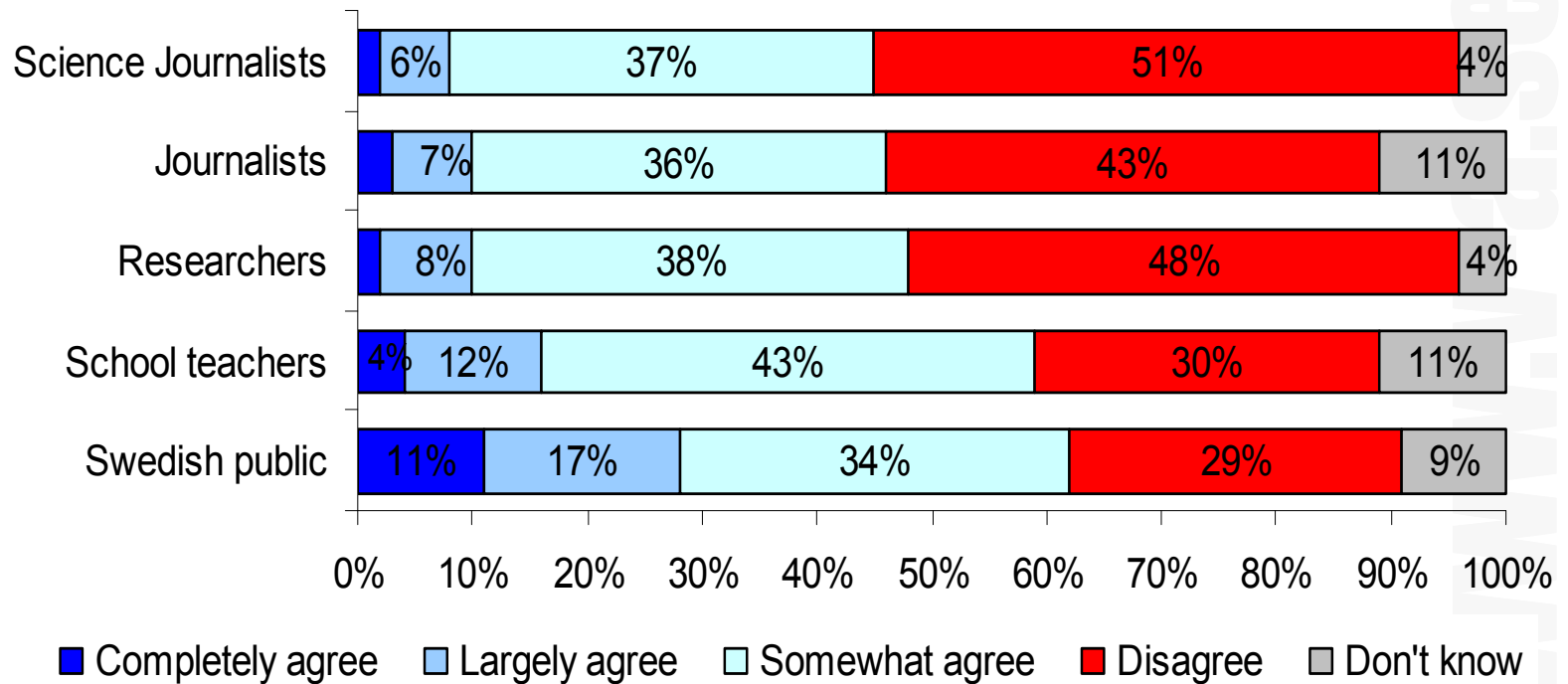


Sources: VA-report 2005:6, 2005:4, 2003:4



# Journalists have high confidence in researchers

Q: "Researchers seem to try new things without paying enough attention to possible risks"



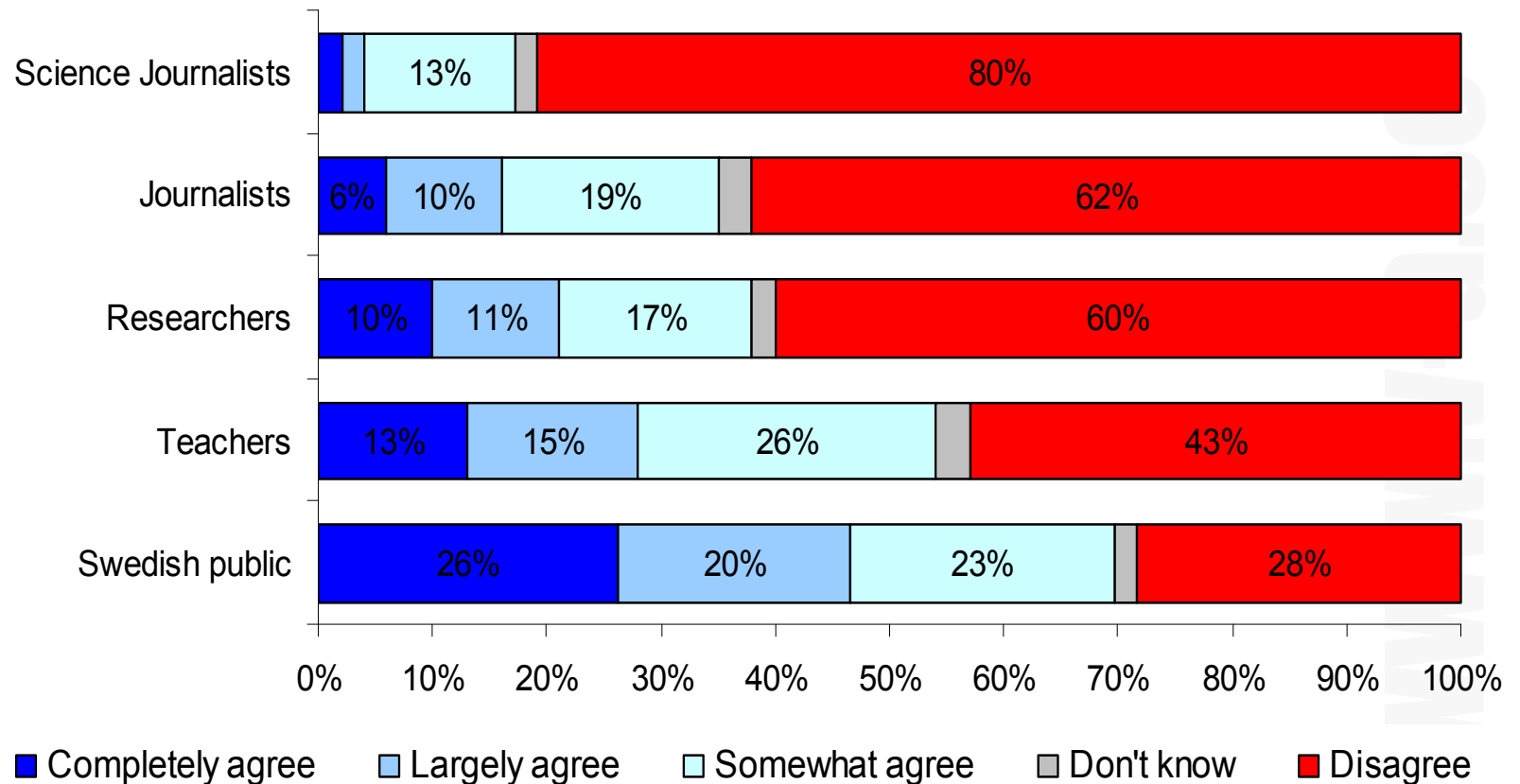
Sources: VA-report 2005:6, 2005:4, 2004:4



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# Researchers should not only do “useful” research

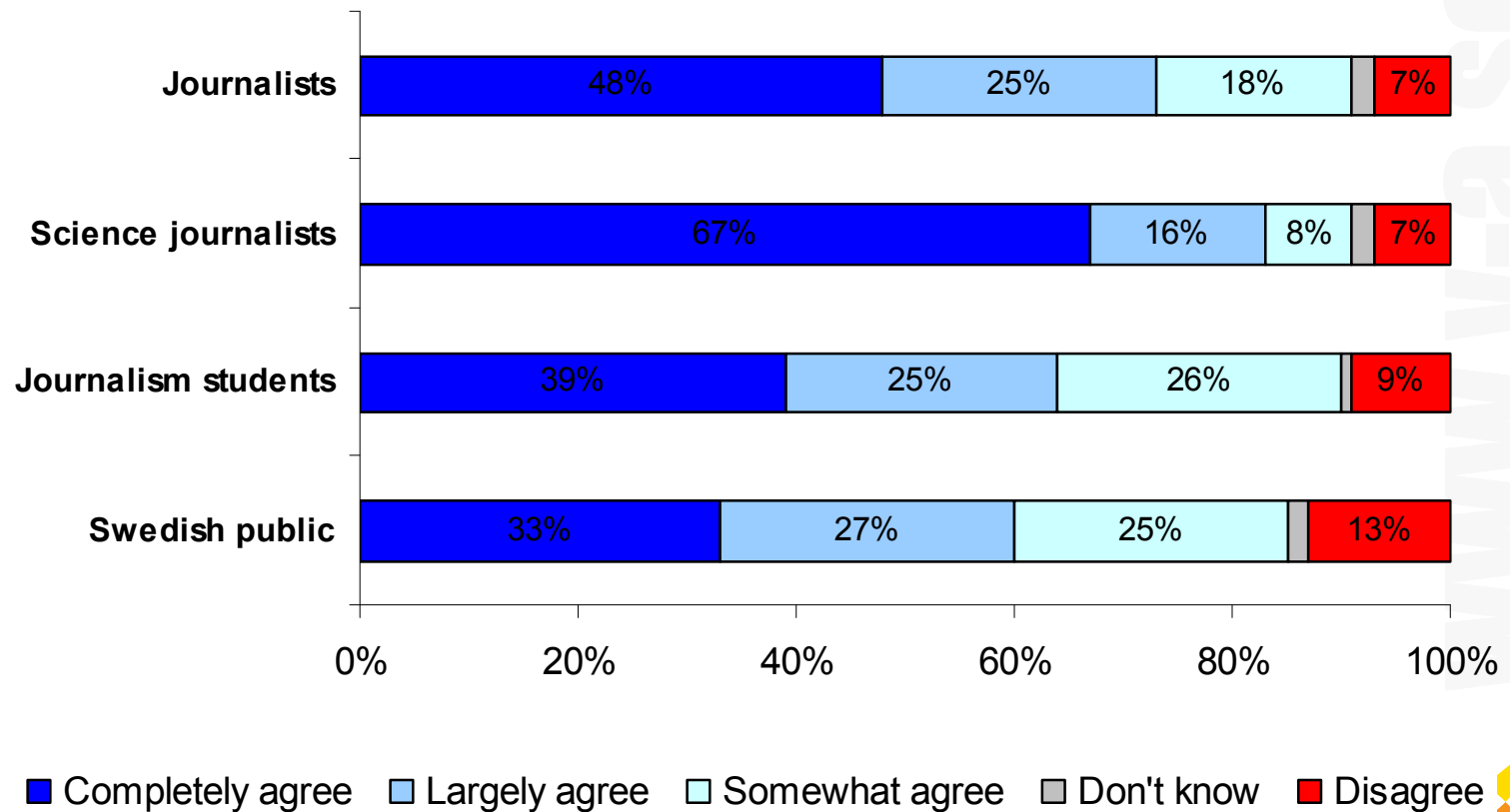
Q: “Researchers should only perform research that may lead to useful results”



Sources: VA-report 2005:6, 2005:4, 2004:4

# Research is important, even if it does not bring immediately useful results

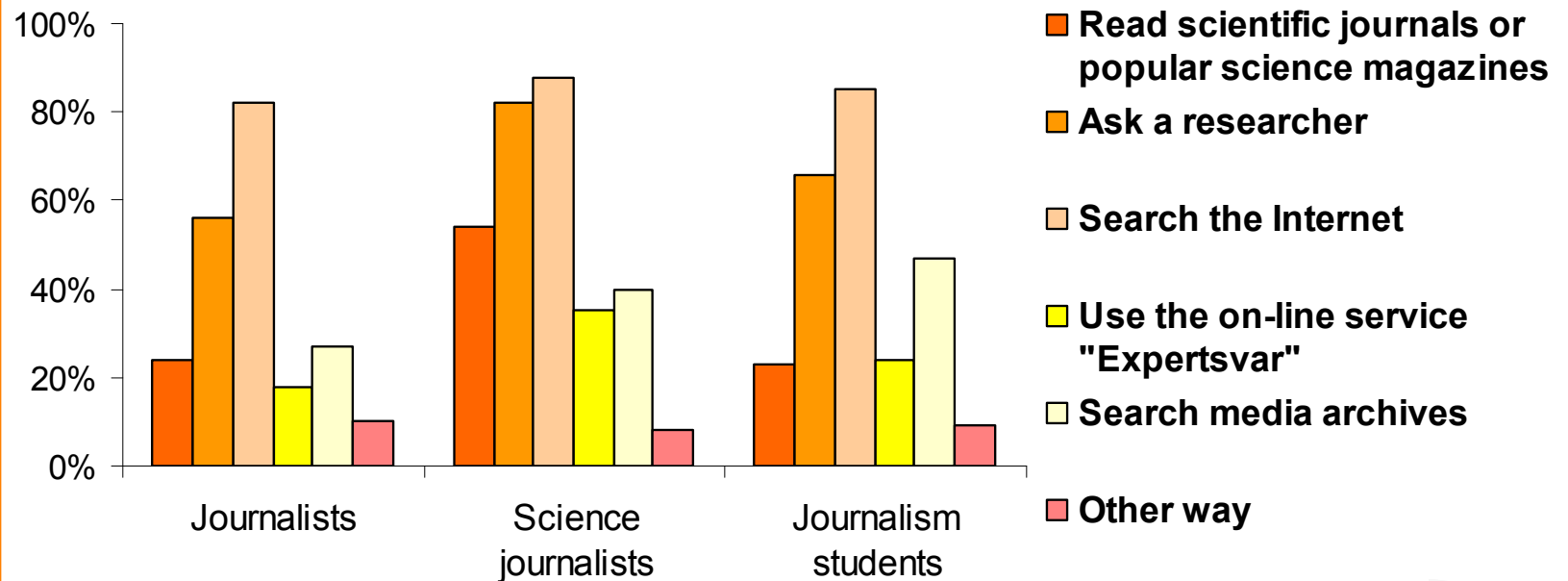
Q: "It is important to spend money on research, even if it is not intended to bring immediately useful results"



Sources: VA-report 2005:6, 2005:4

# Journalists often use the internet as a resource

Q: Where do you get information about science and research?



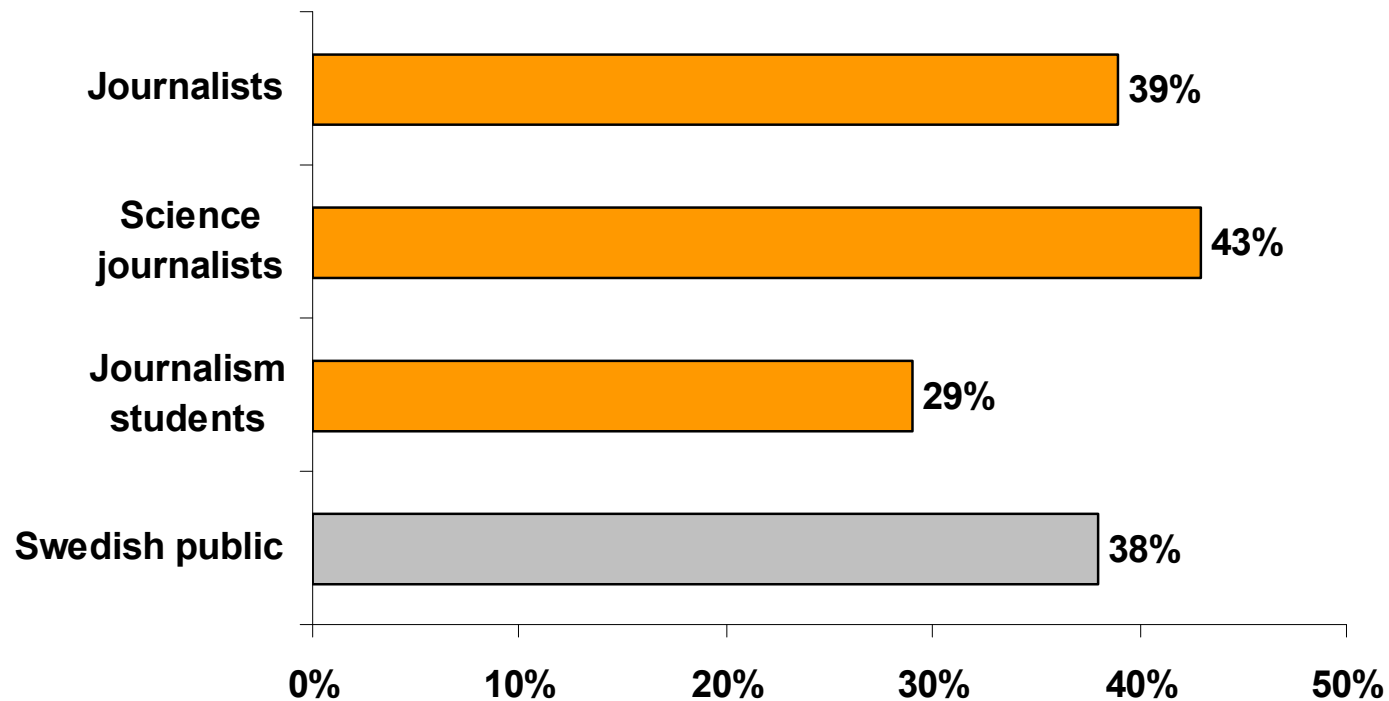
Source: VA-report 2005:6



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# Visits to science & technology museums

Q: Do you regularly visit museums or exhibitions on science or technology?  
(Yes)



Sources: VA-report 2005:6, 2005:4

www.va.se

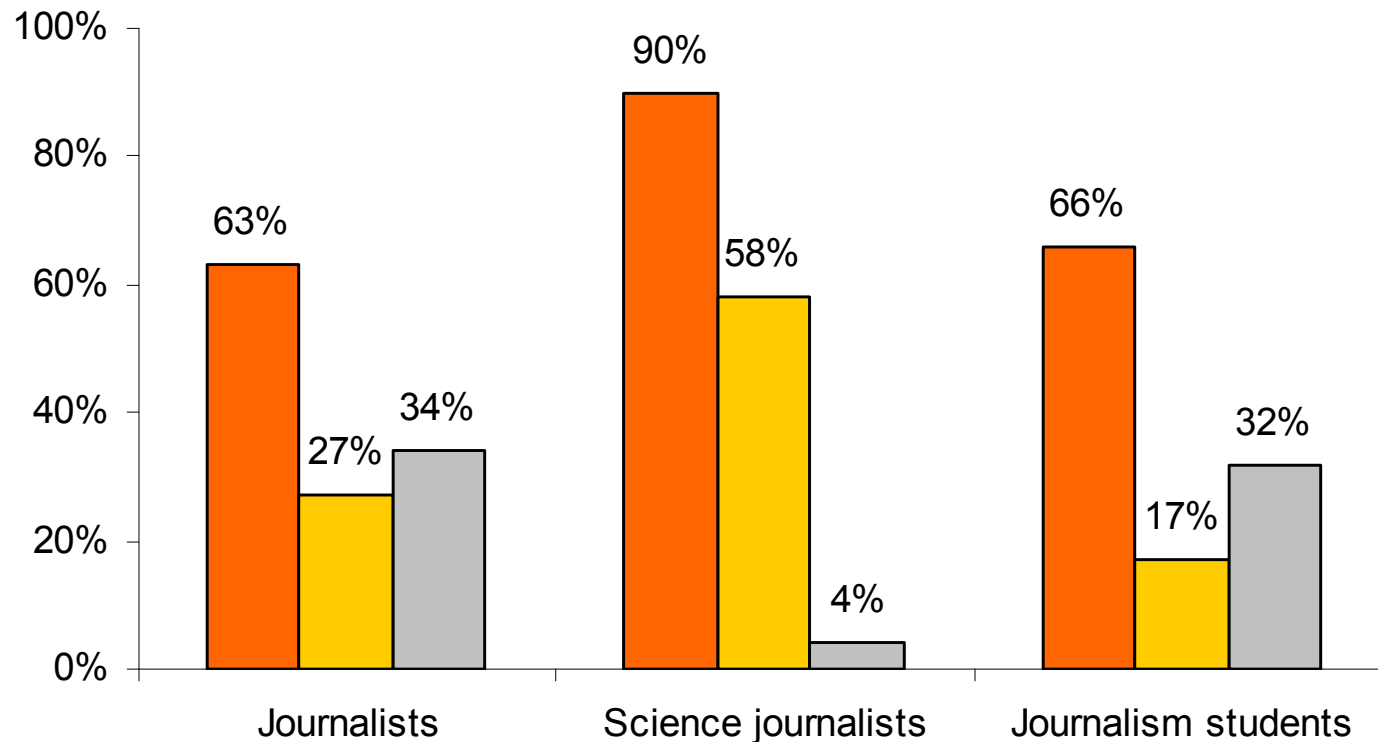


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# Journalists are often in contact with researchers

Q: Do you, during an average working month, have contact with any of the following?

■ Researchers at Universities   ■ Researchers at companies   ■ No contacts



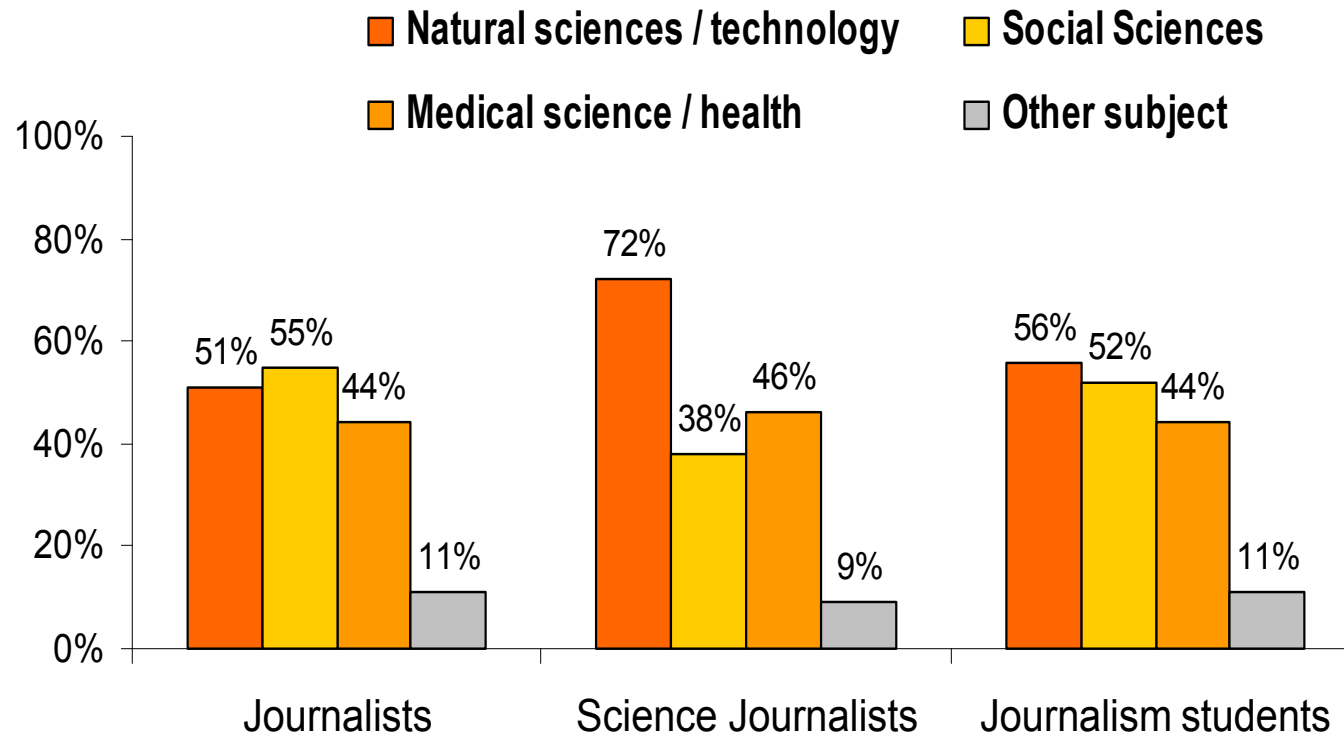
Source: VA-report 2005:6



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# These contacts are within all disciplines

Q: What scientific areas do you have research contacts in?



Source: VA-report 2005:6



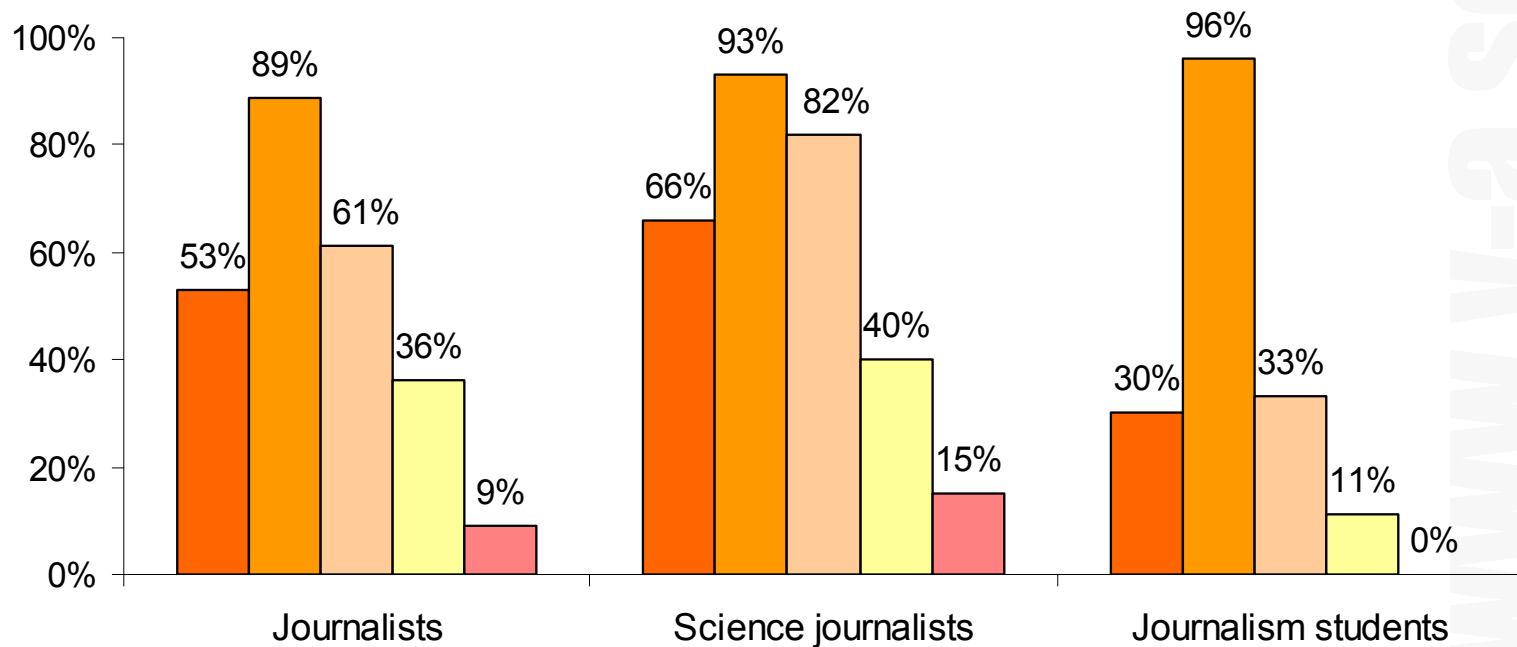
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# Most contact takes place over the phone

Q: How do you normally get in contact with researchers?

Meet personally Phone E-mail Press conf. or similar Courses for professionals



Source: VA-report 2005:6



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## Journalists have good experiences from their research contacts

**Q: What are your experiences from contacts with researchers?**  
(open question)

- Mainly very positive / good
- Friendly / nice / helpful / cooperative
  
- Mixed experiences
  
- Little knowledge of how the media works
- Not good at using understandable language

*Source: VA-report 2005:6*



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## Comprehensible, accessible information wanted!

**Q: In your opinion, is there anything that researchers and research communicators could do which would be useful to you in your work as a journalist? (open question)**

- Accessible information
- Easily reachable researchers
- Knowledge of how journalists work
- Website/database with all researchers
- Use comprehensible language!

*Source: VA-report 2005:6*

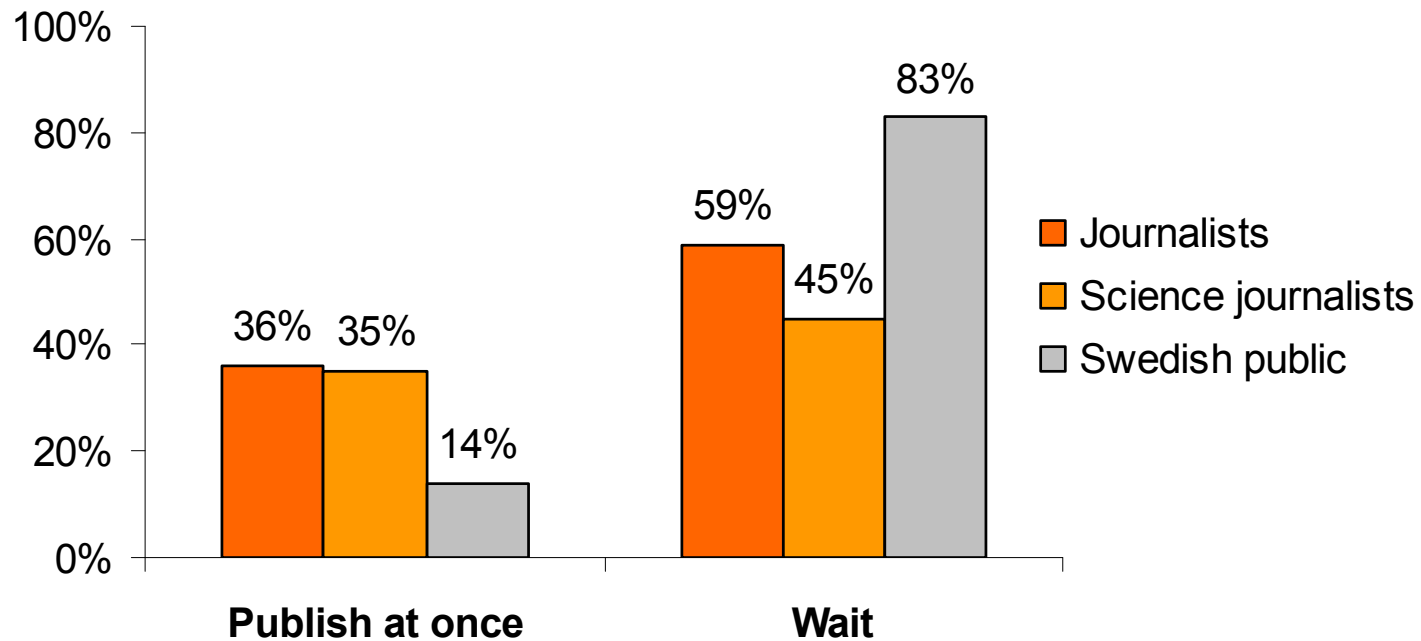


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www.va.se

## Rapid publication important for many journalists

Q: Do you think that research results that might be important for people's health should be published at once, even if only based on a single investigation, or is it better to wait until additional investigations have confirmed the results?



Sources: VA-report 2005:6, 2005:4, 2004:4

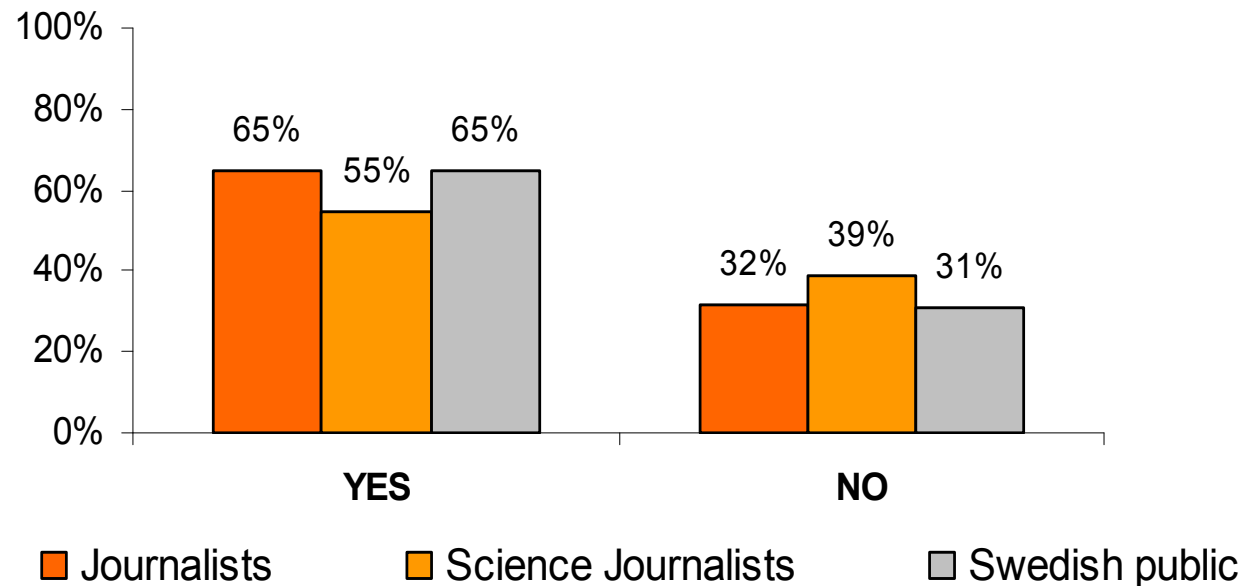


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## Too many alarmist reports

**Q: Research results that might be important for people's health are sometimes published before they are confirmed or countered by other studies in order to warn people about risks associated with habits and lifestyles. Do you think there are too many so-called alarmist reports published?**



Sources: VA-report 2005:6, 2005:4



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# Obstacles for satisfactory science reporting

**Q: In your opinion, what obstacles are there within the media today to satisfactory reporting of science and research? (open)**

- 1. Lack of knowledge**
- 2. Lack of time, editorial space, and resources**
- 3. Lack of interest in science (in media)**
- 4. Bad communication with researchers**

*Source: VA-report 2005:6*

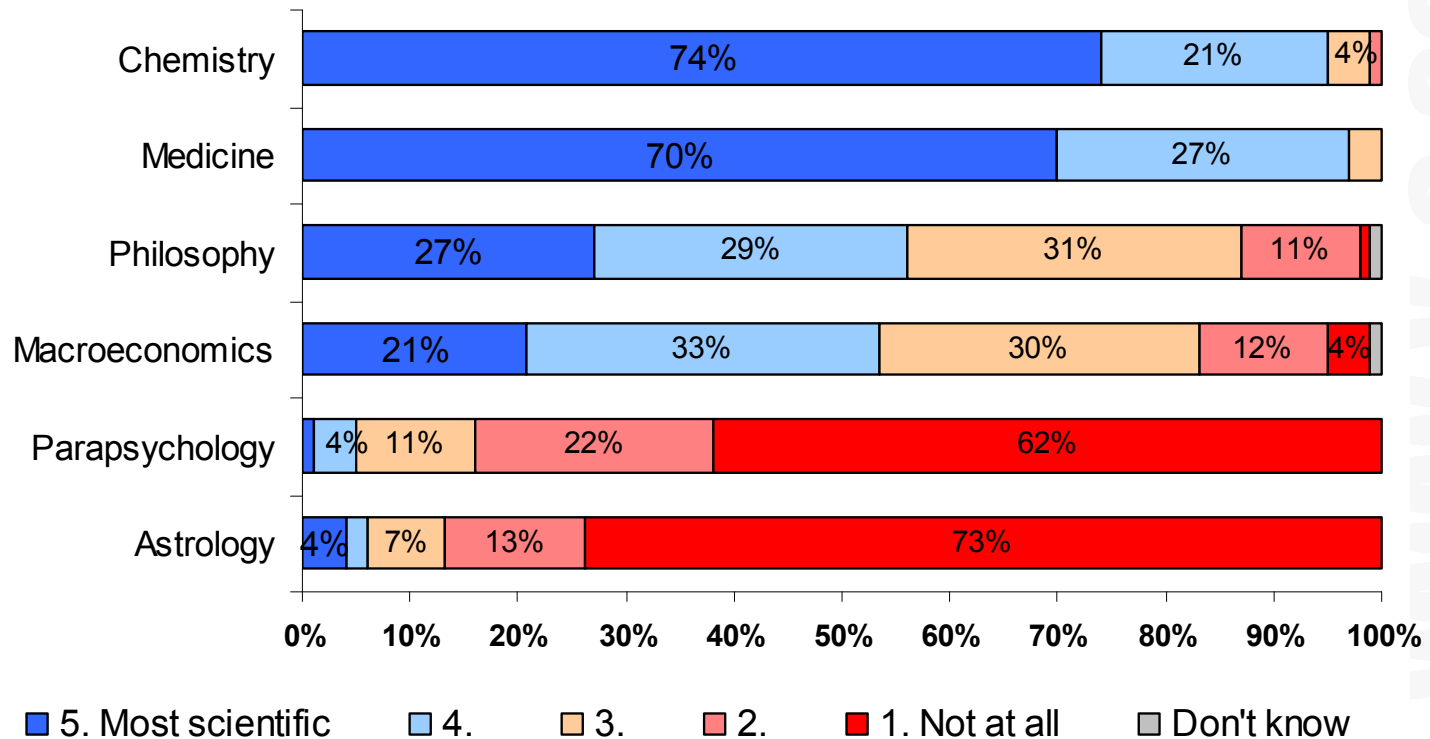


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# Chemistry most scientific – say journalists

Q: To what extent do you regard the following fields as scientific?  
(All journalists)



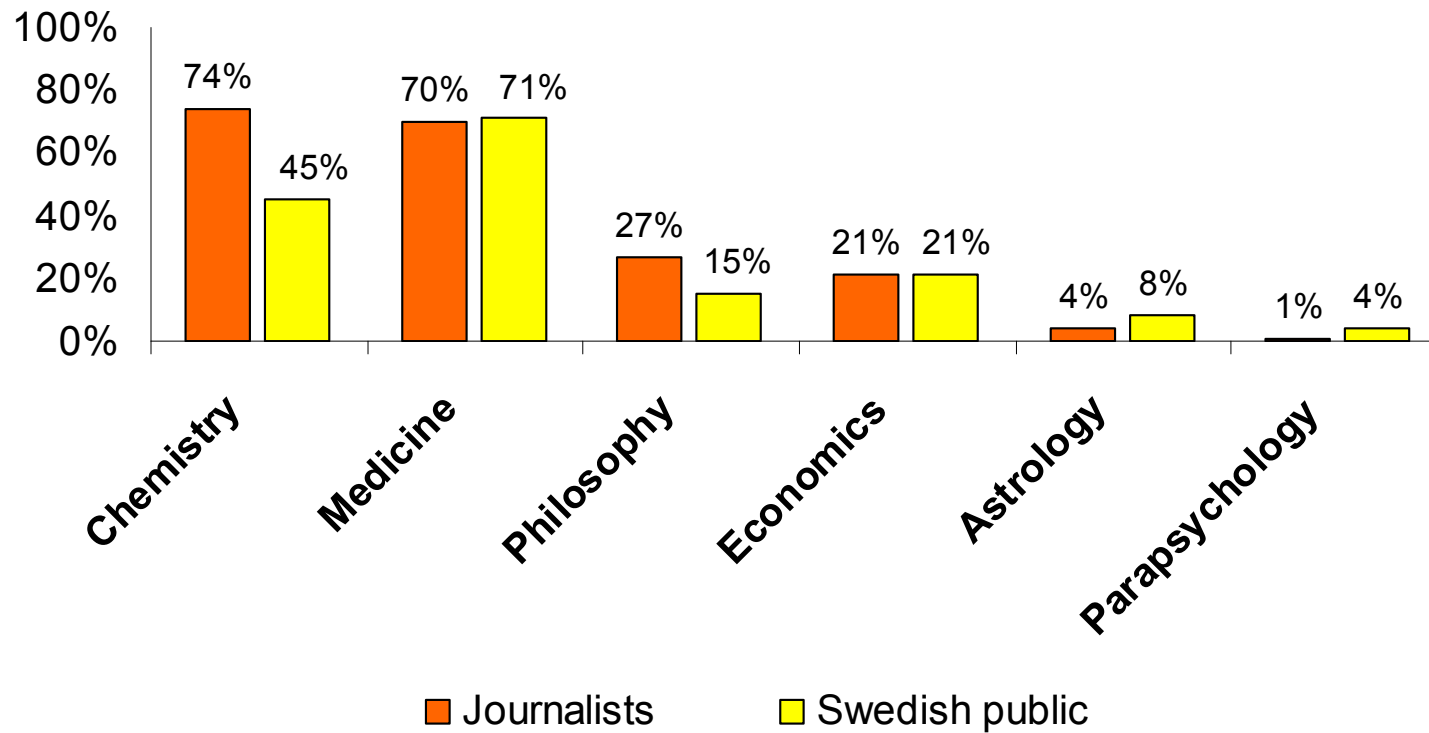
Source: VA-report 2005:6



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# To what extent do you regard the following fields as scientific?

(Percentage answering "highly scientific")



Source: VA-report 2005:6

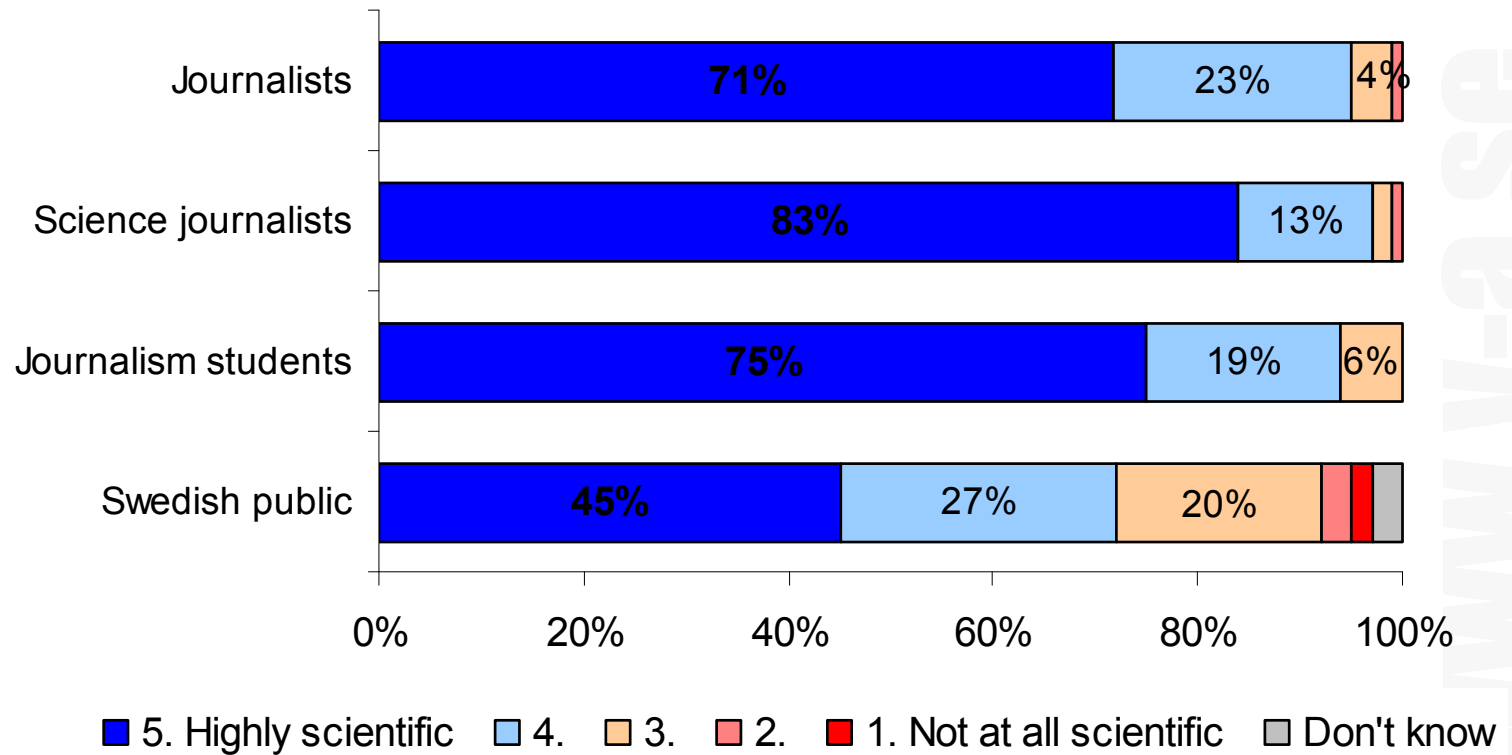


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# Chemistry

Q: To what extent do you regard chemistry as scientific?



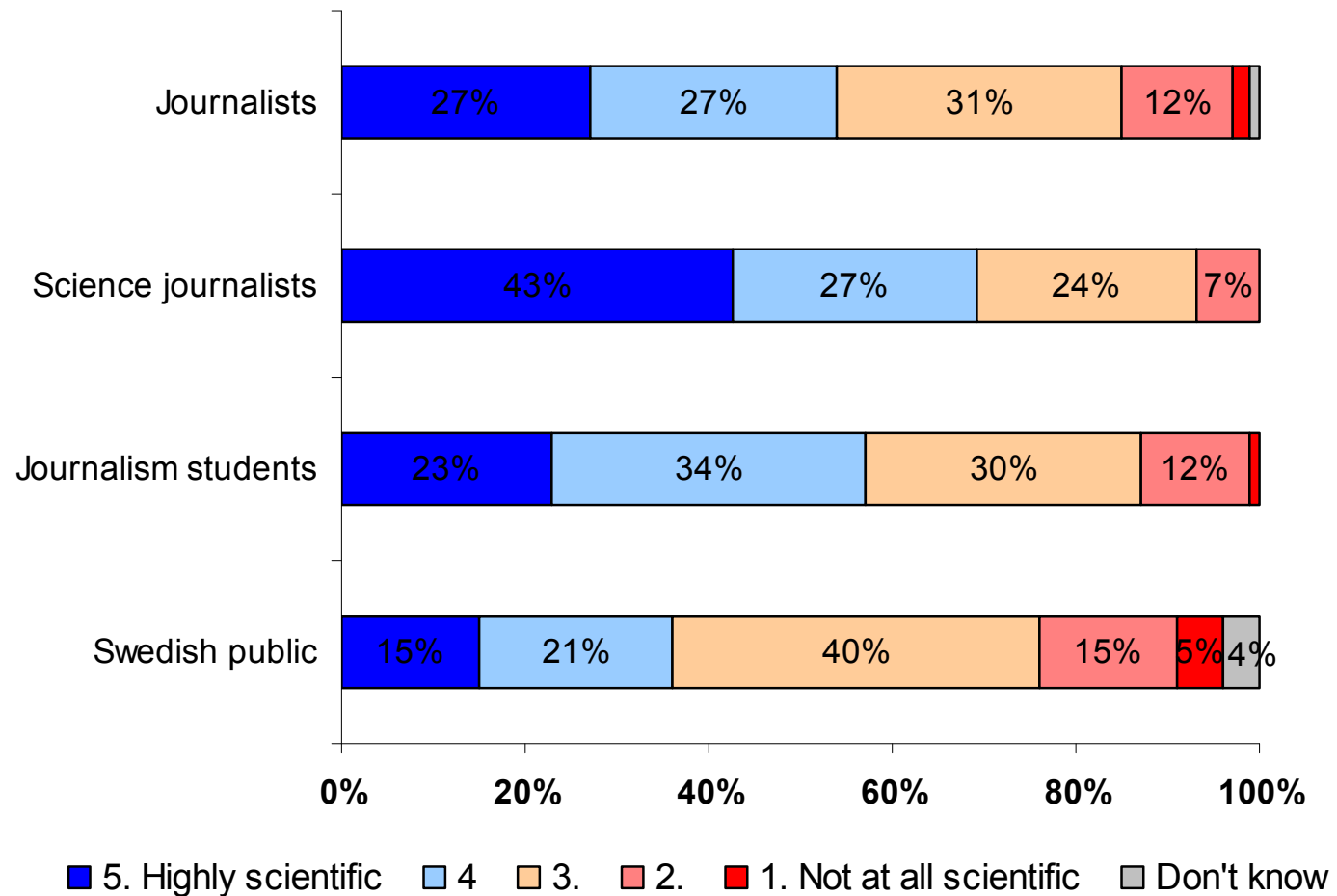
Sources: VA-report 2005:6, 2005:4



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# Philosophy

Q: To what extent do you regard philosophy as scientific?



Sources: VA-report 2005:6, 2005:4

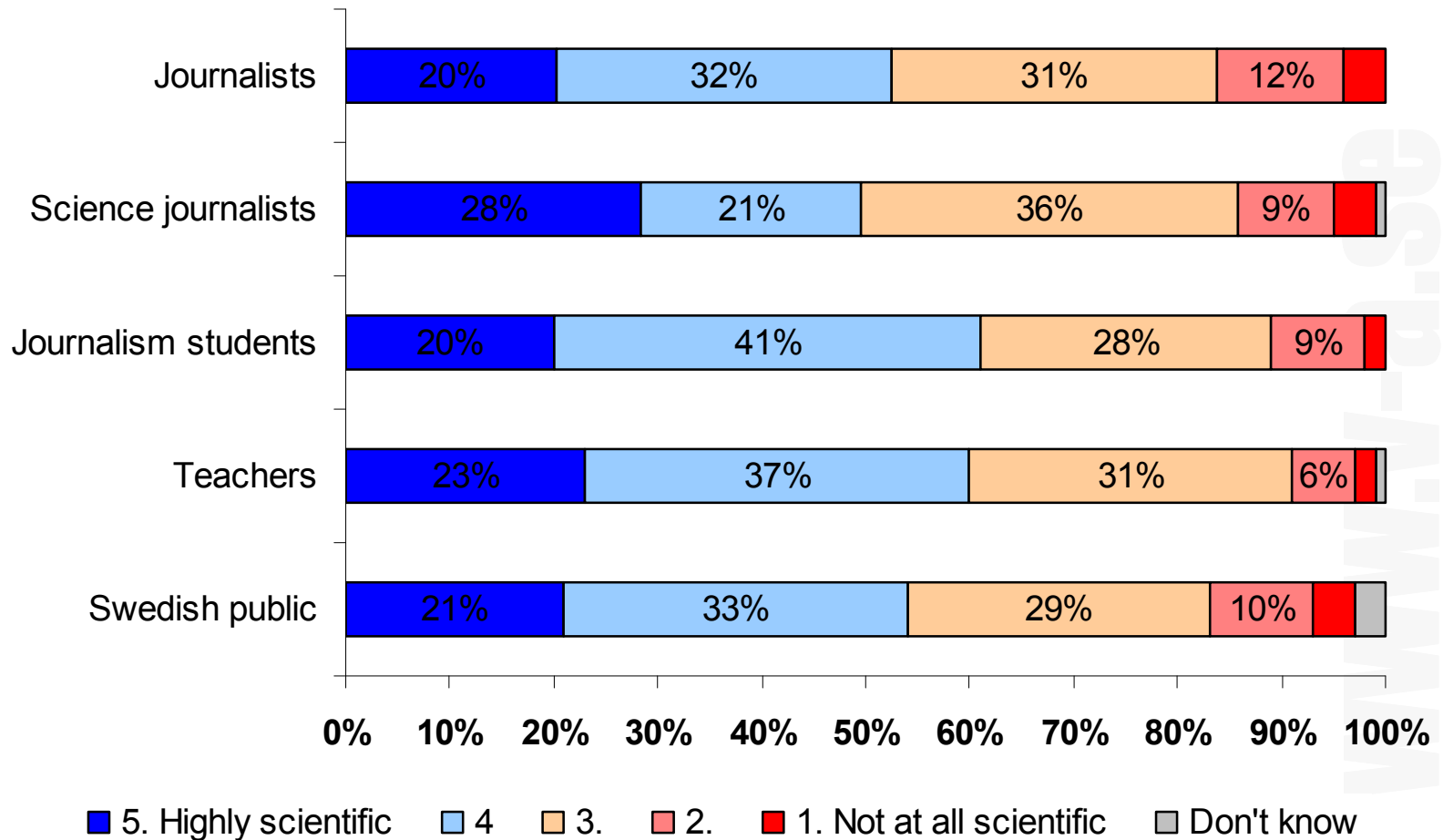
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# Macroeconomics

Q: To what extent do you regard macroeconomics as scientific?



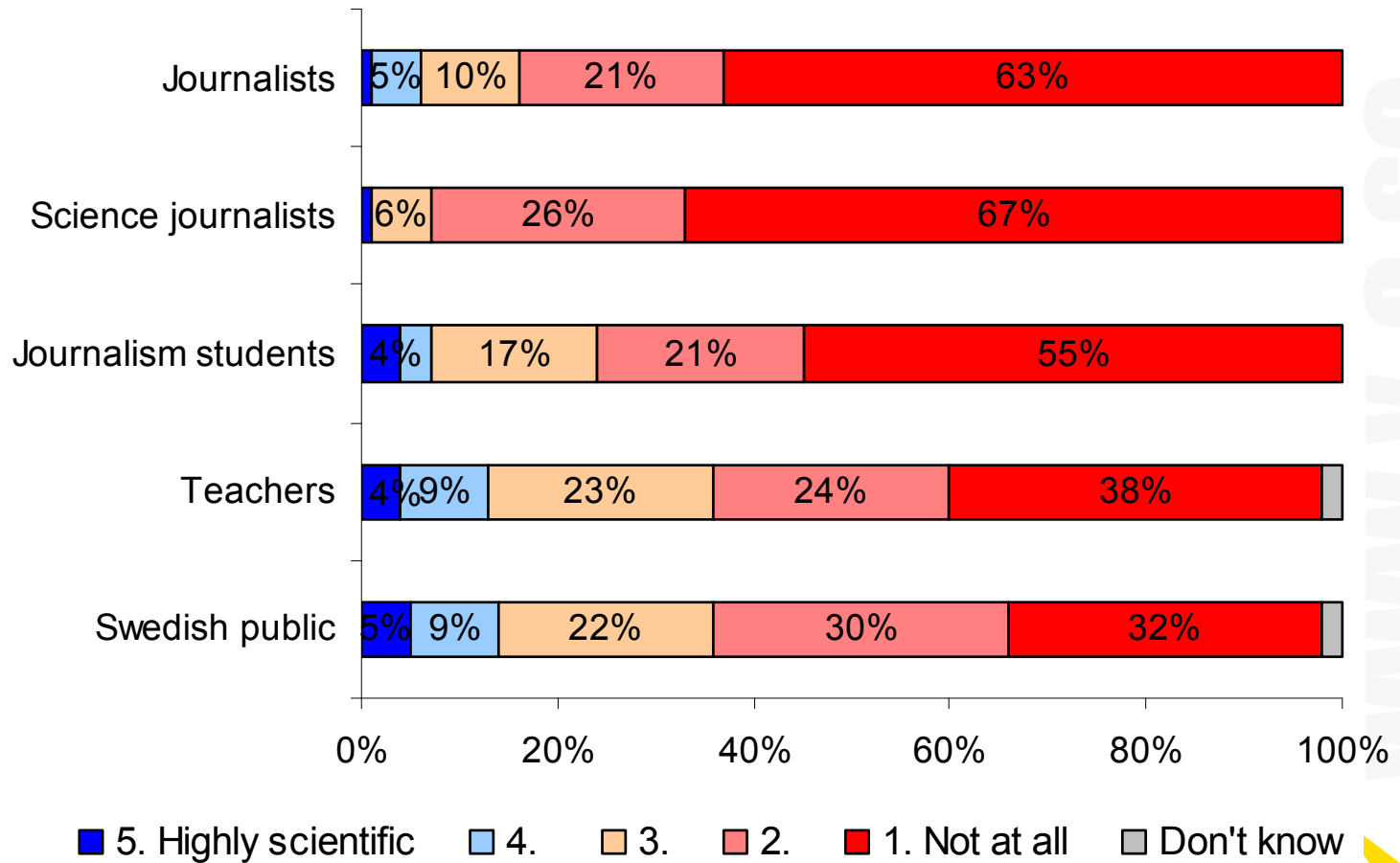
Sources: VA-report 2005:6, 2005:4, 2004:4



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# Parapsychology

Q: To what extent do you regard parapsychology as scientific?



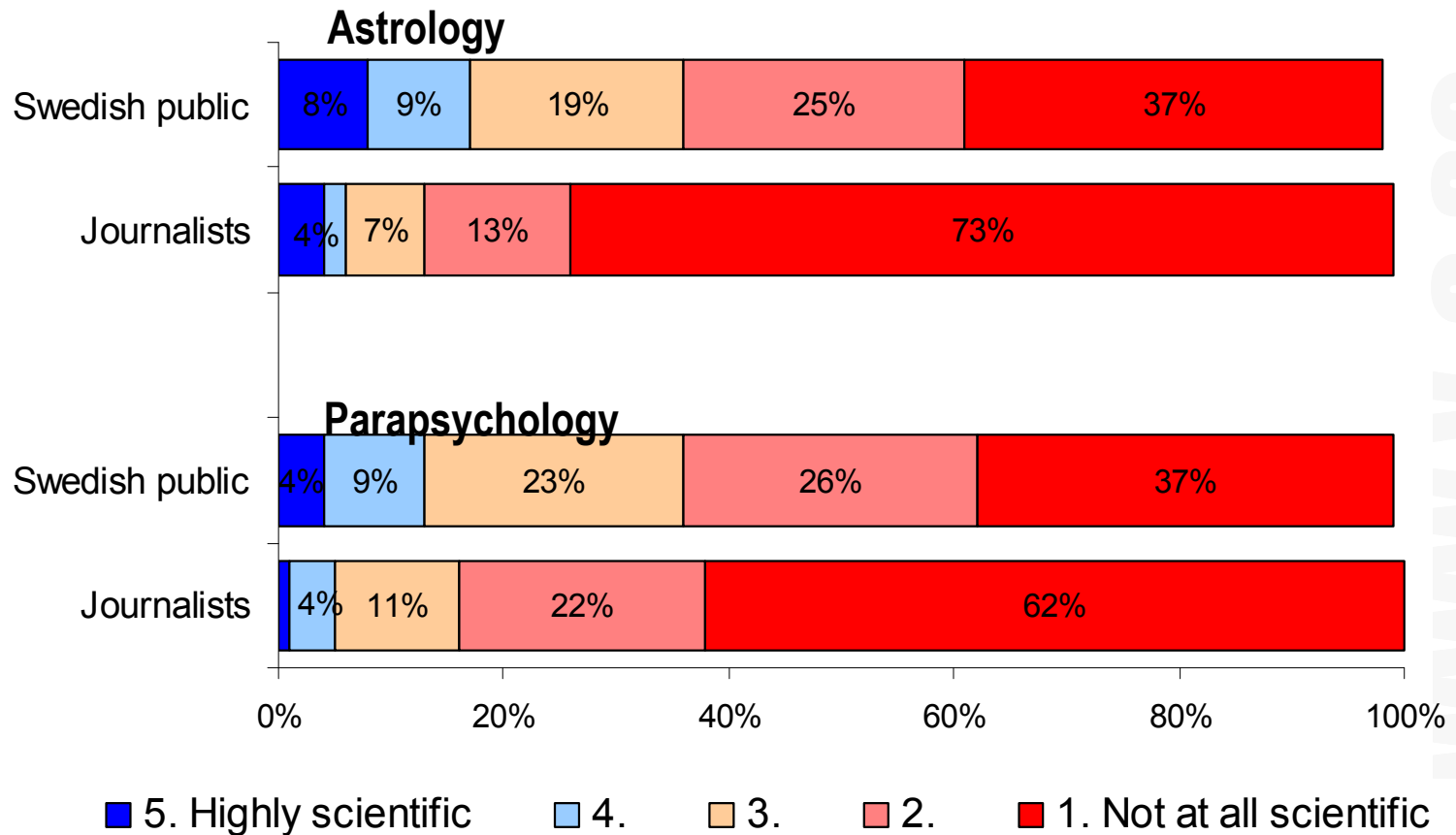
Sources: VA-report 2005:6, 2005:4, 2004:4



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# Journalists don't believe in star-signs and mind-reading

Q: To what extent do you regard the following fields as scientific?



Sources: VA-report 2005:6, 2005:4



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# Conclusions

## *Journalists...*

- ... have a high level of confidence in researchers
- ... would like researchers to be more accessible and understandable
- ... want to find comprehensible information easily

## *Researchers...*

- ... don't trust journalists
- ... don't always understand journalists / the media?

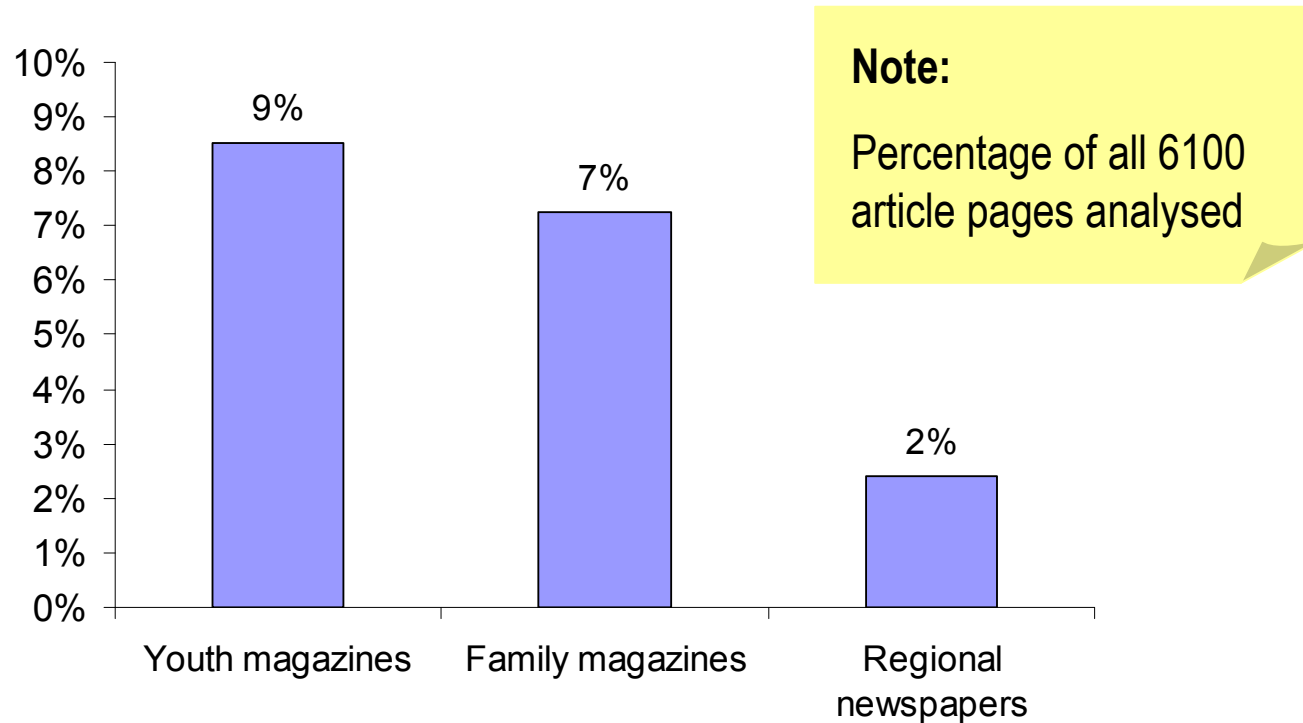


Journalists and researchers need a better understanding of each others' perspectives and methods of working

Source: VA-report 2005:6

# How much science is actually written about?

## Percentage of science-related articles in material analysed



Source: VA-report 2005:5

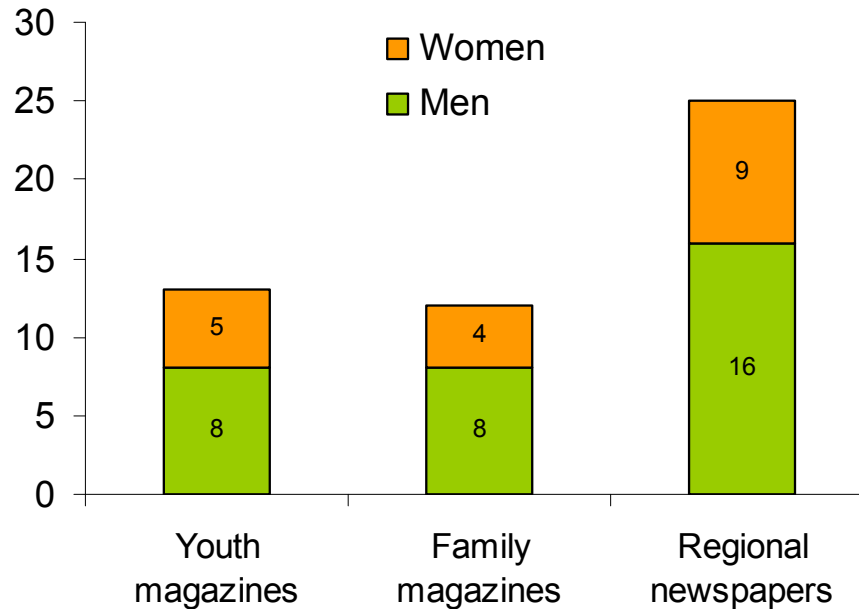
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# How often are researchers quoted?

Number of persons



8600 pages analysed

brittiske professorn Kevin Warwick vid Reading University utanför London

Olle Bälter, doktor i mejlvanor vid KTH

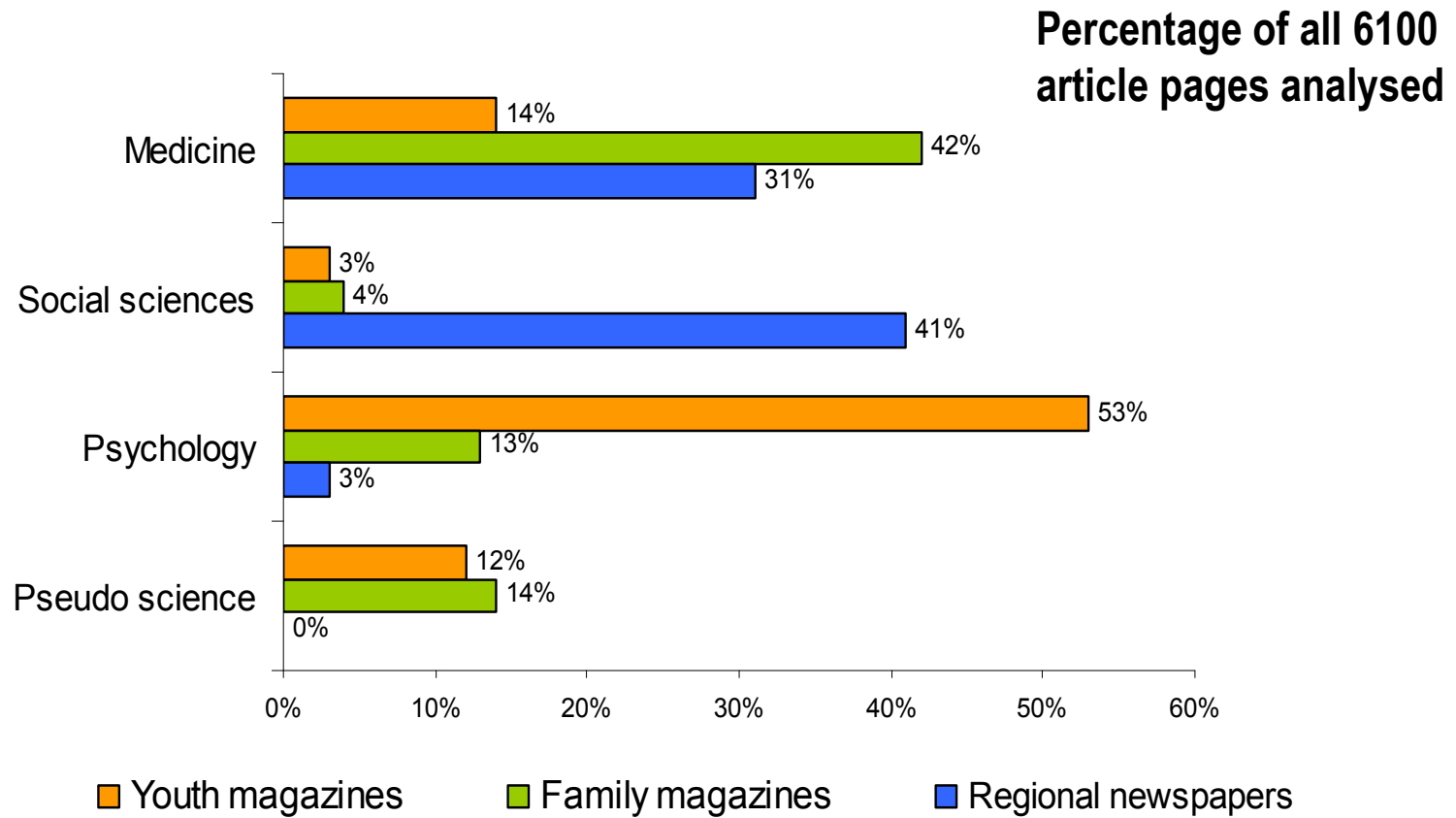
Source: VA-report 2005:5



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# What subjects are written about?



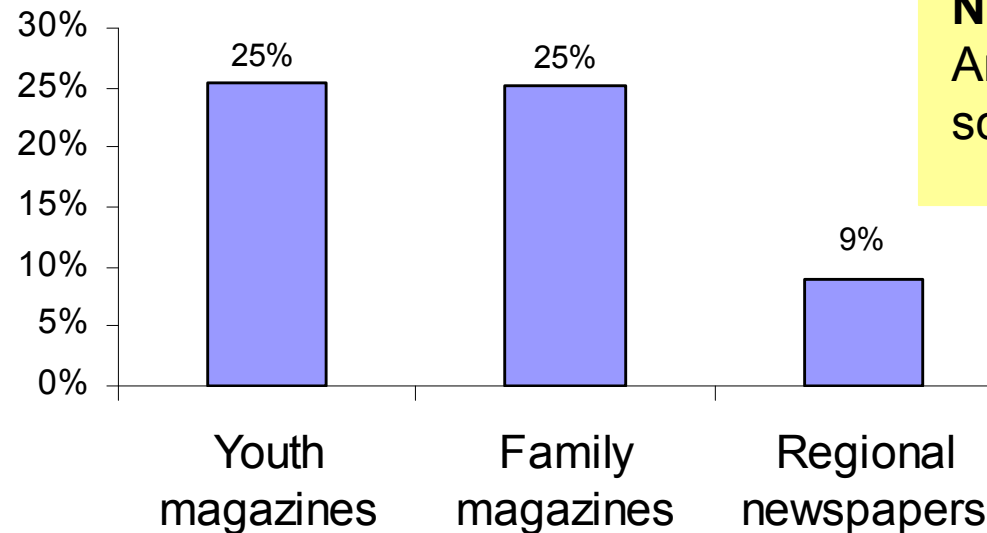
Source: VA-report 2005:5



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# How well is scientific material referenced?

Percentage of articles with no reference given in the article



**Note:**  
Articles with (claimed) scientific content only.

Enligt en brittisk studie

Source: VA-report 2005:5



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**All reports can be downloaded from our  
website: [www.v-a.se](http://www.v-a.se)**

**Results from the following reports were included in this presentation:**

2003:4 – How researchers view public and science (available in English)

2004:4 – How teachers view science (available in English)

2005:4 – How the Swedish public view science 2005 (in Swedish only )

2005:5 – How journalists view science (English summary available)

2006:6 – Science in press (English summary available)

