

## Summary

### A comprehensive overview of today's media landscape in Sweden

The structure of the media landscape develops in interaction with the surrounding society, an ongoing process whereby the social, economic, political, and technological landscapes shape – and are shaped by – the media landscape. Since the millennium, digitalisation has been a major game-changer for the media industry as well as for its audiences. The publication *MedieSverige 2023* [*MediaSweden 2023*] gives the reader an up-to-date and broad overview of today's Swedish media landscape, and here are a few trends the publication notes.

#### Audience moving to digital, slowly leaving traditional

Surveys show a growing share of the Swedish population turning away from traditional media – such as print and linear television and radio – towards streaming services for audiovisual content, online radio, podcasts, and digital newspapers. There is a significant generation gap in the use of online and legacy media; the only online media that is in use more among older (45+ years) than younger people is the newspaper. The younger generations prefer streaming services, podcasts, and online social networks. Digital platforms are today used more for watching television and reading newspapers than linear or print formats, although linear radio is still more popular than digital platforms, streaming, and podcasts.

Looking at overall television viewing (linear, streaming, or digital) regardless of device, it has been stable, with over 80 per cent of the population 9–85 years old watching television on an average day (p. 48). However, the audience is moving away from traditional linear viewing (from 71% in 2010 to 53% in 2022) (p. 47). Today, audiences can choose when, how, and where they want to watch television through various services online. Watching television online has increased over the past five years, with more young people aged 15–24 watching online television (71%) than linear (27%) (p. 49). The patterns are similar for radio listening (p. 53).

#### Advertising market going digital

Digitalisation has created new streams for media financing and advertising investments, with investments in online advertising making up 69 per cent of the total Swedish advertising investments in 2021 (SEK 32 billion of SEK 46 billion) (p. 69). The advertising investments do not necessarily end up with Swedish media companies, however. Of the online advertising in Sweden, 72 per cent (SEK 23.1 billion) was invested in global search engines and social media networks (p. 73). This, of course, means that Swedish media lose revenues at the same time as they compete to keep audience shares. Advertising investments in linear television and radio are stable, whereas the newspaper industry is struggling – since 2005, its advertising revenue has dropped by 79 per cent. Thus far, the drop in print advertising has not been compensated for by growth in online advertising revenue (pp. 71, 75).

### Concerns for local news

The fear is that the flow of money out of the national media market to foreign players will result in increased difficulties in financing content production, especially news journalism (p. 25). During the twenty-first century, the newspaper market has continued making profits, but mainly by cutting costs. Nevertheless, newspapers that have long held advertising as their main source of revenue are inexorably experiencing tighter financial margins, less advertising turnover, and fewer readers. In response to this, the newspaper companies focus more on gaining revenues from their readers and subscriptions.

In Sweden, local and regional newspapers have been crucial for the production and distribution of local news and debate. There are concerns that the newspapers' reduced revenue and scope will affect citizens' access to local news. In 2022, some 35 of Sweden's approximately 290 municipalities lacked regular local news coverage. That is a decrease since 2020 (p. 87).

### Media policy measures following suit

Media policy must react and adjust to the development as digitalisation creates new challenges for policy-makers. State media subsidies, aiming to strengthen democracy and freedom of speech, can be direct or indirect.

The government's direct media support system is in transformation towards a focus on news journalism regardless of media or distribution technique. In 2019, a new government media support was introduced to counteract concerns about local news coverage. This support is platform-neutral when applied to news media. One particular purpose of the subsidy is to support the establishment of local news journalism in unserved areas (p. 23). In 2020, support for covering newsroom costs was introduced. This support is also applicable to any news media, regardless of distribution technique or whether it deals with written, audio, or audiovisual content (p. 23). The largest, and oldest, form of media support is operation subsidies, which are only granted to newspapers. This funding has increased significantly since 2019. The government has proposed a reform that operating subsidies should be replaced with the support for covering newsroom costs. Thereby, no direct government media subsidy will be associated with a particular media. The overall budget for direct support will remain the same. The reformed support system will be introduced 1 January 2024 (p. 25).

### About *MedieSverige*

*MedieSverige* is rich in data from a variety of sources. The report targets students, teachers, researchers, and journalists, as well as decision-makers and everyone who wants to learn more about the development in the Swedish media market.

*MedieSverige 2023* is the 15th volume in the series and is written by Ulrika Facht at Nordicom, University of Gothenburg.