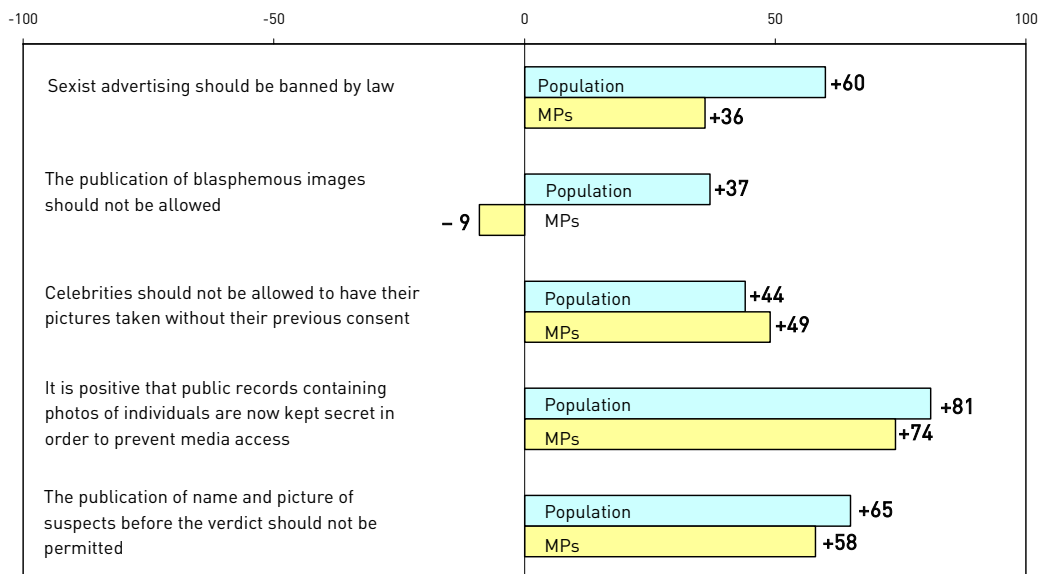


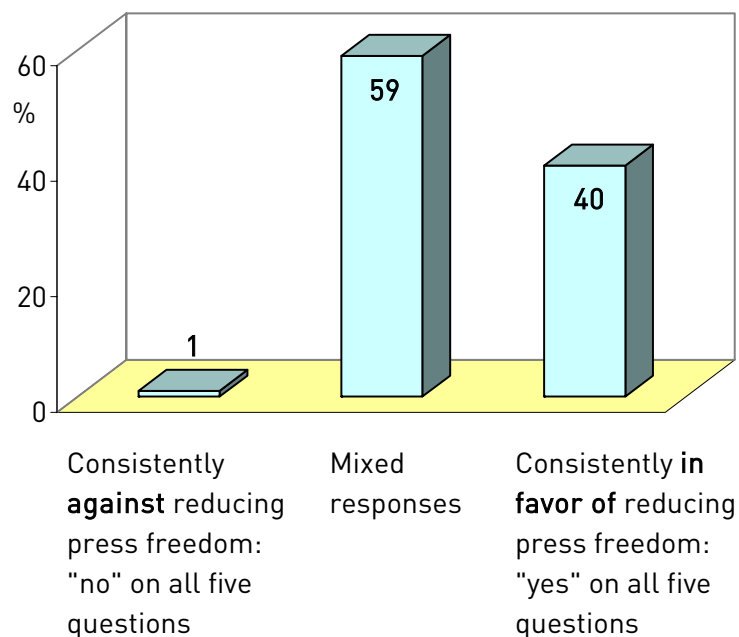
Swedish press freedom challenged by media changes

Swedish press freedom has long and proud traditions, but today mass media and journalists are met with new challenges. Politicians and voters support proposals for stricter legislation aimed at reducing the liberty of media. The SNS Democratic Audit of Sweden is worried that these trends might hamper critical journalism and public debate.

The SNS Democratic Audit has commissioned a survey on the public attitudes toward press freedom. Five questions, which had earlier been a part of a study of members of the Swedish parliament, were included in the national SOM survey at the University of Göteborg. The results indicate that a majority of Swedes support legislation which would reduce the freedom of the press. Those who agree to get tougher on the media in all five respects amount to 40 percent of the population. In contrast, only 1 percent could be classified as consistent supporters of press freedom. Summary tables are shown below.



Source, population: SNS Democratic Audit, SOM University of Göteborg
 Source, members of parliament: Swedish Newspaper Publishers' Association, Sifo poll



The constitutional foundation for Swedish press freedom is not tenable in the long run, according to the 2007 report from the SNS Democratic Audit of Sweden (*Medierna och yttrandefriheten*, by Anker Brink Lund, Eivind Smith, Lennart Weibull, and Olof Petersson, SNS, Stockholm). The Swedish constitution consists of several different texts. These are frequently amended and based on technical criteria. Furthermore, Swedish law gives insufficient protection for free speech outside established media institutions.

The ethical self-regulation of Swedish media is also problematic, according to the SNS Democratic Audit. In the present system a government agency is responsible for the ethical control of television and radio. The code of ethics for press, radio, and television is several decades old and does not cover many of the ethical problems of contemporary media. Sweden needs a modern system of media accountability.

The established media institutions face increasing legitimacy problems. Citizens can no longer be reduced to passive subscribers and viewers. Modern technology allows individual citizens to play an active role in the public arena. The old boundary between media and citizens is being blurred. The SNS Democratic Audit concludes by asking if the government and established media organizations are prepared to create the legal and ethical rules, which are necessary to protect press freedom, the foundation of an open democratic society.

The SNS Democratic Audit 2007 in Swedish:

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by Anker Brink Lund, Eivind Smith, Lennart Weibull, and Olof Petersson

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