

EUROBAROMETER 71

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

SPRING 2009

NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SWEDEN

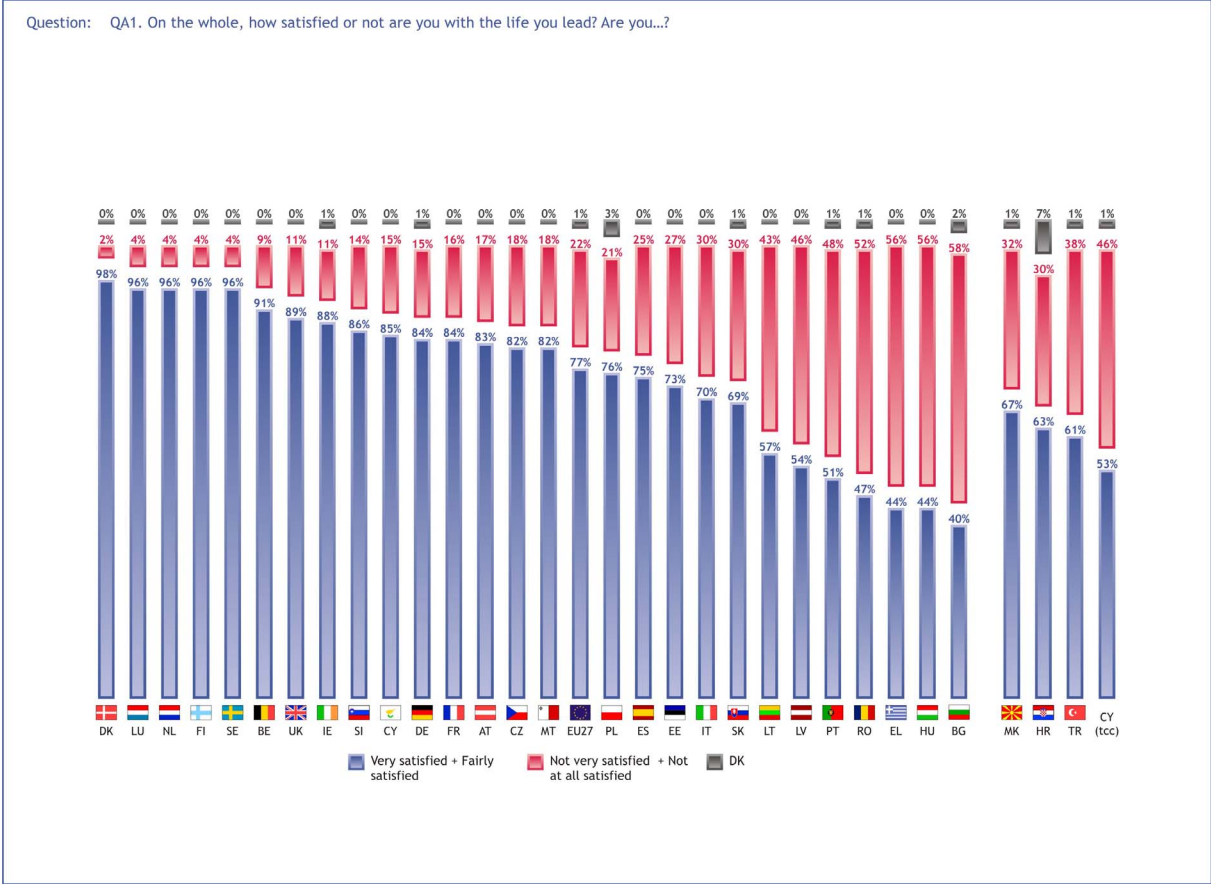
This survey was requested and coordinated by Directorate-General for Communication.

This report was produced for the European Commission's Representation in Sweden.

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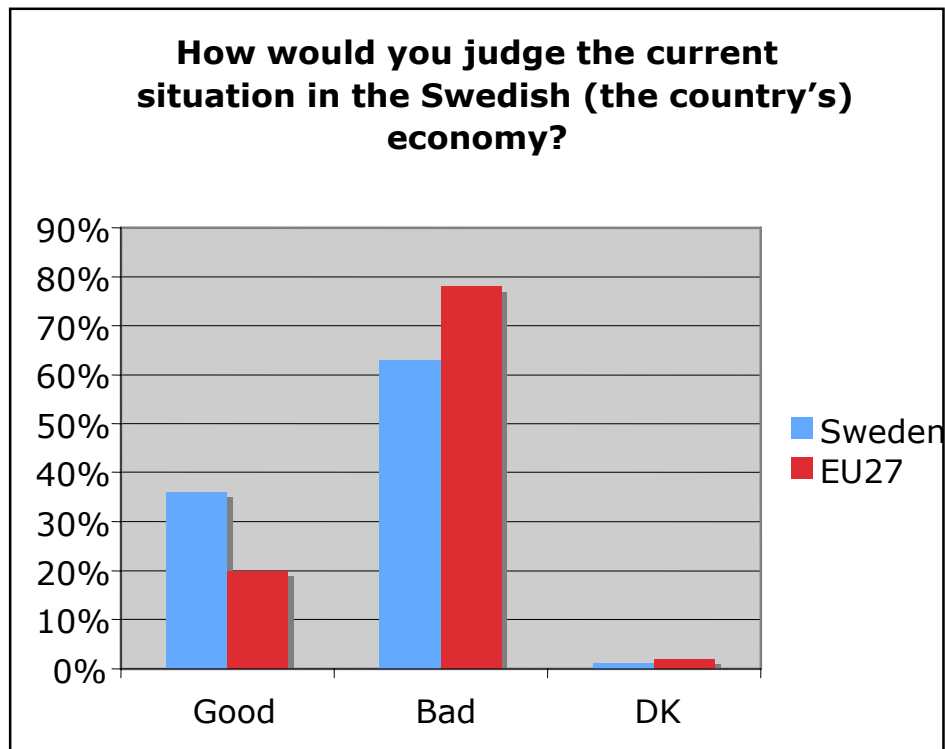
In spite of the economic crisis, more than nine out of ten Swedes are satisfied with their lives. Every second Swede is very satisfied.

Fig.1



There are only a handful of countries in Europe where people are as satisfied with their lives as the Swedes. On the other hand, the outlook in regard to the economy is rather gloomy.

Fig.2



More than six out of ten feel that the economic situation in Sweden is bad. The Swedish media have been full of bad news about the economy and the financial sector over the last year. Against this background, however, it is worth noting that almost four out of ten Swedes think that the economy is in good shape.

Three-quarters of Swedes see their personal job situation as good. At the same time, the same proportion of respondents perceives the state of the labour market to be bad. Swedes observe that more people are losing their jobs but they do not think it will happen to themselves.

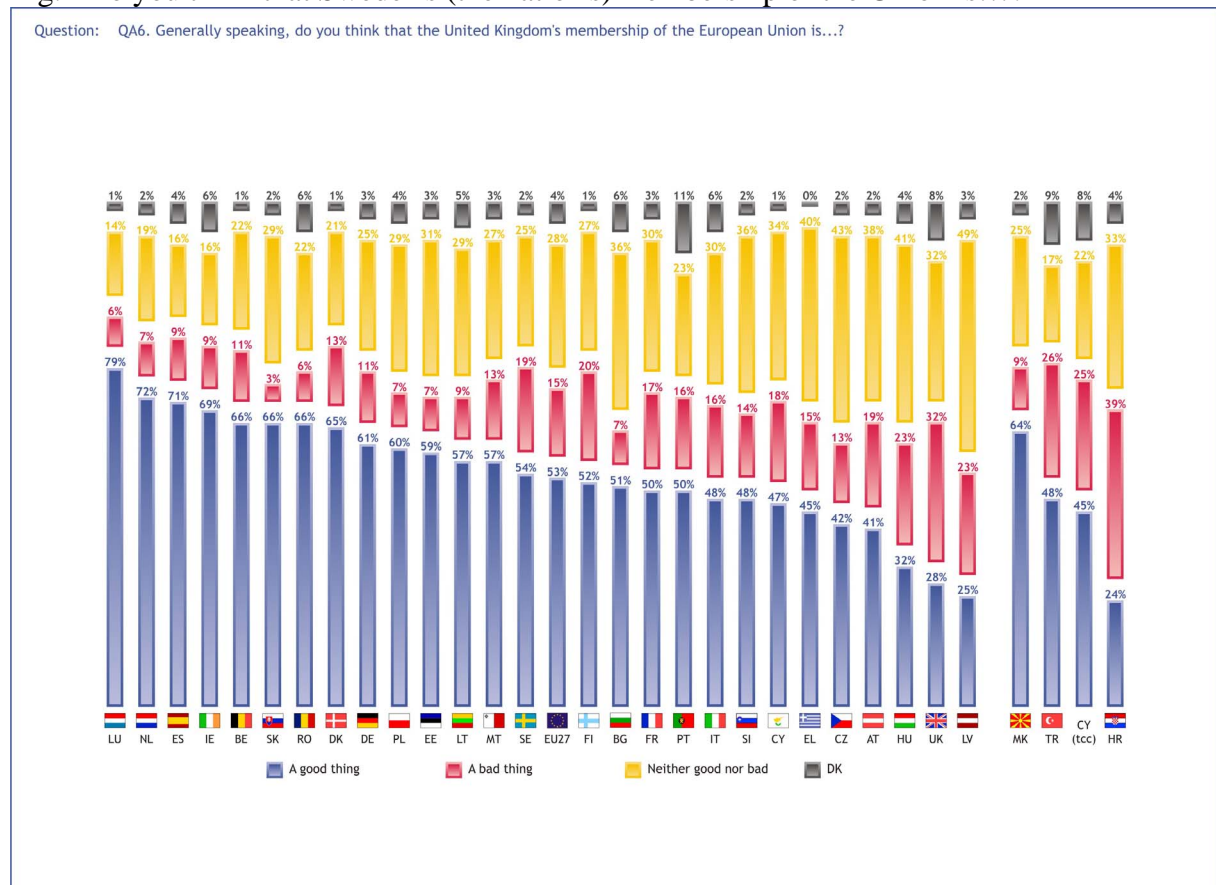
The views of different bodies that say that Sweden will have economic problems in the years ahead are not entirely shared by Swedish respondents.

Fig.3

	Better	Worse	Same	DK
Your life in general	41 %	4 %	54 %	1 %
The economic situation in Sweden	48 %	17 %	32 %	3 %
The financial situation of your household	30 %	9 %	59 %	2 %
The employment situation in Sweden	36 %	33 %	29 %	2 %
Your personal job situation	23 %	4 %	65 %	8 %
The economic situation in the European Union	32 %	22 %	37 %	9 %
The economic situation in the world	32 %	24 %	38 %	6 %

As far as the economic situation in Sweden, the financial situation of the household, the labour market in Sweden and the personal job situation are concerned, a majority of respondents thinks it will be better in the future rather than worse. Sweden is marked by some optimism. This may not be a stable situation but, for the moment, Swedes have a more positive view in regard to the future than Europeans in general.

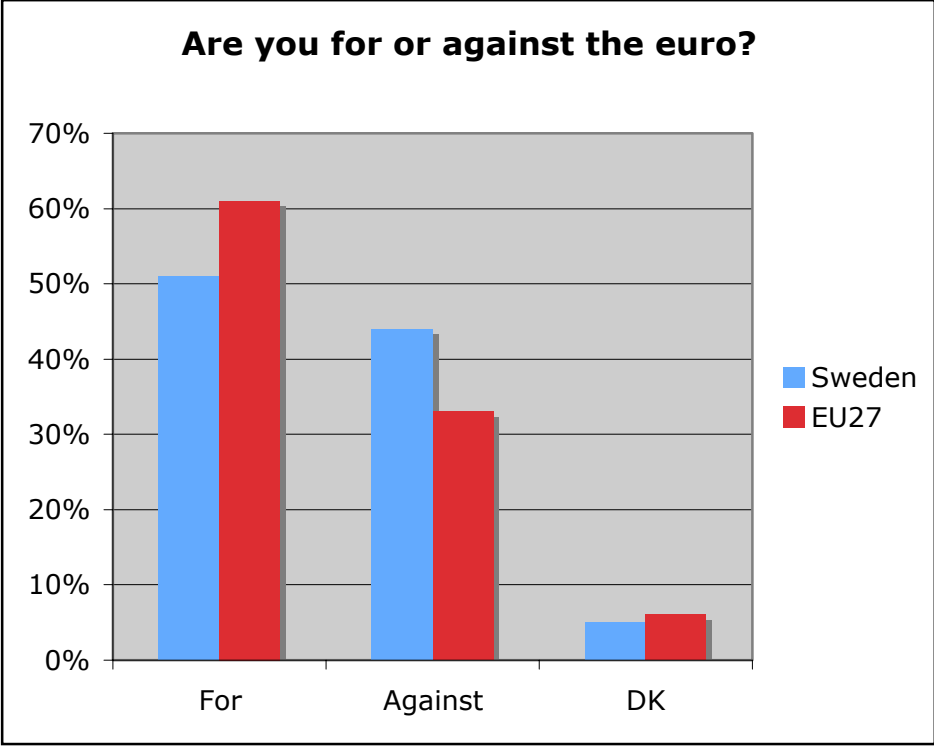
Fig.4 Do you think that Sweden's (the nation's) membership of the Union is...?



Many more Swedes approve of the fact that Sweden is a member of EU than disapprove of it. More than five out of ten believe membership is a good thing and only two out of ten see it as a bad thing. Sweden’s EU membership has probably become a natural component of the political landscape for Swedes. Sweden’s enthusiasm for EU membership is close to the European average. Compared to the UK, Sweden is not very euro-sceptic. According to Swedes, their country’s membership has brought advantages. More Swedish men than women believe this.

On the personal level, the freedom to travel, study and work everywhere in the EU is the aspect of membership that has most significance for Swedes. Six out of ten associate these freedoms with the European Union. However, peace is also important. Twice as many Swedes than Europeans in general associate the EU with peace. Why this is the case is not easy to explain.

Fig.5



The view on Swedish membership of the European Monetary Union has changed. Support has increased with five out of ten Swedes now supporting the euro and four out of ten opposing it. It is probably too early to say whether this change is here to stay. However, the divergence from the European average is getting smaller.

Swedes favour decision-making at European level in many policy areas. Twice as many Swedes want more decision-making at European level compared to those who want less when it comes to securing economic growth, fighting organised crime and terrorism, ensuring food quality, protecting the environment, managing broad health problems, increasing equality between men and women, promoting peace and democracy in the world, securing the energy supply and promoting cooperation in science and innovation. More Swedes than in the past

appear to realise that many problems cannot be handled within the confines of the nation-state.

Eurobarometer asked people what they think characterises the European Union.

Fig.6a

Firstly?	Sweden	EU27
Its economic power	43 %	45 %
Its political influence	45 %	30 %
Its military strength	1 %	6 %
Its cultural influence	3 %	8 %
Other	1 %	0 %
None	1 %	3 %
DK	6 %	8 %

Fig.6b

Secondly?	Sweden	EU27
Its economic power	41 %	29 %
Its political influence	40 %	40 %
Its military strength	4 %	12 %
Its cultural influence	11 %	14 %
Other	1 %	1 %
None	1 %	1 %
DK	2 %	3 %

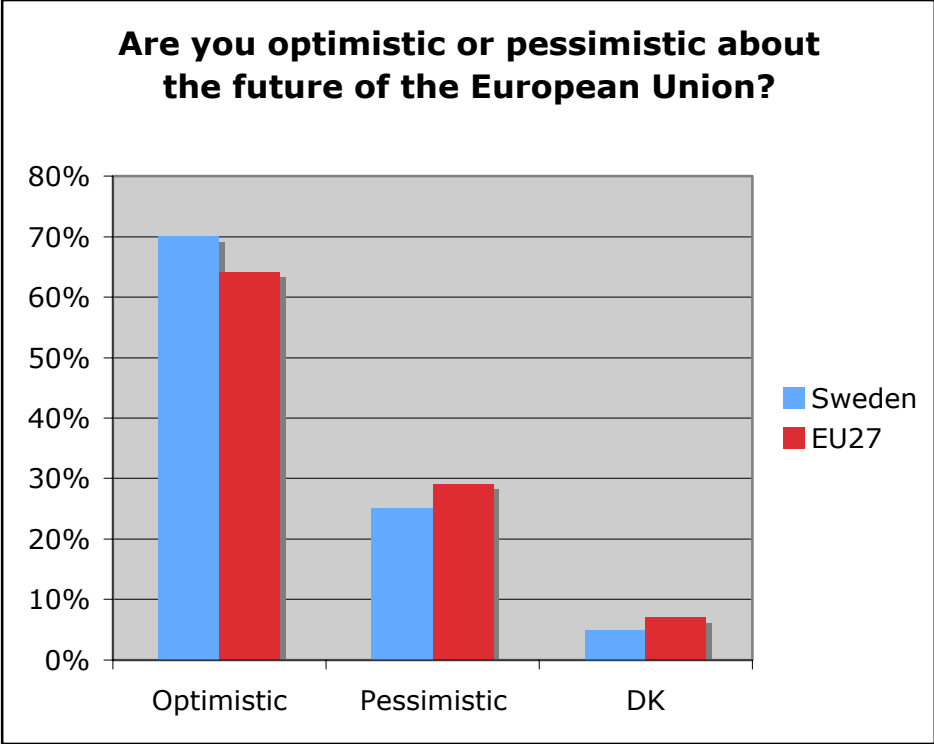
For the Swedes, it is the economic and political power of the Union that came to the forefront. Relatively few found the military strength of the EU worth mentioning. Nor did many cite the cultural influence of the Union.

When asked about methods to fight the effects of the economic crisis, Swedes have faith in education, vocational training and research. More than five out of ten Swedes, compared to three out of ten Europeans in general, feel that the European Union should make use of these methods. The Union should, according to Swedes, also support small and medium-sized companies, as well as invest in infrastructure, energy and the environment. With the exception of support for small and medium-sized companies, Europeans in general show less enthusiasm for these measures.

Seven out of ten Swedes feel that the Union does not do enough to promote human rights around the world. However, just as many say that they are not informed about what the EU actually does in this area. Perhaps the Swedes tell themselves that whatever the Union does in terms of promoting human rights it is not enough.

Questions about identities are complex. To Swedes, democratic values are the most important ingredient of European identity. This is the opinion of eight out of ten respondents but of only four out of ten Europeans on average.

Fig.7



Optimism regarding the future of the European Union is quite widespread in Sweden. Seven out of ten are optimists. However, Swedes who place themselves at the right end of the political spectrum are far more optimistic than those who place themselves at the left end. Swedes are slightly above the European average in terms of optimism.

When asked whether people in 2030 will live in a society marked by individualism or solidarity, Swedes are divided equally. However, more than seven out of ten would prefer to live in a society marked by solidarity. Only two out of ten would prefer a society marked by individualism. Furthermore, a very large majority of Swedes would prefer a society that is more tolerant towards ethnic and religious minorities in 2030. Very few would prefer a less tolerant society.

Eight out of ten Swedes think that other ethnic groups enrich the majority culture and seven out of ten that immigrants are needed in certain sectors of the economy. Only five out of ten Europeans, on average, believe that immigrants enrich the culture and fewer than five out of ten that immigrants are needed in certain sectors of the economy. Europeans in general are more sceptical than Swedes in regard to immigration and immigrants in most areas covered by the survey.