BlogSweden 1.0

A survey of Swedish bloggers and blog readers

May - June 2005



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Summary

To get a better picture of what the Swedish blogger and blog reader looks like, I conducted an online survey between May 12 and 16, 2005 where 600 blog readers answered a number of questions. Here are some key results:

Bloggers: The average Swedish blogger is:

- man
- 26-35 years old
- has a college/university degree
- both parents are born in Sweden
- does not know what party to vote for if there was an election today (largest party was Folkpartiet – the liberal party)
- blogs because he likes to write
- blogs in Swedish
- is not anonymous
- reads 6-10 blogs daily
- spends 6-10 hours per week reading blogs
- often or sometimes uses an RSS reader to read blogs
- reads blogs because it is more personal than other media
- finds new blogs via links on other blogs

Blog readers: The survey shows that the average Swedish blog reader (including those who have their own blogs) is:

- man
- 26-30 years old
- has a college/university degree
- both parents are born in Sweden
- would vote for Moderaterna the moderate party if there was an election today
- has his own blog
- reads 1-5 blogs daily
- spends 2 hours per week reading blogs
- never uses an RSS reader to read blogs
- reads blogs to get different views on news
- finds new blogs via links on other blogs

Other interesting results from the survey:

- Blog readers vote to the right. The right-wing parties get 62.4% of all votes.¹
- Bloggers vote (slightly less) to the right. 52.6% of bloggers vote for the right-wing parties while 47.6% would vote to the left.²
- Male bloggers vote to the right (57.4%).³
- Female bloggers vote to the left. (s), (v), (mp) and (fi) get 55.4% of the votes.⁴
- Among blog readers who don't blog themselves, the moderate party (m) is the dominant party. More than a third (36.8%) of this group would vote for (m).

Not counting those who don't know what to vote for and those who plan not to vote.

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- Many bloggers do not know who to vote for, but female bloggers are more uncertain than male (29.8% of female bloggers, 18.5% of male bloggers)
- Women blog anonymously (60.6%), men reveal their identity (69.4%)
- Most women don't use an RSS reader to read blogs, but most men do.
- Female bloggers have slightly higher education than male bloggers.
- Male bloggers more often blog to influence others and to become famous, than female bloggers do.
- Those who use an RSS reader, read more blogs than those who don't use an RSS reader.
- 96.9% of respondents who read 26 blogs or more daily, use an RSS reader (often or sometimes).
- Bloggers read more blogs and spend more time reading blogs than blog readers who don't have a blog of their own.
- Half of all blog readers spend 4 hours or more per week reading blogs, which is 34 minutes or more per day. Compared to the average Swede who spends 28 minutes per day reading a daily newspaper⁵.

Background

It has almost become an established truth in Sweden that the political right dominate the blogosphere. Media monitoring company Observer ranked⁶ Sweden's ten most influential blogs in November 2004 and concluded that "the right dominate the blogs", which was also reported in Dagens Nyheter⁷.

"There is a clear tendency in Sweden that only liberals spend time blogging. Apart from the ones just mentioned are Dick Erixon, Per Gudmundson, Nicklas Lundblad, Pär Henriksson and Stockholm Spectator some strong blogs. How come? Why doesn't the left blog?" – **Johnny Munkhammar**⁸

The last couple of months a number⁹ of high profile individuals from the left have started blogging, for example Margot Wallström¹⁰ and Annika Billström¹¹, but the picture of a liberal blogosphere remains.¹²

Another common view is that bloggers predominantly are male.

"A quick run-through of the most visited blogs in Sweden shows that the average blogger is 1) man, 2) writes about politics and social issues and 3) has right-wing preferences." – **Kalle Dixelius**, TT Spektra.¹³

The problem with all these assumptions are that they are just assumptions. Noone has studied the blogosphere in any detail and most comments about the profile of bloggers or blog readers are just guesses. So in order to get more facts about the Swedish blogosphere, I initiated a blog survey.

http://www.aftonbladet.se/blogg/klein/150505123319_pj_anders_linder_har_kanske_rtt.html Helsingborgs Dagblad mfl, 2004-12-13.

 $http://hd.se/ArticlePages/200412/13/20041213161133_-Alla_anvandare-299/20041213161133_-Alla_anvandare-299.dbp.shtml\\$

http://www.observer.se/templates/newspage.aspx?id=5640

⁷ Dagens Nyheter, 2004-11-10

Johnny Munkhammar, 2004-11-30. http://www.sourze.se/default.asp?ItemID=10434524

Examples of leftist blogs can be found at http://www.sblogg.se/?p=41

http://europa.eu.int/comm/commission_barroso/wallstrom/weblog

http://www.annikasblogg.se/

¹² Helle Klein, 2005-05-15.

Method and selection

The respondents I wanted to include in the survey were primarily:

1) Swedes who read blogs.

Within this group I also wanted to analyze:

2) Swedes who run blogs, i.e. "bloggers".

In the remainder of this report I will use the following terms for the different respondents:

- a) **blog readers** all 600 respondents in the survey, which means everyone who read blogs, including those who have their own blog
- b) bloggers respondents who blog

In these types of surveys there are never any guarantee that the results are completely accurate. The results might be skewed or distorted by a number of factors like a non-representative selection of respondents, or the way in which the questions are being formulated. In order to minimize these risks I took the following measures.

The survey was performed via SurveyMonkey.com between May 12 and 16, 2005. To minimize the number of respondents who never read blogs, I wanted to promote the survey mainly on blogs. I put up a text on my own blog¹⁴ with a link to the survey¹⁵ and encouraged other bloggers to promote the survey on their blogs. I also randomly chose 10 other blogs that I contacted and asked if they couldn't post about the survey. I chose them among the latest pings on the blog aggregator nyligen.se (where there was an email address on the blog).

SurveyMonkey has a feature that prevents the same respondent from answering the survey more than once (from the same computer).

One Response per Respondent - After completing the survey, respondents will be prevented from entering additional responses. Respondents that return to a survey later will be able to edit their existing answers. Respondents that return to an incomplete survey will be taken to the point that they left off.

A check of the IP addresses from the respondents also ruled out any signs of systematic cheating.

On some of the questions I chose to let the answers be listed randomly so that one answer would not benefit from always being listed first.

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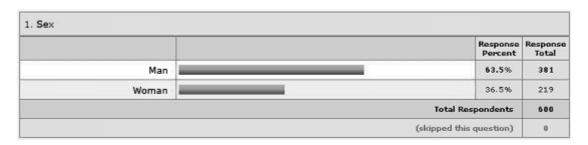
⁴ http://www.kullin.net/arkiv/2005 05 01 mc.html#111592822712331819

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=70638607448

Results - all blog readers

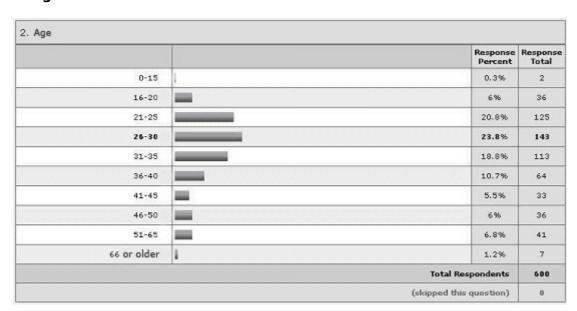
These are the results from all respondents in the survey, i.e. all blog readers. Please note that the original questions and answers were in Swedish and the English translation is just added for the purpose of this report.

1. Sex:



According to the survey, there are more men than women among blog readers. As a reference, the percentage of male blog readers was 75.5% in Blogads¹⁶ survey in the US.

2. Age:



Close to one in four blog readers are between 26 and 30 years old. The majority (63.4%) of blog readers are between 21 and 35.

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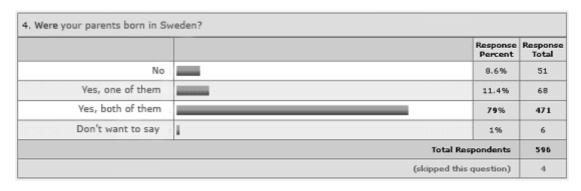
http://www.blogads.com/survey/2005_blog_reader_survey.html

3. Your highest level of education.

		Response Percent	Response Total
Elementary school (9 years)		5.4%	32
High school		32.2%	192
College/University degree		61.7%	368
Don't know	1	0.7%	4
	Total Respondents		596
(skipped this question)		4	

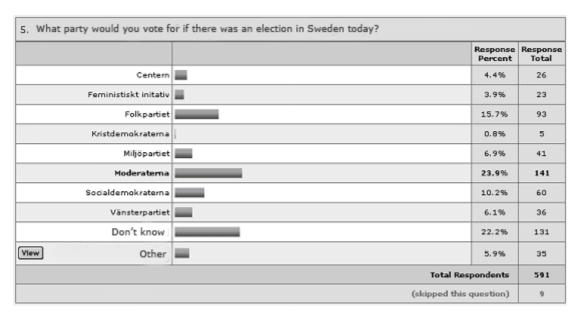
The average blog reader has a high level of education. 61.7% has a college or university degree.

4. Were your parents born in Sweden?



One in five has at least one parent that was not born in Sweden.

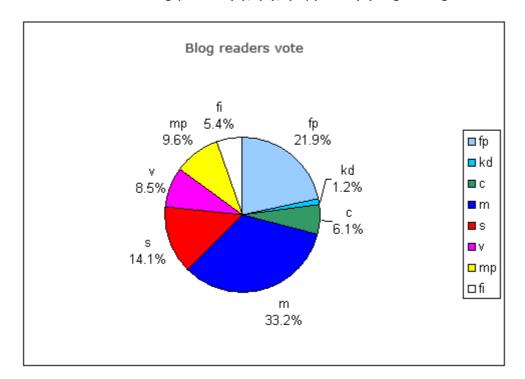
5. What party would you vote for if there was an election in Sweden today?



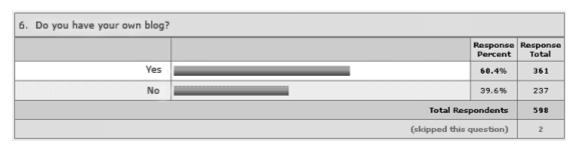
Moderaterna (the moderate party) got the highest percentage of votes (23.9%).

As many as 22.2% of all blog readers do not know what party to vote for. Another 5.9% would either not vote at all or vote for some small niche party like Junilistan.

Blog readers clearly have preferences to vote to the right. The two largest parties are the moderate party (m) and the liberal party (fp). Not counting insecure voters and those who will not vote at all, the right-wing gets 62.4% of all votes while the four left wing parties (s), (v), (mp) and (fi) together get 37.6%.



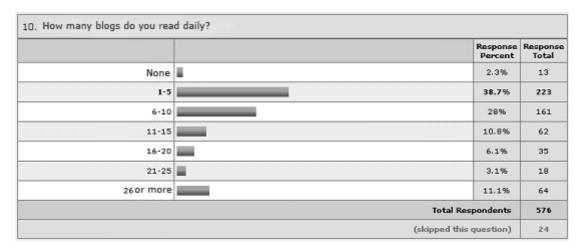
6. Do you have your own blog?



Three out of five blog readers (60.4%) have a blog of their own.

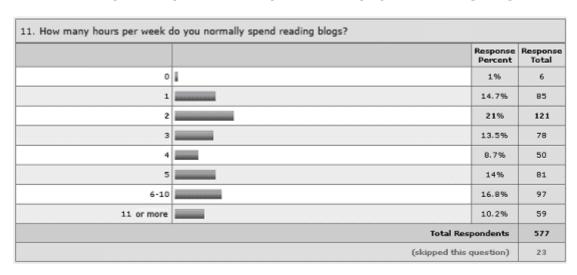
[Respondents who answered 'no' on this question continued to question number 10.]

10. How many blogs do you read daily?



The average blog reader reads 1-5 blogs daily. A total of 11.1% of the respondents are so called "heavy users" that read 26 blogs or more daily.

11. How many hours per week do you normally spend reading blogs?

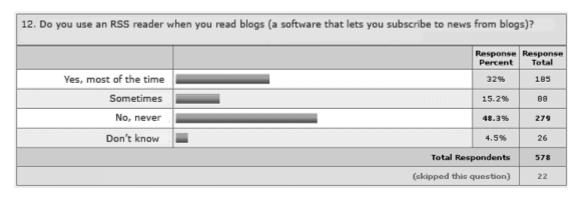


The average blog reader spends 2 hours per week reading blogs. Half of all blog readers spend 4 hours per week or more reading blogs, which is about 34 minutes or more per day. An interesting comparison is a recent survey of Swedes' media habits (Sveriges Mediebarometer 2004¹⁷). According to that report, Swedes in general spend 5 hours and 51 minutes per day consuming media (351 minutes). Most of that time is spent on radio (123 minutes per day), followed by tv (102 min), daily newspapers (28 min), internet (25 min), CDs and books (21 min each). In other words, half of all Swedish blog readers spend more time each day reading blogs than the average Swede spend on dailies.

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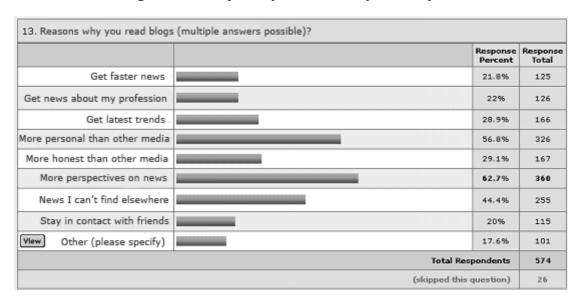
 $http://www.nordicom.gu.se/?portal=mt\&main=info_publ2.php\&ex=178\&menu=menu_sve\&me=8$

12. Do you use an RSS reader when you read blogs (a software that lets you subscribe to news from blogs)?



About half, or 47.2% of all blog readers use an RSS reader to read blogs, at least sometimes.

13. You read blogs because (multiple answers possible):



Most blog readers read blogs because they want more perspectives and opinions on news stories than they feel they get from traditional media. There is apparently a need for other voices and media's monopoly on interpreting and filtering events and news is slowly breaking up.

Another popular reason for reading blogs is that blogs have a more personal tone of voice than traditional media who rarely lets ordinary people speak their minds. On blogs, one gets to read personal reflections from people who are much like oneself. Someone joked about it as a sign of voyeurism. Other comments along the same line were:

"Curious about other people's lives."

"Hear about other people's lives and thoughts."

"Read about other peoples lives, blogs are not just news."

"To take part of others' personal experiences."

"It's so fun to read "ordinary" people for a change."

Others say that reading blogs enable them to read news and opinions they cannot find elsewhere.

"To get help in monitoring information by people who are interested in the same things as I am."

"Read news that has to do with my hobbies."

A number of blog readers are critical of traditional media and see blogs as a more honest and transparent medium.

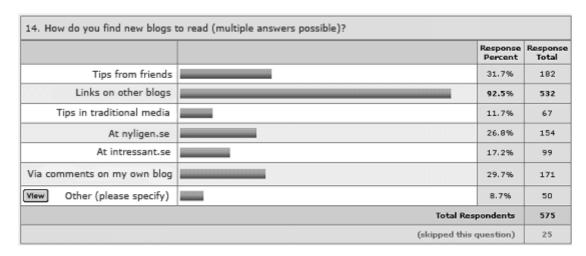
"Get "real" news that the media establishment has not distorted."

"Traditional media is a thing of the past."

"Open and more transparent."

"Independent criticism."

14. How do you find new blogs to read (multiple answers possible)?

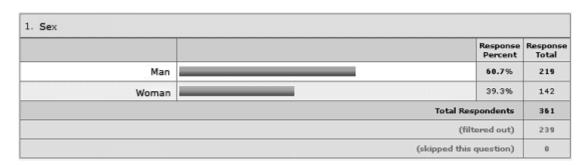


Not surprisingly, blog readers find new blogs via links on other blogs. Among the other comments we notice that they get tips on new blogs via aggregator services like intressant.se, nyligen.se sweblogs.com and svensk.lemonad.org. Many also find blogs via searches on Google.

Results - bloggers

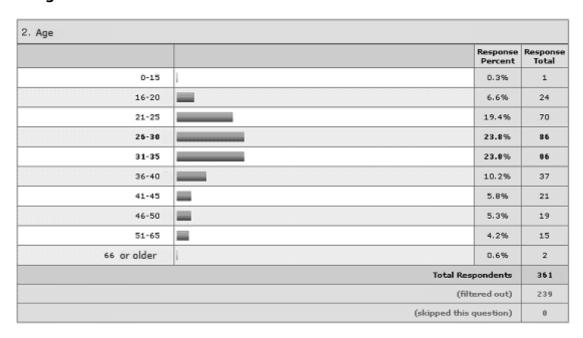
Below you can find the results from bloggers – the respondents who answered 'yes' on the question "do you have your own blog?". The respondents who answered 'no' on the same question have been left out, which is illustrated by the comment "filtered out" in the graphs below.

1. Sex:



Three out of five Swedish bloggers are men.

2. Age:



The average Swedish blogger is between 26 and 35 years old.

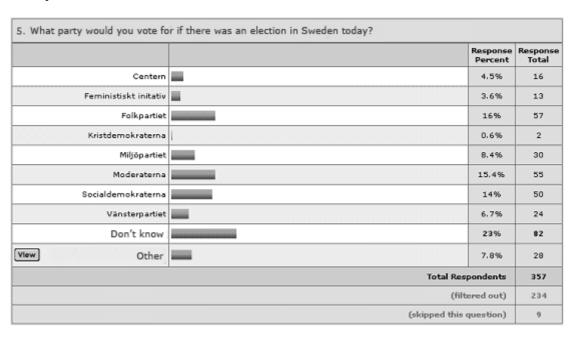
3. Your highest level of education.

	Response Percent	Response Total
Elementary school (9 years)	6.1%	22
High school	34.2%	123
College/University degree	59.2%	213
Don't know	0.6%	2
	Total Respondents	360
(filtered out)		236
	(skipped this question)	4

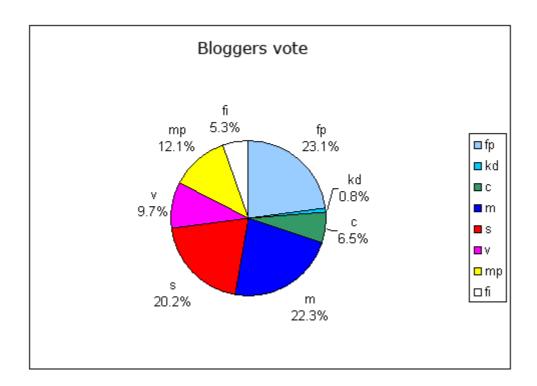
4. Were your parents born in Sweden?

	Response Percent	Response Total
No	8.1%	29
Yes, one of them	12.8%	46
Yes, both of them	78.6%	282
Don't want to say	0.6%	2
	Total Respondents	359
(filtered out)		237
	(skipped this question)	4

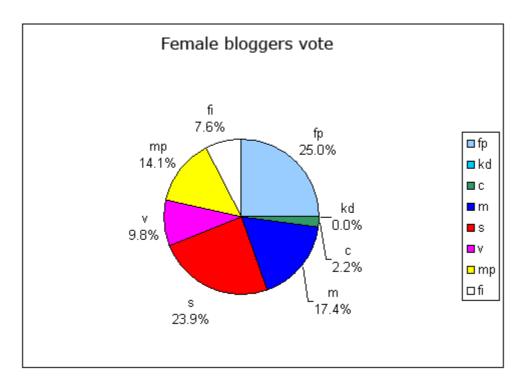
5. What party would you vote for if there was an election in Sweden today?



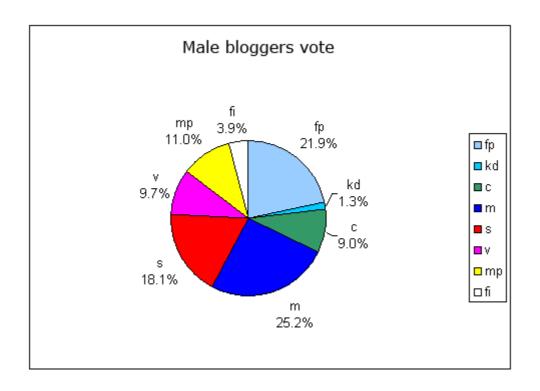
The liberal party (fp) is the largest party among bloggers, which differs from blog readers where (m) got most votes. The right-wing majority is less significant among bloggers than among blog readers. Not counting undecided voters and those who plan not to vote, the right gets a 52.6% majority.



The left is in majority when female bloggers vote. Not counting undecided voters and those who plan not to vote, the left (s), (v), (mp) and (fi) gets 55.4% of the votes. A large portion (29.4%) of the female bloggers are not sure about who to vote for.



18.5% of male bloggers do not know what party to vote for. Among those who do know, the majority votes to the right (57.4%). Since the number of male bloggers in the survey is much greater than the number of female bloggers, the political preference to the right affects the average bloggers voting habits to a large extent.



6. Do you have your own blog?

Since this section only contains bloggers, the response to this question was 100% 'yes'.

7. Why did you start a blog (multiple responses possible)?

	Response Percent	Response Total
Because I like to write	79.3%	284
To get in contact with other people	23.5%	84
To market a product or a service	4.5%	16
To influence others	21.5%	77
To stay in contact with friends or family	14.896	53
To become famous	7%	25
View Other (please specify)	17.3%	62
	Total Respondents	358
	(skipped this question)	242

Most people start a blog from a will of self expression. They like to write and make their voice heard. This is also shown in some of the comments respondents left under other alternatives.

"To write off some of my anger"
"To give vent to my opinions"

A large portion of bloggers where motivated to start a blog by social interaction. They want to build or develop relations to friends, relatives or other people who share the same interests.

Many also claim that apart from willing to express themselves they also have an interest in influencing people. An example of that is the growing number of political blogs in Sweden the last few months. Bloggers are also voicing an opinion that there are alternative voices that currently don't get enough attention in the public debate, and that traditional media present a certain view of news and events that they don't share themselves.

"To show inadequacies in society"

"Because I had something to say"

"Because it felt like I had something important to say that nobody else said"

"A complement to narrow Swedish media"

Bloggers also use their blogs as a tool to collect thoughts, ideas, interesting articles and to learn more about a subject.

"Writing is a way to learn"
"To preserve thoughts and ideas in a somewhat structured manner"
"To collect my research in one location"

Few have started blogs to become famous, but a guess is that had the wording in the answer been more of "to build your own brand or reputation", the picture would be slightly different.

8. In what language(s) do you blog (multiple answers possible)?

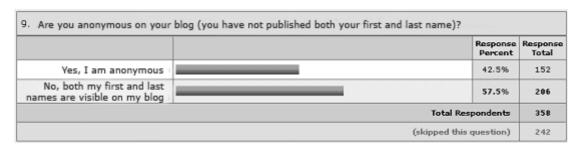
8. In w	hat language(s) do you b	log (multiple answers possible)?	
		Response Percent	Response Total
	Swedish	92.5%	331
	English	25.796	92
View	Other (please specify)	2%	7
	Total Respondents		
(skipped this question)			242

One out of four bloggers write in English, either completely or both in Swedish and English. It is not uncommon that Swedes have an English language blog and then another blog in Swedish for thoughts that for some reason don't fit in the regular blog.

Other languages are not common and only German and Spanish get more than one mention in other alternatives.

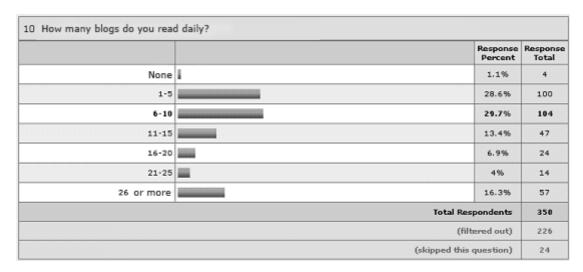
A reason behind the large number of English language blogs might be the possibilities to reach a larger audience. Swedish is a very small language, spoken by approximately nine million people and to be able to communicate with people that share your interests it might be easier to do so in English. Shared interests are sometimes a stronger influence than geography.

9. Are you anonymous on your blog, (you have not published both your first and last name)?



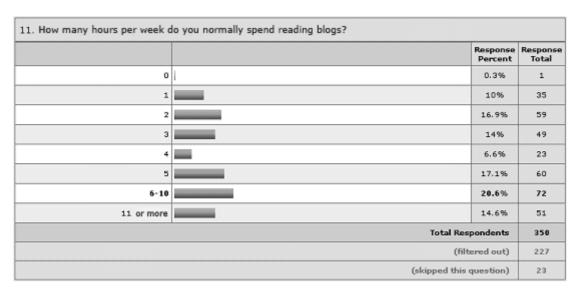
The majority of all bloggers reveal their identity on their blog, with both first and last name. However, there was a huge difference between men and women. Among male bloggers only 30.6% were anonymous, while 60.6% of female bloggers were anonymous.

10. How many blogs do you read daily?



Bloggers read more blogs daily than the average blog reader. The number of "heavy users" is also higher, 16.3% read 26 blogs or more per day on average, compared to 11.1% among blog readers in general.

11. How many hours per week do you normally spend reading blogs?

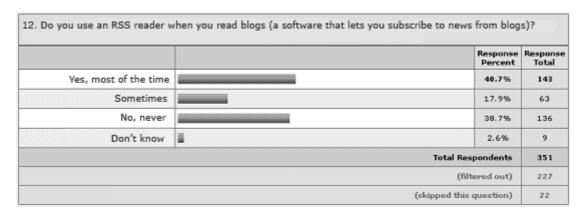


Bloggers spend more time reading blogs than the average blog reader. 58.9% spend more than 4 hours per week reading blogs. 14.6% spend 11 hours or more per week reading blogs, which is 94 minutes or more per day, compared to the average Swede who spends 102 minutes per day watching tv. 18

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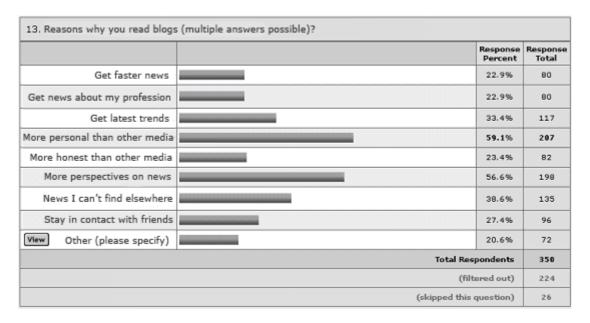
http://www.nordicom.gu.se/?portal=mt&main=info_publ2.php&ex=178&menu=menu_sve& me=8

12. Do you use an RSS reader when you read blogs (a software that lets you subscribe to news from blogs)?



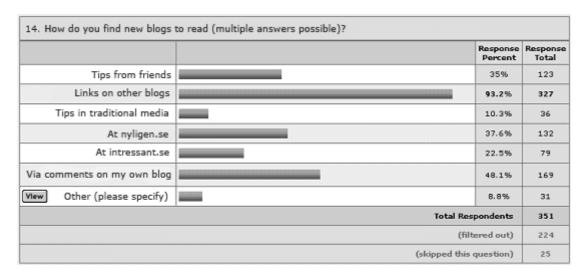
Bloggers use an RSS readers more frequently than blog readers do. 58.6% use and RSS reader most of the time or sometimes (compared to 47.2% among blog readers). There is probably a connection between the fact that bloggers read more blogs, which is either enabled by use of an RSS reader or because the large consumption of blogs trigger usage of an RSS reader.

13. Reasons why you read blogs (multiple answers possible):



Bloggers read other blogs because they find them to be more personal than other media. The second most common reason is to get more perspective on news.

14. How do you find new blogs to read (multiple answers possible)?



Bloggers are more frequent users (than the average blog reader) of aggregator services like nyligen.se and intressant.se, probably because they are used to ping these websites and therefore visit them more often.

Conclusion

It is quite obvious that blogs fill a void in the media landscape, both for people who write and read blogs. These individuals experience a need for alternative voices in society and feel that for the first time there is a chance for "ordinary people" to influence others via internet.

Many turn to blogs to get different aspects and viewpoints that are not present in traditional media. Users experience that media are serving them with a narrow and filtered view on news and events that they can either accept or reject. Through blogs they become part of a dialogue and a conversation that is more personal, and where they can contribute with their own views. There is a strong will among bloggers to be both media consumers and producers.

There is also a need for niche information that has to do with the person's interests or profession. It is sometimes not commercially interesting for traditional media, especially in a small country like Sweden, to cover certain topics and there is an opportunity for blogging experts and enthusiasts to fill this need for information.

One can also conclude that once a person starts to blog, he or she will start reading more blogs. They get in touch with other bloggers via comments and trackbacks and the more engaged in the blogosphere they get, the more time they spend reading other blogs. Heavy users are also likely to shift to reading blogs via an RSS reader which in turn may affect they way we consume other type of non-blog information like traditional news sites in the future.

Final words

This is not scientific research, but hopefully this survey has added more knowledge about the Swedish blogosphere. Since the number of blogs continues to grow rapidly, it is my intention to do a follow up survey in the near future.

Finally I would like to thank the bloggers who helped promote the survey and all the 600 respondents who took time to fill out the survey.

A special thanks to bloggers Mattias Durnik, Annica Tiger, Henrik Torstensson and Fredrik Wass for valuable comments on the first draft of this survey.

The graphs and samples in this report are just some of the different facts that are possible to extract from this survey. For further comments please contact me.

Hans Kullin, Stockholm, May/June 2005.

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