SWEDEV SWEDISH DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH NETWORK

CONDITIONS FOR SWEDISH DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH - INSIGHTS FROM SWEDEV'S MEMBER SURVEY

How have recent funding cuts affected the focus of research?

> *I've given up researching impacts of climate change per se.*

> *Funding for international LGBT advocacy and activism in the Global South has almost disappeared.*

> *Had to cancel/postpone/reframe collaboration on child health-air quality-urban development in West Africa, with several years of delays as a consequence.*

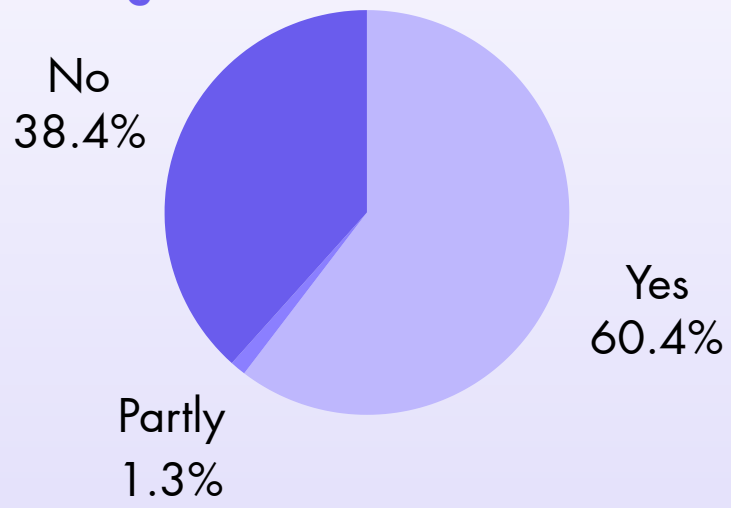
> *I'm no longer working on Zoonotic disease surveillance in development countries, which is of importance for us to also learn about diseases that can come to Sweden, such as African swine fever.*

> *In general, I shift to other areas more in line with the government priorities. It also means that some research ideas will not be funded at all.*

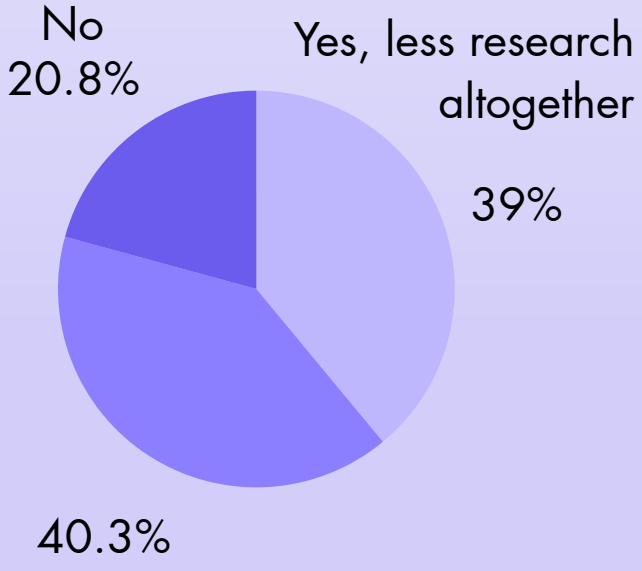
> *More basic science*
> *Less societal relevance*
> *Less development relevance.*

Photo: NastyaSensei/Canva

Switched research area due to funding cuts?



Difficulty to pursue research related to international development in the past two years?



SURVEY PROCEDURE

The SweDev 2025 survey was conducted **digitally** during **spring 2025** to follow up on how the Swedish government's funding cuts (notably, terminating the U-Forsk grant in 2023) continue to affect international development research.

In total, **175 respondents** participated in the survey (165 in development researchers or otherwise working in academia, and 10 people working with development practice or policy in Sweden).

Most respondents are based at **Swedish universities and research institutes**, from different parts of the country, including Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (22%), Lund University (14%), Karolinska Institutet (12%), Uppsala University (11%), and the University of Gothenburg (11%), and others.

Among respondents in academia, the largest groups are **researchers** (35%) and **professors** (33%), followed by associate or senior lecturers (12%) and postdoctoral researchers (8%). More than half of respondents (55%) are based in the **humanities and social sciences**, while 22% work in science and technology, and 13% in medicine and pharmacology.

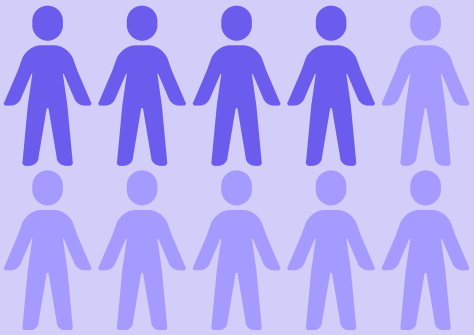
The **gender distribution is relatively balanced** (approximately half of the respondents are women). Most respondents are between 39 and 58 years old (57%), with an additional 17% aged 59–68 and 17% aged 29–38.

Together, the survey responses provide a detailed picture of Sweden's international development research community and its composition in 2025.

HOW ARE FUNDING CHANGES AFFECTING INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION AND THE COMPOSITION OF RESEARCH TEAMS?

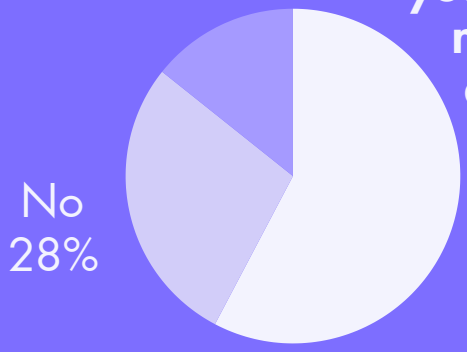
Funding cuts are leading to **research driven by funding agendas**, where quantitative studies are perceived as more valuable than qualitative ones. At the same time, research focusing on developing countries is declining as funding sources prioritise Swedish and EU interests, **risking the loss of important insights.** Together, these trends are **eroding the unbiased foundation of development research** and **Sweden's reputation as a reliable research partner**.

Nearly* 4 in 10 research teams have restructured following the cuts



*38% of respondents report changes in their research team structure since the funding cuts.

Have the cuts negatively affected your research networks in developing countries?



> *It has contributed to a sense of disillusionment and made particularly junior scholars pessimistic about the possibility to stay in the field, meaning we risk to lose a lot of expertise.*

> *Given up field based activities in developing countries.*

> *Less focus on collaboration with researchers in the global South.*

At the same time, some respondents acknowledge that they have **not needed to adapt** their research. Furthermore, some have even **broadened their field of study**, with one case out of personal curiosity.

> *I have given more priority to developing research applications with Swedish academics who have skills in quantitative methods. Before I prioritized collaborating with partners in the Global South with more qualitative/regional expertise.*

Recent cuts to Swedish funding for international development research have had substantial consequences across the research community.

Key Takeaways

Implications on research

The SweDev 2025 survey reveals **widespread consequences** of funding cuts on Swedish international development research.
More than half of the researchers surveyed have **adapted their research focus**, often moving away from global development themes or reframing their projects to align with available funding streams.

Global implications

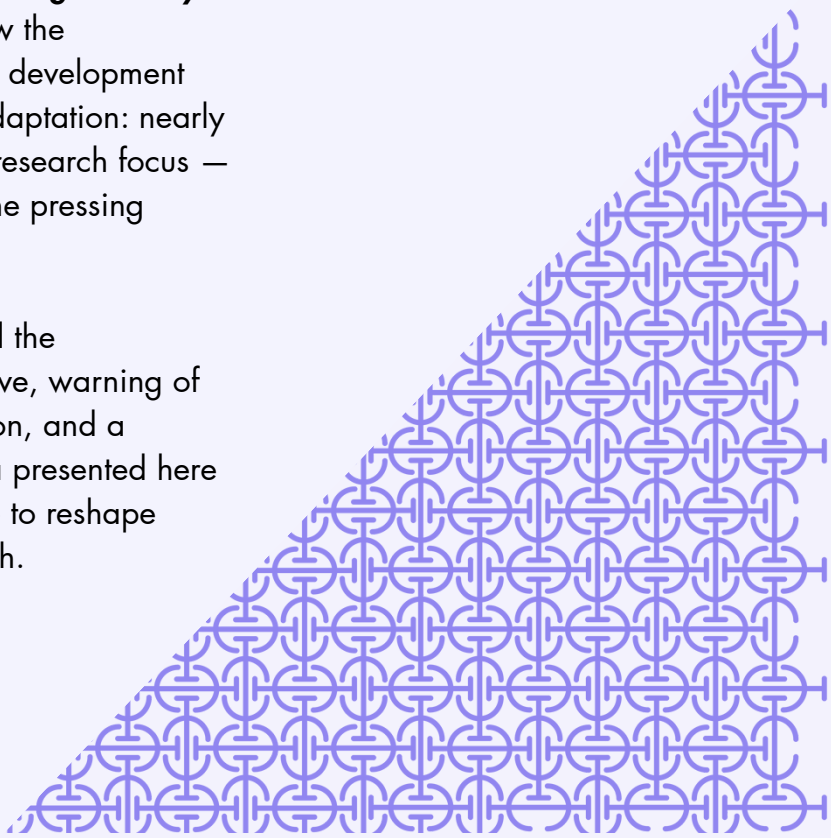
These changes ripple beyond Sweden: networks in the Global South have **weakened**, with collaborations **disrupted or downsized** due to funding shortages.

Survey 2024

This fact sheet builds on findings from SweDev's earlier report "***Development research in Sweden today: Funding and ways forward***" **(2024)**, which first documented how the government's funding cuts disrupted Swedish development research. That survey showed widespread adaptation: nearly half of researchers had already shifted their research focus — often toward themes of lesser relevance to [the pressing problems of] the Global South.

It also found that 93% of respondents viewed the consequences for the Global South as negative, warning of weakened partnerships, reduced collaboration, and a narrowing of research scope. The 2025 data presented here confirm that these trends persist and continue to reshape Sweden's role in global development research.

Access the report at ww.SweDev.dev



Two-thirds of respondents experience increased barriers to international development research.