

Country Profile - Sweden

Job market

What are my chances of getting a job?

The global economic recession has had an effect on the Swedish labour market, reducing the amount of jobs available and raising unemployment. There are high-levels of competition for jobs in Sweden, except in some areas where Swedish employers have reported difficulties in finding qualified staff. These include teaching; professions within medical and health care; technology and computing professionals; and certain professions within the construction and manufacturing industries.

- **Typical problems encountered:** some areas are well staffed with home-based graduates and competition is fierce for any job opportunities that become available. Sweden has a high population of graduates, which also increases competition for jobs.
- **How to improve your chances:** Swedish employers are looking for highly qualified and experienced graduates, so developing vocational or technical skills at graduate level will improve your chances of success. It is also wise to get some employment experience in your home country first. The best prospects are with international companies that have a base in the UK.
- **Language requirements:** although English is widely spoken, you will have difficulty finding employment if you are unable to speak and write in Swedish. Details of Swedish language courses are available from the [Swedish Institute](#), [Folkuniversitetet \(Sweden\)](#), and [Study in Sweden](#) has a list of online resources. Self-study courses are also available through [Eurotalk Interactive](#) and [Key Languages](#).

Where can I work?

- **Major industries:** services (IT, telecommunications, biotechnology), manufacturing (wood pulp and paper products), machinery and metal products (iron and steel), and the automotive industry.
- **Recent growth areas:** consulting, biotechnology industry and pharmaceutical manufacturing, retail and green (environmental) exports.
- **Industries in decline:** the traditional industries of steel, paper and pulp have fallen behind IT and telecommunications.
- **Shortage occupations:** pre-school teachers, engineers, IT professionals, accountants, various health and medical care professionals and more, see the labour shortage list on [Official Gateway to Sweden](#).
- **Major companies:** AstraVeneca, Volvo, IKEA, Ericsson, Electrolux, H&M, SKF, Atlas Copco, Gambro, Scania, Skansa, Skandinaviska Enskilda Banken, Tetra Pak.
- **Search for more companies:** [Kompass](#), a worldwide business directory searchable by country and product/service, [Swedish Chambers of Commerce](#) and [Europages](#).
- **Major cities:** Stockholm (capital), Gothenburg, Malmö and Uppsala.

What's it like working in Sweden?

- **Average working hours:** the maximum legal working week is 40 hours.
 - **Holidays:** 25 days' paid holiday per year is the legal minimum.
 - **Tax rates:** Sweden is usually reckoned to have one of the highest rates of taxation in the world. A foreign national will be liable to tax if they are regarded as being resident in Sweden, have essential connections to Sweden or are present in Sweden for a period of more than 183 days in a tax year. Non-residents only pay tax on income from Swedish sources and is a flat rate of 25%. Detailed information is available from the [Swedish Tax Agency \(Skatteverket\)](#).
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Applying for jobs

EU nationals can apply from their home countries for jobs in Sweden or wait until after they've arrived in the country. Large international employers increasingly use online applications via their websites. In recent years it has become common to see jobseekers advertising for work in local and national newspapers.

Standard CVs in Sweden are usually one page long but a two page CV is acceptable. The employer may require the CV in Swedish so check this before you apply. Try to be concise in the CV and include details of qualifications, work experience, and any awards or extra achievements, as well as additional information about any special skills or interests that you have. You can also include the contact details of your referees although it's OK to provide these at a later date. A sample CV is available on the [Official Gateway to Sweden](#) website.

You should ensure that a covering letter is sent along with your CV. This is typically similar to a standard covering letter in the UK and should summarise why you are suitable for the job. It is not necessary to send copies of your qualifications along with the application unless this is specifically requested, although it is a good idea to take them along to the interview.

Assessment centres are common for graduate-level jobs. They include interviews, aptitude tests and job simulation tests that focus on teamwork and working under stress. The number of times you will be interviewed depends largely on the job you are applying for and the ethos of the company or organisation.

At interview, recruiters are keen to find out more about wider life experiences outside of the academic environment. Be prepared to talk about your interests and extracurricular activities and, if possible, positions of responsibility. Be prepared to ask some questions at the end of the job interview.

During interviews for jobs in the public sector, a trade union representative from within the organisation is usually present to ensure that everything goes according to the rules.

Trade unions are a well-established part of employment in Sweden and most workers belong to one. Conditions of employment are decided between employers and trade unions by collective agreement. Sweden has no statutory minimum wage and new employees are usually able to negotiate their starting salary.

Will my UK qualifications be recognised?

Recognition of academic degrees and vocational qualifications is undertaken by [ENIC-NARIC](#), which can provide you with a document that briefly describes which Swedish qualifications are equivalent to yours. This free service can make things easier for any prospective employer and will assist you in your job search.

You may also want to visit the [UK National Europass Centre \(UK NEC\)](#) website for information on how to make your skills and qualifications easily understood in Sweden.

Do I still need to pay UK tax and National Insurance?

If you are planning to live and work in Sweden, check your UK tax and National Insurance position with [HM Revenue & Customs \(HMRC\)](#) to ensure that you are not losing any UK pension rights.

Vacancy sources

Job websites

- [Academic Search](#) (Swedish/English)
- [Career Builder Sweden](#) (Swedish)
- [Career.edu](#) - for academic jobs (English)
- [English Language Jobs](#) (English)
- [Jobb24](#) (Swedish)
- [Merajobb](#) (Swedish)
- [Monster \(Sweden\)](#) (Swedish)
- [Stepstone Sweden](#) (Swedish)
- [The Local](#) (English)
- Company websites are also good sources of vacancies.

Recruitment agencies

Private recruitment agencies operate in Sweden. Comprehensive listings are available from the [International Confederation of Private Employment Agencies \(CIETT\)](#). Search for employment agencies in [Gula Sidorna \(Swedish Yellow Pages\)](#) - in Swedish only.

Some UK-based employment agencies deal with international vacancies or have branches abroad, including in Sweden. Visit [Recruitment and Employment Confederation \(REC\)](#) for a list of approved UK agencies and then contact the agency to see if they have jobs abroad.

Newspapers

- [Dagens Nyheter](#) - the daily newspaper, has the largest number of job adverts.
- [Svenska Dagbladet](#) and [Dagens Industri](#) - for business-orientated vacancies.
- You will also find jobs advertised in local and regional newspapers. Links to these can be found via [Kidon Media-Link](#).

Other sources

The [Swedish Public Employment Service](#) (Arbetsförmedlingen or Swedish Labour Market Administration) is where most vacancies are registered. There are some 320 employment offices, which are the equivalent of jobcentres in the UK. In addition to details of vacancies, they provide careers advice and information. Check the English language web pages.

[EURES - European Job Mobility Portal](#), maintained by the European Commission, provides information about job vacancies, living and working conditions and labour markets in Sweden, as well as a CV-posting service for jobseekers.

Hidden vacancies

Speculative applications are quite common in Sweden and worth trying. Look at the Job market section for help searching companies in Sweden. Telephone first and, if possible, write in Swedish if relevant to the employer. Networking and using personal contacts are also popular ways of finding work. Create a profile on [LinkedIn](#) and network online.

Work experience

Work placements and internships

- Undergraduates studying science and engineering disciplines can apply for summer placements in Sweden through [IAESTE \(The International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience\)](#).
- See [Intern Abroad](#) to search for interns and placements in Sweden.

Exchange programmes

- [AIESEC \(Association Internationale des Etudiants en Sciences Economiques et Commerciales\)](#) offers international traineeship exchanges, providing work experience opportunities from 6 weeks up to 18 months.

- The [Leonardo da Vinci Programme](#) arranges vocational training exchanges and work placements with partner organisations in other countries. To find out if your institution is a member, contact your international office or careers service for more information.

Teaching schemes

Casual work teaching English is rarely available, but opportunities may arise at:

- the [British Institute \(Sweden\)](#) - offers freelance work for native English speakers who have a certificate/diploma in English language teaching to adults (CELTA/DELTA);
- the [Folkuniversitetet \(Sweden\)](#) - operates a nine-month placement adult English language programme in education centres across the country. A TEFL qualification is essential.
- Teaching information and jobs can also be found on [Teach Abroad Sweden](#).

Volunteering

Volunteering is a good way to gain experience. The [Youth in Action](#) programme is funded by the [European Commission](#) and has various opportunities to experience Europe. [The European Voluntary Service \(EVS\)](#) is part of this programme and young people (18-30) can volunteer in a range of countries, including Sweden, for 2-12 months.

Voluntary opportunities in Sweden can also be found on [Volunteer Abroad](#) and [Service Civil International](#).

Casual work and short-term opportunities

Seasonal work is limited - it is available nationally in hotels, bars and the agricultural and market areas of Skane. Childcare and au pair opportunities with local families are also available.

Postgraduate study

How does the higher education system work?

The Swedish government sets degree frameworks and ensures quality control in higher education, plus the institutions use a common credit system which is compatible with the [European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System \(ECTS\)](#). However, the individual institutions have freedom to structure their courses as they please as long as they fit state regulations.

Each institution usually develops a specialisation as a result of a well-established collaboration with local industries and the business community. This means they can each offer specialised programmes of study that are not offered at other institutions.

There are universities and university colleges in Sweden. The former has the right to award Licentiate and PhD degrees while the latter generally do not. However, university colleges can apply to the government to be permitted to award these qualifications and some have been granted this right in several specific fields of study.

What courses are available?

The degree structure at Swedish higher education institutions conforms to the Bologna Process, as detailed on the [European Higher Education Area \(EHEA\)](#) website, which brings it in line with other European countries. There are around 600 Masters degrees offered at Swedish universities and taught in English.

It is possible to do either a one-year Masters degree (magisterexamen) or a two-year Masters (masterexamen). Two-year Licentiate degrees (equivalent to MPhil in the UK) are also available, as are four-year PhDs.

[Study in Sweden](#) has a searchable database of higher education courses.

Where can I study?

There are over fifty universities and university colleges in Sweden, the majority of which are state-funded. Go to [Study in Sweden](#) for links to all higher education institutions' websites.

Universities are listed and ranked internationally at [Top Universities](#).

Applying for postgraduate study

Three years of completed undergraduate study (BA/BSc) is the minimum for embarking on postgraduate education in Sweden. For Licentiates and PhDs, a postgraduate Masters qualification (MA/MSc) is usually required. If there is an exchange agreement, foreign students enrolled on a PhD in their home country can register for postgraduate courses in Sweden. Otherwise admission is restricted and may only be granted to those students who have funding for the entire study period.

For international students, application is via the [University Admissions in Sweden](#) online application system. This allows you to apply for up to four Masters courses in Sweden in one application. The cover sheet must be printed off and sent by post along with certified copies of certificates/diplomas, and any other proof of educational achievements. If these documents are in a language other than a Scandinavian language, English, French or German, authorised translations will be required. A letter of intent or short essay may be required for each individual course applied to. The deadline for most Masters applications is mid-January for programmes starting in the autumn term.

For PhD study, applications must be made by post direct to institutions. Copies of certified certificates/diplomas and a letter of recommendation must be included. Application deadlines for PhD study vary between institutions so you should check institution websites. Some have set application dates while others admit students throughout the year.

For courses taught in Swedish, non-native speakers may have to take tests or complete a language course beforehand. See [Study in Sweden](#) for information on available courses.

Once you have received a letter of acceptance, non-EU citizens should contact their Swedish embassy or consulate to apply for a student visa.

Fees and scholarships

If you are from the [European Union \(EU\)](#), then application and tuition is free, paid for by the Swedish Government. For detailed information, see the [Swedish Migration Board](#) website's section on studying in Sweden.

Cost of living is estimated to be around SEK 7,300 per month. Most students also usually pay to get membership of their student union which costs between SEK 60-70 per month. See [Study in Sweden](#) for further information.

The [Swedish Institute](#) provides a limited number of scholarships for international postgraduate students. The number of scholarships varies from year to year and you can choose which to apply for, depending on your circumstances. You should be aware that competition for these scholarships is fierce, and that many students finance their studies in Sweden without the aid of a scholarship, visit the Study in Sweden website for details. Most individual universities also award scholarships, and you need to contact the one you're interested in for further information.

Are there any exchange programmes?

UK students on undergraduate degree programmes, or postgraduate Masters and some PhD programmes, may be interested in spending time studying in Sweden through the [Erasmus](#) scheme. This programme is open to all subject areas, but check with your institution's Erasmus coordinator first (usually based in the international office) to see which countries they have links with and in what subject areas.

Will my qualification be recognised in the UK?

As part of the Bologna Process, a Swedish postgraduate course is directly comparable to the UK equivalent. Full details on comparing international qualifications are also available from [UK NARIC \(National Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom\)](#).

Visa and travel information

Visa requirements and applications

EU nationals have the right to live and work in Sweden without a visa or work permit, but must register with the [Swedish Migration Board](#) if they plan to stay for longer than three months. Registration must be done before the end of the initial three month period.

If you are not a UK national, contact the Swedish embassy in the country where you are currently residing about how to obtain visas and work permits. If you are living in the UK, go to the [Swedish Embassy](#).

You might also find it useful to contact your ministry of foreign affairs (or your own embassy if you are not living in your home country) to ask whether there are any issues to be taken into account when considering working in Sweden.

Permanent residency

EU nationals have permanent right of residence in Sweden once they have registered with the Swedish Migration Board and have been living in Sweden for five years without a lengthy break. A permanent residence certificate can be applied for from the Swedish Migration Board at that point.

For nationals of other countries, different rules apply. Check with the Swedish Migration Board.

Help in an emergency

If you are a British citizen, you can contact the [British Embassy Sweden](#) for help in a variety of emergencies, for example, if you are the victim of a crime, need to find a doctor, or have lost your passport. See the Embassy website for details of the assistance they can offer. The website also provides general guidance about dealing with a variety of situations and a list of lawyers who can give advice in English.

The telephone number for the emergency services is 112.

Travel advice

Find the latest travel advice and a traveller's checklist on the [Foreign and Commonwealth Office \(FCO\)](#) website.

Country overview

Geography

- **Full country name:** Kingdom of Sweden.
- **Population:** 9,074,055 ([Statistics Sweden](#)).
- **Border countries:** Norway and Finland.
- **Climate:** the high latitude means that much of the country has very long hours of daylight in summer and very long nights in winter. North of the Arctic Circle, sunlight lasts around the clock in summer. Even as far south as Stockholm nights consist of only a few hours of semi-darkness. The weather is temperate in the south, which sees cold, cloudy winters and cool summers.
- **Terrain:** large forests, numerous lakes, long coastlines and mountains in the west.
- **Natural hazards:** ice floes in the Gulf of Bothnia and the surrounding waters sometimes interferes with maritime traffic; flooding after snowmelt; and forest fires.

Living in Sweden

- **Cost of living:** the Swedish cost of living is generally high. Cost of living guidance for students is available from [Study in Sweden](#), and this can be used as a guide by non-students too. Stockholm is typically more expensive than smaller towns.
- **Internet domain:** .se
- **Health:** health standards are high and there are no vaccination requirements. All residents are covered by national health insurance, but healthcare is not free to patients and an appointment at a primary health clinic carries a charge. In order to access public healthcare, EU citizens should register for a [European Health Insurance Card \(EHIC\)](#). If you do not have an EHIC or a Swedish personal identity number, you must pay the full cost of medical treatment yourself. If you are going to be in Sweden for more than three months, you can obtain a personal identity number by registering with the [Swedish Migration Board](#) within three months of your arrival. Otherwise, it is important to have adequate insurance cover.
- **Laws and customs:** Sweden is a tolerant, modern society that for many years has made it a key priority to secure minority rights through legislation and in practice. Same-sex marriage has been legal since 2009. However, there is a zero tolerance drug policy, including cannabis. There is widespread drug testing, and penalties range from rehabilitation treatment and fines to a maximum ten-year prison sentence. Smoking is banned in public places like restaurants, banks and shops.

Economy and finance

- **Currency:** Swedish Krona (SEK).
- **Type of economy:** Sweden has an export-oriented market economy. Business is highly internationalised but there is a high level of public sector activity in the service sector.
- **Health of economy:** Sweden was affected by the global recession, but in 2010 and 2011 the country's banking sector saw a return to profitability. The government is proposing stimulus measures in 2012 to boost employment and growth.
- **Unemployment rate:** 7.8% (Statistics Sweden).
- **Main exports:** machinery and transport, paper products, chemicals, iron and steel and pulp and wood.

Culture

- **People:** the majority of the population is Swedish, with Finns and Sami a small minority. Immigrants make up more than 10% of the population and foreign-born or first-generation immigrants include Finns, Yugoslavs, Danes, Norwegians, Greeks and Turks.
- **Major religion:** Christianity.
- **History:** see [BBC Timeline: Sweden](#)

Politics

- **Type of government:** Sweden is a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy.
- **Major political parties:** Centre Party, Christian Democrats, Green Party, Left Party, Liberal People's Party, Moderate Party and Social Democratic Party.

More information

- [British Embassy Sweden](#)
- [BBC Country Profile: Sweden](#)
- [The World Factbook](#)
- [XE Universal Currency Converter](#)

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