



New Advancements in the Timeliness of Swedish Income Statistics

Johan Lindberg, Statistics Sweden, johan.lindberg@scb.se

Petter Lind, Statistics Sweden, petter.lind@scb.se

Abstract

Statistics Sweden (SCB) publishes annual income and tax statistics for individuals and households based on administrative data. These statistics are released with a lag of 13 months, which limit their timeliness, something that is often highlighted among users of the statistics.

Since 2019, SCB receives monthly data on earnings, taxes, and income transfers from employers and government agencies. Together, these data enable the production of more timely income statistics, allowing near real-time monitoring of household financial conditions, while serving as a complement to the annual statistics.

This paper will give a brief presentation of newly developed statistics regarding monthly disposable income for individuals. The statistics were published in June 2026, covering a period from January 2025 to March 2026.

The paper reviews available data, identifies gaps in monthly income coverage, and explores methods to address these limitations. Several models are evaluated against annual register-based data using lagged information and index-based adjustments. Model performance is assessed both at aggregate level and across detailed breakdowns, highlighting trade-offs between timeliness, accuracy and statistical stability.

The paper also provides an analysis of the monthly dynamics of disposable income.

Keywords: New Statistics, Disposable Income, Timeliness, Modelling



Introduction

There is a strong demand for timely and rapidly produced statistical information in today's society. One example of this is flash estimates, such as the preliminary CPI inflation rate that Statistics Sweden (SCB) publishes since October 2024. Another recent example at SCB is the Population by Labour market status (BAS) – a fully register-based statistical product, based on monthly administrative income data at an individual level, describing the labour force supply in Sweden with a lag of two months.

Traditional income statistics are, however, generally subject to a substantial time lag, often stemming from slow data collection processes, irrespective of the underlying survey design. Unsurprisingly, the lack of timeliness is among the most frequently cited criticisms from users of the statistics.

SCB annually produces and publishes statistics on incomes and taxes for individuals and households. These statistics are typically released 13 months after the end of the reference year, which in turn means a lag of up to 25 months (i.e. income year 2024 is published in January 2026). The statistics are based entirely on administrative records from various authorities, such as declared incomes from the Swedish Tax Agency. Due to the significant lag in data availability, the published statistics lack in timeliness, something that often is highlighted among users.¹

However, advancements in data availability in recent years have created opportunities to better meet the demand for more timely statistical information.

Since 2019, employers are obliged to declare payments and deducted preliminary tax for each payee monthly to the Swedish tax authority. SCB has since the introduction of monthly employer's declaration received data on a monthly basis, including information on salaries and preliminary taxes for all employees. In addition, SCB has ongoing monthly data collection for various types of social transfers from agencies such as the Swedish Social Insurance Agency and the Swedish Pensions Agency.

¹ See for example this blog post by the Swedish economist Daniel Waldenström regarding bottlenecks in the Swedish income statistics: [Hur kan vi minska flaskhalsarna i inkomstrapporteringen?](#)



Altogether, these new data enable compilation of monthly income statistics for individuals and households, with a lag of just two months.

This paper will give a brief presentation of newly developed statistics regarding monthly disposable income for individuals, MIST (acronym for Månatlig Inkomst-Statistik or Monthly Income Statistics). The statistics, published in June 2026, cover the period from January 2025 to March 2026. Publication is initially quarterly, with the aim of moving to a monthly frequency in the coming years. In the initial phase, MIST will be labelled as ‘statistics under development’, rather than as official statistics, to indicate that the work is still in progress.

Income concept and data availability

Disposable income is the commonly used income concept in income distribution statistics, both at an individual level (personal income) and at the household level (aggregated across all household members). When analysing economic well-being, household income is generally the preferred measure. Individual disposable income, however, is often preferred when the analysis focuses on more personal characteristics, such as in gender equality analysis. Initially, the statistics will refer to individual income, but going forward, the aim is to also develop household-based statistics.

There are several differences and challenges when income is compiled on a monthly basis rather than annually. Most notably, some income components are missing from the monthly data, such as income from self-employment and capital income. In addition, taxable income in the annual statistics is based on the tax return, and the tax amounts refer to the final tax determined by the Swedish Tax Agency.

In MIST, taxable income and deducted tax are derived from income statements reported by employers and other payers, which serves as input to the Swedish Tax Agency’s tax return process. These variables are therefore regarded as preliminary for taxation purposes. This leads to definitional differences between the corresponding income components in the annual statistics and in MIST.

Furthermore, as noted, some data are missing on a monthly basis. Most of these gaps can be addressed through simulation, allowing them to be included in the statistics. However, components such as capital income are considered



difficult to simulate with sufficient precision. Due to these quality concerns, combined with the fact that capital income is often one-off rather than recurring monthly, it is currently excluded from our operational definition of monthly disposable income.

Below is a concise overview of the income components included in the annual official statistics on disposable income, indicating the extent of monthly missing data as percentage of the annual disposable income, and the corresponding treatment of these gaps within MIST.

Table 1. Disposable income

Income component	Gaps in monthly data, percentage of annual disposable income	Treatment in MIST
+ Primary income		
Employee income	0,5%	Included (missing data simulated)
Income from self-employment	1%	Included (missing data simulated)
Capital income including capital gains	12%	Not included
+ Current transfers received		
Pensions	3,5%	Included (missing data simulated)
Social security benefits	0%	Included
Social assistance benefits	0%	Included
Transfers from other households	0,1%	Included (missing data simulated)
- Current transfers paid		
Direct taxes and fees	--	Included (missing data simulated)
Transfers to other households	--	Included (missing data simulated)
= Disposable income	17%	--

Employee income earned in Sweden is fully captured in the monthly data. In addition, the annual statistics include employee income from other Nordic countries for individuals registered in Sweden, information that is not available on a monthly basis.

Missing data on pensions refer to taxable private pensions, occupational pensions and pensions from other Nordic countries for persons registered in Sweden, with occupational pensions accounting for the majority of the total missing amount.



For occupational pensions, approximately 30 percent of the total amount is available in the monthly data, corresponding to 54 billion SEK (the total occupational pension in 2023 amounts to 175 billion SEK).

Transfers from other households refer to child support paid between separated parents. This income component is also missing from the annual data, but it is simulated and included in the annual disposable income.

The next section gives a brief description of models used to simulate missing data, and how different models were tested and evaluated.

Modelling of missing data

Due to the incomplete monthly coverage of data included in disposable income, some components have been simulated. The modelling was carried out separately for eight variables: income from self-employment, pension components, foreign income and transfers between households. In addition, several tax variables were simulated, although these were not included in the separate model evaluation described below.

For each variable, four main model variants were evaluated. The simplest approach was to set the missing monthly value to zero. A second variant used the latest available annual value from the income and tax register and carried it forward, either directly or adjusted by a relevant index. Different indices were used depending on the income component: the labour cost index for self-employment income, the income base amount for pension-related variables, and the consumer price index for foreign income and household transfers.

Table 2. Overview of model variants

Model variant	Core idea (treatment of missing income data)	Uses previous value	Uses index	Non-zero	Imputation	Monthly construction
Model 0	Set to zero	No	No	No	-	0
Model 1	Carry-forward	Yes (t-2)	No	No	-	Annual value / 12
Model 2	Indexed carry-forward	Yes (t-2)	Yes	No	-	Monthly scaling
Model 3	Prob + median	Yes (if exists)	Yes	Yes (Bernoulli)	Group (median)	Monthly simulated
Model 4	Prob + mean	Yes (if exists)	Yes	Yes (Bernoulli)	Group (mean)	Monthly simulated

Two further variants were based on a two-step simulation approach. First, the probability of having a non-zero value was estimated within groups defined by



relevant background variables. Individuals were then assigned non-zero status using a Bernoulli draw based on this group probability. Second, for individuals assigned a non-zero value, the amount was taken from the latest available annual value where such a value existed. If no previous value was available, the amount was imputed using either the group median or the group mean. All amounts were index-adjusted and converted to monthly values.

Since the models produce monthly estimates, while the benchmark from the annual income and tax register is available only on an annual basis, the monthly estimates were summed to annual values before evaluation. The model variants were evaluated separately for 2023 and 2024, and separately for each simulated variable. At this stage, the evaluation focused on the simulated components themselves, rather than on total disposable income.

Model performance was assessed by comparing estimated and observed annual values for totals, means, the number of individuals with non-zero values, and selected percentiles. The comparisons were made both at the aggregate level and across detailed breakdowns by municipality, sex, age group and region of birth. The main diagnostic measure was relative pseudo bias, defined as

$$\text{RPB} = (\text{observed value} - \text{estimated value}) / \text{observed value}$$

For each model, target variable and breakdown, examination was made of the share of cells where the absolute RPB exceeded pre-defined thresholds, as well as the maximum absolute RPB. This made it possible to assess not only average performance, but also whether a model produced unstable results in detailed cells.

Overall, the index-adjusted carry-forward model (model 2) performed most consistently across variables and evaluation dimensions. It was therefore selected as the main modelling approach for the simulated income components.

After selecting model variants for the individual income components, the resulting estimates were incorporated into disposable income and evaluated in relation to alternative publication tables. This evaluation followed the same general principle, using relative pseudo bias across proposed reporting groups and income measures. The results were used to determine which breakdowns were sufficiently stable for publication. In general, detailed lower-percentile measures, especially the 10th percentile, showed larger deviations and were therefore treated with caution.



Results

During the first quarter of 2026, the inflation-adjusted median income for persons aged 20 years and older rose by approximately 3 percent, compared to the first quarter of 2025. The largest increase occurred in February, when median income rose by 3.6 percent. Income increased across the entire distribution, although the rise was more pronounced in the upper half and at the top of the distribution. This uneven growth contributed to a slight increase in the percentile ratios P75/P25 and P90/P10.

There is a clear seasonal pattern in the median disposable income over the calendar year, with a dip in March and peaks in June and September. The peak in June has a distributional bias toward the upper half of the distribution and is primarily driven by income from wages and salaries.²

By contrast, the dip in March and the peak in September are more pronounced in the lower half of the distribution. The decline in March also seems to be largely driven by changes in wages and salaries, whereas the increase in September coincides with a sharp rise in study grants, including study loans, associated with the start of the academic semester.

Future work

As indicated earlier, although published, this work remains ongoing, with the ambition to evaluate and, where necessary, develop models that provide improved precision regarding treatment of missing data in relation to the desired level of detail in the statistics.

Other areas of interest include extending the time series (with the possibility of going back to 2020), introducing a household perspective, and, in this context, deriving what is likely the most requested income measure on a monthly basis – namely, equivalised disposable income.

Last, but not least, there is a demand for more timely poverty indicators and related income metrics on a monthly basis. To properly measure such indicators, capital income would need to be included, as it accounts for a significant proportion of households' disposable income.

² The peak reflects an extra holiday reimbursement to employees paid out when going on summer vacation, according to Angelov and Waldenström (2021).



References

Angelov, N. and Waldenström, D. (2021). COVID-19 and Income Inequality: Evidence from Monthly Population Registers. IFN Working Paper No. 1396.