

Public Attitudes to R&D and the Cost of Living

This briefing covers key findings on the cost of living from CaSE's Discovery Decade 2022-23 public attitudes study, which comprised four nationally-representative surveys polling a total of 18,000 people, and 14 focus groups. Full findings on [CaSE's website](#).

R&D advocates must recognise the realities of the cost of living crisis, which was people's preeminent concern throughout our research

"Everything's very much an unknown at the minute. We've had Brexit then we've got the Ukraine-Russia war. We've got global warming, we've got like the cost of living crisis. Everything just seems to be getting worse."



Accountant, Female,
24, Greater Manchester

- **75%** said the cost of living crisis was one of the most important issues for the UK
- Most focus groups discussed people struggling to pay bills or buy food, and a sense of **moving from crisis to crisis**
- **23%** said new research was essential to solving the cost of living problem, but focus group participants generally struggled to articulate specifically how R&D could help

Concerns about the cost of living pose a risk to support for R&D investment

- **59%** would be more supportive of Government R&D spending if it was going towards research into cost of living
- However, when an R&D element is tensioned against a more immediate non-R&D solution, **research may be deprioritised**: for the cost of living, there was net support for both cutting *and* increasing the R&D budget
- **55%** thought an argument against investing in R&D because "other issues are more pressing at the moment" was strong

"If there wasn't as much of a crisis today - with the gas, electric, diesel, the NHS - I could be more content with investing in research for the future. But right now we need to focus on what is happening here and now."



Scientist, Female,
28, Greater Manchester

Faced with financial pressures, the public are divided on whether R&D is a luxury that can't be afforded right now or a vital tool to build a better future

"People, at the moment, are on the bones of their buttocks. They need immediate help, money needs to be put aside for that. But for the youngsters now, we need investment for the future. I'm conflicted."



Cleaning company manager,
Male, 54, Mansfield

- **46%** would invest more in R&D only when the economy is in better shape; 35% said we should invest more in R&D now
- Many focus group participants felt R&D was a **"luxury"** that could be "put on the backburner" until times were better
- Others felt current crises showed the need to invest now to help the next generation or be **better prepared for the future**