

Public Attitudes to R&D and the Environment

This briefing covers key findings on the environment 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](#).

Climate change is a major public concern and people believe R&D can help

- **59%** said climate change and damage to the environment was either the single most or one of the most important issues facing the UK
- **42%** say new research is essential for tackling climate change, while 43% say it is essential for securing the UK's energy supply and lowering the cost of energy bills
- Many focus group participants were passionate about the issue, but few gave environmental research as an example of R&D without prompting

Relating R&D to the climate boosts support for investment and borrowing

- Net support for increasing the R&D budget rose from 20% when no issue was provided, to **46%** when this investment in R&D was linked to the environment
- **56%** would be more supportive of Government spending on R&D if it was going towards research to address climate change
- When given a binary choice, **75% favoured an R&D solution** over a non-R&D solution to environmental problems
- 45% of those who said climate change was one of the biggest issues facing the UK would increase R&D investment **even if it meant the UK had to borrow more money**; compared with a third overall

"R&D is always going to be a thing, we're always going to need it. I'm happy to fund R&D, I'm happy the country funds R&D for the reefs and the forests."

Railway engineer, Male, 56, Derby

The environment is a strong connection point, linked to a global outlook and a desire to leave the world a better place for future generations

- Many focus group participants prioritised environmental R&D projects, even if they had **longer timeframes**
- Participants who were passionate about the environment tended to have a **more global outlook**
- There tended to be more **trust, interest and agreement** with messengers writing about R&D to protect the planet than those about the economy or "boosting Britain"

"There's been years and years and of damage, so it's only natural it's going to take many years to try to reverse it... It absolutely needs doing and it needs starting at least from now. It's for our children."

Furniture upcycler, Female, 37, Blackpool