

Public Attitudes to R&D and Businesses

This briefing covers key findings for businesses 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 are available on CaSE's website.

The public recognises the significant role businesses play in UK R&D

- The private sector is seen as having a major role in funding and carrying out R&D
- **46%** said large businesses carry out a large amount of R&D; top with universities
- For medium and small businesses the figure was 20% and 11%, respectively
- Most focus group participants **instinctively thought of private sector activities** when asked to describe R&D

"Research and development is what businesses do to develop new ideas. It's usually to do with technology."

Teacher, Female, 35, Blackpool

Despite concerns about bias, private R&D is not always seen negatively

- **53%** felt R&D was no better or worse when funded by private companies for profit versus by Government and charities not for profit
- Most focus group participants described companies as profit-motivated, but many felt this led to **quicker results and some said it was "saving taxpayers money"**

As R&D messengers, businesses appeal more to certain groups

- 29% trust businesses to be honest about how much Government should invest in R&D
- Businesses tend to perform less well than academic or household names as R&D messengers
- Businesses appeal more to some audiences; they tend to have most cut through with **men, 25-34s and those on higher incomes**

"Even if it was one of the companies, as long as the way they deliver it and show the evidence is objective... then I feel I could be convinced."

*Physiotherapist,
Male, 28, Manchester*

Businesses can generate a sense of local pride and support in the public

- About half of those who associate their region with R&D linked this to businesses
- Most focus group participants struggled to name local R&D businesses but those that could often **expressed a sense of pride with these links**
- Arguments for boosting R&D investment framed around **benefits to businesses or job creation consistently performed well**, while more than half said that investment in R&D could achieve better jobs (58%) and attract businesses (57%)