

Public Attitudes to R&D and Universities

This briefing covers key findings for universities 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.

Universities' role in the R&D system is not instinctively clear to the public

- When prompted with a list of organisations, **46%** said universities carried out a large amount of R&D and 33% said they funded a large amount, putting them in the top three with large businesses and the national government
- But in an unprompted scenario when focus group participants were asked where R&D happens, **universities were rarely mentioned**

University R&D is perceived as more altruistic, but slower to deliver results

"I think research at a university, where people are doing it in their spare time as well as lecturing or being lectured, it's quite a slow process."

Solicitor, Male, 41, Leeds

- Focus group participants described university R&D as **altruistic** rather than profit-driven, but also **slower** to deliver results than the private sector
- Research was assumed to be **blue skies or medical** - and rarely consumer facing
- Universities were seen as inherently **global and collaborative** - and this was a positive

Universities and academics are trusted messengers about R&D investment

- **51%** trust universities to be honest about how much the Government should invest in R&D; while 54% trust researchers
- While household names tended to perform best, **university-linked voices were seen as trustworthy, interesting and reliable**

"I want to hear it directly from the people involved, the scientists, the creator."

*Retail manager,
Male, 63, Wimbledon*

Universities are ideally placed to respond to the public's appetite to hear more about local R&D

- For those who associated their region with R&D, **universities were the main reason** for this connection - but overall just 9% had visited a university in the past six months
- **65%** say they know hardly anything about research being done in their area - but a similar proportion **would like to hear more**, with higher interest among under 45s
- **29%** would be interested in attending an open day at a university to learn more