

Public Attitudes to R&D and the Government's Missions

This briefing summarises attitudes to the UK Government's five missions, as set out in the [2024 Labour Party manifesto](#). It is based on evidence from a nationally representative survey of 3,258 UK adults in September 2024 and two focus groups in December 2024.

All the missions are seen as high priorities, with the NHS being a top priority

- Before being introduced as the Government's "missions", the goals of all five missions were perceived as an important or top priority by a majority of respondents (from 71% for the education mission to 95% for the NHS mission).
- When allowed to pick only one, the highest priority mission for public investment was "Build an NHS fit for the future" (selected as the highest by 44% of respondents).
- The lowest priority mission for public investment was "Make Britain a clean energy superpower" (selected as the lowest by 36% of respondents).

Few perceive the missions as achievable in the near-term

- Less than half of the public think that any of the Government's missions will be fully or partially achieved in five years, with the mission relating to crime reduction seen as the least achievable.
- However, in our focus groups, there was appetite for the incoming Government to be ambitious and an expectation that it would at least try to meet the goals, even if the deadlines were unrealistic.



"They're our Government, they've got to have ambition. I'd be a bit worried if they'd come into power and were saying 'actually, no, there's nothing we can do about this'."

*Female, 59, Business Manager,
Kingston upon Hull East*

Most think R&D has an essential or important role in the missions

- Up to a third of people selected investing in R&D as one of the top three ways to address each of the missions.
- More than half think R&D has an essential or important role to play across all mission-based objectives tested.
- People in [socioeconomic groups](#) AB are more likely to recognise the role of R&D in climate mission objectives compared to those in socioeconomic groups DE, who instead focus more on R&D's role in the NHS mission objectives.

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The public support R&D being used as a tool to achieve the missions



"We're all living longer so more needs to be done researching all these non-communicable diseases, like Alzheimer's, like cancer, etc, because they're having a massive impact on not only personal lives, but they affect the economy too."

*Male, 31, Technical
Support, Hendon*

- 72% think the Government should use R&D as a tool to achieve its missions.
- More people support investing in a relevant R&D-based approach to achieve a given mission than support cutting R&D investment to spend the money on a non-R&D solution.
- The public naturally link economic growth with success in the NHS and energy missions. When asked which options, from a list of R&D solutions, would contribute most to the economic mission, the top two solutions chosen were "improving healthcare and treatments" (40%) and "researching and developing new sources of clean energy" (33%).

Advocates must do more to show how R&D investment helps the missions

- More than a third (37%) of all respondents thought it was unclear how R&D would help the Government achieve its missions.
- Only around half said it was clear how investing in R&D would help each of the NHS, economy, and clean energy missions, with around 30% saying it was not clear for each.
- Women and those with lower levels of formal education felt less clear on how investing in R&D would help achieve the missions.
- Our focus groups highlighted that, when it comes to funding R&D for the missions, competing priorities are at the front of people's minds.

Informing CaSE's policy development process

Insights from this public opinion research on R&D and the Government's missions were used to inform policy development roundtables with CaSE members on this topic. The recommendations stemming from this process are captured in CaSE's [Mission Critical R&D](#) policy report.

Explore the data

