

Public Attitudes to R&D and Businesses

This briefing summarises public attitudes to R&D and businesses. It is based on evidence from extensive quantitative and qualitative research carried out by CaSE since 2022. Full results can be found on [CaSE's Public Opinion Research pages](#).

Businesses are strongly linked to R&D in the public's mind

- The public naturally associate the private sector with R&D, with a strong focus on multinational consumer goods, technology and pharmaceutical companies.
- 53% say they associate large businesses with R&D, falling to 23% for small and medium sized businesses (July 2025).
- 71% agree that the private sector has an important role to play in UK R&D (July 2025).
- Around half (45%) say that R&D benefits some in the UK more than others, with the main beneficiaries seen as being the wealthy or elite and the private sector (July 2025).

Profit-driven R&D can cause concerns

- Focus group participants express concerns that profit-led motivations could compromise transparency and research objectives in privately-funded R&D.
- Trust in businesses is lower than other R&D voices, with small and medium sized businesses more trusted than large ones. Some 50% say they would trust information on R&D from large businesses and 46% trust them to be honest about how much money the Government should invest in R&D (July 2025).



"An entrepreneur that develops a product, all they're thinking about is the pound sign, so they want to get that product out there. And suppress any negativity. It's product over people."

Male, 25-34, Taunton

Businesses should emphasise local links, job creation and partnerships

- About half of those who associate their region with R&D linked this to businesses (July 2022), and many focus group participants expressed pride in local business-led R&D.
- Arguments for boosting R&D investment that are framed around benefitting businesses or job creation consistently perform well.
- Qualitative research suggests that greater awareness of partnerships between universities and businesses could mitigate some of the public's concerns and shift the archetype that private sector R&D is solely related to big tech and big pharma.