

Public Attitudes to R&D 2025: Awareness

This briefing summarises findings on the public's awareness and understanding of R&D from CaSE's Public Attitudes to R&D 2025 study, which comprised a nationally representative survey of 8,000 UK adults, eight focus groups and 20+ follow-up interviews. Full results can be found on [CaSE's Public Opinion Research pages](#).

Most people are aware of research and development as a concept

- 40% say they have heard of the term "R&D" and know what it means, rising to 82% when "research and development" is spelled out in full. These figures are very consistent with previous CaSE research.
- Despite this, fewer than half (47%) agree with the statement "I would be confident to explain what R&D is to my friends and family".

Associations often focus on consumer tech and the private sector

- Consumer products, technologies and medical advances, rather than the arts or humanities, tend to be the public's main initial associations with R&D.
- In focus groups, there was a consistent skew towards R&D as a private sector endeavour, undertaken for profit.
- Universities are rarely front of mind in focus groups, and are seen primarily as education institutions. Their role is more likely to be recognised when participants are prompted.

“ I knew about the University of Essex, because my niece went there, so I did know about it, but I didn't know exactly that they did all of the research there. I knew they had students there, but I didn't know about the research side of things.”

Female, 45-54, Clacton

Few understand the scale of the R&D workforce and stereotypes persist

- 54% disagree with the statement "I don't really know what a researcher does", compared with 23% who agree.
- Sentiment towards the R&D workforce during in-depth interviews was largely positive, although most struggled to see someone working in R&D as being 'like them'.
- Participants' first thoughts are overwhelmingly about stereotyped STEMM researchers, with references to "geeks", statistics, engineers and lab scientists.