

## Public Attitudes to R&D in Scotland 2026

This briefing summarises attitudes to R&D in Scotland. It is based on evidence from a nationally representative survey of 2,707 adults (16+) in Scotland in January 2026. Full results can be found on [CaSE's Public Opinion Research pages](#).

### Opinions are divided on how well Scotland is doing and on immigration

- The top three priorities in Scotland are improving the NHS, reducing the cost of living and growing the economy.
- Similar proportions think that Scotland is generally a country moving forward (34%) as think it is in decline (37%).
- A majority (57%) think it should be made easier for high skilled workers to come to the UK, but attitudes vary towards ease of entry for low skilled workers and asylum seekers.

### Public awareness of, and connection with, Scottish R&D's benefits is low

- Less than half (47%) said they had heard of the term "R&D" and know what it means, rising to 82% when "research and development" is spelled out in full.
- Some 87% feel they don't know much or anything about the R&D being done in Scotland.
- Less than half (44%) could immediately think of at least some ways Scottish R&D benefits Scotland, falling to three in ten when asked about personal benefits.
- Awareness of R&D's contribution to the Scottish economy is low – a plurality said they don't know if it contributes or not (40%).

### Most people value public R&D investment, would be proud of local R&D and support their Member of Scottish Parliament (MSP) taking action on it

- Around three quarters (77%) think it is important for the Scottish Government to invest in R&D in their nation, and this majority support (68-87%) extends across all voter groups.
- Some 66% would feel proud if their area were to become well known as an important hub for R&D in Scotland and 53% would support a new R&D laboratory in their local area.
- A majority think that it should be a priority for the Scottish government to support R&D in universities, research organisations and businesses in a range of ways.
- There is broad support for MSPs to campaign for a range of R&D-related activities with levels of opposition very low across all examples tested – typically between just 2-5%.