

The 3M State of Science Index

An insight into UK perceptions of science



Does science matter?

It does to 3M because it fuels our company vision: 3M technology improving every company, 3M products enhancing every home and 3M innovation improving every life.

But what about the general population? Does it recognise and appreciate science? Or are people largely unaware of science, unconscious and indifferent to its presence around them? Do parents want their children to pursue a career in science? Are they trusting or sceptical of science and scientists? Do they even care?

To find answers to these and other questions, we set out to explore the general public's attitudes to science in 14 countries.* The result is the 3M State of Science Index (SOSI), one of the largest and most comprehensive global studies on this topic in recent years.

We believe it's important to know what the world thinks about science, because a lack of trust and appreciation, and indifference to the subject have consequences for the future.

Discover here what we found out about science, based on insights from a thousand people in the UK.

Or, for the bigger picture, you can check out the global results at www.3M.com/scienceindex

How was the 3M SOSI conducted?

A 15-minute survey was commissioned by 3M and conducted by an independent global market research firm, among a representative sample of 1,000 general population adults, 18 years and older, across a total of 14 countries.

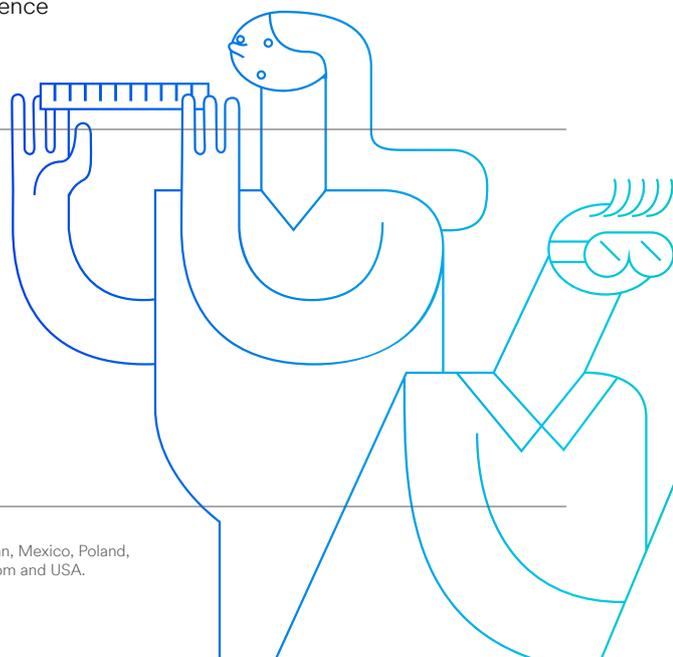
The survey was fielded between June and August 2017 using a combination of online and offline interviewing to ensure accurate general population representation based on age, gender, region, and race/ethnicity.

Survey topics were broadly grouped into three categories for analysis:

- ▶ The image of science
 - ▶ Understanding the impact of science
 - ▶ Expectations of science
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So what did we find out...?

*Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Japan, Mexico, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, United Kingdom and USA.





The image of science

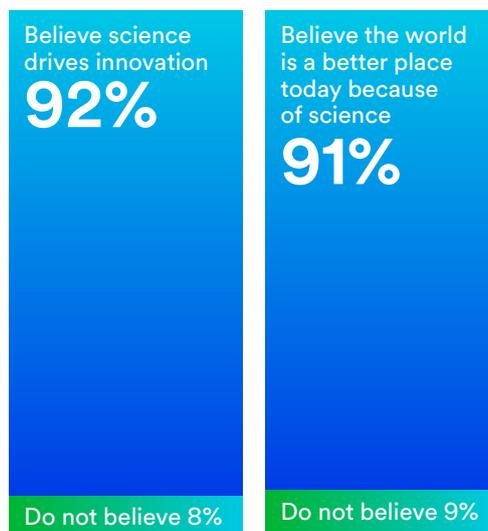
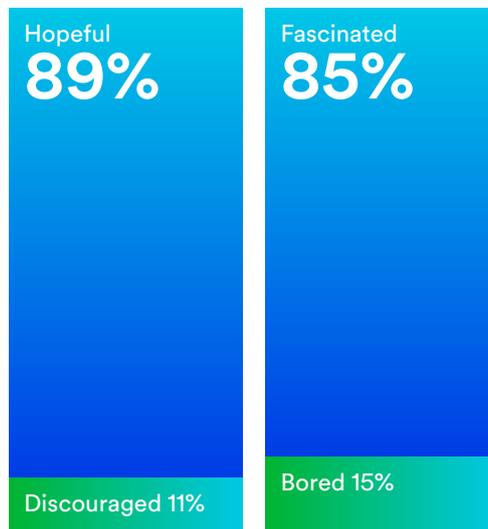
Defining science

At the macro level and unprompted, survey respondents globally see science largely as the study of understanding the world, nature and life.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, science is deeply associated with advancements/discoveries in healthcare – with words like ‘cure, human, DNA and cancer’ all featuring prominently when asked to name the most important scientific discovery in their lifetime. However, people are less aware of everything science touches.

On the surface, it looks like positive news – Britons are hopeful that science will lead to a better world

When Britons hear the word ‘science,’ they feel:





But there is confusion about how science and technology interrelate

While 47% think that without science there would be no technology (and 4% believe that without technology there would be no science), a further 30% think that science and technology are totally different things.

And some are hesitant to trust science completely

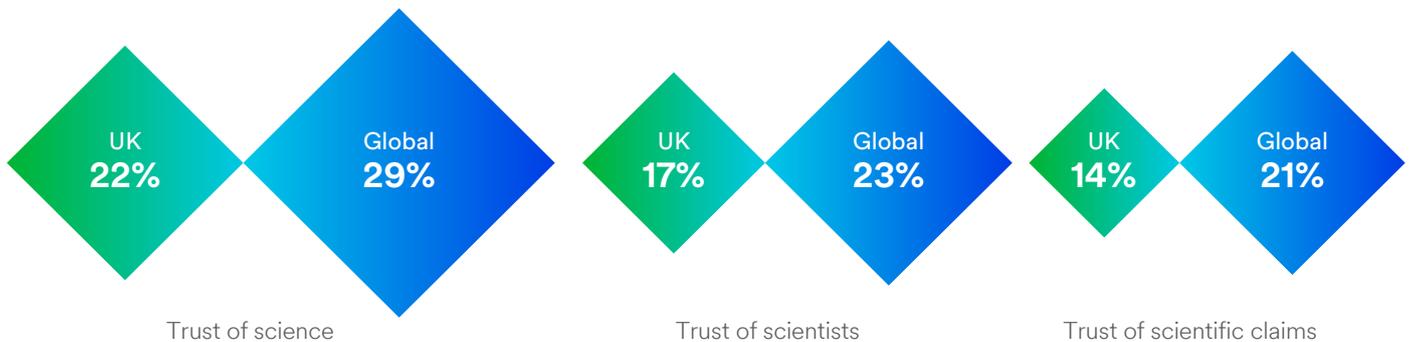
On the 'Science Trust Index' (an aggregate score of responses to survey questions on perceptions on trust/scepticism in science), the UK scores 54.1 compared to the global average of 56.1.

The index quantifies perceptions of trust and scepticism of science to understand how this differs across countries. The higher the country's score, the greater their trust toward science is. The lower their score, the more sceptical and distrusting of science the country is.

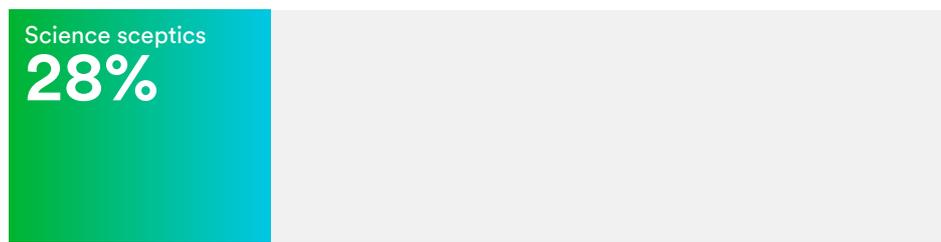
Science Trust Index Country Scores



Slightly fewer Britons completely trust science



And more than a quarter of UK respondents (28%) agree that they are science sceptics – with nearly half (48%) believing that science causes as many problems as it solves.





Understanding the impact of science

Few know a lot about science... and the gender gap is real

Only 14% of respondents in the UK claim to know a lot about science, with men more likely to do so than women (21% vs. 7%). In fact, 19% of UK women feel they know nothing about science.

Those younger are likely to claim more knowledge, with 24% of 18–34 year olds saying they know a lot about science, vs. only 7% of those aged 51+.

But there's clearly an appetite for science knowledge...

While nearly three quarters of respondents overall know just a little (71%), eight out of ten (82%) wished they knew more about science in general. News articles in magazines, print and online media are the most common source of science information for around half of respondents, followed by additional online sources, such as search engines, forums and organisation websites. However, women are less likely to follow science news, with 28% saying they don't typically read or hear about science, vs. 19% of men.

Many are unaware of the impact of science on their daily lives

While 62% of UK respondents think that science is very important to society, significantly fewer (41%) say it is very important to their everyday lives, and even less so (37%) for their families' lives.

Importance of science to society



Importance of science to everyday lives



Importance of science to families



25% completely or somewhat believe that if science didn't exist, their everyday lives wouldn't be all that different, while 15% of respondents never think about the impact of science on daily life.



Most Britons don't regret pursuing a non-scientific career

Britons are more likely than the global average to not regret choosing a non-science-based career for themselves (63% vs. 54%). When asked which field of study they would have picked today, information technology/computer science (23%) was the top British choice; while art and design and history (both 19%) proved more popular than engineering (16%) or medicine (14%).

But there is real hope for the next generation

Conversely, 88% of UK respondents are keen to encourage children to pursue a science-related career. And when posed specifically to parents, an overwhelming 94% want their children to know more about science.



About a third feel that students would be more convinced to pursue a science-related career if they had a better understanding of the different opportunities that existed (38%), if they understood how science provided the opportunity to improve the world (31%), or if there were more mentorship/work opportunities for students with people employed in the science field (29%).

Only 15% felt that understanding how they could make a lot of money would be effective in convincing students to pursue science.



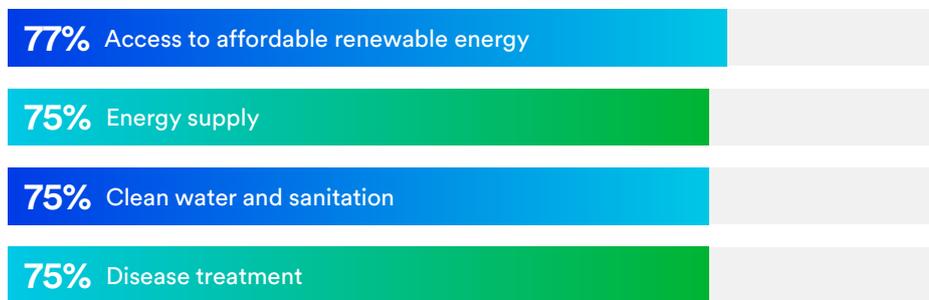
Expectations of science

Britons are optimistic about the future impact of science

When asked whether the best days of science are in the past, now, or in the future, 72% of those in the UK feel the best days are still to come – an optimism beating the global average of 62%. Healthcare and energy are the two industry sectors thought most likely to be impacted by future scientific discovery in the next five years.

Most think science will positively impact major global challenges

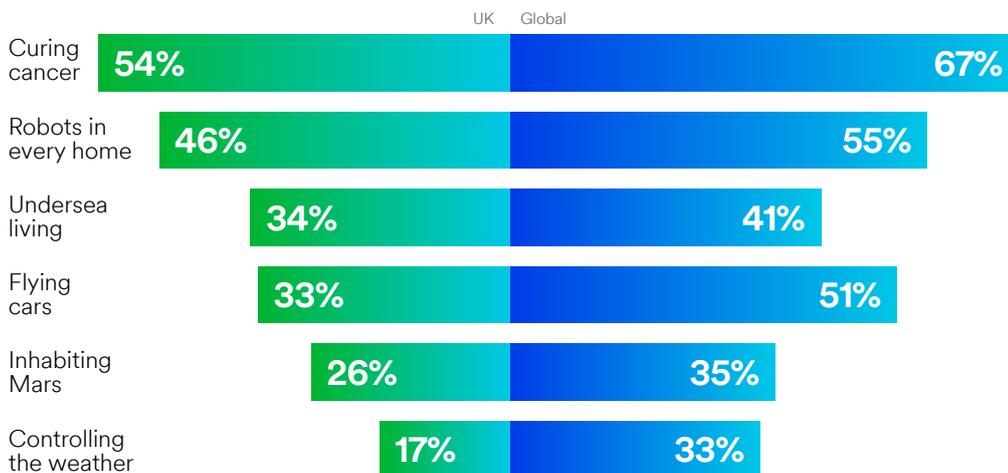
People in the UK believe that science can find solutions to global challenges the world faces today, including:



Of the issues Britons believe science can find solutions for, disease prevention and treatment top their wish list for society as a whole, with 62% and 53% respectively.

Yet our expectations are more conservative when it comes to cancer, the weather and undersea living...

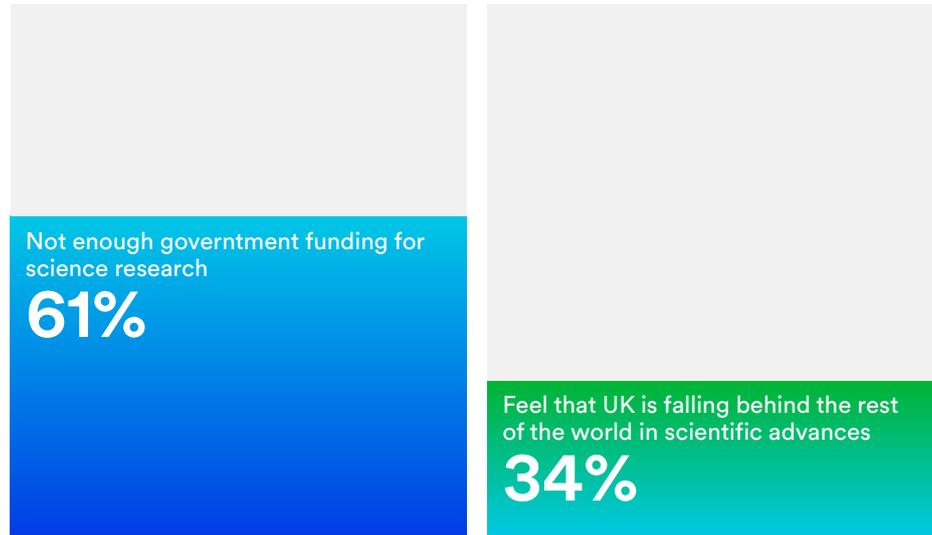
Compared to the global average, Britons have lower expectations on what science can achieve in:





With funding perceived as a limiting factor

Some 61% believe that the Government does not contribute enough funding to science research, and more than half (59%) feel that other countries place a higher value on science than the UK.



Another 34% feel that the UK is falling behind other countries when it comes to scientific advancements, while nearly half (45%) feel that we are maintaining the status quo, and 20% believe that we are leading the field.

So what happens now?

3M believes in making science more relatable and personal, in celebrating science and its achievements, and in encouraging and inspiring others, particularly young people, to do the same. We've invested in this research to identify problems and areas of opportunity for the image of science, and by making the findings publicly available, we hope that people will engage with it, comment on it and share it. We're committed to repeating the research again, so we can track changes in attitudes and perceptions over time.

By appointing our first-ever global Chief Science Advocate – Dr Jayshree Seth, an accomplished scientist with a doctorate in Chemical Engineering and 60 patents to her name, we will contribute to ongoing dialogues on the image of science and its importance in improving lives around the world.

And by continuing to invest in our community programmes designed to encourage an early interest in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) and working in partnership with the British Science Association as a sponsor of British Science Week, we aim to bring science to the forefront of young people's minds.

**Science matters to 3M –
and we hope it matters
to you, too.**





3M

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