

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

