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# Public attitudes to animal research in 2018



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# Introduction

This report presents the findings of the 2018 survey into public acceptance, awareness and attitudes towards the use of animals in scientific research in the UK. The research was carried out by Ipsos MORI on behalf of the Office for Life Sciences, a joint office between the Department for Health and Social Care and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

This is the third wave of a tracker survey first conducted in 2014. Fieldwork for each wave has been carried out using Ipsos MORI's face-to-face omnibus survey (also known as Capibus). This consistency of methodology allows for greater confidence in cross-wave comparisons.

The 2014 survey was built on a long-term trend survey that had been conducted since 1999. The original survey was revised in 2014, with the questionnaire updated to reflect how the context of life sciences in the UK had changed since 1999. The new survey was run simultaneously with the previous survey wave in 2014 to check for comparability of results and to measure the impact of the new wordings. While the comparison showed that the rewording did not change question response significantly, the update means that direct comparisons between pre- and post-2014 data are not possible. Where broader comparisons of similar questions from before and after the questionnaire update are highlighted in the report, the analysis makes clear that the data comprises two separate questions.

Where differences between percentages are reported, these are significant unless stated in the report.

## Headline findings

Key measures of the acceptability of animal research are at similar levels to 2016. However, public acceptability is contingent on the purpose and context of the research.

However, Animal welfare is becoming a bigger consideration for some members of the public and the link between animal research and human health appears weaker.

Public trust in the regulation of animal research in the UK remains at levels recorded in previous years.

Public awareness of government work on the “three Rs” of animal research remains low.

Two thirds of the public do not feel well-informed about the use of animals in research, while interest in finding out more about work to find alternatives and improve the welfare of animals in research is high and has risen. Views on the acceptability of protest and demonstration formats are unchanged.

The primary characteristic the public attribute to animal research organisations remains “secrecy”.

## Executive summary

**This year’s wave of the survey shows a broadly similar picture of public awareness, acceptability and attitudes towards animal research and the Life Sciences sector in the UK.** Most of the public accept the use of animals in scientific research for medical and scientific purposes (65% and 68% respectively). As in previous years this acceptance is conditional on the context of the research and the types of animals that are under consideration. When considering the use of animals for all types of research where there is no alternative, public opinion is more balanced, with close to four in ten saying they can either accept (37%) or not accept it (39%).

**However, exploring public attitudes in detail reveals a more complex picture, with acceptance falling on some measures while others remain in line with past years.** There is some evidence of a shift towards greater questioning of animal research – for instance, while interest in finding out more has always been relatively high, interest in finding out more about alternatives to the use of animals in research has risen significantly, from 55 per cent to 60 per cent.

Despite this increase in interest, public awareness of government work to replace, reduce and refine the use of animals remains at the low levels of previous years. Fewer than one in ten say they know more than a little about any of these areas. Similarly, just a quarter of the public believe that research is carried out on animals only when

there is no alternative (23%) and four in ten (41%) believe that researchers are working to find alternatives to using animals in research.

Perhaps most notably, the proportion of the public who agree that the use of animals for medical research is important to human health has fallen significantly, from close to half in 2016 (46%) to four in ten this year (41%), lower than the 2014 figure of 43 per cent.

**Public regard for animal welfare appears to be increasing too.** Interest in finding out more about work to improve the welfare of animals used in research has risen from 54 to 59 per cent since 2016. The proportion of the public who are not concerned at all about the use of animals in research has fallen to 15 per cent, from 22 per cent in 2016 – the lowest score recorded not only in this current survey but also in the longer-term trend since 2002.

At the same time, the proportion who say animals should not be used in any research on animal welfare grounds has increased from 31 per cent in 2014 to 35 per cent in 2016 and 38 per cent this year. Younger people appear particularly concerned about animal welfare, with those aged 15-24 significantly more likely to say they can accept animal research if unnecessary harm is avoided (76%) than if it is for medical research (57%).

**As in previous years, the type of animal being used is as important as the type of research under consideration.** Rats and mice are the most acceptable type of animal for use in medical research to benefit people (47% and 44% respectively), research into animal health (48% and 43%) and environmental research (41% and 37%). Cats, dogs and primates are considered the least acceptable animals across these different research types.

This aligns with the Home Office 2017 animal research statistics<sup>1</sup>, which show that mice and rats were the most commonly used animals (used in 70% research procedures) followed by fish (16%), while less than one per cent of all animal research procedures in 2017 used special category animals – cats, dogs and primates. However, it is also worth noting the significant increase in the proportion of the public who do not think that any animals should be used in medical research to benefit people (up from 23% in 2014 to 28% in 2016 and 27% in 2018).

**Misperceptions about animals and testing of cosmetics persist – and have grown.** Testing cosmetics and ingredients for cosmetics on animals has been banned since 2009 across the European Union (and the sale of cosmetics that have been tested on animals elsewhere in the world has been banned since 2013). Even so, this year 38 per cent of the public believe testing cosmetics on animals is allowed in the UK. This is a significant increase from 2014, when 31 per cent believed this to be the case.

It is important to acknowledge this gap between public perceptions and reality, as it suggests that those members of the public who say they feel informed about the use of animals in research do not necessarily hold accurate views on the topic. Those who believe cosmetic testing is permitted hold more critical views on a wide range of topics, including being more likely to say that animals are used in unlicensed and unnecessary research projects. They are also more likely to be supportive of a wide range of protest actions.

**In general, public views of the regulation of animal research have remained unchanged,** with faith in scientists in the sector greater than faith in the system. Public concern about the risk of unnecessary duplication and unlicensed animal research remains high but has declined over the life of the survey. Since 2014 the proportion

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<sup>1</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/724611/annual-statistics-scientific-procedures-living-animals-2017.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/724611/annual-statistics-scientific-procedures-living-animals-2017.pdf)

who feel unnecessary duplication occurs has fallen from six in ten to 55 per cent while those who feel that unlicensed research goes on has decreased from half to just over four in ten (50% to 44%).

**Public support for illegal protest actions remains very low.** While a majority of the public are supportive of (in order of acceptability) letter writing, signing petitions, stickering and handing out leaflets to oppose animal research – as well as demonstrating outside animal research facilities – support for stronger actions is lower. Sizeable minorities say they can support protests outside haulage and services firms that work with the Life Sciences sector (37%), online campaigns against people involved in animal research (42%), and covert filming inside facilities (34%). Support for more extreme and illegal actions is restricted to a small minority of the public.

**Vets involved in research and universities are most trusted to give balanced information about animal research.** They are trusted by 45 per cent and 40 per cent respectively. The next most trusted groups are animal protection organisations (33%), people with a knowledge of the subject (32%) and the NHS (29%).

Trust in the NHS in this area has risen significantly compared with 2014 (from 22% then to 29% this year), forming part of what appears to be a trend of rising public trust in government organisations in this area (trust in government research institutes has risen from 21% to 26% over the same period). There has also been an increase in trust in environmental organisations between 2016 and 2018 (from 21% to 25%). Trust in medical research charities, which fell from 28 to 22 per cent between 2014 and 2016, has recovered slightly to 24 per cent this year.

**When asked how they would like to receive information about the use of animals in research, three in ten of the public say they do not want any more information.** Members of this group are typically older: 37 per cent of over 65s say they want no more information, compared with just 14 per cent of 15–24 year olds.

**As in previous years, the primary perception of animal research organisations is one of secrecy.** Four in ten associate secrecy with animal research organisations (41%) – matching similar results in 2016 (42%) and 2014 (44%). A third say they carry out work essential for human health (32%) and a quarter believe they are well-regulated (26%). Again, echoing previous years' data, the overall public view of these organisations is carefully balanced – half mention at least one attribute that is either positive or negative (both 50%), while a third are solely positive or negative (both 34%).

# Methodology

## Overview

A sample of 1,011 adults aged 15+ from across Great Britain was interviewed between 31<sup>st</sup> August – 17<sup>th</sup> September 2018, using Ipsos MORI's "Capibus" vehicle – a face-to-face omnibus survey that uses a form of random location sampling to produce a high-quality representative sample. This is the same methodology and survey vehicle used in 2014 and 2016, allowing for robust comparisons over time.

The final data has been weighted by gender, age, region, ethnicity, working status and social class to reflect the 15+ population profile of Great Britain.

This work was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the international quality standard for market research, ISO 20252, the Market Research Society Code of Conduct and with the Ipsos MORI Terms and Conditions.

## Reporting conventions

### Percentage Points

Reference is sometimes made to "percentage points". This describes a numerical difference between two percentage figures - rather than an increase / decrease. For example, if awareness among one sub-group is 60% and in another is 70% this is a difference of 10 percentage points, but not of 10 per cent (which would be 60% and 66%).

### Net scores

At some points in the report "net scores" are used to describe results. A net score is calculated, for example, by subtracting the proportion who disagree with a given question from the proportion who agree, resulting in a score that can range from -100% to +100%. A score above zero denotes that a larger proportion of the sample agree with a given statement than disagree with it, whilst a score below shows the opposite – that a larger proportion disagrees than agrees with the question or statement. Net scores are calculated from full data and then rounded, which can sometimes mean that there appears to be slight discrepancies between the figures reported as net scores and the sum of percentages; however, the figures are correct and the discrepancy is only due to the rounding of data.

### Publication of Data

As Ipsos MORI has been engaged to undertake an objective programme of research, it is important to protect our clients' interests by ensuring that it is accurately reflected in any press release or publication of findings. As with all our studies, and as part of our Standard Terms and Conditions, the publication of the findings of this report is therefore subject to the advance approval of Ipsos MORI. Such approval will only be refused on the grounds of inaccuracy or misrepresentation.

The full data set has been published alongside this report. This can be found on the UK Data Service website.

# 1 Public awareness of animal research

## Key findings

**Two thirds of the public do not feel well-informed about the use of animals in research**, in line with findings from previous years.

**Interest in finding out more about work to find alternatives and improve the welfare of animals in research is high and has risen.** Close to six in ten are interested in both aspects, and the proportion interested in work to find alternatives has risen significantly since 2016.

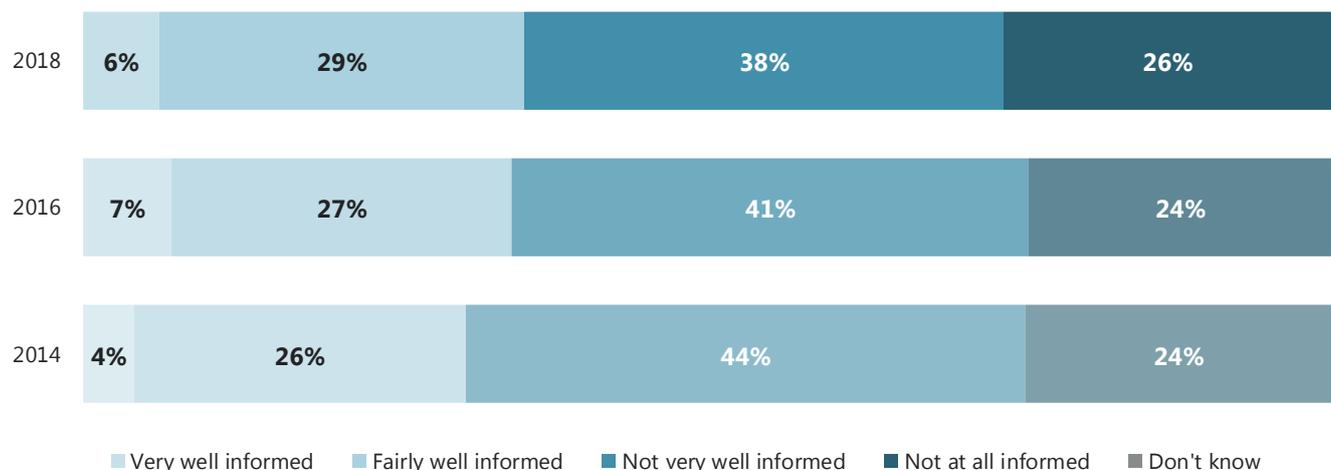
**Public awareness of government work on the “three Rs” of animal research remains low.** Less than one in ten know more than a little about government work to replace, reduce or refine the use of animals in scientific research. Similarly, nine in ten of the public have not heard of the National Centre for the three Rs.

**The most preferred source for additional information on animal research continues to be television**, although the same proportion of people say they are not interested in getting more information on the topic from any source.

**Vets who look after animals in research facilities continue to be the most trusted to give balanced information on the use of animals in research.** Universities are the second-most trusted, followed by animal protection organisations, people with a knowledge of the subject, and the NHS

## 1.1 Public awareness and interest in animal research

**One third of the British public say they feel well informed about the use of animals in scientific research in the UK (35%).** This figure has not changed since the 2016 survey when 34% said they felt well informed, although both are slightly higher than the proportion who said the same in 2014 (30%).

**Figure 1.1: Feeling informed about animal research in the UK, 2014-2018**

Bases:  
 2018 – 1,011 British adults aged 15+ (interviewed 31 August – 11 September 2018)  
 2016 – 987 British adults aged 15+ (interviewed 4 March – 4 April 2016)  
 2014 – 969 British adults aged 15+ (interviewed 7 – 13 March 2014)

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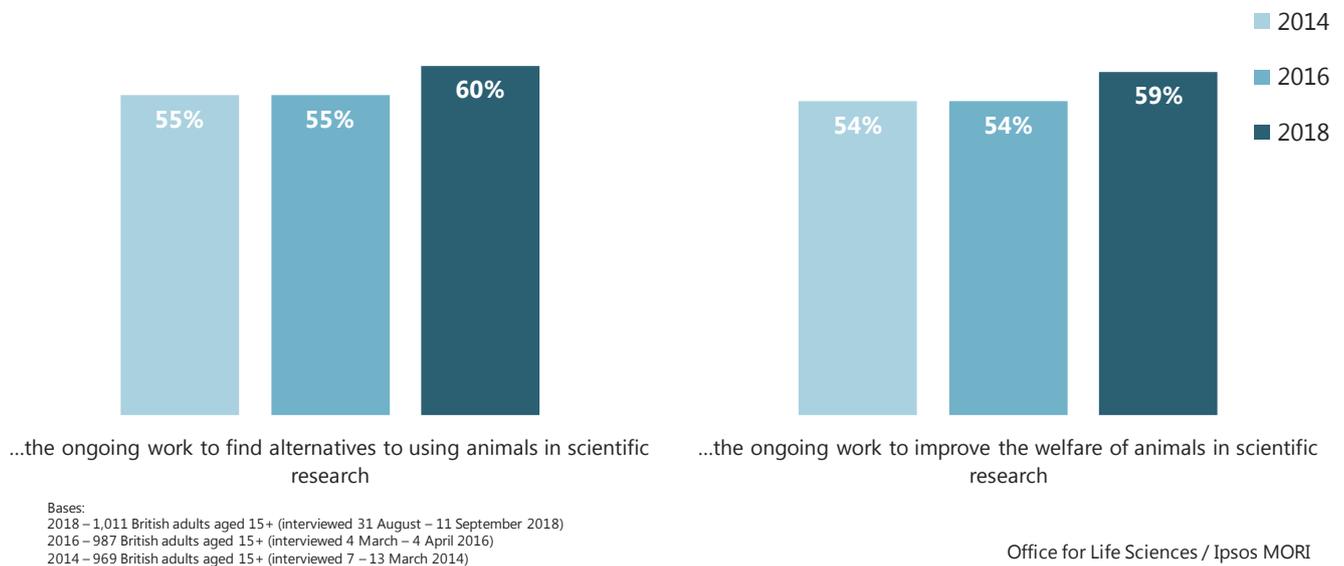
Feeling well-informed differs by educational level, social grade and age within gender. Close to half of those with a degree-level education say they feel well informed (46%), compared with just over a third of those with A Levels as their highest qualification (36%), and around a quarter of adults with GCSEs (27%) or no formal qualifications (23%).

A similar pattern can be observed by social grade and age within gender. Almost half of those in social grades AB feel well informed (46%), a proportion that falls to 26% of those in social grades DE. Similarly, around four in ten men aged 55 or over feel well informed (42%), compared with three in ten of women of the same age (30%) and men aged 15-34 (29%).

It is important to note that feeling informed about the use of animals in research is not necessarily grounded in objective knowledge about the sector. A good example of this (as noted throughout this report) are those who wrongly believe that the testing of cosmetics on animals is permitted in the UK - currently 38% of the public. This group are distinguished by being significantly more likely than average to feel informed about animal research in the UK (41% compared with 35% overall). They also stand out as being more interested in information about animal research and being more concerned about practice within the sector. This includes being more likely to believe that unlicensed or unnecessary research is carried out. We therefore highlight this group throughout the report because of the role misperceptions may play in shaping overall views of the sector.

### Public interest in finding out more

**A majority of the public are interested in finding out more about alternatives to animal research and work to improve animal welfare.** Around six in ten are interested in finding out more about ongoing work to find alternatives to using animals (60%) and ongoing work to improve the welfare of animals used in research (59%), with both representing a significant increase since 2016.

**Figure 1.2: Public interest in finding out more about animal research****% interested**

Levels of interest differ by age group: more than two thirds of those aged 15-24 say they are interested in finding out about alternatives or work to improve animal welfare (both 67%). By contrast, the proportion interested in both is lower amongst those aged 65 or over. Just over half say they are interested in finding out more about alternatives (52%) or improving research animal welfare (53%).

There are differences between men and women too: around two thirds of women saying they are interested in finding out more about both alternatives and improving animal welfare (both 64%), compared with around half of men (56% and 53% respectively).

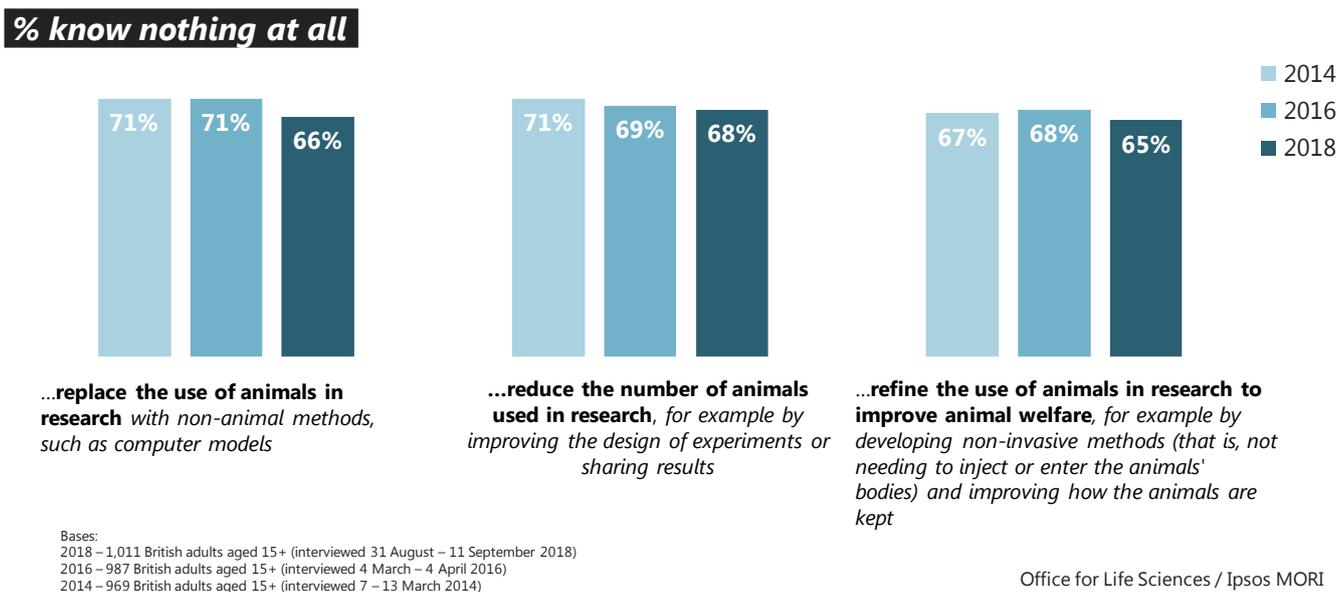
Around two thirds of those who believe cosmetic testing is permitted say they are interested in learning about alternatives (69%) and work to improve animal welfare (65%). Both figures are significantly higher than average (60% and 58% respectively).

### Public awareness of the three Rs of animal research

**Public awareness of government work to reduce, replace and refine the use of animals in research remains low.** This has been consistent across the years, with few feeling they know either a fair amount or a great deal about the government's work to:

- a. **Replace** the use of animals with non-animal methods, such as computational models (eight per cent),
- b. **Reduce** the number of animals used in research, for example by improving the design of experiments or sharing the results (six per cent),
- c. **Refine** the use of animals in research to improve animal welfare, for example by developing non-invasive methods and improving how the animals are kept (eight per cent).

**Figure 1.3: Public knowledge of government work in the three Rs**



Awareness in this area varies by demographic characteristics including ethnic background, age and gender. People from white ethnic backgrounds are significantly more likely to say they know a little or nothing at all about the replacement (92%) and reduction (93%) of the use of animals in research compared with those from other ethnic backgrounds (86% and 87% respectively). A similar gradient can be observed by gender, with women more likely than average to say they know a little or nothing about work on the replacement (93%), reduction (94%), and refinement (92%) of the use of animals in research.

Older people are also more likely to say they know little or nothing about these areas of research: around three quarters of those aged 65 or above say they know nothing at all about replacing animals (73%) or reducing the number of animals used in research (72%). This contrasts with those in the 15-24 age group, for whom the figures are 52% and 61% respectively. This younger group are also more likely to claim to have at least some knowledge in this area: 48% say they know at least a little about work to replace the use of animals in research (compared with 33% overall), 38% say the same about work to reduce the use of animals (versus 31% overall) and 43% say they are at least a little familiar with work to refine the use of animals (compared with 36% overall).

**Awareness of the National Centre for the Three Rs (NC3Rs) also remains low.** Ninety per cent of the public had not heard of the centre prior to their interview and just five per cent said they were familiar.

**Table 1.1: Awareness of NC3Rs**

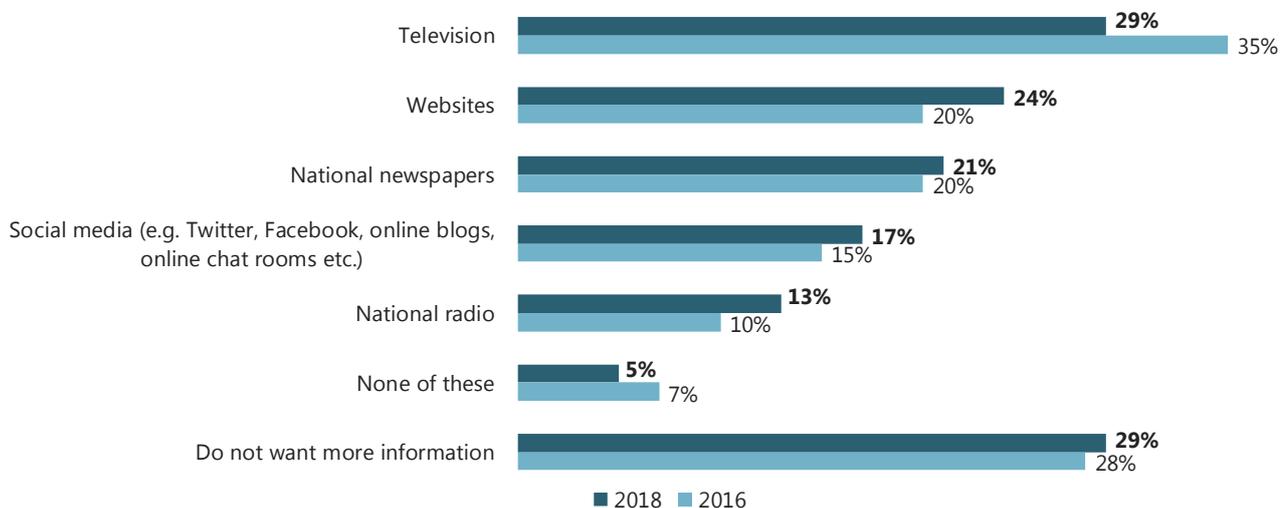
	Yes (Aware of NC3Rs)	No (not aware of NC3Rs)	Not sure
<b>2018</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>2016</b>	5%	90%	6%
<b>2014</b>	6%	85%	8%

## 1.2 Trusted and preferred sources of information on animal research

### Preferred sources of information on animal research

**Television remains the preferred source for information on animal research among the British public, although its popularity has fallen significantly since 2016.** Three in ten select this as one of the main ways they would like to get information on the topic (29%), down from over a third in 2016 (35%). It is also important to bear in mind that this is the same size as the proportion of people who say they do *not* want any information on the use of animals in scientific research. Television is closely followed by websites; a quarter prefer this source (24%), with the next-most popular being national newspapers (21%), social media (17%) and national radio (13%). The overall order of preference remains similar to previous years.

**Figure 1.4: Top five information channels for animal research, 2016-2018**



Bases:  
2018 – 1,011 British adults aged 15+ (interviewed 31 August – 11 September 2018)  
2016 – 987 British adults aged 15+ (interviewed 4 March – 4 April 2016)

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Reflecting broader changes in the use of technology, while television continues to have the broadest appeal this is diminishing. Other channels have a stronger appeal to specific subgroups. In particular:

- **Online media sources are more popular among younger populations.** Two fifths of those aged 15-24 years old prefer websites (41%) and social media (37%), followed by television (33%) and national newspapers (24%).
- **Traditional media continues to appeal to older people:** National newspapers are the most popular channel among those aged 65 and over (25%), followed by television (22%). Just twelve per cent of this age group say they would like more information through a website.
- **Those who do not want more information are predominantly older:** almost two fifths of those aged 65+ say they do not want more information (37%), compared with just 14 per cent of 15-24 year olds. Other populations who are more likely to say they do not want more information include residents of southern England, where 37% do not want more information – a figure that rises to 49% when residents of London (of whom only 20% want no more information) are excluded.

## Trusted sources of information on animal research

**The vets who look after the animals used in research continue to be the most trusted source on animal research.** Nearly half of the public say they would trust vets (45%), two fifths would trust universities (40%), and one third would trust animal protection organisations (33%) and people with a knowledge of the subject (32%).

**Figure 1.5: Sources trusted to give balanced information on the use of animals in research**

	% 2014	% 2016	% 2018
<b>Vets who look after the animals used in research</b>	-	41	<b>45</b>
<b>Universities</b>	36	36	<b>40</b>
<b>Animal protection organisations</b>	31	33	<b>33</b>
<b>People with a knowledge of the subject</b>	34	32	<b>32</b>
<b>The NHS</b>	22	26	<b>29</b>
<b>Government research institutes</b>	21	24	<b>26</b>
<b>Environmental organisations</b>	24	21	<b>25</b>
<b>Medical research charities</b>	28	22	<b>24</b>
<b>Non-Government research institutes</b>	19	19	<b>19</b>
<b>Farming organisations</b>	13	13	<b>13</b>
<b>Patient groups</b>	10	8	<b>9</b>
<b>Organisations that support the use of animals in research</b>	9	8	<b>7</b>
<b>Politicians / MPs</b>	6	6	<b>6</b>
<b>Companies and businesses which carry out research on animals</b>	6	6	<b>6</b>
<b>Companies and businesses which sell products developed from the research</b>	4	4	<b>4</b>
<b>Other</b>	1	1	<b>1</b>
<b>None of these</b>	11	11	<b>8</b>
<b>Don't know</b>	8	5	<b>7</b>

The overall order of public trust in organisations is similar to previous years of the survey. Key movements between 2014 and 2018 include a gradual rise in trust in the NHS to give balanced information: 29 per cent say they would trust it this year, a significant increase from 2014 (although not since 2016). There has also been a significant increase in the proportion who trust government research institutes since 2014 (rising from 21% then to 26% now). This suggests there may be a growing trust in government bodies in this area more generally. By way of contrast, trust in non-government research institutes has remained flat between 2014 and 2018, on 19 per cent.

Trust in medical research charities, which fell from 28 per cent to 22 per cent between 2014 and 2016, has stabilised, rising slightly but not significantly to 24 per cent this year. There has also been a significant rise in the proportion who would trust environmental organisations to provide balanced information since 2016 (from 21% to 25%).

Although the order of trust in organisations is similar across demographic groups, there are some notable variations:

- Trust in the vets who look after animals used in research is higher than average amongst those from social grades AB (56%), those resident in Midlands and Wales (53%), as well as those from white ethnic backgrounds (48%).
- People with degree-level qualifications (49%) and men aged 15-34 (53%) are more likely than average to trust universities to give balanced information.
- Women are more likely to trust animal protection organisations than men (37% compared with 29%). Those from white ethnic backgrounds also trust these organisations more than those from non-white ethnic backgrounds (36% compared to 19%).
- The NHS is trusted more by men than women in this area (33% vs. 25%) and those in social grades AB (40%) are more likely to trust it than those in social grades C2 and DE (25% and 27% respectively).

## 2 Public acceptability of animal research

### Key findings

**Headline measures of the acceptability of animal research are at similar levels to 2016.** However, public acceptability is contingent on the purpose and context of the research – less than half accept animal research for any purpose.

**Animal welfare is becoming a bigger consideration for some members of the public** and the link between animal research and human health appears weaker. Younger people in particular appear to be worried about the welfare of animals.

**The type of animal is also important for public acceptability.** Mice and rats – the most commonly-used animals in scientific research – are still seen as the most acceptable to use across different types of research.

**Despite a blanket ban since 2013, a substantial minority believe that testing cosmetics on animals is allowed in Britain,** and the proportion who believe this has risen since 2014.

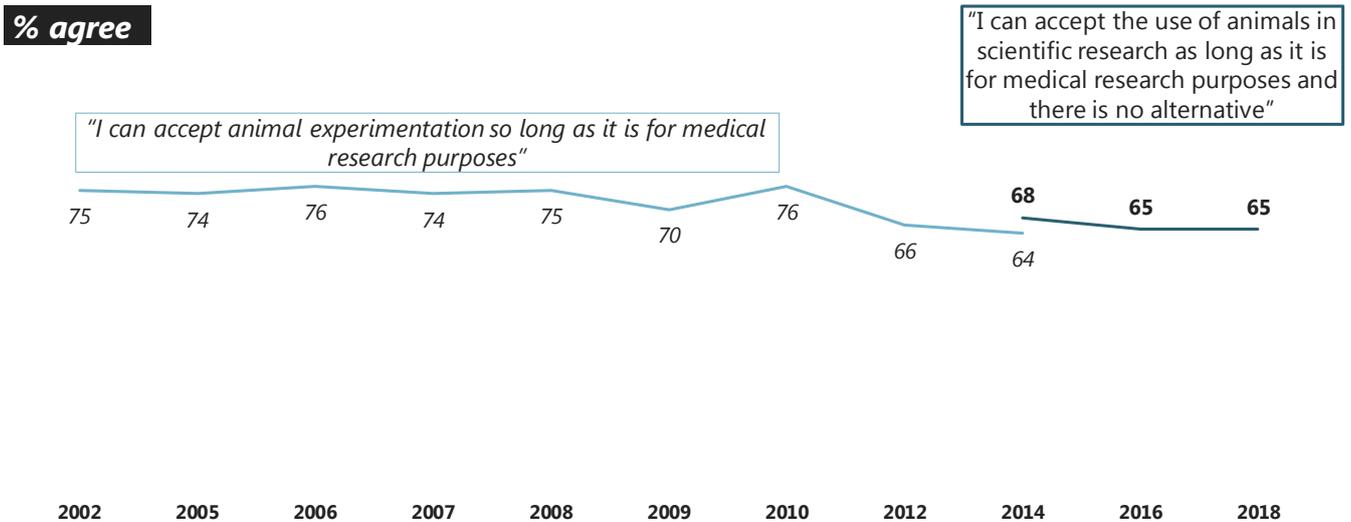
### 2.1 General attitudes towards animal research

#### Public acceptability of animal research

**Public acceptability of animal research remains at a similar level to previous years.** Two thirds can accept animal research for medical or scientific research purposes where there is no alternative, and around six in ten can accept it for research into human and animal health – all figures are unchanged since 2014. However, public acceptability is clearly conditional: four in ten find it acceptable to use animals for all types of research.

**Two thirds of the public can accept the use of animals for medical research where there is no alternative** (65%) – a figure that has changed little since the first wave of this survey in 2014. Two in ten say they cannot accept animal research for these purposes (19%), which again is the same as the past waves of this survey. Looking back to a similarly-worded question in the previous survey (which ran 1999-2014) we can see that the public acceptance has been at the same level since 2012. Prior to this point public acceptance was higher, at around three quarters.

**Figure 2.1: Public acceptance of animal research for medical purposes 2002 - 2018**



Base: British adults 2018 (1,011), 2016 (987) 2014 (1000), 2012 (1026), 2010 (997), 2009 (988), 2008 (1010), 2007 (944), 2006 (969), 2002 (1023), 1999 (1014)

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Acceptance of the use of animals in research for medical purposes varies by age and gender. Men are more likely than average to find it acceptable (69%) while women are more likely to say it is unacceptable (22%). Less than six in ten of those aged 15-24 agree they can accept animal research here (57%) while the figure among those aged 65 plus is 72 per cent. These two factors interact, meaning that just half of women aged 15-24 agree with this scenario (52%).

Those who believe that cosmetic testing on animals is permitted in the UK are just as likely to say they can accept the use of animals in medical research as the rest of the public, again highlighting the context-driven nature of support for animal research.

**Public acceptability of the use of animals in scientific research more generally also stands at two thirds**, with the proviso that there is no unnecessary suffering to the animals and there is no alternative (68%). Public agreement here has also remained steady since 2014. Attitudes by age differ here compared with the previous question – young people aged 15-24 are the most likely to find this type of research acceptable (76%). The reason for this difference may be the additional reassurance this statement provides around animal welfare (“as long as there is no unnecessary suffering”), as this age group’s responses in other questions suggest it is a larger concern for them.

**Figure 2.2: Acceptance of animal research – differences by age**

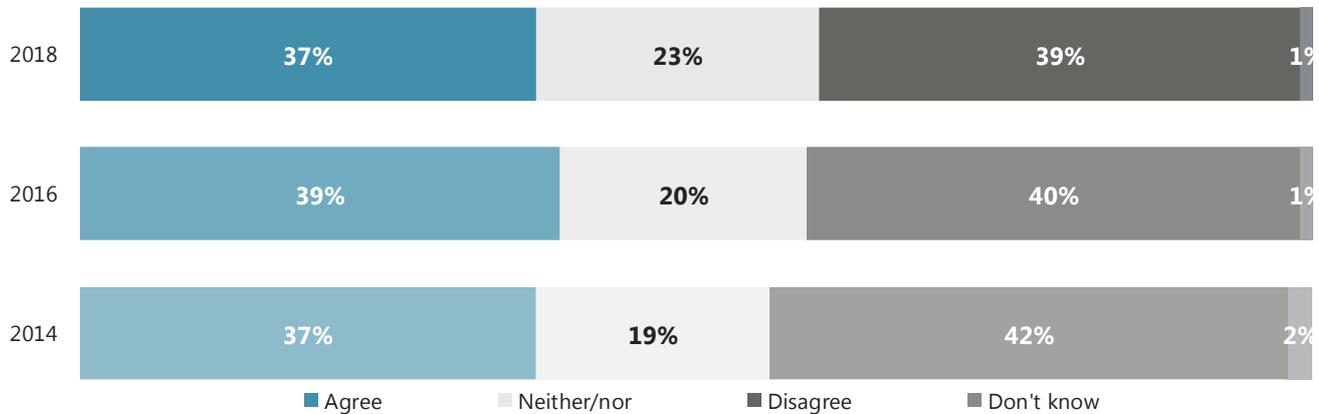
% agree	Overall	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
<b>I can accept the use of animals in scientific research as long as it is <u>for medical research purposes</u> and there is no alternative</b>	65%	57%	61%	60%	67%	68%	72%
<b>I can accept the use of animals in scientific research as long as there is <u>no unnecessary suffering to the animals</u> and there is no alternative</b>	68%	76%	59%	62%	68%	73%	70%

**The public remain slightly less likely to accept the use of animals in research to understand animal health or the human body.** Just over six in ten find the former use acceptable (62%) and acceptability of the latter stands at 56 per cent. Acceptance of the use of animals for both of these of research types rises and falls similarly across a range of demographic groups – with the exception of age:

- **Gender:** Men are more likely than women to accept the use of animals in research to help the understanding of animal health (69% to 55%) and the human body (63% to 48%)
- **Social grade:** Those in social grades AB are significantly more likely than those in any other social grades to say they can accept the use of animals in both types of research. For research to help the understanding of animal health, almost three quarters of ABs can accept the use of animals (72%), compared with 62 per cent in grade C1, 57 per cent in C2 and 53 per cent in DE. When it comes to human health the figures look similar: 70 per cent AB, 54 per cent C1, 46 per cent C2 and 49 per cent DE.
- **Education:** Degree-holders are the most accepting of the use of animals in both types of research. For research to understand animal health, acceptance among those with at least a degree-level qualification stands at seven in ten (69%), compared with two thirds with A-Levels or equivalents (66%), 55 per cent of GCSE holders and half of those with no qualifications (50%). When it comes to research to help understanding of the human body the pattern is similar – 63 per cent at degree-level, 55 per cent A-Level, 53 per cent GCSE and 44 per cent for those with no formal qualifications.
- **Age:** Acceptance of the use of animals in research to help understanding of animal health is even across age groups; it stands at 63% for both 15-24 year olds and those over 65. However, there is a steep age gradient to acceptability of the use of animals to help understanding of the human body – half of those ages 15-24 find this acceptable (47%), and this rises to 65 per cent among the over 65s.

**The public are evenly divided on whether they can accept the use of animals in all types of research,** even where there is no alternative. Just under four in ten of the public say they can accept this (37%), and the same proportion say they cannot accept this (39%). This close balance of opinion has existed in every wave of the survey since 2014.

Figure 2.3: Acceptability of the use of animals in all types of research

**It is acceptable to use animals for all types of research where there is no alternative**

Bases:  
 2018 – 1,011 British adults aged 15+ (interviewed 31 August – 11 September 2018)  
 2016 – 987 British adults aged 15+ (interviewed 4 March – 4 April 2016)  
 2014 – 969 British adults aged 15+ (interviewed 7 – 13 March 2014)

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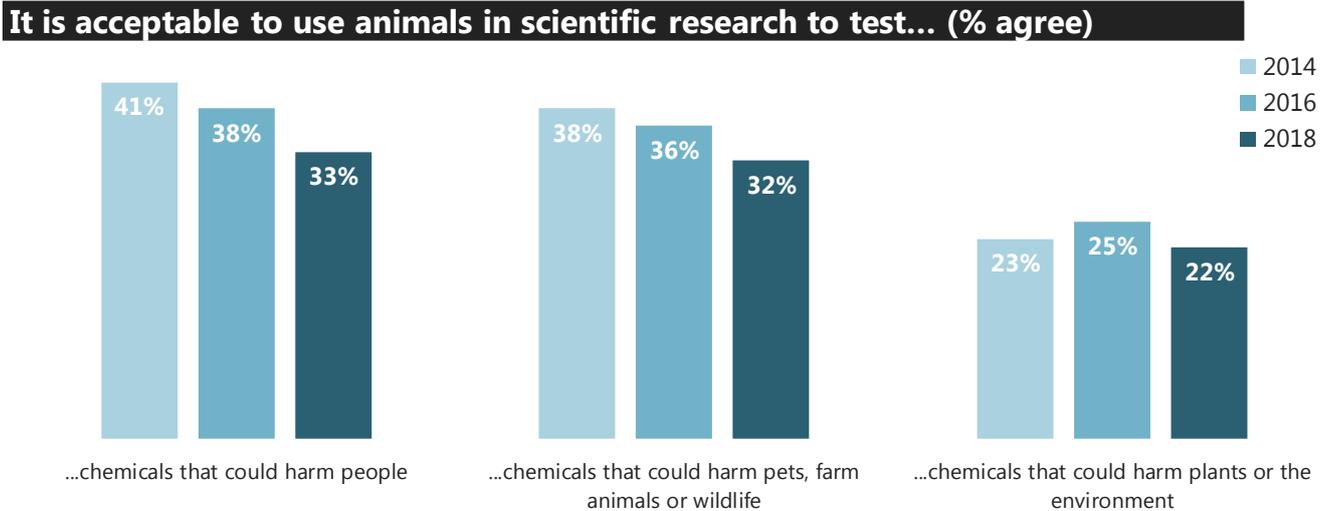
Net acceptance for the general public – the proportion who say they can accept animal research for this purpose, subtracted from the proportion who say they cannot accept it – is minus one, meaning that public opinion is very close to being evenly balanced on this topic. However, the balance of acceptance varies across different demographic groups. For instance, while those in social grades AB are positive overall (+8), the balance of opinion is slightly negative for grades C1 (-8), C2 (-3) and DE (-4).

## Public acceptability of animal research for chemical testing

**Public willingness to accept the use of animals in scientific research to test chemicals has fallen since 2016,** although the extent of the fall depends slightly on the purpose of the test:

- The proportion of the public willing to accept the use of animals in research to test chemicals that could harm people has fallen significantly since 2016, from 38 to 33 per cent, although the proportion who cannot accept this has not increased significantly (43% in 2018 and 40% in 2016).
- While there has not been a statistically significant fall between 2016 and 2018 in the proportion who can accept the use of animals in research to test chemicals that could harm pets, farm animals or wildlife, acceptance has fallen since 2014 – at that point 38 per cent could accept the use of animals, and this figure has now fallen to 32 per cent. Over this period non-acceptance has risen too, from 37 to 43 per cent.
- The proportion willing to accept the use of animals in research to test chemicals that could harm plants or the environment has not fallen, although this has long been considered the least acceptable of the three options. This year, 22 per cent consider this an acceptable proposition, close to the level recorded in 2016 (25%) and 2014 (23%).

Figure 2.4: Public acceptance of the use of animals in research to test chemicals



Bases:  
 2018 – 1,011 British adults aged 15+ (interviewed 31 August – 11 September 2018)  
 2016 – 987 British adults aged 15+ (interviewed 4 March – 4 April 2016)  
 2014 – 969 British adults aged 15+ (interviewed 7 – 13 March 2014)

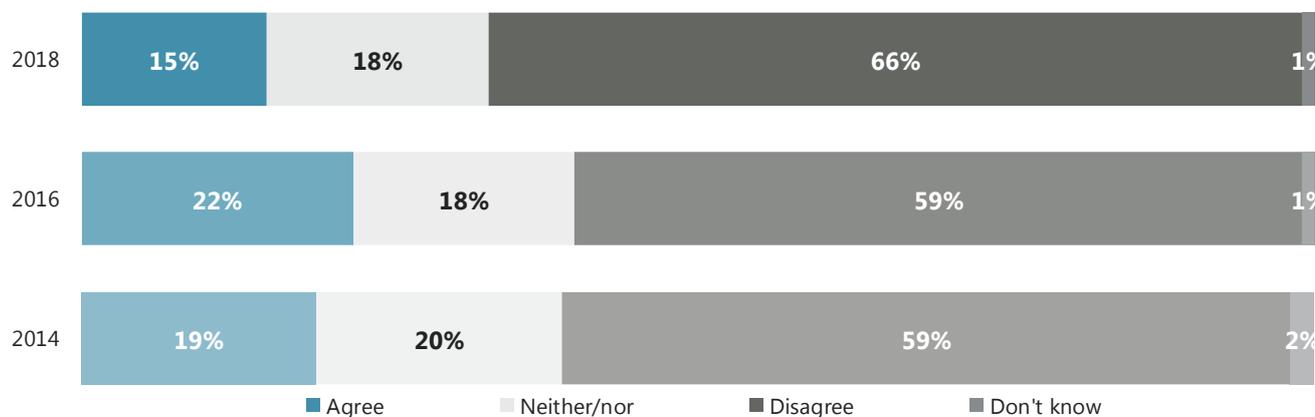
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### Broader public attitudes

Broader public attitudes to animal research show some movement, with the data suggesting a greater level of concern about animal welfare than in previous years. As explored below, this is evidenced in a drop in the proportion who are not concerned at all about the use of animals in research, and a small increase in support for a ban on all kinds of animal research. This support increases further when animal welfare is used as a rationale.

**As in previous years, the public are agreed that more work needs to be done into alternatives to using animals in research.** Three quarters (75%) agree this is the case and just six per cent disagree. Agreement with this question has been similarly high in the previous years of the survey, and there are no groups with notably different views on this.

**The proportion who agree they are *not* bothered about the use of animals in research has fallen from 22 per cent in 2016 to 15 per cent this year.** The proportion who say they are bothered has risen correspondingly, from 59 per cent in 2016 to two thirds. Looking at the longer-term trend back to 2002, this is the lowest level of agreement recorded so far – the previous lowest score (with the previous question: “*It does not bother me if animals are used in experimentation*”) was 17 per cent in 2002.

**Figure 2.5: Public concern about the use of animals in research****It does not bother me if animals are used in scientific research**

Bases:  
 2018 – 1,011 British adults aged 15+ (interviewed 31 August – 11 September 2018)  
 2016 – 987 British adults aged 15+ (interviewed 4 March – 4 April 2016)  
 2014 – 969 British adults aged 15+ (interviewed 7 – 13 March 2014)

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Groups more likely than average to agree they are not bothered include men (19% agree), adults aged 65 and over (19%), those from social grades AB (22%) and people with degree-level qualifications (20%). Women are significantly more likely than average to disagree (72%), as are those in social grades DE (74%) and those with A-Levels as their highest level of qualification (73%).

**Support for an outright ban of all forms of animal research in the UK remains low but has grown.** Just over a quarter (27%) of the public agree that all forms of animal research should be banned by the government – this is a similar level to that recorded in 2016 (26%), but a significant increase since 2014, when 23 per cent agreed with this statement. The proportion who are opposed to a blanket ban has remained the same, at half of the public (49% in 2018 and 53% in 2014/16).

Support for a ban ranges widely – for instance, a third of women and 15-24 year olds agree (33% and 34%), compared with one in five men (21%) and a quarter of over 65s (24%). Taking all of these factors together, 41 per cent of women aged 15-34 agree that all forms of animal research should be banned by the government. Support is lower still among those from social grades AB, where just 16 per cent are in favour of a ban of all types of research – less than half the level of support among those from social grades DE (38%).

Those with degree-level qualifications also stand out as being particularly opposed to a ban – 16 per cent of this group agree that all research should be banned, half the level observed among all other educational groups: those with A-Level qualifications (31%), GCSEs (32%) or no formal qualifications (35%).

**References to animal welfare and the removal of the word “ban” increase the appeal of a ban on animal research.** Four in ten of the public (38%) agree with the statement “*I think that animals should not be used in any scientific research because of the importance I place on animal welfare*”, and a similar proportion disagree (36%). The proportion who agree with this statement has risen significantly since 2014, when 31 per cent agreed and four in ten (40%) disagreed.

**Table 2.1: “I think that animals should not be used in any scientific research because of the importance I place on animal welfare”**

	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Don't know
<b>2018</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>2016</b>	35%	26%	38%	1%
<b>2014</b>	31%	27%	40%	2%

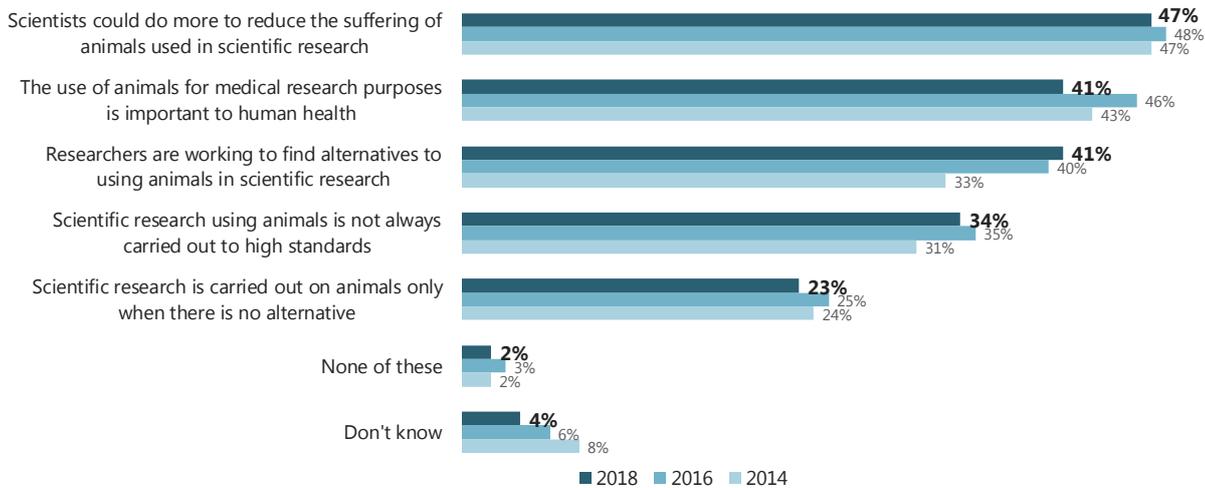
As seen in other questions women, younger people and those in social grades DE stand out as being more likely to prioritise animal welfare. Close to half of those aged 15-24 (44%) and 25-34 (48%), along with four in ten women (42%) and half of those in social grades DE (48%) agree here. The groups most likely to disagree include social grades AB (49% disagree), the over 65s and those with a degree-level qualification (48%).

**Support for strong restrictions on animal research are even more popular** – half of the public agree that *“the use of animals for medical research purposes should only be conducted for life-threatening or debilitating diseases”* (50%) while a quarter disagree (26%). Agreement here has been the same over the three waves of this survey (2016: 53%, 2014: 51%). Unlike many other questions, agreement with this statement is broadly similar across ages and social grades, although those educated to degree-level or above do stand out. This group are more likely to disagree than average (31% disagree), however they are no less likely to agree (47%).

#### Public attitudes towards the sector

**The proportion of the public who agree that the use of animals is important for medical research into human health has declined since 2016.** Forty-one per cent believe this is true, compared with 46 per cent in 2016 – however this is closer to public opinion in 2014, when 43 per cent agreed. The proportion who say that researchers are working to find alternatives to the use of animals is also 41 per cent, the same score as in 2016 (40%) and higher than the proportion who said the same in 2014 (33%).

Other public attitudes have shifted less: it remains the case that half of the public feel that scientists could do more to reduce the suffering of animals used in research (47%); a third agree that research using animals is not always carried out to high standards and a quarter say that research only occurs when there is no alternative (23%).

**Figure 2.6: And which, if any, of these do you think is true?**

Bases:  
 2018 – 1,011 British adults aged 15+ (interviewed 31 August – 11 September 2018)  
 2016 – 987 British adults aged 15+ (interviewed 4 March – 4 April 2016)  
 2014 – 969 British adults aged 15+ (interviewed 7 – 13 March 2014)

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Awareness that the use of animals in medical research is important for human health is higher among some groups – for instance over half of those in social grades AB (55%) and half of broadsheet readers (49%) and those with degree-level qualifications (51%) agree. Those who believe that cosmetic testing on animals is currently permitted in the UK are also more likely than average to agree that this is the case (45%). This awareness is lower, however, among women and those aged 15-24 (both 37%) – and among women aged 15-34 it falls to just 27 per cent.

## 2.2 Support for animal research using different species

**Public support for the use of different types of animals in research is affected by multiple factors, including familiarity with the research type and attitudes towards the animal under consideration.** For instance, the public are more in favour of using animals in research into human health and animal health than in environmental research, which may be due to the clearer benefits of research into human health compared with the environment. Rats and mice – often considered less popular or desirable animals – are the top two most acceptable types of animal for research regardless of the context, while dogs and cats (typically seen as household pets) are among the least acceptable, although acceptability of the use of these animals is higher for research into animal health.

The order of acceptability has shifted little over the period 2014-2018, although the proportion who select “none of these” for research into human health has risen significantly since 2014 (from 23% to 27%).

**Table 2.2: Public acceptability of using different animals in different types of research**

	Medical research to benefit people	Research into animal health	Environmental research (e.g. to look at the effect of chemicals on the food chain or the effect of air pollution on health)
<b>Rats</b>	47	48	41
<b>Mice</b>	44	43	37
<b>Pigs</b>	21	24	16
<b>Fish</b>	21	25	22
<b>Amphibians</b> e.g. frogs, toads, newts	19	24	19
<b>Small mammals</b> e.g. rabbits, ferrets	18	23	16
<b>Small monkeys such as marmosets</b>	16	20	11
<b>Birds</b>	16	22	17
<b>Larger mammals</b> e.g. sheep, cows	16	23	14
<b>Large monkeys such as macaques</b>	14	18	10
<b>Cats</b>	14	21	13
<b>Great apes</b> e.g. chimpanzees and gorillas	12	17	9
<b>Dogs</b>	14	21	13
<b>Others</b>	1	1	1
<b>None of these</b>	27	26	32
<b>Don't know</b>	10	11	11

As in previous years, the public view that mice and rats are the most acceptable animals for research is aligned with the government statistics on procedures involving animals. In 2017, 70 per cent of all procedures involving animals were carried out using either mice or rats, with a further 16 per cent using fish, which are the joint-third most acceptable animal for use in research.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, less than one per cent of procedures used primates, cats or dogs, which are specially protected species and also the animals the public are least supportive of using in research.

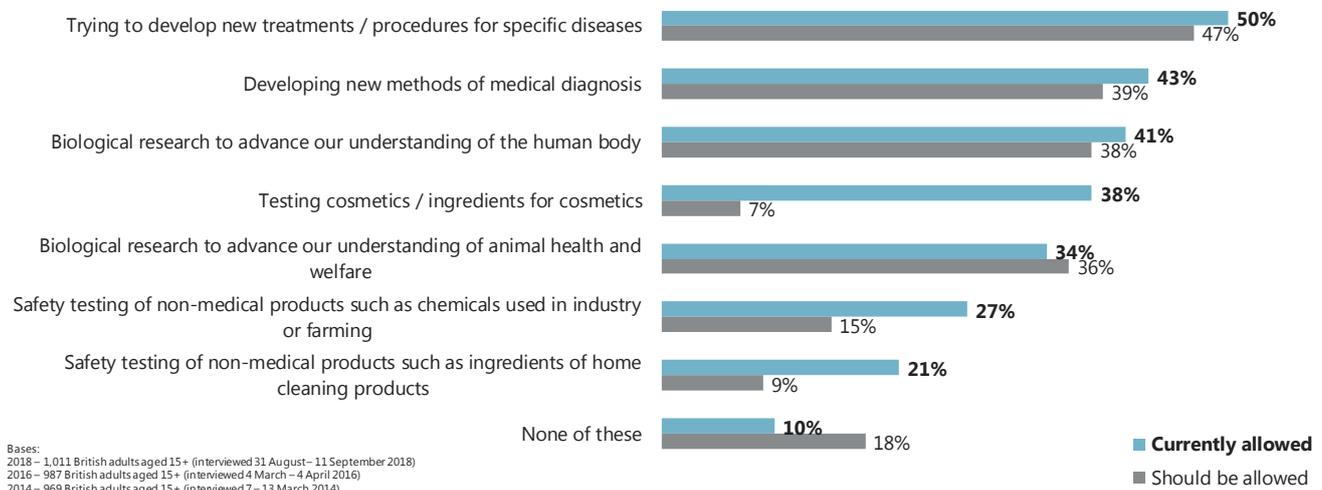
### 2.3 Perceptions of what is permitted in animal research

**A significant minority of the public continue to believe that testing cosmetics is permitted on animals.** Close to four in ten say this is currently allowed (38%), a similar level to 2016 (when it was 35%) but significantly higher

<sup>2</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/724611/annual-statistics-scientific-procedures-living-animals-2017.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/724611/annual-statistics-scientific-procedures-living-animals-2017.pdf)

than in 2014 (31%). Just seven per cent believe that this should be permitted, which marks this out as the factor where public perception and reality are furthest apart.<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 2.7: Public perceptions: what is (and what should be) allowed in animal research<sup>4</sup>**



Bases:  
 2018 – 1,011 British adults aged 15+ (interviewed 31 August – 11 September 2018)  
 2016 – 987 British adults aged 15+ (interviewed 4 March – 4 April 2016)  
 2014 – 969 British adults aged 15+ (interviewed 7 – 13 March 2014)

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Aside from cosmetic testing, public perceptions have remained at similar levels since 2014: those purposes that more of the public think are currently allowed are also more likely to be seen as something researchers should be permitted to do. For instance, half of the public think researchers are currently allowed to conduct research into developing new treatments or procedures for specific diseases (50%) and a similar proportion are agreed that researchers should be allowed to do so (47%) while two in ten believe safety testing of non-medical products is allowed (21%), with one in ten believing that this should be allowed (9%).

Opposition to animal research here – measured as the proportions saying that researchers should be allowed to use animal in research for none of the purposes listed – stands at 18 per cent overall. This rises among some groups, for instance, over a quarter of those with no qualifications (27%), two in ten women (21%) and those from white ethnic backgrounds (19%) express opposition this way.

<sup>3</sup> Testing cosmetics and ingredients for cosmetics on animals has been banned since 2009 across the European Union, and the sale of cosmetics that have been tested on animals elsewhere in the world has been banned since 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Note that all activities in the chart – aside from the testing of cosmetics on animals – is permitted under UK law with the applicable licence

## 3 Public attitudes towards regulation and behaviour

### Key findings

**Public trust in the regulation of animal research in the UK remains at levels recorded in previous years.** There has been a slight decline in the proportion who are worried that unnecessary duplication or unlicensed animal research occurs since 2016, although both figures are still high.

**The rules governing animal research are still considered to be strict and the public broadly have faith in the regulators.** However, trust that rules are well-enforced has declined slightly.

**Views on the acceptability of protest and demonstration formats are unchanged.** Writing letters, organising petitions and demonstrating outside research facilities remain the most acceptable methods, while more extreme actions attract only a few percentage points of support.

**The primary characteristic the public attribute to animal research organisations remains “secrecy”.** This and other attributes (including carrying out work essential to human health and being well-regulated) have stayed in line with previous year’s data – although there has been a small increase in the proportion who think these organisations have poor animal welfare records, driven by greater agreement among younger people.

### 3.1 Views on the regulation of animal research

#### General views on regulation

**The broad picture of public attitudes towards the regulation of animal research remains similar to previous years.** Public trust in scientists and the regulatory system remain at levels recorded in 2016 and the trend since 2014 suggests the start of a decline in the proportion who believe that unnecessary duplication or unlicensed research with animals goes on.

**Trust in scientists involved in animal research is higher than trust in “the system” more broadly.** Around a third of the public either distrust or trust the system that regulates animal research in the UK but the largest proportion do not have a view. Thirty-two per cent say they do not trust it, closely in line with findings from 2016 and 2014 (both 34%) and a similar proportion (29%) say that they do trust the system. As in previous waves of the survey, the largest single group are those who neither trust nor distrust the system (37%), suggesting a lack of familiarity with the regulatory system around animal research.

Distrust in the system is higher among women and opponents of animal research. More than one third of women distrust the regulatory system (35%), which is significantly higher than the proportion of the overall population (32%) and men (28%) who agree. Close to four in ten of those who believe that cosmetic testing on animals is permitted in the UK express distrust (37%), as do over half of those who find animal research for medical purposes unacceptable (56%).

**Table 3.1: “I do not trust the regulatory system around the use of animals in scientific research”**

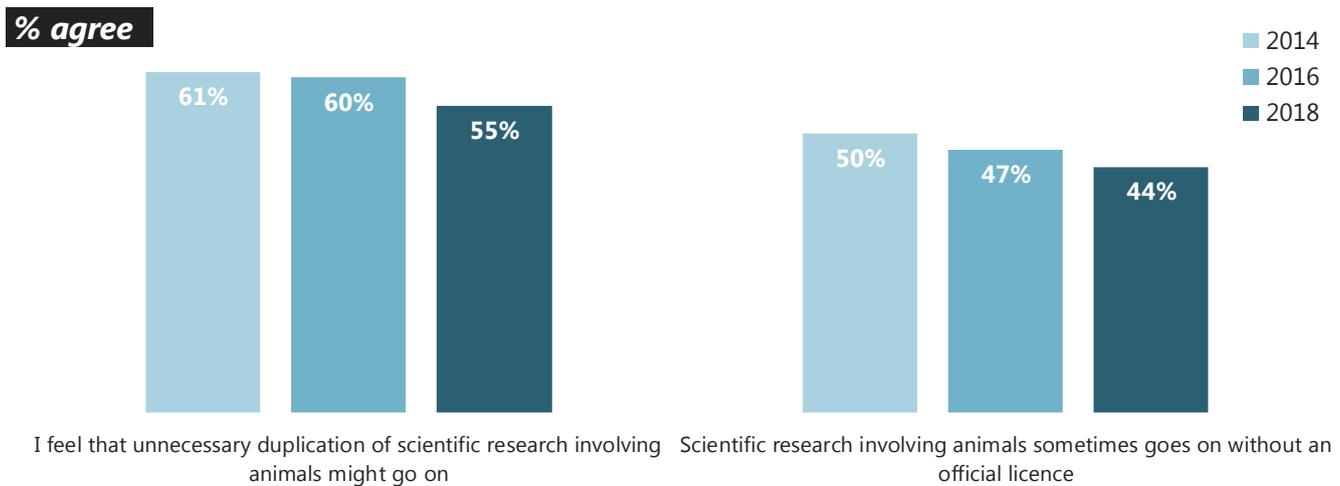
	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Don't know
<b>2018</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>2016</b>	34%	34%	27%	4%
<b>2014</b>	34%	35%	26%	5%

Public trust in scientists not to cause unnecessary suffering to animals is higher than trust in the system. Four in ten agree that they trust scientists on this, while a third disagree – both findings are very similar to previous years.

Men and older people are both more likely than average to say they trust scientists not to cause unnecessary harm. In both cases the differences are large; half of men put their trust in scientists (47%), compared with a third of women (35%) and agreement by age ranges from 49 per cent among those aged 65 and over, down to four in ten of those aged 15-25 (39%).

Personalising trust – moving from talking about “the system” to individual scientists – has a positive impact on public views. This is best measured when we look at trust in the system and individuals among those who believe that cosmetic testing on animals is permitted. While this subgroup is much more likely to express distrust in the system than average (37%, compared with 32% overall), they are just as likely as the wider population to say they trust scientists not to cause unnecessary harm (42% versus 40%).

**Public concern about unnecessary duplication and unlicensed animal research remains high but has declined over the life of the survey.** Since 2014 the proportion who feel unnecessary duplication occurs has fallen from six in ten to 55 per cent while those who feel that unlicensed research goes on has decreased from half to just over four in ten (44%).

**Figure 3.1: How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**

Bases:  
 2018 – 1,011 British adults aged 15+ (interviewed 31 August – 11 September 2018)  
 2016 – 987 British adults aged 15+ (interviewed 4 March – 4 April 2016)  
 2014 – 969 British adults aged 15+ (interviewed 7 – 13 March 2014)

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Public views on both unnecessary duplication and unlicensed research are broadly similar across different subgroups. One point of difference is that those who are more opposed to animal research generally are more likely to think both occur:

- The belief that unlicensed research sometimes goes on is significantly higher among those who believe that testing of cosmetics on animals is permitted in the UK (55%, compared with 44% overall) as well as those who cannot accept animal research for medical purposes (57%)
- Both groups are also significantly more likely to agree that there is unnecessary duplication of animal research – 67 per cent of those who think that cosmetic testing is permitted and 68 per cent of animal research opponents agree, compared with 55 per cent of the overall population.

### Views on the quality of the regulation of animal research

**While public faith in the quality of animal research rules are unchanged, trust in enforcement of the rules has declined somewhat.** As in previous years, a majority agree that the rules governing animal research are strict (51%) and trust in regulators to uncover misconduct is unchanged at four in ten (43%). However, public confidence that the rules are well-enforced (always the lowest indicator) has declined six percentage points since 2014, from 35 per cent to 29 per cent.

**Trust in the strictness of the rules on animal research and in regulators has been maintained at reasonably high levels.** Half of the public agree that the UK has strict rules on the use of animals in scientific research, and just twelve per cent disagree – both findings are close to the results recorded in 2016 and 2014. Three in ten (31%) neither agree nor disagree, suggesting that they do not feel they know enough to give an opinion either way. Agreement is higher among those in social grades AB (67%) and those with a degree-level qualification (63%), while those who are opposed to the use of animals in medical research are significantly more likely to disagree (28%). This suggests that their opposition may in part be related to their views on the strictness of the rules governing animal research.

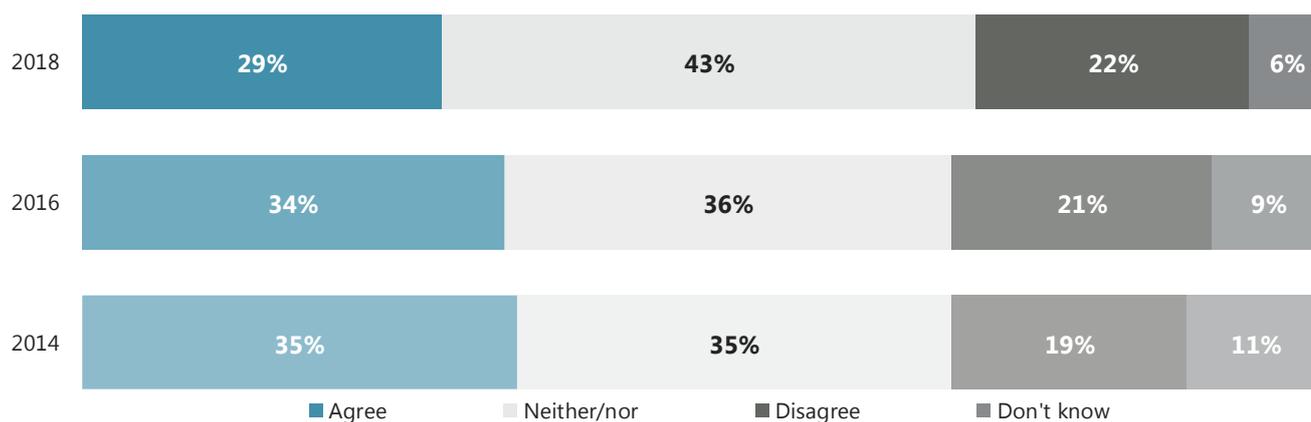
Trust in the regulators to uncover misconduct at animal research facilities has been unchanged since 2014, with a little over four in ten agreeing that they think the regulators are effective (43%). This level of trust is similar across different groups including age and social grade, although women are slightly more likely to disagree (31%, versus 28% overall). Again, those who oppose the use of animals in medical research stand out, with half of this group expressing doubt about the ability of regulators to uncover misconduct (52%).

**Table 3.2: How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**

	The UK has strict rules on the use of animals in scientific research			I trust the regulators to uncover any misconduct at animal research facilities		
	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
<b>2018</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>2016</b>	52%	28%	13%	41%	25%	30%
<b>2014</b>	51%	28%	12%	42%	24%	29%

**There has been a drop however in the proportion who agree the rules governing animal research are well-enforced.** Three in ten agree that the rules governing animal research are well-enforced (29%), a significant drop from the result in 2016 (34%). The proportion who disagree however has not shifted and stands at two in ten (22%) – there has instead been an increase in the proportion who neither agree nor disagree (43%, up from 36% in 2016).

**Figure 3.2: “The rules in the UK on scientific research involving animals are well-enforced”**



Bases:  
 2018 – 1,011 British adults aged 15+ (interviewed 31 August – 11 September 2018)  
 2016 – 987 British adults aged 15+ (interviewed 4 March – 4 April 2016)  
 2014 – 969 British adults aged 15+ (interviewed 7 – 13 March 2014)

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Groups more likely than average to believe that the rules are well-enforced include those from social grades AB (35%) and readers of broadsheet and mid-market papers (38% each).

### 3.2 Views on the acceptability of protest

**Handing out leaflets remains seen as the most acceptable activity for animal protection organisations.** Eight in ten of the public think this is acceptable, with the same proportion recorded in 2016 and 2014. Asking people to put stickers or posters in windows is also seen as acceptable by a majority, with two thirds in support (67%). Less than one in ten can accept illegal activities such as occupying research facilities, releasing animals, or damaging property.

**Table 3.3: Acceptability of protest actions**

	2014	2016	2018
<b>Hand out leaflets</b>	80%	78%	<b>81%</b>
<b>Ask people to put a sticker/poster in their window</b>	65%	70%	<b>67%</b>
<b>Occupy research facilities illegally</b>	8%	8%	<b>9%</b>
<b>Release animals illegally</b>	7%	9%	<b>7%</b>
<b>Destroy or damage property</b>	2%	4%	<b>2%</b>
<b>None of these</b>	4%	5%	<b>5%</b>
<b>Don't know</b>	4%	3%	<b>2%</b>

Handing out leaflets and putting up posters and stickers are both seen as more acceptable by those from social grades AB (89% and 73% versus 81% and 67%). Notably, those who believe the testing of cosmetics on animals is permitted in the UK are also more likely to view all the protest actions as acceptable – including occupying research facilities (14%), releasing animals (10%) and damaging property (4%).

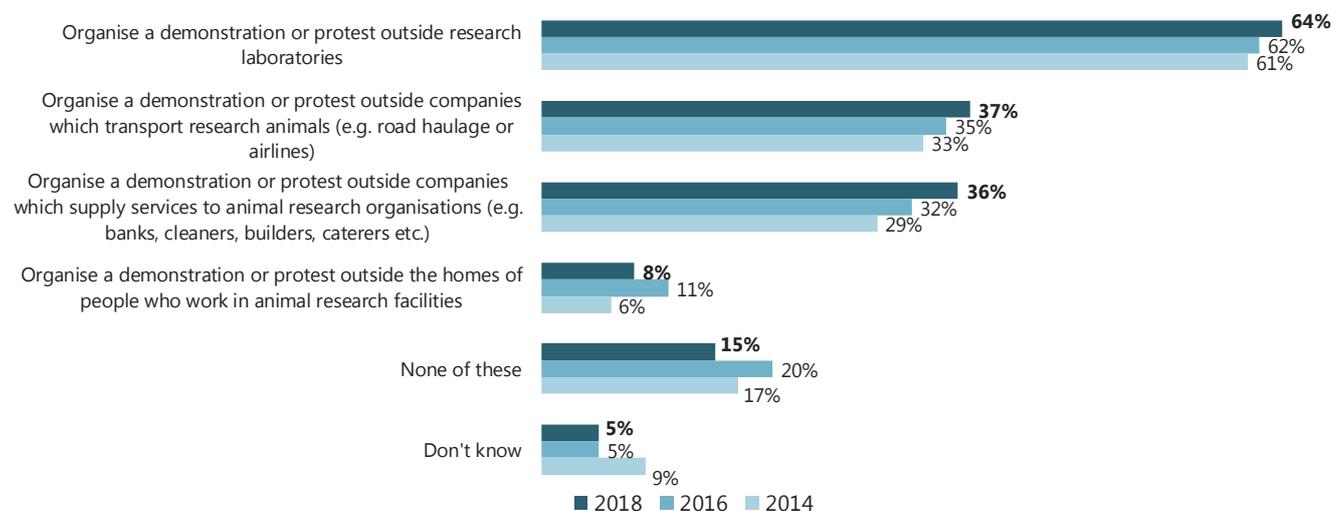
Looking to a wider range of potential activities animal protection organisations might undertake, three quarters of the public consider organising petitions and writing letters to newspapers and MPs to be acceptable. Organising online campaigns against people involved in animal research and secretly filming activities in animal research facilities are seen as acceptable by four in ten (42%) and a third (34%) of the public respectively. These figures are close to those recorded in previous years of the survey. Similarly, support for more aggressive and illegal measures – including verbal or physical harassment of researchers, sending hate mail and arson – remains very low.

**Table 3.4: Public acceptability of different types of protest action**

	2014	2016	2018
<b>Organise petitions</b>	72	74	<b>75</b>
<b>Write letters to newspapers, MPs etc</b>	72	69	<b>70</b>
<b>Organise an online campaign against people involved in animal research</b>	41	44	<b>42</b>
<b>Secretly film the activities in animal research facilities</b>	33	31	<b>34</b>
<b>Publicise without their permission the identity of people carrying out research involving animals</b>	5	9	<b>6</b>
<b>Set up road blocks illegally</b>	4	4	<b>5</b>
<b>Misrepresent or 'spin' the information about the use of animals to support their cause</b>	2	3	<b>3</b>
<b>Verbally harass people who carry out research on animals</b>	3	3	<b>2</b>
<b>Send 'hate mail' or abusive messages to those involved in animal research (either in the post or online)</b>	1	2	<b>1</b>
<b>Use physical violence against those who carry out scientific research on animals</b>	1	2	<b>1</b>
<b>Carry out serious crime (e.g. arson, car bombs, mail bombs)</b>	1	2	<b>1</b>
<b>None of these</b>	5	6	<b>5</b>
<b>Don't know</b>	6	4	<b>3</b>

Support for these actions within subgroups is generally similar to support among the wider population. Younger people are more likely than average to support online campaigns (63% acceptability, likely reflecting their greater use and familiarity with online platforms) while those aged 65 and over are less likely to find it acceptable (29%). This older group are also less accepting of most protest actions including organising petitions (68%), writing letters (65%) and secretly filming activities (26%).

**As in previous years, demonstrating outside research laboratories remains the most acceptable form of protest**, seen as an acceptable protest type by two thirds of the public (64%). The acceptability of demonstrating outside companies that supply services to animal research organisations has risen significantly from 29 per cent in 2014 to 36 per cent this year – this is now considered as acceptable as protesting outside transport firms that work in animal research (37%). Demonstrating outside the homes of those who work in animal research facilities remains acceptable to only a small minority (8%).

**Figure 3.3: Public acceptability of different types of demonstrations**

Bases:  
 2018 – 1,011 British adults aged 15+ (interviewed 31 August – 11 September 2018)  
 2016 – 987 British adults aged 15+ (interviewed 4 March – 4 April 2016)  
 2014 – 969 British adults aged 15+ (interviewed 7 – 13 March 2014)

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Again, those with a degree-level education stand out as more accepting of most types of demonstration, including protesting outside research labs (69%), transport companies (43%) and firms that provide services to animal research organisations (44%). Broadsheet newspaper readers are particularly likely to support protesting outside research labs (77%), although they are no more likely than average to support any of the other types of protest.

Looking to a wider range of potential activities animal protection organisations might undertake, three quarters of the public consider organising petitions and writing letters to newspapers and MPs to be acceptable. Organising online campaigns against people involved in animal research and secretly filming activities in animal research facilities are seen as acceptable by four in ten (42%) and a third (34%) of the public respectively. These figures are close to those recorded in previous years of the survey. Similarly, support for more aggressive and illegal measures – including verbal or physical harassment of researchers, sending hate mail and arson – remains very low.

**Table 3.5: Public acceptability of different types of protest action**

	2014	2016	2018
<b>Organise petitions</b>	72	74	<b>75</b>
<b>Write letters to newspapers, MPs etc</b>	72	69	<b>70</b>
<b>Organise an online campaign against people involved in animal research</b>	41	44	<b>42</b>
<b>Secretly film the activities in animal research facilities</b>	33	31	<b>34</b>
<b>Publicise without their permission the identity of people carrying out research involving animals</b>	5	9	<b>6</b>
<b>Set up road blocks illegally</b>	4	4	<b>5</b>
<b>Misrepresent or 'spin' the information about the use of animals to support their cause</b>	2	3	<b>3</b>
<b>Verbally harass people who carry out research on animals</b>	3	3	<b>2</b>
<b>Send 'hate mail' or abusive messages to those involved in animal research (either in the post or online)</b>	1	2	<b>1</b>
<b>Use physical violence against those who carry out scientific research on animals</b>	1	2	<b>1</b>
<b>Carry out serious crime (e.g. arson, car bombs, mail bombs)</b>	1	2	<b>1</b>
<b>None of these</b>	5	6	<b>5</b>
<b>Don't know</b>	6	4	<b>3</b>

Support for these actions within subgroups is generally similar to support among the wider population. Younger people are more likely than average to support online campaigns (63% acceptability, likely reflecting their greater use and familiarity with online platforms) while those aged 65 and over are less likely to find it acceptable (29%). This older group are also less accepting of most protest actions including organising petitions (68%), writing letters (65%) and secretly filming activities (26%).

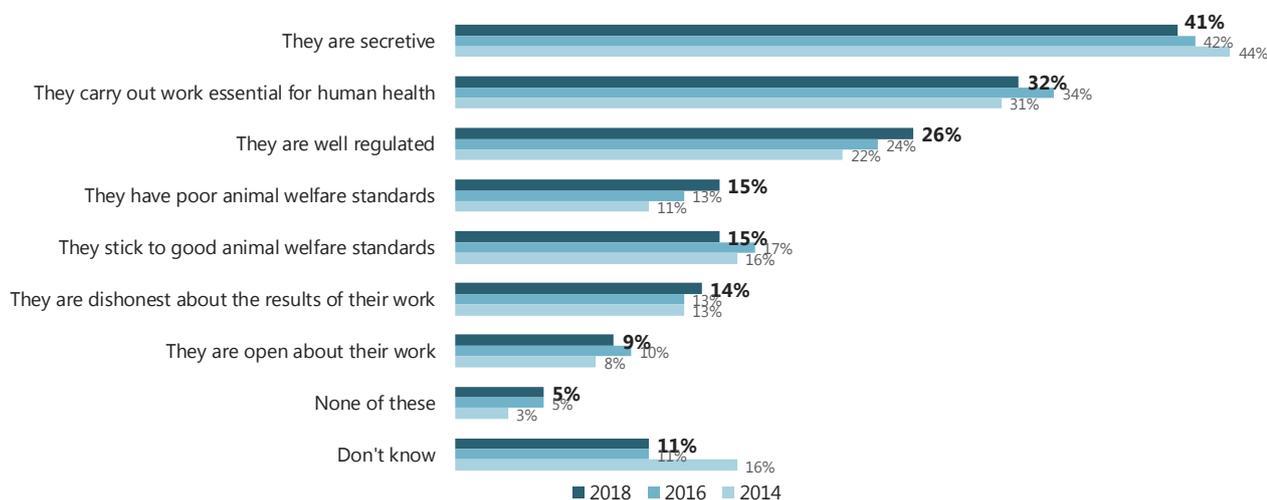
### 3.3 Views of individuals and organisations involved in animal research

**The primary characteristic the public associate with animal research organisations is secrecy.** Forty-one per cent say that these organisations are secretive, a figure in line with previous years of the survey. The next most-common characteristics – that they carry out work essential for human health (32%) and they are well-regulated (26%) show a more positive view of organisations involved in animal research. The proportion who say that animal research organisations are well-regulated has risen significantly since 2014 (21%).

Equal proportions say that animal research organisations have good or poor animal welfare standards (15%). However, while the number of those who say these organisations have good animal welfare standards has remained steady over the past waves of the survey, there has been a significant rise in those who feel they have poor standards, from 11 per cent in 2014 to 15 per cent now.

When the characteristics available to participants are grouped into positive and negative traits, the public are revealed as having very evenly balanced perceptions of animal research organisations. A third select only positive or negative attributes (both 34%), while half select a mixture of positive and negative statements (50%).

**Figure 3.4: Public perceptions of animal research organisations**



Bases:  
 2018 – 1,011 British adults aged 15+ (interviewed 31 August – 11 September 2018)  
 2016 – 987 British adults aged 15+ (interviewed 4 March – 4 April 2016)  
 2014 – 969 British adults aged 15+ (interviewed 7 – 13 March 2014)

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Younger people are notably more negative about animal research organisations – almost six in ten 15-24 year olds selected at least one negative trait (57% compared with 50% overall), and almost half selected only negative traits (45% compared with 34%). This seems to be linked to young people being more concerned about animal welfare: they are twice as likely to say that these organisations have poor animal welfare standards (27% compared with 15%). In contrast, those from social grades AB are more positive. Sixty-two per cent of this group mention at least one positive trait and four in ten mention only positive traits (39%).

Educational level has only a limited impact on perceptions of animal research organisations. While those educated to degree level are more likely to say that animal research organisations carry out work essential for human health (38% vs 33% overall), are well-regulated (33% against 26%) and stick to good animal welfare standards (23% compared with 15%), this group are no more likely to have a solely positive view of than any other educational group. Those with GCSEs or equivalents as their highest educational qualification are slightly more negative – 46% see these organisations as secretive and 56% mention at least one negative trait – but again they are no more likely than average to hold a solely negative view.

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