

USC Dornsife Center for Economic and Social Research Understanding America Study

University Research Survey UAS 172– Field dates 2/19-3/15, 2019

Data in this report from final analytic data set of respondents to this survey and UAS 147 (N = 4,362)

These questions focus on attitudes toward scientific research and technological development, and how these activities interact with society and the U.S. economy.

Harris Survey [November, 1977]

For each of the following questions, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement in the question.

Q1. Scientific research and technological development are necessary to keep the country prosperous.

	Feb 2019	Nov 1977
Agree Strongly	59	
Agree Somewhat	33	
Disagree Somewhat	3	
Disagree Strongly	1	
Not sure	4	
Agree	92	92
Disagree	4	4
Not sure	4	4

Q2. Scientific research and technological development are the main factors in increasing productivity.

	Feb 2019	Nov 1977
Agree Strongly	25	
Agree Somewhat	56	
Disagree Somewhat	11	
Disagree Strongly	1	
Not sure	6	
Agree	81	69
Disagree	12	16
Not sure	6	15

Q3. Scientific research and technological development will eventually lead to the loss of jobs.

	Feb 2019	Nov 1977
Agree Strongly	10	
Agree Somewhat	34	
Disagree Somewhat	33	
Disagree Strongly	13	
Not sure	10	
Agree	44	39
Disagree	46	44
Not sure	10	17

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Q9. Even if it brings no immediate benefits, scientific research, which advances the frontiers of knowledge, is a necessary human endeavor worth supporting.¹

	Feb 2019	Sep 1983
Agree Strongly	45	
Agree Somewhat	42	
Disagree Somewhat	5	
Disagree Strongly	1	
Not sure	7	
Agree	87	82
Disagree	6	14
Not sure	7	4

Public Attitudes Towards and Understanding of Science and Technology Trend Survey [1985-1999]

Q4. Even if it brings no immediate benefits, scientific research which advances the frontiers of knowledge is necessary and should be supported by the federal government.²

	Nov 1985 ³	Jun 1988 ⁴	Mar 1999 ⁵	Feb 2019
Agree Strongly	9	16	21	34
Agree Somewhat	70	65	61	43
Disagree Somewhat	16	16	13	12
Disagree Strongly	*	*	2	3
Not sure	5	4	3	9
Won't Say	*		*	
Agree	79	81 [†]	82	77
Disagree	16	16	15	14
Not sure	5	4	3	9

† Original numbers do not add to 100%

¹ Methodology: Conducted by Louis Harris & Associates September 1-September 11, 1983, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,256. Originally asked as 3 category agree/disagree/not sure

² Originally asked as 6 category strongly agree/agree/disagree/strongly disagree/won't say/don't know

³ National Science Foundation. Public Attitudes Towards and Understanding of Science and Technology Trend Survey, Nov, 1985 [survey question]. USNSF.85SCIENCE.Q149. Public Opinion Laboratory, Northern Illinois University [producer]. Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLL [distributor], accessed Aug-1-2019. (N=2003)

⁴ National Science Foundation. Public Attitudes Towards and Understanding of Science and Technology Trend Survey, Jun, 1988 [survey question]. USNSF.88SCIENCE.Q149. Public Opinion Laboratory, Northern Illinois University [producer]. Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLL [distributor], accessed Aug-1-2019. (N=2041)

⁵ National Science Foundation. Public Attitudes Towards and Understanding of Science and Technology Trend Survey, Mar, 1999 [survey question]. USNSF.99SCIENCE.Q149. National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago [producer]. Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLL [distributor], accessed Aug-1-2019. (N=1882)

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Pew Research Center for the People & the Press Political Survey [June, 2009]

Q5. In your opinion, do government investments in basic scientific research usually pay off in the long run, or are they not worth it?⁶

	Feb 2019	Jun 2009
Yes, pay off in the long run	55	62 [†]
No, aren't worth it	10	26
Not sure	35	11

† Original numbers do not add to 100%

Public Attitudes Towards and Understanding of Science and Technology Trend Survey (1979-2008)

Q6. People have frequently noted that scientific research has produced both beneficial and harmful consequences. Would you say that, on balance, the benefits of scientific research have outweighed the harmful results, are about equal, or have the harmful results of scientific research been greater than its benefits?

	Feb 2019	Oct 1979	Nov 1985 ⁷	Jun 1988 ⁸	Apr 2008 ⁹
Balance strongly in favor of beneficial results	43	46	44	53	
Balance slightly in favor of beneficial results	12	24	25	23	
About Equal	39	19	13	12	
Balance slightly in favor of harmful results	3	7	13	8	
Balance strongly in favor of harmful results	3	4	6	4	
Benefits have been greater than harmful results	55	70	69 [†]	76	68
Benefits and harmful results have been about equal	39	19	13	12	16
Harmful results have been greater than benefits	6	11	19	12	9
Don't Know					7

† Original numbers do not add to 100%

⁶ Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. Pew Research Center for the People & the Press Political Survey, Jun, 2009 [survey question]. USPSRA.200906POL.Q21A. Princeton Survey Research Associates International [producer]. Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLL [distributor], accessed Aug-1-2019. 1126 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone and 376 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 153 who had no landline telephone. Originally asked as a 3 category yes, pay off in long run/no, aren't worth it/Don't Know and Refused. (N=1502)

⁷ National Science Foundation. Public Attitudes Towards and Understanding of Science and Technology Trend Survey, Nov, 1985 [survey question]. USNSF.85SCIENCE.Q149. Public Opinion Laboratory, Northern Illinois University [producer]. Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLL [distributor], accessed Aug-1-2019. (N=2003)

⁸ National Science Foundation. Public Attitudes Towards and Understanding of Science and Technology Trend Survey, Jun, 1988 [survey question]. USNSF.88SCIENCE.Q149. Public Opinion Laboratory, Northern Illinois University [producer]. Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLL [distributor], accessed Aug-1-2019. (N=2041)

⁹ National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago. General Social Survey 2008, Apr, 2008 [survey question]. USNORC.GSS08E.Q1035. National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago [producer]. Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLL [distributor], accessed Aug-1-2019. (N=2023)

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if q6 = 1

Q6a Would you say that the balance has been strongly in favor of beneficial results, or only slightly?

	Feb 2019
Balance strongly in favor of beneficial results	79
Balance slightly in favor of beneficial results	21

if q46= 3

Q6b Would you say that the balance has been strongly in favor of harmful results, or only slightly?

	Feb 2019
Balance slightly in favor of harmful results	46
Balance strongly in favor of harmful results	54

Road After 1984: The Impact Of Technology On Society [September, 1983] ¹⁰

The next questions are statements about the whole question of scientific and technological research. For each, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree...

Q7. The trouble with scientific research is that its results can be applied in ways that cause more bad than good for the world.

	Feb 2019	Sep 1983
Agree Strongly	7	
Agree Somewhat	37	
Disagree Somewhat	32	
Disagree Strongly	13	
Not sure	12	
Agree	44	50
Disagree	44	45
Not sure	12	5

¹⁰ Southern New England Telephone. Road After 1984: The Impact Of Technology On Society, Sep, 1983 [survey question]. USHARRIS.832033.R02AC. Louis Harris & Associates [producer]. Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLL [distributor], accessed Aug-1-2019. Originally asked as 3 category agree/disagree/not sure. (N=1256)

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Pew Internet & American Life Project/Exploratorium Survey [January, 2006]

Q10. Scientific research today doesn't pay enough attention to the moral values of society.¹¹

	Feb 2019	Jan 2006
Agree Strongly	12	11
Agree Somewhat	39	38
Disagree Somewhat	26	36
Disagree Strongly	10	7
Not sure	13	8
Agree	51	49
Disagree	36	43
Not sure	13	8

Q11. Scientific research is essential to improving the quality of human lives.

	Feb 2019	Jan 2006
Agree Strongly	41	35
Agree Somewhat	44	56
Disagree Somewhat	8	7
Disagree Strongly	2	1
Not sure	6	2
Agree	84	91 [†]
Disagree	10	8
Not sure	6	2

† Original numbers do not add to 100%

¹¹ Pew Internet & American Life Project, The Exploratorium. Pew Internet & American Life Project/Exploratorium Survey, Jan, 2006 [survey question]. USPSRA.05JAN09.QE05F. Princeton Survey Research Associates International [producer]. Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLL [distributor], accessed Aug-1-2019. (N=2000)