**Debating the Ethics of Animal Use in Research**

**Legislation Fact Sheet**

# Ipsos-Mori poll - attitudes to animal research in 2016

<https://ems.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/publications/1858/Attitudes-to-animal-research-in-2016.aspx>

The report presents the findings of a 2016 survey on current public awareness of, and attitudes towards, the use of animals in research. The survey also examines attitudes towards, and trust in, the regulatory system and the people who work with animals in research.

This is the second wave of a tracker survey, [first carried out in 2014](https://ems.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/publications/1695/Attitudes-to-animal-research-in-2014.aspx) by Ipsos MORI. The survey is based on a long-term survey that ran between 1999 and 2014, but as the questions have changed, direct comparisons between pre-2014 data and this year’s results are not possible

On many measures, public opinion on this topic is unchanged between 2016 and 2014.

Key research findings include:

* A majority of the public do not feel well informed about the use of animals in research in the UK – only one-third (34%) say they feel either very or fairly well informed, a similar finding to 2014 when 30% felt well informed.
* Two-thirds (65%) say they can accept the use of animals in research as long as it is for medical purposes, and there is no alternative. Public acceptance has remained at the same level since 2014, when 68% said the same thing.
* Many people continue to believe that cosmetics testing on animals is allowed in the UK (35% - up from 31% in 2014) although testing cosmetic products and their ingredients on animals was banned in the UK in 1998 and across the EU in 2013.

**Concordat**The Concordat on Openness is a set of commitments for UK-based life science organisations to enhance their animal research communications. Launched by [Understanding Animal Research](http://www.understandinganimalresearch.org.uk/policy/concordat-openness-animal-research/signatories-to-the-concordat-on-openness-on-animal-research/) on 14th May 2014, the Concordat currently has 121 signatories. The Concordat has been a huge success, both internally amongst organisations, and externally in the public domain.

Within organisations, the Concordat has raised the profile of animal research and welfare, enabling more open conversations to take place and giving research staff and technicians greater confidence to speak about what they do. Within the life-science sector the Concordat has inspired collaborations between institutions, and challenged the fears associated with speaking about animal research, to reflect a society where the voices against using animals in science are becoming more reasoned and less aggressive.

For wider society, the Concordat has provided better access to information about animals in research. This has led to a greater understanding of the role of animal care staff, enabling interested public to see inside facilities, and more considered news stories on the use of animals in research.

<http://concordatopenness.org.uk/>

## **Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986**

The use of animals in experiments and testing is regulated under the [Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consolidated-version-of-aspa-1986) (ASPA). ASPA has recently been revised to align UK law with the European Directive 2010/63/EU on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes. The revised legislation came into force on 1 January 2013. ASPA is implemented by the Home Office in England, Scotland and Wales and by the Department for Health, Social Security and Public Safety in Northern Ireland.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/research-and-testing-using-animals>

**The 3Rs**

<https://www.nc3rs.org.uk/the-3rs>

The [principles of the 3Rs](http://altweb.jhsph.edu/pubs/books/humane_exp/het-toc) (**R**eplacement, **R**eduction and **R**efinement) were developed over 50 years ago providing a framework for performing more humane animal research. Since then they have been embedded in national and international legislation and regulations on the use of animals in scientific procedures, as well as in the policies of organisations that fund or conduct animal research.  [Opinion polls](https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/attitudes-animal-research-2016?language_content_entity=en-uk) of public attitudes consistently show that support for animal research is conditional on the 3Rs being put into practice.

[The NC3Rs](https://www.nc3rs.org.uk/about-us) is the UK’s national organisation for the 3Rs. Their [strategy](https://www.nc3rs.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Corporate_publications/The%20NC3Rs%20strategy%202017%20to%202019.pdf) is to advance the 3Rs by focusing on their scientific impacts and benefits. They have re-defined the standard 3Rs definitions so that they are more reflective of contemporary scientific practice and developments.

**Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Bodies**Animal experiments in the UK are regulated by the [Home Office](https://www.gov.uk/research-and-testing-using-animals), which is responsible for carrying out the formal ethical evaluation and authorisation of projects. All establishments breeding or using animals for scientific procedures in the UK must have an institutional Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB). Details of the tasks and participants of AWERBs have been set out by the [Home Office](https://www.gov.uk/research-and-testing-using-animals). There is little other official guidance, although the Home Office undertook a comprehensive [Review of the ERP (PDF 70KB)](https://science.rspca.org.uk/ImageLocator/LocateAsset?asset=document&assetId=1232711948779&mode=prd#_blank) system in 2001 which identified examples of what at the time was, and probably still remains, 'perceived best contemporary practice'.

<https://science.rspca.org.uk/sciencegroup/researchanimals/ethicalreview/differentsystems/uk>

**Non-technical summaries**Publication of non-technical summaries is a legal requirement under Article 43 of EU Directive 2010/63. This mandatory requirement will help put the debate on the use of animals in research and testing on a much better informed footing.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/non-technical-summaries-granted-in-2016>