

Public assessment of general scientific research, by respondent characteristic: Selected years, 1979–2004

(Percent)

Characteristic	1979 (n = 1,635)	1981 (n = 1,536)	1985 (n = 2,005)	1988 (n = 975)	1990 (n = 2,033)	1992 (n = 997)	1995 (n = 2,006)	1997 (n = 2,000)	1999 (n = 1,882)	2001 (n = 1,574)	2004 (n = 1,912)
All adults											
Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results	46	42	44	57	47	42	43	47	47	47	56
Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results.....	24	28	24	25	25	31	29	28	27	25	28
Benefits equal harmful results	19	13	13	5	15	11	16	13	11	19	3
Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits.....	7	12	13	9	10	12	10	8	10	7	10
Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits	4	5	6	4	3	4	3	4	5	3	3
Male											
Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results	51	48	48	59	54	45	47	52	50	49	60
Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results.....	23	27	23	25	24	30	28	27	27	27	27
Benefits equal harmful results	16	11	10	5	9	9	13	10	9	15	3
Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits	7	10	13	7	9	11	9	7	10	7	7
Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits	3	5	6	4	4	5	4	4	4	2	2
Female											
Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results	42	37	40	55	40	40	39	42	45	44	52
Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results.....	25	28	26	25	26	31	30	29	28	23	29
Benefits equal harmful results	23	16	14	6	20	13	19	15	12	22	3
Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits	6	14	14	10	11	12	10	10	10	8	13
Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits	4	5	6	4	3	4	3	4	5	3	3
Formal education											
<High school graduate											
Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results	26	26	20	37	24	24	18	30	25	28	31
Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results	25	23	21	30	25	33	30	28	25	27	37
Benefits equal harmful results	32	25	26	9	30	17	34	21	18	26	4
Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits	12	18	20	17	17	20	14	18	22	13	23
Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits.....	5	9	13	7	4	7	3	3	10	6	5
High school graduate											
Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results	50	43	47	59	49	41	44	46	47	45	51
Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results	26	31	26	25	27	32	30	30	31	25	31
Benefits equal harmful results	16	10	10	5	11	10	13	13	10	20	3
Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits	5	12	13	7	10	12	10	6	8	8	12
Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits.....	3	4	4	4	3	5	3	5	4	2	3
Baccalaureate and higher											
Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results	69	64	67	80	72	66	67	67	71	64	72
Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results	18	22	23	16	18	22	23	23	19	23	20
Benefits equal harmful results	8	7	2	1	6	8	6	6	5	9	3
Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits	2	4	6	2	2	3	3	3	4	2	3
Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits.....	3	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	1	2	2
Family income (quartile)											
Top											
Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	72
Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	21
Benefits equal harmful results	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	3
Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	3
Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits.....	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1

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Second											
Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	58
Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	29
Benefits equal harmful results	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	3
Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	8
Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	2
Third											
Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	53
Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	29
Benefits equal harmful results	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	4
Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	11
Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	3
Bottom											
Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	43
Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	33
Benefits equal harmful results	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	3
Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	18
Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	4

NA = not available

NOTES: Responses to: *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, or have the harmful results of scientific research been greater than its benefits?* If respondents answered benefits outweighed results, they were asked: *Would you say that the balance has been strongly in favor of beneficial results or only slightly?* If respondents answered harmful results outweighed benefits, they were asked: *Would you say that the balance has been strongly in favor of harmful results or only slightly?* Some respondents did not provide information about highest level of education. Detail may not add to total because of rounding.

SOURCES: National Science Foundation, Division of Science Resources Statistics, Survey of Public Attitudes Toward and Understanding of Science and Technology (various years); and University of Michigan, Survey of Consumer Attitudes (2004).

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