What Europeans think about science and technology
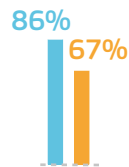
Special Eurobarometer 516

Interest and knowledge

Being interested in and feeling informed about science and technology
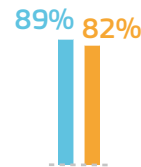
EU citizens are interested in various fields...
But interest does not always translate to feeling informed
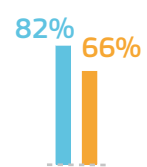
New medical discoveries

86% 67%

Interested (+4 points since 2010)   Informed (+2 points since 2010)

Environmental problems

89% 82%

Interested (+1 point since 2010)   Informed (+4 points since 2010)

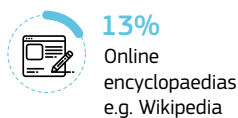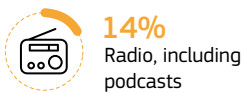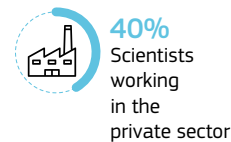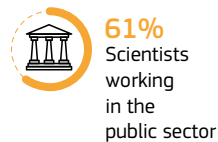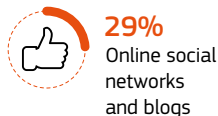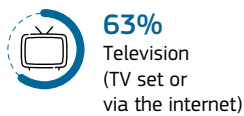**New scientific discoveries and technological developments**

82% 66%
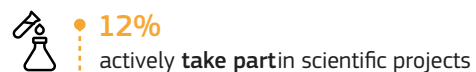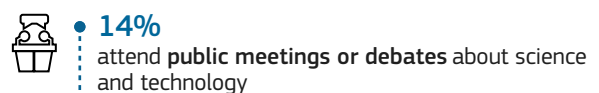
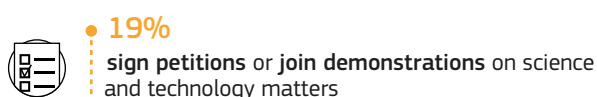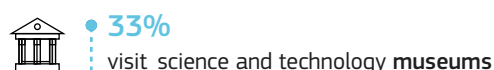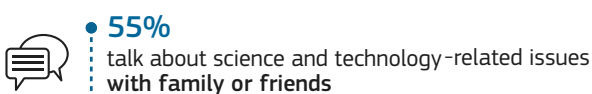Interested (+3 points since 2010)   Informed (+5 points since 2010)

Sources of information about scientific and technological developments

Respondents get most of their information about science and technology from...

63% Television (TV set or via the internet)

29% Online social networks and blogs

14% Radio, including podcasts

13% Online encyclopaedias e.g. Wikipedia

EU citizens think the following are most qualified to explain the impact of scientific and technological developments:

61% Scientists working in the public sector

40% Scientists working in the private sector

29% Doctors

19% Journalists

16% Environmental protection associations

How citizens engage with science and technology

59% **watch documentaries**, or read science and technology-related publications, magazines or books

55% talk about science and technology-related issues **with family or friends**

33% visit science and technology **museums**

19% **sign petitions** or **join demonstrations** on science and technology matters

14% attend **public meetings or debates** about science and technology

12% actively **take part** in scientific projects

8% contact **public authorities or political leaders** about science and technology-related issues

■ 2021   ■ 2005

The **continents** on which we live **have been moving** for millions of years and **will continue to move in the future**
82%
86%

Human beings developed from **earlier species of animals**
67%
70%

Humans **did not live at the same time as the dinosaurs**
66%
66%

The **oxygen** we breathe comes from **plants**
82%
82%

Anti–biotics do not kill viruses
55%
46%

Lasers do not work by **focusing sound waves**
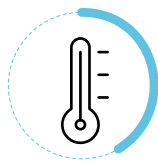42%
47%

Views on the impacts of science and technology

Areas where science and technology can make a difference

47%
Health and medical care

40%
The fight against climate change

32%
Energy supply

25%
Protection of the environment
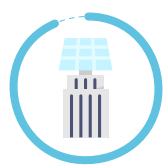
19%
Availability and quality of food

19%
Education and skills

Respondents think that **health and medical** care and the **fight against climate change** are the areas where science and technology **can make the most difference**.

Technologies and innovations Europeans think will have a positive effect on our way of life in the next 20 years
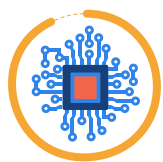
90% (+2pp since 2005)
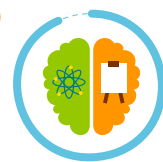Solar energy

87% (+3pp since 2010[1])
Wind energy

86%
Vaccines and combatting infectious diseases

82%
information and communication technology

73% (+25pp since 2005)
Nanotechnology

71%
Brain and cognitive enhancement

The benefits of science and technology

86%
respondents think the **overall influence of science and technology on society is positive**

57%
think that science and technology mostly **improve the lives of people** who are already better off

53%
of EU citizens think that science and technology benefit **their lives**

Views on the governance of science and technology

EU citizens believe that decisions about science and technology should be based primarily on...

the moral and ethical issues concerned **55%** ⟷ **43%** the potential to make new scientific discoveries and develop new technologies

Older respondents place more importance on moral and ethical issues

moral and ethical issues		new scientific developments
58%	55 and over	40%
54%	40-54	45%
55%	25-39	44%
49%	15-24	50%

Those who finished education later tend to place more importance on the potential to make new scientific discoveries

moral and ethical issues		new scientific developments
59%	15 and younger (finished education)	37%
56%	16-19	43%
55%	20+	44%
50%	still studying	49%

[1] This question in 2010 only had four possible responses: positive effect, negative effect, no effect, don't know; while the 2021 question had six possible responses: very positive effect, fairly positive effect, fairly negative effect, very negative effect, no effect, don't know

What EU citizens think of scientists

The characteristics that best describe them

- Intelligence **89%**
- Reliability **68%**
- Collaborative **66%**
- Honesty **58%**
- Knowing best what is good for people **47%**
- Altruism **40%**
- Bad at communicating **38%**
- Arrogance **28%**
- Narrow mindedness **23%**
- Immorality **16%**

The qualities they'd like to see

- **50%** Intelligence
- **43%** Honesty
- **39%** Reliability
- **34%** Morality
- **27%** Ability to work together
- **26%** Open-mindedness
- **25%** Know what is good for people
- **16%** Communicate well
- **12%** Altruism
- **8%** Modesty

Opinions on the role of scientists in society

68% say that **scientists should intervene in political debate** to ensure that decisions take into account scientific evidence

51% say that scientists **do not spend sufficient time meeting people** to explain their work

45% say that scientists **should be held accountable for the misuse** of their discoveries

Inclusion and social responsibility in science and technology

EU citizens and gender equality

55% say gender equality is **important** for them personally

And when it comes to promoting gender equality in the workforce....

47% say gender equality would help us live in **a fairer and more equal society**

46% say gender equality would **improve the outcomes of science and technology**

43% say gender equality would improve **business profits and the economy**

EU citizens and social responsibility in science and technology

79% say that the government should **make private companies tackle climate change**

78% say that **the needs of all groups of people should be considered** when developing new solutions and products

72% say that the government should take responsibility to ensure that **new technologies benefit everyone**