

Science and Scientists Held in High Esteem Across Global Publics | Pew Research Center

By Cary Funk, Alec Tyson, Brian Kennedy & Courtney Johnson

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As publics around the world look to scientists and the research and development process to bring new treatments and preventive strategies for the novel coronavirus, a new international survey finds scientists and their research are widely viewed in a positive light across global publics, and large majorities believe government investments in scientific research yield benefits for society.

Still, the wide-ranging survey, conducted before the COVID-19 outbreak reached pandemic proportions, reveals ambivalence about certain scientific developments – in areas such as artificial intelligence and genetically modified foods – often exists alongside high trust for scientists generally and positive views in other areas such as space exploration.

Public concerns around climate change and environmental degradation remain widespread. In most publics, majorities view climate change as a very serious problem, say their government is not doing enough to address it and point to a host of environmental concerns at home, including air and water quality and pollution.

With renewed attention to the importance of public acceptance of vaccines, the new survey finds majorities in most publics tend to view childhood vaccines, such as those for measles, mumps and rubella, as relatively safe and effective. Yet sizable minorities across global publics hold doubts about this keystone tool of modern medicine.

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