

Public Attitudes to Chemistry



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[rsc.li/pac](https://www.rsc.li/pac)
[#chemperceptions](https://twitter.com/chemperceptions)





The graphic consists of several white icons on a teal background: a flask, a wind turbine, a molecular structure, and two stylized human figures.

Public attitudes to chemistry

This report outlines the findings of an online UK public survey and focus group interviews on views on chemistry.

While there is a general interest about the public image of chemistry, there is a clear gap in quality of chemistry. Public opinion is generally positive, but the overall image of chemistry is generally poor. It is particularly important that we continue to build on the positive aspects of chemistry.

To achieve this, we have commissioned the world research company TNS MORF to investigate current public attitudes, awareness, interest and engagement towards chemistry in the UK.

The report and other materials are available online at www.chemsoc.org

ROYAL SOCIETY OF CHEMISTRY

The first national, in-depth study on how the UK public thinks and feels about chemistry, chemists and chemicals





84% of the UK public agreed that chemists make a valuable contribution to society

But only

12% of the chemists we interviewed thought the public would have said so



62% of the UK public agreed that jobs in chemistry are interesting

But only

27% of the chemists we interviewed thought the public would have said so

Most people have totally separate feelings about chemistry, chemists and chemicals.



Public attitudes to chemistry



People lacked specific examples of how chemistry makes a positive impact, instead finding it easier to specify and visualise negatives or stereotypes.

People lacked personally relevant, concrete examples.

Most people can't think of chemistry beyond their school memories

When I talk about chemistry what comes to your mind? Top 5 answers



School/teachers



Science



Chemicals/
elements



Drugs/
tablets/pills



Medication

People are positive about chemistry's contribution to society



59%

of the public believe the benefits of **chemistry** are greater than any harmful effects

55%

for **science***



55%

of the public believe it is important to know about **chemistry** in their daily life

72%

for **science***



72%

agree that **chemistry** research and developments make a direct contribution to economic growth in the UK

76%

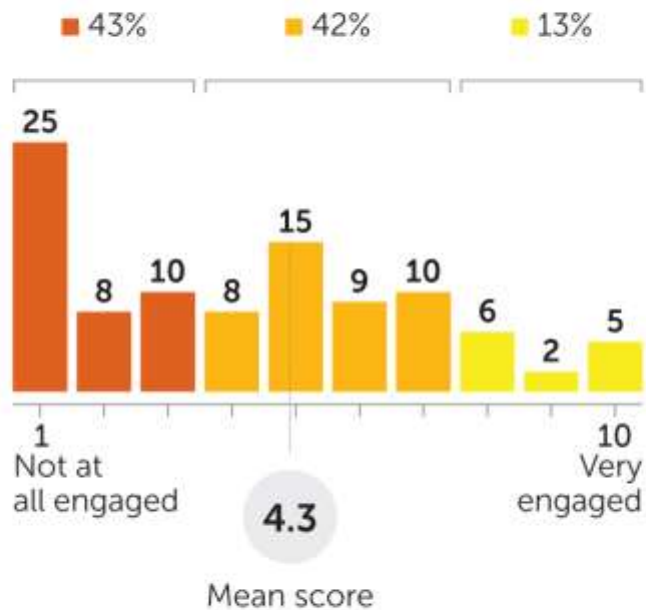
for **science***

How do you feel about chemistry? (%)**



People don't have an emotional connection with chemistry

How engaged or interested are you with chemistry? (%)



Overall engagement is fairly low

I don't feel confident enough
to talk about chemistry



Public attitudes to chemists



People strongly associate chemists with pharmacists

When I talk about a chemist what comes to your mind? Top 5 answers



Pharmacies/
pharmacists



Medication/
medicine



Prescriptions



Shop/
chemist's
shop



Drugs/
tablets/pills

31% Only said
pharmacies or
hospitals



76%
Pharmacies



47%
Laboratories



29%
In hospitals



17%
In medical
research



17%
For
pharmaceutical
companies

25%
Only mentioned
pharmacies

Source: Public Attitudes to Chemistry 2015 Public Survey Q.3 Where do you think chemists work? (multi-code). Base: All respondents (2104)



Chemists

Make a
difference in
the world

95%

5%

Do not make
a difference in
the world

Honest

93%

7%

Dishonest

Approachable

88%

12%

Unapproachable

Enthusiastic

85%

15%

Unenthusiastic

Interesting

72%

28%

Boring



Public attitudes to chemicals





Flash Eurobarometer 361

CHEMICALS

REPORT

Fieldwork: October 2012
Publication: February 2013

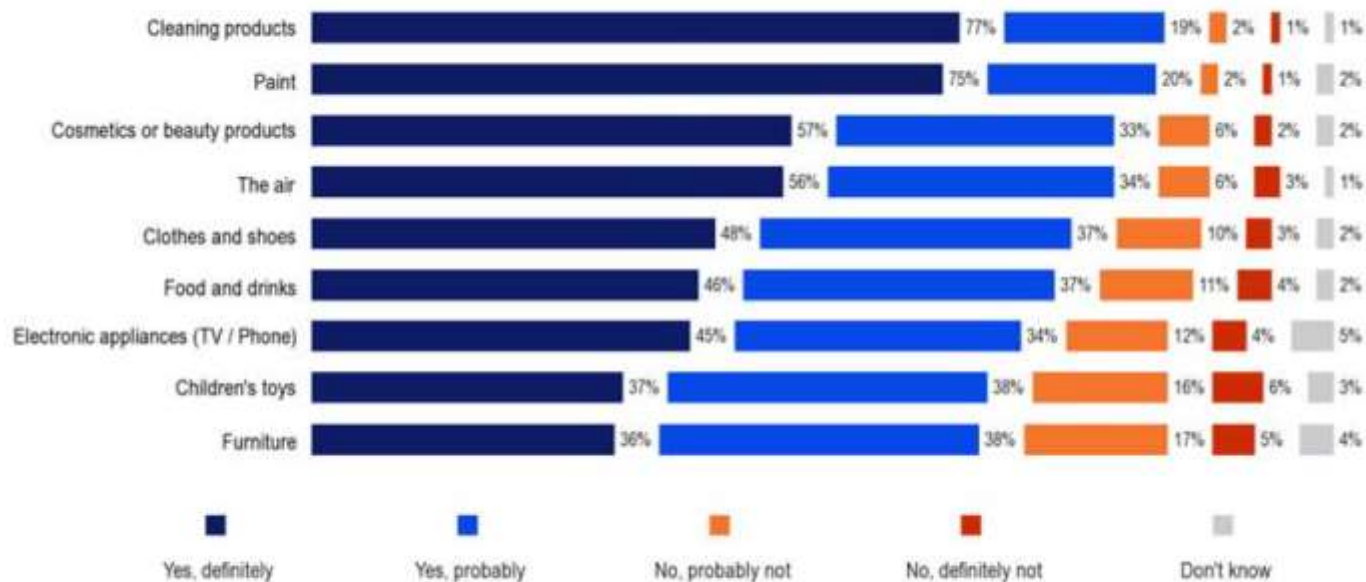
This survey has been requested by the European Commission, Directorate-General Enterprise and Industry and co-ordinated by Directorate-General for Communication.

This document does not represent the point of view of the European Commission.
The interpretations and opinions contained in it are solely those of the authors.

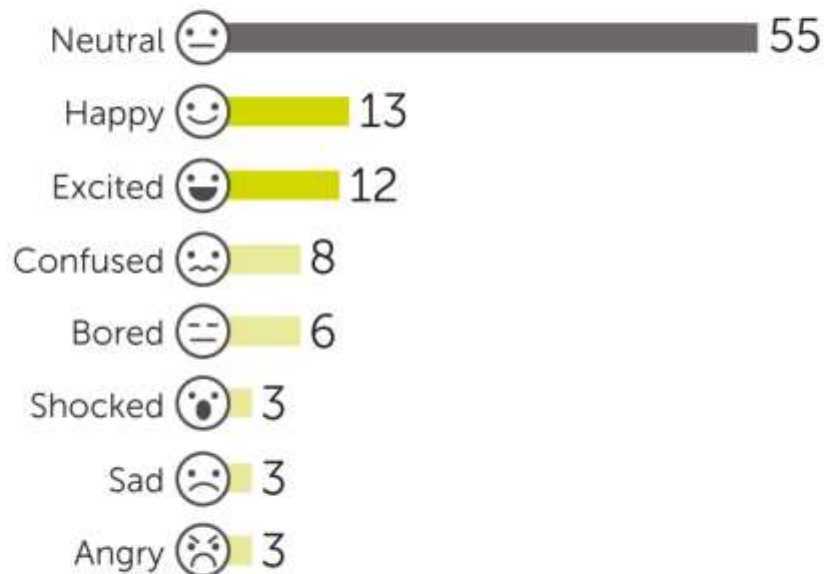
Flash Eurobarometer 361 – TNS Political & Social



Q1. Do you think that you can find chemical substances in the following...?



How people feel about chemicals (%)**



Source: Public Attitudes to Chemistry 2015 Public Survey Q.4C
Which of the following describes how you feel about chemicals?
Base: All respondents (2104)



< 20%

of the public think
“all chemicals are
dangerous and
harmful”

Public attitudes to chemicals

Although there are some concerns about chemicals, these do not affect people's views on chemistry

60%

of the public agreed that "everything is made of chemicals"



70%

of the public agreed that "everything including water and oxygen can be toxic at a certain dose"



67%

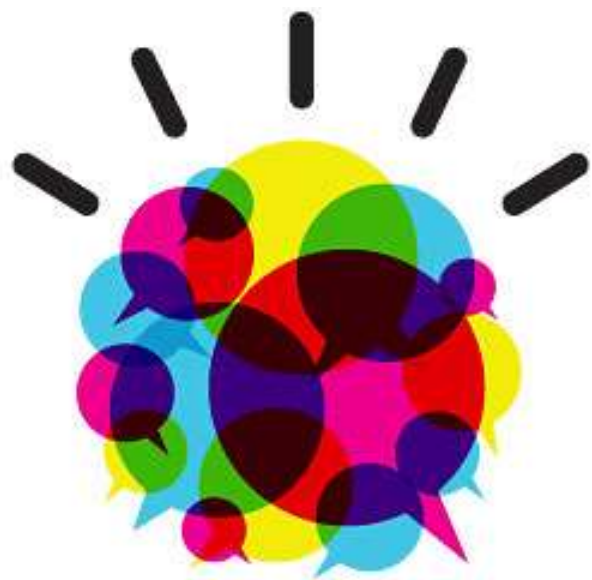
of the public disagreed that "all chemicals are man-made"





People's views of chemicals do not impact their view of chemistry or chemists.







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