



Technology, innovation and digitalization
EU opinion poll

Opinion in the United Kingdom

Within the framework of the “Fostering Innovation. Unlocking Potential.” project, the Bertelsmann Stiftung has conducted an online survey in all EU countries with the eupinions¹ survey tool. This survey elicits information regarding citizens’ attitudes – across the EU and within individual countries – toward technological innovation. The results for the United Kingdom (UK) are representative.

How UK respondents view their country²

UK respondents generally have a positive view of their country’s performance in terms of innovation and the framework conditions needed to facilitate it. They are for the most part also optimistic about the advantages potential technological innovations bring to them personally in the coming years.

- Some 67% of UK respondents consider **their country** to be particularly innovative in international comparison. On average across the EU, only 54% of respondents say this about their own country.
- A clear majority of the British (58%) **express confidence in their country’s economic environment and policy framework** ability to foster innovation, while only 45% of citizens across the EU express the same regarding their country.
- More than two-thirds of UK respondents (69%) expect technological innovation to have **positive effects** on their lives over the next 15 years. The areas in which they’d most like to

¹ eupinions is an independent platform for European public opinion. They collect, analyse and comment on what the European public thinks about current political issues and megatrends. eupinions employs cutting-edge data collection techniques. Every quarter, they collect samples from each EU member state in 22 languages. The data meets the highest scientific standards and is representative with regard to age, gender, education and country/region. eupinions is a project of Bertelsmann Stiftung. The data is collected by Dalia Research.

² At the time in which the survey was conducted (2019), the UK was still a member of the European Union.

see innovations fostered include healthcare and long-term care (60%), job creation (43%), and environmental protection and efforts to combat climate change (39%)..

The UK and the European Union

Most people in the United Kingdom see the EU as a strong innovator by international comparison. While most UK respondents favor increased cooperation between European states, this desire is somewhat less pronounced than that found among other European respondents on average.

- Most UK respondents (67%) think that the EU's **innovative capacity is rather strong in international comparison**. This assessment is almost exactly in line with that of the EU average (66%).
- Less than half of the UK respondents (44%) consider the **United States to be more innovative than the EU**. By contrast, 52% of all EU respondents believe this to be the case.
- Just over one-half of UK respondents see China as a competitor in terms of innovation, with 52% stating that **China performs better** in this regard. On average in the EU, 59% believe this to be the case.
- The most recent survey data from 2020 shows that 55% of UK respondents support closer **cooperation between EU countries as a means of becoming more innovative and competitive**. The average among other EU respondents is 63%. And while 17% of UK respondents are satisfied with the current level of cooperation, only 14% of EU respondents state the same.
- Only 18% of UK respondents favor a **focus on national solutions** to facilitate innovativeness and competitiveness. This figure lies only four percentage points above the EU average of 14%.

Differences according to specific respondent characteristics

The level of education among UK respondents is a key factor in the opinions expressed. However, age and place of residence (urban vs. rural) are also relevant. The gender of respondents shows almost no relevance in shaping opinion.

- Only 45% of UK respondents with **no to low levels of formal education** consider the conditions for facilitating innovation in their country to be good. By contrast, 61% of people with **medium to high levels of education** believe this to be the case.
- In terms of jobs, UK respondents with **medium to high levels of education** are more likely to expect negative effects as a result of technological innovation (41%) than those with **no to low levels of formal education** (31%).
- **People who live in urban areas** expect innovation to have positive effects in the health sector (43%) and mobility (32%) in particular. In contrast, **rural populations** expect positive effects primarily in the health sector (38%) as well as in defense and security (36%).
- **The older the UK respondent**, the more likely it is that innovations in the area of environment protection are to be considered a good idea. **The younger the respondents**, the more useful innovations in the area of **nutrition** are perceived to be.