Finnish Science Barometer

A STUDY OF PUBLIC OPINION AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

2026



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A STUDY OF PUBLIC OPINION AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Tieteen tiedotus

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Heureka, the Finnish Science Centre, 2026

To the reader

This time, the Finnish Science Barometer turns its attention to those who are sceptical about science. The 2026 set of survey questions included new statements about alternative therapies and other views that challenge the scientific consensus.

The results suggest that roughly one in ten Finns has a strong distrust of science. In the survey, this distrust was not limited to science; they also expressed distrust of other institutions.

A slightly larger group, amounting to just under 30% of respondents at most, expressed a milder degree of scepticism. They questioned certain statements that form part of the scientific consensus or favoured alternative therapies. Distrust in one area did not necessarily extend to others. Many proponents of alternative therapies said that they generally trust science and health authorities.

However, the rise in the popularity of alternative therapies, which had begun in 2022, had now levelled off and, in some places, even begun to decline slightly.

Esa Väliverronen
Finnish Society for Science Communication

Trust in science

An overwhelming 85% majority of respondents trusted science and research. On the other hand, 11% said they had only little trust in science. Public trust in science has remained at the same level since 2022.

Those with a university education (49%), as well as Green Party (48%) and Left Alliance (43%) supporters, stood out in that they placed a great deal of trust in science. Finns Party supporters, on the other hand, stood out in that one in four (26%) had little trust in science. Nevertheless, 72% of Finns Party supporters said that they had at least a fair amount of trust in science.

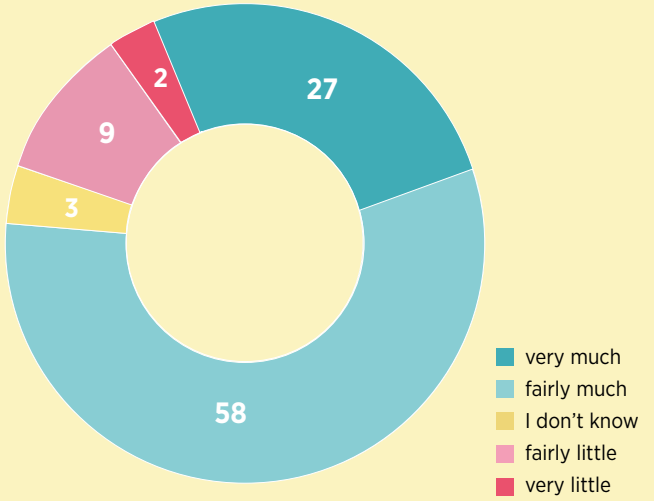
In international comparison, the general level of trust in science among Finns is high: for example, German Science Barometer[1] (2025) reported that 54% of respondents had high or very high trust in science. In the 2025–26 Swedish Science Barometer[2] , 79% of respondents had high confidence in research.

[1] https://search.gesis.org/research_data/ZA8806

[2] https://vetenskapallmanhet.se/en/resource/report-swedish-science-barometer-2025-2026/

How much do you trust science and research in general?

total 2026 (n=1,016)



Why is science trusted?

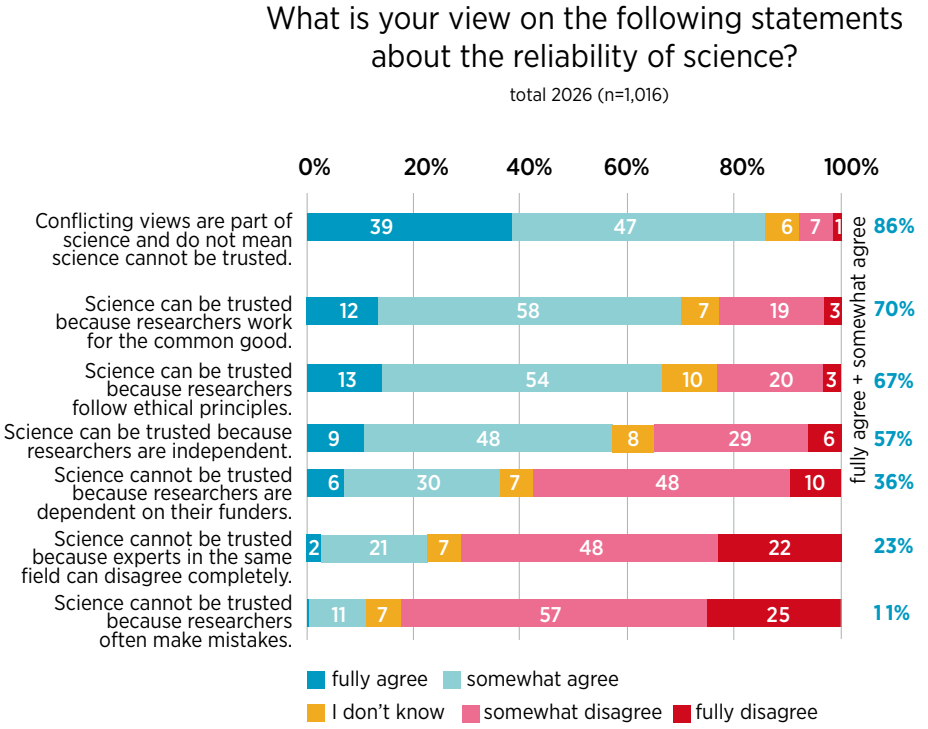
Conflicting expert opinion does not seem to undermine public trust in science. In fact, 86% of survey respondents thought that disagreement is part and parcel of science. More than two-thirds (70%) disagreed and fewer than one in four (23%) respondents agreed with the opposite statement that "science cannot be trusted because experts in the same field can disagree completely".

Of those surveyed, 70% thought that science can be trusted because scientists are working for the common good, and almost as many (67%) believed that researchers follow ethical principles. Slightly less than a quarter of respondents disagreed with these statements.

Opinion was somewhat more divided on the independence of research: 57% of respondents trusted science "because scientists are independent", 35% disagreed.

Attitudes were effectively unchanged from the 2022 survey, although confidence in the independence of researchers fell slightly.[3]

[3] TB2026-liite, s. 12 https://www.tieteentiedotus.fi/tiedebarometri.html

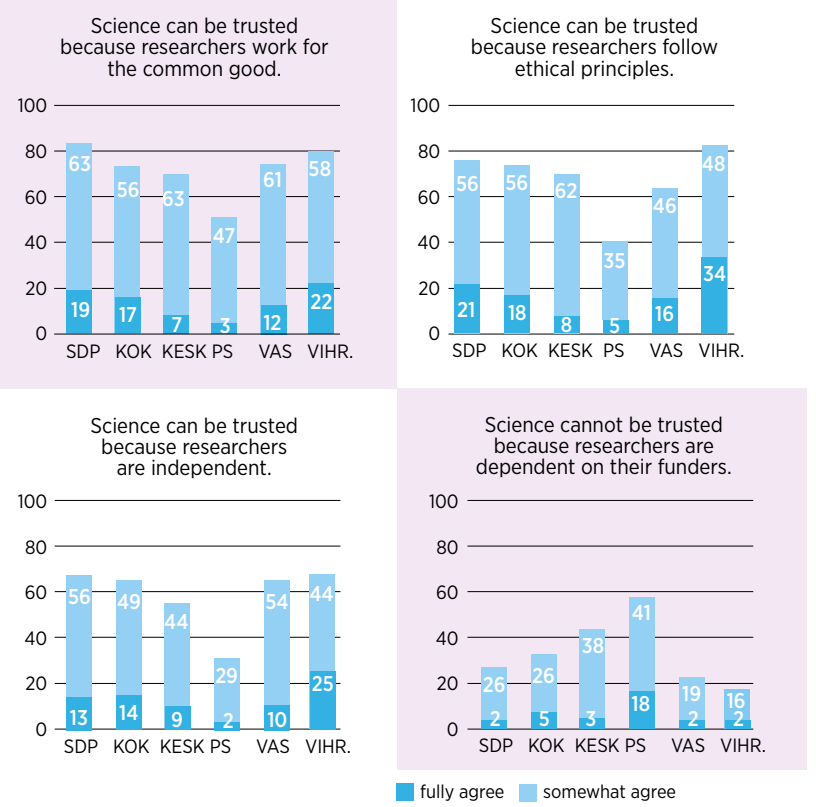


Differences in trust by political party affiliation

Looking at the results by political party affiliation, supporters of the Green Party and SDP expressed the highest levels of trust in science. Finns Party and Left Alliance supporters were the most sceptical about researchers' adherence to ethical principles.

Supporters of the Finns Party and the Centre Party, in turn, were most sceptical about the independence of researchers. Similarly, they were clearly more likely than others to suspect that researchers are dependent, in particular, on their funders.

Trust in researchers' independence declined slightly across the board, with a more pronounced drop among Finns Party and Centre Party supporters than among other groups, compared with previous surveys.



KOK = National Coalition Party / SDP = Social Democratic Party / KESK = Centre Party / VIHR = Green Party / PS = Finns Party / VAS = Left Alliance

Science sceptics

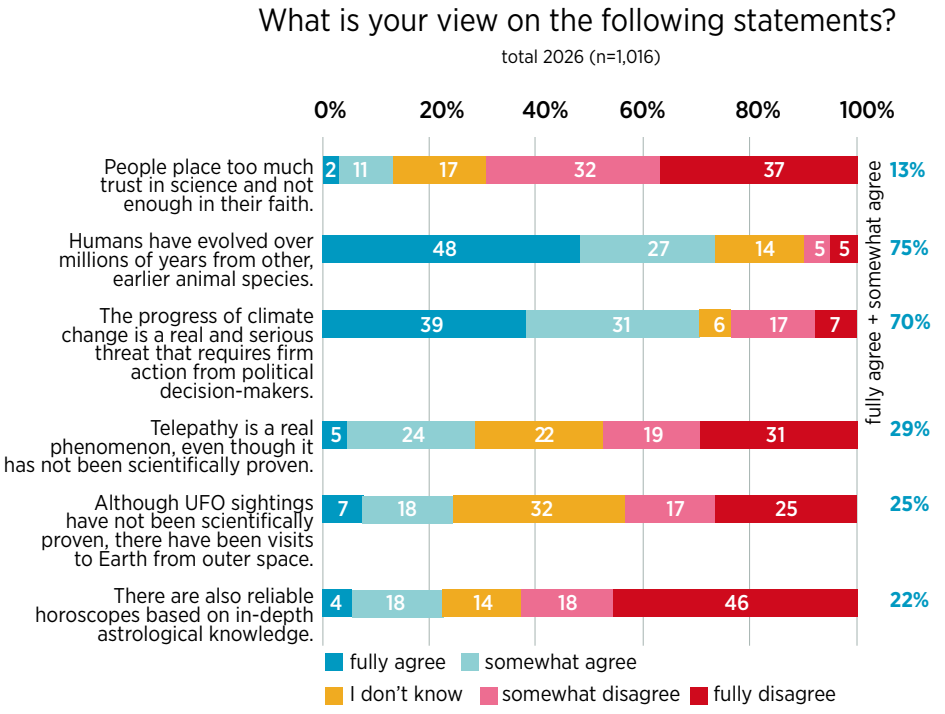
Some Finns are consistently sceptical about science and question the basic assumptions that form part of the scientific consensus. What they have in common is scepticism towards other key institutions in society. When asked how much they trusted science in general, 11% of survey respondents said they had only a little trust in it.

One in ten respondents questioned the theory of evolution; in addition, as many as 14% did not wish to take a stance on the issue. A total of 13% of respondents, on the other hand, believed that people should place more trust in their faith than in science. Of those surveyed, 29% believed in telepathy, 25% in UFO visits and 22% in the reliability of horoscopes.

A quarter of the respondents, meanwhile, did not agree with the statement on climate change. The statement combines science with political action, so disagreement with it cannot be interpreted straightforwardly as scepticism towards science alone. The results suggest that one in ten Finns has a strong distrust of science. At most, just under 30% of respondents expressed some degree of scepticism. They questioned certain statements that form part of the scientific consensus or favoured alternative therapies (see p. 13). Nevertheless, most sceptics of science cannot be directly labelled as anti-science. Their attitude towards science is not unequivocally dismissive, and their views vary depending on the subject and the field of research. At the same time, many of them express general trust in science, despite favouring certain alternative therapies.

These findings are consistent with those of a study examining Finns' attitudes towards the Covid-19 pandemic.[4]

[4] ks. Jallinoja ym. (2021) Valtavirtaa ja vastavirtaa - koronanäkemykset yhteydessä halukkuuteen ottaa koronarokotus. Duodecim 137 (19).



Conventional medicine and alternative therapies

The 2026 Finnish Science Barometer examines the acceptability of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) in greater depth than before. A clear majority of respondents agreed with the statements that "the most reliable experts on health are researchers in the field and trained professionals" (89%) and that "illnesses should primarily be treated using medical approaches" (77%). However, 16% of respondents disagreed with the latter statement.

On the other hand, an average of one-third of respondents expressed trust in CAM, either alongside or instead of conventional medicine. The most popular alternative therapies were folk healers (40%), alternative health influencers (30%) and homeopathy (27%).

Attitudes towards CAM also divided opinion sharply. Of those surveyed, 39% believed that the provision of alternative therapies should be restricted by legislation. Almost as many (38%) held the opposite view. While 20% of respondents wanted alternative therapies to be covered by Kela reimbursements, 62% disagreed.

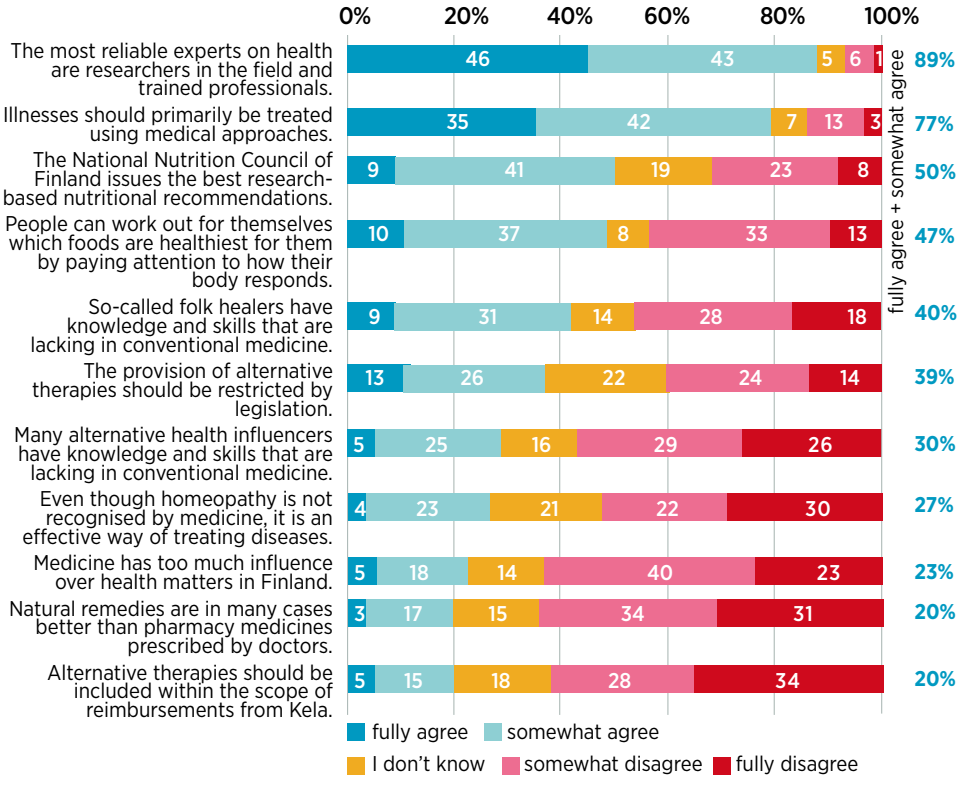
Half of respondents trusted the recommendations issued by the National Nutrition Council, while nearly one-third did not.

Supporters of the National Coalition Party and the Left Alliance placed the greatest trust in medicine, while Left Alliance and SDP supporters placed the greatest trust in the recommendations of the National Nutrition Council.[5]

[5] TB2026-liite, s. 33 https://www.tieteentiedotus.fi/tiedebarometri.html

What do you think of the following statements about health, alternative therapies and food?

total 2026 (n=1,016)



Alternative therapies 2001–2026

The popularity of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) declined steadily throughout the 2000s, until it began to rise again in the early 2020s. In this year's survey, the popularity of CAM levelled off or declined slightly.

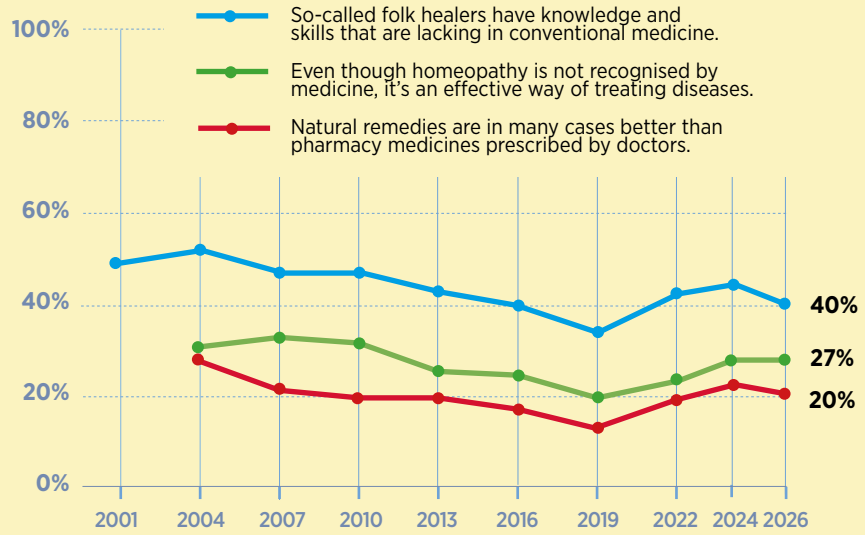
Trust in alternative therapies was higher among rural residents and women, as well as among supporters of the Finns Party and the Centre Party, than among other respondents. Among supporters of the Finns Party and the Centre Party, more than half trusted folk healers and around one-third trusted homeopathy.[6]

[6] TB2026-liite, s. 33 https://www.tieteentiedotus.fi/tiedebarometri.html

Alternative therapies 2001 – 2026

proportions of fully agree and somewhat agree

total 2026 (n=1,016)



Views on vaccination remain unchanged

In recent years, there has been much talk of the rise in anti-vaccine sentiment and the decline in vaccination coverage. Based on the results of the 2026 survey, however, there is no evidence of an increase in anti-vaccine attitudes. The respondents' views on vaccination were at the same level as, or slightly more positive than, in 2022, when the Science Barometer last surveyed attitudes towards vaccination.[7]

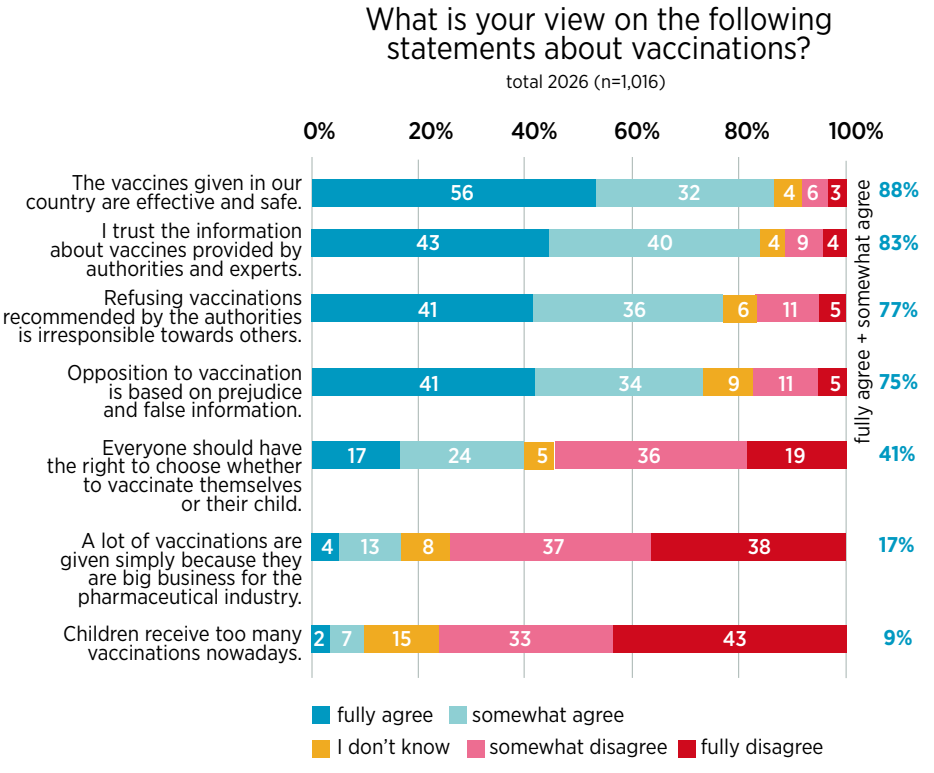
Just over four in five respondents considered the vaccines administered in Finland to be effective and safe, and trusted the recommendations of the authorities and experts. Around 10% of respondents were sceptical about the statements.

A slightly smaller proportion of respondents (41%) were in favour of freedom of choice to vaccinate than in the previous survey (47%).

Those with a university education (93%–95%) had significantly greater trust in vaccinations than those with only a basic education (75%–83%). Supporters of the Green Party expressed slightly greater trust in vaccinations than other respondents, while supporters of the Finns Party and the Centre Party expressed less.[8]

[7] TB2026-liite, s. 35 https://www.tieteentiedotus.fi/tiedebarometri.html

[8] TB2026-liite, s. 36 https://www.tieteentiedotus.fi/tiedebarometri.html



Science, everyday life, and beliefs 2001–2026

Views on the relationships between science, everyday life, and beliefs have been followed in the Science Barometer survey since the early 2000s. For example, support for the theory of evolution rose relatively steadily from 2007 (66%) to the early 2020s, but now appears to have stalled at 75%. Of the major political parties, the Centre Party's supporters clearly account for the largest number of those who question the theory of evolution. Of these respondents, 19% did not accept the theory of evolution, and as many declined to answer. Support for the theory of evolution was strongest among supporters of the Finns Party and the Left Alliance.[9]

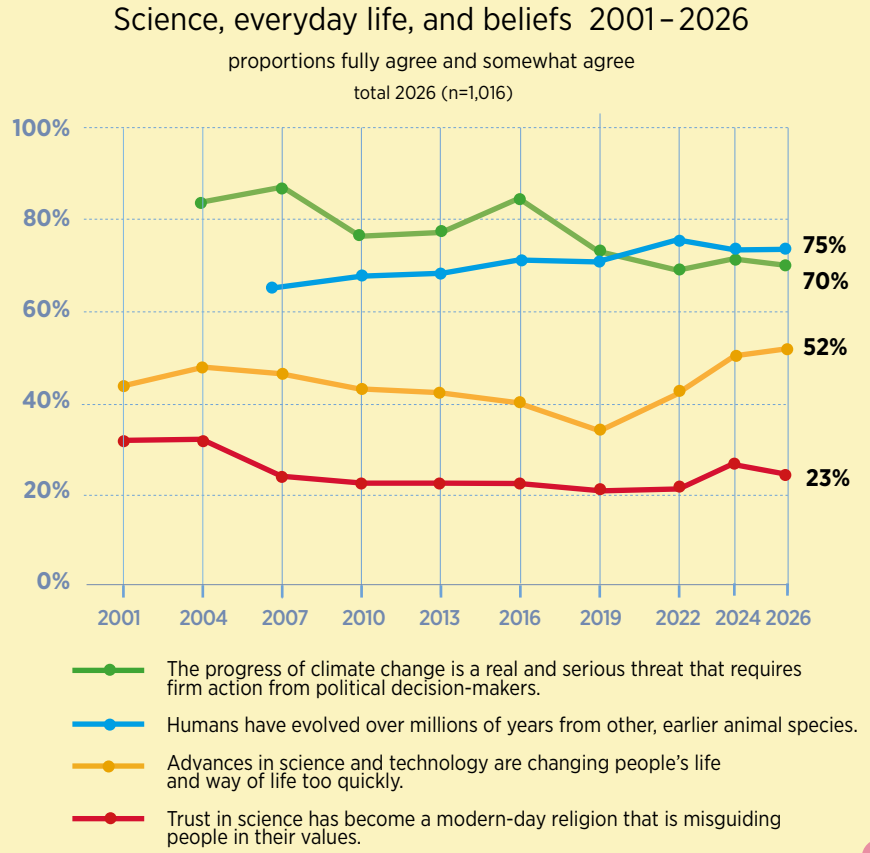
The number of people who regard climate change as a serious threat has declined, even though the scientific evidence on the subject has, at the same time, become more robust. One possible reason is that the issue is now less prominent in the media than it was 20 years ago. Furthermore, the issue has become highly politicised, leading to a divide in opinions regarding the importance and effects of climate action.

Agreement with the statement "advances in science and technology are changing people's life and way of life too quickly" decreased from 2004 to 2019, but then began to rise. In 2019 the figure was 35%, and in 2026 it stands at 52%.

Agreement with the statement "trust in science has become a modern-day religion" also declined steadily until 2007 but thereafter remained at the same level until 2022, when it began to rise slightly.

Based on these results it seems there are increasing concerns about the negative effects of science and technology. One possible factor is artificial intelligence, towards which scepticism has increased (see p. 24).

[9] TB2026-liite, s. 92 https://www.tieteentiedotus.fi/tiedebarometri.html



Views on the state of science less optimistic

Respondents have become more pessimistic across the board about the state of science in Finland over the course of this decade, particularly so with regard to the general standard science and technology.

By age group, respondents under 30 had a more critical assessment of the standard of science and technology in Finland.[10]

On the other hand, the majority of respondents still considered the overall standard of technology (80%) and science (76%) to be at least fairly good.

Only a quarter of respondents (25%) considered the level of research funding in Finland to be sufficient, and views on this have become more negative.

Two out of three respondents considered that the independence of research, as well as the ethics and morals of researchers, were at a good level. Opinions have become somewhat more critical compared with the 2022 survey.

Respondents' assessments of how well science and its findings are communicated to the public have also declined quite markedly.

Assessments of the value of research to society and of the state of researchers' freedom of expression have also become more pessimistic.

[10] Tiedebarometri2026-liite, s. 69 https://www.tieteentiedotus.fi/tiedebarometri.html

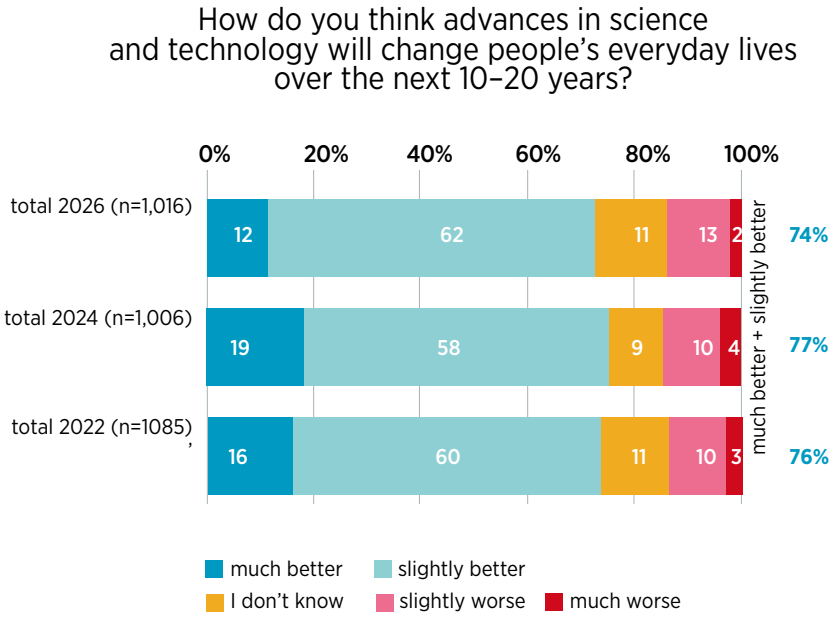


Views on the future

Of the survey respondents, 74% believed advances in science and technology would improve people's everyday lives over the next 10–20 years. Fifteen per cent believed things will get worse. Views had become slightly more pessimistic compared with previous surveys.

Views were largely similar across all groups surveyed, although those aged 70 and over (82%) were clearly more optimistic about the future than those aged under 30 (62%). The differences between supporters of the various parties were even greater. Supporters of the Green Party (89%) and the National Coalition Party (88%) were clearly more optimistic than supporters of the Finns Party (59%) and the Left Alliance (66%).[11]

[11] Tiedebarometri2026-liite, s. 68 https://www.tieteentiedotus.fi/tiedebarometri.html



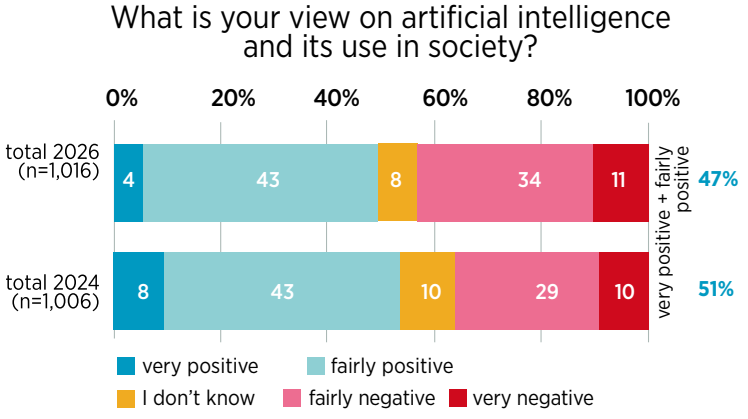
Opinions on AI have become more pessimistic

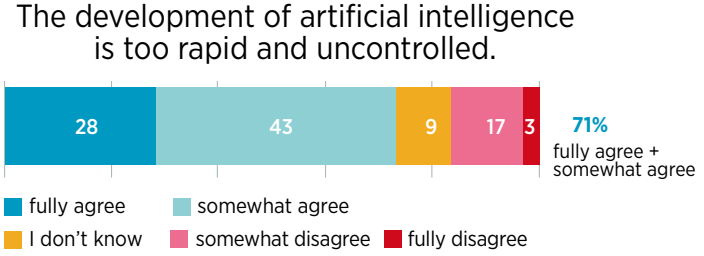
Views on AI and its applications in society have become somewhat more pessimistic. Two years ago, 51% of Science Barometer respondents viewed AI more positively than negatively; this time, the figure was down to 47%. Now, only 4% of respondents had a very positive view on AI, down from 8% two years ago.

Of those surveyed, 71% agreed with the statement “the development of artificial intelligence is too rapid and uncontrolled”, while only 20% disagreed.

A respondent’s background had a strong influence on their attitude towards AI. For example, 65% of those with a university education and 72% of senior staff took a positive stance. Supporters of the National Coalition Party (67%) had by far the most positive attitude towards AI, while supporters of the Left Alliance (29%) had the most negative.[12]

[12] TB2026-liite, s. 30 https://www.tieteentiedotus.fi/tiedebarometri.html





Science and society

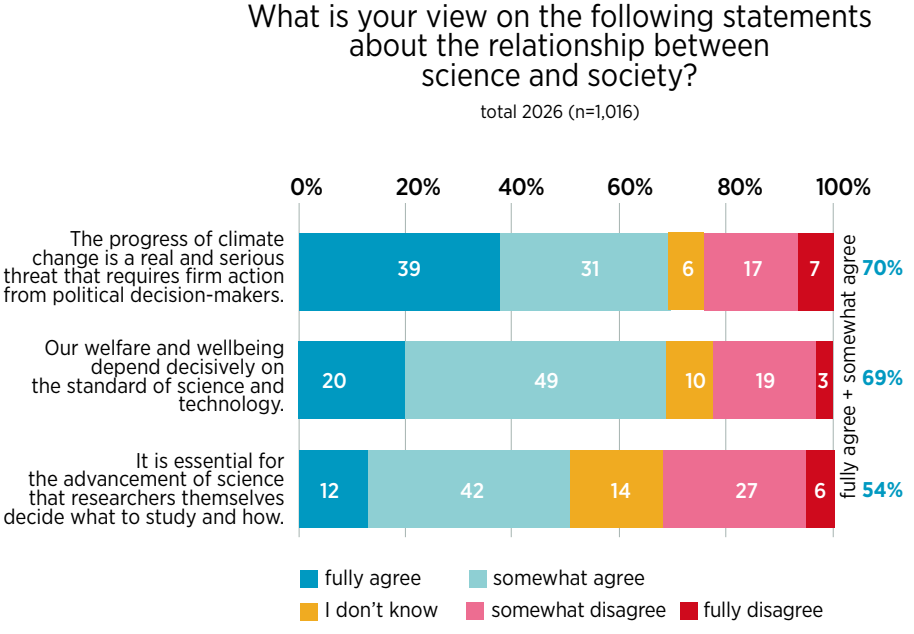
A total of 70% of respondents subscribed to the statement that "climate change is a real and serious threat that requires firm action", while 24% disagreed.

The strongest factor explaining scepticism about climate change was the respondent's political stance. Among respondents who placed themselves on the right of the political spectrum, 43% questioned the threat of climate change and the firmness of political action, compared with just 10% of those who placed themselves on the left. Sixty per cent of Finns Party supporters disagreed with the climate statement. Supporters of the Left Alliance (90%) and the Green Party (87%) were more likely than others to call for firmer climate action, while supporters of the Centre Party (66%) and the Finns Party (33%) were less likely to do so.[13]

Just over two-thirds of respondents believed that "our welfare and well-being depend decisively on the standard of science and technology". One-fourth disagreed.

More than half of the respondents (54%) believed that "it is essential for the advancement of science that researchers themselves decide what to study". The proportion of respondents who expressed trust in the freedom of science had fallen slightly since the previous survey (59%)[14]. This time, 33% of respondents disagreed. Support for the freedom of science was lower amongst supporters of the Finns Party (32%) and the Centre Party (45%).[15]

[13] TB2026-liite, s. 79 https://www.tieteentiedotus.fi/tiedebarometri.html
[14] TB2026-liite, s. 22 https://www.tieteentiedotus.fi/tiedebarometri.html
[15] TB2026-liite, s. 23 https://www.tieteentiedotus.fi/tiedebarometri.html



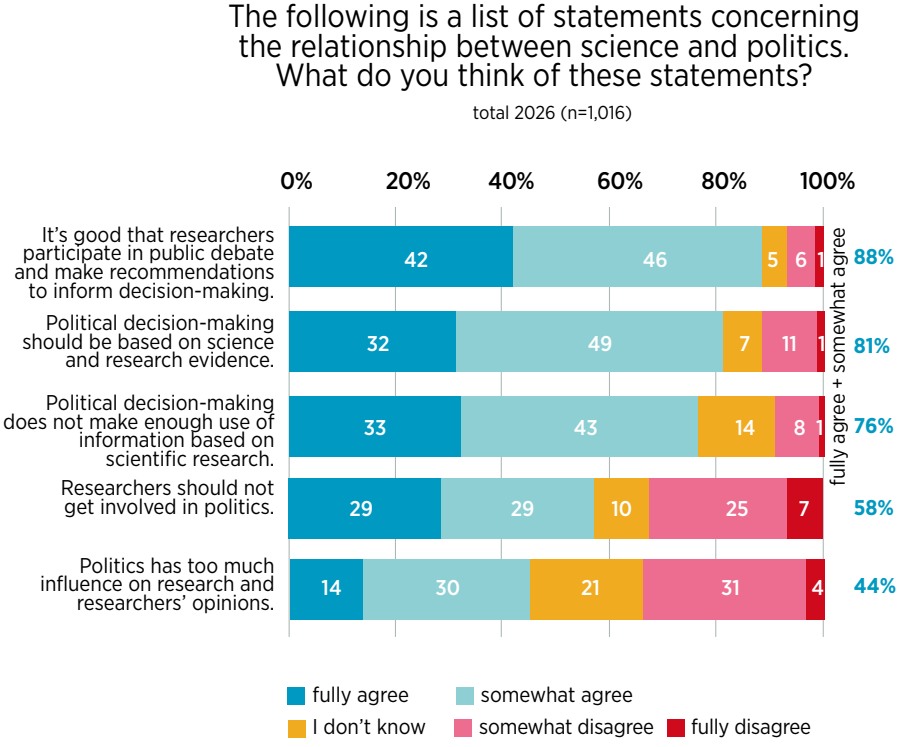
Relationship of science and politics

The survey results suggest that Finns are strongly in favour of researchers participating in public debate and making recommendations to inform decision-making (88%). Furthermore, 76% of respondents believed that political decision-making does not make enough use of scientific research.

On the other hand, the majority (58%) believed that researchers should not get involved in politics, while a third disagreed (32%).

The statements were first included in the 2022 survey, and overall levels of agreement remained largely unchanged, although support for using research in political decision-making increased slightly.[16]

[16] TB2026-liite, s. 25 https://www.tieteentiedotus.fi/tiedebarometri.html

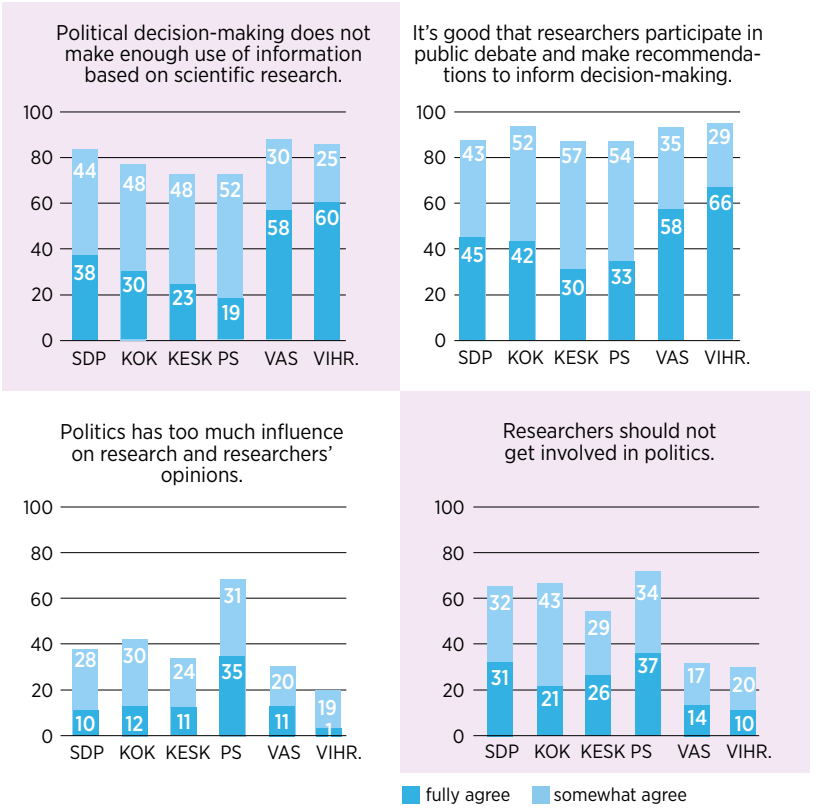


Opinions by political party affiliation

A clear majority of supporters of various political parties believed that researchers should participate in public debate and that political decision-making should be based on research evidence. By contrast, respondents' political views strongly influenced their attitudes towards statements about political influence on research and researchers' involvement in politics.

Sixty-one per cent of those on the political right believed that politics has too much influence on researchers' opinions. Only 31% of those on the left of the political spectrum agreed.[17] Supporters of the Finns Party (71%) and the National Coalition Party (64%) were most likely to see researchers' involvement in politics as a problem, while supporters of the Green Party (30%) and the Left Alliance (31%) were less likely to do so.

[17] TB2026-liite, s. 26 https://www.tieteentiedotus.fi/tiedebarometri.html



KOK = National Coalition Party / SDP = Social Democratic Party / KESK = Centre Party / VIHR = Green Party / PS = Finns Party / VAS = Left Alliance

Funding for science

Respondents' opinions were more sharply divided on statements concerning the funding of science, and demographic differences were more pronounced. A total of 52% of respondents agreed with the statement that "much unnecessary research is done with taxpayers' money". Supporters of the Finns Party (81%) and the National Coalition Party (55%) were more likely than others to hold this view.

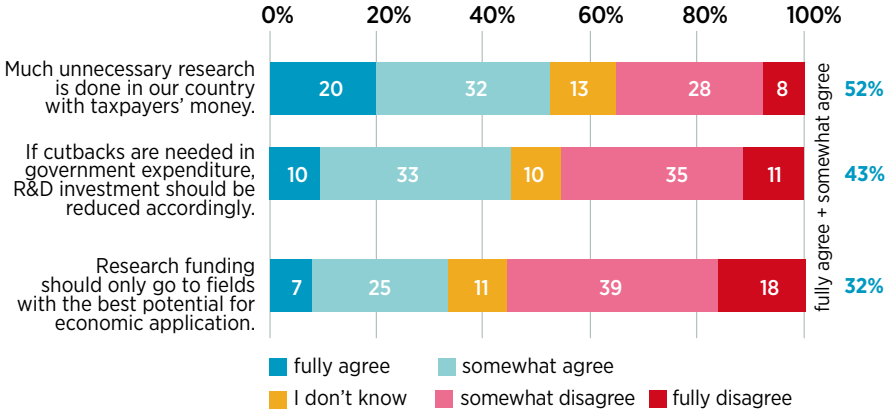
However, cuts to research spending, like cuts to other areas of public spending, met with slightly more opposition (46%) than support (43%). Support for cuts was higher among supporters of the Finns Party (61%) and the National Coalition Party (48%) than among other respondents.

Considerably more respondents opposed allocating research funding exclusively to fields with the greatest potential for economic application (57%) than supported it (32%). Support for this was once again strongest among Finns Party (53%) and National Coalition Party (46%) voters.

Generally speaking, views on these issues have not changed much since the previous survey.

What is your view on the following statements about the relationship between science and society?

total 2026 (n=1,016)



Opinions on research funding by political party affiliation

proportions of fully + somewhat agree

	SDP	PS	KOK	KESK	VIHR	VAS
Much unnecessary research is done in our country with taxpayers' money.	45	81	55	49	13	22
If cutbacks are needed in government expenditure, R&D investment should be reduced accordingly.	37	61	48	43	21	27
Research funding should only go to fields with the best potential for economic application.	23	53	46	30	7	19

Most trusted scientists

Respondents were asked to name a maximum of three scientists whom they considered trustworthy. One in four respondents named at least one. This may suggest that the Finnish public is still not very familiar with researchers.

The researchers or experts with a research background who received the most mentions are, almost without exception, familiar to the general public from television.

Esko Valtaoja, Professor Emeritus of Astronomy, was once again voted the most trusted scientist. Liisa Keltikangas-Järvinen, Professor Emeritus of Psychology, came second. Other new names on the list include Timo R. Stewart, a researcher in political history, and Teivo Teivainen, a professor of world politics.

Esko Valtaoja	27
Liisa Keltikangas-Järvinen	22
Timo R. Stewart	12
Ilmari Käihkö	9
Timo Miettinen	9
Teivo Teivainen	9
Mika Aaltola	8
Kari Enqvist	8
Sixten Korkman	8
Hanna Nohynek	7
Charly Salonius-Pasternak	7

Strongest interest shown in natural sciences

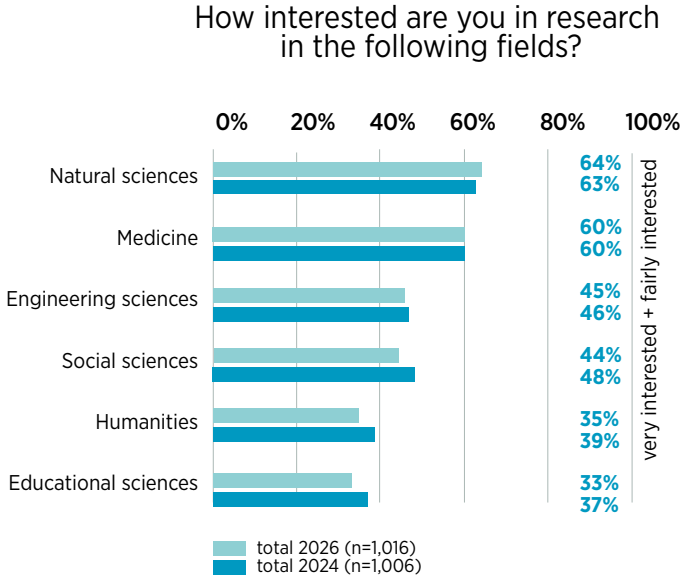
People in Finland are most interested in the natural sciences (64%), medicine (60%) and engineering sciences (45%). Their popularity remained roughly the same as in the previous survey.

By contrast, interest in the social sciences (44%), the humanities (35%) and educational sciences (33%) fell slightly.

This result differs somewhat from earlier foreign studies in which medicine has usually come out on top. Strong public interest in the natural sciences seems to be a distinctively Finnish phenomenon.

There are some clear differences in interest in various scientific disciplines depending on the respondents' political views. For example, the humanities are of considerably greater interest to respondents who place themselves on the left (67%) than to those who place themselves on the right (22%) of the political spectrum. By contrast, engineering sciences are of considerably greater interest to those who place themselves on the right (65%) than to those who place themselves on the left (32%).[18]

[18] TB2026-liite, s. 43 https://www.tieteentiedotus.fi/tiedebarometri.html



Defence forces, police and universities

The most trusted institutions and organisations have long been ranked in the same order in the Finnish Science Barometer: the defence forces, the police and universities. Trust in them has remained more or less at the same level in recent years, although trust in universities has fallen slightly in the 2020s. At the same time, trust in universities of applied sciences has risen.

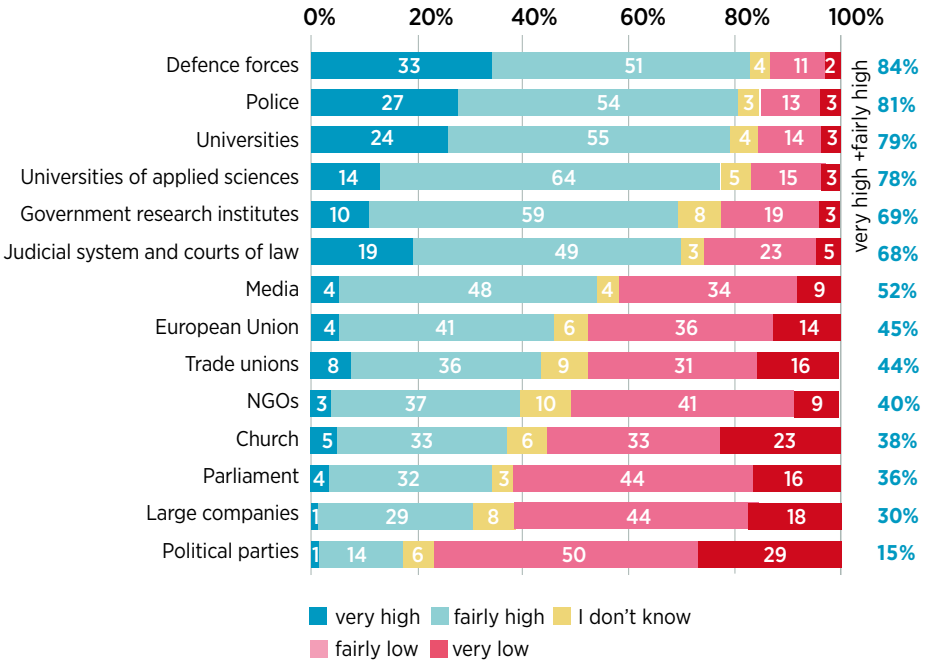
The most striking change has been in public trust in Parliament, which has virtually collapsed. Trust in Parliament has fallen from 57% of respondents in 2022 to just 36% today. Trust in the judicial system and the media has also fallen somewhat in the 2020s.[19]

Levels of trust in universities vary to some extent according to the respondents' political views. SDP (92%) and Green Party (91%) supporters expressed the greatest trust in universities. The difference between respondents identifying with the left (85%) and those identifying with the right (60%) was fairly substantial.[20] This is probably explained by the fact that trust fell most sharply among supporters of the Finns Party: Only 48% of Finns Party supporters now expressed trust in universities and other higher education institutions, down from 61% in 2024.[21]

There is also a marked gap between Finns Party supporters and other respondents in trust in the media: only one-third (34%) of Finns Party supporters trusted the media.

[19] TB2026-liite, s. 55 https://www.tieteentiedotus.fi/tiedebarometri.html
[20] TB2026-liite, s. 67 https://www.tieteentiedotus.fi/tiedebarometri.html
[21] https://www.tieteentiedotus.fi/files/Tiedebarometri_2024_liitteet.pdf

The following is a list of a number of social institutions.
How high is your trust in them?
total 2026 (n=1,016)



Changes in trust 2001–2026

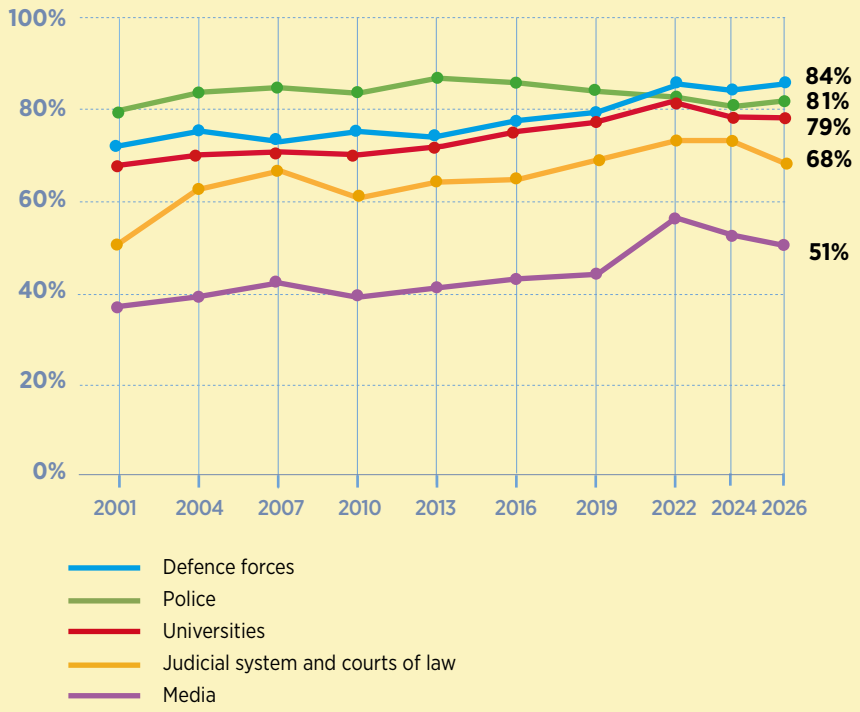
There has been a great deal of talk recently of a general decline in trust in institutions. This is also reflected to some extent in the results of the Science Barometer, as trust in several key institutions has fallen slightly in the 2020s.

The decline can be explained by the divergence in attitudes described above, for example according to the respondents' political views: not everyone shares the same level of trust.

However, the change is not particularly dramatic. If we compare the results with those from the early 2000s, trust in institutions is largely at the same level as, or slightly higher than, it was then.

Trust in institutions 2001 – 2026

proportions of very high and fairly high



The Science Barometer survey

The Finnish Science Barometer survey has tracked public opinion on science and the role of science and technology in society since 2001. The survey is nowadays conducted every other year.

The survey data were collected between 15 and 26 May 2026 with Forum, a panel of respondents administered by the polling agency Verian using online data transfer.

A total of 1,016 persons participated in the survey. The respondents represent the Finnish population aged 18 and over (excl. residents of Åland).

To improve the reliability of statistical conclusions, the data are weighted by gender, age and place of residence to better represent the population.

The confidence interval for the results at the level of the total dataset is +/– 3.1 percentage points and slightly higher for results for specific groups, depending on group size.[22]

The Finnish Science Barometer is produced by Tieteen tiedotus, the Finnish Society for Science Communication.
The data are stored in the Finnish Social Science Data Archive.

[22] TB2026-liite, s. 4–6 https://www.tieteentiedotus.fi/tiedebarometri.html



Microscope workshop, The Night of Science 2025, photo by Jaana Tihtonen



Science event at the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, The Night of Science 2025, photo by Jaana Tihtonen