

Policy priority survey March 2021

Summary report

As a trusted and authoritative voice, the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC) aims to ensure that chemistry has a recognised and influential role in science and society. One of our aims is to influence decision makers in areas that impact the chemical sciences, via our policy work. 'Policy work' is when we advise decision-makers, for example Government and Parliamentarians, on **decisions related to the chemical sciences**. In March 2021, we sent out a survey seeking views from our members on what their priorities were within three of our existing work areas – **research and innovation policy, UK and Global chemicals policy, and health challenges**. These work areas have been informed by results of our [2019 Policy Priorities Survey](#).

In total, we received 1240 responses with enough information to analyse, although not all respondents answered survey questions on every topic so sample size varies by question.

We would like to thank everyone who responded to the survey. It will help inform our work programme for 2022. The results will be an important consideration in developing the RSC's priority policy themes for 2022 to 2023, which the relevant RSC Governance bodies will consider this Autumn and we will publish an update later this year, after those meetings have taken place. The key survey results are presented here.

Survey results

Research and innovation policy

To find out which research and innovation policy issues were most important to members, survey respondents were asked to give each issue a score from 0-10, where 0 was not important and 10 was extremely important. Respondents were given the opportunity to give different issues the same score and to select 'don't know' instead of giving a score.. The score distributions for research and innovation policy issues are shown in Figure 1.

How important or unimportant are the following areas of research and innovation policy to the chemistry research and innovation community? Proportion of respondents scoring each factor. (924-936 respondents)

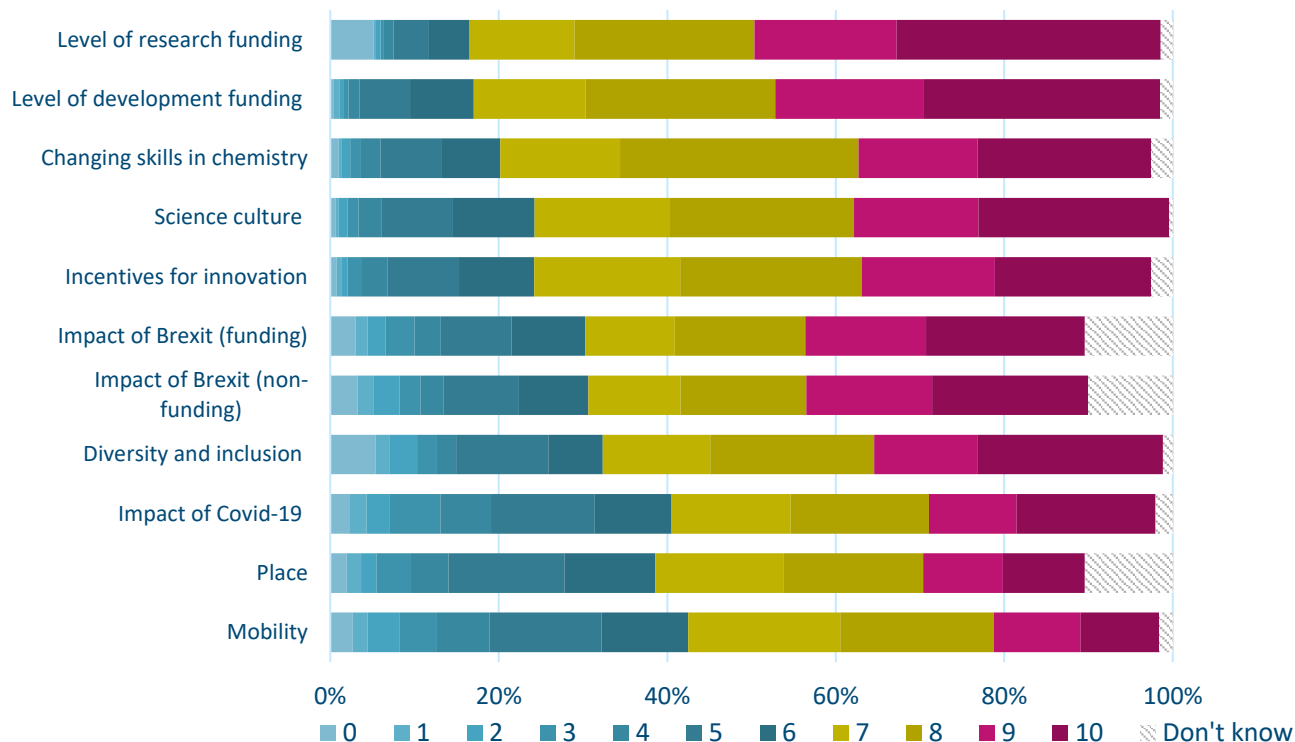


Figure 1 Score distribution for the importance of different areas of research and innovation policy to the chemistry community. In order of decreasing overall weighted score¹ per respondent (top = highest score). (924-936 respondents).

All the areas of research and innovation policy received a score of 6 or more from the majority of respondents, indicating that all the issues identified are important to the chemistry community. Levels of investment in research and innovation consistently emerged as the top community priority with minor variations between different groups of respondents. Science culture was identified as important across the respondent population but is a lower priority for mid- and established career respondents than students and early career respondents.

¹ Overall weighted score per respondent calculated as follows: (SUM[score * n respondents giving score]) / Total N respondents giving a score. Overall weighted scores for all issues can be found in the accompanying slides.

UK chemicals strategy

In the RSC's work to support the UK government in developing a new UK-wide chemicals strategy [we have identified four themes: education, innovation, circular economy and regulation](#). To find out which issues within these themes were most important to members, respondents were again asked to give issues a score from 0-10. These issues were grouped according to the four themes. Across the four themes, issues associated with Education emerged as high priority for respondents. Environmental monitoring was a high scoring priority within regulation. Figure 2 shows the score distribution for the two highest priority issues in each theme.

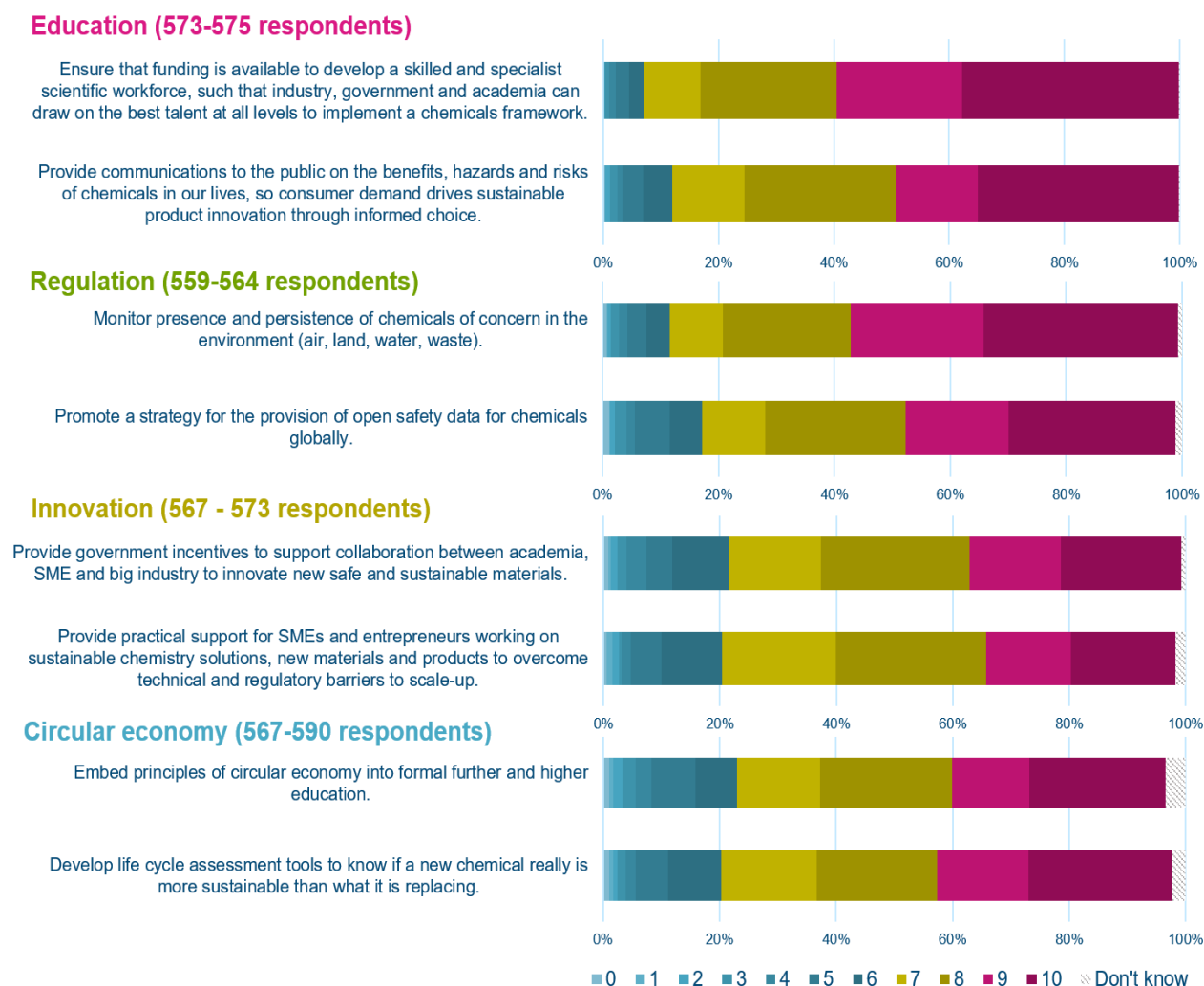


Figure 2 Score distribution for the two highest priority issues in each theme.

Global chemicals policy

The RSC is [calling for](#) the establishment of a new independent UN-led Intergovernmental Platform for Chemicals and Waste Management that is on a par with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). This is in response to the UN Global Chemicals Outlook II report which stated the need for a new science-policy interface for chemicals and waste at UN level.

In our policy priorities survey, we asked respondents whether they supported this call to action, giving options of 'yes', 'no', 'undecided' and 'I don't know enough about it'. 69% respondents supported this call to action, selecting yes (out of 433 respondents to this question). The majority of those who did not select yes selected 'I don't know enough about it'.

Health challenges

We asked members how much or little impact they thought the chemical sciences could have in addressing a range of health challenges. Challenges were scored from 0 to 10 with 0 being no impact at all and 10 being an extremely large impact. The full distribution of scores is shown in Figure 3.

How much or little impact do you think the chemical sciences can have in addressing the following health challenges? Rate each challenge from 0 to 10, with 0 being no impact at all and 10 being an extremely large impact. (678-684 respondents).

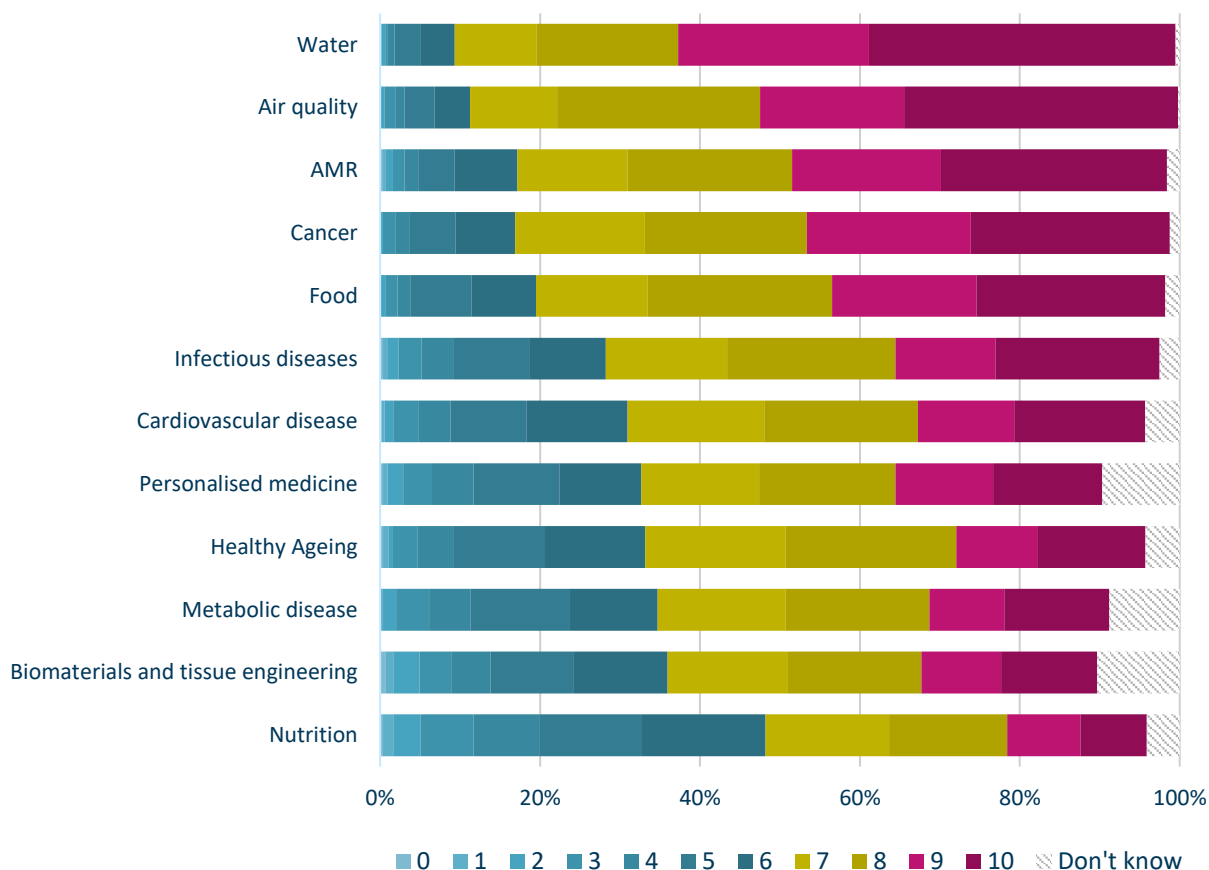


Figure 3 Score distribution for the impact of the chemical sciences in health challenges, in order of decreasing overall weighted score per respondent (top = highest score). (678-684 respondents).

Many respondents indicated they felt the chemical sciences could have impact in all areas, scoring an 8 or above for each challenge. When asked why they felt chemistry could have an impact in addressing these challenges, respondents were motivated by issues they felt were important for society (81%, 561 respondents). 86% of respondents felt that the chemical sciences could make an important contribution to tackling these challenges working with other disciplines (561 respondents).

We asked respondents what they saw as enablers and barriers to the chemical sciences achieving impact in these health challenges. Themes that emerged as enablers for the chemical sciences in health were collaboration and aspects of the research landscape - including funding, innovation and infrastructure (out of 278 responses). When asked about barriers to the chemical sciences achieving its possible impact in health challenges funding, engagement with government and public and political will emerged as themes (out of 328 responses).

Next steps

We will use the survey results, alongside an assessment of the policy environment and stakeholder engagement to develop the RSC's priority policy themes for 2022 to 2023, ensuring they support the RSC's strategy. The relevant RSC Governance bodies will consider them in autumn 2021 and we will update members later this year.

More information on our policy work in these and other areas can be found on [our corporate website](#), while future updates will be published in Voice and the member networks newsletter. If you would like to get involved, we would like to hear from you:

- Join one of our policy communities: our [Environment and Regulation Collective \(EnReC\)](#) helps inform our work on environmental policy and chemicals regulation and our [Research and Development Landscape Collective \(ReDLaC\)](#) helps inform our work on R&D, from funding and commercialisation to international collaboration mobility and research culture.
- Share your story: we would welcome case studies on the themes discussed in this summary, particularly around chemistry and global challenges.

Please get in touch via policy@rsc.org.

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