



Is Scotland Getting Innovation Right?



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BritainThinks

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Introduction

As we enter a new decade, the Scottish public has expressed an appetite for innovation to be used for public good, prioritising social issues even if they don't necessarily lead to economic gains.

Across Scotland there are high levels of public uncertainty about what the future might hold, but there is clear support for taking risks and experimenting to help tackle the major issues of the day – from improving public health to building an inclusive economy that works for everybody, with action on the causes of our climate emergency taking precedence.

However, this public support for new thinking and new ideas comes with the caveat that many people in Scotland currently feel excluded from the processes of social innovation. And many people feel that the benefits of innovation are not equally spread across Scotland's geography and population. Despite this, people in Scotland have expressed an openness to participate in the process of innovation, with a majority noting that they would be happy for their personal data to be used in support of innovation on social issues.

The Scottish public want to see investment and support for new ideas which address longer-term social issues and prioritise universal public good for the largest number of people, even if there is not necessarily any economic benefit.

These findings are a call to action for those of us in Scotland interested in social innovation, to think creatively and act differently about how we seek to address the major societal issues facing Scotland today. New methods to empower and engage people in the development and application of radical ideas must be embraced across sectors in Scotland. The insight in this report should help to inform, encourage and support an agenda of ambitious, bold, cross-sector (and cross party) thinking on new ways of working to address the complex social challenges of this new decade.

In Scotland, we have everything necessary to be a world leader in innovation for social good and there are many great examples of this already taking place across the country at every level. But we can and must do more if we are to proactively and meaningfully address the challenges of the next decade head-on and shape a fairer and more inclusive and empowered future for everyone.

Adam Lang

Head of Nesta in Scotland

Background and methodology

This summary report is based on the results of a survey of adults in Scotland, undertaken between 1–7 November 2019. In addition to the nationally representative sample of 2,901 UK adults, the survey was run with an additional boost resulting in a sample of 1,031 in Scotland. The data has been weighted by age, gender, and urban/rural split.

This report outlines the findings from the survey for Scottish respondents only.

Summary of findings

What Scotland thinks about the future

In Scotland there is uncertainty about the future – as well as a sense of disempowerment in shaping the future of the country. However, the public, particularly younger people, are open to change and accept that risks need to be taken.

A majority (60 per cent) of Scottish people report feeling uncertain about the future and half (50 per cent) say that they often feel the world is changing too quickly.

There is widespread negativity about the long-term future of the UK within Scotland, 44 per cent of Scottish people disagree with the statement 'I feel positive about the long-term future for the UK'.

Alongside this, nearly three quarters (72 per cent) of the Scottish sample say there is little to no agreement around the long-term vision for the country, which is again slightly higher than within the overall sample (66 per cent).

A majority (61 per cent) of Scottish people report they do not feel they have the opportunity to shape this future, with around a fifth (22 per cent) saying they have 'no opportunity' at all. Half (51 per cent) of Scottish people say that they believe that under the current system, only people who are well-off and influential are able to get involved in innovation.

What Scotland thinks about innovation and change

People in Scotland have a strong desire for innovation and change.

A majority of those in Scotland (69 per cent) believe that allowing people to take risks and fail is what drives society forward.

A clear majority of Scottish people (61 per cent) believe that change in culture and society is usually a good thing.

Younger people are particularly likely to agree with this statement (70 per cent of 18–24 year olds).

What Scotland thinks about innovation and who benefits from it

Recognition of the term 'innovation' is very high, with few Scottish people indicating that they do not know what it means. People also readily identify the impact of innovation in addressing social issues such as improving public health and education.

However, the public feel some currently benefit more than others, with the young, those living in towns and cities, people in work and with higher education likely to reap more from innovation than others.

When asked to define 'innovation' most definitions centre around new ideas and developments, as well as a sense of creativity, tackling challenges and 'thinking outside the box'. For example:

'Creating something new – be that an idea or a product'

'New, an advance, an improvement'

'Something new and unique or forward thinking'

'Progress and ingenuity, looking at new ways of doing things'

People have heard about innovation in a number of key areas, in particular climate change, health and education, and there are some notable differences between older and younger people.

Older people are more likely to report hearing about innovations making the population healthier (74 per cent of 55–64 year olds, and 75 per cent of individuals over 65).

Younger people are more likely to report hearing about innovations improving local communities (62 per cent of 18–24 year olds), increasing employment (53 per cent of 18–24 year olds), and improving education (71 per cent of 18–24 year olds).

Innovation is seen by some to have made Scottish people's lives better across a number of areas.

Figure 1 % saying they are aware of any innovation in this area.

Q4. How much innovation, if any, have you seen or heard about in each of the following areas?

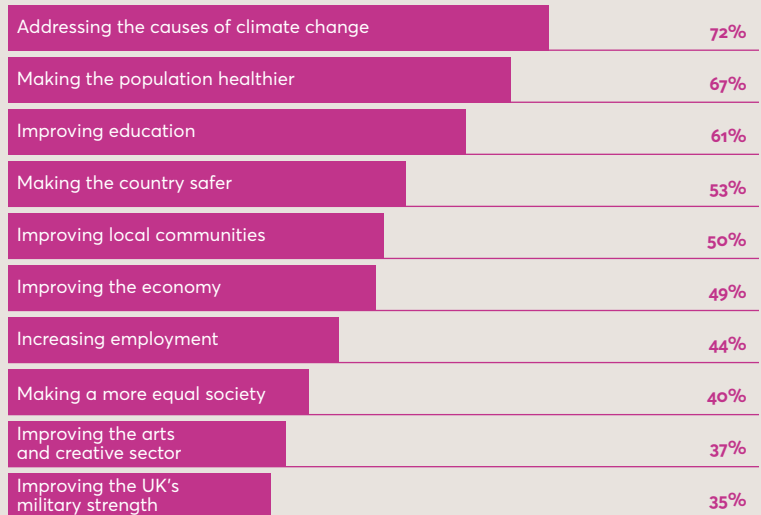
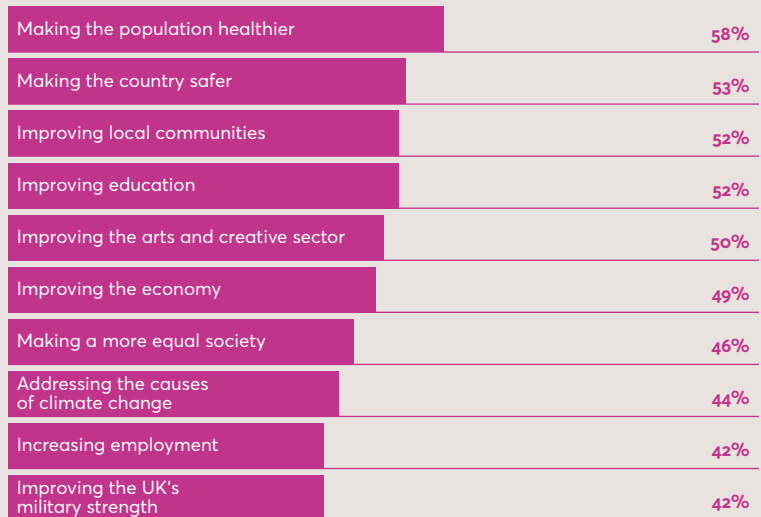


Figure 2 % selecting that each option has made their lives better.

Q5. To what extent, if at all, has innovation in each of these areas made your life better, or worse?



There are some notable differences between younger and older individuals in reporting which areas of innovation have made their lives better.

Older people (65+) are more likely to say innovations making the population healthier have made their lives better (65 per cent).

Younger people (18–24 year olds) are more likely to say innovations in addressing the causes of climate change (59 per cent), increasing employment (54 per cent), the arts and creative sector (62 per cent), and education (77 per cent) have made their lives better.

Scottish people feel there are some who are clear ‘winners’ as a result of innovation, whilst other groups are less likely to be seen to benefit.

Across the public majorities feel that innovation has had a positive impact on the following groups:

Table 1 Who benefits? Q3. How positive or negative is the impact of innovation on each of the following groups of people?

Group	% positive impact
People in work	61%
Younger people (aged 18 and under)	60%
People who live in towns and cities	59%
People who went to university	59%
Disabled people, or people with long term health conditions	58%
People on higher incomes	58%
People like you	54%

There are significant demographic variations in the likelihood to say that innovation has had a positive impact on ‘people like you’.

18–24 year olds (67 per cent) and 25–34 year olds (59 per cent) are more likely than all other age brackets to say innovation has had a positive impact on them, whilst those aged 55–64 are the least likely (47 per cent).

Individuals within the AB SEG (61 per cent) and C1 (58 per cent) are more likely than those who are C2DE (43 per cent) to say innovation has had a positive impact on people like them.

Only minorities believe that innovation has had a positive impact on the groups in the table below.

Table 2 Q3. How positive or negative is the impact of innovation on each of the following groups of people?

Group	% positive impact	% negative impact
People who live in the countryside	41%	10%
People who did not go to university	38%	12%
People who are from a BAME background	37%	7%
Older people (aged 65+)	37%	21%
People on lower incomes (e.g. minimum wage)	29%	23%
People who are unemployed	27%	25%

Notably, almost as many people believe that innovation has a negative impact on people who are on lower incomes (29 per cent positive, 23 per cent negative), and on people who are unemployed (27 per cent positive, 25 per cent negative).

What Scotland thinks about how innovation should be targeted

Scottish people would most like to see innovation in addressing the causes of climate change, making the population healthier, improving the economy and improving education. While the economy is identified as an area for innovation, a significant majority of the Scottish public wants to see innovation used to tackle social issues, regardless of whether there are economic benefits to doing so.

There are clear indications as to the principles that people would like to be applied to innovation funding:

- Ensuring that innovations benefit a large number of people – even if the comparative benefit they experience from this is small. Scottish people are far more likely to say the Government should prioritise investing in innovation that has a smaller positive

Table 3 How innovation should be targeted. Q6. In which of these areas do you think that innovation is most important to society?

Areas for innovation	% selecting each in their top 3
Addressing the causes of climate change	48%
Making the population healthier	46%
Improving the economy	41%
Improving education	38%
Making the country safer	31%
Increasing employment	29%
Making a more equal society	29%
Improving local communities	14%
Improving the UK's military strength	8%
Improving the arts and creative sector	4%

impact on a larger number of people (80 per cent) than a significant positive impact on a small number of people (20 per cent).

- Ensuring that innovation benefits the entire country – even if that means the pace of progress in better off areas is slower than it could be. Seventy-one per cent of Scottish people say that when investing in innovation, governments should focus on making everywhere in the country more prosperous, even if this means that the progress in better-off areas is slower than it might have been otherwise, compared to just 29 per cent who say that when investing in innovation, governments should focus on improving a country's economy overall, even if some places (e.g. certain cities and towns) do better than others.
- Solving social problems – even if there is no economic benefit to doing so. Seventy-one per cent of Scottish people say that the Government should invest in innovations which solve social problems without any economic benefit compared to 29 per cent who say the Government should only invest in innovations where there will be an economic benefit to the country.

In other areas the principles that should guide innovation are less clear.

Three-fifths (62 per cent) of Scottish people say that innovation should focus on the long term. However, only 56 per cent say that innovation should focus on improving the lives of future generations rather than current generations.

A clear majority of Scottish people say they would be happy to share their personal data for innovation to take place (60 per cent).

There are no clear majorities of Scottish people who say that:

- We should be prepared to limit the use of innovation and new technology if they have the potential to lead to inequality or disadvantage certain groups of people (55 per cent).
- Decisions about innovation should be made by experts, even when they disagree with most of the general public (54 per cent).
- Innovation is worthwhile even if it means some people lose their jobs (53 per cent).

What Scotland thinks about who should make decisions about innovation

The Scottish public feel that they should have the power to make decisions over innovation, but most currently believe they have none. The public also supports central government making decisions about innovations. In contrast, business is currently felt to have more power over innovation than they should.

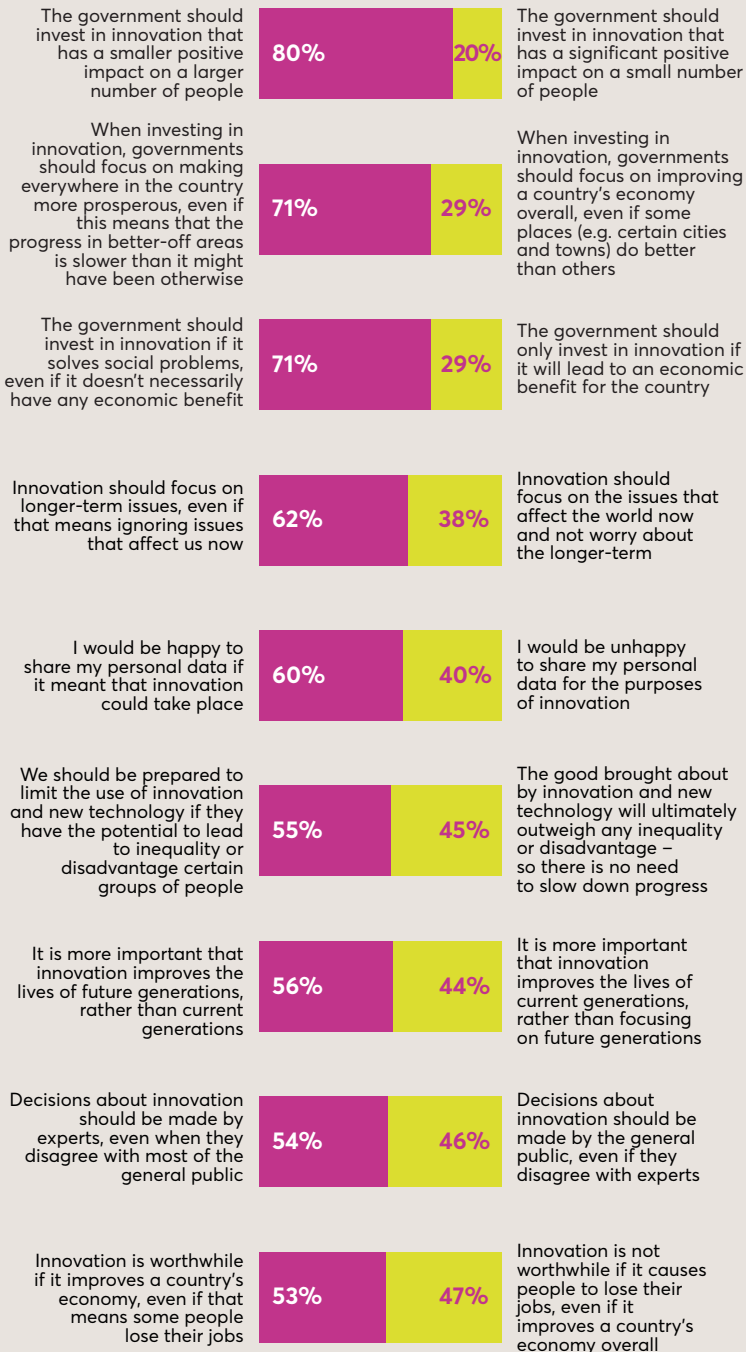
A majority (54 per cent) believe the general public should have decision making power around innovation – however only 2 in 10 (21 per cent) believe they currently do.

Slightly fewer (48 per cent) feel that they themselves ('people like you') should have decision making power around innovation. But, currently, only 17 per cent believe that 'people like you' do in fact have this power.

People are most likely to feel that central Government should make decisions around innovation (62 per cent) – this is 9 per cent less than the 71 per cent who believe that central Government currently has this power.

Figure 3 Priorities for investment and further views on innovation.

Q7. For each of the following pairs of statements please indicate which best matches your views.



There were smaller majorities reporting that the Scottish Parliament (55 per cent) should have power, with less than half (44 per cent) feeling that it currently does have power.

At the moment, private sector companies are seen to have far more decision making power (72 per cent) than they should (54 per cent).

The public has a clear view on who should be most responsible at each of the different stages of innovation.

Business are most likely to be considered responsible for the development, production and delivery of new goods and services, and government for planning for the future.

Table 4 Responsibility for innovation. Q12. Of the groups below, please indicate who you think should be most responsible for each of the following stages of innovation.

Stages of innovation						
	Planning for the future	Coming up with new ideas	Developing new ideas	Manufacturing goods	Delivering services	Adapting to change
Responsibility	Government	Mixed	Business	Business	Business	Individuals
Government	62%	8%	12%	3%	30%	27%
Business	11%	42%	58%	85%	55%	18%
Individuals	15%	38%	19%	4%	6%	42%

Conclusion

- The findings of this research represent an opportunity for Scotland to better embrace innovative approaches to solving social issues.
- There is clear public support to explore new ideas, and to take risks, to tackle the major social issues of our time: our climate crisis, improving public health and building an inclusive economy that works for everybody.
- Nesta recently published both our Compendium of Innovation Methods and our 20 Tools for Government Innovation as resources to help those seeking to harness the power of innovation to tackle social issues.
- The Scottish people support a focus on innovation for social good, even if this doesn't necessarily lead to economic gains.
- Those involved in innovation in Scotland, including government, public bodies, businesses, academics and the voluntary sector, must harness this support and work together to address the big issues we face as a society.
- We must ensure that a focus on social innovation in Scotland benefits everyone across society, regardless of where they live or their circumstances. This means better empowering and engaging people in the development of ideas that address the issues that matter to them.
- Scotland has everything necessary to be a world leader in innovation for social good. We must now back this potential with a willingness to act.

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