

# Survey: Trust in science is high, but misinformation is a threat

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Trust in science is rising worldwide, according to a 3M-backed survey released Tuesday, and more people expect it to solve the world's problems.

But the fifth annual 3M State of Science Index also showed many are worried that misinformation could lead to more [public health crises](#), greater societal divisions and lack of action on climate change.

"It's really good to see that trust in [science](#) is high, and that's true in America and around the world, but misinformation threatens scientific credibility," Jayshree Seth, 3M's corporate scientist and chief science advocate, said in an interview. "It's not simply a matter of communicating facts, data and evidence. We need to build that relationship with the public."

Since 2018, 3M has sought to measure global attitudes about science and the role it plays in society to help shade decision-making.

Global research firm Ipsos surveyed 17,000 adults in 17 countries last fall: Australia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Poland, Singapore, South Korea, United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the U.S.

Ninety percent of respondents said they trust science at least somewhat, up from 84% in 2020. About half of respondents said they consider science important in their [everyday lives](#)—and 61% of those under 40 said so.

"The deep level of trust that [younger generations](#) have in science and the increasing role it plays in their lives is a very promising sign for the future," 3M chief executive Mike Roman said in a statement.

Seth said that building and retaining that trust means direct and clear communication packed with context.

"You have to bring people along on how the scientific method works—it relies on data, debate, discussion and discourse," she said. "When new

data is uncovered, new recommendations emerge."

To combat misinformation, which encompasses a range of false, purposely misleading or out-of-context media, consumers need to take the initiative to confirm credibility.

"There's a profound sense of urgency around that," Seth said. "It's a complex problem, and a multifaceted, multidisciplinary approach will be needed."

Other findings in the survey showed 4 out of every 5 respondents said they or a loved one could be displaced by climate change-driven extreme weather events. Overall concern for climate change is also rising.

"To address these concerns, investing in innovations to mitigate the effects of [climate change](#) ranks as a top action for corporations to prioritize —second only to improving health care quality," the survey said.

The study also looked at gaps in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education and opportunities.

"While 87% of people believe it's important to increase diversity and inclusion in STEM fields, 71% say underrepresented minorities often do not receive [equal access](#) to STEM education," the survey found.

Seth said there is a clear imperative from the public to improve access to science education and careers.

"We need a more diverse scientific community to address all the challenges we face," she said. "We want to tell people they can dismantle archetypes, shatter stereotypes and blaze trails. Everyone is the 'science type.' "

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