



Animal Testing – Wales Polling

A Briefing for Welsh Parliamentarians

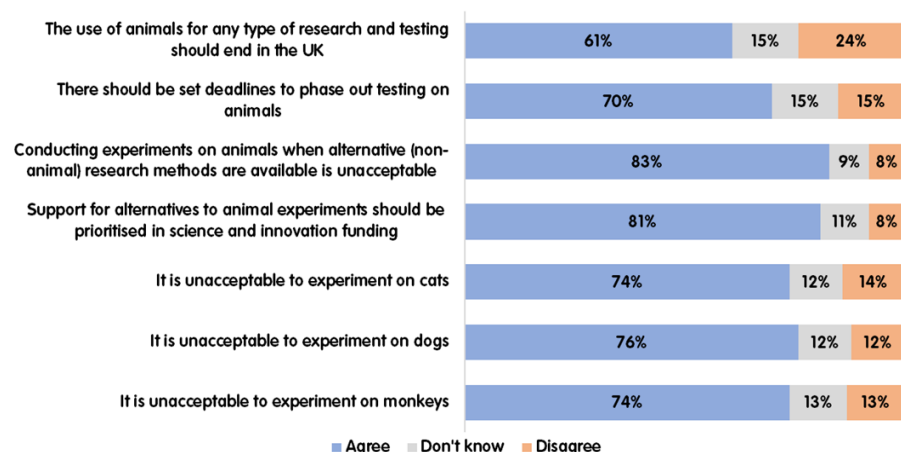
This March, YouGov^[1] carried out an online survey for Cruelty Free International in Wales which shows that people in Wales are against the suffering of animals used in experiments and believe more should be done to prioritise humane and human-relevant alternatives.

Our key findings

Across multiple demographics, including age, gender and work status:

- 8 out of 10 adults living in Wales (81%), believe that alternatives to animal testing should be a funding priority in the UK for science and innovation.
- 8 out of 10 adults living in Wales (83%) find it is unacceptable to use animals for experiments when non-animal methods are available.
- There is a majority (70%) in favour of setting deadlines for phasing out animal tests.
- Over 7 out of 10 adults found it unacceptable to test on cats (74%), dogs (76%) and monkeys (74%).

Question asked: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Ending Animal Testing in the UK

7 out of 10 (70%) adults in Wales think that the UK should set targets and deadlines to phase out animal testing. 61% agree that animal testing should end in the UK.

High levels of support for a phase out of animal tests with deadlines were shared across all Welsh regions: 74% in Mid and West Wales, 73% in South Wales East, 68% in North Wales and South Wales West, 67% in Cardiff and 65% in South Wales Central.

In stark contrast to public opinion, the UK remains Europe's biggest user of animals in research. The latest [Home Office figures published](#) show a staggering 3.4 million animal tests were completed in the UK in 2019. UK animal tests have gone down by only 9% in the last 10 years^[2], on average less than 1% per year.

90% of drugs fail in human trials even though they passed preclinical tests (including animal tests) – whether on safety grounds or because they do not work.^[3] Not only do animal experiments cause suffering to animals in laboratories, but they are also not good science. We need a fundamental change of approach.

Other countries are committing to phasing out animal experiments. The Netherlands has put five ministries together to pro-actively phase out areas of animal testing. In the United States the Environmental Protection Agency has pledged to phase out chemical testing on mammals by 2035 and the Food and Drug Administration has unveiled a roadmap to integrate new methods for drug safety testing. It is time for the UK to step up.

We are calling on the UK to set out a pro-active strategy for ending reliance on outdated and unreliable animal experiments. Like those deployed in other important policy areas such as climate emissions and pollution, the roadmap should contain agreed milestones, targets and timetables.

Support for Use of Alternatives

The YouGov poll revealed that an overwhelming 83% of the Welsh public found it unacceptable to conduct experiments on animals when alternatives methods are available. When broken down across age groups the survey showed:

- the position is held slightly higher amongst older respondents with 86% of those over 55 agreeing [including 60% who said they “strongly” agree] that using animals instead of available alternatives are available is unacceptable.
- 83% of those aged 45-55 feel it is unacceptable.

- 82% of those aged 35-44, 78% 25-34 and 76% between the ages of 18-24 also believe that conducting experiments when alternatives are available is unacceptable.

While there have been significant advances in the past 30 years in the development of non-animal methods that can now replace wholly, or in part, a number of animal tests across several product sectors, we find that actually replacing the animal tests takes much longer than it should. In many cases, the problem lies with the tick-box approach to safety assessment and a lack of enforcement by the authorities.

There are animal tests still being used in Europe, including the UK, for which there are accepted, validated alternatives. [These tests should not be permitted to take place.](#)

Every opportunity should be taken to encourage the use of more appropriate methods as they become available, through workshops, written guidance and advice for regulators and the scientific community.

Support for Investment in Alternatives

The Welsh public strongly supports prioritising investing in the development of more alternatives. A clear majority of 81% of the Welsh public agreed that alternatives to animal experiments should be prioritised in science and innovation funding.

Non-animal methods, or new approach methodologies (NAMs), promise to deliver safer chemicals and more effective medicines more quickly and at less cost than animal tests. However, they are woefully underfunded. Whilst the UK is one of the largest funders of NAMs in Europe (more than € 11 million per year),^[4] the extent of investment is inconsistent and still inadequate. It remains a tiny fraction of R&D spend and significantly less than spend on research that uses animals. To be a competitive global leader in science and innovation, the funding and development of NAMS must be prioritised.

Dogs, Cats, Monkeys

When asked about their views on the use of specific species used in research and testing in the YouGov survey, respondents found consistently the use of dogs, cats and monkeys to be unacceptable.

Nearly three quarters (74%) of the Welsh public think it is unacceptable to test on cats and monkeys and 76% found it unacceptable to test on dogs.

Despite this, UK is one of the top users of primates and dogs in Europe, with 2,850 and 4,227 uses respectively in 2019 alone.

Whilst there is a ban on the use of great apes in the UK, no such ban exists for other primates, despite their substantial similarity, including high levels of intelligence and capacity to suffer. Furthermore, despite growing evidence that dogs perceive, feel and understand much more deeply than previously thought, they continue to be used.

Dogs and primates are routinely used as a second (non-rodent) species in toxicity tests. In the UK, 64% of all dog and 85% of all primate uses in 2019 were for testing human medicines. The expectation is that additional data from the non-rodent will detect harmful effects not detected by rodent tests. However, there is little evidence to support this. In fact, our analysis found that dogs and primates are highly inconsistent predictors of the toxic responses in humans and that tests in dogs and primates increase the probability of a new drug from being free from harmful side effects by just 2% and 0.4%, respectively.^[5] The UK NC3Rs recently published a report on the use of dogs and primates in drug testing, which supports our findings. The study's key finding, based on an evaluation of 172 drug candidates, was that two-thirds of drugs could have been progressed to human clinical trials using just one, instead of two, animal species in longer-term toxicity tests.^[6]

We believe, that with significant attention and resources, the use of dogs and primates, particularly in the areas of second species testing and neuroscience research, can be phased out, which would lead to a substantial reduction in unnecessary animal suffering in the UK.

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[1] Total sample size was 1005 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 10th - 12th March 2021. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all Welsh adults (aged 18+).

[2] by 323,000 from 3,724,726 in 2010 to 3,401,517 in 2019.

[3] Clinical Development Success Rates 2006-2015. Biotechnology Innovation Organization: <https://www.bio.org/sites/default/files/Clinical%20Development%20Success%20Rates%202006-2015%20-%20BIO,%20Biomedtracker,%20Amplion%202016.pdf>

[4] Taylor, K. EU member state government contribution to alternative methods. *Altex*. 2014;31(2):215-18.

[5] Recent efforts to elucidate the scientific validity of animal-based drug tests by the pharmaceutical industry, pro-testing lobby groups, and animal welfare organisations. *BMC Medical Ethics* (2019) 20:16. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12910-019-0352-3>

[6] Opportunities for use of one species for longer-term toxicology testing during drug development: A cross-industry evaluation. *Regulatory Toxicology and Pharmacology* 113, 2020, 104624.

