

Australian community attitudes towards use of animals in research

Summary Information

Background

- AECs must include community members intended to contribute independent ‘societal’ views
- However there is no up-to-date, detailed, or comprehensive information on Australian public understandings of and values associated with animal research
- Clear gap in our understandings of Australian public views on and the values associated with animal research, despite international consensus on many issues

Methods

- Representative survey (Australia only for this iteration)
- Based on instrument used previously in the UK, supplemented by Australia-specific questions/info
- Administered via an online panel provider, sample of 2694
- Balanced in terms of key demographics



Knowledge/awareness about use of animals in research

- Majority say they care about use of animals, but don't feel well informed
- 64% interested in finding out more about the research being done into alternatives to using animals in research
- 70% interested in finding out more about what is being done to improve welfare of animals used in research
- Many respondents were uncertain about which types of animal research were permitted: 40-59% depending on the specific type of application

Public acceptance

- Unsure about animals being used in any kinds of research
- Acceptability increases if research is done for medical reasons, if there are no alternatives, or if there is no unnecessary suffering
- 57% said they disagree with the statement “it does not bother me if animals are used in scientific research,” with 20% saying that they neither agree nor disagree with this statement
- Many are apprehensive and unsure about the use of animals in research
- Use of animals is conditional: 37% agree that it is acceptable to use animals in all types of research where there is no alternative, with 30% disagreeing and 33% sitting on the fence or unsure
- Consistent gender differences around willingness to accept use of animals in research, with females being less accepting

Alternatives to animals

- Despite up to 25% of participants indicating that they don't know about what researchers are doing to reduce using animals in their research, 69% believe they could be doing more to reduce animal suffering
- 56% believe that use of animals for medical research purposes is important for human health
- Many respondents indicated that they felt they didn't know what to think
- Reporting about COVID-19 vaccines likely influenced views in this period