Are MPs open to experimenting?

Findings from the winter 2014 MPs survey
Support for controlled trials of policy is high, but support for less robust evidence gathering is similarly high

Q. How much do you support or oppose ... to design and test more areas of government social policy?

The use of controlled trials

- % strongly support: 12
- % tend to support: 55
- % neither support nor oppose: 19
- % strongly oppose: 11
- % don't know: 0

The use of pilot schemes without control groups

- % strongly support: 19
- % tend to support: 45
- % neither support nor oppose: 19
- % strongly oppose: 16
- % don't know: 0

Base: 104 MPs (interviewed from 4 November to 19 December 2014)

Source: Ipsos MORI MPs survey
The fairness of controlled trials is more polarising than their cost, though many MPs are neutral on both these grounds

**Q. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**

- **Randomly choosing whether some people get a policy intervention and others do not is unfair**

  - % strongly agree: 7
  - % tend to agree: 27
  - % neither agree nor disagree: 23
  - % strongly disagree: 33
  - % don’t know: 8
  - % agree: 35%

- **Controlled trials are too expensive as ways of designing and testing social policies**

  - % strongly agree: 18
  - % tend to agree: 38
  - % neither agree nor disagree: 40
  - % strongly disagree: 6
  - % don’t know: 6
  - % agree: 9%

Base: 104 MPs (interviewed from 4 November to 19 December 2014)

Source: Ipsos MORI MPs survey
Across the two main parties there is no strong objection to controlled trials on the grounds of cost

Q. How much do you agree or disagree that “controlled trials are too expensive as ways of designing and testing social policies”?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% strongly agree</th>
<th>% tend to agree</th>
<th>% neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>% strongly disagree</th>
<th>% don’t know</th>
<th>% total</th>
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<td>All MPs surveyed</td>
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<td>Conservative MPs</td>
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<td>37</td>
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<td>Labour MPs</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: 104 MPs; 50 Conservative MPs; 42 Labour MPs (interviewed from 4 November to 19 December 2014)

Source: Ipsos MORI MPs survey
Even those who say they support the use of controlled trials still have concerns

26% of those who support the use of controlled trials in policy design also think that randomly choosing whether some people get a policy intervention and others do not is unfair.

Base: 72 MPs who support the use of controlled trials (interviewed from 4 November to 19 December 2014)

Source: Ipsos MORI MPs survey
Two-fifths of MPs see the greater use of controlled trials of policy as inevitable

Q. How much do you agree or disagree that “we are going to see much greater use of controlled trials in designing and testing social policies in the next few years”?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% strongly agree</th>
<th>% tend to agree</th>
<th>% neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>% strongly disagree</th>
<th>% don’t know</th>
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<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>Labour MPs</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>12</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

% agree

- All MPs surveyed: 40%
- Conservative MPs: 36%
- Labour MPs: 48%

Base: 104 MPs; 50 Conservative MPs; 42 Labour MPs (interviewed from 4 November to 19 December 2014)

Source: Ipsos MORI MPs survey
Q. Which two or three, if any, of the following should politicians pay most attention to when deciding what should be done?

- Evidence from experts (e.g. academics or think tanks): 50%
- Views of constituents: 45%
- Views of practitioners (e.g. teachers, police etc): 40%
- What works in other countries: 38%
- My own principles: 34%
- Findings from pilot schemes without control groups: 31%
- Findings from controlled trials: 23%
- Survey research with those affected: 14%
- Personal experiences: 8%
- Views of journalists: 0%
- None of these: 1%

Base: 104 MPs (interviewed from 4 November to 19 December 2014)
Source: Ipsos MORI MPs survey
Talking about findings from controlled trials when backing up policy decisions is far from the norm among MPs

Q. Which, if any, of the following have you ever used to justify a policy that you support?

- Views of constituents: 75%
- My own principles: 73%
- Evidence from experts (e.g. academics or think tanks): 73%
- Personal experiences: 70%
- What works in other countries: 66%
- Views of practitioners (e.g. teachers, police etc): 65%
- Survey research with those affected: 43%
- Findings from pilot schemes without control groups: 35%
- Findings from controlled trials: 25%
- Views of journalists: 8%
- None of these: 1%

Base: 104 MPs (interviewed from 4 November to 19 December 2014)
Source: Ipsos MORI MPs survey
MPs’ use of controlled trial evidence is in line with what they think they should be paying attention to

What MPs say politicians should pay most attention to

- Evidence from experts (e.g. academics or think tanks)
- Views of constituents
- What works in other countries
- My own principles
- Personal experiences
- Survey research with those affected
- Findings from pilot schemes without control groups
- Findings from controlled trials
- Views of practitioners (e.g. teachers, police etc)
- Views of journalists

What MPs have used to justify a policy that they support

Base: 104 MPs (interviewed from 4 November to 19 December 2014)  
Source: Ipsos MORI MPs survey
Technical note

• Ipsos MORI carried out face-to-face interviews with 107 MPs from 4 November to 19 December 2014

• An initial sample of 343 MPs were contacted to take part

• Data are weighted to reflect the true balance of the House of Commons by political party and ministerial or spokesperson position

• The following preamble preceded all the questions shown here:

  As you know, there are many ways of testing the effectiveness of social policies, in areas such as education, crime, health and welfare.

  For example, in a controlled experiment or trial, some people are randomly chosen to get a policy intervention and others do not get it at all. These groups are then compared to see the effect the policy has had.

  On the other hand, a pilot scheme is when a policy is tested with part of a population before being rolled out to the whole target population.

• For more information on the Ipsos MORI MPs surveys, please see https://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchspecialisms/reputationresearch/whatwedo/kit/MPs.aspx