

What should happen to your brain after you die?

**Glasgow Science Centre
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Voting Summary

- While there was complete support (100%) for the use of human brains in research throughout the day, only 35% of participants indicated that they would want their own brain used for research after death at the very beginning of the event, when the question was first asked. Fifty-two percent (52%) were undecided. Nevertheless, 58% of the participants would be prepared to give samples of their brain rather than their whole brain for research.
- Numerous participants (67%) were also undecided at the beginning of the event about whether they would want the brain of one of their family members to be used for research while 25% would want it.
- Ninety per cent (90%) of participants supported the idea of a publicity campaign to encourage donations from people with no neurological disease, and 96% of participants thought that potential donors should sign up to join a donor register prior to death. Nevertheless, there were mixed reactions about whether people with degenerative brain diseases should be considered competent to consent to brain donation or not: 67% of the participants answered that it depended, while 30% thought that they should be able to do it.
- The overwhelming majority (95%) thought that research on human brain tissue should be subject to legal regulation, and 70% thought that Scottish Brain Banks should be responsible to a single authority, similar to the Human Tissue Authority in England.
- There were mixed reactions to the question about the sharing of results with relatives or next of kin. Most of the participants (67%) also felt it was dependant on the situation whether researchers should be permitted to access other data (eg. Health, education or criminal records) about the individuals whose brains they were studying. Nevertheless, most of the participants (67%) agreed that donated brains, and any personal records relating to those brains, should be anonymised for purposes of research.

- There were also mixed reactions to the question about whether donated brain tissue should be used for commercial profit (41% of the participants were in favour, 18% against and 41% were undecided).
- The majority of participants (74%) considered organ donation for research different from organ donation for transplantation and 87% considered brain donation for research different from donation of other organs for transplantation. Whereas, there were mixed reactions regarding the question whether post-mortem donation of brain tissue for research should be arranged at the same time as organ donation for transplantation; and the majority of participants (86%) did not think it should be assumed that organ donation carriers would want to donate their brains.
- Most participants (64%) thought that studying the brain could tell us things about what it means to be human that we can't learn from studying other organs.
- At the end of the event, some questions were asked again, following the presentations and the round-table discussions. There was still a total support from the participants for the use of human brains in research (100%). Interestingly, several people changed their mind regarding whether they would want their brain to be used for research after their death: while they were only 35% wanting it at the very beginning, it increased by doubling to 71% of the participants at the end of the day. Furthermore, while they were 25% wanting the brain of one of their family members to be used for research, the percentage also almost doubled to 42%.