• Studying public perceptions of nanotechnology under conditions of low awareness and apriori any stigmatizing risk events necessitates relying on known predictors of risk. Two well-known predictors of risk perception are measures of trust and affect. The former includes trust judgments about reports on different management practices whereas the latter [affect] refers to rapid pre-conscious or pre-analytic judgments expressing strong or weak feelings about the “goodness” or “badness” of an object [nano].

• Reporting on a nationally representative phone survey of U.S. residents (N=1,100), participants were asked (1) their affective response to nanotechnology and (2) their trust judgments of different risk management practices. Management scenarios were intentionally balanced from extremely positive to extremely negative. Findings illuminate the fact that affective ratings largely enhance the principle of trust asymmetry – that trust is easier to destroy than gain. Enhancing trust (blue bars) is more difficult to achieve than the reverse (red bars), and even in the best scenarios those who offered negative affective judgments were not converted to trusting positions in the face of trust-enhancing events.

Satterfield, T.; Conti, J.; Pidgeon, N; Harthorn, B.H. in preparation, ES&T