

Maximizing Research Impact

A Strategic Approach for Authors



What is research impact?

Research impact is when the knowledge generated by research results in meaningful change, influence, or benefit to society. The kind of impact your research might have will be dependent on your specific project and area of research, though some key forms of research impact include:



**Academic
impact**



**Environmental
impact**



**Economic
impact**



**Cultural
impact**



**Technological
developments**



**Health and
wellbeing**



**Policy influence
and change**

Why is research impact so important?

The importance of research impact is twofold. Firstly, research impact helps keep researchers focused on the overall purpose rather than the process of research. This can be summarized by two simple questions:

- What could my research change?
- Whom could my research benefit?

Secondly, in today's research landscape, there is also a practical dimension to the need for research impact. Funding is often tied to achieving and demonstrating the broader impact of research, as funders want to achieve the greatest return on their investment. Plus, policymakers want to be assured that government-funded research is generating high-quality, relevant findings.

As a result, **being able to measure and demonstrate research impact has become more important than ever.**

So, how do you go about achieving research impact? How can you measure it? And what skills do you need to help relevant audiences to discover, understand, and apply your research?

Keep reading to uncover tried and tested strategies to achieve research impact »

Increasing the discoverability of your research

The first step to making an impact with your research is to ensure others can find it easily. You should consider ways to increase the discoverability of your research while writing your research article, at the time of publication, and after it's been published.

While you are writing your research article

Come up with a compelling title that is specific and includes keywords that readers might be searching for. A good title is easily understandable for a general audience and avoids subject-specific jargon. Additionally, you should provide keywords at the time of submission to help relevant readers find your article quickly. These keywords will be used to index your article on search engines like Google Scholar.

When it comes to publishing your article

Opt for an open access publication and aim to make any research data associated with your article as open as possible and as closed as necessary. Publishing your research and data openly increases its visibility and enables anyone, anywhere, to read, cite, and build upon your research.

After your research has been published

Create an impact plan for how you will promote your research within your academic community and to other key stakeholders, including policymakers, the media, and the public. This step may require you to develop new skills and connect with experts at your institution, but it is pivotal to getting your research in front of the right people.

We've compiled some key strategies to get you started below.



How to promote your research to your community



Use social media strategically

Social media platforms are a great tool to promote your research and share it with a wider audience. While most researchers know that social media platforms are an excellent way to draw attention to their work, many are still not using these channels to their full potential. X, for example, serves as a great platform to promote your work as many academic and research institutions have their own accounts where they actively share content and engage with the wider community.



Join an academic research sharing network

Research sharing networks are online platforms for researchers to discover new studies in their fields and connect to people in their community. They can be thought of as academic social networks for researchers in any discipline. Some popular research sharing networks include ResearchGate, Academia.edu, and Mendeley. You can use these sites to share papers, ask and answer questions, and find collaborators.



Write a blog post or guest blog post

Blog posts are a great way to help your research reach a new audience and to summarize its key takeaways in a more informal mode of communication. Blog posts can make your research sharable on social media, helping to drive people to your research and increase readership. Do some research into popular blogs in your subject area and see if they accept guest posts so you can connect with a readymade audience.



Create a video abstract or illustration

You've heard the adage: a picture is worth a thousand words. Consider creating a video abstract or illustration to accompany your research. A video abstract lets you introduce readers to your article in your own words, telling others why they should read your research. Likewise, an illustration can simplify the findings of your research in an engaging and straightforward manner.



Create a Google Scholar profile

Google Scholar is a popular search engine for finding scholarly literature. A Google Scholar profile is an easy way to bring together all your publications and citations in one place. This enables others to find your work more easily and often an accessible copy that they can read. Once you have set up a profile, be sure to set it to 'public' and choose automatic updates so you don't need to consistently update your publications list.



Present your paper at a conference

Conferences are an inevitable part of academic life, though they look much different today than in years past. With many conferences going virtual because of the COVID-19 pandemic, there are more opportunities than ever to attend and present at relevant conferences in your discipline. Presenting at a conference is a guaranteed way to generate increased awareness of your works and provides a great opportunity to network with likeminded researchers.

Getting your research in front of key stakeholders

ENGAGING WITH POLICYMAKERS

Research can provide evidence and suggest a direction, but it's only policymakers who can translate all findings into effective legislation. Therefore, to help drive policy change, identifying the relevant stakeholders, their interests, and how to communicate with them is essential.

Write a Policy Brief alongside your original article

To maximize the possibility of your work receiving attention from policymakers, you need to write up your research in a way that is digestible for people who are not as familiar with your subject as you are.

A Research Article often constitutes the most appropriate format for policymaking impact. Yet, you can consider using a different article type to make your research more accessible for policymaking audiences, such as a Case Study, Brief Report, or Policy Brief. Policy Briefs are short, clear, and concise articles suitable for non-specialist audiences. This article type can help bridge the gap between policymakers and researchers. Policy Briefs bring important research, evidence of policy-related issues, and proposed solutions to the attention of local authorities, policymakers, or governments.

Work on building and nurturing a relationship with policymakers

Once you have identified the most relevant policymakers in your field, make sure to reach out and communicate your work. Along with your research, you should always include the essentials, including your credentials, contact information, and executive summary. Plus, as change can be incremental, you should aim for smaller, actionable, and more achievable policy improvements. For example, the full implementation of policies that change eligibility criteria for services covered by existing policies will take less time to realize than those that will enact or require new programs.

Once you get to know a policymaker in your field of expertise, nurture this relationship by touching base on a regular basis. Always demonstrate that you are an expert commentator, can exchange knowledge, help build capacity, or design projects through co-production.

ENGAGING WITH THE MEDIA

Engaging with the media can be pivotal when it comes to raising awareness of your research. A research article considered newsworthy will likely: have made a major discovery, have links to a timely topic or event, or have the potential to lead to real change in society.

As a first step, do some research into what kind of public relations (PR) support is on offer from your publisher and your institution's communications department. Whether you are working solo on your PR or in collaboration with any expert, here are 3 essential strategies to keep in mind:

Think audience, think message

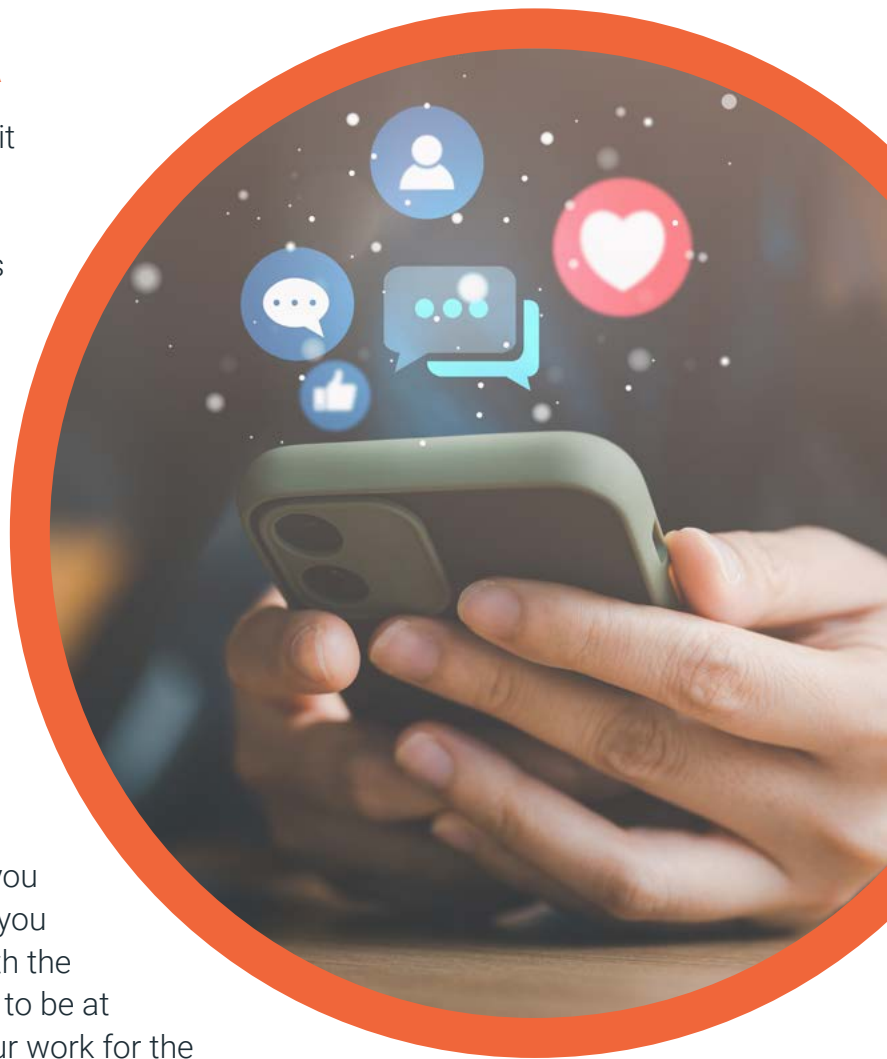
Apart from identifying your target audience, you should also determine the one key message you want them to connect with. When dealing with the media or policymakers, your message needs to be at the forefront as journalists will likely skim your work for the relevant takeaways. Supporting evidence and additional details can follow at a later stage, if necessary.

Stay TRUE to your research: Timely, Relevant, Unique, Engaging

Once you've thought about your message, you want to stay true to that message. This includes deciding when the right time is to engage with the press and communicate your pitch. Your pitch needs to be relevant and adapted to your chosen media outlet's audience. You must also determine what makes your study unique and why the audience will engage with the findings.

Tell a 'head and heart' story

The next step is to tell your research story and back it up with statistics and a case study; statistics typically resonate with your rationale (head) while a case study can speak to your emotions (heart). These two aspects together with some key insights, takeaways, or recommendations can make up a great head and heart story that will interest editors, journalists, and policymakers.



ENGAGING WITH THE PUBLIC

The best routes to communicating your research findings to the public are through traditional and social media.

Working with traditional media outlets

If you think your research would interest a broader, non-specialist audience, consider working with your institution's communications team to pitch your research to the media. Follow our tips for engaging with the media above.

Promoting your research via social media

Social media is full of micro-communities, many of which will likely align with the implications of your research.

Here are some useful tips on how to promote your article using social media:

- 1** Announce your publication with a link to your article and an 'elevator pitch' summary of its significance.
- 2** Tag your co-authors, journal, publisher (e.g., @F1000Research), funder, and institution. Don't forget to repost/retweet your co-authors' announcements.
- 3** Research and include hashtags that your audience is using, including practitioners, lobbyists, think tanks, and policymakers in your field.
- 4** Include an engaging and relevant image, gif, or video. Different types of visual content are more digestible and can help attract and engage with audiences more effectively than textual posts-always keep in mind that people remember 80% of what they see but only 20% of what they read.
- 5** Reply to your initial post with relevant policy news or updates on your article's impact.
- 6** Be social! Use hashtags and keywords to search for conversations already happening online that your research might add value to. Interact with these users and share a link to your research to back up your viewpoints.

Measuring research impact

Article-level metrics

Article-level metrics enable you to assess the reach and impact of an individual article. These metrics include things like the number of views, downloads, citations, and mentions the article has received. Typically, the publisher of your article will showcase article-level metrics alongside your article, where it is published online. Additionally, you can use [Altmetric](#) and the Altmetric Attention Score to assess the attention your research is getting from non-traditional sources, including mainstream and social media, policy documents, blogs, and more.

Journal-level metrics

Journal-level metrics are a depiction of the reach and impact of the body of work published in any one publication. These metrics include things like Impact Factor, CiteScore, annual views and downloads, and speed of publication. Journal-level metrics can be an important factor for authors when considering where to publish, though they do have limitations. As a signatory of [DORA](#), F1000 strongly believes that the quality of an individual research article should always be assessed on its own merits rather than on the metrics of the publication in which it was published.

Responsible research assessment

Over the past decade, there has been a growing consensus that the metrics that have traditionally been used to assess the quality and impact of research are too narrow. These metrics tend to favor individuals who publish in journals with high Impact Factors, secure large grants, and publish their research frequently. Arguably, this type of assessment not only puts pressure on researchers to attain specific performance metrics but also increases the risk of violations of research ethics and integrity.

In 2013, the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment](#) (DORA) was established with the aim of advancing practical and robust approaches to research assessment globally and across all scholarly disciplines. DORA, its 26,300+ signatories, and other like-minded initiatives recognize the need to improve the ways in which researchers and the outputs of scholarly research are evaluated. Crucially, this includes the need to move away from journal-level metrics to a more holistic view of research impact.



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JOURNEY »**

