

# 01

## IMPACT EVALUATION

*More and more of the academic community are rallying for a shift away from traditional metrics, particularly at the individual research level. In this section, we explore how change-ready we are as a sector and the initiatives that may help us move to fairer and more meaningful research evaluation.*



*There is a growing trend within the research community for a broader number of metrics and indicators to measure the quality of individual research contributions. The [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#) in 2012, followed by the [The Leiden Manifesto](#) and [The Metric Tide](#), both published in 2015, have helped to drive awareness of the limitations of research metrics and indicators. However, despite subsequent changes to policy and best practices, journal impact factors (JIFs), h-indices and other metrics still tend to influence who gets hired, promoted and funded in academia.*

As a signatory of DORA and in line with our [Real Impact Manifesto](#) to move beyond metrics and celebrate impact commitment, we have rolled out various initiatives to create awareness of the limitations of metrics and drive real impact. One area we have focused attention is helping researchers demonstrate the influence of their research on practice, policy and society. In collaboration with industry experts, we are developing a suite of [resources](#) that will help researchers tell their impact story. Support materials that are readily available include an [Impact Literacy Workbook](#) and [Institutional Healthcheck Workbook](#).

To guide our efforts to further research impact, we are continuously listening to the research community and probing further into the barriers to, and opportunities for, change. Our surveys and [reports](#) in these areas over the past three years have been an attempt to stimulate debate and bring conversations to the fore.

### How change ready are we?

In this year's survey, we found the desire for a broader impact metric had grown when compared to the previous year, with 20% of the research community calling for JIFs to be dropped all together, up from 13% in 2019. However, in terms of how research quality is measured at their institution, JIFs were perceived to play an important role – 71% selected JIFs as the way research quality is measured at their institution, up from 58% in 2019.

According to respondents, the biggest challenges to change include 'Incentives for career progression still aligned to traditional impact metrics (i.e. publishing in ranked journals)' (56%), closely followed by 'Difficulty in tracking research impact beyond academia' (55%), and 'Lack of clarity on what measures would replace rankings to assess quality' (49%).

### Driving change

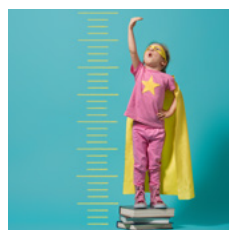
In terms of what individual researchers were willing to do to broaden the impact of their work and push for change, 'Publishing Open Access and sharing links to supporting datasets to get more 'eyeballs' on my work' came out on top, with just over half of researchers selecting this option. More opportunities for collaboration between industry and practice was believed to be the best way to make change happen, with 63% supporting this choice, up slightly from 2019.

### Measuring up

When asked, 'What main change would you like to see in the way research quality is measured?', suggestions included:

**Quality over quantity:** "Pay attention to the quality of a researcher's work, rather than quantity of research. Not all research should be equally weighted. Philosophical reflection takes time. Yet, quantitative work can have quick outcomes. But their impacts are different. Current evaluation drives most researchers to do quick work, especially when they have heavy teaching load" (Female, Teacher, Asia)

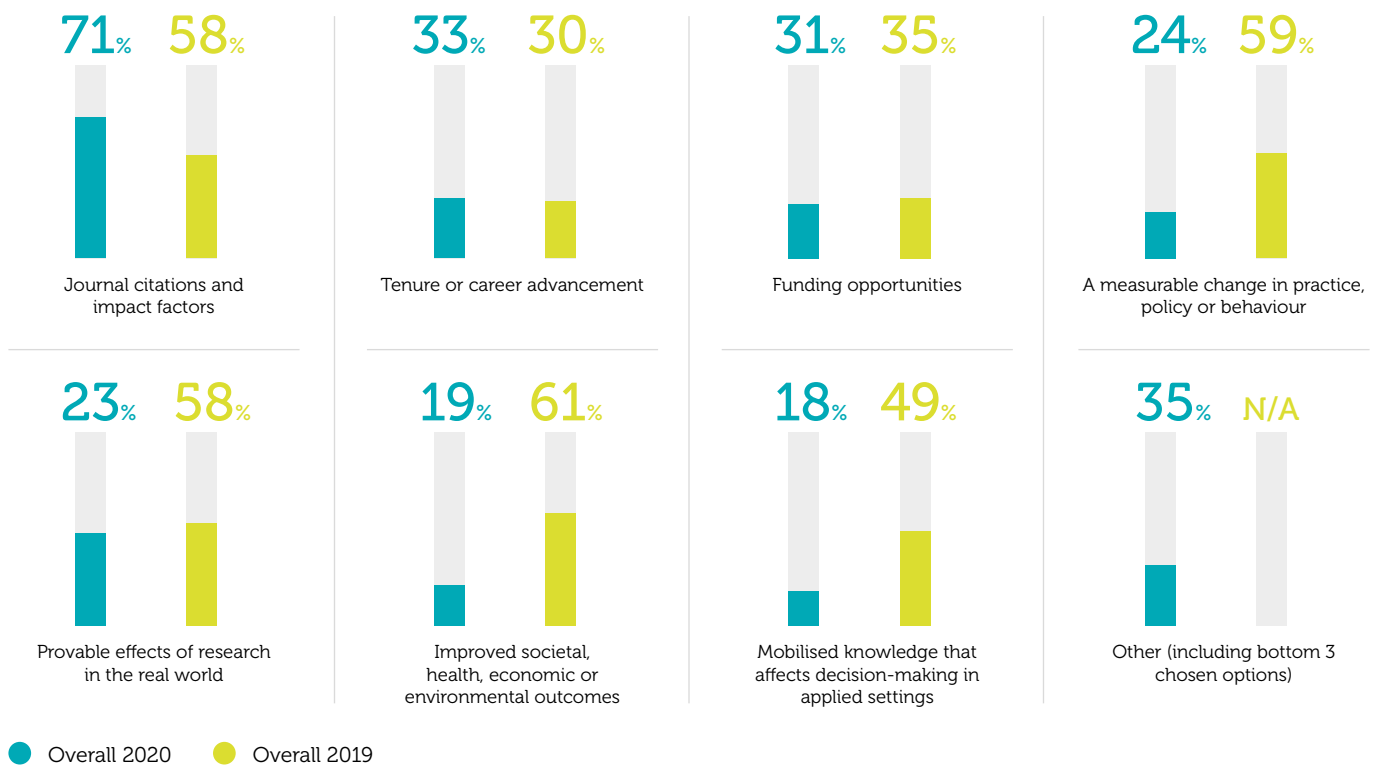
**Changes to incentives:** "Changing the incentive structure for the career and performance evaluation beyond the publication and impact factors" (Female, Researcher, SSA)



On a scale of 1 – 10 where 1 is not at all important and 10 is very important, how important is demonstrating impact of research on society to...? (average score out of 10).



How is the quality of your research impact currently measured? (Please select up to 3 options.)



On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all important and 5 is very important, how important are the following factors in helping achieve broader impact with your work?

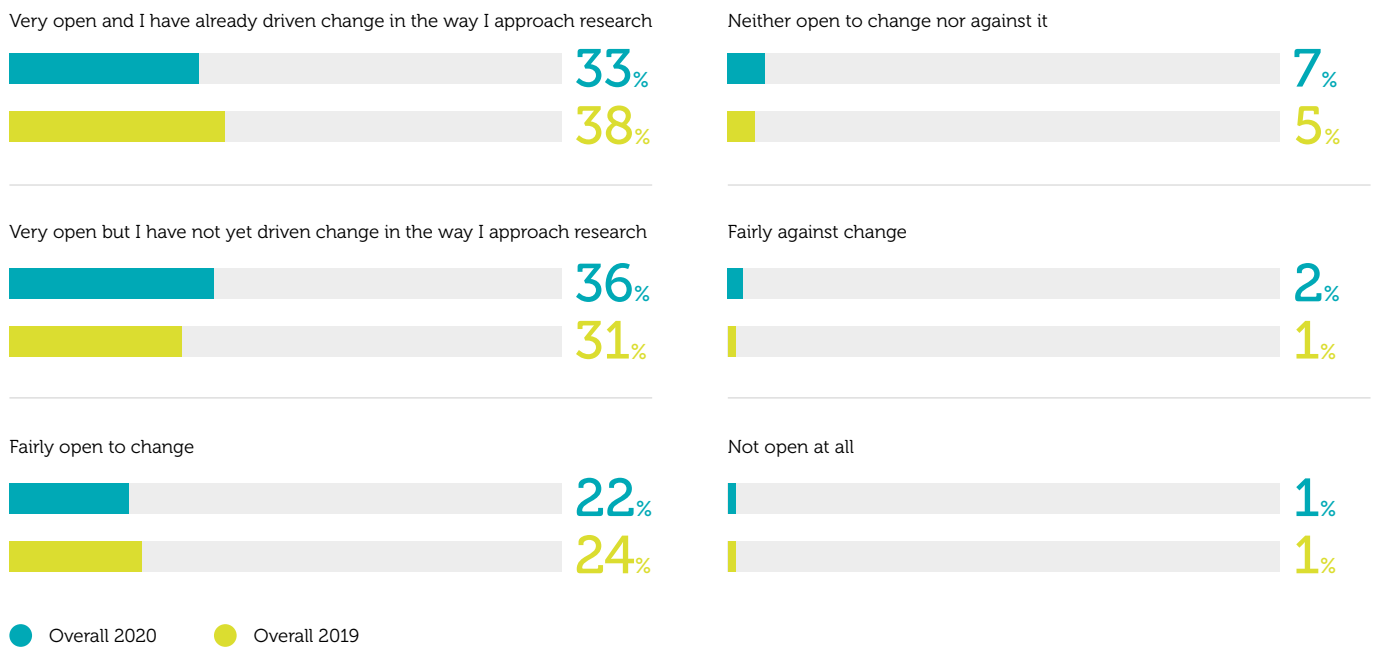


## SECTION ONE

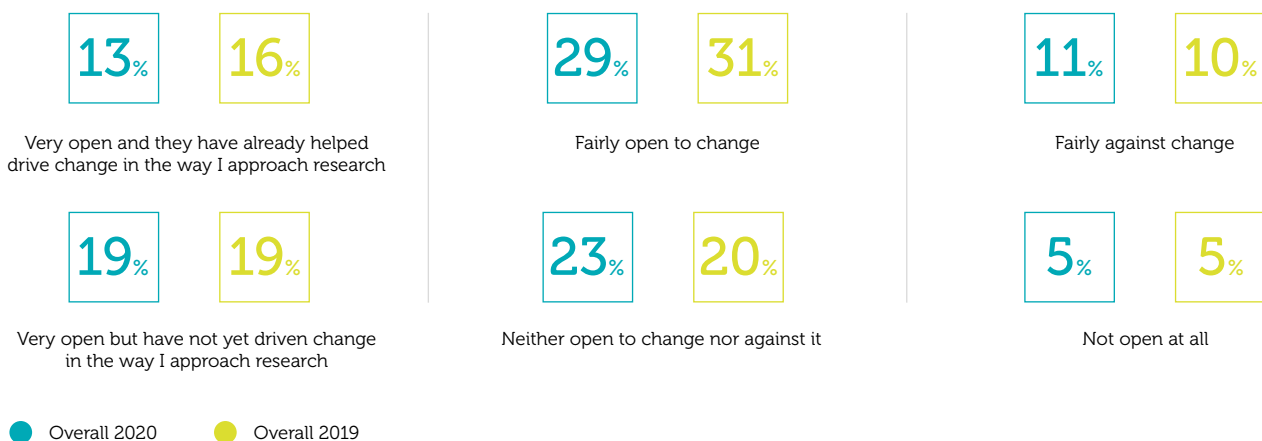
Do you expect the priority of measuring real-world impact to change in your institution in the next 12 to 18 months?



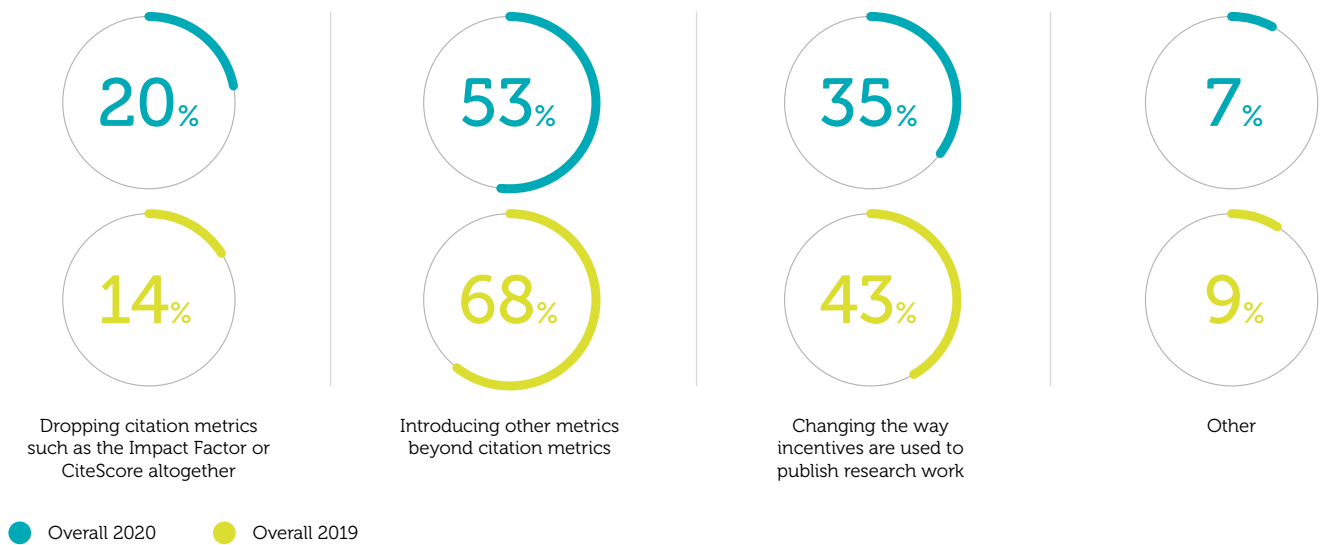
How strongly do you support the idea of changing the way research impact is measured? (Please select 1 answer.)



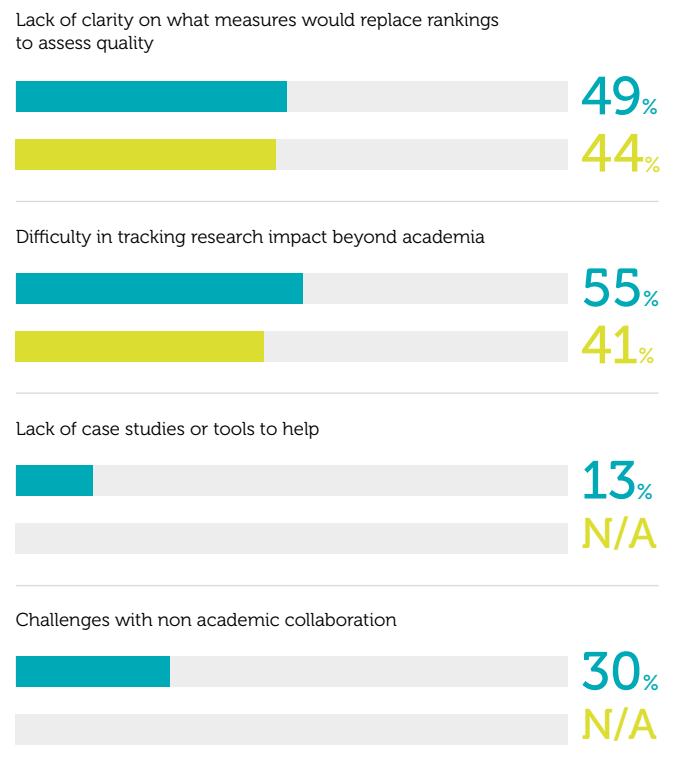
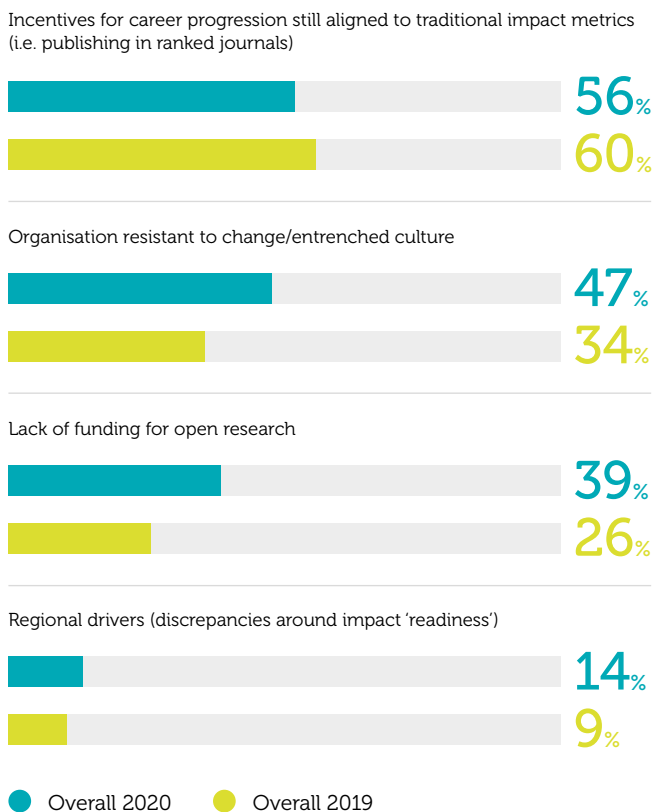
How supportive/interested are those in your broader institution in driving change when it comes to other ways to measure research impact (Please select one answer.)



What main change would you like to see in the way research quality is measured? (Please select 1 option.)

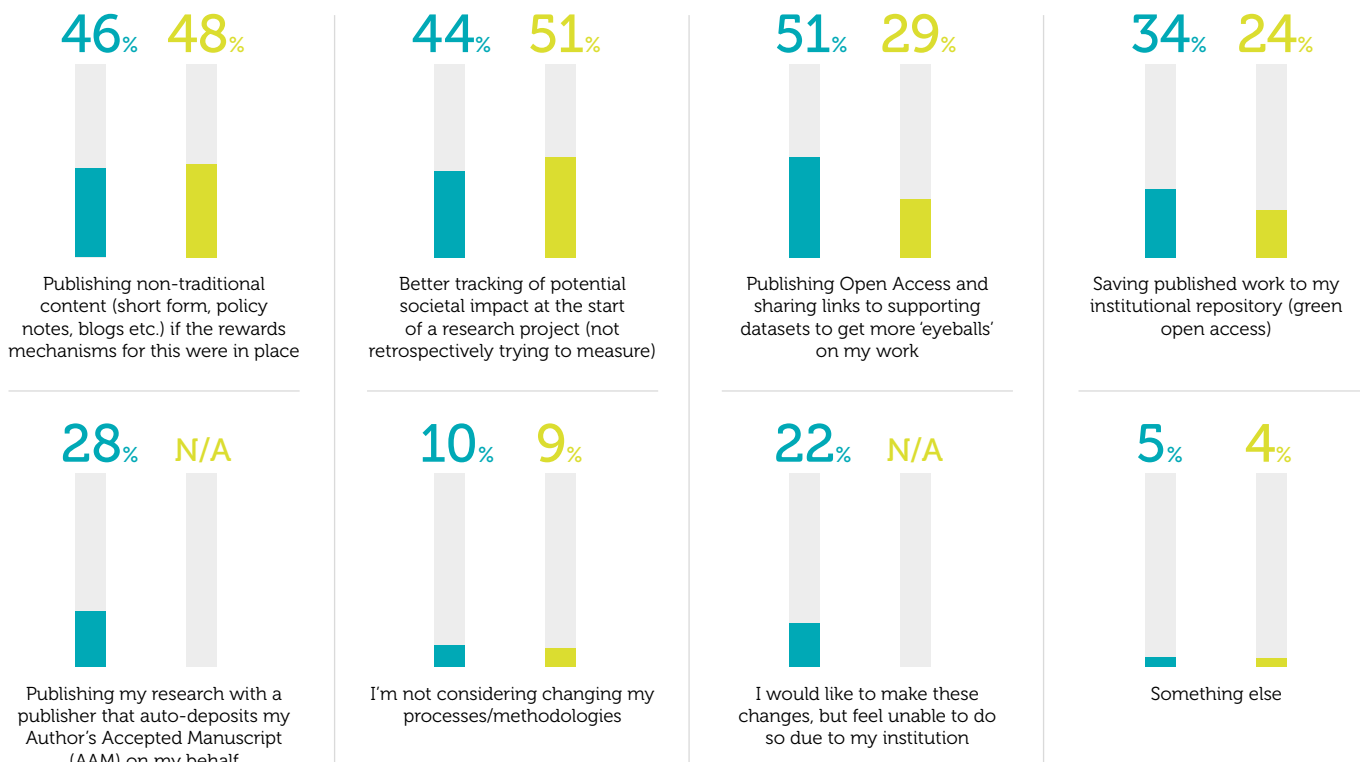


Which of the following do you consider to be the biggest 'challenges' of changing the way research impact is assessed? (Please select all that apply.)



## SECTION ONE

When it comes to your research, what types of change would you consider implementing?  
(Please select all that apply.)



● Overall 2020 ● Overall 2019

In your opinion what are the best way(s) to enable change to happen? (Please select up to 3 options.) (% of times chosen in top 3.)



● Overall 2020 ● Overall 2019



# THE EMERALD VIEW

*Supporting research that can make a real difference is crucial to our progress on global issues such as climate change and poverty, says Tony Roche, Executive Vice President of Publishing and Strategic Relationships at Emerald. In this context, he calls for the development and recognition of a broader range of research evaluation metrics, in addition to narratives that support the impact journey.*

More than ever, researchers need to demonstrate how their efforts are delivering provable effects in society. Findings from our latest academic culture survey back up what we're seeing and hearing from our global network of researchers, scholarly comms experts, policy makers and funders.

With societal challenges such as the climate crisis now a reality, the contribution of research will be subject to ever greater scrutiny. Against this backdrop, it is increasingly evident that the mechanisms for evaluating the quality and contribution of research (and researchers themselves) are no longer fit for purpose.

### *Eliminating the blockers to change*

Drawing on our latest survey, it is encouraging to see researchers, institutions, funders and policy makers placing greater emphasis on the societal impact of research. While this is now widely accepted in principle, poorly aligned evaluation and incentive structures are clearly blocking these aspirations. Bibliometric indicators and citations have a role to play, needs not be sacrificed for research to better connect with real world impact.

There has been positive movement in some national evaluation systems, with open routes of dissemination increasingly preferred, however the participation of the intended beneficiaries in society is still limited, and mechanisms to mobilise knowledge remain poorly developed.

This year's survey also highlights cultural challenges within research that must be addressed through the research evaluation process as driver of change, to incentivise responsible research practices for the benefit of all.

### *Giving voice to the underrepresented*

Emerald is committed to action through co-creation, to bring the voice of the beneficiary as well as underrepresented researchers themselves more directly into the research and publication process, and we will hold ourselves to account to measure progress here.

As a participant within the global research and scholarly comms ecosystem, we work with over 30,000 researchers each year, and through our own commitments to diversity and inclusion we can ensure that the research we publish is more representative and reflective of the needs of society.

### *Supporting research impact*

Our commitments extend to working with policy makers and funders, so that a wider array of indicators and metrics, as well as the narratives to support the impact journey, are developed and recognised through evaluation processes themselves. This clearly requires coordinated efforts and a willingness to work together, so that research can perform better in its critical underpinning role to support societal progress in areas such as climate change mitigation, environmental degradation, poverty and illiteracy.

*"Emerald is committed to action through co-creation, to bring the voice of the beneficiary as well as underrepresented researchers themselves more directly into the research and publication process"*



Tony Roche  
Executive Vice President  
of Publishing and  
Strategic Relationships