

SMC 2022 evaluation survey summary

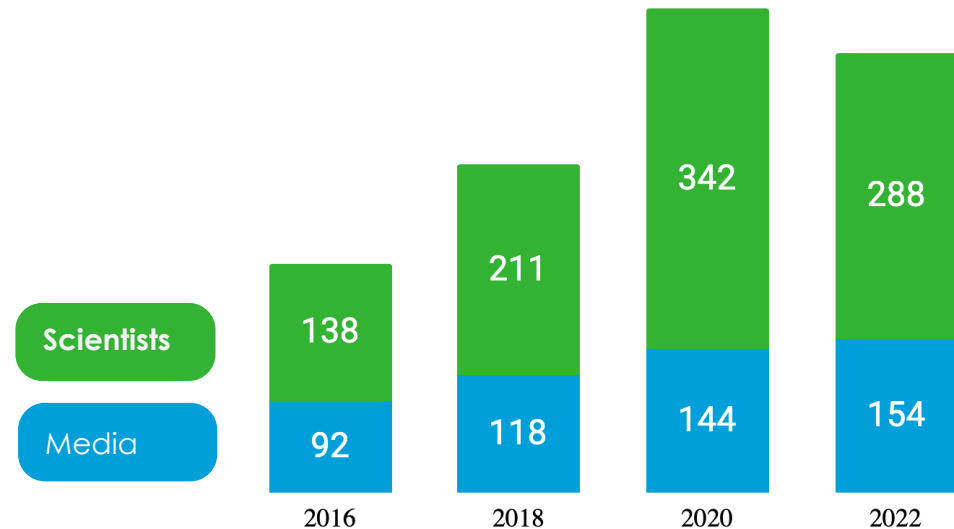
Key results from the Science Media Centre's stakeholder survey and their relevance to objectives

Survey Respondents 2016-2022

During December 2021 and January 2022 we surveyed New Zealand media professionals and researchers who had worked with the Science Media Centre (SMC). We have carried out this survey every two years since 2016.

For our media survey, we contacted all media professionals who had received email alerts from the SMC, contacted the SMC with a media query, or attended a SMC workshop. We invited 1187 media professionals to take the survey, and 154 (13%) completed the survey.

For our scientists' survey, we contacted all researchers who attended a SMC workshop or provided commentary to the SMC for our Expert Reaction alerts. We invited 2101 researchers to take the survey, and 288 (14%) completed the survey. Fewer researchers responded than in 2020, possibly due to the impact of COVID-19.



Objective 1: Enhance the depth and breadth of media coverage of science relevant to society.



Performance indicator: Media outlets are using SMC-derived content and experts in their science coverage.

Journalists say the SMC is making a difference: 94% of media professionals agree the SMC has an impact on the way science is covered in the media, and 97% agree that the SMC makes it easier for them to cover a broader range of science-related issues.

Journalists who had contacted the SMC looking for experts to comment on a story said the contacts provided were 'knowledgeable' (91% selected this option), 'relevant' (89%) and 'contactable' (84%).

97%

Media say the SMC helps them cover a **broader range of issues**

Experts suggested by the SMC...

Knowledgeable

Relevant

Contactable

Objective 2: Ensure science is accessible to media



Performance indicator: registered journalists have access to scientific information for use in reporting.

The overwhelming majority of journalists agreed that the SMC is useful to (99%, up from 97% in 2020), and valued by New Zealand media (97%, up from 93% in 2020).

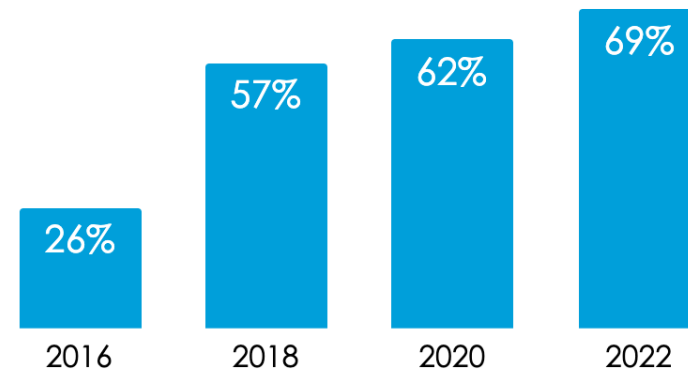
More journalists are accessing SMC resources regularly; 69% use SMC resources at least once a week, an increase from 2020 (62%) and 2018 (57%).

The most used resources were Expert Reactions (78% had used), the media query hotline (73%), and SMC Picks (twice-weekly embargoed research tipsheet; 65%).

97%

Media say the SMC is **valued**

Accessing SMC resources at least once a week



Objective 3: Enable scientists and research organisations to work effectively with the media



Performance indicator: Workshop participants are more confident working with the media.

The SMC's Science Media SAVVY workshops boost scientists' confidence in interacting with the media.

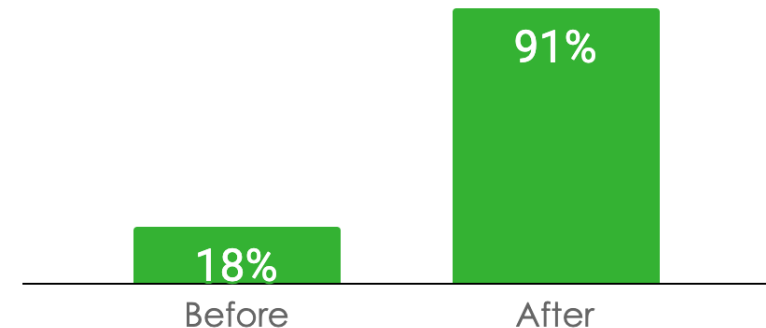
Nearly all researchers (92%) who attended a 2-day SAVVY workshop agreed that the workshop helped them communicate their research more effectively. 84% of participants at 15-minute SAVVY Express training also agreed that they were able to communicate their research more effectively due to the workshop.

We asked survey participants to give an indication of their media confidence before and after the workshops. Less than one in five (18%) felt confident before the 2-day workshop, but most (91%) said they were confident after.

92%

Communicating research more effectively due to training

More scientists are confident responding to the media after the 2-day SAVVY workshop



Objective 4: Encourage responsible and insightful reporting from journalists



Performance indicator: Journalists are more confident covering a broader range of issues.

The SMC's newsroom and online media workshops have an impact on journalists covering science. 85% of journalists who attended one of the SMC's workshops agreed that it influenced the way journalists at their organisation cover science. 100% agreed that other journalists would find the workshops useful.

Journalists said the workshops improved 'evaluating scientific claims' (83% selected this option), 'identifying red flags' (78%), and 'finding reliable sources' (56%).

The majority (89%) of all journalists surveyed said that they were confident covering a broad range of science-related issues (up from 76% in 2020).

89%

Media confident covering a **broad range** of science issues

Top workshop skills

Evaluating scientific claims

Spotting 'red flags'

Finding reliable sources

85%

Media say SMC workshops **impact** science coverage.

Objective 5: Establish links between the science system and the media



Performance indicator: The SMC fosters linkages and cooperation between science organisations and the media.

Almost two-thirds (63%) of journalists who had been offered expert suggestions by the SMC for a specific story said these contacts were 'useful on an ongoing basis'.

Most researchers (82%) who participated in a Science Media SAVVY workshop rated their experiences interacting with the media after the workshop as positive (15% neutral and only 3% negative).

Journalists also take part in SAVVY workshops, providing feedback to participants as part of a panel. Most (82%) workshop media panellists said they had further contact with researchers resulting in media coverage, and 72% said 'contacts I made will be valuable over the long term'.

Over three-quarters (88%) of the researchers who contributed to SMC expert reactions said the process made it easy to connect with media. Almost all (95%) said it was a good use of their time and 96% rated their subsequent interactions with the media as positive.

82%

Scientists report **positive interactions with media** after workshops

82%

Media have **further contact** with scientists after workshops resulting in media coverage

96%

Researchers report **positive interactions with media** after providing expert reaction.

Media perceptions of science

New Zealand media trust scientists: 95% (an increase from 91% in 2020) of respondents agreed with the statement 'Journalists in New Zealand consider scientists to be trustworthy sources.'

Almost half (47%) of respondents said they were producing science stories at least weekly, up from 33% in 2020.

When asked about potential barriers to covering science, the reasons most often selected by journalists were: 'Not enough staff skilled/comfortable in covering science' (54%) and 'Not enough time' (46%).

We also asked them how they would characterise the way science is usually perceived. 'Important' (73%), 'Interesting' (70%) and 'Good source of content' (57%) were most commonly selected options, while very few chose 'Boring' (8%), 'Inaccessible' (8%) or 'Irrelevant' (1%).

95%

NZ media agree scientists are **trustworthy sources**

Barriers to covering science

Not enough skilled staff

Not enough time

Science is perceived as...

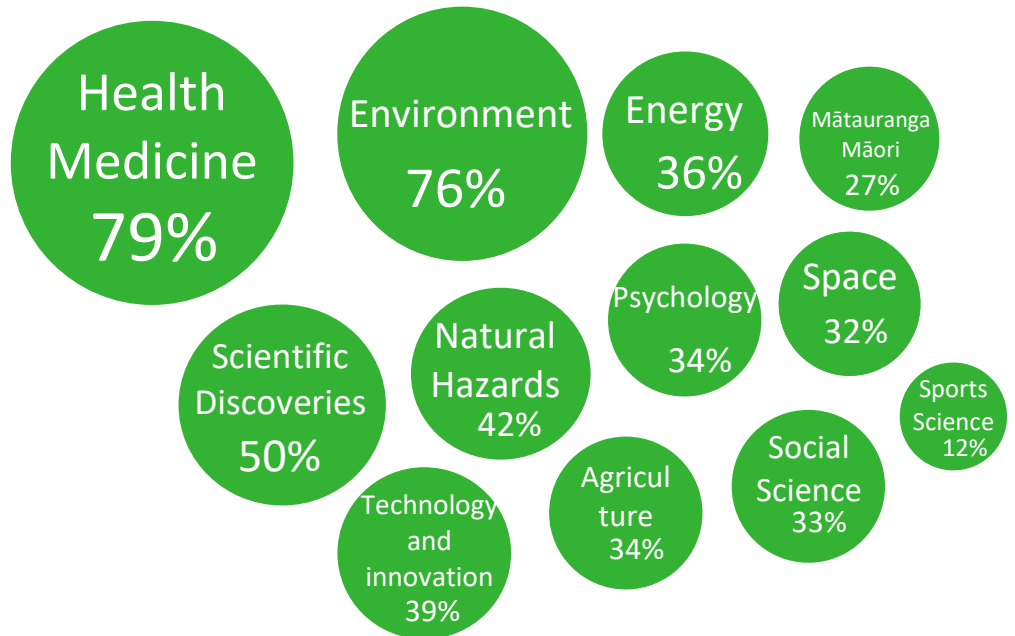
Important

Interesting

Good source
of content

Media perceptions of science

We asked journalists which areas of science interested their audience. The top four selected categories were: Health and Medicine (79% selected), Environment (76%), Scientific Discoveries (50%) and Natural Hazards (42%). Just over a quarter (27%) selected Mātauranga Māori, a new category introduced for the 2022 survey.



Decision-makers

We also posed some questions to newsroom decision-makers. Among this subgroup, 19% said their organisation is likely to increase resourcing for science and related rounds in 2022—and none said decreases were likely. 62% said their audience's interest in science content was increasing over time (up from 44% in 2020). Only 3% said it was decreasing.



Scientists' perceptions of media

The majority of researchers surveyed agreed that, if approached by the media they would: be likely to respond (95% compared to 93% in 2020), feel prepared (85% compared to 84% in 2020), and be confident (79% compared to 77% in 2020).

Half of respondents (50%) reported having a media interaction within the last three months, and 69% within the last six months. Just over half (56%) said they had written their own articles for a public audience (e.g., contributing to online publications such as *Newsroom*, *The Spinoff* or *The Conversation*).

Some of the scientists we surveyed had reservations about the media; 62% agreed with the statement 'The mainstream media often misrepresents science'.

However, most (83%, up from 79% in 2020) agreed that the public appreciates scientific content in the mainstream media.

95%

Likely to **respond** to a media query about their research

54%

Writing their own **science content** for the public

83%

Say the **public appreciates science** in the media

Scientists' perceptions of media

Researchers told us how much they agreed with a range of reasons for, and barriers to, engaging in public science communication.

The top reasons for communicating science were: 'To ensure the public is better informed about science and technology' (93% agreed), 'To raise awareness about my subject' (90%), and 'To raise awareness about science generally' (86%).

The top barriers were: 'I don't have enough time' (68% agreed) and 'There are too few professional incentives' (45%).

Organisations are changing their views on public engagement - when asked about their own organisations, 70% of researchers felt that communicating research to the public had become more important (up from 61% in 2022), and only 4% felt it was viewed as less important.

Top reasons for communicating science

Informing the public

Raise awareness of my subject

Top barriers to communicating science

Not enough time

Too few professional incentives

70%

Say science communication has become **more important** in their organisation

Impact of COVID-19

We asked researchers to rate their experiences with the media during the COVID-19 pandemic. More than three quarters (77%) said their experiences were always or mostly positive. 19% were neutral, and 4% were mostly negative.

The most common barriers that stopped researchers talking to media during the pandemic were 'I don't have time to take media enquiries' (selected by 25%) and 'I don't want to risk making a scientific error in public' (18%).

When asked about experiences after speaking about COVID-19 to the media, the most commonly selected were 'Greater public awareness of important messages' (17% selected) and 'Higher public profile for my research' (16%). However, one in ten researchers had received attacks on their credibility, and 6% had suffered emotional or psychological distress.

Over half (56%) of journalists produce stories on COVID-19 related issues at least once a week.

Newsroom decision-makers were asked how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the amount of science content they produce - 68% said it had increased, and none said it had decreased.

77%

Scientists report **positive** experiences with the media during the pandemic.

Biggest barriers during the pandemic

No time to take media enquiries

Risking scientific error in public

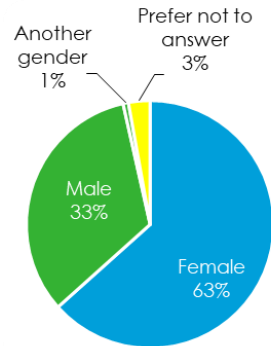
68%

Media report **increased science content** during pandemic.

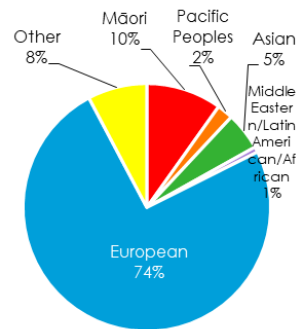
Demographics

Media

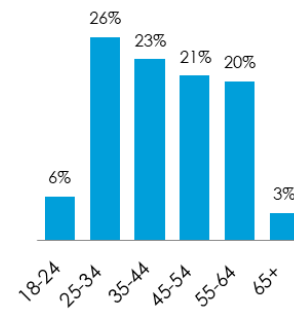
Gender



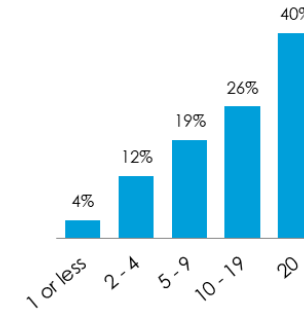
Ethnicity



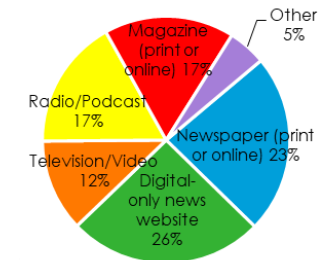
Age



Years' experience

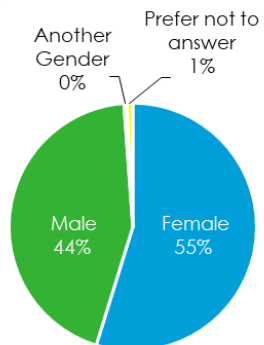


Employer

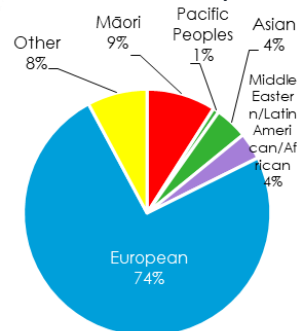


Scientists

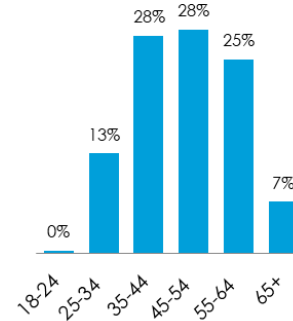
Gender



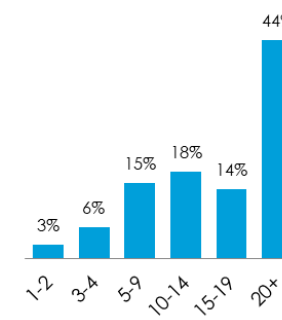
Ethnicity



Age



Years' experience



Employer

