

SMC 2025 evaluation survey summary

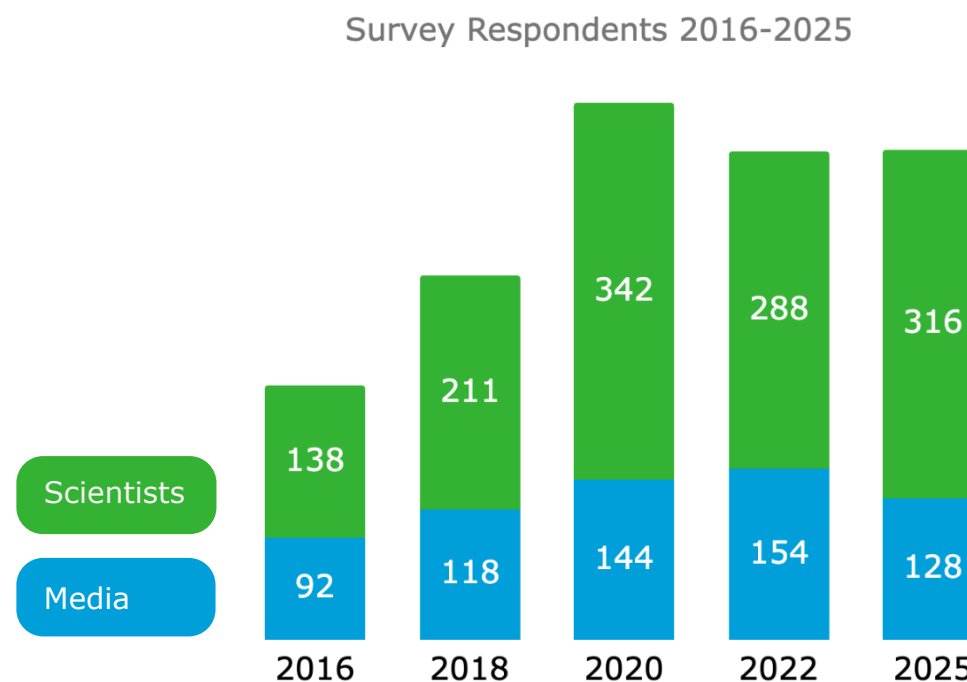
Key results from the Science Media Centre's stakeholder survey and their relevance to objectives

From October to December 2024, we surveyed New Zealand media professionals and researchers who have worked with the Science Media Centre (SMC). This is the fifth evaluation survey we have completed, with surveys now taking place every 3 years so results can inform the 3-yearly refresh of the SMC's strategic plan.

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 1027 media professionals to take the survey, and 128 (12%) 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 1994 researchers to take the survey, and 316 (16%) completed the survey.

The total number of responses matched our last survey, with more researchers and fewer journalists taking part this time following a period of consolidation in the news media.



Objective 1: Enhance the quality, depth & breadth of media coverage of science-related topics



Performance indicator: Media outlets throughout New Zealand use SMC outputs in their science coverage

Journalists say the SMC is making a difference: 92% of media professionals agree the SMC has an impact on the way science is covered in the media, and 93% 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' (91%) and 'willing to engage' (82%).

Journalists continue to access SMC resources regularly. 64% use SMC resources at least once a week - only slightly less than at peak levels during the pandemic.

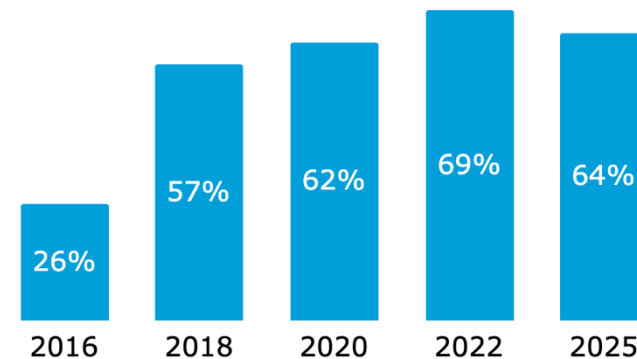
92%

Media say the SMC has an **impact** on science coverage

93%

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

Accessing SMC resources at least once a week



Objective 2: Improve the accessibility of research, science & innovation to the media



Performance indicator: Registered journalists have timely access to scientific information for use in media reporting

The overwhelming majority of journalists agreed that the SMC is useful to (97%) and valued by (95%) New Zealand media.

The most used resources were Expert Reactions (82% had used, up from 78% in 2022), the media query hotline (76%, up from 73% in 2022), and SMC Picks (twice-weekly embargoed research tipsheet; 69%, up from 65% in 2022).

96%

Media agree that the SMC shows an **understanding of news and newsworthy topics.**

87%

Media agree that the SMC shows an **ability to respond to the changing media environment.**

Most used SMC resources

Expert Reactions

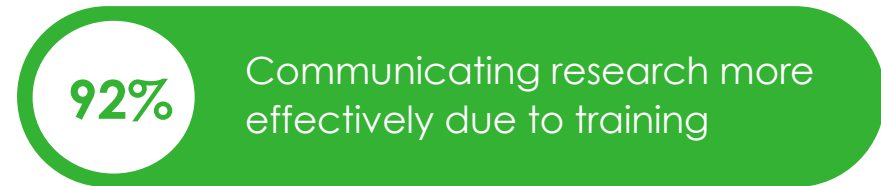
Media Query Hotline

SMC Picks

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



Performance indicator: Researchers communicate science effectively via the media



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

Nearly all researchers (92%) who attended a two-day SAVVY workshop agreed that the workshop helped them communicate their research more effectively.

We asked survey participants to give an indication of their media confidence before and after the workshops. Less than one in five (15%) felt confident or very confident before the 2-day workshop, but most (91%) said they were confident after.



Objective 4: Encourage responsible and evidence-based science news reporting from journalists



Performance indicator: Journalists produce responsible and relevant science news reporting across a broad range of topics

Journalists show sustained confidence in evaluating scientific claims in news coverage and press releases after the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2020, 64% of journalists said they were confident evaluating scientific claims. This increased to 79% of journalists in 2022 and remained stable at 79% in 2025.

The majority (83%) of all journalists surveyed said that they are confident covering a broad range of science-related issues (compared to 89% in 2022, and 76% in 2020). Journalists are gaining confidence when covering stories that include mātauranga Māori - over a third (38%) felt confident in 2025, an increase from 22% in 2022.

The SMC's newsroom and online media workshops have an impact on journalists covering science. 88% of journalists who attended one of the SMC's workshops agreed that it influenced the way journalists at their organisation cover science. 98% agreed that other journalists would find the workshops useful.

83%

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

88%

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

Top workshop skills

Evaluating scientific claims

Spotting 'red flags'

Finding reliable sources

Objective 5: Strengthen links between the key components of the science and media sectors



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

Researchers' experiences with the media are overwhelmingly positive when initiated by the SMC.

Over three-quarters (86%) of researchers who contributed to SMC Expert Reaction alerts said the process made it easy to connect with media. Almost all (89%) said it was a good use of their time and 93% rated their subsequent interactions with the media as positive.

Almost all researchers (93%) who participated in a Science Media SAVVY workshop rated their experiences interacting with the media after the workshop as positive.

Engaging with the media gave researchers new career opportunities after attending SMC workshops. 66% had seen an impact on invitations to speak at conferences and public events, and 54% had seen an impact on collaborations.

Over half (53%) of journalists who had been offered expert suggestions by the SMC for a specific story said these contacts were 'useful on an ongoing basis'.

93%

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

93%

Researchers report **positive interactions with media** after attending **workshops**

Researcher experiences after talking to media

Higher public profile for their research

Positive impact on their reputation among

Greater public awareness of important messages

Journalists also take part in SAVVY workshops, providing feedback to participants as part of a panel. Most (72%) workshop media panellists said they had further contact with researchers. For 56% of media this resulted in media coverage related to the story ideas pitched, while 39% said contacts from the workshop were useful on another story. 61% passed on contacts to others in their media organisation. 72% said 'contacts I made will be valuable over the long term'.

72%

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

Independence of the Science Media Centre



Performance indicator: The SMC demonstrates editorial and operational independence.

Both journalists and scientists overwhelmingly perceive the SMC to be independent. 89% of journalists agreed with the statement "The Science Media Centre is independent" (the same as in 2022). Most researchers agreed with the statement "The Science Media Centre is independent" (87%, compared to 91% in 2022).

89%

Media agree that the Science Media Centre is **independent**.

87%

Scientists agree that the Science Media Centre is **independent**.

Media perceptions of science

New Zealand media trust scientists: 97% (an increase from 95% in 2022) of respondents agreed with the statement 'Journalists in New Zealand consider scientists to be trustworthy sources.'

A third (33%) of respondents said they were producing science stories at least weekly (down from 47% in 2022, and the same as 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' (59%) and 'Not enough time' (52%). Since 2018, these two barriers have been mentioned by a steadily increasing number of journalists.

We also asked them how they would characterise the way science is usually perceived. 'Interesting' (79%), 'Important' (73%) and 'Good source of content' (68%) were most commonly selected options, while very few chose 'Low Priority' (15%), 'Inaccessible' (8%) or 'Irrelevant' (3%).

97%

NZ media agree scientists are **trustworthy sources**

Top barriers to covering science

Not enough skilled staff

Not enough time

Science is perceived as...

Interesting

Important

Good source
of content

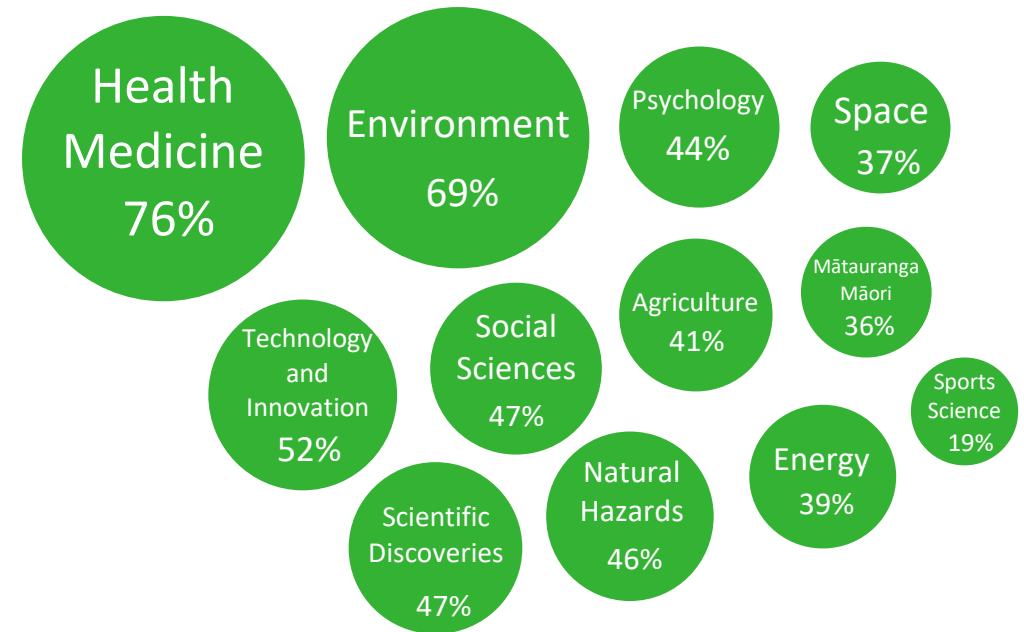
Media perceptions of science

We asked journalists which areas of science interested their audience. The top three selected categories were: Health and Medicine (76% selected), Environment (69%), and Technology and Innovation (52%). Over a third (36%) selected Mātauranga Māori, up from 27% in 2022. The biggest changes were for Social Science (47%, up from 33% in 2022), Technology and Innovation (52%, up from 39% in 2022), and Psychology (44%, up from 34% in 2022).

Decision-makers

We also posed some questions to newsroom decision-makers. Among this subgroup, 15% said their organisation is likely to increase resourcing for science and related rounds in 2025 (down from 19% in 2022), while few media organisations (12%) said decreases in resourcing were likely.

Audience interest in science content is increasing (50%) or holding steady (50%). No newsroom decision-makers surveyed reported a decrease in their audience's interest in science this year.



50%

Say their audience's **interest in science is increasing**

Scientists' perceptions of media

The majority of researchers surveyed agreed that, if approached by the media they would: be likely to respond (95%, same as in 2022), feel prepared (85%, same as 2022), and be confident (82% compared to 79% in 2022).

Most researchers engage frequently with media. Half of respondents (49%) reported having a media interaction within the last three months, and 64% within the last six months. Just over half (54%) said they had written their own content for a public audience (e.g., contributing to online publications such as Newsroom or The Conversation).

Some of the scientists we surveyed had reservations about the media: 64% agreed with the statement 'The mainstream media often misrepresents science' (compared to 63% in 2022, down from 70% in 2020).

However, more than three-quarters (82%, similar to 83% in 2022) 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

82%

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' (97% agreed), 'To raise awareness about my subject' (88%), and 'To raise awareness about science generally' (87%).

The top barriers were: 'I don't have enough time' (65% agreed) and 'There are too few professional incentives' (39%).

Organisations are changing their views on public engagement - when asked about their own organisations, two-thirds (66%) of researchers felt that communicating research to the public had become more important (compared to 70% in 2022 and 61% in 2020), and only 6% 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

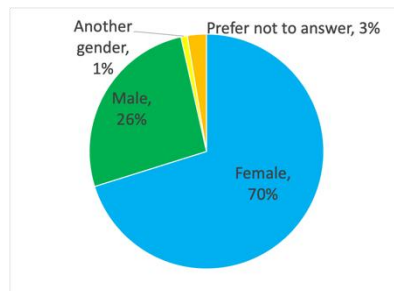
66%

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

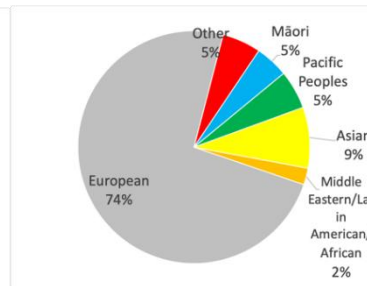
Demographics

Media

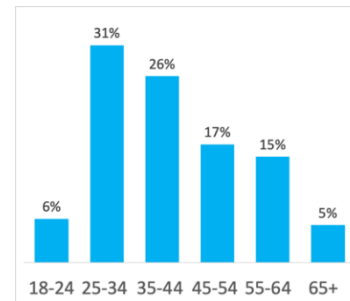
Gender



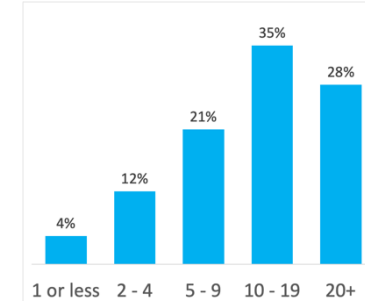
Ethnicity



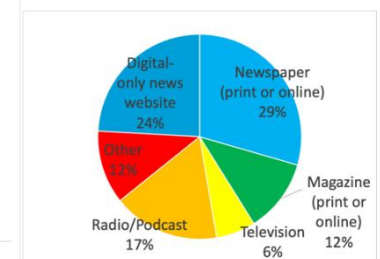
Age



Years' experience

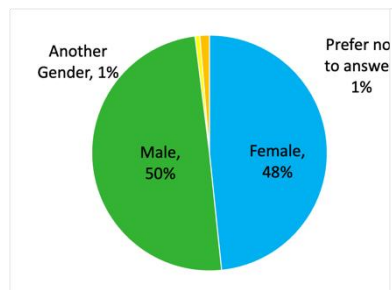


Employer

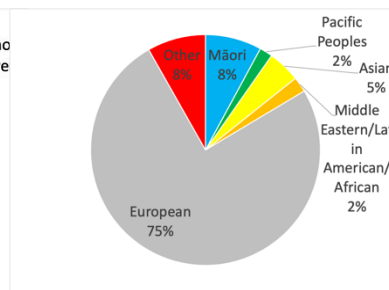


Scientists

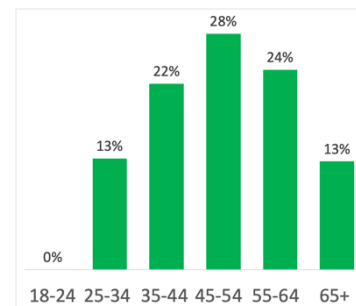
Gender



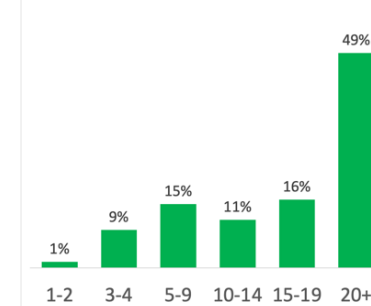
Ethnicity



Age



Years' experience



Employer

