

Science Media Centre

2018 Survey

Overview & key results

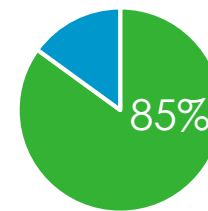
In March 2018 the Science Media Centre (SMC) surveyed stakeholders, seeking feedback on SMC resources and training workshops as well as general reflections on how science is covered in the media.

This short summary outlines the key findings from the surveys. Two separate surveys were used, one for media professionals and one for scientists and researchers.

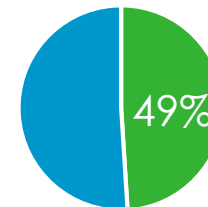
The **scientist survey** was sent to all scientists and researchers who had attended any SMC workshops. Of the 751 researchers contacted, 236 completed the survey. Respondents were asked specific questions about each type of workshop they reported attending.

The **media survey** link was sent to all media contacts who receive SMC alerts and releases, have contacted the SMC with queries, or who have had other contact with the SMC. Of the 567 media professionals contacted, 118 responded to our survey, including 32 working in more senior editor or producer roles.

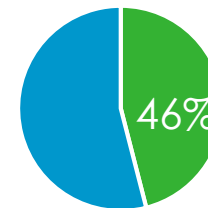
Across all SMC workshops, participants report they are:



Communicating more effectively



Communicating more often



Reaching a wider audience

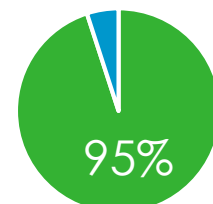
Scientists Survey

Two-day Science Media SAVVY workshops

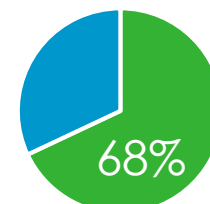
These intensive workshops focus on building key skills in working effectively with media. This workshop format includes face-to-face interaction with reporters from national media and the opportunity to pitch potential stories for their feedback in a supportive, confidence-building environment.

A total of 90 survey respondents reported attending these workshops. Most participants felt these workshops improved their skills; 95% of participants agreed¹ that they could communicate their research more effectively after attending the workshop. They also reported ongoing impact from the workshops: 68% agreed that they were communicating their research more often, 68% agreed that their research was reaching a wider audience, and 97% said they had applied skills from the workshop to at least some degree since participating.

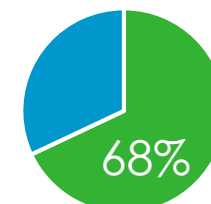
Almost half of workshop participants (49%) reported having follow-up contact with journalists and more than a third (35%) said that this led to media coverage of their research. More than half (58%) of researchers said their media and public profile was higher following the workshop. Journalists who attended workshops as part of a media panel also reported positive outcomes, with 76% reporting follow-up with participants and most (71%) producing media stories based on contact with researchers.



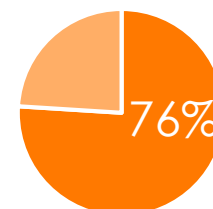
Communicating more effectively



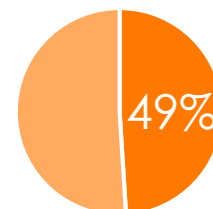
Communicating more often



Reaching wider audience



Journalists report follow-up contact with researchers



Researchers report follow-up contact with journalists

¹ Selecting 'Agree' or 'Strongly agree' on 5-point scale.

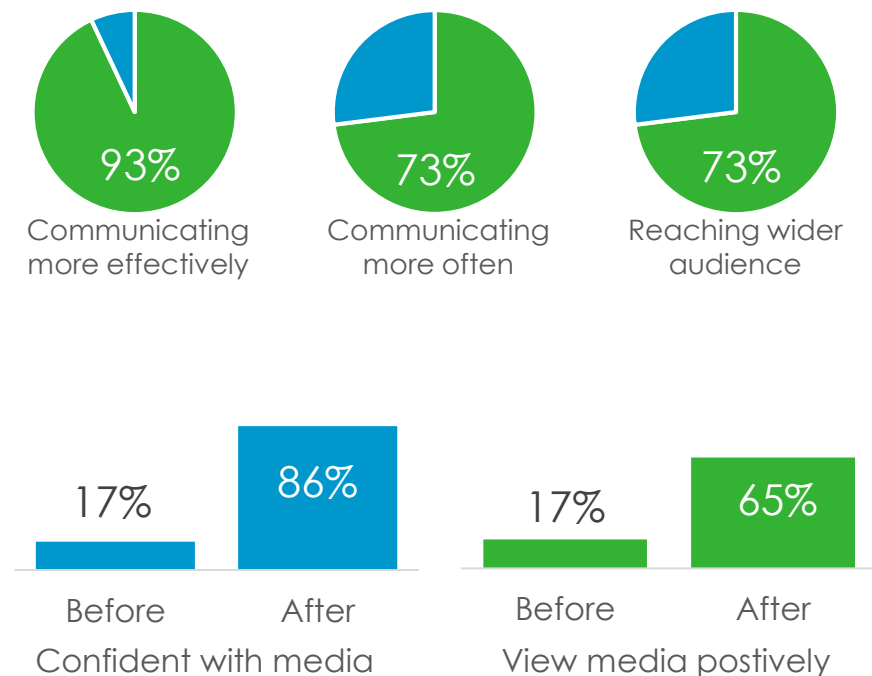
Over half (56%) of participants reported positive career impacts as a result of engaging with media generally, including collaborations (27%), conference invitations (21%) and referencing of their research (19%).

When asked which aspects of the workshops they felt were most valuable, the most common responses participants selected were 'preparing key messages' (62%) and 'understanding the media' (61%).

Media SAVVY workshops for Māori researchers

Building on our full-length Science Media SAVVY programme, these sessions offer Māori researchers the chance to discuss shared issues and exchange perspectives in a setting that supports Māori kaupapa and promotes whakawhanaungatanga. The overall aim is to increase the visibility of Māori researchers and impacts from their work in both mainstream and Māori media outlets.

To date, the SMC has run five workshops, so the number of participants responding to the survey was relatively low, with 15 respondents offering feedback. These participants reported increased confidence in dealing with the media; only 17% said they were confident before attending the workshop but 86% said they were confident after. Attending the workshops also led participants to view the media more warmly – 65% reported positive attitudes towards media after the workshop compared to 17% before the workshop.



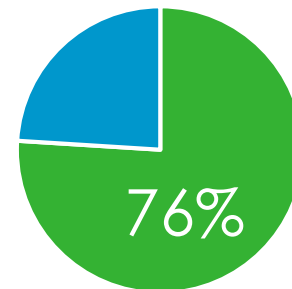
SAVVY Express

SAVVY Express sessions run parallel with research conferences and are aimed at busy researchers. Participants take part in a brief one-on-one coaching session developing their skills in speaking about their research on camera. In just 15 minutes, participants receive tailored advice from media experts to help them develop their style and content for a general audience. Participants also receive a 90-second video of the highlights of their session as an added bonus.

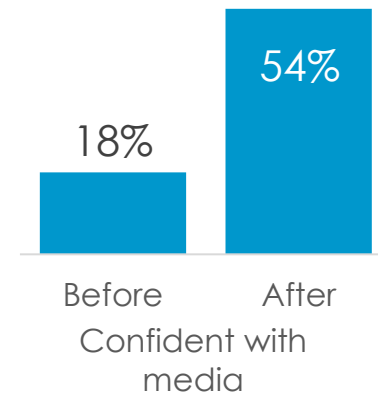
105 respondents reported attending a SAVVY Express session. Taking part in a 15-minute SAVVY Express on-camera practice session increased participants' confidence; only 18% of participants reported feeling confident in responding to media before the session, but 54% reported feeling confident after the session.

When asked if the experience had encouraged them to pursue further development of their communication skills, 45% indicated this was strongly the case², and only 5% selected 'not at all'.

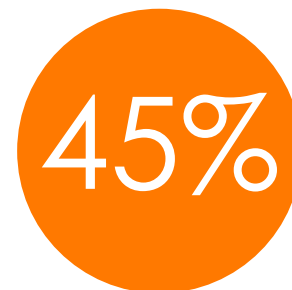
27% said that they had posted, displayed or otherwise used the 90-second video clip produced during their session.



Communicating
more effectively



Before
Confident with
media



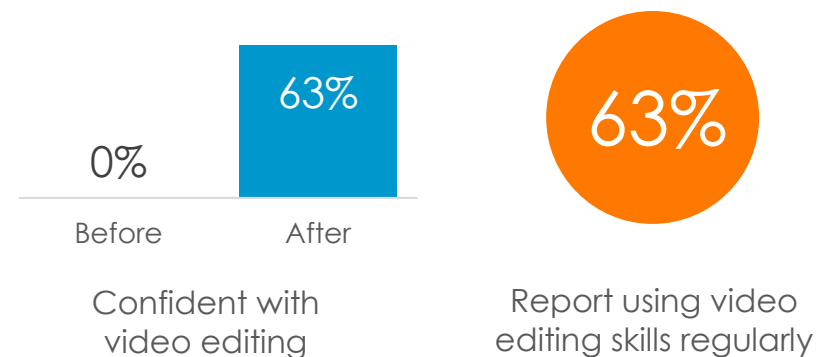
Say 15 min Express
session encouraged
them to pursue further
skills development

² Selecting 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale from 'Not at all' to 'A great deal'.

Video workshops

The SMC also runs introductory workshops on using smartphones to create videos that communicate research.

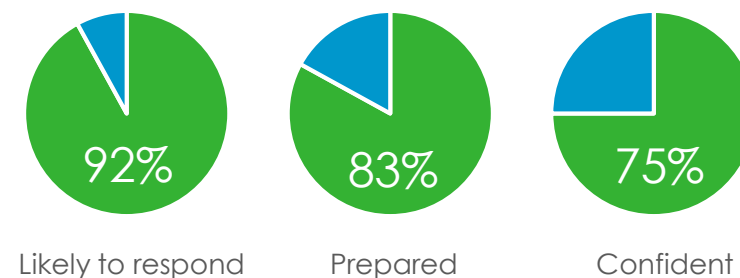
28 participants who attended one of the video editing workshops provided feedback in our survey. Video editing workshops increased participants' confidence; no participants reported feeling confident making a video before the session, but 63% reported feeling confident after the session. 63% of participants reported they had used skills regularly³ since attending and no participants reported not using the skills at all.



Working with media

Across all workshops, the researchers responding to our survey were generally confident in working with media. Most respondents agreed that if approached by the media to discuss their research they would feel confident (75%), prepared (83%) and likely to respond (92%).

Two thirds of respondents (66%) had responded to a media query in the last six months and 81% in the last year.



³ Selecting 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale from 'Not at all' to 'A great deal'.

Media Survey

Science Media Centre evaluation

Media professionals' overall evaluation of the Centre and its work was very positive. Nearly all respondents agreed that the SMC is useful to New Zealand media (98%), has an impact on science coverage (89%) and is valued by media (89%).

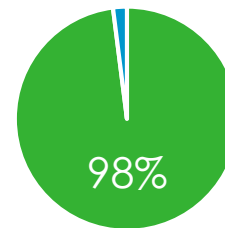
When asked which SMC resources they use, the responses media professionals most commonly selected were: individual media queries (74%); SMC picks⁴ (67%) and expert reaction (66%) emails; and the Scimex.org online portal (66%). Broadly, respondents reported greater familiarity with SMC resources than at the time of our last survey in 2016. Respondents regularly use SMC resources; 58% of respondents said they access them at least weekly, and 85% said at least monthly. This is a substantial increase from 2016 when only 61% of respondents reported accessing SMC resources at least monthly.

Journalists who had contacted the SMC for individual queries said the experts suggested by the SMC were 'relevant' (95%), 'knowledgeable' (87%) and 'willing to engage' (83%).

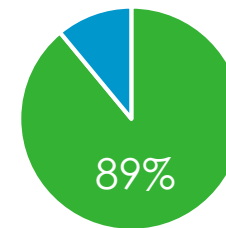
Among respondents who had attended one of the SMC's 'Spotting bad science' workshops, 92% agreed that other journalists would find the workshops useful, and 67% agreed that the workshops had influenced how their organisation covers science.

⁴ The SMC picks is a twice-weekly email containing summaries of upcoming research, with links to the Scimex.org portal for more information.

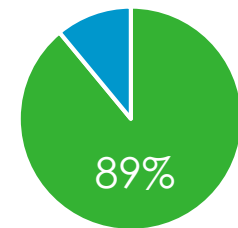
Most respondents agree the SMC...



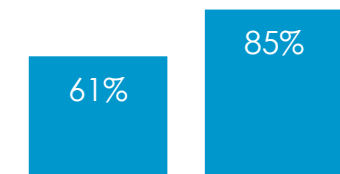
Is useful



Has an impact



Is valued



2016

2018

Use SMC resources
monthly



Agree 'Spotting Bad Science'
workshops are useful

Experts suggested by the SMC are:

Relevant

Knowledgeable

Willing to engage with media

Science in the media

Only a very small percentage of professionals surveyed (1%) believed their audience was not interested in science content⁵. Almost half (47%) of editors and producers thought that their audiences' interest in science content was increasing and just 3% said it was decreasing.

When asked about barriers to covering science, the most common responses selected by respondents were 'a lack of compelling visual content' (52%), 'not enough skilled staff' (50%) and 'hard to access experts who can explain research clearly' (49%)

When asked what areas of science their most interested their audience, the often answers selected by media were: environment (80%); health and medicine (78%); scientific discoveries (65%); natural hazards (65%); and technology and innovation (55%).

We also asked editors and producers about their interest in using republishable third party content. A majority said they would use such content if it were free (72%) or if it were exclusive (56%). Fewer said they would be likely to use such content if it were available to media (36%) or a paid-for service (9%). Most editors and producers (69%) also expressed high levels of concern⁶ over conflicts of interest and loss of editorial independence that could result from new sponsorship arrangements with third parties

⁵ Selecting 1 or 2 on a 5-point scale from 'Not at all interested' to 'Very interested'.

⁶ Selecting 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale from 'Not at all concerned' to 'Very concerned'.

Barriers to media covering science

Lack of visual content

Not enough skilled staff

Hard to access experts who can explain research clearly

1%

Think audience not interested in science

47%

Think interest in science is increasing

Most interesting science topics

Environment

Scientific discoveries

Health & medicine

Natural hazards

Technology & innovation