



Researcher of the *Future*

A **Confidence in Research** report



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Advancing human progress together

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Foreword

Researchers today are tackling some of the world's most urgent challenges — from climate change to antibiotic resistance — while navigating the pressures of fast expanding volume of information, funding challenges, demonstrating impact, and the fundamental need to safeguard research integrity and trust.

Amid these demands, the transformative potential of artificial intelligence is reshaping every stage of the research process. Already, we're seeing breakthroughs: AI accelerating drug-target discovery, improving medical imaging, and streamlining the entire research journey from literature review to publication. Yet these advances represent only the beginning. The opportunities ahead — for science, innovation and society — are immense.

At Elsevier, we've partnered with the research and healthcare communities we serve for over 140 years to turn trusted information into mission-critical insights — supporting discovery, innovation and impact. We combine quality content and data with advanced technology and AI to help researchers find answers, make confident decisions and focus on what matters most — advancing human progress.

This report reflects the voices of more than 3,000 researchers worldwide. Their insights reveal resilience, collaboration across borders and an unwavering commitment to integrity, even under growing pressure. They also show optimism about how AI can accelerate discovery — provided researchers have the right support, and tools that are built on quality, transparency and trust.

The research environment continues to evolve rapidly. By listening to researchers' experiences and expectations, we can shape solutions that strengthen confidence, foster collaboration and drive progress — together.

On behalf of Elsevier, I thank all who shared their perspectives. I invite you to explore these findings and join us in imagining — and building — the future of research.



Judy Verses

President, Academic and
Government Markets



Executive summary

The global research landscape is going through profound transformation.

Rapid advances in Artificial intelligence (AI), biotechnology, quantum systems and other frontier fields are redefining what's possible, while shifting societal priorities, economic pressures and policy demands are reshaping how research is funded, conducted and evaluated.

In this era of acceleration, success will depend on how effectively researchers and institutions embrace AI, foster collaboration and build resilience. The ability to adapt — while maintaining integrity and public trust — will define the next generation of scientific progress.

To better understand these shifts, Elsevier engages regularly with researchers worldwide through comprehensive surveys that capture their experiences, challenges and aspirations. Their insights reveal not only how they feel about the evolving research and innovation environment today, but what is needed to strengthen it for the future.

Across continents, one message stands out: researchers remain deeply committed to advancing human progress. Despite increasing challenges, and with the right support and technology, they are ready to shape a more connected, confident and innovative research future.

The Researcher of the Future — a Confidence in Research report builds on our recent studies — *Insights 2024: Researcher Attitudes toward AI*¹, *Confidence in Research: Researchers in the Spotlight* (2022)² and *Research Futures 2.0* (2022)³.

Together, they chart the pulse of a community navigating change with optimism.

Researcher of the Future — a Confidence in Research report



Online survey by email invitation, August–September 2025.



3,234 active researchers and leaders across academia, R&D-led corporations and research institutions from 113 countries.



Responses are weighted geographically to improve representativeness. See appendices for details.

AI is transforming research

AI is reshaping the research landscape, with growing adoption and optimism about its potential, alongside concerns about preparedness and governance.



AI adoption in research has surged: 58% have used AI tools for work, up from 37% in 2024. Most often they use AI to find and summarize the latest research (61%) and perform literature reviews (51%).



However, many feel underprepared: 45% feel undertrained in AI, and only 32% agree governance of AI at their institution is good.



Researchers are largely positive about AI's potential to boost efficiency, with 58% saying it already saves them time today and 69% expecting AI to save them time in the next two to three years.



Researchers point to a number of factors to increase their confidence in using AI including transparency: when AI automatically cites references (59%) and recency: when the AI's training data includes the most up-to-date scholarly literature (55%).



61% believe AI will be the creative force driving new knowledge in the next two to three years.

Under pressure but upholding integrity

Researchers face challenges that impact their ability to conduct and publish high-quality work but value the publication record.



Only 45% agree they have sufficient time for research, and just 33% expect funding in their field to increase in the next two to three years, with optimism lowest in North America and Europe.



85% agree that corrections and retractions of research articles ensure integrity, and 76% agree that publishers play a critical role in ensuring research integrity.



The pressure to publish is ubiquitous: 68% say the pressure to publish their research is greater than two to three years ago.



Additionally, 78% rate the design of the research methodology as extremely or very important for confidence in others' work. Many (55%) have successfully replicated others' work in their own studies.



Researchers value trusted content: 74% say peer-reviewed research is trustworthy.

Ways of working are evolving

Research practices are shifting with increased collaboration and changing attitudes toward international mobility.



63% agree there is more collaboration in their research area than previously.



29% would consider moving abroad for their career in the next two years.



Among those seeing increased collaboration, 68% are collaborating more with researchers from other disciplines and 53% with institutions in other countries.



Top motivations for those considering moving are better work-life balance (51%), more research funding (49%) and greater freedom to pursue research interests (49%).



Researcher mobility is in flux: 30% of all researchers report seeing more international applicants than a year ago.

Drive to demonstrate impact

Researchers are increasingly expected to align their work with societal goals and demonstrate real-world impact.



There is a shift in the focus of research — 67% agree there is more emphasis on mission-oriented research compared to two to three years ago.



66% have done outreach to share their research with broader audiences...



50% of researchers think research must always have real world benefit — up 7 percentage points from 2022.



...of whom 64% have published an article in a magazine or newsletter, 58% given public lectures and 49% interacted with school students.



78% say their research will result in increased scientific knowledge and understanding in their field; only 1% say their research will have no impact.

Regional and demographic variations

This global report reveals geographical differences in researchers' experiences and how they view the current and future research landscape.

Across the broad regions of North America, South America, Asia Pacific, Europe, Middle East and Africa, the insights show notable variations by country. Recognizing these differences is important for tailoring support and solutions that account for local contexts.

In **North America**, researchers' views on AI are consistently less positive, and they have lower AI adoption rates compared to those in other regions. Fewer agree that research must have a real-world benefit (33% vs 50% globally). They are less optimistic that their funding will increase (11% vs 33% globally). Researchers in the USA are most likely to consider relocating (40% vs 29% globally).

Europe's researchers are similar to those in North America: Their views on AI are consistently less positive and their AI adoption rates are lower compared to those in other regions. Researchers in Europe also report more time pressure than those in other regions. They are less optimistic that their funding will increase (25% vs 33% globally).

Researchers in **South America** are more optimistic about funding increases over the next 2–3 years (42% vs 33% globally) and more inclined to consider relocating to another country (43% vs 29% globally). When it comes to AI, they are less confident in institutional governance (12% vs 32% globally) and feel less adequately trained in its use (18% vs 27% globally). Despite this, a higher proportion have used AI for work-related purposes (63%) compared to peers in North America (52%) and Europe (53%).

Researchers in the **Middle East and Africa** are most open to relocating abroad, and they are receiving more international applicants than other regions. They believe there is more emphasis of mission-orientated research (78% vs 67% globally). They think research must have a real-world impact (82% vs 50%), and most researchers in this region are doing public outreach (78% vs 66%).

Researchers in **Asia Pacific** consistently report more positive views on AI and higher adoption rates of AI tools, particularly in China (they are also more likely to think AI will improve the quality of their work 66% vs 38% globally). In addition, they report greater pressure to publish (79% vs 68% globally). More agree that research must have a real-world benefit (59% vs 50% globally). Researchers in Asia Pacific are least likely to relocate, with the rates particularly low in China (13%).

The *researcher of the future* needs tools, training and support

The findings paint a picture of a research community that is adaptable, collaborative and driven by both curiosity and the desire to make a difference. To empower the researcher of the future, stakeholders — including universities, funders, and information and analytic providers — need to work together to:



Provide training and guidance on AI to ensure researchers have the skills and confidence to use new tools effectively and ethically.



Foster collaboration and mobility through international partnerships and reduce administrative barriers to researcher exchange.



Implement strong governance and policies around research integrity, addressing concerns about reliability, bias and transparency.



Encourage outreach and engagement by rewarding public communication efforts and enabling researchers to share their work with policymakers, educators and the public.



Facilitate access to funding opportunities, enable fair evaluation of research outputs (valuing quality and integrity).

As a driving force in global research, AI has much potential, and to achieve it providers must listen to researchers. With this study, we aimed to understand researchers' perception and use of AI tools, as well as their experiences and predictions in the research environment. We will continue to monitor researchers' views and behavior to meet their needs with responsible AI tools.

For further information, visit:

elsevier.io/researcher-of-the-future

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Introduction

Global challenges, technological development, and economic and political shifts are changing the way research is done, impacting researchers in a multitude of ways.

While optimistic about the future, researchers are under increasing pressure to perform in a fast-moving competitive landscape in which research integrity is critical but support often lagging. With the rise of AI, research is at a tipping point. Armed with reliable AI tools, researchers have the opportunity to overcome the challenges they face at work to solve some of today's biggest global problems.

The researcher of the future will need support in their fast-changing landscape. To understand what that looks like, Elsevier conducts regular surveys on various aspects of research. This report shares the results of the latest survey, in which over 3,200 researchers provided their insights and perspectives on AI, the research environment, impact and outreach, and their possible future.

The aim is to understand how researchers perceive the evolving landscape of academic and scientific enquiry. The findings will highlight the key challenges researchers face today, how views are shifting and how they should be best supported in the future.

Tracking trends in research

Previous studies have highlighted evolving patterns, across AI technology, the research environment, collaboration and mobility, as well as impact.

The [Insights 2024: Researcher Attitudes toward AI](#) report provided a baseline for the use, perception and expectation of AI in research.¹ It showed that 74% of researchers believe AI (including GenAI) will have a transformative or significant impact on their area of work, with 37% of respondents already using AI in their work.³

Several differences emerged in AI usage and attitudes, notably that researchers in Asia Pacific are more likely to have a positive view of AI. Age or career level also made a difference, with early career researchers more positive and knowledgeable about their institution's AI activities and more senior respondents less so. These differences are also evident in this report.

[Research Futures 2.0](#) shared in-depth insights into researchers' experiences, attitudes and predictions across a range of areas, highlighting areas like funding, open science and research integrity.³ The report predicted an increase in collaboration, faster and more open knowledge in publishing, greater engagement with the public, and the growing adoption of AI in research. These trends continue in the current survey.

Public engagement with research was a focus in the [Confidence in Research: Researchers in the Spotlight](#) report, highlighting what researchers are doing to take their work to broader audiences, their confidence in communicating and the barriers to overcome to support this outreach.²

A new chapter: *Researcher of the Future*

This survey provides new and up-to-date insights into how research is evolving.

Many of the trends previously identified continue: researchers are increasingly using AI tools to help them overcome challenges like limited time, pressure to publish and the competitive funding environment. Collaboration across geographic and disciplinary borders is increasing, and many are considering moving to other countries. More researchers recognize the growing importance of impact in research, and they're taking active steps to share their findings with wider audiences.

AI is driving change and supporting researchers across all these shifts. It has quickly become an integral part of researchers' work, being both supportive and transformative, with tools that can accelerate discovery while raising new questions about skills, ethics and trust.

The aim of the survey was to deepen understanding of how researchers perceive the evolving landscape of scientific enquiry and innovation, influenced by AI advancements and growing pressures on researchers. Understanding researchers' experiences and challenges is essential to prepare researchers for a collaborative, AI-enabled future.

This report is structured in four main chapters:

Chapter 1: AI is transforming research

AI is reshaping the research landscape, with growing adoption and optimism about its potential, alongside concerns about preparedness and governance.

Chapter 2: Pressures on researchers and integrity

Researchers face challenges that impact their ability to conduct and publish high-quality work but value the publication record.

Chapter 3: Ways of working are evolving

Research practices are shifting with increased collaboration and changing attitudes toward international mobility

Chapter 4: Drive to demonstrate impact

Researchers are increasingly expected to align their work with societal goals and demonstrate real-world impact.

Each chapter presents key survey findings (with statistics), illustrative quotes from respondents around the world and comparisons to past studies where relevant. We also highlight notable regional and career-stage differences throughout.

You can explore the full results in the accompanying [databook](#) released with this report.

Researcher of the Future — a Confidence in Research report

Survey: Online survey by email invitation

Date: August–September 2025

Respondents: 3,234 active researchers and leaders across academia, R&D-led corporations and research institutions from 113 countries.

Responses are weighted geographically to improve representativeness. See appendices for details.

AI is transforming research

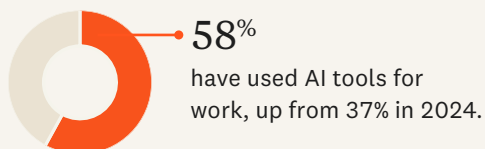
“AI is becoming not only a tool for automating tasks but also a creative partner enhancing human intellect, enabling breakthroughs and original knowledge creation at unprecedented speeds.”

Academic Affairs Director/Deputy Director, China

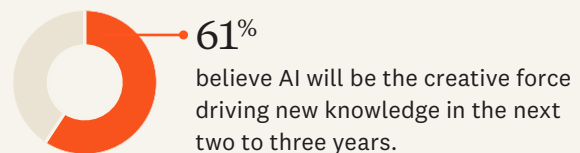


Key insights

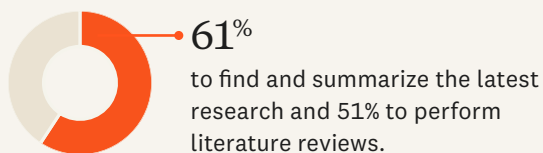
AI adoption in research has surged



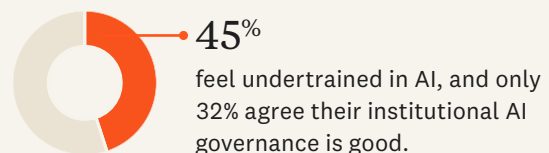
AI as a creative force



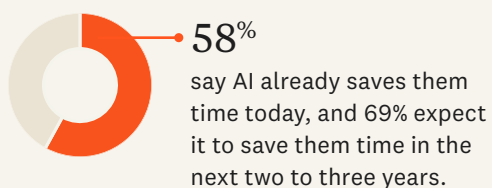
Researchers use AI for different purposes



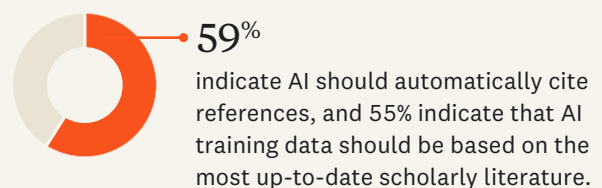
However, many feel underprepared



Researchers are largely positive about AI's potential to boost efficiency



Researchers point to a number of factors to increase their confidence in using AI



AI today: Current use and perceptions

Researchers today recognize AI as a transformative tool that can enhance their efficiency, boost creativity and enable data analysis. Many are enthusiastic about the potential of AI to transform research, and they are increasingly experiencing its benefits in practice.

As one respondent noted:

“AI makes it easier to analyze several articles in a short time, which speeds up research and is more precise when making decisions.”

Researcher, Peru

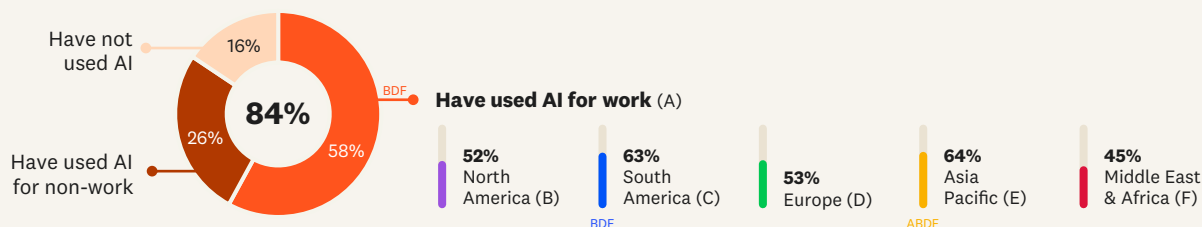
Another described AI as:

“... now helping us to think out and invent new research topics, becoming indispensable. In the near future, thus, it will be a game changer.”

**Research Services/Office (Head/Director/
Deputy Director), South Korea**

Figure 1

Use of AI tools



Question: Have you used an AI (including generative AI) tool or an AI feature on an existing tool you use?

Values marked with a letter are significantly higher (at the 90% confidence level) than that group. For example, if a value is marked with 'B', it is significantly higher than 'North America'. Conversely, the group denoted by the letter is significantly lower than that value.

Base: n= 3,234; North America (480); South America (141); Europe (848); Asia Pacific (1,534); Middle East & Africa (128).

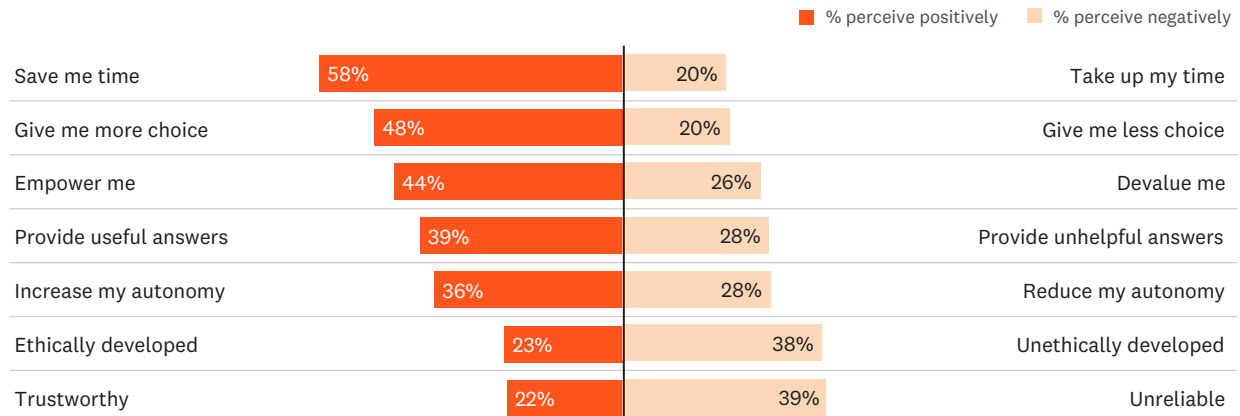
AI adoption among researchers is growing rapidly: 58% have used AI tools for work, up from 37% in early 2024.¹ Usage ranges from 40% in India to 69% in China, aligning with previous patterns. About a quarter (26%) of respondents say they have used AI tools just to test them or for a non-work purpose.

Overall, 16% of researchers say they have not used AI tools at all, with those in the USA (25%) and India (26%) indicating they have not used AI, while only 4% of those in China (4%) have not.

As in previous years, ChatGPT is the most commonly used generalist AI tool. Of those who use AI tools for work, 71% of respondents globally use ChatGPT. Usage is highest among early career researchers (with less than seven years' experience), at 83%, and lowest among those with over 20 years' experience (65%).

Figure 2

Current perceptions of AI tools



Question: How do you perceive the impact of AI tools on you as a researcher? For each of the following pairs of statements, please indicate where your view falls on the spectrum. Not charted are those who answered at the mid-point of the spectrum.

Base: n= 3,234

The perception of AI among researchers today is generally positive, though there are areas of concern. Most researchers globally (58%) say AI tools save them time, compared to 20% who say they take up their time. There is substantial regional variation, with 70% of respondents in South America and 67% in Asia Pacific perceiving them as time-saving compared to 39% of those in North America and 52% of those in Europe. You can explore the full results in the accompanying [databook](#) released with this report.

Similarly, 60% of researchers in Asia Pacific say AI tools give them more choice, compared to 29% in North America and 39% in Europe. This pattern — with perception more positive in Asia Pacific and less positive in North America and Europe — is evident across all AI-related areas covered in the survey.

Globally, respondents are overall more positive about AI currently empowering them (44%) rather than devaluing them (26%), providing useful (39%) rather than unhelpful (28%) answers, and increasing (36%) rather than reducing (28%) their autonomy.

However, in two areas — ethics and reliability — researchers are less positive. Less than a quarter (23%) of respondents globally believe AI tools are ethically developed, compared to 38% who think they are unethically developed. Similarly, 22% of respondents believe AI tools are currently trustworthy, compared to 39% who say they are unreliable. We see this reflected in the comments.

“Although a useful tool, AI requires validation because it often generates false or misleading information.”

Researcher (hospital), USA

“Until now, AI has not demonstrated trustworthy characteristics in scientific research, except for writing. Especially when I found that AI often fabricates fake literature on its own, I became very cautious about using AI in academic research.”

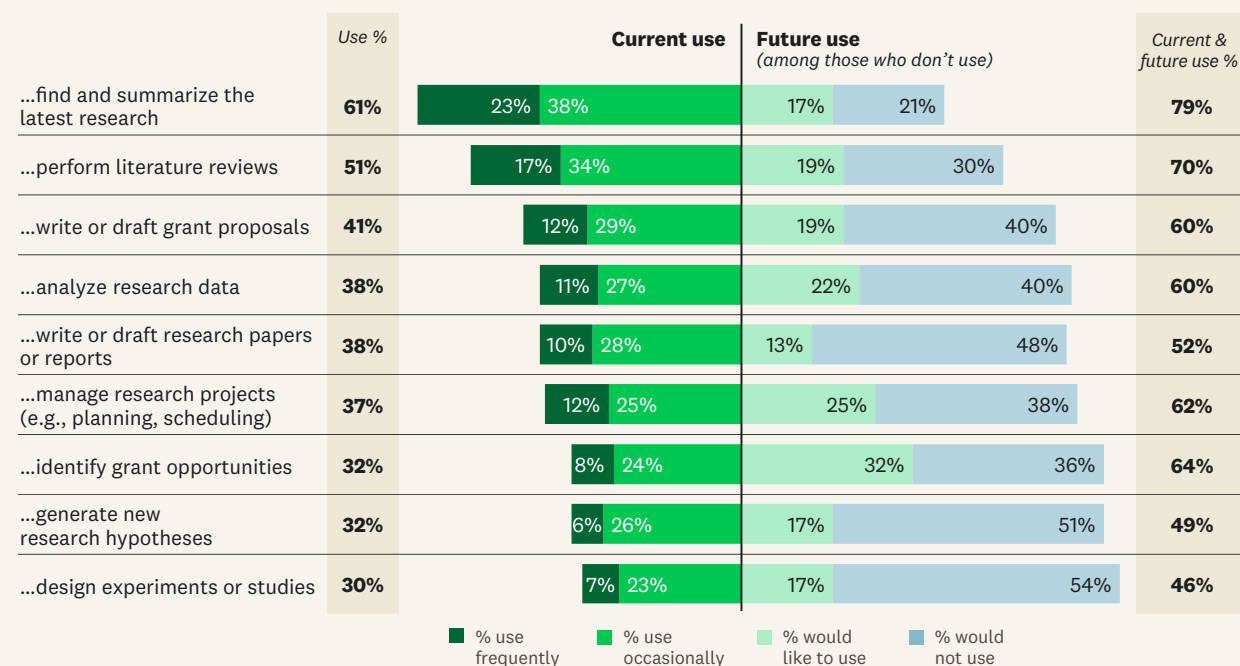
Head of Department/Department Head, China

While there is some negative sentiment in Asia Pacific too, the pattern is inverted, in both cases with 31% indicating they believe is ethical and trustworthy and 27% unethical and unreliable.

AI applications, today and tomorrow

Figure 3

Researchers' current and future uses for AI



Question: Do you use or would like to use AI tools to...

Base: n= 3,234

AI technology plays a supporting role in many aspects of research, and as such it is driving progress across areas including knowledge management and dissemination, funding and collaboration. As we saw in previous research, academic leaders are grappling with big challenges, including funding, talent acquisition and retention, and impact.⁴

Researchers are also dealing with these challenges, and current AI usage reflects this, including keeping up with the latest studies. More than half of researchers are currently using AI to perform literature reviews (51%) and find and summarize the latest research (61%). Over one-third (38%) are using AI tools to analyze research data, 38% to write or draft research papers or reports, and 41% to write or draft grant proposals.

“Although artificial intelligence has become a powerful tool for automating bureaucratic and operational tasks, such as improving grammar, spelling and textual cohesion in scientific writing, its role remains that of technical assistance.”

Researcher, Brazil

However, when thinking about AI tools broadly, researchers are generally less likely to use AI for more creative activities, such as generating new research hypotheses and designing experiments or studies. Prior research shows the likelihood of using a reliable and secure AI assistant for such purposes is higher among those who saw a benefit in AI.¹

Researchers' predictions about the impact of AI on their work in the coming few years can provide insights into how the technology is likely to be used in the future. Most researchers globally (69%) expect that AI tools will save them time in the next two to three years, with researchers more likely to agree the earlier they are in their career.

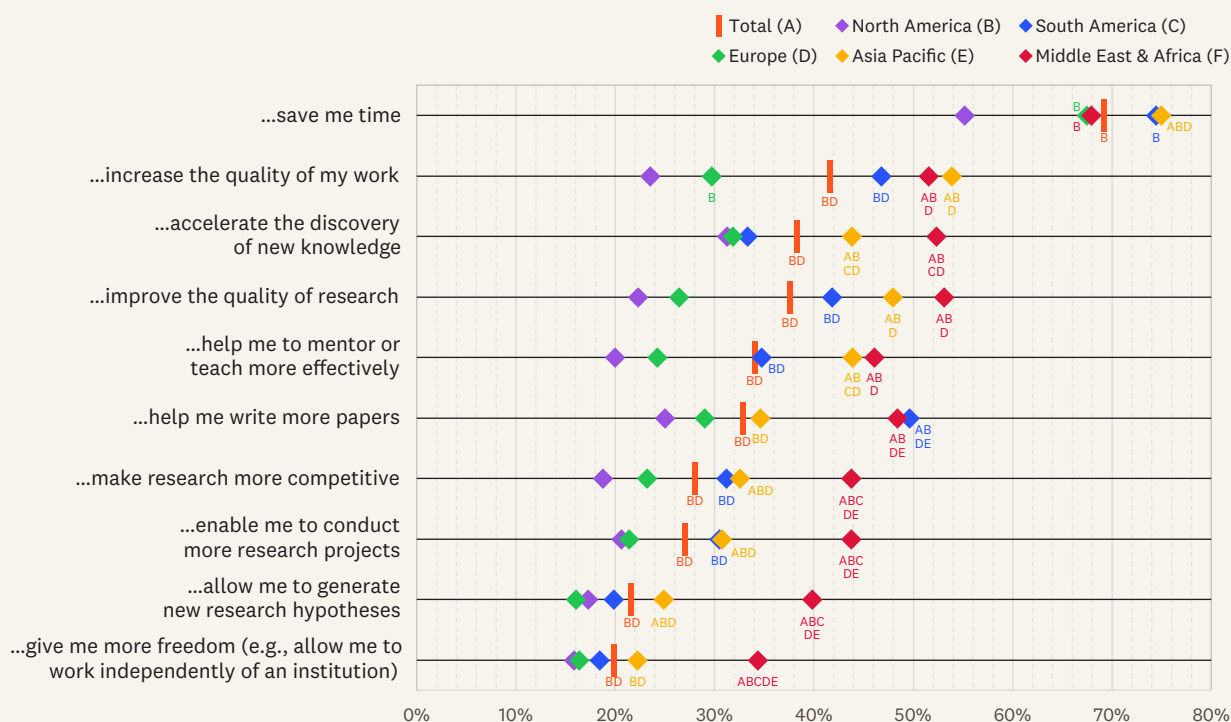
Many researchers believe AI tools will increase the quality of their work (42%), accelerate the discovery of new knowledge (38%) and improve the quality of research (38%). Other areas in which respondents believe AI will be helpful include in supporting their mentoring and teaching work (34%) and helping them write more papers (33%).

Respondents are less optimistic about the future impact of AI tools on increasing trust in research (14%), helping them secure funding (15%) and increasing collaboration (20%).

Figure 4

Top ten expectations of AI tools in the next two to three years

I believe AI tools will...



Question: Thinking about AI tools more generally, what impact do you think they will have on your work in the next 2–3 years?

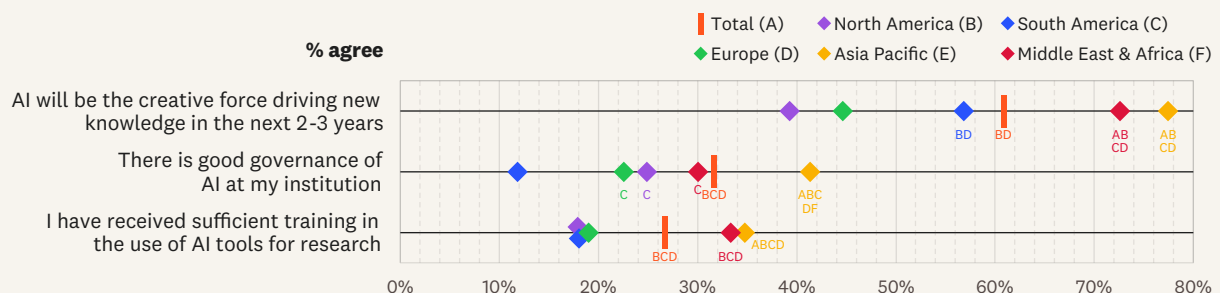
Values marked with a letter are significantly higher (at the 90% confidence level) than that group. For example, if a value is marked with 'B', it is significantly higher than 'North America'. Conversely, the group denoted by the letter is significantly lower than that value.

Base: n= 3,234; North America (480); South America (141); Europe (848); Asia Pacific (1,534); Middle East & Africa (128).

AI as a driving force for knowledge generation

Figure 5

AI's transformative role



Question: To better understand your views on the current research environment, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. Scale: strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree, don't know/not applicable. Don't know answers excluded from the base.

Values marked with a letter are significantly higher (at the 90% confidence level) than that group. For example, if a value is marked with 'B', it is significantly higher than 'North America'. Conversely, the group denoted by the letter is significantly lower than that value.

Base: n = 2,930–3,225; North America (405–480); South America (127–141); Europe (753–845); Asia Pacific (1,419–1,530); Middle East & Africa (113–128).

Despite some reservations, overall, researchers are optimistic about the positive impact AI will have on knowledge generation, with 61% of respondents globally agreeing the technology will drive new knowledge.

Echoing the broader sentiment toward AI, agreement is higher in Asia Pacific (77%) and lower in North America (39%) and Europe (45%). Researchers are most likely to agree in China (83%) and least likely in the Netherlands (29%). You can explore the full results in the accompanying [databook](#) released with this report.

Agreement is higher among early career researchers, falling as number of years in research increases, from 74% among those less than seven years in research to 52% among those with over 20 years' experience.

Some respondents highlighted the role of AI as a supporting technology and others as an amplifier of human intellect and not a replacement for it.

"[AI] will play a role in creativity and new knowledge, but I still think human idea generation will be the main creative force in the next 2-3 years."

Head of Department/Department Head, USA

Enablers of AI adoption — training, governance and trust

Lack of AI training and governance could be contributing to uncertainty and resistance to the adoption of AI in research.

Less than a third of researchers agree there is good governance of AI at their institution (32%). This is reflected in previous research with academic leaders, which showed that 64% are prioritizing the challenge of AI governance, while just 23% consider their institutions well prepared to tackle the challenge.⁴

Lack of AI training is another major issue, with 45% of respondents feeling undertrained and only 27% saying they have had sufficient AI training.

Across governance and training, respondents in Asia Pacific are overall more positive compared to those in all other regions. In South America, 62% of respondents feel undertrained in AI; in North America and Europe this is also high, both at 58%.

Improving governance and training at the institutional level will embed AI more deeply into researcher workflows, supporting greater efficiency.

Researchers also identified a number of factors that would increase their use of AI for work: they want AI tools that automatically cite sources (59%), are trained on the most up-to-date literature (55%), ensure high factual accuracy and safety (55%), use high-quality, peer-reviewed content (55%), maintain the confidentiality of input data (52%) and have outputs that undergo regular expert review (49%).

By meeting these expectations, AI tools developed for researchers can become trusted and transformative in the research ecosystem, alleviating some of the long-standing pressures around, funding, time, career progression, and maintaining research quality and integrity. Explore full results in the accompanying [databook](#) released with this report.

“There is a lack of institutional support in the form of formal training programs for using AI in research. We currently learn and establish our own boundaries and best practices through self-taught methods, rather than through official guidance from the university.”

**Research Services/Office (Head/Director/
Deputy Director), Indonesia**

“The guidelines are really vague. Also, the diversity of tools using AI is so huge that you have no idea of which is a valuable one.”

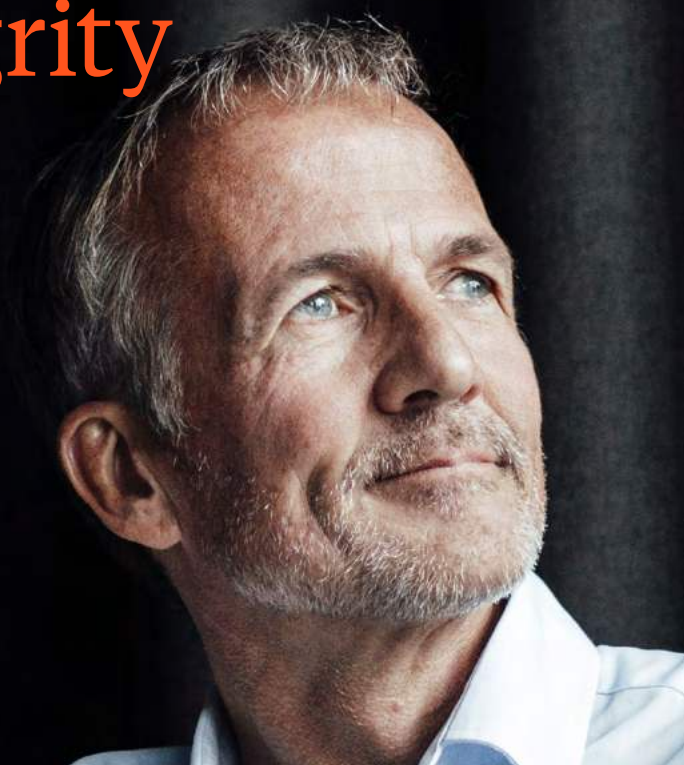
**Senior Academic/Researcher (e.g., Professor/
Principal Investigator), Switzerland**



Under pressure but upholding integrity

“We are evaluated on publications and the pressure increases more and more. The worst is when we are evaluated on the number of publications and not about the quality of our research.”

Research Administrator/Manager, France

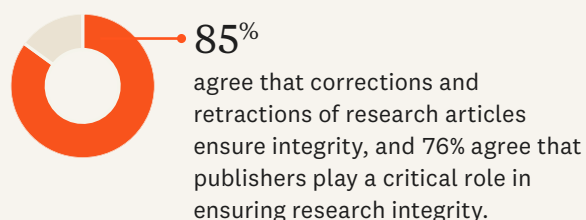


Key insights

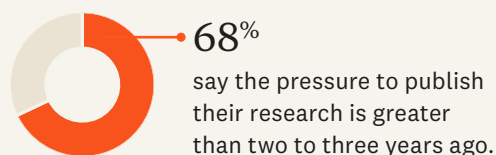
Time and funding pressures



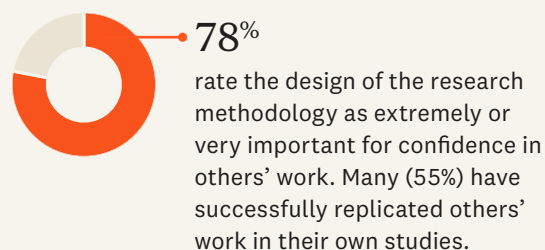
Publishers seen as integrity partners



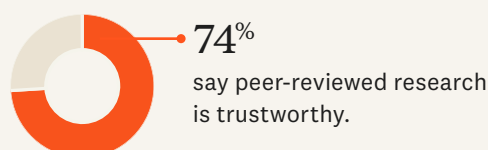
The pressure to publish is ubiquitous



Confidence built on methodology



Researchers value trusted content



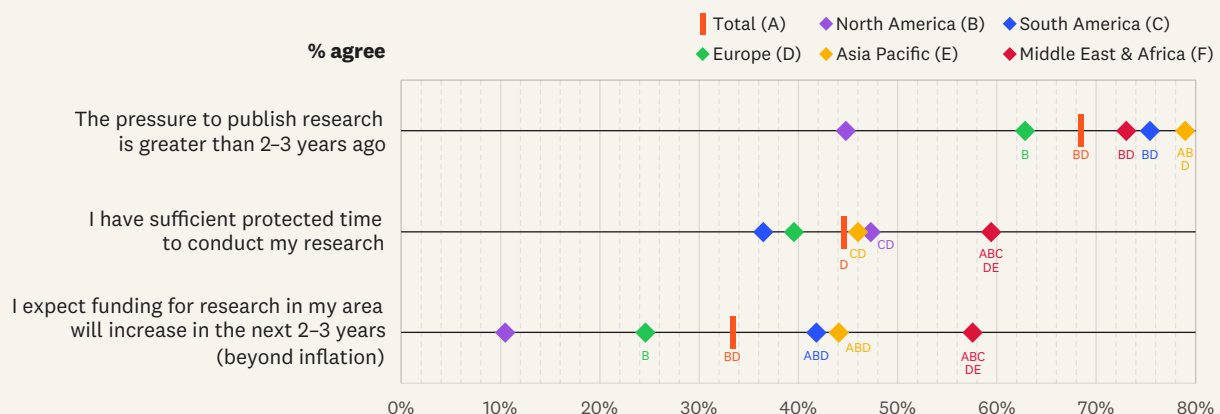
Pressure on researchers is increasing

Several factors are putting pressure on researchers, notably uncertainty around funding, geopolitical impacts on research stability, and administrative and teaching burdens.

Pressure to publish has also increased. Together, these factors are eroding the time researchers can dedicate to conducting research and potentially impeding their career progression.

Figure 6

Challenges facing researchers



Question: To better understand your views on the current research environment, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. Scale: strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree, don't know/not applicable. Don't know answers excluded from the base.

Values marked with a letter are significantly higher (at the 90% confidence level) than that group. For example, if a value is marked with 'B', it is significantly higher than 'North America'. Conversely, the group denoted by the letter is significantly lower than that value.

Base: n = 2,930–3,225; North America (405–480); South America (127–141); Europe (753–845); Asia Pacific (1,419–1,530); Middle East & Africa (113–128).

A key finding of this study is the low expectation for funding growth: only a third (33%) of researchers expect a funding increase in the coming two to three years. Researchers in North America (11%) and Europe (25%) are significantly less optimistic about this, and those in Asia Pacific (44%) more so. The USA (9%), Germany (14%), UK (15%) and Japan (27%) are all notably lower in contrast to India (68%) and China (44%). You can explore the full results in the accompanying [databook](#) released with this report.

Interestingly, optimism is inversely correlated with experience: newer researchers (under 7 years' experience) are much more hopeful about funding increases (42% expecting growth) than those with long careers (only 26% of 20+ year veterans expect growth). This could indicate that younger researchers see emerging opportunities, possibly in interdisciplinary or industry collaborations, or simply reflect a generational difference in outlook.

“In Japan, the amount of research funding has remained unchanged for nearly 20 years. Tax revenues have not increased, and with the declining birthrate, there are no signs of an increase in the budget allocated to universities for education, research, etc.”

**Faculty Member/Lecturer/Adjunct,
Associate or Assistant Professor, Japan**

Time pressure on researchers is clearly evident: less than half (45%) of researchers agree that they have sufficient time for research. Time pressure is generally consistent across geographies, with the exception of Europe, where agreement is lower (40%).

Comments indicate that teaching loads, identifying and acquiring funding, as well as administrative tasks are eating into research hours.

While technology may in some ways be contributing to the pressure researchers are under, for example because they need to learn how to use new AI tools, survey respondents acknowledged the role AI is and will have in alleviating their pressures in various areas. For example, they expect AI to reduce the time they spend on administrative tasks and support them in information gathering and summarizing activities.

The pressure to publish is not a new phenomenon, but its escalation is worth mentioning: 68% say this pressure has increased over the last two years. This pressure is higher in Asia Pacific (79%) and South America (75%) and lower in North America (45%) and Europe (63%), though it is notably high even there. Career stage makes a difference too: the earlier researchers are in their career, when they need to secure jobs or tenure, the higher the pressure they feel. This is in line with previous findings.³

This pressure is not only impacting individuals; it also has an impact on the research communication system. According to a 2024 study, researchers experiencing greater pressure to publish are more likely to prioritize speed of publication over other factors such as accessibility and language.⁵ And a 2021 study revealed pressure to publish as the most cited reason for questionable behavior, including fraud.⁶

In this way, pressure has an impact on research integrity.

“I think there are very few researchers working at Japanese universities who can find time to do research. This is because the teaching load is extremely heavy compared to Australia, etc. Also, they have to participate in meaningless tasks and things like entrance exams.”

**Senior Academic/Researcher (e.g., Professor/
Principal Investigator), Japan**

“We generally have to carry out other non-research activities, which end up distracting us from our focus.”

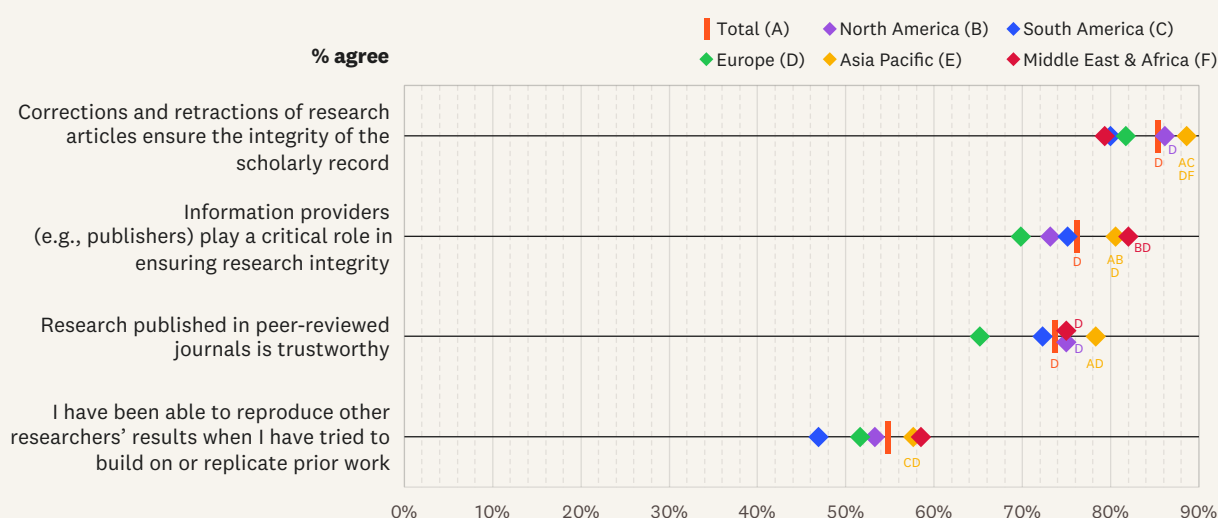
Research Administrator/Manager, Brazil

Researchers' commitment to research integrity is strong

Despite the strains, researchers have a strong commitment to quality and maintaining research integrity, and they highlight the role publishers play in this.

Figure 7

Researchers' views on issues affecting research integrity



Question: To better understand your views on the current research environment, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. Scale: strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree, don't know/not applicable. Don't know answers excluded from the base.

Values marked with a letter are significantly higher (at the 90% confidence level) than that group. For example, if a value is marked with 'B', it is significantly higher than 'North America'. Conversely, the group denoted by the letter is significantly lower than that value.

Base: n = 2,930–3,225; North America (405–480); South America (127–141); Europe (753–845); Asia Pacific (1,419–1,530); Middle East & Africa (113–128).

Research integrity emerged as a critical topic for researchers today, intertwined with the aforementioned pressures. Many shared their thoughts on the importance of peer review, the limitations of the system, and the risks emerging as a result of evolving AI technology.

Some of the longstanding mechanisms for ensuring research integrity remain vital, for example, 85% of respondents agree that corrections and retractions ensure integrity. This high agreement indicates to the community that, despite often being controversial, embarrassing or undermining in public discourse, retractions are a necessary mechanism to maintain trust and rigor in science.

Over half (55%) of respondents say they have reproduced others' results. Reproducibility is often hampered by lack of time or funding and some researchers cite a lack of opportunity to publish as the reason not to.

"I have not really had the chance to replicate others' work, because such studies are not often accepted by journals due to lack of novelty. This is bad for research."

Researcher, the Netherlands

Peer review is imperfect but essential

While there are concerns about the peer review process, transparency, openness and accessibility are important to research integrity, building trust and broadening impact.



Overall, peer review remains a critical mechanism for ensuring integrity. About three-quarters (74%) of researchers say peer-reviewed research is trustworthy. Agreement is lower in Europe (65%) and higher in Asia Pacific (78%).

Researchers highlight the role of publishers here, with 76% globally agreeing they are critical for research integrity.

There is also acknowledgement of the impact that increasing AI use might have on the scholarly record, and researchers are generally positive about the ability for integrity mechanisms — themselves often powered by AI — to maintain quality.

Researchers strive to uphold quality and integrity amid significant career pressures, but call for structural support (better funding, balanced workloads), cultural shifts (valuing quality over quantity) and development support to help alleviate these pressures.

“Peer review is the litmus test for quality and rigor; publishers have to manage and monitor processes and outputs to ensure high quality and set clear expectations for researchers and the publication of research.”

**Senior Academic/Researcher (e.g., Professor/
Principal Investigator), UK**

“Peer review has its flaws, but when done conscientiously it is of vital importance for quality assurance... But there is also an inflation of journals claiming to be peer-reviewed, including predatory journals.”

**Head of Department/Department
Head, Germany**

What drives confidence in research?

Figure 8

Top ten factors rated important for confidence in citing or sharing research



Question: When you are considering whether to cite or share someone else's research, how important, if at all, are the following in terms of giving you confidence that their findings are reliable? Scale: extremely important, very important, moderately important, slightly important, not at all important, don't know/not applicable. Don't know answers excluded from the base.

Base: n= 3,215

Consistent with the perception of peer-reviewed publications as trustworthy, over three quarters (76%) of respondents globally consider whether the research is peer-reviewed to be very or extremely important for having confidence in someone's research. The design of the research methodology is seen as extremely or very important for confidence in others' work by 78% of respondents. These findings are in line with the 2022 [Confidence in Research: Researchers in the Spotlight](#) report.

Availability in a permanent archive and accessibility of data used in the study also remain important, with 56% and 54% of respondents considering these factors very or extremely important respectively.

The use of AI in writing and analysis has added a new dimension to integrity discussions; the ease of generating text or even fake data, and the phenomenon of AI tools fabricating references is a challenge for maintaining the scientific record.

Transparency is a key driver of confidence in research: 48% consider clear statements of ethical approval and

disclosure of any conflicts of interest as very or extremely important. Ensuring integrity will require updated guidelines (e.g., disclosure if AI was used in analysis or writing) and new tools to detect AI-generated content, plagiarism, and statistical issues or errors. A quarter (25%) of respondents say stating the source of funding would give them confidence in research and 39% the availability of peer reviewer reports.

While journal prestige (53%) and author reputation (44%) matter to many, they are secondary to the more intrinsic factors like methods and peer review status. This is a reassuring sign that researchers critically assess work based on content quality above all.

Nonetheless, the findings also point to increased pressure to publish compared to two to three years ago. Efforts to build and maintain confidence in research through quality, transparency and integrity are strongly connected with the culture and incentives that shape the research landscape. Easing "publish-or-perish" pressure can help strengthen research quality and trust, while a stronger culture of integrity can, in turn, help reduce those same pressures.

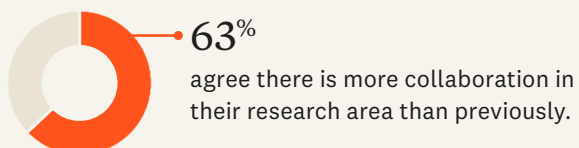
Ways of working are evolving

“I’ve been around some decades and notice an increasing willingness from industry, other disciplines and other national research groups to collaborate on research.”

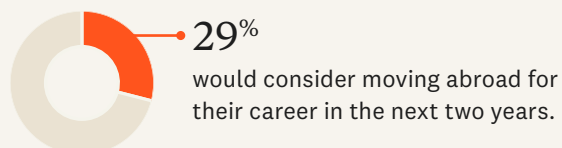
Senior Academic/Researcher (e.g., Professor/Principal Investigator), the Netherlands

Key insights

Growing culture of collaboration



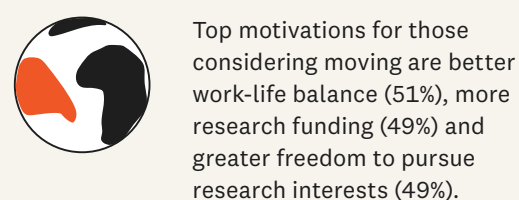
Global mobility



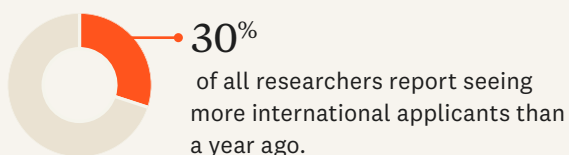
Broader networks are emerging



Freedom, funding, and balance



Researcher mobility is in flux



Keep on moving: The critical role of collaboration and mobility in research

Research is a shared endeavor: to build the knowledge base, researchers work together across geographical and disciplinary borders, to gain new insights, different perspectives and fresh ideas. Collaboration and mobility are not new concepts — they have always been a fundamental part of academic life.⁷

But the nature of collaboration has changed in recent years. With the COVID-19 pandemic closing physical doors and grounding planes, researchers stayed at home and collaboration went digital. Our 2022 study shows a 15-point increase in those who said they were collaborating more compared to the start of the pandemic in 2020.³

Today the pressures are different, with geopolitical dynamics impacting international collaboration and researcher mobility. Many researchers noted the difficulties they have in making connections internationally. Other barriers noted by respondents include access to funding, regulations, institutional inertia and cultural differences.

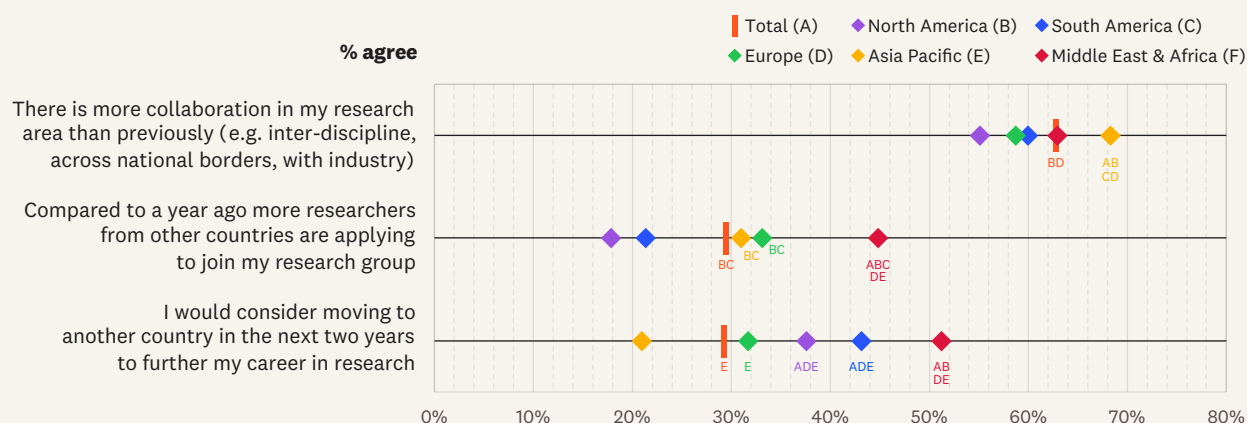
Despite this, collaboration across countries, disciplines and institutions is highly valued for its role in helping researchers tackle challenges and make an impact.

Many of the complex challenges they face — like climate change, sustainable energy and antibiotic resistance — are themselves global, so by their nature require a collaborative interdisciplinary solution. Technology plays a role here, and as some respondents point out, digital tools are supporting collaboration already.

Many researchers are keen to move to another country to strengthen networks and collaborations, gain new perspectives and take the next steps in their careers. From an institutional perspective, this flow of talent is critical: as noted in the *View from the Top* report, universities are in global competition for talent, with 93% of leaders seeking more funding to attract the best talent.⁴ It underscores both a risk and an opportunity for institutions: those that provide supportive environments (e.g., funding, stability and work-life balance) stand to gain talent, while those that do not may lose people.

Figure 9

Evolving dynamics in research



Question: To better understand your views on the current research environment, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. Scale: strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree, don't know/not applicable. Don't know answers excluded from the base.

Values marked with a letter are significantly higher (at the 90% confidence level) than that group. For example, if a value is marked with 'B', it is significantly higher than 'North America'. Conversely, the group denoted by the letter is significantly lower than that value.

Base: n = 2,930–3,225; North America (405–480); South America (127–141); Europe (753–845); Asia Pacific (1,419–1,530); Middle East & Africa (113–128).

Collaboration remains strong

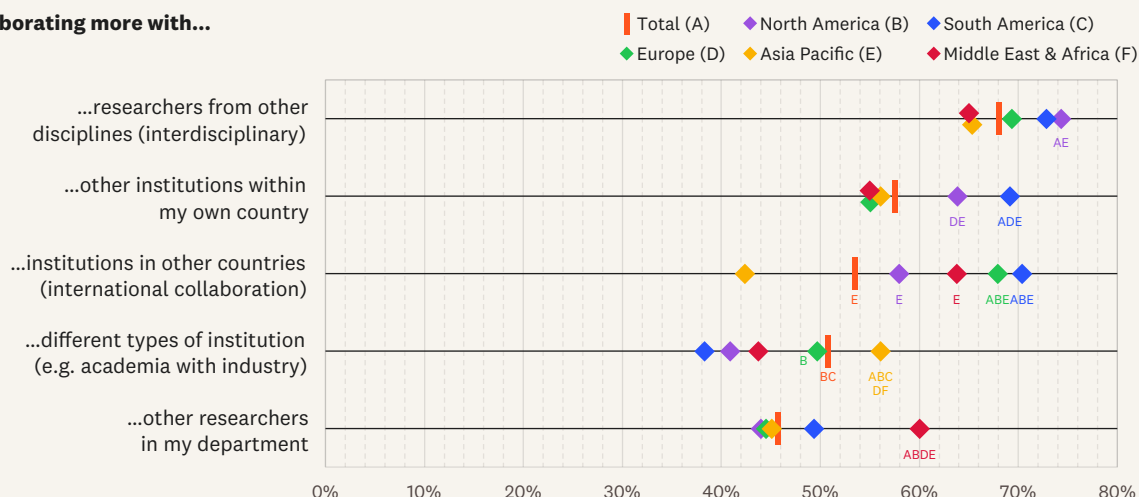
International and interdisciplinary collaboration is critical to research as a whole and to individual researchers' careers.

One study, based on the experiences of 1,286 Fellows and grant recipients from the National Academies, found that international collaboration is “integral to life as an active researcher across all disciplines and at all career stages.”⁸ Almost all participants said international collaboration was important to their careers, citing relationship building, access to specific expertise and perspectives, funding and career development as reasons for collaboration.

Figure 10

Areas where collaboration has increased, among researchers who see more collaboration than previously

I am collaborating more with...



Question: You agreed with the statement ‘There is more collaboration in my research area than previously’. In which of the following ways has collaboration increased? Only asked to those for whom there is more collaboration.

Values marked with a letter are significantly higher (at the 90% confidence level) than that group. For example, if a value is marked with ‘B’, it is significantly higher than ‘North America’. Conversely, the group denoted by the letter is significantly lower than that value.

Base: n= 1, 974; North America (257); South America (81); Europe (487); Asia Pacific (998); Middle East & Africa (80).

The current survey supports this, with respondents sharing similar reasons for collaboration. Responses also suggest a continuing steady increase in collaboration: 63% agree there has been more collaboration than previously, with those in Asia Pacific agreeing more (68%) and those in North America (55%) and Europe agreeing less (59%). This is in line with previous research, showing a continuing upward trend globally.³

Researchers recognize that collaboration brings diverse perspectives, fosters creativity, and often is necessary to tackle multifaceted research questions that require expertise from different areas.

“I have had opportunities to collaborate across the world in last four years with advancement in communications like Zoom, Microsoft Teams etc. It is easier to communicate and ideate projects.”

Faculty Member/Lecturer/Adjunct, Associate or Assistant Professor, India



Interdisciplinary research is particularly strong in North America and South America, where 74% and 73% of researchers who see more collaboration say they are collaborating more with those from other disciplines. Interestingly, respondents from all disciplines reported an almost equally high increase in their interdisciplinary collaboration, suggesting this is a trend across research.

Researchers in South America for whom collaboration has increased are also most likely to report collaborating more with other institutions within their own countries (69% compared to 58% globally) and in other countries (70% compared to 53% globally). International collaboration is lowest in Asia Pacific, at 42%.

Notably, among those who see more collaboration, early career researchers (ECRs) are less likely to say they are collaborating more within and outside of their own country (46% and 43%), and researchers with a 20+-year career more likely (62% and 59%). One interpretation is that senior researchers, being more established, had a surge of new large projects, whereas ECRs may face more barriers to initiating collaborations (e.g., fewer networks or less travel funding). You can explore the full results in the accompanying [databook](#) released with this report.

Collaborations between institution types, specifically academia and industry, are uneven: in Asia Pacific, academia-industry collaboration is relatively high (56%) and lower in North America (41%) and South America (38%). This kind of collaboration is least reported in the USA (38%) and India (40%) and most in China (62%). This could indicate either stable collaboration levels or challenges in bridging academia and industry in those contexts.

International mobility is dynamic

Global challenges and research questions are not limited by geographic boundaries, so researcher mobility plays an important role in advancing career and scientific progress.

It is a complex phenomenon influenced by global events, national policies and personal priorities. In one study, participants reported short- and long-term visits to other countries to develop networks, collaborate and develop their careers. They also highlighted some of the problems that can arise, such as due to visas and immigration policies.⁸

In the current survey, international mobility is highlighted from two angles: international applications to respondents' research teams, and the respondents' own plans to move abroad. It seems there has been a decline in mobility since the pandemic: fewer researchers are considering relocating abroad now than in 2022.

Almost one-third (30%) of respondents say they have had more international applicants than last year (see figure 9). Respondents in South America are significantly less likely to agree (21%) and those in the Middle East and Africa more likely (45%). However, those that have seen more international applicants highlight the advantages of this.

“The rise in international applications not only enhances the academic visibility of our group but also presents opportunities to build stronger global networks, exchange knowledge, and foster multicultural collaboration in addressing complex research challenges.”

**Research Services/Office (Head/Director/
Deputy Director), Bangladesh**

Globally, 29% of survey respondents say they would consider moving abroad for their career (see figure 10). The desire to move abroad is highest in the Middle East and Africa (51%) and South America (43%) and lowest in Asia Pacific (21%). The low mobility interest in Asia Pacific might be partly due to growth and opportunities at home (e.g., China has an expanding research system and only 13% are considering moving abroad).

Additionally, cultural and personal ties, as well as language comfort, play a role. For example, Japanese researchers traditionally have lower mobility rates due to language and cultural preferences,⁹ and our data shows a very low percentage (9%) are considering relocating. The share of researchers considering a move has declined in both China and Japan since 2022. In contrast, interest in moving among researchers in the USA has risen sharply since 2022 (16 percentage points). This could reflect various factors like the highly competitive job market (many PhDs for few faculty jobs) or funding uncertainties.

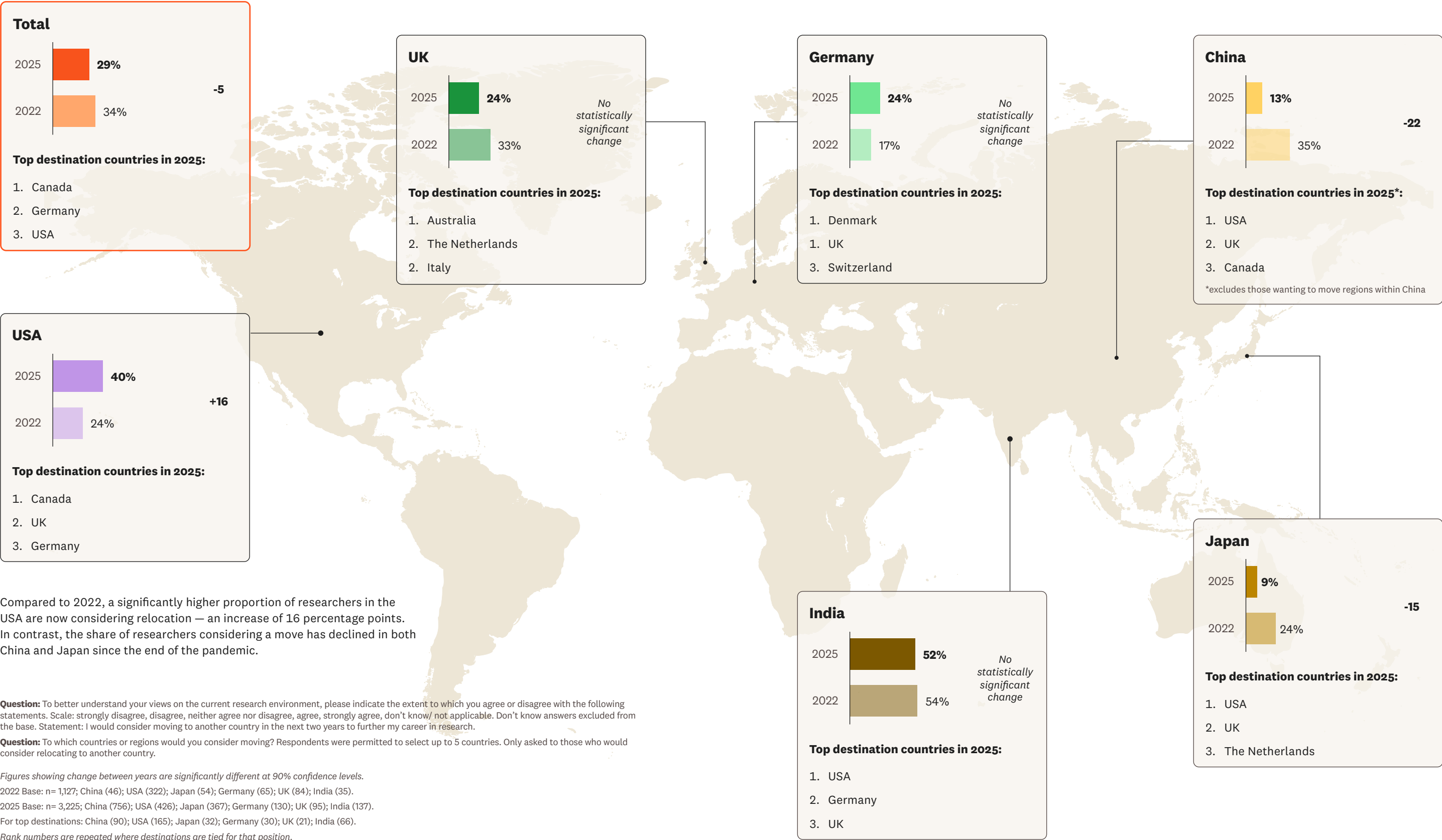
Where do researchers want to go? Canada tops the list of places that researchers who are considering relocating countries would like to move to (27%). This is closely followed by Germany (26%), the USA (26%) and the UK (25%). Preferences vary by country: Canada is a popular destination for those researchers in the USA considering moving (55%), while the USA is a popular destination for those in Japan (44%) and India (36%).

“Language skills, high hurdles to emigrating overseas (considering social security and medical systems, etc., the standards in one’s own country are higher).”

**Faculty Member/Lecturer/Adjunct, Associate or
Assistant Professor, Japan**

Figure 11

Researchers considering moving abroad and their top destinations



Those considering moving cite various reasons, including for a better work-life balance (51%), more funding (49%), and greater research freedom (49%). Job security comes through strongly here too, with many researchers saying they would consider moving abroad for more job opportunities (34%), a better salary (39%) and a better chance of securing a permanent position (22%). You can explore the full results in the accompanying [databook](#) released with this report.

“In my current country, the funding is limited. The payments are not good for teachers and researchers. Social security is less. Research commercialization is extremely difficult.”

**Senior Academic/Researcher (e.g., Professor/
Principal Investigator), Bangladesh**

Overall, international mobility may be entering a new phase shaped by geopolitics. Countries that traditionally attracted many foreign researchers, like the USA, are seeing a change in perception as a destination, potentially influenced by factors such as immigration policy debates and funding allocations. Meanwhile, some countries have implemented policies to keep researchers or encourage them to return, such as attractive funding and the Thousand Talents program in China.¹⁰ The net effect is a dynamic global talent map where some regions are gaining at the expense of others.

One of the driving forces behind increased collaboration and a need to relocate is the desire to achieve greater impact and to amplify the reach and significance of their work on society. We will look at outreach and impact in the next chapter.



Drive to demonstrate impact

“I believe research should generate concrete impact on society, whether through technological advancements, improvements in public health, environmental solutions or more effective policies. When the knowledge produced is applied in the real world, it transforms lives, guides decisions, and justifies public and private investment in science. Moreover, research with tangible benefits tends to attract more institutional support and public engagement.”

Research Administrator/Manager, Brazil

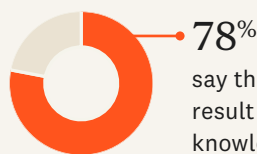
Key insights

There is a shift in the focus of research



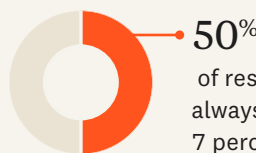
67%
agree there is more emphasis on mission-oriented research compared to two to three years ago (e.g., towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals).

Impact confidence remains high



78%
say their research will result in increased scientific knowledge and understanding in their field; only 1% say their research will have no impact.

Impact expectations are growing



50%
of researchers think research must always have real world benefit — up 7 percentage points from 2022.

Outreach activities



66%
have done outreach to share their research with broader audiences.



External impact incentives propel engagement

As we have seen, researchers are working together across geographic and disciplinary boundaries to solve global challenges, and in their comments on this survey, many shared their views on the importance of research that has tangible real-world benefits.

While this is a result of personal beliefs for many, it is also due to pressures from institutions and funders, which the respondents note are increasingly looking for research that aims to solve global problems such as climate change, public health and sustainability.

Universities are under increasing pressure to show the broader impact of their research, and in the 2024 *View from the Top* report, 79% of academic leaders agreed that means measuring impact beyond traditional metrics like publications and patents.⁴

Researchers are feeling this pressure and responding with increasing outreach about their work. In the current survey, researchers shared some of the activities they have undertaken, as well as mentioning barriers to effective outreach, such as insufficient institutional support and lack of opportunity. Given the importance of outreach to a range of audiences for increasing research visibility, engagement and societal value, these insights provide an opportunity for improved support for researchers.

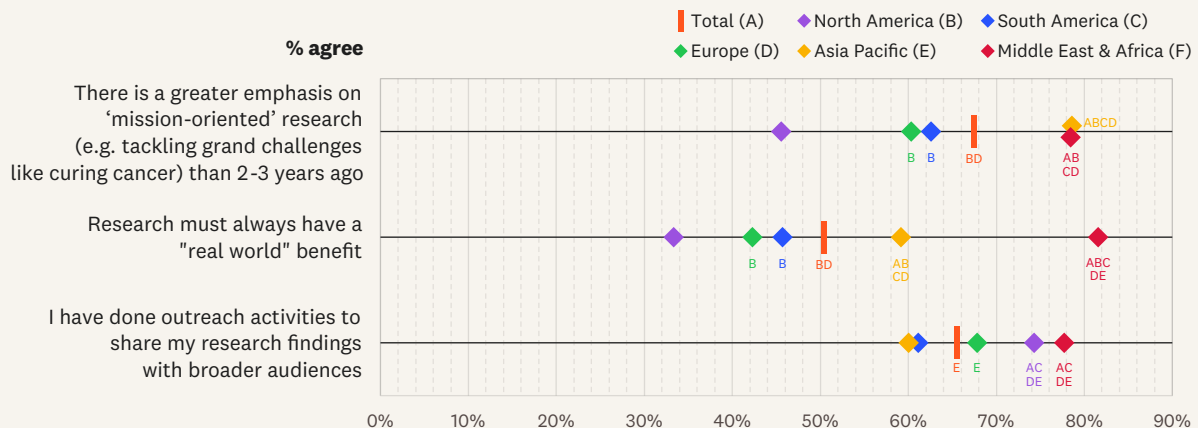
“The current climate seems to favor high-impact, ‘mission-oriented’ projects that attract public and financial support. This has created a dynamic where recognition is often reserved for those tackling grand challenges or those working in a highly specific niche, potentially leaving less room to acknowledge vital, long-term foundational research.”

Researcher, India

The rise of research with an impact

Figure 12

Rising pressure to demonstrate impact



Question: To better understand your views on the current research environment, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. Scale: strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree, don't know/not applicable. Don't know answers excluded from the base.

Values marked with a letter are significantly higher (at the 90% confidence level) than that group. For example, if a value is marked with 'B', it is significantly higher than 'North America'. Conversely, the group denoted by the letter is significantly lower than that value.

Base: n= 2,930–3,225; North America (405–480); South America (127–141); Europe (753–845); Asia Pacific (1,419–1,530); Middle East & Africa (113–128).

Researchers are aware of the ongoing shift toward more mission-driven research, driven by funding agencies, institutions, governments and other actors. In the survey, more than two-thirds (67%) of researchers agree there is more emphasis on mission-oriented research compared to two or three years ago.

Agreement is lowest in North America (46%) and Europe (60%) and highest in Asia Pacific (79%) and Middle East and Africa (78%). These differences may reflect different research policy environments; for instance, North American and European researchers may believe there is a strong tradition of such research and might perceive a smaller shift, whereas elsewhere recent funding initiatives may be strongly oriented toward development goals, making the change more noticeable.

While career advancement, funding and institutional support remain significant motivators, there is a clear desire among researchers for their work to be meaningful and impactful. In the survey, 50% of respondents agree that research must have real-world benefit. This viewpoint has gained traction, with an increase of 7 percentage points since 2022.

"To me, research is about understanding the world better to make positive changes."

Faculty Member/Lecturer/Adjunct, Associate or Assistant Professor, UK

Agreement is significantly lower in North America (33%) and Europe (42%) and higher in Middle East and Africa (82%) and Asia Pacific (59%). Those who have been in research for over 20 years are least likely to agree that research must have real-world benefit, with 44% agreeing and 36% disagreeing. Agreement is significantly higher in India (81%) and China (62%).

However, many felt that curiosity-driven research is valuable and vital for the world, and they warn against policies and assessment systems with a narrow focus on real-world benefits, instead encouraging more openness to research that may not have immediately obvious applications.

Overall, researchers in North America (particularly the USA) are more likely to say their research will have an impact across a range of areas, and those in Asia Pacific (particularly China) less likely. More senior researchers are also more likely to expect an impact than early career researchers. You can explore the full results in the accompanying [databook](#) released with this report.

“It is not possible to predict when basic research will yield real world benefits. As such, focusing only on research that we think will have real world benefits may actually paradoxically reduce the amount of research that ultimately yields real world benefits.”

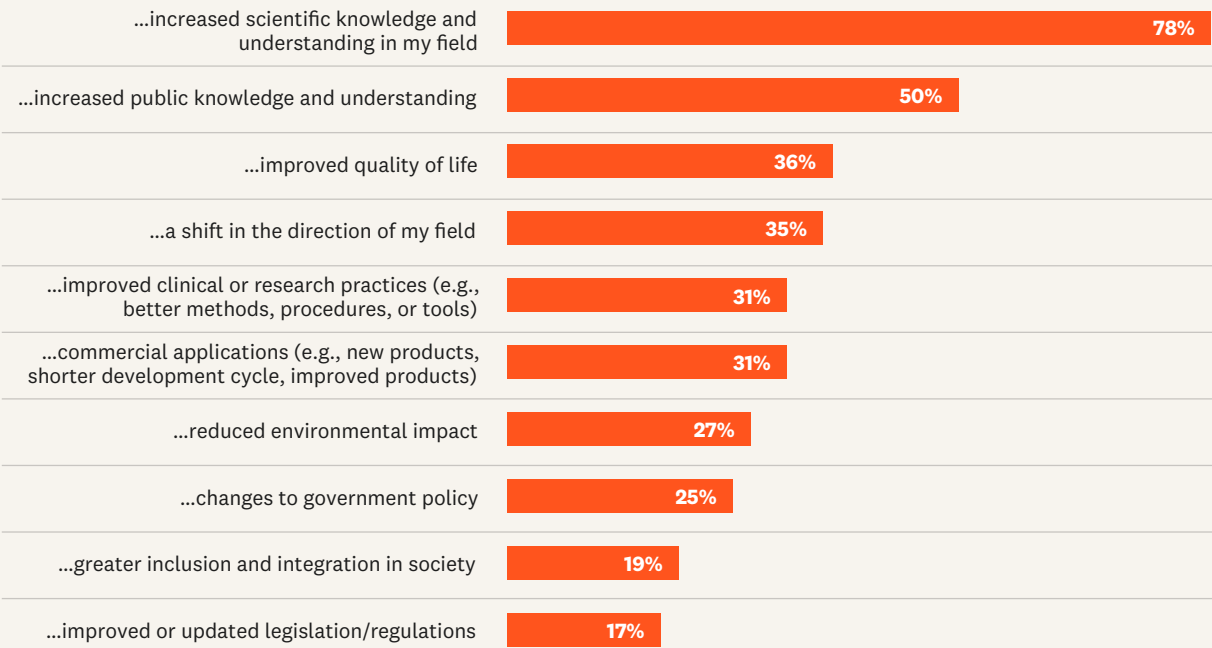
Researcher, Denmark



Figure 13

Top ten expected impacts from researchers' own findings

My research will result in...



Question: What do you consider to be the impact of your research?
Base: n= 3,234

By far the biggest area respondents expect to make an impact in is increased scientific knowledge and understanding in their field (78%). Half (50%) believe their research will result in increased public knowledge and understanding and over a third (36%) think their research will result in improved quality of life.

Differences in disciplines reflect the nature of the research when it comes to impact. For example, health researchers are more likely to expect their work to impact quality of life (56%), improved clinical or research practices (61%), increased life expectancy (29%) and shortened treatment time (33%). Those in the physical sciences are more likely to make an impact via commercial applications (39%) and reduced environmental impact (38%). And social researchers are more likely to impact government policy (46%), inclusion and integration (39%) and improved legislation (28%).

Measuring the impact of research

Impact measurement is an ongoing challenge. Many universities and national assessments are grappling with how to evaluate research impact beyond publications. Some aspects of research impact are easier to measure and report than others.

Figure 14

Top ten measures of research impact



Question: What do you consider to be the best measures of the impact of your research?

Base: n= 3,234

In the current survey, we asked researchers how the impact of their work can best be measured. Traditional impact metrics still topped the list: 81% consider publication in a specialist journal to be the among the best measures of the impact of their research. Rated equally is their work being cited in journals, followed by the number of times it is read or downloaded (60%) and publication in broad-scope journals (e.g., *Nature*, *Science*, *Cell*, *The Lancet*) (49%). In other words, peer recognition via publications remains the primary currency of impact for most researchers.

More directly, societal metrics had lower but notable numbers for example citations in public policy documents (27%), patents obtained (26%) and citations in patents (18%) were also mentioned.

Reflecting the importance of public engagement with research, several of the impact measures relate to outreach: news articles in popular press (25%), mentions on blogs or online forums (15%) and mentions in podcasts (8%).

These perspectives underline a dual reality: researchers still largely rely on academic indicators for impact (which align with career incentives like promotions), but they also increasingly recognize societal and engagement indicators as meaningful.

Taking research to wider audiences

Communication is the vehicle for impact on society.

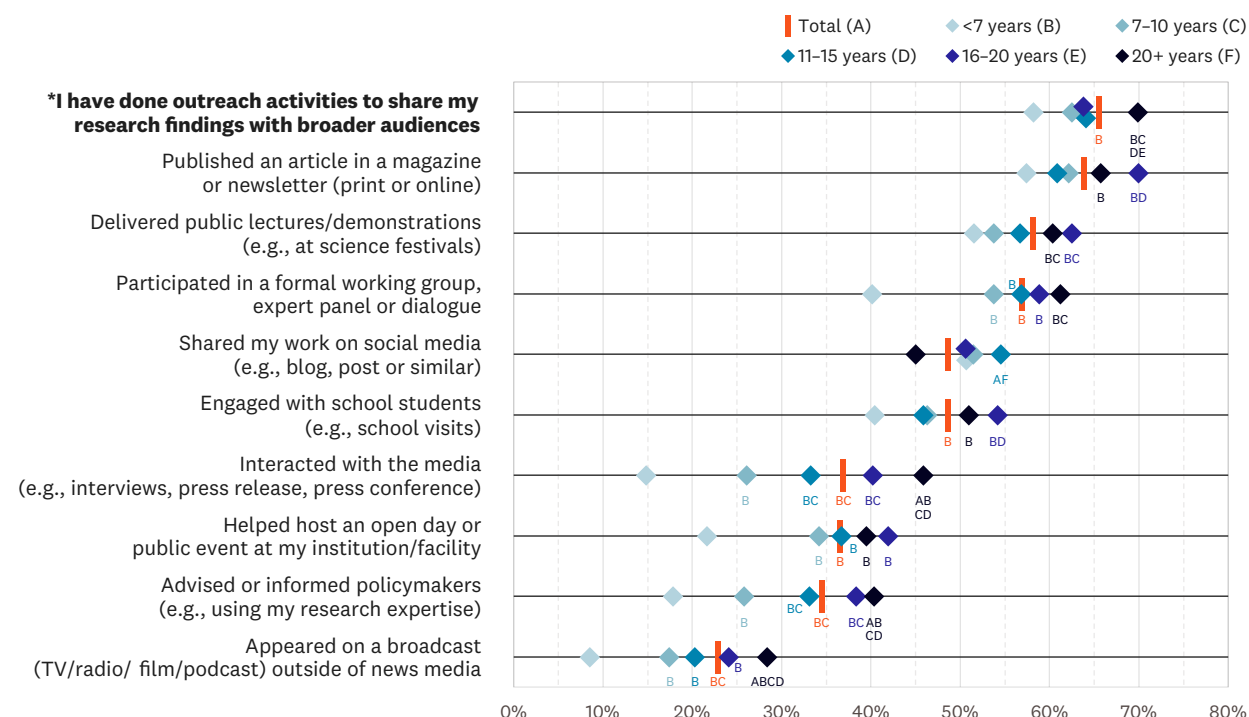
In the 2022 *Confidence in Research: Researchers in the Spotlight* report, respondents shared their perception that communication skills (45%) and personal connections (49%) were more influential on whether policymakers use a piece of research than study design (29%) or the reputation of the journal the research is published in (33%).²

The survey also revealed that researchers considered they had a greater role in the public engagement with science. Outreach isn't just about sharing one's own findings, but also about defending scientific principles and evidence in the public sphere. Participants perceived their role in countering misinformation as having grown since the pandemic. But there was a confidence gap: only 18% of researchers said they had a lot of confidence in communicating their research findings on social media.²

Figure 15

Outreach activities undertaken among researchers who have shared their findings with broader audiences

Broken out by years actively involved in research



***Question:** To better understand your views on the current research environment, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. Scale: strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree, don't know/not applicable. Don't know answers excluded from the base.

Years in active in research. Base: n = 2,930–3,225; <7 (311–360); 7–10 (446–485); 11–15 (512–562); 16–20 (356–395); 20+ (1236–1383).

Question: You agreed with the statement 'I have done outreach to share my research findings'. Which of the following activities have you done? Only asked to those who have done outreach.

Years in active in research. Base: n = 2,058; <7 (209); 7–10 (289); 11–15 (352); 16–20 (248); 20+ (940).

Values marked with a letter are significantly higher (at the 90% confidence level) than that group. For example, if a value is marked with 'B', it is significantly higher than '< 7 years'. Conversely, the group denoted by the letter is significantly lower than that value.

“Engaging in research outreach can increase the impact and visibility of my work, foster public understanding and trust in science, inform policy, and attract potential funding opportunities.”

**Research Services/Office (Head/Director/
Deputy Director), USA**

This more public-facing role came with challenges for researchers, including the oversimplification and politicization of research, which is in turn impacting confidence in research.² Despite this, researchers reported positive outcomes: after the pandemic, 64% of researchers reported that public engagement with research had increased, and 54% expected an even greater emphasis on societal impact of research going forward.³

Outreach activities have continued to increase, from 57% reporting sharing research findings with the wider public in 2022 to 66% in the current survey.³ Outreach is currently lowest in Asia Pacific (60%) and highest in Middle East and Africa (78%) and North America (74%).

Among those who have done outreach, 64% have published in magazines or newsletters (highest in Asia Pacific, at 71%) and 49% have shared their work on social media (highest in Europe, at 54%). In-person events are also popular, with 58% delivering public lectures, 49% engaging with school students and 37% hosting an open day at their institution.

More formally, 57% participated in a working group, expert panel or dialogue and 34% have advised policymakers. Traditional media engagement (news, TV) is less frequent, with 37% interacting with the media and 23% appearing on a broadcast outside of news media.

A strong theme from responses is that support from institutions is crucial. Many feel they need more support, freedom and opportunity to do outreach effectively. Some universities have begun valuing outreach, such as through awards, including outreach in promotion criteria and under service.

Given the proportion of researchers engaging in various activities, institutions supporting and formally recognizing these efforts could help unlock more societal impact of the research, enabling researchers and institutions to extend the influence of their work beyond the research ecosystem.

“Sharing research findings with broader audiences is an essential part of promoting knowledge, fostering public understanding, and facilitating practical application of scientific discoveries. Engaging in outreach activities helps bridge the gap between academia and the general public, ensuring that research doesn’t stay confined to specialized communities but can benefit and inform a wider audience. It also often helps researchers receive feedback and perspectives that they might not have considered.”

PhD candidate, Pakistan

Conclusion

Through the *Researcher of the Future — a Confidence in Research report*, thousands of researchers around the world have shared their insights, enabling us to put a spotlight on some of the key trends in research today.

These include intensifying funding and career pressures, heightened emphasis on research integrity, a continued rise in collaboration and mobility, and a growing focus on impact and outreach.



Researchers value quality, trust in the research process and perceive research integrity as critical to the scientific record. They call for continued vigilance and are keen to ensure that the rush to publish does not trump rigorous evaluation.

Collaboration remains a positive story: researchers are more connected now than ever, pooling their knowledge across disciplines and borders to solve complex problems. They view it not just as beneficial, but as essential. Mobility, while somewhat tempered recently, continues to redistribute talent globally, and this underscores the need for creating supportive research environments to both retain and attract researchers. Work-life balance, funding availability and academic freedom emerge as pivotal factors in where researchers choose to work; these are areas institutions and governments can work to improve to nurture their research communities.

Perhaps one of the most heartening trends is researchers' desire to make a difference in society. The results show clear momentum toward mission-driven research and public engagement. Researchers are increasingly willing to step outside the lab to communicate their findings, educate others, and ensure that science informs policy and public discourse. They are also advocating for the value of science itself — both applied and fundamental. This bodes well for the social contract between science and society. Researchers are actively trying to repay society's investment in research with knowledge and solutions that benefit the public.

Looking ahead, the survey suggests that the researcher of the future will be collaborative, AI-empowered, cross-disciplinary, closely attuned to societal needs and focused on upholding the core values of scientific inquiry.

- AI tools are already helping researchers save time, but they need support to maximize its benefit. Institutions could strengthen their AI governance and provide researchers with training.
- Researchers want to focus on their research, but they lack time and are under pressure to publish. They believe AI will accelerate discoveries and open new avenues of enquiry but need specialised tools for research that are grounded in accuracy and accountability to help them carry out tasks such as literature reviews, data analysis, study design with confidence.
- Collaboration is ever important, and when supported by technology, it can succeed despite dynamic mobility. AI tools will play an important role here, and institutions can support this through training.
- Researchers want to make an impact with their research, and they need time, skills and confidence to do outreach.

At the same time, researchers are clear-eyed about the limitations and risks of AI, stressing the need for proper training and governance to ensure AI is used ethically and effectively. AI can be a powerful enabler, when used responsibly and in tandem with human expertise.



Supporting researchers across challenges, disciplines and geographies

We recognize that, along with other stakeholders, we have a role to play in supporting researchers amid the changes and challenges they are facing.

This report shares the results of the latest survey in a series designed to gain insights and perspectives from researchers, which we hope will inform institutional strategies and help to shape the tools and services we provide to the research community.

Elsevier provides information-based analytics and decision tools for researchers and health professionals worldwide, helping them advance science and improve healthcare outcomes, for the benefit of society.

We will continue to monitor researchers' views and behavior to meet their needs. In tandem, we reaffirm our commitment to responsible innovation in AI.

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Appendices

Methodology

Respondents were a sample of researchers randomly selected from a database of published authors (including journals and books) from various publishers.

Participants were recruited using an email invitation containing a link to the online survey. To qualify, participants had to be currently involved in research at the time of fieldwork. By this, we mean reading, conducting, supervising, reviewing or publishing research.

In total, there were 3,234 surveys completed by researchers across a range of geographies. A detailed breakdown follows.

Throughout this report we show statistical differences between groups at the 90% confidence level. Results at the 'Total level' have an error margin of approximately $\pm 1\%$ — this assumes maximum variance in the response.

We weighted the results based on OECD population figures for researchers by region, ensuring representation from the key countries we have highlighted in this report. Base sizes shown in the report are unweighted.

Despite the weighting, the study is not without limitations due to self-selection, non-response biases and the lower response rates typical for online surveys of this nature (~1%). Therefore, there will be some non-sampling error associated with this study, as we cannot be sure responses accurately represent the views of the population for a given country or region. Significant differences in this report should be interpreted within this context, and while showing notable difference between groups, results are not necessarily generalizable to a whole country. Given the non-probability sampling methods, these tests are indicative.

Researcher of the Future — a Confidence in Research report

Survey: Online survey by email invitation

Date: August–September 2025

Respondents: 3,234 active researchers and leaders across academia, R&D-led corporations and research institutions from 113 countries.

Responses are weighted geographically to improve representativeness.

Sample bases by region/country

North America	480	Ireland	2	Pakistan	15
Canada	54	Italy	32	Philippines	1
United States of America	426	Kazakhstan	1	Singapore	3
		Lebanon	1	South Korea	107
South America	141	Lithuania	1	Sri Lanka	1
Argentina	8	Luxembourg	1	Taiwan	33
Bolivia	1	Malta	1	Thailand	4
Brazil	90	Netherlands	87	Vietnam	5
Chile	4	Norway	5		
Colombia	8	Poland	30	Middle East & Africa	128
Costa Rica	2	Portugal	14	Algeria	5
Ecuador	1	Romania	6	Botswana	2
Honduras	1	Russia	130	Cameroon	3
Mexico	13	San Marino	1	Congo	1
Nicaragua	1	Serbia	3	Egypt	7
Peru	5	Slovakia	1	Ethiopia	6
Saint Kitts and Nevis	1	Slovenia	4	Ghana	1
Saint Pierre and Miquelon	1	Spain	49	Iran	39
Trinidad and Tobago	1	Sweden	8	Iraq	9
United States Virgin Islands	1	Switzerland	6	Israel	7
Uruguay	2	Turkey	59	Jordan	1
Venezuela	1	Ukraine	7	Kenya	4
		United Kingdom	95	Malawi	1
Europe	848	Uzbekistan	2	Morocco	4
Albania	2			Namibia	1
Austria	3	Asia Pacific	1,534	Nigeria	12
Belarus	2	Afghanistan	6	Oman	3
Belgium	6	Australia	52	Palestinian Authority	1
Bulgaria	5	Bangladesh	7	Rwanda	1
Croatia	2	Brunei Darussalam	1	Saudi Arabia	1
Cyprus	1	China	757	South Africa	9
Czech Republic	6	Hong Kong	3	Tanzania	1
Denmark	9	India	137	Togo	1
Estonia	1	Indonesia	17	Tunisia	1
Finland	6	Japan	368	Uganda	1
France	109	Macau	1	United Arab Emirates	4
Georgia	2	Malaysia	5	Zambia	1
Germany	130	Myanmar	1	Zimbabwe	1
Greece	14	Nepal	3		
Hungary	3	New Caledonia	1	Prefer not to say	103
Iceland	1	New Zealand	6		

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