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# Awareness, attitudes, and the reality of research assessment: Findings from the 2025 MCAA survey

Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA)

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# Foreword

Research assessment reform has become a global movement and a central element of research and innovation policy discussions worldwide. From the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) to the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA), there is growing recognition that the ways we evaluate researchers must evolve to reflect the realities, challenges, and opportunities of contemporary research systems.

This reform agenda is driven by growing dissatisfaction with the current research culture and increasing recognition that many traditional approaches are no longer fit for purpose. The “publish or perish” concept has contributed to a research culture that often prioritises quantity over quality, limits the recognition of diverse contributions, and places significant pressure on researchers throughout their careers. At the same time, researchers are asked to give certainty to increasingly complex challenges. Therefore, research leadership, collaboration, impact, and transdisciplinarity are more important than ever and require broader and more inclusive approaches to evaluation.

Yet changing research assessment is not simply a technical exercise. Research is an inherently uncertain endeavour, and researchers seek stable research systems to compensate, making change extremely difficult. Evaluation criteria shape careers, employment, funding, and institutional priorities. Reforming these systems requires not only new policies and frameworks, but also cultural change, trust, and a shared understanding of why change is necessary.

The findings presented in this report reflect both the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. The respondents to the research assessment reform survey largely support its principles, while awareness of major initiatives remains low and on-the-ground implementation is uneven. At the same time, researchers consistently call for evaluation systems to place greater emphasis on quality, fairness, diversity, interdisciplinary collaboration, mentoring, Open Science, and societal impact. These findings suggest that the values underpinning reform resonate strongly within the research community, even where familiarity with specific frameworks remains low.

As a previous member of the MCAA Board, I have been privileged to build on the work of many colleagues who helped advance this agenda. The Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA) has supported research assessment reform for several years through policy engagement, community initiatives, and its active involvement in CoARA. During my Board mandate (2024–2026), the MCAA further strengthened this commitment by publishing its CoARA Action Plan and conducting this survey to better understand how researchers themselves experience research assessment.

This report provides a valuable snapshot of the perspectives of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) community at a pivotal moment for research assessment reform. Its findings will help guide the MCAA's future activities and contribute to wider discussions across the European and global research ecosystems.

As you read the report, I invite you to reflect on a simple question: What can each of us do, within our own institutions, disciplines, and communities, to contribute to a more responsible, fair, and sustainable system of research assessment? Meaningful reform will only be achieved when strong policy commitments meet collective actions. We should all ensure that the way we assess research truly reflects the value that research creates.

**Irene Castellano**  
MCAA Board member 2024–2026

# Graphical executive summary

MCAA 2025 survey on research assessment: Awareness, attitudes, and reality



636

survey respondents



84

nationalities represented

## The reform paradox

Respondents support the idea of reform, but the movements and tools have barely reached them.



47%

respondents agree  
reform should be implemented

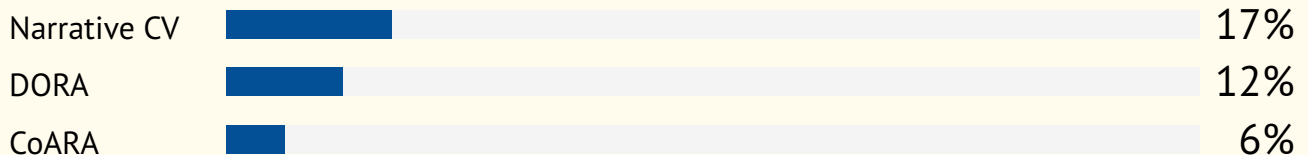
2%

respondents disagree

37%

respondents don't know

Low familiarity of respondents with the movements and tools



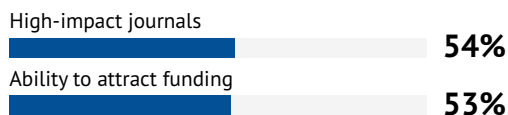
## What is rewarded vs. valued

A persistent mismatch: institutions still reward what reform aims to move beyond

What institutions reward today



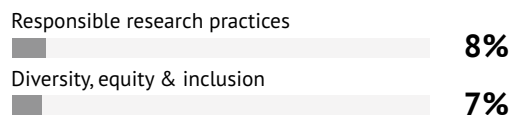
57% Peer-reviewed publications



Central to reform, yet marginal in assessment



11% Open Science practices

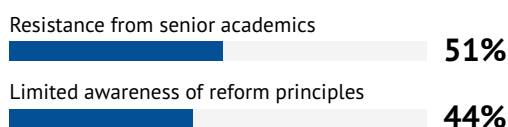


## What blocks reform and what it could deliver

Biggest barriers



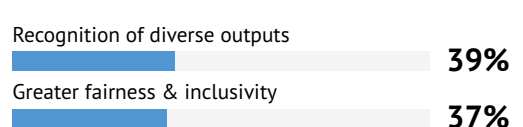
57% Over-reliance on traditional metrics



Most-wanted outcomes



42% Less reliance on impact factor



# Introduction

The global research landscape is in significant transition, moving away from narrow reliance on journal impact factors, citation counts, and publication volume toward more qualitative, responsible, and context-sensitive evaluation. An early catalyst was the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), published in 2013, which aims to improve how the output of scientific research is evaluated by funding agencies, academic institutions, and other parties. Momentum has since spread across regions and policy levels, with funders' councils, intergovernmental bodies, and regional fora each adopting their own frameworks for responsible assessment<sup>1</sup>.

In Europe, reform is embedded directly in the policy agenda. Research assessment reform is a dedicated structural policy of the European Research Area (ERA) Policy Agenda (2025–2027). The Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment gave rise to the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA), now with over 900 signatory organisations. Yet translating these high-level commitments into institutional change remains a formidable challenge, with deeply embedded incentive structures, uneven awareness, and divergent expectations across sectors, career stages, and national systems.

Within this context, the Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA) occupies a distinctive position. As a community of current and former Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) fellows spanning all disciplines, career stages, and geographies, MCAA members experience research assessment both as subjects of evaluation and, increasingly, as participants in evaluation processes themselves. Their perspectives offer a grounded, practitioner-level view of how assessment systems are working and where reforms are, or are not, being implemented.

As preparations for the ERA Act bring researcher assessment and career frameworks into legislative focus, the survey provides the empirical basis for an MCAA position that speaks for a community directly affected by how these reforms are designed and implemented.

This report presents the findings of the MCAA's 2025 survey on research assessment, conducted to gather systematic evidence on perceptions of researcher assessments by the MSCA community.

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<sup>1</sup> Notably the Global Research Council's Responsible Research Assessment Working Group, co-led by UK Research and Innovation and South Africa's National Research Foundation, has set shared dimensions of responsible assessment for funders; the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science calls for revising research career and evaluation criteria; and in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Latin American Forum for Research Assessment (FOLEC-CLACSO), has adopted a Declaration of Principles for "a new research assessment towards a socially relevant science," valuing local-language and regionally relevant work that global metrics overlook.

# Methodology note

The MCAA survey comprised a structured online questionnaire administered via Qualtrics from September to October 2025. It was organised into six thematic blocks covering respondent background, understanding of research assessment, selection and progression within the MSCA, assessment during MSCA projects, research assessment reform, and closing questions. The instrument combined Likert-scale items, multiple-choice questions, and open-ended responses to allow both quantitative analysis and contextual insight.

Invitations were distributed through MCAA mailing lists, MSCA programme networks, and the Association's communication channels, including social media. Participation was voluntary and open to anyone, including those outside the MCAA community. Responses were fully anonymised. A total of 636 responses were received.

Respondents could indicate more than one role, resulting in 748 role selections across the 636 respondents, of whom 67% identified as MCAA members (423 of 633 answering). The largest shares are of current MSCA fellows (44%) and alumni (35%), followed by host supervisors/Principal Investigators (PIs) (8%), evaluators/reviewers (4%), and research managers/administrators (3%). These figures describe the composition of all roles indicated rather than the proportion of individuals holding each role.

The sample spans all four researcher career stages, R1 through R4<sup>2</sup>, with broadly even representation, and covers 84 nationalities, with 58% of respondents holding nationality from European Union (EU) Member States, 37% from third countries, and 5% from Associated Countries to Horizon Europe. Among the 531 respondents who participated in the MSCA under Horizon 2020 (34%) or Horizon Europe (34%) and indicated their most recent action, Postdoctoral Fellowships under Horizon Europe (36%) and H2020 Individual Fellowships (17%) together account for over half of the sample, followed by Doctoral Networks (20%) and Innovative Training Networks (8%). COFUND (10% across both programmes) and Staff Exchanges/Research and Innovation Staff Exchanges (RISE) (9%) make up the remainder.

Given the voluntary, non-probabilistic nature of the sampling approach, findings are not statistically representative of the MSCA community as a whole. Results should be interpreted as indicative of the views and experiences of a diverse, internationally engaged research community, particularly those affiliated with MSCA.

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<sup>2</sup> The European Framework for Research Careers classifies the career progression of researchers into four distinct stages based on their level of independence and expertise: **R1 (First Stage Researcher)**, which includes those up to the point of PhD; **R2 (Recognised Researcher)**, encompassing PhD holders who are not yet fully independent; **R3 (Established Researcher)**, for those who have developed a level of research independence; and **R4 (Leading Researcher)**, referring to researchers who are recognised leaders in their respective fields.

# Findings

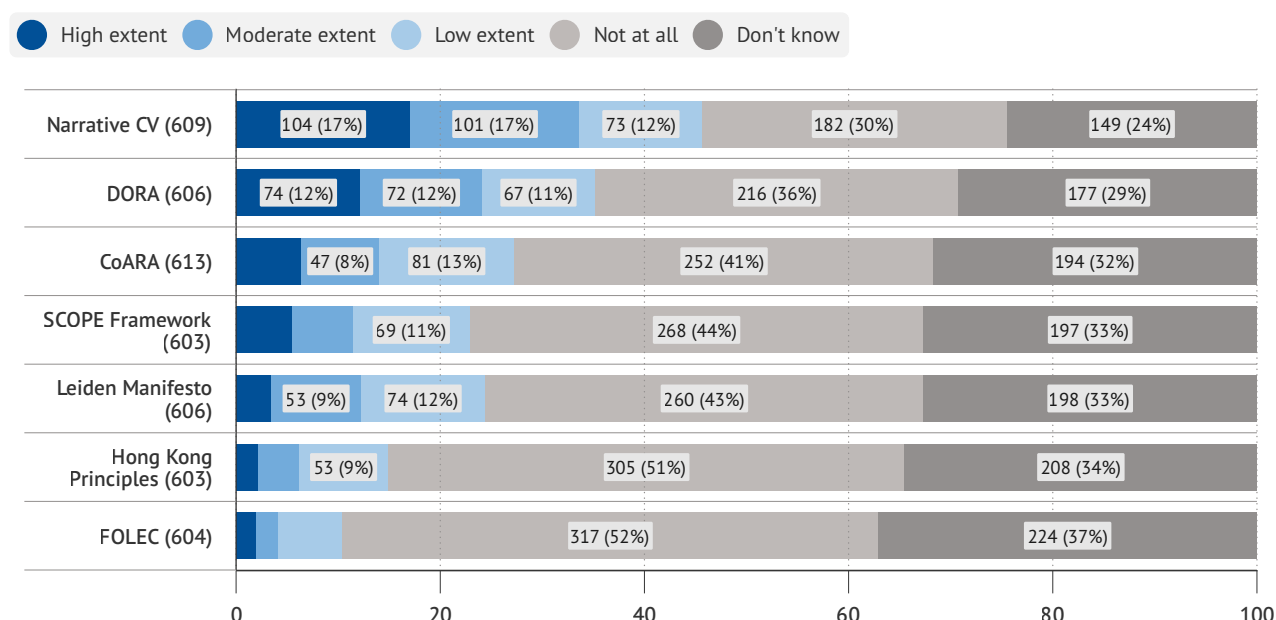
## Awareness of research assessment reform

A sign for meaningful reform is that researchers are aware of the frameworks and tools that reform efforts have produced. The survey findings reveal a significant awareness gap across the MSCA community regarding research assessment reform initiatives.

Across all seven initiatives assessed, CoARA, DORA, the [Leiden Manifesto for Research Metrics](#), the [Hong Kong Principles for Assessing Researchers: Fostering Research Integrity](#), the narrative CV, the [INORMS SCOPE Framework for Research Evaluation](#), and the [Latin American Forum for Research Assessment \(FOLEC\)](#), low familiarity is the dominant response (see Figure 1). The narrative CV is the most widely known instrument<sup>3</sup>, with 17% of respondents reporting a high extent of familiarity and a further 16% reporting moderate extent of familiarity. Narrative CVs are an implementation tool of some of the research assessment reform principles, and as such, they are more visible than policies or frameworks. DORA is the second most familiar initiative, with 12% of respondents reporting high familiarity (n=606), reflecting its longevity as the first research assessment initiative established in 2012/2013, while CoARA is highly known by only 6% of respondents (n=613). The detailed responses to the question on familiarity with responsible research assessment initiatives are available in Annex I (Figure 11).

**Figure 1: Respondents' familiarity with research assessment initiatives**

*Question: To what extent are you familiar with the following responsible research assessment initiatives or tools?*



<sup>3</sup> The MCAA manages the Peer Exchange Platform for Narrative-style CVs (PEP-CV), delivering webinars, workshops and community activities that have likely contributed to increasing awareness and visibility of narrative CVs within the surveyed community.

A clear career-stage gradient is evident in familiarity levels (see Figure 12 in Annex I). Senior researchers (R3 and R4) consistently report being more familiar with reform initiatives than early-career respondents. R1 researchers show the highest rates of unawareness across all initiatives, whilst R4 leading researchers demonstrate the most pronounced high-familiarity scores, particularly for DORA. This pattern is consistent with greater institutional exposure among senior academics who participate in governance and evaluation processes.

Familiarity also varies across sectors of employment (see Figure 13 in Annex I) and region (see Figure 14 in Annex I). It is highest in higher education and public research organisations, whilst respondents from the private sector, government, and NGOs report minimal awareness of most initiatives. Even within higher education, high familiarity rarely exceeds 15% for any framework other than the narrative CV.

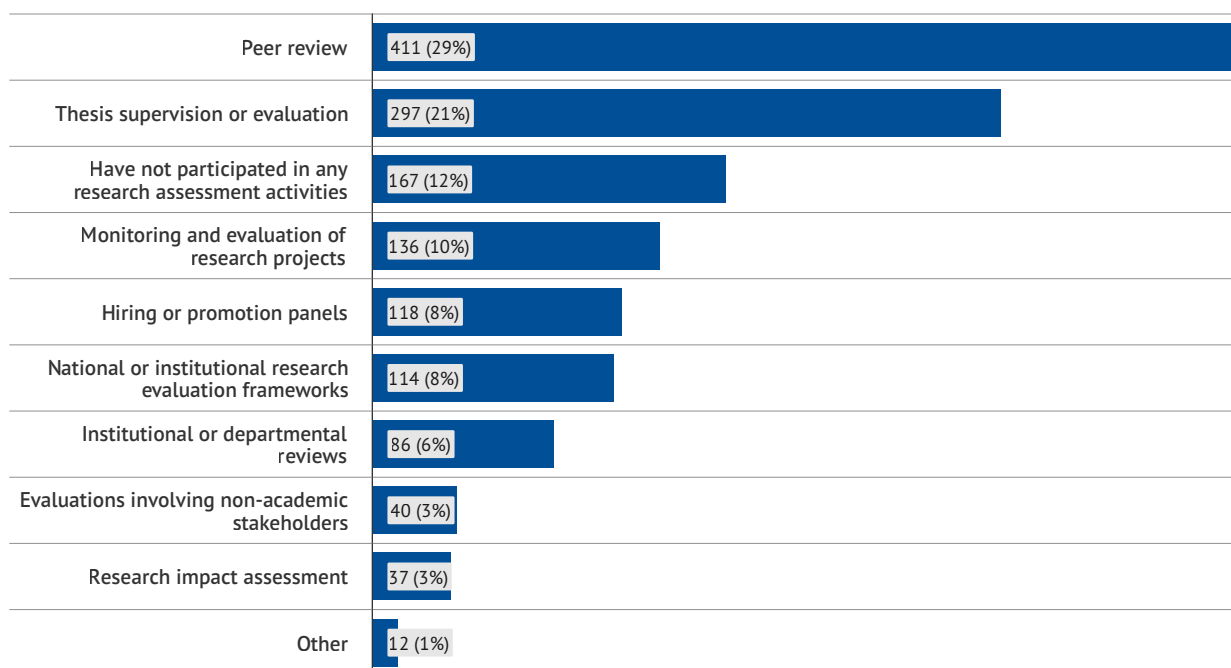
## Researcher assessment today

Researchers are not only subjects of assessment; many also participate actively in evaluation processes (see Figure 2). When asked about their participation in research assessment activities, respondents could give a full breadth of their work in relation to assessment by choosing multiple options. Peer review is by far the most commonly reported activity, with 66% of respondents reporting it. This reflects its central role in academic life, followed by thesis supervision and evaluation (47%).

Participation in structured institutional processes is also notable: the number of answers for monitoring and evaluation of research projects (22%), hiring or promotion panels (19%), and national or institutional evaluation frameworks (18%) indicates that a meaningful share of respondents is involved in formal career-defining decisions beyond their own work. By contrast, research impact assessment (6%) and evaluations involving non-academic stakeholders (6%) remain uncommon among respondents, despite their centrality to reform agendas promoting broader definitions of research value. Notably, more than one in four respondents (27%) report not having participated in any research assessment activities. This is strongly patterned by career stage: 60% of R1 researchers report no participation, while the numbers are 19% for R2, 12% for R3, and 9% for R4 respondents.

**Figure 2: Respondents' participation in research assessment activities**

*Question: As a reviewer/evaluator, have you participated in any of the following research assessments? [multiple choice]; N=626*

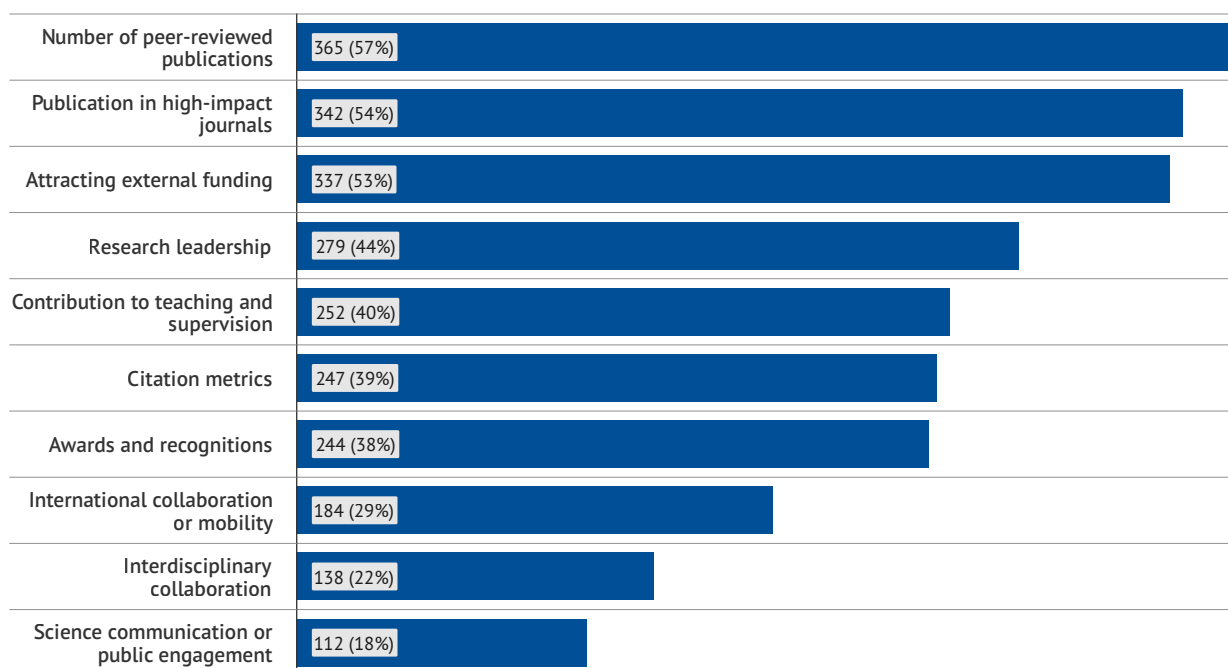


## Metrics used for hiring and promotion

Respondents were asked to identify the metrics and criteria their institution uses for hiring and promotion decisions, revealing the continued dominance of traditional bibliometric indicators (see Figure 3). The number of peer-reviewed publications is the most frequently cited criterion (57%), followed by publication in high-impact journals (54%) and the ability to attract external funding (53%). Citation metrics such as the h-index ranked sixth (39%), confirming that quantitative output measures remain the backbone of institutional career decisions.

**Figure 3: Top 10 metrics used for hiring and promotion**

*Question: What metrics does your current institution use for determining whether a researcher is hired or promoted? Select the five most important criteria; N= 636*



Interestingly, two criteria more closely aligned with responsible research assessment reform, research leadership (44%) and teaching and supervision (40%), rank in the top five, above some of the most traditional quantitative indicators, such as the h-index, which might be an indication of a shift in research assessment implementation. However, other criteria more closely aligned with responsible research assessment reform and less aligned with traditional academic activities are consistently less prominent in the survey responses. Interdisciplinary collaboration is selected by only 22% of respondents, science communication by 18%, and societal or policy impact by just 12%. The criteria most central to reform agendas, such as Open Science practices (11%), responsible research practices (8%), and diversity, equity and inclusion (7%), are among the least reported. Only 10% of respondents indicate that their institution uses narrative CVs as a format in hiring and promotion.

## Recognition of researcher competence areas in institutional assessment

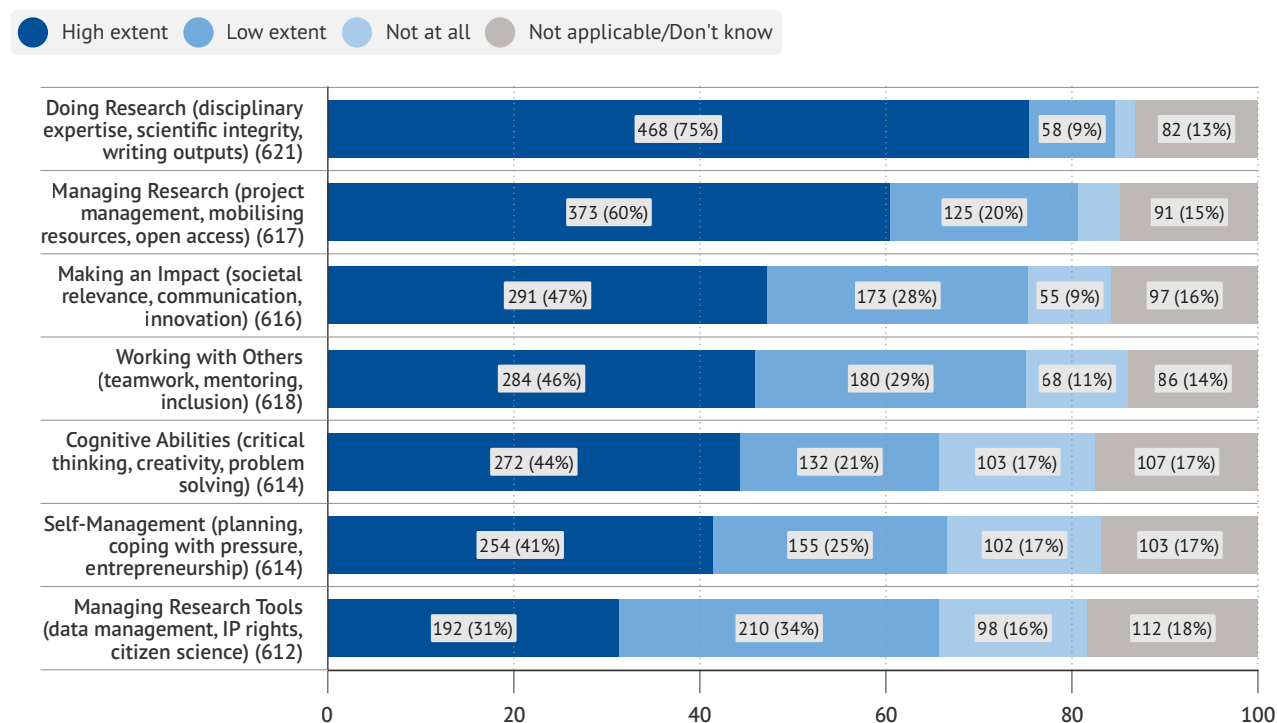
As shown in Figure 4, respondents were also asked to rate the extent to which each competence area from the [European Competence Framework for Researchers](#) is considered in research assessment at their institution. “Doing research,” encompassing disciplinary expertise, scientific integrity, and the production of research outputs, ranks first, with 468 respondents selecting “high extent.” This is followed by “managing research,” including project management, resource mobilisation, and open access, which received 373 “high extent” responses.

Recognition drops for competences further from conventional academic outputs. “Making an impact” (291 “high extent” responses), “working with others” (284), “cognitive abilities” (272),

and “self-management” (254) all receive substantially lower scores. The least recognised competence area is “managing research tools,” covering data management, intellectual property, and citizen science, with just 192 respondents reporting a “high extent” of recognition, compared to 308 who reported a “low extent” or “not at all.”

**Figure 4: Recognition of researcher competence areas in institutional assessment**

*Question: Below are the competence areas from the European Competence Framework for Researchers. To what extent do you believe each of these competence areas was considered in research assessment at your current institution?*



## Support for researcher assessment reform

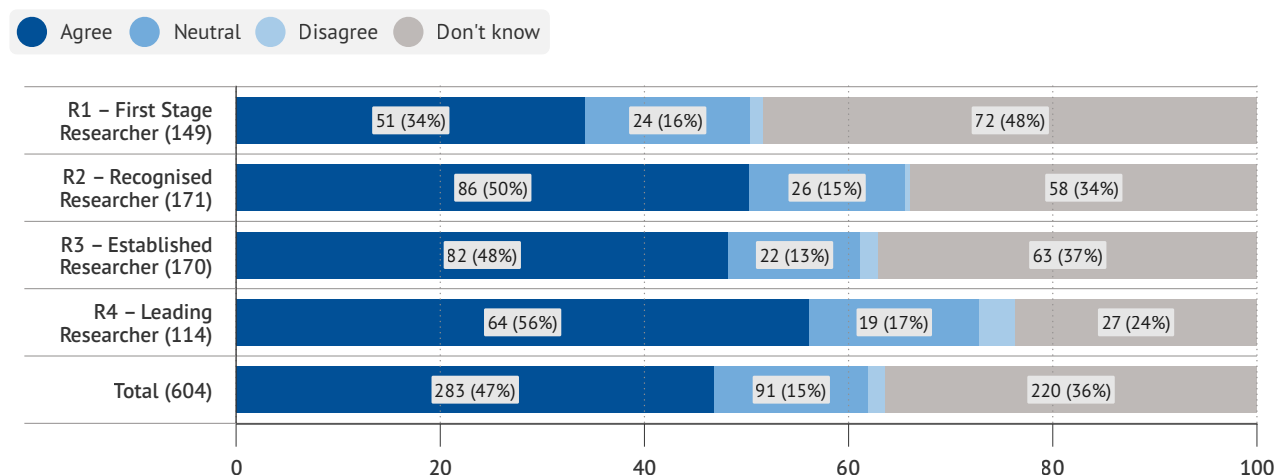
Across all respondents, 47% agree that research assessment reform initiatives should be implemented. Disagreement is minimal, at just 2%. A further 15% are neutral. However, 37% indicate unknowingness, a proportion that exceeds the neutral category by more than double and warrants careful interpretation. This result is consistent with the low familiarity with reform initiatives documented in the previous section, and suggests that apparent support may be more broadly normative than based on direct engagement with specific frameworks.

Support for reform is positive across all career stages (Figure 5); however, a large percentage of respondents in each career group don't know whether they support the research assessment reform. This highly influences the support percentages per group. This response is most prevalent among R1 respondents (48%), declining progressively across R2 (34%), R3 (37%), and R4 (24%). This pattern closely mirrors the career-stage gradient in familiarity with reform initiatives, reinforcing the conclusion that exposure to reform discourse increases with institutional seniority and engagement. Interestingly, R4 Leading Researchers show both the highest agreement (56%) and the highest disagreement rate (4%) with the reform. Responses from this group are extremely relevant as leading researchers tend to hold leadership

positions and have institutional power to implement change. Even when agreement exists, behavioural change is challenging. The level of disagreement with the reform within this group should not be dismissed.

**Figure 5: Support for implementing research assessment reforms by career stage**

*Questions: To what extent do you agree that research assessment reforms (e.g., CoARA, DORA, FOLEC etc.) should be implemented?; If you are a researcher, which of the following best describes your current career stage?<sup>4</sup>*



## Barriers and expectations of navigating research assessment reform

The survey explored the obstacles respondents perceive as blocking the successful implementation of research assessment reforms, as well as the positive developments they anticipate if reforms are successfully implemented.

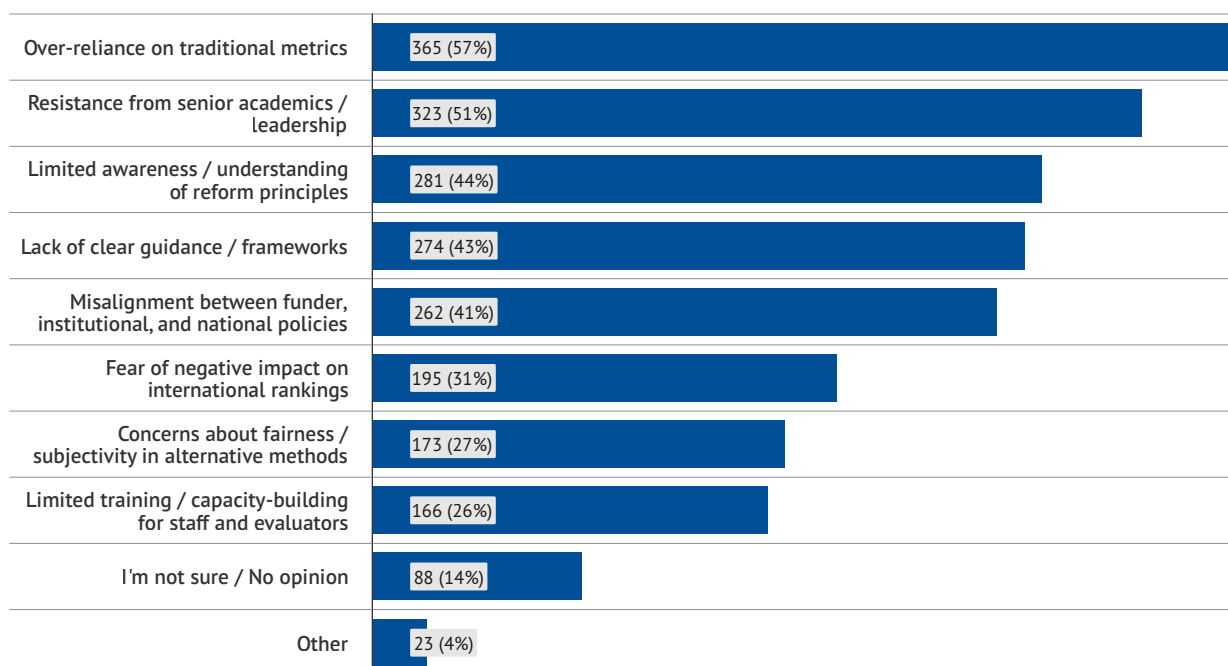
### Main barriers to reform implementation

Respondents were asked to identify the most significant barriers to reform implementation (see Figure 6). The results highlight a combination of cultural resistance, structural misalignment, and communication deficits. Over-reliance on traditional metrics, such as journal impact factor and h-index, is the most frequently cited barrier (57%), followed by resistance from senior academics and institutional leadership (51%), and limited awareness or understanding of reform principles (44%). Lack of clear guidance or practical implementation frameworks ranks fourth (43%), and misalignment between funder, institutional, and national policies ranks fifth (41%). The fear of a negative impact on international rankings is cited less often among respondents (31%). Further barriers include concerns about fairness or subjectivity in alternative assessment methods (27%) and limited training or capacity-building for staff and evaluators (26%). Some 14% of respondents indicate they are unsure or have no opinion on the barriers.

<sup>4</sup> R1 – First Stage Researcher (e.g. PhD candidate or equivalent); R2 – Recognized Researcher (PhD holder or equivalent; not yet fully independent); R3 – Established Researcher (independent researcher; has developed a level of independence); R4 – Leading Researcher (leader in research or innovation field, e.g. professor or PI)

**Figure 6: Main barriers to the successful implementation of the research assessment reforms**

*Question: In your opinion, what are the main barriers to the successful implementation of research assessment reforms? Select the five most important barriers.; N=619*



Beyond the listed options, open-text responses pointed to deeper structural and cultural obstacles. Workload and bureaucracy emerged as recurring concerns, with respondents describing reform as an additional burden rather than a genuine replacement for existing practices. As one respondent answers, reform “feels like an add-on with additional requirements rather than a revision of standards ready to replace traditional methods.” Informal power dynamics are also explicitly raised, with respondents pointing to favouritism as a barrier that formal reform frameworks cannot easily address: “Job openings are tailored to fit a person favoured by the hiring committee.” Some respondents identify a deeper epistemological resistance, “the prejudice that quantitative is more accurate and trustworthy than qualitative,” suggesting that barriers to reform are not only institutional but rooted in longstanding assumptions about what constitutes rigorous evidence of research quality.

Considered together, these findings suggest that the principal obstacles to reform are not primarily technical but cultural and systemic. Entrenched metrics, senior-level resistance, and policy incoherence form a mutually reinforcing set of constraints that cannot be addressed through communication alone.

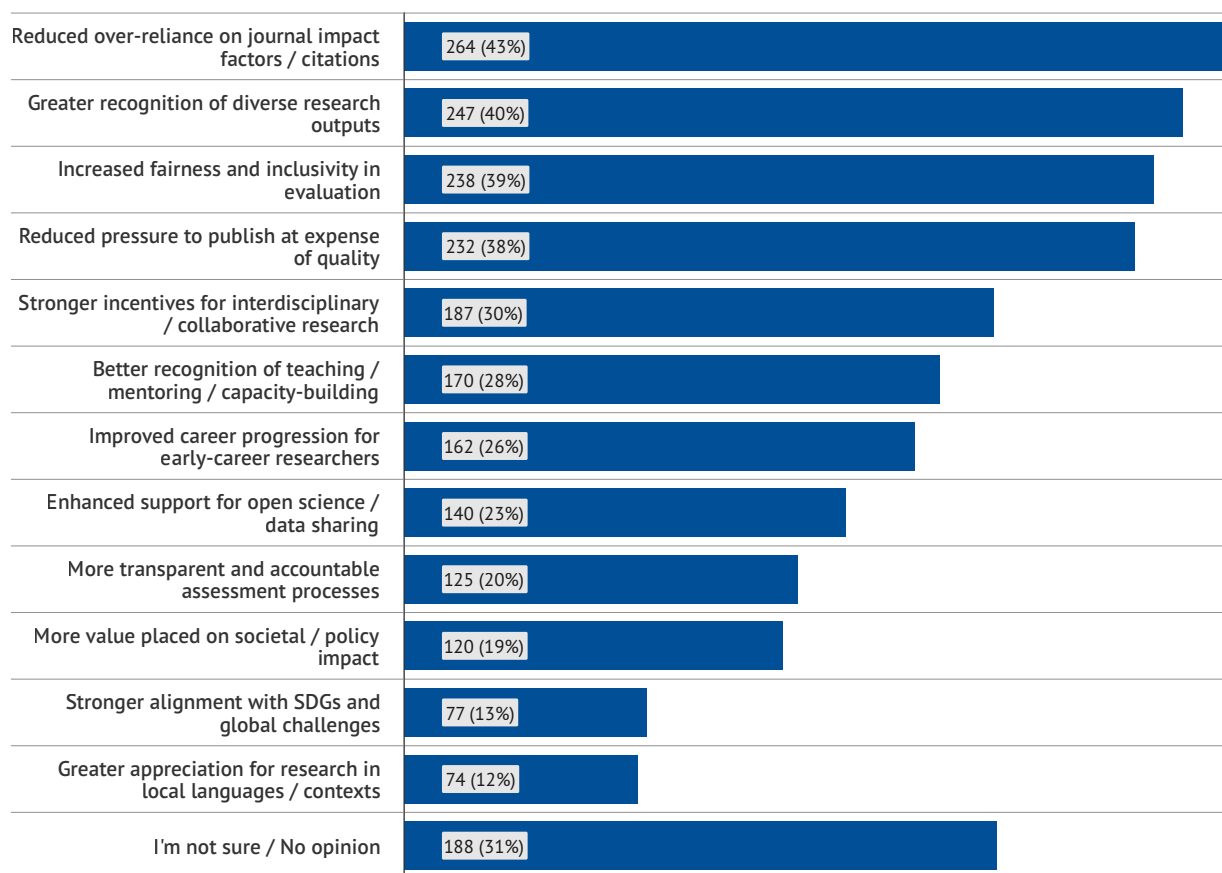
## Expected positive developments from research assessment reform

Respondents express clear expectations about the benefits of research assessment reform, with the top four anticipated developments all centred around dismantling traditional metric-driven evaluation. As shown in Figure 7, reduced over-reliance on journal impact factors and citation-based metrics is the most frequently selected outcome (42%), closely followed by

greater recognition of diverse research outputs (39%), increased fairness and inclusivity (37%), and reduced pressure to publish frequently at the expense of quality (37%).

**Figure 7: Expected positive developments from research assessment reform**

*Question: What positive development do you expect from reforming research assessment initiatives such as CoARA, DORA, and FOLEC? [multiple choice]; N= 617*



Beyond the top four, respondents also highlight the need for reform to deliver stronger incentives for interdisciplinary research (29%), better recognition of teaching and mentoring (27%), and improved career progression for early-career researchers (26%), reflecting a broad vision of the assessment reform that goes well beyond publication metrics. Notably, 30% of respondents say they aren't sure or don't have an opinion, suggesting that despite general support for reform, a significant share of the MSCA community remains uncertain about its concrete benefits.

# Researcher assessment in the MSCA

The survey also examined how evaluation by the host institution is experienced within the MSCA project itself - during the selection process, or during the fellowship itself<sup>5</sup>. Findings in this section are drawn from the subset of respondents (<300) who participated in Horizon 2020 (H2020) or Horizon Europe (HE) programmes as fellows or alumni and who answered the relevant questions<sup>6</sup>. The highest share of respondents participated in MSCA doctoral programmes (~46-47%), individual fellowships (~28-29%) and COFUND doctoral or postdoctoral programmes (~17%).

## Recognition of competences in MSCA projects

Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which the evaluation criteria during the selection process of their MSCA project recognised a wide range of competences (see Figure 8<sup>7</sup>).

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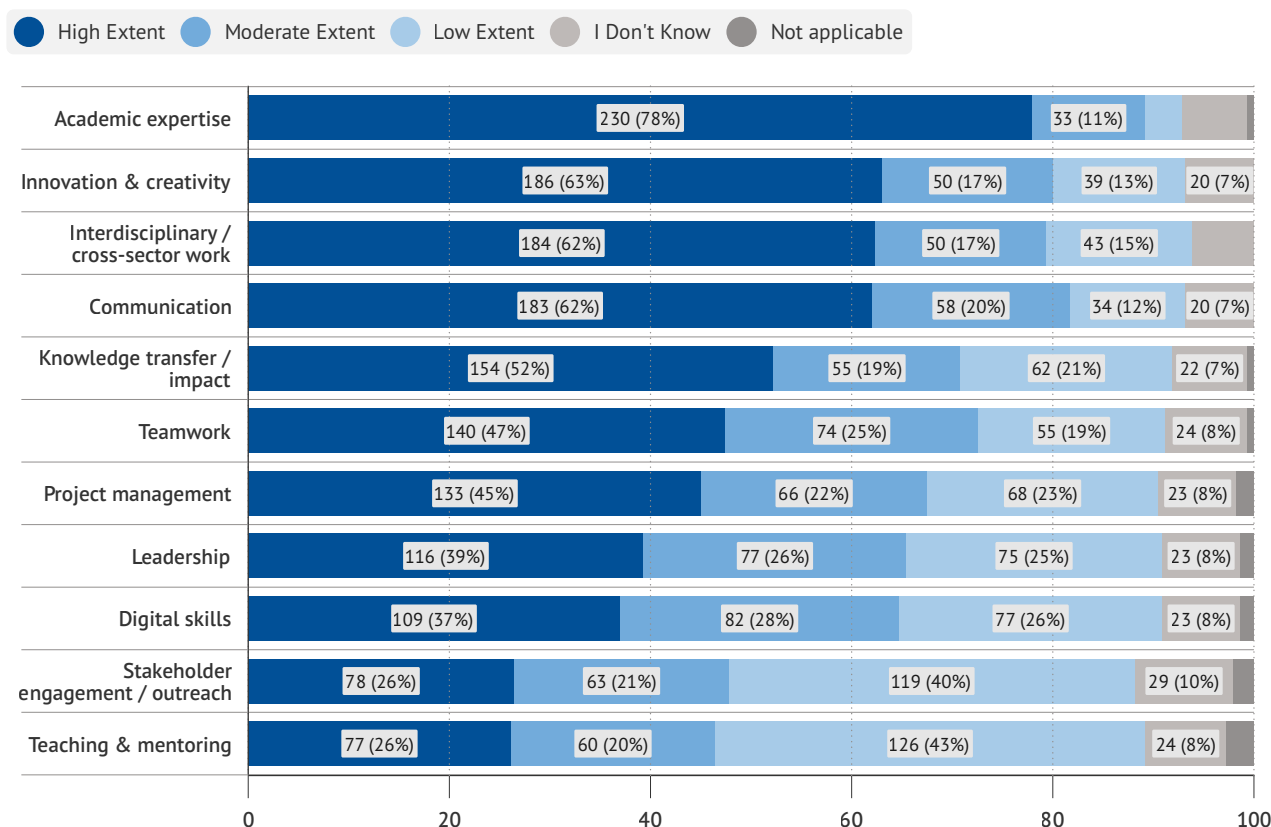
5 The survey addresses the assessment of researchers only; the evaluation of MSCA research and training programmes themselves falls outside its scope.

6 This is a substantially smaller base than the rest of the report and sample sizes for individual actions are small. Findings should therefore be read as indicative, and results disaggregated by action treated with particular caution.

7 Under actions such as Doctoral Networks and COFUND, host organisations select and recruit fellows after the MSCA funding is awarded, while under Postdoctoral Fellowships (Individual Fellowships in H2020) the fellow is assessed as part of the EU proposal evaluation, though some institutions run their own selection beforehand. This section reflects institutional selection practices only (not the EU-level evaluation of MSCA proposals) and findings should be read as indicative of fellows' overall perception of competence recognition at the point of entry into their MSCA project.

**Figure 8: Perception of how well evaluation criteria recognise a wide range of competences in the selection process of the MSCA projects**

*Questions: To what extent would you consider that the evaluation criteria recognised a wide range of competences relevant for the position/project/activity?; Which MSCA action did you participate in? If you have been involved in several MSCA projects, please choose the most recent one. Note: this question was answered by current fellows or recent alumni of Horizon 2020 (H2020) or Horizon Europe projects. N=295*



Academic expertise is overwhelmingly perceived as highly recognised (78%). Innovation and creativity (63%), interdisciplinary and cross-sector work (62%), and communication skills (62%) are each recognised to a high extent by roughly two-thirds of respondents. Knowledge transfer and impact are reported as highly recognised by 52%.

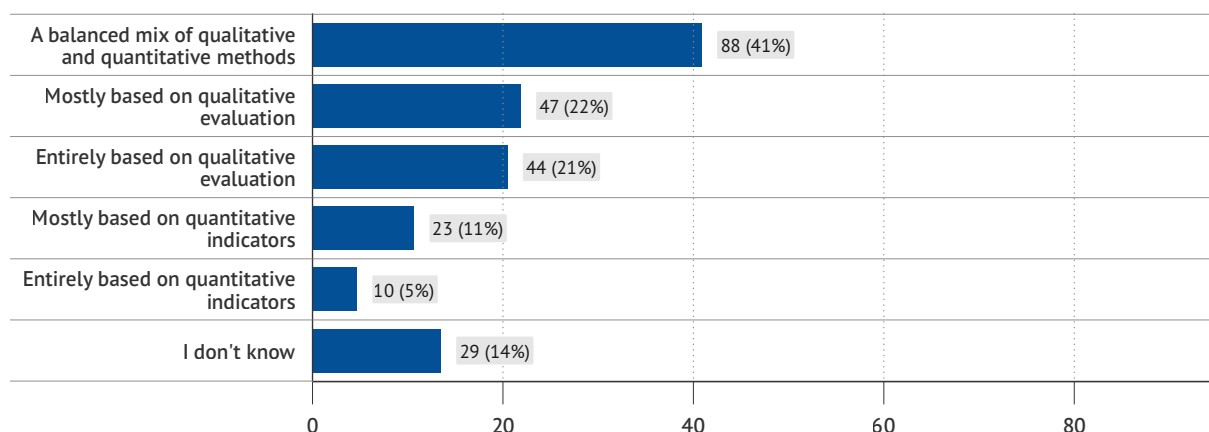
Recognition declines for competences more closely associated with team and institutional dynamics. Teamwork is rated highly by 47%, project management by 45%, and leadership by 39%. Digital skills are highly recognised by 37%. The two lowest-ranked competences are stakeholder engagement and outreach (high recognition: 26%) and teaching and mentoring (high recognition: 26%). These figures should be read strictly in the context of selection. The MSCA is a research and training programme: many of the competences listed, including teaching and mentoring, stakeholder engagement, and project management, are intended to be developed during the fellowship. It is therefore neither surprising nor necessarily problematic that, for instance, doctoral candidates are not selected on the basis of prior teaching and mentoring experience. Across all scientific panels, academic expertise is consistently the most recognised competence in the MSCA selection process.

## A mix of evaluation methods during the MSCA fellowship

Among the 216 MSCA fellows who reported having had a formal evaluation during their fellowship, the most common approach is a balanced mix of qualitative and quantitative methods (41%), followed by mostly or entirely qualitative evaluation<sup>8</sup>. As shown in Figure 9, quantitative approaches are relatively rare, with only 16% of fellows reporting evaluations based mostly or entirely on quantitative indicators. Notably, 14% of respondents indicate they don't know what methods are used, which may reflect limited communication of evaluation approaches to fellows, but could equally reflect recall difficulties or differing interpretations of the question.

**Figure 9: A mix of evaluation methods used during the MSCA fellowship**

*Question: What was/is the mix of quantitative and qualitative methods used for evaluating your work? You can choose multiple options; N=216*



## Contributions that should receive stronger recognition and encouragement in MSCA projects

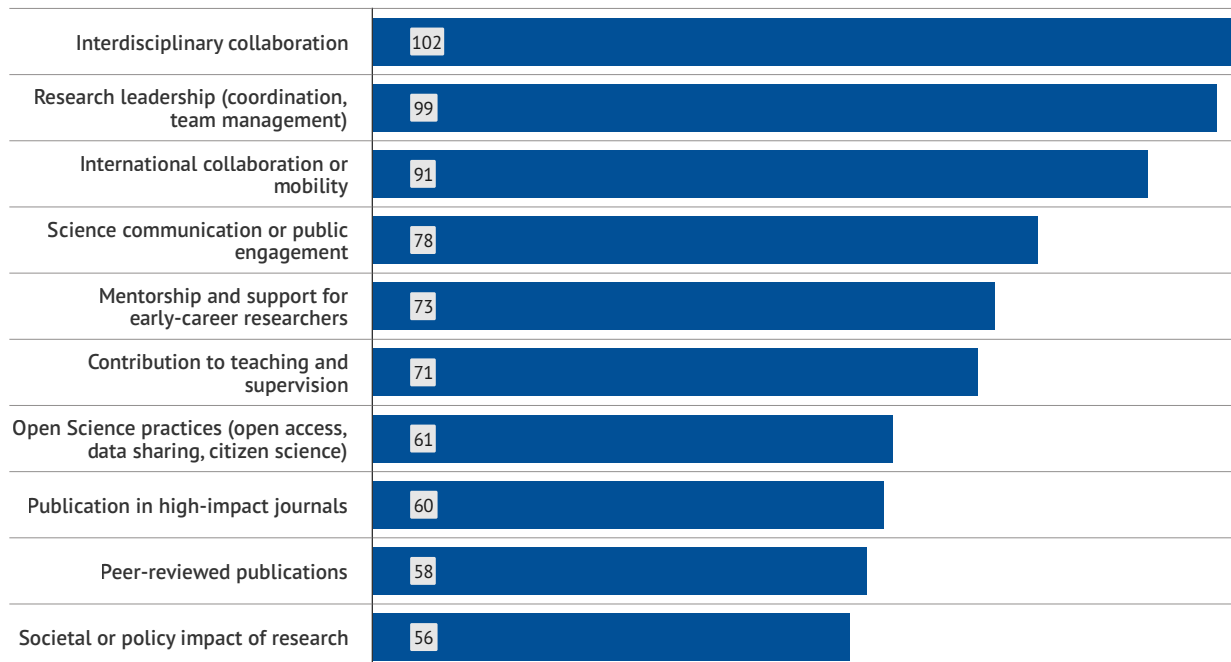
Finally, respondents were asked which of their contributions they felt could have been more strongly recognised and encouraged within their MSCA project (Figure 10). These responses reflect the interests and priorities of the fellows who answered, rather than a measurement of what MSCA projects actually recognise or reward.

Interdisciplinary collaboration is the most frequently cited under-recognised contribution (47%), followed closely by research leadership, including project coordination and team management (45%), and international collaboration or mobility (42%). Science communication and public engagement (36%) and mentorship and support for early-career researchers (34%) also feature prominently, as does contribution to teaching and supervision (33%).

<sup>8</sup> The findings presented in this section reflect respondents' subjective perceptions of the evaluation methods used during their fellowship, rather than an objective assessment of formal MSCA evaluation procedures. Traditional application requirements, including a standard CV format, remain in place across the MSCA, and the recognition of a wider range of competences and contributions in formal evaluation criteria remains an area with scope for further development. The data here reflects lived experience and perception; it does not imply that structural reform of MSCA evaluation processes is complete or unnecessary.

**Figure 10: Top 10 contributions that could have been more strongly recognised and encouraged in the MSCA projects**

*Question: Which of the following contributions do you feel could have been more strongly recognised and encouraged in the MSCA project? [multiple choice]; N = 216*



Open Science practices (28%), publication in high-impact journals (28%), and peer-reviewed publications (27%) follow, alongside societal and policy impact (26%), innovation and entrepreneurship (25%), and responsible research practices (23%). Citation metrics are among the least frequently cited under recognised contributions (11%), indicating that respondents are not primarily seeking greater recognition for bibliometric performance but for a broader range of collaborative, interdisciplinary, and capacity-building activities.

# Conclusions

The MSCA community expresses support for research assessment reform, tempered by considerable uncertainty. About 47% of respondents agree that reform frameworks should be implemented, with only 2% disagreeing, but more than a third (37%) do not know. This uncertainty is mirrored in researchers' immediate environments; familiarity with reform instruments remains low, and the criteria institutions apply in practice are still dominated by traditional metrics.

The evidence points to a persistent mismatch between the values researchers hold and the incentive structures they navigate. When asked about their current institutions (which, for most respondents, are not MSCA host organisations), respondents report that hiring and promotion still reward publication counts, journal impact factors, and external funding above almost everything else, while criteria central to reform agendas, such as Open Science practices, responsible research, and contributions to diversity, equity, and inclusion, remain marginal. At the same time, researchers clearly value a broader range of contributions: many wished that interdisciplinary collaboration, teaching, mentoring, and societal engagement had been more strongly encouraged. Adding to this picture, a quarter of respondents do not know what criteria their institution applies to hiring and promotion at all. This level of uncertainty suggests a need for clearer communication around assessment practices, which reform frameworks alone cannot deliver.

Awareness of reform instruments remains limited. Respondents report very limited familiarity with research assessment reforms such as CoARA or DORA, with narrative CVs being the most well-known instrument. Many respondents indicate they do not know whether to support reform, suggesting the reform movement has yet to reach most researchers. The use of implementation tools such as narrative CVs is a good starting point. However, as one respondent noted, there is a real risk that reform becomes “an add-on with additional requirements rather than a revision of standards ready to replace traditional methods,” increasing burden without producing change.

Yet, the survey also reveals a community with clear, coherent, and actionable expectations. Respondents want reduced dependence on journal metrics, greater recognition of diverse research outputs, increased fairness and inclusivity in evaluation, and relief from publish-or-perish pressures. These expectations are specific, consistent with CoARA and DORA commitments, and shared across career stages and geographies. This highlights that, while awareness of research assessment reform initiatives is low among respondents, the value and expectations of the community closely align with the reform's principles.

The survey also offers a counterpoint to the institutional picture. In the selection of MSCA fellows by host organisations, innovation and creativity and interdisciplinary and cross-sector work rank among the top three most recognised competences. While based on a smaller respondent group, this suggests that programmes like the MSCA, which embed broader evaluation criteria in their conditions, can shift evaluation practice on the ground and can serve as a reference point for what reformed assessment looks like in operation.

The task ahead is to translate that readiness into action while making sure those most vulnerable, such as early-career researchers, are not negatively impacted. Through sustained advocacy with funders and host institutions, through peer learning and capacity-building

within the community, and through continued pressure on systems that still assess researchers primarily based on how much and where they publish rather than on the quality of their work or the difference their work makes.

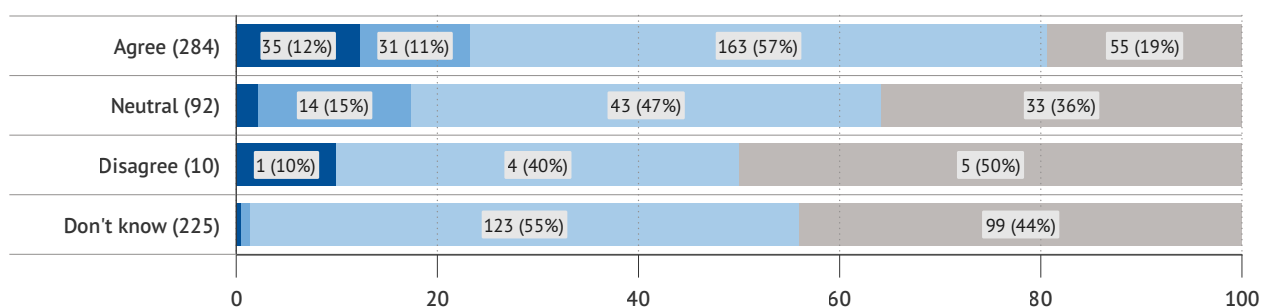
# Annex I: Additional statistics

**Figure 11: Familiarity with responsible research assessment initiatives by level of support for reform**

*Questions: To what extent are you familiar with the following responsible research assessment initiatives or tools?; To what extent do you agree that research assessment reforms (e.g., CoARA, DORA, FOLEC etc.) should be implemented?*

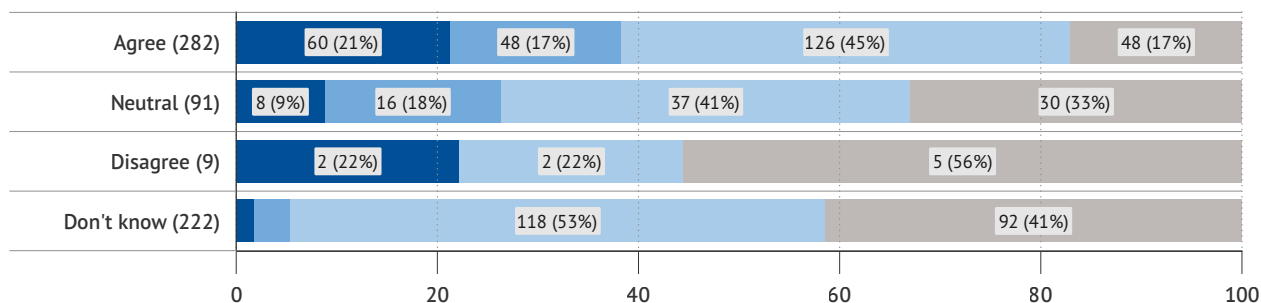
## CoARA

High Moderate Low Don't know



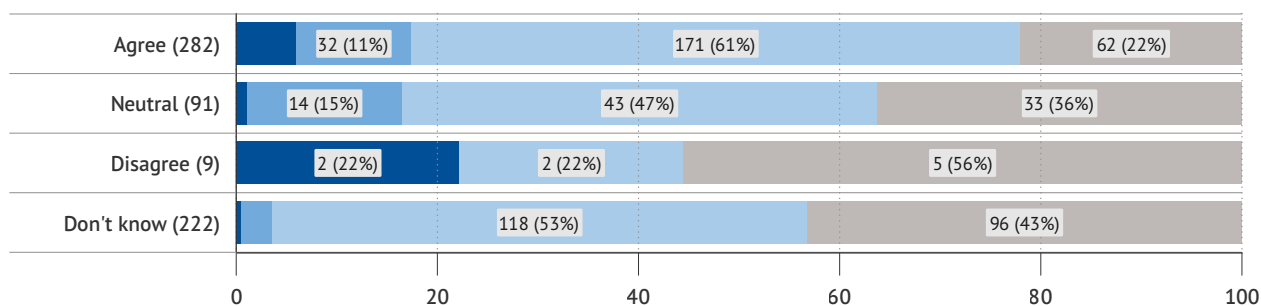
## DORA

High Moderate Low Don't know



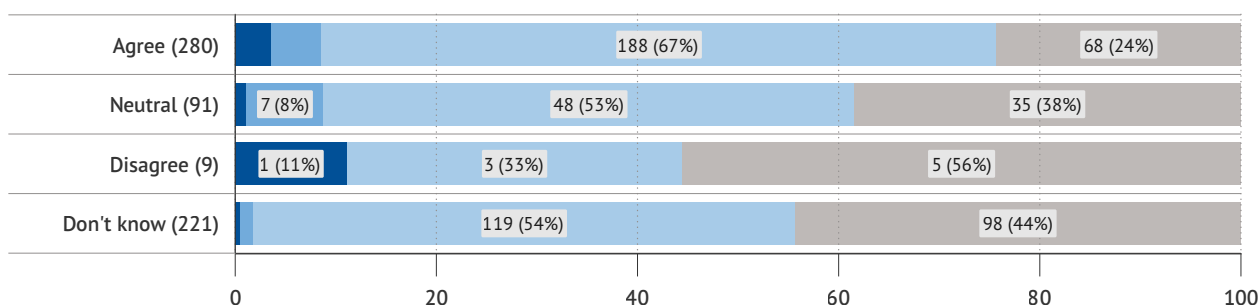
## Leiden Manifesto

High Moderate Low Don't know



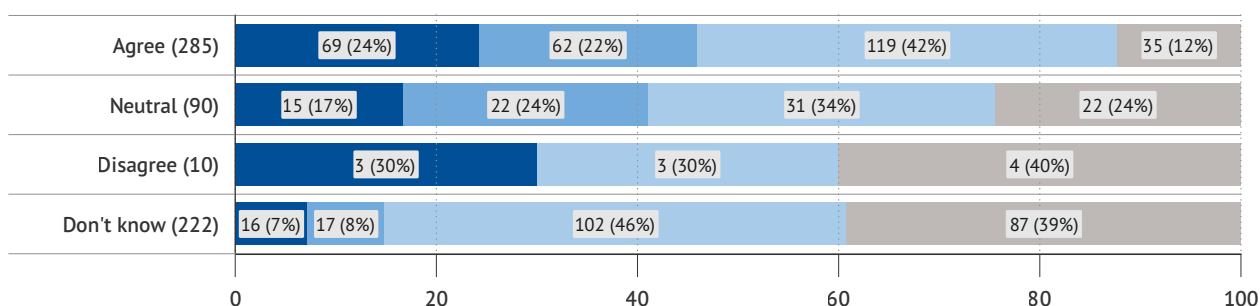
## Hong Kong Principles

High Moderate Low Don't know



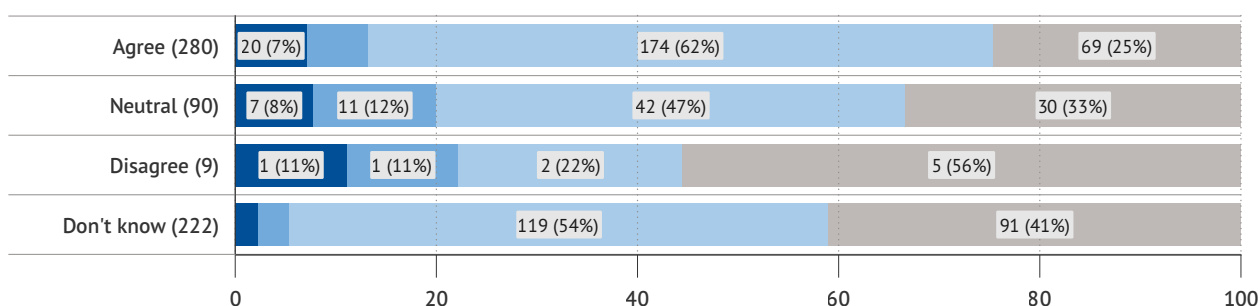
## Narrative CV

High Moderate Low Don't know



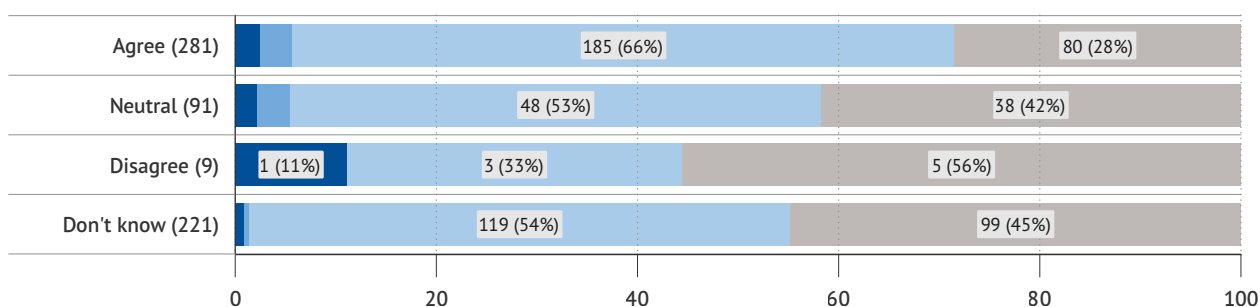
## SCOPE Framework

High Moderate Low Don't know



## FOLEC

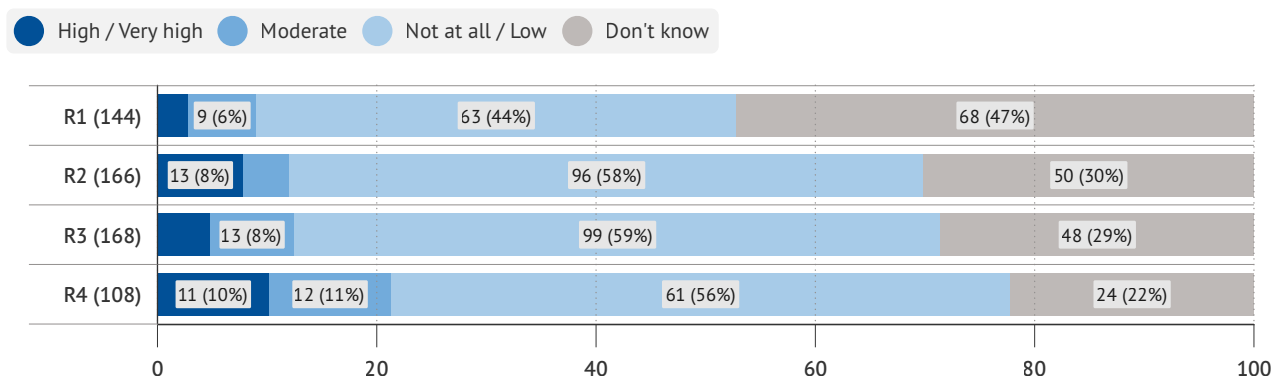
High Moderate Low Don't know



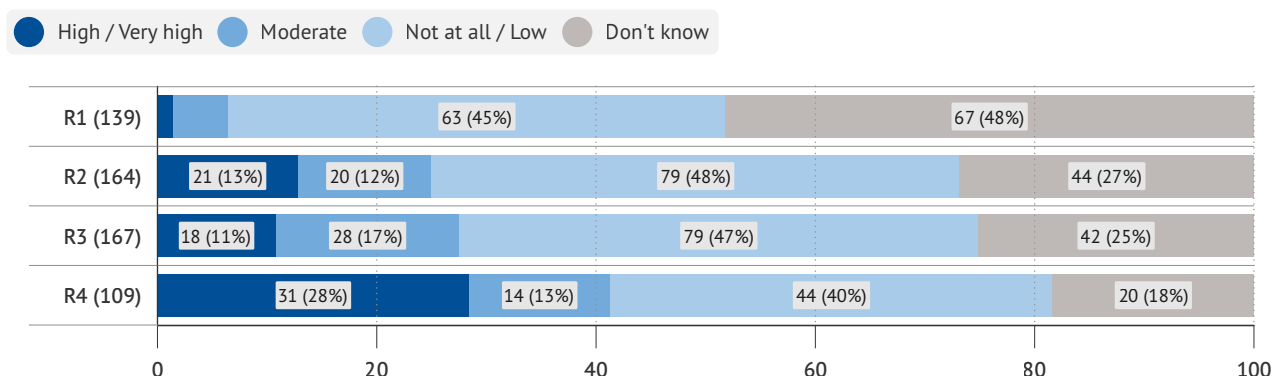
**Figure 12: Familiarity with responsible research assessment initiatives by career stage**

Questions: To what extent are you familiar with the following responsible research assessment initiatives or tools?; If you are a researcher, which of the following best describes your current career stage<sup>9</sup>?

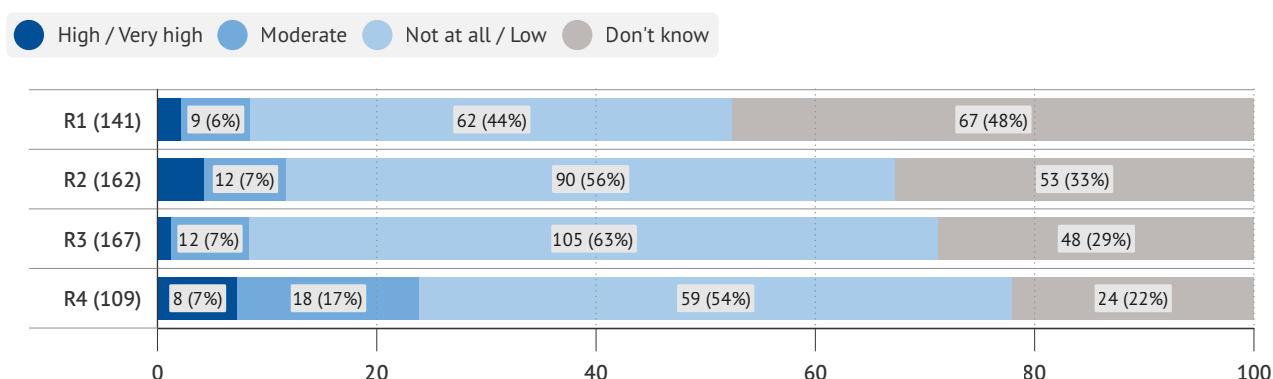
### CoARA



### DORA

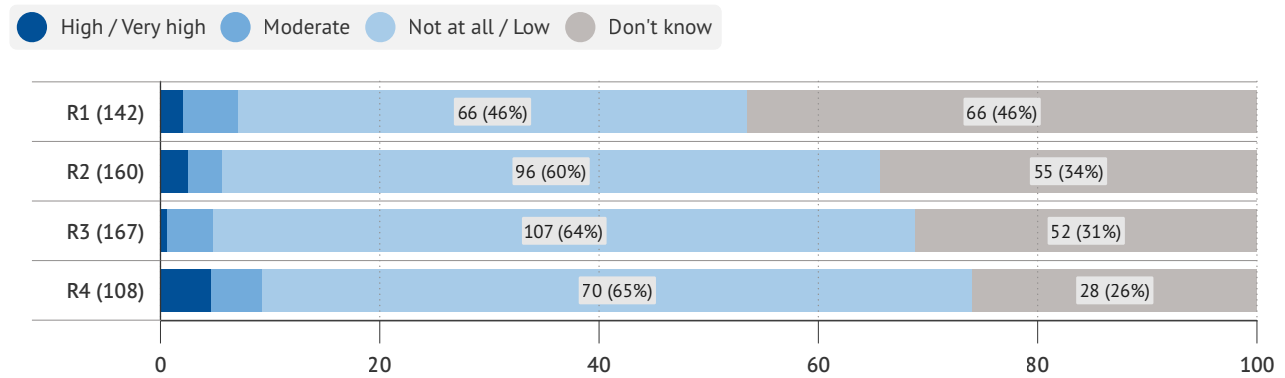


### Leiden Manifesto

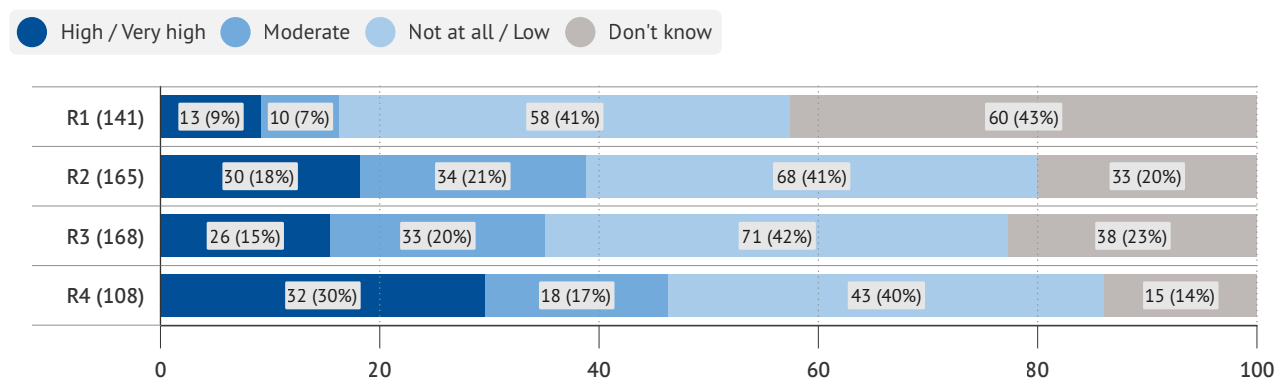


<sup>9</sup> R1 – First Stage Researcher (e.g. PhD candidate or equivalent); R2 – Recognized Researcher (PhD holder or equivalent; not yet fully independent); R3 – Established Researcher (independent researcher; has developed a level of independence); R4 – Leading Researcher (leader in research or innovation field, e.g. professor or PI).

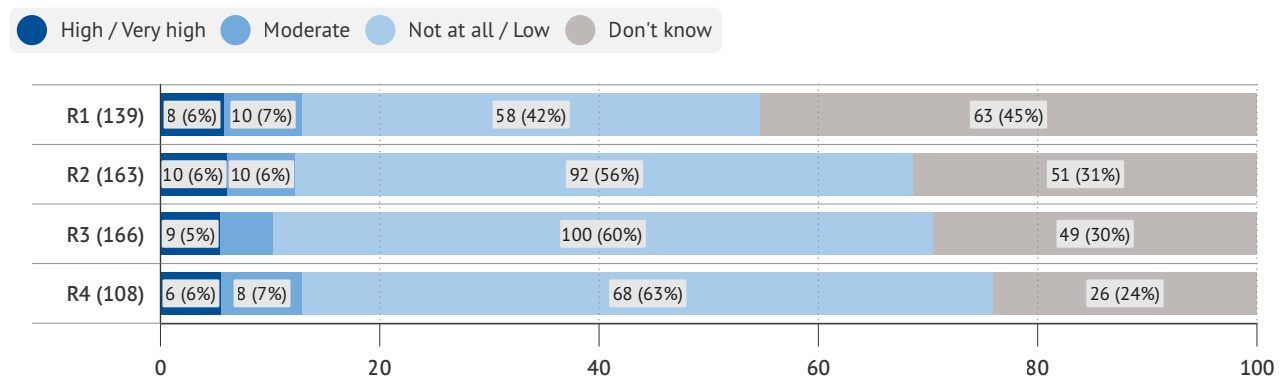
## Hong Kong Principles



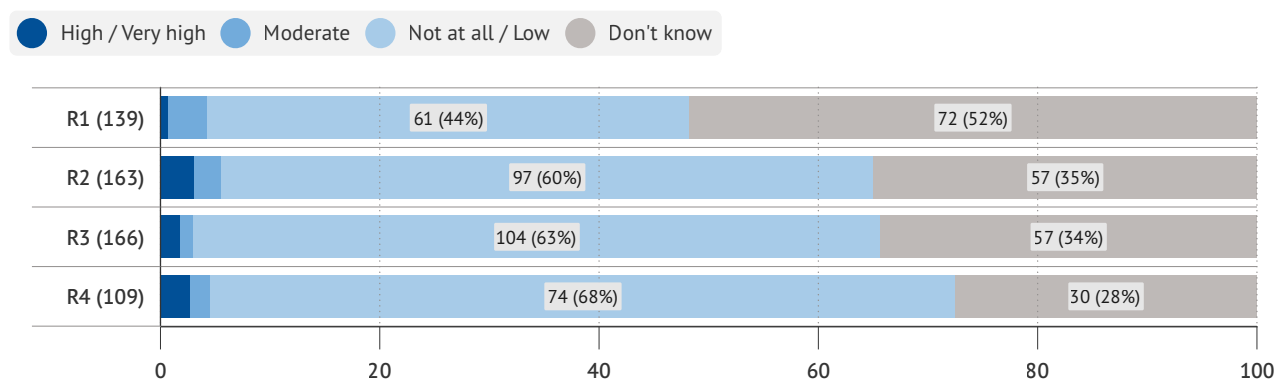
## Narrative CV



## SCOPE Framework



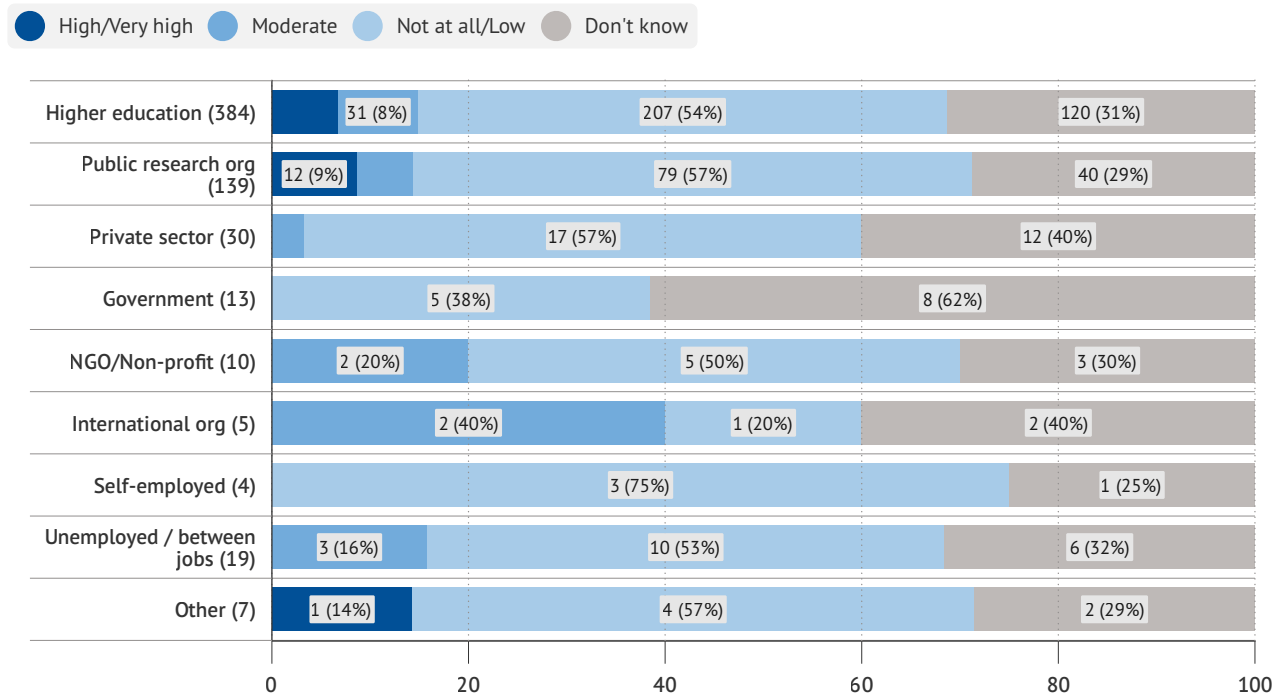
## FOLEC



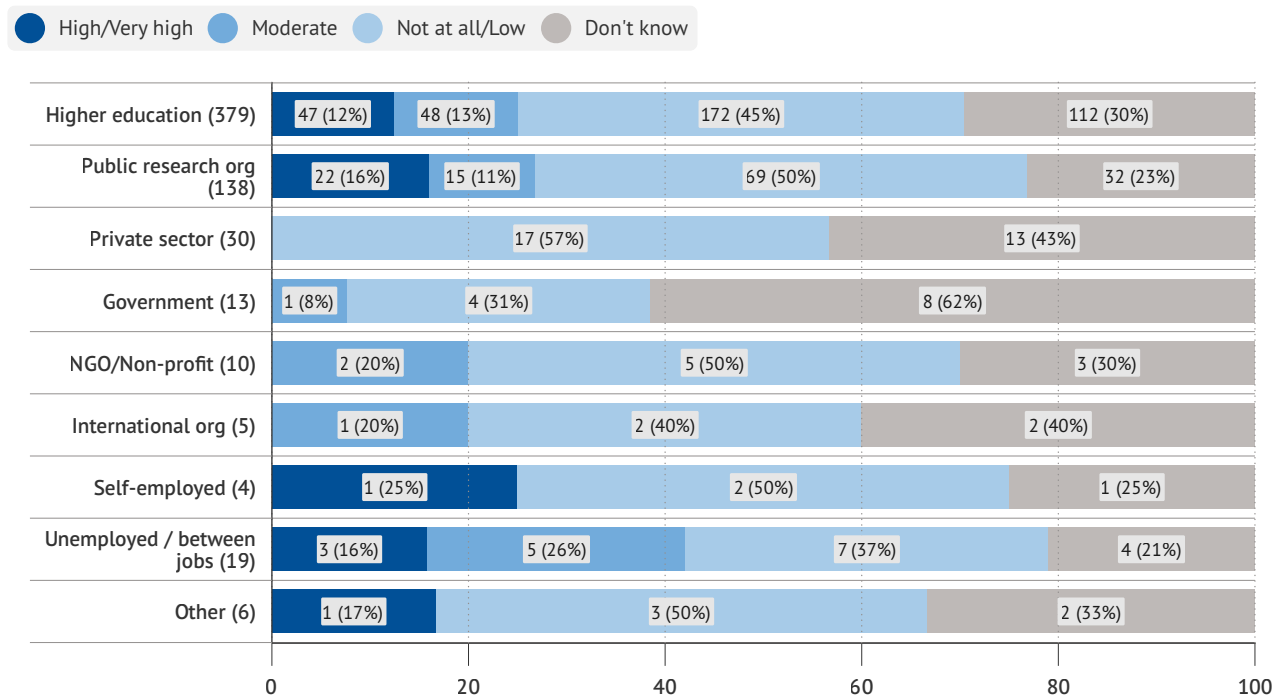
**Figure 13: Familiarity with responsible research assessment initiatives by employment sector**

Questions: To what extent are you familiar with the following responsible research assessment initiatives or tools?; Which sector are you currently working in?

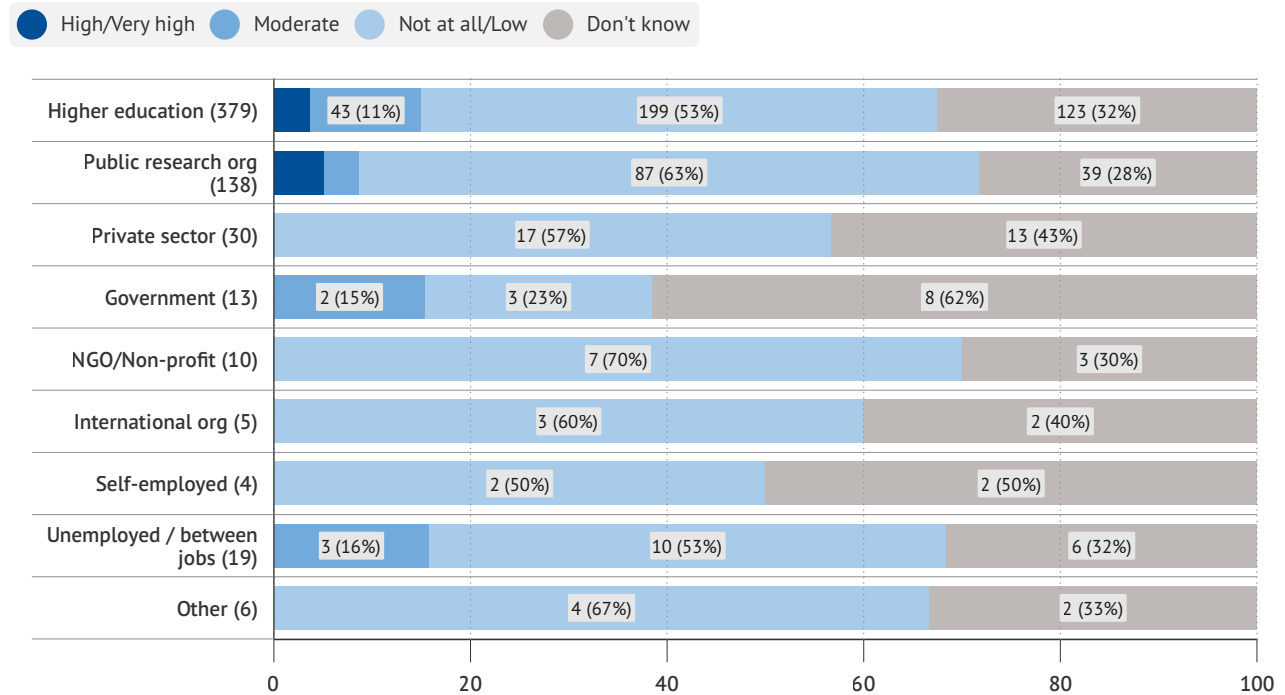
### CoARA



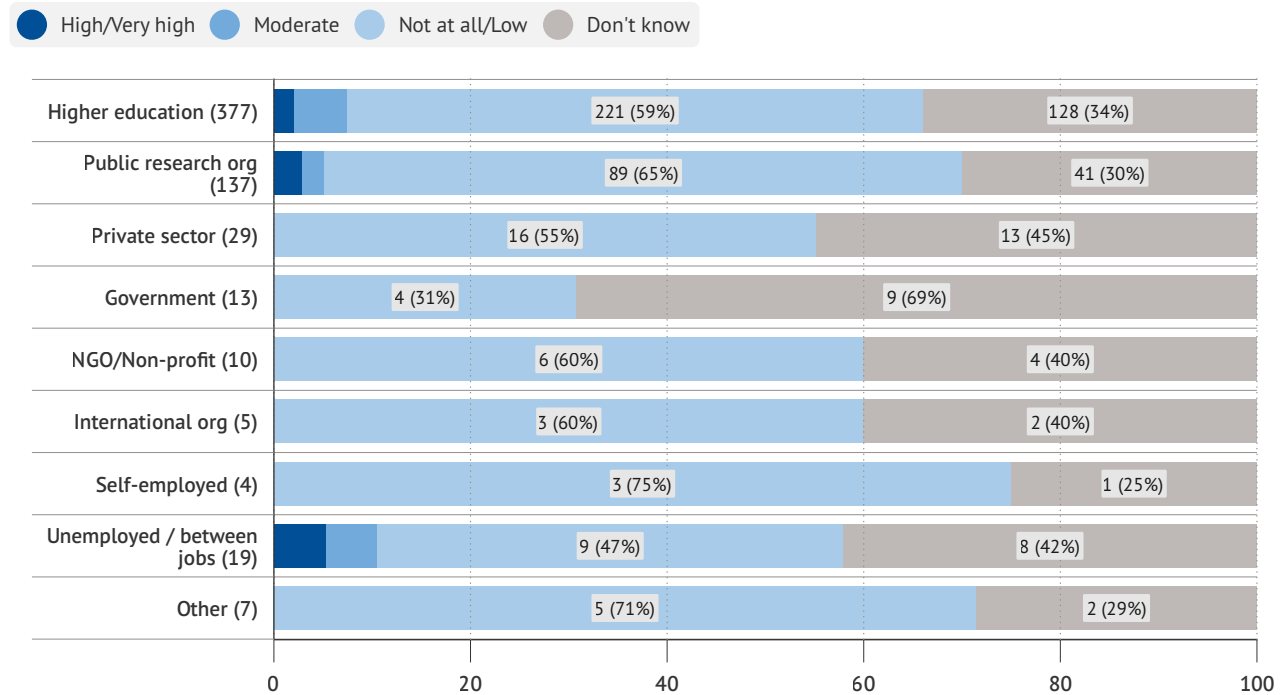
### DORA



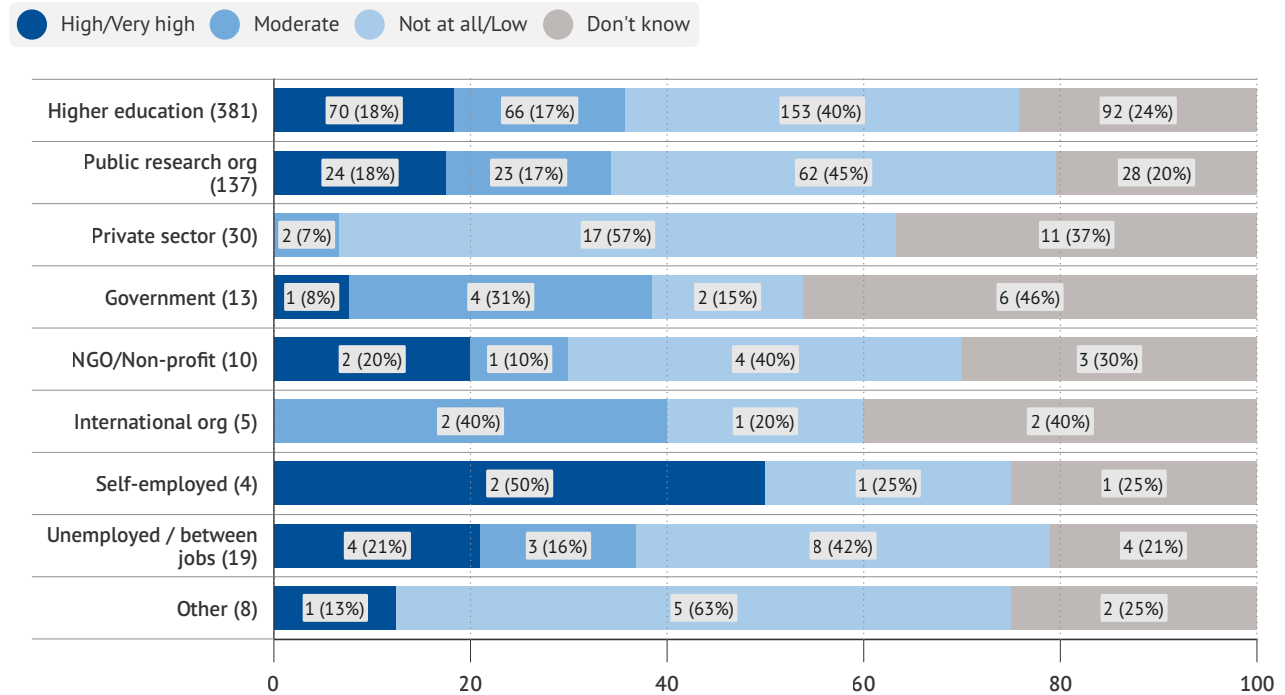
## Leiden Manifesto



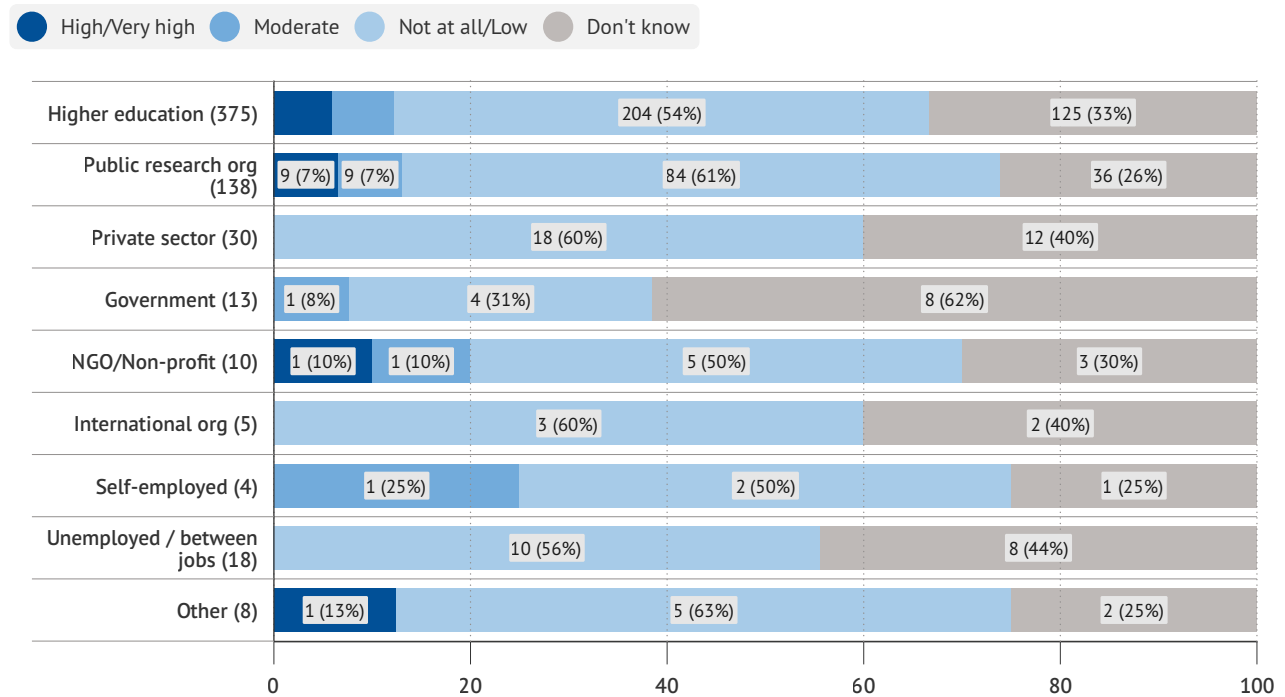
## Hong Kong Principles



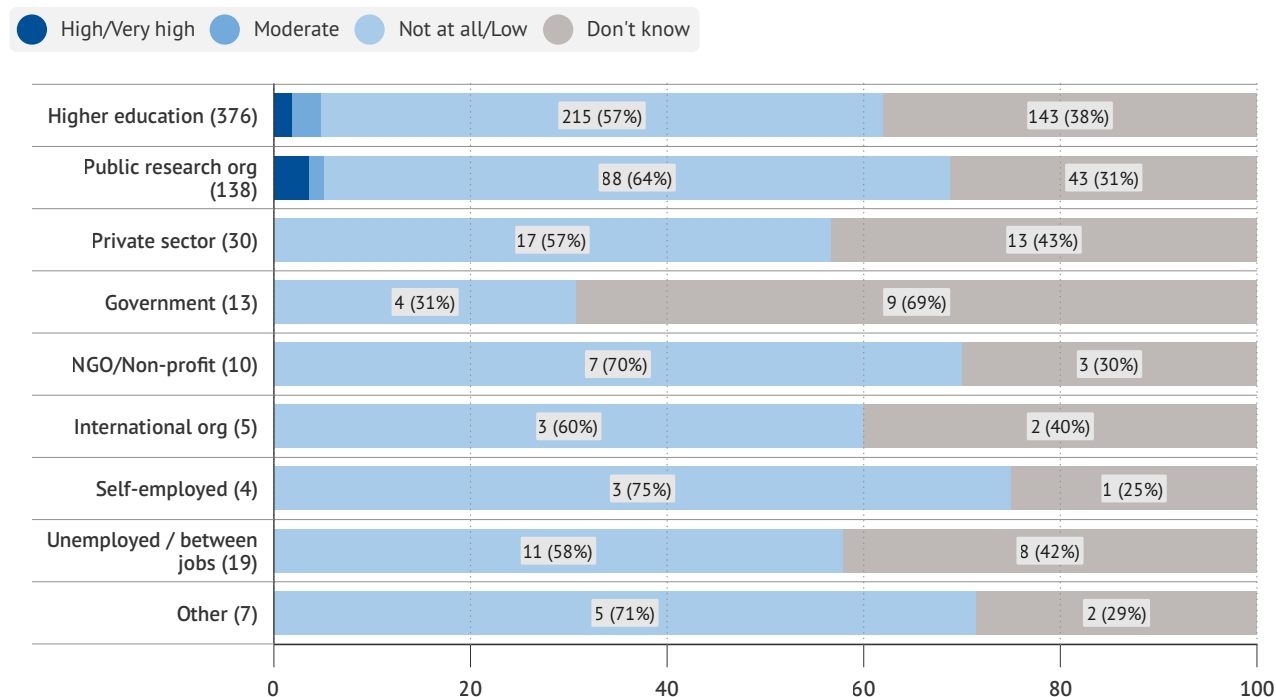
## Narrative CV



## SCOPE Framework



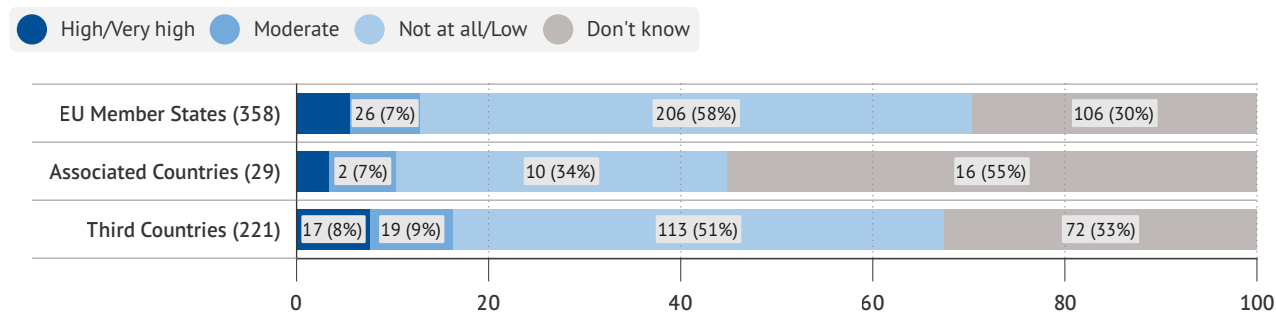
## FOLEC



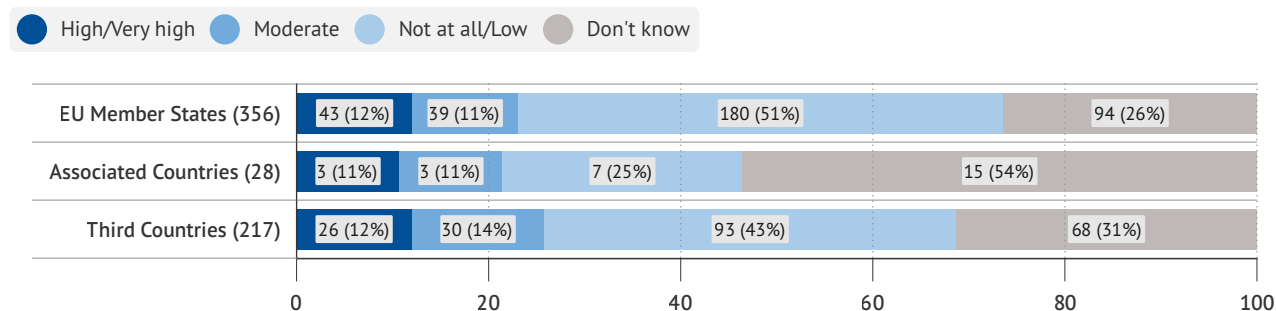
**Figure 14: Familiarity with responsible research assessment initiatives by country group**

Questions: To what extent are you familiar with the following responsible research assessment initiatives or tools?; Nationality

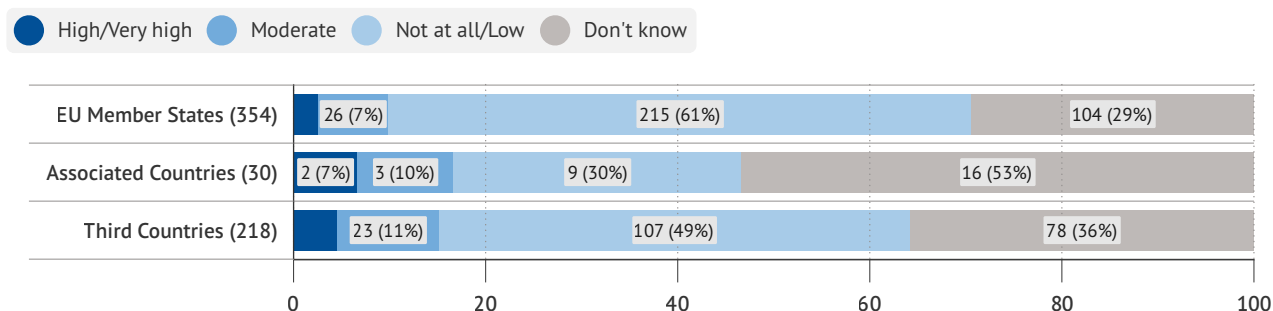
## CoARA



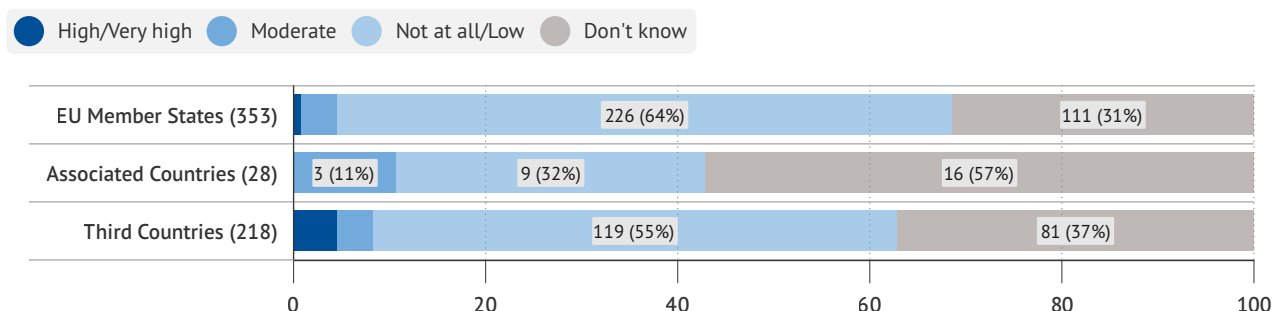
## DORA



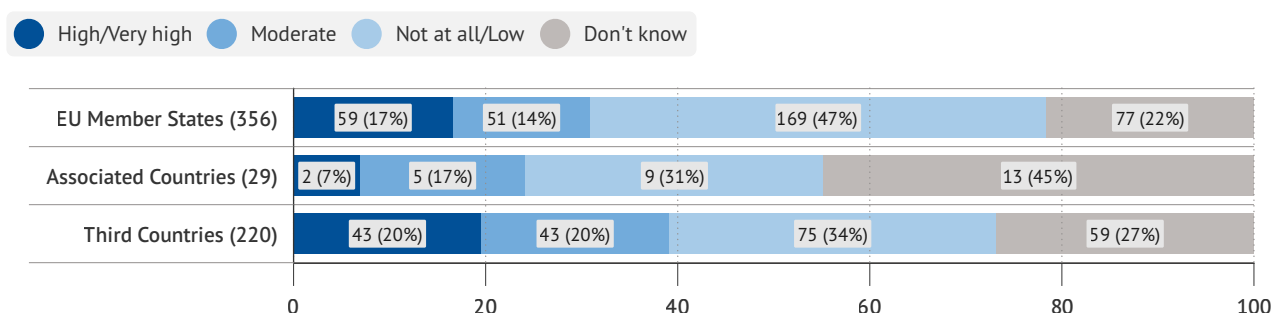
## Leiden Manifesto



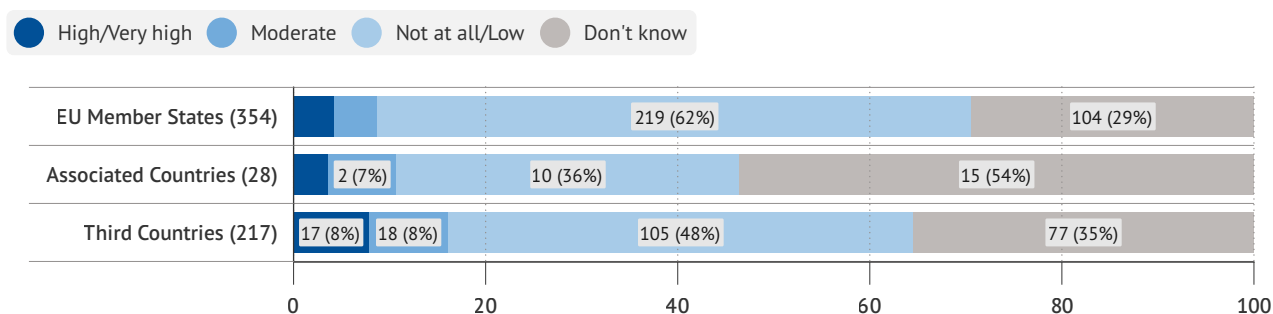
## Hong Kong Principles



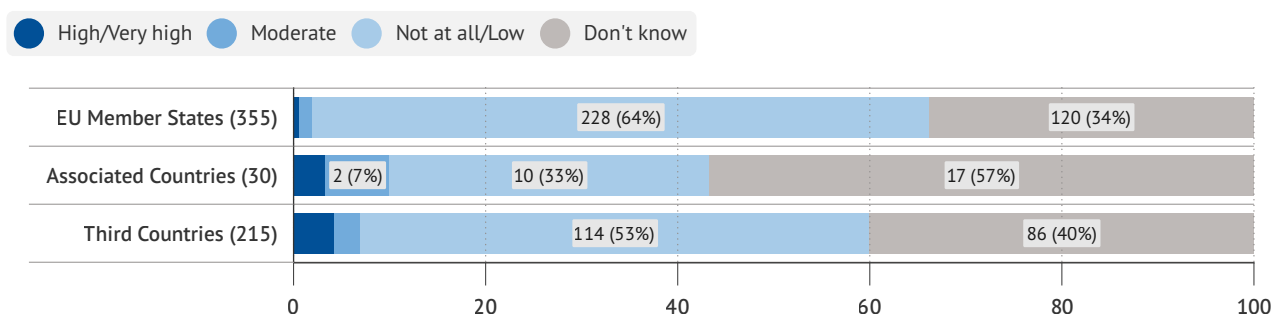
## Narrative CV



## SCOPE Framework



## FOLEC





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