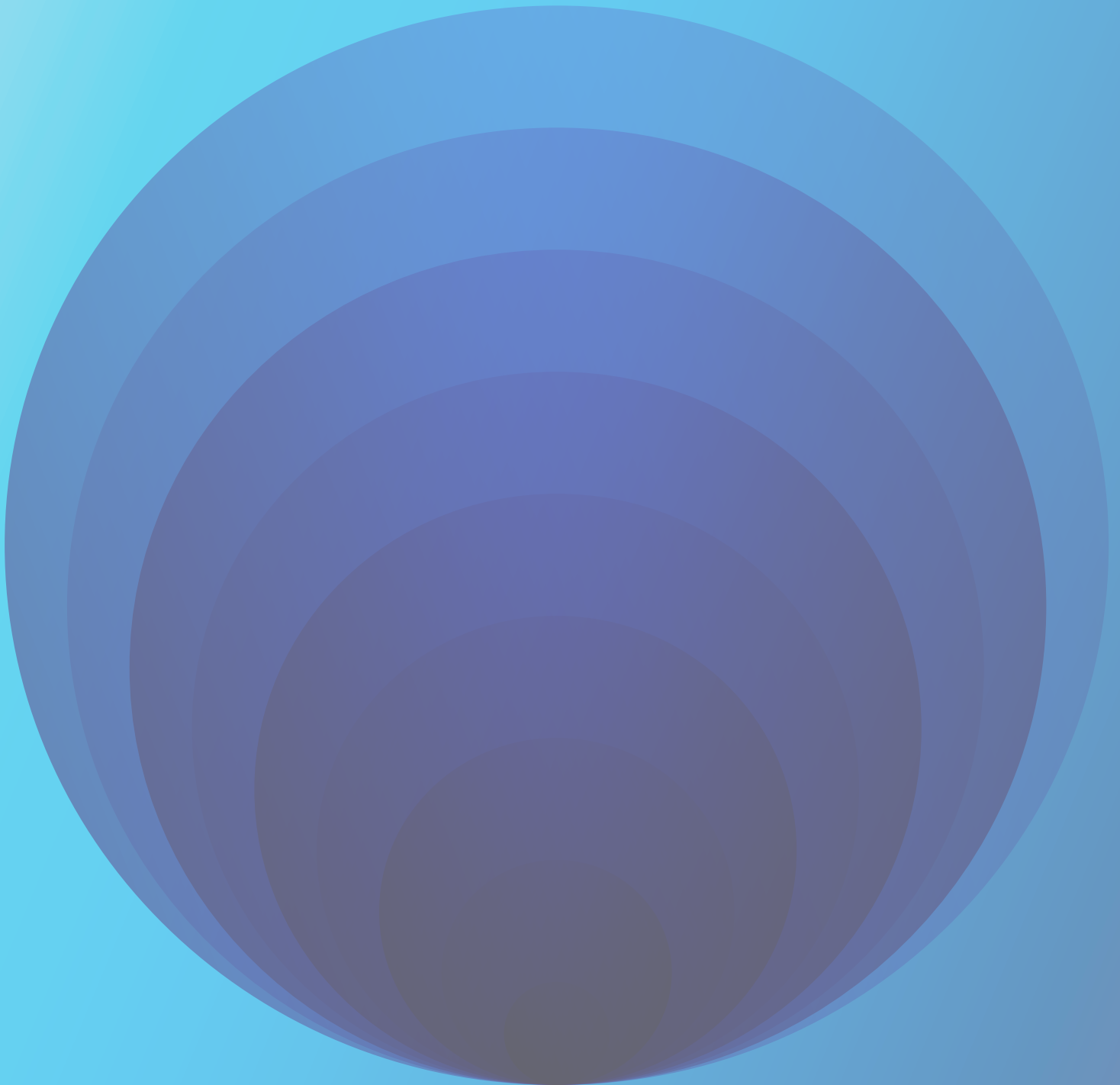

CONSULTANCY
REPORT

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS: MOTIVATORS, ENABLERS AND BARRIERS

SEPTEMBER
2023

FINDINGS FROM A GLOBAL
SURVEY OF 9,606 ACADEMICS



Executive summary	04
Introduction	06
Enablers of international research collaborations	08
Assessing research reputation	12
Barriers to international research collaboration	14
Assessing the success of research collaborations	16
Conclusion	18

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

COUNTRY	
United Kingdom	14%
United States	9%
Japan	7%
Germany	6%
Spain	6%
France	4%
Brazil	4%
Australia	4%
Canada	4%
Netherlands	4%

75%

A WILLINGNESS TO COLLABORATE OPENLY AND WITH TRUST (75%) IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS ALIGNMENT OF RESEARCH EXPERTISE (73%) WHEN SEEKING AN INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH COLLABORATOR.

69%

Personal interactions are by far the most informing opinions researchers (69%),

is still an important factor (49%).

44%

Having shared ethics and values (44%) is a key enabler for initiating a successful research collaboration (second only to having a common approach to the research; 69%)

IN-PERSON VISITS, INFORMAL NETWORKING, AND IN PERSON CONFERENCES ARE SEEN AS THE MOST EFFECTIVE ACTIVITIES FOR CREATING NEW RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS

Judging whether research has meaningfully contributed to an

(75%) is most

whether a research collaboration has been successful

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT BARRIERS TO INITIATING A NEW RESEARCH COLLABORATION ARE A LACK OF PERSONAL INTERACTIONS (46%) AND LACK OF EXISTING CONTACTS (44%), AS WELL AS A LACK OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FROM AN ACADEMIC'S INSTITUTION (45%)

INTRODUCTION

In a globalised world, which enables researchers and academics to collaborate with fewer geographical barriers, international collaboration can offer academics and universities the opportunity to share skills, knowledge and newly developed techniques, while also building their reputations and research impact.

Numerous studies have emphasised that international collaboration is increasing as a global trend. As shown in Figure 1, across the world the proportion of academic publications with international co-authorship has increased over the past decade.

It is also well documented that international collaboration can increase the number of citations a paper receives.¹ As displayed in Figure 2, countries which have a greater proportion of publications with international co-authorship tend to have higher Field Weighted Citation Impact (FWCI) – a measure designed to reflect the impact of the academic output.

In recognition that international collaboration, and internationalisation in general, are key tenets of many universities' core missions, the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings includes a metric which directly measures the proportion of a university's publications with international co-authorship. As well as this direct impact on a university's rank, international collaboration can also impact performance in other metrics, such as the highly weighted citations and research reputation metrics.

Whilst the importance and desirability of international collaboration are well established, the underlying factors used by academics to identify collaborators is not widely researched.

This report therefore details findings from THE's Consultancy team who undertook an online survey of 9,606 research-active academics from around the world. The report includes findings related to academics' opinions and perspectives of the enablers of international research collaborations, assessing research reputation, barriers to international research collaboration and assessing the effectiveness of research collaborations.

PROPORTION OF PUBLICATIONS WITH INTERNATIONAL CO-AUTHORSHIP OVER TIME

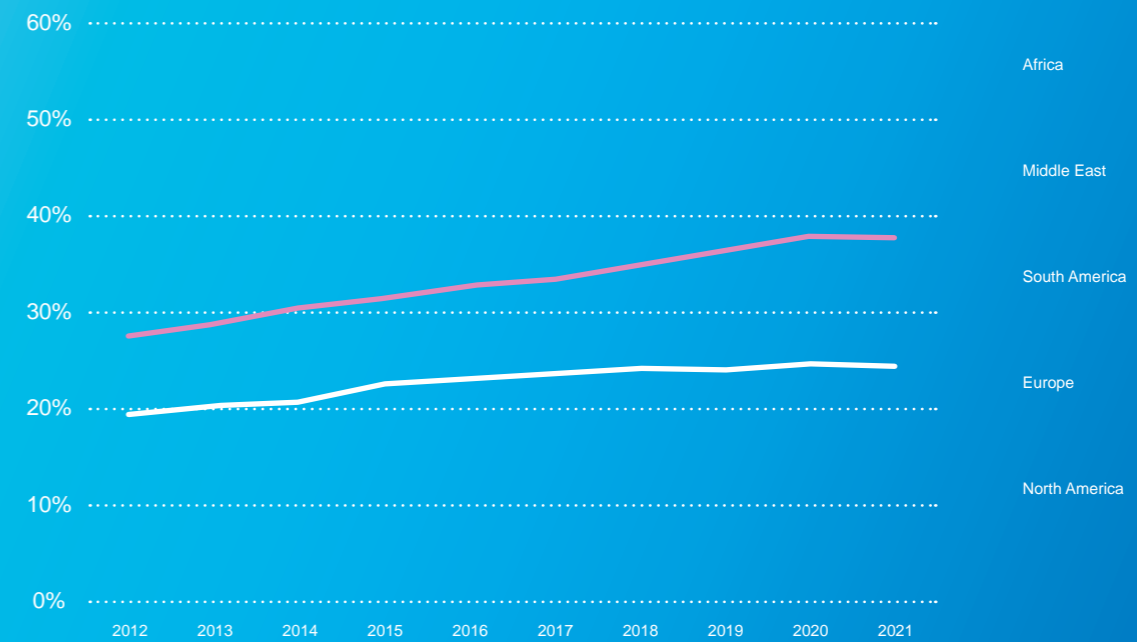


Figure 1

ENABLERS OF INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS

research were published prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, during which those in academia – and almost all fields – were forced to conduct work at a distance. These experiences may have broadened horizons in how academics view the importance of geographical proximity in establishing new partnerships. If geographical proximity is becoming less of a consideration, there may be greater possibilities for researchers to forge collaborations with partners who are further afield.

Effective activities for creating new collaborations

When asked about activities which are effective in creating new research collaborations, academics in our survey prioritised the importance of personal relationships over formal networks.

ASSESSING RESEARCH REPUTATION

Scholarly reputation can be defined as ‘the overall judgment of a scholar’s standing, based on their research and impact on the field as determined by experts in that field.’ The concept of scholarly reputation is a much discussed topic and, as discussed in the previous chapter, among the top three most important considerations for academics when identifying potential collaborators. What is less well understood is what factors academics take into account when forming that judgment.

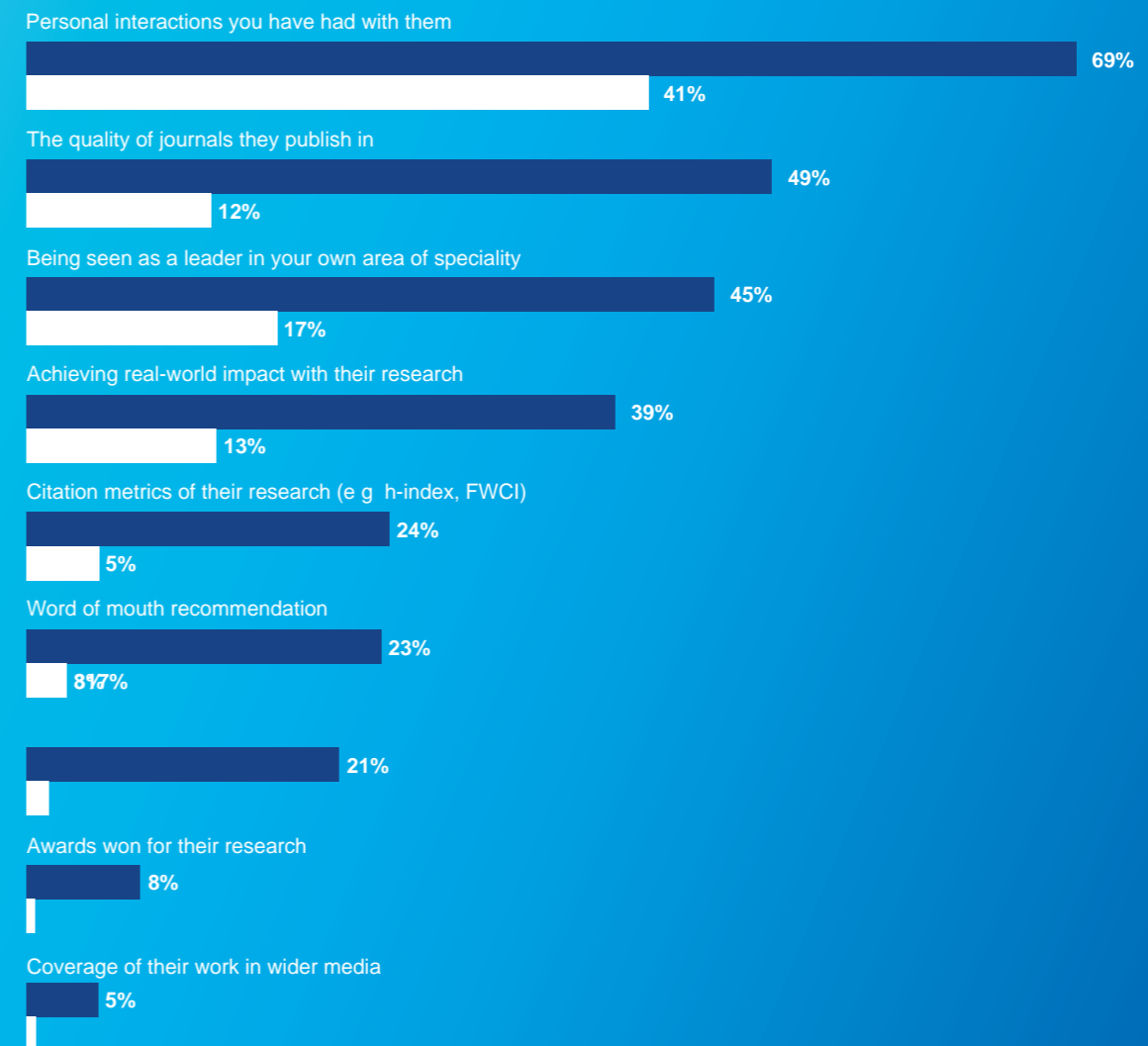
In our survey, 69% of academics selected personal interactions with individual researchers as being of importance in forming that judgment, with 41% citing this as the single most important factor. This gives rise to the importance of direct interactions with scholars through activities such as conferences to showcase expertise and impact.

Interestingly, almost half (49%) of academics use the quality of journals that researchers publish in (‘journal prestige’) as being important to forming judgments about scholarly reputation, with 12% citing this as the most important factor. This may come as a surprise following sustained efforts in recent years to lessen the so-called ‘prestige economy’ in academic publishing, which some blame for rising subscription and open access costs at top journals and the marginalisation of research published outside big-name titles.⁵ Indeed, taking the field of business and management as an example, research by Haley and colleagues showed that a majority of members of the Association of Management believe that journal rankings and impact factors probably did not reflect journal quality or scholarly impact yet are still widely used to evaluate faculty contributions.⁶

Our data also reveals that research reputation among academics in Africa, Asia and South America is more based on tangible, hard metrics such as quality of publications, citations, awards, and media coverage, whereas soft indicators like interpersonal communication and word of mouth recommendation hold much more value in Europe, Oceania and North America.

MOST INFLUENTIAL FACTORS WHEN FORMING OPINION ABOUT RESEARCH REPUTATION OF INDIVIDUAL RESEARCHERS

Figure 6



SECTION 4

ASSESSING THE SUCCESS OF RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS

As discor 6500 32 144.0557 644.4883 T32 1.-nnJ0 0 5 304. 644.

CONCLUSION

Academic research is becoming ever more international,

