



Elsevier Research Intelligence

# Usage Guidebook

Version 1.01 | March 2015

# Contents

---

<b>1. Usage as a data source</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1 The importance of research intelligence based on multiple data sources	4
1.2 Why are usage metrics valuable?	5
1.2.1 Optimal decisions recognise that research is multi-faceted	5
1.2.2 Usage metrics are complementary to other types of research metrics	5
1.2.3 Viewing activity can occur as soon as research is available online	5
1.2.4 Usage reflects engagement of the whole research community	5
1.2.5 Not all research is published with the expectation of being cited	5
1.3 What if different data sources give different messages?	7
<b>2. Usage data and metrics</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1 Usage data sources	8
2.2 Anonymized usage data	8
2.3 What do usage data mean?	10
2.4 Which usage events are included?	10
<b>3. Selection of the appropriate usage source</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>4. Selection of appropriate metrics</b>	<b>12</b>
4.1 Clarity on the question being asked	12
4.2 Factors besides performance that affect the value of a metric	13
4.2.1 Do I need to address these factors?	13
4.2.2 Discipline	14
4.2.3 Database coverage	16
4.2.4 Manipulation	16
<b>5. Usage metrics</b>	<b>17</b>
5.1 Metric: Views Count	18
5.2 Metric: Views per Publication	20
5.3 Metric: Field-Weighted Views Impact	22

# Foreword

---

**Usage data are generated when requests are made for online scholarly information. These data hold intelligence about the interest in research outputs, and are an important piece of the jigsaw puzzle that builds up to a complete picture of the impact of research on academia and society.**

**Usage data are especially exciting for other reasons as well:**

- They begin to accumulate as soon as an output is available online, and are more immediate than citation activity, so that an emerging trend or research talent may be more quickly spotted than via citation activity
- They reflect the interest of the whole research community, including undergraduate and graduate students, and researchers operating in the corporate sector, who tend not to publish and cite and who are “hidden” from citation-based metrics
- They can help to demonstrate the impact of research that is published with the expectation of being read rather than extensively cited, such as clinical and arts and humanities research

The availability of online usage data is a relatively recent phenomenon, and research metrics derived from usage data are not yet commonplace. Usage-based insights into impact are less familiar than insights based on publication and citation data, and funding awards data, and there are questions that have not yet been answered.

This Guidebook provides information about usage data and metrics to answer some of your questions, and to help you to start to include this intelligence in the picture that you build of the impact of research. But of course, using such information will stimulate more questions, and we do not have all the answers yet.

We are very much looking forward to working with you to learn about the new insights you can gain from this innovative information, and to answer some of the open questions.

I hope that you find this Guidebook useful, and perhaps even interesting.

**Dr Lisa Colledge**  
Elsevier  
March 2015

# 1. Usage as a data source

## 1.1 The importance of research intelligence based on multiple data sources

Research intelligence aims to understand, as completely as possible, an entity's impact on the world. This entity may be, for example, a single publication or a set of several publications, a researcher or a team or network, a research area, an institution or a country, or the research financed by a particular funder. Whatever the entity is, its total impact is multi-dimensional<sup>1</sup>, and is the combination of many different outputs and outcomes, such as productivity, frequency with which it has been read and cited, generation of intellectual property and spin-out companies that employ people in the region, and impact on society. This is illustrated in Figure 1.

Data sources alone will never be enough to tell the whole story. Human judgment is essential to supplement and interpret the intelligence that is present in the data. Understanding the total impact of research, on both the research community and on society, can be seen as a jigsaw puzzle, with quantitative inputs forming some of the pieces, and qualitative inputs forming others. All of the pieces are needed to see the complete picture, but a good impression can be gained from having several pieces in place, even if there are a few gaps.

We aim to make the quantitative section of that jigsaw puzzle as complete as possible, and to expand the range of data sources that we offer. Research encompasses many activities: publishing novel contributions, reading and citing, producing raw data and sharing it with others, collaborating within and between academia and business, building up a reputation and being considered an authority, and providing benefits to society outside the world of academia. These outputs and outcomes also act as a means of attracting talent and securing funding.

Usage data is generated by those who access electronic research publications. They visit a database of publications, and select and view information about their question or interest. These actions are captured by the database and form a data source called "usage data". Usage data is associated with different types of databases, such as commercial, institutional, and disciplinary, and these are all rich sources of intelligence about how research literature is being consumed.

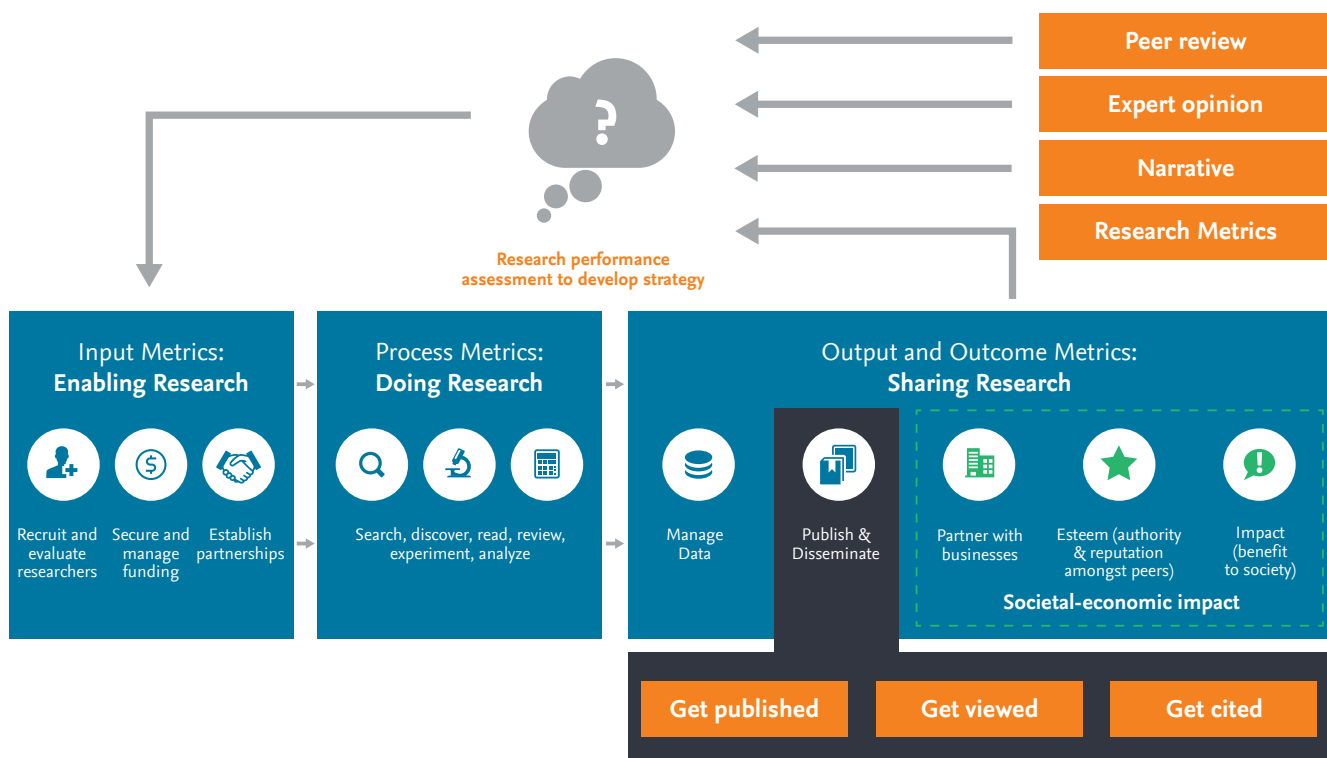


Figure 1 Research workflow. The impact of an entity, whether a single publication, a researcher, an institution, or the research financed by a particular funder, for example, is multi-dimensional, and can best be understood by combining metrics measuring a combination of inputs, processes, and outputs and outcomes. Usage data are generated by those who view electronic publications ("Get viewed"). Quantitative input should always be interpreted using judgment, and complemented by qualitative input.

1: J. Bollen, H. Van de Sompel, A. Hagberg, and R. Chute, A Principal Component Analysis of 39 Scientific Impact Measures (2009), *PLoS ONE* 4(6): e6022. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0006022.

---

## 1.2 Why are usage metrics valuable?

### 1.2.1 Optimal decisions recognise that research is multi-faceted

There are many ways in which research can be considered excellent: for instance, it may be well cited, but it may also receive few citations and yet be well read. Optimal decisions about research performance will likely draw on the widest base of information possible, and use both qualitative and quantitative input.

Quantitative input is the most reliable when it is based on metrics that draw on a combination of data types, such as usage, publication and citation, collaboration, altmetrics, funding / awards information, and so on (see Figure 1). All of these pieces of information are complementary; usage data can reveal everything that has been viewed, and citation data represent a selection that the author of a publication has chosen to make. Combining them tells the most complete story, and can best support decision-making processes.

### 1.2.2 Usage metrics are complementary to other types of research metrics

The initial reaction to new research, the influence it goes on to develop, and its ultimate use by others in their own research is a complex phenomenon that cannot be adequately measured by a single criterion. Metrics drawn from multiple data sources reflect different types of behavior, with different motivations underpinning them, and all may be important in their own right.

Viewing activity, that produces usage data, is sometimes considered only in terms of how well it can predict citation activity. However, citations should not be seen as the leading research outcome against which all other behavior is to be compared. Viewing activity is important in its own right, and not only in relation to citation activity (see Box 1).

### 1.2.3 Viewing activity can occur as soon as research is available online

Viewing activity is typically detected before citations start to be received (Figure 2). Viewing metrics provide an early indication of interest in an output, or set of outputs. An emerging trend, or “hot topic” in research, or a new talent, may be more quickly spotted via viewing activity, since it is more immediate than citation activity. This does not mean, however, that only research that has recently become available is viewed. An analysis of subscribed ScienceDirect full-text usage demonstrates that older publications continue to be well used.

### 1.2.4 Usage reflects engagement of the whole research community

Non-publishing – and hence non-citing or cited – users are estimated to constitute one-third of the research community<sup>2</sup>. This includes large numbers of undergraduate and graduate students, as well as researchers operating in the corporate sector. By incorporating demand from these users, which is “hidden” from citation-based approaches, usage-based metrics may provide a more representative indication of how research publications perform. This takes us a step closer to measuring scholarly influence on the entire research and student community.

### 1.2.5 Not all research is published with the expectation of being cited

Clinical research is primarily aimed at practitioners who are working with patients. These practitioners tend to read voraciously to stay up to date with new clinical advances so that they can offer their patients the best care, but they are less likely to publish original research themselves. They may eventually be cited in reviews, but this type of clinical research may be poorly cited, but very well viewed and / or read. Viewing activity may be more appropriate than citations as an indicator of impact in these disciplines.

Researchers in Arts & Humanities usually do not publish frequently, tend not to include long reference lists in publications, and their output may be of local or regional interest. The volume of citations, or citation potential, is therefore low. This should not necessarily be interpreted as the research being poor, but as a reflection of the behavior inherent in this field. Citations may not be the most useful indicator of impact in these cases, but the amount of interest in these outputs could still be significant, and this may be better measured by viewing activity based on usage data.

<sup>2</sup>: D.J.S. Price and S. Gürsey, Studies in Scientometrics I. Transience and continuance in scientific authorship (1976), *International Forum on Information and Documentation*, 1(2), 17-24; and C. Tenopir and W. King, Towards electronic journals: Realities for scientists, librarians, and publishers (2000), Washington, DC: Special Libraries Association.

### Box 1: Relationship between viewing and citation activities

Viewing and citation statistics reflect different types of behavior, with different motivations underpinning them. Both are important in their own right, rather than only as predictors of each other. If there is any relationship between viewing and citation activities, it should be considered as a cycle: the influence of viewing on citation, and the influence of citation on viewing.

Table 1 shows the disciplinary correlation between full-text downloads and citations at the journal level. It is based on download counts received in the year of publication, and citation counts in the third year after publication. Correlation indicates the relationship between two sets of data, but does not necessarily mean that one causes the other; it is possible that there are one or more additional factors involved. The extent of correlation, between downloads and citations, depends on the discipline, and, while the research did not have access to sufficient information about the user and reader populations to rigorously test the reasons for this variable correlation, the authors of this research suggest that:

- Disciplines in which the correlation is high, such as Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, tend to be specialized, and the author and the reader populations tend to coincide
- Disciplines in which the correlation is lower may have a reader population that is much broader than the publishing (cited and citing) research community. This would include readers interested in humanities and social science research from outside these disciplines, and practitioners using technical information from engineering and nursing journals

Correlation (Pearson's R)	Disciplines		
Over 0.65	Agricultural and Biological Sciences Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Business Chemical Engineering Chemistry Decision Sciences	Economics and Finance Engineering Immunology Materials Science Mathematics Medicine	Neuroscience Nursing Pharmacology Veterinary Science
0.40 to 0.65	Computer Science Dentistry Earth Sciences	Energy Environmental Science Physics and Astronomy	Psychology Social Sciences
Below 0.40	Arts and Humanities	Health Professions	

Table 1 Disciplinary correlation between full-text downloads and citation data at the journal level<sup>3</sup>.

This publication goes on to note that there is more variance in the correlation between downloads and citations at the level of individual publications. In an applied science journal, the citation counts of highly downloaded articles (>2,000 downloads) showed a strong scatter, and the journal contained highly downloaded papers which were not highly cited. Similarly, a case study of the journal *Tetrahedron Letters*<sup>4</sup> found no statistical evidence of a relationship between early full-text downloads of a publication, and the citations it subsequently received. However, more of the highly cited publications than would be expected were also highly downloaded, leading to the hypothesis that a small group of publications that were both highly downloaded and cited were responsible for driving the apparent correlation. The correlation between usage and citations is also greatly reduced when only non-English language journals are investigated<sup>5</sup>.

Citations also correlate with increased usage. The case study of *Tetrahedron Letters*, for instance, found that during the 3 months after receiving a citation, the number of full-text downloads received by a publication increased by 25% compared to what would be expected if the citation had not been received<sup>3</sup>.

3: Table 1 is based on Figure 6 in G. Halevi and H.F. Moed, Usage patterns of scientific journals and their relationship with citations (2014), *Proceedings of the science and technology indicators conference 2014 Leiden*, p241-251.

4: H.F. Moed, Statistical relationships between downloads and citations at the level of individual documents within a single journal (2005), *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 56(10), 1088-1097.

5: V.P. Guerrero-Bote and F. Moya-Aneón, Downloads versus citations and the role of publication language (2014), *Research Trends* 37, available at <http://www.researchtrends.com/issue-37-june-2014/downloads-versus-citations-and-the-role-of-publication-language/>

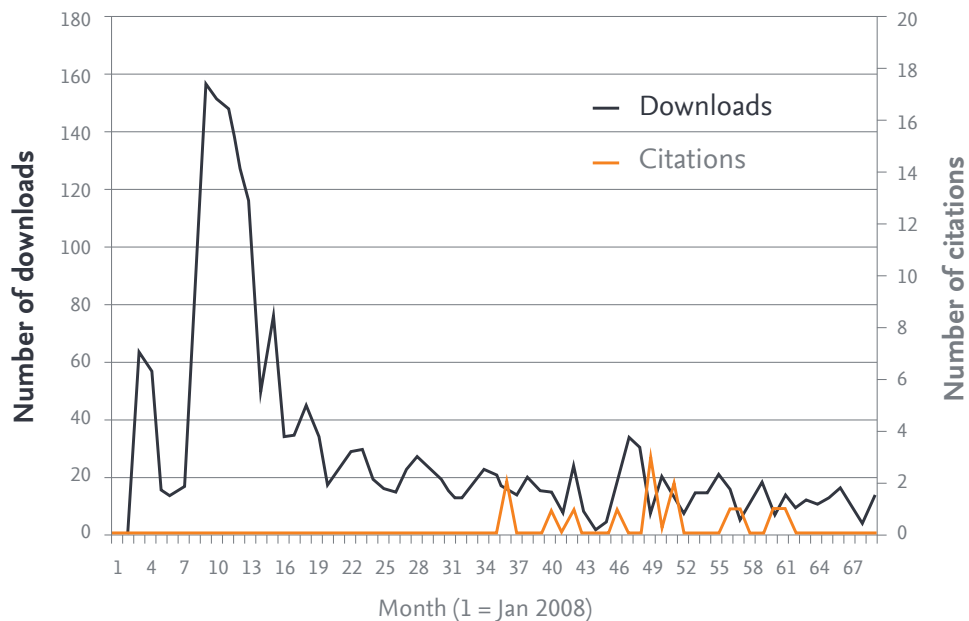


Figure 2 Usage data accumulates quickly, and is a more immediate indicator of attention than citation data<sup>6</sup>. The chart shows the example of one publication whose corrected proof appeared online on 4 March 2008 (month 3 in the figure), and whose corrected paginated proof appeared online on 22 August 2008 (month 8).

### 1.3 What if different data sources give different messages?

The data sources underpinning research metrics are based on the day-to-day activities of researchers, students, and readers, and therefore offer useful windows into behavior and trends. **Distinct metrics often reinforce each other's message, giving a high degree of confidence in the analysis and conclusions.** Extra confidence due to this reinforcing effect may be especially warranted when the metrics are calculated from distinct data sources.

There will be other situations in which metrics, whether from the same or distinct data sources, appear to give conflicting information. A common reaction is that one or other data source must be incorrect, but this can be a valuable signal that further investigation would be useful. Research metrics only reflect what is present in the data produced by the research community itself, and so a more productive approach is to try to understand the reason for the apparent discrepancy. For instance:

- If there is **high usage but little or no citation activity**, is this because too little time has passed since publication for citations to have accumulated in this discipline? Or is this a discipline where citations are not to be expected?
- If there is **citation activity but no or little usage**, is this because the usage cannot be captured in the data source that is being viewed? This would be the case when using ScienceDirect usage data for publications that are not included in a journal published by Elsevier and that are therefore not available on ScienceDirect. This could be addressed by selecting Scopus usage instead

**Research metrics alone will never be enough to provide a complete picture, and human judgment and other sources of insight are essential to supplement and interpret the intelligence that is present in the data.**

<sup>6</sup>: Figure 2 is based on work conducted for the following paper, and is reproduced with permission: G. Halevi and H.F. Moed, Usage patterns of scientific journals and their relationship with citations (2014), *Proceedings of the science and technology indicators conference 2014 Leiden*, p241-251.

## 2. Usage data and metrics

---

### 2.1 Usage data sources

The usage metrics in Elsevier's tools draw on anonymized usage data from our commercial databases ScienceDirect<sup>7</sup> and Scopus<sup>8</sup>. All ScienceDirect and Scopus usage data are COUNTER-compliant, and are audited every year: "COUNTER (Counting Online Usage of Networked Electronic Resources) is an international initiative serving librarians, publishers and intermediaries by setting standards that facilitate the recording and reporting of online usage statistics in a consistent, credible and compatible way"<sup>9</sup>.

Scopus is the world's largest abstract and citation database, and delivers a comprehensive overview of global research output. [Scopus indexes content from over 5,000 publishers, including Elsevier, and its usage data offer the optimal representation of what is being viewed across multiple publishers.](#) Its content is determined by the independent and international Scopus Content Selection and Advisory Board<sup>10</sup>. See [Box 2](#) for more information about the content of Scopus.

ScienceDirect, Elsevier's leading information solution for researchers, contains global, peer-reviewed, full-text content published by Elsevier. Users can view Elsevier's final version of a publication. [ScienceDirect usage is driven by Elsevier-published content that is being viewed globally.](#) The Research4Life<sup>11</sup> program ensures that electronic usage from developing countries is reflected in the counts. The content available online via ScienceDirect also continues to be available in print, and usage of coffee table print journals, for instance, cannot be captured. See [Figure 3](#) for more information about the content of ScienceDirect.

The relationship between Scopus and ScienceDirect is illustrated in [Figure 4](#).

### 2.2 Anonymized usage data

The metrics that Elsevier produces are anonymized. They do not provide any information about what a particular institution's users are viewing, and it is not possible to see the usage of a particular customer. For instance:

- [SciVal](#)<sup>12</sup> displays information about the total views that an institution's publications have received. This can be sliced by country and sector (academic, corporate, government, or medical). This global usage includes the institution's own views, but also the views from all other institutions in the world. You can see what is being viewed, but not who is responsible for the viewing
- [My Research Dashboard](#)<sup>13</sup> allows researchers to immediately see the impact of their research in terms of what is being downloaded, shared, and cited, and the country and discipline of viewers. Researchers can see which type of users are viewing their output and how often, but not the institution to which these users are affiliated

---

7: <http://www.elsevier.com/online-tools/sciencedirect>

8: <http://www.elsevier.com/online-tools/scopus>

9: <http://www.projectcounter.org/>

10: <http://www.elsevier.com/online-tools/scopus/content-overview#scopus-content-selection-and-advisory-board>

11. Elsevier was one of the six founding publishers of Research4Life, which provides more than 6,000 institutions in more than 100 developing countries with free or low-cost access to the latest peer-reviewed online content: <http://www.research4life.org/>

12: <http://www.elsevier.com/online-tools/research-intelligence/products-and-services/scival>

13: <http://www.elsevier.com/editors/journal-and-article-metrics#my-research-dashboard>



## Box 2: Scopus content

Scopus is the world's largest abstract and citation database, and contains information on global research across all disciplines: science, mathematics, engineering, technology, health and medicine, social sciences, and arts and humanities. Scopus content covers:

### Journals

- Over 21,000 titles from more than 5,000 international publishers (see the journal title list<sup>14</sup>)
- This includes more than 2,800 gold open access journals
- More than 365 trade publications are indexed
- Articles-in-press are available from more than 3,750 journals and publishers

### Books

- Almost 70,000 stand-alone books (see the book title list<sup>14</sup>), with more than 75,000 expected during 2015 through the Books Expansion Project<sup>15</sup>
- More than 420 book series

### Conference papers

- Approximately 6.5 million conference papers from over 17,000 worldwide events, including
  - High energy physics from the inSPIRE database<sup>16</sup>
  - Computer science conferences and workshops from the DBLP Computer Science Bibliography<sup>17</sup>
- Society meetings including the IEEE, American Chemical Society (ACS), Association for Computing Machinery (ACM), Society of Petroleum Engineers (SPE), The Minerals, Metals & Materials Society (TMS), American Geophysical Union (AGU), European Society of Cardiology (ESC), International Society for Chemotherapy (ISC), American Society for Information Security (ASIS), Japan Society of Mechanical Engineers (JSME), and many more

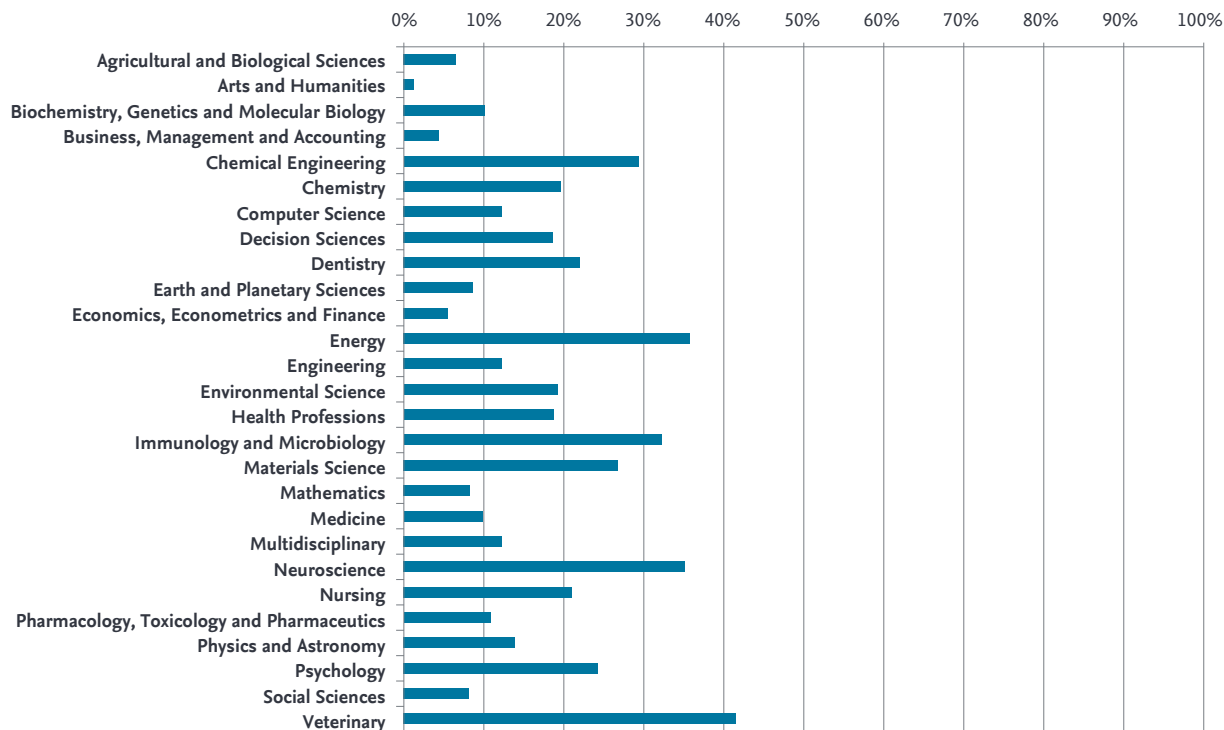


Figure 3 ScienceDirect content coverage. ScienceDirect content (articles and reviews only) is shown as a percentage of Scopus content within the Scopus subject classification, for the period 2010-2014. Analysis was performed using data from 16 December 2014.

14: Scopus' journal and book title lists are available at <http://www.elsevier.com/online-tools/scopus/content-overview>

15: <http://blog.scopus.com/posts/scopus-content-update-books-expansion-project>

16: [http://inspirehep.net/search?ln=en&cc=Conferences&p=&action\\_search=Search](http://inspirehep.net/search?ln=en&cc=Conferences&p=&action_search=Search)

17: <http://www.informatik.uni-trier.de/~ley/db/conf/indexa.html>

---

## 2.3 What do usage data mean?

The common feature of all types of usage activity is that a user makes a request to a service for a particular piece of scholarly information<sup>18</sup>. This request may be made for a variety of reasons which are unknown by the service that records the request: perhaps they are referring to a reading list, or a colleague has just published or informed them about something; perhaps they were intrigued by the title of the publication and requested it to see whether it was of interest (and it may or may not have been); or perhaps they intend to read the information and incorporate it into their own research (and may or may not eventually do so). The most that we can say is that **usage reflects an interest or need for particular information**.

## 2.4 Which usage events are included?

SciVal aims to give the most complete picture of the viewing activity within a particular research area. Therefore, it does not attempt to distinguish between different “types” of requests for information, and includes the following usage events:

- Scopus – the sum of abstract views, and clicks on the link to view full-text at the publisher’s website. These events cover all views from both commercial and trial customers
- ScienceDirect – the sum of abstract and full-text views. Full-text views comprise PDF downloads, HTML requests, Mobipocket downloads<sup>19</sup>, and ePub downloads<sup>20</sup>. These events cover all views from commercial customers, trial customers, guests, learned society accounts, and Research4Life<sup>11</sup>
  - Activity from ClinicalKey<sup>21</sup> and Health Advance<sup>22</sup> is not included
  - Activity that is generated by Elsevier’s internal editorial processes, such as by journal editors and reviewers using online tools, is not included

My Research Dashboard<sup>13</sup> aims to provide researchers with the latest usage and citation activity for their publications. It helps researchers to showcase their output by providing early details about: how their publications are being downloaded in ScienceDirect, shared in Mendeley<sup>23</sup>, and, according to Scopus, how they are being cited; metrics about the country and disciplinary distribution of their readers; detailed information about the search terms used in ScienceDirect to find their publications; and comparative metrics in relation to similar publications. The usage metrics draw on ScienceDirect usage data and show counts of full-text views, which comprise PDF downloads, HTML requests, Mobipocket downloads<sup>19</sup> and Epub downloads<sup>20</sup>. These events cover all views from commercial customers, trial customers, guests, learned society accounts, and Research4Life.

---

18. M. J. Kurtz, M.J., & J. Bollen, “Usage Bibliometrics” (2010) *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology* 44 (1), pp. 3–64.

19. Mobipocket produces an e-book reader for mobile phones, personal digital devices, and desktop operating systems.

20. ePub is an open distribution format standard for digital publications, developed by the International Digital Publishing Forum.

21. <http://www.elsevier.com/elsevier-products/clinicalkey>

22. <http://www.elsevier.com/editors/publishing-platforms#health-advance>

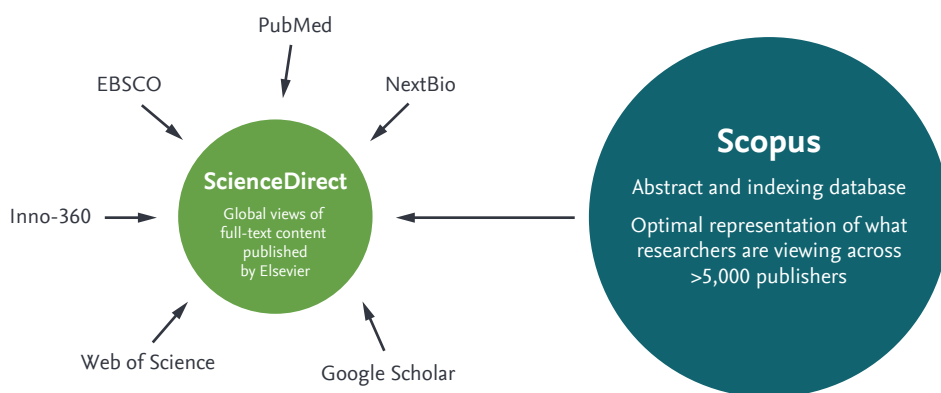
23. <http://www.elsevier.com/online-tools/mendeley/about>

### 3. Selection of the appropriate usage source

SciVal offers both Scopus and ScienceDirect usage data, and users can select the data source from which usage metrics are calculated. This section highlights differences between usage data from Scopus and ScienceDirect to assist this selection; the relationship between them is illustrated in Figure 4.

- Scopus indexes content from over 5,000 publishers, including Elsevier, and its usage data offer the optimal representation of what is being viewed across multiple publishers. See Box 2 for more information about the content of Scopus
- ScienceDirect usage is driven by Elsevier-published content that is being viewed globally. The content of other publishers is not available on this platform. See Figure 3 for more information about the content of ScienceDirect

Figure 4 Relationship between Scopus and ScienceDirect. Scopus drives usage to ScienceDirect, along with many other search and discovery platforms. The platforms shown are illustrative only, and are not intended to be an exhaustive list.



Usage data collected since	2000	2004
Content	Full-text content published by Elsevier. See Figure 3	Journals, books and conference papers from > 5,000 publishers globally. See Box 2
Type of usage (see section 2.4)	Abstract views Full-text downloads	Abstract views Links to publisher to view full text
Organization-type of user base. See Figure 5	>90% academic	>90% academic

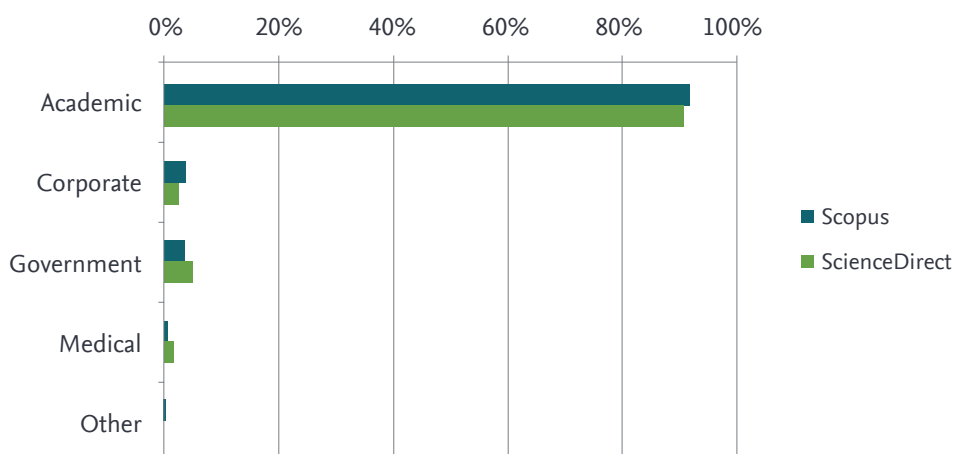


Figure 5 Scopus and ScienceDirect usage activity by organization-type. Data are based on activity from January-September 2014.

## 4. Selection of appropriate metrics

---

This topic has been covered in detail in section 4 of the SciVal Metrics Guidebook<sup>24</sup>, and is not repeated in its entirety here. Key points are detailed, together with additional information relevant to usage data.

The aim of using research metrics as an input into decision making is to complement qualitative inputs and increase confidence that the judgment is the optimal one. Elsevier offers a range of research metrics from which to select, and appropriate selection depends on two important factors:

- The question that is being asked
- Awareness of other factors, beyond performance, that can influence the value of a metric. These may or may not be important in the context of the question being asked

### 4.1 Clarity on the question being asked

The types of questions asked typically fall into three groups:

- **Evaluation of performance**, such as is conducted by a national body on its research institutions for the purposes of allocating national funding, or by a line manager to provide input into career development discussions. It is important in these situations that variables besides differences in performance are accounted for to ensure that the assessment is fair. It would not be advisable to compare a research group in chemistry with one in immunology using metrics that do not take into account the tendency for higher output and citation rates in immunology, for instance
- **Demonstration of excellence**, such as in support of an application for competitive funding, or for promotional purposes to attract post-graduate students to a research institution. The aim in these situations is typically to find a way to showcase a particular entity, and a user may be able to benefit from the factors besides performance that affect a metric. For instance, a large institution may choose to use one of the “Power metrics” that tend to increase as an entity becomes bigger, whereas a small institution may prefer to use a size-normalized metric
- **Scenario modeling**, such as in support of the decision of which academic to recruit to an existing research team, or of how to structure a reorganization. The importance of factors besides performance that affect metrics may or may not be important, depending on the particular scenario that is being modeled

---

<sup>24</sup>: <http://www.elsevier.com/online-tools/research-intelligence/resource-library/resources/scival-metrics-guidebook>

---

## 4.2 Factors besides performance that affect the value of a metric

There are six factors, besides performance, that may affect the value of a metric:

- Size
- Discipline
- Publication-type
- Database coverage
- Manipulation
- Time

Discipline, database coverage and manipulation are considered further in this Guidebook. The reader is referred to the SciVal Metrics Guidebook<sup>24</sup> for information on the remainder.

### 4.2.1 Do I need to address these factors?

Sometimes **these factors may not need to be addressed at all, or may be used to advantage**. A large institution that is aiming to present its performance favorably in order to attract students may purposefully use a metric like Views Count that does not take size into consideration. This would not, however, be a suitable approach for the evaluation of entities of varying size.

**Metrics themselves may address some of these factors**, as summarized in Table 2. If metrics are being used to evaluate entities of different sizes, then using the size-normalized metric Views per Publication instead of Views Count would compensate for this difference. If these entities also have a very different disciplinary profile, then Field-Weighted Views Impact might be the preferable choice.

**The tools in which metrics are embedded may provide an answer**, even if the metric itself does not. Views per Publication, itself sensitive to disciplinary differences, could still provide a useful in evaluating institutions with distinct disciplinary profiles if functionality is used to “slice and dice” these institutions to a common disciplinary portion.

	Size-normalized?	Field-normalized?	Publication-type-normalized?	Resistant to database coverage?	Difficult to manipulate?	Time-independent?
Views Count						
Views per Publication						
Field-Weighted Views Impact						

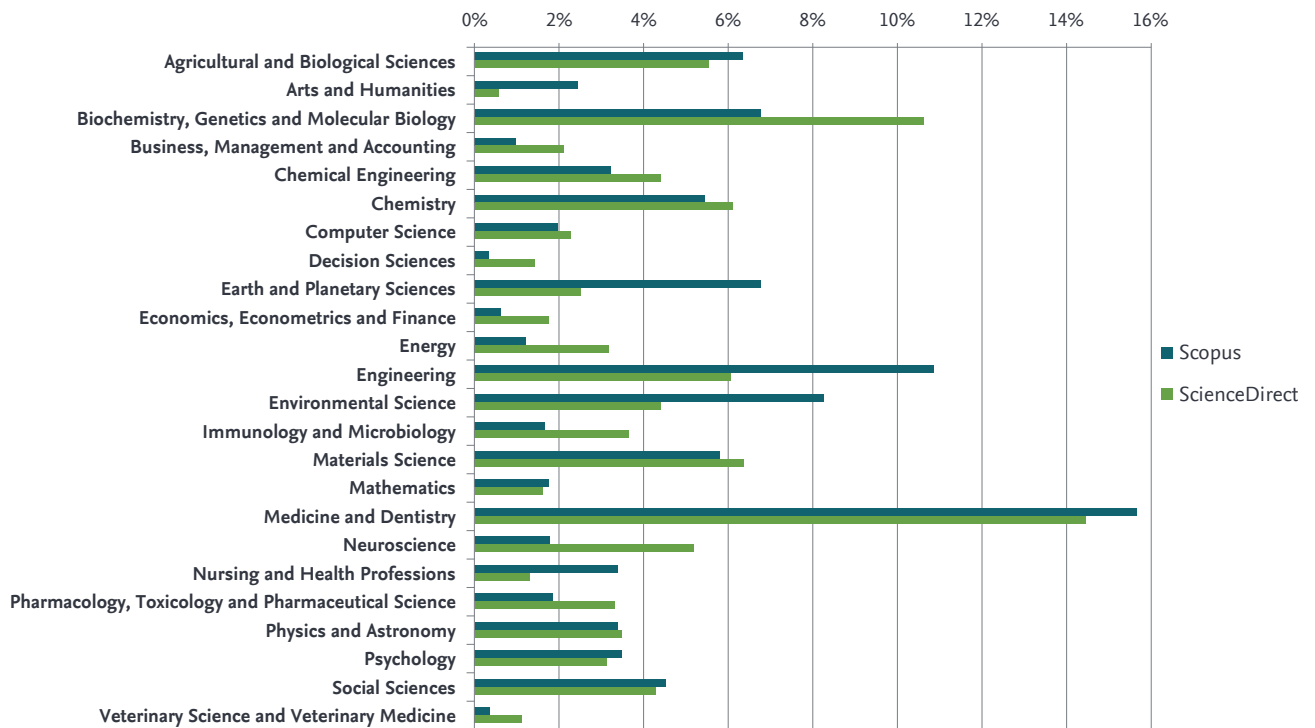
Table 2 Characteristics of usage metrics

#### 4.2.2 Discipline

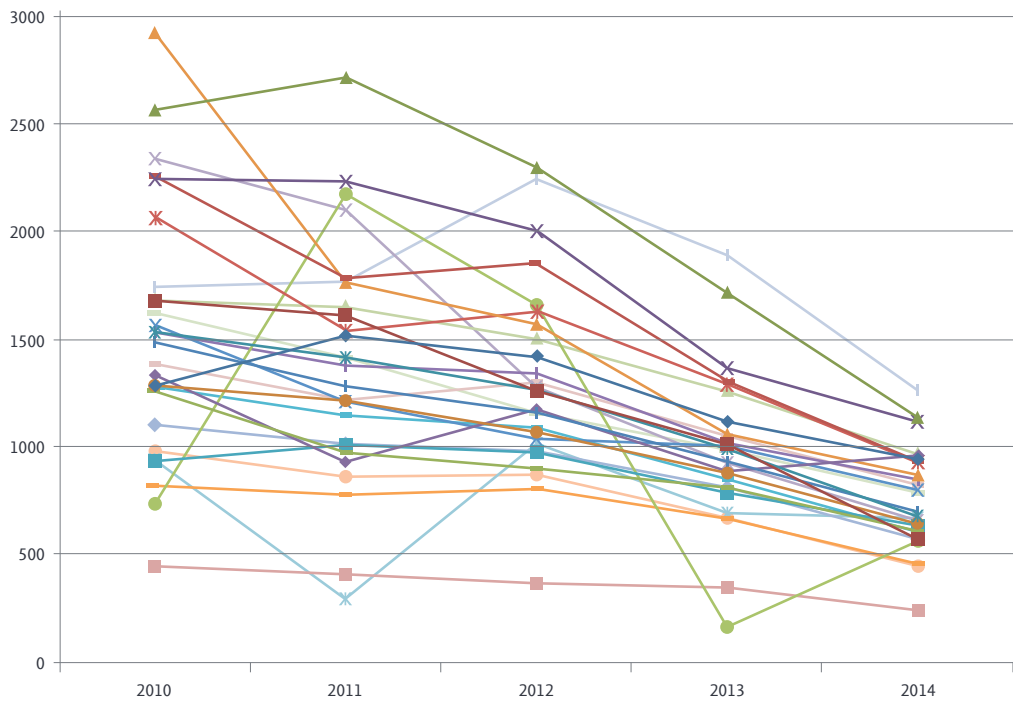
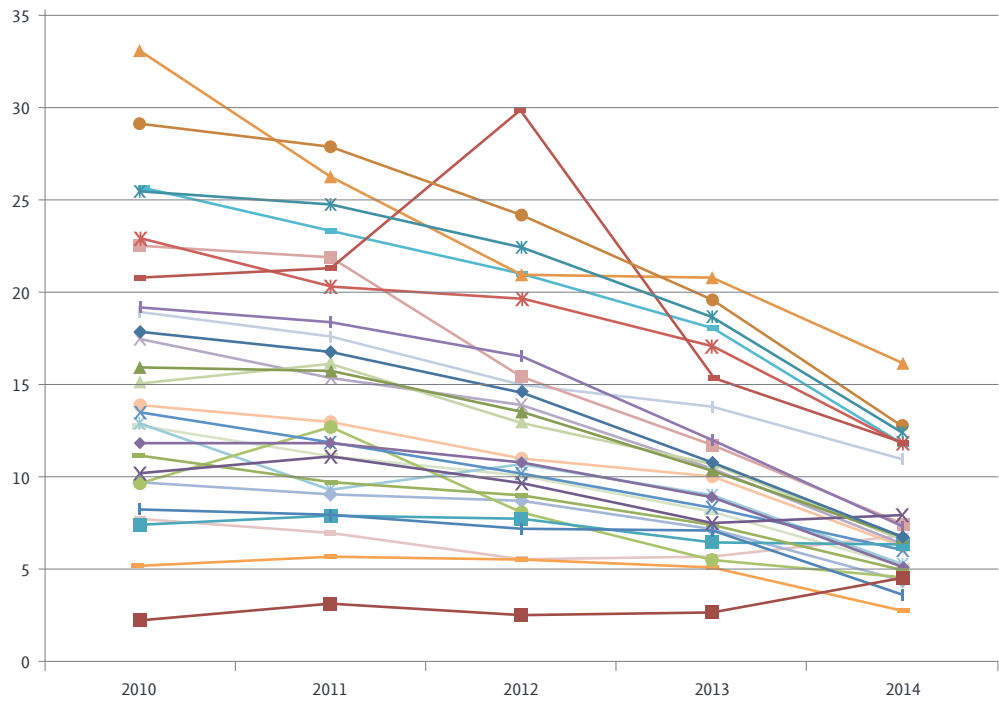
Academics working in different disciplines display distinct characteristics in their approach to, consumption of, and communication of research findings. These behavioral differences are not better or worse than each other, but are merely a fact associated with particular fields of research.

The volume of usage per discipline, in Scopus and ScienceDirect, is shown in [Figure 6a](#).

[Figure 6b](#) shows the average Views per Publication, per discipline. Values are smaller for recent years because publications that became available online in 2013 have had less time to be viewed than those that became available in 2010, and so have accumulated fewer total counts. The difference in magnitude of the metric between the two data sources reflects the difference in the total volume of usage data available.



[Figure 6a](#) shows the proportion of the total usage of Scopus and ScienceDirect, over the period January-September 2014, per discipline.



- Agricultural and Biological Sciences
- Arts and Humanities
- ▲— Biochemistry, Genetics and Molecular Biology
- ×— Business, Management and Accounting
- \*— Chemical Engineering
- Chemistry
- +— Computer Science
- Decision Sciences
- ▲— Dentistry
- Earth and Planetary Sciences
- Economics, Econometrics and Finance
- ×— Engineering
- \*— Environmental Science
- Health Professions
- ▲— Immunology and Microbiology
- Materials Science
- Mathematics
- +— Medicine
- ×— Multidisciplinary
- \*— Neuroscience
- ×— Nursing
- \*— Pharmacology, Toxicology and Pharmaceutics
- Physics and Astronomy
- +— Psychology
- Social Sciences
- ▲— Veterinary

Figure 6b shows Views per Publication per discipline calculated using Scopus usage data (top) and ScienceDirect usage data (bottom). Date of data cut was 16 December 2014.

---

#### 4.2.3 Database coverage

For information about the coverage of:

- Scopus, see section 2.1 and [Box 2](#)
- ScienceDirect, see section 2.1 and [Figure 3](#)

#### 4.2.4 Manipulation

Ease of manipulation of usage data is sometimes a concern in using it as an input for decision making. It is probably true that it is easier to manipulate usage data than citation data. This is another reason for drawing on multiple research metrics as input into your questions: it is much more difficult to manipulate the data underlying multiple metrics, especially if they are drawn from distinct data sets.

Moreover, there are industry guidelines in place to limit the effectiveness of attempted manipulation of usage data. Scopus and ScienceDirect usage data are COUNTER-compliant, and are audited every year. "COUNTER (Counting Online Usage of Networked Electronic Resources) is an international initiative serving librarians, publishers and intermediaries by setting standards that facilitate the recording and reporting of online usage statistics in a consistent, credible and compatible way"<sup>25</sup>. COUNTER have prepared clear guidelines in their Code of Practice<sup>26</sup> that address these concerns, and excerpts from this code are quoted here:

- "All users' double-clicks on an http-link should be counted as only 1 request. The time window for occurrence of a double-click should be set at **10 seconds** between the first and second mouse-click". There are a number of options to trace that a double-click is coming from one and the same user: IP-address, session-cookie, user-cookie or user name
- "The downloading and rendering of a PDF, image, video clip or audio clip may take longer than the rendering of an HTML page. Therefore requests by one and the same IP/username/session- or user cookie for one and the same PDF, image, video clip or audio clip should be counted as a single request if these multiple requests occur within a **30 seconds** time window. These multiple requests may also be triggered by pressing a refresh or back button on the desktop by the user"
- "When two requests are made for one and the same article within the above time limits... the first request should be removed and the second retained. And additional requests for the same article within these time limits should be treated identically: always remove the first and retain the second." This means that the removal of double-clicks may occur over a longer period than the 10 or 30 seconds mentioned, since the timing of the latest click is always gauged relative to the most recent; 25 clicks made at 5 second intervals over a period of around 2 minutes will still be counted as 1 view

<sup>25</sup>: <http://www.projectcounter.org/>

<sup>26</sup>: <http://www.projectcounter.org/r4/COPR4.pdf>, page 25.



# 5. Usage metrics

This section covers the usage metrics that are currently available from Elsevier. It shares their method of calculation, situations in which they are useful, and situations in which care should be taken. It also suggests usage metrics that might be considered useful partners, either to address shortcomings of a particular metric, or to highlight information that is naturally complementary. These suggestions should not be taken as rules, but as guidelines that may sometimes be useful, and are summarized in [Table 3](#).

		... useful partner metrics are:		
		Views Count	Views per Publication	Field-Weighted Views Impact
For these metrics...	Views Count			
	Views per Publication			
	Field-Weighted Views Impact			

- Natural complementary partner metrics
- Communicate information about magnitude of metrics values
- Avoid display of viewing “dip” in recent years

Table 3 Suggested partner metrics

---

## 5.1 Metric: Views Count

Views Count indicates the total usage impact of an entity: how many views have this entity's publications received?

Views Count is a:

- Usage Impact metric
- “Power metric”: its value tends to increase as the size of the entity increases

Views Count may be displayed in a chart or table with months and / or years:

- In SciVal, the years show the date on which items became available online; this may be different to the official publication date. They do not refer to the years in which publications were viewed
- In My Research Dashboard, the months and years show when a publication was viewed

This metric is useful to:

- **Benchmark the views received by entities of similar size, and that fall into similar disciplines**, such as multidisciplinary institutions with a similar number of research staff, or international collaboration networks in similar disciplines
- **Showcase the performance of entities that are large** in comparison to a group of peers, when this metric is likely to give high numbers
- **Showcase the performance of entities that have published a few noticeably highly viewed publications** that will have a positive effect on the total for the entire data set
- **Give an early indication of interest in output** that has recently become available, for example in the very early stages of a new strategy, or of early-career researchers
- **Showcase the interest of the whole research community**, and not only the two-thirds who publish and therefore cite. The one-third which does not tend to publish includes large numbers of undergraduate and graduate students, as well as researchers operating in the corporate sector
- **Demonstrate interest in outputs produced in disciplines with low citation potential**, such as clinical research and the arts and humanities that are generally well read but poorly cited
- **Provide transparency** on the underlying data to build trust in research metrics

---

This metric should be used with care when:

- **Benchmarking the visibility of entities of obviously different sizes**, when this “Power metric” may most closely reflect entity size rather than differences in views received. Users are advised to use the size-normalized metrics Views per Publication or Field-Weighted Views Impact to compare the visibility of entities of different sizes
- **Benchmarking the usage of entities with distinct disciplinary profiles**. The average usage between disciplines is variable (see [Figure 6b](#)), and it is not advisable to use this metric to compare entities in distinct disciplines without accounting for these differences. When comparing entities made up of a mixture of disciplines, such as an Institution or an interdisciplinary Research Group, it is advised to apply a Research Area filter to focus on one field that is common between all the entities, or to select Field-Weighted Views Impact which will take this into account
- **Revealing the extent to which each of an entity’s outputs are viewed**, since one or a few publications with a very high number of views can conceal a sizeable body of unviewed or poorly viewed material
- **There may be gaps in output in the database coverage**
  - For Scopus usage, this will mainly apply when entities are small, and a single missing output may have a significant negative impact on apparent usage
  - For ScienceDirect, this will depend on the proportion of the entity’s outputs that are published in Elsevier titles (see [Figure 3](#))
  - The only way to account for this is to be vigilant; consider also limiting the use of Views Count to comparing larger data sets in the same discipline where gaps in the database coverage likely have a similar effect on all entities being viewed and do not invalidate the comparison
- **The people who will use the metrics do not like to see a trend that “dips” in recent years**. This typically happens with Views Count because the most recent outputs have had less time to receive views than older ones. Users are advised to use Field-Weighted Views Impact to avoid this drop, if it is of concern

Useful partner metrics are:

- **Views per Publication and Field-Weighted Views Impact**, which bring complementary perspectives on total views received. Both account for differences in the size of entities being compared, and Field-Weighted Views Impact also accounts for differences in viewing behavior between disciplines
- **Field-Weighted Views Impact** avoids the “dip” in recent years due to the most recent outputs having had less time to receive views than older ones

Views Count is calculated analogously to Citation Count. For a [worked example of the calculation underlying this metric](#), please see Example 3 in the SciVal Metrics Guidebook<sup>27</sup>.

27: [http://www.elsevier.com/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/184749/scival-metrics-guidebook-v1\\_01-february2014.pdf](http://www.elsevier.com/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/184749/scival-metrics-guidebook-v1_01-february2014.pdf), pages 56-57.

---

## 5.2 Metric: Views per Publication

Views per Publication indicates the average usage impact of an entity's publications: how many views have this entity's publications received on average?

Views per Publication is a:

- Usage Impact metric

Views per Publication may be displayed in a chart or table with months and / or years:

- In SciVal, the years show the date on which items became available online; this may be different to the official publication date. They do not refer to the years in which publications were viewed
- In My Research Dashboard, the months and years show when a publication was viewed

This metric is useful to:

- **Benchmark the average usage impact of publications** within a body of work or entity
- **Compare the average visibility of publications of entities of different sizes**, but in related disciplines, such as Researchers working in a similar Research Area
- **Showcase the performance of entities that have published a few highly viewed papers** that will have a positive effect on the average of the entire data set
- **Give an early indication of interest in output** that has recently become available, for example in the very early stages of a new strategy, or of early-career researchers
- **Showcase the engagement of the whole research community**, and not only the two-thirds who publish and therefore cite. The one-third which does not tend to publish includes large numbers of undergraduate and graduate students, as well as researchers operating in the corporate sector
- **Demonstrate interest in output produced in disciplines with low citation potential**, such as clinical research and the arts and humanities that are generally well read but poorly cited
- **Provide transparency** on the underlying data to build trust in research metrics

---

This metric should be used with care when:

- **Benchmarking the usage of entities with distinct disciplinary profiles.** The average usage between disciplines is variable (see [Figure 6b](#)), and it is not advisable to use this metric to compare entities in distinct disciplines without accounting for these differences. When comparing entities made up of a mixture of disciplines, such as an interdisciplinary collaboration network, it is advised to apply a Research Area filter to focus on one field that is common between all the entities, or to select Field-Weighted Views Impact which will take this into account
- **Revealing the extent to which each of an entity's outputs are viewed,** since one or a few publications with a very high number of views can conceal a sizeable body of unviewed or poorly viewed material
- **There may be gaps in output in the database coverage**
  - For Scopus usage, this will mainly apply when entities are small, and a single missing publication may have a significant negative impact on apparent usage
  - For ScienceDirect, this will depend on the proportion of the entity's publications that are published in Elsevier titles (see [Figure 3](#))
  - The only way to account for this is to be vigilant; consider also limiting the use of Views per Publication to comparing larger data sets in the same discipline where gaps in the database coverage likely have a similar effect on all entities being viewed and do not invalidate the comparison
- **Entities are small, such that the metric may fluctuate significantly and appear unstable** over time, even when there is complete database coverage. Views per Publication calculates an average value, and is strongly influenced by outlying publications in a small data set
- **The people who will use the metrics do not like to see a trend that “dips” in recent years.** This typically happens with Views per Publication because the most recent publications have had less time to receive views than older ones. Users are advised to use Field-Weighted Views Impact to avoid this drop, if it is of concern

Useful partner metrics are:

- **Field-Weighted Views Impact**, which is a natural complement to Views per Publication and takes into account behavioral differences between disciplines
- **Field-Weighted Views Impact** avoids the “dip” in recent years due to the most recent publications having had less time to receive views than older ones

Views per Publication is calculated analogously to Citations per Publication. For a [worked example of the calculation underlying this metric](#), please see Example 3 in the SciVal Metrics Guidebook<sup>28</sup>.

---

28: [http://www.elsevier.com/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/184749/scival-metrics-guidebook-v1\\_01-february2014.pdf](http://www.elsevier.com/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/184749/scival-metrics-guidebook-v1_01-february2014.pdf), pages 56-57.

---

### 5.3 Metric: Field-Weighted Views Impact

Field-Weighted Views Impact indicates how the number of views received by an entity's publications compares with the average number of views received by all other similar publications in the same data universe: how do the views received by this entity's publications compare with the world average for that database?

Similar publications are those publications in the database that have the same publication year, publication type, and discipline, as represented by the Scopus classification system.

- A Field-Weighted Views Impact of 1.00 indicates that the entity's publications have been viewed exactly as would be expected based on the global average for similar publications in the same database; the Field-Weighted Views Impact of "World", that is, of either the entire Scopus database or the entire ScienceDirect database, is 1.00
- A Field-Weighted Views Impact of more than 1.00 indicates that the entity's publications have been viewed more than would be expected based on the global average for similar publications in the same database; for example, 3.87 means 287% more viewed than world average within the same database
- A Field-Weighted Views Impact of less than 1.00 indicates that the entity's publications have been viewed less than would be expected based on the global average for similar publications in the same database; for example, 0.55 means 45% less cited than world average within the same database

Publications can be allocated to more than one category in the Scopus classification system. When we calculate the expected views for similar publications, it is important that these multi-category publications do not exert too much weight; for example, if a publication P belongs to both parasitology and microbiology, it should not have double the influence of a publication that belongs to only one or the other of these. This is accounted for in this metric calculation by distributing publication and views counts equally across multiple categories; publication P would be counted as 0.5 publications for each of parasitology and microbiology, and its views would also be shared equally between them.

Field-Weighted Views Impact is a:

- Usage Impact metric

Field-Weighted Views Impact may be displayed in a chart or table with months and / or years:

- In SciVal, the years show the date on which items became available online, this may be different to the official publication date. They do not refer to the years in which publications were viewed
- In My Research Dashboard, the months and years show when a publication was viewed

This metric is useful to:

- **Benchmark entities regardless of differences in their size, disciplinary profile, age, and publication-type composition**, such as an institution and departments within that institution
- **Easily understand the prestige of an entity's usage performance** by observing the extent to which its Field-Weighted Views Impact is above or below the world average of 1.00
- Present usage data in a way that **inherently takes into account the lower number of views received by relatively recent publications**, thus avoiding the dip in recent years seen with Views Count and Views per Publication

- 
- Gain insight into the **usage performance of an entity in a discipline with relatively poor database coverage**, since gaps in the database will apply equally to the entity's publications and to the set of similar publications
  - Use as a **default to view usage data**, since it takes into account multiple variables that can affect other metrics
  - **Give an early indication of the interest in output** that has recently become available, for example in the very early stages of a new strategy, or of early-career researchers
  - **Showcase the engagement of the whole research community**, and not only of the two-thirds who publish and therefore cite. The one-third which does not tend to publish includes large numbers of undergraduate and graduate students, as well as researchers operating in the corporate sector
  - **Demonstrate interest in output produced in disciplines with low citation potential**, such as clinical research and the arts and humanities that are generally well read but poorly cited

This metric should be used with care when:

- **Information about the magnitude of the number of views received by an entity's publications is important.** In these situations, it is advised to use Views Count or Views per Publication
- **Demonstrating excellent performance to those who prefer to see high numbers;** Views Count or Views per Publication would be more suitable in these circumstances
- **Entities are small, such that the metric may fluctuate significantly and appear unstable** over time, even when there is complete database coverage. Field-Weighted Views Impact calculates an average value, and is strongly influenced by outlying publications in a small data set
- **Trust needs to be built** in research metrics. This calculation accounts for multiple normalizations, and the generation of the average views for similar publications requires calculations on the entire database which will be difficult for a user to validate. Users are advised to select simpler metrics, such as Views Count or Views per Publication, if trust in the accuracy of the metrics calculations needs to be built
- **Completely answering every question about performance from a usage perspective.** Field-Weighted Views Impact is a very useful metric and accounts for several variables, but using it to the exclusion of other metrics severely restricts the richness and reliability of information that a user can draw on

Useful partner metrics are:

- **Views Count and Views per Publication.** They indicate the magnitude of the number of views received, to complement the relative view offered by Field-Weighted Views Impact. They are also simple and allow transparency on the underlying data to build trust in the accuracy of metric calculations

Field-Weighted Views Impact is calculated analogously to Field-Weighted Citation Impact. For a **worked example of the calculation underlying the metric**, please see Example 5 in the SciVal Metrics Guidebook<sup>29</sup>.

For the **mathematical notation of this metric**, please see page 63 of the SciVal Metrics Guidebook.

29: [http://www.elsevier.com/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/184749/scival-metrics-guidebook-v1\\_01-february2014.pdf](http://www.elsevier.com/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/184749/scival-metrics-guidebook-v1_01-february2014.pdf), pages 64-65.



For more information,  
please visit: [elsevier.com/research-intelligence](http://elsevier.com/research-intelligence)

03.15 MKT