Transforming Evidence

for policy and practice

What works and why in government-academic engagement?

An analysis of research-policy engagement initiatives and their impact

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We mapped the activities of:

428 organisations running ...

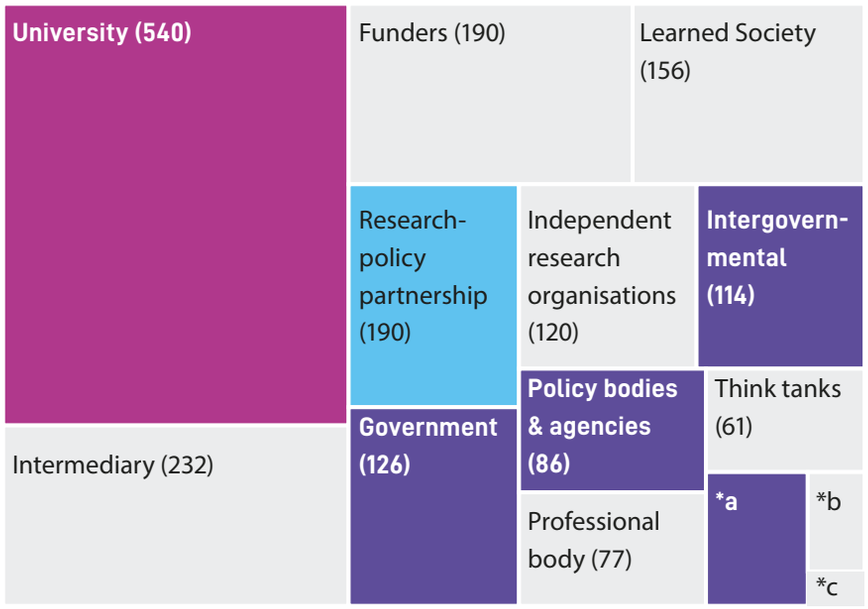
1922 research-policy engagement initiatives in over ...

41 countries worldwide

We identified 9 different research-policy engagement practices, that speak to three different ways of thinking about how to improve evidence use in government

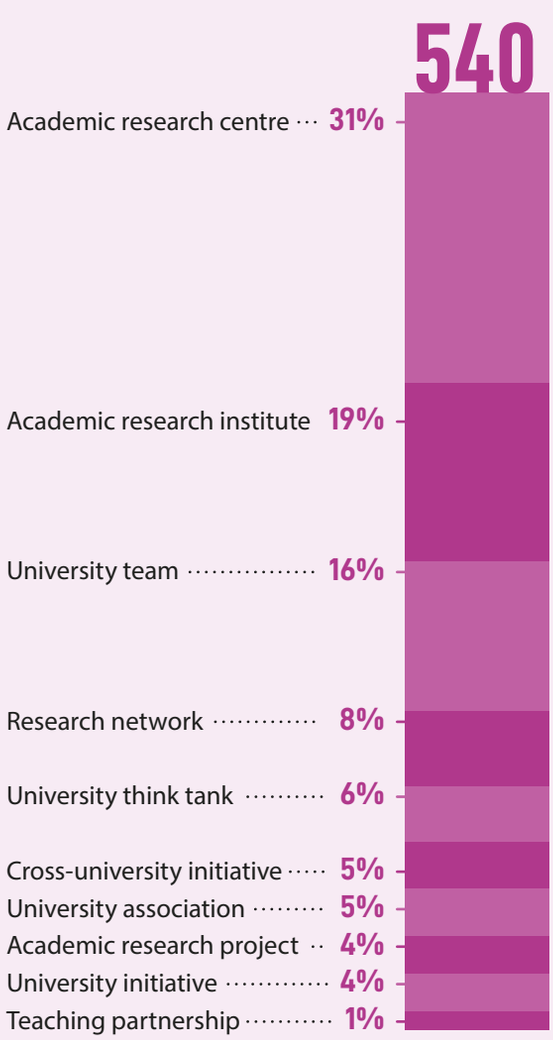
Approach to improving evidence use		What do research-policy engagement initiatives do?		How many?
1	**Linear** Linear approaches 'push' evidence out from academia or 'pull' evidence into government	Linear	1. PUSH Disseminating and communicating research	349
			2. Formal institutional requests for evidence	173
			3. PULL Facilitating access to research	238
				760
2	**Relational** Relational approaches recognise that evidence use is social, relying on expertise and shared understanding. Relational initiatives aim to strengthen skills and support long-term collaborations	Relational	4. Building decision-maker skills	226
			5. Building researcher skills	225
			6. Building professional partnerships	245
				696
3	**System** Systems approaches aim to tackle barriers to improved evidence use and create more supportive cultures	System	7. Strategic leadership	193
			8. Rewarding impact	52
			9. Creating infrastructure and posts	221
				466

The mapping revealed a complex landscape in which many organisations and stakeholders promote engagement ...

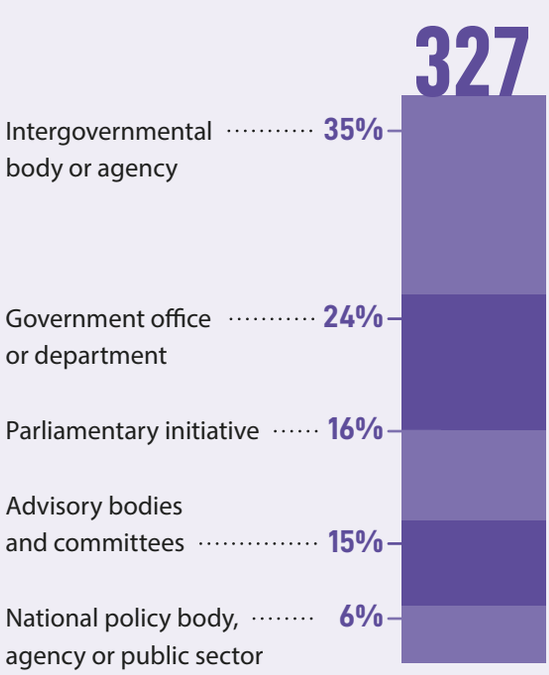


*a Parlimentary Initiative (51)
*b Business (21)
*c Non-profit initiative (7)

University



Government

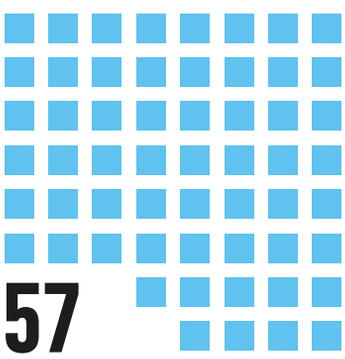


… across different policy areas and disciplines

Dominant topics of research-policy engagement initiatives (top 15)

1.	Public policy	476
2.	Health	273
3.	Environment	136
4.	Multi-disciplinary	118
5.	Science, technology and policy	85
6.	Development	78
7.	Single disciplinary	64
8.	Social Policy	63
9.	Research and innovation	55
10.	Policing	46
11.	Professions	45
12.	Social Services	44
13.	Higher education	41
14.	Economic Policy	38
15.	Local Government	37

A total of …



57

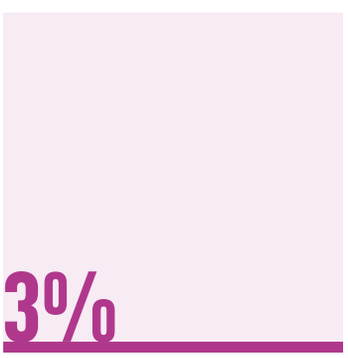
organisations have made evaluations of their work available in the public domain

That's only …

13%

of organisations who have shared evaluations

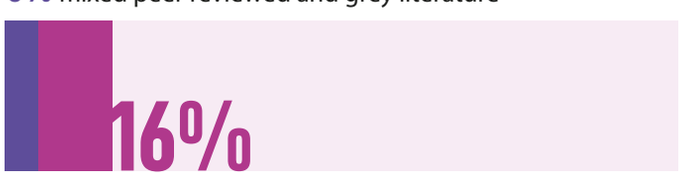
Just under …



3%

of the initiatives we found

5% mixed peer reviewed and grey literature



16%

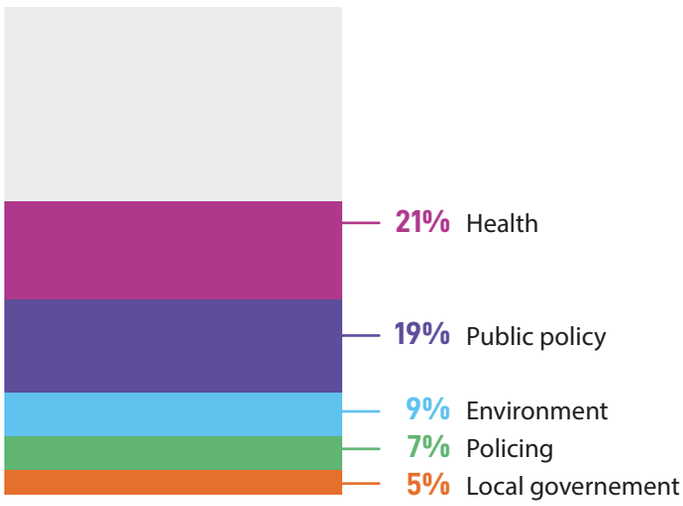
11% Peer reviewed

About 16% of the literature we found had been peer reviewed

70%

and over 70% of the evaluations were conducted by an independent evaluator

We found pockets of learning from evaluations that offer a rich and nuanced picture



Often new initiatives fail to draw on this existing learning. Many organisations funded multiple activities, used different policy engagement practices, and didn't articulate clear goals.

To make the most of growing investment in research-policy engagement, we need clearer evidence about what works and how organisations can support each other to achieve shared goals.

Find out more:

transforming-evidence.org

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