

# **Perspectives of academic social scientists on the benefits and impact of knowledge co-production: Australian findings**

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# Use of Social Science Research

- **EBPP movement – relevance of academic social research gained attention.**
- **Body of research from Europe, America and Canada focused on understanding the impact of social science research on policy and practice (e.g. Nutley, Landry, Weiss).**
- **Academics frequently argue that policy-makers ignore the research they produce, while policy-makers argue that often academic research is irrelevant to their needs.**

## Knowledge co-production widespread

- **High number of collaborative research partnerships between academics and external agencies.**
- **Major emphasis on knowledge co-production (mode 2 knowledge).**
- **Literature indicates that such engagement not without its problems / challenges / costs.**
- **Understanding co-production central to gauging social research impact.**

# Current study - ARC Linkage Grant

## Three central questions :

- In what ways is social science research currently used within policy contexts?
- What conditions and circumstances support and hinder the use of social science research?
- Are there models for enhancing the policy-relevance and utilisation of social research knowledge?

We define “research” deliberately broadly, because one aim is to understand the relative authority accorded to different types of social research by policy-makers.

# Nine Linkage Partners

- **Productivity Commission**
- **Australian Bureau of Statistics**
- **Queensland Health**
- **Queensland Communities**
- **Queensland Dept of Employment**
- **Queensland Dept of Premier and Cabinet**
- **Victorian Dept of Planning and Community Development**
- **Victorian Dept of Education & Early Childhood Devt.**
- **Victorian Dept of Human Services**
  
- **Plus 12 other state and federal collaborating organisations across four jurisdictions.**

# ARC Linkage Project phases

- **Phase 1: A targeted survey of Australian social scientists.**
- **Phase 2: A targeted survey of policy personnel.**
- **Phase 3: Follow up interviews with a selection of academic respondents.**
- **Phase 4: In-depth interviews with policy personnel.**

# Academic survey

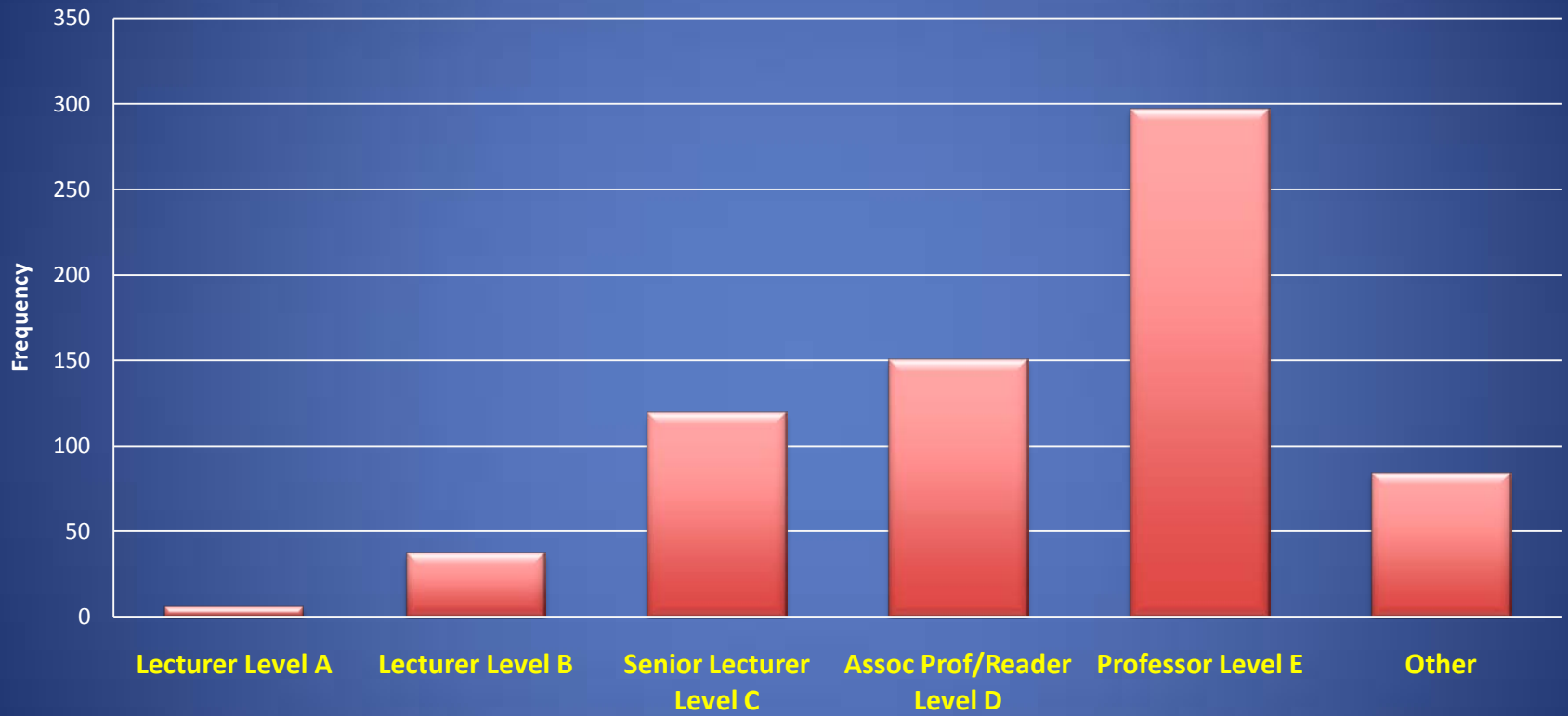
- **Aims of the academic survey were to capture the attitudes, perceptions and experience of academic researchers concerning:**
  - 1: The ways in which their research has been, or could be used.**
  - 2: Benefits & problems of research collaborations with external agencies.**
  - 3: Barriers to uptake.**
  - 4: Investment in activities that increase uptake.**

# Academic survey methodology

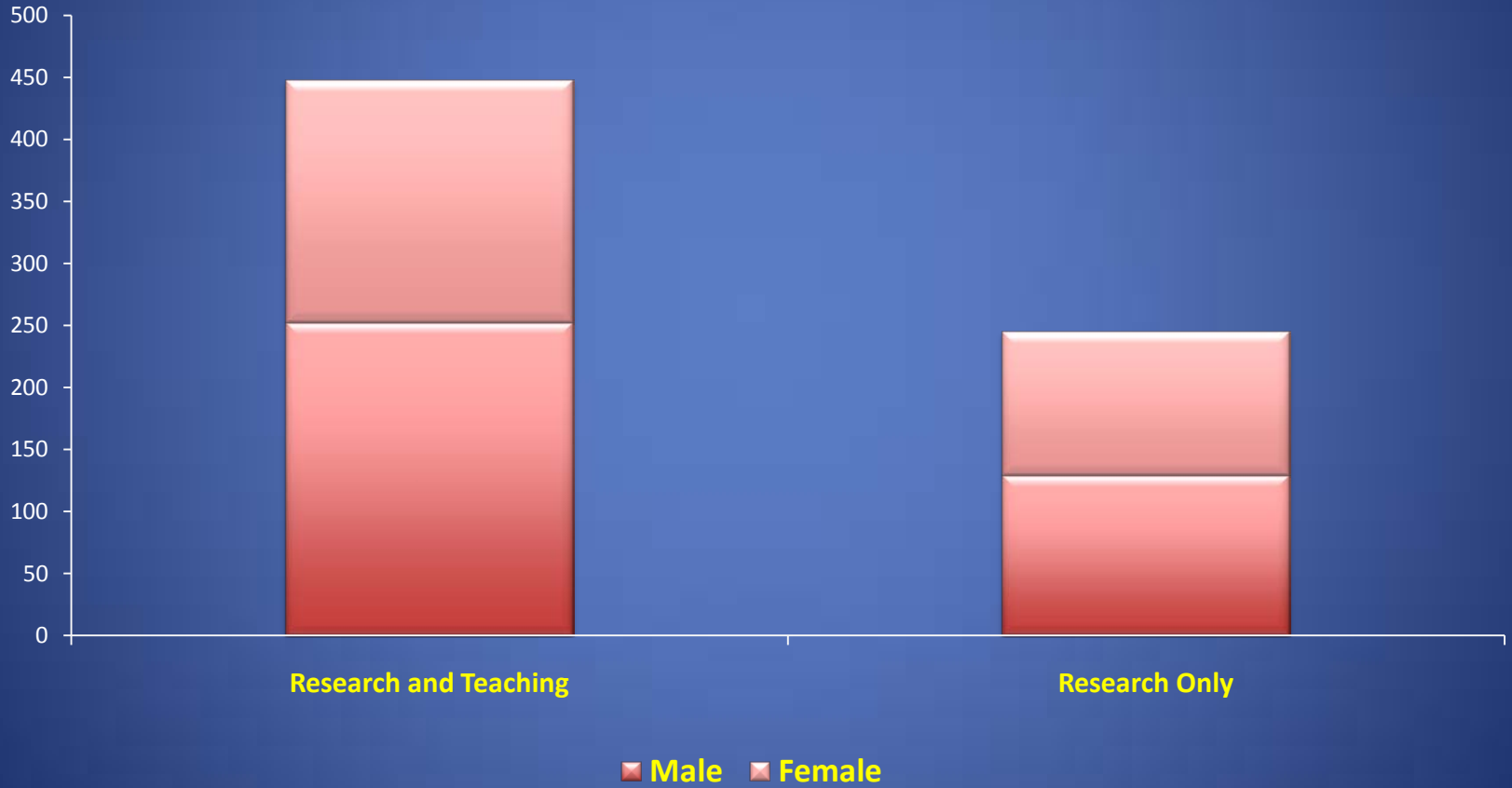
- Survey was piloted on ASSA Fellows in September/October 2010.
- Distributed to approximately 500 Fellows - 81 surveys completed.
- Established a database of about 1950 Australian social science academics - recipients of ARC Discovery and Linkage grants between 2001 and 2010.
- First wave of academic survey sent to approximately 950 academics in early November, 2010. Second wave sent in early February 2011.
- The survey closed in May 2011. A total of 612 completed surveys were received.
- Combined with the results from the ASSA pilot, the final total is 693 responses.



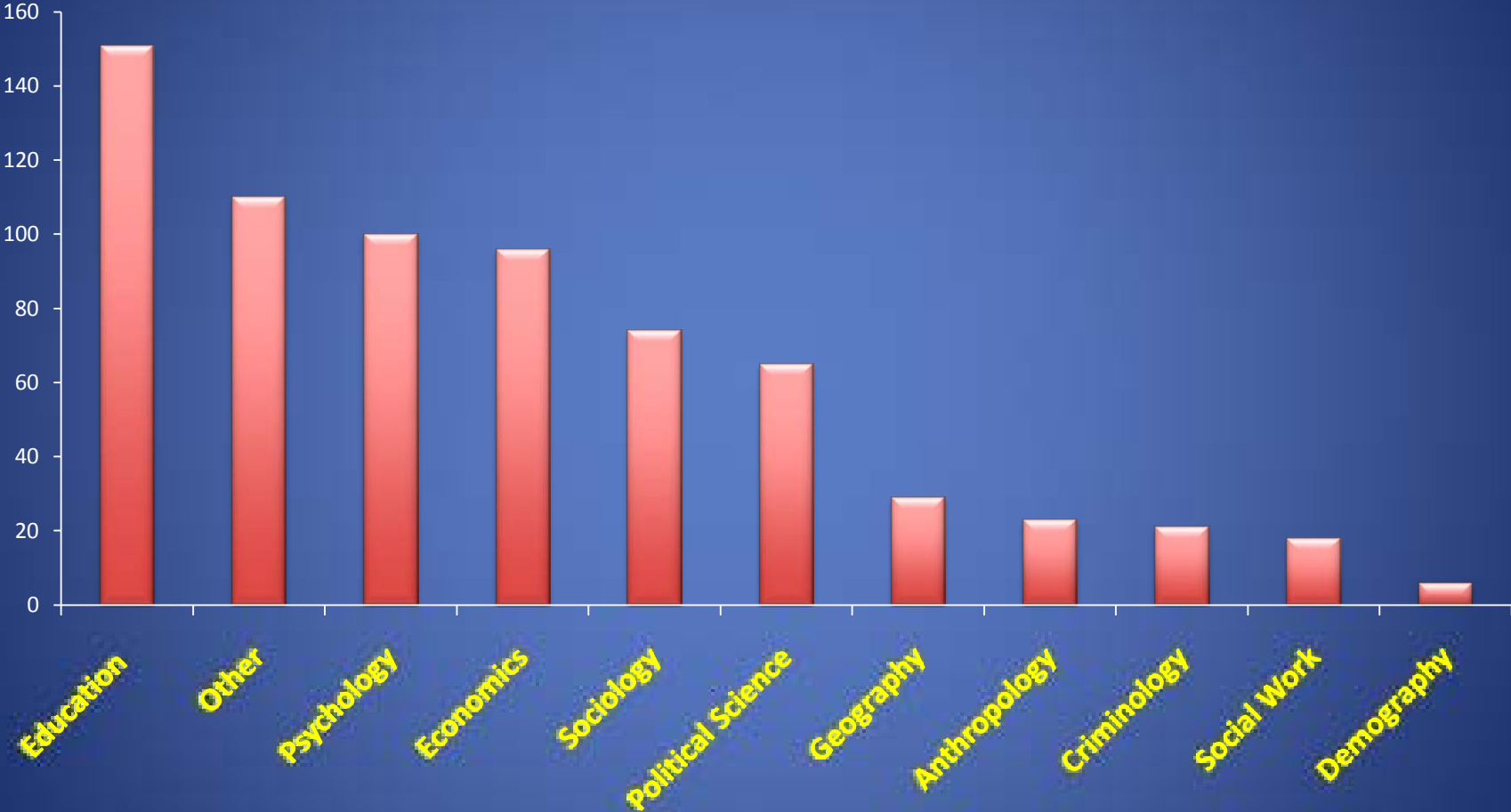
## Professional Profile



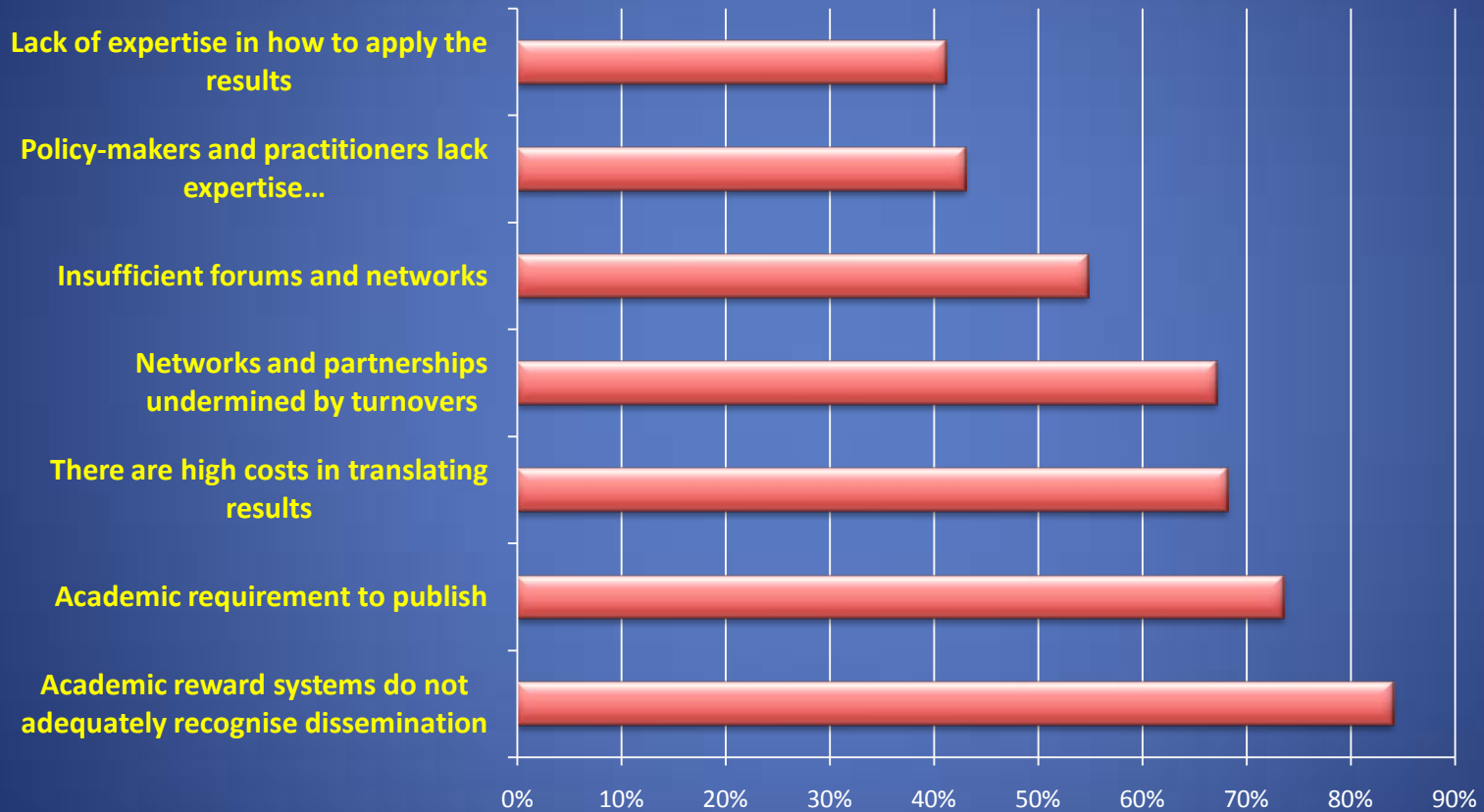
## Primary Position



# Major research discipline



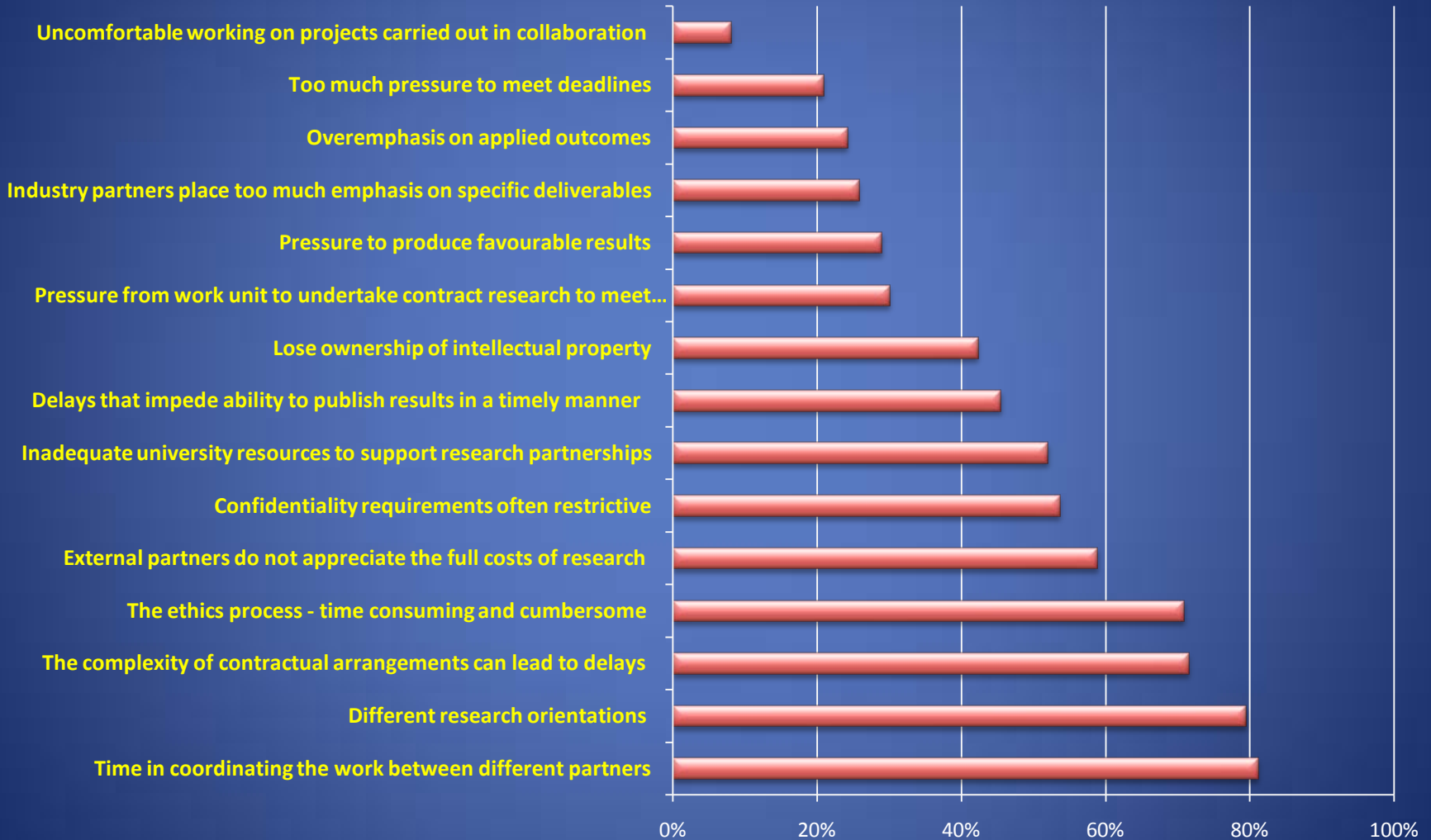
## Barriers to research uptake - Strongly agree/Agree



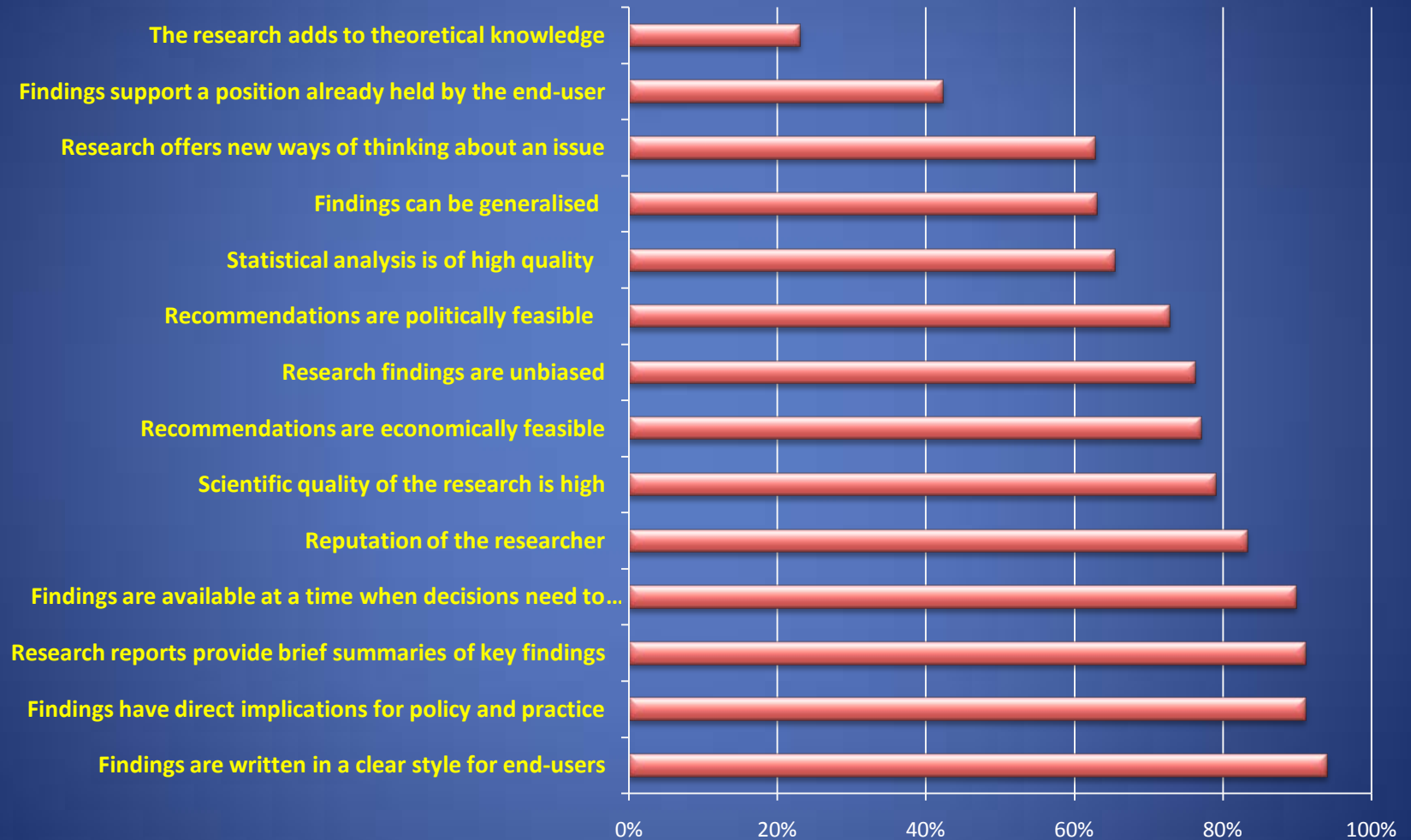
**Benefits of research partnerships with government, industry or community sectors-  
Strongly agree/Agree**



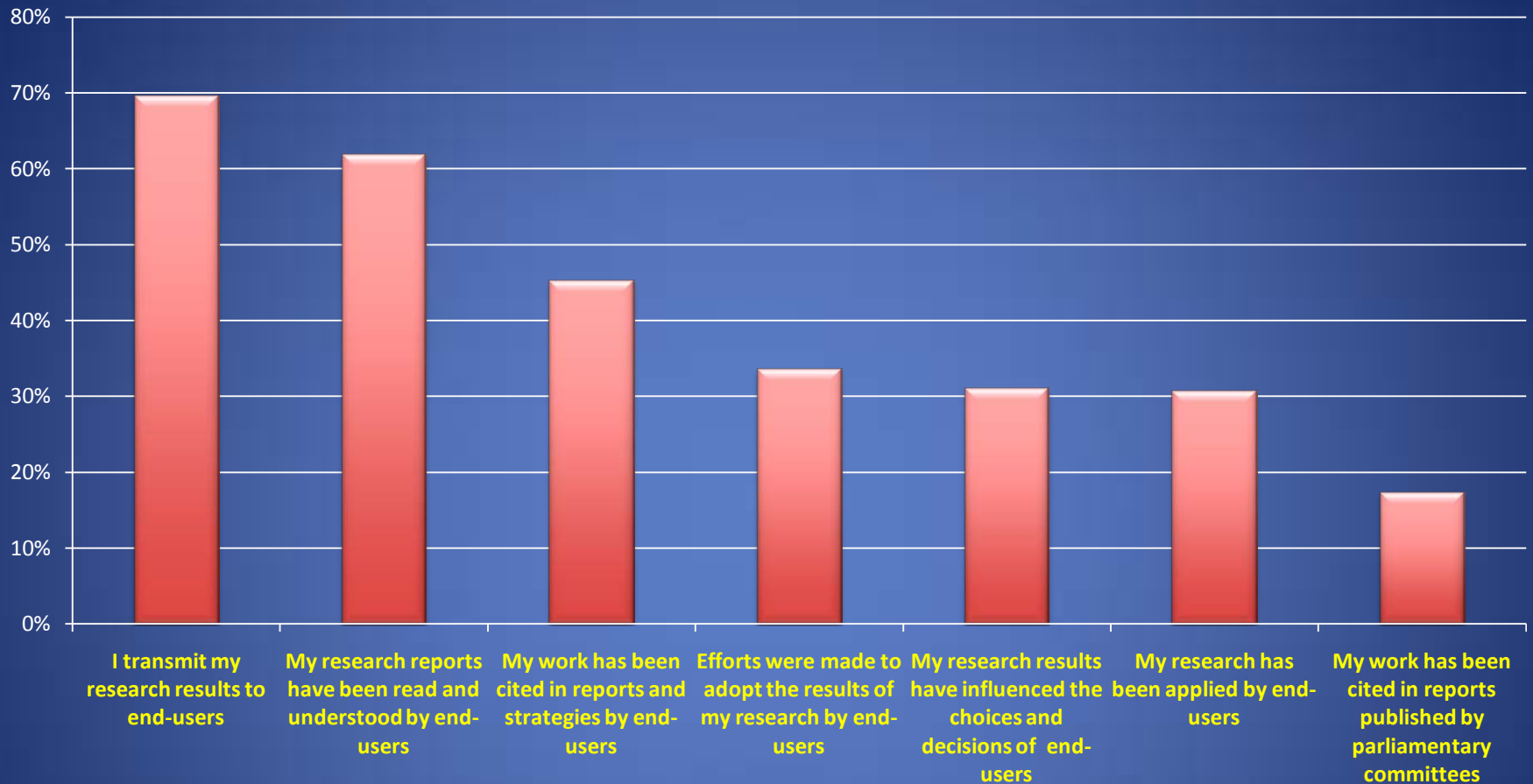
## Problems with carrying out research with government, industry or community sectors- Strongly agree/Agree



# What characteristics of social research do end-users prioritise - High priority/Moderate priority



## Research Use Ladder - Always/Usually

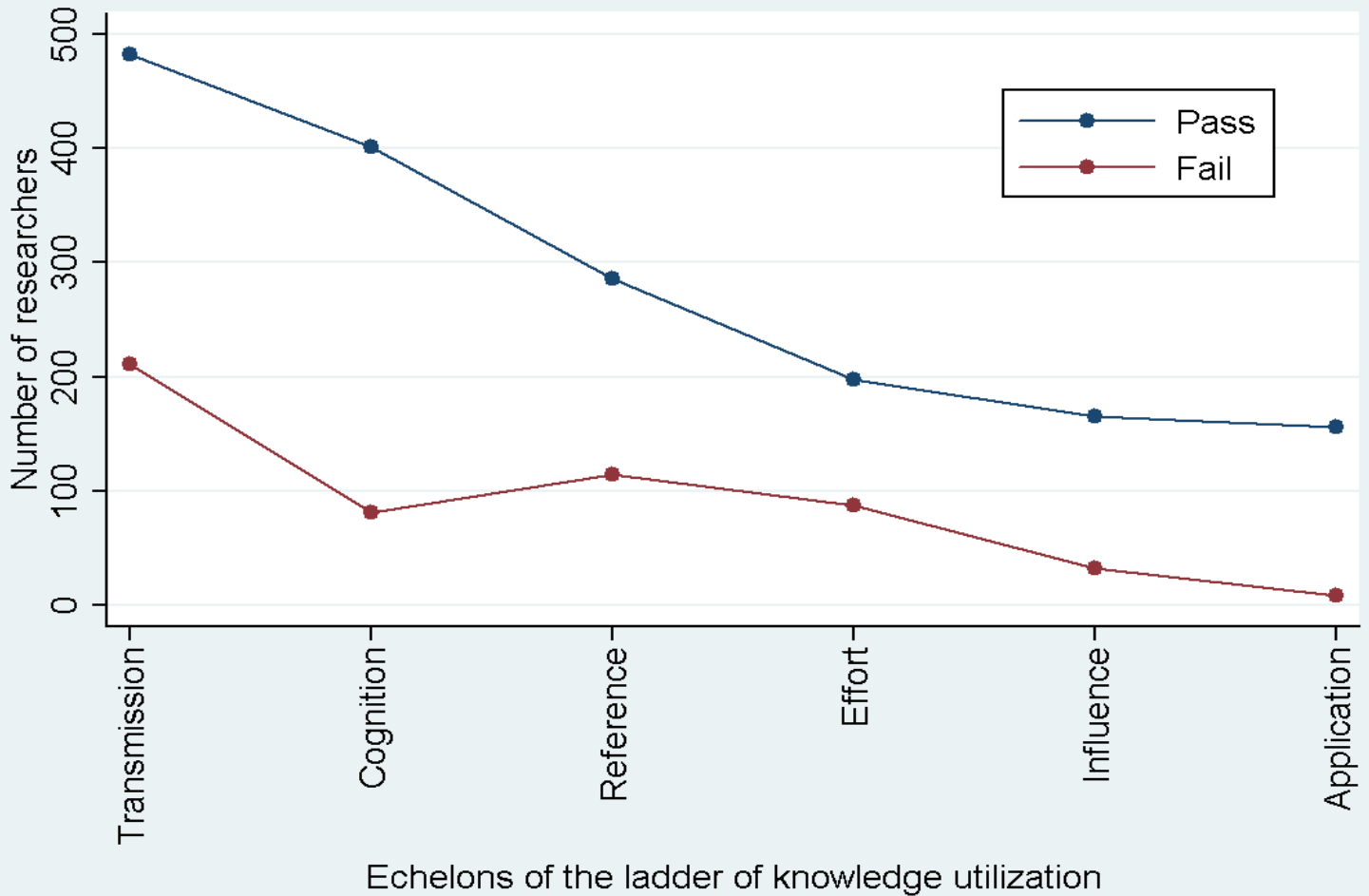


**RU ladder comprises 6 stages -- transmission, cognition, reference, effort, influence, application.**

**Parliamentary committee question not part of the RU ladder.**



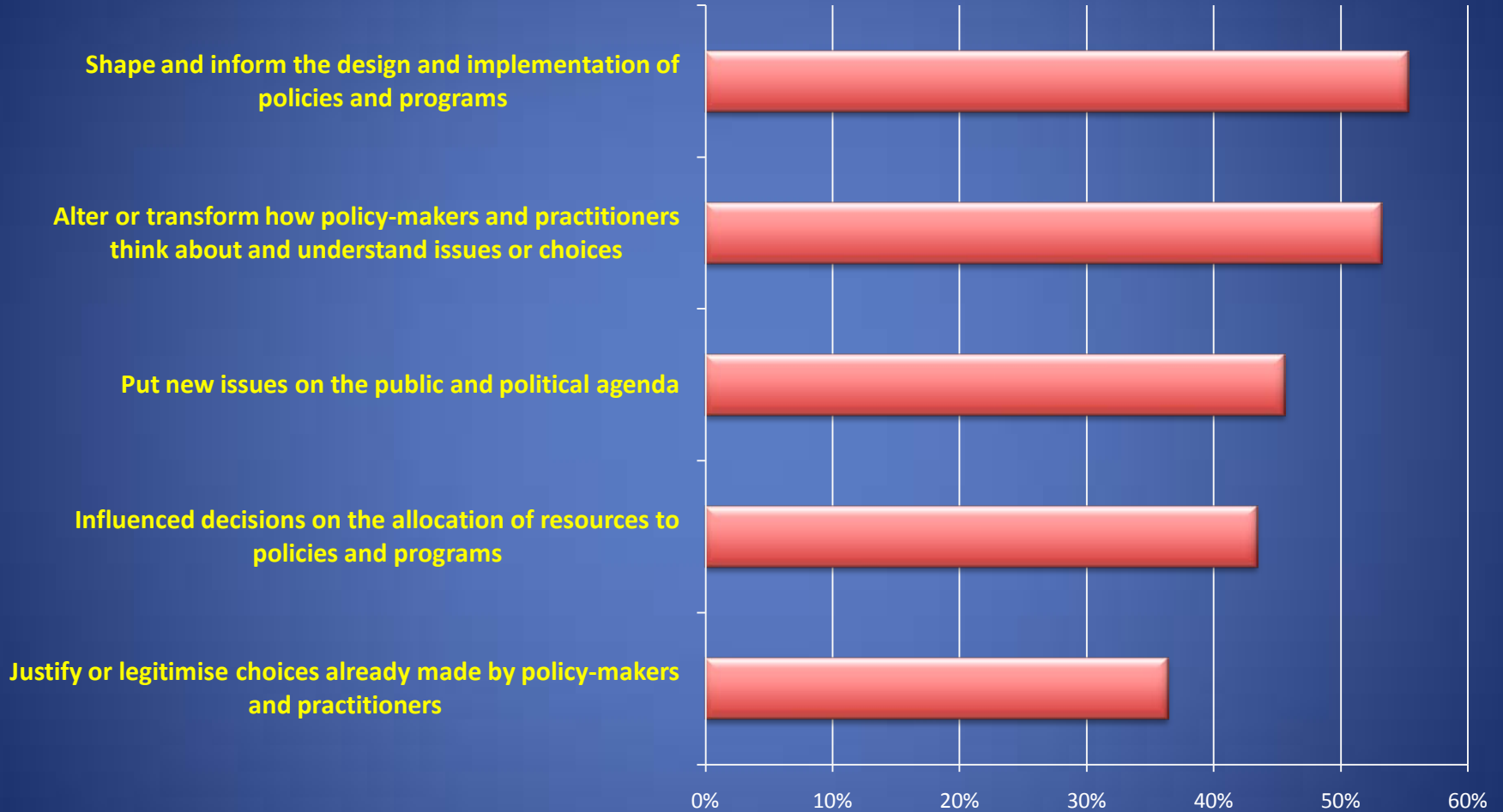
# Climbing the RU ladder



# Passing or Failing RU ladder – what makes a difference? (preliminary findings)

	Stage 1: Transmission			Stage 6: Application		
	Pass	Fail	z	Pass	Fail	z
Number of cases that pass or fail each stage of the knowledge utilization ladder	482	211		156	9	
	Total	693		Total	165	
Number of grants (count)	3.17	2.07	4.67**	4.05	2.69	5.35**
Importance of internal funding (% V. Important/Important)	49.03	64.74	-3.54**	45.33	52.79	-1.55
Importance of other funding (mean score 1-5)	2.55	2.84	-4.71**	2.56	2.61	-0.82
Frequency of use (quantitative) (% Always/Usually)	54.77	48	1.54	65.38	48.88	3.51**
Frequency of use (qualitative) (% Always/Usually)	65.35	46.29	4.42**	62.18	63.28	-0.24
Frequency of use (mixed methods) (% Always/Usually)	56.85	28	6.54**	62.18	49.63	2.67**
Extent that research is directed towards policy makers (% Always/Usually)	62.03	26.29	8.11**	67.95	52.85	3.23**
Linkage (mean score 1-5)	1.81	2.78	-13.90**	1.63	2.08	-6.03**
Adaptation (mean score 1-5)	1.81	2.21	-8.96**	1.70	1.95	-5.16**
Importance of informal contacts (mean score 1-5)	2.14	2.58	-6.39**	2.06	2.25	-2.60**
Importance of seminar participation (mean score 1-5)	2.44	2.80	-5.16**	2.44	2.49	-0.69
Importance of sending reports to community/private/public (mean score 1-5)	2.35	2.88	-7.81**	2.34	2.51	-2.55*
Importance of publication of articles(% V. Important/Important)	92.53	93.71	-0.52	90.38	92.56	-0.85

## Types of Impact Reported - Strongly agree/Agree



## Key issues (1)

- **Institutional and professional cultures at work – creates dissonance between producers and end-users.**
- **Linkage and exchange factors important to knowledge transfer.**
- **Perceived lack of end-user organisational skills / capacity an issue – this though may also be about the lack of organisational processes that facilitate uptake.**

## Key issue (2)

- **Knowledge co-production accrues benefits to academic participants – enhancing networks of application / influence.**
- **Knowledge co-production has costs that can deter investment in dissemination, translation and relationship building.**
- **Various types of impact reported - reflects findings from previous studies and where academics make the most efforts.**

# Conclusion

- **Need to understand research uptake in the context of knowledge co-production.**
- **Linear, science push models of research production and use inadequate.**
- **Costs and incentives important in relation to investment in knowledge translation - relates to institutional and professional cultures (important for understanding research use).**
- **Subsequent phases - e.g. what factors determine / inhibit policy uptake of social research, what type of evidence is used, what do policy-makers think of academic social research, knowledge brokering, organisational skills & capacity.**