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UNIVERSIDADE DE LISBOA

AAII  
ÁREA DE ASSUNTOS INSTITUCIONAIS  
E DE INVESTIGAÇÃO

# SOCIAL IMPACT OF RESEARCH

# 2022

**Exige o teu melhor**

**TITLE**

Social Impact of Research 2022

**EXECUTION**

Research Support Office  
Area of Institutional Affairs and Research

**DATE**

2023



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# Executive Summary

In 2022, the researchers belonging to ISCSP-ULisboa's R&D Units carried out multiple actions to disseminate their academic activity, not only through scientific events, but also in a broader sense, reaching non-academic audiences.

In addition to these dissemination activities, ISCSP-ULisboa faculty and researchers actively participate in associations, both scientific and professional, as well as Non-Governmental Organisations, social institutions, both as members and as directors. Some of these researchers also hold political positions with public visibility.

In this document we propose an exploratory analysis of the data reported by researchers in 2022, identifying the nature of their activities in a non-academic environment, as well as which scientific or thematic areas most encompass them, thus reflecting on the social impact of research.

Social impact is a concept that is still being defined. In a broad sense, it represents actions that address social change and contemporary challenges, in an extra-academic environment, based on research and science. Impact can also be conceived as the change that knowledge brings to ways of thinking or acting by social actors (Spaapen & van Drooge, 2011).

When it comes to our results, of the 281 researchers linked to ISCSP-ULisboa's R&D Units, 211 reported scientific activities (publication of scientific articles, participation in research projects, etc.). In 2022, researchers from ISCSP-ULisboa's R&D Units published 38 books, 95 international and 60 national book chapters, 222 international articles and 14 national articles. Of these, 142 are indexed in Scopus and 129 in Web of Science. They also carried out 27 funded research projects (18 national and 9 international).

Of the 211 researchers who reported research activities in 2022, 120 carried out extra-academic activities, including 217 interventions in the press, 55 appearances on television and 12 on the radio, and 203 positions and various affiliations, including 17 high profile political positions. Researchers' extra-academic activities were further categorised into seven main groups: Press, Institutional Positions and Affiliations, Television, Communications at non-scientific meetings/ Exhibitions, Podcasts/ Videocasts and Radio. Of these, there is a strong emphasis on current affairs commentary, particularly on pressing issues in 2022, such as the electoral process in Portugal or the conflict in Ukraine.

1.

## Social impact

Social impact is a concept that is still being defined, broadly representing actions that address social change and contemporary challenges, in an extra-academic environment, based on research and science, but going beyond scientific excellence (Dotti & Walczyk, 2022). Impact can also be conceived as the change that knowledge brings to ways of thinking or acting by social actors (Spaapen & van Drooge, 2011).

This activity can be considered an integral part of research, considering the benefit that scientific outputs bring to society, with particular relevance at a global level when placed in relation to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Simultaneously, both at a global, national and even local level, many argue that research should be orientated towards the needs of society, involving its actors in the research process, developing more sustainable societies, ensuring an understanding of the real needs of communities, and leading to significant changes in laws and public policies, underpinned by solid scientific knowledge. It is in this essential dichotomy that the concept of social impact exists.

Given the relevance of the topic, and in order to create a body of knowledge, many funding organisations are increasingly valuing the social impact of research, namely by funding projects that clearly identify their effects on society. Thus, social impact is beginning to be considered a “triple mission”, research with “social relevance” or “third stream activities”, alongside teaching and research (Dotti & Walczyk, 2022).

It's important to discuss the conceptualisation and subsequent measurement of the concept (Smith, 2001; Viana-Lora & Nel-lo-Andreu, 2021), since it is difficult to understand the effects of these actions, either from upstream measures, motivating researchers to take part in activities that are expected to have a social impact (with all the uncertainty that this entails), or downstream, measuring the activity of researchers, which still lacks precise measurement indicators (Viana-Lora & Nel-lo-Andreu, 2021; Dotti & Walczyk, 2022).

Qualitative methodologies such as case studies or quantitative methodologies such as altmetrics analysis (measuring mentions in the media, social networks, exports to bibliography tools, etc.) have been used to operate the concept (Dotti & Walczyk, 2022). It should be noted that although social network analysis can measure the popularity of a topic or social engagement, it cannot define the benefit of the output for society (Viana-Lora & Nel-lo-Andreu, 2021).

Through its strategic project, ISCSP has tried to establish itself on the national and international scene as a benchmark school in teaching and research in the area of Social and Political Sciences, with a special focus on increasing social impact and valuing the dimension of social responsibility.

Connecting with society is at the root of higher education institutions, which is why it is important to encourage the development of research projects with a strong social impact and to consolidate the policy of disseminating the results, reinforcing the idea that universities should clearly convey the strategy for the social impact expected of their researchers (de Jong & Balaban, 2022). Whether in the political or scientific context, reinforced by the guidelines of EU funding bodies, institutions are increasingly required to direct their activities towards society, encouraging the communication of results in simple and accessible language.

Being part of ULisboa has proved to be an asset in terms of international recognition and the possibilities for co-operation and establishing strategic partnerships. In terms of impact and social responsibility, this is one of the areas in which ULisboa has invested the most in recent years. This effort is demonstrated through the University's presence in the QS World University Rankings, a ranking in partnership with Elsevier that offers analysis services on the Higher Education sector, producing general rankings and also on various aspects, such as employability or sustainability.

In the field of social and environmental sustainability, the first edition of the Sustainability 2023 ranking was launched, comprising indicators to measure the capacity of institutions to face the biggest environmental, social and governmental challenges on a global scale. In terms of social impact, the indicators include equality, knowledge transfer, impact of education, employability and opportunities, and quality of life.

In this edition, the University of Lisbon is ranked 161-170 in the overall Sustainability ranking, and 153 in terms of social impact.

2.

## Methodology

The data that originates the analysis within this text comes from the annual report on the activities of ISCSP-ULisboa's R&D Units, sourcing directly from the researchers' reports to the Units.

To this end, this document is based on the reports of 211 researchers linked to ISCSP-ULisboa's R&D units in 2022, as integrated members or collaborators. Of these, 120 researchers reported some element of extra-academic activity, such as participation in the media or holding a management position (56.9%).

We followed a series of steps in order to summarise activities into categories:

- a) Analysis of the main category based on the researchers' original report, sourced in the database of the Research Support Centre (NAI).
- b) Creation of categories and subcategories, through comprehensive analysis of titles, websites, in six groups and subgroups, spread out in the graphs shown in point 3 (analysis and discussion of indicators).
- c) Thematic analysis of the subcategories press, podcast/videocast, radio and television, based on the titles reported, knowledge of the researcher's main scientific area and reading/listening to the output whenever available.



3.

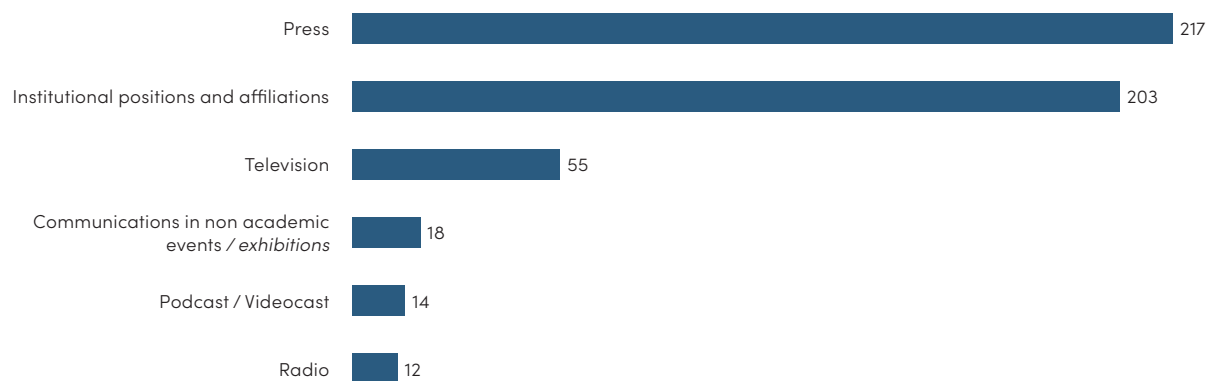
## Analysis and discussion

Before moving on to the mapping of the indicators of social impact, it is important to recall some of the main metrics of the scientific activity of ISCSP-ULisboa researchers in 2022.

In 2022, researchers from ISCSP-ULisboa's R&D Units published 38 books, 95 international and 60 national book chapters, 222 international articles and 14 national articles. Of these, 142 are indexed in Scopus and 129 in Web of Science. They also carried out 27 funded research projects (18 national and 9 international).

The researchers also reported a number extra-academic activities related to positions held or interventions in the press. By analysing these reported indicators, it was possible to classify the researchers' participations into six broad categories (Graph 1), totalling 519.

**GRAPH 1.** Actions to disseminate scientific activity to non-academic audiences (n = 519)

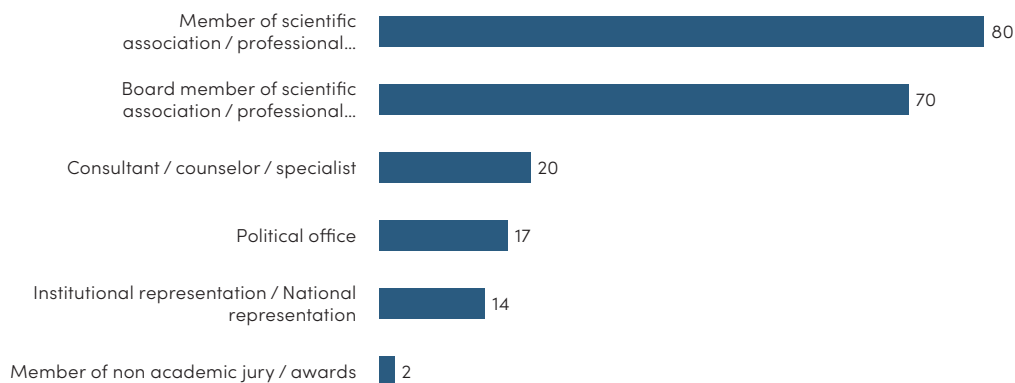


### 3.1 Positions held

36% of researchers are members of one or more scientific or professional associations, NGOs or networks. An equally high number (40%) hold positions in the board in these types of organisations (President, Vice-President, Member, etc.). In addition to more permanent or regular institutional affiliations, researchers are also called upon to provide consultancy or advisory services in areas such as health, public policy and public administration. Several researchers are also institutional representatives in national and international organisations. There were also two cases of juries for non-academic awards.

Finally, under political office we categorised positions (by appointment or election) such as Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces or Deputy Advisor to the Minister of Internal Affairs, which are distinguished by their public visibility. We have chosen to highlight these specific positions, for their public outreach.

**GRAPH 2.** Positions held (n = 203)



### 3.2 Presence in the media

Concerning the press, the researchers' appearances are mainly related to opinion articles, many of which in leading nationwide newspapers. This number reflects the participation of various ISCSP-ULisboa researchers consistently throughout the year. Interviews and mentions in the media mainly concern current affairs on which experts are heard (interviewees) or whose research is referred to in an illustrative way (in the form of a mention of the research). There are also, although in a smaller number, chronicle or essay reports.

**GRAPH 3.** Press (n = 217)

As for the other categories, participation in television programmes is mainly divided into commentaries (regular commentary or on current affairs) and interviews.

Participation in podcasts and videocasts has increased over the years with the popularisation of the medium. These podcasts can either be directed by individual journalists or linked to reference media (e.g. Rádio Comercial).

As for public speaking, as with the rest of the analysis, we didn't count those that were part of scientific events, but rather those that took place in environments such as primary and secondary schools or gatherings open to the public. These also include TED Talks/Speed Talks. Finally, a residual number of researchers wrote texts for exhibitions.

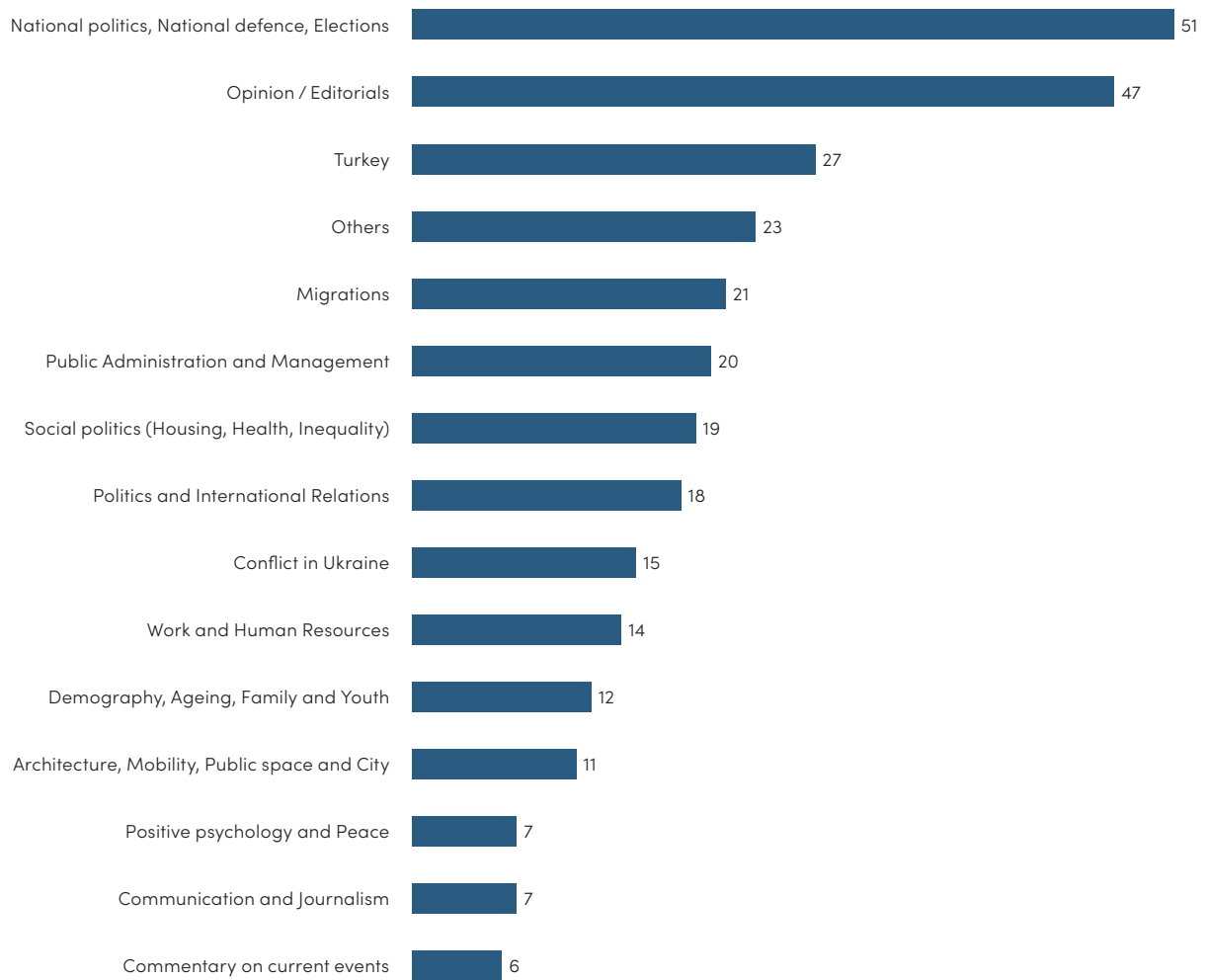
### 3.3 Thematic areas of intervention

Returning to the participation of researchers in the media, it was also possible to identify the main scientific or thematic areas of their interventions based on the reported titles, knowledge of the researcher's main scientific area and reading/listening whenever available.

It became clear that there is a very significant intervention in the area of national politics, national defence and, in 2022, in particular on the electoral process in Portugal (51). Due to the turbulent year in Turkey (27), this theme was also particularly prevalent, as was the conflict in Ukraine (15). Areas such as Migration, Management and Public Administration, Social Policies, International Relations or Labour and Human Resources are uniformly represented, reflecting the specialisation of researchers and their public interventions on a broad range of subjects. Although less represented, we can also find the areas of Demography, Ageing, Family and Youth, Architecture, Mobility, Public Space and the City, Psychology and Peace, Media and Journalism.

Finally, a note on the Opinion/Editorials and Current Affairs Commentary classification. We can find, under this item, a large number of participations in the media on diversified or more generic themes, but which nonetheless signify an important recurring presence of researchers from the Institute in the media.

**GRAPH 4.** Thematic areas in the media (n = 298)



4.

## Final remarks

This analysis, although embryonic and in itself a work in progress, reveals strong activity by researchers in multiple fields of action, beyond academic tasks, which reinforces the potential for social impact by the research carried out at ISCSP-ULisboa.

It is clear from this document that researchers from ISCSP-ULisboa's R&D Units are regularly present in several fields of extra-academic activity. As examples, we can point to the participation in the media of 46 researchers for a production of 298 unique outputs, or the representation of 70 per cent of respondents in some position, being of political or associative nature.

We can immediately infer that this strong representation of ISCSP's researchers in organisations of a very diverse nature, and with a wide variety of positions held, can influence decision-making processes and contribute to changes in public policies.

However, this analysis is not without its limitations, the most notable of which is the difficulty of measuring the real impact of these indicators, which is why we intend to carry out follow-up work and methodological fine-tuning of the analysis of social impact reports in future years, in line with the theoretical debates.

A second important limitation lies in the reporting itself. It is essential not only to motivate annual reporting by all researchers linked to ISCSP-ULisboa, but also to fine-tune the quality of the responses and thus eliminate non-quantifiable elements, such as "various participations", which we found in the 2022 reports, meaning that these figures, especially those related to the press, will tend to be higher than those analysed here.

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## Online resources

Website for altmetrics, connected to Scopus:

<https://plumanalytics.com/>

QS World University Rankings: Sustainability 2023:

<https://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/sustainability-rankings/2023>

QS World University Rankings – Universidade de Lisboa:

<https://www.topuniversities.com/universities/university-lisbon>

The social impact is an integral part of scientific research (entrada em blog):

<https://www.springernature.com/gp/researchers/the-source/blog/blogposts-communicating-research/the-social-impact-is-an-integral-part-of-scientific-research/20145098>

How to measure social impact:

<https://www.brightest.io/social-impact-measurement>

Universities, societal impact & sustainable development updated:

<https://www.elsevier.com/research-intelligence/societal-impact-and-sdg-guide>



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