

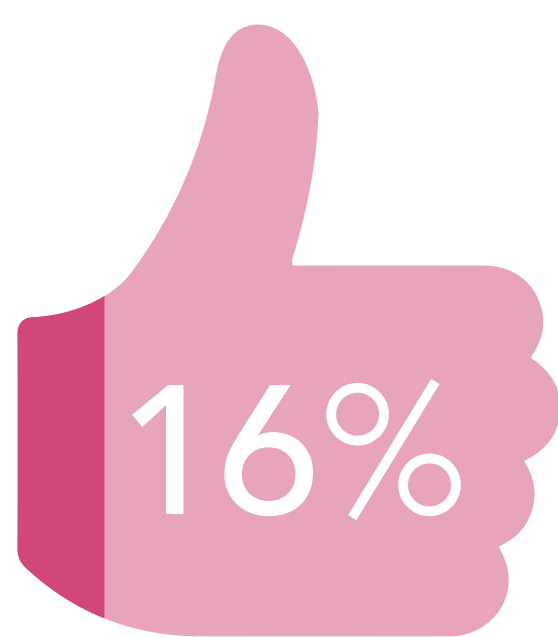
# What made a 4\* impact case study in REF2014?

Mark Reed<sup>1</sup>, Bella Reichard<sup>1</sup>, Jenn Chubb<sup>2</sup>, Ged Hall<sup>3</sup>, Lucy Jowett<sup>4</sup> and Alisha Peart<sup>4</sup>

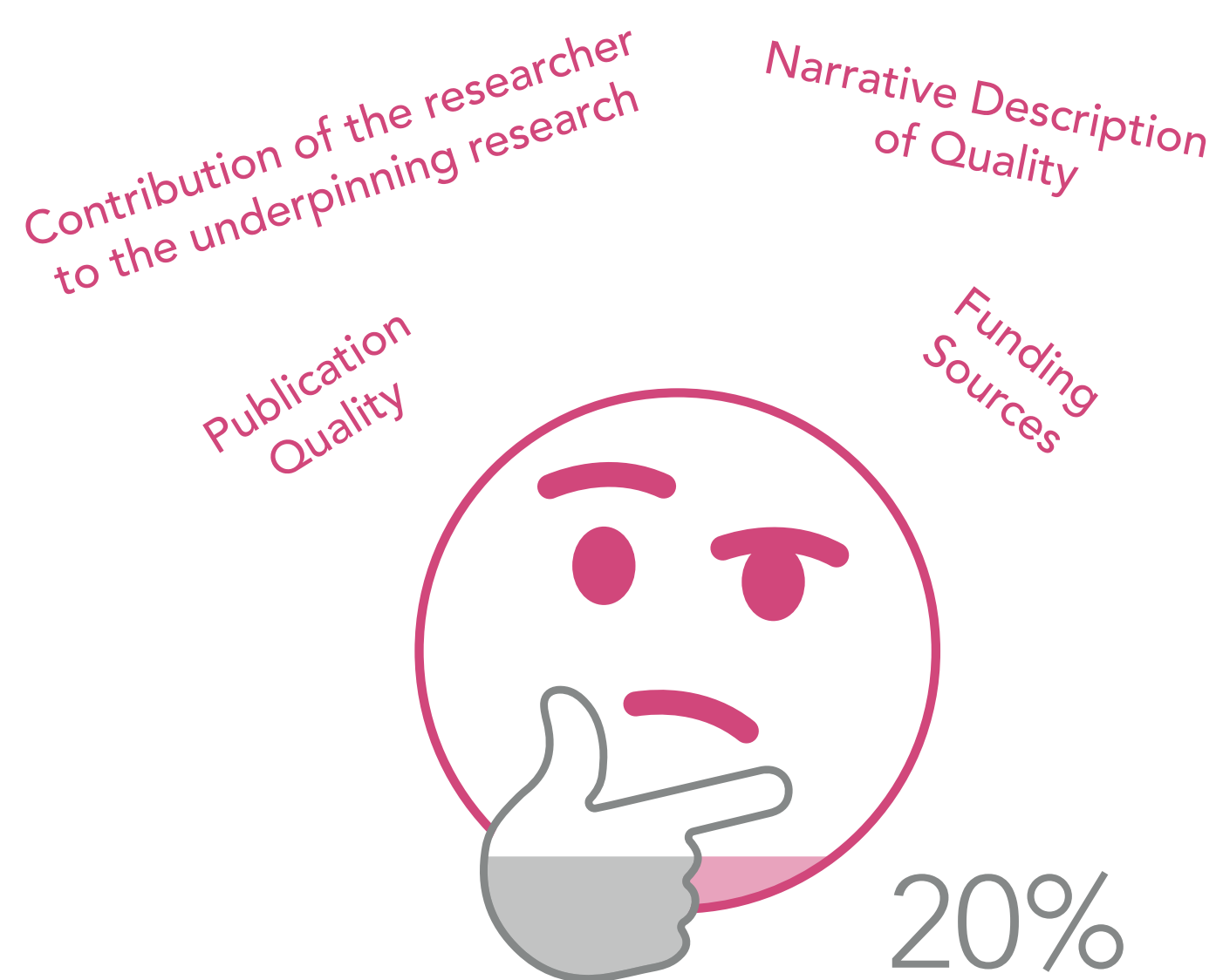
<sup>1</sup>Newcastle University; <sup>2</sup>University of Sheffield; <sup>3</sup>University of Leeds; <sup>4</sup>Northumbria University

## High-scoring case studies in REF2014...

### 1. Articulated actual benefits to specific groups and evidenced their significance and reach

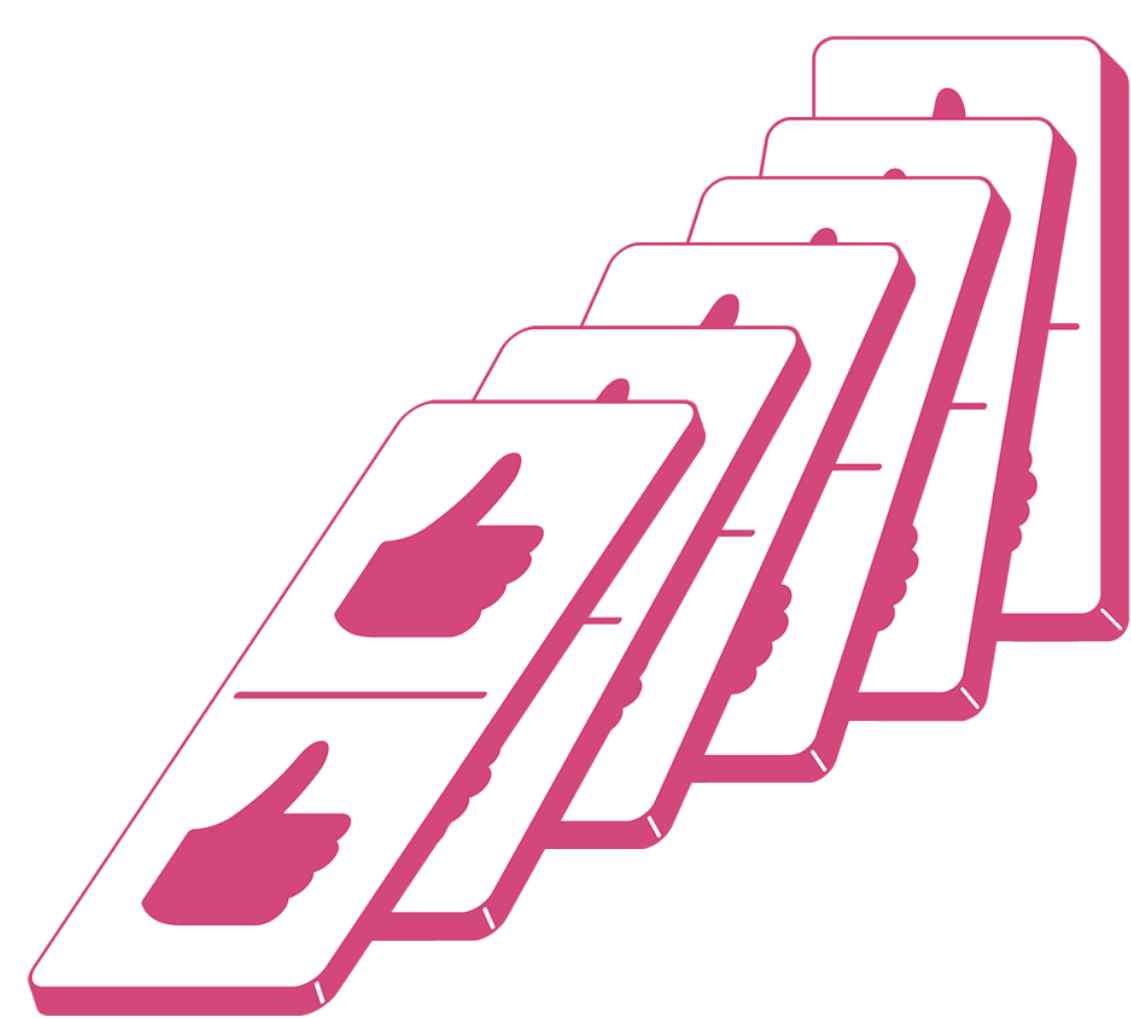


- 68% of low-scoring cases did not articulate benefits and typically focused instead on pathway to impact (compared to 16% of high scoring cases).
- High-scoring impact case studies described on average 2.8 impacts, compared to an average of 1.8 impacts described by low-scoring case studies. However, in the qualitative analysis, there were a similar number of high-scoring case studies that were considered to have reached this score due to a clear focus on one single, highly impressive impact, compared to those that were singled out for their impressive range of different impacts.



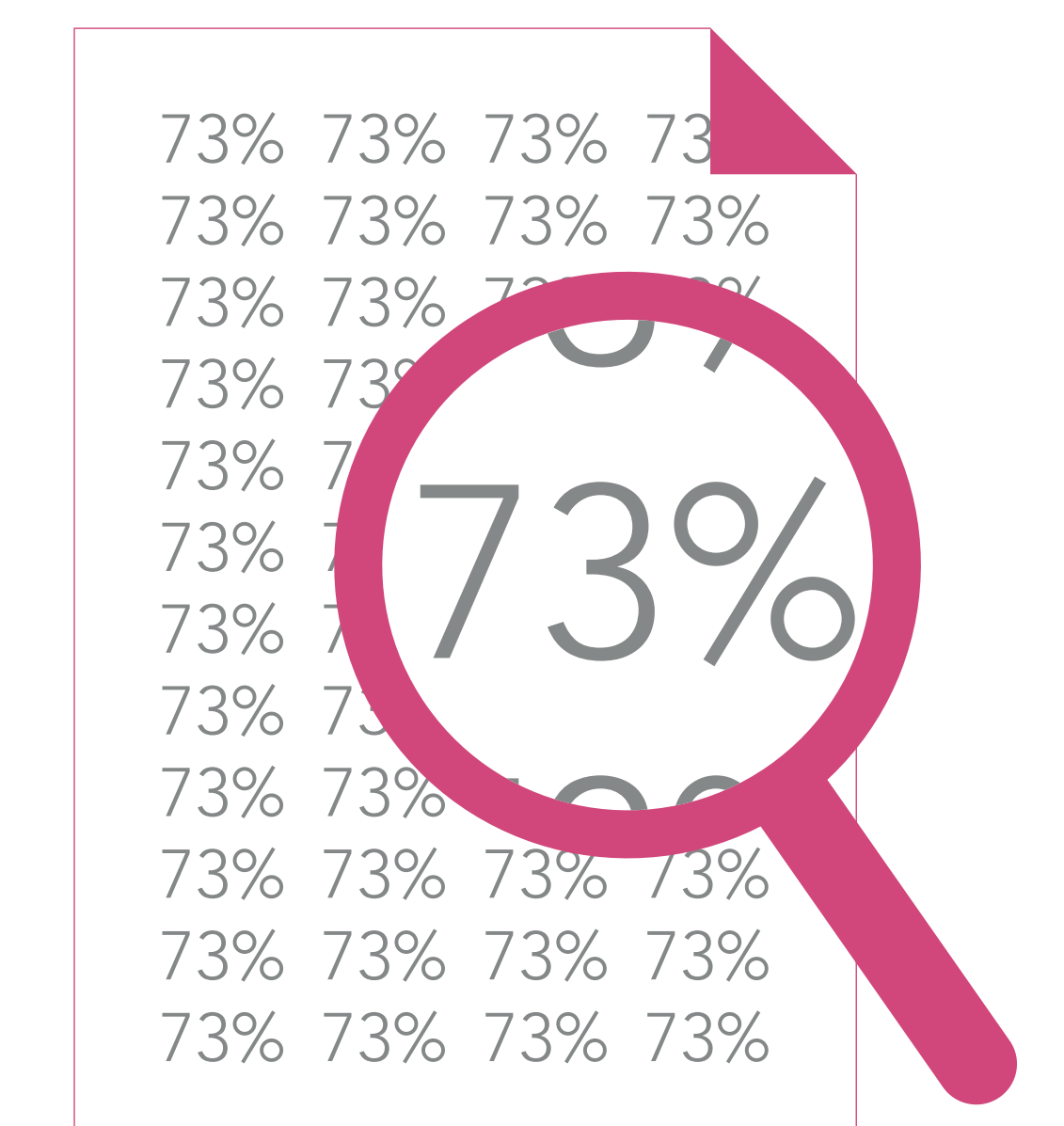
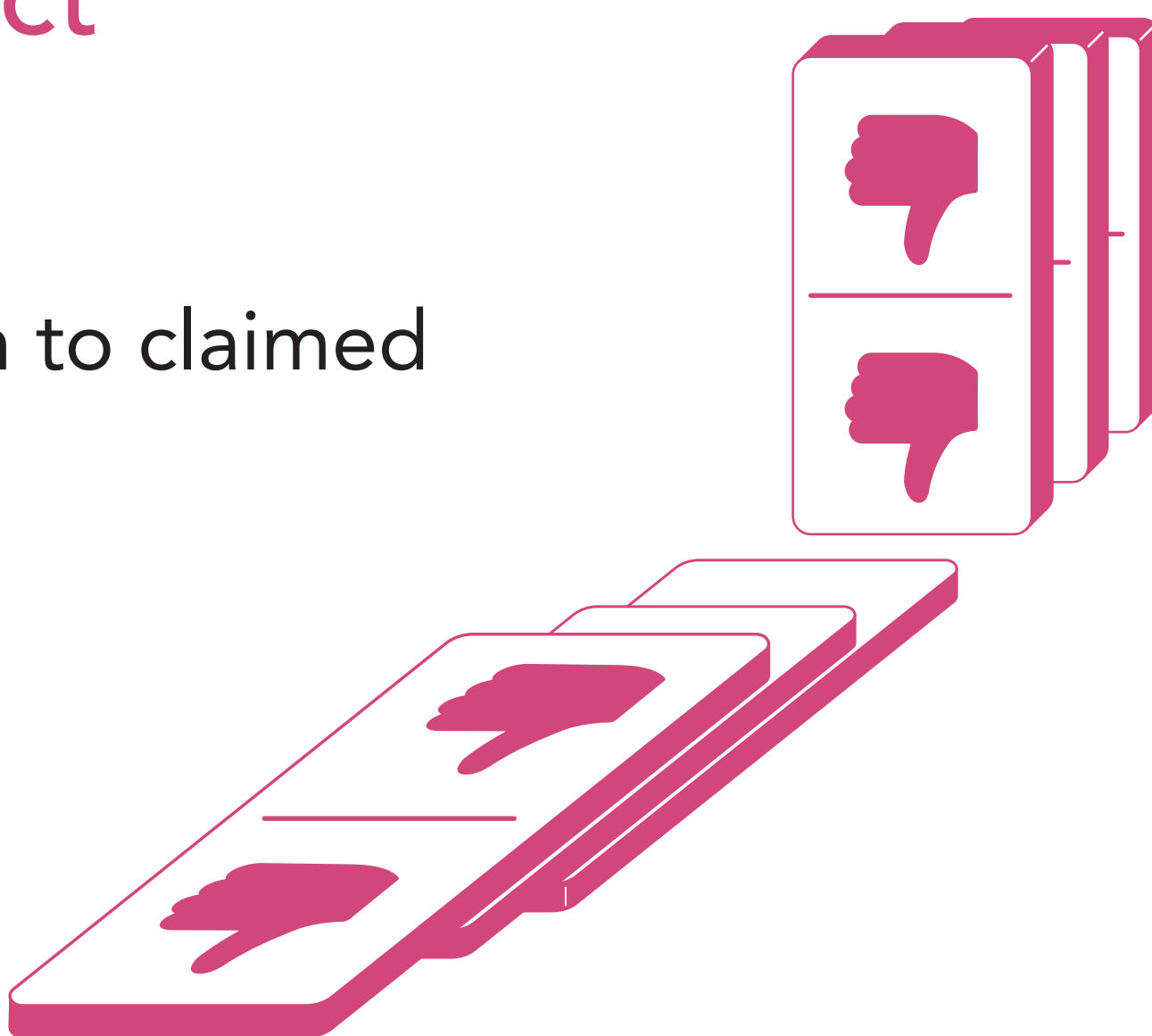
### 2. Gave no grounds for doubt that the research was at least 2\* quality

- 20% of low-scoring cases gave grounds to doubt the quality of underpinning research (compared to 2% of high-scoring cases).
- Grounds for doubt and indications of quality were found in publication quality, funding sources, narrative description of quality and contribution of the researcher to the underpinning research.



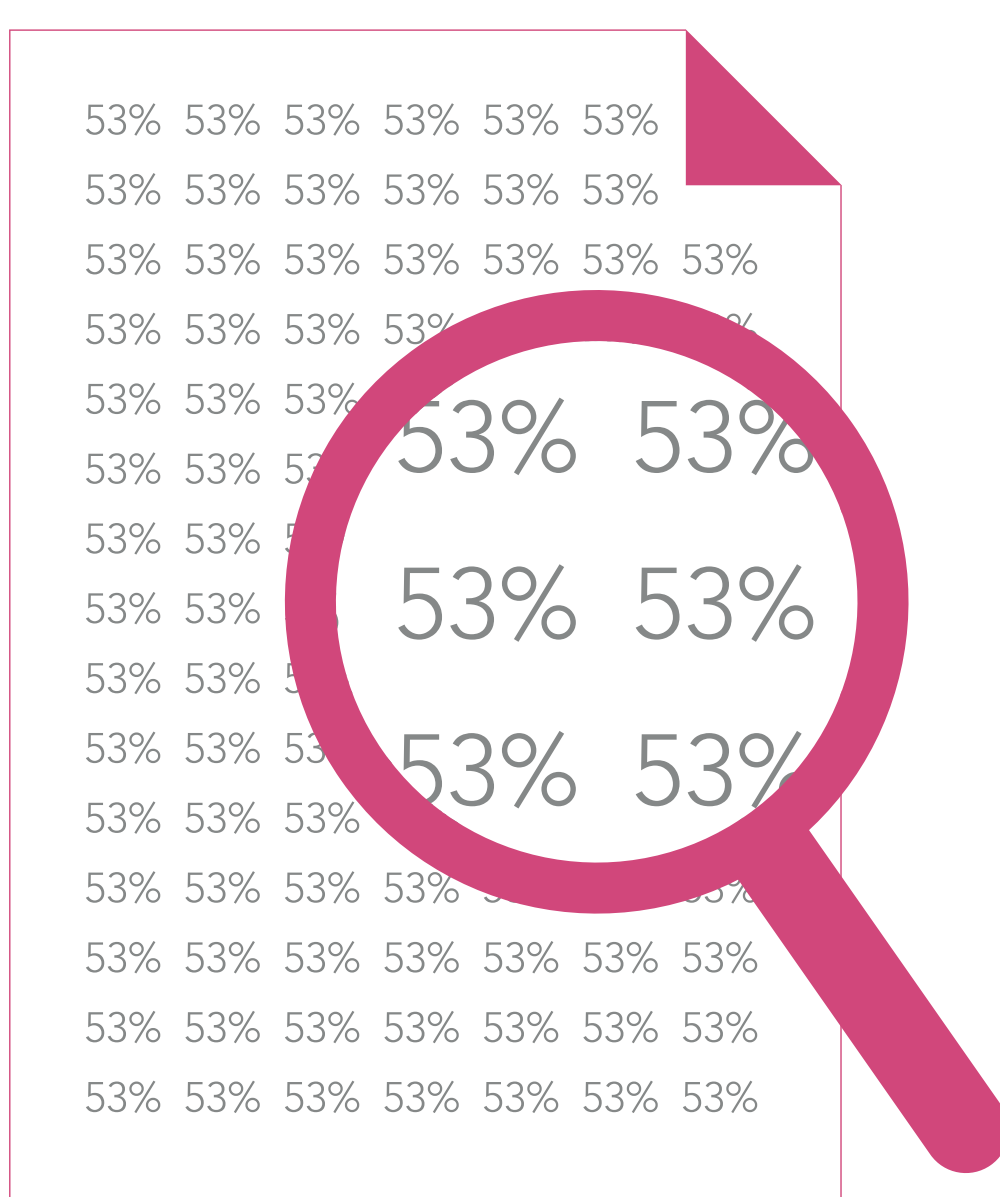
### 3. Established links between research (cause) and impact (effect) convincingly

- Only 50% of low-scoring case studies clearly linked the underpinning research to claimed impacts (compared to 97% of high-scoring cases).
- Quantitative linguistic analysis (Reichard, 2017) showed high-scoring case studies were significantly more likely to include the phrase “led to” linked to specific impacts, compared to low-scoring case studies which were more likely to use the phrase “a range of” and the word “improvement”, often linked to indicative lists of (rather than specific) benefits or beneficiaries.

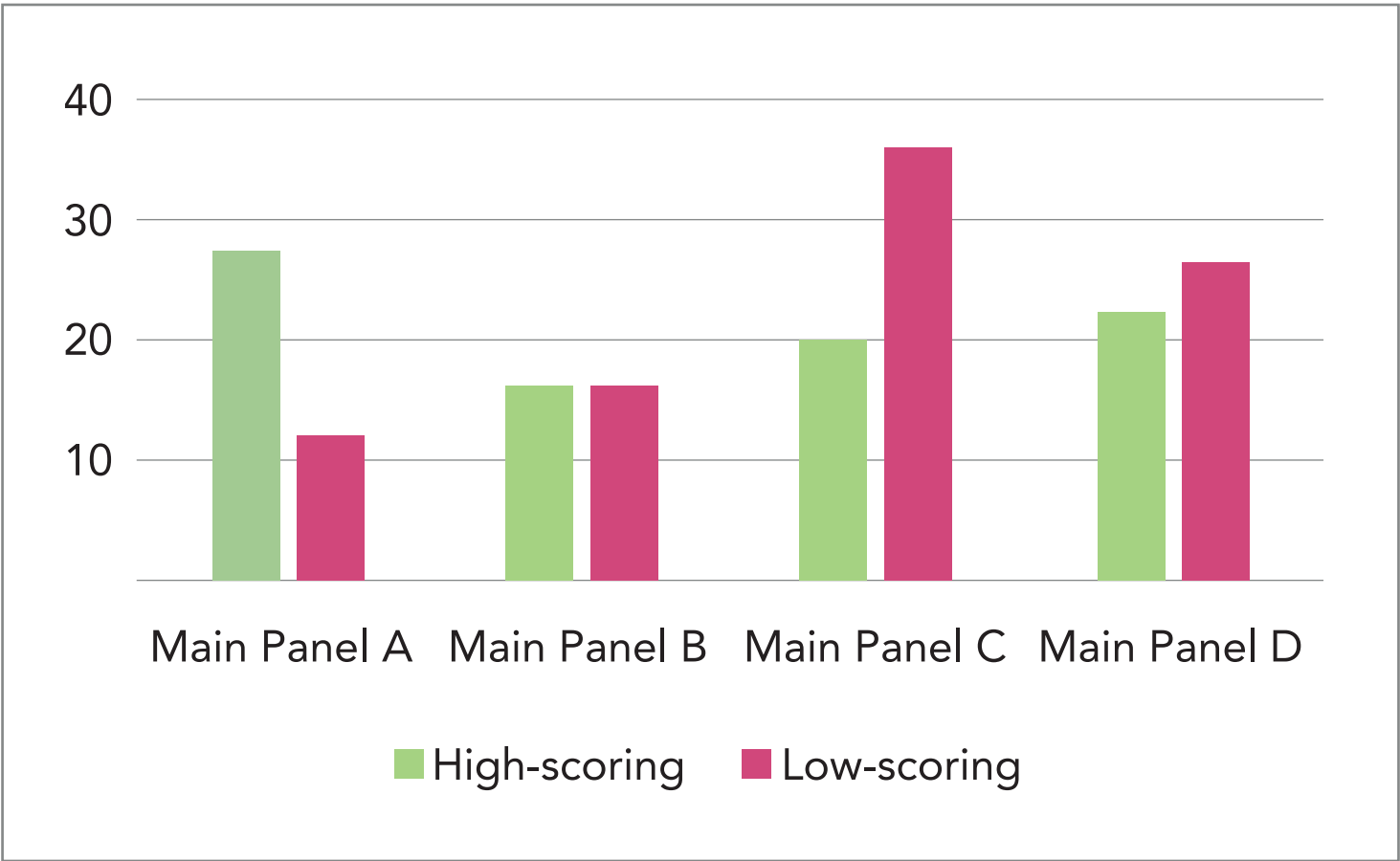


### 4. Were easy to understand and well written

- 53% of low-scoring impact case studies were considered easy to read for a non-specialist audience (compared to 73% high-scoring cases)
- Quantitative linguistic analysis (Reichard, 2017) showed high-scoring case studies were significantly different in their choice of words to the underpinning research they cited (e.g. more direct, plain language), compared to low-scoring case studies that shared many stylistic features in common with their underpinning research (e.g. expressing uncertainty by hedging their statements).



Scores for individual case studies in REF2014 were not made public, but based on the distribution of scores received by some institutions (e.g. where all were given the same score based on publically available data from HEFCE), we identified 175 of the highest and lowest scoring case studies and analysed them using a combination of qualitative thematic analysis and quantitative linguistic analysis. To achieve balance across all Main Panels, the sample included 85% of all known 4\* case studies, supplemented by additional cases from Main Panel B where at least 85% of case studies for a given institution scored 4\* and the remaining cases scored 3\* (n = 85). These were compared with a sample of case studies known to have scored either 1\* or 2\* (n = 90). Initial coding was conducted by 6 coders with intercoder reliability (based on 5% sample) assessed at >90%, with subsequent thematic analysis conducted by two of the coders. In this blog, we present preliminary findings based on the analysis of approximately half the data. Analysis is ongoing and full results will be presented in a peer-reviewed paper later this year.



Reference: Reichard, B (2017). Academic Writing across Genres: Language Choices in Research Articles and Impact Case Studies. Paper presented at CLAVIER conference, Bari, Italy, 1 December 2017

Online version with sharable infographic available at: [www.fasttrackimpact.com/blog](http://www.fasttrackimpact.com/blog)

Cite as: Reed MS, Reichard B, Chubb J, Hall G, Jowett L, Peart A (in prep.) What made a 4\* impact case study in REF2014? Submitting to Palgrave Communications