

# **Understanding Faculty Perceptions Toward Policy Citations:**

A case study at the University of Minnesota and the  
University of New Brunswick

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# Agenda

1. Introduction
2. Overton Grant
3. Methodology
4. Research Questions
5. Discussion/Takeaways
6. Limitations

# Introduction

- General movement toward responsible research evaluation
- Study looks at faculty perceptions of policy citations and engagement
- Overton used for data analysis
  - 24+ million policy documents
  - 193 countries

# Overton Policy Impact Grant

- Available to researchers and practitioners using policy data.
- Enhance the links between research and policy.
- Support knowledge dissemination.



# Methodology

- Identified faculty members with high policy citations using the Overton database
- 5 faculty members participated from the University of Minnesota (3) and University of New Brunswick (2)
- 60-90 minute semi-structured interviews were recorded and transcribed by a student
- 6-Phase Thematic Analysis used for coding methodology

## 6-Phase Thematic Analysis *(Braun & Clarke, 2006)*

**Step 1: Familiarizing yourself  
with your data**

**Step 2: Generating initial codes**

**Step 3: Searching for themes**

**Step 4: Reviewing themes**

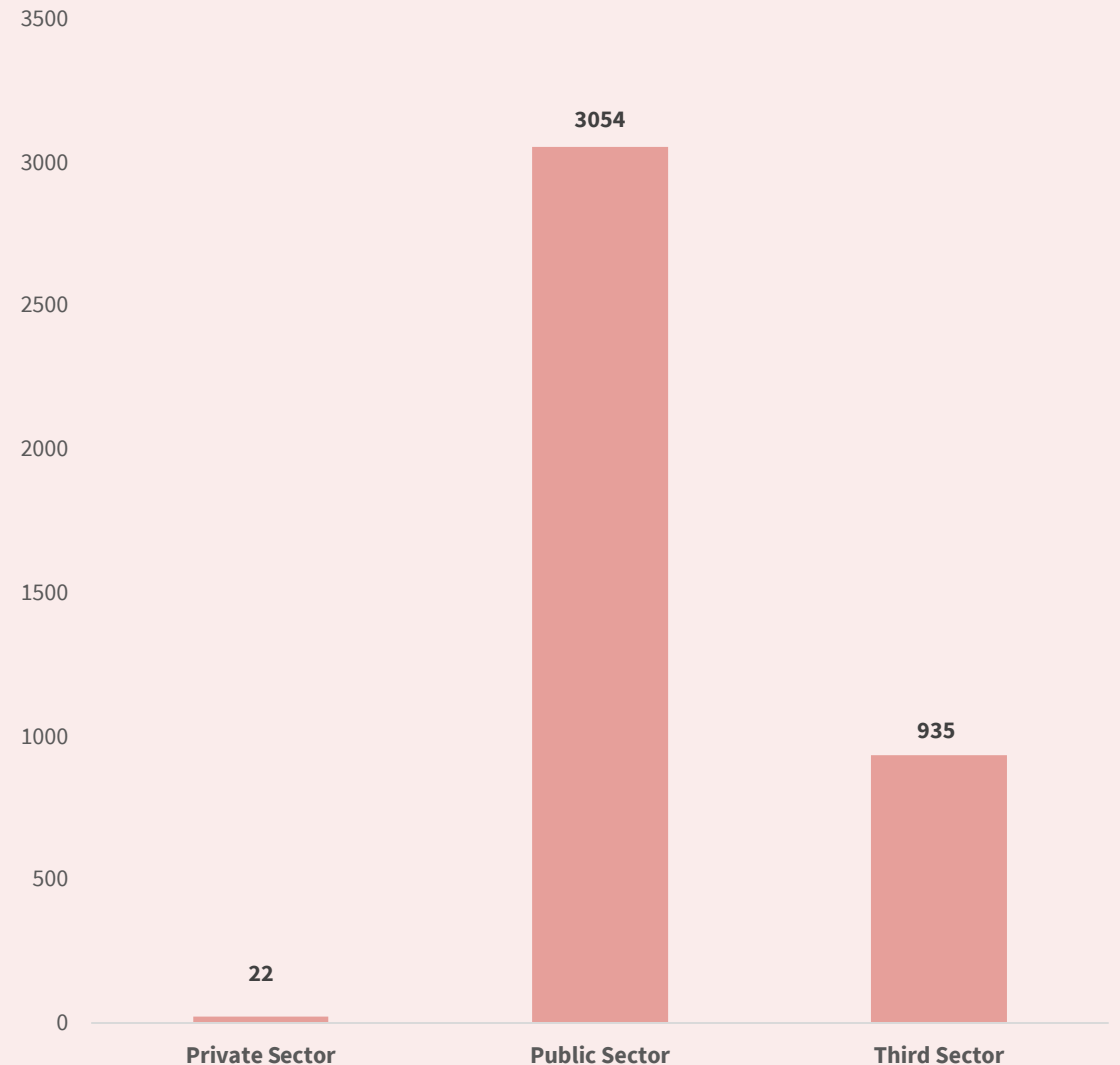
**Step 5: Defining and naming themes**

**Step 6: Producing the report**

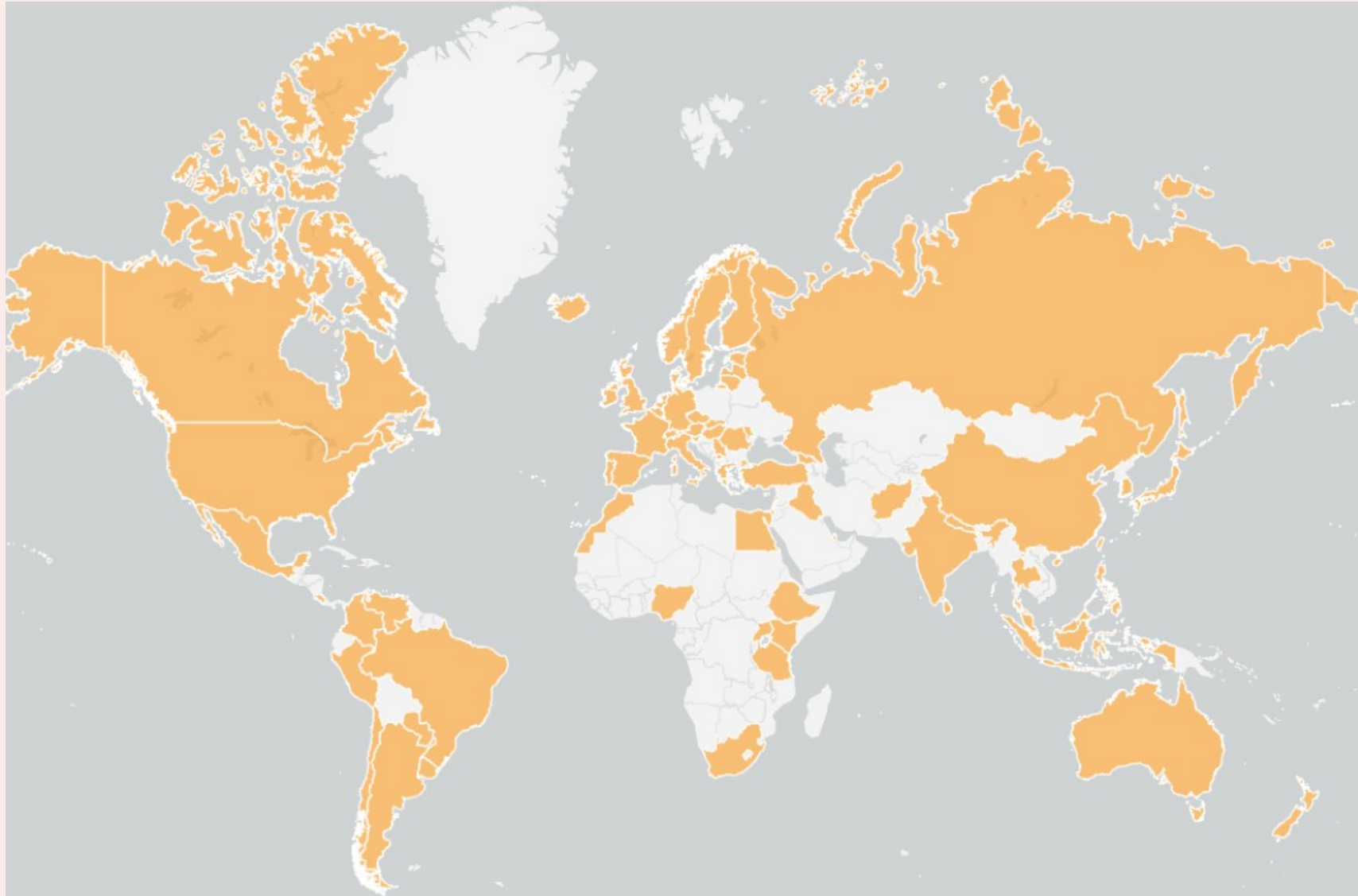
# Citation Trends

- Participants were cited most frequently by the public sector.
- Large geographical reach.
- Journal articles were primary source type cited.
- Participants prefer publishing Open Access.

Number of policy citations, by citing institution type



# Countries Citing Participants' Works



# Research Questions

1. What impact does academic research have on society locally and globally?
2. How do faculty members perceive traditional research metrics? How do they view policy citations and engagement as indicators of impact?
3. How do academic faculty engage with policymakers to influence policymaking?
4. How do academic faculty perceive Open Access (OA) and how does the OA ecosystem influence policymaking efforts?

Themes and Subthemes	Count of Quotes
<b>Open Access</b>	<b>25</b>
Financial Implications	11
Models	7
OA Impact	5
Misc	2
<b>Policy Engagement</b>	<b>46</b>
Policy Impact	6
Policy-maker engagement	25
Processes	2
Writing	9
Institutional Engagement	2
Misc	2
<b>Research and Publications</b>	<b>61</b>
Networks	14
Promotion and Tenure	10
Research Impact	30
Research Quality	3
Discoverability	4
<b>Societal Impact</b>	<b>31</b>
Community	25
Global Impact	2
Libraries	4
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>163</b>

# Theme 1: Societal Impact

- Engagement with policymaking as an avenue for impact on local and global communities.
- Researchers want to address issues rooted in systems of power and capital; but face constraints.
- Funding remains a challenge, and representing the interests of funding agencies.

**“All research is to impact and make our society better.”**

**“All of the research we have been doing, or that I have been leading, was intended to have a societal impact or some policy impact”**

**“Policy and community organizing” is to find information that “might help communities ... figure out what they could potentially do.”**

## Theme 2: Open Access

- Majority of researchers have concerns about OA business models
- OA removes barriers to information and knowledge for researchers, especially on a global scale
- Concern over misuse and quality of open information.

**“It becomes a financial issue when it’s a few thousands dollars as opposed to \$500 dollars... There’s threats I would say for the next couple of years that that could become a consideration.”**

**“I can assure you it’s a better fiscal model for some people and it’s a better political model for some people.”**

**“Really thankful our university has a number of journals available where basically the university has made some kind of a pact or agreement that as long as we publish in those journals it's open access.”**

## Theme 3: Value

- Even for those faculty with numerous policy citations and awareness of altmetrics, only one had heard of policy citations.

**“There is a tool called policy citations, is that what you are saying?” -Participant 1**

**“...I was completely and naively unaware that that sort of thing exists and I spent maybe 5 minutes looking at it and it's like well, cool..” -Participant 4**

**"Now that I am more aware of it, I see that it has great value." -Participant 2**

- Faculty saw value in policy citations. One faculty member even decided to change how they write.

**"Well, I have to say this [Overton] is fascinating.“**

**"I wouldn't say yeah that I used it [Policy Citations] a lot or an I'm expert but I think it's important."**

**“...convinces me like in our future papers we have to have our policy sections to be very very clear. What is the policy implication of our work has to be with clearly written and we have not done enough effort I guess.”**

## Theme 4: P&T

- Most faculty expressed concerns about policy impact mattering in P&T.

**“It has come up, in practice, it still academic publication, impact factor and citation matter most”**

**“I would say yes, that its valued. The tenure code...doesn’t speak to policy. It speaks to productivity....I would say if a person has a really excellent policy influencing record that would be very highly valued...”**

**"...there are people that I think value policies and influence on policy and yet I hear them talking a lot about the h-index and not about some of the other things."**

- Some faculty expressed an inherent conflict between traditional academic work and work designed to impact policy.

**"If you do a purely policy kind of thing, you will be stuck in that. It will be useful but you will not get any street cred in the academic world. On the other hand, you do too much of the academic world, there is this continuous tension on how to balance it."**

**"That's like a side thing, that’s my evening work. Even if I do it during the day I am going to be doing other work and making up for it at night because I have a certain number publications to get promoted."**

## Theme 5: Relationships

- The most cited faculty in our small sample had the weakest relationships to policy makers.

**"If I meet somebody, say I am going to a meeting or whatever, and I meet somebody who is a policy maker who is working in that field, there will be a conversation about that work."**

**"Then we got invitation to the local First Nation."**

**"... we get ... almost weekly requests there [government meetings]. Can you come and contribute?"**

- Three faculty take a number of steps to expand their reach beyond academia: social media, policy briefs, videos, LinkedIn, reports, datasets, blog posts, lay person summaries.

**"One representative was on the floor talking about some concerns ..., so we pulled her off the floor and we were like we have research that addresses your concerns...So many of the legislators aren't aware of the research that's happening at the university or school."**

# Limitations

- Limited sample size
- Short timeline for completion
- Dataset limitations
  - Citation detection
  - Language and geography
  - Later publications
- Misunderstandings about key concepts, like Open Access
- Focus on highly cited participants
- Different geographies and types of institutions

# Conclusion

- Faculty members are influenced by policy citations in a variety of ways:
  - Publishing habits and behaviours
  - Work with communities
  - Collaboration with other academics and policymakers
  - Measuring impact for promotion and tenure
- More research is needed to understand broader impact

# Thank you

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# References

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