

The Impact of Ageing Research within the Research Excellence Framework 2021: an evaluation

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The BSG commissioned an evaluation of the role of ageing research within REF2021 impact case studies.

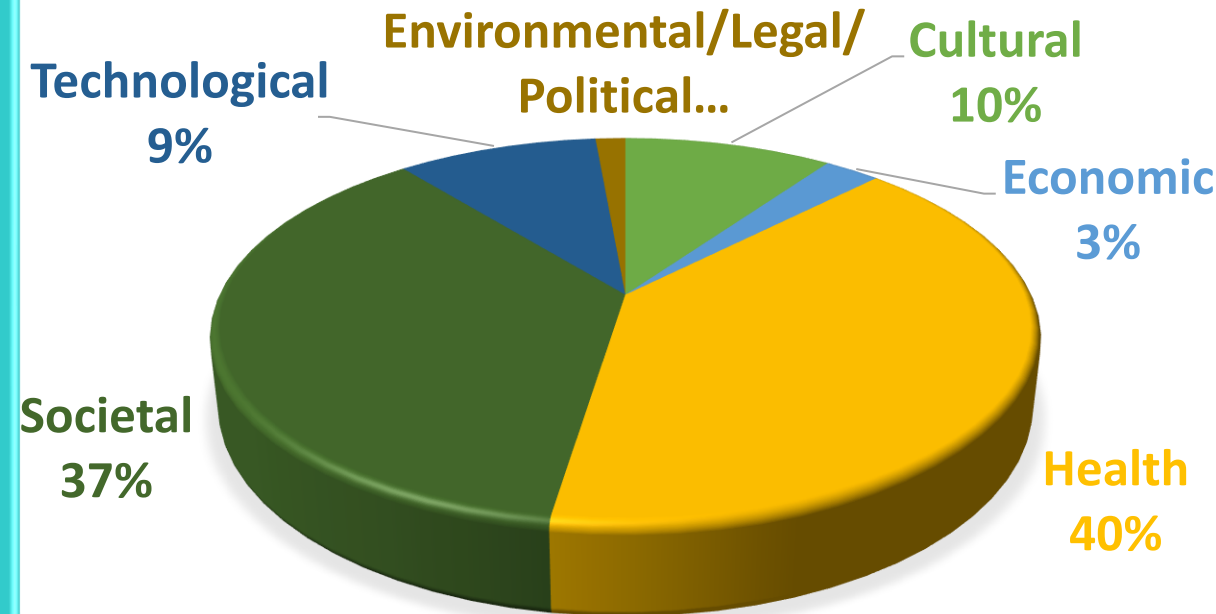
Aim

To consider the content, significance and reach of research concerning ageing outlined in the REF 2021 impact case studies.

Objectives

1. To consider the range of Units of Assessment (UoAs) engaged with ageing and later life research.
2. To consider the role of social gerontology in the impact of interdisciplinary or cross-sector research.
3. To analyse how impact has been addressed within a sub-sample of case studies.
4. To consider how this analysis may be of value to members of the BSG and others involved in research about ageing and later life.

572 impact case studies related to ageing and later life identified (8.4% of 6,781 case studies submitted, up from 4.7% in REF 2014)



Ageing Impact is in 33 out of 34 UoAs

Phase 2: Qualitative data: A purposive sample of 25 impact case studies

Example ICSs and Summary Impact	How?
<p>Falls prevention amongst older people: Increased reach and further impact of interventions, uptake and adherence. U of Manchester, Panel A.</p> <p>Reduced burden of falls in the UK and worldwide;</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Collaborative 2) Worked with technology company 3) Informed policy & Engaged with policymakers 4) Implementation support 5) Data to demonstrate benefits – e.g. RoI, 6) Timeliness - Covid-19 risk of deconditioning and falls 7) Active dissemination
<p>Improving the lives of older people in Kenya, U of Southampton, Panel C.</p> <p>Evaluation and impact on development of Older person cash transfer programme (OPCTP) in Kenya; Impact on decision to roll out new universal non-means tested benefit to all >70s</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Engagement with policy makers; briefing paper 2) Dissemination to key world and African policy groups: 3) IAA to strengthen policy networks and to work directly with World Economic Forum Global Agenda Council on Ageing.
<p>CINAGE: Creative Approaches to the Active Ageing Agenda through Film and Theatre-making, Leeds Beckett U, Panel D: helped older people in the UK and Romania become more independent, confident, mentally agile and socially connected. Raised awareness of older people’s experiences.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Collaborative – 7 EU project partners. 2) Participatory - involvement of older people 3) Active public dissemination 4) Resources to support implementation 5) Data to demonstrate benefits - external independent evaluation
<p>Designing socially intelligent adaptive systems to inform commercial AI development and engage the public in debates over human-robot interaction; U of Hertfordshire, Panel B:</p> <p>New concepts for design and industry standards for personal care robots.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Research took place concurrently with engagement to raise public awareness and explore the ethical and technical challenges of human/robot interaction. 2) Media dissemination

Key points from ICS sample

Main research funders

A diverse range of funders. In the majority of cases, the ICSs were based on a series of awards. In some instances, there was specific funding to support impact (Impact Acceleration Accounts).

Evidence of collaborative work 100% (25/25) indicate some degree of collaborative involvement, increased from 79% in the REF 2014.

International reach

76% (19/25) of the impact case studies refer to an international dimension to the research.

Timescale between research and impact

For 56% of the case studies (14/25) the timescale between research and impact is between 1-4 years. The average timescale in the sample is 5.0 years.

Teams or individuals?

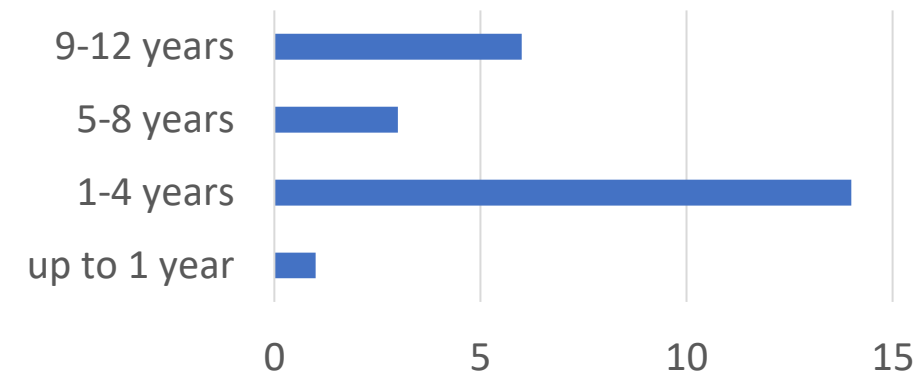
23 ICSs were based on the work of researchers/ projects/ teams which include those beyond the submitting institution, 2 were based on the work of one research team. None were based on a single researcher.

Participation and engagement with older people?

52% (13/25) of case studies make explicit reference to this representing an increase from the REF 2014 (32%). Included user-centred design, co-design of research and interventions, participatory performances, creation of cultural artefacts, international collaborations, experiences of marginalised groups and Intergenerational activities.

Active efforts made by researchers and teams provide indication of the commitment, perseverance and enthusiasm of researchers for generating impact from research.

Indicative time between research and impact



Conclusions

Disciplinary involvement in ageing research is shifting: other disciplines are joining the traditional preponderance of social sciences, BUT, greater engagement of the social sciences in health-related research was apparent, which has been stimulated to some extent by research funders. Although 'Health' remains the most commonly occurring category of impact, it is closely followed by 'societal' (40% and 37% of the case studies respectively). The increase recognises the growing recognition of a need for societal impact.

Underpinning research is multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary. Impact is underpinned by collaborative and partnership activities including a wide range of stakeholders. The role of organisations and agencies concerned with older people remains pivotal.

The richness and variety illustrated in the case studies highlights **how research can benefit the lives of older people and their families and carers. The REF impact case studies are to be celebrated.**

We hope this report will initiate an invitation for further dialogue across disciplinary areas and with stakeholders. The overview of ageing research across the case studies indicates that major challenges and opportunities presented by age and ageing in society benefit from collaborations which bring together multiple perspectives.