**The Role of Academic Research in Policymaking:**

**Insights from Complementary Surveys.**

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Abstract

*This article explores the area of research engagement between two very important communities in the Canadian public policy landscape: academics and senior public service executives. Using data from two surveys we argue that the two communities live in a ‘marriage of indifference’ situation. While there does not seem to be a strong cleavage between the two groups, they also tend to come together mostly under very specific conditions.*

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**The Role of Academic Research in Policymaking**

**Introduction**

In the political science literature there are various voices, both anecdotal and analytical that describe the challenges in establishing solid engagement between the academic community on the one hand and government and administrative officials on the other. It is also clear that they exist in a relational state and the nature of that relationship is the focus of this article.

Undoubtedly, the two communities have different goals and methodologies. How they relate raises a variety of questions such as what is the role of evidence-based policy making in the public sector, or whether academia can remain relevant to administrative work, especially at a time when Schools of Public Policy and Public Administration appear to be increasingly central in the educational landscape.

A fair amount of research looks at evidence-based policy-making (Jennings and Hall 2012; Howlett and Newman 2010; Likens, 2010; Lingard 2013; Head 2014). The approach looms large in the Canadian and international contexts (Vishwanath and Hakem Zadeh 2012; Young 2013) and yet, over the years, various authors have looked at the actual results and found a gap between promise and results (Head 2010a; Corbett and Bogenschneider 2011; Cartwright and Hardie 2012; Hammersley 2013) and highlighted the very complex nature and approaches to the subject matter of diverse policy communities (i.e., academia, government, NGOs) which makes enduring and frequent contacts difficult to establish (Head 2015a; Head *et al* 2014). The emergence of the concept of a research-policy gap has in itself stimulated a thriving academic publishing niche (Head 2010b; Khan *et al* 2014; Cherney *et al*  2012; Newman 2014; van der Arend 2014).

While this is an interesting line of analysis, here we wish to focus on a different approach. In particular we look at how these two communities, which we can describe as both including leaders in the field, interact with one another. When we embarked in this research project, we knew anecdotally that the connections between academia and the public service had become cooler in the last decade. At the same time, there is no doubt that the rise of concepts like performance management and evidence-based policy-making had created a demand for policy advice and research (Howlett and Migone 2014; Howlett and Newmann 2010). We had a two-fold goal: first we wanted to assess the type of relationships that existed between these two communities. Second we wanted to explore the reasons underpinning these relations. These are our operational hypotheses:

* **HYP 1**: we argue that *academia is not the primary provider of advice and research for public servants*;

We believe that this situation depends on a variety of interconnected factors. These include the regulatory frameworks that have affected research and communication approaches. Aside from internal rules, we should note the 2009 Government of Canada Communication Strategy and the Tri-Council Ethics Policy. A second factor that we believe affects the first hypothesis is the increased ‘political’ control over the activities of individual public servants. (making them less likely to bear the scrutiny associated with new research). Finally, we believe that a general dissonance between the focus and timing of academic research and the research that is most useful to public servants may affect this relationship.

* **HYP 2**: we argue that *the level of the jurisdiction (i.e., Federal as opposed to Provincial or Territorial) should matter in the type of relationship.*

We believe that the two levels have cognate but different approaches to research and capacities. This should function to produce detectable differences in approach.

* **HYP 3**: we argue that *the topic areas should matter.*

Topic areas should matter because with an increased focus on outsourcing knowledge production by the public service the favored model to obtain research has been contracting. As attention cycles and the need for specific pools of knowledge change, the public service is more likely to solicit certain types of information.

* **HYP 4**: we argue that, because of the often-different focus of academic research and public service research, *research engagement will likely be highly concentrated in a small group of academics.*

Finally we believe that because of the shift from knowledge production to knowledge management noted above, the public service is more receptive to a ‘consulting’ model of outsourcing. Often, the latter is relatively different from the activities of academics. Therefore, we believe that academics will be comparatively disadvantaged in this market.

We hope that this effort will encourage further discussion about these relationships. The article is organized in three sections. The next one offers a quick introduction to the nature of our surveys. The following section draws out some of the more interesting comparative results from the preceding data, and finally some conclusions are offered.

**The Surveys and Respondents’ Profiles**

In mid-2014, the Institute of Public Administration of Canada (IPAC) launched its latest survey of senior executives (Deputy Ministers, Chief Administrative Officer of major cities, and Chairs, CEOs and Heads of agencies, boards and committees). Among the inquiries that the survey contained, two sets of questions were designed to measure the type, depth, and frequency of engagement that existed between the academic community and practitioners. During May 2015, a second survey was administered to academics, who specialize in public policy, public administration, and political science. Besides mirroring the two questions that were asked in the public executives survey about engagement, the latter survey also expanded on the terms of engagement, contracting and connection between the two communities.

The 2014 survey covers four countries: Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United Arab Emirates. Each of the four countries response sets accounts for 25% of the weight in the model.[[1]](#footnote-1) The following response rates were obtained for the Canadian samples. [[2]](#footnote-2)

*Table 1. Response rates for the surveys – Canada*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Surveys Mailed | Usable Answers | Response Rate |
| Executives | 471 | 190 | 40.3% |
| Academics | 1,654 | 374 | 22.6% |

*Profiles of Respondents*

For the 2014 Canadian Government Executive Survey, the majority of respondents came from Provincial and territorial governments, very low response rates were collected from non-departmental organizations and Crown Corporation. A lower than hoped for response rate also came from local governments.

Regarding the sample of academics who were sent the survey, we chose to include all faculty in Canadian universities who belonged to Departments of Political Science/Political Studies, Public Administration, and to Schools of Public Policy and Public Administration who could be found on the website of these institutions. This meant that we included a very diverse set of specializations along with the full spectrum of faculty positions (including policy fellows, retired and emeriti professors, and so forth).

Our sample choice was based on two major reflections. The first one was practical: the collection of contact information for this group was easy enough, but extending it to science faculties, faculties of economics and business administration/management would have made the task very onerous. We are convinced that doing so in the future would provide important data and we would encourage this step. The second reason rests with our own professional identification as political scientists and public policy specialists. Because of it, we are very keenly interested in exploring the contribution of our community to research engagement.

Both sets of results are best analyzed at the national level, since some of the provinces and territories struggled to provide sufficient responses to be statistically relevant. The demographics of the respondents did not provide great surprises.

*Table 2. Age and Gender Distribution – Canada*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Executives | | Academics | |
|  | M | F | M | F |
| Less than 30 years old | 0.0%  (0) | 0.0%  (0) | 0.5%  (1) | 0.9%  (1) |
| 30-39 years old | 1.0%  (1) | 6.1%  (3) | 11.9%  (26) | 29.6%  (34) |
| 40-49 years old | 28.6%  (30) | 20.4%  (10) | 30.3%  (66) | 33.9%  (39) |
| 50-55 year old | 33.3%  (35) | 36.7%  (18) | 16.5%  (36) | 15.6%  (18) |
| Over 55 | 37.1%  (39) | 36.7%  (18) | 40.8%  (89) | 20.0%  (23) |

As can be seen from this comparison, there is divergence in terms of age difference distribution both within the academic respondents and between samples. Women tend to have higher numbers compared to men in the younger age groups; almost no executives are under 40 years of age. In the over 55 category for academics the difference is extremely pronounced.

With regards to the place of work of the respondents, those who specified it overwhelmingly teach in Departments of political science and policy studies (65%). About 17% works in Schools of Public Policy and Public Administration. Academic respondents were mostly tenured professors and many tended to belong to the group that was already established career-wise – Full Professors (32.3%) and Associate Professors (36.0%). Interestingly enough few public servants in residence and fellows answered the survey (0.6%).

In terms of fields of analysis, the academic respondents were allowed to indicate up to three fields of research in which they operated. The most common answers are summarized in the following table.

*Table 3. Top Four Fields of Research*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1st Choice | 2nd Choice | 3rd Choice | Total |
| Public Policy and Policy Analysis | 53 | 64 | 22 | 139 |
| Canadian Government and Politics | 55 | 28 | 24 | 107 |
| International Relations and International Studies | 49 | 28 | 14 | 91 |
| Public Administration | 34 | 22 | 10 | 66 |

Finally we inquired about whether any of the respondents had had any previous employment in government. Only 38 respondents skipped this answer and 120 (35.7%) answered positively. Multiple choices were available and therefore the sum of the percentages in the chart is larger than 100%.

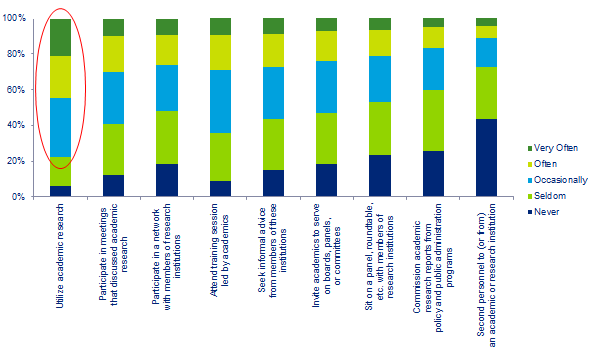
*Table 4. Previous Employment in Government – Canadian Academics*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Percentage |
| Federal Government | 62.7% |
| Provincial and Territorial Government | 49.2% |
| Local Government | 11.9% |
| Non-Departmental Bodies | 5.1% |
| Crown Corporation | 2.5% |

Among this group, 58.3% of respondents spent five years or less in government employment but 29.2% were there for over ten years. In terms of their positions, almost 24% reached the level of Director General or higher. While the two groups present some differences (for example in the gender/age make ups), both seem to represent senior cadres who are professionally familiar with policy activity. We also think that the two groups are functionally interested in cooperating, but it is likely that what are considered as ‘appropriate’ or ‘sustainable’ engagement levels (i.e., the frequency and intensity of the engagement) will be perceived as different by different groups.

**The Presence of Research in Evidence-Based Policy-making in Canada**

In this section we present first the results from the global sample of the senior executive survey, followed by the responses of Canadian senior executives and finally the results from our survey of academics. The global sample contains the equally weighed results of the four countries in which the survey was administered (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United Arab Emirates).

*Figure 7. Type of Engagement with the Academic World – Global Sample*

*Source: Question 9 – Public Service Executive Survey*

Respondents are most likely to use of published academic research (papers, journal articles, and the like). It was reported by 78% of respondents that they utilize academic research at least “occasionally.” While most respondents have, at one time or another, engaged with the academic community, ongoing collaborative relationships are not exceedingly common. Only 27%“often” seek advice from academic institutions and only 26%“often” participate in a network with members of research institutions. These results are not totally unexpected. High frequencies of interaction (more than twice per month) tend to be restricted to the use of academic literature and informal management: training engagements and inviting academics to serve on boards and panels are also relatively common for this group. However, very few cases are extant of governments commissioning research on policy from academics.

We asked the same questions of Canadian public executives and as we can see below the set of answers was very similar.

*Figure 2. Type of Engagement with the Academic World – Canadian Sample (Public Service Executive)*

*Source: Question 9 – Public Service Executive Survey*

Tables 5 & 6 below examine the responses from public service executives and academics on the engagement that exists between the two communities. We immediately note that there is a broad discrepancy in the ‘Never’ category, with often more than 30 percentage points of difference. Part of the reason is embedded in the fact that academic respondents for this survey represent only a subset of all academics (political science, public policy and public administration). However, these responses still indicate that many academics have relatively infrequent engagement with the public service.

However, frequencies of engagement can be considered relatively high for some of the areas of engagement. For example, it is unlikely that an agency or department would often second personnel to an academic unit considering the complexity of the arrangement, so numbers on that area should not be considered damning. Academics are relatively unlikely to sit on boards, panels or committees, nor do they attend many workshops or training sessions with public servants. It is also uncommon for them to receive requests for the production of research reports from public service officials. The most common activities for these groups are of an informal kind: participating in networks and offering/being requested informal advice.

*Table 5. Research Engagement – Canadian Academics*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Never** | **Seldom**  **(not more than twice per year)** | **Occasionally**  **(at least every three months)** | **Often**  **(at least every month)** | **Very Often**  **(more than twice per month)** |
| Receive an invitation from members of the public service to serve on boards, panels, or committees | 57.6% | 27.6% | 10.8% | 2.9% | 1.2% |
| Participate in meetings that discussed academic research with members of the public service | 40.2% | 38.4% | 14.5% | 4.3% | 2.6% |
| Attend workshop/training session with members of the public service | 52.2% | 31.8% | 13.4% | 1.7% | 0.9% |
| Receive a request for research or research reports from members of the public service | 51.2% | 31.4% | 14.8% | 1.7% | 0.9% |
| Provide informal advice to members of the public service | 38.8% | 31.8% | 16.9% | 6.7% | 5.8% |
| Participate in a network with members of the public service | 42.8% | 29.9% | 15.0% | 7.6% | 4.7% |
| Sit on a panel, roundtable, etc. with members of the public service | 43.7% | 38.5% | 12.0% | 4.7% | 1.2% |
| Second personnel to (or from) a government agency or administrative unit | 88.8% | 8.2% | 1.8% | 0.3% | 0.9% |

*Table 6. Research Engagement – Canadian Public Service Executives*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Never** | **Seldom**  **(not more than twice per year)** | **Occasionally**  **(at least every three months)** | **Often**  **(at least every month)** | **Very Often**  **(more than twice per month)** | |
| Invite academics to serve on boards, panels, or committees | 13.1% | 25.6% | 35.7% | 20.2% | | 5.4% |
| Participate in meetings that discussed academic research | 6.5% | 30.4% | 28.6% | 25.6% | | 8.9% |
| Attend workshop/training session led by academics | 6.0% | 28.7% | 38.9% | 17.4% | | 9.0% |
| Commission academic research reports from policy and public administration schools/programs | 16.2% | 41.3% | 26.9% | 10.8% | | 4.8% |
| Seek informal advice from members of these institutions | 6.5% | 29.8% | 30.4% | 23.2% | | 10.1% |
| Participate in a network with members of research institutions | 11.4% | 32.9% | 28.7% | 15.6% | | 11.4% |
| Sit on a panel, roundtable, etc. with members of research institutions | 17.9% | 31.5% | 29.8% | 14.3% | | 6.5% |
| Second personnel to (or from) an academic or research institution | 39.3% | 34.5% | 18.5% | 4.2% | | 3.6% |

With regard to differences between the two groups in key areas, we note that commissioning academic research is the second least common type of engagement for both groups after seconding personnel (a logical outcome). However, informal advice and participating in a network are comparatively very high. For executives, the most frequent activity (once again measured as the sum of the Often and Very Often responses) is participation in meetings that discuss academic research.

*Table 7. Key Areas of Engagement – Differences between the two communities*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Academics** | **Executives** | **Percentage Difference Executives vs Academics** | ***Factor Multiplier for Executives*** |
| Participate in meetings that discuss academic research | 7% | 35% | 28% | *5* |
| Seek/Provide informal advice | 12% | 33% | 21% | *2* |
| Participate in a network | 13% | 27% | 14% | *2* |
| Provide/Commission academic research reports | 3% | 16% | 13% | *5* |

Besides the evident percentage differences in the responses, which are all in the double digits it is interesting to see how very high are the factor differences for these activities. At a minimum, academics report activity half as frequent as executives; at worst they report just 20% of that activity.

The table below highlights the differences in responses between the academic community and the executives along all questions. We have slightly modified the variables’ names in the table because they reflect specular engagement types. For example executives were asked how often they invite academics to serve on boards, panels, or committees, while academics were asked how often they were invited to serve there. The values reflect a simple subtraction of the response values (academics value – executives value), so for the first variable in the ‘Never’ column academics is the result of 13.1% - 57.6% = -44.6%.

*Table 8. Areas of Engagement – Differences between Academics and Executives*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Never** | **Seldom**  **(not more than twice per year)** | **Occasionally**  **(at least every three months)** | **Often**  **(at least every month)** | **Very Often**  **(more than twice per month)** | |
| Invite academics/ being invited to serve on boards, panels, or committees | -44.6% | -1.6% | 25.2% | 17.1% | | 3.8% |
| Participate in meetings that discussed academic research | -33.2% | -8.4% | 14.5% | 21.7% | | 6.4% |
| Attend workshop/training sessions led by academics/Lead workshop/training sessions | -46.2% | -2.8% | 25.6% | 15.3% | | 8.1% |
| Commission/Being requested academic research reports from policy and public administration schools/programs | -35.2% | 9.6% | 12.2% | 9.3% | | 4.1% |
| Seek/Give informal advice from members of these institutions | -31.8% | -1.8% | 13.1% | 16.3% | | 4.2% |
| Participate in a network with members of research institutions/Executives | -31.8% | 3.1% | 14.0% | 8.4% | | 6.3% |
| Sit on a panel, roundtable, etc. with members of research institutions/Executives | -25.7% | -6.5% | 18.0% | 9.3% | | 5.8% |
| Second personnel to (or from) an academic or research institution | -49.8% | 26.8% | 16.2% | 3.7% | | 3.1% |

These patterns seem to imply that there is a polarization of these of engagement: a smaller percentage of academics in our sample take part in them than public sector executives and the frequency of their engagement is lower.

*Engagement with Non-Profit and the Private Sector*

Our survey also enabled us to compare how frequently the two communities engaged with the non-profit and the private sector.

*Table 9. Engagement with the Non-Profit and Private Sector*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Never** | **Seldom (not more than twice per year)** | **Occasionally (at least every three months)** | **Often**  **(at least every month)** | **Very Often (more than twice per month)** |
| *Canadian Public Service Executives* |  |  |  |  |  |
| Engage with non-academic actors like social enterprises and not-profit? | 5.4% | 16.7% | 38.1% | 25.0% | 14.9% |
| Engage with the private sector? | 2.4% | 9.8% | 14.0% | 34.1% | 39.6% |
| *Canadian Academics* |  |  |  |  |  |
| Engage with non-academic actors like social enterprises and not-profit? | 33.8% | 29.7% | 19.1% | 10.3% | 7.1% |
| Engage with the private sector? | 56.9% | 27.7% | 11.2% | 3.2% | 0.9% |

Public service executives have a much higher frequency of contact with both communities. This is unsurprising considering that often academic work is extremely focused and specialized and that the main drivers of promotion and tenure both are academic production and publications. So for academics, often enough, the third sector and the private sector are a subject of study rather than a partner. For the public service the equation is often reversed. Hence, in an age of New Public Management principles, engagement with these realities is much more frequent and – most likely – much more substantial than with academia. Once again, it may be naïve to expect that academia would be able to match engagement with the private sector, but it should be able to score a bit better with the non-profit sector.

Finally, we can assess the relative frequency with which academics and public service executives engage in research with (or about) one another. In table 10 below, we can see how a fair amount of academic respondents (about 53%) has in the past year engaged in surveying or interviewing members of the public service. This appears to be a relatively high percentage of direct research emerging from this sample. However, among academics, it is less common to partner with a public servant to engage in this research: only about 34% of them did in the past 12 months. Conversely, the respondents of the survey and their senior staff often engaged and participated in academic research in large numbers: 89% of them reported such an engagement in the previous year.

*Table 10. Research Engagement by Partner Type*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Never** | **Seldom (not more than twice per year)** | **Occasionally (at least every three months)** | **Often**  **(at least every month)** | **Very Often (more than twice per month)** |
| *Canadian Academics* |  |  |  |  |  |
| Did you partner with a member of the public service in undertaking academic research that included contact with members of government or the public administration? | 65.8% | 18.1% | 8.5% | 5.6% | 2.0% |
| Did you actually engage (performing the research) in academic research that included either surveying or interviewing members of government or the public administration? | 46.9% | 27.7% | 14.0% | 7.0% | 4.4% |
| *Canadian Public Service Executives* |  |  |  |  |  |
| Participate or engage in academic research, excluding participation in this research survey? | 10.7% | 33.3% | 37.5% | 13.1% | 5.4% |

When we look at this data, considering that such research is often time-consuming to design and implement, we have strong rates of engagement from our academic sample, with at least 11% showing a constant engagement; over 18% of executives do the same. All and all these appear to be strong numbers.

*Research Approaches*

In our survey of academics we were able to ask questions about the perceived trajectory of the relationship between the two communities in the recent past and about the way in which the research engagement was actually structured. In this section, first we explore the general responses of academics about the state and recent trajectory of their relationship with the public service. After this introduction, we look in sequence at how research is done, at whether academics bid on research contracts (an increasing common way of securing research for the public sector) and at the nature of the relationship between the two communities.

With regard to the current state of the relationship between the two communities when engaging in research, academics are almost evenly split in three groups as we can see from Table 11 below. This seems to indicate that, while there is room for improvement, for a substantial group there is a strong sensation that the public service is well disposed towards research.

*Table 11. Level of Satisfaction Engaging the Public Service in Academic Research*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Response Percent** | **Response Count** |
| Very Dissatisfied | 9.0% | 27 |
| Dissatisfied | 18.0% | 54 |
| Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied | 38.3% | 115 |
| Satisfied | 28.0% | 84 |
| Very Satisfied | 6.7% | 20 |

The respondents offered some nuances in their comments from which it emerged that federal public servants were more difficult to engage with those from other jurisdictions. Generally there was also a sense that academic research was not very interesting to public servants.

Next we asked how academics perceived the change in quality of that engagement over the span of the previous five years. Only 14.6% of respondents felt that it had improved in any way, while 46.9% felt it had become worse.

*Table 12. In the Past 5 Years the Level of Engagement with the Public Service became*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Response Percent** | **Response Count** |
| Much Worse | 19.0% | 56 |
| Worse | 27.9% | 82 |
| Remained the same | 38.4% | 113 |
| Better | 11.9% | 35 |
| Much Better | 2.7% | 8 |

This question received 84 comments from the respondents, allowing us to delve in more detail into the perceptions of academics in this area. We should note that while there are some challenges that are emerging notwithstanding the continued engagement. From a very general point of view, these answers tell us that academics see the public service as having become more inward-looking, having lost the capacity and/or the desire to participate in research undertaken by academics. In a word, there is more reticence towards academia, the reasons for which are variously attributed. Many academics felt that public servants operated in an environment that placed increased restrictions on their capacity to participate in research.

These impediments ranged from budget pressure to increased media scrutiny, to strong political controls over communication. However, alongside this ‘loss of capacity’ explanation, we also find a ‘cultural’ one. The latter ascribes the reduced quality and scope of interactions among these communities to an increased anti-academic turn in both public servants and politicians. The notion that academic evidence and methods are unwelcome is often noted about the federal level. Here the impression is that there may be first a political dimension to this approach: i.e., that elected federal officials and their political staffers may be the source of these new rules of engagement with academics. The second, and a minority view, is that this approach may actually have become embedded in at least some administrators.

We also noticed a perception that at the federal level avenues for collaboration that existed a few years back have disappeared. While these statements would need increased testing and research, it is interesting to note them because they seem to speak against two important trends that have emerged in the research field in recent years. The first is the increasing relevance of geographically and organizationally distributed networks and pipelines of research. The second is the focus on triple-helix models of research and innovation. This would be an interesting trend if we could find further evidence for it, since for many years the notion of knowledge transfer towards government (as opposed to the process of knowledge creation internal to the public service) has been very important to many public administrations. Our study appears to indicate that, especially at the federal level, academic research is not seen as the preferred source for knowledge transfer.

Now we begin to examine how the existing engagement takes place. Our next step was to analyze the methods more often used by our respondents to engage in research about and with the public service. Table 13 below patterns both the attempted and the successful tools used in this field. As we can see, interviews and informal discussions are the most used tools. This seems to confirm the findings from the IPAC Public Executive Survey especially with regard to informal connections. Survey instruments are not used particularly often. We should also note that there are relatively high success ratios with regard to all instruments used so we could assume that researchers have a good understanding of what approaches or research tools best work in their specific research environment.

*Table 13. Instruments used by Academics in their Research Engagement*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Attempting Research** | | **Successful Research** | |
|  | **Response Percent** | **Response Count** | **Response Percent** | **Response Count** |
| Survey Instrument | 19.8% | 50 | 17.2% | 42 |
| Interview | 72.6% | 183 | 71.7% | 175 |
| Focus Group | 11.1% | 28 | 10.2% | 25 |
| Case Study | 29.8% | 75 | 27.5% | 67 |
| Informal Discussion | 63.5% | 160 | 61.9% | 151 |
| Other Qualitative Instruments | 6.0% | 15 | 5.3% | 13 |
| Other Quantitative Instruments | 6.0% | 15 | 6.1% | 15 |

We then asked our respondents how often they engaged in work with the various orders of government (Aboriginal, local, provincial and territorial, and federal). This question was designed to measure how far the academic community is from what appears to be the dominant model of research management for many governments: contracting out.

We did not expect that even a large minority of academics would maintain high frequencies of engagement here because of the nature of career progression in academia. We asked how often academics engaged in bidding on competitively advertised government contracts, how often they had been selected for a sole-source contract and how often they had provided policy analysis advice. The next four tables (14a to 14d) break down these results by order of government.

*Table 14a. Over the past two years have often have you – Federal Government*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Never** | **Seldom (not more than twice per year)** | **Occasionally (at least every three months)** | **Often**  **(at least every month)** | **Very Often (more than twice per month)** |
| Bid on a competitive contract | 81.4% | 15.8% | 2.4% | 0.3% | - |
| Been selected for a sole source contract | 80.8% | 16.7% | 2.1% | 0.3% | - |
| Provided policy analysis | 77.7% | 19.6% | 2.7% | - | - |

*Table 14b. Over the past two years have often have you – Provincial/Territorial Government*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Never** | **Seldom (not more than twice per year)** | **Occasionally (at least every three months)** | **Often**  **(at least every month)** | **Very Often (more than twice per month)** |
| Bid on a competitive contract | 84.4% | 12.9% | 2.4% | 0.3% | - |
| Been selected for a sole source contract | 85.0% | 13.2% | 1.8% | - | - |
| Provided policy analysis | 84.5% | 13.7% | 1.2% | 0.6% | - |

*Table 14c. Over the past two years have often have you – Local Government*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Never** | **Seldom (not more than twice per year)** | **Occasionally (at least every three months)** | **Often**  **(at least every month)** | **Very Often (more than twice per month)** |
| Bid on a competitive contract | 93.0% | 7.0% | - | - | - |
| Been selected for a sole source contract | 92.6% | 7.1% | 0.3% | - | - |
| Provided policy analysis | 91.1% | 8.6% | 0.3% | - | - |

*Table 14d. Over the past two years have often have you– Aboriginal Government*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Never** | **Seldom (not more than twice per year)** | **Occasionally (at least every three months)** | **Often**  **(at least every month)** | **Very Often (more than twice per month)** |
| Bid on a competitive contract | 96.4% | 3.0% | 0.6% | - | - |
| Been selected for a sole source contract | 95.1% | 3.7% | 0.9% | 0/3% | - |
| Provided policy analysis | 95.1% | 4.3% | 0.3% | 0.3% | - |

**Conclusions**

A very important part of the engagement between our subset of academics (Public Policy, Public Administration and Political Science) falls in the more informal area. In practice, this means that participation in networks and the offering/request of informal advice are the most frequent areas of interaction between these communities.

As part of a strong evidence-based approach to policy-making we would expect a fair level of consumption of research on the part of the policy makers: this we find to be in place. For example, over the previous 12 months, over a third of Canadian public service executives participate Often or Very Often in meetings that discuss academic research, and only seven percent never did. However, we would require further research to determine the quality and impact of these discussions.

Important elements of the process of policy advice that fuels an evidence-based approach are the source of that advice and whether that source is further involved in the discussion and evaluation of research materials. With regard to the academic group we find that about 60% of those who answered our survey have participated in meeting with public servants that discussed academic research. While these occasions are not very frequent, they still represent an interesting approach to the use and examination of academic research by public service executives.

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1. The survey received over 2,200 responses but a large number came from the UAE. To obviate to this, all data that refers to the global survey has been weighed. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. It should be noted that for the academics, the 1,654 surveys mailed out represent the total universe of tenured/tenure-track professors and fellows at Schools of Public Policy, Public Administration and in Departments of Political Science, Policy Studies and Public Administration in Canadian Universities. Hence, the response rate over 22% allows us to be relatively confident in our reporting. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)