



Concordat on Openness on Animal Research in the UK **Annual Report 2025**

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The Concordat on Openness on Animal Research in the UK

The Concordat on Openness on Animal Research in the UK was launched in May 2014. It brings together organisations involved in the use of animals for scientific research to support openness with the public.

Signatories pledge to uphold the four commitments and to ensure that their rationale for using animals in research is in the public domain.

- 1. We will be clear about when, how and why we use animals in research**
- 2. We will enhance our communications with the media and public**
- 3. We will be proactive in providing opportunities for the public to learn about animal research**
- 4. We will report annually on our experiences and share practices**

The Concordat is a voluntary code of practice which sits alongside legislation, providing a structured framework and guidance for the research sector to develop more transparent communications about its use of animals in research. It was the first agreement of its kind and has subsequently given rise to similar agreements and practices in ten further countries, while several other countries have similar agreements in development¹.

The practical steps taken to fulfil each commitment will differ depending on the type, size and circumstances of each organisation, but all activities will contribute towards ever-greater openness on the use of animals in research in the UK.

Following a review of the Concordat in 2025, signatories have noted the following impacts of the Concordat on the life sciences research sector:

- Better public access to information about animals in research
- A greater understanding and appreciation of the role of animal care staff
- Increased profile of animal facilities within their establishments
- Better access to see inside animal facilities
- Fewer reactive communications on the use of animals in research

¹ <https://concordatopenness.org.uk/resources>

Foreword

As the Concordat on Openness on Animal Research in the UK enters its second decade, I am pleased to see that its signatories continue to seek new ways to help the public to understand animal research.

This report highlights activity undertaken by Concordat signatories to explain to the public, internal colleagues, and the media how, when and why they use animals in research.

Events and activities that engage the public in animal research continue to grow, particularly from organisations that carry out research. A high number of signatories are engaging with their local community, with many opening the doors of their research facilities to external visitors.

The amount of information about animal research available on signatory websites continues to increase as well. We have seen a rise in the number of signatories sharing images and videos of their research animals, research summaries, AWERB minutes and virtual lab tours. More signatories are also providing details on the number and species of animals used, including the actual severity of their scientific procedures. The vast majority of signatories have developed website content that goes beyond the minimum requirements of an online policy statement, a fact worth celebrating. These webpages are also getting easier to find, with more signatories making sure this content is found within three clicks or fewer from their homepage.

I was pleased to attend a workshop on the future of the Concordat earlier this year. While no major changes to the Concordat are to be made – a decision based on discussions and voting sessions with signatories – I am looking forward to seeing how the impacts of the Concordat can be measured and understanding what information the public wants to receive from organisations involved in this area of science.

Congratulations to everyone who is involved with the openness journey at their organisation. Your hard work and dedication continue to make the Concordat a success.



Professor Dominic Wells

Interim Chair of the Steering Group

Concordat on Openness on Animal Research in the UK



Executive summary

This is the eleventh annual report on the Concordat on Openness on Animal Research in the UK and is a summary of the survey data received from 129 Concordat signatories: 100% of the organisations that, on 14 May 2025, met the requirement of the fourth Concordat commitment to report on their activities.

The report covers activities that took place during the period May 2024–May 2025 and includes case studies that illustrate the innovative work being done by Concordat signatories and the impact it is having.

Two-thirds (83) of Concordat signatories are organisations that carry out research, while the remainder (46) are organisations that do not carry out their own research but fund research or directly support researchers or organisations.

Reviewing the Concordat on Openness

In early 2025, a review of the Concordat was undertaken to identify areas of satisfaction, dissatisfaction or concern with the way the Concordat is structured and administered. This was carried out via a survey of all signatories, followed by a workshop event based on the survey responses. This was the first time the Concordat had undergone a review since 2017; it encompassed views from 69 signatories.

During the workshop, signatories discussed whether the Concordat should introduce new mandatory requirements, if the types of signatory organisations should be formalised in line with the Leaders in Openness application process, and if the impacts from the 2017 review were still relevant. Signatories also discussed how to measure the impact of the Concordat and how to communicate the limitations of animal research.

After lively discussions and voting sessions, it was decided that the Concordat should not go through any major changes as this could create additional barriers to new and existing signatories. No new mandatory requirements will be added and the wording in the original Concordat document will not be changed.

Signatories agreed that the impacts of the Concordat on the life sciences research sector identified at the 2017 review were still relevant:

- Better public access to information about animals in research
- A greater understanding and appreciation of the role of animal care staff
- Increased profile of animal facilities within their establishments
- Better access to see inside animal facilities
- Fewer reactive communications on the use of animals in research

Findings from the workshop, such as how to measure the impacts of the Concordat and discuss the limitations of animal research, will be taken into consideration as the Concordat moves into its second decade.

Progress towards Concordat commitments

Engagement with the Concordat remains consistent and high, particularly in areas of internal engagement, public engagement, and website communications.

Signatories are engaging with their staff (and students where applicable) through a variety of initiatives, allowing staff who aren't directly involved with the use of animals to find out more about their organisation's involvement with this type of research. Internal talks and presentations, newsletters and animal lab visits for staff not involved in research remain popular. Where live lab tours are not possible, several signatories have developed virtual opportunities.

The number of signatories getting involved with face-to-face public engagement continues to grow and is particularly high among research signatories. Participation in science festivals and engagement with schools remains popular, and we have also seen an increase in the number of signatories providing access to their animal facilities to visitors from outside their organisations.

One of the Concordat's greatest impacts has been the increase in the availability of publicly accessible information about animal research, directly from those involved with this type of research.

The amount of information signatories share on their public-facing websites remains very high, with an increase in the number of signatories sharing images and videos of their research animals, research summaries (for lay audiences), AWERB minutes, and virtual lab tours. In fact, 90% of signatories have gone beyond the minimum requirement of an online policy statement by developing website content of a high standard, an increase of seven signatories from the previous year. This information is also becoming more accessible with an increase in signatories whose dedicated animal research webpages can be found in three clicks or fewer from their organisation's homepage.

Signatories use a variety of traditional and new channels to provide information to the public. Engagement via websites, social media, newsletters, and media releases remains consistent, with a slight increase in the number of signatories using YouTube and Instagram. A third of signatories (41) reported that they took part in a social media event organised by an animal research advocacy organisation such as Understanding Animal Research, European Animal Research Association, or Americans for Medical Progress.

While there has been less media interest in animal research since the launch of the Concordat, signatories continue to engage proactively with journalists. The majority of signatories have policies and processes to support the provision of information to the media and to ensure that key people in their organisations are trained to support this work. In this reporting year, we have seen an increase in the number of signatories that have adopted the Academy of Medical Sciences' labelling system when mentioning animal research in press releases.

Providing balanced information around the harms and benefits of animal research is central to the Concordat. This principle helps signatories explain how and why this research takes place but also allows for nuanced and balanced conversations around harm and suffering, showing what life is like for research animals. The availability of balanced information allows public consideration and scrutiny of animal research and is crucial to ensure the Concordat's credibility.



Signatories continue to make progress in this area, particularly in their website communications where we see 3Rs-focused case studies, videos and images of research animals, meeting minutes which include ethics-focused discussions on animal use, and detailed statistics on animal use and the severity of experiments.

It is encouraging to see that as the Concordat moves into its second decade, engagement from signatories remains consistent and, in many areas, high. Signatories have their concerns, with a lack of time and resources to support openness being a major barrier. However, it appears that once structures and policies to support openness are embedded within organisations, signatories are able to maintain a high level of openness. This is part of the culture change the Concordat set out to achieve.

Internal barriers, such as caution among senior leaders and researchers, are also a concern. However, the current rise in animal research activism does not seem to have impacted the majority of signatories' work towards openness, perhaps indicating that fear of activism is not the barrier to openness that it once was.

Leaders in Openness

Organisations that make exceptional contributions towards openness are designated Leaders in Openness. These organisations consistently achieve good practice and successfully embed openness in their work. Leader in Openness status is only held for three years, after which the organisation needs to reapply. This year, the following signatories were successful in renewing their Leaders in Openness status.

- Agenda Life Sciences
- The Babraham Institute
- The Francis Crick Institute
- Imperial College London
- Newcastle University
- The Pirbright Institute
- Royal Veterinary College
- University of Bath
- University of Cambridge
- University of Manchester

Areas for improvement

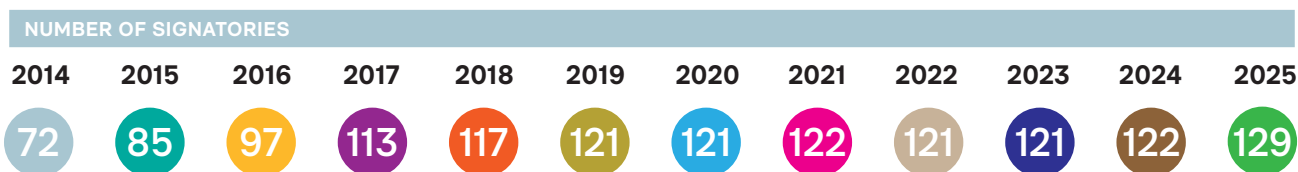
There are inevitably some aspects of the Concordat that prove challenging or are of concern to some signatories and where a need for additional support has been noted. These include:

- Harms and limitations: we have seen significant progress in the communication of harms done to animals but commenting critically on the limitations of animal research models remains a difficult topic for many signatories.
- Uneven contributions: while many organisations contribute, only a few are leading. More organisations should be encouraged to see the value in taking bolder steps.
- The role of non-research organisations: steps need to be taken to clarify the role of non-research organisations and to ensure that Concordat administrative processes provide for and are appropriate to them.



Concordat on Openness on Animal Research in the UK

Commitment 1: We will be clear about when, how and why we use animals in research **Commitment 2:** We will enhance our communications with the media and the public about our research using animals **Commitment 3:** We will be proactive in providing opportunities for the public to find out about research using animals **Commitment 4:** We will report on progress annually and share our experiences



May 2024 – M

University: 55

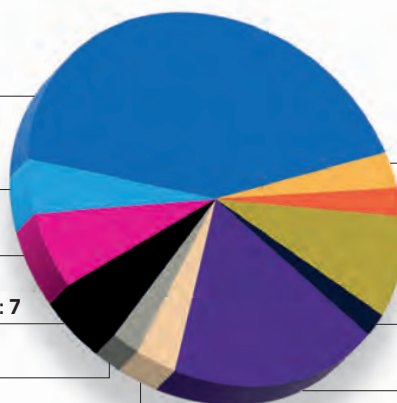
Umbrella Body/
Trade Association: 6

Research Institute: 8

Pharmaceutical Company: 7

Other not-for-profit: 3

Other commercial: 4



CRO: 4

Funding body: 3

Learned Society: 12

Government agency: 3

Charity: 24

83
Organisations
that carry out research

46
Organisations
that provide support for
animal research



13 Leaders in Openness 2023 - 2026 / 2024 - 2027 / 2025 - 2028

AstraZeneca Agenda Life Sciences The Babraham Institute The Francis Crick Institute Imperial College London Newcastle University The Pirbright Institute Royal Veterinary College University of Bath University of Bristol University of Cambridge University of Edinburgh University of Manchester

Engaging with the media and the public



signatories communicated their work on the 3Rs with the media and public



signatories engaged with the local community about animal research



signatories provided staff with media training on animal research



signatories provided staff with public engagement training on animal research



signatories included research summaries on their websites



signatories discussed animal research in a media release



signatories provided visitors from outside their organisation access to animal facilities



signatories engaged with schools about animal research



signatories made comments to the media about animal research



signatories followed the AMS labelling system when mentioning animal research in press releases



signatories published their AWERB minutes



signatories provided media access to animal facilities

Concordat on Openness on Animal Research in the UK launched in 2014

TRANSPARENCY AGREEMENTS IN:

Spain launched in 2016
Portugal launched in 2018
Belgium launched in 2019
France launched in 2021
Germany launched in 2021
New Zealand launched in 2021
Netherlands launched in 2021
Switzerland launched in 2022
Australia launched in 2023
USA launched in 2025



Communicating animal research online



signatories provide details on the number and species of animals used at their institution



signatories have images of animal facilities, research animals, or procedures on their websites



signatories mentioned animal research on social media



signatories provide details on actual severity of animal procedures on their website



signatories have video footage of animal facilities, research animals, or animals undergoing procedures on their website



signatories provide details on the proportion of their funded research that relates to animal work

Engaging with internal stakeholders



signatories give talks and presentations about the use of animals in research



signatories endorse and actively support the ARRIVE guidelines



signatories offer opportunities for non-research staff to visit animal facilities



signatories produce internal newsletters and publications that mention animal research



signatories explicitly mention animal research during the recruitment and induction process



signatories offer an open AWERB invitation or include student representatives on the AWERB

Clicks to reach animal research position statement from signatory's homepage

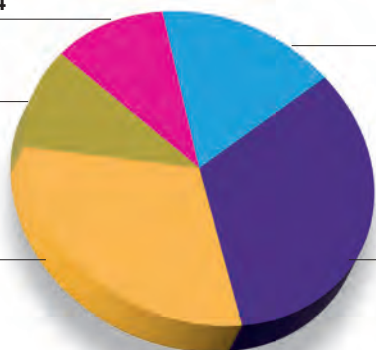
5 or more: 14

0-1: 21

4: 14

3: 37

2: 43



Signatories using social media to talk about animal research

Other platforms: 15

YouTube: 37

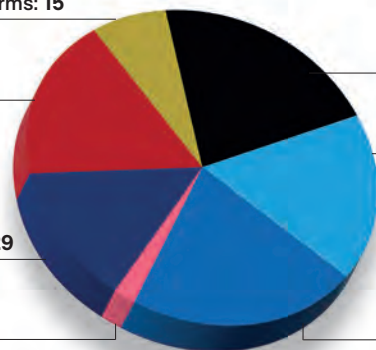
Instagram: 29

TikTok: 4

X: 44

Facebook: 37

LinkedIn: 46



^ indicates an increase, v a decrease, and = no change in the data compared to the 2024 Concordat report.

Good practice recommendations for signatory organisations compiled from previous reports on the Concordat on Openness on Animal Research in the UK

Communicating how, when and why animals are used in research

1. Follow UAR/RSPCA guidance² to provide more balanced information, acknowledging harms as well as benefits of animal research, including commenting critically on models that are used
2. Develop communication resources so that sector-based discussions that review, critique and evaluate protocols using animals are available in the public domain
3. Actively endorse ARRIVE guidelines³ (or equivalent standard) and support a process that checks compliance
4. Actively support information sharing between animal facility and communications staff through processes and organisational structures (such as communications representatives on AWERB)
5. Ensure non-technical summaries of research projects clearly communicate objectives, harms, benefits and 3Rs considerations to lay audiences, making these, or other research summaries, available through the organisation's website

Openness with staff, students, members and supporters

1. Mention animal research during staff recruitment, ideally at interviews for all staff
2. Include an animal facility tour in the induction process for new staff
3. Offer an animal facility tour to existing non-research staff⁴
4. Provide seminars or publications on the ethics of using animals in research to staff, students or members
5. Hold AWERB sessions that are open to all staff where possible
6. Include a student representative position on the AWERB or ethics committee
7. Offer work experience in the animal facility
8. Recognise individuals who have made outstanding contributions to openness through internal awards

Partnerships and working with others

1. Ensure recipients of grants, prizes or funding are made aware of their funders' commitments under the Concordat and the importance of openness on the use of animals in research
2. Have a partnership or collaboration policy which outlines commitments and expectations under the Concordat when working with non-signatories

² <https://concordatopenness.org.uk/talking-about-harms>

³ <https://arriveguidelines.org/>

⁴ Possibly via another organisation (such as UAR)

**Providing accessible information to the public**

1. Answer enquiries from the public about animal research with direct responses wherever possible and make resources available to answer common questions
2. Train reception and other frontline staff to respond to enquiries about animal research
3. Make a substantial amount of material about how, when and why animals are used in scientific research openly available through the organisation's website
4. Share the species and numbers (or proportions) of any animals used in research at the organisation
5. Share the proportion and value of grants awarded by the organisation that fund animal research
6. Encourage staff (including researchers where applicable) to undertake training for speaking with public audiences or media about the use of animals in research

Communicating through the media

1. Mention the species used in any media communication that refers to animal research
2. Include expectations of how animal research should be communicated to the media in partnership agreements (even where clients are a step removed)
3. Have an access procedure for press looking to visit animal facilities
4. Actively engage with (local or national) media requests to join panels or participate in interviews about animal research
5. Provide media training for key spokespeople, supporting them to engage with the media on their organisation's use of animals in research
6. Use the AMS/SMC labelling system to indicate when animal research is mentioned in a press release ⁵

Supporting engagement with the use of animals in research

1. Produce guidelines to support researchers and others in planning public engagement events around animal research
2. Participate in programmes to allow interested members of the public to see inside animal facilities, including remote or virtual tours
3. Participate in science festivals or other public engagement events
4. Hold family or community days that staff can participate in and talk about their animal work

⁵ www.sciencemediacentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/AMS-press-release-labelling-system-GUIDANCE.pdf

About this report

This report summarises the information provided by Concordat signatories for the period May 2024–May 2025, fulfilling their obligations under the fourth commitment of the Concordat on Openness. It describes activities and approaches to openness and provides a picture of how communications are improving under the Concordat and where there is still some distance to go. The report includes a series of case studies that illustrate how leading Concordat signatories have set standards for good practice and created excellent, transparent communications around their use of animals in research.

The Concordat comprises four Commitments, each underpinned by practical steps that organisations can take. These practical steps are described in the original Concordat document⁶ and the numbered sub-headings that follow below refer to these points.

Data collection methodology

This report is based on data collected from signatories through an electronic survey. The survey was distributed in May 2025 and was completed by all signatories within six weeks. Survey questions remained similar to previous years in order to show trends. Research and non-research organisations answered separate sets of survey questions to reflect their different situations with regards to animal research.

Responses are provided by the named signatory contact, but most represent a co-ordinated response on behalf of the organisation. It is usual for a committee such as the Animal Welfare Ethical Review Body (AWERB) to be involved in drafting the response.

Data were analysed using SmartSurvey's in-built survey analysis software and by manually theming and coding qualitative data.

In most cases the views and activities described in the report were volunteered by signatories and have not been externally assessed or audited. The exceptions to this are around points of compliance such as the structure of webpages and the placement of policy statements on institutional websites, which are checked and verified by UAR.

Organisations were not asked to provide responses to every question. Throughout the report respondent numbers are provided as absolute values, showing the total number of respondents for each question. As in previous reports, the names of organisations have been removed to allow organisations to report their experiences freely. Where organisations are quoted, the type of organisation (charity, university, commercial, etc) is indicated to provide context.

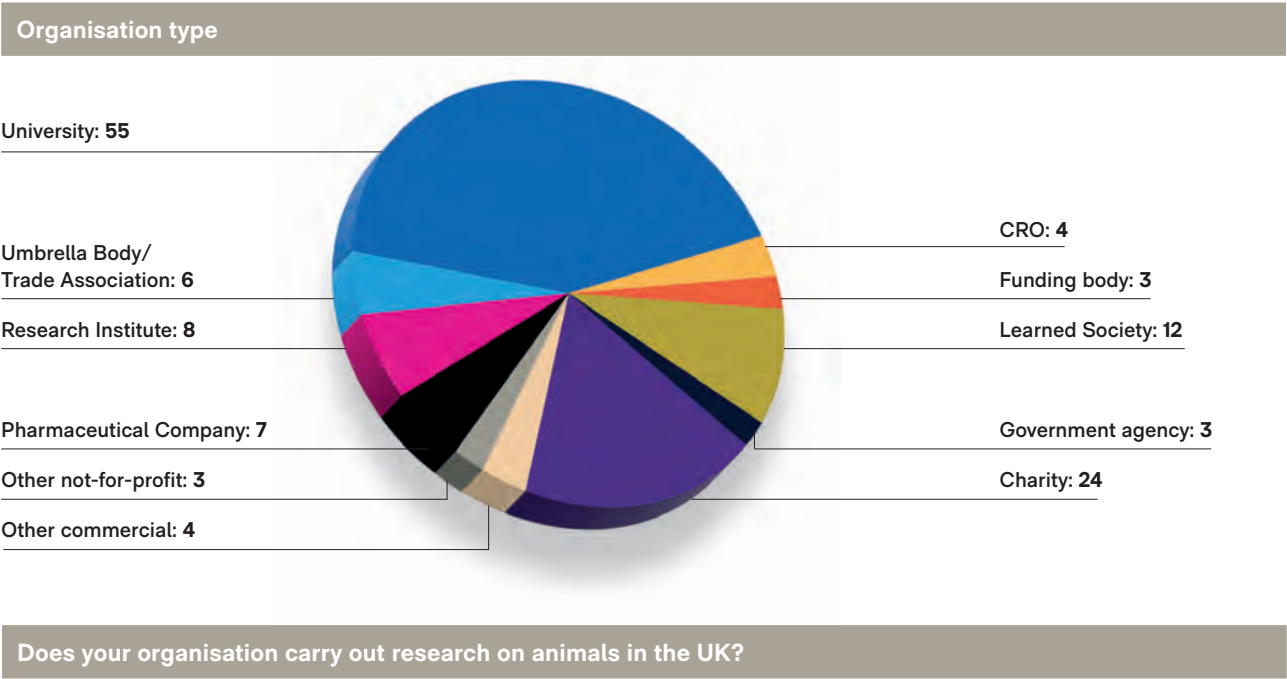
⁶ <https://concordatopenness.org.uk/resources>



Concordat signatories in 2025

In May 2024 there were 133 organisations which had been signatories of the Concordat on Openness on Animal Research in the UK for a year or more and therefore met the requirement to report on their progress. UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the UK Research Councils (MRC, BBSRC, EPSRC and NERC), which remain separate signatories to the Concordat on Openness, submit a single annual return between them.

Only organisations that undertake research on animals, commission research on animals, breed research animals, or who support members that carry out or fund research on animals, are eligible to sign the Concordat on Openness. This research is usually carried out in the UK. Nearly half of Concordat signatories are universities that use animals in their academic research. Two-thirds of signatories directly carry out research on animals, while a third of signatories do not themselves conduct animal research but instead fund or support research that is undertaken by other organisations.





Commitment 1

We will be clear about how, when and why we use animals in research

This Commitment seeks to ensure that all organisations acknowledge, both internally and externally, that they or their members carry out or fund animal research. It also seeks to ensure that they are transparent about the use of animals in that research. All signatories are expected to agree to these basic principles of openness which underpin the whole of the Concordat.

1.1 Harms and benefits

“Our presentations and talks always include an outline of the cost–benefit of animal work and the limitations of the clinical relevance of the work that we do. We always refer to the progress in non-animal work in which we are involved and with what is happening elsewhere in the field of replacement technologies.”

– GOVERNMENT AGENCY

“Our openness scoring criteria judges events on ethical reflection covering harms, limitations and benefits. This allows us to track information shared to ensure balanced information is shared and prompts organisers on the importance of covering these factors.” – PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANY

Providing transparent information about the balance of harms to the animals and benefits to research is central to the Concordat on Openness. Signatories are expected to provide balanced information that highlights the benefits of research but also acknowledges the harms experienced by the animals and the limitations of the research.

As a minimum, signatories are expected to discuss their approach to the 3Rs on their websites, illustrating key aspects of their approach to animal welfare. Even better is to publish information that summarises and explains the discussions of their ethics committees about the acceptability of different types of research and the circumstances under which various protocols are permitted.

Signatories are making great strides towards providing balanced information on harms and suffering, especially via their public-facing webpages as they develop a deeper understanding of how balanced information can be provided. Many signatories now talk explicitly about how they use the 3Rs to limit harms and provide details of the actual severity of procedures undergone by their animals.

- 108 signatories have communicated their work on the 3Rs
- 72 signatories provide information on the number of animals they use or the proportion of their funded work involving animals
- 70 signatories provide research summaries on their websites
- 49 research signatories provide indicators of the severity of their procedures
- 20 research signatories share their AWERB minutes
- 19 signatories show images or videos of animals that have clearly been harmed undergoing a procedure, such as mice with visible tumours

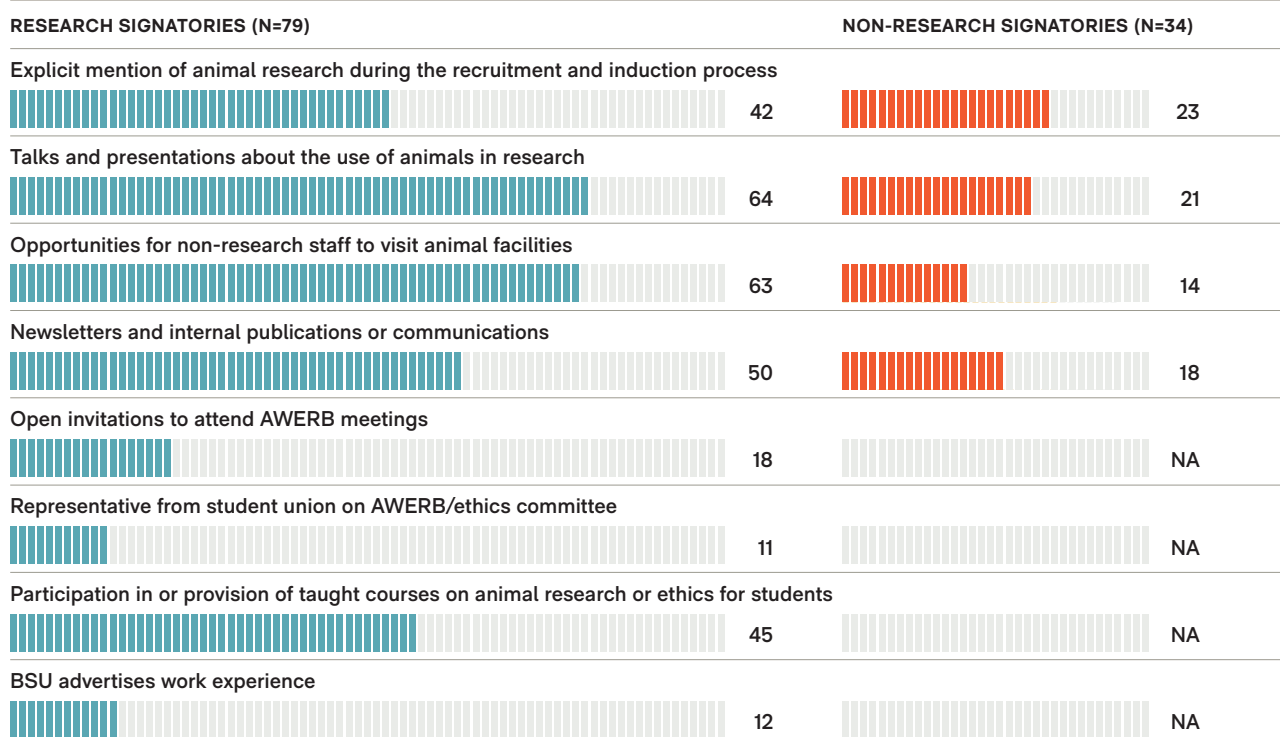
For commercial organisations, which are bound by extensive regulations around competition as well as intellectual property and commercial sensitivities, public discussion of harms and benefits can be more difficult to achieve. However, the contribution of these organisations to research sector discussions on mitigating harms, improving experimental design and supporting better animal care is substantial. Internal and sector-facing communications about animal use, even within very large organisations, can be frank, honest and accessible, leading the way with initiatives such as open ethics committees and promoting global standards of animal care.

“Information about the harms, limitations and benefits of animal research is provided in the Non-Technical Summaries of all project licences on our website, which are visible to the public. The minutes of our AWERB meetings are published on the website. The minutes contain mention of concerns or harms as raised by committee members, and also of Condition 18 reports that we have reported to the Secretary of State.” – UNIVERSITY

1.2 Staff and student awareness

Signatories are asked to make sure their use of, or support for using, animals in research is made clear to all internal stakeholders, including staff, students, grant holders and supporters. 95% of research signatories and 74% of non-research signatories have discussed their organisation's involvement with or support for the use of animals in research with researchers, staff or students via the following.

Do you make your use of animal research clear to researchers, staff or students, beyond those who work directly with the animals, through any of the following?



Before the Concordat was launched, staff whose role was not directly connected with the use of animals in research, such as those in administrative roles or other departments, often had no knowledge of the animal work carried out or supported by their organisation. One of the great successes of the Concordat has been how signatories have developed initiatives to communicate with internal stakeholders and raise the profile of the animal facilities within their organisations. Increasingly, staff from research institutions understand that animal research is not something done elsewhere and by other people, but something that happens where they work and that they can understand

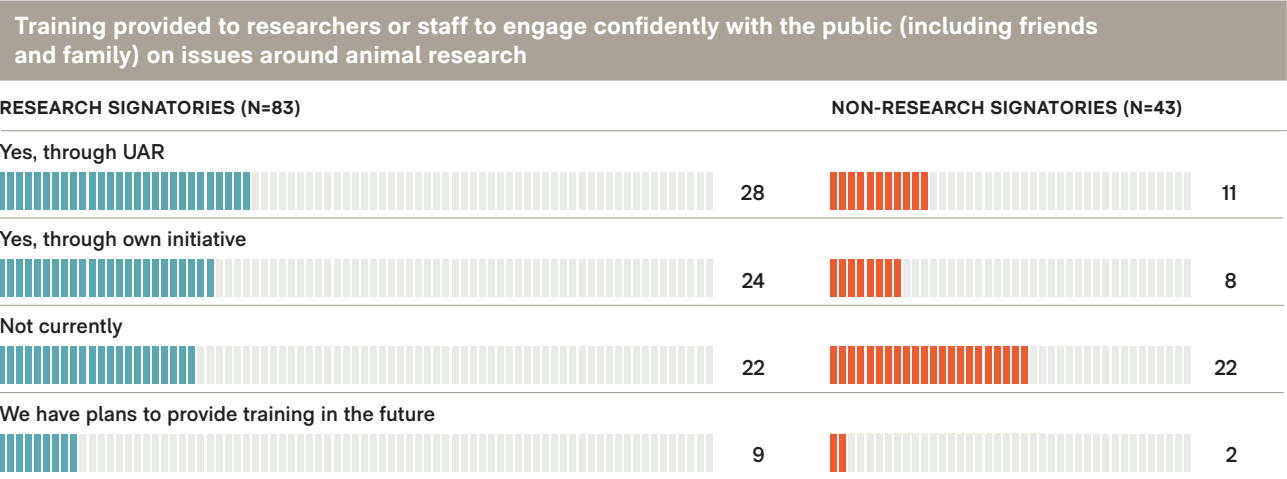
the need for. If they are uncomfortable, they are now able to make this known and find out more, dispelling misinformation by improving transparency.

Very small organisations are encouraged to consider how this commitment could be applied to the appointment of outside contractors and agencies such as accountants, auditors, insurance companies and web designers as well as employees. An ultimate aim of the Concordat is to ensure that everyone who works with Concordat signatories has an informed understanding of their connection to animal research.

“We proactively invite non-research staff to visit our animal facilities and we give talks and presentations on our animal-based work, including application of the 3Rs, to include both scientific and non-scientific staff.” – **GOVERNMENT AGENCY**

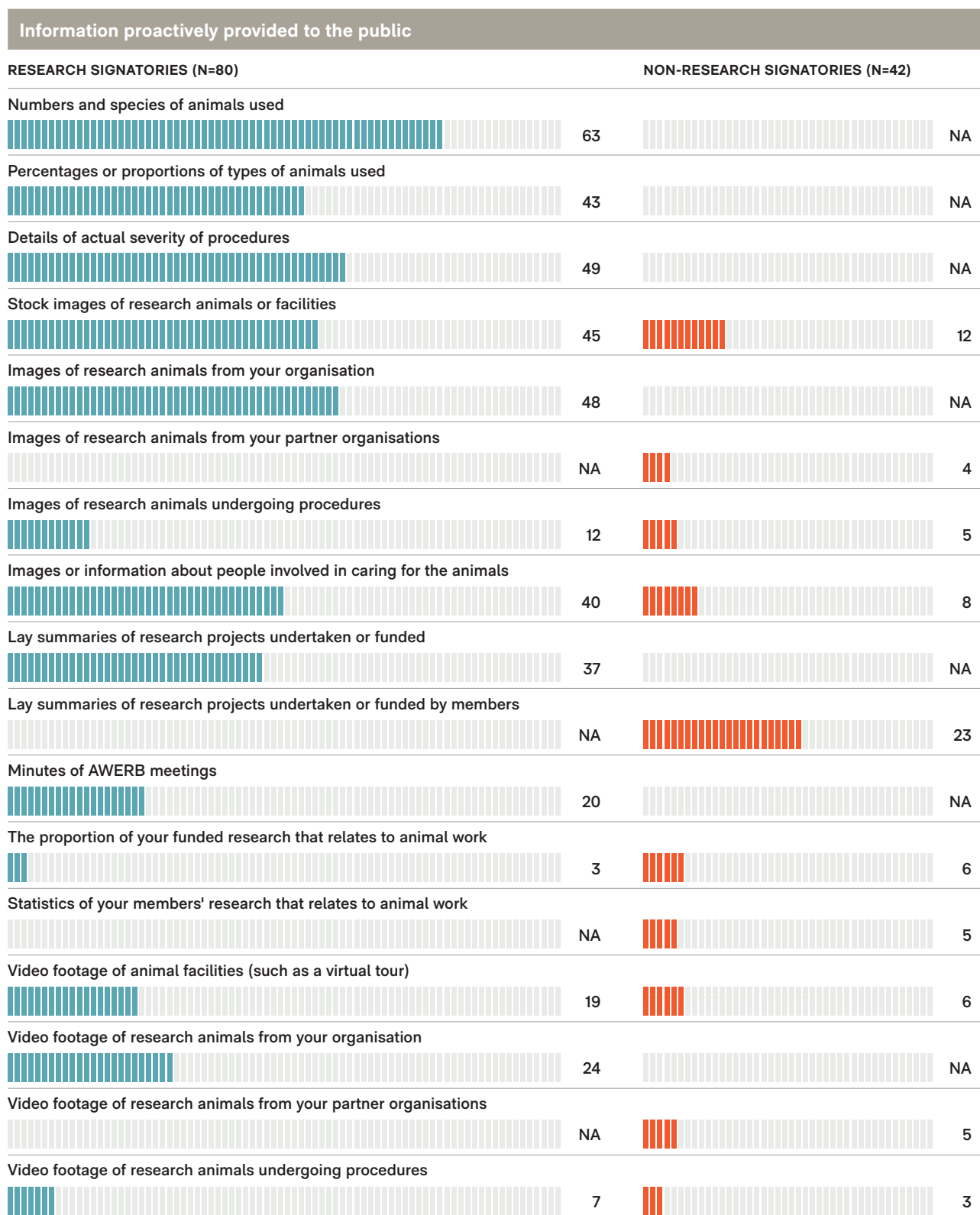
“At staff interview, we make candidates aware that [the charity] funds research involving animals. Staff who are interacting directly with our supporters and the public are provided with a FAQ sheet to help them answer any questions about animal research.” – **CHARITY**

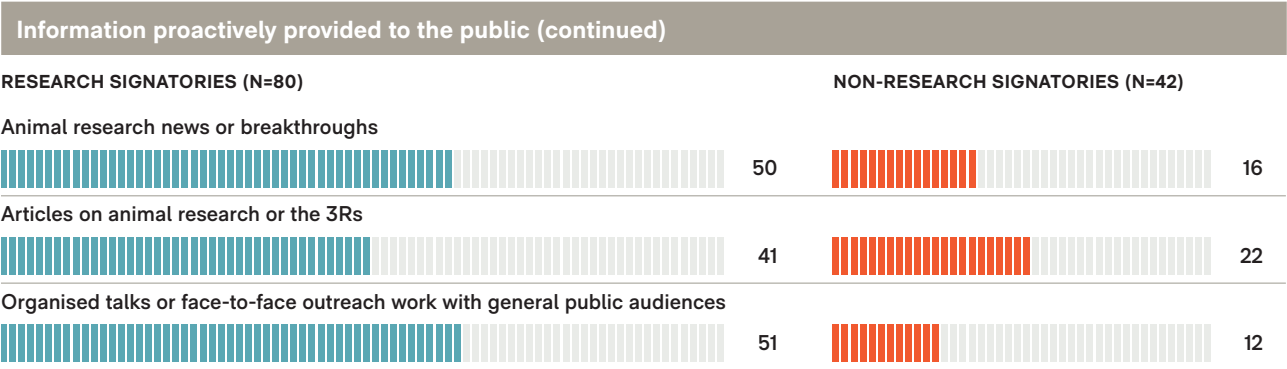
63% of research signatories and 41% of non-research signatories provide training, either through specialist UAR training or in-house initiatives, to support their researchers and other staff to talk about this topic with confidence.



1.3 Explaining involvement with the use of animals in research

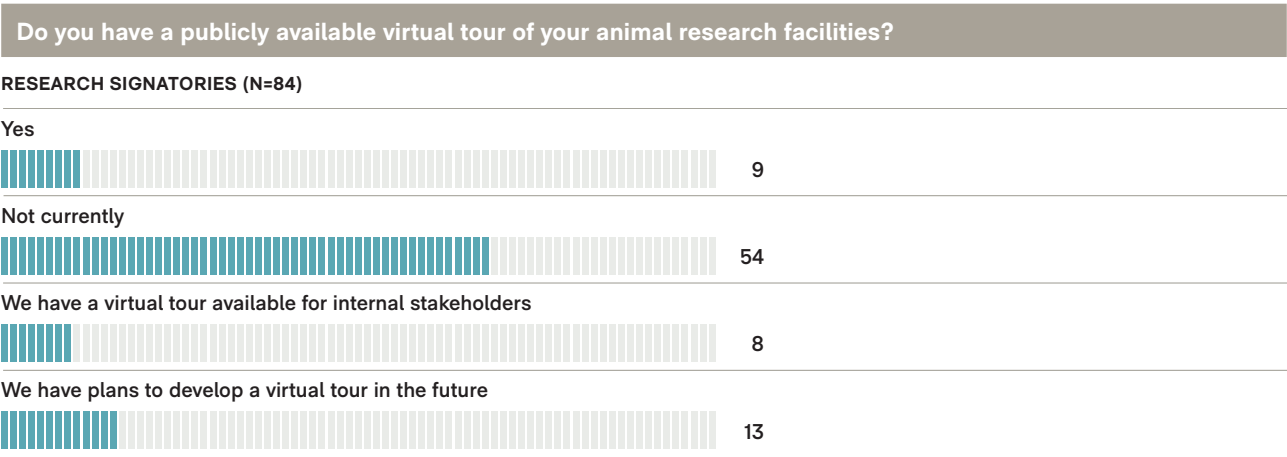
96% of research signatories and 91% of non-research signatories have provided information about animal research to the public including the following details.





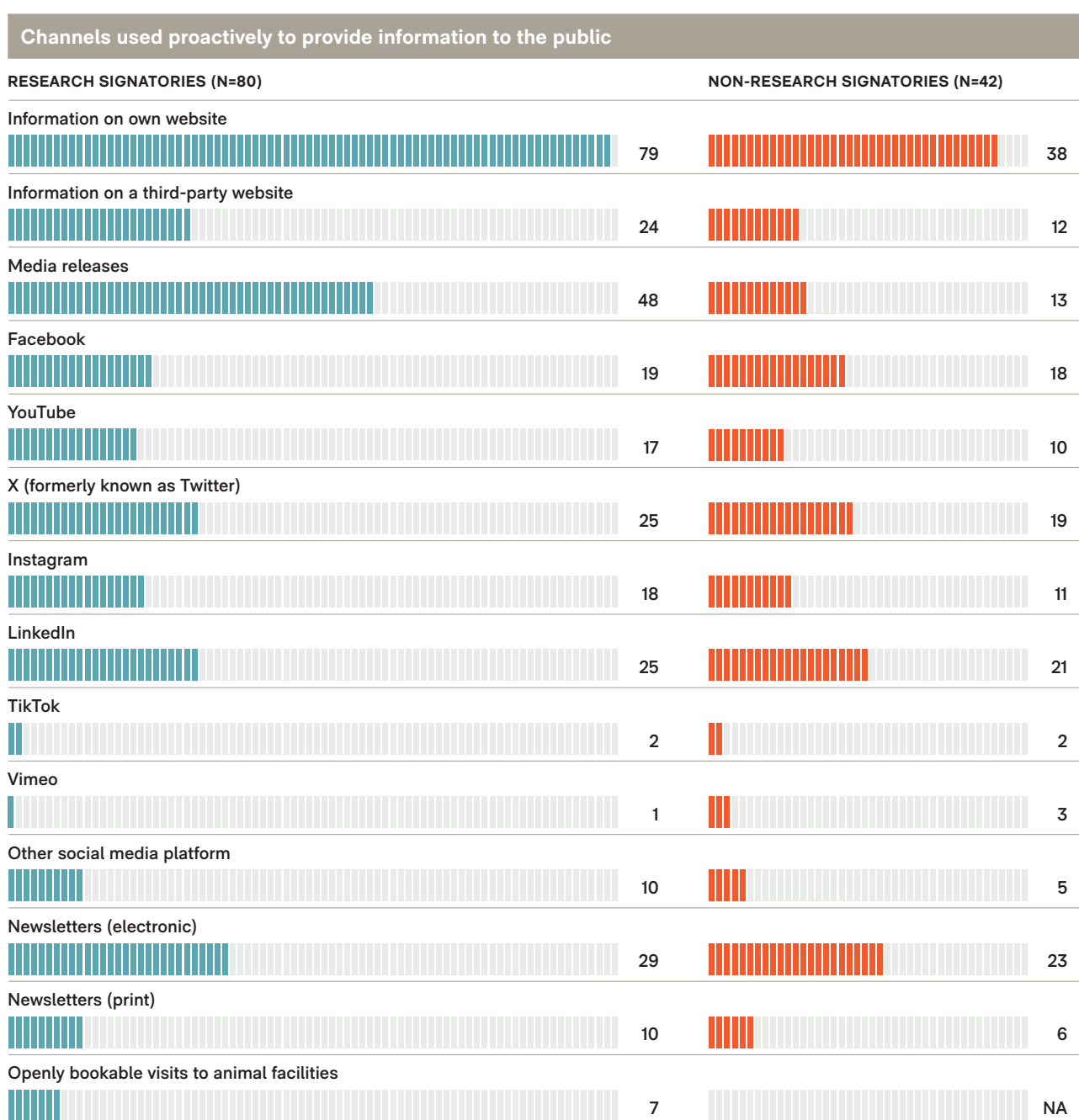
The amount of information that Concordat signatories provide remains high. As a minimum, signatories are required to have a public-facing website statement explaining their involvement with animal research and why this is the case, but most see this only as a starting point and go much further, developing online content that explores their use of animals in great detail and in a manner that is attractive and easily accessible to non-specialist readers. 116 signatories (77 research; 39 non-research) have webpages that exceed the minimum requirements of the Concordat. These webpages include content such as animal use statistics, severity details, images and/or video of research animals (including lab tours), research summaries, AWERB minutes, animal research news and breakthroughs, and articles about animal research or the 3Rs. This is an increase from 109 signatories in 2024.

Nine research signatories now offer virtual lab tours as a way for the public to see inside their research facilities. Virtual tours can require considerable resources to develop, but they hugely expand the opportunities for public engagement and have become valuable aids for teaching and onboarding new staff. Working conditions mean that some research signatories cannot offer in-person lab tours; virtual tours are an alternative way of letting a wide range of staff and interested members of the public experience the reality of life inside an animal facility.



“Following a successful application to the Institute's Public Engagement Seed Fund, [we have] developed a comprehensive, self-guided 360 virtual tour of the facility, which was launched at the Cambridge Festival in March 2025. Feedback collected from early audiences will be used to refine the tour.” –
RESEARCH INSTITUTE

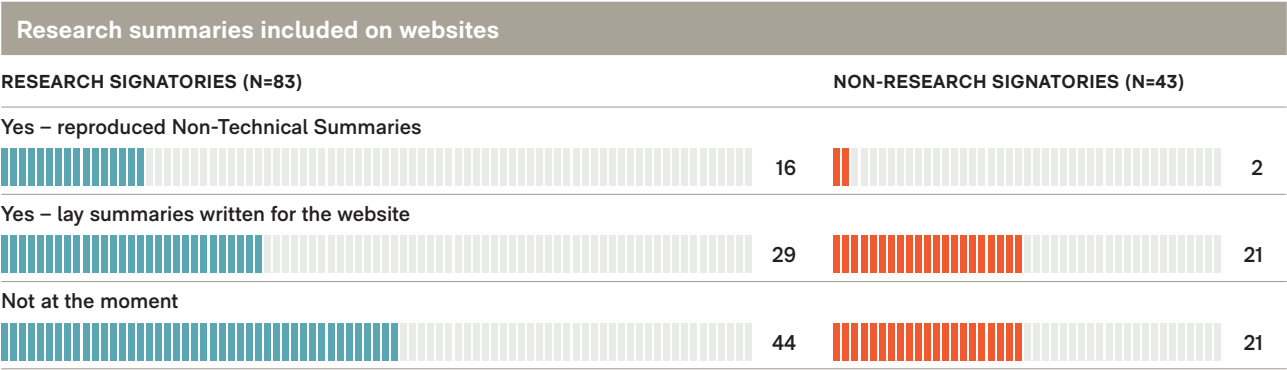
The following channels have been used proactively to provide information about animal research to the public by 99% of research signatories and 91% of non-research signatories.



Traditional channels and social media remain important tools for communicating with the public. While the use of Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube remains steady, there has been a decline in the number of signatories using X. This is likely due to organisations leaving the platform. However, several signatories are now reporting they are using Bluesky.

“As an alternative channel we launched a Bluesky account and although we see strong engagement with an academic research community on this platform, we recognise that our ability to reach public audiences through our social media channels has decreased with the loss of X. To counter this, we plan to launch an Instagram account later this year.” – RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Research summaries are presented on the websites of 69% of research signatories and 50% of non-research signatories.



Case studies help bring research to life and offer an opportunity to provide balanced information on harms, benefits, and limitations. Although some non-research signatories felt that they were unable to offer case studies, others have overcome this obstacle by partnering with other signatories to share information about the types of research they fund or support. Several commercial organisations reported that they are unable to share case studies due to client confidentiality.

“In 2024, we implemented a new approach in collaboration with the digital content team. The researcher is invited to contribute a case study and chats with a member of the team who creates the case study and sends it to the researcher to check for accuracy before posting on the website.” – UNIVERSITY

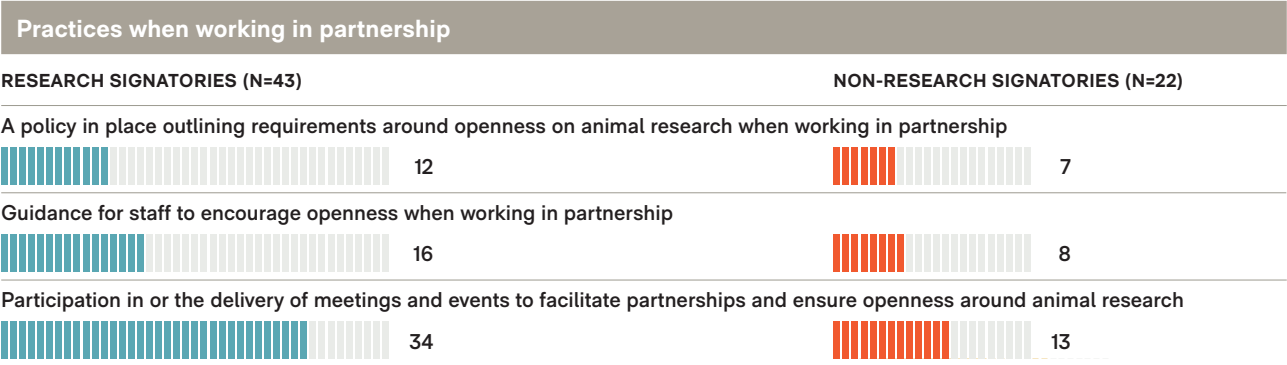
1.4 Partnership working

“We don’t find partnership working a barrier to openness – in fact it can increase openness as we will sometimes raise with partners that we think that they should be mentioning animal research in joint projects where relevant, if they haven’t.” – RESEARCH INSTITUTE

“Where the university works in partnership on animal research based projects with other organisations, we require such partners to accept and commit to the same principles of Openness. Preferably, we seek for such partners to also be signatories to the Concordat.” – UNIVERSITY

“We haven't noted any difficulties in communicating our use of animals where the research has been conducted in partnership with another organisation. Many of our partners, who are often universities, are also signatories of the Concordat.” – CHARITY

For the majority of signatories, working in partnership with others is seen as a benefit and an opportunity to share practices that encourage openness, with many signatories reporting that all their partners are Concordat signatories. 52% of research signatories and 48% of non-research signatories have practices in place to support openness when working in partnership.



Commercial partnerships can present particular difficulties due to commercial and security interests and confidentiality clauses. Commercial research organisations do not have the freedom to communicate about specific pieces of work in the way that other organisations are able to; there are additional limitations on their communications. While, for example, they may provide images of animals on a study to a third-party website, they may not be able to provide details of particular trials or the partners they work with.

“Our partners are commercial clients developing new drugs and the key factor around this is confidentiality, so in most instances we must take the lead from them.” – CRO



Commitment 2

We will enhance our communications with the media and the public

The purpose of this Commitment is to ensure that relevant details about signatories' involvement in the use of animals in research are readily accessible by the public. It builds on Commitment 1 by outlining some of the practical steps that organisations can take to facilitate their communications around animal research.

2.1 Position statements on animal research

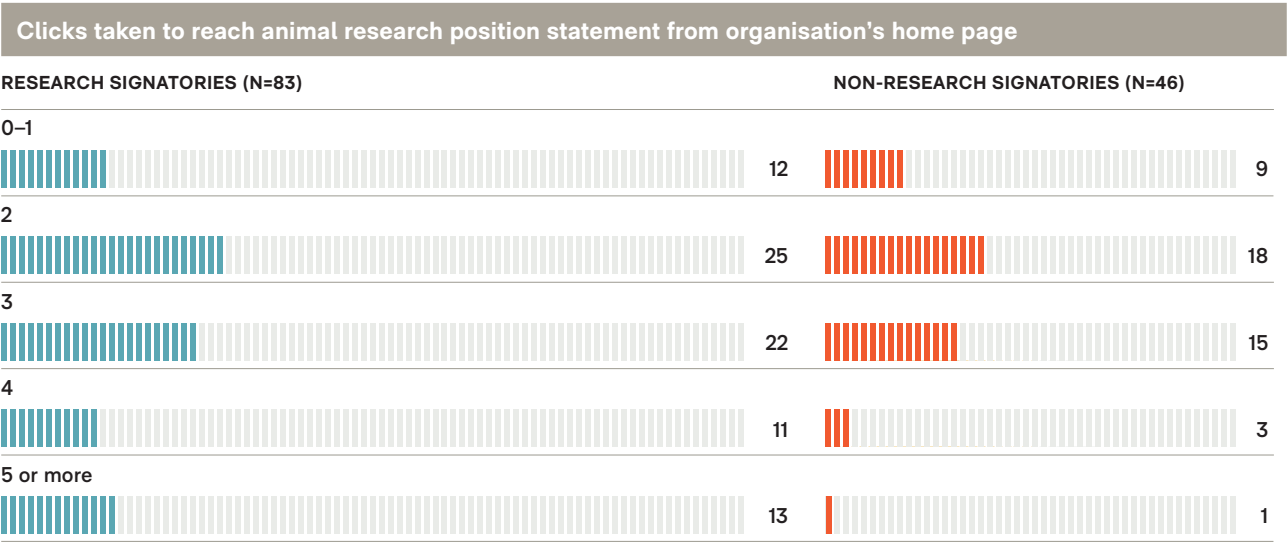
All 129 Concordat signatories have public-facing statements online which outline their ethical position and explain their reasons for using, or supporting the use of, animals in research. This is a requirement for all Concordat signatories. These statements are linked to from the Concordat website⁷ and can be viewed via the QR code. UAR checks these statements throughout the year to make sure they are active and that the Concordat website is up to date.



Signatories are strongly encouraged to see their position statement as a minimum requirement of openness and to create webpages with extensive information about the animal research they carry out, fund, or support, bringing some of the vast amount of information that is held in members' filing systems and intranets into public view.

The Concordat has been instrumental in a huge increase in the amount of information about animal research that is available online. Most signatory websites exceed the minimum requirements and set a new standard for best practice in openness. See Commitment 1.3 for more detail on information available online.

It is an ambition of the Concordat that this information should be easily accessible to everyone and not just those actively seeking it out, so it is important that these pages can be reached from website homepages within a few clicks and without using the search function. The majority of signatories (101) now provide this information on pages that can be reached in three clicks or fewer from their homepage.



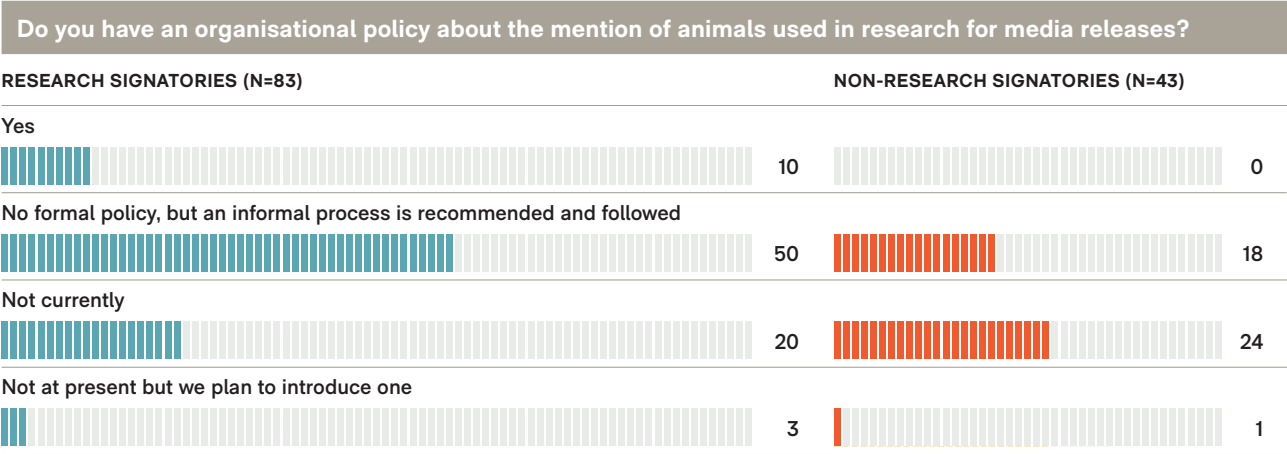
⁷ <http://concordatopenness.org.uk/list-of-signatories>



2.2 Inclusion of animal research in communications and media releases

“Our press office follows the AMS press release labelling system for new biomedical research, by including a clear label at the top of every press release about research using animals identifying it as such, while additionally mentioning the use of animals in the first sentence of the release, and prominently explaining in the main text which animals were used and how.” – UNIVERSITY

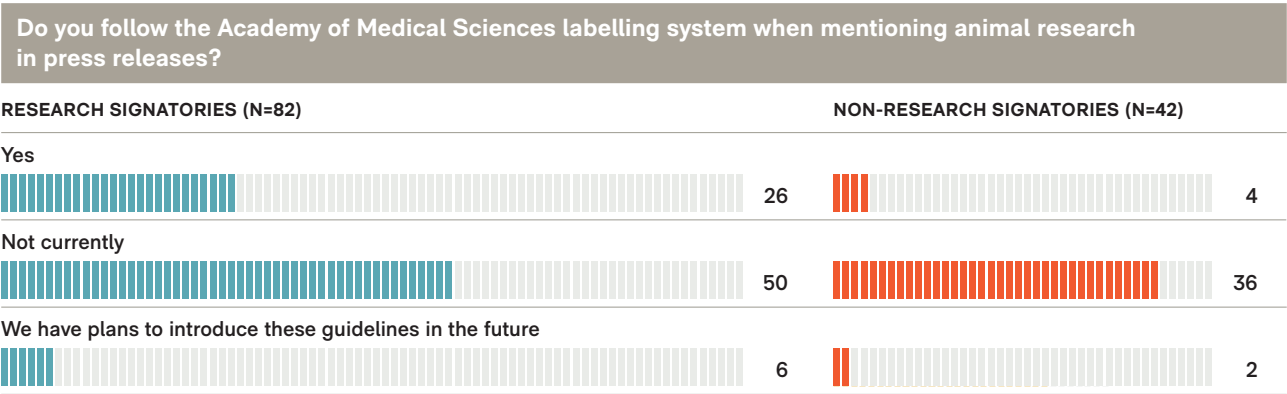
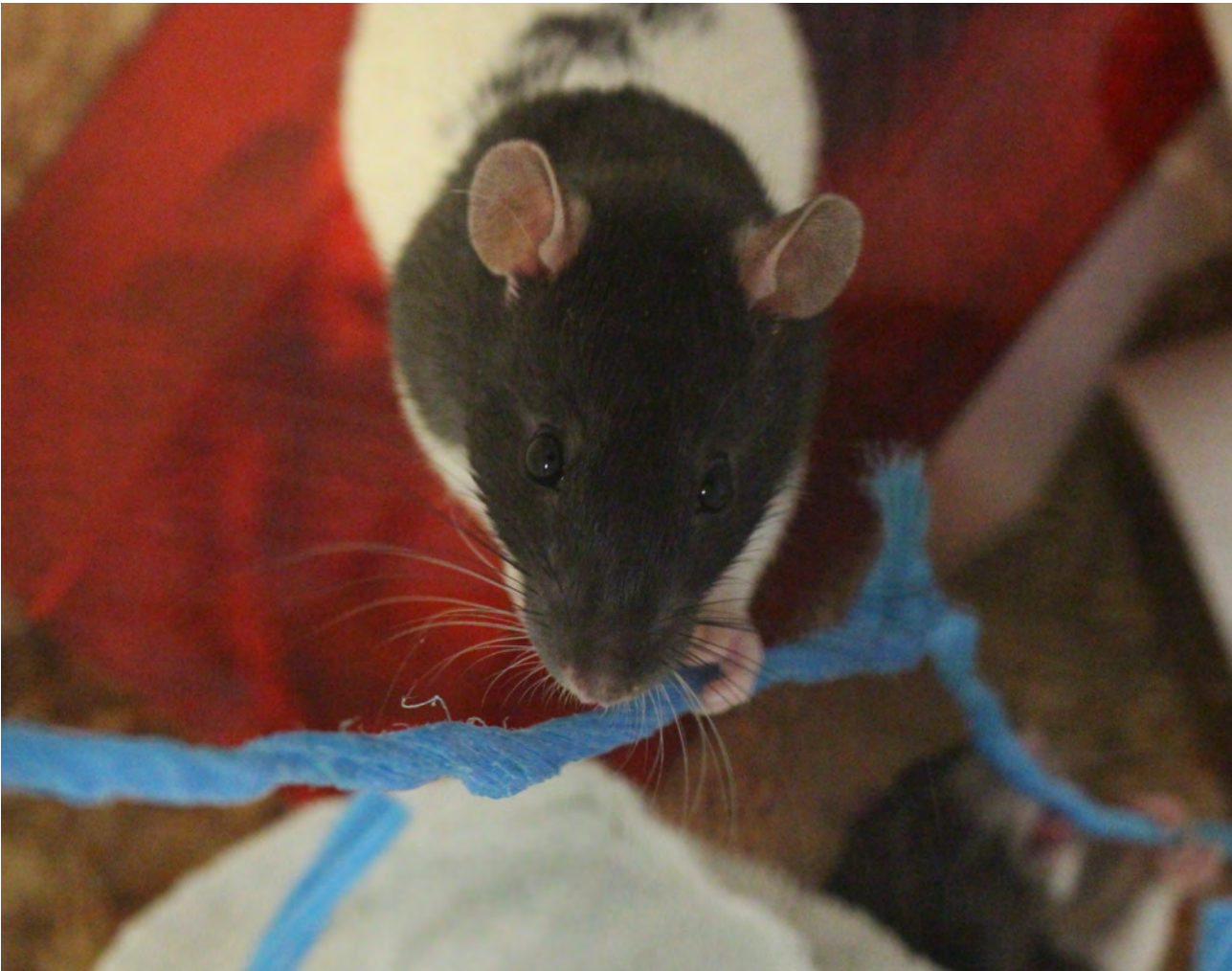
Inclusion of animal species in press releases (where relevant to the research) is now common practice, with 61 signatories reporting that they mentioned the species used in relevant press releases during the reporting period. 72% of research signatories and 39% of non-research signatories have a policy or process in place about the mention of animal research in media releases.

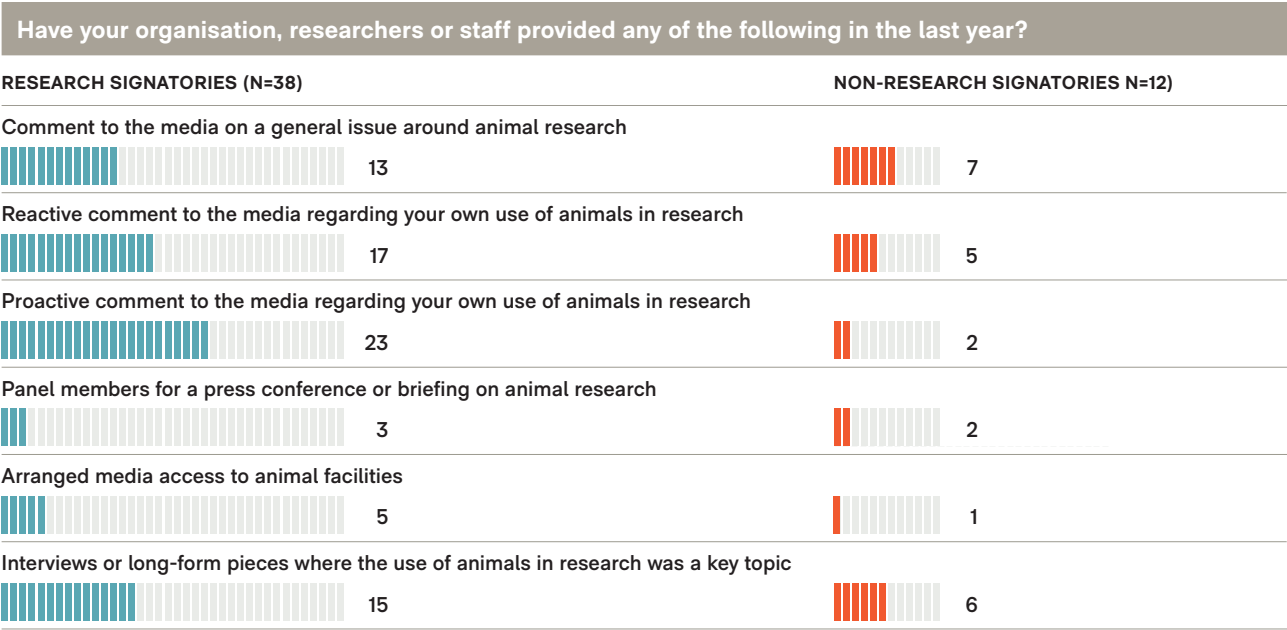


The adoption of a formal policy that requires animal research to be proactively included in media releases and media enquiries is recommended good practice for Concordat signatories. Such a policy helps ensure that expectations around openness are fully understood and saves time when handling media enquiries.

Where media policies are used by organisations, they should describe what information should be included in press releases, how to handle media enquiries, how pictures of research animals should be used, and how lab visits should be conducted. 31% of research signatories and 9% of non-research signatories use the Academy of Medical Sciences and Science Media Centre labelling system⁸ for press releases that mention animal research.

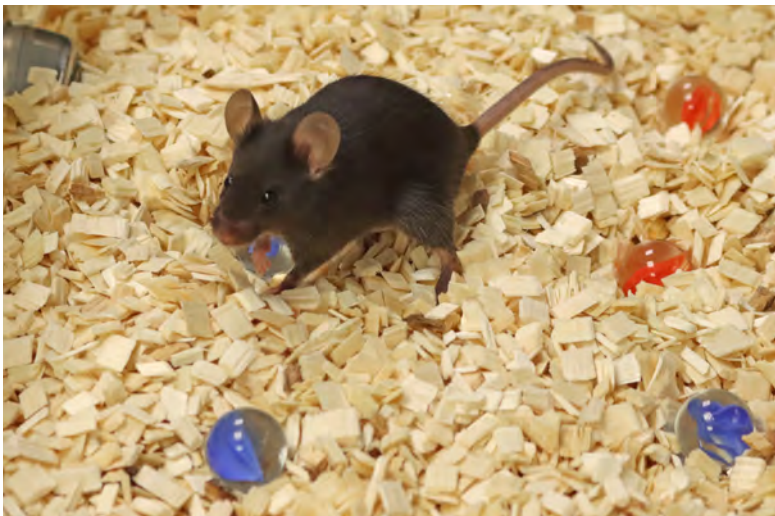
⁸ www.sciencemediacentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/AMS-press-release-labelling-system-GUIDANCE.pdf



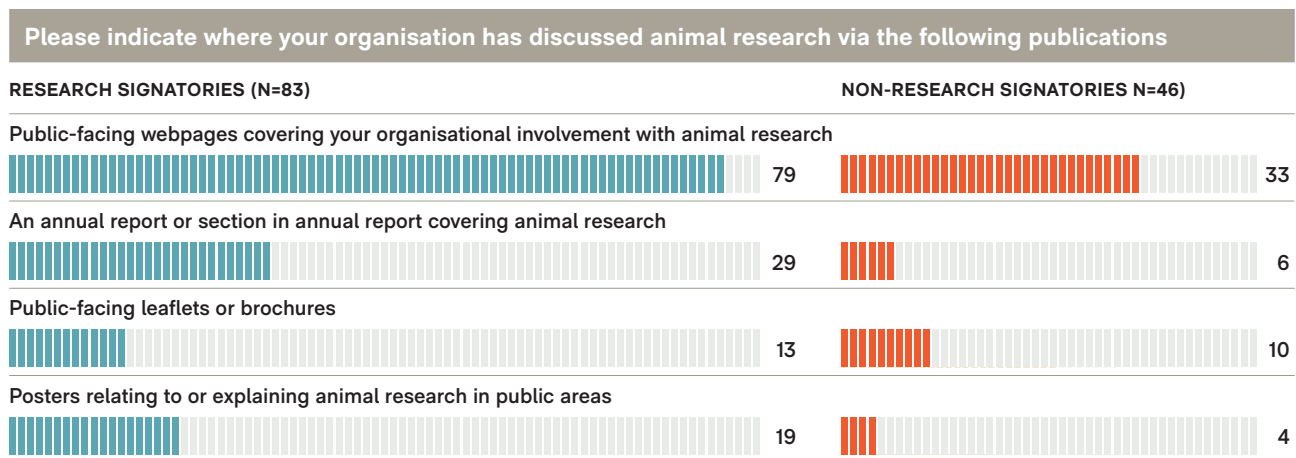


Many Concordat signatories have capable press offices which include stories and comments about animals in science as standard practice. UAR has developed an annual press campaign around the publication of the national animal use statistics. The campaign gives signatories an opportunity to proactively publish their animal use figures and case studies to the media. In September 2024, 69⁹ organisations took part in the campaign, sharing their 2023 statistics.

Signatories are recommended to include information about the animal research they carry out, fund, or support in other forms of communication as well as press releases. 100% of signatories reported that they include information about animal research via the following channels.



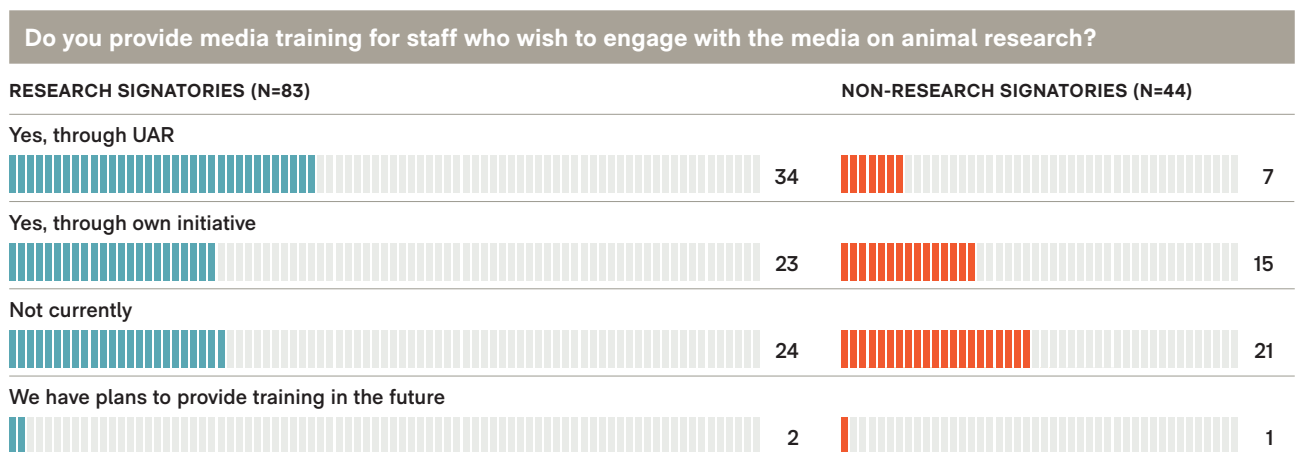
⁹ www.understandinganimalresearch.org.uk/news/ten-organisations-account-for-half-of-all-animal-research-in-great-britain-in-2023



Signatories represent a wide range of organisations, and not all are public facing or regularly involved with the press. In these cases, they are more likely to engage in proactive communications by other means, such as expert panels and briefing sessions. For example, commercial organisations and smaller, not-for-profit organisations rarely issue media releases about their animal work but often have established communication channels with stakeholders and policymakers where they lead on communications around the 3Rs and publication standards.

2.3 & 2.4 Support for media engagement on animal research

Signatories are continuing to support the development of media-trained champions who can respond to stories about the use of animals in research on behalf of their organisations. 69% of research signatories and 48% of non-research signatories provide media training on animal research for staff, either through specialist UAR training, alternative providers or in-house support.



2.5 & 2.6 Good practice in publication guidelines

It is recommended that signatories institute a checking process to ensure that best practice in publication standards is followed. While not all signatories enforce adherence to the ARRIVE guidelines¹⁰, 73% of research signatories and 41% of non-research signatories stated that they endorse and actively encourage staff to meet them. These signatories include organisations that carry out their own research, funders and learned societies that have their own journals.

It is often assumed that the onus of ensuring that ARRIVE guidelines are followed falls on the journals, which can enforce them as a condition of publication. However, the Concordat recommends that research organisations and other associations whose members are researchers assume the responsibility of ensuring that adhering to ARRIVE or an equivalent framework is embedded as normal good practice in their organisations, regardless of the requirements of particular publications, thereby supporting transparency and reproducibility of research.

From 2020 we noted that many signatories had begun to mention their work in following the PREPARE¹¹ guidelines. PREPARE guidelines are not publication standards but provide a framework for ensuring that experimental design and data collection will support the requirements of ARRIVE. 37% of signatories endorse and actively support both ARRIVE and PREPARE.



¹⁰ <https://arriveguidelines.org>

¹¹ <https://norecopa.no/prepare>

Do you require that ARRIVE, PREPARE or equivalent guidelines are met for the research that your organisation carries out?

| RESEARCH SIGNATORIES | | NON-RESEARCH SIGNATORIES | |
|--------------------------------------------------|----|--------------------------|---|
| ARRIVE guidelines (n=82) | | (n=37) | |
| Yes | 61 | 19 | |
| No | 21 | 18 | |
| PREPARE guidelines (n=82) | | (n=39) | |
| Yes | 46 | 6 | |
| No | 36 | 33 | |
| Signatories that require both ARRIVE and PREPARE | | 42 | 6 |

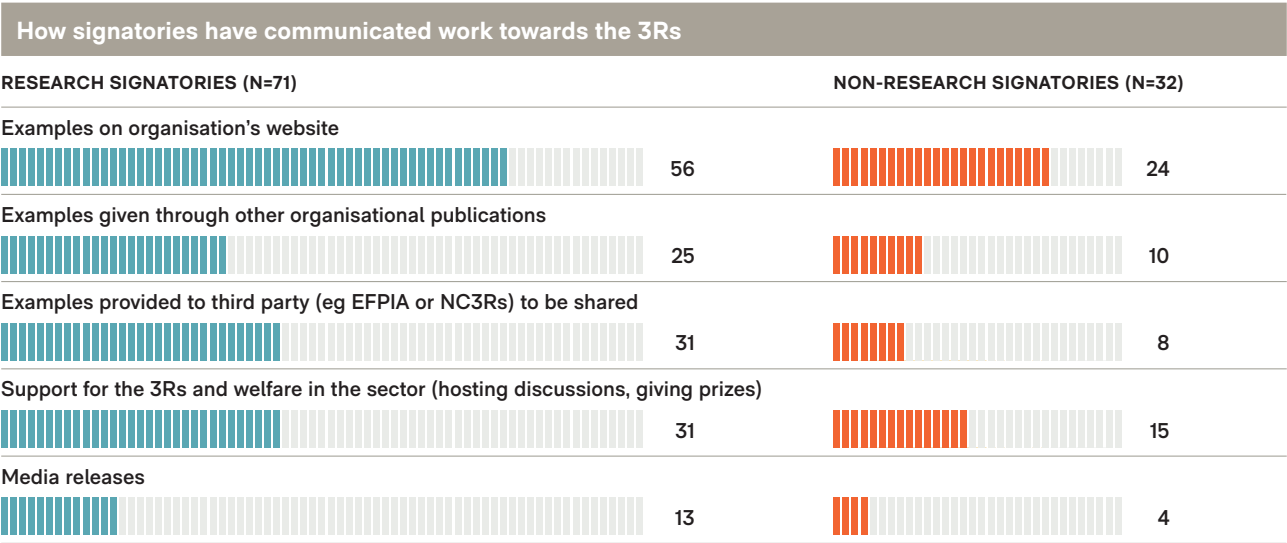




“Previously as part of a project to assess compliance with the ARRIVE 2.0 guidelines our AWERB reviewed a cohort of publications from the university against the ARRIVE checklist. As a result, AWERB established a tailored training programme for our Project Licence Holders to address specific under-reported areas in accordance with ARRIVE, to improve the robustness and reliability of animal research reporting output, as well as to raise awareness and improve compliance.” – **UNIVERSITY**

“The Academy's brief to grant holders stipulates that they must follow the ARRIVE guidelines. We provide this information to grant applicants and award holders on our website, and stipulate this in our grant conditions to applicants prior to application.” – **CHARITY**

Signatories are encouraged to communicate their 3Rs work to the media and the public. 86% of research signatories and 70% of non-research signatories have communicated their 3Rs work via the following.



“This year we presented the first annual 3Rs prize. This was publicised on our website and on social media.” – **UNIVERSITY**

“We explicitly state how we fund research into the 3Rs on our website, including case studies of research that has had an impact on the 3Rs. Internal training for staff and supporter-facing researchers focuses on the 3Rs and our commitment to this. Presentations given by researchers highlight specific research or activity which has addressed the 3Rs.” – **CHARITY**



Commitment 3:

We will be proactive in providing opportunities for the public to learn about animal research

This Commitment aims to encourage more public discussion in the UK about animal research. It builds on Commitments 1 and 2 by suggesting ways in which signatories can engage proactively – directly and indirectly – with the public, over and above the provision of information.

3.1 Co-operative working to provide explanations of animal use in research

Signatories were asked to provide examples of when they had collaborated with other organisations to provide information about the use of animals in research. Forty-five organisations provided examples of collaborative work. These were enormously varied, with school engagement, science fairs, local community outreach, and lab visits being popular among signatories. Several signatories have also collaborated with other organisations to deliver presentations, webinars, workshops and to host policy events.

“Our Primate research group works with the Discovery and Learning team at a wildlife conservation charity to provide interpretation materials, and lessons on their online learning platform on animal minds.” – UNIVERSITY





















“We have collaborated between our Older Peoples Reference Group who were established in 2009 to support ageing research at the university and who are all members of the local community, living near our campus. Our proposal in explaining the use of animal research at the university to this group was to allow them to act as critical friends to us and to act as our representatives and spokespeople within our local community.” – UNIVERSITY



3.2 & 3.3 Activities that encourage public engagement with the issues of animals in research

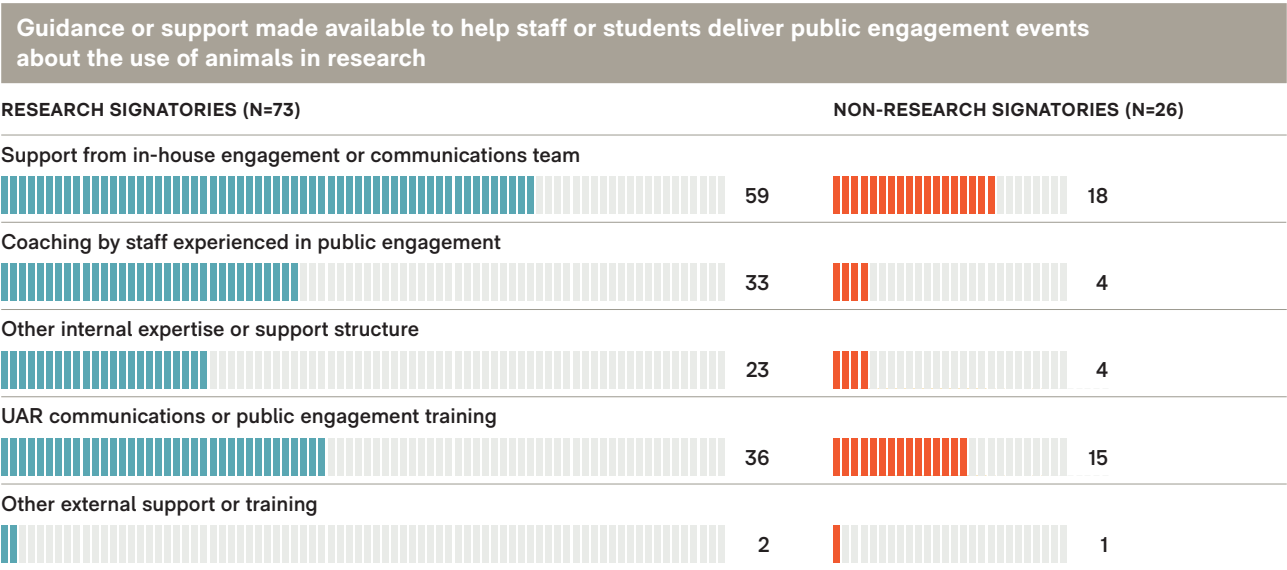
Signatories continuously develop innovative ways to engage with the public to talk about animal research. This aspect of openness brings the research to life, and many organisations now have well-developed resources for online and in-person engagement. 87% of research signatories and 39% of non-research signatories have engaged with their local communities via the following activities. Furthermore, 88% of research signatories and 57% of non-research signatories offer staff or students a variety of resources to support the delivery of public engagement events.

Have you engaged with the public or community around the use of animals in research through any of the following public engagement activities?

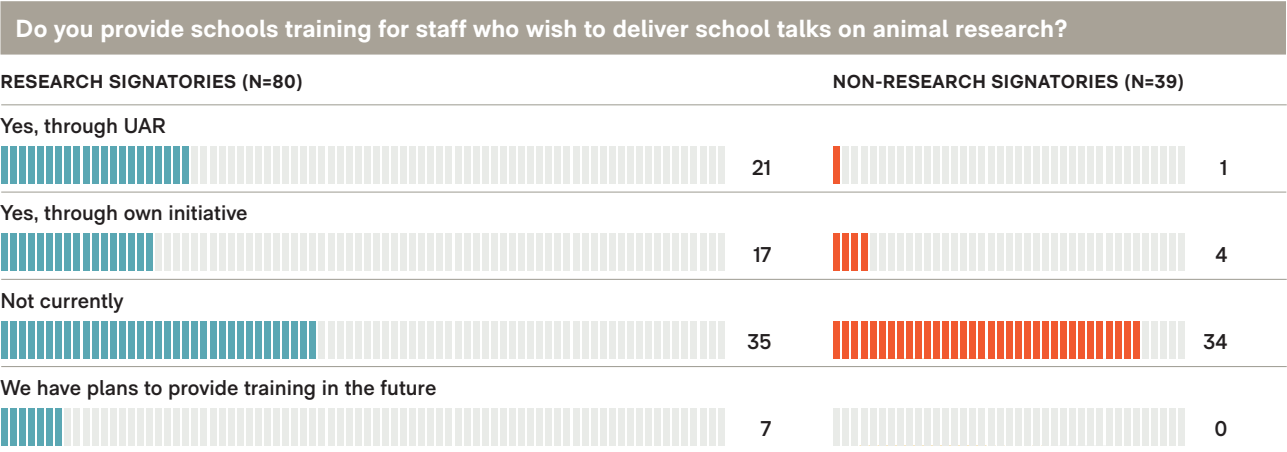
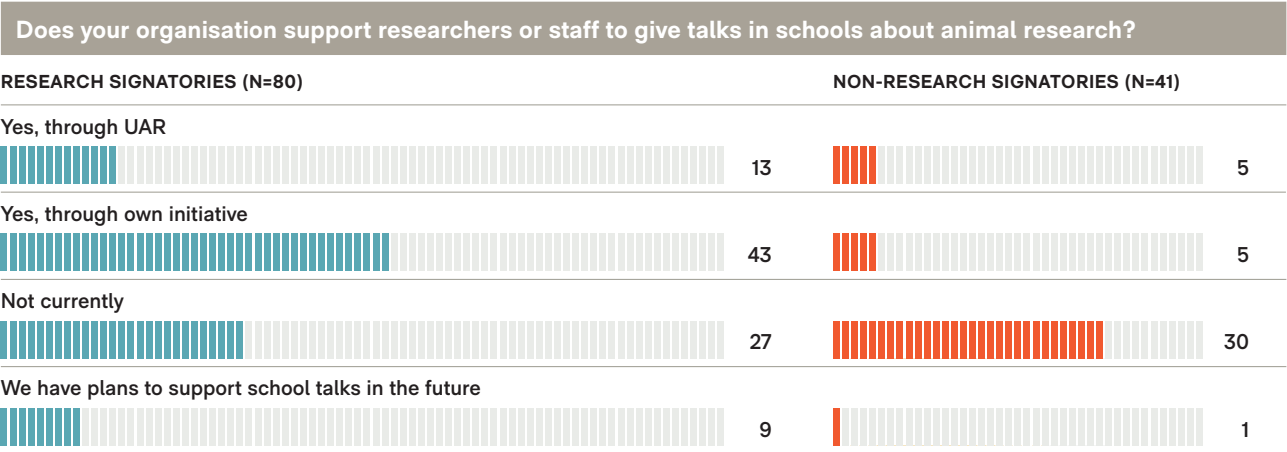
| RESEARCH SIGNATORIES (N=72) | | NON-RESEARCH SIGNATORIES (N=18) |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Policy events (non-sector) |  8 |  6 |
| Holding or participating in science festivals |  47 |  6 |
| Presentations at local or supporter events |  27 |  5 |
| Family days |  21 |  NA |
| Community days and festivals |  22 |  5 |
| Recruitment fairs |  17 |  1 |
| Patient engagement and involvement initiatives |  19 |  3 |
| Schools' engagement |  45 |  7 |
| Open days |  22 |  2 |
| Virtual events |  9 |  3 |

“Our LEAP (Listen, Engage, and Analyse with the Public) meetings with the public, enable direct contact with our researchers to talk about the latest projects and hear views from the public. Each meeting focuses on a key health topic.” – UNIVERSITY

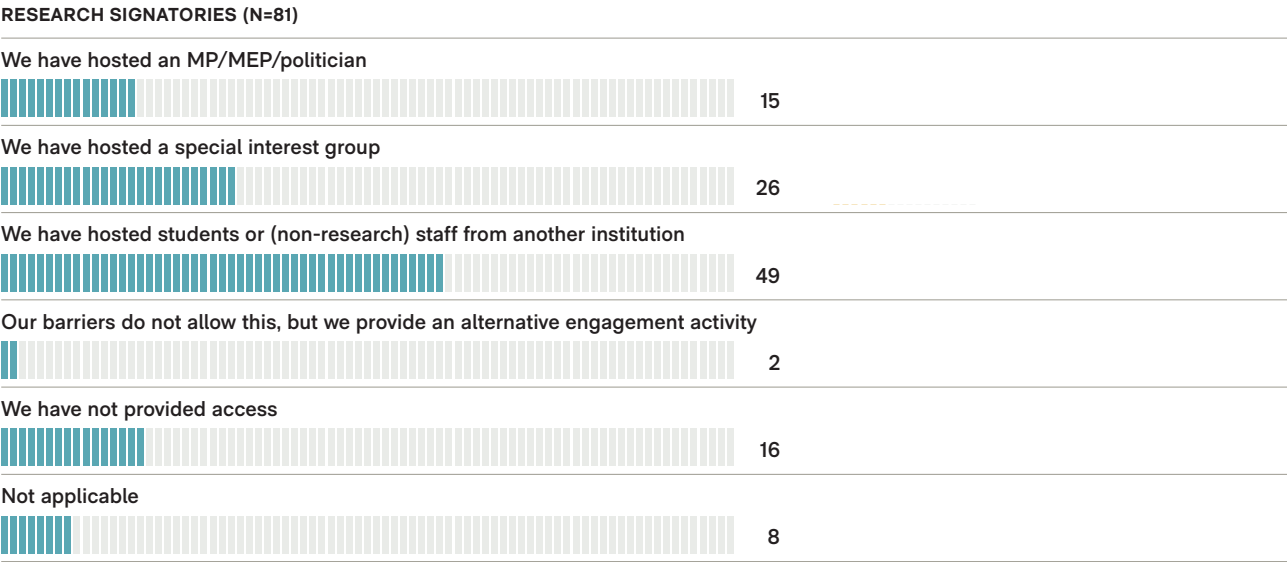
“Our Public Engagement programme continues to work to engage school students and public audiences with the Institute's science, including about the use of animals in research. All these events involved discussions relevant to openness, for example, our research involving animals, animal facility set-up, and animal technician careers. The overall aims of this work are to improve understanding of how and why we do animal research, alternatives, legislation and animal technician careers, as well as providing a platform for the public to ask questions directly to our staff. Within our Public Engagement programme as a whole, talking about animal research where appropriate is a standard part of our engagement events, illustrating the successful embedding of the Institute's culture of openness.” – RESEARCH INSTITUTE



Many signatories support openness through schools engagement, which is valuable for bringing young people into the sector as well as for raising awareness of animal research, animal welfare and the importance of humane research practices. 67% of research signatories and 22% of non-research signatories support researchers or staff to give talks in schools either through UAR or through their own initiatives. Furthermore, 46% of research signatories and 11% of non-research signatories provide training to staff who wish to deliver school talks, either through specialist UAR training or through their own initiatives.



During the last year, have you provided access to your animal facilities to visitors from outside your organisation?



When possible, research signatories are recommended to allow public access to animal facilities, so that visitors can see what is involved in the research and how animals are cared for. Signatories aren't required to do this under the Concordat, but it is one of the best and most effective ways to provide members of the public with opportunities to learn about animal research. 69% of research signatories provided access to their animal facilities via the following.

“School and college visits have occurred across several of our sites, these visits will be offered as part of organised openness events with discussions around how animals support the development of new drugs, 3Rs and ethics discussions and include a tour of the animal facilities.” – PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANY

Openness case studies

Leaders in Openness

The Leaders in Openness standard recognises a structured and embedded culture of openness which communicates effectively to colleagues within, and the public beyond, the life sciences sector. Leaders in Openness are those signatories that excel in providing clear, transparent and relevant information to people from a range of backgrounds and ethical views.

This initiative was launched in 2019 to recognise those organisations that consistently meet and go beyond the good practice recommendations of the Concordat. The assessment process looks at complex areas such as the balance of information about harms and benefits in detail, and the initiative supports all signatories by providing clear examples of embedded good practice from a range of organisations. Candidates' public-facing communications are reviewed by members of the public and by peer reviewers against criteria for current good practice in openness around media communications, staff engagement, website development and public engagement. Full details of this initiative, including the criteria and assessment process, are available on the Concordat on Openness website¹².

Leaders in Openness are presented annually. Leader status is held by an organisation for three years, after which organisations may reapply.

In 2025, the organisations listed below successfully reapplied to retain their Leaders in Openness status.



LEADERS IN OPENNESS 2025

- Agenda Life Sciences
- The Babraham Institute
- The Francis Crick Institute
- Imperial College London
- Newcastle University
- The Pirbright Institute
- Royal Veterinary College
- University of Bath
- University of Cambridge
- University of Manchester

These organisations join AstraZeneca, the University of Bristol and the University of Edinburgh who were appointed Leaders in Openness in 2024 and 2023.

Here, we offer case studies to share good practice implemented by the Leaders in Openness.

¹² <http://concordatopenness.org.uk/leaders-in-openness>

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Newcastle University

Who we AreStudy with UsOur ResearchWork with UsAlumni

Newcastle University > Our Research > Research Governance > Animals and Research

Animals and Research

Animal research plays a vital role in developing our understanding of health and disease


Newcastle University has a policy of using animals in research only if there are no realistic alternatives and in projects of major importance. UK standards of care are among the highest in the world, and we strictly enforce them.

Research using animals has helped conquer many of the world's diseases and other health problems and is crucial to the fight against cancer, heart disease, diabetes and other conditions which are prevalent in the 21st century.

The vast majority of the medical research at Newcastle **does not involve experiments on animals** and the University is committed to the development of alternative methods, such as computer modelling, tissue culture, cell and molecular biology, and research with human subjects.

Research is also dedicated to understanding animal behaviour and improving the welfare and well-being of animals in different environments including laboratory, farm, companion of wild animals.

Newcastle University is a signatory of the national declaration on openness on animal research, and has been recognised as a Leader in Openness in Animal Research since the inception of the award in 2019.



CB

Use of animals in research at Newcastle

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Newcastle University

Who we AreStudy with UsOur ResearchWork with UsAlumni

Newcastle University > Our Research > Research Governance > Animals and Research > Facts and Figures

Facts and Figures

Use of animals in research

You can view our list of five 2025 project titles as of January 2024. This list will be updated annually.

1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024

A breakdown by species of the number of animal procedures carried out at Newcastle University from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024:

Mouse15,725

Fish690

Rat156

Bird150

Macaque8

Marmoset4

CB

Newcastle University

Website www.ncl.ac.uk/research/research-governance/animal

Newcastle University's dedicated animal research webpages provide a model of transparency and accessibility, offering a rich and engaging online resource that meets and surpasses the Concordat's expectations. The pages are easily accessible within just three clicks from the university's homepage. They are fully searchable, ensuring visitors can quickly find detailed information about the institution's research activities that involve animals.

The website features a dynamic mix of high-quality images and videos showcasing the research, alongside a real-time news feed that highlights the latest developments and stories related to research involving animals at Newcastle. This multimedia approach helps demystify the research process and fosters a deeper connection with the public.

One of the standout features is the university's commitment to sharing up-to-date data on animal use in research. Annual updates provide transparent statistics on the number and species of animals used, complemented by summaries of Home Office project licence titles. This level of detail offers visitors a clear understanding of the scope and focus of Newcastle's research programmes.

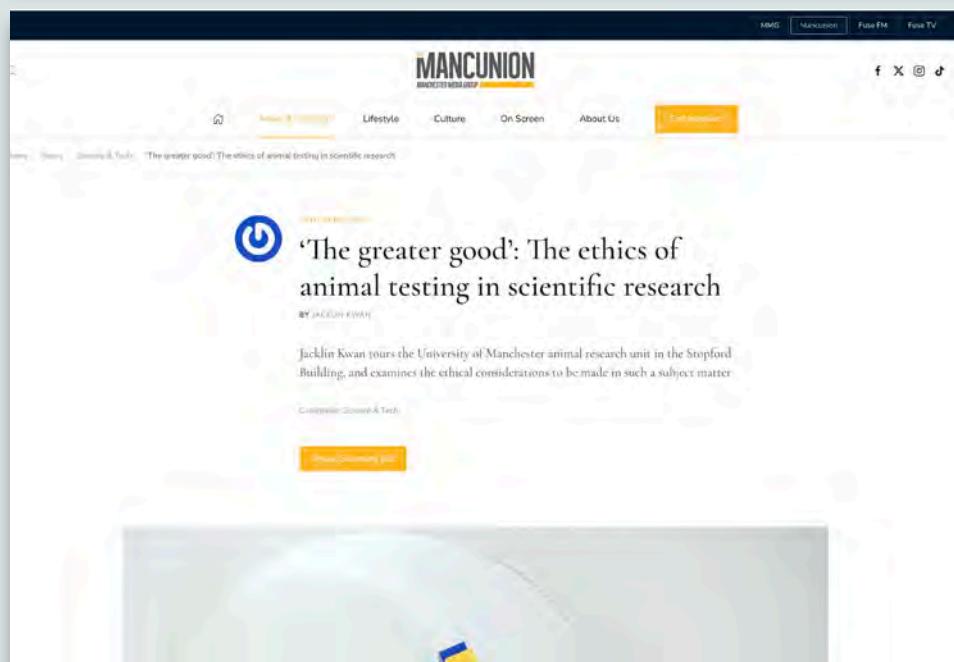
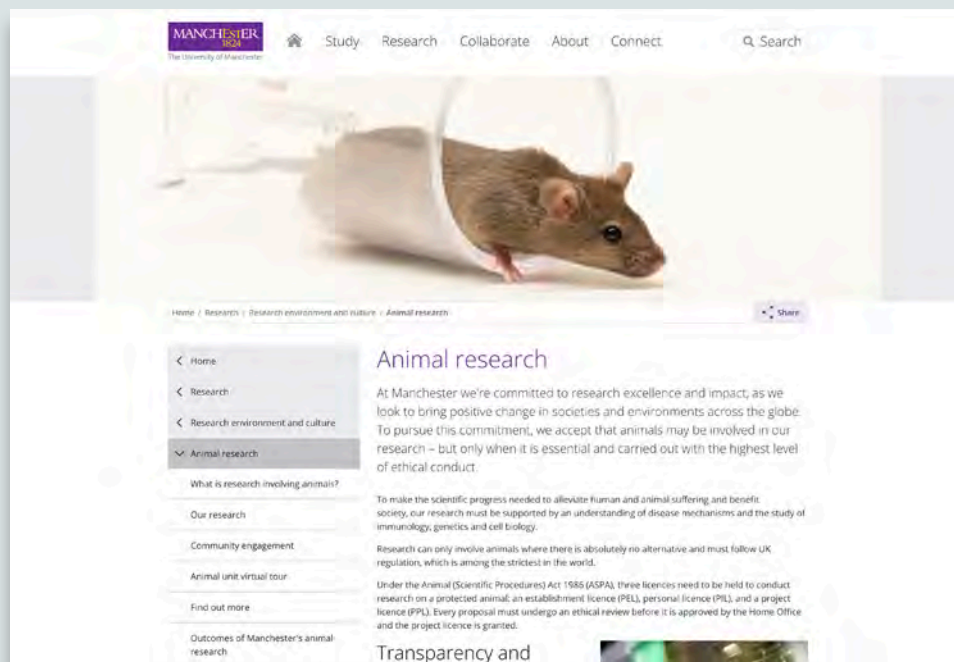
In addition to transparency about research activities, the website places strong emphasis on animal welfare. Newcastle is nationally recognised for pioneering techniques to improve laboratory animal welfare, including less stressful handling for mice and the effective assessment of pain. Through a partnership with outside organisations, the university leads workshops to share these best practices with other institutions. These are often supplemented with resources made available on the website. For example, to support the workshop on low-stress handling of mice, run in collaboration with the NC3Rs, the site includes videos where researchers demonstrate their refined methods and explain the benefits.

The vital role of animal technicians, their expertise and dedication are highlighted throughout the site. By openly celebrating these careers, Newcastle provides insight into the diverse roles that support research involving animals, encouraging a broader appreciation of the workforce behind the science.

The website is organised into clear sections that cover:

- The rationale and scope of research involving animals at Newcastle, including a collaborative video explaining the use of non-human primates.
- The university's policy on research involving animals, with links to relevant regulatory bodies and sector organisations.
- Visually engaging facts and figures, presenting animal use data alongside photographs and explanations of the health conditions the research supports.
- Examples of how research involving animals at the university contributes to advances in human and animal health, providing vital context to the research done.
- Public access to the Animal Welfare Ethical Review Body (AWERB) details, reinforcing ethical oversight and accountability.

By combining comprehensive, regularly updated information with engaging multimedia and a clear focus on animal welfare and staff contributions, Newcastle University's webpages about research involving animals offer a compelling, accessible resource. Their approach not only informs but inspires confidence and understanding, providing a valuable blueprint for other Concordat signatories aiming to enhance their online openness.



University of Manchester

Media engagement

The University of Manchester demonstrates a sophisticated and multi-layered approach to media engagement regarding its animal research, coupling strategic press relations with a robust and dynamic presence across digital and social platforms. Its communications strategy is founded on transparency, clarity, and a commitment to highlighting both ongoing work with animals and advances in alternatives, ensuring accurate representation of its scientific activity in the media and public discourse.

A core feature is the systematic preparation and dissemination of press materials for research stories. Manchester employs the Academy of Medical Sciences press release labelling system, ensuring clear communication to journalists when animal research is involved. Press releases make explicit, from the first line, whether and how animals have been used in studies, and stories are published directly on the university's main news pages for maximum visibility. Developments and achievements in the animal research unit, such as AAALAC accreditation or national awards, are actively promoted, with news items naming key individuals and including direct staff quotations to personalise and contextualise the research.

Manchester's approach extends to direct engagement with media representatives. The student newspaper has more than once toured the animal research unit, providing opportunities for student journalists to engage critically with current practices and fostering a culture of openness.

Staff have received tailored media training, including sessions provided by Understanding Animal Research (UAR), to develop confidence and competence when engaging with the media, ensuring complex topics are communicated effectively and transparently. Senior academics and communications staff are consequently well prepared to serve as spokespeople in media interactions.

Manchester also delivers significant national media engagement. Research from the university frequently appears in national outlets, with examples ranging from studies exploring gene regulation in skin structure to the relationship between daily activity rhythms and skeletal health. Such stories always include clear statements regarding animal involvement and robust ethical context, reinforcing transparency.

Complementing this, the university has a vibrant digital and social media strategy. Since 2022, social media activity has expanded, with participation in nationwide campaigns such as Be Open About Animal Research Day, regular involvement in UAR's Top Ten initiative, and multiple Instagram takeovers highlighting animal and 3Rs research. These efforts include video content such as "A Day in the Life of an Animal Technologist", infographics promoting environmental enrichment, and high-profile campaigns showcasing advances in 3Rs research, including organoid mini-lung models and stroke research using larval zebrafish and engineered human cell systems. These videos and posts, some garnering tens of thousands of views, communicate advances to a diverse audience and reinforce the university's commitment to animal welfare and research alternatives.

Through its multi-channel outreach – spanning traditional media, digital platforms, and internal training – The University of Manchester sets a strong standard in media engagement for openness in animal research. Its approach ensures that public and media audiences receive not only timely and accurate information about why and how animals are used, but also a clear understanding of the ongoing efforts to refine, reduce, and replace animal use wherever possible.



**“Let’s talk
animal
research”**



**A chance to hear about
animal research and welfare**

Thursday 8th February
2.45-3.45pm
Queen Edith Room

- Understanding neonatal death in mice
- Talking publicly about working with animals
- Active projects to reduce and refine animal use

**Everyone welcome
Refreshments from 2.30pm**

Babraham Institute

Internal engagement

Internal engagement is vital to ensuring staff across an organisation are informed, involved, and empowered to participate in open conversations about the work they support. The Babraham Institute has demonstrated a dynamic and inclusive approach to internal engagement regarding its animal research.

A flagship element of Babraham's internal engagement is its well-established seminar series, relaunched in 2022 and rebranded in 2024 as "Let's Talk Animal Research" to appeal to a broader audience, particularly those in non-scientific roles. Organised by an animal technician and the Named Information Officer, with support from Communications and Events teams, these seminars have consistently attracted high attendance from animal technicians and have successfully engaged staff from diverse teams such as Bioinformatics, Stores, Computing, and Engineering.

Recent highlights include the February 2024 seminar, which drew 30 attendees and featured talks on understanding neonatal death in mice, communicating publicly about animal research, and active projects to reduce and refine animal use. The Institute also piloted a live "Ask Me Anything" session in May 2024, held in the campus bar, which brought together a panel of facility representatives and engaged new audiences from across the Institute, encouraging open dialogue and breaking down barriers between research and non-research staff.

Quarterly virtual tours of the Biological Support Unit (BSU) further support transparency and engagement, offering small groups of staff and campus colleagues the chance to observe the facility in real time, ask questions, and discuss animal care practices. These tours are promoted Institute-wide and are capped at ten participants per session to ensure meaningful discussion. In 2024, 28 staff and campus colleagues took part, including a bespoke tour for members of the Institute's Engineering team, who are critical to maintaining the facility's building operations.

The Institute's annual Lab Talks event is another key opportunity for internal engagement. Researchers present their work and the animal facility team sometimes presents to share updates. Regular communication is maintained through the Institute's monthly internal newsletter, which features news from the animal facility alongside broader research updates.

Babraham also champions the visibility and professional development of its technical staff through its ongoing support of the Technician Commitment, ensuring animal technicians are recognised as vital contributors to the Institute's success.

Transparency is further supported by welcoming observers to AWERB meetings (with Chair approval) and making executive summaries available on the intranet. To equip staff to communicate confidently about animal research, facility staff have participated in UAR-led communications workshops, including smartphone video training and dedicated sessions for animal technicians in June 2023.

Through a varied programme of seminars, tours, training, and open dialogue, the Babraham Institute has created a culture where internal engagement on animal research is accessible, valued, and continually evolving – setting a strong example for others to follow.

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News

Pirbright wows visitors with Disease Detectives at the Royal Society Summer Science Exhibition 2022

14 July 2022

Pirbright was one of just 16 exhibits selected to attend the prestigious Royal Society Summer Science Exhibition 2022 which showcased cutting-edge science for people of all ages.

Home > News > Pirbright wows visitors with Disease Detectives at the Royal Society Summer Science Exhibition 2022



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we are currently working on risk assessing

Avian flu research at The Pirbright Institute

The Pirbright Institute

1.15K subscribers

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0

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Clip

The Pirbright Institute

Public engagement

The Pirbright Institute has established itself as a leader in public engagement, delivering a wide-ranging programme that brings transparency and education about animal research to communities of all ages. With a clear focus on demystifying animal research and highlighting its vital role in animal and human health, Pirbright's approach exemplifies best practice in openness and accessibility.

Between April 2022 and March 2025, Pirbright participated in 79 events, including 48 careers-focused sessions in secondary schools and sixth form colleges, and 18 school talks – six of which specifically addressed animal research and welfare. The Institute's commitment to inspiring future generations is evident in its regular school and college visits, where scientists and animal care staff discuss STEM careers, the importance of animal research, and the ethical standards that underpin their work.

Pirbright's public engagement extends well beyond the classroom. The Institute has been a visible presence at major science festivals and national events, including the Royal Society Summer Science Exhibition, where in July 2022 it debuted the interactive "Disease Detectives" exhibit. This hands-on simulator allowed thousands of visitors, including more than 700 students and teachers from 33 schools, to step into the shoes of researchers tackling zoonotic disease outbreaks. The exhibit received national media coverage and was ranked among the top three at the event, highlighting both the public's interest and Pirbright's ability to communicate complex science in an accessible way.

Locally, Pirbright maintains strong ties with its surrounding community, sponsoring parish events, supporting wildlife conservation projects, and providing updates at parish council meetings. The Institute also opens its doors for special occasions – such as the two-day open event in March and April 2023, which welcomed more than 800 visitors and showcased the breadth of research and expertise across all departments.

Despite the challenges of operating a high-biosecurity site, Pirbright has prioritised increasing public access to its animal facilities. Notable examples include guided tours of the Biggs Avian Research Building and the under-construction Brooksby Building, which have hosted dignitaries, scientific advisers, and senior officials from across government and academia. These visits offer rare insights into the high standards of animal welfare and the sophisticated infrastructure supporting Pirbright's research.

The Institute's commitment to public engagement is further demonstrated through its digital and media activities. In 2024, Pirbright produced a film on avian influenza research, featuring both leading scientists and animal services staff, and participated in national media campaigns such as UAR's Animals in Research Week, where animal technicians took over Instagram to answer questions from the public.

By combining hands-on educational outreach, high-profile public events, community partnerships, and innovative digital engagement, the Pirbright Institute sets a high standard for public engagement in animal research, demonstrating how openness and active dialogue can build trust, inspire future scientists, and support the responsible use of animals in research.

Concordat administration

About the Concordat on Openness

The Concordat on Openness was developed by the UK life sciences sector over an 18-month period and was directly informed by a deliberative public process¹³. Public interest in how and why animals are used in scientific research, and public expectations of the information that should be provided about this issue, lie at the heart of the Concordat's aims and the framework for communication that it offers. The four commitments are still considered by the signatories and the Steering Group to be appropriate and have remained the same throughout the lifetime of the Concordat, although guidance and practices around the Concordat have been continually updated to reflect changing circumstances and practices.

To sign the Concordat, organisations must carry out animal research themselves, directly support organisations that use animals in research (for example through funding), support members who carry out or fund animal research, or breed animals for research under a Home Office licence. Signatories include academic bodies, pharmaceutical companies, commercial research organisations and breeders, medical research charities, learned societies, research funding bodies and others who are concerned with the accessibility of public-domain information about animal research.

The Concordat is managed by UAR and overseen by an independent Steering Group which meets annually. UAR provides several opportunities throughout the year for signatories and non-signatory organisations to discuss and engage with the Concordat. Signatories can provide feedback to UAR in an annual workshop event and through the annual survey. Non-signatories can contact UAR via the Concordat website¹⁴ or join one of UAR's regular openness-themed webinars that are open to everyone¹⁵.

Concordat aims

1. Support confidence and trust in the life sciences sector
2. Build open dialogue with the public on the reality of the use of animals in research
3. Foster greater openness and practical steps that will bring about transparency around the use of animals in research

¹³ <https://concordatopenness.org.uk/about-the-concordat-on-openness/history-of-the-concordat>

¹⁴ <https://concordatopenness.org.uk/contact-us/>

¹⁵ www.understandinganimalresearch.org.uk/events



Concordat objectives (2017–2025)

1. Improve public access to information about what happens to research animals and why
2. Raise the expectation of openness and transparency around the use of animals in research for research organisations, their funders, animal breeders and other professional organisations associated with animal research
3. Recognise and champion best practice in openness
4. Provide better quality and more accurate information to the media
5. Alert the research community to the risks of secrecy, and provide support for greater transparency, highlighting its benefits for science, animal welfare and communications
6. Gain buy-in for greater openness among practitioners and stakeholders in the animal research sector, from both the top-down and the bottom-up

Minimum compliance requirements

To meet the minimum requirements of the Concordat on Openness on Animal Research, all signatory organisations must provide a copy of their logo to be displayed on the Concordat website, along with a statement outlining their position regarding the use of animals in scientific research. This statement must be unique to the organisation and explain its ethical position on the use of animals with reference to organisational structure, values and research interests. If the organisation supports or funds – rather than carries out – research on animals, the statement should explain why this is the case. These statements must be easily accessible on the organisation website, and clearly linked to from the Concordat on Openness website. The links must be working and provided to UAR annually as part of the reporting process.

Signatories are required to provide an annual report on their progress and activities undertaken towards openness (commitment 4). A survey is undertaken annually by UAR to support this process. The Concordat on Openness on Animal Research annual report is created from the data collected through the annual survey.

Signatories are also expected to make a commitment to improving internal structures and communications around their use of animals in research. The form of these structural changes will depend on the organisation, but all are expected to commit to a new approach to open communications that will form the basis of their future practices.

Throughout the history of the Concordat, there have only been two situations of non-compliance that resulted in signatories being removed from the Concordat. In the first instance of non-compliance, signatory organisations are contacted and made aware by UAR. If no further effort is made by the signatories to meet the minimum compliance requirements, a letter is sent from the Steering Group removing the organisation from the Concordat. Both signatories did eventually rejoin the Concordat once able to show they had developed processes to ensure that the minimum compliance requirements could be met. There were no situations of non-compliance in the current reporting period.

Evaluation of management processes

UAR manages the Concordat and asks for feedback from signatories on the support they have been given over the year.

Signatories reported that they are happy with the Concordat, find it valuable, and feel that it is enabling change in their organisations. The reporting process is seen as useful and serves as a reminder of what other organisations are doing, but also provides an opportunity for comment by organisations that do things differently.

Please let us know to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements:

I understand the Concordat commitments and that support is available to help me fulfil them (Response total: 124)

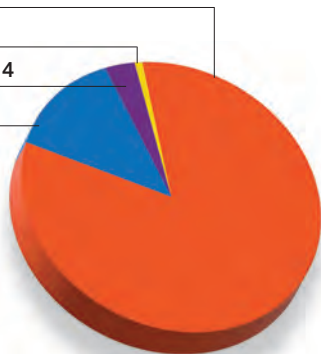
Agree: 102

Disagree somewhat: 1

Neither agree nor disagree: 4

Agree somewhat: 17

Disagree: 0



The Concordat is an important step forward for UK-based biomedical research (Response total: 124)

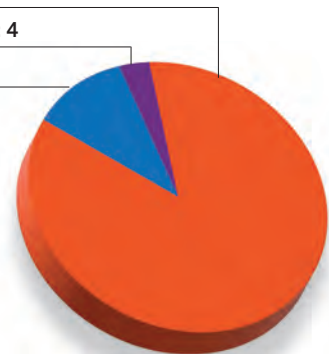
Agree: 106

Neither agree nor disagree: 4

Agree somewhat: 14

Disagree somewhat: 0

Disagree: 0



The Concordat is unlikely to lead to real changes in signatory organisations (Response total: 123)

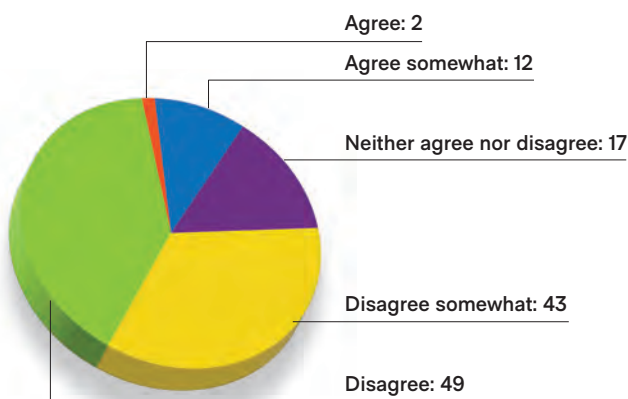
Agree: 2

Agree somewhat: 12

Neither agree nor disagree: 17

Disagree somewhat: 43

Disagree: 49



The communications I receive about the Concordat are useful (Response total: 123)

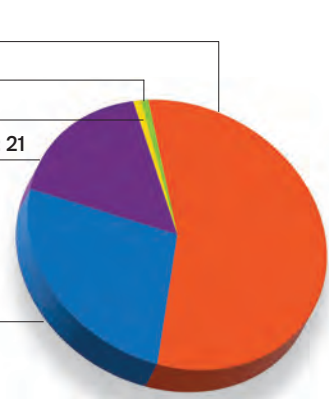
Agree: 68

Disagree: 1

Disagree somewhat: 1

Neither agree nor disagree: 21

Agree somewhat: 32



Above: For some organisations, internal and structural difficulties can make implementing the Concordat challenging. Small, sector-focused organisations whose work is not public-facing can feel less involved with openness, although they are supportive.

We asked signatories about areas where they would like more support or that they would like to see the Concordat address, and the following themes emerged:

- More opportunities for Concordat signatories to share ideas and experiences with one another
- Internal engagement activities and influencing senior management
- Developing website content
- How funders and organisations that don't carry out research can support openness
- Guidance for non-biomedical research involving animals and research taking place outside of the UK
- Supporting openness with limited time and resources
- Developing public engagement events, specifically school talks
- Guidance on developing communications in a time of increased activism

I know how to get help with meeting the commitments
(Response total: 123)

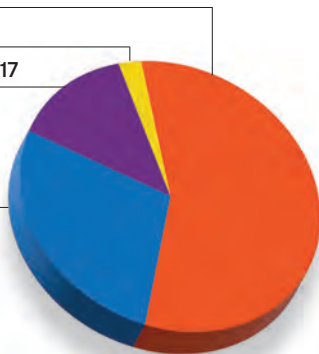
Agree: 69

Disagree somewhat: 3

Neither agree nor disagree: 17

Agree somewhat: 34

Disagree: 0



I am worried that my organisation will not be able to meet the Concordat commitments (Response total: 124)

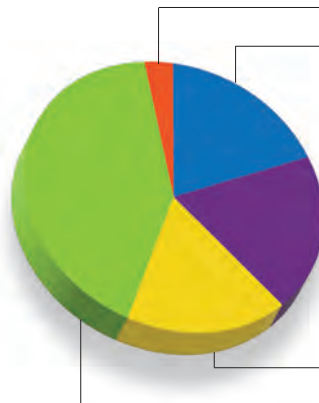
Agree: 4

Agree somewhat: 22

Neither agree nor disagree: 24

Disagree somewhat: 22

Disagree: 52



I am happy with the support I have received with implementing the Concordat (Response total: 122)

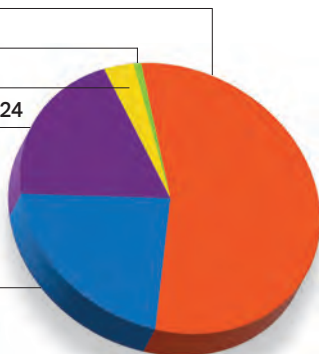
Agree: 67

Disagree: 1

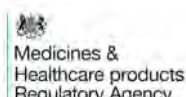
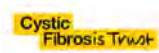
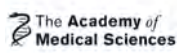
Disagree somewhat: 4

Neither agree nor disagree: 24

Agree somewhat: 26



Above: Reasons for concerns about meeting obligations under the Concordat were mixed across a variety of organisations and included internal structures, resources, and continuing caution among researchers.







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ISSN 2754-4702