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The Crisis of Mediators? Science Communication in the Digital Age

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The 'third mission' push

- *European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers:*

Researchers should ensure that their research activities are made known to society at large in such a way that they can be understood by non-specialists, thereby improving the public's understanding of science. Direct engagement with the public will help researchers to better understand public interest in priorities for science and technology and also the public's concerns (2005).

Public engagement describes the myriad of ways in which the activity and benefits of higher education and research can be shared with the public. Engagement is by definition a two-way process, involving interaction and listening, with the goal of generating mutual benefit. (NCCPE, UK)

Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research

Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research was developed by the UK's research funding bodies. The aim of the *Concordat* is to create a greater focus on and help embed public engagement with research across all disciplines in the higher education and research sectors.

"Engaging people with science and engineering has never been more important. In an increasingly technological world, everyone needs to understand the benefits and potential concerns around new developments which may affect us all. Science engagement can help the public become part of a national conversation on some of the big issues like climate change and renewable energy, ensuring that researchers and policy makers understand the impact of leading research."

"There are already lots going on, but now more than ever we need to maximise the effectiveness of science engagement by increasing its reach and impact. I welcome this Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research and its aims to strengthen public engagement across the research and HE sector. I would like to thank all the signatories and supporters who will be implementing and reviewing the Concordat for their commitment to public engagement, which will enhance the future of research and benefit the UK society and economy."

David Willetts, Minister for Universities and Science

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Concordat

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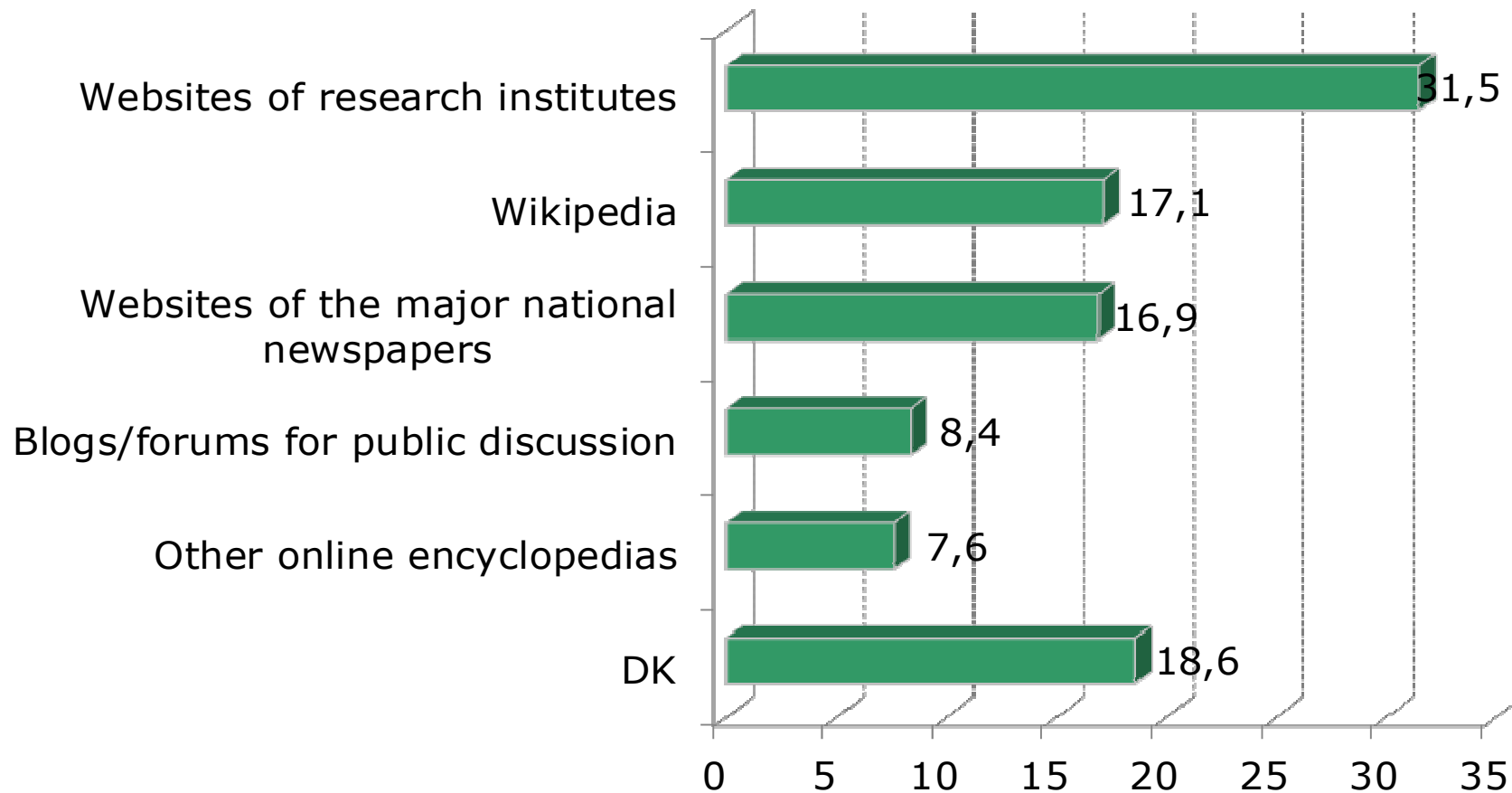
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Trustworthiness of science information sources

	Highly/quite trustworthy		Little/Not trustworthy		DK	
	2008	2012	2008	2012	2008	2012
Public lectures by researchers	65,4	72,4	19,8	23,2	14,8	4,4
Popular science magazines	66,8	72,2	18,8	23,1	14,4	4,7
Research institutions websites	47,9	66,4	21,1	20,8	31,0	12,8
TV science programmes	72,4	69,5	22,2	29,7	5,4	1,2
Researchers' blogs	44,9	63,1	24,1	27,6	31,0	12,8
Newspapers' S&T pages	55,4	55,2	35,2	40,4	9,4	4,4
Radio science programmes	42,9	48,1	23,6	35,0	33,5	16,9

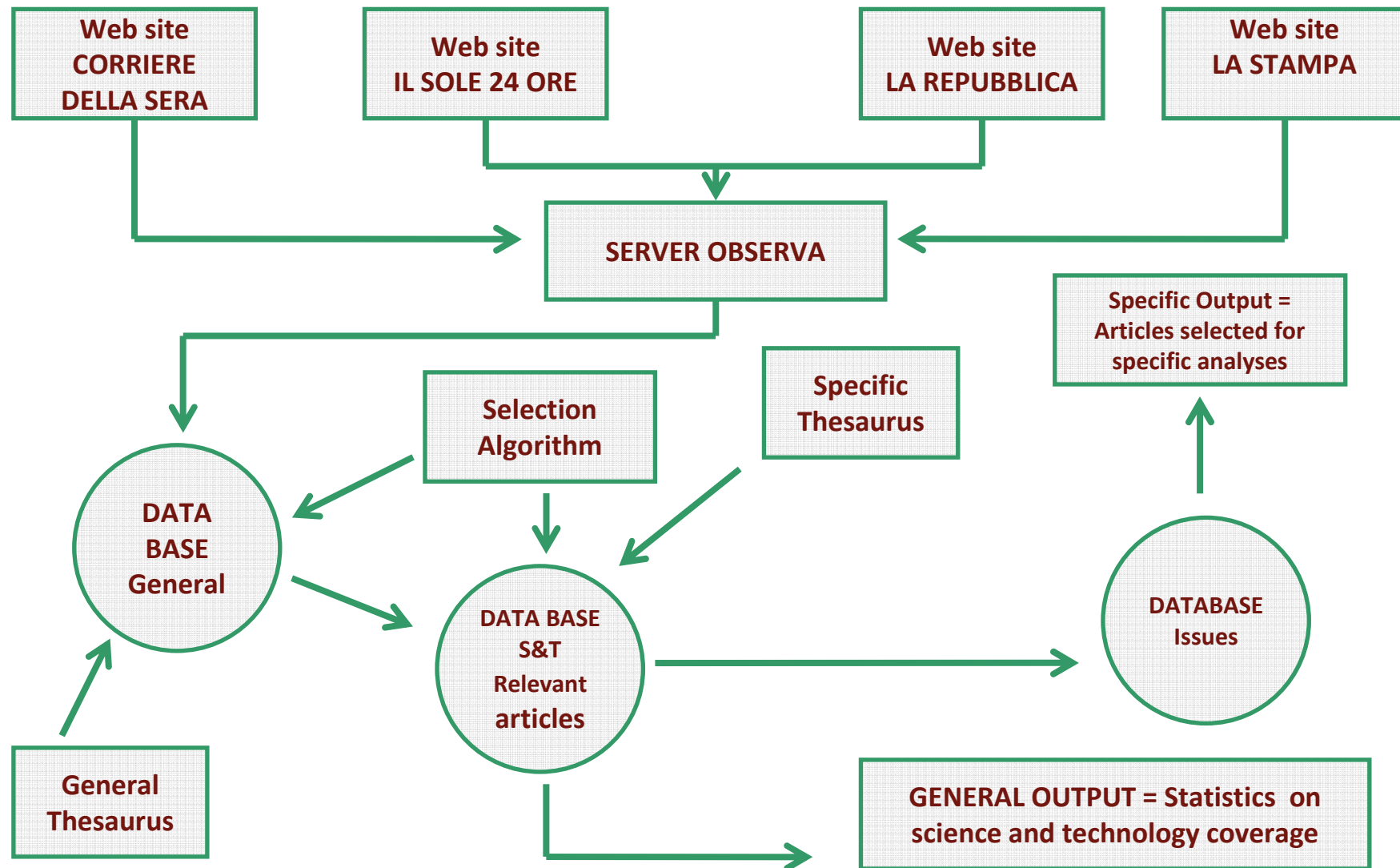
Trend 2008-2012 (%; 2008: n=996; 2012: n=995).

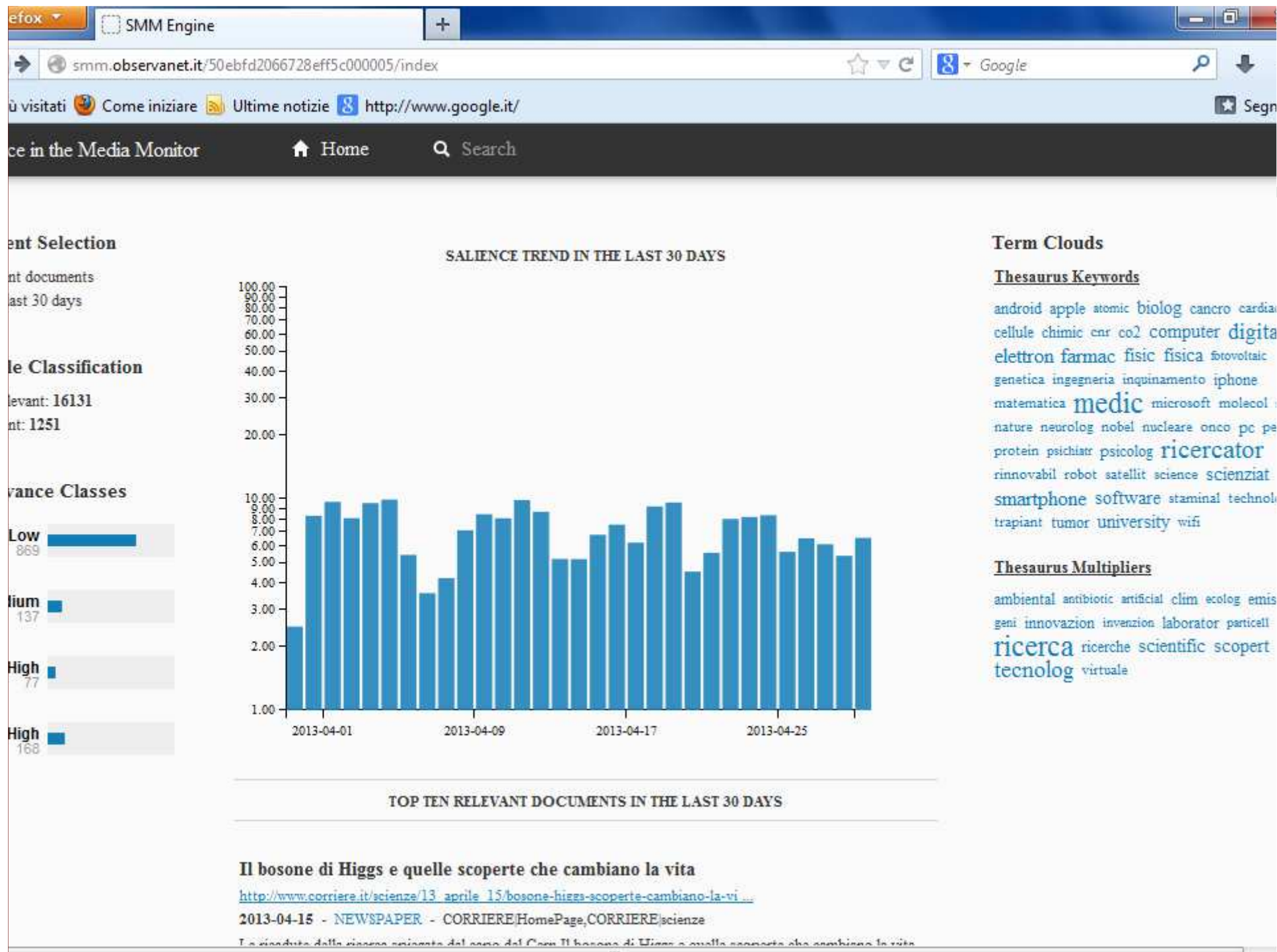
Most trustworthy web sources



Web sources considered more credible to find information about current issues related to science and technology (%; 2010: n=985).

Science in the Media Monitor

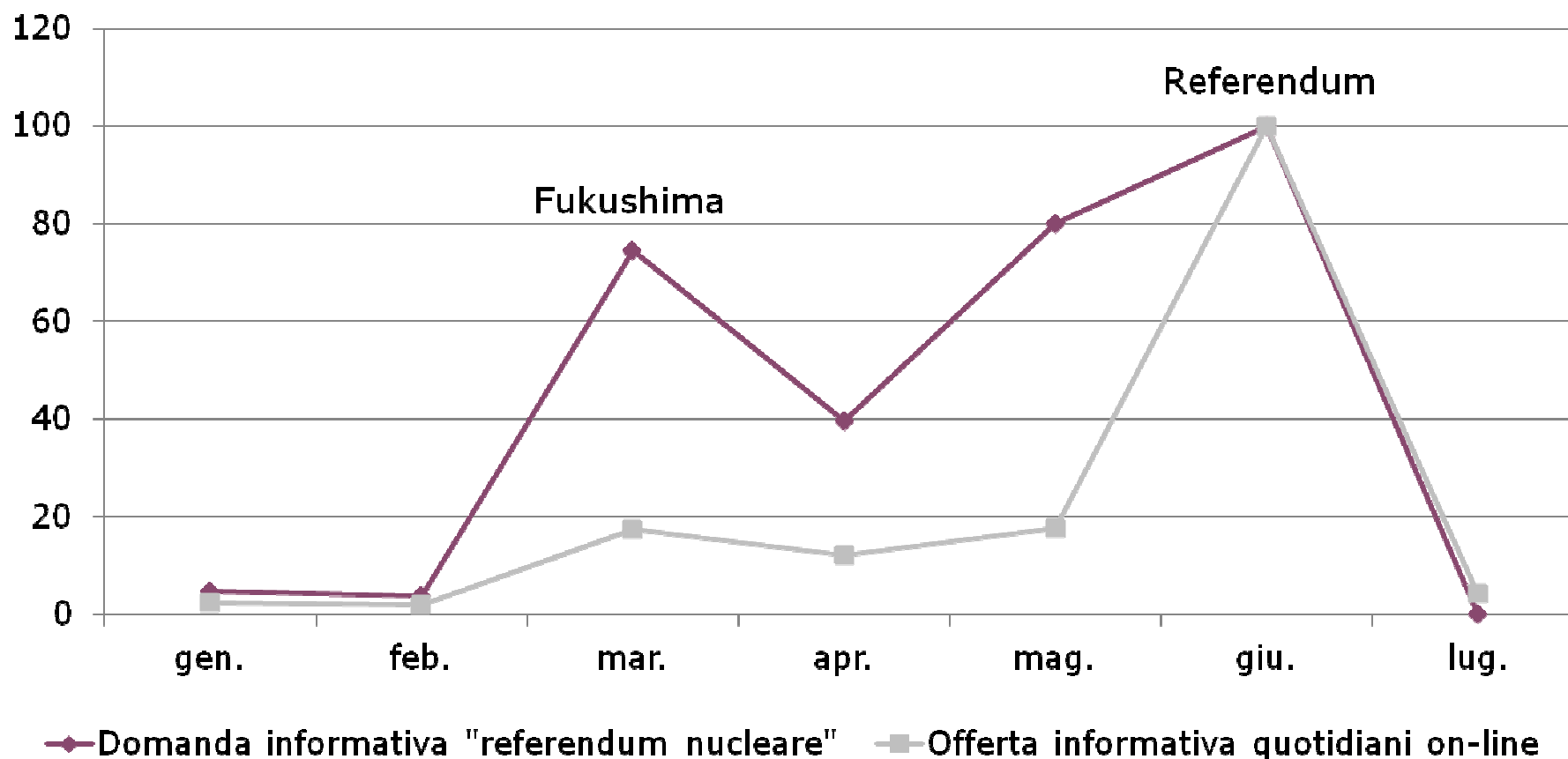




Science in the
Media monitor



Information offer vs. information demand, in
connection with referendum on nuclear energy of
13 giugno 2011
(normalised values, jan/june 2011)



Sources: Observa/Smm; Google Stats.

Indicators of PE activities obtained from the survey

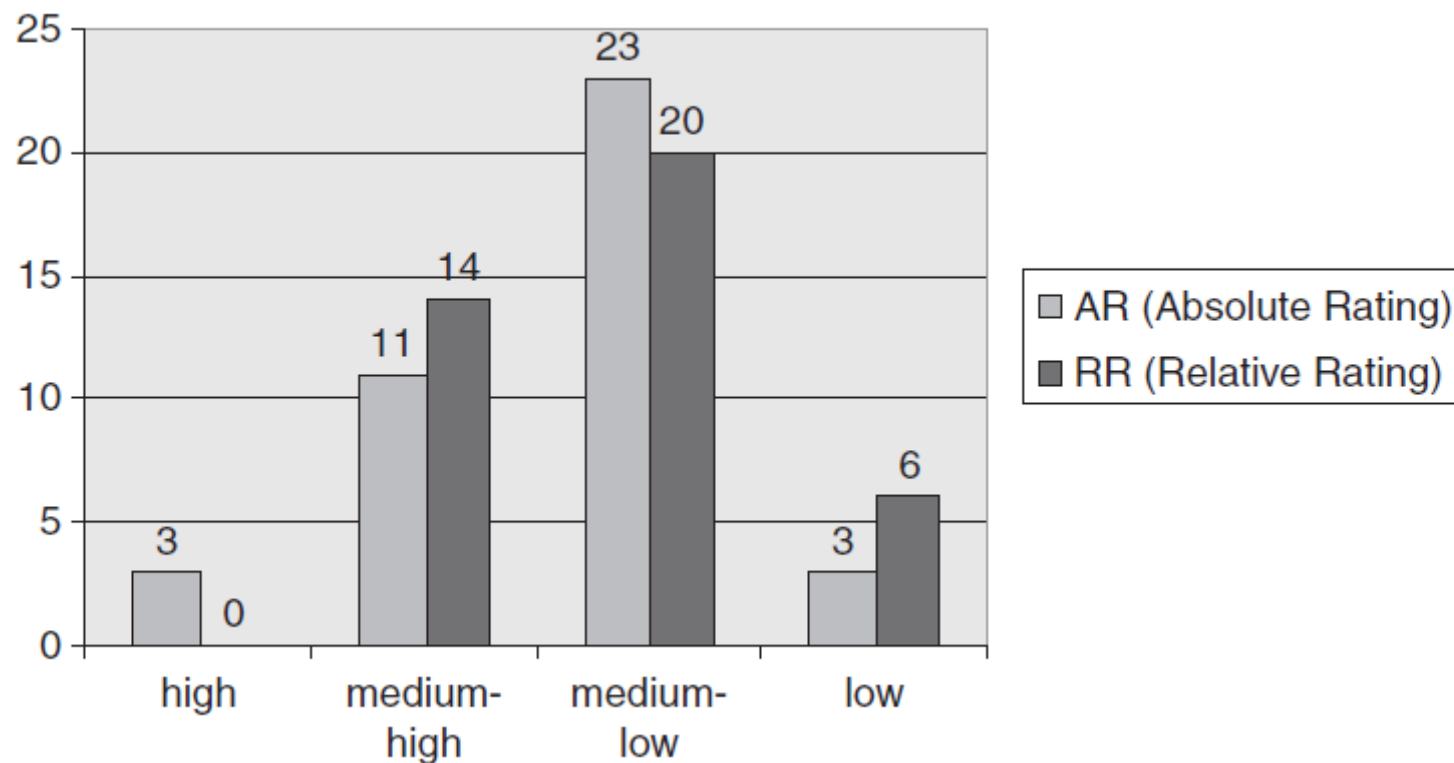
(da Neresini-Bucchi, 2011)

Name	Aspect of PE activities on which the indicator focuses	Main features of the indicators' distribution			Test of independency from the research institute's size		
		Range ($m-M$)*	Mode (category with the highest concentration of cases)	Suitable for analysis?	F/P	p	Dependency on RI size
Q1	Dedicated resources for PE	0-3	3 = 47.5%	yes	F = 2.659	p = 0.063	no
Q2	Public availability of information about research activities	0-15	3 = 15%	yes	P = 0.397	p = 0.012	no
Q3	Attention to ethical issues	0-3	0 = 47.5%	yes	F = 4.539	p = 0.003	no**
Q4	Press and/or PR office	0-3	2.5 = 52.5%	yes	F = 0.567	p = 0.724	no
Q5	Intensity of relationships with media	0-5	3 = 35%	yes	F = 5.583	p = 0.001	yes
Q6	Publications addressed to the public	0-1.5	1 = 52.5%	yes	F = 6.499	p = 0.004	yes
Q7	Participation in EU projects and/or networks about PE	0-3.75	0 = 45%	yes	P = 0.380	p = 0.016	no
Q8	Museum and/or permanent exhibitions	0-9.38	0 = 75%	no	F = 2.156	p = 0.066	no
Q9	Specific activities with schools	0-4	3 = 42.5%	yes	F = 3.126	p = 0.024	no
Q10	Visits to laboratories	0-9.25	6 = 15%	yes	P = 0.281	p = 0.079	no
Q11	Open days	0-2	1 = 55%	yes	F = 1.421	p = 0.254	no
Q12	Collaboration with NGOs and local government bodies?	0-2	1 = 52.5%	yes	F = 1.016	p = 0.372	no
Q13	Meetings, conferences etc. addressed to the public	0-6.75	0 = 72.5%	yes	F = 11.005	p = 0.000	yes

* The 0 value (m) is assigned when PE activities on which the indicator is focused are completely absent in the specific research institution; M is the highest value of the indicator which has been found in the sample.

** Only for biomedical research institutions.

Distribution of research institutions' PE performances on the basis of absolute rating AR (range = 0–17; mean = 7.7; SD = 2.8) and relative rating RR (range = 0–13; mean = 5.7; SD = 1.9)
(da Neresini-Bucchi, 2011)



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