LEGEND LABS

What Makes Research Break Through to the Public?

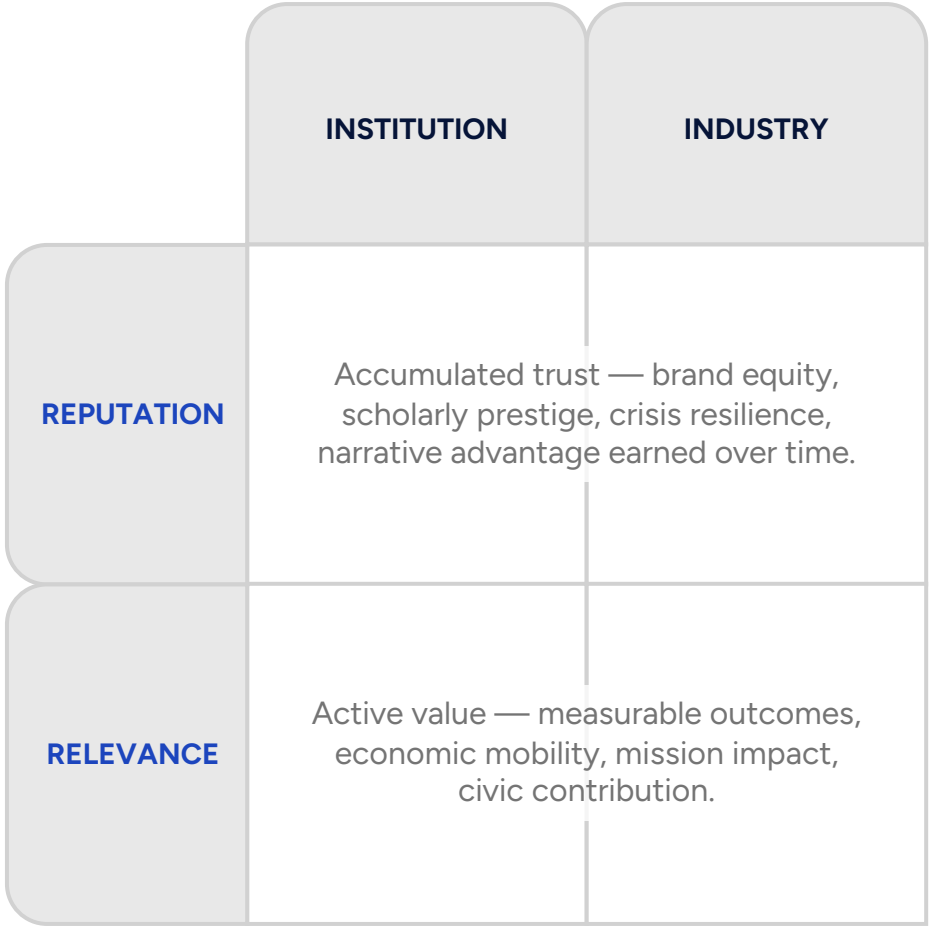
Intelligence for Research Impact Storytelling in Higher Education

Redrawing Higher Education's Strategic Map

Higher education is in a battle for reputation and relevance — at the institution level and at the industry level. The question facing university leadership is how to build and sustain them in a landscape where trust is eroding, scrutiny is increasing, and the value of higher education is no longer taken for granted.

In our conversations with university presidents, boards, and communications leaders, one theme has consistently surfaced as material to every quadrant on higher education's strategic map:

The research impact storytelling imperative.

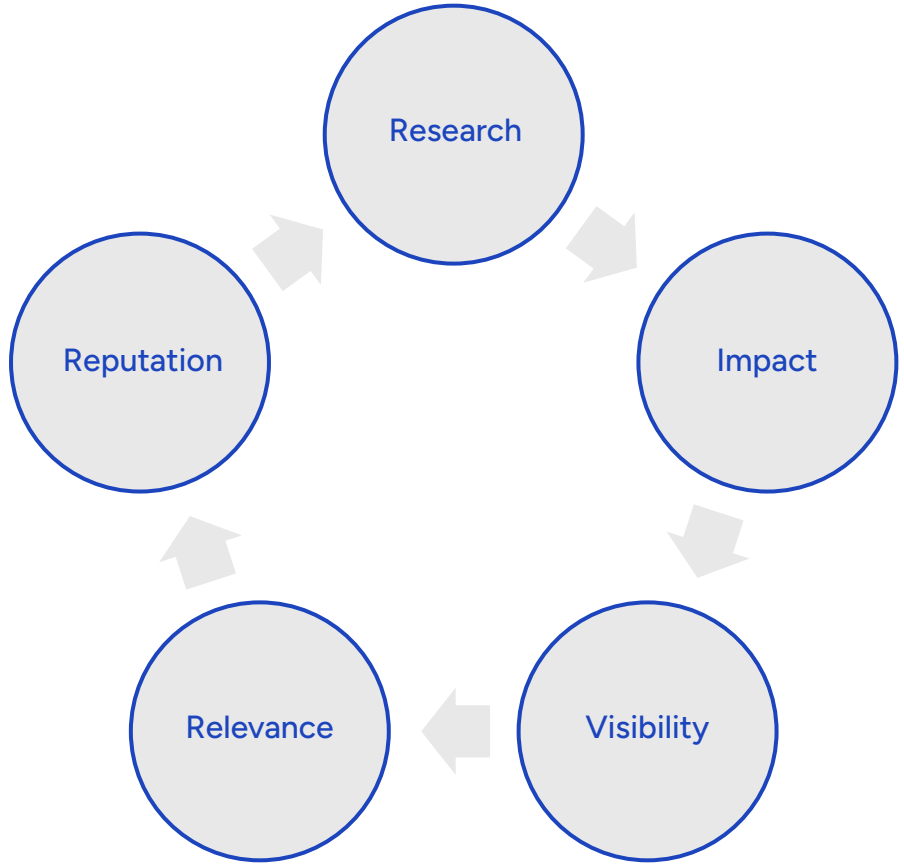


The Research Impact Storytelling Imperative

The "flywheel effect," popularized by Jim Collins, describes how consistent execution in key areas builds compounding momentum — small wins reinforcing one another until progress becomes self-sustaining.

Research is a critical component in the university's — and indeed the industry's — flywheel:

> *Research produces impact. Impact, when translated and surfaced, drives visibility. Visibility, sustained over time across the right audiences, builds relevance. Relevance, accumulated and recognized, strengthens reputation. Reputation attracts the talent, students, funding, and philanthropy that enables more and better research. And so it continues...*

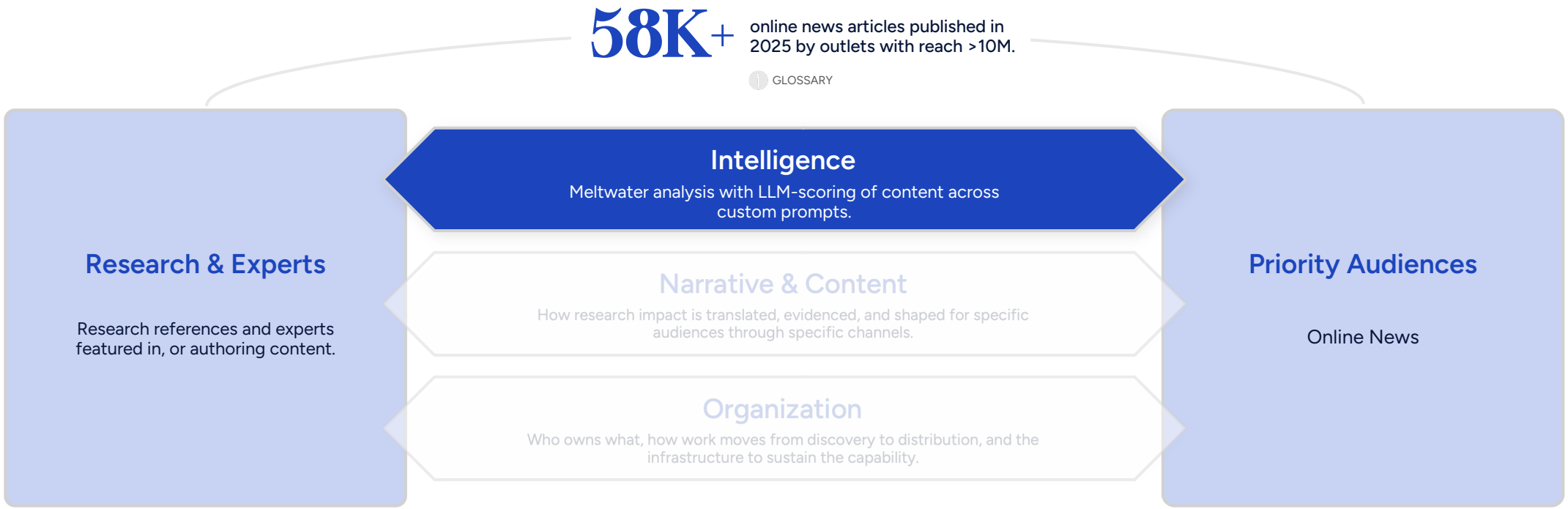


The Research Impact Storytelling Operating System

So how do we *affect* the flywheel effect? The Research Impact Storytelling Operating System is a framework for how institutions connect research and faculty expertise to the audiences that matter most. These pillars — and the interdependent layers that connect them — determine the pressure we can apply to the flywheel.

The Intelligence Layer

Given the enterprise-scale complexity the full Operating System represents, we focused our analysis on the Intelligence Layer — a foundational assessment from which other parts of the Operating System can be built or augmented. We analyzed over 58K mentions of university research and faculty experts by high-reach, online news media. These outlets and journalists are a priority audience in and of themselves but also represent a critical bridge to many others — academe, alumni, donors, legislators, world leaders, etc.



Research & Experts in Online News

The analysis is an exploration of how digital listening intelligence can be configured and leveraged to understand performance and inform strategy — at the industry level, at the institution level, and at the academic discipline level. It also layers in third-party metrics like the h-index and U.S. News and World Report peer assessment scores as we seek to directionally map *output* to *outcomes*.

The following slides represent a fraction of what's been scored: visualizations of the most mentioned institutions include a small sample of the 2,000 universities in the dataset. Data featured in the profiles of NYU and Quinnipiac University exist for every institution in the analysis. The "playbook" for law as an area of expertise can be reproduced for any of 186 subject matter areas that featured in 20 or more articles.

At this scale — and with a 10M reach threshold on news outlets in the analysis — all strategic implications are directional. Private Ivies are not the same as public land-grants. The New York media market is not the same as Wyoming's. But the *type* of intelligence institutions, anywhere, can leverage to guide and optimize strategy *is* the same. **If nothing else, this analysis reinforces the fact that competition for visibility is fierce and that some flywheels will turn faster than others.**

The scale and breadth of the analysis

Coverage and Institutions	**58,684** Articles Scored	**2,791** Universities
Experts and Disciplines	**38,758** Faculty Experts	**774** Subject Matter Areas
Outlets and Journalists	**10,621** Individual Journalists	**137** High-reach Outlets

Analysis Contents

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The Landscape

University Coverage

We started at the macro level — how are institutions, topics, and faculty showing up across 58,000+ articles in high-reach media? The goal: understand the operating environment and the competitive reality of getting research and expertise into the media.

Which institutions are generating the most coverage?

What You're Seeing

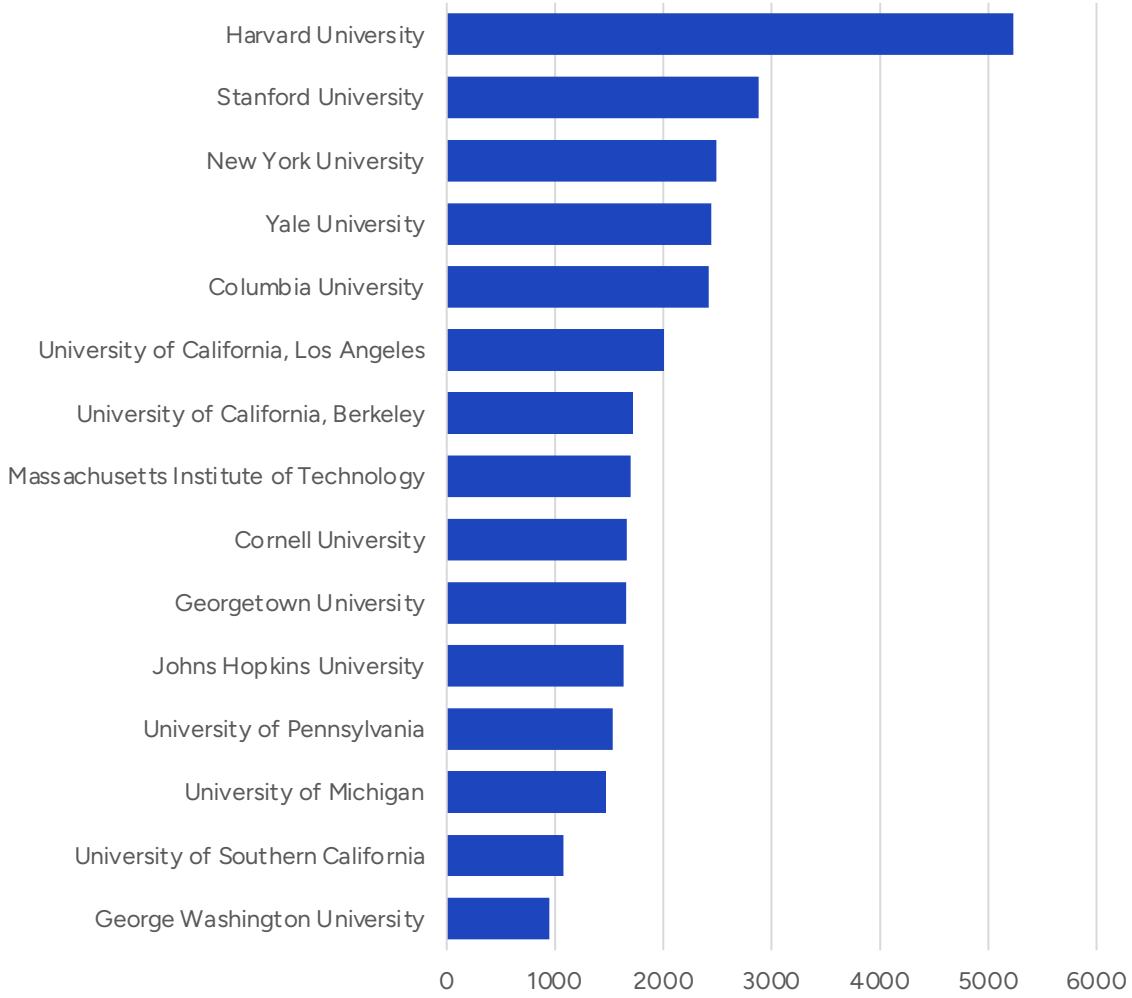
Total article volume by institution (top 15 universities).

Takeaways

Harvard, Stanford, and other privates at the top — perhaps unsurprising.

The value isn't the top of the list — it's the trends throughout and the outliers punching above their weight relative to resources and perceived prestige.

Most Mentioned Universities



Which topics generate the most coverage?

What You're Seeing

Primary topics in news (top 15) by article count.

Takeaways

Health & medicine, politics & government, and economy/business/ finance account for the largest share of coverage.

These are the topics on which university experts and research are the focus, or are featured, most frequently.

Primary Topics of News Coverage by Article Count

How are universities featured?

What You're Seeing

How university research and/or experts are featured, the degree to which it/they are the focus of the story, and the nature of the stories themselves.

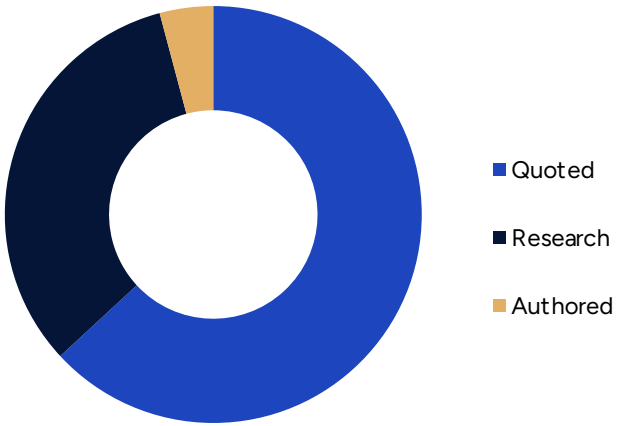
Takeaways

63% of university references are from university faculty and/or researchers being quoted as subject matter experts. In many cases, these are singular university references — university research was the focus of stories only 14% of the time.

Nearly 75% of coverage was event-driven. University experts are being leveraged as go-to voices on breaking news and current, timely events. This highlights the importance of live intelligence — a finger on the pulse of public interest to surface experts and research to appropriate journalists at the right time.

Reference Types

GLOSSARY



Prominence of References

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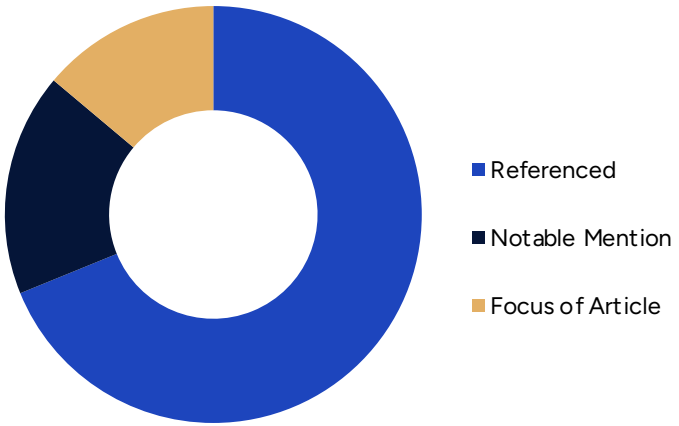
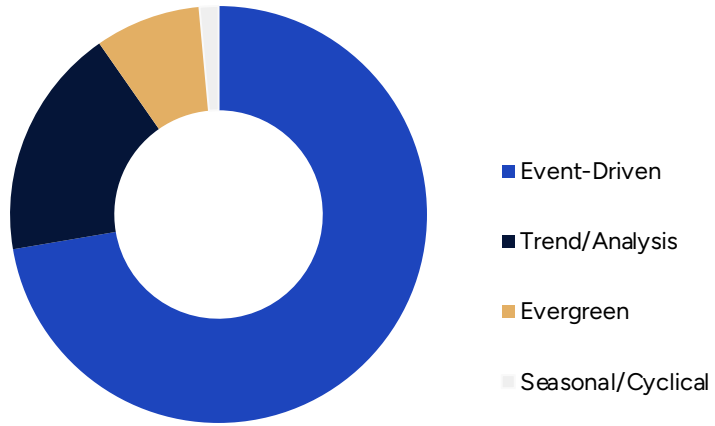


Coverage Type

GLOSSARY



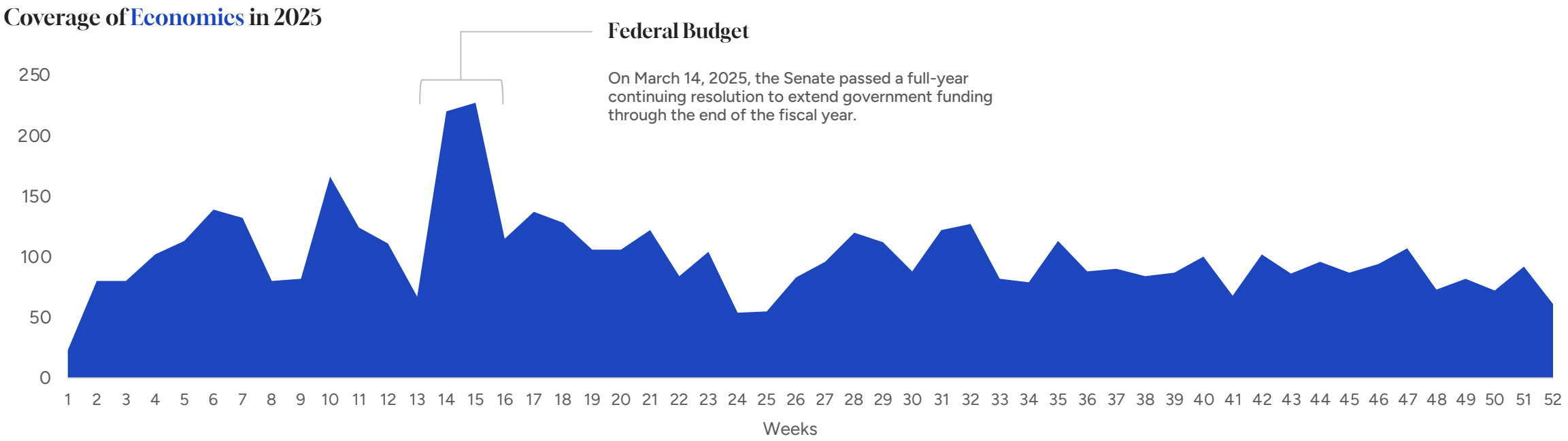
What can temporal trends tell us about media opportunity?

What You're Seeing

Weekly coverage volume for a single subject matter area — economics.

Takeaways

Spikes align directly with the news cycle. The late-March surge coincides with the federal budget continuing resolution passed by the Senate on March 14, 2025. Having digital listening intelligence to track these topics and disciplines can power proactive, forward-looking amplification strategy.



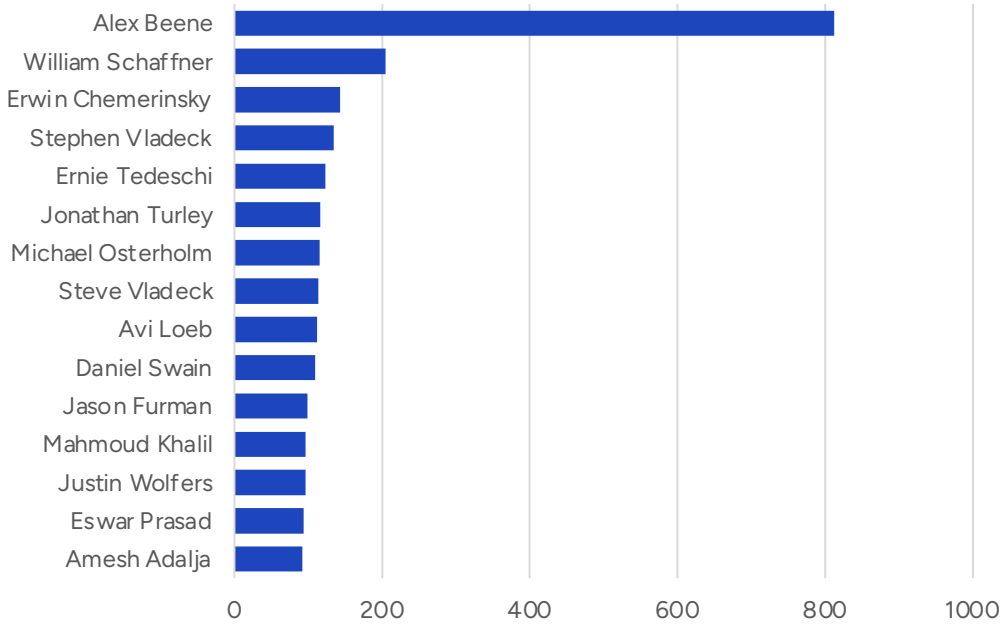
Who is being featured, and for what subject matter expertise?

What You're Seeing Analysis down to the individual expert level and their subject areas of expertise.

Takeaways Analysis at the individual expert and subject matter levels start to introduce the type of intelligence that can be leveraged across the university enterprise — from provosts to deans.

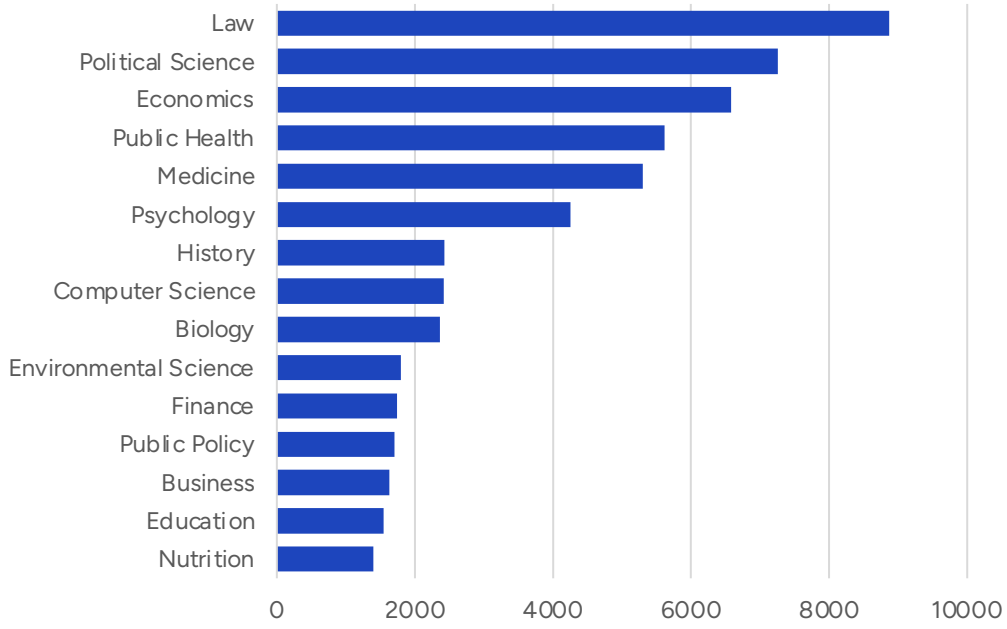
Most Referenced Faculty Experts

The most referenced individual researchers and/or faculty experts.



Most Referenced Subject Matter Expertise

The subjects on which research, researchers, and/or faculty experts were featured.



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The Landscape

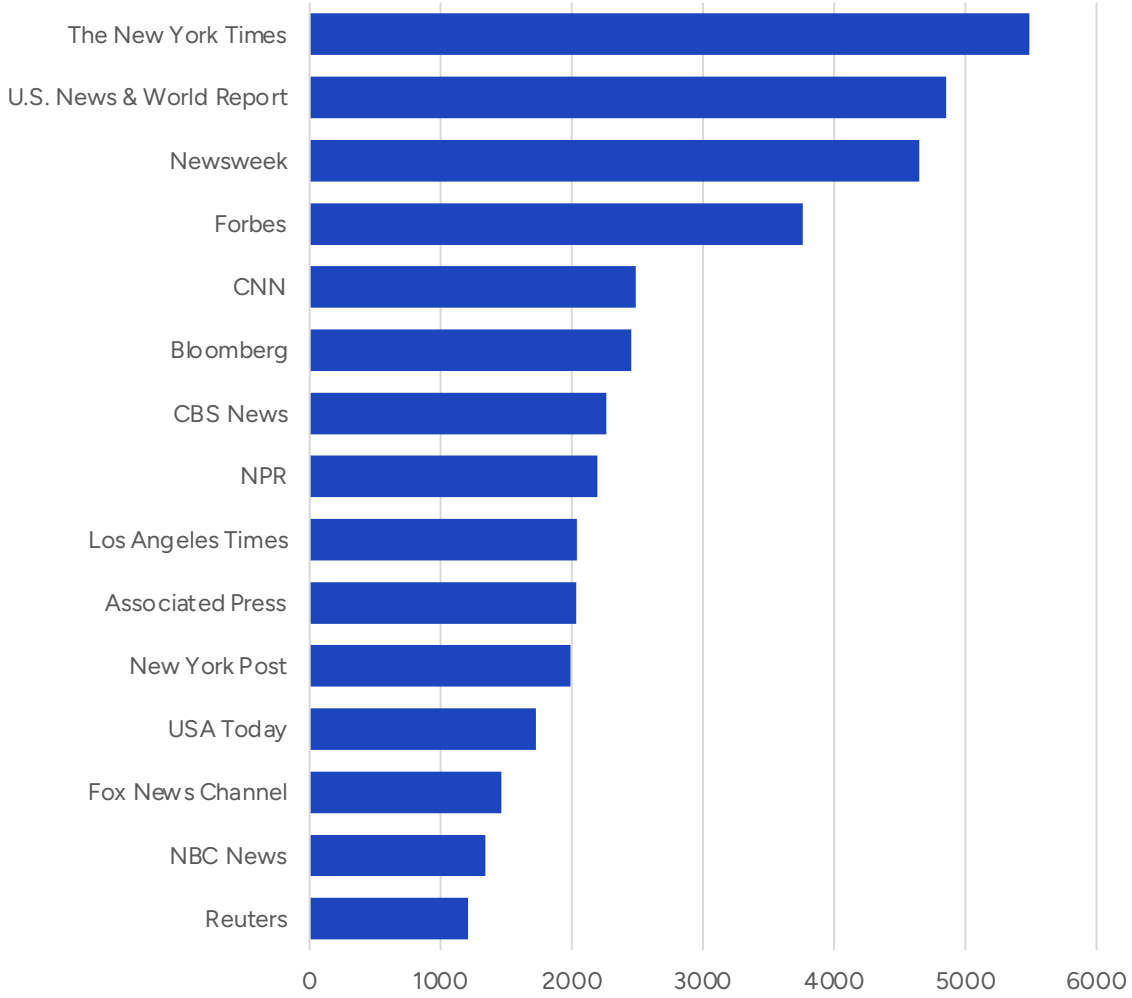
Online News Sources

We've seen which institutions and topics are generating coverage. Now we flip the lens to the outlets themselves — how can we understand which sources are driving coverage, how that coverage comes to life, and where the nuances exist that should shape media strategy?

Which outlets account for the most coverage?

Among high-reach news media, these are the outlets generating the most coverage referencing university research and expertise. The New York Times, US News & World Report, Newsweek, Forbes, and CNN lead in terms of article count. These are publications we're all familiar with — but each features university research and/or faculty experts differently.

Top News Outlets by Article Count



What is the breakdown of coverage type by outlet?

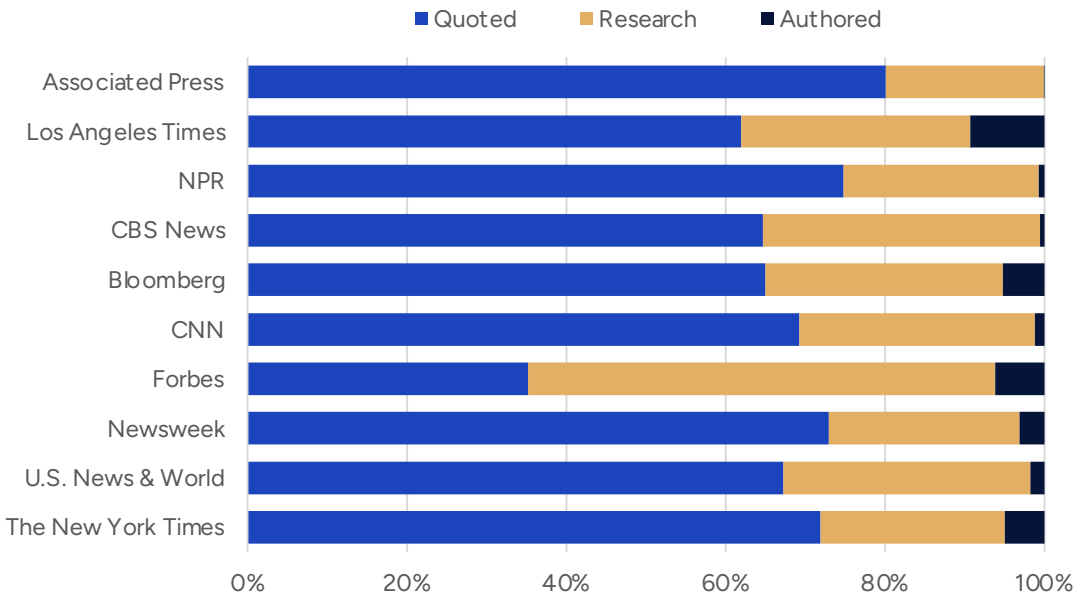
What You're Seeing How coverage materializes across individual outlets — the reference type, coverage type, and topic mix for each.

Takeaways Understanding outlet nuances should be central to how media strategies are developed.

Reference Type by Outlet

GLOSSARY

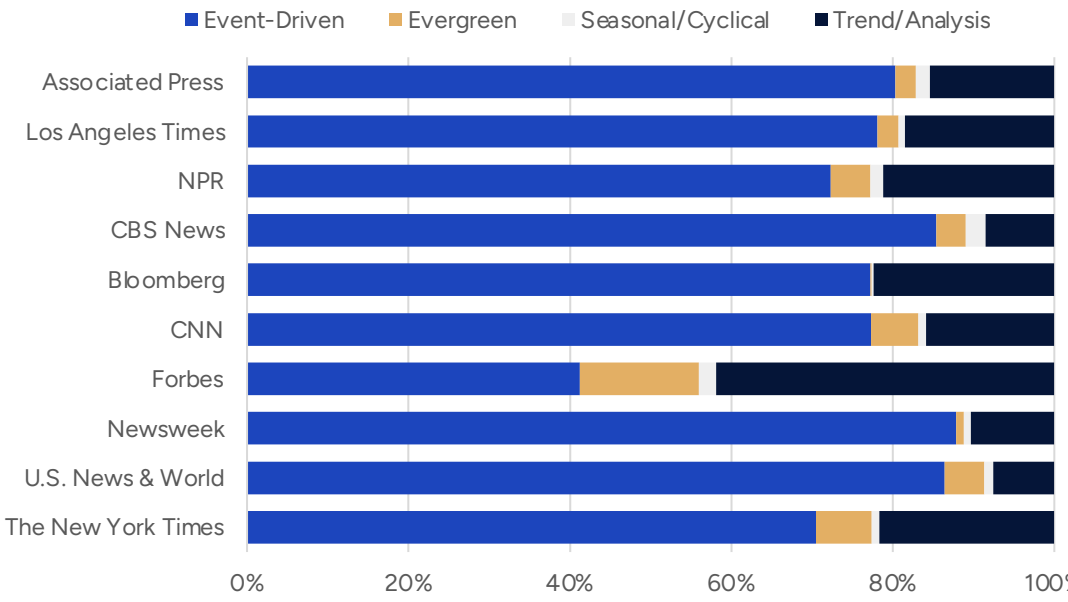
Ex: The LA Times is more predisposed to hosting authored faculty content.



Coverage Type by Outlet

GLOSSARY

Ex: Forbes indexes far more heavily on Trend/Analysis-based content than other outlets.



Which outlets are covering which topics?

What You're Seeing

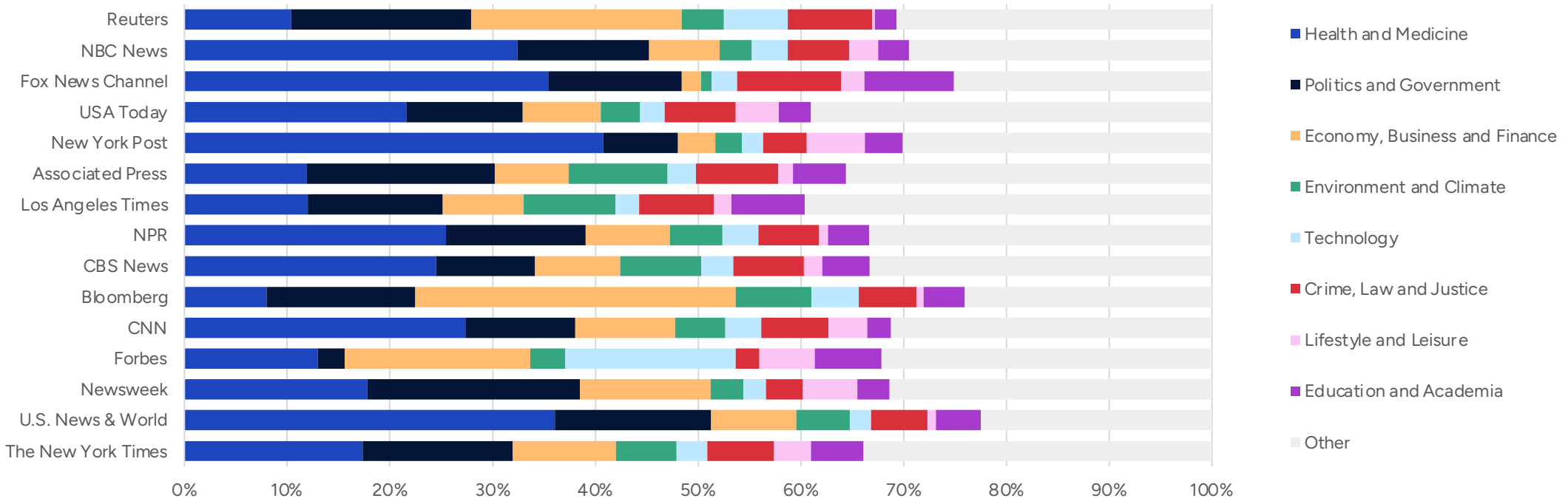
The primary topic mix for each of the most active outlets in the dataset.

Takeaways

Some outlets are hyper-focused on certain topic areas; others cover a breadth of subjects featuring university expertise. This intelligence informs where to pitch and what to pitch — understanding which outlets are most receptive to which topics before the outreach begins.

Primary Topic Distribution by Outlet

GLOSSARY



Where do primary topics and subject matter expertise intersect?

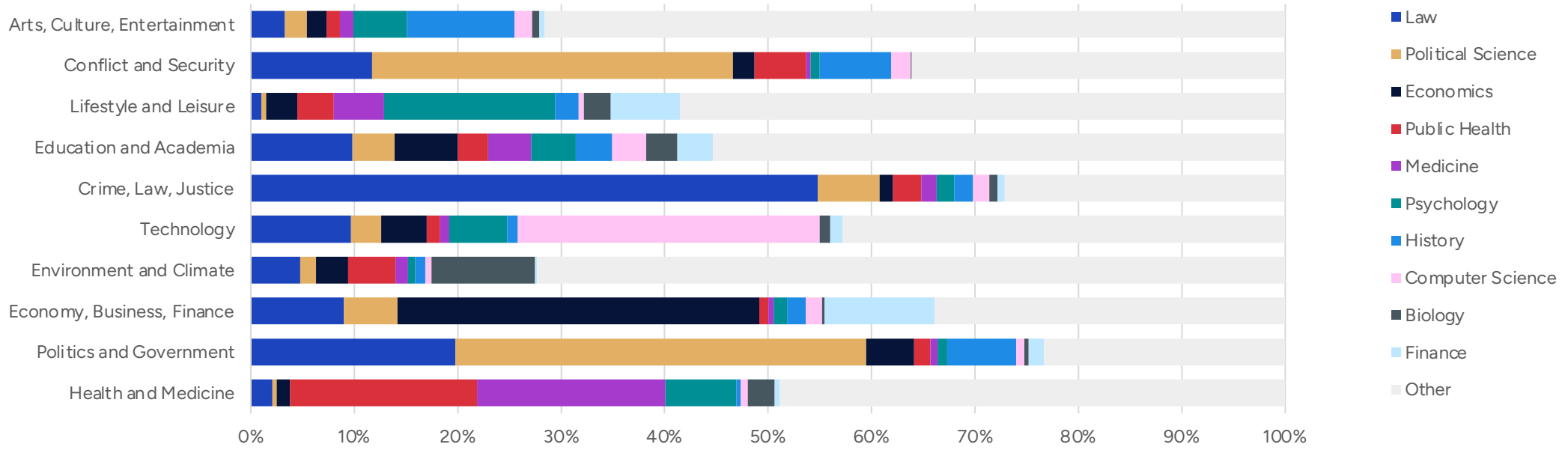
What You're Seeing

Where subject matter expertise intersects with the primary topics of articles across the dataset.

Takeaways

Some disciplines have enormous latitude. Law expertise appears across nearly every primary topic category — from politics and government to immigration to the environment. Others are far more concentrated. Economics expertise is heavily clustered in economy, business, and finance coverage. These intersections reveal how much flexibility exists in placing a given type of expert — and should inform how we think about pitching and positioning faculty across topics.

Primary Article Topic by Subject Matter Expertise Referenced



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Layering in Context

Media exposure in isolation only tells part of the story. Where you start to extract real insight is when you layer media intelligence against third-party metrics indicative of the outcomes that matter most, such as research output, peer reputation, and institutional rankings.

Media coverage by research output

H-index scores sourced from OpenAlex. The h-index captures both research productivity and citation impact, rewarding sustained output that other scholars cite.

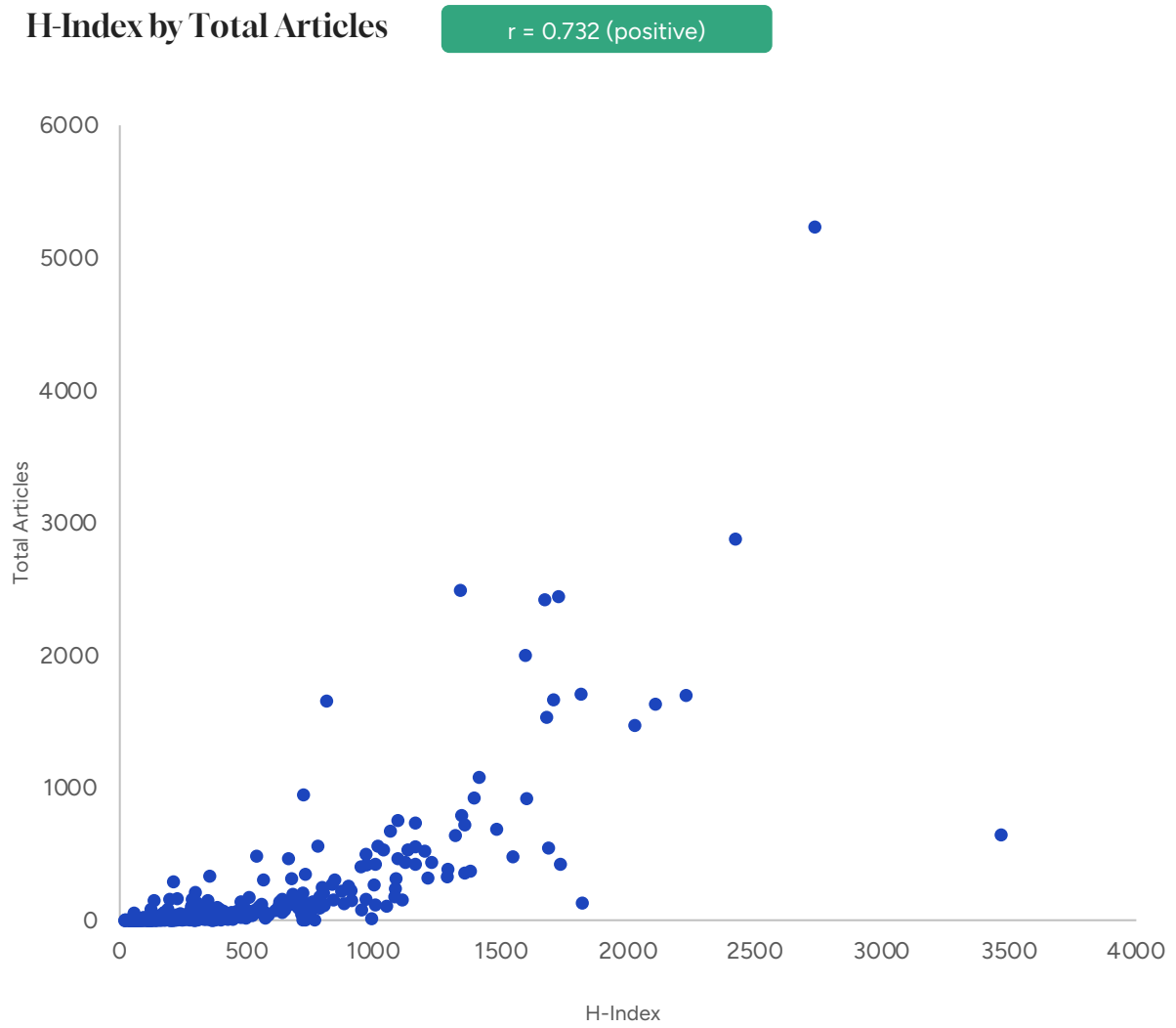
What You're Seeing

GLOSSARY

A scatter plot mapping the correlation between how often each institution was referenced in articles and its aggregate h-index.

Takeaways

The correlation is strong and positive (r = 0.732). If nothing else, this underscores the importance of organizational collaboration between communications, marketing, and the research enterprise.



Media coverage by peer assessment scores

Peer assessment scores sourced from the 2025 U.S. News & World Report Best National Universities Rankings. Peer assessment reflects the average score assigned by top academics rating institutions on a scale of 1–5.

What You're Seeing

GLOSSARY

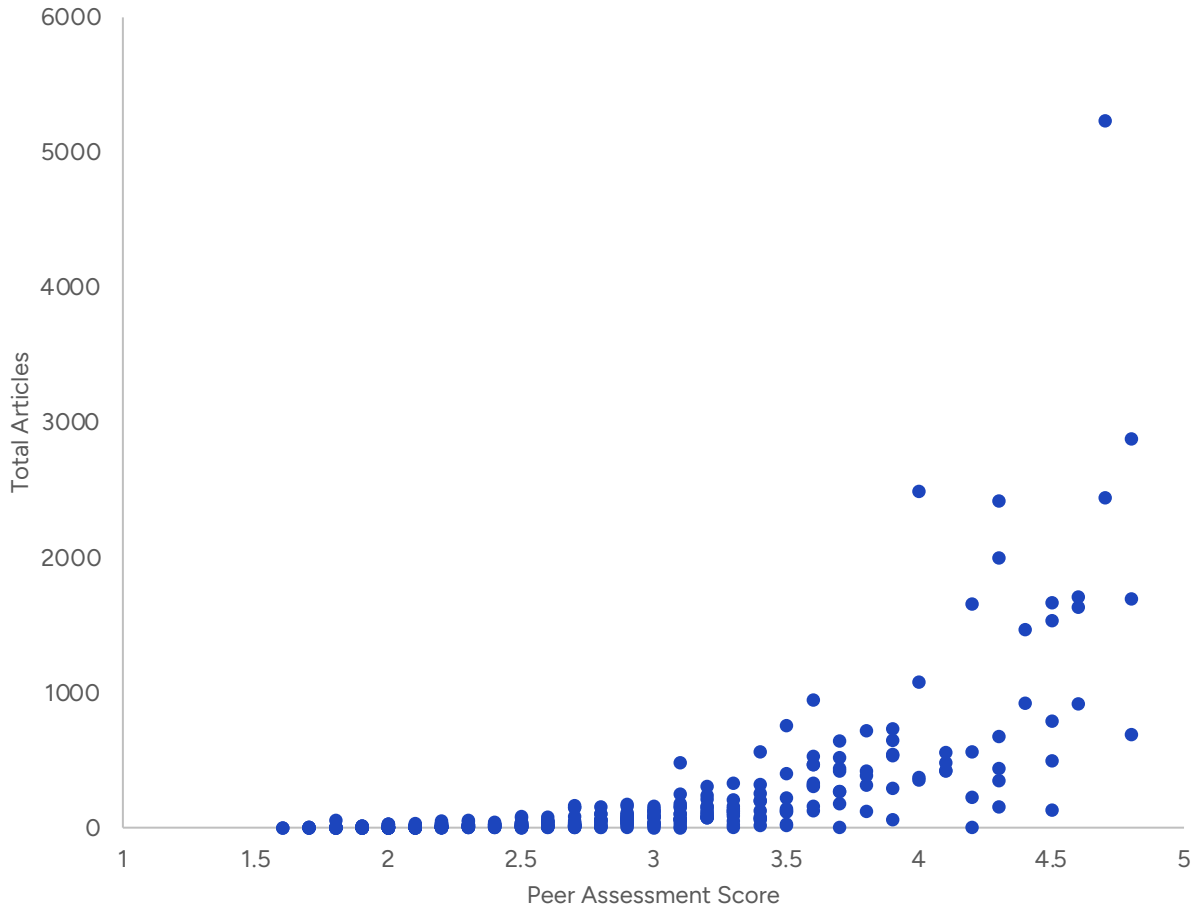
A scatter plot mapping the correlation between how often each institution was referenced in articles and its U.S. News peer assessment scores.

Takeaways

20% of the U.S. News and World Report ranking comes from peer assessment scores — arguably the element most materially impacted by how institutions promote themselves and their research. The correlation is positive (r = 0.644), reinforcing the link between earned media exposure and the reputation indicators that matter most to leadership.

Peer Assessment Score by Total Articles

r = 0.644 (positive)



Media strategy: news outlet diversity

What You're Seeing

The correlation between the number of distinct outlets an institution appears in and both peer assessment score and h-index.

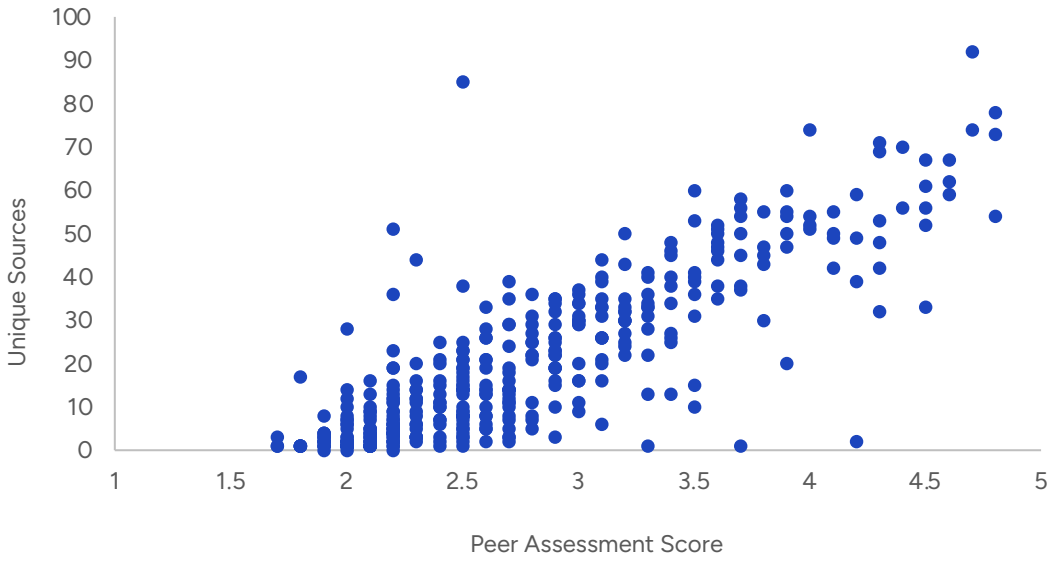
Takeaways

Breadth of coverage — appearing in the most sources — is a strong predictor of both research prominence and peer reputation.

GLOSSARY

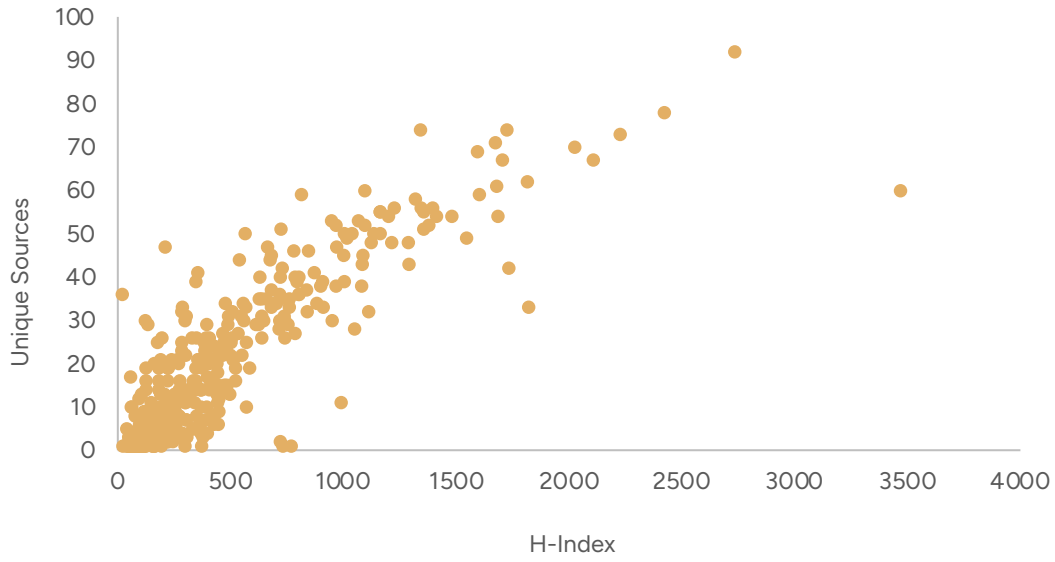
Unique Sources by Peer Assessment Score

r = 0.877 (positive)



Unique Sources by H-Index

r = 0.858 (positive)



Media strategy: topic diversity

What You're Seeing

The correlation between the number of distinct topics an institution is referenced across and both peer assessment score and h-index.

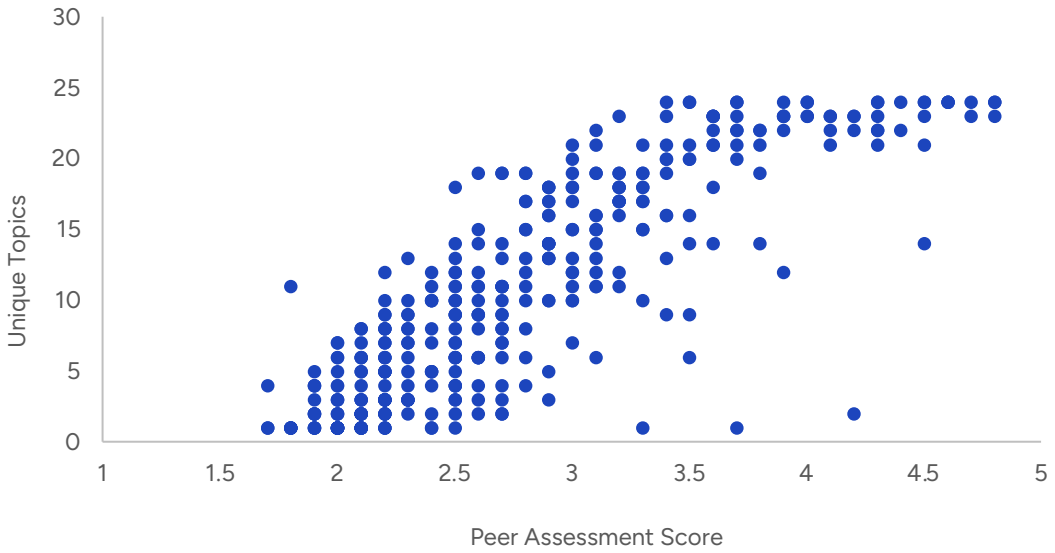
Takeaways

Being referenced across a wide range of topics — not just a handful — is a strong predictor of both research prominence and peer reputation.

GLOSSARY

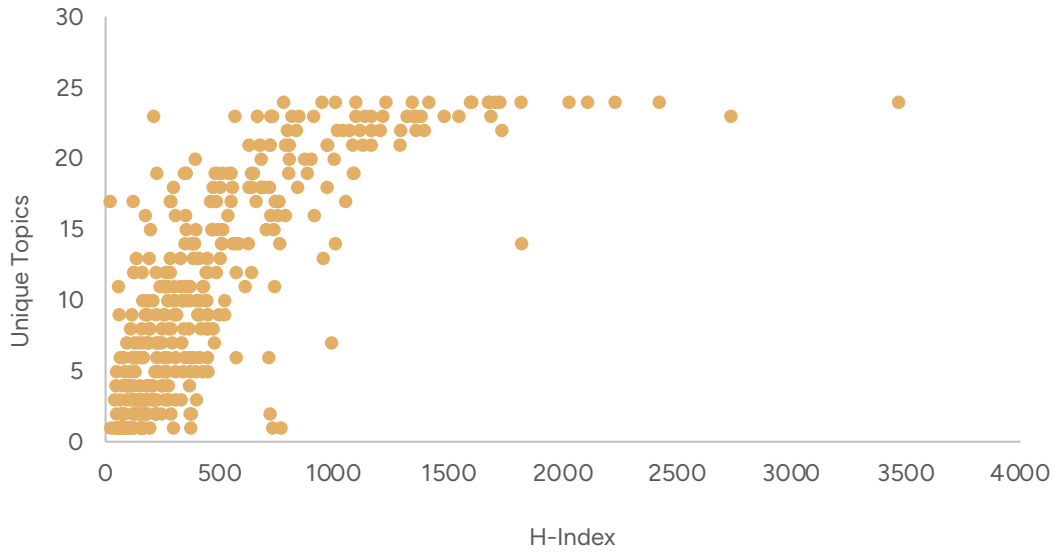
Unique Topics by Peer Assessment Score

r = 0.842 (positive)



Unique Topics by H-Index

r = 0.755 (positive)



Media strategy: researcher and/or faculty expert diversity

What You're Seeing

The correlation between the number of distinct researchers and/or faculty experts featured in the media and both peer assessment score and h-index.

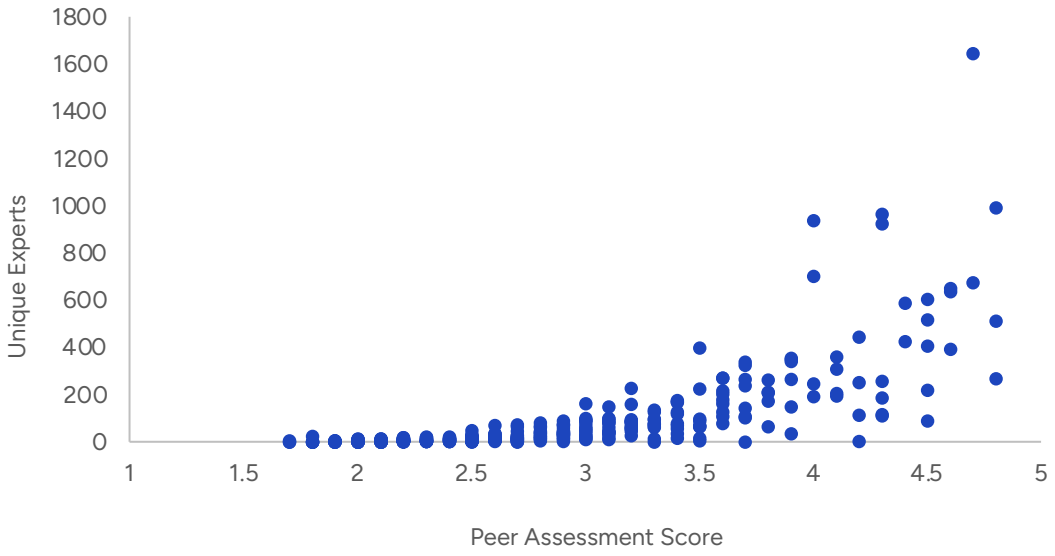
Takeaways

Be in the most places, on the most topics, featuring the most faculty. Scale and diversity of exposure are all strong predictors of research prominence and peer reputation.

GLOSSARY

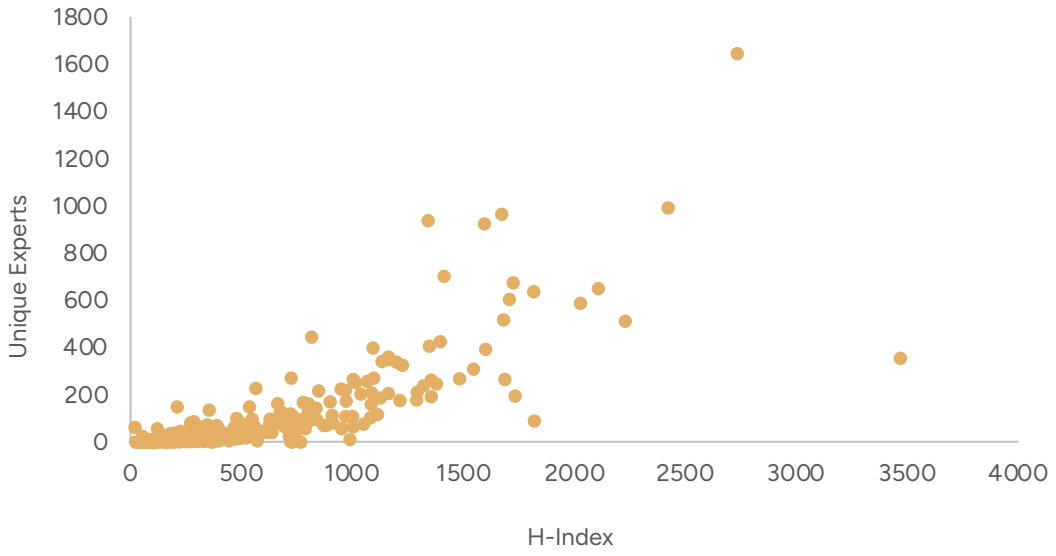
Unique Experts by Peer Assessment Score

r = 0.699 (positive)



Unique Experts by H-Index

r = 0.799 (positive)



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Overperformers

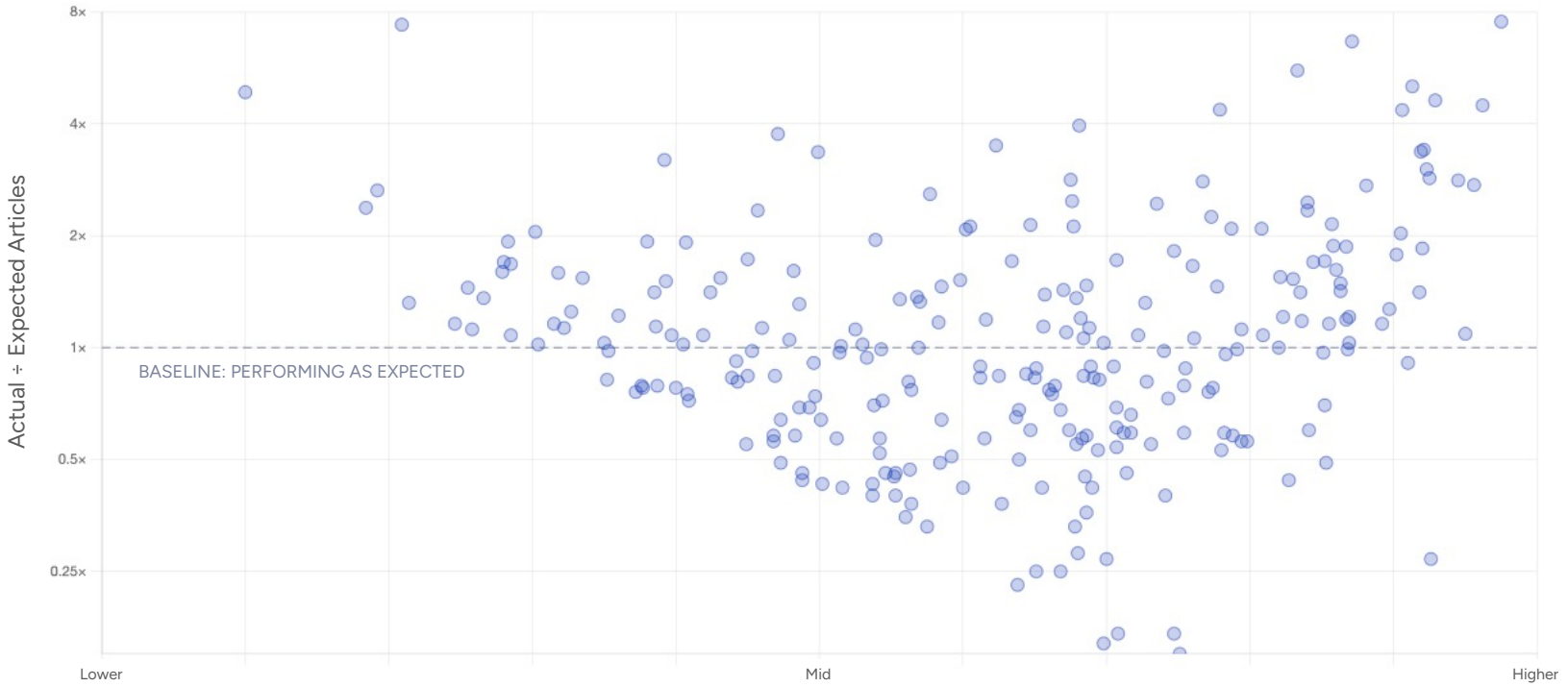
Identifying correlations between key output indicators and outcomes helps us understand what predicts results at scale. Just as importantly, it allows us to spot overperformers — institutions achieving better-than-expected results — and examine them more closely to understand what they are doing well. To explore this, we built a media overperformance index that identifies institutions generating more media exposure than their prestige and research output alone would predict, so we can reverse-engineer the strategies behind their success.

Who's punching above their weight?

Media Overperformance Index

GLOSSARY

Which universities generate more media exposure than their prestige and research output would predict?



What You're Seeing

A media overperformance index mapping institutions across two dimensions: academic prestige (U.S. News ranking & h-index) and actual media exposure vs. expected exposure.

Takeaways

Every point above the baseline is an institution generating more coverage than its "prestige" and research output would predict.

Overperformance is prestige-agnostic — institutions across the spectrum are punching above their weight.

This allows us to identify overperformers and decode the strategies behind their success.

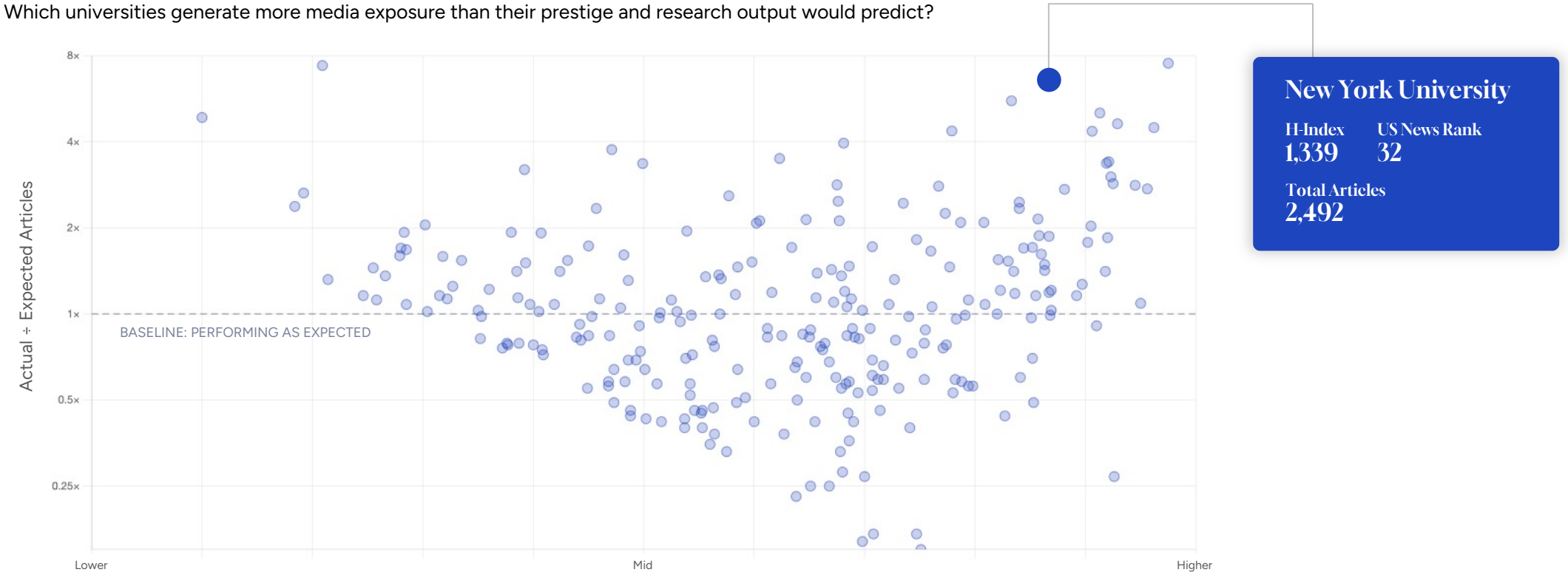
NYU is a clear overperformer

NYU is ranked #32 in U.S. News with an h-index of 1,339 but generated 2,492 articles — well above the expected volume for its "prestige" profile. (Media market is not accounted for in this analysis)

Media Overperformance Index

GLOSSARY

Which universities generate more media exposure than their prestige and research output would predict?



NYU is heavily indexed on topics that generate the most coverage

What You're Seeing

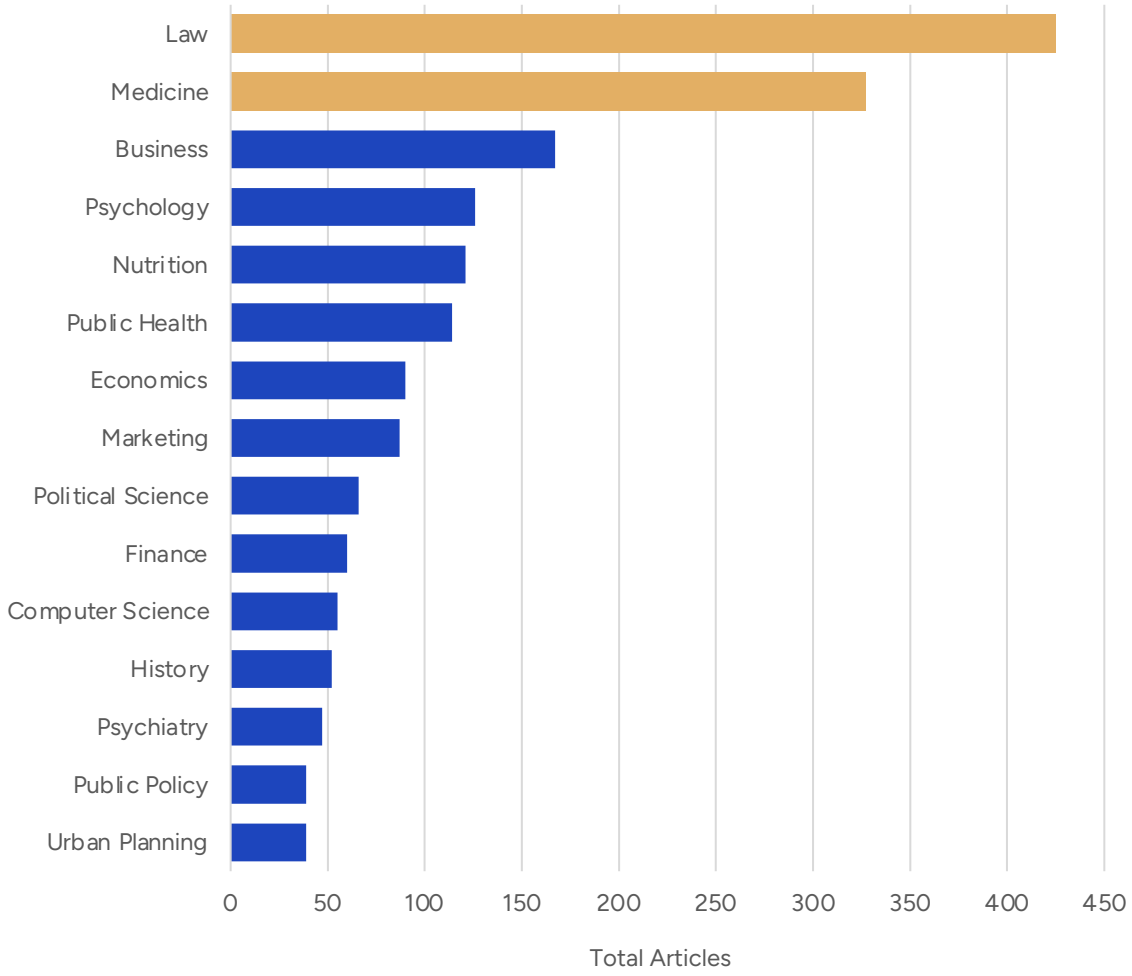
The distribution of NYU's coverage across subject matter areas.

Takeaways

NYU indexes heavily for law, medicine, and business — topics that generate significant media demand from high-reach outlets.

This topic concentration aligns directly with the areas where we see the highest article volume and lowest expert concentration at the macro level.

NYU Subject Matter Distribution



A deep bench, with a few experts leading the way

What You're Seeing

The most referenced NYU faculty experts across high-reach media in 2025.

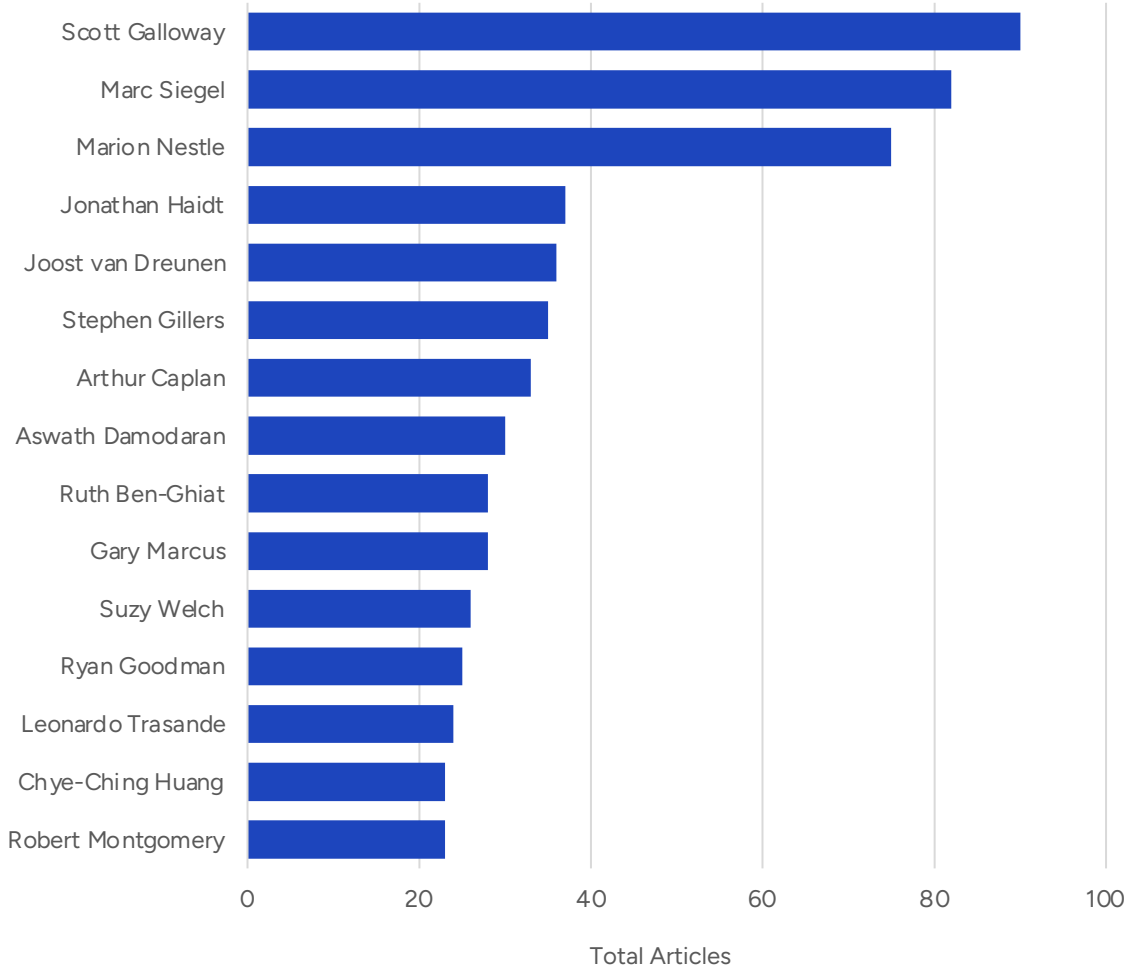
Takeaways

NYU's top expert accounts for just 3.4% of total mentions; the top 5 experts account for 12.1%. Coverage is distributed across a wide bench of faculty — but those at the top still generate outsized impact.

This reflects the balance we see in overperformers: breadth of experts correlates with outcomes, but strategic weighting of investment toward high-performing individuals amplifies the effect.

The intelligence should guide both — who to develop next and who to invest more deeply in.

Most Referenced Experts



NYU's coverage profile leans heavily into quoted expertise

What You're Seeing

NYU's reference type, coverage type, and prominence profile compared to the dataset average.

Takeaways

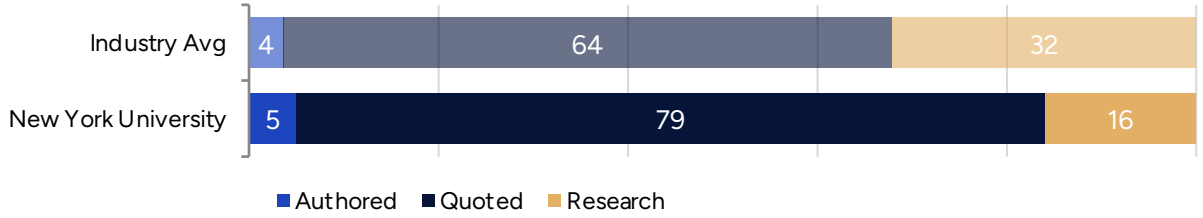
~79% quoted expertise vs. 64% average — NYU's faculty are often the go-to sources for journalists on emerging topics.

Coverage type closely mirrors the industry average — predominantly event-driven.

Prominence profile also closely tracks the average, with a slightly smaller share of primary references.

Reference Type

GLOSSARY



Coverage Type

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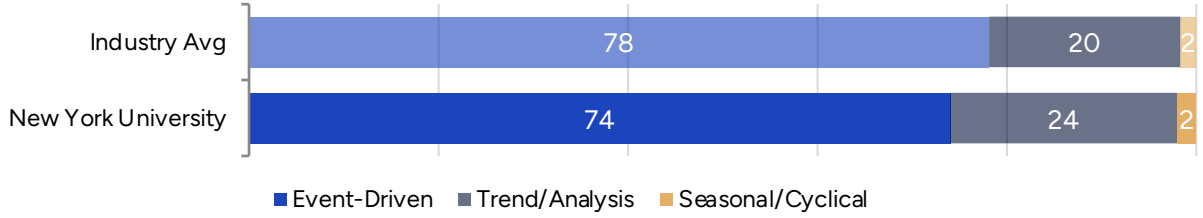

Prominence Profile

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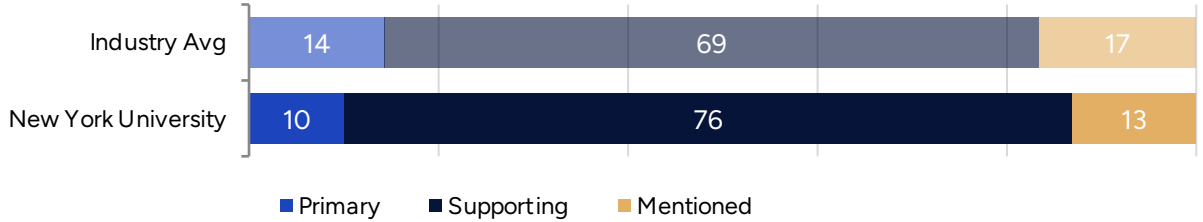


Repeat journalist relationships are compounding NYU's exposure

What You're Seeing

NYU's most active outlets and the journalists who have covered the institution most frequently.

Takeaways

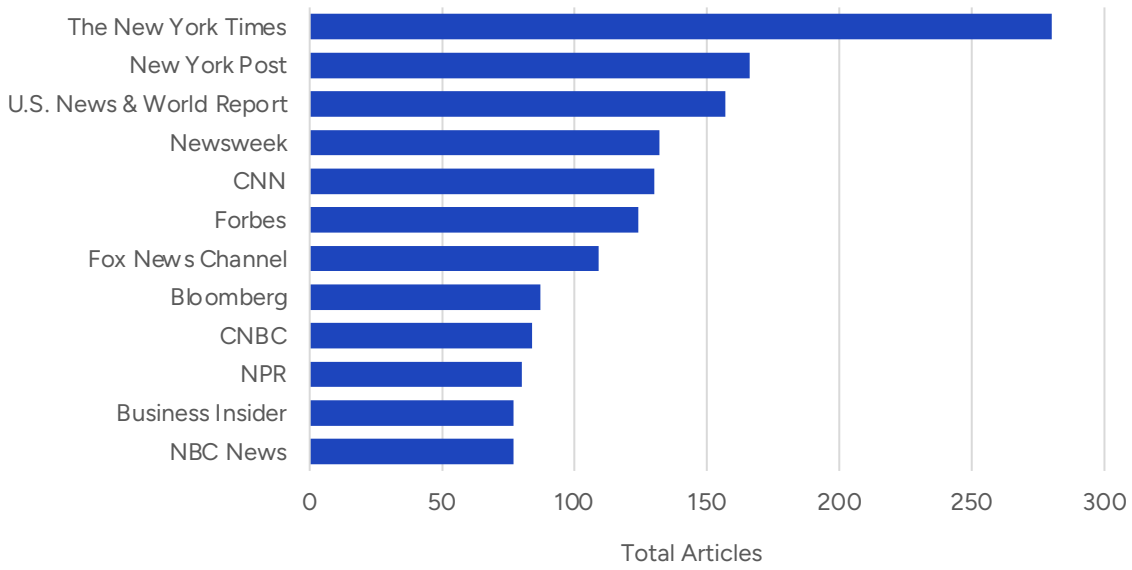
Geographic relationships leveraged — The New York Times and New York Post lead — but deep relationships extend to outlets across the country. The repeat journalist list is extensive. This is compounding relationship building — positioning experts as the go-to resource for high-reach journalists on a recurring basis.

Repeat Journalist Relationships

Journalists who have covered this university 3 or more times.

Journalist	Articles	Outlet
Melissa Rudy	45	Fox News Channel
Jeffrey Quiggle	26	TheStreet
Berkeley Lovelace	20	NBC News
Angelica Stabile	18	Fox News Channel
Marc Siegel	17	Fox News Channel
Caroline Bologna	16	HuffPost
Caroline Kee	14	NBC - Weekend Today
Kerry Breen	13	CBS News

Most Active Outlets



Where is NYU over-leveraged and under-leveraged vs. peers?

What You're Seeing

NYU's subject matter exposure compared to its academic peer set, expressed as percentage points above or below the peer average.

Takeaways

Over-indexed on law, medicine, business, nutrition, and marketing.

Under-indexed on economics, political science, public health, biology, and environmental science.

Not all gaps warrant closing — this must be viewed through the lens of institutional priorities. But the data paints the picture of where the institution is leading and where opportunity may exist.

Exposure Against Disciplines vs. Academic Peer Set

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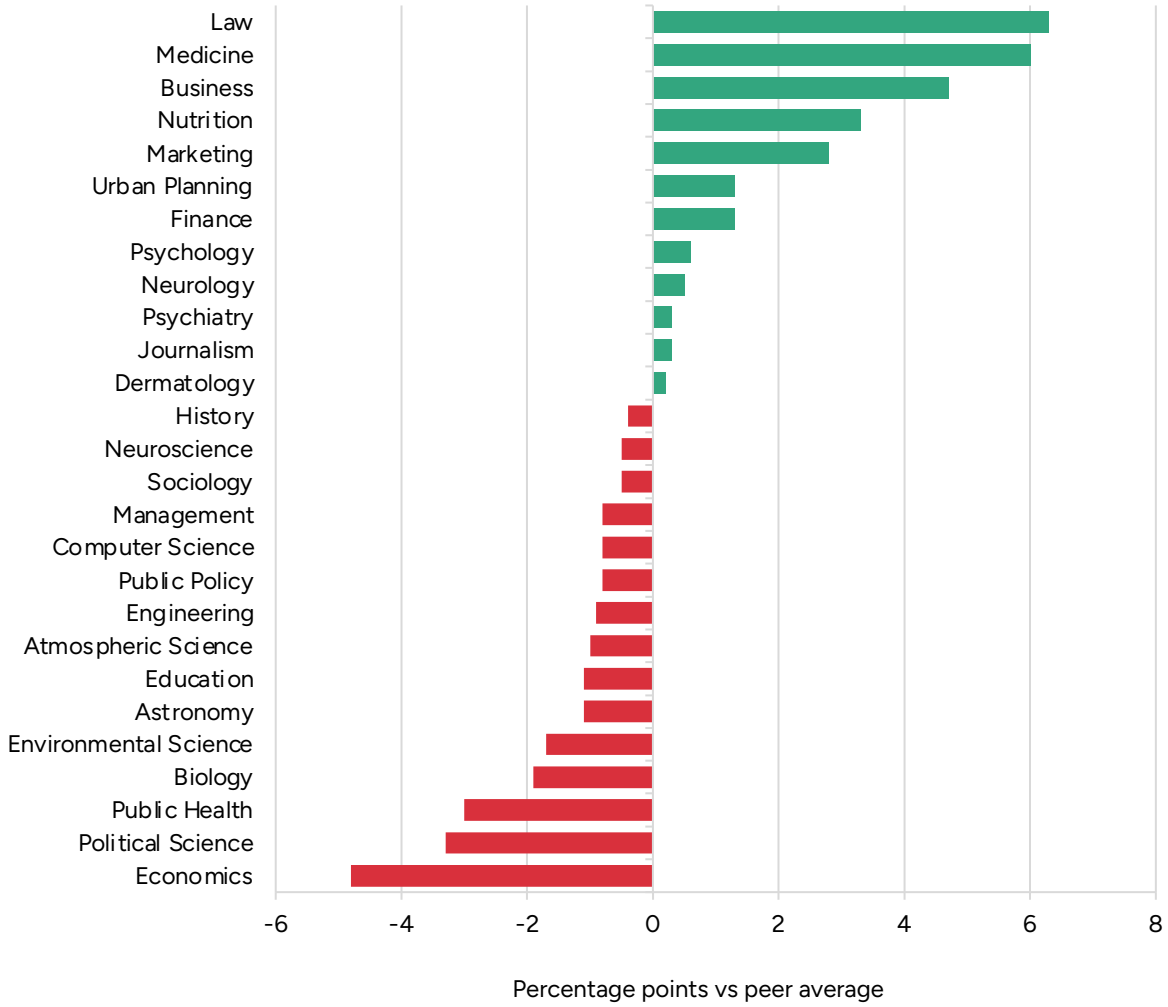


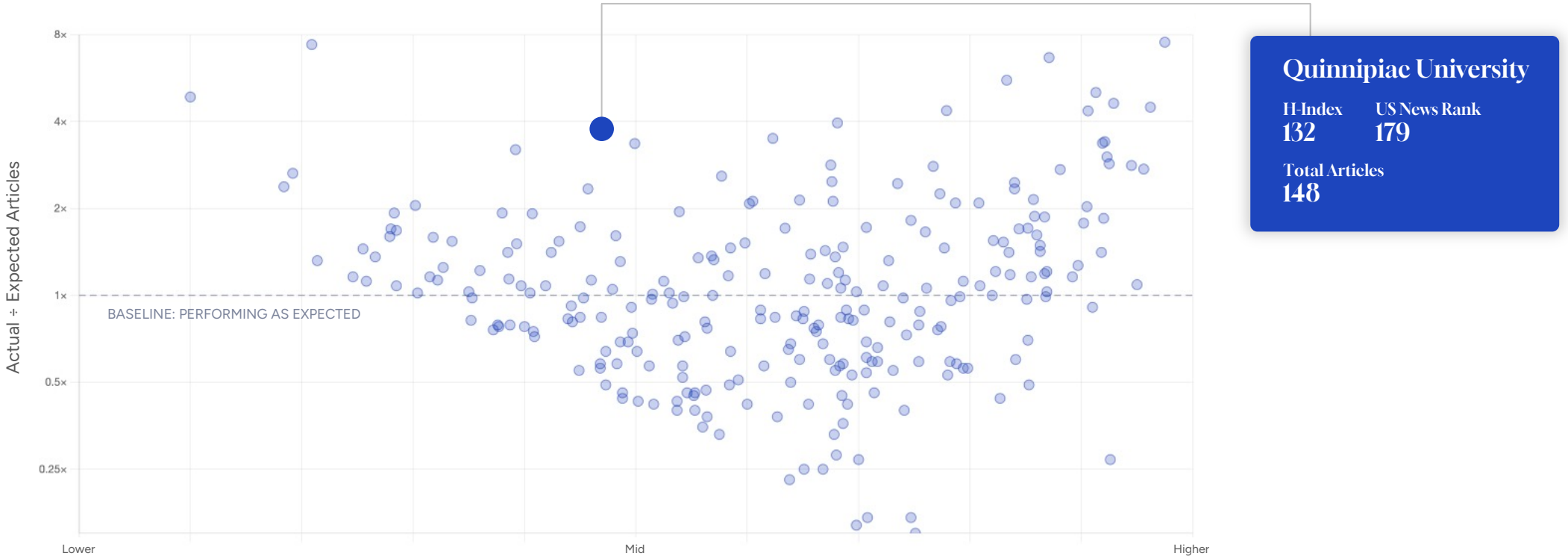
Quinnipiac tells a very different story

Quinnipiac University is ranked #179 in U.S. News with an h-index of 132, but generating 148 articles — well above what would be expected for its "prestige" profile. A fundamentally different playbook.

Media Overperformance Index

GLOSSARY

Which universities generate more media exposure than their prestige and research output would predict?



Quinnipiac's exposure is concentrated in a single discipline

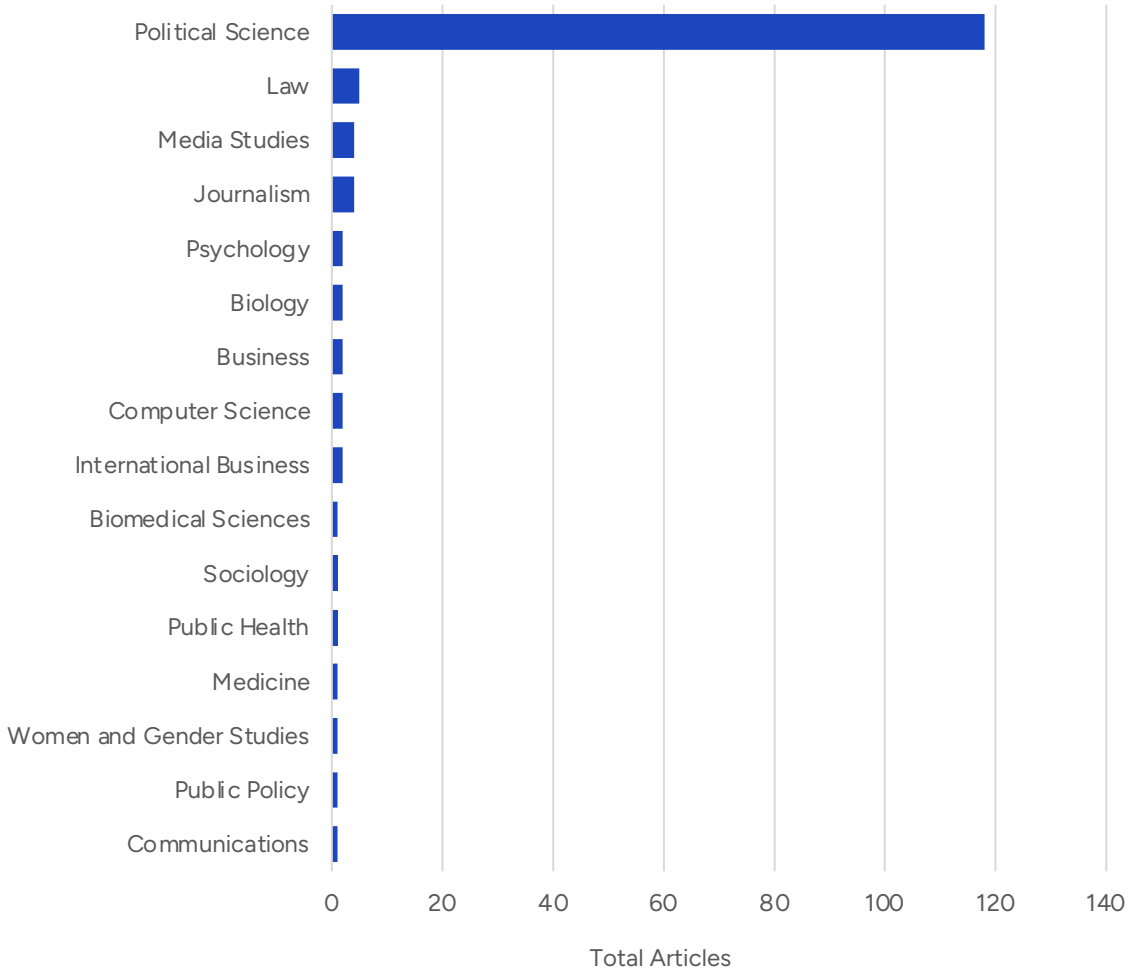
What You're Seeing

The distribution of Quinnipiac's coverage across subject matter areas.

Takeaways

Heavily concentrated in political science — by far the dominant discipline driving exposure for this institution. A narrow focus, but one that has been demonstrably effective.

Quinnipiac University Subject Matter Distribution



82% of Quinnipiac's exposure is driven by research

What You're Seeing

Quinnipiac's reference type, coverage type, and prominence profile compared to the dataset average.

Takeaways

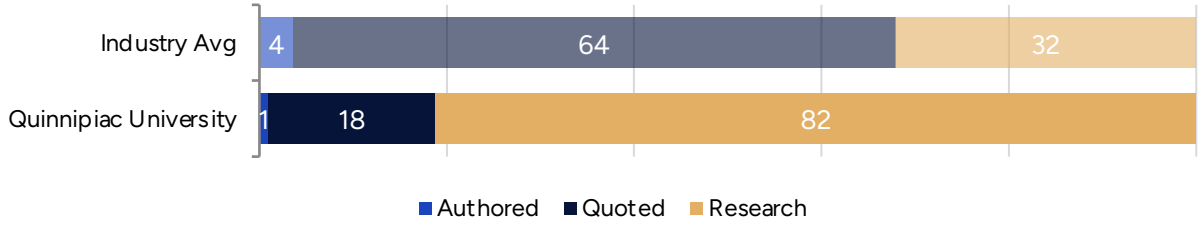
82% of exposure driven by research — vs. 32% average. By far the most research-dominant profile in the dataset.

The driver: year-round proprietary polling on political and social issues. An always-on resource aligned with journalist demand — no faculty briefings required, passive exposure generation.

A very distinct playbook from NYU, but one that has been extremely successful for an institution that has carved out a unique space in earned media.

Reference Type

GLOSSARY



Coverage Type

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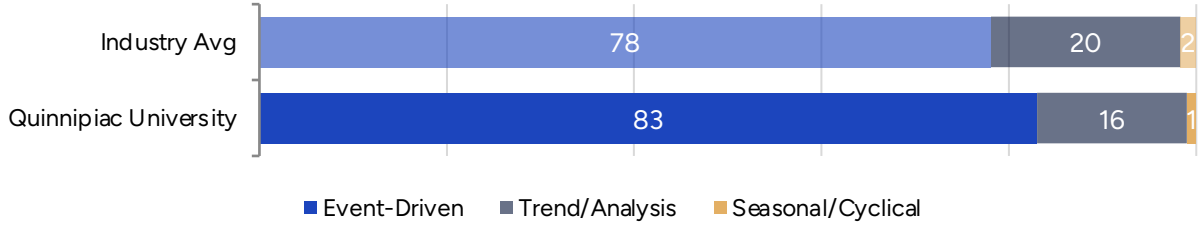

Prominence Profile

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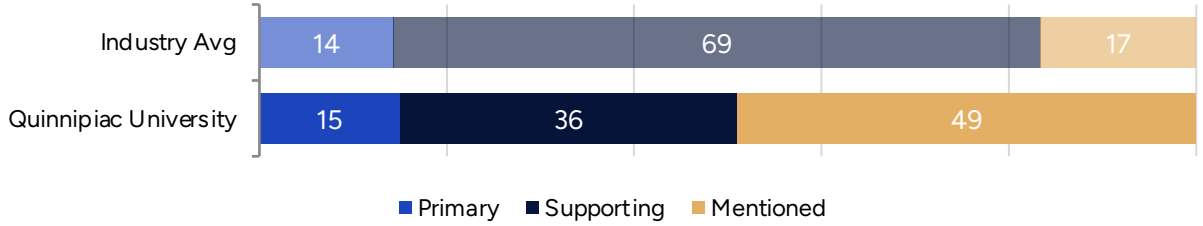

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Mapping Media Opportunity

Where does journalist demand for university expertise outstrip supply, and where is the market already saturated?

Where does journalist demand for expertise outstrip supply?

What You're Seeing

Media opportunity map across subject matter disciplines, with a key metric: expert concentration (experts per article).

Takeaways

Low concentration (finance at 0.42, law at 0.62, economics at 0.65) indicates demand outpacing supply of experts — high opportunity for placement.

Higher concentration (medicine at 1.10, history at 1.06) may indicate a more saturated landscape where alternative amplification channels (owned content, storytelling) could be a better investment.

Think of this like SEO: where is there white space, and where is the market already crowded?

Media Opportunity Map

GLOSSARY

Expert concentration by discipline — where demand for university expertise exceeds supply.

Discipline	Articles	Universities	Experts	Experts / Article
Finance	1,636	193	679	**0.42**
Law	6,966	417	4,285	**0.62**
Economics	5,285	544	3,443	**0.65**
Political Science	5,740	821	4,217	**0.73**
Public Health	4,674	443	4,125	**0.88**
Computer Science	1,905	311	1,710	**0.90**
Business	1,488	222	1,338	**0.90**
Nutrition	1,055	232	957	**0.91**
Management	1,020	212	959	**0.94**
Public Policy	1,620	183	1,597	**0.99**
Psychology	3,324	639	3,333	**1.00**
Marketing	623	190	625	**1.00**
Astronomy	793	234	804	**1.01**
International Relations	683	196	689	**1.01**
Environmental Science	1,539	360	1,564	**1.02**
Engineering	1,038	284	1,092	**1.05**
History	2,090	449	2,216	**1.06**
Medicine	4,194	376	4,597	**1.10**

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Decoding a Discipline

The media opportunity map tells us where white space exists. The next step is to decode a specific discipline — what does the playbook look like for an institution that wants to lead on a specific subject? We'll use law as an example, but this analysis can be applied to any priority discipline.

For law, what does the source landscape look like?

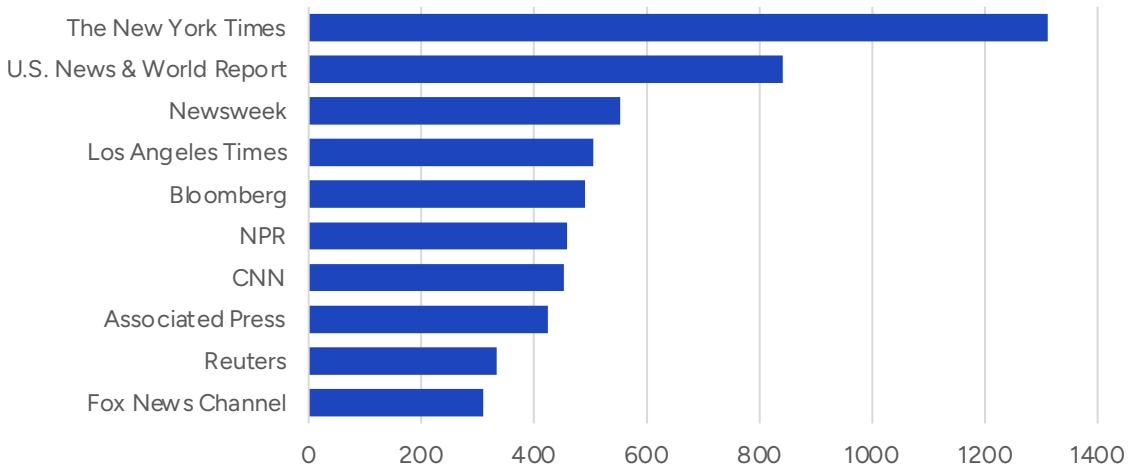
What You're Seeing

The most active outlets and most active journalists covering law-related university expertise in 2025.

Takeaways

The New York Times, U.S. News & World Report, and Newsweek lead on article volume. At the journalist level we can identify the relationships that matter most for an institution prioritizing law as a subject matter area.

Most Active Outlets - Law



Most Active Journalists - Law

Journalist	Articles	Outlet
Hugh Hewitt	93	Fox News Channel
Alison Durkee	89	Forbes
Adam Liptak	80	The New York Times
Jonathan Turley	66	Fox News Channel
John Fritze	52	CNN
Noah Feldman	50	Bloomberg
Stephen L. Carter	43	Bloomberg
Maureen Groppe	42	USA Today

Top performers in law: numerous experts & repeat references

What You're Seeing

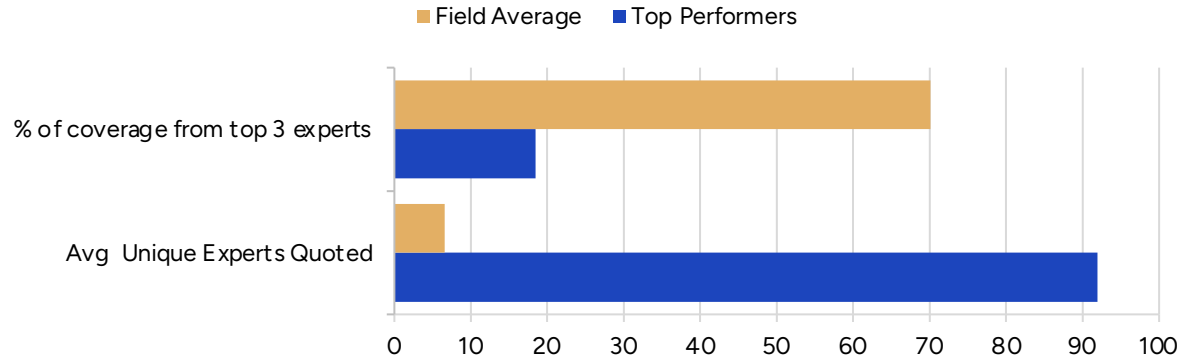
Law programs that dominate media coverage vs. the field average — how many experts they feature and how they build and leverage journalist relationships.

Takeaways

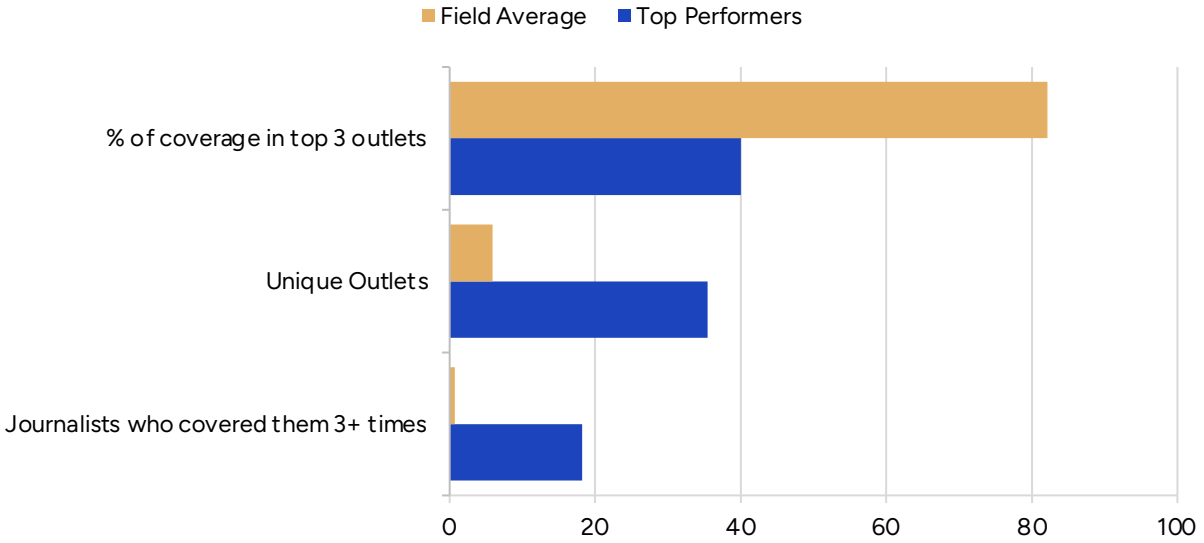
Top performers have numerous experts featured on the subject of law who are referenced repeatedly by the same journalists across news outlets.

The playbook for law will have overlap with other disciplines, but the media relationship strategy is inherently distinct based on the subject, the outlets, and the journalists driving coverage.

Expert Depth and Concentration



Media Relationships



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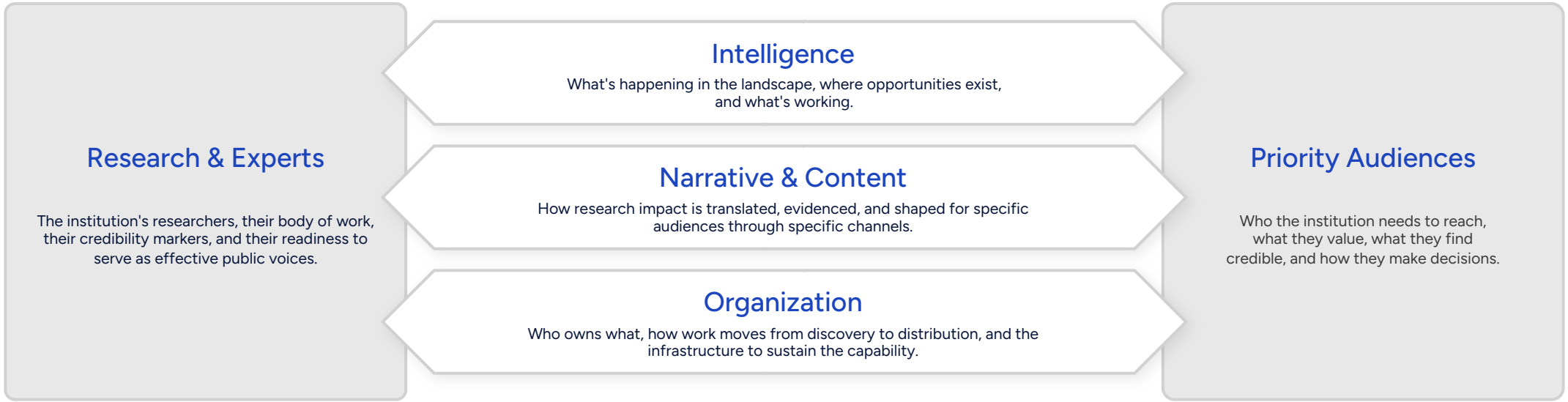
The Research Impact Storytelling Imperative

Going deeper

What this analysis demonstrates is one view of the intelligence layer within the Research Impact Storytelling Operating System: a way to understand the landscape, identify what is working, uncover where opportunity exists, and measure performance against the metrics that matter most. But this is only a starting point. Institutions can — and should — go deeper. Comparing faculty experts' h-indexes with media coverage, evaluating social media presence alongside earned media performance, and incorporating data on grants, research funding, philanthropy, and enrollment can all add important context and sharpen decision-making.

Intelligence also does not operate in isolation. It needs to inform — and measure — every part of the system. This includes the narrative and content that translate research impact for specific audiences, the organization that moves work from discovery to distribution at scale, and — possibly — the recruitment and hiring strategy at the faculty and researcher level.



Recommendations

In a sector fighting for both reputation and relevance, research impact storytelling is not a communications add-on. It is how institutions turn research into visibility, visibility into relevance, and relevance into reputation — and, in turn, attract the talent, students, funding, and philanthropy that make future research possible.

1 Audit

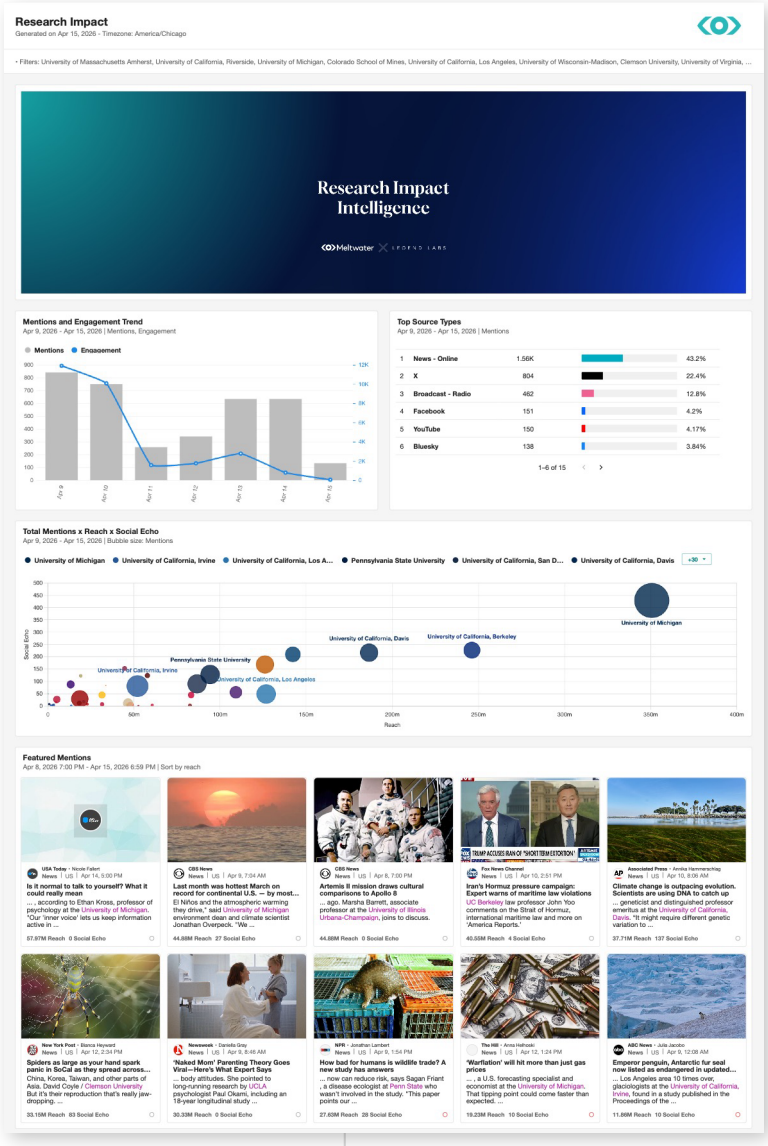
Audit your enterprise against the Research Impact Storytelling Operating System to see where capability is strong, where it breaks down, and where it needs to be built.

2 Analysis

Extend an analysis like this to your institution level, without the higher reach filters used here, and calibrate it to the institution's goals, peer set, geography, and institution type.

3 Always-on

Make the capability always on by configuring digital listening to deliver intelligence in real time about where attention is moving, which experts are breaking through, what narratives are resonating, and where the next opportunity lies.



Sample dashboard:

Research Impact Intelligence
U.S. News and World Report
Top 40 public universities

Source:
Meltwater x Legend Labs

Competition for visibility is fierce, and some flywheels will turn faster than others. The institutions that lead will do great research *and* build the operating system to consistently identify it, translate it, and move it to the audiences that matter most.

That is the research impact storytelling imperative.

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For questions, feedback, or to explore what this intelligence looks like for your institution, contact Legend Labs.

LegendLabs.com | hello@legendlabs.com

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Glossary

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Article-Level Classifications

Primary Topic — The main subject of an article from the reader's perspective, classified into one of 24 categories (e.g., Health and Medicine, Politics and Government, Economy/Business/Finance, Technology, Education and Academia). Determined by the substance of the article, not the academic discipline of the person quoted or the institutional source.

Coverage Type — A four-category classification describing the editorial nature of an article:

- **Event-Driven** — Triggered by a specific, time-bound development (e.g., announcement, policy decision, incident, study release, data release). The article would not exist without that event occurring.
- **Trend/Analysis** — Examines a broader pattern, policy debate, or systemic issue. May reference recent events as context, but the substance is not dependent on any single one.
- **Evergreen** — Not tied to any specific event or time-bound trigger. Feature profiles, explainers, deep dives that could have run at any time without losing relevance.
- **Seasonal/Cyclical** — Tied to a recurring, predictable time-bound topic where the annual cycle itself is the framing: admissions cycles, commencement, enrollment numbers, rankings releases, budget/appropriations season.

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Dataset Scope

58,684 Articles — The total number of scored articles in the dataset. All published in 2025 by outlets with reach exceeding 10 million.

2,791 Universities — The total number of distinct institutions referenced across the dataset.

38,758 Faculty Experts — The total number of individual faculty experts identified and scored across the dataset.

774 Subject Matter Areas — The total number of distinct subject matter disciplines scored.

10,621 Journalists — The total number of individual journalists identified across the coverage.

High-Reach — The reach threshold applied to define the outlet universe for this analysis. An outlet qualifies as high-reach if its total audience reach exceeds 10 million. This filters the media landscape down to the national-scale outlets where coverage carries the broadest visibility — and excludes local, trade, and niche publications regardless of their journalistic quality or relevance to a specific institution. The resulting set of 137 outlets spans the full spectrum of national news, business, health, policy, and general interest media.

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University Reference-Level Classifications

Reference Type — How a university appears in an article. Classified per university per article, meaning the same article may contain different reference types for different institutions.

- **Authored** — A faculty member or affiliate wrote the article. Represents institution-initiated visibility.
- **Quoted** — A faculty member or researcher is directly quoted providing expert commentary, analysis, or opinion. Represents journalist-initiated engagement with university expertise.
- **Research** — University research, a study, data, findings, or a university-developed tool/methodology is cited. If a researcher is directly quoted explaining their own institution's research, the institution is classified as Research — the research is the substantive contribution. If a researcher is quoted commenting on *another* institution's research, their institution is Quoted and the researching institution is Research.

Prominence — How visible and central a university's appearance is within an article. Classified independently from reference type.

- **Primary —** The university is central to the article's narrative. Appears in the headline, subhead, or lead paragraph; the article is built around their research, data, initiative, or expertise. The key test: the article was occasioned by this university's output. If you could swap in a different institution's expert and the article would still be written, it is not Primary.
- **Supporting —** The university makes a substantive contribution but is not the reason the article exists. Faculty cited as authoritative experts in broader stories.
- **Mentioned —** The university appears but with limited depth or centrality. A single passing reference, brief attribution, or minimal context.

Subject Area — The academic field of expertise or research being contributed, specified at the granularity of a university department name or undergraduate major (e.g., Economics, Public Health, Computer Science, Law, Political Science). Not broader ("Social Sciences," "STEM") and not narrower ("Constitutional Law," "Early Modern European History"). Assigned only for Authored, Quoted, and Research references; not assigned for Incidental.

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Analytical Constructs

Media Overperformance Index — The X-axis represents academic prestige as a composite of U.S. News rank and h-index. The Y-axis represents the ratio of an institution's actual article count to the article count that would be expected given its position on the prestige axis. A regression model generates the expected value; the ratio of actual ÷ expected is what gets plotted. The 1× baseline (a dashed horizontal line) represents "performing as expected" — an institution appearing exactly where the model predicts. Institutions above the line are overperforming; below it, underperforming. The Y-axis is logarithmic, so a school at 4× is generating four times the coverage its prestige would predict.

Source Diversity / Unique Sources — The count of distinct media outlets in which a university appears across the dataset. Measures the breadth of an institution's media footprint — whether coverage is concentrated in a handful of outlets or distributed across the landscape. Two institutions with the same total article count can have very different source diversity profiles: one might appear in 80 outlets, the other in 15.

Topic Diversity / Unique Topics — The count of distinct primary topic categories a university is referenced against. Measures whether an institution's media presence spans the full range of public discourse or is clustered in a narrow set of subjects. An institution referenced in 20 of the 24 topic categories has a fundamentally different visibility profile than one appearing almost exclusively in Health and Medicine coverage.

Expert Breadth / Unique Experts — The count of distinct individual faculty experts from an institution who appear in the dataset. Measures the depth of an institution's public-facing expert bench — whether visibility is driven by a broad roster of faculty or concentrated in a few high-profile individuals. Distinct from Top Expert Share, which measures the concentration rather than the absolute count.

Expert Concentration (Experts per Article) — The ratio of unique experts cited to total articles within a given discipline. A discipline-level metric (not institution-level) that serves as a proxy for the supply-demand balance in media coverage. When the ratio is below 1.0, there are more articles being published than there are experts being cited — meaning individual experts are appearing across multiple articles and journalist demand for expertise in that discipline exceeds the available supply. When the ratio is above 1.0, there are more experts than articles — a more crowded landscape where each expert appears less frequently.

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Analytical Constructs

Media Opportunity Map — A table that ranks disciplines by expert concentration to identify where white space exists in the media landscape. Disciplines are sorted from lowest to highest expert concentration. The low end of the table represents disciplines where journalist demand for university expertise outstrips the supply of experts being cited — analogous to low-competition keywords in SEO. The high end represents disciplines where the landscape is more saturated and alternative amplification strategies (authored content, research storytelling) may be more effective than pitching for quotes.

Repeat Journalist Relationships — Journalists who have covered a given institution three or more times within the dataset. Captures the extent to which an institution has established itself as a go-to source for specific reporters. The threshold of three is a signal of an ongoing relationship rather than a one-off citation. Measured both at the institution level (how many repeat journalists does a school have?) and at the discipline level (do top performers in a discipline have more repeat journalists than the field average?).

Exposure Against Disciplines vs. Academic Peer Set — A per-institution analysis that takes the institution's subject matter distribution (the share of its coverage in each discipline) and compares it against the average distribution of its academic peer group, expressed as percentage points above or below the peer mean. A +6 in law means the institution has 6 percentage points more of its coverage in law than its peer group average; a -4 in economics means 4 points less. The peer group is defined by academic comparability (Carnegie classification, h-index range, U.S. News ranking tier), not aspiration — so a mid-tier R1 is compared to other mid-tier R1s, not to Harvard.

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Third-party Data

U.S. News and World Report (link) — A media company that publishes the most widely referenced annual rankings of U.S. colleges and universities. The Best National Universities ranking is a composite methodology incorporating peer assessment, graduation rates, faculty resources, financial resources, student selectivity, and other factors. Two components of the ranking are used in this analysis: the overall institutional rank and the peer assessment score.

OpenAlex (link) — An open-access index of scholarly metadata covering over 250 million works, including publications, citations, authors, and institutional affiliations. Maintained as a free public resource.

- **H-Index —** A metric that measures both the productivity and citation impact of a body of scholarly work. An institution has an H-index of h if h of its publications have each been cited at least h times. For example, an H-index of 50 means the institution has produced at least 50 publications that have each been cited at least 50 times. The metric rewards sustained output that other researchers find valuable enough to cite — a single highly cited paper doesn't move it much, nor does a large volume of uncited work. In this analysis, H-index is measured at the aggregate institutional level — the cumulative citation footprint of all scholarship published under that institution — not at the individual researcher level. Sourced from OpenAlex.

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What Makes Research Break Through to the Public?

Intelligence for Research Impact Storytelling in Higher Education