Key decisions and issues when selecting and publishing academic papers

EAAE Masterclass: Publishing: The Do's and the Don't

Professor Iain Fraser
School of Economics, University of Kent
Editor Q Open

What is Q Open?

- *Q Open* is an inclusive open access (OA) forum for applied economics research in the areas of:
  - agricultural economics; environmental and climate economics; natural resource economics; development economics (agricultural/rural topics); food economics (and related nutrition- and health economics topics)

- *Q Open* welcomes:
  - replications; 'null-result' research; pre-registered experimental research; registered experimental research

- *Q Open* operates 'sound-science' peer review, where the focus is on scientific rigour and reflects the state-of-the-art in the field

- *Q Open* decisions rely less on subjective evaluations of editors

Publication Strategy

- Strategic choices and questions we think about when trying to publish (a few…):
  - What research to submit?
    - Which projects to focus on/make a priority?
    - Quantity versus quality?
    - When to "give up" on a piece of research?
  - The style of research (Theory, Econometrics, Applied, Inter/Cross Disciplinary, etc…)
  - Which type of journal to select? (Society, High Profile, Rapid Publication, etc…)
  - What are you trying to achieve by publishing you research? (Tenure, Job Market, etc…)
  - The signal that a specific journal gives about your research, about you
  - Funded research and funder requirements (can constrain choices)
  - Open Science and/or Open Access

What type of paper are you writing?

- Your audience

1. Academic journal articles
2. Policy reports that will appear in the “grey literature”
3. Outreach articles

- Research as distinct from advocacy
  - Research: the implications, e.g. for policy, should flow directly from the analysis
  - Advocacy: takes a position and marshalls the evidence

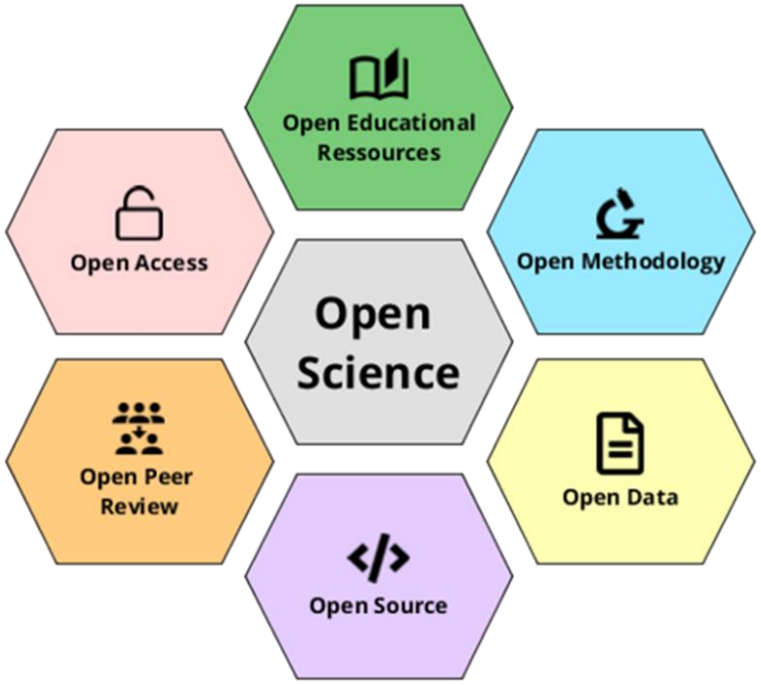
- Key things to remember when writing a paper
  - What story are you telling?
  - Good economics (theory, econometrics, etc) and good writing are complementary
  - Poorly written papers irrespective of the idea are highly likely to be rejected
  - If your research ideas are unclear you will struggle to write them up coherently
  - Well structured and well written papers are more frequently cited
  - The process of learning to write well can take time, don’t be in a rush e.g. Your “abstract” should make sense without the reader needing to refer to the paper

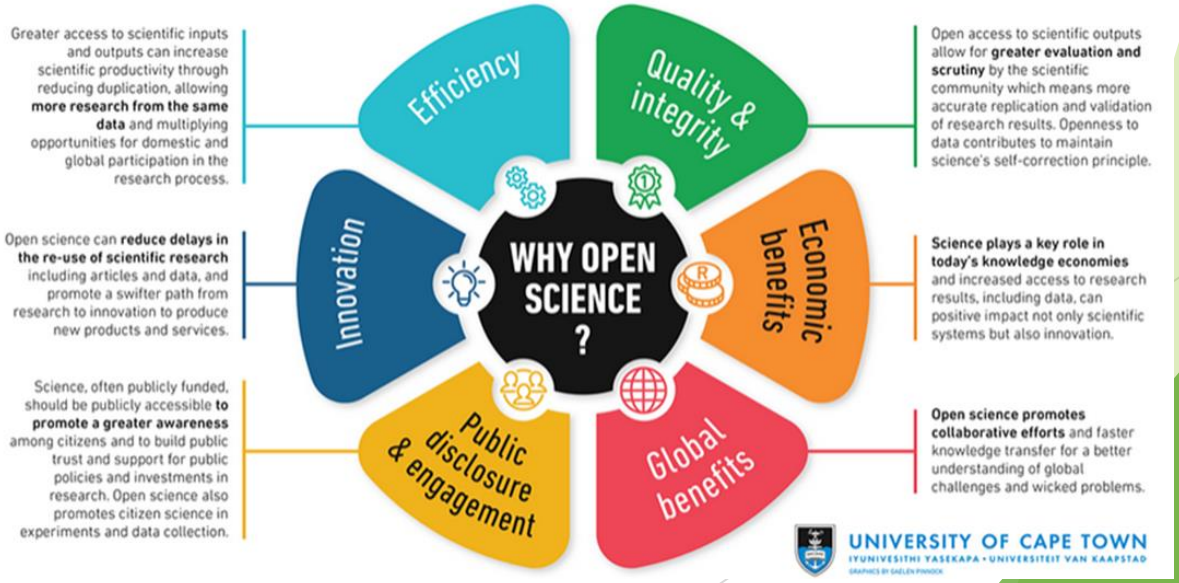
Open Science

- What is Open Science?

UNESCO defines OS as follows

- “Open science is a set of principles and practices that aim to make scientific research from all fields accessible to everyone for the benefits of scientists and society as a whole. Open science is about making sure not only that scientific knowledge is accessible but also that the production of that knowledge itself is inclusive, equitable and sustainable” (https://www.unesco.org/en/open-science/about)





What does OS me for me?

How does OS affect researching and publishing?

- Pre-Registered/Registered Studies
- Experimental design and proposed data analysis
- A Pre-Analysis Plan
- Data/Code availability
- Replication

Useful websites:

- Github: https://github.com/
- Centre for Open Science: https://www.cos.io/
- MPRA: https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/
- Open Economics Guide: https://openeconomics.zbw.eu/en/
- https://www.oaspa.org/about/, Etc…

Open Access

- Various definitions, take ***Berlin Declaration*** ***on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities***

"By 'open access' to the literature, we mean its free availability on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself."

- Growing demand for "free" and Open Access (OA) to research output
  - The Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI) in 2002
  - The Berlin Declaration in 2003
  - PLOS One started in 2006

- Horizon Europe – **ONLY** fund publication fees in full OA outlets
- Horizon Europe - **WILL NOT** fund publication in hybrid journals (eg, journals with a paywall & OA options)
- 2021 EC launched Open Research Europe (ORE) - OA platform
- Gates Foundation – change in OA/OS in 2025 - Discontinuing providing APCs – to address inequities in publishing models

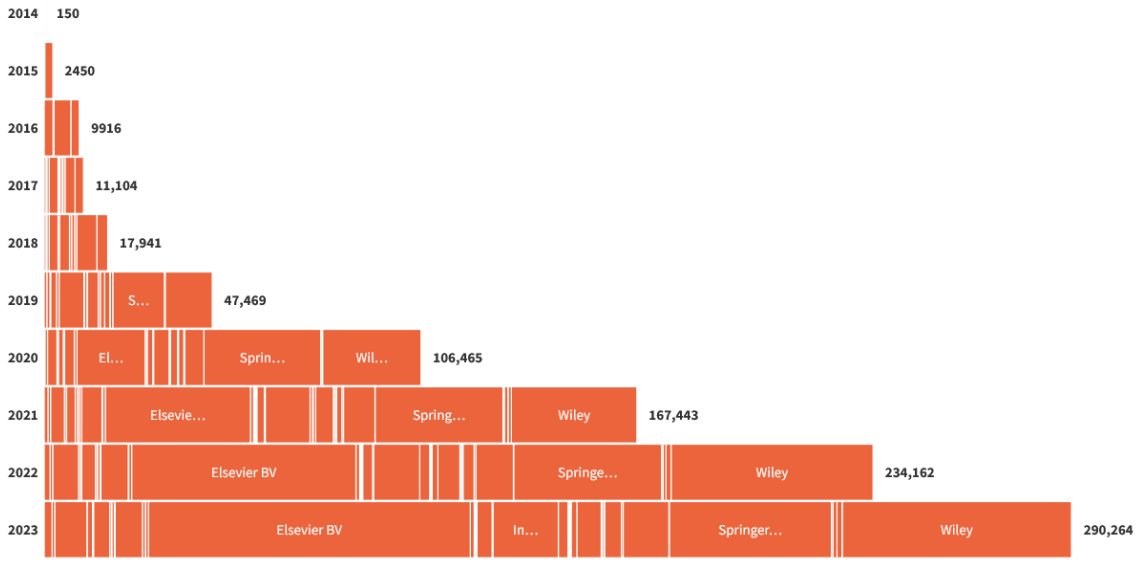
Open Access versus closed access

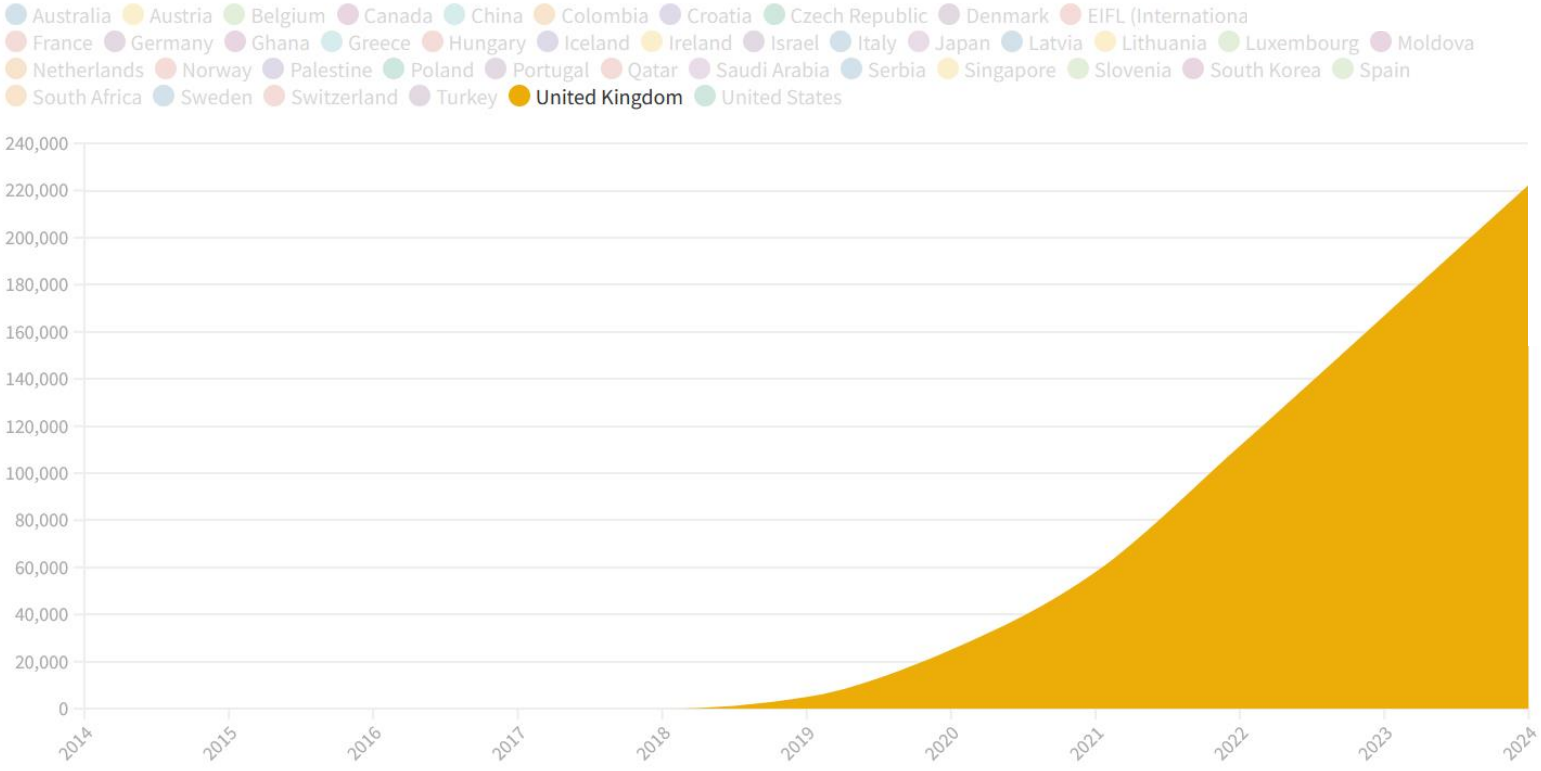
Strong commitment to Open Access

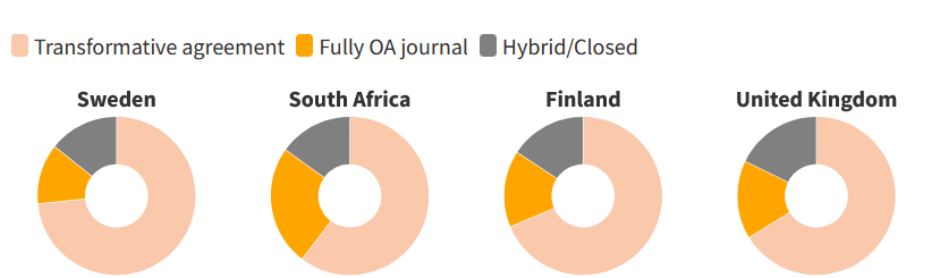
Table 1 below presents the total number of articles assigned to cOAlition S funders and how many of these are available as Open Access (OA). The data consistently shows that over the past three years, OA levels have continued to rise, with approximately four out of five articles attributed to cOAlition S funders being available as OA in 2023. This highlights the strong commitment to OA among cOAlition S members towards achieving widespread OA in research.

cOAlition S funded research	2023	2022	2021
1. Total number of Open Access articles	163 775 [**81%**]	132 064 [**79%**]	113 507 [**73%**]
2. Total number of closed articles	37 839 [**19%**]	36 136 [**21%**]	41 528 [**27%**]
3. Total number of articles	201 614 [100%]	168 200 [100%]	155 035 [100%]

Table 1: cOAlition S funded research: Open Access versus closed access







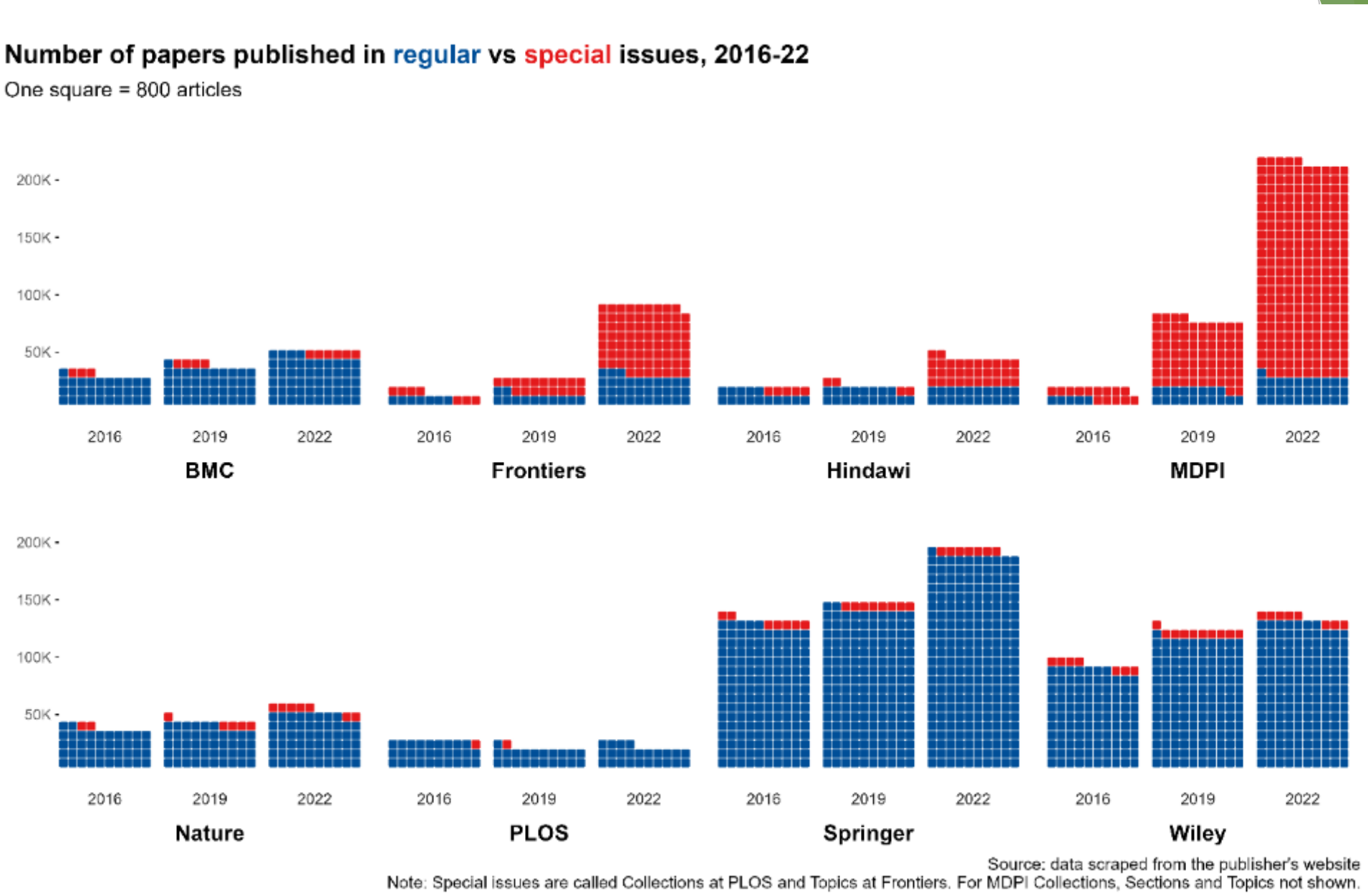
Source: ESAC Transformative Agreement Registry • Click on a country to filter.
Last updated: 04.04.2024

Hybrid Journals and Transformative Agreements

- cOAlition S have made six criticisms:
  - I. Hybrid has not facilitated a transition to Open Access (OA)
  - II. The research community pays twice (double dipping)
  - III. Hybrid journals are more expensive than fully OA journals
  - IV. Hybrid journals provide a poor quality of service
  - V. Hybrid journals crowd out new, full OA publishing models
  - VI. Reader access: a hybrid journal is a "random OA" journal
- No top 5 econ journals "transformative"
- **AER** – *"Authors are permitted to post published versions of their articles on their personal websites."*

Predatory Journals, OS/OA, Peer Review and More…

- List of predatory journals – http://bealslist.net
- Crosetto has a fascinating post/paper about MDPI journals (next slide)
- Rapid growth – mixed strategy – some good journals, some not – a halo effect e.g. MDPI
- Proliferation generated surge in publications - ever greater demands on reviewers
- Hanson et al. (2023) total articles indexed Scopus/WoS- grown exponentially; 2022 total ~47% higher than 2016 – do we have enough reviewers?
- Cost peer review - LeBlanc et al. (2023) estimate that the global cost was $6 billion in 2020.
- Pay reviewers? If (more) academics refused to review would the whole edifice would come tumbling down?
- AI and peer review - growing use of open reviews - Piniewski et al. (2024) growth in per-review plagiarism



https://arxiv.org/pdf/2309.15884 -The strain on scientific publishing Hanson et al. (2023)

OA/OS and Its Actual Impact

- OA agenda has not yielded the hoped-for benefits (minimal for economics)
- Unintended consequences that seem unlikely to be resolved in the short-term – continued transfer of funds
- Paper by Peters et al (2023) replications and the associated benefits

  "We conclude that the economics literature does not self-correct, and that robustness and replicability are hard to define in economics."

  "The absence of a clear-cut definition of robustness and replicability raises questions about the extent to which empirical economics can live up to the Popperian definition of "science."
- And what happens with all this evidence we generate?
- Just (2023) – Is it the right evidence, collected in the right way to answer the right question?

And…time I stopped talking…

Thanks!