

Quality of Research

Broad enhancement

March 2006

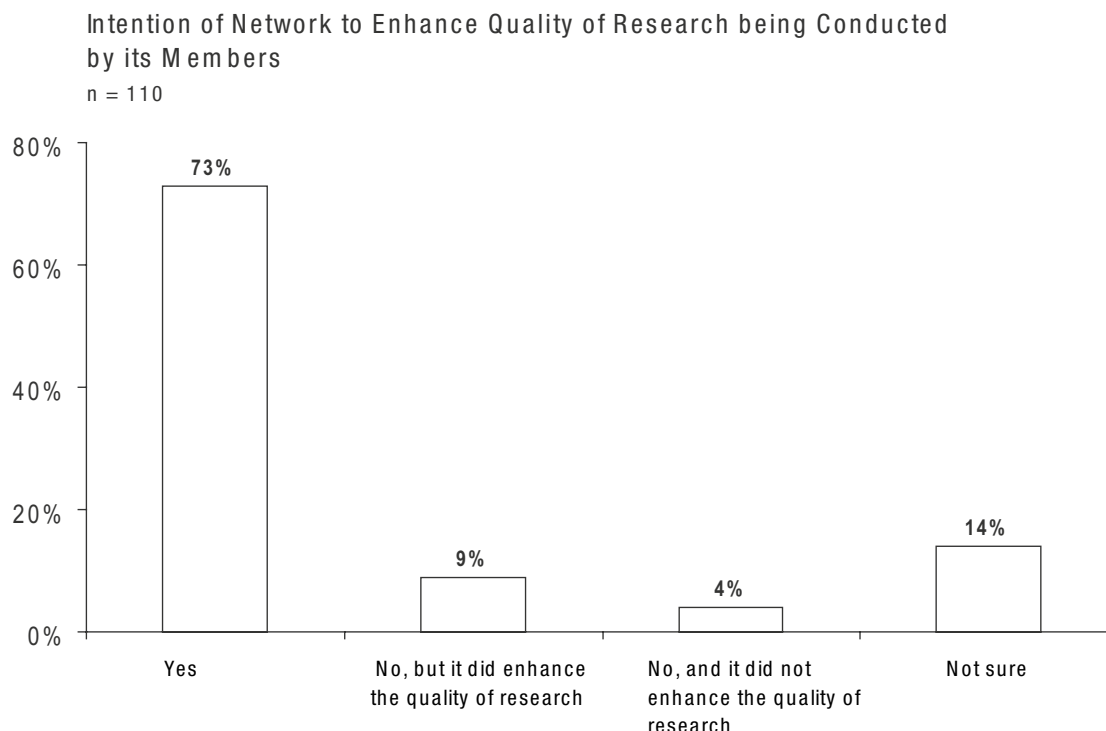
In 2006, IDRC completed a wide-ranging evaluation of the support it gave to research networks during the decade 1995-2005. This assessment included a review of IDRC's documentation, interviews with key players, a learning forum, and a telephone and e-mail questionnaire survey addressed to hundreds of network coordinators and members.

Among its findings, this survey heard from 110 coordinators about how network membership enhanced the quality of research being carried out by the members.

BONUS RETURNS

The study looked at the *intentions* of networks to improve the quality of research being carried out by its members. It found that people often got more than they had hoped for: while three-quarters of networks wanted to enhance the quality of their research, in fact four-fifths actually did so.

Here's how it breaks down:

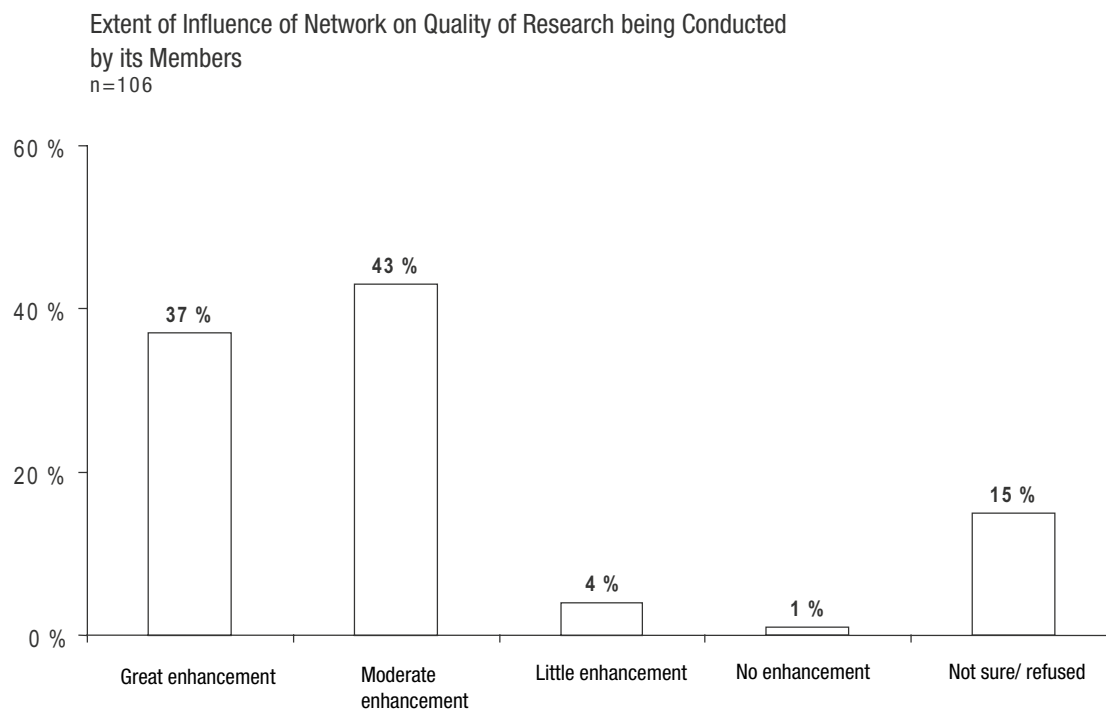


When different types of networks are examined, those more likely to state that involvement has enhanced the quality of their members' research are those dealing with economic policy, those focused on South Asia and Southeast Asia, and older networks.

NETWORKS MAKE IT HAPPEN

The survey approached the issue also from the viewpoint of "degree of influence." It found that eight out of ten networks report that network involvement has produced either a "great" or a "moderate" enhancement of the quality of research being conducted by members.

Here is the graph:



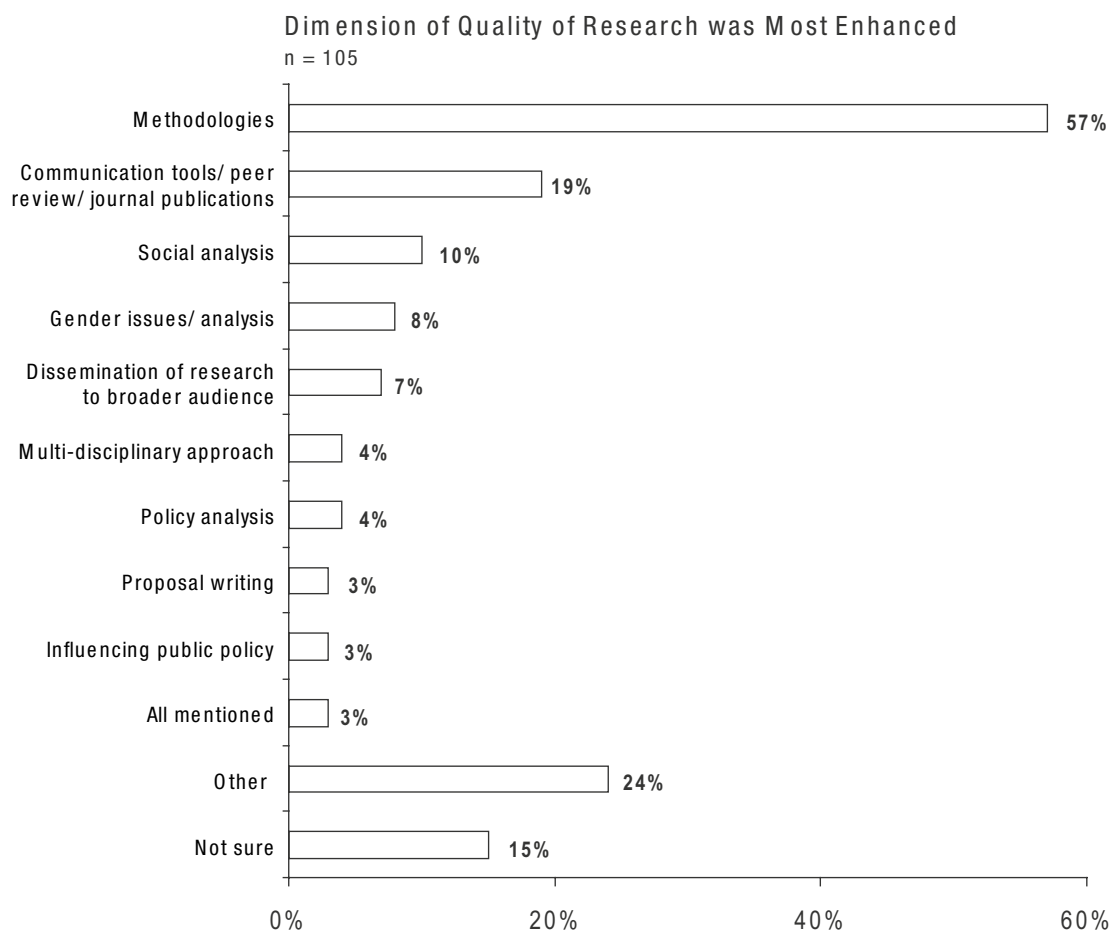
Among program areas, networks that focus on economic policy and on information, communication, and technology are more likely than others to cite “great” enhancement. Among geographic regions, practically all the networks concentrating on South Asia and Southeast Asia report either a “great” or a “moderate” enhancement.

PREMIUM ON PRACTICAL SKILLS

Finally, the survey asked: “What dimension of research quality was most enhanced by your network?”

By far the most frequent response was “methodological improvements,” followed by “better communication tools.”

Here are the remainder of these findings:



SOCIAL FACTORS

When the social characteristics of the coordinators are considered, additional details emerge:

- * Coordinators most apt to report their network's intention to enhance the quality of research include: those with a doctorate degree, those who work in a college or university, and those who work for an NGO.
- * Coordinators aged over 50 are more apt to report the enhancement of research than those aged under 50.
- * Almost one-fifth of coordinators suggest that the dimension of research quality most enhanced by their participation in the network is peer review, journal publication, and communication tools. Coordinators more likely to make this response are those who work in a college or university, volunteer coordinators, and those over 50.