

4.15 Global-commission reports by form of evidence

Only one of 70 global commission reports published since January 2016, in describing their commissioners singled out expertise in any of the eight forms of evidence that decision-makers typically encounter.

When commission reports explicitly reported in their methods section that they drew on any of these forms of evidence in their own work, modeling was the most frequent form (13 reports) and evidence synthesis (6) and technology assessment / cost-effectiveness analysis (5) were the next most frequent. Complementing this analysis of methods sections, an analysis of reference lists found:

- 64 of 70 reports had a reference list
- only 32 of these 64 reports had at least one citation of an evidence synthesis
- only 3% of citations (526 of 17,605) appeared to be evidence syntheses based on their titles
- the mean and median number of citations of evidence syntheses were 8.2 and one per report, respectively.

We also analyzed the citation list for the Global Sustainable Development Report 2019, which was prepared by an independent

group of scientists appointed by the UN Secretary-General and which, accordingly, one might expect to be a positive outlier.⁽²⁰⁾ However, in this report only 1.8% of citations (17 of 941) appeared to be evidence syntheses based on their titles. When evidence syntheses were cited, it wasn't clear whether quality and recency of search played a role in selecting them. For example, three of the cited evidence syntheses addressed the specific topic of health-worker recruitment and retention, yet there are hundreds of syntheses available on this topic through Health Systems Evidence. We focus on evidence syntheses because – as we note in [section 4.2](#) – they use a systematic process of identifying, selecting, appraising and synthesizing the findings from all studies that have addressed the same question to arrive at an overall understanding of what is known, including how this may vary by groups and contexts.

At most one of the reports made any one of these forms of evidence the explicit focus of their recommendations. As we return to in [section 7.1](#), many reports made general recommendations about data collection and sharing, but they did not make specific recommendations about harnessing data analytics to support decision-making.

Forms of evidence		Number of commission reports
Basis for describing the expertise of members of the commission (not including their individual bios)	Technology assessment / cost-effectiveness analysis	1
	All other forms of evidence	0
	Not explicitly reported	69
Source of evidence drawn upon	Modeling	13
	Evidence synthesis	6
	Technology assessment / cost-effectiveness analysis	5
	Data analytics	3
	Evaluation	2
	Guidelines	2
	Behavioural/implementation research	1
	Qualitative insights	1
	Not explicitly reported	49
Focus of recommendations	Modeling	1
	Evaluation	1
	Qualitative insights	1
	Technology assessment / cost-effectiveness analysis	1
	Guidelines	1
	All other forms of evidence	0
	Not explicitly reported	66