



For Immediate Release

## **Largest study ever on research integrity launches, aimed at all researchers in the Netherlands**

*Research by and for researchers to determine how to improve the validity of results and trustworthiness of science*

**October 15, 2020:** The National Survey on Research Integrity (NSRI) is being distributed to nearly 40,000 researchers in the Netherlands starting today. The survey marks the starts of not only the largest study ever conducted, worldwide, on research integrity, but also the first and largest study to target the entire research community in the Netherlands, across all disciplines.

The survey seeks to sketch as accurate and complete a picture as possible of the issues that can foster or hinder research integrity, such as open science practices, competitiveness, trust in published studies, work pressure, and questionable and responsible research practices.

“We are living in a time when scientific research and outcomes are essential to making decisions that affect the general population and our country’s welfare,” said professor Lex Bouter, project leader for the NSRI. “There is much at stake, and it is imperative that those who are relying on science can also trust our research practices.”

The NSRI is part of and receives funding from the Fostering Responsible Research Practices (FRRP) programme, underwritten by the Dutch ZonMw to conduct “research about research.” ZonMw and its partners are investing a total of 3.8 million euros over five years to realise the four projects, of which the NSRI is one of, in the FRRP programme.

According to FRRP: “By means of the NSRI, we will gain insight into the nature and causes of questionable research practices. The results will be used to implement substantiated improvements.”

### **Why research integrity – and why now?**

“Different to ethics, research integrity generally refers to the principles and standards whose purpose it is to ensure validity and trustworthiness of research,” according to Gowri Gopalakrishna, the post-doc researcher on the NSRI team. “It has become an urgent topic not only in the Netherlands, but also worldwide, especially with the open science movement.”

Accelerated scientific publishing during the Covid-19 pandemic is an example that Bouter, Gopalakrishna and their team have cited as a reason to bring research integrity topics to the front of researchers’ attention, noting that the first four months of the pandemic resulted in much more related scientific publishing than in 2003 with the outbreak of SARS.

“The rapidly increasing number of publications combined with the urgency to quickly understand the new pathogen presents a significant challenge for maintaining the integrity of the underlying evidence base, and to ensure that research is conducted according to global

standards of research integrity,” Gopalakrishna and Bouter argue in a commentary written in June 2020 for British Medical Journal Opinion (1).

### **The NSRI: scope and results**

The NSRI will be distributed by email, via an external research agency, to all academic researchers in the Netherlands beginning on October 15, 2020. Due to the high sensitivity of some topics, the survey will use a technique known as the Randomised Response (RR), which has been shown to elicit more honest answers around sensitive topics. More information about this methodology can be found at <https://youtu.be/vvcaziHteAI>.

Using the NSRI results, concrete action plans will be developed to strengthen the quality of scientific research, co-created with key stakeholders and in collaboration with an organisation specialised in implementing change.

The results of the survey are expected to be available in the second quarter of 2021. Once the data have been analysed, the outcomes from the NSRI will be available through preprints, other Open Access publications and through (inter)national conferences.

For more information, please see <http://www.nsri2020.nl/>.

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**For interviews with the core research team, working on the NSRI under the leadership of professor Lex Bouter, or for any additional information, please contact Sara Behrad: [s.behrad@amsterdamumc.nl](mailto:s.behrad@amsterdamumc.nl).**

### **Notes for the editor:**

- National Survey on Research Integrity (NSRI)
- Launched on October 15, 2020 and will remain open for approximately one month.
- Target group: all researchers (+/- 40.000) in the Netherlands.
- The NSRI is being distributed anonymously by research agency Kantar.
- The action plans will be developed in close collaboration with representatives of each scientific domain: biomedical, natural and technical, social and humanities.

### **Article referenced in the press release:**

- (1) Gopalakrishna G, Bouter L, Mayer T, Steneck N. *Assuring research integrity during a pandemic. BMJ Opinion. Published online: 8 June 2020.*  
<https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2020/06/08/assuring-research-integrity-during-a-pandemic/>

### **Additional links about research integrity:**

- (1) *What's the purpose of the National Survey on Research Integrity?* (video, EN)  
[https://youtu.be/SYvsa-1d\\_wQ](https://youtu.be/SYvsa-1d_wQ)
- (2) Meijlgaard N, Bouter LM, Gaskell G, Kavouras P et al. *Research integrity: nine ways to move from talk to walk.* <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-02847-8>

- (3) Bouter LM. *What research institutions can do to foster research integrity*. *Journal of Science and Engineering Ethics* 2020; 26: 2363-69  
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11948-020-00178-5>

## **About the NSRI**

The National Survey on Research Integrity (NSRI) is a national survey about research integrity that will be launched in the Netherlands on October 15, 2020. The survey is being conducted by a team, led by Professor Lex Bouter (Free University and Amsterdam University Medical Center). This study, targeting all Dutch academic scientists, has been designed to offer reliable estimates per scientific domain about the occurrence of questionable research practices. It will also provide explanations for such practices, and illustrate the role that the various parties involved in scientific research (for example: research institutes, funding bodies and publishers of scientific journals) play in this.

The NSRI is part of the Fostering Responsible Research Practices (FRRP) programme and is funded by ZonMw and its partners. The NSRI project began in July 2019 and continues until June 2022.

More information is available via [www.nstri2020.nl](http://www.nstri2020.nl).

## **About ZonMw and the Fostering Responsible Research Practices (FRRP) programme**

The Fostering Responsible Research Practices (FRRP) programme funds research on research, addressing the need for greater quality, integrity and efficiency in academic research. As such, this programme responds to the need for more quality, integrity, and efficiency in scientific research.

FRRP is a five-year programme with four organisations who have made financial contributions: ZonMw, the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO), the Netherlands Federation of University Medical Centres (NFU) and the Dutch Diabetes Research Foundation. For more information, please see the [programme overview](#).

Further information can be found at <https://www.zonmw.nl/en/research-and-results/fundamental-research/programmas/programme-detail/fostering-responsible-research-practices/>