



Evidence use in early childhood education and care (ECEC) and schools

The **Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO)** has taken a first look at data from our evidence use survey. These initial, high-level findings help us understand how early childhood and school practitioners currently use evidence in their work. The findings focus on practitioners' beliefs, confidence and practices. They are based on responses from 1,358 early childhood teachers, early childhood directors, school teachers and school leaders across Australia.

AERO focuses on two types of evidence:



Practitioner-generated evidence

includes information or data generated through daily practice

In **ECEC**, practitioner-generated evidence usually includes observations of children's learning and development.

In **schools**, practitioner-generated evidence includes informal teacher observations, information from student assessments or feedback, and whole-school data.



Research evidence

is academic research that is usually published as books, reports, articles, summaries or podcasts

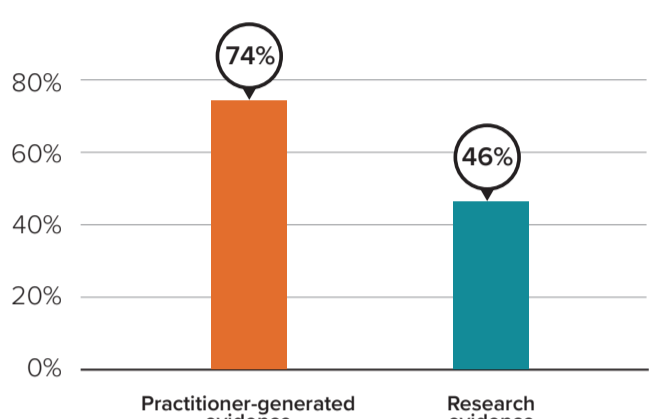
1,358
survey responses



Using different types of evidence

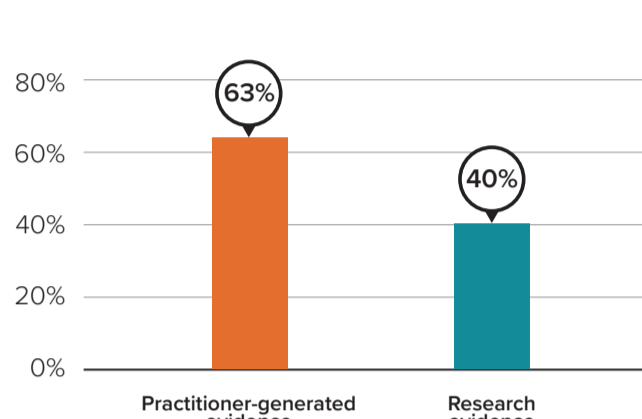
Practitioner-generated evidence informs practice much more often than **research evidence** does. This is true for both ECEC and schools.

ECEC



Almost three-quarters (74%) of ECEC respondents use forms of practitioner generated evidence "often" or "very often". Just under half (46%) regularly use research evidence.

Schools



Almost two-thirds (63%) of school respondents use forms of practitioner-generated evidence "often" or "very often". Fewer than half (40%) regularly use research evidence.

When used, practitioner-generated evidence and research evidence inform practice in a range of ways. Practitioners **most commonly** reported:

ECEC



using observations of children's learning to **evaluate** their practice



consulting academic research to **improve their knowledge** of effective practice



reviewing observations of children's learning before **planning** an activity



consulting summaries of effective practices when **planning** an activity

Schools



using student learning data to **evaluate** their practice



consulting academic research to **improve their knowledge** of effective practice



using student learning data to **adjust their lesson planning**



using recommendations from academic research to **trial or refine** their practice

Moving from belief to practice

Just because practitioners **believe** evidence is useful doesn't mean they regularly **use** it. This is particularly true for research evidence.

ECEC



Most (87%) of the ECEC respondents who believe observations of children's learning are useful for evaluating a practice **also regularly use** observations to evaluate their practice.



By contrast, fewer than half (48%) of ECEC respondents who believe recommendations from academic research are a useful source of evidence **also regularly use** recommendations from academic research to trial or refine their practice.

Schools



Most (83%) of the school respondents who believe student learning data is useful for evaluating a teaching practice **also regularly use** data to evaluate their practice.



By contrast, just over half (54%) of the school respondents who believe recommendations from academic research are a useful source of evidence **also regularly use** recommendations from academic research to trial or refine their practice.

Confidence in using research evidence

There are a number of possible reasons why practitioners may not regularly use research evidence even though they believe it is useful. One possible reason could be a lack of confidence.

To be confident in using research evidence, practitioners need to know it's both **relevant** (appropriate for their context) and **rigorous** (made using high quality research methods).

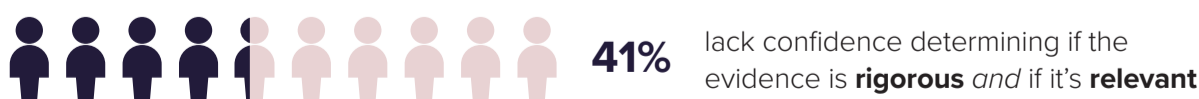
For ECEC and school respondents who believe recommendations from academic research are a useful source of evidence, but **don't** regularly use these recommendations to trial or refine their practice:



58% lack confidence determining if the evidence is **rigorous**



46% lack confidence determining if the evidence is **relevant to their context**



41% lack confidence determining if the evidence is **rigorous and** if it's **relevant**

AERO aims to help practitioners use both practitioner-generated evidence and research evidence in their work.

Access our evidence tools at:
edresearch.edu.au/evidence

AERO's vision is for Australia to achieve excellence and equity in educational outcomes for all children and young people through effective use of evidence.

