

THE IMPACT FACTOR

Calculation

The Impact Factor (IF) is the most well known of all the publication metrics. A high IF indicates a good quality journal. The IF reflects the citations to recent articles divided by the number of recent articles.

Citations made during 2015 to **all** articles published in 2013 and 2014.

2015 IF = $\frac{\text{Citations made during 2015 to all articles published in 2013 and 2014.}}{\text{Research articles published in 2013 and 2014.}}$

All **citations** within an article are counted and displayed above the line. Below the line **only** the number of **research** articles are counted. Not all article types will be included in the article count. A controversial editorial will get a lot of citations but is not a research article and will, therefore, not be counted.

The regular Impact Factor looks at a window of 2 years. In addition, there is the **5-year Impact Factor** for slower moving fields. The '**immediacy index**' and '**citation half-life**' look at how fast a scientific field moves.

Issues

There are a number of problems with the IF which means that it should be used with caution.

- A citation can be cited either in favor, or against, the work of the author. This is not recorded in the IF.
- The Impact Factor does not take into account the quality of the citing journal.
- There is a strong variation in citations between subject areas. You cannot compare an IF within mathematics with one in virology.
- It is far easier for a small journal to obtain a high IF than for a large journal.
- Only around 12.000 out of approximately 27.500 journals are registered for inclusion in the Impact Factor.
- Human error - regularly the wrong paper is cited.

Alternatives

Alternatives to the Impact Factor are:

- SNIP (Source Normalized Impact Factor)
- Eigenfactor
- Scimago Journal Rank
- H-index
- Altmetrics
- Impactstory

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