Traditionally, academic research was shared and discussed primarily within scholarly journals. However, there are an ever-growing number of ways for researchers to share, discuss and communicate research in an online environment. Researchers may use Mendeley to save and share research papers, or write about research that interests them through blogs or Twitter. Research can be cited in Wikipedia, mainstream news stories, policy documents or patents. There are also an ever-growing number of research outputs beyond the traditional journal paper.

Altmetrics are designed to help track this online activity, and identify research that receives attention online. Altmetric Explorer monitors a variety of online sources and tracks any instances where a research is mentioned, shared or discussed. The sources tracked include:

- news outlets
- scholarly blogs
- policy documents
- social media
- post-publication peer review services
- Mendeley

This data can be used to complement citation metrics and can help to give a richer picture of the impact, reach or influence of research, both within the academic community and beyond. Altmetrics can also be used to track mentions of books, book chapters and datasets.

**Accessing Altmetric Explorer**

Search for Altmetric Explorer on the University webpages or via StarPlus. Once on the Library’s Altmetric Explorer page (www.sheffield.ac.uk/library/cdfiles/altmetex), click **Connect to Altmetric Explorer**

You may be asked to sign in or register – click **Continue as a Guest** for now (registering allows you to save reports but isn’t necessary to use Altmetric Explorer)
By default, Altmetric Explorer only shows data for University of Sheffield research outputs. However, if you want to explore research from across the world, click on ‘Edit Search’ and select ‘Full Altmetric database’. You will then have access to altmetric data on millions of research papers, conference papers, books and more. Use the ‘Edit Search’ option to focus on publications in your subject area. You can search by keyword or look for papers from a particular journal. You can also limit by date and output types.

Once you’ve run a search Altmetric Explorer will give you an overview of the data. From here you can see the top outputs (those outputs with the highest Altmetric score), the latest mentions and a breakdown of where the attention is coming from.

To see a full list of outputs which match your search click ‘Research Outputs’ at the top of the screen.
You should see a list of papers ranked according to their Altmetric Attention Score. This metric is designed to indicate the amount of attention each paper has received from a variety of online sources. Click on a title to see more information about how it has been shared and discussed online.

On the left you can see the amount of attention the research has received from a variety of sources (e.g., how many mentions on Twitter, how many readers on Mendeley, etc.). The map shows the areas of the world in which the paper has received attention.

Clicking on ‘Attention Score in Context’ shows more information on how this paper’s attention score compares with others from the same publication and of a similar age. You may also be able to view the paper on the publisher website if you want to investigate further.
A large amount of attention doesn’t necessarily tell us anything about the quality of a research paper. For example, some research may receive lots of (negative) attention due to controversial claims, or because they have a ‘click-bait’ style headline. Fortunately, Altmetric Explorer allows you to explore mentions in context so you can check for yourself. Clicking on any of the tabs at the top of the page will let you see the actual news stories, tweets and other online mentions so you can read what people are saying about the research.

Click the ![button](button.png) to close the article record and return to the full list of papers.

You can continue to interrogate the data from your search further by using the tabs along the top. This will give you information on all of the outputs matching your search including a timeline, a demographic breakdown and a list of journals which are gathering the most attention.

Remember it is important to recognize that no single metric can give the full picture when it comes to assessing research, so altmetrics should always be used in conjunction with other quantitative and qualitative measures.