

JOURNAL-LEVEL INDICATOR / NOT A QUALITY VERDICT

Verify the number before interpreting it.

A Journal Impact Factor observation is incomplete without the journal identity, JCR release, data year, source, and comparison context.

CURRENT CHECKED RELEASE

2026 Journal Citation Reports

Released

June 17, 2026

Reflects

2025 data

Coverage

22,643 journals across 254 categories

Exact journal title

ISSN

JIF value

JCR release

Data year

Source or JCR record

Date checked

Citations in the current JCR year to items published by the journal in the two preceding years

Scholarly items published by the journal in those two years, comprising articles, reviews, and proceedings papers in the current Web of Science help definition

FICTIONAL NUMERATOR

350

/

FICTIONAL DENOMINATOR

100

=

ILLUSTRATED RATIO

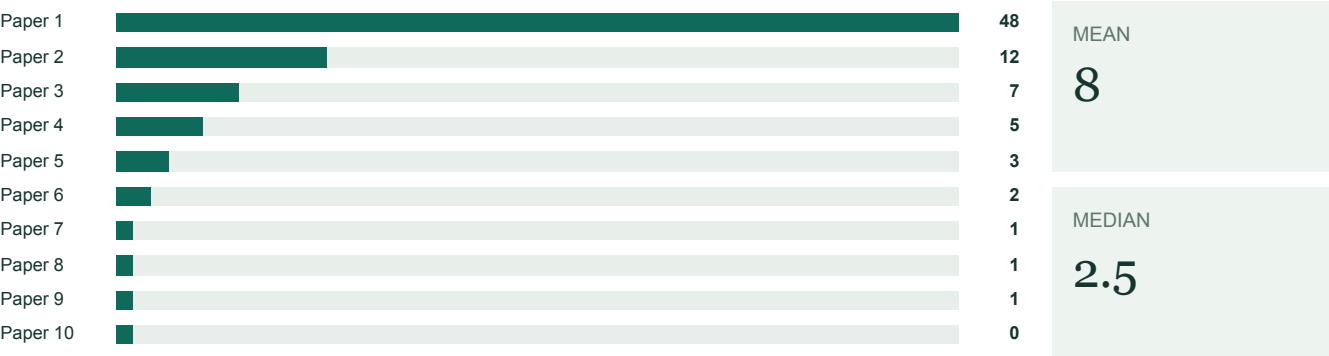
3.5

Boundary. This arithmetic illustrates the ratio only. Real JCR records control item classification, citation matching, exclusions, and the final value.

READ BEYOND THE MEAN

The average is not the typical paper.

This fictional distribution shows why a journal average cannot stand in for an article. It is teaching data, not a named journal and not a JIF reconstruction.



A mean can be pulled upward by a small number of highly cited papers. Inspect the distribution before treating the average as typical.

Decision gate

Question	Verdict	Required action
Describe one journal's recent citation performance	Use with context	Retain the JCR release and data year, then show category context, trend, and citation distribution where available.
Compare journals in the same subject context	Use with controls	Use one JCR edition, check category assignments and document mix, and avoid treating a small numerical difference as a quality verdict.
Compare journals across fields	Do not use raw JIF alone	Use a field-normalized indicator such as JCI or category percentiles, and keep disciplinary differences visible.
Assess an article, researcher, team, or institution	Stop	Evaluate the work and contribution directly. DORA and Clarivate both reject using a journal-level JIF as a proxy for an individual article or researcher.
Predict scope fit, acceptance, review time, or open-access compliance	Wrong measure	Use current aims and scope, recent relevant articles, publisher process data, verified acceptance evidence, and policy requirements instead.

Citation-distribution evidence: [Source H](#). Responsible-use boundaries: [Source C](#) and [Source E](#).

ORIGINAL MANUSIGHTS FRAMEWORK

Make the conclusion reproducible.

Complete all five sections. The record should let another person recover the observation, understand the comparison, and see its limit.

1 Question

What decision are you trying to make: describe a journal, compare journals, choose a venue, or assess a paper or person?

2 Observation

Record the exact journal identity, JIF value, JCR release, data year, source, and date checked.

3 Context

Add the subject category, rank or percentile, JCI or another field-normalized view, trend, and citation distribution when available.

4 Boundary

State what the JIF cannot establish for this decision, including article quality, researcher merit, acceptance probability, fit, or speed.

5 Decision

Write the narrow conclusion the evidence supports and list the non-metric evidence still needed.

Stop before writing: A JIF does not establish article quality, researcher merit, scope fit, acceptance probability, review speed, open-access compliance, or a causal benefit from publishing in the journal.

EVIDENCE CHECKED SEPTEMBER 22, 2026

Keep the source beside the claim.

The web guide, PDF, and source record share one edition. Recheck after a new JCR release or methodology change, and no later than 90 days after this review.

A. Clarivate releases Journal Citation Reports 2026

Clarivate / Release date; scope; Supporting responsible use of journal metrics
Current JCR release, data year, coverage, field-normalized context, and the journal-level interpretation boundary.

[Open source](#)

C. Journal Citation Reports

Clarivate / Responsible use; FAQs; Resources

Multiple-indicator use, annual snapshot boundary, and rejection of article- or researcher-level inference.

[Open source](#)

E. Guidance on responsible use of quantitative indicators

DORA / Five principles; Journal Impact Factor and other journal metrics
Clear, transparent, specific, contextual, and fair use of indicators, plus limits of JIF for research assessment.

[Open source](#)

G. The Leiden Manifesto for research metrics

Nature / Ten principles, especially principles 1, 2, 4, 6, and 8

Qualitative assessment, field variation, transparency, and scrutiny of indicators.

[Open source](#)

B. Web of Science Core Collection full record details

Clarivate / Impact Factor: Journal Citation Reports
Current public JIF formula and denominator document types.

[Open source](#)

D. Introducing the Journal Citation Indicator

Clarivate / Background; Journal Citation Indicator

Field-normalized comparison rationale and the three-year publication window used by JCI.

[Open source](#)

F. San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment

DORA / General recommendation 1; recommendations for researchers and institutions
Do not use journal-based metrics as a surrogate for the quality of individual articles or researchers.

[Open source](#)

H. A simple proposal for the publication of journal citation distributions

bioRxiv / Abstract; Figures 1 to 3; Table 2

Empirical evidence that journal citation distributions are skewed and overlap, limiting article-level inference from JIF.

[Open source](#)

Teaching prompts

1. What decision is the metric being asked to make?

2. What information disappears when a distribution becomes one mean?

3. What field, document-type, and time-window context is needed?

4. Which qualitative evidence must remain primary?

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