

# Researchers Familiarity and Use of Preprint Servers

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November 23, 2022

## **Abstract**

The objective of the study is to assess the familiarity and the use of preprint servers by researchers to share their work. Data collection was conducted by Wiley through an online survey in May and June 2020. 44% of survey respondents (out of a total of 1,905) indicated they are not at all familiar with preprint servers. Most of the researchers surveyed indicated multiple reasons to upload their research on a preprint server. The most popular reasons were to get feedback on their work (46%) and for faster dissemination of their research (45%). 55% of respondents indicated that they have never uploaded any research outputs on preprint servers. This study and our key findings show that there is a need to share the benefits of preprints and to explain to researchers how servers work.

# Researchers Familiarity and Use of Preprint Servers

**WILEY** **Researchers Familiarity and Use of Preprint Servers**  
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**Objective and Methodology**

The objective of the study is to assess the familiarity and use of preprint servers by researchers in their own words. Data collection was conducted by Wiley through an online survey in May and June 2020. 1,500 respondents completed at least 18% of each of the survey questions. The collected data was cleaned and analyzed by Hannah Qualtrough to generate insights for Wiley. 27% of respondents selected Earth and Environmental Science as their area of research.

**Respondent Demographics**



RESEARCH AREA		NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	
Area	Count	Percentage	Count
Earth and Environmental Science	405	27%	1,500
Other	1,095	73%	1,500

**Key Findings**

- 43% of survey respondents (just over a third of 1,500) indicated they are not at all familiar with preprint servers.
- Most respondents also indicated they are familiar with preprint servers have submitted a manuscript or been published in a journal in the last three years (87%).
- Level of education has a major impact on whether respondents read research on preprint servers. More than 83% of post-doctoral fellows access preprint servers to read the research work uploaded by other researchers, compared to only 23% of undergraduate students.
- Only 54% of researchers who access servers to read documents posted by their peers use preprint servers to upload their own research outputs.
- 53% of respondents indicated that they have never uploaded any research outputs on preprint servers.
- Most of the researchers surveyed indicated multiple reasons to upload their research on a preprint server. The most popular reasons were to get feedback on their work (38%) and for faster dissemination of their research (35%).
- Over 80% of respondents that have never uploaded any research to a server indicated that they are not familiar with the benefits of servers and nearly 30% of researchers do not feel any benefits from uploading research output on preprint servers.

**Discussion**

The COVID-19 pandemic is driving assessment of preprint servers among the scientific community. Preprints are being discussed more than ever before. This study and our key findings show that there is a need to share the benefits of preprints and to explain to researchers how servers work.

Preprint servers offer fast dissemination of research. They allow researchers to share preliminary results and receive peer feedback ahead of formal publication. Servers also provide researchers with an opportunity to build up their scholarly record and to showcase their work to establish priority. Preprints accelerate the discovery of research. They are rapidly becoming more widely integrated into the scholarly publishing ecosystem. At Wiley we believe preprints work better with publishers and journals involved, and that preprints will continue to complement traditional peer-reviewed publishing, adding speed, openness, and faster feedback for researchers. Journals should allow for the submission of manuscripts which have already been made available on a server. We encourage researchers to submit preprints (the other peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed content) in addition to the other content normally.

The journals Wiley publishes have policies designed to suit the research community they serve. Given the increase in the number of servers and researchers using a directory such as [Crossref Preprint Service Directory](#) https://www.crossref.org/preprint-service-directory/, we should

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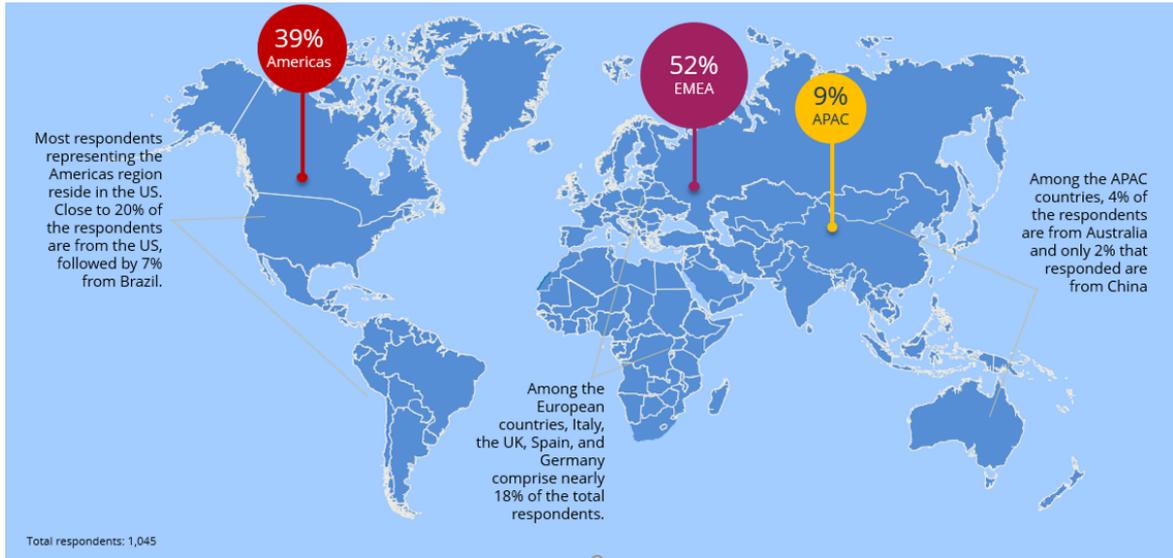


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## OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

The objective of the study is to assess the familiarity and the use of preprint servers by researchers to share their work. Data collection was conducted by Wiley through an online survey in May and June 2020. 1,045 respondents completed at least 40% or more of the survey questions. The collected data was cleaned and analysed by Infiniti Research to generate insights for Wiley. 27% of respondents selected Earth and Environmental Science as their area of research.

# RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS



## Respondent's age group

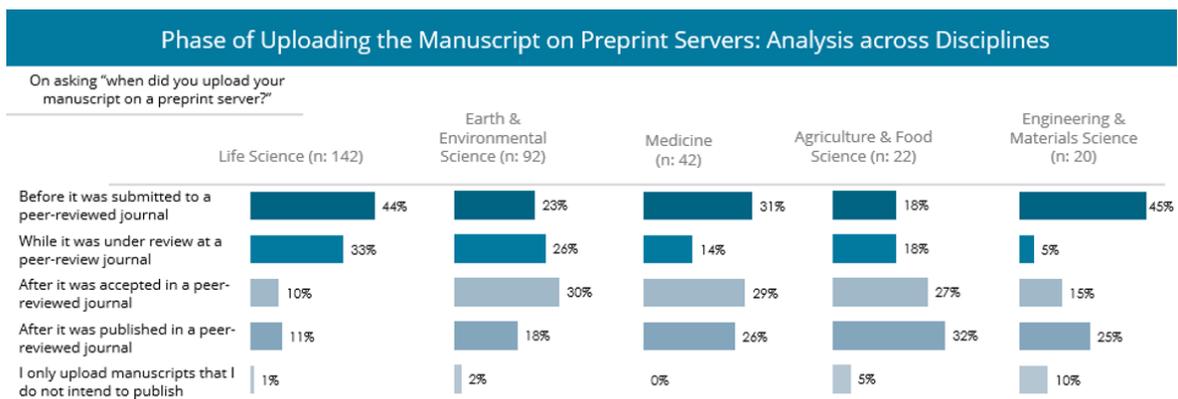
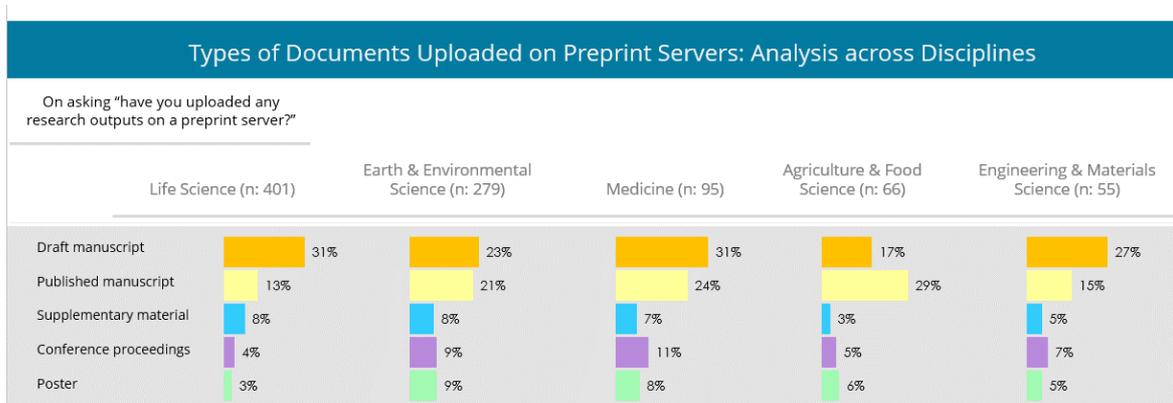
	Overall
<25	25
26-34	173
35-44	232
45-54	200
55-64	207
65-74	103
75+	24

## Association with organization or institute

	Overall
University or College	596
Research institute	162
Government organization	49
Corporate	26
Hospital/Clinic	23
Medical school	23
Not-for-profit (e.g., foundation)	13

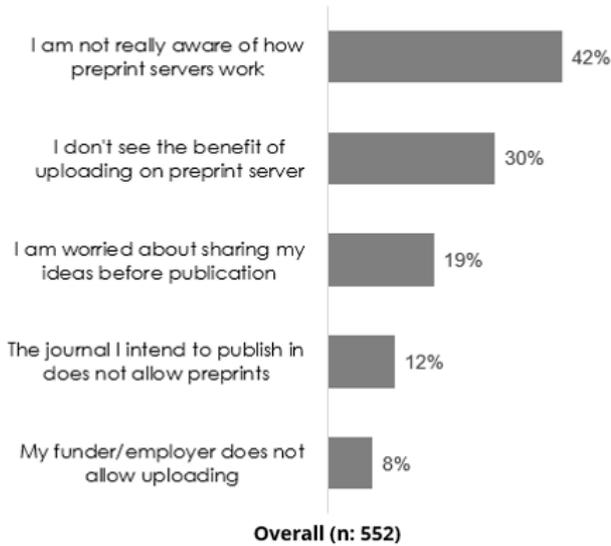
## KEY FINDINGS

- 44% of survey respondents (out of a total of 1,905) indicated they are not at all familiar with preprint servers.
- Most respondents who indicated they are familiar with preprint servers have submitted a manuscript to be published in a journal in the last three years (83%).
- Level of education has a major impact on whether respondents read research on preprint servers. More than 60% of post-doctoral fellows access preprint servers to read the research work uploaded by other researchers, compared to only 33% undergraduate students.
- Only 56% of researchers who access servers to read documents posted by their peers use preprint servers to upload their own research outputs.
- 55% of respondents indicated that they have never uploaded any research outputs on preprint servers.
- Most of the researchers surveyed indicated multiple reasons to upload their research on a preprint server. The most popular reasons were to get feedback on their work (46%) and for faster dissemination of their research (45%).
- Over 40% of respondents that have never uploaded any research to a server indicated that they are not familiar with the functions of servers and nearly 30% of researchers do not find any benefit from uploading research output on preprint servers.



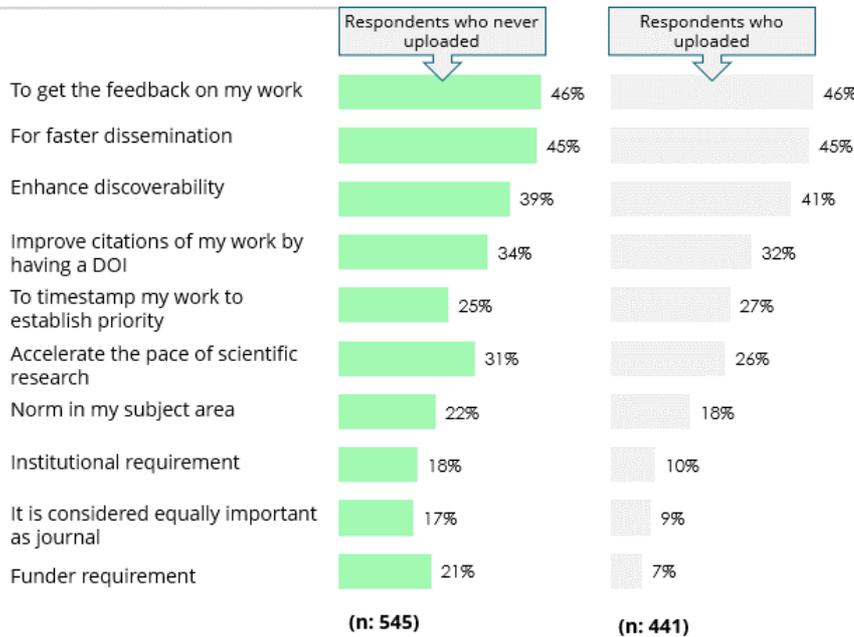
## Reasons for NOT Uploading the Research Output on Preprint Servers

On asking "what are the reasons for not uploading your research outputs on a preprint server?"



## Reasons for Uploading Output on Preprint Servers

On asking "what reasons would motivate you to upload your manuscript on a preprint server in the future?"



## DISCUSSION

The COVID-19 pandemic is driving awareness of preprint servers among the scientific community. Preprints are being discussed more than ever before. This study and our key findings show that there is a need to share the benefits of preprints and to explain to researchers how servers work.

Preprint servers offer fast dissemination of research. They allow researchers to share preliminary results and receive peer feedback ahead of formal publication. Servers also provide researchers with an opportunity to build up their scholarly record and to timestamp their work to establish priority.

Preprints accelerate the discovery of research. They are rapidly becoming more widely integrated into the scholarly publishing ecosystem. At Wiley we believe preprints work better with publishers and journals involved, and that preprints will continue to complement traditional journal publishing, adding speed, openness, and faster feedback for researchers. Journals should allow for the submission of manuscripts which have already been made available on a server. We encourage researchers who reference preprints (like other peer reviewed and non-peer reviewed sources) to continue to cite these sources accurately.

The journals Wiley publishes have policies designed to suit the research communities they serve. Given the increase in the number of servers we recommend using a directory such as ASAPbio Preprint Server Directory (<https://asapbio.org/preprint-servers> (<https://asapbio.org/preprint-servers>)) to check their disciplinary scope and compare their governance, licensing, archiving strategies and the nature of any screening checks. The Earth and Space Science Open Archive - ESSOAr (<https://www.essoar.org/> (<https://www.essoar.org/>)) is a community server for the Earth, space, and environmental sciences.