

receiving questions from countries about where to start. A good first step is for a nation or region to take stock of what has worked during the pandemic – the bright spots, such as the centres in Uganda and Brazil – and then figure out what hasn't worked and what could be done to fill the gaps.

During the pandemic, too many decisions have been made by GOBSATs or by other questionable means. Lessons learnt from COVID-19 provide an opportunity for change, for injecting more-rigorous research and evidence into the way that decisions are reached. We can all start by asking the GOBSATs for the evidence on which their statements are based.

Trial of transparent peer review yields promising results

Last year, nearly half of *Nature* authors agreed to publish anonymous referee reports. We hope that more will consider doing so this year.

Research papers are the product of lengthy discussions between authors and reviewers – guided by editors. These peer-review conversations can last for months at a time and are essential to progress in research. There is widespread agreement that the robustness and clarity of papers are enhanced in this process.

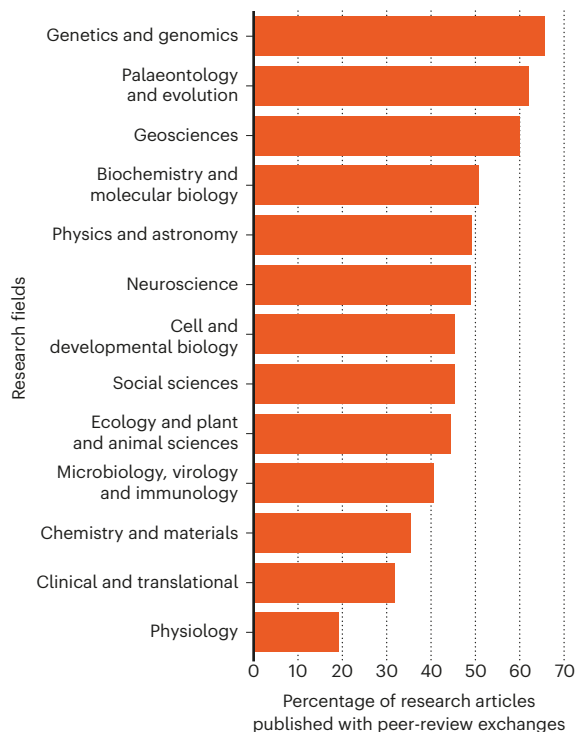
Peer-review exchanges are mostly kept confidential, meaning that the wider research community and the world have few opportunities to learn what is said in them. Such opacity can fuel perceptions of secrecy in publishing – and leaves reviewers and their key role in science publication underappreciated. It also robs early-career researchers of the opportunity to engage with examples of the inner workings of a process that is key to their career development.

In an attempt to change things, *Nature Communications* has since 2016 been encouraging authors to publish peer-review exchanges. In February 2020, and to the widespread approval of Twitter's science community, *Nature* announced that it would offer a similar opportunity. Authors of new manuscript submissions can now have anonymous referee reports – and their own responses to these reports – published at the same time as their manuscript. Those who agree to act as reviewers know that both anonymous reports and anonymized exchanges with authors might be published. Referees can also choose to be named, should they desire.

A full year's data are now in, and the results are encouraging. During 2021, nearly half (46%) of authors chose to publish their discussions with reviewers, although there is

PEER REVIEW OPENS UP

In 2021 and 2022, transparent peer-review comments were published alongside many *Nature* research articles. In total, 447 out of 974 articles in 2021 were published with anonymous referee reports. By 1 February 2022, it was 30 out of 61 articles.



variation between disciplines (see 'Peer review opens up'). Early data suggest more will do so in 2022. This is a promising trend. And we strongly encourage more researchers to take this opportunity to publish their exchanges. Last year, some 69% of *Nature Communication's* published research articles were accompanied by anonymous peer-review reports together with author-reviewer exchanges, including manuscripts in life sciences (73% of published papers), chemistry (59%), physics (64%) and Earth sciences (77%).

The benefits to research are huge. Opening up peer review promotes more transparency, and is valuable to researchers who study peer-review systems. It is also valuable to early-career researchers more broadly. Each set of reports is a real-life example, a guide to how to provide authors with constructive feedback in a collegial manner.

Publishing peer-review exchanges, in addition, recognizes the effort that goes into the endeavour. Peer review is integral to being a researcher. Making reviewers' work public illustrates the lengths that researchers will go in the service of scholarship. According to one study, reviewers in total do tens of millions of hours of peer review each year (B. Aczel *et al. Res. Integr. Peer Rev.* 6, 14; 2021). Yet this contribution is rarely recognized in research evaluation systems. As we have reported, there is growing interest in reforming these systems to better represent how science is done. If more researchers agree to open up their peer-review exchanges, we can all play a part in making that happen.

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