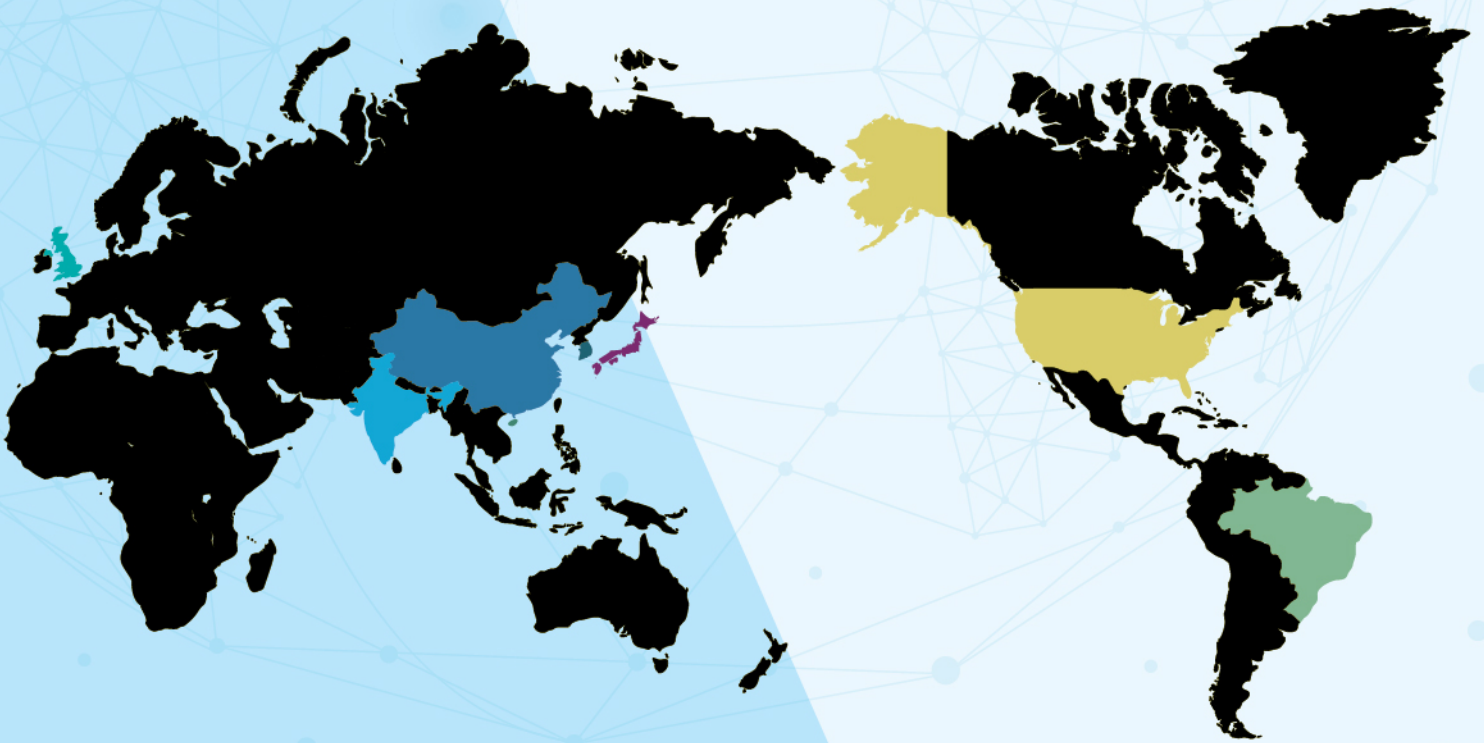


# Geographic Trends in Attitudes to Open Access

Findings from the Editage  
Global Author Survey 2018



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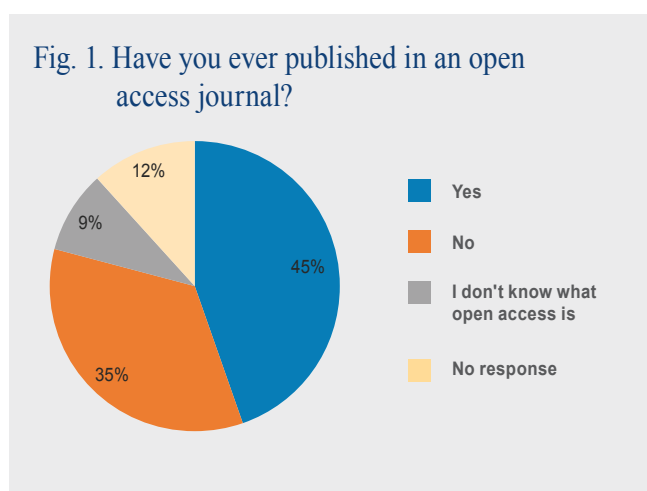
# Background

The global open access (OA) publishing landscape has been evolving steadily over the past several years, and significant strides have been taken in encouraging OA publishing, with many governmental agencies and funding bodies now mandating it. The OA publishing model has generated excitement as well as vigorous debate, with some hailing it as the way forward to make research universally accessible and others viewing it with skepticism although agreeing with the underlying principle.

One aspect that has possibly received less attention than it deserves is researchers' perspectives on and attitudes toward OA. [In a recent global author survey report released by Editage](#), we presented our findings on the views of close to 7000 researchers on various aspects of scholarly publishing, including OA publishing. The results of our survey were particularly interesting because the majority of the participants were from non-Western, non-English-speaking countries, which represent a segment that many international publishers and other stakeholders are greatly interested in.

In the survey report, we provided an overview of the OA-specific responses received from over 6000 researchers across different countries—the main finding being that more respondents had published in an OA journal before than not (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1. Have you ever published in an open access journal?



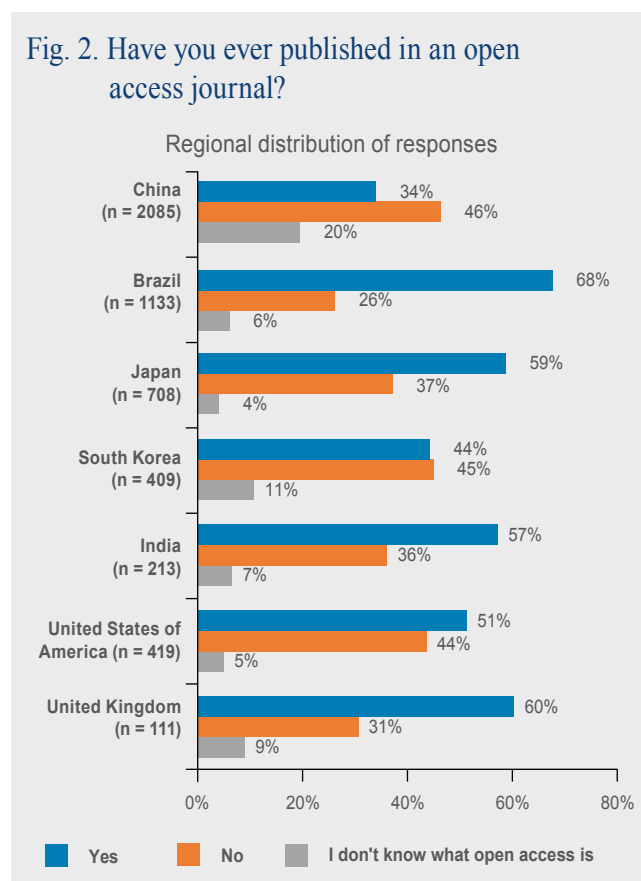
We now take a deep dive into the survey findings on OA and present a summary of trends observed

for seven of the most represented countries in our survey. We believe that these can provide useful insights into some practical aspects of OA publishing in these countries.

## Regional overview

Our findings showed considerable regional variation in the proportions of authors who had published in OA journals. Remarkably, China and South Korea were the only countries where fewer authors HAD published in OA journals than those who had not; these countries also had the highest percentages of respondents who were unfamiliar with OA (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2. Have you ever published in an open access journal?



# Reasons for publishing or not publishing in OA journals

Globally, the most common reason for publishing in OA journals was to reach a larger audience, and that for never having published in one was unrelated to lack of trust in OA journals—in most cases, the journal chosen as best fit for a paper was incidentally a subscription journal, and many authors reported inability to afford article-processing charges. The following results show country-specific variations in the choice of different reasons.

## China



Fig. 3. [CHINA] If you have published in an open access journal, why?

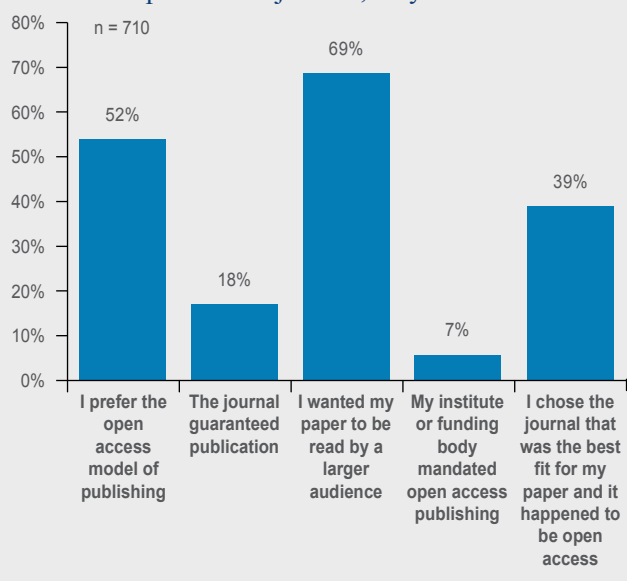
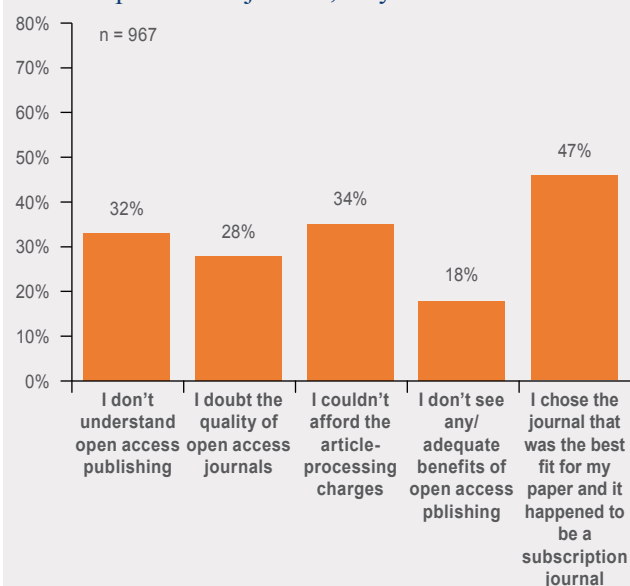


Fig. 4. [CHINA] If you have never published in an open access journal, why?



**HIGHLIGHTS:** The low level of both awareness and understanding of OA in China is perhaps a little surprising given that China is now the largest producer of research globally and [major Chinese agencies have been promoting various forms of OA](#) for the past several years. While a high percentage of those who chose to publish OA wanted to reach a larger audience, an important concern is that many Chinese researchers seem to be especially vulnerable to unethical approaches adopted by predatory journals—such as guaranteed publication. This is noteworthy since researchers in China are known to face intense pressure navigating [an academic evaluation system that emphasizes the quantity of publications in high-impact factor journals](#).

# Brazil



Fig. 5. [BRAZIL] If you have published in an open access journal, why?

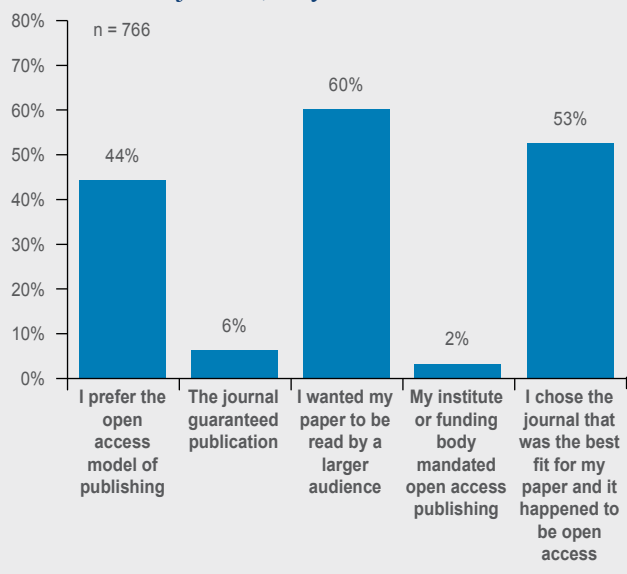
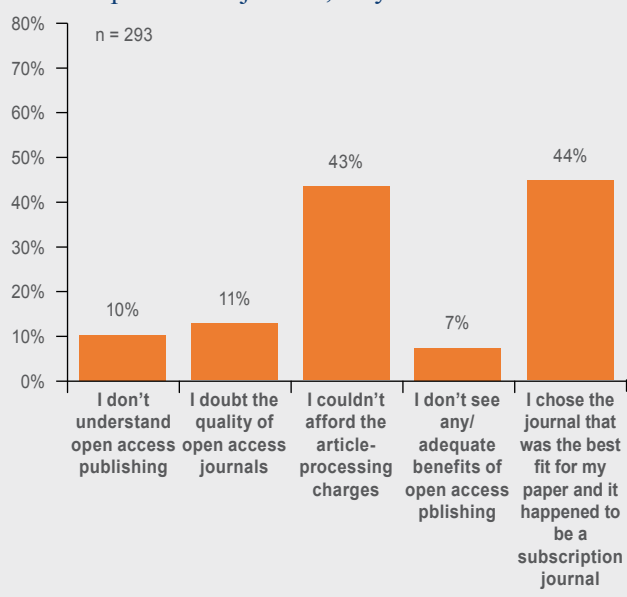


Fig. 6. [BRAZIL] If you have never published in an open access journal, why?



**HIGHLIGHTS:** The relatively low percentages of respondents who do not understand OA publishing, distrust the OA model, or do not see any benefits of OA indicate that in Brazil, researchers have a good understanding of and a generally positive attitude toward OA. The popularity of OA in Brazil is not surprising given that Brazil is one of the major producers of research papers published in OA journals. Additionally, prominent global players in OA publishing, such as SciELO, are approved and supported by the Brazilian govern-

ment and have played a significant role in making Brazilian research visible. However, while researchers in Brazil probably want to publish more in OA journals to reach a larger audience, they may not have sufficient financial support to be able to do so.

# Japan



Fig. 7. [JAPAN] If you have published in an open access journal, why?

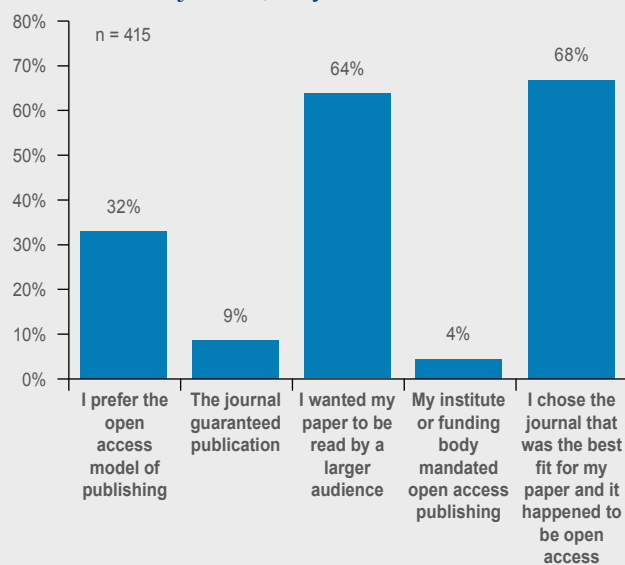
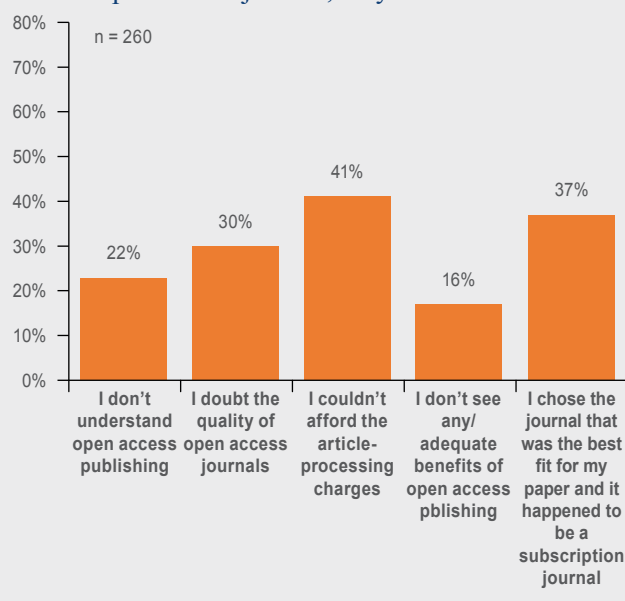


Fig. 8. [JAPAN] If you have never published in an open access journal, why?



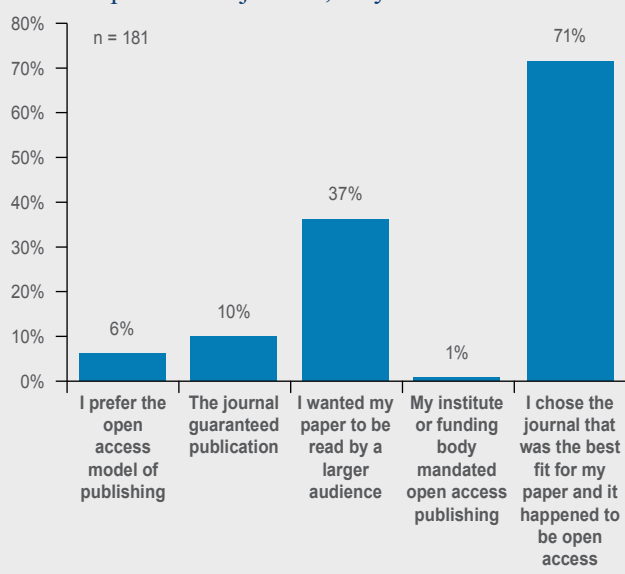
**HIGHLIGHTS:** Quite interestingly, like Brazil and India, [Japan has a relatively high share of papers published in OA journals](#), and respondents seem to have a good understanding of OA. However, unlike researchers in Brazil and India, those in Japan may seem distrustful of OA journals or not particularly enthusiastic about OA publishing.

**HIGHLIGHTS:** Open access does not seem to have gained as much popularity in South Korea as in the other countries; this, however, does not seem to be because of high levels of distrust in or unawareness of OA. One possible reason may be that not many South Korean funding bodies and institutes mandate or encourage OA publishing yet.

## South Korea



Fig. 9. [SOUTH KOREA] If you have published in an open access journal, why?



## India



Fig. 11. [INDIA] If you have published in an open access journal, why?

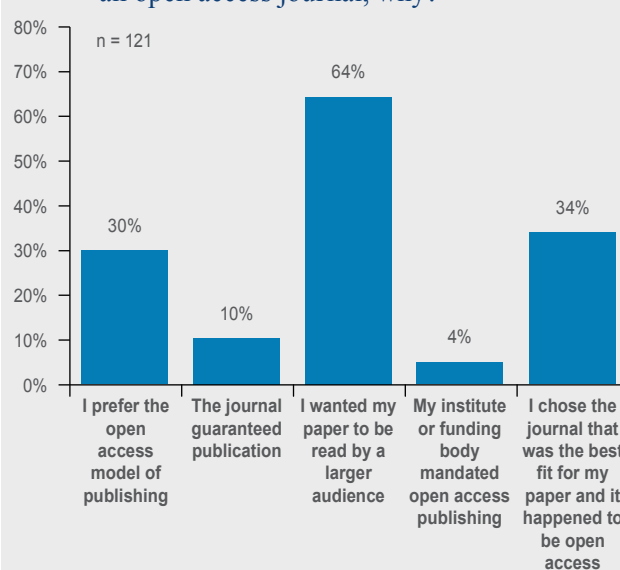


Fig. 10. [SOUTH KOREA] If you have never published in an open access journal, why?

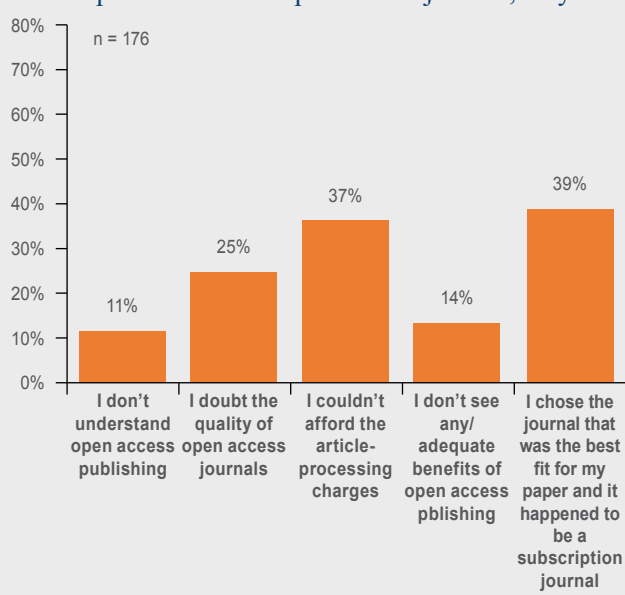
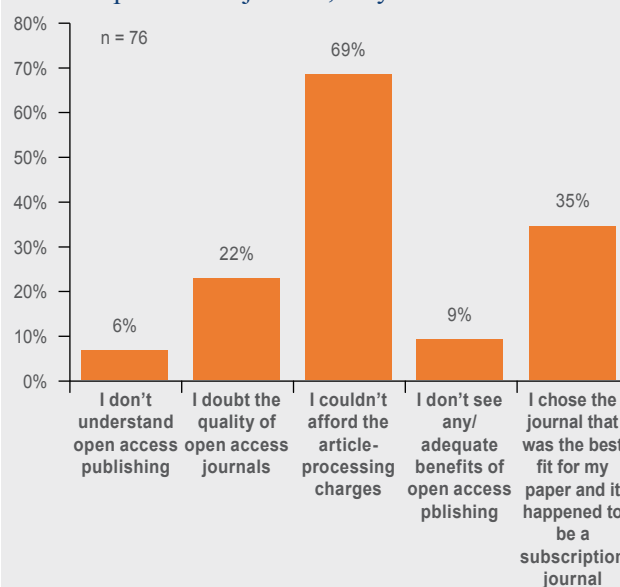
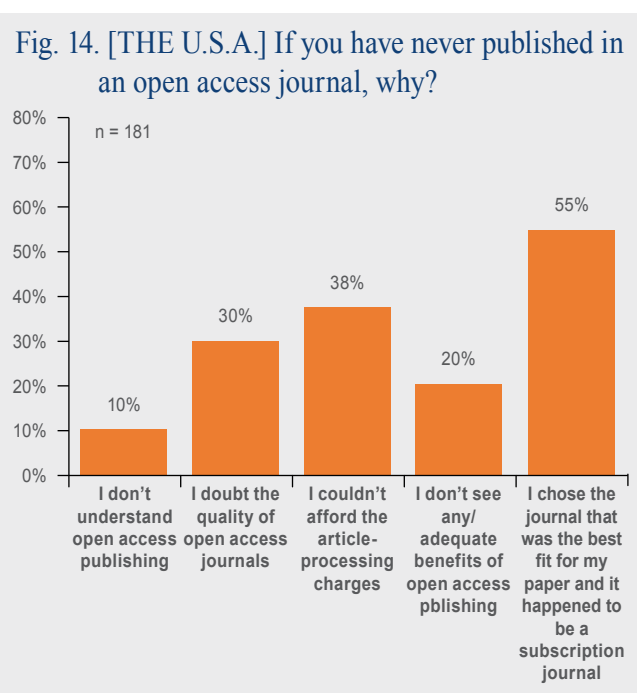


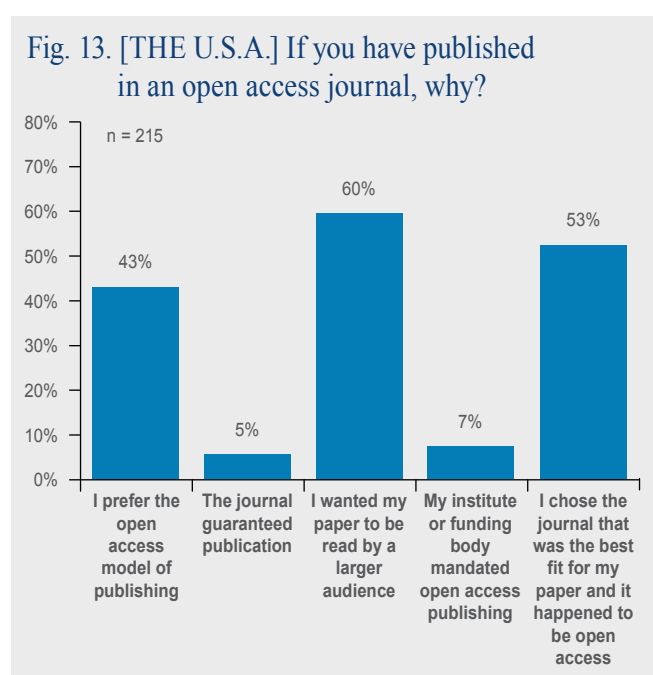
Fig. 12. [INDIA] If you have never published in an open access journal, why?



**HIGHLIGHTS:** The high percentage of respondents who prefer the OA model and want their research to reach a larger audience is consistent with the fact that [India ranks third in the world in terms of the share of research output published in OA journals](#), after Brazil and Spain. A caveat here is that [India also has a large number of predatory journals](#). What is interesting is that a substantially high proportion of respondents who had not published OA reported inability to pay article-processing charges as the reason. This apparent inconsistency between these facts begs the following questions: Are researchers not receiving sufficient financial support to publish in an OA journal they want to, or are those who choose to publish OA feeling compelled to choose OA journals with low article-processing charges?



## The U.S.A.



**HIGHLIGHTS:** In the U.S.A., opinions seem to be roughly divided. Many respondents seem to understand OA well and even prefer the OA model, but a notably high percentage of them seem wary of OA journals. One factor distinguishing the U.S.A. from most European countries is that prominent funders in the former tend to mandate [“public access,” which is distinct from open access](#), allowing greater freedom to authors in choosing the journal to publish in. This may be a reason why gold OA publishing in particular has not gathered as much momentum here as in most European countries.



Fig. 15. [THE U.K.] If you have published in an open access journal, why?

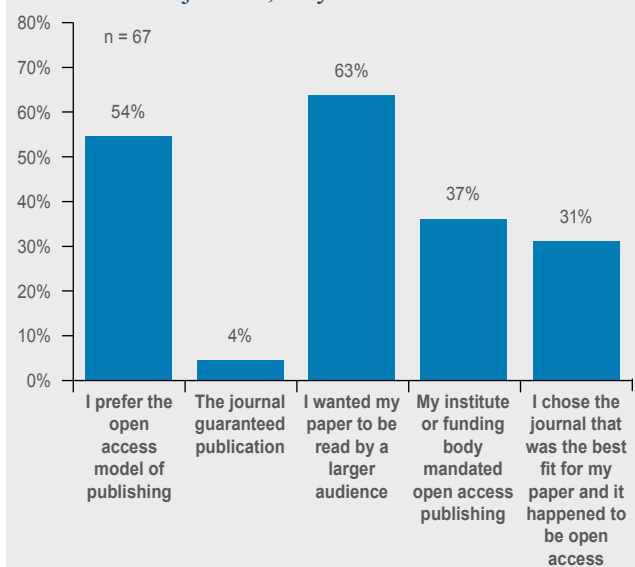
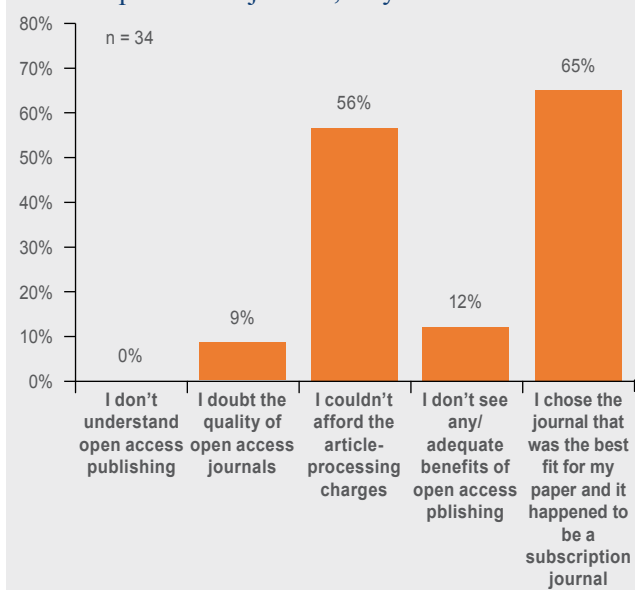


Fig. 16. [THE U.K.] If you have never published in an open access journal, why?



**HIGHLIGHTS:** Researchers in the U.K. seem to have both a solid understanding of OA publishing and a generally positive attitude toward it. The U.K. has been at the forefront in Europe with respect to development of OA policies. Remarkably, OA publishing is mandated by funding bodies more often in the U.K. than in the other countries covered in this report, and yet the majority of respondents that did not publish OA reported inability to pay article-processing charges. This may indicate that measures for fund allocation, which accompany the OA mandates, have not been effective or sufficient so far.

## Concluding thoughts

Governments, funding bodies, and research institutes are increasingly adopting OA policies and setting up OA mandates. The development of these policies and mandates is primarily based on the underpinning principle that publicly funded research should be universally accessible. However, whether they are implemented effectively may depend in large measure on how well those establishing them understand researcher-specific factors such as attitudes toward OA and awareness of OA benefits.

Regional patterns such as those presented in this report can provide inputs necessary for parallel measures to strengthen OA strategies. For example, if the overall understanding of the OA publishing model among researchers in a country is weak, adequate training and educational resources on OA should be provided, especially to early-career researchers. Where researchers are vulnerable to being exploited by bogus journals, it is imperative to educate researchers about ethical publishing, in addition to eliminating the root causes of such publication practices. This latter measure is also important where researchers are reluctant to publish OA because of distrust in the OA publishing model.

With OA mandates, especially where researchers are required to publish in gold OA journals, funding is an important factor. In countries where OA is otherwise widely adopted, inability to afford potential fees associated with OA publishing can be a big roadblock and a source of considerable stress to researchers.

Finally, with extensive global research collaboration, governments, funders and organizations need to be well aware of possible regional differences in overall researcher attitudes and practices that may need to be addressed before undertaking large international research projects.

We hope that our findings encourage further discussions and in-depth examination of OA-related issues, how they vary across regions, and how they can affect authors and other stakeholders in scholarly publishing.





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