

73% of academics say access to research data helps them in their work; 34% do not publish their data

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Credit: Charles Rondeau/public domain

Combining results from bibliometric analyses, a global sample of researcher opinions and case-study interviews, a new report reveals that although the benefits of open research data are well known, in practice,

confusion remains within the researcher community around when and how to share research data.

The [report](#), Open Data: The Researcher Perspective, is the result of a year-long, co-conducted study between Elsevier, the information analytics company specializing in science and health, and the Centre for Science and Technology Studies (CWTS), part of Leiden University, the Netherlands.

The study is based on a complementary methods approach consisting of a quantitative analysis of bibliometric and publication data, a global survey of 1,200 researchers and three case studies including in-depth interviews with key individuals involved in data collection, analysis and deposition in the fields of soil science, human genetics and digital humanities.

Report findings include:

- Researchers acknowledge the benefits of [open data](#), but data sharing practices are still limited. Reasons mentioned include: not enough training in data sharing, sharing data is not associated with credit or reward, [research data management](#) and privacy issues, proprietary aspects and ethics.
- Data sharing mandates by funders (or publishers) are not considered a driver by researchers to increase their data sharing practices; 64% of researchers believe they own the data they generated for their research.
- Public data sharing primarily occurs through the current publishing system; less than 15% of researchers share data in a data repository. When researchers do share their data directly, most (>80%) share with direct collaborators.
- 34% of researchers surveyed do not publish data at all. Those who do share data still use more traditional processes, such as

through publication of data aggregated into tables and annexes.

- Analysis of publication in data journals reveals scattered practices: dedicated data journals are a new and small-scale phenomenon; the popularity is increasing quickly.
- There is an almost even split between researchers who believe there are no clear standards for citing published data (45%) and those who believe there are clear standards (41%).
- Data-sharing practices depend on the field: there is no general approach. In intensive data-sharing fields, data sharing practice is embedded into the research design and execution.

Wouter Haak, Vice-President of Research Data Management Solutions at Elsevier, said: "The findings presented in this report help us—as well as research leaders, university and government policy makers—better understand where pain points lie when it comes to the sentiment around and the reality of data sharing practices among researchers. These are invaluable insights for us to ensure researchers are given the tools and knowledge they need to successfully share their data."

Paul Wouters, Director of CWTS and Professor of Scientometrics, said: "The science system is undergoing a major transition: from a professional system where the researcher is in the lead, to an open innovation system with multiple stakeholders. One of the ambitions in the Dutch National Plan Open Science is to make [research data](#) available in a standardized way for reuse. The study presented here shows that this reality is still far away. It calls for stronger incentives and rewards to implement open [data](#) practices. It is time we address the fundamental questions around accessibility in order to be responsible to society. CWTS will continue to raise these issues."

The report and key findings will be presented at the Research Data Alliance conference (RDA) in Barcelona on April 7, 14.00-16.00.

The [report](#) and all underlying report [raw data](#) are freely available.

Provided by Elsevier

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