Open Science, Closed Peer Review?*

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Abstract

Open science initiatives have gained traction in recent years. However, open *peer-review* practices i.e., reforms that (i) modify the identifiability of stakeholders and (ii) establish channels for the disclosure and exchange of peer-review information, have seen very little adoption. In this paper, we seek to explore the feasibility and desirability of such reforms. We present insights derived from survey data documenting the attitudes of 802 experimental/behavioral economics researchers and observational evidence on transparency policies across disciplines. Policies considered under (i) include modifications to the identifiability of authors, referees, and editors, both to each other and to the readers of published manuscripts. Those under (ii) relate to the release of peer-review documents and metadata, as well as to the establishment of further channels for communication between stakeholders. In evaluating these policies, we pay close attention to the trade-off between increasing transparency and preserving confidentiality.

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1 Introduction

The open science movement in economics has seen some degree of success in recent years (Ferguson et al., 2023), such as with the adoption of pre-analysis plans (Olken, 2015) and reproducibility policies at journals (Vilhuber, 2019). However, relatively few efforts have been made to discuss and promote the take-up of open *peer-review* practices. These practices can be divided into (i) policies that modify the identifiability of authors, referees, and editors and (ii) those that facilitate the disclosure and exchange of peer-review documents, metadata, and other information. Such policies may serve to promote accountability and to provide readers with useful information about manuscripts. However, they might also come with real costs, especially if piercing confidentiality affects stakeholders' (perceived) ability to deliver honest assessments. In this paper, we offer perspectives on these tradeoffs from a survey of experimental/behavioral economists, from relevant literature, and from the experiences of other disciplines.

Perhaps due to a lack of causal evidence and the difficulty of reaching a consensus on these issues (Tennant et al., 2017), the embrace of open peer-review practices has been slow across disciplines (Wolfram et al., 2020). Economics seems typical in this respect: among a set of economics journals that we have collected data on, a handful release basic metadata and handling editor identities upon publication, but none have experimented with the revelation of referee identities alongside manuscripts or the posting of referee reports and editorial decision letters (Table 1). One salient exception to this general pattern across disciplines comes from the *Nature* journal family.[1] In 2016, *Nature Communications* began publishing referee reports subject to author consent (Nature Communications, 2015). The opt-in rate rose from 60% in 2016 to 70% in 2022, after which they started publishing all reports without exception (Nature Communications, 2016, 2022). Since then, *Nature* and other affiliated journals have also begun publishing reviewer identities alongside manuscripts, subject to author and referee consent (Nature, 2019). Most stakeholders have been open to this as well, with around 80% of manuscripts featuring at least one referee identity during the trial period.

Given the limited amount of research that has been done on these issues in economics and other social sciences (Taphouse and Cockshull, 2022), we surveyed economists on their views about open peer review as part of a larger effort to explore the state of peer review in economics ($N = 1,459$). In this article, which is based on a longer report (Charness et al., 2022), we seek to investigate the arguments for and against increased transparency within our discipline, with an emphasis on understanding the attitudes of experimental/behavioral economists ($N = 802$) towards it. In so doing, we complement other recent surveys on open peer review practices (Publishing Research Consortium, 2016; Ross-Hellauer et al., 2017) by focusing on the views of economists, covering ground especially relevant to journals in economics, and taking an

[1] Other exceptions include *Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science*, *The BMJ*, *eLife*, the *Frontiers* family, *F1000Research*, *PLOS One*, and *Royal Society Open Science*.

Table 1: Transparency policies

	ESA Journals		Top-5 Journals					Other Disciplines		
Identifiability	*Exp Econ*	*JESA*	*AER*	*ECMA*	*JPE*	*QJE*	*REStud*	*BMJ*	*Frontiers*[a]	*Nature*[b]
Blinded Review	Single	Single	Single	Single	Single	Single	Single	Open	Single	Varies
Journal Publishes List of Referees	No	No	Full	Full	Full	Partial	Partial	Full	No	No
Authors Can Nominate Referees	✓	✓	–	–	–	–	–	✓	✓	✓
Authors Can Oppose Referees	✓	✓	–	–	–	–	–	✓	✓	✓
Handling Editor Disclosed	–	–	✓	✓	✓	–	–	✓	✓	–
Referee Identity Disclosed	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	✓	✓	✓
Disclosure										
Turnaround Time Statistics	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Acceptance/Rejection Statistics	–	–	✓	✓	✓	✓	–	✓	✓	✓
Manuscript Received/Decision Dates	✓	✓	–	✓	–	–	–	✓	✓	✓
Public Decision Letters	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	✓	–	✓
Public Referee Reports	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	✓	–	✓
Signed Public Referee Reports	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	✓	–	✓
Prior Manuscript Versions	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	✓	–	–
Communication										
Journal Policy On Author Appeals	–	–	✓	✓	✓	–	–	✓		✓
Publisher Policy On Author Appeals	✓	✓	–	✓	–	–	–	✓	✓	✓
Interactive Review	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	✓	–

Notes: For journal abbreviations and further information, please see Appendix A.1. ***a***: After acceptance, *Frontiers* publishes the names of referees who have recommended the manuscript for publication. Since *Frontiers* refers to a journal family, the entry for *Journal Policy On Author Appeals* is left empty. ***b***: *Nature* allows authors and referees to opt in to double-anonymity and/or to varying extents of transparent peer review, including identifying referees, publishing unsigned reports, and publishing signed reports.

economic perspective on issues common across disciplines. Our efforts are divided into four sections. Section 2 describes our survey design and recruitment strategy. Section 3 assesses policies affecting the identifiability of stakeholders. Section 4 explores proposals to facilitate the release of peer-review information and establish further communication channels between stakeholders. Finally, Section 5 discusses the limitations of our study and possible steps forward.

2 Survey on Peer Review

We conducted an anonymous survey of economists between July 2020 and January 2021. Researchers were eligible to participate if, over the prior two years, they had (i) written at least one referee report and (ii) received reports on at least one journal submission. Generally, we inquired about their experiences with the system, their opinions about its current performance, and their attitudes towards certain proposals for reform. The survey was divided into three sections: the first two asked about peer review from their perspective as a reviewer and as an author (with the order randomized across respondents), while the third concerned their demographic characteristics. The full questionnaire can be found in Appendix E and the survey dataset is available on our OSF page (https://osf.io/eczkv/). In this article, we restrict our presentation to findings that are relevant to transparency in peer review.

Our recruitment strategy was designed to maximize the number and diversity of responses (Appendix D). In the end, most came from (i) outreach to the members of various associations and (ii) mail merges sent to

researchers in two recruitment waves. Channel (i) took a variety of forms, starting with a campaign targeting experimental/behavioral economists via posts on the discussion forum of the Economic Science Association (ESA), yielding 535 complete responses across sources (Appendix Figure B.1). For channel (ii), the first recruitment wave targeted experimental/behavioral economists and was sent to 1,802 contacts, garnering 655 full responses (36.3%). The second targeted economists from all fields and was sent to 3,618 contacts, resulting in 269 full responses (7.4%).[2] In total, 1,459 (1,497) researchers fully (at least partially) completed the survey. Given the interests of the readership of this journal (and the lower selection bias due to a higher response rate), we focus primarily on the subset of behavioral/experimental researchers ($N = 802$, 53.6% of responses).[3]

We next tried to understand the representativeness of our sample. To the best of our knowledge, general statistics on the world population of economists are nonexistent. In light of this, we compare the demographic characteristics of our sample of behavioral/experimental respondents with those of the population of 2020 ESA members (Appendix Table A.1) and the characteristics of our full sample with those of the weighted sample in Andre and Falk (2021) (Appendix Table A.2).[4] Relative to both groups, we somewhat under-sample female researchers and over-sample researchers based in Europe. We additionally over-sample experimental/behavioral researchers relative to Andre and Falk (2021). While the ESA group is a useful benchmark, we note that the population of ESA members may not be representative of the experimental/behavioral community overall. In any case, respondent attitudes do not differ much between the full- and sub-samples.

3 Identifiability

A key dimension on which peer-review systems can differ is the *identifiability* of stakeholders. The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) distinguishes between double-blind, single-blind, and open identifiability (COPE, 2019). In the first system, the identities of referees and authors are concealed from each other during the review process.[5] With single-blind review, only authors are blinded to referee identities. Finally, under open identifiability, referees and authors are never blinded to each other's identities. Many variations on these policies are possible, such as changes to editor identifiability and to the timing and conditions of identity revelation. Despite these possibilities, the ESA journals and the top-5 journals in economics are

[2] These response rates likely represent lower bounds, as some researchers may have already responded via other channels, such as the ESA forum.

[3] All respondents in this subset completed the survey in full. Since researchers only reported their field at the end of the survey, there are likely some partially completed surveys from experimental/behavioral economists that we necessarily omit.

[4] Andre and Falk (2021) surveyed respondents from a database that consisted of almost all active economists with publication data on EconLit. As such, their sample is weighted with respect to an underlying study population.

[5] Of course, author identities are necessarily revealed upon publication, while referee identities are typically never shared.

unanimous in their application of single-blind review (Table 1). Moreover, COPE (2019) recognizes it as part of the "standard" model of peer review.

As such, in this section, we consider a range of proposals that deviate from the norm of single-blind identifiability. Generally speaking, anonymity-oriented policies for authors may help to convince them that their manuscript received a "fair trial," and those for referees and editors may preserve their ability to deliver honest assessments. At the same time, transparency could promote accountability and incentivize better behavior by decision makers. Given the difficulty of these issues, we also consider a set of proposals that may achieve similar objectives without directly piercing the anonymity of stakeholders.

3.1 Author identifiability.

The commitment of journals in economics to single-blind review is perhaps more tenuous than it may seem. While single anonymity may appear ubiquitous now (Table 1), top journals such as the *American Economic Review* (*AER*) and the *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (*QJE*) were operating under double anonymity as recently as 10-20 years ago (Hengel, 2022). Moreover, some journals popular with economists continue to do so e.g., *Economic Inquiry* and *Management Science* (EI-1, MS-1), and it remains common at top psychology journals such as the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* and *Psychological Bulletin* (JPSP-1, PB-1). Given this heterogeneity between journals and across time, we seek to explore the pros and cons of concealing author identities.

The main argument in favor of double anonymity is that it could protect against the identity-based biases of reviewers. To extend this logic even further, one could even implement "triple-blind" review by blinding editors to author identity (Jung et al., 2017), a common practice at top journals in some disciplines, such as philosophy (PR-1). That being said, the state of the evidence on blinded review is quite mixed, with some studies finding positive effects for bias reduction and others finding null effects (Blank, 1991; Laband and Piette, 1994; Snodgrass, 2006; Tomkins et al., 2017; Kolev et al., 2019; Ersoy and Pate, 2021; Carrell et al., 2022). This heterogeneity could relate to field- and time-specific factors that affect the feasibility of concealing author identities from referees and editors. In disciplines where long turnaround times and the threat of being "scooped" incentivize authors to seek maximum visibility for their preprints (Rastogi et al., 2022), like economics, author anonymity may be more difficult to preserve. This is perhaps especially true in subfields where only a small number of researchers work on a given topic. By contrast, in larger disciplines or those where projects are typically kept confidential until journal submission, blinded review may be more effective. In any case, blinded review has likely become difficult to preserve across fields due to the advent of search engines. Attesting to these concerns, in 2012 the editors of the *AER* declared their belief that double

anonymity had become nearly impossible (Goldberg, 2012).

How do our respondents reason about these factors? Despite the near-unanimous practice of single-blind reviewing at journals in economics, attitudes on the issue are in fact highly divided, with 39.3% holding favorable views towards double-blind reviewing and 46.4% expressing unfavorable attitudes (Appendix Figure B.2).[6] More qualitatively, many of our respondents attested to their concerns about referee and editor objectivity in open-text comments.

To accommodate differing views, journals could adopt an opt-in model of blinded review, similar to *Nature* (Table 1) and *Nature Human Behaviour* (NHB-1-a). One caveat is that authors who choose this option might inadvertently signal that they belong to an under-represented group, thereby mitigating the benefits of anonymity.

3.2 Referee and editor identifiability.

Another approach to addressing concerns around referee and editor behavior might be to consider modifications to their identifiability. The status quo in economics is for the identities of referees and associate editors to be hidden from authors and manuscript readers, while handling editor identities are known to authors but only sometimes publicly revealed (Table 1). The situation looks somewhat different in other disciplines, with a growing number of journals embracing open referee identifiability e.g., in the medical sciences (Wolfram et al., 2020).[7] Given this, we examine below the potential arguments for and against the protection of referee and associate editor identities.

One benefit of preserving the anonymity of the reviewing team relates to the (perceived) ability of reviewers and editors to deliver honest assessments. In particular, some argue that anonymity protects them from retaliation, favor-swapping, and social pressure (Tennant et al., 2017); the absence of anonymity may therefore disincentivize participation (Van Rooyen et al., 1999; Bianchi and Squazzoni, 2022). One piece of empirical evidence for potentially counterproductive effects comes from a field experiment with referees at the *Journal of Public Economics* (Chetty et al., 2014). In the experiment, some referees were told that their personal turnaround times would be publicly shared. The main effect of this policy was to decrease the acceptance rate of refereeing requests. Similar effects on participation could follow if journals announce they will reveal referee names to authors (Van Rooyen et al., 1999; Vinther et al., 2012) or to manuscript readers. To complement the existing (but limited) empirical evidence on this question, Bianchi and Squazzoni (2022) tried to model aggregate researcher behavior under open identifiability; their simulations suggest that this

[6] There are only 112 responses to the question on double-blind reviewing, since it was included in later survey rounds. However, patterns are similar to those in the full sample (Appendix Figure C.4).

[7] Prominent adopters include *The BMJ*, *Nature* (subject to consent), and journals in the *Frontiers* family, including *Frontiers Behavioral Economics* and *Frontiers Environmental Economics* under certain conditions (Table 1).

policy can significantly backfire due to concerns about competition and status.

In terms of downsides of the status quo, the lack of identifiability of referees means that there is limited accountability for what they write (Tennant et al., 2017). Reports with vague, inaccurate, and inappropriate content are therefore sometimes transmitted to authors who have little recourse (Silbiger and Stubler, 2019). While our respondents were overall moderately satisfied with the quality of reports they receive, they still reported receiving a non-negligible percentage of low-quality reports. The most common features of unsatisfactory reports were "*inaccurate statements about what the paper does*" (75.6% of respondents who gave any reason for dissatisfaction - Appendix Figure B.3 and "*vague and unconstructive comments*" (66.5%). A non-negligible number of respondents also mentioned reports "*written with an aggressive tone*" and/or that contained "*personal insults*" (41.9% mentioned at least one of these). Such problems are not unique to our field (Silbiger and Stubler, 2019), but research from other settings in economics suggests that underrepresented groups can be particularly affected by unprofessional behavior (Allgood et al., 2019; Wu, 2019; Dupas et al., 2021).

If anonymity is what enables referees to write unconstructive reports, then transparency might be a solution. Since the effect of transparency can be highly heterogeneous depending on the exact policy implemented (Bruce et al., 2016), we consider a number of ways to increase the identifiability of referees and editors without publishing referee reports or decision letters.

As a first option, the identities of referees who evaluated a particular submission could be revealed to authors, whether or not their identity is linked to a specific report.[8] In terms of benefits, this could incentivize more civil communications with authors (Walsh et al., 2000) and expose unrecorded conflicts of interest (Benos et al., 2007). So far, the available empirical evidence on revealing referee identities to authors appears to have found a mix of positive (Walsh et al., 2000) and null (Van Rooyen et al., 1999; Vinther et al., 2012) effects on report quality.

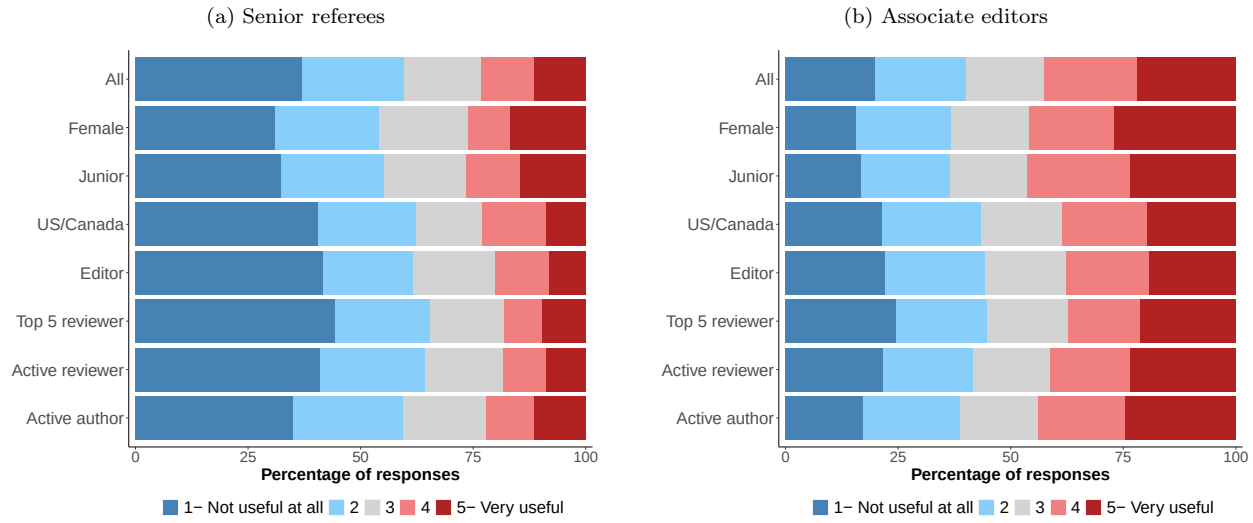
Next, referee and editor identities could be publicly shared alongside manuscripts. Since publishing the names of referees who recommended rejection might be unfair, this policy could be limited to referees who recommended acceptance, as is done by *Frontiers* (Table 1). This would create some public accountability for decision makers and could further incentivize them to conduct careful reviews. For referees, this policy could also increase the visibility of reviewing and facilitate greater weight being given to peer-review contributions in tenure, promotion, and hiring decisions, as suggested by several respondents (16 open-text comments). For editors, we would be able to observe their Type 1 error rates (i.e., decisions to publish papers that should have been rejected) over a range of submissions. This may have unintended consequences, however, to the extent that reviewers and editors are disincentivized to participate, start to ask for more revisions, or become

[8] With the identities of their 2-3 referees, authors can likely make a well-informed guess on report authorship, in any case.

generally more risk averse with publication decisions.

On balance, the general view seems to be that the cons outweigh the pros. Indeed, we find that most respondents would be skeptical about such moves towards open identifiability. When asked to rate the usefulness of lifting the anonymity of senior referees on a 1 to 5 scale, approximately 60% chose a 1 or a 2 (Panel (a) of Figure 1). Respondents were more divided on the question of associate editor anonymity, with approximately equal numbers choosing a 1 or 2 (40%) and a 4 or 5 (42%) for usefulness (Panel (b) of Figure 1). In this respect, attitudes about open referee identifiability appear somewhat more skeptical than those from researchers polled in other surveys on open peer review (Publishing Research Consortium, 2016; Ross-Hellauer et al., 2017).

Figure 1: Usefulness of changing the identifiability of reviewers



Notes: $N = 802$ for both panels. The full-sample version of this figure is available at Figure C.1. The exact wording of the question these responses are based off of is: "Below is a list of proposals to improve peer reviews. On a scale from 1 to 5, how useful do you find each of them? (iv.) Removing the anonymity of senior referees. (v.) Removing the anonymity of associate editors."

3.3 Other modifications.

Given the above concerns about negative behavioral responses to increasing identifiability, we also consider more conservative approaches. One possibility is to allow referees to opt-in to revealing their identity, after peer review is complete and conditional on acceptance, as done by *Nature* and *Nature Human Behaviour* (Table 1, NHB-1-b). While nothing would be mandatory, referees could use this policy as a commitment device to write quality reports, and it could help to shift norms around identifiability over time. Another possibility is for journals to publish periodic acknowledgments of their referees (Tennant et al., 2017), as is done by some economics journals (Table 1). The number of reports written by each reviewer could also be acknowledged. This would serve to increase the visibility of refereeing, possibly incentivize further

participation, and allow us to assess the diversity of refereeing pools. However, it would come at the cost of some de-anonymization and might do little to promote accountability.

We also consider policies that have plausibly similar benefits but that do not rely on explicitly revealing referee identities. For example, authors could be allowed to nominate or oppose the assignment of particular referees to their submissions. Most of our respondents appear open to this, with 60.7% reporting favorable attitudes to a policy of allowing authors to oppose certain referees (Appendix Figure B.4). While this may give authors an advantage in the publication process (Teixeira da Silva and Alkhatib, 2018; Moore et al., 2011; COPE Council, 2016), it should also give them added confidence that their manuscript was fairly reviewed without actually knowing who read it. Moreover, it allows them to communicate their concerns about certain referees in advance of manuscript decisions, which editors may find more credible than ex-post complaints about specific referees. This practice is commonplace at some journals, including *Experimental Economics* and the *Journal of the Economic Science Association* (*JESA*), but none of the top-5 journals in economics have official procedures for it (Table 1).

4 Open Communication

Other key dimensions on which peer-review systems differ include the *publication* of peer-review documents and the *mediation* of interactions (COPE, 2019). Regarding publication, COPE identifies three policies: keeping referee reports confidential, publishing unsigned reports, and publishing signed reports. Possible mediation policies include editor-mediated interactions between reviewers and authors, open interaction between reviewers, and open interaction between reviewers and authors. Unpublished reports and editor-mediated interactions are part of the "standard" model of peer review as embraced by the ESA journals and the top-5 journals in economics (Table 1).

Once again, these policies are a subset of the proposals that we consider in this section. In addition to the advantages and disadvantages of transparency noted in the previous section, information-sharing policies can also help to provide readers with useful information about manuscripts (Tennant et al., 2017). Meanwhile, more open communication between stakeholders might speed up the peer-review process and give authors a stronger voice, but it could also place more demands on already-overloaded referees and editors.

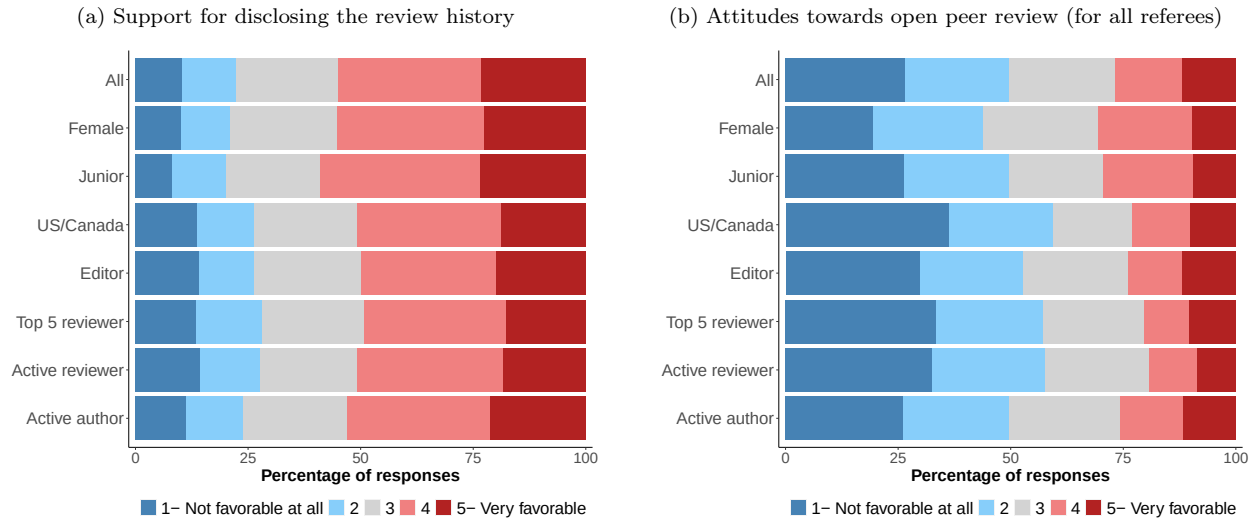
4.1 Publication of peer-review documents and metadata.

We start by investigating the sharing of peer-review documents separate from identifiability. We polled respondents on publishing referee reports and author responses "*in an anonymized way, unless the reviewers choose to disclose their identity.*" Fifty-five percent expressed favorable views (Panel (a) of Figure 2).

Respondents to a cross-disciplinary survey on open peer review were even more supportive (Ross-Hellauer et al., 2017). Despite majority support in economics, *Nature* is the only journal in Table 1 to allow this.

As in Section 3, a possible benefit of this practice could be to incentivize referees to write higher-quality reports and to conduct more thorough investigations, without de-anonymizing individuals.[9] Empirically, referees seem to write longer reports under public peer review (Bornmann et al., 2012), and an evaluation of the quality of reports showed null results overall and positive effects for some subgroups (Bravo et al., 2019). A second benefit is that the publication of referee reports, author responses, and prior manuscript versions might enhance our understanding of how revisions have shaped specific manuscripts. More generally, we could gather better evidence on the marginal value of revision rounds and of different types of revision requests (e.g., requests for new data and robustness checks), as a continuation of prior efforts (Malički et al., 2022). Since revisions often impose substantial costs on authors, referees, and editors, understanding when they are most beneficial could be useful for reform efforts.

Figure 2: Respondents' opinions on disclosure policies



Notes: $N = 802$ for both panels. The full-sample version of this figure is available at Figure C.2.

While our respondents seem supportive of increased transparency on this dimension, only about 38% expect it to be useful for improving the quality of reviews. This finding may reflect a general expectation that the publication of peer-review documents will be informative but will have null effects on reviewer behavior. This attitude would be broadly in line with evidence on referee behavior from pilots conducted at Elsevier and *Nature* (Bravo et al., 2019; Nature, 2022).

Finally, we consider a policy where "*referees sign their reports and the entire review history (including responses to referees) is disclosed.*" Our respondents were highly skeptical about such a system, whether this

[9]However, we note that anonymity may be difficult to maintain with published reports, given potential identifiers like report layouts and recommended citations.

applies to all referees (Panel (b) of Figure 2) or to senior referees only. This decline in support mirrors patterns seen among social science researchers in another survey on open peer review (Publishing Research Consortium, 2016). Only a handful of journals have embraced this extent of transparency, such as *F1000Research* (F1000-1-a) and *The BMJ* (Table 1). This type of openness would strongly promote accountability, as referees and editors would have to write their evaluations with the knowledge that their content will become public. However, van Rooyen et al. (2010) finds that telling reviewers their signed report may be published reduces invitation acceptance rates and causes longer turnaround times, with no discernible effect on report quality.

Given the concerns raised, we again consider more conservative approaches to promoting accountability and informativeness. For example, journals could periodically post detailed delay and rejection statistics on their websites and share manuscript metadata at the time of publication, both of which are practiced by some journals in economics, but not systematically (Table 1). Ideally, such statistics would be reported in a standardized way to facilitate comparisons across journals. Interesting metadata to share might include submission and first response dates and the number of revision rounds. These policies could create public accountability for journals and editors regarding turnaround times and allow authors to make more informed submission decisions. In terms of downsides, it is possible that journals will make changes targeted at improving the statistics but that do little to improve the peer-review experience. Authors may also be discouraged from submitting promising manuscripts due to high rejection rates and long turnaround times.

Finally, journals could publish short summaries of the changes that occurred in manuscripts from original submission to publication, as is done by *F1000Research* (F1000-1-b). This would also promote accountability and allow us to assess how manuscripts are affected by the revision process (Malički et al., 2022), but it does rely on revealing editor/referee advice. While this could discourage them from making certain types of revision requests, it seems that the downsides would be minimal.

4.2 Open channels of communication.

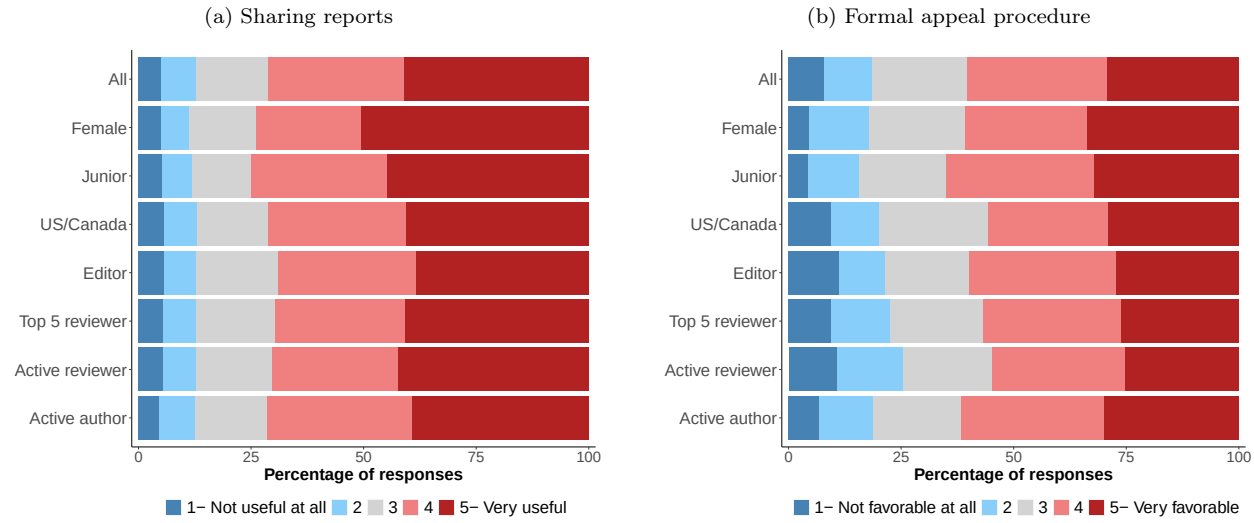
In this section, we consider policies that deviate from editor-mediated interaction. In terms of feasible first steps, editors could be required to systematically share the contents of their decision letters and other referee reports with all reviewers; a large majority of respondents thought this policy would be useful for improving the quality of reviews (Panel (a) of Figure 3).[10] Depending on when this happens in the review process, referees could learn from each other's (intermediate) evaluations and possibly update their own opinion. This may help referees in crafting their own assessments, although some editors might prefer to preserve the

[10] While this practice may be fairly common, a number of respondents left comments expressing frustration with editors who did not share reports.

independence of referee signals.

To create more communication channels for authors, journals could allow the authors of rejected manuscripts to submit a direct response to the referees and the editor without any "guarantee of the referees taking this rebuttal into account." Over 60% of our respondents were in favor of this idea (Panel (b) of Figure 3). Interestingly, support for this policy is only mildly weaker among respondents who are editors and active reviewers,[11] despite the potential extra work implied by an appeal process. Policies allowing author responses are fairly common but not universal among the journals in Table 1. Moreover, some journals (i.e., *AER* and *Econometrica*) mention appeals in their policies but do not specify a clear procedure to initiate them. By contrast, they are an integral part of the peer-review process in other disciplines, such as in computer science conferences where reviewers are required to read and consider author rebuttals (Shah, 2023).

Figure 3: Respondents' opinions on open communication channels



Notes: $N = 802$ for both panels. The full-sample version of this figure is available at Figure C.3.

Authors may also appreciate an additional channel to communicate with editors and/or referees after receiving an R&R. Many of the unsatisfactory referee reports received by our respondents were characterized by "*unrealistic demands*" and/or "*inconsistent demands*" for revisions (45.6% of respondents who gave a reason for dissatisfaction mentioned at least one of these). In these cases, it is important for the editor to step in and give clear direction, but many respondents also reported in open-text comments that editorial guidance is sometimes lacking in consideration for the feasibility of requests or fails to specify how to deal with conflicting demands (as discussed in Charness et al. (2022)). Offering authors the opportunity to discuss revisions or submit a revision proposal to editors (and possibly to referees) could incentivize better-considered requests ex-ante as well as serve to clarify important matters before implementing costly revisions.

[11] To be specific, the proportion of respondents choosing 4 or 5 for favorability is insignificantly lower among editors (-0.01, $p = 0.85$) and somewhat lower among active reviewers (-0.10, $p < 0.01$) in a test for differences between proportions.

This would require more work upfront from editors and possibly referees, but it could save time during the revision process.

More generally, as suggested by some of our respondents in open-text comments ($N = 7$), journals could consider establishing fully interactive review phases or processes. Respondents to another survey on open peer review were quite supportive (68%) of greater open interactivity between stakeholders (Ross-Hellauer et al., 2017). One model of interactive review comes from *Frontiers* process (Table 1), in which an independent review phase is followed by an interactive review phase. In the latter phase, authors and reviewers can interact with each other in real-time via a discussion forum. Such a process would allow for active back-and-forth discussions and the immediate resolution of questions, which could help to speed up the review process. However, this would require substantial attention and effort from reviewers, authors, and editors at specific points in time, which some may find undesirable or infeasible.

5 Looking Forward

In this article, we presented evidence on the attitudes of our respondents regarding transparency reforms in peer review. Broadly speaking, the policies considered can be divided into those for which respondent views were (i) mostly supportive, (ii) mostly opposed, or (iii) almost evenly split. In terms of group (i), significant majorities were in favor of editors sharing all referee reports with reviewers and establishing a formal appeal procedure for authors in case of rejection (Figure 3). These policies could represent particularly popular opportunities for experimentation and broad implementation. Policies in group (ii) include the revelation of referee identities, either in isolation (Figure 1) or with signed reports (Figure 2). As such, weakened anonymity seems likely to be controversial if implemented, but it will be important to track whether attitudes on identifiability shift over time. Finally, those in group (iii) include double-blind review (Appendix Figure B.2), the disclosure of associate editor identities (Figure 1), and the publication of anonymized review histories alongside manuscripts (Figure 2). In light of split attitudes, surveys and trials to gather further evidence on these issues could be particularly instructive.

Given the above and the need to obtain explicit consent from stakeholders to modify transparency (COPE Council, 2017), we also considered more incremental policy changes, which are summarized in Table 2. These changes appear to be easily implementable reforms that could promote greater transparency with minimal downsides.

Table 2: Proposals summary table

Proposal	Possible Pros	Possible Cons	Discussion
Identify handling editor on manuscript	• Accountability for decisions • Incentive for thorough review • Observe editors' Type 1 error rate	• Dis-incentive to participate • Incentive for more revisions • More risk-averse paper decisions	Section 3.2
Publish lists of referees and # of reports	• Greater visibility of refereeing • Incentive to write more reports • Assess diversity of referee pool	• Some de-anonymization • No accountability for reports	Section 3.3
Share delays and rejection rates	• Accountability for performance • Informed submission decisions	• Targeting of statistics • Discourage submission attempts	Section 4.1
Summarize revisions made to papers	• Accountability for revisions • Assess effect of revisions	• Pierces confidentiality of advice • Discourages certain revision types	Section 4.1
Discuss revisions with authors	• More clarity/less time to revise • Better-considered requests	• More upfront work • Social pressure to accept revisions	Section 4.2

However, precisely due to the incremental nature of these reforms, we are lacking in evidence on their popularity among economists. Given constraints on survey length, we prioritized measuring attitudes about more transformative proposals. But this points to a more general limitation of our article, namely that there are likely many dimensions of transparency in peer review that we left unaddressed. Moreover, we were also unable to offer confident assessments about the effects of many policies due to a lack of causal evidence. For this reason, considerable uncertainty still remains about most proposals for reform. Other limitations include that our respondent pool may not be entirely representative of researchers in experimental/behavioral economics, even based on observables, and that our survey data is likely to suffer from measurement error.

In light of these limitations, we would like to propose directions for further research. First, it could be useful to collect more extensive data on attitudes towards open peer review, covering issues that we omitted. Longitudinal data would also allow us track the evolution of attitudes over time. Next, further experimental studies would be helpful for enhancing our understanding of the effects of open peer-review. Throughout the article, we highlighted evidence from pilots and trials whenever available, but we found the extent of causal evidence to be quite limited, especially within economics. Since running trials with stakeholders randomized into different policies might be particularly challenging, conducting lab/online experiments that mimic the peer review setting could be an important first step. Moreover, studies of voluntary policies (such as those at *Nature*) could help with understanding take-up rates and perhaps shifting norms over time.

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A Data discussions

This appendix is devoted to explaining certain aspects of our data collection in greater detail and presenting additional figures of importance.

A.1 Construction of the journal transparency policies table

The abbreviations used in Table 1 are as follows:

- *Exp Econ* = *Experimental Economics*; *JESA* = *Journal of the Economic Science Association*; *AER* = *American Economic Review*; *ECMA* = *Econometrica*; *JPE* = *Journal of Political Economy*; *QJE* = *Quarterly Journal of Economics*; *REStud* = *Review of Economic Studies*

We made use of a wide range of data sources in the construction of Table 1. Furthermore, we made several subjective judgments about the best way to code the available information and data. As such, in this section we provide more information about sample selection, data sourcing, and variable definitions:

- Our first judgment relates to which journals' transparency policies to include in the table. Due to the significant contribution of the Economic Science Association (ESA) and its membership to our survey results, we include the two journals of the ESA (i.e., *Experimental Economics* and *JESA*). Given their importance to the careers of economists (Heckman and Moktan, 2020), we also include each of the traditional "top-5" journals. For the other disciplines, we selectively chose three journals or journal families in order to highlight a number of unique or innovative policies for discussion.

- The policies in the **Identifiability** section of the table were obtained from a range of sources.

  - The ***Blinded Review*** variable indicates whether the identity of the author is blinded to the referees ("Double") or not. Usually, when this is not the case, referee identities still remain obscured to authors ("Single"). However, in the case of *The BMJ*, author and referee identities are mutually known ("Open"). In the case of *Nature*, the level of identifiability varies according to author and referee preferences ("Varies"). Most journals mention their review policy in their guidelines (EX-1, JESA-1, BMJ-1-a, FRN-1-a, NAT-1-a). The top-5 journals are uniform in their application of single-blind refereeing, which we (the authors) can confirm through personal experience.

  - The ***Journal Publishes List of Referees*** variable indicates whether the journal periodically publishes a full list of its referees ("Full"), a partial list ("Partial"), or no list at all ("No"). *QJE* and *REStud* limit their referee list to those who have met a certain threshold of quality/quantity

contribution. These lists can usually be found in periodic journal reports or on journal websites (AER-1-a, ECMA-1, JPE-1, QJE-1, RES-1, BMJ-2).

- The ***Authors Can Nominate Referees*** and ***Authors Can Oppose Referees*** variables indicate whether the journal allows authors to make suggestions to include or exclude specific referees by name for each submitted manuscript (✓) or not (–), respectively, as part of the regular submission process. This information was obtained by clicking through the submission portal of each journal.
- The ***Handling Editor Disclosed*** variable indicates whether the journal typically discloses the identity of the handling editor(s) who decided to accept each manuscript (✓) or not (–). This information was obtained by inspecting a selection of articles on each journal website.
- The ***Referee Identity Disclosed*** variable indicates whether the journal discloses the identity of the referees who evaluated each manuscript (✓) or not (–). At *Frontiers*, the identities of referees who recommend publication are disclosed after review is complete and conditional on acceptance. At *Nature*, referee identities are shared subject to author and referee consent. This information was obtained by reading journal policies (BMJ-1-b, FRN-1-b, NAT-1-b).

- The statistics in the **Disclosure** section also come from a wide range of sources.
  - ***Turnaround Time Statistics*** and ***Acceptance/Rejection Statistics*** record whether each journal releases statistics on its turnaround time and its acceptance/rejection rates (✓) or not (–), respectively. This is usually done via a periodic report or on the journal website (EX-2, JESA-2, AER-1-b, ECMA-2, JPE-2, QJE-2, RES-2, BMJ-3-a, FRN-1-b, FRN-2, NAT-2, NAT-3-a).
  - The ***Manuscript Received/Decision Dates*** variable indicates whether a journal discloses certain manuscript metadata alongside publications (✓) or not (–), in particular the date that the manuscript was received, the date of first response, the dates that subsequent versions were returned, and/or the acceptance date. This information was obtained by inspecting a selection of articles on each journal website.
  - The ***Public Decision Letters*** variable is an indicator for whether a journal releases editors' decision letters alongside published manuscripts (✓) or not (–). For *The BMJ*, this was verified by inspecting recently published articles. *Nature* states that they publish decision letters "in some cases," as part of their optional transparent review process (NAT-1-c).
  - The ***Public Referee Reports*** variable is an indicator for whether a journal releases referees' reports alongside published manuscripts (✓) or not (–). The ***Signed Public Referee Reports***

is an additional indicator for whether the authors of each report are publicly specified. This was verified on the peer-review guidelines of *The BMJ* and *Nature* (BMJ-1-c, NAT-1-c). We note once again that *Nature* policies are subject to referee and author consent.

- The ***Prior Manuscript Versions*** variable is an indicator for whether a journal releases the prior versions of published manuscripts alongside the final one (✓) or not (–). This was verified on the peer-review guidelines of *The BMJ* (BMJ-1-c).

- The information in the **Communication** section comes from a smaller range of sources.

  - The ***Journal Policy on Author Appeals*** variable records whether the journal explicitly states that authors can appeal manuscript decisions (✓) or not (–). Most journals in our sample do this, but the extent to which they have a formal procedure for doing so varies. This information comes from policies on journal websites (AER-2, ECMA-3, JPE-3, BMJ-3-b, NAT-3-b).

  - The ***Publisher Policy on Author Appeals*** variable records whether the publisher's cross-journal editorial policies explicitly address author appeals (✓) or not (–). *Experimental Economics* and *JESA* are published by Springer, whose policy is stated here. *Econometrica* is published by Wiley-Blackwell. *The BMJ* is published by BMJ Journals. The entry for *Frontiers* already refers to the publisher/journal family (FRN-1-c). Finally, *Nature* is part of the Nature portfolio.

  - The ***Interactive Review*** variable indicates whether the journal reports having established channels for active communication between reviewers and other reviewers or between reviewers and authors i.e., channels other than referee reports. *Frontiers* is the only journal in our sample that reports having a system of interactive review (FRN-1-c).

A.2 Survey Data

Table A.1: Comparison between Experimental/Behavioral Sample and ESA Membership

Categories	**Our Sample (%)**	**ESA 2020 Membership (%)**
Female	24.4%	37.5%
Student	9.2%	25.5%
Europe	54.9%	40.3%
US/Canada	31.4%	34.8%
Asia/Oceania	11.8%	23.0%
Africa/Other Americas	1.9%	1.9%
Total Respondents	802	994

Notes:
[a] The demographic characteristics of ESA 2020 members were obtained directly from the ESA.

Below we elaborate on the definitions of certain variables and note any instances where variables had to be reformulated in order to ensure the comparability of our data with the external data.

- **Location:** From the Andre and Falk (2021) (AF) statistics, we combine the "Asia" and "Australia and New Zealand" categories to create the "Asia/Oceania" category and we combine the "Latin America" and "Africa" categories to create the "Other regions" category.
- **Field of research:** The field categories from AF are based on the JEL codes:
  - Microeconomics = JEL D (Microeconomics)
  - Macroeconomics = JEL E (Macroeconomics and Monetary Economics) + JEL F (International Economics) + JEL G (Financial Economics)
  - Econometrics = JEL C (Mathematical and Quantitative Methods)
  - Development = JEL O (Growth and Development Economics)
  - Labor = JEL J (Labor and Demographic Economics)
  - Industrial Organization = JEL L (Industrial Organization)
  - Public Economics = JEL H (Public Economics)
  - Other fields = JEL Q (Agriculture and Environmental Economics) + Other fields
- **Position:** The "Full Professor," "Postdoc/PhD," and "Other" categories combine the AF categories of "Professor" and "Emeritus," the categories of "Post-doc" and "Doctoral student," and the categories of "Graduate student" and "Other," respectively.
- **Average number of publications:** The number of publications is capped at 200.

Table A.2: Comparison between Full Sample and Andre & Falk (2021) Benchmarks

		Andre & Falk (2021)		
	Peer-review survey	Study population	Unweighted sample	Weighted sample
Demographics				
Female	23.5%	26.0%	23.1%	25.8%
Age:				
Under 40	42.8%	-	32.5%	34.8%
40-49	32.4%	-	32.6%	31.6%
50-59	15.9%	-	18.9%	17.7%
60 and over	8.9%	-	16.0%	15.9%
Location:				
US/Canada	35.5%	33.9%	24.2%	33.9%
Europe	54.2%	40.4%	53.6%	40.5%
Asia/Oceania	8.4%	21.4%	17.1%	20.5%
Other regions	1.9%	4.3%	5.1%	5.1%
Field of Research (excl. Behav/Exp)[a]				
Microeconomics	27.5%	14.5%	18.2%	15.2%
Macroeconomics	13.1%	31.1%	24.3%	29.4%
Econometrics	8.8%	4.2%	3.2%	3.2%
Development	7.9%	7.3%	7.5%	8.0%
Labor	10.9%	8.6%	12.2%	9.8%
Industrial Organization	6.0%	8.3%	7.4%	8.0%
Public Economics	11.1%	3.6%	4.3%	3.8%
Other fields	14.7%	22.4%	22.9%	22.6%
Position				
Full Professor	38.3%	-	41.1%	37.1%
Associate Professor	22.0%	-	27.3%	28.2%
Assistant Professor	26.5%	-	19.6%	22.0%
Postdoc/PhD Candidate	7.6%	-	9.6%	10%
Other Position	5.6%	-	2.4%	2.6%
Professional Experience				
Average number of publications	25.3	17.1	18.3	16.2
N	1,459 [b]	53,779	7,794	7,794

Notes: The statistics in the last three columns were either directly taken from Andre and Falk (2021) (AF) or derived for us by Peter Andre.

[a] For the field statistics, we removed the "Behavioral/experimental" selection from our peer-review data to improve comparability with the Andre & Falk data for the other fields. As such, it is useful to remember that we report a conditional distribution. For example, the microeconomics category, consisting of respondents who selected either applied microeconomics, decision theory, game theory, or microeconomic theory as a field, accounts for 27.5% of all field selections that were not behavioral or experimental economics ($N = 2,668$ remaining selections). Behavioral/experimental economics accounts for 33.0% of the total number of field selections (out of $N = 3,982$ selections made across all fields).

[b] The sample size reported for our peer-review survey is the number of completed surveys. However, for our statistics to be comparable with the data in AF, we needed to remove the respondents who selected "Prefer not to say" for `Age`, `Location`, and `Position`. This leads to smaller sample sizes for those variables (with $N = 1,381, 1,392, \&1,401$, respectively). For the `Female` statistic, responses of "Prefer not to say" were kept.

Table A.3: Descriptive statistics for the main dimensions of heterogeneity

Variable	N	%
Female	196	24.4%
Junior	268	33.4%
US/Canada	239	29.8%
Editor	297	37.0%
Top 5 reviewer	441	55.0%
Active reviewer	350	43.6%
Active author	367	45.8%
All	802	100.0%

Variable Descriptions:

- `Female`: Binary variable = 1 if the respondent selected "Female," with the baseline being the combination of "Male" (71.2%) + "Prefer not to say" (4.4%).
- `Junior`: Binary variable = 1 if the respondent selected "PhD candidate" or "Post-doctoral researcher" or "Assistant professor" as their position.
- `US/Canada`: Binary variable = 1 if the respondent selected "United States" or "Canada" as the country of their job.
- `Editor`: Binary variable = 1 if the respondent answered "Yes" to having held an editorial position.
- `Top 5 reviewer`: Binary variable = 1 if the respondent indicated they had refereed for a top 5 journal ($> 0\%$).
- `Active reviewer`: Binary variable = 1 if the respondent wrote more reports annually than the median respondent of our sub-sample (> 8 reports).
- `Active author`: Binary variable = 1 if the respondent made more submissions over the designated timeframe than the median respondent of our sub-sample (> 6 submissions over two years).

A.3 Journal sourcing table

We present Table A.4 in this section as a list of sources about journal statistics and policies that we cited throughout the article. We elected not to formally cite these sources in the references list, as they are not academic sources or news articles. Each source contains a reference to where it was used in the text and an external URL that links to its web location.

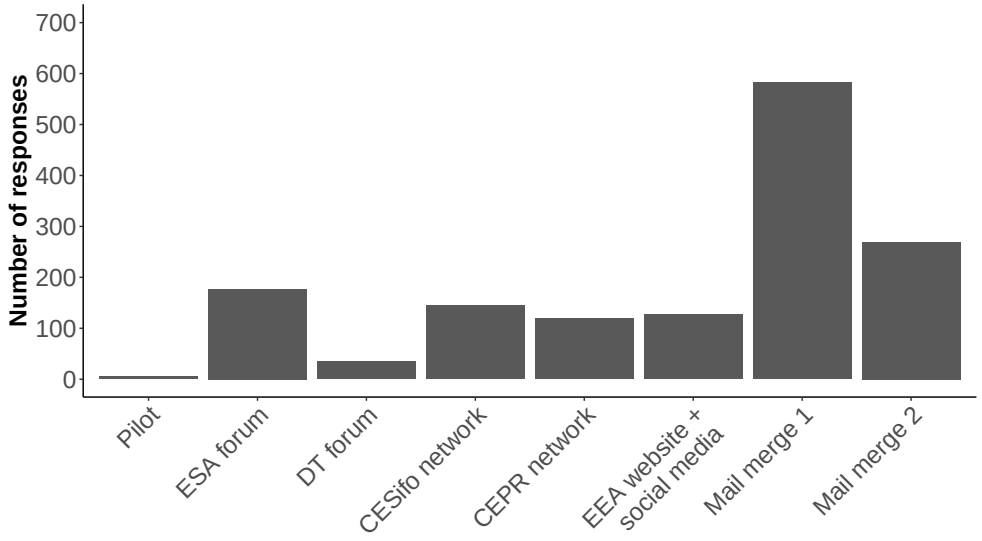
Table A.4: Sources for journal statistics and editorial policies

Journal Name	Source ID(s)	Source Name	Source Year	Source Link
American Economic Review	AER-1-a, AER-1-b	Report of the Editor *AER*	2023	AER-1
	AER-2	AER: FAQs	2023	AER-2
The BMJ	BMJ-1-a, BMJ-1-b, BMJ-1-c	Resources for reviewers	2023	BMJ-1
	BMJ-2	The BMJ's reviewers 2013-2022	2023	BMJ-2
	BMJ-3-a, BMJ-3-b	Publishing model	2023	BMJ-3
Econometrica	ECMA-1	Annual Report 2021-2022 Refs	2023	ECMA-1
	ECMA-2	Annual Report 2021-2022	2023	ECMA-2
	ECMA-3	Editorial Procedures	2023	ECMA-3
Economic Inquiry	EI-1	Journal Policies	2023	EI-1
Experimental Economics	EX-1	Ethics & disclosures	2023	EX-1
	EX-2	Experimental Economics	2023	EX-2
F1000Research	F1000-1-a, F1000-1-b	How it Works	2023	F1000-1
Frontiers	FRN-1-a, FRN-1-b, FRN-1-c	Peer Review	2023	FRN-1
	FRN-2	Progress Report	2023	FRN-2
JESA	JESA-1	Ethics & disclosures	2023	JESA-1
	JESA-2	JESA	2023	JESA-2
Journal of Political Economy	JPE-1	Recent Referees	2023	JPE-1
	JPE-2	Summary Statistics	2023	JPE-2
	JPE-3	ETHICS	2023	JPE-3
JPSP	JPSP-1	JPSP	2023	JPSP-1
Management Science	MS-1	Submission Guidelines	2023	MS-1
Nature	NAT-1-a, NAT-1-b, NAT-1-c	Peer Review	2023	NAT-1
	NAT-2	Journal Metrics	2023	NAT-2
	NAT-3-a, NAT-3-b	Editorial criteria and processes	2023	NAT-3
Nature Human Behaviour	NHB-1-a, NHB-1-b	Peer Review	2023	NHB-1
Psychological Bulletin	PB-1	Submission Guidelines	2023	PB-1
Philosophical Review	PR-1	Editorial Policies	2023	PR-1
QJE	QJE-1	Acknowledgment of Referees	2022	QJE-1
	QJE-2	Tweet	2023	QJE-2
REStud	RES-1	Excellence in Refereeing Award	2023	RES-1
	RES-2	Turnaround statistics	2023	RES-2

Journal abbreviations; *JESA = Journal of the Economic Science Association*; *JPSP = Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*; *QJE = Quarterly Journal of Economics*; *REStud = Review of Economic Studies*.

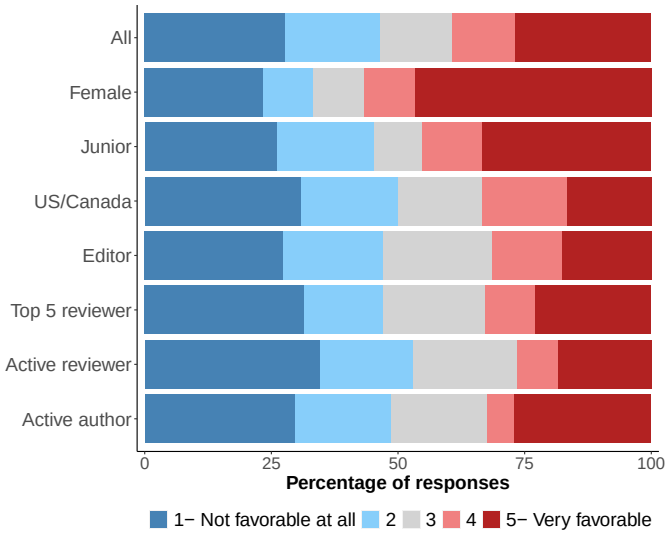
B Additional Figures Referenced in Text

Figure B.1: Distribution of responses across recruitment channels



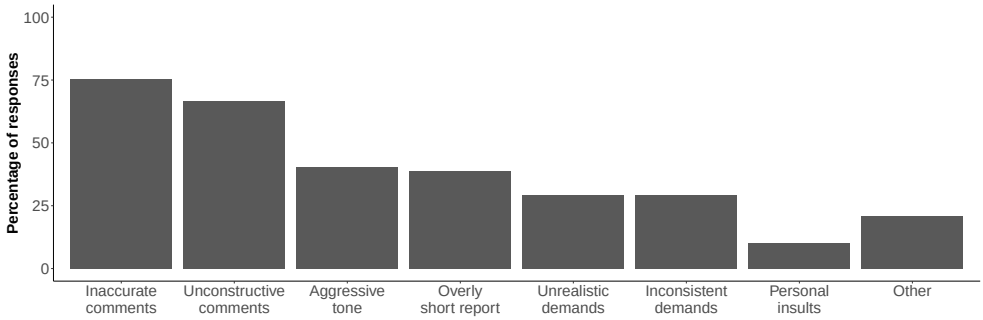
Notes: This figure only includes respondents who fully completed the survey. $N = 1,459$.

Figure B.2: Support for double-blind peer review



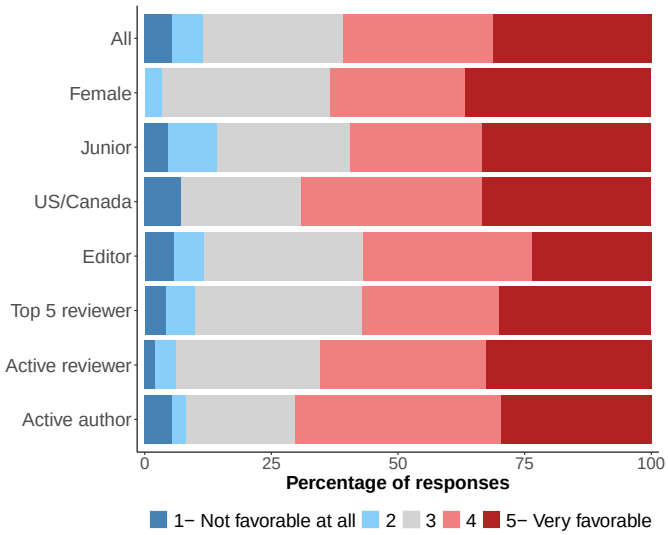
Notes: The figure is based on responses to question Q19. $N = 112$. There are fewer respondents because this question was only included in later survey rounds. Due to this, the groups in each category of heterogeneity are small. As such, caution should be taken when making inferences about subgroup attitudes. The full-sample version of this figure is available at Panel (a) of Figure C.4.

Figure B.3: Characteristics of low-quality reports



Notes: Percentages do not add up to 100% as respondents could select multiple reasons (3.1 reasons selected on average). $N = 802$.

Figure B.4: Support for allowing authors to disqualify certain reviewers

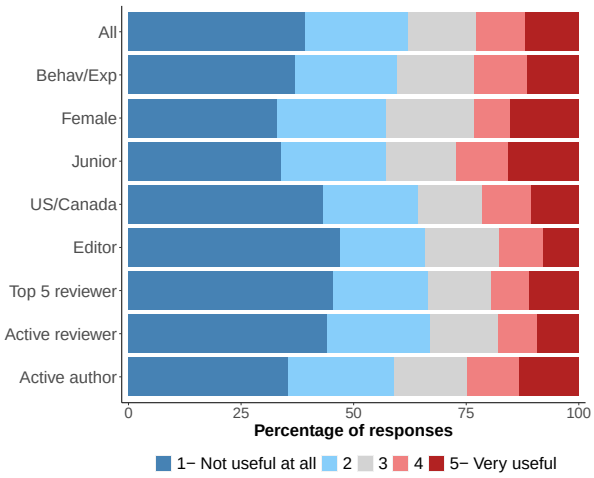


Notes: The figure is based on responses to question Q20. $N = 112$. There are fewer respondents because this question was only included in later survey rounds. Due to this, the groups in each category of heterogeneity are small. As such, caution should be taken when making inferences about subgroup attitudes. The full-sample version of this figure is available at Panel (b) of Figure C.4.

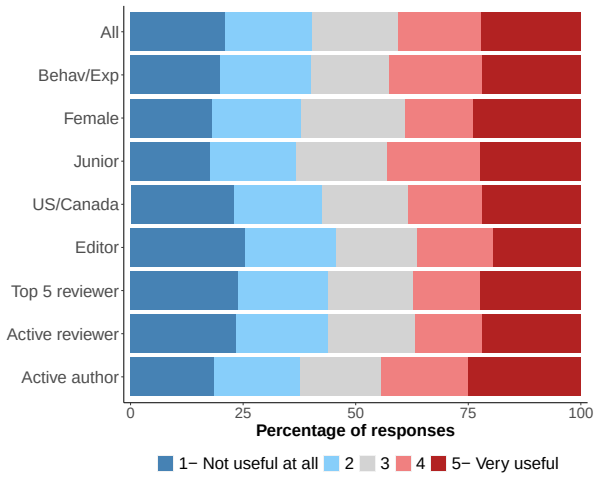
C Full Sample Figures

Figure C.1: Usefulness of changing identifiability of reviewers

(a) Senior referees



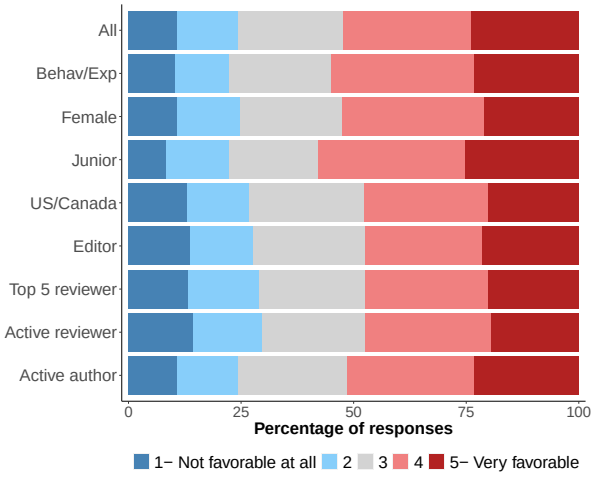
(b) Associate editors



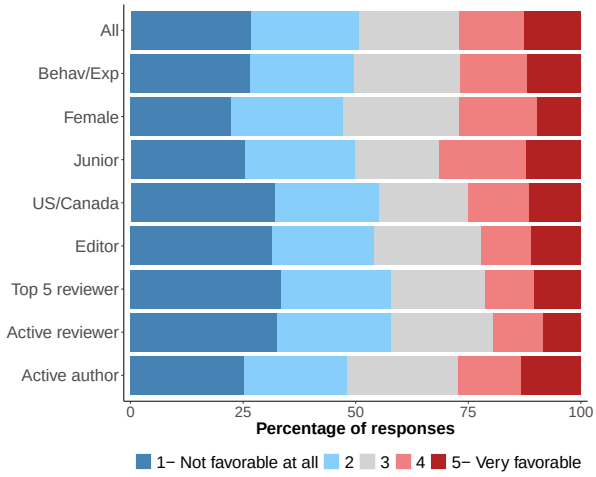
Notes: $N = 1,459$ for both panels. Return to the experimental-sample version of this figure at Figure 1.

Figure C.2: Respondents' opinions on disclosure policies

(a) Support for disclosing the review history



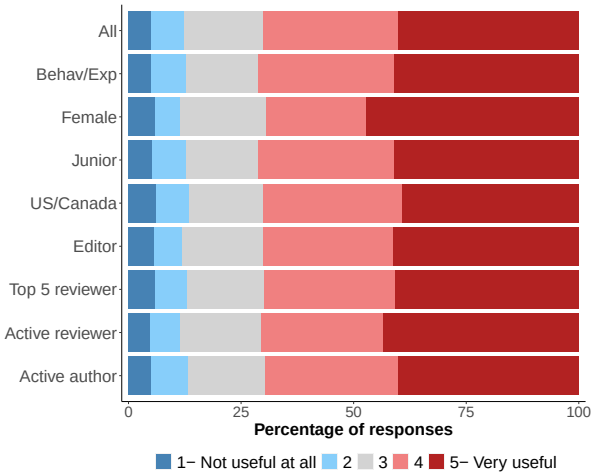
(b) Attitudes towards open peer review (for all referees)



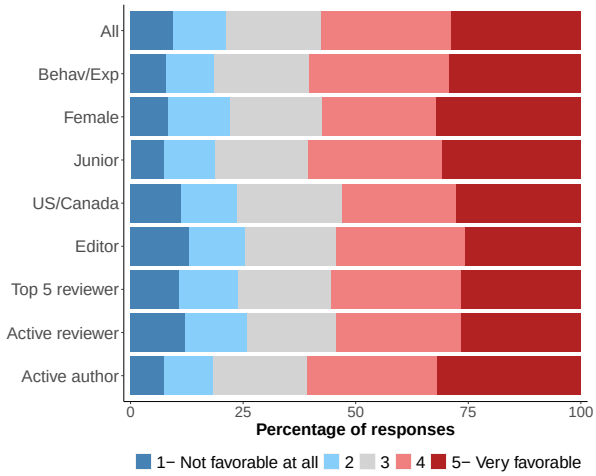
Notes: $N = 1,459$ for both panels. Return to the experimental-sample version of this figure at Figure 2.

Figure C.3: Respondents' opinions on open communication channels

(a) Sharing reports



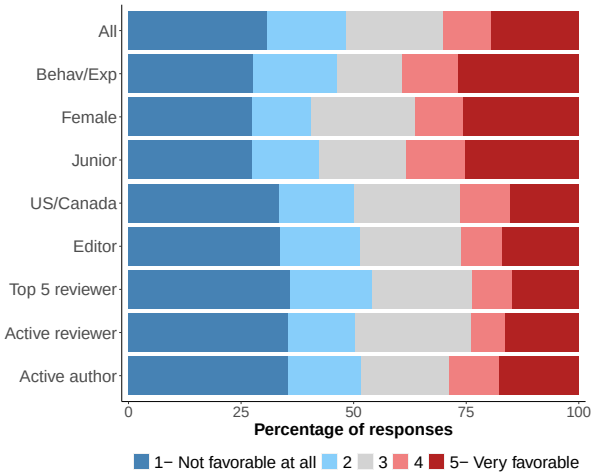
(b) Formal appeal procedure



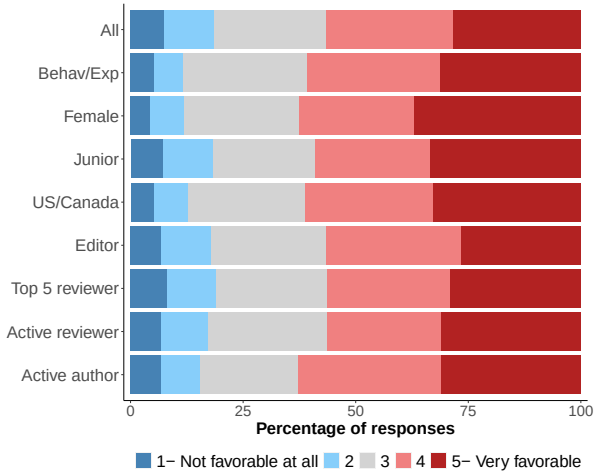
Notes: $N = 1,459$ for both panels. Return to the experimental-sample version of this figure at Figure 3.

Figure C.4: Respondents' attitudes on transparency policies with small samples

(a) Double-blind peer review



(b) Disqualifying certain reviewers



Notes: $N = 684$ for both panels. Return to the experimental-sample versions of these figures at Figure B.2 for double-blind peer review and Figure B.4 for disqualifying certain reviewers.

D Recruitment

To increase participation in the survey, we conducted multiple stages of outreach and recruitment among different communities of academic economists. A timeline and summary of these efforts can be found in Table D.1. The first part (Wave 1) lasted from July 2020 to October 2020. In this phase, we targeted groups of behavioral and experimental economists. An initial pilot study was sent to a select group of these researchers in order to gather feedback on the content and structure of the survey. After that, a link to the survey was posted on the Economic Science Association (ESA) discussion forum. Next, we created a database of email addresses of behavioral and experimental economists in order to reach a larger group of potential respondents (mail merge 1). Email addresses in the database came from a wide variety of sources, including lists of behavioral and experimental economists on the RePEc database and participation lists from various conferences and seminars i.e., the ESA conference, the Early-Career Behavioral Economics Conference (ECBE), and the Stanford Institute for Theoretical Economics conference (SITE). A few emails were also added individually. The entire email database was sent an initial email in early August, which was followed by a reminder email in late September, sent only to those who had not provided their email address after taking the survey (i.e., in order to be considered for the prize drawing). We sent emails out to 1,802 researchers, for which we received 655 responses (36.3%). A separate but similar email was also sent to the participants of the Virtual East Asia Experimental and Behavioral Seminar (VEAEBES).

The second part (Wave 2) was conducted from November 2020 to January 2021. In this stage, we shifted our efforts to recruiting economists from outside of behavioral and experimental economics. We did this by reaching out to communities of economists that are not specific to any subfield, as well as conducting efforts targeted at some particular subfields. Posts on the European Economic Association (EEA) website and Twitter feed advertised the survey to general groups of economists. Emails sent to the CESifo and CEPR networks targeted similarly varied groups. Subfield-specific outreach efforts included a post on the Decision Theory (DT) forum and emails sent to Health Economics at Lancaster (HEAL) seminar series members. Finally, we constructed another database of email addresses targeted at non-behavioral and experimental economists, with a particular emphasis on reaching out to underrepresented fields like macroeconomics (mail merge 2). The database was partly constructed with participant lists of conferences hosted by various organizations, including the Society for Economic Dynamics (SED), the American Economic Association/Allied Social Science Associations (AEA/ASSA), the Society for Judgment and Decision Making (SJDM), and the Society for the Advancement of Economic Theory (SAET). We also included contact details collected from the NBER database and some emails added individually. The entire email database received a survey request in mid-December, followed by a reminder email in mid-January

(once again to those we could not confirm took the survey). We sent emails out to 3,618 researchers, for which we received 269 responses (7.4%). Informal recruitment efforts took place throughout the entire recruitment period, including via individual emails and social media posts sharing the survey link.

As mentioned elsewhere, 1,497 (1,459) individuals at least partially responded (fully responded) to our recruitment efforts. The median response time for fully completed surveys was 15.5 minutes. Most respondents were recruited from the two mail merges, from which we received 875 completed responses (60.0% of our sample). Four other recruitment channels garnered > 100 completed responses each (Figure B.1).[12] Characteristics of the sample broken down by recruitment channel can be found in Table D.2. Some clear demographic differences are worth noting. First, the CESifo and CEPR channels have particularly high percentages of respondents over 50 (44.3% and 39.6%, respectively), respondents who are full professors (57.4% and 58.6%), and respondents with editorial experience (49.7% and 56.3%). Additionally, the percentage of US/Canada-based respondents from mail merge 2 (62.9%) is much higher than the other channels, which tend to have relatively more Europe-based researchers. Finally, while all channels have a fairly high percentage of researchers who have refereed for top-5 journals, this percentage is particularly high in the CEPR and mail merge 2 channels (84.0% and 71.4%, respectively).

After completing our primary analysis of the survey data, we sent out a follow-up survey in February 2022 ($N = 117$) to clarify our interpretation of the initial results and gather further evidence. Our additional inquiries included questions on what respondents consider to be reasonable report-writing activity, whether they feel pressured to write more referee reports due to publication concerns around their own manuscripts, and the percentage of their submissions from 2020-2021 that were desk rejected (27.8%). These results were included in our original report, but most are excluded from the present article. The follow-up survey sampled relatively fewer full (33.6%) and assistant (19.0%) professors, and relatively more postdoc/PhD candidates (19.0%). 33.3% of respondents reported that they are currently editors.

[12] A recruitment channel is based on the survey link used. Some survey links were used in multiple methods of recruitment; these are considered to be one recruitment channel.

Table D.1: Recruitment strategy summary

Method	Date	Population characteristics	Recruitment channel
Wave 1			
Pilot (individual emails)	Early July 2020	Behavioral economists (initial feedback)	Pilot
ESA discussion forum	16 July 2020	Behavioral and experimental economists	ESA forum
First mail merge	8 August 2020 (main) 25 September 2020 (reminder)	Behavioral and experimental economists (Combination of the RePEc database and conference programs of ESA, AEA/ASSA, ECBE, and SITE + a few additional)	Mail merge 1
Emails to VEAEBES seminar series members	18 September 2020	Behavioral and experimental economists	Mail merge 1
Wave 2			
EEA (post on website and Twitter)	13 November 2020	Various fields	EEA website + social media
DT forum	15 November 2020	Theorists and experimentalists	DT forum
Emails to CESifo members	24 November 2020	Various fields	CESifo network
Emails to CEPR members	26 November 2020	Various fields	CEPR network
Emails to HEAL seminar series members	7 December 2020	Health economists	EEA website + social media
Second mail merge	16 December 2020 (main) 12 January 2021 (reminder)	Economists from various fields (Combination of NBER database and conference programs of SAET, SED, AEA/ASSA, and SJDM + a few additional emails)	Mail merge 2
Personal emails	Sporadically	Various fields	EEA website + social media[a]
Social media posts	Sporadically	Various fields	EEA website + social media

Notes: See previous page for more information about the meaning of the various acronyms.
[a] Some personal emails were sent using different survey links, but the majority of them used the link for "EEA website + social media."

Table D.2: Characteristics across recruitment channels[a]

	ESA forum	CESifo	CEPR	EEA / social media	Mail merge 1	Mail merge 2
Demographics						
Female	27.5%	17.9%	28.4%	28.5%	23.8%	25.9%
Age:						
Under 40	55.1%	30.0%	26.7%	50.8%	40.1%	48.6%
40-49	27.5%	25.7%	33.6%	35.5%	38.1%	26.1%
50-59	11.4%	26.4%	22.4%	9.7%	15.1%	15.7%
60 and over	6.0%	17.9%	17.2%	4.0%	6.6%	9.6%
Location:						
US/Canada	32.4%	27.1%	23.3%	28.7%	30.5%	62.9%
Europe	57.8%	69.3%	74.1%	61.5%	53.8%	30.9%
Asia/Oceania	6.9%	2.9%	2.6%	8.2%	13.5%	4.6%
Other countries	2.9%	0.7%	0.0%	1.6%	2.2%	1.5%
Position						
Full Professor	22.6%	57.4%	58.6%	25.2%	39.0%	36.5%
Associate Professor	25.6%	13.5%	21.6%	22.8%	25.7%	16.9%
Assistant Professor	26.8%	16.3%	12.1%	29.3%	26.4%	34.2%
Postdoc/PhD Candidate	17.9%	5.0%	0.0%	15.4%	4.9%	6.9%
Other Position	7.1%	7.8%	7.8%	7.3%	4.0%	5.4%
Professional Experience						
Editorial Experience	29.3%	49.7%	56.3%	29.7%	37.8%	40.9%
Average number of publications[b]	20.7	40.3	26.6	25.4	28.0	20.3
Referees for top-5 journals	46.2%	54.5%	84.0%	43.0%	57.5%	71.4%
N[c]	190	145	119	128	606	269

[a] This table only looks at the recruitment channels (i.e., survey links) that received > 100 partially- or fully-completed responses (= 96.5% of the total sample).
[b] Full range used (no top coding).
[c] These sample sizes refer to all partially- or fully-completed surveys for each recruitment channel. For the individual statistics, sample sizes may differ from the stated N as unanswered questions and "Prefer not to say" responses were removed from these calculations.

E Survey questions

Consent Form

Principal Investigators: Gary Charness (UCSB), Anna Dreber (Stockholm School of Economics), and Séverine Toussaert (Oxford)

Description: This is a survey on peer review, which should take about 15-20 minutes of your time. We are interested in your view of the current peer review process and how it can be improved.

Eligibility Criteria: You are eligible to participate in this survey if, **over the last two years**, (i) you **completed at least one peer review**; and (ii) you **received referee reports** on a paper you submitted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

Risks and benefits: There are no physical or emotional risks associated with this study that would go beyond the risks of daily life. Your participation in this study may improve the peer review process and, therefore, benefit the scientific community. In addition, we will give $100 (cash or gift certificate) to two people drawn randomly from the respondents; you will be asked to leave your email address in a separate survey link if you wish to be entered in the lottery.

Confidentiality: The information collected in this survey may be published in a report or a journal article and presented to interested parties, including possibly, but not exclusively, members of editorial boards or scientific committees. In no circumstances will your identity or personal involvement in this study be disclosed. No personal data (e.g., your IP address) will be collected, except for your email address if you wish to be emailed the report and/or participate in the prize draw (this information will not be connected to your survey responses and will be destroyed after the prize draw). Other information (e.g., survey responses, time of the survey) will be kept by the researchers and may be used for future studies.

Your rights as a participant: Participation is entirely voluntary. You may leave the survey at any time without any penalty or prejudice.

Ethics approval: This research has been reviewed according to the ethics procedures for research involving human subjects of the University of Oxford (approval # ECONCIA-21-21-20). If you wish to raise any concerns about this study to the ethics committee, please email ethics@economics.ox.ac.uk.

Please indicate below that you have read the above, that you meet the eligibility criteria, and that you are willing to participate in this online survey.

Yes, proceed to the survey YES/NO

Your experience of the peer review process as an author

[Q1]: Over the last two years, how many times did you submit a paper to an economics journal? Please include only first-time submissions (not revisions), with submissions of the same paper to different journals counted separately. [Dropdown with numbers]

[Q2]: How would you rate the overall quality of the referee reports you received over this period? Please indicate what approximate percentage of reports were of the following quality (total should sum to 100):

Very low	[ ]
Fairly low	[ ]
Average	[ ]
Fairly high	[ ]
Very high	[ ]
Total	[100]

[Q3]: What were the characteristics of the low-quality reports? Please tick all that apply:

☐ Inaccurate statements about what the paper does or does not do

☐ Overly short report

☐ Very vague and unconstructive comments

☐ Written with an aggressive tone

☐ Personal insults

☐ Unrealistic demands

☐ Inconsistent demands

☐ Other - please specify: [TEXT BOX]

[Q4]: A referee report can achieve multiple objectives. How important do you consider each of the following objectives? Please rank 1-4 in order of importance (with 1 being most important) by dragging and dropping the various items: [1= most important, 2, 3; 4 = least important]

- Help editor reach an informed decision on the paper
- Give general comments that improve the paper
- Provide detailed feedback on the paper
- Make precise suggestions that improve the paper

[Q5]: As an author, what do you expect from the peer-review process? Please rank 1-3 in order of importance (with 1 being most important): [1 = most important, 2; 3 = least important]

- Getting useful feedback on my work
- A timely decision (whether good or bad)
- Getting a reasonable and well-substantiated decision

Improving the quality of peer reviews

[Q6]: Below is a list of proposals to improve peer reviews. On a scale from 1 to 5, how useful do you find each of them? [1 = not useful at all; 2, 3, 4; 5 = extremely useful]

i. Providing a set of guidelines for writing referee reports.

ii. Providing doctoral training on how to write peer reviews.

iii. Making the history of (anonymous) reviews and authors' responses publicly available.

iv. Removing the anonymity of senior referees.

v. Removing the anonymity of associate editors.

vi. Somehow grading reports and rewarding referees for high-quality reports.

vii. Encouraging the use of a platform that tracks referee activity in a centralized way.

viii. Making all reports available to all of the reviewers and making sure reviewers know this is being done.

Guidelines for writing a report

[Q7]: What type of comments do you find most useful or would you like to see more of? Please make 3 selections from the following list:

☐ Comments about the presentation of the results

☐ Suggestions to improve the existing analysis

☐ Suggestions about possible extensions

☐ Comments that help me clarify the contribution of the paper relative to the literature

☐ Comments about shortening/restructuring the paper

☐ Comments that put in perspective the assumptions made in the paper

☐ Comments about missing previous work and references

☐ Robustness checks

[Q8]: Do you think journals or associations should provide a template for referee reports? [YES/NO]

Information disclosure

[Q9]: In other disciplines, such as public health/medicine, many journals have an open peer review process: referees sign their reports and the entire review history (including responses to referees) is disclosed. On a scale from 1 to 5, how favorable would you be to an open review policy? [1 = not favorable at all; 2, 3, 4; 5 = very favorable]

[Q10]: What if this only applied to senior reviewers? [1 = not favorable at all; 2, 3, 4; 5 = very favorable]

[Q11]: Another recent trend is to make the history of reports/responses to referees publicly available in an anonymized way unless the reviewers choose to disclose their identity; see e.g., Nature Communcations. On a scale from 1 to 5, how favorable would you be to such a policy? [1 = not favorable at all; 2, 3, 4; 5 = very favorable]

Tracking referee activity

[Q12]: At the moment, there is no centralized system that would allow journal editors to:

- check how many peer review requests a researcher has recently received across all journals.
- find suitable referees who might be currently available to provide a peer review.

One platform called Publons allows researchers to document their (verified) peer review activity and to register their interest in doing peer reviews for journals. However, it is not widely used at the moment in economics.

On a scale from 1 to 5, how favorable would you be to the more widespread use of Publons or a similar type of platform? [1 = not favorable at all; 2, 3, 4; 5 = very favorable]

Recognition

[Q13]: Do you think that referees would do a better job if they were better rewarded for their work? [YES/NO]

[Q14]: How should referees be rewarded? Please tick all that apply:

☐ Excellence in refereeing awards based on specific criteria
☐ Payment for timely completion e.g., as at the *American Economic Review*
☐ Discount on submissions to the publisher
☐ Other - please specify: [TEXT BOX]

Improving the peer review process more generally

[Q15]: What do you think is an appropriate time length to give to reviewers to submit their reports (in weeks)? [Dropdown: From 1 to 16+ weeks]

[Q16]: How do you feel about the policy of having desk rejections? [1 = not favorable at all; 2, 3, 4; 5 = very favorable]

[Q17]: The American Economic Association started a new journal in 2017 called *AER: Insights*. This journal follows a model close to the one of medicine, with the endeavor to accept or reject papers without having to go through a lengthy revision process. Like the papers that *AER: Insights* is looking to publish, reports are supposed to be short and to the point. The whole process is supposed to be fast.

How favorable are you to this type of model? [1 = not favorable at all; 2, 3, 4; 5 = very favorable]

[Q18]: In the case of a rejection, the norm is not to challenge the decision made by the Editor or the views of the referees. This norm is not always followed in practice.

How favorable would you be to a policy allowing the authors to submit a (single) response to the referees and the Editor? The referees would be under no obligation to provide additional comments; a "cooling period" could be required before the authors can send their response. There would be no guarantee of the referees taking this rebuttal into account, and the decision would be final after the comment period. [1 = not favorable at all; 2, 3, 4; 5 = very favorable]

[Q19] (Only included in later survey versions): At journals such as *Management Science*, the review process is double-blind i.e., the identity of both the authors and the referees is kept anonymous. How favorable are you to double-blind reviewing? [1 = not favorable at all; 2, 3, 4; 5 = very favorable]

[Q20] (Only included in later survey versions): In some fields, authors are allowed to suggest that certain reviewers should be disqualified from reviewing their work. How favorable are you to this possibility? [1 = not favorable at all; 2, 3, 4; 5 = very favorable]

[Q21]: Are there other proposals you would like to make to improve the quality of peer reviews or the peer review process more generally? [TEXT BOX]

Your experience of the peer review process as a referee

[Q22]: On average, approximately how many referee reports do you write per year? [Dropdown with numbers]

[Q23]: What percentage of the time do you write referee reports for the following types of journals? (total should sum to 100):

top 5 journal	[ ]
Top field journal	[ ]
Other journal in Economics	[ ]
Journals in other disciplines	[ ]

Total [100]

[Q24]: Have you occupied or are you currently occupying an editorial position? [YES/NO]

[Q25]: Usually, how much time do you spend on a referee report, including reading the paper and writing the report? [Dropdown: Less than one hour, 1 or 2 hours, Half a working day, 1 day, 2 days, More than 2 days]

[Q26]: Over the past two years, what percentage of the time were you late submitting a referee report? [0, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 100]

[Q27] [*If Q26 answer* > 0]: On average, what was your delay? [Dropdown: 1 day, More than 1 day & less than 1 week, 1-2 weeks, 3-4 weeks, More than a month]

[Q28]: What do you think is a reasonable number of reports to be assigned per year? [Dropdown with numbers]

[Q29]: Did you reject a request to referee over these past two years? [YES/NO]

[Q30]: How many times did you reject a request to referee? [Dropdown with numbers]

[Q31]: What were the main reasons? Please tick all that apply:

☐ Conflict of interest
☐ Inability to judge the paper
☐ Too remote from your research field
☐ Lack of time
☐ Low quality paper
☐ Lower-ranked journal
☐ Other - please specify: [TEXT BOX]

[Q32]: How many times did you feel tempted to decline a report even if you ended up fulfilling the request? [Dropdown with numbers]

[Q33]: When you were tempted to decline a report, what were the main reasons? Please tick all that apply:

☐ Conflict of interest

☐ Inability to judge the paper

☐ Too remote from your research field

☐ Lack of time

☐ Low quality paper

☐ Lower-ranked journal

☐ Other - please specify: [TEXT BOX]

[Q34]: How do you feel about people refereeing papers by co-authors or friends?

- This should never happen.
- This should happen as little as possible but cannot be avoided sometimes.
- This is not a problem as long as the editor is aware of the potential conflict of interest.
- This is not a problem and there is no reason to inform the editor.

[Q35]: What do you see as the biggest benefits of being a referee? Please rank 1-5 in order of importance (with 1 being most important) by dragging and dropping the various items: [1 = most important; 2, 3, 4; 5 = least important]

i. I can help to ensure the right papers are published or rejected

ii. I can get to know the editors and make myself known.

iii. I can learn from the opinion of the other referees and the editor.

iv. I can attentively read papers I would never read otherwise.

v. Being a referee makes me a better writer.

[Q36]: How important do you consider your role as a referee? [1 = most important; 2, 3, 4; 5 = least important]

[Q37]: How could your experience as a referee be improved? Please rank 1-4 in order of importance [1 = most important; 2, 3; 4 = least important]

i. There is a global annual limit on how many papers I am requested to review.

ii. The editors give clear guidance of what they would like to learn from my report.

iii. The editors systematically share their decision and the other reports.

iv. The editors assign me only papers that are related to my research.

[Q38]: Please enter below any additional suggestion(s) to improve your experience as a referee: [TEXT BOX]

A little more about you

[Q39]: How many papers have you published in your career up to now? Please indicate a ballpark estimate. [TEXT BOX]

[Q40]: What are your key areas of research? Please select all that apply:

- Applied econometrics
- Applied microeconomics
- Behavioral economics
- Decision theory
- Development economics
- Economic history
- Econometric theory
- Experimental economics
- Financial economics
- Game theory
- Industrial organization
- International trade
- Labor economics
- Macroeconomics
- Microeconomic theory
- Political economy
- Public economics
- Structural econometrics

- Urban economics
- Other - indicate: [TEXT BOX]

[Q41]: What is your gender? [Dropdown: Male, Female, Other, Prefer not to say]

[Q42]: What is your age? [Dropdown: Under 30, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70+, Prefer not to say]

[Q43]: What is your position? [Dropdown: PhD candidate, Post-doctoral researcher, Assistant professor, Associate professor, Full professor, Prefer not to say]

[Q44]: In what country is your job located? [Dropdown]

[Q45]: Finally, if you have any comments about the survey itself, feel free to add in the text box below: [TEXT BOX]