


NFDI4Earth

NFDI4Earth Report

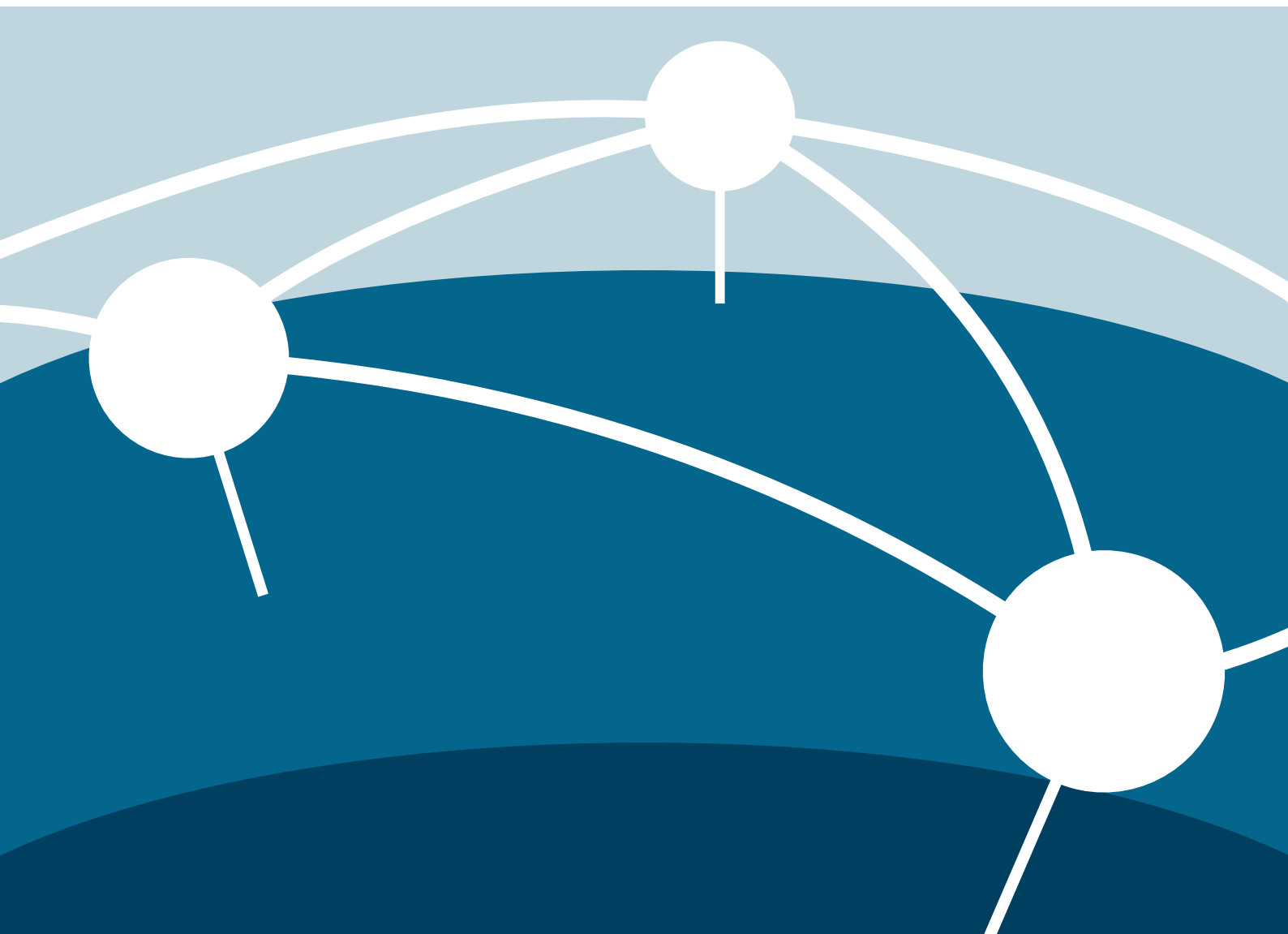
Results of online survey on incentives for FAIR and open data practices

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Executive summary

To better understand the current attitudes and practices surrounding the principles of fairness and openness in research data management, an online survey targeting researchers in the German Earth System Sciences community was conducted. Participants were asked to provide insights into their current practices and into reasons that would motivate them to engage in these practices more often.

The survey started with questions about the status of the participant, the institutional affiliation and the disciplinary field of work. Then, FAIR and open data practices were addressed with four questions about the general relevance of FAIR and open data practices, the engagement in FAIR and open data practices in research and teaching/education activities, and about incentives that would motivate participants to perform FAIR and open data practices more often. This was followed by two questions about data sharing: drivers of data sharing as well as reasons for not to share data. The survey was designed to take approximately 10 min to answer.

This report presents the results of the online survey. The interpretation of the results will be part of a future follow-up report.

Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. The survey	1
3. Results: status / institutional affiliation / field of work	3
3.1. Status	3
3.2. Institutional affiliation	5
3.3. Discipline	6
4. Results: FAIR and open data practices	8
4.1. How important do you think the expansion of FAIR and open data practices is for research as a whole?	8
4.2. When working with data, how often do you engage in the following FAIR and open data practices?	11
4.3. In case you are designing curricula, teaching students or supervising PhD students, which of the following practices do you perform?	14
4.4. What would motivate you to perform FAIR and open data practices more often? .	15
5. Results: Data sharing	18
5.1. How important are the following drivers for you to share your data?	18
5.2. How important are the following reasons for you to not share your data?	20
A. Appendix	24
A.1. Outline of the online survey on “Incentives for FAIR and open data practices” . .	24

List of Figures

1.	Status groups of participants of the online survey	3
2.	Bar chart of answers to the question about the institutional affiliation	5
3.	Bar chart of answers to the question “Which Earth System Science (ESS) field is your major field of work?”	6
4.	Bar chart of answers to the question “How important do you think the expansion of FAIR and open data practices is for research as a whole?”	8
5.	Bar chart of answers to the question “How important do you think the expansion of FAIR and open data practices is for research as a whole?” combined with status information of the participants	9
6.	Bar chart of answers to the question “How important do you think the expansion of FAIR and open data practices is for research as a whole?” combined with disciplinary affiliation information of the participants	10
7.	Bar chart of answers to the question “When working with data, how often do you engage in the following FAIR and open data practices?” N<114 indicates that some participants clicked on the option “not applicable to me” (the latter is not shown in the bar chart). Example: “Depositing data and software in suitable repositories” was ranked by 107 participants, 7 participants clicked on “not applicable to me” .	11
8.	Bar chart of answers to the question “When working with data, how often do you engage in the following FAIR and open data practices?”, only answers “always” and “often”, ordered in terms of percentage of answers	12
9.	Bar chart of answers to the question “When working with data, how often do you engage in the following FAIR and open data practices?”, only answers “always” and “often” (see Fig. 8, calculated to 100%, grey bars in the background), combined with status information of the participants	13
10.	Bar chart of answers to the question “In case you are designing curricula, teaching students or supervising PhD students, which of the following practices do you perform?”. N=53 participants answered positively at least on one of the options 1-4; 61 participants clicked on the option “not applicable to me” (the latter is not shown in the bar chart)	14
11.	Bar chart of answers to the question “What would motivate you to perform FAIR and open data practices more often?”	15
12.	Bar chart of answers to the question “What would motivate you to perform FAIR and open data practices more often?”. Only answers “very strong motivator” and “strong motivator”, ordered in terms of percentage of answers	16

- 13. Bar chart of answers to the question “What would motivate you to perform FAIR and open data practices more often?”. Only answers “very strong motivator” and “strong motivator” (see Fig. 12, calculated to 100%, grey bars in the background), combined with status information of the participants 17
- 14. Bar chart of answers to the question “How important are the following drivers for you to share your data?” 18
- 15. Bar chart of answers to the question “How important are the following drivers for you to share your data?”. Only answers “very important” and “important”, ordered in terms of percentage of answers. 19
- 16. Bar chart of answers to the question “How important are the following drivers for you to share your data?”. Only answers “very important” and “important” (see Fig. 16, calculated to 100%, grey bars in the background), combined with status information of the participants 19
- 17. Bar chart of answers to the question “How important are the following reasons for you to not share your data?” 20
- 18. Bar chart of answers to the question “How important are the following reasons for you to not share your data?”. Only answers “very important” and “important”, ordered in terms of percentage of answers 22
- 19. Bar chart of answers to the question “How important are the following reasons for you to not share your data?”. Only answers “very important” and “important” (see Fig. 18, calculated to 100%, grey bars in the background), combined with status information of the participants 23

List of Tables

1.	Free text entries for the field “My status: I respond to this survey... [Other]”. *the original quote was substituted by „Leadership position” for privacy protection reasons. “x” indicates that this participant’s answer was moved to the category “postdoc”	4
2.	Free text entries for the field “I work at ... [Other]”.	5
3.	Data summary of the answers for the question “Which Earth System Science (ESS) field is your major field of work?”.	6
4.	Free text entries for the field “Which Earth System Science (ESS) field is your major field of work? [Other]”.	7
5.	Free text entries for the field “In case you are designing curricula, teaching students or supervising PhD students, which of the following practices do you perform?... [Other]”.	14
6.	Free text entries for the field “How important are the following drivers for you to share your data?... [Other]”.	18
7.	Free text entries for the field “How important are the following reasons for you to not share your data?... [Other]”.	20

1. Introduction

In the rapidly evolving landscape of scientific research, the principles of fairness and openness in research data management have gained significant prominence. To better understand the current attitudes and practices surrounding these principles, we conducted an online survey targeting researchers in the German Earth System Sciences community. This report presents the findings of our survey, shedding light on the perspectives and experiences of researchers in relation to FAIR and open research data practices.

The survey aimed to capture a comprehensive view of the existing practices, challenges, and opportunities associated with FAIR and open data practices in general and with the sharing of research data in particular. Participants were asked to provide insights into their current practices and into reasons that would motivate them to engage in these practices more often.

This report presents the results of the online survey. The survey is part of the work in the measure M4.2 "Towards a Cultural Change in Earth System Sciences Research Data Management" of the NFDI-Consortium 4Earth.

2. The survey

The survey was structured in the way that it started with questions about the status of the participant and the disciplinary field of work (see below). Then, FAIR and open data practices were addressed: about the general relevance of FAIR and open data practices, the engagement in FAIR and open data practices in research and teaching/education activities, and about incentives that would motivate participants to perform FAIR and open data practices more often. This was followed by two questions about data sharing: drivers of data sharing and reasons for not to share data. The survey was designed to take approximately 10 min to answer.

1. Status / Institutional affiliation / Field of work

2. FAIR and open data practices

- How often do you engage in certain FAIR and open data practices?
 - Research
 - Teaching/Education
- Motivations to perform FAIR and open data practices more often?

3. Data sharing

- How important are the following drivers to share your data?

- How important are the following reasons to not share your data?

A pretest of the survey was conducted with four researchers and two persons from a university research data management team and resulted in valuable feedback especially on the clarity of the questions.

The request to participate in the online survey was distributed in October 2023. It was sent via Email to all NFDI4Earth consortium members contact persons and, as far as know, to their institutional research data management teams of participant institutions. This included the request to circulate this information in the relevant sections and departments of the respective institution. The invitation to participate in the online survey was also circulated via the NFDI4Earth email list, in the NFDI4Earth newsletter and was prominently placed on the NFDI4Earth website. The online survey was open until 17 December 2023.

Participants

Overall, 151 persons participated in the online survey. 115 participants completed the survey, however, one of these answers stemmed obviously from the test phase of the survey and was excluded from the analysis. Therefore, 114 completed answers were considered in the analysis of the online survey.

3. Results: status / institutional affiliation / field of work

3.1. Status

The largest (professional) status group of participants is “postdocs”. 42 participants indicated to be postdocs in the survey and 32 persons checked “other” and added a job description in the free text field. However, 27 participants of the group “other” indicated to be researchers, senior scientists, „wissenschaftliche(r) Mitarbeiter(in)“, or alike (Tab. 1). This group of 27 was shifted to the group of postdocs, because “postdoc” in this survey encompasses all career stages between persons with finished dissertation and professor. This results in 69 persons (60,5%) to belong to the group of “postdocs”. The second largest group of participants were PhD students (n=28; 24,6%), followed by professors (n=11; 9,6%). 4 participants were Data manager/Data steward, 1 indicated to be in a leadership position, 1 participant was lecturer and 1 was BSc/MSc student.

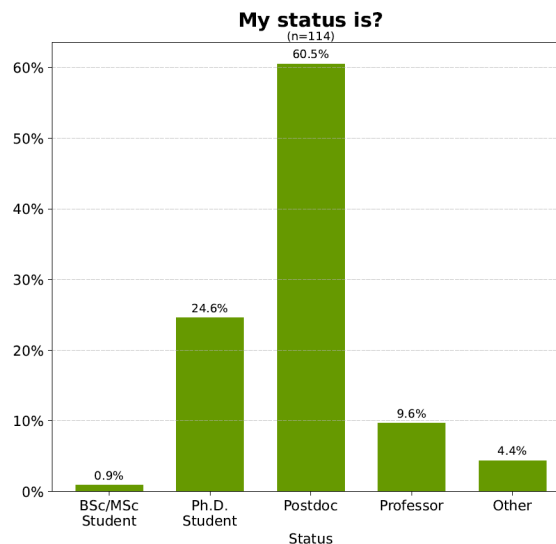


Figure 1: Status groups of participants of the online survey

3.2. Institutional affiliation

49 participants work at a non-university institution, 59 participants work at universities. 6 participants stated different affiliations in “other” (Fig. 2).

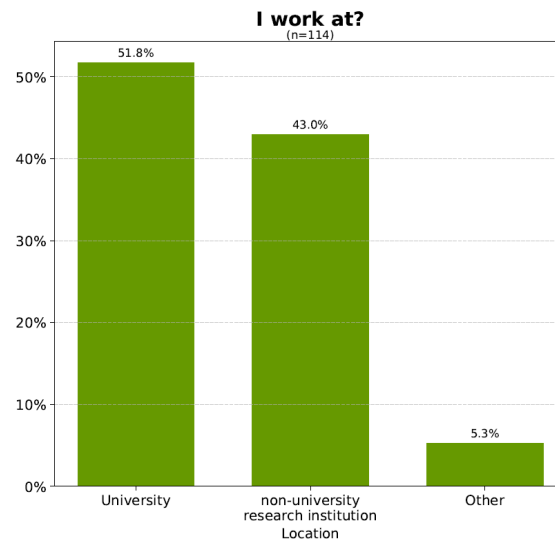


Figure 2: Bar chart of answers to the question about the institutional affiliation

Table 2: Free text entries for the field “I work at ... [Other]”.

I work at ... [Other]: free text entries

Federal Agency

government institute

I work at bot types of isititutes above.

KIT

National Hydrological Service

research facility

3.3. Discipline

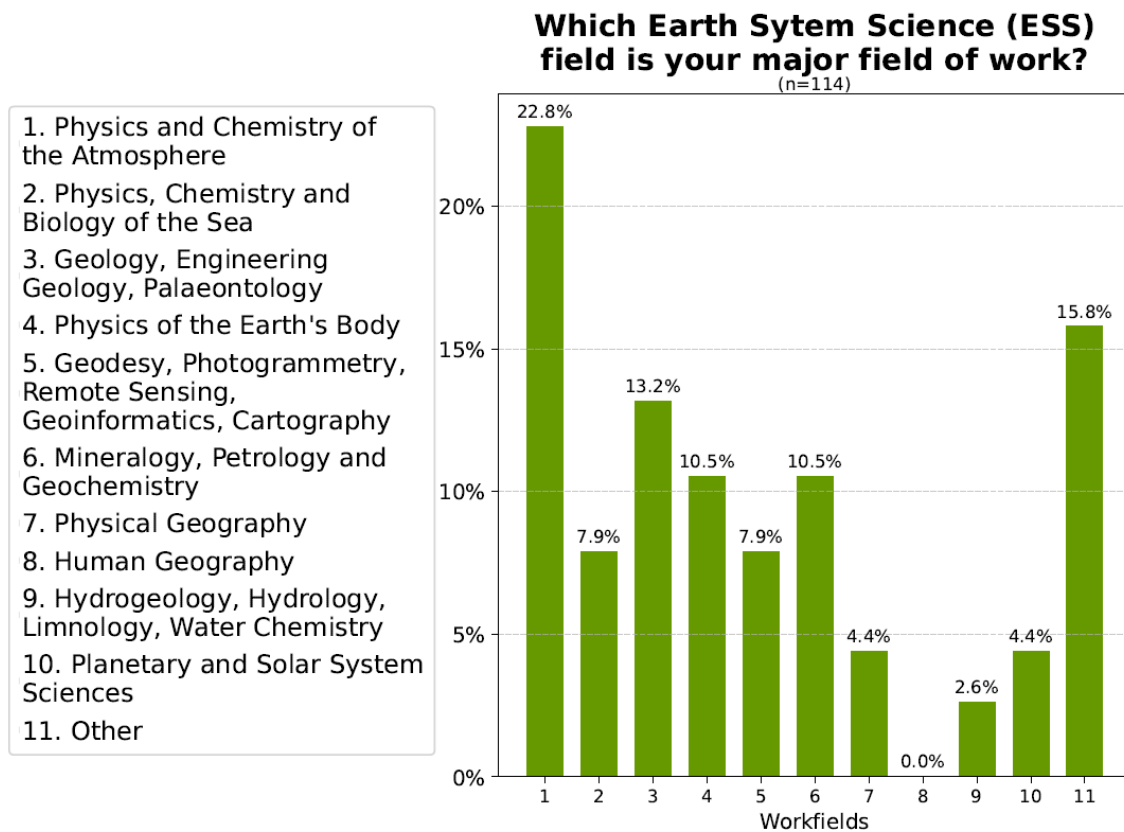


Figure 3: Bar chart of answers to the question “Which Earth System Science (ESS) field is your major field of work?”

Table 3: Data summary of the answers for the question “Which Earth System Science (ESS) field is your major field of work?”.

Discipline	[%]	n
Physics and Chemistry of the Atmosphere	22,8	26
Geology, Engineering Geology, Palaeontology	13,2	15
Physics of the Earth's Body	10,5	12
Mineralogy, Petrology and Geochemistry	10,5	12
Physics, Chemistry and Biology of the Sea	7,9	9
Geodesy, Photogrammetry, Remote Sensing, Geoinformatics, Cartography	7,9	9
Physical Geography	4,4	5
Planetary and Solar System Sciences	4,4	5
Hydrogeology, Hydrology, Limnology, Water Chemistry	2,6	3
Human Geography	0	0

Discipline	[%]	n
Other	15,8	18

Table 4: Free text entries for the field “Which Earth System Science (ESS) field is your major field of work? [Other]”.

Which Earth System Science (ESS) field is your major field of work? [Other]: free text entries

biogeochemistry
 Biogeosciences
 Climate Mitigation (Economics)
 Climate science
 Climate science of the atmosphere, ocean, and land cryosphere; modelling
 Computational science
 Cryosphere
 Crystallography, Solid state physics, Mineralogy
 Ecology
 Environmental Sciences
 ESS Data Science and Management
 Geophysics
 Glaciology, Geophysics
 Limnology and Ocean Sciences, Microbiology, Remote Sensing
 Palaeoclimate
 Physics of the Ocean
 Terrestrial biogeochemical cycles

4. Results: FAIR and open data practices

4.1. How important do you think the expansion of FAIR and open data practices is for research as a whole?

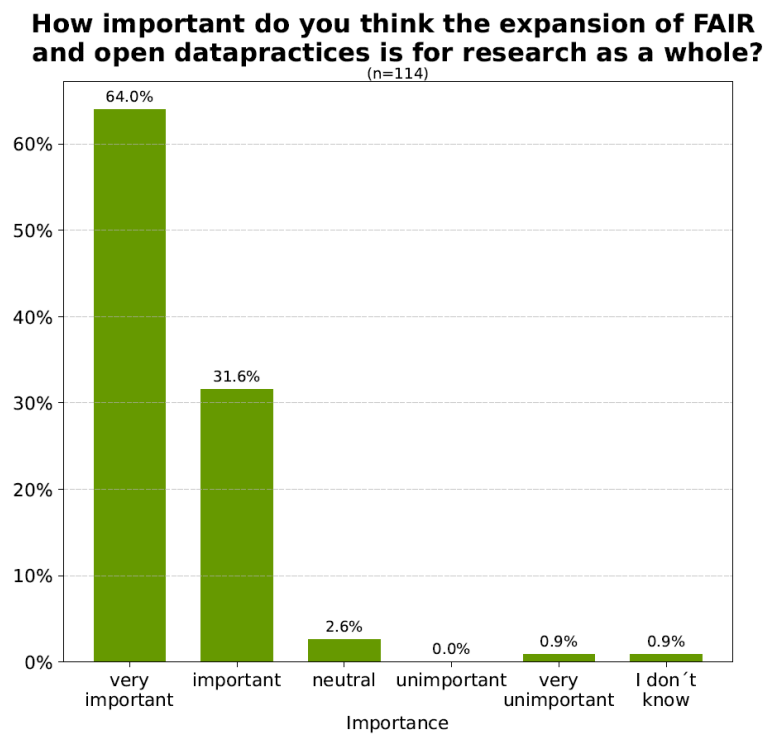


Figure 4: Bar chart of answers to the question “How important do you think the expansion of FAIR and open data practices is for research as a whole?”

How important do you think the expansion of FAIR and open data practices is for research as a whole?
(n=114)

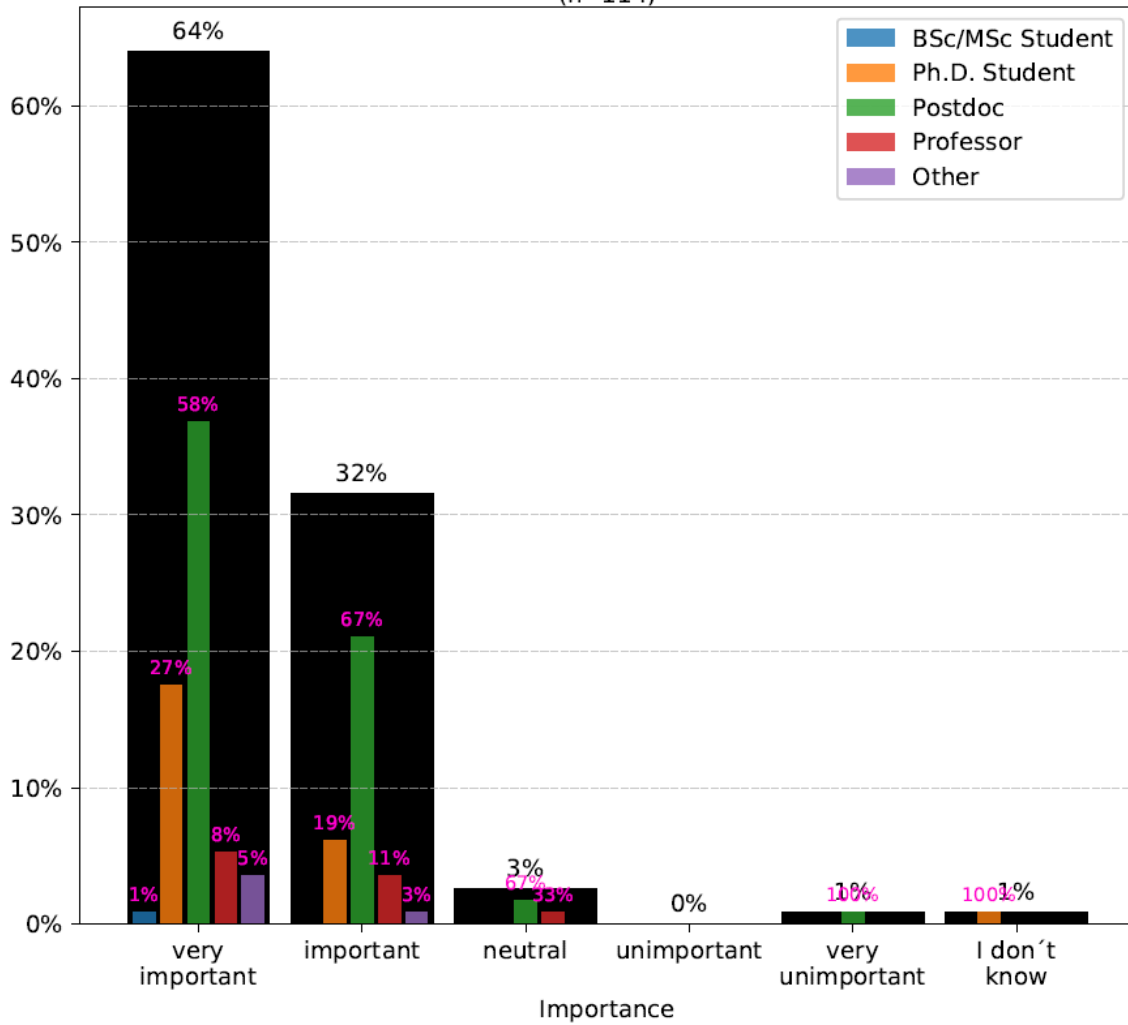


Figure 5: Bar chart of answers to the question “How important do you think the expansion of FAIR and open data practices is for research as a whole?” combined with status information of the participants

How important do you think the expansion of FAIR and open data practices is for research as a whole?
(n=114)

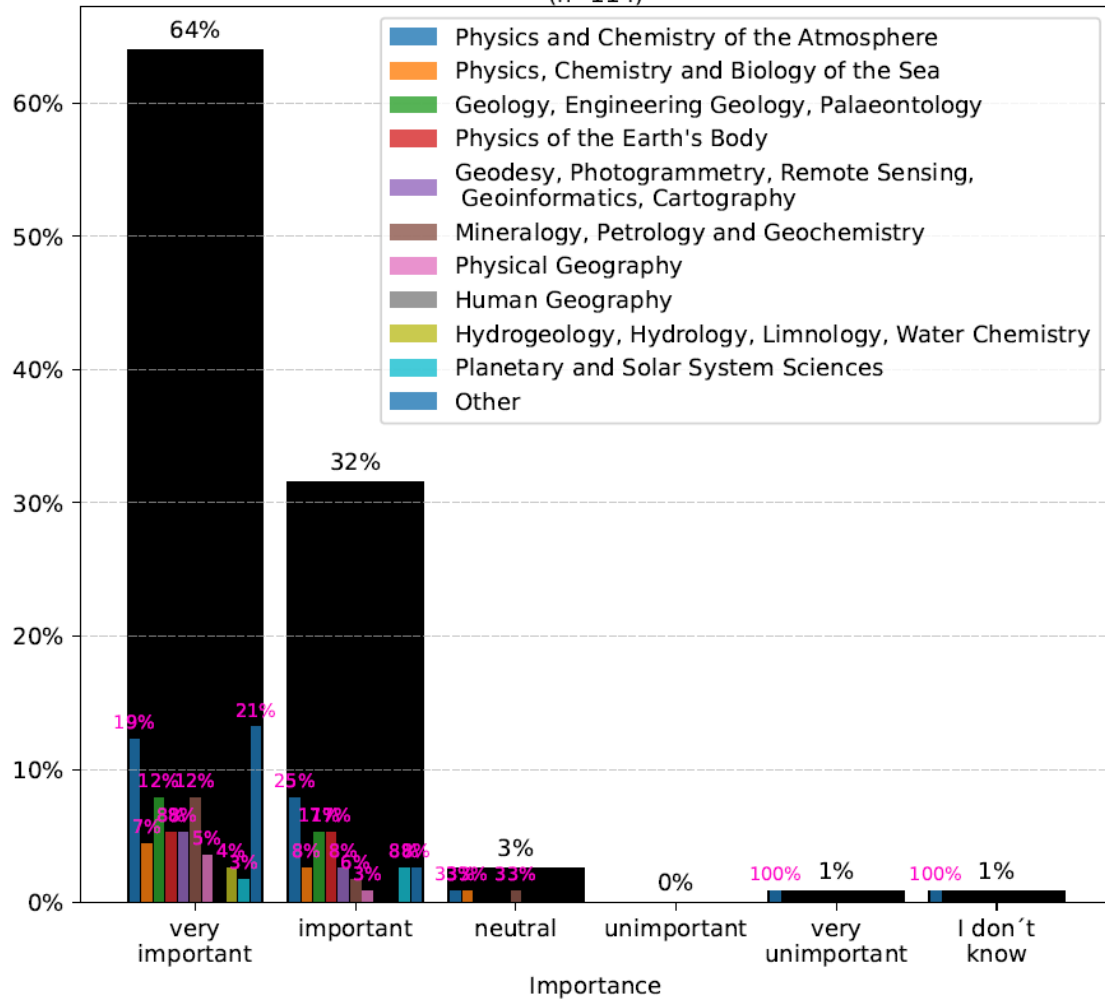


Figure 6: Bar chart of answers to the question “How important do you think the expansion of FAIR and open data practices is for research as a whole?” combined with disciplinary affiliation information of the participants

4.2. When working with data, how often do you engage in the following FAIR and open data practices?

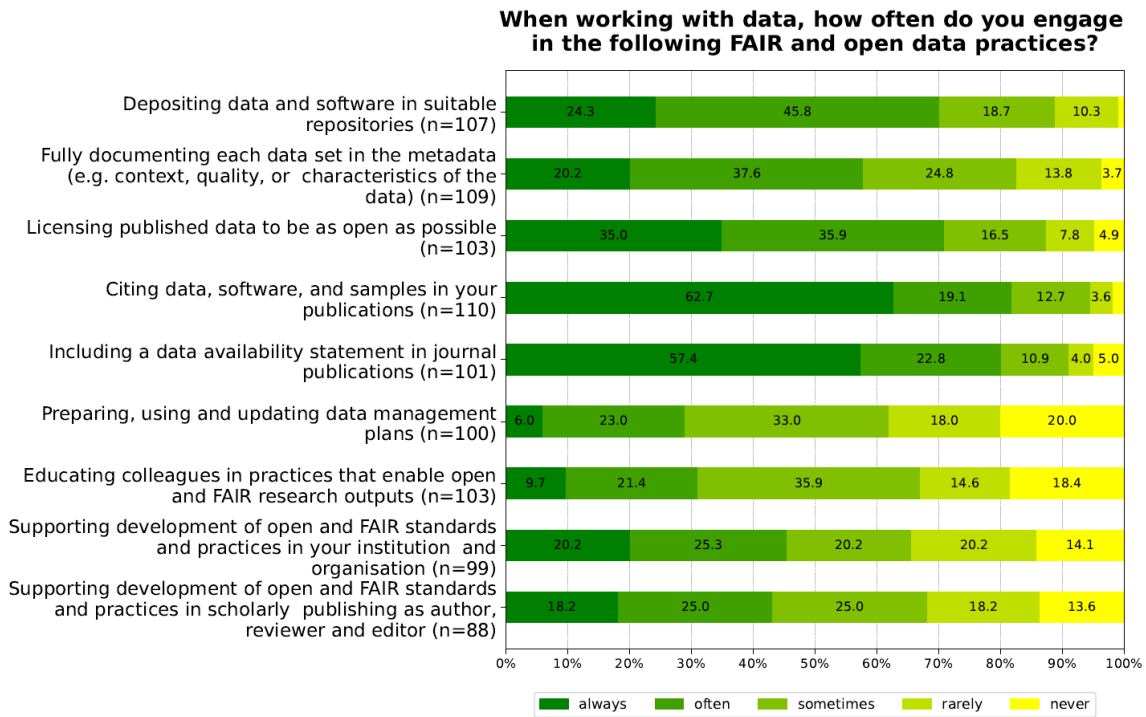


Figure 7: Bar chart of answers to the question “When working with data, how often do you engage in the following FAIR and open data practices?” N<114 indicates that some participants clicked on the option “not applicable to me” (the latter is not shown in the bar chart). Example: “Depositing data and software in suitable repositories” was ranked by 107 participants, 7 participants clicked on “not applicable to me”

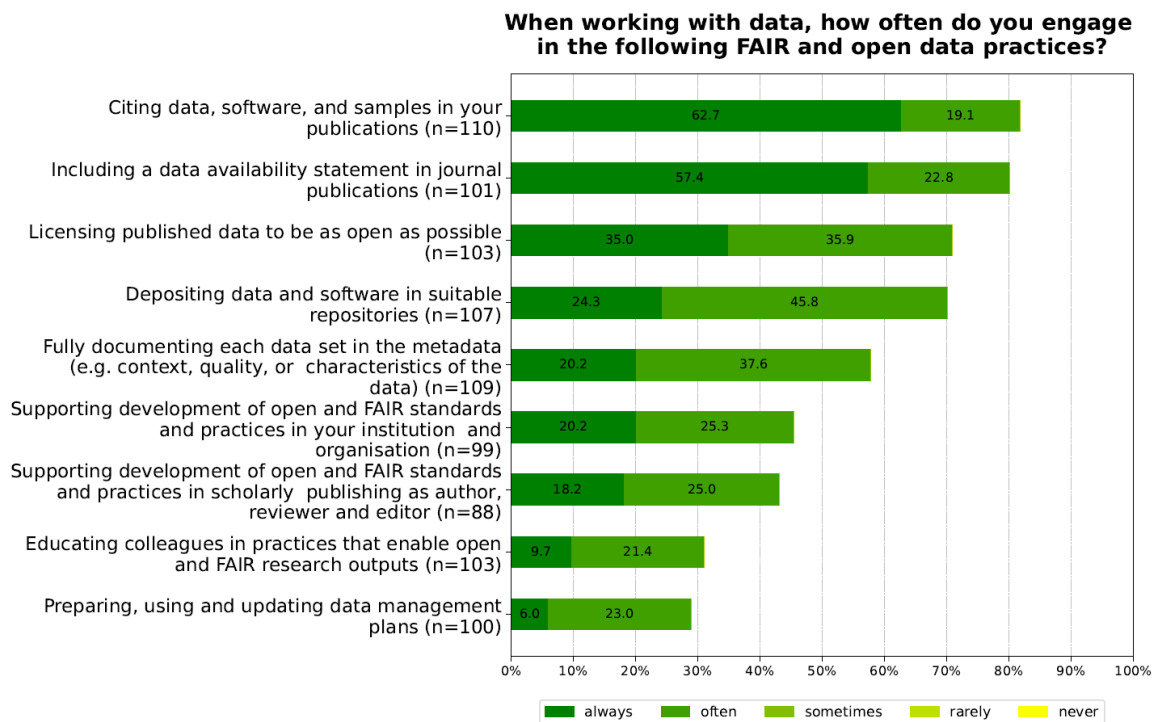


Figure 8: Bar chart of answers to the question “When working with data, how often do you engage in the following FAIR and open data practices?”, only answers “always” and “often”, ordered in terms of percentage of answers

When working with data, how often do you engage in the following FAIR and open data practices?

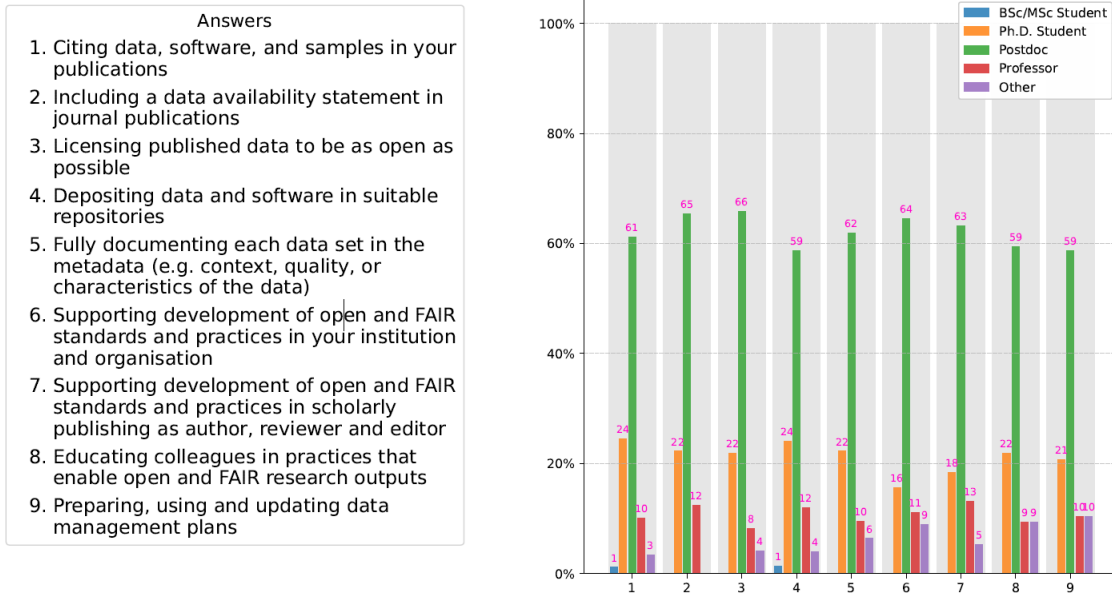


Figure 9: Bar chart of answers to the question “When working with data, how often do you engage in the following FAIR and open data practices?”, only answers “always” and “often” (see Fig. 8, calculated to 100%, grey bars in the background), combined with status information of the participants

4.3. In case you are designing curricula, teaching students or supervising PhD students, which of the following practices do you perform?

While the previous question related to research practices, this question relates to teaching and training of FAIR and open research practices and management.

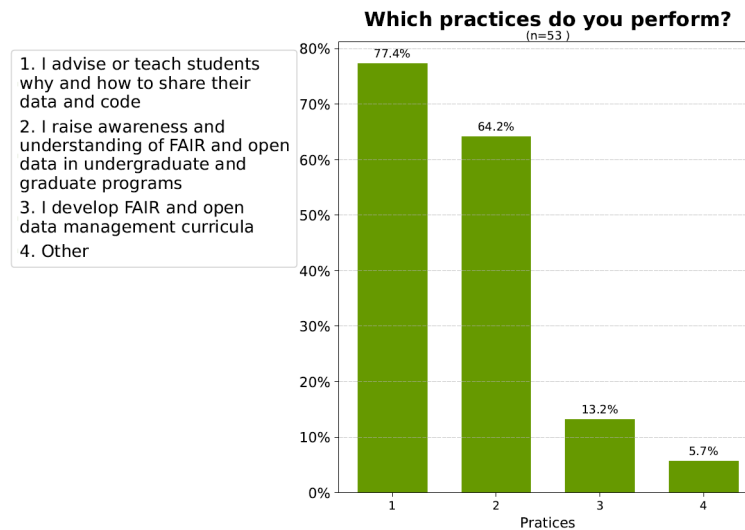


Figure 10: Bar chart of answers to the question “In case you are designing curricula, teaching students or supervising PhD students, which of the following practices do you perform?”. N=53 participants answered positively at least on one of the options 1-4; 61 participants clicked on the option “not applicable to me” (the latter is not shown in the bar chart)

Table 5: Free text entries for the field “In case you are designing curricula, teaching students or supervising PhD students, which of the following practices do you perform?... [Other]”.

In case you are designing curricula, teaching students or supervising PhD students, which of the following practices do you perform?... [Other]: free text entries

I am not teacher, only researcher

none

Recommend NFDI4Earth academy

4.4. What would motivate you to perform FAIR and open data practices more often?

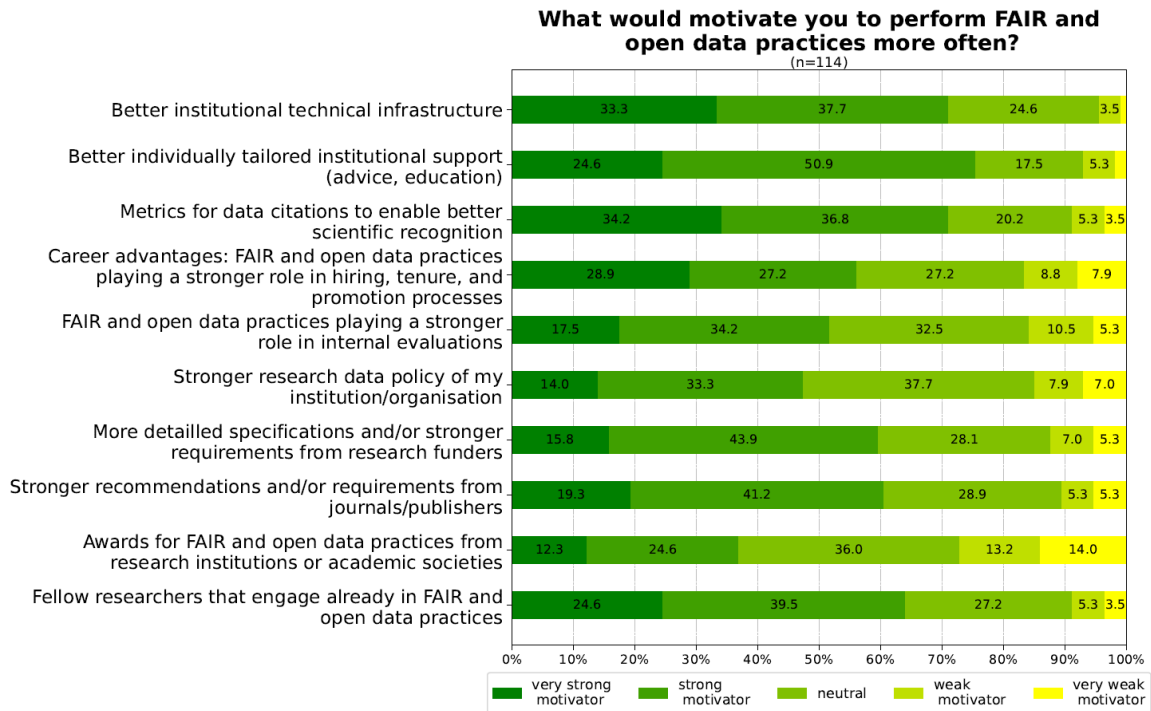


Figure 11: Bar chart of answers to the question “What would motivate you to perform FAIR and open data practices more often?”

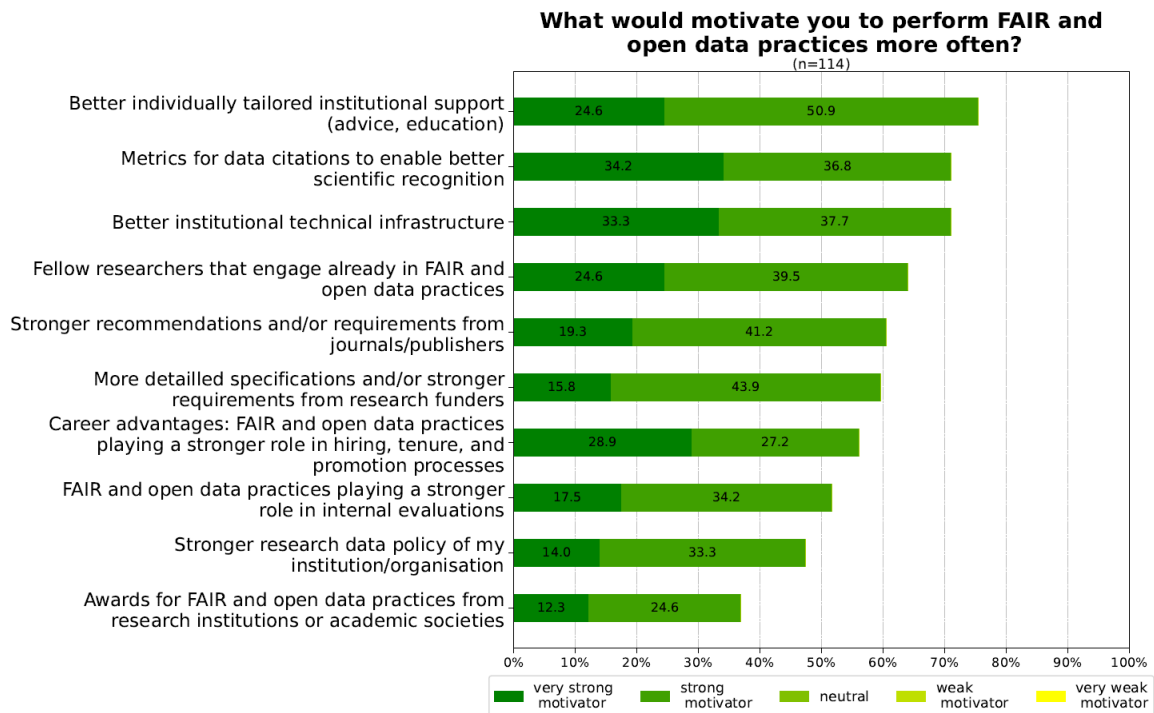


Figure 12: Bar chart of answers to the question “What would motivate you to perform FAIR and open data practices more often?”. Only answers “very strong motivator” and “strong motivator”, ordered in terms of percentage of answers

What would motivate you to perform FAIR and open data practices more often?

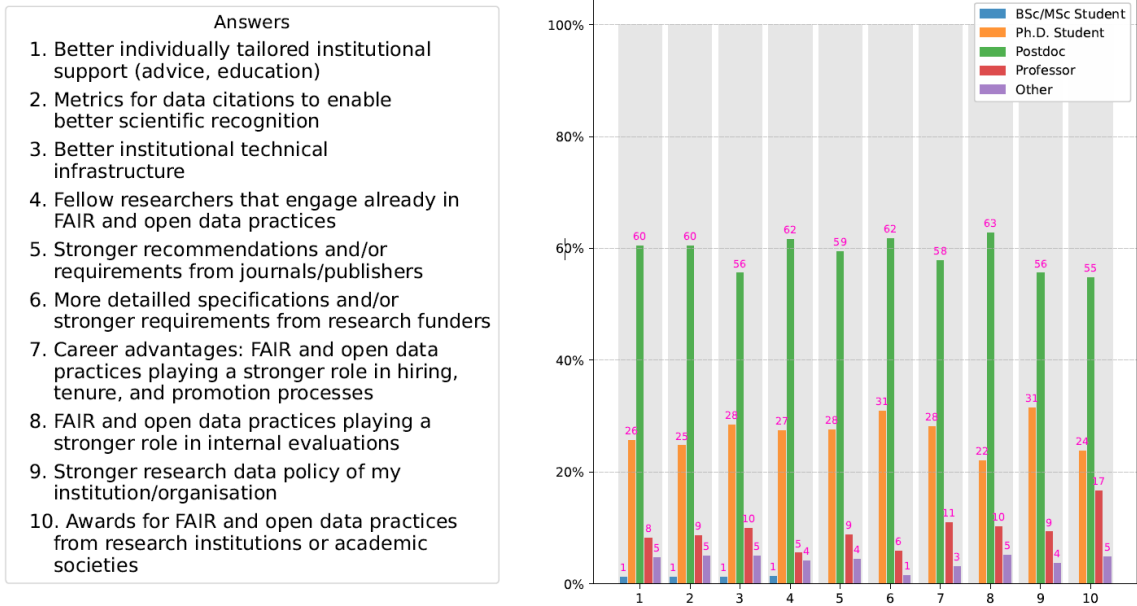


Figure 13: Bar chart of answers to the question “What would motivate you to perform FAIR and open data practices more often?”. Only answers “very strong motivator” and “strong motivator” (see Fig. 12, calculated to 100%, grey bars in the background), combined with status information of the participants

5. Results: Data sharing

5.1. How important are the following drivers for you to share your data?

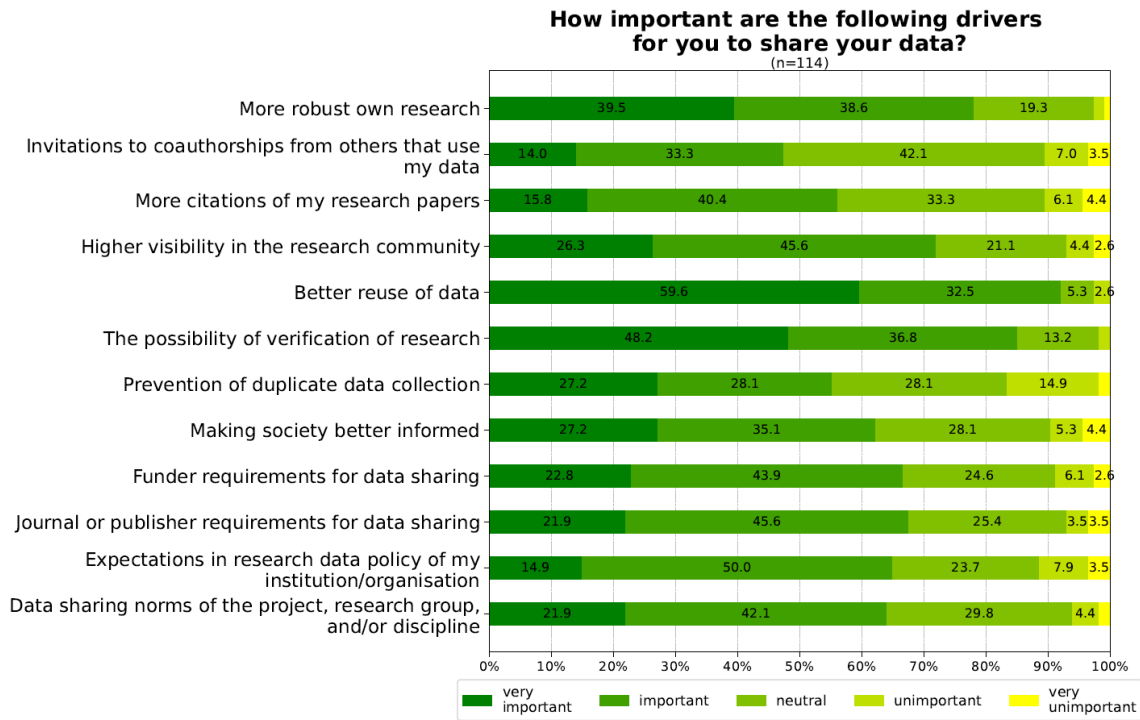


Figure 14: Bar chart of answers to the question “How important are the following drivers for you to share your data?”

Table 6: Free text entries for the field “How important are the following drivers for you to share your data?... [Other]”.

How important are the following drivers for you to share your data?... [Other]: free text entries

(1) We might not be able to collect data in certain areas due to political and/or environmental restrictions (scientific marine research)! (2) Cuts in the research budget might result in reusing legacy data. (3) FAIR data enables AI.

Allows for worldwide and syntheses studies.

Enable adaption and repurposing of research output (“frugal innovation”)

enhance reliability of research outputs

European and German law

It's fun :)

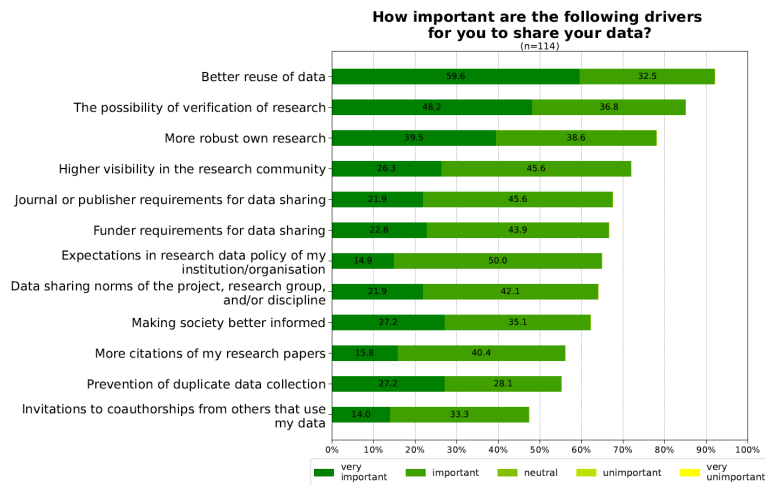


Figure 15: Bar chart of answers to the question “How important are the following drivers for you to share your data?”. Only answers “very important” and “important”, ordered in terms of percentage of answers.

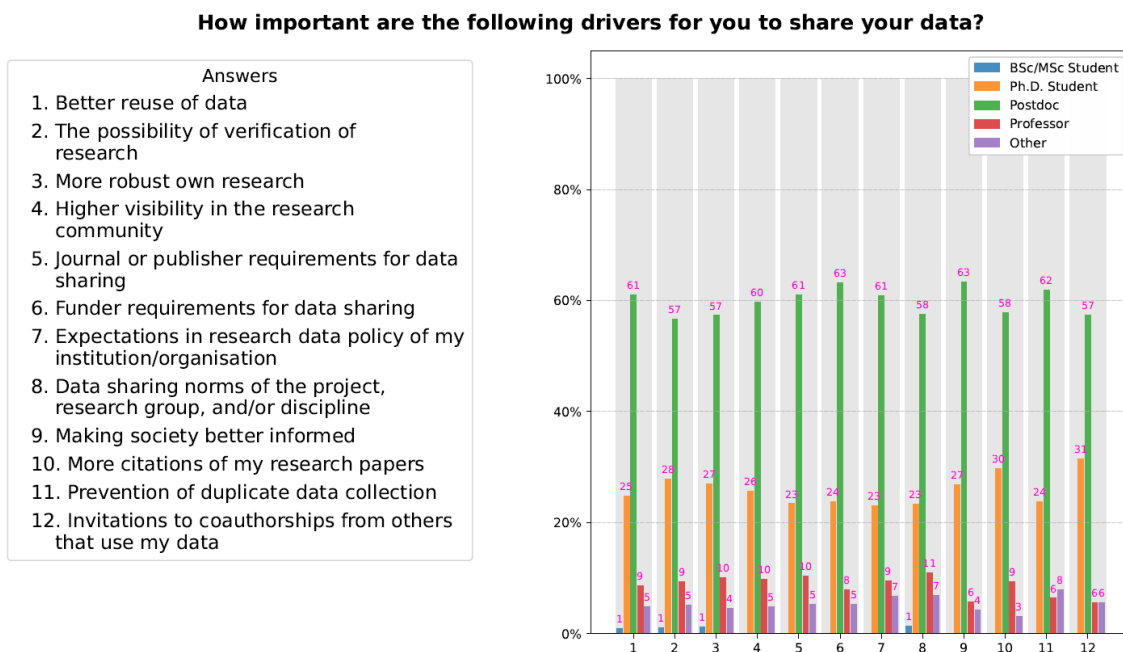


Figure 16: Bar chart of answers to the question “How important are the following drivers for you to share your data?”. Only answers “very important” and “important” (see Fig. 16, calculated to 100%, grey bars in the background), combined with status information of the participants

5.2. How important are the following reasons for you to not share your data?

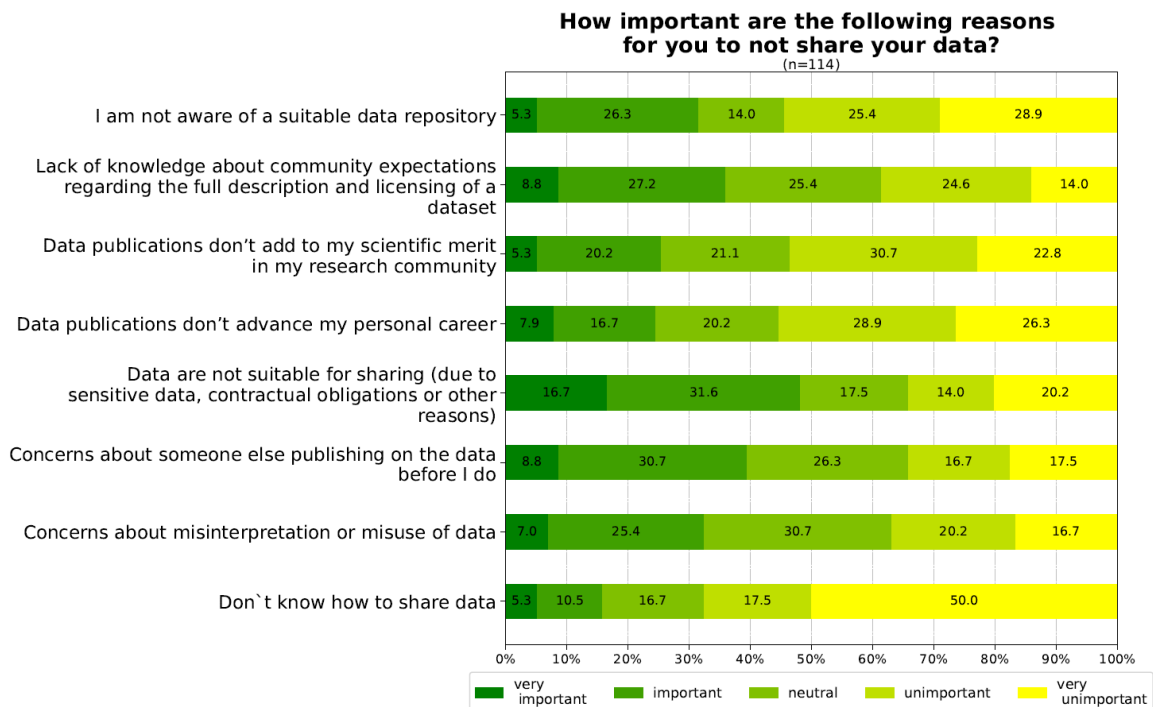


Figure 17: Bar chart of answers to the question “How important are the following reasons for you to not share your data?”

Table 7: Free text entries for the field “How important are the following reasons for you to not share your data?... [Other]”.

How important are the following reasons for you to not share your data?... [Other]: free text entries

(1) Takes time, which I do not have and am not paid for. (2) Starting proper data sharing needs resources to implement standards for meta-data or to merge meta-data standards to own data. (3) Formats for data sharing are either not defined or are not applicable to my data-sets. I simply do not know, what to share (huge binary data sets or interpreted data tables?). I work in a group that develops new monitoring tools, and as such has very unique data sets...

a lot of work

Adding sufficient documentation and metadata is time consuming

Becoming legally vulnerable in case of misuse or other problems

Being scooped by organizations with more manpower and resources is a real threat that should not be underestimated, and I have witnessed that in connection with gross misinterpretation and miserable science, which is then also bad for the reputation of the data set itself.

Comment on “Concerns about misinterpretation or misuse of data”: Therefore, data descriptor papers should be accompanied by potentially misinterpretable data.

data might be so specific that there might not be common interest in them

data preliminary, missing QC and hence not published.

How important are the following reasons for you to not share your data?... [Other]: free text entries

For a very massive amount of modeling data, it can be a real drag if we have to adjust the data format and add, by the community required, metadata information. Sometimes the labor resources are not always available.

I don't think these questions are properly phrased. What is the correct answer to "I am not aware of a suitable data repository" when I am aware of repositories, but I don't want to store data in them?

If "data sharing" here includes "software code": I do not think, multi-year efforts in writing software code should be shared within a single click.

It happened to me that my repositories were cited and not the accompanying publications themselves. One time not even due to an error of the authors, but the journal changed the reference list during typesetting cancelling the paper citation and leaving only the data and code doi. That is very unpleasant considering that only the paper citations are accounted in research metrics.

It takes a lot of time to prepare the metadata and the actual data submission: important

Like to emphasize that main barrier in our research field is content protection (e.g. occurrence of endangered species or economically minerals), however, techniques like blurring of data points can often applied.

Makes the publishing process more time consuming. There are already so many forms to fill
no resources (esp. time)

no standard data format, very complicated to bring data in useable format for other researchers, as data acquisition is complex and non-standard with inhouse developed unique equipment

Research work is still carried out and needs first to be published until data should be available. This is in particular important for Ph.D. projects.

Security reasons, intellectual property protection, commercial interest

Technical challenges: the data I generate (spatially resolved maps and point measurements located on a sample surface (often thin sections) is hard to sensibly archive, as it would be very important to preserve *where* on the sample the data was taken with high precision, with relation to an overview image and other spatially resolved datasets from the same sample. This is currently not available.

There are no reasons for not sharing data as research is funded by taxes unless data has been paid by companies not bound by law to publish.

There is still no good way to share terabytes of model output. Thus, we always have to extract data for a few variables (those used in publications) rather than sharing all of the model output. It would be valuable if there were a repository where all raw model output could be uploaded.

Too large data sets to be fully shared on a public repository

volume of data

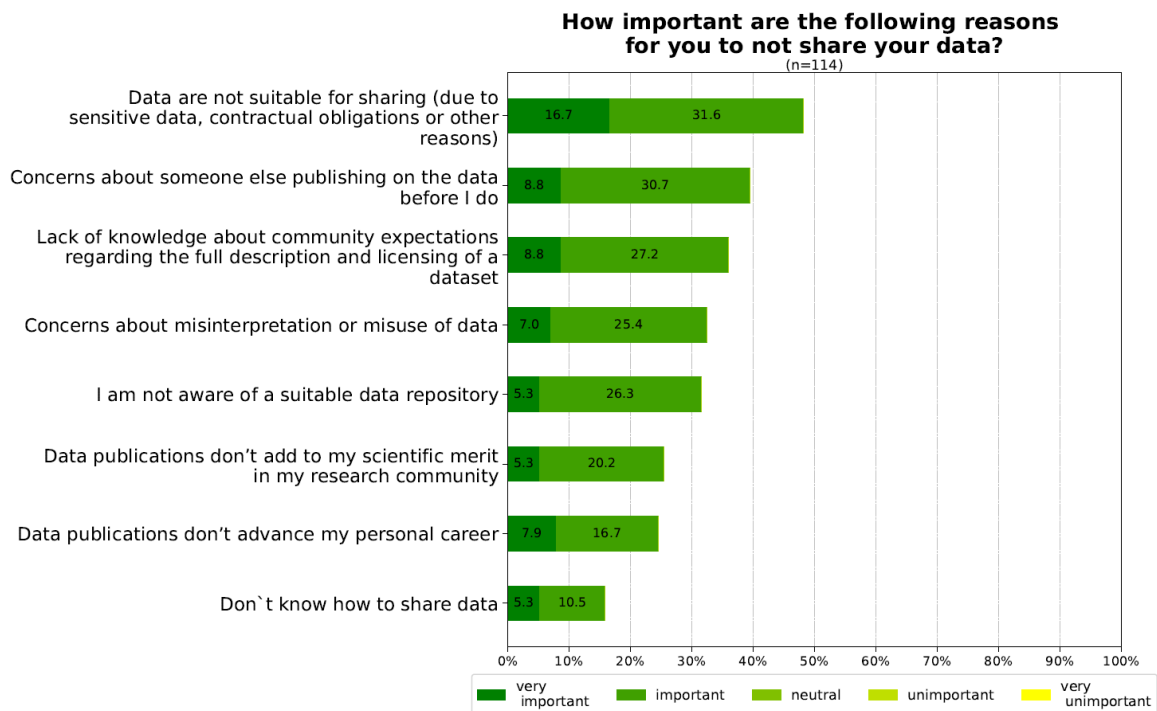


Figure 18: Bar chart of answers to the question “How important are the following reasons for you to not share your data?”. Only answers “very important” and important”, ordered in terms of percentage of answers

How important are the following reasons for you to not share your data?

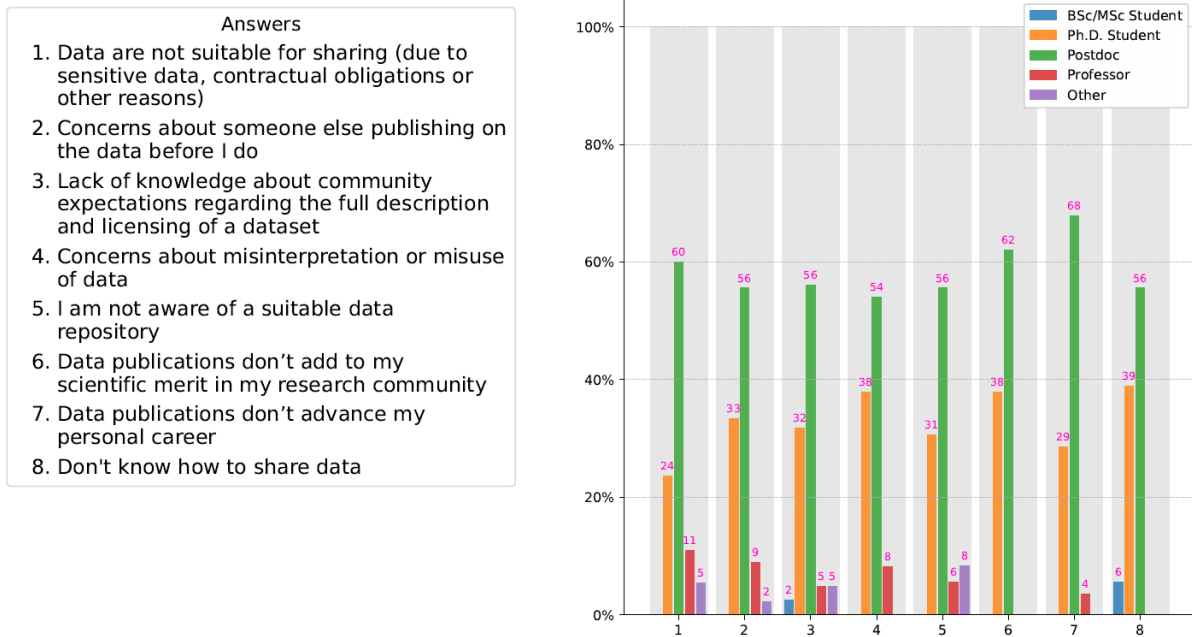


Figure 19: Bar chart of answers to the question “How important are the following reasons for you to not share your data?”. Only answers “very important” and “important” (see Fig. 18, calculated to 100%, grey bars in the background), combined with status information of the participants

A. Appendix

A.1. Outline of the online survey on “Incentives for FAIR and open data practices”

Incentives for FAIR and open data practices

With this online survey, the NFDI4Earth (<https://www.nfdi4earth.de/>) addresses researchers, but also students, in the German Earth System Science (ESS) community. NFDI4Earth aims to get insights on which FAIR and open data practices are already in use and which incentives should be created or strengthened to increase uptake of FAIR and open data practices.

For more information about our understanding of FAIR and open data practices, click here (<https://www.geo.fu-berlin.de/en/forschung/forschungsdaten/FAIR-and-open-data-practices/index.html>).

It will take approximately 10 min to answer this survey. If you are interested in the results of this survey, you may get a notification when the results of this survey are published. For that purpose you can leave your E-mail address at the end of this survey.

This online survey is part of the NFDI4Earth Measure 4.2 (<https://www.nfdi4earth.de/2coordinate/cultural-change>) "Towards a Cultural Change in ESS Research Data Management". Contact for this survey: Andreas Hübner, Freie Universität Berlin (Email (<mailto:andreas.huebner@fu-berlin.de>))

There are 15 questions in this survey.

Allgemeines

My status: I respond to this survey...

*

🗳️ Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

as a BSc/MSc Student

as a Ph.D. Student

as a Postdoc

as a Professor

as a (other than above):

I work at ... *

🗳️ Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

an university

a non-university research institution (German: außeruniversitäre Forschungseinrichtung)

another type of institution:

This is a single choice question. In case you work in two or more types of institutions, please tick the institution that is the most relevant to your work.

A1 a-d 1

Which Earth System Science (ESS) field is your major field of work?

*

🗳️ Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Physics and Chemistry of the Atmosphere
- Physics, Chemistry and Biology of the Sea
- Geology, Engineering Geology, Palaeontology
- Physics of the Earth's Body
- Geodesy, Photogrammetry, Remote Sensing, Geoinformatics, Cartography
- Mineralogy, Petrology and Geochemistry
- Physical Geography
- Human Geography
- Hydrogeology, Hydrology, Limnology, Water Chemistry
- Planetary and Solar System Sciences
- Other:

This is a single choice question. In case you work in two or more fields, please tick the field that is the most relevant to your work.

How important do you think the expansion of FAIR and open data practices is for research as a whole? *

🗳️ Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- very important
- important
- neutral
- unimportant
- very unimportant
- I don't know

A1 a-d 2

When working with data, how often do you engage in the following FAIR and open data practices?

*

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	always	often	sometimes	rarely	never	not applicable to me
Depositing data and software in suitable repositories	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fully documenting each data set in the metadata (e.g. context, quality, or characteristics of the data)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Licensing published data to be as open as possible	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Citing data, software, and samples in your publications	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Including a data availability statement in journal publications	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Preparing, using and updating data management plans	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Educating colleagues in practices that enable open and FAIR research outputs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Supporting development of open and FAIR standards and practices in your institution and organisation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Supporting development of open and FAIR standards and practices in scholarly publishing as author, reviewer and editor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I engage in other FAIR and open data practices (please specify practice and frequency):

Please write your answer here:

In case you are designing curricula, teaching students or supervising PhD students, which of the following practices do you perform?

*

🗨️ Check all that apply

Please choose **all** that apply:

- I advise or teach students why and how to share their data and code
- I raise awareness and understanding of FAIR and open data in undergraduate and graduate programs
- I develop FAIR and open data management curricula
- Not applicable to me
- Other:

B2 a 1-4

How important are the following drivers for you to share your data?

*

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	very important	important	neutral	unimportant	very unimportant
More robust own research	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Invitations to coauthorships from others that use my data	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More citations of my research papers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Higher visibility in the research community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Better reuse of data	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The possibility of verification of research	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Prevention of duplicate data collection	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Making society better informed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Funder requirements for data sharing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Journal or publisher requirements for data sharing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Expectations in research data policy of my institution/organisation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Data sharing norms of the project, research group, and/or discipline	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I like to mention (an)other driver(s):

Please write your answer here:

How important are the following reasons for you to **not** share your data? *

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	very important	important	neutral	unimportant	very unimportant
I am not aware of a suitable data repository	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of knowledge about community expectations regarding the full description and licensing of a dataset	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Data publications don't add to my scientific merit in my research community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Data publications don't advance my personal career	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Data are not suitable for sharing (due to sensitive data, contractual obligations or other reasons)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Concerns about someone else publishing on the data before I do	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Concerns about misinterpretation or misuse of data	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Don't know how to share data	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other reasons for **not** sharing your data:

Please write your answer here:

A1 a-d 4

What would motivate you to perform FAIR and open data practices more often? *

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	very strong motivator	strong motivator	neutral	weak motivator	very weak motivator
Better institutional technical infrastructure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Better individually tailored institutional support (advice, education)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Metrics for data citations to enable better scientific recognition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Career advantages: FAIR and open data practices playing a stronger role in hiring, tenure, and promotion processes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
FAIR and open data practices playing a stronger role in internal evaluations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stronger research data policy of my institution/organisation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More detailed specifications and/or stronger requirements from research funders	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stronger recommendations and/or requirements from journals/publishers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Awards for FAIR and open data practices from research institutions or academic societies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fellow researchers that engage already in FAIR and open data practices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other motivator(s):

Please write your answer here:

Finally, we would like to give you the opportunity to leave a comment on this questionnaire about FAIR and open data practices.

Please write your answer here:

I am interested to read about the results of this survey. Please send me a notification to the following E-mail address when the results of this survey are published.

Please write your answer here:

18.12.2023 – 09:06

Submit your survey.

Thank you for completing this survey.