

News in focus

frequency of heatwaves to shrinking sea ice in the Arctic and melting snow cover in Eurasia, arguing that these factors are disrupting air circulation above Europe⁵.

But not everyone agrees that it's possible to point to a specific moment when Europe's climate began to transition. The climate hasn't changed "step-wise", says Helge Goessling, a climate physicist at the Alfred Wegener Institute in Bremerhaven, Germany. It's become "continuously warmer and warmer", he notes.

And other scientists say that they're not sure that Europe does have a new climate. Ségolène Berthou, a climate modeller at the United Kingdom's Met Office in Exeter, thinks that there is still a chance that the change in

weather patterns is linked more strongly to natural variations in the climate rather than to the effects of global warming, "in which case this extreme warming may slow down at some point". Still, she emphasizes, Europe will keep warming if global greenhouse gas emissions continue.

1. Keeping, T. et al. *Fossil fuel emissions have rapidly worsened European heatwaves in just a few decades* (World Weather Attribution, 2026).
2. Krüger, J., Kjellsson, J., Kedzierski, R. P. & Claus, M. *Tellus* **75**, 358–374 (2023).
3. Copernicus Climate Change Service & World Meteorological Organization. *European State of the Climate Report 2025* (ECMWF & WMO, 2026).
4. Boboc, L., Dima, M., Vaideanu, P. & Ionita, M. *Weather Clim. Extrem.* **49**, 100794 (2025).
5. Zhang, R., Sun, C., Zhu, J., Zhang, R. & Li, W. *npj Clim. Atmos. Sci.* **3**, 7 (2020).

PAYING PEER REVIEWERS WORKS, ACCORDING TO AN EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

A biology journal that paid peer reviewers found that the time to a first editorial decision was cut by 85%.

Science relies on peer review, but the process can drag. To fix this, in July 2024, the journal *Biology Open* trialled something unconventional: paying their reviewers.

In the six-month experiment, reviewers who within four working days delivered a report that their handling editor considered good quality were paid £220 (US\$290) per manuscript.

The scheme, known as Fast & Fair, was so successful¹ that the journal never looked back. Earlier in June, results of the first 18 months of operations were reported in a preprint².

Paying reviewers not only led to faster first editorial decisions – an average of 5.5 working days, down from nearly 38 for unpaid reviews – but review quality, as judged by handling editors on the basis of helpfulness in making an editorial decision, went up (see 'Fast and paid peer review did not affect editorial decisions').

Nature spoke with developmental biologist and toxicologist Daniel Gorelick, at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas, who has been serving as *Biology Open*'s editor-in-chief since July 2023.

How did the idea of Fast & Fair peer review come about?

As an active scientist, I've always been frustrated with some elements of peer review. It takes longer than it should. And often, the reviews are not high-quality enough to improve the paper.

And I thought that one way to fix that would be to pay peer reviewers because, honestly, it seemed obvious. People get paid to do a job, and there's evidence³ from economic studies showing that incentives like money can improve performance. So, I figured, why not try this with peer review?

How does Fast & Fair peer review work in practice?

It's easy to have the idea of paying peer reviewers. The hard part was the execution. First, we designed an experiment that would test the

hypothesis that paying peer reviewers would work – without pulling out our hair, losing a ton of money or going bankrupt.

One key thing was having a database of pre-contracted peer reviewers before any manuscript was sent for peer review. We created a contract that researchers must agree to in order to take part. When you get a review request, you have one business day to accept or decline the invitation. Of course, you can decline for any reason. But if you agree to do the review, you have four working days to submit it. If you don't meet that deadline, or the review is deemed not useful by the editor handling the manuscript, then you're not paid.

I think that part really set this experiment apart from other experiments in the past, where there were no stipulations on quality or turnaround.

We tested this experiment for six months, starting in July 2024, with 20 submissions handled by two of our ten academic editors. Once we saw that data from the pilot confirmed that it was successful¹, we extended the experiment in April 2025 to all ten academic editors. And the only exceptions are when we don't have pre-contracted reviewers with the requisite expertise to review the manuscripts.

In these rare cases, we give the authors the choice between submitting their manuscript to another journal (no hard feelings) or shuttling it through conventional peer review. If we can't find reviewers with the appropriate expertise, we're not going to cut corners just because we want to meet a seven-day turnaround time. We will never, ever sacrifice rigour for speed.

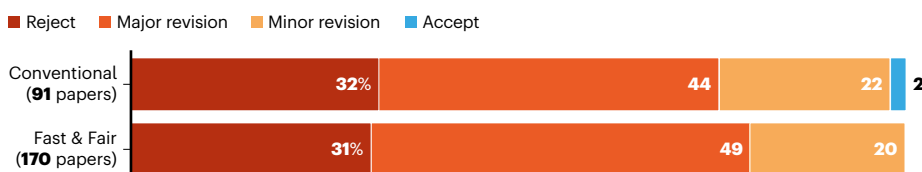
How do you choose the paid peer reviewers?

When researchers apply to become paid reviewers for *Biology Open*, we screen their CVs and check whether they're legitimate and have peer-review experience. We currently

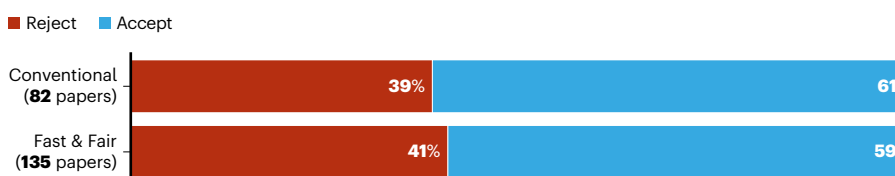
FAST AND PAID PEER REVIEW DID NOT AFFECT EDITORIAL DECISIONS

The proportions of manuscripts that were rejected, required minor or major revision or accepted were similar under paid and conventional peer review.

Total manuscripts sent for peer review



Total manuscripts for which a final decision was made



have 500 pre-contracted reviewers from all over the world. Ideally, what I envision is a system where reviewer applicants undertake a manuscript-reviewing test. And we'd review that review, so if it scored high enough, we'd hire them.

How is Fast & Fair peer review funded?

The scheme is funded by the journal's publisher, The Company of Biologists, which is a non-profit charitable organization based in Cambridge, UK. We evaluate the scheme every year. We're approved to go through the end of calendar year 2026 at this point. Beyond that, I will have to make the case that this deserves to go on another year and meet with the publisher, who will make that decision.

[In 2025, the total cost of the Fast & Fair scheme was £104,000 (US\$137,000) – £114,000, of which £66,000 were reviewer payments.]

Who benefits from Fast & Fair peer review?

It benefits everybody. It benefits authors because they get a fast and high-quality review. It benefits editors because the editors handling the manuscripts don't have to spend a lot of time finding reviewers. They can just look up all our pre-contracted reviewers that have the relevant expertise and select two as primary and three as alternatives and boom, it's done. Our editors are all academics running labs, just like me. Under conventional peer review, editors would invite, on average, nine researchers – and it could take days or weeks to find reviewers. The reviewers benefit because they have a motivation to perform a high-quality review fast, and they're compensated for their efforts.

Do you think paying reviewers could work in other journals and in other disciplines?

Absolutely. There's been such a profound aversion to paying peer reviewers, whether it's on principle or because people think it will never work. We've demonstrated that it works.

More journals can adopt this approach. There's no shortage of reviewers willing to do high-quality reviews for money. Now, the devil's in the details. I can't tell you for sure whether this will work in every other discipline. The only way to know is to do the experiment.

Interview by Miryam Naddaf

1. Gorelick, D. A. & Clark, A. Preprint at bioRxiv <https://doi.org/10.1101/2025.03.18.644032> (2025).
2. Gorelick, D. A. & Clark, A. Preprint at bioRxiv <https://doi.org/10.64898/2026.06.02.729548> (2026).
3. Lazear, E. *Am. Econ. Rev.* **90**, 1346–1361 (2000).

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.



When laughing, several great apes produce similar vocalization patterns to human children.

OO OO, HA HA: WHY HUMANS AND OTHER APES GIGGLE ALIKE

Shared rhythmic pattern of laughter hints at origin of complex primate vocal control.

By Miryam Naddaf

Tickling a chimpanzee, a gorilla and a human child causes similar rhythms of laughter, according to an analysis of primate behaviour.

Laughter is a conserved vocalization in humans and their closest primate relatives. A study published on 25 June (C. De Gregorio *et al. Commun. Biol.* <https://doi.org/rdqm;2026>) found that their laughter followed consistent

body of data now that suggest that our closest living relatives, the primates, and particularly the great apes, have more control over their vocal system than previously thought", says Simon Townsend, who studies primate communication at the University of Zurich in Switzerland.

The findings also provide insights for the "evolutionary progression of vocal flexibility within the primate lineage", he adds.

Apes and japes

Study co-author Chiara De Gregorio, a primatologist at the University of Warwick in Coventry, UK, and her colleagues compared recordings of juvenile and infant great apes – including four orangutans (*Pongo pygmaeus*), two gorillas (*Gorilla gorilla*), three bonobos (*Pan paniscus*) and four chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes*) – with recordings of four human children playing with their mothers at home.

The analysis focused on 140 sequences of laughter, of which 42 were from bonobos, 35 from chimpanzees, 34 from gorillas, 16 from orangutans and 13 from the human children.

De Gregorio and her colleagues examined how much time passed between successive bursts of laughter and found that humans and other apes stuck to a consistent rhythm

"While in play, laughter was a bit messy."

rhythmic patterns. When humans and other great apes between six months and seven years old were tickled, they left evenly spaced intervals between successive laughing sounds.

The authors suggest that these regular rhythms reflect how nuanced primate vocal motor control can be and that it might have been inherited from a common ancestor that lived 15 million years ago.

The analysis "falls in line with an emerging