

A hand is shown pointing towards a glowing, circular digital interface. The interface is composed of numerous overlapping, colorful particle trails in shades of blue, purple, and orange, creating a sense of motion and data. The background is dark with scattered, colorful bokeh lights. The overall aesthetic is futuristic and technological.

**RESEARCHERS' USE OF AI FOR
CONTENT DISCOVERY AND
SUBMISSION DECISIONS**

***SELECTED FINDINGS FROM FULL REPORT
(SEPTEMBER 2025)***

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SPRINGER NATURE

Background, methodology, and a note on interpretation

Survey aims, distribution and sample:

This research is a global snapshot survey and aims to understand the Springer Nature's researcher audience use of AI use by Springer Nature's researcher audience for both content discovery and submission decisions.

This work was carried out purely for internal reasons, and there are no current plans to disseminate it publicly. We are sharing this internal summary with you purely as a thank you for being on our librarian panel. This report is not confidential, but we'd suggest care in sharing broadly as it is not peer reviewed and does not have a permanent identifier.

The survey was distributed from 25th July to 15th September 2025, via an online intercept running across Springer Nature sites and through Springer Nature's researcher panel, resulting in 3,825 responses from Springer Nature's target customers.

Notes on interpretation:

We used the term "AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT, Copilot)" initially in the survey and "AI tools" subsequently throughout the survey. We did not define what we meant by the term, so it was intentionally open to respondents' interpretation. Moreover, we did not reference AI as the subject of the survey, to avoid skewing the sample to those with particularly positive or negative views on AI.

For simplicity, respondent countries were grouped into the five groups:

Europe, China, North America, India and Other. The Other segment comprises a long tail of countries, the largest being Brazil (n=130) and Ethiopia (n=118).

Three seniority segments (Early-career, Mid-career and Senior) were created using latent class analysis of both i) job title and ii) the number of years the respondent reported they had been actively involved in research.

Next steps:

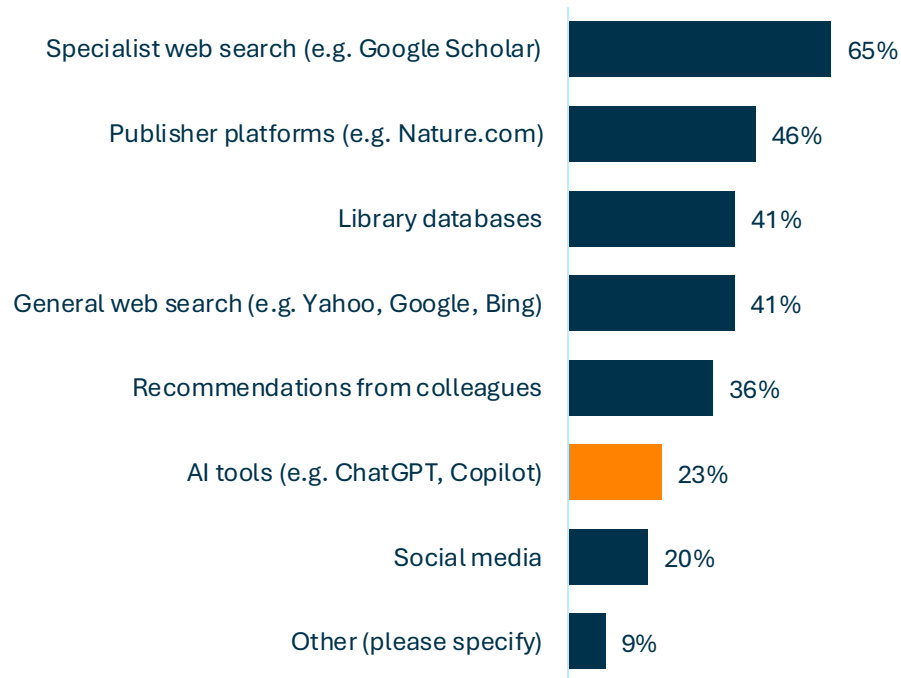
If you believe the findings from this survey could be useful to your colleagues, whether in the same department or in other areas of your institution / organisation, please feel free to forward this mini-deck.

We also welcome any thoughts or feedback you may have on this research, and how you and your colleagues find the results useful.

Around a quarter of researchers say they use AI tools to discover research content

Content discovery

*“How do you typically discover research content?
(Please select all that apply)” (n=3804)*



Of all of the methods researchers use to discover research content, the most popular answer was via specialist web search, followed by publisher platforms and library databases.

AI tools were selected by 23% of respondents, with almost all these respondents saying that they used AI tools alongside other methods.

- Reported use of AI tools is higher for junior segment (27%) and lower for senior (22%)
- The use of AI tools is also lower in Europe (20%), where use of specialist web search is higher (70% vs average of 65%)

When asked “what kind of information do you typically use AI tools to look for?”, many answer how they use AI more broadly. The usage falls into three broad areas.

1. Content Discovery: using AI to find, search for, or access specific articles, data, or facts.

“To look for relevant papers for the literature review.”

2. Knowledge Synthesis & Summaries: using AI to summarize, synthesize, or provide overviews of research or topics.

“Summary of a given paper so that I can decide if I want to read it in depth or not.”

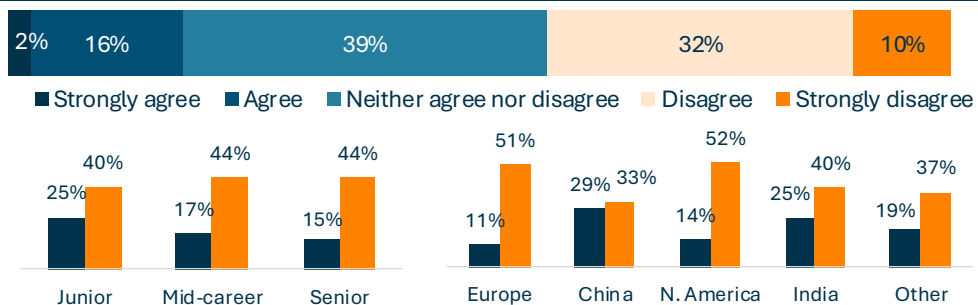
3. Ideation & Brainstorming: using AI to generate ideas, discuss concepts, or identify research gaps.

“When I have some ideas, I discuss these ideas with Chatgpt to deepen the idea and go more specific in my search.”

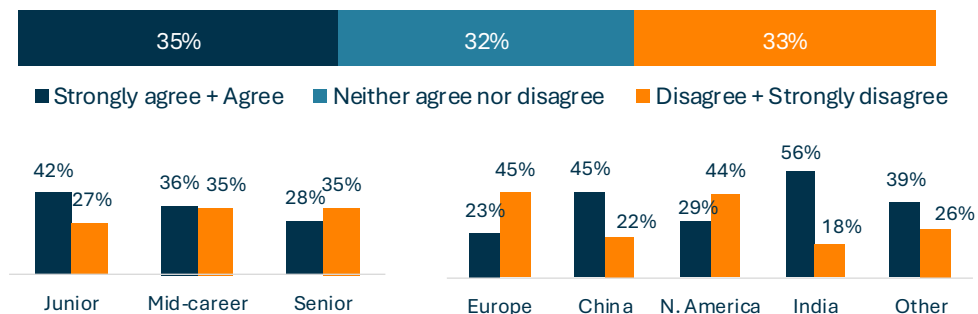
There is a low level of trust in research content recommendations made by AI

Trust in AI: content discovery

"I trust research content recommendations made by AI tools in my work."
(n=3790)



"AI tools are replacing my traditional methods of discovering new research content."
(n=3804)



Respondents are more likely to disagree than agree, and the largest proportion is neutral, suggesting 'it depends'.

- Junior researchers have a higher level of trust than their senior counterparts ("neither" segment removed).
- And trust in AI is reported as higher by researchers in China and India. ("neither" segment removed), although we should consider the influence of cultural survey bias here.

Asked whether AI tools are replacing traditional methods, the sample is split almost equally.

This is likely because "replacing" is a strong word - we can see from later questions that AI is being used in parallel with traditional methods.

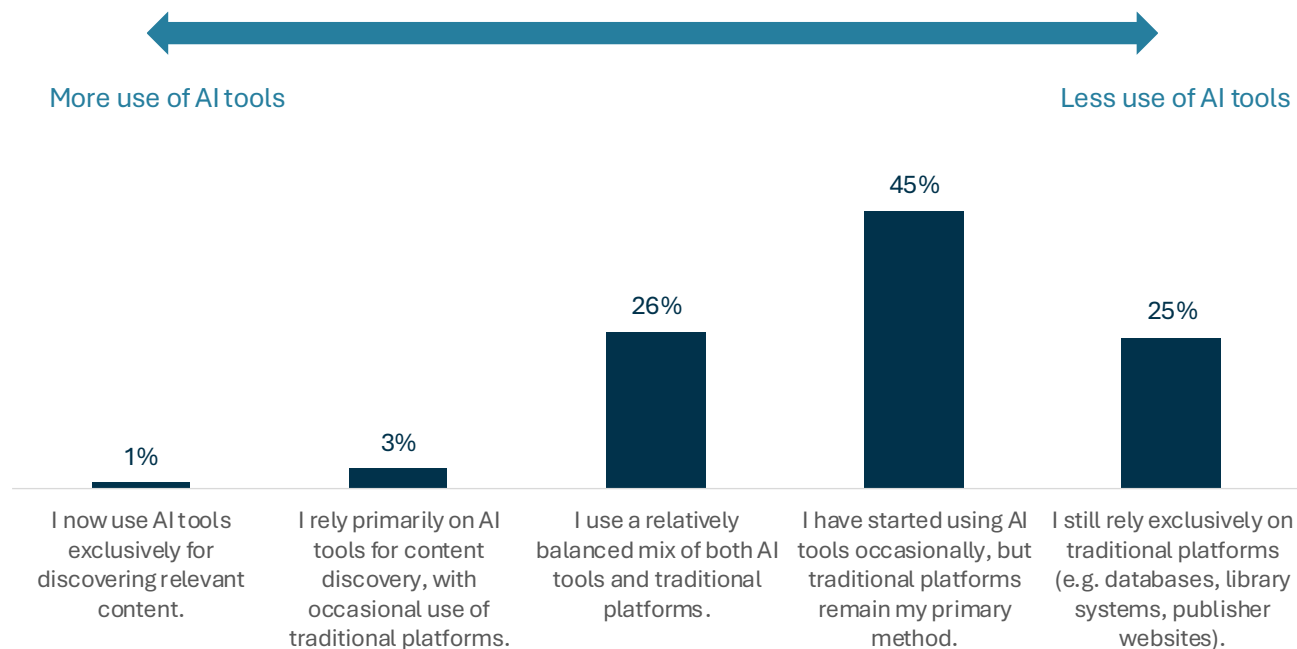
- But there is a clear seniority effect and a strong difference by region, with younger users and those in China and India more likely to say that AI tools are replacing. ("neithers" removed)
- Colleagues in China report this difference may be partly due to AI algorithms becoming more intrinsic in everyday apps like WeChat, RedNote and Tiktok.

At present, AI tools are mostly used experimentally, if at all, in research discovery

Usage level of AI tools in content discovery

"To what extent, if at all, have your behaviours changed in the past 12 months regarding how you discover relevant content?" (n=3790)

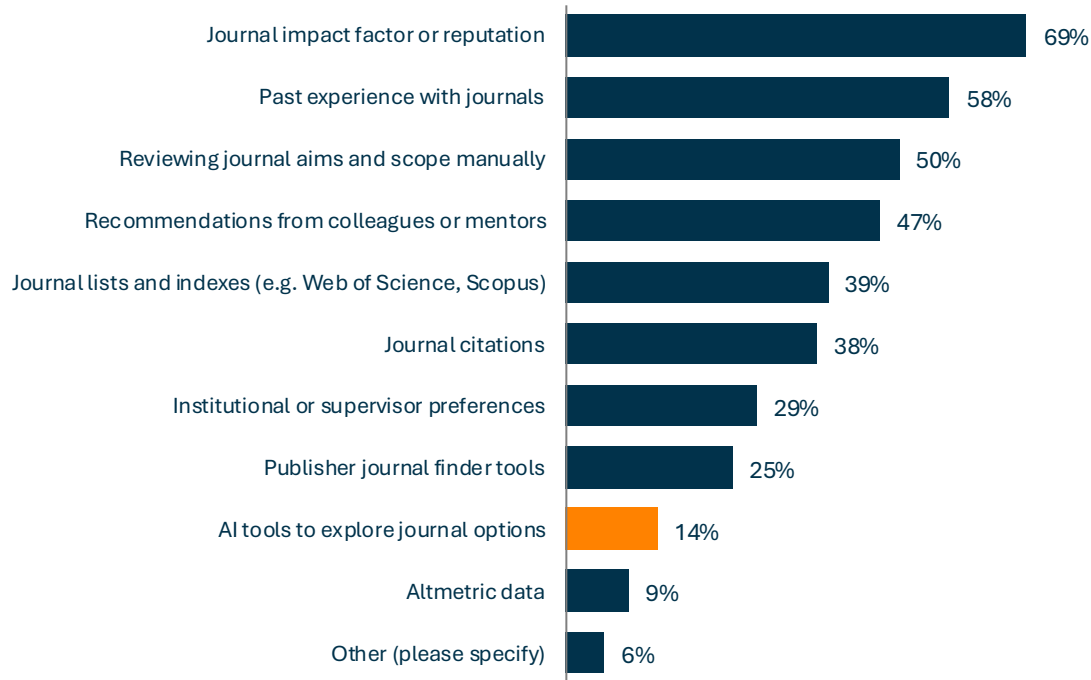
A tiny proportion of researchers say they are relying heavily on AI tools for content discovery, with the majority reporting using AI tools only in a minor way alongside traditional methods of content discovery.



Just 14% adopt AI tools as part of their submission decision making

Journal submission decision-making

“When searching for suitable journals for your manuscripts, which of the following tools or methods do you use to support your submission decision-making?” (n=3605)



Seniority mediates behaviours: early-career researchers significantly more likely to utilise AI tools (20%) vs mid-career researchers (13%) and senior researchers (10%).

Early-career researchers significantly more likely to rely on peer recommendations, supervisor preferences, publisher journal finder tools, AI tools, whereas senior researchers significantly more reliant on bibliometric data and past experiences (almost double compared to early-career researchers).

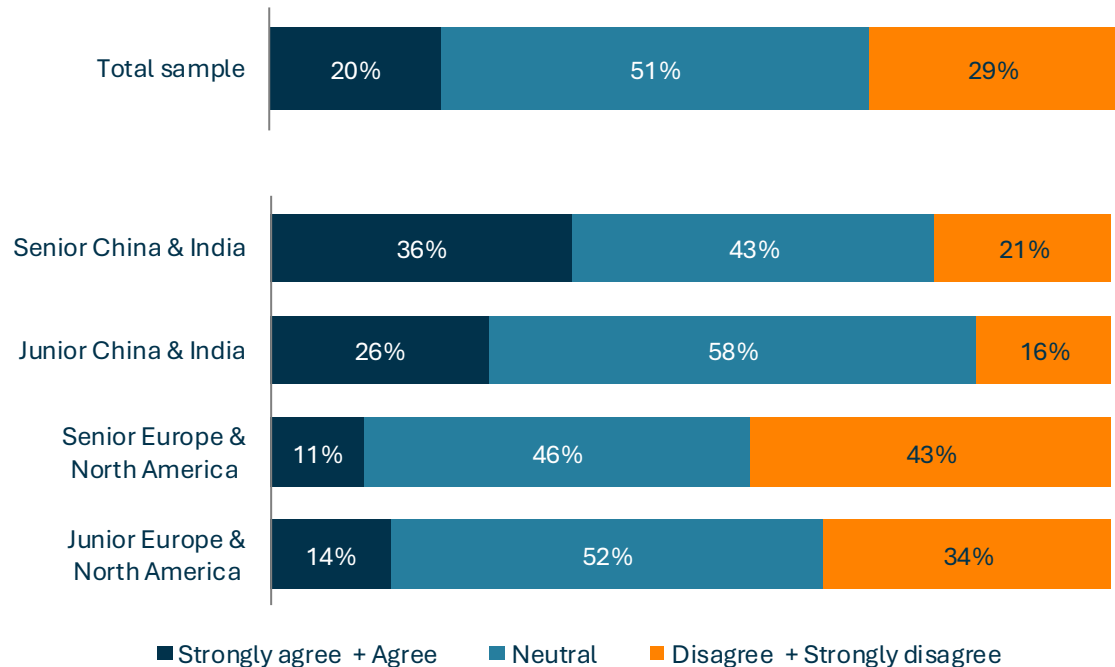
Chinese researchers significantly more likely to adopt AI for submission decision making (19%), followed by India (15%), North America (11%) and Europe (10%), with early-career researchers almost twice as likely to have adopted than senior researchers.

No indication of variance by institutional tier.

Trust highest in China and India, lowest in Europe & North America

Trust in AI: Journal submission decision-making

“To what extent do you agree with the following statement: “I trust AI tools and the outputs they provide in helping me make more informed decisions about where to publish my research.” (n=3790)



Strong regional variance in extent of agreement – China & India significantly more likely to agree (31%, 26% respectively) vs. North America & Europe (12%, 13% respectively).

Almost 1 in 2 researchers from North America disagrees with this statement (45%), almost 4x that of China.

Extent of agreement not too dissimilar by way of seniority (early-career researchers: 24% vs. senior researchers: 17%), whereas extent of disagreement stronger for senior researchers (37%) than early-career researchers (23%).

APAC vs. North America & Europe, by seniority: neutral-positive (trust) vs. neutral-negative (no trust)

The extent of the library's involvement varies largely by geography: Chinese librarians closer to AI adoption than western counterparts

Role of the library

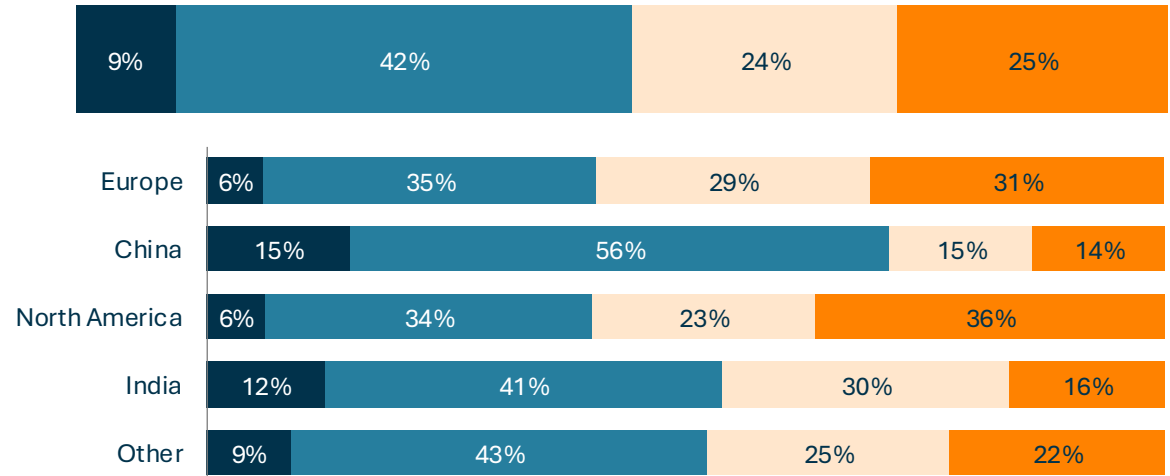
42% think their library has some involvement with AI adoption, but less than 10% of researchers think their library is very involved, and a quarter do not know how involved their library may be.

This high proportion of don't knows effectively means libraries are not involved in AI adoption for a third of researchers.

Library involvement seems to be higher in China and to a lesser extent, India.

“What role does the library play regarding the adoption / usage of AI tools to support with research, at your institution?” (n=3790)

- Very involved: oversight of AI tool usage and the go-to source for information
- Somewhat involved: Is informed more generally, but not the primary stakeholder
- Not involved: Has limited to no involvement in the uptake of AI tools at the institution
- Unsure / I don't know



THANK YOU

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