



HARVARD Kennedy School

BELFER CENTER

for Science and International Affairs

# International Security

## Editorial Report

2023



The editors thank Christopher Shim for his assistance in preparing this report and assembling the data.

# Introduction

This report presents information on questions that are often addressed to the editors of *International Security*: How many submissions does the journal receive? Where do they come from? What is the acceptance rate? How long does it take to reach a decision? How does the journal compare to other journals? The report includes data on *International Security* submissions and decisions from Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 to FY2023. The report is based on fiscal years because the journal generally collects data for each fiscal year. *International Security*'s fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30 of the following year. The data used in this report come from the Editorial Manager software platform. For data from FY2014 to FY2018, the data for desk acceptances/rejections had to be manually tracked. The report also includes data on how the journal has ranked according to Clarivate Analytics Impact Factor since 2014.

## I. *International Security* Submissions and Decisions

### The *International Security* Editorial Process

All manuscripts submitted to *International Security* pass through an initial editorial screening to determine if they are appropriate for the journal. Manuscripts that are too short, insufficiently scholarly, or on unsuitable topics have a low probability of acceptance and are rejected after internal review. Manuscripts that are appropriate for the journal are circulated for external review, though to clarify, not *all* manuscripts deemed appropriate are sent for external review. The journal attempts to obtain at least two external reviews. The editors always invite at least three reviewers to make it more likely that at least two will agree. Manuscripts that receive positive external reviews are circulated to the journal's editors and discussed at periodic editorial meetings. The journal generally fills one issue at a time and does not accept a large backlog of articles for future publication. Competition for the limited number of article slots in each issue is thus intense. The editors attempt to select the best possible articles from the short list of leading contenders considered at each editorial meeting. Some manuscripts that receive positive external reviews are not accepted. In some cases, authors are invited to revise and resubmit manuscripts for further consideration. Revisions may be considered by the editors, circulated to the reviewers of the original submission, or circulated to new external reviewers. *International Security* also welcomes letters to the editor. Most letters are not circulated for external review. The journal occasionally publishes review essays. Most are solicited. Some are circulated for external review. Please note that the data in this report do not include review essays. In FY2019, there was one review essay published, in the Fall 2019 issue. In FY2016, there was one review essay published, in the Winter 2015/2016 issue.

### Overall Trends: Submissions, Acceptances, Rejections, Requests to Revise and Resubmit

Table 1 presents an overview of *International Security* manuscript submissions and decisions since FY2014. There has been an increase in the number of submissions received, with 42 more submissions received in FY2023 than in FY2014. The number of new submissions listed understates the total number of manuscripts considered by the journal, however, because dozens of additional manuscripts and abstracts are submitted informally by authors who ask if their papers merit formal submission. Relatively few of these queries and informal submissions lead to formal submissions.

***International Security*: Manuscript Decisions in Brief**

Table 1

Fiscal Year	New Submissions	Accepted	Rejected	Withdrawn	Undecided	Pending Revise & Resubmit	Other
2013–2014	300	25 (8.3%)	261 (87.0%)	6 (2.0%)	3 (1.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (1.7%)
2014–2015	293	32 (10.9%)	247 (84.3%)	7 (2.4%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	7 (2.4%)
2015–2016	337	35 (10.4%)	287 (85.2%)	8 (2.4%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	7 (2.1%)
2016–2017	329	30 (9.1%)	287 (87.2%)	2 (0.6%)	1 (0.3%)	0 (0.0%)	9 (2.7%)
2017–2018	329	24 (7.3%)	300 (91.2%)	3 (0.9%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.3%)	1 (0.3%)
2018–2019	347	23 (6.6%)	321 (92.5%)	1 (0.3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (0.6%)
2019–2020	420	20 (4.8%)	392 (93.3%)	4 (1.0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (1.0%)
2020–2021	377	19 (5.0%)	352 (93.4%)	5 (1.3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.3%)
2021–2022	329	20 (6.1%)	293 (89.1%)	8 (2.4%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	8 (2.4%)
2022–2023	342	10 (2.9%)	310 (90.6%)	3 (0.9%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	19 (5.6%)

The fiscal year for the journal runs from July 1 to June 30 of the following year. The final decisions made on manuscripts do not necessarily occur within the fiscal year that the original submission was received. For an assessment of the journal's turnaround time, please see tables 4 and 5. Category "Other" refers to manuscript submission Final Disposition Term statuses (in Editorial Manager) such as, but not limited to, "Removed by Editor," "Removed by Author," "Incomplete," and "Decision in Process." Category "Undecided" refers to manuscript submission Final Disposition Term statuses such as, but not limited to, "Required Reviews Completed," "Revised Manuscript Submitted," and "Manuscript Submitted." Note that FY2017, FY2018, and FY2022 have 329 new submissions (including both articles and letters to the editor) each. The data for each of these fiscal years was double checked, and it is confirmed that it is a matter of coincidence that these three fiscal years happen to have the same number of new submissions.

In a few cases, manuscripts are listed as "Pending Revise & Resubmit" in table 1 because the journal invited the author(s) to revise and resubmit, but the authors have not yet submitted a revision, or the journal has not yet decided on the revision. Some of these revisions may never arrive. A few authors decide not to revise and resubmit.

The journal's acceptance rate is now in the 2–7% range from FY2019 to FY2023, although that may slightly understate the eventual acceptance rate for manuscripts submitted in recent years, because some of the pending revisions may be resubmitted and accepted.

Table 2 offers more details of the journal's editorial decisions, including the number of revisions considered, the number of revisions accepted, and similar information for letters to the editor. The table indicates that since FY2014, slightly less than half (117/238 or 49.16%) of accepted *International Security* articles have been revisions. Further, the acceptance rate for revisions (117/147 or 79.59%) is much higher than for initial submissions (121/3403 or 3.56%). This acceptance rate might be slightly lower if all pending revisions were received and rejected, but it would still be much higher than the acceptance rate for initial submissions. The table also makes clear that the acceptance rate for letters to the editor (58/117 or 49.57%) is similar to the rejection rate for letters to the editor (55/117 or 47.00%).

**International Security: Manuscript Decisions Based on Initial Submission**

Table 2

	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	Total
<b>Total Submissions</b>	300	293	337	329	329	347	420	377	329	342	3403
<b>Total Acceptances</b>	25	32	35	30	24	23	20	19	20	10	238
Accepted - 1 <sup>st</sup> round of review	14	26	19	18	13	11	5	4	7	4	121
Accepted - following Revise & Resubmit	11	6	16	12	11	12	15	15	13	6	117
<b>Total Rejections</b>	261	247	287	287	300	321	392	352	293	310	2476
Rejected - 1 <sup>st</sup> round of review	260	246	286	286	298	318	390	351	292	310	2751
Desk Rejections	69	80	110	115	130	120	220	204	157	220	1425
External Review	191	166	176	171	168	198	170	147	135	90	1612
Rejected - following Revise & Resubmit	1	1	1	1	2	3	2	1	1	0	13
<b>Total Revise &amp; Resubmit</b>	12	8	18	13	14	15	19	17	22	9	147
Pending Revise & Resubmit	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Withdrawn</b>	6	7	8	2	3	1	4	5	8	3	47
<b>Undecided</b>	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
<b>Letter Submissions</b>	10	17	10	21	19	9	8	9	5	9	117
Accepted	7	12	7	12	9	3	3	3	0	2	58
Rejected	2	4	3	9	10	6	4	6	4	7	55
Other	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	4
<b>Other</b>	5	7	7	9	1	2	4	1	8	19	63

Table 3 presents data on manuscripts that are circulated for external review. Approximately 58.1% of submissions from FY2014 to FY2023 fall into this category. Also, the percentage of manuscripts sent out for review has declined significantly from 62.6% in FY2018 to 31.9% in FY2023. The “Total Review” figure was derived from the sum of the “External Review Rejected,” “Total Revise and Resubmit,” “Total Accepted,” and “Total Undecided” figures from Table 3. The figure for “Withdrawn” is not included in this sum, as withdrawn manuscripts never go out for external review. The figure for “Other” is not included in this sum either.

***International Security*: Manuscript Decisions Based on External Review**

Table 3

	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	Total
<b>Total Submissions</b>	300	293	337	329	329	347	420	377	329	342	3403
<b>Total External Review</b>	206	206	229	215	206	236	209	183	178	109	58.1%
External Review Rejected	191	166	176	171	168	198	170	147	135	90	47.4%
Total Revise & Resubmit	12	8	18	13	14	15	19	17	22	9	4.3%
Total Accepted	25	32	35	30	24	23	20	19	20	10	7.0%
Accepted - 1 <sup>st</sup> round of review	14	26	19	18	13	11	5	4	7	4	3.6%
Accepted after Revise & Resubmit	11	6	16	12	11	12	15	15	13	6	3.4%
Total Withdrawn	6	7	8	2	3	1	4	5	8	3	1.4%
Total Undecided	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.1%
Other	5	7	7	9	1	2	4	1	8	19	1.9%

**Turnaround Time: How Long Does It Take to Reach a Decision on a Submission?**

The journal places a high priority on reducing the turnaround time for submissions and takes the following steps to achieve this goal.

*Two-Month Goal:* The journal continues to aim to reach a decision on every submission within two months. This goal focuses attention on manuscripts that are overdue for a decision and provides an incentive for making more rapid decisions, even if the journal has not fully met this goal.

*Associate Editors:* As of December 2023, *International Security* has 6 associate editors on its editorial team: Målfrid Braut-Hegghammer, Tanisha Fazal, Sarah Kreps, Zachariah Mampilly, Sebastian Rosato, and Caitlin Talmadge. In addition to offering general advice, the associate editors have helped to reduce turnaround time by serving as reviewers of last resort for manuscripts that are overdue for review. They also have recommended reviewers and advised on when manuscripts should be rejected without external review.

*Desk Rejections:* *International Security* has increased the percentage of “desk rejections”—manuscripts rejected by the editors without external review—from 23% of total submissions in FY2014 to 64.3% of total submissions in FY2023. Many submissions are not appropriate for the journal and others clearly have a low probability of publication. Rapid rejection without external review enables the authors of such manuscripts to promptly submit them to other publications. Desk rejection also reduces the burden on external reviewers and enables them to focus on submissions that have a higher probability of publication.

*Outstanding Reviewer Recognition:* External reviewers face increasing demands on their time. The journal recognizes outstanding reviews—those who review many manuscripts and submit their reviews promptly—by listing them with an asterisk in the annual listing of external reviewers that appears in each summer issue.

*Editorial Board:* Like other journals, *International Security* often finds it difficult to persuade external reviewers to review manuscripts. The journal thus has expanded its Editorial Board in recent years, to 49 members in total as of December 2023. Editorial Board members are expected to review several manuscripts per year, although the number will vary depending on their interests and expertise and the subjects addressed in manuscripts submitted to the journal.

The results of these initiatives are evident in the data in tables 4 and 5. As table 4 indicates, since FY2014 the average time between submission and a decision has fallen from 113.4 days to 64.2 days in FY2023. The average turnaround time dropped in FY2023 itself partly because the percentage of desk rejects increased significantly. The median turnaround time has fallen from 49.5 days in FY2014 to 24 days in FY2023. Much of this improvement took place from FY2019 to FY2021, followed by an increase in median turnaround time in FY2022 (which can be attributed to staff turnover in 2022) and a drop in the median turnaround time in FY2023. Table 5 shows that the journal is reaching rapid decisions on an increasing percentage of submitted manuscripts. In FY2014, *International Security* reached decisions in one month or less for 32.3% of all submissions. By FY2023, that percentage had risen to 55.8%, marking an 23.5% increase in the percentage of one-month decisions since the previous fiscal year. The percentage of decisions made within two months—the journal’s stated goal—declined slightly from 65.0% in FY2014 to 63.5% in FY2023. Decisions are now made within three months 76.3% of the time in FY2023, compared to 80.7% in FY2014.

***International Security*. Turnaround Time from Submission until Decision**

Table 4

Timetable	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023
1 month or less	97	107	154	143	161	172	232	210	123	191
2 months or less	195	200	245	233	231	252	282	242	145	217
3 months or less	242	247	279	271	275	300	357	312	189	261
More than 3 months	58	46	58	58	54	47	63	65	140	81
Total manuscripts considered	300	293	337	329	329	347	420	377	329	342
Average time (days)	113.4	91.4	111.6	86.2	66.5	64.1	73.2	72.5	117.2	64.2
Median time (days)	49.5	45	41	39	35	35	16	12	76	24

Total includes manuscripts with decisions and does not exclude manuscripts that have been withdrawn. Numbers are cumulative in the first three categories. The decisions that can be made are Accept, Reject, Pending Revise & Resubmit, Withdrawn, Undecided, and Other.

***International Security*: Turnaround Time by Percentages**

Table 5

Timetable	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023
1 month or less	32.3%	36.5%	45.7%	43.5%	48.9%	49.6%	55.2%	55.7%	37.4%	55.8%
2 months or less	65.0%	68.3%	72.7%	70.8%	70.2%	72.6%	67.1%	64.2%	44.1%	63.5%
3 months or less	80.7%	84.3%	82.8%	82.4%	83.6%	86.5%	85.0%	82.8%	57.4%	76.3%
More than 3 months	19.3%	15.7%	17.2%	17.6%	16.4%	13.5%	15.0%	17.2%	42.6%	23.7%

It still takes too long to reach decisions on some manuscripts. In some cases, consideration is delayed because external reviewers decline to read a submission or take a long time to submit their reviews. In other cases, a decision may be delayed until an editorial meeting is held. All manuscripts that are leading contenders for publication are considered at editorial meetings, which are held 5–8 times per year. For these manuscripts, it can thus take a month or more from the time that all reviews are received until the editors decide. In addition, authors sometimes wait too long for editorial comments after being invited to revise and resubmit a manuscript.

## II. How *International Security* Is Ranked

### Impact Factor: How Often Are *International Security* Articles Cited?

There are many quantitative metrics for measuring the importance or influence of scholarly journals. One of the most prominent is the Impact Factor, which is calculated annually for the Journal Citation Reports® issued by Clarivate Analytics (previously issued by Thomson Reuters). In a given year, the Impact Factor of a journal is the average number of citations received per article published in that journal during the two preceding years. Thus the 2023 Impact Factor is the average number of citations in 2022 of articles published in 2020 and 2021.

Impact Factor rankings for international relations journals from 2014–2022 appear below. (Clarivate Analytics only posts data going back to 1997, but *International Security* has a record of data going back to 1996). The top 10 journals for each year are listed. In 2022, *International Security* ranked 4th for Impact Factor among 96 international relations journals ranked by Clarivate Analytics. The journal ranked 1st in the 2019, 2015, and 2014 rankings.

In 2022, *International Security* ranked ahead of other prominent journals of international politics, foreign policy, and security studies, including *World Politics* (5th) and *International Affairs* (7th).

*International Security* has a very impressive long-term record in the Impact Factor rankings:

- 1st in 2014, 2015, 2019
- 2nd in 2017, 2018, 2021
- 3rd in 2020
- 4th in 2016, 2022

*International Security* has ranked 1st three times, 2nd three times, 3rd once, and 4th twice since 2014.

*International Security* has ranked 1st or 2nd in six of the past nine years (since 2014).

*International Security* has ranked in the top five every year since 2014.

*International Organization*, *Review of International Organizations*, *International Affairs*, and *World Politics* are the only serious rivals to *International Security* in the Impact Factor rankings. *International Organization* has ranked 1st three times (2017, 2018, 2022). *Review of International Organizations* has ranked 1st one time (2021), *International Affairs* has ranked 1st one time (2020), and *World Politics* has ranked 1st one time (2016). These four journals have ranked 1st in 6 of the 9 years since 2014.

### ***International Security* and General Political Science Journals**

Clarivate Analytics classifies *International Security* as a journal of international relations and therefore does not rank it among the general political science journals. That category includes the *American Political Science Review*, the *American Journal of Political Science*, and the *Journal of Politics*, among many other journals. Although *International Security* would rank very highly on the basis of Impact Factor among general political science journals, Clarivate Analytics regards such comparisons between different categories as invalid. Thus, we have not included such data in this report.

### **Clarivate Analytics International Relations (SSCI) Journal Impact Factor Rankings, 2014–2023**

<b>2022</b> (96 journals ranked)	<b>2021</b> (96 journals ranked)
1 International Organization (7.800)	1 Review of International Organizations (7.833)
2 Foreign Affairs (7.500)	2 <b>International Security (7.179)</b>
3 Contemporary Security Policy (5.900)	3 International Organization (5.754)
<b>4 International Security (5.000)</b>	4 Contemporary Security Policy (5.719)
5 World Politics (5.000)	5 Foreign Affairs (5.486)
6 Global Environmental Politics (4.800)	6 International Affairs (4.985)
7 International Affairs (4.500)	7 Emerging Markets Finance and Trade (4.859)
8 American Journal of International Law (4.300)	8 International Studies Review (4.342)
9 Review of International Political Economy (4.300)	9 Marine Policy (4.315)
10 New Political Economy (4.200)	10 Review of International Political Economy (4.146)



**2020** (95 journals ranked)

- 1 International Affairs (7.910)
- 2 Review of International Organizations (7.795)
- 3 **International Security (7.486)**
- 4 International Organization (6.276)
- 5 Foreign Affairs (4.791)
- 6 New Political Economy (4.681)
- 7 Review of International Political Economy (4.659)
- 8 Marine Policy (4.173)
- 9 Global Environmental Politics (4.055)
- 10 Journal of Peace Research (4.054)

**2019** (95 journals ranked)

- 1 **International Security (5.432)**
- 2 International Organization (5.000)
- 3 Foreign Affairs (3.775)
- 4 International Affairs (3.705)
- 5 Common Market Law Review (3.522)
- 6 European Journal of International Relations (3.474)
- 7 Marine Policy (3.228)
- 8 Review of International Organizations (3.214)
- 9 New Political Economy (3.157)
- 10 Global Environmental Politics (3.091)

**2018** (91 journals ranked)

- 1 International Organization (4.508)
- 2 **International Security (4.500)**
- 3 Foreign Affairs (4.390)
- 4 Common Market Law Review (3.918)
- 5 International Affairs (3.748)
- 6 Global Environmental Politics (3.397)
- 7 World Politics (3.368)
- 8 New Political Economy (3.085)
- 9 Marine Policy (2.865)
- 10 Review of International Organizations (2.800)

**2017** (86 journals ranked)

- 1 International Organization (4.517)
- 2 **International Security (4.135)**
- 3 Common Market Law Review (4.073)
- 4 Foreign Affairs (3.544)
- 5 Journal of Conflict Resolution (3.491)
- 6 World Politics (3.250)
- 7 Global Environmental Politics (3.237)
- 8 International Affairs (2.952)
- 9 Security Dialogue (2.710)
- 10 Review of International Organizations (2.686)

**2016** (86 journals ranked)

- 1 World Politics (4.025)
- 2 Review of International Political Economy (3.452)
- 3 International Organization (3.406)
- 4 **International Security (3.390)**
- 5 Journal of Conflict Resolution (2.947)
- 6 Security Dialogue (2.692)
- 7 Foreign Affairs (2.536)
- 8 Review of International Organizations (2.429)
- 9 Common Market Law Review (2.318)
- 10 Journal of Peace Research (2.284)

**2015** (86 journals ranked)

- 1 **International Security (3.275)**
- 2 International Organization (3.213)
- 3 World Politics (3.125)
- 4 European Journal of International Relations (2.465)
- 5 Marine Policy (2.453)
- 6 Review of International Organizations (2.444)
- 7 Review of International Political Economy (2.414)
- 8 Foreign Affairs (2.295)
- 9 Journal of Peace Research (2.153)
- 10 International Political Sociology (1.955)

**2014** (81 journals ranked)

- 1 **International Security (3.868)**
- 2 Journal of Peace Research (3.387)
- 3 International Organization (3.019)
- 4 Marine Policy (2.610)
- 5 World Politics (2.450)
- 6 Foreign Affairs (2.009)
- 7 European Journal of International Relations (1.972)
- 8 Review of International Political Economy (1.875)
- 9 JCMS - Journal of Common Market Studies (1.855)
- 10 Common Market Law Review (1.795)

### III. National Origins of *International Security* Submissions

#### National Origins of *International Security* Submissions

The following table and pie charts show the national origins of submissions to *International Security*.

The FY2023 table and pie chart are based on information generated by Editorial Manager, the editorial software that *International Security* has used since FY2010. Editorial Manager uses the location of the corresponding author’s email address to determine national origin. This method may not be ideal, but any other approach would not necessarily be superior, given the complexity of dual nationality and the fact that some scholars spend much or all of their careers outside their home countries.

In FY2023, 342 total article submissions originated from 50 different nations (with 0 submissions’ origins undetermined by Editorial Manager).

#### *International Security*: Fiscal Year 2023 Article Submissions by Countries of Origin\*

Table 6

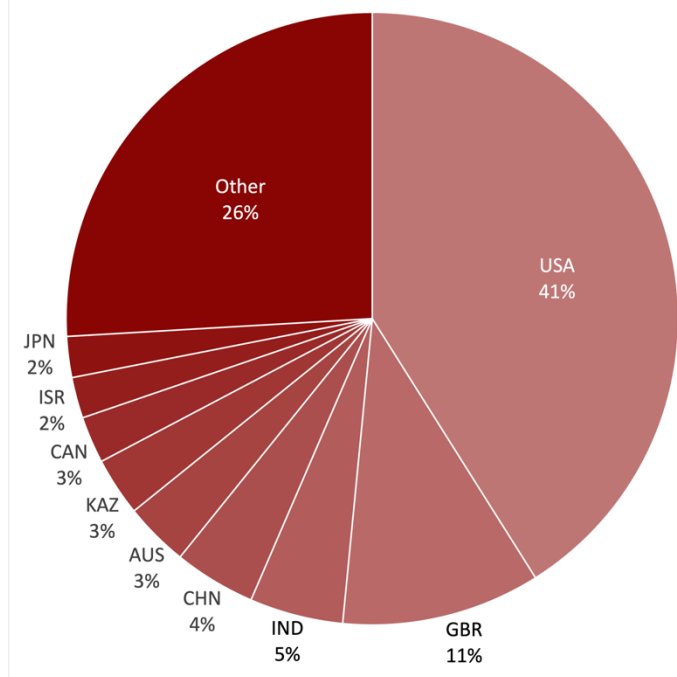
Country		Submissions	
United States	133	Czech Republic	4
United Kingdom	34	Germany	4
India	16	Indonesia	4
China	14	Pakistan	4
Australia	11	Poland	4
Kazakhstan	10	Ukraine	4
Canada	8	France	3
Israel	7	Italy	3
Japan	7	Singapore	3
Spain	6	Switzerland	3
Turkey	6	Denmark	2
Korea, Republic Of	5	Egypt	2
Belgium	4	Finland	2
		Greece	2
		Hong Kong	2
		Lebanon	2
		Netherlands	2
		Norway	2
		Russian Federation	2
		Azerbaijan	1
		Brazil	1
		Bulgaria	1
		Cyprus	1
		Ethiopia	1
		Ghana	1
		Hungary	1
		Iran (Islamic Republic Of)	1
		Iraq	1
		Ireland	1
		Kenya	1
		Kuwait	1
		Macau	1
		Nigeria	1
		Palestinian Territory, Occupied	1
		Serbia	1
		Sweden	1
		Syrian Arab Republic	1
		Undetermined	0

\*Data for country-of-origin information determined by email address of a submission’s corresponding author.

\*The pie charts following Table 6 use the ISO 3 country codes

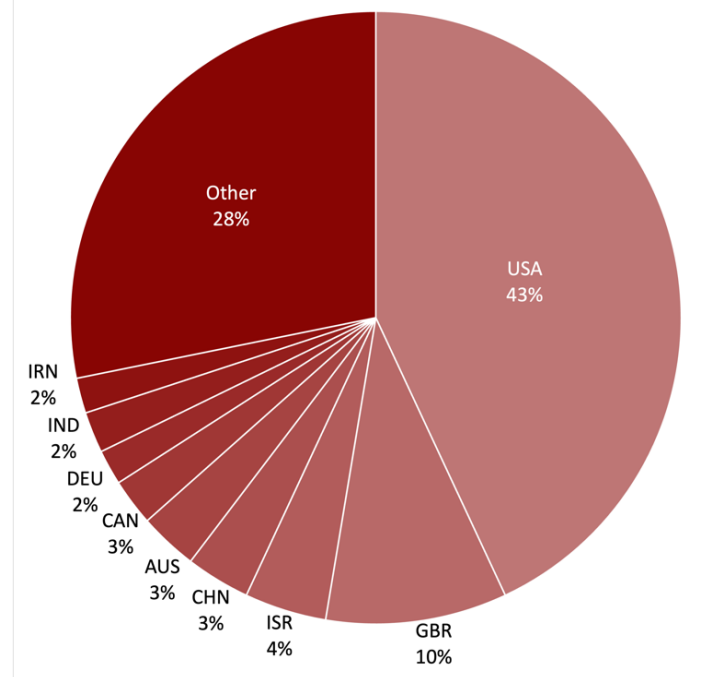
Fiscal Year 2023

Total article manuscripts submitted: 333  
Total nations: 50



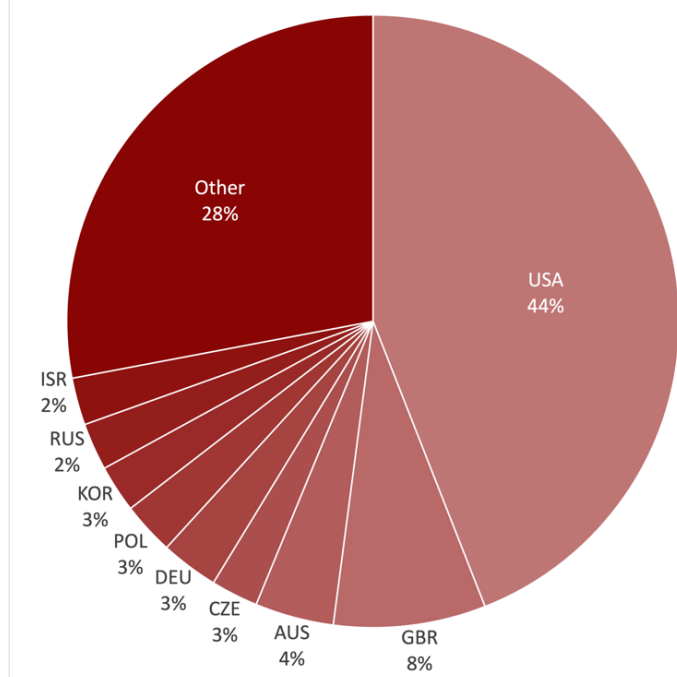
Fiscal Year 2022

Total article manuscripts submitted: 323  
Total nations: 49



Fiscal Year 2021

Total article manuscripts submitted: 361  
Total nations: 52



Fiscal Year 2020

Total article manuscripts submitted: 409  
Total nations: 46

