



# No room at the inn? The case for dedicated replication journals

W. Robert Reed <sup>a</sup>, Lukas Röseler <sup>b</sup>, Marianne Saam <sup>c,\*</sup>, Lukas Wallrich <sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Economics and Finance and UCMeta, University of Canterbury, Christchurch 8140, New Zealand

<sup>b</sup> Münster Center for Open Science, University of Münster, Münster 48149, Germany

<sup>c</sup> Program Area Open Economics, ZBW – Leibniz Information Centre for Economics and University of Hamburg, Hamburg 20354, Germany

<sup>d</sup> Birkbeck Business School, Birkbeck, University of London, London, United Kingdom

## ARTICLE INFO

### Keywords:

Replications  
Reproductions  
Economics  
Psychology  
Publishing

## ABSTRACT

Replication is widely recognized as essential for scientific self-correction, yet published replications remain exceedingly rare in both economics and psychology. At the same time, large-scale collaborative replication efforts and growing attention to research transparency have revealed widespread reproducibility failures across empirical research. This article reviews evidence on the scarcity of published replications, examines why traditional journals continue to resist publishing them, and evaluates the “first-best” proposal that journals should publish replications of their own articles. It then surveys alternative models that journals have adopted, such as dedicated replication sections and special replication issues, and considers their limitations in overcoming structural barriers to replication. Because these approaches have not meaningfully expanded the publication of replications, the article argues that dedicated replication journals offer an essential and complementary solution. By providing a stable, credible, and visible home for replication work, these journals supply critical infrastructure for the self-correcting function of science.

## 1. Introduction: why replication matters

Replication has a central role to play in the accumulation of scientific knowledge. Independent replication helps identify errors, evaluate robustness, and assess whether published findings generalize beyond their original contexts. These functions are particularly important in empirical fields such as economics and psychology, where results often conflict and researcher degrees of freedom are substantial. Despite broad recognition of its importance, replication remains uncommon. Most published findings are never subjected to independent reanalysis, and most journals do not actively encourage replication submissions.

*Evidence of replicability failure.* Over the past decade, empirical research across psychology, economics, and other behavioral sciences has uncovered substantial evidence of replicability failure. High-profile projects reveal that many published findings do not survive independent reanalysis or reimplementations. In psychology, the *Open Science Collaboration* (2015) reported that only a minority of replicated studies produced effects consistent with the originals, and the Many Labs initiatives (Klein et al., 2014) showed substantial variability in outcomes even among well-known effects.

In economics, the reanalysis of Reinhart and Rogoff’s influential

“Growth in a Time of Debt” demonstrated how coding errors and analytic choices can materially alter widely accepted conclusions (Reinhart & Rogoff, 2010; Herndon, Ash & Pollin, 2013). Collectively, these findings show that published results are often sensitive to contextual, procedural, or sampling differences that were previously unrecognized.

## 2. Replications have been and remain scarce

Although scholars routinely emphasize the importance of replication, peer-reviewed journals have historically published very few replication studies. Mueller-Langer et al. (2019) found that fewer than one-tenth of one percent of articles published in the top 50 economics journals from 1974 to 2014 were replications. Psychology performs modestly better, but rates remain very low: Makel, Plucker and Hegarty (2012) estimate that roughly one percent of psychology articles published in top 100 journals since 1900 qualify as direct or conceptual replications. These figures underscore that the traditional publication system has not meaningfully incorporated replication work.

*Recent initiatives to encourage replication.* Efforts have been made to address this shortcoming. In economics, many journals now require authors to make their data and code publicly available, which makes

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [m.saam@zbw.eu](mailto:m.saam@zbw.eu) (M. Saam).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socrec.2025.102502>

Received 29 April 2025; Received in revised form 1 December 2025; Accepted 7 December 2025

Available online 8 December 2025

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replication easier (Vlaeminck, 2021). For more than a decade, initiatives such as the Berkeley Initiative for Transparency in the Social Sciences have helped promote checks of computational reproducibility and meta-scientific standards (BITSS, n.d.). A major milestone occurred in 2018 when the American Economic Association appointed its first Data Editor to enforce data availability and reproducibility requirements across AEA journals (Vilhuber, 2020).

Parallel developments have taken place in psychology. Journals such as *Psychological Science*, *Nature Human Behaviour*, *American Psychologist* and *Journal of Social Psychology* have implemented increasingly stringent transparency guidelines requiring authors to deposit data, materials, and code in public repositories.

The Transparency and Openness Promotion (TOP) Guidelines (Nosek et al., 2015) provide a cross-disciplinary framework for these reforms. A small but growing number of journals now conduct analytic reproducibility checks and employ quantitative-methods editors. These practices have made replication materials more accessible and contributed to a culture in which replication is becoming more normalized.

These cultural changes have enabled the emergence of large collaborative replication efforts. One example is the Institute for Replication (I4R), founded by Abel Brodeur in 2021, which organizes “replication games” and maintains an extensive working paper series (Institute for Replication, 2025). Another is the Lab<sup>2</sup> Incubator at the WZB Berlin Social Science Center, which coordinates many analysts projects and large-scale collaborative replications of influential empirical results (Lab<sup>2</sup>, 2025). Despite these encouraging developments, the number of published replications remains low.

*Replication studies in journals: Still hard to find.* Given the growth of replication activity and infrastructure, one might expect a corresponding increase in published replications. While the evidence is scant, there appears to be, at best, only a mild uptick over time.

Following up on Makel et al. (2012), Clarke et al. (2024) studied direct replication articles<sup>1</sup> published between 2010 and 2021 in 100 high-impact psychology journals. They found “a small suggestive increase in the prevalence of direct replication articles over time.” According to data compiled by the blog site *The Replication Network* (The Replication Network, 2025), the number of published replications in economics has increased in recent years from an average of 12.3 per year in the 2000s, to 37.1 per year in the 2010s, to 54.2 per year in the 2020s. Nevertheless, their overall share remains extremely small. Even under a conservative assumption that roughly 10,000 empirical articles are published annually in peer-reviewed economics journals, 50 replications per year equate to about 0.5 % of all published economics articles.<sup>2</sup> Together, these studies indicate that while awareness of replication has grown, replications still comprise well below 1.5 % of published papers in psychology and economics.

Admittedly, one must be careful in interpreting the persistently low rate of published replications. One possibility is that improvements in transparency and reproducibility checks have elevated the overall quality of empirical work, leaving fewer issues for replications to uncover. If so, a modest increase in replications might indicate that research is improving rather than that journals resist publishing replications.

However, this is unlikely. Most transparency reforms target analytic reproducibility—ensuring that authors provide the materials needed to regenerate results—rather than deeper sources of replicability failure

such as low power, selective reporting, flexible analytic choices, or generalizability problems. Reforms have improved our ability to reproduce published results, and they may also begin to increase incentives for authors to check reproducibility more thoroughly before publication. Meanwhile they do not remove the underlying need to assess whether findings are robust and generalizable using different data and methods. Thus, the more likely explanation for continued low rates of replication is that the structural forces that impede replication publication — novelty-oriented incentives, perceived citation penalties, reputational risk, and limited space for non-novel contributions — remain firmly in place.

*The Pottery Barn rule.* A straightforward remedy for the lack of replicability in published research is for journals that publish original findings to also publish the replications that test them. As Srivastava (2012) noted in applying the well-known “Pottery Barn Rule” to academic publishing, journals that disseminate findings that are challenged by direct replications should “own” responsibility for the scientific record. Publishing replications in the same journal ensures that they reach the same audience, preserves editorial accountability, and creates a coherent record of whether published results withstand independent scrutiny (see also LeBel, 2015; Hüffmeier & Kühner, 2024).

In practice, however, this ideal has seen little uptake. A small number of journals — *Royal Society Open Science* being the most notable — have committed to publishing replications of their own articles. Many journals may perceive replications as generating fewer citations, demanding additional editorial resources, or destabilizing established narratives. Even though recent evidence suggests citation penalties may be overstated (Coupé et al., 2025), most journals remain reluctant to adopt Pottery Barn-style policies. As a result, journals have implemented a variety of alternative approaches.

### 3. Alternative journal approaches to publishing replications

One approach that journals have taken is to create replication sections within their pages. In economics, the *Journal of Applied Econometrics* was among the first to do this (Pesaran, 2003). Similar sections exist in *Public Finance Review* (Burman et al., 2010), the *Journal of Economics and Statistics* (Journal of Economics & Statistics, 2025), *Spatial Economic Analysis* (Dietzen & Selhorst, 2022), and — for experimental research — in the *European Economic Review* (European Economic Review, 2024).

In psychology, *Royal Society Open Science* maintains a dedicated track for replication studies within its Psychology and Cognitive Neuroscience section (Royal Society Open Science, 2019). In addition, *Nature Communications* and *Communications Psychology* jointly maintain a “Replication and Generalization” collection (Nature Communications, 2022). However, even when journals carve out space for replications, these sections can be sparsely populated and may not consistently feature replications in every issue.

Beyond these, a number of outlets in economics and psychology explicitly invite replications or have published special issues focused on them. In psychology, these include among others *Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science* (Simons, 2018), *Social Psychology* (Nosek & Likens, 2014), *Collabra: Psychology* (Lebel, 2015), and *Psychological Science* (Vaziri, 2024). In economics, the *American Economic Review* (2025), *Energy Economics* (Tol, 2019), and *Economic Inquiry* (Bokhari et al., 2025) have published special replication issues and/or invite the submission of replications to regular issues.

*In practice, there are few pathways for publishing replications.* As noted above, despite substantial investment in transparency reforms and growing cultural support for reproducibility, the number of replications published in peer-reviewed journals has, at best, only modestly increased. Perhaps more concerning is that researchers have relatively few pathways for publishing replication studies. According to data compiled by *The Replication Network* (2025), four journals account for roughly one-third of all economics replications published since 1960:

<sup>1</sup> Direct replications are replications that adhere to the sampling and the experiment procedures of the original as closely as possible (Makel et al., 2012).

<sup>2</sup> The search portal EconBiz lists more than 70,000 articles published in economics and management journals for 2023, source: [www.econbiz.de](http://www.econbiz.de). Assuming that the number of publications is lower in economics than in management and that some articles are not empirical, we consider 10,000 to be a rough conservative estimate of the annual number of empirical articles published in economics journals.

the *Journal of Applied Econometrics*, the *American Economic Review*, *Econ Journal Watch*, and the *Journal of Comments and Replications in Economics*. Ten journals account for approximately half of all replications. In psychology, [Clarke et al. \(2024\)](#) similarly found that six journals published nearly 60 percent of all direct replications between 2010 and 2021.

This narrow distribution makes replication a risky undertaking. Researchers must invest significant time in work with limited prospects for placement. Editorial norms that privilege novelty reinforce these risks, as reviewers often view replications as unoriginal or low-impact. Replications that contradict influential findings may be seen as contentious or reputationally risky. Together, these factors reveal a structural bottleneck: The journal infrastructure as it currently exists is not amenable to absorbing substantially larger numbers of replication work.

At the same time, advances in AI-assisted writing, analysis, and synthetic data generation make it easier than ever to produce manuscripts that appear polished even when the underlying evidence is weak or selectively reported. Combined with longstanding sources of false positives — publication bias, flexible analytic practices, low power, and novelty-driven incentives — the risk that questionable findings will enter and persist in the literature only increases. Replication offers one of the few reliable mechanisms for scientific self-correction — but only if viable outlets exist.

#### 4. The case for dedicated replication journals

Given the structural barriers in traditional journals, dedicated replication journals offer a promising solution. Journals such as the *Journal of Comments and Replications in Economics* and *Replication Research* provide dedicated space for replication work.<sup>3</sup>

Dedicated replication journals are well suited to overcome many of the obstacles that limit replication in traditional outlets.

First, because their mission centres on verification rather than novelty ([Kasy, 2021](#)), they eliminate an editorial bias that discounts replications as “unoriginal”. In these outlets, replication is the expected contribution, not an exception that must justify itself against novelty-oriented criteria.

Second, dedicated replication journals can establish clear and consistent methodological expectations — something traditional journals often lack. This reduces ambiguity for authors and allows replications to be evaluated on their scientific merit rather than their fit with a journal’s thematic agenda.

Third, because these journals anticipate that some replications will contradict influential findings, they are less susceptible to the reputational pressures that discourage traditional editors from publishing negative or contentious results.

Finally, replication journals can foster institutional cultures that normalize open data, reproducibility checks, pre-analysis plans, and transparent review processes, reducing the conflicts and inconsistencies that arise when replication is forced into publication pipelines designed primarily for original research. Deriving their identity and value from those principles, replication journals face less incentives to pursue the maximization of traditional journal-rank metrics.

Together, these features create a stable and credible pathway for replication work — one that is insulated from the structural disincentives embedded in traditional publishing.

A possible concern is that dedicated replication journals might further marginalize replications by displacing them from mainstream journals. However, authors would still have the option of submitting their work to traditional journals. To appeal to researchers, dedicated replication journals would have to establish themselves as attractive, substitute publishing outlets. Far from marginalizing replications, they

reduce marginalization by giving authors a credible, visible outlet when publishing in mainstream journals isn’t possible. In effect, they counteract marginalization by increasing the overall demand for replication work — creating additional publication opportunities and elevating its presence in the literature.

*Do we really need to publish replications in journals?* Although platforms such as the I4R Working Paper Series provide valuable venues for disseminating replication studies, relying solely on preprints or working papers is insufficient for at least three reasons if replications are to perform the self-correcting role they are meant to serve.

First, journal publication substantially increases the visibility and impact of replication studies. Many researchers never encounter replications that remain only as preprints or working papers, which lack the indexing, discoverability, and promotion mechanisms associated with peer-reviewed outlets. Empirical evidence confirms this visibility gap: A study of 28,000 economics papers found that receiving the “stamp of approval” of journal publication roughly doubles a paper’s yearly citations compared to similar work that never progresses beyond the working-paper stage ([Wohlrabe & Burgi, 2021](#)). Replications that remain unpublished are therefore far less likely to be discovered, cited, or incorporated into the cumulative scientific record.

Second, career incentives strongly shape researchers’ choices. Academic advancement depends heavily on peer-reviewed publications and citations, not on preprints. The resulting statistical publication biases have been shown in metascience research (e.g., [Bakker et al., 2012](#)). When replications face limited journal opportunities, researchers receive a clear signal that such work is undervalued, discouraging them from investing time in studies that may be difficult to publish or that yield fewer career rewards than novel contributions.

Finally, peer-reviewed publication provides a level of methodological vetting and quality assurance that working-paper platforms cannot offer. Subjecting replication studies to formal review makes them both more trustworthy and more trusted, increasing their influence on subsequent research and ensuring that they can more effectively contribute to science’s self-correcting function.

#### 5. Dedicated replication journals: short-term fixes or long-term solution?

Whether dedicated replication journals prove to be a temporary stopgap or a lasting part of the academic publishing landscape depends on how traditional journals respond to the challenges posed by replication work. In principle, such journals could function as a short-term fix if their presence creates competitive or normative pressure that ultimately induces traditional outlets to publish more replications. By demonstrating that high-quality replications are both feasible and valuable, they may encourage established journals to incorporate replication more fully, at which point dedicated replication journals could gradually recede in importance.

Alternatively, traditional journals may remain anchored in incentives that prioritize novelty, resistant to publishing results that challenge their prior contributions, and constrained by impact-factor pressures and editorial risk aversion. In that scenario, dedicated replication journals could become permanent fixtures in the scientific ecosystem, providing the self-correcting function that traditional outlets have struggled to assume.

In either case, dedicated replication journals expand the pathways through which replication studies can be vetted, disseminated, and integrated into the scientific record — strengthening the credibility and integrity of cumulative science.

#### 4. Data availability

Data sources are cited. All data are publicly available.

<sup>3</sup> JCRE is co-edited by two authors of this essay, RR and MS; R2 is co-edited by LR and LW.

## CRediT authorship contribution statement

**W. Robert Reed:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Investigation, Conceptualization. **Lukas Röseler:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Investigation, Conceptualization. **Marianne Saam:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Project administration, Investigation, Conceptualization. **Lukas Wallrich:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Investigation, Conceptualization.

## Acknowledgements

We thank Tom Coupé, Paul von Hippel, Steven Verheyen and two anonymous referees for helpful suggestions and discussions.

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