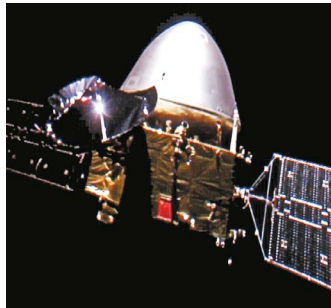


# News in brief



## CHINA'S FIRST MARS EXPLORER ARRIVES AT THE RED PLANET

China has achieved another milestone in space. Its first spacecraft designed to explore Mars arrived at the planet on 10 February just before 8.00 p.m. Beijing time, a day after the United Arab Emirates' Hope spacecraft (see page 372).

Tianwen-1 is now orbiting the red planet. In three months' time, it will drop a lander and rover to the Martian surface. Between them, the orbiter and rover will explore the planet's geology and soil characteristics, and will search for water and ice.

"Successfully reaching Mars's orbit is one of the mission's key challenges," says Li Chunlai, deputy chief designer of the Mars exploration programme, based in Beijing. But the pressure is still on, he says, as the mission prepares to land autonomously on the planet's northern hemisphere. If the landing is successful, the rover, which carries 6 instruments, will explore the planet for at least 92 Martian days, each of which is equivalent to a full day and 37 minutes on Earth.

In orbit, Tianwen-1, which carries seven scientific instruments, will begin taking precise images of the landing region known as Utopia Planitia – a flat expanse of volcanic rock in a large basin. The area is near the volcano Elysium Mons, where landforms have been found that could be linked to the presence of water or ice, says Li.

## HOST OF PREDATORY JOURNALS INDEXED ON MAJOR DATABASE

The widely used academic database Scopus hosts papers from more than 300 potentially 'predatory' journals that have questionable publishing practices, an analysis has found (V. Macháček and M. Srholec *Scientometrics* <https://doi.org/ft4s>; 2021). Together, these titles contributed more than 160,000 articles over 3 years – almost 3% of the studies indexed on Scopus during the period.

"There are potentially serious consequences of predatory articles being indexed in scientific databases," says Anna Severin, a sociologist who studies peer review at the University of Bern and has written about predatory journals infiltrating citation databases. "Researchers might base their further research on poor-quality or even fabricated findings and cite these in their own publications, thereby further distributing untrustworthy science," adds Severin, who wasn't involved in the latest study.

Predatory journals are those that tend to publish low-quality science and deviate from best editorial practices. Researchers have previously found that some such journals are indexed in popular scholarly databases such as the biomedical site PubMed (A. Manca *et al. Arch. Phys. Med. Rehabil.* **98**, 1051–1056; 2017), but the extent of the problem is difficult to quantify.

To conduct the latest analysis, researchers compared the titles indexed in Scopus with a list of potentially predatory journals that was maintained by former librarian Jeffrey Beall until 2017. They found 324 of these questionable journals on the database; collectively these titles published some 164,000 papers between 2015 and 2017.

## Trust in COVID vaccines is growing

Attitudes towards COVID-19 vaccines seem to be improving in some parts of the world, a survey of thousands of people in 15 countries has found (see [go.nature.com/3u9homb](https://go.nature.com/3u9homb)). Researchers have welcomed the results, which suggest that an increasing proportion of people are willing to be immunized.

The survey is part of the COVID-19 behaviour tracker, run by Imperial College London and the UK market-research company YouGov. It ran from November 2020 to January 2021, polling around 13,500 people across Europe, Asia and Australia each time. In November – before countries began to approve COVID-19 vaccines – only around 40% of respondents said they would get a COVID-19 vaccine if they were offered one during the week of the survey. In January, this had risen to more than half of respondents, and the share of people who said they worry about side effects had fallen (see 'Vaccine confidence').

"It's great to see that more people are now open to getting a vaccine," says Deborah Jones, a physician at Columbia University Irving Medical Center in New York City. "But what strikes me is how many people are still hesitating. Vaccine hesitancy will slow down our return to normal."

### VACCINE CONFIDENCE

A global survey suggests that a growing share of people are willing to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

