

## Diminishing knowledge with increasing age through Quaternary time

The histograms at right (explained in more detail below) show that publications dealing with MIS 1 to 5 are 94.5% of the 4239 palaeoclimate publications across the period surveyed, and publications about MIS 6 to MIS 28 are 5.5%. The inference to be drawn is one common to geology as a historical science and to history in general: we know much more about the more recent past than we know about the more distant past. In the study of human history, it's why one course called "Ancient History" covers thousands of years and another course on a more recent period may cover at most a decade. In studying the Quaternary, it's why we know so little about, and commonly discuss in so little detail, history before the Holocene, or more generally before MIS 5, and we certainly say little about about history before MIS 13.

The details: The histograms at right show the number of responses from Web of Science for each marine isotope stage from MIS 1 to MIS 28, the latter of which was roughly one million years ago. Because "MIS 1" is a rarely-used term, the result for MIS 1 is combined with that for "Holocene". Because the combination of MIS 2, 3, and 4 constitutes the analog of earlier glacials (i.e., MIS 6 or MIS 8) of previous glacial cycles, their results are combined here. The results are shown in small histogram with a constant vertical scale and a large histogram in which the vertical scale changes. The survey of Web of Science was made on 19 December 2013.

