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Mazurek, Piotr Stanislaw; Yu, Liyun; Skov, Anne Ladegaard; Gerhard, Reimund; Wirges, Werner

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Glycerol as high-permittivity liquid filler in dielectric silicone elastomers

Piotr Mazurek (1), Liyun Yu (1), Reimund Gerhard (2), Werner Wirges (2), Anne Ladegaard Skov (1)

(1) Technical University of Denmark, Danish Polymer Centre, Kgs. Lyngby, Denmark; (2) University of Potsdam, Applied Condensed-Matter Physics, Potsdam, Germany

Abstract

A recently reported novel class of elastomers was tested with respect to its dielectric properties. The new elastomer material is based on a commercially available polydimethylsiloxane (PDMS) composition, which has been modified by embedding **glycerol** droplets into its matrix.¹ The approach has two major advantages that make the material useful in a dielectric actuator. First, the glycerol droplets efficiently **enhance the dielectric constant** which can reach very high values in the composite. Second, the liquid filler also acts as a softener that effectively **decreases the elastic modulus** of the composite. In combination with very **low cost** and **easy preparation**, the two property enhancements lead to a very attractive dielectric elastomer material. Experimental permittivity data are compared to various theoretical models that predict relative-permittivity changes as a function of filler loading, and the applicability of the models is discussed.²

Sample names were formed using the pattern: GX_Y_Z, where G and X denote glycerol and the amount of glycerol added to a PDMS prepolymer (weight parts of glycerol per hundred weight parts of silicone prepolymer), respectively, Y corresponds to the PDMS composition employed (S184 – Sylgard 184, XLR630 – Powersil XLR 630), and Z indicates supplementary components (in the approach discussed here, it corresponds to the thinning fluid OS-20).

Objectives

The aim of this work was to use **polar liquids** as high-permittivity fillers for silicone elastomers. The liquid fillers were expected to act similarly to solid fillers and effectively **enhance the dielectric constant** of resulting elastomers.

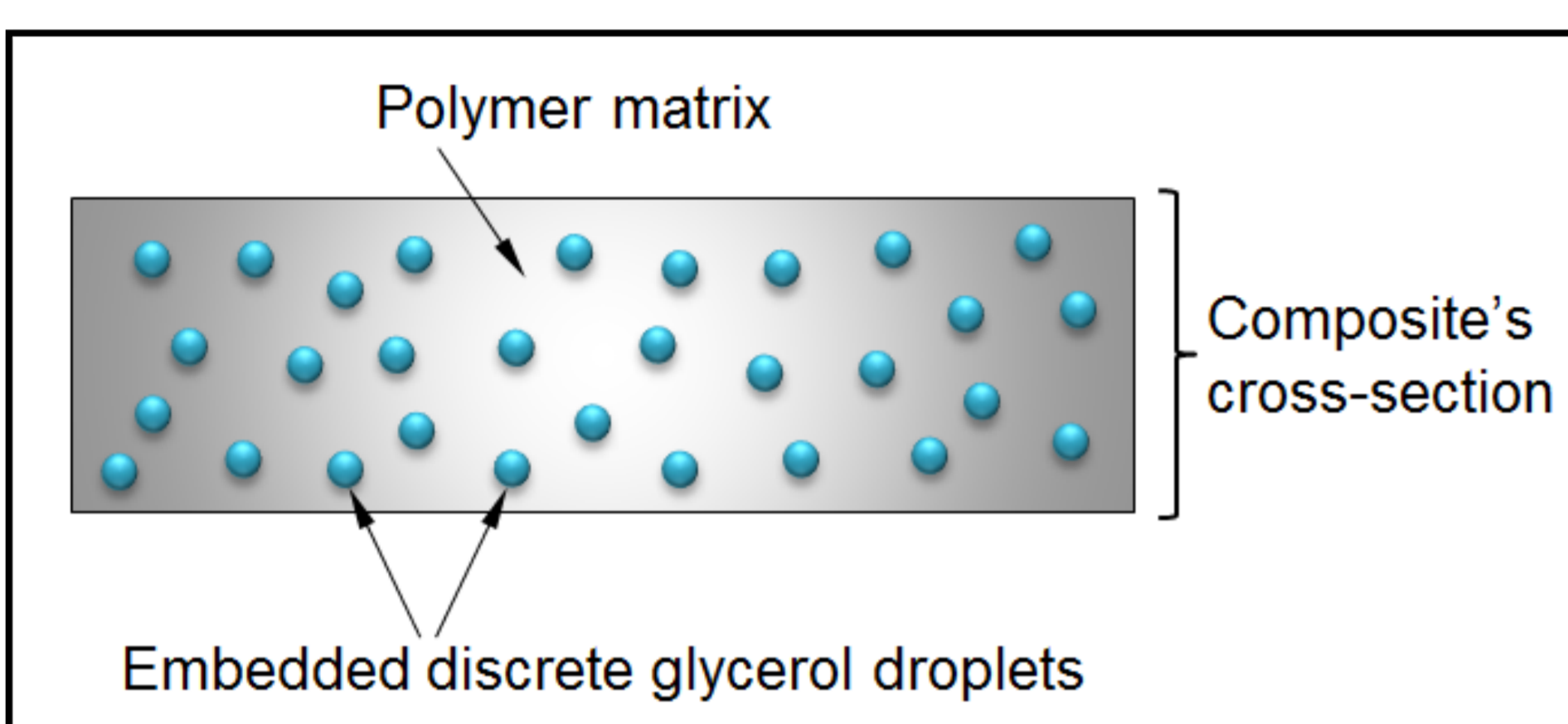


Figure 1. Schema of a glycerol-PDMS composite. Glycerol is embedded into a dielectric elastomer in the form of discrete droplets in order to avoid the formation of conductive pathways across the material.

Film preparation

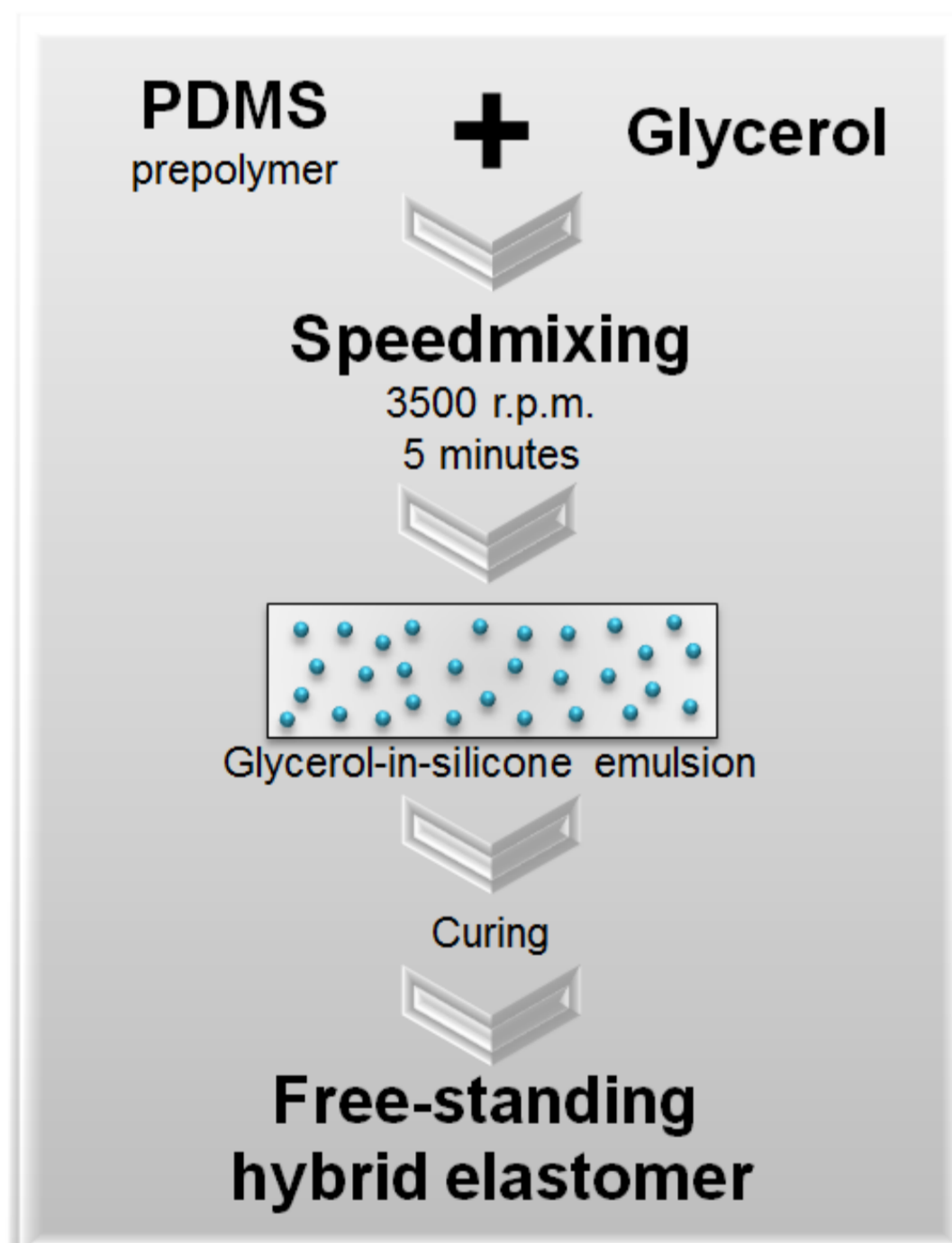


Figure 2. Preparation procedure of glycerol-silicone elastomers.

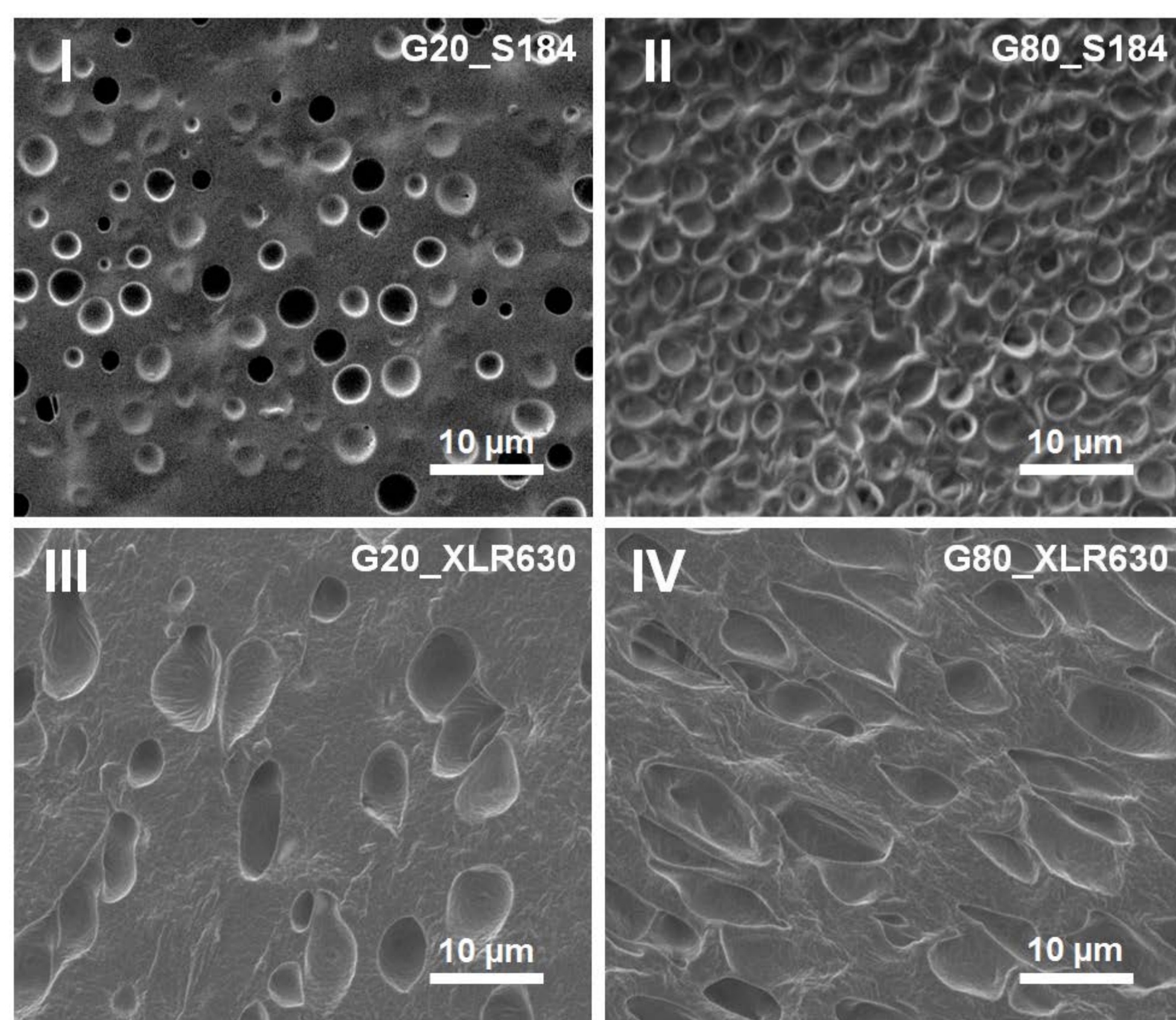


Figure 3. SEM images of cured glycerol-PDMS composite cross-sections. I – G20_S184, II – G80_S184, III – G20_XLR630, IV – G80_XLR630.

Results

Main findings:

- The **Young's modulus** of composites **decreases** with increasing glycerol loading yet the ultimate strain remains unaffected
- Glycerol droplets distributed within PDMS act as high-permittivity filler **enhancing the dielectric constant** of resulting composites
- The composites were assessed by means of some of the most popular theoretical models predicting changes of relative permittivities as a function of filler content. Results show that the **formula** suggested by **Jayasundere and Smith** fits the experimental results most accurately

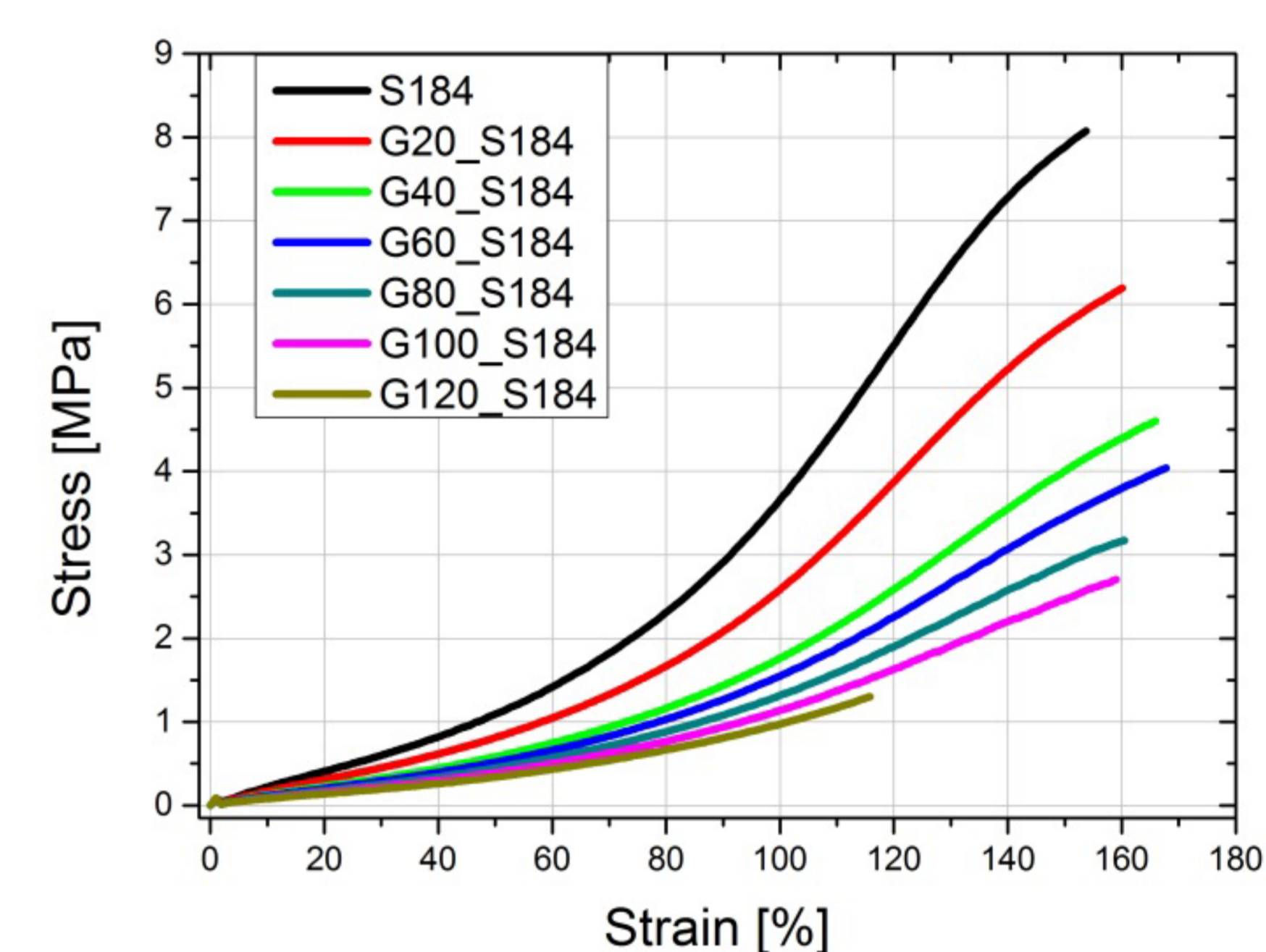


Figure 4. Stress-strain behavior of various compositions obtained from tensile measurements.

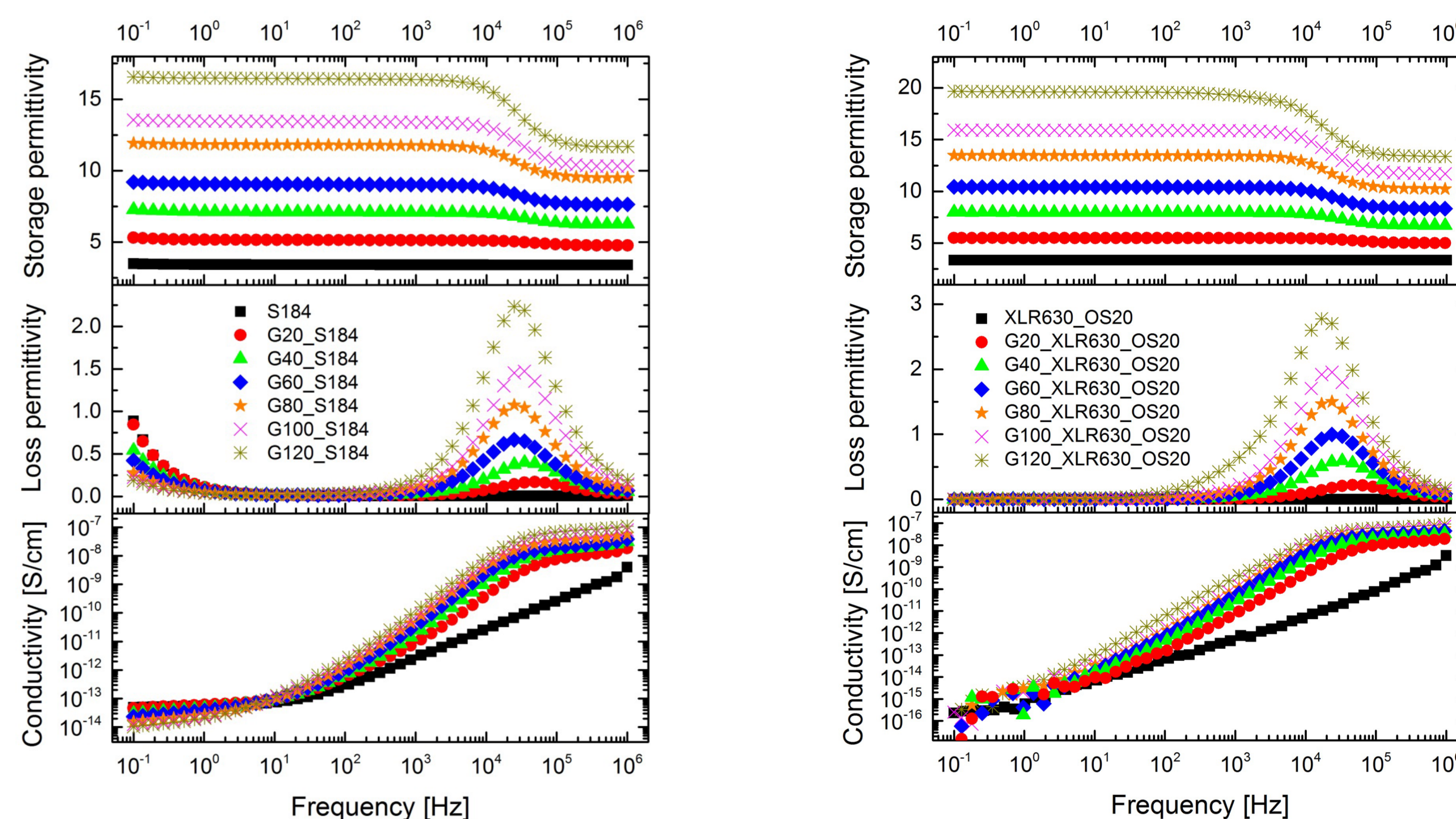


Figure 5. Storage permittivity, loss permittivity and AC conductivity of various glycerol-S184 (left) and glycerol-XLR630 (right) composites.

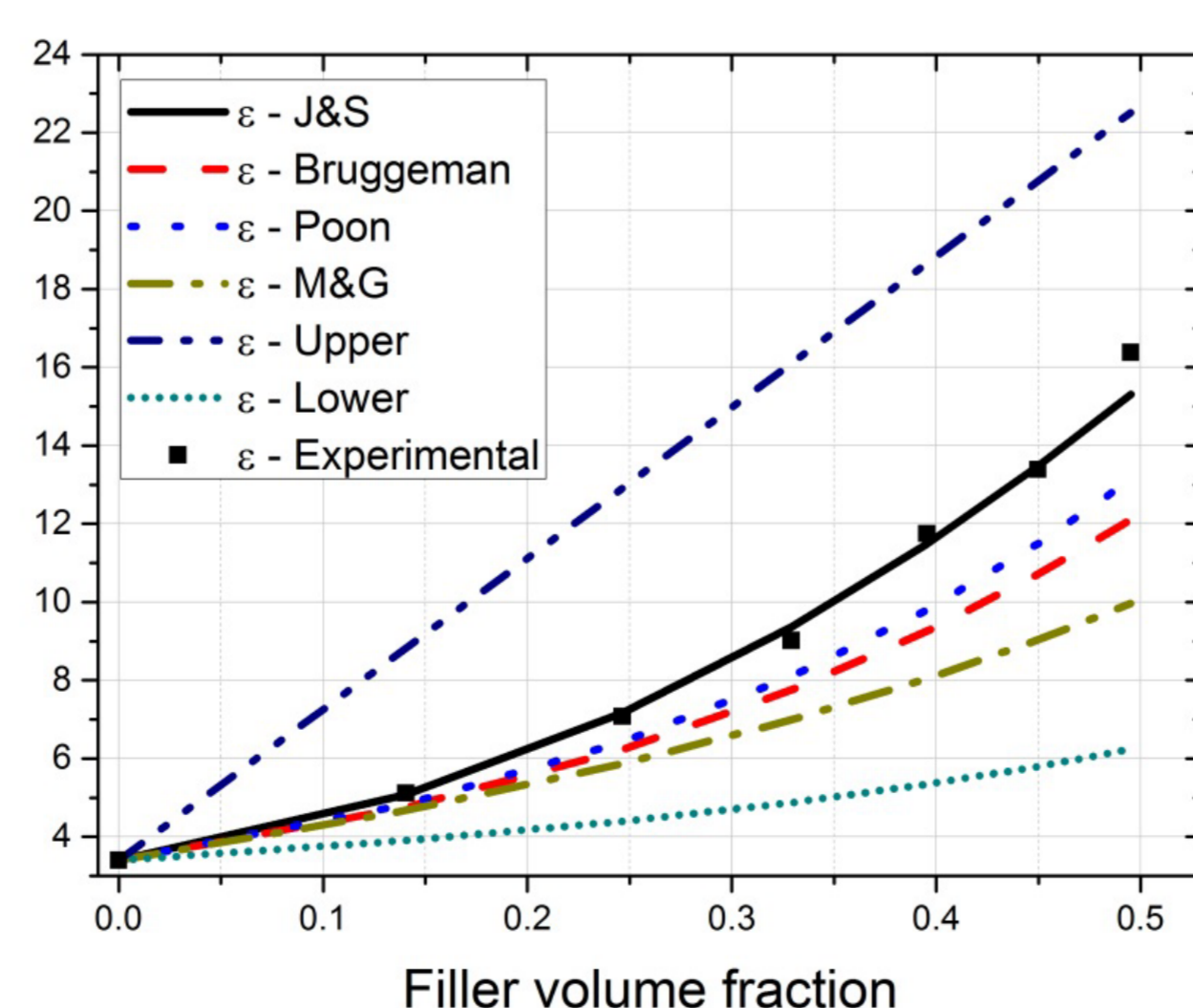


Figure 6. Experimental data and theoretical estimate of the relative permittivity at 1 kHz as a function of the glycerol loading in the composites.

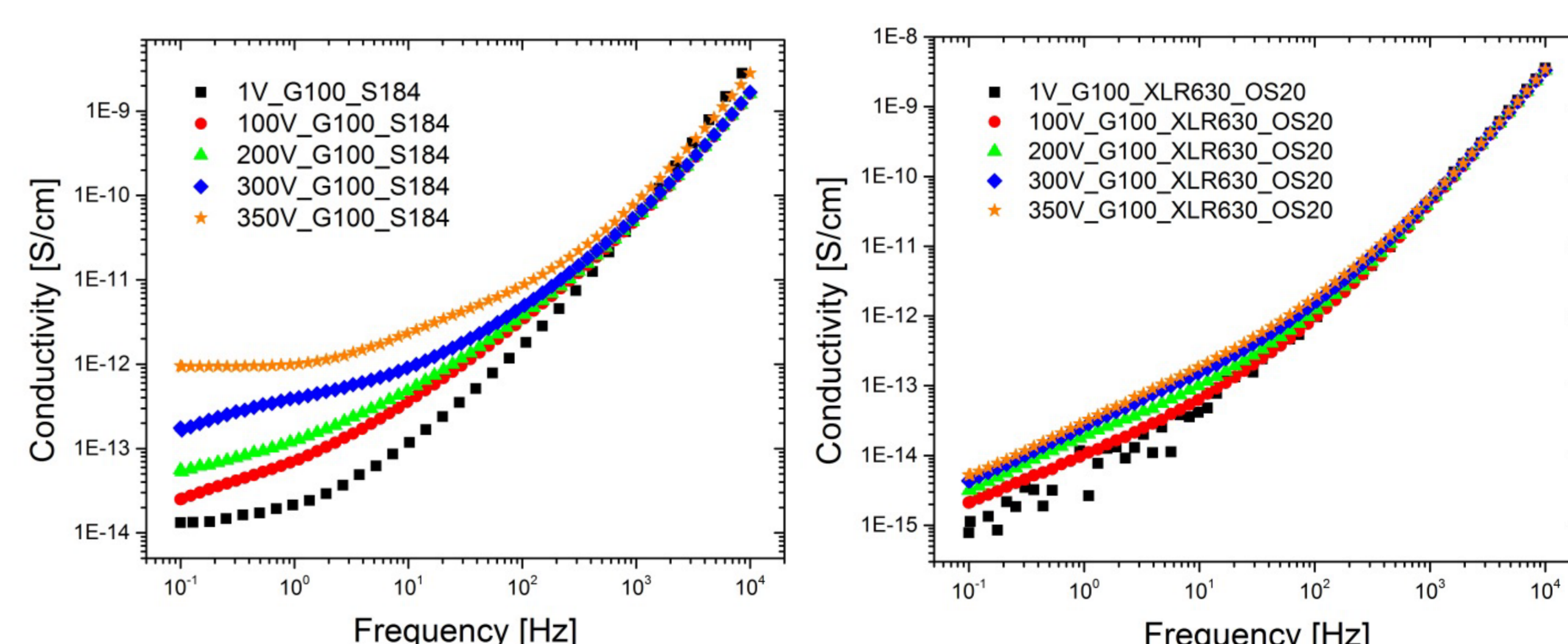


Figure 7. Conductivities of composites G100_S184 (left) and G100_XLR630_OS20 (right), for various AC voltages at room temperature.

Acknowledgments

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References

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2. P. Mazurek, L. Yu, R. Gerhard, W. Wirges, A.L. Skov, Glycerol as high-permittivity liquid filler in dielectric silicone elastomers, accepted in *J. Appl. Polym. Sci.* in June 2016