

# EXPLORING PUBLICATION ETHICS IN THE ARTS, HUMANITIES, AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

COPE (Committee on Publication Ethics) Initial Research Findings

## Top 5 publishing ethics challenges faced by today's journal editors



### WHY THIS RESEARCH?

COPE (Committee on Publication Ethics) aims to provide practical publication ethics guidance for editors working in all disciplines. We wanted to better understand the publication ethics issues faced by arts, humanities, and social sciences journal editors and, with support from Routledge, carried out this research to assess current and future needs. The results will help us provide better support and guidance to journal editors working in these disciplines.

### THE METHODOLOGY

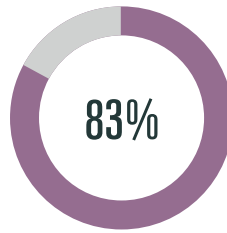
The research was conducted in two stages:

1. We held two initial, exploratory focus groups to identify current ethical issues editors face, future issues they anticipate, and what sources of support they currently use or need.
2. This informed an online survey of a larger number of editors, which helped us understand the prevalence of these issues, how frequently editors are encountering them, and which challenges they need most support with.

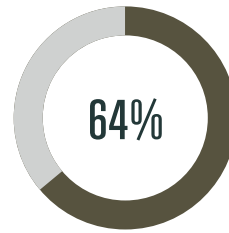
## WHO RESPONDED?

We gathered insights from **656** editors of journals in the arts, humanities, and social sciences who responded to the online survey. This included voluntary and employed editors working independently or in teams, and with varied levels of experience.

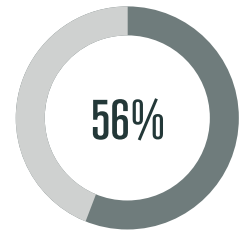
Insights from 656 editors of journals in the arts, humanities, and social sciences



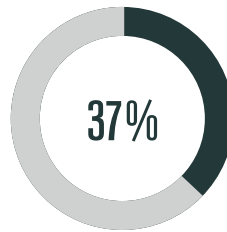
Voluntary or honorarium editors



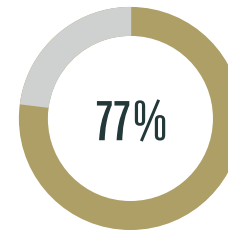
Made independent editorial decisions



Made editorial decisions as part of a team



Are COPE members

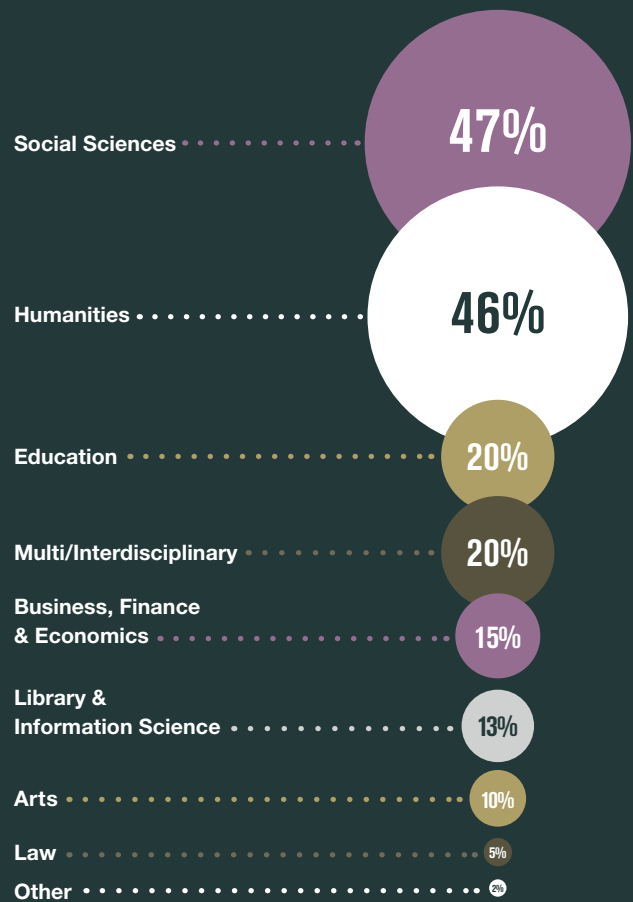


Were associated with major publishers

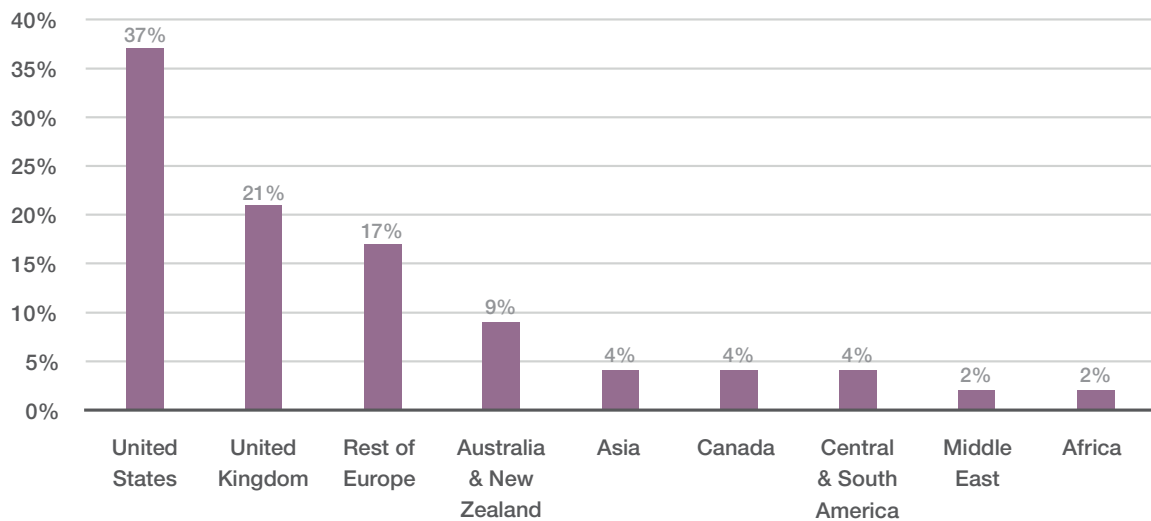
## EXPERIENCE LEVELS



## SUBJECT FOCUS<sup>123</sup>

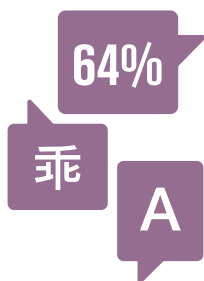


## LOCATION



## WHAT JOURNAL EDITORS TOLD US:

## TODAY'S MOST PRESSING PUBLICATION ETHICS ISSUES



Said the **most prevalent** and **frequent** issue was addressing language and writing quality barriers while remaining inclusive.

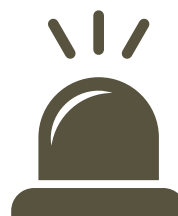


Have encountered issues around the way authors receive and respond to criticism.

**27%** flagged this as a frequent issue.



Encountered issues with detecting plagiarism and poor attribution standards. This was **particularly prevalent among Business, Finance and Economics editors.**



Respondents said the **most serious issues** were detecting plagiarism and poor attribution, fraudulent submissions, and data and/or image fabrication issues.



Said they felt **fraudulent submissions** were among the most serious issues. Examples include hoax articles written to discredit a journal, topic or field, to submissions by a third party on an author's behalf.



Half of the respondents had encountered **self-plagiarism** with **22%** saying it arose frequently. Editors reported that this was likely to increase with the current academic culture of measuring outputs.



Respondents felt least confident in dealing with data and/or image fabrication, fraudulent submissions, and IP and copyright.

## WHAT JOURNAL EDITORS TOLD US: KEY PUBLICATION ETHICS ISSUES OF THE FUTURE

We asked journal editors what situations or behaviours may cause ethical issues in five years' time.

- **Authorship and attribution** issues and problems with **peer review** are expected to increase.
- Journal editors thought the issue of **making scholarly publishing more inclusive** would have to be addressed, and that this would involve dealing with different international standards and minimising English language dominance.
- While not one of the most prevalent issues, **data and/or image fabrication** was highlighted as one that will become more of a problem, exacerbated by **big data and artificial intelligence**.
- The current **output-driven academic culture** is expected to increase pressure to publish and exacerbate issues such as self-plagiarism and predatory publishing.

<sup>1</sup> Arts includes Music; Performance Studies; Visual Art.

<sup>2</sup> Humanities includes Anthropology; Archaeology; Heritage and Conservation Studies; History; Language and Linguistics; Literature; Media, Communication and Cultural Studies; Philosophy; Religion.

<sup>3</sup> Social Sciences includes Area Studies; Criminology; Developmental Studies; Gender Studies; Geography; International Relations; Leisure and Tourism; Planning and Urban Studies; Politics; Psychology and Behavioural Sciences; Race, Ethnicity and Identity; Social Care; Sociology; Sport Sciences; Strategic Studies.

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