



**Ethical challenges in the arts,
humanities and social sciences:
initial research findings and solutions**
Conducted by COPE, supported by Routledge

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Arts & Humanities

Routledge, Taylor & Francis





Our Aim

To better understand the publication ethics needs of arts, humanities and social science journal editors, and to identify areas where they may need specific guidance and support.

Q. What issues are journal editors dealing with that are problematic?

Q. What is it that journal editors need from COPE in terms of support?

Q. What is COPE currently not providing?



Methodology



Online focus groups

- COPE publisher members
- 10 respondents
- Two x 75 minute sessions
- All from major publishers



Online survey

- Academic editors
- 30 questions
- Mix of major publishers and smaller society and university publishers



Online survey respondents: role profiles



83%

Editors working on a voluntary basis

64%

Independent editorial decision makers

56%

Editorial decision making in teams

37%

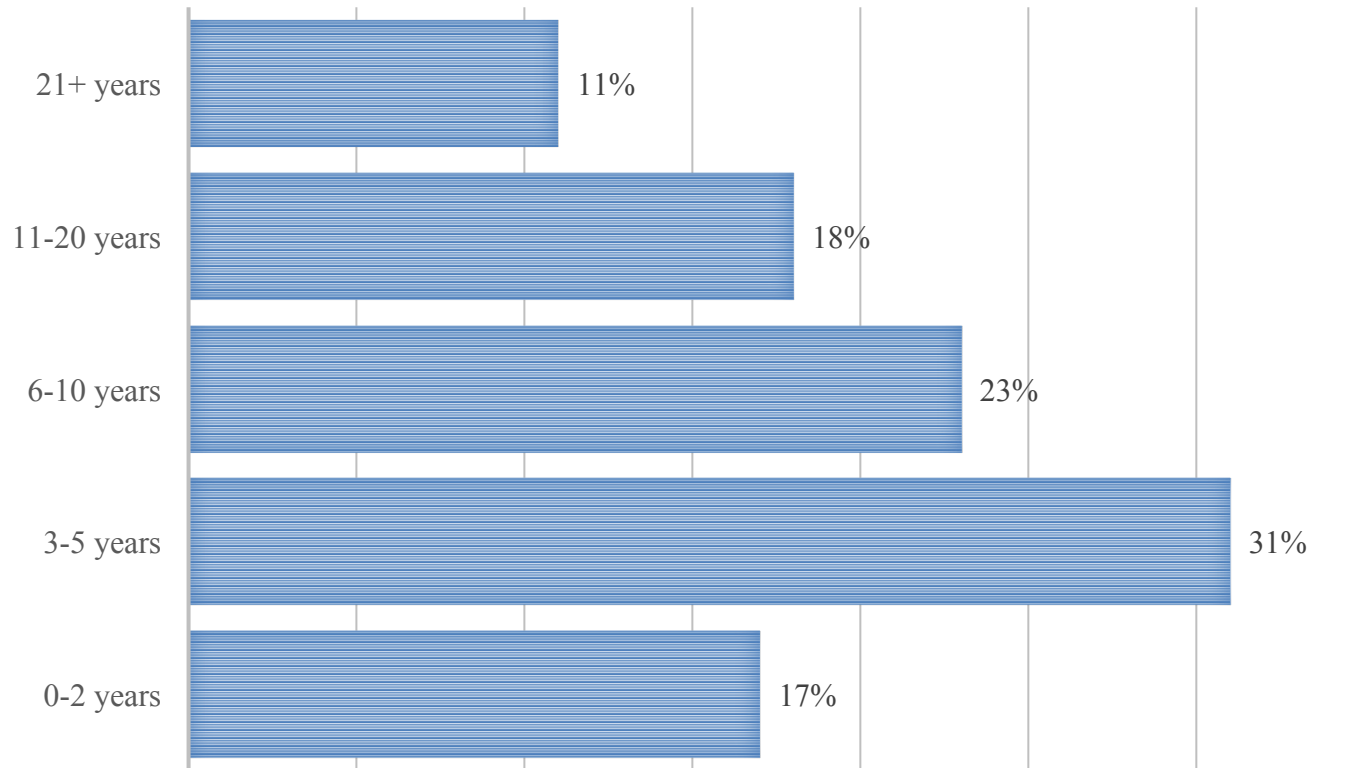
COPE members

77%

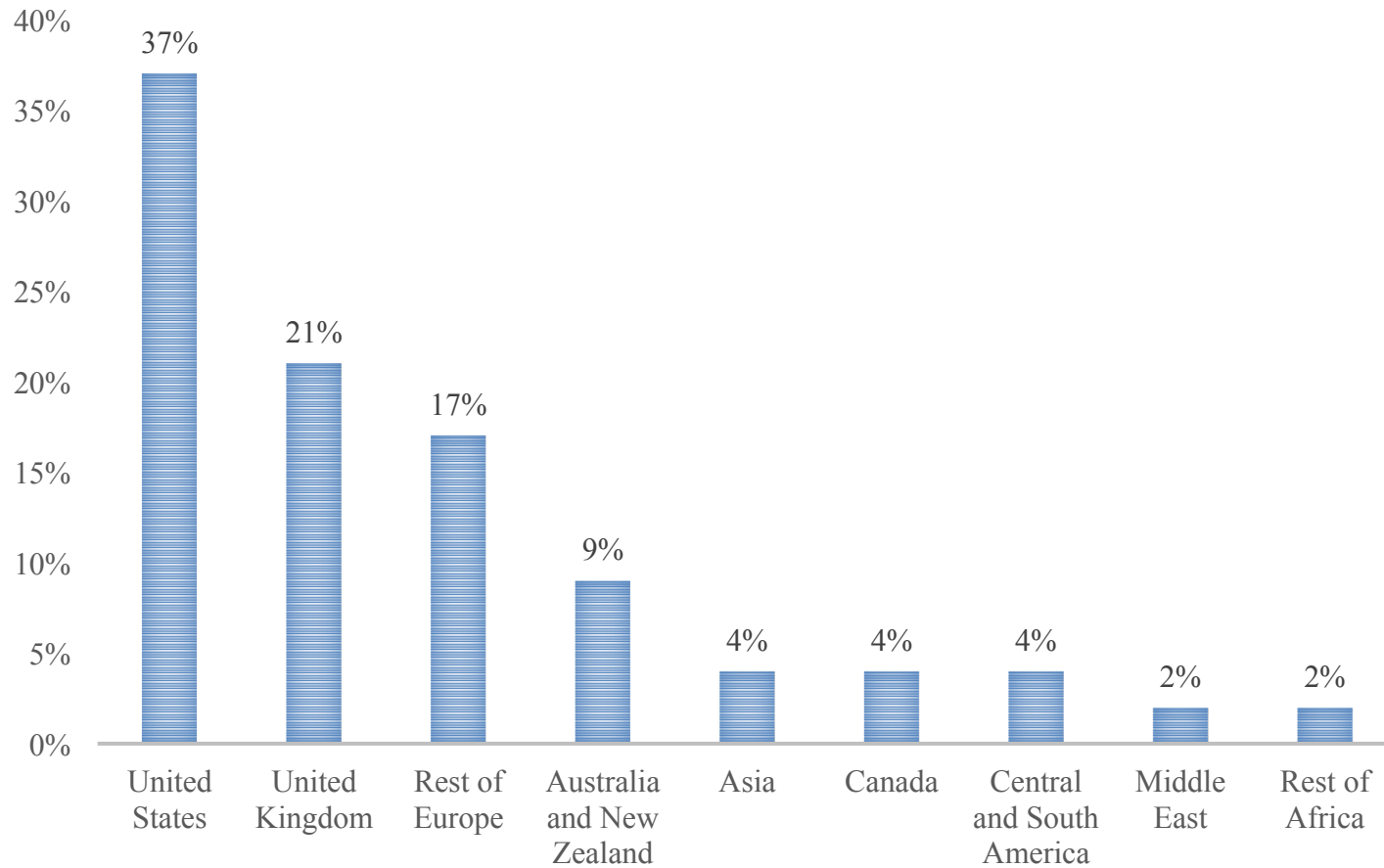
Associated with major publishers



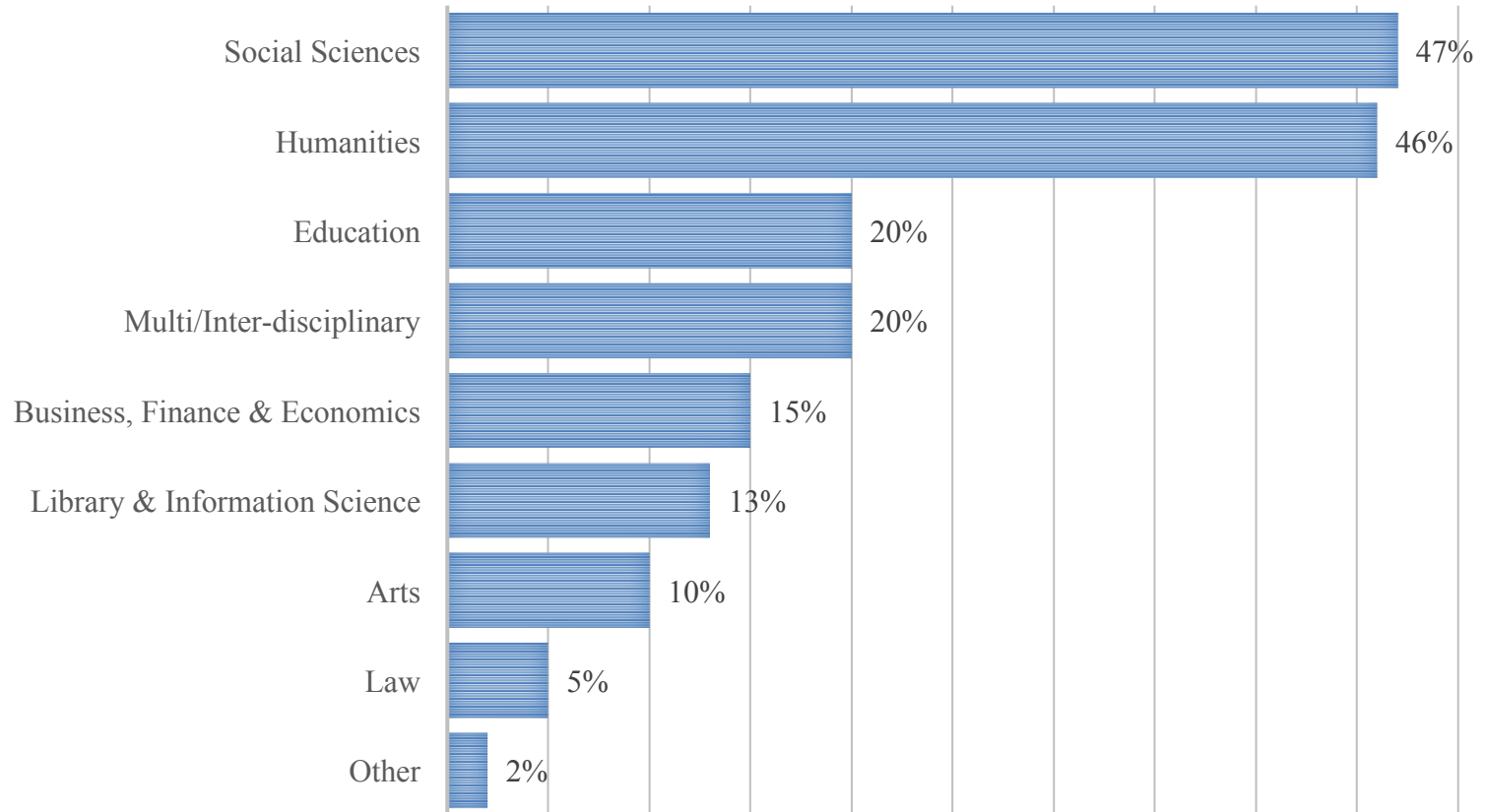
Online survey respondents: editorial experience



Online survey respondents: geographies



Online survey respondents: subject areas





KEY PROFESSIONAL & ETHICAL ISSUES

Taylor & Francis Group

an informa business





Top 5 ethical issues reported

64%

Remaining inclusive while addressing language

58%

Detecting possible unattributed copying

55%

Recognizing and responding to bias in reviews

54%

Handling author responses to criticism

50%

Self-plagiarism



What were the most serious & difficult ethical issues facing editors?



- Detecting plagiarism and poor attribution standards
- Fraudulent submissions
- Intellectual property and copyright issues
- **Data and/or image fabrication issues**

Journal editors felt least confident about dealing with these issues



Data and/or image fabrication: an area of under confidence



“Data fabrication can be a big concern since the validation of reported results is often not within practical means of the reviewers (as they would have to have access to the **raw data** and be willing to replicate the analyses being reported)”

Business, Finance and Economics journal editor, US



What did editors see as future ethical issues?



Inclusion and diversity

Editors must encourage a more diverse range of voices, while maintaining quality

“Increased numbers of writers from non-English speaking backgrounds whose language issues seriously affect how we can work with their material”

Social Sciences editor, Australia and NZ



What did editors see as future ethical issues?



Using data

Data-related ethical issues will become more prominent with big data and AI

“With the increased mainstreaming of ‘big data’ machine learning and AI ... I could imagine investigators using methods they do not understand completely and inadvertently publishing misleading or identifying information”

Social Sciences editor, US



What did editors see as future ethical issues?



Academic culture

An output-driven academic culture will continue to cause more instances of ‘salami-slicing’ and self-plagiarism

“Machine-authored manuscripts are beginning to seem like a real possibility”

Humanities and Social Sciences editor, US





CURRENT SOURCES OF SUPPORT

Taylor & Francis Group
an informa business



Which sources of support were most important to editors?



Senior editorial colleagues/Editor-in-Chief (70%)



Editorial boards (50%)



Contacts at publisher (43%)



Non-editorial colleagues (29%)



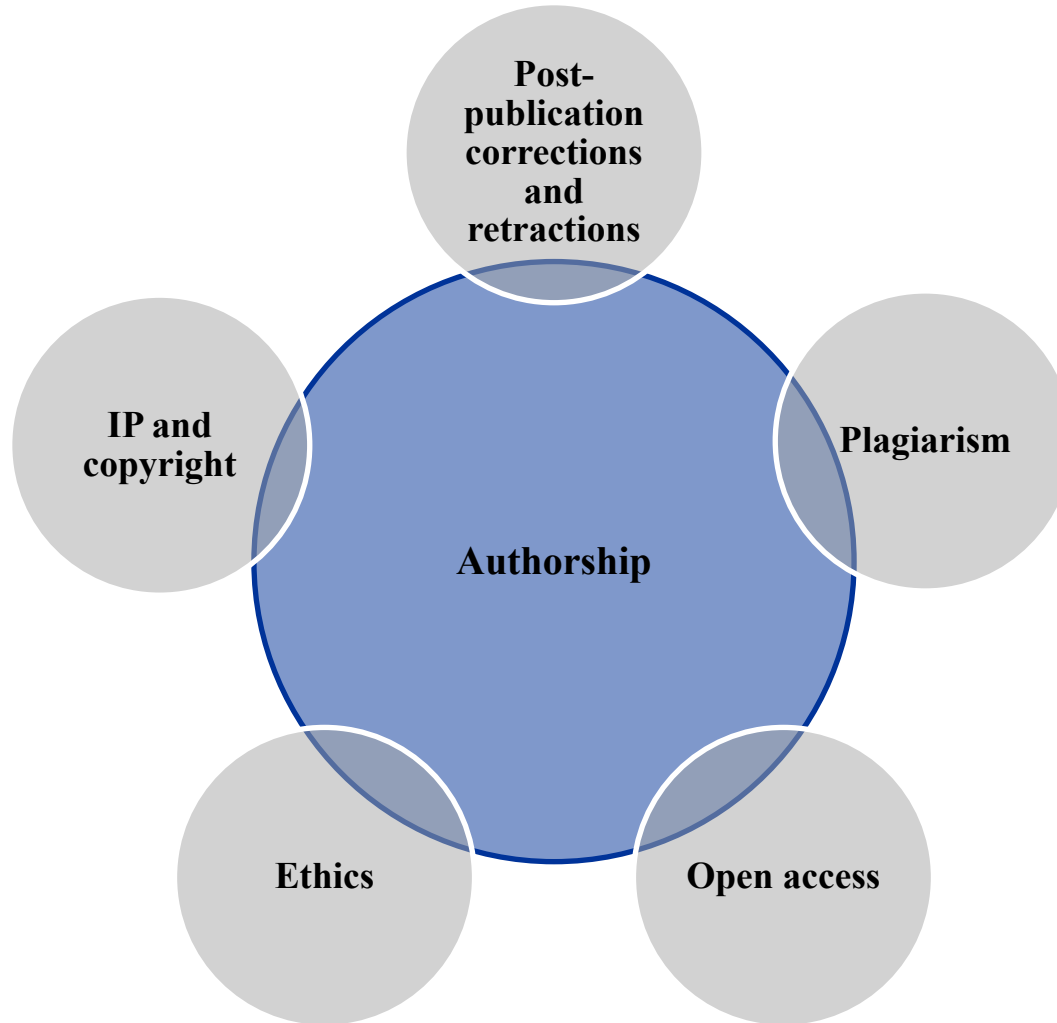
Professional bodies (24%) and societies (18%)



COPE (18%) or HEI ethics committees (17%)



Which policies were most frequently used by editors?

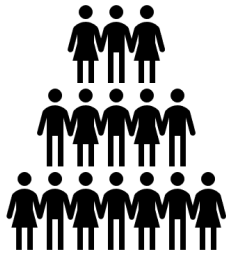




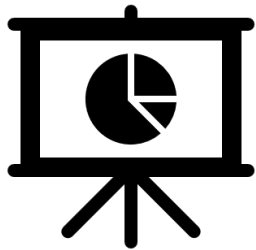
SUMMARY & NEXT STEPS



What can we conclude from these initial findings?



Increasing **inclusivity** and **diversity** requires editor support



Plagiarism and **data** integrity issues are growing in HSS

Editors draw on academic peer support networks when handling ethical issues



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