

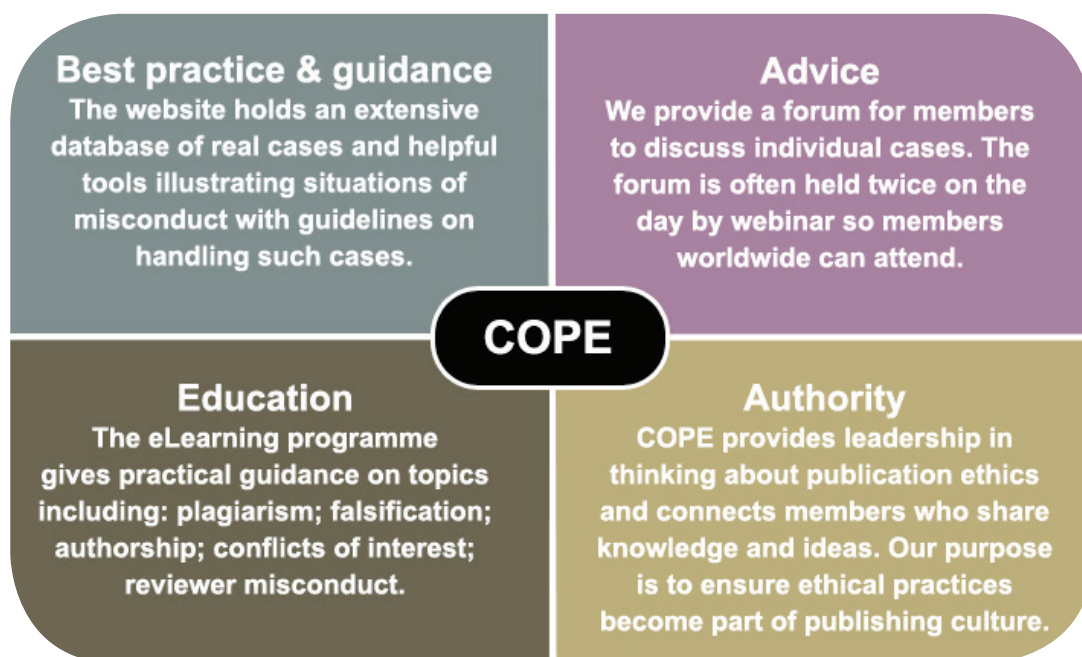
C O P E

Promoting integrity in
research publication

publicationethics.org

Introduction

COPE has over 11,000 members worldwide from Australia to Zimbabwe as well as from all academic fields. We provide advice to editors, publishers and increasingly authors, reviewers and institutions. COPE is committed to providing leadership in thinking in publication ethics; practical resources to educate and support its members; as well as a neutral, professional voice in the wider community.



COPE has identified particular issues from member research conducted late in 2015 as well as developments in publication ethics more widely, to produce our strategic plan. We used an independent market research consultancy to conduct the research, who undertook qualitative interviews with a small sample group and an online quantitative survey emailed to all members.

In this report we summarise the key issues with details of how COPE is, or intends to, respond to the concerns to improve the experience of members and all who are involved in publication ethics issues.

We have listened to our members and developed our 2016-2018 initiatives to improve engagement with members and ensure COPE remains at the forefront of publication ethics

Dr Virginia Barbour, Chair

Summary of findings and COPE's response

Overall performance of COPE is strong

COPE is viewed positively by the majority of its members and users who responded to our survey:

85% see COPE as a **credible authority** in publication ethics

82% say COPE is **fair and objective** in considering ethics issues

78% regard COPE as a **leading voice that sets the agenda** in publication ethics

Our research among publishers has also found a strong perception of COPE as a leading voice in publication ethics and a valuable resource in assisting with issues and case handling.

Use of COPE

Our research has found that Publishers use COPE membership as a kite mark to demonstrate high ethical standards in scholarly publications, and turn to COPE when they need assistance in cases that cannot be resolved internally. The efficacy of COPE here is assured, as our research finds that the more COPE is used, particularly for case handling, the more positive the perception of COPE.

89% rated COPE overall as 'Excellent', 'Very good' or 'Good'

81% would recommend COPE to peers and colleagues

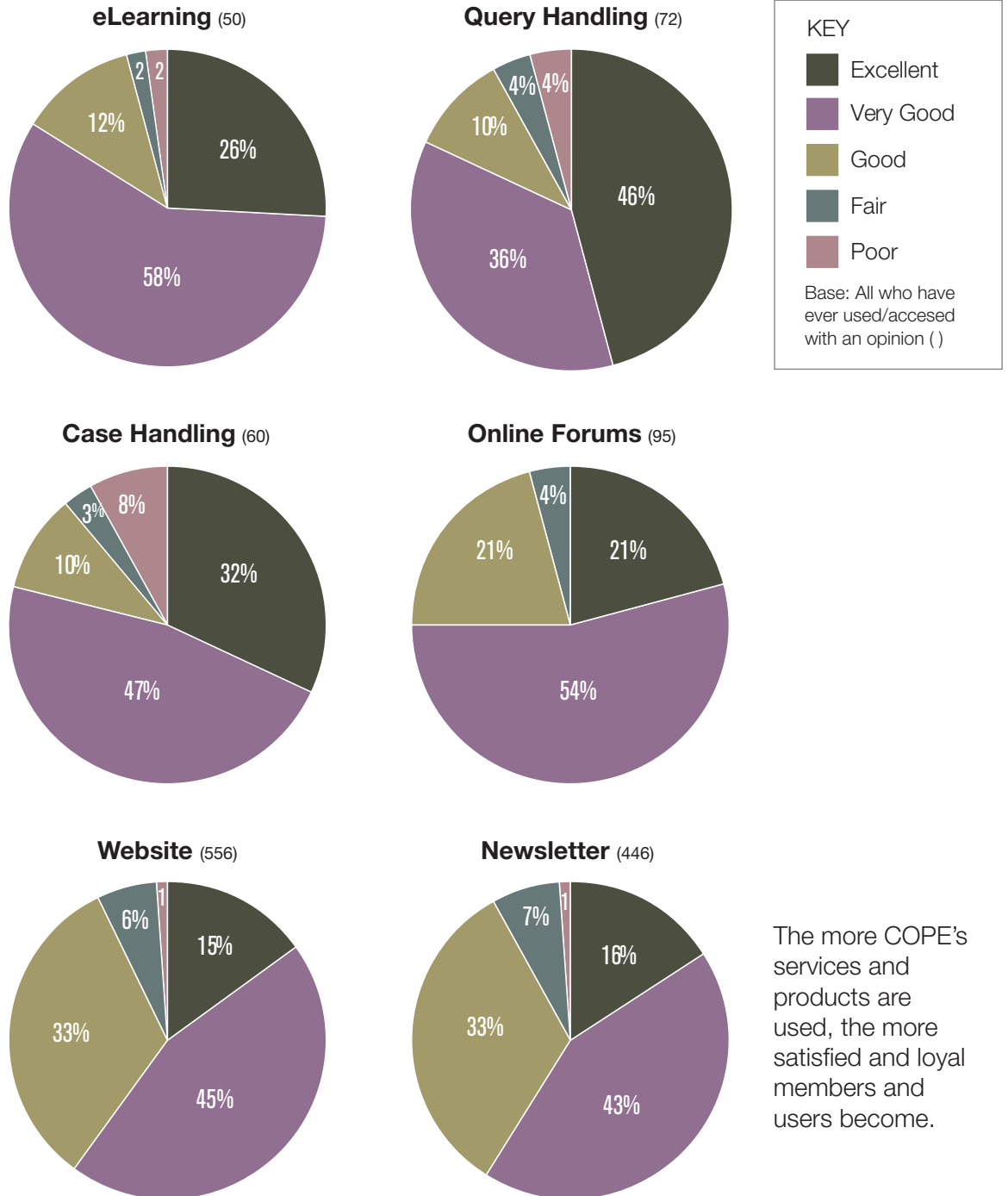
95% rate COPE's content and information as 'Excellent', 'Very good' or 'Good'

92% rate COPE's range of information and services as 'Excellent', 'Very good' or 'Good'

85% say they will turn to COPE for their next publication ethics issue

Overall satisfaction measures - service aspects

Although eLearning is the least utilised service among those measured it attracts the highest overall satisfaction ratings. Query handling and case handling are important aspects of service which also score highly.



- ✓ We are improving our communication to members through email, website and face-to-face meetings/workshops
- ✓ We continue to develop and update resources
- ✓ We have developed a new member guide to COPE resources
- ✓ We are working to improve usability of our website

Ethical issues and case handling

Our research confirms that COPE's case handling service remains at the heart of its role. For those rare occasions when advice is needed on a particular case, those who turn to COPE tend to become more closely involved with COPE and their overall satisfaction with COPE rises substantially too.

85% have handled a publication ethics issue in the past three years

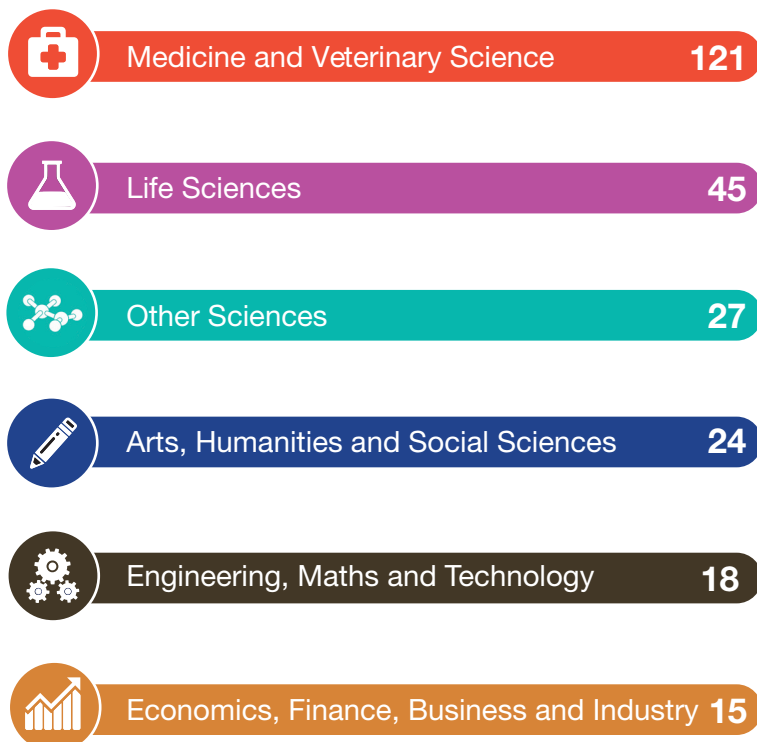
68% of cases were handled alone or with the help of a colleague

78% of those who have submitted a case to COPE rated their overall satisfaction with Case Handling as 'Excellent' or 'Very good'

Our research revealed a need for speedier resolution of cases and clearer explanation of the case handling process at the outset and during the 'lifetime' of a case.

✓ **We have cut down the turn-around time from submission to response to 5-7 days**

Number of cases seen annually by respondents to our research



Supporting all disciplines

Only one in five of survey respondents hold the view that COPE pays sufficient attention to social sciences and humanities journals.

Only one in five of those in the arts, humanities and social sciences cite COPE as their first port of call for publication ethics issues. This compares to one in three among the medical and life science fields.

We recognise that our existing guidelines and case studies may not always be relevant where ethical decisions are less clear-cut and perhaps more reliant on judgement and a case-specific analysis. This is an important issue for COPE and therefore we are taking the following steps to ensure greater inclusivity across the full range of academic disciplines:

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- ✓ **We now have a higher representation on COPE Council of those in non-scientific and technical fields and are working to increase that further.**
 - ✓ **We are working on ensuring our resources meet the needs of arts, humanities and social sciences.**
 - ✓ **We are reviewing resources to support specific disciplines that are currently under-represented.**
-

Trends in publication ethics

An important part of our research was to identify and confirm what members and publishers think are the most pressing issues in publication ethics today. We found that a lack of training and education in publication ethics is seen as the most important current issue, followed by the same in research ethics.

Publishers in particular highlighted a desire for COPE to become more proactive in bringing potential issues to their attention, for example, alerts to new ethical issues and the production of guidelines and flowcharts for dealing with them. There is little appetite for the organisation to become an arbiter, intermediary or regulator.

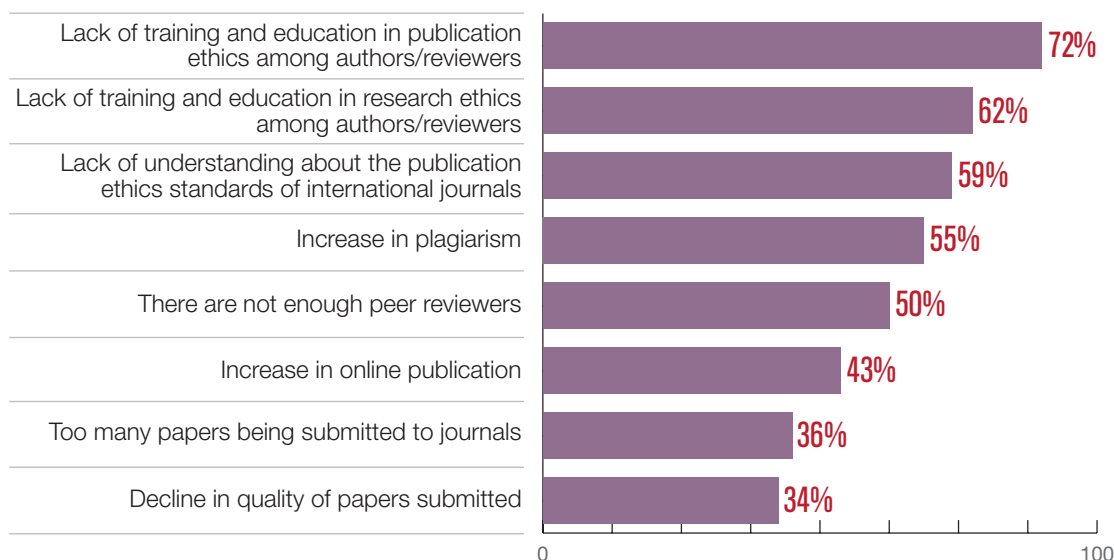
87% agree publication ethics is an increasingly important subject

87% agree ethics issues are becoming increasingly complex

82% agree research ethics is an increasingly important subject in their field

Issues of importance in publication ethics today (multi-choice)

Lack of training and education in publication ethics is seen as the most important current issue, followed by that in research ethics. The international angle features highly as a perceived source of errors in publication ethics.



✓ We are working collaboratively with COPE Council and members to identify emerging issues and guidance

Ethical standards across the world

A key challenge highlighted by our research is the application of global ethical standards where regional and cultural differences need to be recognised. These differences may arise for a number of reasons, for example:

Cultural differences that challenge 'traditional Western' views eg 'gifting' authorship to others.

Differing levels of:

- publication ethics education
- resources, namely a shortage of reviewers in some regions

63% of respondents outside of Europe and North America cite a lack of peer reviewers as a top issue

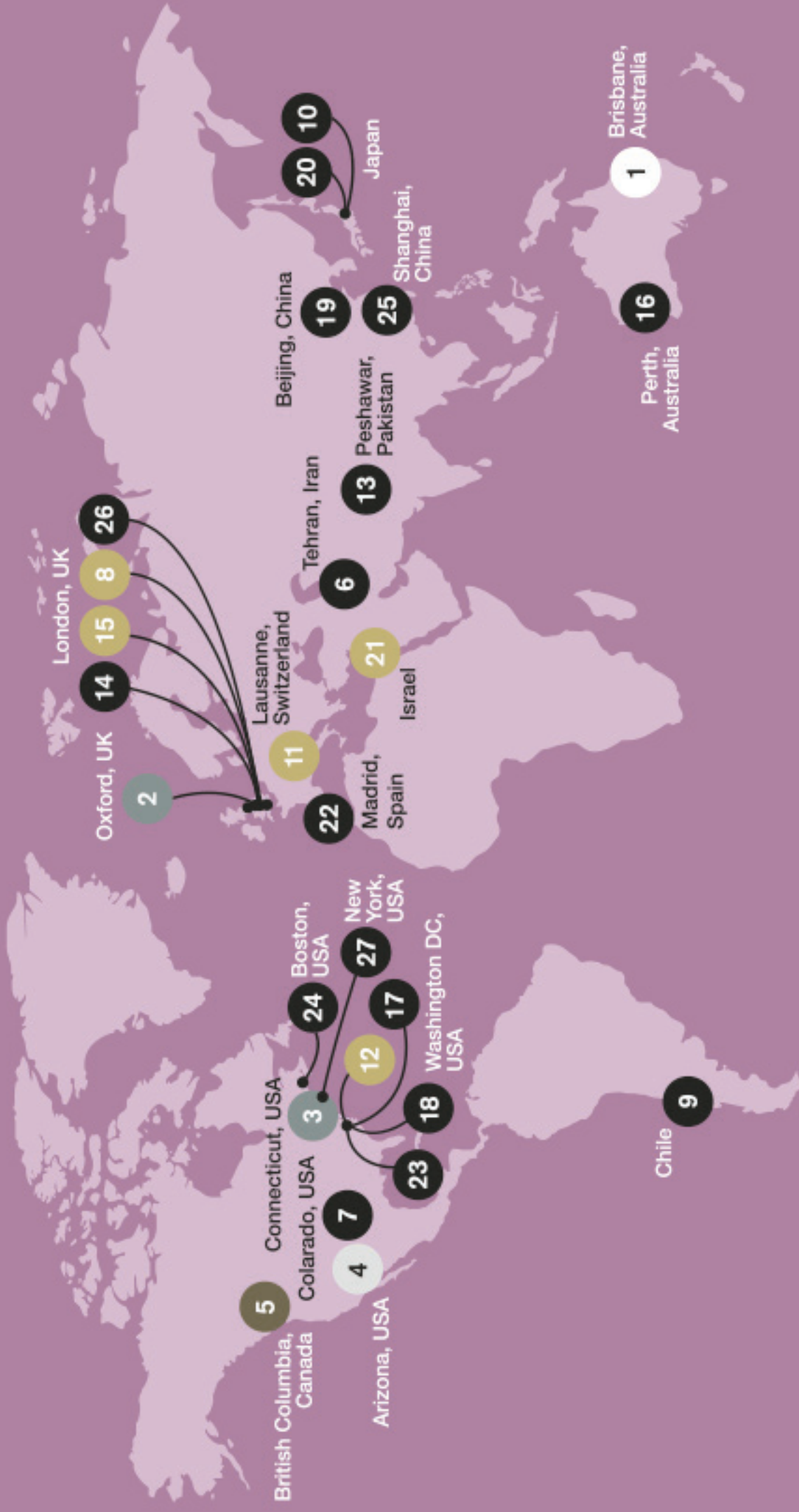
55% cite an increase in online publications as top issue

Papers submitted for review may be rejected at a higher rate in regions where cultural differences between the author and journal exist and/or where ethics training and resource constraints are heightened. Coupled with a generally observed global trend in 'pressure to publish', there is a clear need for action and assistance.

To foster greater awareness and understanding of cultural differences, COPE is taking the following steps:

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- ✓ **We intend to establish in-country "champions" of publication ethics in regions that are still developing their publication ethics infrastructure and where cultural issues play a part in publishing**
 - ✓ **We are working on providing greater support and guidance on a regional basis**
 - ✓ **We have a greater representation of Council members across the globe**
-

Geographical diversity of Trustee and Council Members



Key	
●	Chair
●	Co-Vice-Chair
●	Secretary
●	Treasurer
●	Council Member
●	Trustee

01. Virginia Barbour	22. Iria del Rio
02. Chris Graf	23. Nancy Chescheir
03. Geraldine Pearson	24. Rachel Safer
04. Charon Pierson	25. Jason Hu
05. Deborah Poff	26. Deborah Kahn
06. Mohammad Abdollahi	27. Daniel Kulp
07. David Ginley	
08. Sally Weatherall	15. Zoë Mullan
09. Vivienne Bachelet	16. Michael Wise
10. J Patrick Barron	17. Alison Taylor
11. Mirjam Curno	18. Heather Tierney
12. Tara Hoke	19. Helena Wang
13. Muhammad Irfan	20. Trevor Lane
14. Elizabeth Moylan	21. Adrian Ziderman

Education initiative with academic institutions

While COPE will continue to provide a credible, fair and objective voice in upholding ethical standards, there is recognition that more can be done to be more inclusive in formulating and communicating guidance and expertise.

72%

say a top issue is lack of education in publication ethics amongst reviewers and authors

62%

say reviewers and authors lack education and training in research ethics

34%

cite a decline in the quality of papers submitted for review

We have a growing number of enquiries from academic institutions and other key bodies who wish to develop publication ethics education among their researchers and authors. This complements our current members' feedback that we promote publication ethics principles at 'grass roots'.



COPE has launched a pilot initiative with academic institutions to develop a suite of educational resources aimed at the researcher, author and reviewer

Global accessibility of COPE online forums

Our regular online Forums where we discuss ethics cases and provide advice on members' cases are popular with our most active members.

75% of those who have attended our online Forums rate them as 'Excellent' or 'Very good'

However, 62% rate the timing of these forums as 'Excellent' or 'Very good' and given their importance in communicating the latest practical decisions in publication ethics we are committed to improving on this.

- ✓ **We now hold our online Forums twice in one day to make them more globally accessible**
- ✓ **We are also working on raising awareness of the Forums among Editors-in-Chief**
- ✓ **We now include Ask Me Anything sessions to discuss general issues**

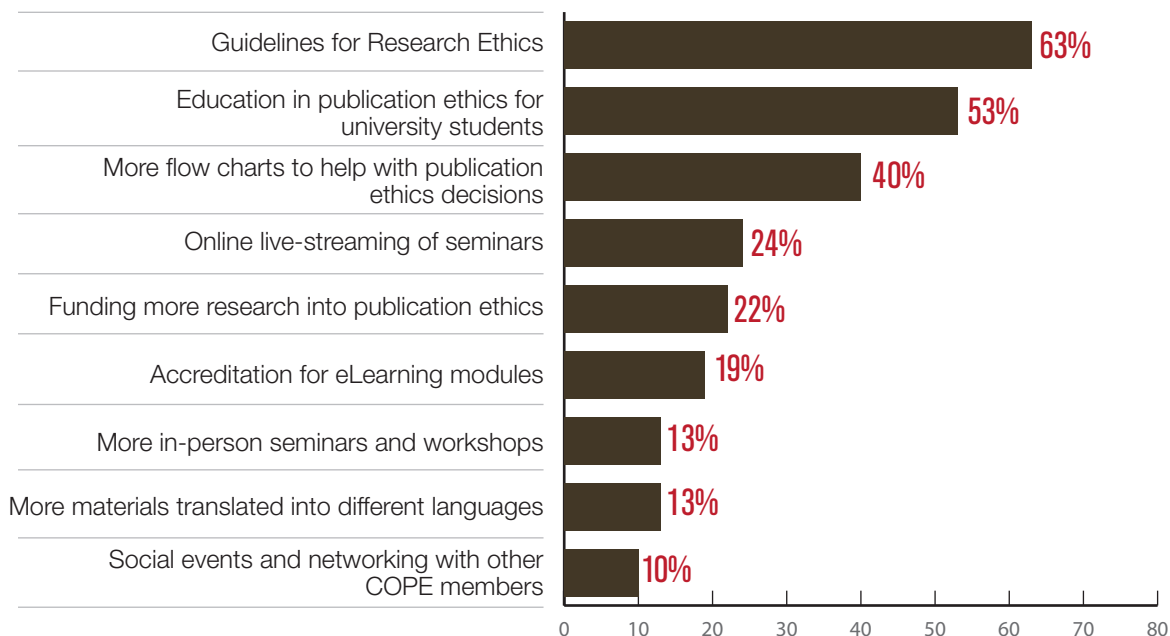
Forums are held twice in one day



Guidance information & educational resources

Our range of guidance information and educational resources is very popular, however we want to do more to ensure that we reach the widest possible audience, including publishing staff at all levels, journal editors, authors and reviewers.

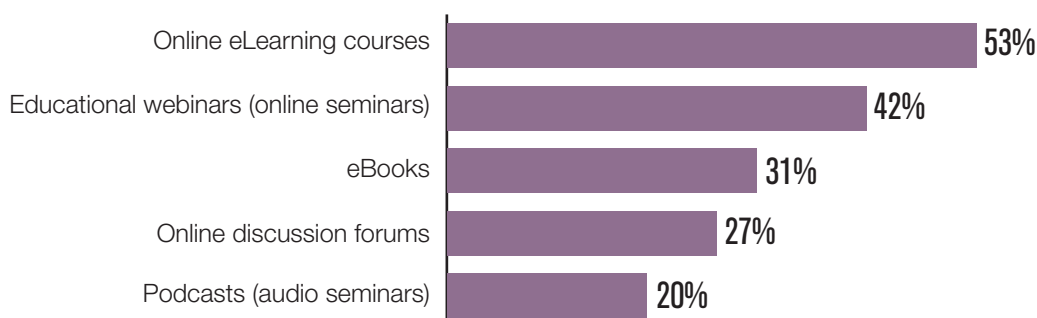
Future service preferences (respondents selected up to 3 items)



We are taking wide-ranging action to update our range of resources and encourage their use.

- ✓ **We now have a content plan to raise awareness of COPE resources and to engage in the publication ethics debate across media**
- ✓ **We are revising our flowcharts and guidelines and developing new resources to further support our members**
- ✓ **We now liaise with a named Ethics Specialist at publishers to help us reach out to Editors-in-Chief**

Future education and training format preferences



COPE newsletter & website

The COPE Digest newsletter enjoys wide readership, with 90% of readers using it to keep up to date on publication ethics. The majority of members want to receive our newsletter each month (62%), but our research shows we needed to increase our relevance to currently under-represented disciplines and improve ease of navigation.

Why read COPE Digest?

- 90% to keep up to date on publication ethics
- 45% read about ethics cases
- 37% to find out about COPE events

✓ **Our Newsletter has been re-designed to focus on the issues that matter most to our readers, and is hopefully easier to navigate**

Although an impressive 60% of respondents rated the COPE website as 'Excellent' or 'Very good' our research revealed the necessity of further improvements.

Specifically, our research found that to be most effective, the COPE website needs to have a clearer layout and design, with comprehensive and lucid articles.

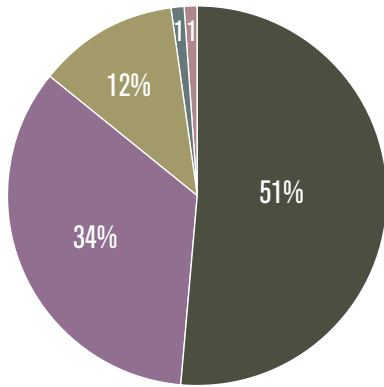
✓ **A research project is underway to understand needs and improve the usability and content of our website**

✓ **We have recruited staff to develop our online communications and website usability**

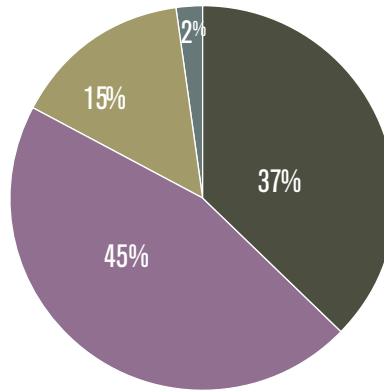
Satisfaction with information products

Flowcharts are the most valued information products, followed by all COPE guidelines.

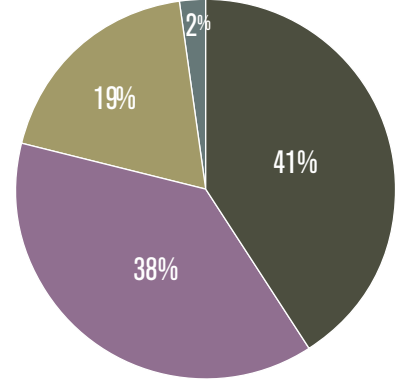
Flow charts to help with ethics decisions (315)



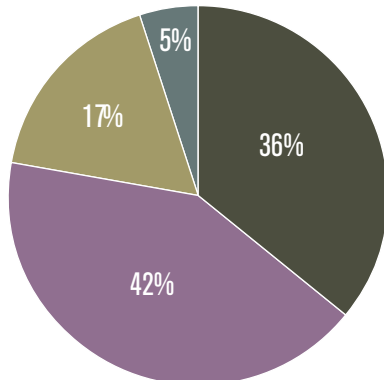
COPE (general) guidelines (272)



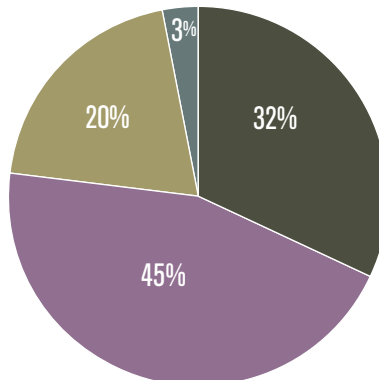
International standards for editors and authors (292)



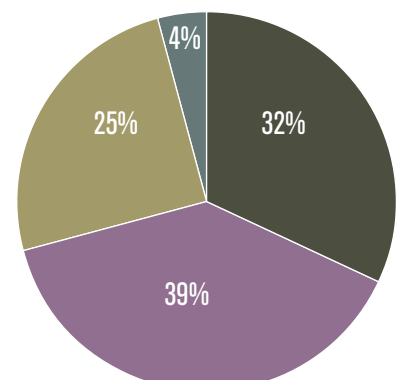
Research into publication ethics topics (122)



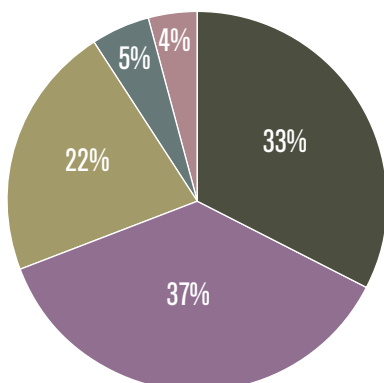
Discussion Documents (152)



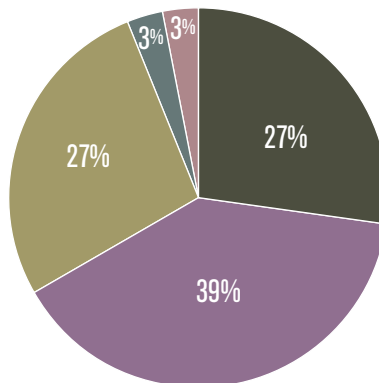
Database of past ethics cases (241)



Sample letters (111)



COPE Audit (33)



KEY

- Excellent
- Very Good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

Base: All who have ever used/accessed with an opinion ()

COPE Strategic Plan 2016-2018

Key changes we have made as a result of our research include a programme of direct engagement with academic institutions, changes to our website to improve navigation, more timely online Forums and more which we reflect in our Strategic Plan link. The Strategic Plan has been formed following a period of consultation with the Trustees, COPE Council and feedback from our members through this research.

Further information

COPE Strategic Plan 2016-2018

http://publicationethics.org/files/u7140/StrategicPlan2016_2018.pdf

COPE Annual Trustees Report

<http://publicationethics.org/about/trustees-reports-and-financial-statements>

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