

Author perspectives on what's broken in the academic publishing process

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Have you seen the news?

SCIENCE

Is the Peer Review Process for Scientific Papers Broken?

NATURE | RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS: SOCIAL SELECTION

Online debate erupts to ask: is science broken?

Panel discussion about the shortcomings of science sparks chatter about possible remedies.



LSE Impact Blog

Scholarly publishing is broken: Is it time to consider guerrilla self-publishing?

st » News & Opinion

Opinion: Academic Publishing Is Broken

THE CONVERSATION

The scientific publishing culture is broken
- can it be rescued?

Academic research publishing is a broken system that needs to be fixed

NOVEMBER 1, 2015 ~ DIGITALBIOLOGIST









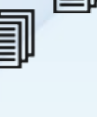
Let's begin with some facts for perspective...

EVERY YEAR

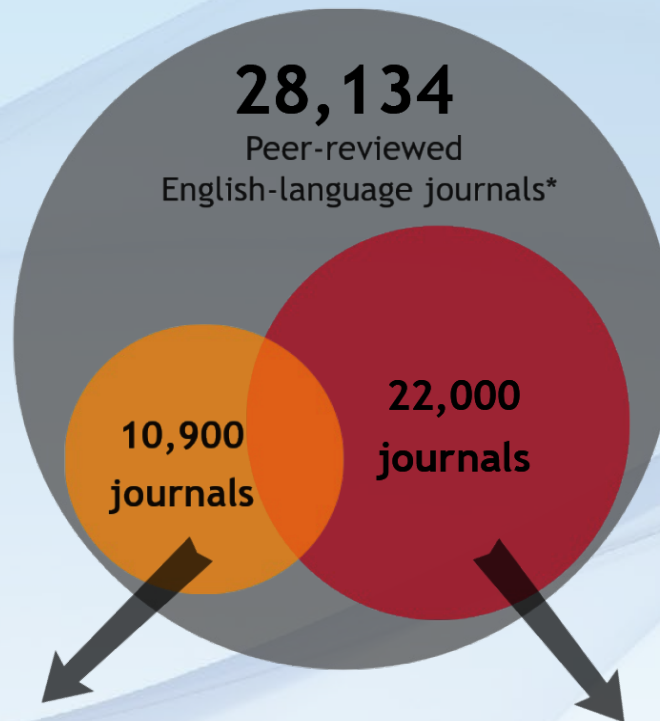


ABOUT **8 MILLION** RESEARCHERS
8,000,000



PUBLISH 
        
2,500,000
2.5 MILLION ARTICLES

2.5 MILLION ARTICLES IN



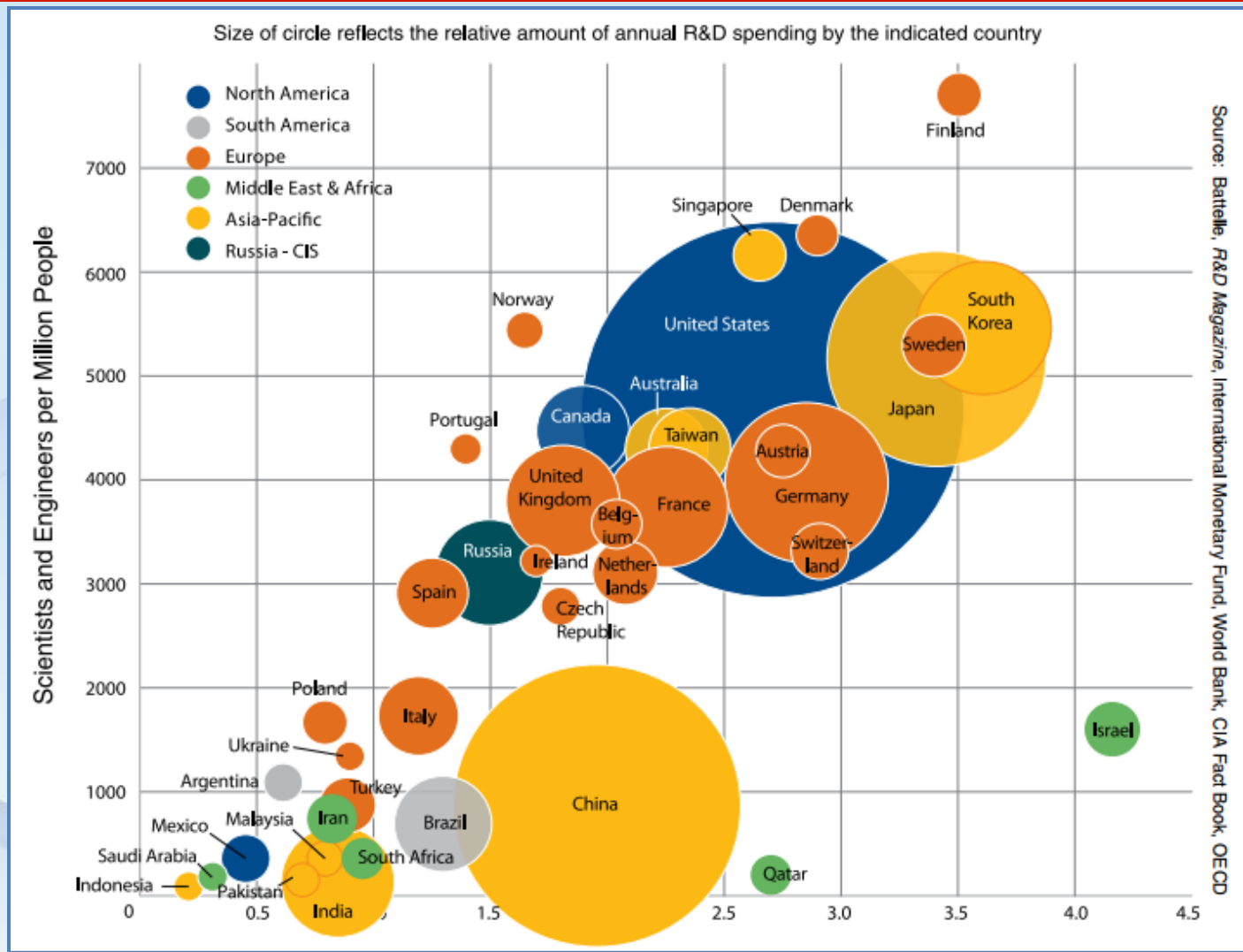
Included in Thomson Reuters'
Journal Citation Reports

Included in Scopus

* As of 2014 - Ulrich's database

Note: Venn diagram not to scale

More research output from ESL countries



Previously identified gap in perspectives between authors and editors

Authors think...

- They understand publication ethics and do the best they can to adhere to standard guidelines
- They address and respond carefully to all peer reviewer comments
- Journal instructions for authors are often incomplete and unclear



Editors think...

- Authors don't realize the importance of publication ethics
- Authors only address the peer reviewer comments they find agreeable
- Journal instructions for authors are generally clear and complete



From C. Cerejo. International journal editors and East Asian authors: two surveys. *Learned Publishing* 27(1) 63-75.

This causes a lot of pressure...

For authors



And for journal editors



What would ease up the pressure a bit?

Journal editors bridging the gap and getting closer to authors!



So we asked authors globally for their opinions

- Ongoing survey by **Editage Insights**, a global learning and resource platform for researchers
- Survey being run in English, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Portuguese

Seeking authors' opinions on all aspects of the journal publication process

Manuscript preparation

Journal selection

Journal processes

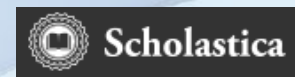
Peer review

Open access

Publication ethics

Supported by the industry

editage Insights™

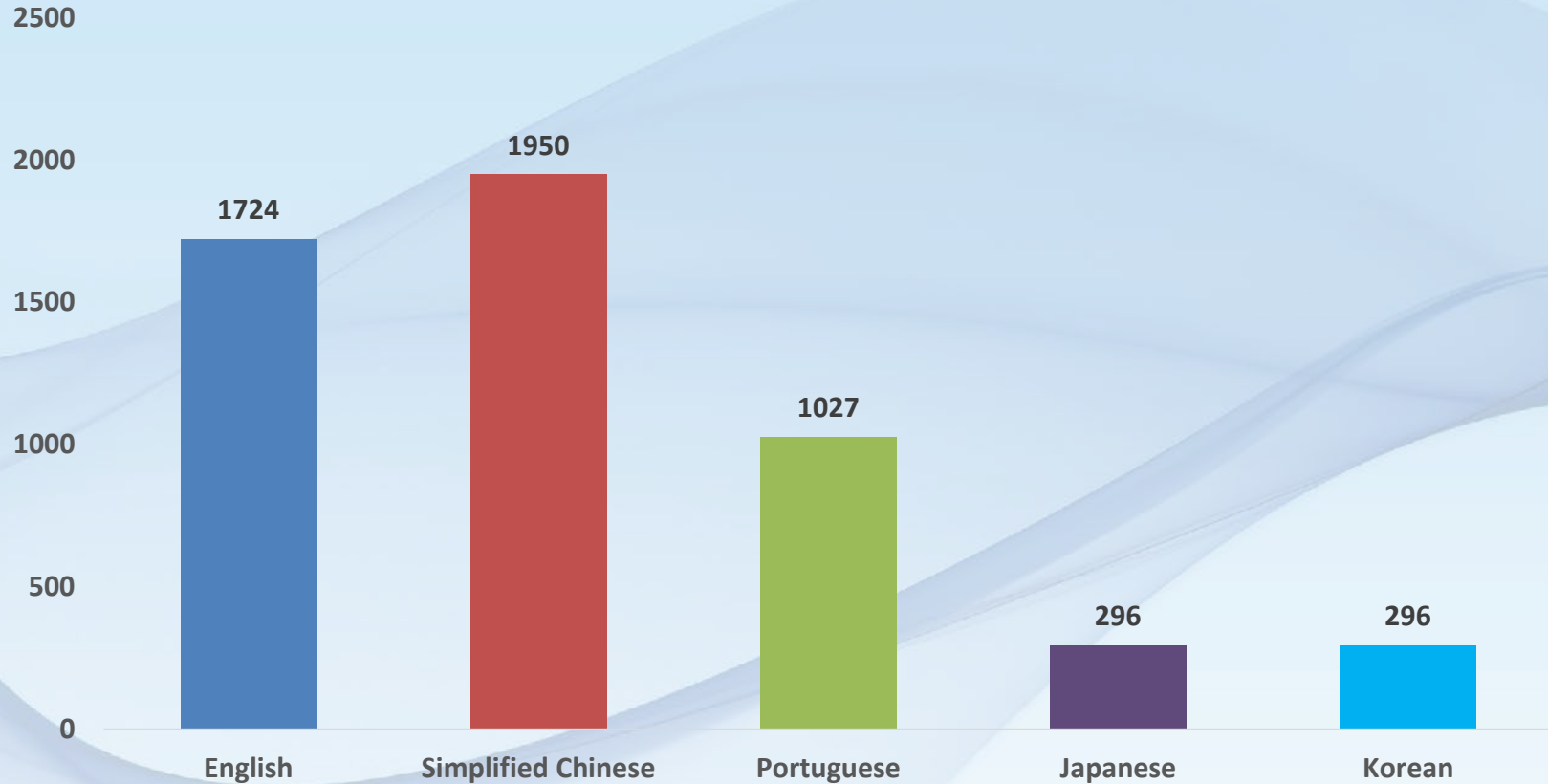


Interim results: 5293 respondents

Respondent demographics



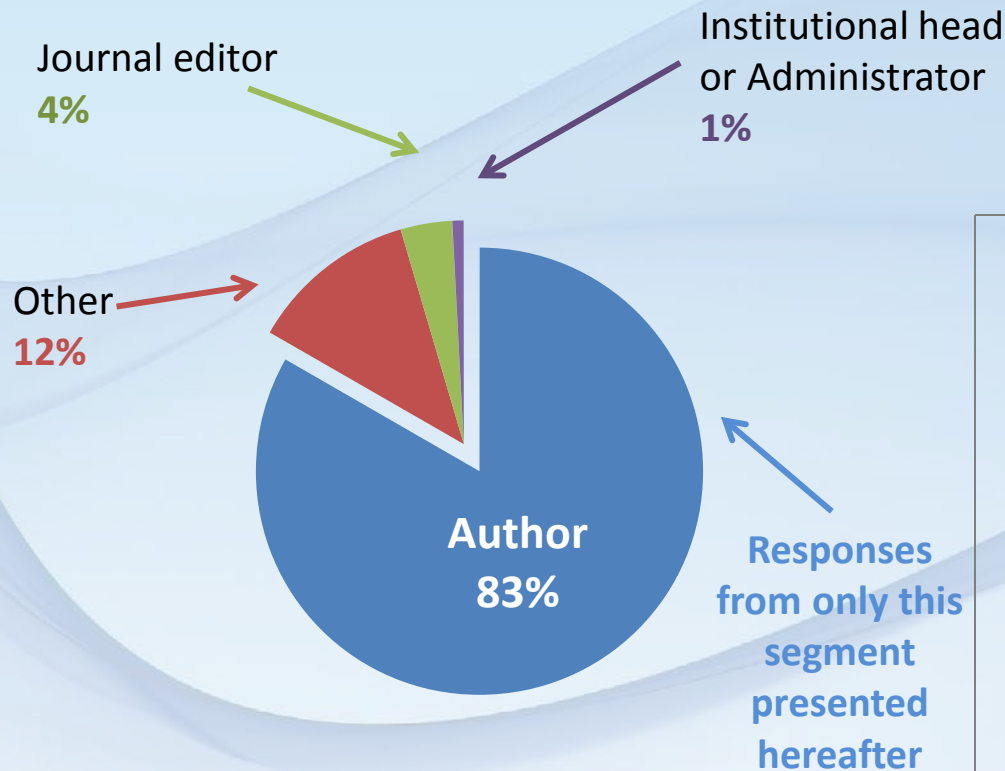
Total number of respondents for each survey language



$n = 5293$

Respondent profile

Which of these primary roles do you identify yourself with as a researcher?



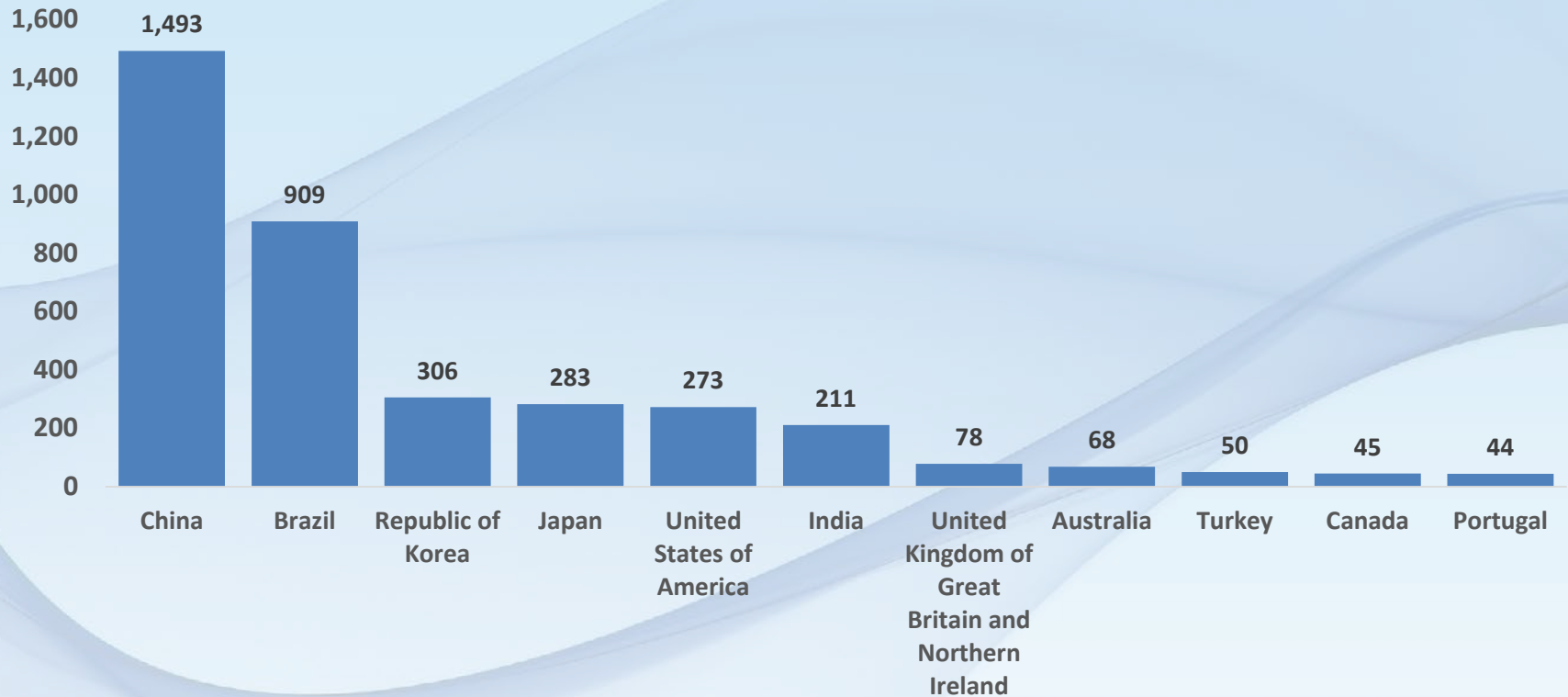
Roles identified when selecting “other”

Consultant^{Writing} Professor^{Fellow}
Independent^{Lead} Scholar^{Science}
Student Researcher
Medical Writer Editor Published Author
Academician and Clinician Librarian Doctor
Lecturer^{Content} Reviewer^{Assistant} Retired
Postdoctoral Teacher

$n = 5259$

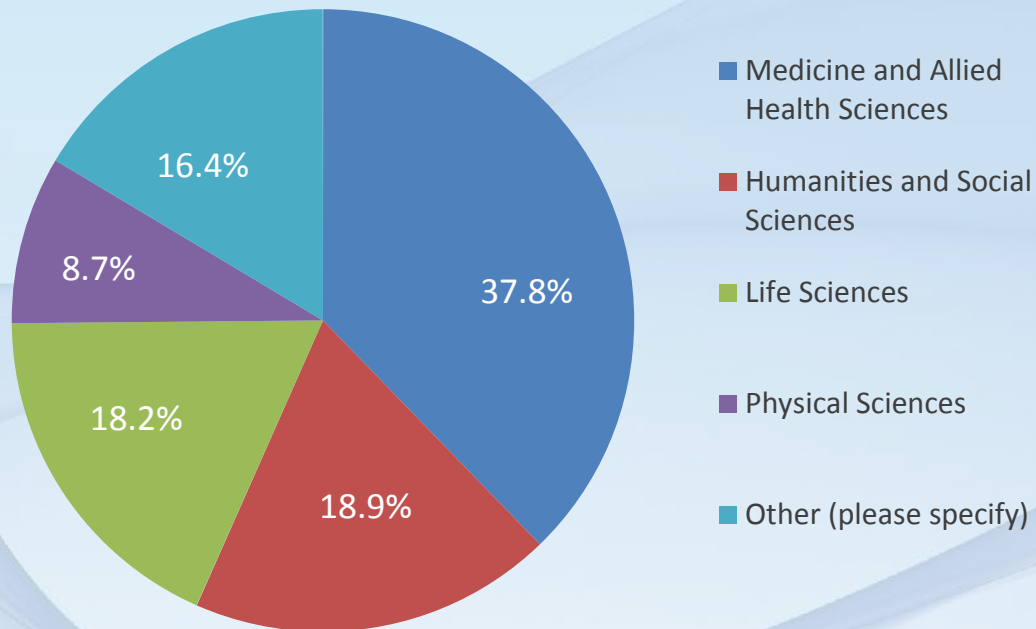
Top 10 countries represented (current location)

Number of authors currently working in these countries



$n = 4299$

Author respondents by field of study



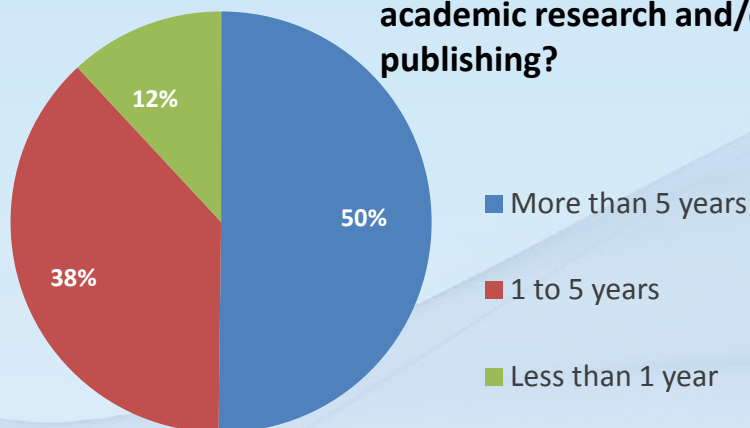
Fields identified when selecting "other"

Architecture Information Technology Development
Human Business Law Mathematics Teaching
Chemistry Research Engineering
Interdisciplinary Science Public Health
Education Arts Management Psychology
Applied Test Economics Veterinary Medicine Nursing
Energy

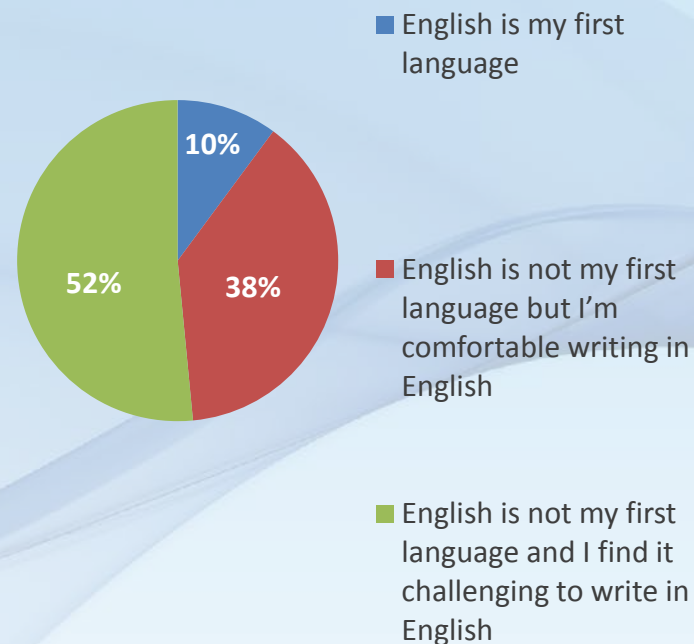
$n = 4299$

Experience and English proficiency of author respondents

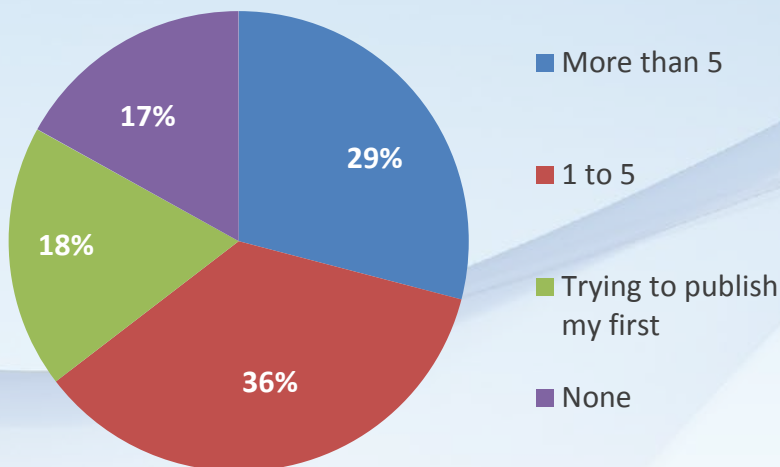
How long have you been involved in academic research and/or journal publishing?



What is your written English proficiency?



How many papers have you published in an international English-language journal?



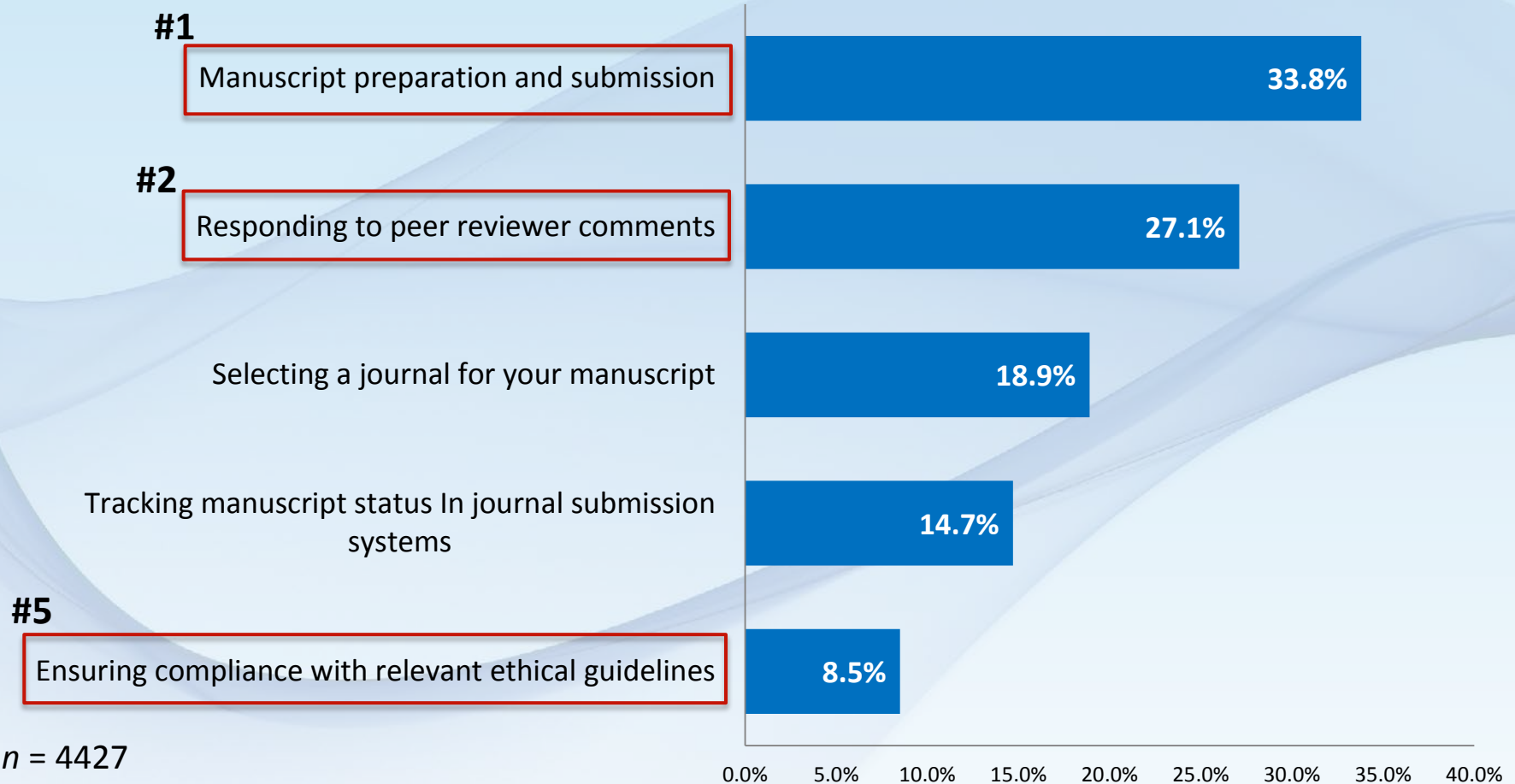
$n = 4298$

Publication-related challenges authors face



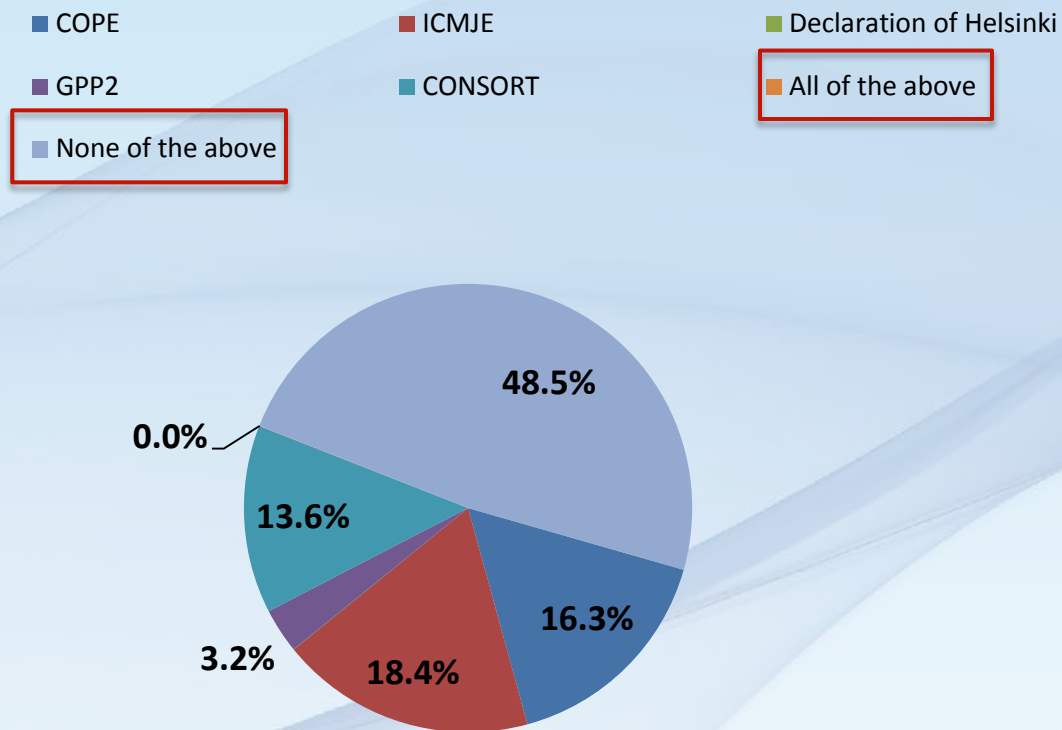
What do authors struggle with most?

Percent authors who find specific stages of the publishing process “VERY DIFFICULT”?



Familiarity with good publication standards

Which of the following bodies/guidelines are you familiar with?



What aspects of manuscript preparation are “VERY DIFFICULT”?

Framing a research question

28.2%

Structuring the manuscript in IMRAD format

20.7%

Presenting information from previous studies in your own words

20.4%

Conducting a literature review

16.6%

Drafting the manuscript title and abstract

15.9%

Creating figures and tables

14.0%

Formatting as per journal guidelines

13.6%

0.0% 5.0% 10.0% 15.0% 20.0% 25.0% 30.0%



$n = 3797$

Where do authors seek help when in doubt during the publishing process?



I search online using a search engine

39.0%

I approach my seniors or colleagues

38.6%

I check on specific social media or an online forum for researchers

8.5%

I ask my librarian for resources or visit my university writing support center

7.6%

I feel lost and don't know where to look

6.3%

0.0% 5.0% 10.0% 15.0% 20.0% 25.0% 30.0% 35.0% 40.0% 45.0%

*Multiple selections allowed

n = 4277

Perspective-based questions for authors

I think...



How do authors choose a journal for their manuscript?

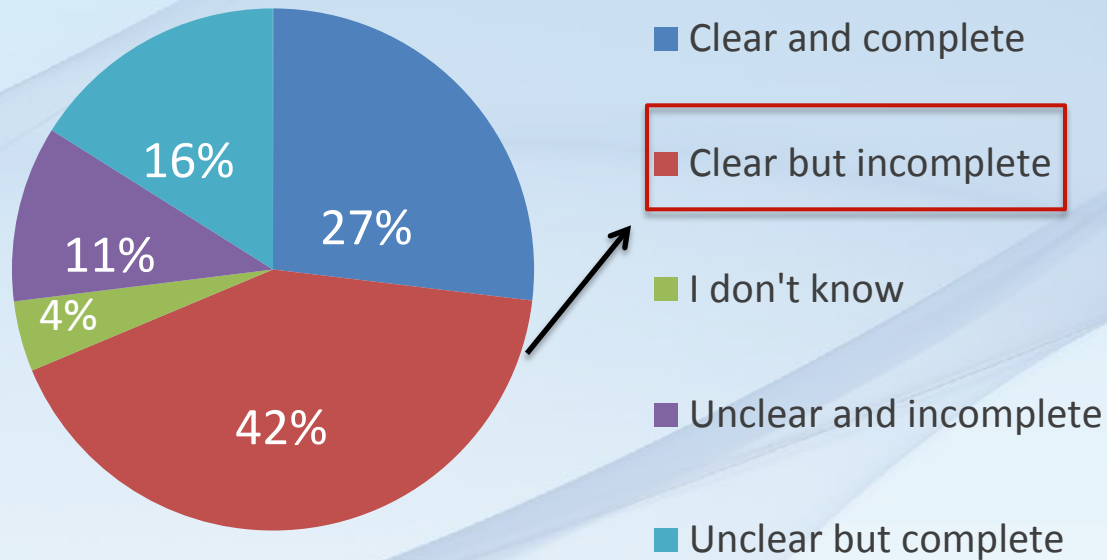
Factors considered, ranked from most important (1) to least important (7)

- 1 The journal should have a high impact factor for my field
- 2 The journal should have published similar papers
- 3 The journal should offer a short time-to-publication or have a rapid publication option
- 4 My colleagues and seniors should be reading the journal regularly
- 5 The journal should have a clear and professional-looking website
- 6 The journal should be open access or have an open access publishing option
- 7 The journal's submission process and charges should be clearly mentioned on its website

$n = 3876$

Perspectives on journal instructions for authors

In general, how well do you think journal guidelines for authors are framed?



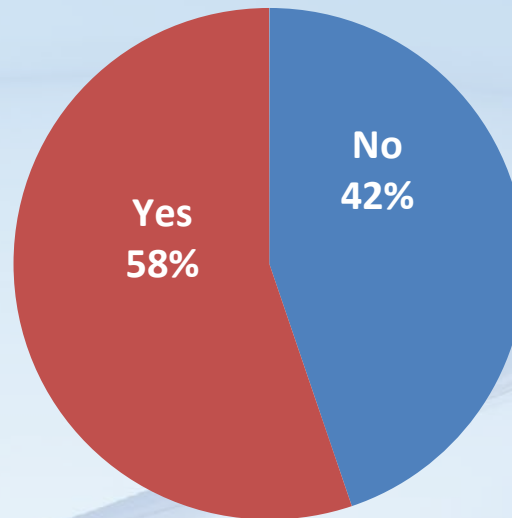
$n = 3799$

Perspectives on open access publication

Have you ever published in an open access journal, or chosen to make your paper open access in a subscription-based journal?

Reasons for publishing open access (% respondents)*

- Increase research reach **(34.3%)**
- Coincidence **(29.5%)**
- Preference for OA **(15.3%)**
- Publication guarantee by the journal **(13.6%)**
- Institutional/funding body mandate **(7.3%)**



Reasons for not publishing open access (% respondents)*

- Coincidence **(34.3%)**
- Affordability **(29.5%)**
- Lack of understanding **(15.3%)**
- Mistrust in quality of OA journals **(13.6%)**
- No adequate benefits of OA seen **(7.3%)**

$n = 3875$

*Multiple selections allowed

Author-Journal communication

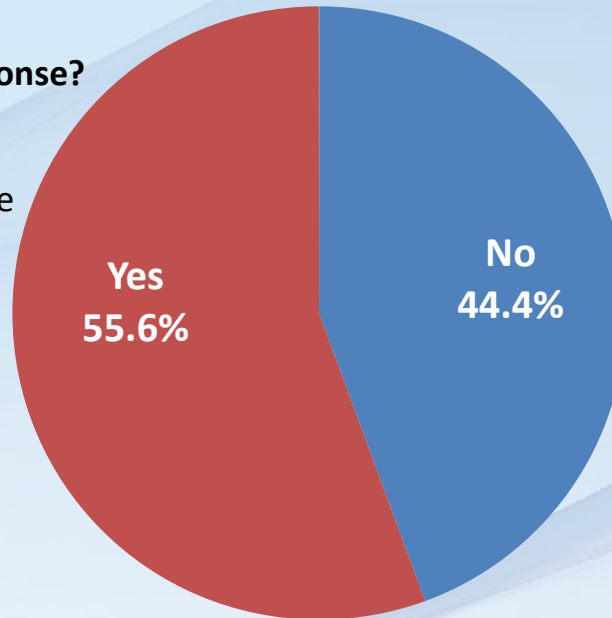


Do authors approach journals without hesitation?

Have you ever written to the journal for queries or clarifications during the publication process?

If yes, how did you find their response?

- Prompt and clear **(42.7%)**
- Delayed but clear when it came **(28.4%)**
- Prompt but not clear **(17.7%)**
- I didn't get any reply **(7.8%)**

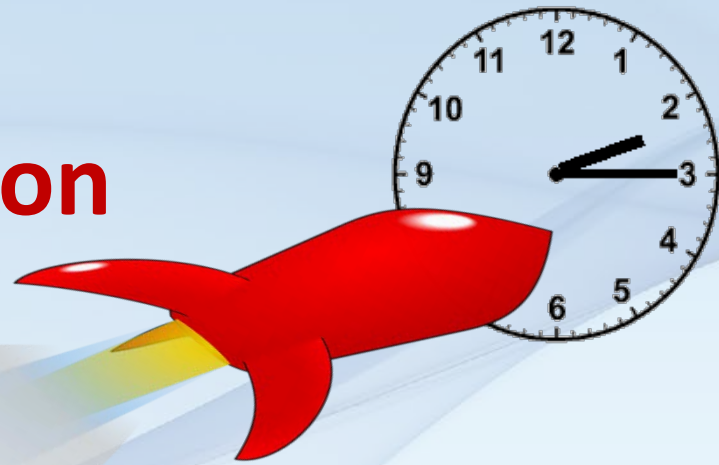


If no, why not?

- I didn't have a query **(51.1%)**
- I didn't know how to contact the journal **(14.8%)**
- I didn't know I was allowed to contact the journal **(16.6%)**
- I was scared to contact the journal **(17.4%)**

$n = 3760$

Time to publication

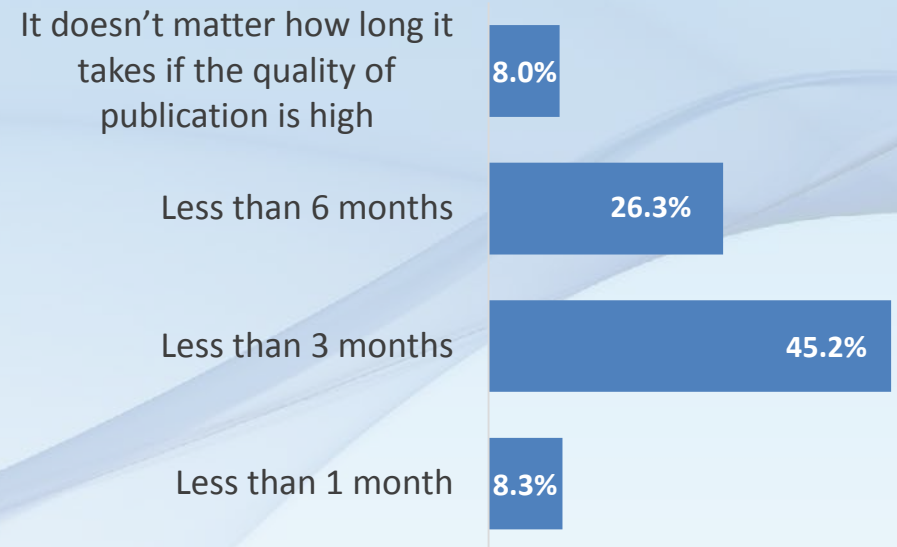


Perspectives on time to publication

What is the shortest time in which you've had a paper published (from submission)



How long do you think it should ideally take to publish a paper in a journal (from submission)?



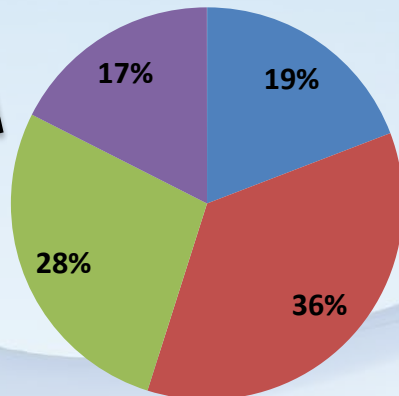
n = 3775

Duration of manuscripts at different stages in the journal workflow

“In your experience, how long does a manuscript remain at the following status points on the journal submission system?”

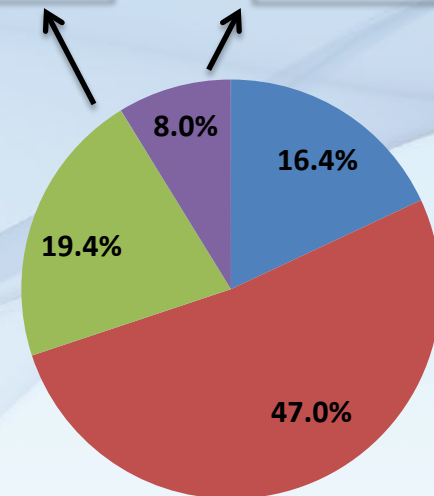
“WITH EDITOR”

■ Less than 5 days
■ 5 to 10 days
■ 10 to 30 days
■ More than 1 month



“UNDER REVIEW”

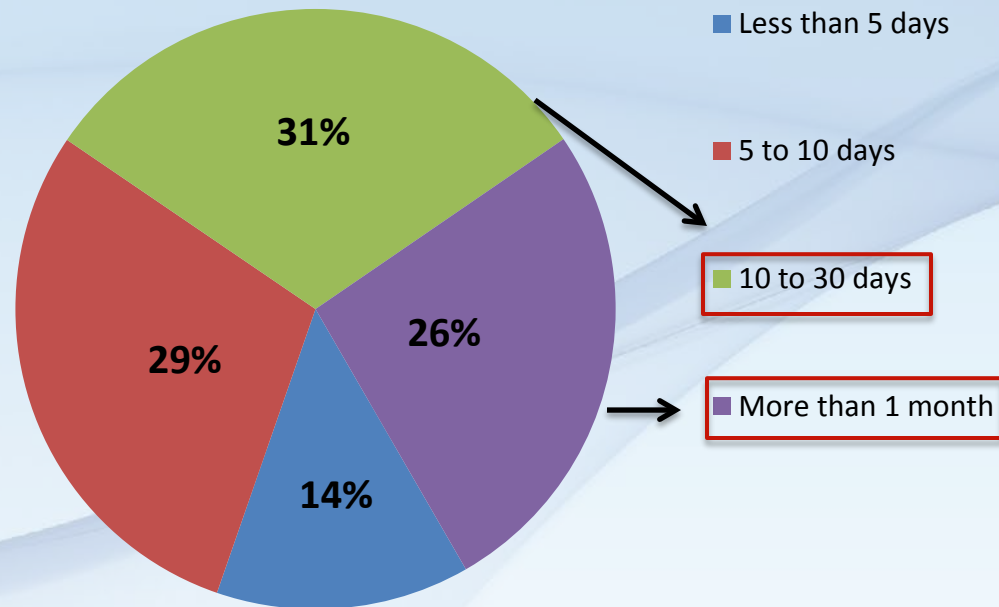
■ Less than 1 month
■ 1 to 3 months
■ 3 to 6 months
■ More than 6 months



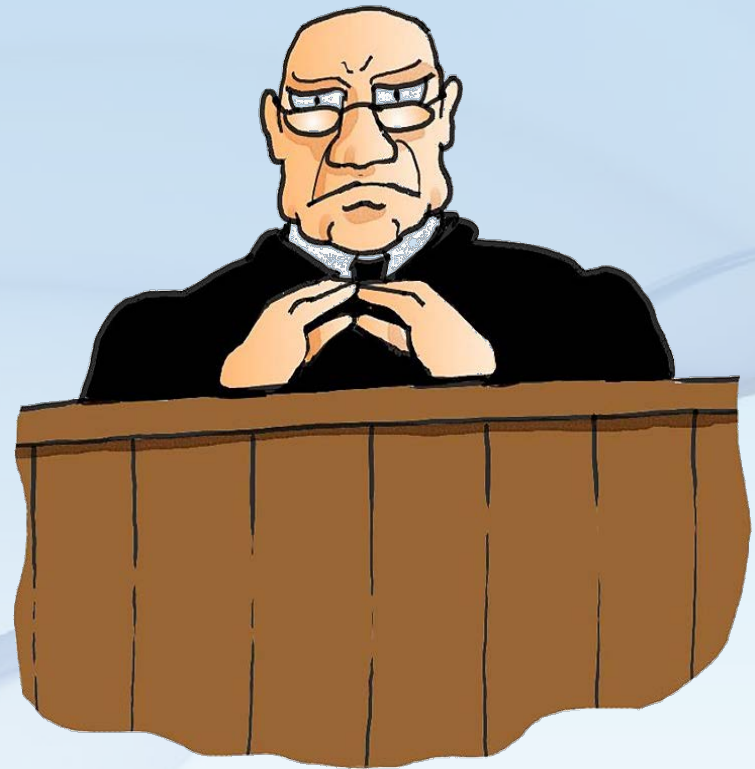
Duration of manuscripts at different stages in the journal workflow

“In your experience, how long does a manuscript remain at the following status points on the journal submission system?”

“DECISION IN PROCESS” OR “AWAITING DECISION”



The verdict...

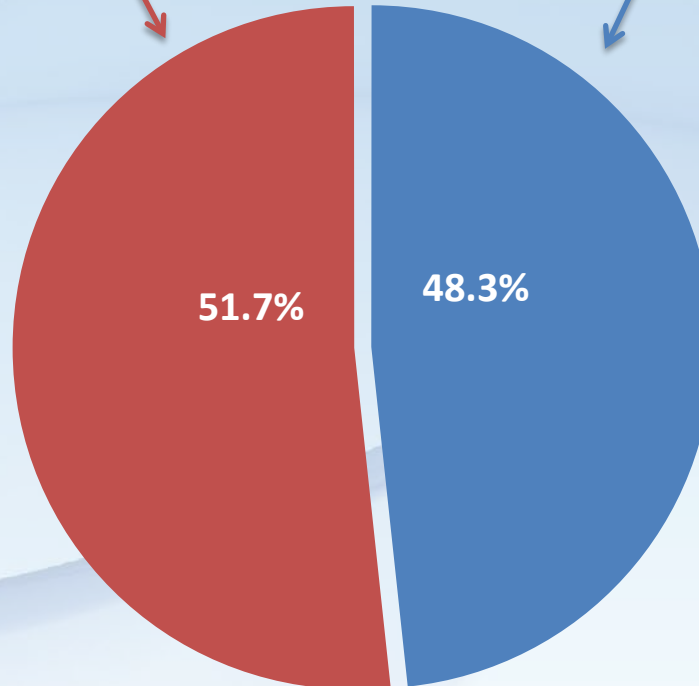


What aspects of journal publishing do authors want changed?

Would you like to change something in the publishing system?

Yes (check my comments below)

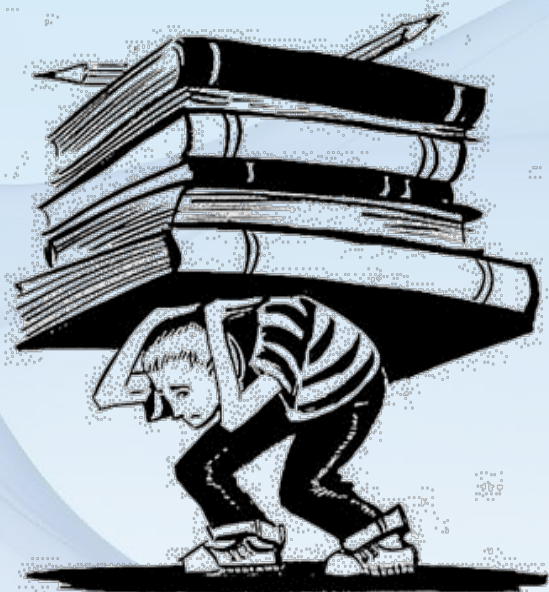
No. I am satisfied with the system



$n = 3712$

What aspects of journal publishing do authors want changed?

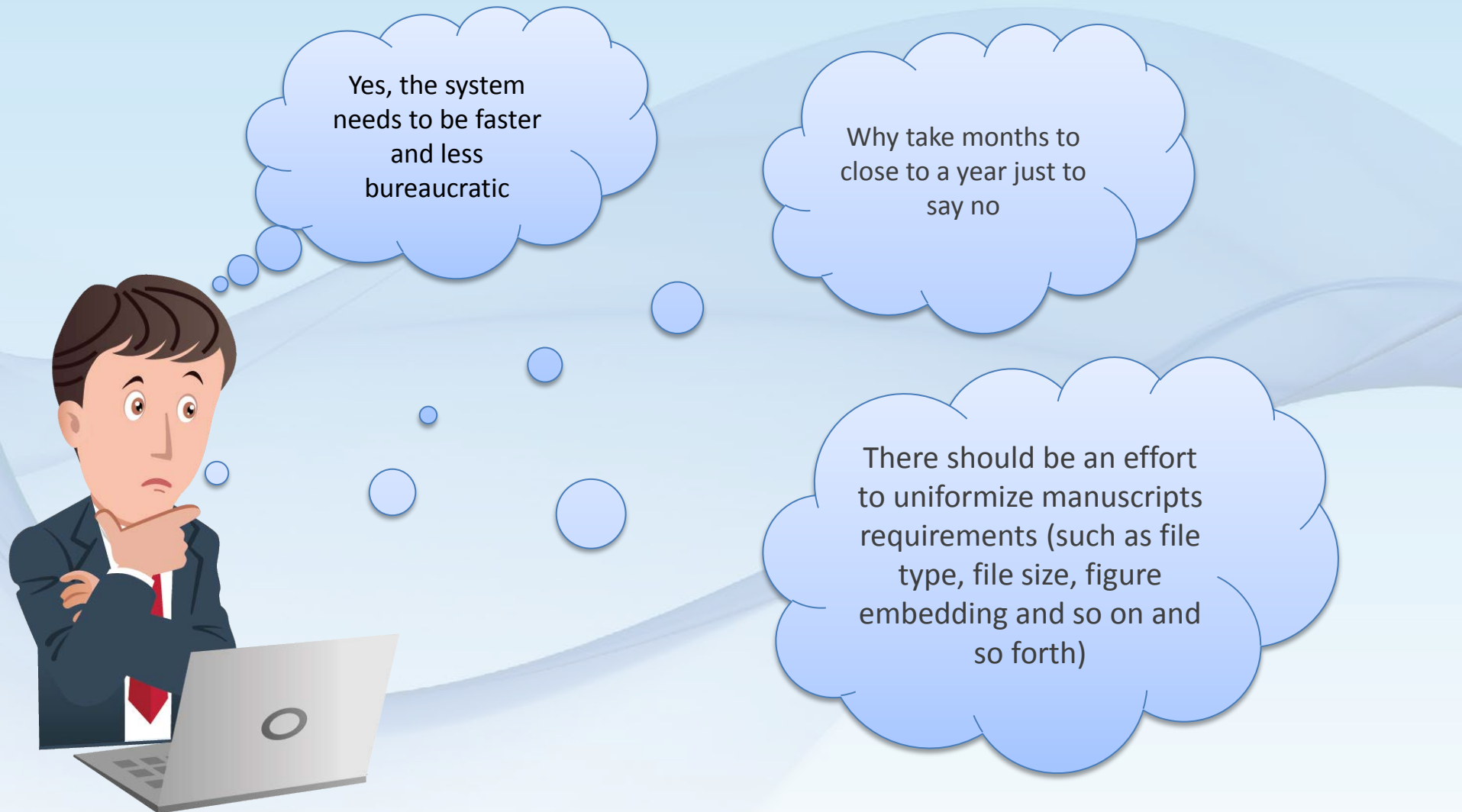
Main pain points and author-suggested areas of improvement



- 1 Time to publication
- 2 Peer review process/quality
- 3 Fairness/objectivity/bias
- 4 Affordability (costs/charges)
- 5 Pressure to publish
- 6 Process standardization

$n = 3712$

Sample author comments about the journal publishing system

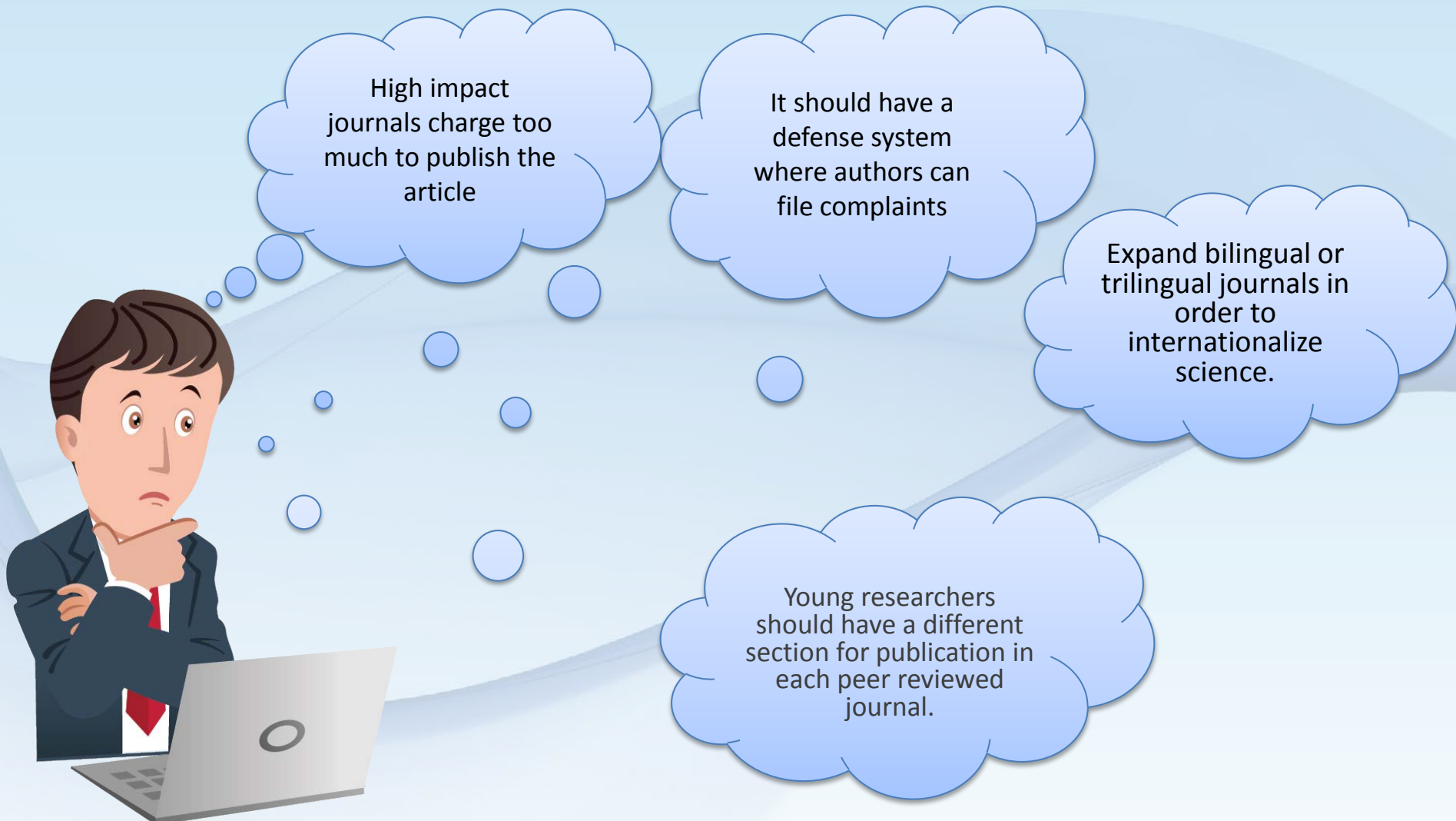


Yes, the system
needs to be faster
and less
bureaucratic

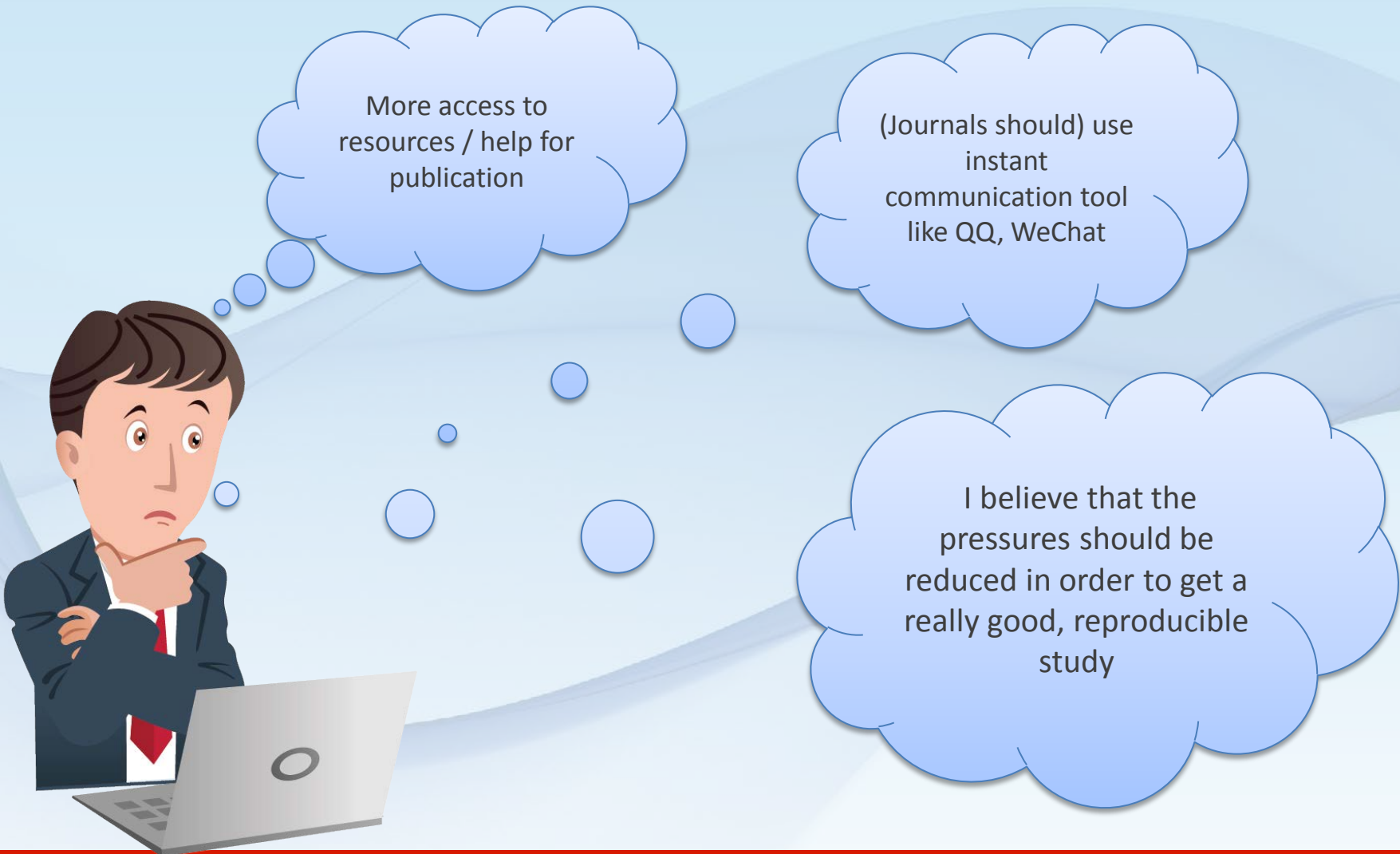
Why take months to
close to a year just to
say no

There should be an effort
to uniformize manuscripts
requirements (such as file
type, file size, figure
embedding and so on and
so forth)

Sample author comments about the journal publishing system



Sample author comments about the journal publishing system



Key takeaway... There's a lot that's broken!

Let's begin by fixing the basics!

1. Reduce time to publication
2. Increase transparency in peer review
3. Eliminate bias
4. Communicate effectively with authors
5. Create new opportunities for young researchers
6. Offer learning resources



Get involved!

Participate in the Editage Insights survey and share it with your authors!



<https://www.editage.com/survey-author-perspectives-on-academic-publishing>

Question Period / Open Discussion

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