



Consequences of Participating in Questionable Academia

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„worthless” papers published with no review by fake editors

quasi-scientific conferences in touristic destinations

David Mazières and Eddie Kohler
New York University
University of California, Los Angeles
<http://www.mailavenger.org/>

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We all know this picture:

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A paper by Maggie Simpson and Edna Krabappel was accepted by two scientific journals

Updated by *Joseph Stromberg* on December 7, 2014, 9:00 a.m. ET [@josephstromberg](#) [joseph@vox.com](#)

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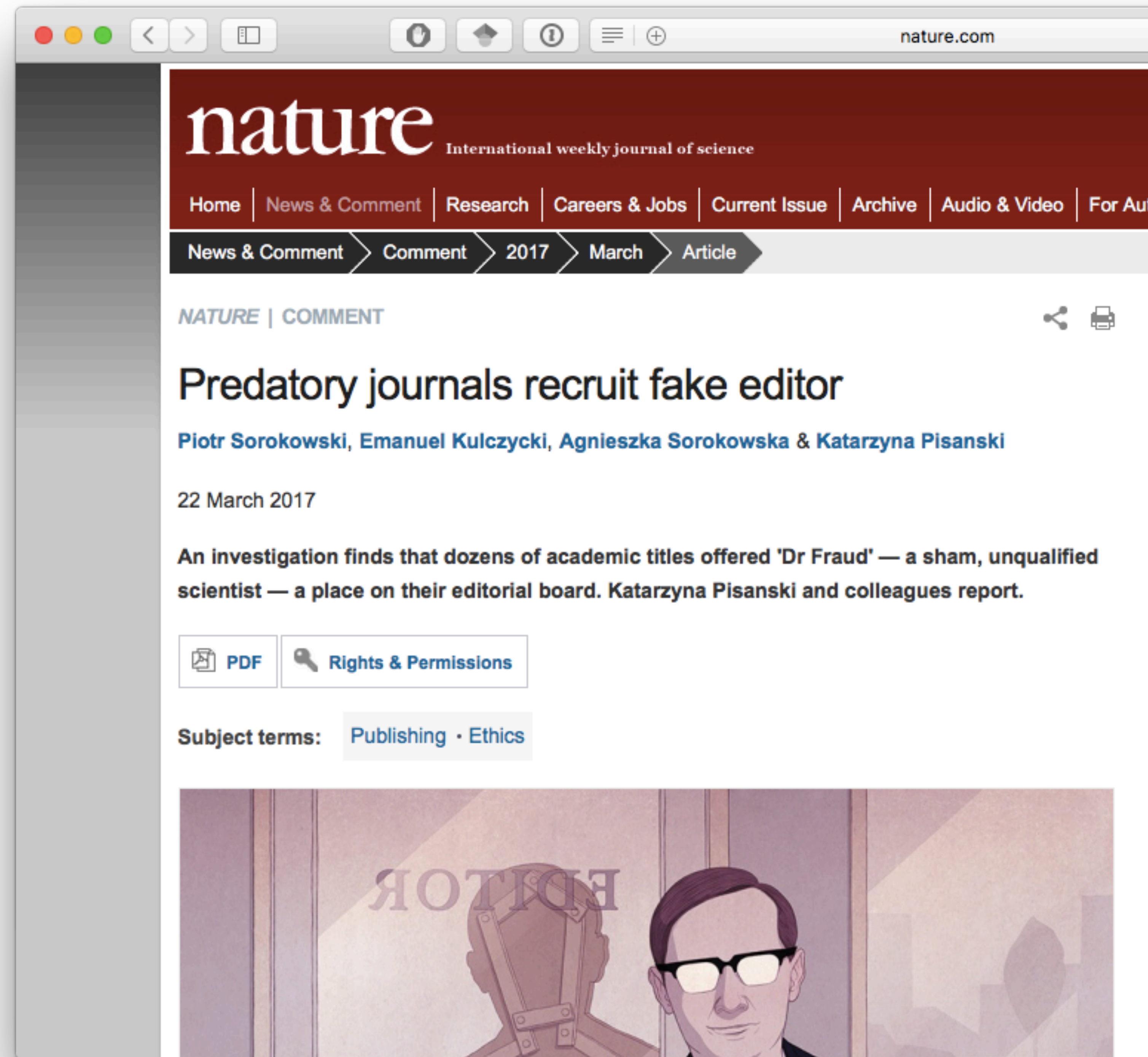
(20th Century Fox)

A scientific study by Maggie Simpson, Edna Krabappel, and Kim Jong Fun has been accepted by two journals.

We all know this picture:

„worthless” papers published
with no review by fake editors

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We also all know this picture:

Predatory journals (publishers) destroy science reliability and trust in science in society.

Publishing in such journals destroys the careers of (young) researchers; thus we must educate them and make more tools to recognize these poor scholarly communication channels.



But it is a simplified picture.

It does not consider geopolitical aspects of this phenomenon: researchers working in different countries have different resources, various points of departure, working conditions, and research aims.

Different things pay off in different places



Articles

- Kulczycki, E., Hołowiecki, M., Taşkın, Z., & Dogan, G. (2022). Questionable Conferences and Presenters from Top-Ranked Universities. ***Journal of Information Science***. DOI: 10.1177/01655515221087674
- Kulczycki, E., Hołowiecki, M., Taşkın, Z., Krawczyk, F. (2021). Citation patterns between impact-factor and questionable journals. ***Scientometrics*** 126, 8541–8560. DOI: 10.1007/s11192-021-04121-8
- Krawczyk, F., & Kulczycki, E. (2021). On the geopolitics of academic publishing: The mislocated centers of scholarly communication. ***Tapuya: Latin American Science, Technology and Society***, 4(1), 1984641. DOI: 10.1080/25729861.2021.1984641
- Sorokowski, P., Kulczycki, E., Sorokowska, A., & Pisanski, K. (2017). Predatory journals recruit fake editor. ***Nature***, 543(7646), 481–483. DOI: 10.1038/543481a

Forthcoming papers

- Taşkın, Z., Krawczyk, F., Kulczycki, E., Are papers published in predatory journals worthless? A geopolitical dimension revealed by content-based analysis of citations (under review).
- Kulczycki, E., *The Evaluation Game: How Metrics Shape Scholarly Communication*. Cambridge University Press (forthcoming).



I will show how we intend to expand the
knowledge about the consequences of
questionable academia.

Actual consequences for individuals.



Background disclaimer

Dialectical approach as the consequence of geopolitical sensitivity



**Fight with
questionable
academia**

**Defend the role of
questionable
academia**

Survey

Anonymous and personalised survey

Set 1

2,630

corresponding authors
of articles published in
65 questionable
journals in the social
sciences

Articles from 2012-2018

Set 2

35,235

corresponding authors
of conference papers
published by the World
Academy of Science,
Engineering and
Technology (WASET)

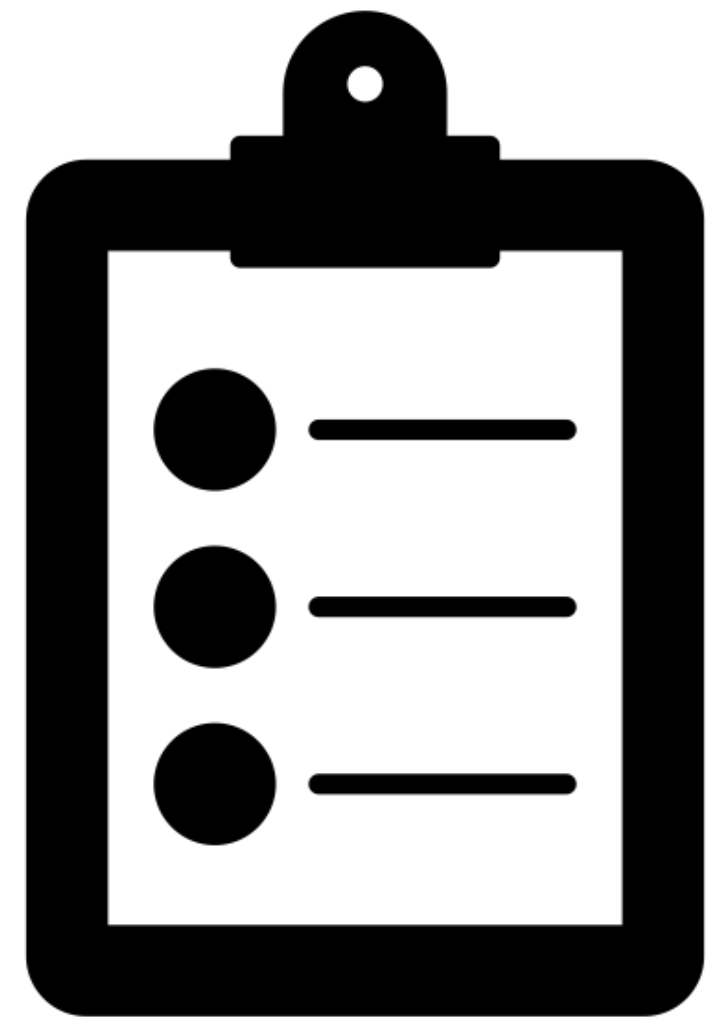
Papers from 2007-2021

Set 3

11,575

presentation authors
who presented their
works at conferences
organised by the
OMICS Group

Presentations from 2011-2019



We collected **3,235** responses:
2,025 fully completed and 1,210 partially completed.

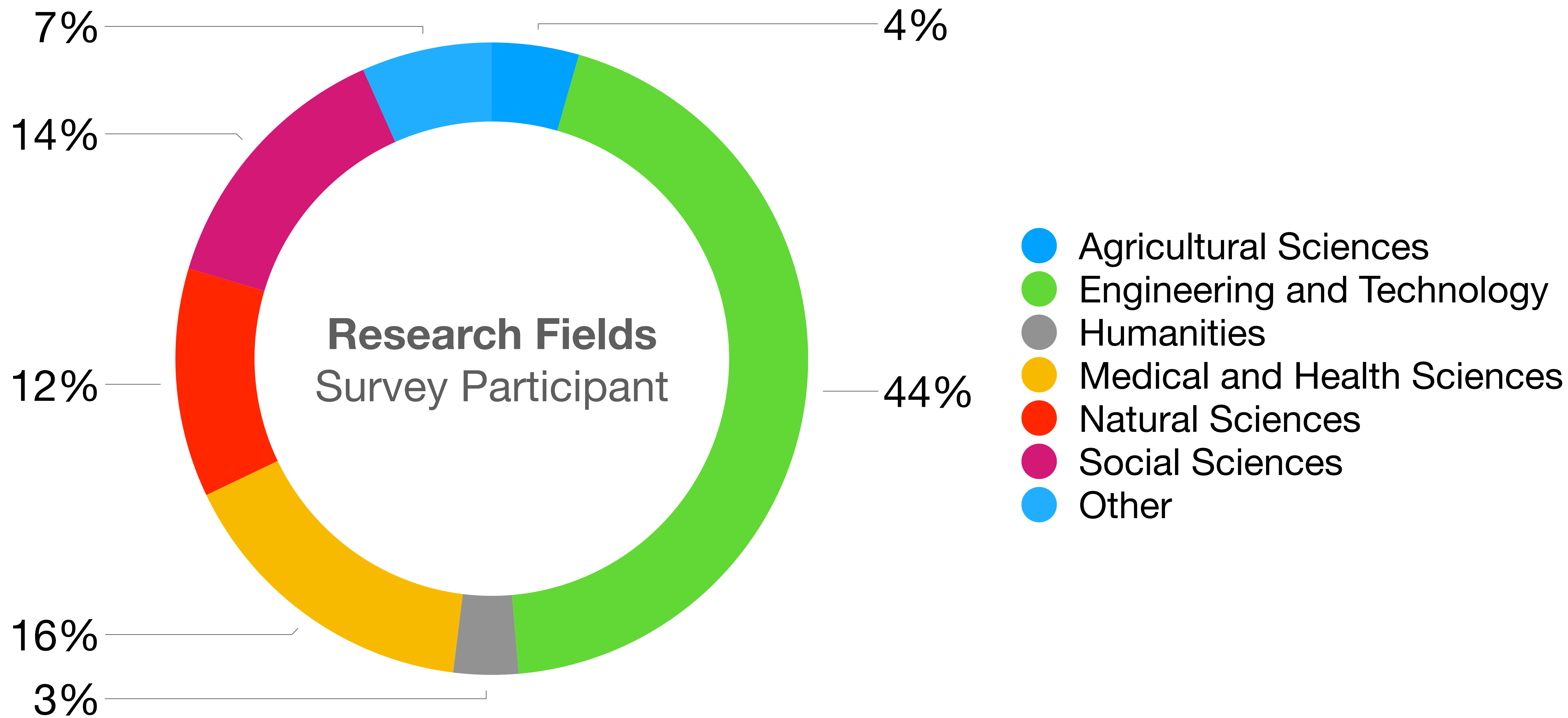
The response rate of 4.1 % (fully complete responses) is low, but expected, primarily because of the sensitivity of the subject matter and period analyzed (2007-2021).

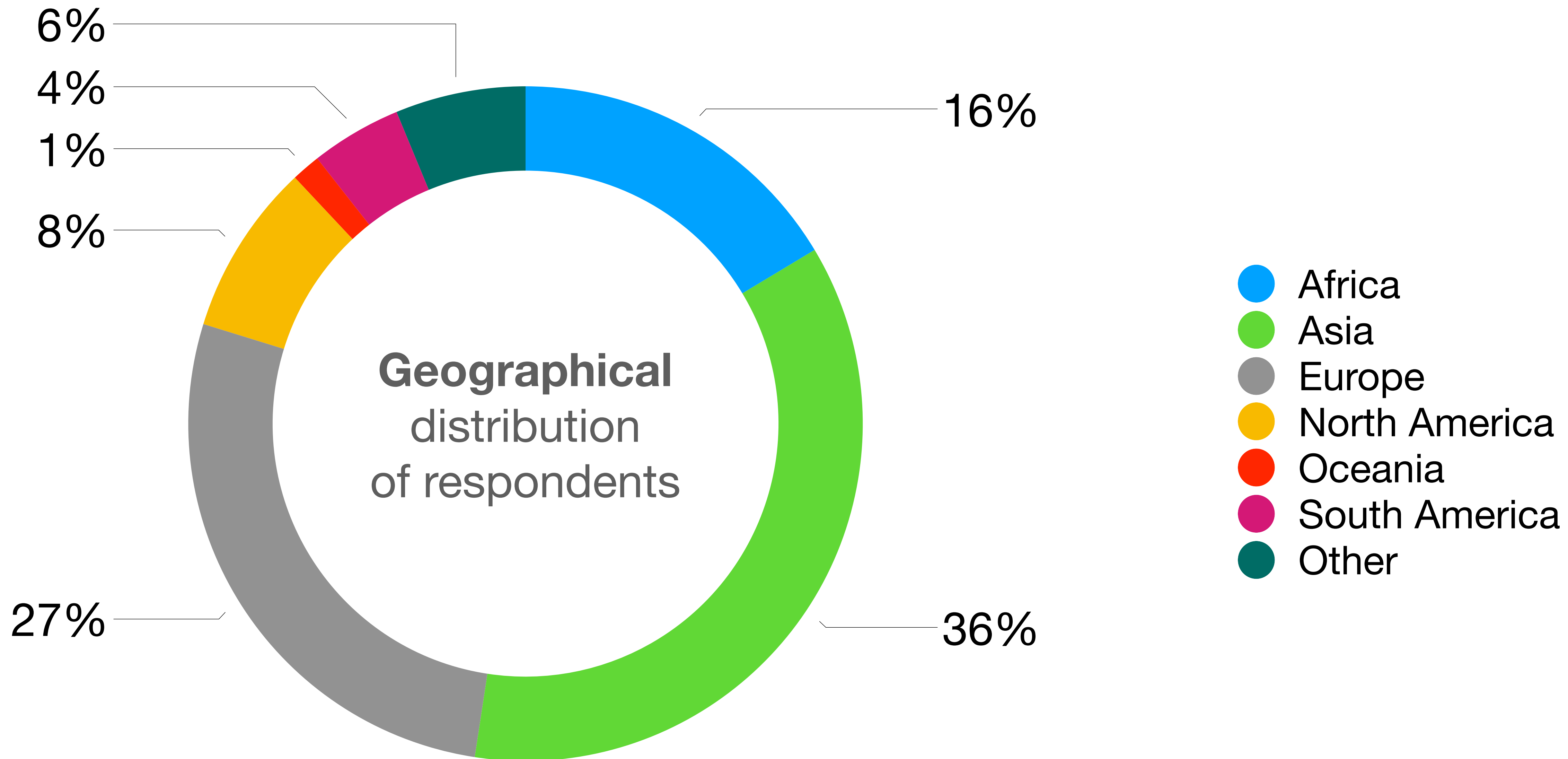
What we were interested in? Survey scope

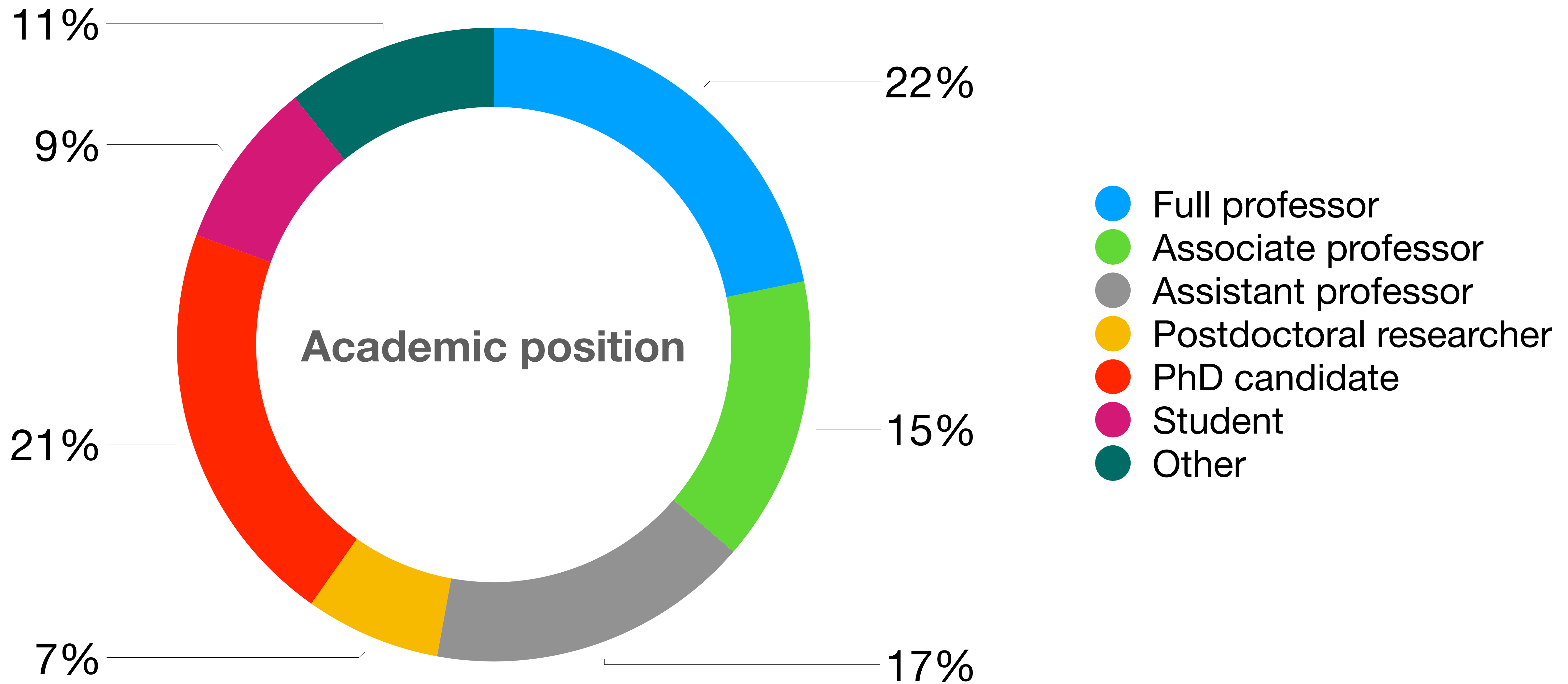
Before
participating in
Questionable
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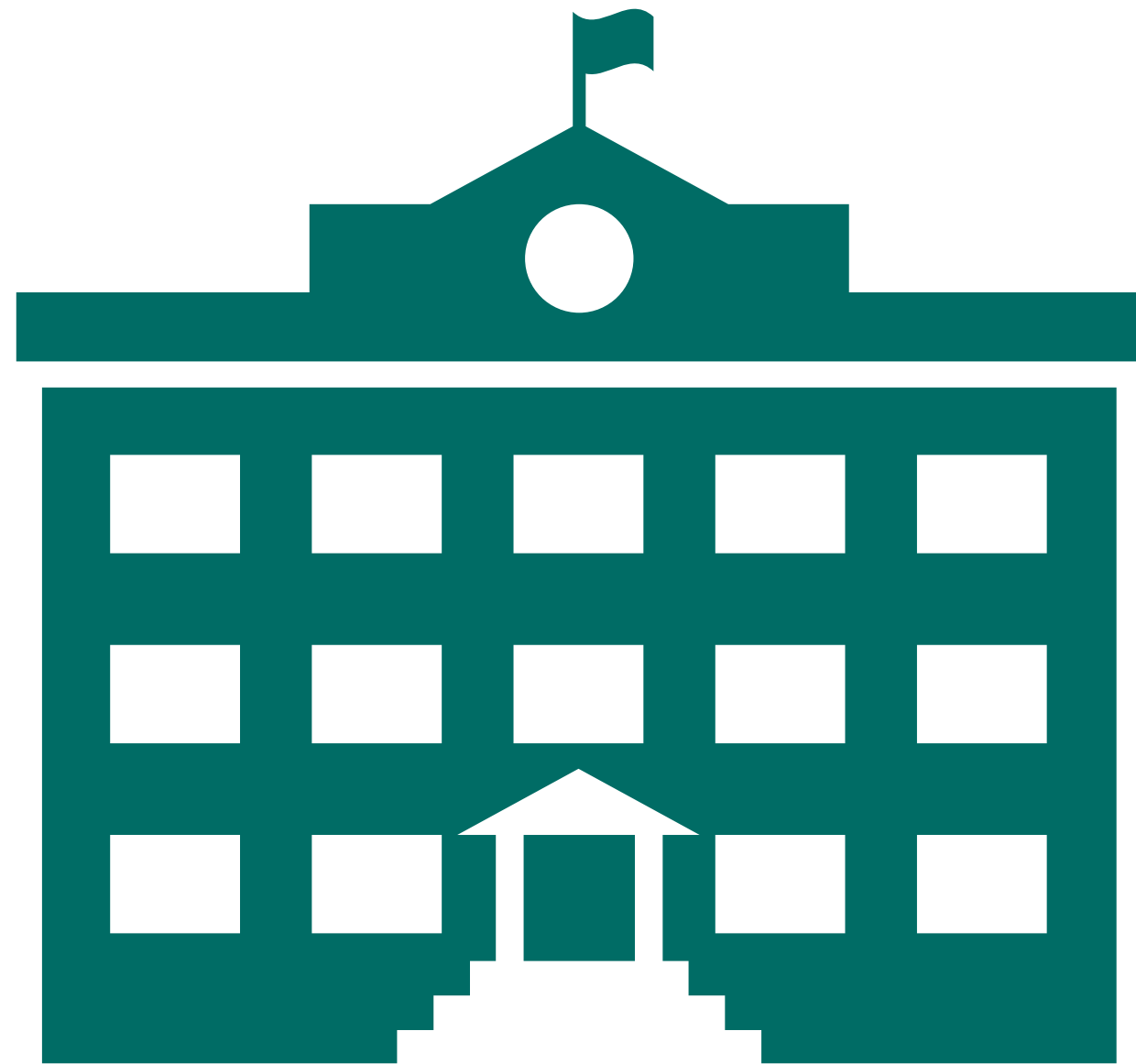
After
participating in
Questionable
Academia:
Feedback in and
beyond the
Institution

Results





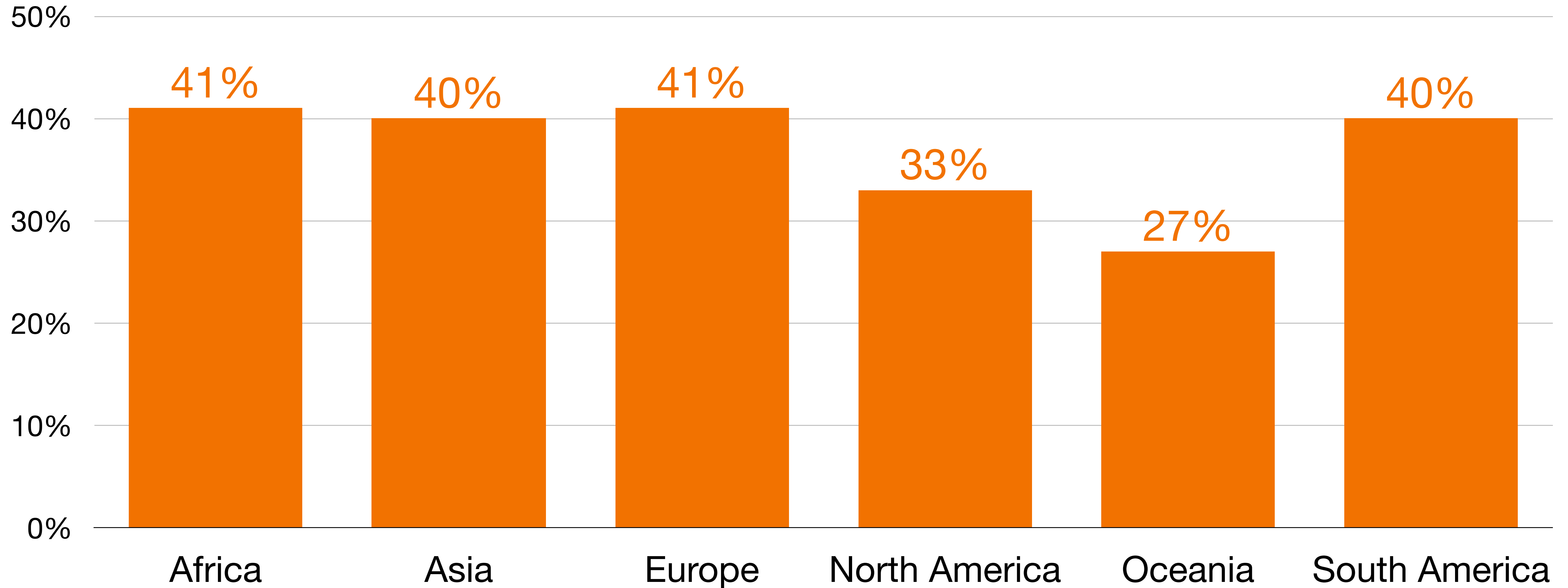




Before Participating in
Questionable Academia

Knowledge about my plans

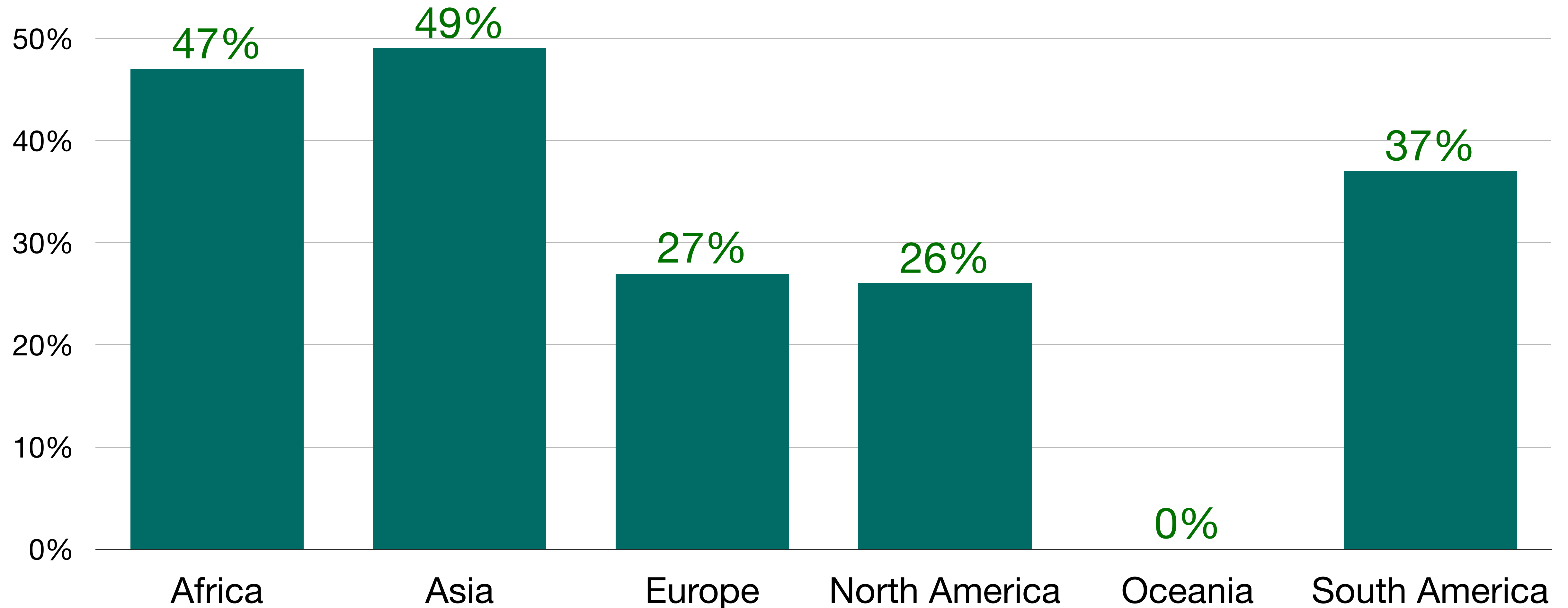
797 respondents



Someone at my institution knew about my publication/conference choice before I submitted my work

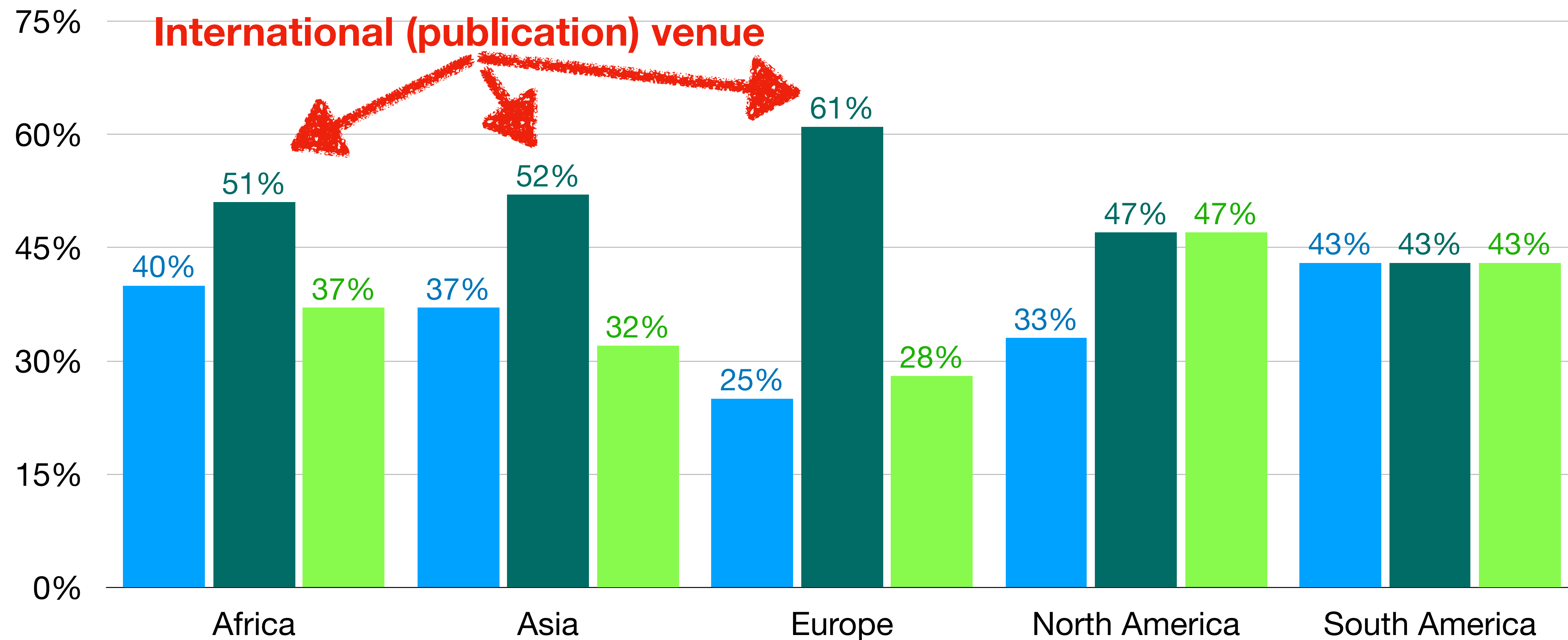
Share of colleagues who knew and gave an advice

311 respondents



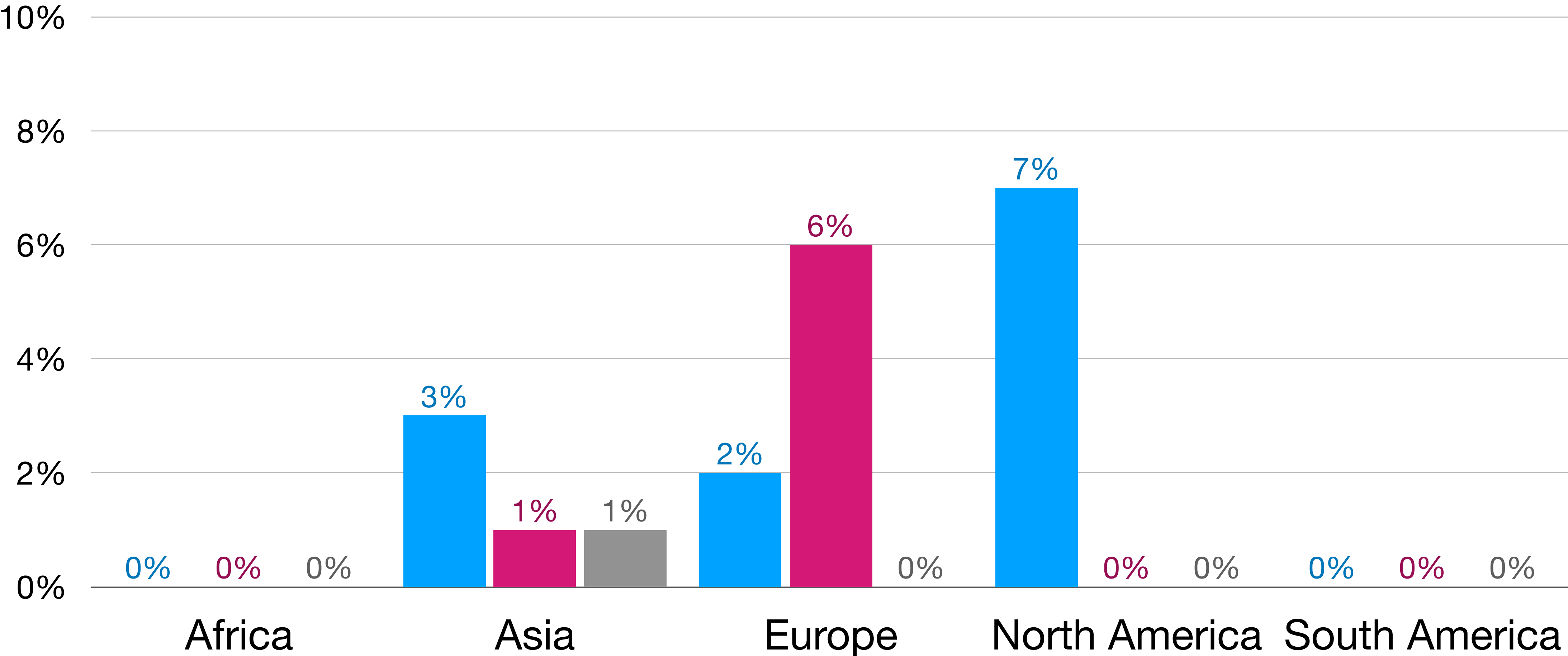
Someone from my institution who knew my plans gave me advice

Advice IN FAVOUR



- It would positively affect my reputation as a researcher or my institution
- It was an international journal/conference
- It was a good journal/conference

Advice AGAINST



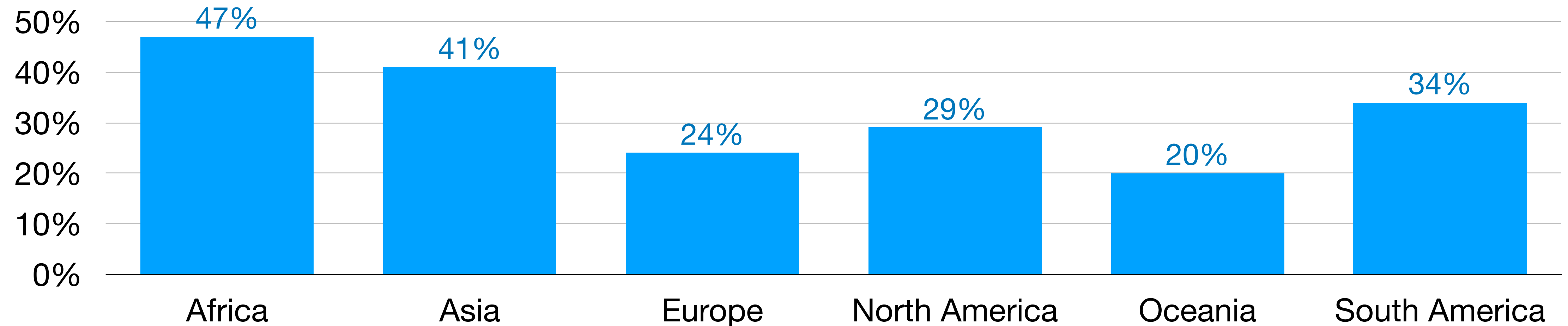
- It was a journal/conference with a bad reputation
- Organisers did not conduct a reliable review of papers
- Journal/conference could have a bad impact on research culture



**After Participating in
Questionable Academia:
Feedback in and beyond
the Institution**

Reactions of colleagues from an institution after publishing papers or presenting at conferences

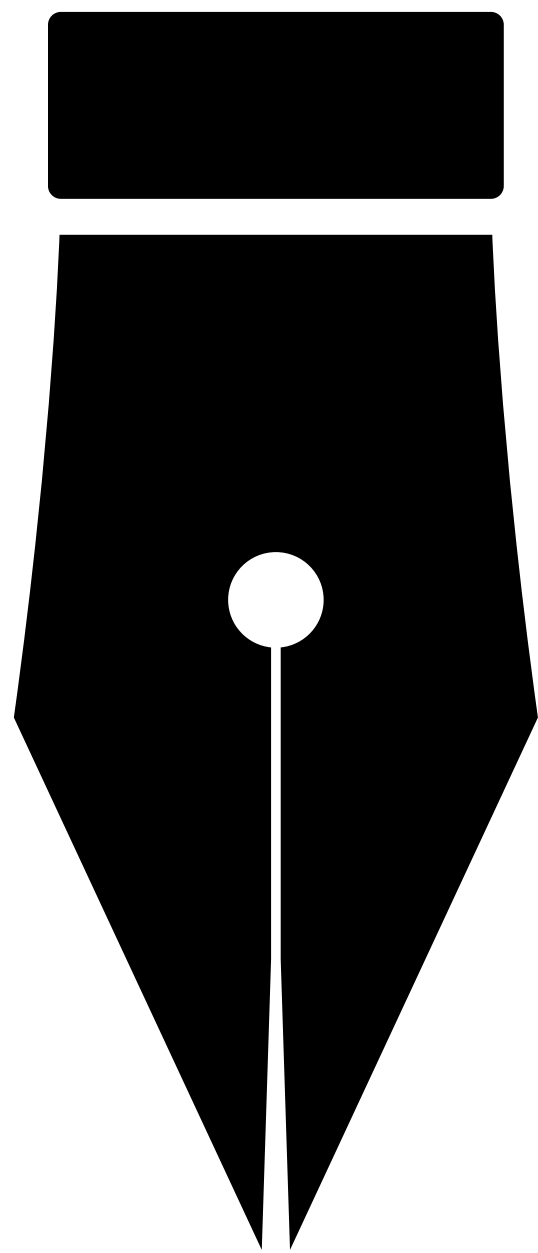
One-third (N=712) of researchers were met with reactions



428 researchers indicated that colleagues from their institutions and **271** that supervisors **congratulated** them.

Only **54** researchers indicated that their work was **criticised** by colleagues and **32** by supervisors.

General feedback (outside researchers' institutions) on their publication/presentation



- **332** researchers replied that they received **congratulations** because of its scholarly value
- **304** received **congratulations** due to the international nature of the journal or conference.
- **84** respondents replied that their choice (publication venue or conferences) was **criticised**
- **19** researchers replied that they received **criticism** for the low scholarly value of publication/presentation.

Positive impact

- 471 researchers replied that the impact was **passing a performance assessment**
- 314 that the impact was **obtaining a degree**
- 270 that the impact was a **promotion** or a **job offer** received afterwards
- 90 researchers replied that the impact was obtaining a **financial award**.

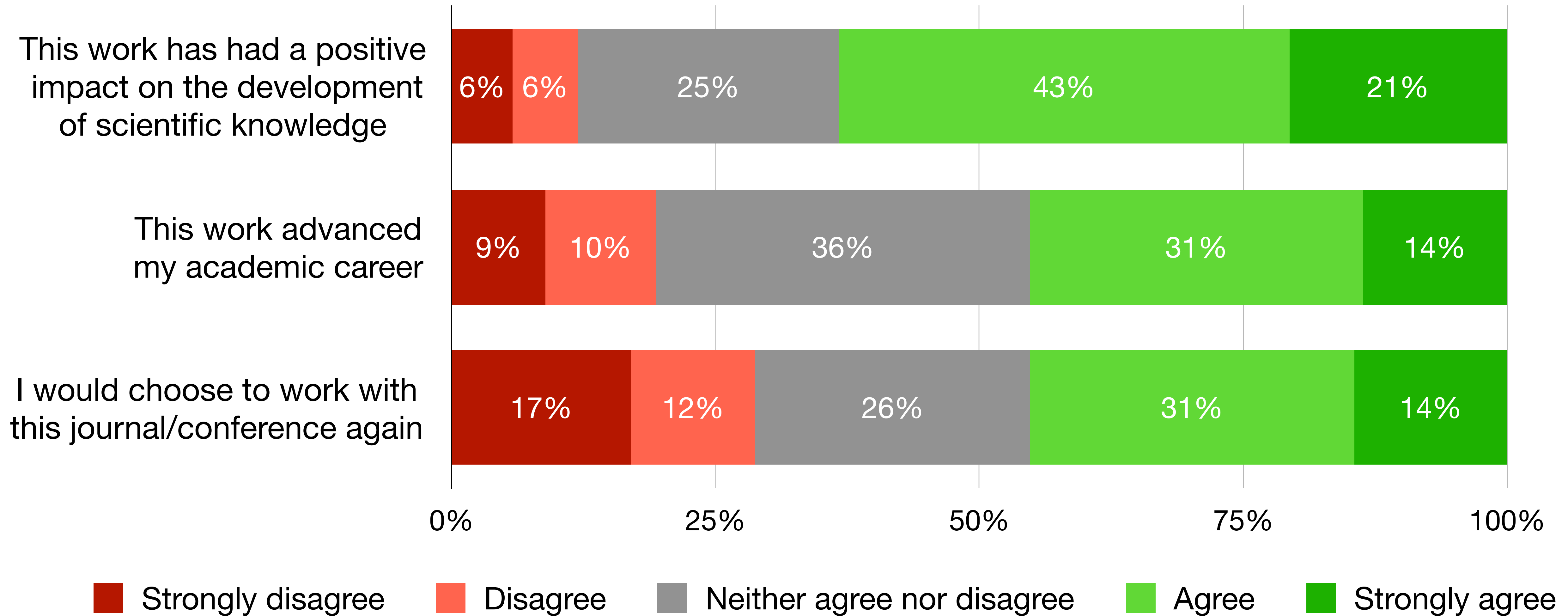


Negative impact

- 269 researchers replied that the **paper was not taken into consideration** in their performance assessment
- 18 researchers replied that they were required to **return research funding**
- 14 researchers **were reprimanded**
- 9 researchers **were fired**
- 249 respondents **had not included** this publication/presentation in their **lists of accomplishments.**



Opinions of researchers on the impact of their work



Conclusions

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- The prevalence of the phenomenon may suggest that it is profitable for many authors (and acceptable in their scientific community) to function within the questionable academia.

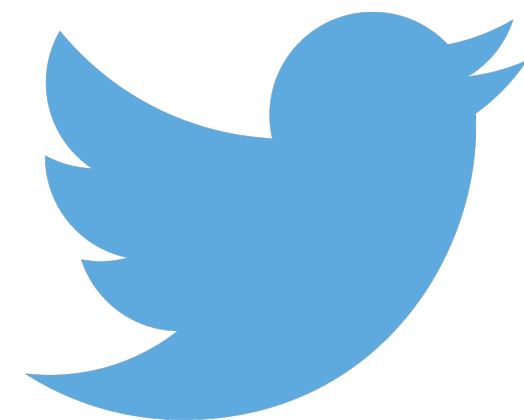
Summarizing the results

- Our survey shows a positive effect for individual researchers.
- Although numerous previous studies have presented the harmful effects of predatory academia to scientific community, many of respondents indicated positive consequences of their choice.
- The prevalence of the phenomenon may suggest that it is profitable for many authors (and acceptable in their scientific community) to function within the questionable academia.
- Our results might be biased because many researchers do not want to participate in such surveys. Thus, we have to draw the picture using the data we have.

Thank you

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