



OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR
**ACADEMIC ETHICS
AND PROCEDURES**
OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA

RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH BAROMETER 2026

SURVEY REPORT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	3
LIST OF TABLES	3
ABBREVIATIONS	4
INTRODUCTION	5
1. METHODOLOGY, ORGANISATION AND CONDUCT OF THE SURVEY	6
1.1. Structure of the questionnaire and method of data collection	6
1.2. Target group, sample size and data collection method	6
1.3. Data management and analysis	7
2. SURVEY RESULTS	8
2.1. Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents	8
2.1.1. Highest research workload	8
2.1.2. Highest qualification and its acquisition place (country)	9
2.1.3. Experience in research	10
2.2. Implementation of research and publication ethics regulations	11
2.2.1. Knowledge of research and publication ethics regulations	11
2.2.2. Implementation of ethics regulations	13
2.2.3. Improving ethical knowledge	15
2.2.4. Training on research and publication ethics attended by respondents	17
2.2.5. Reasons for respondents choosing (refusing) to improve their knowledge in the field of ethics	19
2.3. Unethical behaviour in conducting and publishing research	20
2.3.1. Unethical conduct of research	20
2.3.2. Unethical publication of research results	21
2.3.3. Unethical authorship	24
2.4. Experiences of unethical behaviour	25
2.4.1. Protection of own interests	25
2.4.2. Threat-causing factors	27
CONCLUSIONS	30
REFERENCES	32

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 1.	Higher education and research institution where respondents have the highest research workload	8
Fig. 2.	Largest share of the respondents' workload	8
Fig. 3.	Distribution of respondents by highest attained qualification.....	9
Fig. 4.	Country where respondents obtained their highest qualification	9
Fig. 5.	Duration of respondents' experience in research (in years)	10
Fig. 6.	Field of science/art in which respondents have worked over the past three years	10
Fig. 7.	Awareness of ethics regulations.....	12
Fig. 8.	Implementation of ethics regulations by institutions	14
Fig. 9.	Frequency of improving knowledge about research ethics (in courses, seminars, other events and independently).....	15
Fig. 10.	Frequency of improving knowledge about publication ethics (in courses, seminars, other events and independently)	16
Fig. 11.	Methods of improving knowledge of ethics in the last three years	16
Fig. 12.	Reasons for improving knowledge in the field of ethics over the past three years	19
Fig. 13.	Reasons for not having improved knowledge in the field of ethics over the past three years.....	20
Fig. 14.	Unethical conduct of research within the academic community of one's own institution	21
Fig. 15.	Unethical publication of research results within one's own institution's academic community.....	22
Fig. 16.	Unethical authorship within one's own institution's academic community	24
Fig. 17.	Encountering dishonest behaviour by another researcher over the past three years.....	25
Fig. 18.	Defending one's own interests when faced with dishonest behaviour by another researcher	26
Fig. 19.	Threats to responsible conduct of research and to publication of research results	27

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.	Grouping of answers to the question "Which topics have you deepened your knowledge on in the field of research ethics in the last three years?" (n = 426)	17
Table 2.	Grouping of answers to the question "Which topics have you deepened your knowledge on in the field of publication ethics in the last three years?" (n = 416)	18
Table 3.	Responses to the question "How often have you observed unethical publication of research results within your institution's academic community (among scientists, researchers and PhD students)?" (n = 46)	23
Table 4.	Grouping of responses to the question "What happened after you reported another researcher's dishonest behaviour towards you?" (n = 256).....	26
Table 5.	Responses to the question "Which factors in your opinion threaten responsible research conduct and publication of research results in the academic community of your institution?" (n = 44)	28

ABBREVIATIONS

AI	– artificial intelligence
EC	– European Commission
Ombudsperson	– Ombudsperson for Academic Ethics and Procedures of the Republic of Lithuania
LURC	– Lithuanian University Rectors' Conference
HERI	– higher education and research institution
RE	– research ethics
RPE	– research and publication ethics
PE	– publication ethics
COPE	– Committee on Publication Ethics, https://publicationethics.org/
Office	– Office of the Ombudsperson for Academic Ethics and Procedures of the Republic of Lithuania

This report presents the results of a survey conducted between 28 January and 17 March 2026. Researchers from various Lithuanian higher education and research institutions took part in the survey. This is the fourth report of the survey "Responsible Research Barometer" (the first three reports were published in 2020, 2022 and 2024).

INTRODUCTION

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Academic Ethics and Procedures of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter referred to as the "Office") presents the results of the fourth survey "Responsible Research Barometer 2026". Reports on previous surveys (in Lithuanian and English) were prepared in 2020, 2022 and 2024. The above survey reveals the experiences and situation of researchers working at Lithuanian higher education and research institutions (hereinafter referred to as the "HERIs") in the field of research and publication ethics (hereinafter referred to as the "RPE"). As in previous surveys, this report examines the academic ethics challenges faced by survey participants when conducting research and publishing their results. Members of the Lithuanian academic community, I.E. doctoral students, lecturers and researchers, were invited to participate in the survey. The survey examined the importance of RPE to the academic community, with considerable attention paid to academic integrity, the academic community's awareness, and the responsible application of research ethics (hereinafter referred to as the "RE") provisions.

The report compares the survey results with the following previous surveys conducted by the Office:

- "Responsible Research Barometer 2020" (Dr. E. Ozolinčiūtė, G. Židonė, Dr. L. Tauginienė);
- "Responsible Research Barometer 2022" (Dr. J. Umbrasaitė, Dr. E. Ozolinčiūtė);
- "Responsible Research Barometer 2024" (Dr. B. Liekė, Dr. R. Sinickė).

The Office hopes that the results of the survey will help to improve the culture of academic ethics in Lithuanian HERIs, increase interest in and encourage discussion about academic and publication ethics, and contribute to the search for effective solutions to ensure the proper regulation and practical implementation of research ethics.

1. METHODOLOGY, ORGANISATION AND CONDUCT OF THE SURVEY

1.1. Structure of the questionnaire and method of data collection

The questions in the survey “Responsible Research Barometer 2026” were drawn up based on the questionnaires used in previous surveys. Some of the wording of the questions has been adjusted without changing their substance (most questions remain the same as in previous surveys). It should be noted that, in light of and in response to current issues, some survey questions have been supplemented with relevant statements relating to changes in the RPE, new reports and/or guidelines prepared by the Office.

The questionnaire for the fourth survey “Responsible Research Barometer” consisted of 26 questions (including 8 open-ended questions). The questions were divided into five parts:

1. The first part asked the respondents about education aspects: their knowledge about research ethics, the practical application of the afore-mentioned principles within institutions, the nature and frequency of knowledge enhancement, as well as their decision to deepen or not to deepen their knowledge in the field of ethics and the reasons for such choice.
2. In the second part, the respondents selected statements that best reflected their personal views on ethics.
3. The third part analysed whether, over the past three years, the respondents had encountered unethical behaviour in the conduct of research, the publication of results, the attribution of authorship, and other areas, and how often this had occurred.
4. In the fourth part, the respondents indicated how interests are protected when faced with unethical academic behaviour and which ethical issues they consider most relevant.
5. The fifth part covered questions regarding various professional and socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents.

1.2. Target group, sample size and data collection method

Teaching staff (assistants, associate professors, lecturers, professors), research fellows, doctoral students and other researchers were invited to participate in the survey. According to data provided by the National Agency for Education in the Education Management Information System, there were a total of 2,857 doctoral students in Lithuania in 2023–2025, whilst the number of lecturers, administrative and support staff at Lithuanian colleges, universities and research institutes, according to data from the Register of Educators as of 1 October 2025, was 13,891. Thus, the calculation of the sample size revealed that in order to reach 95% of confidence, 391 respondents had to take part in the survey.

A quantitative method - online survey - was chosen to collect survey data. Invitations to participate in the survey “Responsible Research Barometer 2026” were sent to the general RHEI e-mail addresses. The HERIs were asked to forward the invitation to the members of its academic community. The survey was conducted between 28 January 2026 and 17 March 2026 using the online survey

creation platform Microsoft Forms. In order to comply with fundamental principles of research ethics, participation in the survey was anonymous (a general link to the survey was sent, rather than unique links for each respondent) and voluntary – respondents decided for themselves whether to take part in the survey. They were also able to skip questions they did not wish to answer or exit the survey at any time.

1.3. Data management and analysis

A total of 587 respondents took part in the survey. Some of them skipped a few questions or did not complete the survey. It should be noted that when analysing the data obtained during the survey, the responses of participants who did not complete the entire questionnaire were also included. The report provides the exact number of respondents who answered a specific question alongside each graph. The responses of survey participants to open-ended questions have been left in their original form, with the language unedited.

ANALYSIS OF CLOSED-ENDED QUESTIONS. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse quantitative data. The analysis was carried out using *Microsoft 365 for Business Excel*; a Likert scale was applied to the answers to some of the questions. In some graphs, these scales were combined, presenting their total percentage frequency.

ANALYSIS OF OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS. The method of content analysis – involving the identification of categories and subcategories – was applied to the analysis of open-ended questions. For this reason, the analysis of the questions was carried out in several stages:

- data preparation (collection of responses, organisation of text);
- familiarisation with the data (reading the provided responses, identifying recurring phrases);
- data coding (breaking down responses into meaningful units);
- formation of categories and subcategories (classification);
- data interpretation;
- data analysis and summary¹.

¹ Žydzīūnaitė, V. and Sabaliauskas, S. (2017). *Qualitative Research: Principles and Methods*. Vaga.

2. SURVEY RESULTS

2.1. Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

2.1.1. Highest research workload

The majority of the survey participants (354 respondents; 65 percent) indicated that they carry out research work and hold positions (see Figure 1) at state universities. Other respondents (14 percent) stated that they carry out their duties at public research institutes, whilst slightly fewer (13 percent) of the survey participants indicated that they work at public colleges. Three percent of the respondents noted that they have the heaviest research workload at private colleges, and one percent of those surveyed at private universities. Four percent of the survey participants selected the option "other", stating: "I am not currently working"; "teaching only"; "I do not have one"; "a state university and a private college in equal measure"; "none"; "nowhere"; "I'd say at home, when I have to go back after work to evaluate students' assignments, check my own children's homework, and teach the youngest ones to speak, as they're only just learning. No other institution comes close to such a workload."

**"Which higher education and research institution has the highest research (not academic) workload?" (n = 542)
(Respondents could choose up to two answer options)**

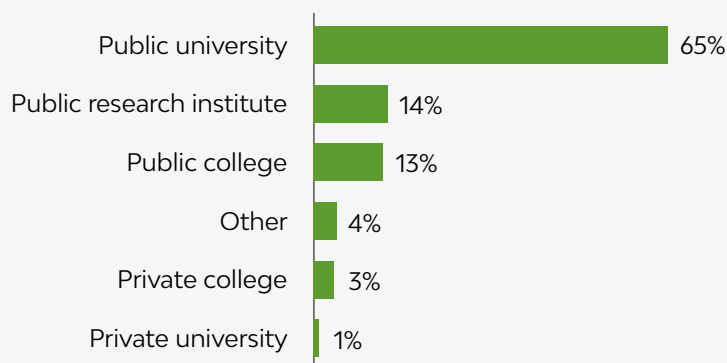


Fig. 1. Higher education and research institution where respondents have the highest research workload

"Which of the below makes up the most of your workload?" (n = 555)

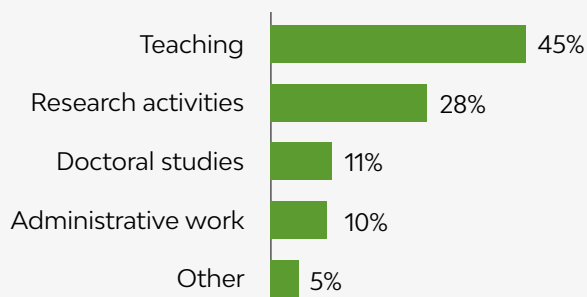
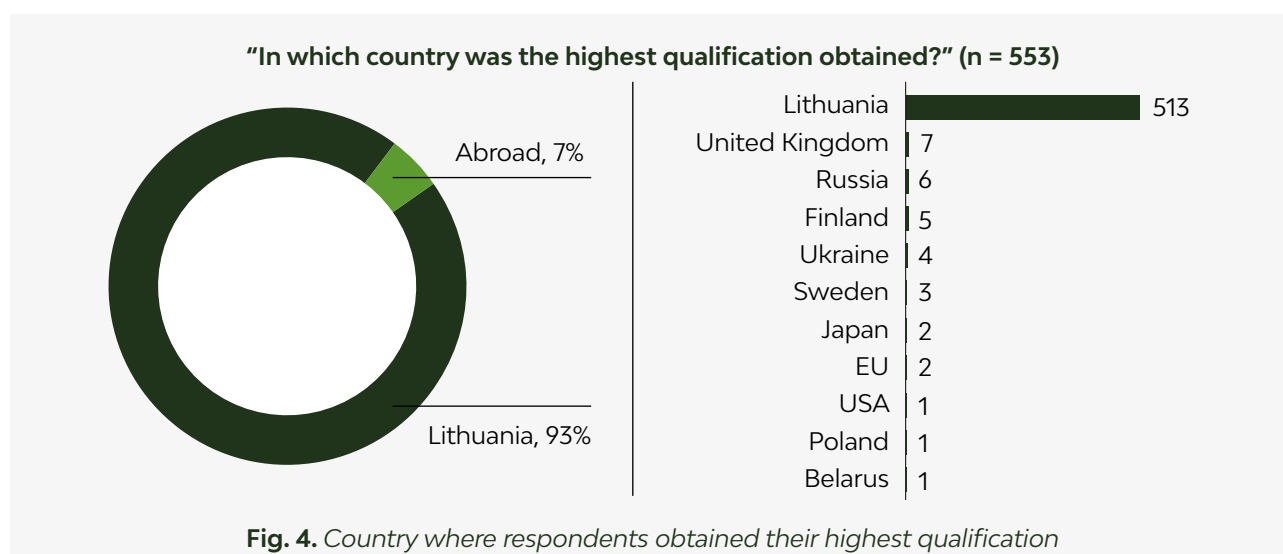
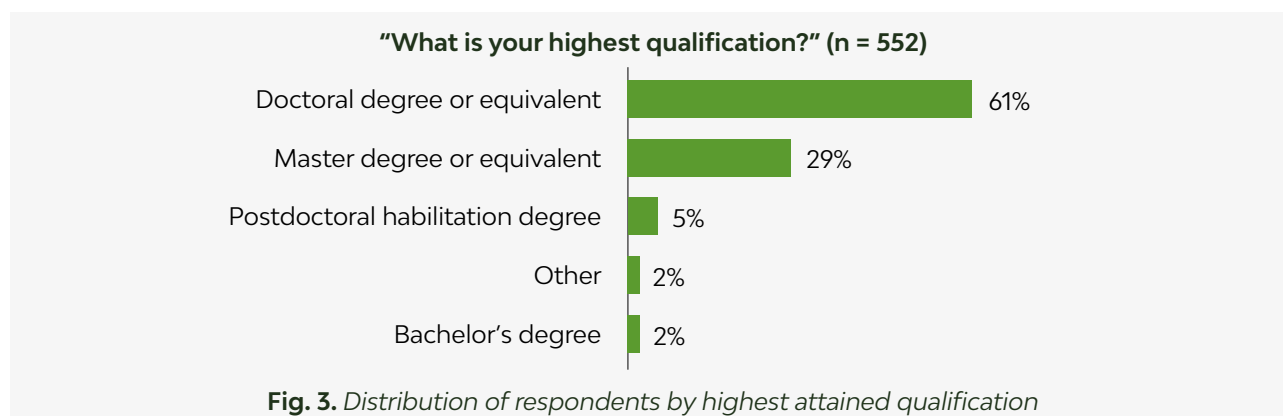


Fig. 2. Largest share of the respondents' workload

The respondents were asked what type of work constitutes the largest part of their workload (Fig. 2). Based on the responses of the survey respondents, it should be noted that the largest part of the respondents' workload was teaching (45 percent), almost one third (28%) of the survey participants stated that they were engaged in research activities, another portion of the respondents were studying for a PhD at the time of the survey (11 percent), and 10 percent of the survey participants performed administrative work. The remaining respondents (5 percent) selected the option "other", specifying: "50 percent research/ 50 percent teaching"; "50/50 – teaching and research activities"; "currently I am not working"; "practical (technical, expert) work"; "50+50"; "research and teaching account for an equal share of my workload"; "research and administrative work"; "clinical work"; "I do administrative work at one higher education and research institution and am studying for a PhD at another institution"; "research and administrative work in equal parts"; "I am studying for a PhD and engaged in research"; "in reality, teaching takes up the majority of my workload; but formally, everything is in accordance with the regulations"; "I work as a doctor and am studying for a PhD"; "research work, and I am studying for a Master's degree".

2.1.2. Highest qualification and its acquisition place (country)

As can be seen in the figure below (Fig. 3), the majority (61 percent) of the survey participants have obtained a doctorate or equivalent degree. Almost one third (29 percent) of those who took part in the survey stated that they hold a Master's degree or equivalent; a small proportion of the respondents – 5 percent – held a postdoctoral degree, and 2 percent of the survey participants held a Bachelor's degree. A portion (2 percent) of the respondents selected the option "other" and stated: "I do not have one yet".



The survey participants who had obtained their highest qualification abroad gave varying responses: seven respondents stated that they obtained their highest qualification abroad without providing further details; six participants obtained their highest qualification in the United Kingdom, five participants in Germany, four participants in Russia, three participants in Italy, and two participants each in Finland and Denmark. Other mentioned countries included Ukraine, Hungary, Sweden, the Netherlands, Japan, Spain, France, the USA, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Belarus and other European Union Member States.

2.1.3. Experience in research

An analysis of the survey data relating to the respondents' experience in research work (Fig. 5) suggests that 16 percent of the survey participants worked for up to 5 years, whilst the respondents who had been engaged in research work for 6 to 10 years, 11 to 15 years and 21 to 25 years were distributed in equal proportions (14 percent each). Thirteen percent of the respondents stated they had 16–20 years of experience. A smaller proportion of the survey participants (10 percent) indicated they had been

"How many years have you been approximately involved in research activities?" (n = 546)

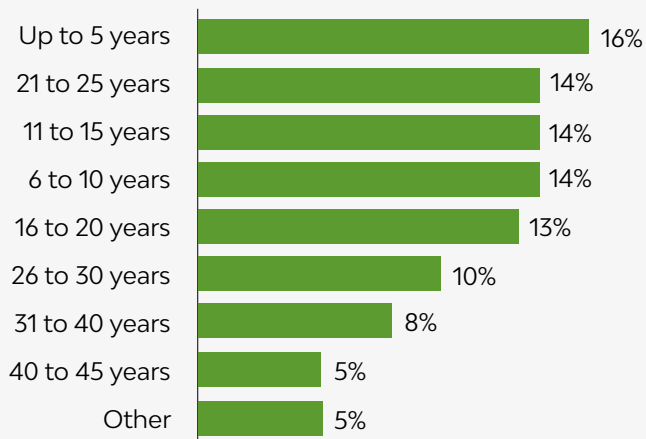


Fig. 5. Duration of respondents' experience in research (in years)

"In which field of science/art have you been working over the last three years?" (n = 553)

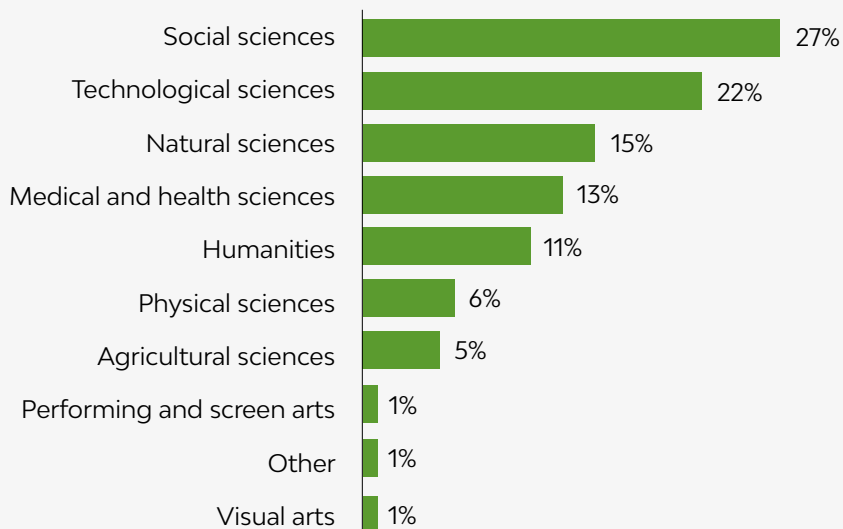


Fig. 6. Field of science/art in which respondents have worked over the past three years

working for 26–30 years, whilst 8 percent of the respondents had been working for 31–40 years. The smallest proportion of the survey participants had 40–45 years of work experience (5 percent), whilst a further 5 percent of the respondents selected the option “other” and specified: “47”; “>45”.

An analysis of the diagram (Fig. 6) shows that the majority of respondents have worked in the social sciences over the past three years (27 percent). Around one-fifth (22 percent) of the survey participants indicated technology sciences, whilst approximately one-sixth of those surveyed (15 percent) worked in the natural sciences. The remaining fields account for a small proportion: 6 percent cited physical sciences, 5 percent – agricultural sciences, and 1 percent each – arts and “other” fields.

2.2. Implementation of research and publication ethics regulations

2.2.1. Knowledge of research and publication ethics regulations

Figure 7 shows that a quarter (25 percent) of the survey participants stated that they were “not very familiar” with any of the documents listed in the questions regarding ethical guidelines and recommendations. It is worth noting that, when comparing these responses with those from previous surveys (2020, 2022 and 2024), an improving trend is evident. Another group of respondents (7 percent) were “well aware of the Recommendations on the Preparation, Adaptation and Implementation of Academic Ethics Codes by Research and Higher Education Institutions (drawn up by the Office) (in 2020, this figure was 38 percent; 32 percent in 2022; 26 percent in 2024, thus, showing a noticeable decline in “awareness”). The same proportion of respondents (7 percent) were “well aware” of the Guidelines for Ethical Review prepared by the Office (23 percent in 2022, 16 percent in 2024). Thus, a downward trend in awareness is again evident.

It should be noted that the responses to this question in the survey “Responsible Research Barometer 2026” were supplemented with two additional options: the Guidelines on the Ethical Use of Artificial Intelligence in Education and Research, prepared by the Office, were “well known” to 12 percent of the respondents, and the Guidelines for Science Communication in Line with Academic Ethics, also prepared by the Office, were known to 8 percent of the respondents.

An analysis of the survey participants’ responses regarding “good knowledge” of international guidelines shows that various recommendations prepared by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) were noted by 6 percent of the respondents (in 2020, 23 percent of those surveyed were well acquainted with them, 18 percent in 2022, and 14 percent in 2024). Thus, a decline in “knowledge” of the guidelines is evident. For the European Code of Conduct, the RE indicator stood at 5 percent “good knowledge” (as compared to 16 percent in both 2020 and 2022, and 14 percent in 2024). Consequently, the downward trend in “good knowledge” persists in this regard as well.

Thus, an analysis of the data from the four studies reveals a trend associated with a decrease in the number of individuals who are well acquainted with the RPE.

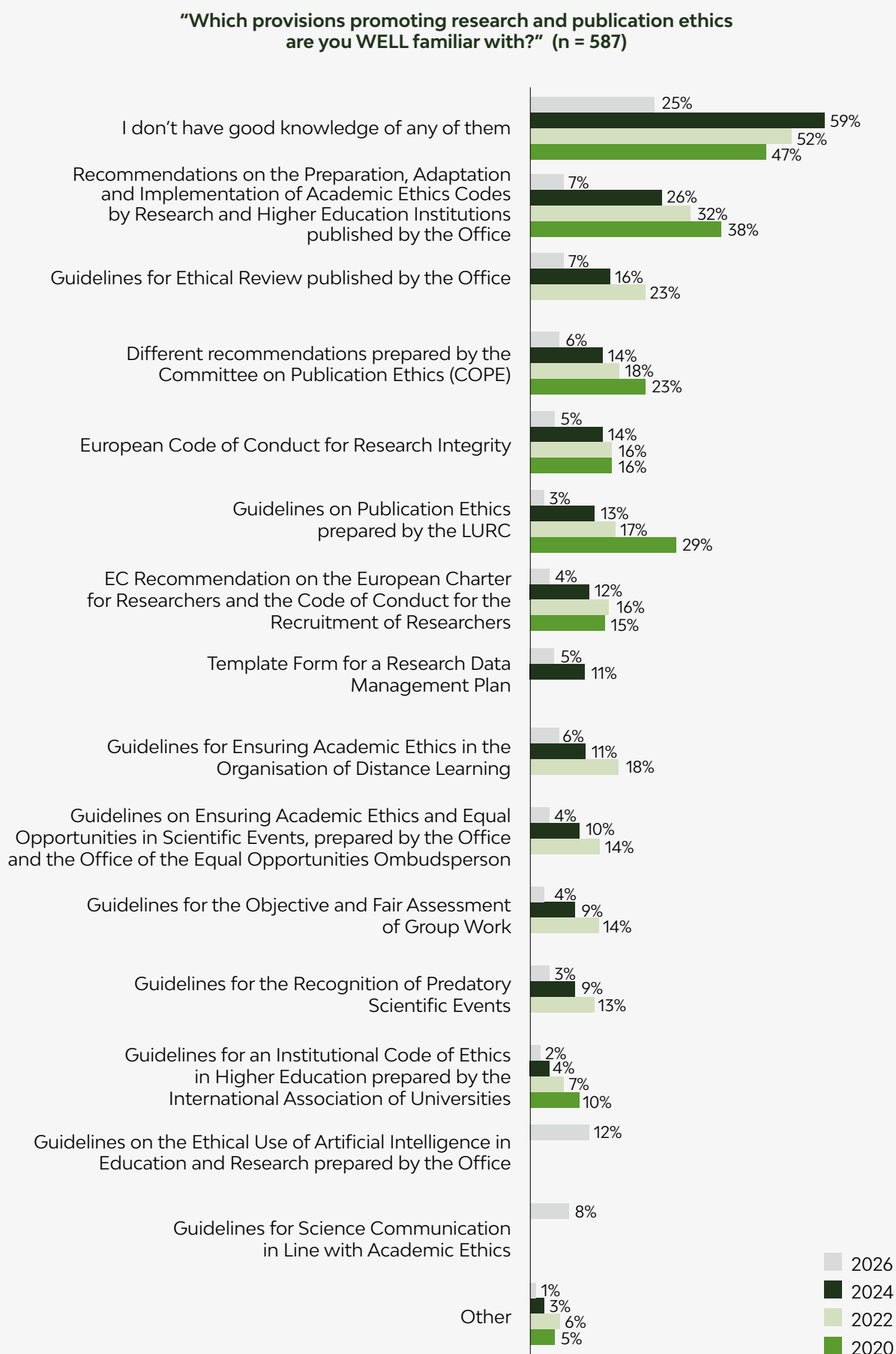


Fig. 7. Awareness of ethics regulations

2.2.2. Implementation of ethics regulations

When analysing (Fig. 8) the indicators of the implementation of ethics regulations, it should be noted that 26 percent of survey participants stated that they did not know which provisions promoting RPE were being implemented by their institutions. When comparing these survey participants' responses with the results of previous surveys (this indicator stood at 56 percent in 2020, 58 percent in 2022 and 64 percent in 2024), a decrease in the level of ignorance is evident.

An analysis of specific guidelines shows that traditional documents, such as the Recommendations on the Preparation, Adaptation and Implementation of Academic Ethics Codes by Research and Higher Education Institutions, accounted for 7 percent in 2026 (as compared with 36 percent in 2020, 28 percent in 2022, and 19 percent in 2024). A similar trend is observed in other areas, for example, regarding Guidelines for Ensuring Academic Ethics in the Organisation of Distance Learning or the Guidelines for the Objective and Fair Assessment of Group Work.

A significant feature of the 2026 survey, as already mentioned, is that new response options reflecting current contemporary issues have been included in the questionnaire. The Guidelines on the Ethical Use of Artificial Intelligence in Education and Research, prepared by the Office and assessed for the first time, achieved a 10 percent rating among respondents. For a new document, this is a relatively high figure, indicating that ethical issues surrounding artificial intelligence (hereinafter referred to as the "AI") are rapidly gaining ground in institutions and becoming an important part of academic ethics. The Office's Guidelines for Science Communication in Line with Academic Ethics, were also included for the first time and were noted by 8 percent of the respondents. Although this figure is somewhat lower, it nevertheless indicates a growing focus not only on the conduct of research, but also on its ethical presentation and the importance of science communication.

2 percent of the survey participants provided a separate opinion stating: "perhaps all of them, but we researchers follow international rules, not the ramblings of local bureaucrats"; "I think all of them"; "I think all of them; they essentially overlap"; "I try to follow moral and ethical principles"; "The bureaucratic wheels at our University turn slowly but surely :) I have no doubt that they follow all internal and external documents"; "I don't know exactly, but I think the vast majority of those listed".

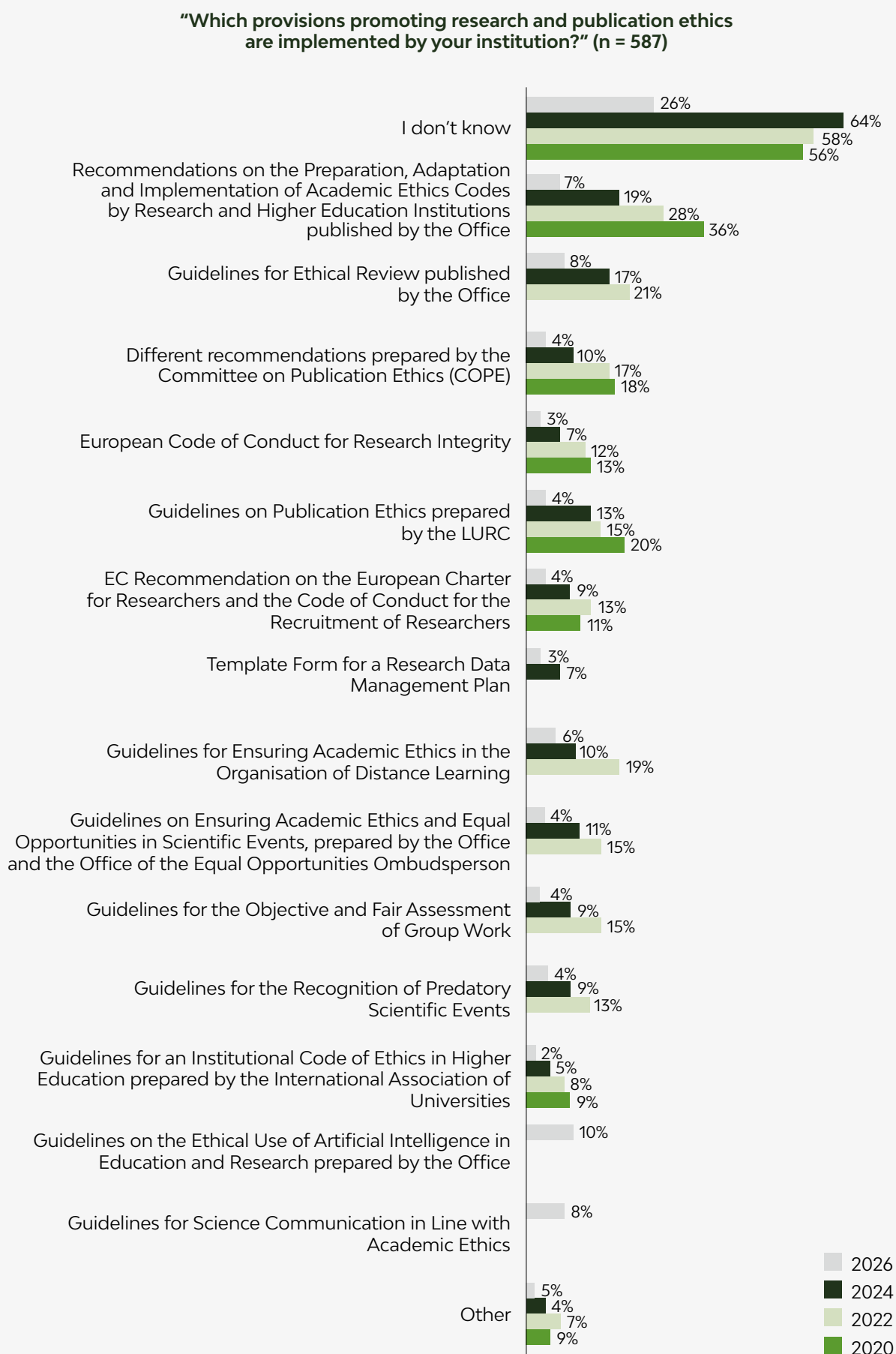


Fig. 8. Implementation of ethics regulations by institutions

2.2.3. Improving ethical knowledge

Data from 2026 (Fig. 9) show a moderate positive change in the deepening of knowledge in the field of research ethics. As compared with the results of previous years' surveys, there has been a noticeable decrease in the number of respondents stating that they have never deepened their knowledge in this field (in 2026 this figure was 22 percent, as compared with 41 percent in 2024), so it can be assumed that engagement is increasing.

The largest proportion of respondents in 2026 fell into the medium-frequency categories – “sometimes” and “rarely” (20 percent each), as well as “very rarely” (19 percent). This indicates that knowledge is most often deepened sporadically rather than consistently. The proportion of respondents who deepen their knowledge frequently or very frequently remains small: 13 percent indicated “frequently”, and 5 percent “very frequently”.

“How often have you improved your knowledge in the field of RESEARCH ETHICS in the last three years (in courses, seminars and other events or on your own)?” (n = 561)

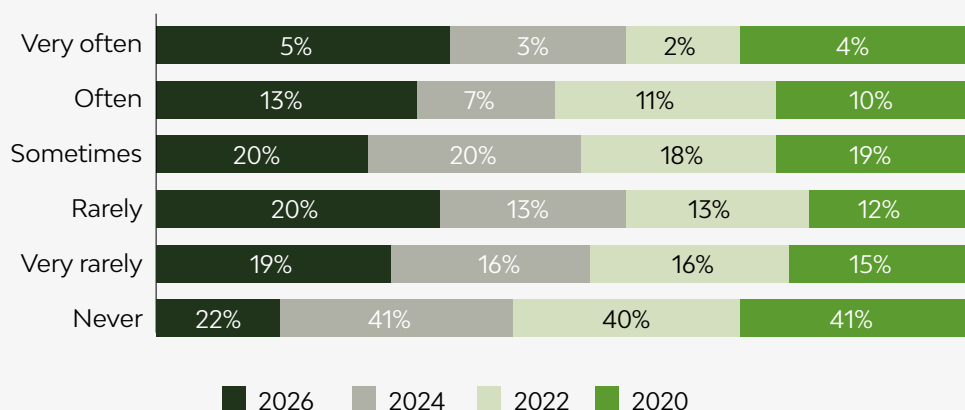


Fig. 9. Frequency of improving knowledge about research ethics (in courses, seminars, other events and independently)

Data on the deepening of knowledge in the field of publication ethics show a moderate (Fig. 10) positive change. As compared with the results of previous surveys, there has been a decrease in the number of respondents who stated that they had never deepened their knowledge in this area (2026 – 23 percent, 2024 – 44 percent), so it can be assumed that engagement is increasing.

The majority of respondents fall into the lower and medium frequency categories – “very rarely” (23 percent), “rarely” (20 percent) and “sometimes” (20 percent). This indicates that knowledge in the field of publication ethics is most often deepened sporadically rather than consistently. The proportion of respondents who deepen their knowledge frequently or very frequently remains small: “frequently” – 11 percent, and “very frequently” – 3 percent of the survey participants.

In summary, it can be assumed that the systematic and regular strengthening of competencies in publication ethics is still not widespread, although the situation is improving.

"How often have you improved your knowledge in the field of PUBLICATION ETHICS in the last three years (in courses, seminars and other events or independently)?" (n = 561)

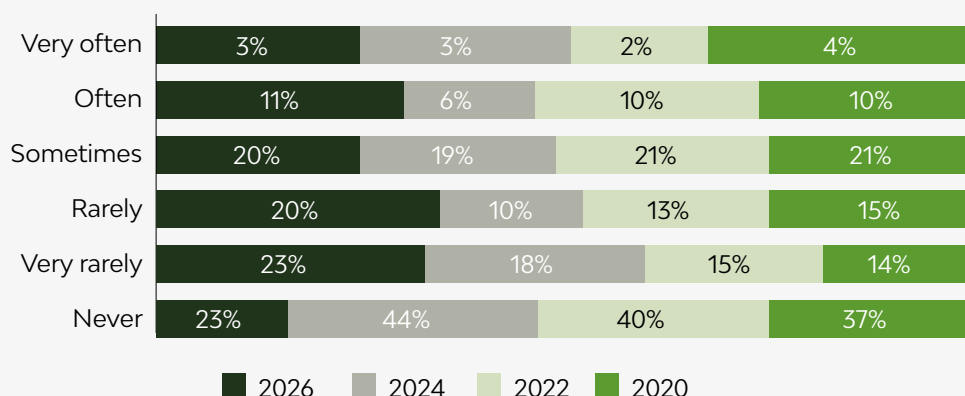


Fig. 10. Frequency of improving knowledge about publication ethics (in courses, seminars, other events and independently)

The data (Fig. 11) on methods of deepening knowledge in the field of RPE show that respondents most often deepen their knowledge by participating in events organised by their own institution (30 percent) or by searching for information independently (28 percent), therefore, the main methods remain linked to internal institutional resources and individual initiative. Compared with the results of previous studies, a significant decline in these forms is evident: participation in institutional events fell from 56 percent (in 2020 and 2022) and 32 percent (in 2024) to 30 percent (in 2026), whilst independent information-seeking has fallen from 69 percent (in 2020) and 52 percent (in 2022) to 31 percent (in 2024) and 28 percent (in 2026). Participation in virtual events has also fallen significantly – from 47 percent (in 2022) to 20 percent (in 2024–2026), likely due to reduced demand for such activities following the pandemic.

"How have you developed your knowledge in the field Research and public ethics in the last three years?" (n = 587)

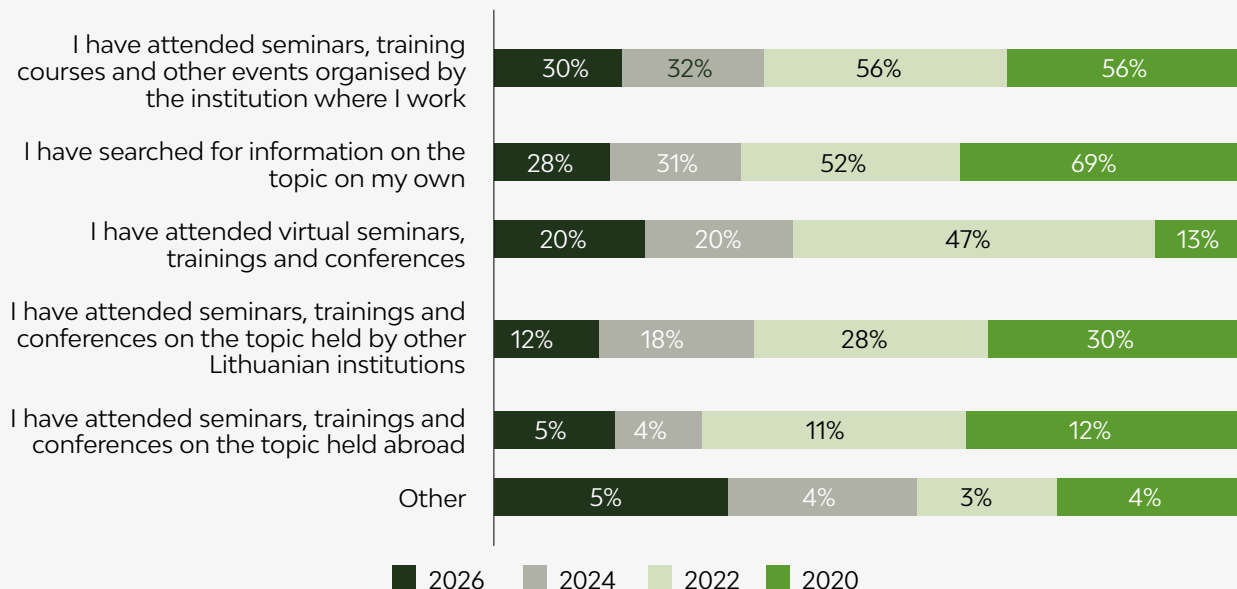


Fig. 11. Methods of improving knowledge of ethics in the last three years

The survey participants provided the following answers under the option "other": "I have never took part"; "I am not interested"; "I don't know what RPE is (the abbreviation was not defined earlier)"; "I don't remember"; "I try to listen to my conscience"; "not at all".

2.2.4. Training on research and publication ethics attended by respondents

In the survey “Responsible Research Barometer 2026”, the respondents were asked two open-ended questions:

- “Which topics have you deepened your knowledge on in the field of RESEARCH ETHICS in the last three years?” (see Table 1);
- “Which topics have you deepened your knowledge on in the field of PUBLICATION ETHICS in the last three years?” (see Table 2).

When analysing the responses to the open-ended questions, a content analysis was carried out to identify categories and subcategories.

Table 1. Grouping of answers to the question “Which topics have you deepened your knowledge on in the field of research ethics in the last three years?” (n = 426)²

Category	Subcategory	Illustrative examples
AI ethics (126)	Use of AI in research (82)	Use of AI in research; intellectual property, use of artificial intelligence, research ethics; issues regarding the use of AI, compliance with research ethics, etc.
	AI ethics issues (44)	Ethics of the application of artificial intelligence in science; use of AI in research design, data analysis and text preparation processes; ethics of artificial intelligence
Ethics of publication and academic integrity (97)	Authorship and co-authorship (21)	Authorship criteria, co-authorship responsibilities, authorship issues, copyrights
	Plagiarism (26)	Plagiarism, self-plagiarism prevention, plagiarism, citation, plagiarism
	Publication ethics (50)	Integrity in research and publishing; publication ethics; commissioning and publishing research
Data protection and working with the survey participants (88)	GDPR and other data (52)	Processing of personal data in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR); protection of personal data; data protection
	Informed consent (36)	Principles of informed consent; working with the survey participants; protection of vulnerable groups
Ethics of open science and data management (41)	Open science (12)	Ethics of open science; open access to publications; open science
	Data management (29)	Storage, sharing and reuse of the survey data; preparation of the data plan; data management
General principles of research ethics (52)	Research ethics (52)	Research ethics; ethical issues for researchers; ethics
Training and institutional practice (34)	Training (18)	Capacity building for researchers; training; seminars
	Institutional practice (16)	Institutional guidelines; university ethics; practices
Non-specific and unspecified responses (37)	Non-specific and unspecified responses (37)	I don't remember; I didn't look into it; I haven't heard

² The number of the respondents and the number of comments may differ, as some comments have been classified into two or more relevant subcategories.

The largest proportion of responses relates to the ethics of the use of AI (126). This category is dominated by aspects of the use of AI in research (82), where the use of AI for data analysis, text generation and research processes is highlighted, whilst raising issues of intellectual property, transparency and ethics. A significant proportion of responses also relate to general AI ethical issues (44), highlighting the role of AI in research and the need to ensure its responsible use.

The second most frequent category is the ethics of publication and academic integrity (97). This highlights aspects of publication ethics (50) related to the integrity in reporting the survey results. Plagiarism (26) and its prevention are also discussed, as are issues of authorship and co-authorship (21), emphasising the sharing of responsibility and copyrights.

The ethics of data protection and working with the survey participants (88) reveal the respondents' focus on the processing of personal data in accordance with the requirements of the GDPR (52) and the importance of informed consent (36), particularly when working with vulnerable groups.

A smaller but significant proportion of responses relate to the ethics of open science and data management (41). The respondents mention both open science principles (12), such as access to publications, and data management issues (29), covering data storage, sharing and reuse.

The general principles of research ethics (52) are also frequently mentioned, emphasising the ethical conduct of research and the importance of ethics in research activity.

A slightly smaller number of responses fell into the category "Training and institutional practices" (34), in which the respondents highlighted the importance of both training (18) and institutional guidelines and practices (16) in fostering an ethical research culture.

Finally, some responses were assigned to the category "Non-specific and/or vague responses" (37), which included superficial or unclear statements by respondents (e.g., "I don't remember", "I haven't looked into it").

Table 2. Grouping of answers to the question "Which topics have you deepened your knowledge on in the field of publication ethics in the last three years?" (n = 416)

Category	Subcategory	Illustrative examples
Ethics of publication and academic integrity (142)	Publication ethics (89)	<i>Publication ethics; research publication; publication processes</i>
	Plagiarism and academic integrity (53)	<i>Plagiarism; academic integrity; citation rules</i>
AI ethics (77)	Application and use of AI (52)	<i>Use of AI; application of artificial intelligence; use of AI in research</i>
	AI ethical issues (25)	<i>Ethics of artificial intelligence; ethical aspects of AI; issues of AI accountability</i>
Data protection and work with the survey participants (20)	Data protection/ GDPR (12)	<i>Data protection; GDPR; processing of personal data</i>
	Work with the survey participants (8)	<i>Work with respondents; protection of respondents; ethical requirements in surveys</i>
Ethics of open science (8)	Open science (8)	<i>Open science; open sciences; open access</i>
General ethical issues (11)	Ethical issues (11)	<i>Ethics; research ethics; ethical principles</i>
Non-specific and unspecified responses (211)	Non-specific and unspecified responses (211)	<i>I don't remember; I didn't look into it; I haven't heard</i>

An analysis of the table shows that the category of publication and academic integrity ethics (142), with the main focus on publication ethics (89), covering research publication processes, and issues of plagiarism and academic integrity (53), relating to citation rules and ethical conduct.

AI ethics is in the second place (77). This includes the application of AI in research (52) and general AI ethical issues (25) related to responsibility and ethical aspects.

Less frequently mentioned topics include data protection and working with research participants (20) (GDPR, protection of respondents), open science ethics (8) (open access) and general ethical issues (11).

There was also a significant proportion of unspecified responses (211), indicating that some respondents did not name specific topics.

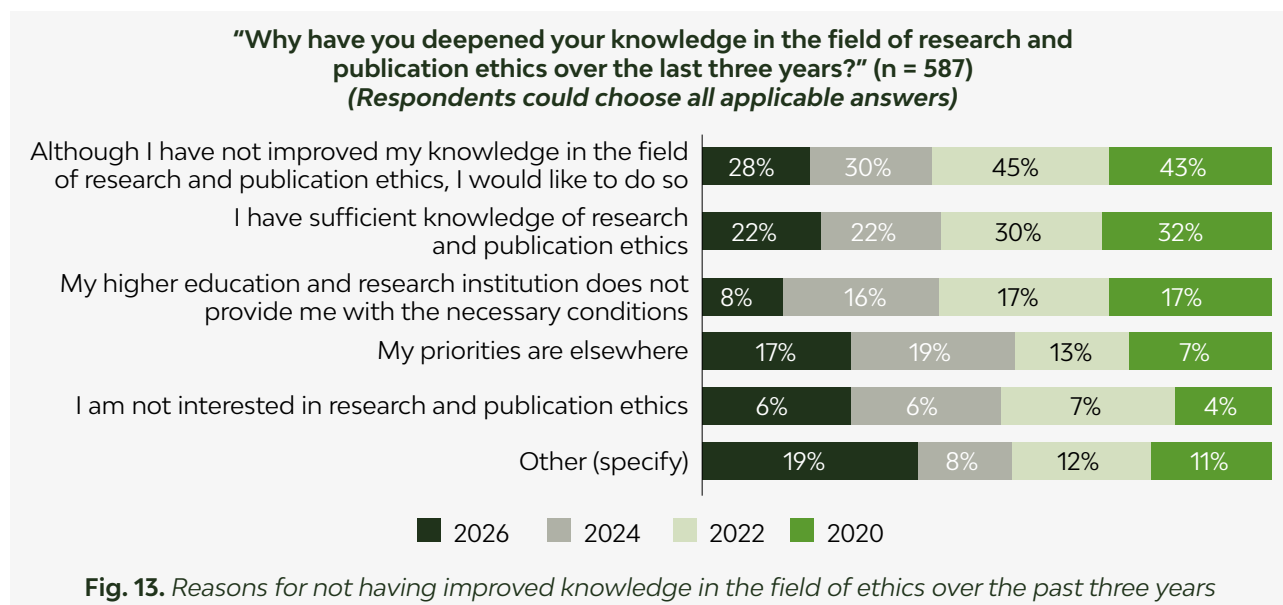
2.2.5. Reasons for respondents choosing (refusing) to improve their knowledge in the field of ethics

The largest proportion of respondents (29 percent) stated that they had improved their knowledge because every researcher must have a thorough understanding of this field. When comparing the above figure with the results of previous years' surveys, a decline is evident (34 percent in 2024, 65 percent in both 2022 and 2020), indicating a diminishing importance of this motivation. The second most frequently cited reason is a perceived lack of personal knowledge (20 percent), though a decline is also noted here as compared to 2024 (25 percent). Responsibility based on functions is also mentioned less frequently – in 2026 it stood at 7 percent, as compared to 10 percent in 2024 and 22 percent in 2022. Some external factors remain less significant but fairly stable. The increase in institutional attention in 2026 stands at 14 percent. (In 2024 it was 17 percent, but significantly lower than in 2020, when it stood at 31 percent). Under the response "other", respondents indicated: "we must be honest with ourselves and accountable to society"; "why is that necessary?"; "I haven't looked into it"; "I don't know what RPE is", etc. (Fig. 12). It can be assumed that there is a noticeable trend of a decline in the reasons for deepening knowledge in the field of ethics over the last three years – most reasons are weakening, particularly those related to inner duty or professional responsibility. As compared with the results of previous surveys, the overall intensity of the reasons for improving knowledge has also decreased.



In response to the question :Why have you not improved your knowledge in the field of RPE over the last three years?", 30 percent of the respondents indicated that they would like to do so, although they have not yet deepened their knowledge (Fig. 13). A smaller proportion (22 percent, the same as in 2024) of the survey participants stated that they have sufficient knowledge in the field of RPE. 6 percent of those surveyed noted that they were not interested in research and publication ethics (the same proportion as in 2024).

Thus, when analysing trends over the years, it should be noted that they remain the same or are decreasing.



Under the option "other", respondents stated: "I looked for information myself, but I don't have enough information. I think that <...> is not actually against such training, it's just not on their list of priority activities and such training is not carried out. However, I do not support the idea that <...> is against such training. I am certainly not suggesting that"; "we had a seminar at the college"; "low level in this area in Lithuania"; "I don't know what RPE is"; "I don't have the time or can't make it because it clashes with lectures/seminars"; "no publication reached me that I could read and that sounded interesting"; "I want to spend my time analysing scientific problems, not dry RPE excerpts. I know the basic RPE criteria, but I need to deepen my knowledge in ways other than the dry, uninspiring, formulaic, "just to tick the box" training".

2.3. Unethical behaviour in conducting and publishing research

2.3.1. Unethical conduct of research

When the survey participants were asked how often they had observed unethical research practices at their institutions over the past three years (Fig. 14), it became clear that the response "never" was by far the most common, accounting for the largest proportion across all categories. Particularly high figures are seen in cases of data collection without permission (74 percent), data fabrication (69 percent), data falsification (68 percent) and data omission (61 percent). This indicates that, in the respondents' assessment, these unethical practices almost never occur.

"How often have you noticed UNETHICAL RESEARCH being carried out in the academic community (among scientists, researchers and PhD students) at your institution in the last three years?"

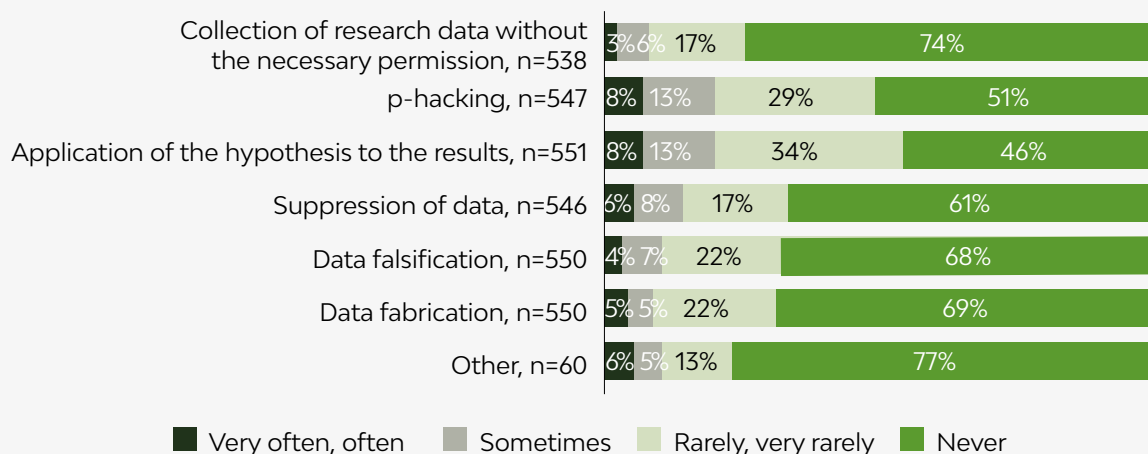


Fig. 14. *Unethical conduct of research within the academic community of one's own institution³*

Among the more frequently (though still relatively rarely) observed violations, p-hacking and the tailoring of hypotheses to fit the results stand out – in both cases, 8 percent of respondents indicated that this occurs frequently or very frequently. These are the highest figures on this scale. Cases of data omission (6 percent) and data fabrication (5 percent) also occur very frequently and frequently. The lowest figures in the "very often/often" category are recorded for data falsification (4 percent) and data fabrication (5 percent), i.e. the most serious violations are almost never perceived as frequent.

2.3.2. Unethical publication of research results

An analysis of the figure (Fig. 15) shows that the response "never" predominates across all categories, accounting for the largest share of responses in each case. The highest proportions of this response were recorded for simultaneous submission of the same work (78%), verbatim plagiarism (71 percent), translation plagiarism (68 percent), multimedia plagiarism (66 percent), and patchwork plagiarism (65 percent), which indicates that, in the respondents' view, these forms of academic misconduct occur almost never.

The highest figures in the "often/very often" category are relatively low, but the breakdown of the survey into several publications (7 percent), as well as the omission of references (6 percent) and hidden duplication and self-plagiarism (5 percent each), stand out.

In the "Rarely/very rarely" category, the highest figures were recorded for omitting citations (42 percent), splitting a study across several publications and self-plagiarism (38 percent each), as well as hidden duplication (32 percent), indicating that these practices occur more frequently than others, although they are still not common.

The lowest figures in the "often/very often" category are observed in cases of simultaneous submission and template plagiarism (2 percent each), indicating that these occur extremely rarely

³ *Data falsification – the unjustified manipulation of research data to create a misleading impression.
Suppression of data – the falsification of genuine data by reducing the dataset or omitting data that does not support the desired conclusions or results.
Data fabrication – inventing data and presenting it as genuine.*

“How often have you noticed UNETHICAL PUBLICATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS in your institution’s academic community (among scientists, researchers and PhD students) in the last three years?”

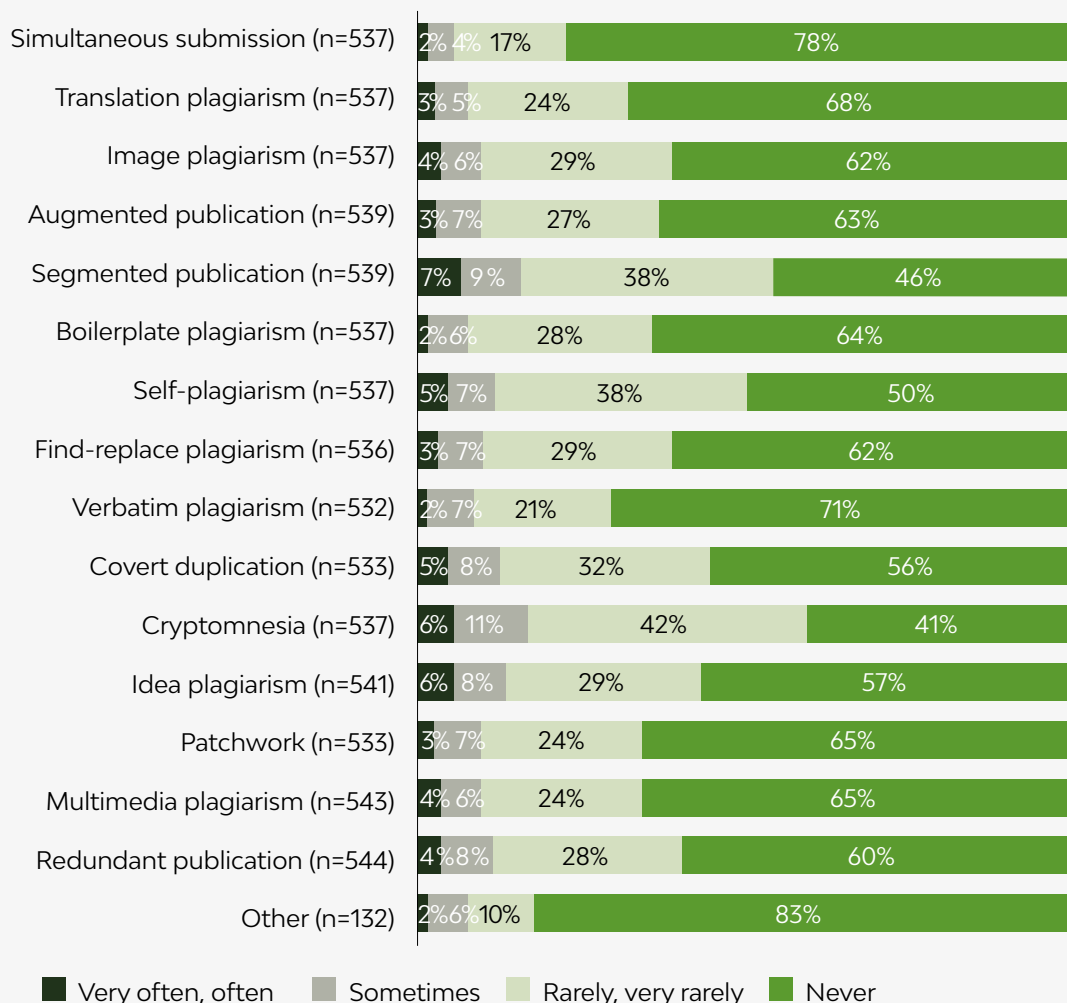


Fig. 15. Unethical publication of research results within one’s own institution’s academic community⁴

⁴ Multimedia plagiarism – the use of multimedia without indicating its source.

Covert duplication – failure to refer to previous publications by the same author on the same topic.

Redundant publication – a work (or its main sections) that is published more than once (in the same or other languages) without proper acknowledgement of other authors’ sources, previous publications or explanations on the same topic, and the same (or substantially the same) data, that appear in more than one scientific publication without proper references to their previous publications on the same topic and explanations, especially if this is done in order to prevent reviewers or readers from understanding that most or all of the results of the research have been published before.

Augmented publication: 1. A previously presented or published work, supplemented with data and/or information, which has been re-named, and which states a changed research aim and/or recalculates research results. 2. A previously presented or published work, supplemented with data and/or information, with a changed title and a changed research aim and/or recalculated results, without reference to a previously published work and avoiding to produce a new article.

Find-replace plagiarism – improper paraphrasing by replacing single words with synonyms.

Boilerplate plagiarism – plagiarism using a template of the introduction, conclusion or language of another source, with minimal or no changes, and without reference to the original source.

Patchwork is a derivative written article consisting of specified or unspecified passages from several different sources.

When the study participants were asked to share their candid opinions in response to this question, it should be noted that these were varied (Table 3).

Table 3. Responses to the question ‘How often have you observed unethical publication of research results within your institution’s academic community (among scientists, researchers and PhD students)?’ (n = 46)

Category	Subcategory	Illustrative examples
Ethics of publication and academic integrity (11)	Authorship and co-authorship (5)	<i>Failure to acknowledge authorship, even though the author’s contribution meets the criteria. Attribution of honorary authorship where there is no genuine contribution</i>
	Quality of publication/errors (3)	<i>Errors in calculations – encountered whilst reading published articles</i>
	Manipulation of data presentation (3)	<i>I have not observed any unethical behaviour based on facts. However, phrases such as ‘data can always be presented in a way that suits the authors’ sometimes ‘float around’ in conversations in the form of jokes. But these are not specific cases</i>
Ethical issues related to AI ethics (11)	Use of AI (6)	<i>Nothing changes – researchers do the work, administrators and managers add their names to the article</i>
	Ethical aspects of AI (5)	<i>The form isn’t working: the English version is the same as the Lithuanian version. This is unethical because it’s discriminatory</i>
Data protection and working with the survey	Data use (4)	<i>Use of data collected by others without obtaining permission from colleagues and the head of the department; manipulation of decisions regarding who may use the collected data and when.</i>
General ethical issues (4)	Ethical violations (2)	<i>There was a case of plagiarism at the institution, but the ethics committees investigated the matter and took transparent measures to inform the academic community about the incident</i>
	Ethical reflection / education (2)	<i>I discuss bioethics with students because this topic is part of the curriculum of the subject I teach</i>
Issues in open science / research practice (2)	Problems in research practice (2)	<i>I have encountered situations where students admit that, out of desperation, whilst conducting quantitative research, they have to collect a calculated sample size in order to defend their work, fearing a lower mark due to an insufficient sample size, resulting in contaminated data, by asking relatives acquaintances who have absolutely no connection to the study population</i>
Non-specific and unspecified responses (17)	Non-specific and unspecified responses (17)	<i>I have not noticed unethical behaviour.</i>

An analysis of the responses presented in the table shows that the dominant themes are the ethics of publication and academic integrity (11) and ethical issues related to AI ethics (11). Within the first category, issues of authorship and co-authorship stand out (5), with an emphasis on problems of inappropriate attribution of authorship and failure to acknowledge contributions. Also mentioned are topics of publication quality and errors (3) and data presentation (3), related to potential manipulation or inaccuracies.

In the AI ethics category, the most frequently highlighted issues are the use of AI (6), particularly its application in academic activities, and ethical aspects (5) related to transparency and accountability when applying these technologies.

Less frequently mentioned are the topics of data protection and working with research participants (4), which highlight cases of inappropriate data use, and general ethical issues (4), covering both specific violations and ethical reflection and education.

The fewest responses were attributed to questions regarding open science/research practices (2), which are associated with inappropriate research practices.

The largest proportion consists of non-specific responses (17), indicating that a significant number of respondents did not provide specific examples.

2.3.3. Unethical authorship

When analysing the survey participants' responses (Fig. 16) regarding unethical authorship within their institution's academic community, it is worth noting that the response "never" stands out the most, accounting for the largest proportion across all categories. Particularly high figures are seen in cases of fictitious authorship (around 93 percent), coercive authorship (88 percent), and ghost authorship (79 percent), which indicates that, in the respondents' assessment, these unethical practices are almost non-existent.

Among the more frequently observed (though still not dominant) cases, gifted authorship stands out, with "often / very often" reaching 18 percent in this instance, as well as exchange-based authorship and undeserved co-authorship (13 percent each). This indicates that these practices occur more frequently than others.

"How often have you noticed UNETHICAL AUTHORSHIP in your institution's academic community (among scientists, researchers and PhD students) in the last three years?"

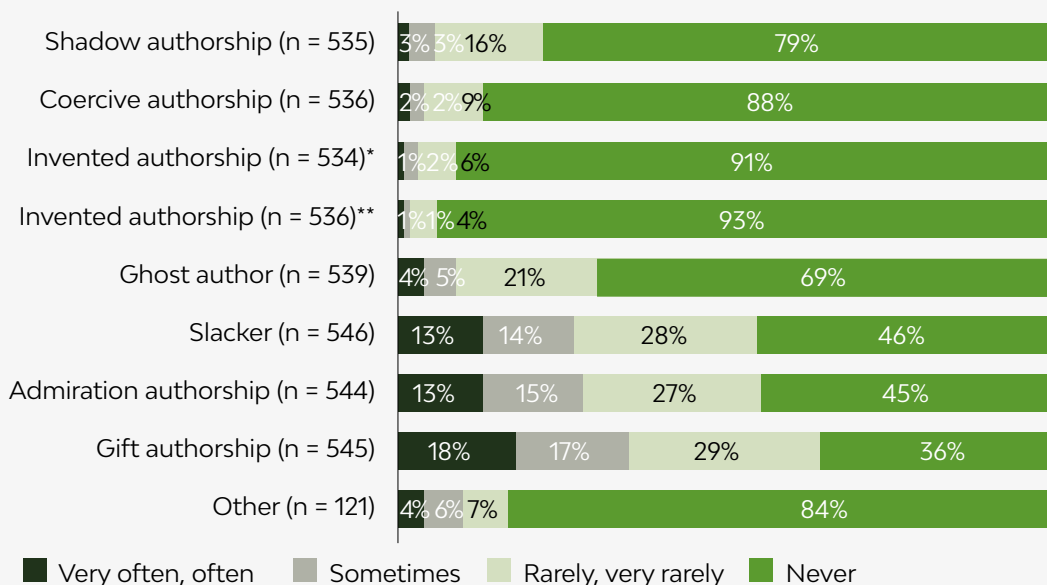


Fig. 16. Unethical authorship within one's own institution's academic community⁵

⁵ Gift authorship – the inclusion as a co-author of a person who has contributed little or nothing to the creation of a work.
 Admiration authorship – the practice of two or more researchers agreeing to include each other's names in their publications, even though one of them has made little or no contribution, in order to gain an unfair advantage.
 Slacker is a person who has contributed little or nothing to the work of the group and/or forces other members of the group to do more than their fair share.
 Ghost author – a writer (person) who helps to create a work that gives another person an unfair advantage.
 Shadow authorship – the practice of using a credited contributor who is not listed among the authors who wrote or prepared the text for publication.
 Coercion authorship – coerced rather than voluntarily granted authorship.
 Invented authorship – inclusion of a non-existent person into co-authors without consent.
 Invented authorship – inclusion of a stranger into co-authors without consent.*

The survey participants provided the following responses under the option “other”: “Our research is largely individual and we do not have co-authors. And if we do have them, they contribute in one way or another. I have heard of this, though I have never encountered it myself, that when a study is written with a very prominent and respected researcher, he or she is awarded higher marks, even though they did not actually contribute to the research carried out. This even happens during the evaluation process, when, for example, a department head might say publicly that “such a prominent researcher really does need to be awarded more points or given a higher weighting”. Sometimes individuals are included in an organising committee, for example for international conferences, even though they contribute nothing to the organisation; the work is carried out free of charge by volunteer PhD students, whilst all the credit goes to the organising committee.” “Pressure from the university management to submit publications only to high-ranking journals in a single field, even though the university does not fully cover the publication costs when such journals charge an open-access fee. The ‘publish or perish’ culture leaves no time for in-depth research, as the focus is on rankings”; “The exclusion or removal of a hard-working author on personal grounds”; “ghost authorship, where a contributor who has made a significant contribution but is not listed among the authors is used; this includes an author who planned experiments, carried them out, analysed data and presented conclusions, or created products, tools and methodologies”.

2.4. Experiences of unethical behaviour

2.4.1. Protection of own interests

As shown in the diagram (Fig. 17), 27 percent of the survey participants indicated that they had encountered dishonest behaviour by another researcher in the past three years. These results are similar to those of previous surveys, although a slight decrease is noticeable.

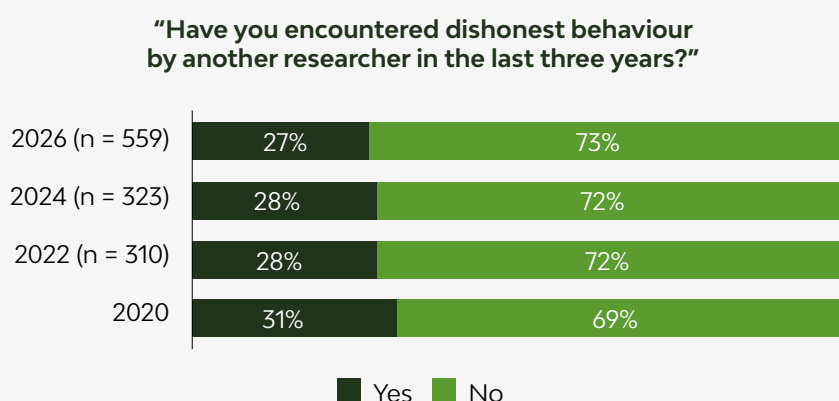
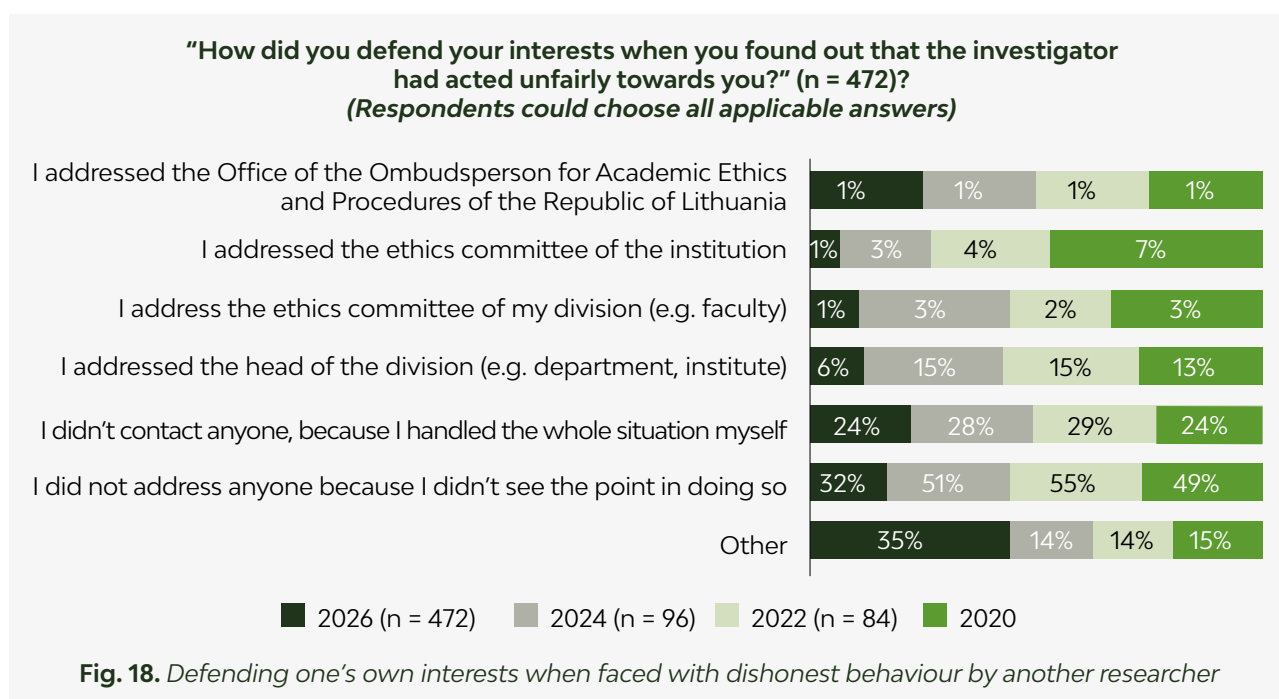


Fig. 17. Encountering dishonest behaviour by another researcher over the past three years

When asked how study participants defended their interests upon learning that a researcher had acted dishonestly towards them, it became clear that respondents’ answers to this question varied (Fig. 18).



The most striking extremes are seen among responses relating to not reporting instances of dishonest behaviour by another researcher. The largest proportion of respondents chose the answer “I did not report it to anyone because I saw no point in doing so” – 32 percent. (51 percent in 2024, 55 percent in 2022 and 49 percent in 2020, respectively). It can be assumed that there is a noticeable downward trend, which indicates a positive change.

High figures are also recorded for the response “I resolved the situation by myself” – 24 percent (28 percent in 2024, 29 percent in 2022 and 24 percent in 2020, respectively).

As regards contacting the Office of the Ombudsperson for Academic Ethics and Procedures, the figure remains stable – at 1 percent in all the years analysed.

The survey participants also provided open-ended responses (Table 4).

Table 4. Grouping of responses to the question “What happened after you reported another researcher's dishonest behaviour towards you?” (n = 256)

Category	Subcategory	Illustrative examples
Ethics of publication and academic integrity (10)	Authorship issues (7)	Nothing has changed; authorship of publications was attributed to a department head who did not participate directly in the research
	Conflicts over authorship (3)	My supervisor was very angry with me for making such a request. The situation remained unchanged: the person who had not contributed to the research was still included, whilst I incurred my supervisor's displeasure for an indefinite period
AI/systemic ethical violations (3)	Bullying/power relations (3)	I was sidelined
Institutional ethics and workplace environment issues (6)	Psychological pressure/conflicts (4)	I found myself in a long-running conflict during which I was humiliated. I can say quite frankly that I would very much like an audit <...>
	Inequality/unfair behaviour (2)	Why raise your salary if you receive a doctoral student's scholarship
Non-specific and unspecified responses (198)	Non-specific and unspecified responses (198)	I have no experience; I have not had such an incident; I did not report it because there was nowhere to do so within the institution

An analysis of the table shows that, among the specific categories, the most frequently mentioned issues relate to publication and academic integrity (7), particularly concerning authorship (7) and conflicts over authorship (3). The responses reflect situations where authorship is attributed incorrectly or conflicts remain unresolved.

Institutional ethical issues and problems in the working environment are also highlighted (6), with psychological pressure and conflicts (4) and issues of inequality or unfair treatment (2) being the most prevalent. This suggests that reports of unethical behaviour are sometimes linked to stress or negative consequences in the working environment.

Less frequently mentioned are violations of DI or systemic ethics (3), covering cases of discrimination or injustice (2) and issues of power relations (1).

The largest proportion consists of unspecified and/or non-specific responses (198), indicating that the majority of respondents did not provide clear answers, possibly because they had no such experience.

2.4.2. Threat-causing factors

Respondents were asked for their views on the factors which, in their opinion, pose a threat to the responsible conduct of research and the publication of results (Fig. 19).

“Which factors in your opinion threaten RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH CONDUCT AND PUBLICATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS in the academic community of your institution?”



Fig. 19. Threats to responsible conduct of research and to publication of research results

When examining the threats to the responsible conduct of research and the publication of its results, it should be noted that the most pronounced extremes are associated with pressure-related factors. The highest score is recorded for the statement “Pressure to publish more papers within a shorter timeframe” – 58 percent of respondents agree with this. A similarly high figure is observed in the case of pressure to secure funding (45 percent). This indicates that external demands and competition for resources are considered the most significant threats.

More than a half (58 percent) of respondents disagree that the institution creates conditions conducive to negligent research, whilst 51 percent of survey participants disagree with the statement that the consequences of ethical violations are insignificant. This indicates that these potential systemic problems are not widely recognised as significant threats.

Average ratings are typical of factors related to a lack of information and clarity: unclear data ownership rights (31 percent of respondents agree), limited dissemination of information on responsible research conduct (29 percent), and pressure to publish only positive results (30 percent). These factors are considered relevant, but less pronounced than direct pressure regarding productivity.

Survey participants also provided open-ended responses (Table 5).

Table 5. Responses to the question “Which factors in your opinion threaten responsible research conduct and publication of research results in the academic community of your institution?” (n = 44)

Category	Subcategory	Illustrative examples
Violations of academic ethics and publication practices (11)	Authorship issues (7)	<i>There are cases where co-authors who have only performed technical work and have not independently generated new ideas claim ownership of the idea; the outdated notion that master’s and doctoral students must write articles with their supervisors poses a threat</i>
	Publication pressure/ quantitative assessment (4)	<i>Unreasonable requirements regarding the volume of academic publications; linking the value and quality of research to the publication of results in highly ranked academic journals</i>
Institutional and systemic ethical issues (11)	Pressure and the evaluation system (11)	<i>Even ordinary lecturers, let alone professors, are forced to churn out articles like bread rolls, chasing quartiles and quantity rather than quality</i>
Research process and data ethics (2)	Ownership of data (1)	<i>It is unclear: is a researcher who has carried out a measurement but not analysed its results the owner of that result and the article?</i>
	Research integrity / reality (1)	<i>Pressure and unreasonable demands given the resources allocated (time, funding, etc.)</i>
General ethical assessments (2)	Systemic criticism (2)	<i>A multitude of interests – researchers, supervisors, reviewers, publishers, ethics watchdogs... – which compromises the quality of scientific work</i>
Dilemmas of open science and accessibility (1)	Issues of openness and control (1)	<i>The same information is available to everyone online; is this normal and fair?</i>
Non-specific and unspecified responses (16)	Non-specific and unspecified responses (16)	<i>I cannot answer because there was no such cases</i>

An analysis of the table shows that the dominant themes relate to breaches of academic ethics and publishing practices (11) as well as institutional and systemic ethical issues (11). In the first category, authorship issues stand out (7), where the focus is on incorrect attribution of authorship, the inclusion of supervisors without a real contribution, and the associated pressure. Publication pressure and

quantitative evaluation (4), linked to high publication requirements and a focus on quantity rather than quality are also significant.

The category of institutional and systemic problems is dominated by pressure and the evaluation system (11), revealing the academic environment's focus on productivity.

Other themes are mentioned sporadically. Research process and data ethics (2) cover issues of data ownership and research integrity, revealing an unclear division of responsibility and challenges in work organisation. General ethical assessments (2) most often manifest as systemic criticism directed at the functioning of the entire scientific ecosystem. Dilemmas of open science and accessibility (1) reflect isolated considerations regarding the accessibility and transparency of information.

A significant proportion consists of unspecified and/or vague responses (16), indicating that some respondents were unable to name specific threats.

CONCLUSIONS

Overview of socio-demographic characteristics. The majority of participants in this survey were respondents working at public universities who held a doctoral degree or equivalent degree, having obtained their highest qualification in Lithuania. The respondents' experience in research activities was fairly evenly distributed, although the majority consisted of those with less research experience. In terms of academic disciplines, representatives of the social sciences and technology were the most active participants in the survey.

Knowledge and implementation of research and publication ethics regulations. The survey results revealed that some respondents still lack sufficient knowledge of research and publication ethics documents; however, compared to previous studies, positive trends in awareness and recognition of applicable guidelines are evident. The guidelines on the ethical use of AI and science communication, assessed for the first time, received relatively greater attention from respondents, whilst uncertainty regarding the ethical provisions applied within institutions is decreasing.

Improving knowledge in the field of research and publication ethics. According to the survey data, there is a noticeable increase in respondents' focus on deepening their knowledge of research and publication ethics. Fewer and fewer respondents state that they have never taken an interest in these topics, but in most cases, deepening their knowledge remains sporadic. Most often, respondents deepen their knowledge by participating in events organised by institutions and by seeking information independently. An analysis of open-ended responses revealed that the greatest attention is paid to research integrity, issues of publication and academic integrity, and data protection. Respondents emphasised that they consider ethical awareness to be an essential competence for every researcher.

Unethical conduct of research. The survey results showed that respondents regard the most serious forms of research ethics violations within their institutions as rare. It was most frequently noted that practices such as data fabrication, falsification or data collection without permission go unnoticed.

Unethical publication of research results. An analysis of data on the unethical publication of research results revealed that respondents regard the majority of dishonest publishing practices as rare. Cases of plagiarism and simultaneous submission of manuscripts were the least frequently observed, but practices related to splitting research into several publications, failure to provide references, hidden duplication or self-plagiarism were mentioned more often.

Experiences of unethical behaviour. Some respondents indicated that they had encountered unethical behaviour by other researchers over the past three years, but the extent of such experiences has decreased slightly compared to previous studies. When faced with dishonest behaviour, respondents most often did not report it to the authorities, as they did not believe this would be effective, although this trend is also declining. Some respondents resolved the issues independently, whilst few turned to official bodies. An analysis of the open-ended responses showed that the most common problems experienced were related to issues of authorship, psychological pressure, power relations and conflict situations within institutions.

Reasons of unethical behaviour. The survey results revealed that the causes of unethical behaviour are most often linked to a lack of trust in problem-solving mechanisms and doubts about the

possibility of bringing about real change. Respondents most often resolved any problems that arose themselves or did not seek help at all.

The analysis of the survey results presented here was carried out without additional interpretations that could have a negative impact on the reliability of the study. We hope that these findings will encourage the academic community to engage more actively in discussions and, through joint efforts, seek solutions that may strengthen understanding of and adherence to the principles of academic ethics in the future.

The Office is open to suggestions regarding both this and future research, and invites you to actively participate in organised events and to contact us regarding training for the academic community. It encourages you to address ethical issues openly and boldly.

Thank you for reading!

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AND PROCEDURES**
OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA

The survey report can be accessed on the Office's website at
<https://etikostarnyba.lt/en/main/> (see *Analytical studies*)

Radzevičienė, L. (2026). Responsible Research Barometer 2026. Vilnius:
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