

#NSMNSS

New social media, new social science?

Social Media, Social Science & Research Ethics

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National Centre for
Research Methods

need to build on good foundations so we are producing robust research. We need a stronger dialogue on
#nsmnss **blogspot** One of the issues is about data ownership. What happens if data is produced by companies? Who ow
#nsmnss **netnography** Yes. How? Can study globally with diverse participants and little money! #NSMNSS **twitter** use
media analysis for a gov study and it added a new dimension, wider contextual elements of programme evaluated #nsmnss
book new social media is sensitive in terms of public perceptions so some bodies may not want to appear to work in that
#nsmnss **linkedin** @NSMNSS Absolutely! My 'participants' are also 'friends' & 'followers' - but the more I open up onlin
ater the return. #NSMNSS **BIG DATA** People are playing catch up with ethics in social media guidelines. where to look?
mplement? #nsmnss **google** Tweets that are inherently limited to 140 characters transform language and create a distinc
' #nsmnss I think your earlier question re: going offline to understand online is impnt & speaks to validity of interpretation. #ns



Kandy Woodfield

Head of Learning & Development
NatCen Social Research
NSMNSS Network leader



Janet Salmons, Ph.D. **Network member**

Capella University Core Faculty,
Researcher, Writer & Consultant
through Vision2Lead. Author,
Online Interviews in Real Time
and *Cases in Online Interview*
Research.

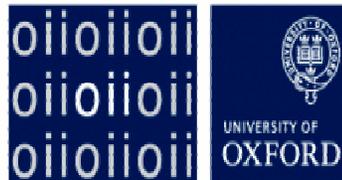


New Social Media, New Social Science - Blurring the boundaries?

- Network of methodological innovation
- Funded by NCRM
- May 2012-May 2013

Innovation
Collaboration
Inspiration
Fresh thinking

NatCen
Social Research that works for society

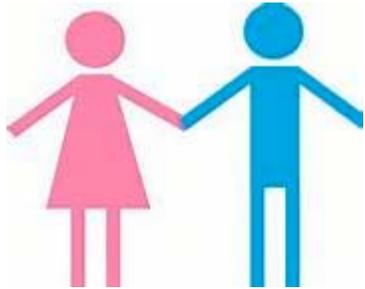


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Aims of the network

Innovation
Collaboration
Inspiration
Fresh thinking

- On & off line community of practice
- Forge links between academics, practitioners & across disciplines
- Catalyse debate - address challenges social media present for social science research
- Share approaches, tools & experiences of using social media
- Identify good practice: co-created content & guidance to be shared with the wider community



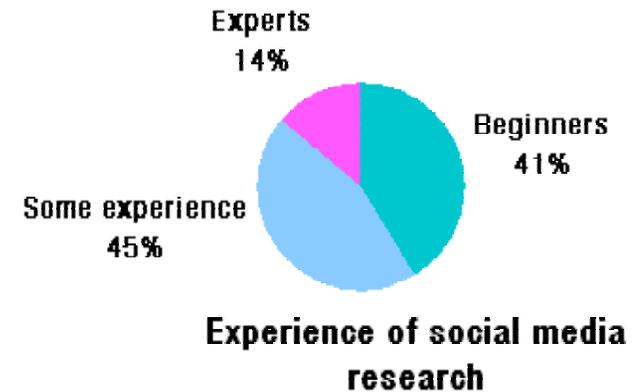
**20 disciplinary
fields**

**58% female
42% male**

**76%
employed
34% students**

**461
members**

**75% HE sector
25% other**



**65% in UK
35% worldwide**

How it works?

Network activities across a range of platforms:

- **Home page:** <http://www.natcen.ac.uk/nsmnss/>
- **Methodspace:**
<http://www.methodspace.com/group/nsmnss/forum>
- **Twitter:** @NSMNSS, #NSMNSS
- **Blogs:** <http://nsmnss.blogspot.co.uk/>
- **You Tube:** <http://www.youtube.com/user/NSMNSS>
- **Face to face events**

Innovation
Collaboration
Inspiration
Fresh thinking

12 months...

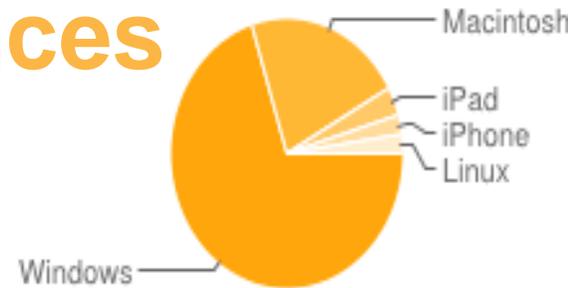
3 online seminars

4 knowledge exchange seminars

7 themed twitter chats

2 conferences

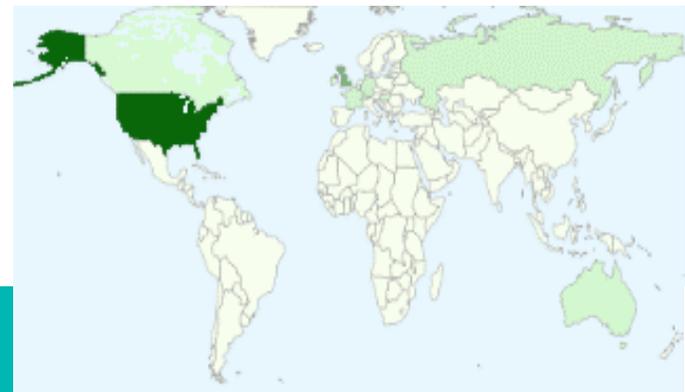
66 blog posts



1,194 video views on YouTube

Over 5,322 minutes of video watched

37,761 blog page views



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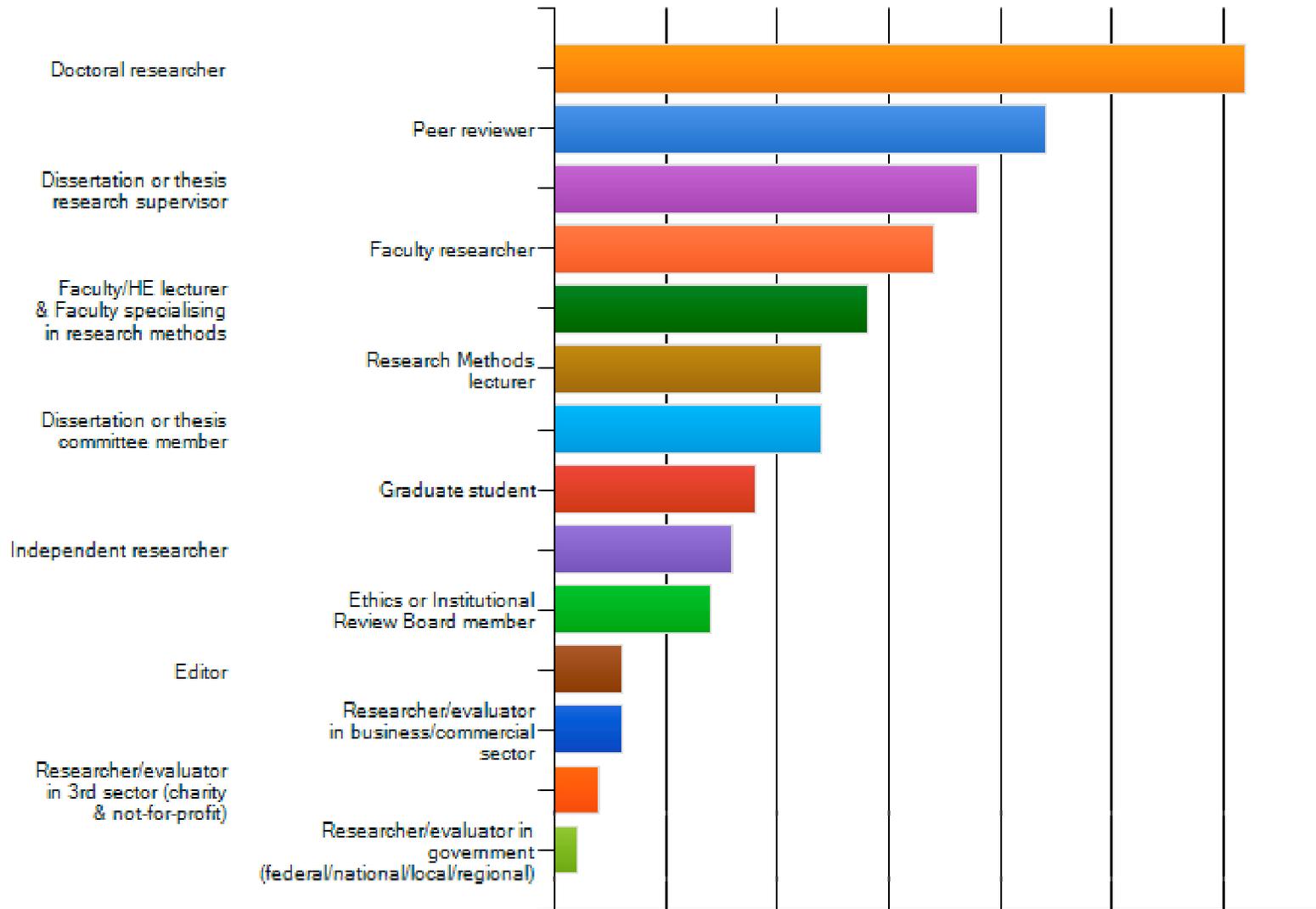
Ethical issues in social media research

Persisting uncertainty 'getting it right' ethically

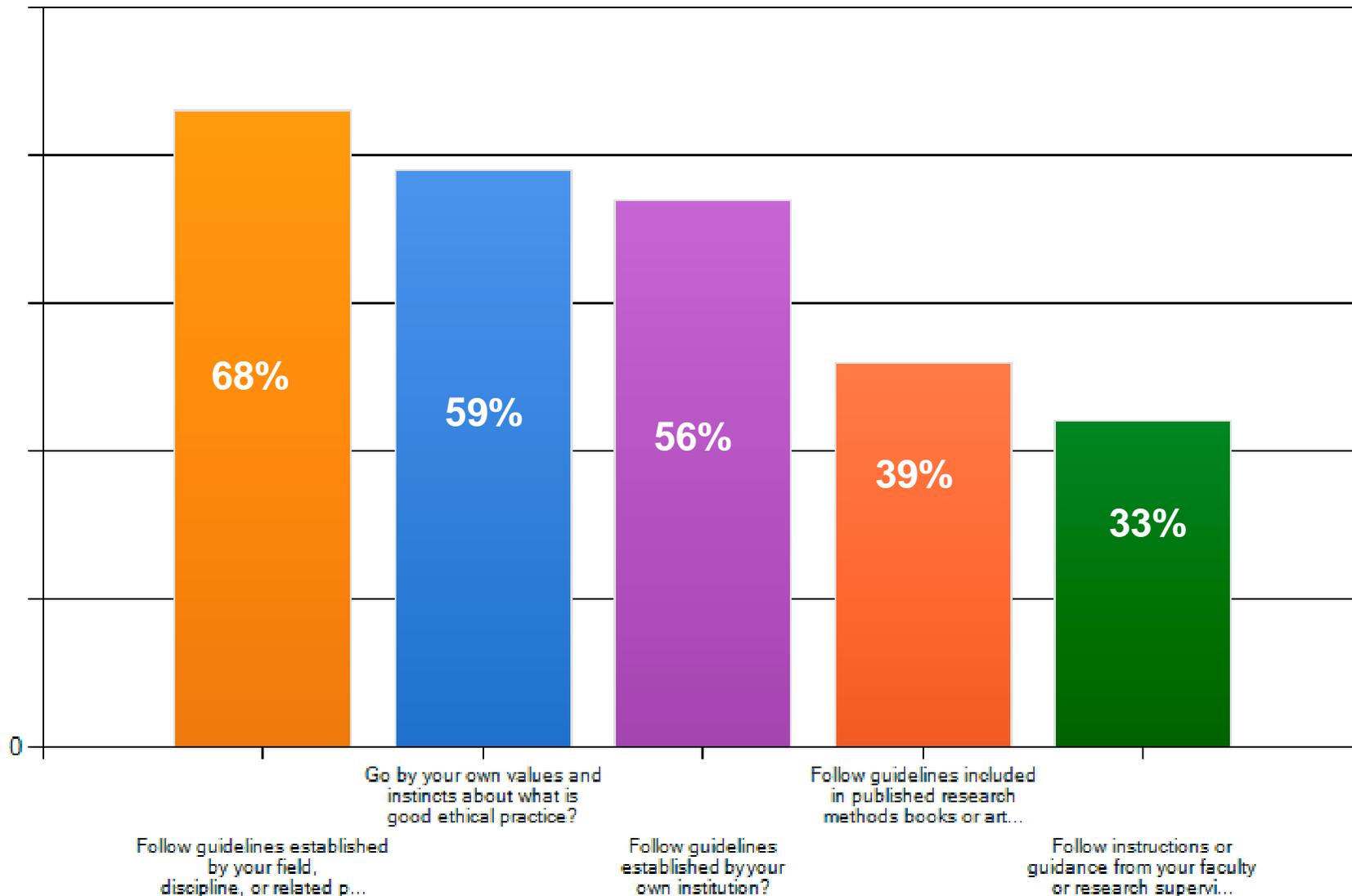
- **Ethical dilemmas** - lack of consistent, relevant guidance, conflicting opinions
- **What are the key political, ethical, legal issues?**
- **Are they different for online to offline research?**
- **Do we understand the digital world well enough to make these choices?**
 - Lack of research with users of social media platforms or engagement with platform providers



Survey of NSMNSS members



How do you make decisions about research ethics?



Do you feel the guidelines you use are up-to-date and adequate for online researchers?



Issues?

Privacy & anonymity of participants

Sampling & recruitment

Informed consent

Researcher identity, rapport & relationships

User-generated content (text & images) as data

Data ownership & data security



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Twitter chats

What is public & private?

What is your responsibility as a researcher?

Do ethics differ between 'public' platforms/spaces & 'walled gardens'?

What does online informed consent look like?

Is it wrong if I lurk and observe?

Research ethics = one tile
in mosaic of technological,
political, cultural &
individual complexity

Cultural competencies
& flexibility needed
when dealing with
multicultural participants

Need for cross-institutional
'standardization' of IRB
boards?

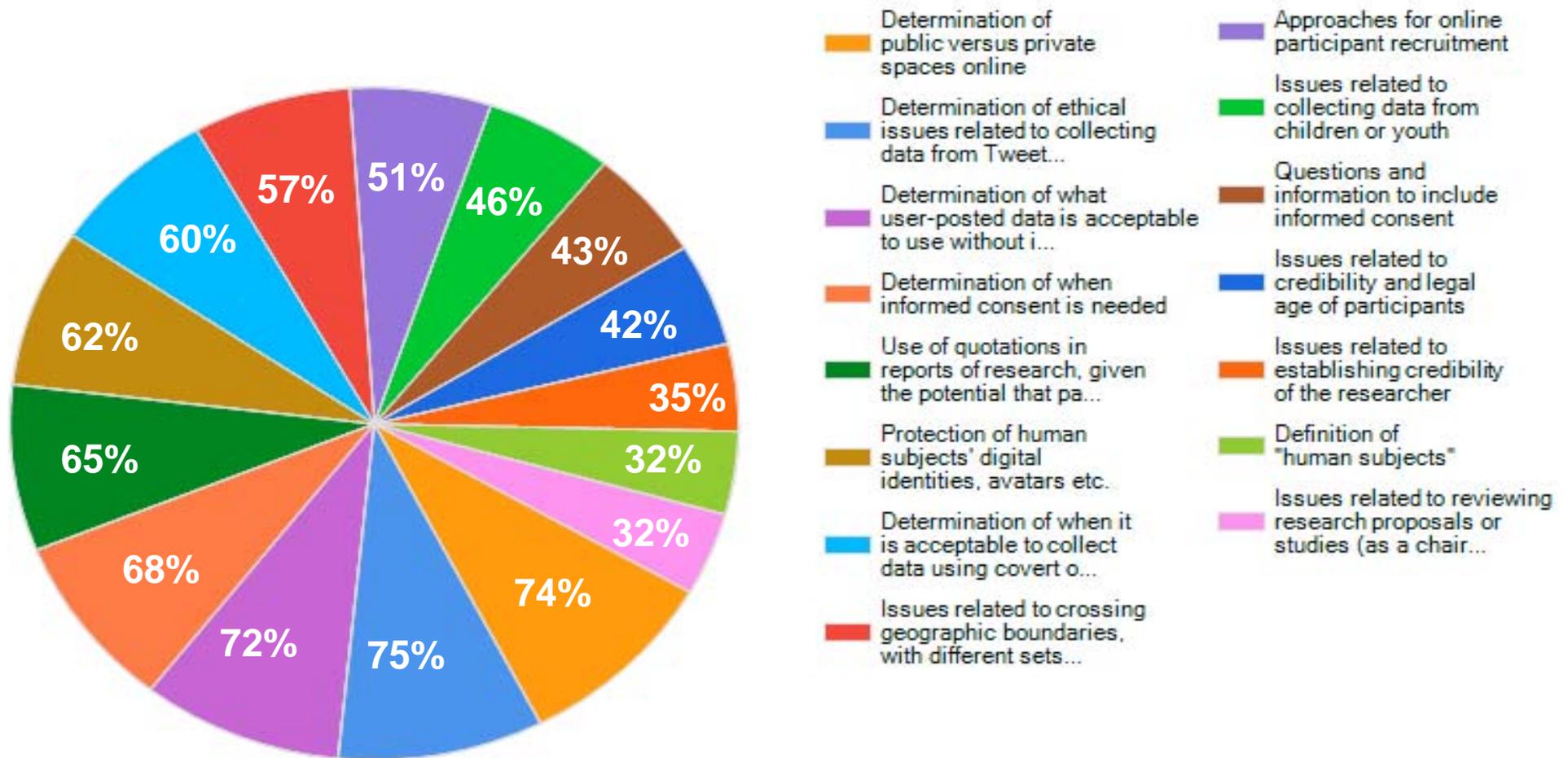
**Social media are
plural, no single
methods – ethics
decisions must
be context and
method specific**

Encouragement
for researchers to
publish methods/
ethical case
studies, failures &
successes

Resolving ethical
dilemmas requires
"holistic" approach
engaging views of
many disciplines

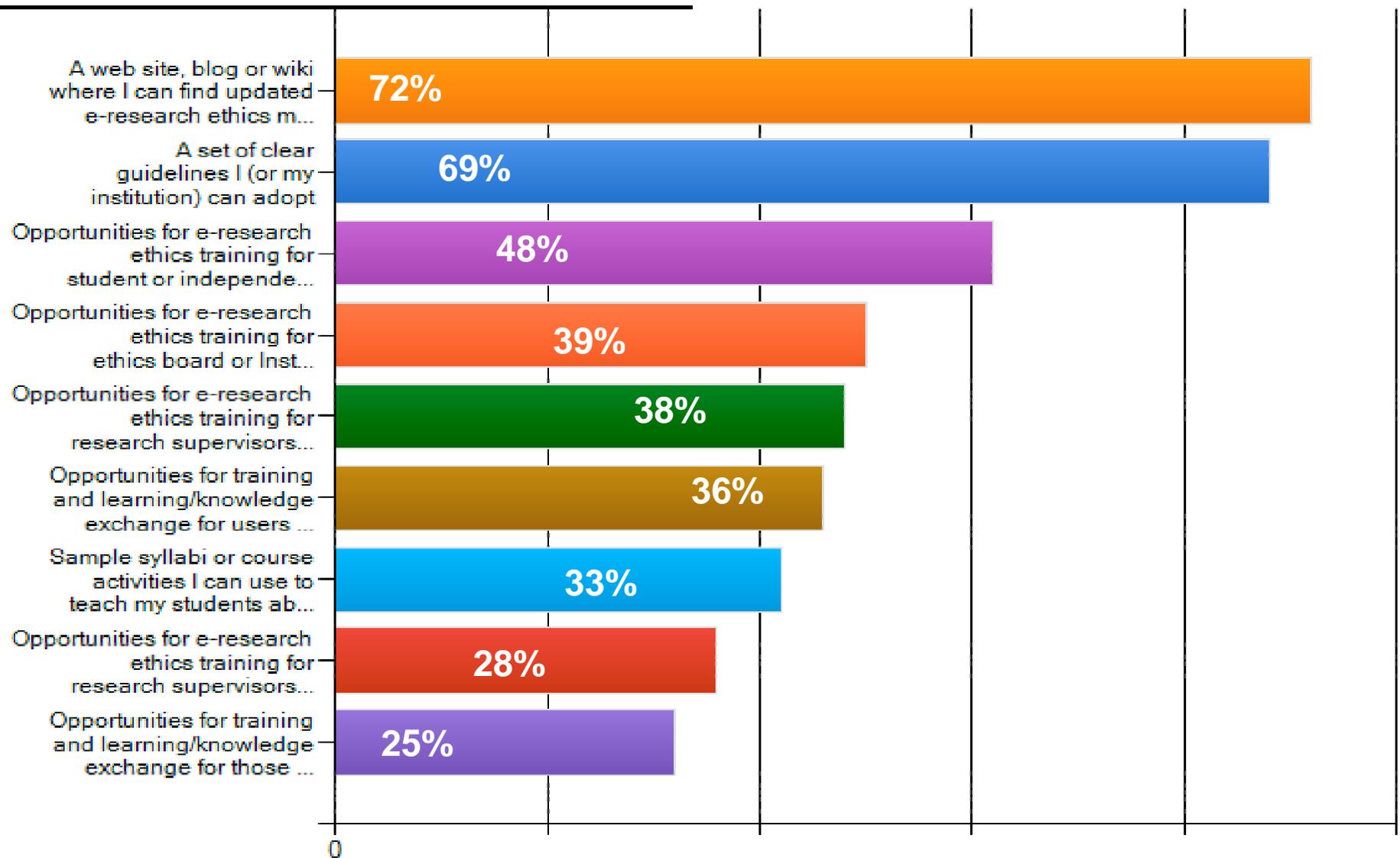
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What are the main gaps, areas needing clarification?



“ I think they would all benefit from attention and clarity”

What research ethics resources would be most useful?



Preliminary observations

- **Multi-disciplinary, multi-method approaches to research ethics are needed**, while respecting the influence of disciplinary codes and work of associations
- **Ongoing development is needed** as approaches will evolve with changes in technology and usage – static codes won't work
- **Need to engage those who teach, review & edit:** the “gatekeepers.”
- **Need to encourage scholars to explain & discuss their methods**, so we can learn from each other about the “how” and “why” of research with online and social media methods.

Resources suggested by network members

Government

Doing the right thing
(DWP guidelines)

Books & articles

Market research

- ESOMAR
- CASRO

Professional Associations

- AOIR
- BERA
- MRS/MRA

Most mentioned issues & resources

AOIR Ethics Guidelines

(Markham, Buchanan, & Committee, 2012)

British Educational Research Association

(Jones, 2011)

Esomar: Market and Social Research

(ESOMAR, 2008; Phillips et al., 2011)

Collecting data from Tweets, blogs, social media communities: consent or disclosure?

What are public versus private spaces online?

Protecting anonymity when using online quotations in research reports

Collecting data from Tweets, blogs, social media communities: consent or disclosure?

	AOIR Ethics Guidelines (Markham, Buchanan, & Committee, 2012)	British Educational Research Association (Jones, 2011)	Esomar: Market & Social Research (ESOMAR, 2008; Phillips et al., 2011)
Collecting data from Tweets, blogs, social media communities: consent or disclosure?	Because all digital information at some point involves individual persons, consideration of principles related to research on human subjects may be necessary even if it is not immediately apparent how and where persons are involved in the research data. (p. 4)	Social networking and other on-line activities, including their video-based environments, present challenges for consideration of consent issues and the participants must be clearly informed that their participation and interactions are being monitored and analysed for research.	If consent has not been obtained researchers must ensure that they report only depersonalised data from social media sources. If researchers are using automated data collection services, they are recommended to use filters and controls to remove personal identifiers such as user names, photos, links to the user's profile, etc.

What are public versus private spaces online?

	AOIR Ethics Guidelines (Markham, Buchanan, & Committee, 2012)	British Educational Research Association (Jones, 2011)	Esomar: Market and Social Research (ESOMAR, 2008; Phillips et al., 2011)
What are public versus private spaces online?	Individual and cultural definitions and expectations of privacy are ambiguous, contested, and changing. People may operate in public spaces but maintain strong perceptions or expectations of privacy. Or, acknowledge that the communication is public, but that the specific context in which it appears implies restrictions. (p. 6-7)	Not addressed.	<p>Public social media: This covers the majority of social media. It includes all places where entry is without any form of barrier.</p> <p>Private social media: This covers areas where the user or the website do not want the data to be publically accessible. All require username identification for access</p>

Protecting anonymity in reporting

	AOIR Ethics Guidelines (Markham, Buchanan, & Committee, 2012)	British Educational Research Association (Jones, 2011)	Esomar: Market & Social Research (ESOMAR, 2008; Phillips et al., 2011)
Protecting anonymity when using quotations in research reports?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are findings presented? • What immediate or future risk might occur by using exact-quoted material in published reports? • Are individuals adequately protected in pre-publication reports, such as workshops, conferences, or informal meetings? • Is the data easily searchable and retrievable? 	<p>In qualitative research one way to protect participants is through narrative and creative means, which might require the fictionalising of aspects of the research or the creation of composite accounts, such as in vignettes, providing generalized features based on a number of specific accounts</p>	<p>Where [consent] is not possible their analysis must only be with depersonalised data.</p> <p>If researchers wish to quote publicly made comments they must first check if the user's identity can be easily discoverable using online search services. If it can, they must make reasonable efforts to either seek permission from the user to quote them or mask the comment.</p>

Ethics – interim thoughts

- Are the ethics of social media research that different really?
- Do we need separate guidelines?
- Paper written up, including comparisons of the codes by the end of the summer
- Working with SRA ethics group around guidance
- More research with users of social media to better understand what people want/expect or need in regard to ethics



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Thank you

If you want further information or
would like to contact the network:

nsmnss@natcen.ac.uk

Tweet us @nsmnss