

Current Practices Regarding Former Industry Employee Authorship of Industry-Sponsored Publications

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Introduction

- Employment changes among industry professionals may affect continued authorship on scientific publications sponsored by their former employers
- While current industry guidelines (eg, GPP 2022,¹ ICMJE²) address employee authorship and criteria, they lack specific guidance on how to handle scenarios related to former industry employees, which can result in challenges and risks to the sponsoring organization (eg, publication delays, competing interests)

Methods

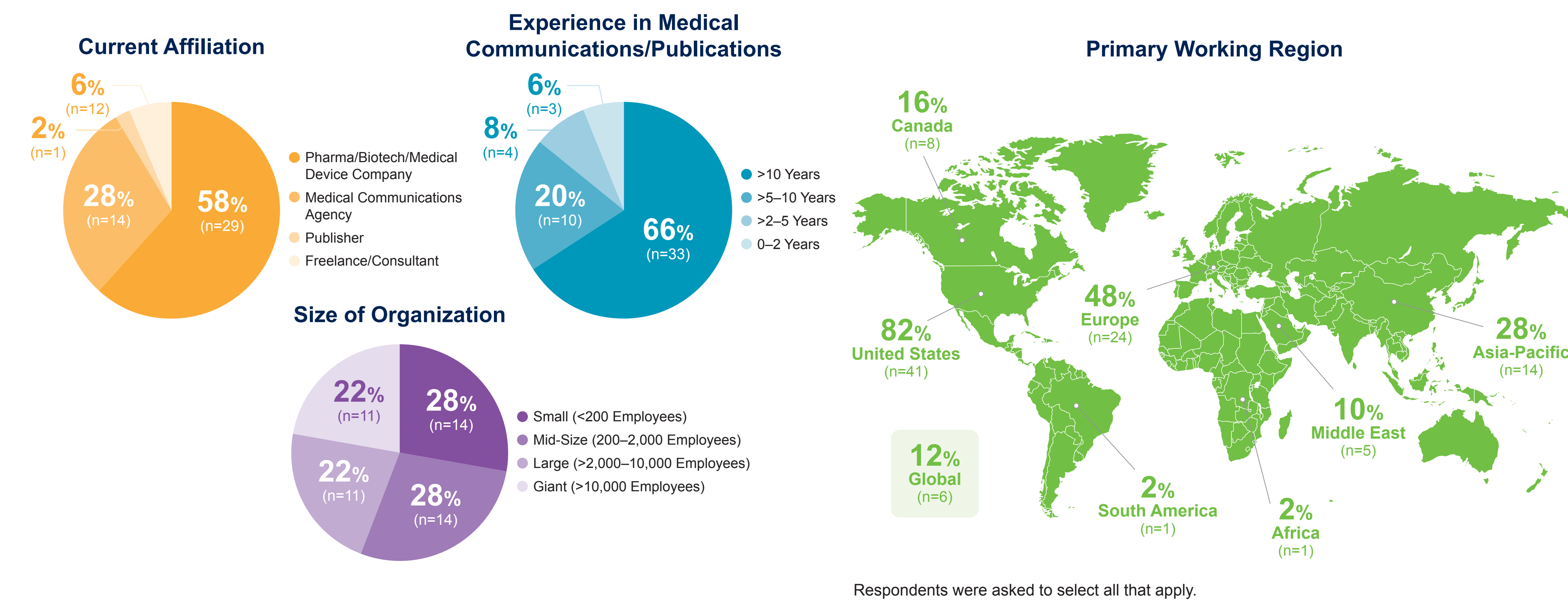
- A survey of medical publication professionals was distributed from November 22, 2023, to January 5, 2024, via the ISMPP Connect Member Forum and ISMPP LinkedIn Group Portal
- The survey included 19 questions regarding organizational practices and challenges for medical publication professionals associated with authorship by industry employees following their departure
 - Respondents who were employees of medical communications agencies or freelance professionals were asked to provide feedback based on the policy or current practices relevant to their primary clients
- All survey responses were anonymous; individual responses were aggregated and summarized for reporting purposes

Objective

To collect information on organizational practices related to industry employee authorship following departure from an organization

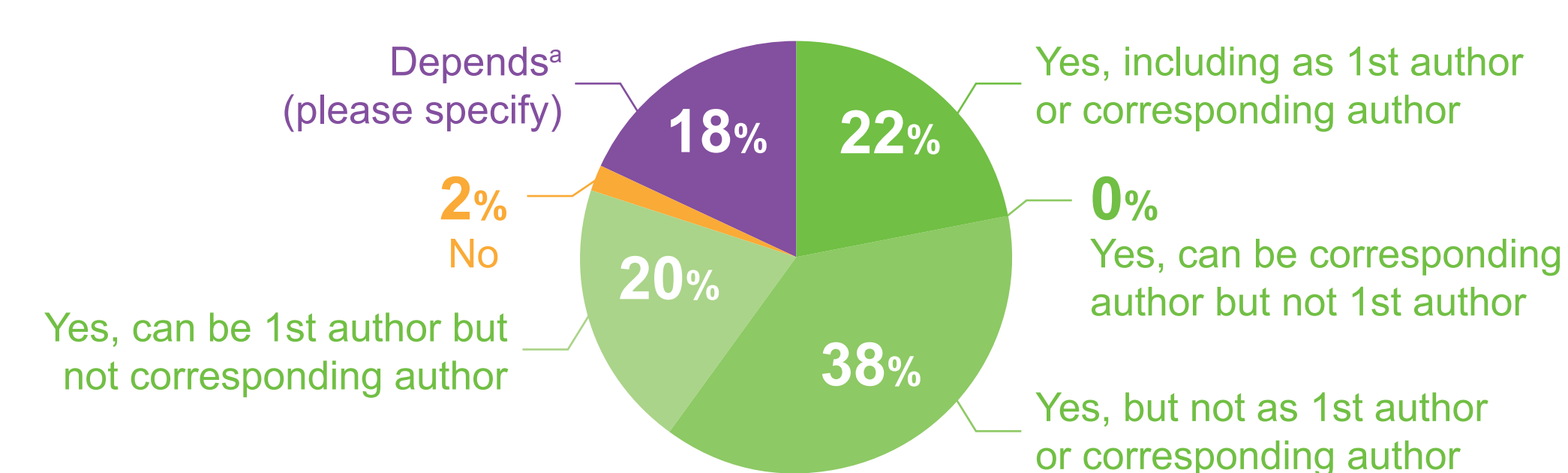
Results

Figure 1. Characteristics of Survey Respondents (N=50)



- A total of 50 responses were received; characteristics of the survey respondents are shown in **Figure 1**

Figure 2. 94% responded that their organization allows former employees to continue as authors of ongoing company-sponsored publications

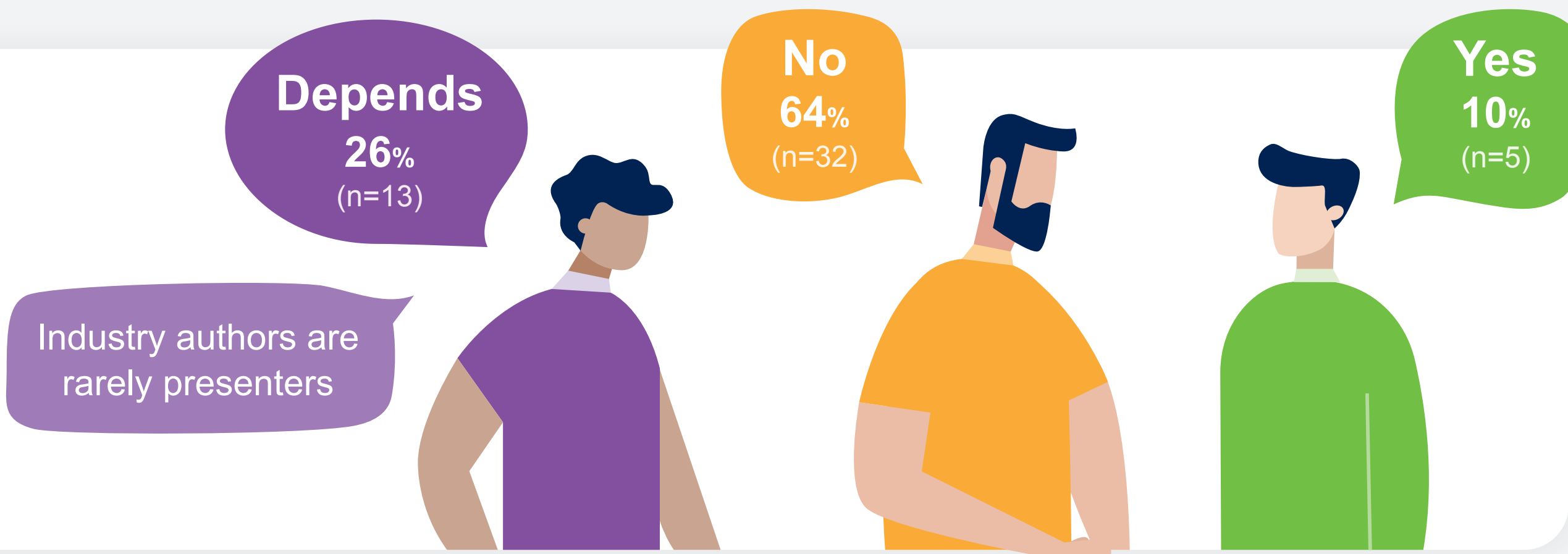


Question: Does your organization allow former employees to continue as authors on ongoing company-sponsored publications?
*Respondents who selected "Depends" generally affirmed that authorship on ongoing publications was allowed at the organization (depending on stage of development), as long as the former employee continued to meet authorship criteria and responsibilities. Two respondents gave responses that were not clearly in agreement.

- Most respondents indicated that policies regarding ongoing authorship do not vary by region
- A minority reported that former employees of an industry organization should be allowed to continue authorship on company-sponsored publications following departure if there is a potential conflict of interest
 - Among those employed by a pharmaceutical, biotech, or medical device company (n=29), 14% responded that former employees should be allowed to continue as authors in instances of a potential conflict of interest

A majority responded that their organization does not allow former employees to be the presenting author on conference presentations

Question: Does your organization allow former employees to be the presenting author?

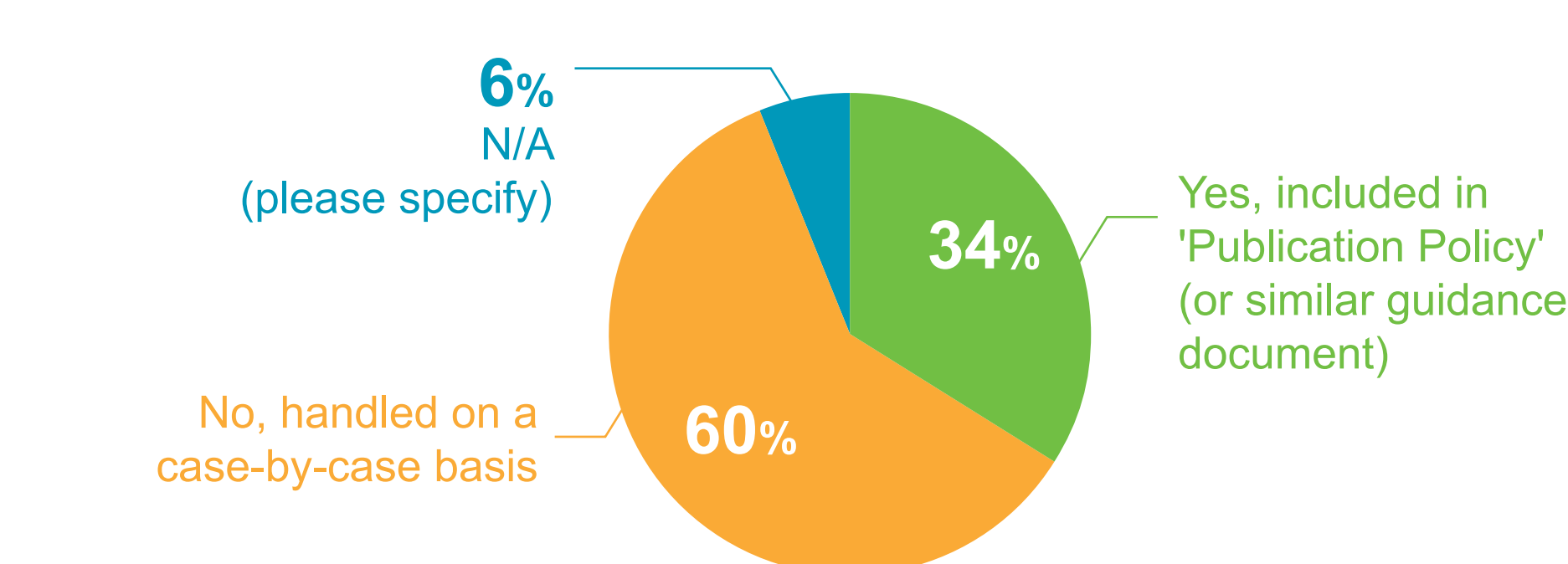


Conclusions

- Although continued authorship by former industry employees is common, their inclusion as authors on new publications is rare
 - Conflicts of interest related to a new employer can negate the ability of a former employee to remain as an author on publications
- Organizations with formal guidance on this topic are in the minority
 - Understanding the processes and policies of different industry organizations may help to inform best practices in the absence of formal guidance
- Findings of this survey highlight current industry practices and frequent challenges faced by medical publication professionals related to authorship by former employees, suggesting the need for further industry guidance

Company Policy

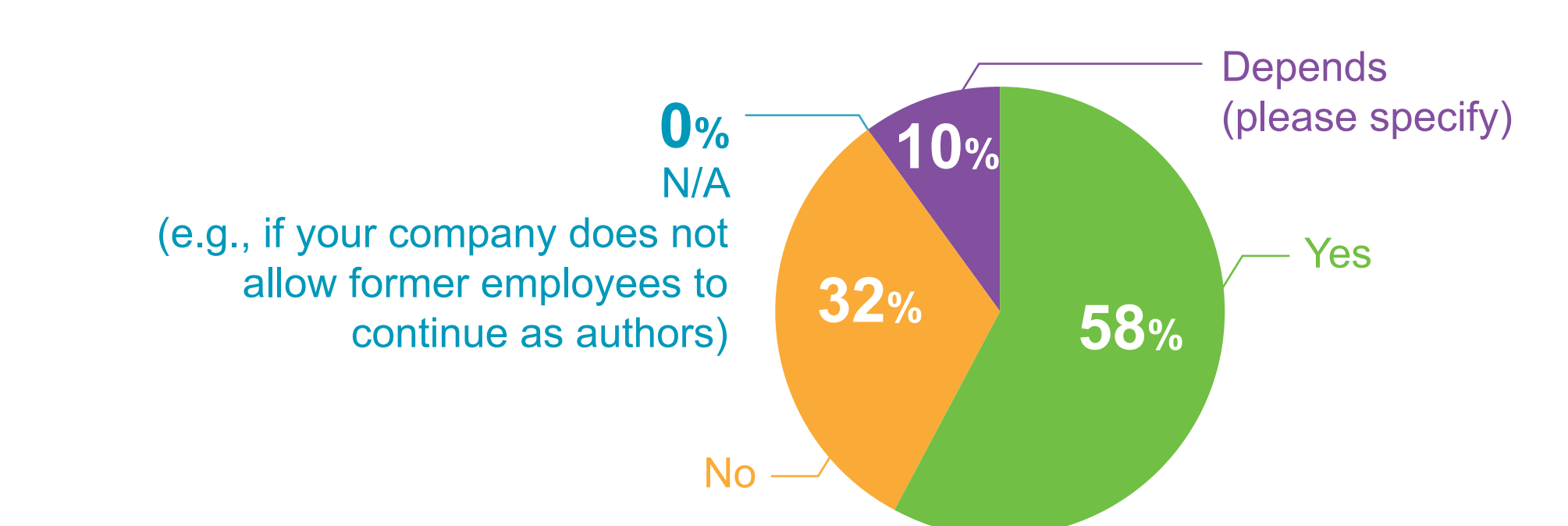
Figure 4. A majority of respondents reported that their organization does not have a formal policy regarding authorship by former employees^a



Question: Does your organization have a policy statement (or other procedural document) regarding authorship by former employees on company sponsored publications?
^aThree (6%) respondents noted "N/A," as they were unsure of whether there is a policy.

- A majority (70%) responded that their organization does not allow a former employee's new employer to review draft publications co-authored by the employee
- 14% reported that their organization requires review of draft publications co-authored by a current employee in which the research/publication was supported by their previous employer
- Approximately half responded that former employees are requested to disclose the identity of their new employers (56%) and/or other competing interests (50%)

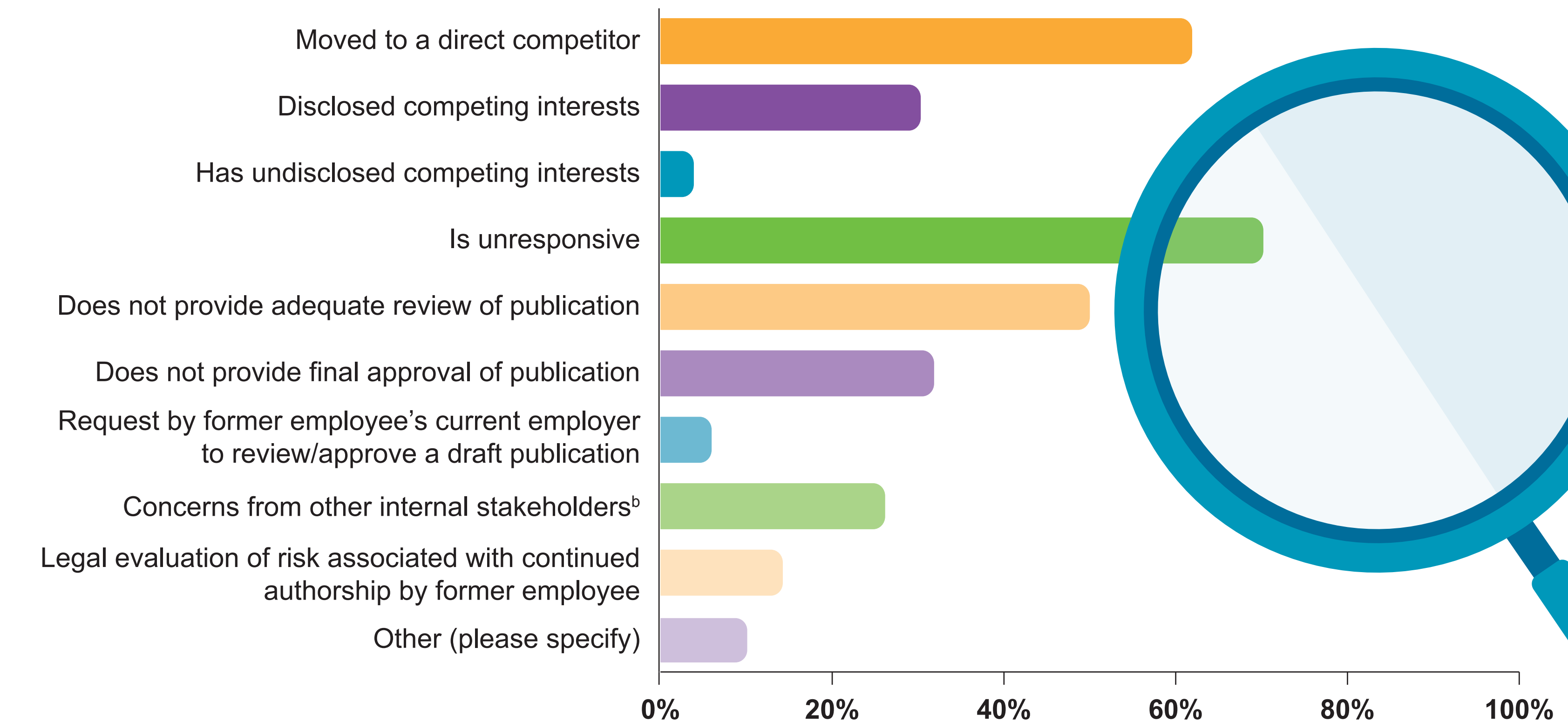
Figure 5. A majority responded that a confidentiality agreement must be executed with the former employee upon departure^a



Question: Does your organization require a confidentiality agreement (CDA, NDA, or similar) be executed for former employees that continue as an author on company-sponsored publications?
^aFive (10%) respondents said "Depends," noting that a CDA is optional (n=1), they were unsure of policy (n=3), or that confidentiality is covered under an authorship agreement (n=1).

Challenges With Continued Authorship by Former Industry Employees

Figure 6. The most common challenges related to continued authorship by former employees were unresponsiveness, moving to a direct competitor, and inadequate review of publications^a



Question: Have you experienced any of the following issues, challenges, or risks related to continued authorship by former employees?
^aRespondents were asked to select all that apply.

^bFor example, Legal, Compliance, Human Resources concerns regarding continued authorship by former employee.

- Respondents reported consulting with the following corporate stakeholders when making decisions related to continued authorship of a departing or former employee:
 - Legal (36%), Compliance (32%), Human Resources (12%), N/A (10%), Other (12%, including Medical and Clinical Affairs, and internal authors), None (40%)

References: 1. LM DeTora, et al. Good Publication Practice (GPP) guidelines for company-sponsored biomedical research: 2022 update. *Ann Intern Med.* 2022;175(9):1298-1304. 2. International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals. Updated January 2024. <https://www.icmje.org/recommendations/>. Accessed 7 March 2024.

Support and Acknowledgments: The authors thank Carla Resvanis for editorial support, and Jie Song and Kyle Gies for graphic design support, all from Peloton Advantage, LLC, an OPEN Health company.

Disclosures: Thomas J Measey, Justine Kennedy, Catherine D Savage, Nathan R Rustay, and Brian Scheckner are full-time employees of Jazz Pharmaceuticals, who in the course of this employment have received stock options exercisable for, and other stock awards of, ordinary shares of Jazz Pharmaceuticals, plc. Michael J Theisen and Sean T Anderson are full-time employees of OPEN Health, who have provided medical communications services for Jazz Pharmaceuticals.