



Scopus as the trusted high-quality data source for Malaysia

Dr Wim Meester, Director of Product Management Scopus Content
Webinar, 25 February 2021



Today's agenda

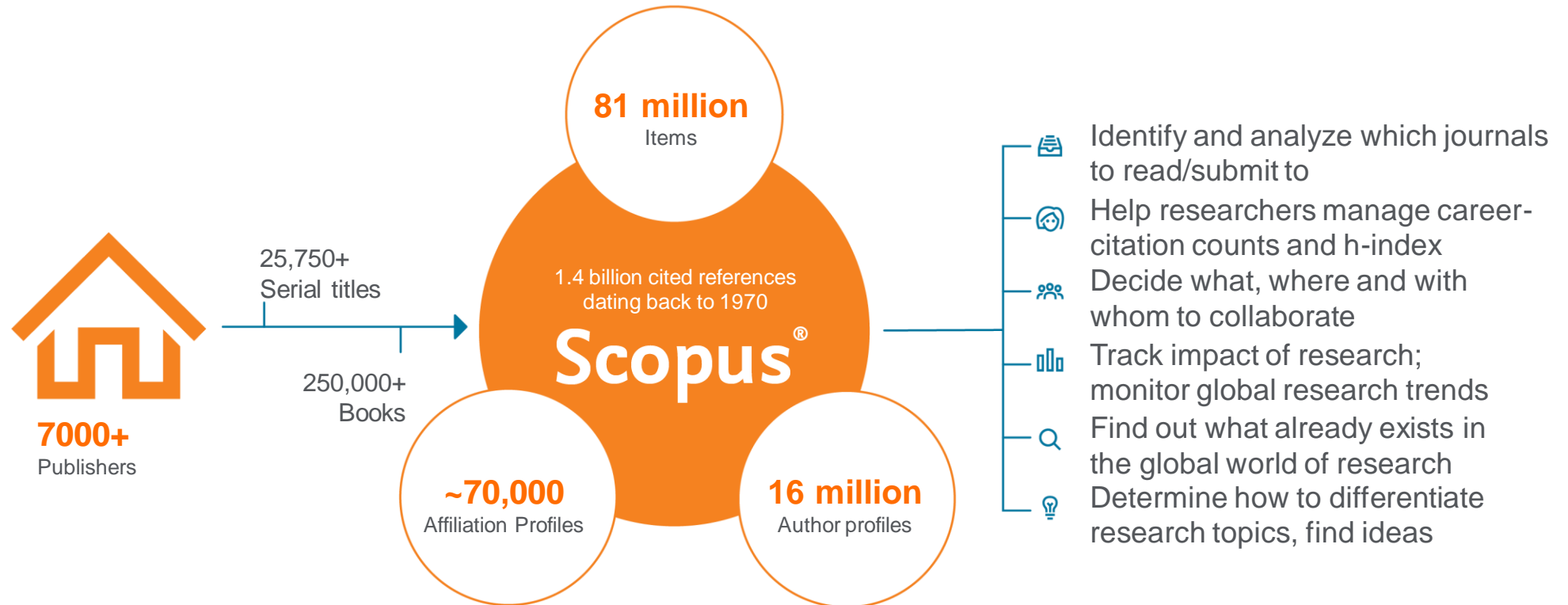
1. The power of Scopus with trusted coverage of high-quality content
2. Publication malpractice and catching “bad” journals
3. How is Malaysia doing
4. Publication malpractice is a threat to all of the scientific community
5. General advice and recommendations
6. Other resources



1. The power of Scopus with trusted coverage of high-quality content



Scopus is a source-neutral abstract and citation database, curated by independent subject matter experts.
and features smart tools that allow you to track, analyze and visualize scholarly research.



Scopus delivers a comprehensive view on the world of research.
No packages, no add-ons. One all-inclusive subscription.

"Help the world of research make high value decisions with confidence"

Expert Curated content selection by the independent Content Selection & Advisory Board (CSAB)

Expert curation

There are
104,586*
active
scholarly
titles



Of which
47,519*
are peer-
reviewed



Scopus
indexes
24,600+



- › Titles on Scopus are rigorously reviewed and selected by an independent board of subject matter experts to include 52% of the world's peer-reviewed scholarly literature.

* Source: Ulrich's Web Global Serials Directory, February 15, 2019

- The **CSAB** is an independent board of subject experts from all over the world.
- Comprised of 17 Subject Chairs.
- Board members are chosen for their expertise in specific subject areas; many have (journal) Editor experience.



Scopus mandate and authority



Scopus is committed to creating a representative, curated dataset of scholarly content:

- Overall journal selection based on journal-level data and performance
- Monitoring and deselection of journals that are predatory or below standards



Scopus cannot interfere with editorial autonomy of journals:

- Editorial decisions on quality of individual articles and conferences
- (Scientific) content of the articles and abstracts included in the database
- Plagiarism and other publication malpractice of individual articles
- Authorship of the paper

Note:

If publication malpractice is occurring knowingly and on a structural basis without policy to address and prevent such cases, Scopus will flag, re-evaluate and potentially discontinue titles



2. Publication malpractice and catching “bad” journals



Threat to science: Predatory journals are on the rise



Various studies have indicated that there is an escalation in predatory journals, however, it is near impossible to determine the extent as they appear and disappear continually.



The term 'predatory journals' was coined by Jeffrey Beall in 2010 who acted as unofficial 'watchdog' of predatory publishing since then.



Beall works with a binary classification in which a journal is considered either predatory or not. Decisions were not systematically explained, and it is not possible to make a more detailed quantification of "predatoriness".



There was criticism for Beall and the website eventually closed on 17 January 2017



In 2019 a group of researchers reached a consensus definition.* An important part of this statement is: "*entities that prioritize self-interest at the expense of scholarship*".



*Source: [Grudniewics et al. \(2019\) Predatory journals: no definition, no defence](#) and [Cukier et al \(2020\) Defining predatory journals and responding to the threat they pose: a modified Delphi consensus process](#).

Driving forces

- **Publish or perish:** For many academics, career progression depends on the research papers they publish.
- **Technology:** Easy to set up a website, spamming thousands of potential authors and receiving electronic payments
- **Exploitation of the open access model:** Pay-to-publish model misused
- **Inexperience / Online environment:** Working online without access to expertise to distinguish bogus journals etc.

What Scopus does to address the issue

- Scopus, together with the CSAB, own the **responsibility of curating content** on an on-going basis as a defence against low quality and predatory journals.
- We have been addressing the issue for some years now and have developed a process of **continuous monitoring in combination with re-evaluation by the independent CSAB**.
- **Validating concerns and to take a well-informed decision is complex and time-consuming.** Additional information that shows the questionable integrity and quality is needed for validation.
- **The decision to potentially exclude a journal from Scopus should not be taken lightly**, given the ongoing risk of discontinuing legitimate sources, or excluding genuine articles published in bad journals.

Identifying potential poor quality or predatory journals

All +25k journals in Scopus are monitored on ongoing basis and flagged for reevaluation based on:

- Our own observation or direct feedback from users and stakeholder's **publication concerns** about the publishing standards or publication ethics of the journal or publisher are investigated.
- Metrics and benchmarks for publication output, citation impact and self-citations are used to identify journals that are **underperforming** compared to peer journals in their field.
- A machine learning tool analyzes the performance of journals according to aspects like output growth, changes in author affiliation, citation behavior, etc. to track **outlier performance** (=‘RADAR’)
- During their review, the CSAB can indicate whether any accepted title should be evaluated again in the future. This data is collected and further analyzed to ensure **continuous curation**.

The reevaluation process



Monitor

Curate

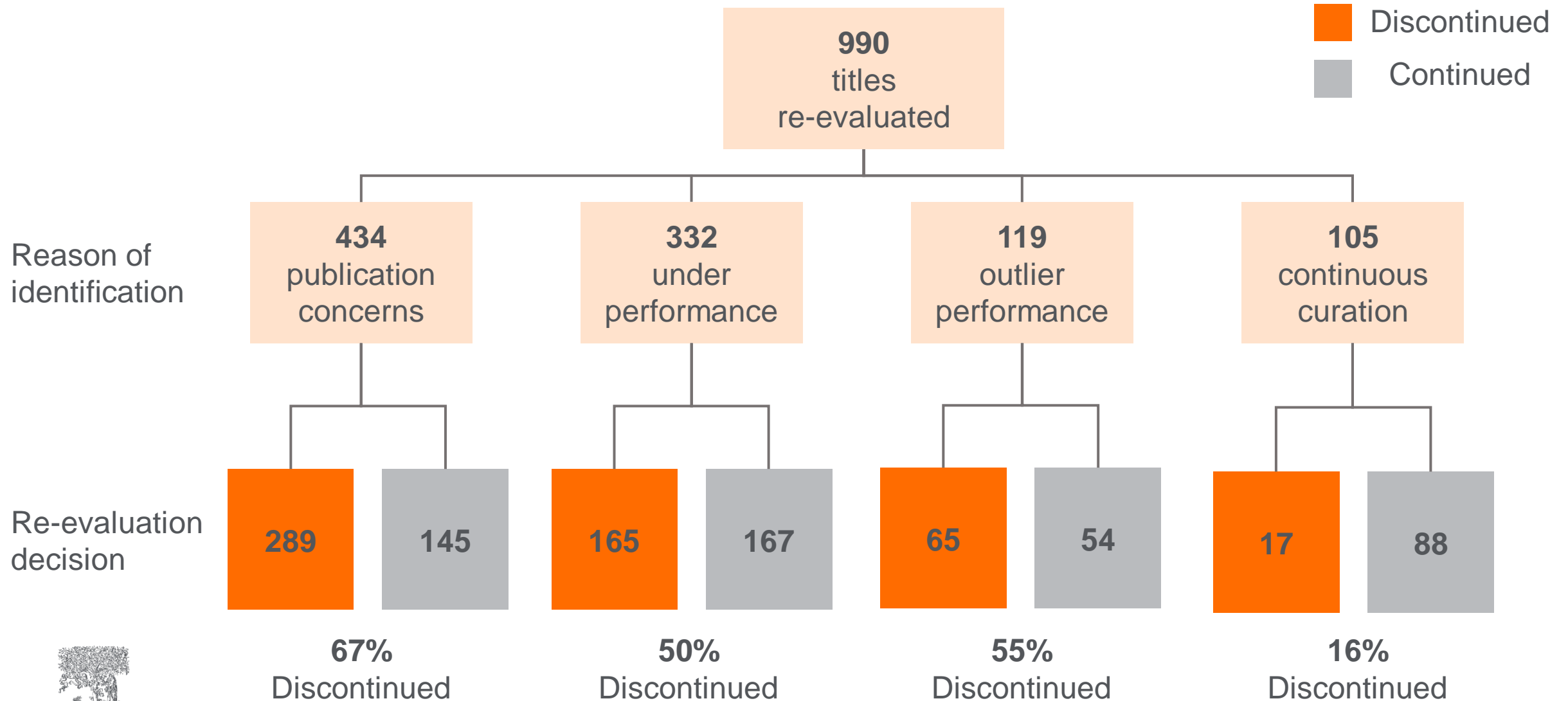
Identify titles based on **publication concerns, under performance, outlier performance or continuous curation.**

In-depth **re-evaluation** by the Content Selection & Advisory Board (CSAB)

Flag

Catch rate broken down by reason of identification

(2016-2020)



What happens with journals for which the decision is made to discontinue?

- No new content is added to Scopus.
- Content already indexed remains as a matter of scientific record and to ensure stability and consistency of research trend analytics.
- In exceptional cases of proven severe unethical publication practice, content already indexed in Scopus may be removed.
- CiteScore will no longer be given for discontinued titles.

Download the Source title list  (XLSX, 24.5 MB)

Download the Book title list  (XLSX, 23.6 MB)

Discontinued sources from Scopus  (XLSX, 77.5 KB)

An overview of all discontinued journals, including the last content indexed in Scopus, is available in the **Discontinued Sources List** on

<https://www.elsevier.com/solutions/scopus/how-scopus-works/content>

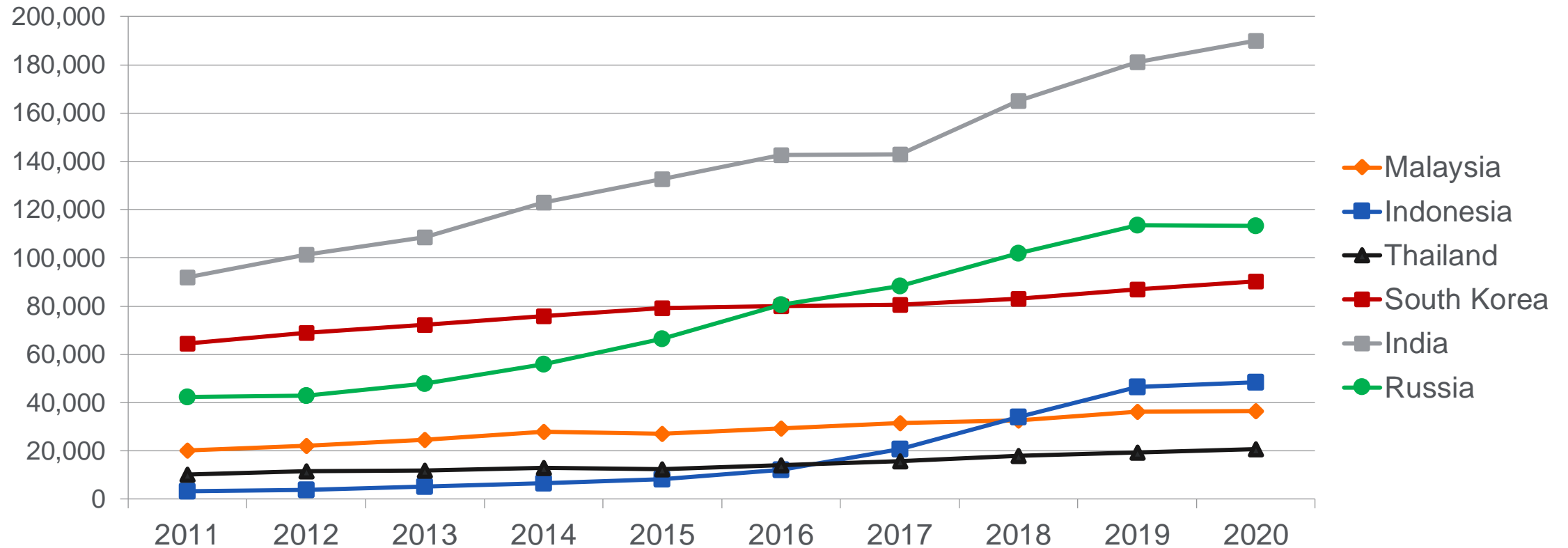


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3. How is Malaysia doing?



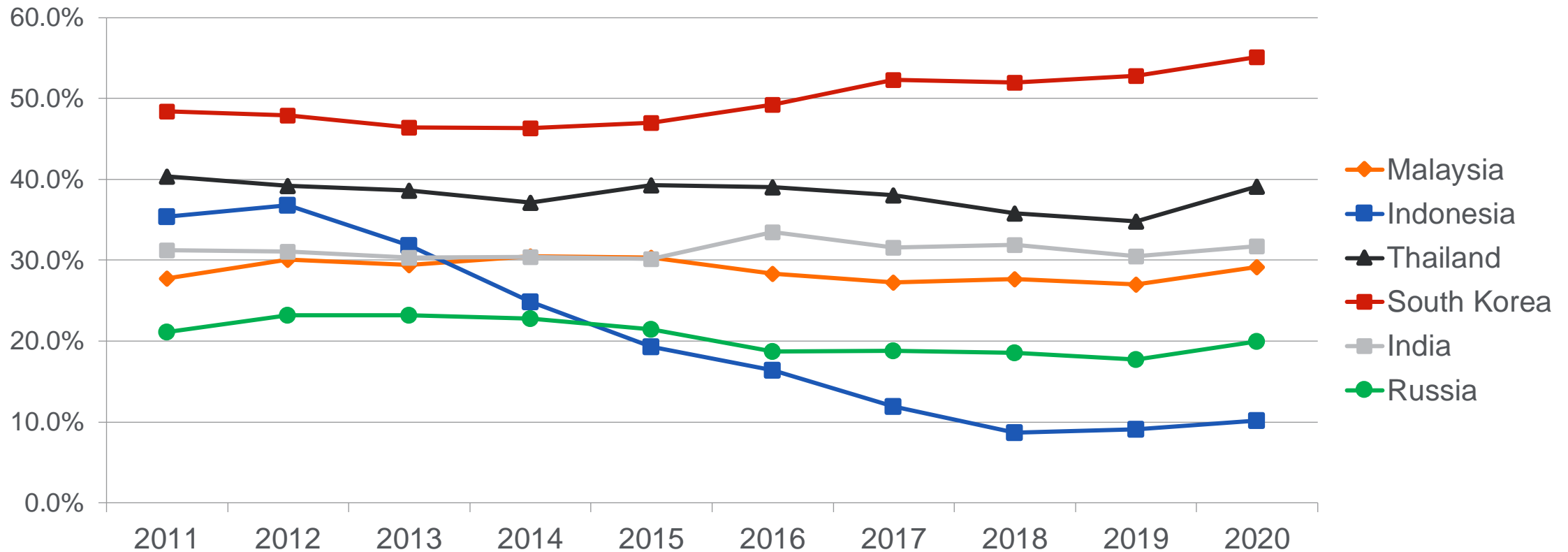
Scholarly output for Malaysia and comparing countries



Scholarly output from Malaysian authors has increased from ~20k to ~40k documents per year. Fast growing countries are Indonesia, India and Russia



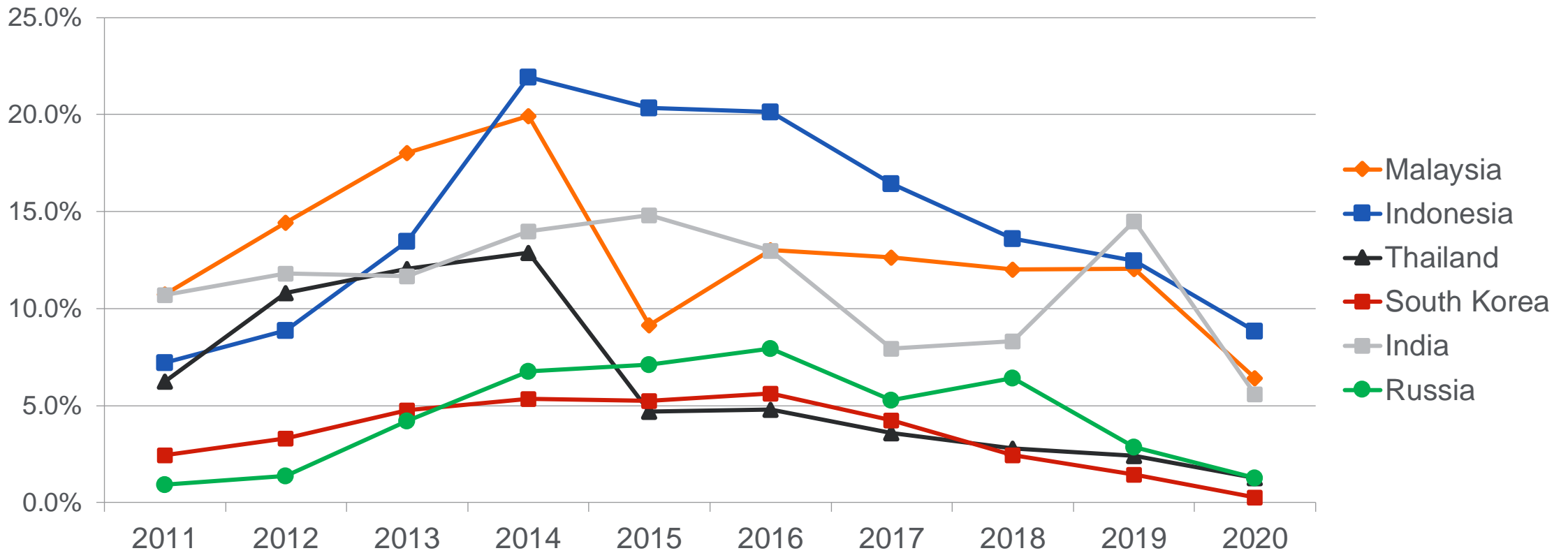
Output in Q1 Journal quartile by CiteScore (%) for Malaysia and comparing countries



The percentage of Malaysian authors publishing in Q1 journals is stable around 30%. That is similar to India, lower than South Korea & Thailand but higher than Russia & Indonesia



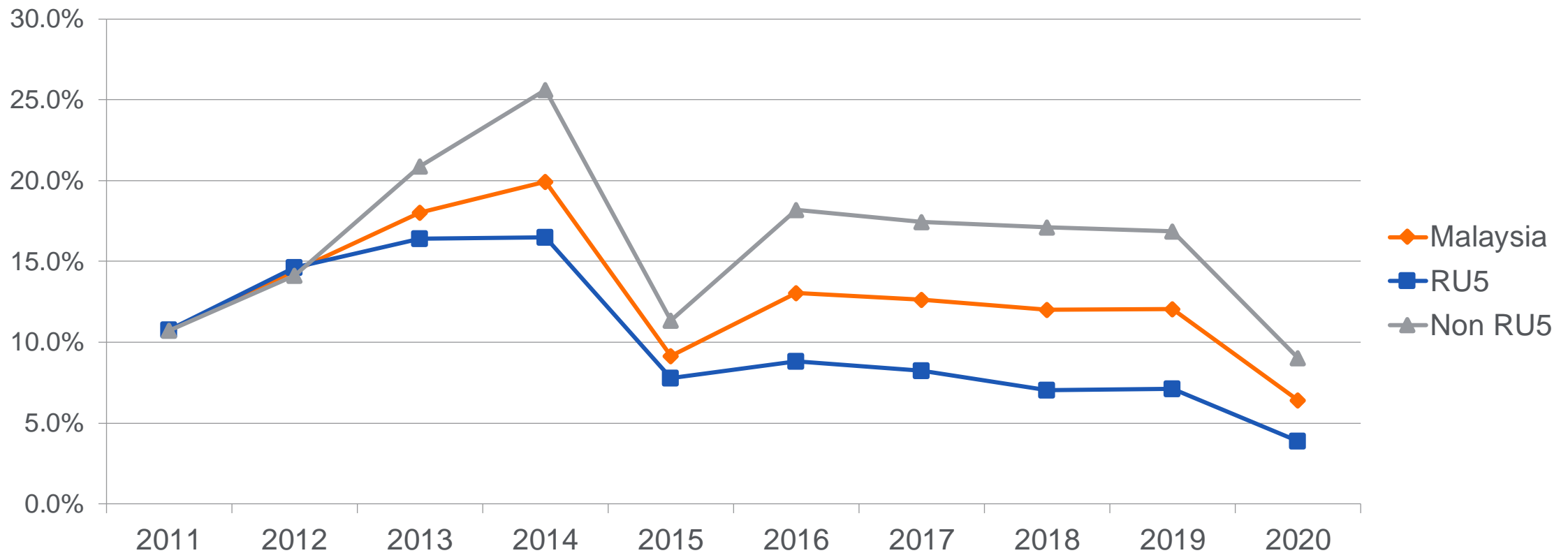
Scholarly output in Scopus discontinued journals for Malaysia and comparing countries (% of total)



Output from Malaysian authors in discontinued journals reached a peak in 2014 and has been around 10% since then. Indonesia and India have similar levels; Russia, Thailand and South Korea are at lower level.



Scholarly output in Scopus discontinued journals for Malaysia broken down by RU5 and non RU5 (% of total)



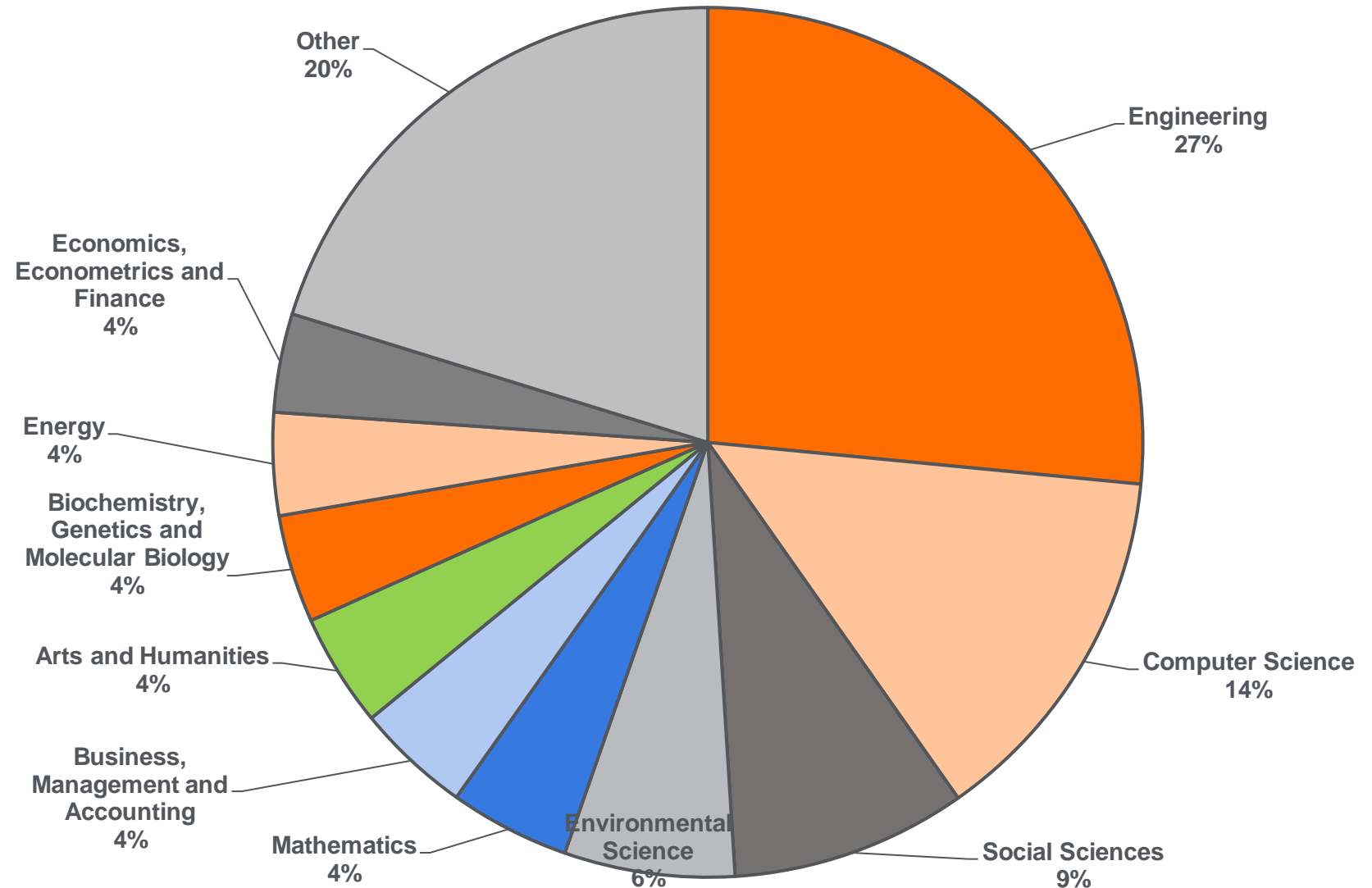
Of the scholarly output from Malaysia, the ratio of authors publishing in discontinued journals is lower for the Malaysian RU5 Universities



Malaysian authors publishing in discontinued journals happens across all subject areas

Scholarly output in Scopus discontinued journals for Malaysia during 2011-2020 broken down by subject area (36,262 documents total)

Source: Scopus data, Article, Review, Conference Papers only (February 2021)



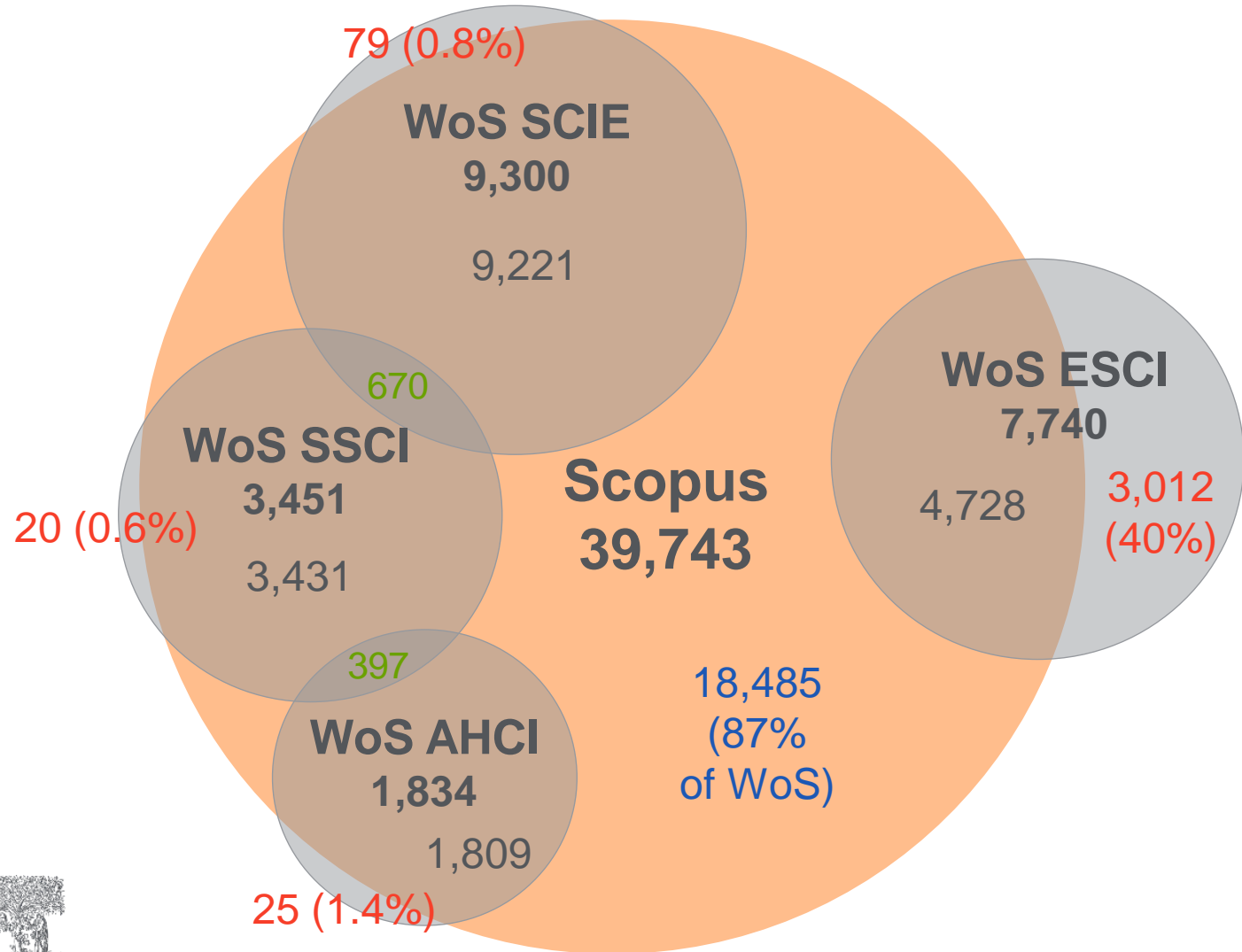


4. Publication malpractice is a threat to all of the scientific community



Scopus coverage is broader than WoS and can be trusted.

Scopus and Web of Science Core Collection comparison (*Active + inactive Scopus Journals and Book Series*)



1,517 ESCI titles suggested for Scopus review
 415 Final decision was made, of which
 171 (40%) rejected for Scopus

Black bold: total titles in database
 Black: overlapping titles in both databases
 Red: WoS unique titles (ratio of total WoS db)
 Blue: Scopus unique titles (ratio of total WoS)
 Green: overlapping between WoS databases



Predatory publishing is a threat to science in general and no database is immune

Clarivate
Web of Science™

Web of Science Journal Citation Reports: Suppression Policy

What do we do when we identify citation distortion?

- Titles are suppressed from the Web of Science Journal Citation Reports based on analysis of the last year of citation data.
- We notify the publisher prior to the annual JCR launch.
- Clarivate does not assume motive on behalf of any party. We investigate the citation data.
- Suppressed journals continue to be indexed in the Web of Science but may be re-evaluated for continued coverage.

	Scopus discontinued titles journals (June 2020)	Titles indexed in any Clarivate database	WoS Core Collection, excluding ESCI	WoS Core Collection, including ESCI	Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI)
Nr. of titles	580	146	59	99	40
% of titles	100%	25%	10%	17%	7%



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5. General advice and recommendations



Selecting the right journal is important

The consequences of choosing a bad journal for good work:

- Monetary costs for the author/institution
- Reputational costs for the work and people involved
- Negative impact on rankings and research assessment
- Durability: no assurance of longevity of the paper
- Delisting of the journal by indexing services
- Possible legal consequences

Do your due diligence.

Think Check Submit is a cross-industry initiative that provides simple guidelines for authors to assess a journal before submitting an article: <https://thinkchecksubmit.org/>



Authors should submit their article to the right journal, for the right reasons

Identifying a journal – first steps

Create a checklist:

- Is this journal the right fit for my work?
 - Does the topic match the journal's scope?
 - Does the journal publish this type of article? e.g. Review article
 - Is there a reasonable chance of acceptance?
- Is it read within the communities I want to reach?
 - Is it indexed by the relevant databases e.g. PubMed, Scopus?
- Is the journal of good quality?
- Can it be trusted?

Useful website: Think, Check, Submit

<http://thinkchecksubmit.org>



6. Other resources

- [Position statement by Scopus and the CSAB on the importance of high quality content](#)
- [Webinar by Scopus and the CSAB on the importance of high quality content](#)
- [Scopus evaluation and re-evaluation process and criteria](#)
- [Scopus source list and Scopus discontinued sources list](#)
- [Consensus definition of predatory journals \(article in Nature\)](#)
- [COPE principles of transparency and best practice in scholarly publishing](#)

The importance of high-quality content: curation and reevaluation in Scopus

Download a comprehensive look into the importance of using trusted information. This article explores how the Scopus curation and re-evaluation processes help exclude poor-quality and predatory publications from Scopus.

The article also includes links to several resources, including Scopus title selection criteria and the discontinued sources list.

Highlights:

- Poor quality vs predatory journals
- Red flags re journal quality
- Response to community concerns
- Scopus Content Selection & Advisory Board

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[Download now](#) 

Thank you!

Scopus content info site: <https://www.elsevier.com/solutions/scopus/how-scopus-works/content>

Scopus blog: <http://blog.scopus.com>

Webinar series: <http://blog.scopus.com/webinars>

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Appendix



Several flaws in two incriminating articles

- Nature [published an article](#) based on research looking into [predatory publishing](#) solely use Beall's list as a definition for predatory journals. This article is based on a study from 2017
- Beall's list has not been maintained since 2017 and is not authoritative about predatory publishing. It is not a good method to identify predatory journals
- All titles included in Beall's list, were already re-evaluated by the CSAB, before 2017, as part of our ongoing re-evaluation program, 65% of them were discontinued from Scopus. The CSAB did not always come to the same conclusion as Beall.
- The title “Hundreds of ‘predatory’ journals indexed on leading scholarly database” is sensationalist and misleading. The articles do not use valid methodology to determine whether a journal is predatory.
- The article also does not acknowledge the rigorous evaluation and re-evaluation mechanisms that Scopus has in place
- The statement that Scopus indexing requires minimum quality criteria based either on bibliometrics or on what the journal declares about itself is untrue. There is an in-depth evaluation of each individual journal by the CSAB in all cases.

NEWS · 08 FEBRUARY 2021

Hundreds of ‘predatory’ journals indexed on leading scholarly database

Scopus has stopped adding content from most of the flagged titles, but the analysis highlights how poor-quality science is infiltrating literature.

Dalmeeth Singh Chawla


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RELATED ARTICLES

- Why India is striking back against predatory journals
- Predatory journals: no definition, no defence
- Predatory journals: evolution keeps them under the radar
- The undercover academic keeping tabs on predatory publishing
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Journals that demand high fees for publication but offer few editorial services are deemed 'predatory'. Credit: Getty

 Springer Link

Published: 07 February 2021

Predatory publishing in Scopus: evidence on cross-country differences

[Vít Macháček](#) & [Martin Srholec](#)

[Scientometrics](#) (2021) | [Cite this article](#)

41k Accesses | 424 Altmetric | [Metrics](#)

Abstract

Predatory publishing represents a major challenge to scholarly communication. This paper maps the infiltration of journals suspected of predatory practices into the citation database Scopus and examines cross-country differences in the propensity of scholars to publish in such journals. Using the names of “potential, possible, or probable” predatory journals and publishers on Beall's lists, we derived the ISSNs of 3,293 journals from Ulrichsweb and searched Scopus with them. 324 of journals that appear both in Beall's lists and Scopus with 164 thousand articles published over 2015–2017 were identified. Analysis of data for 172 countries in 4 fields of research indicates that there is a remarkable heterogeneity. In the most affected countries, including Kazakhstan and Indonesia, around 17% of articles fall into the predatory category, while some other countries have no predatory articles whatsoever. Countries with large research sectors at the medium level of economic development, especially in Asia and North Africa, tend to be most susceptible to predatory publishing. Arab, oil-rich and/or eastern countries also appear to be particularly vulnerable. Policymakers and



See also: <https://blog.scopus.com/posts/the-importance-of-high-quality-content-in-scopus>



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Other unethical practices



Journal hijack

The journal website and content gets hijacked by another party to take advantage of the journal's brand and reputation and use it for publication malpractice.

Examples: Transylvanian Review, Journal of Research on the Lepidoptera

Responsibility and consequences:

In most of the cases the original journal is not to blame and there are no consequences for the genuine journal. Content from the fake source will be removed. There is the responsibility of Scopus to make sure that journals are sources from authentic URLs and the coverage is complete.

Paper brokers

Paper brokers –a middle man between authors and journals in which authorship of articles can be bought. This could be with fake papers or with existing papers in which the original authors sell authorship to an author who was not involved with the research. The target journal may not always be involved in the scam.

Examples: <http://123mi.ru> but also a publisher acting as paper broker: [ICRP](#)

Responsibility and consequences:

Providing ‘publishing services’ is not a crime and Scopus can only take action if the brand or name is being (mis)used without permission. In certain cases action can be taken against the journals involved if they are doing this knowingly on large scale. Awareness of authors is important to prevent them doing business with paper brokers and go to the journal directly.