

Identifying Training Needs for Research Ethics Committees

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The background: irecs in a nutshell

- irecs: improving Research Ethics Expertise and Competencies to Ensure Reliability and Trust in Science
- Horizon Europe, 2022-2025
- Scan and map existing needs raised by new and emerging technologies in European and global research ethics communities
- Produce and implement training materials for European and global audiences in research ethics communities
- Conduct and permanently establish training programmes
- Propose adaptations to the research ethics process in Europe
- Selected technologies: XR, AI in healthcare and healthcare applications, Genome editing (including human and non-human applications), Biobanking

The problem

- Research ethics committees (RECs) are increasingly required to assess applications that make use of or build on new and emerging technologies.
- New ethical concerns which can be difficult to predict and assess, putting new requirements on RECs.
- RECs members: from diverse backgrounds, aim to include subject experts in the fields of their remit.
- Subject expertise: increasingly difficult to be provided in light of rapid advances in scientific knowledge and technological capabilities.

The problem

How to ensure subject expertise?



The solution

By injecting missing knowledge and expertise into the RECs via specific training interventions.

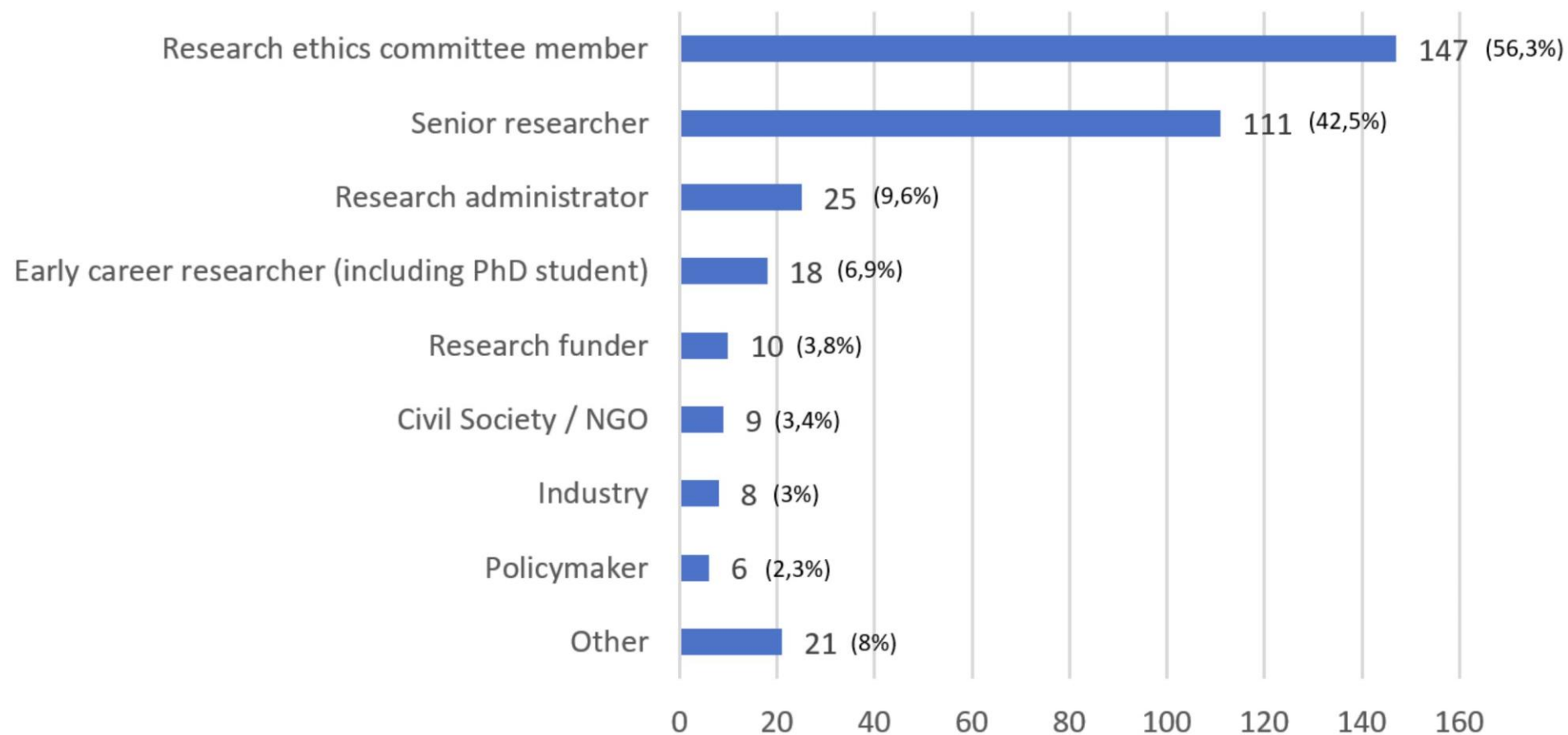
The problem

- **Which training needs** need to be addressed to allow ethics review procedures to appropriately deal with the most pressing current developments?
- This question requires an understanding of **who** has such training needs, what **subject areas** the training is required in and the **context and level of detail** that is required for ethics processes to work.

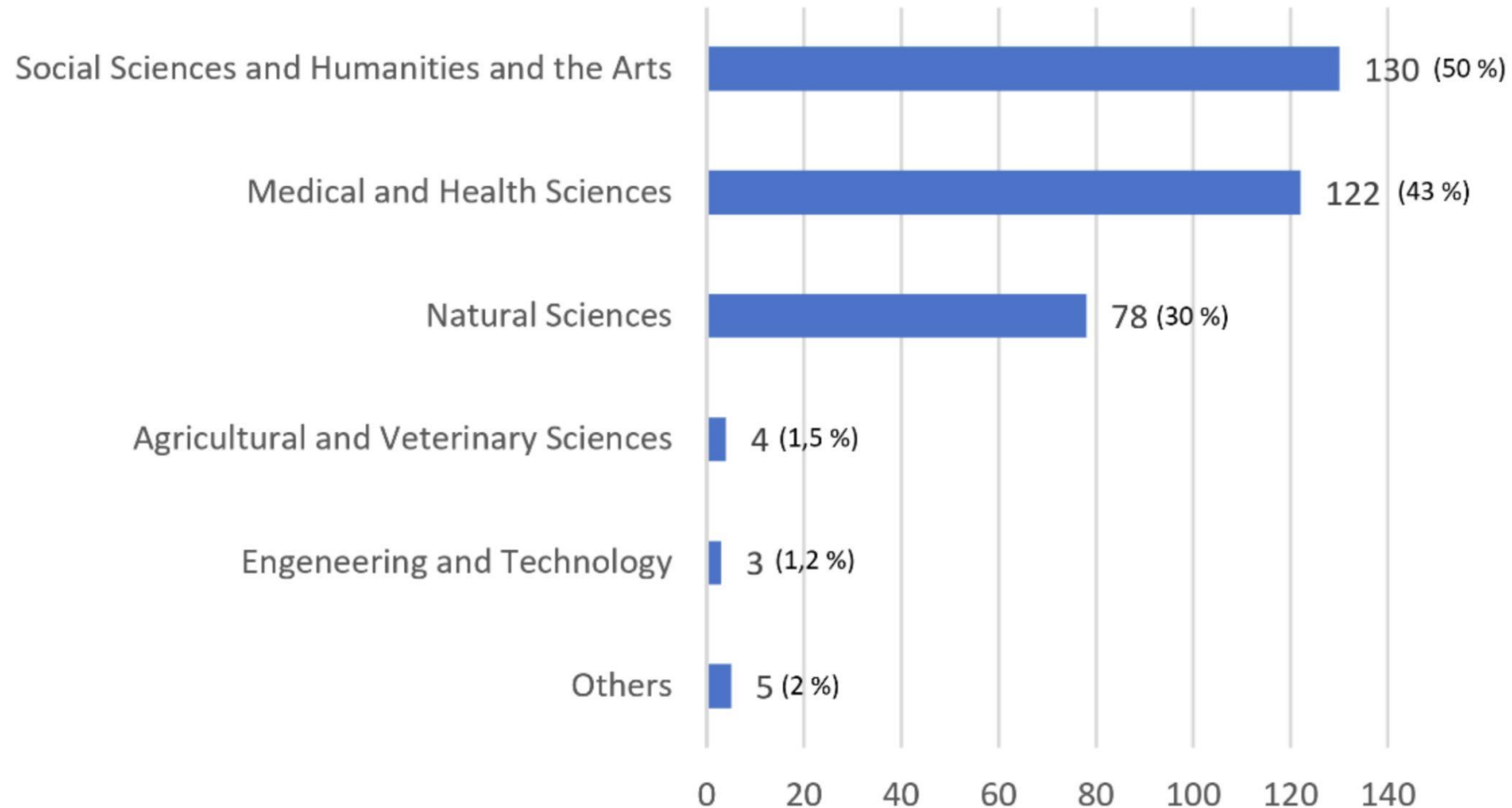
Identifying training needs

- Online survey that was sent out to REC members and researchers in December 2022 to identify their training needs
- 283 responses
- there are discernible differences in terms of perceived training needs, which allow for the planning of more formal training programmes geared towards the needs of RECs and their members to ensure that they can appropriately cover ethical questions arising from these technologies.

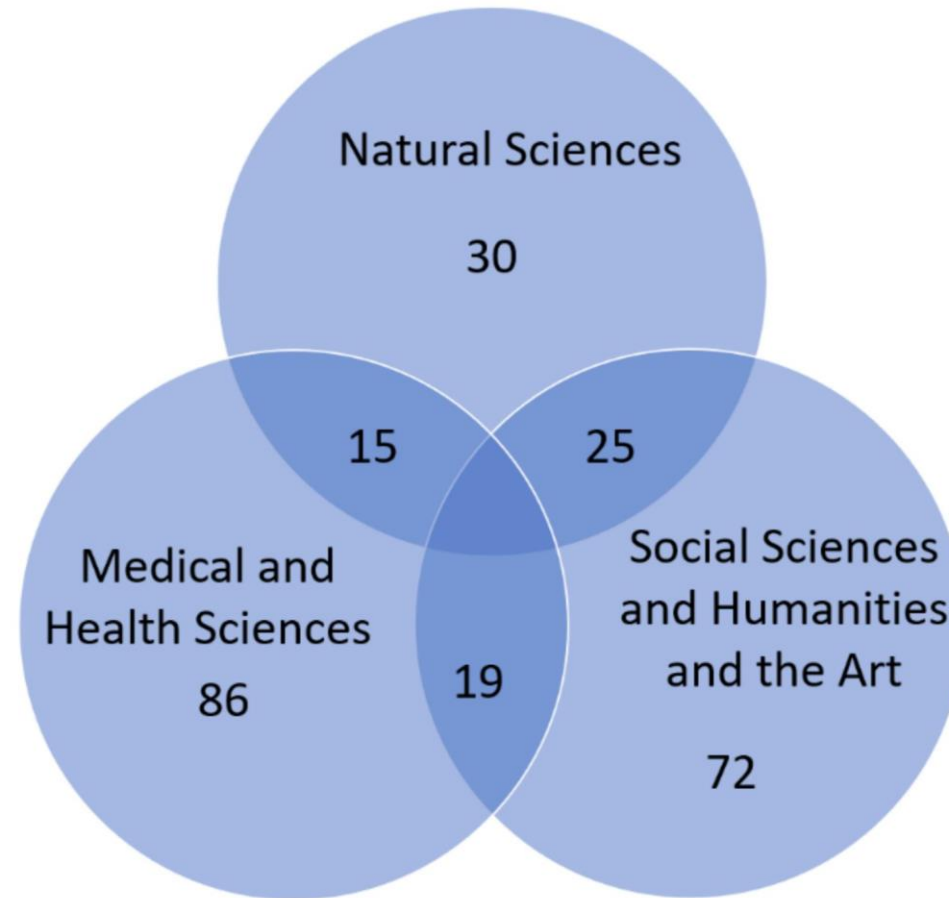
Characterisation of respondents by stakeholders' group



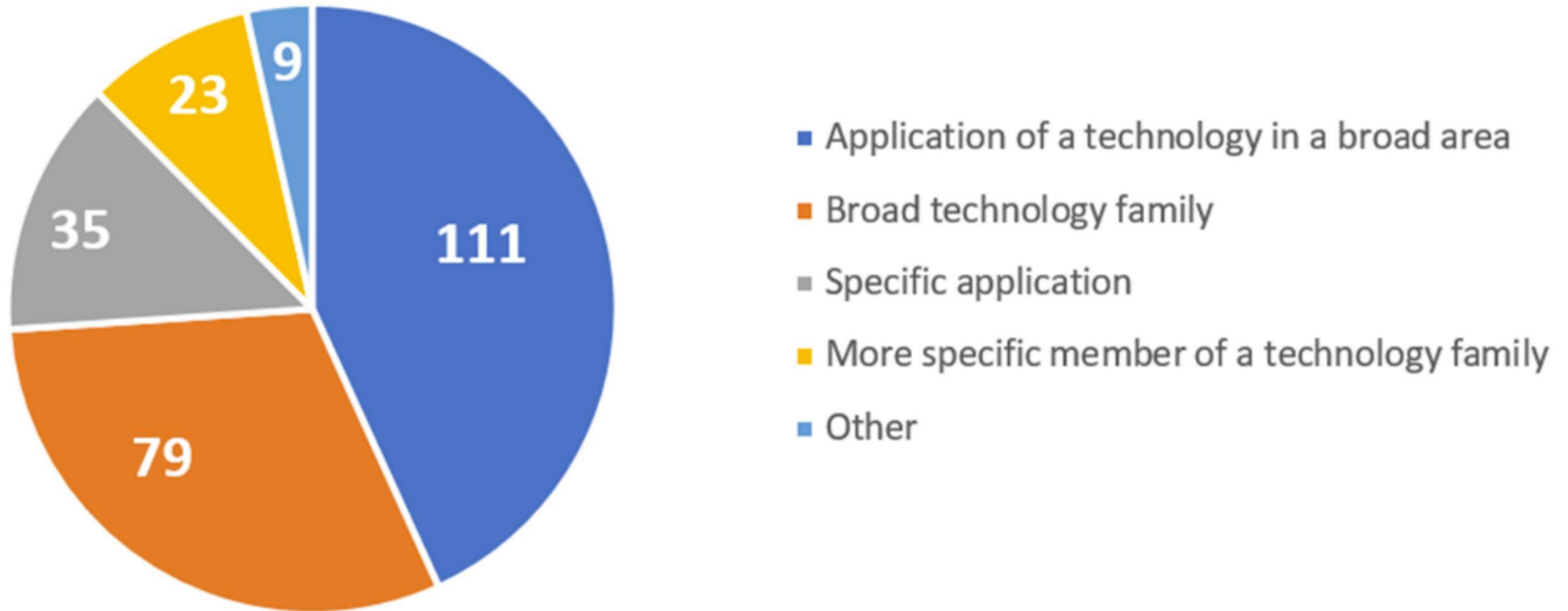
Characterisation of respondents by field of R&D



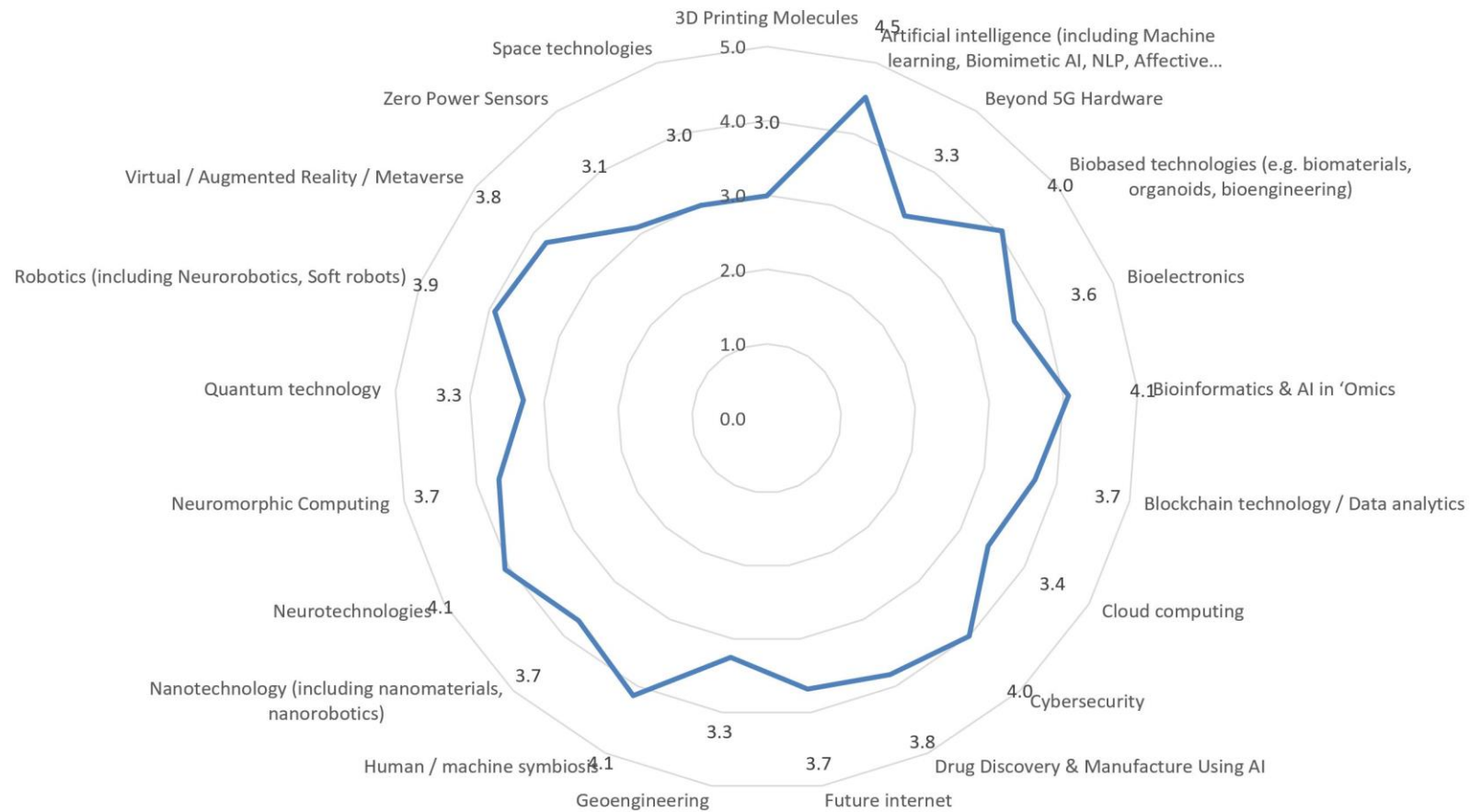
Expertise overlapping of respondents



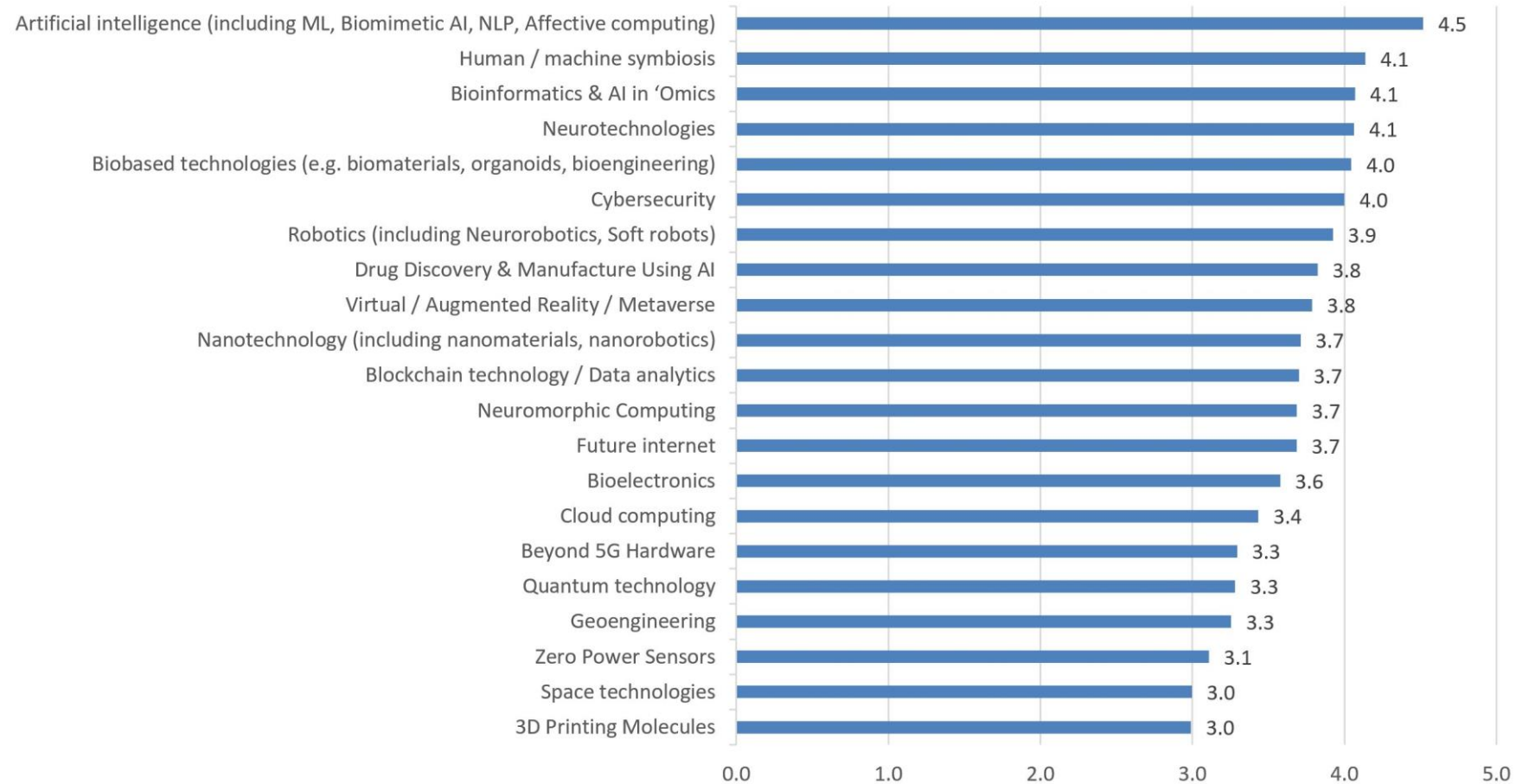
Respondents' preferred level of granularity of trainings for ethics experts



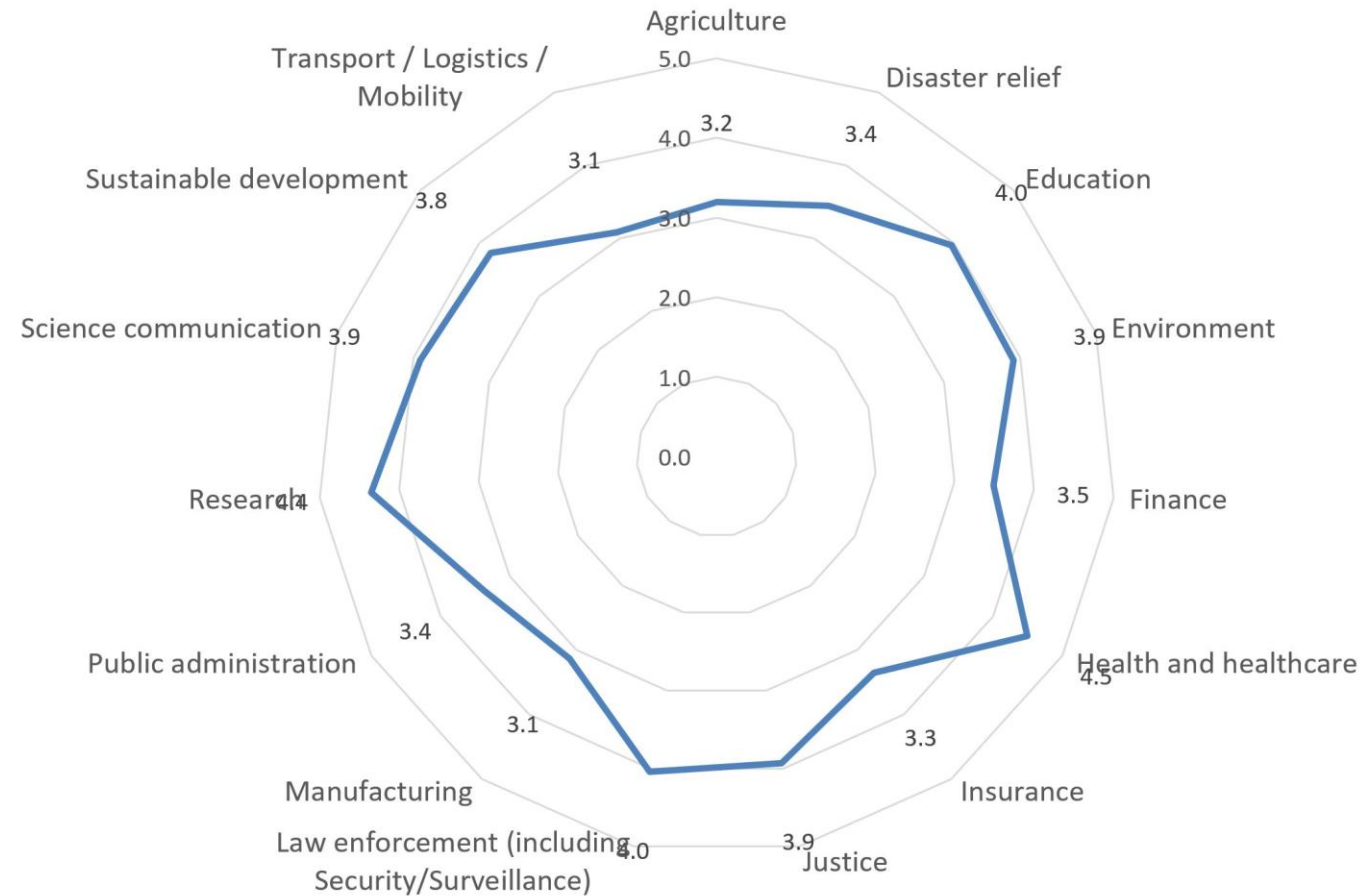
Radar diagram of perceived relevance of different technologies



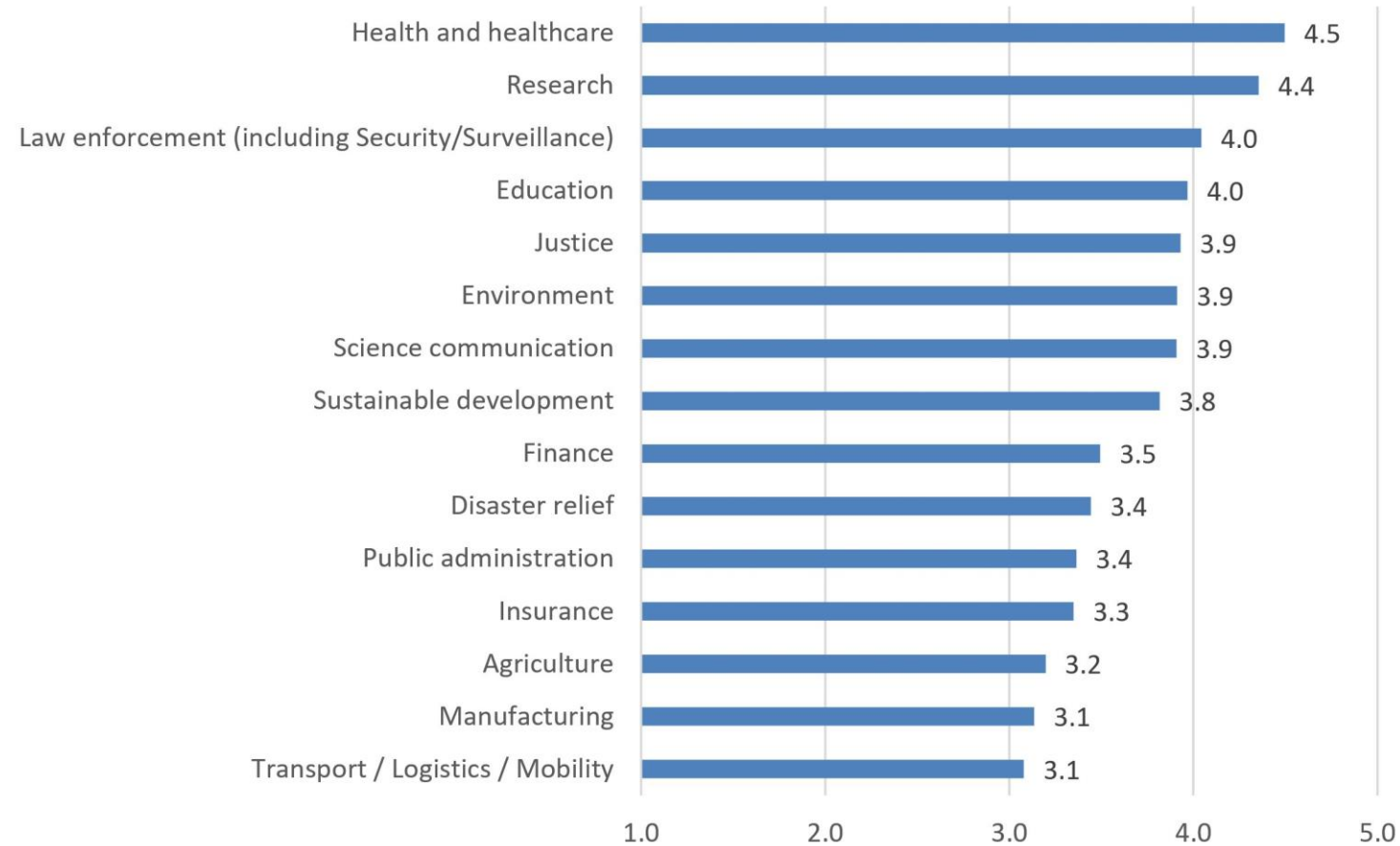
Need for research ethics resources and training



Radar diagram of needs for specific ethics resources and training



Need for specific ethics resources and training, for specific application areas



Contribution - Conclusion

- Description of a large-scale survey of REC members and related ethics experts to understand the knowledge gaps and potential training needs that these experts perceive. It thus makes an important contribution to the research on research ethics and the various processes employed for purposes of research ethics assessment.
- There are perceived gaps in knowledge and training needs that would help inform the work of RECs. In addition, it provides pointers to what these gaps are and which knowledge needs are present.

Thank you for your attention.
Σας ευχαριστώ.