



IFTAS Fediverse Moderator Needs Assessment Results

October 2023



Background

Needs Assessment conducted August 2023, all questions optional

134 respondents, representing:

- 202 servers / instances
- At least 1.3 million accounts (12% of all Fediverse accounts)
- 18 social media platforms
- 26 countries

Respondent Profile

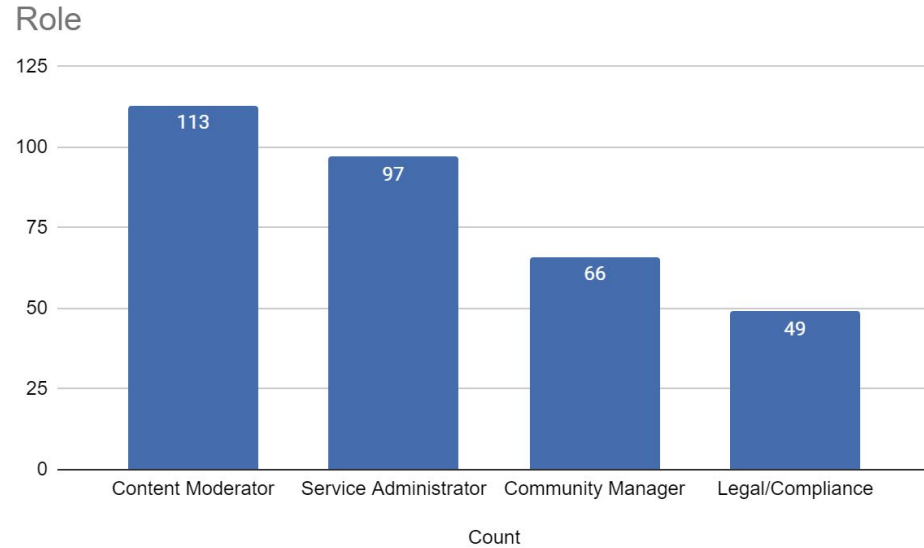
Staff role

128 respondents

Multiple choice, respondent can select one or more

39 (30%) selected all four roles

13 (10%) selected “Service Administrator” only



Service provision

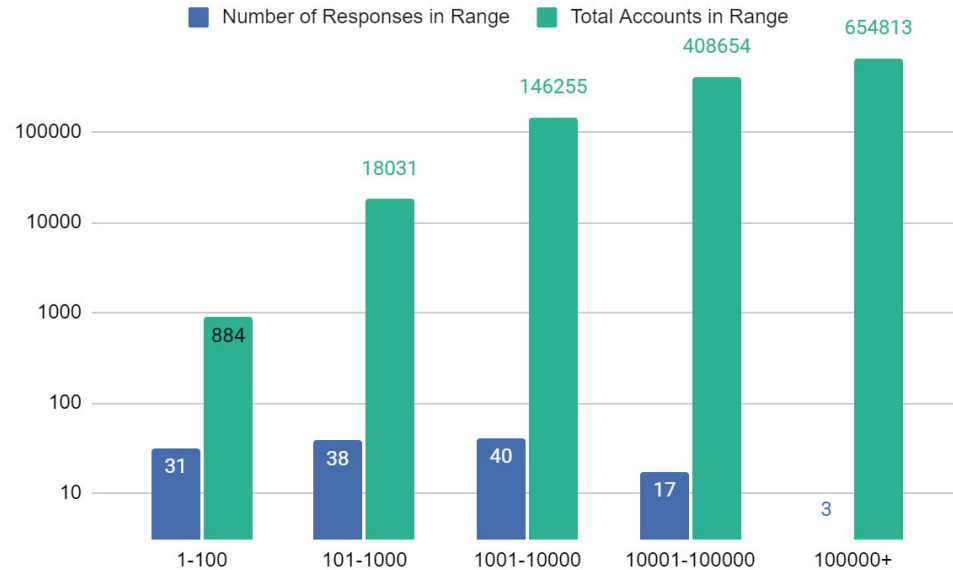
129 respondents

Some responses are MAU, not total accounts

At least 1.3 million accounts covered

Responses grouped by number of accounts

31 respondents host 100 accounts or fewer; 3 respondents host over 100,000 accounts



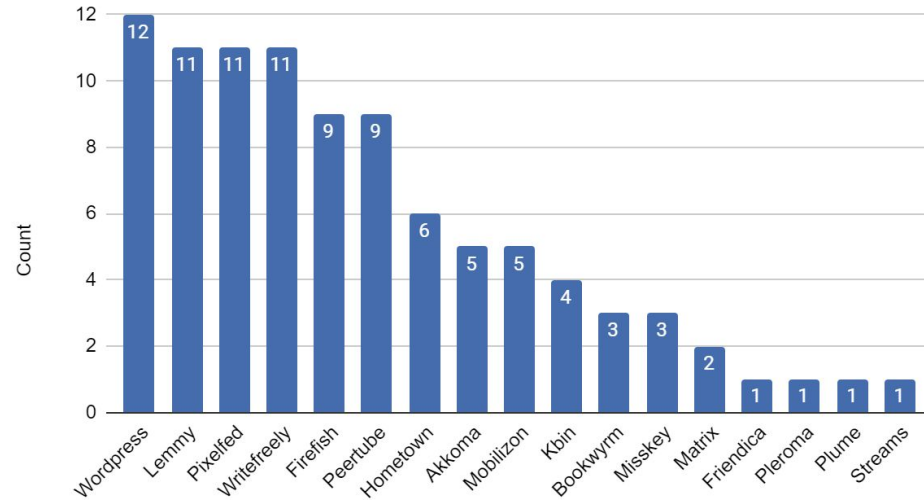
Number of Services

130 respondents

202 individual services reported

107 Mastodon servers, 95 Other (see chart)

Number of Services by Platform (Excluding Mastodon)



Staff Coverage

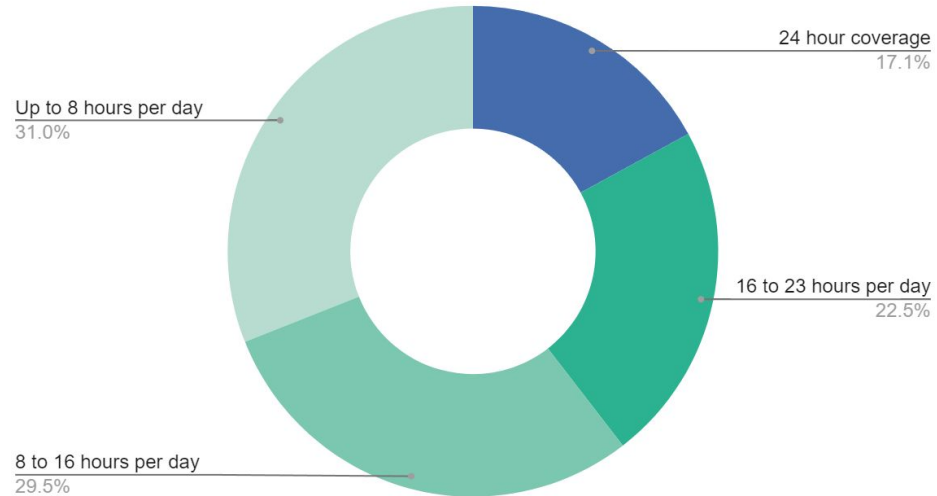
129 respondents

Respondents reported a total of 478 moderators on these 129 teams

1 Moderator for every 2,570 accounts

Only 17% have 24 hour coverage

Service Moderator Coverage



Experience

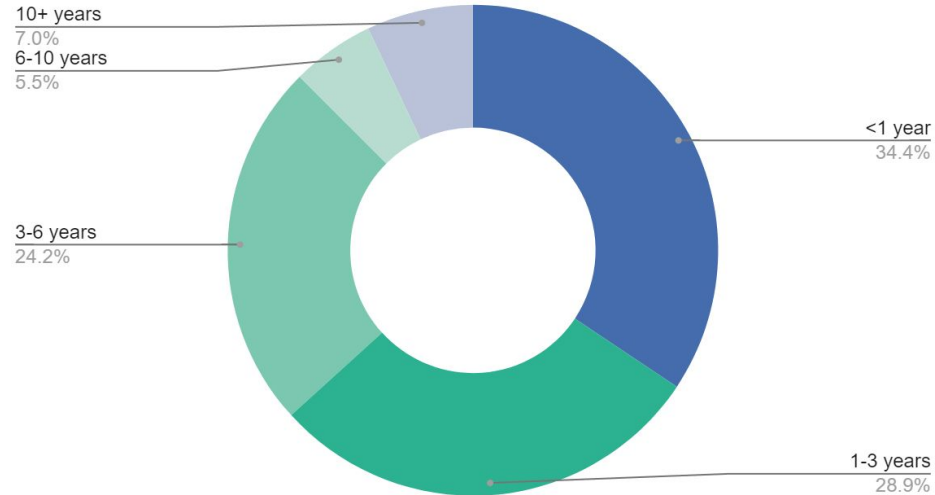
128 respondents

One in three have less than a years' experience

Two thirds of all respondents have less than 3 years' experience

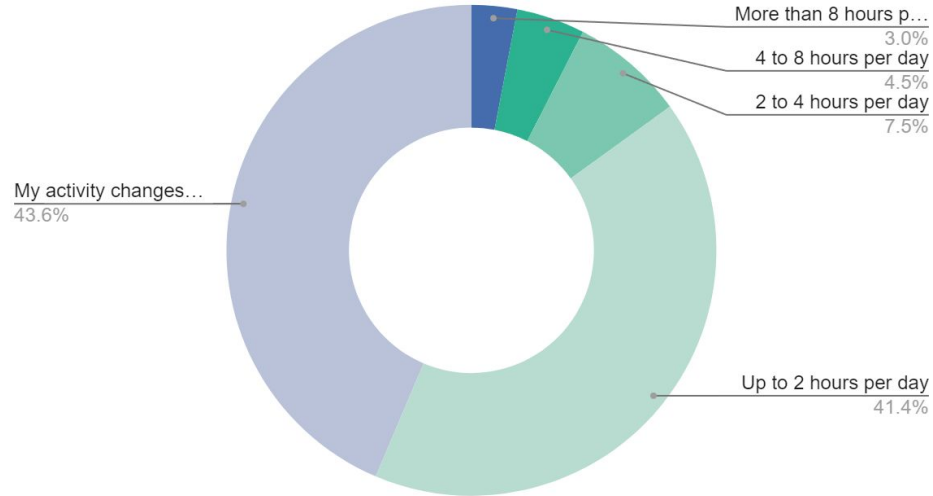
Over 12% have experience prior to 2017

Years Experience as a Content Moderator

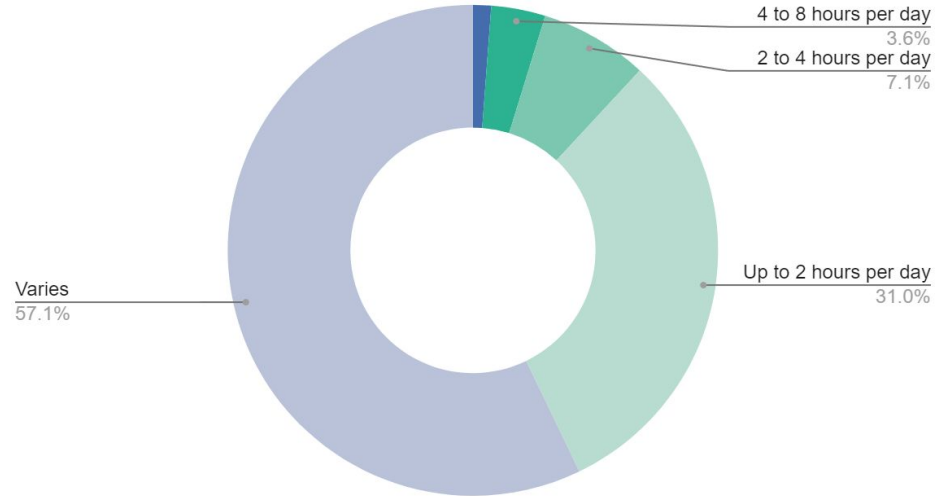




Hours per day performing content moderation (respondent)



Hours per day performing content moderation (team members)



Moderator Support

Formal moderator agreement

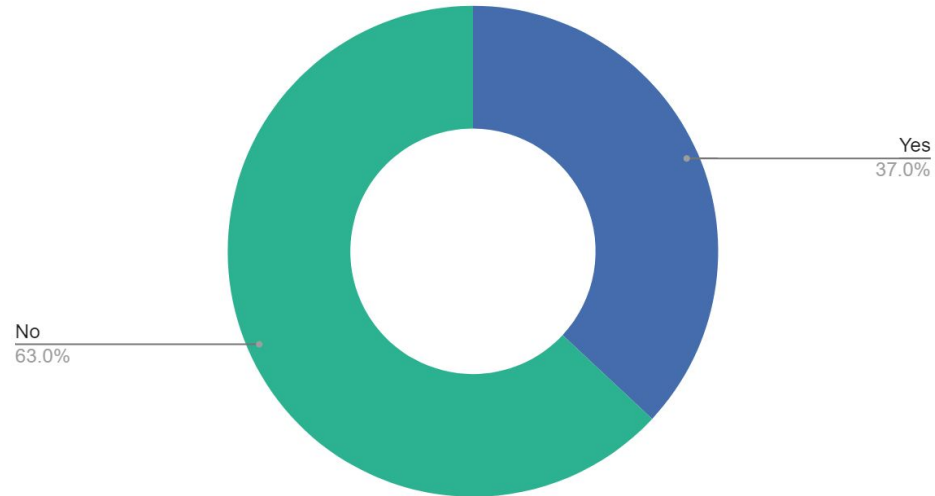
(Solo moderator services excluded)

92 respondents reported a team of two or more moderators

Two thirds of these teams do not have a moderator agreement

 *Key Resource: Provide a basic moderator agreement as a template*

Does the service provide a moderator agreement?




Moderator guidance

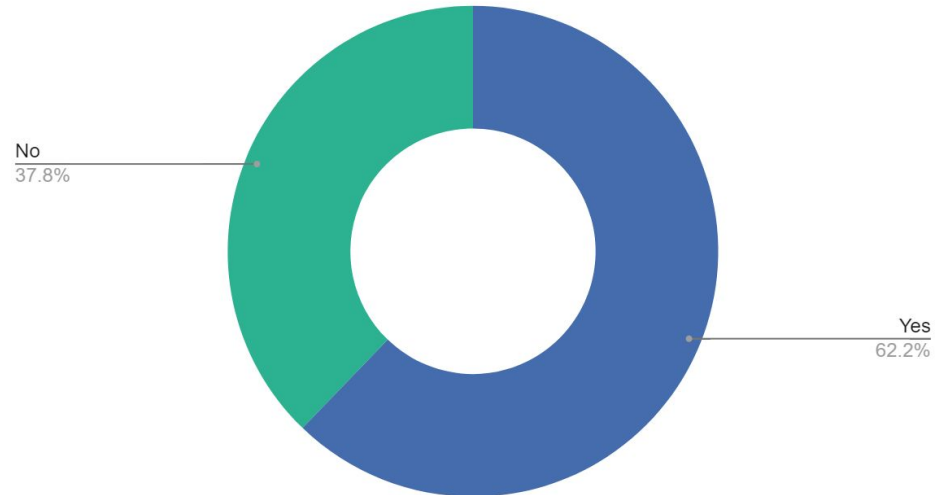
(Solo moderator services excluded)

90 respondents with two or more moderators

Over a third lack moderator guidance

 *Key Issue: Collate and share moderator guidance*

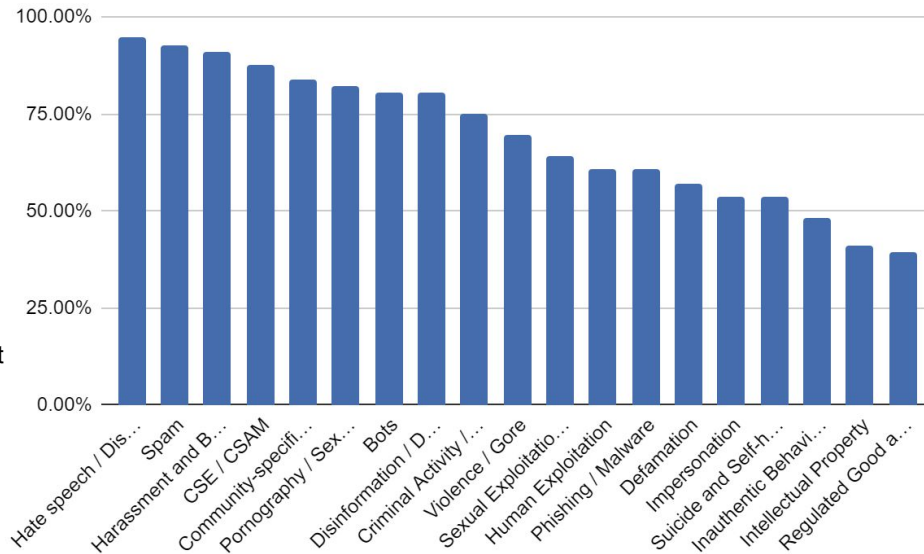
Formal moderator guidance provided?



Moderator guidance

56 respondents specified
if the guidance provided
covered:

Hate speech / Discrimination	Violence / Gore
Spam	Sexual Exploitation / Non-consent
Harassment / Bullying	Human Exploitation
CSE / CSAM	Phishing / Malware
Community-specific rules	Defamation
Pornography / Sexual Content	Impersonation
Bots	Suicide and Self-harm
Disinformation / Dangerous	Inauthentic Behaviour / Fake
Misinformation	Engagement
Criminal Activity / Terrorism / Violent	Intellectual Property
Extremism	Regulated Good and Services



Federation Denylisting

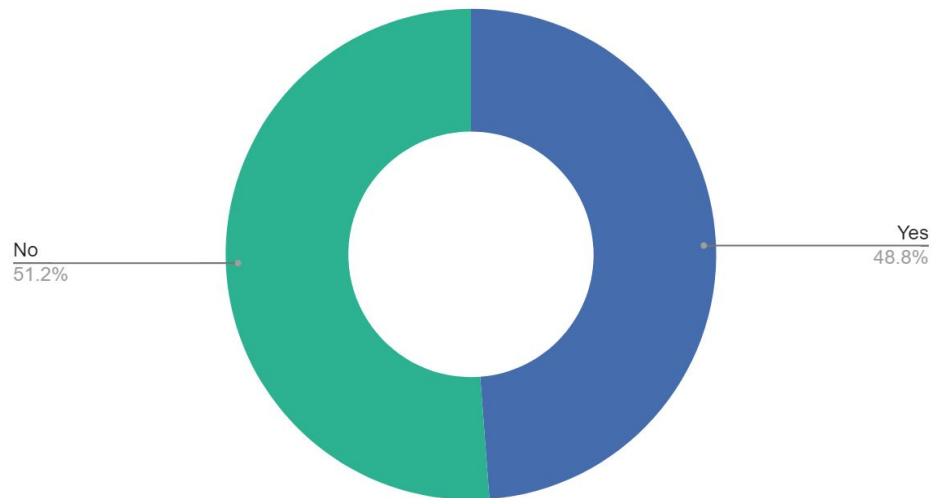
133 respondents

Notable mentions:

- Oliphant Lists (15)
- #FediBlock (12)
- “Other servers’ lists” (11)
- The Bad Space Blocklist (2)

Also mentioned: FediFence, FediSeer, Seirdy, RapidBlock, PeerTube Isolation

Has or Does your service use shared denylists?



Organisational Status

Content Jurisdiction

USA (44)

Germany (31)

France (20)

Canada, Finland (8)

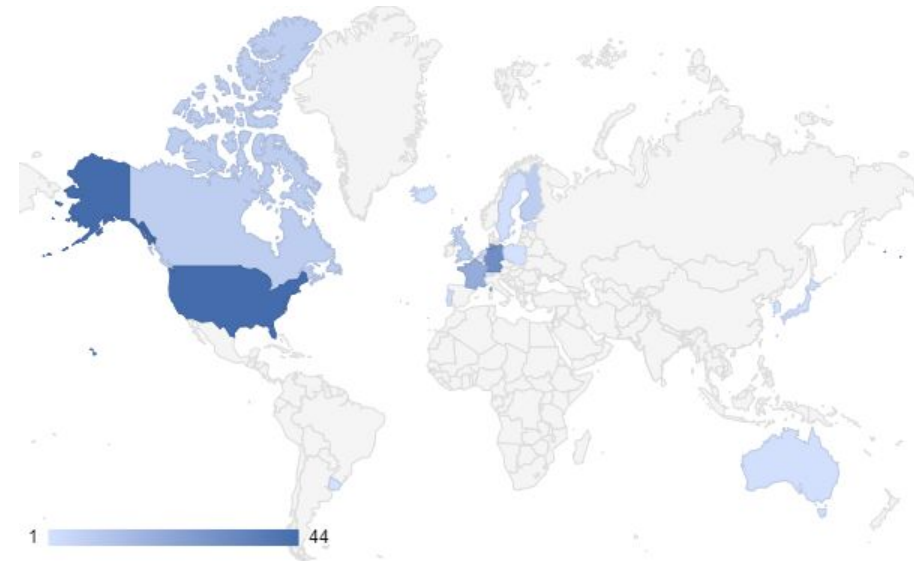
UK (7)

Australia, Japan, Sweden (2)

Estonia, Iceland, Netherlands, Poland,

Portugal, South Korea, Switzerland,

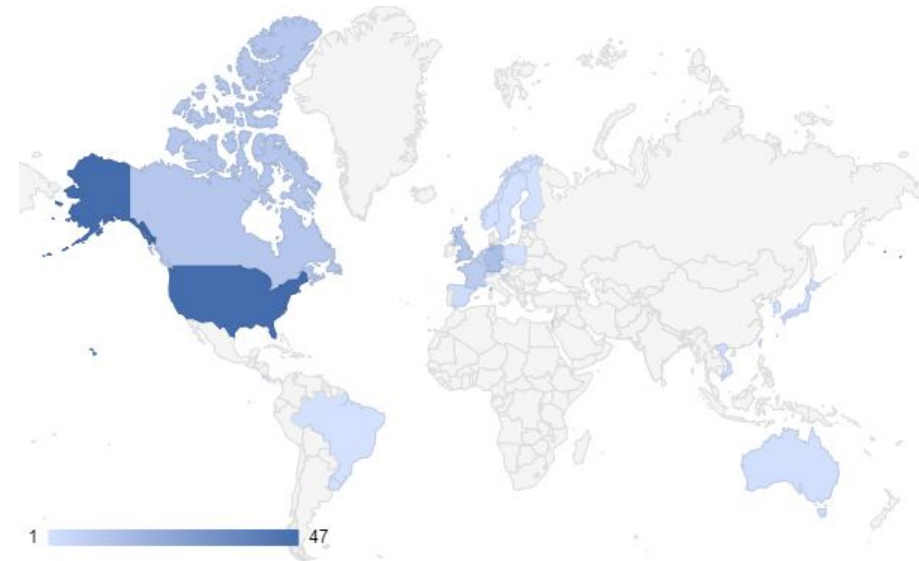
Uruguay (1)



 *Key Issue: Where the content is stored (hosted) defines some legal requirements*

Moderator Jurisdiction

Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Israel, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, UK, Uruguay, USA, Vietnam



Business Operations

30 (22%) respondents are moderating for a registered business

Only 7 of these provide business or liability insurance coverage

Business registrations in Canada, Estonia, France, Germany, Iceland, Netherlands, Poland, Switzerland, USA

Predominantly not-for-profit organisations, with some co-operatives and for-profit corporations

 *Key Issue: Uninsured service providers may incur liability*

Business Operations

10% of services have received legal notices or complaints including:

- Intellectual property (DMCA, copyright infringement)
- Impersonation
- CSAM preservation orders
- Defamation and GDPR claims, including for “publishing reasons for defederation”
- Takedown notice from Russian government agency

 *Key Resource: Collate or create basic legal guidance for administrators and moderators*

Business Operations

88 (66%) of services solicit donations or monetary support of some kind

11 (8%) compensate moderators for their labour

Of the 40 services that reported monthly financials, 9 are profitable, 31 are not

 *Key Issue: Moderators provide valuable service for little to no compensation*

Needs Assessment

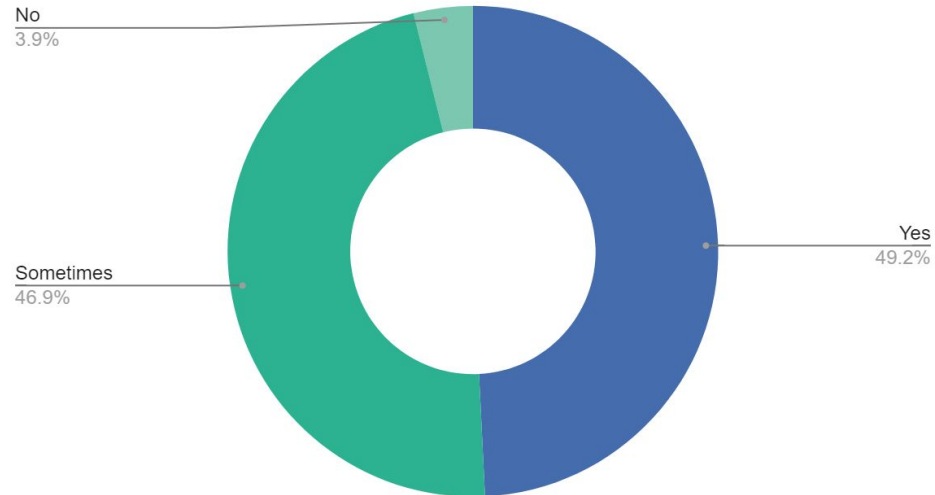
Self-assessment

“Do you personally feel you have enough knowledge and resources to adequately manage and moderate your membership?”

128 respondents

Mostly strong, confident, with some gaps


Adequate knowledge and resources



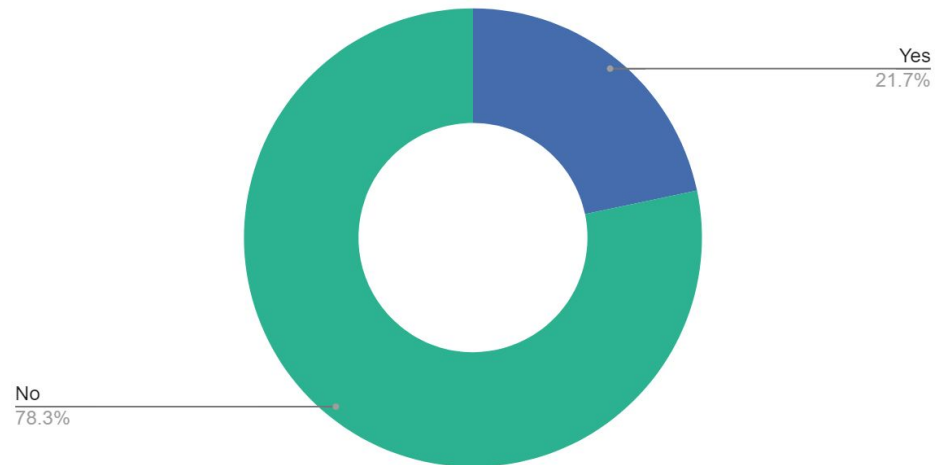
Wellness

“Have you personally experienced burnout or mental health issues due to your moderation activity in the past 12 months?”

129 respondents

 *Key Issue: Moderators need access to wellness and resilience resources*

Experienced burnout or mental health issues in the past 12 months?



Wellness Comments

“Witnessing CSAM nearly broke me”

“There was little to no support in the Fediverse itself for burnout”

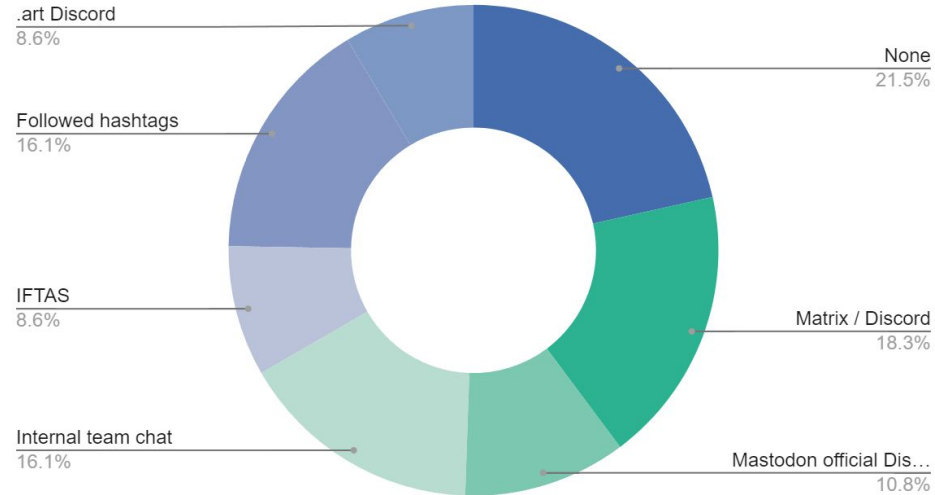
“The Fediverse needs a more robust community care approach to moderation, especially for the moderators”

 *Most common response was to simply walk away, take time off.*

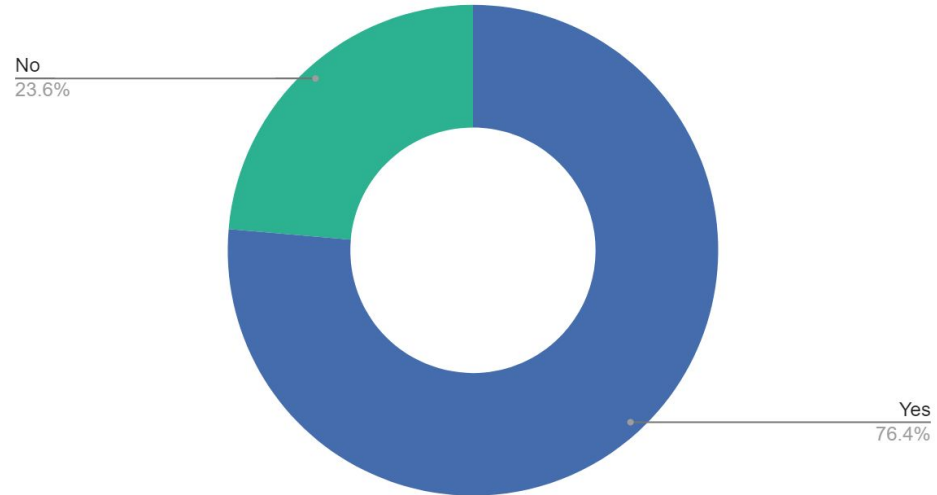
Some moderators reported using their moderator team or Fediverse peers as a support network.



Notable communities in use



Are you interested in learning about Moderator communities?




 **Key Resource:** *Create and share a directory of community resources*

Resource Needs

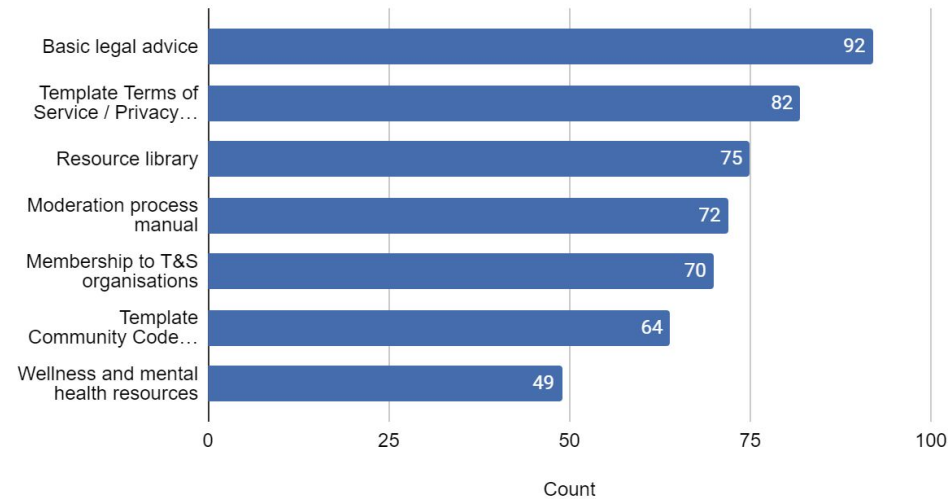
Specific resources offered

Surprisingly low interest in mental health resources

High interest in legal, legalese and compliance support

 *Key Issue: Moderators need access to pro bono and low bono legal counsel*


Specific Resource Needs

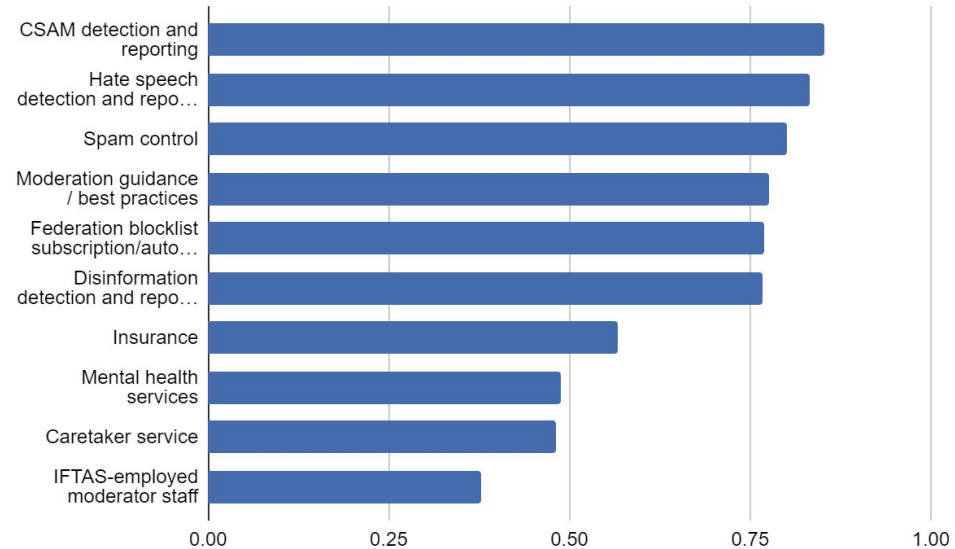


Where should IFTAS focus?

“If IFTAS were to make the following resources available, which of these are the most important to you?”

Stack ranking option

 *CSAM, Hate Speech, Spam, Best Practice, Denylist Management, Disinformation ranked highly*



Additional Comments

“Moderation tools need accessibility improvements for disabled moderators”

“Realise that Black, Muslim, Middle Eastern people find it hard to exist among the section of the Fediverse that we are familiar with (the English user base) and think seriously about how we can make it better for these user groups”

“...the shared blocklists are likely the big win - they aggregate the efforts of a large number of low-intensity moderators and thus concentrate a large amount of human judgment into a powerful resource”



Additional Comments

“It would be nice to have a centralized and effective CSAM reporting site.”

“info and updates on current disinformation campaigns online”

“A process for asking developers to develop features that help moderating”

“expertise in legal questions ... that could help us clarify compliance needs”

“Pay your BIPOC mods extra!”



Additional Comments

“Tips for incorporating as a business”

“a basic modifiable template for a privacy policy ... as well as best procedures for DMCA notices”

“It would be great if you could provide a platform that replaces the #fediblock hashtag”



“together we are stronger”

What's Next?

Key Needs and Issues

- Moderator agreement template
- Best practices and process guidance
- Legal guide for administrators and moderators
- A directory of moderator and admin communities
- Access to wellness and resilience resources
- Access to pro bono and low bono legal counsel

- Uninsured service providers may incur liability
- Moderators provide valuable service for little to no compensation
- CSAM, Hate Speech, Spam, Best Practice, Denylist Management, Disinformation ranked highly

What We're Doing

1. Exploring services like Tall Poppy to provide digital safety and incident response services
2. Compiled a CSAM resource guide: <https://github.com/iftas-org/resources/tree/main/CSAM-CSE>
3. Researching an automated CSAM detection and reporting service
4. Building a federation domain service to automate domain federation denylist management for new administrators, coupled with a “minimum necessary” starter denylist
5. Meeting with organisations like GLAAD, Dangerous Speech Project, Project Arachnid, Safe Online, University of Middlesex and others to gather resources to meet the needs assessment

How to Participate

Advisory: Domain expertise in legal, trust & safety, best practice, community management, wellness/resilience, federation tooling

Steering: Moderator Practice Panel

Matrix Chat and Workgroups:

<https://matrix.to/#/#space:matrix.iftas.org>

Community Web Site coming soon!

Learn more: <https://about.iftas.org>



Thank You!

To all our respondents, thank you for participating, and for the important work you do!

To all the service providers, moderators, community managers, and everyone invested in making the Internet a safer place to be, thank you for helping create better social media for all!

