Use of Formal Ethical Reviews in NLP Literature
Historical Trends and Current Practices

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ACL 2021 Findings
Ethics in NLP

- NLP applications are ubiquitous
  - raises concerns on the ethical use of the technologies

- How do we take care of ethics of NLP research?
  - Personal morality
  - Ethics Committee at Conferences
  - Institutional Review Board (IRB)

- Look at the trends of IRB approvals over years
- Search for IRB-related terms and manually check
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Many papers are now discussing ethics of their research (>5%).

Mention of IRB-related terms are miniscule.
Increasing over the years especially in the recent times.

LREC and Workshops have consistently taken more approvals owing to resource collection and diverse kinds of work.
Trends in NLP conferences

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- LREC and Workshops have consistently taken more approvals owing to resource collection and diverse kinds of work.
Types of IRB Mentions

Statistics on *aspects*

- Collection: 41.3% (24)
- Annotation: 34% (20)
- Scraping: 13% (7)
- User Studies: 20% (12)

- Data Repurposing: 1 paper
- Sensitive System: 1 paper
## Geography and Affiliation

WEIRD countries and universities take (or report) the most approval.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Total Papers</th>
<th>Percent Papers</th>
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<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>47/5368</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
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<td>Germany</td>
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<td>UK</td>
<td>5/1088</td>
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<td>China</td>
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<td>University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joint/Collaboration</td>
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WEIRD = Western, Educated Industrialized, Rich, Democratic.
In Related Conferences
Please visit our Poster @
NLP for Positive Impact Workshop