

Report of the Editors of *Perspectives on Politics* to the American Political Science Association, 2023

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This report covers *Perspectives on Politics*' journal operations for the year 2023, along with briefer comments related to developments during the first two months of 2024. This year brought a season of change as the Northwestern University editorial team took responsibility for the journal in June, rounding out the six-year tenure of the University of Florida team. In addition to the transfer of lead editorship to Ana Arjona and Wendy Pearlman at Northwestern University, leadership of the book review section of the journal transferred to Anne Wolf, University of Oxford, Kathrin Bachleitner, University of Salzburg, and Sarah Bufkin, University of Birmingham, in late 2023. We extend the utmost gratitude to the past *Perspectives on Politics* editors, Michael Bernhard and Daniel I. O'Neill of the University of Florida. Their guidance and support throughout the editorial transition was invaluable.

Despite these major changes, journal operations have proceeded smoothly and apace.¹ All four issues of 2023 were published on time. As described in more detail below, the time taken for editorial decisions has remained consistent with those of the previous editorial team. Jennifer Boylan's continued role as the Managing Editor has been essential in ensuring the journal's success during this transition, as has the hard work of phenomenal editorial assistants first at the University of Florida, including Stephanie Denardo, Graham Gallagher, Karla Mundim, and Kelly Richardson, and now at Northwestern University, including Jinxue Chen, Elizabeth Good, Jack McGovern, and Sarah Moore. Though this report will not discuss book reviews, we thank Karla Mundim for her invaluable role as the interim book review editor while APSA recruited a new book review team and it prepared for its role.

The data on submissions and published material that we present in this report will reflect the efforts of both the Northwestern and University of Florida teams in managing the journal throughout 2023. Our discussion of editorial innovations will reflect the ongoing vision of the Northwestern team, as informed by the prior editorial teams' work.

EDITORIAL INNOVATIONS

INSTITUTIONALIZING INTERNAL PROCESSES

From the beginning of our term, we have prioritized the institutionalization of our workflow and optimization of our editorial processes. Shared leadership between two editors-in-chief, and their shared management of submissions across all subfields, presented a risk of introducing inefficiencies and inconsistent application of journal procedures and standards. Since the start of our term, we have given serious attention to how to mitigate

these risks and instead transform our partnership from a potential liability into a strength insofar as it allows us to bring two minds to any problem rather than one. In addition to continuous daily communication between the co-editors-in-chief, we have authored numerous guideline documents and created standard operating procedures to govern our day-to-day operations. The resulting *Perspectives* Editorial Guidebook formalizes our processes for submission intake, conference review, reviewer invitations, reviewer reminders, and decision letter writing, as well as pre-production guidelines for ourselves and our editorial assistants. In cases where we do not have a straightforward policy or there is gray area about an editorial decision, editors confer with each other or an editorial board member to decide how to best navigate the issue at hand. Every time we encounter a new situation that would benefit from uniform policies, we add this update to our guidelines.

The resulting guidebook has been invaluable in improving workflow and creating consistency within our team. We will be proud to pass this work along to future editorial teams in order to aid their work and ensure smooth transitions for the journal as a whole. In addition to this guidebook, we have created templates for all letters that come from our editorial team for efficient usage and consistent verbiage in communicating with authors. Lastly, we have created a robust system of recordkeeping for ourselves and editorial assistants using a sophisticated database tool. In using this database, we have improved our communications and decision-making processes regarding internal conference review, letter drafting, external reviewer selection, and ongoing journal tasks, in large part because of the action alerts categorizing which papers need attention and what type of action is needed. Furthermore, this system allows us to collect real-time metrics, such as conference review decisions, across members of the editorial team.

INNOVATIONS ON MANUSCRIPTS

We have instituted several innovations concerning manuscripts. In line with citation changes at other major political science journals, such as the *American Journal of Political Science* and *Comparative Political Studies*, we decided no longer to count references as part of articles' overall word count. With production having moved mostly online and Cambridge University Press's (CUP) increased shift to open-access agreements, the journal is not beholden to strict issue proof page counts as it once was, negating the impact of the small increase in published article lengths. Significantly, several studies show that published works tend to undercite scholars of certain backgrounds, name-

ly women, people of color, and early career scholars.² In removing references from the maximum of 12,000 words allowed for research articles, we seek to encourage scholars to engage in fair and equitable citation practices.

Additionally, we have also initiated changes in our expectations of reflection essays. As in the past, we envision reflections as contemplative or programmatic essays that address important questions in political science, though shorter than original research articles (6,000 to 10,000 words). While reflection essays were previously subject to peer review by only two external reviewers, we have recently adjusted these requirements so that reflections will be reviewed by three external reviewers. In addition, we are no longer accepting writers' anonymous inquiries seeking editors' responses to potential reflection topics.

COMMITMENTS TO ETHICAL RESEARCH

In our first months of editorship, we explored several protocols to ensure that articles reviewed and published by *Perspectives* comply with APSA's *Principles and Guidance for Human Subjects Research*.³ As a first step, we consulted with editor Elisabeth Wood and Managing Editor Dragana Svraka of the *American Political Science Review* (APSR) to learn about initiatives they have implemented that we could use as a model and frame of reference. In that context, we assembled a special Research Ethics Advisory Committee with which we will consult on ethics questions related to particular manuscripts or other journal matters as they arise. This committee is composed of editorial board members representing different areas of substantive and methodological expertise and all four political science subfields: Charli Carpenter, Juliet Hooker, Anja Neundorf, Trisha Phillips, and Joe Soss. Members of this committee have already been important in assessing ethical dilemmas we have encountered in the editorial process.

Moving forward, we envision adopting several additional procedures that have emerged from our ongoing conversations about research ethics. First, following the experience of the APSR, we will ask authors to respond to several queries upon manuscript submission to determine if their research complies with APSA Principles, particularly related to research with human participants. If, for some reason, the research does not conform to these disciplinary standards, authors must explain why. We will also ask that reviewers evaluate a manuscript's adherence to disciplinary ethical standards and research transparency as part of the review process. Furthermore, authors of accepted manuscripts will be asked to affirm that they have complied with APSA Principles at the end of their article if their manuscript is accepted for publication.

THEMATICS

We are maintaining the tradition of thematic programming implemented by the University of Florida team in publishing special sections. Unlike calls for papers wherein journals invite submissions that fit a certain theme, special sections feature articles that we select at a much later stage of the editorial process. We carefully group accepted articles published on FirstView based on their core themes and then decide which theme to highlight as we plan the issue. As such, each article included in a special section goes through its own independent review and we choose articles for the special section only after they are accepted and in production.

Table 1 below presents the names of and links to special sections published in Volume 21. In Issue 1, the special section titled "Las Américas" features articles on Latin America spanning a range of substantive issues, such as democratic backsliding, policing, and inclusion. The special section in Issue 2, "Green Political Science," builds on the journal's history of publishing scholarship related to climate change politics and contains a series of articles related to topics such as environmentalism in rural America and competition between the climate movement and hydrocarbon interests. Rather than picking a particular special theme for Issue 3, the outgoing editors from the University of Florida chose one article on each of the topics of the previous special sections published under their editorship. In Volume 21 Issue 4, the first issue produced by the Northwestern University team, the special section was "Methods, Ethics, Motivations: Connecting the How and Why of Political Science." The articles in this special section span subfields and engage in impactful questions relevant to methodological debates beyond the immediate subfield of the individual article authors. Additionally, we are curating mini-sections, which bring together a fewer number of articles but also highlight an important theme. Issue 4 also included a mini-section of reflections centered on collective action. We have identified similar special sections and mini-sections in the issues to come in 2024. In Issue 1 of Volume 22, we feature two special sections: "Women, Representation and Politics" and "Democracy." Issue 2 of Volume 22 includes "Economic Inequality and Redistribution," "Political Violence: Attitudes and Determinants," and "Conceptual Innovation in the Study of Race and Politics."

Table 1: Special Sections Published in Volume 21

Issue	Special Section Name	ToC Link
21 (1)	Las Américas	https://bit.ly/3Ur2hGF
21 (2)	Green Political Science	https://bit.ly/4cWBdXm
21 (3)	University of Florida Culminating Issue	https://bit.ly/3xBVBVX
21 (4)	Methods, Ethics, Motivations: Connecting the How and Why of Political Science	https://bit.ly/3JqeKnP

SUBMISSIONS AND JOURNAL STATUS

EDITORIAL REVIEW PROCESS

When authors submit a manuscript to *Perspectives*, they can expect editors to reach an initial decision within 10 days. Our initial editorial decisions reflect the independent evaluation of two readers on the editorial team. They assess the quality and scope of the manuscript's conceptual, theoretical, or empirical innovation, and also assess the methodological rigor of empirical works. These two independent readers discuss each manuscript based on these dimensions. If a manuscript meets our expectations regarding quality, innovation, and clarity of contribution to a broad audience, it will be sent for external review.

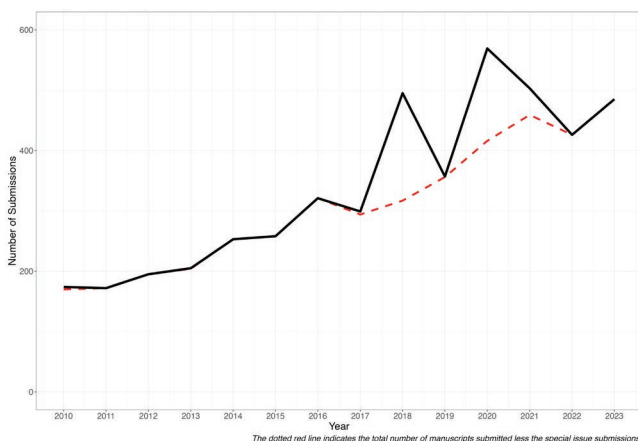
In choosing external reviewers, we try to select a wide array of perspectives for each manuscript, in terms of both demographic diversity and substantive expertise. As much as possible, we strive for gender parity and, when appropriate given the research area, to invite a significant percentage of reviewers based outside the United States. In instances where a manuscript is not sent for external review, we craft a letter that briefly justifies our decision. Due to the substantive engagement that we afford all submissions, these letters also aim to provide authors with suggestions that we believe might improve the manuscript

in its later iterations. In providing this feedback, we hope that all authors enjoy a positive experience with the *Perspectives* editorial process and come away with thoughtful feedback to move their scholarly work forward, regardless of editorial outcome. We have been gratified that numerous authors have taken the initiative to write and thank us for these letters, commenting on how much they appreciated this feedback and believe that our suggestions will help them improve their work.

SUBMISSIONS AND EDITORIAL DECISIONS

Perspectives received 485 regular article and reflections submissions in 2023. Only three previous years surpass this total—2018, 2020, and 2021—all of which included special issue calls for papers. Figure 1 shows the number of submissions from 2010 to 2023. The dotted line in figure 1 indicates the number of article or reflections submissions not counted as part of the journal’s calls for papers. Excluding papers submitted in response to a call for papers, these metrics indicate that the journal has received an average of 24 more submissions per year and the volume of submissions to *Perspectives* has increased 185% from 2010 to 2023.

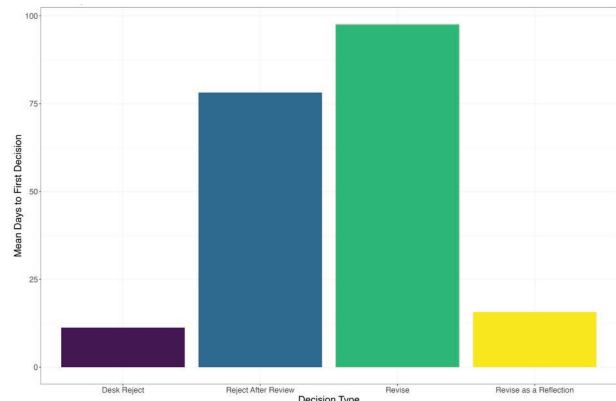
Figure 1: Yearly Submissions to *Perspectives on Politics*



Of the manuscripts submitted in 2023, the Florida team had initial responsibility for 37.5% and the Northwestern team had initial and ongoing responsibility for the remaining 62.5%. Despite the change of editorial team in June and the new team’s acclimation to the editorial process, our submission intake and editorial decision-making remained constant this year. In figure 2 we show the average time to first decision for manuscripts submitted during 2023. Authors received desk reject letters in an average of 11 days. The average times to first decision are equivalent between the two 2023 editorial teams. Among manuscripts sent out for external review, authors received initial reviewer decisions, either revise or reject after external review, in an average of 88 days, or about twelve and a half weeks. Accepted articles reached final decision in 257 days, about eight and a half months, on average.

Turning to the editorial decisions on manuscripts, table 2 presents the first-round editorial outcomes for all manuscripts for which a first decision was made in 2023. The share of manuscripts declined without external review, i.e., desk rejected, decreased slightly from 61% in 2022 to 57%. A small share of research article manuscripts (3%) were not desk rejected; instead, we assessed that the manuscript would be more successful as a

Figure 2: Average Time to First Decisions, 2023



reflection essay than as a research article, and we invited the authors to revise the piece as a reflection and resubmit it to the journal. Of all submitted manuscripts, 23% were rejected based on reviewer recommendations and 17% were invited to revise and resubmit. In all, *Perspectives’* initial decisions on manuscripts remain distributed similarly to previous years, as we show in table 3, which provides the distribution of first round decisions for all manuscripts from 2015 to 2023.

Table 2: First Round Editorial Decisions Made in 2023

First Decision	Number of Manuscripts	Percent
Desk Reject	258	57%
Reject After External Review	104	23%
Revise	79	17%
Revise as Reflection	14	3%
Total Decisions	455	100%

Note: This table only accounts for decisions made in 2023, not for all manuscripts submitted in 2023. It does not account for papers that remain under external review, were withdrawn by the authors, or are yet to reach a first-round decision due to other circumstances.

Table 3: Outcome of First Round of Review Process, 2015-2023 (%)

Year	Desk Reject	Reject After Review	Revise as Reflection	Major Revision	Minor Revision	Conditional Accept	Accept
2023	56.7	22.9	3.1	16	1.3	0	0
2022	61.4	29.2	0	6.9	2	0.5	0
2021	58.5	27.7	0	11.3	2.2	0.4	0
2020	60.9	25.5	0	11	2.1	0.6	0
2019	56	26.2	0	14.3	2.9	0.6	0
2018	62.5	21.7	0	13.9	1.4	0.4	0
2017	59.4	25.2	0	10.3	2.7	0.3	1.7
2016	69.1	22.3	0	5.5	2.8	0.3	0
2015	69.6	19.2	0	7.2	4	0	0

DIVERSITY IN AUTHORSHIP

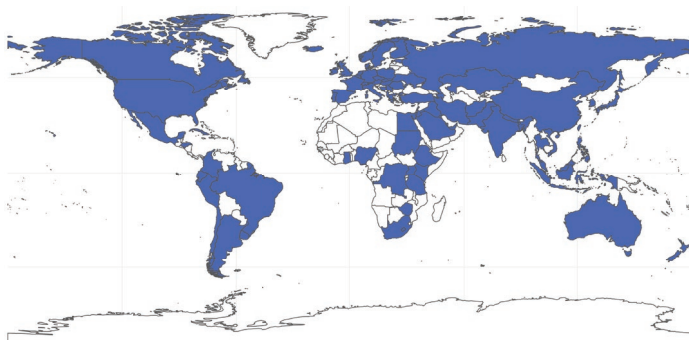
Previous editorial teams invested significant effort in the journal’s internationalization and diversification. To understand *Perspectives’* progress toward that goal, we obtained anonymized demographic data from APSA for all submitting authors from 2018 to 2023. Our resulting dataset consists of each author’s position, institution type, self-reported gender identity, and race or ethnicity, as well as their location. We present metrics constructed with some of these data points below.

Table 4 presents the split between non-US-based and US-based authors for all manuscripts submitted from 2018 to 2023. These metrics indicate that the journal has achieved one aspect of internationalization in that its reach to authors beyond the United States has increased. In recent years, the number of submitting authors outside of the US has even exceeded that of US based authors. What is more, the diversity of author countries has also increased. In 2018, authors came from 42 distinct countries, whereas in 2023 authors came from 58 distinct countries. Over the six-year period that the data cover, authors submitting to *Perspectives* came from 89 distinct countries. Figure 3 presents the geographic spread of author country locations for all years in the data.

Table 4: Author Location Given All Authors on All Submissions (%)

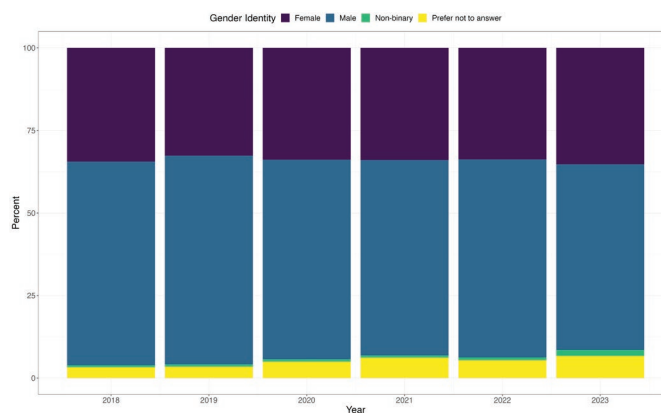
Year	Non-US Based	US Based
2018	36	64
2019	47	53
2020	51	49
2021	46	54
2022	55	45
2023	55	45

Figure 3: Geographic Distribution of Submission Authors, 2018-2023



Recent discipline-wide efforts have also sought to illuminate gender-based disparities in publication processes and professional development.⁴ Thus, a major concern of *Perspectives* is to ensure that none of our editorial processes entrench existing inequities. In figure 4, we present the self-reported gender of submitting authors. The percentage of submitting authors identifying as women, an average of 34%, has remained substantially similar over the six-year period that the data covers. These metrics indicate that there is not yet parity between the number of men and women submitting their work to *Perspectives*. Additionally, the percentage of women to men authors is slightly less than that of women in the discipline, as indicated by APSA membership demographics, in which women account for 39% of all members.⁵ Over the period for which data are available, an average of about 1% of authors identified as non-binary. As APSA does not directly identify the percentage of non-binary members, apart from those members who identify their gender as "Other", we do not have a clear benchmark. We hope that later reports can clarify if *Perspectives*' submission trends reflect the wider discipline in terms of this type of gender diversity.

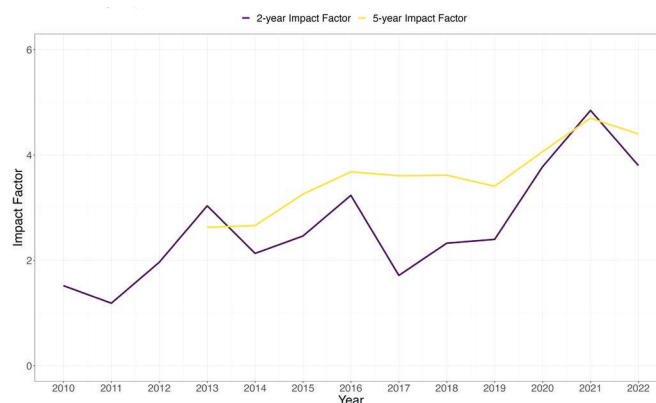
Figure 4: Gender Identity of Submitting Authors, 2018-2023



JOURNAL STATUS METRICS

Perspectives on Politics remains highly regarded among peer journals in the discipline based on data available from several scientometric indices. Figure 5 presents *Perspectives*' two-year and five-year Clarivate Journal Impact Factor (JIF2 and JIF5, respectively).⁶ The most recent JIFs from 2022 (JIF2: 3.8; JIF5: 4.4) represent a slight decrease from the journal's all-time high JIF in 2021 (JIF2: 4.8; JIF5: 4.7). Nonetheless, *Perspectives* remains in the 85th percentile of political science journals with respect to the JIF and in the 93rd percentile of disciplinary journals in terms of citations.⁷

Figure 5: Journal Impact Factor, 2010-2022



Additionally, Google Scholar's most recent h5-index ranking, which accounts for articles published from 2018 to 2022, places *Perspectives* thirteenth in Political Science—a step above last year's ranking.⁸ *Perspectives* also improved on the two metrics on which Google Scholar bases its ranking: the h5-ranking and the h5-median. The h5-ranking indicates that 45 articles published by *Perspectives* in the last five years have at least 45 citations each.⁹ The h5-median indicates that the 45 articles comprising the h5-ranking have a median citation count of 72. In 2022, *Perspectives*' h5-ranking and h5-median were 41 and 63, respectively. Table 5 shows *Perspectives*' ranking and performance on the h5-index relative to other peer journals.

LOOKING FORWARD

Beginning in 2024, CUP implemented a new production policy,

guided by the increasing transition to Open Access Agreements with colleges and universities, whereby our journal's issue publication would no longer be governed by page counts. Instead of hitting a page count, we work with CUP on the number of articles and reflections we intend to publish per issue. With this increased flexibility, *Perspectives* has been able to decrease the number of articles and reflections on FirstView waiting to be placed in an issue.

Despite the record number of submissions received in 2023, the new editorial team is efficiently handling the increased workload. For the first two months of 2024, we have accepted 25 new papers that have been sent to CUP for publishing, as compared to 23 papers sent to CUP from June through December 2023. As of the end of February 2024, three articles or reflections have been published, and another 23 articles or reflections are in various stages of production. Book review publications are also now published on FirstView before appearing in an issue.

As we venture further into 2024, we have several innovations on which we plan to focus, particularly related to retaining the journal's identity and continuing to increase its impact. *Perspectives on Politics* has long been a journal for asking big questions, tackling these questions with potentially unorthodox methods, and engaging with broad audiences. As the journal increases in popularity and standing among top-ranked political science journals, we want to ensure that the journal does not lose sight of its founding mission and uniqueness within the discipline.

In the interest of preserving the journal's character and broad impact, we will hold focus groups with scholars to identify how they view *Perspectives'* mission within the discipline, the barriers people face to pursuing the types of work that *Perspectives* has historically published, and how we might conceive of *Perspectives'* mission in the current scientific environment. We had a highly engaging and informative discussion on this topic in our virtual Editorial Board meeting in January 2024 and we now hope to continue to build on those insights by broadening the conversation to include a highly diverse set of scholars. We hope the information that we gather will help us to understand how to bolster these aspects that have made *Perspectives* such a special journal, while not impeding its continued growth and disciplinary impact.

We also hope to continue expanding upon previous editorial teams' commitments to diversification and internationalization. While *Perspectives* and the wider discipline have come a long way to improve upon these aspects in scholarly publication, we know there is still more to be done. Therefore, we envision carrying out another set of focus groups to understand how journals like *Perspectives* can further promote the participation of traditionally underrepresented scholars and diverse types of research within our discipline. ■

Table 5: Google h5-rankings, Political Science

Rank	Publication	h5-ranking	h5-median
1	American Political Science Review	73	126
2	American Journal of Political Science	68	108
3	Journal of European Public Policy	67	115
4	The Journal of Politics	65	92
5	British Journal of Political Science	62	84
6	Comparative Political Studies	58	80
7	Annual Review of Political Science	54	93
8	West European Politics	51	78
9	JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies	48	72
10	European Journal of Political Research	46	77
11	Political Behavior	46	67
12	Journal of Democracy	45	85
13	<i>Perspectives on Politics</i>	45	72
14	Democratization	45	65
15	Political Analysis	44	85
16	Political Science Research and Methods	42	69
17	Party Politics	41	63
18	Political Studies	40	57

Endnotes

1. We are sincerely appreciative of the support we have received from APSA and Cambridge University Press, particularly Steven Rathgeb Smith, Jon Gurstelle, Tia Gracey, Karima Scott, Mark Zadrozny, David Mainwaring, Lauren Marra, Jim Ansell, Lucie Taylor, Andrew Hyde, Gavin Swanson, Linda Lindenfelser, and Gail Naron Chalew, in helping to ensure our smooth transition.
2. Dion et al. 2018.
3. APSA 2023.
4. See, for example, Dion et al. 2018; Dion and Mitchell 2020; Smith and Lee 2015.
5. The APSA Membership Dashboard shows that, as of August 2022, women composed 39% of the association's membership: <https://www.apsanet.org/RESOURCES/Data-on-the-Profession/Dashboard/Membership>
6. The JIF roughly represents the average number of times articles published in the last two or five years have been cited. More on this metric is available from Clarivate: <https://incites.help.clarivate.com/Content/Indicators-Handbook/ih-journal-impact-factor.htm>
7. This metric comes from Clarivate's Journal Citation Indicator, a discussion of the calculation of the JCI is beyond the scope of this report, but interested readers may learn more from Clarivate's website on the topic: <https://clarivate.com/blog/introducing-the-journal-citation-indicator-a-new-field-normalized-measurement-of-journal-citation-impact/>
8. This information is available from Google Scholar's Political Science metrics:
9. https://scholar.google.com/citations?view_op=top_venues&hl=en&vq=soc_politicalscience
10. The articles that compose the h5-ranking are available at https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=en&vq=soc_politicalscience&view_op=list_core&venue=-ZYiEsN1J8J.2023

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