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Wikipedia Survey – Overview of Results

Authors:

Ruediger Glott (UNU-MERIT), glott@merit.unu.edu

Philipp Schmidt (UNU-MERIT), schmidt@merit.unu.edu

Rishab Ghosh (UNU-MERIT), ghosh@merit.unu.edu

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Data Overview

The following sections present an overview of results of the first global Wikipedia Survey. The dataset that has been used for this overview report contains 176,192 cases.

Wikipedia Language Versions

Table 1 shows the relative shares of the different language versions in the total response. The largest share of responses was provided by users who accessed the survey via the Russian or English Wikipedia versions, followed by users of the German and Spanish versions.

Total	Lang	%
45616	ru russian	26.0663
43912	en english	25.0926
22989	de german	13.1366
20144	es spanish	11.5109
8706	nl dutch	4.9749
6155	pt portuguese	3.5171
5082	ja japanese	2.9040
3613	zhans chin trad	2.0646
3569	fre french	2.0394
3516	it italian	2.0091
3427	zhant chin simp	1.9583
2907	pl polish	1.6611
2319	cs czech	1.3251
1567	ar arabic	0.8954
969	th thai	0.5537
598	vi vietnamese	0.3417
562	ca catalan	0.3211
213	id indonesian	0.1217
154	ta tamil	0.0880
113	el greek	0.0646
47	eo esperanto	0.0269
14	af afrikaans	0.0080

N=176,192

Table 1: Respondents by Wikipedia language version

Countries

Table 2 provides an overview of the countries where the respondents live, illustrating that Wikipedia is used in at least 231 countries in the world.¹

Total	Country	%	
32156	RU	18.34	
20450	DE	11.66	
18644	US	10.63	
7793	UA	4.44	
6863	NL	3.91	
6039	ES	3.44	
6011	BR	3.43	
5506	GB	3.14	
5157	JP	2.94	
4951	MX	2.82	
3733	IT	2.13	
3533	CA	2.01	
3483	FR	1.99	
3180	AR	1.81	
2983	PL	1.70	
2848	PG	1.62	
2546	AU	1.45	
2506	CZ	1.43	
2421	BE	1.38	
2256	TW	1.29	
2032	AT	1.16	
1998	IN	1.14	
1828	CL	1.04	
1690	CO	<1	
1499	SE		
1480	BY		
1445	CH		
1048	VE		
995	TH		
980	HK		
954	IL		
879	PE		
782	KZ		
656	CN		
650	NZ		
576	VN		
562	EG		
541	IE		
493	PT		
489	LV		
481	FI		
441	SA		
389	RO		
384	NO		
349	GR		
346	SG		
313	UY		
306	EE		
306	MD		
304	DK		
284	ID		
276	CR		
265	ZA		
261	PH		
258	MY		
223	LT		
222	EC		
211	DO		
206	HU		
203	AE		
			N: 51 - 200
			TR, SV, GT, RS, BG, SK,
			PK, HR, PR, BO, DZ, UZ,
			PA, AZ, JO, GE, MA, PY,
			KW, SI, HN, LU, KR, BA,
			LK, AM, IR, IS, NI, PS,
			MG, BH
			N: 11 - 50
			CI, KG, MO, SY, TN, LB,
			IQ, BD, AD, QA, MT, OM,
			TT, CY, LY, CU, AL, MK,
			NG, UM, MU, NP, JM, KE,
			SD, ZW, IM, AN, AQ, AW,
			YE, RE, LI, TJ, UG, AX,
			MC, AO, BM, BZ, FJ
			N: <= 10
			AS, TM, MN, AF, BB, BS,
			BN, VI, MV, GH, SN, CD,
			JE, BF, CG, DM, GP, NC,
			BT, GI, GL, EH, BW, ME,
			VG, KH, BI, CV, ET, ZM,
			PF, DJ, KN, MQ, VA, CX,
			GQ, RW, KY, CM, BJ, AG,
			SR, GG, CC, CF, MZ, MM,
			KP, SJ, WS, PN, ML, GU,
			AI, FO, LC, FK, BL, TZ,
			SZ, LA, MP, MW, TL, GF,
			NE, CK, KI, TO, TC, AC,
			VC, SO, MR, GS, IO, NA,
			PW, TG, MS, WF, SH, GD,
			ER, MF, SM, TK, SB, BV,
			NF, SL, LR, GA, SC, NU,
			TD, LS
			N=176,192

Table 2: Countries

¹ Refer to ISO 3166 for country codes http://www.iso.org/iso/english_country_names_and_code_elements

Activity Types

Since Wikipedia can be used in many different ways, the key feature to differentiate respondents – besides language and demographic characteristics – is provided by the activities the respondents perform. The first question of the questionnaire was mandatory, and differentiates respondents between users and different types of contributors.

Type	N	%
Reader	116,139	65.92
Occasional Contributor	40,961	23.25
Regular Contributor	13,073	7.42
Author	[9,398]	
Editor	[8,255]	
Administrator	[1,377]	
Ex-contributor	4,405	2.50
No more activity at all	[1,920]	
Other	1,614	0.92
Total	176,192	100.00%

Table 3: Detailed categories of respondents

Not surprisingly, readers provide the majority of respondents (65.92%). However, a considerable share of respondents (almost 31%) contribute actively to Wikipedia. Since it is impossible to quantify the universe of people using Wikipedia and how many of them are contributors it will be hard to evaluate whether the shares we found in our survey are representative. We assume that the share of contributors is over-represented in our dataset, as contributors (and more regular readers) are likely to be more motivated than the general population to respond to such a survey.

The largest share of contributors (23.25%) is provided by respondents that consider themselves as readers but occasionally contribute as editors or authors. Occasional contributions are the typical way Wikipedia content is created. However, this does not imply that most of the content is created this way. This question will be examined in later parts of the analysis.

Regular contributors (authors, editors, and administrators – overlap possible) represent about 7.42% of the respondents. Approximately 0.75% of the respondents are administrators.

Among the respondents there are more than 4,400 persons that contributed to Wikipedia in the past but have stopped participating. Since this group has a unique insight and relationship to Wikipedia, it is analyzed separately. A remarkable share of this group (43.56%) said they engage in no other activity in relation to Wikipedia, which would imply that these ex-contributors do not even consider themselves as readers of Wikipedia anymore (though this raises the question how this group has heard of the survey). Our profile of Wikipedia activity groups takes into account of a group that claims to pursue no activity at all (share in overall response: 1.09%).

The “*other*” category combines respondents who specified they were either “Other non-contributors” or “Other contributors”, but who did not check any of the other options. Further analysis of the explanation text that these respondents submitted is required to either group them within existing categories or analyze them separately.

It is evident that such a detailed and uneven break-down of activities is not useful for the further analysis of demographics and other characteristics that are presented in the following sections. Therefore, for the following parts of the analysis we will use a break-down that subsumes these activities in only two categories, readers (68.25%) and contributors (31.75%) excluding ex-contributors and others.

Type	N	%
Reader	116,139	68.25
Contributor	54,034	31.75
	170,173	100.00

Table 4: Main categories

Demographics

Age

Valid responses were received from respondents between 10 – 85 years. Overall, the average age of the Wikipedians that participated in the survey is 25.22 years. Half of the respondents are younger than 22 years. The most frequent age that can be observed within the respondents is 18 years. Splitting the respondents in four equally large age groups shows that 25% are younger than 18 years old, 25% are between 18 and 22, a further 25% are between 22 and 30 (e.g. half of the respondents are between 18 and 30 years) and the remaining 25% are between 30 and 85 years old. .

There is a slight age difference between readers and contributors - readers are, on average, 24.79 years old while contributors show an average age of 26.14 years. Finally, female respondents are younger (23.79 years) than male ones (25.69 years).

Gender

Though both groups are dominated by men, there are significant differences in the gender composition of readers and contributors of Wikipedia. Contributors show a substantially larger share of males than readers. Among respondents only 12.64% of contributors are female.

Gender	Reader	Contributor	Total
Male	79,965 (63.11%) (68.99%)	46,736 (36.89%) (86.73%)	126,701
Female	35,377 (83.85%) (30.52%)	6,814 (16.15%) (12.64%)	42,191
Other	566 (0.49%)	338 (0.63%)	904
Total	115,908	53,888	N=169,796

Table 5: Gender composition of Wikipedia activity groups

Education

Given the young age of Wikipedians it is natural that secondary and undergraduate tertiary education are the highest educational degrees among most respondents. Contributors show slightly but significantly higher education levels than readers.

Education Level	Reader (%)	Contributor (%)	Total (%)
Primary education	12.08	11.05	11.75
Secondary education	37.25	33.66	36.11
Tertiary education/Undergraduate	25.23	25.99	25.47
Tertiary education/Masters	17.24	18.61	17.68
Tertiary education/PhD	2.26	4.43	2.95
Other	5.93	6.25	6.03
N=124,752	100%	100%	100%

Table 6: Highest educational degree by Wikipedia activity groups

Relationship Status

The status of the respondents regarding relationships also corresponds to the age structure of the Wikipedia community, as only 33.29% of the respondents say they have a partner. Correspondingly, the share of respondents with children is only 14.72%. The difference between readers and contributors in this regard is negligible.

Motivations and Incentives

Motivation to contribute

In this section we examine some incentives and disincentives to contribute to Wikipedia.

On average, contributors spend under four hours per week contributing to Wikipedia. There is a wide range of motivations for participants' active engagement in Wikipedia, but two motivations stand out clearly: the wish to share knowledge and the desire to fix errors. On the other hand, the desire to earn money, or advance one's career through participation only motivated a very small share of respondents. Few respondents said they contributed because their friends did or because they wanted to gain a reputation in the community.

Motivation max 4 answers, ranked by importance 1 = most important and 4 = least important	Mean Priority	Selected by % of N
I do it for professional reasons (it belongs to my professional tasks)	2.32	8.47
I like the idea of sharing knowledge and want to contribute to it	1.69	72.91
I saw an error I wanted to fix	1.92	68.78
I saw a red link so I wrote a new article	2.88	9.98
I want to learn new skills / acquire new knowledge	2.45	25.05
I think the Internet provides a better medium for encyclopediae than traditional media	2.84	27.86
Just to see if it is really open for anyone to edit	3.20	5.25
I want to demonstrate my knowledge to a wider public / community	2.86	10.55
I want to make topics more popular that are not widely known yet	2.79	17.44
To improve my job / career opportunities	2.95	1.71
Because I like Wikipedia's philosophy of openness and collaboration	2.88	30.07
Because I think information should be freely available to everyone	2.73	37.86
Because I like mass collaboration/cooperation	3.15	8.56
To gain a reputation in the Wikipedia community	3.29	2.16
Because friends of mine are doing it and motivated me to join	3.12	1.02
To make the world a better place	2.97	19.77
To earn money	3.03	0.43
Don't know/can't remember/no real reason	2.75	7.32
N=51,074 (contributors who selected at least one motivation)		

Table 7: Reasons why people contribute to Wikipedia

Reasons for not contributing

A large share of readers who have never contributed to Wikipedia, have at least considered doing so. This indicates a large community of potential future contributors. Two thirds (65.27%) of the respondents that do not contribute to Wikipedia have at least considered to contribute. About one quarter (24.88%) said they had not considered contributing (9.04% replied that they didn't know).

The reasons given by those who never considered to contribute (considering the aggregate data) show two main factors and four less important factors. Not having enough information to contribute or being happy to just read Wikipedia are the two options that have been checked by roughly half of the respondents. Four other options were selected by about a quarter of the respondents respectively.

Reasons for not contributing	%
I don't know how	23.77
I am not sufficiently comfortable with the technology	16.22
I would never interact on the internet	4.99
Others are already doing it, there is no need for me	19.08
I don't have time	31.31
I don't feel comfortable editing other peoples' work	23.68
I don't think I have enough information to contribute	53.06
I am afraid of making a mistake and getting "in trouble" for it	23.15
It's a waste of time: my edits would be reverted or overwritten	6.15
I am happy just to read it; I don't need to write it	45.49
Other	3.58
Don't know	3.82
<i>Respondents who checked none of the options</i>	1.23
N=28,897 (readers, who had never considered contributing)	

Table 8: Reasons of non-contributors for not contributing to Wikipedia

The most frequently selected options that would make non-contributors more likely to contribute are related to a lack of information. Potential contributors do not know which content areas might benefit from their input, and they don't understand how their contributions might benefit others. Difficulty to use the technology was not mentioned as a crucial impediment to contribution. Only 16.22% of respondents stated they were "not sufficiently comfortable with the technology" and only 8.80% (the lowest share of all options) said that they would be more likely to contribute if the "technology was easier to use". Further detail on non-contributors from different sub-groups, and recommendations for increasing contribution, are provided in a separate report on non-contributors.

Answer Option	%
Someone would show me how to do it	19.77
The technology was easier to use	8.80
I knew that other contributors would be welcoming and encouraging	14.40
I knew there were specific topic areas that needed my help	39.63
I was confident my contributions would be valued and kept	24.58
It was clear to me that other people would benefit from my efforts	34.89
Other / don't know / don't want to say	30.68
<i>Respondents who checked none of the options</i>	3.95
N=28,897 (readers, who had never considered contributing)	

Table 9: Factors that would make contribution more likely

Motivation to donate to the Wikimedia Foundation

In this section we examine some incentives and disincentives to donate to the Wikimedia Foundation. We only include readers and contributors, because ex-contributors and others can reasonably be expected to have very different motivations

Regarding the reasons why members of the Wikipedia community do not donate money to the Wikimedia foundation more than 40% overall said they could not afford to donate – hardly surprising given the young average age and high percentage of students -- and more than 20% said they had never been asked to donate or did not know how to donate.

Answer Option	% of respondents
I did not know it is supported by a non-profit organisation	18.59
I never donate to charities	14.55
I can't afford to make a donation	44.89
I donate my time instead of money	18.34
Donations to the Wikipemedia Foundation are not tax-deductible where I live	4.25
I was never asked to/ wouldn't know how	23.00
I disagree with Wikipedia's policies and practices	1.51
I don't know how to do that	22.01
I do not trust that my donation will be used wisely	14.80
It seems that enough of the other people are making donations to keep the project running	16.44
Don't know	10.01
N=156,818	

Table 10: Reasons not to donate money to Wikimedia

Another barrier to donate money to Wikipedia results from a lack of knowledge that this opportunity exists or how to donate money. The least important reason for not donating money to Wikipedia is disagreement with Wikipedia's policies and practices.

Lack of knowledge about the legal status of Wikipedia and how to make donations is more pronounced among the readers than the contributors. There is a large difference between shares of respondents who do not donate money, because they already donate their time (higher for contributors) or who are unaware of the fact that a non-profit organisation supporting Wikipedia exists (higher for readers).

Reason (multiple responses)	Readers	Contributors	Readers & Contributors
I did not know it is supported by a non-profit organisation	23.16	8.24	18.59
I never donate to charities	14.74	14.12	14.55
I can't afford to make a donation	43.50	48.02	44.89
I donate my time instead of money	10.20	36.74	18.34
Donations to the Wikipemedia Foundation are not tax-deductible where I live	3.96	4.91	4.25
I was never asked to/ wouldn't know how	26.12	15.95	23.00
I disagree with Wikipedia's policies and practices	1.05	2.54	1.51
I don't know how to do that	23.68	18.23	22.01
I do not trust that my donation will be used wisely	15.65	12.86	14.80
It seems that enough of the other people are making donations to keep the project running	15.01	19.68	16.44
Don't know	10.59	8.69	10.01
	N=108,731	N=48,087	N=156,818

Table 11: Reasons not to donate money to Wikimedia (by activity type)