

Donor survey 2013

Wikimedia Deutschland e.V.

1. Analysis of findings

Each year, more and more people give donations to support Wikipedia and promote access to free knowledge. They are part of a growing community of Wikipedia supporters. Two years on from Wikimedia Deutschland's first survey, we decided it was time for a new survey of donors to find out whether the group of supporters has changed as it has grown. The findings are very interesting, not only on the topic of donations. For example, we asked why respondents do not edit articles in Wikipedia. The answers reveal that it is not because they do not know they can edit in Wikipedia, nor a lack of knowledge of how to go about it. The reason most often mentioned was the feeling of not being sufficiently competent to contribute.

The survey took place in September 2013 and was accessible online for two weeks. Altogether, about 3,200 donors were contacted via email, of whom 28 percent (942 people) actually took part in the survey. The high rate of participation was similar to that in 2011 (33 percent) and reflects our donors' great willingness to support us. The recipients were selected by a random sample among everyone who had donated during the period from May 2011 to May 2013, regardless of the size of their donation, thus covering precisely the period since the previous survey. The following donor groups were excluded, however: companies, anonymous donors and those who gave no email address. We tested the quality and comprehensibility of the questionnaire in advance using a pretest.

The topics which interested us were issues relating to the donors' use of Wikipedia, what information they require about Wikimedia Deutschland and their opinion of the association's fields of activity. We also focused on aspects relevant to the practical work of fundraising, such as membership and donation receipts. Many questions from the previous survey in 2011 were repeated, in particular those on demographics and donation receipts, permitting comparison with the earlier findings and helping us to pinpoint changes. We wanted to discover whether the huge increase in numbers of donors had resulted in changes in the composition of the donor community. During the 2011 fundraiser, about 160,000 people made a donation to Wikipedia; two years later, the number was 333,000. Did this doubling of numbers also reflect a change in the type of supporters? Had our communications succeeded in reaching new target groups who had previously felt that it was not applicable to them? Or did we simply persuade more people from the same target group?

We suspected that the doubling of the numbers was also partly due to us reaching new target groups and was thus related to changes in our "typical" donors. But much to our surprise, the response behavior has hardly changed in relation to the 2011 survey. This particularly applies to demographics. The majority of donors supporting free knowledge are still men; only 17% of respondent donors are women. The average age is 52, only four years higher than the findings of the survey in 2011. However, our supporters come from all age groups between 15 and 89. Further characteristics that have not changed: our donors still tend to be characterized by an above-average income and a high educational level, with a strikingly large proportion holding PhDs.

Use of Wikipedia and knowledge about the online encyclopedia

Questions on the use of Wikipedia also prompted answers which were surprisingly similar to the findings in 2011. Wikipedia is still highly relevant to donors' everyday lives, as a comparison with the annual [ARD/ZDF online study](#)¹ on Internet use among the German population shows. While only [9 percent of those who use Wikipedia visit the website daily](#)², a much higher proportion – 34 percent – of donors are daily users. The vast majority of donors know that Wikipedia authors are volunteers. But do the donors themselves also contribute to collecting the world's knowledge? Among respondents to the ARD/ZDF study, [only four percent of Wikipedia users claimed to have created content](#)³. Among donors, the proportion of active users is much higher at 18 percent. However, as in 2011, these respondents only rarely contribute to the collection of global knowledge; 86 percent edit Wikipedia articles less than once a month. Their contributions consisted mainly of adding supplementary information and correcting spelling and grammatical errors. Only very few people have already contributed images to an article or have uploaded images generally.

The above findings show that the group of Wikipedia donors is located between “average” Wikipedia readers and the volunteer author community. They visit the site more frequently than the average reader and some of them actively contribute information. The level of activity does not really qualify the donors as Wikipedians, however. To sum up, most of the encyclopedia's financial supporters are constant readers and sporadically active users.

In view of their frequent use of Wikipedia, it is not surprising that on average, the donors assess the quality of the digital knowledge collection as good. The differences in the (overall positive) evaluation of individual quality aspects are more interesting. The illustration of the encyclopedia received the least approval; the comprehensibility and up-to-dateness were the most highly praised qualities.

Reasons for not editing

Are our donors a possible target group for acquiring new authors? As many as 59 percent of those who have never contributed content could at least imagine doing so – precisely the same proportion as in the 2011 survey. So if this consistent level of interest in collaboration exists, what is holding readers back from embarking on producing articles? In an effort to pinpoint some indicators, we asked donors in 2013 for the first time to identify the reasons why they have not yet taken an active part in writing for Wikipedia.

Only three percent stated that they did not know that one may contribute content and only 10 percent do not know how to edit. A further three percent indicated that they are generally not interested in contributing. Among the eight percent who checked “other reasons”, the main factors mentioned were the time and effort involved and a few respondents also mentioned the style of discussion in the project, which they perceive as unfriendly and complex. The main reason, however,

¹ <http://www.ard-zdf-onlinestudie.de/>

² Busemann/Gscheidle 2011: Web 2.0: Aktive Mitwirkung verbleibt auf niedrigem Niveau. Ergebnisse der ARD/ZDF-Onlinestudie 2011. In: *Media Perspektiven* Vol. 7-8/2011, http://www.ard-zdf-onlinestudie.de/fileadmin/Onlinestudie_2011/07082011_Busemann_Gscheidle.pdf

³ Busemann/Gscheidle 2012: Web 2.0: Habitualisierung der Social Communitys. In: *Media Perspektiven* Vol. 7-8/2012, http://www.ard-zdf-onlinestudie.de/fileadmin/Onlinestudie_2012/0708-2012_Busemann_Gscheidle.pdf

mentioned by 43 percent, was that they do not feel sufficiently competent. This finding has interesting implications for the acquisition of new authors: When explaining how to contribute, we must above all work harder to counter peoples' assessment of themselves as lacking competence by informing those interested that in principle, there is a job for everyone among the range of participation options in Wikipedia.

One assumption which has often been expressed is that calling for donations directs some readers' willingness to support the project into the "wrong channels", so that their potential as new authors is lost. The survey does not support this thesis: "I already give money" is only a marginal reason, mentioned by three percent of respondents.

These findings are interesting – but we should avoid over-interpreting them. The study is not designed to permit causal conclusions to be drawn on respondents' reasons for their actions: Firstly, the answers comprise the respondents' self-assessment, which is problematic in relation to motivation issues, partly because the answers can only include conscious motives. Secondly, the answer options provided were not based on any kind of theoretical concept. In addition, the survey only addressed donors, a specific group among the readership, so that the findings are not simply applicable to all readers. However, we wanted to take the opportunity to at least take a glance at the issue. For example, we found strong evidence that potential new authors perceive the competence required as greater than it probably is, which holds them back from contributing.

Attitude towards use of funding

We also reached our theoretical and methodological limits when addressing the issue of the motivation for donating. Rather than asking directly about the reason for giving money, a promising approach might be first to apply a theory of donor behavior in order to determine factors which make a donation more or less likely. This would then be examined and tested not just through the survey of donors, but also of a comparison group of non-donors. In view of this effort, we had to accept that we could not afford a survey at this theoretical and methodological level. Rather than examining why our supporters donate, we decided to focus on their attitude towards our use of funding.

To do this, we took a similar approach to that used in the 2011 survey, presenting a selection of our activities and asking whether the donor considers them worth supporting. Respondents also had the option of stating how much funding should be directed towards which field of activity. This time, we focused more directly on Wikimedia Deutschland's projects and goals, correcting a flaw in the previous survey. The association's goals were presented as they occur in the [charter](#)⁴ and donors could evaluate fields of activity (the list does not claim to be complete) within all areas of the Wikimedia Deutschland organization.

All fields of activity received broad support; these findings are consistent with those of 2011. Fields of activity which have been added since the last survey, such as collaboration with museums, archives and libraries and supporting the diversity of participants, were predominantly evaluated as

⁴ <https://wikimedia.de/wiki/Satzung/en>

being very worthy of support. Correspondingly, donors wished to see a large or very large amount of donated funds directed towards these fields of activity.

When looking at the findings, one might ask whether some fields of activity receive more approval than others. There are certainly some differences in the distribution of percentages, for example between “very worthy of support” and “worthy of support”. However, in order to compare the levels of agreement between fields of support, it is more appropriate to look at the arithmetic mean of all answers. In so doing, the fields technology/software and collaboration with cultural institutions tended to be evaluated most favorably. Looking at the arithmetic means more closely, however, the findings (as in 2011) cannot be sufficiently clearly differentiated to determine different levels of agreement. Furthermore, on the question of how much donor funding should be applied to the different fields, the respondents’ assumptions of possible expense may influence their answers. For example, they may estimate that expenses in the technology field are greater than in the field of political involvement. These answers would then not simply reflect their approval of the content of one field. In any case, however, we are happy to state that the donors evaluated all Wikimedia Deutschland’s fields of activity positively.

Donors’ information requirements

Whether designing banners and the donor page or considering whether it would be a good idea to set up a newsletter for supporters of free knowledge – in our fundraising practice we are constantly faced with the issue of the donors’ information requirements. What are they interested in; what communication channels would they like to be addressed through; what did they find out about before they gave their donations? The survey contained a whole set of questions covering this topic.

It is interesting to look at how donors inform themselves prior to making a donation, since this gives an indication of the extent to which they engage with the issue of their donation. Two thirds of donors stated that they informed themselves about topics such as the use of funding, charitable status and organization of Wikimedia Deutschland before donating. The other third either cannot remember or did not seek information specially. The comments made suggest that a large proportion of this third already considered that they were well-informed or that they simply trusted that the funding would be properly used. After donating, on the other hand, only a good quarter of respondents continued to follow the Wikimedia world.

Donors were mainly interested in Wikimedia Deutschland’s goals and projects (45%), its use of funding (33%), its non-profit status (33%) and its trustworthiness (30%). By comparison, they required less information on the association’s personnel and organizational structure (15%) and the issue of donation receipts (10%) before donating. The main sources of information were Wikimedia Deutschland’s donor page and its homepage, as well as more general Internet research. Encouragingly, 11 percent referred to the annual activity report and a similar proportion gained information from friends and acquaintances. Only the blog does not seem to be a suitable way of communicating with donors. The question of how donors would prefer to be informed in future was clearly answered: 80 percent would prefer information via email.

But what information interests the donors most and are we satisfying this demand? Three questions addressed this issue; however, they appeared to turn into a lesson on the topics of methodology and

the difficulty of formulating questions clearly. We could see from the comments that the questions were understood in a different way than we had intended. We asked about information *from*, but meant information *about* Wikimedia Deutschland. The question was obviously understood as meaning that Wikimedia Deutschland provides encyclopedic knowledge as a service partner or operator of Wikipedia. Correspondingly, the vast majority – over 90 percent – of respondents felt well-informed by Wikimedia Deutschland. In fact we wanted to know whether donors would like more information *from and* about Wikimedia Deutschland. Therefore it was not really possible to evaluate answers to these three questions usefully. Unfortunately this issue did not emerge clearly in the pilot survey.

Fundraising topics: membership, service, donation receipts

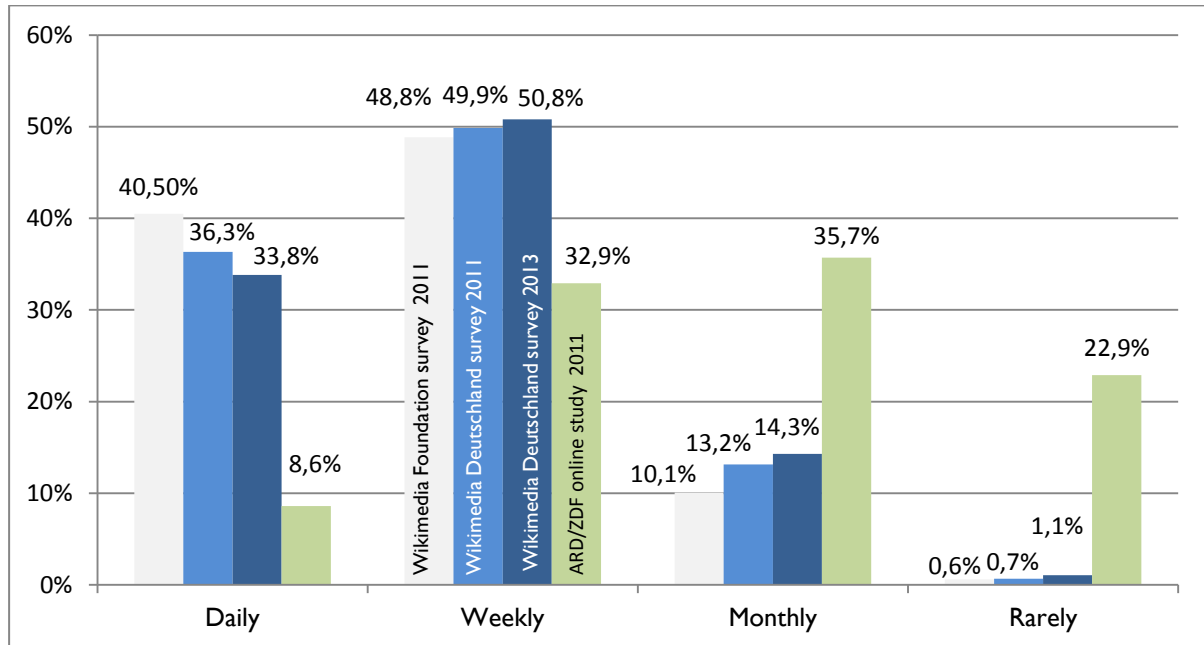
As well as addressing the topic of information requirements, the survey covered other aspects more relevant to fundraising. Taking a rather exploratory approach, we attempted to identify obstacles which might prevent donors from becoming members of the association. This possibility is offered on our website after people have made a donation and many do indeed decide on membership as a way of providing long-term support to the cause of free knowledge. But what prevents all the others from becoming members? According to the findings, this is not due to a rejection of membership in principle. Only 28 percent stated that they were not interested in giving further support. That is a low value even if we assume that respondents gave socially desirable responses. The main reasons mentioned are already being addressed by our fundraising communication. For example, about 45% of respondents do not want to enter into a long-term commitment and 14 percent want no commitment. In fact, however, passive (sustaining) membership may be canceled at any time and unlike active membership, it does not involve participation in the association's business. These findings give us interesting indications of issues which we should explain more clearly.

Two questions on donation receipts also gave us helpful insights. Issuing donation receipts is an annual task that costs the fundraising team a great deal of administrative effort and complex technical use of the database. But the effort is well invested, as the survey showed. We wanted to know how important it is for donors to receive a donation receipt. The findings show that issuing donation receipts is extremely important to the donors, a point we should not underestimate. 60 percent of respondents find receiving a donation receipt at least important, 38 percent very important. 52 percent of respondents submitted it with their tax return. The survey confirmed our assumption that the donation receipt is a key pillar in our relationship to our donors.

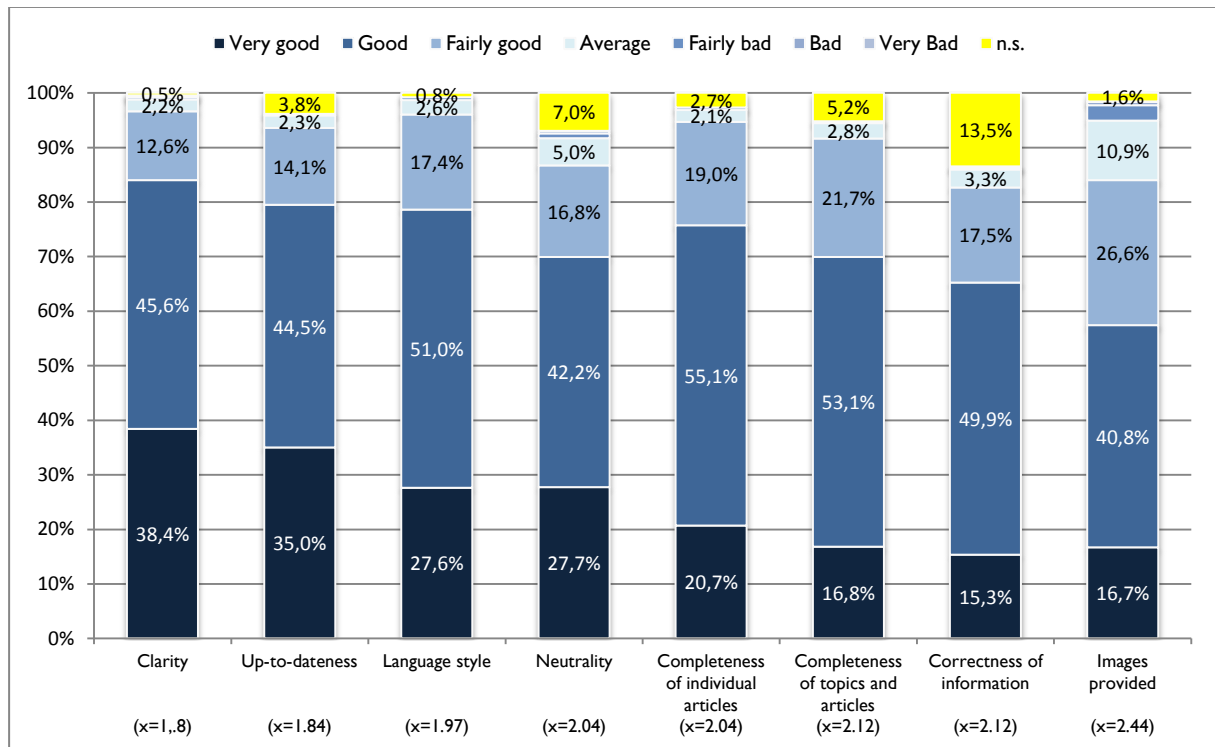
Building up a relationship – that also applies to our donor service. During the annual donation campaign, we receive up to a hundred emails per day containing a wide range of questions and wishes. We wanted to know how satisfied donors are with the way the emails are dealt with and answered. Unfortunately, only two percent of our respondents, a tiny number, have made use of our donor service. Therefore the findings evaluating our service are not significant. But we can be happy about one thing: the 20 relevant respondents were satisfied with our service.

2. Documentation of findings

Question 1: How often do you visit Wikipedia on average?⁵

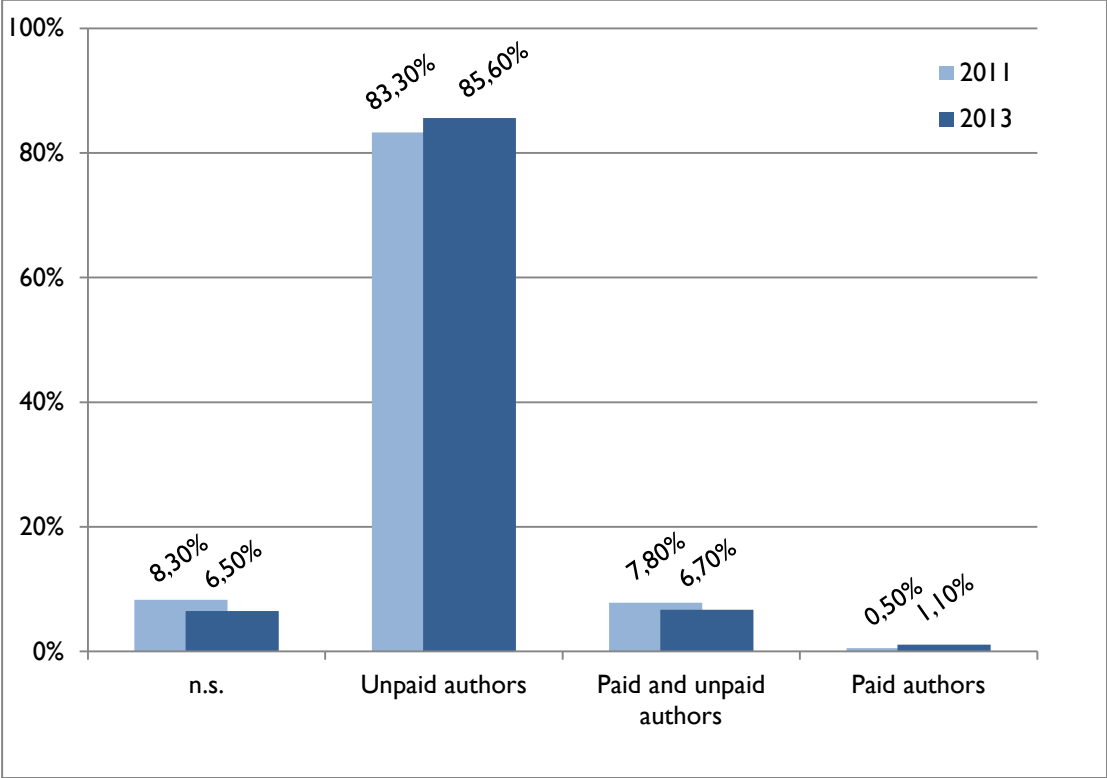


Question 2: Please evaluate the following quality aspects on a scale from 1 (very good) to 7 (very bad).

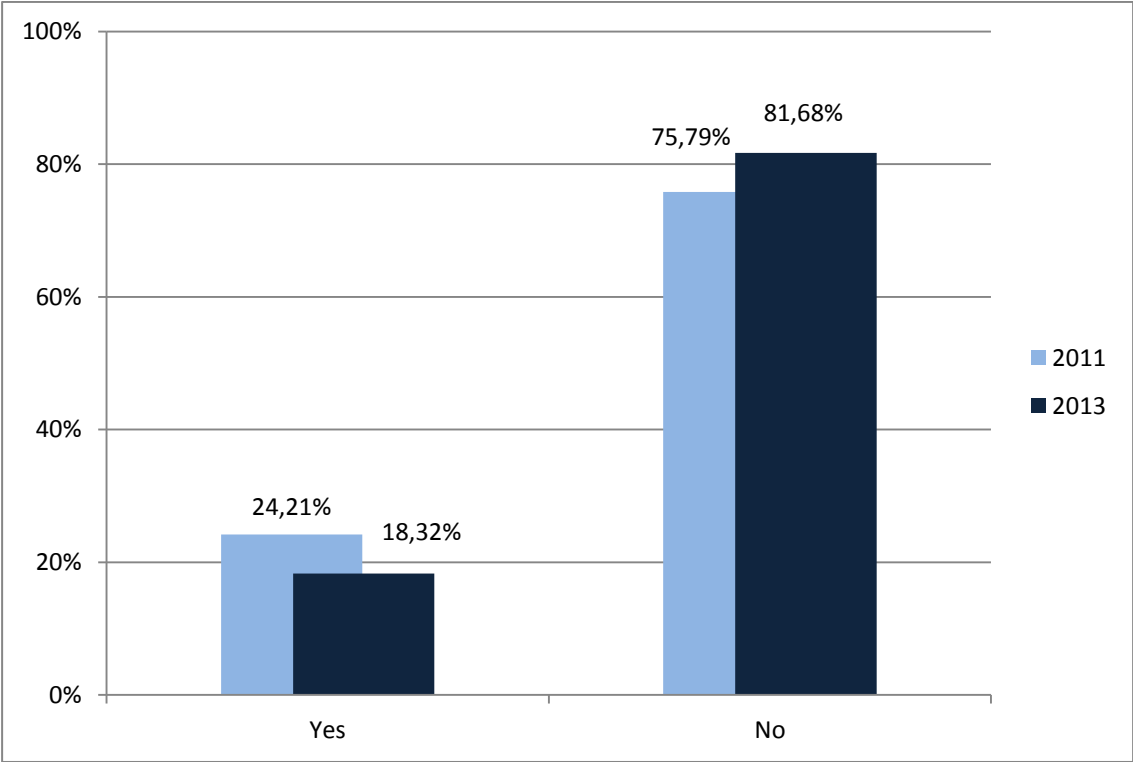


⁵ Frequency of Wikipedia use by people who have visited the site at least once are derived from: Busemann/Gscheidle 2011: *Web 2.0: Aktive Mitwirkung verbleibt auf niedrigem Niveau. Ergebnisse der ARD/ZDF-Onlinestudie 2011*. In: *Media Perspektiven* Vol. 7-8/2011, http://www.ard-zdf-onlinestudie.de/fileadmin/Onlinestudie_2011/07082011_Busemann_Gscheidle.pdf

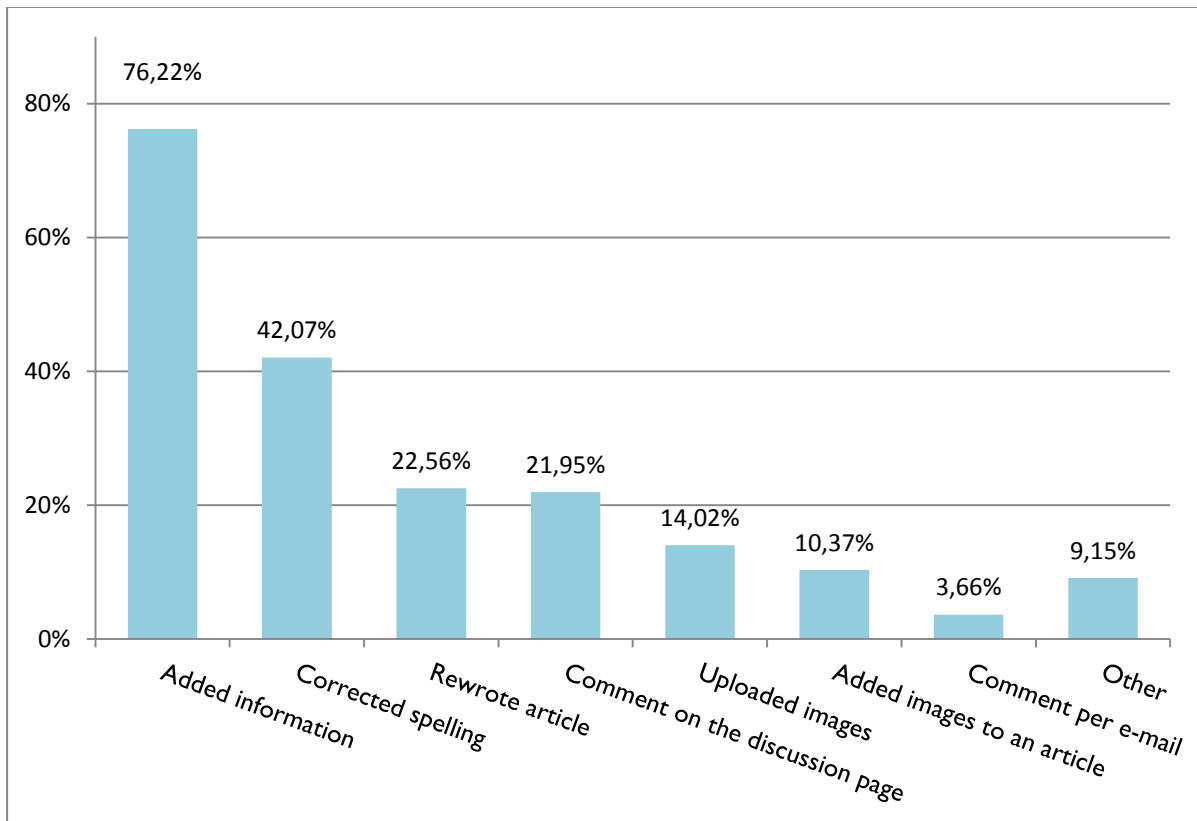
Question 3: Who do you think writes the Wikipedia articles?



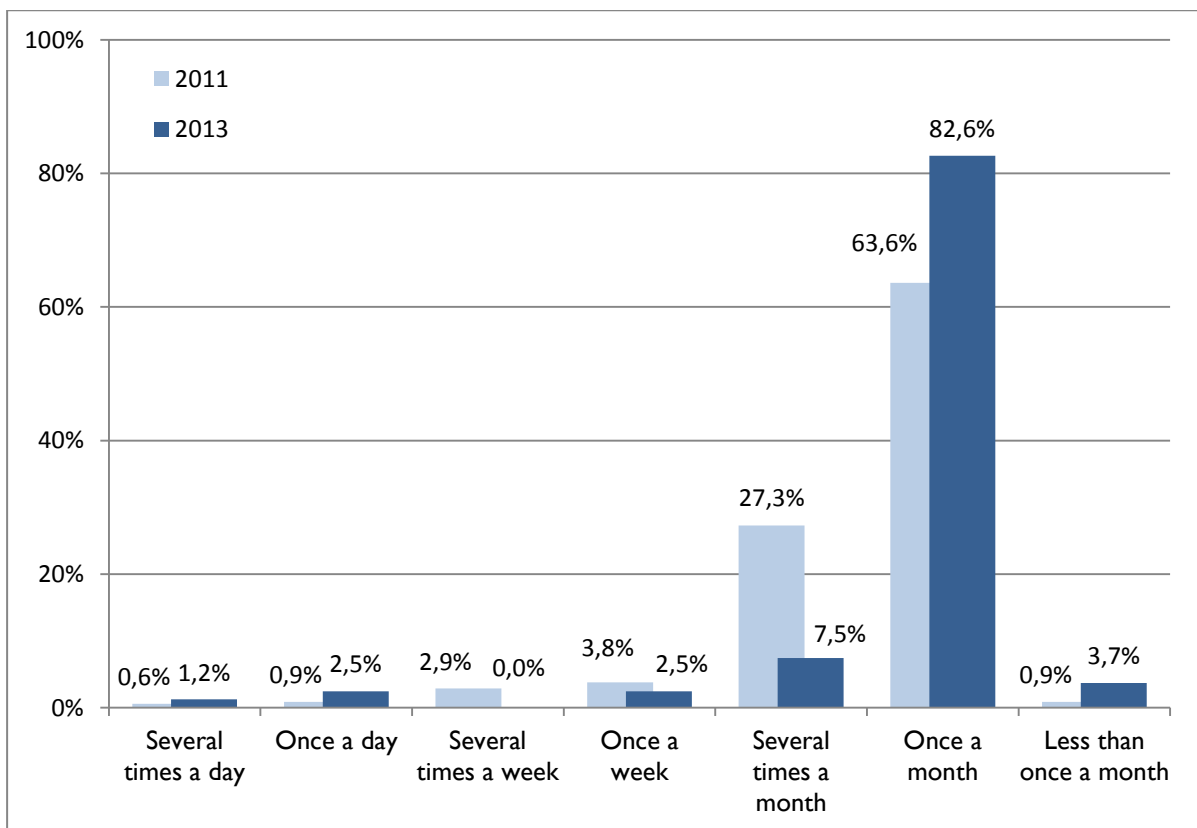
Question 4: Have you ever contributed to Wikipedia or its sister projects?



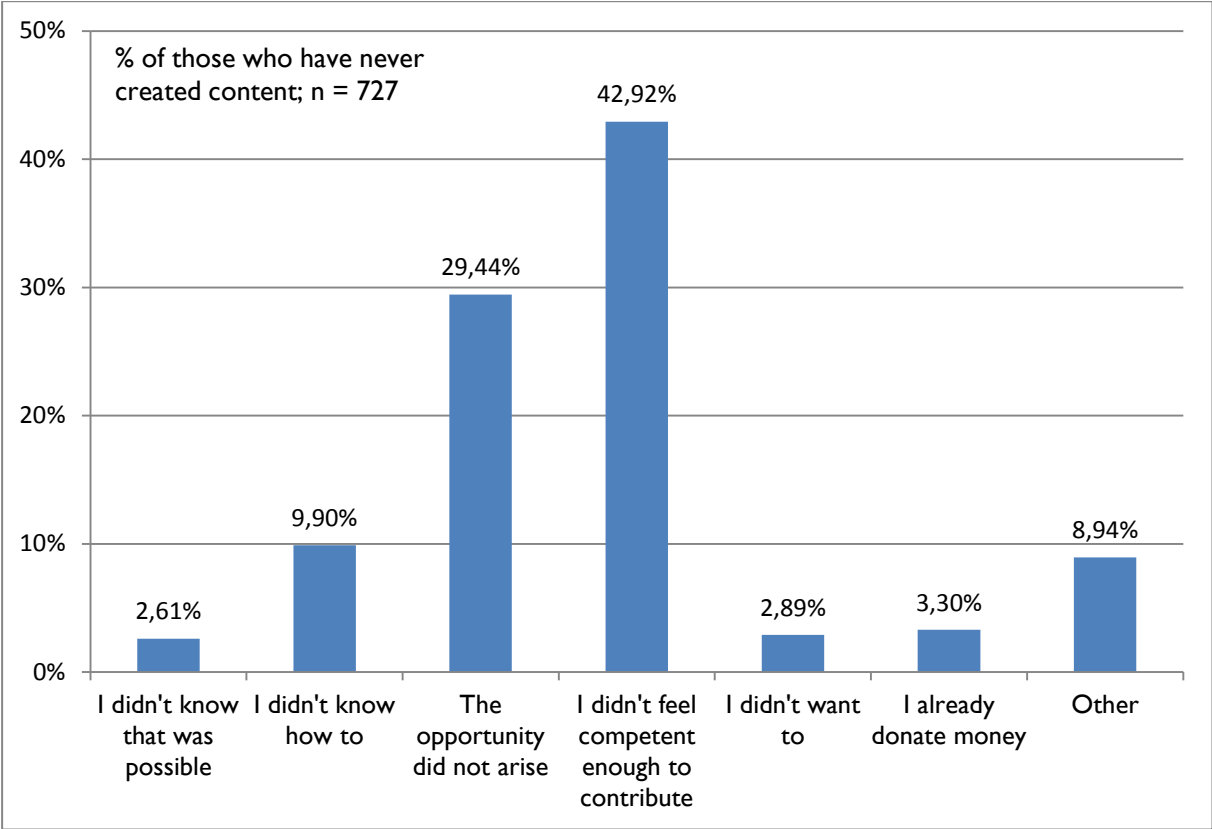
Question 5: How did you participate? (Multiple answers may be given)



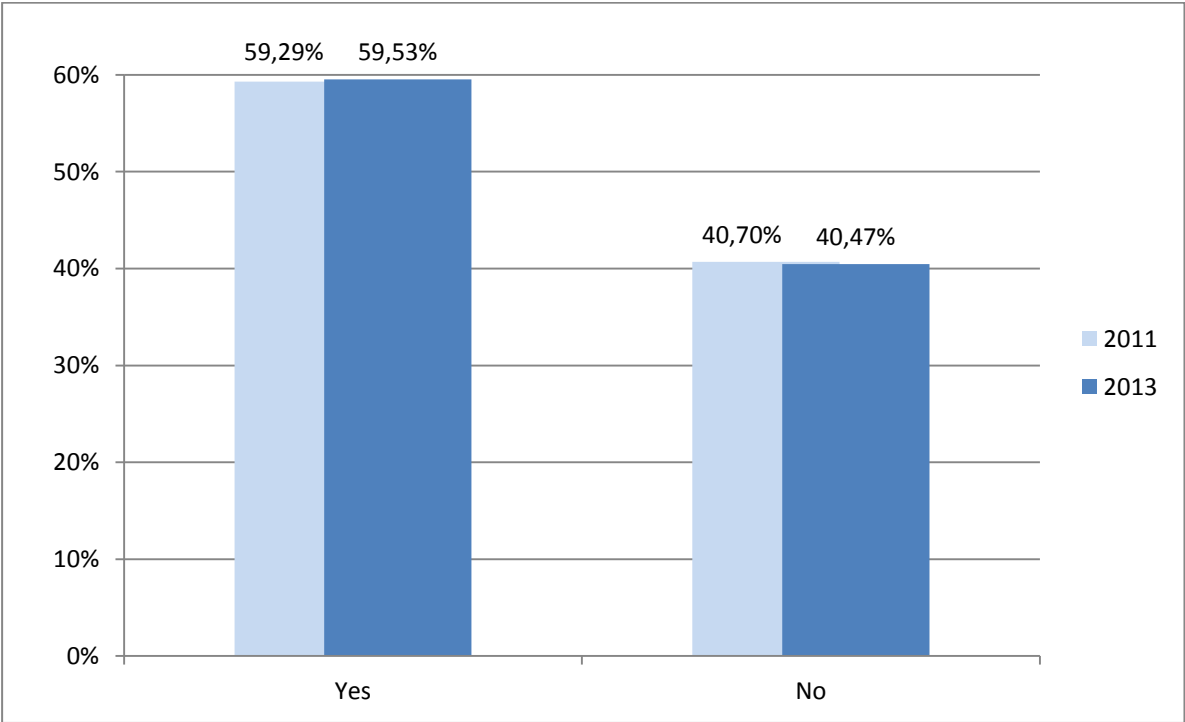
Question 6: How often have you edited articles?



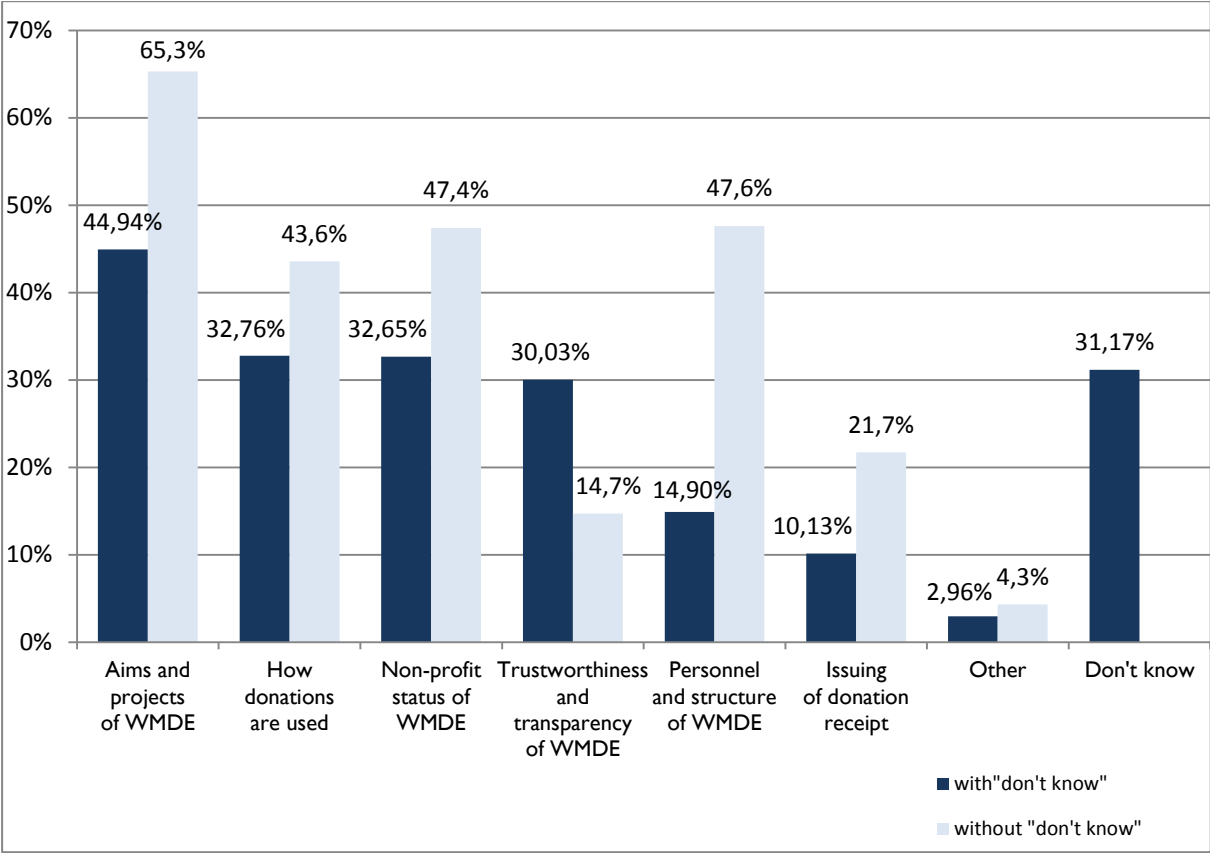
Question 7: Why have you never yet created or altered content in Wikipedia? (Multiple answers may be given)



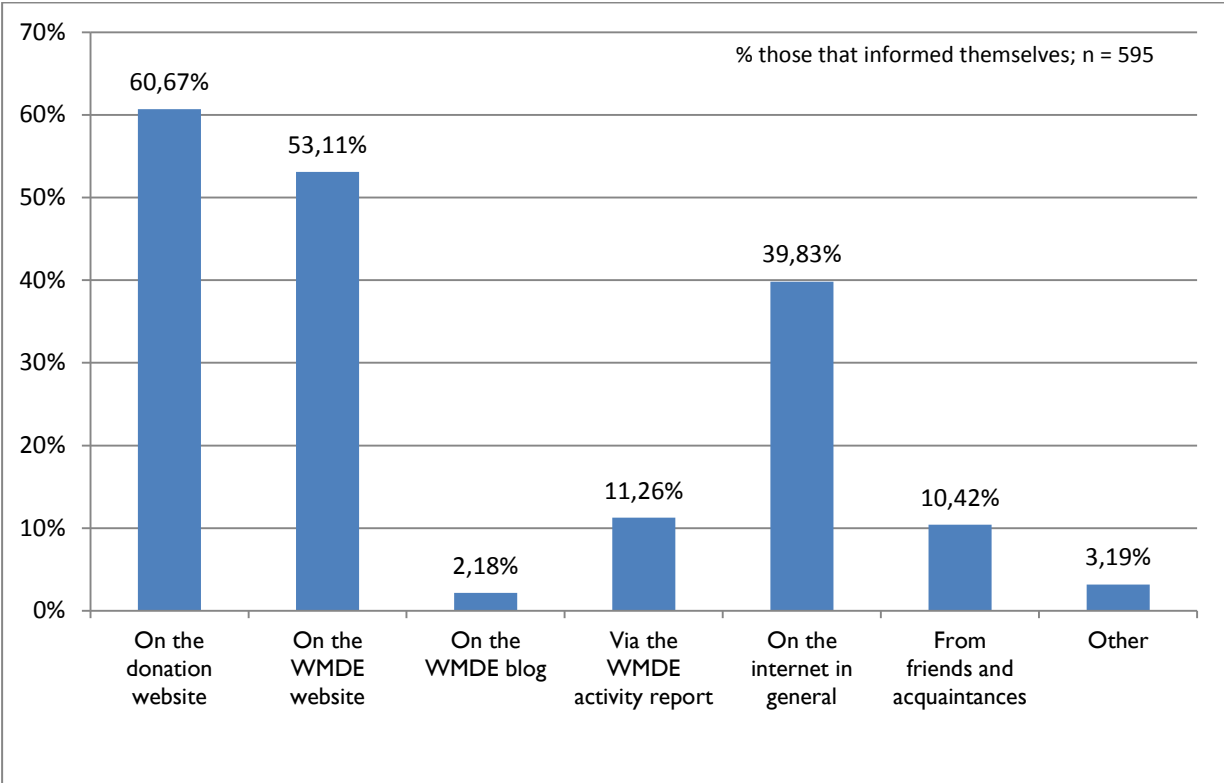
Question 8: Can you imagine creating Wikipedia content yourself?



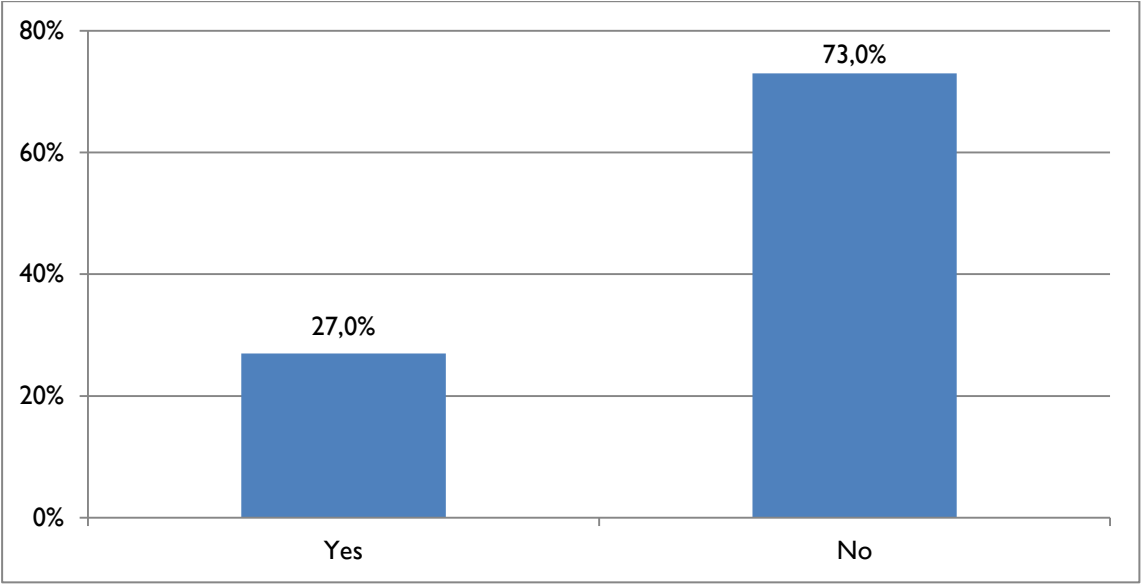
Question 9: Before making your donation to Wikimedia Deutschland, did you seek information on the following topics? (Multiple answers may be given)



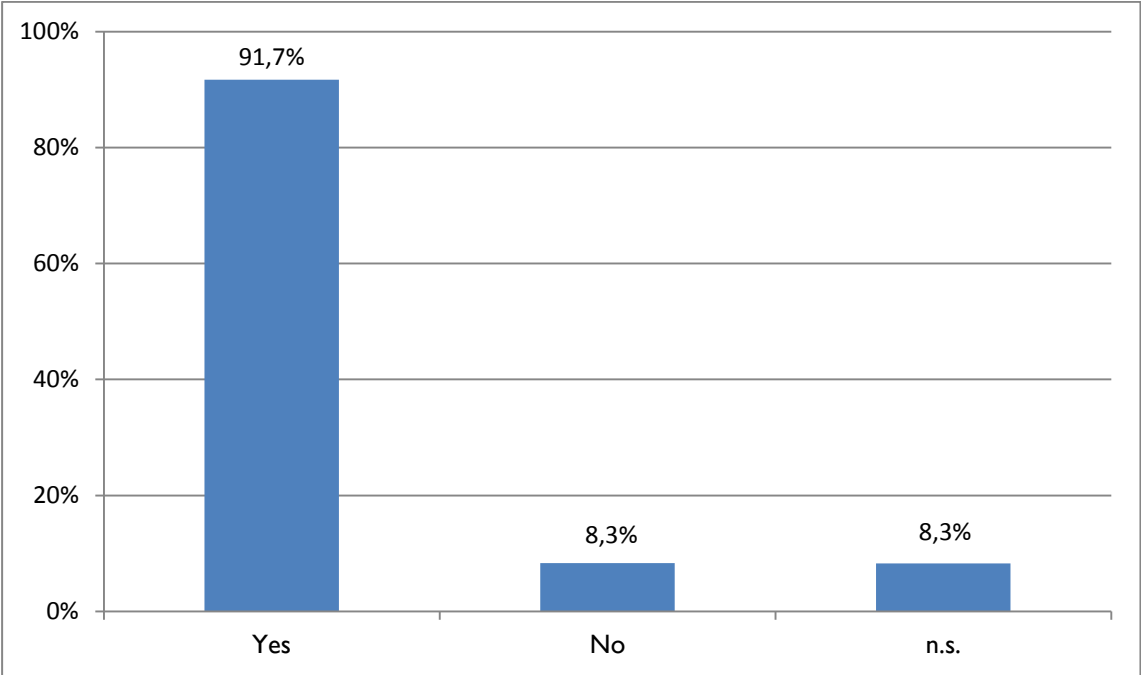
Question 10: Where did you gain your information? (Multiple answers may be given)



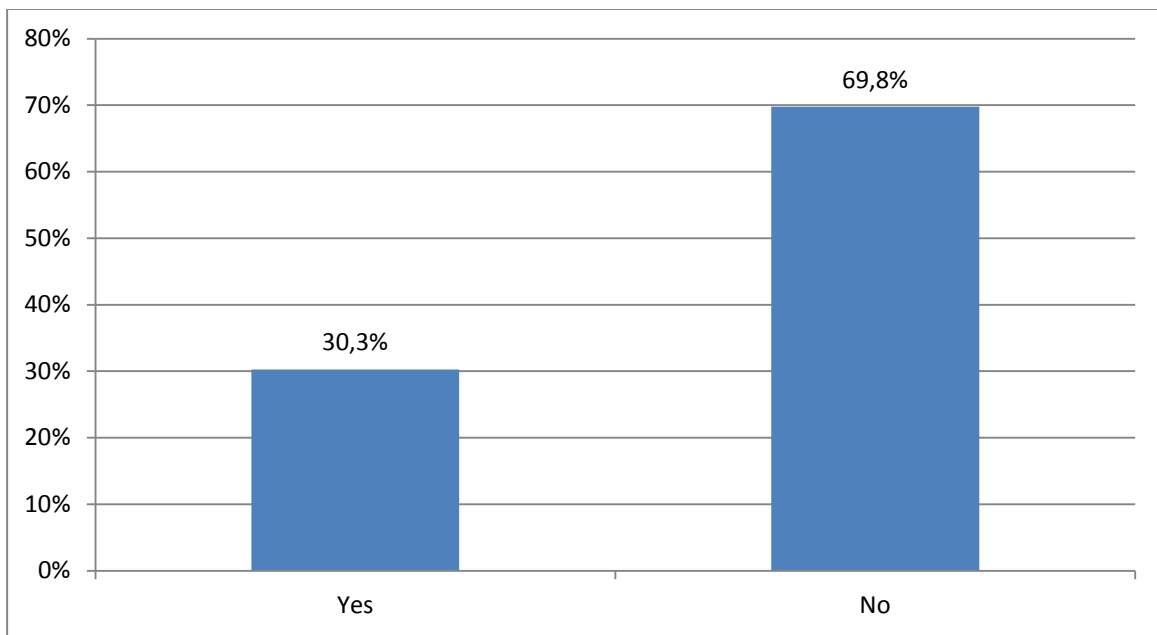
Question 11: Did you continue to seek information about Wikimedia Deutschland and its activities after making your donation?



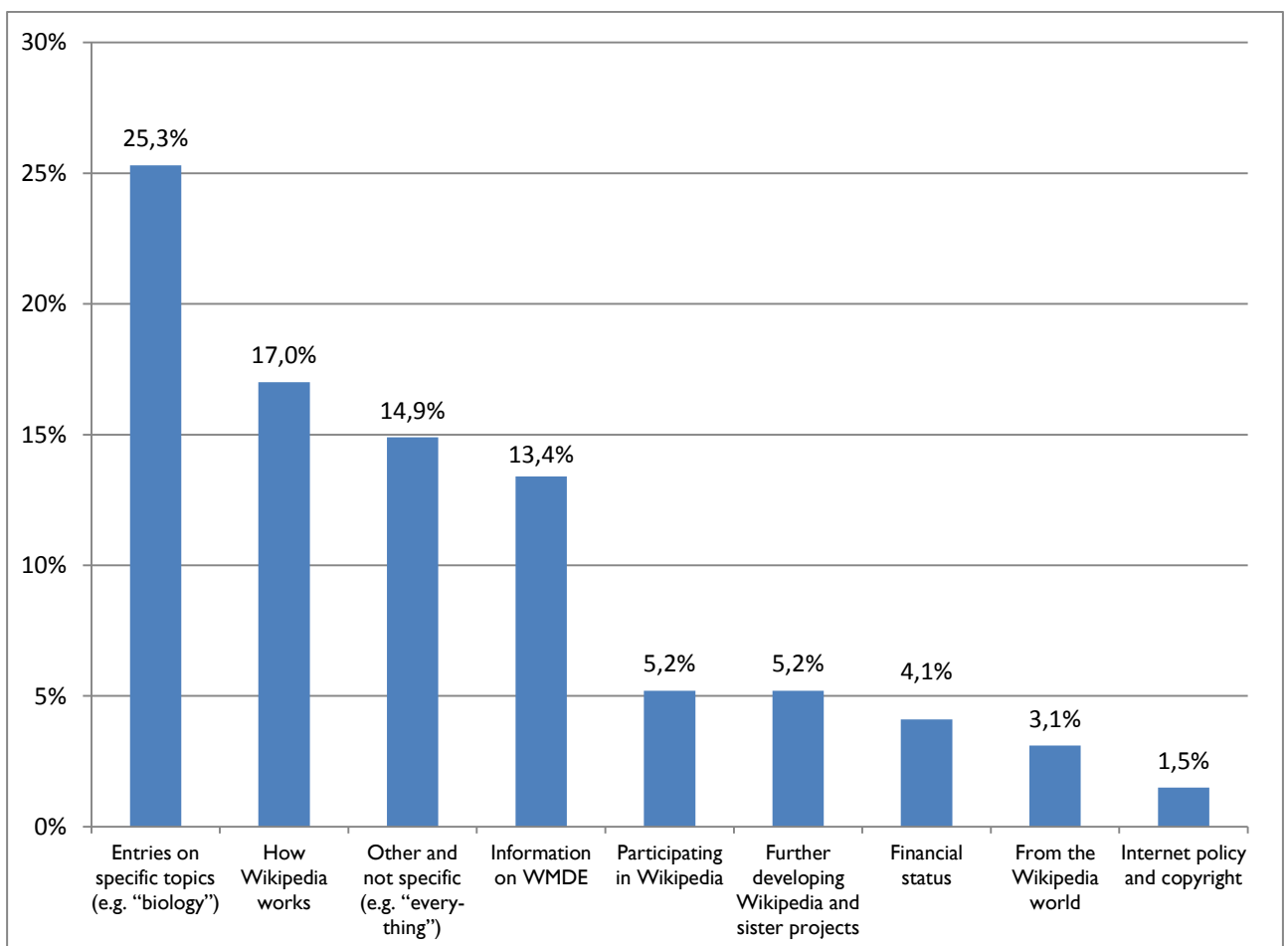
Question 12: Do you feel well-informed by Wikimedia Deutschland?



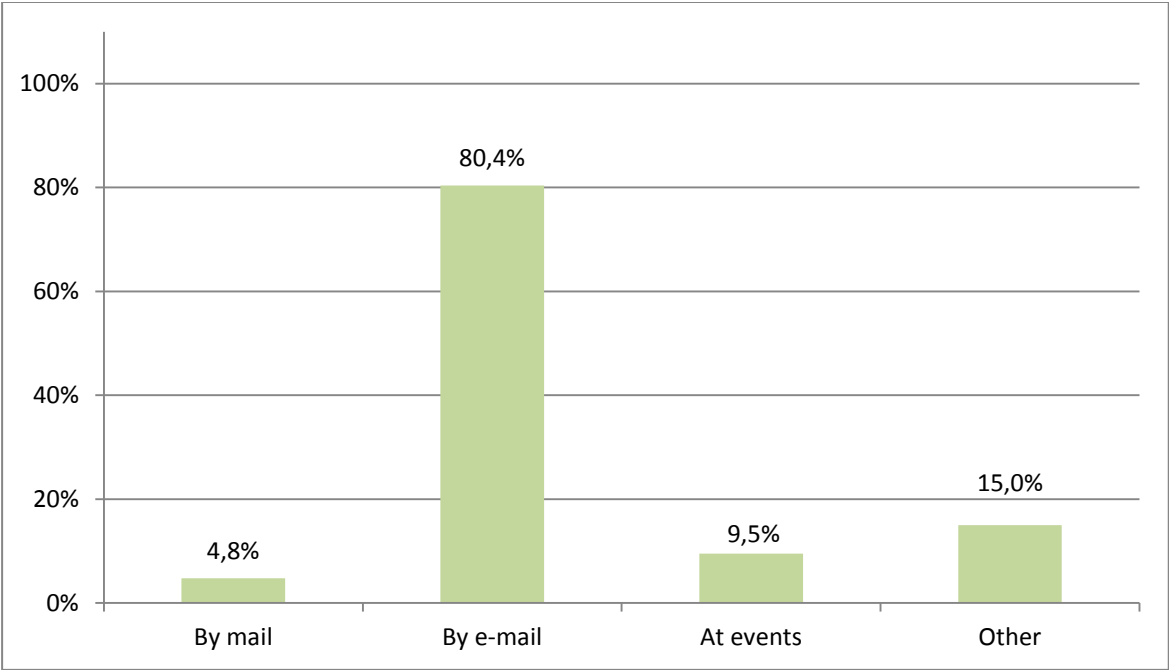
Question 13: Would you like to receive more information from Wikimedia Deutschland?



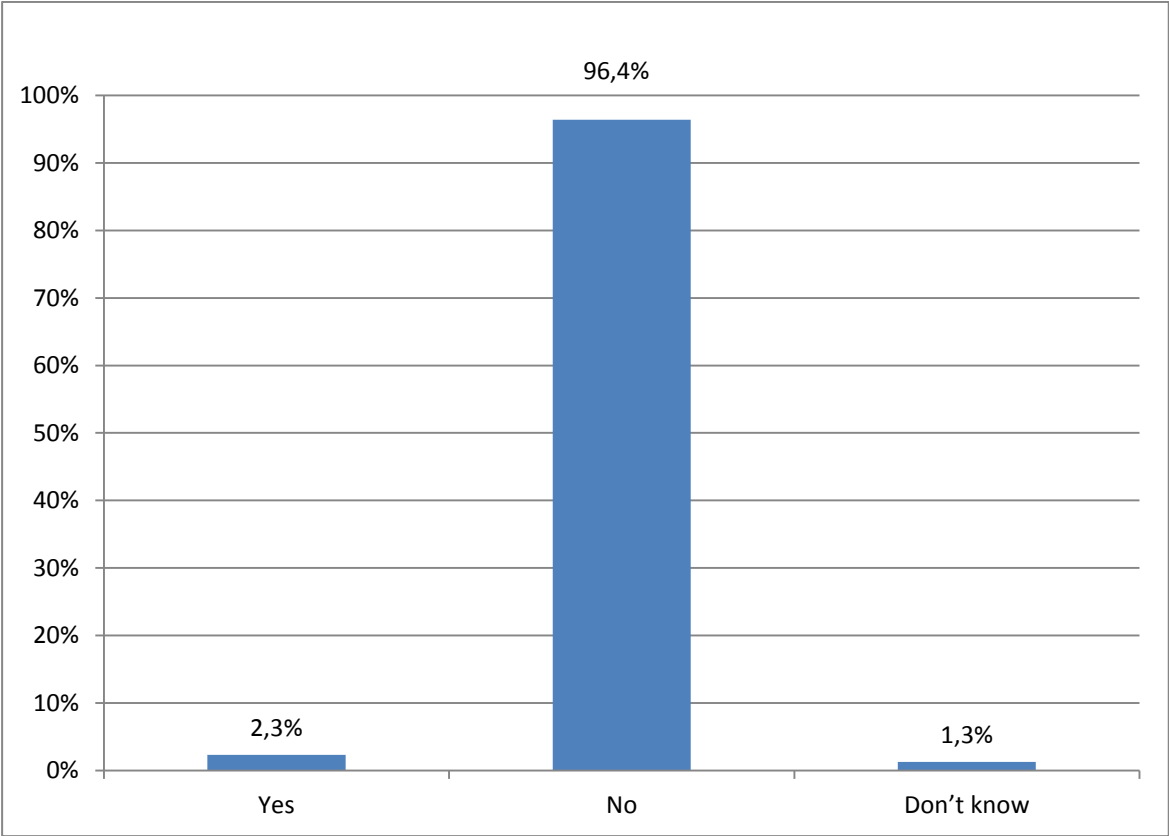
Question 14: What information would interest you? (Comment box)



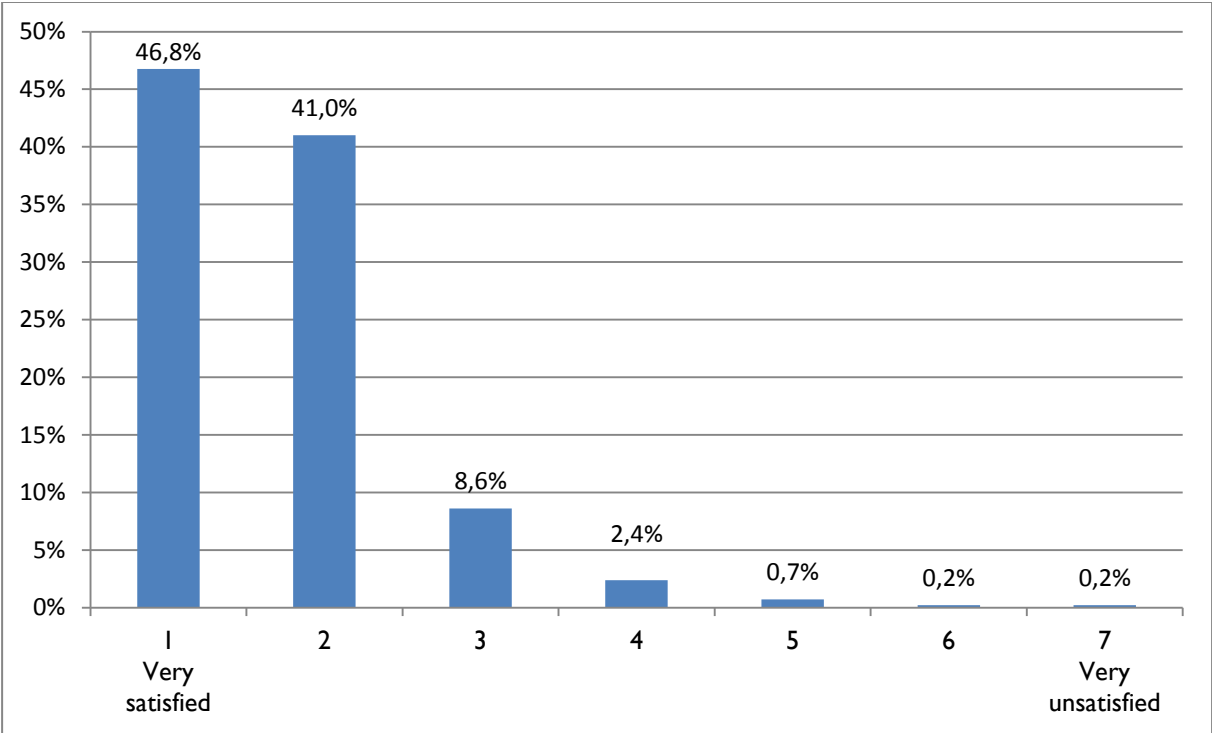
Question 15: How would you like to receive information about Wikimedia Deutschland?



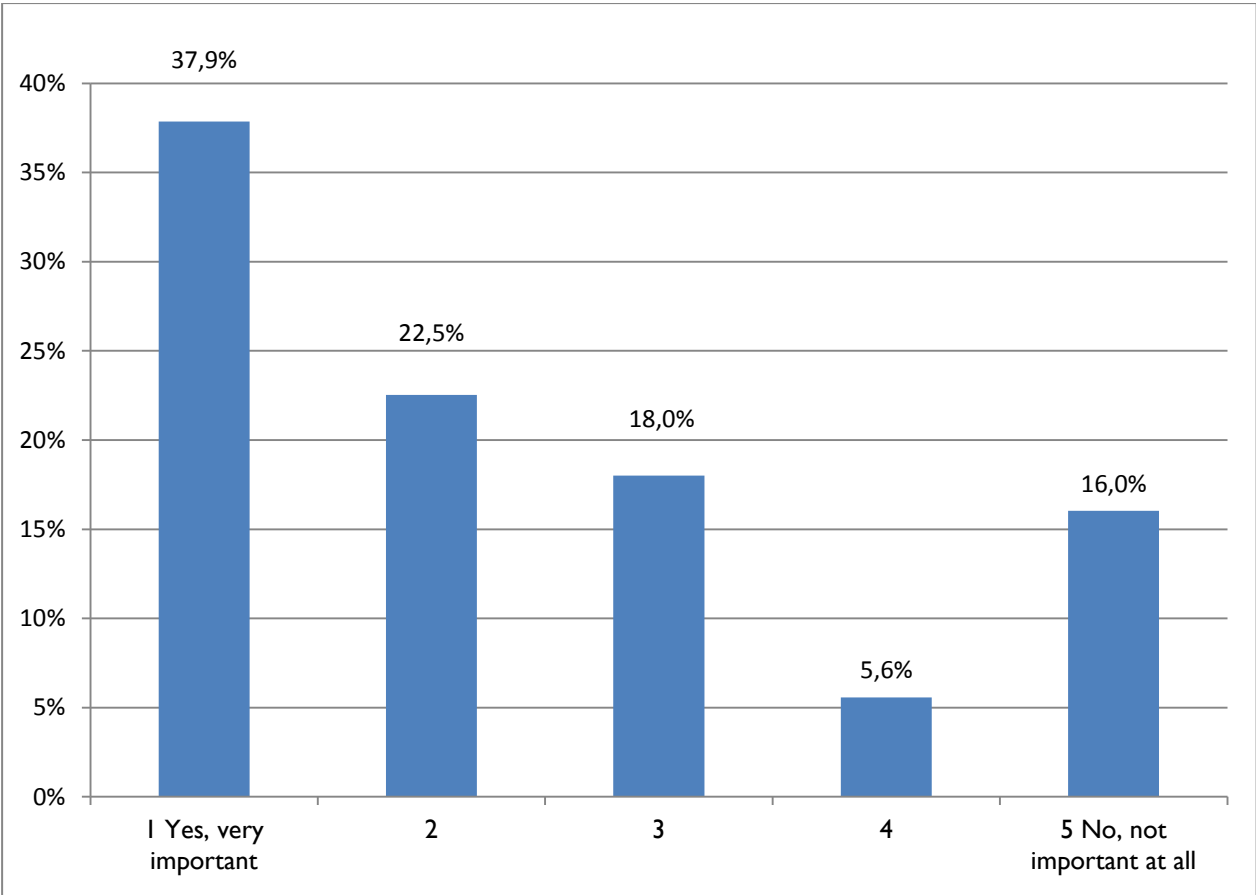
Question 16: Have you ever contacted our donor service with a question?



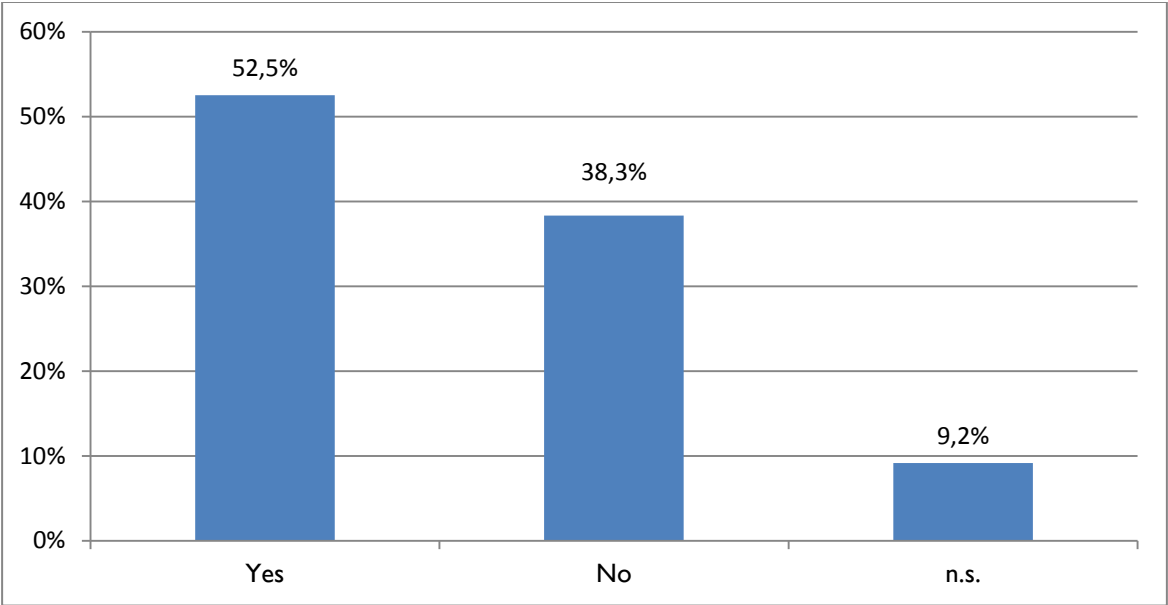
Question 17: How satisfied were you with the donor service?



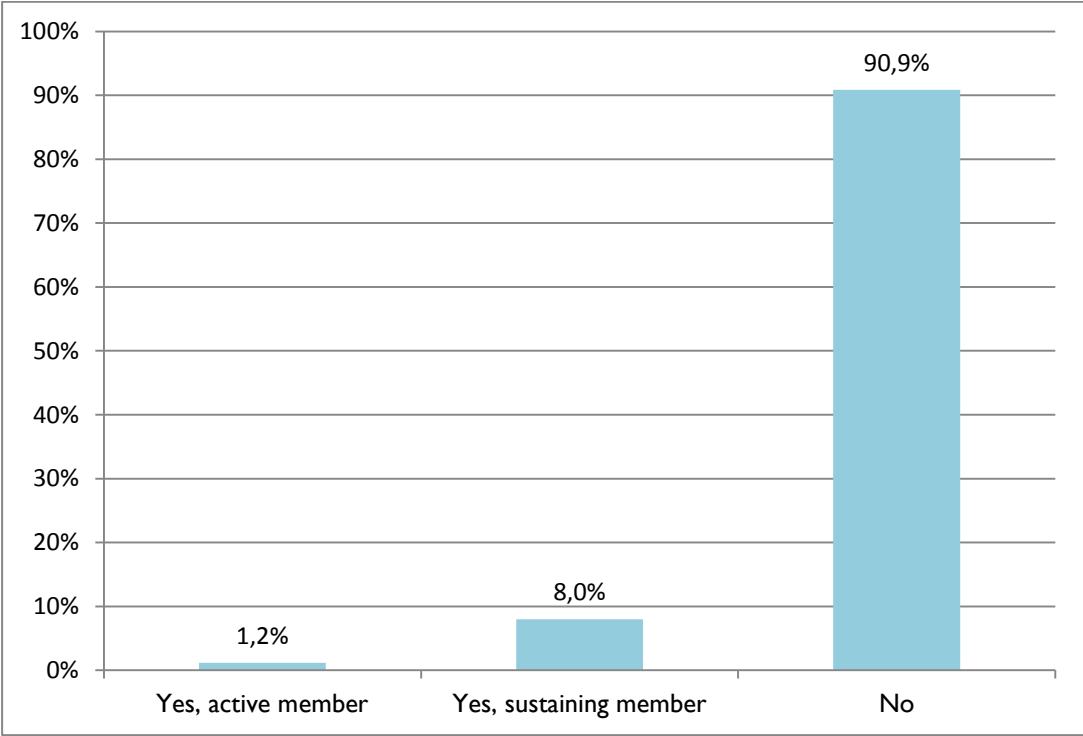
Question 18: Do you consider it important to receive a donation receipt from us for your donation?



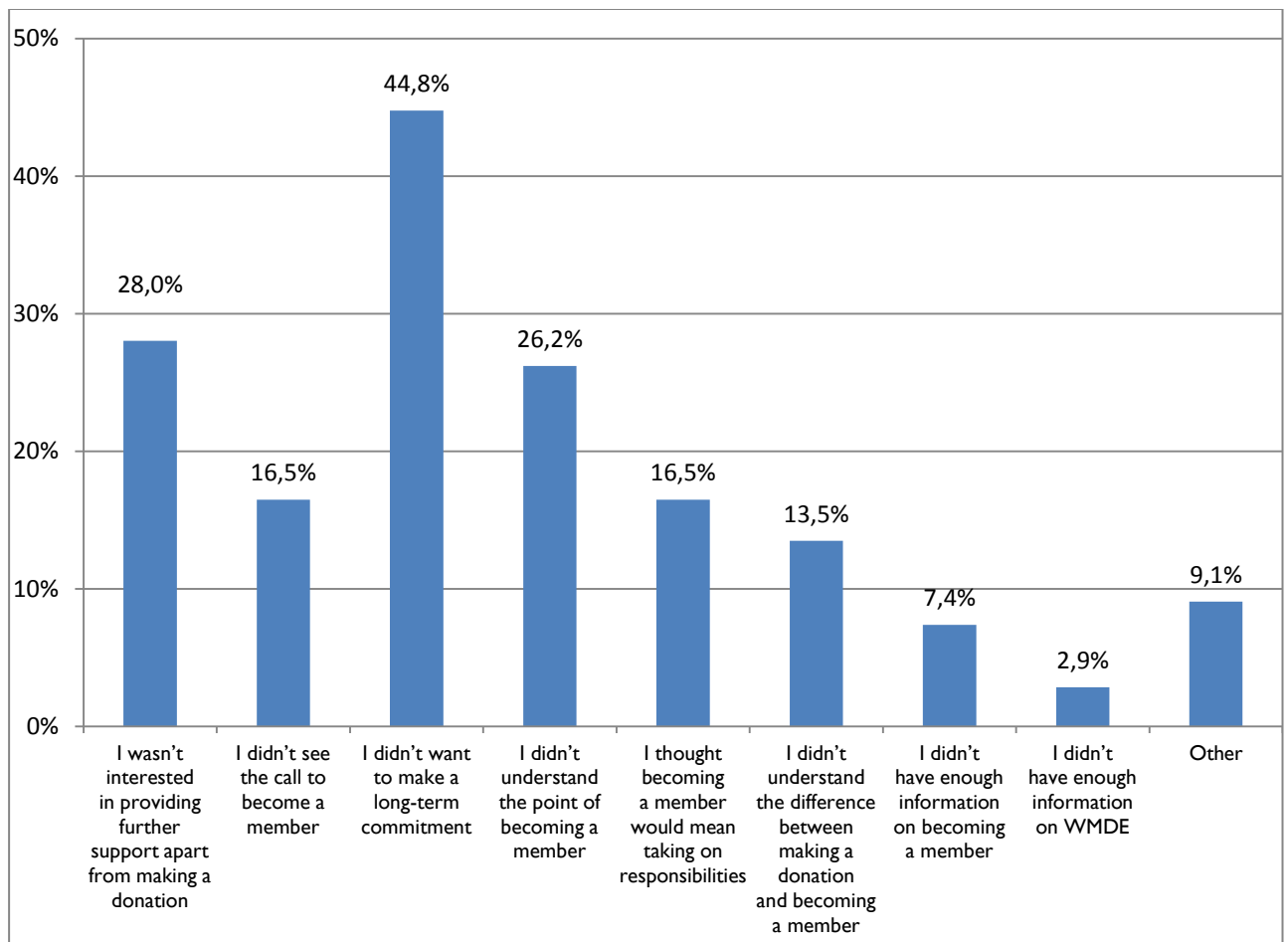
Question 19: Did you submit your donation receipt to the tax office with your tax return?



Question 20: Are you a member of Wikimedia Deutschland?



Question 21: Reasons against membership



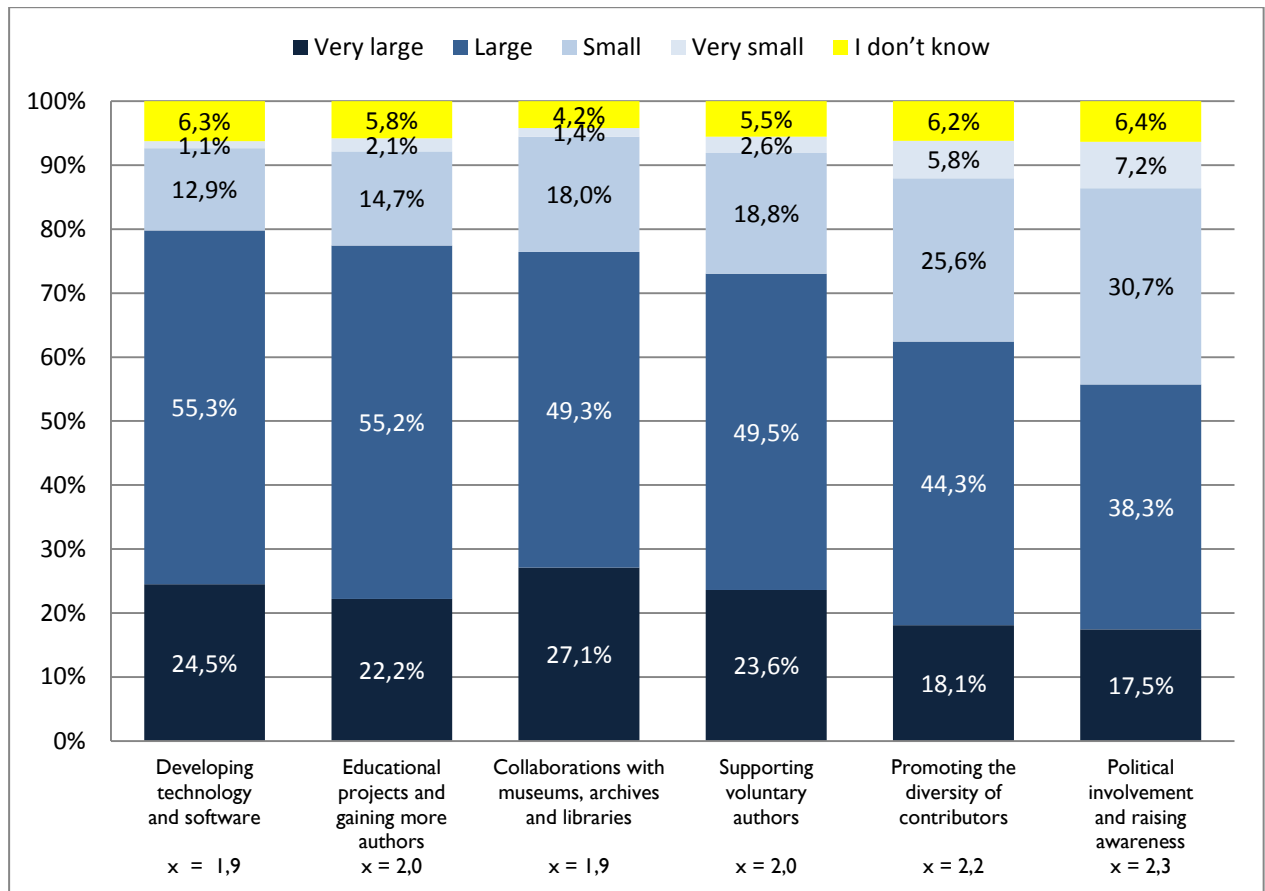
Questions 24/25: Wikimedia Deutschland's goal is to support the creation, collection and dissemination of free content, with the aim of improving education and equal opportunities in access to knowledge. Money donated is applied to support Wikipedia and its sister projects and to disseminate the principle of free knowledge in society.

In the following two tables, six areas of activity are presented which serve this purpose. Do you consider that they are worthy of support?

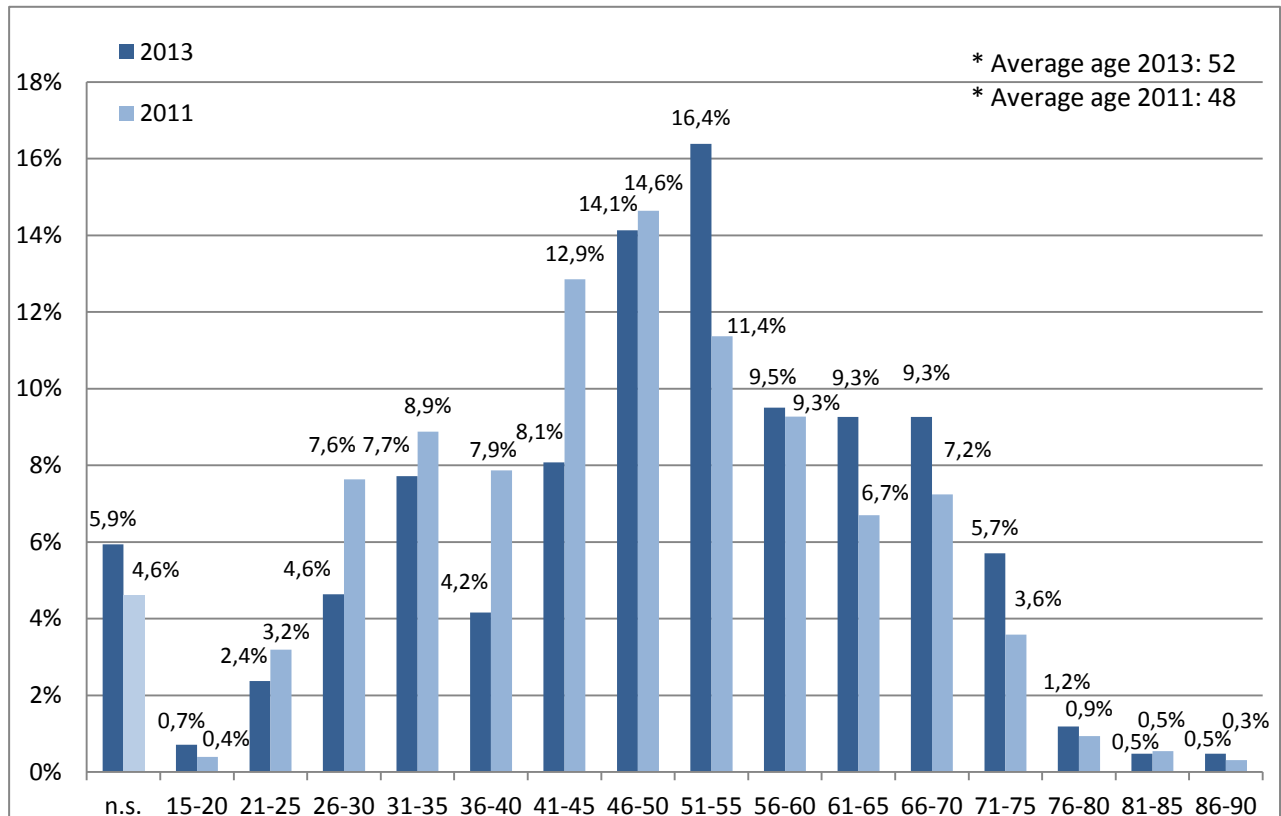
Please evaluate on a scale of 1 (very worthy of support) to 6 (not at all worthy of support).

	1 Very worthy of support	2	3	4	5	6 Not at all worthy of support	I don't know	
As part of our support for volunteer authors , equipment is provided (e.g. photographic equipment or specialist literature), travel expenses for workshops and volunteer meetings are paid and community projects are given organizational support.	250 30%	287 35%	157 19%	59 7%	34 4%	7 1%	36 4%	Total: 830 x: 2.2, std: 1.14
As technology advances , new equipment is provided for volunteer authors. For example, the open database Wikidata enables certain contents of all Wikipedia language versions to be worked on centrally. The RENDER project develops tools for assessing the quality of Wikipedia content for readers and authors.	345 42%	322 39%	99 12%	8 1%	9 1%		48 5%	Total: 831 x: 1.74, std: 0.8
We aim to enthuse as many people as possible for free knowledge and to inspire them to work with Wikipedia, its sister projects and other projects related to free knowledge. Workshops are carried out and helpful tools developed for our educational work and for acquiring new authors .	375 45%	284 34%	106 13%	25 3%	9 1%	4 0%	26 3%	Total: 829 x: 1.78, std: 0.93
We promote collaboration with volunteer authors through cooperation with museums, archives and libraries . This enables, e.g. high quality photos from collections and expert knowledge to become available for the Wikipedia projects. State copyright owners are encouraged to make their content available as open data.	491 60%	257 31%	50 6%	6 1%	5 1%		14 1%	Total: 823 x: 1.49, std: 0.7
The regulatory framework, e.g. copyright, has an enormous influence on the dissemination and use of knowledge. Political involvement and work on raising political awareness through exchanging ideas with political and civil society actors are intended to drive forward the free follow-up use of publicly commissioned content.	414 50%	250 30%	91 11%	21 3%	10 1%	4 0%	31 3%	Total: 821 x: 1.7, std: 0.92
The more diverse the people who participate in Wikipedia, its sister projects and other projects relating to free knowledge, the more comprehensive the content becomes and the wider the range of viewpoints represented. Therefore we campaign to promote the diversity of participants (e.g. gender, age, education).	349 43%	252 31%	139 17%	36 4%	15 2%	9 1%	21 2%	Total: 821 x: 1.93, std: 1.06

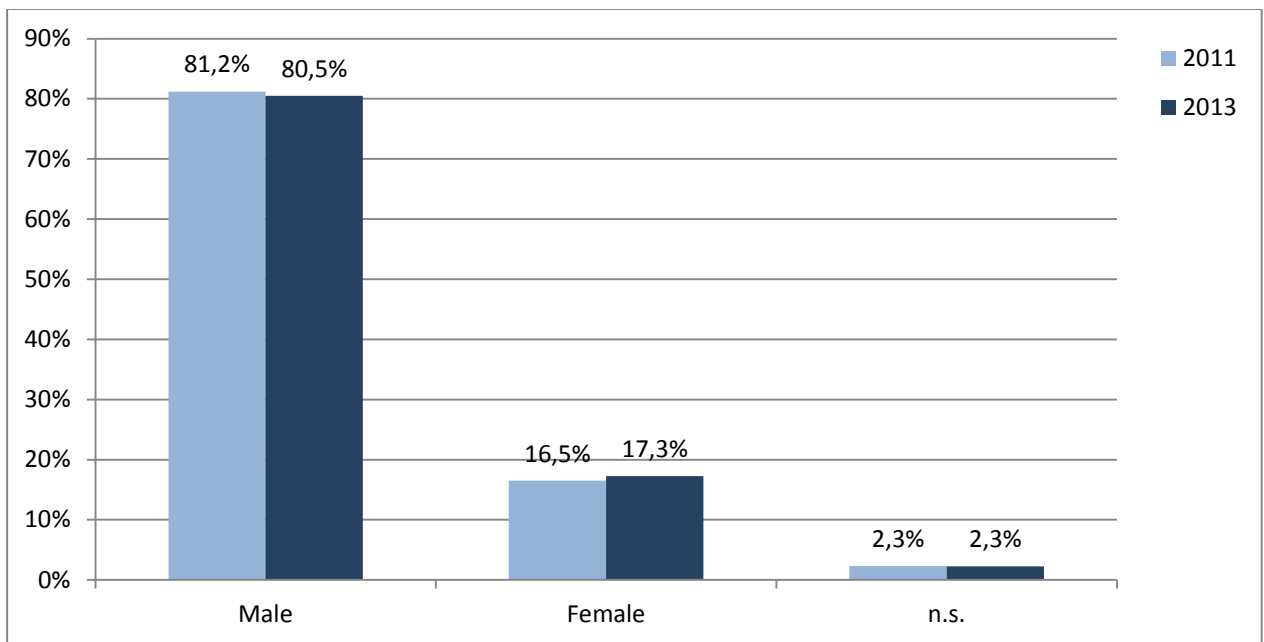
Question 26: What amount of donated funding do you think should be used for the following fields of activity?



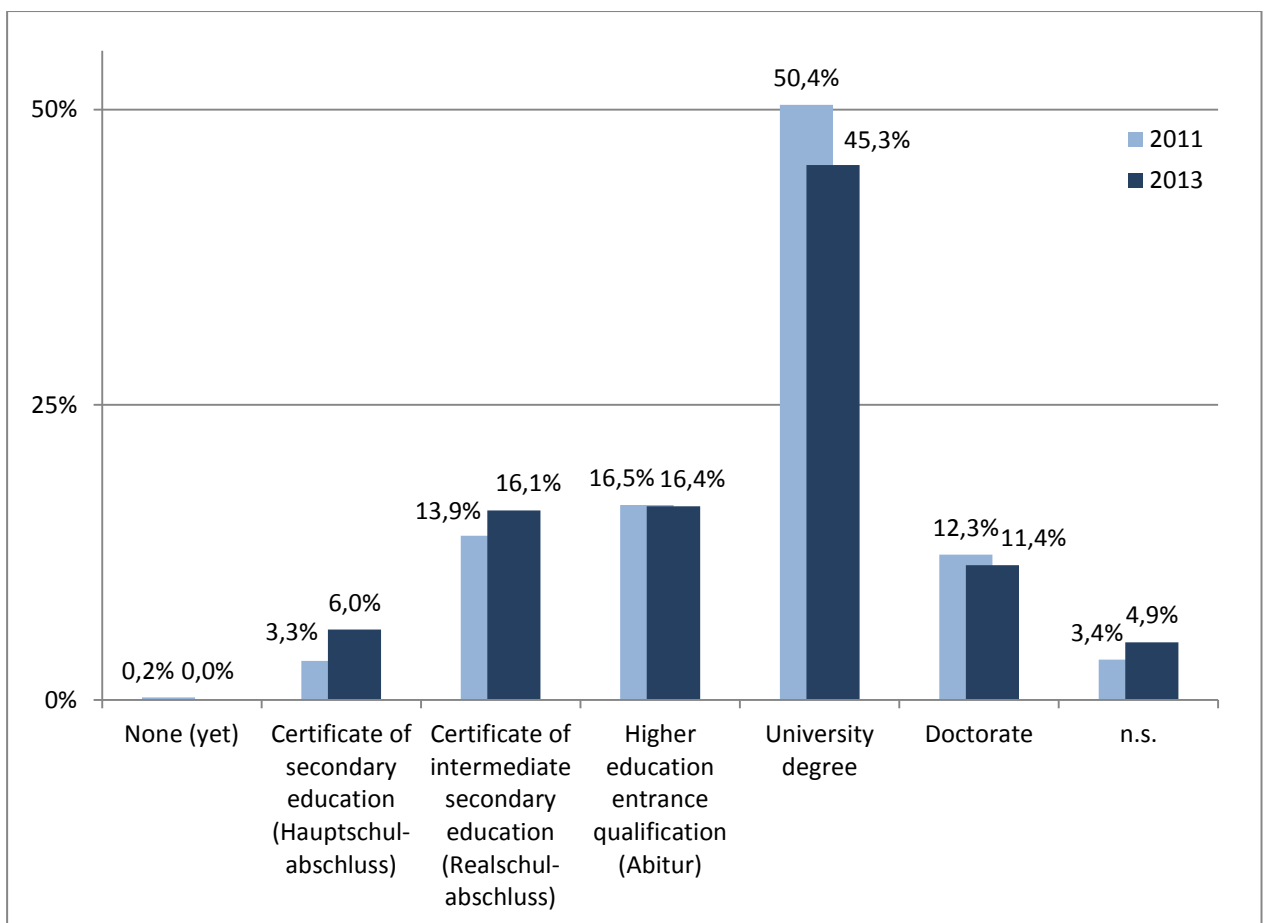
Question 27: In what year were you born? (The diagram shows the age)



Question 28: What is your gender?



Question 29: What is your highest educational qualification?



Question 30: How high was your annual net income in 2012 (/2010)?

