

Knowledge Equity Survey: *Perceptions of awareness and representation on Wikipedia and Wikimedia among US audiences*

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About this research

In 2021, the [Wikimedia Foundation](#) embarked on an ongoing series of research surveys to better understand levels of awareness, trust, and feelings of representation that people have in our work and projects, including Wikipedia.

The data is vital as the Wikimedia Foundation and global volunteer movement work to achieve [knowledge equity](#): a central pillar of our 2030 strategy that centers on welcoming the knowledge and communities that have been left out by structures of power and privilege.

The findings detailed in this report are from the first survey — a study of US adults that examined levels of awareness of Wikipedia and Wikimedia by surveying people who identify as Black, Hispanic, Asian American, LGBTQ+, and those with physical or mental health conditions, further breaking it down by gender.

The study was commissioned by [BAMM](#), a global data and insights firm with deep expertise in helping organizations to meaningfully understand their audiences. Future surveys are planned in Brazil, Japan, Nigeria, and South Africa.



How this data will be used

This research will help the Wikimedia Foundation and movement to:

- Better understand areas where we can strengthen and improve work in relation to knowledge equity goals.
- Better understand audiences within these groups and reasons for representation gaps in our movement among both editors and readers.
- Make informed decisions about programming and priorities based on the issues identified.
- Develop more effective communications to increase engagement with those who are underrepresented in the Wikimedia movement.
- Better measure progress, establish accountability, and set benchmarks for improvement.

What we did

Survey

- Two samples of US adults:
 - 1,000 people of color
 - 500 people who identify as white
 - Note: Hispanic is combined with Latinx due to following census race/ethnicity categories
- 15 min survey
- Fieldwork dates: 28 May - 7 June 2021
- Note: Low sample size for respondents falling into the LGBTQ+ community

Content Analysis

- 23,491 US-only biographies on English Wikipedia (only)
- Across set of pre-agreed topic areas
- Key measures analyzed (e.g. length)
- Language analysis

Key Insights



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Key Insights

- There are **significant differences between communities** in how engaged they are with Wikipedia, how represented they feel, and how they perceive Wikipedia's values around diversity, equity and inclusion.
- **Women**, across communities, are far more skeptical of Wikipedia's support of social/equity movements.
- **Black women** and **Hispanic women** have the lowest engagement rates with Wikipedia, and have negative views of Wikipedia when it comes to inclusivity and support for racial and gender equality.
- **Asian women** have high awareness and are heavy users of Wikipedia, but feel unrepresented on the platform.
- **White women** have high awareness but relatively low engagement, and are highly skeptical of Wikipedia's inclusivity, specifically in regard to Wikipedia's racial and gender equality values.

Key Insights

- **Black men** and **Hispanic men** are less engaged, but generally perceive Wikipedia as inclusive.
- **Asian men** are highly engaged, generally have a positive view of the site, but feel somewhat unrepresented.
- **White men** are the most engaged with Wikipedia and most likely to perceive the site as inclusive and supportive of equality.
- **The LGBTQ+ community** are highly engaged with Wikipedia, and also perceive the site as inclusive*.
- Those with **physical conditions** and those with **mental health conditions** are highly engaged and supportive.
- Finally, there are clear differences in the types of language used in **biographies between genders, ethnicities, and sexual identities** emphasizing stereotypes and biases.

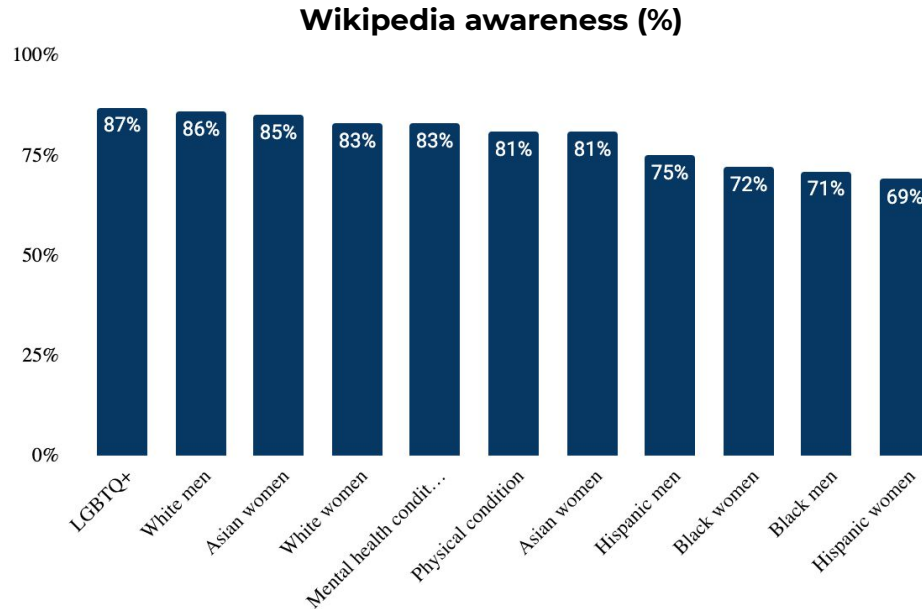
**Which groups are aware
about and use Wikipedia?**



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Wikipedia Awareness

1. Lowest awareness among: Hispanic women (69%), Black men (71%), Black women (72%).
2. Highest awareness for White men, Asian women, White women, and LGBTQ+**.



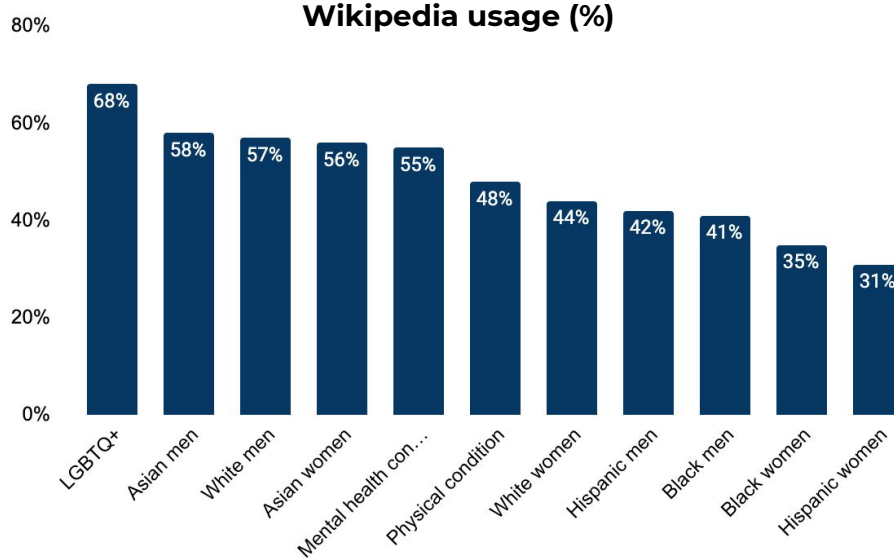
Potential Barriers:

- Hispanic women, Black men, and Black women are more aware of other platforms.
 - Google
 - YouTube
- The Foundation needs to pursue more opportunities to engage these groups

****Small sample size for LGBTQ+**

Wikipedia Usage

1. Very low use among Hispanic women (31%) and Black women (35%).
2. Asian community both highly aware and heavy users.
3. White women have low usage despite higher awareness levels.



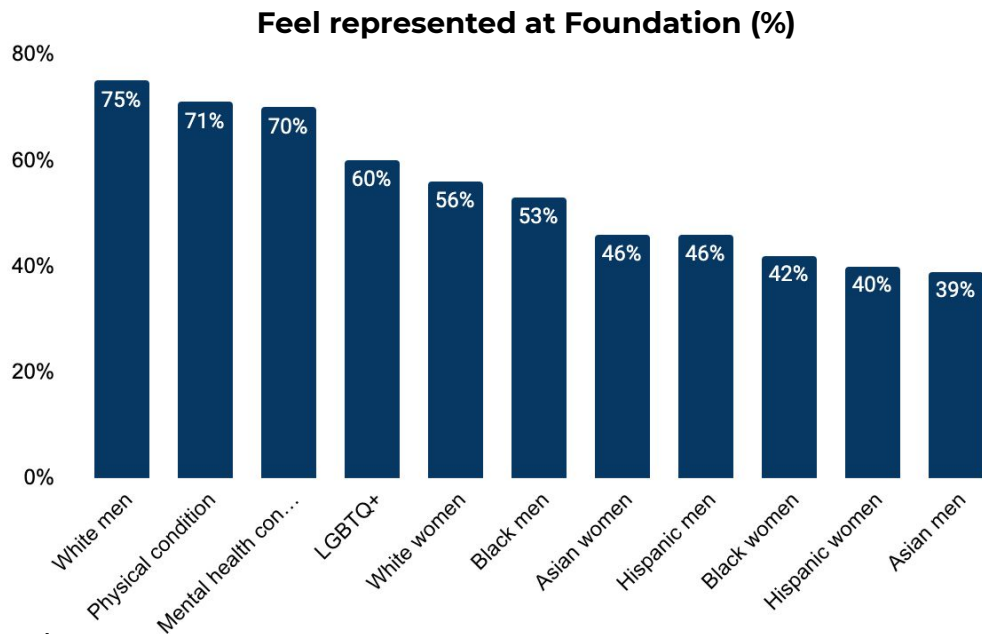
****Small sample size for LGBTQ+**

Potential Barriers:

- **Groups with low percentages of feeling represented on Wikipedia:**
 - Black women (19%)
 - Hispanic women (22%)
 - Asian women (22%)
 - White women (36%)
- **Groups with low percentages of noting “accepting people like me” or inclusive:**
 - Hispanic women (30%)
 - Black women (37%)
- **Black and White women are less likely** to see Wikipedia as valuing racial equality/movements.

Representation at the Wikimedia Foundation

1. Asian men, Hispanic women and Black women feel the least represented by the Wikimedia Foundation



****Small sample size for LGBTQ+**

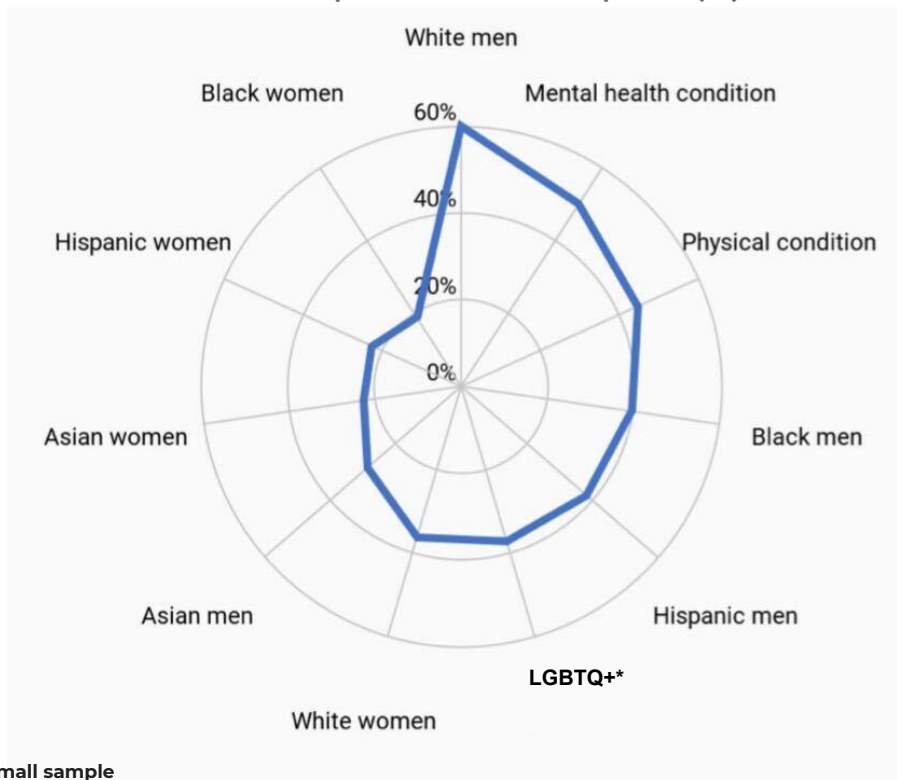
Barriers:

- Black and White women are less likely to see the Wikimedia Foundation as valuing racial equality/movements. Conversely, White men and Hispanic men feel the opposite.

Note: *There could be instances of misattribution due to Wikimedia sounding close to Wikipedia.*

Representation on Wikipedia

Feel represented on Wikipedia (%)



Black, Hispanic, and Asian women have low percentages of feeling represented on Wikipedia

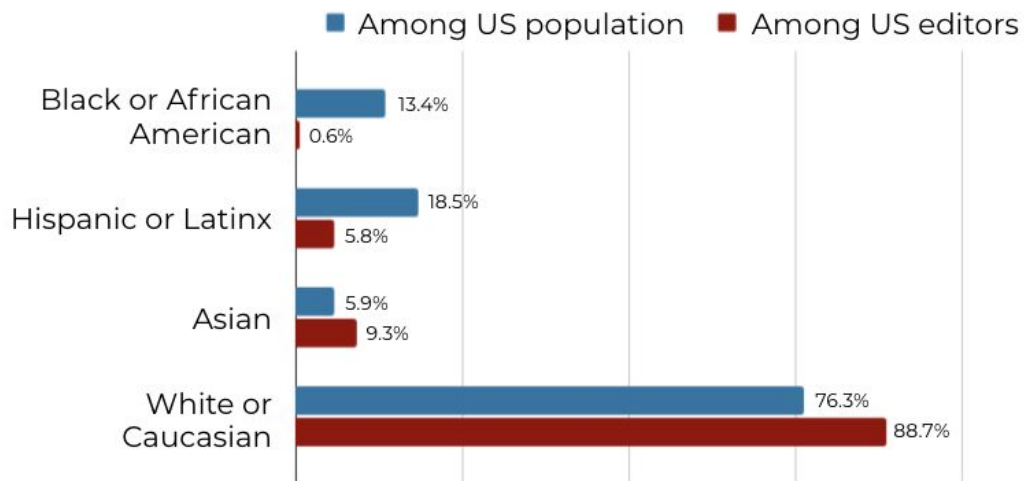
Feel represented on Wikipedia:

- Black women (19%)
- Hispanic women (22%)
- Asian women (22%)
- Asian men (28%)
- White women (36%)

**Small sample size for LGBTQ+*

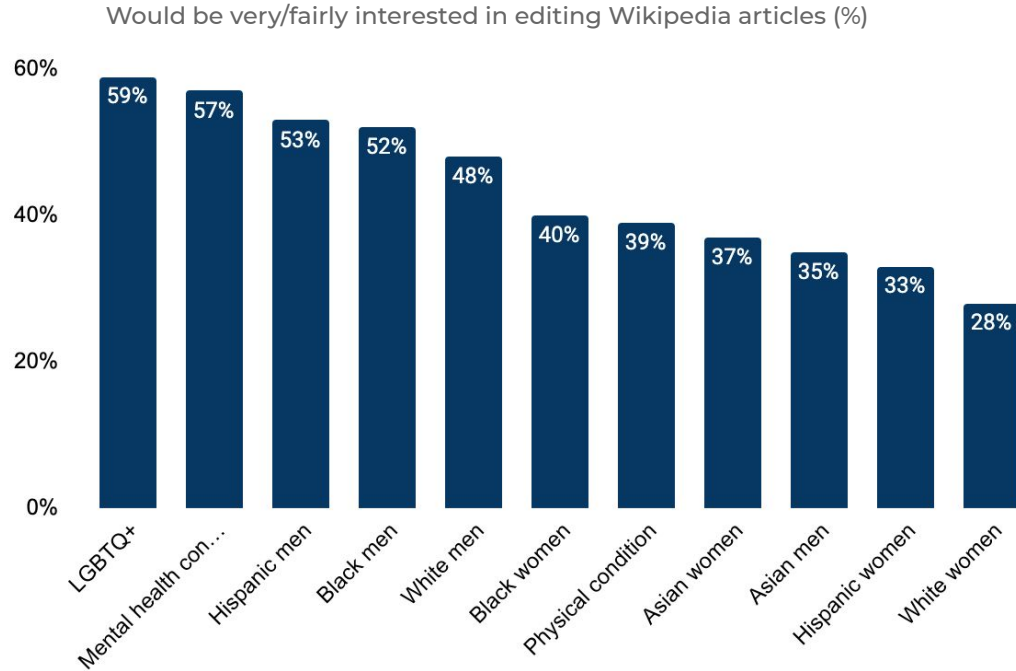
Editors

In 2020, the Global Data & Insights team surveyed our editors. The findings from the 2020 Community Insights survey correlate with our DEI Communications Research.



The race and ethnicity of US contributors, which we were measured for the first time, showed **significant underrepresentation for LatinX and especially Black editors.**

Although the proportion of editors identifying as women has increased 3.5 percentage points since 2019, women are still less interested than other groups in editing.



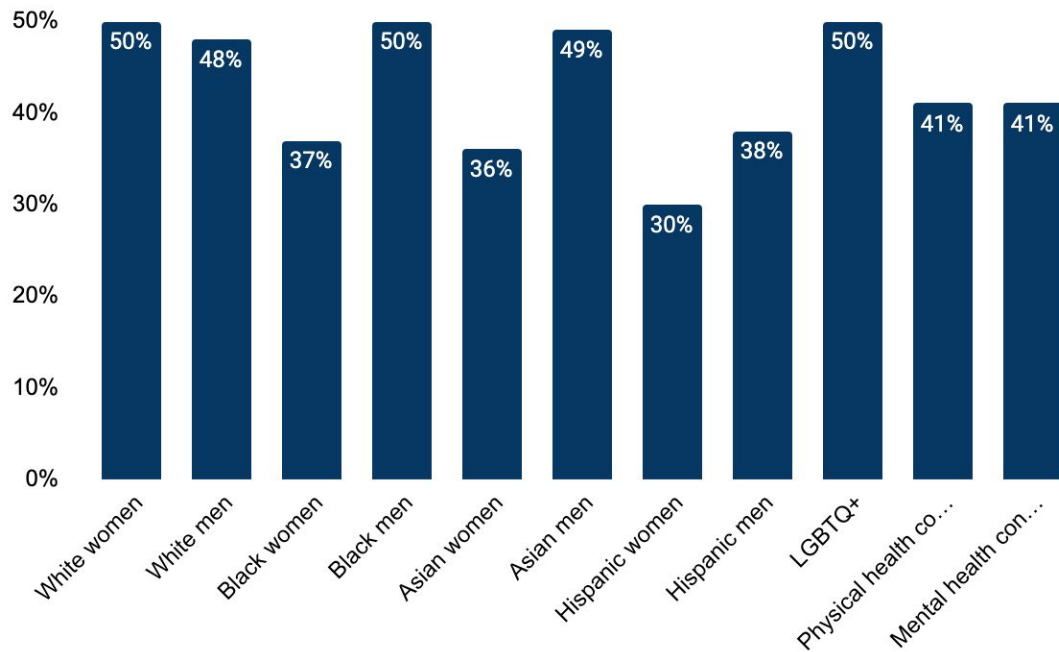
**Small sample size for LGBTQ+

Potential Barriers:

- Women do not believe their gender is represented among editors. Furthermore, women are less likely to see Wikipedia as valuing gender equality.
- Low percentages of groups that believe Wikipedia has representative number of female editors:
 - Hispanic women (16%)
 - Asian women (22%)
 - White women (23%)
 - Black women (25%)
- White women, Hispanic women and Black women least likely to feel Wikipedia supports gender equality, and the LGBTQ+ community.

Wikipedia Associations

% of respondents stating “accepting of people like me”

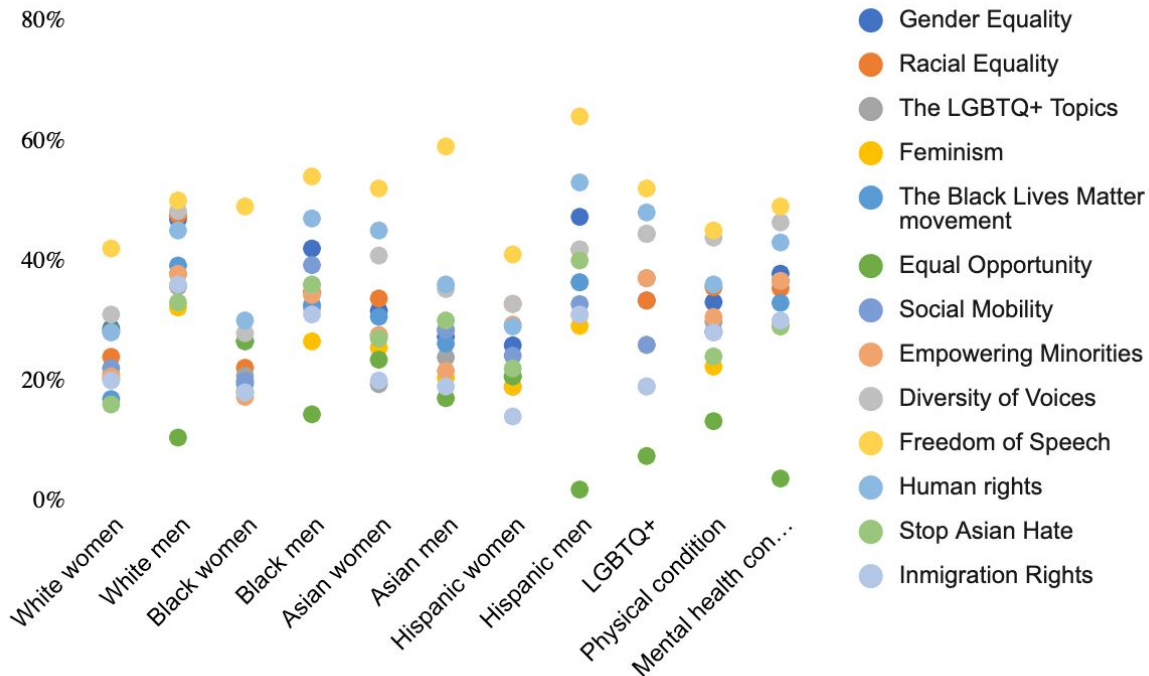


- Black & Hispanic women have low percentages of citing Wikipedia as “accepting people like me”.

****Small sample size for LGBTQ+**

Movements & Causes

Different groups have different perspectives about which movements and causes Wikipedia values.

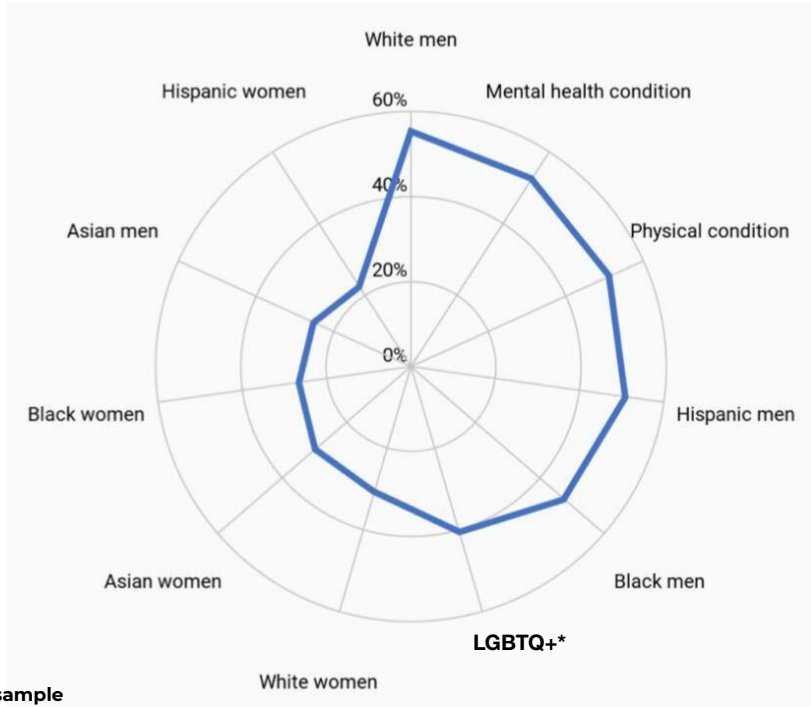


- **“Freedom of speech”** and **“Feminism”** are perceived by all groups to be a highly-valued movement/cause that Wikipedia values.
- **“Stop Asian Hate”** is perceived by most groups to be not as valued by Wikipedia as other movements.

**Small sample size for LGBTQ+

Perception of Ethnic Representation in Editors

True about Wikipedia: Has editors and contributors that represent a range of ethnic backgrounds (%)

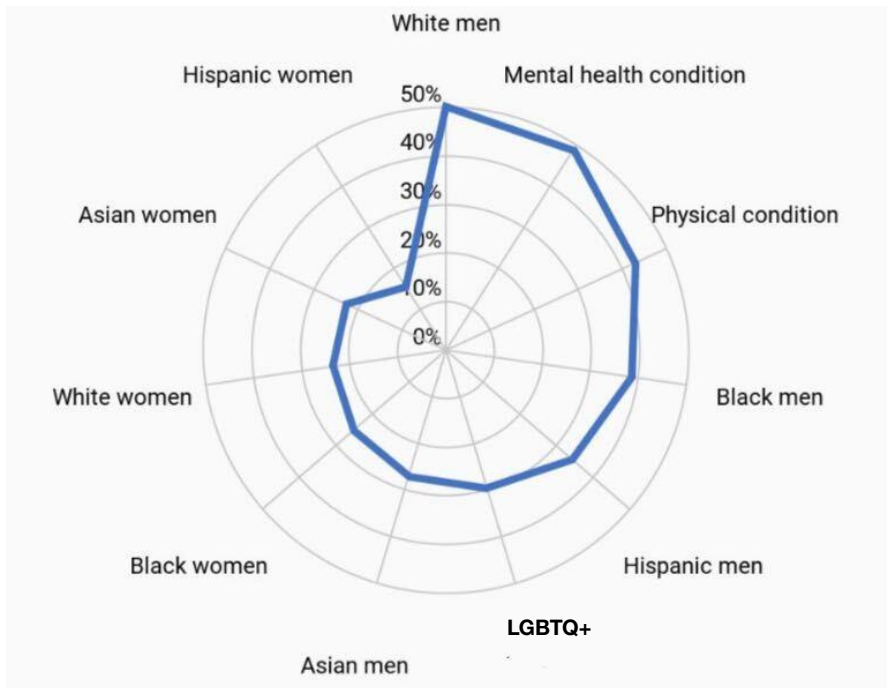


**Small sample size for LGBTQ+*

- Perception of low ethnic representation in editors
 - Particularly an issue among Hispanic women, Asian men, Black women and Asian women.
- Wikipedia has ethnic diversity of editors:
 - Hispanic women (22%)
 - Asian men (25%)
 - Black women (27%)
 - Asian women (30%)

Perception of Women representation in Editors

True about Wikipedia: Has a representative number of female editors (%)



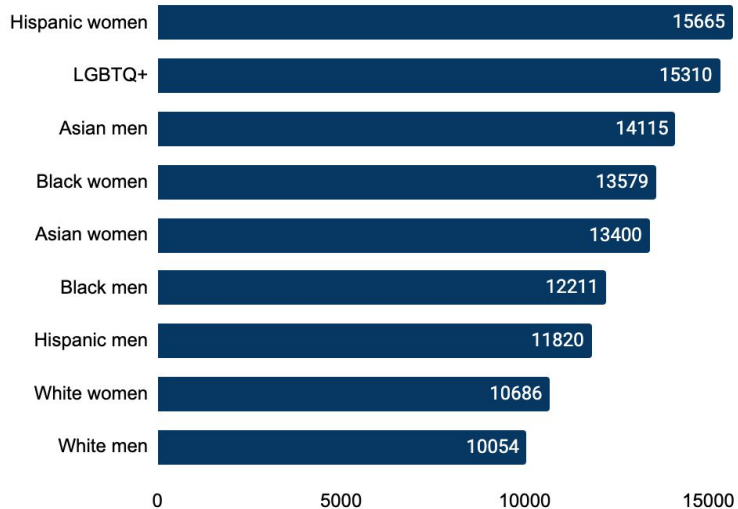
- Women do not believe gender represented among editors in Wikipedia
- *Wikipedia has representative number. of women editors:*
 - Hispanic women (16%)
 - Asian women (22%)
 - White women (23%)
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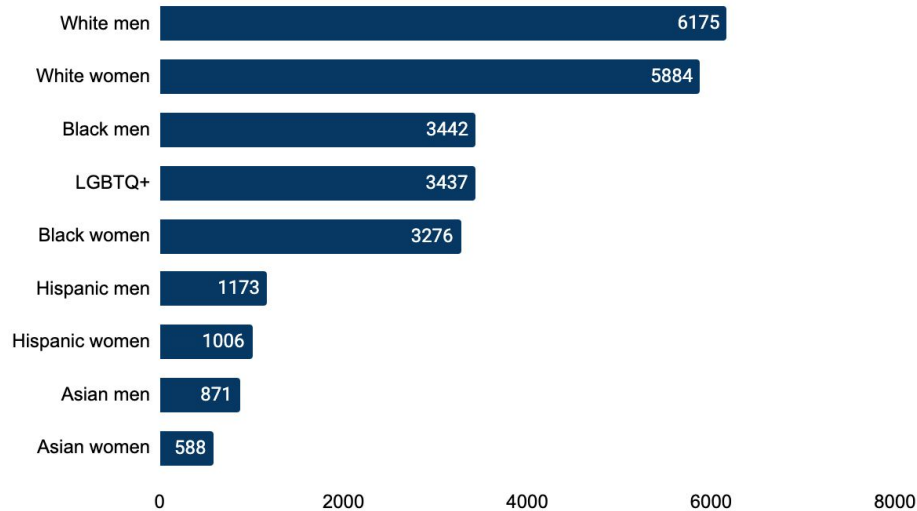
Biographies on Wikipedia

At a total level, there are low numbers of Asian and Hispanic biographies. At a total level, White biographies are shorter on average. Keep in mind, this data is observing English Wikipedia and that Hispanics in the U.S. may prefer to create Hispanic biographies in Spanish.

Average length of Biographies (by word count)



Number of Biographies



Language Bias Use in Biographies on English Wikipedia

Words with highest relative use for each group compared to other group(s)

Female	Male
Marrying	Allegiance
Chartered	Fraternity
Crush	Excellent
Fiancee	Advantage
Motherhood	Accurate

Asian	Black	Hispanic	White
Relocation	Colonization	Chicano	Research
Chow	Bondage	Viva	Cottage
Internee	Cried	Familia	Pillar
Pirate	Intensive	Earns	Thinker
Gymnast	Conversion	Exotic	Adventurous

LGBTQ+	Straight
Homophobic	Mechanical
Visibility	Infantry
Pronoun	Patented
Flamboyant	Pediatrics
Glitter	Aviator

Questions?

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