Report of the results
Author-Survey
"Welcome-culture for new editors at Wikipedia"

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On the behalf of Wikimedia Germany e.V.

Overview

Background & Aims   Methodology   Results   Conclusions

Wikipedia needs more new editors

Attracting new editors for Wikipedia is one the the main goals of Wikimedia Germany for 2016

Survey among editors aims at gaining insights into:
(at least 5 Edits, active within 30 days before survey)**:**

- Understanding current commitment of active community to support new editors
- Gathering experiences and opinions of active editors
- Improving the planned measures to attract new editors
- Increasing understanding of (perceived) welcome-culture / culture of openness
- Information regarding commitment to support new editors

Methodology

Approach

- Creating list of questions in close collaboration with Wikimedia Germany – Based on existing WM-surveys
- Testing phase of questionnaire for amendment of questionnaire and ensuring usability
- Invitation for participation in the survey via banner
- Anonymous online-survey
- Analysis quantitative data: descriptive and analytic
- Analysis qualitative data: explorative

Questionnaire

- Length of questionnaire: 19 questions (17 closed, 2 open questions)
- Time of survey: January 2016
- Number of participants = 686

Profiles of survey participants

Gender

n=675

- Male
- Female
- Other

88%
10%
2%

Age

n=677

- <=20
- 21-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- 61-70
- >=70

4% 9%
9%
21%
26%
16%
15%
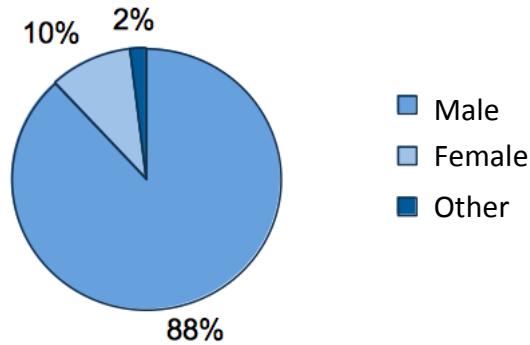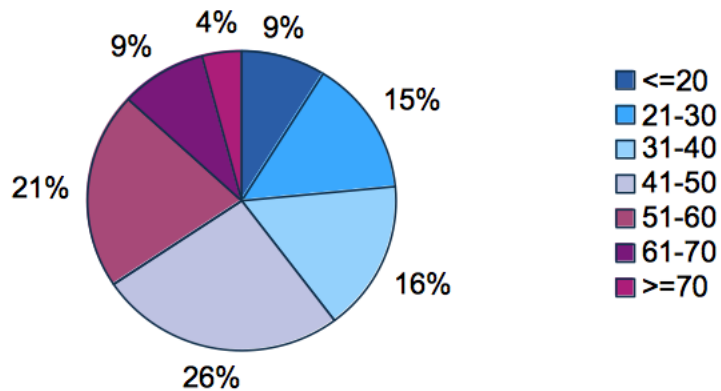
Since when have you been active within Wikipedia or sister projects? [n=684]

Years	
< 1	4%
1 − 2	8%
3 − 4	15%
5 − 6	14%
7 − 8	16%
>=9	41%
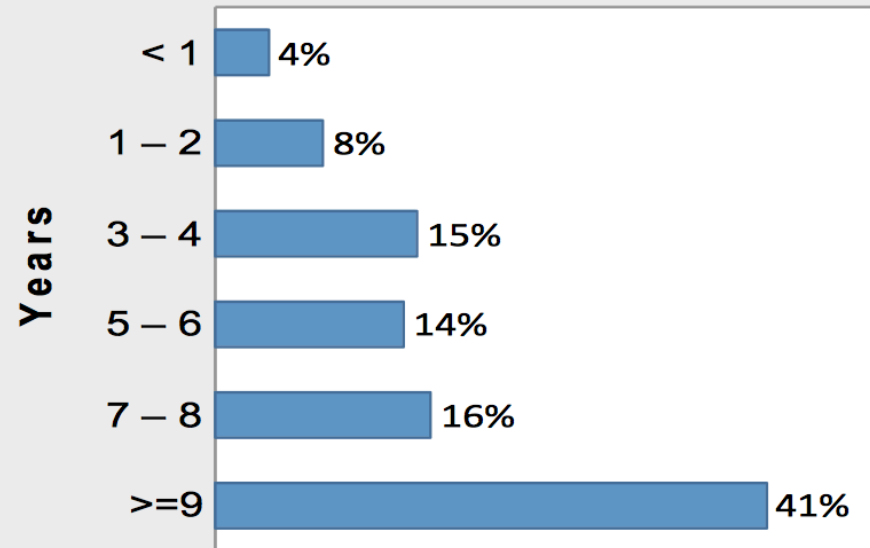
Median = 4, Mean value = 3,57

Profiles of survey participants
Wikipedia-Activity (Q2 & Q3)

The majority of survey participants (71%) are active several times a week or almost daily. A good third fight vandalism.
A great majority (95%) write or edit articles, whereas approx. 10% organise projects for free knowledge and / or cater to administrative tasks.

On average, how often do you contribute to Wikipedia or other Wikimedia projects? (n=685)

- 8%
- 21%
- 44%
- 27%

- ■ almost daily
- ■ several times a week
- □ several times a month
- □ less
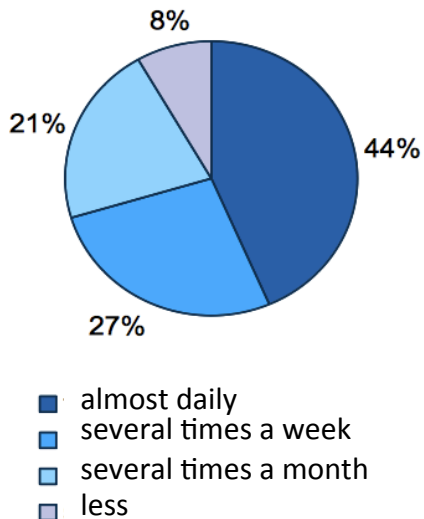
To which of the following Wikipedia-activities did you contribute within the last six months (online and/or offline)? [n=683]

Activity	Percentage
Writing or editing of articles	95%
Maintenance	70%
Embedding pictures / images	65%
Project discussions	45%
Fighting / containing vandalism	38%
Meeting others from Wikipedia community	23%
Organising projects for free knowledge	10%
Administrative tasks	9%
Developing software	2%
Other	10%

Agreement in percentage
(multiple answers allowed)
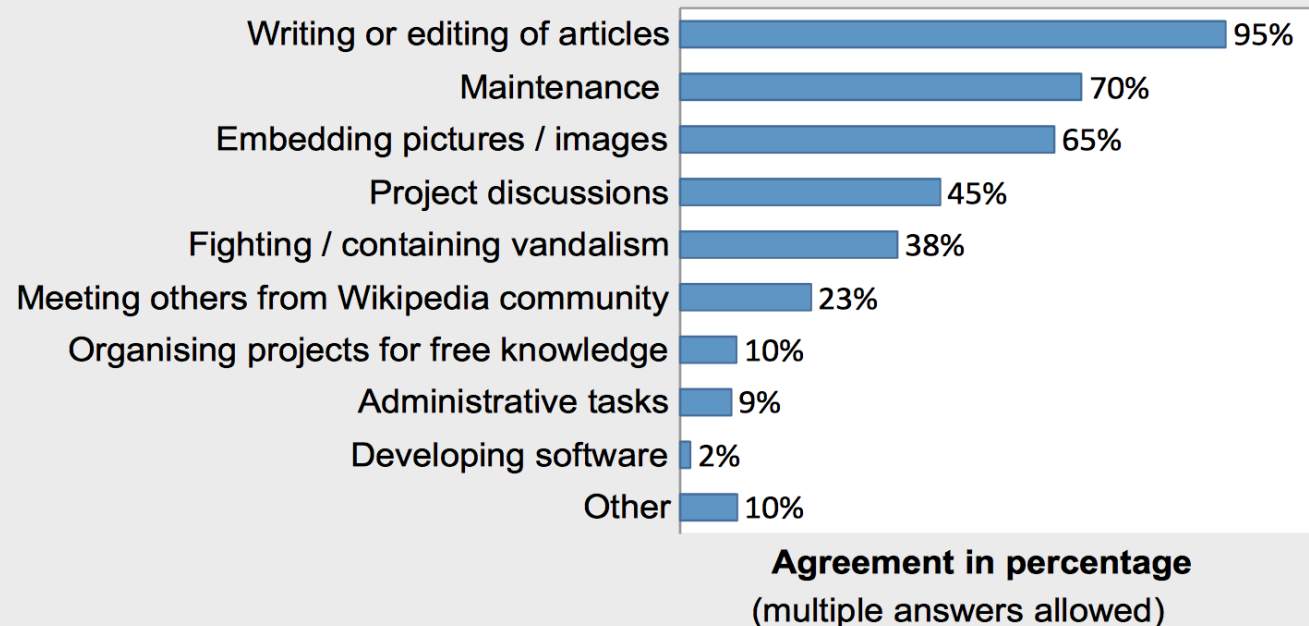
Profiles of survey participants
Wikipedia activity (Q3): other (open text field)
Background & Aims   Methodology   **RESULTS**   Conclusions

n=68

Statements regarding new editors (Q4)

Background & Aims Methodology **RESULTS** Conclusions

A vast majority of the participants think that gaining new editors is very important. 62% find that new editors are insufficiently supported. A rather large group (47%) did not feel welcomed when joining Wikipedia themselves. 9% assume that new editors do not want the best for Wikipedia.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding new editors at Wikipedia?
[n=686]

Statement	true	rather true	rather not true	not true	don't know
Constantly winning new editors is important.	53%	36%			
There should be more new editors.	57%	30%			7%
Most new editors mean well.	27%	51%	8%		12%
New editors often give up easily.	32%	41%	6%		19%
I felt welcome when joining Wikipedia.	19%	30%	26%	21%	
New editors get sufficient support from community.	5%	24%	38%	24%	8%
Most new editors do not want the best for Wikipedia.	7%		31%	41%	18%

Zustimmung in Prozent

■ true ■ rather true ■ rather not true ■ not true ■ don't know ■ no specification

(Not showing results <5% in favour of better readability)

Consequences of gaining more editors (Q5)

16% of the participants assume negative consequences regarding the atmosphere of an increased number of new editors; 47% assume a higher work load for experienced editors.
Positive consequences are broadly assumed for the diversity of topics covered.

In your opinion, which consequences would an increase in new editors bring about regarding the following aspects? [n=686]

Aspect	positive	rather positive	rather negative	negative	don't know	no spec.
Diversity of topics	57%	37%	1%	4%	1%	
Quality of articles	22%	51%	14%	2%	10%	1%
Atmosphere within Wikipedia	15%	41%	13%	3%	27%	1%
Work load for experienced editors	9%	27%	37%	10%	15%	1%

Agreement in percentage

- positive consequences
- rather positive consequences
- rather negative consequences
- negative consequences
- don't know
- no specification

- **Higher quality of articles:** Quality will be improved, content easier to understand, higher objectivity, stronger science-based backup of information

- **Higher diversity of topics / articles:** Diversity of topics would increase, topics of "the new generation" will be more included, fostering of topics that became less relevant over time.

- **Shaking up of old patterns:** More openness and pluralism, fighting of old boys' club mentality / structure.

- **Better atmosphere:** Increase in friendly manners, thoughtfulness

- **Change in workload for editors**: Reduced workload after familiarization of new editors vs. increase in edit-wars and discussions due to increase in editors

- **Guaranteeing Wikipedia's future:** For continuing the Wikipedia project, it will need new editors, "biological continuity"

Assumed barrieres for new editors (Q6)

Deleting of one's contribution and the conflicts within Wikipedia are assumed barriers for new editors by many participants – more so than technical barriers. According to this, the way editors treat each other is assumed the main barrier in joining Wikipedia.

What do you think are the main reasons why there aren't more new editors becoming involved with Wikipedia? [n=686]

Reason	Agreement
Deleting of one's contributions by others	62%
Conflicts between editors within Wikipedia	59%
Lack of knowledge how to contribute	36%
Editing is too complicated and too difficult to learn	27%
The feeling of not being able to contribute – everything has been said already	26%
Less chance to influence compared to established editors	24%
Lack of confidence regarding quality of own articles	22%
Lack of time for participating in lengthy article discussions	20%
Other reasons	25%

Agreement in percentage
(Multiple answers allowed)

11

Assumed barriers for new editors – open text field (Q6)
## Central issues (n=173)

The majority of assumed barriers relate to the negative atmosphere and discussion-culture, the coarse and arrogant way of communicating, especially by "old top-dogs".

- **Atmosphere / discussion-culture:** Unpunished attacks, coarse communication, arrogance, despotism, block-leader (Blockwart) mentality, high-handedness, fixation on rules, lack of support for new editors by experienced editors
- **Technical barriers for new editors:** Access to editing confusing, banning of stubs, weak editing-help, outdated software, problems with referencing
- **Relevance criteria:** Too many and not up to date
- **Culture of deleting**: Deletion-buzz, arbitrary deleting of articles
- **Resource problem**: Lack of time, no interest in contributing (correlated with prevailing consumer culture)
- **Gender topic**: Language within German Wikipedia not gendered correctly, forces editors to use old-fashioned gender language

Willingness to support new editors (Q7)

The largest group (42%) is willing to support new editors – one third is yet undecided.

Are you willing to support new editors in 2016? (n=686)

- 🟩 Yes
- 🟥 No
- 🟦 Don't know

42%
32%
25%
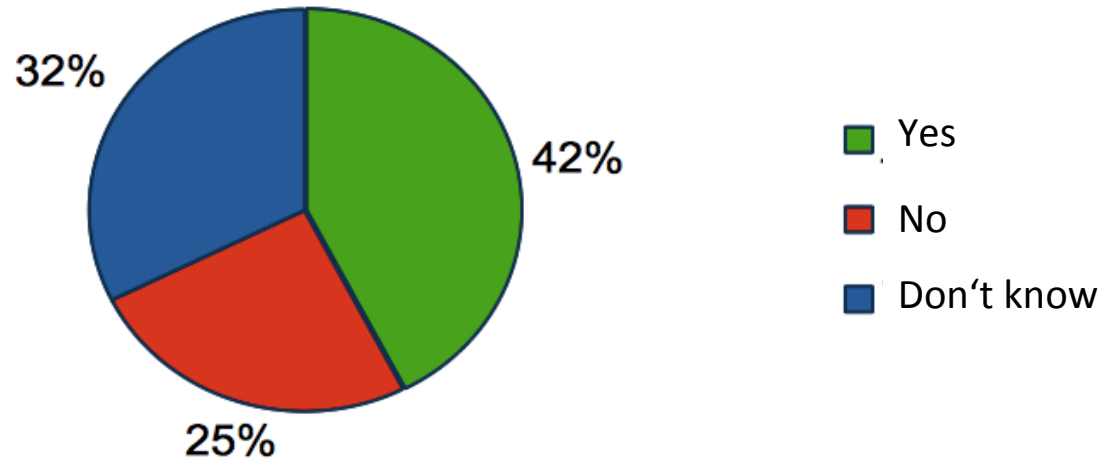
Willingness to support new editors
Type of support (Q8 – if Q7=yes)

A large majority of those willing to support new editors, would like to answer questions asked by new editors. One third would be willing to offer individual support.

Which kind of support would you like to offer to new editors?
[n=290]

Type of support	Percentage
Answering questions	81%
Welcoming new editors	56%
Individual support (e.g., mentoring programme)	37%
Create information for new editors	19%
Other support	24%
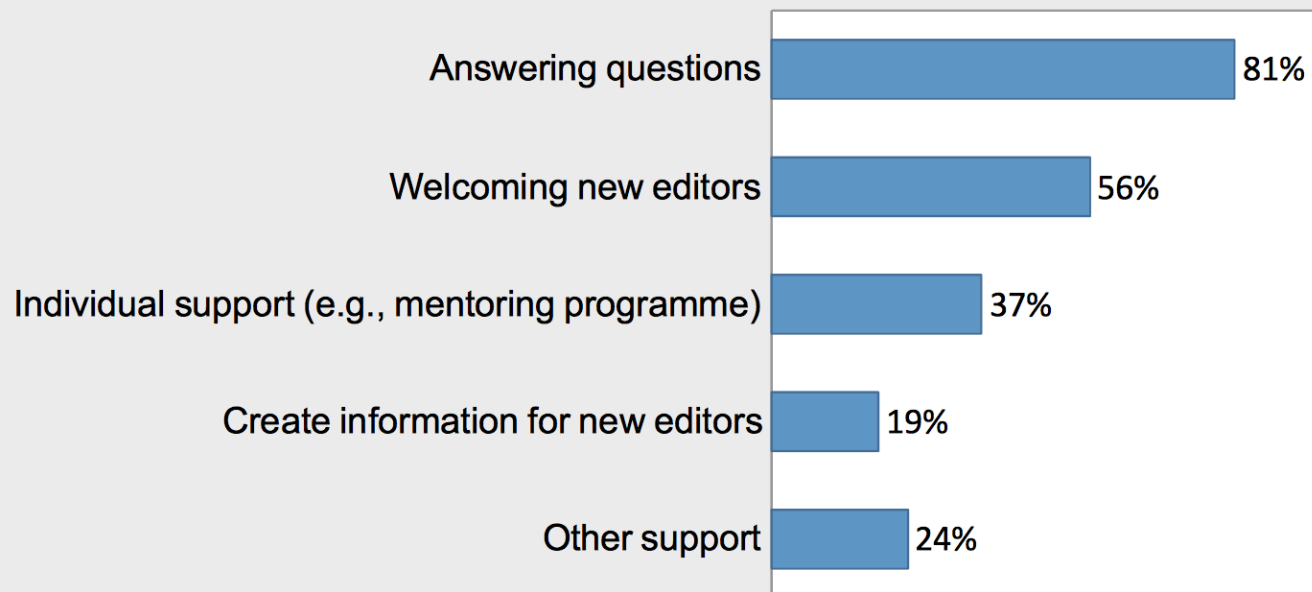
Agreement in percentage
(Multiple answers allowed)

Barriers to support
(Q9 – if Q7=no / don't know)
Background & Aims   Methodology   **RESULTS**   Conclusions

A large group see the time conflict with other Wikipedia activities and a lack of knowledge on how to support new editors as barriers to offering support.

What keeps you from offering support to new editors? [n=385]

Keeps me from pursuing my other activities within Wikipedia — 46%
I am not sure how to support new editors — 33%
Bad experiences with new / less experienced editors — 8%
I don't find such support necessary — 6%
There are too few others who would join me in supporting new editors — 6%
Other — 41%

Agreement in percentage
(Multiple answers allowed)
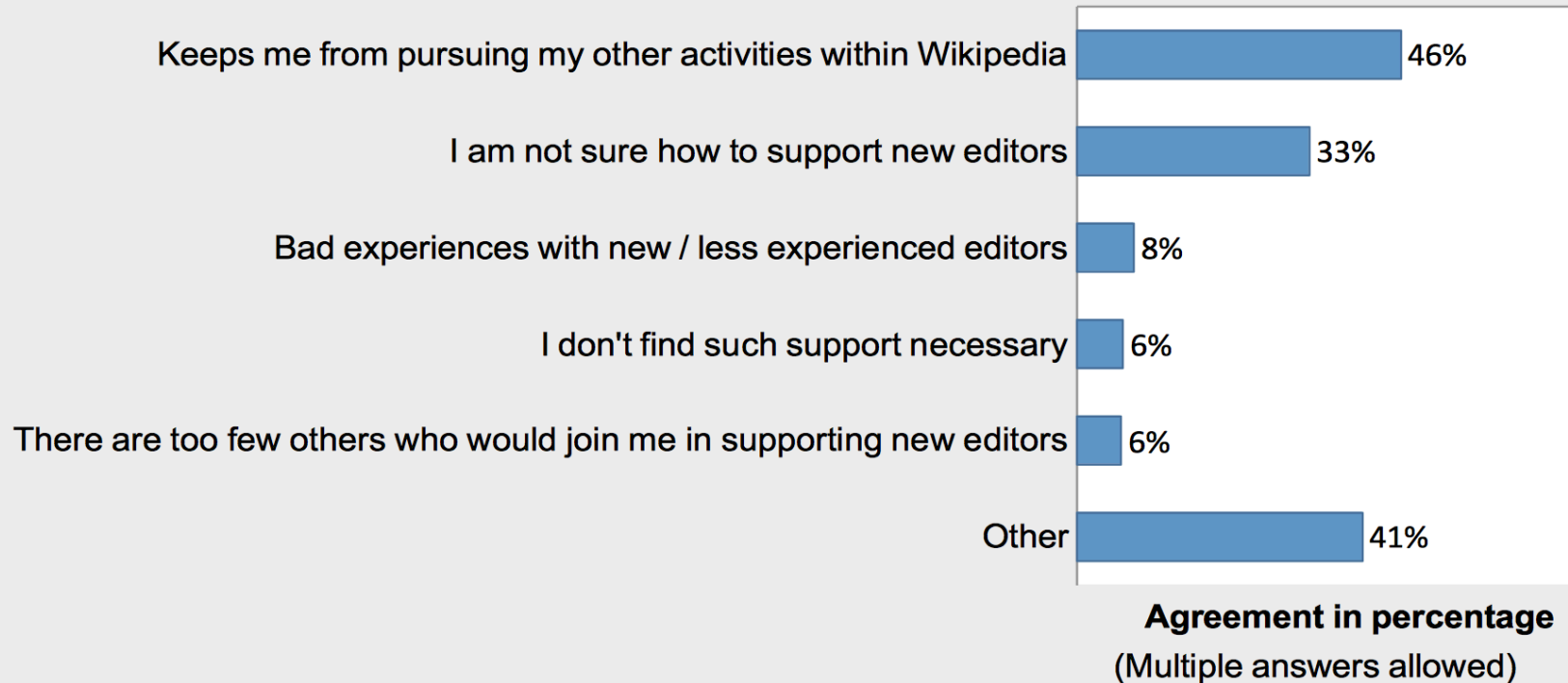
Barriers to support – open text field (Q9)
Central issues (n=156)

- **Resource problem**: Not enough time, other commitments, continuous availability is difficult

- **Lack of experience**: Too new, too inexperienced myself

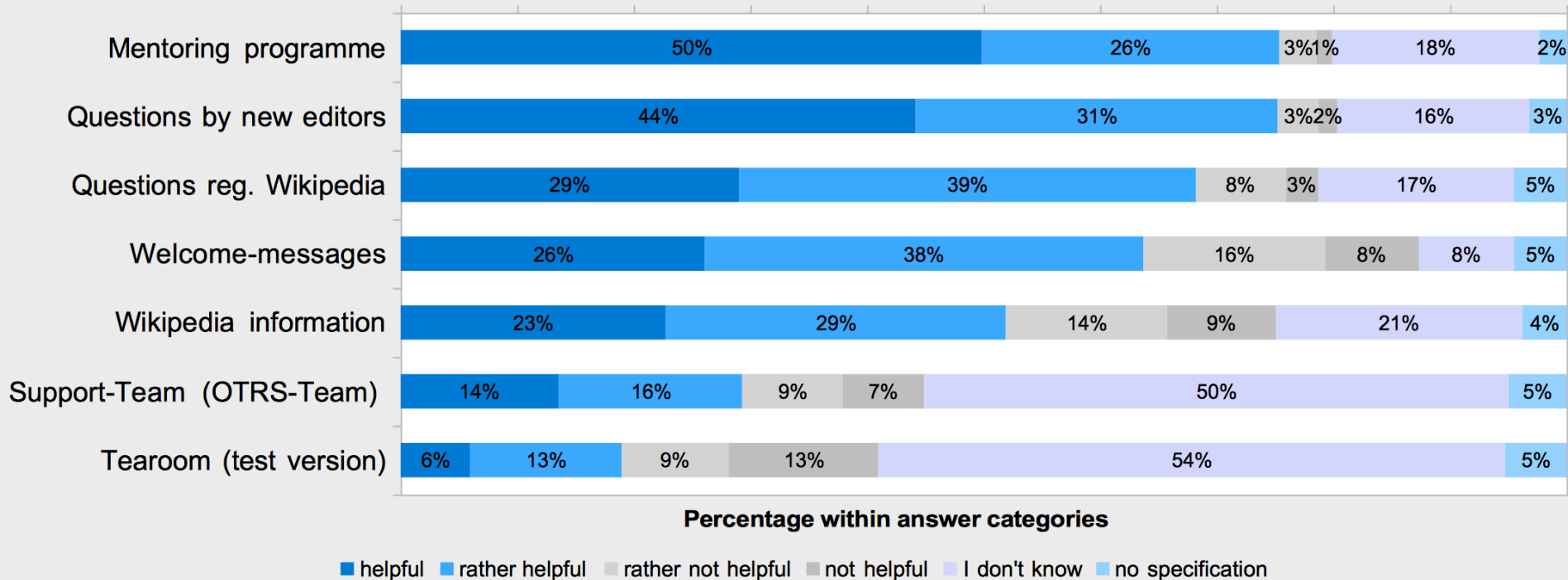- **Lack of motivation:** Continuance of established / singular editors more important; no desire to engage with Wikipedia's system of rules, no personal advantage

- **Reputation of Wikipedia / German Wikimedia:** WMDE not worth being supported, other language version are more tolerant, bad reputation of Wikipedia (editors and contents), lack of sustainable structures (money for unofficial editors)

- **Offline-support preferred**: Support of regional / local contacts

- **Atmosphere**: Manners, conflicts, old male top-dogs, lack of social competence in some admins

- **Questionable motivation of new editors:** Single page accounts, self-depiction

- **Lack of foundation at Wikipedia:** Easy to understand FAQ section, good tutorials, lack of guidelines, edits by new editors hard to identify

Helpfulness of support options (Q10)

Half of the participants find a mentoring program helpful, a majority find the question-formats as rather helpful.

How helpful do you find the different options to support new editors? [n=686]

Option	helpful	rather helpful	rather not helpful	not helpful	I don't know	no specification
Mentoring programme	50%	26%	3%	1%	18%	2%
Questions by new editors	44%	31%	3%	2%	16%	3%
Questions reg. Wikipedia	29%	39%	8%	3%	17%	5%
Welcome-messages	26%	38%	16%	8%	8%	5%
Wikipedia information	23%	29%	14%	9%	21%	4%
Support-Team (OTRS-Team)	14%	16%	9%	7%	50%	5%
Tearoom (test version)	6%	13%	9%	13%	54%	5%

Percentage within answer categories

■ helpful ■ rather helpful ■ rather not helpful ■ not helpful ■ I don't know ■ no specification

Reasons for deletion & major changes (Q11)

When deleting or applying major changes to an article by a new editor – what are common reasons for doing so? (n=680)

	Agreement in percentage (multiple answers allowed)
Breach of rule (e.g., discriminating content, advertisement, non-neutral)	41%
Fighting vandalism	41%
Information not sufficiently backed up by sources	29%
Non-compliance with relevance criteria	29%
Other reasons	10%
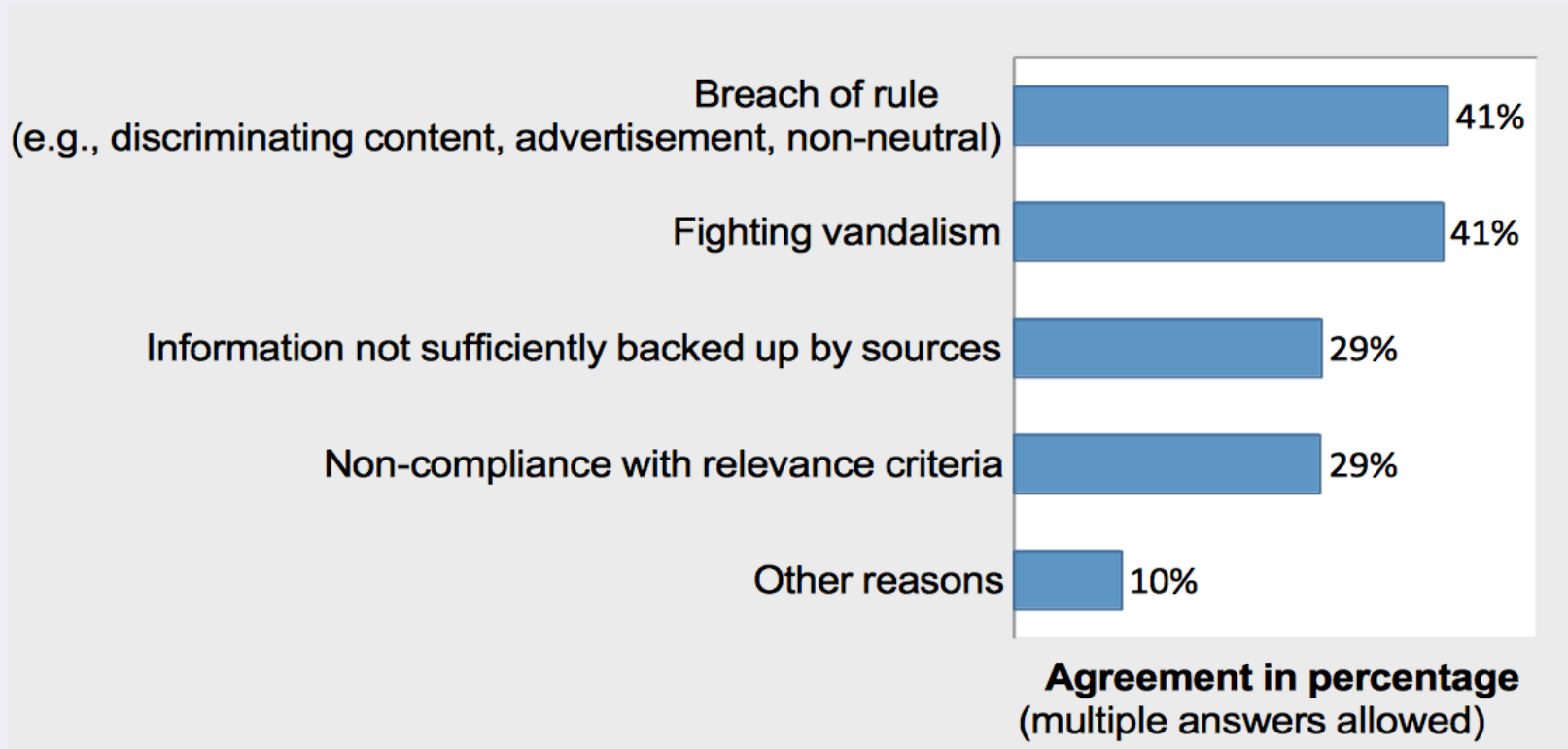
Reasons for deletion & major changes (Q11) – open text field

n=70

Formal standards: e.g., style, language, quality, no encyclopaedic style
Content deficits: e.g., quality, incomplete text

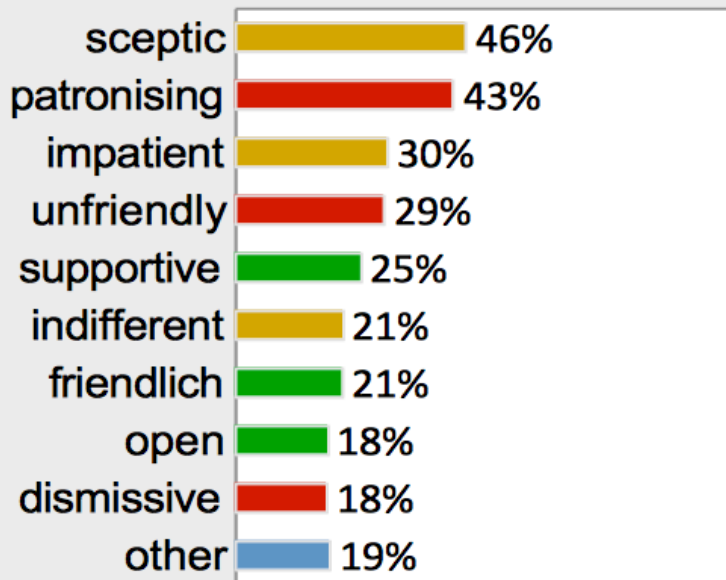# Communication with new editors (Q12)

The communication with new editors is assessed as rather negative (sceptic, patronising, impatient, unfriendly).
At the same time, about 25% of the participants find the communication with new editors supportive.

How would you describe the communication with new editors within the German Wikpedia?
(n=672)

sceptic	46%
patronising	43%
impatient	30%
unfriendly	29%
supportive	25%
indifferent	21%
friendlich	21%
open	18%
dismissive	18%
other	19%

Agreement in percentage
(multiple answers allowed)

n=126

„80% positive, 20% negative – enough to scare them off."
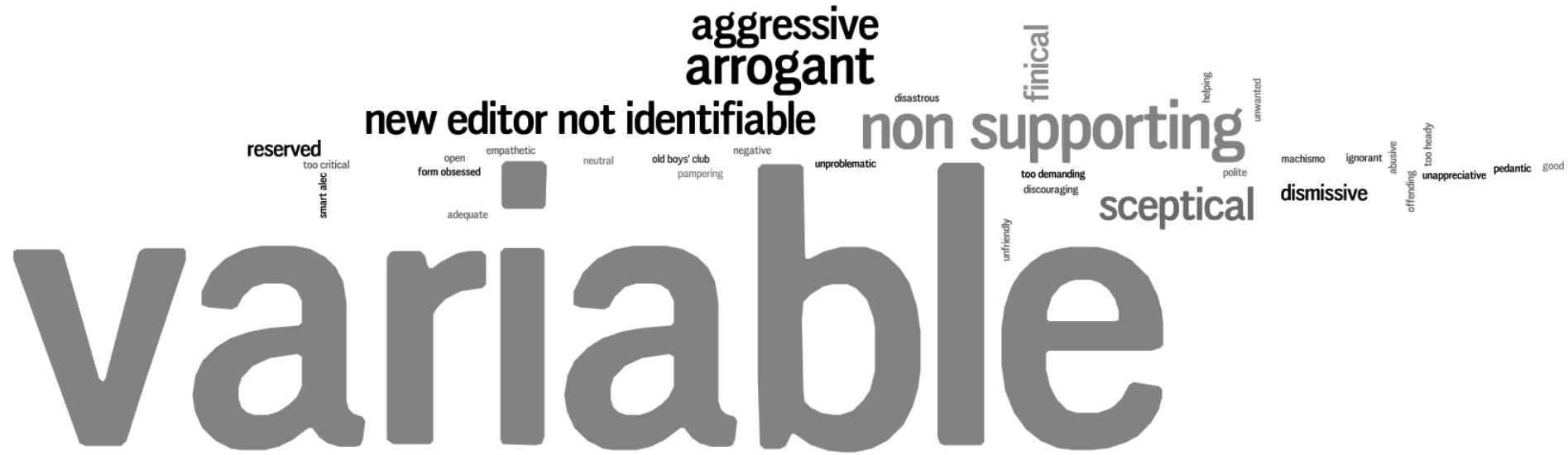
aggressive
arrogant
new editor not identifiable
reserved
too critical
smart alec
open
form obsessed
empathetic
neutral
old boys' club
pampering
negative
unproblematic
adequate
disastrous
finical
non supporting
helping
unwanted
too demanding
discouraging
sceptical
polite
machismo
ignorant
abusive
too heady
unappreciative
pedantic
good
dismissive
offending
unfriendly

variable

Consequences of low female participation (Q13 & Q14)

Most language versions of Wikipedia have a very low female participation. **Which consequences do you assume regarding the following aspects within Wikiepdia? [n=686]**
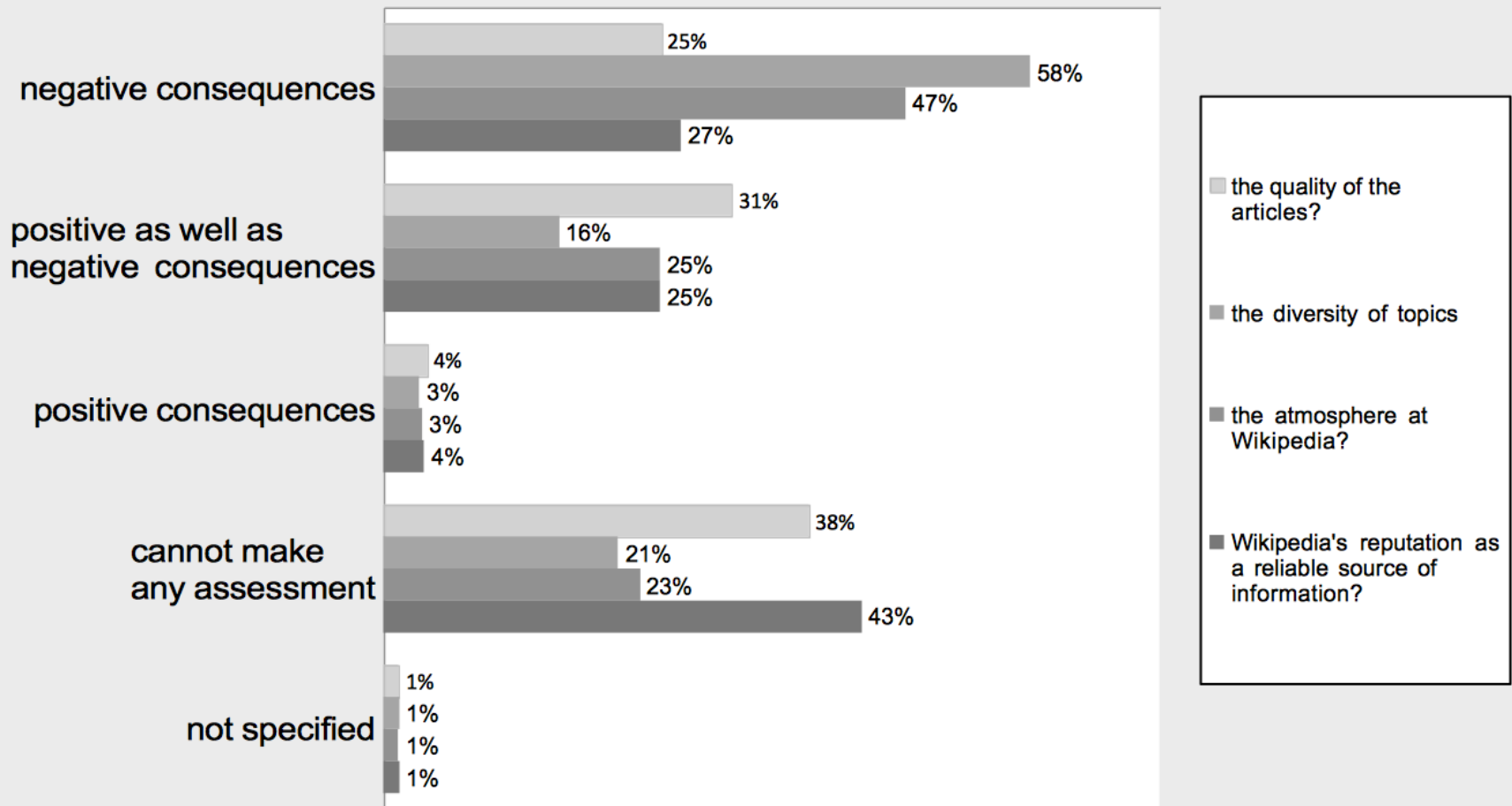
Percentage of the different consequences with the assessment categories

Suggestions female participation – open question (Q14)
Central issues (answers n=293)

- **Specific ads on Wikipedia website:** Females recruit females, every editor recruits in their circle of friends, banners (looking for female editors), promoting female editors / role models

- **Targeted personal communication**: Universities, high schools, websites frequented by females, female knowledge-based professions, …

- Address women via **content topics**, not via gender topic

- **Reduce technical barriers**: Make editing easier (e.g., WYSIWYG), offer regional (personal) introductions, …

- **Improve atmosphere**: Improve manners / atmosphere, increased punishment of machismo & sexism

- Ease **relevance criteria**

- **Refusal of question**: The question in itself is discriminatory; higher female participation not necessary; if more females wanted to participate, they would; it is not possible (to win more females); it is not important

Consequences of low female participation (Q13)
Answers split according to gender – Diversity of topics

In most language versions of Wikipedia, female participation is very low.
Which consequences do you assume for ...

... the diversity of topics?

[n=668]

	male (n=589)	female (n=66)	other (n=13)
negative consequences	59%	67%	46%
positive as well as negative consequences	16%	17%	15%
positive consequences	3%	2%	8%
cannot make any assessment	22%	15%	31%

Agreement in percentage within the consequence "diversity" split according to gender

In most language versions of Wikipedia, female participation is very low.
Which consequences do you assume for ...

... the quality of the articles?

[n=668]

negative consequences: 23%, 41%, 38%

positive as well as negative consequences: 33%, 27%, 31%

positive consequences: 4%, 3%, 8%

cannot make any assessment: 40%, 29%, 23%

Legend:
- male (n=589)
- female (n=66)
- other (n=13)

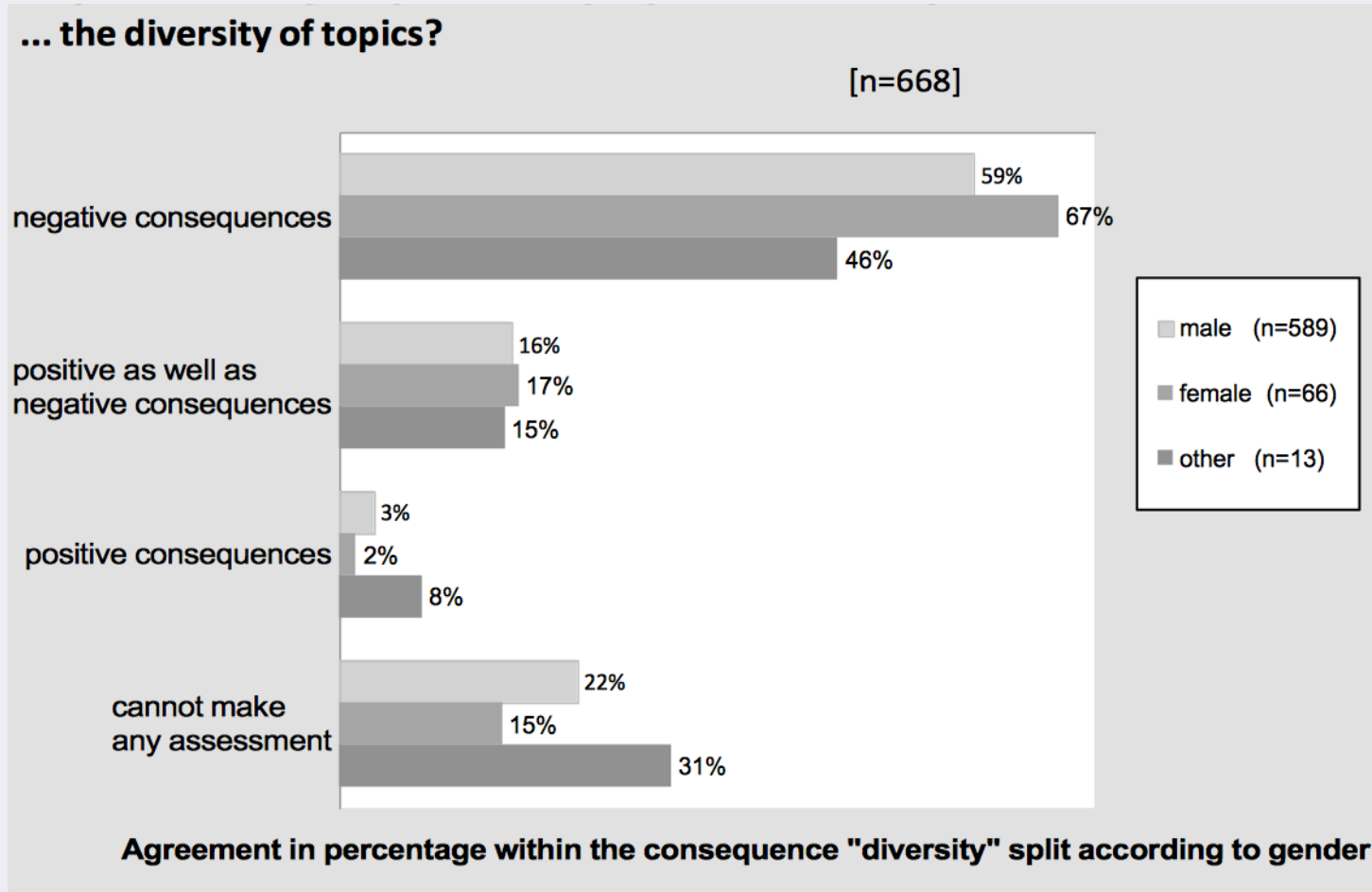**Agreement in percentage within the consequence "quality" split according to gender**

Consequences of low female participation (Q13)
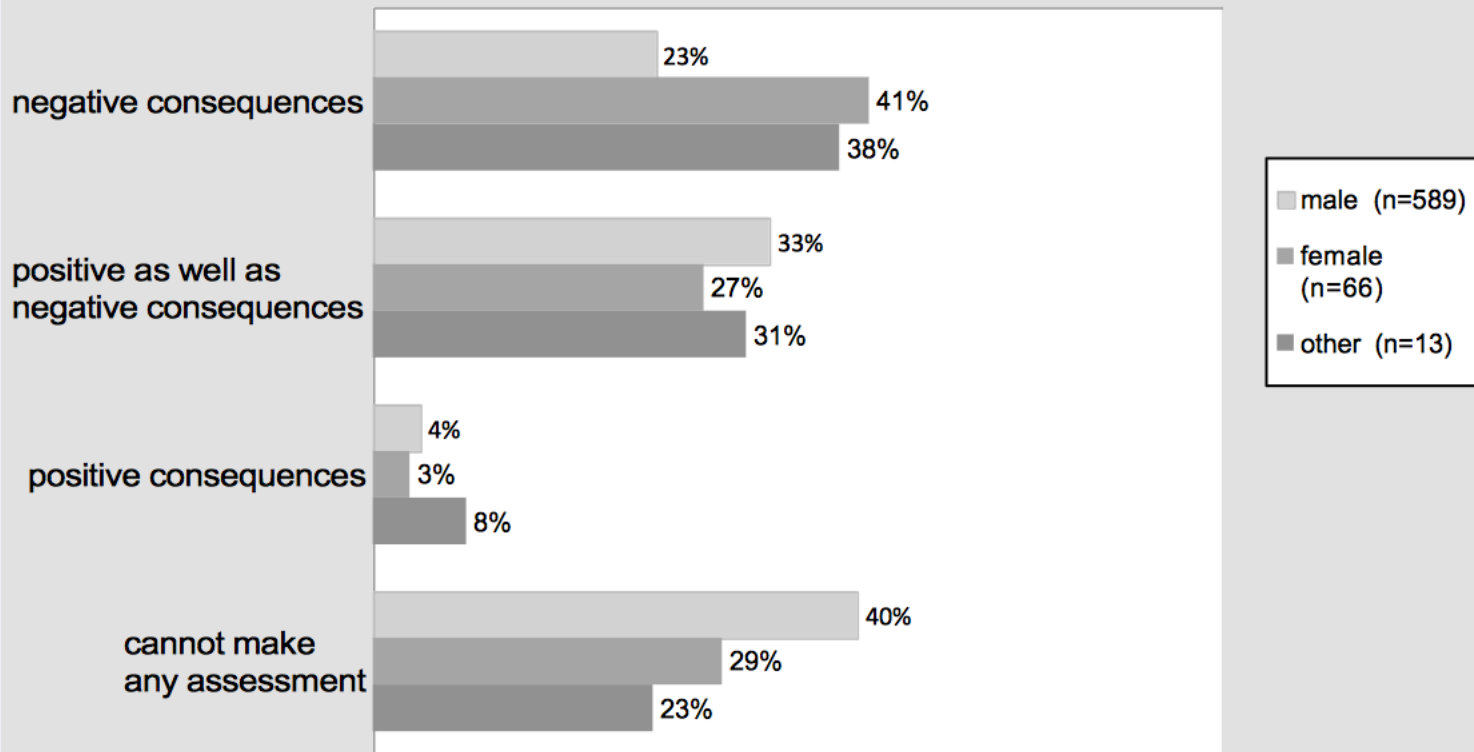## Answers split according to gender – Atmosphere

Background & Aims   Methodology   **RESULTS**   Conclusions

In most language versions of Wikipedia, female participation is very low.
Which consequences do you assume for ...

... the atmosphere?

[n=669]

	male (n=591)	female (n=65)	other (n=13)
negative consequences	47%	62%	23%
positive as well as negative consequences	26%	22%	15%
positive consequences	3%	5%	8%
cannot make any assessment	24%	12%	54%

Agreement in percentage within the consequence "atmosphere" split according to gender

Consequences of low female participation (Q13)
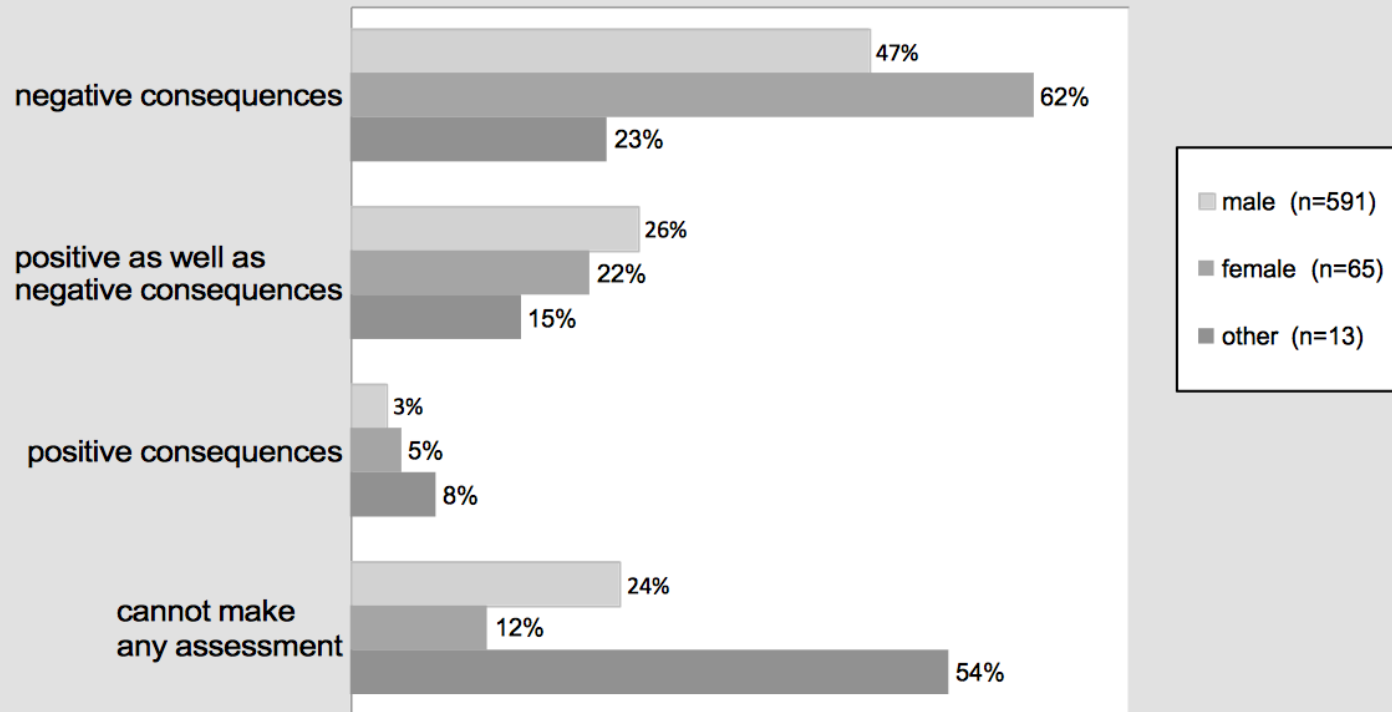## Answers split according to gender – Reputation as source of info
Background & Aims Methodology **RESULTS** Conclusions

In most language versions of Wikipedia, female participation is very low.
Which consequences do you assume for ...

... Wikipedia's reputation as a reliable source of information?

[n=668]

negative consequences: 26%, 37%, 46%

positive as well as negative consequences: 26%, 22%, 23%

positive consequences: 4%, 3%, 8%

cannot make any assessment: 45%, 38%, 23%

Legend:
- male (n=590)
- female (n=65)
- other (n=13)
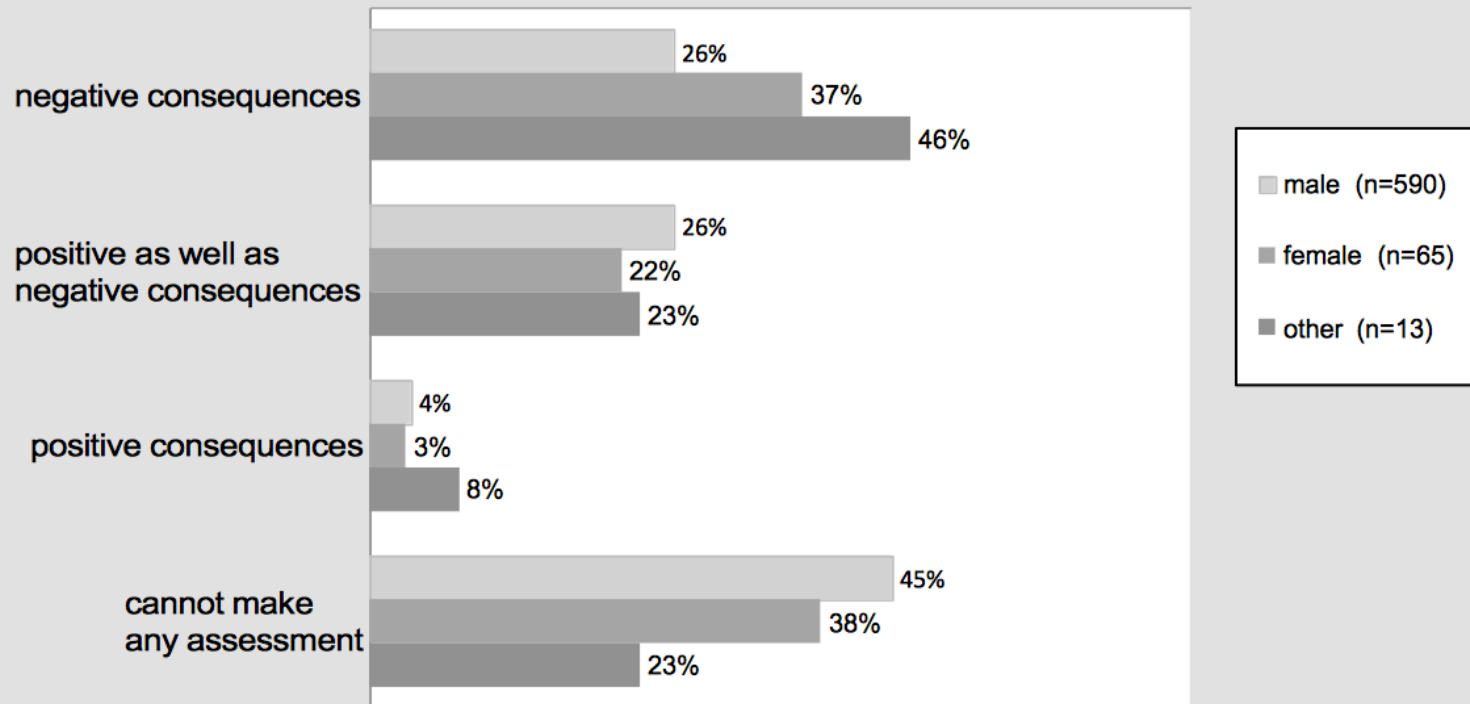
Agreement in percentage within the consequence "repution reliable source" split according to gender

Use of communication channels (Q15)

How often to do communicate with other editors via ...? [n=686]

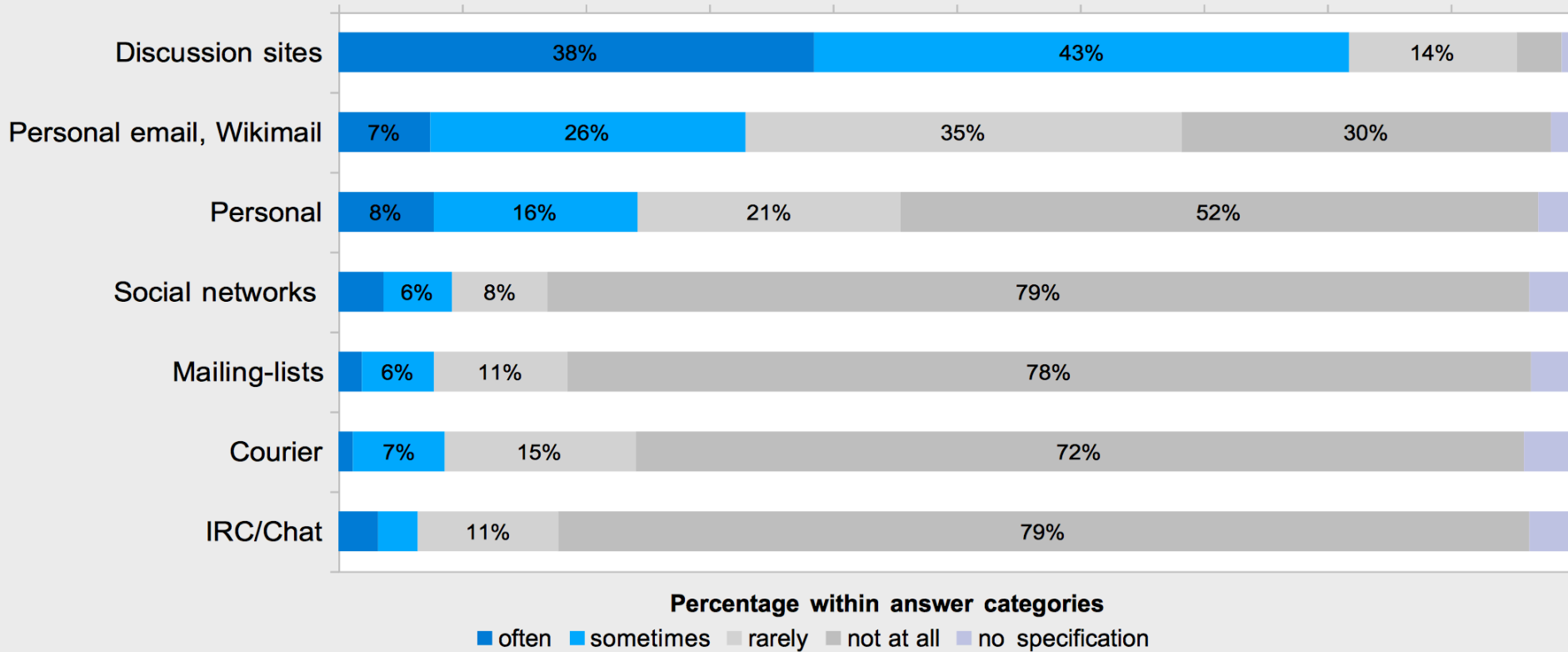| Channel	often	sometimes	rarely	not at all	no specification
Discussion sites	38%	43%	14%		
Personal email, Wikimail	7%	26%	35%	30%	
Personal	8%	16%	21%	52%	
Social networks		6%	8%	79%	
Mailing-lists		6%	11%	78%	
Courier		7%	15%	72%	
IRC/Chat			11%	79%	

Percentage within answer categories

■ often   ■ sometimes   ▪ rarely   ▪ not at all   ▪ no specification

How often do you personally meet other Wikipedia-actives at ...? [n=332]

	often	sometimes	rarely	not at all	no specification
Regulars' tables	18%	23%	22%	35%	
Project meetings (Wikipedia-related)	11%	18%	21%	47%	
Private meetings (friends & acquaintances)	7%	20%	25%	46%	
Conferences	7%	14%	18%	59%	
Workshops	6%	13%	17%	61%	
Edit-a-thons		7%	8%	81%	

Percantage within answer categories

■ often ■ sometimes ■ rarely ■ not at all ■ no specification
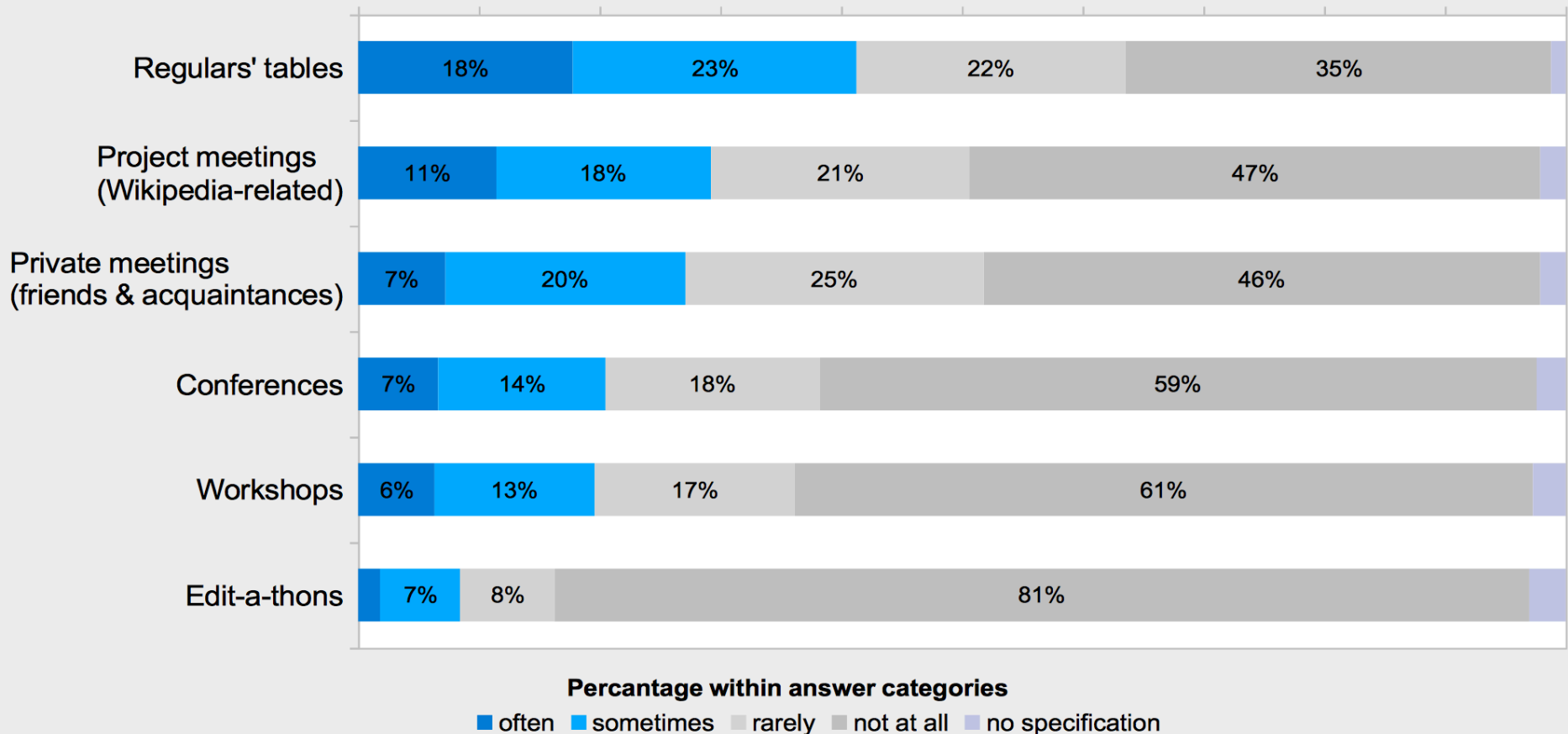
What were the answers to other survey questions from participants with / without / undecided willingness to support new editors in 2016?

- **Profile**
  - Gender (Q18),
  - Age (Q17)
- **Wikipedia-activity**
  - Number of active years (Q1),
  - Frequency of Wikipedia activity (Q2),
  - Type of activity (Q3)
- **Communication with other editors**
  - Use of communication channels (Q15),
  - Personal meetings

Willingness to support new editors in 2016 (n=686)

42% Yes
25% No
32% Don't know

Are you willing to support new editors in 2016? (n=675)
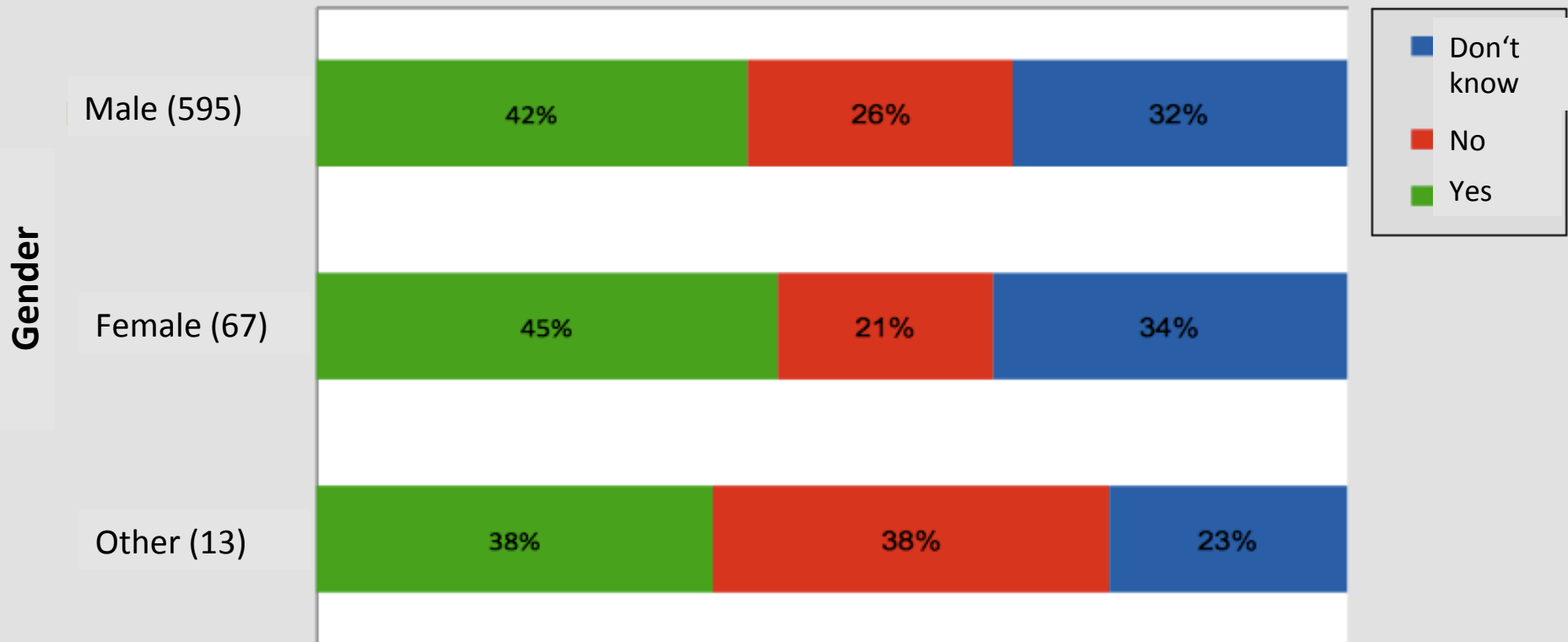
Percentage of answers split according to gender

Are you willing to support new editors in 2016? (n=677)

Willingness/ Age (n)	Yes	No	Don't know
20 years or younger (n=60)	47%	13%	40%
21-30 (n=99)	43%	24%	32%
31-40 (n=110)	44%	29%	27%
41-50 (n=175)	44%	30%	26%
51-60 (n=144)	40%	23%	38%
61-70 (n=61)	43%	23%	34%
70 years or older (n=28)	25%	36%	39%

Number of active years & Willingness to support new editors
[n=684]

Percentage willingness to support within categories "activity in years"

Willingness to support new editors in 2016 – Activity
Frequency of activity (Q7 & Q2)
Background & Aims   Methodology   **RESULTS**   Conclusions

78% of those willing to support new editors are active at Wikipedia several times a week or daily – but also two thirds of those not willing to support and those who are undecided.
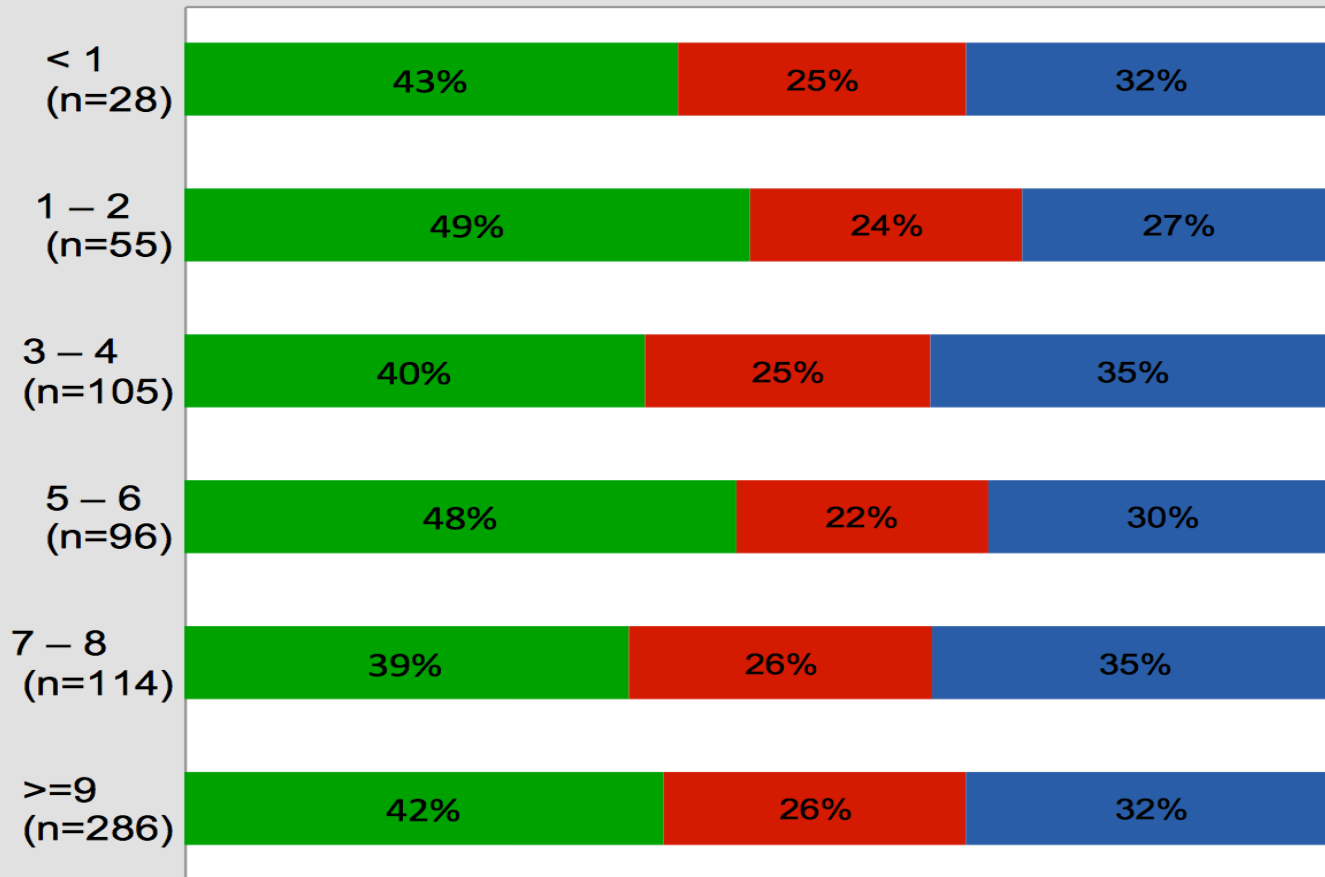
Do you want to support new editors in 2016? [n=685]

How often are you active at Wikipedia:

- less than several times Per month: Yes 5%, No 13%, Don't know 9%
- several times per month: Yes 17%, No 21%, Don't know 27%
- several times per week: Yes 25%, No 28%, Don't know 28%
- almost daily: Yes 53%, No 37%, Don't know 36%

Legend:
- Yes (n=290)
- No (n=173)
- Don't know (n=222)

Percentage willingness to support within categories for "frequency of activity"

Wikipedia activity in 2016
Type of activity and willingness to support new editors (Q7 & Q3)
Background & Aims   Methodology   **RESULTS**   Conclusions

Those willing to support new editors, show above average participation in project discussions and personal meetings.

To which of the following Wikipedia-activities did you contribute over the last six months (online and / or offline)? [n=683]

Activity	all participants	yes, willing to support	no, not willing to support (n=172)	don't know (n=221)
Writing or editing of articles	95%	98%	94%	93%
Embedding pictures / images	65%	73%	55%	64%
Fighting / containing vandalism	38%	43%	33%	36%
Maintenance	70%	74%	66%	67%
Developing software	2%	3%	0%	2%
Administrative tasks	9%	14%	4%	6%
Project discussions	45%	60%	32%	37%
Meeting others from Wikipedia community	23%	37%	8%	16%
Organising projects for free knowledge	10%	18%	3%	4%

Are you willing to support new editors in 2016?

Percantage within categories for Wikipedia activities split according to willingnes to support / all participants

35

Willingness to support in 2016 *Yes* – Communication
Frequency of use of communication channels (Q7 &Q15)
Background & Aims   Methodology   **RESULTS**   Conclusions

Those willing to support new editors, communicate with others most frequently, especially via discussion sites.

How often do you communicate with other editors via...?
(Willingness to support = YES, n=291)

Channel	often	sometimes	rarely	not at all	no specification
Discussion sites	50%	36%	9%	3%	
Personal email / Wikimail	12%	36%	33%	18%	
Personal	14%	23%	22%	38%	
Mailing-lists	2%	12%	14%	68%	
Social networks	6%	8%	10%	72%	
Courier	1%	13%	20%	62%	
IRC/Chat	6%	5%	15%	70%	

Agreement in percentage
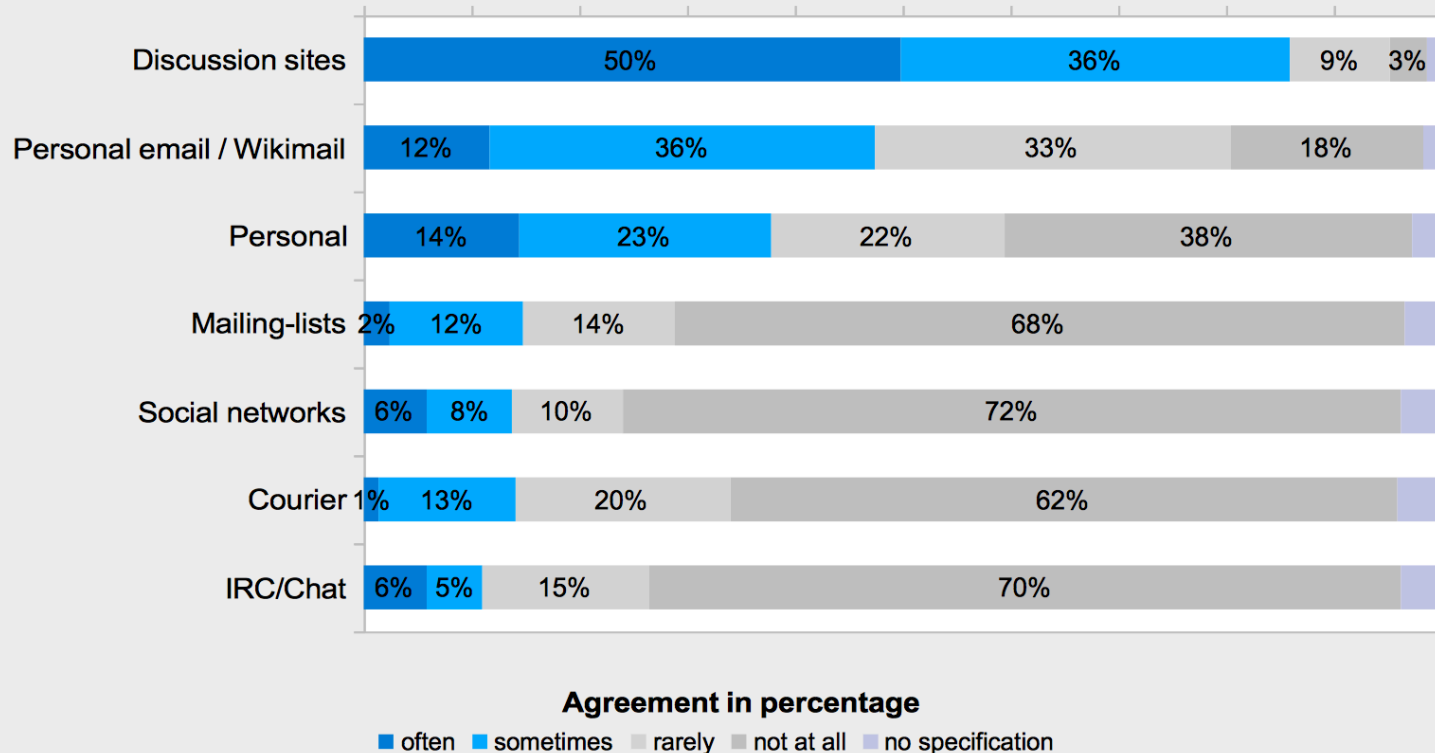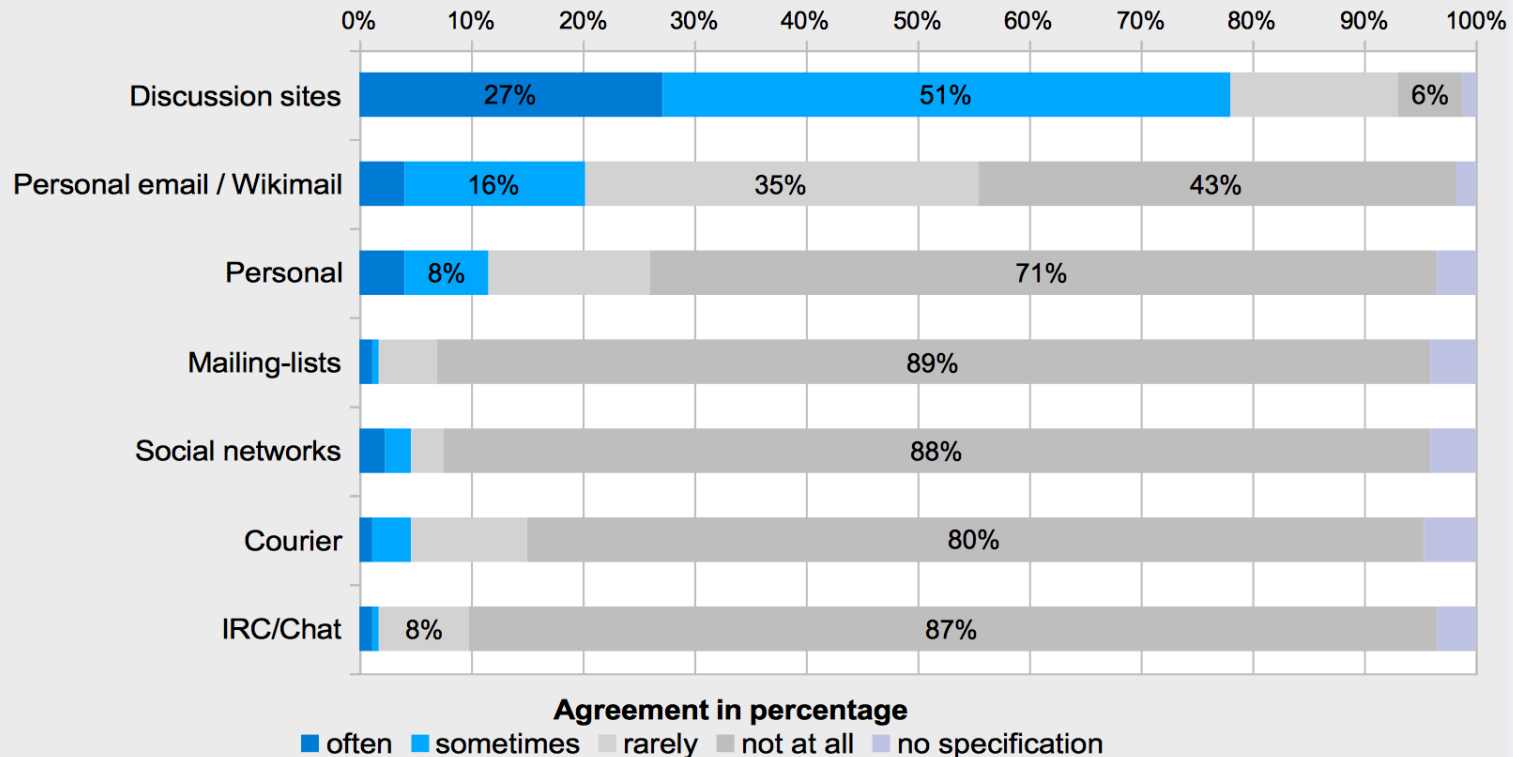■ often ■ sometimes ▪ rarely ▪ not at all ▪ no specification

Willingness to support in 2016 *No* – Communication
Frequency of use of communication channels (Q7 &Q15)
Background & Aims   Methodology   **RESULTS**   Conclusions

Those not willing to support new editors, communicate less frequent – and when communicating, they do so on discussion sites.

How often do you communicate with other editors via...?
(Willingness to support = NO, n=173]

Channel	often	sometimes	rarely	not at all	no specification
Discussion sites	27%	51%	6%		
Personal email / Wikimail		16%	35%	43%	
Personal	8%			71%	
Mailing-lists				89%	
Social networks				88%	
Courier				80%	
IRC/Chat	8%			87%	

Agreement in percentage

■ often ■ sometimes ▢ rarely ▨ not at all ▨ no specification

Those undecided regarding their supporting of new editors, communicate more often than those who are not willing to offer their support.

How often do you communicate with other editors via...?
(Willingness to support = DON'T KNOW, n=222)

Channel	often	sometimes	rarely	not at all	no specification
Discussion sites	32%	47%	18%		
Personal email / Wikimail	5%	19%	38%	36%	
Personal		14%	26%	55%	
Mailing-lists		11%		83%	
Social networks	5%	8%		82%	
Courier		14%		78%	
IRC/Chat		9%		84%	

Agreement in percentage

■ often ■ sometimes ■ rarely ■ not at all ■ no specification

Those willing to support new editors, meet at regulars' tables and project meetings; allo over, they meet personally more often than than those undecided or unwilling to offer support.

How often do you personally meet other Wikipedia-actives at ...?
(Willingness to support = YES, n=181)
(Filter question: only asked if personal meetings were confirmed in earlier question)
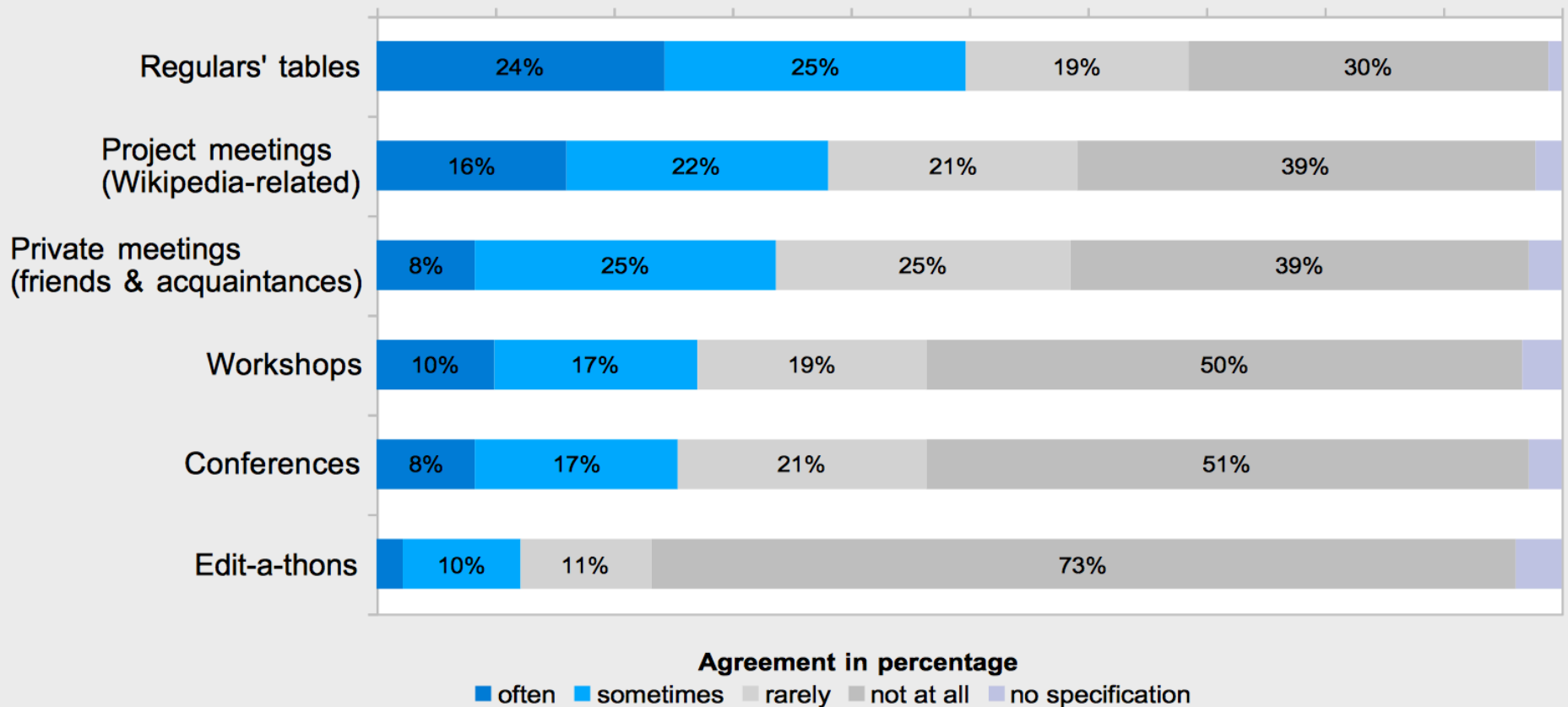
	often	sometimes	rarely	not at all	no specification
Regulars' tables	24%	25%	19%	30%	
Project meetings (Wikipedia-related)	16%	22%	21%	39%	
Private meetings (friends & acquaintances)	8%	25%	25%	39%	
Workshops	10%	17%	19%	50%	
Conferences	8%	17%	21%	51%	
Edit-a-thons	10%	11%	73%		

Agreement in percentage
■ often ■ sometimes ■ rarely ■ not at all ■ no specification

How often do you personally meet other Wikipedia-actives at ...?
(Willingness to support = No, n=51)
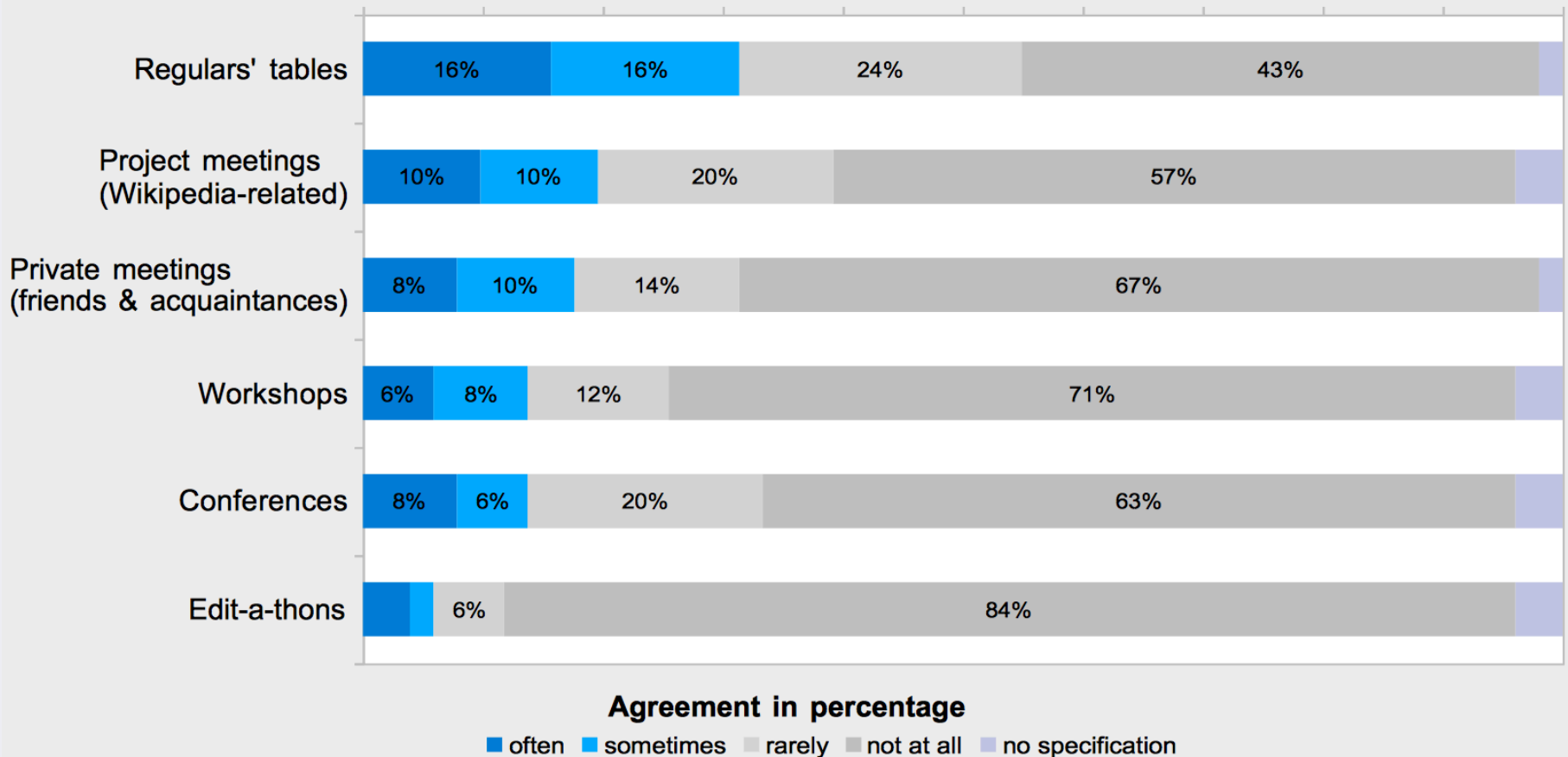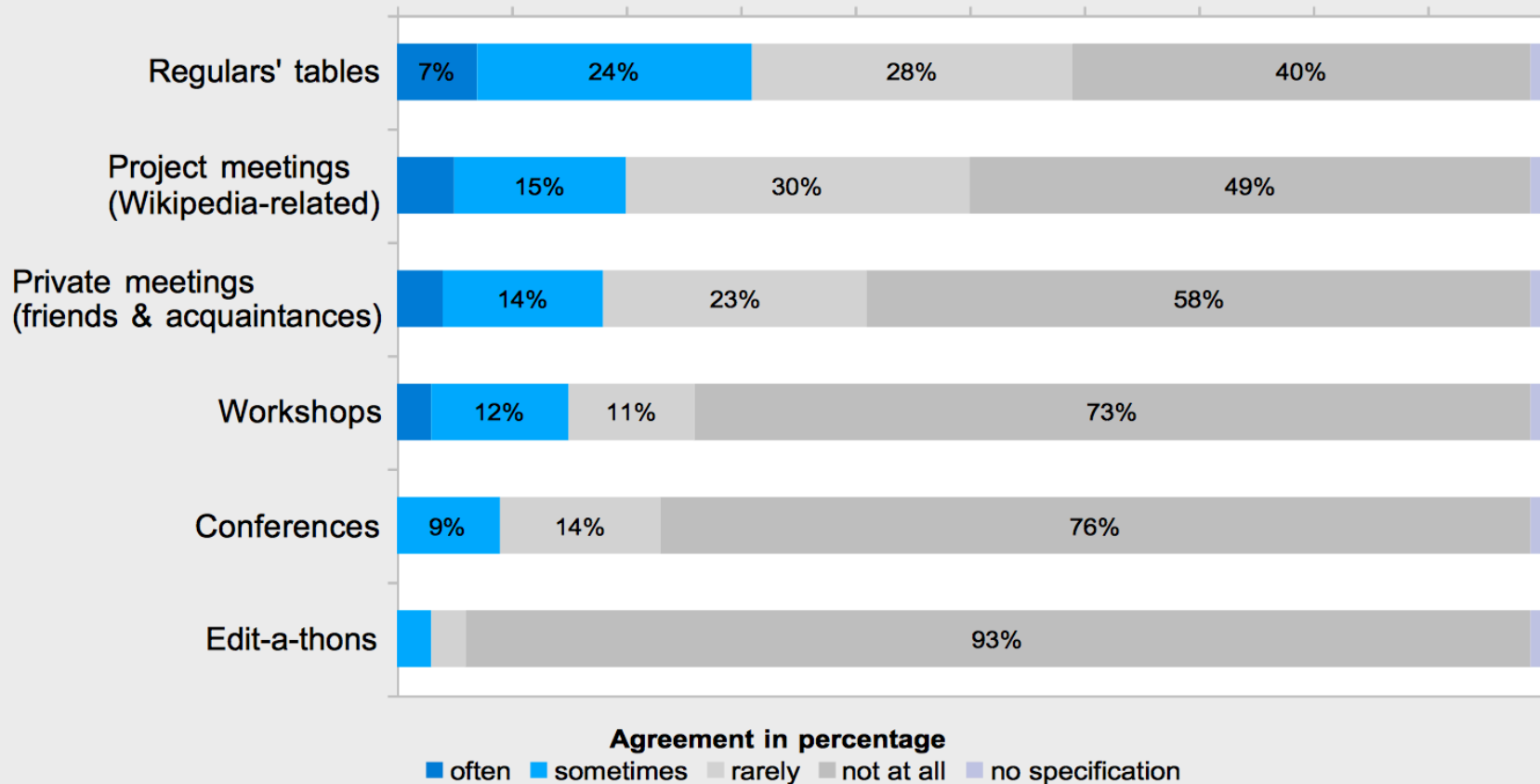(Filter question: only asked if personal meetings were confirmed in earlier question)

	often	sometimes	rarely	not at all	no specification
Regulars' tables	16%	16%	24%	43%	
Project meetings (Wikipedia-related)	10%	10%	20%	57%	
Private meetings (friends & acquaintances)	8%	10%	14%	67%	
Workshops	6%	8%	12%	71%	
Conferences	8%	6%	20%	63%	
Edit-a-thons			6%	84%	

Agreement in percentage

■ often ■ sometimes ■ rarely ■ not at all ■ no specification

How often do you personally meet other Wikipedia-actives at ...?
(Willingness to support = DON'T KNOW, n=100)

(Filter question: only asked if personal meetings were confirmed in earlier question)

	often	sometimes	rarely	not at all	no specification
Regulars' tables	7%	24%	28%	40%	
Project meetings (Wikipedia-related)		15%	30%	49%	
Private meetings (friends & acquaintances)		14%	23%	58%	
Workshops		12%	11%	73%	
Conferences	9%	14%	76%		
Edit-a-thons			93%		

Agreement in percentage

■ often ■ sometimes ■ rarely ■ not at all ■ no specification

Other comments / suggestions – open question (Q19)
Vital issues (n=330)

- **Technical aspects**: Make editing easier: Provide sample articles; Visual Editor; software out-dated; too many templates (reduces clarity); introduce button for editing on main page; overall layout should be systematised and simplified; …

- **Atmosphere / culture**: Overall atmosphere is very negative and arrogant → discouraging; registration for active editing as requirement; go easy on new editors (puppy protection); blocking of editors and tougher punishment for breaking rules (e.g., edit-wars, offenses); establish code of ethics; professional conflict management; ...

- **Deleting articles**: Extremely frustrating; consider relevance criteria as criteria of inclusion, not exclusion; slow down form-freaks in favour of content; ...

- **Publicity**: Make the topic of editing visible – at schools (e.g., class projects), to the reader / within the article

- **Denial of topic**: There are less editors due to decrease in topic / knowledge gaps within Wikipedia

- **Rejection of the phrase:** „Welcome-culture" as „Unwort"

Wikipedia with the rules of officialdom:

It's always been like this.

It's never been like this.

Well, that's what they all say.

The existing offers are more than sufficient. People who don't know how to make use of them, we do not need as editors.

The tone of communication, also within tough discussions, needs to be more respectful. – The feud between inclusionists and exclusionists needs to be confined.

Improving the welcome-culture can no longer be undertaken at the expense of the Wikifants, who built up the project.

Conclusions

- **High number of participants** (n = 686) despite short survey time: topic seems very relevant

- **High number of comments** provides many and diverse suggestions and remarks

- **Results confirm the necessity to improve the communication culture and the support offered to new editors within the German Wikipedia.**

- **Challenge:** Communication culture can be significantly disturbed by a small but active number of editors (8-10%) – as long as they are allowed to dominate.

Conclusions

- **Potential:** 42% of the participants are willing to commit to support new editors- this poses a great potential for offering special support to new editors. The 42% are those who are very active, communicative editors that also meet other editors personally.

- **Gender:** Improvement in addressing females and new editors in general calls for an overall improvement of the communication towards a culture of openness within the German Wikipedia.

- **Open questions:** a high number of helpful suggestions and comments, i.a. other Wikipedia communities (e.g., English) are less destructive ($\rightarrow$ learning from them?); lack of enforcement of rules regarding disrupters; recognisability of new editors vs. vandals, etc.