IP editing: Spanish

effective tools improve community reception

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Introduction

Undertaken on the behalf of the WMF Growth team, this report sheds light on the phenomenon of IP editing, also known as "anonymous" editing, in the context of Spanish Wikipedia. The Growth team's main questions about IP editing can be summarized as:

A. Who makes up the main populations of IP editors in the Wikipedias where Growth works, and how are they distributed differently in different language communities?
B. Which of these populations might be encouraged to create accounts, and which populations might be better accommodate as non-logged-in editors?

Drawing on a survey of editors and interviews with experienced Spanish community members, this research attempts to address these questions in the context of Spanish Wikipedia, a community that sees both a relatively high rate of IP contributions (in comparison with the other study Wikipedias *Bengali*, *Arabic*, and *Japanese*), as well as a relatively high rate of reverting IP edits.

I consider that IP edits are quite valuable for Wikipedia, and I don't think that the vandalism justifies completely restricting anonymous contributions.
— Spanish survey respondent

Key findings

Effective tools render IP vandalism a mere "annoyance"

- This research indicates that **IP editing is not viewed as an existential threat to Spanish Wikipedia**.
- **Consulted editors agree that a majority of vandalism to Spanish Wikipedia comes from IP.**
- Although some patrollers support increased restrictions on IP editing, **a majority of consulted editors regard IP vandalism as a mere "annoyance."**
- **Interview participants believe that the most dangerous vandalism to Spanish Wikipedia comes from knowledgeable, logged-in editors.**
- **Effective filters and tools are the chief reason why IP vandalism is not seen as a global threat to Spanish Wikipedia**—the filters and tools greatly reduce the work associated with patrolling IP edits.

The Spanish community is divided on the question of whether to further restrict IP editors

- Experienced editors are split between a "pro-restriction" and a "pro-accomodation" camp. Interviews and survey responses collected via this study indicate that the "pro-accomodation" camp is currently in the majority.

Vandalism to Wikidata is unexpected, damaging, and accessible even to inexperienced editors

- Interview participants note that much of the most damaging vandalism to Spanish Wikipedia—associated with both experienced and casual editors alike—occurs via Wikidata.
- Spanish biographical infoboxes often include a hyperlink inviting readers to *edit information in Wikidata*. This is easy for casual readers to access and to do from a mobile device.
- Knowledgeable vandals often use Wikidata as an avenue to change content in articles under protection.
- Casual vandals may accept the invitation to *edit information in Wikidata* without understanding the consequences of their action.

Privacy and anonymity are a growing community concern, but new editors specifically are largely unaware of these issues

- Like other Wikipedia communities, Spanish is seeing a broad rise in awareness of the importance of online privacy and anonymity.
- **Spanish editors don't fully agree about how much information their IP address divulges.**
- Survey respondents generally agree that it is important for their IP address to be hidden from others on the internet.

"Anonymous" means de-linking your edits from your account

- For many editors, IP editing is "anonymous" precisely because it de-links their editing activity from their account.
- Many experienced editors see IP editing in some ways as more private than logged in editing, largely because it's easier for other editors to discern personal patterns in editing history than it is for them to decipher one or multiple IP addresses.
- Editing controversial topics, or contributing in a controversial way to public discussions, may potentially threaten the social relationships and positioning that an editor has curated within the community for years.

- WMF-side discussions of privacy may be failing to accommodate an aspect of privacy that is salient for IP editors, namely privacy from other editors' scrutiny of their editing history.

Many IP edits are constructive, minor edits by *potential* new editors

- A lot of IP edits are believed to come from potential new editors who haven't yet figured out how Wikipedia "works."
- A negative reception at this point—e.g., seeing their first IP edits quickly reverted—forms a negative impression that many potential new members never manage to overcome.

IP editing is an under-studied phenomenon

- Communities are generally unaware of how patterns of IP editing in their Wikipedias compare to other Wikipedia versions.
- IP editing may be tolerated more or less in a given community, but its value and characteristics are rarely discussed.
- Wikipedia is seen by many experienced editors as a reflection of the societies that populate it. Useful and encyclopedic contributions from IP editors are seen in some communities as a reflection of Wikipedia's brand awareness.

Spanish is a regional Wikipedia

- Spanish Wikipedia represents a wide diversity of countries and peoples, however organizational energy is concentrated in a few centers of influence (including principally Spain, Argentina/Chile, and Mexico).
- Central America is regarded as an area of chronic under-representation in the Spanish editor population.
- In spite of unequal regional representation, Spanish Wikipedia is regarded as maintaining robust channels of communication and strong collective decision-making processes that see enthusiastic participation from members.

Much like Arabic, Spanish Wikipedia represents a wide diversity of countries, ways of life, and points of view. This diversity is somewhat reflected in the editor population, although interview participants acknowledge that centers of influence among the editor population are associated with a few regions, including Spain, South America (represented primarily by Argentina and Chile), and Mexico. A large proportion of the most active and prominent community members reportedly emerge from these centers of organizational energy. Interview participants also pointed out areas of growing editor activity—such as Venezuela and Peru—as well as areas that are chronically under-represented in Spanish Wikipedia, represented principally by Central America. These centers of influence are a source of organizational energy in Spanish Wikipedia, but they are also recognized—by some interview participants, at least—as having relatively distinct priorities and goals for the project.

The over-representation of certain regions in the Spanish editor community, and the under-representation of others, leads to regional content gaps and divergences of priorities. As editors tend to focus on their local context when creating content, content gaps are a natural result of regional over-representation. Regional context is also regarded as an important factor mediating the work of reviewers and patrollers—patrollers' unfamiliarity with other regional contexts likely also plays a role in perpetuating content and editor gaps.

Access to the internet in most Central American countries is complicated and expensive, with Panama and Costa Rica as the only exceptions. — Spanish interview participant

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In spite of these acknowledged regional centers of influence, interview participants acknowledge that the Spanish community maintains robust internal and external communications. Although the admin population may be limited—[65 admins are responsible for work originating from a population of 14,000 active users](#);[1] a ratio of .005:1—they are drawn from a diversity of countries and communicate frequently.

Although a number of off-Wiki communication channels, such as IRC, Telegram, and WhatsApp, see enthusiastic participation, the community typically makes collective decisions in centralized places, including email lists and especially the *Café* (i.e., Village Pump). Although some community members find the *Café* to be an antagonistic discussion forum, most community discussions and votes are held there, and the various off-Wiki communication channels are not viewed as being the primary fora for important community decisions.

Digital infrastructure affects IP editing patterns

- The international nature of Spanish Wikipedia, and the unequal representation of different regions within it, naturally affects the ways in which IP editors work and the ways in which the community sees them.
- Regions with more limited digital infrastructure may be regions in which IP editing is more incentivized.

Spanish Wikipedia community members interviewed for this study tend to express awareness of the fact that contributing editors often emerge from countries with drastically different levels of digital infrastructure, and that these regional differences shape and inform the patterns of IP editing that they observe. Edits and editors are regarded as associated primarily with the region's larger cities, for example, which in turn likely contributes to existing content gaps.

Access to personal computers varies

Editors in Latin American regions with less developed digital infrastructure can be expected to be more likely to work from shared computers in schools or internet cafes, rather than via a personal device at home. In countries such as Paraguay or Nicaragua, the rate of access to a computer in the home may be drastically lower than in neighboring, more developed countries. In addition to the social barriers that a shared device may place on account creation—editors may be less willing to enter personal information into a form on a device they view as potentially compromised—the lack of access to a private desktop devices also places barriers on participation in the community.

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[1] For reference, English = .009:1; Arabic = .005:1; Japanese = .003:1; Bengali = .011:1).

There's issues with connectivity in Latin America, lack of access to computers or the time to participate, that means that blocking IP edits could go counter to building content. Editing from a computer and having the time to do it is a privilege in Latin America. — Spanish interview participant

Content generation is harder on mobile

Even if an editor has an account that they created from mobile, the editing process—which often involves research, maintaining multiple tabs, checking and reformatting multiple sources, etc.—is regarded as simply being more cumbersome on mobile. Other important community functions like sending and responding to messages may also be more cumbersome on mobile. It is possible that good-faith mobile edits may be less productive of content, and more focused on "small" maintenance tasks like typo correction, for this reason.

Mobile data is more expensive in countries with less infrastructure

The cost and ease of access to mobile data likely also affects the extent to which potential new editors are able to explore editing Wikipedia and consider creating accounts. Mobile data tends to be relatively expensive in most of Central America, for example, especially when average income is taken into consideration.[2] Central America is described by interview participants as being a relatively poor region with high mobile connectivity costs. On the other hand, Wikipedia is regarded as well-known in Central American society—students use it widely in spite of apparent instruction to the contrary by educators.

IP editors are part of the community

IP editors do important maintenance work

- Some interview participants regard the typo correction and other minor edits often attributed to IP editors as "essential."

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[2] A 2020 report published by *Visual Capitalist* found that the top 5 most expensive countries for mobile data in Latin America were Cuba, Panama, Bolivia, Mexico, and Colombia. These rankings did not take into account cost of living or average income, however.

Interview participants generally regard non-vandalizing IP edits as being the result of quick and casual editing. A great deal of constructive IP edits are also regarded as performing a maintenance function, such as correcting typos, modifying punctuation, and other tasks that don't necessarily fall under the rubric of "content creation."

IP editors sometimes participate in community discussions

- Interview participants report occasional, sustained contributions from IP editors in community discussions and decision making.

Interview participants note that public discussions in Spanish Wikipedia often see participation from IP editors, and that there is a general awareness of the existence of knowledgeable IP-preferring editors. Interview participants acknowledge that some of this behavior stems from banned users who aim to continue their participation in conversations. Although there are a few well-known anonymous editors who are well received by the community, other interview participants note that IP participation in the *Café* is not characterized by "discussion" as much as it is by complaints and occasional abuse.

It naturally raises eyebrows. It's striking because it's an editor under an IP speaking with authority about the topic that we're discussing. It's quite striking. And although we have the rule about 'assume good faith,' it's inevitable that you think, 'ok, who's really behind that address?' Because it's clear that it's not just some newbie. — Spanish interview participant

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IP editors have distinct motivations

IP editors are different than New Editors

- IP editors and New Editors are distinct groups. While good-faith IP editors are interested in making occasional, quick changes, New Editors are more interested in joining a community and learning how Wikipedia works.

Interview participants acknowledge that IP editors and New Editors are distinct groups with different motivations and patterns of editing. In general, good-faith IP editors are regarded as people who are motivated to make quick, minor changes. New Editors, on the other hand, are described as individuals who are motivated to join a community. New Editors often convert from being readings, and may therefore already have some functional knowledge about Wikipedia. The decision to create an account may likewise represent a motivation to work in-depth on a particular topic.

Why do people edit without logging in?

- Many editors prefer not to log in on shared devices while traveling or at school.
- Editors seeking to create false consensus in debates are more likely to maintain multiple accounts than to attempt this via IP.
- The Spanish Wikipedia gender gap may lead some editors to log out to avoid harassment before working on certain controversial topics.
- The account creation and logging-in process simply isn't desirable for editors who want to quickly change punctuation or correct a misspelled item.

Interview participants acknowledge that Spanish IP editors often have a range of motivations for not logging in while editing. Several participants themselves acknowledge occasional IP editing. Typically, this decision was explained in socio-technological terms—editors are often reluctant to log in on shared devices or while traveling.

Interview participants regard that the desire to work on controversial topics is not a major motivator of Spanish IP editors—participants regard that editors with this motivation are more likely to maintain multiple accounts, which is against Spanish Wikipedia policies and often results in blocks. It is more difficult to engage in certain non-encyclopedic behaviors such as building false consensus from IP, however. On the other hand, other participants note that the acknowledged gender gap in Spanish Wikipedia may lead some editors to log

out to in order to contribute to controversial topics while avoiding harassment. Such editors may also use VPNs to protect themselves.

For their part, Spanish survey respondents confirm the importance of the two motivations *not seeing the value in an account* and *working on controversial topics*, rating both as the most important in a series of possible motivations for IP editing. At the other end of the range, *avoiding government surveillance* and *avoiding advertisers* were ranked as the least important motivations.

How important are the following motivations for IP editing?	mean	SD	#
Not seeing the value in having an account	2.51	.67	52
Working on controversial topics	2.50	.68	50
Disputes with other editors	2.44	.70	52
Committing vandalism	2.41	.80	51
Only wanting to make minor edits (e.g., spelling)	2.38	.77	52
Forgot to log in	2.10	.78	51
Not wanting to create a personal edit history	1.87	.81	53
Forgot password	1.84	.74	50
Avoiding government surveillance	1.45	.64	51
Wanting to avoid advertisers	1.29	.61	49

Generally, though, interviewed Spanish community members tend to agree that a great deal of IP editing comes from people who simply don't understand how Wikipedia works. These explorers thus often inadvertently disrupt formatting or references, i.e., committing "vandalism," and through their lack of knowledge they often also unwittingly divulge identifiable information about their offline lives:

Very few casual editors are aware of the fact that having an account hides their IP. People don't know there's an edit history and that changes are saved under an IP address. They think they're being anonymous. Lots of IP edits are because people don't know how Wikipedia work . . . It's an issue of
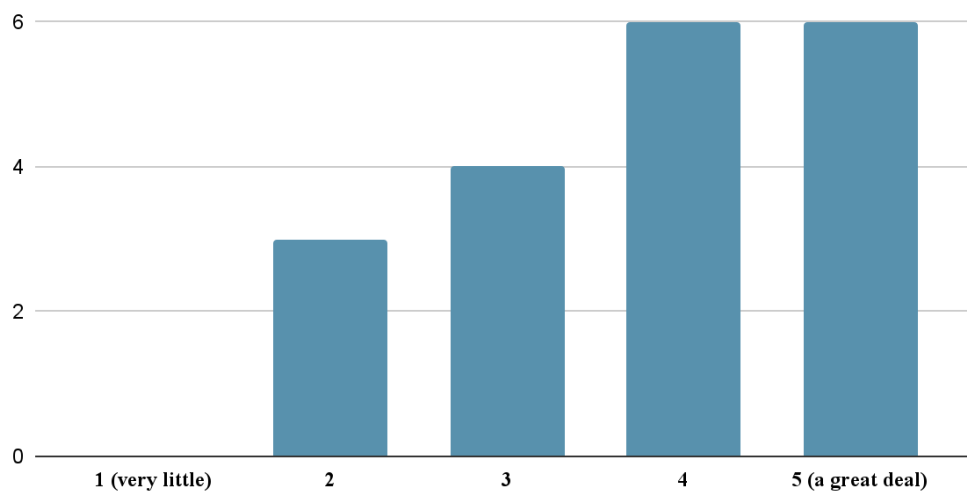
digital illiteracy. Lots of people use their real names too because they don't' understand the importance of privacy. — Spanish interview participant

IP vandalism in Spanish Wikipedia

- IP editors are regarded as the single largest source of vandalism in Spanish Wikipedia.

Interview participants acknowledge that the majority of vandalism to Spanish Wikipedia comes from IP—one participant estimated that IP vandalism represents 80% of the total. When asked how much vandalism on Spanish Wikipedia comes from IP, the 19 self-identified patroller respondents tended to agree that "a great deal" vandalism comes from IP, with 12 of 19 responding with a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale:

In your opinion, how much vandalism on Spanish Wikipedia comes from IP?

When some politician mentions Wikipedia in a speech, there will be a surge of vandalism in the biography of that politician. It's 100% sure to happen. — Spanish interview participant

IP vandals usually focus on local context

IP vandalism in Spanish Wikipedia doesn't occur randomly—rather, it is concentrated in several re-occurring areas. IP vandalism tends to focus mostly on local issues affecting a single country or local context, while in rarer cases it is found in broader social issues that affect the whole region.

Local

- [Sports](), including local teams, athletes, and rivalries;
  - The most important match in Argentina is [Boca-River](), for example, and many of the main players are in the the public eye all the time. Interview participants note that patrollers are very aware of updates to these articles.
- [Celebrities]();
- Political history, including conflicted terms for historical events and periods;[3]
- Contemporary politics and politicians, especially during electoral periods.

International

- Social issues such as religion, abortion, and social rights that affect the whole region;
- The naming of cities in Spain; i.e., whether to use cities' local names in local languages and dialects, or to use the formal Spanish names;[4]
- The translation of foreign movie names; e.g., [The Fast and the Furious]() is officially named *Rápido y Furioso* in Latin America, and *A todo Gas* in Spain.
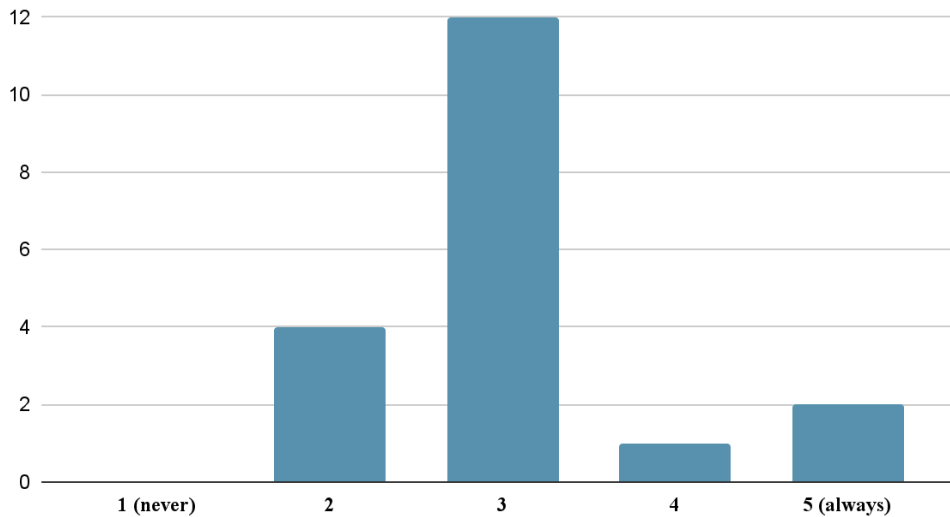
IP vandalism isn't a major threat

In spite of the fact that most vandalism to Spanish Wikipedia is generally agreed—by patroller survey respondents and interview participants—to come from IP, the community largely doesn't view IP vandalism as an existential or even major threat to the community. For their part, the same 19 patrollers who above generally agreed that most vandalism comes from IP also report that they don't have a tendency to frequently revert IP edits. 12 of the 19 respondents responded with a 3 on a scale of 1 ("never") to 5 ("always") when asked how frequently they revert IP edits, and only 2 of 19 respondents responded that they "always" revert IP edits.

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[3] As stated by one interview participant, "almost all of our countries have had dictatorships."
[4] The Spanish editing community was noted as being particularly interested in minority and regional languages in Spain.

How often do you revert IP edits when you see them?

Three kinds of vandalism: Innocent, "dumb," and dangerous

Interviews with community members indicate that the Spanish community differentiates multiple kinds of vandalism, each of which presents different levels of risk. Participants differentiated between "innocent" vandalism in which editors unintentionally break rules, "dumb" vandalism (*vandalismo tonto*), including the curse words, page blankings, and other actions that are easily caught by filters and bots, and "dangerous" vandalism intended to damage and deceive. Although IP editors are generally agreed to be the source of most vandalism, the most damaging hard-to-detect vandalism is often committed by knowledgeable, logged-in editors.

Innocent vandalism

Interview participants also note that a great deal of IP vandalism isn't necessarily "bad faith"—IP editors are regarded as often not understanding how Wikipedia works and how to contribute useful content. Newer editors are often unaware of how to use tables or of the necessity to include basic information when building them, for example. These actions by IP editors are also considered vandalism and are reverted by the community.

Vandalismo tonto

Interview participants also describe "dumb" vandalism, such as that committed by students or children who might be joking for the benefit of their friends without understanding the consequences of vandalism for a project like Wikipedia. Much of this latter type of vandalism is regarded as coming from children, or from IP addresses associated with shared computers in schools. Often these IP addresses' ranges are provided by a government, indicating that they may be associated with a school.

An interview participant recounted a recent example of this phenomena, in which a wave of IP vandalism originated on TikTok—an IP editor changed the national anthem of Costa Rica to a popular contemporary song, *El Sarpe*, and then recorded a popular TikTok video depicting the change. This vandalism was quickly identified by SeroBOT, but the meme's popularity on TikTok resulted in further repeat instances of vandalism. Approximately 40 IP addresses were apparently subsequently blocked.

Dangerous vandalism

Interview participants describe dangerous vandalism as that which is intended to deceive or confuse. Often, this takes the form of misrepresenting public figures, for example by removing the "controversies" section of their biography. IP addresses are often implicated in this type of vandalism, although knowledgeable vandals may only be using IP editing as one of multiple deceptive strategies, which may also include creating multiple accounts.

We have had attempts by institutions or specific political figures to try to influence articles through anonymous editing. We saw it in the previous legislative assembly—the legislative assembly changed buildings recently . . . but the range of IP addresses that corresponded with the legislative assembly in their old building was filled with edits to the biographies of the legislators.— Spanish interview participant

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Dangerous vandalism is sometimes observed in the biographies of politicians, for example, and occurs frequently during electoral periods. Interview participants from multiple countries recounted instances in which IP addresses associated with local government ministry offices were identified as having edited articles related to their work and the politicians that work there, such as a [2018 instance in which a Chilean governmental](#)

[cabinet office edited the article for "profit"](#) to make it more "neutral," i.e., to remove the negative implications of the term in the Spanish article.[5]

[IP editing by institutions] *is not very salient, let's say—it's not talked about a lot in Wikipedia, but yes, this kind of editing to influence content is present there, under the table or hidden.* — Spanish interview participant

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Vandalizing Wikidata

Multiple interview participants identified a particularly damaging avenue of dangerous vandalism in the form of malicious changes to Wikidata. Knowledgeable patrollers observe vandalism to Wikidata from both IP and logged-in editors that is intended to affect the presentation of Wikidata items in the Spanish Wikipedia articles that use them. Vandalism via Wikidata is regarded as particularly nefarious, as the subtle changes to information such as dates of birth and death are often impervious to detection by the filters and bots that normally relieve so much of patrollers' patrolling burden. This type of "imperceptible" vandalism could last for years, and may also be further disseminated by media that relies on Wikipedia for information.

The best way to vandalize Wikipedia is to change numbers. Change numbers and change digits, because it's very difficult to validate the digits again.— Spanish interview participant

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Vandals often change information in Wikidata in order to vandalize in spite of article protections, for example, and in many cases they appear to fully understand the effect that changes to Wikidata can have on the Wikipedia articles that rely on it. The problem of limited admin populations being responsible for large numbers of editors is likewise compounded on Wikidata, in which an even smaller number of admins is responsible for changes that potentially affect hundreds of individual Wikipedias. In the case of Spanish Wikipedia, Spanish-speaking vandals have been observed to introduce insults and other types of non-encyclopedic content to Wikidata specifically so that it will be reproduced in Spanish Wikipedia articles. These actions affect the global Wikipedia ecosystem, however.

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[5] Media coverage of this incident is highlighted on the user page of SeroBOT, which [links to an article](#) containing the statement "Only the changes can be seen on the site . . . because the user SeroBOT reverted the changes made by the Government."

Vandalizing Wikidata is easy

On the one hand, it may be reasonable to assume that repeated vandalism to Wikidata implies a population of vandals that are very knowledgeable about the roles and functions of the Wikimedia ecosystem of sister sites. On the other hand, the mechanical path of navigation from a Spanish Wikipedia infobox to the Wikidata edit button may be so easy and obvious that a great deal of "casual" IP vandals find themselves holding the keys to the Wiki-kingdom.

I explored how those changes were made in Wikidata, and I found that they were from a cell phone without being blocked. Because it's that easy to do. For example with dates, if you see an infobox in a biographical article, you'll see a link to change information in Wikidata. *And there you can change the description, edit facts, change dates. For example yesterday I was looking at the article for* [Carmen Salinas](#)*, and somebody changed the date of birth. It was an incredibly subtle change—changing a 3 for a 9.*— Spanish interview participant

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A standard biographical infobox on Spanish Wikipedia includes an inter-wiki link at bottom inviting the reader to "edit information on Wikidata." This link may not be present in every Spanish biographical infobox, but it is nevertheless common. An example of this can be seen below, in a partial screenshot of the Spanish Wikipedia article for a Central American political leader:[6]

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[6] Partial screenshot of a biographical infobox on the Spanish article for [Schafik Hándal](#) (accessed 12/22/2021).

Información personal	
Nombre de nacimiento	Schafik Jorge Hándal
Nacimiento	13 de octubre de 1930 Usulután, El Salvador
Fallecimiento	24 de enero de 2006 (75 años) San Salvador, El Salvador
Causa de muerte	Infarto agudo de miocardio
Sepultura	Cementerio de Los Ilustres ✎
Nacionalidad	Salvadoreña
Familia	
Padres	Giries Abdallah Hándal Giamile Hándal
Cónyuge	Tania de Hándal
Información profesional	
Ocupación	Político
Seudónimo	Comandante Simón ✎
Conflictos	Guerra civil de El Salvador ✎
Partido político	*fmln* Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional
[editar datos en Wikidata]	

A brief comparison indicates that the "edit information in Wikidata" link at the bottom of the infobox is absent from the English version of this article, while the Arabic infobox link invites readers to edit the article, rather than to edit Wikidata. The French infobox includes links to edit both the article and Wikidata.

Tools to the rescue

Effective vandalism management tools are the chief reason why the Spanish community doesn't view IP vandalism—"innocent," "dumb," or otherwise—as an existential threat. Interview participants and patrollers describe a situation in which user-maintained filters and a particular vandalism-focused bot combine to save human reviewers an immense amount of time and effort. Given the relatively small number of Spanish admins vs the population of editors, these effective tools are a major factor in IP vandalism being regarded as merely "an annoyance" in Spanish Wikipedia.

The filters have progressed a lot. The dumbest vandalism, like sometimes writing the letter 'l', is reverted in a few seconds, and automatically. — Spanish interview participant

Anti-abuse filters

The Spanish community relies on a number (one interview participant estimated 100) filters to identify possibly vandalizing actions like blanking pages, inserting problematic external links, publishing profanity, etc. Several user-maintained filters, such as an [automatic anti-abuse filter](#), are relied on to identify instances of possible vandalism. The anti-abuse filter focuses on large deletions, keywords and phrases, and other practices possibly representative of vandalism. Interview participants describe this filter as accurately identifying vandalism in the vast majority of cases, while the small number of false positives are subsequently resolved by the community.

SeroBOT

The single most-frequently lauded tool among Spanish interview participants is [SeroBOT](#), a bot that focuses on identifying and reverting instances of possible vandalism using ORES as a source of information. Maintained by a Spanish community member, SeroBOT is viewed as having a very low miss rate, and is described in glowing terms by several interview participants. Some patroller interview participants anecdotally remark that they have experienced fewer complaints, fewer false positives, and less work overall as SeroBOT has increased in effectiveness. By reverting vandalism before it reaches the screens of patrollers, and by being generally accurate in its work, SeroBOT is regarded as saving patrollers time by efficiently dealing with the most obvious cases of vandalism.

By "cleaning up" instances of IP vandalism before they fall under the responsibility of human patrollers, SeroBOT seems single-handedly to have greatly reduced the severity of the threat posed by IP vandalism to Spanish Wikipedia. At the very least, it seems to have reduced the severity of the threat that Spanish patrollers perceive from IP vandalism. This process stands in contrast to the effect of the Flagged Revisions policy in Arabic, which conversely appears to mandate that every edit from IP represents additional work for patrollers.
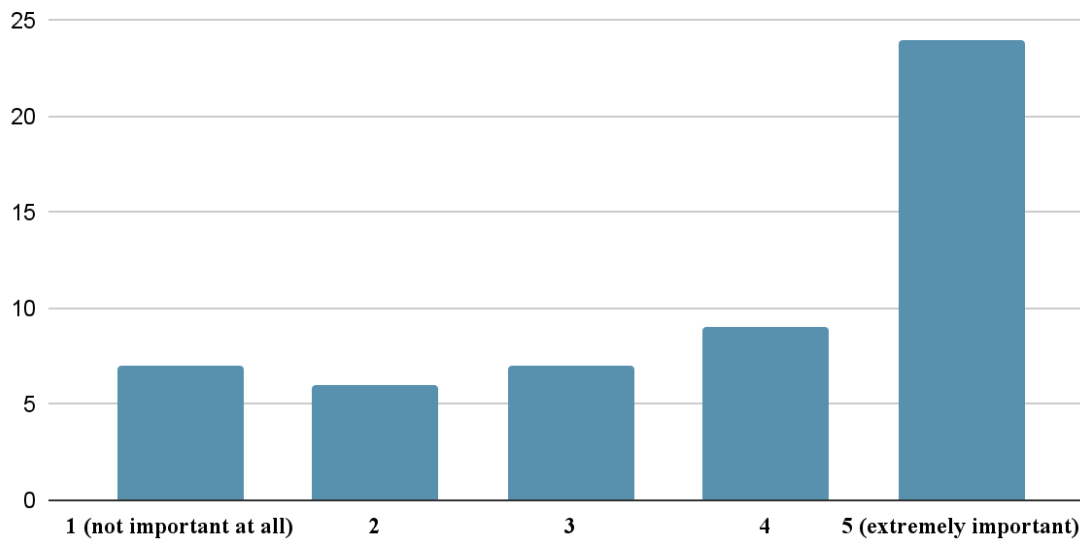
Difference of opinion: Should the community further restrict IP editing?

The Spanish Wikipedia community is of two minds with respect to the question of whether IP editing should be further restricted or further accommodated. There is a consensus that a great deal of vandalism comes from IP, but the question of how serious this vandalism is, and whether it should be combatted via restrictions on IP editing, remains debated. The issue of accommodating vs restricting IP editing has been discussed at length in the *Café*, including in two recent threads about *The future of anonymous editors* (part two).[7] In general, a "pro-restriction" camp wants to apply technical restrictions on IP editing to alleviate widespread vandalism, while a "pro-accomodation" camp views IP vandalism as a mere annoyance, and feels that additional restrictions would run contrary to the project's ethos.

There's two schools of thought in Spanish Wikipedia about IP editing. One group—the smaller group—wants to place some restrictions on IP editors to make dealing with vandalism less time consuming. The second, larger group wants to avoid placing any restrictions on IP editing.— Spanish interview participant

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[7] A number of discussants note their own past or current practice of not logging in to make minor edits. Several discussants also participated from IP. The IP discussants were notably antagonistic in some of their posts, and their posts received relatively antagonistic responses in turn. One IP discussant was accused of commenting from multiple different IP addresses in order to create a false consensus, apparently confirming the complaints of a few earlier posters.

How important is it that people can edit Wikipedia without logging in to an account?

For their part, Spanish survey respondents tend to fall more squarely in the pro-accomodation camp, with a plurality of responses to the question *how important is it that people can edit Wikipedia without logging in to an account?* supplying a 5 (*extremely important*) on a 5-point scale.

The pro-restriction camp

Some community members feel that placing greater restrictions on IP editing would greatly minimize the impact of vandalism, both anonymous and from registered accounts. Proponents of restricting IP editing point to the low proportion of useful edits and retained new pages contributed by IP editors, even after the contributions of multiple filters.

Advocates of restricting IP editing note that a majority of IP edits can be considered non-encyclopedic in some way, and that IP edits are the source of most vandalism on Spanish Wikipedia. Patrollers in particular find a lot of their time occupied by cleaning up after the various forms of IP vandalism. This group takes inspiration from English and other Wikipedias that have more restrictive stances toward IP editing than Spanish.

When anonymous editing is open, there's no wall or barrier. If you want to make this incorrect or vandalizing edit, or if you want to annoy people, and

you have to register an account, you might need to supply an email to register the account, it's a first disincentive for people who want to cause damage.
— Spanish interview participant

For example, there is currently a great deal of administrative discretion in how blocks are distributed. Updates to rules about blocks and protections—such as allowing these mechanisms to be used preventively—are argued to hold potential for mitigating vandalism and abuse.

The pro-accommodation camp

Advocates for the continuing accommodation of IP editing argue that they generally view IP editors in good faith, and note that IP editors are already subject to more scrutiny than logged-in editors, who may themselves be the source of the most dangerous vandalism seen by Spanish Wikipedia. This camp views themselves as the majority opinion within the community, and argues that restrictions to IP editing run contrary to the Movement ethos of "anyone can edit."

Advocates for IP accommodation note that the Spanish community generally considers itself to be very open and free, and that IP editors generally have a lot of freedom to edit and create pages. Accommodation advocates also note that, in addition to the high volume of useful IP edits they observe, the most damaging vandalism tends to come from account holders.

I don't know much about other Wikipedias, but I think that Spanish Wikipedia can't function without anonymous editing. — Spanish interview participant

Proponents of accommodation also point out that IP editors do a great deal of maintenance work in the form of typo correction, for example. This maintenance work is even more valuable in a context in which the most active editors find themselves focusing more on community processes like patrolling than on content creation.

Finally, proponents of IP accommodation also point out that the community response to IP editing—described as "systematic aggression" by one participant—may be discouraging and globally damaging to the Movement goal of new editor retention.
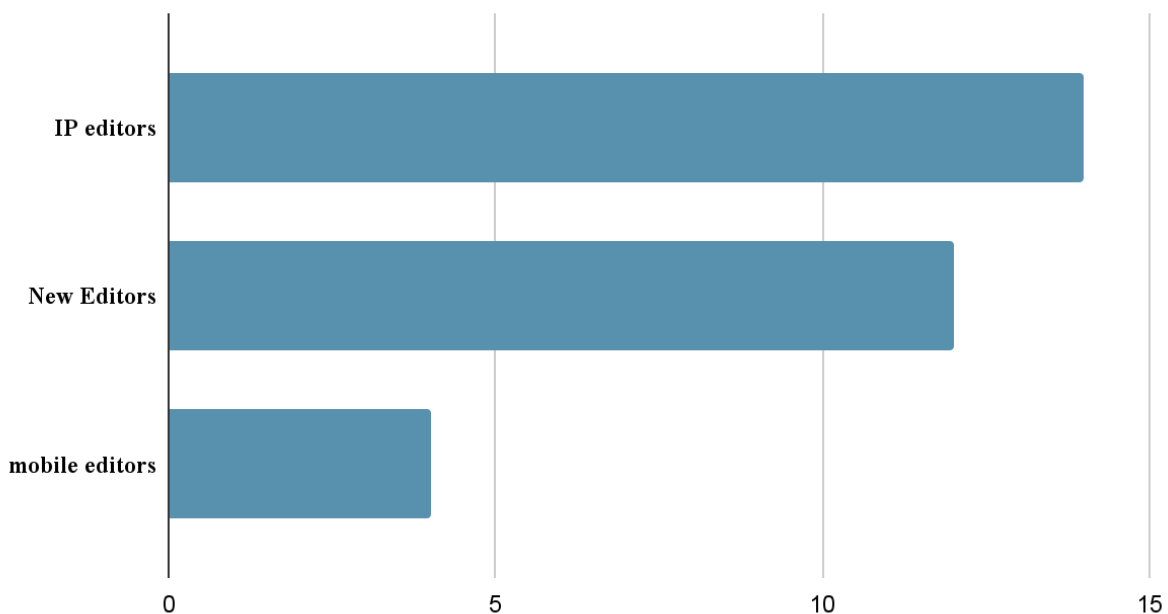
[Someone] might have taken one or two hours to understand the mechanics of the site and search for information. [Reverting them] really discourages people from participating in Wikipedia or wanting to create an account . . . This phenomenon results in a negative relationship towards new users, and it makes IP edits and editors seem almost disposable. — Spanish interview participant

Patrollers' view

Even patrollers sympathetic to IP editing note that they spend a great deal of time correcting vandalism and other problems, such as copyright confusion, that they associate with IP editors. One interviewed patroller described the community's approach to IP edits as "shoot first and ask questions later," even if the IP edit question is indicative of a potential new editor exploring the editing process. Interview participants also note that IP edits may be reverted more frequently and aggressively now than they were in the past.

When asked what groups they pay the most attention to when patrolling, self-identified patroller survey respondents report scrutinizing IP editors and New Editors at similar rates:

What groups do you pay the most attention to when patrolling?

Cultures of anonymity: "Anonymous" means de-linking edits from accounts

- For many editors, IP editing is "anonymous" precisely because it de-links their edits from their accounts.
- Spanish survey respondents don't agree about how much information their IP address reveals.
- Survey respondents generally do agree, however, that their IP address should be hidden from others on the internet.

A recurring theme of this IP editing research is that "anonymity" is often conceptualized very differently by different groups of stakeholders. While recent discussions and initiatives from the WMF have focused on the security risks associated with publicly visible IP addresses, this research indicates that individual IP editors may be more concerned with their "anonymity" from other community members, rather than with the information that may be divulged via their IP address.

In the last ten years [in Spanish Wikipedia], a lot more is being heard about anonymity in the context of the internet. — Spanish interview participant

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For many editors, editing via IP is "anonymous" precisely because it de-links their editing activity and their account, which they may have maintained and curated for years. For many editors—especially long-term editors who may be more likely to engage in "strategic" IP editing, their accounts may represent years of work and social positioning. De-linking their editing activity and their account's edit history allows some editors to work on controversial topics without negatively affecting their social relationships within the community.

Mobile IP editing is something I do all the time, but I never edit from IP in my own home because I know how it works. — Spanish interview participant
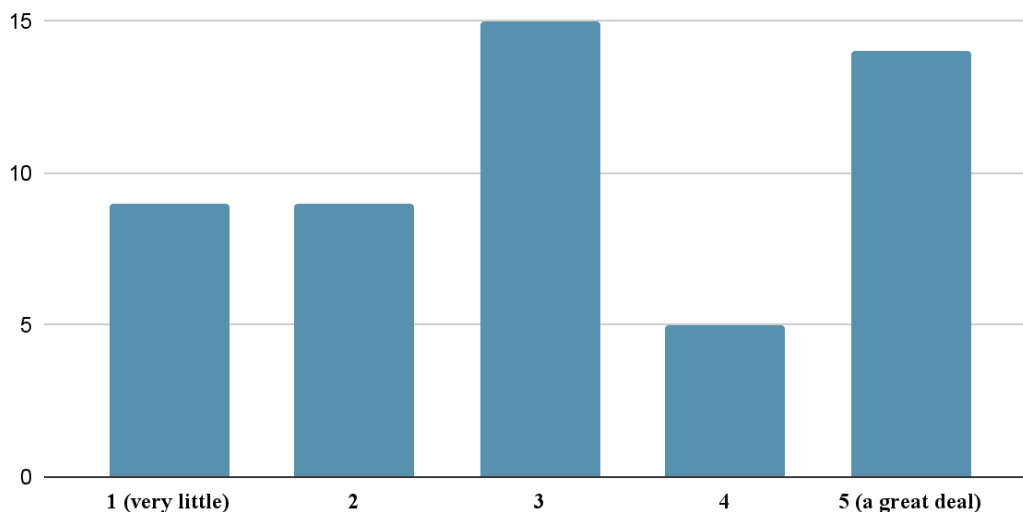

The privacy question: New editors have "zero to no awareness"

In general, online anonymity does not appear to be a salient concern for the Spanish Wikipedia community. Interview participants report limited discussion of this issue in places such as the *Café*, and note that this issue is discussed less frequently than on English Wikipedia. One interview participant stated that new Spanish editors typically have "zero to no awareness" of the privacy concerns associated with IP addresses.

The people who want to be anonymous here are involved in technology, in activism, for example in small movements working on political or sexuality issues. But they're small groups. — Spanish interview participant

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Spanish responses to the survey indicate that Spanish editors may have a similar collective stance to the privacy implications of public IP addresses to that observed among Arabic respondents—namely, respondents largely don't agree about how much personal information their IP address divulges. As many Spanish editors responded with a 4 or 5 (a great deal) as responded with a 2 or 1 (very little) when asked *how much information do you think your IP address reveals about you?*:
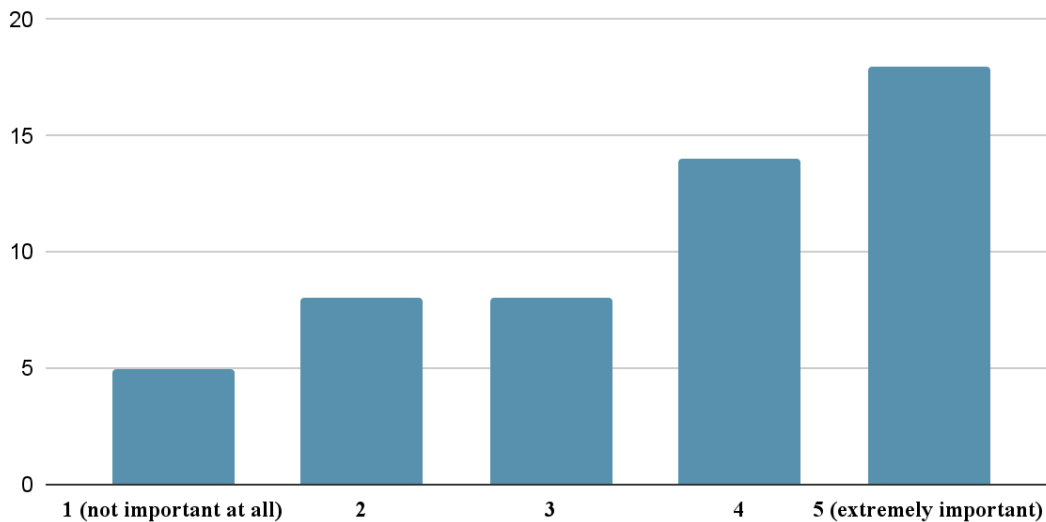
How much personal information do you think your IP address reveals about you?

Sometimes I also think there is a lack of knowledge that when they edit, if they don't have an account, what people see is their IP. — Spanish interview participant

When asked how important it is that your IP address be hidden from others on the internet, however, Spanish respondents show a much stronger agreement that this is *extremely important*:

How important is it that your IP address be hidden from others on the internet?

Additionally, Spanish mentors who work with new editors also point out that new editors are themselves generally unconcerned with or unaware of the potential privacy risks inherent to public IP addresses.

In workshops, we always mention how this all works so they know how it works, calling their attention to all the information that's saved and made public, and we try to show them the article history and all the important things that happen there but they don't really pay attention to IP addresses and its role. — Spanish interview participant

The use of offline names

While interviews with Arabic community members indicate that editor legitimacy is somewhat linked to editor identifiability in Arabic Wikipedia, experienced Spanish community members note the use of identifiable offline names in Wikipedia accounts is relatively rare in Spanish Wikipedia. Consulted editors don't view the omission of offline names as associated with any type of stigma within the community, and the community is regarded as very accepting of power users obscuring their offline identities.

Interview participants note that they often recommend that new editors avoid using their offline names when creating accounts. New users are regarded as often not paying attention to this issue, as they are more concerned with exploring the interface and other aspects of the project. The use of offline names in Wikipedia account names is noted as something that children often do when creating an account.

That's a recommendation that we . . . make to people asking for a name change from a generic name to their real name. We ask them "are you sure that you want to use your real name?" Because there have been cases of harassment. And sometimes they don't think this will happen to them, but it's something we raise before fulfilling the request. — Spanish interview participant

Government surveillance: Rare, but observable

Interview participants note that, when it comes to privacy concerns around IP addresses, Spanish new editors are typically most aware of the risk of government surveillance when they talk about online privacy at all. Even given that the Spanish Wikipedia community has placed more emphasis on privacy education in recent years, however, anonymity and privacy enthusiasts are regarded as a definite minority of editors. These enthusiasts are also regarded as being likely associated with political or activist movements that may predispose them to being aware of government surveillance.

Although interview participants note that the threat posed by government surveillance to individual editors may be less in Latin America than in other global regions, Spanish Wikipedia nevertheless encompasses several countries in which editors are likely to be more aware, and more wary of government surveillance. One interview participant also recounted an instance in which an editor reverted their own edits and talk page comments
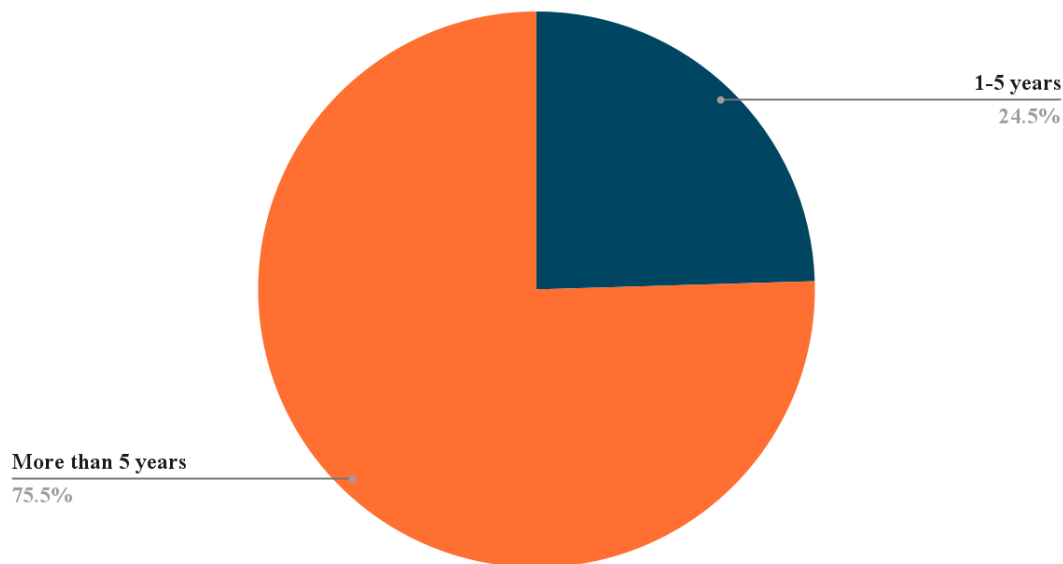
due to their relevance to a Mexican drug cartel. Mexico is regarded by some interview participants as a growing center of privacy and anonymity concern within the Spanish Wikipedia community.

It's perhaps not very common, but it's an observable phenomenon—the issue of not having a user account so that a given change isn't vulnerable to the point of view of governments. Governments can, through internet surveillance, come to know who made the change . . . On the other hand, if they're only IP addresses, you're almost invulnerable all over again . . . This animates a little bit to not register. It has a lot to do with government control over the internet. — Spanish interview participant

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Appendix: Participants

This research reached Spanish editors and patrollers who are largely experienced and knowledgeable. Of the 52 survey respondents, roughly 75% report that they have been editing for *more than 5 years*, while the remaining 25% have been editing for at least 1 year.

How long have you been editing Spanish Wikipedia?

1-5 years
24.5%

More than 5 years
75.5%

When asked how often they log in to their Wikipedia accounts when editing, the majority of these respondents (66%) report that they *always* log in. Only a single respondent reported that they *rarely* log in.