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# **Former Contributors Survey**

# Agenda

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- Background
- Results
- Discussion of themes
- How do we use this information?
- Next steps

# Background

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- **Objective:** to better understand why casual contributors are leaving Wikipedia
- **How:** Sent online survey (via email) out to 10,000 “casual contributors” defined as users who have:
  - 20-99 lifetime edits
  - Have “left” (no edits within last 3 months)
  - Last edit was in 2009
- **Response rate:**
  - **12% (1238) completed survey**
  - 80% (989) of respondents provided at least one comment
  - 36% (451) are open to a follow-up call



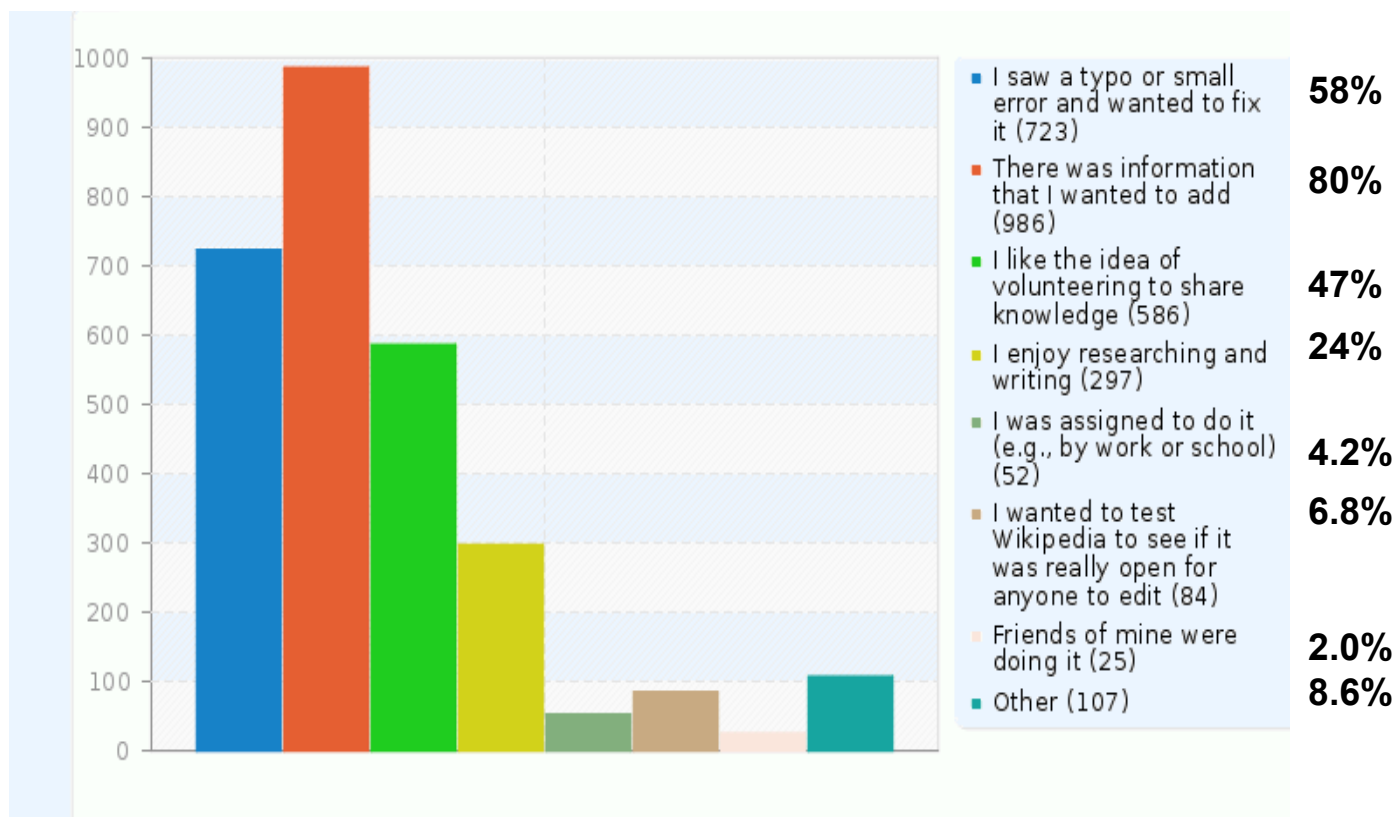
# Survey Questions

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- When did you start editing?
- When did you make your last edit?
- During your time as an active editor, roughly how many edits did you make in a typical month?
- Why did you start contributing to Wikipedia?
- Why did you stop contributing to Wikipedia?
- At the time of your last edit, did you personally feel like you still had a lot to add to Wikipedia? (1-5)
- What was your most rewarding experience with Wikipedia? Why? (open)
- What was your worst experience with Wikipedia? Why? (open)
- Did the difficulty of the work have an impact on your decision to stop contributing?
- Did the community have an impact on your decision to stop contributing?
- How likely are you to start contributing again? (1-5)
- Please read the following statements and select all that you believe are true.
- Is there anything else you would like us to know? (open)
- 14-16. Availability for follow-up

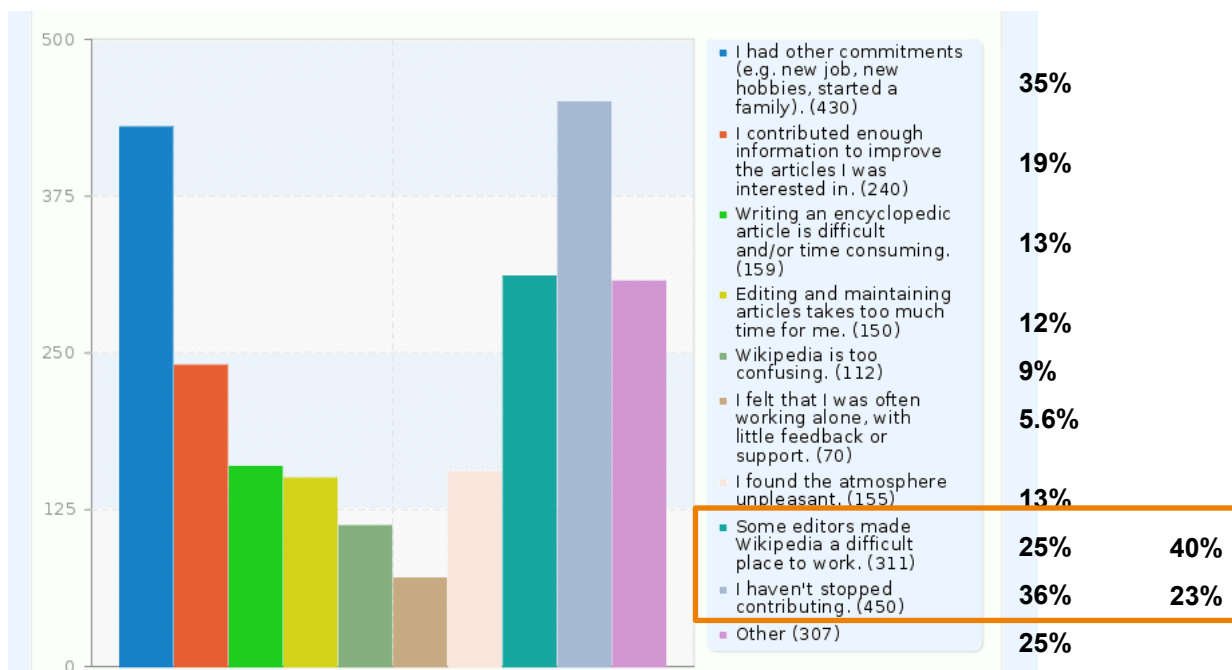
## Q4: Why did you start contributing to Wikipedia?

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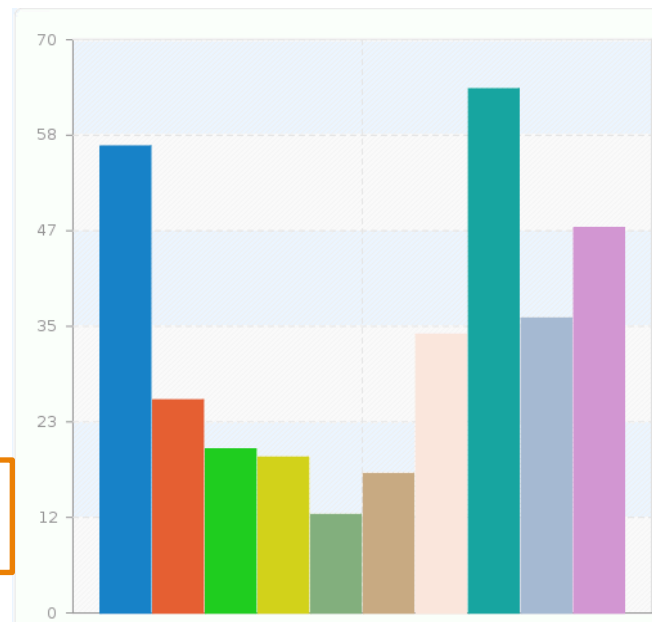


# Q5: Why did you stop contributing to Wikipedia?

All Users



10+ edits/month

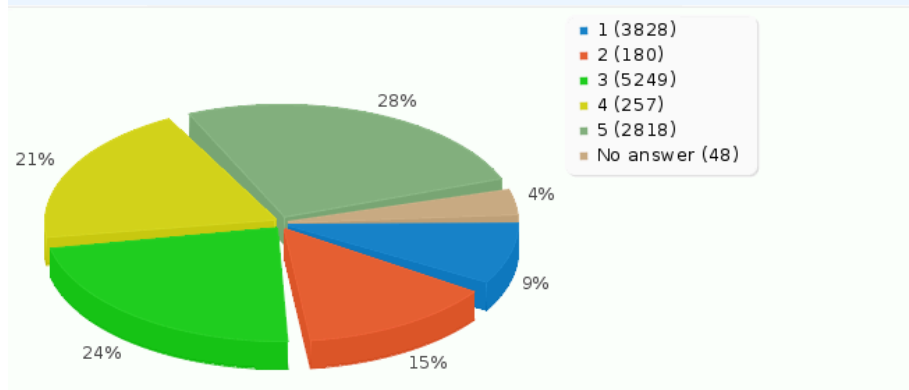


Difficult editors: 40%  
Haven't stopped: 23%

# Q6: At the time of your last edit, did you personally feel like you still had a lot to add to the Wikipedia?

(1 = Not much more I could have contributed, 5 = A lot more I could have contributed)

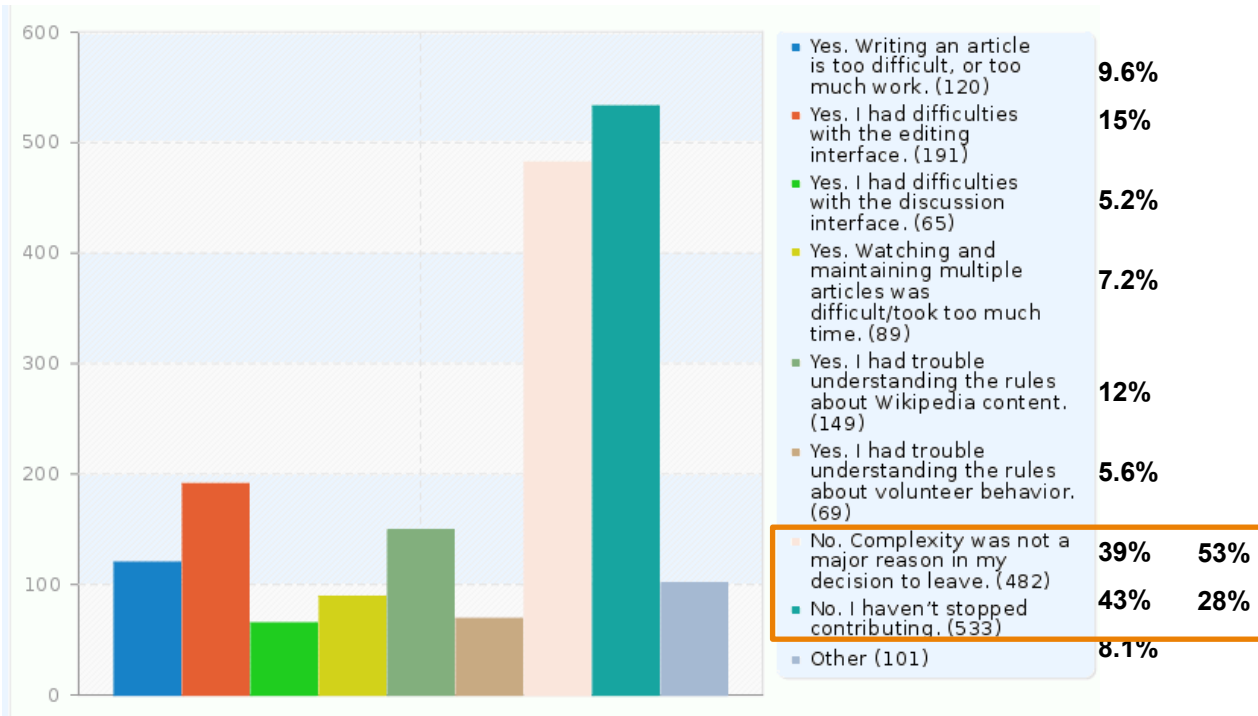
1 (1)	114	9.58%	24.71%
2 (2)	180	15.13%	
3 (3)	297	24.96%	24.96%
4 (4)	257	21.60%	
5 (5)	342	28.74%	50.34%
<b>Sum (Answers)</b>	<b>1190</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
Number of cases	1238	100.00%	
No answer	48	3.88%	
Arithmetic mean		3.45	
Standard deviation		1.3	



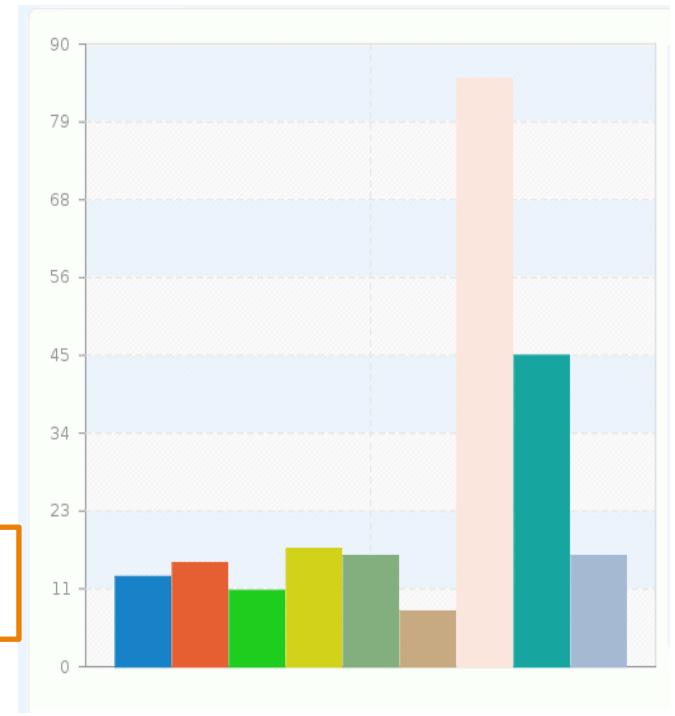
10+ edit users: top 2 = 72%

# Q9: Did the difficulty of the work have an impact on your decision to stop contributing?

All Users



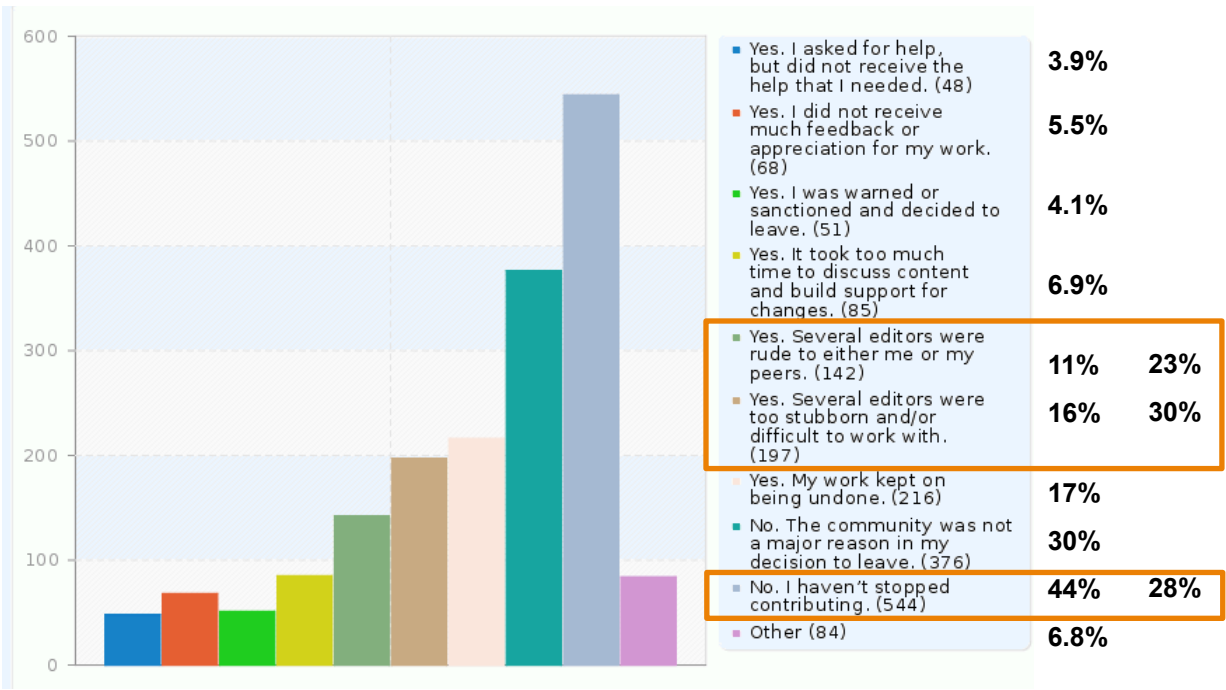
10+ edits/month



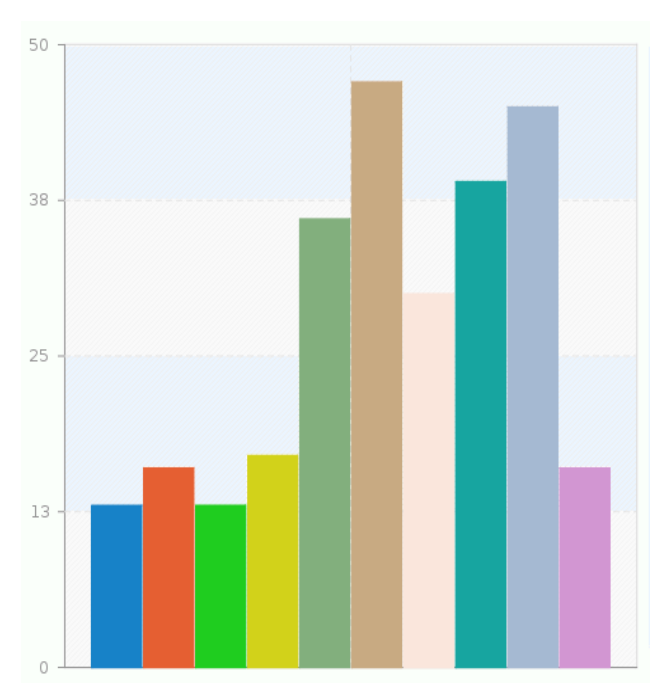


# Q10: Did the community have an impact on your decision stop contributing?

All Users



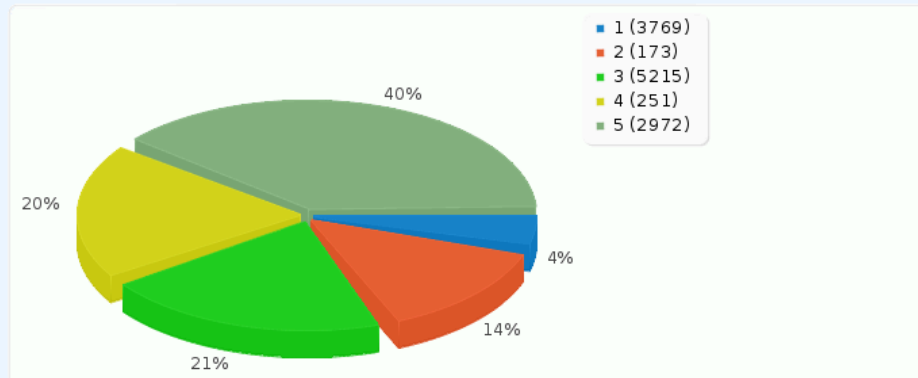
10+ edits/month



# Q11: On a scale of 1-5, how likely are you to start contributing again?

(1=Never, 5=Definitely, it's just a matter of time)

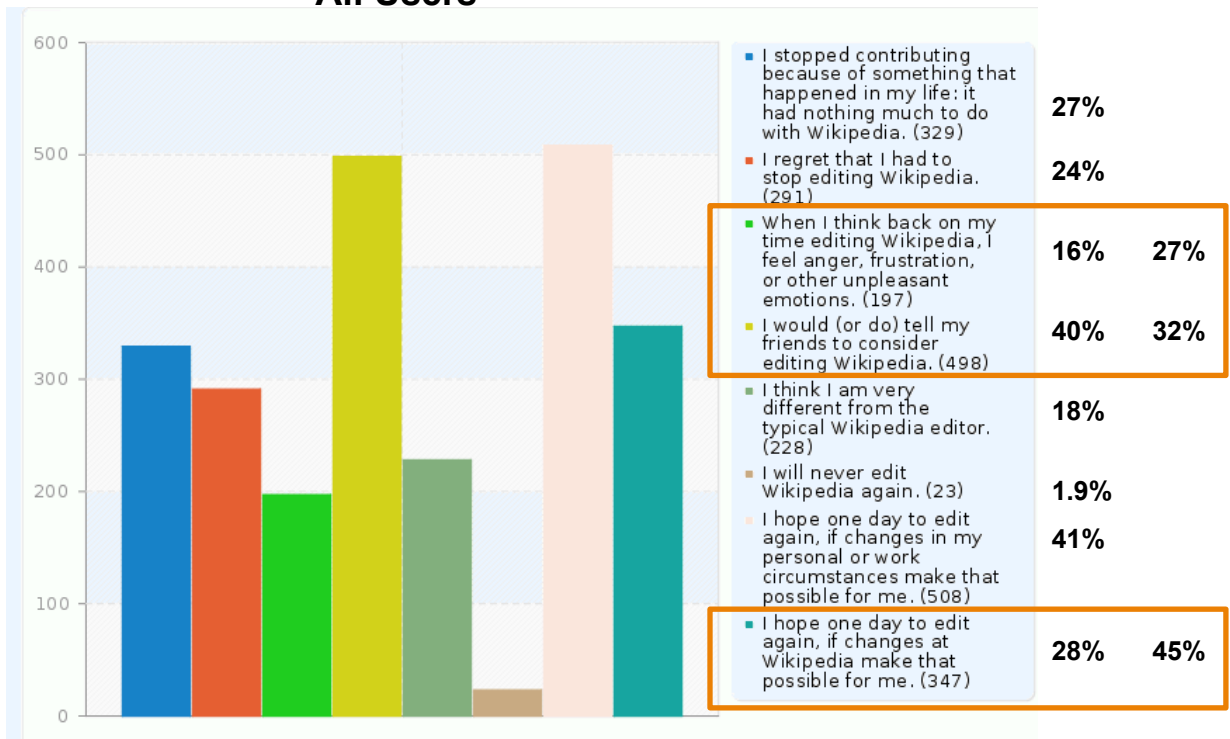
1 (1)	55	4.44%	18.42%
2 (2)	173	13.97%	
3 (3)	263	21.24%	21.24%
4 (4)	251	20.27%	
5 (5)	496	40.06%	60.34%
<b>Sum (Answers)</b>	<b>1238</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
Number of cases	1238	100.00%	
No answer	0	0.00%	
Arithmetic mean		3.78	
Standard deviation		1.23	



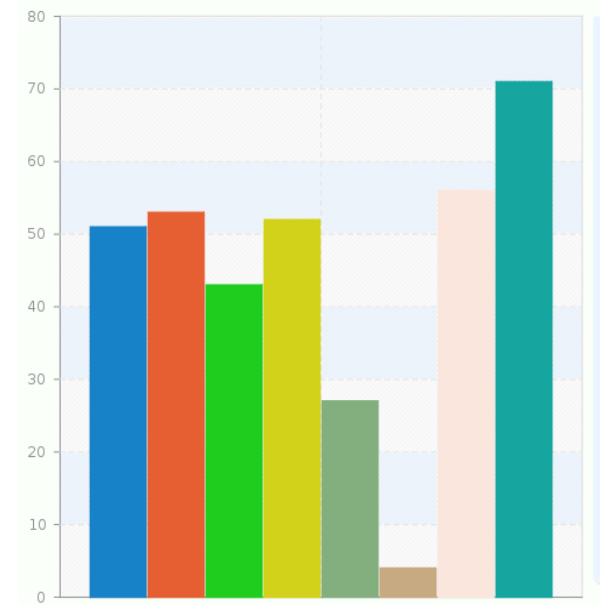
10+ edit users: top 2 = 50%

# Q12: Please read the following statements and select all that you believe are TRUE.

All Users



10+ edits/month



# User Comments

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# Most Rewarding Experience

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- Having the context and having a pro help placing the photo and info in the right place.
- I got a barnstar because someone noticed that I had done some re-arranging and rephrasing in an article.
- I wrote a new article on what I thought was an obscure topic. Within a month or two, someone added pictures to the article. It felt good to see my article grow!
- I love the idea of Wikipedia. I edited and wrote good information that lots of people may even don't know. I had the chance to share my knowledge with the world. Wikipedia made me PROUD of myself! Thanks!A few of my articles were selected as featured, which is a great honor. I have a few friends, includng my best friend, which I met "in" wikipedia, which is very nice.

# Worst Experience

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- Having my edits reversed - also, nothing about this was explained in a fashion that was easily understood. The people "overseeing" the edits appeared to be too power-hungry in their roles.
- One or Two Editors that think they are God and make life uneasy even though I follow the rules of Wikipedia.
- Having edits reversed, or eliminated because other people feel territorial about certain topics, and refuse to accept the input from other people.
- Editors pushing their POV whilst claiming they are without bias...
- There was no one horrible experience. I just found it unpleasant over time... it seemed like there were an awful lot of bullies.

# Worst Experience

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- I don't like how rude the editors are. They are snobs and don't take into consideration that you might be new to wikipedia. The worse thing is to be new and excited, ready to help, and have some self-appointed a\*\*hole flame you in the discussion because you didn't do things how they wanted them. Also I didn't have time to have a version war where those people probably don't have much else to do.
- The biggest difficulty after putting a lot of work into an article, there was nothing done other than the article was listed on "articles for deletion", and then later deleted. No explanations were given, and no discussion on my talk page to explain this. I did it and went to reference it, but it was ALREADY listed for deletion. I gave up on editing after that. I had put several hours into getting the article expanded, and it was completely removed with no appeal.
- As a new user there is a ton of "do's and don't" that I tried to read up on, but even before I really started I was already getting warnings that I was doing X and Y wrong. It was just off-putting trying to learn something and having people constantly scolding you.

# Additional Comments

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- The interface and writing methods are quite complicated. I'm quite computer savvy and even I get a little overwhelmed at times; this really limits the number of people who can add useful information to only those who are adept with computers. Just make the interface more user friendly
- The interface and writing methods are quite complicated. I'm quite computer savvy and even I get a little overwhelmed at times; this really limits the number of people who can add useful information to only those who are adept with computers.
- please make coding wiki more simple.
- I love wikipedia! :) It's just such a great thing for all of humanity!



# Themes (from discussion)

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- Concept of “having left” Wikipedia: many users don’t see themselves as having left even though they haven’t contributed in the past three months. Users have a more nuanced view than what has been commonly discussed (e.g., in media)
  - Related: It’s unclear whether many of these users feel that they’ve “entered” the community
- Impressions of community, experience differ depending on self-reported editing activity. Users with 10+ edits reported issues with community more frequently
- Reversion/deletion of contributions cited as a “worst experience” for many users. There are a variety of reasons for this (e.g., issues with editors, opacity of rules, feeling unappreciated/unimportant, wasting time, etc.)
- A few problem editors:
  - Power complexes
- Lack of transparency
  - Policy (What are the rules for contributing to Wikipedia (e.g., do’s and don’ts)
  - Reasons for decisions (significance of articles, why edits were reverted)
- Bots vs. Human reverts
- Bias: many users complained about editors having an agenda/pushing a certain point of view; left-wing bias.
- User’s mental model of Wikipedia consists of different parts (e.g., editor, rules, community, Wikipedia)
- Issues with interface
- Quality improvement vs. Constructiveness

# Word Visualization

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## Editors

bullying  
rule-Nazi  
over-zealous  
orthodoxy  
hard-nosed  
heavy handed  
clique  
arrogant  
rude  
snotty  
personal kingdom  
ego trip

agenda  
biased  
subjective

unknowledgeable

abrupt a\*\*holes  
one-word-answer  
people

## Rules

draconian  
unexplained  
automatic reversion  
review process  
no explanations  
confusing  
inconsistent

## Community

dark  
unwelcoming  
left-wing  
closed community  
hostile

## Wikipedia

love  
terrific  
great  
amazing  
priceless  
resource

left-wing

# Next steps

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- 36% (451) are open to a follow-up call – who wants to call?
  - Gain more texture behind the stories
- Follow up survey, segmented by actual contribution volume
- Other communities?

# Contributors

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- Andrew G.
- Erik Z.
- Eugene K.
- Frank S.
- Howie F.
- Mike G.
- Pete F.
- Philippe B.
- Randomran
- Sue G.

**Other**

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# User Lifecycle

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- How does user transition from one phase to the next?
- What are the barriers?
- Do people move back (e.g., reader -> casual contributor -> reader)?