

# State of the Wiki

August 27, 2009

## Wikimedia's first eight years

- 13 million articles in 271 different languages
- More than 17 million pages
- More than 325 million edits
- 330 million visitors monthly (in 2009)
- 100,000 active contributors (in 2009)
- Institutions such as U.S. National Institutes of Health and the German Federal Archives have partnered with Wikipedia to make information more accessible and reliable
- Over 50 books published on the Wikimedia phenomena



What can Wikimedia achieve in its next eight years?

Source: wikipedia.org; Time magazine; Wikimedia strategy site; "A brief history of Wikipedia," Dan Fletcher, Aug 18, 2009, Digital Trends; "Wikipedia logs 3 millionth article," Aug 18, 2009

## How global?

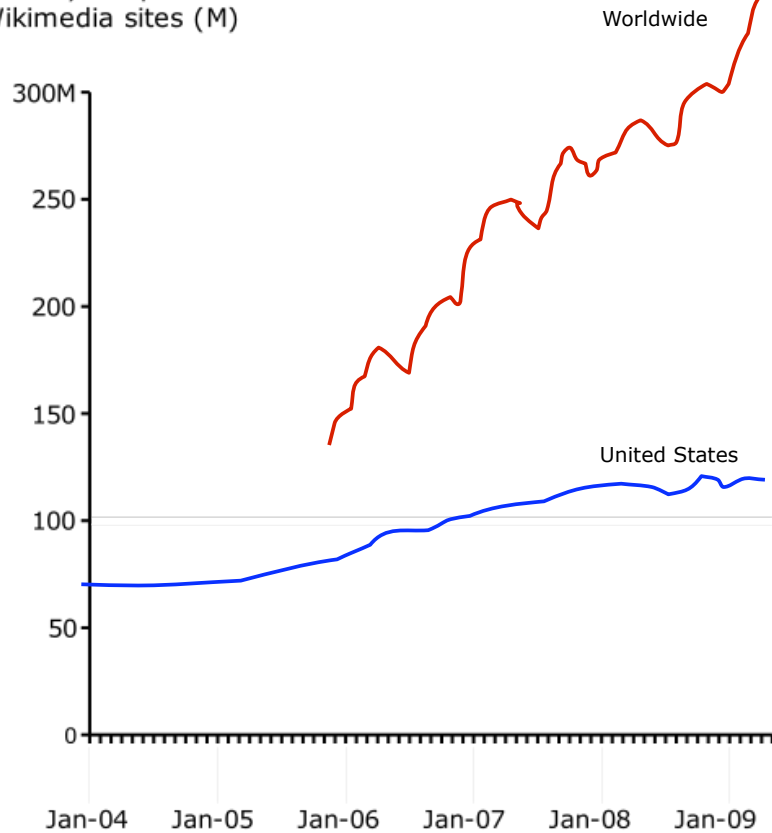
- 9 languages at 500k+
- 27 languages at 100k+
- 90 languages at 10k+
- 177 languages at 1k+

## Stabilization of >1k

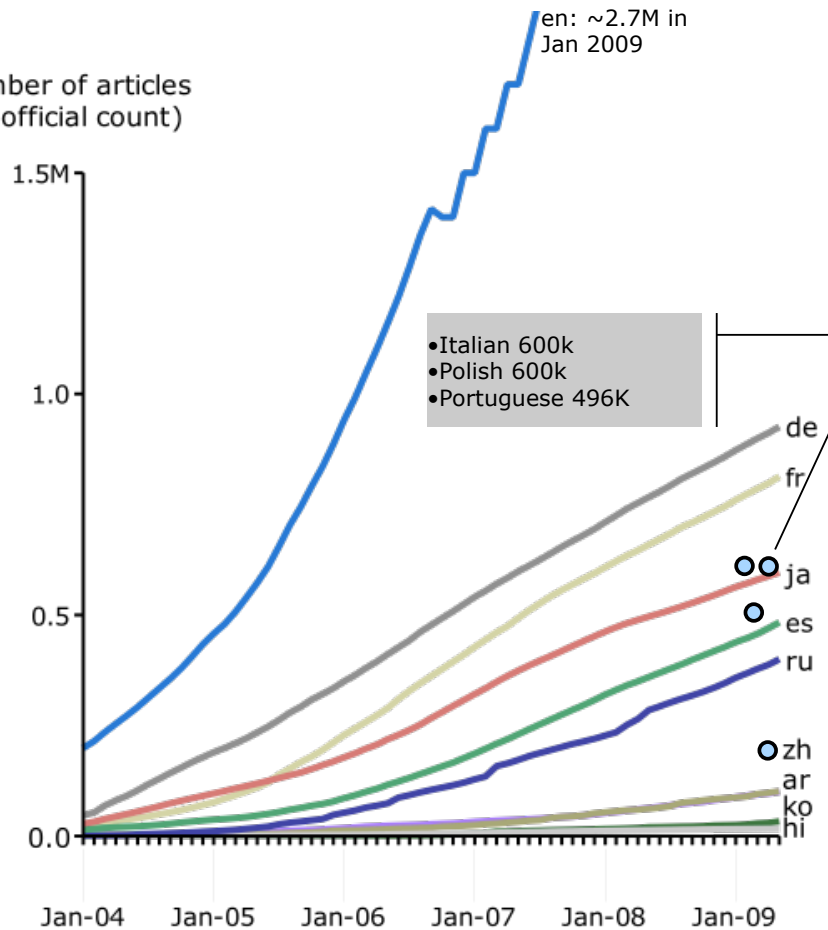
- August 2007 - 73
- August 2006 - 107 (+34)
- August 2007 - 143 (+36)
- August 2008 - 156 (+13)
- Today - 177 (+21)

# Wikimedia has become a global phenomenon with strongest growth outside of the U.S.—though currently dominated by English, other European, and Japanese languages

Monthly unique visitors of Wikimedia sites (M)

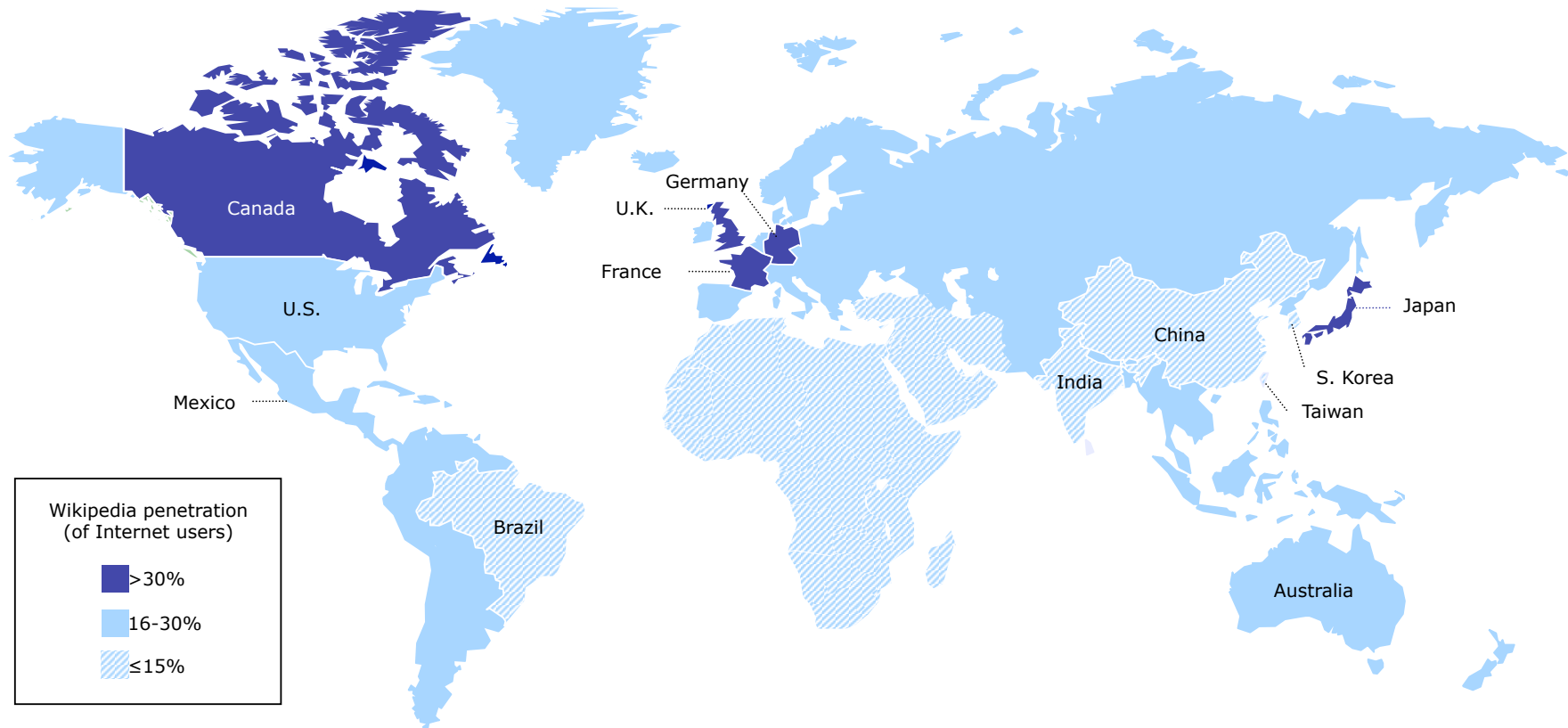


Number of articles (M; official count)



Note: "Step function" in English Wikipedia curve caused by English numbers rounded to nearest million post 2006  
 Source: Visitor data from ComScore; article data from WikiStats

# Future opportunities for growth abound among Internet users, with big questions surrounding growth in India, China, Brazil, and Africa

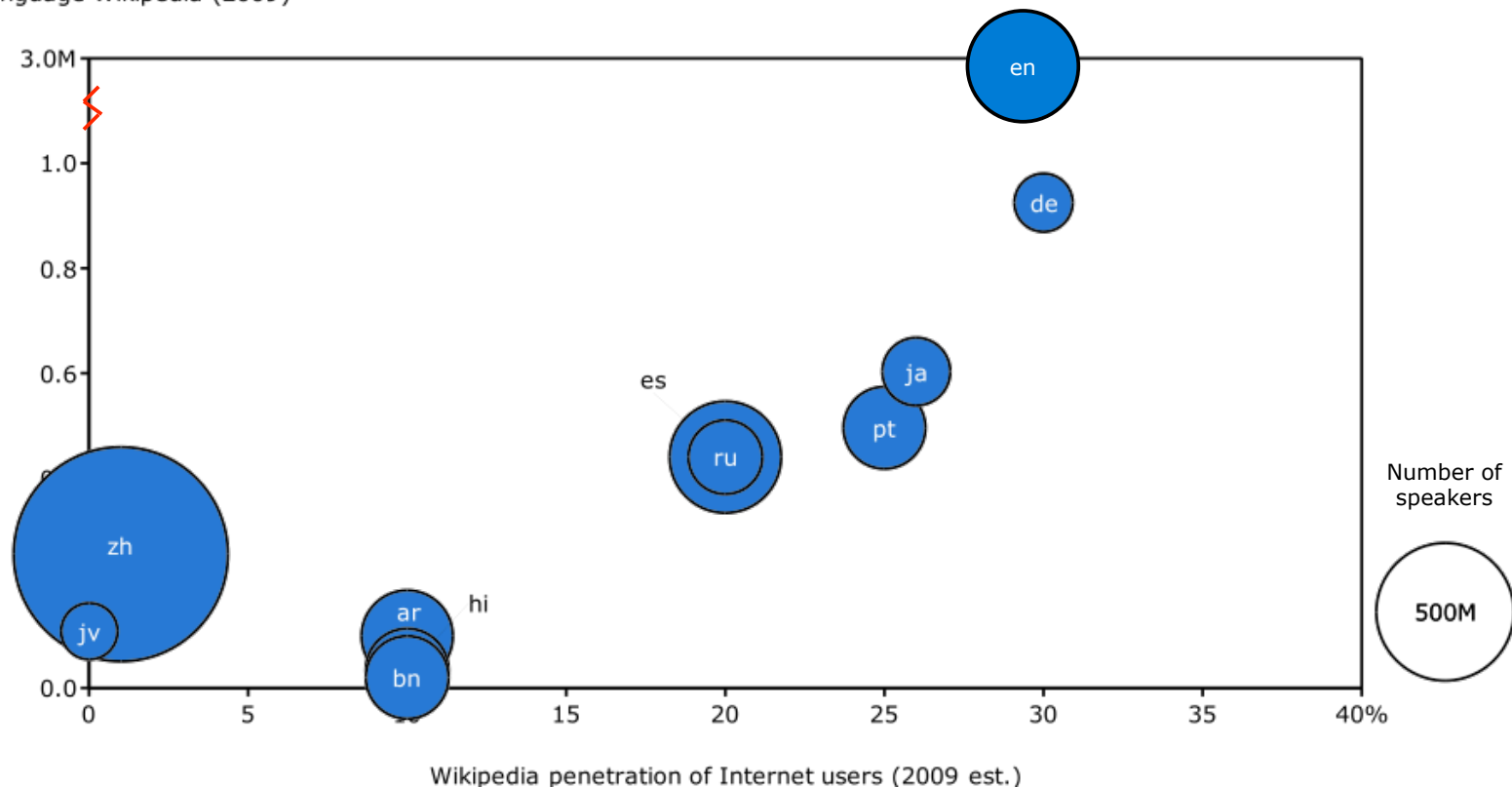


- Highest penetration in Canada (>40% of Internet users)
- Lowest penetration in China (~1% of Internet users)
- U.S. lowest penetration of primary English-speaking countries

Note: Ranges provided are estimates, given varying numbers provided by available sources. Exceptions to region-wide trends (e.g., China in Asia) pulled out for illustrative purposes; other exceptions may be present in data.  
Source: International Telecom Union; ComScore

# Growth in global reach appears to require more robust language sites; top 10 languages worldwide (by number of speakers) remain under-represented in native language articles

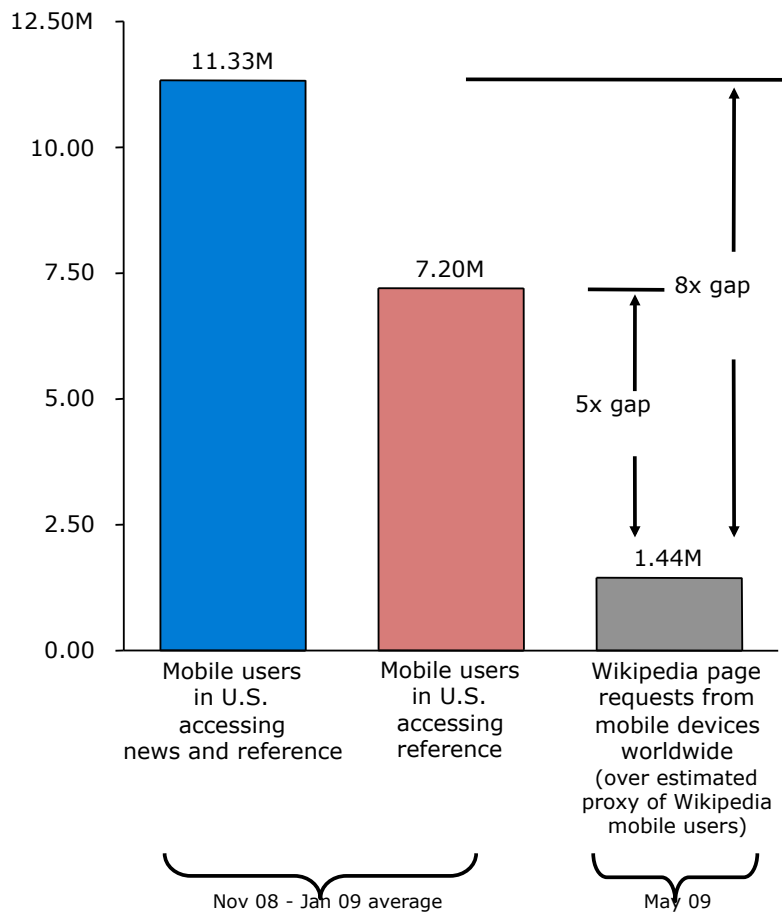
Articles in language Wikipedia (2009)



- Is ~500K the threshold for articles in native language to achieve 20%+ Wikipedia penetration (barring censorship and other restrictions)?
- What role should Wikipedia play with smaller languages vis-à-vis language and culture preservation (e.g., Native American languages)?

# Rapid growth of mobile Internet poses new challenges for Wikimedia in meeting users' "anytime, anywhere" modality preferences

Monthly average users accessing reference & news via mobile device



Mobile interface features

Reading

Editing

Media uploading

Reading			
Editing	1		
Media uploading		2	

1. Only available via traditional Wikipedia site

2. Only available on select smartphones

Source: U.S. user data from ComScore Mobile Internet report; Wikipedia page request data from WikiStats: Wikimedia Visitor Log Analysis Report



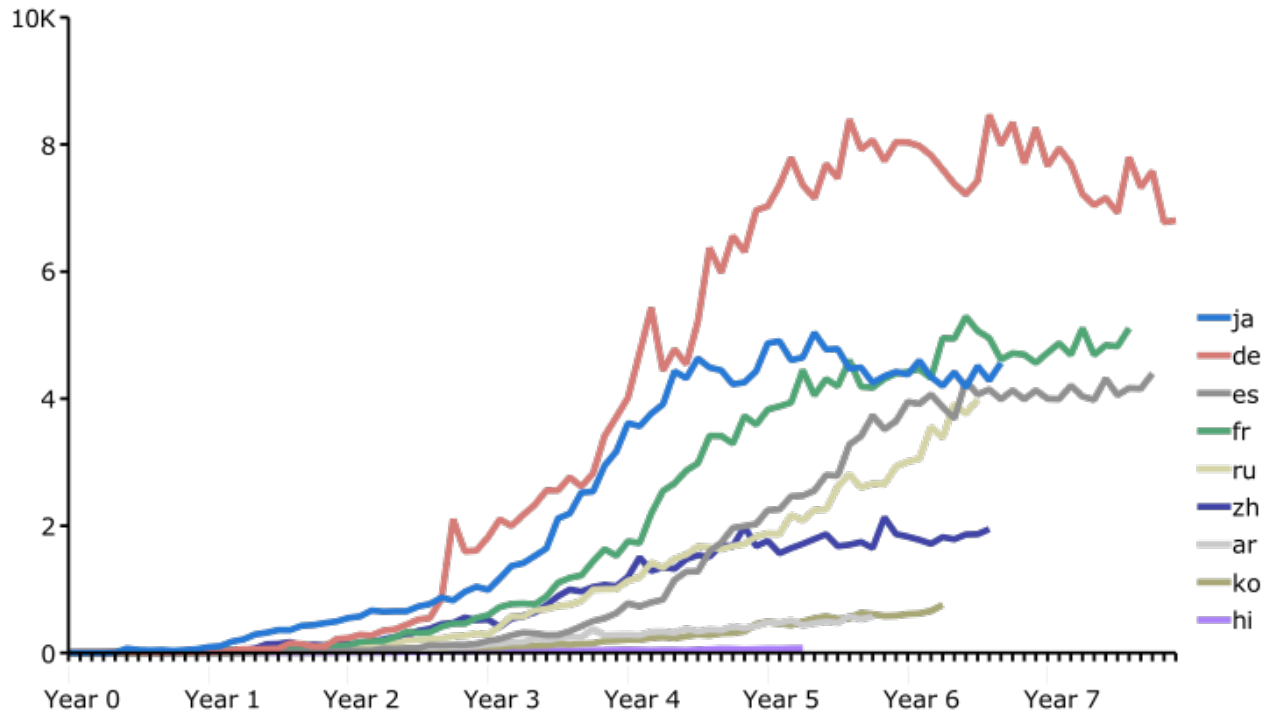
## Key questions for discussion on reach

PRELIMINARY

- How should Wikimedia prioritize growth among different populations?  
(e.g., different countries, different languages, Internet users vs. non-Internet users)
- Looking forward, how might Wikimedia's traditional approach to growth need to change in order to attract new populations and/or sustain health with current populations?
- How should Wikimedia address issues of mobility and different interface platforms?
- As one considers goals for expanding reach, how might the content/quality of knowledge and the contributor base need to evolve?

## Number of active contributors appears to plateau as Wikipedias mature: Is this a threat to future health and growth?

Number of contributors making 5+ edits in a month



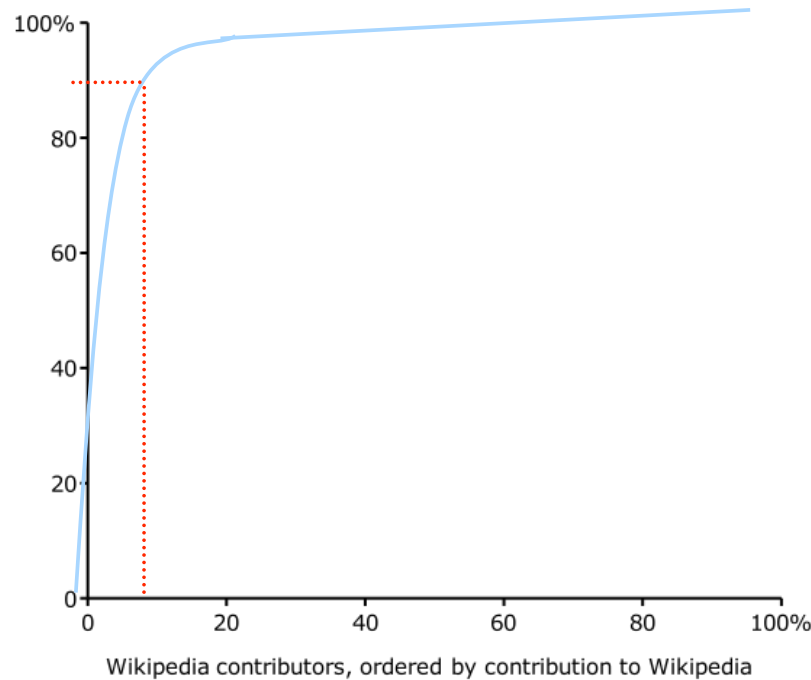
- As active contributors level off, the pace of article creation is slowing, and more “maintenance” activities are occurring as a proportion of all edits (e.g. edits on talk pages and on “Wikipedia” pages, which concern governance and rules).
- Research shows that if active contributors continue to decrease, there may not be a large enough cohort to “look after” Wikipedia.

Note: Year 0 defined as first year in which a contributor made 5+ edits in a month. English excluded because of scale; follows similar pattern as German with slightly more pronounced drop-off.

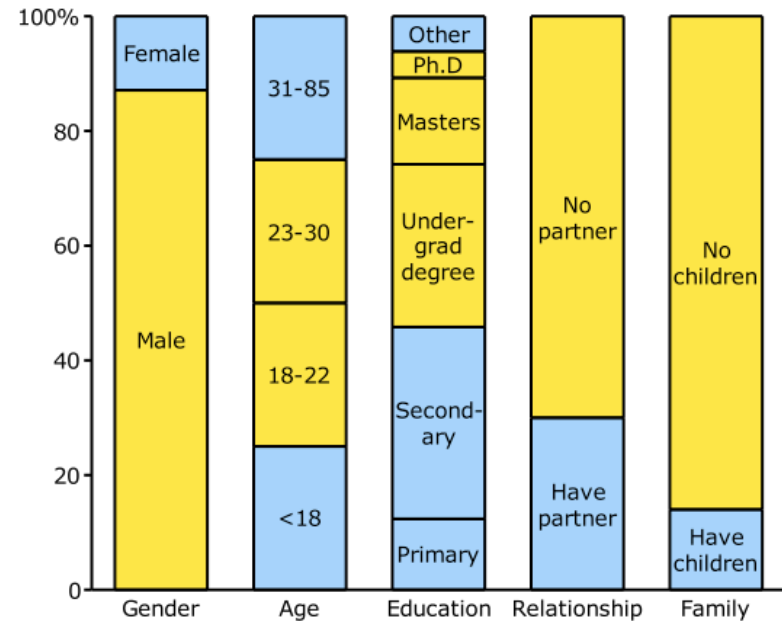
Source: WikiStats; “Wikipedia: A quantitative analysis,” Jose Felipe Ortega Soto, Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, 2000

# Contributor community dominated by a relatively homogenous base of very active contributors: Will future health and growth require more diversity? If so, how could this be achieved?

Total contributions to en Wikipedia (May 2009)



Self-reported "occasional" or "regular" contributors to any language Wikipedia (2009) (n=43,793)



- Potential for small, homogenous contributor base to introduce bias with topic selection, reference selection or articles' neutral point of view; can also create literary barriers (e.g., articles written at college level).
- Skewed participation has spawned multiple community projects to combat systemic bias such as WikiChix and Countering Systemic Bias project (which is now defunct).

Note: Data for age category also includes respondents who were not contributors but who did read Wikipedia. Average age for contributors is 26.8 (vs. 25.3 for readers). "Regular" contributors include authors, editors, and admin. "Occasional" contributors include readers who occasionally author/edit articles. Respondents may not be representative of all contributors; they self-selected into this survey.

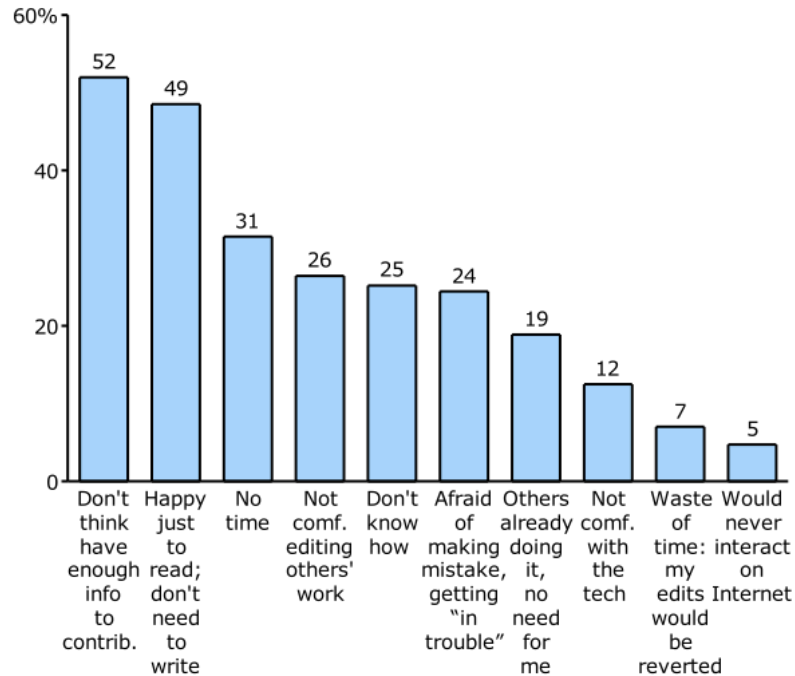
Source: "Wikipedia Survey – First Results," UNU-MERIT, April 2009; "New Twitter Research: Men Follow Men and Nobody Tweets," Harvard Business Publishing (June 1, 2009); input from community on strategy Wiki

Given limited resources, what should our diversity goals look like? What should get priority?

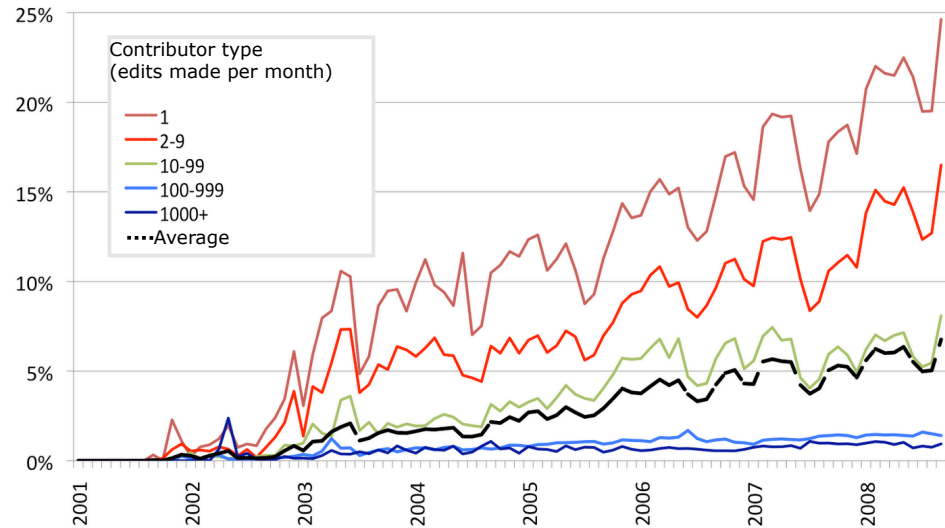


# Contributor growth appears to be limited by lack of desire to edit, ease-of-use constraints and “cultural” barriers; growth in edit reverts may be warning sign for future

Reasons for not contributing to Wikipedia (2009) (n=21,432)



Proportion of edits reverted, by contributor type



- Guardian UK suggests that growth of Wikipedia may stall as “inclusionists” and “deletionists” fight for control, with “deletionists” increasingly arguing for tightly-controlled and well-written encyclopedia articles that provide valuable information on topics of widespread interest (e.g., Wikipedia is not a “junkyard”)
- “Wikilawyering” may be drowning out contributors with less Wikipedia experience

Note: Left chart: Respondents could choose more than one answer. Respondents may not be representative of all Internet users; they self-selected into this survey.

Right chart: Edits related to vandalism or performed by bots excluded.

Source: “More details of changing editor resistance in Wikipedia,” The Augmented Social Cognition Research Group at Palo Alto Research Center, August 2009;

“Wikipedia Survey – First Results,” UNU-MERIT, April 2009; Bridgespan analysis; input from community strategy Wiki, Guardian UK article

## Key questions for discussion on contribution

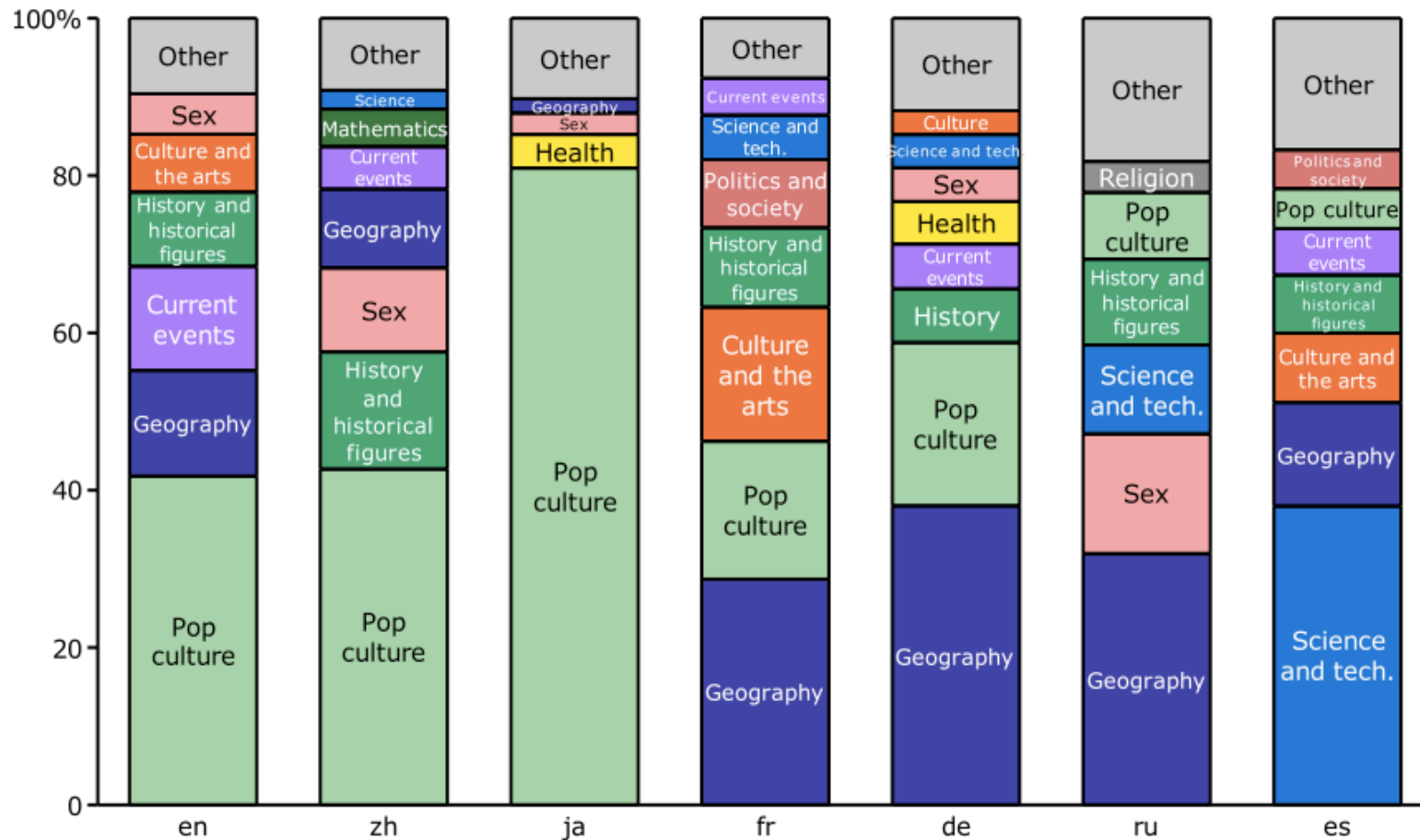
PRELIMINARY

- What are the implications of the plateau in active contributors for future the health and growth of mature, nascent, and new sites? What does the community need to stay strong?
- What are the issues underlying the apparent lack of diversity in the community? Are there conflicts or trade-offs in terms of community culture and/or the technology platform between maintaining the current community and opening Wikimedia to new demographics?
- As one considers goals for expanding reach and content/quality, how might the contributor base need to evolve?

# Some Wikipedias may already be shifting from encyclopedic core to more topical and current events content

% of page hits for top 100 pages

**PRELIMINARY**



Source: Bridgespan analysis of data found at <http://wikistics.falsikon.de/> (pulled August 2009)

## Key questions for discussion on content

PRELIMINARY

- What initiatives should Wikimedia consider to extend the scope of its content toward “the sum of all knowledge”?
- What are the implications of Wikimedia’s usage trend toward more topical events and pop culture? How might this co-exist with the core encyclopedic work?
- How should Wikimedia position its various projects against different content areas? Is there a way to leverage the strengths of Wikipedia to enhance the smaller projects?
- How can Wikimedia continue to improve the actual and perceived quality of its content?
- How might priorities for growth in different populations shift priorities for content and quality?



## Sample languages

- Arabic (ar) - 100,094 (250mm)
- Chuvash (cv) - 10,436 (2mm)
- Wolof (wo)- 1,000... or 997 :- ) (3.2mm)
- Punjabi (pa) - 1,408 (88mm)

## Arabic

- Last year's Wikimania based in Alexandria
- 280mm native speakers + 250mm non-native
- May be classified as a success!
- But considering the number of speakers, how quickly can we get it to 250,000 or 1mm articles?
- How could we accelerate growth and quality?

## Chuvash

- Turkic language spoken in central Russia, primarily in Chuvashia and surrounding areas
- 1.3 million speakers in Russia
- Taught in schools and sometimes used in media
- nevertheless considered: ENDANGERED due to dominance of Russian
- Many of our smaller language projects are similar
- What emphasis should we place on Endangered languages?

## Endangered languages - two views

- To provide a free encyclopedia, it is enough to provide one that people can understand just fine - English Wikipedia serves Welsh speakers for the most part (very few Welsh speakers do not also speak perfectly fluent English)
- I do not agree
- “for every single person on the planet in THEIR OWN language”

## Wolof

- Senegal, The Gambia, and Mauritania
- native language of ethnic Wolofs
- but also spoke by most other Senegalese
- Typical of African languages (though more successful than most)
- Problems of poverty, literacy rate (33%)
- Official language of Senegal is French, understood by 15-20% of males, 1-2% of females

## Punjabi (Eastern)

- Example of what I consider to be a great opportunity
- 88 million speakers
- The language of Sikhs
- 2nd most common language in the UK after English (Citation needed!!!!)
- Demographics similar to other, more successful, India/Pakistan languages

## 1. Participate on the strategy wiki

- Participate on the strategy Wiki. In particular, we'd like
- participation on the Fact Bases and the Call for Proposals
- \* Regarding the Call for Proposals, we'd like to
- (1) encourage people to help improve, categorize, merge existing proposals
- (2) start acting on proposals that they care about. The purpose of the proposals process is not to seek some approval from some higher authority, but to capture ideas in a useful way.



Page Discussion

Read

View source

View history

Go

Search

How should we go about expanding Wikimedia's content and quality?

## Main Page

**In other languages:** [Български \(bg\)](#) | [ᱵᱟᱲᱟᱢ \(bn\)](#) | [Català \(ca\)](#) | [Česky \(cs\)](#) | [Dansk \(da\)](#) | [Deutsch \(de\)](#) | [English \(en\)](#) | [Esperanto \(eo\)](#) | [Español \(es\)](#) | [Suomi \(fi\)](#) | [Français \(fr\)](#) | [हिन्दी \(hi\)](#) | [Bahasa Indonesia \(id\)](#) | [Italiano \(it\)](#) | [日本語 \(ja\)](#) | [Basa Jawa \(jv\)](#) | [ᱫᱷᱟᱱᱵᱟᱫᱽ \(km\)](#) | [한국어 \(ko\)](#) | [Македонски \(mk\)](#) | [मराठी \(mr\)](#) | [Bahasa Melayu \(ms\)](#) | [Nederlands \(nl\)](#) | [Polski \(pl\)](#) | [Português \(pt\)](#) | [Português do Brasil \(pt-br\)](#) | [Русский \(ru\)](#) | [Slovenčina \(sk\)](#) | [Svenska \(sv\)](#) | [ᱥᱟᱱᱛᱟᱲ \(te\)](#) | [Türkçe \(tr\)](#) | [Tiếng Việt \(vi\)](#) | [中文\(简体\) \(zh-hans\)](#) | [中文\(繁體\) \(zh-hant\)](#) | [Add translation \[edit\]](#)

**Welcome to the Wikimedia 2009–2010 strategic planning process!** This is an open community process designed to serve the movement. These pages are wiki pages, and we encourage you to explore and edit them.

### Where is Wikimedia now?

Current participation  
Current reach  
Current content and quality

### Where should Wikimedia go?

Key questions  
*Call for proposals*

### About this process

Community guidelines  
Frequently asked questions  
How to participate

#### Navigation

- Main Page
- Fact Base
- Call for proposals
- Recent changes
- Village Pump
- Donate

#### Toolbox

- What links here
- Related changes
- Special pages
- Printable version
- Permanent link
- Cite this page

PROJECT

# Strategy.wikimedia.org

DATE

DATE

CLIENT

NAME



## 2. Host strategy conversations

- Both face-to-face and online
- Basic questions:
  - Where is Wikimedia now?
  - Where should Wikimedia be in 5 years?
  - How can we get from here to there?

## How to do this

- All we are asking is that people report-out on conversations
- We'll be collecting best practices/templates on how to host good strategy conversations
- I will be doing this at wikimeetups and dinners that I personally attend

### 3. Tell others about the process

- First and foremost, take these messages back to your home projects - make sure that people there learn of the desire for global participation
- Help with outreach if you have a platform: blog/twitter, etc. We need insights from outside our community - people we aren't currently serving well

## 4. Formal participation

- **Think about getting more directly involved**
- **“We'll be making a more formal call for participation in a few weeks, and some of the work will require significant investments of time. We're looking for motivated volunteers who are willing to dive deeper into some of these issues.”**