FACT SHEET

ABOUT THE GENDER BIAS ON WIKIPEDIA – AND BEYOND –

The way we record and narrate our society and history can tell us a lot about the existing power structures.

Today, one of the biggest sources of knowledge is Wikipedia, the online free and collaborative encyclopedia, which is one of the top 7 most visited websites in the world, with more than seven billion visits per month.

→ "Alexa Top 500 Global Sites", New Statesman, 26.05.2015

In other terms, Wikipedia has a

HUGE IMPACT

on how people of all ages see the world.

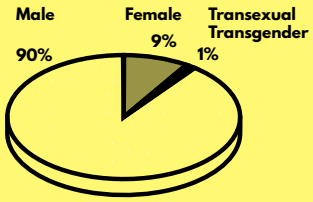
One of the crucial differences between Wikipedia and other encyclopedias is that the articles are written by many different people and not only by a selected set of experts. Making it possible to represent a multitude of truth and not just one side of the story.

But since 2009, the Wikimedia Foundation (WMF) has made surveys on Wikipedia's users which gave alarming results:

only 9 to 16 % of Wikipedia's contributors identify as women.

→ Wikimedia Survey, 2011

This situation means that the "encyclopedia that anyone can edit" is in fact mainly edited by the same group of people.



"The main thing is to bring in people of all different backgrounds. If you do that, you increase the knowledge base of the site, which can only be a good thing" Jimmy Wales*, The Independent, 2001

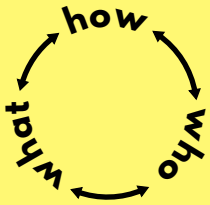
"We've completely failed" Jimmy Wales*, BBC News, 2014

*co-founder of Wikipedia

"Everyone brings their crumb of information to the table. If they are not at the table, we don't benefit from their crumb." Sue Gardner, executive director WMF

"The Dinner Party" table, by feminist artist Judy Chicago, 1974-79

The three levels of who writes, what is written and how the knowledge is represented are related.



This impacts the contents of the encyclopedia.

Wikidata Human Gender Indicators, 2016 http://whgi.wmflabs.org/

"The marginalisation becomes circular and self-perpetuating"

women are badly or not at all represented in history books and then on Wikipedia

women are not represented in some domains

women are less likely to identify to some positions

Jenny Kleeman, The New Statesman, 2015

This is not only true for Wikipedia, it is part of a long history of writing:

- **newspapers,**
- **history books,**
- **commercials,**
- **everyday communications,**

...

that continues today.

Recent research has shown that 75.8 % of the history books published for general readers in 2015 are written by male authors, and that 71.7 % of the biographies are about male figures.

→ Andrew Kahn and Rebecca Onion, Slate, 2016

Wikipedia is often seen as:

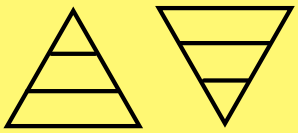
- **collaborative**
- **horizontal**
- **neutral**

But these words shouldn't hide the fact that there are power structures in Wikipedia (on top of those we inherit from the society, eduction, ...)

See Jo Freeman, The Tyranny of Structurelessness, 1972

Wikipedia's power structure:

stewards	block users,
admins	delete pages,
bureaucrats	remove edits
...	...
users	edit



DO's and DON'Ts for writing on Wikipedia, and everywhere:

DO	DON'T
... use a person's surname if not their full name.	... use their first name, as it is patronizing.
... focus on their achievments.	... focus on their (personal) relationships.
... avoid language and images that make the male the 'self' and female the 'other'.	... label a woman as a 'female' author or a 'female' politician unless gender is explicitly relevant.
... link articles about people from all genders to each other.	... forget to link articles about men to articles about relevant women in the same field.

To find information, like:
- guides about how to write in a gender-balanced way
- how to edit on Wikipedia
- articles that need care
- and further information the gender gap in new media:

jusfortherecord.space/info

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