



Where are (women) planetary scientists on Wikipedia?

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Background

Wikipedia is an open source, web-based encyclopedia, and allows anonymous and registered users to edit and create articles. This means that anyone can create, edit and improve articles. However, several studies have shown the **most of Wikipedia editors are male** (See **Fig. 1**). In addition, there are fewer and less developed articles about women, especially in STEM [1].

Wikipedia editors are predominantly male

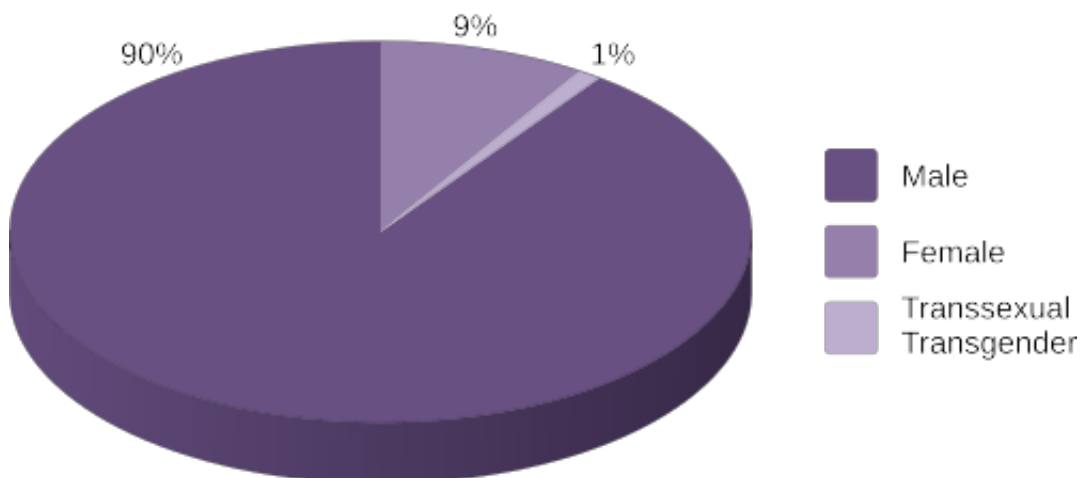


Figure 1: Wikipedia editors are predominantly male (Source: Wikipedia)

In October 2014, only 15.53% of English Wikipedia's biographies were about women [2]. Founded in July 2015, the WikiProject **Women in Red** has the objective to increase this percentage, which has reached **18.46%** as of 2 June 2020 [1].

Today, Wikipedia is within the 20 most popular website [3] and every month it attracts more than 1 billion unique visitors [4]. **Wikipedia can therefore give a huge contribution to change the perception the general public has about who is doing science and how a scientist looks like.**

My experience

In May 2020, I was selected to participate in the **500 Women Scientists Wiki Scholar** [5] program May-June 2020. My initial objective was to promote and contribute to biographies of **women planetary scientists**. It was a surprise then to discover that the total number of planetary scientists' articles on the English Wikipedia is only **189**, of which **48 women (25%)**. This percentage is in agreement with the percentage of women in the International Astronomical Union from all ESA's Member State (24%), which can give us an indication of the percentage of women in the field [6].

One of the reasons of this paucity could be that planetary scientists' biographies are already on Wikipedia, but they are categorized under "astronomers" or "astrophysicists" and not as "planetary scientist". A second reason could be that planetary scientists' articles simply do not exist on Wikipedia.

Let's organize an Edit-a-thon!

An **Edit-a-thon** (edit marathon) is an organized event where editors edit and improve a specific topic. I would like to encourage the planetary community as a whole to organize an Edit-a-thon focusing on creating content regarding **(women) planetary scientists' biographies**. This could be done both as a live or virtual event. ***Special attention should be devoted to minorities or under-represented groups of people.***

Acknowledgment

I would like to express my gratitude to **500 Women Scientists Wiki Scholar** for the opportunity they gave me. A special thank you goes to **Ryan McGrady, Ian Ramjohn** and **Elysia Webb** from the Wiki Education Foundation to let me discover the "world" of Wikipedia.

References

[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_Red

[2] Eduardo Graells-Garrido, Mounia Lalmas, Filippo Menczer, "First Women, Second Sex: Gender Bias in Wikipedia", arXiv, 9 February 2015, p. 3.

[3] "Wikipedia.org Traffic, Demographics and Competitors". www.alexa.com. Retrieved October 1, 2019.

[4] <https://stats.wikimedia.org/#/all-wikipedia-projects>

[5] <https://wikiedu.org/500-women-wiki-scientists/>

[6] Piccialli A., et al., "Participation of women scientists in ESA Solar System missions: an historical trend", submitted to Advances in Geosciences (ADGEO).