

# DISPUTE RESOLUTION ON THE ENGLISH WIKIPEDIA

RESULTS FROM THE SURVEY—APRIL 2012 BY STEVEN ZHANG

# Table of Contents

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INTRODUCTION TO SURVEY:	
Executive Summary	3, 4
Survey Background	4
Survey Methodology	5
SURVEY RESULTS:	
Demographics	
Gender	6
Age	6
Gender compared to age	6
Location	7
Education	7
Began participation to Wikipedia	7
User rights	8
Areas of participation	8, 9
Participation in dispute resolution	
Use – as a requestor	10
Use – as a party	11, 12
Assisting in dispute resolution – frequency	12, 13
Last time assisted in dispute resolution	13, 14
Effectiveness of dispute resolution	14, 15
Reasons for participation or non participation as an volunteer	16
Description of a dispute resolution experience	
Dispute resolution forum used	17
Most positive about experience	17
Improvements that could be made	17
Satisfaction with experience	18
Outlook on dispute resolution	
Dispute resolution – effective at resolving	18
Dispute resolution – difficulties	19
Process or policies to change to improve effectiveness	19
Technical changes to improve effectiveness	20
Future participation in dispute resolution	
Interest in discussion on improving dispute resolution	20
Interest in dispute resolution workshops	20
Conclusion	21

# Executive Summary

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The purpose of this survey was to get Wikipedians to explain in their own words how they felt about dispute resolution on the English Wikipedia and their experiences with it.

In the survey, which received 238 responses out of a sample of 1100 who were selected based on their activity (at least 10 edits) in dispute resolution between 2010 and 2012, demographic information and feedback on the processes was gathered, as well as first-hand accounts of their experiences. The respondents have detailed processes that they think are effective, but also highlighted issues that they have experienced that made things difficult.

Highlights of the report include:

- 87% of respondents were male, only 8.4% of respondents female – roughly in line with the results of the [Wikimedia Editor Survey](#) of 9%;
- over half of all respondents (and 80% of female respondents) were older than 40. 68% held a degree in some form, and 73% have contributed to Wikipedia for four to eight years – potentially showing that editors active in dispute resolution tend to be older, more mature editors;
- the Request for Comment process is the most used dispute resolution forum, with 60% of respondents participating within the last year; almost 50% used the Arbitration Committee in some way, and a similar number used the Dispute Resolution noticeboard since its creation in June 2011. However, only 10% got involved in Mediation Committee proceedings;
- 70% of respondents have offered assistance at a dispute resolution forum at some point – and a third of those do so frequently;
- 50% of the respondents have offered assistance in a dispute within the last year – however some forums have more volunteers than others;
- respondents graded the overall effectiveness of dispute resolution relatively poorly – Arbitration fared the best with one in three rating it as *Good* or better, whereas in contrast, Wikiquote assistance was rated the worst – only one in twelve rated it as satisfactory; overall, 35 people gave negative feedback on every single venue they had an opinion on;
- respondents who volunteered in dispute resolution did so because they felt the process was critical to the functioning of Wikipedia, wanted to help keep article content neutral, liked helping people or as a way of paying back the community as a former recipient of dispute resolution;
- respondents who haven't volunteered explained that this was because they felt that disputes were so toxic that dispute resolution was difficult or unpleasant; others due to its prolonged nature and complexity, because they didn't know how to participate, or because of past bad experiences with the process;
- respondents reported that the most positive aspects of their experience with dispute resolution were that the dispute was resolved in some fashion; they praised the example set by dispute resolution volunteers, describing them as fair, even-handed editors; some also commended the behavior of their fellow participants, describing their behavior as “polite” and “working in good-faith” to a resolution;
- respondents also felt that processes were too slow and can become unfair – many citing the source of this unfairness as administrators that became involved in the process;

- respondents were generally unhappy with their personal experiences in dispute resolution – only one in five were satisfied with their experience – however despite this all respondents had requested assistance from a dispute resolution forum – 94% at some point and one in four on a regular basis, and noticeboards were used the most – seven out of ten had used them at some point;
- dispute resolution is most effective at resolving issues over policy and its interpretation, and issues with reliable sources, according to two in five respondents, with one in three feeling that it was effective at resolving issues with POV pushing;
- participants felt that dispute resolution was too complex, too hard to find, that there were too many resolution processes and not enough volunteers to resolve disputes;
- respondents want stricter action taken against problematic editors, a simplified, more accessible process where closure can be bought to a dispute quickly – potentially with the use of “teeth” – the ability to make a resolution “stick”;
- following or explaining policy is key to resolving disputes, as is the participation of uninvolved editors;
- the ability to block editors from editing specific pages, a bot which could detect disputes and the creation of a filter that could warn someone before they breach 3RR were all ideas that respondents felt could resolve disputes; and
- a little over half of the respondents were interested in participating in further discussions on improving dispute resolution, and a third were interested in learning how to resolve disputes, or to teach others.

Based on the results of the survey, my recommendations to the community are to:

- find ways to make the process more straightforward and easy to use – potentially by amalgamating the many existing dispute resolution processes into a few consolidated processes – making them more inviting for new volunteers and less complex for people that need assistance;
- have existing volunteers in dispute resolution help develop a how-to manual with tips and tricks that can be used to resolve disputes – giving new volunteers the confidence to assist in dispute resolution– and possibly giving participants ways they can resolve a dispute without requiring assistance; and
- discuss technical changes such as page-specific blocking, as well as policy changes such as time-fixed binding resolution of contentious content disputes, or by giving dispute resolution “teeth” – making the process more binding and consequential.

## Survey Background

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Until late 2003, Jimmy Wales acted as the arbiter in all major disputes. Following the founding of the [Mediation Committee](#) and the [Arbitration Committee](#), Wales delegated the mandate to resolve major content and conduct disputes to these bodies.

In addition to these committees, a number of informal, community-created processes have been developed for dispute resolution. These include Third Opinion, where two users can seek the assistance of an uninvolved third party; Requests for Comment, a forum to notify the community of discussions regarding user issues or content; the Mediation Cabal, a more informal venue for mediation; and a variety of noticeboards targeted at specific issues surrounding biographies of living persons, the use of reliable sources, neutrality of content and the presence of original research or fringe theories in articles.

In June 2011, the Dispute Resolution noticeboard was created to act as an entry point for dispute resolution on the English Wikipedia, and to amalgamate some of the existing dispute resolution options.

# Survey Methodology

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The Wikipedia Dispute Resolution survey was offered to members of the community based on their activity within dispute resolution. Editors who had made more than ten edits to the following pages between February 2010 and February 2012, that were not indefinitely blocked at the time the data was collated- were eligible.

The pages were:

- Wikipedia:Arbitration/Requests/Amendment
- Wikipedia:Arbitration/Requests/Enforcement
- Wikipedia:Arbitration/Requests/Clarification
- Wikipedia:Dispute resolution noticeboard
- Wikipedia:Third opinion
- Wikipedia:Biographies of living persons/Noticeboard
- Wikipedia:Fringe theories/Noticeboard
- Wikipedia:Administrators' noticeboard/ Geopolitical, ethnic, and religious conflicts
- Wikipedia:Neutral point of view/Noticeboard
- Wikipedia:No original research/Noticeboard
- Wikipedia:Reliable sources/Noticeboard
- Wikipedia:Wikiquote assistance
- Wikipedia:Content noticeboard.

... along with all subpages of:

- Wikipedia:Mediation Cabal/Cases
- Wikipedia:Requests for comment
- Wikipedia:Requests for mediation
- Wikipedia:Requests for arbitration
- Wikipedia:Arbitration/Requests/Case.

Additionally, any editor that had edited Wikipedia:Administrators noticeboard or Wikipedia:Administrators noticeboard/Incidents more than 25 times was also eligible.

The scoping database query returned 1978 results. Out of these, 26 were ineligible for the survey and were removed - 13 were bots, 12 had left the community and one was involved in the creation of the survey. This left 1952 eligible for the survey. The top 1100 users (by edits made to the pages) were offered the survey (56.3% of those eligible). Due to the time gap between the collation of the data and the offering of the survey, 40 indefinitely blocked editors were offered the survey, leaving 1060 eligible survey responses.

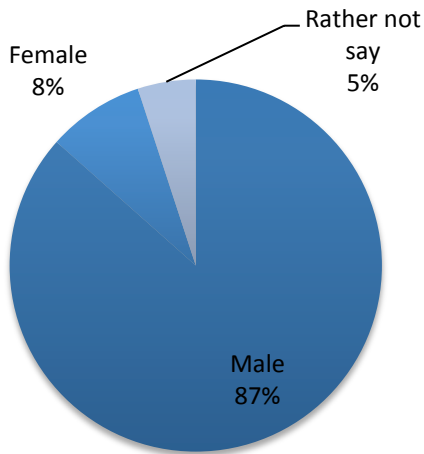
The survey received 241 responses (a 21.9% response rate out of the total 1100, or a 22.7% response rate out of the adjusted eligibility rate), however three responses were omitted, one due to unusable data and two because they were submitted by an indefinitely blocked editor. This has left 238 valid responses to the survey, or 22.4% of the sample.

The results of this survey have been compared with the [Wikimedia Editor Survey](#), from April 2011.

Note: The percentage values reflect the entire sample for the core questions; where questions were optional, the percentage reflects the sub-sample.

# Demographics

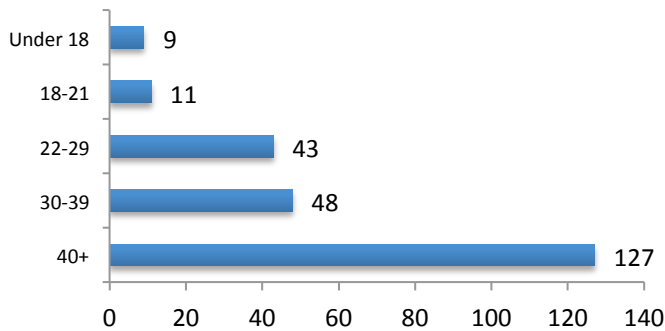
## Gender



Option	Result	%
Male	206	87%
Female	20	8%
Rather not say	12	5%

Out of the sample of 238 editors, only 20 (8.4%) identified as female. This is consistent with the results of the Wikimedia Editor survey, where 8.5% of respondents identified as female.

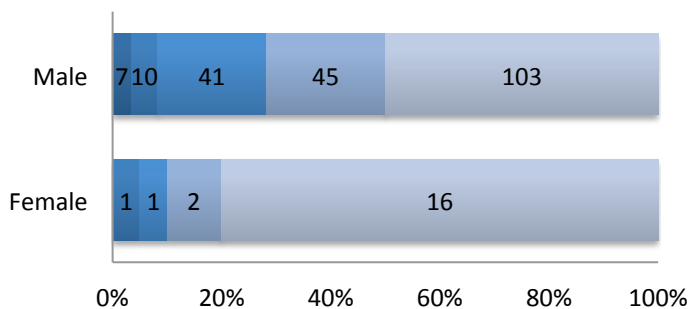
## Age



Option	Result	%
Under 18	9	4%
18-21	11	5%
22-29	43	18%
30-39	48	20%
40+	127	53%

The general perception of Wikipedians is high school or undergraduate students editing in their free time. In the Wikimedia editor survey, 53% of editors identified as under 30. In contrast to these results, the sample for this survey found 73% of respondents over 30, and 53% over 40 – suggesting that older editors are more active in dispute resolution than younger editors.

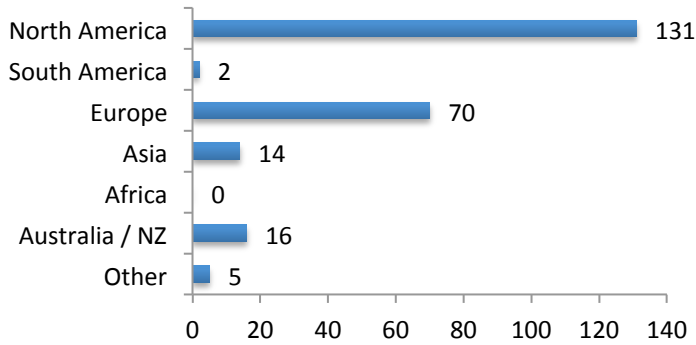
## Gender compared to age



Option	Result-Male	%-Male	Result-Female	%-Female
Under 18	7	3.40%	0	0%
18-21	10	4.85%	1	5%
22-29	41	19.90%	1	5%
30-39	45	21.84%	2	10%
40+	103	50%	16	80%

Via multi-variable analysis of age and gender, 90% of female respondents are over 30 (80% over 40), where with male respondents, nearly 72% were over 30 (50% being over 40).

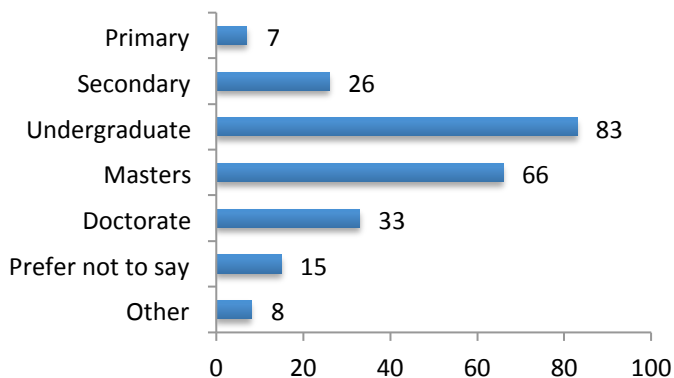
## Location



Option	Result	%
North America	131	55%
South America	2	1%
Europe	70	29%
Asia	14	6%
Africa	0	0%
Australia/NZ	16	7%
Other	5	2%

In line with the results of the Wikimedia Editor survey, most editors (84%) are either from North America or Europe.

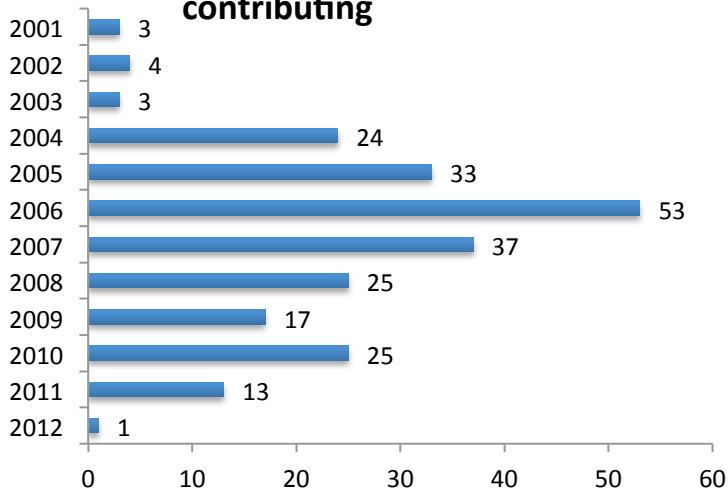
## Education - highest level completed



Option	Result	%
Primary education	7	3%
Secondary education	26	11%
Undergraduate	83	35%
Masters	66	8%
Doctorate	33	14%
Prefer not to say	15	6%
Other	8	3%

Most of the survey respondents had completed some form of higher education, with 68% holding a degree, compared to the respondents of the Wikimedia Editor survey, where 61% of whom had a degree.

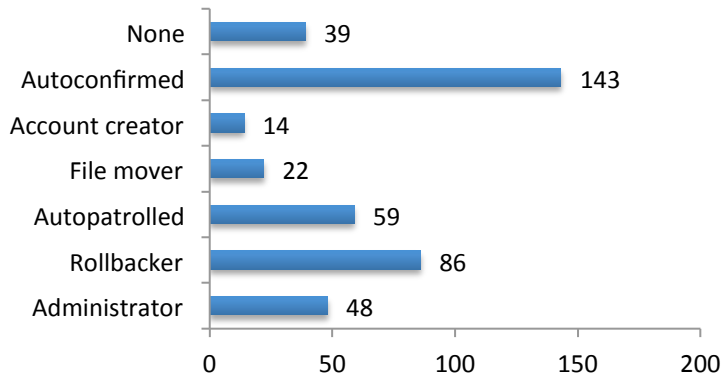
## Participation - began regularly contributing



Option	Result	%
2001	3	1%
2002	4	2%
2003	3	1%
2004	24	10%
2005	33	14%
2006	53	22%
2007	37	16%
2008	25	11%
2009	17	7%
2010	25	11%
2011	13	5%
2012	1	0.4%

73% of respondents began editing between 2004 and 2008.

## User rights held

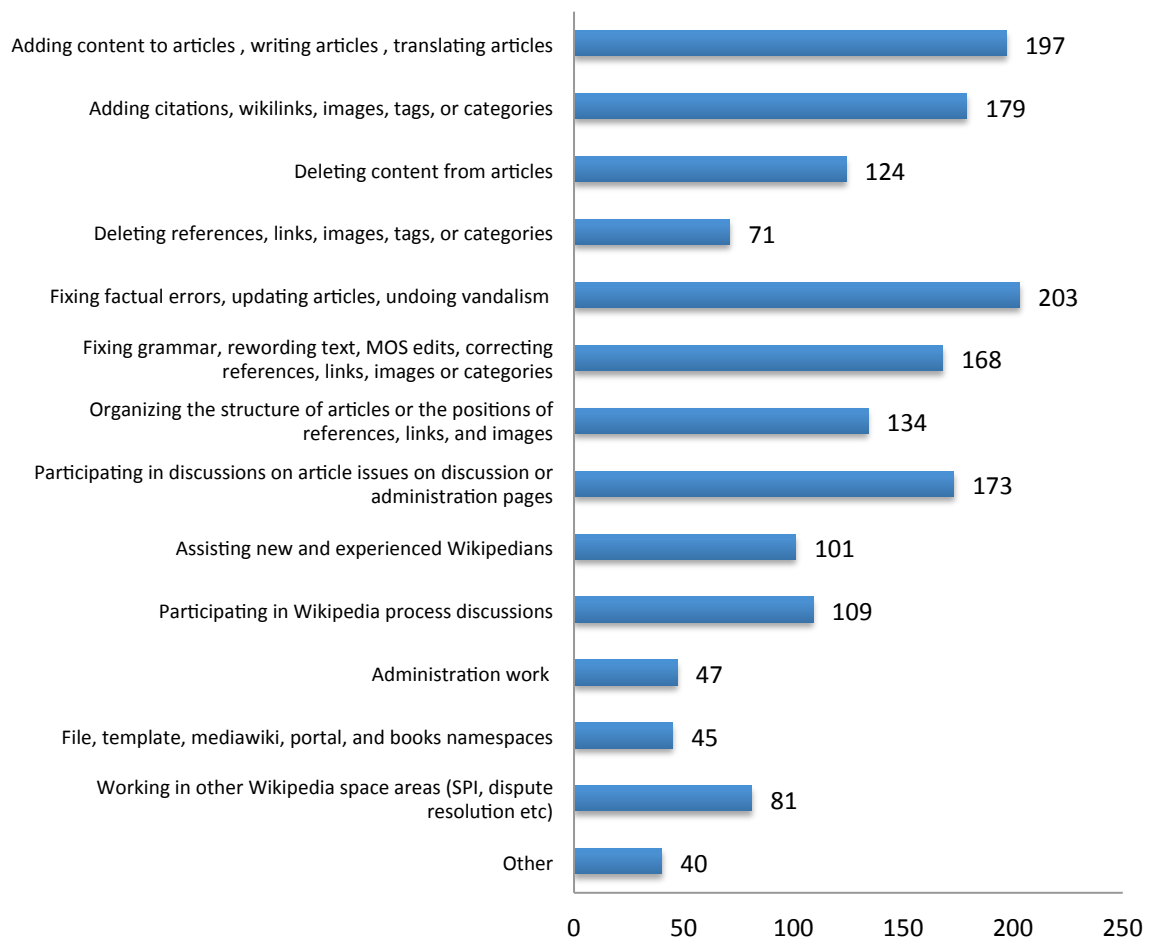


Option	Result	%
None	39	16%
Autoconfirmed	143	60%
Account creator	14	6%
File mover	22	9%
Autopatrolled	59	25%
Rollbacker	86	36%
Administrator	48	20%

83% of respondents had at least one userright, with just fewer than 21% being admins

## Areas of participation on Wikipedia

Many of the respondents were active in writing articles, as well as fixing errors in them and removing vandalism (83% and 85% respectively) as well as adding or correcting references and images (75%), along with fixing grammar or formatting issues (71%). 52% of editors were active in deleting or cleaning up content from articles, and 30% removed references, links or images from articles. Respondents were active in discussions; with 73% involved in article related discussion and 46% involved in general project discussion. 42% spent time assisting other users, and 20% were involved in administration work like deletion, protection and blocks. 34% of editors worked behind the scenes in areas like SPI (investigating suspected sockpuppetry) and dispute resolution.

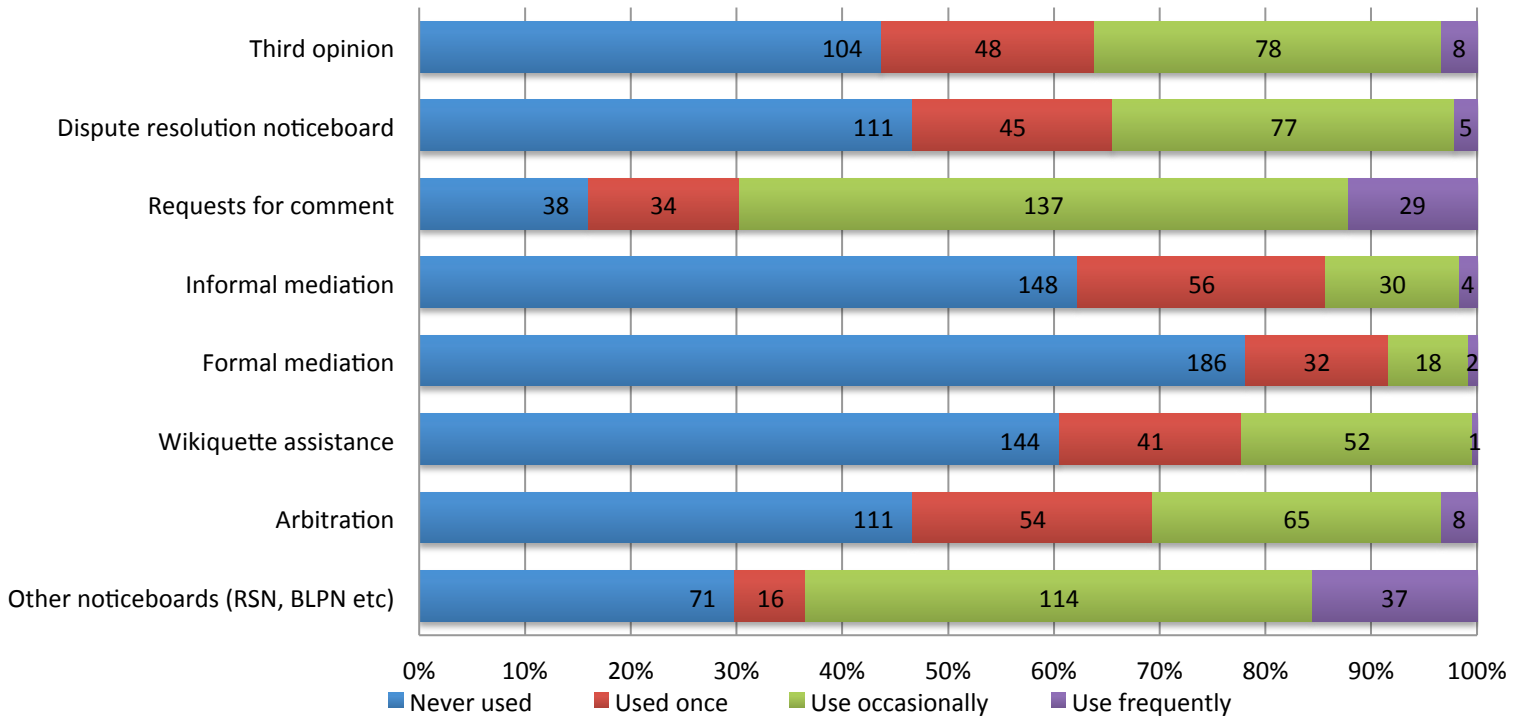




<b>Option</b>	<b>Result</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Adding content to articles , writing articles , translating articles</b>	197	83%
<b>Adding citations, wikilinks, images, tags, or categories</b>	179	75%
<b>Deleting content from articles</b>	124	52%
<b>Deleting references, links, images, tags, or categories</b>	71	30%
<b>Fixing factual errors, updating articles, undoing vandalism</b>	203	85%
<b>Fixing grammar, rewording text, MOS edits, correcting references, links, images or categories</b>	168	71%
<b>Organizing the structure of articles or the positions of references, links, and images</b>	134	56%
<b>Participating in discussions on article issues on discussion or administration pages</b>	173	73%
<b>Assisting new and experienced Wikipedians</b>	101	42%
<b>Participating in Wikipedia process discussions</b>	109	46%
<b>Administration work</b>	47	20%
<b>File, template, mediawiki, portal, and books namespaces</b>	45	19%
<b>Working in other Wikipedia space areas (SPI, dispute resolution etc)</b>	81	34%
<b>Other</b>	40	17%

# Participation in Dispute Resolution

## Participation in dispute resolution as a requestor - frequency



Question: **What dispute resolution forums have you used in the past, and how often have you utilised them?**

Due to the nature of Wikipedia, disputes over both article content and user conduct can occur from time to time. 94% of respondents had requested for assistance at a dispute resolution forum at least once - and 28% were using at least one method of dispute resolution a regular basis. The most used dispute resolution forums were our general content noticeboards - used by 70% of the sample, while the least used were the formal mediation processes (22%)

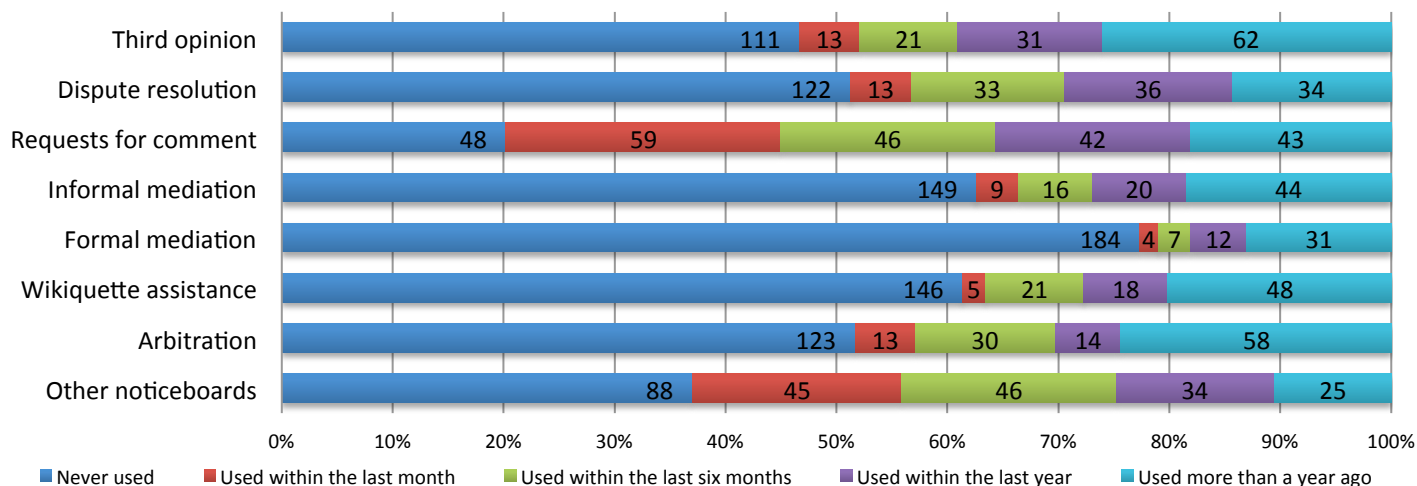
Never used		
Option	Result	%
Third opinion	104	44%
Dispute resolution noticeboard	111	47%
Requests for comment	38	16%
Informal mediation	148	62%
Formal mediation	186	78%
Wikiquette assistance	144	61%
Arbitration	111	47%
Other noticeboards (RSN, BLPN etc)	71	30%

Used once		
Option	Result	%
Third opinion	48	20%
Dispute resolution noticeboard	45	19%
Requests for comment	34	14%
Informal mediation	56	24%
Formal mediation	32	13%
Wikiquette assistance	41	17%
Arbitration	54	23%
Other noticeboards (RSN, BLPN etc)	16	7%

Use occasionally		
Option	Result	%
Third opinion	78	33%
Dispute resolution noticeboard	77	32%
Requests for comment	137	58%
Informal mediation	30	13%
Formal mediation	18	8%
Wikiquette assistance	52	22%
Arbitration	65	27%
Other noticeboards (RSN, BLPN etc)	114	48%

Use frequently		
Option	Result	%
Third opinion	8	3%
Dispute resolution noticeboard	5	2%
Requests for comment	29	12%
Informal mediation	4	2%
Formal mediation	2	1%
Wikiquette assistance	1	0%
Arbitration	8	3%
Other noticeboards (RSN, BLPN etc)	37	16%

## Last time last participated in dispute resolution - as a party



### Question: **When did you last participate in the following dispute resolution as a party?**

As part of the survey, it was important to find out which forums of dispute resolution were most utilised by the community.

By far, the most used forum for resolving disputes was Requests for Comment, with 80% of respondents having used the process since they started editing - 62% within the last year. Other noticeboards followed with 63%, and the dispute resolution noticeboard had been used by almost half. 48% and 37% of respondents had used arbitration and mediation, respectively. The least used forum was formal mediation, with only 23% ever using it - 10% within the last year.

Never used		
Option	Result	%
Third opinion	111	47%
Dispute resolution noticeboard	122	51%
Requests for comment	48	20%
Informal mediation	149	63%
Formal mediation	184	77%
Wikiquette assistance	146	61%
Arbitration	123	52%
Other noticeboards (RSN, BLPN etc)	88	37%

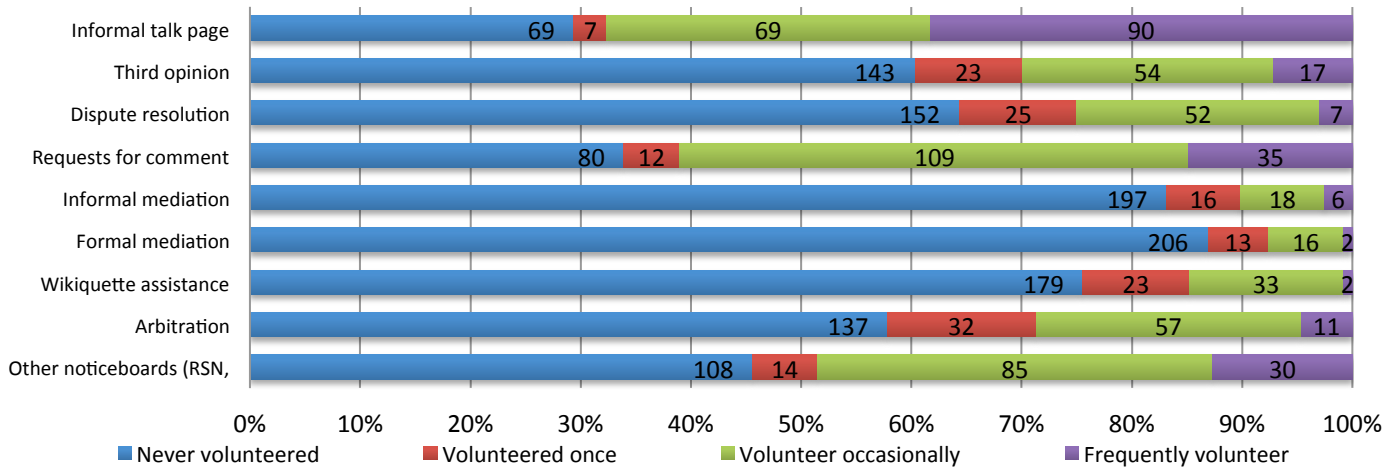
Used within the last month		
Option	Result	%
Third opinion	13	5%
Dispute resolution noticeboard	13	5%
Requests for comment	59	25%
Informal mediation	9	4%
Formal mediation	4	2%
Wikiquette assistance	5	2%
Arbitration	13	5%
Other noticeboards (RSN, BLPN etc)	45	19%

Within the last six months		
Option	Result	%
Third opinion	21	9%
Dispute resolution noticeboard	33	14%
Requests for comment	46	19%
Informal mediation	16	7%
Formal mediation	7	3%
Wikiquette assistance	21	9%
Arbitration	30	13%
Other noticeboards (RSN, BLPN etc)	46	19%

Used within the last year		
Option	Result	%
Third opinion	31	13%
Dispute resolution noticeboard	36	15%
Requests for comment	42	18%
Informal mediation	20	8%
Formal mediation	12	5%
Wikiquette assistance	18	8%
Arbitration	14	6%
Other noticeboards (RSN, BLPN etc)	34	14%

Used more than a year ago		
Option	Result	%
Third opinion	62	26%
Dispute resolution noticeboard	34	14%
Requests for comment	43	18%
Informal mediation	44	18%
Formal mediation	31	13%
Wikiquette assistance	48	20%
Arbitration	58	24%
Other noticeboards (RSN, BLPN etc)	25	11%

## Participation in dispute resolution as a volunteer - frequency



### Question: How frequently do you volunteer at the following dispute resolution forums as a volunteer?

Respondents gave varied responses when asked how frequently they have volunteered in dispute resolution. Surprisingly, 71% of respondents had assisted with some form of dispute resolution at least once - 66% at a Request for Comment, 42% at a Request for Arbitration, and nearly 40% had offered a Third Opinion. The two forums that had the fewest volunteers were informal and formal mediation, with only 17% of the sample assisting at the Mediation Cabal, and 13% at the Mediation Committee. Regular volunteering was somewhat lower - only 38% of respondents assist in dispute resolution frequently on talk pages, and 15% assist at Requests for Comment. Formal mediation and the Wikiquette assistance noticeboard are the most understaffed - only 0.8% of respondents volunteer there on a regular basis.

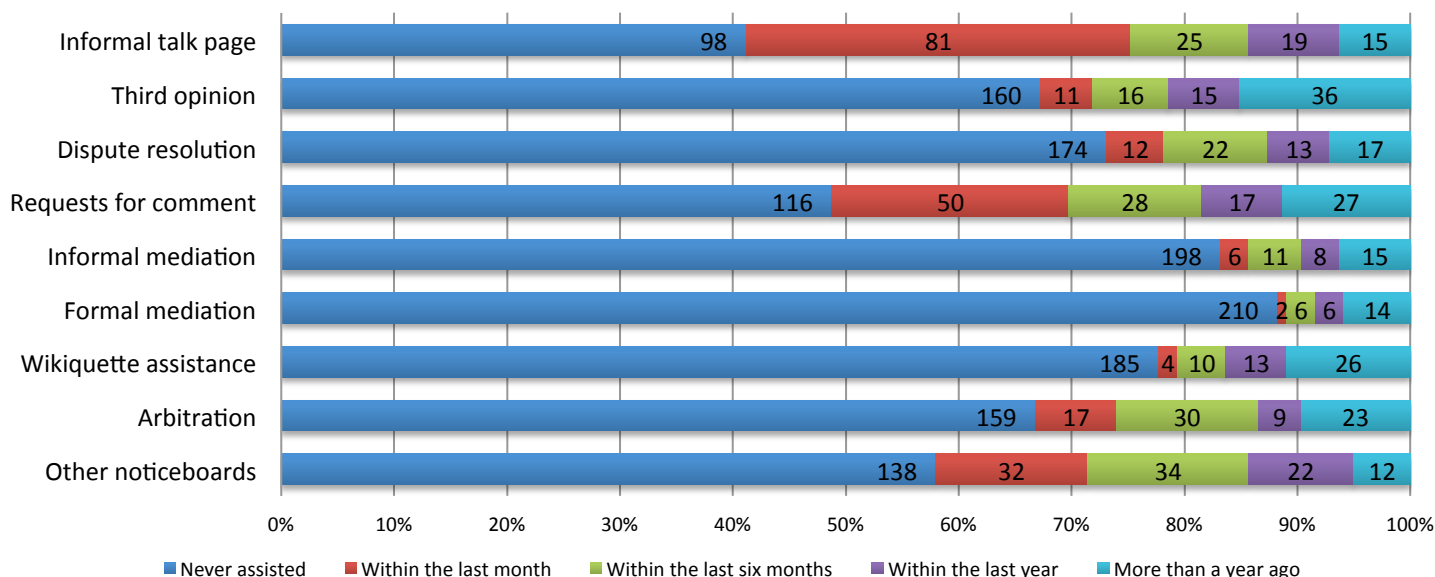
Never volunteer		
Option	Result	%
Informal talk page assistance	69	29%
Third opinion	143	60%
Dispute resolution noticeboard	152	64%
Requests for comment	80	34%
Informal mediation	197	83%
Formal mediation	206	87%
Wikiquette assistance	179	75%
Arbitration	137	58%
Other noticeboards (RSN, BLPN etc)	108	45%

Volunteered once		
Option	Result	%
Informal talk page assistance	7	3%
Third opinion	23	10%
Dispute resolution noticeboard	25	11%
Requests for comment	12	5%
Informal mediation	16	7%
Formal mediation	13	5%
Wikiquette assistance	23	10%
Arbitration	32	13%
Other noticeboards (RSN, BLPN etc)	14	6%

Volunteer occasionally		
Option	Result	%
Informal talk page assistance	69	29%
Third opinion	54	23%
Dispute resolution noticeboard	52	22%
Requests for comment	109	46%
Informal mediation	18	8%
Formal mediation	16	7%
Wikiquette assistance	33	14%
Arbitration	57	24%
Other noticeboards (RSN, BLPN etc)	85	36%

Frequently volunteer		
Option	Result	%
Informal talk page assistance	90	38%
Third opinion	17	7%
Dispute resolution noticeboard	7	3%
Requests for comment	35	15%
Informal mediation	6	3%
Formal mediation	2	1%
Wikiquette assistance	2	1%
Arbitration	11	5%
Other noticeboards (RSN, BLPN etc)	30	13%

## Last time last participated in dispute resolution - as a volunteer



### Question: When did you last participate in the following dispute resolution as a volunteer?

Volunteers are the lifeblood of dispute resolution. Without them, few disputes would be resolved - so the survey respondents were asked about their volunteering in dispute resolution, and 163 (69%) had assisted with dispute resolution at some point. Most respondents assisted on talk pages, with 53% of respondents assisting a dispute on a talk page within the last year. In contrast, only 7% of respondents have assisted with formal mediation.

In terms of regular participation in dispute resolution, 54% had volunteered at one or more dispute resolution forums in the six months prior to the survey, and 40% in the month prior to the survey.

Never assisted		
Option	Result	%
Informal talk page assistance	98	41%
Third opinion	160	67%
Dispute resolution noticeboard	174	73%
Requests for comment	116	49%
Informal mediation	198	83%
Formal mediation	210	88%
Wikiquette assistance	185	78%
Arbitration	159	67%
Other noticeboards (RSN, BLPN etc)	138	58%

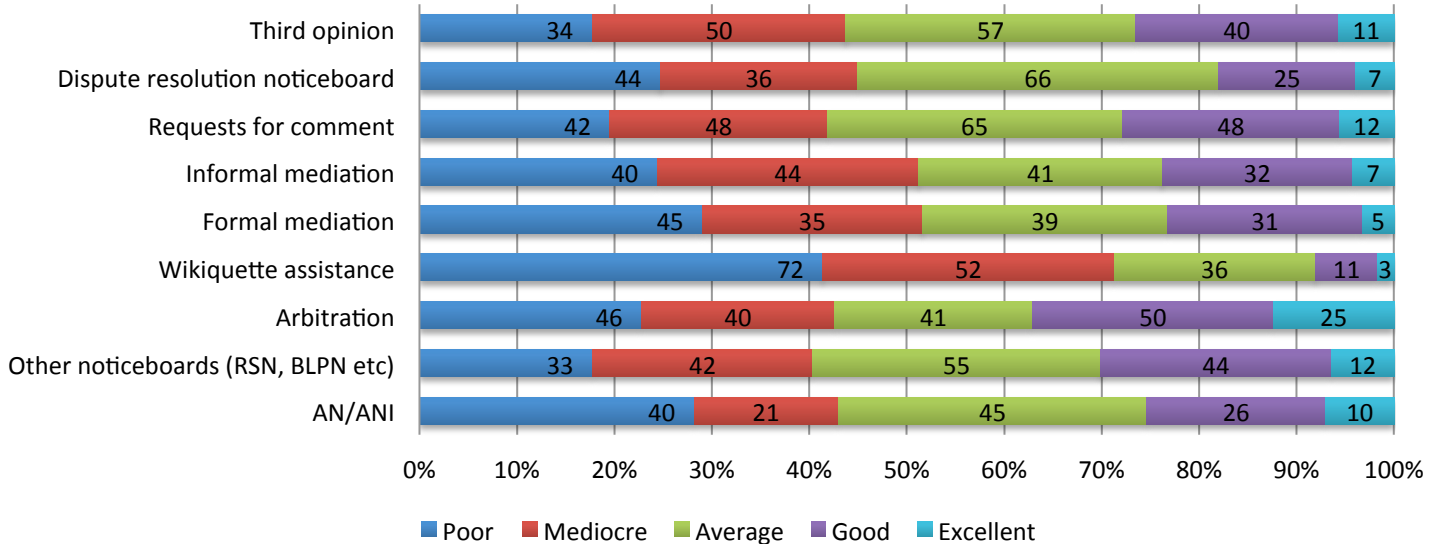
Assisted within the last month		
Option	Result	%
Informal talk page assistance	81	34%
Third opinion	11	5%
Dispute resolution noticeboard	12	5%
Requests for comment	50	21%
Informal mediation	6	3%
Formal mediation	2	1%
Wikiquette assistance	4	2%
Arbitration	17	7%
Other noticeboards (RSN, BLPN etc)	32	13%

Assisted within the last six months		
Option	Result	%
Informal talk page assistance	25	11%
Third opinion	16	7%
Dispute resolution noticeboard	22	9%
Requests for comment	28	12%
Informal mediation	11	5%
Formal mediation	6	3%
Wikiquote assistance	10	4%
Arbitration	30	13%
Other noticeboards (RSN, BLPN etc)	34	14%

Assisted within the last year		
Option	Result	%
Informal talk page assistance	19	8%
Third opinion	15	6%
Dispute resolution noticeboard	13	5%
Requests for comment	17	7%
Informal mediation	8	3%
Formal mediation	6	3%
Wikiquote assistance	13	5%
Arbitration	9	4%
Other noticeboards (RSN, BLPN etc)	22	9%

Assisted more than a year ago		
Option	Result	%
Informal talk page assistance	15	6%
Third opinion	36	15%
Dispute resolution noticeboard	17	7%
Requests for comment	27	11%
Informal mediation	15	6%
Formal mediation	14	6%
Wikiquote assistance	26	11%
Arbitration	23	10%
Other noticeboards (RSN, BLPN etc)	12	5%

## Dispute Resolution - Effectiveness



Question: **Please rate how effective you feel the following methods of dispute resolution are at resolving disputes**

A key purpose of the survey was to get an understanding of the perspective of the community regarding how effective its dispute resolution processes are. As this was an optional question, not all respondents gave an opinion on certain dispute resolution fora. The percentages above are based on the opinion of the entire sample, however.

The results were concerning. Arbitration was rated as the most effective dispute resolution forum, with 38% of those who answered rating it as either good or excellent at resolving disputes – but this shows that out of all dispute resolution, 62% still found the best process ineffective at resolving disputes. Requests for Comment was rated positively by 28% of respondents, and Third Opinion as well as other noticeboards followed with 27% who rated them as good or excellent. In contrast, Wikiquote assistance was rated as ineffective by 71% who had an opinion, with only 8% saying it was an effective process for resolving disputes.

<u>Poor</u>		
Option	Result	%
Third opinion	34	18%
Dispute resolution noticeboard	44	25%
Requests for comment	42	20%
Informal mediation	40	24%
Formal mediation	45	29%
Wikiquette assistance	72	41%
Arbitration	46	23%
Other noticeboards (RSN, BLPN etc)	33	18%
AN/ANI	40	28%

<u>Average</u>		
Option	Result	%
Third opinion	57	30%
Dispute resolution noticeboard	66	37%
Requests for comment	65	30%
Informal mediation	41	25%
Formal mediation	39	25%
Wikiquette assistance	36	21%
Arbitration	41	20%
Other noticeboards (RSN, BLPN etc)	55	30%
AN/ANI	45	32%

<u>Excellent</u>		
Option	Result	%
Third opinion	11	6%
Dispute resolution noticeboard	7	4%
Requests for comment	12	6%
Informal mediation	7	4%
Formal mediation	5	3%
Wikiquette assistance	3	2%
Arbitration	25	12%
Other noticeboards (RSN, BLPN etc)	12	6%
AN/ANI	10	7%

<u>Mediocre</u>		
Option	Result	%
Third opinion	50	26%
Dispute resolution noticeboard	36	20%
Requests for comment	48	22%
Informal mediation	44	27%
Formal mediation	35	23%
Wikiquette assistance	52	30%
Arbitration	40	20%
Other noticeboards (RSN, BLPN etc)	42	23%
AN/ANI	21	15%

<u>Good</u>		
Option	Result	%
Third opinion	40	21%
Dispute resolution noticeboard	25	14%
Requests for comment	48	22%
Informal mediation	32	20%
Formal mediation	31	20%
Wikiquette assistance	11	6%
Arbitration	50	25%
Other noticeboards (RSN, BLPN etc)	44	24%
AN/ANI	26	18%

**Question: If you have assisted in the past in dispute resolution, please tell us a little bit about why you decided to participate. Likewise if you haven't assisted with dispute resolution in the past, or did but no longer do, please tell us why not:**

*Of editors who have assisted with dispute resolution:*

- 24 editors expressed an interest in dispute resolution because they felt it was key to keeping Wikipedia running. Ideas like "Wikipedia's a machine... dispute resolution is the grease that helps keep it all running" and ideals of ensuring everything is "working smoothly" were common for such responses.
- 18 editors said they were involved due to a desire to keep article content neutral, or that they wanted to correct a political slant in an article.
- 15 editors expressed an interest in dispute resolution to help disputes involving newer users or just generally helping people. One editor said that "I've been the recipient of dispute resolution in the past and I've found it very helpful, so I participate in DR from time to time as a form of payback."
- 9 editors said working in DR matched work they do in real life or an area of expertise, sometimes the law or the subject matter of the article itself.
- 6 editors have always done dispute resolution on Wikipedia.

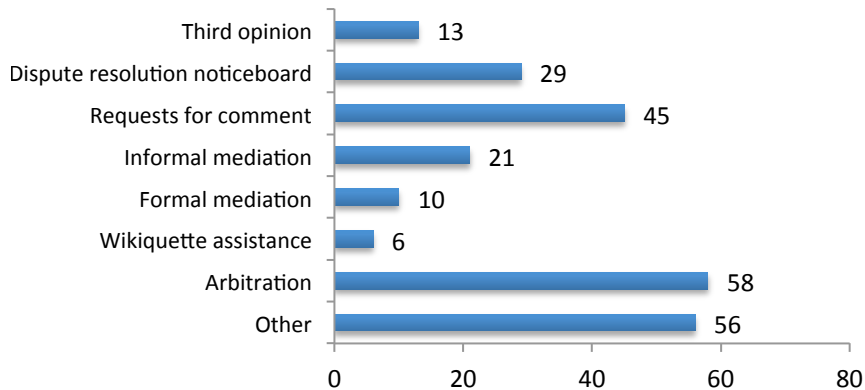
*Of editors who said they no longer assist in dispute resolution, or never have:*

- 28 editors expressed that Wikipedia disputes are usually too toxic to make dispute resolution difficult to participate in. Common expressions of this group were ideas of impossible "deadlock" and a sense of "unpleasantness".
- 10 editors said they stopped participating in dispute resolution due to its prolonged nature. One such editor complained the process is "too complicated and cumbersome".
- 4 editors said they didn't get involved because they didn't feel "competent enough" or knowledgeable about the conflict to handle the situation, or simply just "didn't know how" to assist.
- 4 editors said they seldom participated due to a bad experience with mediators or third parties trying to lend a hand.
- 2 editors said they just didn't have the time.



# Describe a past experience with dispute resolution

## Dispute resolution - forum used



Forum used		
Option	Result	%
Third opinion	13	5%
Dispute resolution noticeboard	29	12%
Requests for comment	45	19%
Informal mediation	21	9%
Formal mediation	10	4%
Wikiquette assistance	6	3%
Arbitration	58	24%
Other	56	24%

### Which dispute resolution forum did you use?

Arbitration was the most common dispute resolution forum used, with requests for comment following behind. A few options provided for "Other" were AN/I, the talk page of the user or article, and various content noticeboards (RSN, BLPN etc).

### What was most positive about the process?

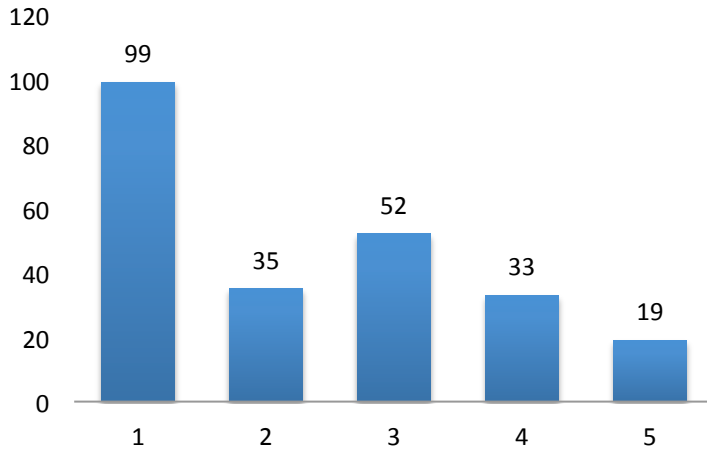
- 47 respondents were happy that the dispute was resolved amicably - with responses such as "the article is now stable", "dispute resolution worked", and "it was resolved" common.
- 23 editors thought the most positive part was the example set by the third parties, mediators, arbitrators, or generally neutral editors who helped them out, describing them as "fair", "even-handed", and "neutral, with common sense".
- 11 respondents praised the passion and behavior of their fellow DR participants, describing others as "polite" and "working in good- faith".
- 7 said the greatest positive was learning about the conflict resolution process.
- 2 respondents said going through the process actually made them more active editors.

### What could have been improved?

Most editors who responded to this question were concerned about the length of time it took to complete the DR process.

- 19 editors said the process was too slow - comments like "[it] Takes so long for a dispute to be resolved" were common
- 18 listed concerns about the fairness of the process, with many citing the source of their complaint as admins who got involved at some step - generally describing administrators involved in the processes as biased, self-supporting, and occasionally rude
- 16 editors said the incivility of other participants should be resolved while another 16 said the process itself was too complex, or too difficult to find - describing the processes as "confusing" and "cumbersome".
- 7 editors said they desired more assistance in terms of people, that there were not enough people to help them in their dispute - comments like "more uninvolved editors available for dispute resolution" were common responses.
- 2 users said the process focused too much on tangential policy issues.

## Satisfaction with experience



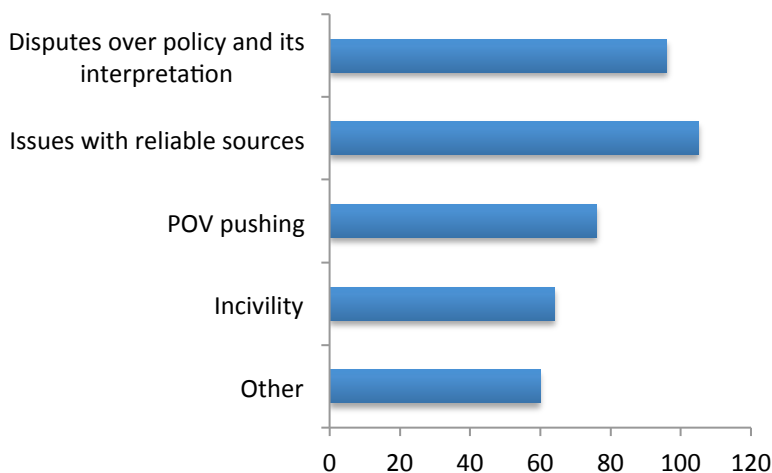
Satisfaction		
Option	Result	%
1 (Poor)	40	17%
2 (Mediocre)	25	11%
3 (Average)	48	20%
4 (Good)	32	13%
5 (Excellent)	31	13%

Please rate how satisfactory you found the experience, on a scale of 1 (poor experience) to 5 (excellent experience)

When rating their dispute resolution experience out of five, 57% described their experience as a poor one, rating it either one or two. 22% felt it was average, and 22% described their experience as a positive one – rating it either a four or five.

## Outlook on Dispute Resolution

### What is dispute resolution good at resolving?

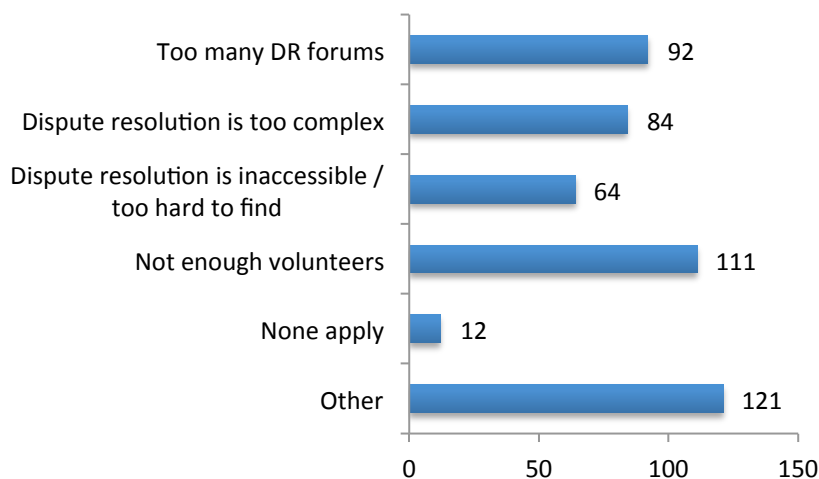


Option	Result	%
Disputes over policy and its interpretation	96	40%
Issues with reliable sources	105	44%
POV pushing	76	32%
Incivility	64	27%
Other	60	25%

From your experience, what kinds of disputes do you think dispute resolution processes are good at resolving?

When the respondents were asked what dispute resolution works well at resolving, 44% of the sample said that it was good at resolving issues over reliable sources, and 40% felt it was effective at resolving disputes concerning policy, and how the policies are interpreted. It was also seen as good at resolving disputes where editors engage in POV pushing, according to 32% of the sample, and 27% said it was efficient in resolving disputes between other editors.

## What makes dispute resolution difficult?



Option	Result	%
Too many DR forums	92	43%
Dispute resolution is too complex	84	39%
Dispute resolution is inaccessible / too hard to find	64	30%
Not enough volunteers	111	52%
None apply	12	6%

### From your experience, what issues do you see that make dispute resolution difficult?

A few main sticking points with dispute resolution is the lack of dispute resolution volunteers, with 52% of respondents detailing the lack of volunteers as a major issue. The number of dispute resolution forums was highlighted as an issue, as well as its complexity and accessibility, with 43%, 39% and 30% respectively considering these to be issues. Other common concerns were the lack of experience of some of the dispute resolution volunteers, and the time it took to resolve a dispute.

### What kind of process or policy changes do you think would improve the dispute resolution processes on Wikipedia?

The survey results presented a few ideas in regards to policy or process changes that can be made to improve dispute resolution.

- 27 editors wanted stricter action taken against difficult editors, such as long-term POV-pushers - by either applying blocks or topic bans more liberally or by giving more dispute resolution the ability to bring closure to disputes.
- 10 editors wanted the dispute resolution processes to be streamlined or simplified - by amalgamating dispute resolution forums and rewriting the dispute resolution policy to create a set of links with a brief explanation of what each forum does. Respondents also emphasized the importance of having volunteers who were experienced in resolving disputes.
- Nine respondents felt dispute resolution takes too long and wanted faster resolutions.
- Six emphasized the importance of uninvolved subject-matter experts in a dispute.
- Five editors felt that the civility policy should be relaxed, or removed altogether, with comments such as "Remove civility from the five pillars", or "remove civility as a policy".
- Another five wanted dispute resolution to be more accessible, and for it to be easier to find the correct dispute resolution forum, or to raise a dispute for attention. The idea of a "one-click button" that could be put onto an article talk page to flag the issue for attention was raised.
- A third group of five editors felt that many problems can be solved by following policy, and that dispute resolution volunteers could resolve disputes more effectively by explaining policy.
- Three wanted better checks and balances in our processes.
- Two editors explicitly suggested dispute resolution having more teeth would be beneficial, though others mentioned similar ideas, including administrators enforcing results of dispute resolution, binding RFCs or straw polls, and dispute resolution volunteers having the ability to hand out time outs - short term page or topic bans if parties were edit warring or misbehaving.

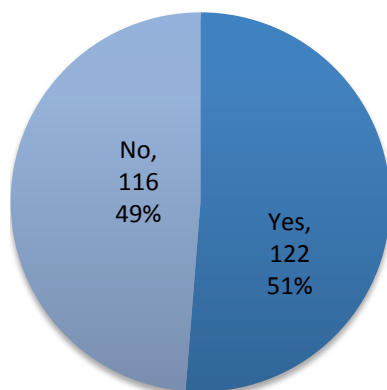
## What kind of technical do you think would improve the dispute resolution processes on Wikipedia?

Out of the survey results, some common responses to this question were:

- 23 editors felt that there were no technical changes needed, and that the main problems with dispute resolution revolve around people. Comments such as "we don't need technical changes - we need people changes" were common.
- 15 editors felt that dispute resolution was too complicated, and wanted it to be easier to file a dispute, or find a dispute resolution forum. Comments like "[it is] so hard to find where to go" or "the [dispute resolution] pages are too confusing" were common.
- Three groups of seven editors had a few ideas on how to improve dispute resolution. The first group wanted more fine-grained controls on problematic editors, such as enforced page bans (similar to blocking now) and warnings, the second seven felt that administrators were a contributing factor to disputes and wanted more constraints upon them, and the last group of seven wanted a reduction in the amount of dispute resolution forums - either by consolidating them or by closing down infrequently used forums.
- Six respondents felt that setting up better ways for parties in a dispute to communicate would help
- Five thought that the addition of neutral editors to a dispute would assist in resolving disputes
- Four felt that anonymous editors were a factor in disputes and wanted to remove the ability for anonymous users to edit and
- Two editors mentioned the enabling of liquid threads as a potential fix.

## Questions on future participation with dispute resolution

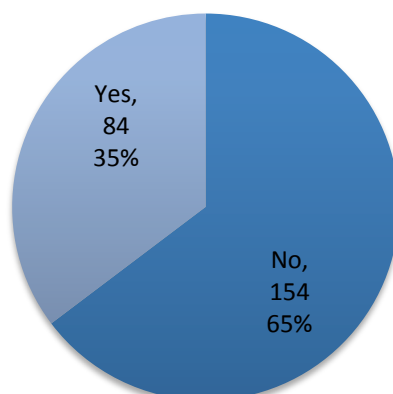
Would you be interested in participating in discussions on improving dispute resolution?



Option	Result	%
Yes	122	51%
No	116	49%

Interest in future discussions was split almost evenly down the middle, with 51% expressing an interest in further discussions, and 49% not.

Would you be interested in participating in on/off-wiki workshops to learn about methods and techniques to use to resolve disputes, or to help others develop these skills?



Option	Result	%
Yes	84	35%
No	154	65%

A little over one third have expressed interest in either on or off-wiki workshops. A map, showing the distribution of interested editors in terms of their location, is available [here](#).

# Conclusion

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The results showed some positive aspects of dispute resolution, but also some important areas which may need improvement. Respondents were mostly older males that held a degree and have been editing Wikipedia for four to eight years – and those who had used dispute resolution graded both their experiences and the effectiveness of the processes poorly. Overall, respondents who were involved in disputes that were attended to by experienced volunteers with co-operative fellow editors were generally satisfied with their experience - but complex, time consuming processes, inexperienced or insufficient volunteers, or uncooperative fellow editors made their experiences unpleasant. 70% of respondents had volunteered with dispute resolution at some point, but only 40% did so in the month of March 2012 - many of these to talk pages only, and this is apparently due to the complexity of the processes or lack of understanding on how to resolve disputes.

In order for dispute resolution to be effective, several problems touched on by respondents need to be resolved, and these are:

- Too confusing or complicated to request dispute resolution- many dispute resolution forums handle disputes in different ways, and inexperienced editors might find themselves sent to another forum to file the same dispute in a different way. Some disputes also end up at non-DR venues, which increases the complexity
- Processes are time consuming, and as a result users become frustrated and either give up or leave DR unsatisfied.
- Because dispute resolution is time-consuming; there aren't enough volunteers to resolve disputes, and potential volunteers may be unsure how to assist, also due to a lack of a call to action - how they can get involved in the process.
- Obstructive editors who delay or make the process difficult

There is enough interest within the community to discuss change, and the results have shown that change is necessary; therefore my recommendations to resolve these issues are:

- Making it easier to request dispute resolution – both by creating a simplified request process, and by amalgamating the many existing dispute resolution processes into a few consolidated ones.
- Reducing the time it takes for a dispute to be resolved – by requiring disputes to have brief descriptions of the situation, and templates to easily display the status of a dispute.
- Making it easier for a volunteer to get involved – with clear directions on where and how to volunteer with disputes, a simple-to-use guide on dispute resolution techniques, short summaries of disputes reducing the obstacles to participation and recognition for their efforts.
- Investigate technical changes (including 3RR edit filters and page-specific blocking) along with policy changes such as time-fixed binding resolution of intractable content disputes, or by giving dispute resolution “teeth” – making the process more binding, consequential and more resistant to disruptive editors.