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Readers Foundational Research

What do readers use Wikipedia for? What is working well and not so well? How can we better attract and retain readers?

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Executive summary

This deck presents a **reader use case framework** with three dimensions: curiosity vs. task; broad vs. specific; one-off vs. recurring — to help product teams have a shared language around readers, understand the prevalence and dynamics of use cases, and be able to incorporate this into their work.

Our findings have product implications for:

- Priority areas to invest in for the Consumer strategy [see slides 29, 44]
- Search [see slides 51, 71]
- Interface navigation [see slides 38, 55, 59, 63, 66, 72]

Jump to key slides: Key Findings | Use case framework (& prevalence)

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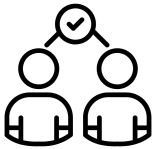
I. Background

Background & context

In the face of ongoing declines in readership in Wikipedia, it is crucial to understand what product and community interventions can be done to change this trend and enable Wikipedia to serve as a source of useful information for readers, in perpetuity.

There are several efforts in the works by the Readers teams; yet, the teams felt that having a deeper baseline understanding of Wikipedia readers and their needs would help to inform where to focus, and whether any new initiatives should be prioritized.



Generally, the group also feels they lack clear frameworks and shared vocabulary to describe what needs readers have when visiting Wikipedia. This shared vocabulary would help facilitate faster and easier internal discussions and alignment.

Research Goals

1. **Revisit and flesh out the previous taxonomy of reader use cases**, to create a usable, memorable framework for the product team that names and describes readers' Wikipedia use cases
2. **Determine the current prevalence of each use case**, as well as patterns in *who* (what type of reader) does each use case
3. **Identify and understand what's most important for readers** for each use case (what does a successful session look like in their eyes?), as well as the biggest pain points to solve for.

Read more in the Research Brief

In 2017 a previous taxonomy was created.

(Singer et al)

This effort identified **3 dimensions of reading use cases** on Wikipedia:

1. *I am reading this article because [**motivation**];*
2. *I am reading this article to [**information need**];*
3. *Prior to visiting this article I was [**prior knowledge**].*

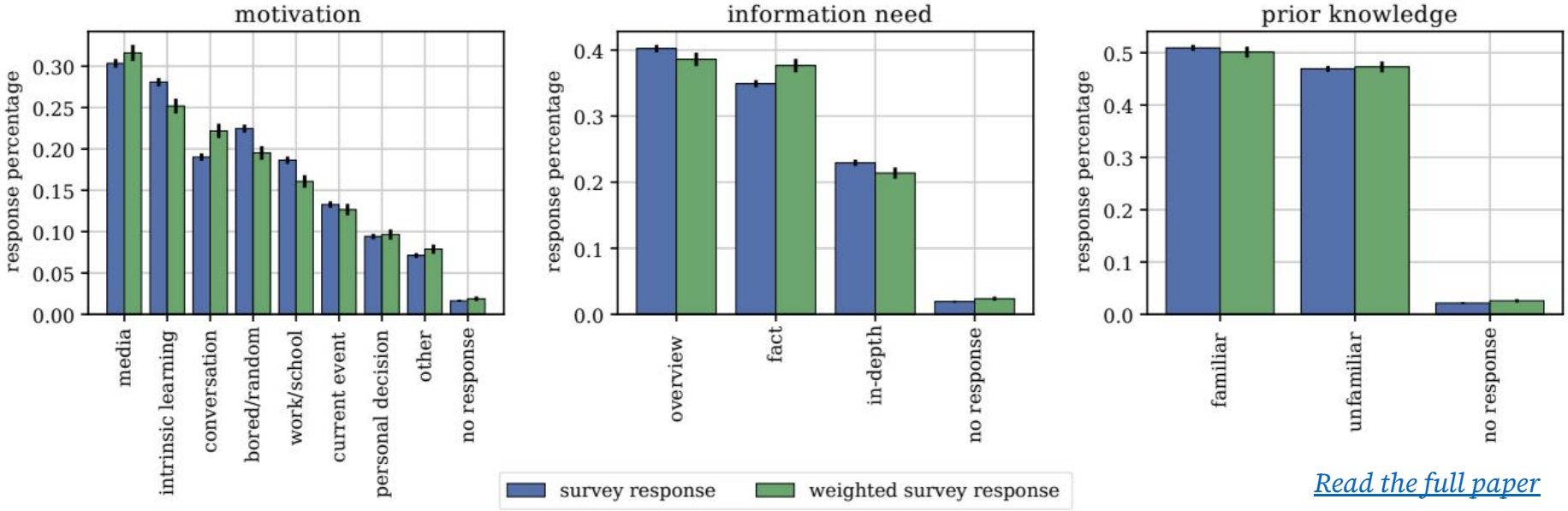
```
I am reading this article because ...

Please select all answers that apply

[] I have a work or school-related assignment
[] I need to make a personal decision based on this topic (e.g., buy a book, choose a travel
destination)
[] I want to know more about a current event (e.g., a soccer game, a recent earthquake,
somebody's death)
[] the topic was referenced in a piece of media (e.g., TV, radio, article, film, book)
[] the topic came up in a conversation
[] I am bored or randomly exploring Wikipedia for fun
[] this topic is important to me and I want to learn more about it (e.g., to learn about a
culture)
[] Other ...

I am reading this article to ...
¤ look up a specific fact or to get a quick answer
¤ get an overview of the topic
¤ get an in-depth understanding of the topic

Prior to visiting this article ...
¤ I was already familiar with the topic
¤ I was not familiar with the topic, and I am learning about it for the first time
```

Operationalization of **motivation**, **information need**, and **prior knowledge** in the 2017 taxonomy.

While there were insights from this taxonomy work, the taxonomy itself was not adopted by the product team.

(While this had not been a goal at the time, it speaks to the clarity and actionability of the taxonomy design.)

Insights on prevalence (English Wikipedia), from 2017:



[Read the full paper]

Goals in creating a new taxonomy now:

The Readers team gave input on what would be useful for them in a taxonomy; this guided our approach:

- **Unified as one single framework** of use cases, rather than different disconnected dimensions
- **Focused on users' intent/need/behavior** – rather than what triggered the visit (it's not so actionable for product or design, to know that visits are triggered by media, or by a conversation)
- **Has mutually exclusive, descriptive categories** (as much as possible given the "messy" nature of human activity)
- Has a **small enough number of use cases** to be able to remember

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II. Methodology

We used a mixed-method approach to identify, understand, and measure readers' use cases.

1. **Large-scale open-ended survey** asking Wikipedia readers what they're looking for and why, followed by preliminary elaboration of new use case framework;
2. **Qualitative video diary study** to collect users' recordings of their real reading sessions, and confirm their categorization of their use case (via a set of now close-ended survey questions) aligns with ours; follow-up interviews with a subset;
3. **Quantitative closed-ended survey** to measure prevalence of use cases. Demographic information also collected, and responses paired with session and topic data.

Note that all were project activities were carried out in English.

Open-ended survey

- Survey prompt shown to a random sample of readers accessing English Wikipedia through mobile and desktop, via QuickSurvey
- **2,843 responses** collected by Limesurvey
- Response data was coded using an open coding process, as a research team.

Questions:

- *What are you looking for on Wikipedia today?*
- *Why are you looking for that today?*
- *Did you come to Wikipedia to look up a specific fact or get an answer to a specific question? (yes, no)*
  - *(If yes) What is that specific fact or question?*
- *How are you going to use what you learned on Wikipedia today, if at all?*
- *Did you find what you were looking for on Wikipedia today?*

Video diary study

Method

- 8 participants recruited
- Each time they visited Wikipedia for 10 days, they were asked to record themselves for the duration of the visit using Userlytics' recording function
- After the visit, they answered a set of survey questions about the visit
- 7 participated in hour-long follow-up interviews after the 10 days

Participants

English Wikipedia users, from a range of countries, who visit Wikipedia daily.

Data

~200 reading sessions collected

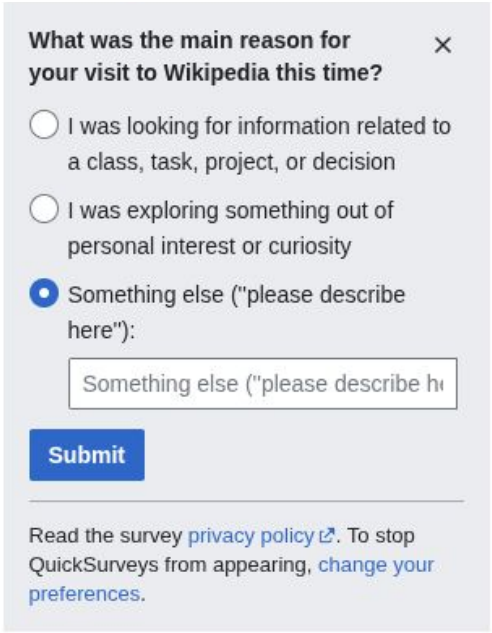
Follow-up interview topics

Topics included perception of "success" for particular use cases, reading challenges, and how Wikipedia compares to other apps/sites including AI tools.

See detailed participant demographics in the Appendix.

Quantitative closed-ended survey

- Survey prompt shown to a random sample of readers accessing English Wikipedia through mobile and desktop, via QuickSurvey
- **193,000 responses*** collected
  - Over 2,000 responses from each WMF Region
  - 69% mobile respondents (31% desktop)
- Responses were weighted by OS family, browser family, geography, browser language preference, whether visit included an unusually high-traffic page (in top 0.5% of pages by traffic)



** Not intended to be that high! This was the first multi-question QuickSurvey of readers done since that functionality was built. We learned that when users can answer all survey questions on-site, few of them drop off and we collect many responses. This is good news for future survey research and shows the impact of investing in QuickSurveys.*

Quantitative closed-ended survey: questions

- 1. What was the main reason for your visit to Wikipedia this time?
  - I was looking for information related to a class, task, project, or decision
  - I was exploring something out of personal interest or curiosity
  - Something else (please describe here) _____
- 2. What best describes the type of information you were looking for?
  - A specific piece of information or answer (e.g., a date, formula, name, definition)
  - A broader understanding of a topic (e.g., a concept, event, biography)
  - I wasn't looking for anything in particular
- 3. How often do you read about this topic or similar topics on Wikipedia? *Please consider not just this article, but also related topics and articles.*
  - Rarely - I've never read about these topics or just once or twice
  - Sometimes – I read about these topics now and then
  - Often – I frequently read about these topics
- 4. Were you able to find the information you were looking for on Wikipedia?
  - Yes
  - No
  - I'm still looking

Q5-Q10 were: age, student status, level of education, primary language, gender identity, and Wikipedia visit frequency

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III. Key Findings

Key Findings

- There are **8 types of needs** that bring people to Wikipedia, and the most prevalent is **'broad recurring curiosity'**.
- 80% of visits to Wikipedia are motivated by **curiosity** (vs. the user trying to get something done).
- **Curiosity sessions** are more likely to be on mobile, focus on Culture topics, and be done by readers who visit more frequently.
- **Task-oriented sessions** are more likely to be on desktop, by younger readers and students, and focus more on STEM topics.
- **Readers with a recurring interest** have more success finding what they're looking for and are generally more engaged with Wikipedia.
- **Length and denseness of articles** can make finding information difficult; readers need help finding what they're looking for in the content.

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IV. A new framework of reader use cases

There are 8 types of needs that bring people to Wikipedia...

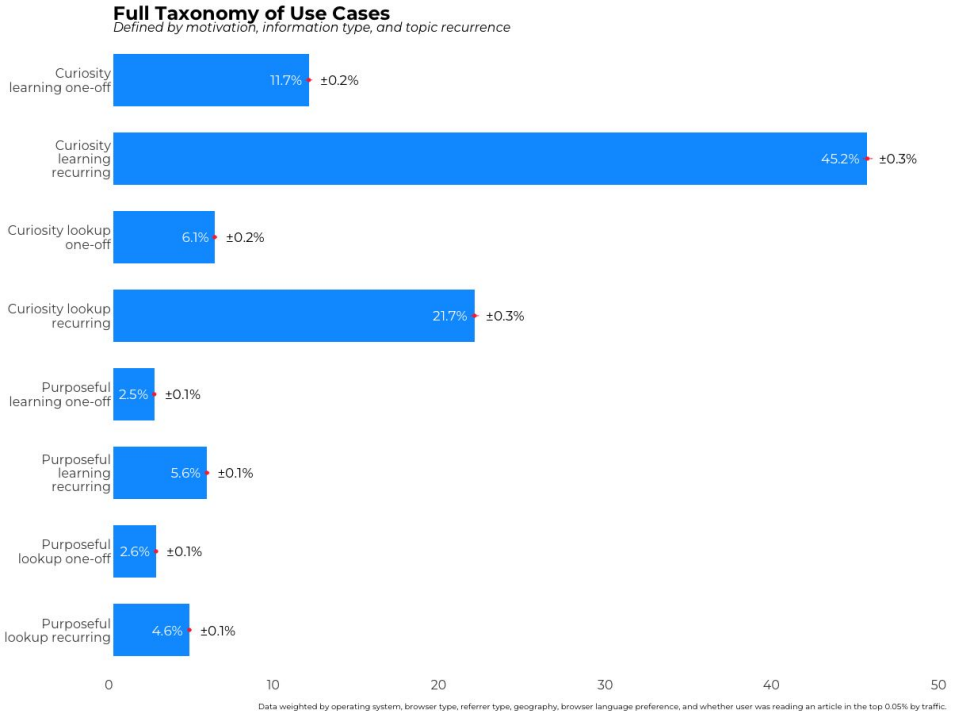
...and the most prevalent is 'broad recurring curiosity'.

(recurring at the topic area level)

	Specific one-off curiosity	Specific recurring curiosity	Broad one-off curiosity	Broad recurring curiosity	Specific one-off task	Specific recurring task	Broad one-off task	Broad recurring task
	6%	22%	12%	46%	3%	4%	2%	5%
Real example *(paraphrased)*	Today I read something that made me wonder what Bluesky is and how it's different from Twitter/X.	I was looking up why is a country in Africa named 'Chad'. It just came to my mind. I often read articles [on WP] relating to world geography, history, and politics.	Looking up the history of Paraguay. I became interested after watching a TV program.	I looked for a Canadian sportscaster's biography because I saw her on a broadcast. I often look up people I see in movies or on television.	I just saw a Subaru car drive by and I want to know how to tell a WRX from a BRZ the next time I see either.	Looking up the convention on enumerating harmonics. I need to document source code. I often look up physics facts for this reason.	I'm thinking about switching from Google to another search engine. I want to understand the difference before I make a decision.	I'm looking for info on relational algebra, because I'm trying to teach myself about it. I frequently read on WP about computer science topics.

Prevalence data is for English Wikipedia

Use case prevalence



- Curiosity use cases predominate
  - 79.5% are "*exploring out of personal interest or curiosity*"
  - 15.7% are visiting "*for a class, task project, or decision*"
- Readers more often seek broad (rather than specific) information
  - 51.4% looking for "*a broader understanding of a topic*"
  - 14.0% are "*not looking for anything in particular*"
  - 34.7% are looking for "*a specific piece of information*"
- Most readers are visiting for a recurring interest
  - 76.8% "*sometimes*" or "*often read about these topics on Wikipedia*"

Let’s dig into what each part of the framework means and how we arrived at it...

There are 3 dimensions to this use case framework:

1. Information goal: **Curiosity** vs. **Task**
2. Information type (of the info being sought): **Specific** vs. **Broad**
3. Frequency of reading about this or similar topics on Wikipedia: **One-off**, or **Recurring**

These dimensions were identified as the most salient and useful distinctions between reading sessions, based on rounds of independent coding of the data from the open-ended survey, discussion as a group, and consultation with stakeholders.

Keep in mind that there is no one “ground truth” to how best to categorize sessions - there is just what we decide to be most useful for us to inform product decisions, at this point in time.

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More about...

Curiosity vs. Task

Curiosity vs. Task

This dimension is about whether the reader has next steps identified of what they will do with the information - such as for a class, task, project, or to make a decision. If they do, we classify it as a “Task”. If they don’t, and are exploring out of personal interest or curiosity, it’s “Curiosity”.

Examples from the open-ended survey:

Curiosity

“What part of Warwickshire is considered within the Cotswolds? ...No plans for the info, other than my personal knowledge”

“Details about Cleo Lane. I just saw that she died and wanted to know more about her life. ...It was for my own curiosity.”

“How people dyed fabrics before synthetic dyes were invented. ...I just wanted to satisfy my curiosity.”

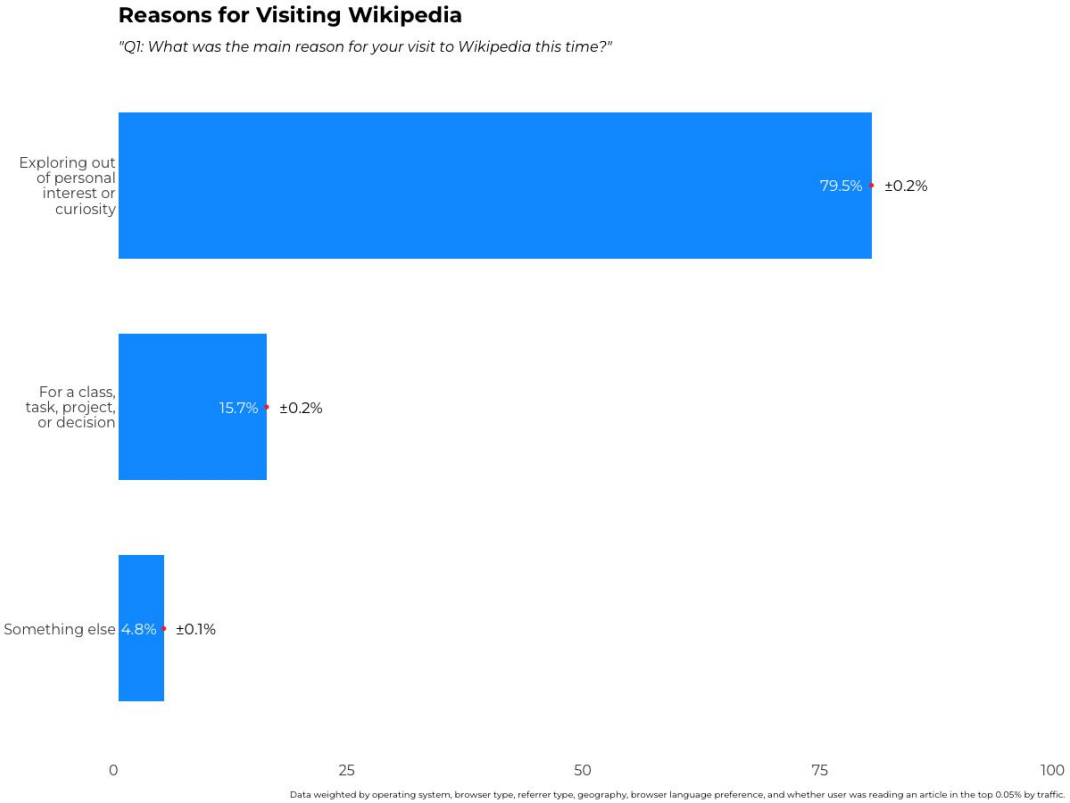
Task

“Information about the movie, The Earth Dies Screaming. Because I just began watching it on YouTube and want to know if it is worth watching.”

“What is chondroitin? [Why?] Help with arthritis (especially knee). [How are you going to use?] Maybe increase my intake of glucosamine/chondroitin supplements.”

“I wanted to know why Truman Capote's book In Cold Blood was described as a 'non-fiction novel' and what that meant. [Why?] To provide some examples for writing students...in a lecture.”

The vast majority of visits to Wikipedia (80%) are motivated by Curiosity.



Curiosities (as compared to Tasks) are more likely to include *Culture* topics, and be done by *more frequent* WP readers.

Curiosities are:

- more likely to include **Culture topics** (largely Biography, Media) compared to tasks (**+16.2 pp**)
- done by users who tend to **visit Wikipedia more frequently (+15.1 pp a few times/week or more** vs. task)
- more likely to have **started their session on Wikipedia** (**+4.3 pp** vs. task), vs. on a search engine or other external source
- more likely to be to an **extremely-high traffic article** – defined as an article in the top 0.05% of enwiki articles by traffic (**+6.5 pp** vs. task). (The few readers motivated by "something else" are even more likely to have done so (**+7.9 pp** vs. task))
- **longer on average** (2.2 pages) compared to task-motivated sessions (2.1 pages) or those motivated by "something else" (2.0 pages).

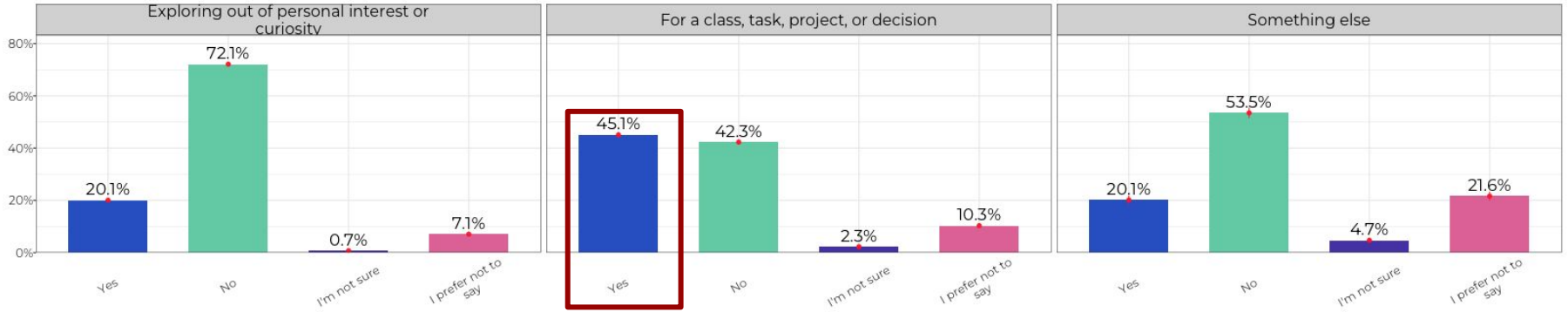
Tasks (as compared to Curiosities) are more likely to be done on *desktop*, by those who are *younger* and are *students*.

Tasks are:

- disproportionately likely to be on **desktop** (**+16.5 pp** vs. curiosity) rather than mobile
- done by users who skew **younger** (**+19.7 pp under 25** vs. curiosity) and are more likely to be **current students (+25.0 pp** vs. curiosity**)**
- more likely to include **STEM topics (+11.5 pp** vs. curiosity)
- done by higher shares of **non-native English** readers (**+4.0 pp** vs. curiosity)

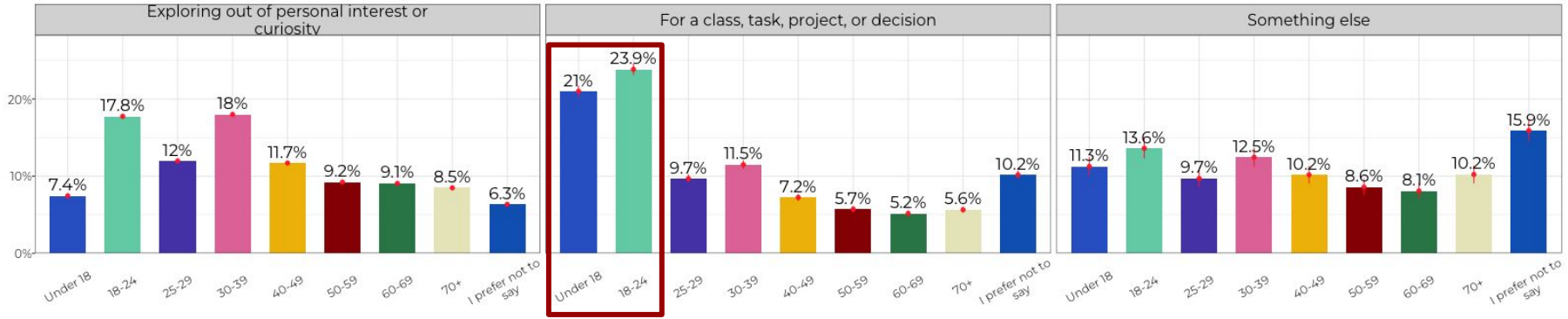
Tasks more likely to be done by young readers, current students

Student Status Distribution by Information Goal



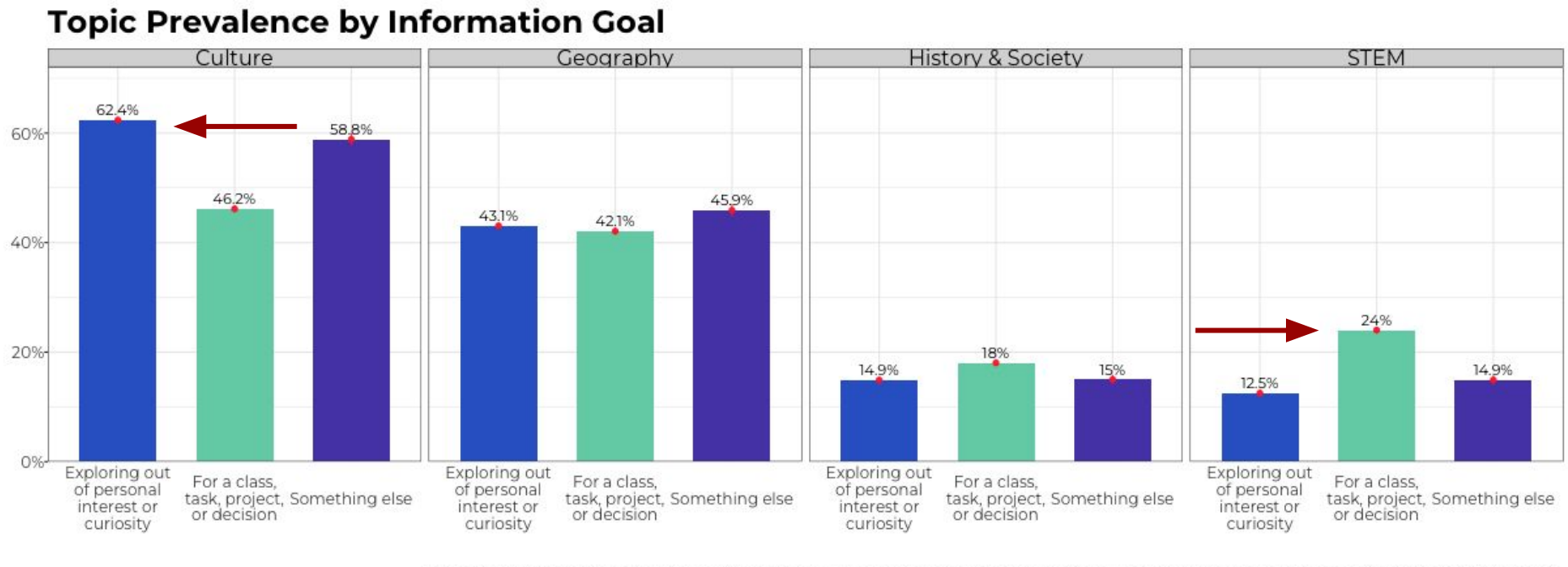
Data weighted by operating system, browser type, referrer type, geography, browser language preference, and whether user was reading an article in the top 0.05% by traffic.

Age Distribution by Information Goal



Data weighted by operating system, browser type, referrer type, geography, browser language preference, and whether user was reading an article in the top 0.05% by traffic.

Curiosity readers more likely to read Culture topics; *Task* readers, STEM

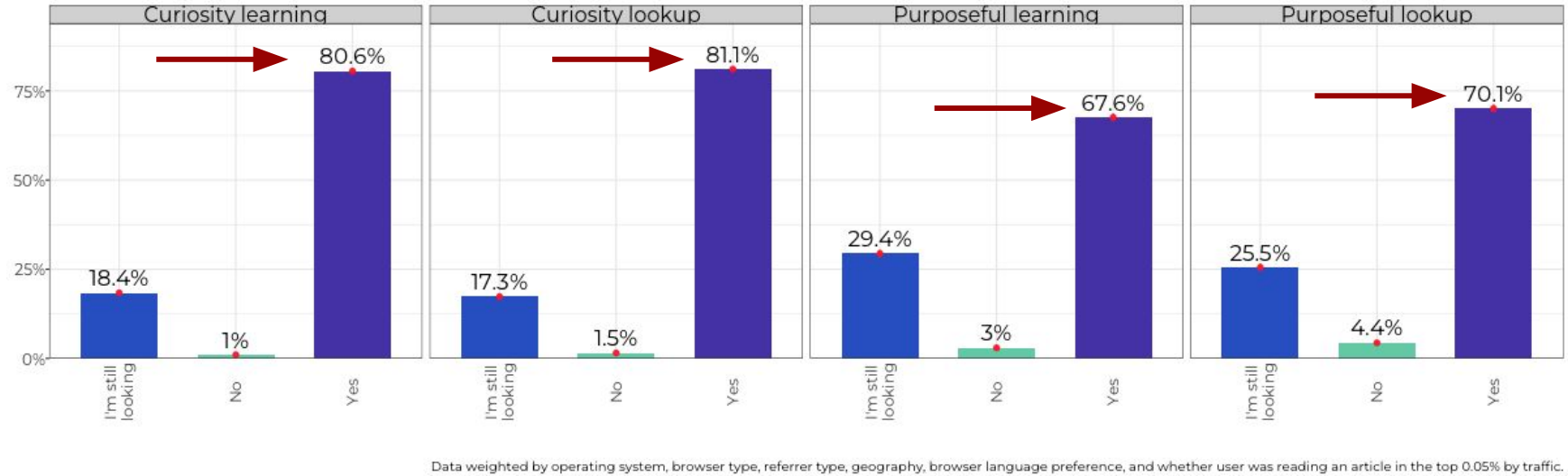


Data weighted by operating system, browser type, referrer type, geography, browser language preference, and whether user was reading an article in the top 0.05% by traffic.

Curiosity use cases report more session "success"

than *Task,* within the same kinds of reading session.

Were you able to find the information you were looking for on Wikipedia? (close-ended survey question)



Data weighted by operating system, browser type, referrer type, geography, browser language preference, and whether user was reading an article in the top 0.05% by traffic.

From the diary study, we learned that for Curiosities, users may feel a session was successful even if they didn't find the specific information they are looking for as long as they had an **enjoyable experience**.

Tasks more likely to be done on *desktop*, by *students*; Curiosity readers *visit more often*, more likely to read about *Culture*

Task

- disproportionately likely to be on **desktop** (**+16.5 pp** vs. curiosity) rather than mobile
- done by users who skew **younger** (**+19.7 pp under 25** vs. curiosity) and are more likely to be **current students (+25.0 pp** vs. curiosity**)**
- more likely to include **STEM topics (+11.5 pp** vs. curiosity)
- done by higher shares of **non-native English** readers (**+4.0 pp** vs. curiosity)

Curiosity

- done by users who tend to **visit Wikipedia more frequently (+15.1 pp a few times/week or more** vs. task)
- more likely to include **Culture topics** (largely Biography, Media) compared to tasks (**+16.2 pp**)
- more likely to be to an **extremely-high traffic article**.
- **longer on average** (2.2 pages) compared to task-motivated sessions (2.1 pages) or those motivated by “something else” (2.0 pages).

Readers are more focused when seeking information for Tasks compared to Curiosities.

As also found in the Understanding User Needs for Deep Reading study, readers visiting Wikipedia to complete a task take a teleological, or purposeful, approach to information gathering.

On the flip side, many Curiosity sessions aren't time-bound, allowing the reader to take their time reading the article(s) for the singular purpose of enjoyment.

"For school projects, it's more about the efficiency... I need to skim through the article or I need to look at the sections, find the information I need...

However, when it's ...personal interest, it's more relaxed and because I know it's my free time. Like I'm not under pressure to get through the entire article, so I like to read around a little bit more and pick up new bits of information that maybe I wasn't looking for, but it helps me to build a more complete picture of what I was curious about in the first place." -P4

Reading to make a decision is often difficult for readers to classify as Task vs. Curiosity.

Diary study participants described decisions that were low-stakes or far in the future as Curiosities, while high-stakes or immediate decisions were described as Tasks.

I don't think [whether to buy this video game is] a big enough financial decision to be considered as like a life changing decision, so I'm gonna keep it as personal interest or curiosity [in the end-of-visit survey question]. - P4

Implications: Task and Curiosity dimension

- **With most visits (80%) having the goal of satisfying curiosity rather than to get something done — we should consider prioritizing and deepening investments in product efforts that are about further satisfying curiosity (e.g. things like 'Read More' suggestions at the end of articles).**
- **When we see people click through from Google Search to Wikipedia* with a curiosity, it's likely more than just a very simple or small curiosity (simple and small ones can often be met from the Google Search results page itself). How might we better support and further serve users who are in that strong curiosity mindset, on Wikipedia?**
- **Many curiosities are about notable people in popular culture; tasks are more done by young people/students: how might we create features to better support these specific opportunities?**

**Remember: 78% of Wikipedia sessions originate from search engines, with 90% of those being from Google Search*

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More about...

Specific vs. Broad

Specific vs. Broad

This dimension is about whether the user is looking for a specific fact or to get an answer to a specific question. If they are, we classify it as “Specific”. If not, we classify it as “Broad”.

It could be Broad because it’s an inherently more complex question, for which one clear factual answer does not exist. Or, because the user’s need is broader: to need an overview, or an in-depth understanding of the topic. Or, because the users’ intent is so broad as to not be looking for anything in particular.

Examples from the open-ended survey:

Specific

“I wanted to know the definition of Pareto efficiency. I am preparing for an exam. I came up to a term I did not know, and wanted to understand it.”

“Who made the music for the movie I was watching. I was watching a movie on TV. I was just curious.”

Broad

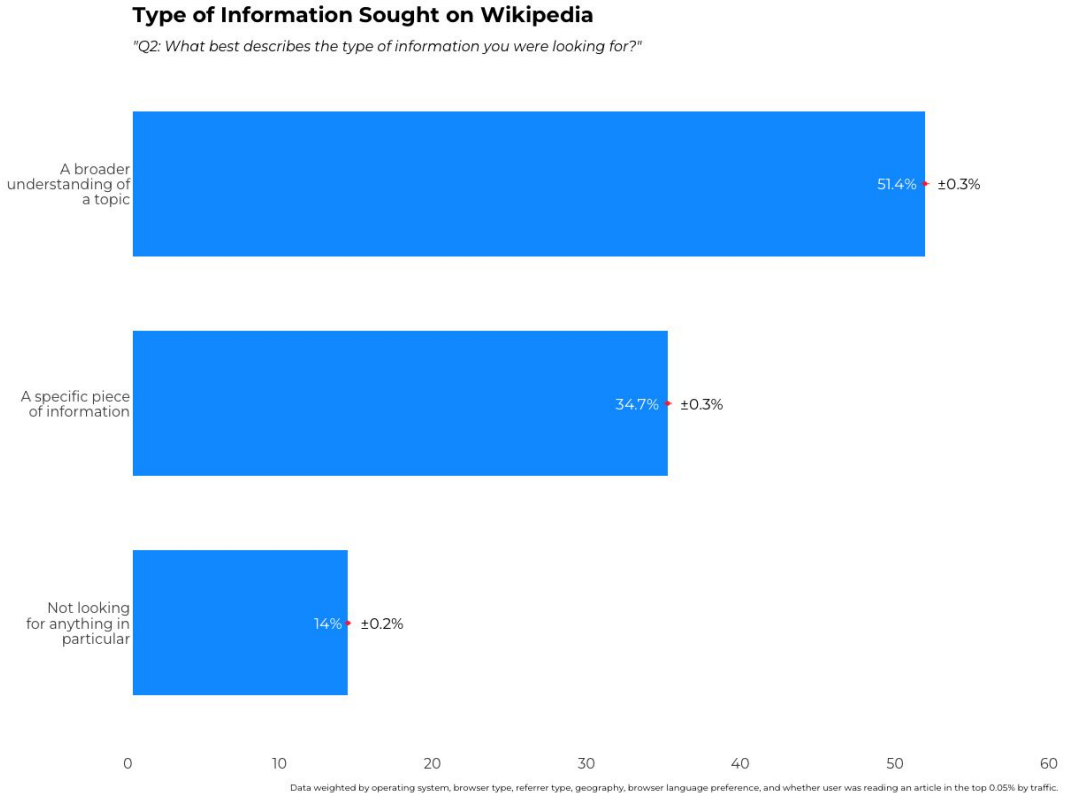
“[Looking for] a technical overview of the Google Pixel series of phones. I'm considering buying one.”

“Information about biology and the internal works of the immune system. I'm making a video game about the immune system. [Need to] figure out the components of the game like story, enemies, places, etc.”

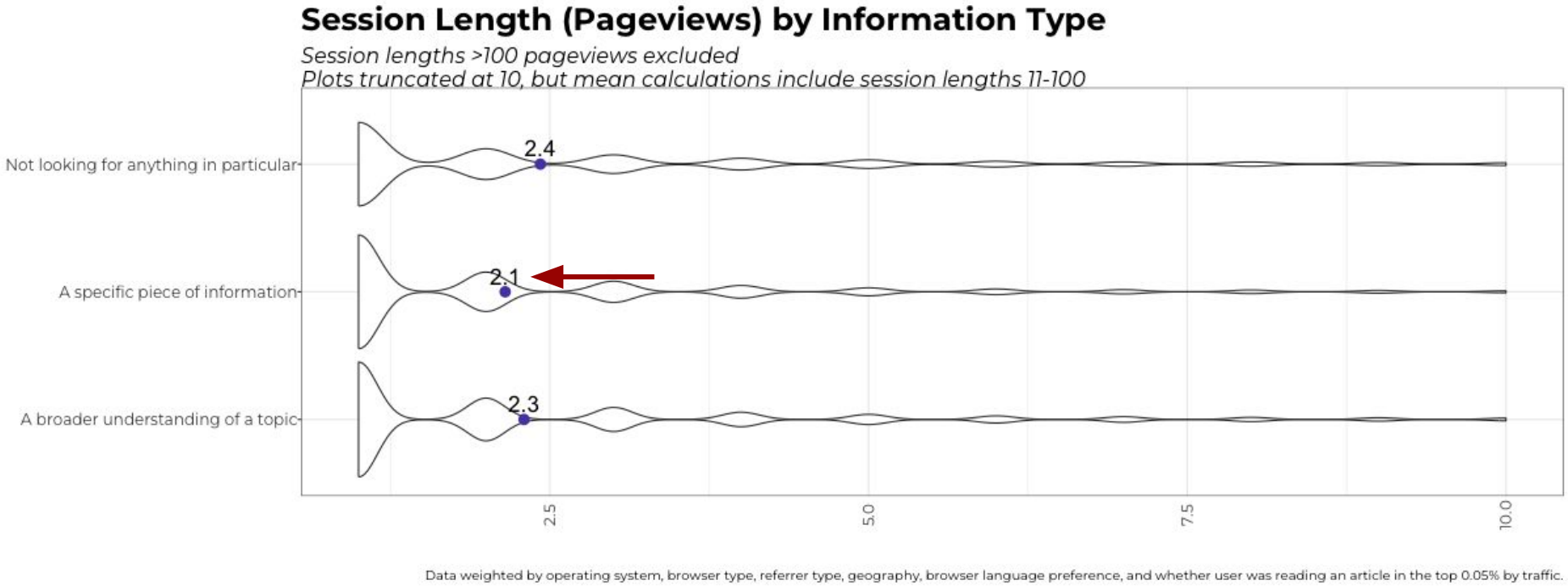
“Just killing time at work. ...End of the day end of the week. ...Click another link or two on Wikipedia”

It’s more common to seek Broad information

- For 51% of visits, people said they were looking for “a broad understanding of a topic”; for 14% they said “not looking for anything in particular” (we classify both as Broad)
- Only 35% said they were seeking “a specific piece of information”



Readers seeking *specific* information have shorter sessions



Broad sessions (vs. Specific) are *longer*. Specific sessions are more likely to include *Culture* topics.

The gaps are much smaller here, than for Curiosity vs. Task.

Broad sessions:

- are **longer on average** (**2.3 unique article pageviews)** than specific sessions **(2.1**)
- involve proportionally **more frequent Wikipedia readers** (**+3.7 pp** visit Wikipedia “a few times per week” or more vs. task)
- are marginally **more likely to involve current students** (**+ 2.6pp**; 23.8% vs. 21.2%) compared to specific visits

Specific sessions:

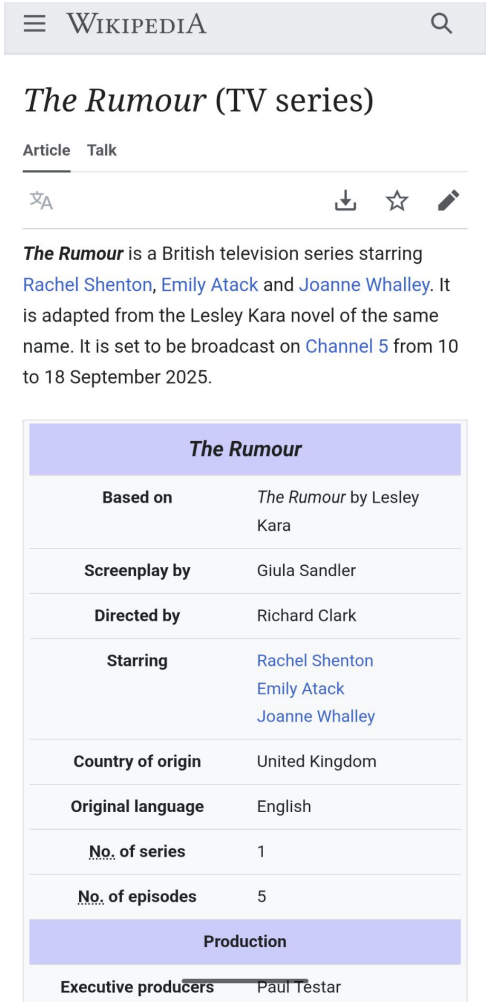
- are more likely to include **Culture topics (+4.9 pp**; 62.0% vs. 57.1%) vs. broad sessions
- are more likely to be conducted by **native English-speakers** (**+3.6 pp**; 30.7 vs. 34.3) vs. broad sessions

When looking for Specific info, readers rely on Wikipedia's dependable page structure to locate it.

Readers seeking Specific info value speed. Readers use their knowledge and expectations of Wikipedia's structural page elements to locate the specific info they seek. They aim first for the article introduction or expected elements like the Table of Contents and infobox.

These sessions can be challenging when the reader encounters structural elements (like section headings or infoboxes) in unfamiliar combinations, or when the article is sparse or missing expected structural elements.

"The synopsis is very vague.... I can see cast and production [have a lot of information] on this one, but I really did sort of want to get an idea of what's [the show The Rumour is] about because I don't want to watch something and waste my time if it's not the sort of plot that I'm interested in." - P7



The Infobox answers a lot of quick specific questions.

Upon hearing of Robert Redford's recent death, this diary participant looked him up as she was curious to learn more about him as a person.

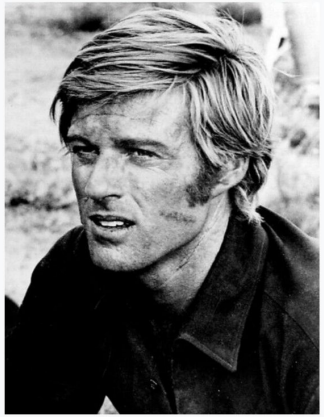
"What went well is just the fact that you've got a photo of him and you can instantly see his sort of main details on the top right [in the infobox], so that was very easy to sort of navigate to. You can easily see like his age, date of birth, when he died, all the basics that ...I wanted to sort of know about." - P7

Another participant was getting ready for bed and looking through his books when he spotted Peanuts. He realized he didn't know anything about the author, Charles Schulz, so he searched for him on Wikipedia out of curiosity.

"[The infobox] already answered part of my reason for coming to Wikipedia." - P4

Academy Honorary Award in 2002, the Kennedy Center Honors in 2005, the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2016 and the Honorary César in 2019.

Robert Redford



Redford in 1971

Born	Charles Robert Redford Jr. August 18, 1936 Santa Monica, California, U.S.
Died	September 16, 2025 (aged 89) Sundance, Utah, U.S.
Resting place	Robert Redford Home, Sundance
Alma mater	University of Colorado Boulder Pratt Institute American Academy of

When looking for Broad info, readers need to engage with more of an article.

Readers in these sessions are in a more of a ‘learning’ than lookup mode. These sessions also often involve higher commitment to the topic – either out of high personal interest, or because they have an important need for the information, like for school or work.

“I'm reading the whole thing because I just like to read the material in front of me completely just to get full context more than anything.” - P2

To get what they need, readers need to read whole paragraphs, or multiple sections, or multiple articles. **These learning sessions can be frustrated when readers encounter articles or paragraphs that are long or too textually dense**—i.e., an article can have “so much information that it’s hard to find what I’m looking for” (P5).

Participants were observed to read deeply as they sought to comprehensively understand context, history, and narrative, such as in historical articles or long biographies.

When the need is Broad, it’s difficult for a user to say whether their need was met during the session.

“Broad” needs are difficult to establish “success” and “failure” conditions for. Readers may simply reach a hard-to-articulate point and “feel” that the session is over.

“Specific” needs are easier to establish “success” and “failure” for, since they have a specific goal—you either found what you were looking for or you didn’t.

Needs of both types can be frustrating when the reader seeks clarity on a subject that doesn't have a clear answer - e.g. "Why do we dream?" (P4)

“I did come out of my own curiosity to learn something, however, I did have a topic in mind that I wanted to research. But knowing that I did not know the end result, I think that I did not know that I was looking for something specific, and I just wanted to learn...” - P4

“I wasn't really looking for a specific answer. So I guess it'd be hard to say if I found it or not.” - P5

Implications:

- **Continue to highlight commonly-sought information early in articles in an expected format (e.g. in Infobox)**
- **Improve in-article navigation so users can hone in on the specific information they are looking for in the article (e.g. by providing an in-article search function)**
- **Wikipedia offers a richly-textured landscape for exploration—although many or most 'specific' queries might be satisfied before the reader arrives at Wikipedia, curiosity-driven readers are often here to explore.**

WIKIMEDIA FOUNDATION

More about...

One-off vs. Recurring

One-off vs. Recurring

This dimension is about whether the user has read about this *or similar* topics on Wikipedia before. If they have (at least sometimes, or often), then we classify it as “Recurring”. If they rarely or never have, then it is “One-off”.

Examples from the open-ended survey:

One-off

“[Looking for] history of John Deere. [Why?] Curiosity. [Is what you are looking for today related to other topics you frequently read about on Wikipedia?] No. I look up random things.”

“Description about a show. To know what's its plot and storyline. [Is what you are looking for today related to other topics you frequently read about on Wikipedia?] not extremely, generally I search up science related terms here.”

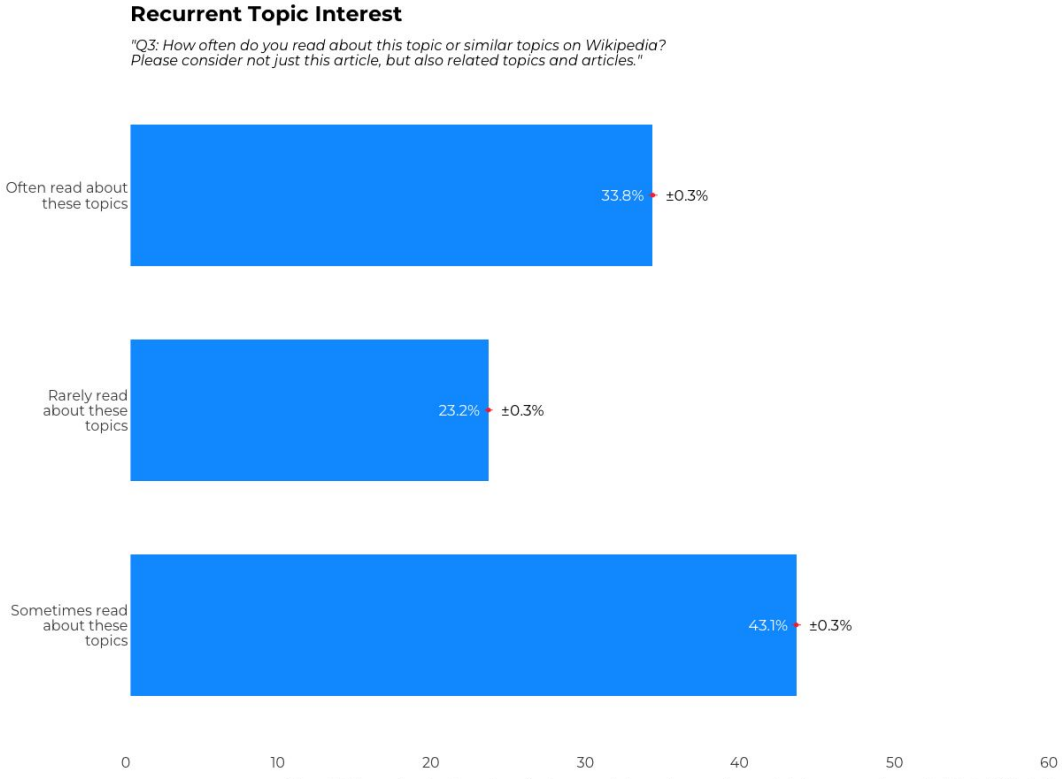
Recurring

“I was looking for an article on the sino vietnam border conflicts that occured after the end of the 1979 sino vietnam war. [Why?] Saw it in a reddit meme. [Is what you are looking for today related to other topics you frequently read about on Wikipedia?] Yes. I often look at wikipedia for information about past wars/historical events.”

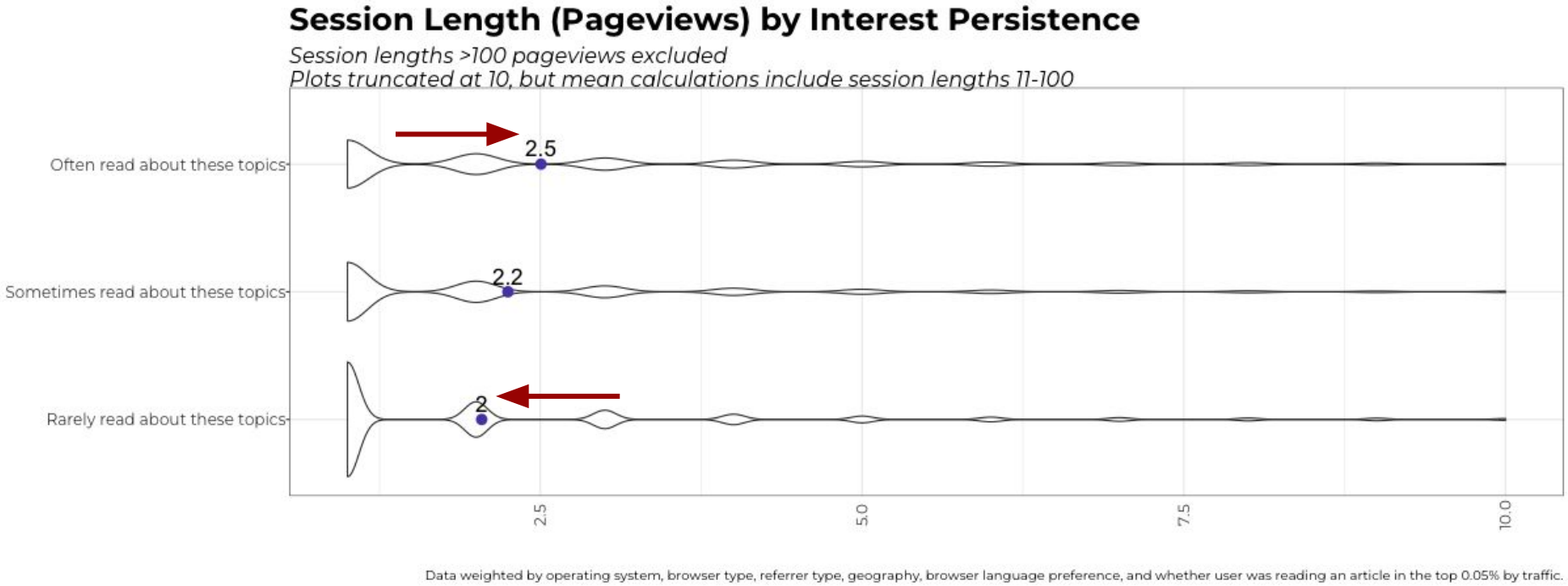
“I'm looking for information about a writer. I recently started reading The Malazan Book of the Fallen, and I'm curious about the author's identity. Yes, I read about books and their authors [on Wikipedia] quite often.”

Most visits are for recurrent topic areas of interest.

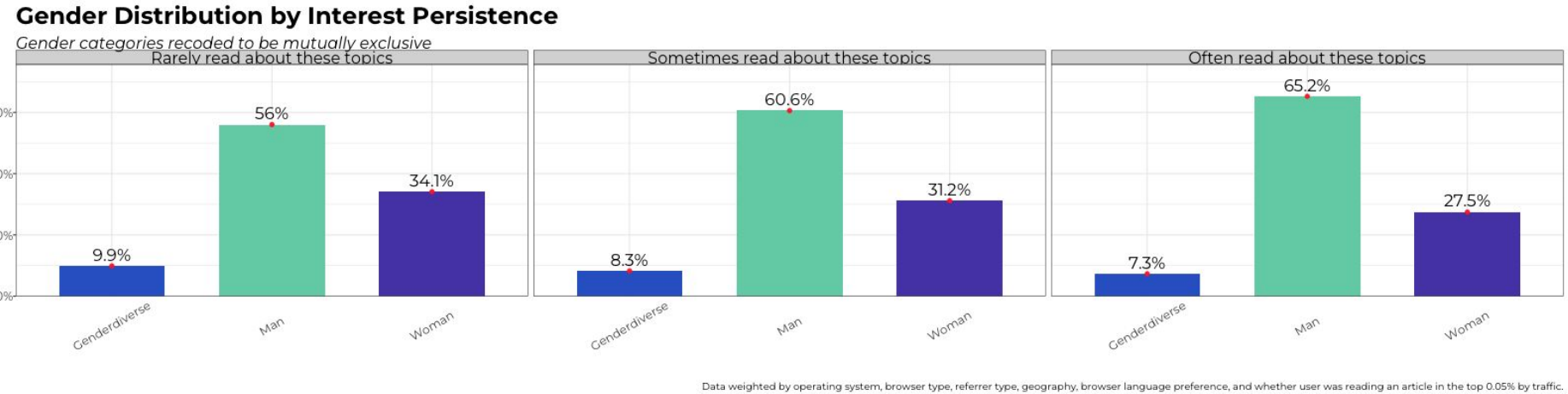
In the close-ended survey, 77% of readers said they had read about ‘this or similar topics on Wikipedia’ (to what their current visit was about) Sometimes or Often.



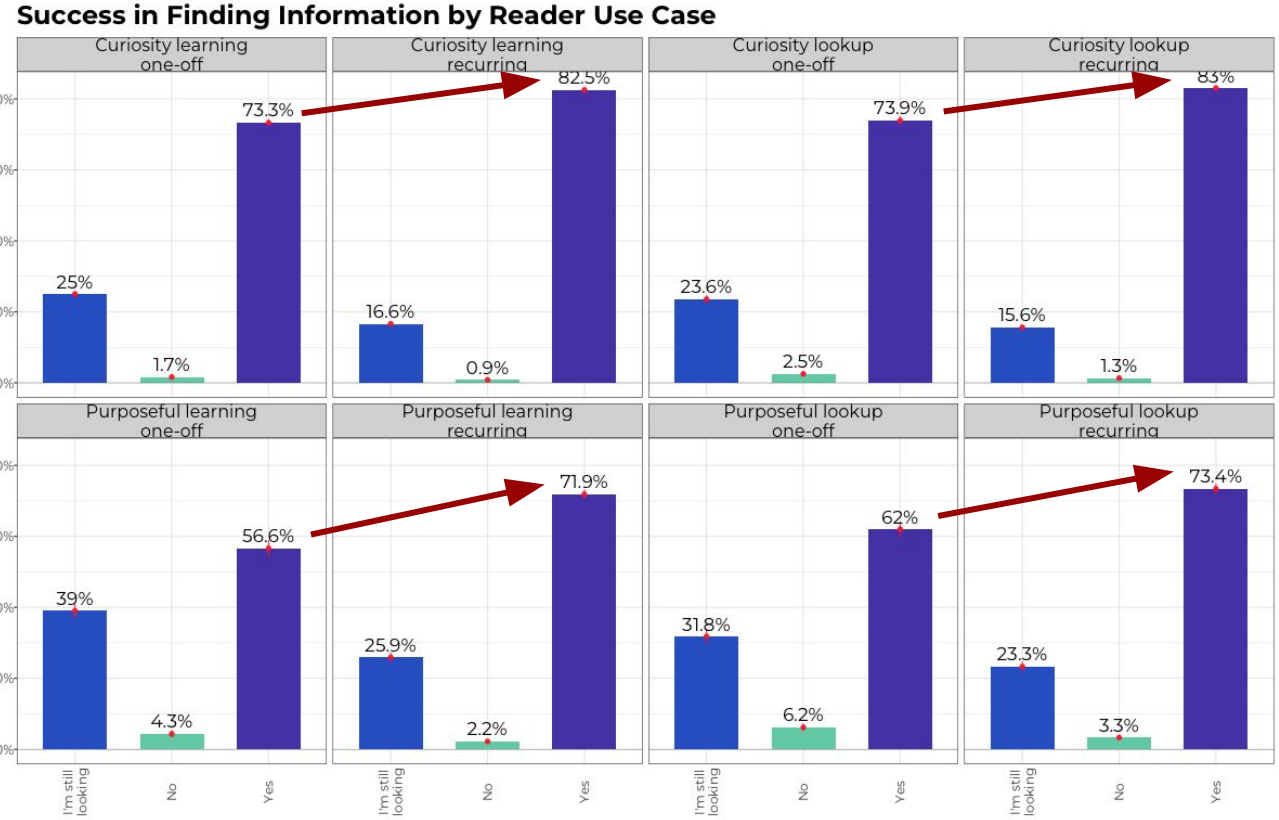
Readers with *Recurrent* needs average substantially longer session lengths than those with *One-off* needs



Readers with *one-off* needs are more likely to identify as cis women



Readers with a *Recurring* interest report higher success than readers with a *One-off* interest (within the same type of session).



Data weighted by operating system, browser type, referrer type, geography, browser language preference, and whether user was reading an article in the top 0.05% by traffic.

Not surprisingly, Recurring use cases skew toward *more frequent* readers.

Compared to visits from readers who “rarely read about these topics” (one-off needs), visits from those who “often” do are:

- more likely to **visit Wikipedia “every day”** (**+28.2 pp** than one-off)
- more likely to say they **found the information** they’re looking for (**+15.6 pp**)
- more likely to **start on Wikipedia** instead of an external site (+**7.6 pp**)
- **longer on average** (**2.5** unique article pageviews vs. 2.0)

Compared to visits from readers who “often read about these topics”, visits from those who “rarely” do are:

- more likely conducted by **high school students** (**+5.5 pp**) and less likely by post-graduate students (**-7.6 pp**)
- more likely to identify as a **cis woman** (**+6.6 pp**) or genderdiverse (+2.6 pp)
- more likely to be conducted by **native English speakers** (**+4.7 pp**)

Implications:

- **Recurring readers are good candidates for personalized or customized experiences.** They've found something that brings them back to Wikipedia, and when they come back for it, they stay for longer and experience more success than one-off readers. How might we invest more in this, as part of the Reader strategy?

WIKIMEDIA FOUNDATION

V. Deeper dive into the use cases

These 4 Curiosity-based needs make up 85%* of sessions. We'll deep dive into them first.

	Specific one-off curiosity	Specific recurring curiosity	Broad one-off curiosity	Broad recurring curiosity	Specific one-off task	Specific recurring task	Broad one-off task	Broad recurring task
	6%	22%	12%	45%	3%	5%	3%	6%
Real example *(paraphrased)*	Today I read something that made me wonder what Bluesky is and how it's different from Twitter/X.	I was looking up why is a country in Africa named 'Chad'. It just came to my mind. I often read articles [on WP] relating to world geography, history, and politics.	Looking up the history of Paraguay. I became interested after watching a TV program.	I looked for a Canadian sportscasters biography because I saw her on a broadcast. I often look up people I see in movies or on television.	I just saw a Subaru car drive by and I want to know how to tell a WRX from a BRZ the next time I see either.	Looking up the convention on enumerating harmonics. I need to document source code. I often look up physics facts for this reason.	I'm thinking about switching from Google to another search engine. I want to understand the difference before I make a decision.	I'm looking for info on relational algebra, because I'm trying to teach myself about it. I frequently read on WP about computer science topics.

In this deep dive we'll collapse the one-off vs. recurring dimension, as from the diary data we didn't see meaningful differences to readers' behaviors due to this.

Specific curiosity	Broad curiosity	Specific task	Broad task
28%	57%	7%	8%

Specific Curiosity

28% of all sessions

Topic areas: Tiers: Culture (66.7%), Geography (39.6%), H&S / STEM (13.4%; 12.1%)
Top topics (2nd-3rd level): Biography (36.4%), North America (19.7%)
Distinctive topics: Music (12.5%), Sports (10.8%)

"I was asking when Neil Diamond recorded and when the song 'Solitary Man' first aired."

What sort of things people are looking for and why:

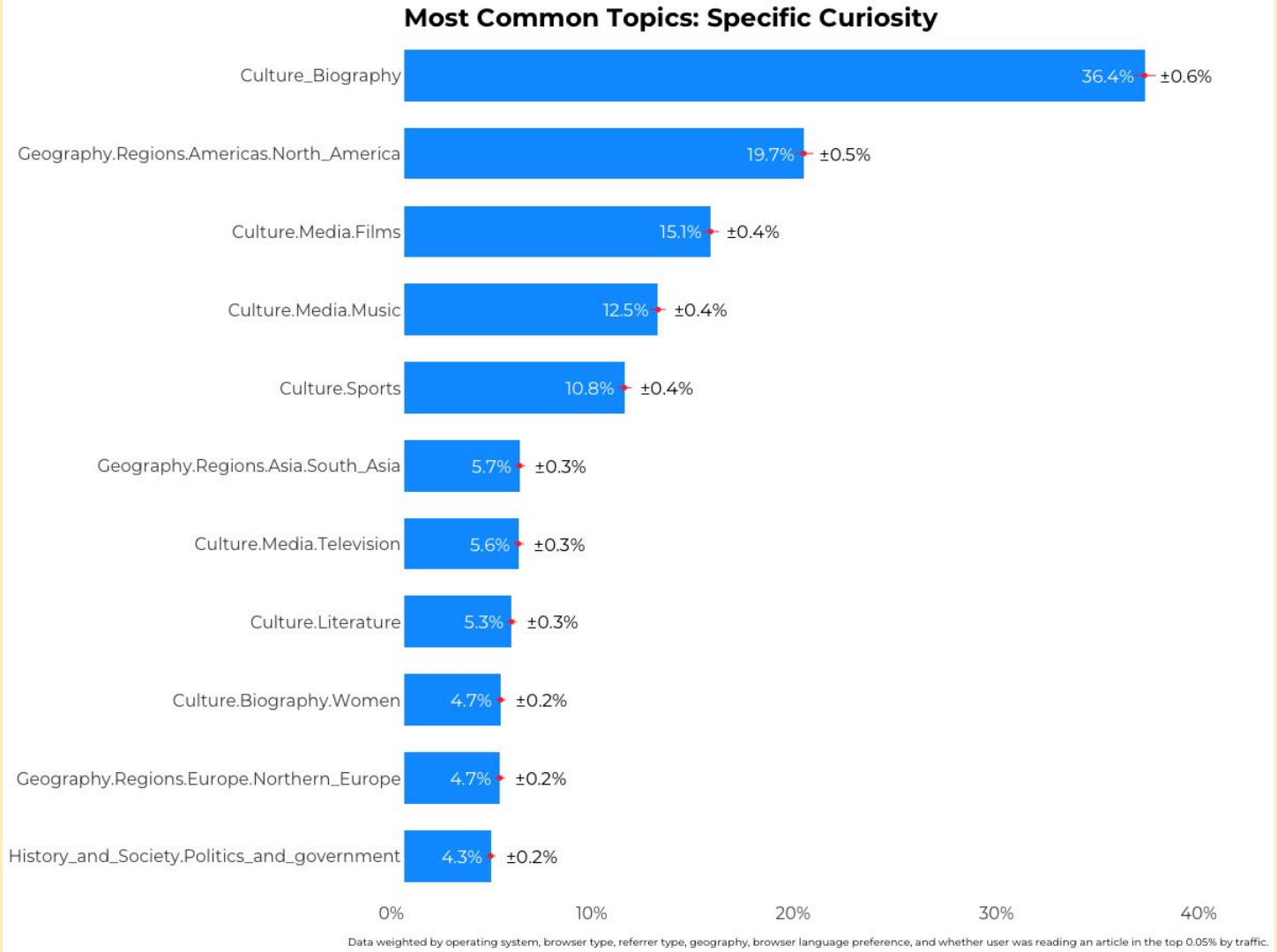
Over two-thirds of readers searching for a Specific Curiosity read an article about Culture and about half of those Culture articles are Biographies. Specific Curiosity use cases also often include Geography articles, specifically about North America.

"The teams for which Andrew Benintiendi has played... I saw he plays for the White Sox & his name is familiar."

The mindset users are in, and what's important to them:

Motivated by a sense of general interest, users value **speed** and **ease** in curiosity lookups. Both site and in-article navigation are key to finding the specific piece of information they are looking for.

"Information on Great Britain license plates... Because I'm playing license plate bingo."


Most Common Topics: Specific Curiosity
Culture_Biography
36.4%
±0.6%
Geography.Regions.Americas.North_America
19.7%
±0.5%
Culture.Media.Films
15.1%
±0.4%
Culture.Media.Music
12.5%
±0.4%
Culture.Sports
10.8%
±0.4%
Geography.Regions.Asia.South_Asia
5.7%
±0.3%
Culture.Media.Television
5.6%
±0.3%
Culture.Literature
5.3%
±0.3%
Culture.Biography.Women
4.7%
±0.2%
Geography.Regions.Europe.Northern_Europe
4.7%
±0.2%
History_and_Society.Politics_and_government
4.3%
±0.2%
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
Data weighted by operating system, browser type, referrer type, geography, browser language preference, and whether user was reading an article in the top 0.05% by traffic.

Specific Curiosity

28% of all sessions

Successful session example

P6 looks for the year Colin Kaepernick knelt during the national anthem.

He finds that easily in the first paragraph, and then continues on with a new question this sparked, of what the team's record was in that season.

Unsuccessful session example

P6 is curious to identify a specific bird he'd seen.

His Wikipedia search for [birds in thailand similar to a bluejay] did not yield any relevant results at first.

His manual browsing of the List of birds in Thailand article, and other articles for specific birds, did not yield him an answer.

Specific Curiosity

28% of all sessions

Opportunities:

- Improve **search experience** to enable users to search on Wikipedia to find what they are looking for easily (we know most don't do today, but start on Google Search instead)

Broad Curiosity

57% of all sessions

Topic areas: Tiers: Culture (59.6%), Geography (43.4%), H&S / STEM (15.9%; 13.5%)
Top topics (2nd-3rd level): Biography (33.6%), North America (18.5%)
Distinctive topics: Films (14.7%), Music (9.0%), South Asia (8.6%)

"Info on Ichiro [Suzuki] - baseball player being inducted into the Hall of Fame today."

What sort of things people are looking for and why:

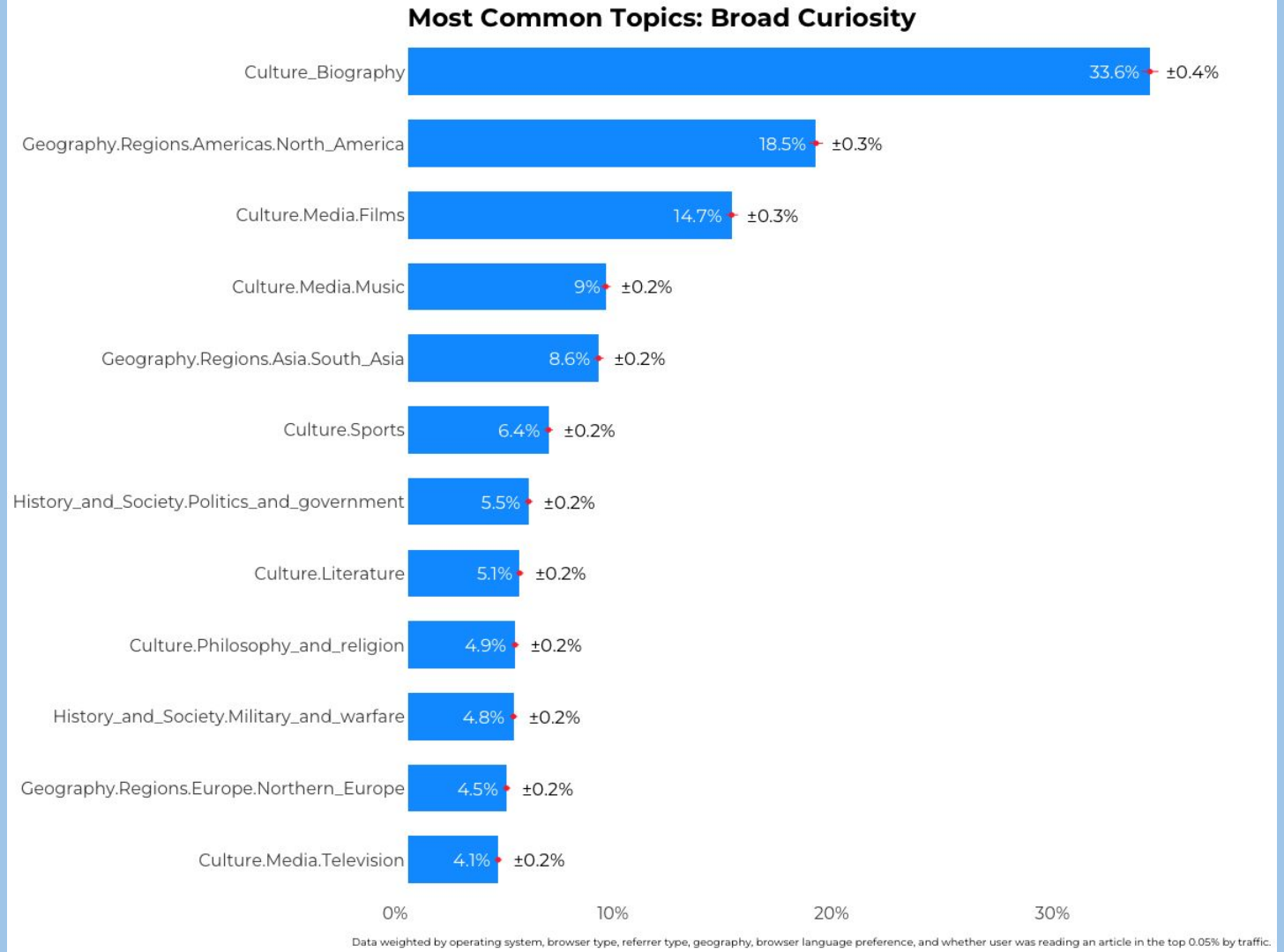
Nearly 60% of readers performing Broad Curiosity searches read articles about Culture, with a full third specifically looking at Biographies, such as film and music celebrities. Geography articles also make up a large portion of this use case's readership with a focus on North America and South Asia.

"Information on cast from The Love Boat.... I like to look up the actors and actresses from different programs and see what their life experiences have been."

The mindset users are in, and what's important to them:

This use case stems from an interest in a broader topic area rather than a specific informational goal. Since the starting point is more general, users follow threads of interesting information as they encounter them. Success for this pattern is subjective: users feel satisfied simply by reading something they found interesting, regardless of how deeply they engage with the material.

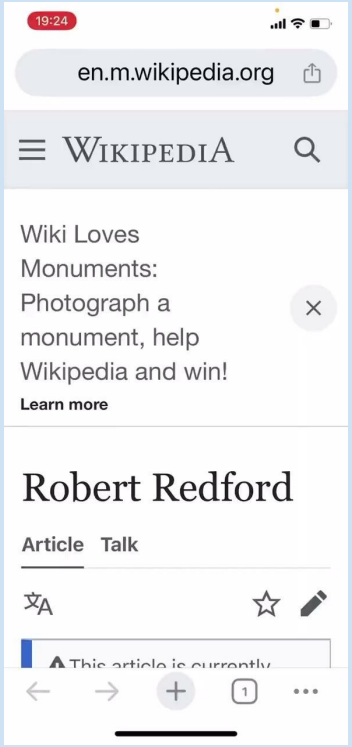
"I was looking up information on George Lucas and his new museum... I am a fan of that art."


Most Common Topics: Broad Curiosity
Culture_Biography
33.6%
±0.4%
Geography.Regions.Americas.North_America
18.5%
±0.3%
Culture.Media.Films
14.7%
±0.3%
Culture.Media.Music
9%
±0.2%
Geography.Regions.Asia.South_Asia
8.6%
±0.2%
Culture.Sports
6.4%
±0.2%
History_and_Society.Politics_and_government
5.5%
±0.2%
Culture.Literature
5.1%
±0.2%
Culture.Philosophy_and_religion
4.9%
±0.2%
History_and_Society.Military_and_warfare
4.8%
±0.2%
Geography.Regions.Europe.Northern_Europe
4.5%
±0.2%
Culture.Media.Television
4.1%
±0.2%
0%
10%
20%
30%
Data weighted by operating system, browser type, referrer type, geography, browser language preference, and whether user was reading an article in the top 0.05% by traffic.

Broad Curiosity

57% of all sessions

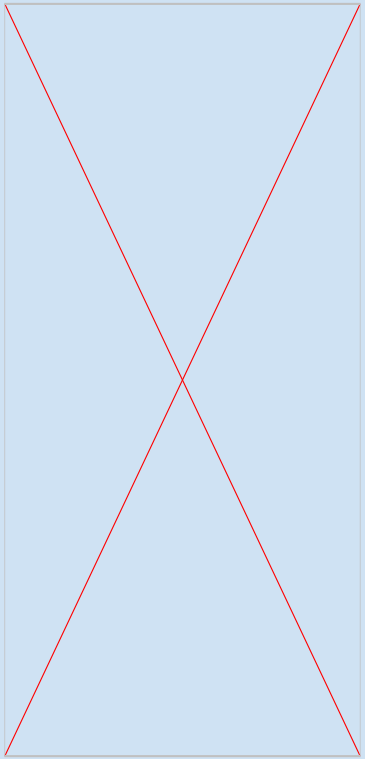
Successful session example



P3 reads the biography of the recently deceased Robert Redford.

She reads through his Career section first and then scrolls up to read the Early Life and Education section.

Unsuccessful session example



P4 looks for information on how Eucalyptus oil works as a decongestant as well as the history of its use.

He reads through the three subsections, but doesn't find anything related to nose care. While he does find some information on the history of Eucalyptus, he doesn't find anything around it's use as a decongestant and therefore deems this an unsuccessful search.

Broad Curiosity

57% of all sessions

Opportunities

- In Broad Curiosity sessions, readers can follow a direct path to their originally intended topic, or they may find themselves following navigational twists and turns as new curiosities and rabbit holes open up along the way. To aid the latter, **encourage further topic exploration through new and improved in-article discovery features**, such as moving Related Articles further up the page.

Specific Task

7.1% of all sessions

Topic areas: More balanced: Culture (44.8%), Geography (41.7%), STEM (25.0%)
Top topics (2nd-3rd level): Biography (21.4%), South Asia (15.1%)
Distinctive topics: Politics & Govt (5.8%), Biology (5.5%), Tech (4.7%)

"[I looked for] White louse-like pests on Eonymous plant/tree, the Japanese and European varieties... I just noticed a plague on my plants from that family of shrubs."

What sort of things people are looking for and why:

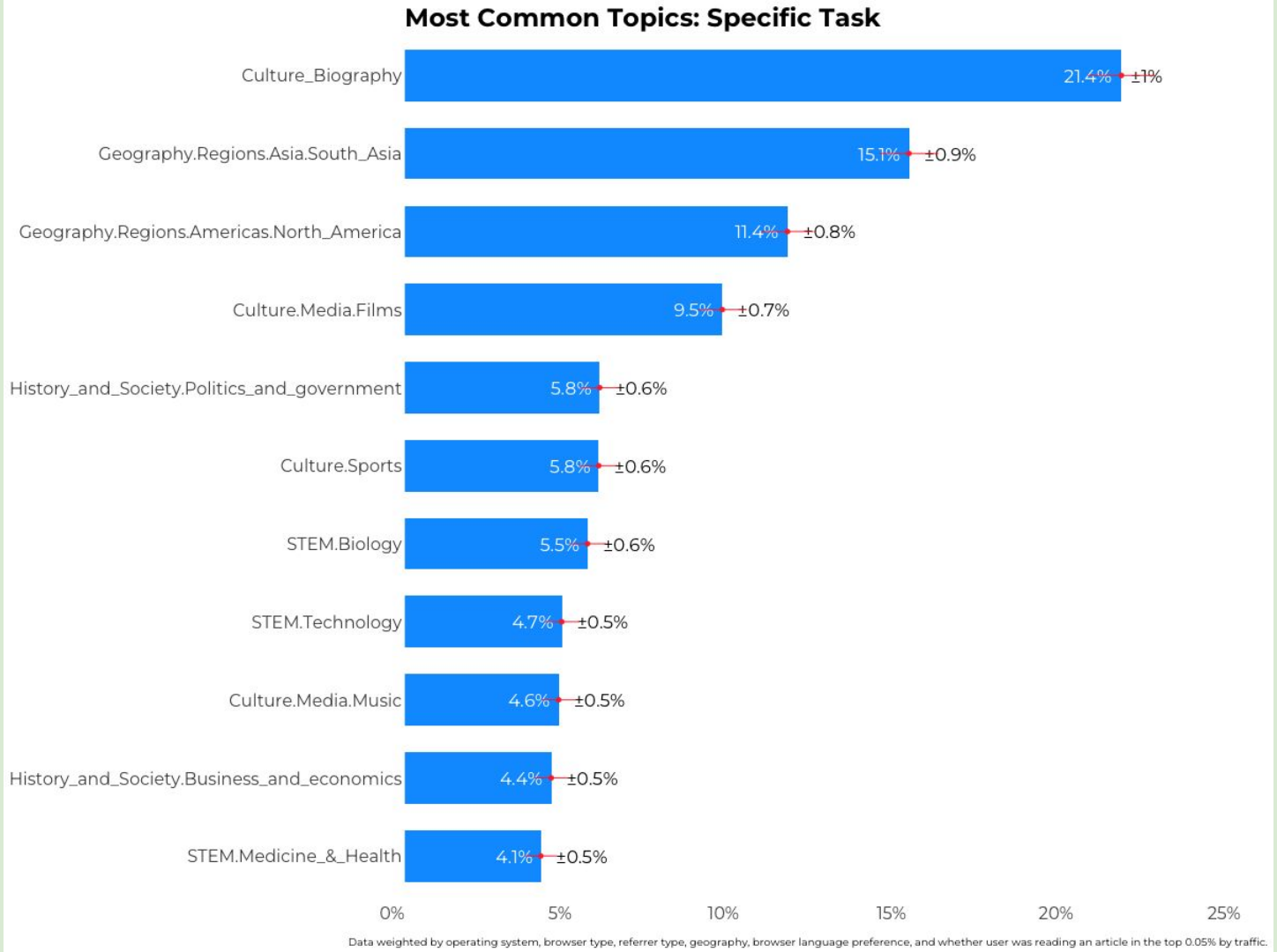
Unlike both Curiosities, Specific Tasks are more varied in their article topics. Culture topics - and Biographies within that - are still the most common though, with Geography close behind. While still a small percentage of visits, Politics & Government, Biology, and Tech articles are more common for this use case than other use cases.

"[I searched for] Lee Majors... I want to see his hometown... [for] site seeing."

The mindset users are in, and what's important to them:

Similar to Specific Curiosity, users seek a specific piece of information, but in this case they have a concrete intended purpose for it. This practical context elevates the importance of accuracy, as users plan to apply what they find to a specific task or decision.

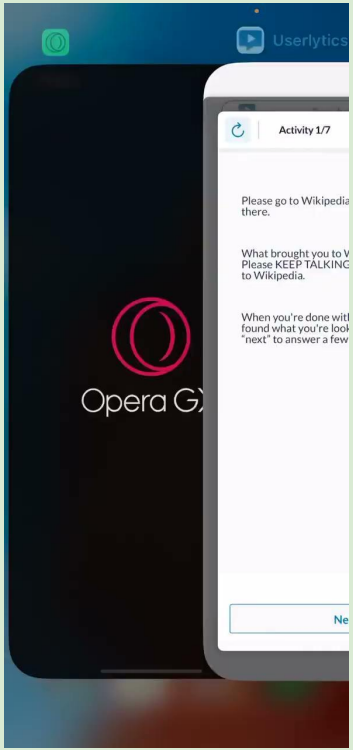
"I'm researching the descendants of Robert the Bruce and of the Stewarts of Scotland... I would like to verify ancestors for a friend in creating her genealogy."


Most Common Topics: Specific Task
Culture_Biography
21.4%
±1%
Geography.Regions.Asia.South_Asia
15.1%
±0.9%
Geography.Regions.Americas.North_America
11.4%
±0.8%
Culture.Media.Films
9.5%
±0.7%
History_and_Society.Politics_and_government
5.8%
±0.6%
Culture.Sports
5.8%
±0.6%
STEM.Biology
5.5%
±0.6%
STEM.Technology
4.7%
±0.5%
Culture.Media.Music
4.6%
±0.5%
History_and_Society.Business_and_economics
4.4%
±0.5%
STEM.Medicine_&_Health
4.1%
±0.5%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
Data weighted by operating system, browser type, referrer type, geography, browser language preference, and whether user was reading an article in the top 0.05% by traffic.

Specific Task

7.3% of all sessions

Successful session example



P4 looks for the temperature a PCB burns to prevent accidents.

He searches [PCB Wikipedia] on Google and is directed to an unofficial disambiguation page. He finds this page confusing but quickly sees a blue link to the relevant topic - Printed Circuit Board. On the article page, he is unsure which subsection will have the information he is looking for. He eventually finds the temperature.

Unsuccessful session example

P1 searches for information on Spanish copyright laws for cartoons.

His initial Google search [patent Spain Wikipedia] leads him to an article on the Spanish Patent and Trademark Office, not information on the patent process. He searches on Wikipedia but continues to use “patent” which is the incorrect legal term - he should be using the term “copyright.” Another natural-language Google search leads him to a relevant Wikipedia article on copyright laws, but lacks information about Spanish law.

Specific Task

7.3% of all sessions

Opportunities

- As with Specific Curiosities, what could help users the most is more **support in getting to the answer faster**. As mentioned earlier, clear structured data, site navigation, and article navigation are all important. Improved search features would also help.

Broad Task

8.0% of all sessions

Topic areas: More balanced: Culture (44.3%), Geography (40.5%), STEM (25.1%)
Top topics (2nd-3rd level): Biography (23.5%), South Asia (14.5%), North America (12.3%), Films (8.6%)
Distinctive topics: Politics & Govt (6.6%), Medicine & Health (5.4%), Biology (5.2%)

"Information about biology and the internal works of the immune system... I'm making a video game about the immune system."

What sort of things people are looking for and why:

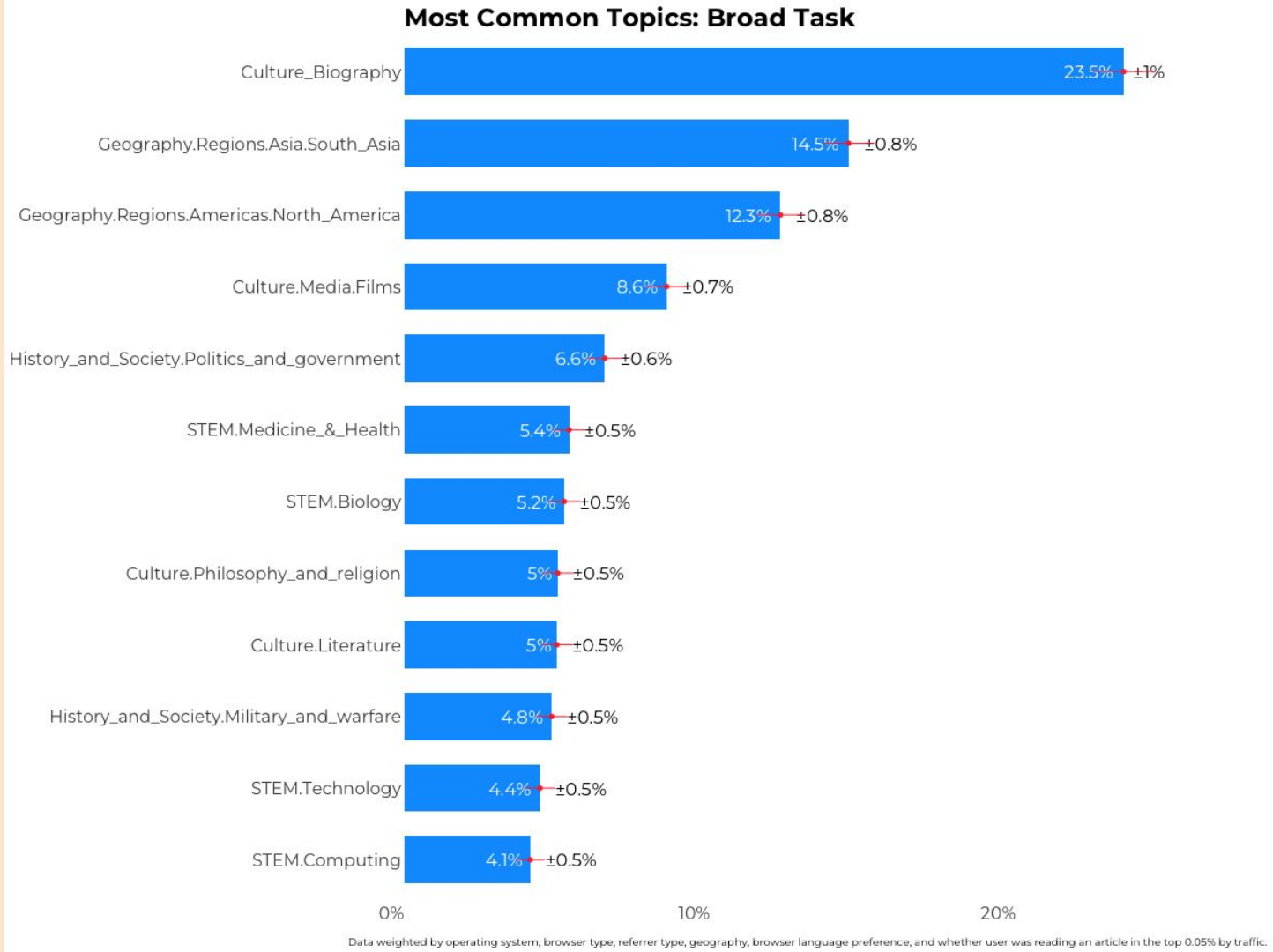
Culture, and Biographies within that topical bucket, are also the most common topics for Broad Task. The most distinctive topics of interest for this use case (as compared to the other use cases) are Politics & Government, Medicine & Health, and Biology.

"Information about tourist events/activities in states surrounding Massachusetts.... [for] planning future trips."

The mindset users are in, and what's important to them:

Users seek information on a broad topic area for a specific purpose. This use case is more likely to be characterized by a desire for detailed information and an emphasis on accuracy, as users intend to apply what they learn to a particular task or goal.

"General information about Pakistani entertainment industry and artists... to find interesting shows to add in watch list."


Most Common Topics: Broad Task
Culture_Biography
23.5%
±1%
Geography.Regions.Asia.South_Asia
14.5%
±0.8%
Geography.Regions.Americas.North_America
12.3%
±0.8%
Culture.Media.Films
8.6%
±0.7%
History_and_Society.Politics_and_government
6.6%
±0.6%
STEM.Medicine_&_Health
5.4%
±0.5%
STEM.Biology
5.2%
±0.5%
Culture.Philosophy_and_religion
5%
±0.5%
Culture.Literature
5%
±0.5%
History_and_Society.Military_and_warfare
4.8%
±0.5%
STEM.Technology
4.4%
±0.5%
STEM.Computing
4.1%
±0.5%
0%
10%
20%
Data weighted by operating system, browser type, referrer type, geography, browser language preference, and whether user was reading an article in the top 0.05% by traffic.

Broad Task

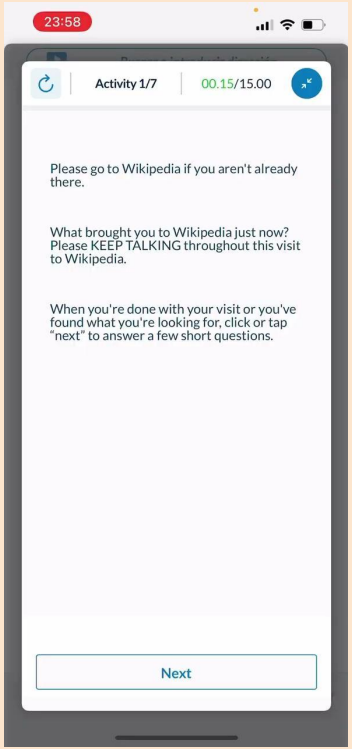
8.2% of all sessions

Successful session example

P5 looks for information on children's literature as background research for his own work on a children's book.

He starts his session reading the article on The Very Hungry Caterpillar and then follows the blue link to the author, Eric Carle, to find information on his other work. He quickly reads articles on a few other children's books, including The Tale of Peter Rabbit.

Unsuccessful session example



P1 researches Nano Banana as preparation for a meeting the next day on AI.

He quickly finds the article on Nano Banana via a Google search, but the article lacks some of the information he is looking for such as price. He searches on Wikipedia [nano banana price], but still doesn't find pricing information. He then searches on Google and finds the information in the AI overview.

Broad Task

8.2% of all sessions

Opportunities

- Users need **support in organizing and synthesizing the information** they need for their task, as they learn and make connections from information scattered across multiple articles. Features to aid in this would help them.

- Make it easier for readers to make mental connections between articles by reminding them **how they got to the article** in the first place, be it the Wikipedia search query or previous article visited displayed as breadcrumbs.
    - Right now, clicking a blue link and then the back button brings the reader to the beginning of the article - not where they just were. This means that every time a reader clicks a blue link they lose their place in the original article. This can be especially frustrating if it's an anchor article* and/or for readers on mobile where tab usage is more cumbersome. Consider making the back button dynamically return the reader to where they were in the article when they return.

**see more about Anchor articles in the Understanding user needs for Deep Reading Research Study*

WIKIMEDIA FOUNDATION

VI.

How very engaged readers see Wikipedia's strengths, weaknesses, and how it compares to other apps/sites

Things to keep in mind with these findings

- These findings com from the hour-long follow-up interviews with 7 of the diary study participants.
- They come from self-reported **daily active** readers of Wikipedia – their views do not represent the majority of Wikipedia readers who are not as engaged
- We still need to do further research on these topics with the broader population

Readers’ perceptions of Wikipedia

1. **Wikipedia has a formal tone and dense, mostly textual content. Finding what’s needed within this can be hard.**

   Participants submitting diary entries noted that:

   “there’s just a lot of text on screen . . .”
   “it requires a lot of scrolling . . .”
   “[information is] buried behind a lot of text . . .”

   In a follow-up interview, P5 described how Wikipedia’s dense text can sometimes make it difficult to find what they’re looking for, even if they know what information they’re trying to find:

   “[Wikipedia articles] ***can be very verbose. Granted, that's an expectation.*** *When I come to Wikipedia, I expect to find everything about a topic, but sometimes it does make it hard to find if I'm looking for just little tidbits of info about something, I won't always find it immediately. There's been a couple of times when I realized I have to scroll through the different headers. For example, if I'm looking up a general concept, but I want to know a specific small thing about that general concept, I can't directly type a question into Wikipedia, right? I have to look up that concept and then scan the article or maybe “control+F,” and I usually use it on my phone so I can't even “control+F” so I usually have to actually scan through the article . . .* ***I do experience just that wordiness can make it hard to immediately find what I'm looking for. But granted, I expect that when I'm coming to Wikipedia.”*** *- P5*

Readers’ perceptions of Wikipedia

2. **Engaged Wikipedia readers have high trust in Wikipedia content.**

   “At least in my eyes, [Wikipedia is] a trusted source. Like for really niche topics, I might go to websites where I don't know them, I haven't been there before, I don't know their like history. But obviously like Wikipedia, it's people who know those trusted websites. They go there and they get the information and write it down, so ***I know it's trustworthy****.” - P4*

   “I've always taken Wikipedia to be sort of quite honest *and I've always trusted the information sort of, which is unusual, because I don't trust much on the internet at all. I'm very skeptical. I mean, I do watch a lot of YouTube videos and I'm quite into sort of conspiracy theories, but I do realize that a lot of stuff you see, especially on YouTube, you've got to take sort of the pinch of salt.” - P8*

Readers’ perceptions of Wikipedia

3. **Wikipedia is a good place to start researching something.**

   Wikipedia was described by some diary study participants as a “search refinement” space to identify and understand concepts and terminology that they plan to deploy elsewhere online in more focused searches.

   *“I would say the, the **initial research is usually done on Wikipedia**, the finding what I need, what I should look up, if that makes sense, and then taking those terms, taking those names, taking those everything, then I **go back and do a big Google search** or something.” - P5*

   *“[Wikipedia] gave you a certain **starting point for information**, whether I was looking up a celebrity or a sports team or it gave me sort of a basis of information.” - P6*

Readers' perceptions of Wikipedia

4. **Wikipedia is a source for historical information, not current events.**

   Multiple participants noted that they don't visit Wikipedia for current events as they don't expect it to be updated yet. Instead, they think of Wikipedia as a place for historical, static information.

   *"If I want sort of facts, **old facts**, if I want sort of knowledge. Wikipedia is my is my number one go to. It's just convenient, it's easy." - P8*

   ***"Wikipedia is if you're looking for the history** on somebody. George Washington or some political figure or some event. That's gives you a very absolute historic ....information base." - P6*

What is Wikipedia “good” at?

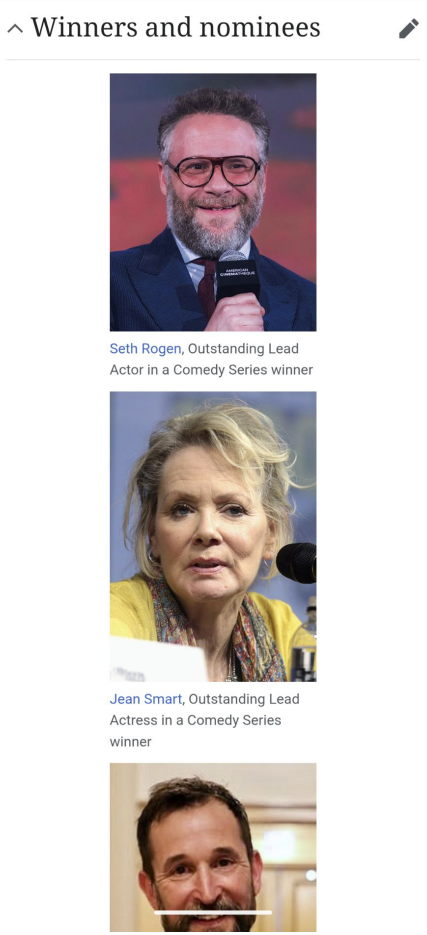
1. Biographies

> *“I often read about this [biographies] because again this is entertainment and I like to look into those kinds of things in my free time... Wikipedia is my go to place essentially to just get a grasp of all the sort of* ***general context to the person.”*** *- P2*

2. Comprehensive overviews

> ***“Wikipedia does a good job of sort of lining up an actor*** *or somebody in Hollywood – their past performances, and allows me to look at all the different things that they've done.” - P6*
>
> *“Now I see some pictures of some of the people that have actually won The Emmys, which is nice to see the actual faces so you can actually relate to who they are, because sometimes you know the actor, but you don't know their names. So I appreciate* ***the full information that they're giving me.”*** *- P3*

3. Lists - for example devices that use a specific 3D screen (P4)



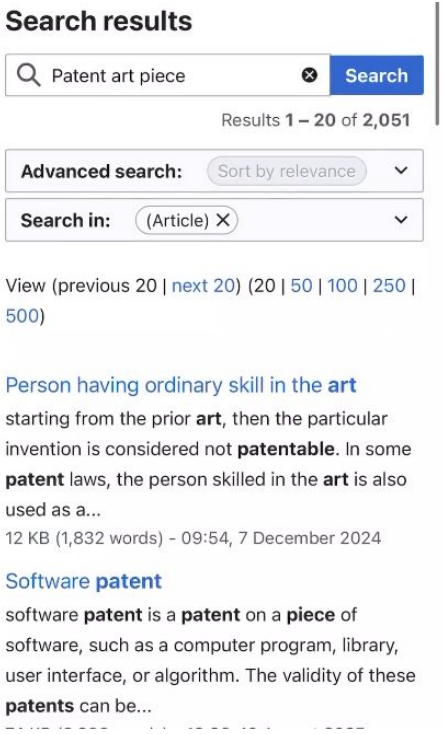
What is Wikipedia “bad” at?

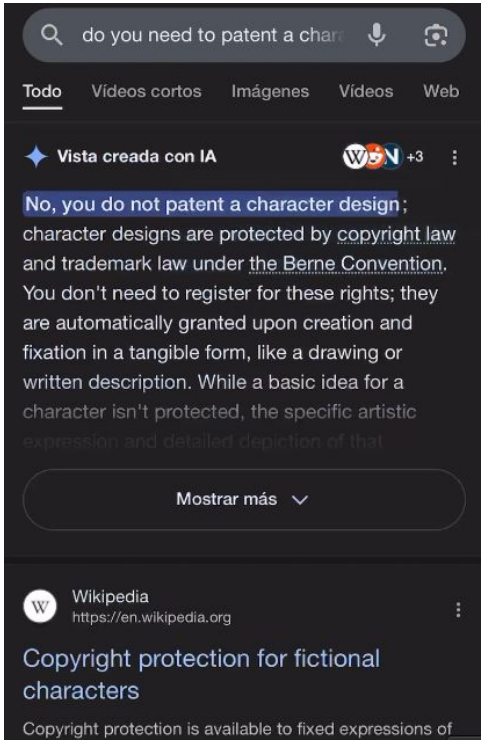
While participants were asked directly what Wikipedia was “bad” at, they found it difficult to answer directly. Instead, these findings are based on the challenges participants encountered organically when visiting Wikipedia as part of the diary study and/or follow-up moderated interviews.

1. **Site navigation - Search**

   P1 wants to know if they need to patent an animated character they created, trying multiple in-Wikipedia keyword searches. Eventually, they Googled a natural language question and located a session-ending article.

   *“Wikipedia search forces you to almost have the exact wording that is inside of the Wikipedia pages... **You can't just ask a question like you do on Google and get the Wikipedia searches that are relevant to that question**. ...That was the challenge for me to be able to find [the article]. It didn't just work with putting keywords in the Wikipedia search, but I had to actually write the whole question in Google, add ‘Wikipedia’ and then Google managed to find the Wikipedia page that related more to what I was asking.” - P1*





What is Wikipedia “bad” at?

2. In-article navigation - Finding specific information within long articles

Readers find it difficult to zero in on the section of the article most relevant to their needs. Many want to be able to search within the article for keywords that would make that process easier.

> *“I can't find a search button within the actual site that would let me try to find keywords. So for example I wanted to look for the word “fridge” inside all of the text that I was reading for a much faster finding of what I needed, and I don't think that exists. That makes it hard because it makes you have to really read through everything and* ***it takes time, which I don't usually have.”*** *- P1*

3. Navigating articles on a mobile device

> *“A challenge I did see was that* ***on a mobile device a lot of text could be quite jarring*** *and it did lead me to be lost a little bit while looking through the plot, etc. because there was just a lot of writing there, and I... couldn't distinguish, oh, am I in the section for the plot or am I in the section in the beginning with like a little introduction. It's kind of hard to distinguish that.” - P4*

4. Media

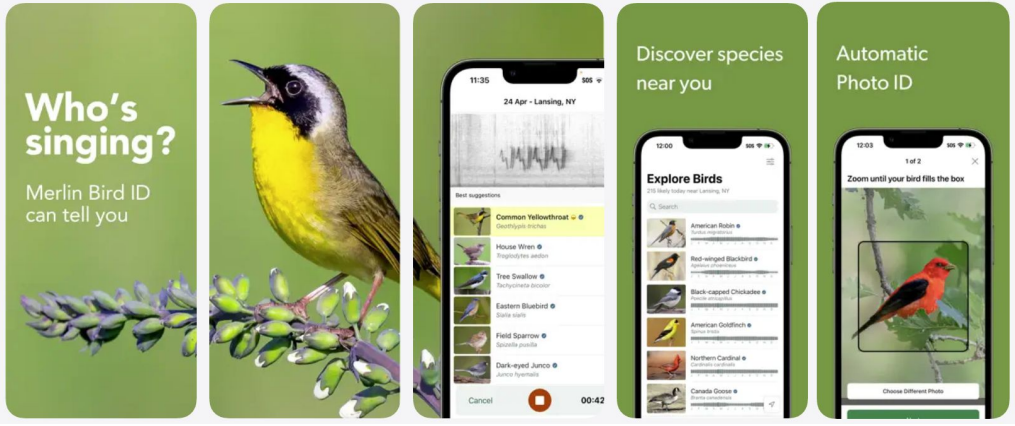
> *“I'd say the media side of Wikipedia is* ***lacking****.” - P8*

Wikipedia vs its “competition”?

For highly engaged readers, Wikipedia doesn’t have a one-for-one competitor, but rather competitive information sources that fit specific session needs. For *Curiosity* use cases, the competition can be based on the entertainment value, not the information itself. For *Task* use cases, the competition is **often topic-specific platforms**.

P6 was curious to find the **specific name of a bird** he saw outside his window - something he’d never done before. He searched on Wikipedia for Thai birds that resemble blue jays and magpies, but was unable to identify the bird based on the information on Wikipedia. He struggled with both onsite search and in-article navigation of the List of birds of Thailand article, wishing there was a way to view and compare images of birds side-by-side.

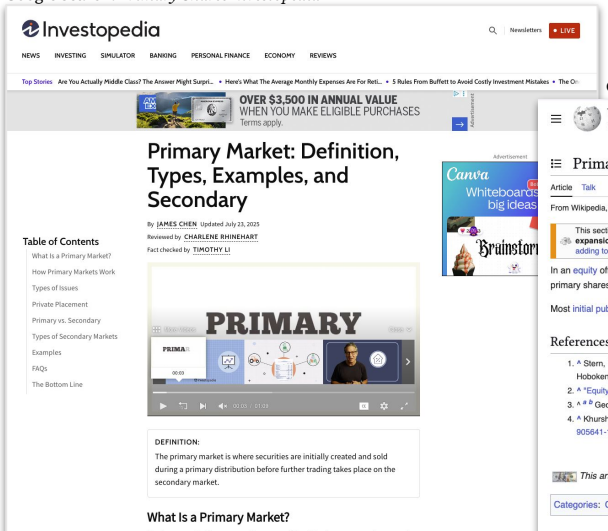
After abandoning Wikipedia, he discovered the **Merlin Bird ID app** which provides bird identification through uploaded photos.



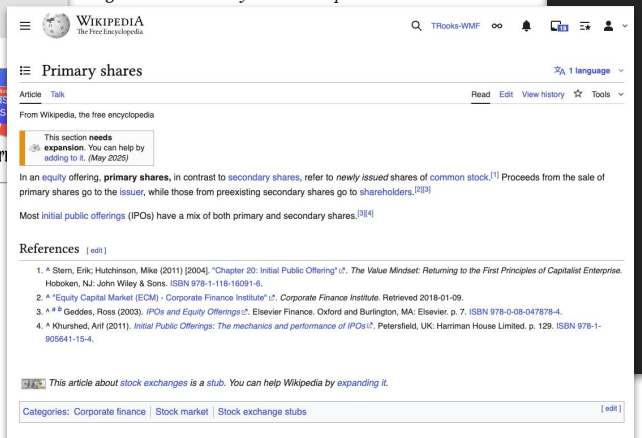
Wikipedia vs its “competition”?

P2 frequently searches online for **financial terms** so he is always in the loop at his job. His go-to’s are **Wikipedia, Investopedia.com and ChatGPT**, depending on his needs in the moment, as each offers different formats and depths of information. If he is in a hurry, a ChatGPT prompt will supply him with a quick, short definition of the term. If he has more time, Wikipedia and/or Investopedia.com provide a deeper discussion of the financial concept behind the term. Unlike the encyclopedic writing style of Wikipedia, Investopedia.com reads like a blog, with highlighted “Key Takeaways” and “Fast Facts” – which he finds useful for understanding topics.

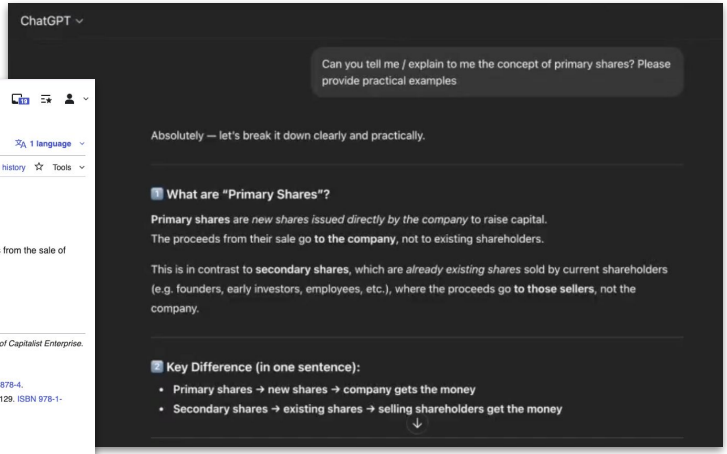
Google search: *Primary Shares Investopedia*



Google search: *Primary Shares Wikipedia*



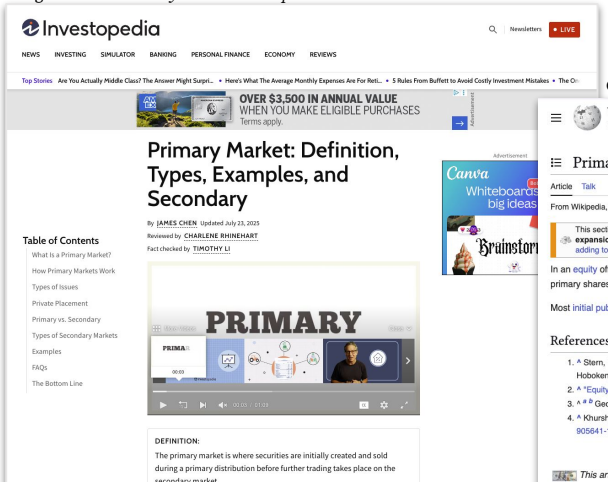
Chat GPT Prompt: *Can you tell me / explain to me the concept of primary shares? Please provide practical examples*



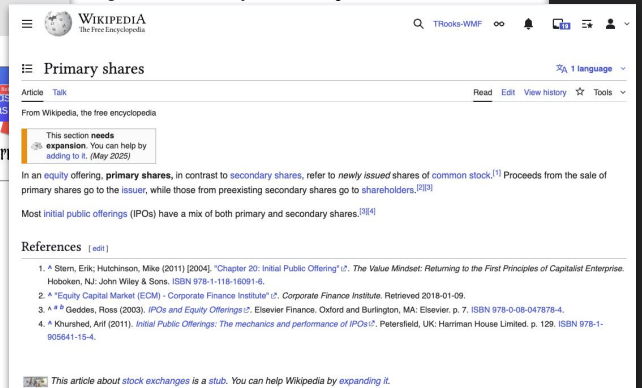
We prompted this participant to specifically compare the results of looking up “primary shares” (to brush up on his understanding of this concept – a real recent need he’d had for his job) – on Wikipedia, Investopedia.com and ChatGPT.

In this instance, the Primary Shares Wikipedia article is very short and lacks practical examples. This participant noted a preference for the Investopedia article over the other two, but caveated that he would look to ChatGPT if he had limited time which is often the case. While ChatGPT gives less information than Investopedia, it does so in a format that is easily understandable.

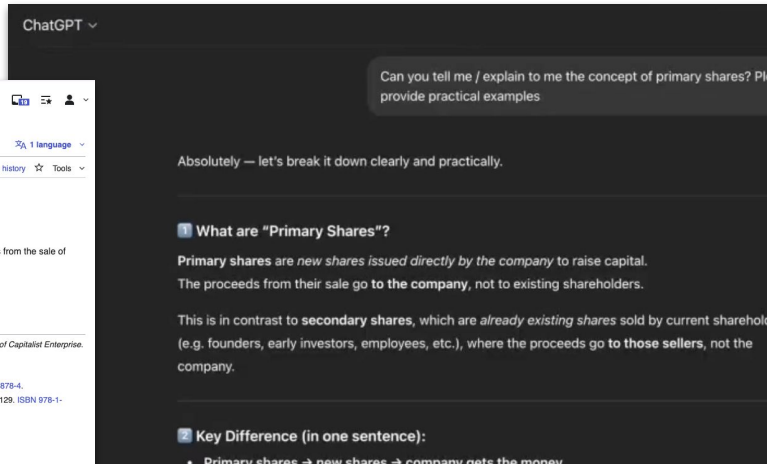
Google search: *Primary Shares Investopedia*



Google search: *Primary Shares Wikipedia*



Chat GPT Prompt: *Can you tell me / explain to me the concept of primary shares? Please provide practical examples*

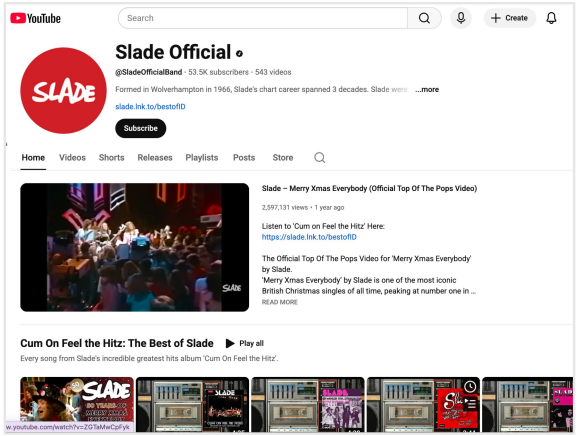


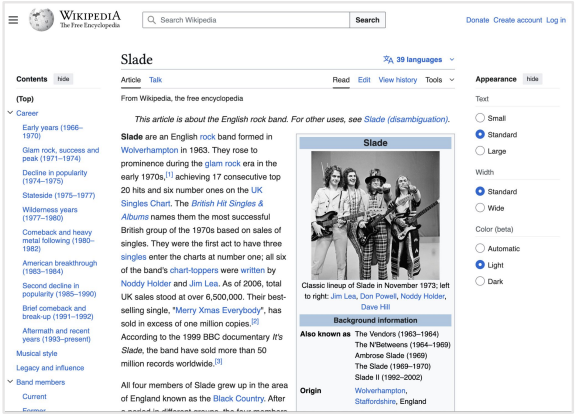
Wikipedia vs its “competition”?

Many sites commonly discussed as competitors to Wikipedia are often used in conjunction, rather than in its place.

> *“Once I'd looked at the information on **Wikipedia**, I went back onto **YouTube** to, you know, to actually see some videos of Slade in the 70s . . . I actually sort of [used] Wikipedia and YouTube to satisfy my needs . . . With Slade, I couldn't remember some of their early sort of songs, so I found the song on sort of their discography on Wikipedia, and then I took the song and entered it into YouTube as a search, like I'd seen the sort of video from 1972 or something like that. **So I was sort of using both in combination**.” - P8*

P7 often looks up **medical conditions** online on a variety of sites: **Reddit, NHS.uk, Wikipedia as well as medical center sites like MayoClinic.org**. She will search the same symptom or condition in all of these places to build a complete understanding as well as compare the results, never relying on just one source.

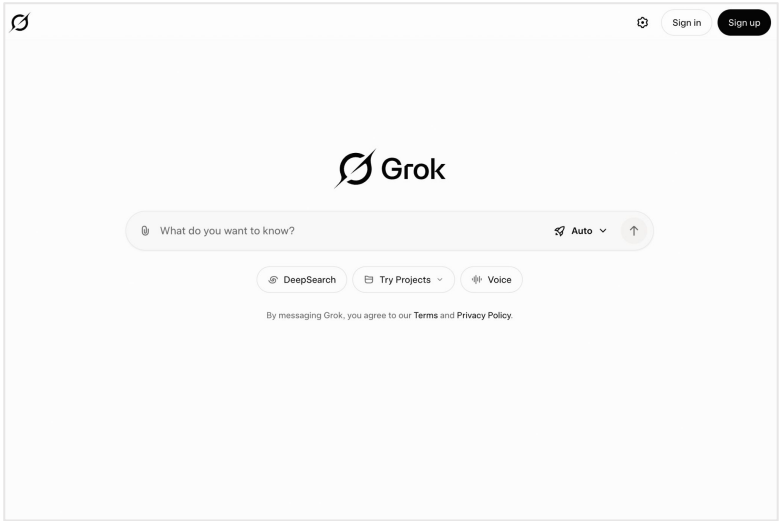




The recent proliferation of AI tools

One participant – a longtime, dedicated reader – organically noted “a very quick change” in how much less often they use Wikipedia since the proliferation of AI tools. Changes in behaviors and perceptions of this are something we should keep tabs on in future research.

“If I use Grok, for example, it cites Wikipedia as being one of their information sources.... whereas **in the past, I would just go straight to Wikipedia** and not have this large language model suck up all the information into one spot.... I would have to say less than 50% of the time, I will go to the Wikipedia link or information to see what it says. In the past, I would almost always [click through]. Within the last year, I would almost always start at Wikipedia. So it's been a **very quick change for me to go from Wikipedia to other sources of information.**” - P6*



*Note: This interview took place before the release of Grokipedia

Wikipedia vs AI

Other diary study participants reported that they sometimes actively avoid using AI tools out of concern for the cognitive or behavioral damage that those tools might do:

> *“Keep my brain at least a little imaginative [by not relying on AI]” - P5*

> *“AI doesn't have creativity because it's just drawing on what's already been created by humans, but I feel like I might use it to just check what I've written.” - P4*

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VII. Summary & conclusions

Implications: Task and Curiosity dimension

- **With most visits (80%) having the goal of satisfying curiosity rather than to get something done — we should consider prioritizing and deepening investments in product efforts that are about further satisfying curiosity (e.g. things like 'Read More' suggestions at the end of articles).**
- **When we see people click through from Google Search to Wikipedia* with a curiosity, it's likely more than just a very simple or small curiosity (simple and small ones can often be met from the Google Search results page itself). How might we better support and further serve users who are in that strong curiosity mindset, on Wikipedia?**
- **Many curiosities are about notable people in popular culture; tasks are more done by young people/students: how might we create features to better support these specific opportunities?**

**Remember: 78% of Wikipedia sessions originate from search engines, with 90% of those being from Google Search*

Implications: Specific vs. Broad; One-off vs Recurring

- **Continue to highlight commonly-sought information early in articles in an expected format (e.g. in Infobox)**
- **Improve in-article navigation so users can hone in on the specific information they are looking for in the article (e.g. by providing an in-article search function)**
- **Wikipedia offers a richly-textured landscape for exploration—although many or most 'specific' queries might be satisfied before the reader arrives at Wikipedia, curiosity-driven readers are often here to explore.**
- **Recurring readers are good candidates for personalized or customized experiences.** They've found something that brings them back to Wikipedia, and when they come back for it, they stay for longer and experience more success than one-off readers. How might we invest more in this, as part of the Reader strategy?

Wrapping up

- **An updated framework of reading sessions** to support a shared understanding of what readers are trying to do on Wikipedia;
- **Most reading sessions are born of curiosity**—most people reading at any given time are engaging in *some* kind of low-stakes exploration;
- **Very engaged readers generally trust Wikipedia**, but information-seeking habits are changing and even our dedicated readers have noticed a change in their reading patterns.

Next up:

A longer survey to answer more deeply “when and why do people use other apps/sites for these same needs?”, exploring how our retained readers compare to less-frequent readers.

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Thank you!

Questions?

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Appendix

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Participant details

Video diary study - participant details

Demographics

Age	
18 - 24	1
25 - 34	3
35 - 44	1
45 - 54	1
55 - 64	0
65+	2

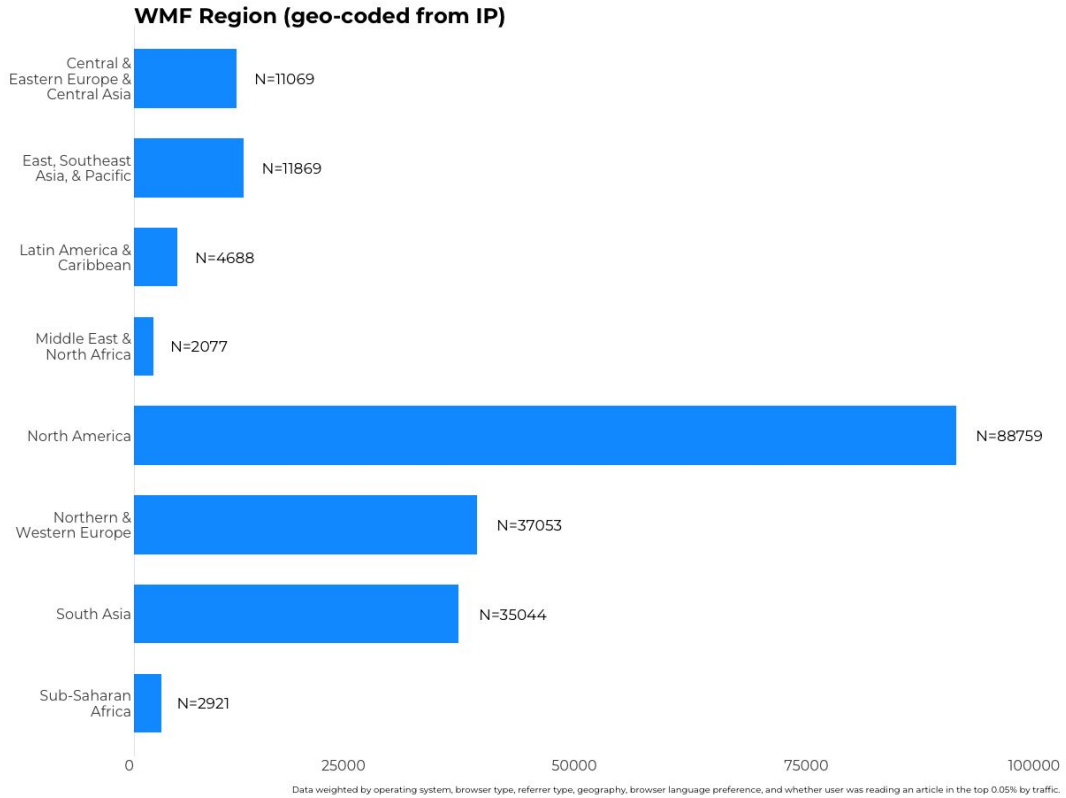
Self-Identified Gender	
Male	6
Female	2

Country	
Spain	2
UK	2
Colombia	1
Thailand	1
Turkey	1
USA	1

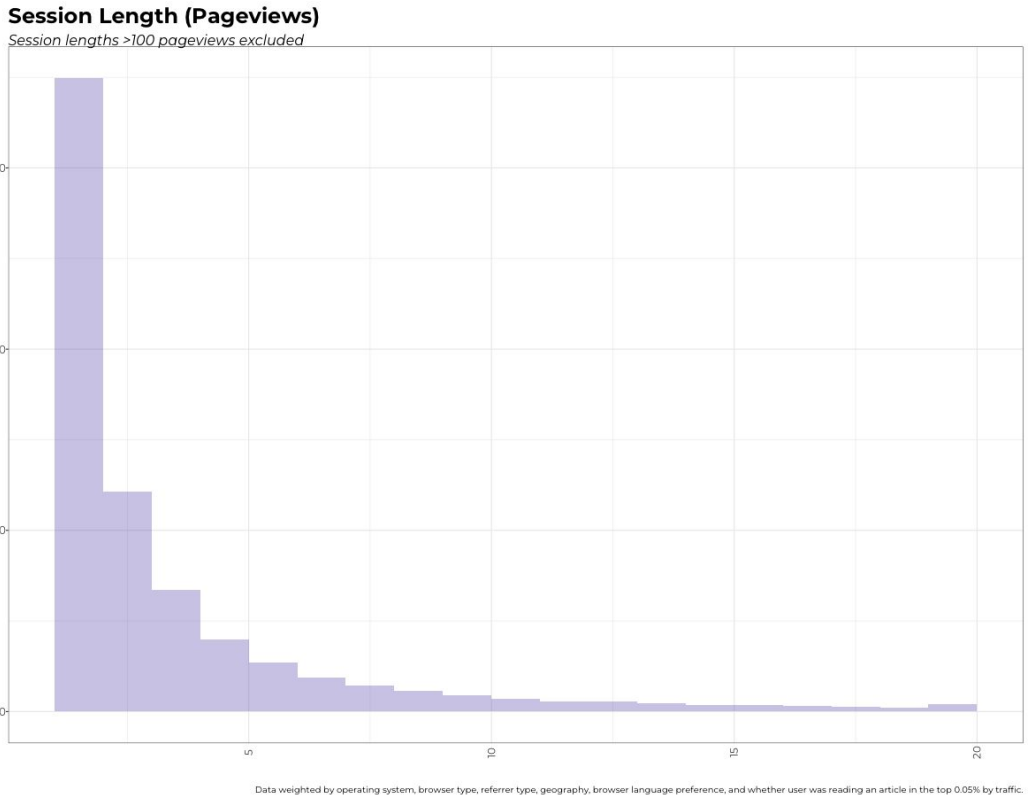
Have you ever added, changed, or edited anything in a Wikipedia article?	
No	5
Yes, once or twice	2
Yes, a few times	1
Yes, many times	0
I'm not sure	0

How often do you visit Wikipedia?	
Never	0
A few times per year	0
A few times per month	0
A few times per week	0
Every day	8
I'm not sure	0

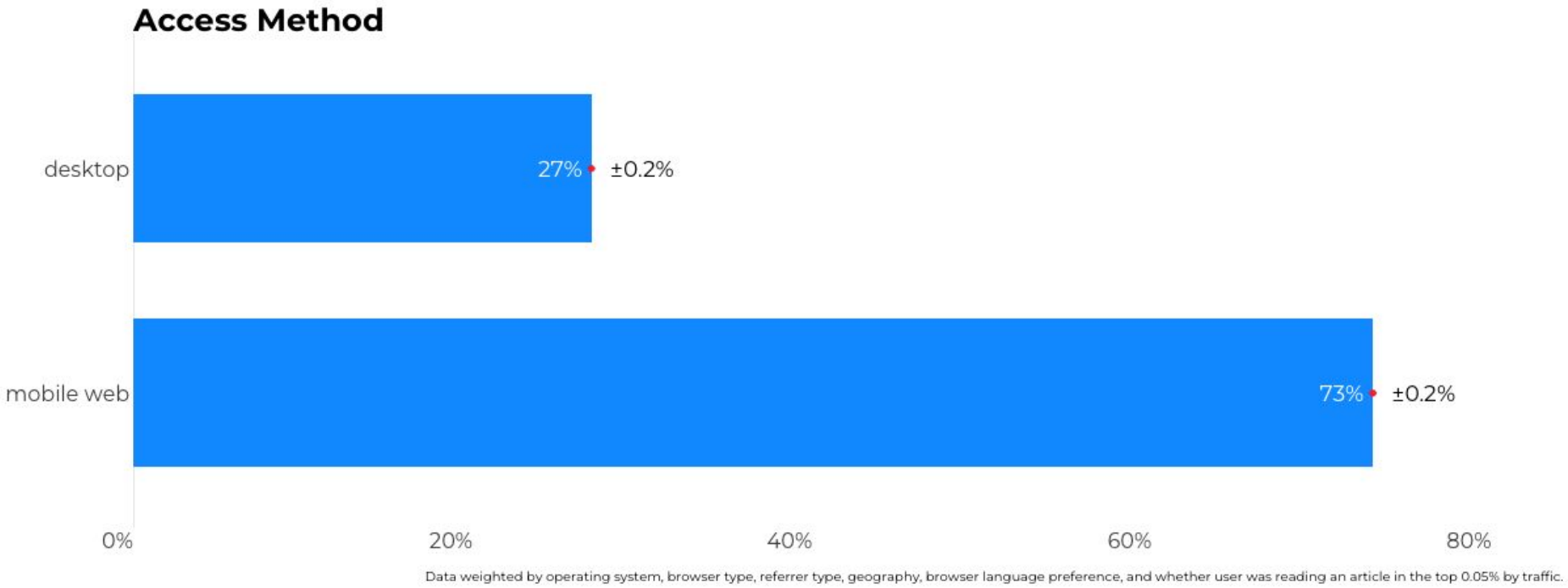
Respondents by WMF Region (closed-ended survey)



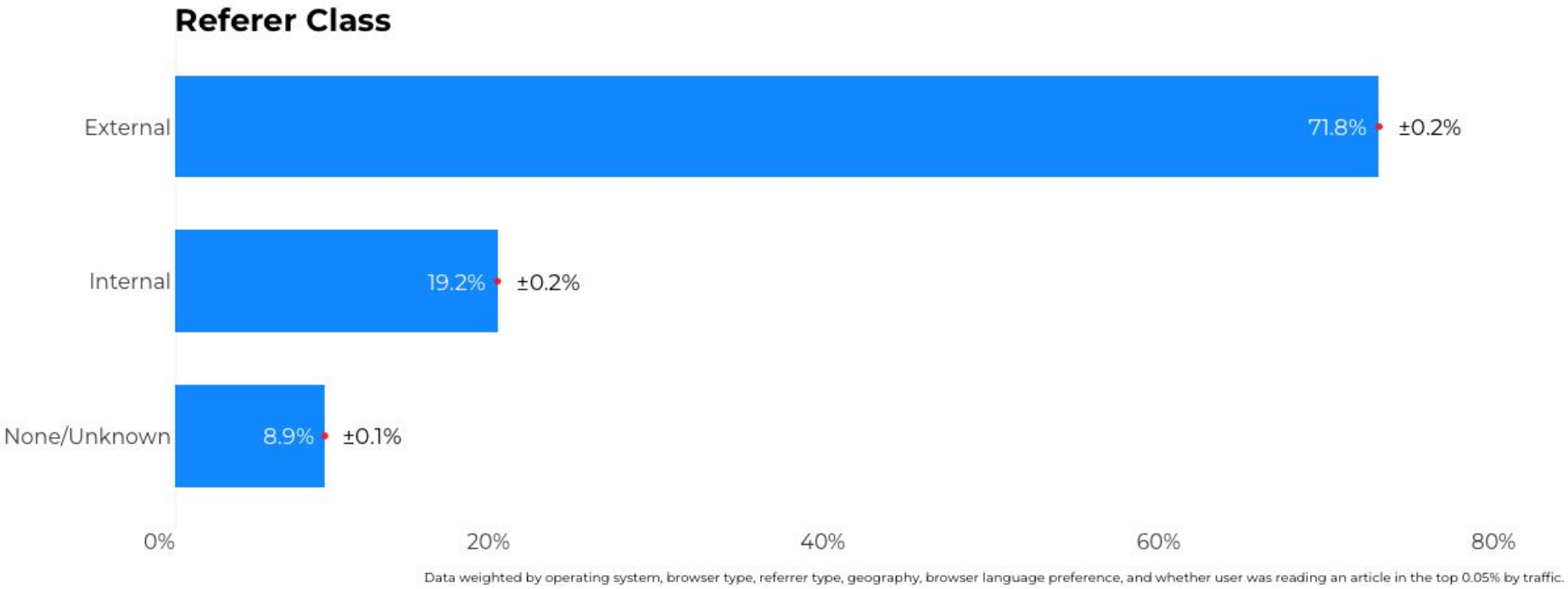
Most-common sessions were 1 page long



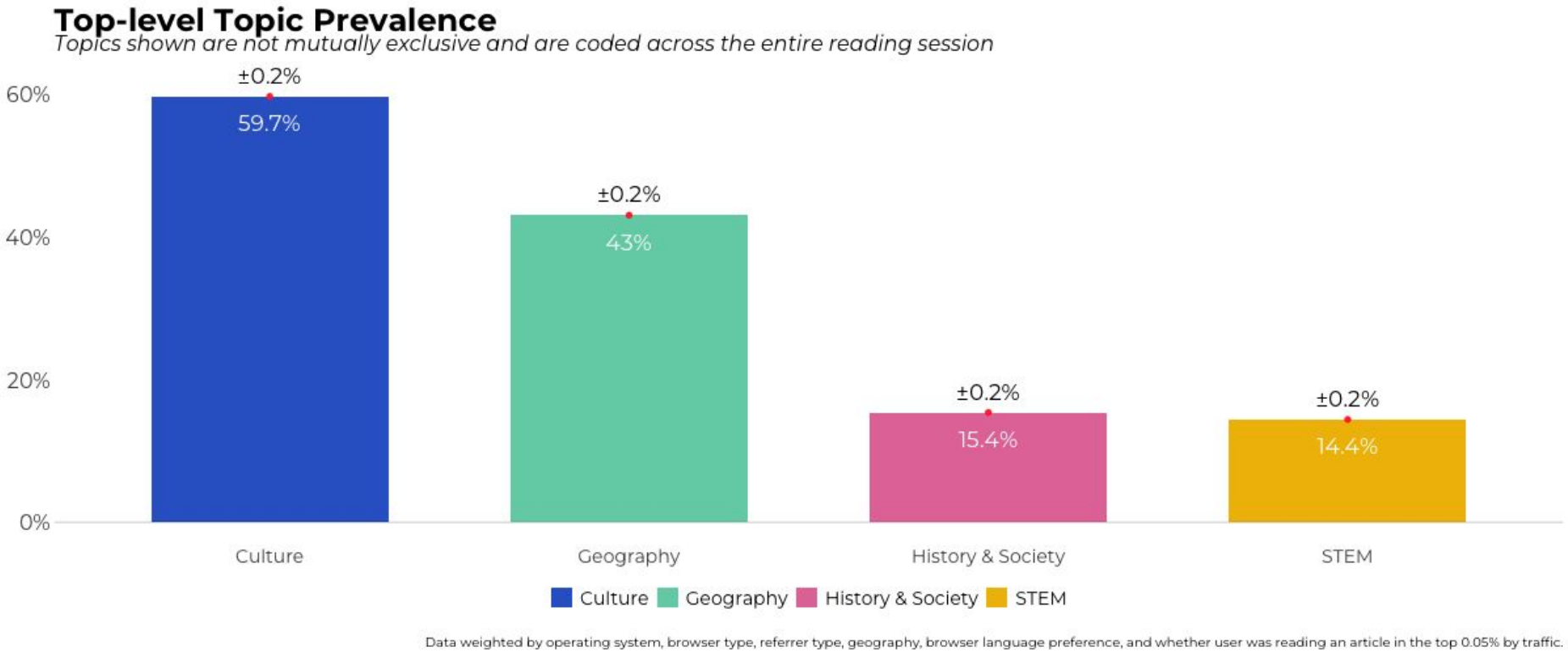
Mobile respondents >> Desktop respondents



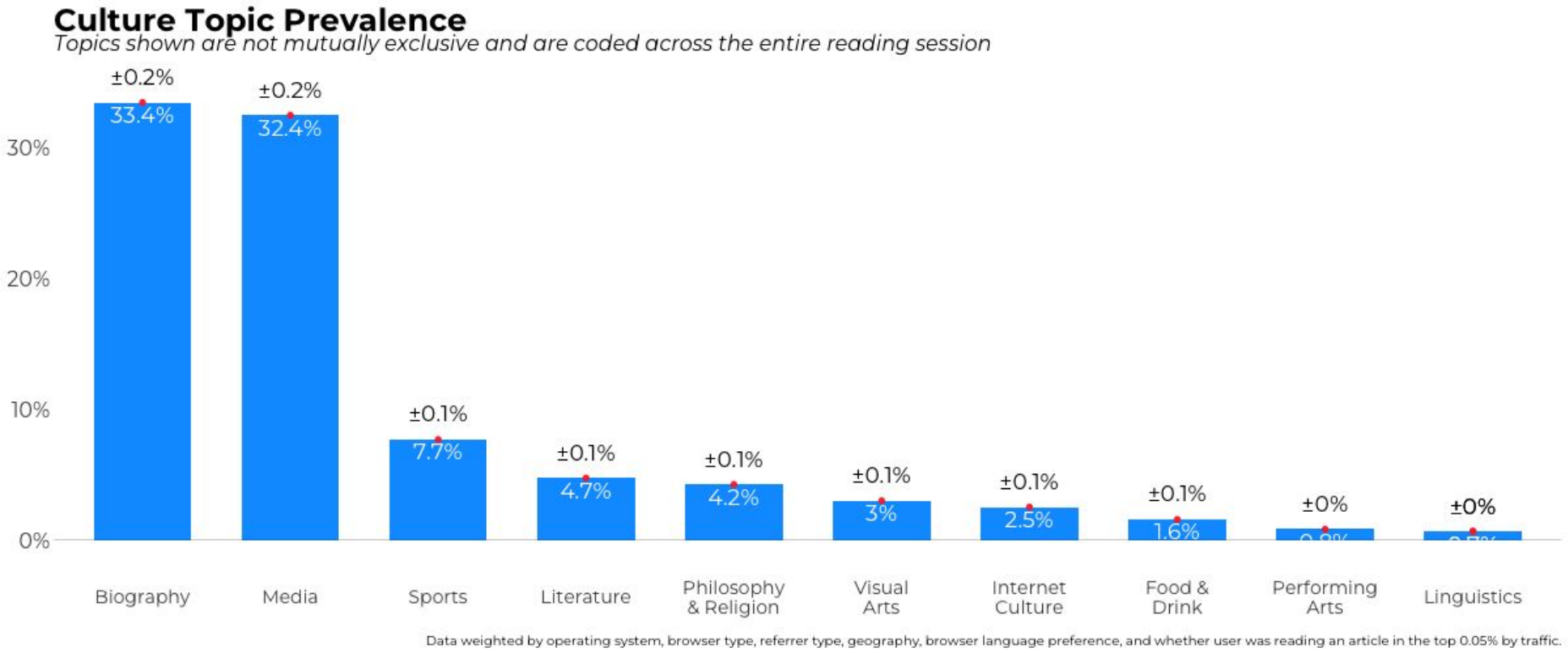
Most respondents are externally-referred



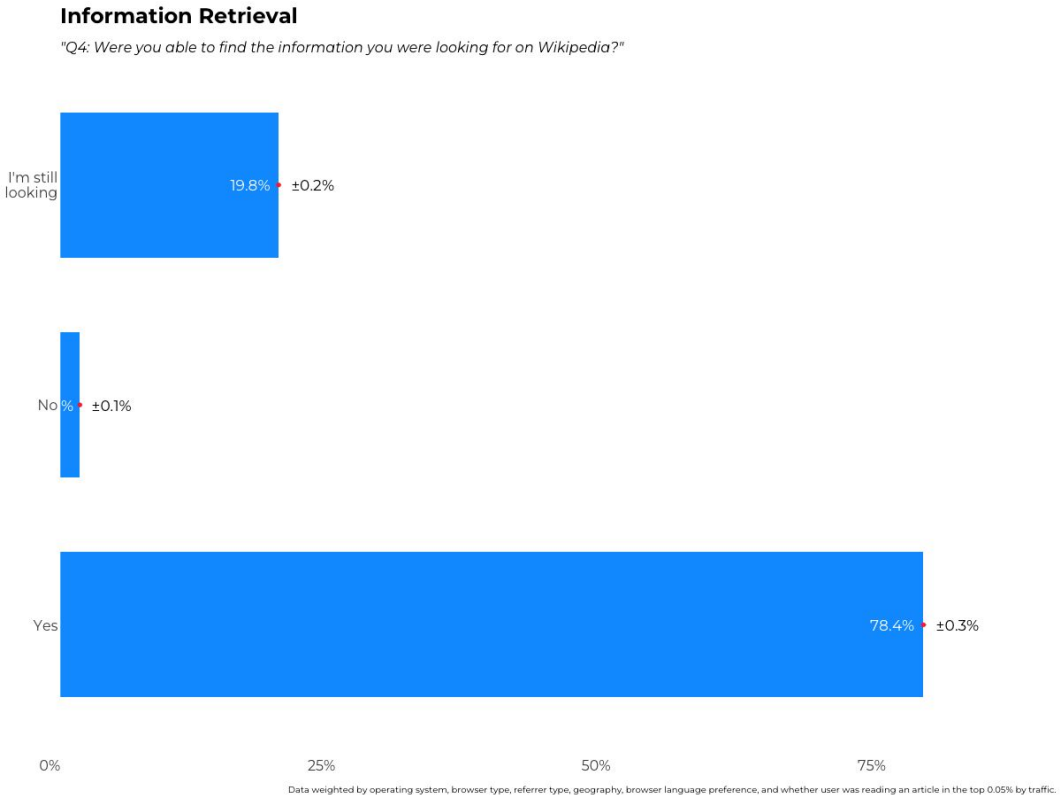
Culture topics are most commonly-read



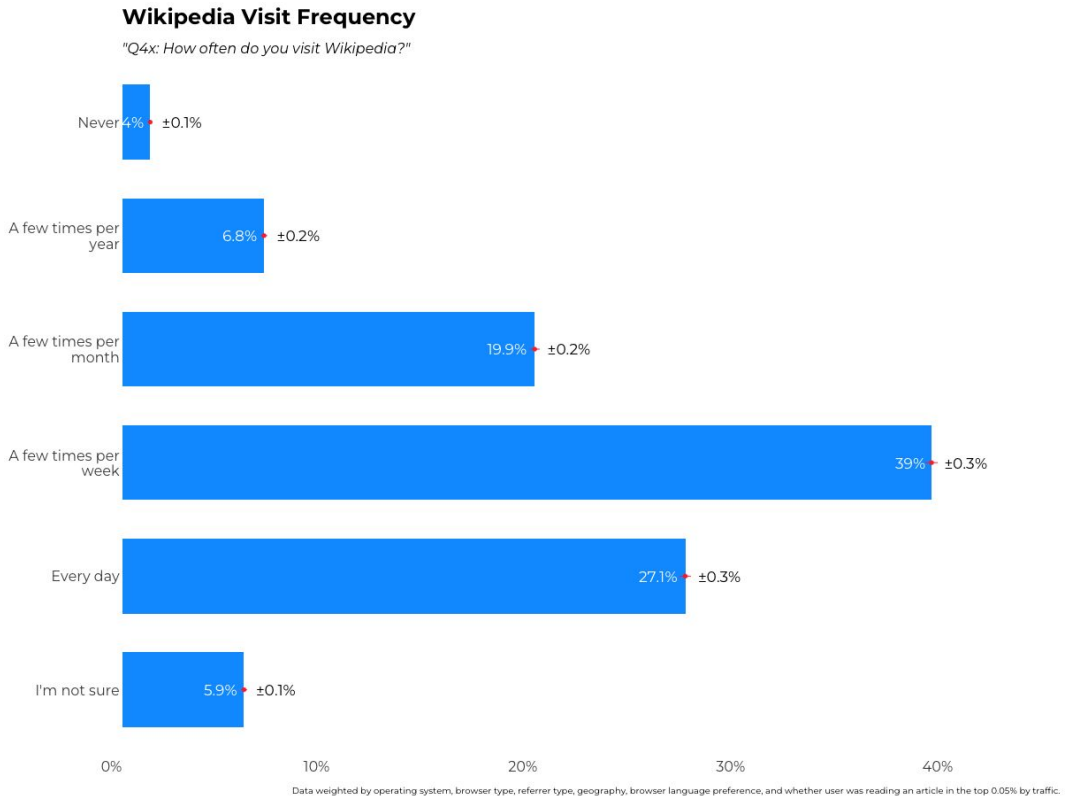
Within Culture, Biography and Media are most common



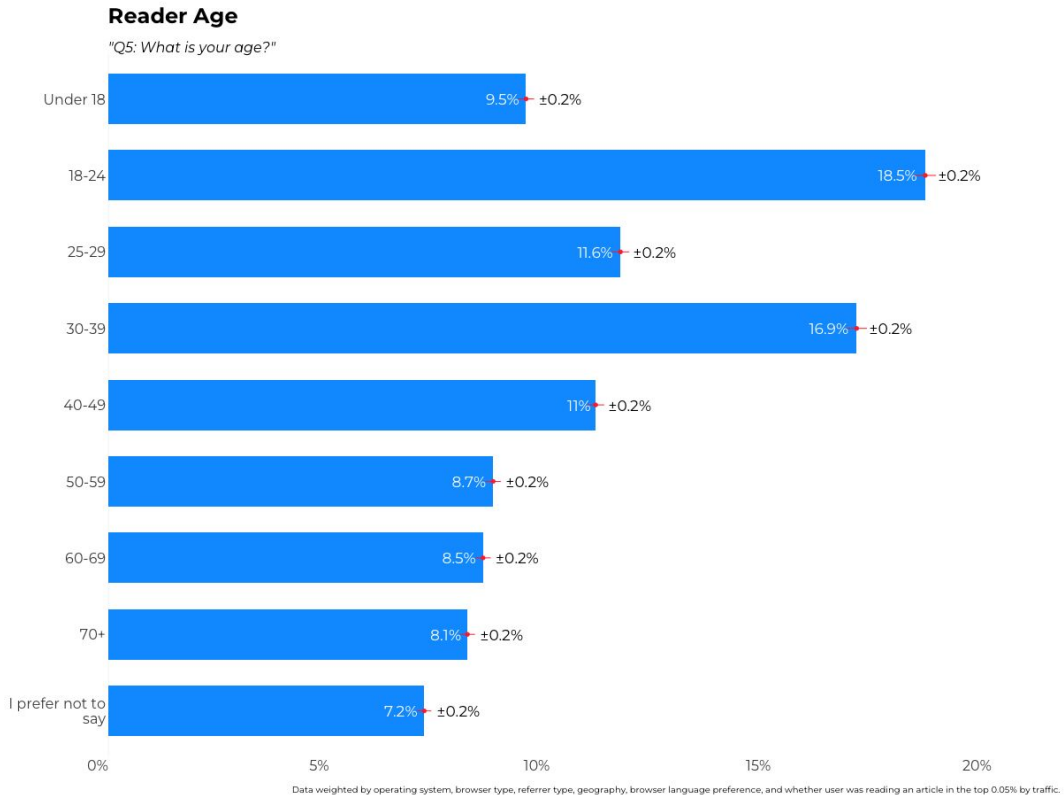
Very few readers say they can’t find the information they’re seeking on Wikipedia



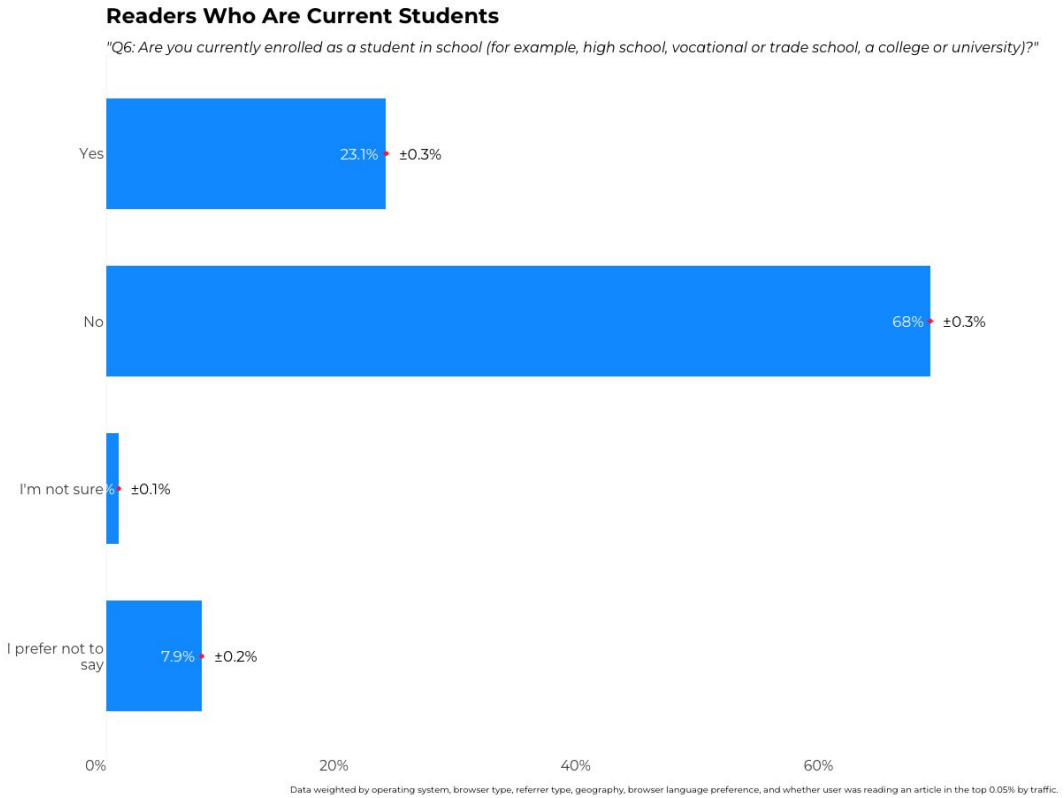
Most readers visit at least a few times / week



About 40% of readers <30; skews older than 2024 GRS

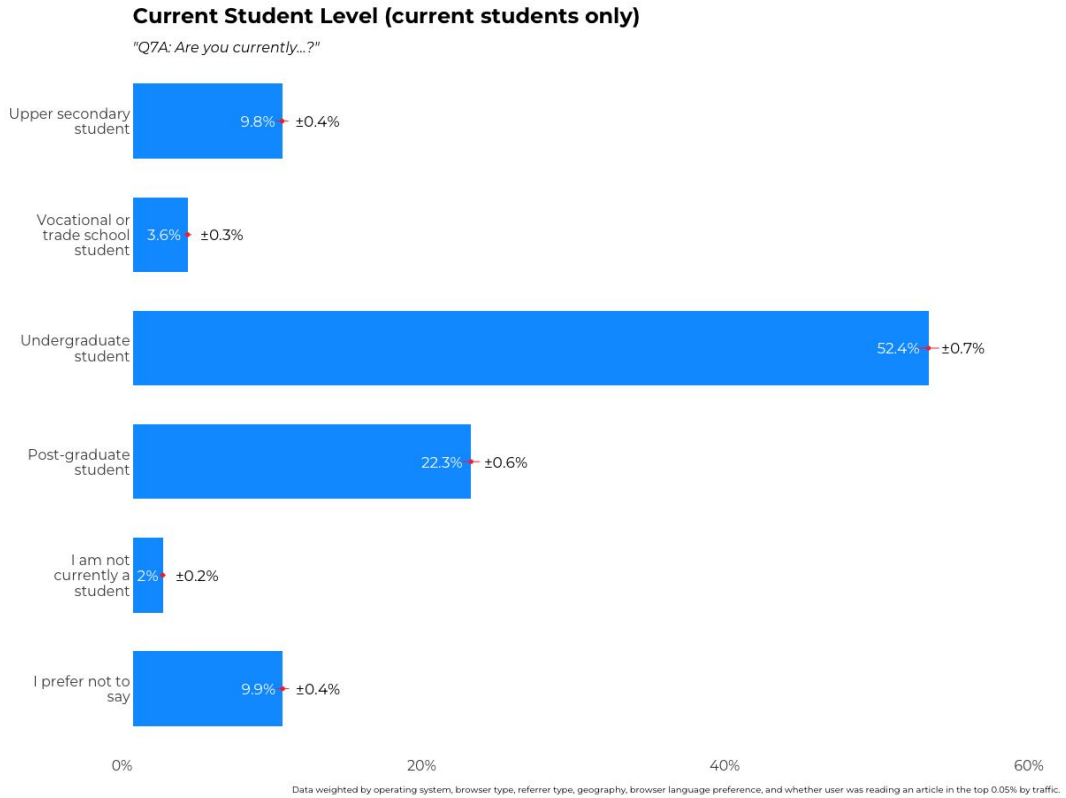


About 1 in 4 readers* are current students



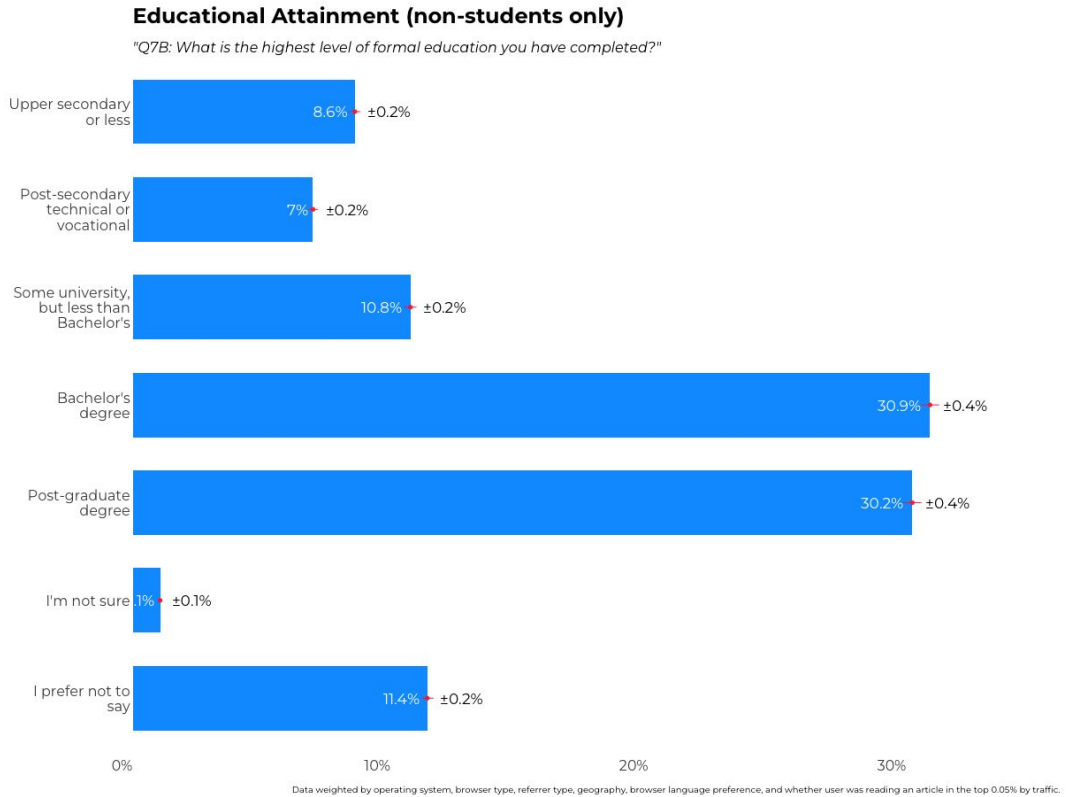
*This excludes all respondents under age 18

Most student readers* are undergrads



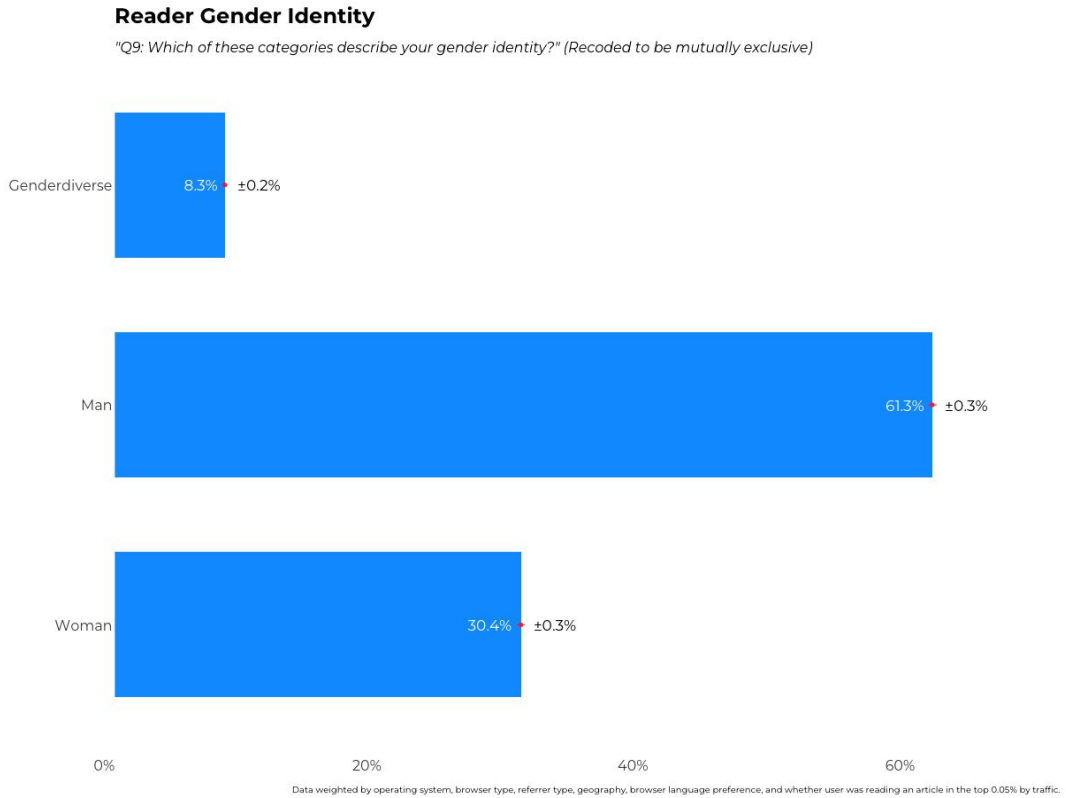
*This excludes all respondents under age 18

Non-student readers* are highly-educated



*This excludes all respondents under age 18

Readers* are disproportionately men†



*This excludes all respondents under age 18
†But proportion of women is +10 pp / 50% increase over 2024 GRS

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Methodology details

How Dimension 3: Persistence of interest was asked about

Reader responses to the open-ended survey indicated that many—but not all—participants often find themselves reading about the same or related topics on Wikipedia. This indicated that *persistence of interest* is a variable that can be used to meaningfully differentiate between different kinds of Wikipedia reading sessions or readers.

We directly asked participants to self-classify the longevity of their topic interests:

[diary study] How would you describe your *overall interest* in this topic on Wikipedia?

1. This was my first time looking this up
2. I often read about this or related topics
3. Other: please tell us

[on-Wikipedia survey] How often do you read about this topic or similar topics on Wikipedia?

Please consider not just this article, but also related topics and articles.

a. Rarely - I've never read about these topics or just once or twice
b. Sometimes – I read about these topics now and then
c. Often – I frequently read about these topics

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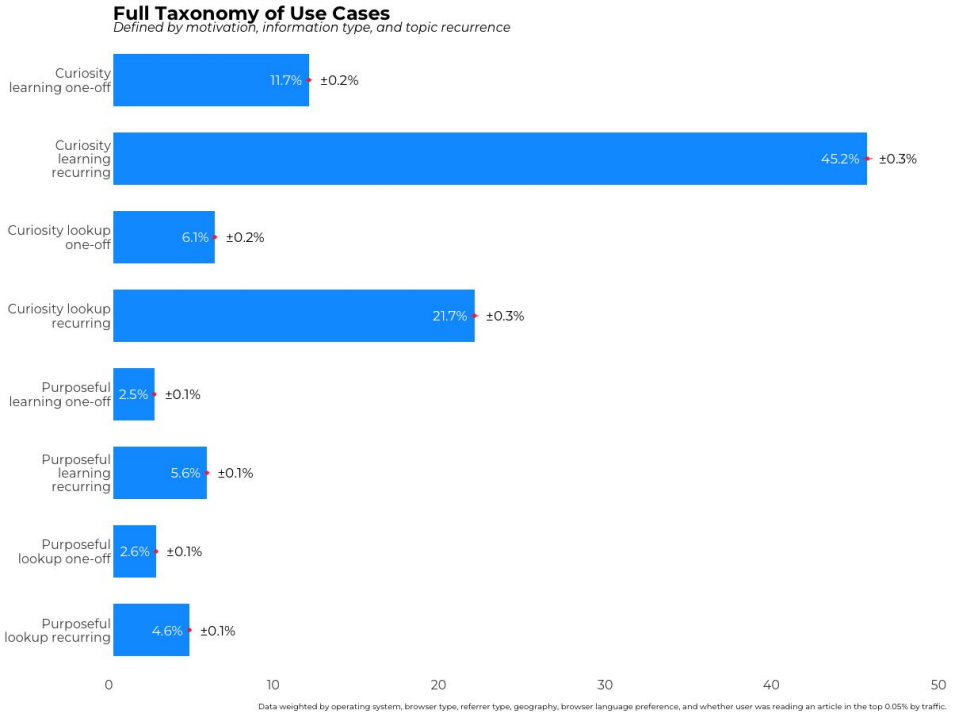
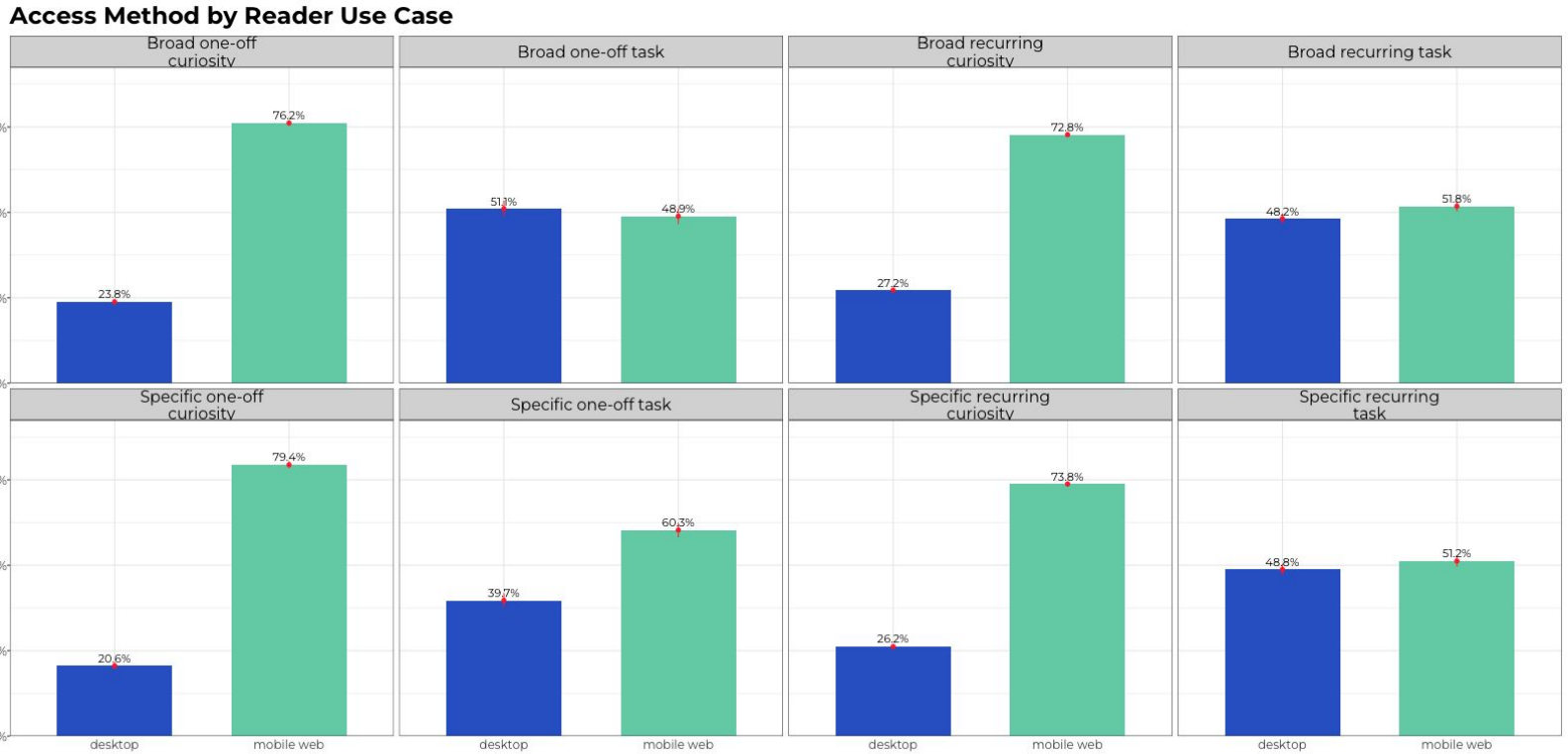
Detailed survey results

Use case prevalence



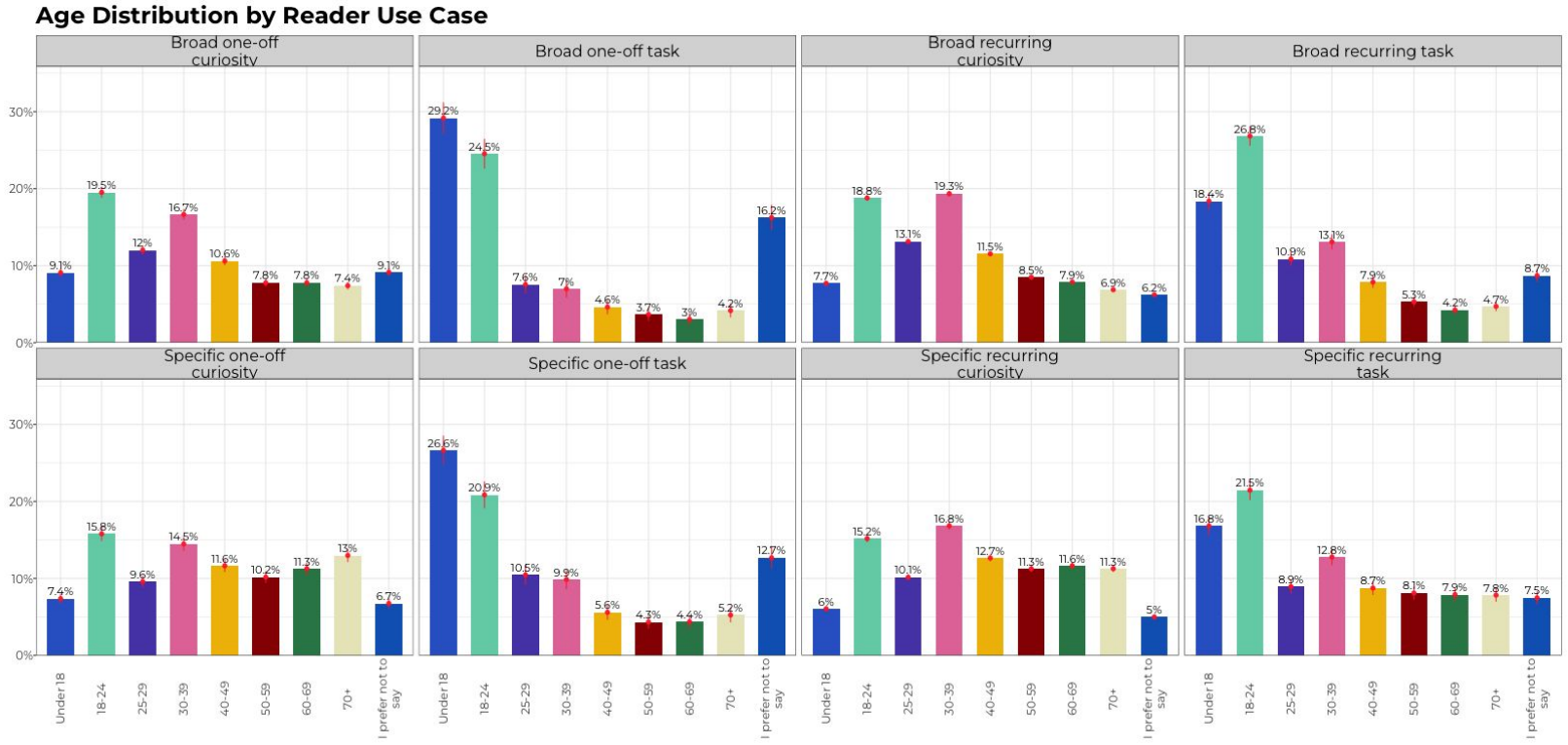
- Curiosity use cases predominate
  - 79.5% are "*exploring out of personal interest or curiosity*"
  - 15.7% are visiting "*for a class, task project, or decision*"
- Readers more often seek broad (rather than specific) information
  - 51.4% looking for "*a broader understanding of a topic*"
  - 14.0% are "*not looking for anything in particular*"
  - 34.7% are looking for "*a specific piece of information*"
- Most readers are visiting for a recurring interest
  - 76.8% "*sometimes*" or "*often read about these topics on Wikipedia*"

Purposeful Visits Disproportionately on Desktop



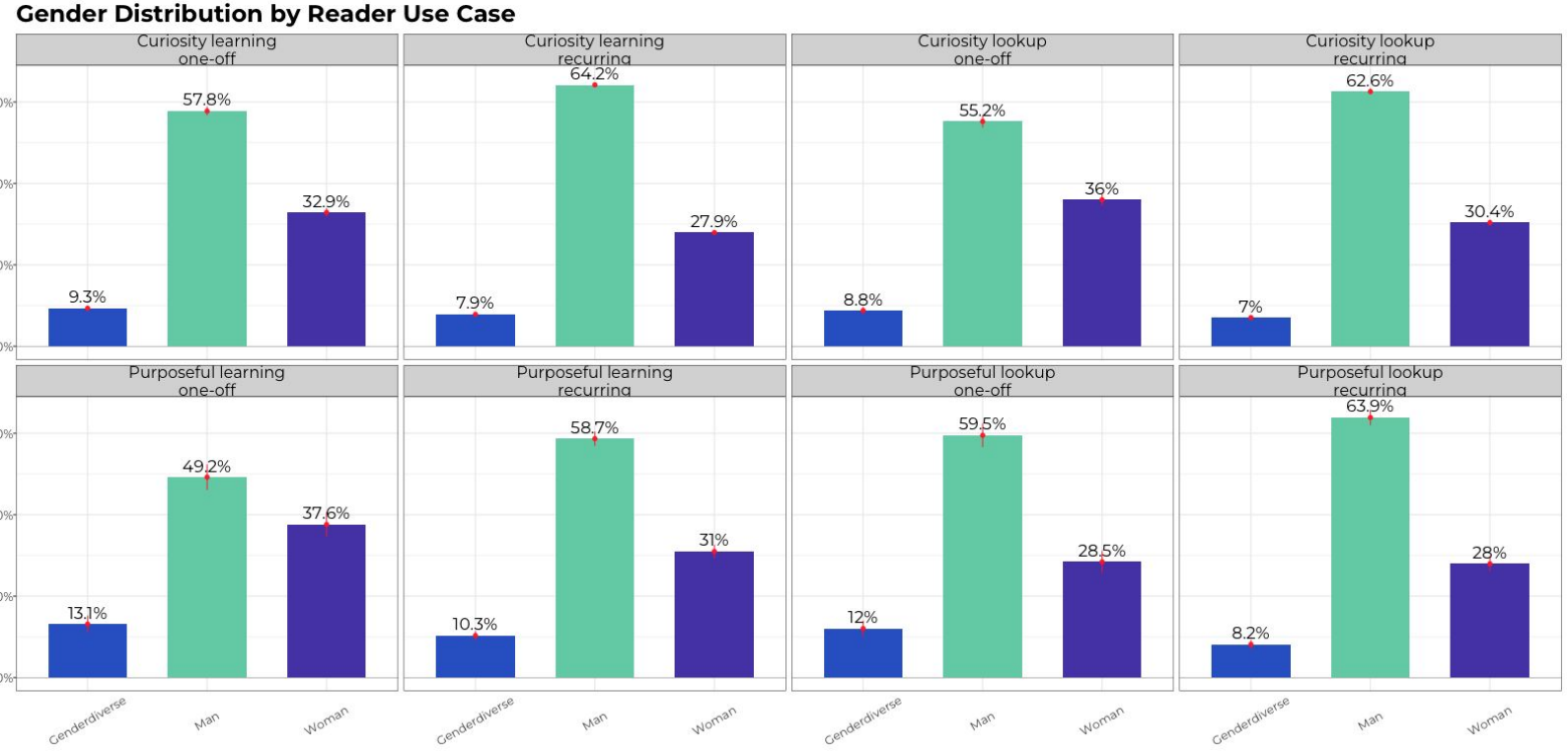
Data weighted by operating system, browser type, referrer type, geography, browser language preference, and whether user was reading an article in the top 0.05% by traffic.

Readers on *task-oriented* visits skew younger



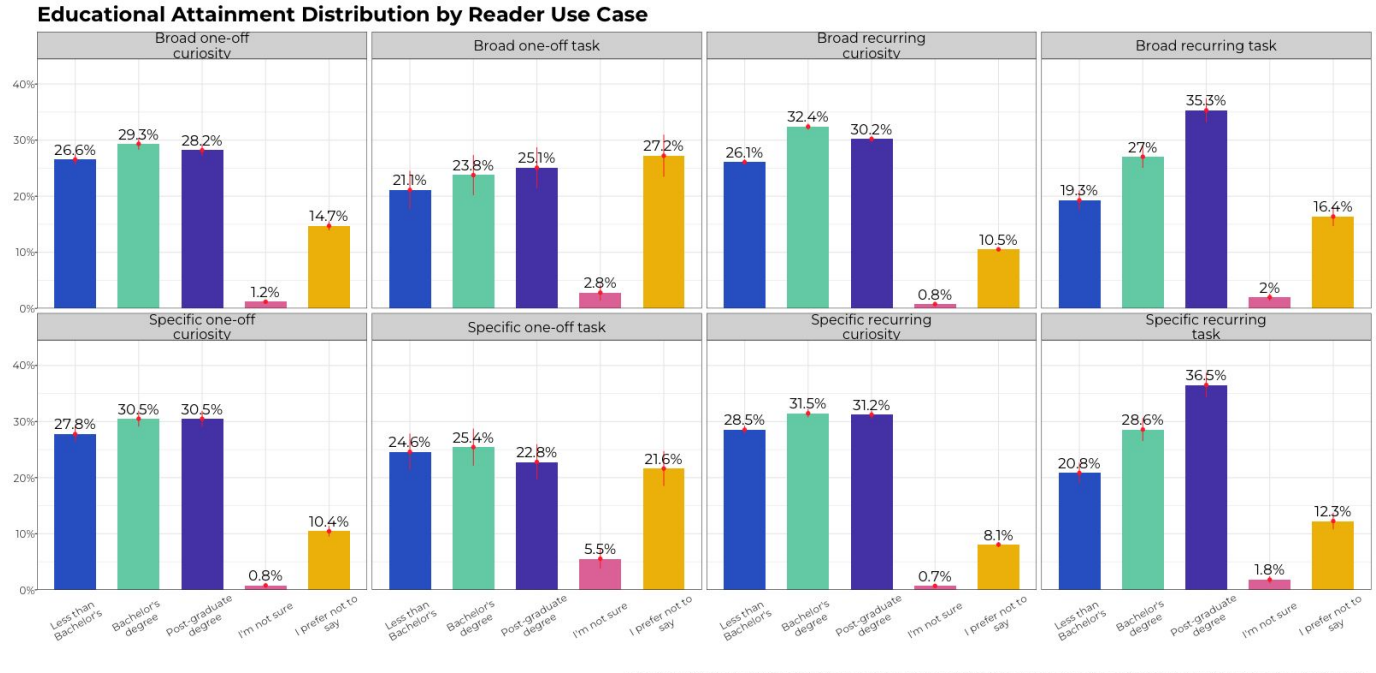
Data weighted by operating system, browser type, referrer type, geography, browser language preference, and whether user was reading an article in the top 0.05% by traffic.

One-off Use Cases Have Proportionally More Women



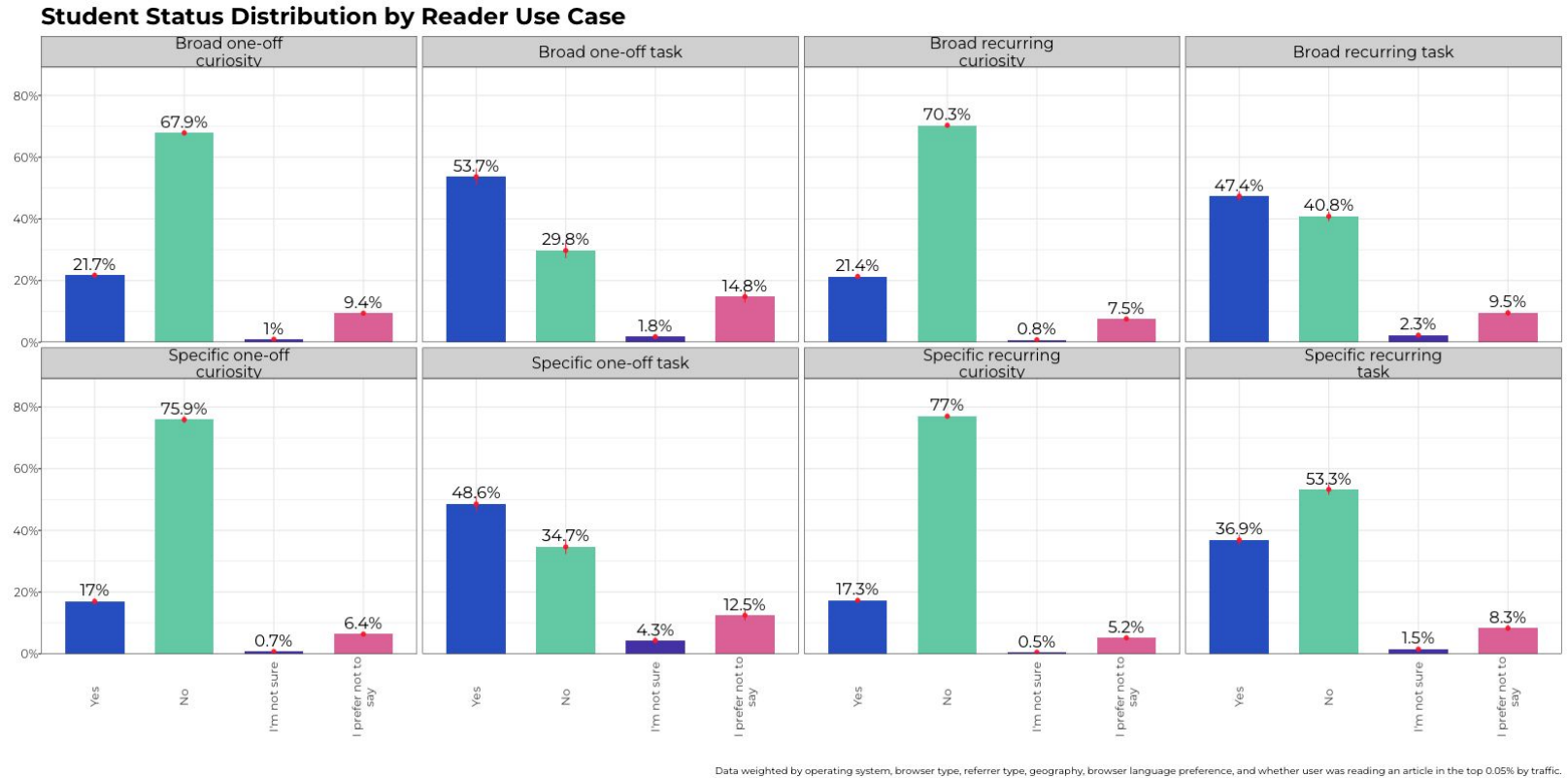
Data weighted by operating system, browser type, referrer type, geography, browser language preference, and whether user was reading an article in the top 0.05% by traffic.

Highly-Educated Readers Overrepresented in *Recurring Purposeful* Use Cases



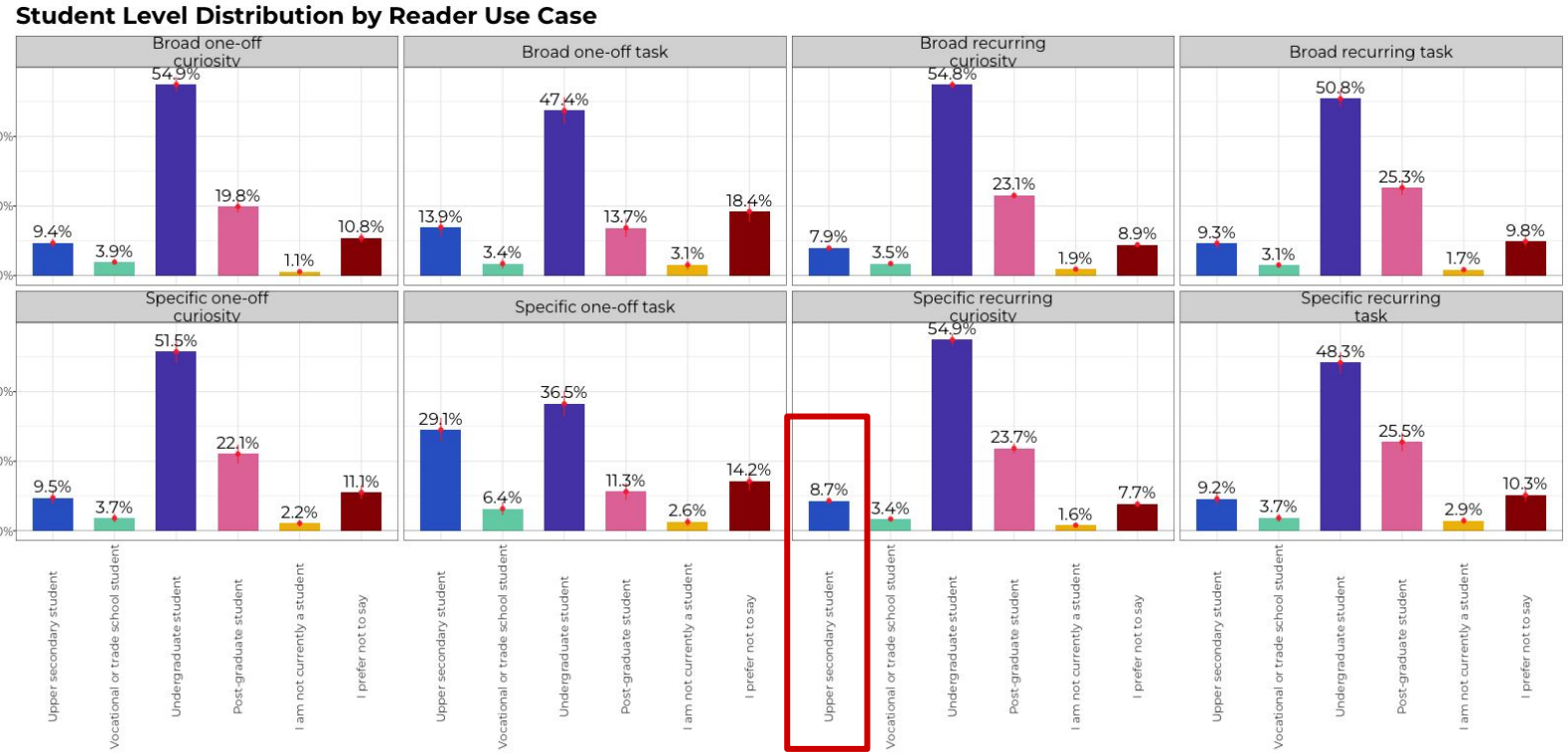
Data weighted by operating system, browser type, referrer type, geography, browser language preference, and whether user was reading an article in the top 0.05% by traffic.

Readers with *task-oriented* visits are more likely to be students



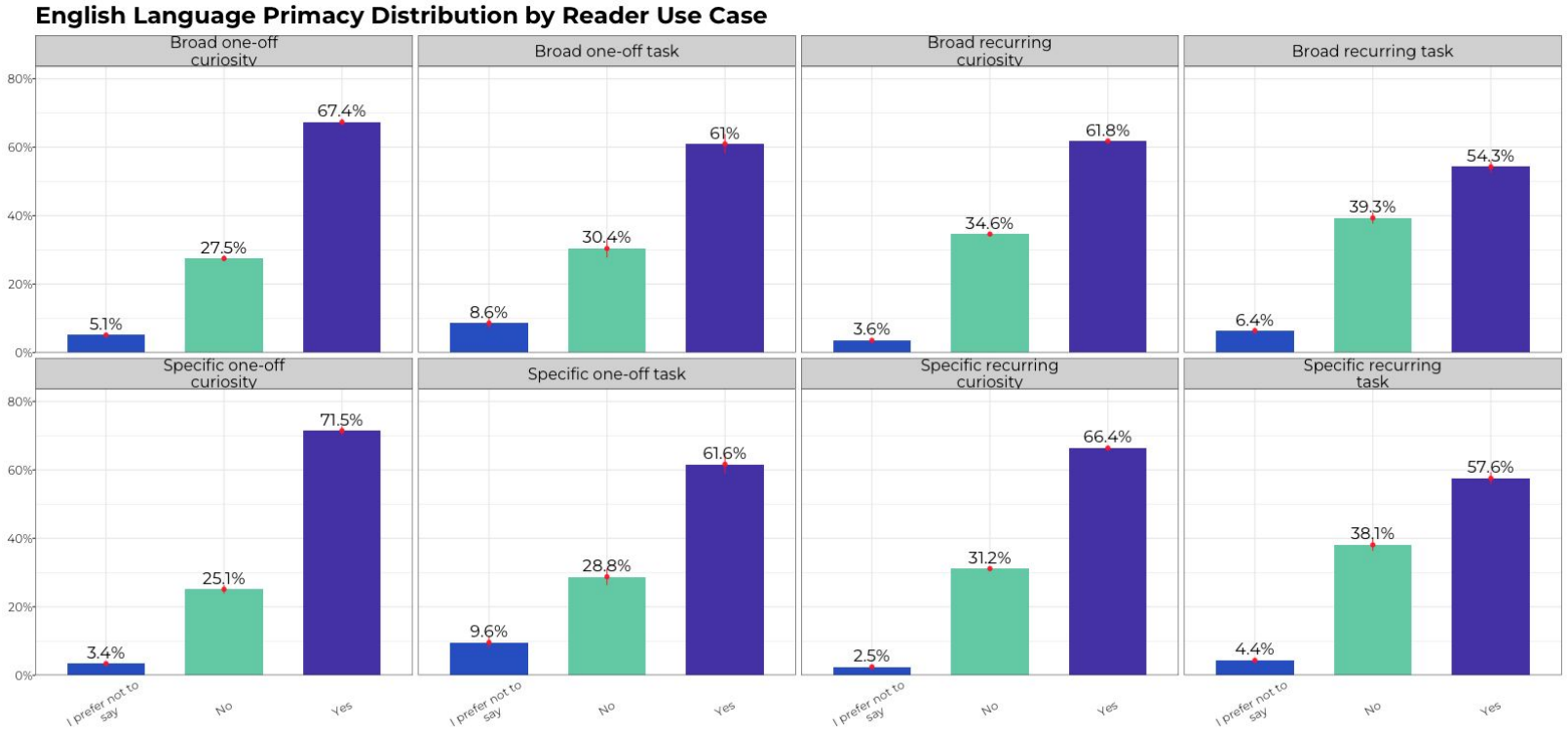
Data weighted by operating system, browser type, referrer type, geography, browser language preference, and whether user was reading an article in the top 0.05% by traffic.

High school students are overrepresented in the *specific one-off task* use case



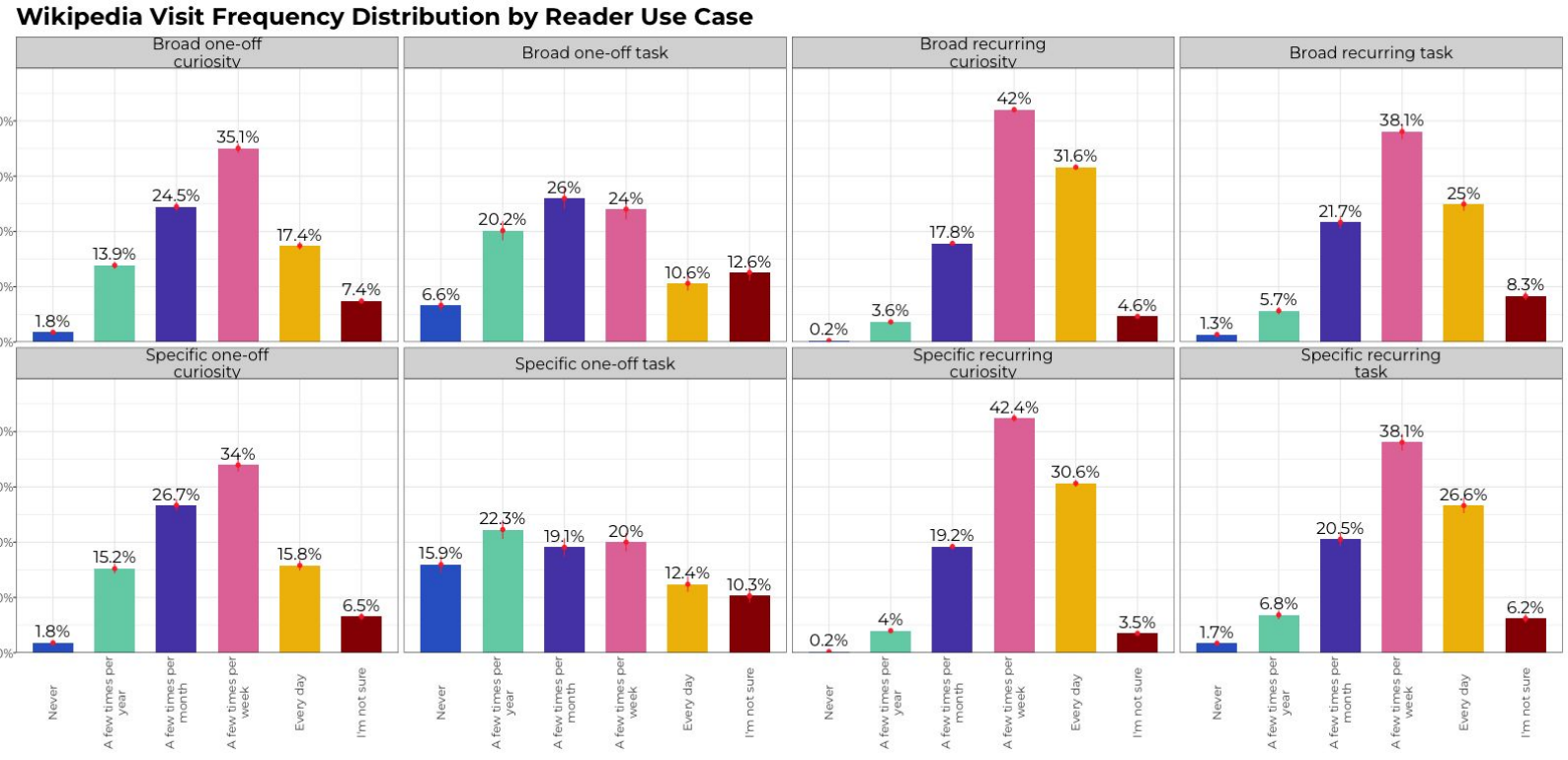
Data weighted by operating system, browser type, referrer type, geography, browser language preference, and whether user was reading an article in the top 0.05% by traffic.

Readers with *task-oriented* use cases are more likely to be non-native English speakers



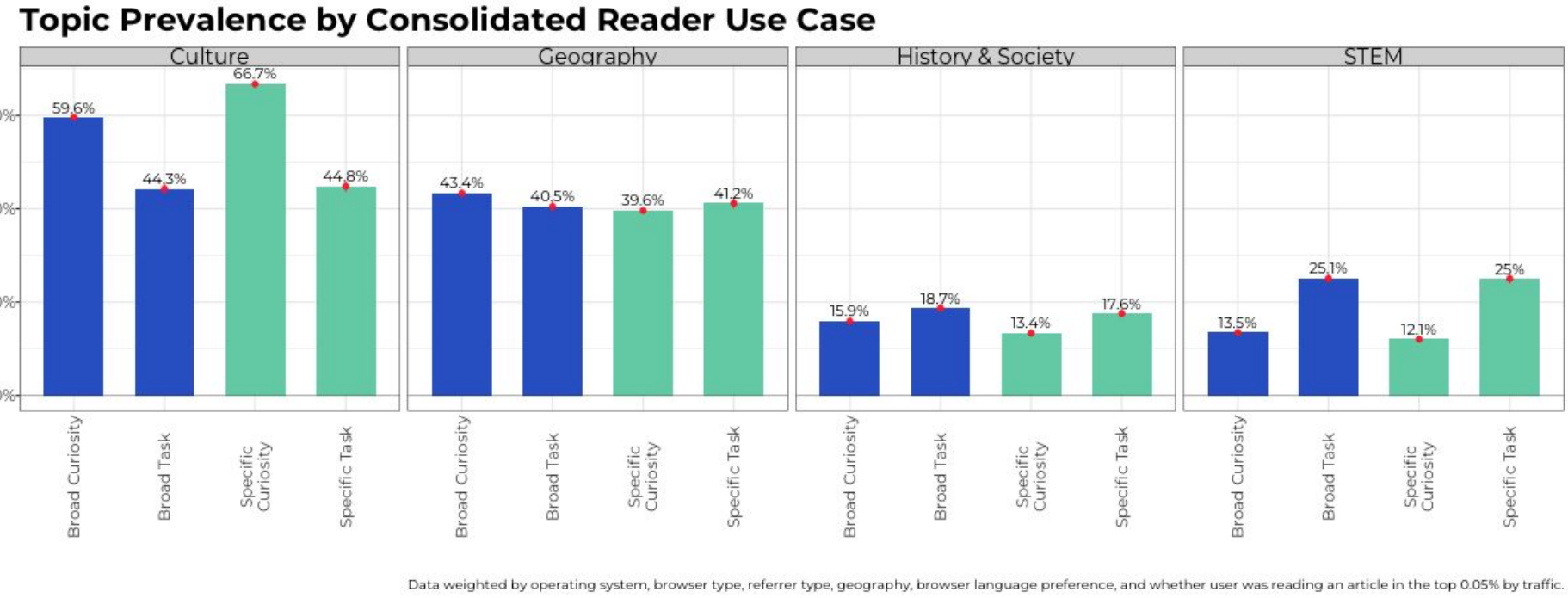
Data weighted by operating system, browser type, referrer type, geography, browser language preference, and whether user was reading an article in the top 0.05% by traffic.

Curiosity and *Recurring* Use Cases Skew towards More-Frequent Readers



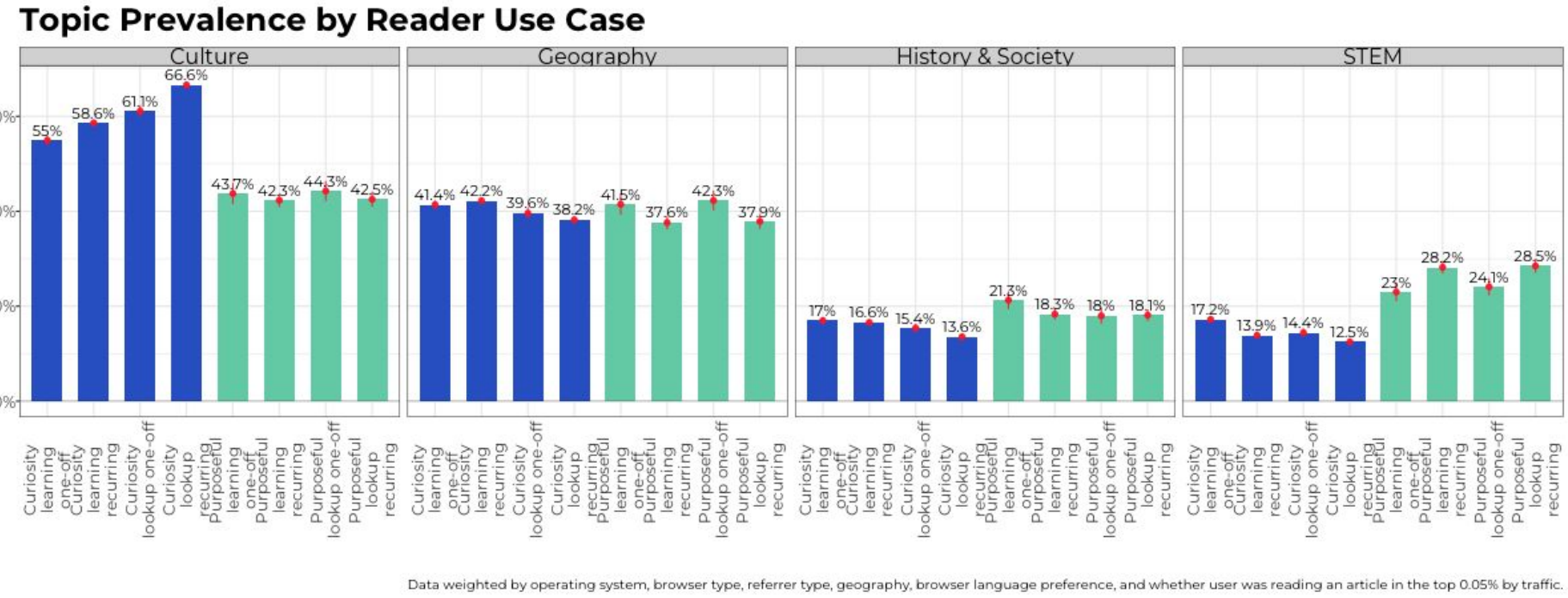
Data weighted by operating system, browser type, referrer type, geography, browser language preference, and whether user was reading an article in the top 0.05% by traffic.

Curiosity Visits More Likely to Include Culture Topics, Less Likely to Include STEM



Data weighted by operating system, browser type, referrer type, geography, browser language preference, and whether user was reading an article in the top 0.05% by traffic.

Curiosity and *Task* diverge on Culture, STEM topics



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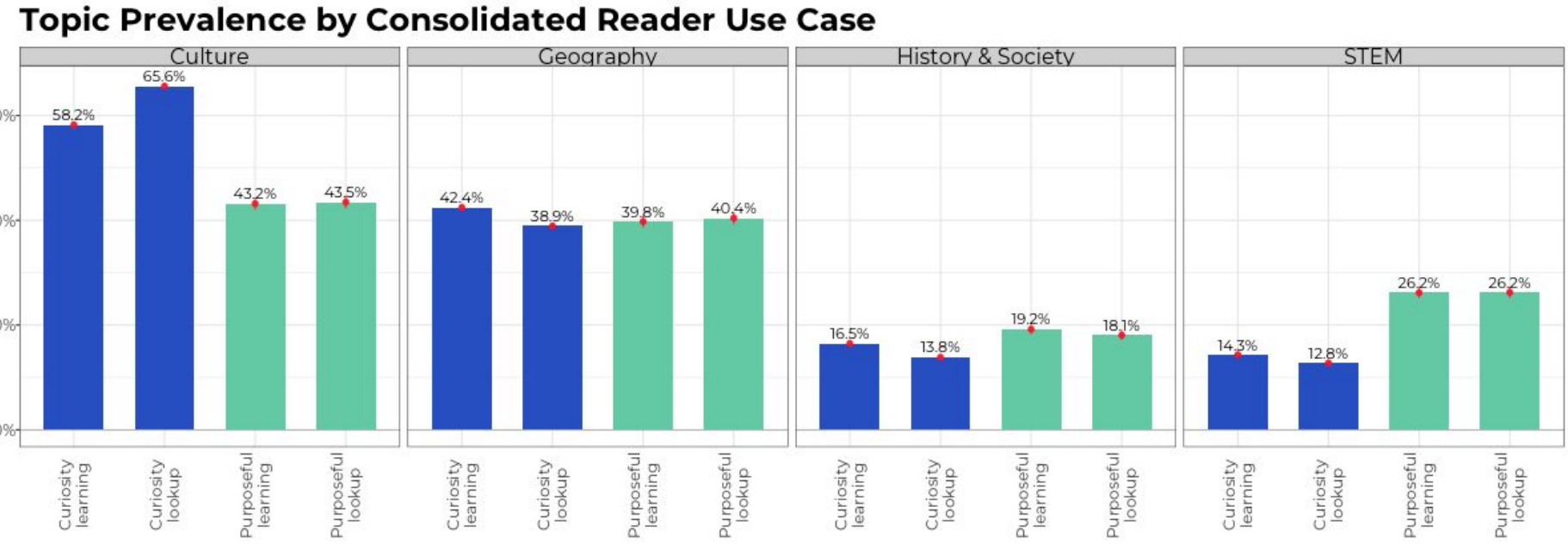
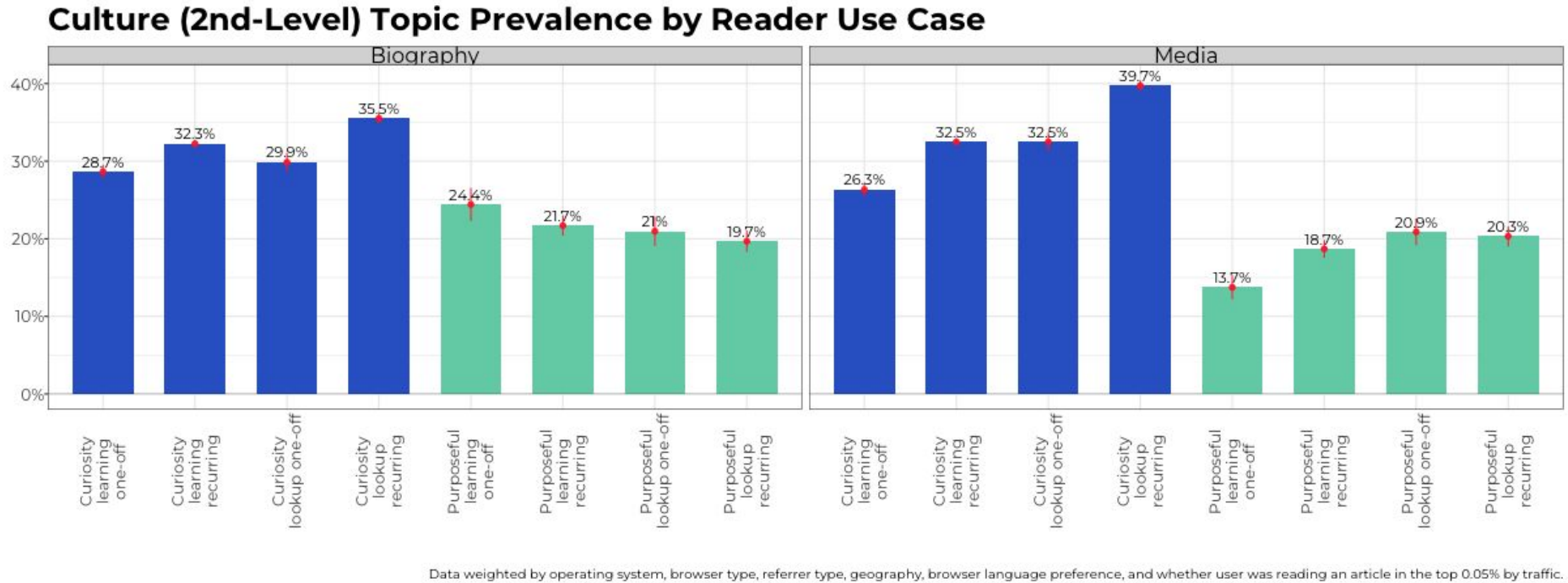


Data weighted by operating system, browser type, referrer type, geography, browser language preference, and whether user was reading an article in the top 0.05% by traffic.

Curiosity and *Task* also Split for Most Popular Culture Sub-Topics



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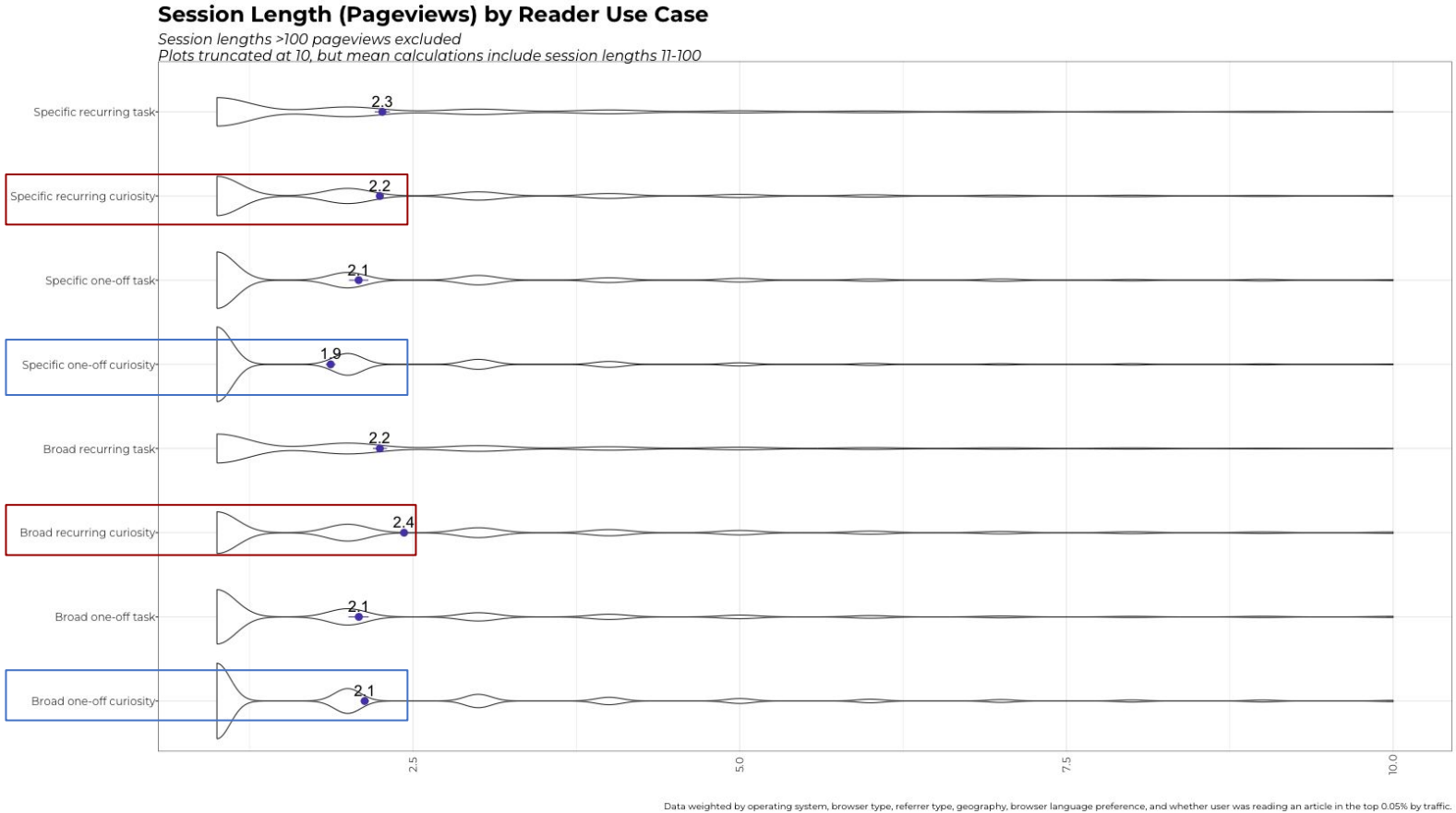
Detailed analysis results

Recurring use cases skew longer for *curiosity*-driven visits



Broad use cases skew longer for *curiosity*-driven visits