Analyzing Credibility Percentages of Online Sources
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Background

My research addresses the issue of unreliable online sources and aims to find comprehensive ways to analyze online sources used for both academic research and everyday information. In an era where false information is readily available and widely distributed, it is important to know how to decipher between factual and fictitious sources in order to trust each accordingly. While there are research guides to help navigate the world of online sources and websites that check the credibility of a given source, there are no comprehensive methods of evaluating online sources that include a step-by-step breakdown of each criteria used on well-known sources, both reliable and unreliable.
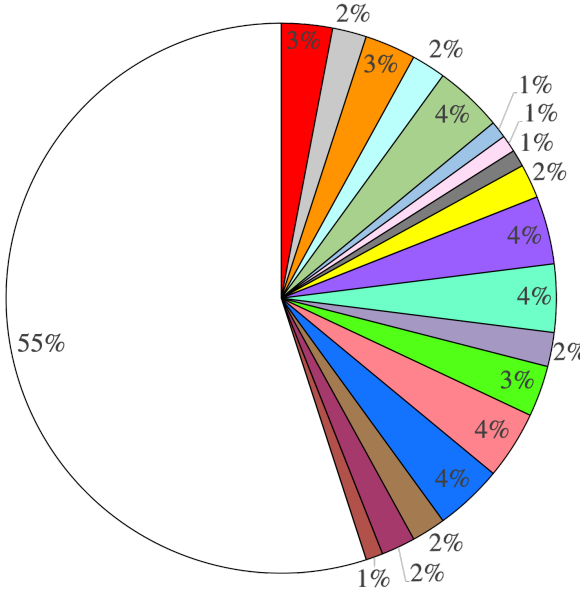
Methodology

I used some of the sites that I most frequently encountered while conducting research for an architectural history textbook during my Smithsonian internship to compile a list of online sources ranging in levels of reliability. I then established a criteria of 25 factors that add up to a total of 100% credibility using university research guides and my own experience. Each of the 25 credibility factors are worth 4%, and each source was given somewhere between 0% and 4% based on an examination of their websites and my knowledge of each one. The 10 sources were then ranked according to their reliability percentage and given a pie chart that breaks down their credibility according to each factor comprising the final percentage.

References: "Library Guides: Evaluating Resources: Home." Home - Evaluating Resources - Library Guides at UC Berkeley. Accessed July 02, 2019. https://guides.lib.berkeley.edu/evaluating-resources.
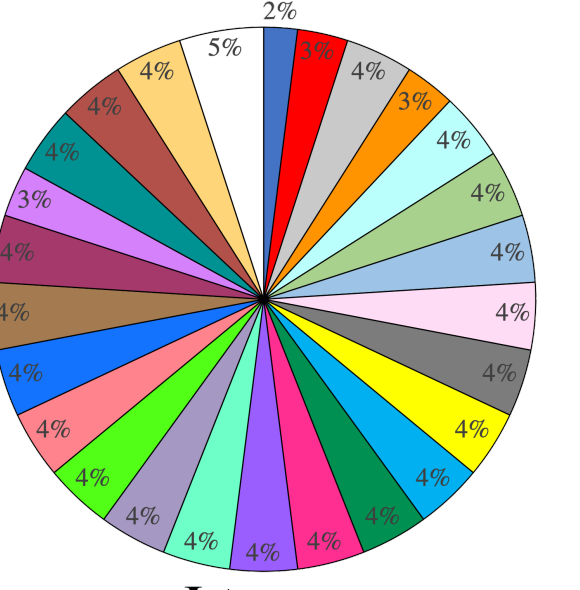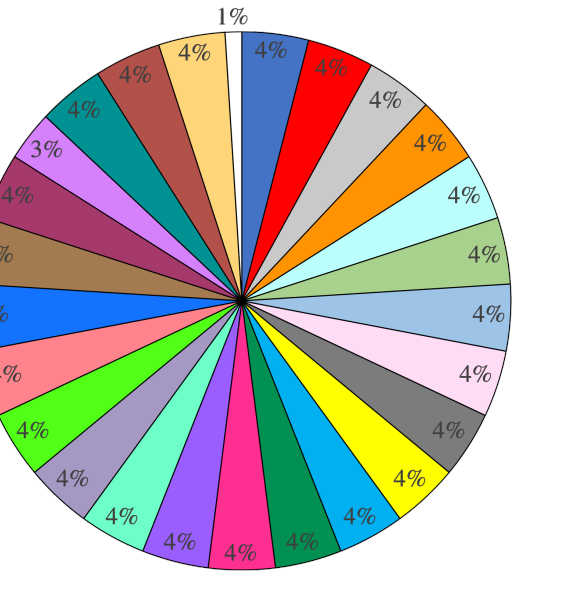
Results
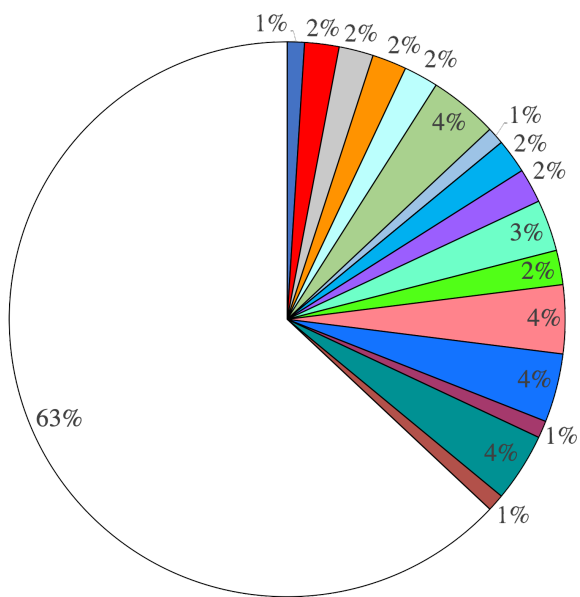
Wikipedia.org
Not credible, but has no ads, some current, accurate content, some sources, and name recognition.

History.com
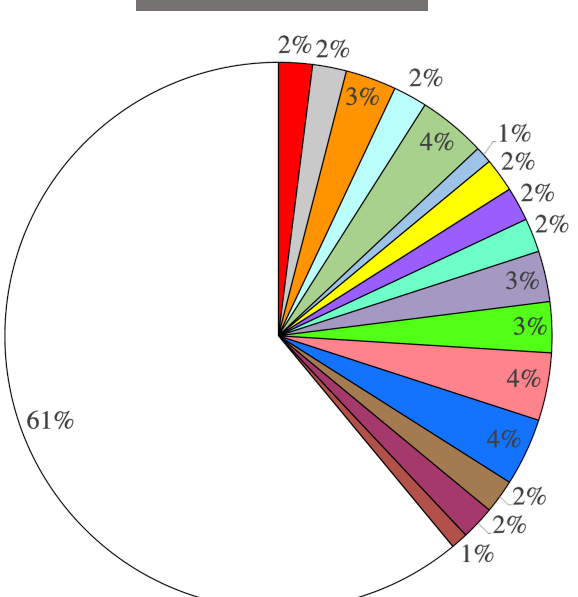Not credible, but has some current, accurate content and name recognition.

Nationalgeographic.com
Not credible, but has some current, accurate content and name recognition.

Britannica.com
Not credible, but has some current, accurate content and name recognition.

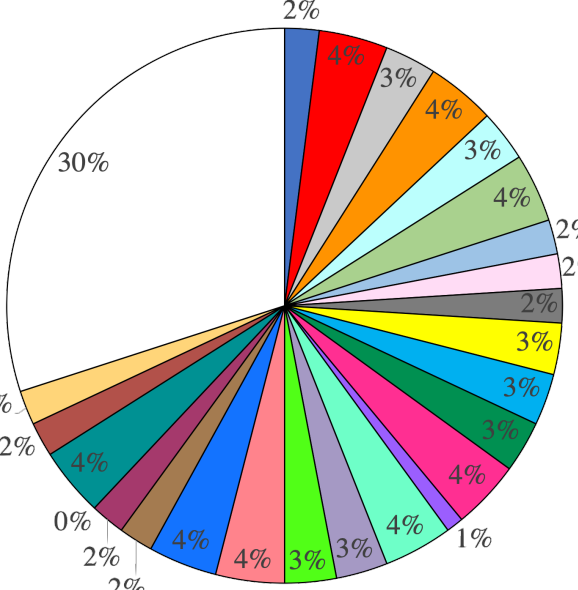**Khanacademy.org**
Partially credible, not all content is accurate and trustworthy.

Whc.unesco.org
Credible, 9% unreliable because not all content peer-reviewed, sources cited, author(s) named & links credible.

Jstor.org
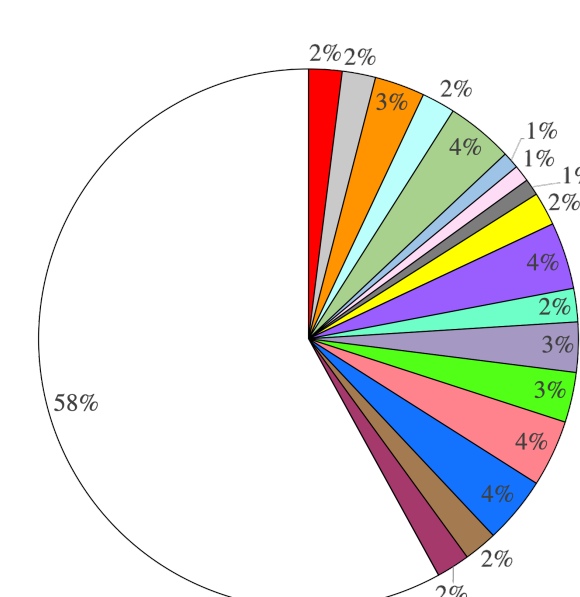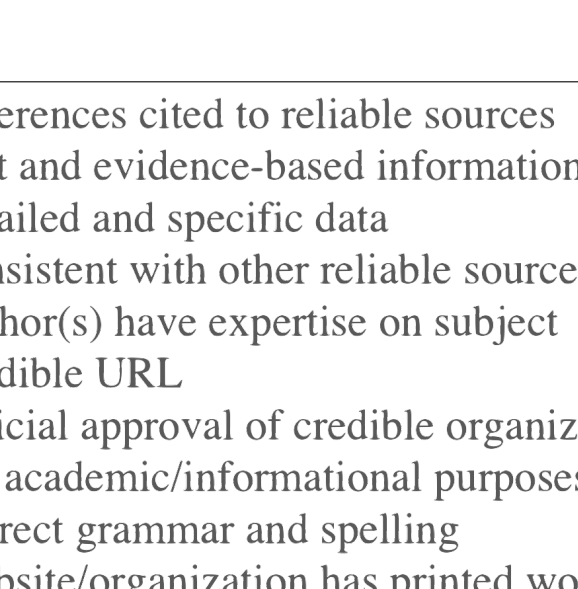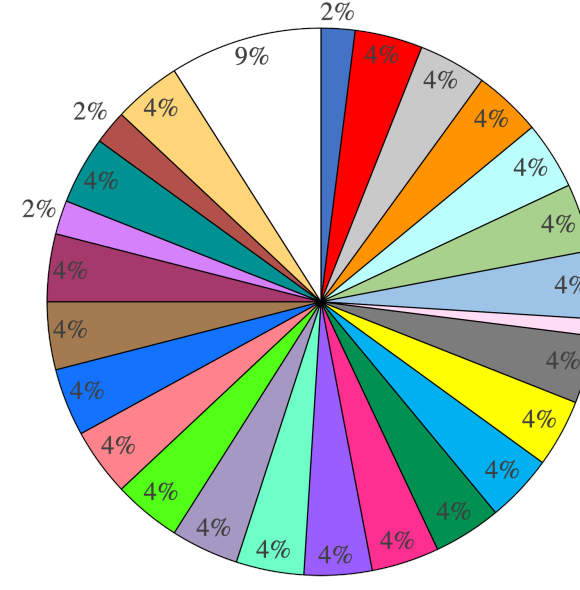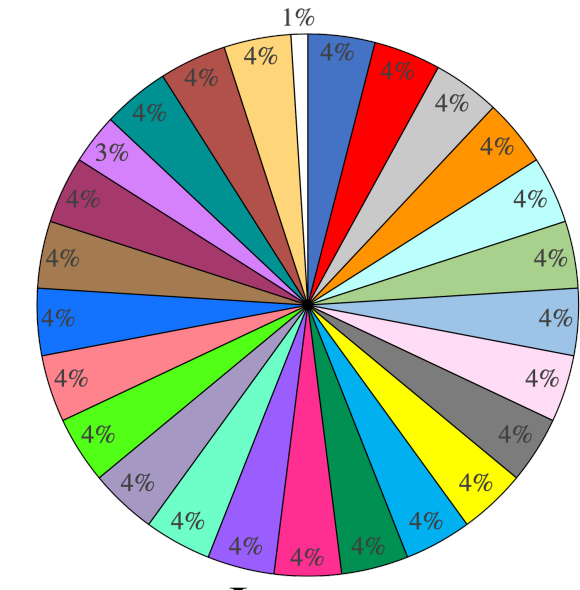Credible, 5% unreliable because not all content peer-reviewed/cites sources & contains opinion.
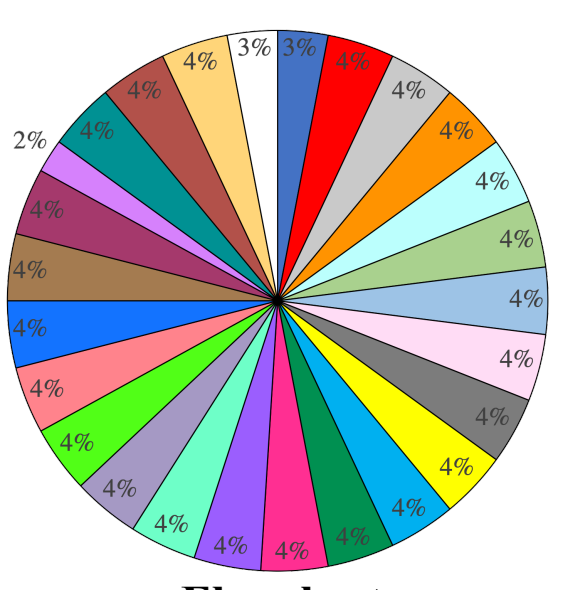
Ebscohost
Very credible, only 3% unreliable because not all content is peer-reviewed and cites sources.

Loc.gov
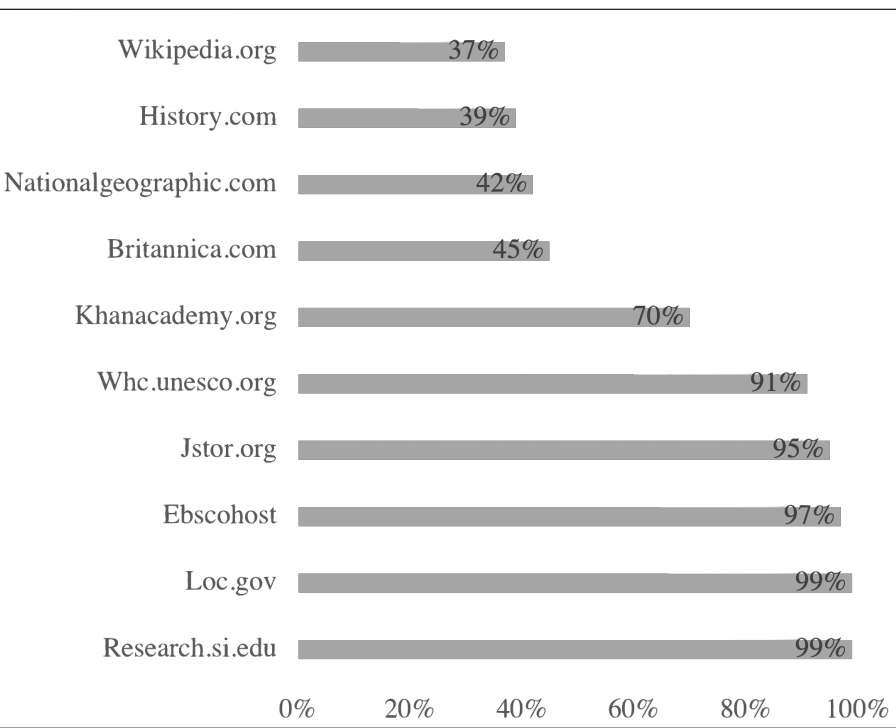Extremely credible, only 1% unreliable because most, but not all, content is peer-reviewed.

Research.si.edu
Extremely credible, only 1% unreliable because most, but not all, content is peer-reviewed.

Legend
- References cited to reliable sources
- Fact and evidence-based information
- Detailed and specific data
- Consistent with other reliable sources
- Author(s) have expertise on subject
- Credible URL
- Official approval of credible organization
- For academic/informational purposes
- Correct grammar and spelling
- Website/organization has printed works
- Data and facts used in context
- No advertisements
- Information has not been falsified
- Unbiased information
- Neutral language
- Contains current information
- Named and reliable author(s)
- Website has good reputation
- Credible publisher
- Accessible contact information
- Reviewed and edited content
- Source name recognition
- Supporting documents
- Peer-reviewed
- Links current/to credible sources
- Percentage of unreliability

Conclusion

Credibility Ranking

Source	Percentage
Wikipedia.org	37%
History.com	39%
Nationalgeographic.com	42%
Britannica.com	45%
Khanacademy.org	70%
Whc.unesco.org	91%
Jstor.org	95%
Ebscohost	97%
Loc.gov	99%
Research.si.edu	99%

This data shows that many popular online sources, some of which are widely assumed to be credible, cannot be trusted solely based on name recognition. It also shows that even some of the most reliable sources on the internet are not always 100% credible, and personal judgement is therefore still necessary on an individual basis for each page on a site. This research provides a comprehensive method for analyzing each source in order to make such judgements. Due to the widespread availability of false information, being able to think critically and determine what is accurate are crucial skills.

Acknowledgements

References: "CUL - Main Content." Evaluating Online Sources | Columbia University Libraries. Accessed July 02, 2019. https://library.columbia.edu/libraries/undergraduate/evaluating_web.html.
"Evaluating Internet Resources." Georgetown University Library. Accessed July 02, 2019. https://www.library.georgetown.edu/tutorials/research-guides/evaluating-internet-content.