



FOSS Backstage is a conference dedicated to everything related to FOSS governance and open collaboration. The fourth edition of FOSS Backstage took place as a hybrid conference from March 17-18, 2022, with the first day fully online and the second day onsite at our venue TUECHTIG in Berlin.

FOSS Backstage provides a space to discuss a broad spectrum of issues related to community management, vendor neutrality and leading projects without discretionary power. Conference topics include open source project leadership best practices, community management, open source project metrics, open source strategy for enterprise, adopting open source collaboration in corporations, legal matters when dealing with open source and many more.

FOSS Backstage aims to provide a space to discuss a broad spectrum of issues related to the FOSS community. We believe we can do this best by ensuring that people taking part are valued, respected, accepted and encouraged to fully participate. Part of ensuring a wide range of opinions can be shared at FOSS Backstage is ensuring that people from underrepresented groups within the FOSS community can attend and engage with the discussions.

This report is part of our efforts to make FOSS Backstage a conference that is open, encouraging, and engaging. This report aims to:

- Keep FOSS Backstage transparent and accountable to our commitments to diversity and inclusion
- Share the lessons we have learned from FOSS Backstage 2022
- Encourage feedback from the FOSS Backstage community

## **Diversity ticket fund**

In order to promote diversity at FOSS Backstage we initiated a Diversity Ticket program in 2021 as well having reduced tickets available to pupils, students, trainees, people on social welfare, retirees and people with disabilities.

Diversity Tickets are fully sponsored (i.e. free) tickets that are available to people from underrepresented groups within the FOSS community. This includes, but is not limited to: women, people of colour, LGBTQIA people, disabled people, and people facing economic or social hardships. We initially provided 9 diversity tickets with additional tickets being provided through partners and diversity support tickets. For every two diversity support tickets purchased we also provided an additional diversity ticket.

In total 20 diversity tickets were available for FOSS Backstage 2022. Of these:

- 8 were funded by FOSS Backstage, of these 5 were funded by FOSS Backstage and 3 were unused diversity tickets from last year.
- 9 were funded by our community partners Mercedes-Benz, Eclipse Foundation, GitHub, Google, Grafana Labs, Linux Foundation, Red Hat and Univenton.
- 2 were funded by attendees purchasing diversity support tickets.
- 1 was funded by FOSS Backstage per the “For every two diversity support tickets purchased we also provided an additional diversity ticket”-rule

Of these 20 tickets, 19 were utilized leaving 1 remaining. Funding for this 1 ticket will be used at FOSS Backstage 2023 to provide 1 diversity ticket.

## **Survey highlights**

This is the second time that we have collected demographic data from speakers and attendees at FOSS Backstage. We hope to collect data in future years to show whether there are changes in these demographics.

The first thing to note is that of a total of 164 attendees of FOSS Backstage 2022, 27 persons or 16.5 percent completed the demographic survey. The survey was sent to every participant after the conference concluded. It was bundled with our regular feedback survey and participants had the opportunity to take part in a raffle upon completion of the survey. This measure was taken in hopes of increasing participation.

The demographic survey had 27 participants and yielded the following results:

- Of the speakers who completed the survey, 57.2% identified as female, while 42.8% identified as male, compared to 33.3% of speakers who identified as female last year.
- Of the attendees who completed the survey, 46.2% identified as female, while 53.8% identified as male, compared to 37.5% of attendees who identified as female and 62.5% who identified as male last year.
- Of all participants of the survey non identified as non-binary or trans.
- Of the speakers who completed the survey, 7.1% identified as a person of color, compared to 16.7% who identified as a person of color last year.
- Of the attendees who completed the survey, 7.7% identified as a person of color, compared to 12.5% who identified as a person of color last year.
- Of all participants of the survey, 7.4% considered themselves to have a disability, compared to 16.7% of participants who completed the survey last year.
- Of the persons with disabilities who completed the survey, none reported problems with accessibility during the online or onsite event.

Participants had various suggestions on how to improve diversity and inclusion at FOSS Backstage. This is an excerpt of answers that participants gave; you can find the complete list in the survey responses below.

- Subtitles / Captions: Adding live subtitles to the talks was the most requested improvement by participants of the survey. It was also suggested to share speakers' presentations in advance to increase accessibility.
- Religious Diversity: The conference took place on Friday, which is inconvenient for Jewish & Muslim participants. It was also mentioned that FOSS Backstage currently doesn't include religion in the diversity & inclusivity planning.
- Child Care: There is currently no child care at FOSS Backstage.
- Diversity of Audience & Speakers: The participants of the conference were perceived as predominantly white and male. It was suggested to invite more participants from underrepresented groups.
- Online Platform: It was mentioned that the online networking features were intimidating for women, especially when talking to strangers.

These are all ideas that we as the FOSS Backstage organizing team will be taking on board. We aim to integrate considerations of these topics when planning future FOSS Backstage events.

## Lessons Learned

It must be stressed again that only 16.5% of participants of FOSS Backstage 2022 completed the survey, so especially the demographics as shown in this survey may not be completely representative and results must be interpreted carefully. Thus, we would like to increase participation in this survey and we are considering additional ways of communicating the survey such as directly mentioning it at the conference in the future.

That being said, we concur with the assessment that FOSS Backstage still has predominantly white & male participants. We are actively working to invite speakers with different cultural backgrounds and attract a diverse audience, for example with our aforementioned Diversity Ticket Initiative. Still, there is room for improvement in this area, and we are exploring additional options such as addressing and inviting members of underrepresented groups more directly.

Regarding religious diversity, we are looking to avoid religious holidays in the future and are discussing further ways to incorporate religious diversity in our planning.

In the area of accessibility, we are looking at ways to display live subtitles of the sessions both for our online platform as well as the onsite conference. We hope that continuing to host future editions of FOSS Backstage as hybrid events will increase accessibility for those who can't travel to Berlin to attend.

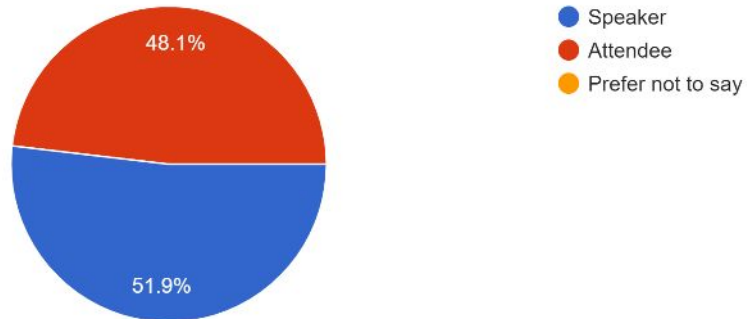
Since FOSS Backstage is a comparatively small conference, we currently don't offer dedicated child care for the conference, but we are looking at options to either help participants organize this for themselves or offer other options at future events.

If you have any questions or concerns, about this report, or if you want to share further ideas or improvements with us, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at [info@foss-backstage.de](mailto:info@foss-backstage.de).

## Full survey responses:

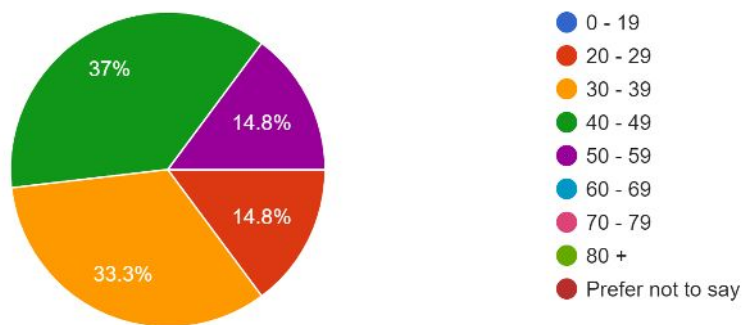
Are you a speaker or an attendee?

27 responses



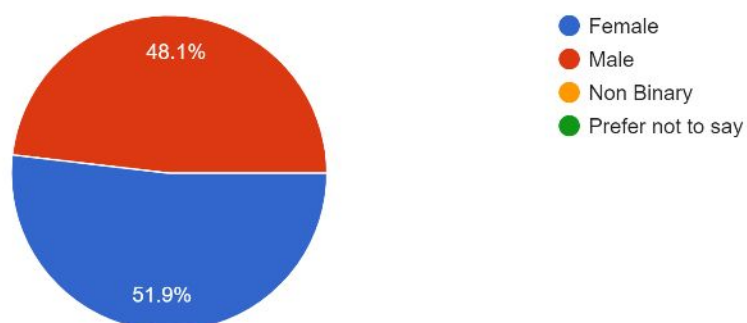
How old are you?

27 responses



Which one of the following best describes your gender?

27 responses

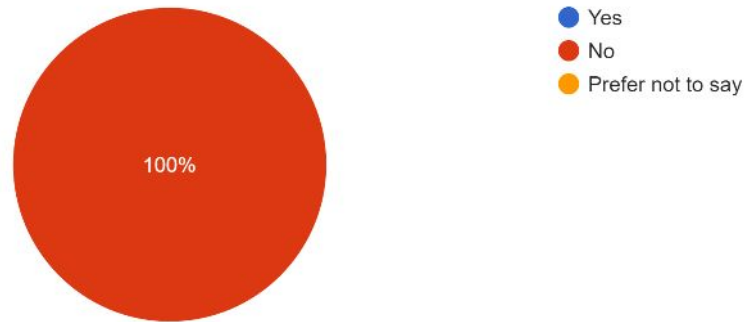


If you prefer to use another term to describe your gender identity, please provide it here

0 responses

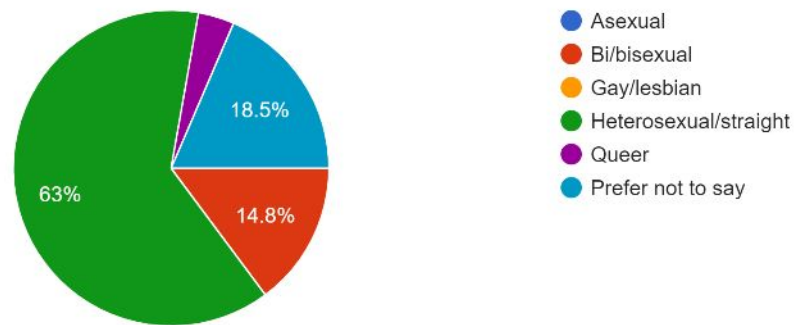
Do you consider yourself to be a trans person?

27 responses



Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?

27 responses

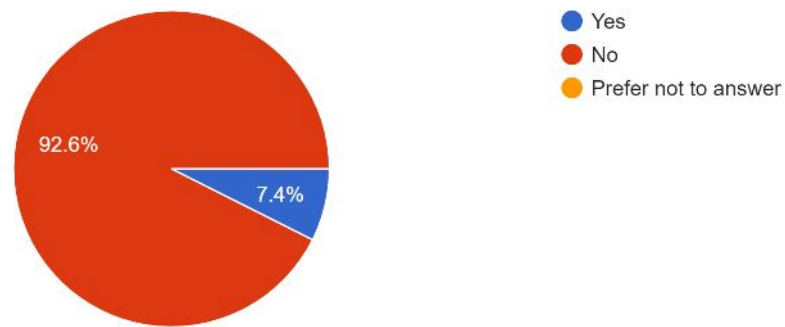


If you prefer to use another term to describe your sexual orientation, please provide this here

0 responses

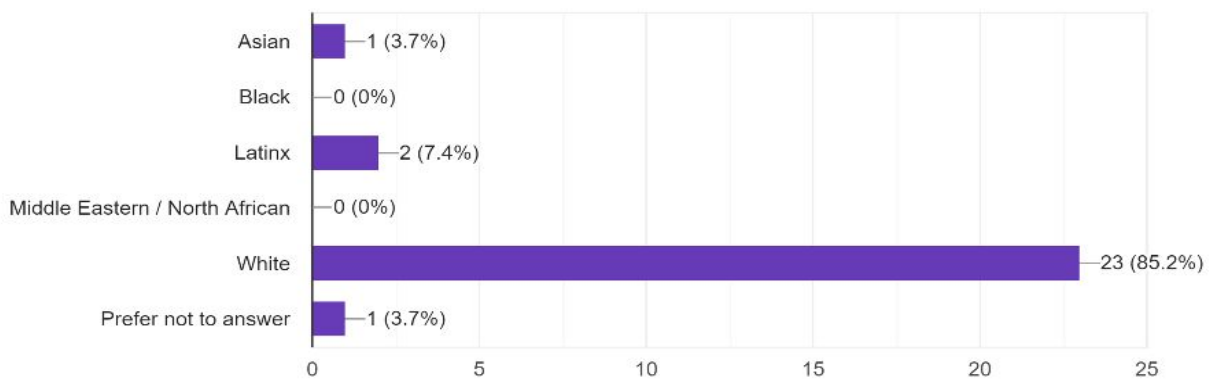
Do you identify as a person of color?

27 responses



With which ethnic background(s) do you identify? (check all that apply)

27 responses

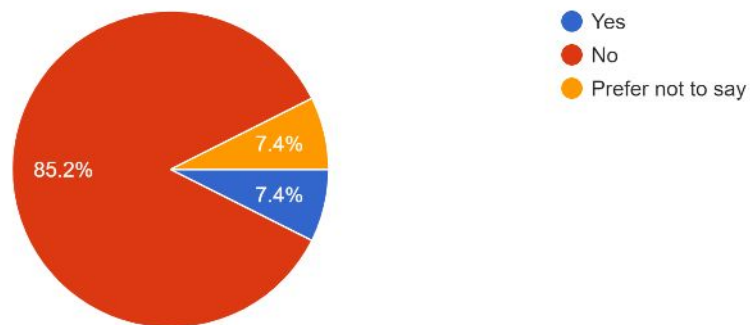


Please write any other ethnic backgrounds that you identify with here

0 responses

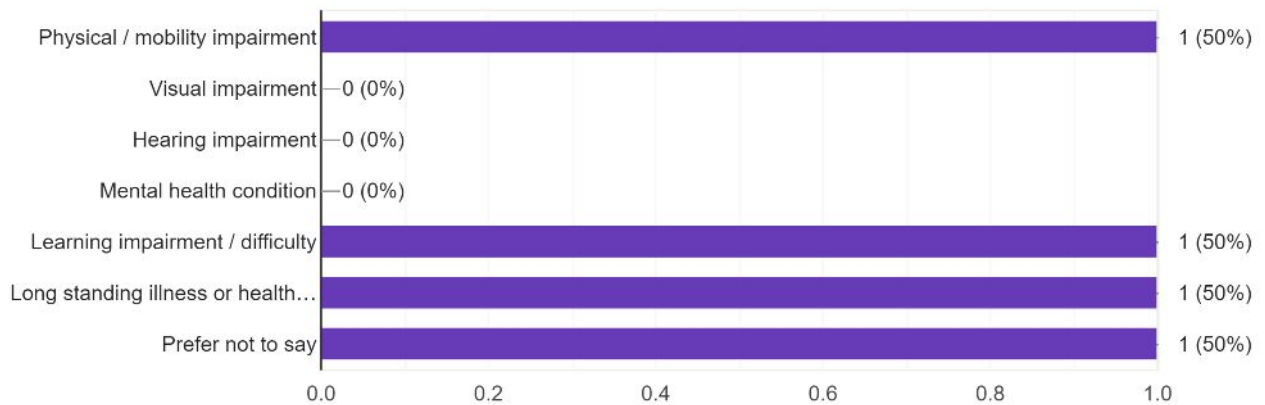
Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

27 responses



If you consider yourself to have a disability, please indicate the type(s) of impairment(s) that apply to you

2 responses



If you consider yourself to have a different type of disability, please provide it here

0 responses



If you have a disability, did you have problems with accessibility either during the online or onsite event?

2 responses



If you had problems with accessibility, share your experience here, if you feel comfortable.

0 responses

What can the organizers do to improve the diversity and inclusion at this event?

13 responses

- Adding subtitles of the speech (or add as an option)
- More space and time for individual interaction of participants.
- Invite people with disabilities, people with small income.
- Keep the remote option, make rules at the event clearer and inforce them
- Bursaries for those from locations that can't afford to travel and attend. Offer to education establishments in developing nations.
- I understand that you don't have power over the composition of the audience, but at some point there were only 3 women in the whole place...
- Have no suggestions, the sessions I saw had several ladies presenting, but did not get to attend every session to see how diverse things were.
- Your "diversity" currently only covers gender, sex and color and excludes religious diversity
- Encourage more speakers to turn on captioning for their presentations, or otherwise offer captioning
- It would be appreciated if the speakers could follow some inclusive language guidelines. In several talks cliches such as "guys" or directing examples expecting it to be male were said, and I find this, although not offensive, a push back. As an event organizer myself I am really aware of difficulty and costs, but a few things should always be aimed: 1. to ask participants about their needs -

2. to have either sign language or subtitle / transcript for the talks - 3. to offer or help participants to self organize around childcare

- subtitles
- Captions/subtitles would have been helpful :)
- If possible, add captions to the talks and share presentations in advance, so that people with cognitive and visual disabilities - as well as English second language speaker - could have an easier time following the talks, use text to speech tools, read at their own pace, etc.

What are some examples of how this event met, exceeded, or fell short of your diversity and inclusion expectations?

11 responses

- The organizers go out of their way to make all speakers feel welcome and have what we need to succeed, which I think helps level the field for everyone, including for example new speakers or underrepresented groups. I really enjoy and feel welcomed and respected at FOSS Backstage.
- The event reflected the diversity of the field, so it met my expectations.
- The community is not very diverse, so I have expected not much. We all are very privileged
- Hybrid: exceeds, outreach to diverse ppl: could be improved,
- As almost all tech events, many middle aged white men - not good representation of the tech user base.
- Met
- I was very happy with the vegetarian-only catering as it meets most requirements. To improve you could make this more explicit, communicate upfront and have clear signs explaining the catering options at the conference. To go even further you could make sure that the conference party also follows the same.
- I enjoyed the privacy and pronoun neutrality to share audience questions
- I appreciated the online question-asking system, and in particular that it does not include the asker's name. The organizers were very conscientious about making sure remote attendees had a good experience.
- 1. It was really great overall! But I somehow expected to see more women and other historically minoritized groups in FOSS in the audience. So I was a bit surprised that even at FOSS Backstage it was such a strong majority of men and white people... Maybe it was my mistake to expect it that, or maybe it was just that it was still a hybrid event and most people were local and we didn't have the full audience of the event show up... 2. It is completely fine to have alcohol at a community event. But I tried to find out if there would be non-alcoholic drinks available and from the website it didn't look like it. So I ended up not

joining. It would be nice to make it clear that there are non-alcoholic options. I generally prefer to go to events where I don't think people will get drunk and I will not drink alcohol at community and networking events.

- I felt that the choice of speakers was comparably diverse and that the orga team made an effort with that! The audience (at least at the in person meeting on Friday) felt a lot less diverse to me.

Additionally, the following relevant feedback was provided via our feedback form:

2 responses

- For me going into Friday evening is really bad because the holy Shabbat starts there. For Muslims going into Thu evening & Friday is equally bad. So the best would be to do it Monday + Tuesday. That way people can arrive on Sunday and enjoy the city. Also, please check the intercultural calendar <https://www.berlin.de/lb/intmig/service/publikationen/interkultureller-kalender/> to stay away from religious holidays. With regard to the times I'd prefer more working time but would be OK with later times if it is on Mon+Tue
- The online platform and remote features weren't amazing for me personally. I didn't know who or how many people were using it and I wasn't sure if / when to join. It was a bit awkward and intimidating. I enjoyed the streams, but didn't want to engage the "networking" features. Especially as a woman online - it's not something I feel comfortable doing with people I don't know. If I already attended the event before and knew some people maybe I would have felt otherwise, but it was my first time.