2025 Community Survey

Detailed Report of Findings

Summer 2025

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Key Takeaways

FreeBSD continues to be a powerful and respected platform among users. But if current trends hold, shifting demographics, rising complexity, and outdated processes present challenges to its strong standing. The Foundation should implement strategies that focus on user segmentation and modernization to bridge the gap between its historical strengths and the needs of tomorrow's users.

1 Refresh the Contribution Pipeline

There has been a notable decline in contributions from both professional and personal users. A meaningful minority of users – especially new, young, or those contributing to other OS projects – report that FreeBSD is harder to contribute to; fragmentation, review delays, opaque processes, and a steep learning curve are among the top complaints.

Find ways to modernize and simplify the contribution process, such as through:

- *Simplifying and documenting the onboarding and submission process (e.g., migrate off Bugzilla, enable easy access to GitHub)*
- *Providing a clear, interactive roadmap for new contributors who may be unclear about how to start or submit*
- *Expedite response times and ensure that the community is welcoming and responsive by establishing mentor cohorts*

2 Tailor Strategies By Deployment Segment

Use cases, needs, and priorities differ dramatically depending on where FreeBSD is primarily deployed (server, laptop, desktop, cloud, network appliances, storage appliances). While there may be some synergies between segments (e.g., server and cloud; laptop and desktop), a one-size-fits-all approach does not adequately address the needs of most users.

Design user segment tracks that encompass the following:

- *Addressing relevant platform features (e.g., CI/CD compatibility and Vorg for desktop/laptop users; unique workload priorities for network storage users, etc.).*
- *Establish segment-specific communication and community channels*

Key Takeaways (cont'd)

3 Strengthen and Simplify The Upgrade Experience

Major upgrades are still a pain point, particularly for pro users who are managing many installations. The key issues include ports management issues, risk of breakage, and process complexity, among other issues.

Invest in process improvements such as:

- *Make upgrades easier and more reliable by helping users to see potential problems ahead of time, fix conflicts/mismatches, and minimize manual steps*
- *Improve testing before and during release so bugs and problems are detected early*
- *Clearly communicate release timelines and when it is safe to upgrade*

4 Streamline Communications To Match User Habits

While traditional documentation and mailing lists are still important, younger and newer users are turning to alternative channels for help and updates (e.g., social media, IM, AI). The Journal is losing relevance, and some users are not getting the info they need (e.g., software dev updates)

Implement a multi-channel communication strategy that meets users where they are:

- *Scale back on the Journal and apply resources to dynamic, web-based channels like a revamped blog or YouTube*
- *Centralize updates (e.g., blog posts, QSRs, release notes) on the Foundation's home page, accessible by RSS feed*
- *Build out a searchable archive of community Q&A and other content*
- *Amplify FreeBSD presence in newer spaces (e.g., Discord, GitHub Discussions, Reddit, etc.)*

Key Takeaways (cont'd)

5 Clarify and Amplify the Foundation's Mission and Roles

Awareness and understanding of the Foundation's work is mixed. Most users are unclear on the Foundation's role beyond legal, advocacy, or infrastructure. Committers "mostly" trust the Foundation, but transparency (financial and otherwise) is an issue.

Work toward positioning the Foundation more clearly as the backbone of FreeBSD.

- *Publish an annual "State of the Foundation" report to address transparency concerns and speak to wins in key areas.*
- *Embed Foundation messaging/branding into installation materials, the website, major project docs, etc.*
- *Reach beyond the Foundation's 'inner circle' to welcome non-committers/non-contributors.*

Objectives & Methodology

OBJECTIVES

The research is designed to provide an in-depth understanding of the FreeBSD user community:

- Profile FreeBSD users based on key technical/user criteria and demographics
- Understand the buyer/user journey
- Gauge awareness & understanding of the Foundation and its offerings
- Identify strengths and weaknesses for the Project and Foundation
- Understand differences between key subgroups and over time

The information will be used to develop strategies to increase engagement and improve the FreeBSD user experience.

METHODOLOGY

- An **anonymous online survey** administered by FBSD among members of the FreeBSD Research Community.
- Respondents were recruited through a variety of means including: email, FBSD News, Reddit, Hacker News and other media. *NOTE: Changes in recruiting could impact trending.**
- The survey included more than 50 closed- and open-ended questions.
- FreeBSD was identified as the research sponsor. No incentive was used to reward respondents.
- A total of **2,127** substantially complete returns were received (not all respondents answered all questions)

**This wave, the study was promoted by an OS journalist focused on Linux Users; this may help to explain the increase in personal users this wave.*

Respondent Profile Overview

- There have been some notable changes in the composition of the respondent base this wave – most notably, more personal users (and fewer who use FreeBSD as daily driver) along with fewer contributors and committers.
  - There has also been a shift in age (older) and years experience with FreeBSD (longer).
  - Geography has remained remarkably steady wave to wave.

Selected Profile Variables

(Among All Respondents)

Primarily use FreeBSD*	2024	2025
…Outside of job (“personal user”)	65%	70%
…As part of job/professionally (“professional user”)	31%	27% ↑
…At school	1%	1%
Years Using FreeBSD		
…Less than 5 years	28%	29%
…5-<15 years	27%	23% ↓
…15-<25 years	32%	27% ↓
…25+ years	13%	21% ↑
Consider Self…		
…Committer	10%	6% ↓
…Contributor	19%	14% ↓
…User only	66%	76% ↑
…Don’t know	5%	4%

Daily Driver	2024	2025
…Use FreeBSD as daily driver	43%	40% ↓
Where primarily use FreeBSD (top mentions)		
…Servers	50%	49%
…Desktop	18%	17%
…Laptop	14%	16% ↑
Age		
…Under 25	6%	6%
…25 - 44	45%	36% ↓
…45- 64	43%	49% ↑
…65+	5%	7%
…Mean age	45	46 ↑
Location (top mentions)		
…Europe	52%	52%
…North America	33%	33%
…Asia	6%	7%

* Slight wording change in 2025; interpret trend cautiously

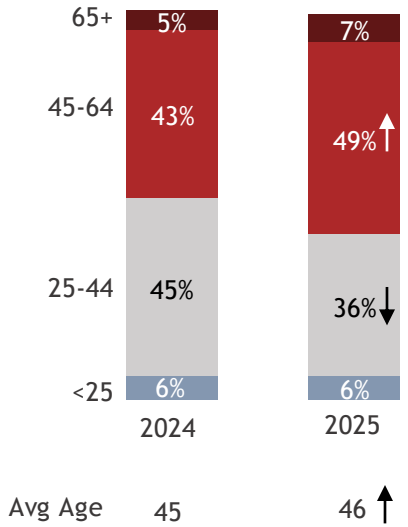
SOURCE: Q3. Is FreeBSD your daily driver? (the operating system you use most frequently)? | Q7. Do you use FreeBSD primarily…? *(slight wording change in 2025)* | Q8. For about how long have you been using FreeBSD? | Q45. Do you consider yourself…? | Q53. What is your age? | Q54. Where are you located?

Respondent Demographics

- Respondent age has increased this year, due largely to a bump up among 45-64 year olds.
  - The typical respondent is age 46 and located in Europe or North America.
  - There has been no change in geographic mix since the last study.

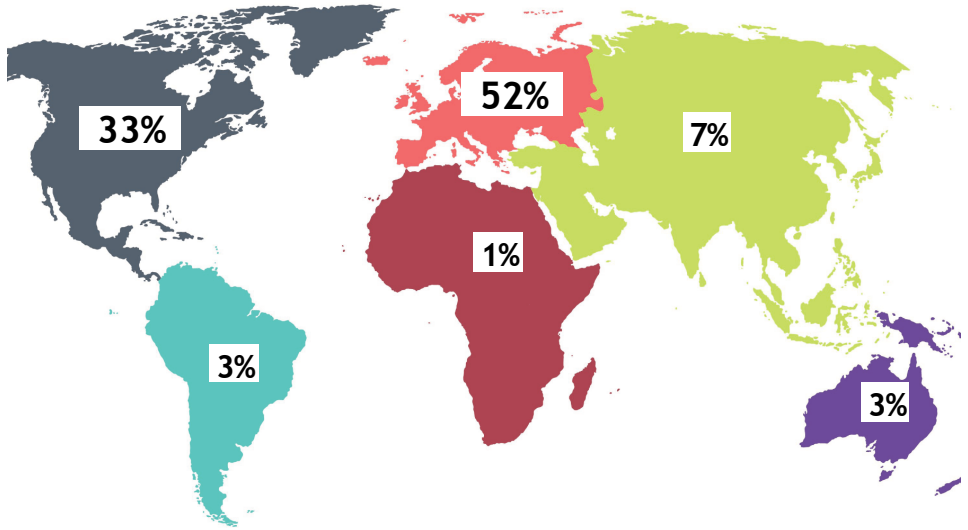
Respondent Age

(Among All Respondents)



Where Located

(Among All Respondents)



1% prefer not to say

SOURCE: Q53. What is your age?) | Q54. Where are you located? | NOTE: Community members located in Russia were unable to take the survey.

FreeBSD User Profile

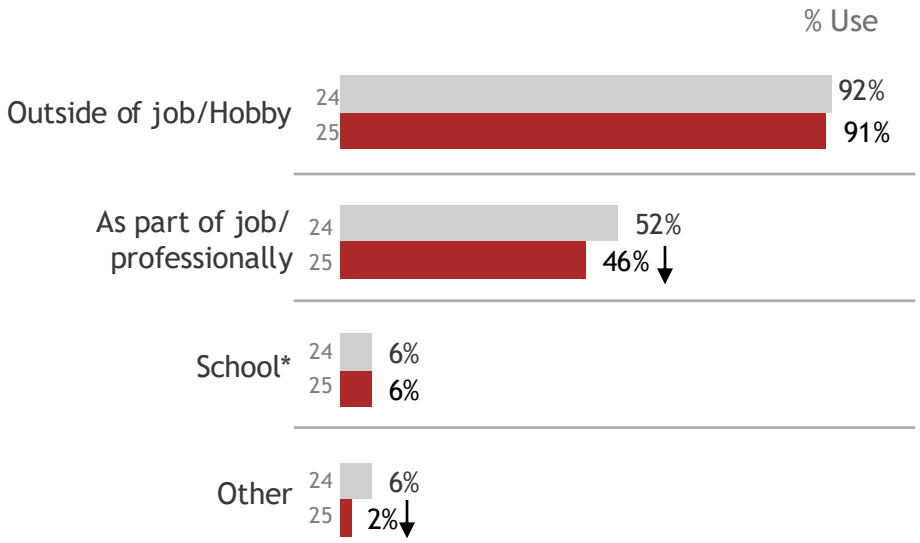
- This wave's sample mix is more heavily skewed to personal users, with a drop in professional users. Accordingly, there are also fewer committers/contributors in this wave, and fewer who consider FreeBSD their daily driver.
- Personal users are generally younger than professional users and have been using FreeBSD for a shorter time.
- Users are learning about FreeBSD in various ways – especially while searching for an alternative to Linux, through word of mouth, or just randomly on their own.
- It is worth noting that word of mouth is not the catalyst it was 15+ years ago: newer users are less likely than others to have discovered FreeBSD via personal recommendation.
- The primary architecture being used is unequivocally 64-bit x86. ARM CPU options (both 64-bit and 32-bit versions) are far less common, and popularity has dropped since the last wave.

Where Use FreeBSD

- Even more than last year, most respondents are primarily using FreeBSD personally. There has been a corresponding drop in the share of respondents who are professional users.
  - Personal users are notably younger than those who use it primarily as part of their job but both segments have aged since 2024.

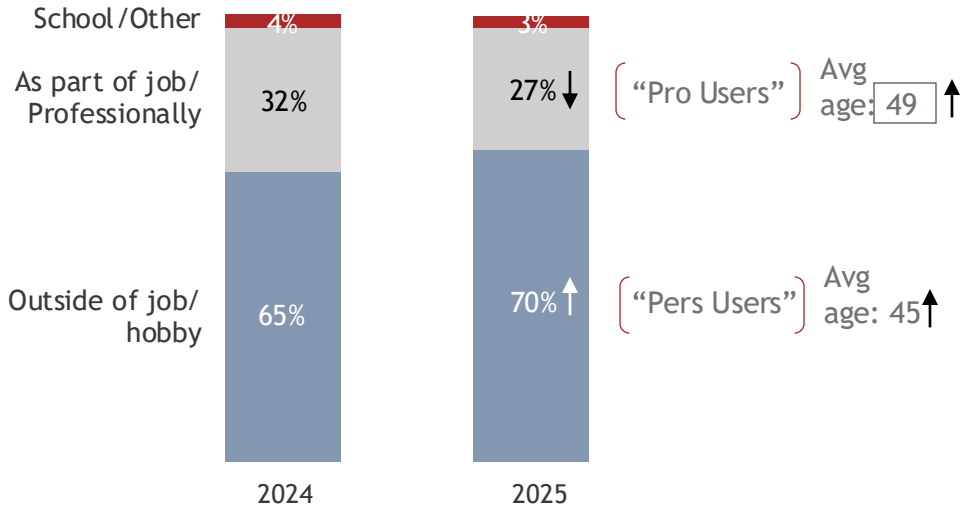
Where Use FreeBSD*

(Among All Respondents)



Where Primarily Use FreeBSD*

(Among All Respondents)



*Wording changed since 2024; interpret trend cautiously

SOURCE: Q6. Do you use FreeBSD…? (check all that apply) | Q7. Do you use FreeBSD Primarily…? (check one)

Learning About FreeBSD

- Users are learning about FreeBSD through a range of different sources – no one source stands out.
  - Many found FreeBSD when searching for an alternative OS (typically to Linux).
  - Newer users are less likely than others to have been referred and are more likely to have found FreeBSD while researching alternatives.
  - Word of mouth does not seem to be the catalyst it was 15 years ago.

How First Introduced to FreeBSD

(Among All Respondents)

Top Mentions

Primarily as an alternative to
- Linux (54%)
- Windows (16%)

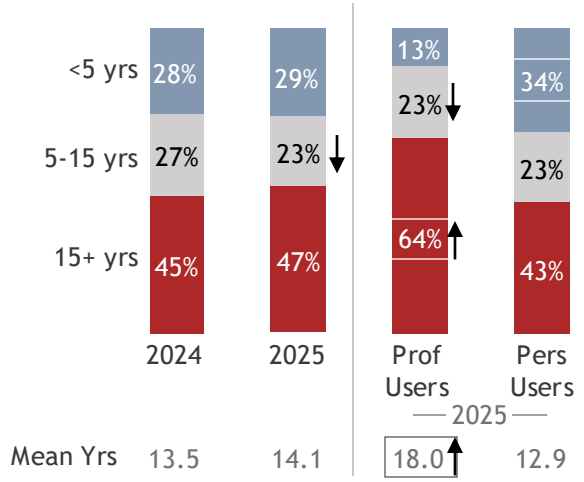
	All	Pro Users	Pers Users	YRS USING FBSD < 5	YRS USING FBSD 5-<15	YRS USING FBSD 15+
Researching alternative OS	17%	13%	18%	26%	15%	11%
Word of mouth/recommendation	16%	18%	15%	8%	12%	22%
Discovered randomly on my own	15%	12%	16%	18%	15%	13%
Book/magazine/blog article	11%	10%	12%	13%	11%	11%
At my workplace	9%	17%	7%	3%	10%	13%
Appliance (FreeNAS, pfsense, etc.)	5%	4%	5%	8%	10%	1%
School	5%	6%	4%	2%	4%	7%
Social Media	2%	1%	2%	5%	2%	<1%

SOURCE: Q30. How were you first introduced to FreeBSD? (check one) (not trendable) | Q30A (NEW). If you chose "researching alternatives to operating system9s)", which one(s)? (open end)

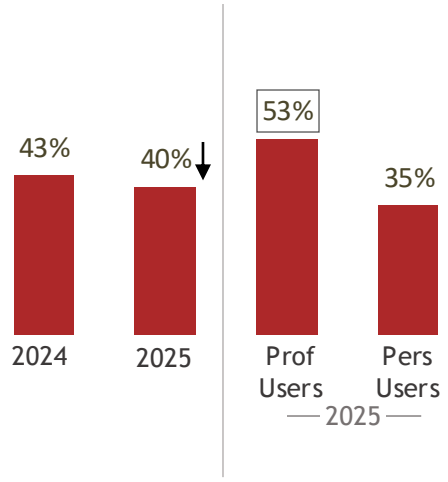
Other FreeBSD Usage Characteristics

- Pro users are particularly long-term FreeBSD users (18 years on average) – both compared to the last wave and to personal users.
  - Only 2 in 5 view FreeBSD as their daily driver; the drop since 2024 can be attributed to the increase in personal users.
  - 64-bit X86 continues to be the dominant architecture, as 64- and 32-bit ARM chips seem to be waning in popularity.

Years Using FreeBSD
(Among All)



Consider FreeBSD Daily Driver
(Among All)



CPU Arch Will Use Next 12 Mos.
(Top Mentions, Among All)

	All 2024	All 2025	Prof Users	Pers Users
64-bit X86 (amd64)	97%	97%	98%	96%
64-bit ARM (aarch64)	42%	38% ↓	38%	39%
64-bit RISC-V (riscv 64)	7%	6%	8%	6%
32-bit x86 (i386)	7%	6%	7%	5%
32-bit ARM (armv7)	7%	5% ↓	6% ↓	5%
64-bit Power (powerpc64,powerpc641e)	2%	2%	2%	2%

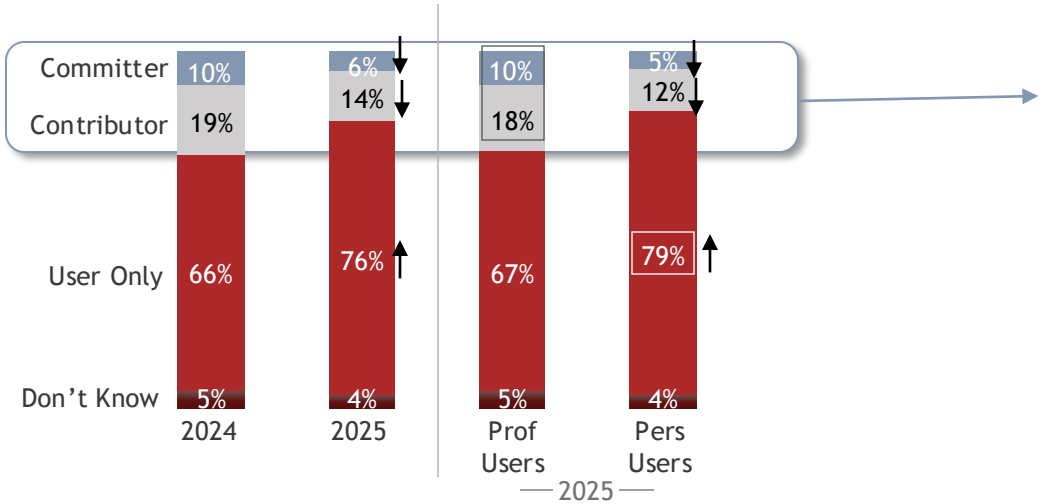
SOURCE: Q8. For about how long have you been using FreeBSD? | Q3. Is FreeBSD your daily driver? (the operating system you use most frequently) | Q10. Which CPU Architectures will be used in the next 12 months by you or your employer in a production capacity (e.g., server, desktop, laptop, appliance and not as the target for development) (check all that apply)

Project Role

- There has been a drop in the share of respondents who self-describe as ‘committers’ or ‘contributors’, and a corresponding rise in ‘users only’.
  - Some of this can be attributed to the rise in personal users in this wave, but even within that segment, the share of committers and contributors is lower than in 2024.
  - Personal users are more likely to identify with Ports, while pro users associate with SRC.

FreeBSD Project Role

(Among All Respondents)



Part of FreeBSD Identify With Most

(Among Committers/Contributors)

	All 2024	All 2025	Prof Users	Pers Users
Ports	40%	42%	30%	50%
Src	31%	30%	42%	23%
Advocacy	18%	17%	15%	17%
Doc	4%	5%	1%	7%
Infrastructure	3%	3%	7%	1%
Other	5%	4%	5%	3%

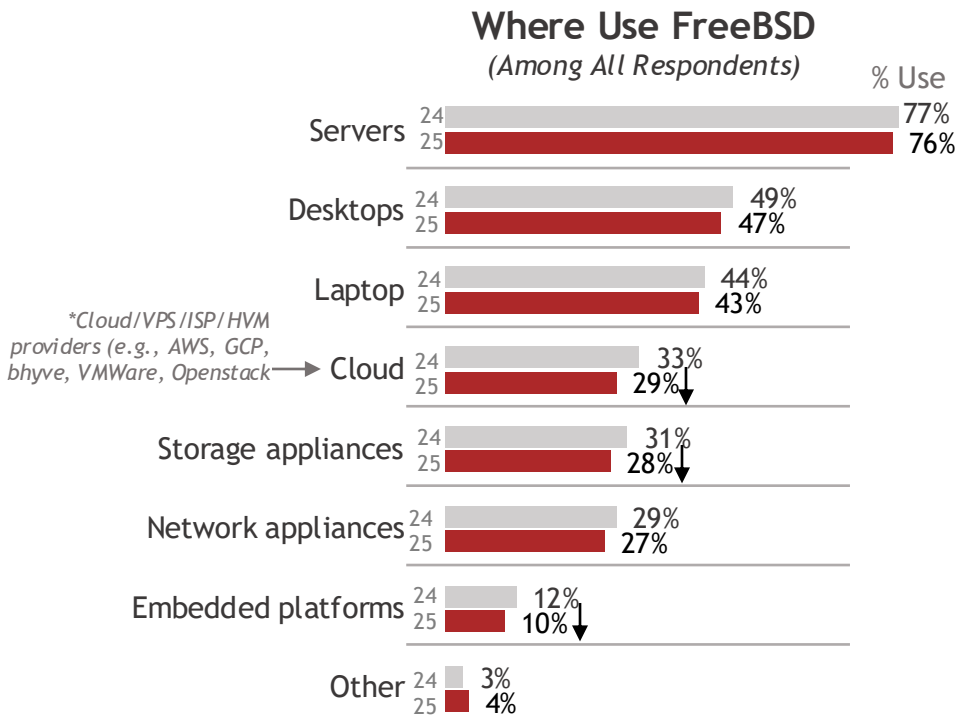
SOURCE: Q45. Do you consider yourself. . .? | Q46. Which part of FreeBSD do you identify with the most? (Check one)

Where FreeBSD is Deployed

- Consistent with the last wave, FreeBSD is most commonly deployed on **servers.**
  - Pro users are particularly likely to use FreeBSD primarily on a server.
  - Server users are generally older and have been using FreeBSD longer than those deploying elsewhere.
- While many deploy FreeBSD on **desktops or laptops**, just one in five consider either of these channels primary.
  - Personal users are more likely than others to primarily use FreeBSD on a desktop or on a laptop.
  - Desktop and laptop users are newer to FreeBSD, more likely to consider FreeBSD their daily driver, and they have fewer installations at work.
  - Nearly all desktop/laptop users use a CI/CD system – with GitHub actions most preferred. GitLab CI/CD and Jenkins are also used with some frequency.
  - Vorg is by far the most popular graphic sub-system, by a 4:1 margin over Wayland.
  - Laptop users favor Lenovo/IBM and expect to use their laptops 6-7 years on average,
- Only a minority of users (7%) use FreeBSD primarily in the **cloud**.
  - Collectively, public cloud providers are widely used – but Bhyve is the single most widely subscribed cloud provider when using FreeBSD.

Where Use FreeBSD

- As before, about half of the respondents use FreeBSD primarily on servers – especially professional users.
  - There has been a slight rise in those who use FreeBSD primarily on laptops, driven largely by the increase in personal users.
  - Personal users are more likely than others to deploy FreeBSD primarily on a desktop or laptop (though even here, servers are still most common).



Where Primarily Use
(Among All Respondents)

	All 2024	All 2025	Prof Users	Pers Users
Servers	50%	49%	65%	44%
Desktops	18%	17%	8%	20%
Laptop	14%	16% ↑	7%	20%
Cloud	6%	7%	8%	6%
Storage appliances	5%	4%	4%	4%
Network appliances	5%	4%	5% ↓	4%
Embedded platforms	<1%	1%	2%	1%
Other	1%	2%	1%	2%

SOURCE: Q1. Do you use FreeBSD on…? (check all that apply) | Q2. Where do you primarily use FreeBSD? (check one)

Where Use FreeBSD

- There are notable differences in users' profiles based on where they primarily use FreeBSD. For example,
  - Server users are older and have been using FreeBSD longer than others.
  - Desktop and laptop users are newer to FreeBSD and more likely to use it primarily outside of work and as their daily driver. Those who use FBSD at work have fewer installations on average.

Profile of FBSD Users by Where Primarily Use

(Among All Respondents)

		Where Primarily Use FBSD (2025)					
	All 2025	Server	Desktop	Laptop	Cloud	Network App	Storage App
Age/Years Using							
Average age	46 ↑	47 ↑	47	43	44	47 ↑	43
Average # yrs using FBSD	14.1	16.5 ↑	11.7	9.3	14.9	14.5	13.0
Located In…							
Europe	52%	54%	53%	47%	56%	52%	45%
North America	33%	33%	33%	34%	24%	33%	38%
Asia	7%	6%	6%	11%	9%	6%	11%
FreeBSD Daily Driver?							
Yes	40% ↓	31%	67%	55%	28%	18%	18%
Use Primarily…							
Outside of work (pers user)	70% ↑	63%	84% ↑	84%	66%	68% ↑	68%
At work (pro user)	27% ↓	36%	13%	11%	32%	32%	30%
Number of work installations							
Avg # work installations (among pro users)	24.8	26.2	9.5	11.2	27.8	34.7*	38.8*

* Sample size small (n<50)
SOURCE: (multiple questions)

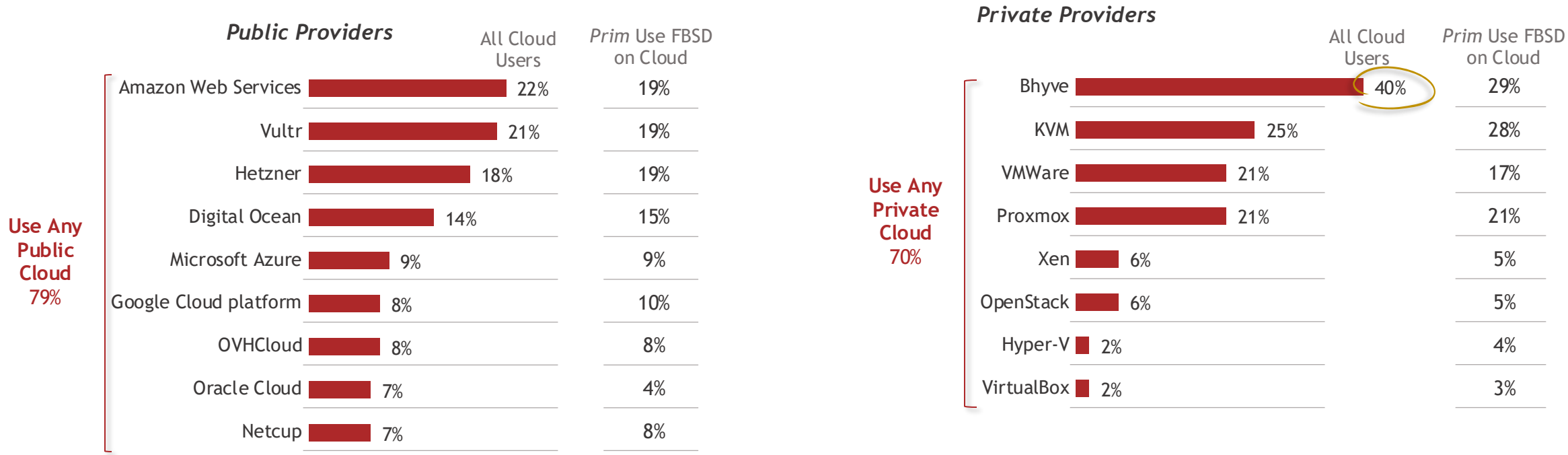
Cloud Users: In-Depth

- Nearly four in five of those who use FreeBSD on the cloud are using one or more public cloud providers – typically Amazon Web Services, Vultr or Hetzner.
  - Collectively, private cloud providers are less widely used than public, but Bhyve is, by far, the dominant provider overall.

Cloud Providers Used with FreeBSD

(Among Those Who Use FreeBSD on Cloud)

Top Mentions



SOURCE: Q25. Which public cloud providers do you use when running FreeBSD? (check all that apply) | Q25A. Which private cloud providers do you use when running FreeBSD (check all that apply) (questions not trendable0

Desktop & Laptop Users: In-Depth

- Most desktop/laptop users are currently using a CI/CD system.
  - GitHub Actions is the CI/CD system of choice – both among current users and as a desired system.
  - Notably, more than half of desktop/laptop users say their current system is adequate.
  - Vorg is the preferred graphic subsystem, by a nearly 4:1 margin – but its edge is less clear among personal users.

System Used/Would Like to Use for FreeBSD-Related Projects

(Among Those Who Use FreeBSD on Desktop and/or Laptop)

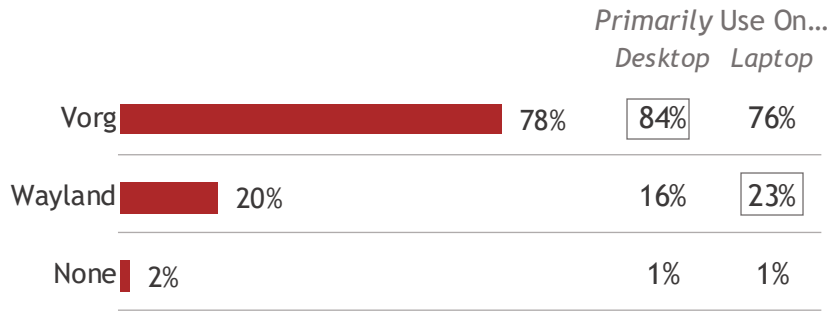
	Currently Use		*Would Like to Use*
Use ANY CI/CD System	**86%**		
GitHub Actions	35%	GitHub Actions	33%
GitLab CI/CD	28%	Google Cloud Build	7%
Jenkins	24%	Azure Pipelines	7%
Gitea Actions	12%	AWS CodePipeline	6%
Buildbot	4%	Travis CI	4%
Sourcehut	4%	TeamCity	2%
Custom/homegrown	3%	None – what I use now is adequate	55%
Cirrus CI	3%		

17% among those not already using GitHub Actions

There is no variation in CI/CD usage based on whether primarily on a desktop or laptop

Graphic Subsystem Used Most

(Among Those Who Use FreeBSD on Desktop and/or Laptop)



SOURCE: Q28B. (NEW) What CI/CD system are you currently using for your FreeBSD-related projects? Check all that apply | Q28C. (NEW) Which of these CI/CD systems, if any, would you want to use for your FreeBSD related projects? (check all that apply) | Q28D. (NEW) Which graphic subsystem do you use most? (check one)

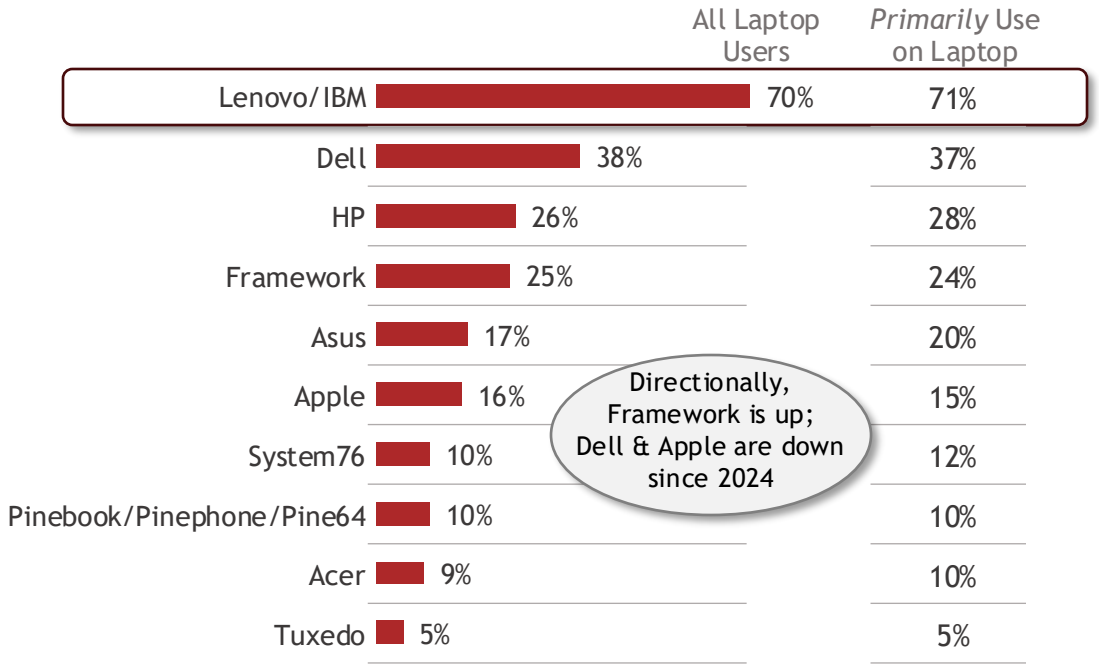
Laptop Users: In-Depth

- Lenovo/IBM is, by far, the most important laptop brand for those using FreeBSD on a laptop.
  - Dell is also important but may be slipping in popularity on a purely directional basis. Framework may be on the rise.
  - Laptop users in general expect to use their laptop for 6-7 years on average. – but those *primarily* on a laptop have even longer expectations.

Most Important Laptop Brands

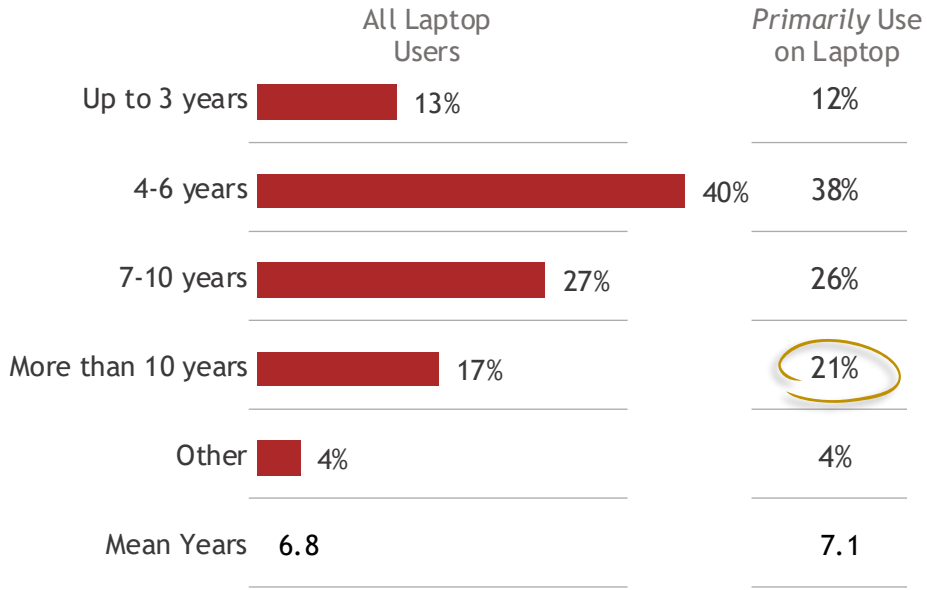
(Among Those Who Use FreeBSD on Laptop)

Top Mentions



How Long Expect to Use Laptop

(Among Those Who Use FreeBSD on Laptop)



SOURCE: Q27. Indicate which three laptop brands are most important to you for running FreeBSD as a laptop OS. (Check up to 3) (not trendable) ! Q28A. (NEW) When you install FreeBSD onto a laptop, how long do you expect to use that laptop?

Workloads

- FreeBSD is being used for 4-5 workloads per user on average, with storage and web serving among the most common. But on a subgroup level, workloads vary considerably:
  - Pro users are using more workloads on average.
  - For those primarily on servers or cloud, Web serving is most common, but firewall/proxy router also over-represented.
  - Desktop and laptop users have fewer uses for FreeBSD beyond development.
  - Network and storage appliance users are using primarily for firewall/proxy/router and storage, respectively.
- ZFS and access to security patches are among the most important workload attributes across all segments, but secondary priorities vary by deployment segment.
  - Those using FreeBSD primarily on network appliances seem to have the most unique priorities.
  - While not a top priority, power efficiency is nonetheless important among personal users and laptop users.

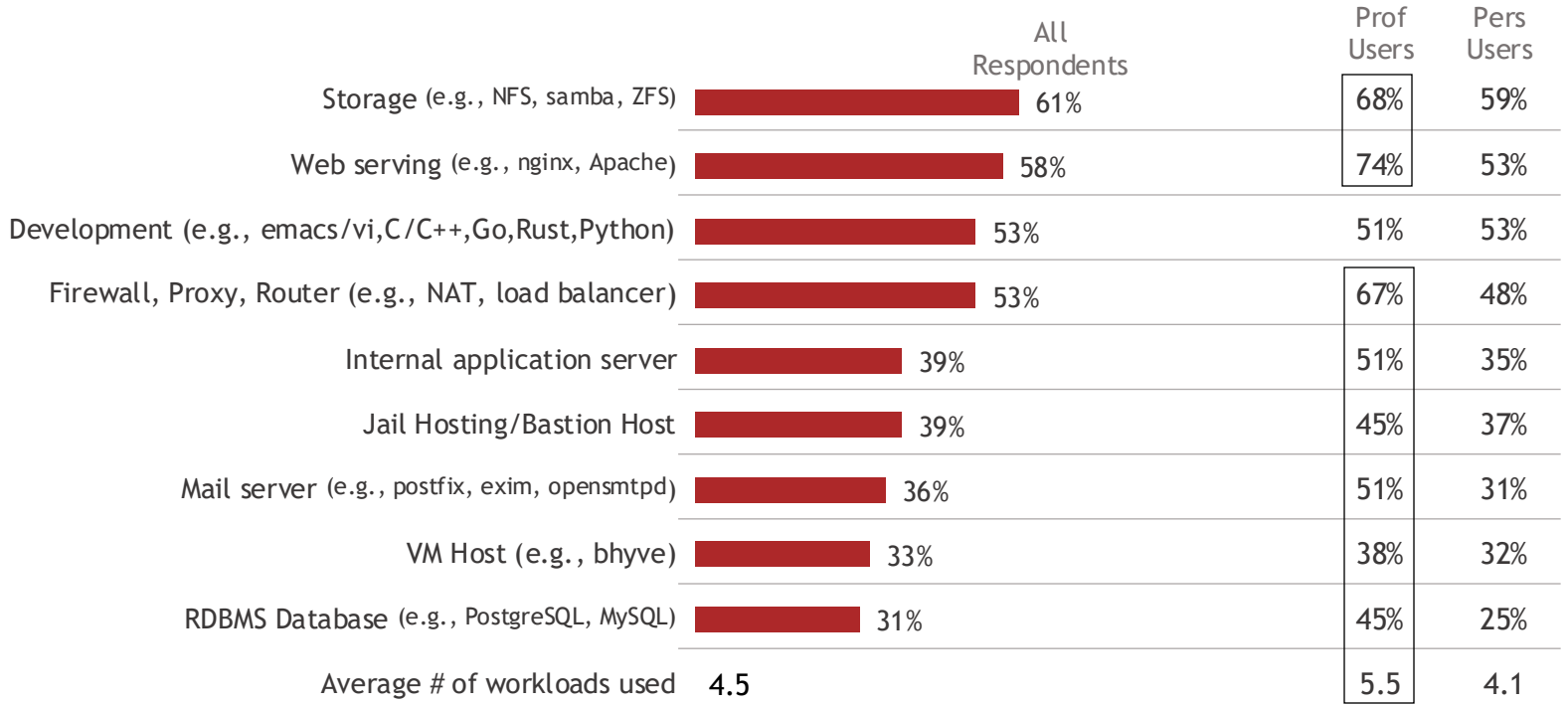
Workloads Used

- FreeBSD is being used for a number of different workloads – storage and web serving chief among them.
  - Pro users are using FreeBSD for 5-6 workloads, significantly higher than personal users' 4 workloads.
  - Firewall/proxy/router nets out the top three in the pro user segment, while development rounds out personal users' main workloads.

Workloads Use FreeBSD For - Most Widely Used

(Among All Respondents)

Top Mentions



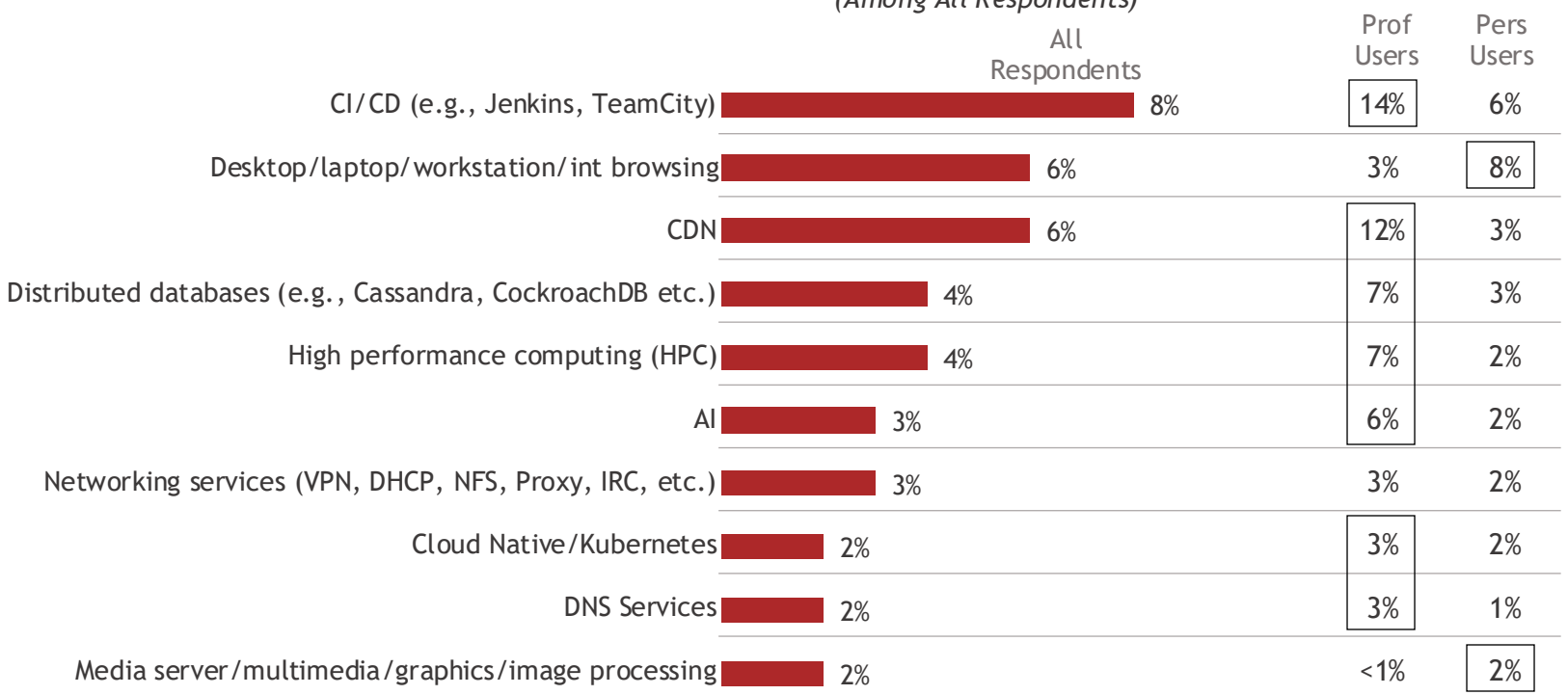
SOURCE: Q23.Which workloads do you use FreeBSD for? (check all that apply from list of 15+ items)? (data not trendable)

Workloads Used

- There is a significant drop off in other workload applications FreeBSD is being used for.
  - Again, big differences exist in workloads for pro vs personal users.

Other (Less Widely) Used Workloads For FreeBSD

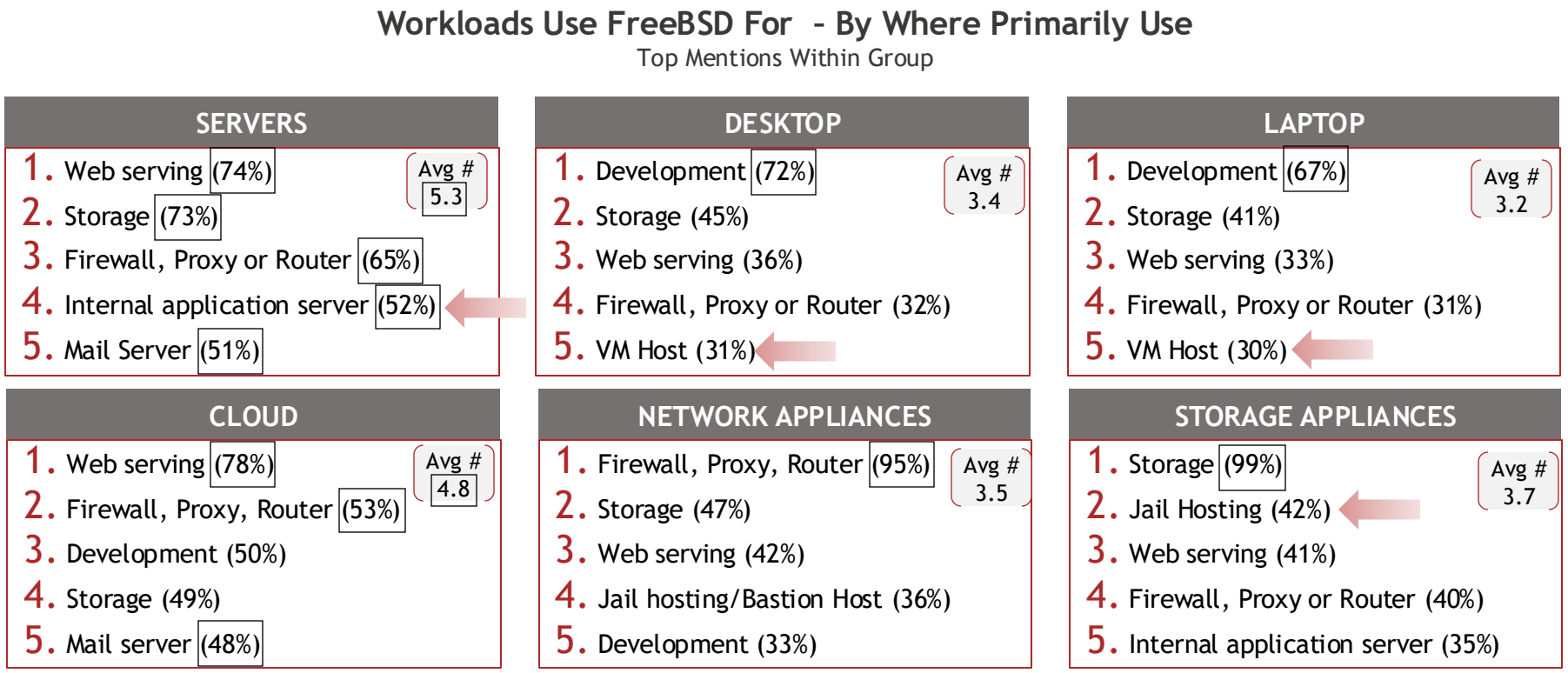
(Among All Respondents)



SOURCE: Q23. Which workloads do you use FreeBSD for? (check all that apply from list of 15+ items)? (data not trendable)

Workloads Used

- As expected, the number and mix of workloads vary widely based on where FreeBSD is being deployed.
  - Those primarily on servers or cloud are using FreeBSD for more workloads, web-serving chief among them.
  - Desktop and laptop users are most focused on development.
  - Network and storage users are focused on firewalls and storage workloads, respectively.



SOURCE: Q23. Which workloads do you use FreeBSD for? (check all that apply from list of 15+ items)? (data not trendable)

Workload Attributes

- ZFS and access to security patches are the most important workload attributes overall – for both professional and personal users.
  - Network/firewall and Network/performance are more important to pro users than to personal users – but in general, the order of priorities is similar across user segments.

Most Important Workload Attributes

(Among All Respondents)

Top Mentions

	All Respondents	Prof Users	Pers Users
ZFS	68%	70%	68%
Access to security patches	62%	65%	61%
Network: Firewall	45%	51%	43%
Filesystem performance	44%	45%	43%
In-Place upgrades (vs. fresh install)	43%	44%	43%
Sandboxing (Jails, Capsicum)	37%	39%	37%
Network: Performance bandwidth	33%	38%	31%
Virtualization host (bhyve, SRIOV)	33%	34%	33%
Average # checked	5.9	6.3	5.8

SOURCE: Q24. Which of the following workload attributes are most important to you? [Check up to 8 from list of 21] (data not trendable)

Workload Attributes

- Compared to personal users, pro users view more workload attributes as important.
  - Power efficiency is particularly important to personal users (who are more likely to use FreeBSD primarily on a laptop), but most other attributes are not as important as they are for pro users.

Other (Less) Important Workload Attributes

Second tier mentions

	All Respondents	Prof Users	Pers Users
Up-to-date server applications	29%	33%	28%
Network: Storage (e.g., iSCSI, NVMeoF, NFS, smb/Samba)	29%	33%	27%
Block Storage Performance (e.g., NVMe, SATA)	27%	30%	26%
Network: Router	26%	31%	25%
Power Efficiency	24%	16%	27%
Vulnerability Mitigation (e.g., ASLR, spectre/meltdown mitigations)	18%	15%	18%
Virtualization Guest (e.g., optimized paravirtual drivers)	17%	20%	16%
Config mgmnt support (ansible, chef, salt, packer, puppet)	13%	17%	12%
Network: Performance – PPS	11%	15%	10%
OCI/Container Support	10%	9%	10%
Fault Management	9%	11%	7%
Observability (e.g., Dtrace)	8%	10%	7%
Large Core Count System Perf (NUMA, E vs P cores)	5%	7%	4%

SOURCE: Q24. Which of the following workload attributes are most important to you? [Check up to 8 from list of 21] (data not trendable)

Workload Attributes

- ZFS and access to security patches are a top-5 priority across all deployment segments, but other priorities vary considerably.
  - Network appliance users seem to have the most unique set of priorities, placing strong emphasis on a range of network attributes.

Most Important Workload Attributes - By Where Primarily Use

(Among All Respondents)

Top Mentions Within Group

SERVERS — Avg # 6.3

1. ZFS (74%)
2. Access to sec. patches (65%)
3. Network: Firewall (52%)
4. In-place upgrades (47%)
5. Filesystem performance (42%)
   Sandboxing (42%)

DESKTOP — Avg # 5.1

1. ZFS (64%)
2. Access to sec patches (60%)
3. Filesystem performance (47%)
4. In-place upgrades (40%)
5. Virtualization host (36%)
6. Network: Firewall (31%)
   Network: Performance (31%)

LAPTOP — Avg # 5.3

1. ZFS (61%)
2. Access to sec patches (57%)
3. Filesystem performance (48%)
4. Power efficiency (41%)
5. In-place upgrades (36%)
   Network: Firewall (36%)

CLOUD — Avg # 6.0

1. Access to sec. patches (65%)
2. ZFS (52%)
3. In-place upgrades (48%)
4. Network: Firewall (44%)
5. Sandboxing (42%)
6. Filesystem performance (39%)

NETWORK APPLIANCES — Avg # 6.3

1. Network: Firewall (88%)
2. Network: Router (76%)
3. Access to security patches (61%)
4. Network: Perf bandwidth (57%)
5. ZFS (53%)
6. Network: Perf - PPS (32%)
   Sandboxing (32%)

STORAGE APPLIANCES — Avg # 5.9

1. ZFS (88%)
2. Access to sec patches (56%)
3. Filesystem performance (54%)
4. Network: Storage (53%)
5. In-place upgrades (40%)
6. Block Storage performance (35%)

SOURCE: Q24. Which of the following server workload attributes are most important to you? [Check up to 10]

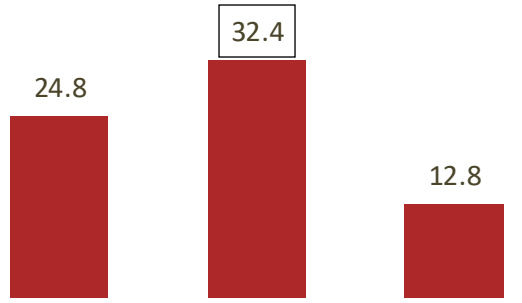
FreeBSD Installations & Releases

- The typical FreeBSD user who uses FreeBSD at work has roughly 25 installations on average.
- Users are running multiple releases: 5 out of 6 are running the current (14.2) release, but many are also running other releases, especially any 13 release or 14.1.
- Most commonly, users prefer to delay upgrades until a release has matured.
- Pro users are particularly likely to run multiple releases and are less likely to jump to upgrade (likely a function of the number of installs). They use FreeBSD stable branches slightly longer than personal users (2-3 years on average) and update third-party packages less often (many monthly or less).
- Minor upgrades seem to be going smoothly for most users, but major upgrades are more problematic. One in 7 users say major upgrades have been “difficult”.
- Package/ports management issues, risk of breakage, and process complexity are the main (but not the only) culprits.

Number of Installations at Work

- Those using FreeBSD at work have, on average, nearly 25 FreeBSD installations at work.
  - For those who are *primarily* using at work, the number of installations is 32+.

Number of Physical & Virtual FBSD Installations At Work
(Among Those Who Use at Work)



	All	Prof Users	Pers Users
20+ Installations	25%	34%	12%
Don't know	7%	4%	11%

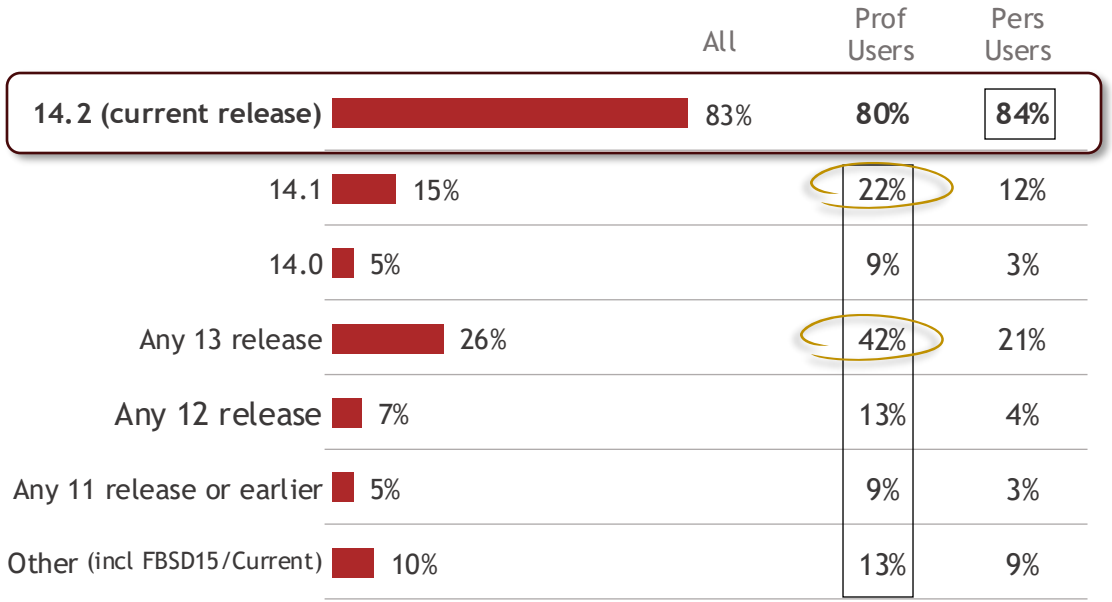
SOURCE: Q16. When using FreeBSD at work, approximately how many physical and virtual FreeBSD installations does the organization have? (not trendable)

Releases & Upgrade Strategy

- FreeBSD users are running multiple releases, but the vast majority are running the current release (14.2).
  - Personal users are particularly likely to be running the current release, while many pro users are also running any of the earlier releases – especially 14.1 and any 13 release.
  - Users tend to prefer to wait to upgrade until a release has matured – although many personal users say they upgrade as soon as possible.

Release(s) Currently Running

(Among All Respondents)



Upgrade Strategy

(Among All Respondents)

	All 2025	Prof Users	Pers Users
After a delay, to allow a release to mature	**42%**	**44%**	**41%**
As soon as each version is released	29%	19%	33%
Based on factors unrelated to the FBSD release cycle	19%	24%	17%
As infrequently as possible	6%	8%	6%
My situation not described here	5%	5%	4%

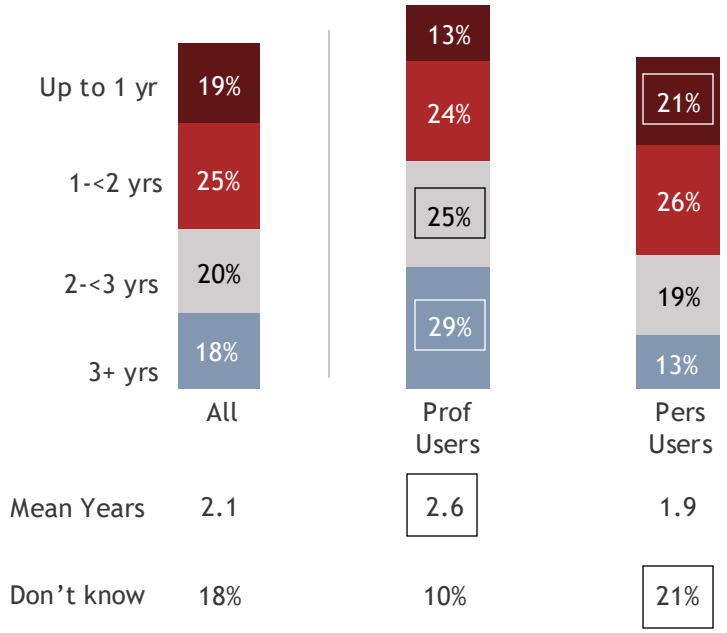
SOURCE: Q19A. (NEW) Which release(s) of FreeBSD are you currently running? Check all that apply. (If you are running FreeBSD15/Current, please choose "other" | Q19B. (NEW) Which of the following best describes your upgrade strategy. I usually upgrade. . .

Stable Branches

- FreeBSD users typically use stable branches for 2 years – closer to 3 years for professional users.

How Long Typically Use FreeBSD Stable Branches after First Release

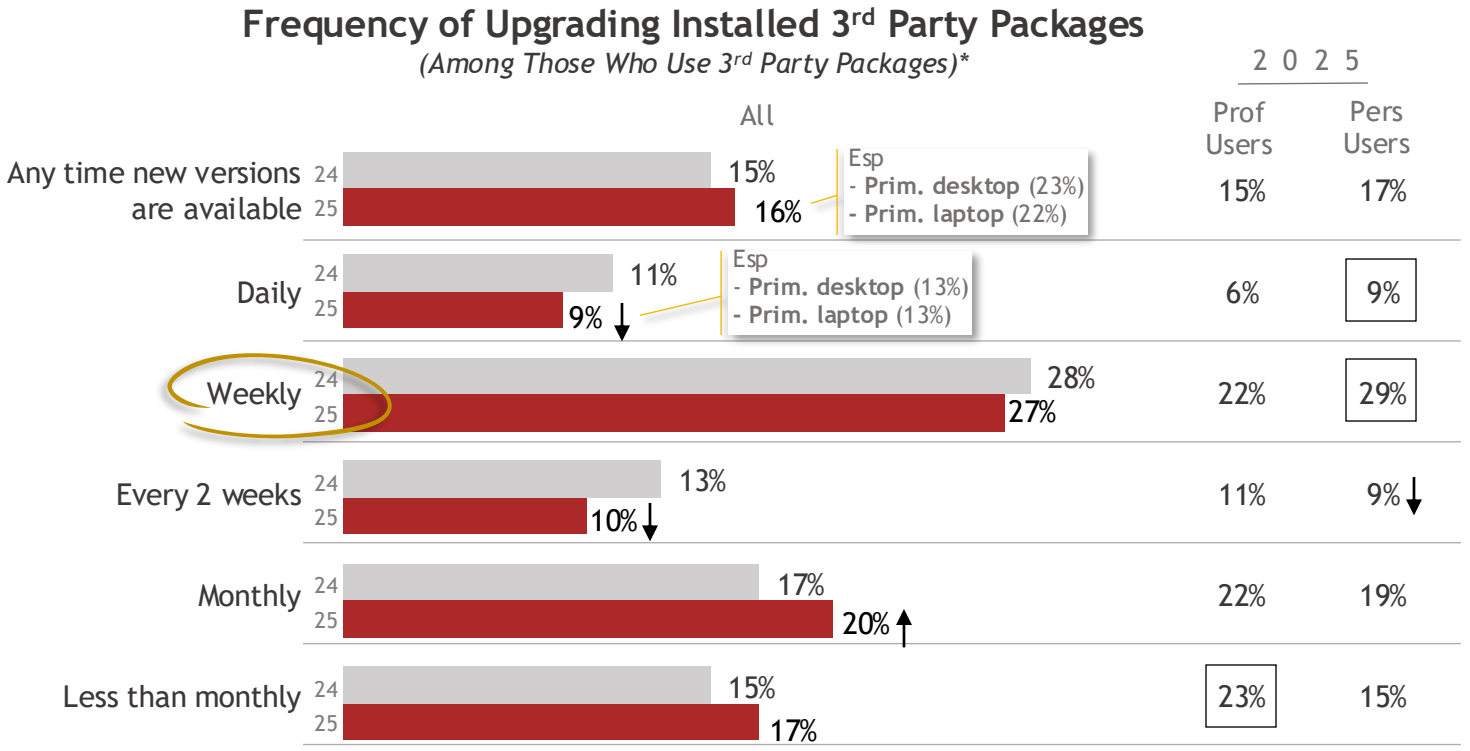
(Among All Respondents)



SOURCE: Q17A. (NEW) How long do you typically use FreeBSD stable branches after the first release (e.g., 14.x)?

3rd Party Package Upgrades

- As in 2024, there is no consensus about the frequency of upgrading installed 3rd party packages – although the pace of upgrades may be dropping.
  - Weekly is most common, particularly for personal users.
  - Professional users tend to upgrade their packages less frequently than personal users.
  - Desktop and laptop users update more frequently than those using FreeBSD primarily elsewhere.



*98% of respondents report using 3rd party packages

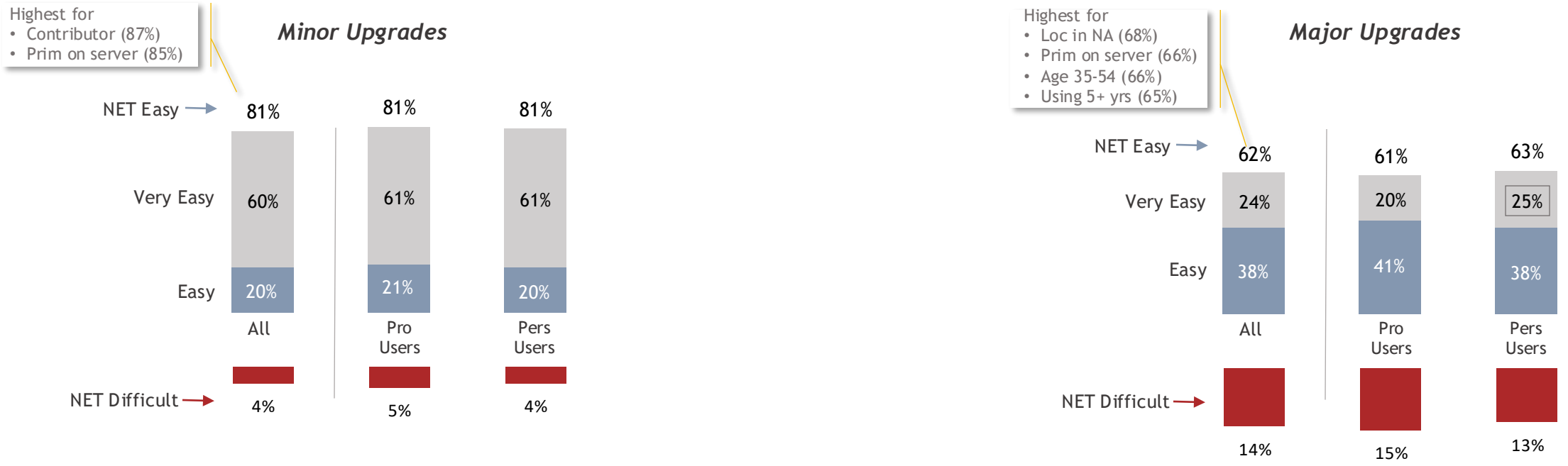
SOURCE: Q13. How often do you upgrade your installed third-party packages? (slight wording change; interpret trend cautiously)

Rating of Upgrade Process

- Minor upgrades seem to be very easy for most FreeBSD users, but major upgrades notably less so.
  - For 1 in 7 users, major upgrades are described as ‘difficult’.
  - Server users are among those most likely to see the upgrade process as easy, but differences are minimal between pro and personal users.

Perceptions of Ease of Making FreeBSD Upgrades

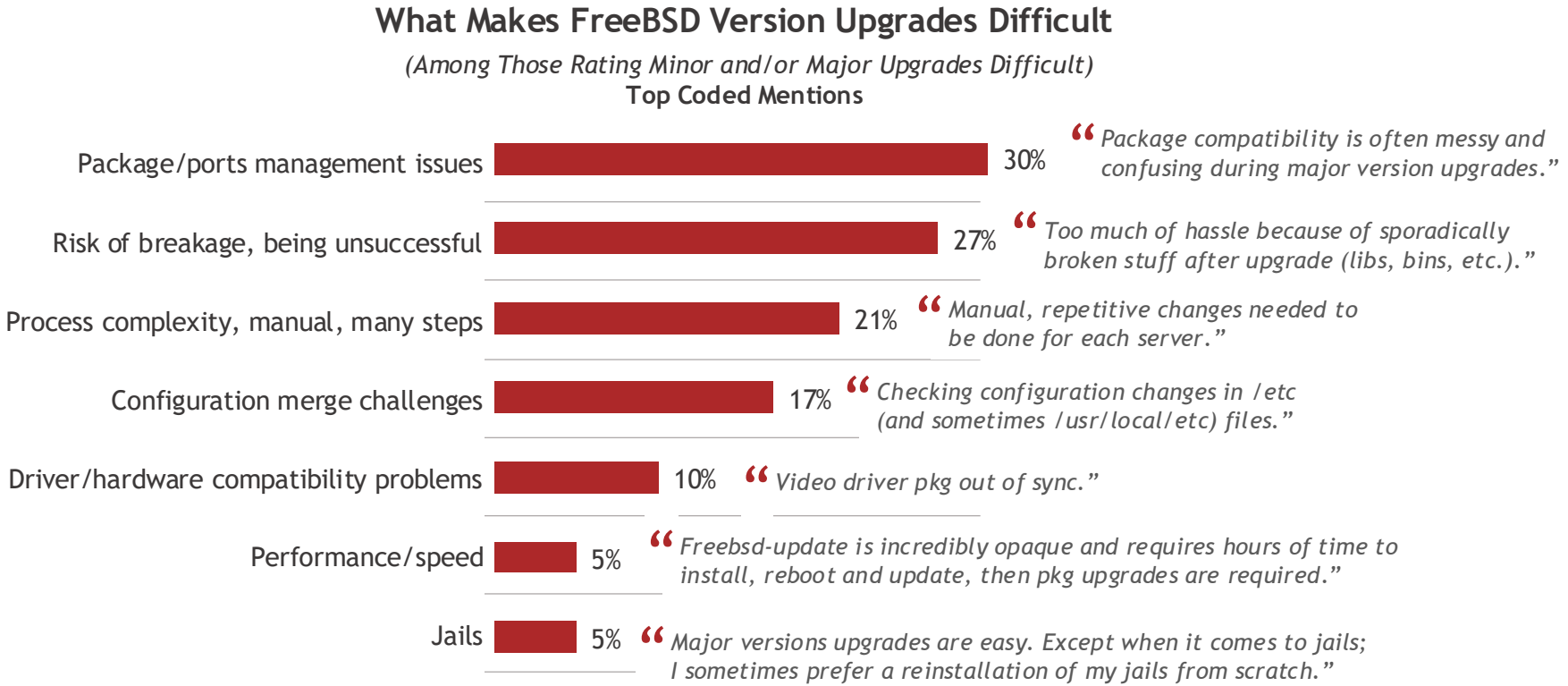
(Among FreeBSD Users With An Opinion)



SOURCE: Q20A. (NEW) How would you rate the process of making minor version upgrades for FreeBSD (5-point scale; NA excluded) | Q20B. (NEW) How would you rate the process of making major version upgrades for FreeBSD? (5-point scale; NA excluded)

Upgrade Process Barriers

- Users point to several issues that make upgrades difficult, including package/ports management issues and the risk of breakage.
  - Process complexity (e.g., manual, many steps involved) also factors in to some extent.



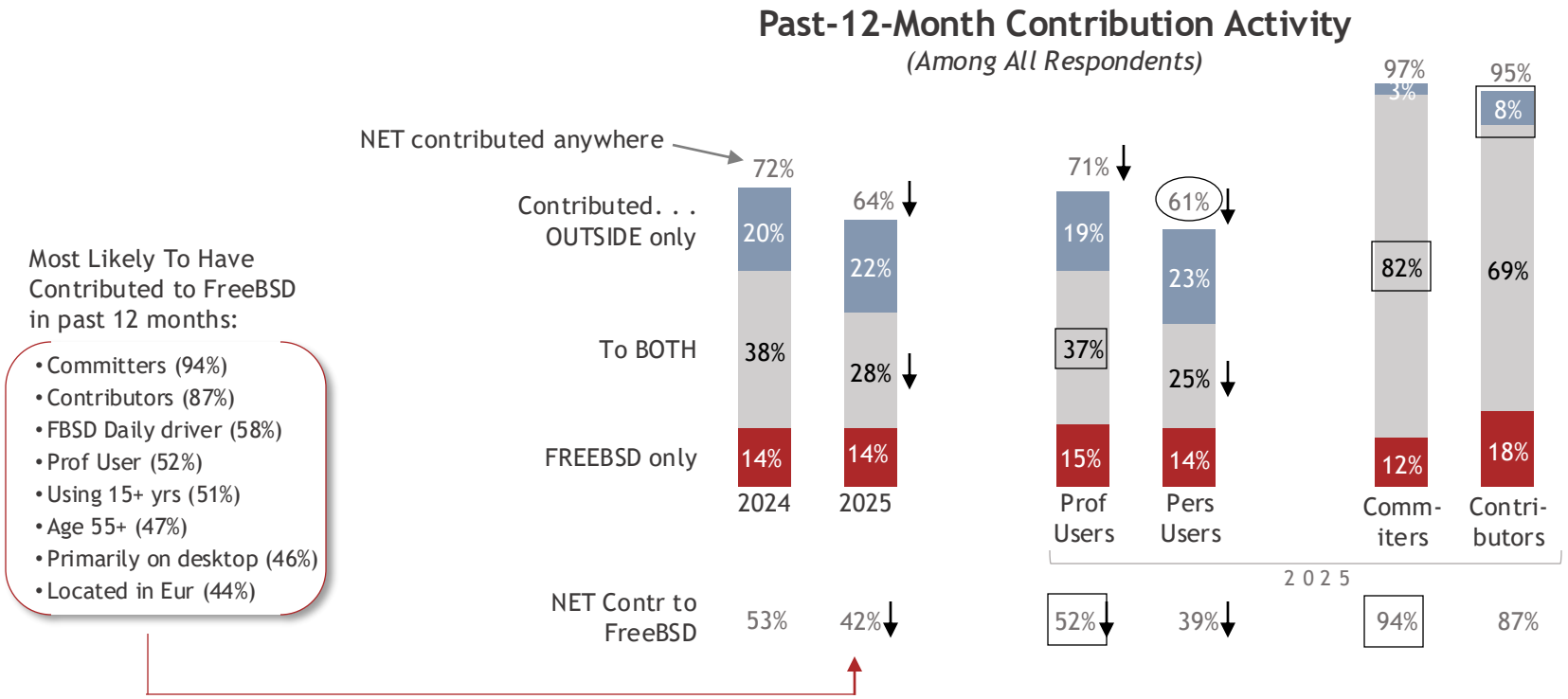
SOURCE: Q20C. (NEW) What is it about FreeBSD version upgrades that is difficult (open end)

Contributing to FreeBSD

- There has been a notable drop since last year in the percent of respondents who have contributed to FreeBSD or anywhere – among both professional and personal users.
- Only about two in five have contributed to FreeBSD in the past 12 months, down from over half. The frequency of contributing is unchanged (with most contributing quarterly or less).
- FreeBSD gets generally high marks for its contribution process, but the percent who are negative has inched up since last year.
- Most say FreeBSD is on par with other OS projects when it comes to contributing – but a notable minority of those who have contributed elsewhere say it is more difficult here. Fragmentation, delays, and a lack of clarity (how to start, and how to submit) are the main barriers.
- Those most likely to say they don't know how to contribute to FreeBSD are younger and new users, and those who contributed elsewhere and not here.
- Committers are more likely than contributors to be compensated or sponsored, but most are not.

Level of Participation

- There has been a notable drop since 2024 in the percent of respondents who say they have contributed to FreeBSD (or anywhere) in the past 12 months.
  - Some of the drop can be explained by the higher number of personal users in this wave (who are less likely to be contributors), but for both user segments, the share of contributors has dropped.



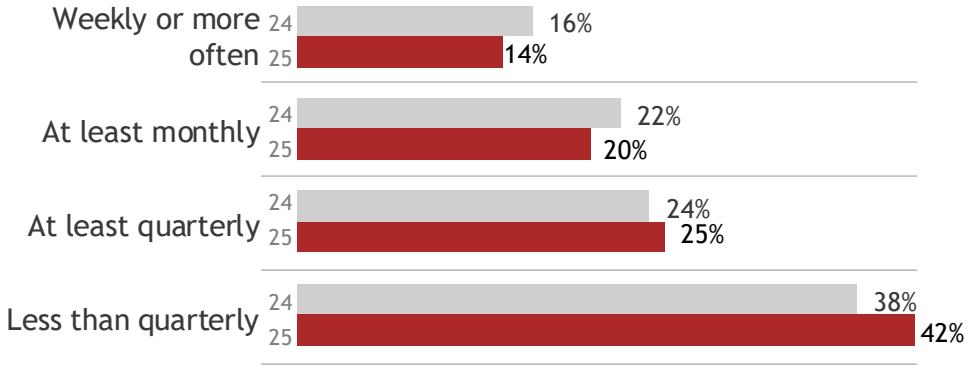
SOURCE: Q36. Excluding FreeBSD, have you contributed to any Open Source software projects in the past 12 months? | Q37. In the past 12 months, have you contributed to FreeBSD (e.g. submitted a patch, opened a bug report, answered a newbie question)?

Level of Participation

- Even if overall participation in the contribution process has dropped, the frequency of contributing has remained steady.
  - Most past-12-month contributors say they contribute quarterly or less often.
  - Pro users and committers are more likely than others to contribute weekly.

Frequency of Contributing to FreeBSD

(Among Those Who have Contributed Past 12 Mos.)



	Pro User	Pers User	Com-mitters	Contri-butors
Weekly or more often	[19%]	11%	[48%]	16%
At least monthly	21%	19%	23%	29%
At least quarterly	21%	27%	15%	[33%]
Less than quarterly	39%	43%	14%	[22%]

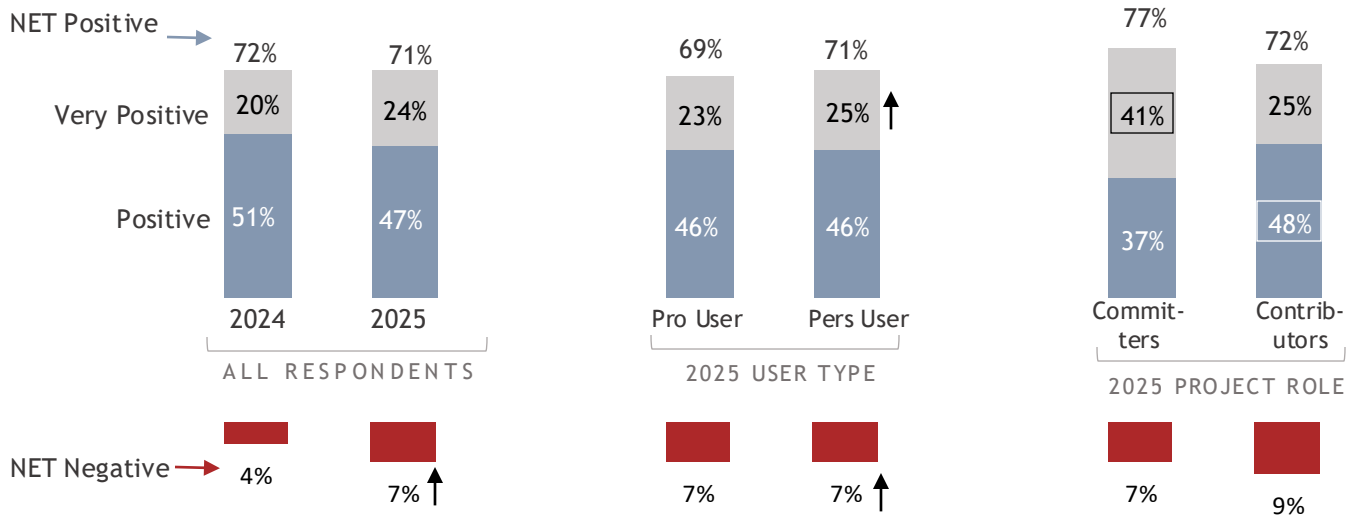
SOURCE: Q38. About how often have you made contributions to FreeBSD over the past 12 months?

The Contribution Experience

- As in 2024, most FreeBSD contributors are positive about the experience, even if not enthusiastically so.
  - There has been a slight rise in those who are negative about the contribution experience at FreeBSD (attributable to personal users), but at 7%, the negativity is not a major concern.
  - Committers are more upbeat about the process than contributors.

Rating of Experience Contributing to FreeBSD

(Among Those Who Have Contributed to FreeBSD in Past 12 Mos)



SOURCE: Q40. Please rate your experience contributing to FreeBSD. (5-pt scale: very negative to very positive)

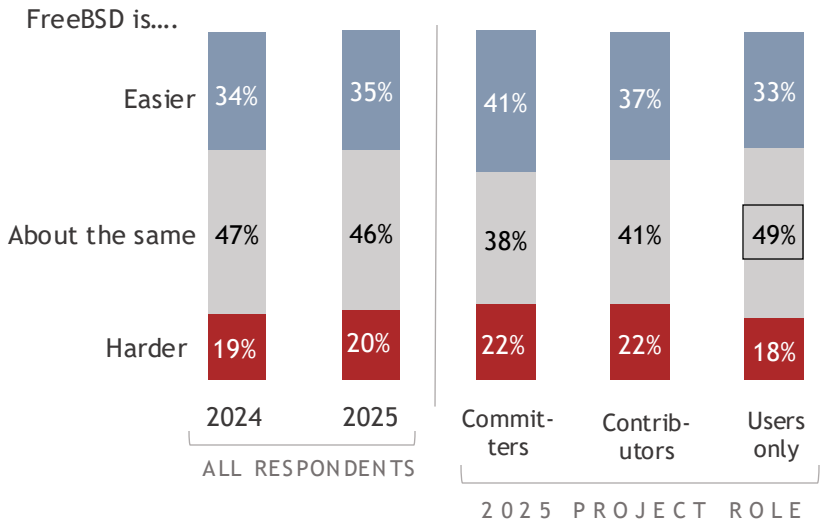
The Contribution Experience

- As before, users generally view FreeBSD's contribution process as on par with other open-source projects.
  - But importantly, perceptions of difficulty may be holding some users back: those who have contributed only outside the project are more likely than others to say that it is more difficult (and less easy) to contribute here.
  - A notable minority of those with first-hand experience (contributing outside FreeBSD) say it is harder to contribute here.

How FreeBSD Contribution Process Compares to Other Open-Source Projects

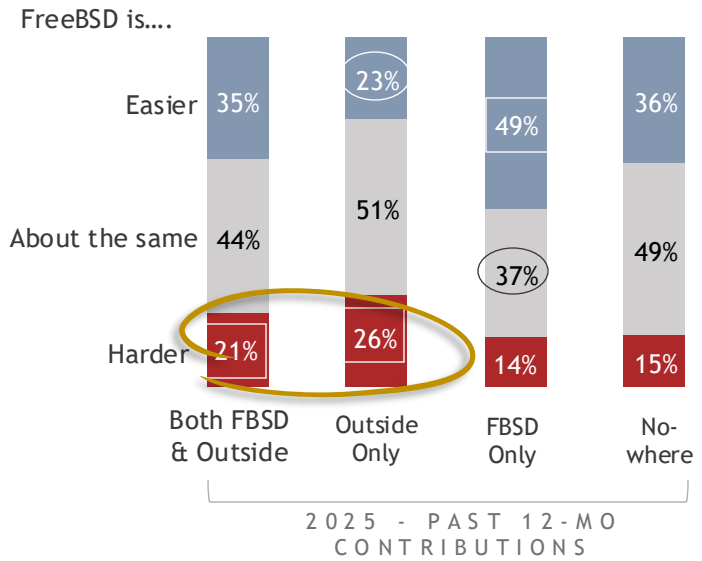
(Among Those Who Have An Opinion, Even if Haven't Contributed)

By Project Role



There are no differences in perception by user type

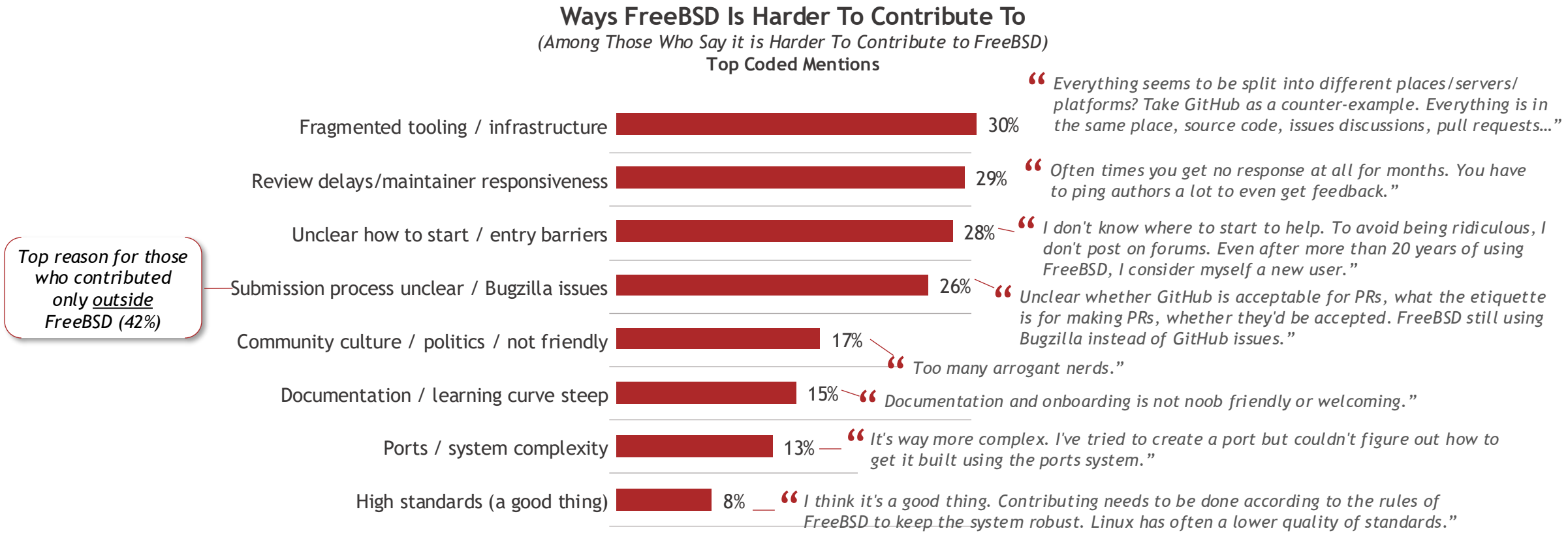
By Where Contributed in Past 12 Mos



SOURCE: Q42. How does FreeBSD compare to other open source projects when it comes to contributing? Please answer even if you haven't contributed - basing your answer on how you think FreeBSD compares to others.

The Contribution Experience

- There are a number of factors contributing to perceptions that it is harder to contribute here, with fragmentation, delays, and entry barriers topping the list.
  - An unclear submission process is the main barrier for those who only contributed outside of FreeBSD.



SOURCE: Q42A. NEW: In what way(s) is it harder to contribute to FreeBSD than to other open source projects? (open end)

The Contribution Experience

- One in six respondents say they do not know how to contribute to the project – even higher among certain segments like younger and newer users, as well as those who contributed elsewhere but not here.
  - Nearly as many say they have had difficulty getting questions answered.
  - Feedback on bug reports and community friendliness do not seem to be major concerns.

Perceptions of FreeBSD Contribution Process

(Among All Respondents)

Highest for
- Using < 2 yrs (34%)
- < Age 35 (28%)
- Contrib outside ONLY (26%)
- Prim on storage app (24%)
- Not daily driver (21%)
- Not contrib anywhere (21%)
- Non commit/contr (20%)
- Loc in N.Amer (20%)

	Disagree		Agree	2025 PROJECT ROLE			2025 USER TYPE	
				Comm	Contr	User Only	Pro	Pers
I find the community welcoming	6%		72%	71%	81%	71%	74%	72%
I know how to contribute to the FreeBSD Project*	17%		59%	93%	87%	50%	64%	57%
Feedback on bug reports and packages is usable*	6%		54%	77%	72%	50%	62%	51%
I have had difficulty getting my questions answered	55%		16%	21%	23%	14%	18%	15%

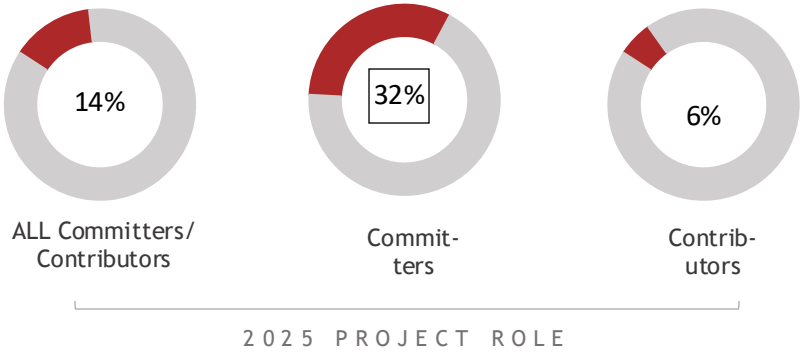
*Item not trendable
SOURCE: Q41. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following. (3-pt scale: agree, disagree, no opinion)

Compensation & Sponsorships

- Committers are far more likely than contributors to have their FreeBSD contributions compensated or sponsored (although most have not).

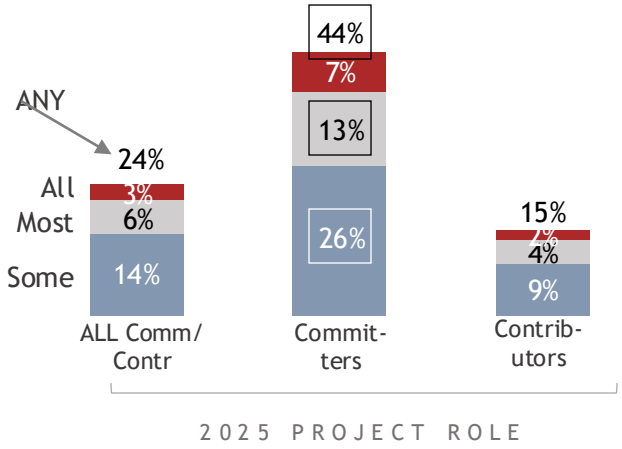
Whether Paid to Contribute to FreeBSD

(Among Committers and Contributors Only)



Portion of FBSD Contributions That Are Sponsored

(Among Committers and Contributors Only)



SOURCE: Q45A. (NEW) Do you get paid to contribute to FreeBSD? | Q45B. (NEW) What portion of your contributions to FreeBSD are sponsored?

FreeBSD Overall & Communications

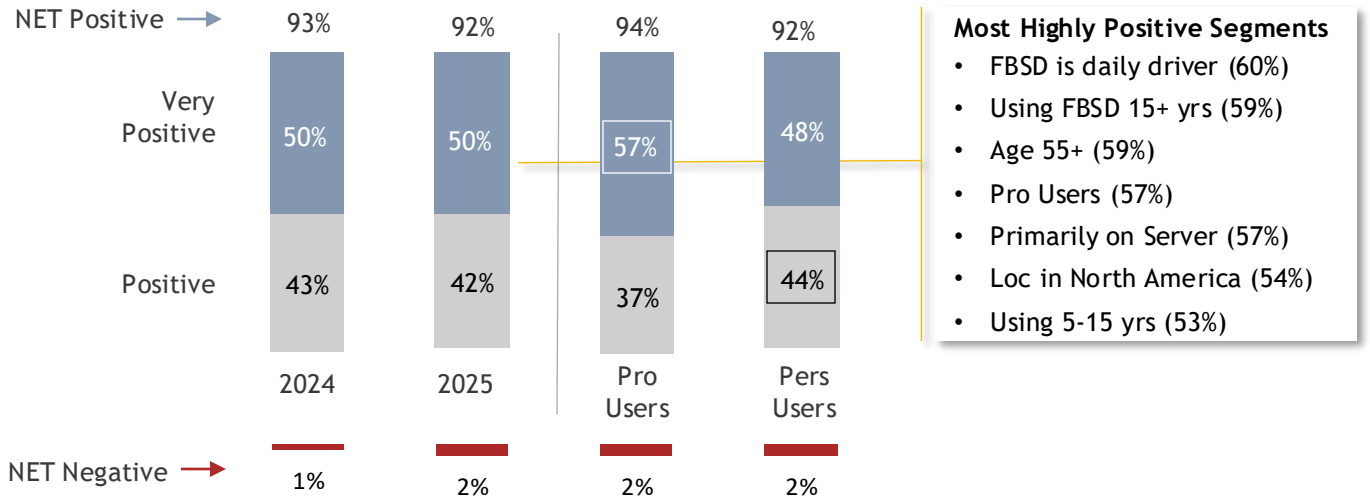
- Consistent with 2024, nearly all users rate their experience with FreeBSD favorably.
- There has been a significant rise in those who say they know how to get help (the vast majority do) , but newer users are less sure than others.
- Documentation, forums and manual pages continue to be the main resources users turn to when they need help – but there are big differences in secondary resources being used.
- Similarly, users differ in their preferred resources for staying current – although the website and (to a lesser extent) mailing lists, forums, and the newsletter remain top sources.
- Discord and IRC are the most widely used instant messaging apps, but there are major differences in the go-to IM app by age (or other demographics).
- Only a minority of users get software dev updates now (primarily via Quarterly Reports). Those who might be interested would primarily look to the Foundation's homepage.
- Most users are aware of the FreeBSD Journal, but it does not appear to be highly valued, especially by younger users.
- There are notable differences in communication preferences, especially for newer users who are more inclined than others to use alternative resources (e.g., AI, IM, Reddit, social media) and are less likely to rely on traditional methods like mailing lists or newsletters.

Overall Experience

- Nearly all respondents reported a positive experience with FreeBSD overall, with half saying it was 'very' positive.
  - There has been no change in perceptions since the last wave.
  - Those most upbeat overall include pro users, older and longer-term users, and those using as their daily driver.

Rating of Experience with FreeBSD Overall

(Among All Respondents)



Most Highly Positive Segments

- FBSD is daily driver (60%)
- Using FBSD 15+ yrs (59%)
- Age 55+ (59%)
- Pro Users (57%)
- Primarily on Server (57%)
- Loc in North America (54%)
- Using 5-15 yrs (53%)

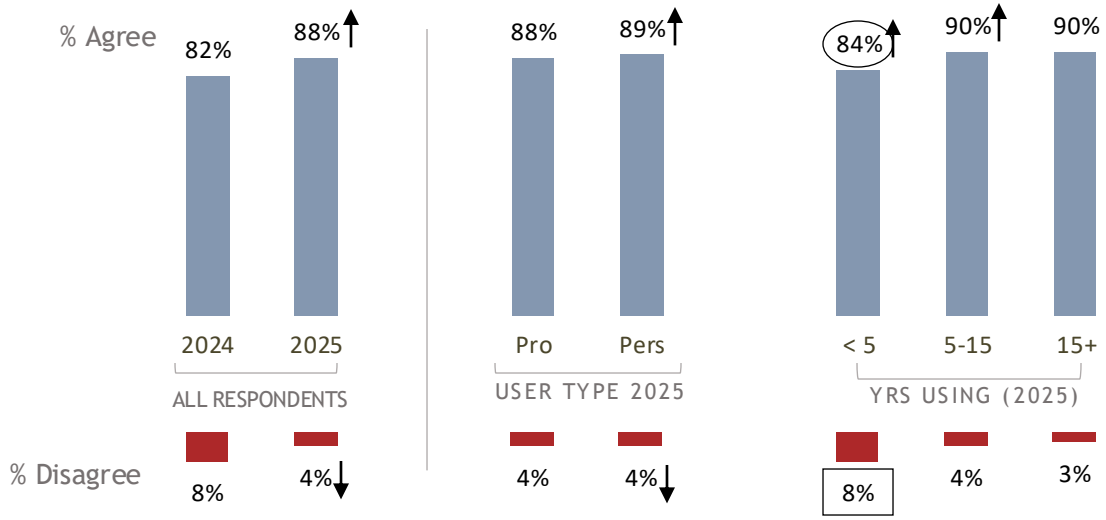
SOURCE: Q47. How would you rate your experience with FreeBSD overall? (5-pt scale from 'very negative to 'very positive')

Getting Help with FreeBSD

- Nearly all FreeBSD users say they know how to get help if they run into problems – an improvement over last year.
  - While not an overwhelming concern, it is notable that those who are newer to FreeBSD are less sure than others about where to go for help.

Understand How To Get Help If Run Into Problem

(Among All Respondents)



SOURCE: Q41G. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following (agree, disagree, no opinion). "I understand how to get help if I run into a problem"

Getting Help with FreeBSD

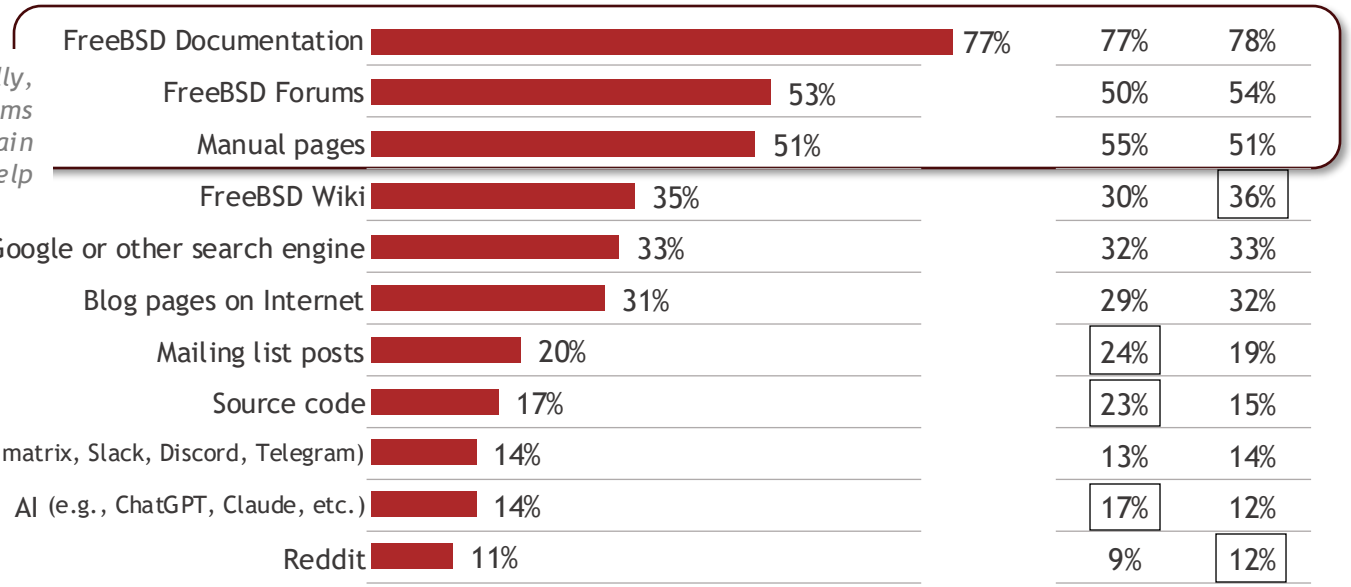
- As in 2024, FreeBSD documentation is the main source users turn to for help, with forums and manual pages also widely used.
  - There are differences in other sources though – especially newer users who more likely to turn to IM, AI or Reddit and less likely to use mailing list posts or source code.

Sources Used For Help With FreeBSD

(Among All Respondents)

Top Mentions

Directionally, documentation, forums and manual pages remain the top sources for help



	Pro User	Pers User	YRS USING FBSD < 5	5-<15	15+
FreeBSD Documentation	77%	78%	74%	82%	78%
FreeBSD Forums	50%	54%	56%	58%	49%
Manual pages	55%	51%	41%	55%	57%
FreeBSD Wiki	30%	36%	36%	40%	31%
Google or other search engine	32%	33%	29%	33%	35%
Blog pages on Internet	29%	32%	36%	34%	27%
Mailing list posts	24%	19%	6%	13%	32%
Source code	23%	15%	9%	14%	23%
Instant msg (e.g., IRC, matrix, Slack, Discord, Telegram)	13%	14%	18%	12%	12%
AI (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, etc.)	17%	12%	18%	13%	12%
Reddit	9%	12%	17%	12%	7%

SOURCE: Q22. Which sources do you use most for help with FreeBSD? (Check up to 5) (not trendable)

Keeping Current on FreeBSD

- The FreeBSD website continues to be the main source for keeping current across all segments, but notable differences exist for other resources.
  - As with getting help, newer users seem less inclined to use traditional sources like mailing lists, newsletters, or the FBSD Journal -- preferring Reddit, social media, and YouTube to stay up to date.
  -

Sources Used to Keep Current on FreeBSD

(Among All Respondents)

Top Mentions

Directionally, the website, mailing lists, forums and newsletter remain the top sources

		Pro User	Pers User	YRS USING FBSD < 5	5-<15	15+
FreeBSD website	56%	56%	57%	57%	57%	56%
Mailing lists	40%	48%	37%	20%	32%	56%
FreeBSD Forums	33%	37%	31%	37%	31%	32%
FreeBSD Foundation newsletter	27%	29%	26%	16%	30%	32%
FreeBSD Journal	21%	24%	20%	18%	25%	21%
External blog posts	20%	20%	21%	23%	24%	17%
Reddit	20%	17%	21%	28%	20%	15%
Social Media (e.g., Facebook, Mastodon, LinkedIn, X)	18%	17%	18%	20%	19%	16%
Instant Msg (e.g., IRC, Matrix, Slack, Discord, Telegram)	17%	16%	16%	21%	14%	15%
FreeBSD Foundation blog posts	16%	13%	16%	16%	21%	13%
YouTube	15%	11%	15%	28%	14%	7%
BSD Now Podcast	14%	13%	14%	15%	18%	11%

SOURCE: Q21. Which sources do you use most to keep current with FreeBSD? (check up to 5) (not trendable)

IM Apps Used Most

- Discord and IRC are the most widely used instant messaging apps overall, but there are major differences in preference by demographic segment.
  - Age is a key determinant, but geography also factors in.

#1 App by Age

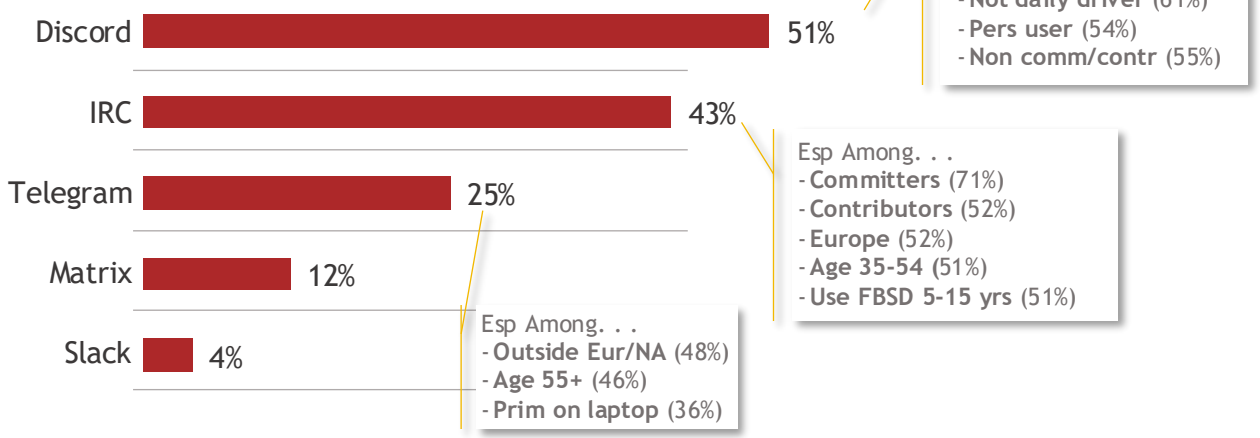
<35 DISCORD

35-54 IRC INTERNET RELAY CHAT

55+ Telegram

Which Instant Messaging App(s) Use Most

(Among Those Who Use IM For Help/Keeping Current With FreeBSD)
Top Mentions



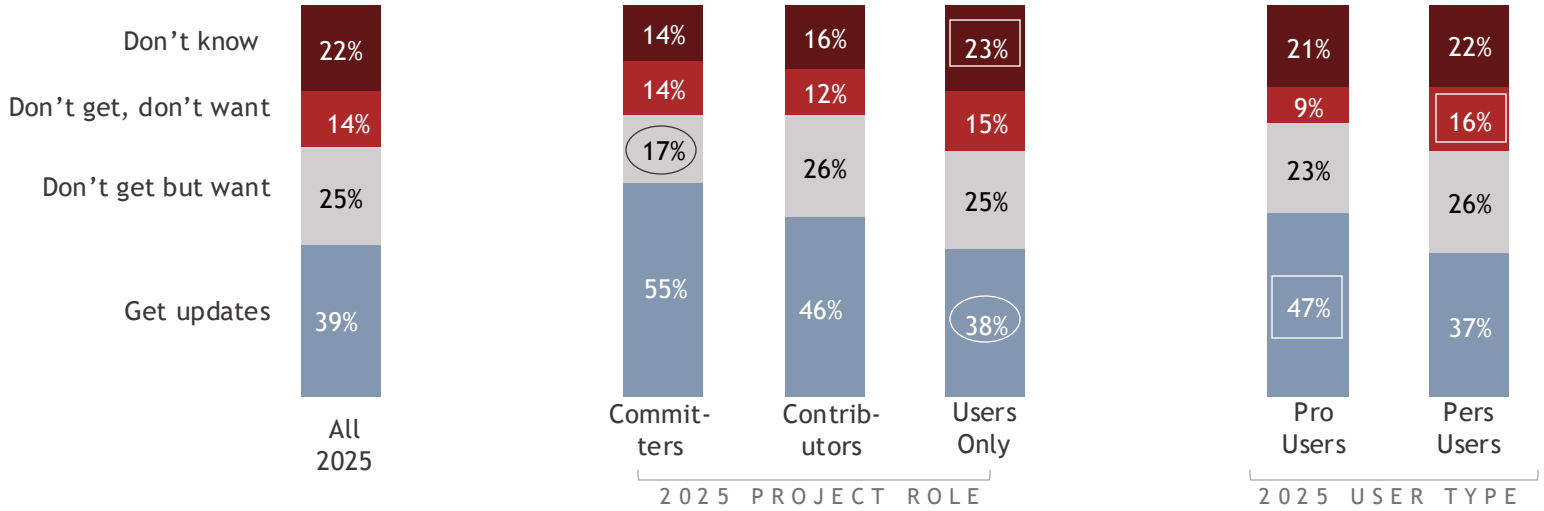
SOURCE: Q22A (NEW) You indicated that instant messaging is one way you keep current and/or get help with FreeBSD. Which instant messaging app(s) do you use most? (check up to 2)

Software Development Updates

- Only a minority of community members say they are getting updates from the Foundation on software dev projects – although there is wide variation based on segment.
  - Users-only and personal users are less likely than others to say they get updates.
  - Fully one quarter of users say they are not getting updates but want them.

Whether Getting Updates on Software Development Projects

(Among All Respondents)



SOURCE: Q50A. (NEW) Are you getting updates on software development projects from the FreeBSD Foundation?

Software Development Updates

- Quarterly Status Reports are the main way users get updates, but the Foundation newsletter is also widely used.
  - Those who would like updates say they'd primarily look to the home page or the quarterly status reports for information.
  - There are some notable differences by subgroup, suggesting (again) that a multi-pronged communication approach will be needed.

How Getting Updates Today
(Among Those Who Currently Get)
Top Mentions

	2025
FreeBSD Quarterly Status Reports	76%
Foundation newsletter	52%
FreeBSD Project homepage	42%
Foundation blog	34%
Social media	26%
Presentations at conferences	14%
GitHub updates	8%

Blog esp among:
- **Age <35** (53%)
- **<5 yrs user** (48%)
- **Committers** (45%)

Soc Med esp among:
- **Age <35** (36%)
- **<5 yrs user** (39%)

Presentations esp:
- **Committers** (34%)

How Would Like to Get Updates
(Among Those Not Getting but Would Like or DK)
Top Mentions

	2025
FreeBSD Project homepage	68%
FreeBSD Quarterly Status Reports	54%
Foundation newsletter	47%
Foundation blog	39%
Social media	28%
Presentations at conferences	20%
GitHub updates	19%

QSP esp among:
- **Comm/Contr** (66%)
- **Using 15+ yrs** (64%)
- **Prim. server** (62%)
- **Pro user** (61%)
- **Daily driver** (58%)

Newsletter Esp among:
- **Loc in N.Am** (58%)
- **Laptop** (55%)

Soc Med esp among:
- **Age <35** (40%)
- **<2 yrs user** (37%)
- **Prim on laptop** (37%)

Esp **Age <35** (29%)

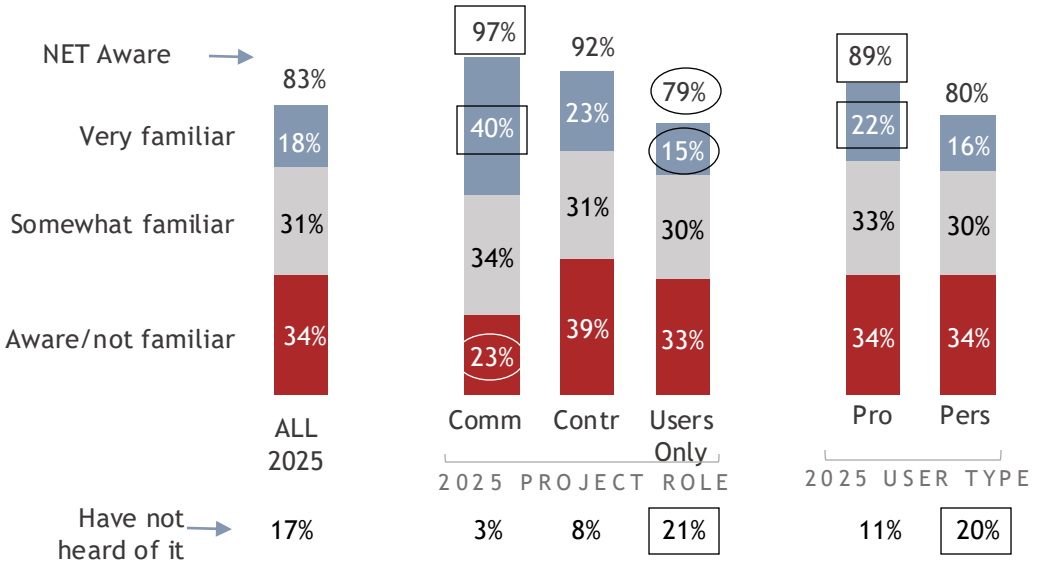
SOURCE:
Q50B. (NEW) How do you get updates on software development projects from the FreeBSD Foundation?
Q50C. (NEW) How would you like to get updates on software development projects from the FreeBSD Foundation?

FreeBSD Journal

- Most community members are aware of the Foundation's FreeBSD Journal, even if they are not all highly familiar.
  - Notably, only one in five of those aware say it is an important resource.
  - Committers and pro users are more likely than others to be familiar with the Journal, but they are no more likely to see the Journal as important.

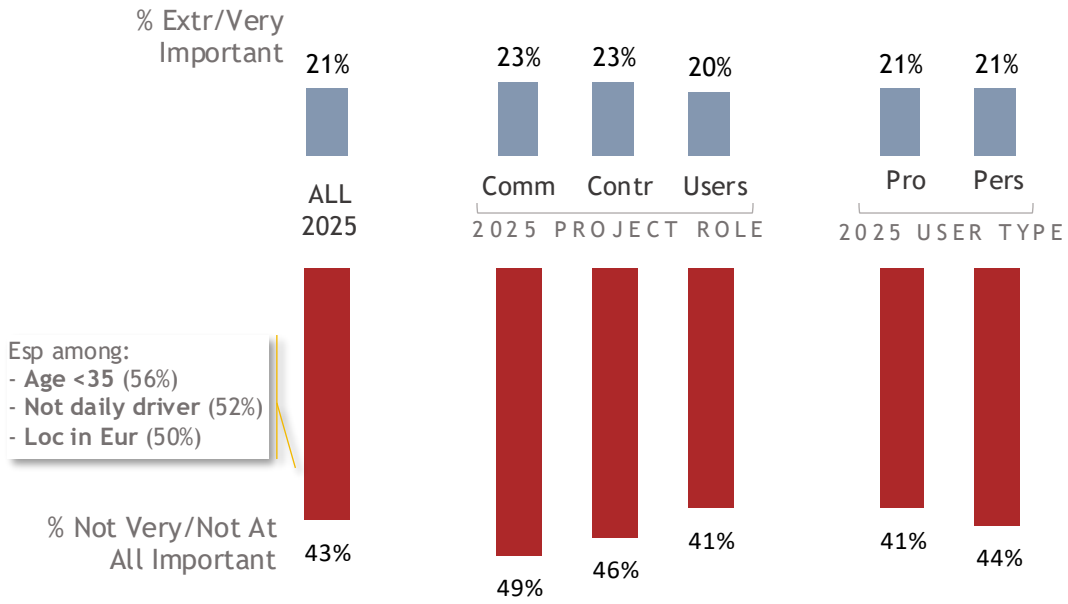
Familiarity with FreeBSD Journal

(Among All Respondents)



Importance of FreeBSD Journal as Source of Info

(Among Those Aware of the Journal)



SOURCE: Q52A. (NEW) To what extent, if at all, are you familiar with the FreeBSD Journal, a free online publication that focuses on development, testing & changes in the FreeBSD OS?
Q52B. (NEW) How important is the FreeBSD Journal to you as a source of information about FreeBSD? (5-pt scale from not at all important to extremely important)

FreeBSD Foundation

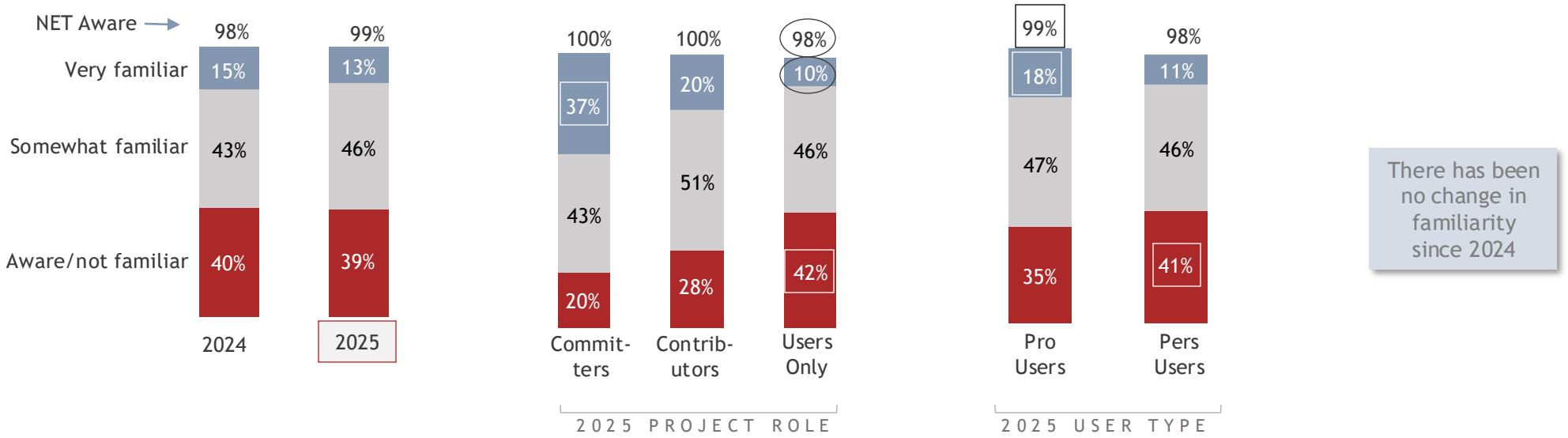
- Most users are aware of the FreeBSD Foundation, but outside of Committers, few are highly familiar.
- The Foundation is primarily seen as providing advocacy and legal support – although there is less consensus about the Foundation's role in this wave.
- Committers' top priorities include fostering vendor relationships and improving support of FreeBSD among open computer makers. Improving the desktop experience is also a priority – although there is some disagreement about the importance of funding this priority.
- There are a lot of spending priorities – with secteam and kernel development chief among them.
- 3 in 10 committers "fully" trust the Foundation. Transparency – including financial transparency – is the single best way to increase this trust level.

Foundation: Awareness

- Consistent with the last wave, nearly all users have heard of the FreeBSD Foundation, but relatively few are highly familiar with it outside of Committers.

Familiarity with FreeBSD Foundation

(Among All Respondents)



There has been no change in familiarity since 2024

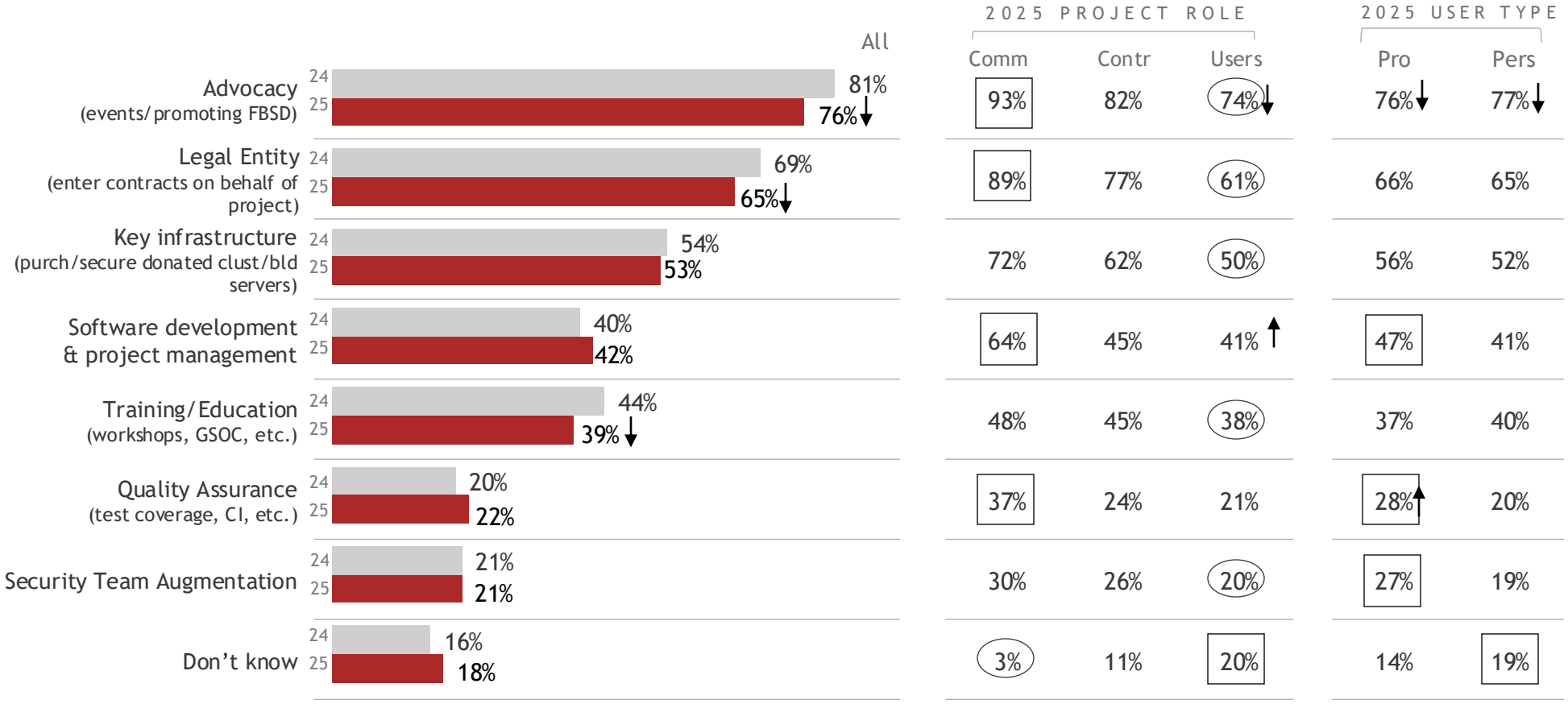
SOURCE: Q49. To what extent, if at all, are you familiar with the "FreeBSD Foundation"? (4-pt scale)

Foundation: Understanding

- Most continue to see the Foundation as an advocacy and legal entity – although there is less consensus this wave.
  - As before, few see the Foundation's role as QA or security team augmentation, although Committers and professional users are more likely to than others.

Perceived Role/Function of Foundation

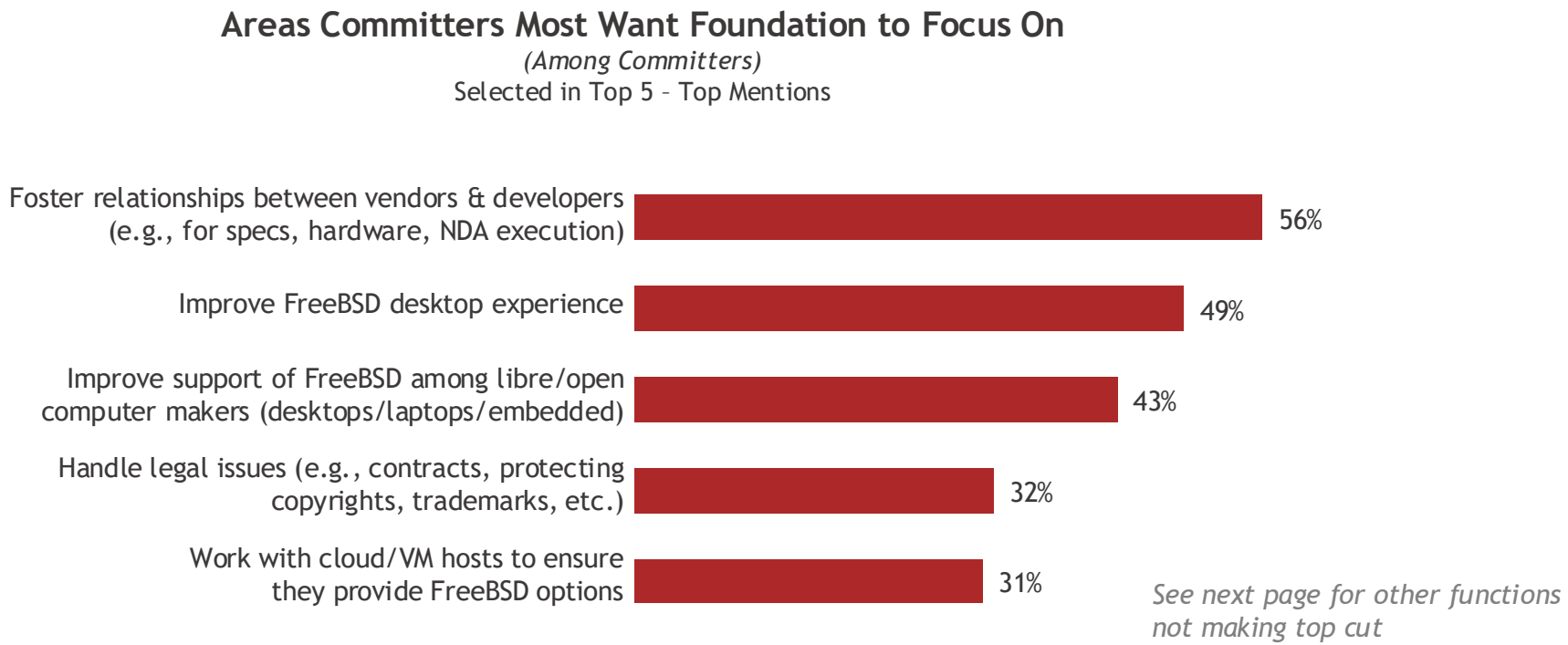
(Among All Respondents)



SOURCE: Q50. As far as you know, which of the following functions or roles does the FreeBSD Foundation serve? (Check all that apply)

Foundation: Committer Priorities

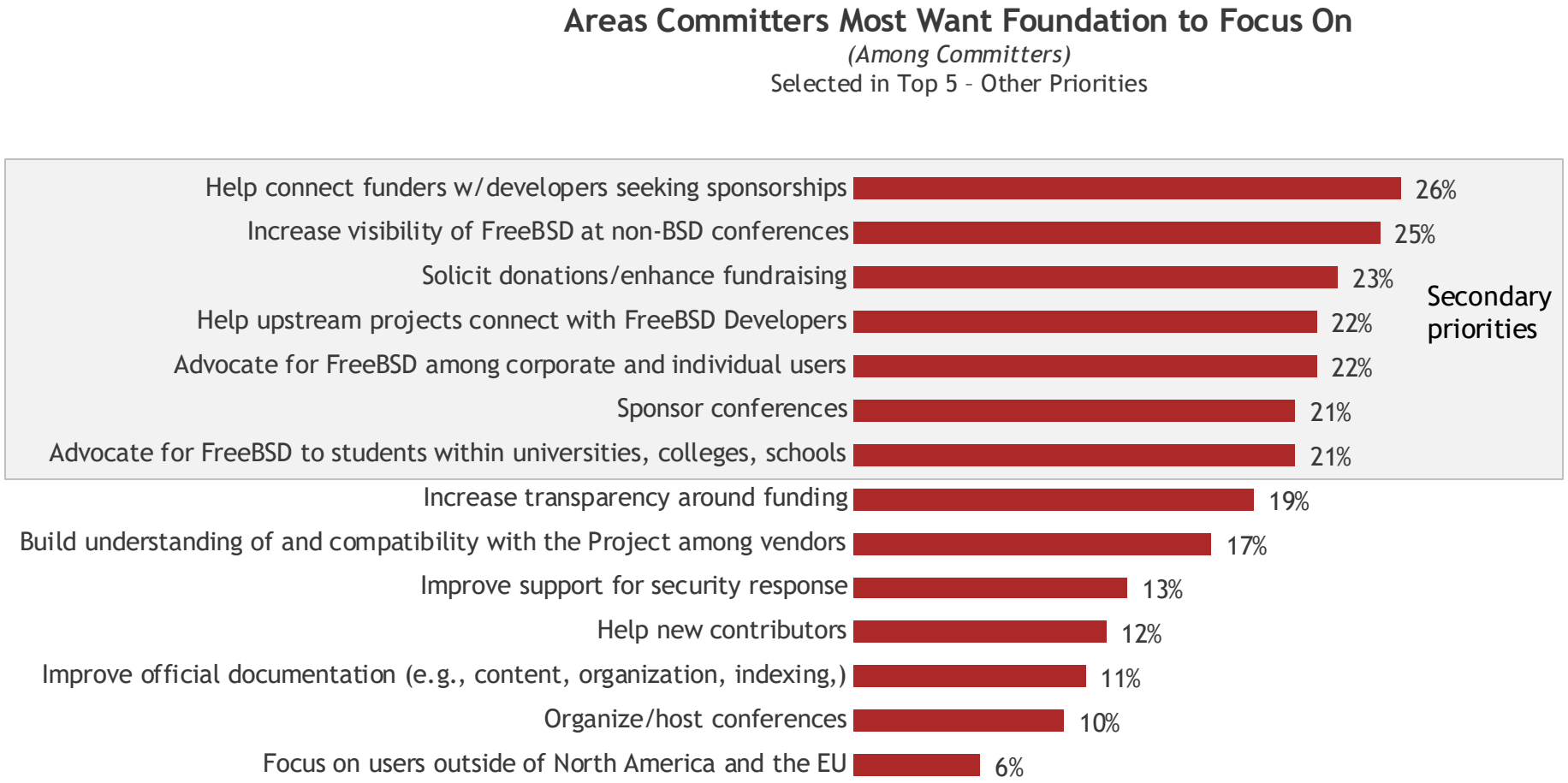
- Fostering vendor relationships is the most widely cited Foundation priority for Committers.
  - At least two in five Committers also value improvements to the desktop experience and support from computer makers.



SOURCE: Q52C. (NEW) Please indicate what you would most like to see the Foundation focus on by selecting your 5 most important priorities (from list of 19 areas).

Foundation: Committer Priorities

- Secondary priorities center around connections, conference visibility, fundraising, advocacy and conferences.



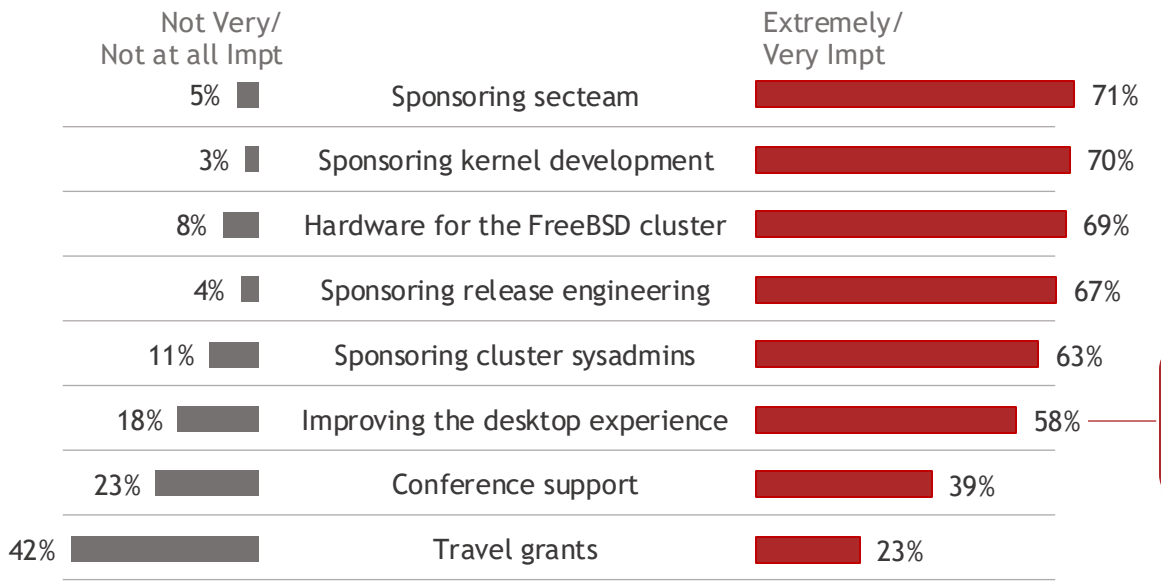
SOURCE: Q52C. (NEW) Please indicate what you would most like to see the Foundation focus on by selecting your 5 most important priorities (from list of 19 areas).

Foundation: Committer Priorities

- While improving the desktop experience emerged as a top-five priority among Committers, there is some question as to the importance of actually funding the cause.
  - It is highly important to a clear majority of Committers to sponsor secteam, kernel development, hardware, release engineering and cluster sysadmins.

Importance of Funding Areas

(Among Committers)



Directionally more important for committers using FBSD primarily on laptop or desktop than for others and is the single most important area for primarily laptop

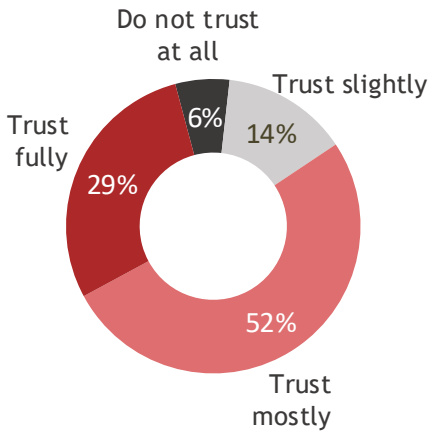
SOURCE: Q52D. (NEW) How important is it to you that the Foundation fund each of the following areas? (5=pt scale from not at all to extremely important)

Foundation: Committers' Trust

- Committers mostly or fully trust the FreeBSD Foundation, but one in five are skeptical.
  - Transparency – including financial transparency – is the key to building trust, along with better communication/engagement.

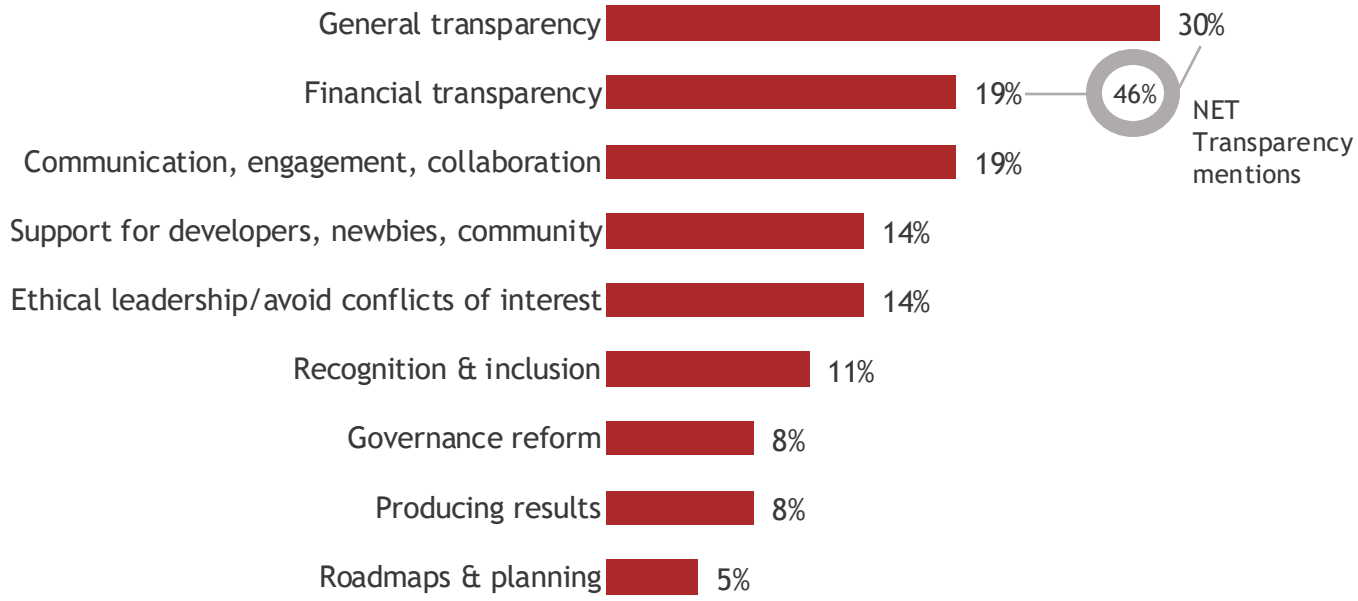
Committers' Trust of FreeBSD Foundation

(Among Committers)



How Foundation Can Gain Committers' Trust

(Among Committers)



SOURCE: Q52E. To what extent, if at all, do you trust the FreeBSD Foundation? *(added in 2025)* | Q52F. How can the FreeBSD Foundation gain your trust? (coded open end)

Foundation: Committers' Trust

Selected Comments About How The Foundation Could Build Trust Among Committers

"Become fully transparent and about how exactly it spends its funds, good start would be expanding the "Contractors" articles 6250 (long term) and 6252 (short term) in the yearly financial reports. Also: https://unixdigest.com/articles/hypocrisy-and-politics-in-free-and-open-source-software-projects.html."

- "Be as transparent with its actions and decisions as possible."
- "Socialize decisions better. Try to avoid top down decisions. Overall you guys do a lot of great work and it's incredibly appreciated. The fundamental model of rough consensus peerage is naturally disinclined to trust the finance management arm that sometimes makes top down decisions, some of which are necessarily not what the peerage wants."
- "Gaining trust is not easy, especially not in our niche. Continuously doing the right things, supporting the people that are already boosting the awareness, providing the community support etc. is important. Overseeing and not noticing them does the opposite. In my view, the FreeBSD Foundation's biggest weakness is in governance. Decisions are said to be public, but in reality, they are often made internally with limited real input from the broader community. Discussions may happen on mailing lists, but it does not feel like the direction of the Foundation is shaped by the contributors who build the system. One improvement would be to open up the process of selecting board members. Active developers should have a role in nominating or recommending members, even if the final decision remains with the Foundation. It would give contributors a stake in the direction of the organization and would make the process more credible. Another necessary change is to involve the community earlier when setting priorities and budgets. Publishing a clear roadmap, based on feedback from both independent developers and corporate users, would help align the Foundation's actions with the actual needs of the project. Decisions would not appear as faits accomplis but would reflect a wider sense of agreement. FreeBSD's real strength has always been its community of contributors. A governance model that does not recognize this fact risks weakening the project over time. Governance should be open, simple, and rooted in the same spirit of cooperation that built FreeBSD into what it is today."
- "Increased transparency and clear roadmaps for future work."

SOURCE: Q52F. How can the FreeBSD Foundation gain your trust? (open end)

Technical Notes

Trending

- Where feasible, comparisons to the 2024 study are made. Interpret trend differences cautiously however, due to changes in sampling frame and composition of the respondent base.

Weighting

- Sample is not weighted and as such, represents those who completed the survey, which may or may not be representative of the entire community of FreeBSD users.

Significant Difference Notations

- With a sample size of 2,127 respondents, the maximum error range on total sample results at the 95% confidence level is +/- 2.1%. (The error range is higher when comparing subgroup scores).
- Throughout the report, statistically significant results are indicated with the following notations:

Trend arrows: ↑ ↓ indicates score is higher/lower than 2024 score(s) at the 95% confidence level **NOTE: Trend changes on subgroups noted, but prior data not shown**

Boxes/circles: ▭/⬭ indicates score is higher/lower than one or more other subgroup score(s) at the 95% confidence level

Callout boxes:

NOTE: Numbers may not always total 100% due to rounding