The graphic features a white document with a teal handle, set against a teal background with pink diagonal stripes. The text 'FOSS Backstage' is in a large, bold, black font, followed by 'Diversity Report 2024' in a slightly smaller bold black font, and a pink asterisk-like symbol to the right.

# **FOSS Backstage**

## **Diversity Report 2024 \***

FOSS Backstage is a conference dedicated to all things FOSS governance and open collaboration. The sixth edition of FOSS Backstage took place as a hybrid conference from 4-5 March, on-site at our venue bUm in Berlin & live streams, online talks and a workshop were available online.

FOSS Backstage provides a space to discuss a wide range of issues related to community management, vendor neutrality and project management without discretion. Conference topics include best practices in open source project management, community management, open source project metrics, open source strategy for the enterprise, adoption of open source collaboration in the enterprise, legal issues when dealing with open source, and more.

FOSS Backstage aims to provide a space for the discussion of a broad spectrum of issues relating to the FOSS community. We believe the best way to do this is to ensure that the people who take part are valued, respected, accepted and encouraged to participate fully. Part of ensuring that 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 participate in 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 2024
- Encourage feedback from the FOSS Backstage Community

## **Diversity Ticket Fund**

To promote diversity at FOSS Backstage we initiated a Diversity Ticket program in 2021 as well as 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 one diversity ticket with additional tickets being provided through partners and diversity fund contributions. In total 14 diversity tickets were available for FOSS Backstage 2024. Of these:

- 1 was funded by FOSS Backstage as unused diversity tickets from last year
- 8 were funded by our partners OpenSearch, Mercedes-Benz Tech Innovation, Google, The Linux Foundation, Red Hat and a private person
- 5 were funded by attendees purchasing Diversity Fund Contributions

We also provided Diversity Online Tickets for the second year in a row. Diversity Online Tickets provide access to our online event platform, but not to our venue in Berlin. This enables people who are unable to travel to Berlin to attend the conference. We initially provided 25 Diversity Online Tickets, 11 were used, leaving 14 remaining. Funding for those 14 tickets will be used next year to provide additional Diversity Tickets.

## **Survey Highlights**

This is the fourth time we have collected demographic data from speakers and attendees at FOSS Backstage. We hope to collect data in future years to show if there are any changes in these demographics. We tried to increase participation in the survey this year by attaching the demographic survey to the registration process, which was hosted externally and not linked to our ticketing system to protect attendees' privacy. The only demographic element directly linked to the registration process was the question about participants' preferred pronouns. This was printed on attendee badges onsite, but answering this question was not mandatory.

After the conference, we send a feedback survey to every participant of FOSS Backstage 2024. We also provided a QR-Code at the venue which linked to the survey on the second day of the conference for participants. The survey was in two parts, with the first part collecting feedback about accessibility, diversity, and inclusivity; and the second one being about general feedback to the conference. The answers to the first part of the survey are attached to this report.

Of all attendees of FOSS Backstage 2024, 44 persons completed the demographic survey and 54 persons completed the feedback survey.

The demographic survey yielded the following results:

- Of the attendees who completed the survey 59,1% identify as male, while 38.6% identify as female, compared to 43.3% of attendees who identified as female and 55% who identified as male last year
- 2,3% of the attendees identify as non-binary and 4,5% identify as a trans person
- Using the question about pronouns asked at registration as a proxy for gender, 53,4% of all attendees of the conference identified as male (i.e. used he/him pronouns), 38,6% identified as female (i.e. used she/her pronouns) and 7,4% identified as non-binary (i.e. used they/them, he/they, or she/they pronouns). 0,5% did prefer not to answer
- Of all attendees who completed the survey, 13,6% identified as a person of colour, compared to 36.1% who identified as a person of colour last year
- Of all attendees who completed the survey, 7% considered themselves to have a disability, compared to 7.4% of attendees 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, 9,7% preferred not to answer. In the following question about which problems with accessibility were encountered, the following relevant answers were provided:
  - *“Better access to accessible toilets and the Wintergarden room has access different from the door in front of the room.”*
  - *“It's not exactly an epileptic-friendly environment for people with sensory issues.”*
  - *“Ideally (but I know it requires a lot of budget), it would be great to have live closed captioning and sign language interpretation.”*

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.

- Diversity of speakers: more diversity for panels
- Diversity of attendees: More budget for people with disabilities to enable them to participate
- Accessibility: Requiring more masking
- Networking: Diversity and inclusion meet-ups at lunch

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

## Lessons Learned

We are still trying to find ways to increase participation in our surveys to get more meaningful results. This is essential to measure our efforts to improve the quality, inclusion and diversity of our event.

One aspect of our programme that was raised by several participants was to avoid sessions/panels with only male speakers (so-called "mannels"). We will try to avoid this in future events and aim for a better gender balance. In terms of diversity, the idea of providing more budget for people with disabilities to attend was mentioned. As FOSS Backstage is a relatively small conference with a limited budget, this is difficult to implement. Still, we are looking at ways of working with other organisations to hopefully offer this in the future to provide more diversity tickets and also to find ways of reaching out and inviting more people from the disability community.

There was a request to increase the diversity of speakers in terms of background - i.e. more speakers from the community (consumers, staff etc). We will take these suggestions on board and try to find ways to reach out more to the community.

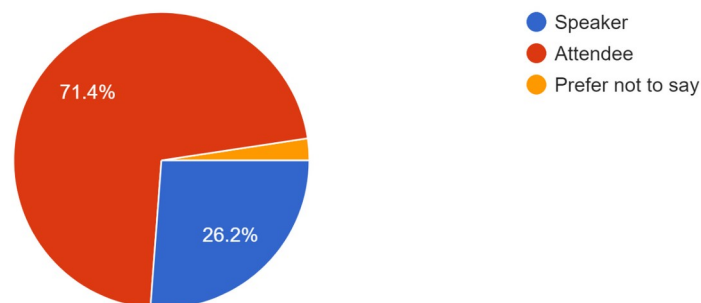
It was also suggested that there should be more networking opportunities at the event, such as diversity and inclusion meet-ups. We plan to work more closely with the community to plan and create such networking meet-ups.

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:

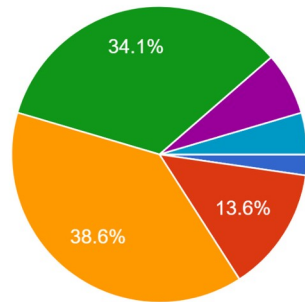
Are you a speaker or an attendee?

42 responses



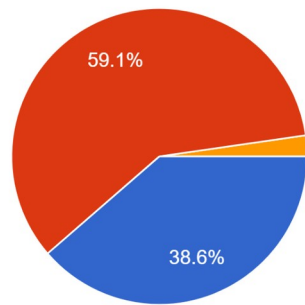
### How old are you?

44 responses



### Which one of the following best describes your gender?

44 responses



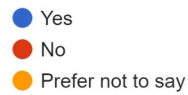
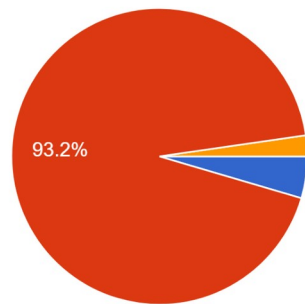
### If you prefer to use another term to describe your gender identity, please provide it here

1 response

Femme they/them

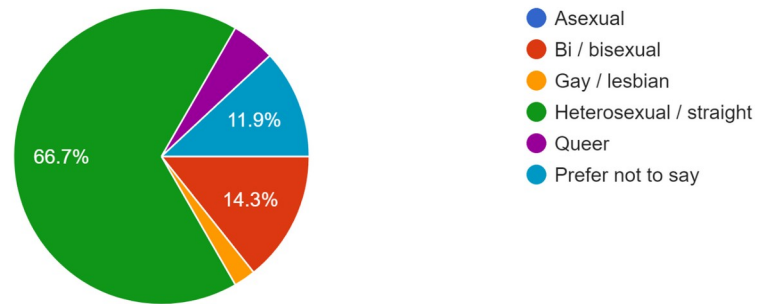
### Do you consider yourself to be a trans person?

44 responses



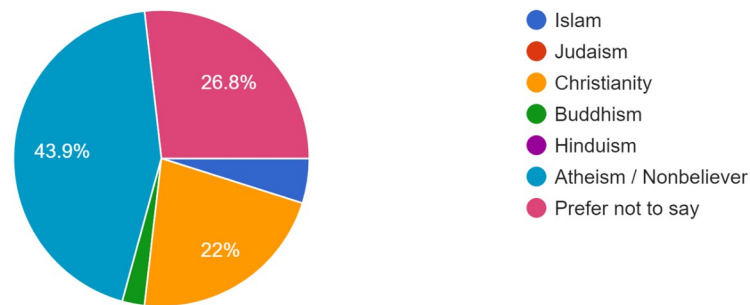
Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?

42 responses



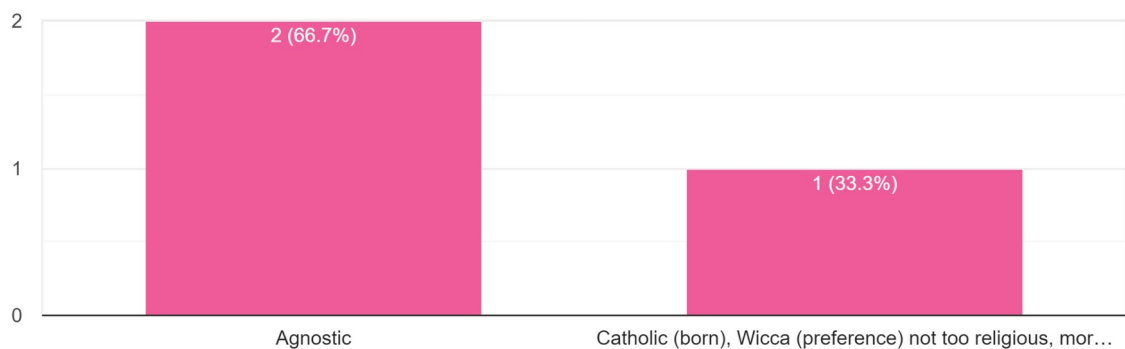
Which of the following best describes your religious affiliation?

41 responses



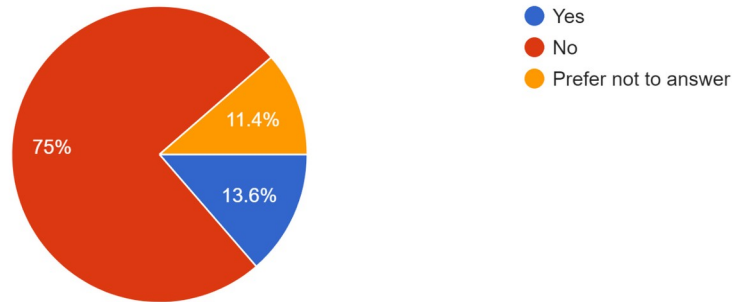
If you have a different religious affiliation or prefer to use another term to describe your religious affiliation, please provide it here

3 responses



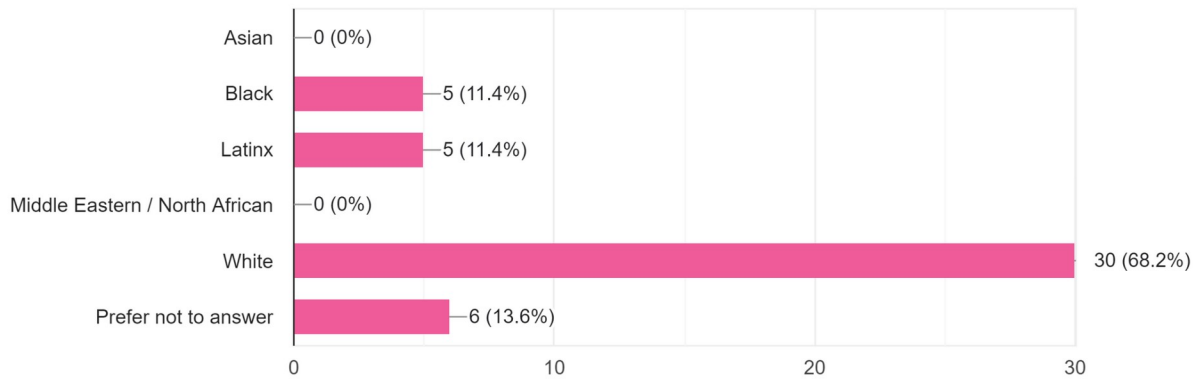
### Do you identify as a person of color?

44 responses



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

44 responses



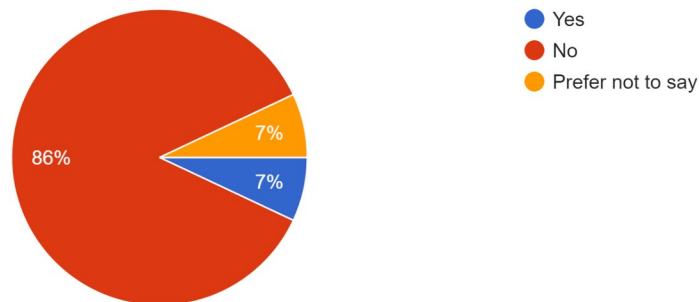
### Please write any other ethnic backgrounds that you identify with here

1 response

Eastern European

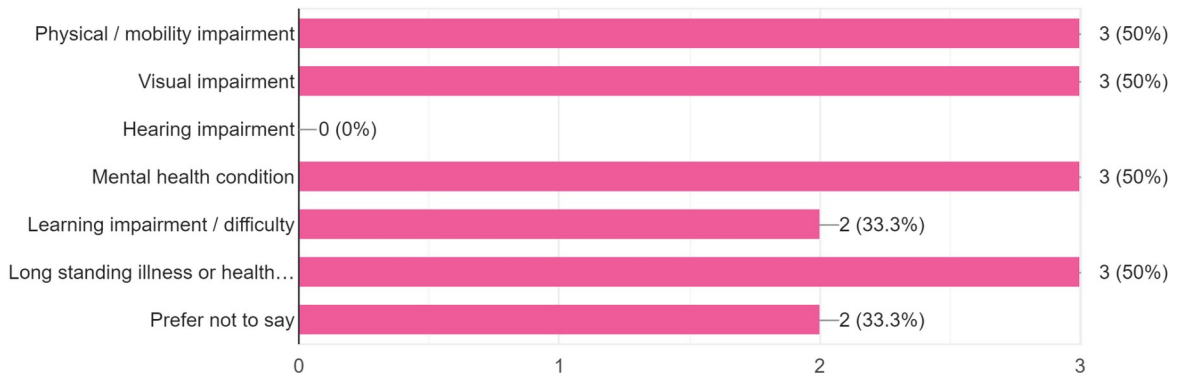
### Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

43 responses



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

6 responses



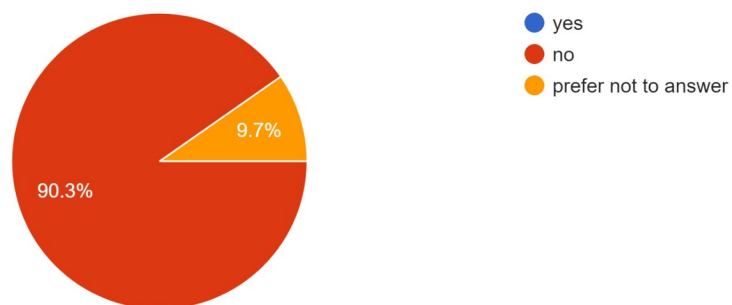
If you consider yourself to have a different type of disability, please provide it here

1 response

Not native speaker of the country where I live. Migrant

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

31 responses





If you had problems with accessibility, or suggestions how to improve accessibility at FOSS Backstage, please provide it here:

6 responses

It seemed to me that the downstairs wasn't wheelchair accessible? But I might be wrong. I found the stairs a bit challenging although I'm perfectly ambulant.

Ideally (but I know it requires a lot of budget), it would be great to have live close captioning and sign language interpretation. To take as much benefit of these services, it would be great to invite people with disabilities, you may want to reach out a local organization that want to participate with individuals in representation of the disability community. Personally I really enjoyed the event, love the place and enjoy the community. I learn a lot, thank you so much for give us the opportunity to participate.

n/a

Was there a quiet room for attendees? I did not look for one (or find a particular need for it). But I think this would be a very helpful resource to provide, so that attendees can access a dedicated space for resting and recharging themselves.

Better access to accessible toilets and the Wintergarden room have access different from the door in front of the room.

It's not exactly an epileptic friendly environment for people with sensory issues.

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

12 responses

Maybe assign or request some budget for people with disabilities only, to be able to go and participate. This way there is a percentage of people with disabilities that only by being there, they will increase awareness. I would love to brainstorm more ideas :D

Maybe even more explicit outreach/marketing to include staffers and speakers and attendees from our communities? But that's always true, isn't it. Yet, spreading the word about how the event is worth their time and attention might drive this even further.

Inclusion of social projects/initiatives, that are specifically FOSS consumers, rather than having mainly FOSS actors/experts

Not have manels, which i definitely saw here.

I heard at the opening remarks that the speaker were chosen following a blind process. In my experience, this process doesn't ensure DEI principles to be reflected in the speaker selection.

very good that they have diversity tickets

Pay more attention to diversity on stage. I have seen panels which consisted only of men.

Diversity and inclusion meet ups at lunch e.g. have volunteers self organise an LGBT+ or POC hang out during lunch

I was able to invite 3 colleagues to attend (2 women). I think word of mouth from attendees is the way to go.

Make sure you're not running panels where all of the participants are not men (aka "manels"). It was nice that the moderator was not a man, but ... that sends a poor message.

Such a good question. I don't know. I think you did a good job with the diversity tickets, and so much of this depends on inviting people to the event from diverse communities that you're in relationship, or network-relationship with, and I don't know if this is something you're already doing or not.

Requiring more masking at the event would probably make it feel more accessible for people. Other options for content delivery besides live speeches

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

16 responses

I enjoyed and appreciated talks by speakers of underrepresented groups and from people from all over the world. It was a great mix. There was still a big part of speakers that fell into the bracket of cis white men.

Great example: The diversity tickets. I would not have necessarily looked for them, but it turned out that I qualified for them and they allowed me to participate after I had missed the window for regular ticket sales. Room for improvement: the line-up of the OSPO panel was a bit comical with five white men from Germany and the Netherlands in near-identical outfits essentially all saying the same thing. If there is this little diversity in OSPOs, I think the panel would have worked better as a fireside chat with just one or maximum two of them, as their experiences and advice were all remarkably similar. I think it's a good example of similar backgrounds leading to similar outlooks, a panel makes more sense when you can expect controversy.

I was happy to see the accessible restroom. Also a little confused about the women restroom because I didn't read all the signs and enter the one that was for man too, and I felt weird, because in Mexico we are not use to it yet. But then I read about the women bathroom. There are so many new things about gender that I think people is taking it to an extreme, but that it is just my personal opinion, I know the trend is open minded, which is fine, as long as you always have a women only bathroom. :D

I felt the signage and messaging was superior to even some LGBTQIA\*-positive events, so well done.

There was at least one all-male panel in the main stage area, which is a bit gauche in this day and age.

I think diversity was far better than past events of that nature

I've noticed that many speakers represented or collaborated with the event sponsors so they might have been used (because of their work) or encouraged by their companies to apply for a talk. A proactive outreach for speakers from underrepresented companies, projects, and contribution groups could improve even more diversity and inclusion at this event.

I appreciated the visibility of the Code of Conduct in the entry area and gender neutral restrooms. In general the atmosphere was very friendly.

I feel like it was good overall. I think I would like to see more casual conversation between diverse groups and also here from OSS foundations and orgs about what they commit to regarding diversity

Diversity among attendees and speakers, based on other events, was achieved. Congratulations.

To non-vegans, vegan food is the most disgusting horrific abuse of actual food that can happen. I could smell those feta cheese waffles across the room and it was true torture. Agonizing, wicked, horrific torture. I suggest a minimally sized "picky eater" section with peanut butter and jelly and chicken nuggets. Maybe I could get a milkshake or something?

The topics were really good and made the event more inclusive.

In general, I thought it was very diverse and inclusive, minus that one manel.

It seemed like you did pretty good job in this regard, and it's a really hard thing to do in the space.

Gender-neutral toilets :)