

Developer Licensing Survey 2025

Start of Block: Consent

CF1 Investigating Needs and Challenges in Software Licensing Tasks Informed Consent Form

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study is to investigate issues, needs, and opportunities related to open source software licensing. In particular, the study aims to identify real-world pain points and gather developer experiences with software license compliance scenarios and tools.

If you decide to participate, you will take a brief survey via the Qualtrics platform. The study will last about 10-15 minutes during which time you will be asked questions regarding your familiarity and experience with several topics related to open source software licensing. There will also be a brief section which asks about your experience and background with software development.

You will be asked to identify and discuss software licensing tasks you or your organization engage with, the difficulty of such tasks, tools used in performing such tasks, and the processes by which licensing issues are resolved.

With your permission, we may contact you by email to invite you to participate in a follow-up interview. We will not share this email with anyone. The provided address will be linked with your responses so that we can ask follow-up questions regarding your answers in the survey.

RISKS

While unlikely, it is possible that survey responses could be accessed by an unauthorized user (e.g. a computer is lost, system compromised, etc.). We mitigate this risk by only storing non-anonymized data on machines necessary for initial data processing and by using best security practices (e.g. two-factor authentication) to protect data stored remotely.

BENEFITS

There are no benefits to you as a participant other than to further research in software engineering and software license compliance.

PARTICIPATION

You must be at least 18 years old to participate.

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party. Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your future relations with [NAME OF INSTITUTION].

CONFIDENTIALITY

The data collected by this study will be confidential, including your responses. Any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential and disclosed only with your permission. You will be assigned a code number to protect your identity and all data will be kept secured. If you give us your permission by signing this document, we plan to disclose the results of the questionnaire in any publication resulting from this study. The disclosed results will not be personally identifiable (if needed, they will be anonymized). The de-identified data could be used for future research without additional consent from participants.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) that monitors research on human subjects may inspect study records during internal auditing procedures and are required to keep all information confidential.

CONTACT

This research is being conducted by [RESEARCHERS' NAMES AND CONTACT INFORMATION].

Questions regarding the rights of research subjects may be directed to [COMPLIANCE PERSONNEL]. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at [NAME OF INSTITUTION] has reviewed and approved the present research (ProtocolID: [ID]).

CONSENT

You are welcome to print this page to keep a copy of this form.



CF2 YOU ARE MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO PARTICIPATE. IF YOU WANT TO PARTICIPATE, PLEASE SELECT THE YES OPTION BELOW, AND START THE SURVEY.

☐ Yes (4)

☐ No (5)

Skip To: End of Survey If YOU ARE MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO PARTICIPATE. IF YOU WANT TO PARTICIPATE, PLEASE SELEC... = No

End of Block: Consent

Start of Block: Demographics

D0 This group of questions asks for demographic information to help us better understand the population of people we are surveying.



country In which country do you currently reside?

▼ Afghanistan (1) ... Zimbabwe (1357)



D1 How many years of experience in software development do you have?

D2 Please indicate which domains you have developed software for (e.g., banking or healthcare).

D3 How would you describe your primary role?

- ☐ Programmer (1)
 - ☐ Tester (2)
 - ☐ Project Technical Lead (3)
 - ☐ Project Manager (4)
 - ☐ IT Manager (5)
 - ☐ Consultant (7)
 - ☐ Educator (8)
 - ☐ Researcher (9)
 - ☐ Legal Expert (10)
 - ☐ Analyst (11)
 - ☐ Software Architect (12)
 - ☐ Other (please specify) (13)
-

D4 Which of the following describes the nature of your employment? (Select all that apply.)

- ☐ I develop software on my own time / I am a hobbyist (1)
 - ☐ I am paid to develop software and work for a company (2)
 - ☐ I am paid to develop software and work for various clients (e.g., freelancer) (3)
 - ☐ I am a researcher at an educational institution (4)
 - ☐ Other (please explain) (5)
-

D5 Which of the following describe the types of projects that you have worked on? (Select all that apply.)

- ☐ Open source projects that don't rely on third-party components/dependencies (1)
 - ☐ Open source projects that rely on third-party components/dependencies (2)
 - ☐ Proprietary software (3)
-

D6 Do you have training or education in software licensing? If so, is that training or education formal (e.g., college classes, degree, or a certification) or informal (self-learning, employer-provided, or other training)?

- ☐ Yes, formal (1)
 - ☐ Yes, informal (2)
 - ☐ Yes, both formal and informal (3)
 - ☐ No (4)
-



D7 What types of systems do you spend time developing more than occasionally? (Select all that apply.)

- ☐ Operating systems (1)
 - ☐ Web applications (2)
 - ☐ Mobile applications (3)
 - ☐ Desktop applications (4)
 - ☐ Middleware (5)
 - ☐ AI-intensive systems (6)
 - ☐ Development tools (compilers, programming languages, etc.) (7)
 - ☐ Libraries/frameworks (8)
 - ☐ Others (please specify) (9)
-

D8 How often did you release or help release a new major version of software/an application over the past two years? Please give your best estimate. If you have developed more than one software/application, please answer based on the most frequently updated software/application.

- ☐ Never (1)
- ☐ Annually (2)
- ☐ Quarterly (3)
- ☐ Monthly (4)
- ☐ More frequently than monthly (5)

End of Block: Demographics

Start of Block: Challenges/Tasks

C0 This section of questions asks about tasks and challenges associated with software licensing. (Section 1/3)

C1 How often have you performed the following software licensing-related tasks?

	Never (1)	Occasionally (2)	Frequently (3)	All the time (4)	I don't know (5)
Identifying the software licenses of dependencies in the software I develop (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understanding the terms of use/service of the tools/components we use to develop software (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assigning a license to software I develop (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Changing the license of software I develop (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Verifying that that use of a piece of software is in compliance with all relevant licenses (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Acquiring or granting license exceptions for the software I develop (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identifying key terms in software licenses (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

C2 Please rate the difficulty of the following licensing tasks.

	Extremely difficult (7)	Somewhat difficult (8)	Neither easy nor difficult (9)	Somewhat easy (10)	Extremely easy (11)	I don't know / I have no opinion (12)
Identifying the software licenses of dependencies in the software I develop (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identifying the software licenses of the tools used in development tasks (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assigning a license to software I develop (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Changing the license of software I develop (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Verifying that use of a piece of software is in compliance with all relevant licenses (including those from dependencies and those from copy/pasted code) (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Acquiring or granting license exceptions for	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

the software I
develop (6)

Identifying
key terms in
software
licenses (7)



C3 If you or your organization assign licenses to a software project, what factors are considered? Please select all that apply.

- ☐ Dependency licenses (1)
 - ☐ Allowing open source contribution to the software project (2)
 - ☐ Intended distribution of software project (3)
 - ☐ Intended use of software project (4)
 - ☐ Development or language ecosystem (e.g., Maven, Gradle) (5)
 - ☐ Organization policies (6)
 - ☐ My or my organization's philosophy about the nature or purpose of OSS development (7)
 - ☐ Dual / multi-licensing (8)
 - ☐ Legal considerations (9)
 - ☐ Impact on future contributions to the software project (10)
 - ☐ My or my organization's views about ethical software distribution and use (11)
 - ☐ Other(s) (12) _____
 - ☒ I don't know (13)
 - ☒ Not applicable (14)
-

C4 If you have encountered any licensing scenarios that are challenging to resolve, please provide specific examples of those scenarios. (Please respond as briefly or as fully as you'd like; any insights are appreciated.)

End of Block: Challenges/Tasks

Start of Block: Current Processes

P0 This section of questions asks about current processes used to address software licensing tasks. (Section 2/3)

P1 Do you or your organization regularly work with any legal professionals or people otherwise trained in software licensing and/or copyright law?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)
- ☐ I don't know (3)

P2 If an issue related to software licensing arises during software development, who is responsible for resolving that issue?

- ☐ Developers (1)
- ☐ Legal experts (2)
- ☐ An Open Source Program Office (OSPO) or similar structure (3)
- ☐ Other (please specify) (4)
-
- ☐ ☒ I don't know (5)

P3 If software licensing issues arise, is the solution typically immediately apparent, or does determining the solution require research? Please provide as much or as little detail as you'd like.

End of Block: Current Processes

Start of Block: Tool Usage

Q174 This final section of questions asks about tools used to assist with software licensing.
(Section 3/3)

TU1 Have you used any software tools to assist with software license compliance?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Skip To: End of Block If Have you used any software tools to assist with software license compliance? = No

TU2 What benefits, if any, have you or your organization derived from using software licensing tools?

TU3 What problems, if any, have you or your organization encountered when using software licensing tools?

TU4 Have you had to manually correct the output of license compliance tools?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

TU5 What features (if any) do you wish that license compliance tooling would support that it currently does not?

End of Block: Tool Usage

Start of Block: Contact Information



CI If you would be willing to be contacted for an interview to further explore your responses to this survey, please enter your e-mail address below.

End of Block: Contact Information
