

GitHub Petitions Regarding Removal of RMS: Contributor Comparison

Wm Salt Hale
<www.altsalt.net>

March 25, 2021

On March 22, 2021 the former president of the Free Software Foundation (FSF) Richard M. Stallman (rms) announced that he would be returning to the FSF board.¹ This comes 18 months after he stepped down, due to public pressure regarding, among other things, statements relating to the involvement of Marvin Minsky and Jeffrey Epstein.²

On March 23, 2021 a letter was published online calling for the removal of rms from all leadership positions within the Free/Libre/Open Source Software community.³ Shortly thereafter, a counter letter, in support of the return of rms was published.⁴

Each of these letters called for readers to add their signatures via a pull request (PR) using GitHub, one of the largest hosts for FLOSS projects. As of 10:00:00 UTC on March 25, 2021, the letter requesting removal has received over 2,000 signatures, while the letter in support of remaining has received just over 1,400.

Below is a cursory analysis comparing contributors to each letter. The data used was acquired from GitHub via thier official API, accessed using the PyGithub library.⁵ It was then processed in R, making use of tools from the tidyverse library.⁶

The documentation provided for this project is released under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (CC BY-SA 4.0) <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>. The code provided for this project is released under the GNU General Public License version 3 (GNU GPLv3) <https://www.gnu.org/licenses/gpl-3.0>. The data was collected from GitHub. All data provided for this project is subject to the terms outlined on this page: <https://docs.github.com/en/github/site-policy/github-terms-of-service>

¹<https://twitter.com/nixcraft/status/1373905399707955202>

²<https://itsfoss.com/richard-stallman-controversy>

³<https://rms-open-letter.github.io/>

⁴<https://rms-support-letter.github.io/>

⁵<https://github.com/PyGithub/PyGithub>

⁶<https://www.tidyverse.org/>

Table 1: User data of contributors on GitHub to letters calling for the removal or support of, Richard M. Stallman, respectively.

	Reject rms	Support rms	Total
Number of Signers	459.00	471.00	930.00
Percentage with Name	95.86	75.80	85.70
Percentage with Bio	55.77	33.12	44.30
Percentage with Email	47.06	30.79	38.82
Percentage with Blog	69.93	32.70	51.08
Percentage with Twitter	33.55	5.10	19.14
Percentage with Company	51.63	19.75	35.48
Total Unique Companies	211.00	93.00	301.00
Mean Account Age (in weeks)	438.85	266.21	351.41
Median Account Age (in weeks)	475.86	257.57	362.40
Mean Public Repos	68.16	21.69	44.63
Median Public Repos	39.00	9.00	19.00
Mean Public Gists	20.37	5.16	12.67
Median Public Gists	5.00	0.00	1.00
Mean Followers	168.91	17.37	92.16
Median Followers	31.00	2.00	8.00
Mean Following	29.92	15.76	22.75
Median Following	7.00	2.00	3.00

