

GitHub Petitions Regarding Removal of RMS: Contributor Comparison

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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 15:52:36 PDT on March 26th 2021, the letter requesting removal has received 1,303 signatures, while the letter in support of remaining has received 2,280.

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

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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 breakdown 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	1303.00	2280.00	3583.00
Percentage Self Identified	35.53	21.01	26.29
Percentage Anonymous	45.97	62.19	56.29
Percentage with Multiple Potential Identities	0.92	0.66	0.75
Percentage Identified via Query	17.57	16.14	16.66
Percentage Identifiable	53.11	37.15	42.95

A Organizational messages regarding the current events:

- [CommitChange](#)
- [Electronic Frontier Foundation \(EFF\)](#)
- [Free Software Foundation Europe \(FSFE\)](#)
- [Mozilla](#)
- [Open Source Initiative \(OSI\)](#)
- [Outreachy](#)
- [Red Hat](#)
- [Software Freedom Conservancy](#)
- [The Tor Project](#)