

# A survey of developers' experiences on answering Stack Overflow questions with code examples

Dear developer,

Since you are one of the top answerers on Stack Overflow, we hope you can help us with a not-for-profit study.

We are researchers in the Software Systems Engineering Group at University College London, UK. We are studying problems caused by outdated and license-violating code snippets on Stack Overflow. We have designed a survey to understand these problems and would be grateful if you would complete it.

The survey is completely anonymous and has 11 questions and should only take about 3-5 minutes to complete. We hope that you will complete the entire form but if you do not wish to continue, you can just quit the session and your input will be discarded.

The survey results will be used only for academic research purposes and we plan to release the results to Stack Overflow and in the form of academic papers and presentations.

This research project has been approved by the designated ethics officer in the Computer Science Department at UCL.

If you have any question, please feel free to contact me.

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**\* Required**

## 1. How long have you been working on developing software? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Less than a year
- ☐ 1 - 2 years
- ☐ 3 - 5 years
- ☐ 5 - 10 years
- ☐ More than 10 years

**2. How frequently do or did you answer questions on Stack Overflow? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Very Frequently (every day)
- ☐ Frequently (roughly 3-6 times a week)
- ☐ Occasionally (roughly once or twice a week)
- ☐ Rarely (roughly once or twice a month)
- ☐ Very Rarely (roughly once or twice a year)
- ☐ Never      *Skip to question 11.*

**Experience of Answering Stack Overflow Questions**

This section aims to gain understanding on how developers choose code snippets to put as a solution on Stack Overflow.

**3. How frequently do or did you include code snippets in your answers on Stack Overflow? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Very Frequently (81--100% of the time)
- ☐ Frequently (61--80% of the time)
- ☐ Occasionally (41--60% of the time)
- ☐ Rarely (21--40% of the time)
- ☐ Very Rarely (1--20% of the time)
- ☐ Never (0% of the time)      *Skip to question 11.*

**Sources of the Stack Overflow Snippets**

This section will gather information about the origins of the example snippets in Stack Overflow answers.

**4. Where did the code snippets in your answers come from? \****Mark only one oval per row.*

	Very frequently	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Very rarely	Never
I copied them from my own personal projects.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I copied them from my company's projects.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I copied them from open source projects.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I wrote the new code from scratch.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I copied the code from the question and modified it for the answer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Concerns of Copying Code Snippets to Stack Overflow

This section aims to study concerns of the answerers regarding software licensing of their code snippets in Stack Overflow answers.

5. **Were you aware, at the time of copying the code, that Stack Overflow apply Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported (CC BY-SA 3.0) to content in the posts, including code snippets? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

6. **Do you usually include a software license in your code snippets on Stack Overflow? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes, as a comment in the code.  
☐ Yes, in a text surrounding the source code.  
☐ Yes, both in code comments and text.  
☐ No.

7. **How frequently did you check the software license of the code snippets you copy to Stack Overflow if they conflict with Stack Overflow's CC BY-SA 3.0 license? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Very Frequently (81--100% of the time)  
☐ Frequently (61--80% of the time)  
☐ Occasionally (41--60% of the time)  
☐ Rarely (21--40% of the time)  
☐ Very rarely (1--20% of the time)  
☐ Never (0% of the time)

## Problems from Code Snippets on Stack Overflow

This section will gather information of code snippets that were outdated after being copied to Stack Overflow.

8. **Outdated code occurs when code snippets in your answers are no longer up-to-date with the latest version of the software you copied the code from. Have you ever been notified of outdated code in your Stack Overflow answers? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

## Frequency of Notifications

9. **How frequently were you notified of outdated or deprecated code in your Stack Overflow answers? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Very frequently (81--100% of my answers)
- ☐ Frequently (61--80% of my answers)
- ☐ Occasionally (41--60% of my answers)
- ☐ Rarely (21--40% of my answers)
- ☐ Very rarely (1--20% of my answers)
- ☐ Never (0% of my answers) *Skip to question 11.*

## Fixing Outdated Code

10. **How frequently did you fix your outdated code on Stack Overflow? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Very frequently (81--100% of the cases)
- ☐ Frequently (61--80% of the cases)
- ☐ Occasionally (41--60% of the cases)
- ☐ Rarely (21--40% of the cases)
- ☐ Very rarely (1--20% of the cases)
- ☐ Never (0% of the cases)

## Additional feedbacks

11. **Do you have any other concerns regarding answering Stack Overflow with code snippets?**

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