Software developer coffee consumption

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1 Introduction

There is a famous quote by Alfréd Rényi[1] about mathematicians:

> "A mathematician is a device for turning coffee into theorems."

This quote has been widely applied to programmers as well in the form:

> "A programmer is a device for turning coffee into code."

There has also been active discussion in the web[2] [3] about the coffee drinking habits of programmers. But is there any scientific validation of this popular myth? The goal of this work is to take a representative sample of programmers and analyze their (coffee) drinking habits.

2 Research Question

The objective of this work is to answer the following questions:

- Do programmers drink coffee on daily basis?

- How much coffee do programmers drink on daily basis?

3 Methods

The research question posed in Section 2 was answered by making a face-to-face user survey (see Appendix A). The survey was presented to programmers in the Futurice office.

4 Results

The results presented in Appendix A and visualized in Appendix B show that approximately 73 % of the developers surveyed drink coffee with an average of 3.2 cups a day.

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[1] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfr%C3%A9d_R%C3%A9nyi
[2] http://giorgiosironi.blogspot.com/2010/03/coffee-and-programming.html
[3] http://programmers.stackexchange.com/questions/107142/is-there-something-special-about-coffee-and-programming

5   Discussion

In this paper the myth of programmers being avid coffee drinkers was validated. The representative sample was taken in Futurice offices. It was noticed that a large portion of the surveyed developers do drink coffee and several cups per day, but there is no other data to compare with.

Also, it is open to discussion whether the sample truly represents the software developer community because Futurice employees are younger than the average developers in the industry.

Some future improvements were considered to the research methods defined in Section 3:

- What is the definition of a cup?

- What if people drink different kinds of drinks on daily basis?

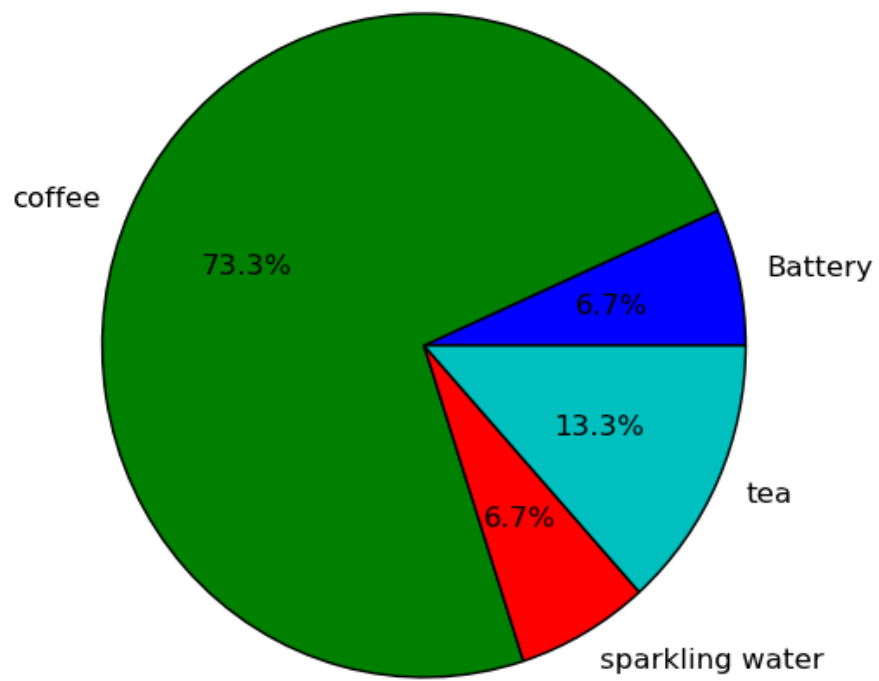We leave these improvements for future research.

A Survey Questionnaire and Answers

On average, what and how many cups do you drink on daily basis?

subject	What?	How many cups?
1	coffee	2-3
2	tea	7
3	coffee	1
4	coffee	3-4
5	coffee	5-8
6	coffee	3-5
7	battery	1
8	coffee	2-4
9	tea	12-14
10	sparkly water	5-6
11	coffee	6
12	coffee	3-4
13	coffee	3
14	coffee	0-1
15	coffee	2

B Charts

Different drinks consumed daily (n=15)

Amount of cups drank in a day by coffee drinkers
(n=15, avg=3.2)