

The graphic features a white document with a teal hole punch at the top, set against a teal background. A pink asterisk symbol is positioned to the right of the text.

FOSS Backstage

Diversity Report 2025 *

FOSS Backstage is a conference dedicated to all things FOSS governance and open collaboration. The seventh edition of FOSS Backstage took place as a hybrid conference from 10–11 March, on-site at our venue bUm in Berlin & online.

FOSS Backstage provides a space to discuss a wide range of issues related to community management, vendor neutrality and project management without discretionary power. Conference topics include best practices in open source project management, community management, open source project metrics, open source strategy for the enterprise, adoption of open source collaboration in the enterprise, legal issues when dealing with open source, and more.

FOSS Backstage aims to provide a space for the discussion of a broad spectrum of issues relating to the FOSS community. We believe the best way to do this is to ensure that the people who take part are valued, respected, accepted and encouraged to participate fully. Part of ensuring that a wide range of opinions can be shared at FOSS Backstage is ensuring that people from under-represented groups within the FOSS community can attend and participate in the discussions.

This report is part of our efforts to make FOSS Backstage a conference that is open, encouraging, and engaging. This report aims to:

- Keep FOSS Backstage transparent and accountable to our commitments to diversity and inclusion
- Share the lessons we have learned from FOSS Backstage 2025
- Encourage feedback from the FOSS Backstage Community

Diversity Ticket Fund

To promote diversity at FOSS Backstage we initiated a Diversity Ticket program in 2021 as well as having reduced tickets available to pupils, students, trainees, people on social welfare, retirees and people with disabilities.

Diversity Tickets are fully sponsored (i.e. free) tickets that are available to people from under-represented groups within the FOSS community.

This includes, but is not limited to: women, people of colour, LGBTQIA people, disabled people, and people facing economic or social hardships. In total 7 diversity tickets were available for FOSS Backstage 2025. Of these:

- 6 were funded by our partners Google, The Linux Foundation, OpenSearch, Landeshauptstadt München IT-Referat, Open Source Collective and Sentry
- 1 was funded by an attendee purchasing a Diversity Fund Contribution

All diversity on-site tickets were used. We also provided Diversity Online Tickets for the second year in a row. Diversity Online Tickets provide access to our online event platform, but not to our venue in Berlin. This enables people who are unable to travel to Berlin to attend the conference. We initially provided 14 Diversity Online Tickets, 6 were used, leaving 8 remaining. Funding for those 8 tickets will be used next year to provide additional Diversity Tickets.

We introduced our Child Ticket for the first time, allowing attendees to bring children under the age of 16 to the conference free of charge. We also provided a quiet room and baby-changing facilities.

Survey Highlights

This is the fifth time we have collected demographic data from speakers and attendees at FOSS Backstage. We hope to collect data in future years to show if there are any changes in these demographics. We tried to increase participation in the survey this year by attaching the demographic survey to the registration process, which was hosted externally and not linked to our ticketing system to protect attendees' privacy. The only demographic element directly linked to the registration process was the question about participants' preferred

pronouns. This was printed on attendee badges on-site, but answering this question was not mandatory.

- Using the question about pronouns asked at registration as a proxy for gender, 58,0% of all attendees of the conference identified as male (i.e. used he/him pronouns), 39,6% identified as female (i.e. used she/her pronouns) and 2,4% identified as non-binary (i.e. used they/them, he/they, or she/they pronouns)

After the conference, we sent a feedback survey to every participant of FOSS Backstage 2025. We also provided a QR-Code at the venue which linked to the survey on the second day of the conference for participants. The survey was in two parts, with the first part collecting feedback about accessibility, diversity, and inclusivity; and the second one being about general feedback to the conference.

Of all attendees of FOSS Backstage 2025, 67 persons completed the demographic survey and 46 persons completed the feedback survey.

The demographic survey yielded the following results:

- Of the attendees who completed the demographic survey 62,7% identify as male, while 34,3% identify as female, compared to 38,6% of attendees who identified as female and 59,1% who identified as male last year
- 1,5% of the attendees identify as non-binary and 1,5% preferred not to answer
- 3 % of the attendees who participated in the survey consider themselves trans
- Of all attendees who completed the survey, 19,4% identified as a person of colour, compared to 13,6% who identified as a person of colour last year
- Of all attendees who completed the survey, 10,4% considered themselves to have a disability, compared to 7% of attendees who completed the survey last year
- Of the persons with disabilities who completed the survey, two persons reported problems with accessibility during the online or on-site event.
- In the following question about which problems with accessibility were encountered, the following relevant answers were provided:

- It'd be really good if there was more space to sit down. There were times where I was forced to stand during the meal periods because there weren't enough seats available.
- Some areas were very crowded during lunch break and coffee breaks, making it very difficult to navigate them. Additionally, few seats and tables were available, esp. during peak hours of interaction.
- There's this yellow colour Slide I could not see very well from online. Organizers should discourage speakers from such.

Participants had various suggestions on how to improve diversity and inclusion at FOSS Backstage. This is an excerpt of answers that participants gave:

- I think it will be helpful to promote the Pac-Man Rule for the event: <https://www.ericholscher.com/blog/2017/aug/2/pacman-rule-conferences/>
- Slides can be submitted to for check. Volunteers could be used to check accessibility colours
- actively mention the code of conduct (a general 'be respectful to each other' and refer to the printed out versions that were stated in the location) at the beginning of the event (in the opening speech) and designate who to go to if there is an incident/for advice. - have quiet places to retreat (or if they already were there, mention them. I have not found them)

These are all ideas that we as the FOSS Backstage organising team will be taking on board. We aim to integrate considerations of these topics when planning future FOSS Backstage events.

Lessons Learned

This year's feedback provided valuable insights and diverse perspectives. We are continuously looking for new methods to increase participation in our surveys to gather more representative and meaningful data for future improvements.

Representation of People of Colour

A recurring theme in the feedback highlighted a perceived lack of People of Colour among our attendees and speakers.

One specific piece of feedback, for instance, noted disappointment that a talk on Open Source Communities in Africa was delivered remotely. We fully agree that on-site speaker presence significantly enhances representation and engagement, especially for topics deeply connected to specific communities.

Our ability to financially support speakers by covering travel costs remains a challenge due to a lack of financial resources. However, we are actively seeking new avenues and partnerships to improve speaker diversity and facilitate on-site participation in the future.

Venue Accessibility & Comfort

We have also received feedback regarding the limited space for eating and drinking at our venue, 'bUm', particularly during rainy weather when the outdoor areas are inaccessible. We are committed to ensuring that all attendees, especially those who may have mobility challenges or require seating, have sufficient space and comfort to eat and drink. We will work closely with the venue to find solutions and improve this aspect of the conference experience.

Air Quality

We have received feedback regarding the air quality in some of the conference rooms. We acknowledge this issue and took steps during the event to address it. Although the building's structural limitations pose challenges, we are proactively addressing ventilation concerns. We have invested in air quality monitoring devices to detect issues early on and respond quickly, with the aim of improving overall air circulation and comfort for all attendees.

Upholding Our Values

At FOSS Backstage, our core mission is to foster a space for discussion on community and project management, compliance, and other critical aspects of free and open-source software. We firmly believe this is best achieved by ensuring that every participant feels valued, respected, accepted, and fully encouraged to contribute.

We have a zero-tolerance policy for disrespectful behaviour. To reinforce this commitment, we will make our Code of Conduct even more prominent at the conference. Furthermore, we will communicate how and who attendees can approach if they encounter any problems or concerns during the event.

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this report, or if you wish

to share further ideas or suggestions for improvement, please do not hesitate to reach out to us at **info@foss-backstage.de**.