

IETF Community Survey 2025

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Introduction

This is the fifth annual survey directed at everyone who in some form participates in the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), however limited their participation. The aim is to deliver these three outcomes:

1. A current size and demographic breakdown of the IETF community.
2. Data to inform the IETF community, particularly those in leadership roles, on what are some of the key issues affecting the IETF and why sometimes asserted issues are not actually issues.
3. A step in a time series of data that can be used to assess the natural changes affecting the IETF and the effectiveness of major programs, organisational changes, and community/leadership actions.

The 2024 survey was accompanied by a similar report¹.

Key Findings

1. The IETF continues to deliver on its core mission, with perceived importance at an all-time high

As shown in Q25 and Q30, participants rate the IETF positively across quality, relevance, transparency, consensus, and openness of standard, all within the "Good" range. The proportion of respondents giving the highest importance scores (9–10 out of 10) in Q28 has slightly increased from 2024, with 57.07% now rating the IETF at that level up from 55.40% in 2024. The IETF continues to be rated better than other Standards Development Organizations (SDOs) across every measured attribute.

2. RFC timeliness and process speed remains a persistent unresolved concern

As shown in Q25 and Q30, for the fifth consecutive year, the timeliness of RFC production scores in the "Poor" range, the only attribute to do so, and Working Group (WG) decision speed (Q27) continue to attract one of the lowest scores across all working group questions. While the speed of the standards process sits above the neutral midpoint at 3.32, indicating that most respondents do not rate the IETF as slower than other SDOs, it still receives the lowest comparative score among all attributes when benchmarking the IETF against other SDOs (Q30). The process speed has remained an area of concern over the past years.

3. Gender diversity is showing meaningful signs of progress

Regular participation among women rose from 5.42% in 2024 to 9.82% in 2025 (Q4), and first-time participation among women is now more than double that of men (Q11). The younger cohort is considerably more gender-diverse than older participants (Q4), and the overall trend is moving towards gender parity among participants, though women still make up under 10% of all respondents. Women are more represented among new participants than among regular participants.

¹ <https://www.ietf.org/blog/ietf-community-survey-2024/>

4. Process complexity and reading volume are a hindrance for new participants

New participants rate both the time required to read documents (2.69) and the complexity of IETF processes (2.94) within the Very Poor range (Q26a), reflecting the inherent demands of joining a technically sophisticated standards body. The Net Promoter Score (NPS) score (-2.9%) for new participants remains below zero (Q20), as it has for several years.

5. Regular participants continue to find the most value in IETF participation

The 2025 data reflects a significant recovery in the sentiment of regular participants, with their NPS score rising sharply to 42% in 2025, up from a low of 26% in 2024 (Q20). Regular participants rate their working group experiences, process understanding, and sense of community significantly higher than all other cohorts (Q26), reporting a very strong belief that they are able to share their views (4.55) and that their contributions are valued (4.28) within working groups (Q27a). This high-value engagement remains a significant time commitment; regular participants spend a median of 6 hours per week on IETF activities (Q13), reflecting the depth of their involvement. Separately, when asked about barriers to participation, the time needed to read emails and documents is the most commonly cited hindrance across all participant types (Q26a), falling in the Poor to Very Poor range across every group.

6. Balancing extensive corporate representation with the core principle of individual contribution remains a challenge

For the fourth consecutive year, the statement "WG participants contribute as individuals and not as representatives of their employer" received the lowest score among working group attributes (3.39, Q27), a concern also mentioned in the open-ended feedback (Q54). However, demographically, 63.65% of the community are corporate employees (Q6), for whom representing their employer or client is one of the motivations for participation (Q12), alongside broader goals such as making the Internet work better. Despite this, the community believes that working groups consistently deliver choices based on rough consensus (4.10) and effectively address all reasonable technical concerns (3.93, Q27).

7. The new open-ended question surfaces governance and inclusion concerns amongst a small subset of participants in the context of a broader, genuine affection for the IETF and its mission

A new open-ended question (Q54), included for the first time in 2025 and only answered by 241 participants out of the 1,480 total who took the survey, surfaces five themes: behavioral barriers and lack of effective moderation, corporate capture and loss of individual voice, process inefficiency and RFC pipeline delays, access and global representation, and leadership accountability and governance reform. Importantly, the majority of the responses across all participant groups reflects genuine affection for the IETF and its mission; the concerns raised are those of invested participants who want to see the organization improve.

Across participation levels, themes shift depending on engagement: those who only monitor and occasional participants surface access and inclusivity concerns most, while regular participants focus on behavioural barriers and governance gaps, calling specifically for term limits, performance reviews and clearer escalation paths. As for leadership experience, those who have never held a role raise all five themes with consistent emphasis and particular concern for accountability, while current leaders focus primarily on operational improvements; former leaders, meanwhile, highlight governance failures and corporate capture. Despite the breadth of concerns raised, respondents express genuine commitment to the IETF's mission.

Methodology

Survey design principles

The survey was designed and questions were constructed following the same principles as previous community surveys:

Return a representative sample of the wider IETF community

The intent of this survey was to reach as widely as possible in order to get a representative sample of the ~50,000 mailing list subscribers, recognising that there are varying degrees of participation within that population.

As people self-select whether or not to respond to the survey, there is the possibility of selection bias and no cross-checking was carried out to test as the data to do so is not available, so this possibility remains.

Design for an international survey

The IETF community is global and the language was carefully chosen to ensure that all respondents interpret the questions easily and similarly through simple, direct, and idiom-free language.

Maximise the number of responses

This principle influenced the question design in a number of ways, all of which aimed to reduce the cognitive load required to complete the survey.

The friction people feel with mandatory questions was largely eliminated by allowing them to skip almost all the questions. The only mandatory question was used for self-identifying the level of participation.

For questions with a scale that includes a "neutral" option, a "No opinion" option was added to avoid people choosing the neutral option and distorting the results. Those who skipped such a question are counted as having no opinion.

For questions with a “prefer not to answer” option, anyone that did not answer was classified as having answered “prefer not to answer” even though they did not explicitly select it.

Ensure that the responses can be processed

In the 2025 survey, one open-ended question (Q54) was introduced. The complete text of all responses to this question are not included in this report for two reasons: the data contains personally identifiable information (PII), and the volume of responses is too extensive to present in full within this format.

Prioritise questions that can be repeated every year

The intent is to repeat this survey every year at roughly the same time so that a trend can be seen over multiple years. This also means that there are no trend questions in the survey (e.g. “Has community behaviour got better or worse over the last year?”) as that is more accurate if derived from multi-year analysis because perception over a period of time differs so much from individual to individual.

Don’t ask questions that are best answered by other means

There is a basic question about mailing list subscriptions, but more accurate answers can be obtained from mailing list analysis. Similarly, it would be better to send each WG a survey than ask for information about specific WGs in this survey.

Open end feedback analysis:

The responses to Q54 were analysed using Claude Sonnet 4.6, an AI assistant developed by Anthropic, which generated a thematic summary of the feedback and identified the most frequently raised topics across all the verbatims.

Changes since the last survey

The 2025 IETF Community Survey maintains much of the core structure of the 2024 version, but includes specific amendments to the wording of perception-based questions and employment demographics.

A couple of questions were removed following the last survey:

- Q16. Over the next year do you expect to spend more or less time on IETF activities? This question was removed as the data gathered to date is sufficient to project future trends.
- Q53. Which other standards setting organisations do you participate in? (check all that apply) This was a duplicate question of Q29 and therefore it was removed.

Several questions were amended following discussions with English as a Second Language (ESL) speakers to ensure clarity and accurate interpretation:

- Q1. How would you best describe your participation in IETF mailing lists? reworded to Q1. How would you best describe your participation in IETF mailing lists over the last year?

- Q6a. What sectors do you work in? reworded to Q6a. What sectors do (did) you work in?
- The choice of Q6a was reworded from Q6a. Academia to Q6a. Academia / Research.
- Q13. On average, how many hours per week do you spend on IETF activities? The options for this question were changed from specific categories (personal time, employer's time, business time & client's time) to a single general average of hours spent per week.
- Q25. How often are the following statements correct about the IETF? reworded to Q25. How much do you agree with the following statements about the IETF? The scale for answering this question also changed from a frequency scale (Almost always to Almost never) to Likert agreement scale (Strongly agree to Strongly disagree).
- Q26. How often are the following statements correct about your participation in the IETF? reworded to Q26. How much do you agree with the following statements about your participation in the IETF? The scale for answering this question also changed from a frequency scale (Almost always to Almost never) to Likert agreement scale (Strongly agree to Strongly disagree).
- Q26a. How often do the following hinder or deter your participation in the IETF? reworded to Q26a. How often do the following become barriers to your participation in the IETF?
- Q27. How often are the following statements correct about the IETF working groups (WGs) that you participate in? reworded to Q27. How often are the following statements true about the IETF working groups (WGs) that you participate in?
- Q27a. How often are the following statements correct about your participation in IETF working groups (WGs)? reworded to Q27a. How often are the following statements true about your participation in IETF working groups (WGs)?

A new question was added:

- Q54. Finally, is there anything else you would like to tell us? A new open-ended feedback question was added at the end of the 2025 survey that was not present in the 2024 version.

Distribution

To distribute this survey, an address list was created by amalgamating the membership lists of all active IETF mailing lists and de-duplicating for addresses using '+' notation. From this list, all addresses that unsubscribed to previous surveys were removed, along with those that we are confident are not able to receive email. The resulting 52,660 addresses were silently subscribed to a mailing list with all members moderated to prevent unwanted use. A pre-announcement post² blog was published on the IETF website and then the invitation to participate³ was sent to the survey list on 24 December 2025. A reminder⁴ was sent on 4 January 2026 and a final reminder⁵ on 19 January 2026.

75 addresses were unsubscribed or hard bounced and automatically unsubscribed. The unsubscribed addresses will be noted and added to a "do not contact" list for future iterations of this survey.

² <https://www.ietf.org/blog/launch-of-the-ietf-community-survey-2025/>

³ <https://mailarchive.ietf.org/arch/msg/secdir/jlaLwo26oLcLEGMO--mlrEVXogg/>

⁴ https://mailarchive.ietf.org/arch/msg/ietf-surveys/_6l78oR68_z7olupRy0-N4sc4-g/

⁵ <https://mailarchive.ietf.org/arch/msg/ietf-surveys/VokCgBtFRID1LYsa5q88Pnk0-II/>

Data validation

The initial protection of the integrity of the data was left to the survey system (Qualtrics), which was configured to detect bots and prevent repeated survey responses. After the survey the data was examined to identify obviously invalid survey responses; 11 were deleted as a result. A further 225 were deleted which were a combination of those who started but did not provide any data, untrusted responses, gibberish responses, etc.

Analysis of results

Population

The population of participants is taken to be the same as the number of addresses subscribed to mailing lists after correction for the use of "+" address notation and those known to be unreachable. There are two known issues that will affect this, but neither are corrected for due to the lack of data:

- Participants subscribed to different lists with different addresses.
- The use of role addresses and internal email expanders going to multiple people.

For analysing the survey, a population of 52,660 is used.

Percentage analysis

Most of the question analysis displays the results as a percentage, with different forms of percentage used:

- **Percentage of (question) respondents.** The majority of questions are analysed using this percentage. Where the question is mandatory, or there is a "no opinion" or "prefer not to answer" option then this is equivalent to the total number of survey respondents, otherwise it is less. For questions where respondents can select multiple options, this means that the percentages will total more than 100%.
- **Weighted percentage.** Used for multiple choice questions where each option selected by the same respondent is assigned a fractional "score" that is inversely proportional to the number of selections made - i.e. if they select 1 option then the score is 1, if they select 2 then a score of 0.5 is used for each option, and so on. This shows the number of responses to a particular option as a percentage of the total number of responses to the question. These percentages will always add up to 100%.

In almost all of the analysis below, the percentage of respondents is used as it represents the views of respondents as accurately as possible as we have from the data, even though it makes comparisons to the total non-intuitive. For example, 71% of respondents indicated that they are employees, which covers both those who are only employees and those who are, say, part-time employees and part-time students. The weighted percentage for the same option is much lower at 59% and so it may seem a fairer percentage to use but this is based on the untested assumption that respondents who give two answers, split their time/role 50/50.

Coding, coding means and applying a value judgement

A number of questions have categorical responses on a scale. For example, "Much more" through to "Much less". For the analysis, each response is assigned a code that is then used to calculate a mean between 1 and 5. These means can then be compared between questions and/or over time.

For some questions it is appropriate to apply a value judgement where we assume that we want as high a score as possible and therefore need to assess the value of a score. In those cases, while there's no hard and fast rule, a mean of 4.50 or above is sometimes considered excellent, 4.00 to 4.49 is good, 3.50 to 3.99 is acceptable but not good, and below 3.50 is either poor or very poor if below 3.00

The codes are:

Quality	Quantity	Preference	Frequency	Reverse Frequency	Code
Excellent	Much more	Strongly preferred	Almost always	Almost never	5
Good	More	Preferred	Often	Rarely	4
Average	About the same	Neutral	Sometimes	Sometimes	3
Poor	Less	Not preferred	Rarely	Often	2
Terrible	Much less	Strongly not preferred	Almost never	Almost always	1

Statistical significance

Only a limited number of significance comparisons have been performed due to the nature of the data:

- Comparison of means, using a public web service⁶.
- Comparison of proportions using a public web service⁷.

Charts

The chart types and settings have been chosen as follows:

- The scale for percentages is always 0%-100% except where the figures are quite small and that would make it difficult to read.
- Stacked bars are used where the answers are on a scale.
- As well as percentages, raw counts are shown so that the reader can calculate their own comparison tests and check the percentages.
- Some figures and headings have been omitted for space reasons and, where meaningful, those are referenced in the text. Any missing figures can be provided on demand.

⁶ https://www.medcalc.org/calc/comparison_of_means.php

⁷ <https://www.socscistatistics.com/tests/ztest/default2.aspx>

Treatment of Previous Participants

Respondents who self-identified as "previous" participants at Q1 are excluded from questions measuring current IETF participation, working group experience and likelihood to recommend IETF (Q26, Q26a, Q27, Q27a, Q13, and Q20), as their engagement with IETF mailing lists and activities has lapsed.

Results and Analysis

Totals

52,660 email addresses were successfully contacted. 1716 responses were received. Out of those, 1480 were valid responses, a response rate of 2.81% (in line with 2.6% in 2024), giving a maximum margin of error of +/- 2.54% (slightly better than 2.60% in 2024).

Testing for selection bias

In Q1 11.01% of respondents answered "I regularly post". With a margin of error of 2.54%, this indicates a total somewhere between 4,460 and 7,136 people who regularly post to IETF mailing lists. A separate analysis has identified that messages sent to IETF mailing lists during 2025 came from 4,457 individual email addresses. Because this figure aligns closely with our survey's projected lower bound, it suggests that regular participants are reasonably represented in the sample, with negligible selection bias.

Questions: Organisational Demographics (part 1)

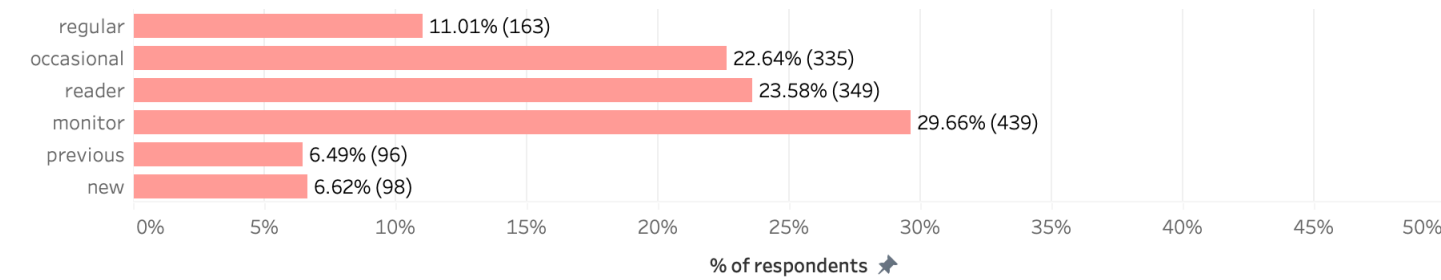
These questions of fact about the respondents participation in the IETF. They are split into two parts as this first question is used as an initial routing and qualification question.

Q1. How would you best describe your participation in IETF mailing lists?

This was the one mandatory question for this survey, with respondents asked to self select a single participant type with textual guidance on those types:

- I regularly post ("regular")
- I occasionally post ("occasional")
- I regularly read messages but never post ("reader")
- I monitor message subjects and occasionally read but never post ("monitor")
- I no longer read or post but I used to ("previous")
- I have recently subscribed and I am still deciding how I fit in ("new")
- I have never read or posted to any IETF mailing list ("non-participant")

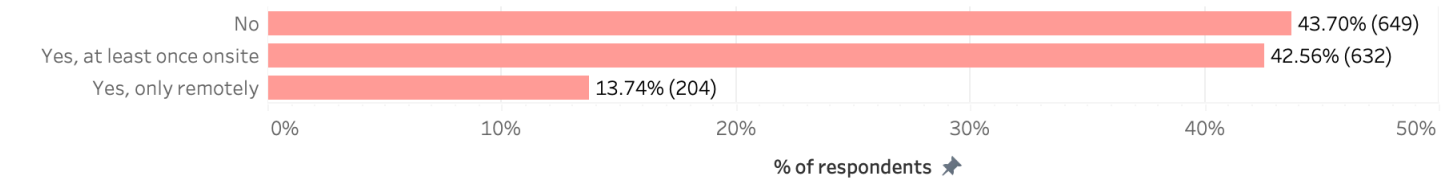
Those that answered "non-participant" were taken immediately to the end of the survey and not asked any further questions. They are therefore not included in the following analysis.



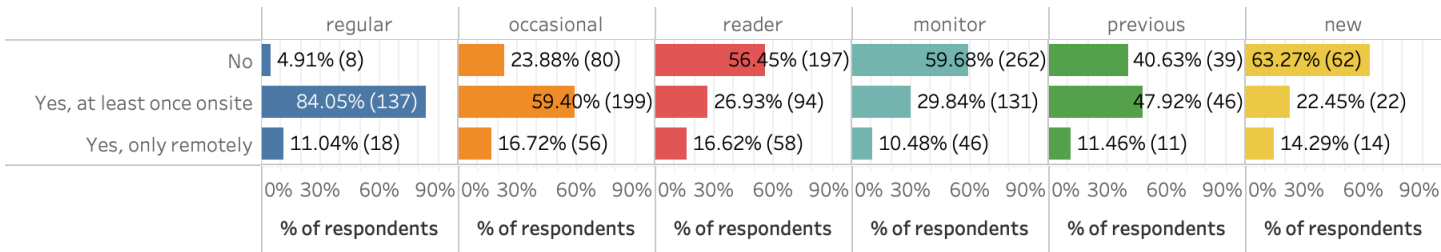
Commentary

- 1. Together, readers (those who read but never post) and monitors (those who occasionally read but never post) continue to make up more than half of IETF mailing subscribers (53.24%).
- 2. Projecting these distributions across the full population of 52,660 mailing list subscribers, approximately 4,460–7,136 are regular participants, 10,585–13,257 are occasional contributors, 11,080–13,752 are readers, and 14,284–16,955 engage primarily as monitors. A further 2,080–4,756 are previous participants and 2,149–4,824 are new participants.
- 3. Note the section above on [Testing for selection bias](#).

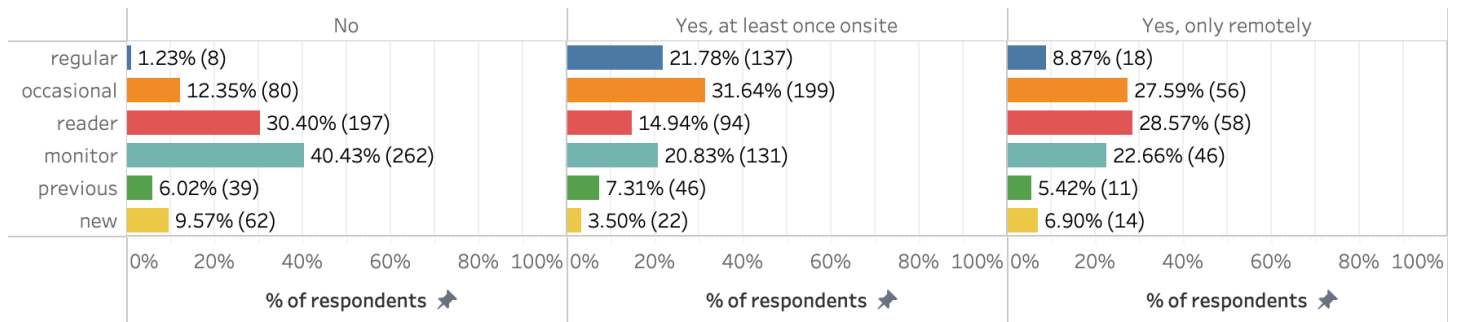
Q1a. Have you participated in an IETF Meeting?



Normalised by participant type:



Participation type distribution within each meeting attendance category:



Commentary

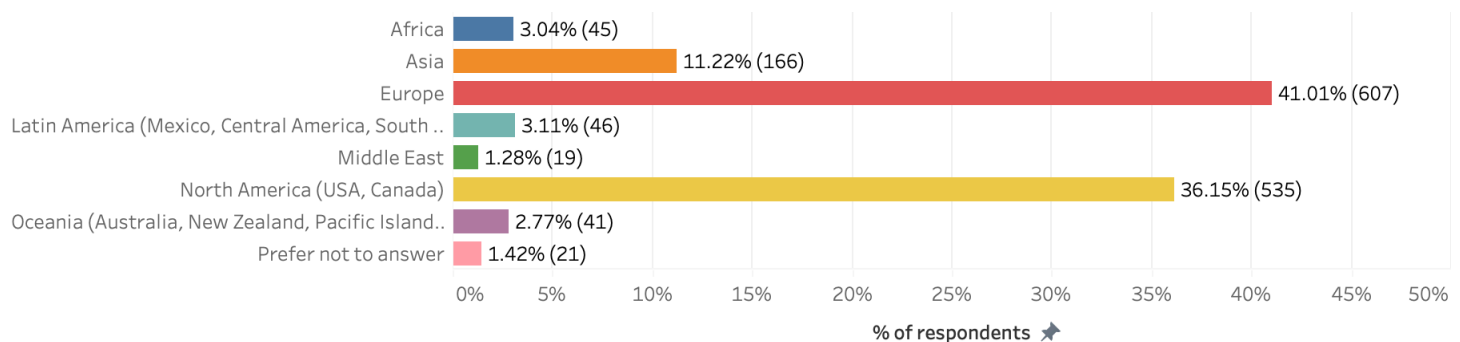
- Meeting attendance remains high, with over 56% of respondents having participated either onsite or remotely. While the "No" category is significant as well (43.7%), this is influenced by those who like to monitor or read the IETF mailing list.
- Remote-only participation has largely remained the same year over year holding a steady trend of approximately 14% of respondents taking part remotely in the meetings.
- Among respondents who have never attended an IETF meeting, monitors (40.43%) and readers (30.40%) together account for over 70%, indicating that non-attendance is heavily concentrated among the least actively posting participant types.

Questions: Demographics

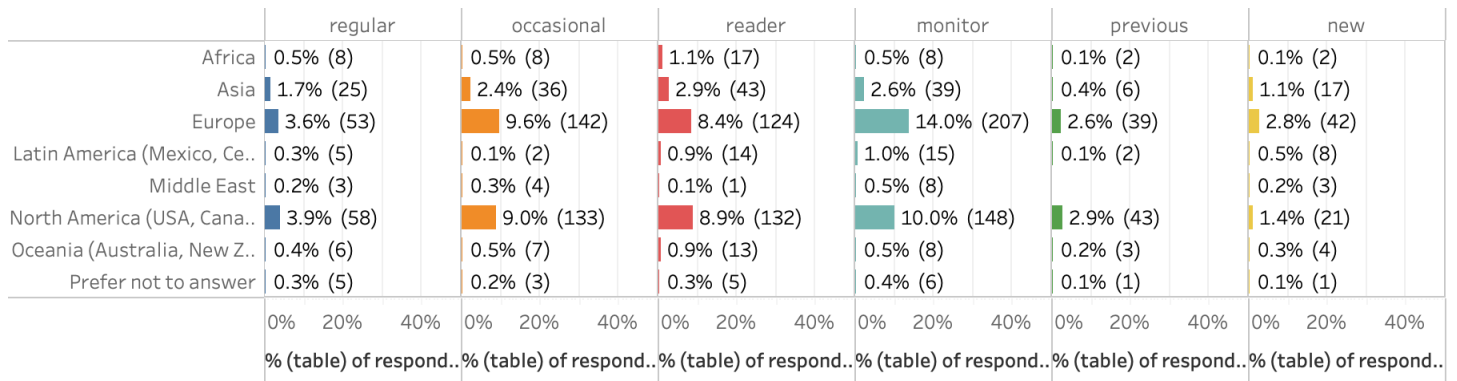
These questions have been asked for the dual purpose of understanding the broad makeup of the IETF community, and how the views and experiences of the community differ by demographics as such differences may indicate problems.

Q2. In what region do you live?

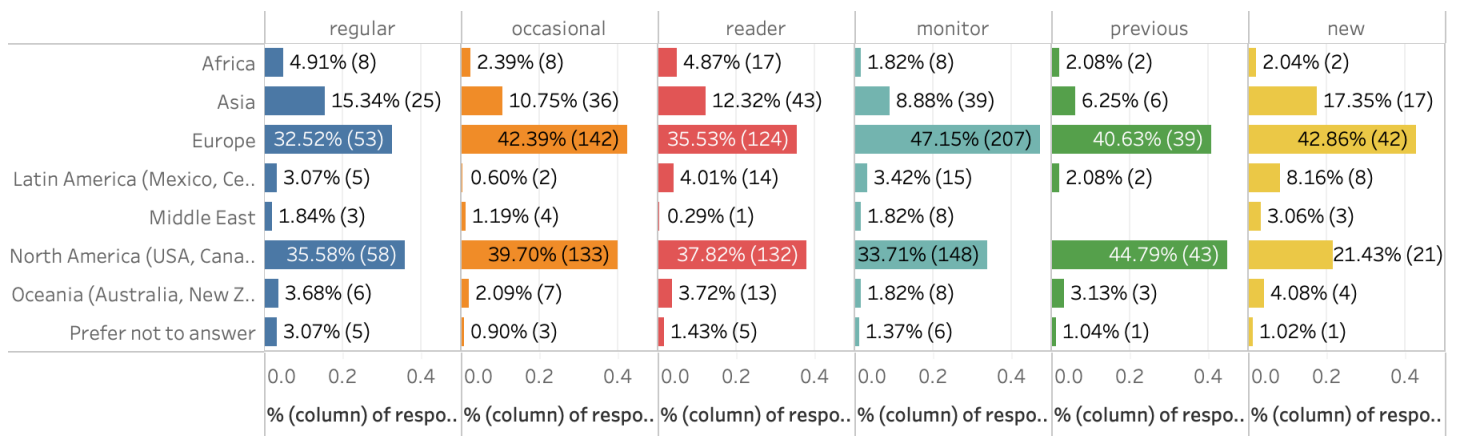
This question uses the standard IETF regions and is the same question asked in most of our other surveys, such as post-meeting surveys.



Cross-tabulating this by participant type gives:



Normalising that cross-tabulation by participant type:

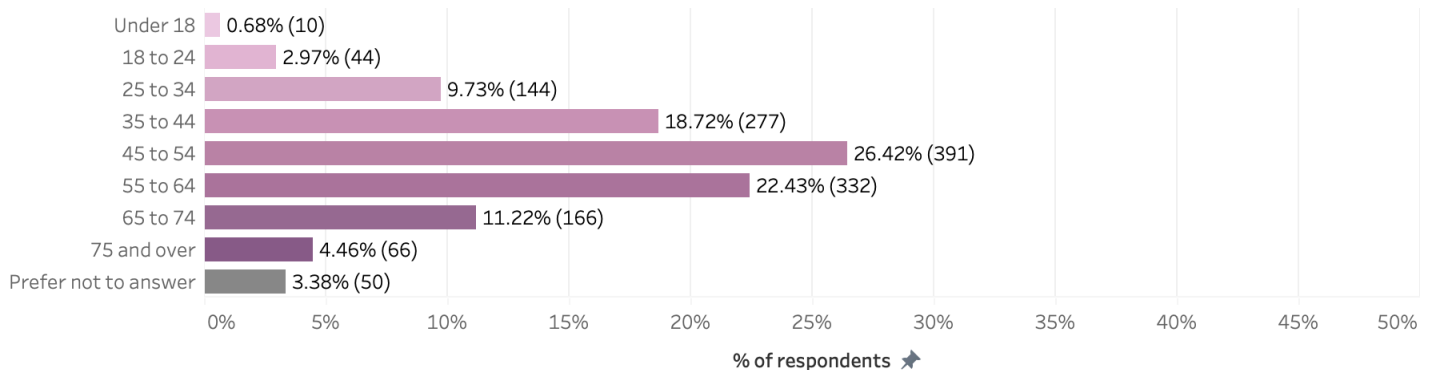


Commentary

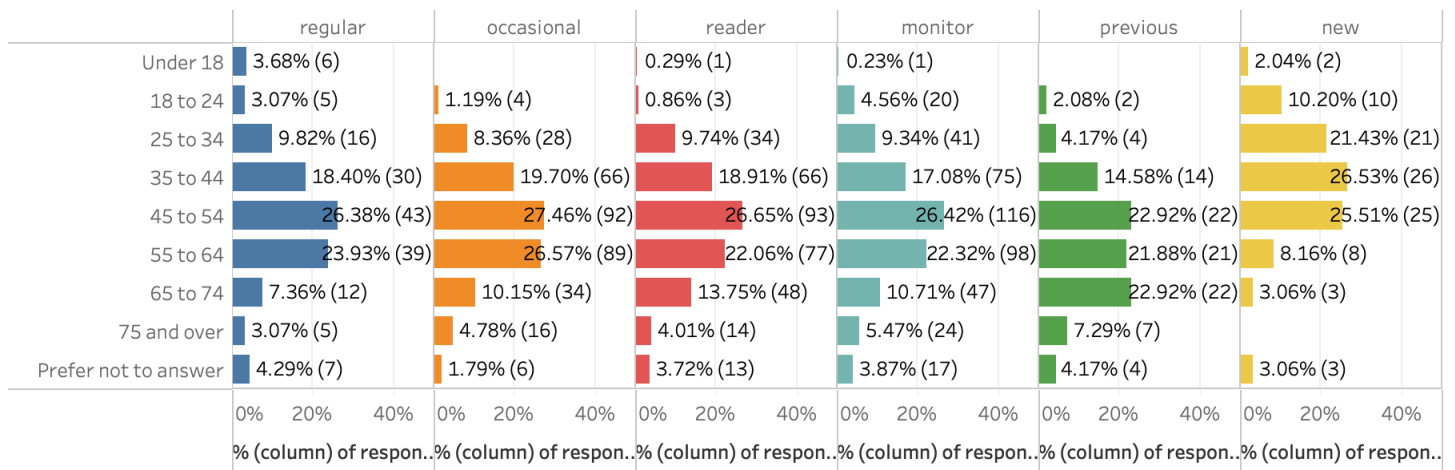
- In line with historical trends from community and post-meeting surveys, IETF participation remains heavily concentrated in Europe and North America, together accounting for approximately three-quarters of the total respondent base.
- Overall participation from Latin America has also increased this time and there is a notable bump among newer community members.

Q3. How old are you?

This was first asked in 2021 and is not normally asked in our post-meeting surveys.



Normalised cross-tabulation by participant type:

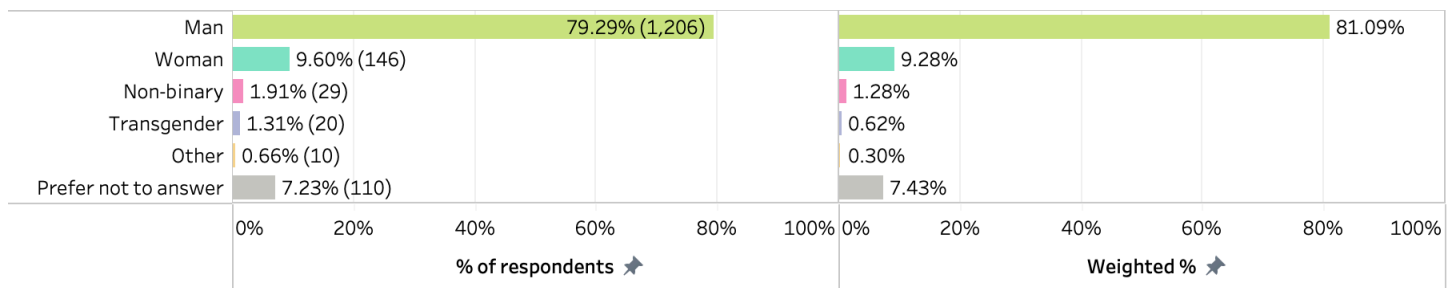


Commentary

9. The median age for the IETF community is in the 45-54 age range. This is the same as the trend previously seen.
10. While the absolute volume of participants under the age of 18 is small (n=10), it is notable that 60% of this group (n=6) identify as "regular" participants, indicating a deep level of commitment and integration upon joining.
11. The previous participants who no longer post/read any IETF material are primarily from the older group of "45-74".

Q4. What is your gender? (check all that apply)

This question was changed for the 2022 survey to allow multiple answers. This first chart shows the different ways that this data can be presented and used:



As the focus here is on respondent views, not proportionality between respondents, the percentage of respondents is used throughout the rest of this survey, which will generally mean totals in excess of 100%:

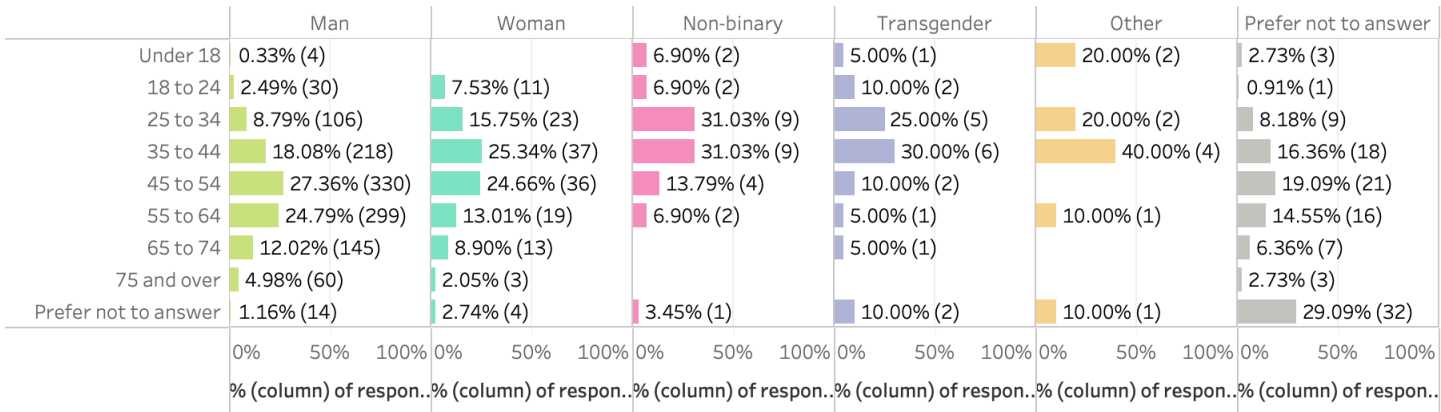
Normalised cross-tabulation by gender:

	regular	occasional	reader	monitor	previous	new
Man	78.53% (128)	85.07% (285)	80.23% (280)	83.83% (368)	78.13% (75)	71.43% (70)
Woman	9.82% (16)	8.66% (29)	9.74% (34)	8.20% (36)	8.33% (8)	23.47% (23)
Transgender	0.61% (1)	1.79% (6)	0.86% (3)	2.05% (9)		1.02% (1)
Non-binary	3.07% (5)	1.79% (6)	1.43% (5)	1.59% (7)	1.04% (1)	5.10% (5)
Other	1.23% (2)	0.90% (3)	0.29% (1)	0.46% (2)	1.04% (1)	1.02% (1)
Prefer not to answer	9.20% (15)	5.97% (20)	9.17% (32)	6.61% (29)	11.46% (11)	3.06% (3)
	0.00% 100.00%	0.00% 100.00%	0.00% 100.00%	0.00% 100.00%	0.00% 100.00%	0.00% 100.00%
	% (column) of respon..	% (column) of respon..	% (column) of respon..	% (column) of respon..	% (column) of respon..	% (column) of respon..

Cross-tabulating gender with region and normalised by region:

	Africa	Asia	Europe	Latin America (Mexico, Central ..	Middle East	North America (USA, Canada)	Oceania (Australia, New Z..
Man	84.44% (38)	80.72% (134)	84.35% (512)	73.91% (34)	94.74% (18)	80.19% (429)	75.61% (31)
Woman	8.89% (4)	15.06% (25)	7.08% (43)	23.91% (11)		10.65% (57)	12.20% (5)
Non-binary	2.22% (1)	1.20% (2)	1.65% (10)		5.26% (1)	1.50% (8)	12.20% (5)
Transgender	2.22% (1)	0.60% (1)	1.32% (8)	4.35% (2)		1.12% (6)	4.88% (2)
Other	2.22% (1)	0.60% (1)	0.33% (2)			0.19% (1)	7.32% (3)
Prefer not to answer	8.89% (4)	4.22% (7)	7.58% (46)	2.17% (1)		7.85% (42)	7.32% (3)
	0% 50% 100%	0% 50% 100%	0% 50% 100%	0% 50% 100%	0% 50% 100%	0% 50% 100%	0% 50% 100%
	% (table) of respo..	% (table) of respo..	% (table) of respo..	% (table) of respo..	% (table) of respo..	% (table) of respo..	% (table) of respo..

Age (Q2) cross-tabulated with gender and normalised by gender:

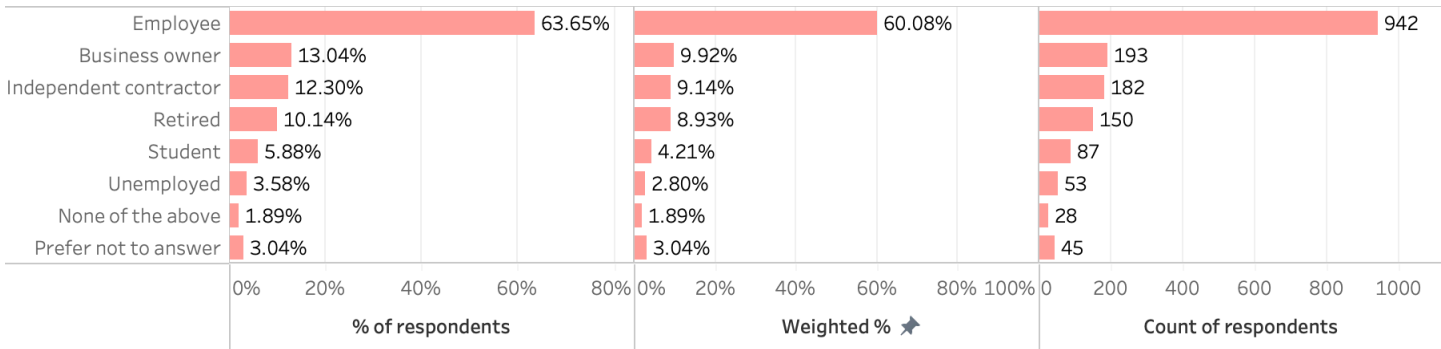


Commentary

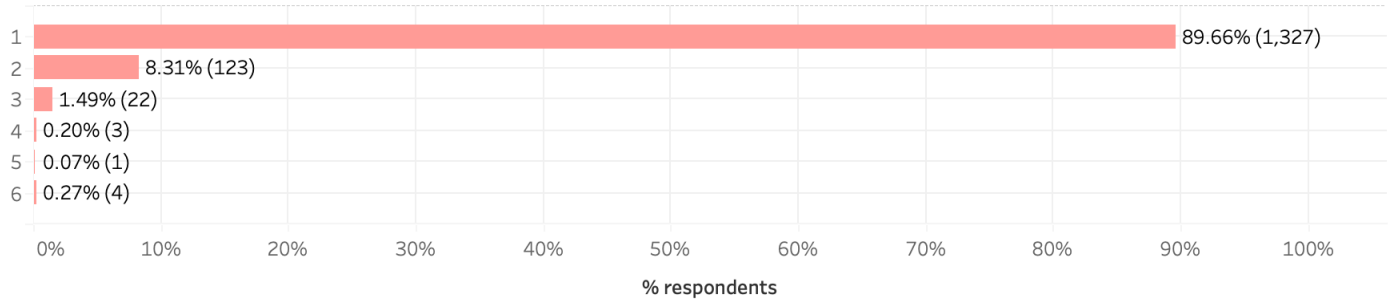
12. The gender distribution remains largely consistent with previous years, though there is a slight increase in "Prefer not to answer".
13. The veteran IETF population is predominantly male, while the younger cohort (under 45) is notably more diverse.
14. While the overall proportion of women remains under 10% (9.60%), the regular participation among women has almost doubled, rising from 5.42% last year to 9.82% in 2025. However, women are still more likely to be new participants than existing ones.
15. Latin America shows comparatively better female representation than other regions (23.91%).
16. The number of respondents who identify as non-binary and transgender continues to grow overall but not so much among new participants. The overall numbers are still low and using those for analysis may not be representative.

Q6. What is your employment status? (check all that apply)

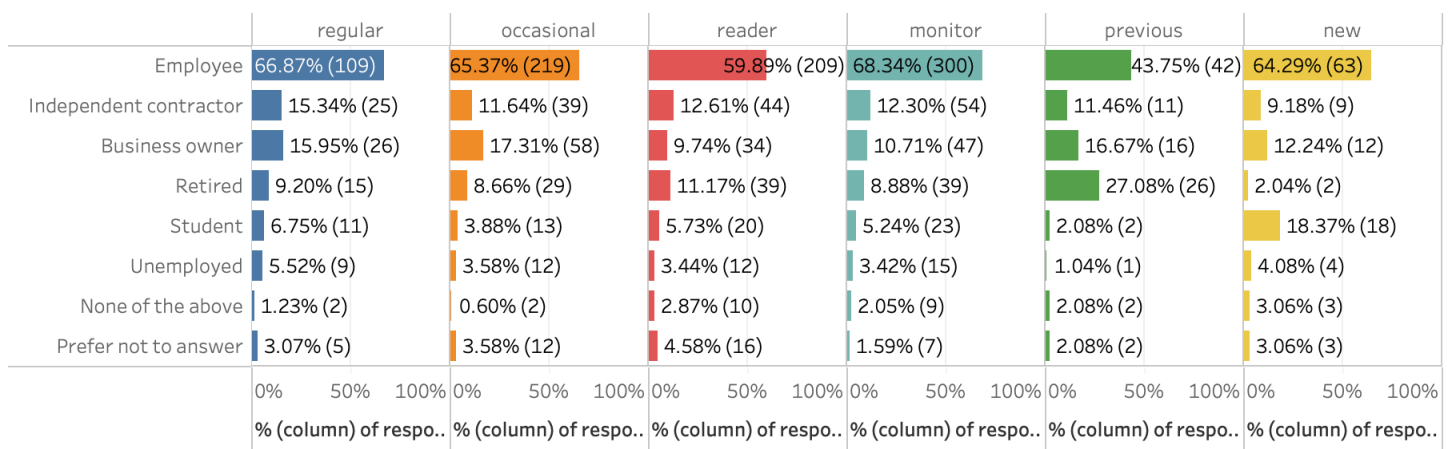
This is the third year of including two employment-related questions in the survey.



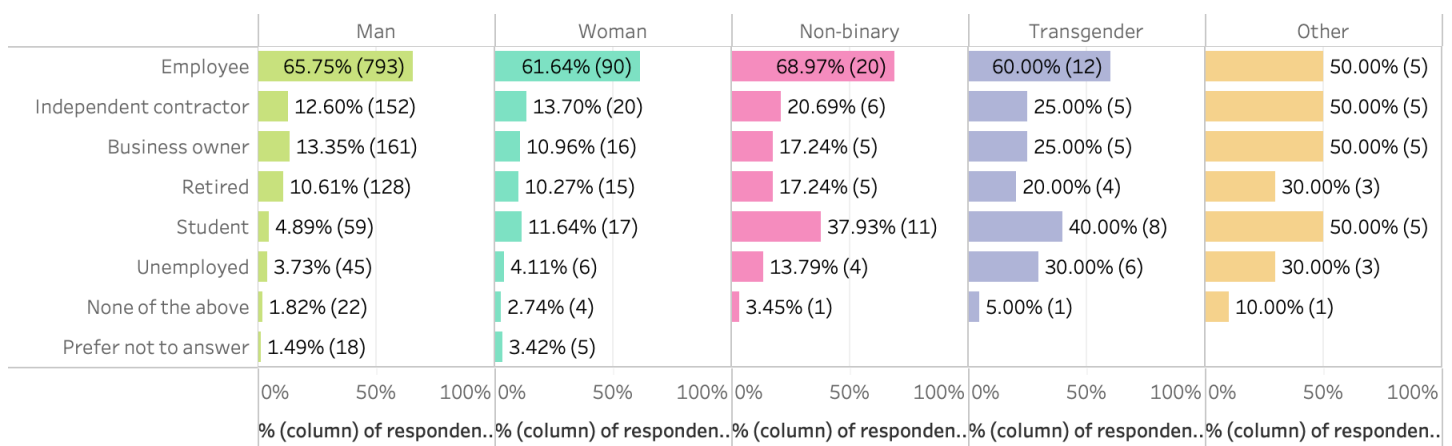
Frequency distribution of the number of options selected per respondent:



Normalised by participant type:



Normalised by gender:

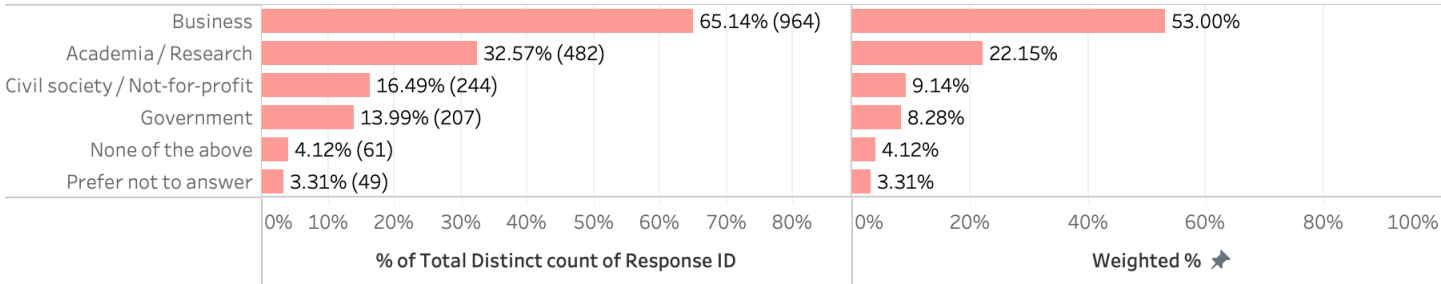


Commentary

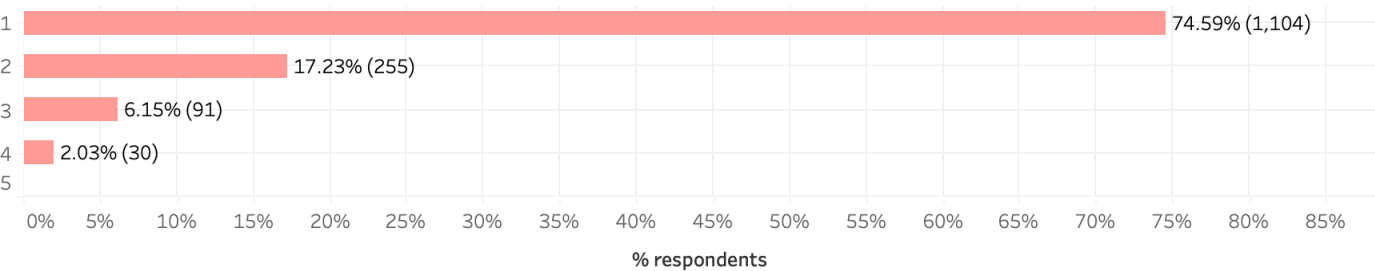
17. The results for this question were consistent this year as well, with the majority of respondents choosing their status as employees, followed by business owners and independent contractors.
18. The profile of regular, reader, and monitor participants follow the same trend with the highest portion being employees followed by independent contractors and business owners. In contrast, previous participants show a more mixed profile, with a notable increase in retirees in 2025.
19. The new participant group shows relatively higher proportions of students suggesting newer entrants may be earlier in their careers.
20. Employment patterns are broadly consistent across participant types and genders, with only minor skews i.e., higher student share among non-binary, transgender and others.
21. Around 10% of respondents have more than one form of employment.

Q6a. What sectors do you work in? (check all that apply)

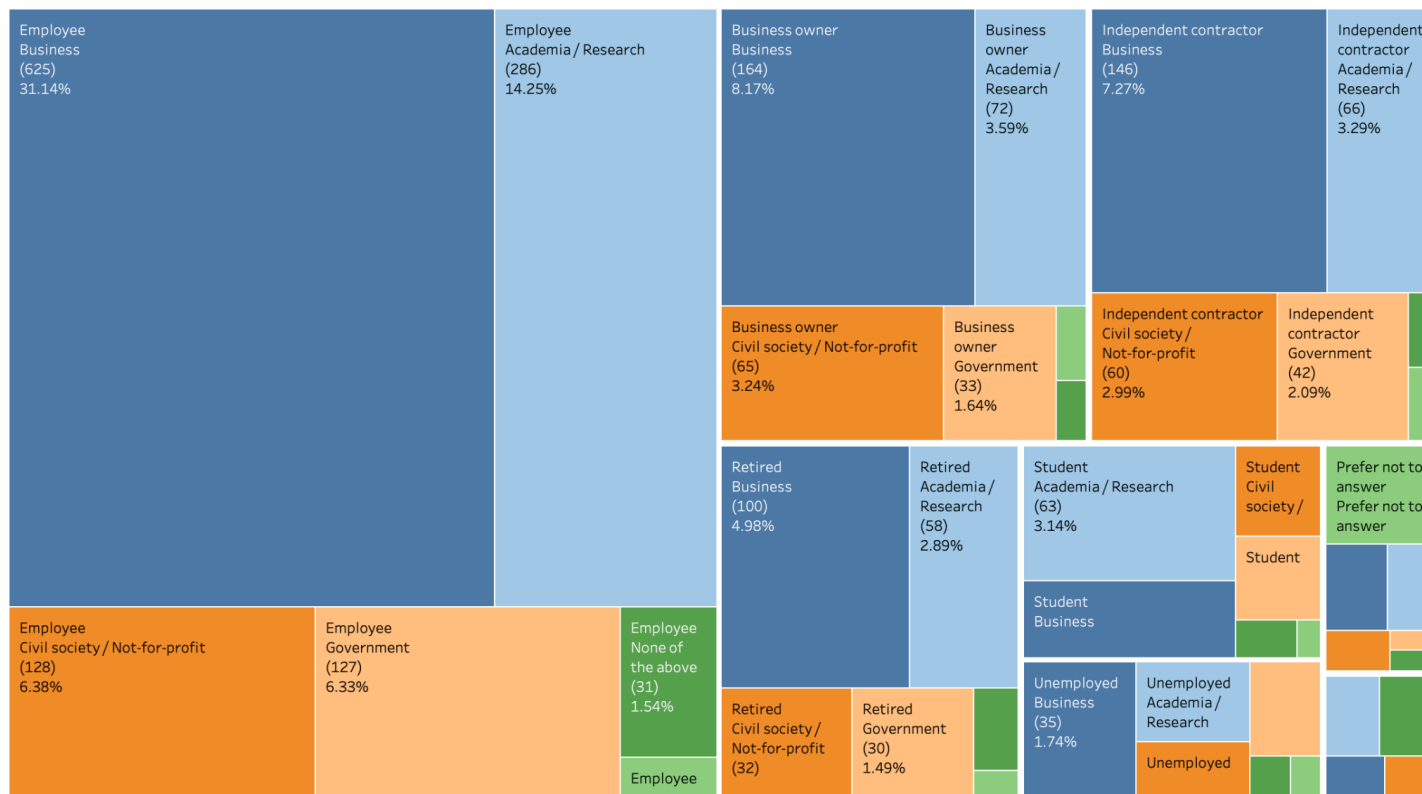
This question focuses solely on what sectors people work in.



Frequency distribution of the number of options selected per respondent:



The relationship between employment and sectors is shown in the following treemap below. Since Q6a (sector question) and Q6 (employment question) allowed respondents to select multiple sectors, a single person may appear in more than one box. Box size represents the number of respondents in each combination, and colours are consistent throughout (by sector) so smaller boxes without labels can still be identified:



Commentary

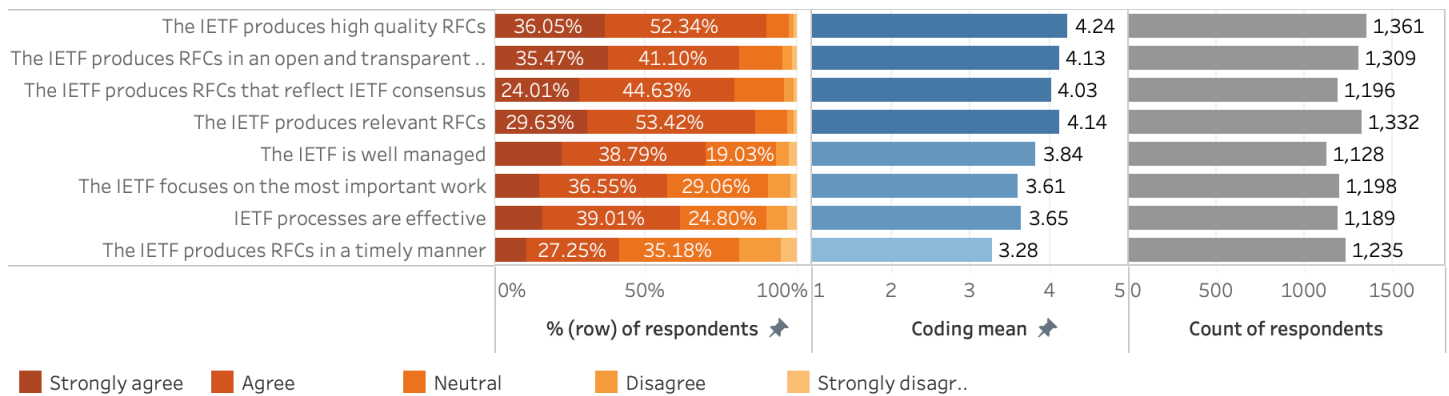
22. With the inclusion of "Research" under the "Academia/Research" category this year, there has been a noticeable increase in its selection, indicating broader representation of research-oriented roles.
23. Business and Academia/Research continue to be the largest sectors represented among participants, while Civil society/non-profit and government show an almost equal split.

Questions: Overall Perceptions

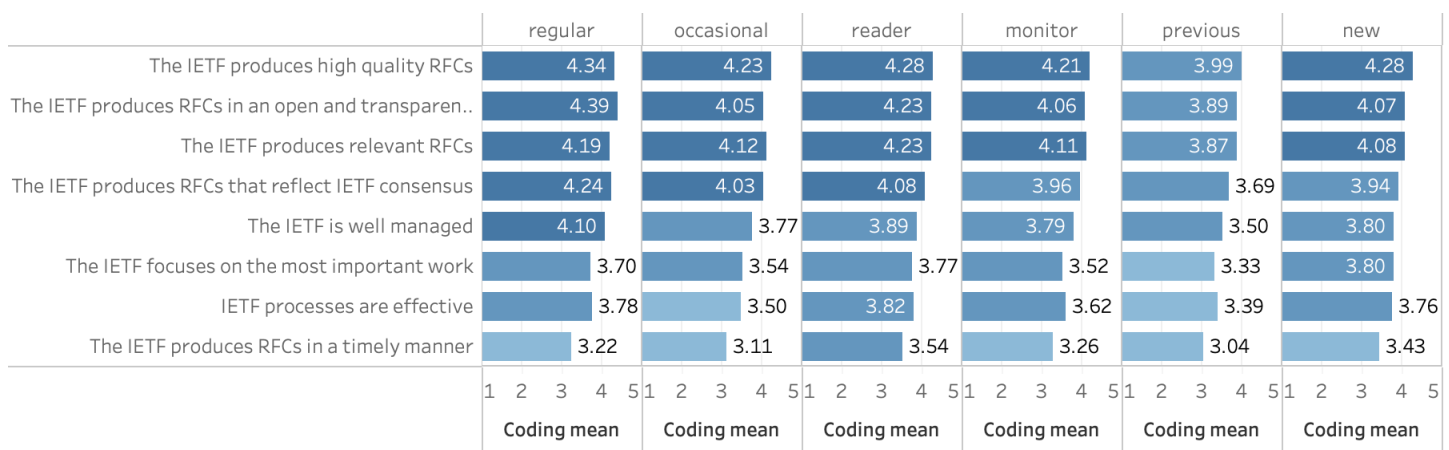
These two questions were asked at this point to provide something substantive for respondents to give an opinion on, breaking up the less interesting demographic questions.

Q25. How much do you agree with the following statements about the IETF?

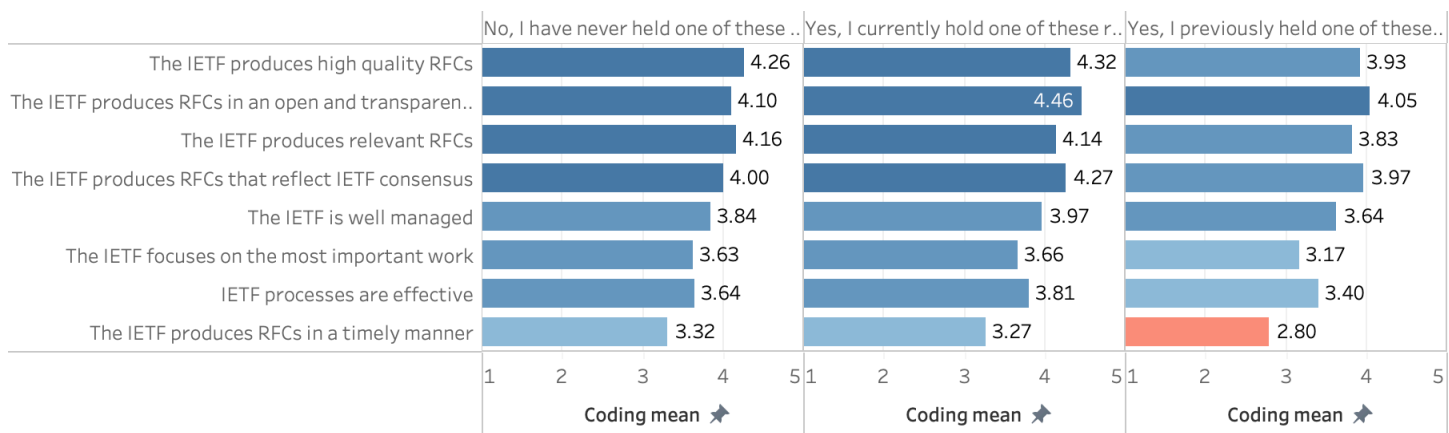
This year, both the question wording and response scale were updated, shifting from a frequency-based scale to an agreement-based scale to capture respondents' perceptions.



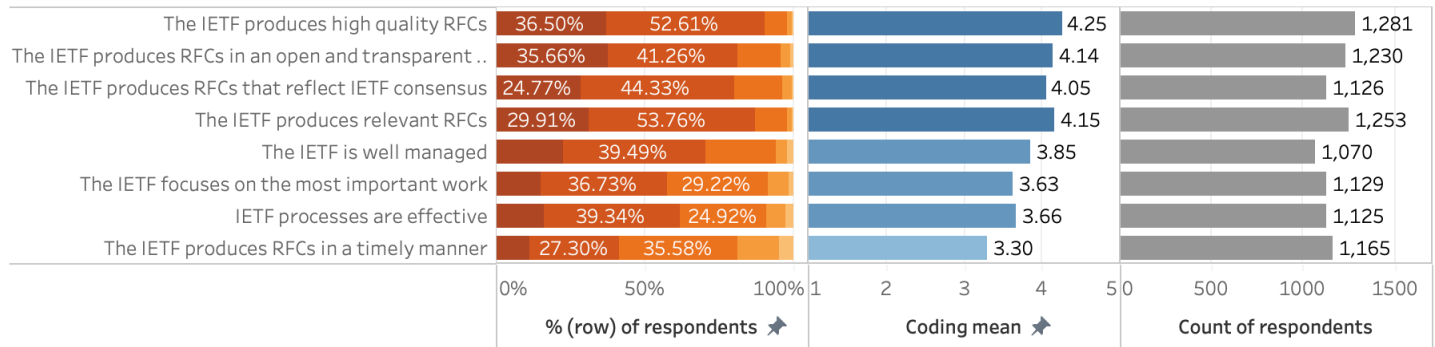
Coding means by participant type:



Coding means by leadership experience:



Similar distribution, by excluding the previous participants, as they no longer post and read IETF mailing list their data is not necessarily valid on this question therefore this additional chart excludes them from this analysis:

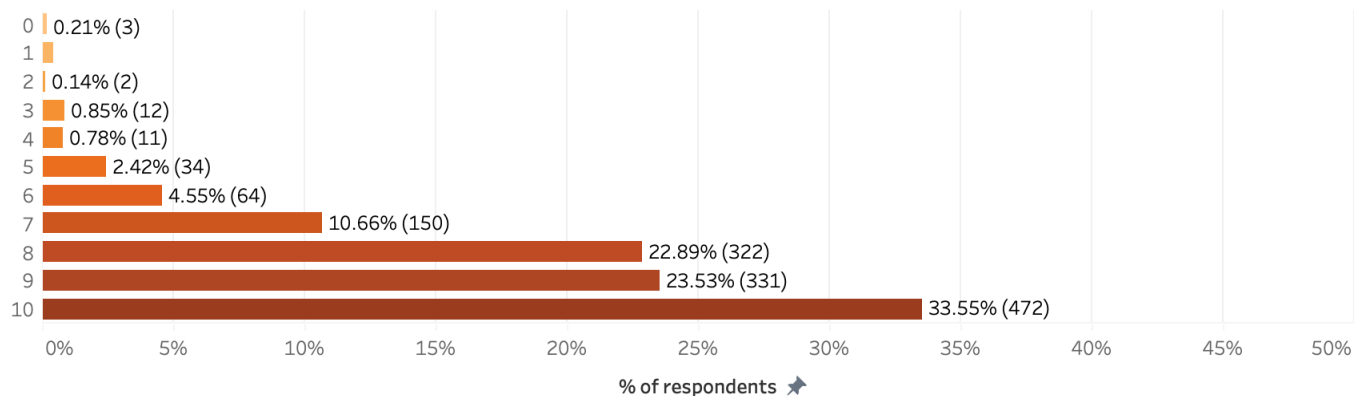


Commentary

24. The core values of the IETF are rated positively overall, with quality, transparency, consensus and relevance all falling within the “Good” range.
25. The timeliness of RFC production continues to remain the lowest rated of the aspects, scoring in the Poor range.
26. Notably, respondents who currently hold or have previously held leadership positions within the IETF rate transparency most highly among all attributes, suggesting stronger confidence in this area among those with deeper organizational involvement.
27. As previous participants no longer actively read or post to IETF mailing lists, an additional analysis was conducted excluding this group. The results are largely consistent across both analyses and the coding means shift marginally upward but not significantly.

Q28. How important is the IETF?

Respondents were asked to rate this on a scale of 0-10. While not strictly an NPS question, that methodology is used to analyse the result.



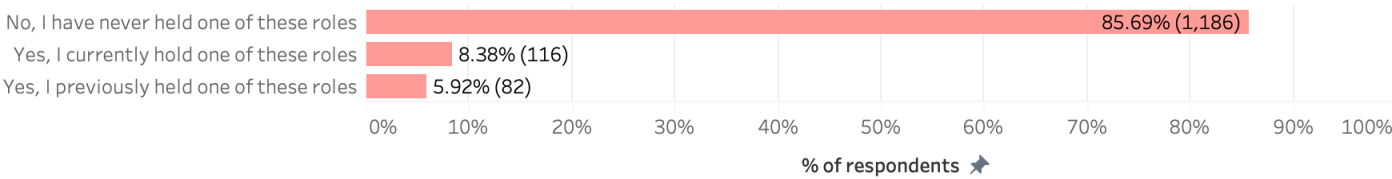
Commentary

28. The vast majority of respondents rate the IETF as highly important, with 57.07% giving a score of 9 or 10 and a further 33.55% scoring 7 or 8. Only 9.38% of respondents gave a score of 6 or below.
29. This is consistent with 2024, when 55.58% gave a score of 9 or 10 and 37.09% scored 7 or 8, with 7.33% scoring 6 or below.
30. The proportion of respondents giving the highest importance scores (9–10) has slightly increased compared to 2024.

Questions: Organisational Demographics (part 2)

This is the second set of factual questions about respondents’ participation in the IETF. These questions were not asked in the sequence reported below.

Q7b. Have you ever held a leadership role in the IETF (IESG, IAB, IRSG, LLC Board, Trustee, IAOC, WG Chair, Nomcom Chair)?



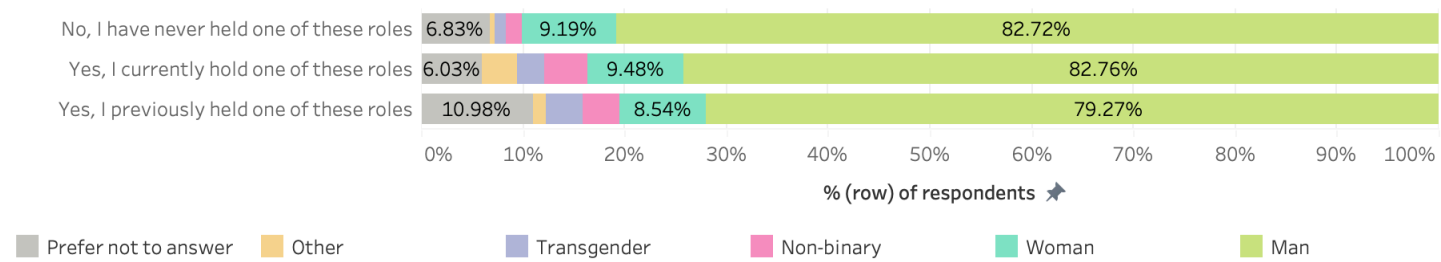
By gender:

	Man	Woman	Non-binary	Transgender	Other
No, I have never held one of these roles	70.88% (981)	7.88% (109)	1.45% (20)	0.94% (13)	0.29% (4)
Yes, I currently hold one of these roles	6.94% (96)	0.79% (11)	0.36% (5)	0.22% (3)	0.29% (4)
Yes, I previously held one of these roles	4.70% (65)	0.51% (7)	0.22% (3)	0.22% (3)	0.07% (1)
	0% 50% 100%	0% 50% 100%	0% 50% 100%	0% 50% 100%	0% 50% 100%
	% of respondents	% of respondents	% of respondents	% of respondents	% of respondents

Normalised by gender:

	Man	Woman	Non-binary	Transgender	Other
No, I have never held one of these roles	85.90% (981)	85.83% (109)	71.43% (20)	68.42% (13)	44.44% (4)
Yes, I currently hold one of these roles	8.41% (96)	8.66% (11)	17.86% (5)	15.79% (3)	44.44% (4)
Yes, I previously held one of these roles	5.69% (65)	5.51% (7)	10.71% (3)	15.79% (3)	11.11% (1)
	50% 100%	50% 100%	50% 100%	50% 100%	50% 100%
	% of q respondents (I..	% of q respondents (I..	% of q respondents (I..	% of q respondents (I..	% of q respondents (I..

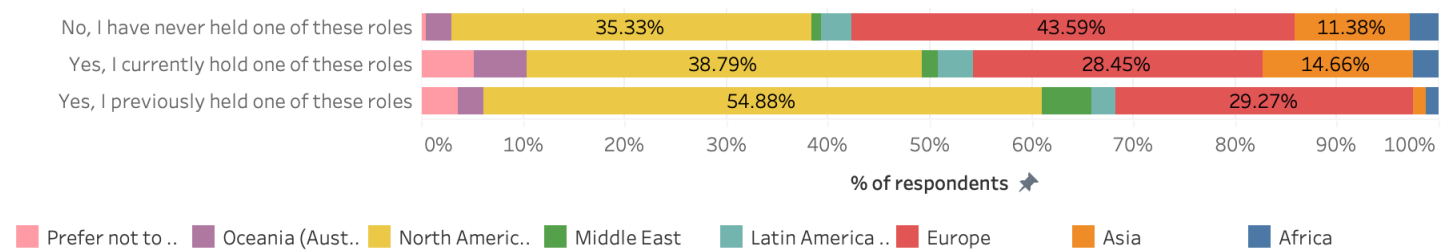
By gender normalised by option:



Normalised by region:

	Africa	Asia	Europe	Latin America (..	Middle East	North America (..	Oceania (Austra..
No, I have never held one of th..	89.19% (33)	88.24% (135)	90.07% (517)	85.37% (35)	64.71% (11)	82.32% (419)	79.49% (31)
Yes, I currently hold one of the..	8.11% (3)	11.11% (17)	5.75% (33)	9.76% (4)	11.76% (2)	8.84% (45)	15.38% (6)
Yes, I previously held one of th..	2.70% (1)	0.65% (1)	4.18% (24)	4.88% (2)	23.53% (4)	8.84% (45)	5.13% (2)
	0% 50% 100%	0% 50% 100%	0% 50% 100%	0% 50% 100%	0% 50% 100%	0% 50% 100%	0% 50% 100%
	% of respondents	% of respondents	% of respondents	% of respondents	% of respondents	% of respondents	% of respondents

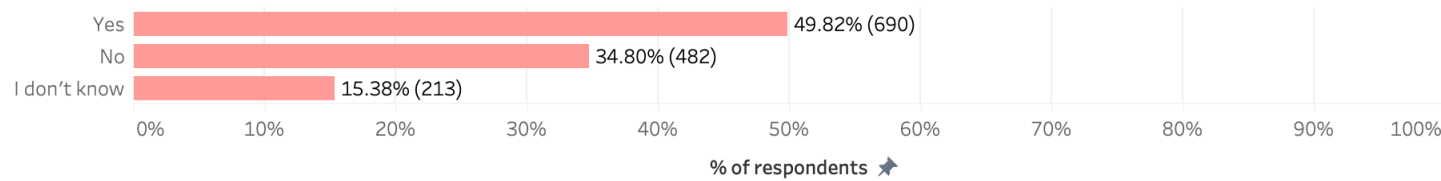
By region normalised by option:



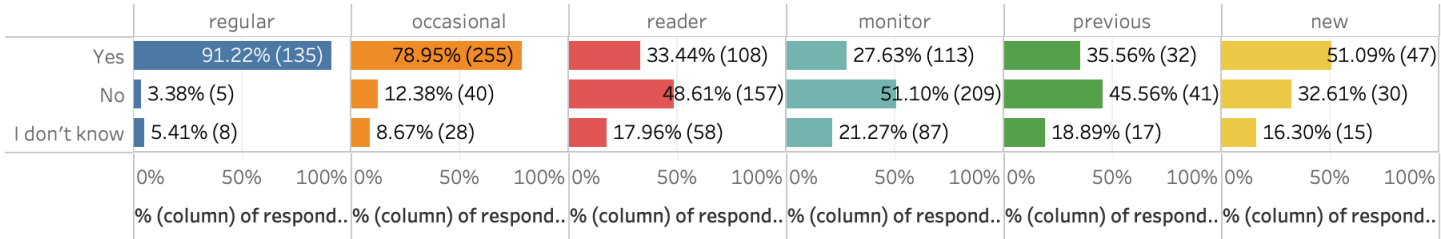
Commentary

31. The overall trend remains stable, with approximately 10–15% of participants reporting that they currently hold or have previously held leadership roles within the IETF year over year.
32. Consistent with the 2024 findings, women in leadership roles are significantly higher than the percentage of women overall. Among respondents identifying as non-binary or transgender, approximately 30% have or had held leadership roles in IETF.
33. From a regional perspective, North America is overrepresented in both current and past leadership roles relative to its overall participation in the IETF. In contrast, Europe is notably underrepresented across both categories, while Asia shows significant underrepresentation among previous leadership role holders.

Q9. Do you have a IETF Datatracker account (<https://datatracker.ietf.org>, used to authenticate for meetings, submit I-Ds, etc)?



Normalised by participant type:

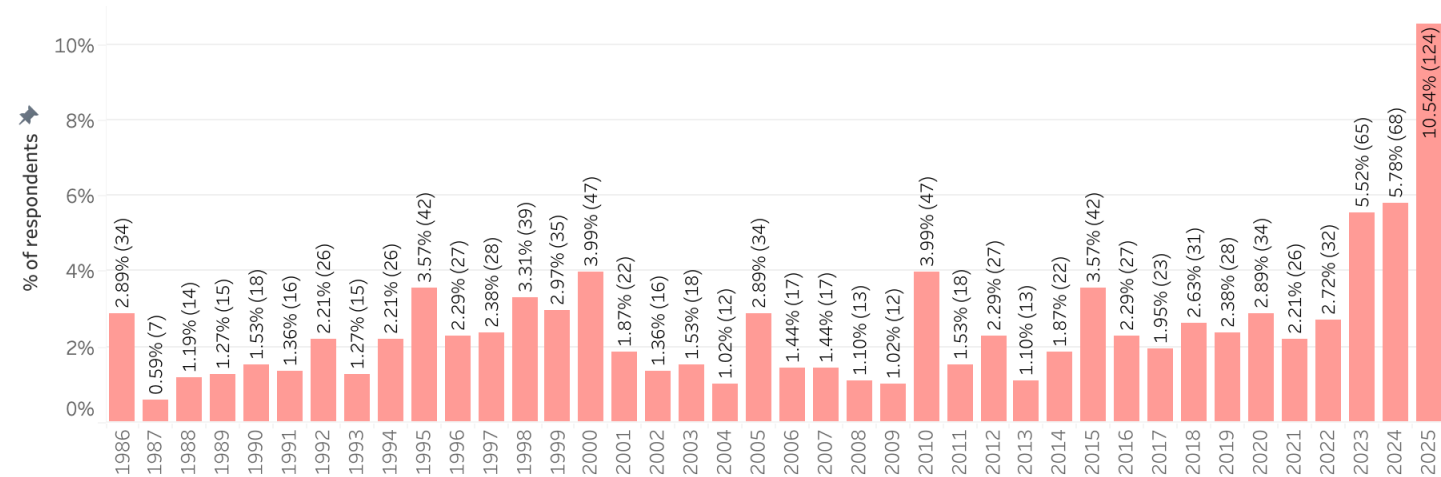


Commentary

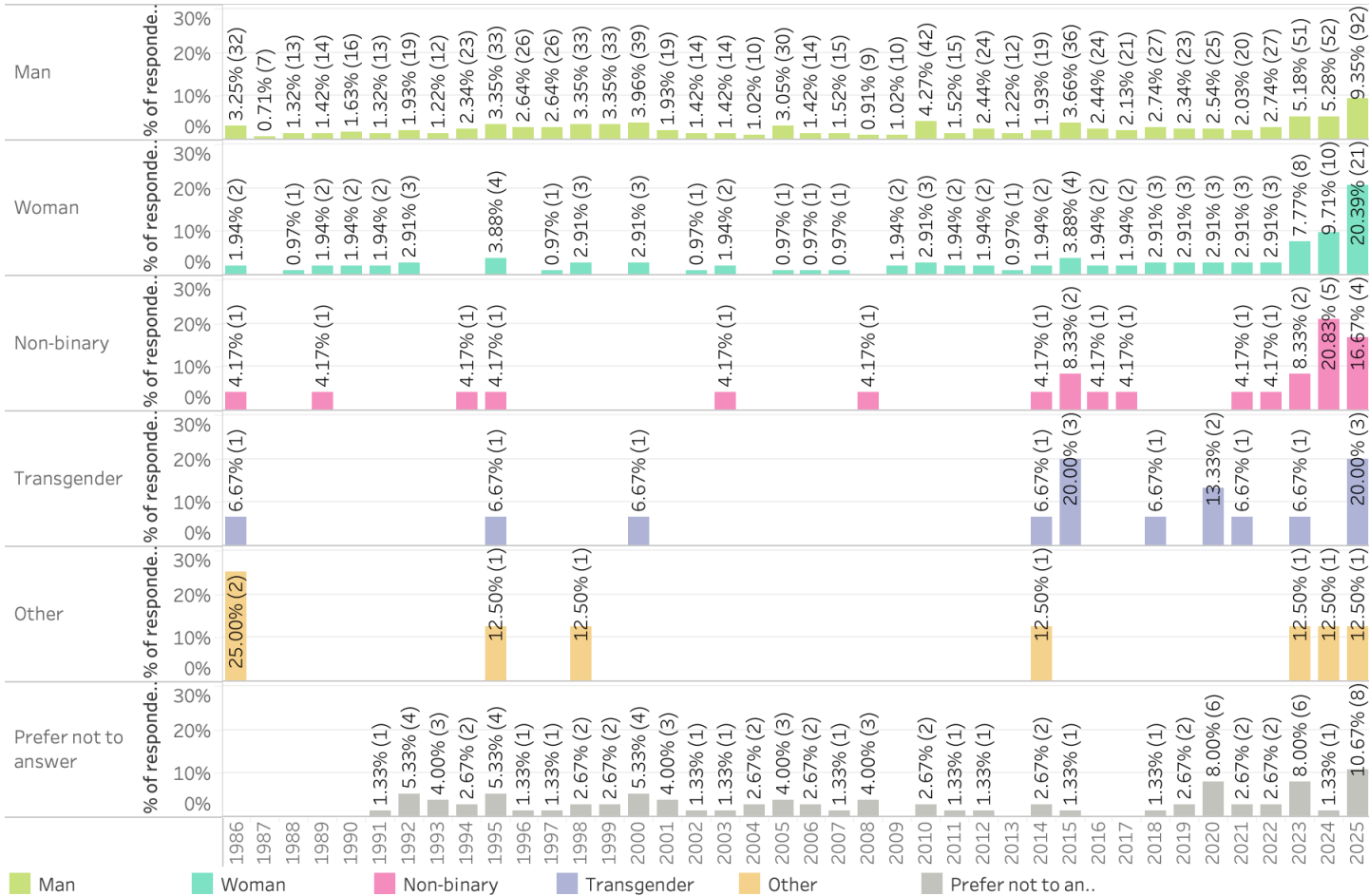
34. After several years of steady growth, the proportion of respondents reporting that they have a Datatracker account has stabilized this year, remaining nearly unchanged from 2024 (49.51%).
35. As expected, almost all the regular participants have a Datatracker account. This year, new participants also show a noticeable increase in having a Datatracker account (51.09% in 2025 compared to 31.76% last year).

Q11. Approximately, in what year did you first participate in an IETF meeting or subscribe to an IETF mailing list?

This is a fixed choice question only listing the years from 1986 to present.



Normalised by gender:



Normalised by region:



Commentary

36. The past three years have seen the highest proportion of respondents reporting first-time participation in IETF meetings.
37. In 2025, first-time participation among women (20.39%) is more than double of among men (9.34%). This continues and strengthens the growth trend noted in 2023 and 2024 surveys.
38. Overall participation from Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and Oceania remains relatively low. However, among these Latin America (26.67%) and Africa (18.75%) show comparatively higher proportions of first-time attendees.

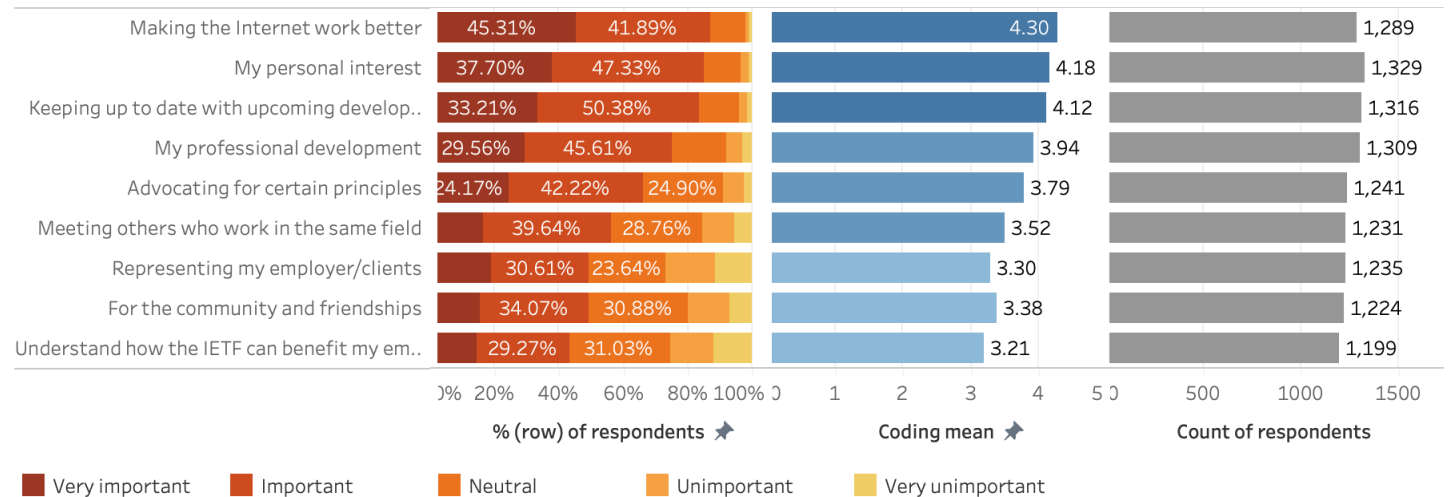
Questions: Participation

The first of these questions, about motivation, was inserted in the middle of the organisational demographics questions above as it was rated by importance. The rest came together in a page of questions immediately following, all rated by frequency.

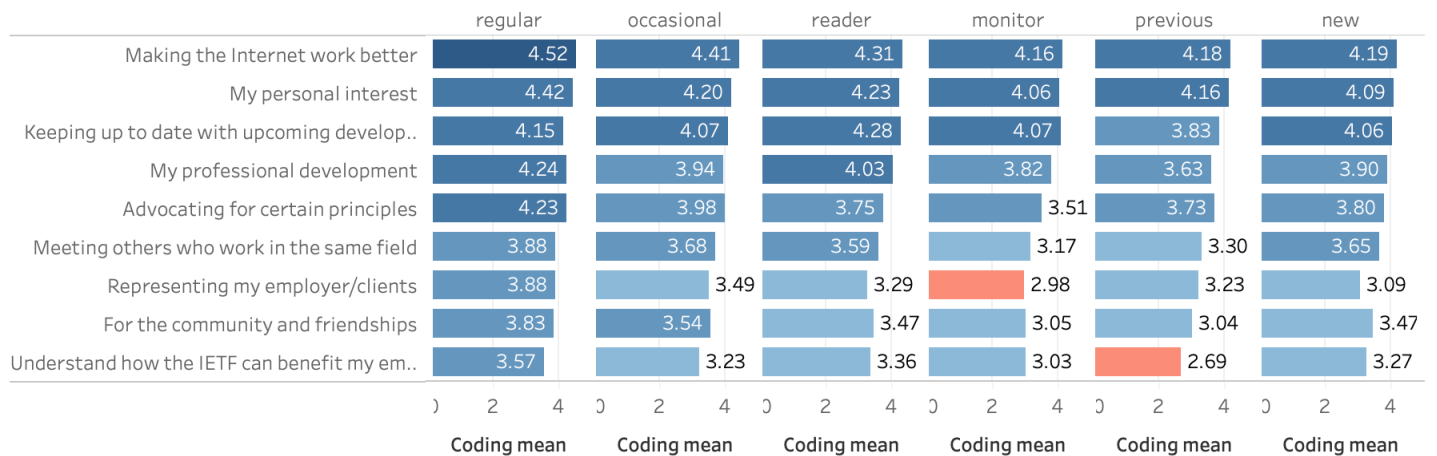
Q12. How important to you are the following for your participation in the IETF?

This question asked respondents to rate the importance of various motivations for participating in the IETF.

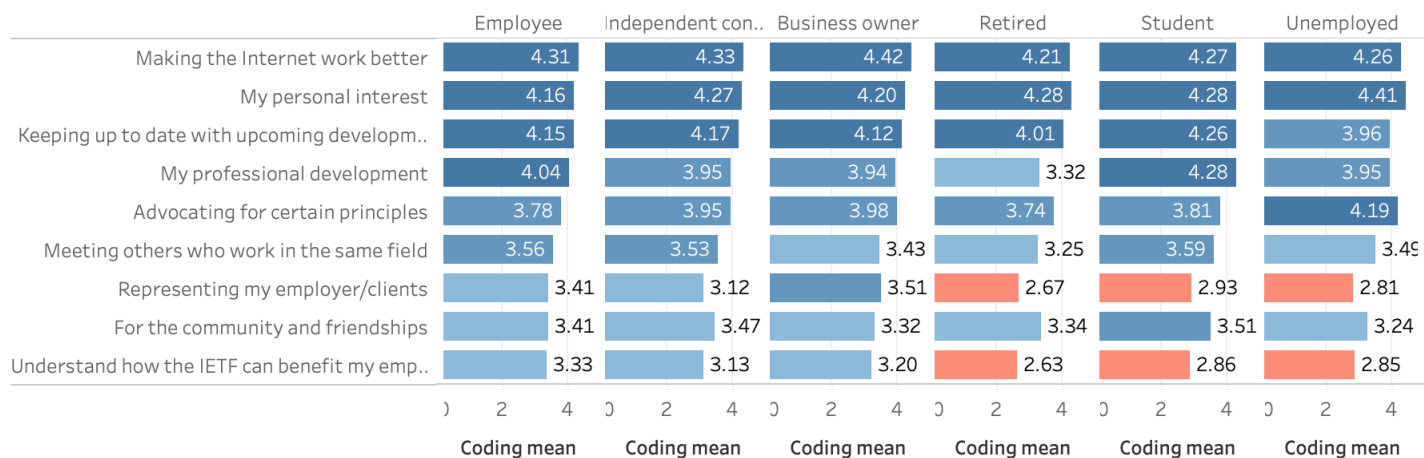
Importance rating and the coding mean for importance.



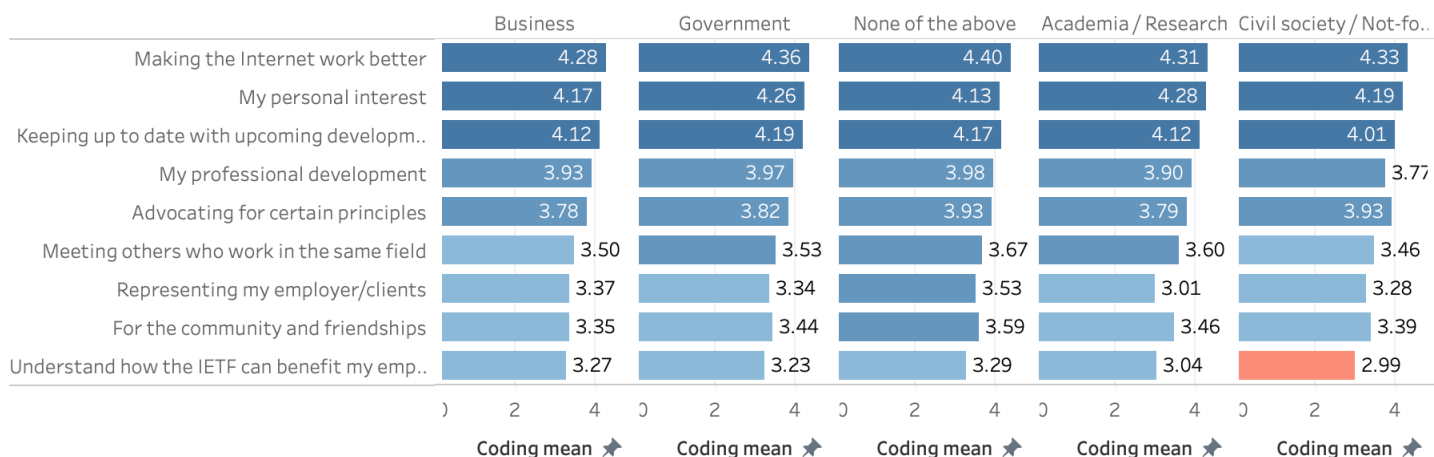
Coding mean by participant type:



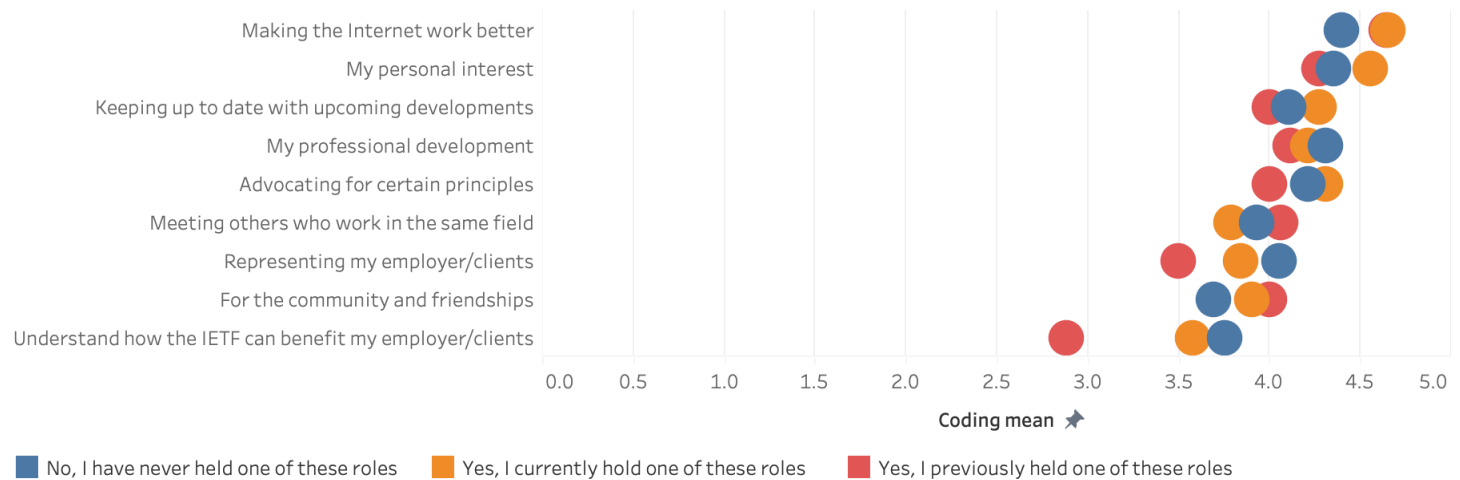
Coding mean by employment:



Coding mean by sector:



Coding means of regular participants only, split by leadership experience:



Commentary

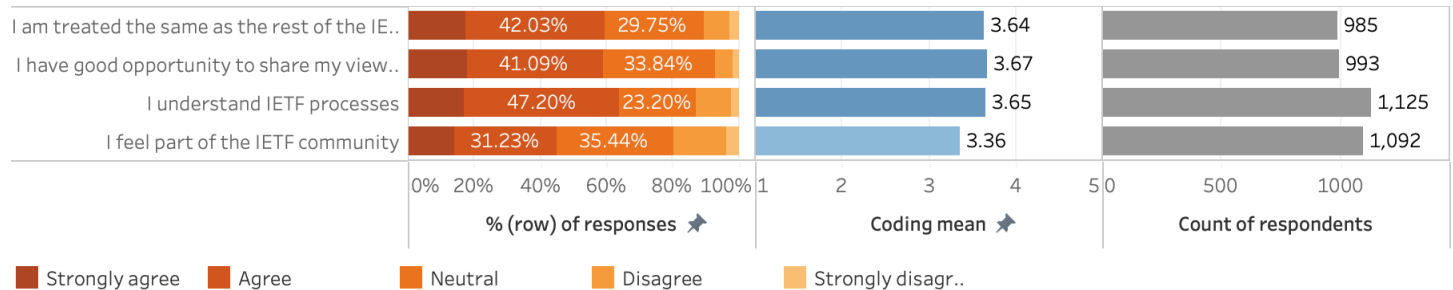
39. "Making the Internet work better" remains the primary driver for participation. This is the top-rated motivation across almost all categories, including participant types, sectors, and employment types. However, those who are retired, student or unemployed rated "my personal interest" higher.
40. Motivation for representing employers varies by participation level. Those who primarily monitor IETF mailing list rate "representing my employer/clients" lower than other participants.
41. "Understand how the IETF can benefit my employer/client" receives lower importance ratings among previous participants, likely reflecting reduced perceived relevance after their disengagement with IETF. This attribute is also given low importance by retired, student, and unemployed respondents, who are less likely to have direct employer-related considerations.
42. Current leaders are the most highly motivated group across almost all categories. However, ex-leadership has a sharp drop in scores for "understanding how the IETF can benefit my employer/client" and "representing my employer."

Q26. How much do you agree with the following statements about your participation in the IETF?

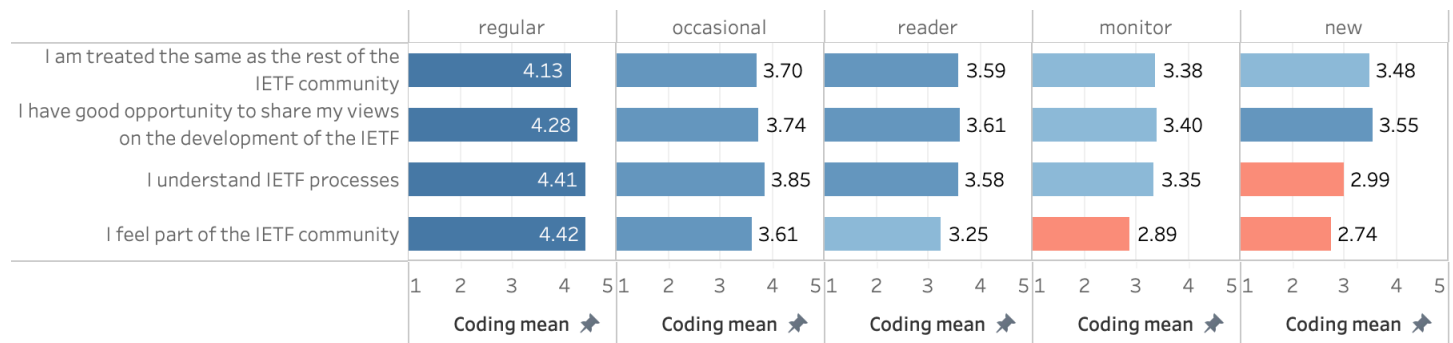
The wording and response scale for this question were updated in the 2025 survey, shifting from a frequency-based scale (Almost always to Almost never) to an agreement-based scale (Strongly agree to Strongly disagree) to better capture respondents' perceptions of their IETF participation.

As a result, direct comparison of individual response categories across years should be treated with caution. The top-box responses appear lower in 2025, respondents are generally less likely to select the strongest option on an agreement scale than a frequency scale. For example, "Strongly agree" for "I am treated the same as the rest of the IETF community" is 17.56% in 2025, compared to 34.35% selecting "Almost always" in 2024. The top-2-box results however remain consistent at approximately

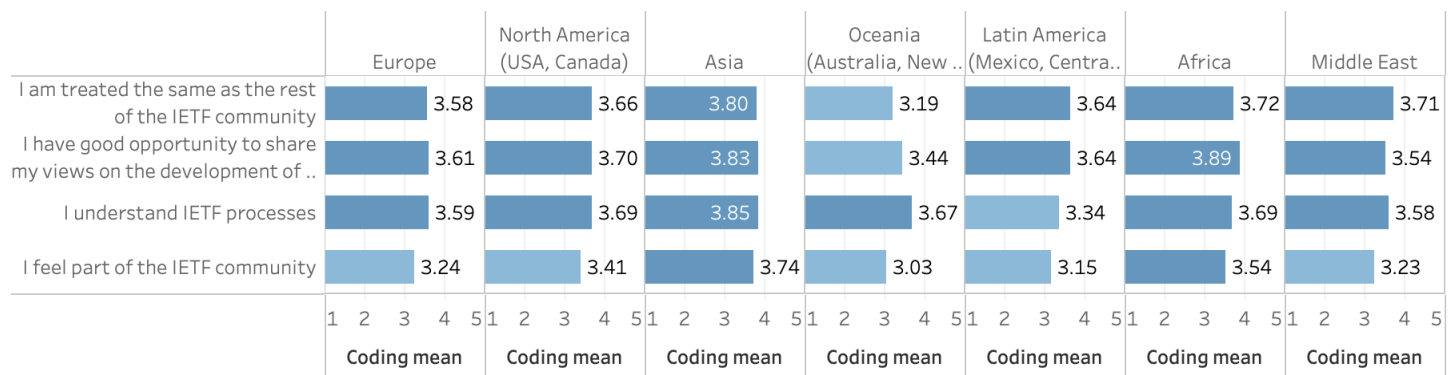
60% across both years, suggesting overall sentiment has remained stable and is the more appropriate basis for year-over-year comparison.



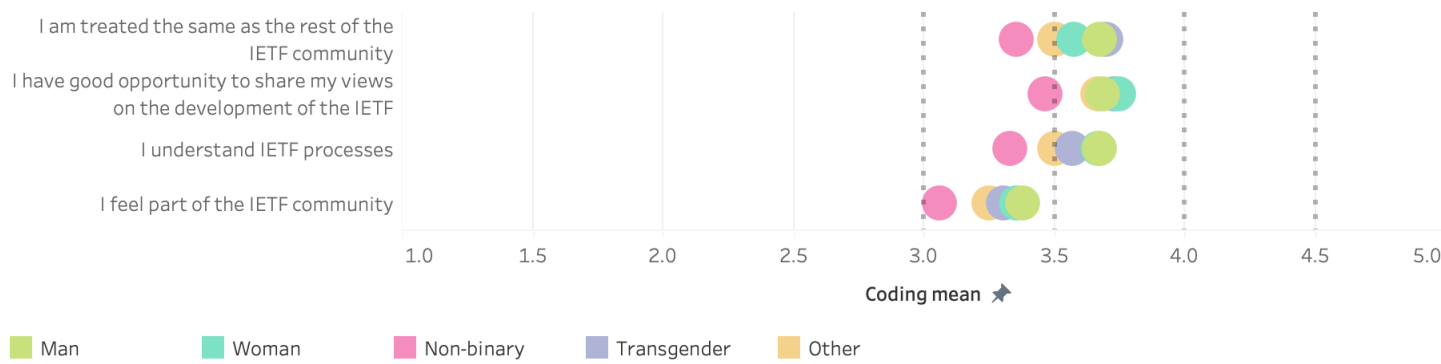
Coding means by participant type:



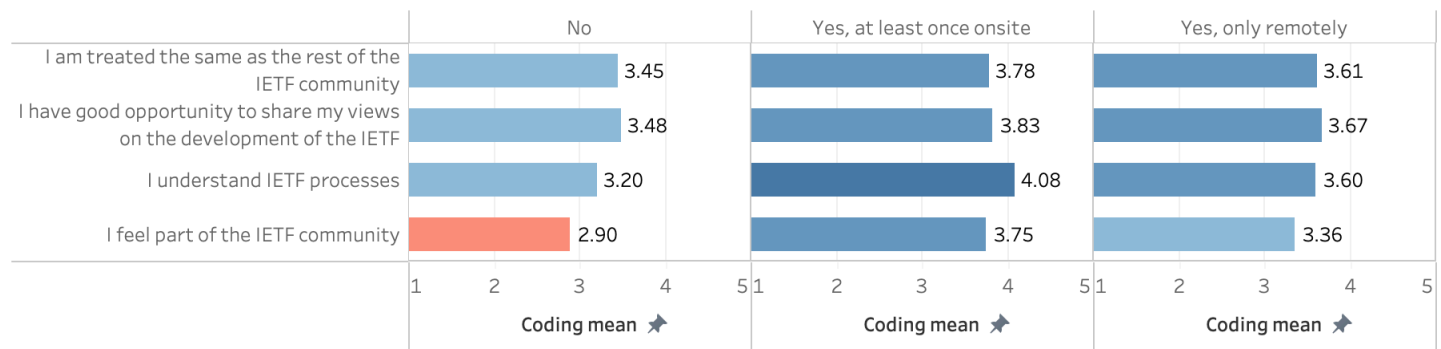
Coding means by region:



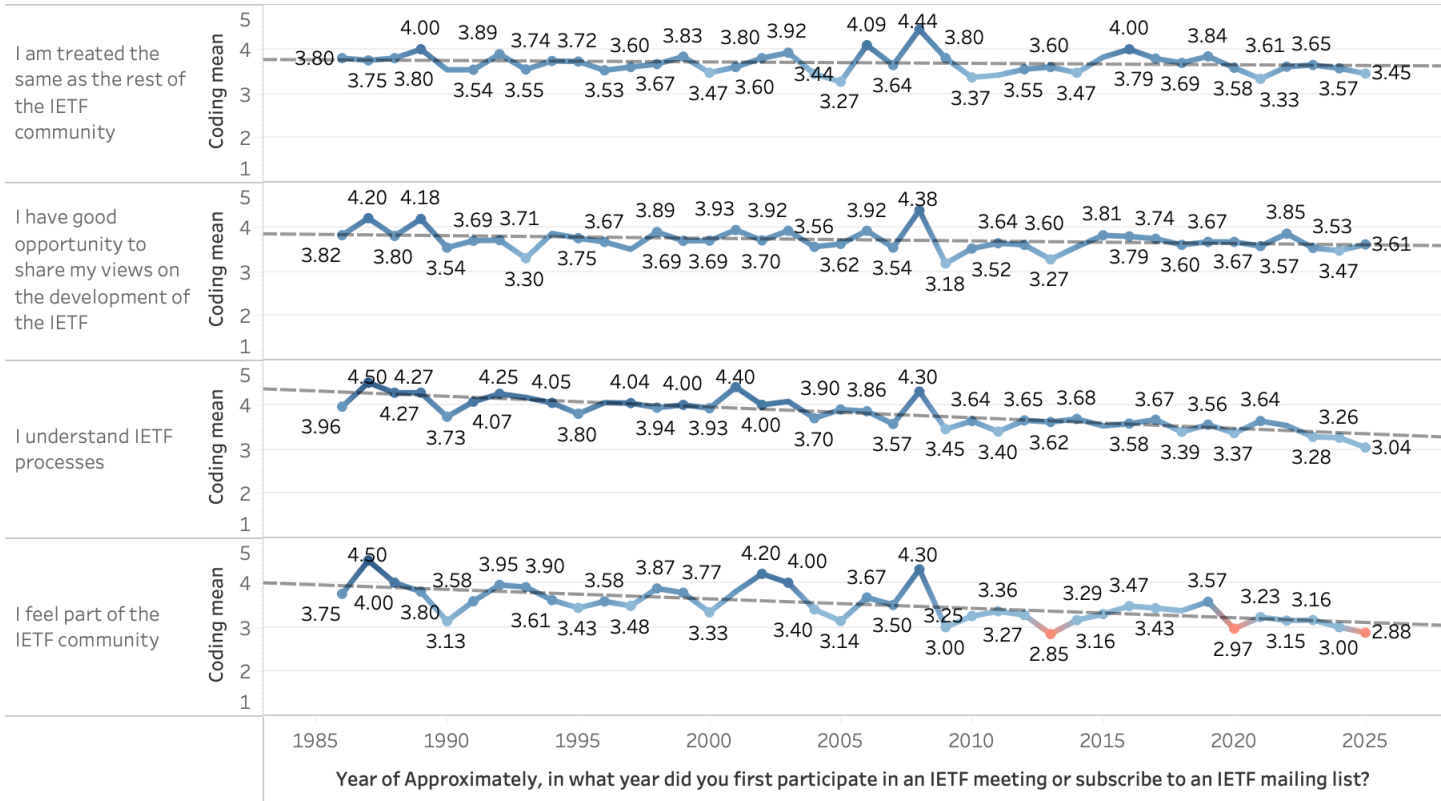
Coding means by gender:



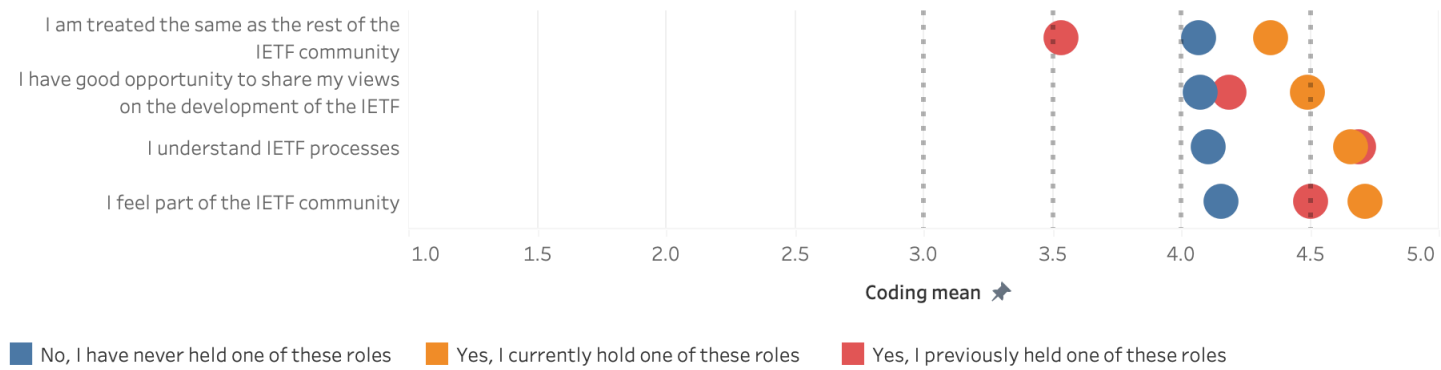
Coding means by meeting participation:



Coding means by year of first participation:



Coding means of regular participants only, split by leadership experience:

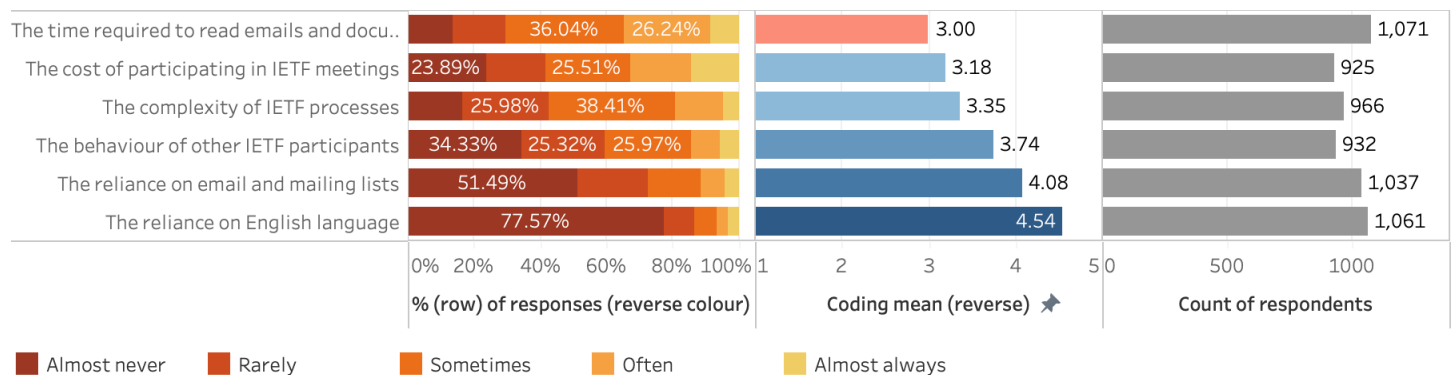


Commentary

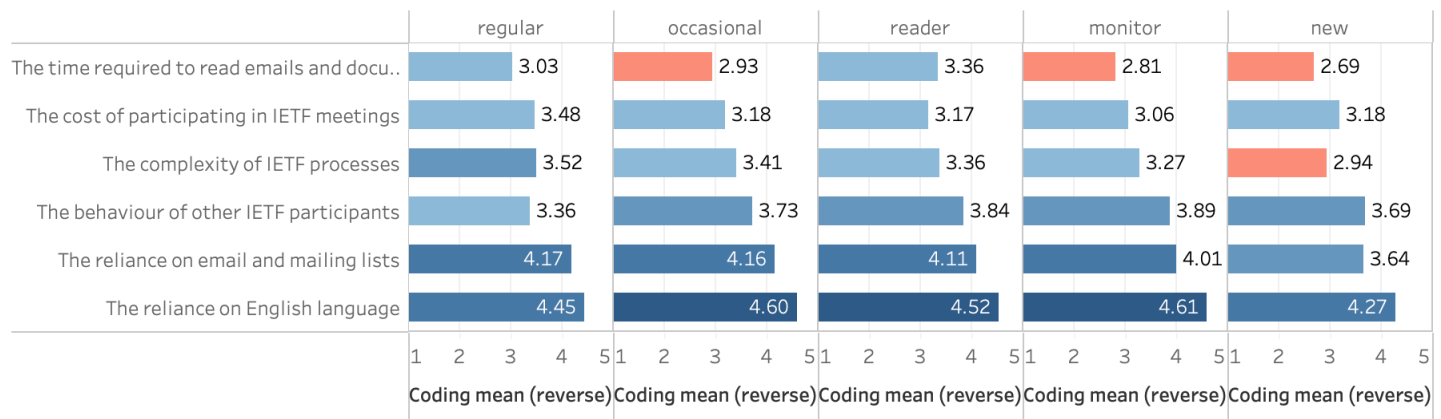
43. Similar to last year, none of the attributes are rated above “Acceptable” overall. However, regular participants consistently report higher scores across all attributes. The new participants rate “I understand the IETF process” the lowest, which is expected as they are still at an early stage of engagement.
44. Understanding of IETF processes is strongly linked to level and type of participation. Longer tenure and regular participation are associated with higher levels of process understanding.
45. Onsite meeting participation has a more positive effect on IETF process understanding than remote participation. Those who have never attended an IETF meeting score lowest in all categories, particularly in feeling part of the community.
46. Notably, and in contrast to previous years, ex-leaders among regular participants report lower agreement with the statement “I am treated the same as the rest of the IETF community,” suggesting a shift in perception within this subgroup.

Q26a. Do any of the following hinder or deter you from participating in the IETF?

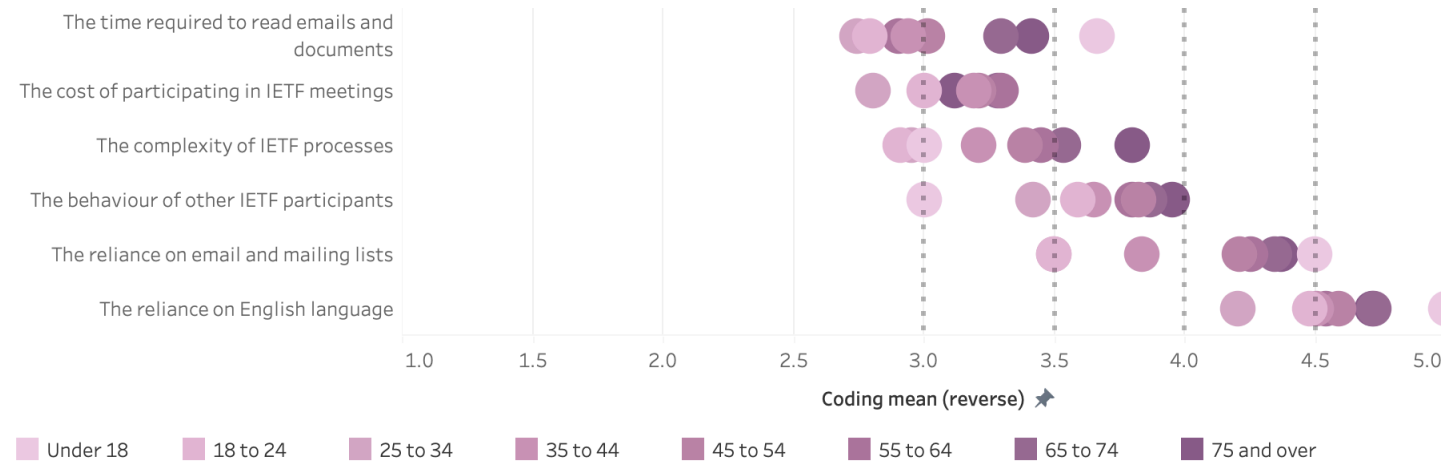
The rating and coding means here are presented in reverse so that that at-a-glance “higher the better” impression remains correct.



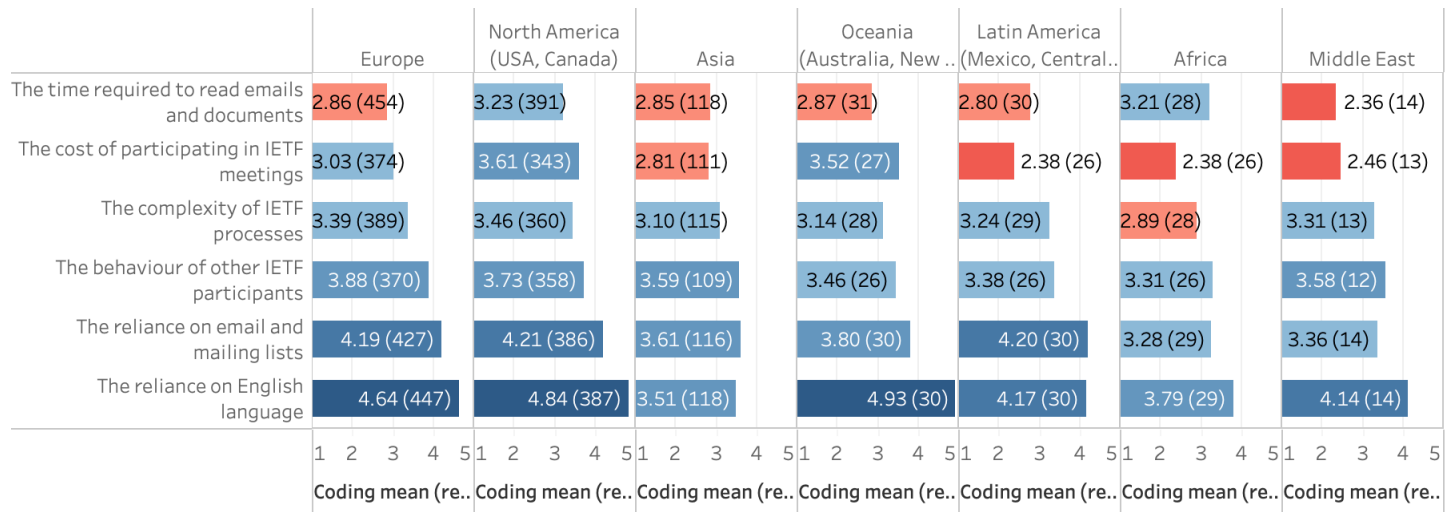
Coding means by participant type:



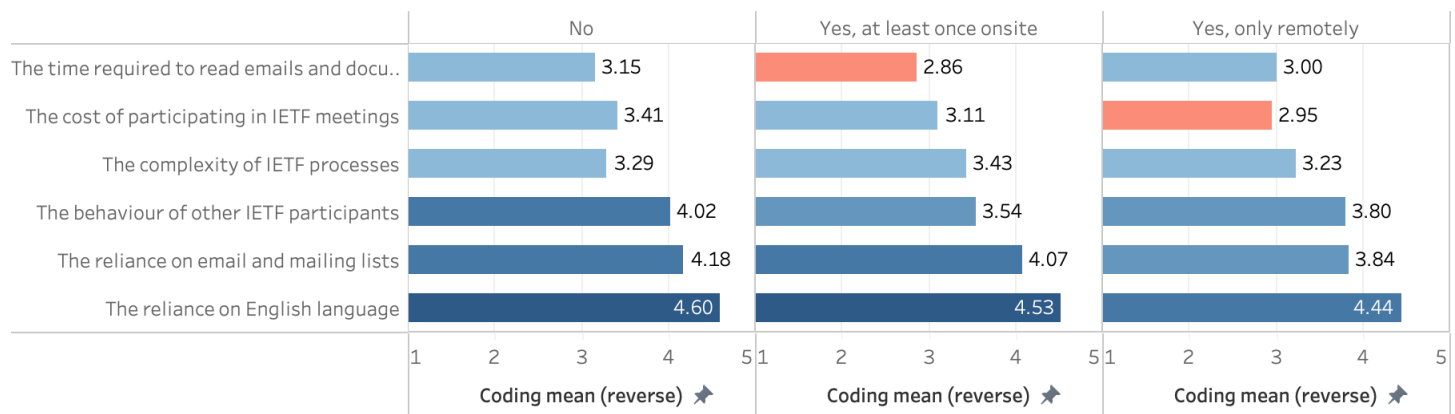
Coding means by age:



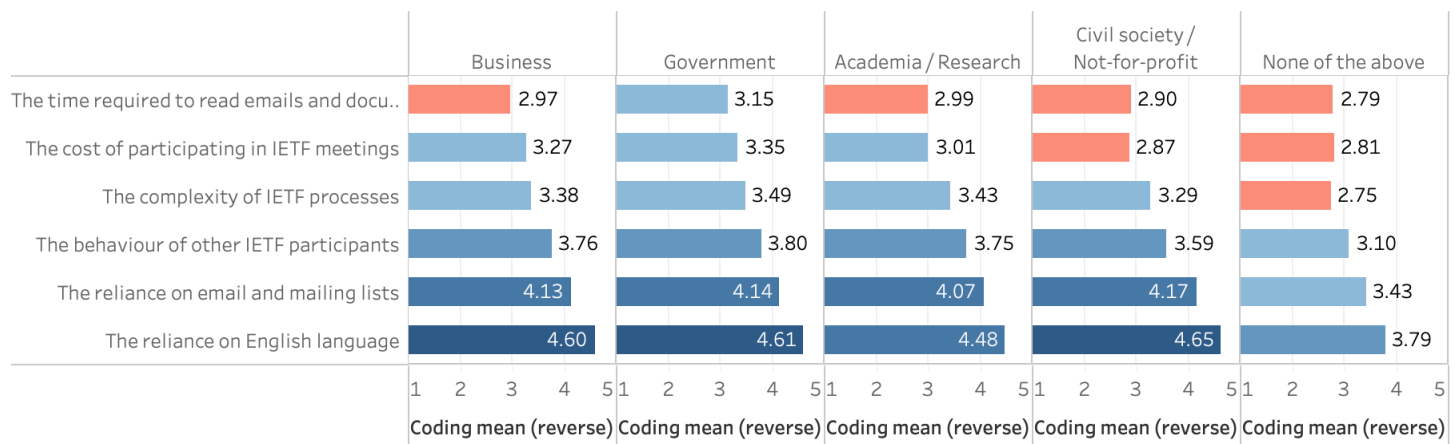
Coding means by region:



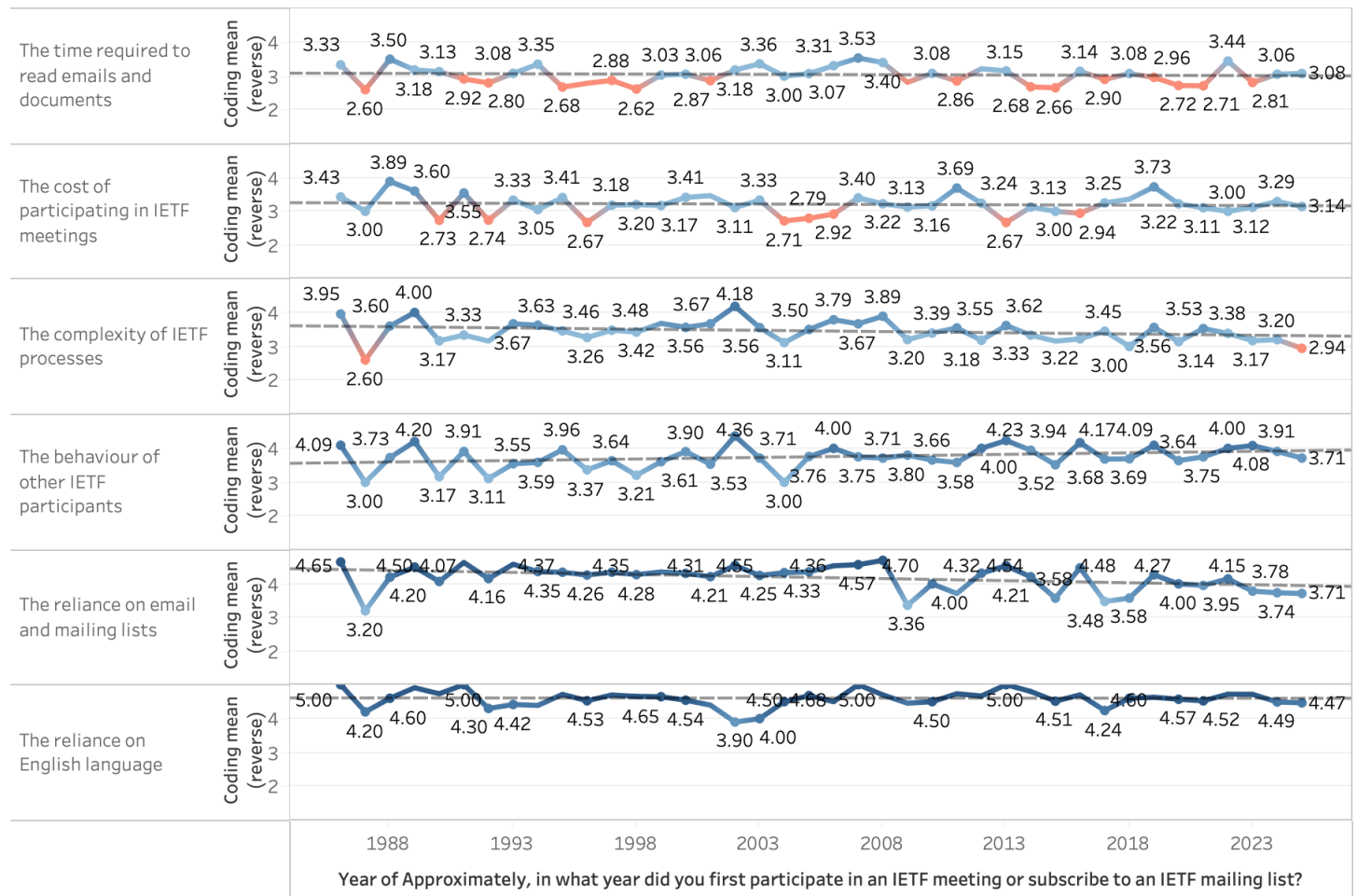
Coding means by meeting participation:



Coding means by sector:



Coding means by year of first participation:

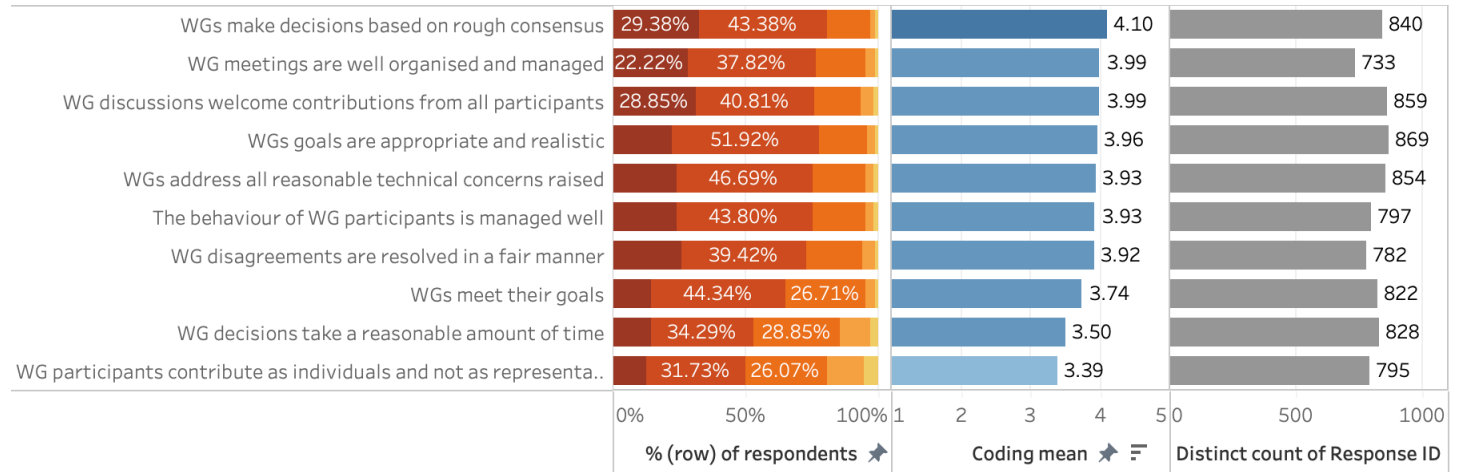


Commentary

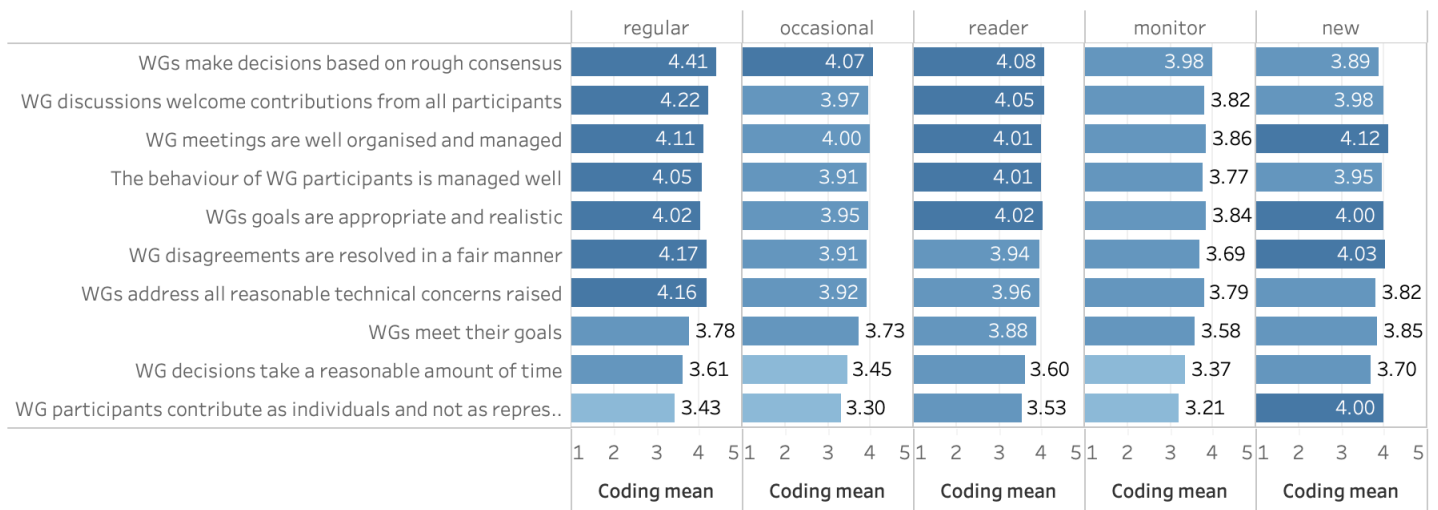
47. The time required to read email and documents continues to be the greatest hindrance overall. This factor is rated significantly lower than all other categories and falls into the Poor range.
48. New participants, monitors and occasional participants report the highest levels of deterrence regarding time and process complexity. New participants recorded the lowest scores for the time required to read documents (2.69) and the complexity of IETF processes (2.94), both falling into the Very Poor range. This suggests that the barrier to navigate through IETF processes and tools remains high for those unfamiliar with IETF norms.
49. The cost of participating in IETF meetings comes up as an issue for participants from Asia, Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East.

Q27. How often are the following statements correct about the IETF working groups (WGs) that you participate in?

This question is unchanged from the previous survey.



Coding means by participant type:



Coding means by leadership experience:

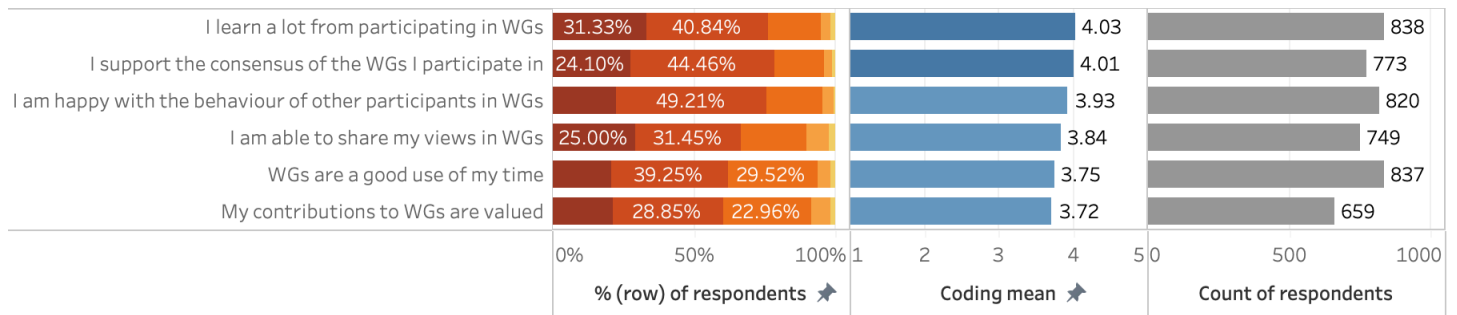


Commentary

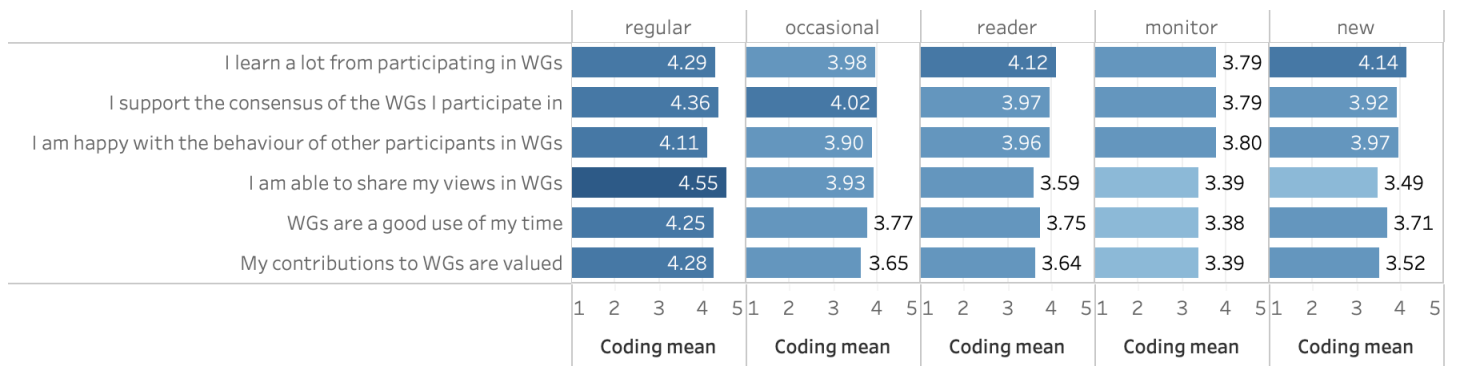
50. Working Groups continue to be viewed as successfully operating under the principle of rough consensus. The attribute "WGs make decisions based on rough consensus" received the highest overall rating again this year with a coding mean of 4.10. Regular participants rate this even higher at 4.41.
51. While the scores for "WGs make decisions based on rough consensus" reach the Good range, most other scores sit on the boundary of Acceptable range, indicating there is still room for improvement across the board.
52. The lowest score is once again, for the fourth year in a row, for "WG participants contribute as individuals and not as representatives of their employer" (3.39), indicating that this remains a persistent issue.
53. As in previous surveys, those who currently hold leadership roles tend to rate WG performance higher on most attributes than those who previously held such roles. Notably, respondents who have never held a leadership role give the highest scores across many attributes, suggesting that those closer to or within leadership may have a more critical perspective on WG functioning.

Q27a. How often are the following statements correct about your participation in IETF working groups (WGs)?

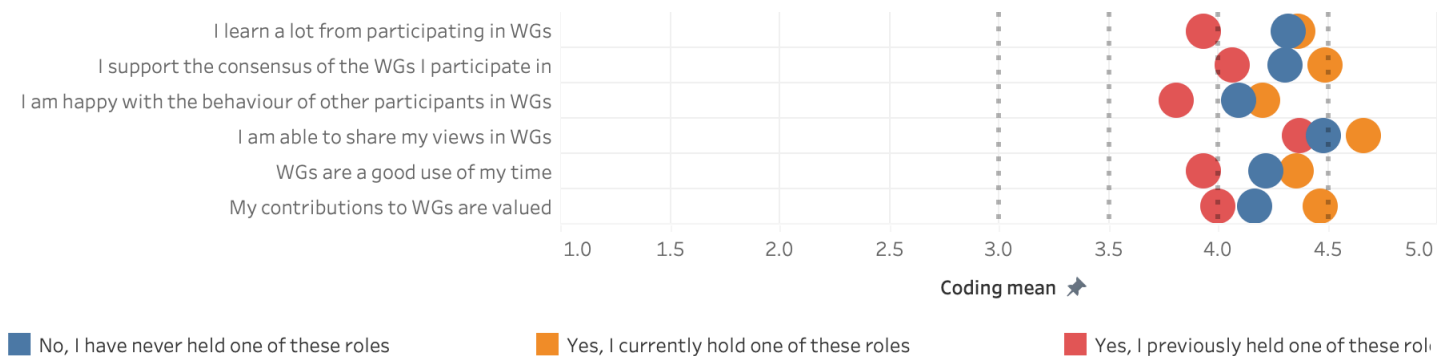
This question aims to establish the internal perceptions of WG participants, distinct from their perceptions about the WG.



Coding means by participant type:



Coding means by leadership experience:



Commentary

54. As with previous surveys, the overall scores for the choices within this question are in a narrow range on the Acceptable/Good boundary. Overall, the highest-rated aspects of personal participation are educational and collaborative, i.e., "I learn a lot from participating in WGs" followed by "I support the consensus of the WGs I participate in".

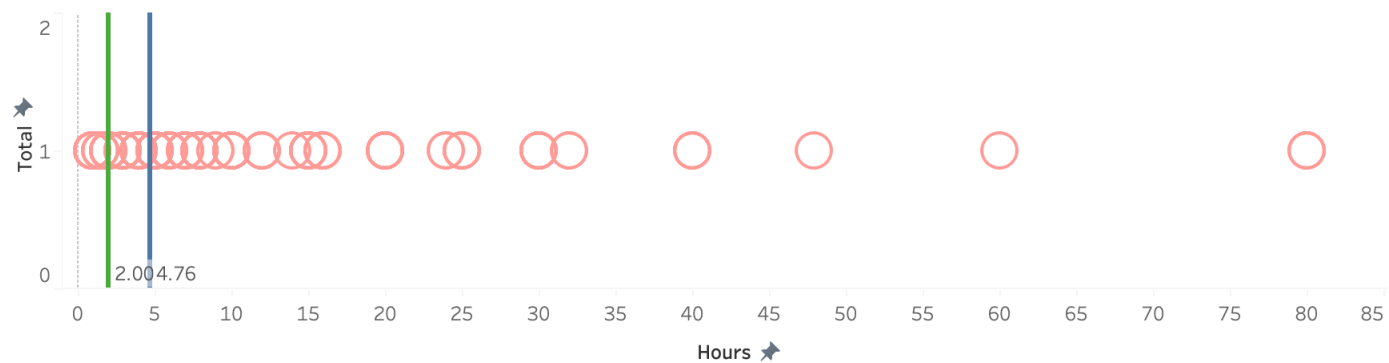
55. Regular participants derive significantly more value from participation than other cohorts. Regular participants rate their ability to share views at an Excellent score of 4.55, compared to other groups. This reinforces the design of the IETF as a participative model, where the benefits of participation scale proportionally with the level of active engagement.

56. Among regular participants, current leaders report the highest levels of personal satisfaction across all categories, while previous leaders provide the lowest ratings in every category, most notably regarding the behavior of other participants.

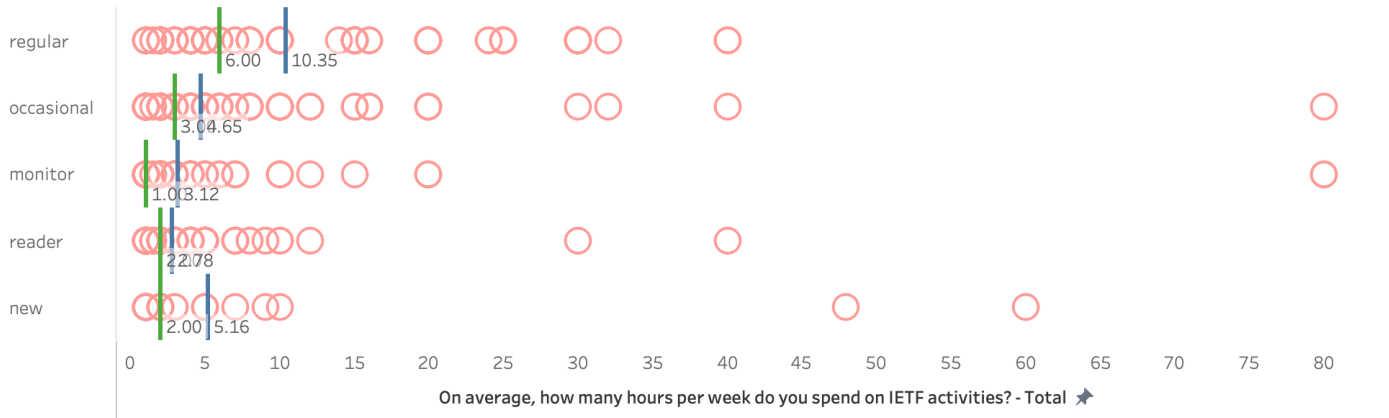
Q13. On average, how many hours per week do you spend on IETF activities?

This question was changed from 2024, earlier respondents are asked to provide answers on four measures that are then summed to give a total. In 2025, those four measures were replaced by a single measure. In the below charts the green line represents the median and the blue line represents the mean.

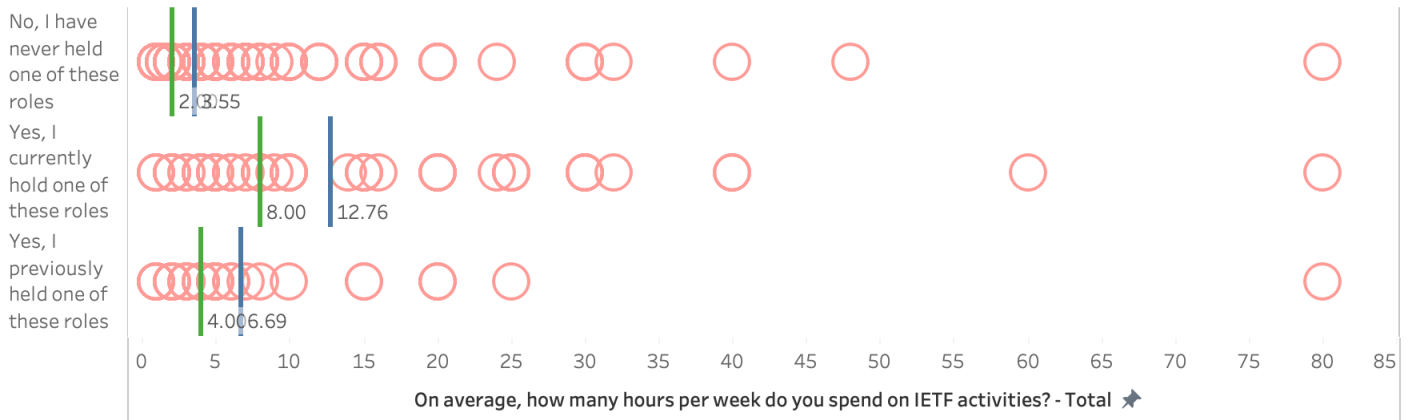
For all of these charts, responses of zero are excluded. This should then be read as, "Of those that spend hours of their personal time on IETF activities, then this is what they spend."



By participant type:



Regular participants by leadership experience:



Commentary

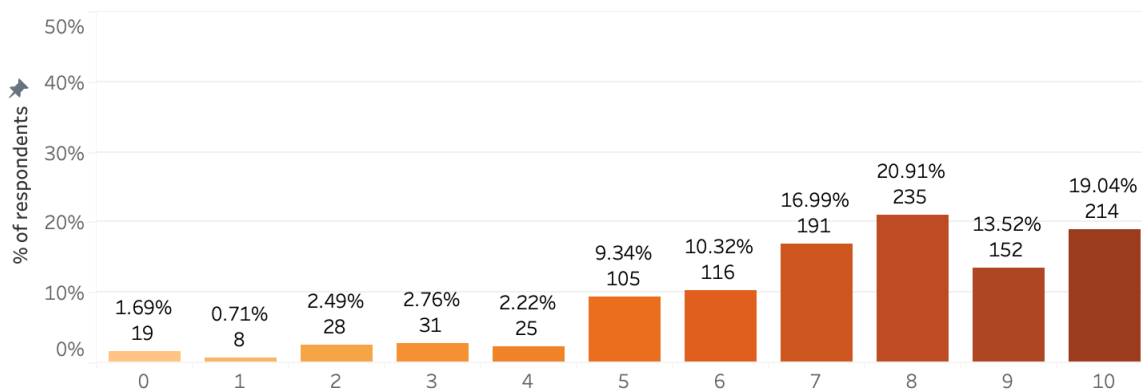
57. The overall average time spent per week is 4.76 hours.

58. Regular participants contribute significantly more time than other groups. Regular participants spend an average of 10.35 hours per week, while all other participant types (occasional, reader, monitor, new) average between 2 to 5 hours.

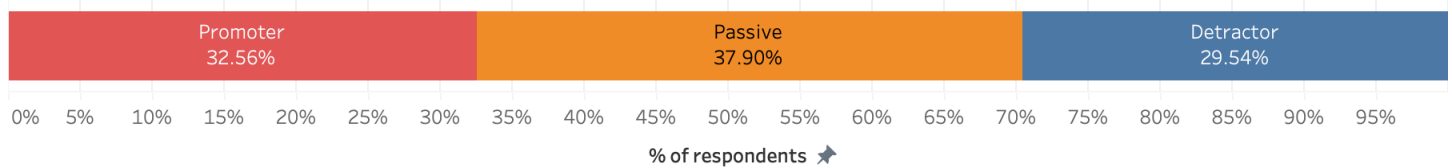
59. Leadership experience shows a clear relationship with time commitment; current role-holders report the highest hours (median 8, mean 12.76), compared to those who have never held a role (median 2, mean 3.55), with previous leaders falling in between.

Q20. How likely are you to recommend IETF participation to a friend or colleague?

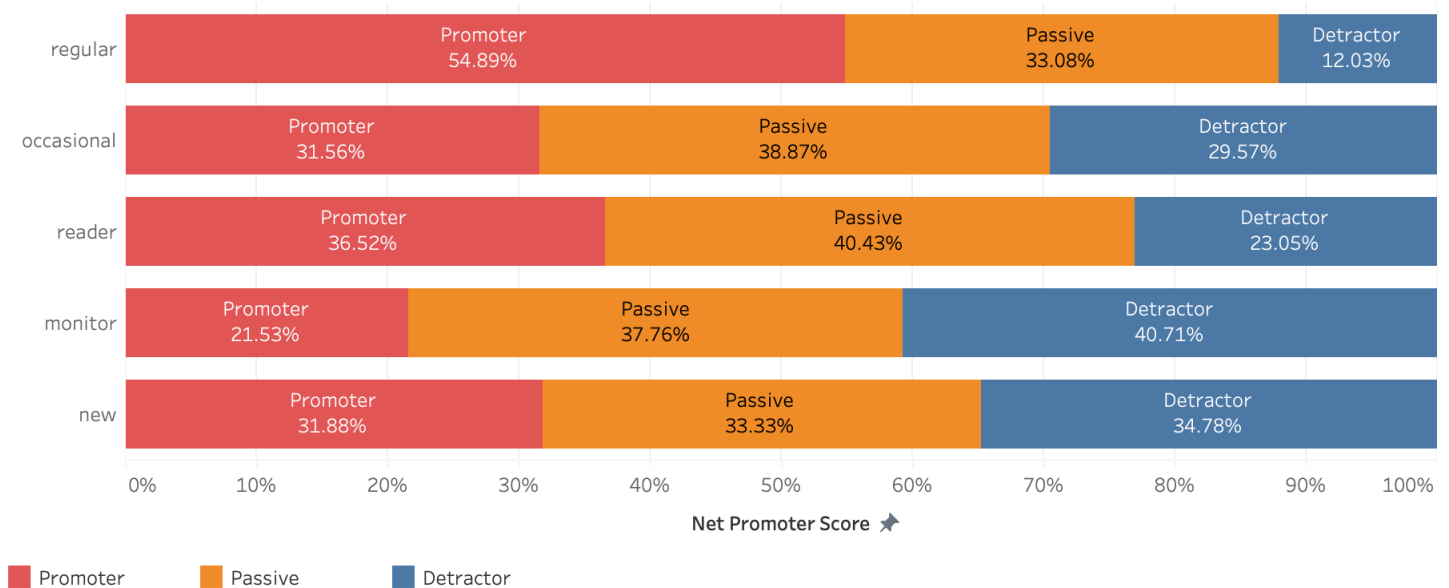
This uses the NPS methodology where people are asked to rank likelihood on a scale of 0-10.



NPS categories:



NPS by participant type:



Commentary

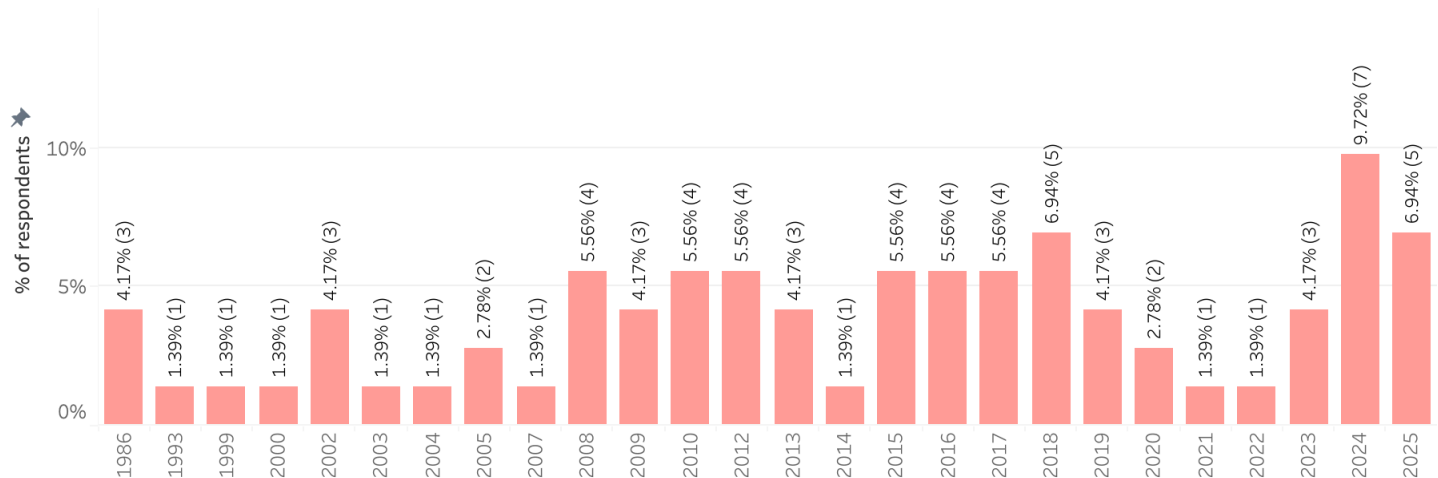
60. The NPS score is promoters minus detractors, which is greater than 0 for the overall response. This is considered a good result by proponents of NPS.
61. The NPS score is consistent with the trends observed in 2022 and 2023, however it is trending downward.
62. The net score for regular participants rose significantly to 42%, representing a strong recovery from the low of 26% recorded in 2024.
63. In contrast, NPS results for new participants and those who only monitor mailing lists remain unsatisfactory, with both groups scoring below 0. A notably large gap exists for those who monitor lists, who report a net score of -19%.

Questions: Previous participants

These questions were only asked of those who self-selected "previous participant" in question 1.

Q17. In what year did you cease being a regular participant in the IETF?

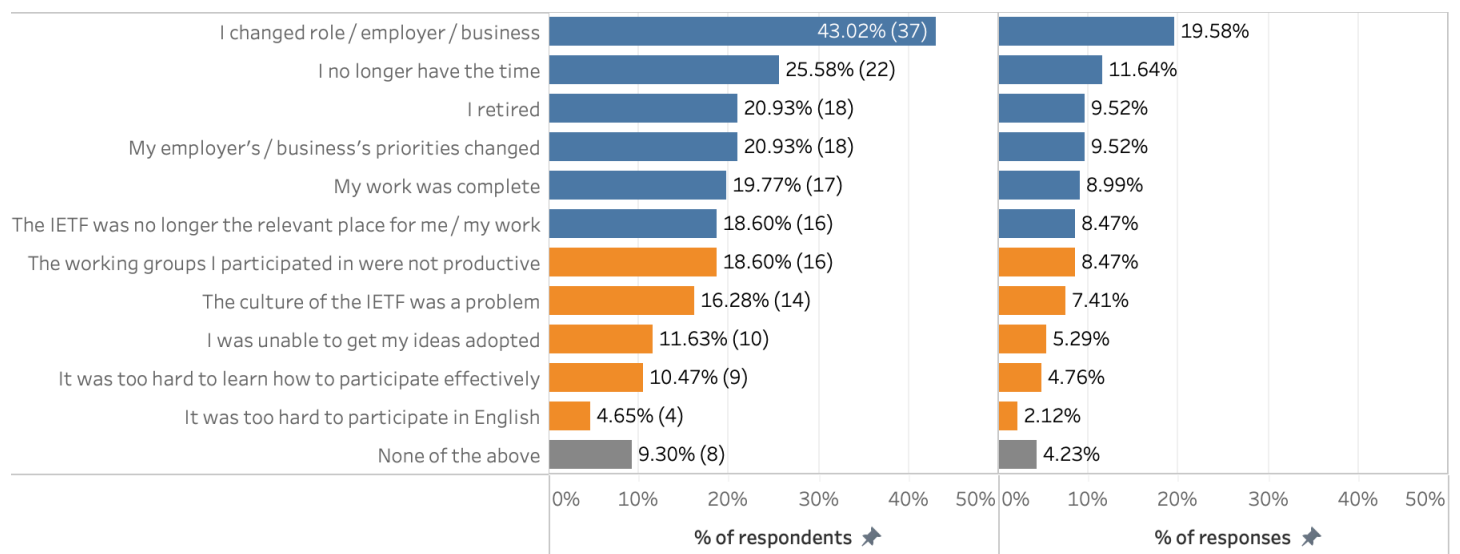
This again had a constrained set of years, from 1986 to 2025, that could be given as an answer. This data was analysed by age, region and gender, but the numbers are too small for any inference to be drawn.



Q18. Why did you cease being a regular participant in the IETF? (check all that apply)

This question asks for the respondent to select any number of options, without any rating. The list of options are those that have been raised directly by individuals in various fora. No cross-tabulations are presented as the numbers are too small.

The colour coding below separates out those options that are outside of the control of the IETF (blue) from those that we may be able to influence (orange).



Commentary

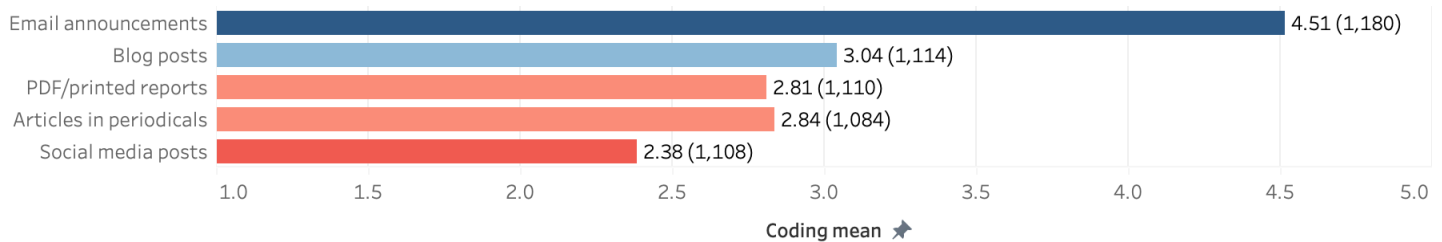
64. By definition, this only records views from people who cease participation but remain subscribed to at least one list and so receive the survey invitation.
65. The primary factors, which account for 90% of responses, are all outside of the control of the IETF.
66. Of those under the control of the IETF, the productivity of the working group came out to be the top reason followed by IETF culture, though both score lower than reasons that are outside of IETF control.

Questions: Communication and Participation Preferences

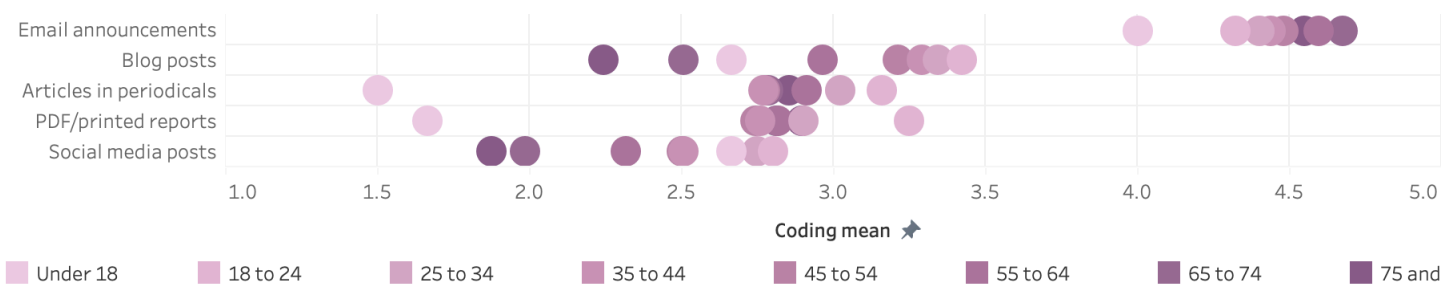
These are a small number of questions to understand individual preferences for communications and participation.

Q22. How do you prefer to be informed of IETF activities?

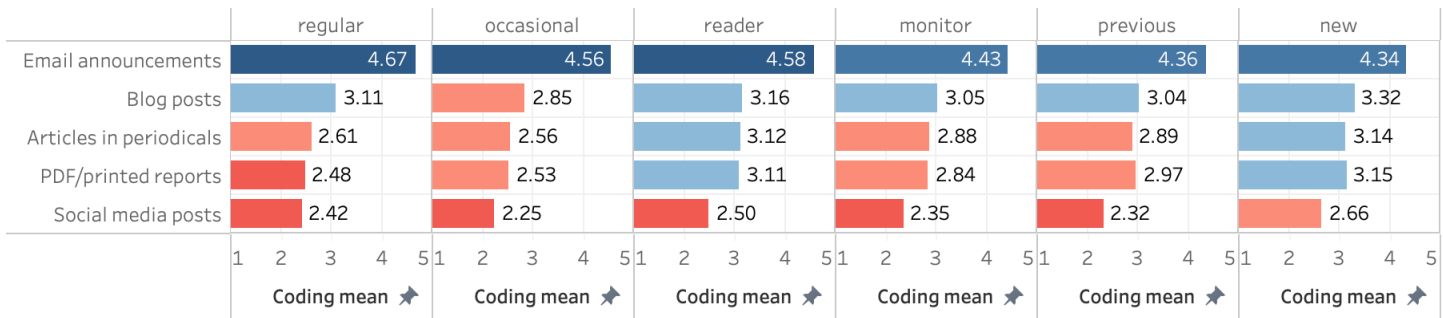
This question asked respondents to rate a set of options by preference, from strongly preferred to strongly not preferred.



Coding means by age:



Coding means by participant type:

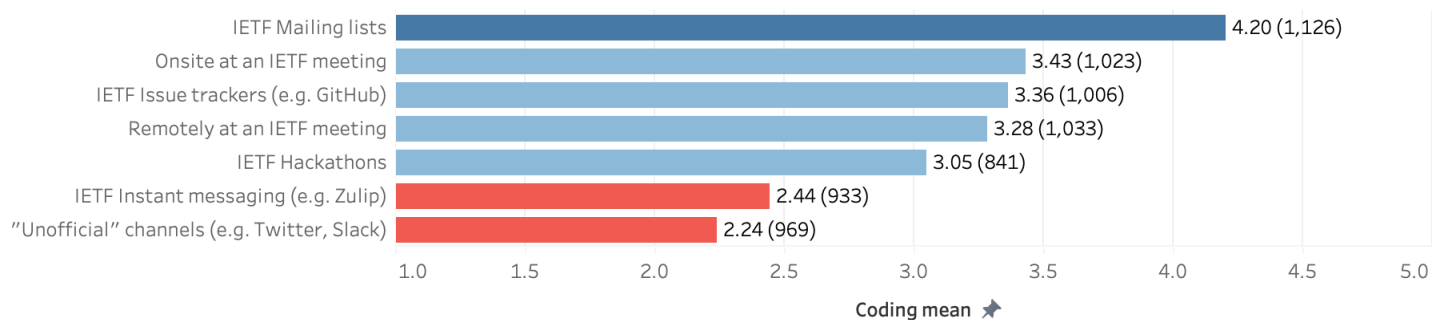


Commentary

67. Overall, email continues to be the preferred method to be informed by a high margin.
68. Online content, including both blog posts and social media posts, has a very wide spread of preference, consistent with age range. The younger the participant, the more they prefer these other methods.
69. New participants are more open to diverse communication channels. Compared to regular participants, new participants show a higher preference for blog posts, articles, PDFs, and social media.

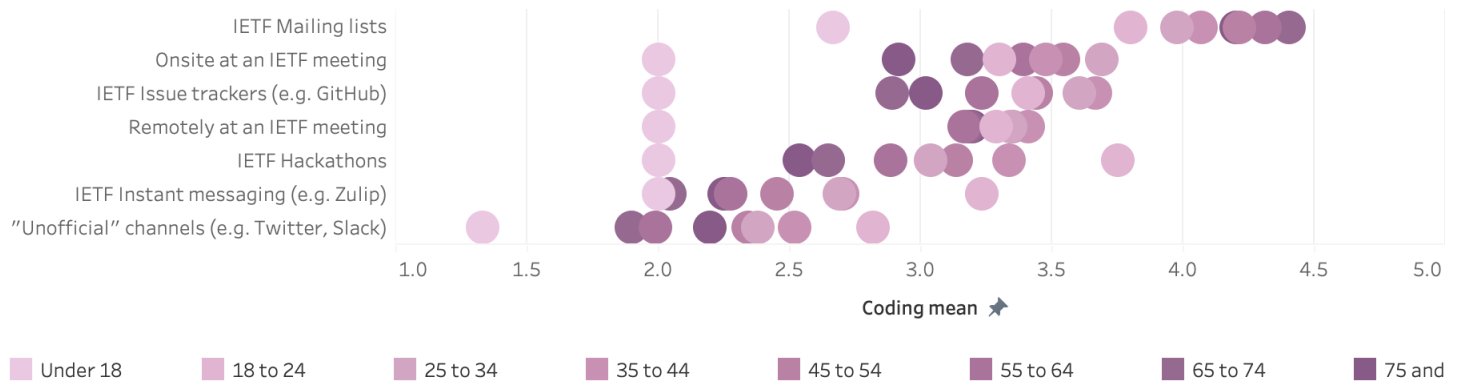
Q24. How do you prefer to participate in the discussions and decisions of the IETF?

This question asked respondents to rate a set of options by preference, from strongly preferred to strongly not preferred.

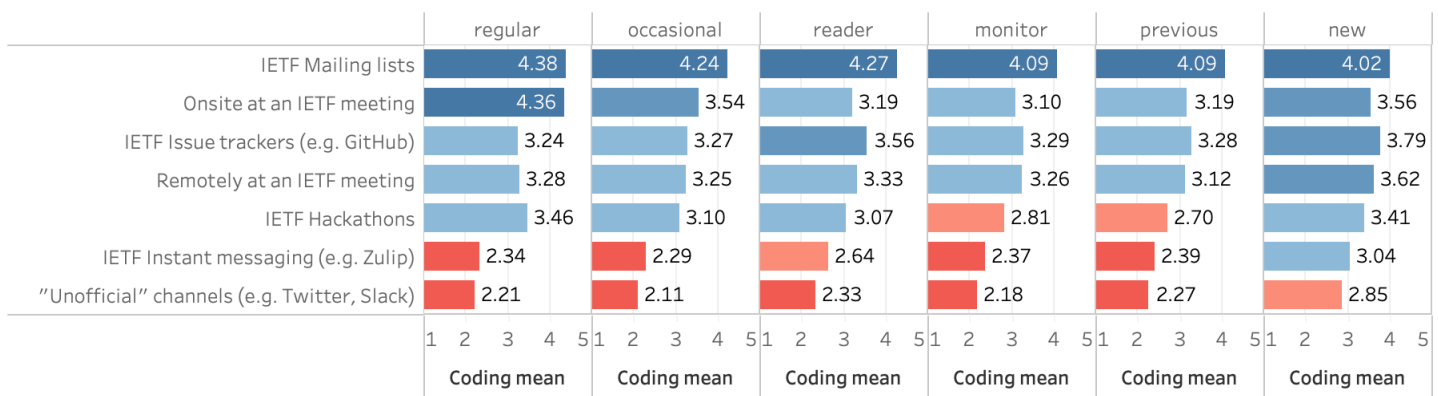


Coding means by age:

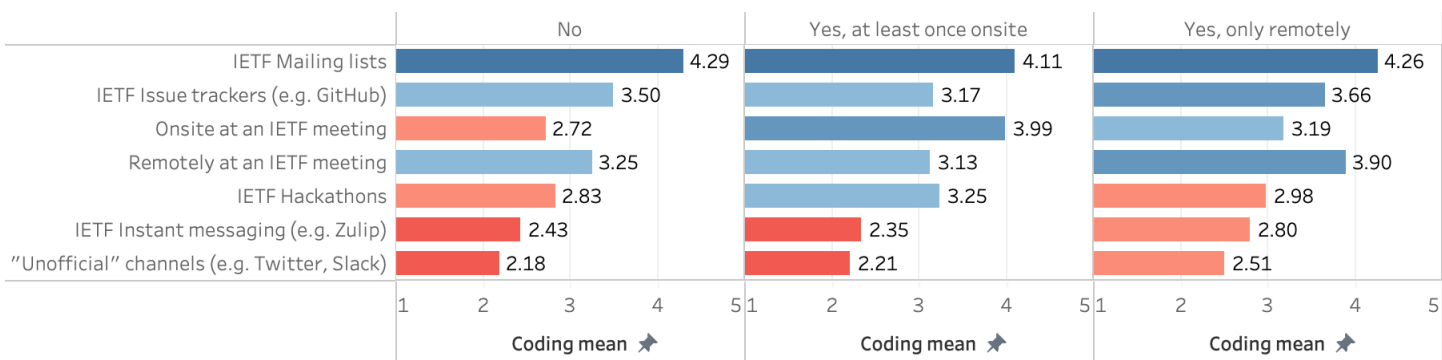
Please note that the "Under 18" demographic includes only three participants (n=3) for this question. Their individual responses were highly consistent and therefore their calculated means align identically across most of the choices. This data has been validated, and irregular responses within this subset were removed from the dataset to ensure accuracy.



Coding means by participant type:



Codings means by meeting participation:



Commentary

- 70. IETF mailing lists continue to be the most preferred way of participation among all respondents.
- 71. New participants rate issue trackers almost as high as email.
- 72. Regular participants and those who have participated onsite at an IETF meeting, rate participating onsite at an IETF meeting almost as high as participating on mailing lists.

73. Participants under 35 rank GitHub and Zulip significantly higher than those in older cohorts, who show a clear low preference for "Unofficial" channels and instant messaging.
74. Non-attendees rely primarily on mailing lists and issue trackers as their entry points to participation. Onsite attendees predictably favour in-person meetings, while remote-only participants show a stronger preference for remote attendance and slightly greater comfort with instant messaging.

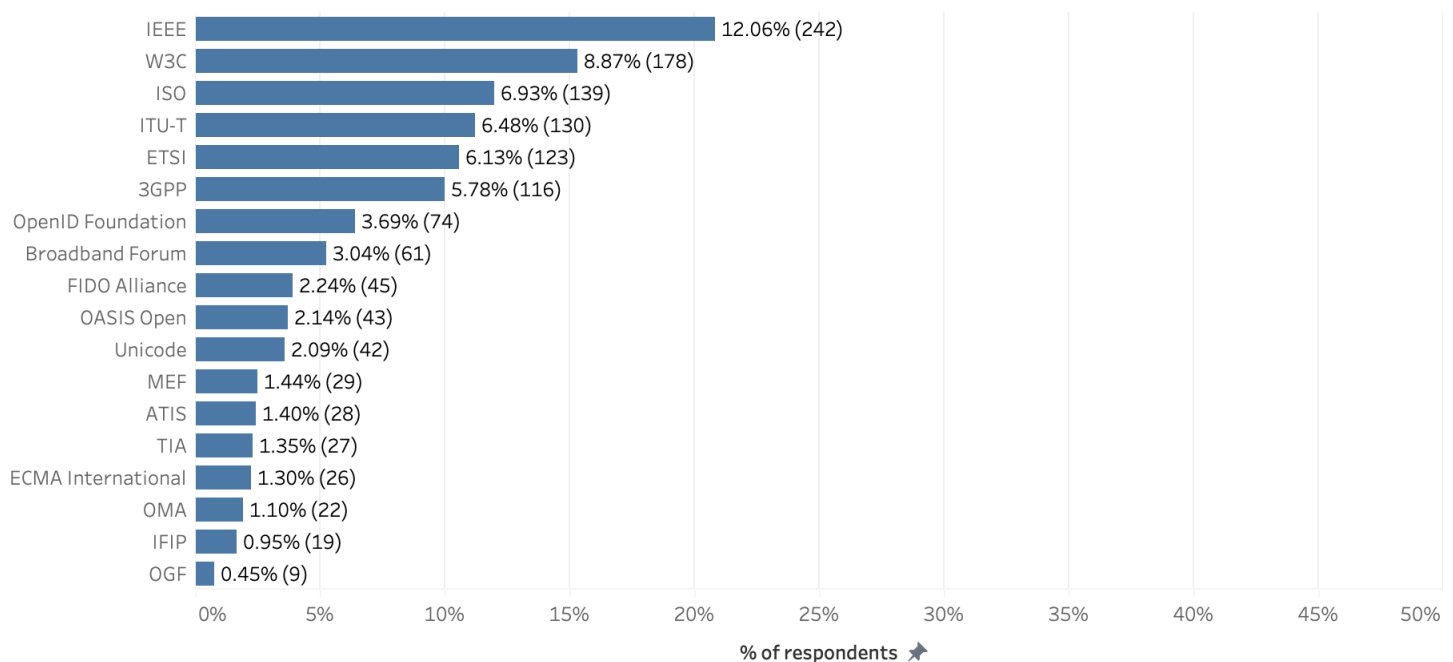
Questions: Other Standards Development Organisations

These two questions aim to help understand how IETF participants also work in other SDOs and to provide some basic comparative analysis.

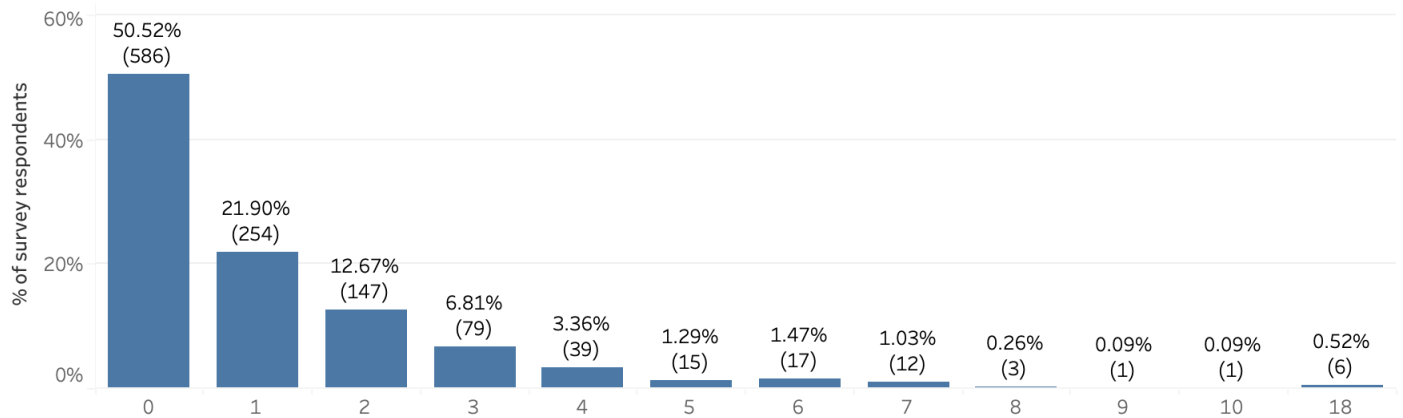
Q29. Which other standards setting organisations do you participate in? (check all that apply)

Respondents were asked to select other SDOs from a list with no rating of their participation. The list of choices is curated by the Internet Engineering Steering Group (IESG) and only includes those they consider the most relevant to the IETF.

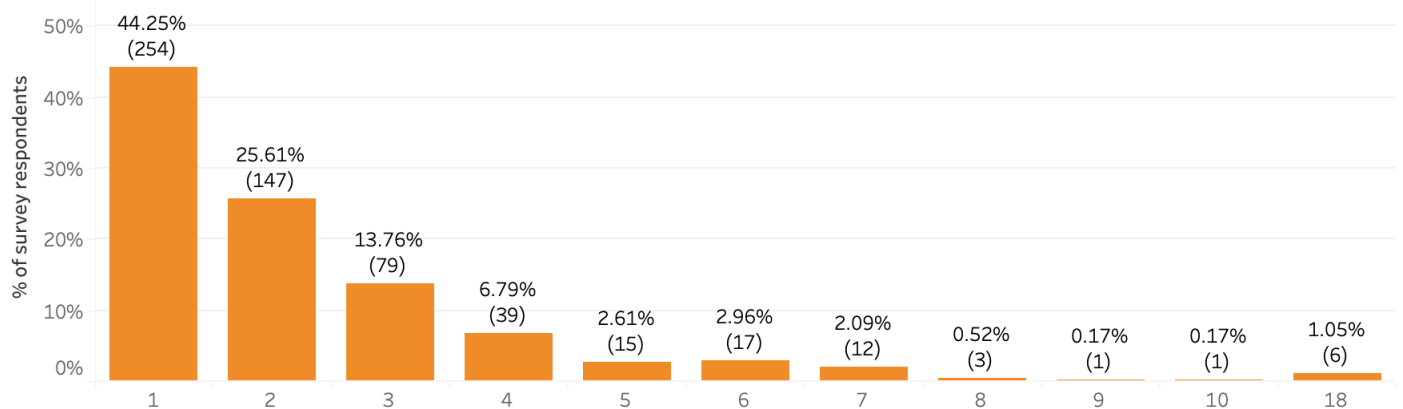
The following chart does not include respondents who answered "none of the above" as that would show a misleading percentage. This is better captured on the next chart.



The following chart shows the distribution of the number of other SDOs participated in, per respondent. If a respondent answered that they participated in all 18 listed, the full set of answers for that respondent were carefully checked for signs of a bot answering or deliberate data corruption, but none were found. Those who answered "None of the above" are shown as the zero column.



Similar distribution, but only for those who participate in 1 or more SDOs:



Commentary

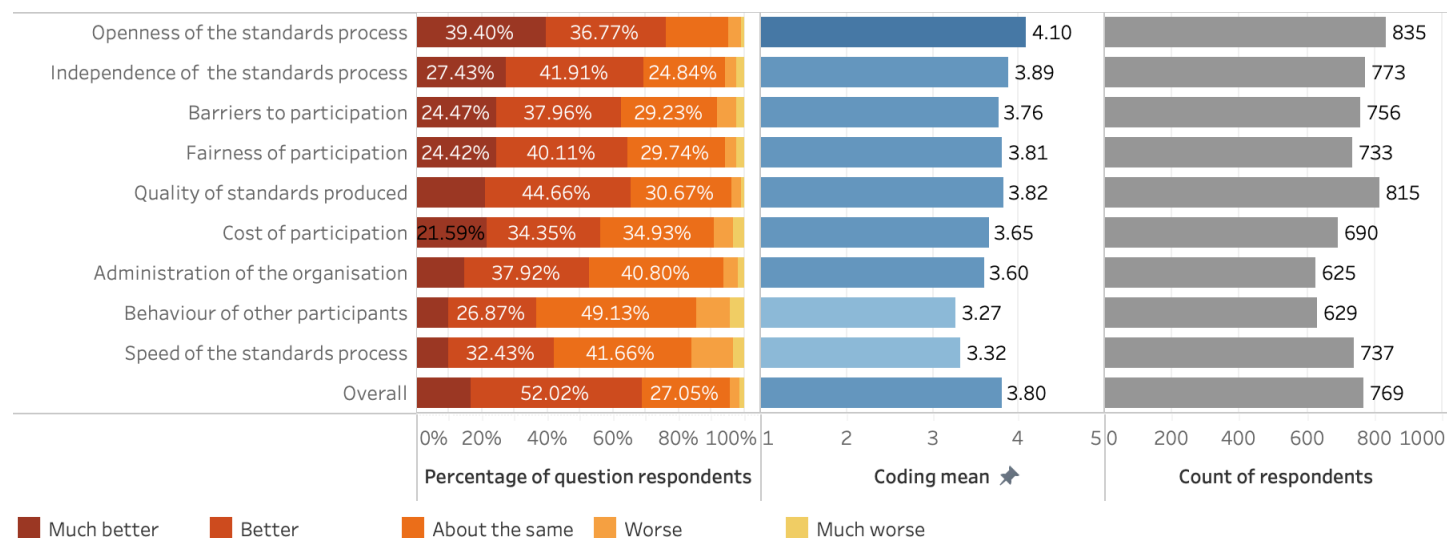
75. Half of IETF participants participate in at least one other SDO. Given that the choices presented are a non-exhaustive set of SDOs, this is lower than the true level.

76. The ordering of other SDOs is very similar to the results from 2023 and 2022 with the IEEE as the highest selected option, then the W3C, and then a close group of ISO, ITU-T, ETSI and 3GPP,, with the others trailing behind.

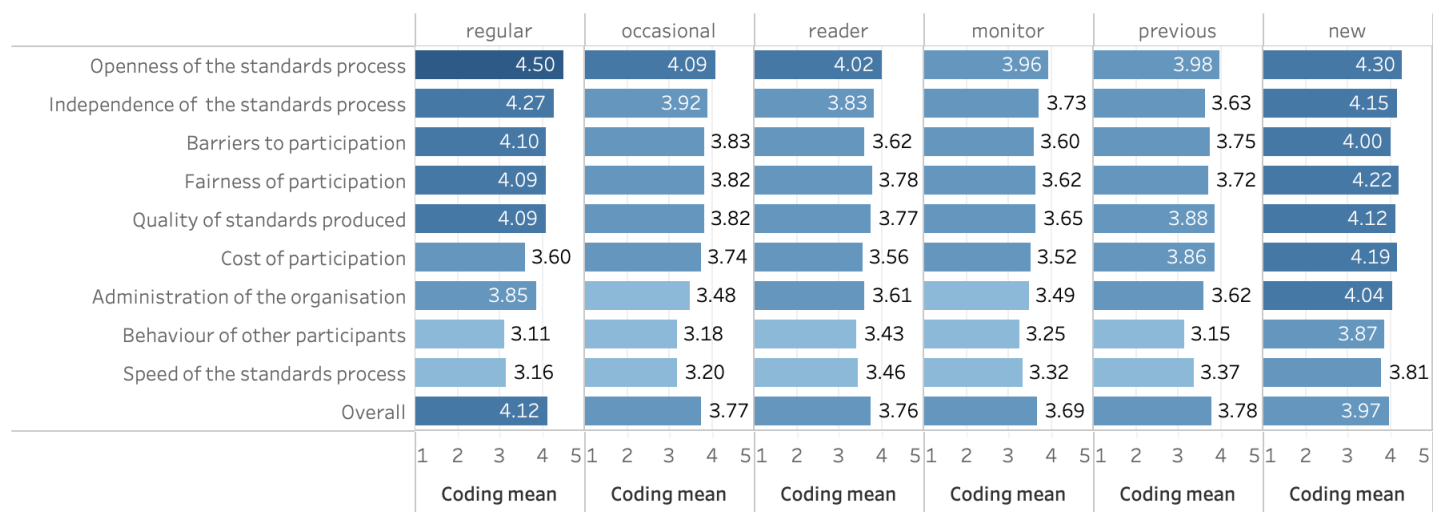
Q30. How well do you think the IETF compares to other standards settings organisations for the following aspects?

Respondents were asked to rate a series of aspects of the IETF using a comparative scale from much better to much worse. A coding mean of 3 is neutral, above that is better than other SDOs and below

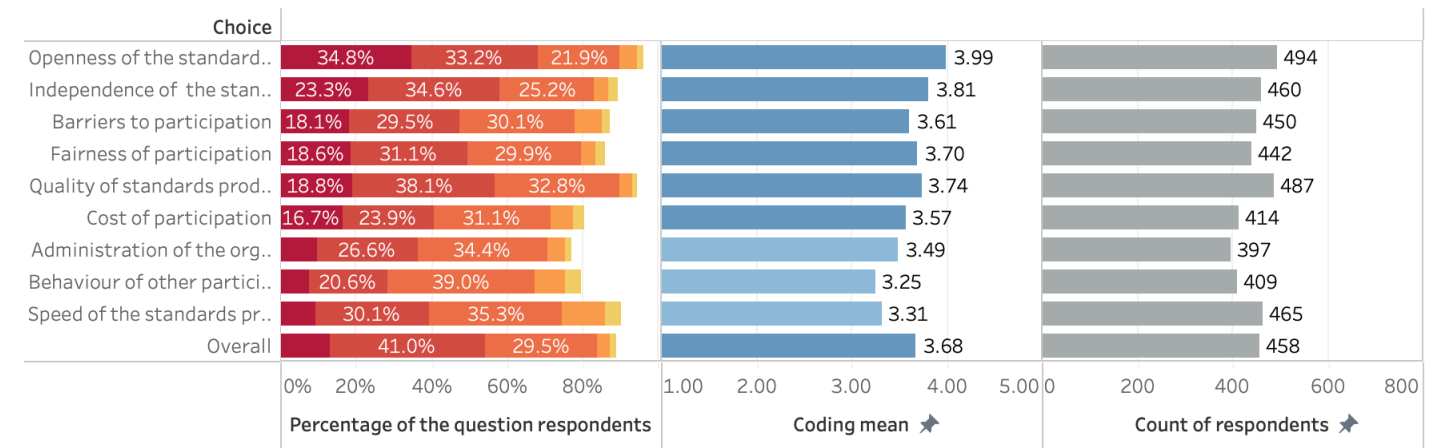
that, worse. In 2025, an additional analysis has been conducted filtering the results to only those respondents who indicated participation in one or more SDOs in Q29.



Coding means by participant type:



In 2025, similar analysis of Q30 was conducted but only for those who participated in 1 or more SDOs:



Commentary

- 77. Every attribute received a coding mean above 3.0, indicating a consistently positive perception of the IETF relative to other SDOs.
- 78. Openness to the standards process continues to be of the highest rated attributes with regular participants giving it excellent rating.
- 79. While still rated better than other SDOs, the speed of the standards process and the behaviour of other participants received the lowest scores, consistent with findings from previous years.
- 80. For those who participate in 1 or more other SDOs, the overall trend remains the same however the scores are marginally lower across all attributes.

Q54. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

This is a new question added in the 2025 survey that was answered by 241 participants out of the 1,480 total who took the survey. Due to the large number of verbatim responses received, these were analyzed using AI to generate a summary of overall findings and identify the top 5 themes.

Methodological note on qualitative vs. quantitative data alignment

The most effective way to review freeform qualitative feedback is to evaluate it alongside the structured quantitative data. The qualitative concerns surfaced in this section represent perceptions of a smaller cohort only and should be interpreted as actionable focus areas for leadership, rather than broad systemic definition.

Summary of the overall verbatims

The open-ended responses indicate strong support for the IETF mission, but highlight frustration with process friction points. Key concerns include disruptive behavior on mailing lists and in working groups, corporate capture of the standards process, leadership accountability, and financial and logistical barriers. Process inefficiencies, particularly lengthy RFC timelines, were also cited. Despite this, many

respondents expressed genuine affection for the IETF and offered constructive suggestions for reform. Overall it shows that respondents remain committed to the IETF and want to see it improve.

Top-5 themes from the verbatims

Theme 1: Behavioral barriers and lack of effective moderation. Respondents flagged disruptive or bad-faith behavior from a small number of participants on mailing lists and in working groups, expressing frustration with moderation response speed.

- **Quantitative survey context:** On a macro level, the community believes participant dynamics are handled successfully. In Q25, the statement "The IETF is well managed" holds a positive score of 3.84, and in Q27, "The behaviour of WG participants is managed well" scores 3.93, confirming that the community views these behavioral issues as isolated rather than systemic.

Theme 2: Corporate capture and loss of individual voice. Respondents expressed concern that large companies, by flooding working groups with representatives, dominating mailing lists, or leveraging patents, are distorting the consensus process and sidelining individual contributors.

- **Quantitative survey context:** The survey data demonstrates the IETF's consensus framework effectively safeguards against external pressure. The community affirms that working groups consistently deliver choices based on rough consensus (4.10, Q27) and that the organization maintains high independence of standard process as compared to other SDOs (3.99, Q30).

Theme 3: Process inefficiency and RFC pipeline delays. Slow standards development, excessively long RFC timelines, and a perceived imbalance toward process over technical output emerged as a major frustration.

- **Quantitative survey context:** While process speed is a recognized lower-scoring attribute, the community believes that this speed does not compromise the final results. Respondents award high ratings to the technical output, rating "The IETF produces high-quality RFCs" at 4.24 and "The IETF produces relevant RFCs" at 4.14 (Q25), both within the Good range.

Theme 4: Access and global representation. Respondents highlighted barriers to participation for people from other parts of the world, other civil society organizations, retired individuals, and those without corporate sponsorship, including meeting costs, visa challenges, financial access, and the in-person bias of IETF's culture.

- **Quantitative survey context:** The structured data shows that the IETF's remote participation infrastructure is helping to bridge this gap. While 43.70% of respondents have never attended a meeting in person (Q1a), those who participate exclusively online rate their experience participating in IETF discussions via "Remotely at an IETF meeting" at 3.90 and rate "IETF Mailing lists" at 4.26 (Q24). This proves that the organization's digital pathways are effective at maintaining access for global remote participants, even while physical and financial travel barriers remain a real issue for them.

Theme 5: Leadership accountability and governance reform: Respondents called for stronger accountability mechanisms for WG chairs and Area Directors, including term limits, performance reviews, and clearer escalation paths for raising concerns.

- **Quantitative survey context:** The survey responses show that the community regards its current leadership as Acceptable, indicating that improvements are possible. In Q25, respondents give a score of 3.84, within the Acceptable range, to the attribute "The IETF is well managed," and in Q27, they award positive scores to working group management, rating "WG meetings are well organised and managed" at 3.99.

Improvements for future surveys

During this survey process, feedback was provided that will be considered for future surveys:

- Refine the phrasing for "Barriers to participation" in Q30, as answering "Much better" can imply the IETF has stronger or higher barriers rather than fewer ones . This should be rephrased to ask if the IETF has "lower barriers" or "absence of barriers".
- Consider adding a qualitative follow-up to the NPS question (Q20). An open-ended follow-up question, such as "What is the main reason for your score?", should be added to capture actionable insights on the NPS question.

Next steps

The results of this survey will be used by the IESG and IETF Administration LLC over the next year as they plan and carry out their work. In particular, the survey will be regularly referenced in decision making to ensure a data-driven approach is taken that emphasises addressing areas that the evidence shows are high priority concerns reducing time spent on those the evidence shows are not actually concerns.

This survey will be repeated annually, with some adjustments, in order to build up a time series of data and to see whether the high priority concerns are being addressed. Finally, thank you to all those who took part in this survey and provided us with such valuable feedback. Please raise any questions or feedback on the admin-discuss@ietf.org mailing list.