

Women in Free/Open Source Software Development

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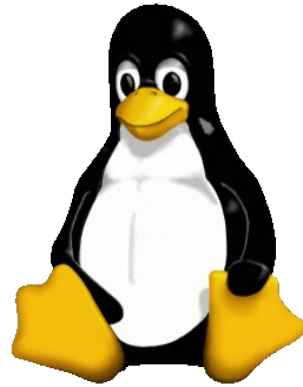
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Part I: Free and Open Source Software

It's everywhere!

Linux kernel:
most famous
free software
project



70% of web servers



LIVEJOURNAL

over 8 million
accounts



powers
Wikipedia

“Four Freedoms”

- The freedom to:
 - Run the program for any purpose
 - Study and adapt the program for your needs
 - Redistribute copies
 - Make and publically release changes

Free vs. Open Source

- (Nearly) identical groups of software
- Different philosophies, histories
- Open source: development methodology
- Free software: social movement

Source Code

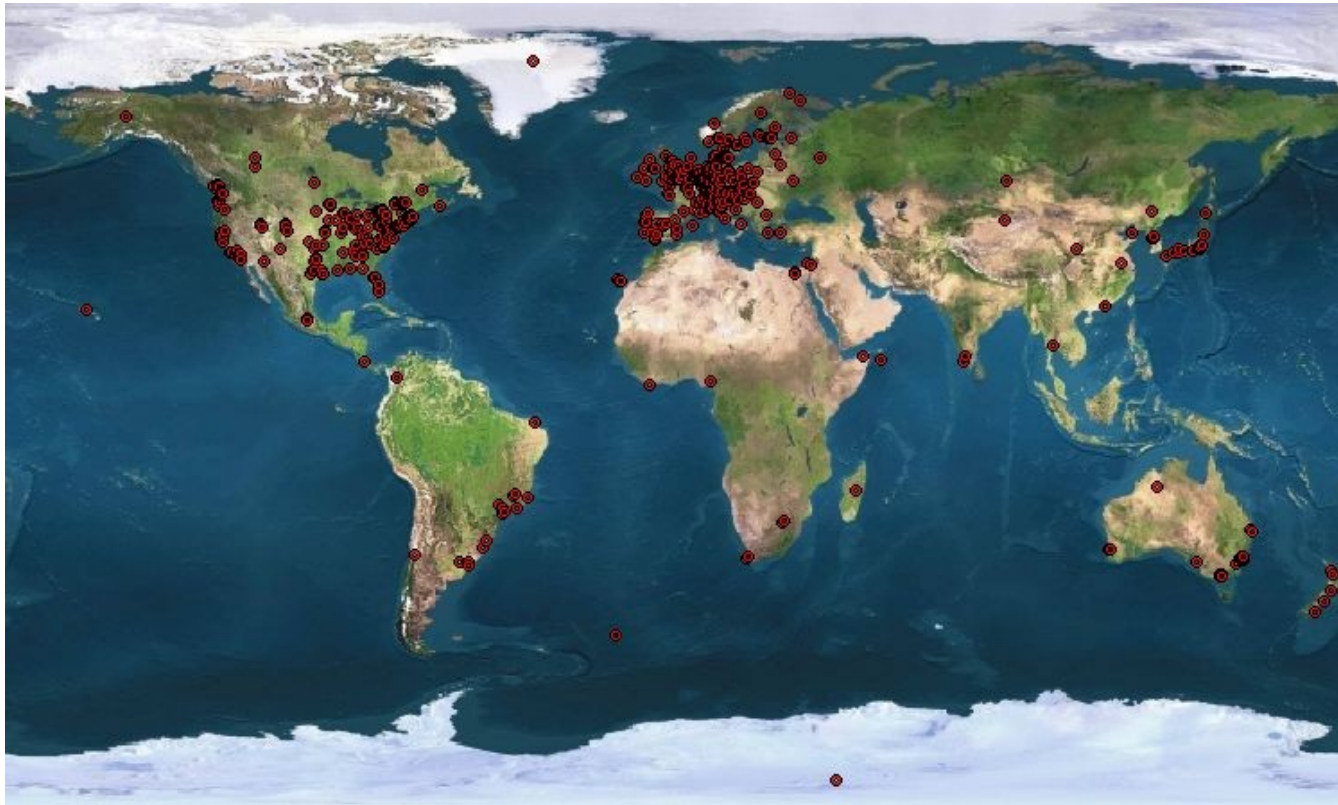
- 2 freedoms require access to source code
- Would you buy a car if
 - it was illegal to open the hood?
 - the hood was welded shut?
 - breaking weld points was a criminal offence?

Free Software and Business

- Commercial does not mean non-free
- Can make money from free software



Distributed Development



Getting Involved

- Not just coding:
 - Testing, translation, documentation, “love”
- Ways to get involved:
 - Filing bug reports
 - Sending suggestions and patches

Users



City of Munich



\$100 laptop project



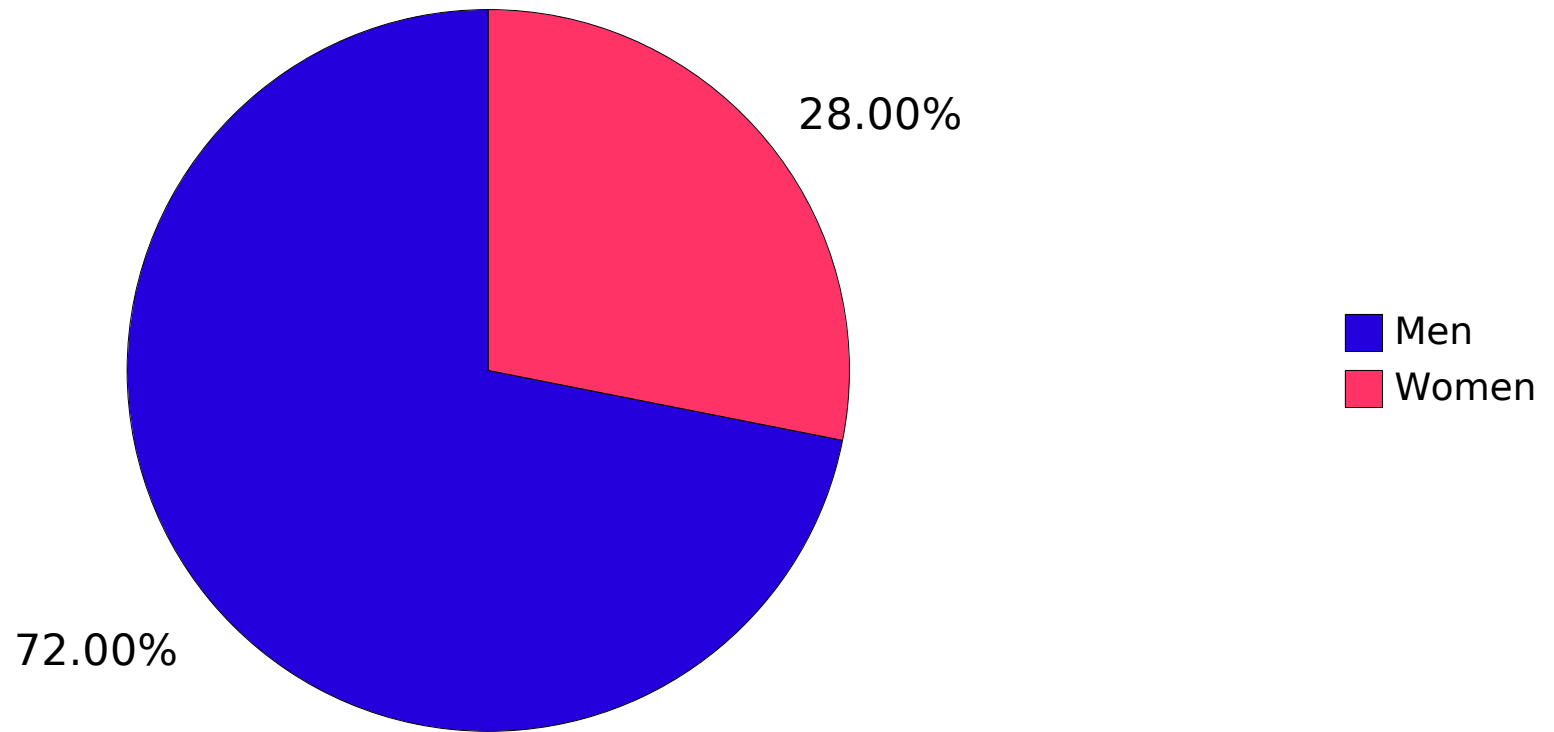
Brazilian government



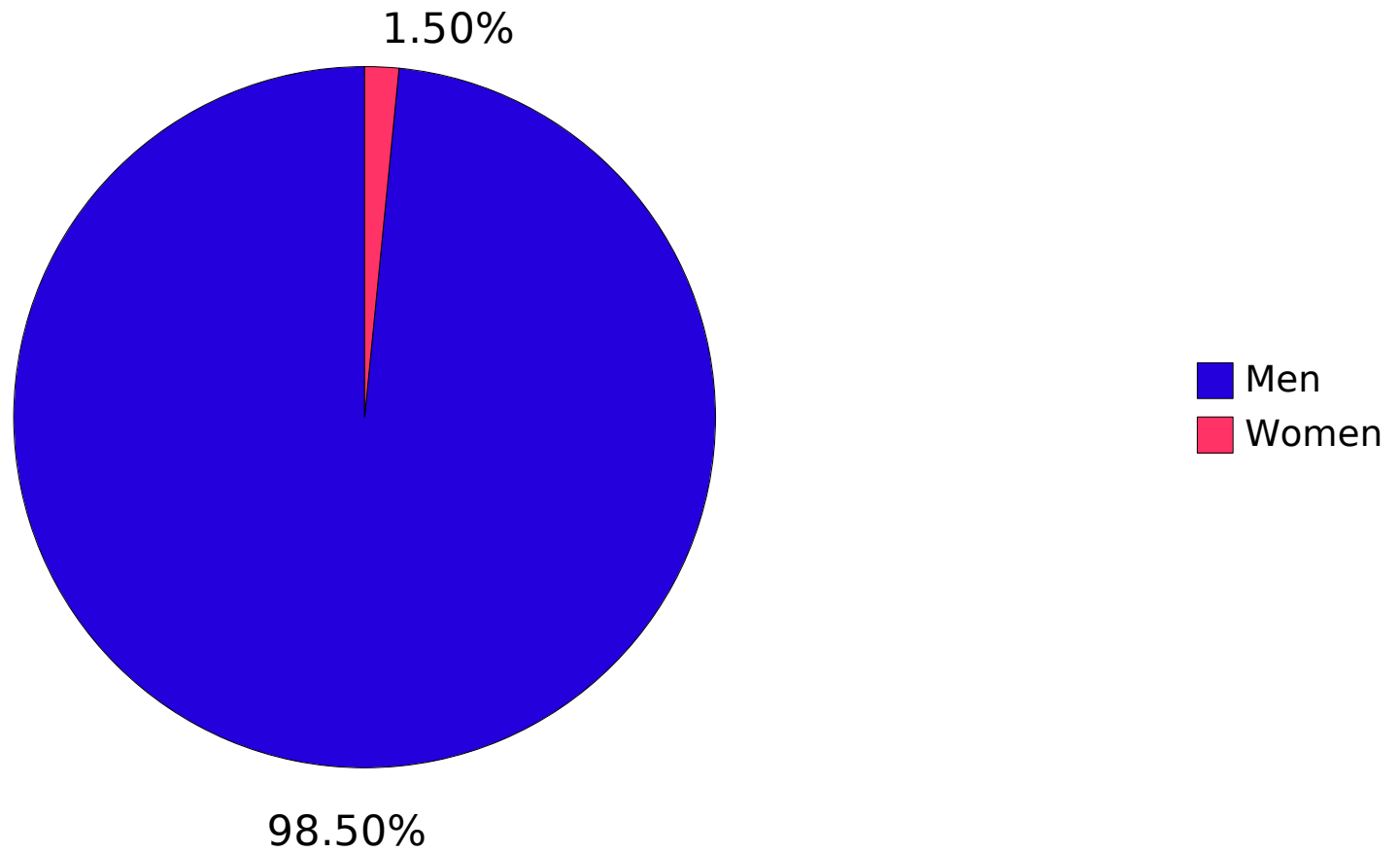
Venezuelan government

Part II: Women in Free Software Development

Proprietary Software



Free Software



Why So Few Women?

- No one knows
 - Lack of interest or experience?
 - Self-doubts and lack of confidence?
 - Hard to get involved?
 - Unwanted attention? (OMFG a g1rl!!)

FLOSS-POLS Project

- Studies on free/open source software
- Universities of Maastricht and Cambridge
- 2002 and 2005
- Funded by European Commission

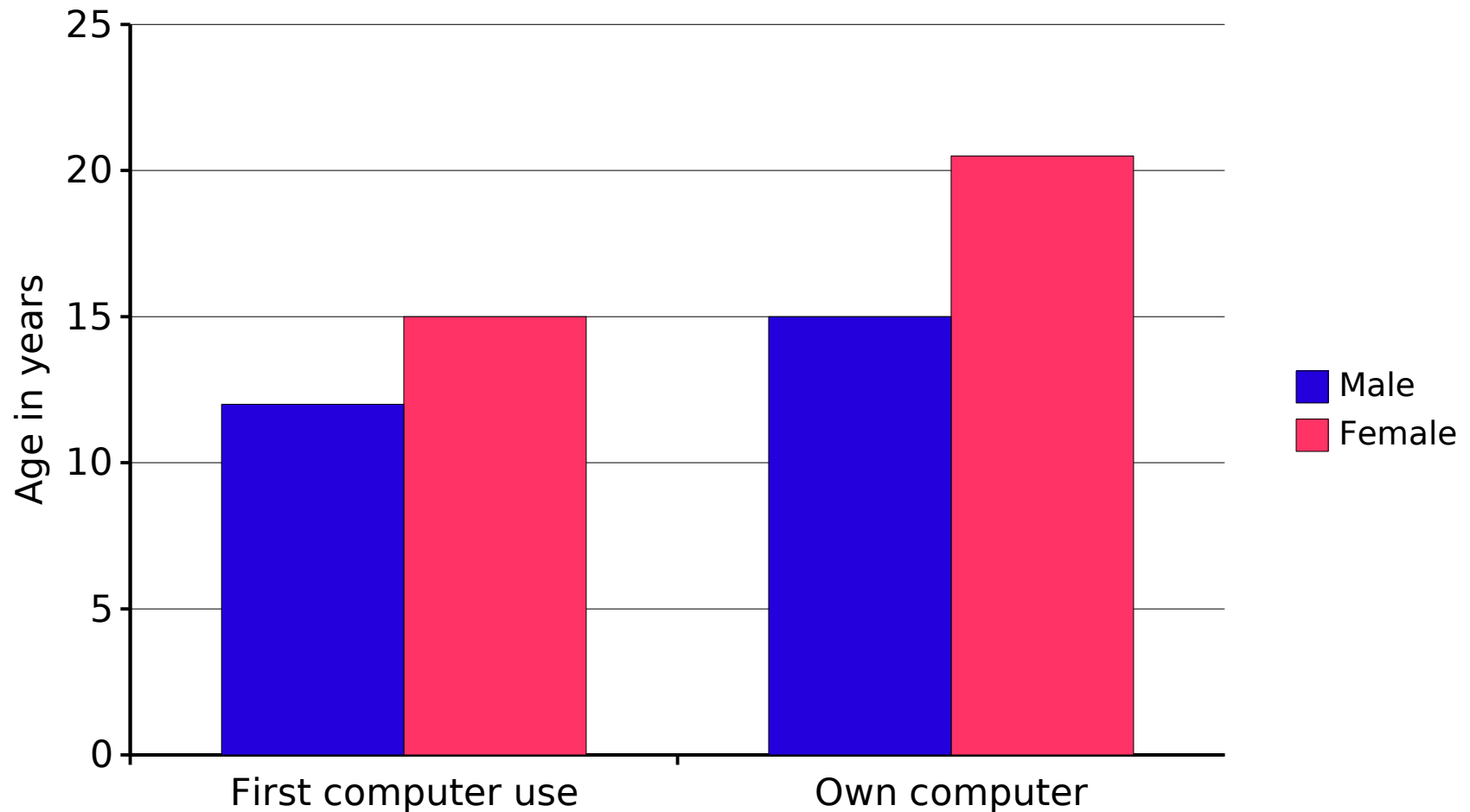
Aims

- Gather socioeconomic data
- Find facts/opinions regarding gender gap
- Identify possible causes
- Establish recommendations for change

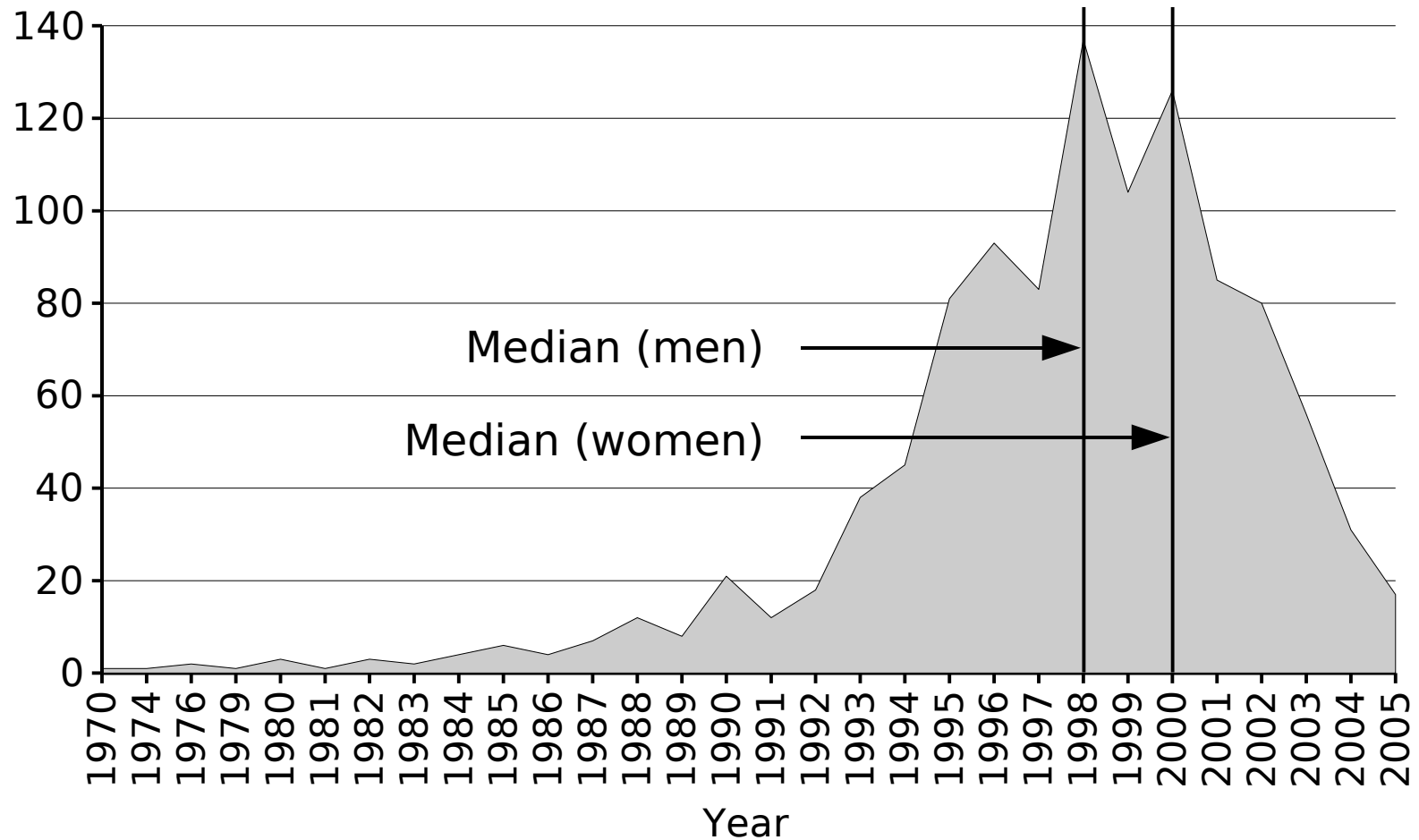
Methodology

- Quantitative online survey
- Sample size: ~1500 participants
- Ethnographic study
- “Snowball” sampling

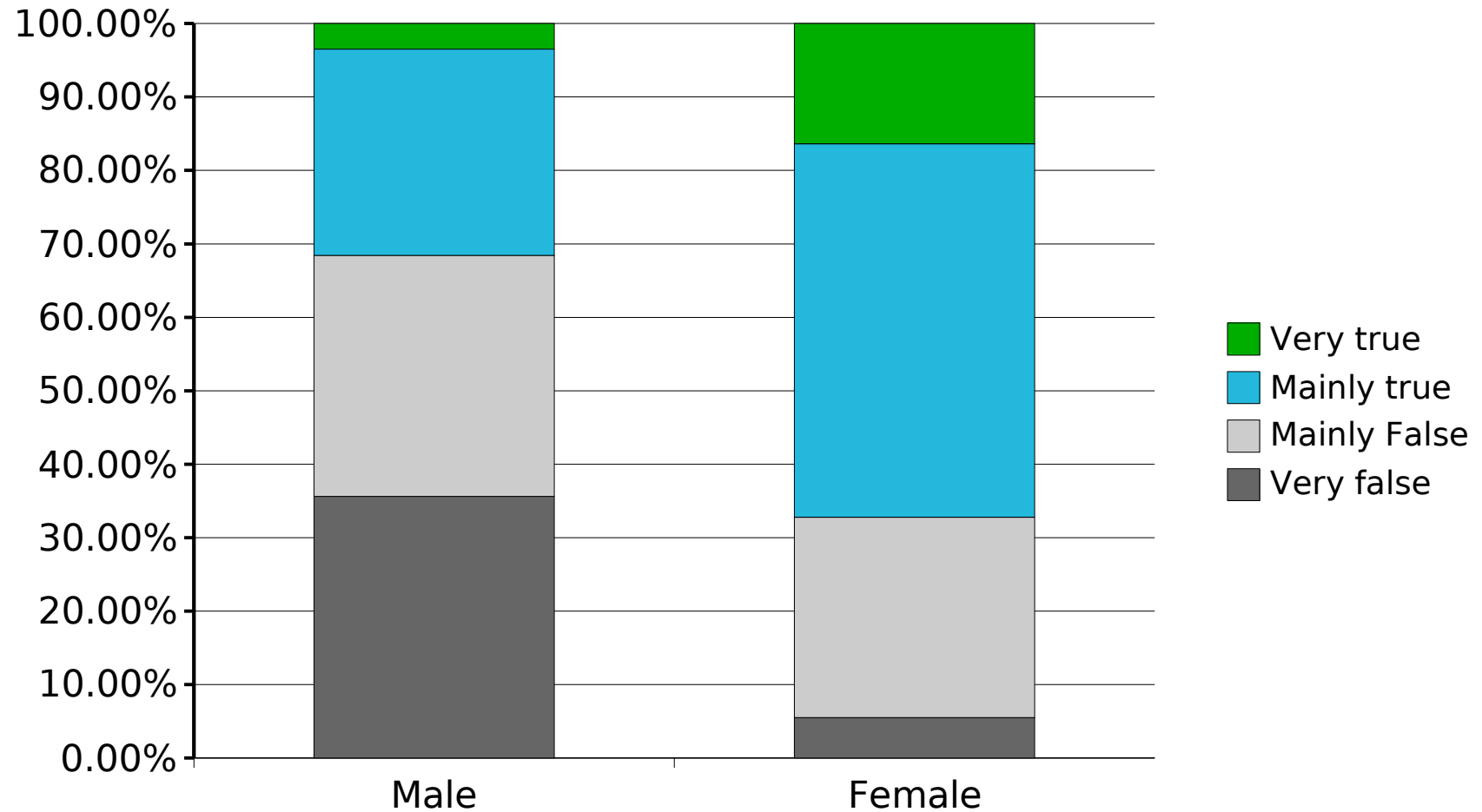
Median Age of First Computer Use and Possession by Gender



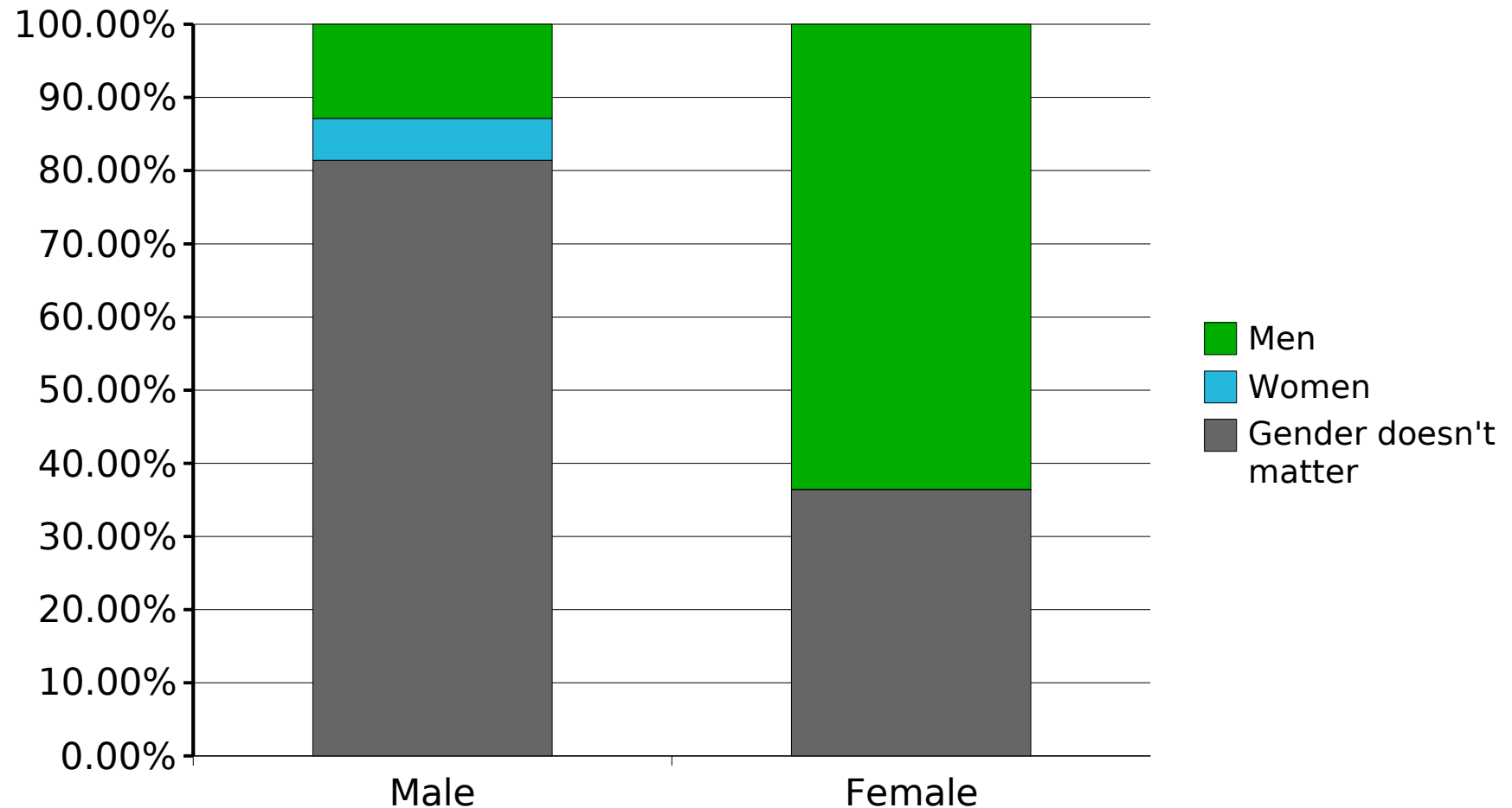
Year of Initial Involvement in FLOSS



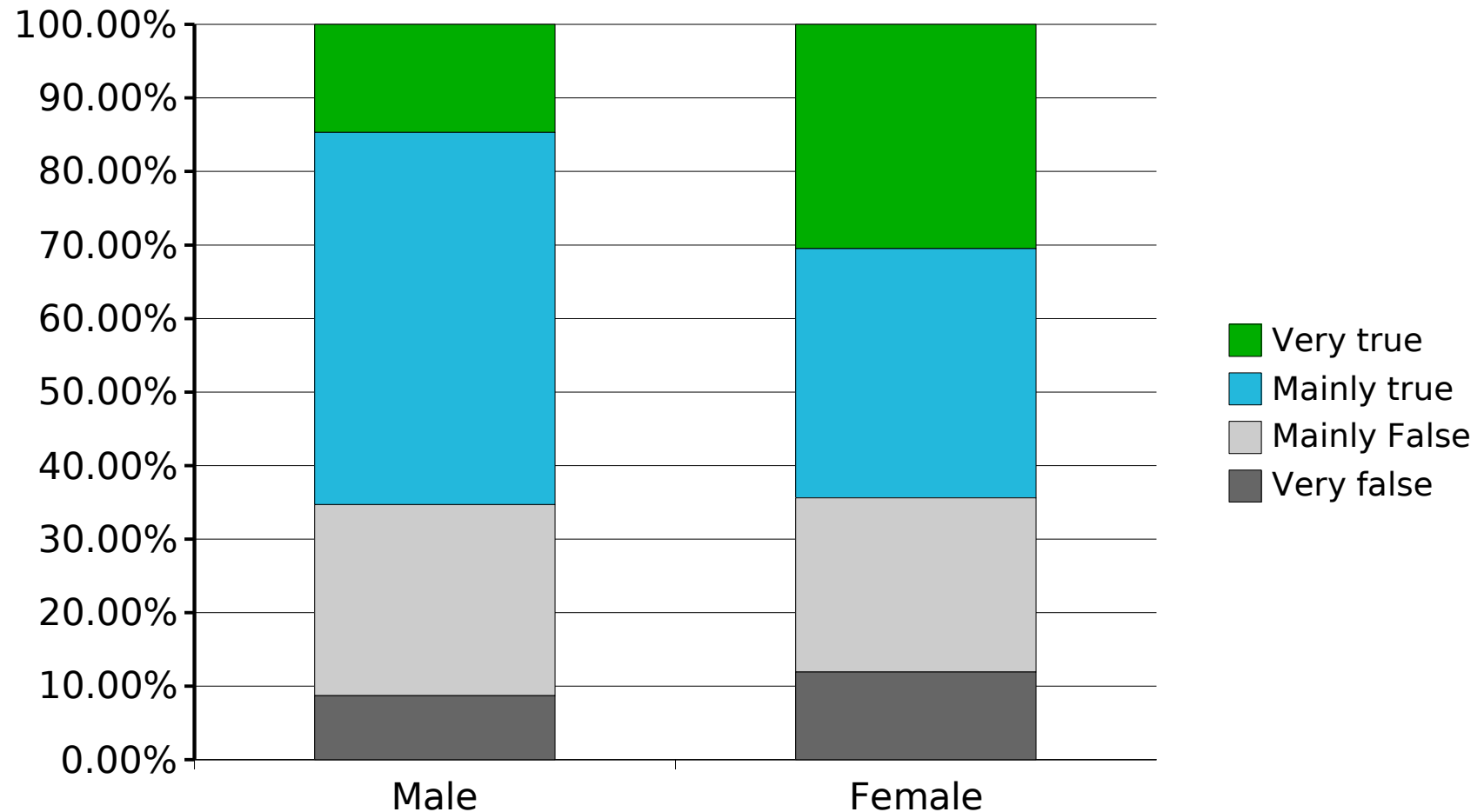
“Do women have less time than men to participate in FLOSS?”



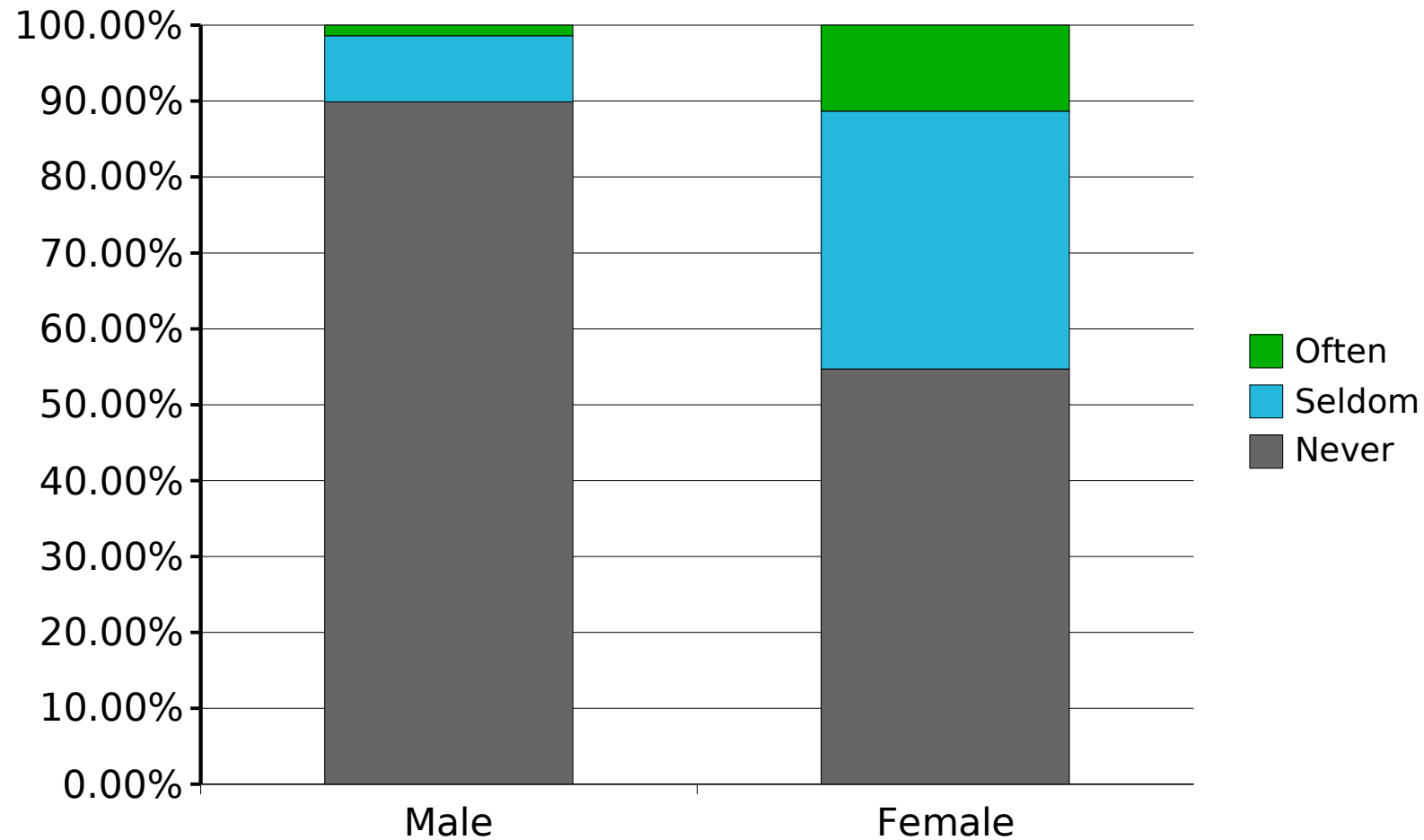
“For whom is it easier to get acknowledgement for FLOSS work?”



“Do women often get more attention as a woman than as a FLOSS participant?”



“Have you ever been asked on a date by another FLOSS participant?”



Summary

- Women tend to:
 - Get involved in free software later
 - Start using computers later
 - Get their first “own” computer later
 - Have different experiences in FLOSS to men

Part III: The Debian Women Project

Debian GNU/Linux

- Linux kernel, GNU OS tools
- >15,490 packages
- 100% “free” software
- Developed by a group of volunteers

“Universal Operating System”?



The Debian Women Project



- Founded in 2004
- First such project for a Linux distribution

What We Do

- Provide role models
- Give tutorials on Debian-related topics
- Mentoring project
- Presentations at conferences
- Word-of-mouth advocacy

Debian Women Isn't...

- A dating agency
- Solely concerned with support
- Segregated
- An “affirmative action” project
- Striving for a Disney-like atmosphere

Who Are We?



Unexpected Results

- Many men are actively involved
- Respect from the Debian community
- “Good for women = good for everyone”
- 9 women in the “new maintainer” queue!

Part IV: Conclusions, Resources

Conclusions

- Free software is a LOT of fun
- Women in computing is not solved
 - There are still areas with almost no women
- Not knowing WHY doesn't mean you can't start to change things!

Resources

- <http://www.fsf.org>
- <http://flosspols.org/>
- <http://www.debian.org/>
- <http://women.alioth.debian.org/>