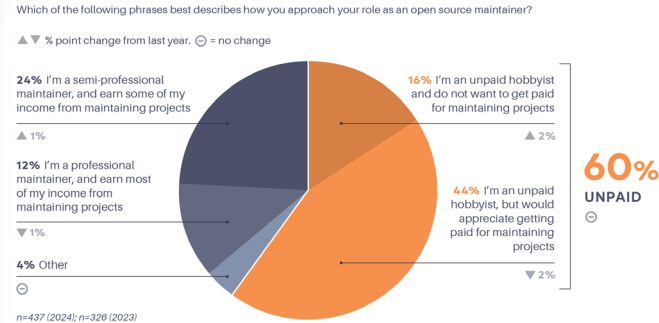# TIDELIFT

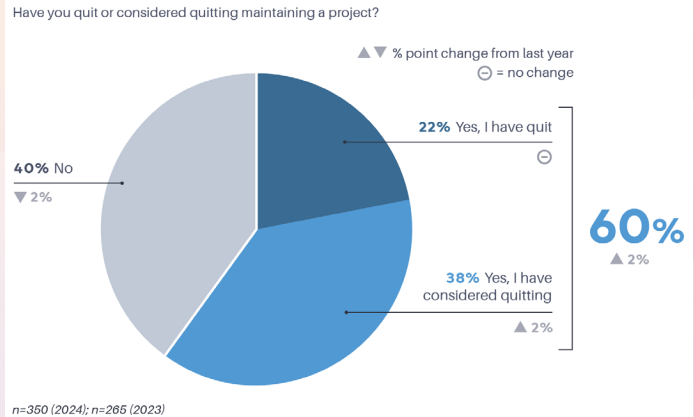# Top 5 findings from the 2024 maintainer survey

60% of maintainers are still not paid for their work

We asked this same question in 2023 and wanted to see if things have changed. As it turns out, they have not changed a bit.

Which of the following phrases best describes how you approach your role as an open source maintainer?

▲ ▼ % point change from last year. ⊖ = no change

24% I'm a semi-professional maintainer, and earn some of my income from maintaining projects ▲ 1%

12% I'm a professional maintainer, and earn most of my income from maintaining projects ▼ 1%

4% Other ⊖

16% I'm an unpaid hobbyist and do not want to get paid for maintaining projects ▲ 2%

44% I'm an unpaid hobbyist, but would appreciate getting paid for maintaining projects ▼ 2%

60% UNPAID ⊖

n=437 (2024); n=326 (2023)

The more maintainers get paid, the more they work on open source

The vast majority of unpaid hobbyists (78%) spend ten hours or less per week on their maintenance work.

■ More than 20 hours ■ 11–20 hours ■ 10 hours or less ▲ ▼ % point change from last year. ⊖ = no change

11% ▼1% **7%** ⊖ **82%** ▲1%

I'm a professional maintainer, and earn most of my income from maintaining projects
n=45 (2024); n=43 (2023)

20% ▼7% **51%** ▲2% **29%** ▲5%

I'm a semi-professional maintainer, and earn some of my income from maintaining projects
n=96 (2024); n=75 (2023)

8% ▲1% **15%** ▲2% **78%** ▼3%

I'm an unpaid hobbyist
n=253 (2024); n=194 (2023)

Totals do not equal 100% because of rounding.

Paid maintainers implement more security practices than unpaid maintainers

Paid maintainers are significantly more likely to have implemented the practices than unpaid maintainers.

Which of the following security practices have been implemented for most or all of the projects you maintain? (Choose all that apply)

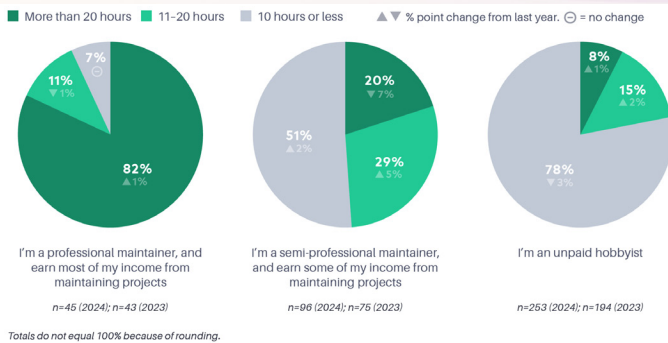| % of those who implemented	■ Professional and semi-professional maintainers ■ Unpaid hobbyist maintainers	GAP
Two-factor authentication for source code hosting and package managers	76 / 68	+8
Static code analysis	75 / 59	+16
Provide fixes and recommendations for vulnerabilities	70 / 54	+16
Disclosure plan on how you should be contacted about security issues	66 / 43	+23
Secrets management	58 / 39	+19
Signed releases and published artifact provenance	50 / 28	+22
Secure build tooling	37 / 23	+14
Dynamic code analysis	23 / 15	+8
Formal processes or standards to verify all new contributors	12 / 12	0
Third-party security audits	10 / 10	0
None of the above	2 / 8	-6

More than half of maintainers have quit or considered quitting their maintenance work

This year the percentage of maintainers who have either quit or considered quitting their work was 60%, which is consistent with the 58% in 2023 and 59% in 2021.

Have you quit or considered quitting maintaining a project?

▲ ▼ % point change from last year ⊖ = no change

40% No ▼ 2%

22% Yes, I have quit ⊖

38% Yes, I have considered quitting ▲ 2%

60% ▲ 2%

n=350 (2024); n=265 (2023)

Improvements made by paid maintainers

We asked the 36% of maintainers who are getting paid for their work what types of improvements they've been able to make to their projects as a result of getting paid.

Paid maintainers were asked, "Which of the following improvements have been made to your projects(s) as a result of getting paid for your work as an open source maintainer? (Choose all that apply)

83% Spend more time maintaining my project(s)

64% Work on new feature requests

52% Research and respond to security issues and bugs reported by users

51% Improve the project's secure development practices

45% Prioritize remediating vulnerabilities impacting the project or its dependencies

26% Bring on additional maintainers

8% Other

6% I have not made any improvements to my project as a result of being paid

n=142

Get all of the key findings from our newest survey of open source maintainers

Want to check out the full report? You can access it by navigating to tdlft.co/24-survey, or scanning the QR code below.

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