

# Poll Shows Developer Support for GPLv3

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Some open-source developers believe that the upcoming GNU GPLv3 will be good for open-source software, but they are concerned about its patent and digital rights management provisions.

A recent poll of some open-source developers found that while nearly half of the respondents believe that the upcoming GNU General Public License Version 3 will be good for open-source software, they are concerned about the patent, device, and digital rights management provisions in the recently released third draft of the license.

The poll was conducted by OpenLogic, a Broomfield, Colo.-based provider of enterprise open-source software, in the days following the release of the third draft of the GPLv3.

The company surveyed its Expert Community members, many of whom contribute to several open-source products.

Stormy Peters, OpenLogic's director of community and partner programs, told eWEEK that the company conducted the poll to take the pulse of open-source developers and give their opinions a voice.

Peters said that while the company "can't say with scientific certainty if this would map to a survey of hundreds of thousands of open-source developers, we do believe that the OpenLogic Expert Community is representative of open-source developers."

Some 50 OpenLogic Expert Community members responded to the poll,

with 47 percent saying they believed the new GPL would be good for open-source software, and just 14 percent saying that it would not be.

However, there was a fair amount of uncertainty about the impact of the license, with nearly 33 percent saying they were unsure whether it would be good for the community or not. Six percent had no opinion either way.

The respondents were also concerned by several of the provisions found in the third draft, which was released earlier this month.

Some 59 percent were concerned about provisions around patent issues, 53 percent were worried by the provisions around digital rights management, and 40 percent were concerned with the provisions around the use of GPL-covered programs in consumer devices. These are all provisions that have been controversial from the first draft of the license.

The developers are not alone in their concerns. A lawyer for ACT, the Association for Competitive Technology, has warned of the legal risks associated with the third draft of the license, an argument that open-source luminary Bruce Perens has strongly disagreed with.

Less than half the respondents (36 percent) currently work only on projects already licensed under GPLv2, but if the 18 percent of respondents who work on projects that are licensed under GPLv2 and other licenses are added in, the number rises to 54 percent.

This compares with 46 percent of respondents who do not work on any projects licensed under GPLv2.

Asked why this number was so low, OpenLogic's Peters said that the open-source packages represented in its library were based on requests

from its enterprise customers. "We've found that the open-source packages used by enterprises are less likely to be GPL than the overall population of open-source packages," she said.

When poll respondents were asked whether they would support a move to GPLv3 for projects they worked on that were already licensed under GPLv2, based on the third draft of that license, 36 percent said they would, 25 percent said they would not, and another 25 percent said they would in some cases. Fourteen percent said they did not know.

Asked how long they thought it would take for those projects to switch over to the GPLv3 once it is released, 23 percent said within six months, 46 percent said between six and twelve months, and 31 percent said more than a year.

The results will have no effect on OpenLogic going forward, Peters said, as the company delivers and supports a library of hundreds of the most popular open-source software packages.

"The OpenLogic Library includes open-source packages that are licensed under a wide variety of open-source licenses. We will also include open-source packages under GPLv3 in our library," she said.

OpenLogic also believed that the third draft of GPLv3 was an improvement over the second draft for most enterprise users of open source as it clarifies some issues about whether Web-based applications are considered distributions.

It also narrows some of the patent clauses that could have impacted open-source contributions, she said.

Asked if she was surprised by any of the poll results, Peters said she was. "We found that although open-source developers have concerns about

patent, DRM and device provisions of GPLv3, by a 3-to-1 ratio, they still feel that the GPLv3 is good for open source. We were also surprised at the high percentage of open-source developers who would advocate moving their GPLv2 packages to GPLv3," she said.

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