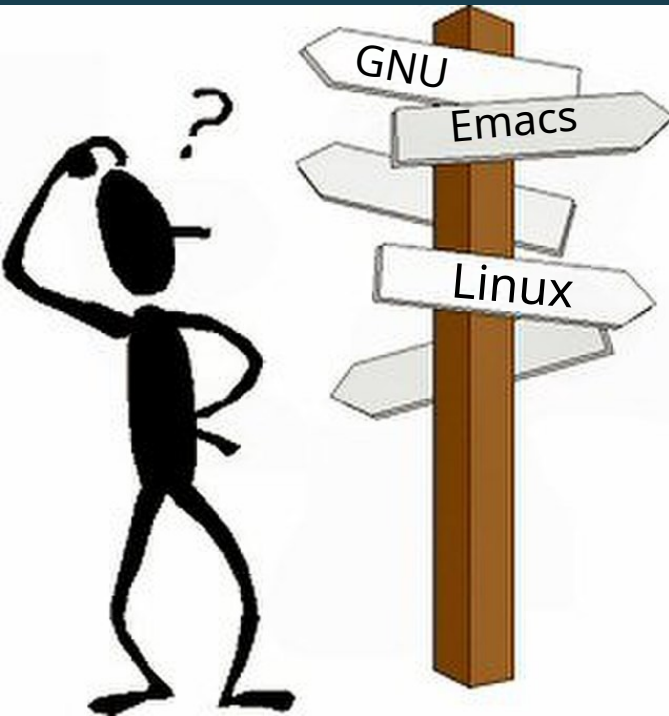


# Free Software for Non-Developers



freeBSD

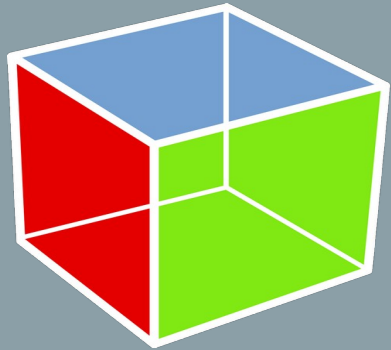
James Gregora

# Timeline of Free Software



# What has the free software movement done well?

Designing professional-grade, industry-standard software



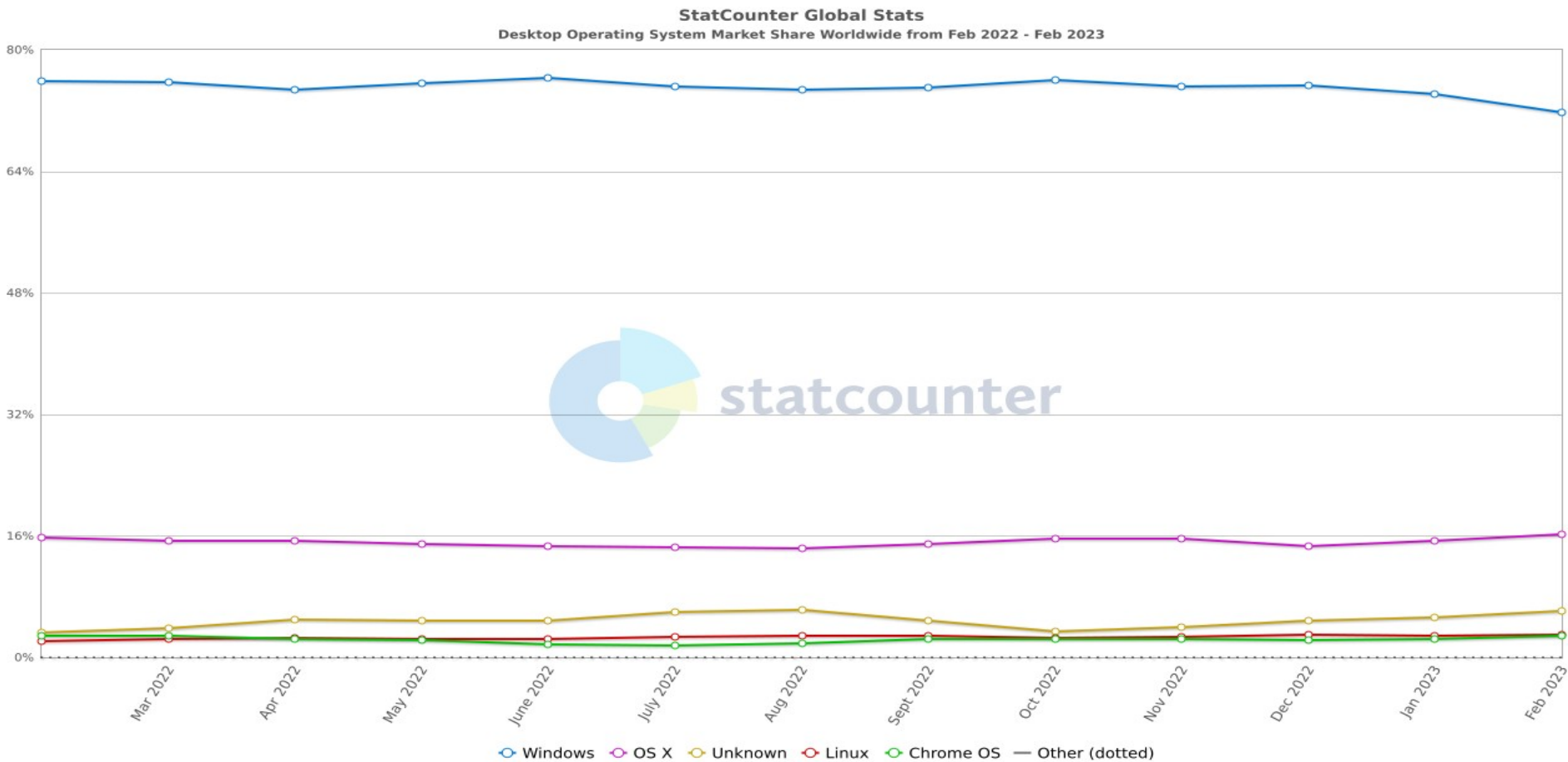
Creating a self-sustaining free software ecosystem that builds on itself



apt (GPL 2) → dpkg (GPL 2) → GNU Coreutils (GPL 3) → libacl (LGPL 3) → libattr1(LGPL 3)

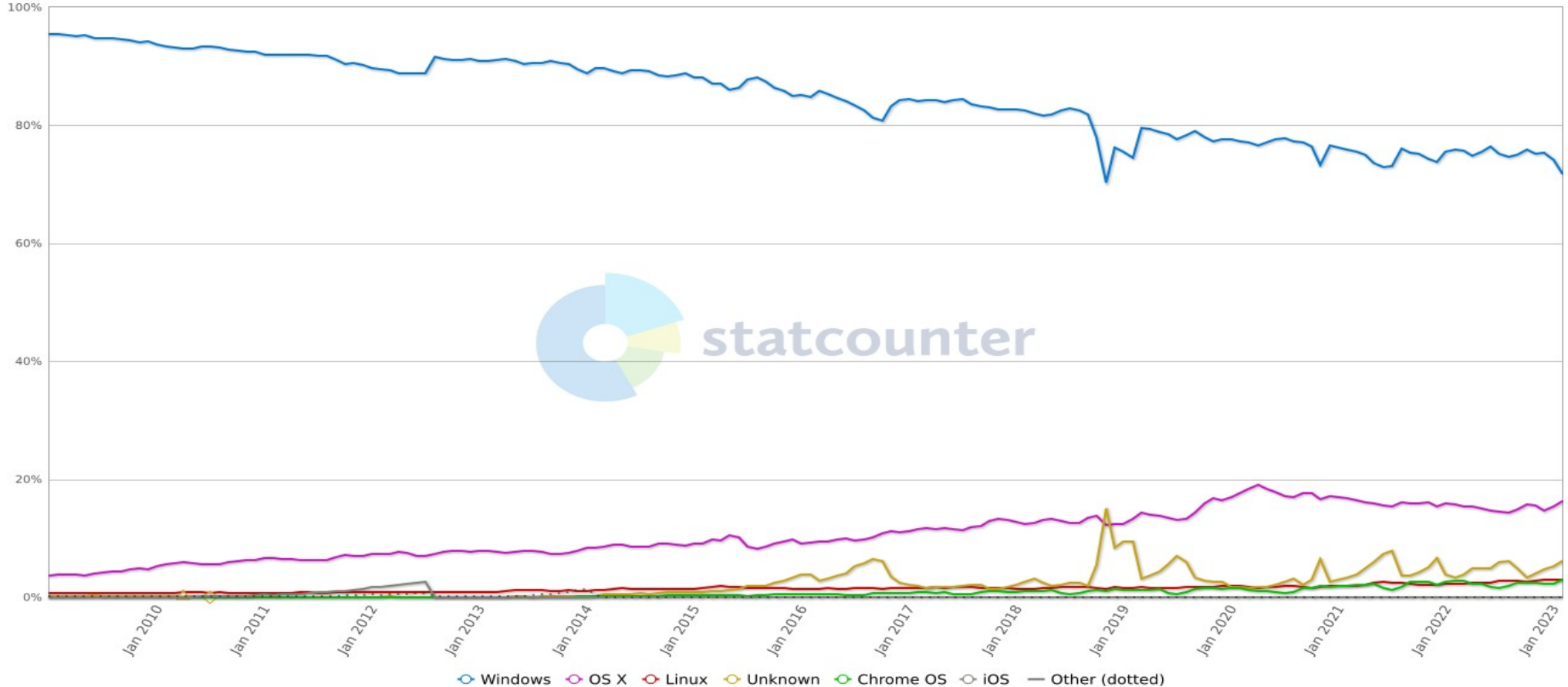
**What has the free software  
movement done *less* well?**

# Desktop Usage by Operating System (worldwide)

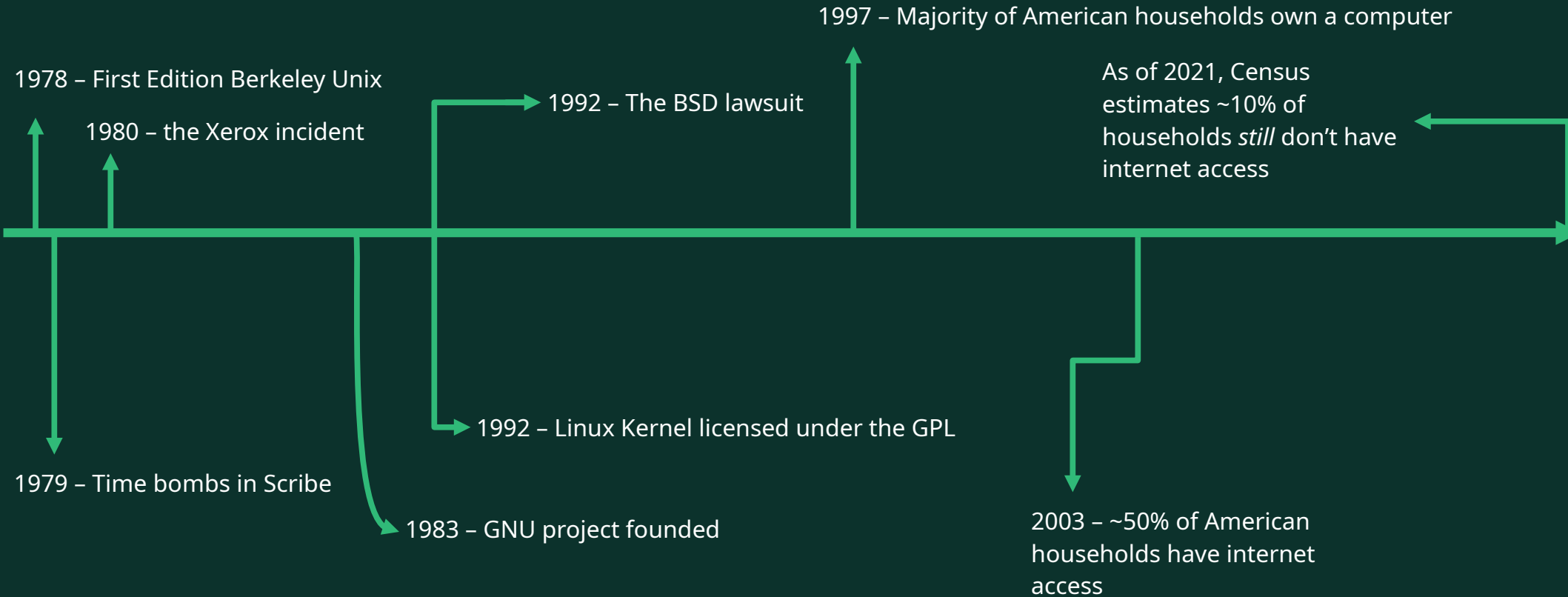


# From Jan. 2009 – Feb. 2023

StatCounter Global Stats  
Desktop Operating System Market Share Worldwide from Jan 2009 - Feb 2023



# Timeline



1978 – First Edition Berkeley Unix

1980 – the Xerox incident

1979 – Time bombs in Scribe

1983 – GNU project founded

1992 – The BSD lawsuit

1992 – Linux Kernel licensed under the GPL

1997 – Majority of American households own a computer

2003 – ~50% of American households have internet access

As of 2021, Census estimates ~10% of households *still* don't have internet access

# The Problem:

- Society has evolved
- How we talk about free software hasn't



# The Four Freedoms

0. The freedom to *run* the program for any purpose
1. The freedom to *study* how the program works
2. The freedom to *redistribute exact copies* to others
3. The freedom to *distribute modified copies* to others

# The Four Freedoms

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# The Four Freedoms

0. The freedom to *run* the program for any purpose

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# The Four Freedoms

1. The freedom to *study* how the program works

3. The freedom to *distribute modified copies* to others

# Some well-intentioned (but bad) approaches:

- *“Everyone should learn to modify software”*

 This is not a reasonable request

Not everyone can do devops, and that's okay!

- *Everyone should care about free software because everyone should care about privacy*

Nonfree software can respect your privacy

Free software does not necessarily respect your privacy



# Why should someone with no intention to modify software care about others' right to do so?

- Practical Reasons (security, code quality, etc)
- Ethical reasons:
  - If you run a developer's code, you are *trusting* that developer
  - Developers have an obligation *not to abuse* that trust

**Source code is a demonstration of *good faith* on the part of developers, that they will not take advantage of those who are dependent on them**

Lack of transparency should make you *very* suspicious

## The Car Analogy

by [root](#) — Published on Oct 19, 2009 04:02 PM

### What if buying a new car were like using nonfree software?

(We're happy to welcome Tal, joining our campaigns team as part of our [internship program](#).)

by **Tal Schechter**  
Campaigns Intern

So you go to the dealership to buy a new car, and...

- Your new car has a trunk, CD player and digital radio -- but these don't work because you didn't pay enough money. You can always call the car company with your credit card details and unlock these items later.

- If you wanted to have your car fixed, you would have to go to an accredited, licensed repair shop. It would be illegal for anyone else to open the hood. When you get to your licensed repair shop, they would charge you an "accredited repair license surcharge."

“The engine requires a cryptographic key from one of our engineers to unlock, and it **totally does not** have a tendency to randomly explode. All these people who work for us and signed NDAs say so.

...and if they ever tell anyone what's in there, we'll sue them into the ground.



# BMW introduces new heated seat subscription in UK

© 13 July 2022



GETTY IMAGES

BMW has sparked heated front seats

The features are available via BMW's ConnectedDrive online store and are activated remotely, with no need to visit a dealer.

BMW drivers in these countries won't have to take their cars to a service shop to get the features installed. The hardware is already there – drivers will merely have to pay an extra fee to activate them through an over-the-air software upgrade on BMW's ConnectedDrive platform. That's also where they can pay for other features locked behind an annual subscription, including safety camera alerts (\$30) and access to an online music library (\$213 a year).

But the company argues that the ability to add new features can be helpful for owners who change their minds after purchase.

And it is particularly useful, BMW wrote, for second-hand car owners, "as they now have the opportunity to add features the original owner did not choose".

## Ford seeks to remotely repossess cars after missed payments in US patent

Automaker would remotely disable the vehicle or a component of the vehicle if delinquency notice isn't acknowledged



Car repossessions in the US have been on the rise since drops in the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. Photograph: Wolfgang Rattay/Reuters

# Nearly everyone agrees this is wrong

But why is it wrong?

1. It creates dependency on the seller, *after* the transaction is over; sellers *insert themselves* into your life later down the line.
2. It deliberately makes the product *worse*.
3. Computers are not just utilities anymore

“But the buyer and seller consented to the transaction... doesn't that mean it's morally acceptable?”

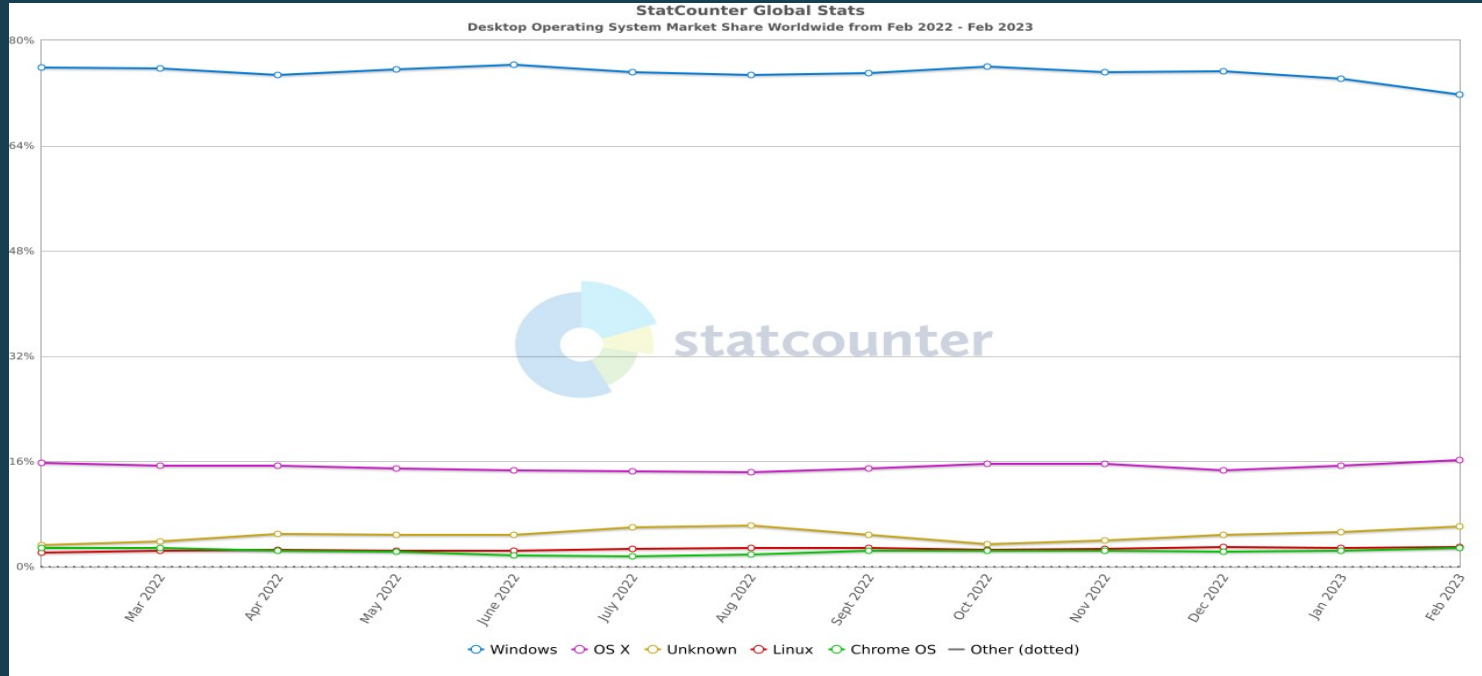
**NO**

What people are willing to accept sets the standard for what is acceptable

The blame still lies primarily with the distributor, not with the user.

Both sides are not mutually culpable; it is an *unethical business practice*

# There is an opportunity here



- Remember this graph?

# To summarize, non developers should care about source code because...

- Source code is a sign that you won't be exploited
- A lack of transparency should make you incredibly suspicious
- You shouldn't be dependent on a specific person or company to fix your software
- Nondisclosure of source code is an unethical business practice that should be discouraged

# Citations

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- “BMW introduces new heated seat subscription in the UK” BBC, July 13, 2022  
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