

A Survey of Linux Systems in Higher Education Environments

Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to report on a survey of computer labs in public universities throughout the US states that are running the Linux Operating System. A total of 7152 computer labs from 559 public universities have been surveyed online. It has been found that 169 computer labs are classified as Linux labs, about 2.3 percent out of the thousands of labs surveyed. This is an interesting, yet counter-intuitive finding. Since its initial development a decade ago on the premises of the University of Helsinki, Linux was adopted early on by many universities' research departments due to its wide availability to run on low-cost PCs, and the free distribution and open format of its source code. Its popularity in college campuses ought to be higher than the commercial Linux applications. To the contrary, the academic Linux applications are found lagging behind with a usage ratio of only 2.3 percent in the academic world, as opposed to the reported 23.1 percent worldwide Linux server market and 2.8 percent Linux client market popularity in the business world. In addition, the collected data are also grouped into seven geographical regions: New England, Mid Atlantic, Midwest, Plains, South, Mountains and West Coast to observe if location makes any marked difference in the Linux popularity. It is observed that West Coast has the highest rate of 3.3 percent, whereas New England has the lowest rate of 0.6 percent. All other regions have rates between 2 and 3 percent. Since the majority of the Linux labs surveyed are hosted either in a Science or Engineering college, further efforts have been made to relate connections between higher ranking engineering schools and higher number of Linux labs. However, no noticeable correlation has been established between the last two, based on the survey results.

Reference:

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