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### 2007 Desktop Linux Survey results revealed

Aug. 22, 2007



**Analysis** -- According to DesktopLinux.com's just completed survey, the number of Desktop Linux users has more than doubled in the past year, and Ubuntu remains their Linux distribution of choice.

Since DesktopLinux.com's recently completed survey is a self-selected group, we can't claim *scientific* proof that the number of desktop

Linux users has more than doubled in the past year. Still, this year's survey produced **38,500 votes** versus **14,535 votes** over the same number of days in a similar survey one year ago.

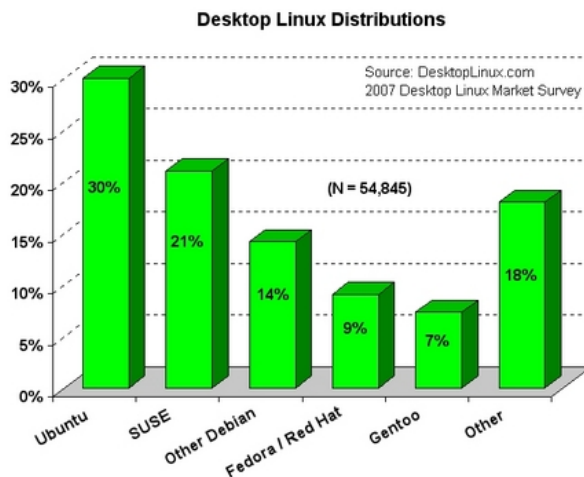
Part of the increase undoubtedly was because this year's survey received front page coverage on both [Digg](#) and the German news site, [Heise Online](#). That said, we've also seen an increased interest in Desktop Linux, based on our own website statistics. We've seen significant increases during the last year both in terms of unique visitors and site page hits.

You don't need to believe our numbers or surveys, though. [Dell](#) and [Lenovo](#) didn't invest in pre-loading Linux desktops to win points with the cool Linux kids. Both companies did it because they want to make money with the Linux desktop. Dell, in fact, has [expanded its Ubuntu Linux offerings](#) both in the U.S. with its 1420 laptop line, in [Europe](#), and in the [Chinese office desktop market](#). Today, [Linux desktops are a business](#), not just a hobby.

So, what are desktop Linux users of 2007 using?

#### Desktop distributions

The leading Linux distribution is the Ubuntu family -- 30 percent of our survey respondents are using Ubuntu or one of its sister distributions: Kubuntu, Xubuntu, and Edubuntu. While there are other distributions that owe a great deal to Ubuntu -- Linspire, Freespire, MEPIS, Linux Mint, and Pioneer all come quickly to mind -- we decided not to count them for Ubuntu this year, since some, like [Freespire](#), have just made the switch, while others, such as [MEPIS](#), are switching back to Debian, and [Pioneer is going in its own direction](#).



#### Which Linux distros do you use on your home or office desktop system(s)? (Click to enlarge)

Next in popularity, after the ever-popular Ubuntu family, comes the SUSE Linux family with 21 percent. In our survey, we found mostly openSUSE users (19.7 percent) with a scattering of SLED (SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop) users (1.3 percent). This isn't too surprising, since our preliminary analysis of our survey data showed that the majority of our respondents were individual rather than corporate users.

It's also noteworthy that the SUSE Linuxes have taken a major step forward. In [2006's survey](#), the SUSE family came in a distant second place with only 13 percent of the user base. In terms of year-over-year growth, openSUSE and SLED were the

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real winners, in fact, with a jump of 8 percentage points. The Ubuntu family, by comparison, built on its lead by only 1.2 percent.

In third place this year we have "other Debian," which includes Debian and all of its relatives besides Ubuntu: Debian, Freespire, Linspire, Linux Mint, MEPIS, and Xandros. While this group, at 14.2 percent, may have dropped behind SUSE this year, if you add in Ubuntu -- the most popular Debian-based distribution of them all -- Debian once again dominates the desktop Linux landscape, accounting for near half -- 44.6 percent -- of this year's distribution votes.

The Red Hat/Fedora family -- which this year includes CentOS -- came in at the fourth spot with 9 percent. This represents a small loss from last year when Fedora had 7 percent, while Red Hat added in a mere 2.2 percent, for a total, including smaller Red Hat/Fedora-based distributions of less than 10 percent.

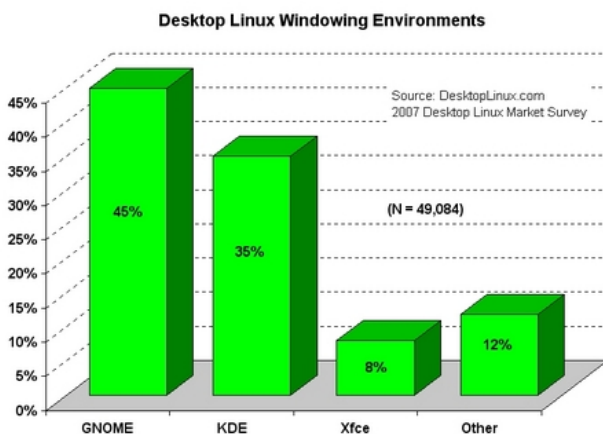
Finally, in our "top five," we have Gentoo, which also declined -- from 9.6 percent to 7 percent. After that we come to a group of smaller, independent distributions. Of these also-ran distributions Mandriva showed the best.

Perhaps the most surprising result of our survey was that PCLinuxOS showed so poorly. On [DistroWatch](#), PCLinuxOS has been at the top of the site's page hit ranking for the last 30 days. Frankly, we're not sure why this popular, easy-to-use community distribution didn't do better. The site supporting it had recently had problems, but that problem's long been history. Perhaps, it's simply that unlike the other popular community distributions -- Ubuntu, openSUSE, and Fedora -- PCLinuxOS doesn't have corporate backing. Canonical, Novell, and Red Hat all provide support and hardware partnerships for their community distributions that PCLinuxOS can't match.

### Desktop environments

The desktop environment results held little in the way of surprises. GNOME, in large part because it's Ubuntu's default desktop, came in first with 45 percent of the users. KDE took second place with 35 percent. Interestingly, this is the first time in DesktopLinux.com's surveys that GNOME has out-pollled KDE. Signs of a looming upset in standings were apparent last year, when KDE scored 38 percent and GNOME was right behind it at 35 percent.

The only "shocker" this year was that Xfce took third with a substantial 8 percent of the vote. In fact, 20 percent of our survey's respondents indicated that they use desktop environments other than the big two. Given this, and the loss of KDE's desktop dominance, it strikes us that there's still a chance for some other Linux desktop environment to make a go of it.



Which windowing environments do you frequently use on your Linux desktop(s)?  
(Click to enlarge)

### Browsers

You can probably guess without even looking at our graph of the survey's results what the most popular Linux web browser is. If you guessed Firefox ([aka IceWeasel](#)), you'd be right.



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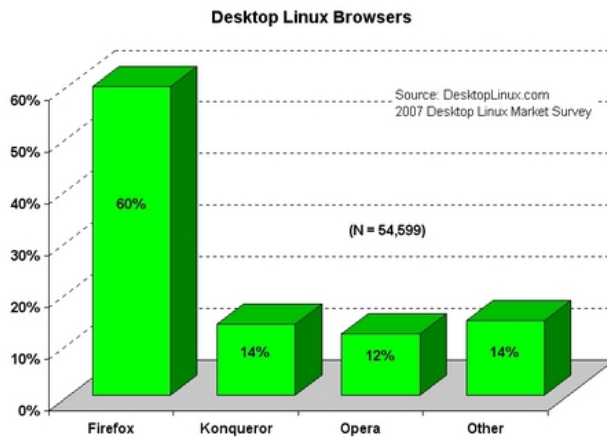
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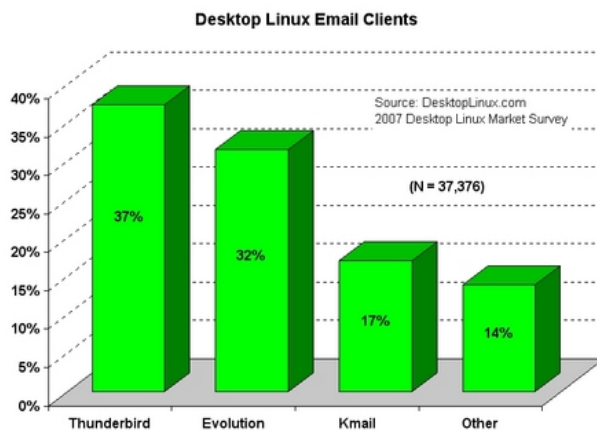


**Which web browsers do you frequently use on your Linux desktop(s)?**  
(Click to enlarge)

Linux users love their Firefox, with 60 percent of all users making it their web browser of choice. Trailing in the rear, you'll find KDE's Konqueror, with 14 percent, followed by what I find an interestingly strong performance by Opera, with 12 percent, and then the rest of the crew.

#### Email clients

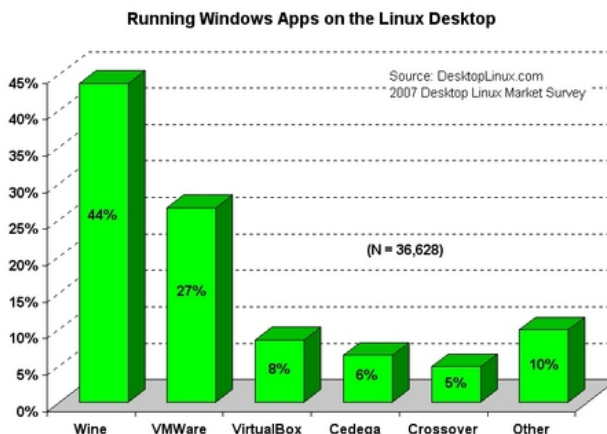
Thunderbird, Firefox's email sibling, is the most popular Linux email client, but it's not nearly as popular as Firefox. Thunderbird commands the loyalty of 37 percent of Linux users, but Evolution is right behind it at 32 percent. KMail takes third place with 17 percent. We also found that many Linux users -- over 10 percent -- have abandoned email clients for web-based email systems like Google's Gmail or Yahoo Mail.



**Which email clients do you frequently use on your Linux desktop(s)?**  
(Click to enlarge)

#### Running Windows applications on Linux

When it comes to running Windows applications on Linux, nearly half of our survey's respondents -- 39 percent -- say they simply don't bother.



**Which of these methods do you use to run Windows apps on your Linux desktop(s)?**

(Click to enlarge)

Of those that do, many turn to Wine ([Wine Is Not an Emulator](#)), which runs the Windows API (application program interface) on top of Linux. More than 44 percent use Wine for their Windows applications needs.

I suspect that many Wine users actually use Wine with the help of [programs that makes deploying Windows applications on Linux easier](#). However, of the two most important of these programs, [Cedega](#), which specializes in running Windows games on Linux, and [CrossOver](#), which focuses on Windows business and productivity applications, only 6 percent of our survey respondents said they used Cedega, while even less, 5 percent, said they used CrossOver.

What they did use, however, was [VMware](#), the well-known proprietary virtualization program, which was selected by 27 percent of all users. In third place was something of a shocker: [VirtualBox](#), with 8 percent. Why a shocker? Well, here at DesktopLinux.com, we like to think we've at least heard of all the popular Linux virtualization programs -- Xen, KVM, etc. -- but we've never heard of this one. Needless to say, we're going to be taking a closer look at VirtualBox soon.

Based on our survey results, we think that everyone should be taking a closer look at desktop Linux. What we see here is a quickly maturing line of desktops that are capable of replacing Windows desktops for both home and business uses.

The Linux desktop is gaining quickly in popularity, and it's not because of technology-happy fans. It's gaining users because it's an inexpensive, secure, and efficient alternative to today's mainstream desktop operating systems. After all, 38,000 plus users and two major PC companies can't be wrong.

For the full results of our survey, see the raw data on the [DesktopLinux.com survey site](#).

--*Steven J. Vaughan-Nichols*

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