

# Contributor Growth Strategies for OSS Projects

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# whoami



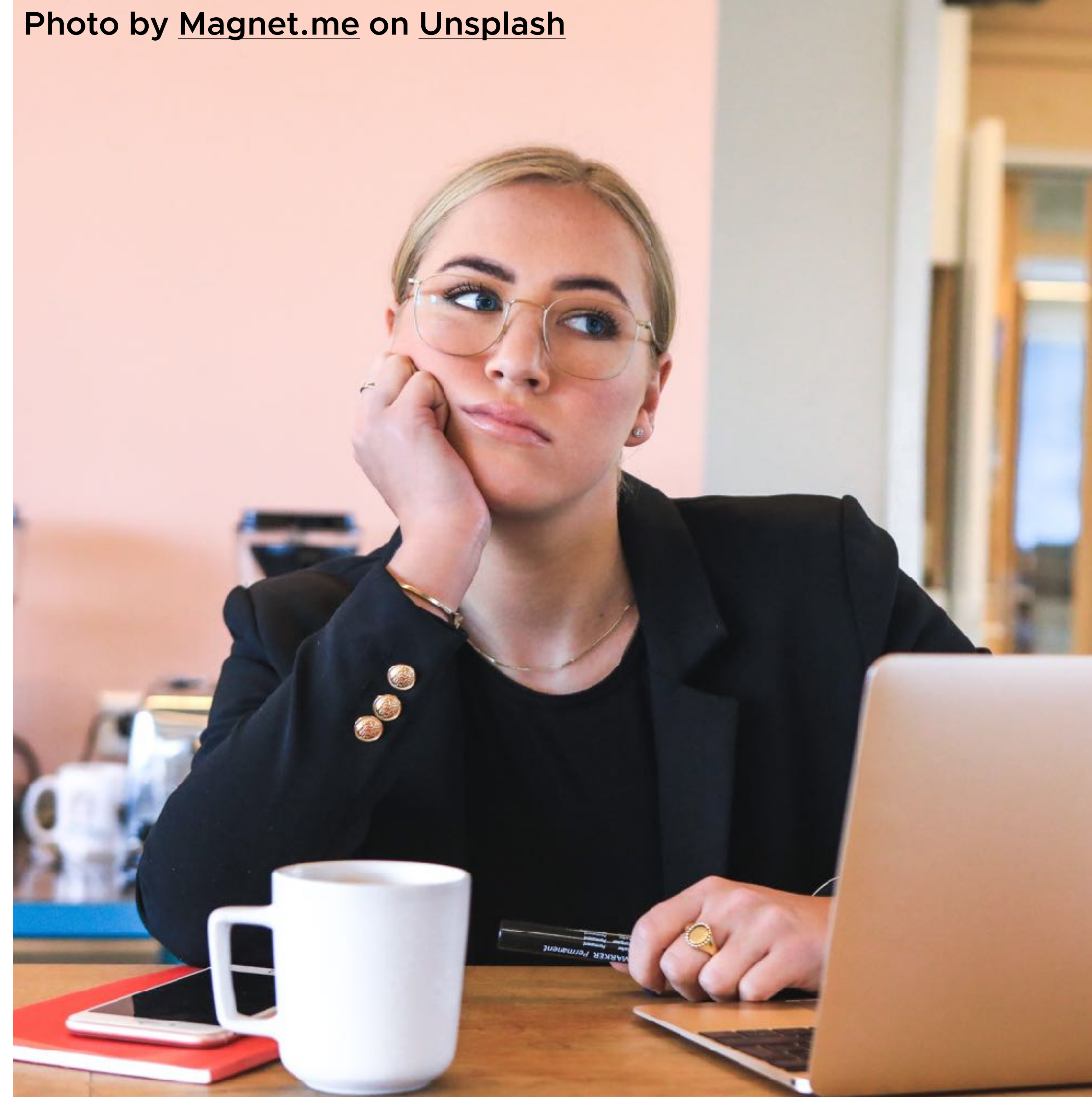
Photos by Mom, Josh Bancroft, Don Park

- Geek, traveler, reader
- 20+ yr tech career focused on community & open source (Intel, Puppet, Scale Factory, ...)
- OpenUK Board
- CHAOSS Board and Maintainer
- CNCF TAG Contrib Strategy co-chair
- PhD from the University of Greenwich focused on Linux kernel collaboration



# The Problem is Hard

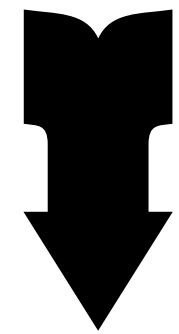
OSS projects are  
made by squishy,  
unpredictable humans



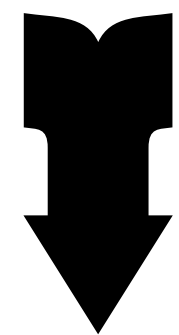


# Vicious Cycle

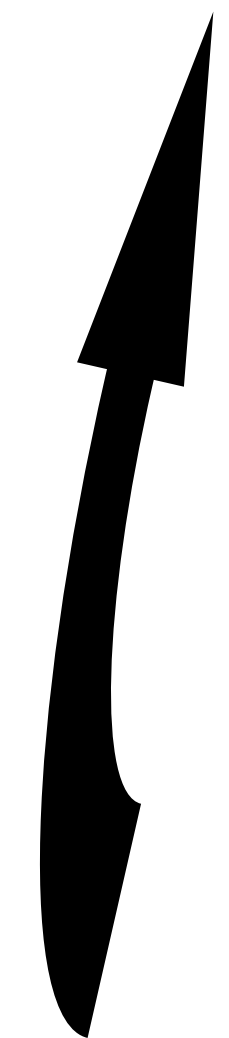
No time to onboard



Fewer contributors



More maintainer burnout





# Agenda

- Factors that Impact Contributor Growth
- Contributor Growth Strategies
- Contributor Ladders and Leadership
- Metrics for Measuring Project Sustainability
- Resources and Final Thoughts

**Photo by Marco Verch - CC BY 2.0**



# Developing and Executing on Contributor Growth Strategies



# Motivation

Squishy humans have  
complex motivations.  
We want to feel useful  
and appreciated.

👉 [contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/community/contributor-growth-framework/motivation](https://contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/community/contributor-growth-framework/motivation)





# Governance is all about the Humans

Set expectations for how people collaborate & make decisions

👉 [contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/templates/governance-intro](https://contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/templates/governance-intro)





# Be Explicit

Explicit, documented governance makes it easier for the humans to contribute



Photo by Andrew Watson - CC BY 2.0



# Onboarding Docs

Good docs for  
onboarding new  
contributors is step #1  
toward scaling maintainers

 [contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/templates/contributing/](https://contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/templates/contributing/)



# Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Building a welcoming  
and  
inclusive community

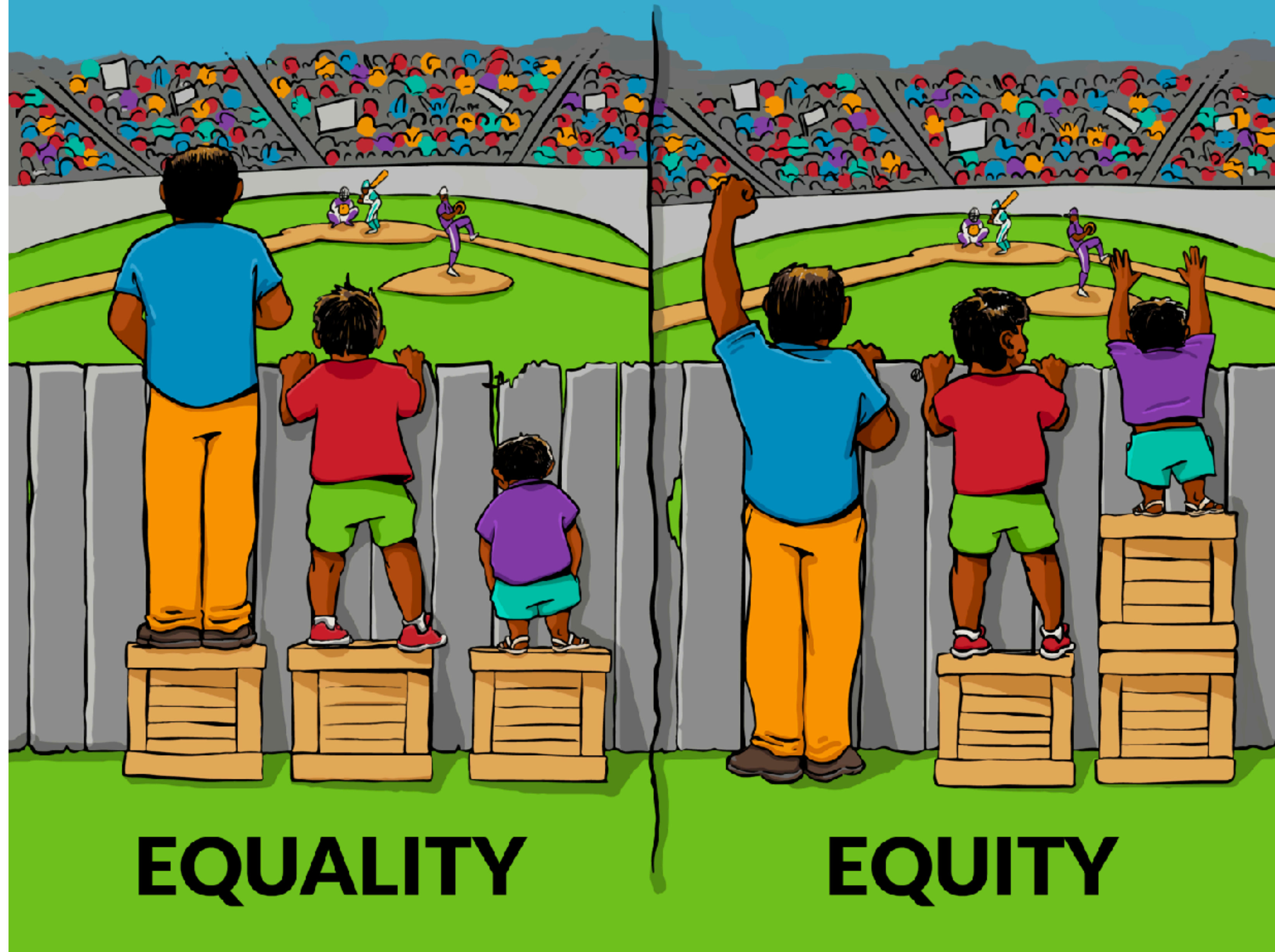


Image courtesy of the [Interaction Institute for Social Change](#) | Artist: [Angus Maguire](#).



# Contributor Ladders and Leadership



# Contributor Ladders

Move the humans up the ladder and into leadership roles to reduce maintainer workload.

👉 [github.com/cncf/project-template/blob/main/CONTRIBUTOR\\_LADDER.md](https://github.com/cncf/project-template/blob/main/CONTRIBUTOR_LADDER.md)





# Leadership

Humans can  
climb the ladder into  
leadership to reduce  
maintainer burden



👉 [contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/governance/leadership-selection](https://contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/governance/leadership-selection)



# Mentoring

Help the humans  
become more  
productive contributors



 [github.com/cncf/mentoring](https://github.com/cncf/mentoring)

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@geekygirl dawn



# Emeritus as a Goal

Set your project  
up for success  
after you move on





# Be Strategic

Think about where you can  
best spend your time to  
grow your contributor base

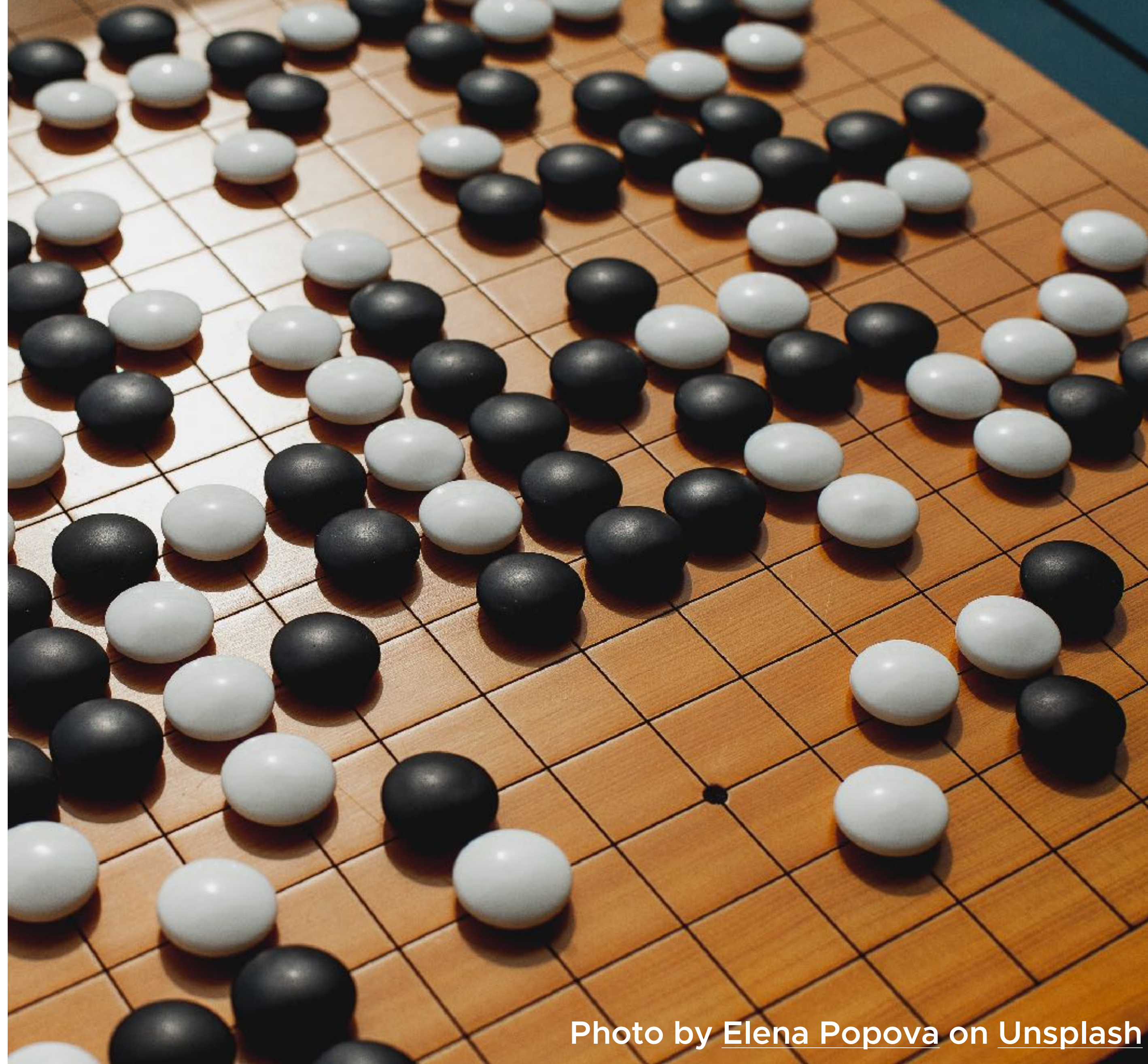
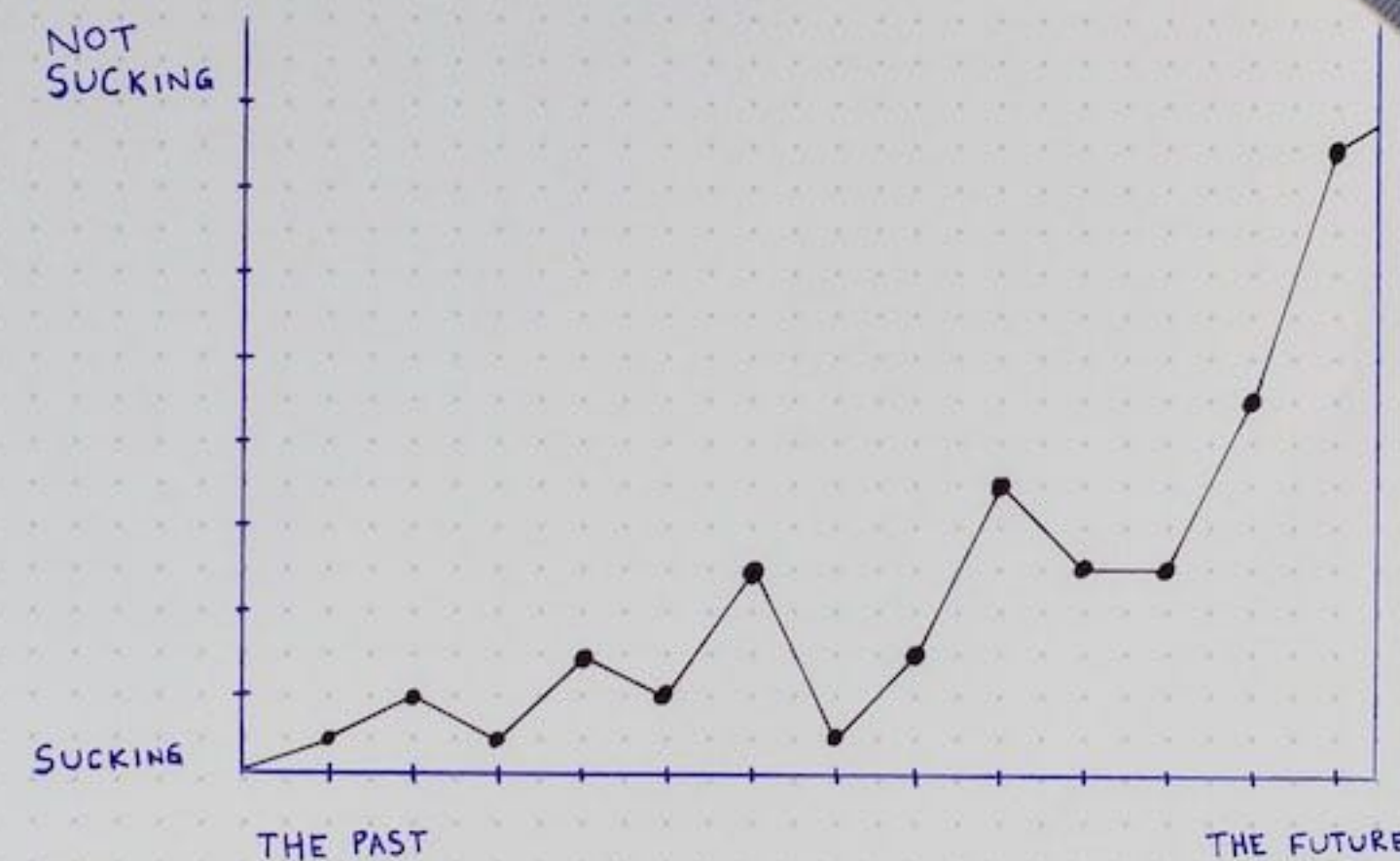


Photo by [Elena Popova](#) on [Unsplash](#)



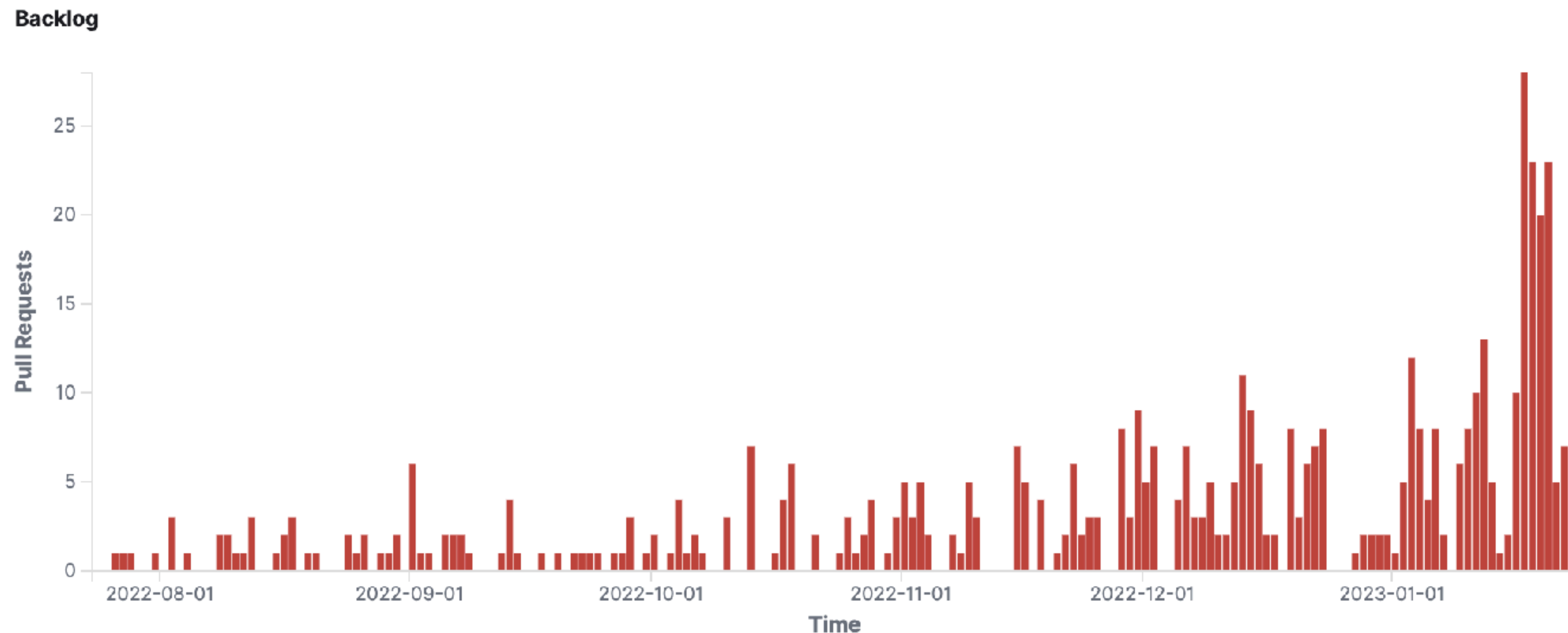


# Measuring Project Sustainability



# Responsiveness

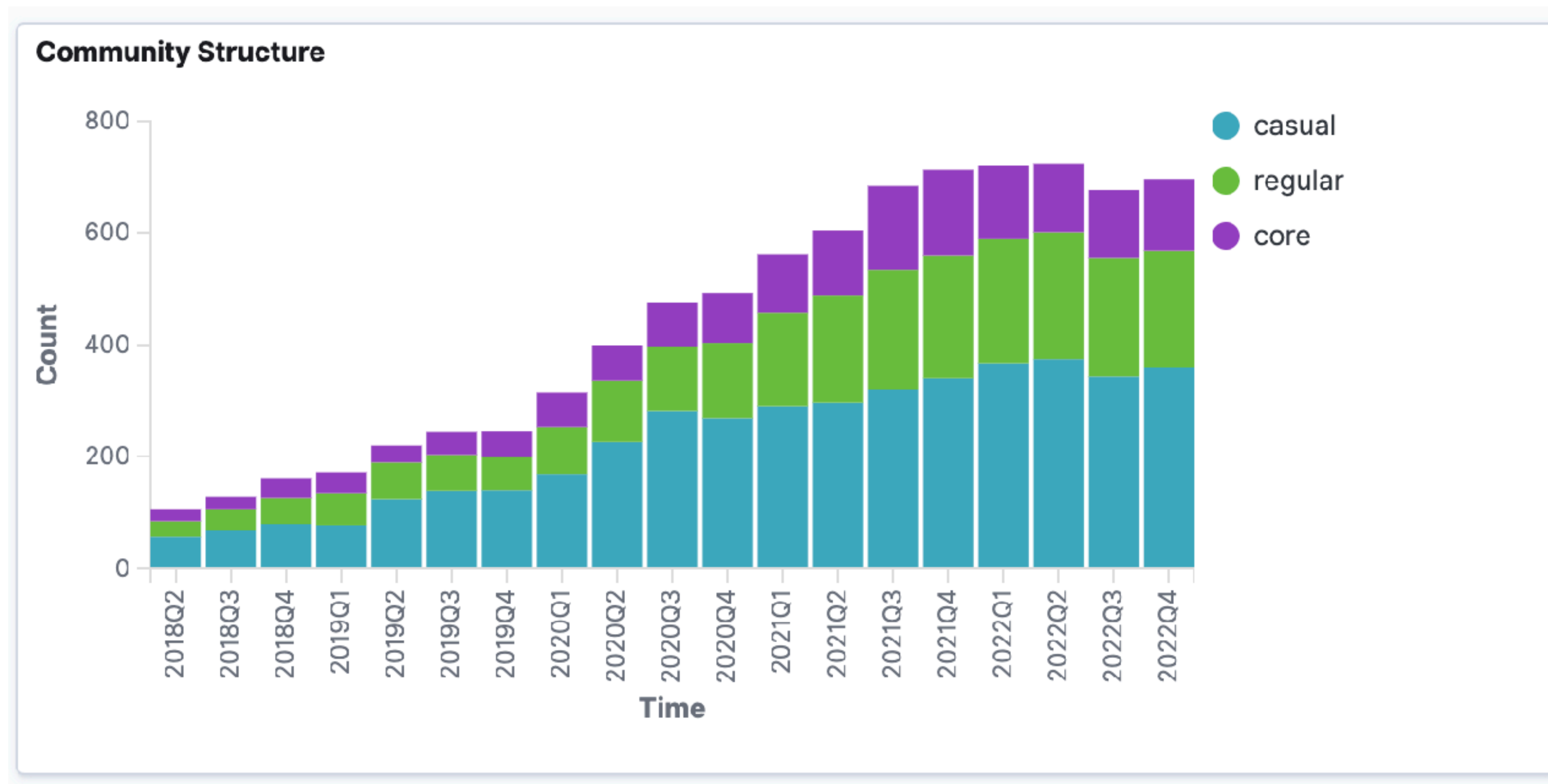
Contributors submitting PRs with no one to resolve / close them - may need to move more people into leadership





# Types of Contributors

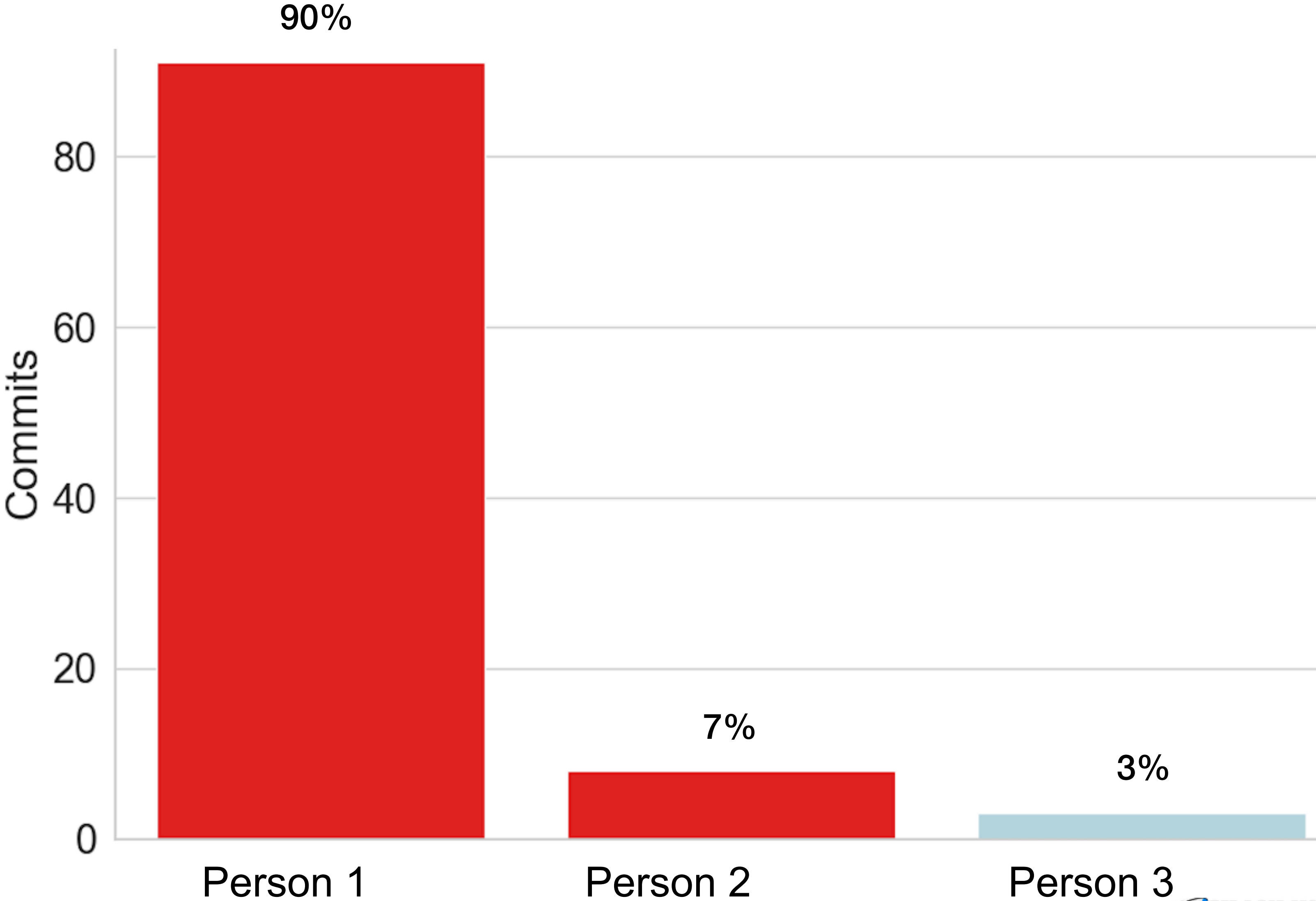
Few casual /regular contributors -> improve onboarding docs





# Lottery Factor

How big of an issue is it  
and  
who can you promote?





# Resources

## CNCF Contributor Strategy TAG Docs & Templates

[contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/](https://contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/)

[contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/community/contributor-growth-framework/](https://contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/community/contributor-growth-framework/)

[github.com/cncf/project-template](https://github.com/cncf/project-template)

## The Open Source Way Guidebook

[github.com/theopensourceway/guidebook/](https://github.com/theopensourceway/guidebook/)

## CHAOSS Metrics

<https://chaoss.community/>



# CNCF TAG Contributor Strategy Needs More Humans!

Join our **Slack Channel**

#tag-contributor-strategy (CNCF Slack)

Sign up for our **mailing list**

[lists.cncf.io/g/cncf-tag-contributor-strategy](https://lists.cncf.io/g/cncf-tag-contributor-strategy)

Drop in to our **meetings**

Go to [cncf.io/calendar/](https://cncf.io/calendar/) and search for contributor strategy!

Learn about the TAG and how to participate:

[cncf.io/contributor-strategy](https://cncf.io/contributor-strategy). 





# Final Thoughts

Humans can be difficult  
and growing your  
contributor base is hard.

It takes time now,  
but it is worth it later.







# Thank You!

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**Open Source at VMware**

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