

## Windows vs Linux, Is it fair to compare?

I am a avid Windows user. Sure I like to play around with the various distro's of Linux, but primarily I rely on Windows. Everywhere I go on the net no matter what the topic is, someone will always feel the duty to point out how much better and secure Linux is compared to Windows. On the surface they appear to be right, but you have to ask yourself Is this a fair comparison? Is it even a good comparison? The first thing Linux users always point to is security. They say that Linux users don't suffer from viruses, malware and attacks the way that Windows users do. On the surface this seems like a good argument, but if you dig deeper you will find the reasoning behind this argument is flawed. There is no argument that Windows dominates the marketplace. Depending on who you listen to, Windows is installed on between 80 and 90 percent of all personal computers. Apple has the majority of the remaining 10 to 20 percent, so that just leaves a small percentage of personal computers running Linux (although admittedly the percentage is growing). If I wanted to design a program or script, wouldn't I want to affect the most computers possible? Why would I write something that would affect only a very small percentage of computers? Also if I was looking for weaknesses in an operating system to exploit, wouldn't I look at the most popular one? Viruses and malware like their counterparts in humans need a certain population density in order to spread effectively. Viruses are much more prevalent, and spread quicker in big cities then in sparsely populated areas. That's because there are many more potential host's in the city and the virus has no problem finding its next target. On the other hand, in sparsely populated areas, people are less likely to have contact with an infected person and the virus dies out quickly. It's the same for computers. A virus or a similar piece of malware is far more likely to find other computers to infect if its written for Windows and therefore have a far better chance of spreading. So you see, Windows main vulnerability lies in its popularity. Linux users saying that they have better security is sorta like small town USA yelling at New York "we have better security because we have never had a terrorist attack!". Which brings me to my next point. Windows, being used by many more people means many more eyes looking for flaws. So they are found rather quickly and if one is found, there are many more voices to complain. Linux users are part of the open source culture and tend not to complain nearly as much and are more patient when awaiting fixes. My experience with Linux has shown me that it, like Windows has its problems. Patches and fixes are released often and finding drivers can be a pain, not to mention the lack of available software when compared to Windows. Don't get me wrong, I like Linux and applaud all the work that the Linux community has done. I am just pointing out that it also has its share of problems. To make any kind of comparison you have to look where Windows and Linux are on equal footing, Servers. There are just about as many Linux servers as there are Windows as a matter of fact Linux may even slightly dominate. I have hosted sites on both and have had no more problems on one then the other. I did sort of an informal poll with various administrators that tend to both operating systems. I asked "which is more reliable and easier for them to maintain". On both questions it was about an equal split with a slight edge going to Linux on reliability. Upon deeper probing I found that the operating system that the administrator had more experience with, was the operating system he saw as more reliable and easier to maintain.

In closing you can see that both operating systems has its own set of weaknesses and strengths and comparing one to the other is like comparing apples to oranges, it's all just a matter of preference. The next time you see someone comment about how much better Linux is then Windows ask yourself "is it, or is it just less tested?". Paul

## About the Author

I am a member of Usingyours and consider myself fairly knowledgeable on various subjects relating to computers. That doesn't mean that I consider mine the only opinion or even the right one so I welcome opposing views.

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