Open UX

Rocket Pool
Survey results

About & Methodology   Respondents   Take-Aways

About

About this project

OpenUX is supporting Rocket Pool with user research on node operator experience. Data gathering for this project is done through (a) a survey to community members and Rocket Pool node operators and (b) user interviews with node operators.

The project will run until end of year 2023 and will result in a publicly posted report.

In this survey findings document we want to share some findings that have come out of the survey. These findings will be further analyzed and contextualized in the final report.

For further info about this project, see the project hub:
https://open-ux.notion.site/Rocket-Pool-x-OpenUX-Public-Project-Hub-Fall-23-c15a1feacfab4673b170a287896b8dcf?pvs=4

About OpenUX

OpenUX is a collective of web3 native user researchers working to make crypto applications more usable and user-aligned. Collectively we've contributed to 30+ leading protocols, applications, and DAOs including Ethereum Foundation, Maker, MetaMask and Lens Protocol.
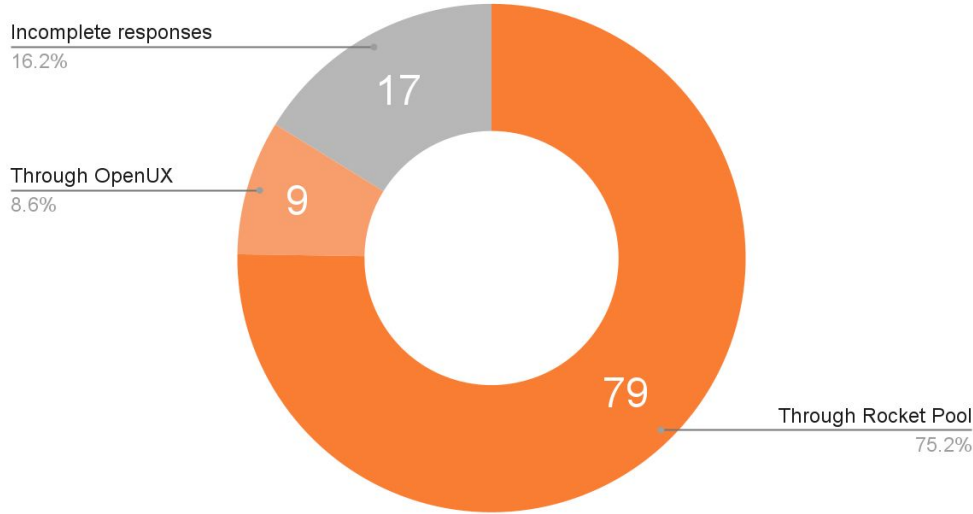
https://openux.xyz/

https://x.com/OpenUX_xyz

Who answered the survey

Respondents

Survey Responses

Incomplete responses
16.2%

Through OpenUX
8.6%

17

9

79

Through Rocket Pool
75.2%

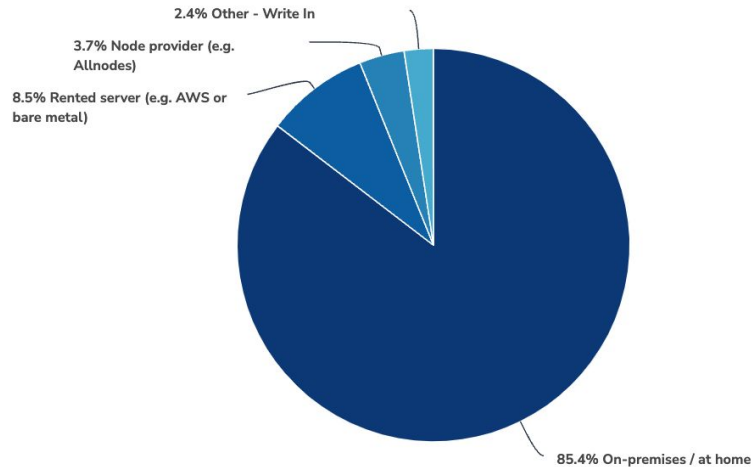The survey got 88 complete responses in total.

Through actively recruiting respondents outside Rocket Pool's channels a few RP node operators not active in the community responded. They were then recruited to the user interviews to get a wider representation of perspectives.

Reading this report, please note that the findings in this report are suggestive and not confirmed by statistical methods. The purpose of this report is to offer guiding insights, rather than definitive proof.

- **Method of Distribution:** The survey was shared both in Rocket Pool channels (Discord, Rocket Fuel) and outside Rocket Pool's channels (OpenUX's channels). Still, perfect distribution is never possible and this might have influenced the profile of the respondents. This aspect potentially limits the representativeness of our findings across a broader population.

- **Integration with Interview Study:** In conjunction with this survey, an interview study is conducted. The insights from these interviews are crucial in adding depth and context to the survey results, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the underlying reasons and narratives.

7. How are you currently running your Rocket Pool node(s)?

Rocket Pool Survey – Node Operator Experience

2.4% Other - Write In

3.7% Node provider (e.g. Allnodes)

8.5% Rented server (e.g. AWS or bare metal)

85.4% On-premises / at home

Home staking constitute the majority of survey respondents

On-premises / at home was by far the most common answer among survey respondents. However, this should not necessarily be seen as an estimation of how Rocket Pool node operators stake.
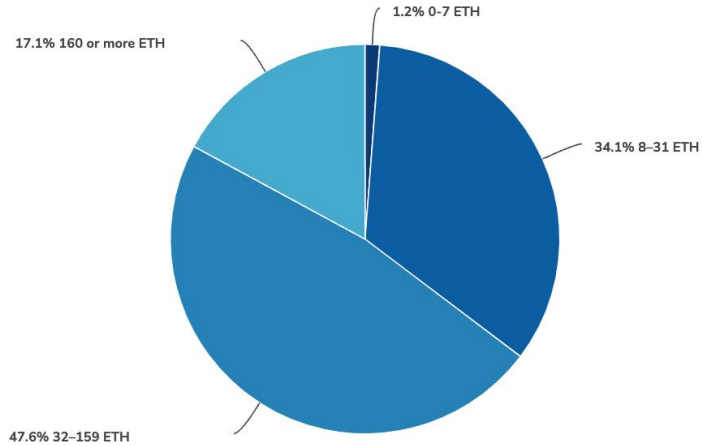
As of Nov 25, 26.3% of the 3378 nodes on Rocketscan used Allnodes' graffiti ("Rocket Pool ⚡ Allnodes"). Thereby we can conclude that Allnodes users were underrepresented among the survey respondents even though significant efforts were made to recruit users outside Rocket Pool's owned channels.

One reason could be that Allnodes users spend less time in the community during onboarding and could therefore be less engaged in the community.

Source: https://rocketscan.io/nodes

9. Approximately how much ETH do you have bonded in your Rocket Pool node(s)?

Rocket Pool Survey – Node Operator Experience

1.2% 0-7 ETH
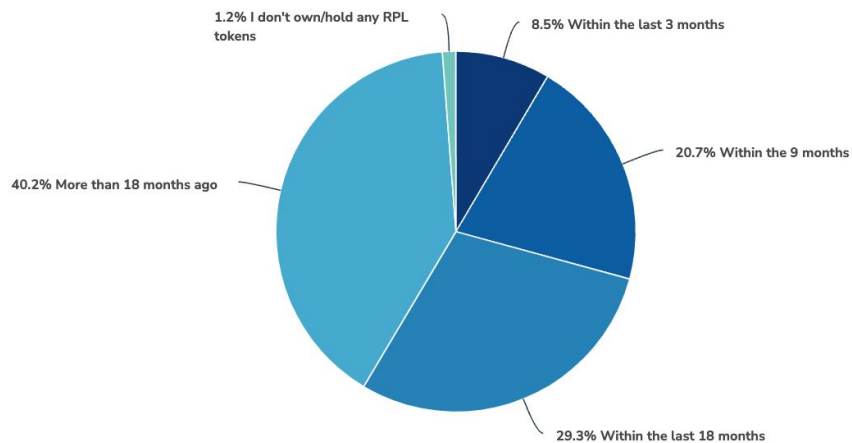17.1% 160 or more ETH
34.1% 8–31 ETH
47.6% 32–159 ETH

Even split between amounts of ETH staked

There was a fairly even split between the three defined groups based on how many ETH they had bonded in RP nodes. Large stakers were overrepresented in terms of percentages, as of Nov 25, 6.6% of the 3378 nodes on Rocketscan had more than 20 minipools (please note, that is not an exact comparison, but a reference to give a sense of proportions).

10. When did you acquire your RPL tokens (if you have acquired it multiple times mark the time of your biggest acquisition)

Rocket Pool Survey – Node Operator Experience

1.2% I don't own/hold any RPL tokens

8.5% Within the last 3 months

20.7% Within the 9 months

40.2% More than 18 months ago

29.3% Within the last 18 months

Majority of old RPL holders

The number of respondents who had made their biggest acquisition of RPL tokens in the last 9 months were in a minority.
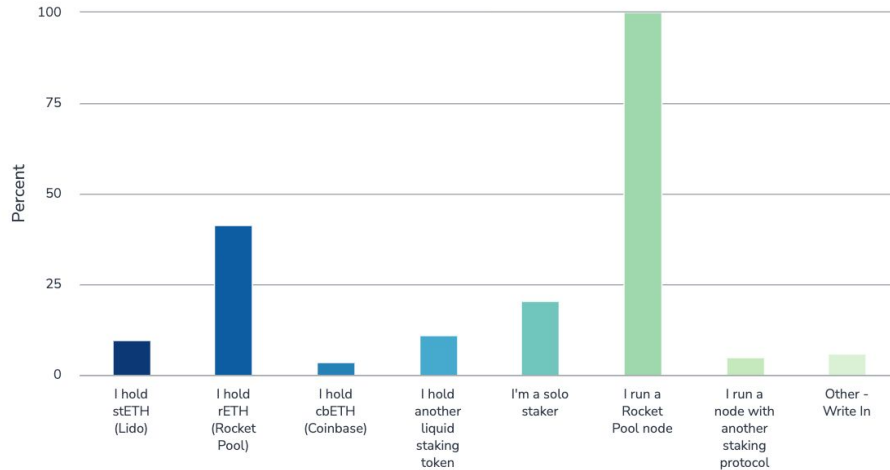
What we found

About & Methodology   Respondents   Take-Aways

1. Do you currently stake ETH through any of the following methods? (check all that apply)

Rocket Pool Survey – Node Operator Experience

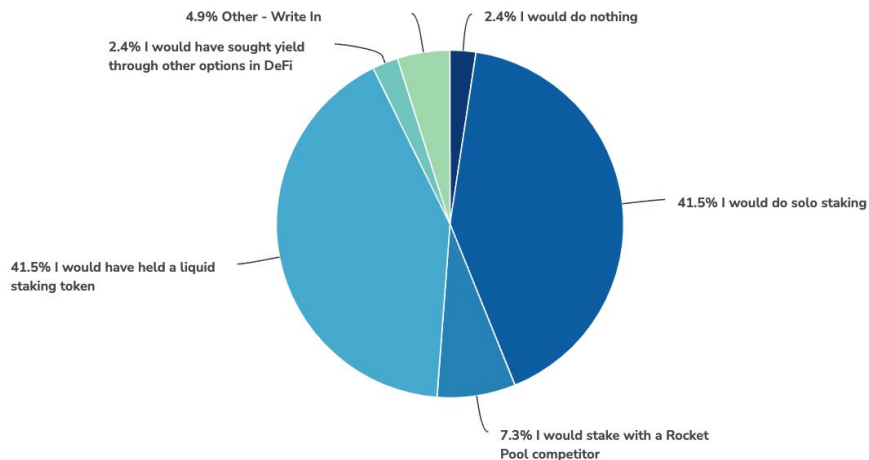## RP node operators stake in other ways too

Unsurprisingly many RP node operators hold rETH in addition to the ETH staked in their RP node. More interestingly some even hold liquid staking tokens from other protocols too.

A significant percentage of users also do solo staking.

The graph illustrates data from complete survey responses that have marked that they run a Rocket Pool node.

3. If you were not running a node with Rocket Pool, what would you have chosen to do with your ETH instead? If you might have done more than one of these, choose the one most likely for you.

Rocket Pool Survey – Node Operator Experience

4.9% Other - Write In

2.4% I would have sought yield through other options in DeFi

2.4% I would do nothing

41.5% I would do solo staking

41.5% I would have held a liquid staking token

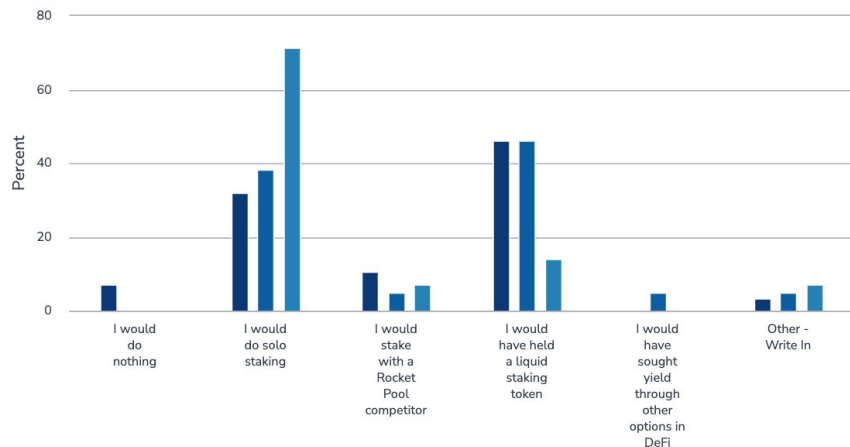7.3% I would stake with a Rocket Pool competitor

Solo staking & liquid staking tokens are primary alternatives

Among survey respondents solo staking and holding another liquid staking token are perceived to be the most attractive alternatives if the respondents could not run a RP node. It is worth noting that the fact these users have successfully set up a node likely makes being a solo staking more feasible compared to a similar audience who have not set up a node, i.e. preferences with a similar audience who have never set up a node likely skews to a liquid staking token preference.

The graph illustrates data from complete survey responses that have marked that they run a Rocket Pool node.

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3. If you were not running a node with Rocket Pool, what would you have chosen to do with your ETH instead? If you might have done more than one of these, choose the one most likely for you.

Rocket Pool Survey – Node Operator Experience

8 – 31 ETH BONDED
Respondents with 8 – 31 ETH bonded in their Rocket Pool node(s). For these respondents solo staking is currently not accessible given the amount staked, this likely shapes their decision to stake with RP.

32 – 159 ETH BONDED
Respondents with 32 – 159 ETH bonded in their Rocket Pool node(s). For these respondents the choice of staking with RP is an active choice as compared to solo staking.

160+ ETH BONDED
Respondents with 160+ ETH bonded in their Rocket Pool node(s). For these respondents the choice of staking with RP is an active choice as compared to solo staking. Given the size of these bonds, these respondents have added incentives to have an informed and optimized strategy for how they place their bonds.

The graph illustrates data from complete survey responses that have marked that they run a Rocket Pool node.

Solo staking preference correlates to size of bond
Solo staking is by far the most popular alternative to running an RP node for respondents with 160+ ETH bonded (400+% compared to second most popular alternative). While still popular for respondents with less ETH bonded the preference to solo stake correlated with bond size among the respondents.
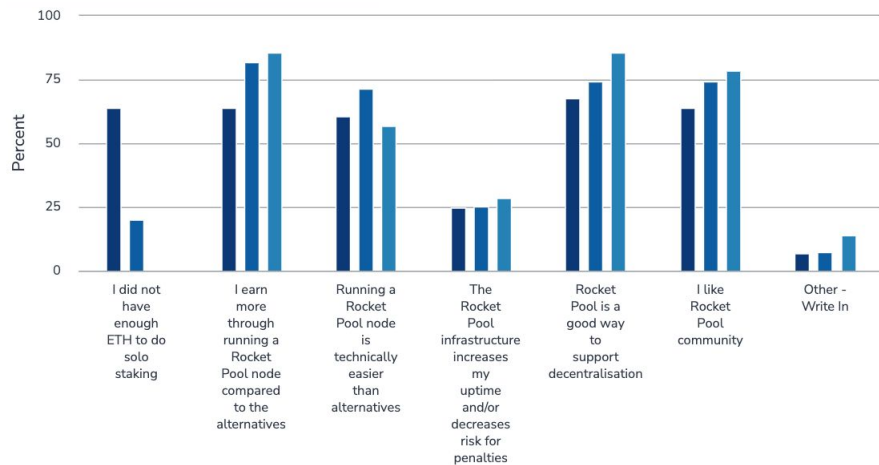
Liquid staking token
For users with up to 159 ETH bonded in their RP node(s), holding a liquid staking token was the most popular alternative. One explanation could be that respondents are guided by an impact/effort analysis when choosing among their alternatives, i.e. the less ETH that are bonded the lower impact in terms of yield on ETH, while the effort of setting up a solo staking node is constant regardless of the amount.

All groups seem loyal to RP
Few of the respondents answered that they would stake with a RP competitor. This is an indication that the respondents are loyal to RP. It would be interesting to compare these results with a similar audience not running an RP node to see how preferences among different protocols measure up.

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4. Why did you choose to run a node with Rocket Pool vs solo staking? Check all that apply.

Rocket Pool Survey – Node Operator Experience

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Relatively similar preferences regardless of bond size
Overall the reasoning behind why to choose RP is fairly similar across groups with different amounts bonded in RP nodes. The groups with larger amounts bonded report a slight increase for soft reasons (decentralisation & community).

Tangible utilities matter
83.9% of respondents answered either that they did not have enough ETH to solo stake, and/or that they chose to run an RP node since they earn more. Still, value alignment and community belonging are still important factors to the respondents.

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2. How would you assess your skills in the following areas?

Rocket Pool Survey – Node Operator Experience

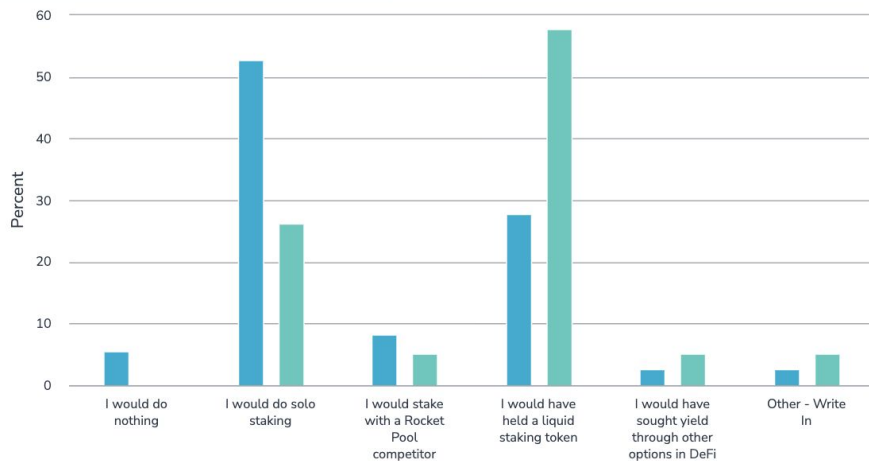|	None - I don't know this	Novice - Beginner	Competent - Capable	Proficient - Skilled	Expert - Highly skilled	Responses
Programming (any language) Count Row %	7 8.5%	24 29.3%	18 22.0%	13 15.9%	20 24.4%	82
Solidity smart contract development Count Row %	50 61.0%	24 29.3%	4 4.9%	3 3.7%	1 1.2%	82
Hardware, how to set up and run a server Count Row %	1 1.2%	17 20.7%	30 36.6%	25 30.5%	9 11.0%	82
Software, how to set up and run a server Count Row %	2 2.4%	24 29.3%	19 23.2%	27 32.9%	10 12.2%	82
Knowledge of how Ethereum works and ETH tokenomics Count Row %	0 0.0%	7 8.5%	37 45.1%	31 37.8%	7 8.5%	82

High technical ability, but few smart contract developers

While the survey respondents had a quite high technical ability in general (self assessed), very few respondents were proficient in solidity smart contract development.

The graph illustrates data from complete survey responses that have marked that they run a Rocket Pool node.

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3. If you were not running a node with Rocket Pool, what would you have chosen to do with your ETH instead? If you might have done more than one of these, choose the one most likely for you.

Rocket Pool Survey – Node Operator Experience

HIGH TECHNICAL ABILITY
Fulfills at least ONE of the following criteria (self assessed)
- Programming (any language)
  - Proficient - Skilled
  - Expert - Highly skilled
- Solidity smart contract development
  - Proficient - Skilled
  - Expert - Highly skilled
- Software, how to setup & run a server
  - Expert - Highly skilled

LOWER TECHNICAL ABILITY
Fulfills ALL of the following criteria (self assessed)
- Programming (any language)
  - None - I don't know this
  - Novice - Beginner
- Solidity smart contract development
  - None - I don't know this
- Software, how to setup & run a server
  - None - I don't know this
  - Novice - Beginner

The graph illustrates data from complete survey responses that have marked that they run a Rocket Pool node.

Liquid staking token
Holding a liquid staking token would be by far the most attractive alternative for RP node operators with lower technical ability. The difference between users with lower and higher technical ability is large.

Solo staking
Among RP node operators with higher technical ability being a solo validator would be the primary alternative for most. Given that not all respondents with high technical ability have the funds to be staking solo this alternative is likely even higher from a preferential standpoint.

Lower TA solo staking
Approximately 25% of respondents with lower technical ability answered that they would be solo staking. That is surprisingly large given the difficulty of onboarding solo staking. This is an indication that node operators onboarding RP build skills and confidence that can enable them to wider participation in the Ethereum ecosystem.

11. On RPL staking. How much do you agree with the following statements?

🔵 Rocket Pool Survey – Node Operator Experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Responses
If I could be a Rocket Pool node operator without staking RPL, I'd still stake it because the rewards outweigh the risks Count Row %	8 9.8%	13 15.9%	15 18.3%	27 32.9%	19 23.2%	82
RPL token price volatility reduces the attractiveness of being a Rocket Pool node operator Count Row %	4 4.9%	7 8.5%	11 13.4%	35 42.7%	25 30.5%	82
Since I became a Rocket Pool node operator my attitude toward the RPL token has become more positive Count Row %	10 12.2%	20 24.4%	19 23.2%	24 29.3%	9 11.0%	82

Attitudes toward the RPL token

A majority of respondents reported that they would still stake RPL even if they did not have to since the rewards outweigh the risks. That said, most respondents still think that the volatility of the RPL token is a negative factor for RP node operators.

Attitudes can shift over time. There was approximately an even share who agreed vs disagreed to the statement that they had become more positive to the RPL token since they became RP node operators. It should be noted that this survey was live during the period when the RPL token price bottomed after a multiple month long downward trend, this timing likely affected preferences among respondents to some extent (median response date was 27th of October, 2023).

The graph illustrates data from complete survey responses that have marked that they run a Rocket Pool node.

What's next

User Interviews with RP node operators of different profiles to get more contextual insights into the pain points of onboarding and opportunities to improve the UX.

User Shadowing user setting up a RP node on the Holesky testnet, documenting each step of the process.

Final project report will be published end of 2023 with insights from the user interviews together with advice on how to improve the user experience for node operators.

November 2023

Rocket Pool Node Operator UX

An OpenUX report
Written by Victor Länsman, Research Lead OpenUX

OpenUX