GNOME Documentation Project

Empathy Users Study

July 2009

About this Document

This document represents the results of the *non professional* survey ran from the end of June 2009 to the 7th July 2009 in order to collect information about the use of the instant messaging application Empathy[1].

The survey was done for the GNOME Documentation Project[2] (and whoever would like to use these data).

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About GNOME

GNOME[4] offers an easy to understand desktop for your GNU/Linux or UNIX computer.

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1   http://live.gnome.org/Empathy
2   http://live.gnome.org/DocumentationProject
3   http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/
4   http://www.gnome.org/

The Survey

The goal of this study was to address some of the problems people have using the instant messaging application Empathy. What we wanted to know was information about what tasks users find difficult to accomplish in order to write a more specific documentation.

The survey consisted of 22 questions: 20 of these questions were multiple choice or selections, 2 were open questions were users could write their impressions.
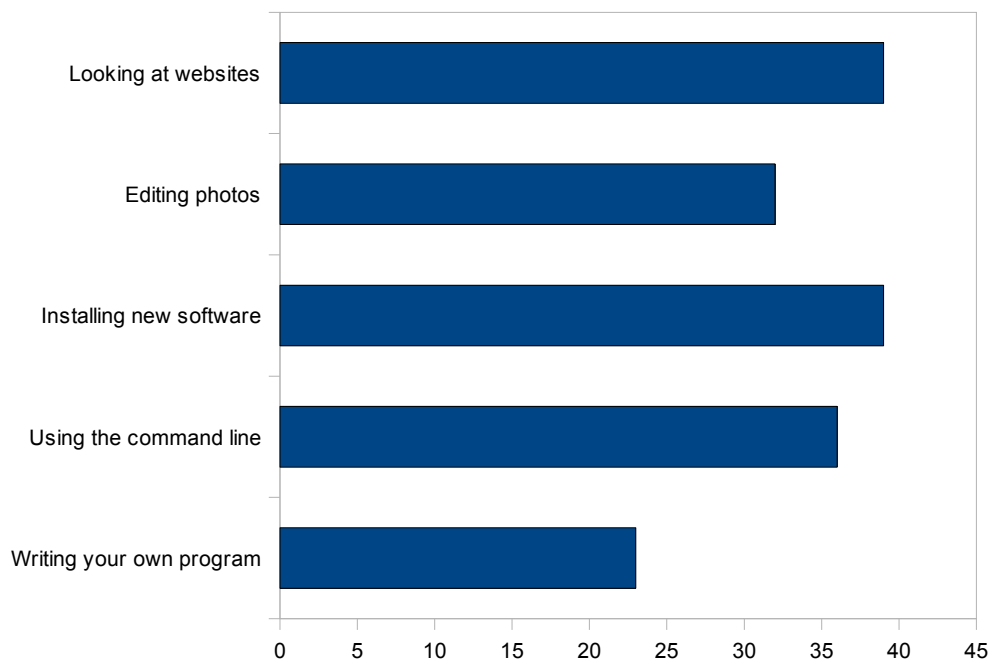
The survey has been completed by 41 people.

The Results

What follows are the results of the survey.

Question 1

Which of the following tasks do you feel comfortable doing?

For this question we have more than 41 results: users could select more than one choice. We wanted to know which was the level of experience of the users taking the survey. The five tasks can be viewed as five levels of experience:
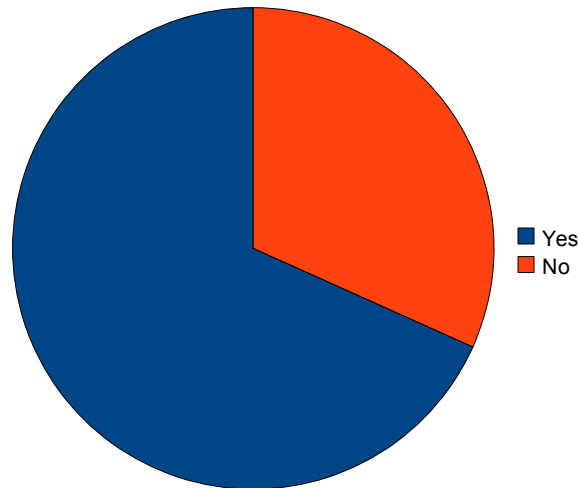- Novice
- Advanced Beginner
- Competent
- Proficient

– Expert

Most of the users that took this survey are in the Proficient and Expert level of experience.
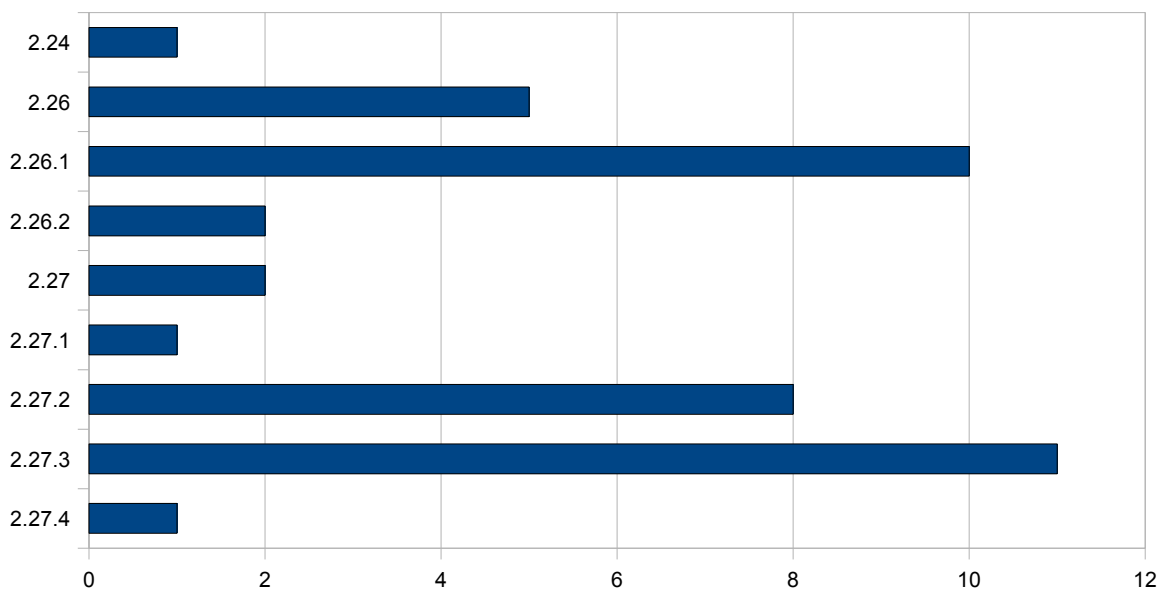
Question 2

Do you use Skype or have used it?

With this question we wanted to know if people use Skype in order to add a section in the documentation explaining why you can't call your Skype contacts with Empathy.
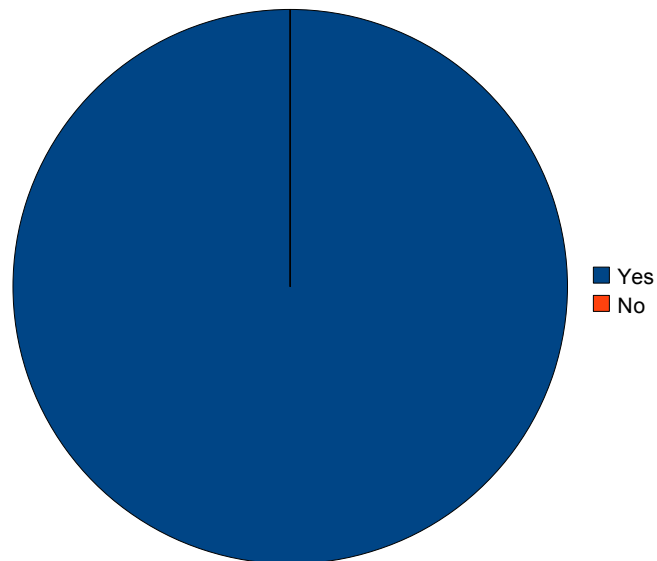
Question 3

Which is the version number of Empathy you are using?

With this question we wanted to know what was the most used version of Empathy of the people doing the survey.

Question 4

*Did you find easy to launch Empathy?*

With this question we wanted to know if people find easy to launch Empathy. The instructions on how to launch an application are usually contained in the documentation of that application, making them almost useless: if you find the manual, usually you already had launched the application.

From a documentation POV there is no easy way to tell end users how to launch an application after it has been installed. Advanced users probably can guess the application command or know where to look in the menu structure.
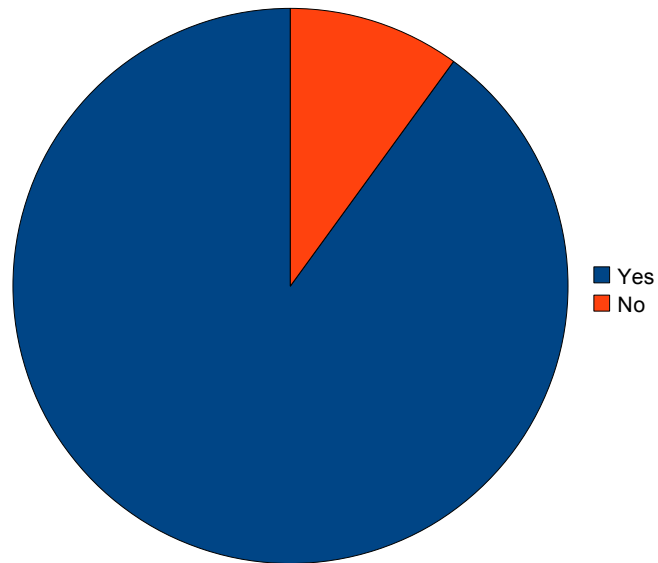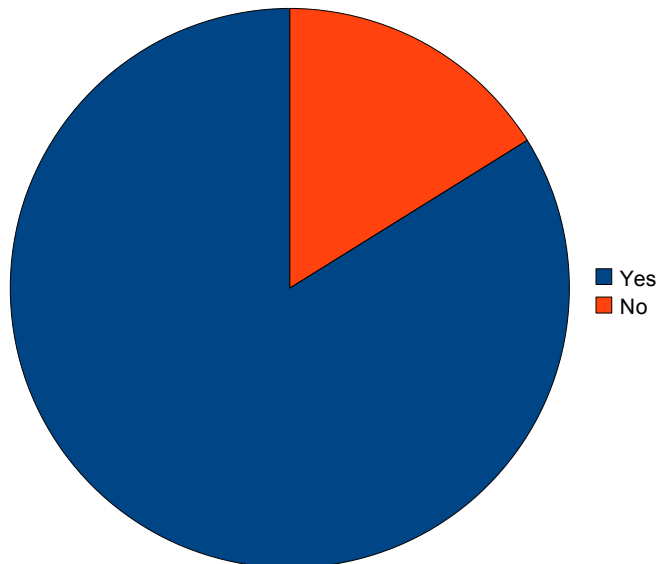
Question 5

How did you launch it?
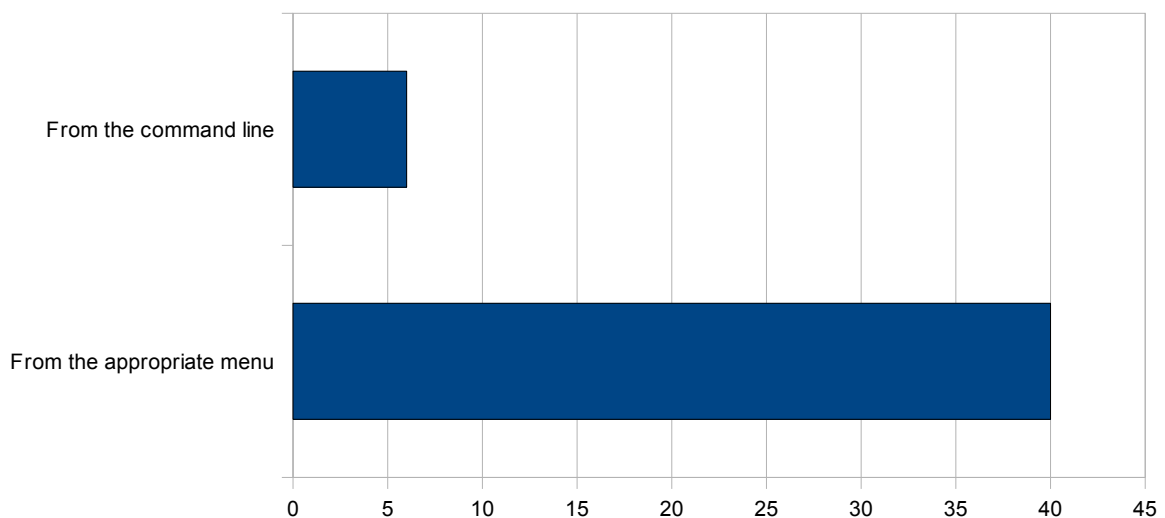
Question 6

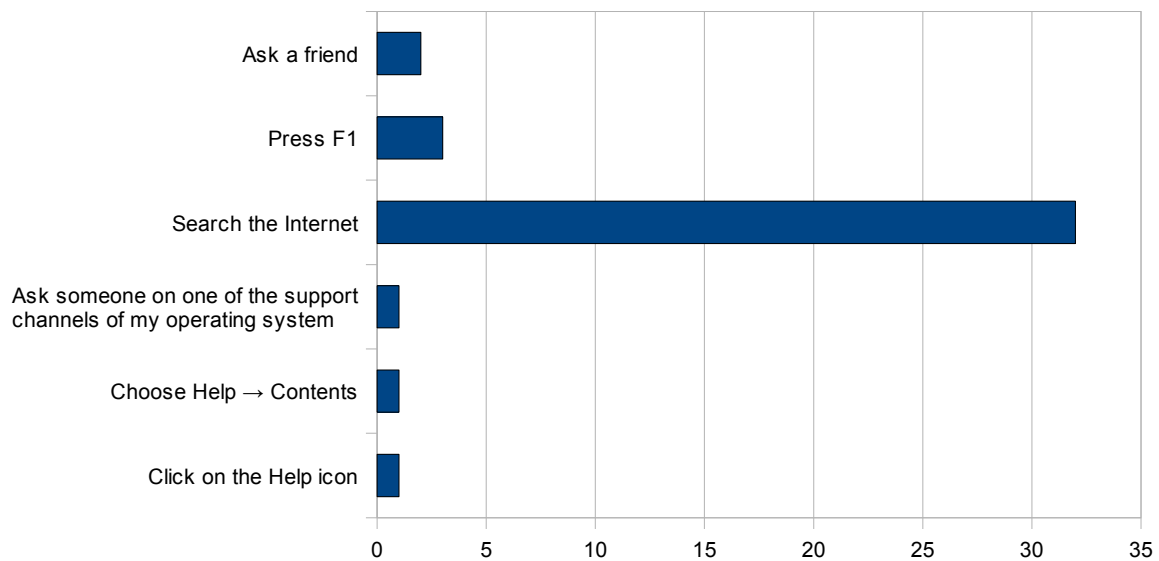*If you launched it from the menu at the top of the screen, did you find it easy to find after you installed it?*

- Yes
- No

Question 7

If you launched it from the command line, did you know which command to type?
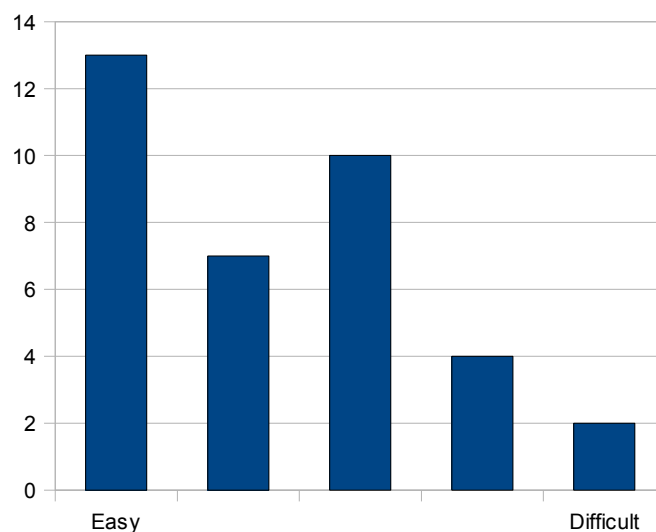
- Yes
- No

Question 8

If you encounter a problem or something you do not understand, what is the first thing you do?

The vast majority of the people do not rely on system documentation for resolving their problems. Internet is the most used help system.
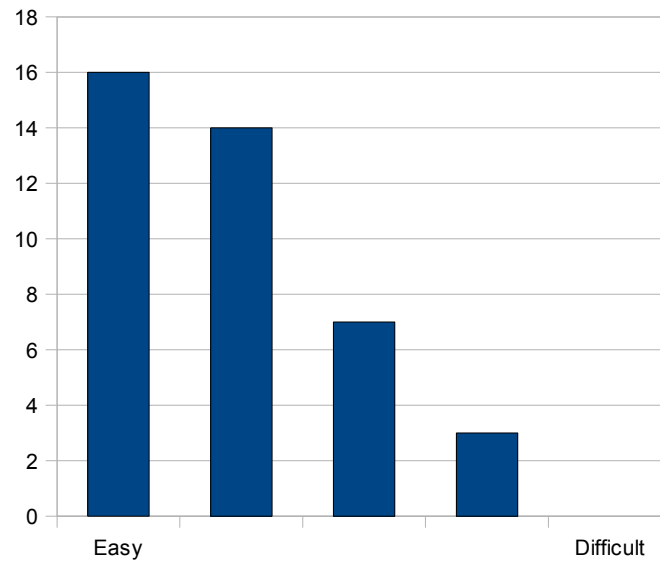
Question 9

In a scale from 1 to 5, how easy is to create an instant messaging account?
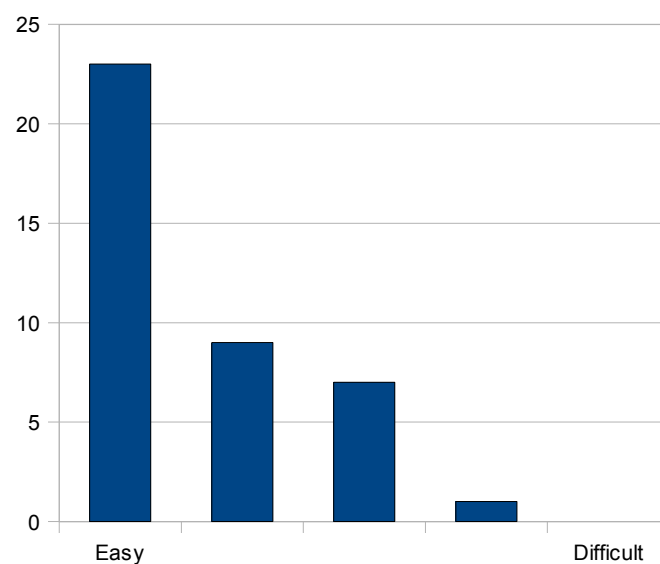
Question 10

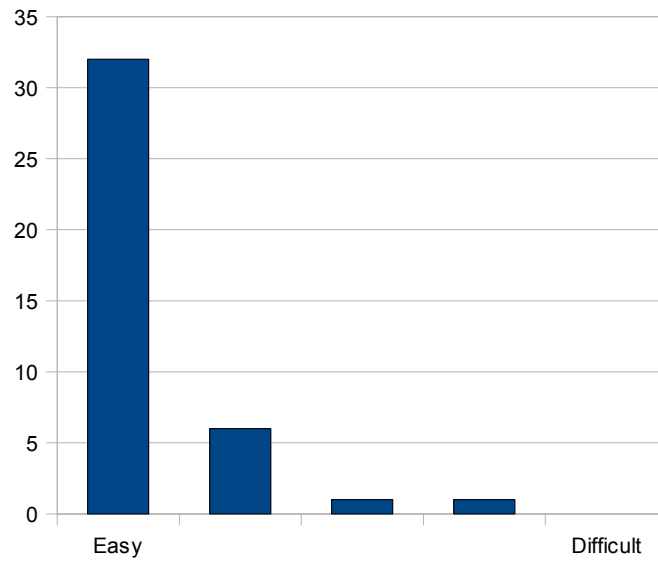*In a scale from 1 to 5, how easy is to add an instant messaging account to Empathy after you created it?*

Question 11

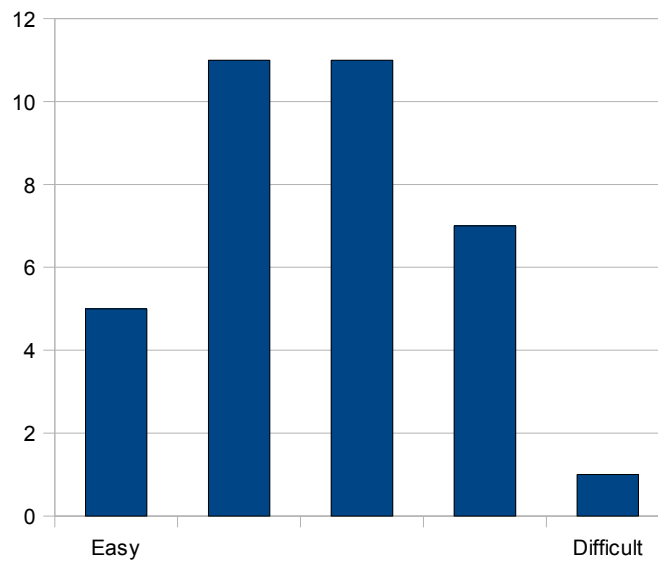*In a scale from 1 to 5, how easy is to remove or disable an account in Empathy?*

Question 12

In a scale from 1 to 5, how easy is to start a conversation with another person?
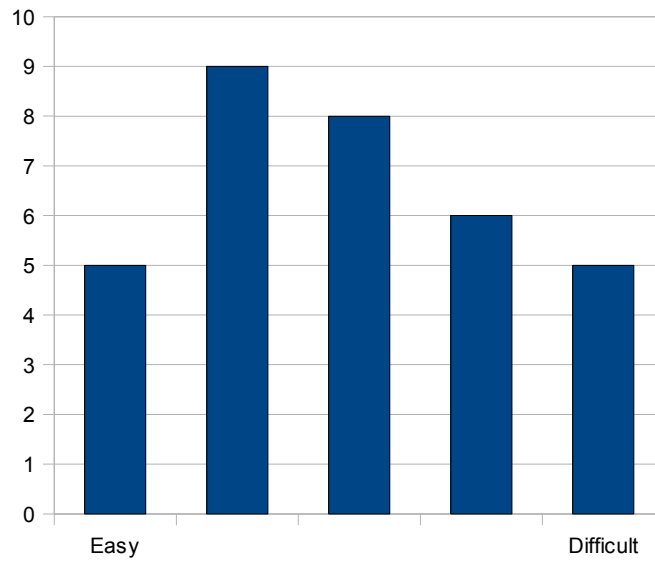

Question 13

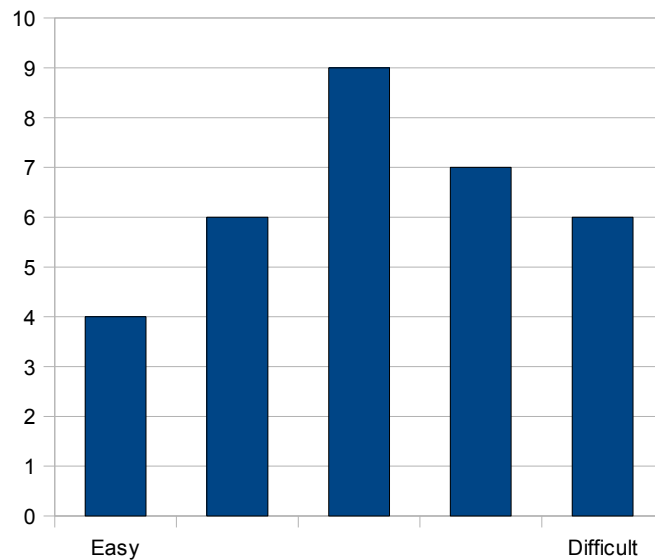*In a scale from 1 to 5, how easy is to send a file to another person?*

Question 14

In a scale from 1 to 5, how easy is to add an IRC account to Empathy?

Question 15

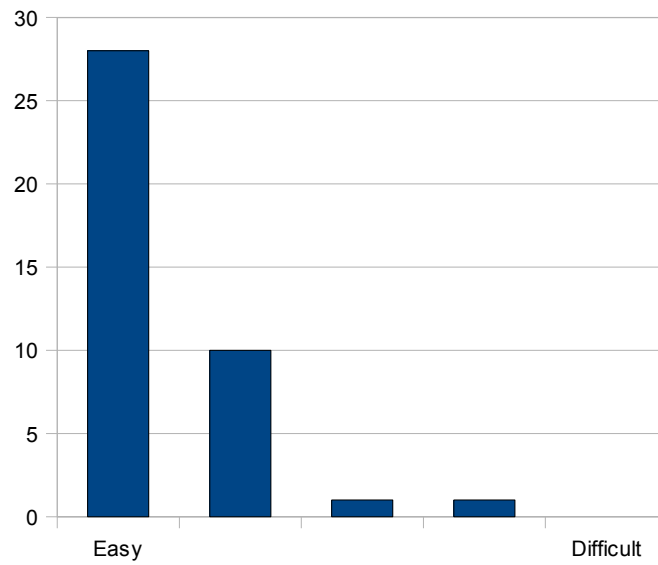*In a scale from 1 to 5, how easy is to use the IRC chat with Empathy?*

Question 14 and question 15 show that Empathy IRC feature is probably the most difficult to use of all. This problem needs to be addressed in a proper way in the documentation.

Question 16

In a scale from 1 to 5, how easy is to change your status?

Question 17

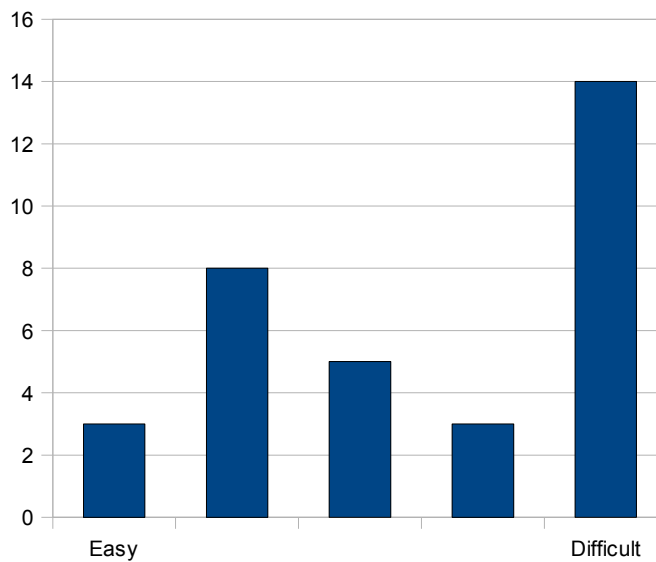*In a scale from 1 to 5, how easy is to change your status message and save it?*
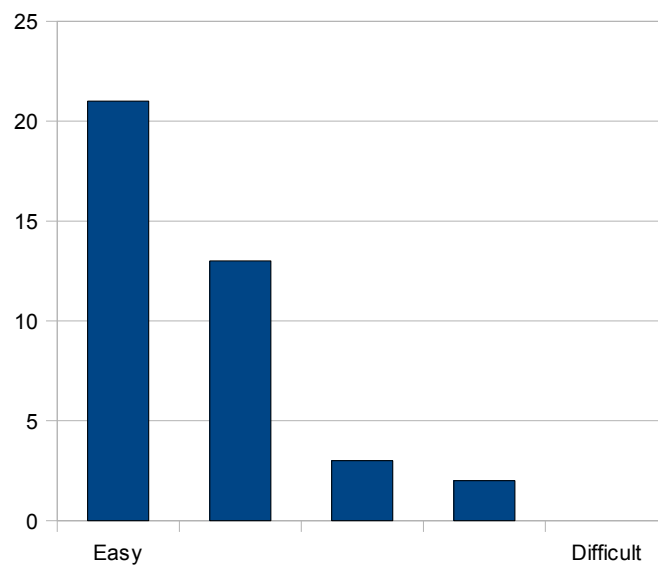
Question 18

In a scale from 1 to 5, how easy is to search your previous conversations?
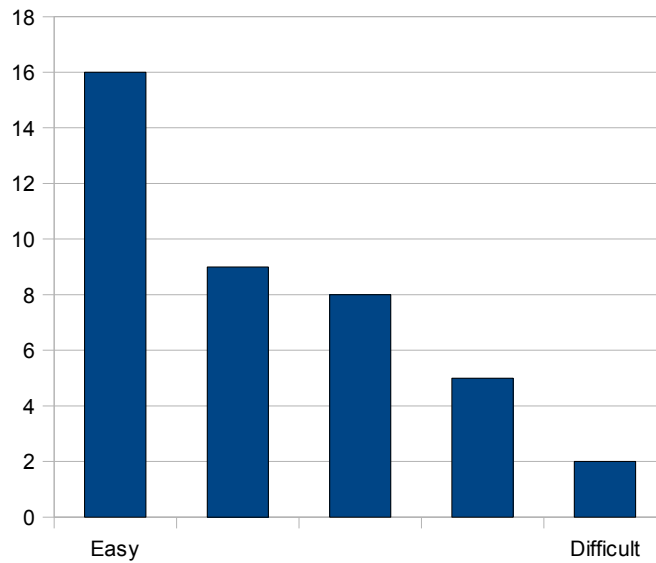
Question 19

In a scale from 1 to 5, how easy is to have a voice/video conversation with another person?

Another difficult to use feature. Problems in this case could arise also from operating system issues like lack of camera support or audio problems.

Questions 20 and 21

Open questions

These are the suggestions/problems reported.

- What to check if audio/video doesn't work.
- How do I setup voice/video chat? Do I need to forward any ports?
- How does irc work? How can someone join an irc chat room?
- what actions are supported with what connections and why they might not work eg video with a friend using gtalk
- How to initiate a standard / voice / video chat or file transfer.
- empathy should fix those critical bugs first,documentation should explain in point of view of users who are accustomed to yahoo and gmail and msn.I personally use yahoo chat and gtalk very much.so documentation should explain about connecting to users,staying connected.how to converse in a room ethics/rules,how to use voice chat and video chat.problems and correction for voice and video chat.etc and where to look for help when needed apart from help menu.
- Adding and creating accounts are the probably the thing that need to be better documented. Especially IRC connections are not very easy to setup/manage. But that's also a problem with the IRC support in empathy beeing very weak right know. In 2.27 it's really a pain-
- How do you join a chatroom that is protected by a password?
- Why doesn't it do anything when I click Room -> Join New -> Refresh? Why can't I call anyone using SIP? There is no SIP option in the Add Accounts dialog.
- Common problems, such as problems connecting to accounts, i.e. what to check, a trouble-shooting guide.
- Is there video?
- How to tell Empathy about the accounts that you have
- how not to be a jerk when asking question on the #telepathy channel (maybe I should add that on the Empathy FAQ)
- *Who* can i have a voice/video conversation with. What are the protocol/service limitations?
- How can I do a audio/video chat?
- How canfigure my Gtalk account?
- sound issues (I am not getting any sound notification from Empathy.)
- The geopisition stuff is really cool
- I don't like the fact that it does not open a window for me when someone talks to me.
- How to *test* is the micro/webcam works? There should be a "test" contact who repeat what you say and show your image exactly as in a real conversation.
- What does the "I already have an account" check box do? The application didn't help me sign up for an ICQ account when unchecked. Explain this process clearly.
- What to do when something just does not work, this should be both distro-specific and general documentation of where to start looking or what to do. IE. i couldnt get gtalk filetransfer to work, and to use irc, i had to manually install telepathy-idle in ubuntu jaunty -> There could be page "Issues" and in there "What to do if protocol X is not in the protocol menu" -> general document might point out to "look for telepathy/empathy plugins from add/remove software, distro specific

document would add (in case of ubuntu) install telepathy-X from package manager. Something like that :P

– Which protocols support video/audo chat?
– Docs/FAQ should list which features are supported by which protocols. eg voice chat for xmpp,sip, gtalk only, file transfer for salut,xmpp only. a nice table would be useful.

Question 22

If asked, would you take part to other studies like this one?
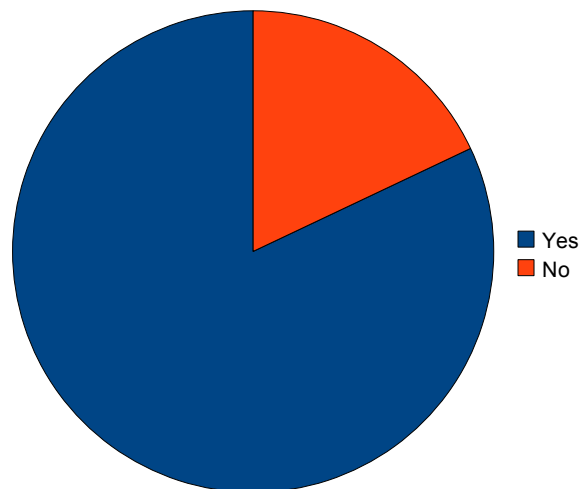
Just to test if people are happy to be part of a survey! :)

Thank you for reading this boring document!