



2016

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Annual  
Salary Survey

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## About the IAI Salary Survey

The Information Architecture Institute (IAI) conducts an annual salary survey to capture data about the demographics, experience level, compensation, and organization characteristics of information architecture practitioners. It is meant to serve as a barometer for the state of the profession and help people to understand and explain their relative value to employers. The information was collected in good faith to serve our community, not to try to identify individuals and their personal compensation. Salary survey data is kept separate from member lists.

The most recent Salary Survey and surveys from previous years can be found online at <http://www.iainstitute.org/research>. Please send any feedback or requests to [info@iainstitute.org](mailto:info@iainstitute.org).

Continuing from the previous two years, the 2016 Salary Survey goals included:

- Increase response rate from younger / more-junior practitioners
- Elicit greater number of international responses
- Continue to increase accuracy of compensation results, particularly for the upper salary ranges
- Continue to increase awareness and sensitivity for gender identity

Small refinements were made to the 2016 survey, including the reordering a few of the demographic questions, adding additional top ranges for Years of Industry Experience and Tenure in Current position, and increasing the top range for organization size from 3000 to 5000. We continued to use simplified question language, included higher salary brackets and free-text response salary to nearest \$1000, and adjusted the gender question to a free-text response to allow people to more comfortably self-identify. Geographic information for country and US State responses was collected via dropdown selectors and free-text response for metropolitan area.

## Methodology

We conducted the 2016 IAI Salary Survey from February 11 to May 4, 2017, as a lead up to World IA Day through IA Summit and shortly after. As in past years, we invited members of [the IA Institute](#), [IxDA](#) and [sigia-I](#) to participate and promoted a link to the survey through IAI emailed newsletters, Twitter, and LinkedIn. In total, 391 people responded. Those who did not include a salary range were removed from salary calculations.

You may download the expanded results from <http://iainstitute.org>. We removed geographic data from the results due to concerns about the privacy of individuals in places where a small, easily identifiable population of respondents live.

We collected survey responses using a SurveyMonkey form. The survey had 18 questions covering age, gender, education, experience, total compensation, freelance rates, management, and teaching levels. We collected job titles as free-text responses to gain a broader sense of how people are professionally identified. These were then categorized according to typical industry groupings.

All figures are represented in US dollars. The survey included a link to a currency converter for respondents using non-US currency. To maintain comparability to prior iterations of the survey, we asked respondents to choose a salary range. This makes it impossible to estimate a true average or median salary. In our analysis, we estimated the median for various data points using the salary range and then averaging that figure.

To gain a better sense of upper ranges, we included ranges up to \$250,000. We calculated mean salary in two ways: including and eliminating the "More than \$250,000" and "Less than \$10,000" groups, which do not have a true midpoint. We present median salary estimates, based on midpoints, for comparison purposes, but it is better to read the survey results in terms of a percentage that falls within a range rather than a specific salary.

In an effort to gain greater precision, we also asked respondents to provide their salary to the nearest \$1000. Though this method had fewer responses, calculations were made and are presented for an additional comparison point.

## **About the Information Architecture Institute**

The Information Architecture Institute (IAI – formerly The Asilomar Institute for Information Architecture “AlfIA”) is a 501(c)6 professional organization that supports the practice of Information Architecture. Through education, advocacy, services, and social networking, IAI supports a community of practitioners, leading the way in demonstrating the value of information architecture to the world at large, and providing a framework for members to improve their skills and enhance their professional standing.

## Results Summary

- 391 responses – a 12% increase from 2015 survey
- 30 countries – US (223 responses, 57%), non-US (168 responses, 43%)  
+2 countries and 4% increase in non-US responses from 2015
- Mean salary overall decreased 5.1% (non-adjusted US dollars) from 2015
  - Modal salary range: \$120,000 – 129,999 (29 responses)
  - Mean salary using midpoints: \$89,383 (-5.1% from 2015)
  - Mean salary excluding top/bottom ranges: \$92,855 (-1.6% from 2015)
  - Mean salary based on responses to nearest \$1000 (285 responses):  
\$92,545 (median: \$86,000) (-7.1% from 2015)
- Mean US salary increased 0.74% (non-adjusted) from 2015
  - Modal salary range: \$80,000 – 89,999 & \$120,000 – 129,999 (tie, 23)
  - Mean salary using midpoints: \$112,451 (+0.74% from 2015)
  - Mean salary excluding top/bottom ranges: \$109,286 (+1.28% from 2015)
  - Mean salary based on responses to nearest \$1000 (182 responses):  
\$114,959 (median: \$106,500) (+4.2% from 2015)
- Mean salary by gender: Female = \$84,806 (-6.8% from 2015) Male = \$94,375 (-1.6% from 2015)
- Bachelor's represent 32.2%, Master's 49.5%, Doctorate 1.5%
- Mean salary by education: Bachelor's = \$84,615 (-9.2% from 2015), Master's = \$95,833 (-2.8% from 2015), Doctorate = N/A (too few responses to be meaningful) (consistent with 2015)
- Freelance payment type (removing N/A and skips for 84 responders) (could check all that apply)
  - Hourly: 59
  - Per diem: 12
  - Per project: 22
  - Commission: 0
  - Equity: 1

- Other: 1 (yearly)
- Freelance rates (not excluding “outliers” and using midpoints when range given):
  - Hourly range: \$10 – 325 (\$30 – 300 in 2015)
  - Hourly median: \$65 (\$77.51 mean) (\$100, \$108.96 in 2015)
  - Per diem rates, ranged: \$4 - \$1000 (given the wide range and small sample size of 22 responses, additional analyses were not conducted)

## Respondent Demographics

### International

| Country                   | Responses | %    |
|---------------------------|-----------|------|
| <b>United States</b>      | 223       | 57.0 |
| <b>United Kingdom</b>     | 26        | 6.6  |
| <b>Canada</b>             | 20        | 5.1  |
| <b>Russian Federation</b> | 20        | 5.1  |
| <b>Italy</b>              | 19        | 4.9  |
| <b>Spain</b>              | 16        | 4.1  |
| <b>Germany</b>            | 9         | 2.3  |
| <b>India</b>              | 8         | 2.0  |
| <b>Mexico</b>             | 6         | 1.5  |
| <b>Switzerland</b>        | 5         | 1.3  |
| <b>Singapore</b>          | 4         | 1.0  |

Other countries responding: Australia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Netherlands, South Africa = 3 each;

Chile, Japan, Sweden = 2 each;

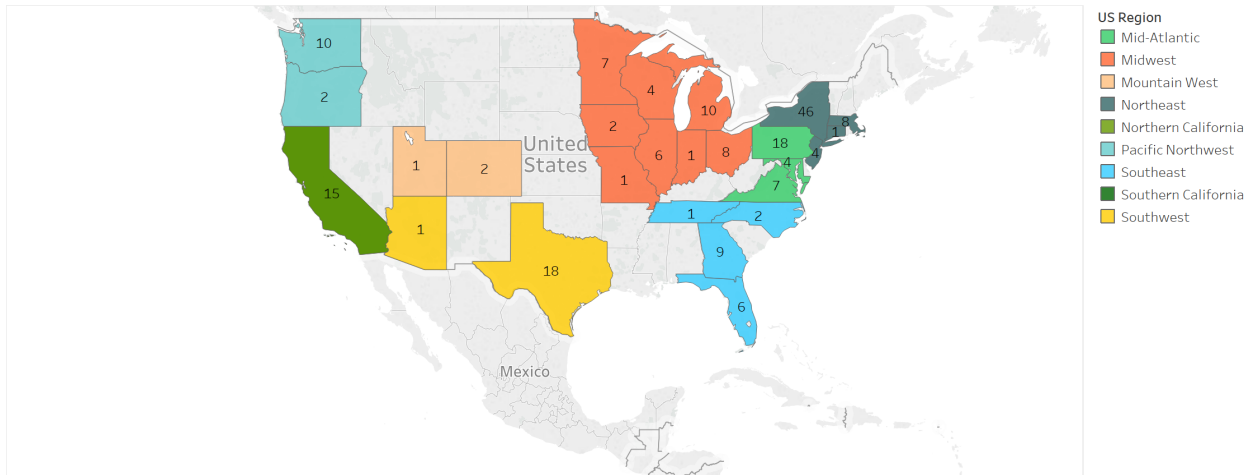
Single responses from (listed alphabetically): Albania, Belarus, China, Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Ireland, Philippines, Portugal, Ukraine, Vietnam.

Responses were received from 30 countries. As with prior years, the United States resulted in the majority, but less heavily than usual. Other English-speaking nations: UK and Canada increased responses, while Australia remained with few responses. Brazil responses tailed off after a strong showing last year, while the Russian Federation maintained its strong presence.

## United States Responses by State & Region

223 Responses

States



See the interactive version:

<https://public.tableau.com/profile/sfitz#!/vizhome/IAInstituteSalarySurvey2016WIP/States>

Respondents represented 26 states plus Washington DC, with fewest responses from the Mountain West region and no responses from Alaska, Hawaii, and US Territories.

### US Responses by Region

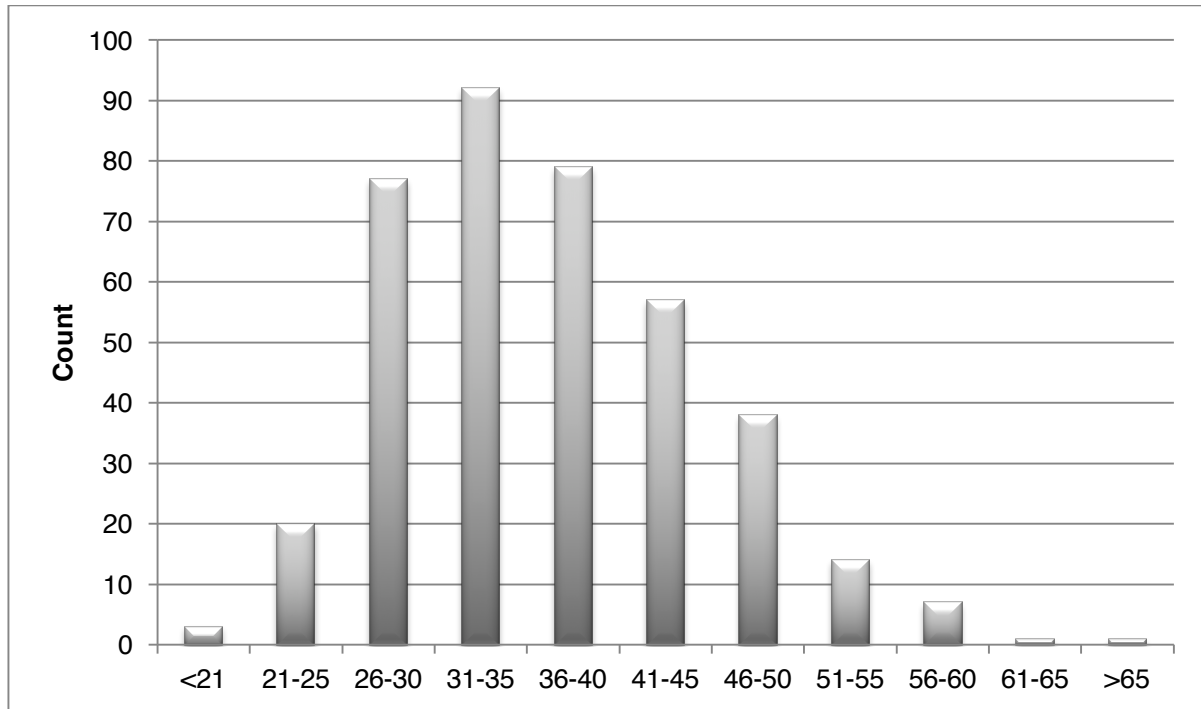
| Region              | Responses | %    |
|---------------------|-----------|------|
| Northeast           | 59        | 26.5 |
| Mid-Atlantic        | 42        | 18.8 |
| Midwest             | 40        | 17.9 |
| Southwest           | 19        | 8.5  |
| Southeast           | 18        | 8.1  |
| Northern California | 15        | 6.7  |
| Southern California | 14        | 6.3  |
| Pacific Northwest   | 12        | 5.4  |
| Mountain West       | 3         | 1.3  |

Within the US, the Northeast produced the most responses. Though the east coast (Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, Southeast), with 119 (53.4%) of responses, was more represented than the west coast (Northern and Southern California, Pacific Northwest), with 41 (18.4%) of responses the west did show an increase from 2015. After the most responses in 2015, the Midwest had fewer this year.



## Age

389 Responses

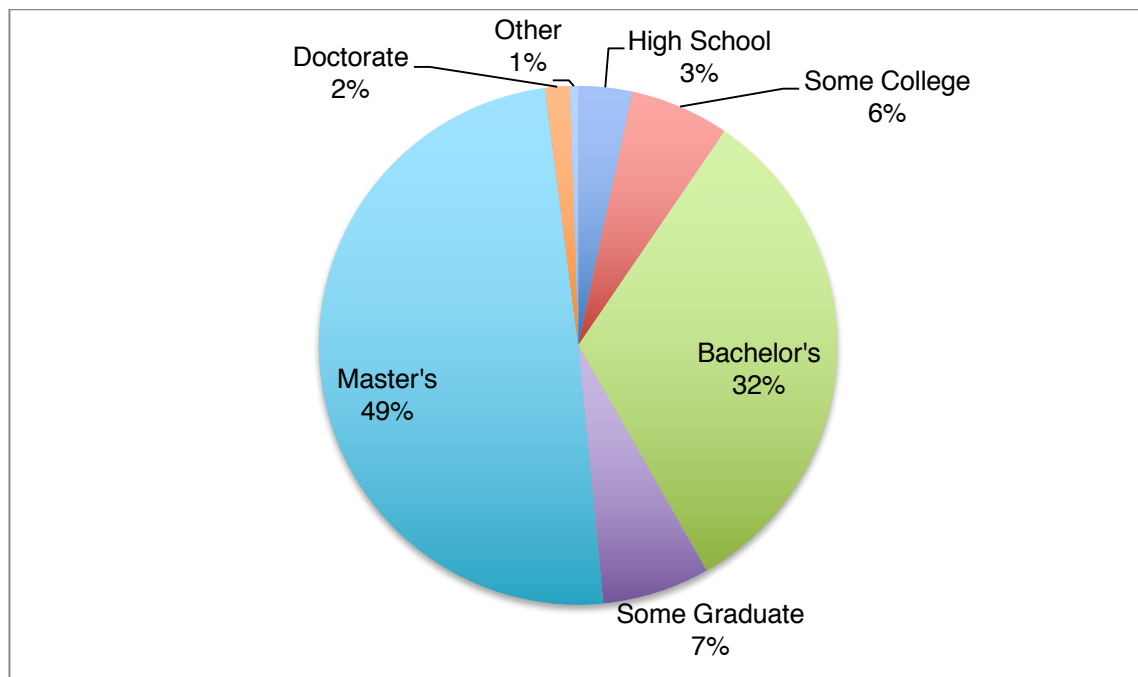


| Age Range              | Responses | %    |
|------------------------|-----------|------|
| <b>Younger than 21</b> | 3         | 0.77 |
| <b>21-25</b>           | 20        | 5.1  |
| <b>26-30</b>           | 77        | 19.8 |
| <b>31-35</b>           | 92        | 23.7 |
| <b>36-40</b>           | 79        | 20.3 |
| <b>41-45</b>           | 57        | 14.7 |
| <b>46-50</b>           | 38        | 9.8  |
| <b>51-55</b>           | 14        | 3.6  |
| <b>56-60</b>           | 7         | 1.8  |
| <b>61-65</b>           | 1         | 0.26 |
| <b>Older than 65</b>   | 1         | 0.26 |

Most of the respondents (228, 58.3%) were between the ages of 31 and 45. Distribution across the ranges remained similar to 2015, with a slight uptick in percentage of responses from 30 and younger brackets and slight decrease in 56 and older compared to 2015.

## Education

388 Responses



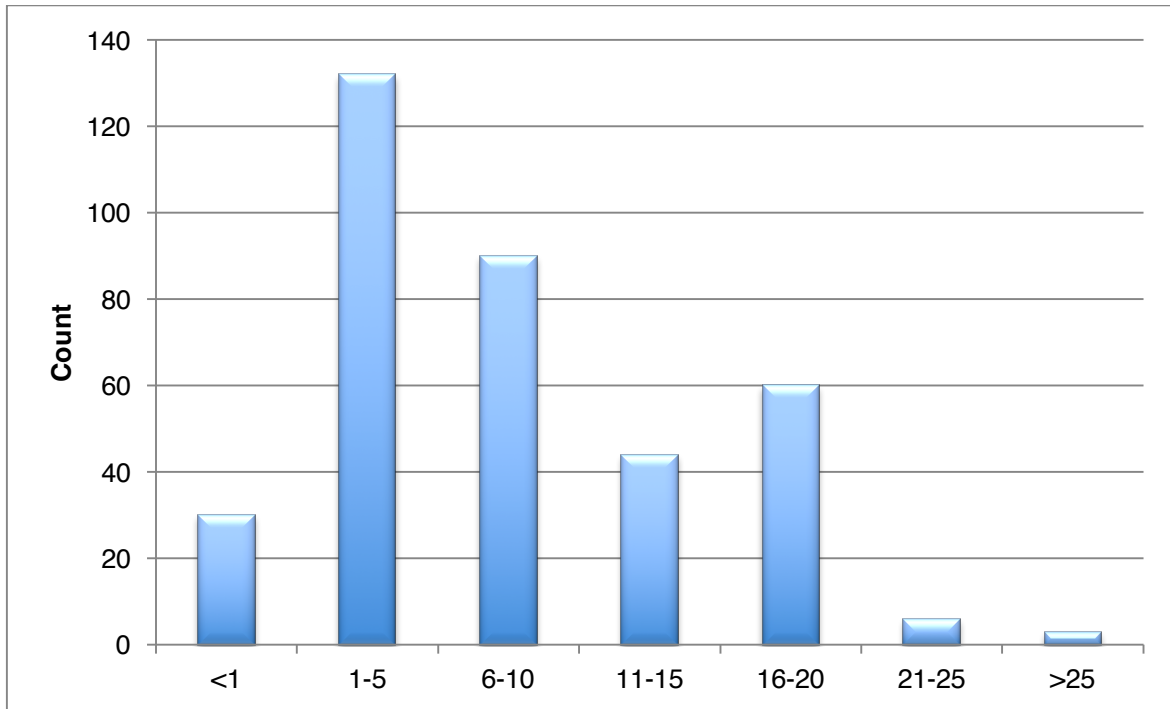
| Level  | Responses | %    |
|--|-----------|------|
| High School  | 13        | 3.4  |
| Some college<br>(Associate's / Tech.<br>Certificate) | 24        | 6.2  |
| Bachelor's degree                                    | 125       | 32.2 |
| Some graduate school                                 | 26        | 6.7  |
| Master's degree                                      | 192       | 49.5 |
| Doctorate  | 6         | 1.5  |
| Other  | 2         | 0.52 |

The community is well-educated, with 90.2% of respondents having a Bachelor's degree or higher, and 51% of respondents having an advanced degree. These percentages have remained quite consistent over the last 3 years of the survey.

## Industry Experience

365 Responses

*Number of years*

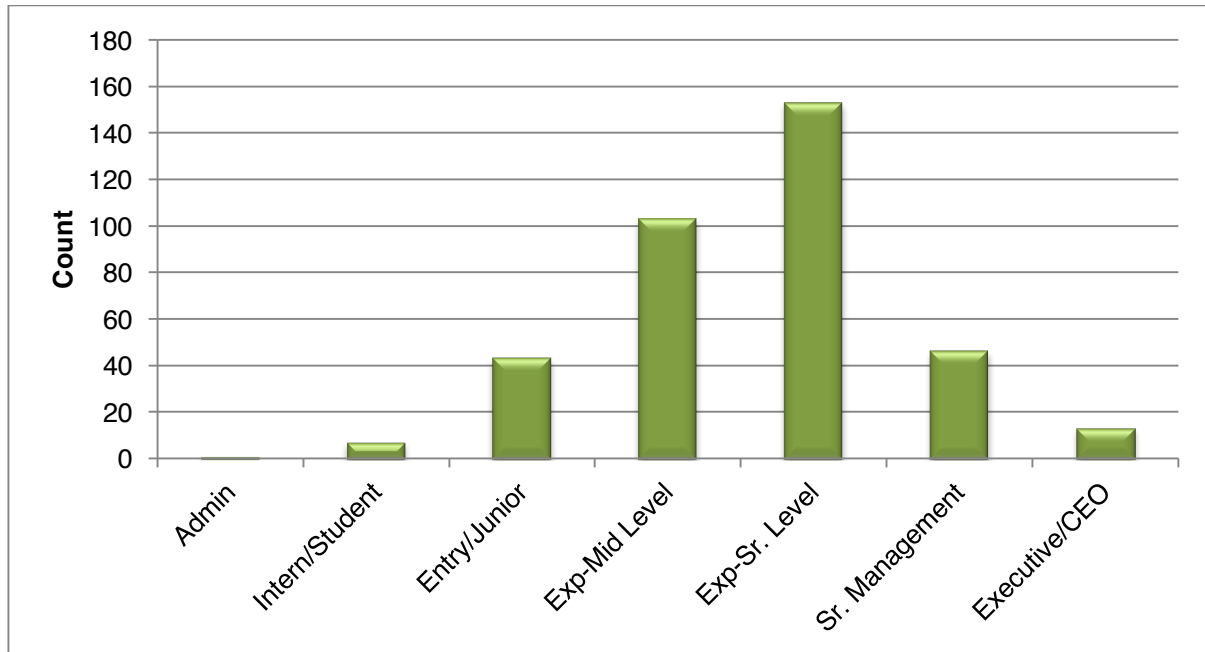


| Number of Years | Responses | %    |
|-----------------|-----------|------|
| < 1             | 30        | 8.2  |
| 1 - 5           | 132       | 36.2 |
| 6 - 10          | 90        | 24.7 |
| 11 -15          | 44        | 12.1 |
| 16 - 20         | 60        | 16.4 |
| 21-25           | 6         | 1.6  |
| > 25            | 3         | 0.82 |

Responses this year continued the trend from last year with greater percentages from less experienced people (<1, 1-5 years). But the community remains experienced overall, with 113 (31%) having 10 or more years of industry experience.

## Position Level

366 Responses

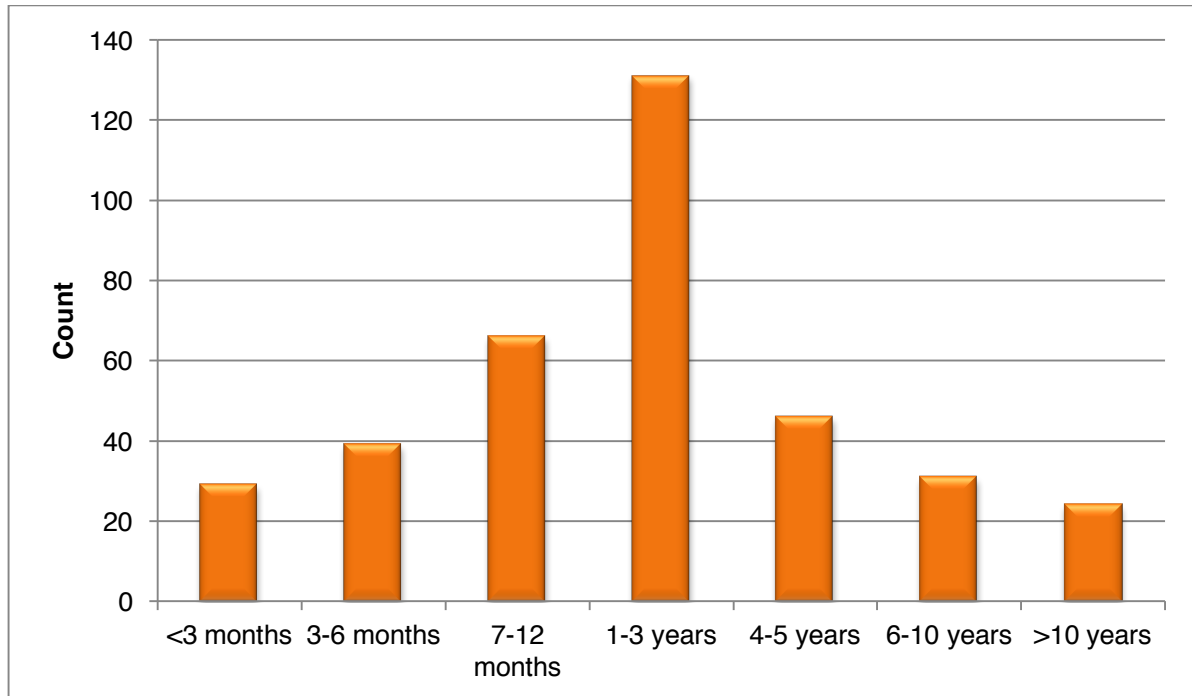


| Level                                | Responses | %    |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|------|
| <b>Administrative Staff</b>          | 1         | 0.3  |
| <b>Intern/Student</b>                | 7         | 1.9  |
| <b>Entry Level/Junior</b>            | 43        | 11.7 |
| <b>Experienced/Mid Level</b>         | 103       | 29.0 |
| <b>Experienced/Senior Level</b>      | 153       | 41.8 |
| <b>Senior Management/VP/Director</b> | 46        | 12.6 |
| <b>Executive/CEO/President/Owner</b> | 13        | 3.6  |

Position level also trends towards greater levels, but again this year we received a decent percentage of responses from less experienced people and students, with 13.7%.

## Current Position Tenure

366 Responses

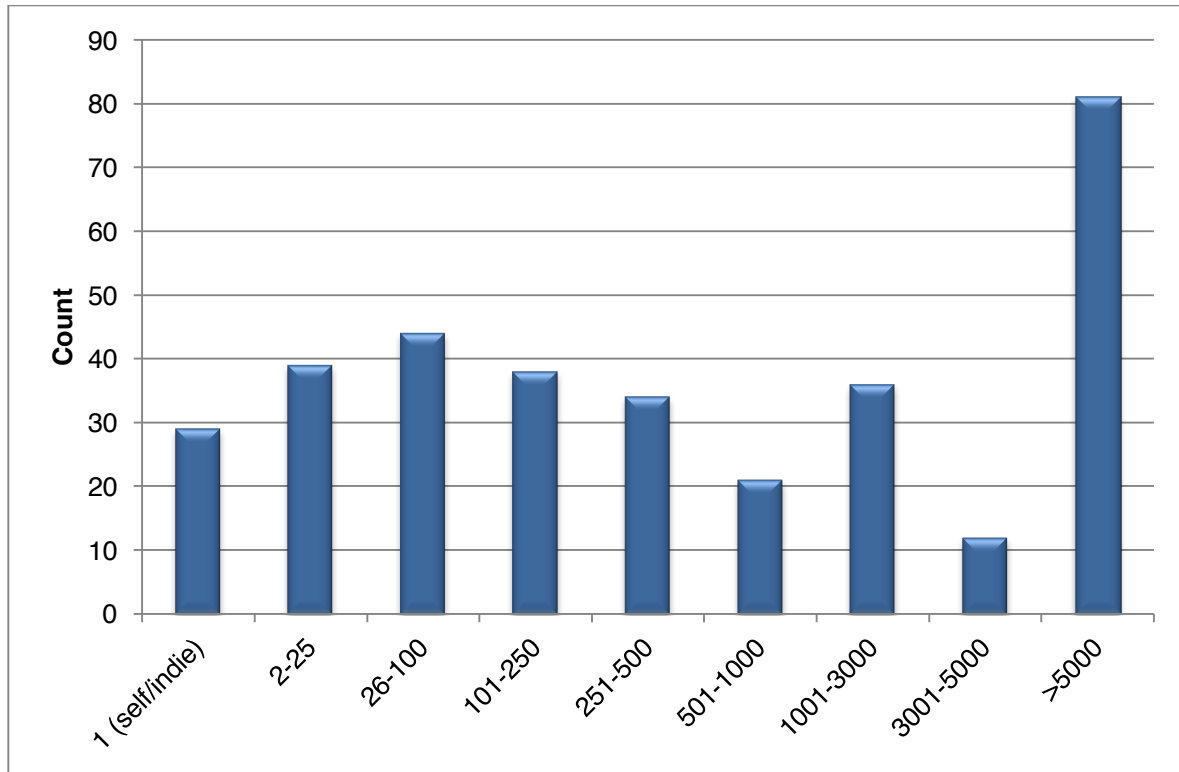


| Tenure        | Responses | %    |
|---------------|-----------|------|
| < 3 months    | 29        | 7.9  |
| 3 – 6 months  | 39        | 10.7 |
| 7 – 12 months | 66        | 18.0 |
| 1 – 3 years   | 131       | 35.8 |
| 4 – 5 years   | 46        | 12.6 |
| 6 – 10 years  | 31        | 8.5  |
| > 10 years    | 24        | 6.6  |

As in past years, the time spent in current position reflects volatility, with a clear plurality in the 1 – 3 years range. But there does seem to be some growing longevity, with 101 (27.6%) responders having been with their organizations for 4 or more years.

## Organization Size

334 Responses

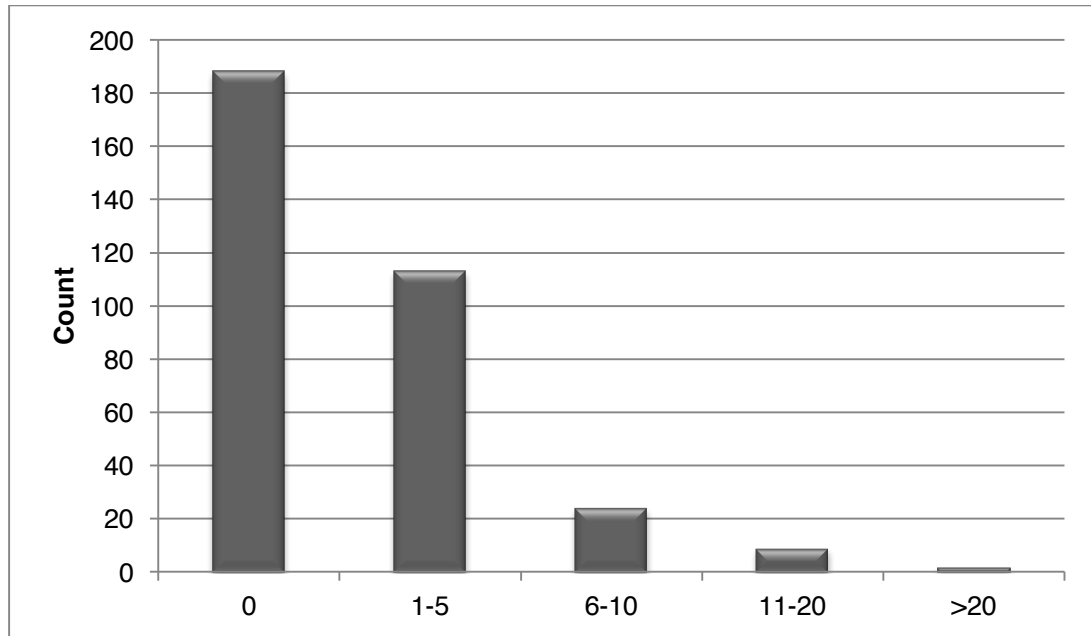


| Number of employees                                | Responses | %    |
|--|-----------|------|
| <b>1 (self-employed / independent / freelance)</b> | 29        | 8.7  |
| <b>2 - 25</b>                                      | 39        | 11.7 |
| <b>26 - 100</b>                                    | 44        | 13.2 |
| <b>101 – 250</b>                                   | 38        | 11.4 |
| <b>251 – 500</b>                                   | 34        | 10.2 |
| <b>501 – 1000</b>                                  | 21        | 6.3  |
| <b>1001 – 3000</b>                                 | 36        | 10.8 |
| <b>3001 – 5000</b>                                 | 12        | 3.6  |
| <b>&gt; 5000</b>                                   | 81        | 24.3 |

Respondents predominately came from larger organizations, with 184 (55.1%) from places with more than 250 employees, and the largest bracket of greater than 5000 employees. This could reflect the continued growth of in-house teams.

## Skills Application *Management*

336 Responses

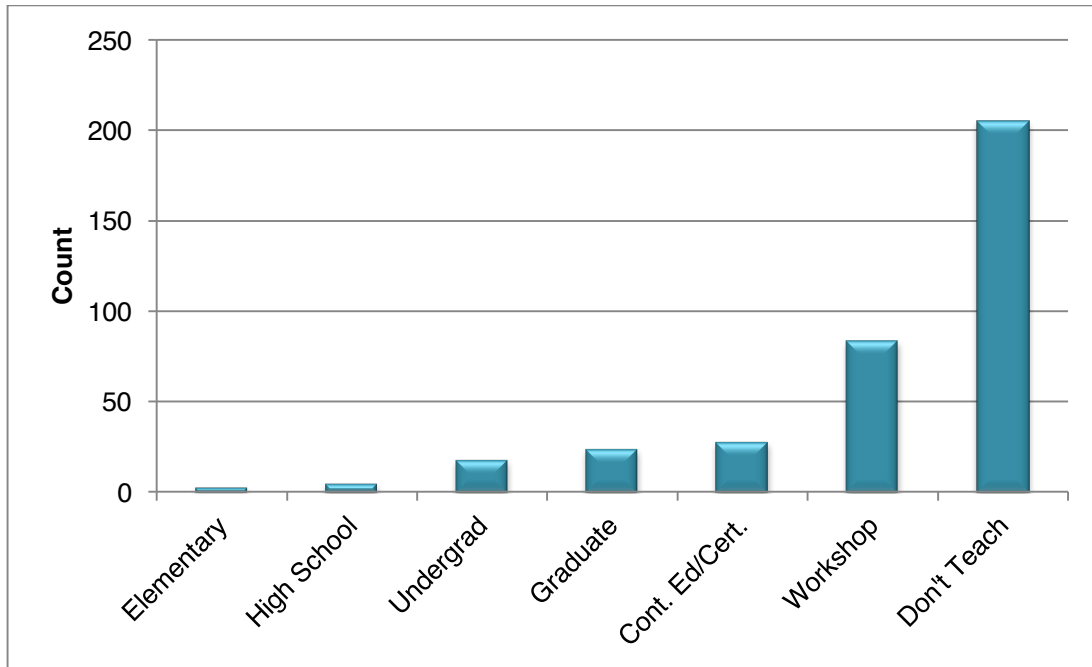


| Number managed | Responses | %    |
|----------------|-----------|------|
| 0              | 188       | 56.0 |
| 1 - 5          | 113       | 33.6 |
| 6 - 10         | 24        | 7.1  |
| 11 – 20        | 9         | 2.7  |
| > 20           | 2         | 0.6  |

Respondents overwhelmingly reported managing 5 or fewer people (301, 89.6%), but this was slightly less pronounced than 2015. Given the experience levels and organization sizes reported, the responses suggest smaller teams are common and/or direct management is not necessarily a requisite for advancement.

## Skills Application *Teaching*

289 Responses



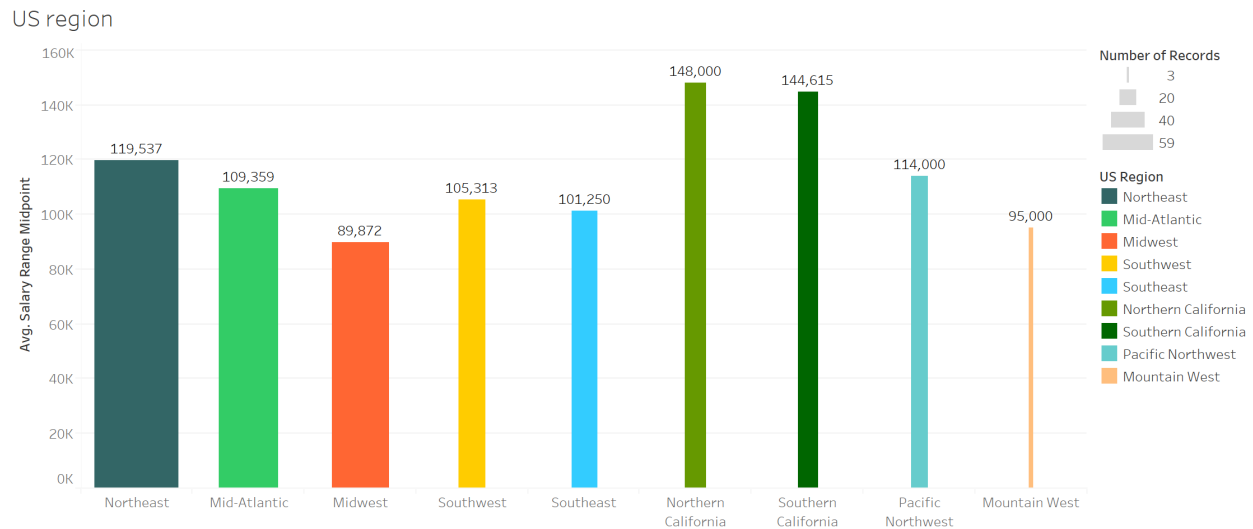
| Education Level              | Responses | %    |
|------------------------------|-----------|------|
| Elementary School            | 3         | 1.0  |
| High School                  | 5         | 1.7  |
| Undergraduate                | 18        | 6.2  |
| Graduate                     | 24        | 8.3  |
| Continuing Ed. / Certificate | 28        | 9.7  |
| Workshop                     | 84        | 29.0 |
| Don't Teach                  | 205       | 70.9 |

A clear majority of respondents do not teach (205, 70.9%), of those who do, they teach workshops and/or continuing education/certificate classes (112, 38.8%).



## Salary Range Analyses

### Mean Salary by US Region



Note: Line thickness reflects relative number of responses for the variable.

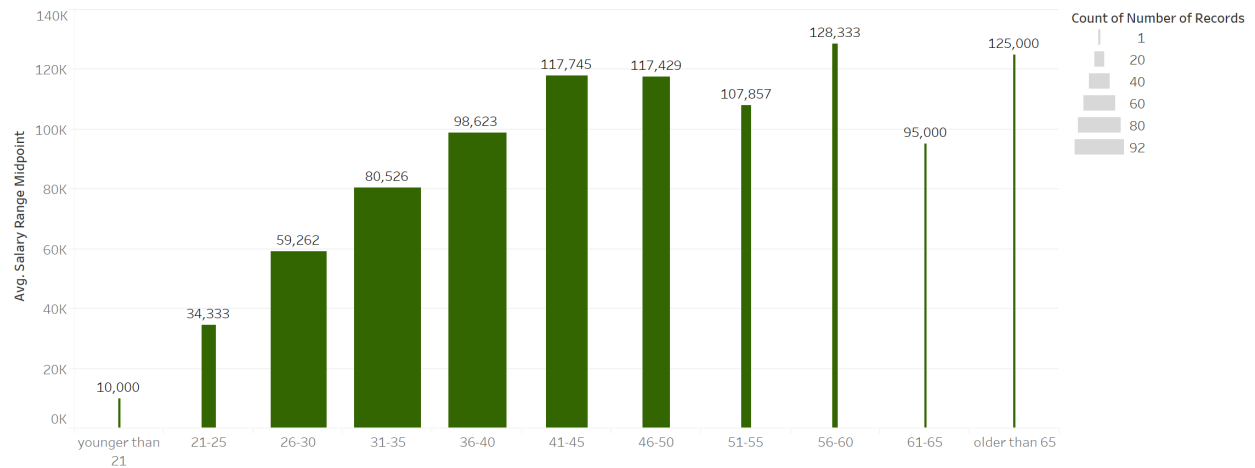
See the interactive graph:

<https://public.tableau.com/profile/sfitz#!/vizhome/IAInstituteSalarySurvey2016WIP/USregion>

As with prior years, the region with the highest mean salary was Northern California, followed this year by Southern California and the Northeast. But California had fewer responses, which could skew the average depending on who responded. The Northeast with the most responses showed higher average salaries than the rest of the east coast regions.

## Mean Salary by Age Range

Age Range



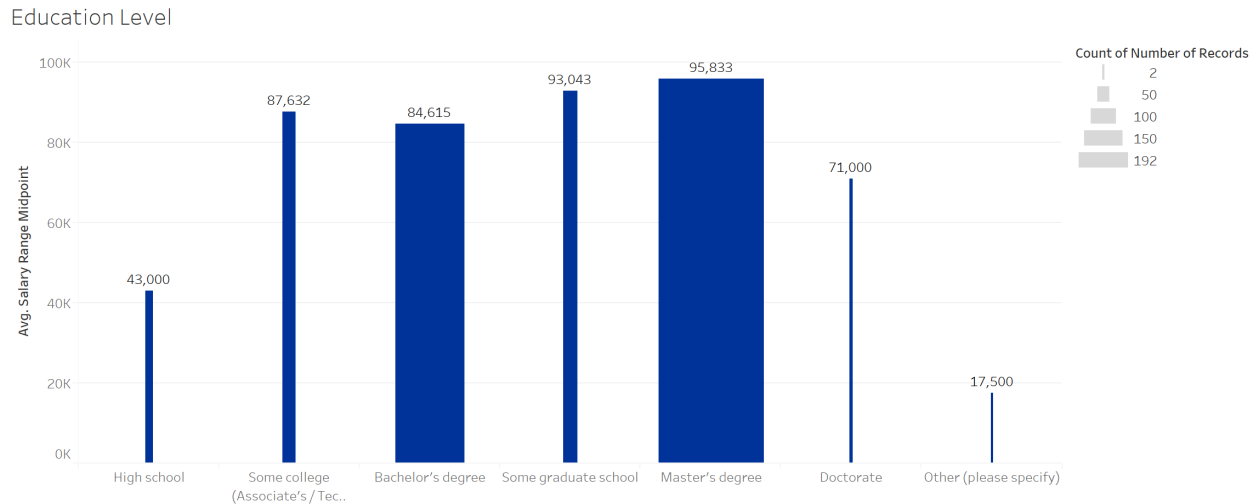
Note: Line thickness reflects relative number of responses for the variable.

See the interactive graph:

<https://public.tableau.com/profile/sfitz#!/vizhome/IAInstituteSalarySurvey2016WIP/AgeRange>

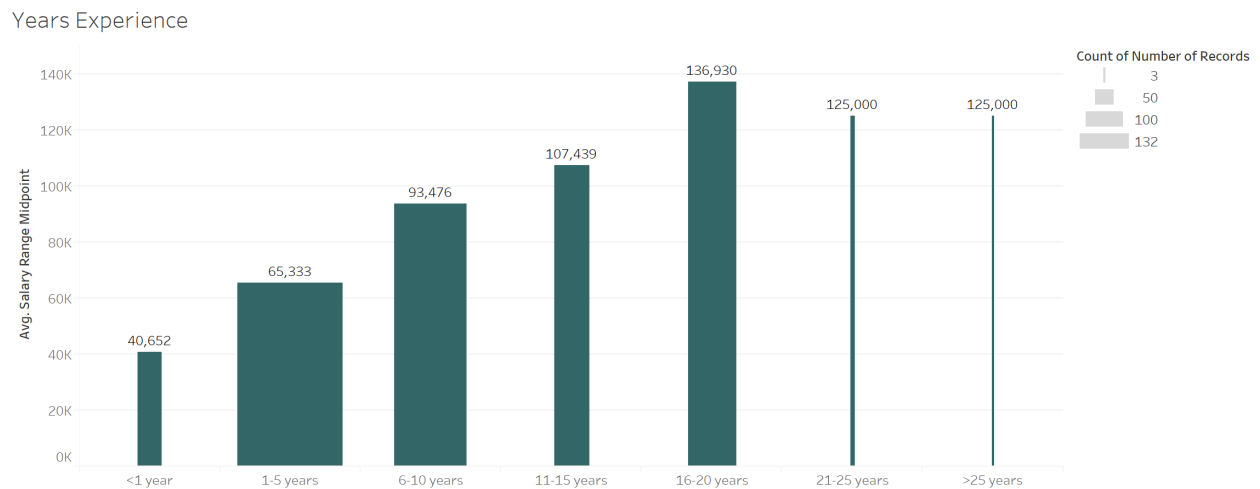
As in the past 2 years, average salary by age ranges show a fairly steady climb with increased age with a noticeable jump from 26-30 to 31-35 and a slight decrease from 41-45 to 46-50. The 56-60 group had the highest mean salary, with fewer responses, which is older than prior years. Fewer responses from higher ages make it difficult to draw conclusions however.

## Mean Salary by Education Level



As with prior years, educational attainment does not correlate greatly with mean salary, with “some college” having greater mean salary than a Bachelor’s degree and similar averages for “some graduate school” and Master’s degree. Also this year, Doctorate degrees and “other” (which often includes post-graduate level work and professional certifications) had lower mean salaries than most other groups, but with very few responses and geographic influences make broad generalizations difficult. The bump in salary from a Bachelor’s to a Master’s degree suggests value placed on education.

## Mean Salary by Years of Industry Experience



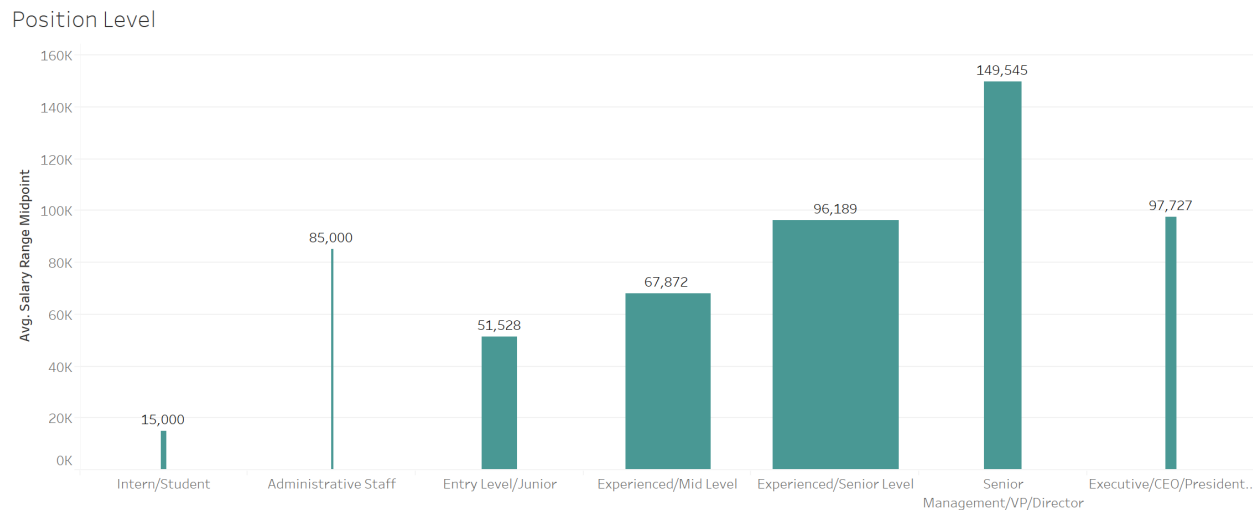
Note: Line thickness reflects relative number of responses for the variable.

See the interactive graph:

<https://public.tableau.com/profile/sfitz#!/vizhome/IAInstituteSalarySurvey2016WIP/YearsExperience>

Again as observed in prior surveys, years of experience have a correlating salary dividend, with each level having noticeable salary gains, with particularly large jump from 11-15 to 16-20 ranges. There is a curious drop in the greater than 20 years range, but with few responses it is difficult to make any generalizations.

## Mean Salary by Position Level



Note: Line thickness reflects relative number of responses for the variable.

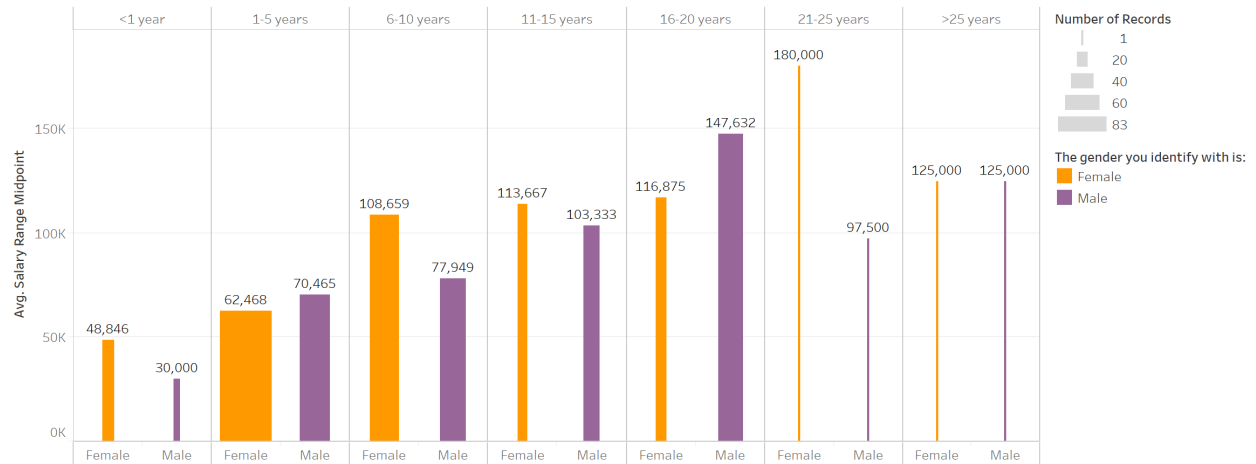
See the interactive graph:

<https://public.tableau.com/profile/sfitz#!/vizhome/IAInstituteSalarySurvey2016WIP/PositionLevel>

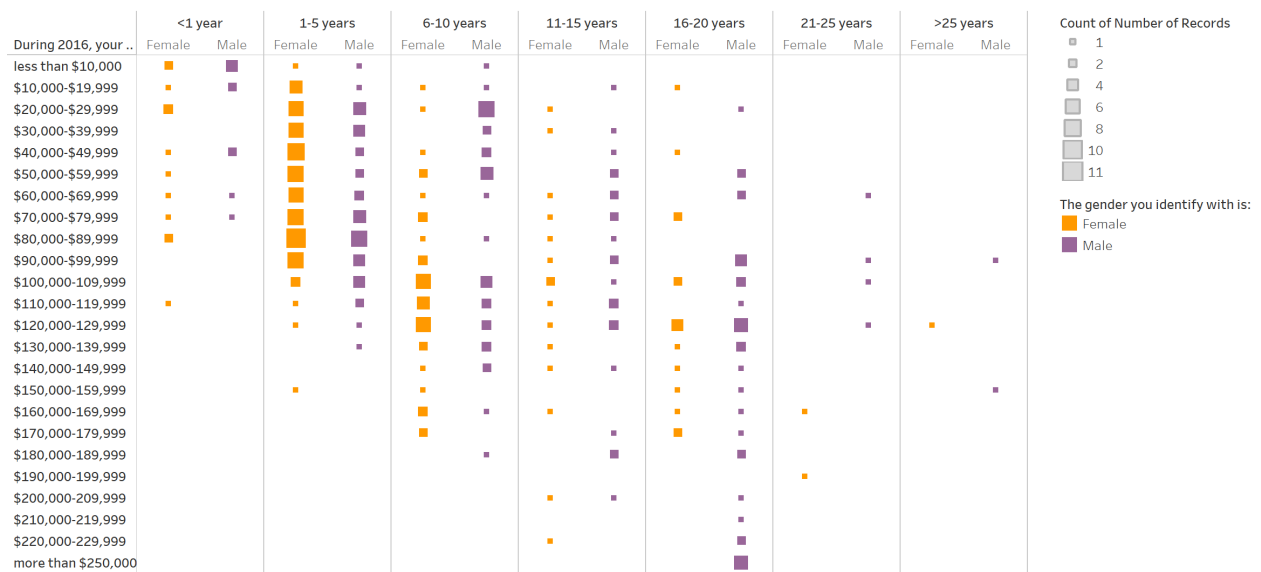
As in previous years, position level also reflects a strong correlation to salary, with sizeable increases noticeable with each step up. A particularly large increase is observed from the experienced/senior level to senior management/VP/director level, though there is also a wide difference in the number of responses on those groups. As with prior years, the “Executive / CEO / President / Owner” category did not follow the trend, with a decrease from the prior level, which is likely related to lumping “owner” into the group, which would include freelancers of varying levels.

## Salary by Gender and Experience

Avg. Salary by Experience & Gender



Salary Range by Experience & Gender



See the interactive graphs:

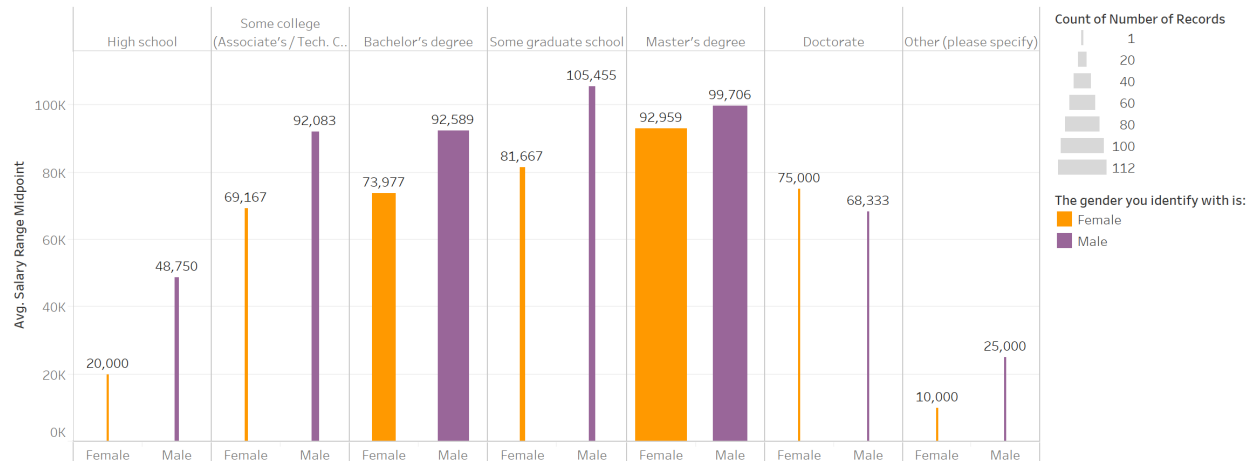
<https://public.tableau.com/profile/sfitz#!/vizhome/IAInstituteSalarySurvey2016WIP/Avg.SalarybyExperience&Gender> and

<https://public.tableau.com/profile/sfitz#!/vizhome/IAInstituteSalarySurvey2016WIP/SalaryRangebyExperience&Gender>

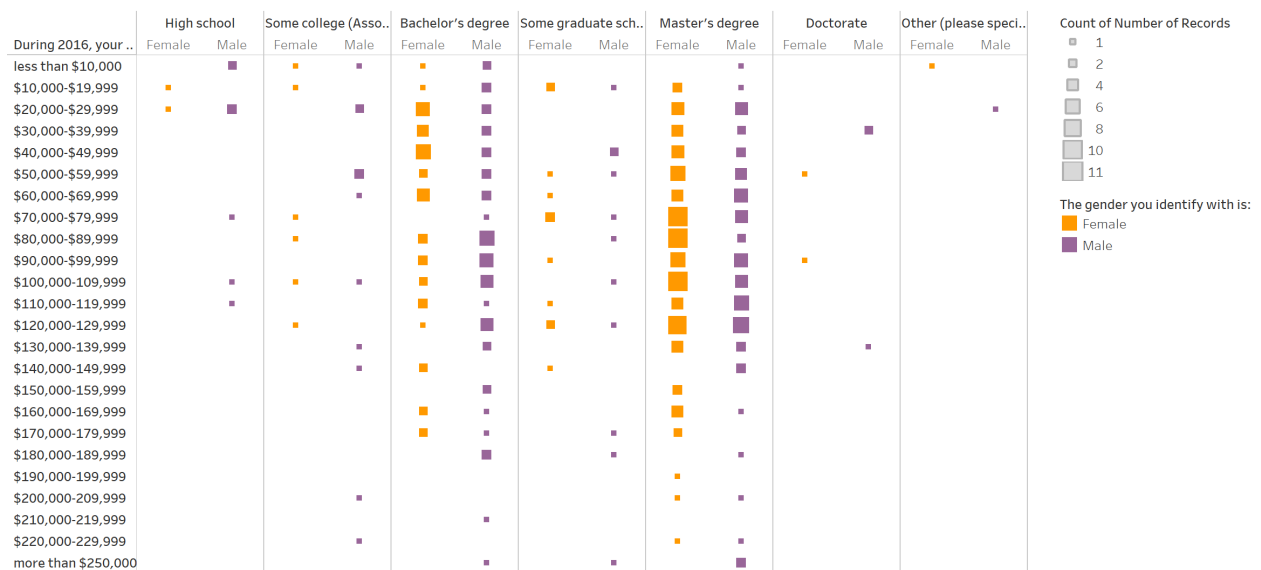
Comparing gender and years of experience with salary ranges shows fluctuations, with women making more 6-15 years of experience, but men making more from 16-20.

## Salary by Gender and Education

Avg. Salary by Education & Gender



Salary Range by Education & Gender



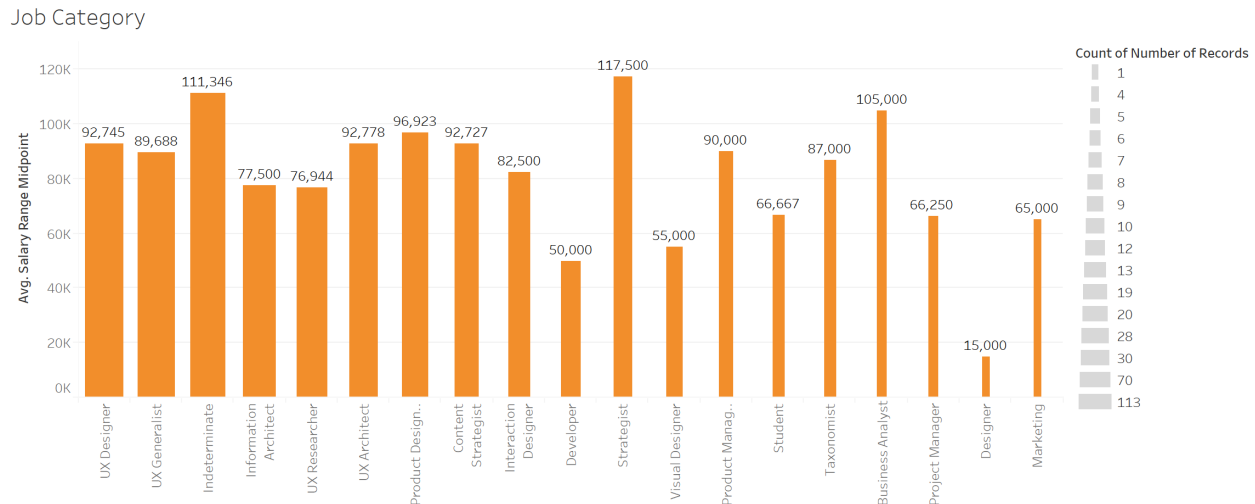
See the interactive graphs:

<https://public.tableau.com/profile/sfitz#!/vizhome/IAInstituteSalarySurvey2016WIP/Avg.SalarybyEductatio&Gender> and

<https://public.tableau.com/profile/sfitz#!/vizhome/IAInstituteSalarySurvey2016WIP/SalaryRangebyEducati&Gender>

Comparisons of gender and educational attainment with salary showed similar distributions, except at the higher salary the higher salary ranges, but less as pronounced in prior years.

## Mean Salary by Job Category



Note: Line thickness reflects relative number of responses for the variable.

See the interactive graph:

<https://public.tableau.com/profile/sfitz#!/vizhome/IAInstituteSalarySurvey2016WIP/JobCategory>

Free text job title responses were categorized into general industry groups for comparative purposes. UX Generalist had lower average than UX Designer, but higher mean salary than more specialized groups such as Information Architect and UX Researcher, as in years past. This group often included directors and those overseeing teams. There remains a noticeable difference in salaries between those identifying as UX Architects rather than Information Architects. Also new this year, people began identifying as “Product Designers” and a new category was created to capture that change. This group had slightly higher mean salary than UX Designers and Generalists.



## Conclusions and Future Considerations

The comparisons and calculations presented in these findings include all available data points. As such, international disparities in wages have an affect and considerations of cost of living expenses should be considered. But even with those differences, the industry is in good health in terms of salary.

This year showed increased overall responses as well as slightly greater percentages of both non-US and earlier career responses, which had corresponding affects to salaries reported and a decrease to overall averages. The results should be viewed as a descriptive snapshot of the moment. Continuing to push for greater participation, particularly from IAI membership will help get a more realistic view of the state of our field.

Other items to consider for future surveys, include:

- Continue international outreach to gather more representative data
- Increase outreach to early-career practitioners for more representative data
- More dedicated initial call to action for participation
- Move collection time closer to start of new year, rather than US tax season
- Coordinate efforts around World IA Day to harness enthusiasm