



2015

Annual
Salary Survey

Executive Summary

The Information Architecture Institute (IAI) conducted its annual salary survey to capture data about our community's demographics and compensation to serve as a barometer for the state of the profession and help practitioners understand and explain their relative value to employers. It was conducted in March and April of 2016 and received 350 responses (53 incomplete) from 28 countries.

Overall, the 2015 data showed:

- Mean salary decreased 6.9% (non-adjusted US dollars) from 2014
- Mean salary by gender showed a gap
- Experience and age also correlate with differences in mean salary
- Higher percentage of earlier-career responses than prior years
- Higher percentage of non-US responses than prior years

Some of the decreases observed in salary this year are likely a reflection of this year's sample pool, which included more junior practitioners and international responses than other years. Taking those differences into consideration, the industry is in good health in terms of salary.

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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.

The 2015 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

In an effort to reach these goals several refinements were made to the 2015 survey. These included: continued use of simplified question language, inclusion of higher salary brackets and free-text response salary to nearest \$1000, and adjusting the gender question to a free-text response to allow people to more comfortably self-identify. Geographic information reverted back to collecting country and US State responses via dropdown selectors and free-text response for metropolitan area, after unsuccessful attempt with postal codes in 2014. Sections assessing job skills and contexts were left out and collected in a separate job skills survey.

Methodology

We conducted the 2015 IAI Salary Survey from April 11 to May 9, 2016. 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, 350 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 located at: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/IAI-Salary_15. 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

- 350 responses [53 incomplete] – a 46% decrease from 2014 survey
- 28 countries – US (211 responses, 61%), non-US (135 responses, 39%)
- Mean salary decreased 6.9% (non-adjusted US dollars) from 2014
 - Modal salary range: \$70,000 – 79,999
 - Mean salary using midpoints: \$94,172
 - Mean salary excluding top/bottom ranges: \$94,395
 - Mean salary based on responses to nearest \$1000 [240 responses]: \$99,654 (median: \$92,000)
- Mean US salary (non-adjusted)
 - Modal salary range: \$70,000 – 79,999 & \$110,000 – 119,999 (tie, 21)
 - Mean salary using midpoints: \$111,623
 - Mean salary excluding top/bottom ranges: \$107,903
 - Mean salary based on responses to nearest \$1000 [159 responses]: \$110,362 (median: \$105,000)
- Mean salary by gender: Female = \$90,949 Male = \$95,872
- Bachelor's represent 32.9%, Master's 47.6%, Doctorate 1.2%
- Mean salary by education: Bachelor's = \$93,167, Master's = \$98,557, Doctorate = N/A (too few responses to be meaningful)
- Freelance payment type (removing N/A and skips for 84 responders) [could check all that apply]
 - Hourly: 52, 61.9%
 - Per diem: 9, 10.7%
 - Per project: 20, 23.8%
 - Commission: 1, 1.2%
 - Equity: 0
 - Other: 1 monthly rate/retainer
- Freelance rates (not excluding “outliers” and using midpoints when range given):
 - Hourly range: \$30 – 300

- Hourly median: \$100 (\$108.96 mean)
- Per diem rates, ranged: \$5 & \$1500 (given the wide range and small sample size of 14 responses, additional analyses were not conducted)

Respondent Demographics

International

Country	Responses	%
United States	211	61.0
UK	27	7.8
Brazil	20	5.8
Germany	13	3.8
Canada	12	3.5
Russian Federation	12	3.5
Ukraine	8	2.3
India	6	1.7
Belgium	4	1.2
Spain	4	1.2

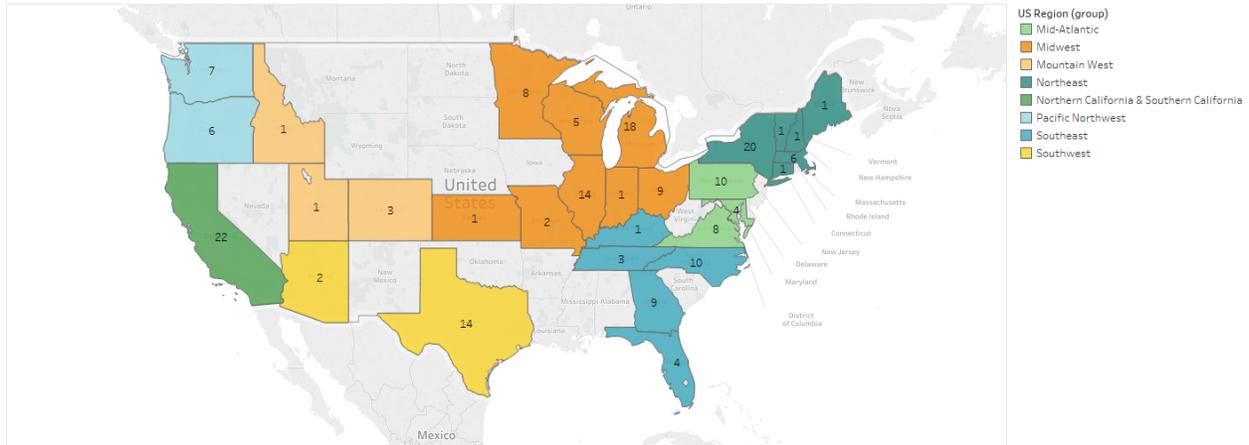
Other countries responding: Denmark, Netherlands = 3 each;
 Australia, Belarus, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Singapore, Switzerland = 2 each;
 Single responses from (listed alphabetically): Argentina, China, Costa Rica, Finland,
 France, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, South Africa

Responses were received from 28 countries. As with prior years, the United States resulted in the overwhelming majority. Other English-speaking nations: UK, Canada, and Australia had fewer responses than years past, while there were more responses from Brazil and the Russian Federation.

United States

US Responses by State

Responses by State



See the interactive version: <https://public.tableau.com/views/IASalarySurvey2015/States>

Respondents represented 30 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

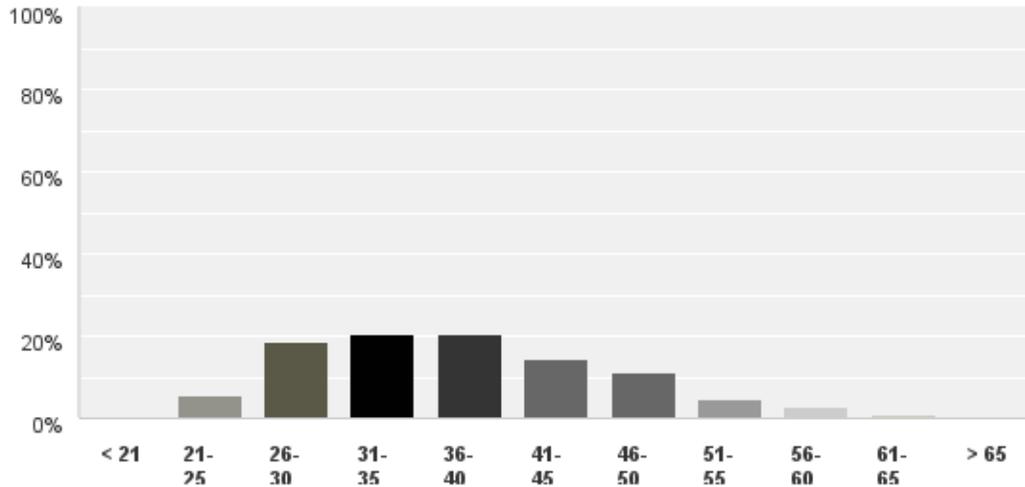
Region	Responses	%
Midwest	58	27.9
Mid-Atlantic	35	16.8
Northeast	31	14.9
Southeast	27	13.0
Southwest	16	7.7
Northern California	14	6.7
Pacific Northwest	13	6.3
Southern California	8	3.8
Mountain West	6	2.9

Within the US, the Midwest produced the most responses. The east coast (Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, Southeast), with 44.7% of responses, was more represented than the west coast (Northern and Southern California, Pacific Northwest), with only 16.8% of responses.

Age

Q1 Age

Answered: 348 Skipped: 2



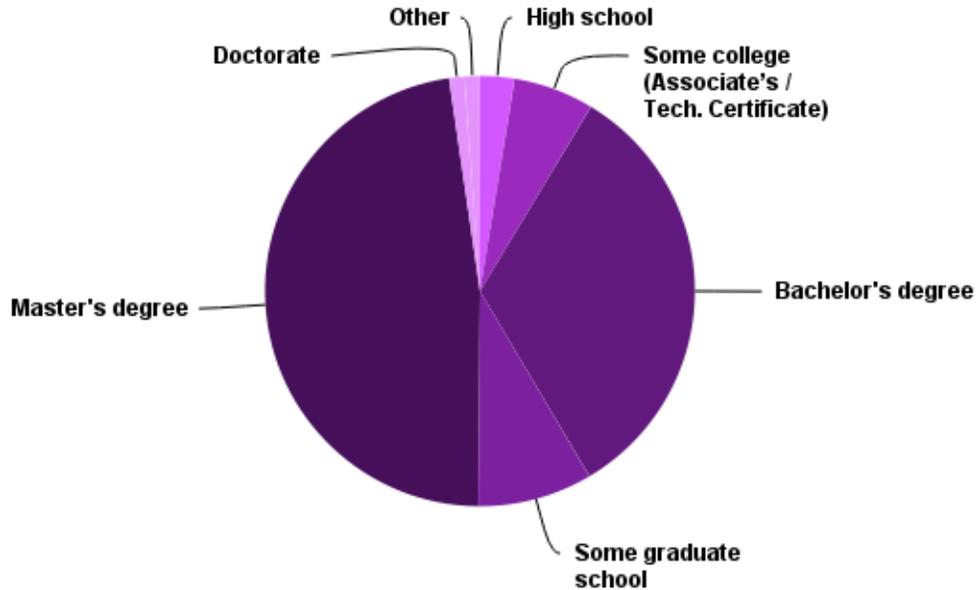
Age Range	Responses	%
Younger than 21	1	0.3
21-25	19	5.5
26-30	64	18.4
31-35	72	20.7
36-40	71	20.4
41-45	50	14.4
46-50	39	11.2
51-55	16	4.6
56-60	10	2.9
61-65	4	1.2
Older than 65	2	0.6

Most of the respondents (55.5%) were between the ages of 31 and 45. There was an uptick in percentage of responses from 30 and younger brackets compared to 2014.

Education

Q3 Education Level

Answered: 347 Skipped: 3



Level	Responses	%
High School	9	2.6
Some college (Associate's / Tech. Certificate)	21	6.1
Bachelor's degree	114	32.9
Some graduate school	30	8.7
Master's degree	165	47.6
Doctorate	4	1.2
Other	4	1.2

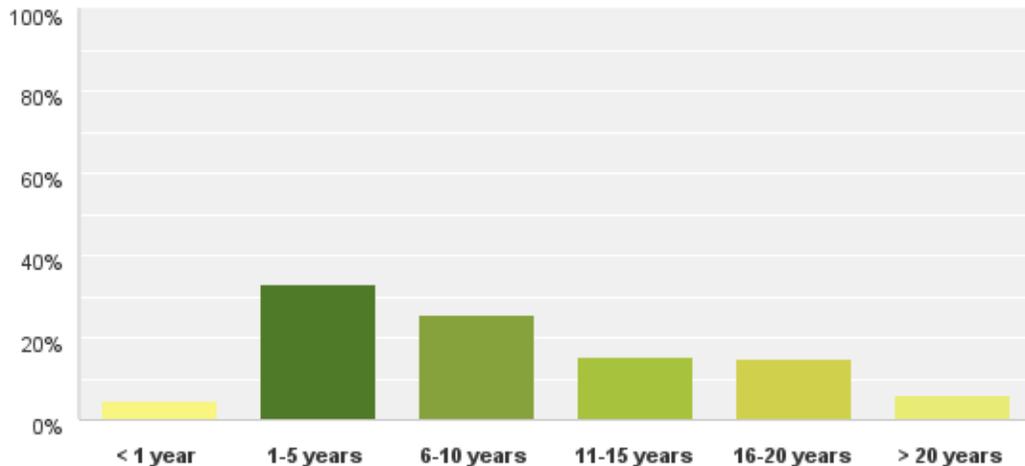
The community is well-educated, with 90.2% of respondents having a Bachelor's degree or higher, and 49.3% of respondents having an advanced degree.

Industry Experience

Number of years

Q7 In-Field Experience

Answered: 329 Skipped: 21



Number of Years	Responses	%
< 1	16	4.9
1 - 5	109	33.1
6 - 10	84	25.5
11 -15	51	15.5
16 - 20	49	14.9
> 20	20	6.1

Though this year received a greater percentage of responses from less experienced people, the community tends towards more experience overall.

Position Level

Q8 Position Level

Answered: 328 Skipped: 22



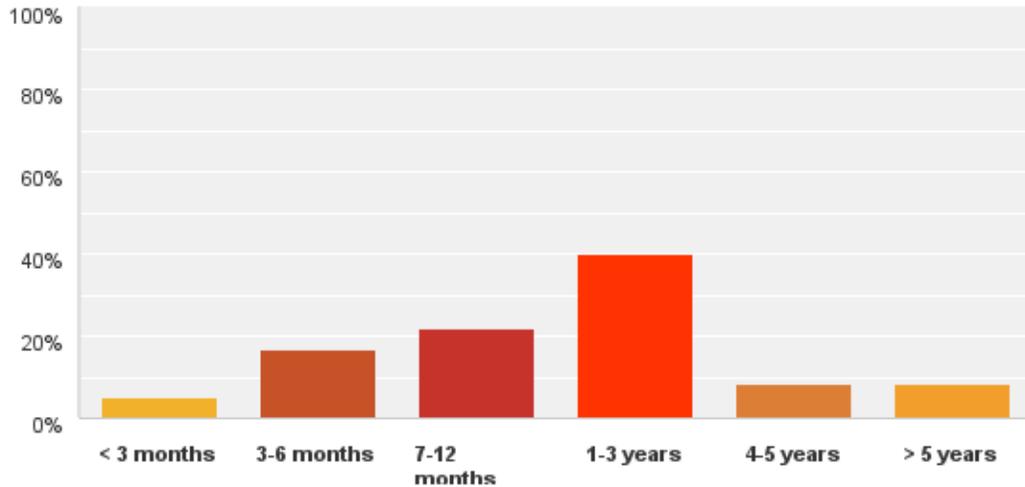
Level	Responses	%
Executive/CEO/President/Owner	18	5.5
Senior Management/VP/Director	31	9.5
Experienced/Senior Level	155	47.3
Experienced/Mid Level	77	23.5
Entry Level/Junior	40	12.2
Intern/Student	5	1.5
Administrative Staff	2	0.6

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

Position Tenure

Q10 Position Tenure

Answered: 327 Skipped: 23



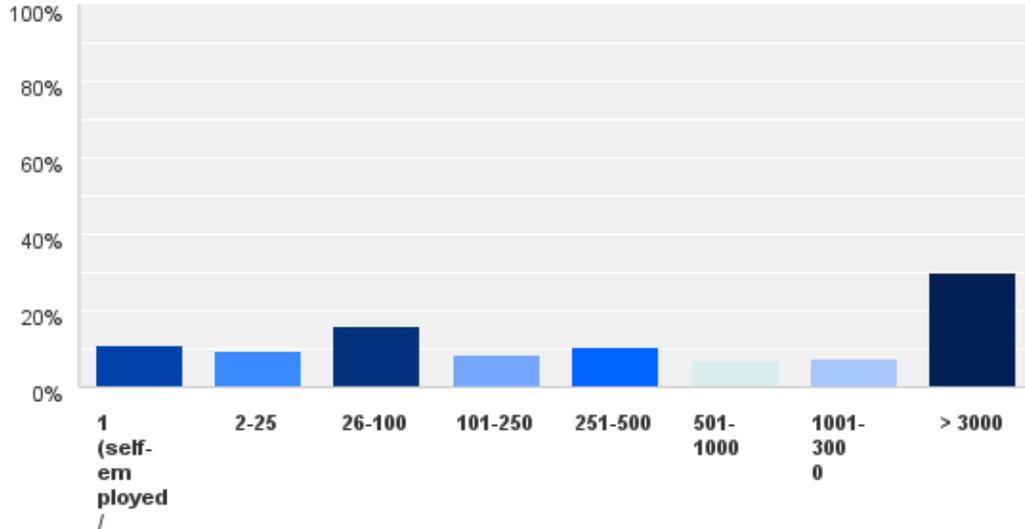
Tenure	Responses	%
< 3 months	16	4.9
3 – 6 months	54	16.5
7 – 12 months	71	21.7
1 – 3 years	131	40.1
4 – 5 years	28	8.6
> 5 years	27	8.3

As in past years, the time spent in current position reflects volatility, with a clear plurality in the 1 – 3 year range. This may be interpreted as either changing job/company or promotions, given the way the question phrasing.

Organization Size

Q13 Company Size

Answered: 296 Skipped: 54



Number of employees	Responses	%
1 (self-employed / independent / freelance)	33	11.2
2 - 25	28	9.5
26 - 100	47	15.9
101 – 250	25	8.5
251 – 500	31	10.5
501 – 1000	21	7.1
1001 – 3000	22	7.4
> 3000	89	30.1

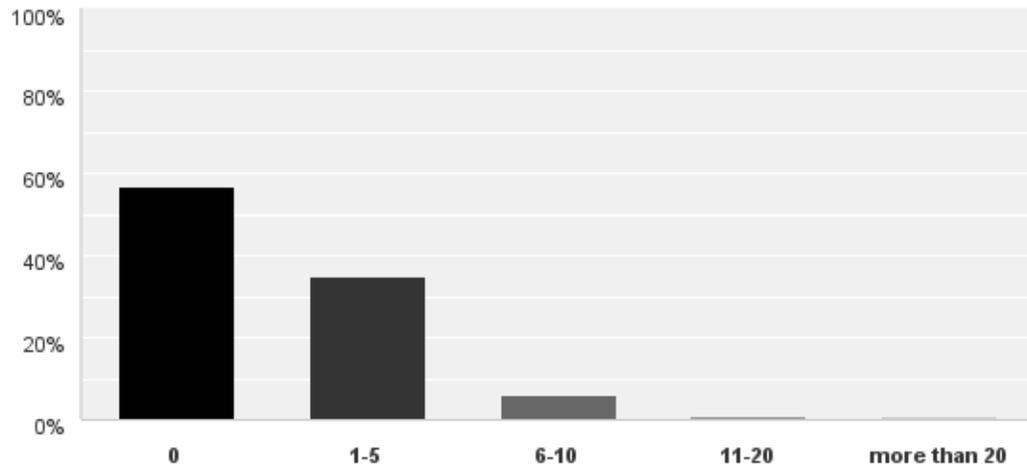
Respondents predominately came from larger organizations, with 55.1% from places with more than 250 employees, and the largest bracket of greater than 3000 employees. This could reflect a trend of more in-house teams.

Skills Application

Management

Q16 Managed _ People

Answered: 292 Skipped: 58



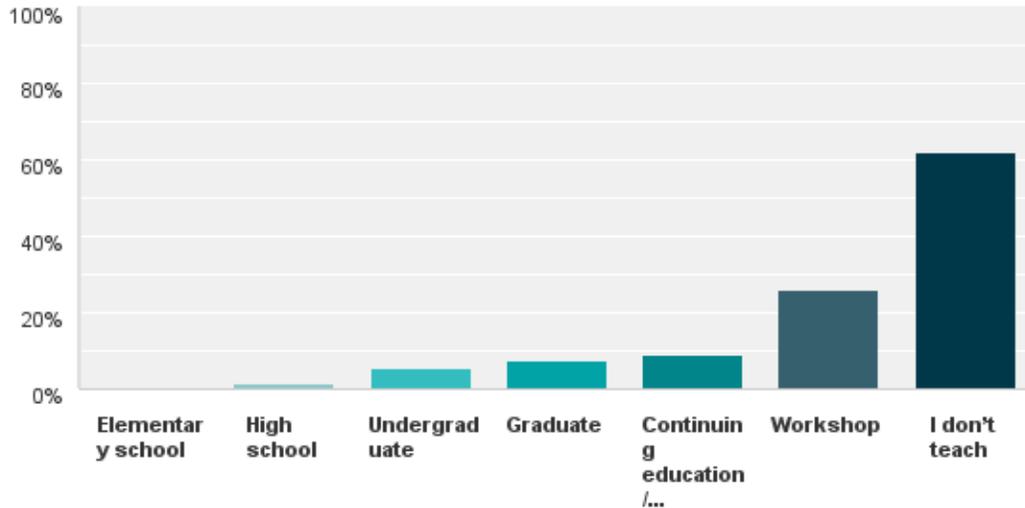
Number managed	Responses	%
0	166	56.9
1 - 5	102	34.9
6 - 10	18	6.2
11 - 20	3	1.0
> 20	3	1.0

Respondents overwhelmingly reported managing 5 or fewer people at 91.8%. This result is interesting given the experience levels and organization sizes reported, suggesting that respondents typically work on smaller teams and direct management is not necessarily a requisite for advancement.

Teaching

Q17 Teaching Level

Answered: 279 Skipped: 71

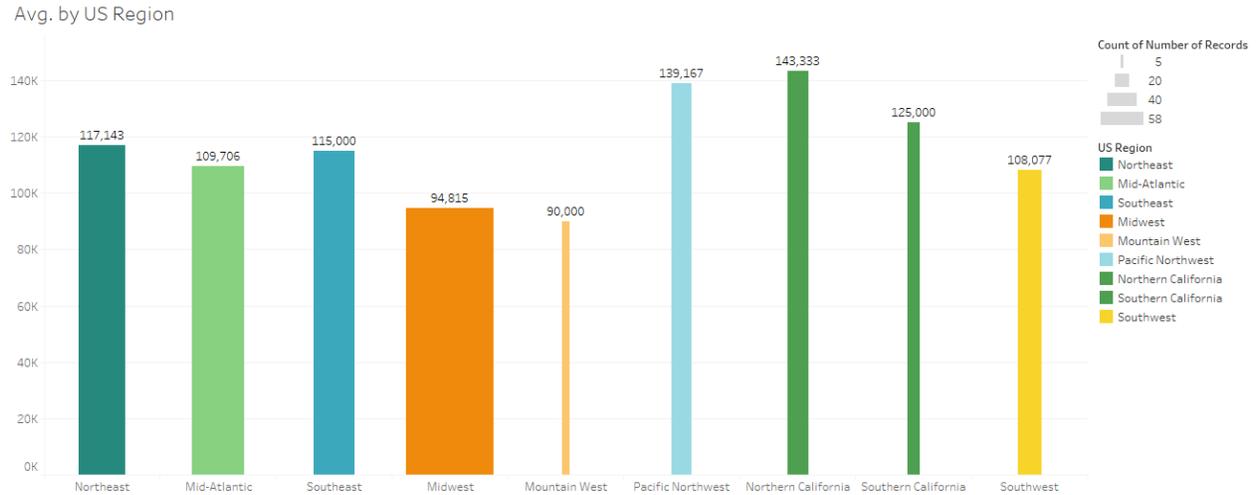


Education Level	Responses	%
Elementary School	1	0.4
High School	4	1.4
Undergraduate	15	5.4
Graduate	21	7.5
Continuing Ed. / Certificate	25	9.0
Workshop	73	26.2
Don't Teach	173	62.0

Though a clear majority of respondents do not teach (62.0%), this year saw an increased percentage of responses from people who do teach at some level. Of those who do, they teach workshops and/or continuing education/certificate classes (35.1%).

Salary Range Analyses

Mean Salary by US Region



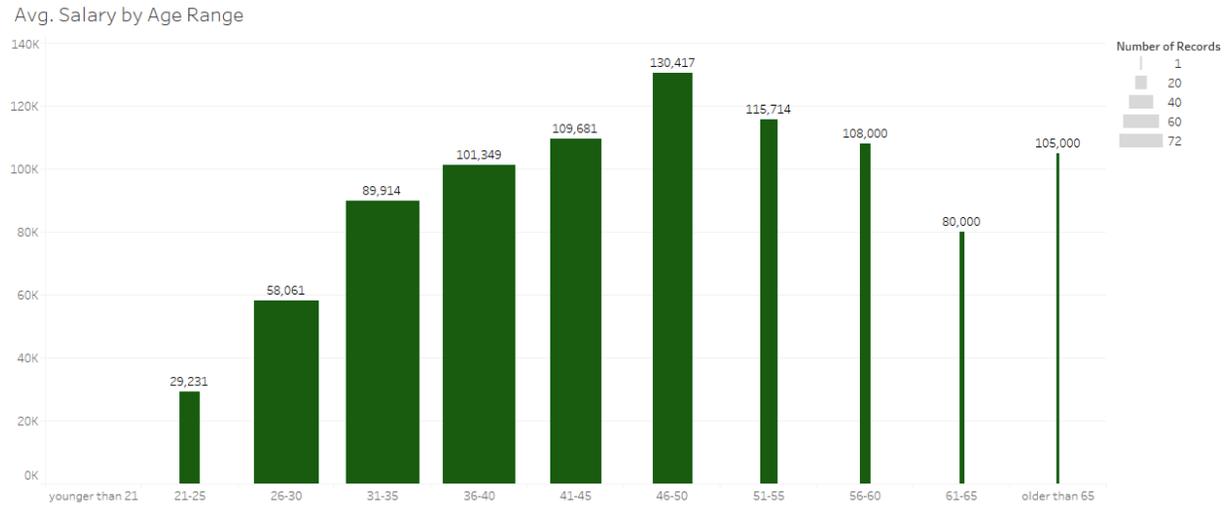
Note: Line thickness reflects relative number of responses for the variable.

See the interactive graph:

<https://public.tableau.com/profile/sfitz#!/vizhome/IASalarySurvey2015/USRegion>

As with prior years, the region with the highest mean salary was Northern California, followed by the Pacific Northwest and Southern California, though all of these regions had relatively fewer responses than other regions. The Northeast was again in the fourth position followed by the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic regions.

Mean Salary by Age Range

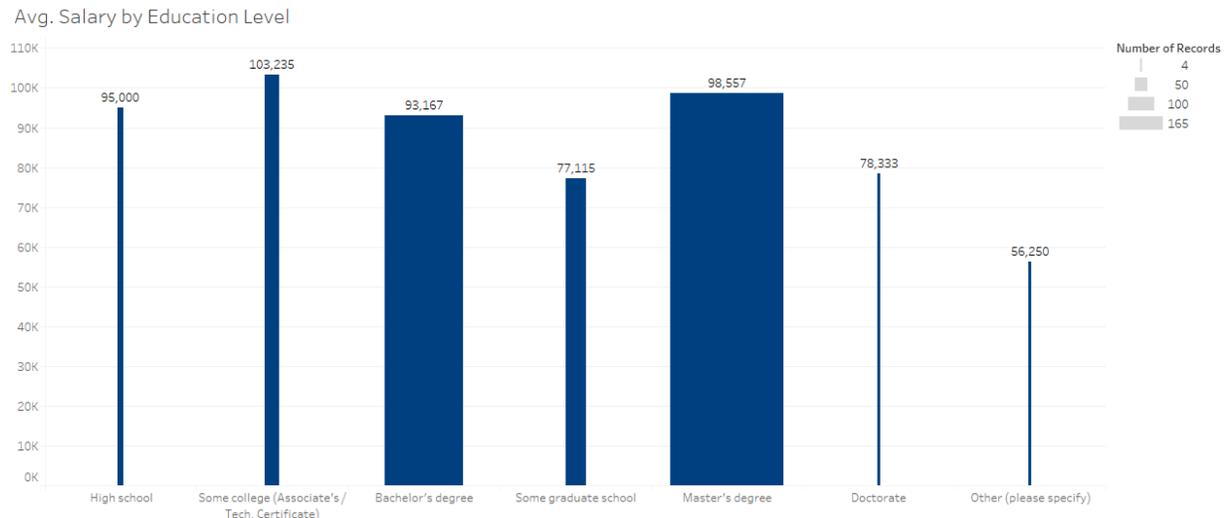


Note: Line thickness reflects relative number of responses for the variable.

See the interactive graph: <https://public.tableau.com/views/IASalarySurvey2015/AgeRange>

The average salary by age ranges show a fairly steady climb with increased age with noticeable jumps from 26-30 to 31-35 and 41-45 to 46-50. The 45-50 group had the highest mean salary, which is younger than 2014 that had the highest above 50. There is also a decline in average after 50 this year, though fewer responses from higher ages make it difficult to draw conclusions.

Mean Salary by Education Level

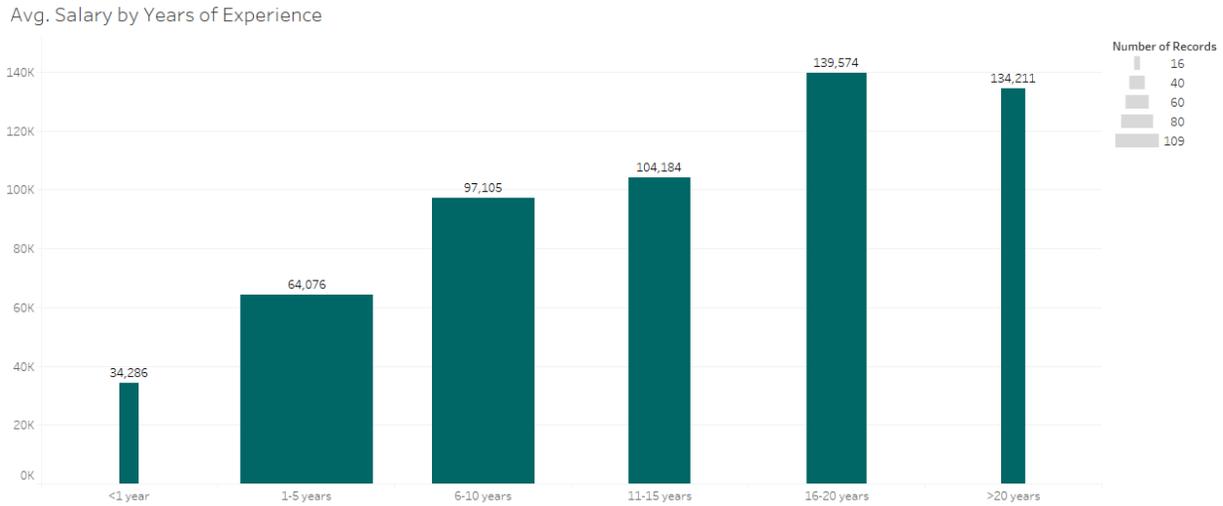


Note: Line thickness reflects relative number of responses for the variable.

See the interactive graph: <https://public.tableau.com/views/IASalarySurvey2015/EducationLevel>

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 “some graduate school” less than a Bachelor’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.

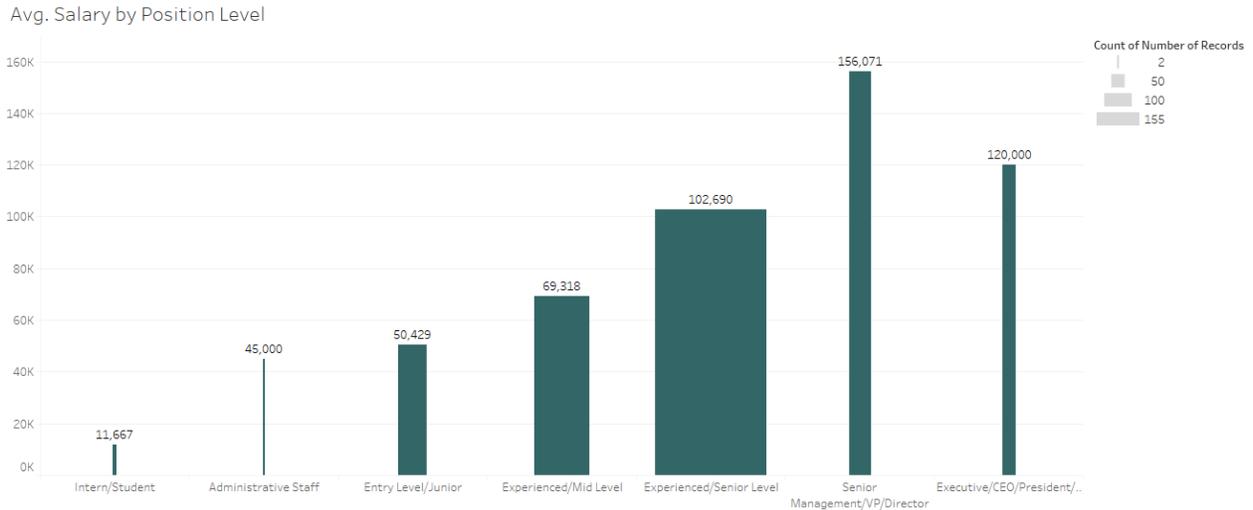
Mean Salary by Years of Industry Experience



Note: Line thickness reflects relative number of responses for the variable.
See the interactive graph: <https://public.tableau.com/views/IASalarySurvey2015/YearsofExperience>

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, which is similar to the jump observed in age ranges. There is a curious drop in the greater than 20 years range that is unexpected.

Mean Salary by Position Level



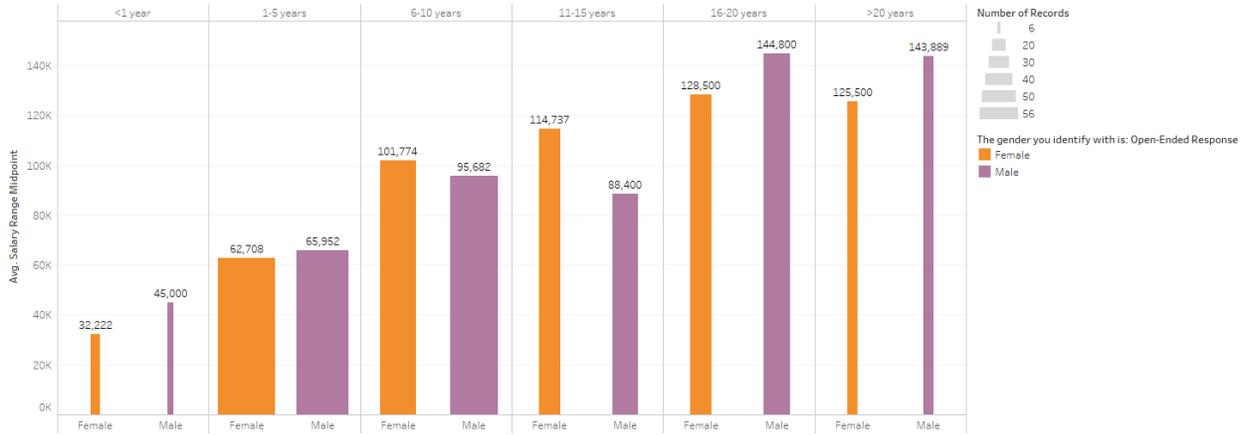
Note: Line thickness reflects relative number of responses for the variable.

See the interactive graph: <https://public.tableau.com/views/IASalarySurvey2015/PositionLevel>

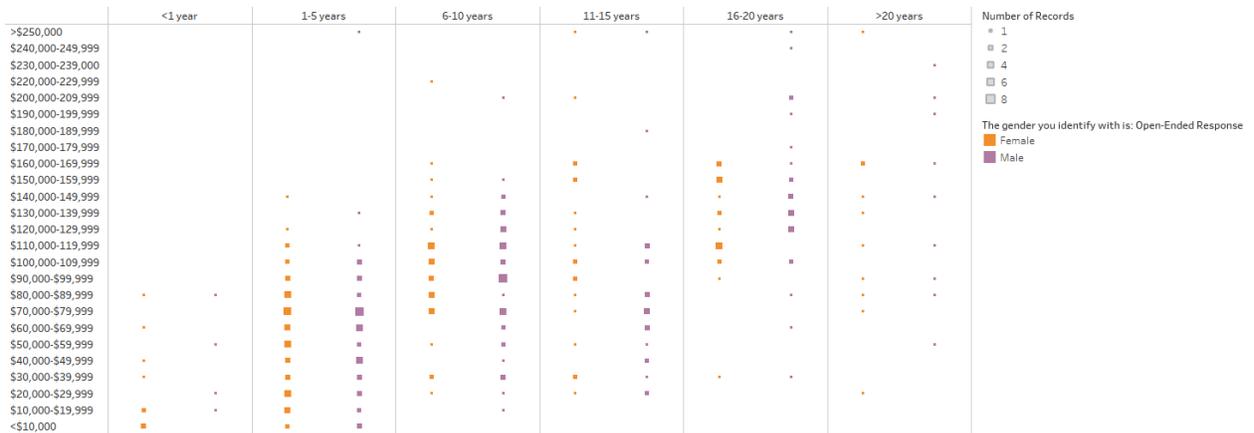
Position level also reflects a strong correlation to salary, with sizeable increases noticeable with each step up. A particularly large increase is observed from the experienced/senior level to senior management/VP/director level, though there is also a wide difference in the number of responses on those 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



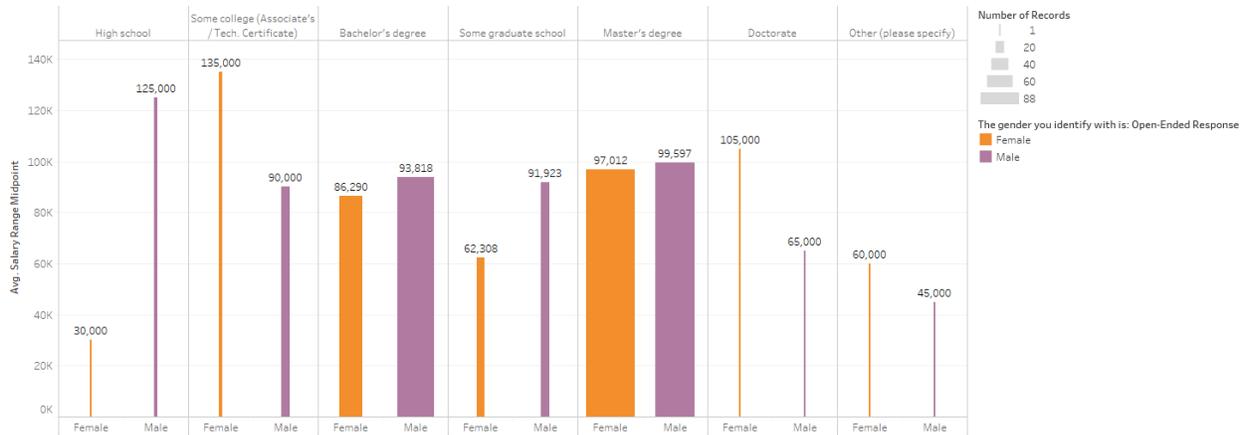
See the interactive graphs:

https://public.tableau.com/views/IASalarySurvey2015/Avg_SalarybyExperienceGender and <https://public.tableau.com/views/IASalarySurvey2015/SalaryRangebyExperienceGender>

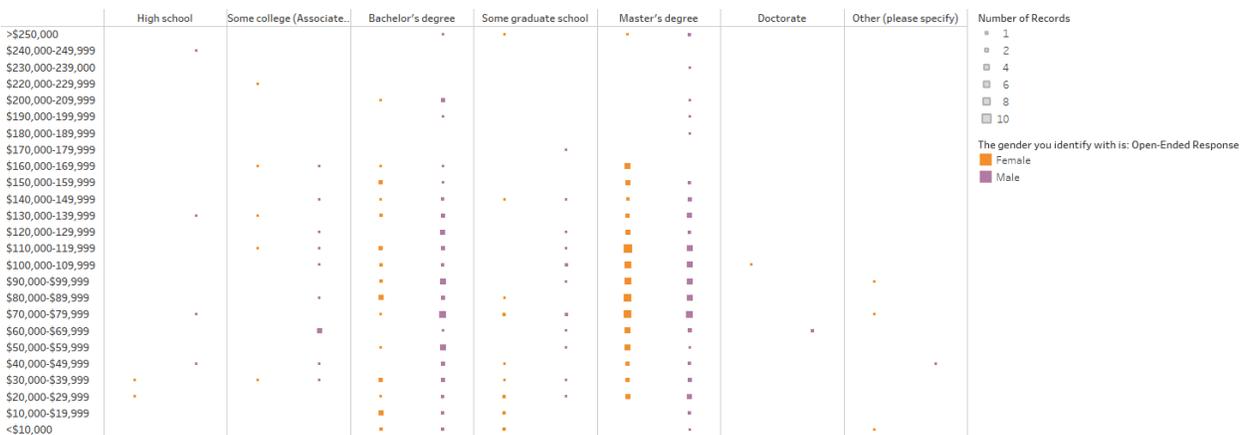
Comparing gender and years of experience with salary ranges shows men making more with 5 years and less of experience and then again with more than 15 years of experience. From 6-15 years of experience, however, women earn higher salaries.

Salary by Gender and Education

Avg. Salary by Education & Gender



Salary Range by Education & Gender



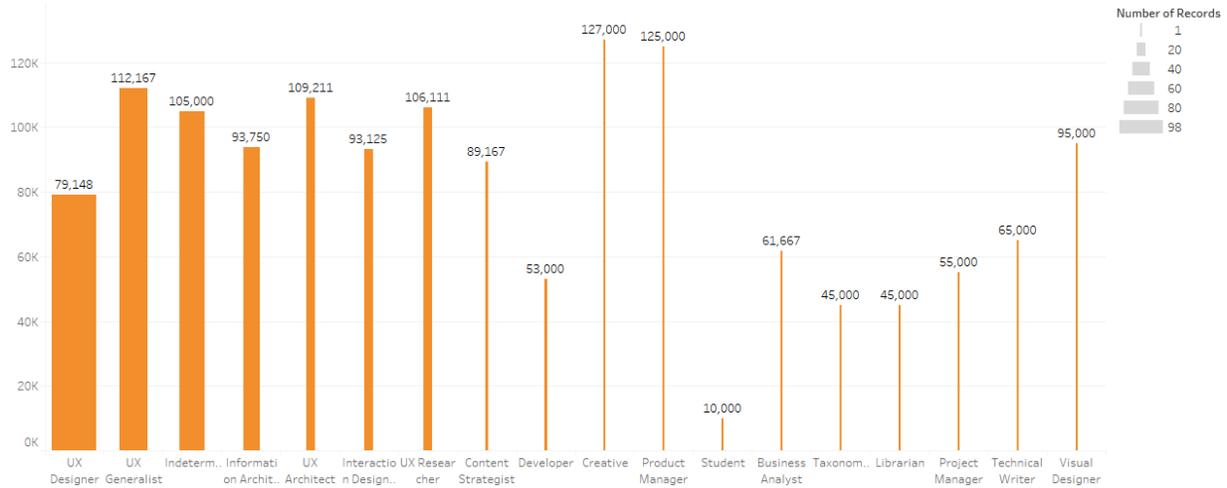
See the interactive graphs:

- https://public.tableau.com/views/IASalarySurvey2015/Avg_SalarybyEducationGender and
- <https://public.tableau.com/views/IASalarySurvey2015/SalaryRangebyEducationGender>

Comparisons of gender and educational attainment with salary showed similar distributions, except at the higher salary the higher salary ranges, particularly for the Master's degree level, which had more males at the higher end.

Mean Salary by Job Category

Avg. Salary by Job Category



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

See the interactive graph: <https://public.tableau.com/views/IASalarySurvey2015/JobCategory>

Free text job title responses were categorized into general industry groups for comparative purposes. UX Generalist had higher mean salary than more specialized groups, but this group often included directors and those overseeing teams. There is a noticeable difference in salaries between those identifying as UX Architects rather than Information Architects.

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.

The sizeable decrease in responses this year makes it difficult to make comparisons with last year to draw broad insights. Instead the results should be viewed as a descriptive snapshot of the moment. Some of the decreases observed in salary are likely a reflection of this year's sample pool, which included more junior practitioners and international responses than other years. These differences were more pronounced with the smaller overall sample size. Pushing 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