

ChiefofStaff
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2023 Chief of Staff Salary Report

November 17, 2023



Introduction

The Chief of Staff role continues to increase in prominence all around the world, appearing in companies of all sizes and industries. Due to this company variability, the disparate backgrounds and responsibilities of Chiefs of Staff, and the relatively small number of Chiefs of Staff compared to other roles and functions, benchmarking compensation remains a daunting task.

As usual, this report exists to assist current and future Chiefs of Staff in understanding their market value and advocating for fair pay. Our research considered the specific factors that heavily impact Chief of Staff compensation, including years of experience, CoS level, company stage/size, gender, location, and more. Previous compensation data is available in our [2019](#), [2020](#), [2021](#), and [2022](#) reports.

This report provides one view of the survey data, but there are many alternative ways to slice and pivot it. The raw data of this survey is available to members of the [Chief of Staff Network](#). Apply [here!](#)

What is a Chief of Staff?

At the Chief of Staff Network, we broadly define a Chief of Staff as the primary strategic operator reporting directly to a C-Level Executive. As the role continues to proliferate in organizations of different sizes, Chiefs of Staff are also emerging as key operators outside the C-suite, reporting at the VP level or even further down the corporate hierarchy.

The Chief of Staff has a unique relationship with their Principal as the facilitator of the Principal's key objectives. The role is rarely an administrative function, rather focusing on operational, strategic, and cross-functional execution. Chiefs of Staff take on diverse responsibilities that depend on their previous career experiences, leadership capabilities, and the priorities of their Principal. These are also potential factors that impact compensation on a case-by-case basis. We have also written about [where CoS come from](#) and [where they go](#) upon "graduating" the role.

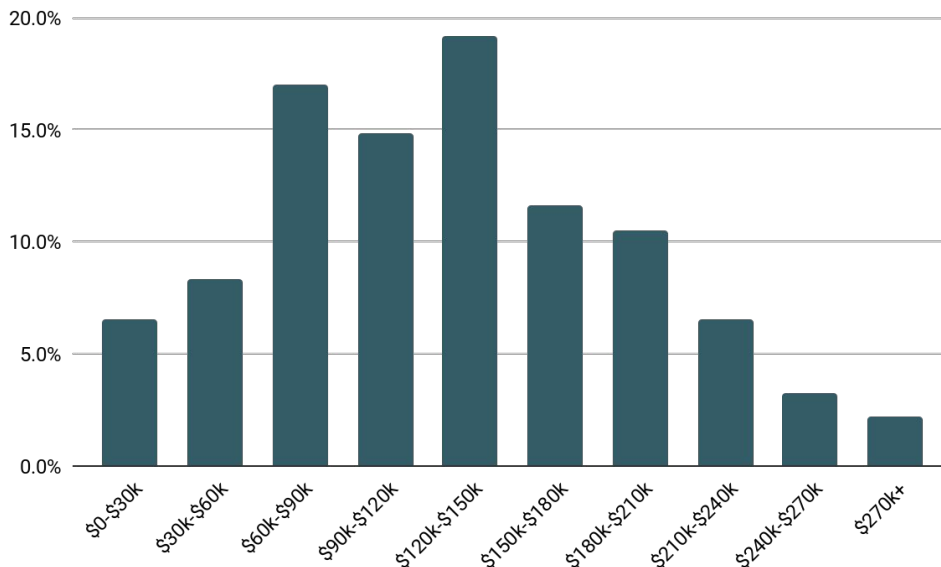
Chiefs of Staff by Level

As noted, Chiefs of Staff come from a variety of professional backgrounds and bring different amounts of experience and skills to the table. The "Chief" in CoS can be deceptive as not every CoS is working at the executive level. Despite sharing the same title, CoS operate with varying amounts of influence & ownership and therefore at different levels within their companies.

With this in mind, the Chief of Staff Network conducted independent research to establish a [Leveling Framework](#) characterizing the dimensions of growth and advancement criteria across five common CoS role archetypes. Survey participants were asked to review the Leveling Framework and self-select into one level. Additionally, we collected number of years of professional experience noting that the two (experience and level) are not always the same.

Cash Rules Everything Around Me

Histogram of Annual Base Salary



As in prior years, our data shows a relatively normal distribution.

This year, there is some downward skewness. The average salary dropped to \$131k, from \$153k last year. This is mainly because we collected much more data from Africa and Asia this year.

Excluding this data, the average is \$144k, similar to 2021's average of \$142,533.

Notably, 48% of Chiefs of Staff make between \$100k-200k and 17% earn >\$200k.

\$131,229

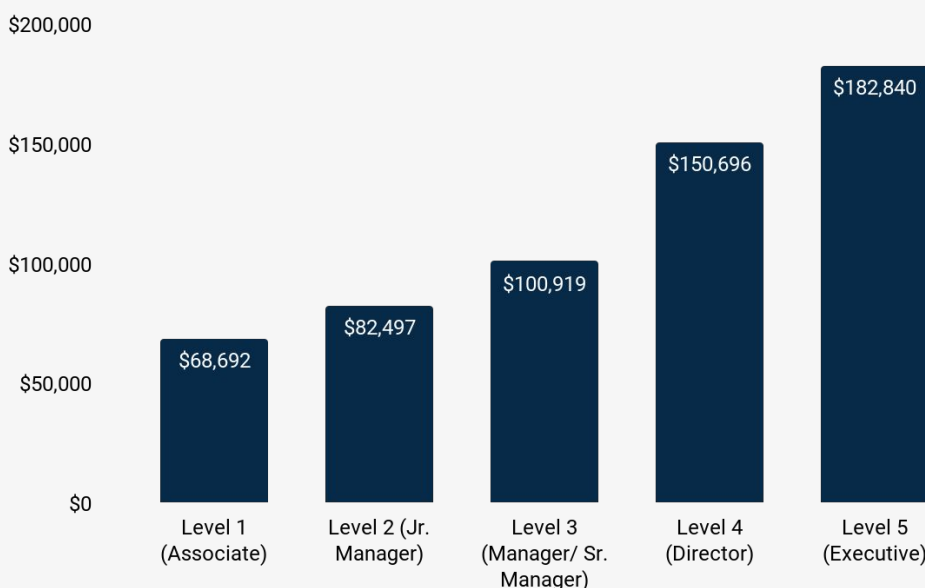
Average - Full Dataset

\$144,121

Average - West Only*

Note: survey respondents provided base salary as an exact figure, rather than as a range. *"West Only" refers to US, Canada, Europe, & Australia.

Average Base Salary by CoS Level



This year, we see even more dramatic increases with higher CoS levels.

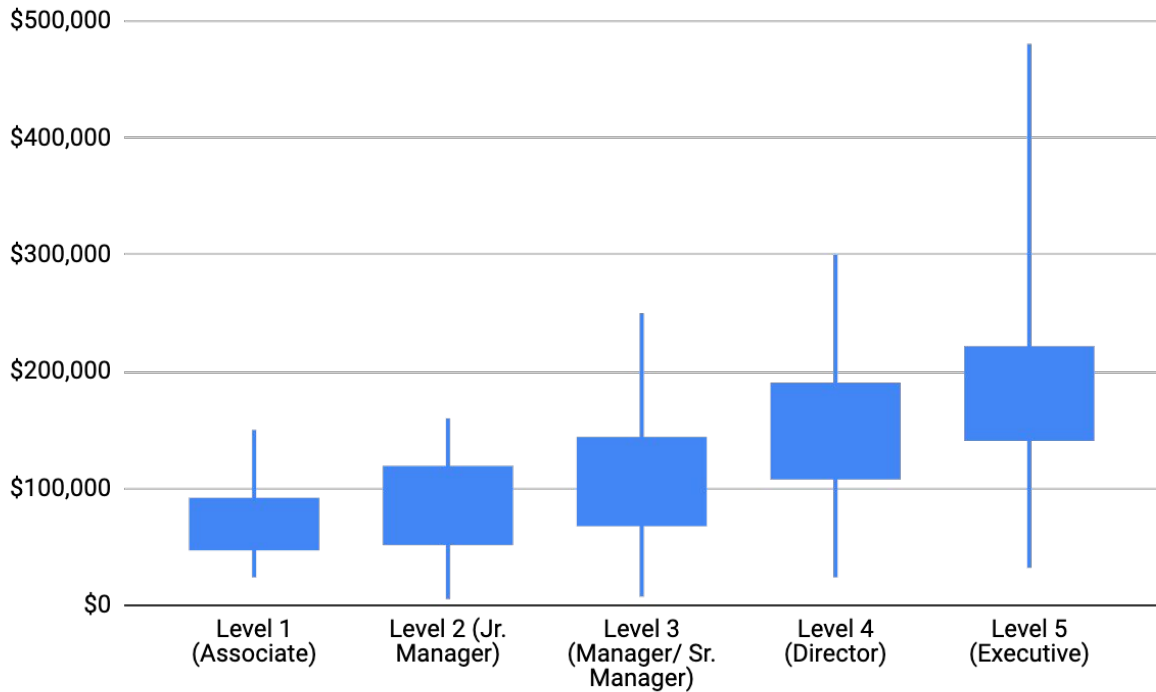
Grouping Level 1 & 2 together, we see the lower levels continue to be squeezed as the average base salary is \$75,594, down from \$94k last year and \$120k in 2021.

We see a 22% increase at Level 3, a 49% increase to Level 4, and a 21% increase to Level 5.

The only level that has seen increased wages is Level 5 (\$20k higher), indicating execs retain more control over their salaries.

Learn more about our proprietary Chief of Staff Leveling Framework [here](#).

Base Salary Bands by CoS Level



Level 1 (Associate)

- Middle 50% range: \$48k-\$150k
- Average: \$68,691.92

Level 2 (Jr. Manager):

- Middle 50% range: \$53k-\$160k
- Average: \$82,497.43

Level 3 (Sr. Manager):

- Middle 50% range: \$70k-\$142k
- Average: \$100,918.59

Level 4 (Director):

- Middle 50% range: \$110k-\$189k
- Average: \$150,696.06

Level 5 (Executive)

- Middle 50% range: \$142k-\$220k
- Average: \$182,839.63

Just as we've seen the last 2 years, there is a direct correlation between the seniority level of a CoS and how high their salary can go. This can be explained by the fact that larger or later-stage organizations' executives rely on CoS for a wider scope of responsibilities and will tend to compensate accordingly.

Indeed, the upper bounds for a Level 5 CoS are far higher than any of the other CoS Levels.

Outliers exist at each seniority level, which can likely be attributed to the variety of CoS responsibilities from company to company.

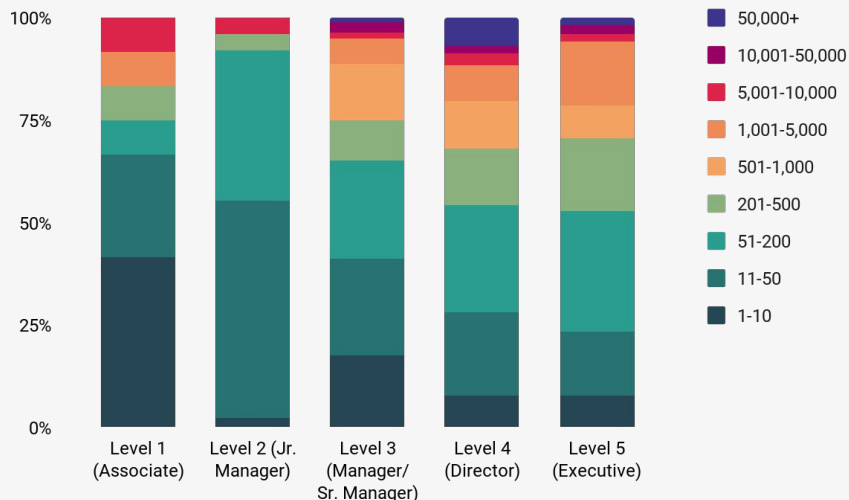
Average Base Salary by Company Headcount



There is a strong correlation between average salary and company size. In fact, 87.5% of variability in salary can be explained by company size. Therefore, it's not surprising that the lowest CoS salaries occur at companies with 1-50 employees.

Above 500 employees in headcount, Chiefs of Staff tend to earn \$150,000 or more on average. When companies get to 10,000+ employees in size, they pay their Chiefs of Staff \$200,000 on average. It's intriguing that a scale of magnitude increase in company size only increases CoS salary by ~\$40,000.

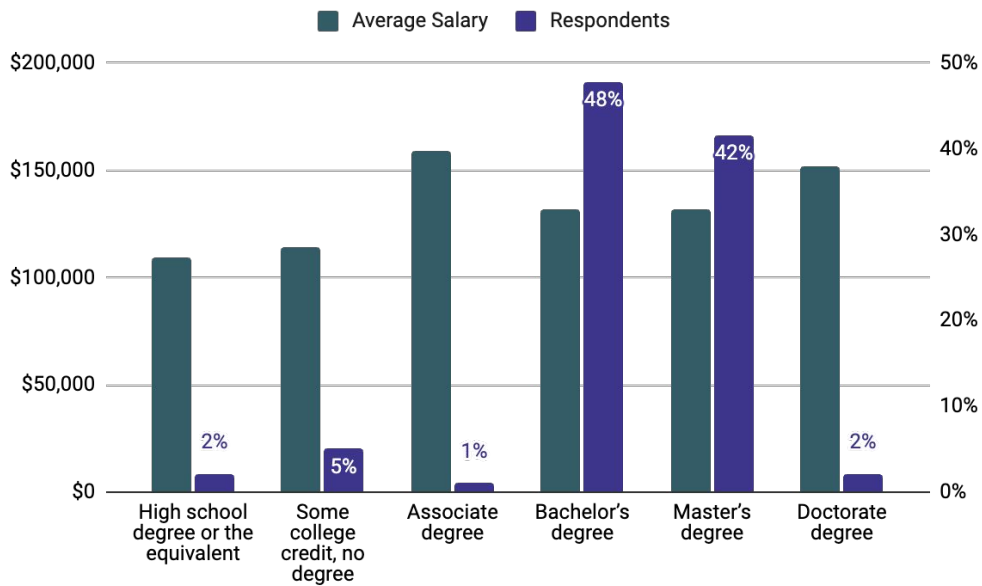
Company Headcount by CoS Level



Similar to the last 2 years, there are few obvious correlations between company size and Level of CoS. With that said, we observe that 66% of Level 1 CoS are at companies between 1-50 in size and 93% of Level 2 CoS between 1-200. Neither Level 1 nor Level 2 appeared at companies > 10,000.

75% of Level 3 CoS are at companies between 1-500. Over a quarter of Level 4 and Level 5 CoS were at companies between 51-200. Only 6% of Level 5s appeared at companies > 5000.

Average Base Salary by Educational Attainment



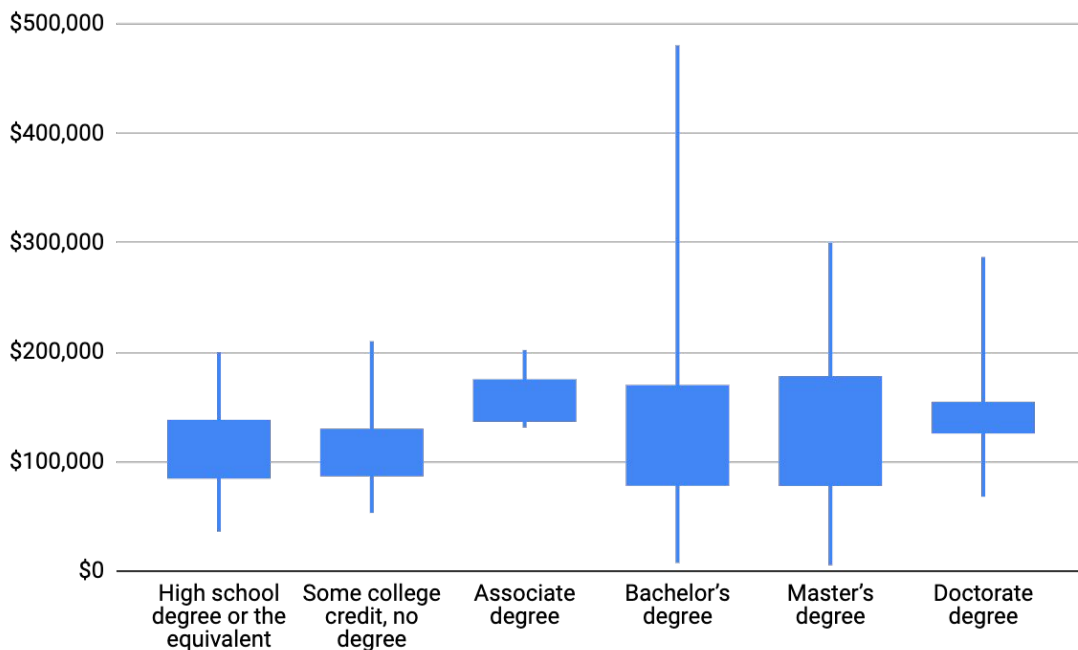
CoS without a higher degree earn about \$20,000 (15%) less on average than those with one. However, among the degreed, there is no relation between education level and average salary, with Associate's degree holders earning more than any other category on average.

With that said, a Bachelor's degree holder had the highest salary reported of \$480,000*, as you can see below. Those with Associate's and Doctorates had the tightest spread between 25th and 75th percentile salaries, as well as the highest minimum salaries. Master's degree holders had the largest spread between the 25th and 75th percentile salaries.

From this data, we see that any degree is better than no degree when it comes to salary and that the vast majority of CoS had Bachelor's or Master's degrees.

*Note: the highest salary reported, while certainly an outlier, had no impact on any of the overarching trends in this report.

Base Salary Bands by Educational Attainment



Average Salary by Years of Relevant Experience



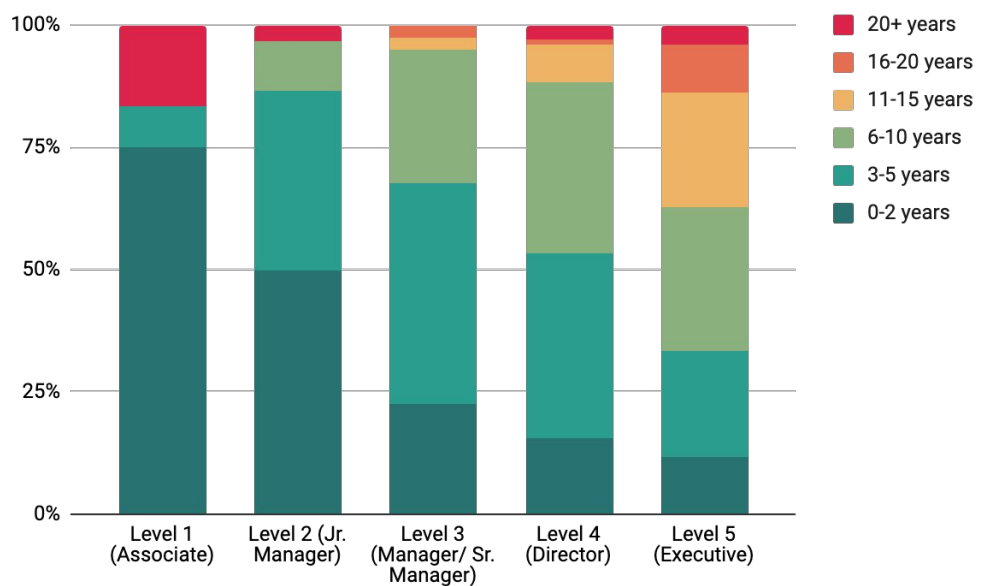
Unsurprisingly, salary typically rises as experience levels go up, with those with 16-20 years of experience (YoE) earning by far the highest average salaries of \$225,807. Interestingly, those with 20+ YoE earn a similar amount to those with 11-15 YoE. This is partially due to high outliers in the 16-20 band, but even with their removal, the data suggests that those with 20+ YoE earn less. Sadly, we speculate that this may be due to ageism in the workplace.

Years of Relevant Experience by CoS Level

It was interesting to see Level 1 and 2 CoS with 20+ YoE - we suspect these are people who made significant career changes later in life.

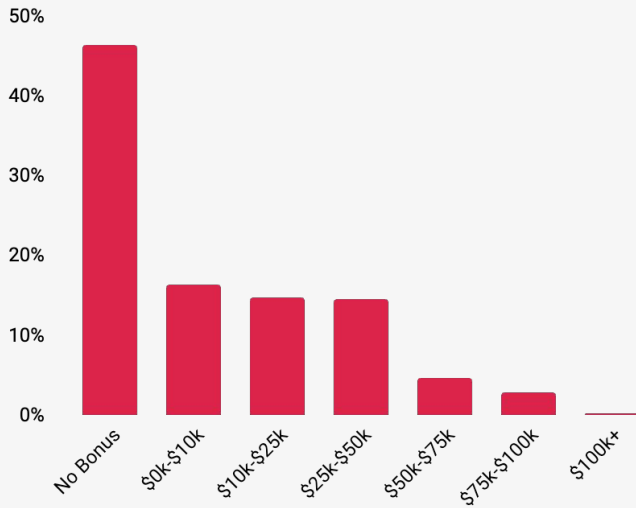
Unsurprisingly, the proportion of CoS with 0-2 YoE declines at each subsequent level of seniority.

There are no CoS with 11-20 YoE at Level 1 or 2 and barely any at Level 3. Typically, these experienced professionals sit at Level 4-5.

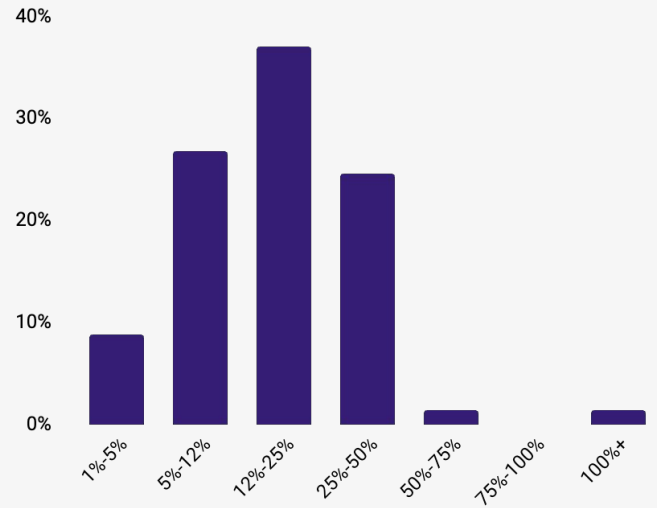


Annual Cash Bonus

Annual Bonus



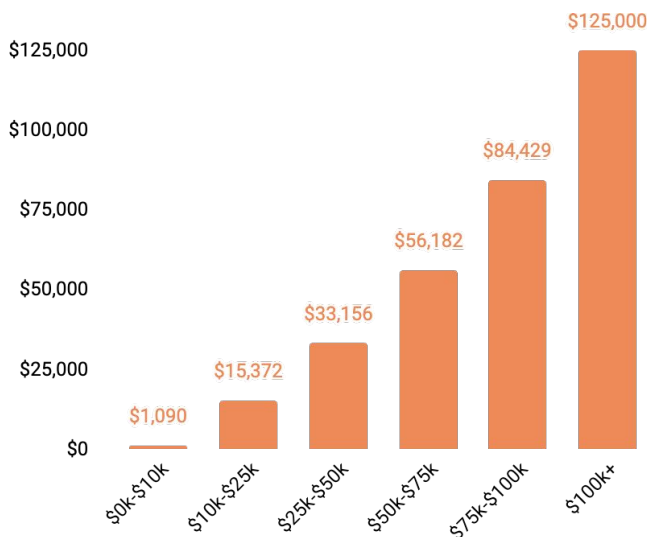
Annual Bonus as % of Base Salary



As we saw last year, primarily, respondents did not receive cash bonuses. For those that did, their bonuses averaged ~\$30k. This lines up with research from PayFactors, indicating median CoS Bonuses are ~\$35k.

The largest proportion of CoS' bonus value fell in the 12-25% range of annual salary. CoS had a broad range of bonuses, with a standard deviation of \$28k and a range between the min and max of \$200k.

Average Bonus by Bracket



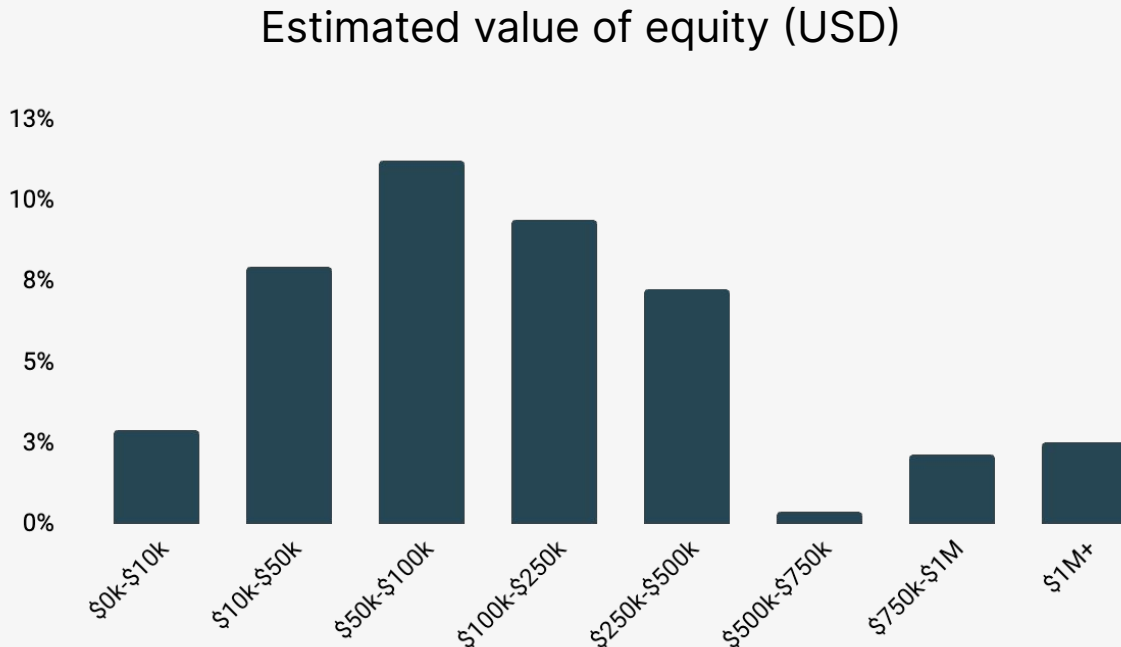
Key Metrics

\$29,271
Average Bonus

\$27,789
Standard Deviation of Bonus

\$199,600
Range between Min & Max Bonus

Stock Compensation



Notably, 56% of respondents did not receive any equity grant; while the graph above does not show that column for legibility, the values depicted do account for it.

Of those who earned equity, the average equity value of \$362,494, but this was pulled up by some respondents' whose equity grants have become highly valuable (\$1M+, with the highest being \$5M).

The median and mode values are \$100k, which tracks with the chart above. Low equity values may suggest that people are at earlier stage companies, have recently vested into their grants, or are simply being granted less equity in the current economy.

\$362,494

Average Equity Value

\$4,000

Minimum Non-Zero Equity Value

\$100,000

Median Equity Value

\$5,000,000

Maximum Equity Value

\$100,000

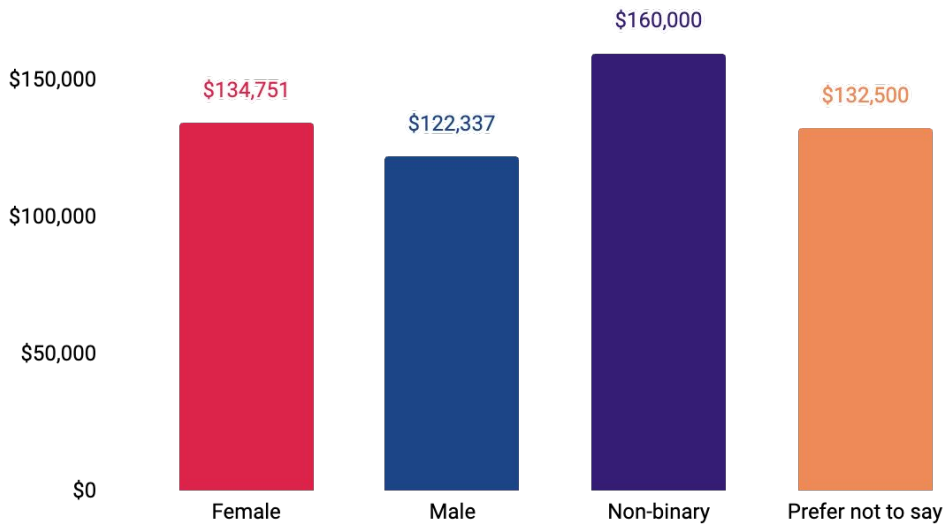
Mode Equity Value

\$793,024

Standard Deviation of Equity Value

Impact of Gender on Compensation

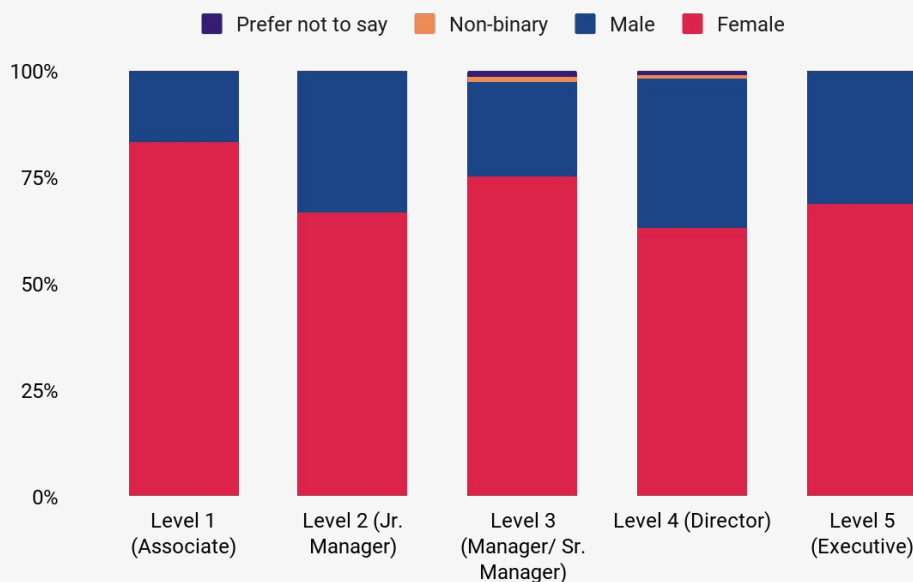
Average Salary by Gender



For the first time since we began conducting this survey, we see that women are earning more than men on average! This is perhaps because we had more female responses across all CoS Levels, including high outliers.

With that said, non-binary respondents earn the most; this is mainly because of high outliers in our admittedly limited non-binary responses.

CoS by Level by Gender



As noted above, Females comprise a majority of our respondents at all Levels, with the heaviest skew towards Female CoS in Level 1. The highest proportion of Males is at Level 4.

Years of Relevant Experience by Gender

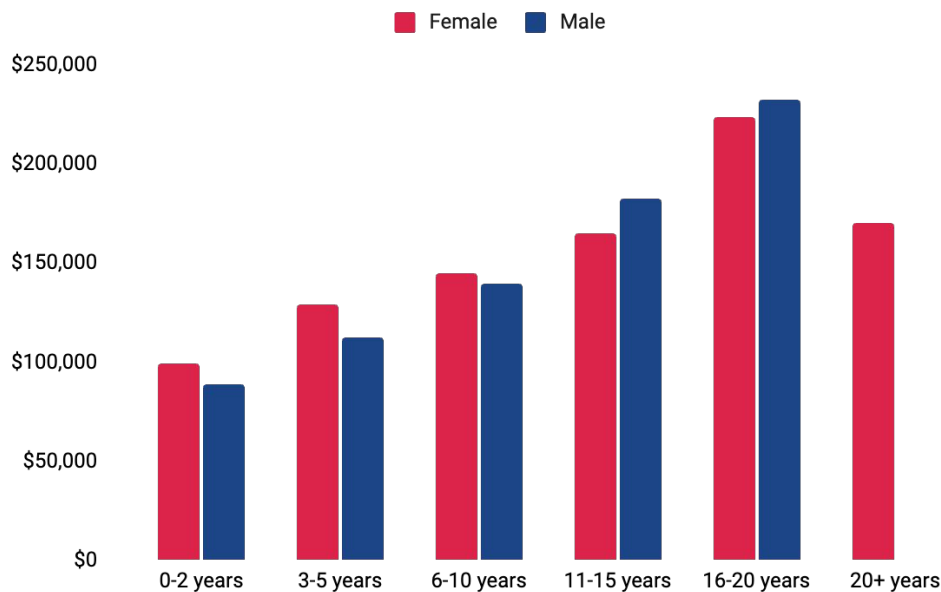
We only see Females with 20+ years of experience. We also know from our YoE analysis that those with 20+ YoE earn less. Besides the ageism hypothesis we stated earlier, it may be the case that sexism is also at play.

Respondents identifying as non-binary as well as those who prefer not to say all had < 5 YoE, which indicates they are members of Gen Z.

There are even proportions of those with 11-20 YoE across Male & Female.



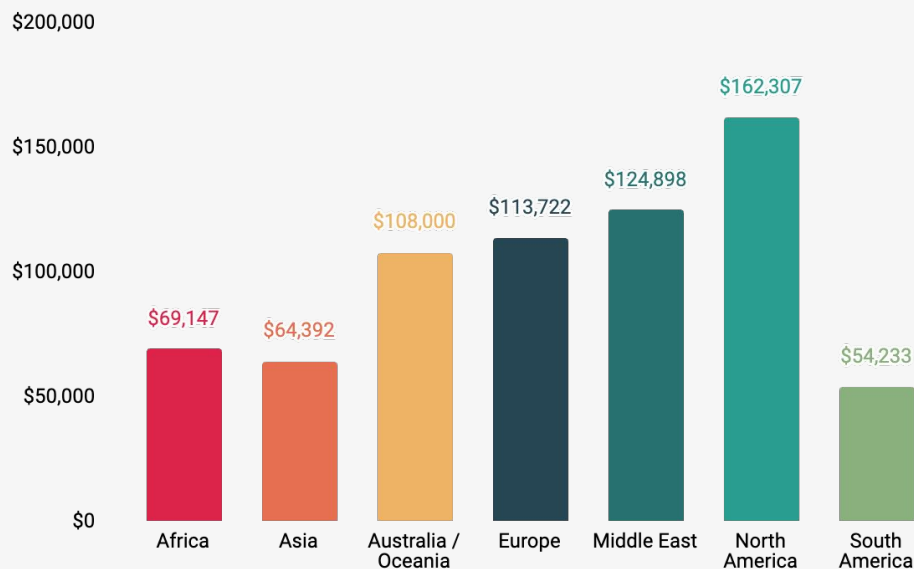
Years of Experience vs Salary by Gender



From 0-10 YoE, Females earn more than Males on average. This trend reverses in the 11-20 YoE range, when Males earn more than Females. It is highly likely that this is evidence of the “Motherhood Penalty” described by economists.

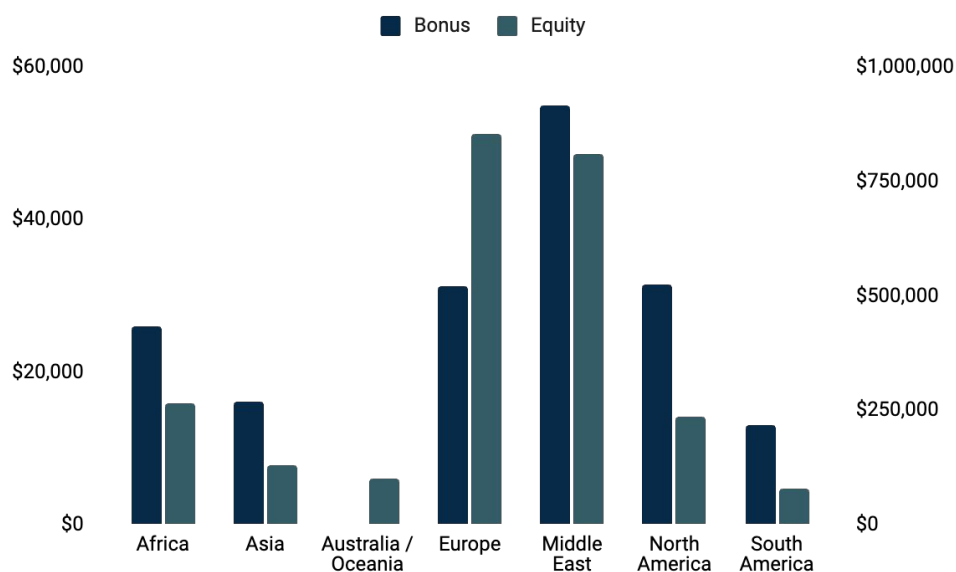
Impact of Geography on Compensation

Average CoS Salary by Geographic Region



As we saw last year, CoS roles pay by far the most in North America, specifically the United States. The pay in North America is 43% higher than in Europe, 2.5x higher than the pay in Asia, and 3x higher than in South America.

As shown below, average bonuses (left axis) are highest in the Middle East and equity grants (right axis) are quite high in both the Middle East and Europe; equity is skewed high because of some respondents who have had long tenure at unicorn companies.



Average Salary, Bonus, & Equity by Country

Country	Salary	Bonus	Equity
Argentina	\$57,875	\$23,000	\$75,000
Australia	\$108,000		\$100,000
Brazil	\$64,886	\$11,460	\$100,000
Canada	\$112,454	\$41,788	\$168,750
Chile	\$20,000		
Colombia	\$43,252	\$7,250	\$5,800
Denmark	\$95,000		\$100,000
France	\$71,748	\$13,467	\$67,000
Germany	\$112,297	\$45,000	\$1,357,065
India	\$51,447	\$17,219	\$157,143
Indonesia	\$90,000	\$9,000	\$40,000
Ireland	\$210,000	\$40,000	\$200,000
Israel	\$130,531	\$55,000	\$962,500
Italy	\$75,000	\$5,000	
Kenya	\$52,549	\$8,475	\$363,750
Lithuania	\$78,000	\$8,000	
Philippines	\$16,802		\$24,465
Poland	\$96,000		\$100,000
Rwanda	\$80,000	\$20,000	
Saudi Arabia	\$192,000		\$200,000
Singapore	\$104,767	\$15,833	\$100,000
South Africa	\$92,337	\$36,303	\$65,000
South Korea	\$60,000		\$220,000
Sweden	\$74,000		\$1,000,000
Switzerland	\$124,667		\$100,000
Uganda	\$52,373	\$18,000	
United Arab Emirates	\$24,000		
United Kingdom	\$136,994	\$33,000	\$1,107,778
United States	\$166,992	\$30,536	\$238,230

Note: we removed certain countries with limited or highly skewed data from this table, so as not to accidentally dox any of our respondents.

Impact of Industry on Compensation

Top Industries for CoS Salary

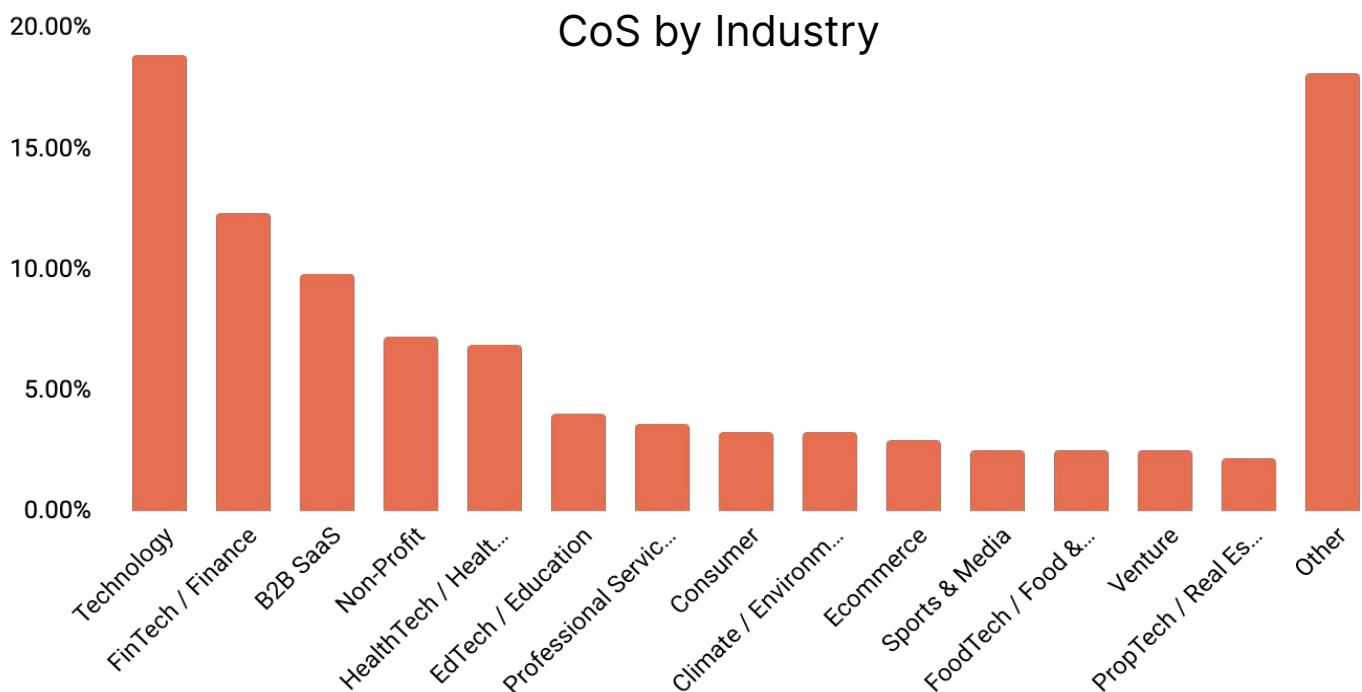
Industry	Salary
Energy	\$187,670
Enterprise SaaS	\$179,794
Sports & Media	\$173,357
Public Sector / Gov	\$173,000
InsureTech / Insurance	\$170,500
BioTech	\$158,600
Technology	\$149,850
Blockchain / Crypto	\$149,200
HealthTech / Healthcare	\$142,357
PropTech / Real Estate	\$141,667
FinTech / Finance	\$140,114
Non-Profit	\$135,440

Facing are the top industries for CoS Salary.

These are the industries in which the average pay exceeds the average salary for all respondents. Many of them are repeats from last year.

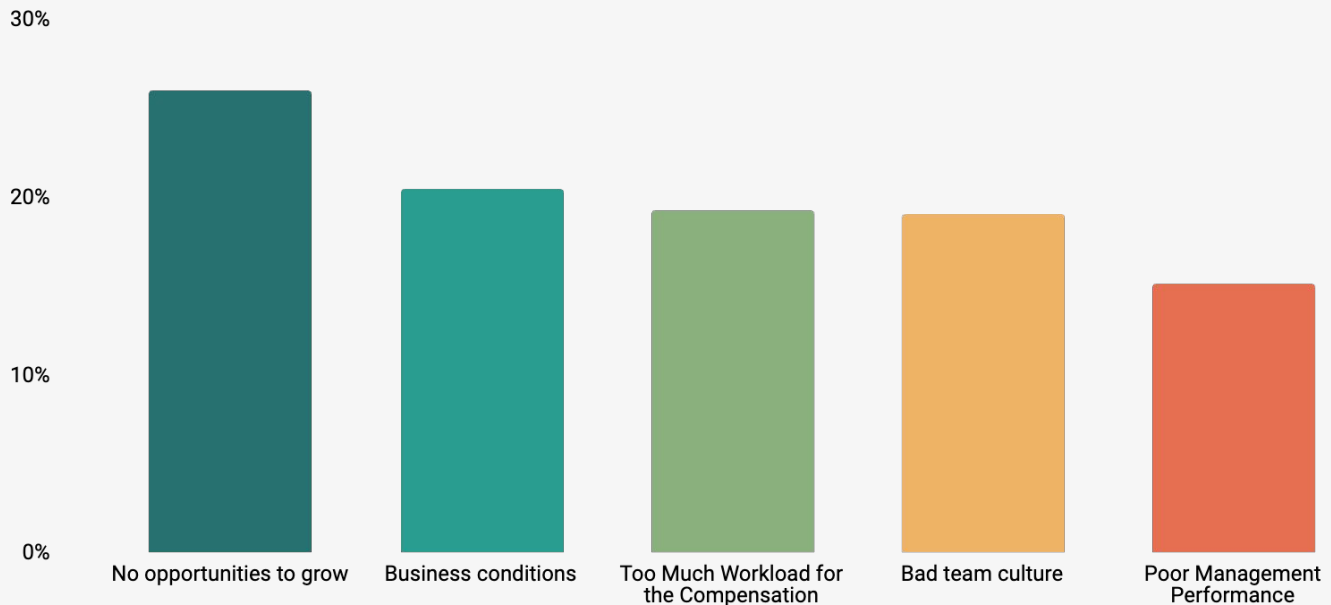
The higher salaries in some of these industries likely stem from the capital intensity of sectors such as healthcare, transportation, real estate, and finance. The presence of nonprofits was surprising, however.

As shown below, tech, finance, non-profits, and healthcare have the most CoS. "Other" accounts for 15 industries that each represented less than 2% of our respondents.



Career Planning

What reasons would cause you to leave your current job?



Given the sustained turbulence in the economy, we wanted to understand how CoS were looking at job transitions. As in 2022, the single biggest driver to leave a job was “lack of growth opportunities.” Unlike last year, “business conditions” has jumped from last place to 2nd place.

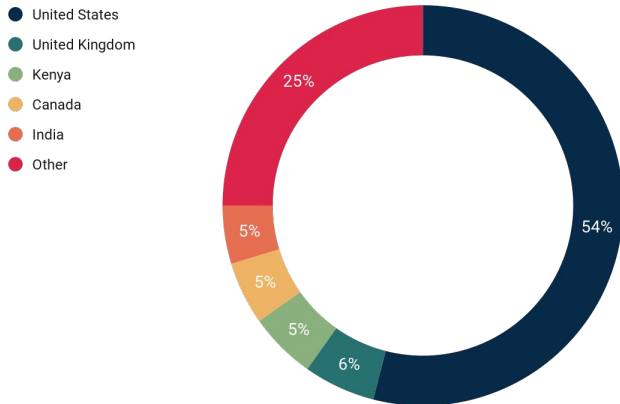
Even so, most CoS are not looking to change jobs. In fact, we remain impressed at the uncommon loyalty of Chiefs of Staff: 58% wish to stay at their current company in some form or fashion. With that said, 40% of respondents told us that they feel their career is stalled due to organizational limitations or that they are outright stuck.

Career Path + Desire to Remain in Current Role

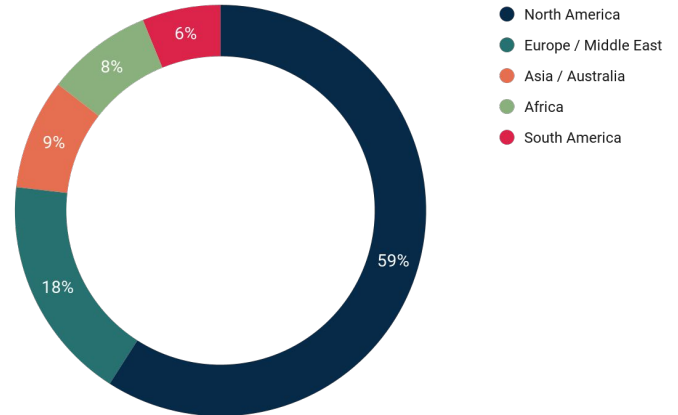
How's your career path in your current company?	Percentage	Do you want to stay in your current role?	Percentage
Developing well	45%	Stay but expand role with more responsibilities	37%
Limited due to organizational limitations	36%	Stay with the same exact role	17%
Developing, but seek more speed	15%	Change company but keep the role	16%
I'm stuck	4%	Unsure	15%
		Change company and role	8%
		Stay at the company but move departments	4%
		Prefer not to say	4%

Respondent Demographics

Country Representation

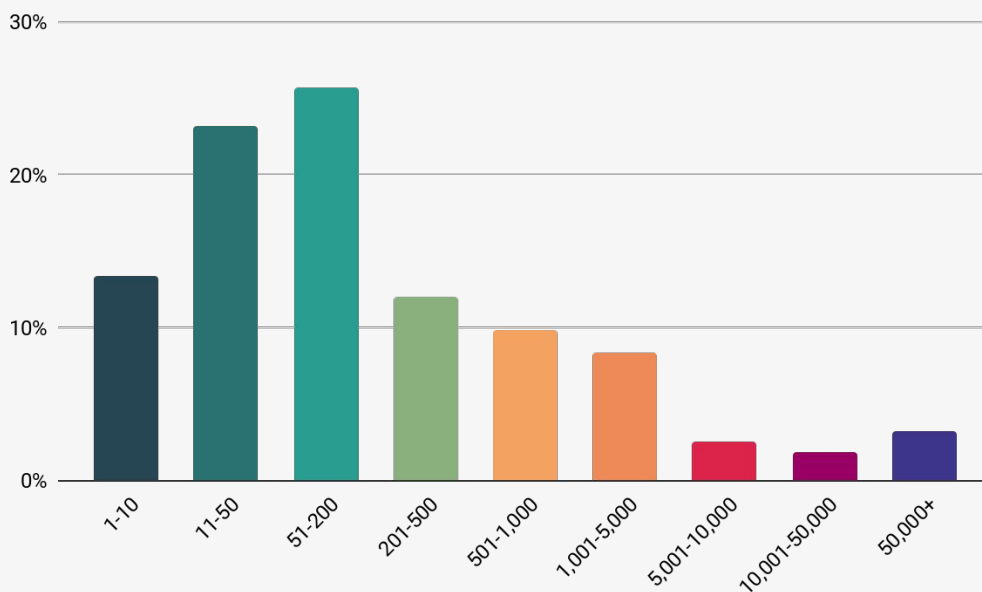


Regional Representation



As usual, CoS from the USA accounted for most of our respondents, but only 54% this year compared to 77% last year. We were able to collect much more data from Africa and Asia YoY. We had participation from over 30 countries, up from 20 last year.

Organization Headcount



Just as we saw last year, companies with 11-50 and 51-200 accounted for the majority of respondents. Overall, the breakdown of organization headcount looks almost exactly the same as 2022.

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