



Enterprise Strategy Group | Getting to the bigger truth.™

ESG RESEARCH INSIGHTS PAPER

The 2021 State of Splunk Careers Report

Global Survey Highlights Accelerating Salaries and Opportunities for Key Data Skills

October 2021

This ESG Research Insight Paper was commissioned by Splunk, Inc.
and is distributed under license from ESG.

© 2021 by The Enterprise Strategy Group, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Contents

Executive Summary	3
Advanced Data Skills = A Durable Career Advantage	3
Key Findings.....	3
The Impact of Data Skills on Compensation	5
Exploring the Link Between Advanced Data Skills and Compensation	5
Why Is Compensation Trending Up? Professional Advancement.....	6
The Splunk Compensation Advantage.....	7
Differences in Compensation	8
Compensation Over Time: An Improving Outlook	8
From Correlation to Causation: Do Data Skills Drive Earnings?	9
Job Security and Data Skills	10
Career Transformation	12
Helping Professionals Upskill and Prepare for a Cloud-First Future	13
The Employer Advantage	14
The Bigger Truth.....	15
Research Methodology	15

Executive Summary

Advanced Data Skills = A Durable Career Advantage

As we reach the tail end of 2021, many of the uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic have begun to crystalize relative to a year ago. Businesses have had time to adjust to remote and hybrid work models, plans for a return to the office have started to take shape, and the macroeconomic picture has steadily improved, giving businesses more confidence in planning. However, it's clear that the "new normal" is just that—new. There will be no rapid "snap back" to the ways we operated before COVID and organizations are still grappling with more uncertainty and change than the historical norm.

And when it comes to that "new normal," necessity has given birth to a lot of innovation: the acceleration of cloud service adoption and reliance, which enabled organizations to effectively support increasing amounts of remote workers and data and the maturation of new digital channels, services, and methods of engaging customers. All of this innovation contributes to the rapid expansion of digital assets that organizations need to manage and protect.

This is the backdrop of *The 2021 State of Splunk Careers Report*, the latest entry in a continuing effort by Splunk, in partnership with ESG, to understand how advanced data skills affect Splunk practitioners' career prospects. This second and expanded survey of Splunk practitioners includes the perspectives of 383 employed Splunk practitioners, up from 245 in 2020. The survey covered salary, promotability, and competence, and it shows us in no uncertain terms that businesses continue to value employees that can use data to answer business questions spanning IT administration, cybersecurity, and application development. Quantitative data captured in the survey was complemented by qualitative anecdotes reported by respondents and quoted throughout this report. For more details, see the Research Methodology section at the conclusion of this report.

Key Findings

- **Splunk professionals earn more than their peers:**
 - Based on ESG's secondary research, ESG's analysis shows Splunk practitioners in an IT administration role earn 16% more than the average IT administrator with more than a decade of experience. Cybersecurity-focused professionals earn 22% more than the average cybersecurity professional with more than a decade of experience.
 - When assessing year-over-year trends, Splunk practitioners this year reported earning 30% more than they did last year. This increase outpaces the rate of inflation by 8.6x and indicates a positive trend for Splunk practitioners moving forward.
 - Splunk practitioners with more than 5 years of experience with the platform earn 8% more than Splunk practitioners with 2 years or less of experience of the same age.
- **Splunk practitioners have a high degree of job security:**
 - More than 4 out of 5 practitioners feel they are valued by their employer, a slight uptick from last year (82% versus 79%).
 - The most frequently cited benefits to learning Splunk are practitioners becoming more effective in their current role and increased job security and portable skills.

- 81% are confident in their ability to quickly find a new job with comparable pay and responsibilities if needed (up from 72% in 2020).
- 76% of respondents are satisfied with their jobs, another uptick from 2020.
- Splunk is helping practitioners (and organizations) prepare for a cloud-first future: There is a 64% jump in Splunk Cloud use year-over-year.
- **Splunk practitioners often take advantage of Splunk-provided educational services:**
 - 78% of Splunk practitioners have participated in paid-for Splunk training.
 - Nearly half of practitioners have earned a Splunk certification.
- **Splunk is a win for both employers and employees:**
 - 62% of Splunk practitioners say it has helped them be more effective at their jobs, which is the most frequently cited benefit of Splunk in 2021.
 - Most organizations have identified multiple use cases for Splunk, and most of those identify a secondary use case within weeks of their initial deployment.
 - In IT operations use cases, Splunk has helped reduce downtime, and 66% cite a reduced number of events, which are faster to resolve.
 - In cybersecurity use cases, 77% say Splunk is helping improve threat detection through data correlation, and 69% say it has shortened investigation cycles.
 - In application development use cases, Splunk has helped the majority of organizations improve application performance and SLA adherence and gain new insights into the development lifecycle.
 - 87% of respondents say their organization is in a better competitive position today because they use Splunk.

The Impact of Data Skills on Compensation

ESG’s research shows that one of the key determining factors of job satisfaction is salary. In fact, salary has overtaken “work/life balance” as the top factor for 2021 (see Figure 1). This is not surprising, since having a job that affords a level of financial freedom ensures that you do not worry about making your next rent or mortgage payment, can enjoy leisure activities, and plan for your and your family’s future—all of which contribute to mental wellbeing. It is also fair to assume that the uncertainty of 2020 has put an even higher premium on this type of financial security, which can allow individuals to save for life’s unpredictable nature.

From the perspective of the company, a worker’s salary is an expression of the value of the worker’s labor: the more valuable the labor, the greater the compensation. And who doesn’t want their efforts to be valued?

Figure 1. What Drives Employee Satisfaction?

Which of the following factors do you believe most impact your job satisfaction? (Percent of respondents, N=383, up to five responses accepted)



Source: Enterprise Strategy Group

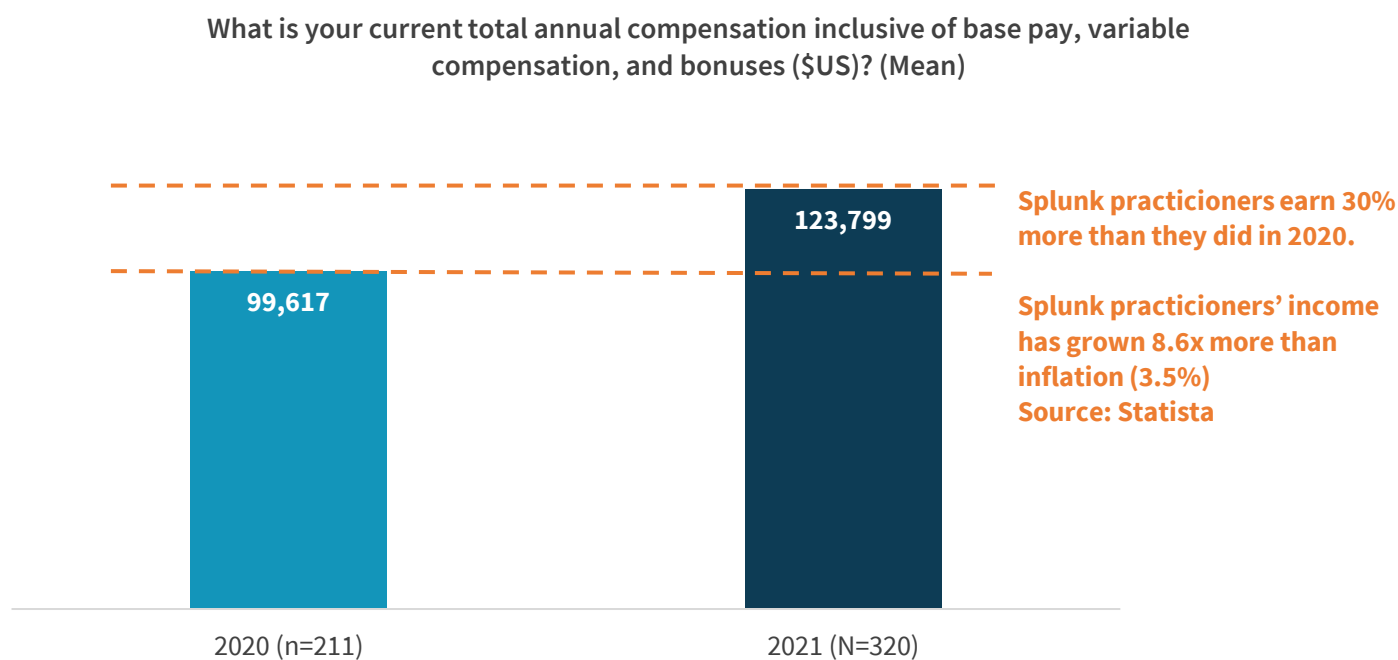
Exploring the Link Between Advanced Data Skills and Compensation

Employees that learn how to use the platform, ask questions about their data, and get actionable answers, will be more valuable to their employers. This value should drive their compensation higher. But is that what the data shows? The answer is still an emphatic “yes.” Overall, Splunk practitioners’ salaries are 30% higher than a year ago (see Figure 2). The 2021 data implies that organizations are increasingly recognizing the value of data analysis and that Splunk

“I was able to change companies over the past year thanks in large part to my knowledge of Splunk. This resulted in a 20% increase in my salary from what I was making at my previous employer.”

practitioners' ability to bring data to bear to solve problems and create business value is being recognized as more and more essential. Splunk practitioners in a cybersecurity role tend to earn more (\$128,214 annually) than their counterparts in IT operations (\$114,959) or application development (\$115,302) functions.

Figure 2. Splunk Compensation Trends



Source: Enterprise Strategy Group

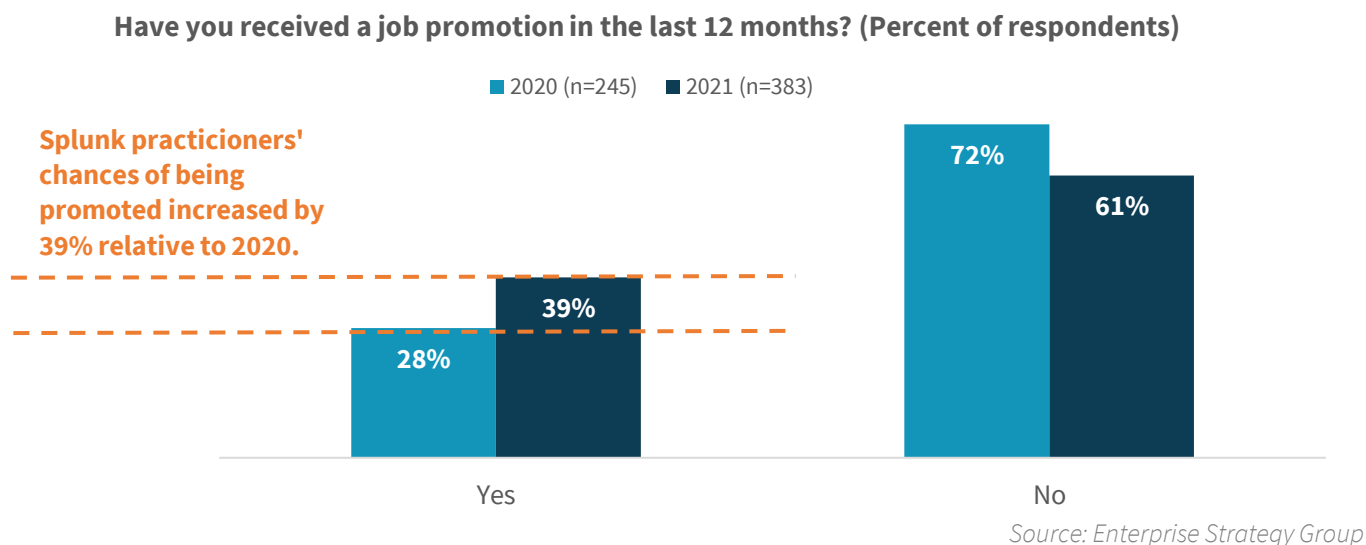
Why Is Compensation Trending Up? Professional Advancement

One likely reason compensation is trending up is practitioners' propensity to have been promoted year-over-year.

ESG asked respondents if they had been promoted in the past year, and 39% reported they had. In 2020, 28% of Splunk practitioners reported receiving a promotion in the prior 12 months. Said another way, Splunk practitioners were 39% more likely to have earned a promotion in 2021 (see Figure 3).

This shift provides further evidence that employers really value the expertise and value Splunk practitioners deliver to their organizations.

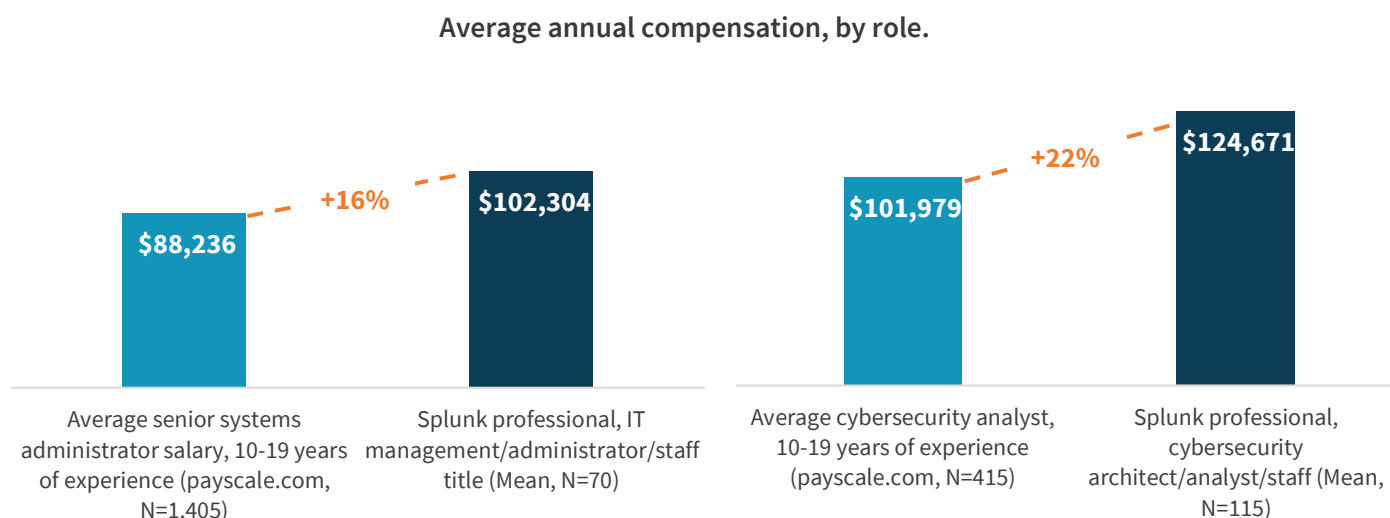
“Before I learned Splunk, I was a young adult with a GED. Today, I'm a Certified Splunk Architect... I can say without a doubt Splunk played and continues to play a pivotal role in my career and quality of life for my family.”

Figure 3. Splunk Practitioners Accelerate Their Career Advancement

The Splunk Compensation Advantage

To understand how Splunk practitioners stack up against a control group, ESG compared reported compensation with data from payscale.com. ESG grouped respondents into two role categories: IT administrators (N=70) and cybersecurity analysts/architects (N=115). As a comparison to the former group, ESG used salary data from payscale.com for “senior systems administrators” with 10-19 years of experience. The data shows that Splunk IT administrators earn a 16% premium relative to the broader market. There is an even greater increase when we make the comparison to surveyed cybersecurity professionals. Relative to “cybersecurity analysts” with 10-19 years of experience, we see that Splunk security professionals earn a 22% premium (see Figure 4).

“Splunk has opened many doors for me and enabled me to triple my yearly income since the time that I first started using the product.”

Figure 4. The Splunk Compensation Advantage

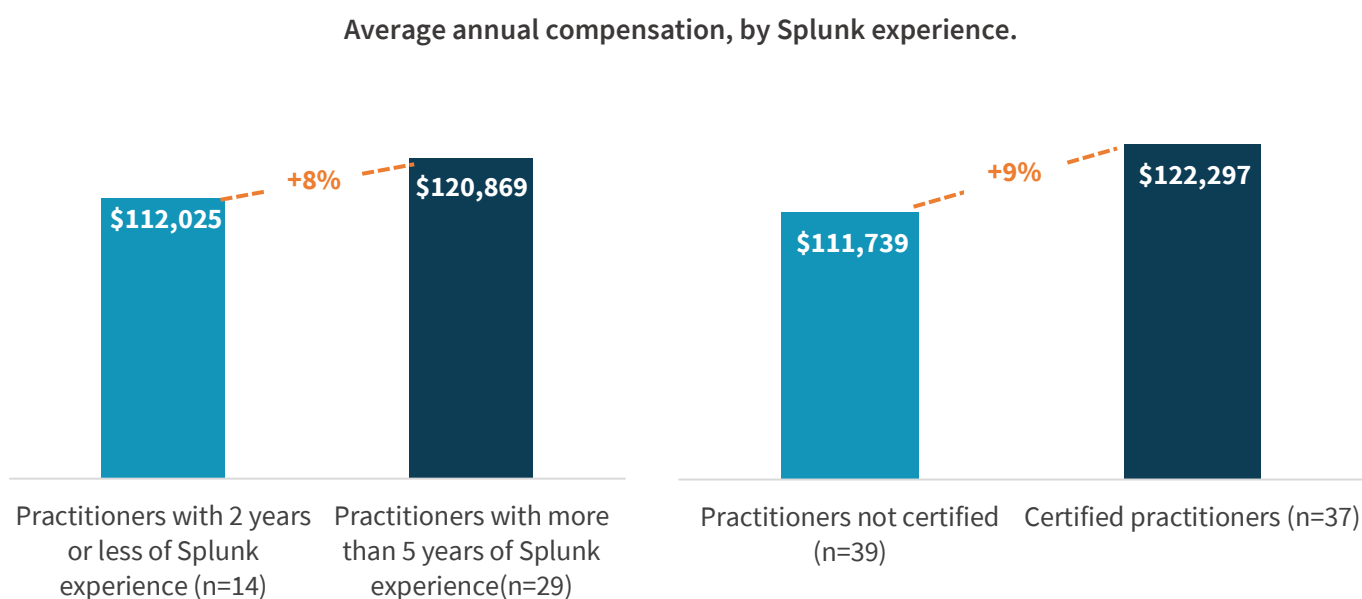
Source: Enterprise Strategy Group

It is worth noting that the survey respondent base skewed young: 46% of respondents fell between ages 26 and 35. Given that the control groups Splunk practitioners were compared against had a minimum of a decade of work experience, the implication is clear: Splunk use seems to help early-stage professionals rapidly increase their earnings. Splunk has positioned itself as a key driver in its practitioners achieving their top professional priority. Employees seek fair compensation, and Splunk use directly correlates to increased earnings.

Differences in Compensation

It is clear that Splunk practitioners hold a distinct compensation advantage relative to the broader market, but what differences exist among Splunk professionals? We compared Splunk practitioners of the same age range (36-45 years) to see how Splunk experience separated professionals at similar stages of their careers. The data shows that Splunk practitioners with more experience tended to earn more than those with less experience. Similarly, those that had earned Splunk certifications also tended to command higher wages. In the aggregate, professionals that have used Splunk for more than 5 years earn 8% more than those with 2 years or fewer of experience with Splunk, and those that have earned a Splunk certification make 9% more than their counterparts who have not (see Figure 5). While a directional finding due to lower n-sizes, this implies that a user's proficiency with Splunk, whether driven by experience or certification preparation, is a driver of compensation.

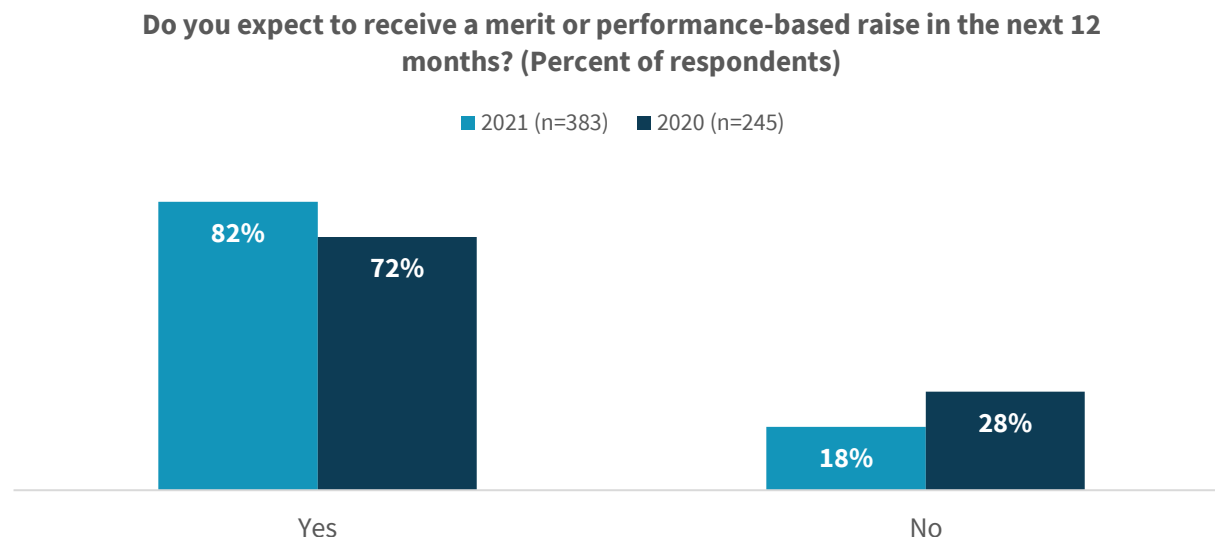
Figure 5. Splunk Proficiency Affects Compensation



Source: Enterprise Strategy Group

Compensation Over Time: An Improving Outlook

The salary data shows a positive correlation between Splunk usage and higher salaries, but we also wanted to assess salary trends over time. To do that, ESG asked respondents if they *expect* a raise in the coming 12 months. In 2020, 72% of Splunk practitioners reported they did, but in 2021 that number rose to 82% (see Figure 6). This data supports a general improvement in business outlook among respondents. Cuts of the data by job responsibility and region show some sizable statistics on future merit-based raises, as 85% of cybersecurity respondents expect a raise in the coming 12 months (versus 80% of IT operations personnel and 81% of developers) as well as 91% of all respondents in the Asia-Pacific region (versus 69% of European respondents and 82% of those in North America).

Figure 6. Splunk Proficiency Impacts Compensation

Source: Enterprise Strategy Group

From Correlation to Causation: Do Data Skills Drive Earnings?

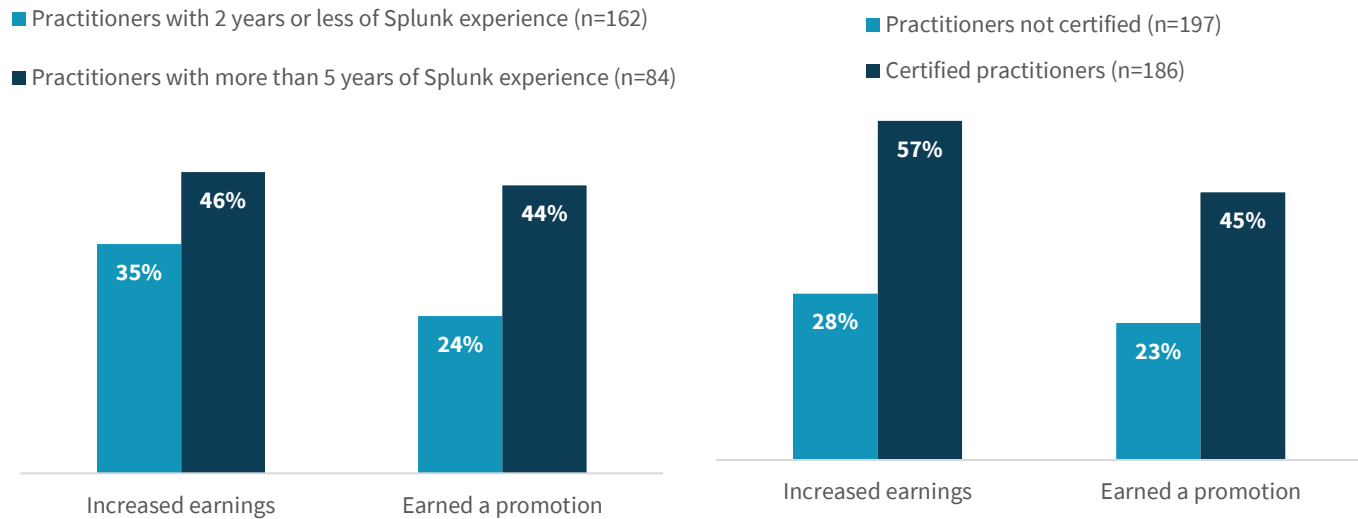
The analysis discussed in this report thus far has all been correlative, which does not necessarily mean there is causation. While the data clearly implies that Splunk use, experience, and proficiency all have a positive impact on earnings, we wanted to test if practitioners saw it that way. ESG asked respondents how, if at all, they felt learning Splunk had directly impacted their careers for the better. Many did: 42% said their knowledge of Splunk had increased their earnings and another 33% reported their knowledge of Splunk had earned them a promotion.

“Splunk gave me the opportunity to identify areas of waste in the organization. Leveraging Splunk and my skillset, I was able to create a new role for myself in the organization.”

Splunk experience and expertise are correlated with an array of positive career outcomes that respondents directly attribute to Splunk. Specifically, the majority (57%) of Splunk-certified respondents said learning Splunk had increased their earnings, and nearly half credited their Splunk knowledge with a promotion. These numbers are noticeably higher than those of non-certified practitioners. Moreover, we see that the longer Splunk has been used by respondents, the more likely they are to attribute these professional benefits to Splunk (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Career Outcomes Attributed to Splunk

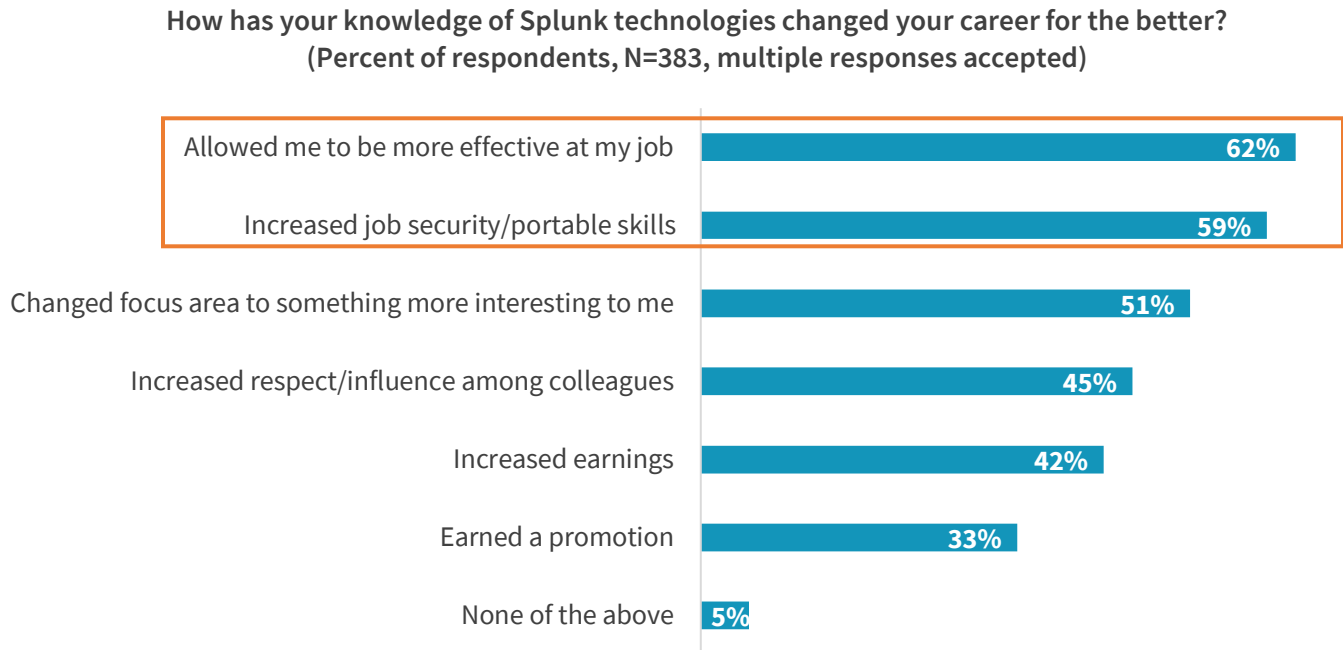
Percent of respondents crediting their Splunk knowledge with delivering increased earnings and advancement, by Splunk experience.



Source: Enterprise Strategy Group

Job Security and Data Skills

ESG asked respondents what direct benefits they have seen in their careers as a result of their Splunk capabilities. The most frequently reported benefits relate to job security: the respondent's effectiveness and their portable skills (see Figure 8). Given the continued presence of COVID-19 and its unpredictable impact on the job market, the importance of having in-demand, portable skills can't be overstated.

Figure 8. How Splunk Improves Career Outcomes

Source: Enterprise Strategy Group

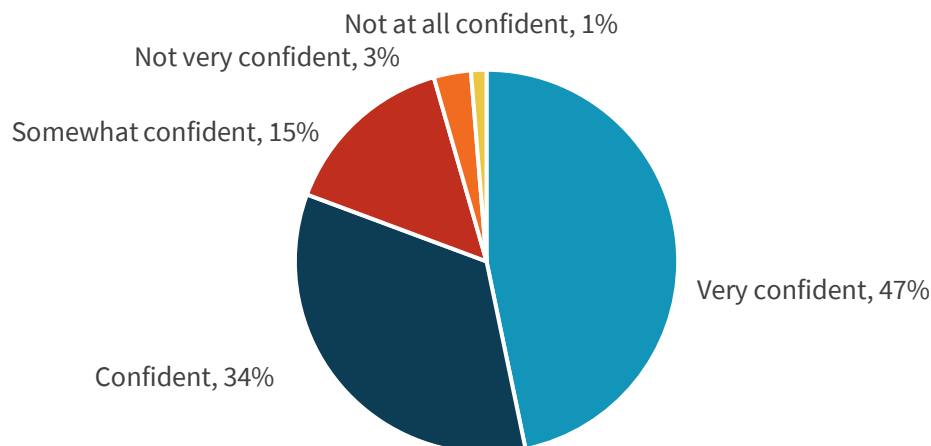
This research data was collected from May 25–July 21, 2021, as greater availability of safe and effective coronavirus vaccines began to allow individuals to return to more normal social and work-related activities compared to the prior 12 months. While white collar IT jobs have not been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic to the same degree as industries like travel and hospitality, job markets have certainly been affected horizontally.

However, Splunk practitioners continue to be very bullish on their employment prospects. ESG asked respondents if they were to leave their current job (voluntarily or involuntarily) today, how confident they would be in their ability to find a new job with comparable or better responsibilities and compensation within a 3-month period. More than four out of five (81%) said they were confident or very confident (see Figure 9). This represents a 9 percentage point increase year-over-year.

Their confidence doesn't waver across individual job responsibilities, either. IT professionals (82%), app developers (82%), and cybersecurity professionals (81%) are all equally self-assured that they would find very little trouble getting hired if they lost their current job.

Figure 9. Confidence in Finding Reemployment

If you were to leave your current job (voluntarily or involuntarily) today, how confident are you in your ability to find a new job with comparable/better responsibilities and compensation within a 3-month period? (Percent of respondents, N=383)



Source: Enterprise Strategy Group

What makes Splunk practitioners so confident? It's their knowledge that employers value their skills. ESG asked respondents to agree or disagree with the following statement: "I feel my employer values my skills and capabilities," and 82% agreed. It stands to reason that respondents not only believe their current employer values their skills but so too will prospective employers, particularly those that use Splunk.

IT, cybersecurity, and application development professionals today must know how to ingest, analyze, and make effective decisions based on data. Splunk practitioners are confident that they have this skill, that they drive benefit for their employers, and that employers recognize this benefit. This is most prevalent among cybersecurity respondents, as 88% of them say they feel their employer values their skills. In today's volatile information security landscape, with a devastating attack seemingly occurring every week, it is worth noting that cybersecurity professionals who use Splunk are voicing so much confidence.

Career Transformation

The research uncovered another distinct trend: that practitioners feel more confident in the workplace thanks to Splunk. The most frequently cited benefit of Splunk on careers is the ability to be more effective at their jobs (cited by 62% of respondents, see Figure 8). By improving their ability to complete day-to-day tasks, many employees are positioned to tackle new and more interesting tasks. For example, the majority of practitioners (51%) said their knowledge of Splunk empowered them to change their professional focus to something more interesting to them. Similarly, 68% of practitioners reported they've been asked to take on a special project or stretch assignment in the past 24 months.

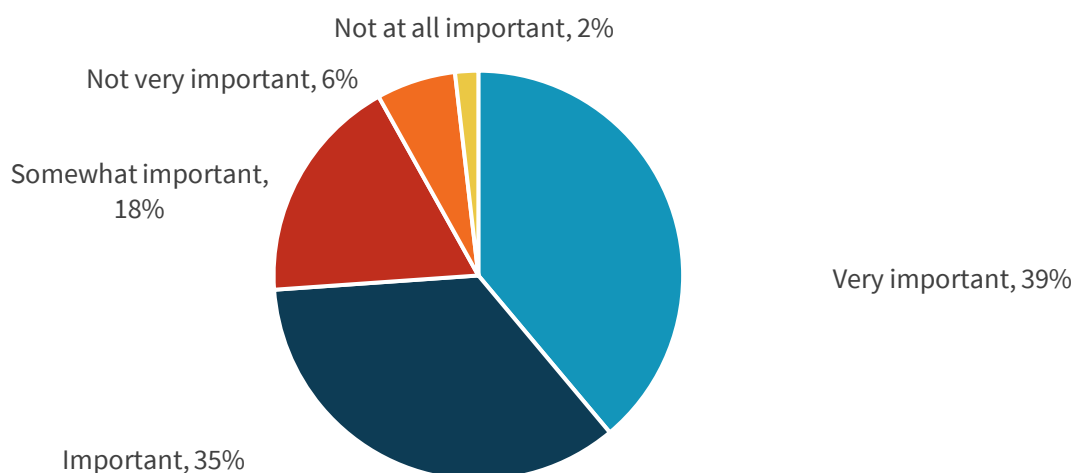
"Before Splunk I was a generic Linux administrator with aspirations to move into architecture. The ability to predictively identify failures through correlated searches across multiple application tiers has been a huge game changer for me. Splunk has enriched my career and has given me a new career path I did not expect."

Given all the benefits practitioners associate with their Splunk capabilities and the investment in time they've made to skill themselves up (nearly half have earned a Splunk certification and 61% have taken training from Splunk), it is not surprising to note that 74% of practitioners feel it is important that any future/prospective employer of theirs also uses Splunk (see Figure 10). Similarly, 85% say Splunk is one of the top 5 most important technologies they must continue to learn and master to advance in their careers. These statistics are eye-opening for individual professionals and organizations alike. Professionals are factoring Splunk implementation into their "pros and cons" lists while evaluating future employers, and lack of implementation seems to be a definitive con.

We see some variation in this data when we review regional cuts. An impressive 93% of APAC respondents cite Splunk as a top 5 most important tool (versus 82% of respondents in North America and 83% of those in Europe).

Figure 10. Importance of Splunk Use at Prospective Employer

If you were to leave your current employer, how important would it be to you that your new employer also uses Splunk? (Percent of respondents, N=383)



Source: Enterprise Strategy Group

Helping Professionals Upskill and Prepare for a Cloud-First Future

Splunk practitioners are acutely aware of its advantages and are invested in making the most of the platform. This is evident based on how many of our respondents have taken Splunk training or certification courses (61% overall). These courses include both free and paid versions. Of those that consume Splunk training, a noteworthy 78% have participated in paid training (either the individual or the employer), indicating the importance professionals place on mastering the product (see Figure 11). Just as important as the financial commitment is the time commitment: these numbers show practitioners are willing and motivated to carve out the time to ensure they are leveraging Splunk to the best of their abilities.

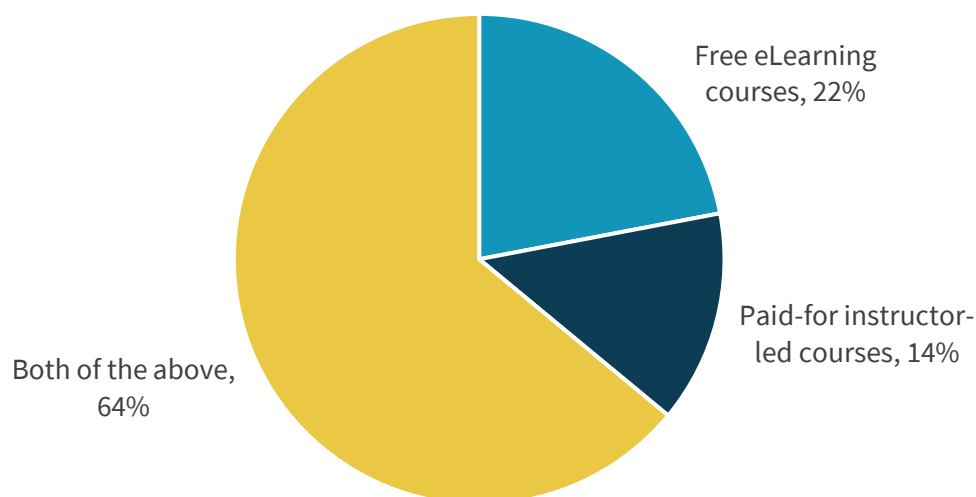
“Splunk has helped me learn how to automate infrastructure deployment and setup with Ansible. I would not have a need for such tools otherwise. Learning Splunk also kickstarted my willingness to learn new things, since the community is very active, and the documentation is thorough but readable.”

This goes for certification programs as well. Nearly half of all respondents said they have received some type of Splunk certification, and more than a third have received multiple. Additionally, only 22% of respondents holding a Splunk certification said they do not plan to earn an additional one in the next 12 months.

Outside of just preparing practitioners for additional skills within the product, Splunk is outfitting them with solutions for the future. The coronavirus pandemic has rapidly accelerated digital transformation across the enterprise. A key driver of digital transformation is increasing use of cloud services, and the data shows Splunk Cloud, the cloud-based iteration of Splunk's data platform, is following suit. Splunk Cloud use has increased by 64% compared to last year's survey data. This was the largest leap in use for any of the Splunk products, and that's likely to continue to accelerate over time.

Figure 11. Training Consumption Pattern for Splunk

How have you generally taken advantage of Splunk training courses? (Percent of respondents, N=235)



Source: Enterprise Strategy Group

The Employer Advantage

Employers are rational economic actors; they would not compensate Splunk practitioners at a higher rate than non-practitioners without cause. It is ESG's belief that through their effective use of Splunk's data platform, practitioners are delivering value for their organizations commensurate with their compensation.

The research also shows several distinct benefits to organizations:

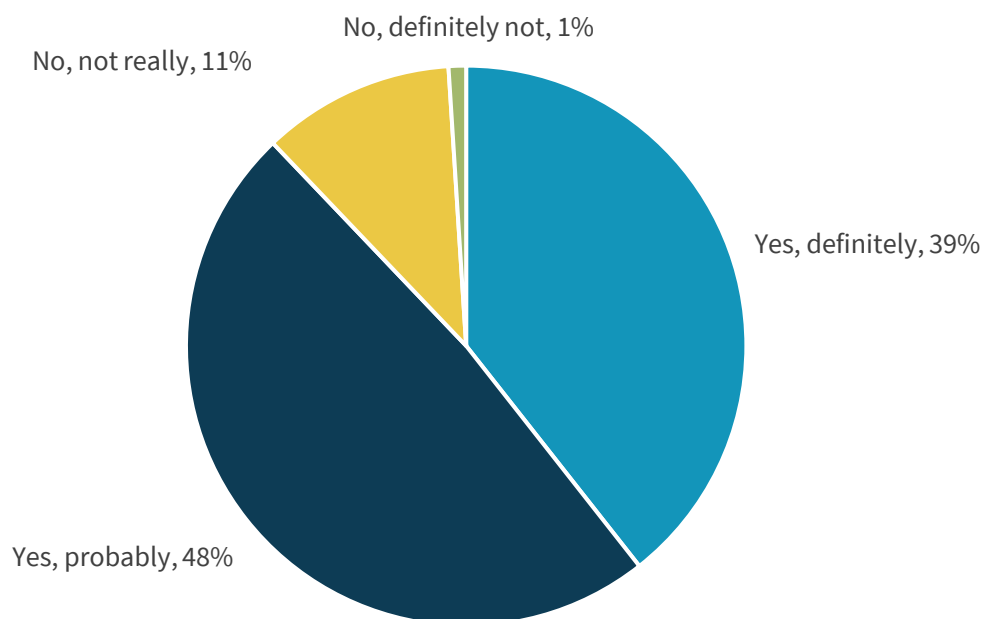
Splunk is a multifaceted tool with many use cases across IT operations, cybersecurity operations, business analytics, and application development. Most respondents we surveyed reported their organizations actively use Splunk for multiple use cases. The majority (61%) identified a second use case for Splunk within weeks of leveraging Splunk for its initial use case. This is a 15% increase compared to our data from 2020, indicating that more adjacent use cases for Splunk like application development and business analytics are trending up.

Top benefits of Splunk: when it comes to IT Ops, 70% of practitioners report Splunk helps reduce downtime, and 66% cite a reduced number of events, which are faster to resolve. Organizations using Splunk for security most often (77%) say Splunk is helping improve threat detection through data correlation, and 69% say it has shortened investigation cycles. Organizations layering Splunk into development processes report increasing their visibility into the development lifecycle (62%) and improvements in code quality (61%).

Regardless of use case, respondents overwhelmingly report that Splunk is helping their companies compete and thrive in uncertain times: Nearly 9 out of 10 respondents believe their company is in a stronger competitive position today than it would be without Splunk (see Figure 12). ESG believes this more than offsets the premium proficient Splunk professionals command.

Figure 12. Splunk as a Competitive Differentiator for Organizations

Do you believe your company is in a stronger competitive position today than it would be without Splunk? (Percent of respondents, N=383)



Source: Enterprise Strategy Group

The Bigger Truth

The data makes it clear: Splunk practitioners are enjoying higher salaries than their generalist peers. In many ways, this year's data shows that gap is widening, particularly in terms of salary and promotion trends. Moreover, the data shows that not all Splunk professionals are treated equally: Those with the most experience and validated expertise (certifications) see the biggest payoff.

Employers should also take note: Splunk is a clear way to stand out from the crowd in terms of recruitment and retention. And it is important to keep in mind that it's not a zero-sum gain where employees earn more at the expense of employers. Splunk frequently drives IT, security, and application development benefits, which combine to put the organization at a competitive advantage. As is usually the case in business, organizations investing in best-in-class tools and talent tend to outperform their peers.

Research Methodology

ESG conducted a comprehensive survey of Splunk practitioners residing in North America (55%), Europe (14%), Asia Pacific (25%), Latin America (7%), the Middle East (2%), and Africa (2%) between May 25, 2021 and July 7, 2021. Invitations to participate were sent by Splunk to known Splunk practitioners. Key industries represented include technology, finance,

communications and media, and manufacturing, among others. All respondents were provided an incentive to complete the survey in the form of cash awards and/or cash equivalents.

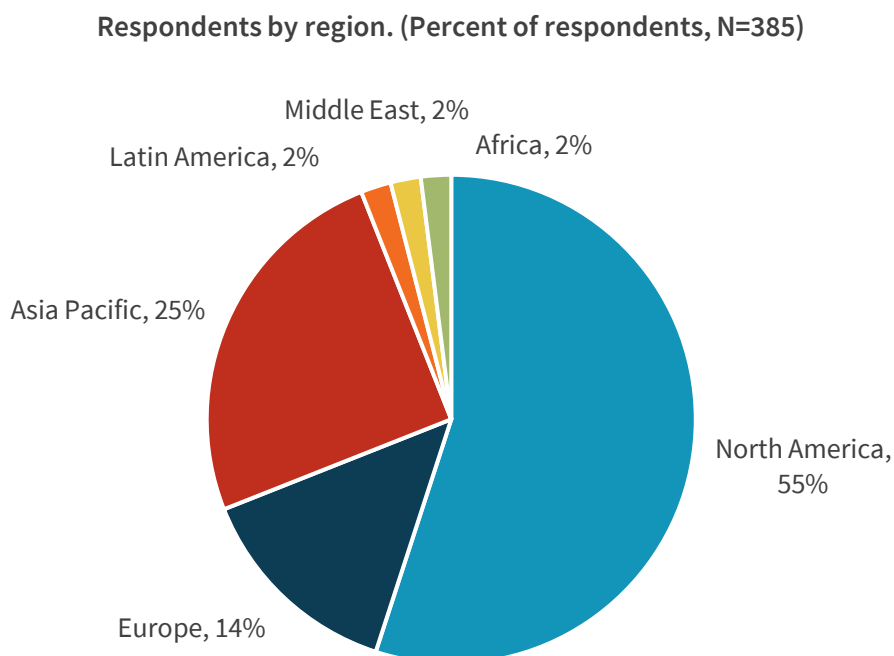
Much of the data in this report focuses on employed practitioners (N=383 of 385 total respondents). Additionally, respondents reported that they were currently using Splunk products, with some current responsibility for Splunk in their company. After filtering out unqualified respondents, removing duplicate responses, and screening the remaining completed responses (on several criteria) for data integrity, a final sample of 385 respondents remained. The margin of error on a sample size of N=385 is + or – 5 percentage points.

When conducting year-over-year analyses in this report, 2020 data has been weighted to match 2021 data in terms of total years of work experience and Splunk experience. Survey solicitation efforts were much broader and inclusive in 2021, while in 2020, invitations to participate were targeted to the most engaged members of the Splunk community. These community members tended to be more senior and to have a longer history with Splunk. As such, ESG views the 2021 dataset as a more representative and accurate random sampling of Splunk practitioners.

The figures that follow detail the demographics of the respondent base discussed in this report.

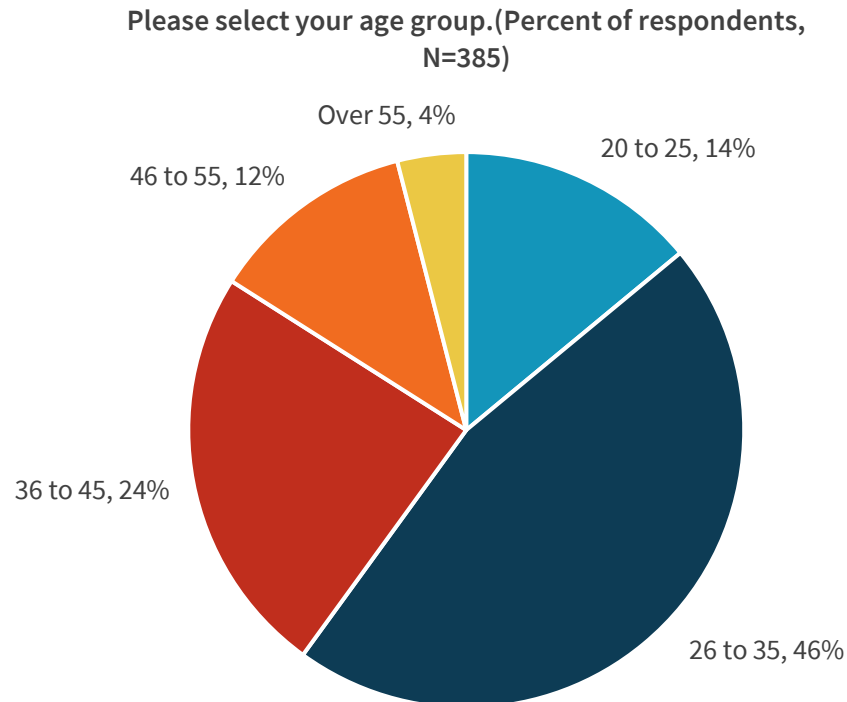
Note: Totals in figures and tables throughout this report may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Figure 13. Location of Represented Splunk Practitioners



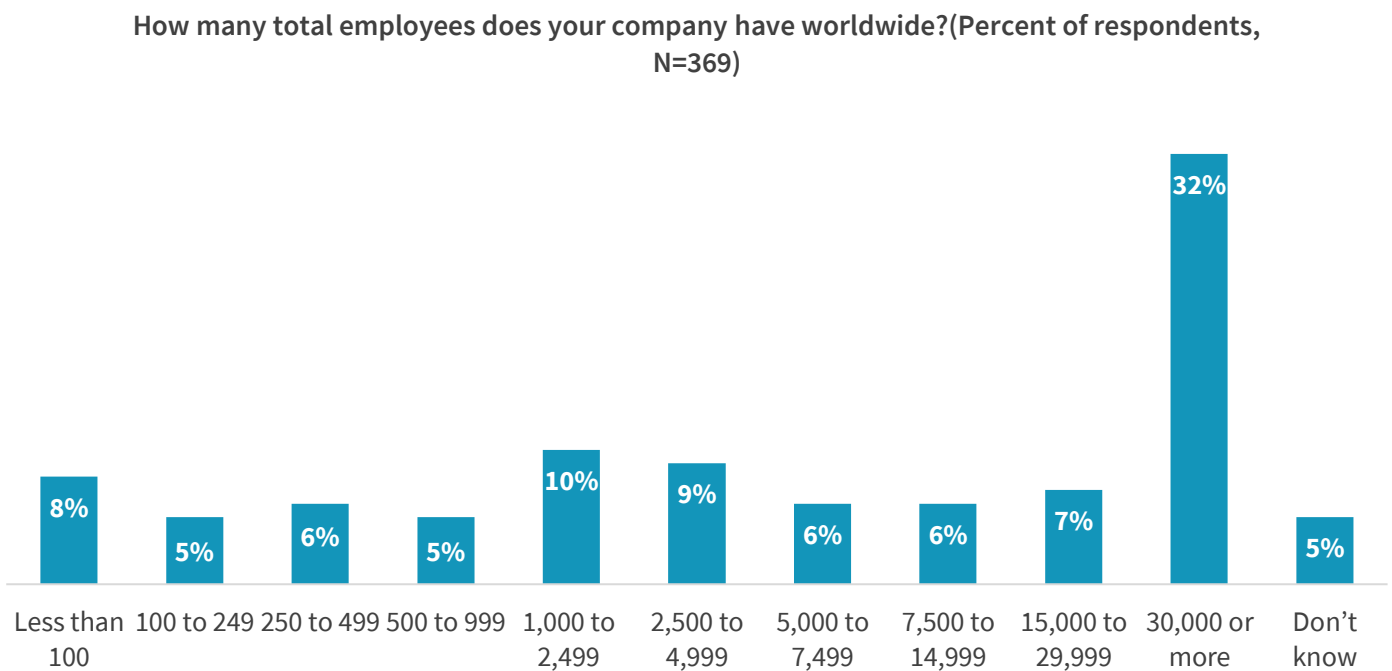
Source: Enterprise Strategy Group

Figure 14. Respondents by Age



Source: Enterprise Strategy Group

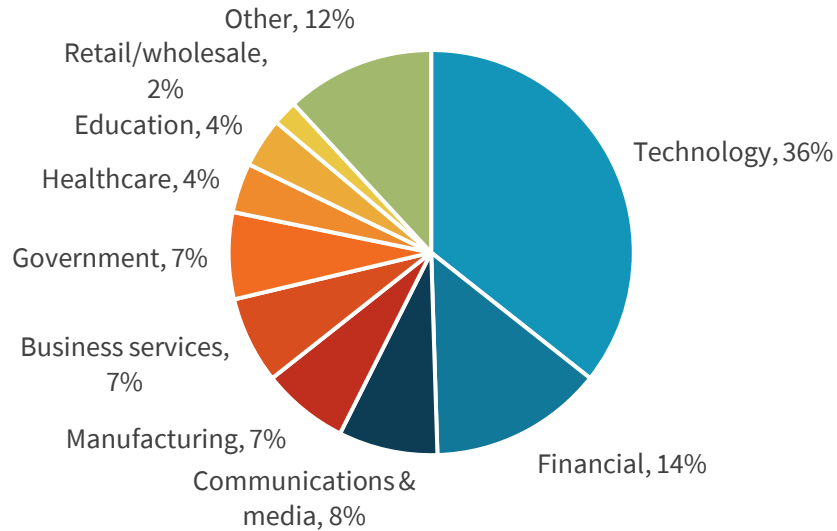
Figure 15. Respondents by Company Size



Source: Enterprise Strategy Group

Figure 16. Respondents by Industry

What is your company's primary industry? (Percent of respondents, N=369)



Source: Enterprise Strategy Group

All trademark names are property of their respective companies. Information contained in this publication has been obtained by sources The Enterprise Strategy Group (ESG) considers to be reliable but is not warranted by ESG. This publication may contain opinions of ESG, which are subject to change. This publication is copyrighted by The Enterprise Strategy Group, Inc. Any reproduction or redistribution of this publication, in whole or in part, whether in hard-copy format, electronically, or otherwise to persons not authorized to receive it, without the express consent of The Enterprise Strategy Group, Inc., is in violation of U.S. copyright law and will be subject to an action for civil damages and, if applicable, criminal prosecution. Should you have any questions, please contact ESG Client Relations at 508.482.0188.



Enterprise Strategy Group is an IT analyst, research, validation, and strategy firm that provides market intelligence and actionable insight to the global IT community.



www.esg-global.com



contact@esg-global.com



508.482.0188