



2021 Chief of Staff Compensation Report



● Introduction

As the Chief of Staff role continues to proliferate across industries and expand within organizational departments, compensation remains difficult to benchmark given the wide range of responsibilities and backgrounds of those in the profession.

Our goal for conducting this annual survey is to better inform current and future Chiefs of Staff and the organizations utilizing the role about their market value. 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 Report](#) and [2020 Report](#).

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

● 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 take root in organizations of different sizes, Chiefs of Staff are also emerging as key operators outside the C-suite, reporting at the VP level or below.

The Chief of Staff has a unique relationship with their Principal as the facilitator of the Principal's key initiatives. The role is rarely an administrative function, but often involves heavy operational, strategic, and cross-functional execution. Chiefs of Staff will take on diverse responsibilities that are dependent on their previous career experiences, leadership capabilities, and the priorities of their Principal. These are also potential factors that impact compensation.

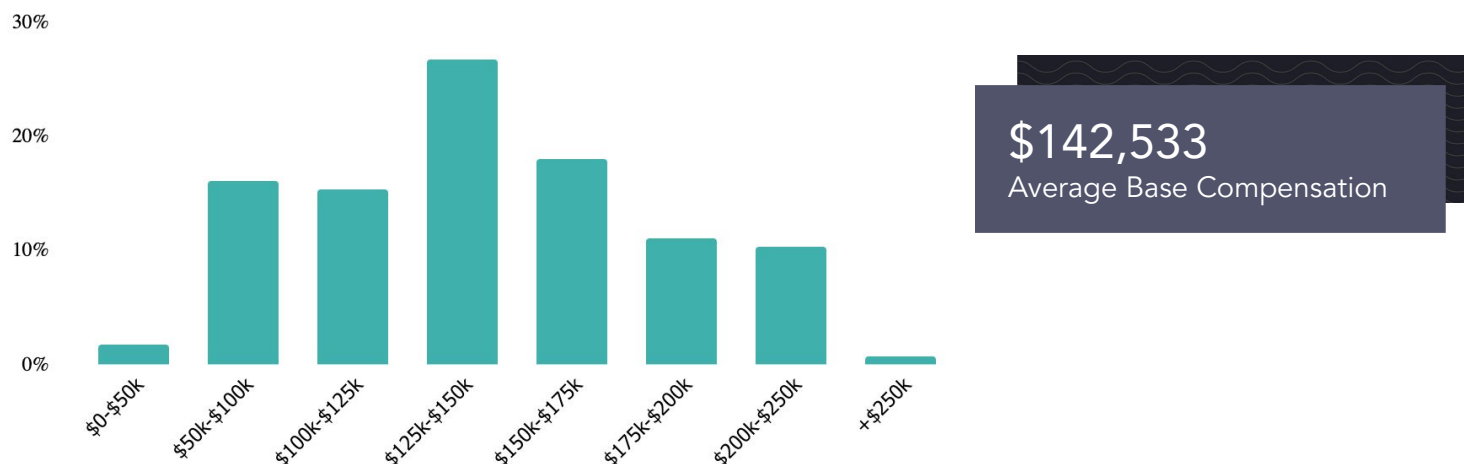
● Chiefs of Staff by Level

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 are operating 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.

Chiefs of Cash

Annual Base Salary



Survey respondents were asked to provide base salary as an exact figure, rather than as a range. Our data shows a relatively even distribution in base compensation, with ~27% of respondents reporting a salary between \$125k-\$150k. Notably, 66% of Chiefs of Staff in our survey are making over \$125k.

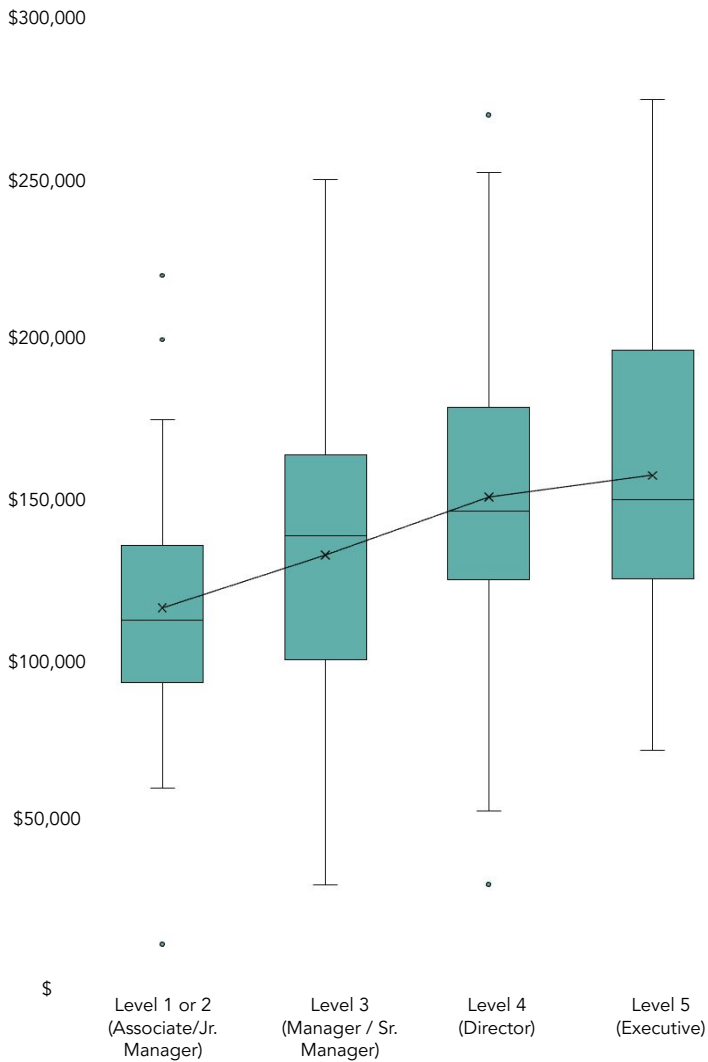
Average Salary by CoS Level



Average salaries show step increases with changes in self-reported experience levels. It should be noted that there are fewer differences in experience, skills or responsibilities between a Level 1 & Level 2 Chief of Staff vs a Level 3, 4, or 5 Chief of Staff.

Grouping Level 1 & 2 together, the average base salary is \$120,210. Thus, we see a 10.5% average increase in salary at Level 3, a 13.6% average increase from Level 3 to Level 4, and a 4.5% average increase to Level 5.

Base Salary Bands by Level



Level 1 (Associate) / Level 2 (Jr. Manager):

- Middle 50% range: \$93k-\$136K
- Average: \$116,341

Level 3 (Sr. Manager):

- Middle 50% range: \$100k-\$164k
- Average: \$132,849

Level 4 (Director):

- Middle 50% range: \$125k-\$178k
- Average: \$150,936

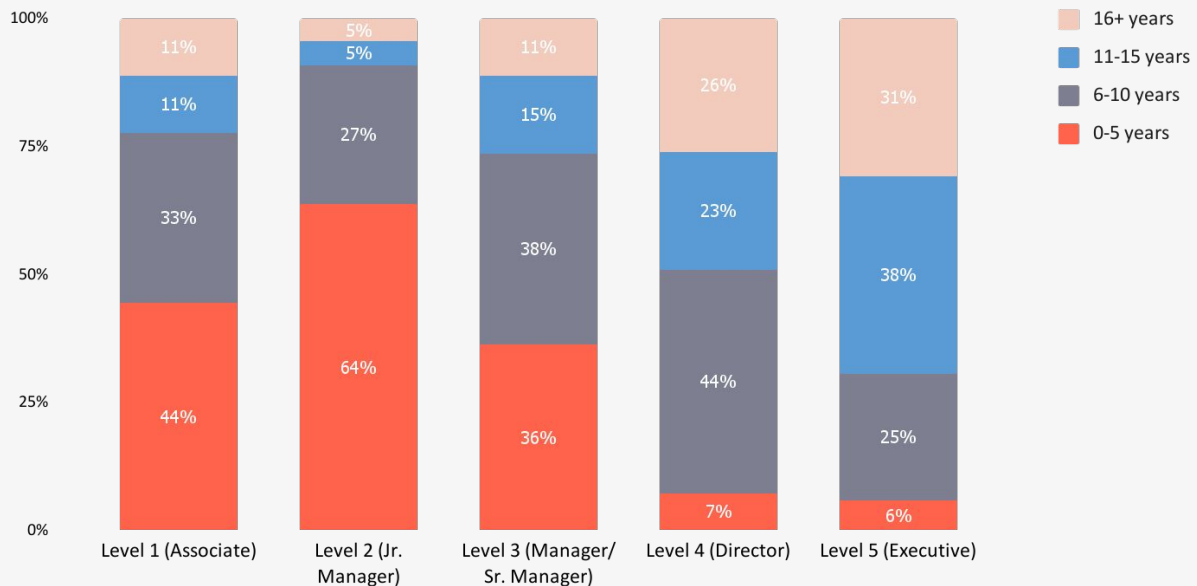
Level 5 (Executive)

- Middle 50% range: \$126k-\$196k
- Average: \$157,669

There is a direct correlation between the seniority level of a CoS and how high the salary can go. This can be explained by the fact that large organizations' executives rely on CoS for a wide scope of responsibilities, and will tend to compensate accordingly.

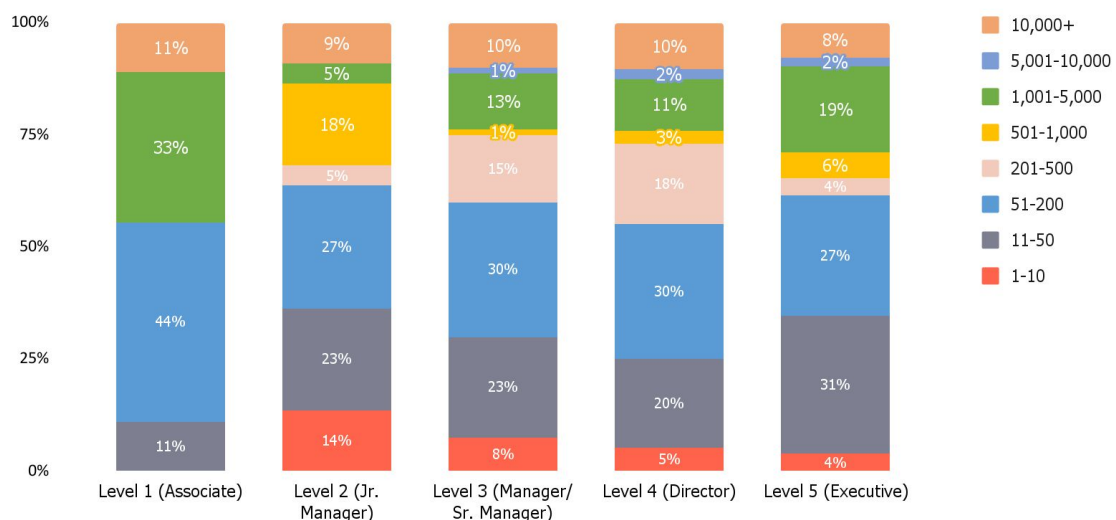
Outliers exist at each seniority level, which can likely be attributed to the variety of CoS responsibilities from company to company.

Years of Experience by CoS Level



Levels 1 and 2 primarily tend to be performed by people with <5 years of experience. Level 3 sees an even mix of 0-5 and 6-10 years' experience. As CoS climb towards more senior levels, a larger share of their cohort has >10 years of experience.

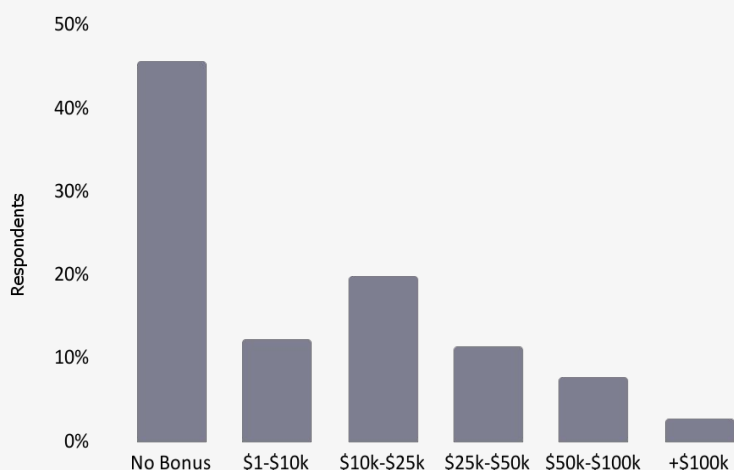
Company Size by CoS Level



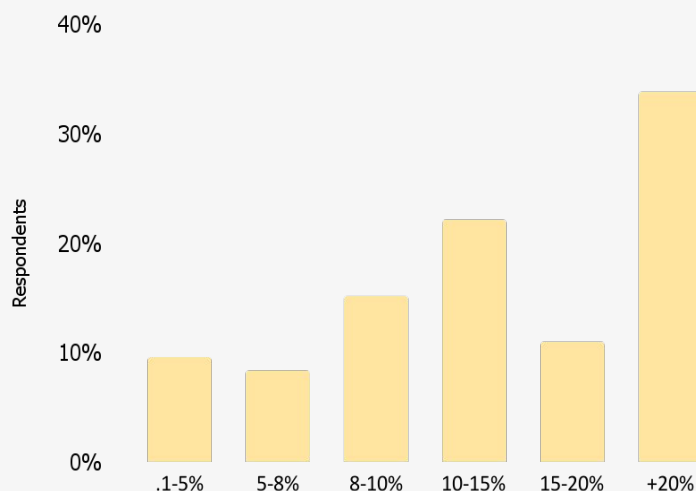
There is not an obvious correlation between company size and Level of CoS. It's interesting to note that we did not have any Level 1 respondents at companies with 1-10 employees. This might suggest that companies of that size do not tend to hire very junior CoS.

Bonus & Equity

Annual Bonus

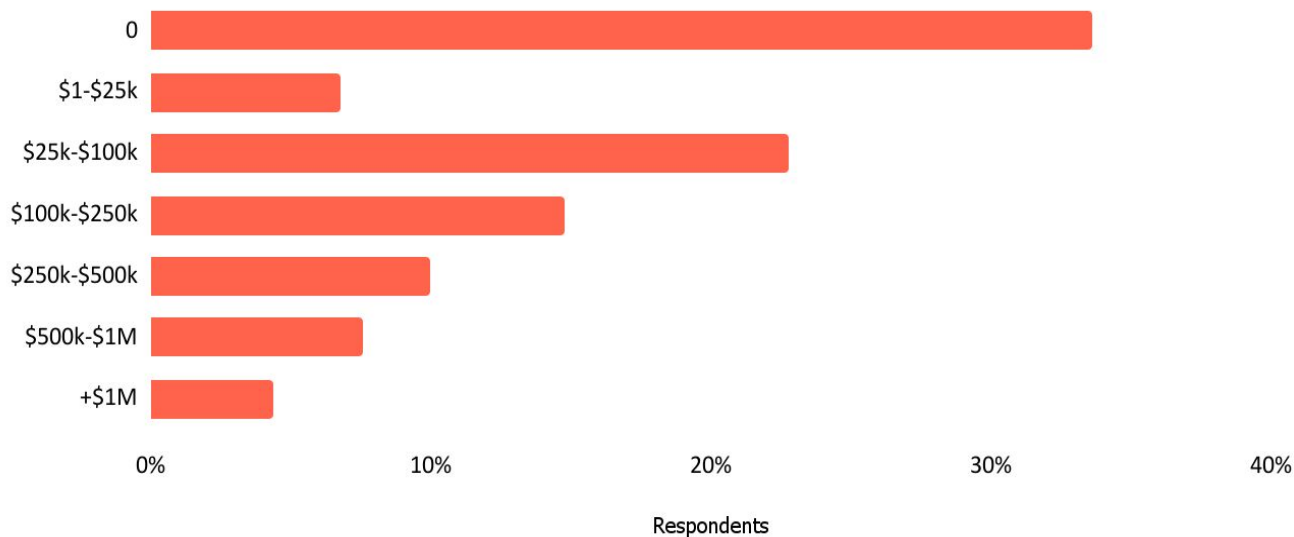


Annual Bonus as % of Base Salary



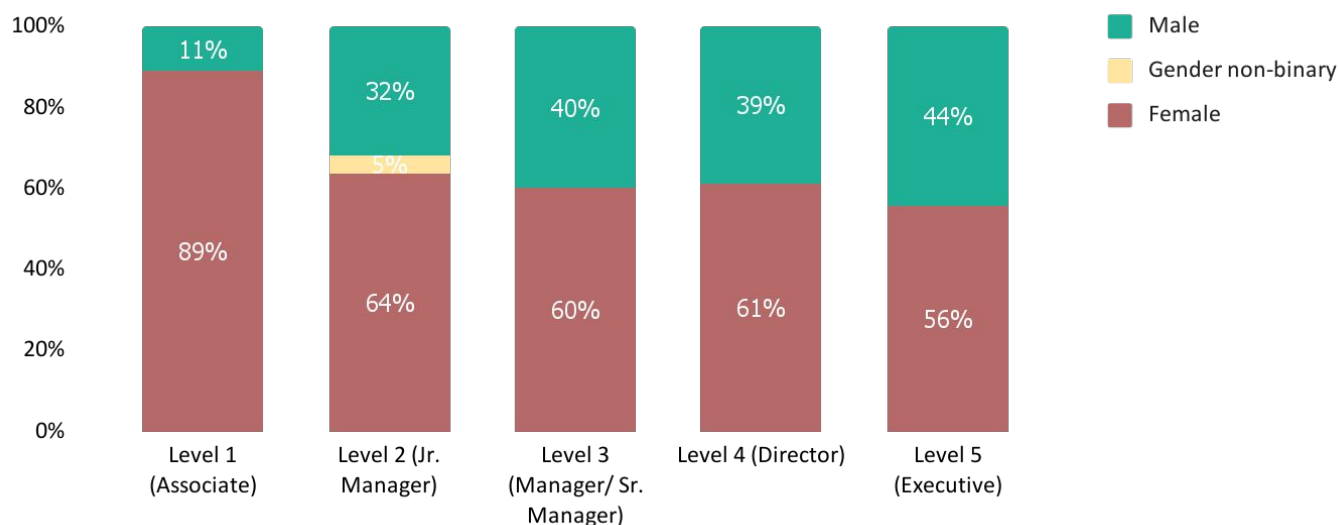
Annual Bonus and value of equity follow a similar trend. Primarily, respondents do not receive bonuses and equity—but if they do, their bonuses tend to be >\$10K, while equity value tends to be >\$25k.

Estimated value of equity (USD)



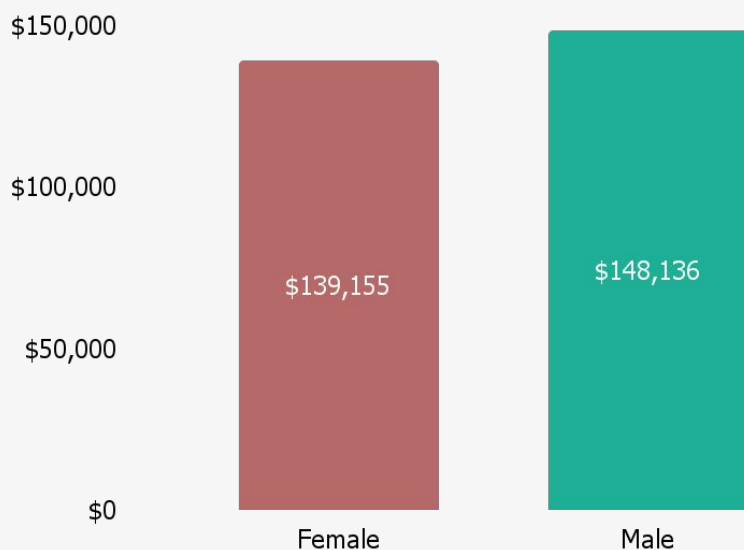
Compensation & Gender

% CoS at each Level by Gender



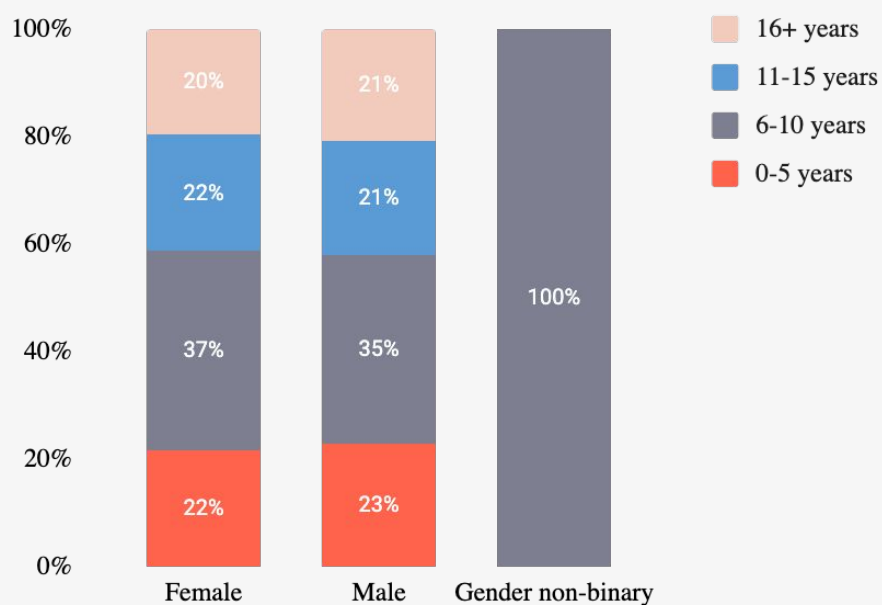
Females comprise a majority of our respondents at all Levels, with heavy skew towards Female CoS in Level 1.

Avg Salary by Gender



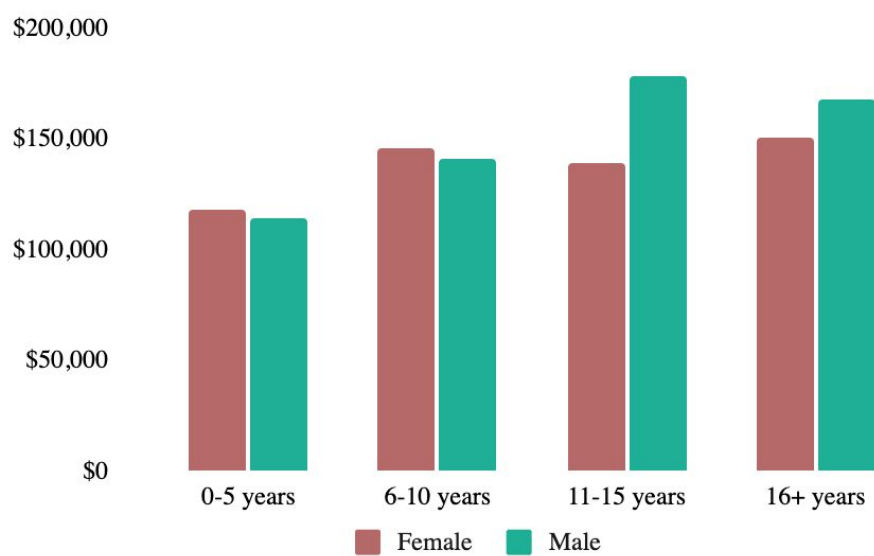
The gender wage gap exists in CoS roles as well, with Females on average earning 93% of their Male counterparts' salaries. However, that is 10% higher than the US economy's overall [gender pay gap](#) of 83%.

Years of Experience by Gender



Years of experience for survey participants are almost evenly split between genders at each level.

Years of Experience vs Salary by Gender

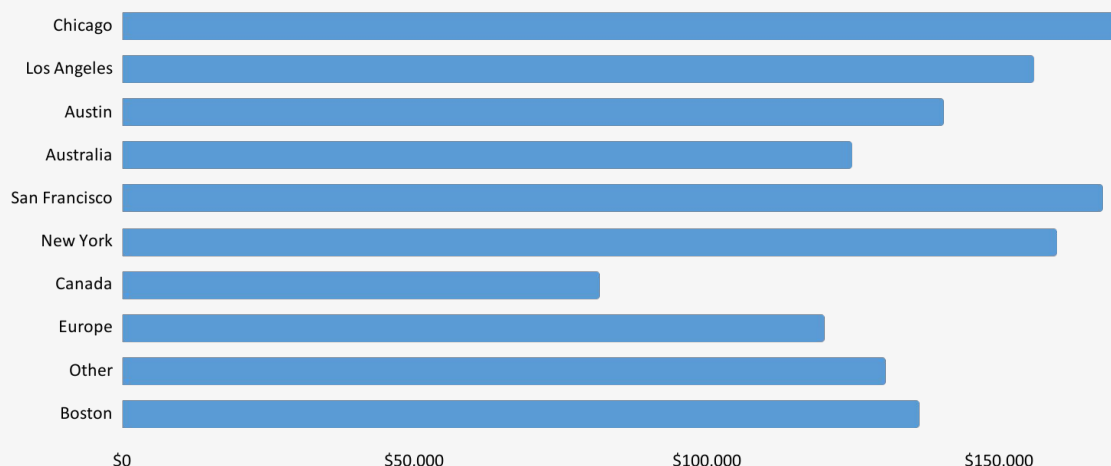


There is a larger wage differential between genders among people who have >10 years of experience.

There was a ~28% difference in base salaries between men and women with 11-15 years of experience and a ~12% difference at 16+ years of experience.

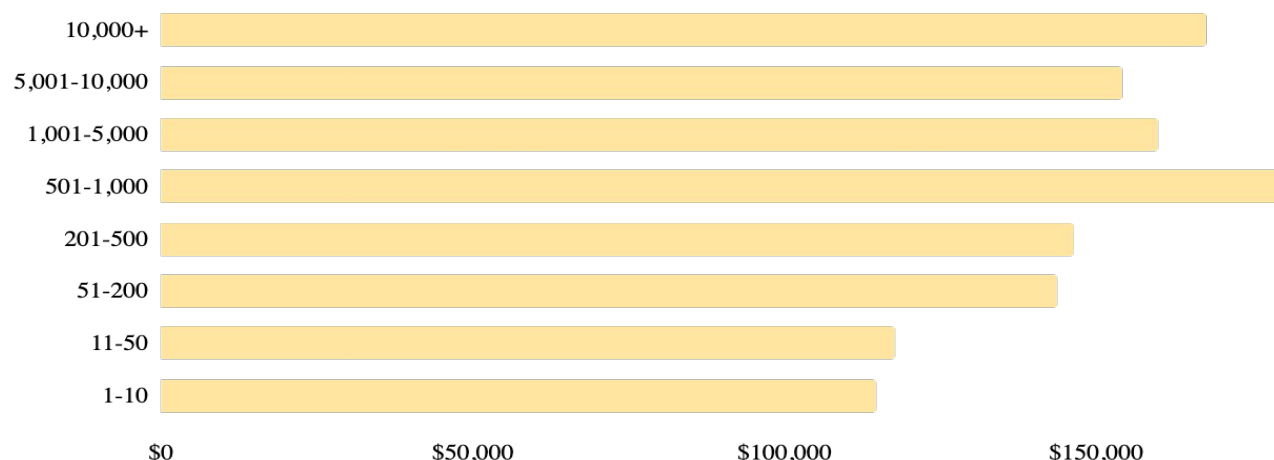
● Geography & Company Size

Average CoS Salary by Geographic Location



CoS roles in the largest US cities pay the highest salaries, followed by emerging regions for companies with CoS, such as Austin, Boston, and global / other, which is becoming more prevalent during the pandemic with higher numbers of employees working remotely.

Average CoS Salary vs. Company Size

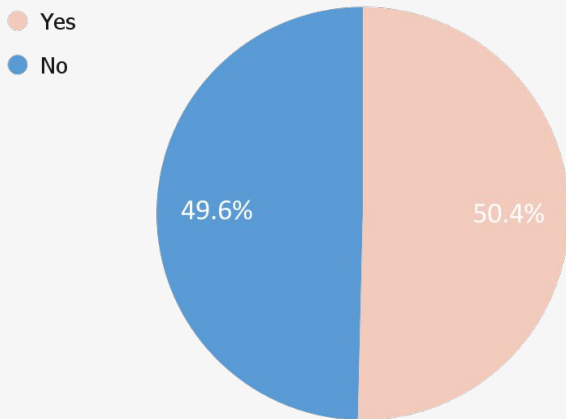


One of the trends we identified relating to company size, is that the average salary is lower for companies with <50 employees. This can also likely be attributed to resources being limited at early stage or small companies.

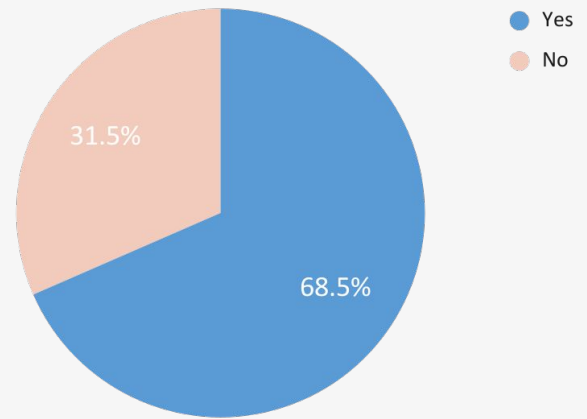
Company Benefits

Despite the rapid shift of employees working from home during the Covid-19 pandemic, it is notable that the majority of respondents' companies do not offer a remote office stipend or cover expenses for external learning & development programs.

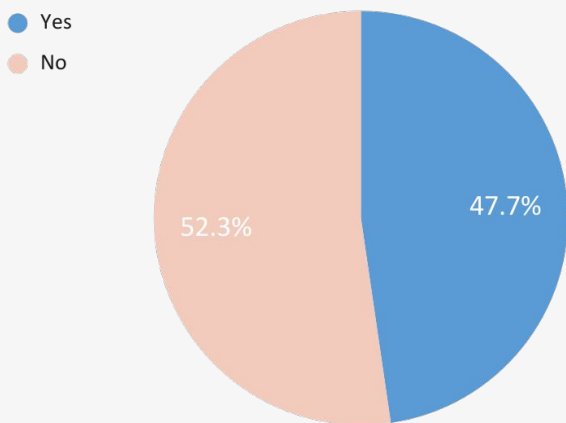
Retirement plan w/ company match



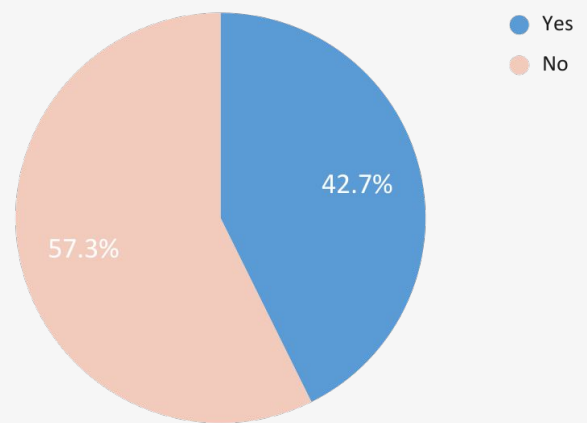
Health & Wellness Perks



L&D Expense Reimbursement

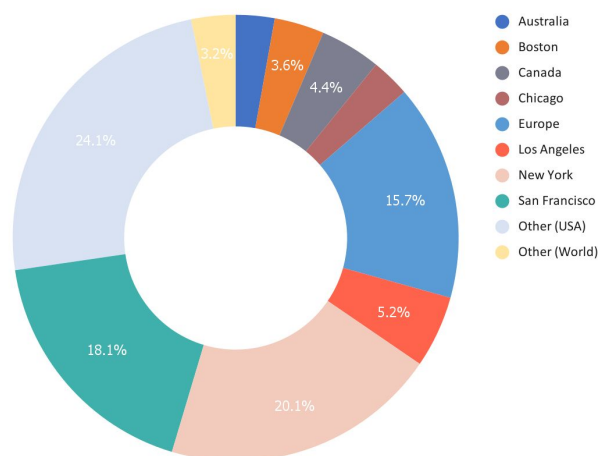


Remote Office Stipend

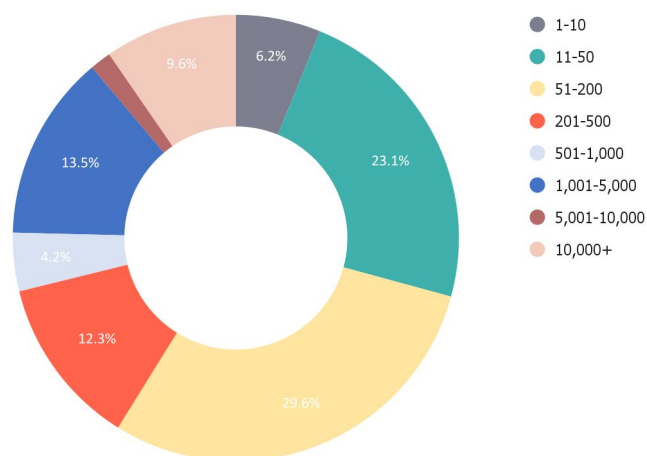


Respondent Data

Chiefs of Staff Across the Globe

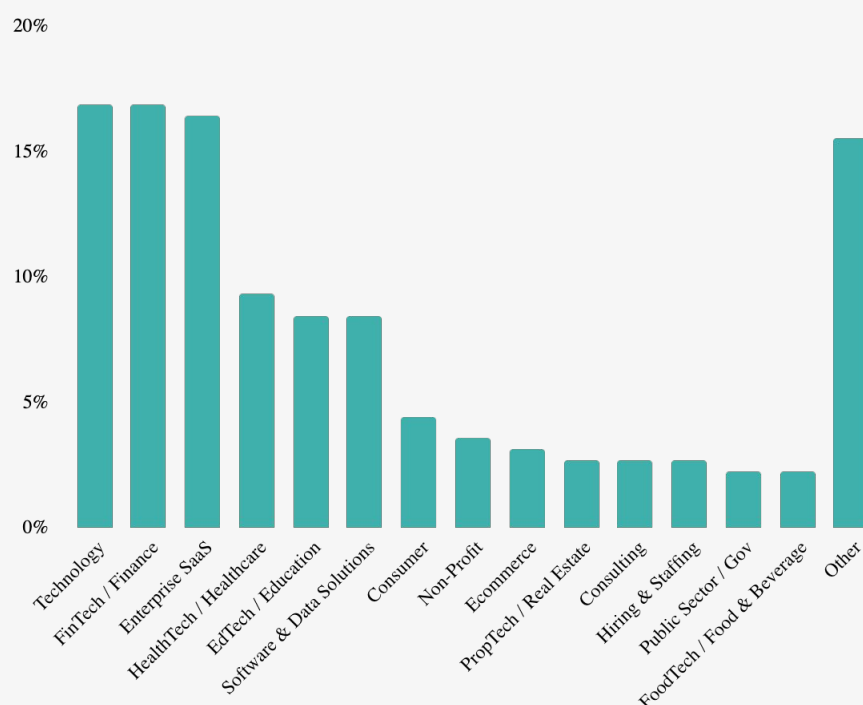


Organization Headcount



Data was collected from 260 survey participants. 59% of respondents work at companies with <200 employees, with the most common cohort being companies with 51-200 employees.

Chiefs of Staff by Industry



The most common industries with Chiefs of Staff survey respondents are general Technology, FinTech, and SaaS.

There are plenty of additional industries which employ Chiefs of Staff, with the "Other" category comprising 18 industries that had <3 responses.

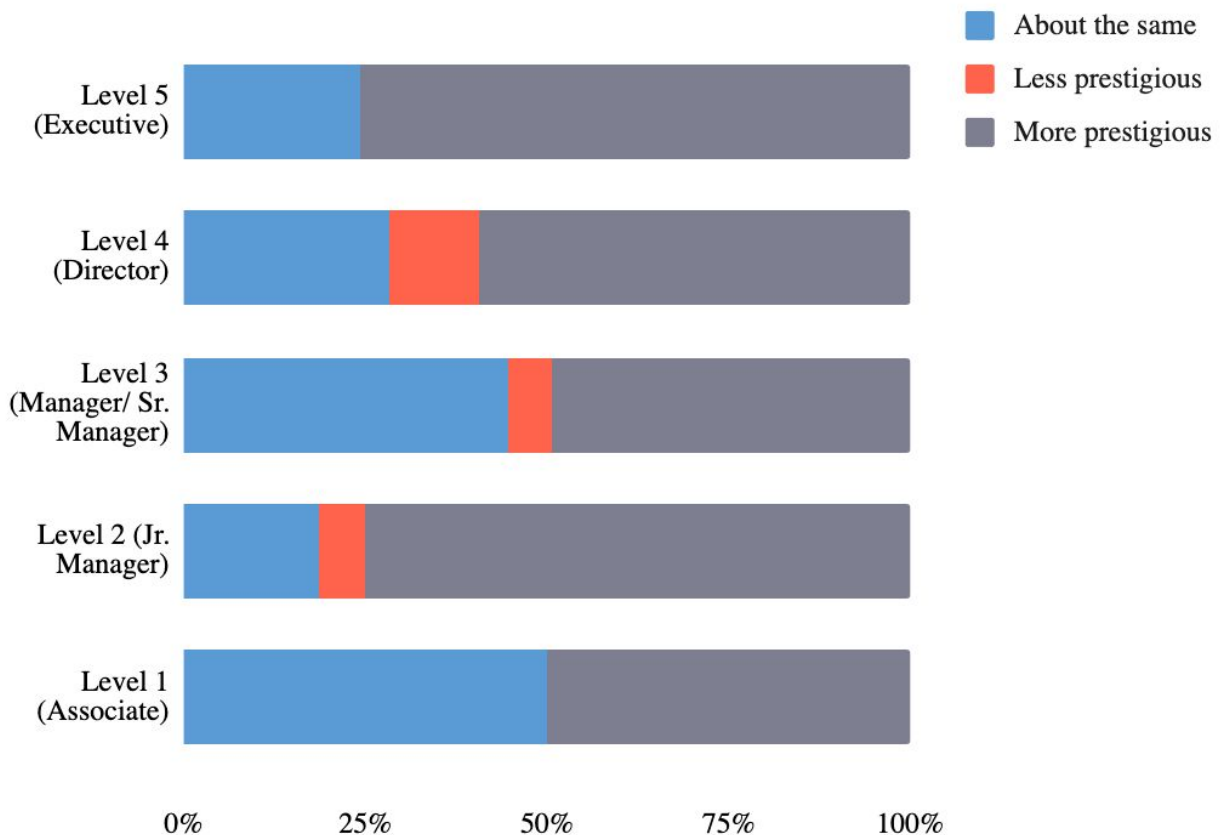
● Prestige Sentiment

Given the rapid rise of the position across industries, we wanted to better understand how current Chiefs of Staff at each level felt about the newfound prominence of their role.

We asked survey participants a simple question about whether they felt the CoS role has become more or less prestigious than a year ago. 204 participants answered this question.

Do you think the CoS role is more or less prestigious than a year ago?

Although 12% of Level 4 Chiefs of Staff felt the role has become less prestigious, the vast majority ~60% of all Chiefs of Staff in the survey felt it was more prestigious and 33% felt it was about the same.



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Get access to the raw survey data.

