

2024 IFT Compensation and Career Path Report

Benchmark Research on Salaries,
Benefits, and Employment Trends
in the Science of Food

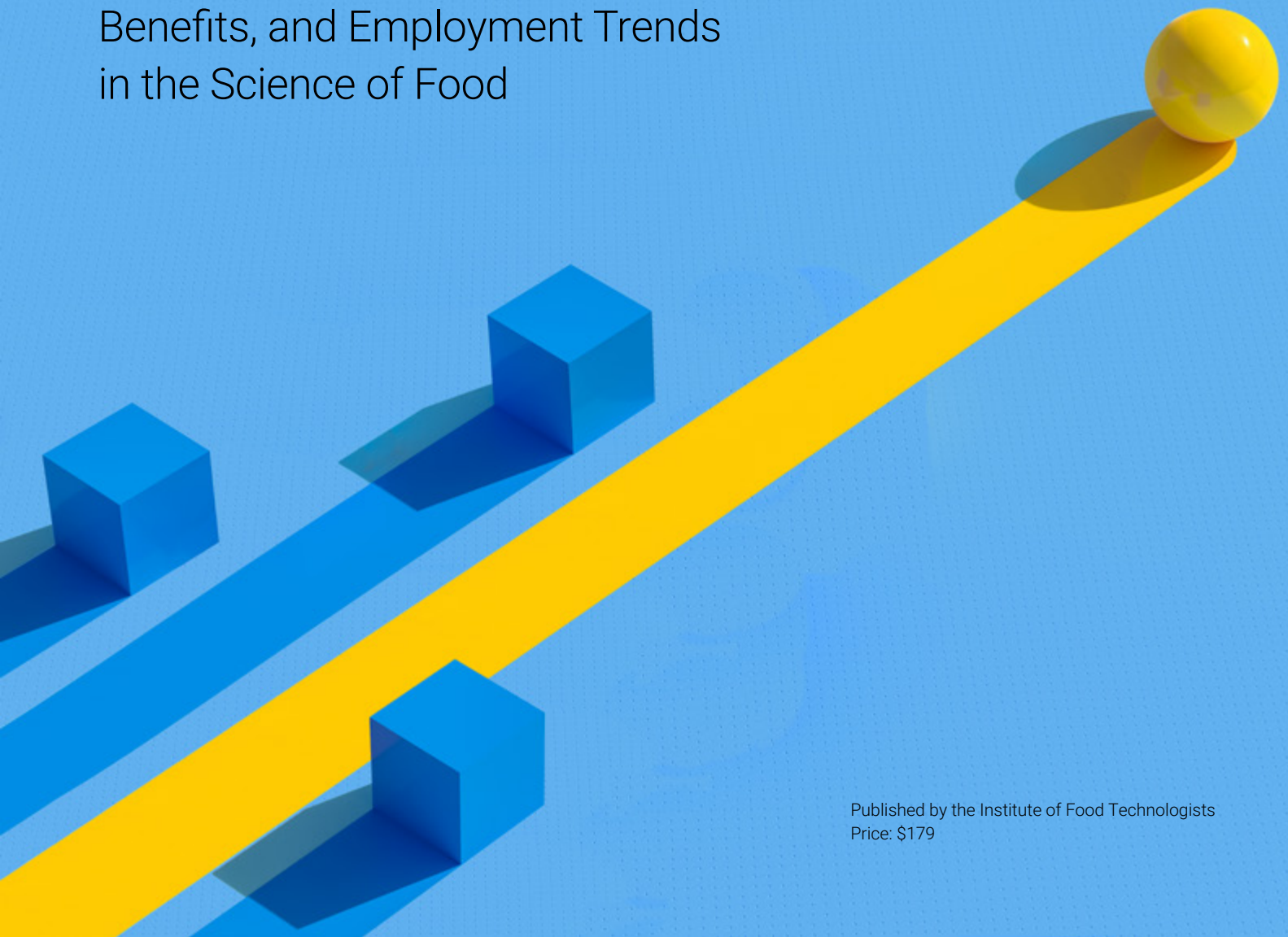


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Note: Not all totals in charts and tables in this report equal 100% due to rounding.

Executive Summary

The median salary for science of food professionals in the United States decreased slightly in the 2024 *IFT Compensation and Career Path Report* to \$107,300, versus \$110,000 in IFT's 2022 research. The median salary of \$107,300 reflects the earnings of the vast majority of respondents, who are full-time employees.

Although median pay dipped since the last survey, changes to the survey and the pool of respondents contributed to this decrease. First, this year's research project drew a larger number of respondents, with a greater percentage of younger, less experienced respondents, who typically have lower salaries than their more experienced counterparts.

In addition, IFT recently changed the way it categorizes professional positions, which may have also contributed to the drop in average salary. Rather than categorizing positions by title, IFT now classifies positions based on primary job functions. This new approach better fits modern ways of working, in which many professionals have multiple job functions that may not be accurately captured by a general title.

Despite a slight decrease in median pay, science of food professionals report largely positive trends in their career lives, including compensation. The majority received pay raises during the past year, and while discrepancies in pay persist between men and women, and professionals of majority and minority racial groups, some of the gaps are smaller than in the past.

Many full-time employees receive additional compensation beyond their

salary. For example, 67% report receiving a cash bonus, with a median value of \$10,321. Total compensation among full-time employees and self-employed, including the total dollar amount of cash bonuses received, total value of stocks received as part of professional income, and overtime earnings was a median of \$115,500.

Overall, professionals in the science of food discipline reflect larger workplace trends, including an increasingly diverse workforce, increased interest in changing jobs, more flexibility at work, and working a full-time job as well as a side hustle.

For example, according to a 2023

Bankrate survey, almost 40% of American workers have a side job in addition to their full-time jobs. In this year's report, 12% of respondents said that they earn income from side jobs. While earning extra income is one of the main reasons for working on the side, they also report a number of other driving factors, including building a network and pursuing a passion.

Results of this research reveal the science of food profession to be a continually growing field with opportunities for building a long-term career while both making a difference in the world and creating a desired personal life.

METHODOLOGY

In November 2023, IFT, working with a private research firm, sent email surveys to 35,899 U.S.-based professionals working in the science of food discipline. With 3,561 responses from individual science of food professionals, the survey had a 10% response rate. Results have a margin of error of +/-1.56% at a 95% level of significance.

This year's report showed a slight decrease in median salary, from \$110,000 in 2022 to \$107,300 in 2024. At the same time, respondents in the survey reported to us that they experienced a median annual increase in pay of 10%. This 2.5% decrease in reported median annual salary almost certainly reflects a combination of factors, including the margin of error that reflects a different group of professionals participating each time.

The participation level increased by about 20% from 2022, and more participants in the most recent survey were younger and less experienced. In the 2024 research, respondents reported a mean of 16.2 years of professional food-related work experience, three years less than the 19.2 years of experience reported in 2022. This year's respondents reported a mean of 7.7 years with their current employer, compared with 9.6 years' tenure reported in 2022. An overall population that has 15% less work experience largely explains the odd decrease in the bottom line at a time when those who participated in the survey personally report high year-to-year increases.

Compensation

Pay Raises Are the Norm

Although the IFT survey reflected a slight decrease in median pay, 71% of this year's individual respondents said they have received a pay increase during the past year. The median increase was 10%, based on respondents who shared both their previous pay and their current pay. In most cases, the pay increase was based on merit, followed by cost-of-living increases.

CHART 1

Pay Raises

Generation

The youngest professionals are the least likely to have received a pay raise in the past year.



Sector

Professionals working in industry are the most likely to have received a pay raise.



Education Level

The percentage of those who received a pay raise varied according to level of education.



Most survey participants (71%) received a pay raise in the past 12 months, but the increases varied by generation, sector, and education level.

CHART 2

Extra Cash

67%

Cash Bonus

9.5%

Stocks

3%

Overtime Earnings

A majority of respondents who are full-time employees earn additional income from their jobs, beyond their base salary. The most popular form of extra income is a cash bonus, with a median value of \$10,321.

COMPENSATION

Salaries by Function, Position, and Geography

When compared by job function, salaries are highest for full-time employees whose primary job is leadership. Those who reported their jobs as Executive/C-Suite/Department Leadership have a median salary of \$200,000, 87% higher than the overall median annual salary.

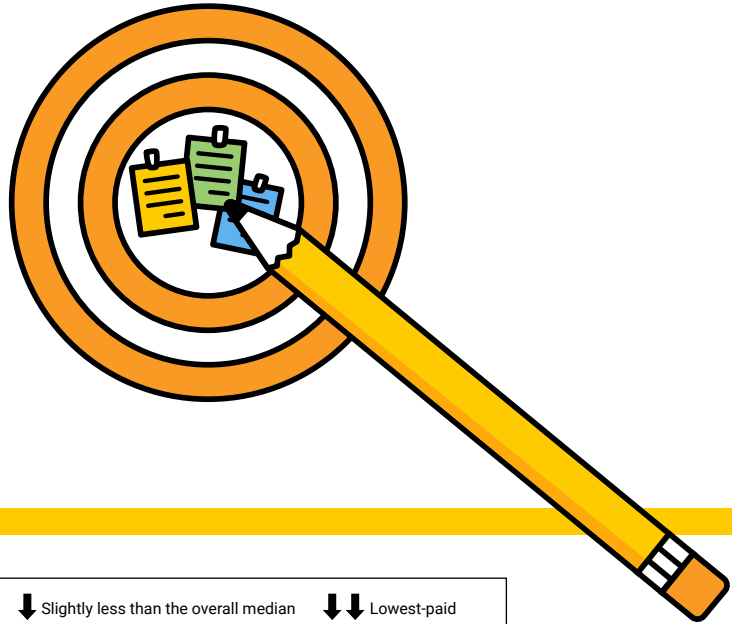


CHART 3

Tracking Pay by Primary Job Function

Primary Job Function Pay			
↑ Higher than the overall median ↓ Slightly less than the overall median ↓↓ Lowest-paid			
Function	Primary Job Function Pay	Median Salary	Total Compensation
Executive/C-Suite/Dept. Leadership	↑	\$200,000	\$233,500
Innovation/Incubator	↑	\$133,657	\$147,500
Marketing/Sales/Business Development	↑	\$133,000	\$158,000
Nutrition	↑	\$126,608	\$136,000
Culinary	↑	\$122,500	\$134,600
Manufacturing/Plant Operations	↑	\$115,000	\$119,000
Flavors	↑	\$111,500	\$122,000
Consultant	↑	\$110,000	\$123,000
Technical Services	↑	\$110,000	\$122,750
Research	↑	\$110,000	\$113,600
Supply Chain	↓	\$105,500	\$120,500
Research & Development	↓	\$102,000	\$111,100
Food Safety	↓	\$100,003	\$109,700
Engineering	↓	\$100,000	\$100,000
Regulatory	↓	\$98,500	\$107,500
Purchasing/Procurement	↓↓	\$95,000	\$99,885
Product Development	↓↓	\$94,600	\$100,000
Microbiology	↓↓	\$90,000	\$99,000
Sensory & Consumer Science	↓↓	\$89,621	\$95,261
Quality Assurance/Quality Control	↓↓	\$88,000	\$95,504
Laboratory	↓↓	\$74,000	\$75,000

Professionals in the C-suite earn the highest salaries with median pay at \$200,000, and those working in the laboratory have the lowest median pay, at \$74,000.

COMPENSATION

CHART 4

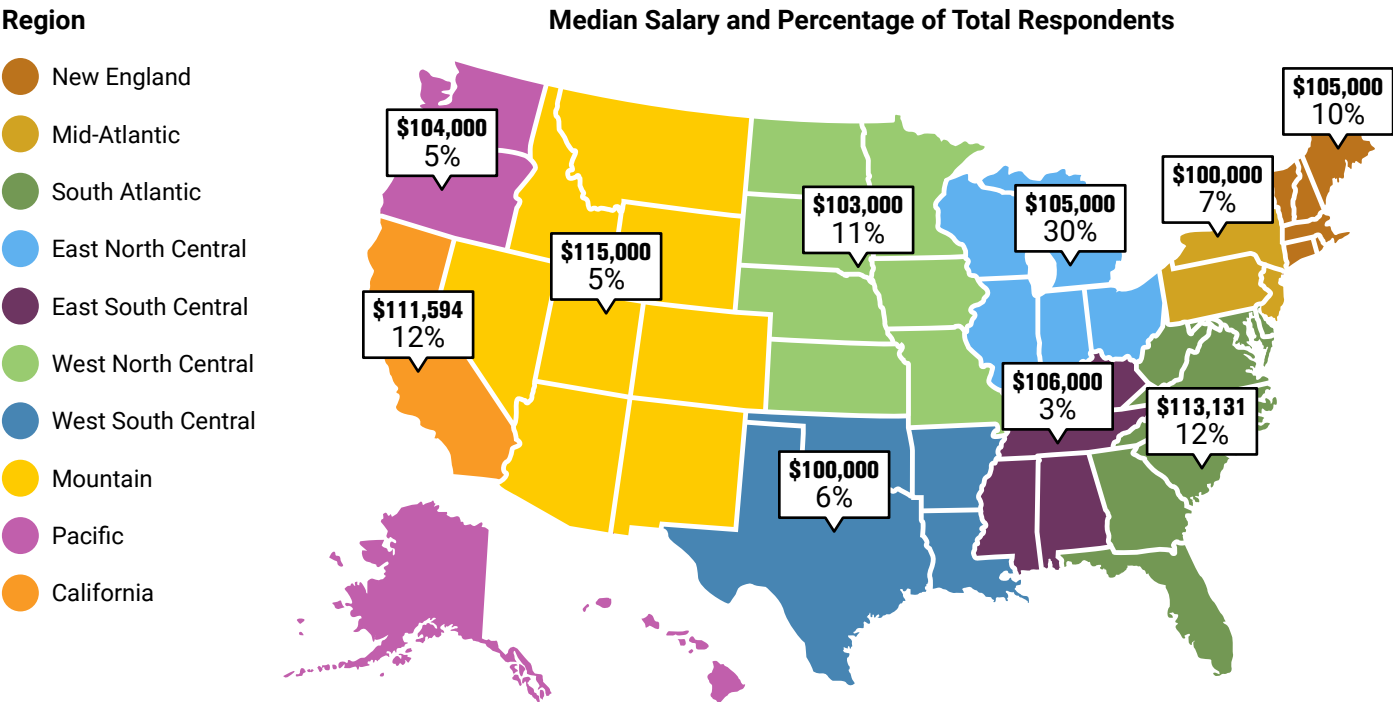
Pay by Position

Position	Median Salary	Total Compensation
Management		
President/Owner/Partner/ Officer/CEO	\$212,500	\$294,000
Vice President	\$219,500	\$265,000
General Manager	\$125,000	\$135,000
Director	\$158,000	\$180,100
Manager/Senior Manager	\$120,000	\$135,000
Plant Manager/Supervisor	\$78,750	\$86,000
R&D/Scientific/Technical		
Principal Scientist/ Technologist/Developer/ Engineer	\$139,000	\$155,993
Senior Scientist/ Technologist/Developer/ Engineer	\$106,000	\$114,238
Scientist/Technologist/ Developer/Engineer	\$81,664	\$86,000
Associate Scientist/ Technologist/Developer/ Engineer	\$72,000	\$75,250
Associate	\$67,000	\$73,500
Education		
Department Chair/Head	\$200,263	\$201,263
Professor	\$147,000	\$158,000
Associate Professor	\$108,881	\$113,800
Assistant Professor	\$88,000	\$92,000
Postdoctoral Researcher	\$55,000	\$55,000
Researcher	\$72,080	\$72,580
Other Positions		
Chef	\$106,000	\$110,000
Inspector	\$68,160	\$68,160
Other Positions	\$89,440	\$94,800

Position titles vary across organizations, but median salaries for similar position titles generally mirror the results of pay by job function.

CHART 5

All Over the Map



Science of food professionals in the Mountain region earn the highest median salary, and the highest percentage of survey respondents hail from the East North Central region.

Education Matters

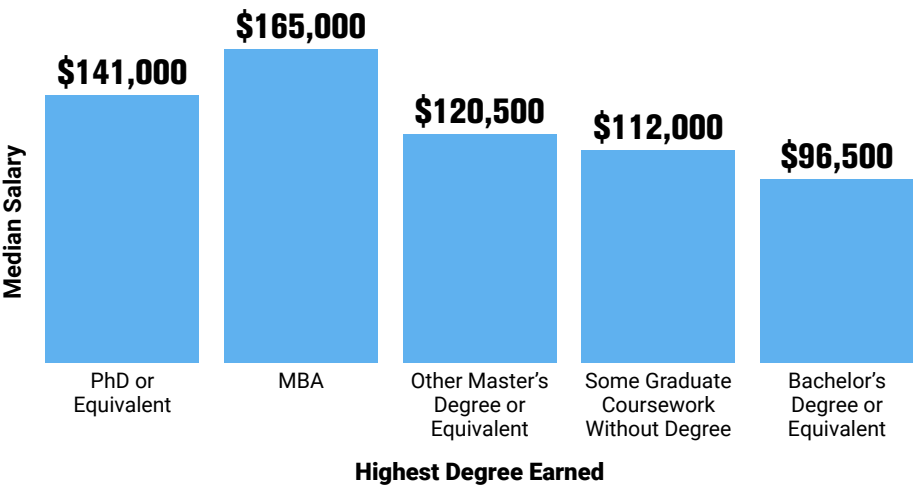
As in past years, science of food professionals' level of education makes a difference in compensation. Those whose highest degree is a bachelor's represented the largest group, earning a median salary of \$96,500. That's a slight decrease from 2022, when those with bachelor's degrees earned a median of \$98,163.

The second largest group includes those whose highest degree is a master's. Those with an MBA had a median salary of \$165,000, and those with other master's degrees, had a median salary of \$120,500.

Professionals who have a PhD or other terminal degree earned a median salary of \$141,000.

CHART 6

To the Highest Degree



Professionals whose highest degree is a bachelor's represent the largest group, and they earn a median salary of \$96,500. Salaries for those with advanced degrees are higher.

Understanding Salary Gaps

Some salary gaps may not be as wide as they once were, but they still exist, according to survey data. Consistent with past surveys, male respondents earned more than female respondents, and members of minority population segments earned less than the median.

This year, women respondents earned a median of \$100,000, the same as in the 2022 survey. That's 6.8% less than the median of \$107,300, an improvement over the 9.1% gap versus the median in 2022. The median salary for men was \$122,000. That's 13.7% higher than the median, compared with the 14.5% figure in 2022.

For Black respondents, the 2024 median salary was 8.9% less than the median, versus 8.6% less in 2022. For Asian respondents, the gap was 0.8% versus the median compared with 2.2% less in 2022. Hispanic/Latino respondents earned 6.8% less than the median in this year's research; in 2022, salaries for Hispanic/Latino participants were equal to the median.

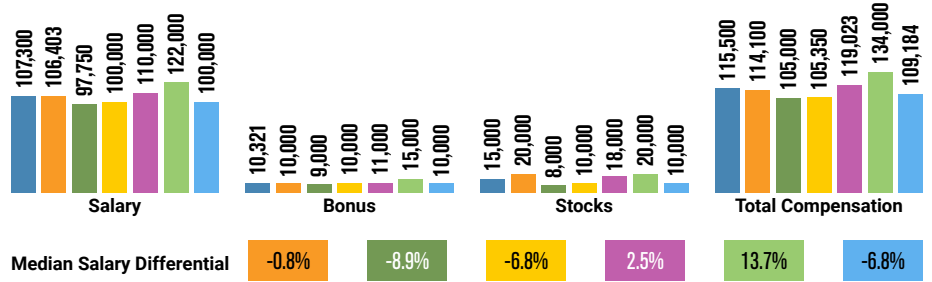
Demographics Affect Career Path

Unsurprisingly, given the median salary differentials shown in Chart 7, many survey participants feel that opportunities for advancement and compensation are negatively affected by their demographics. Overall, survey participants are more likely to feel that opportunities for advancement and compensation are negatively affected by their race/ethnicity and gender than by their sexual orientation.

CHART 7

Comparing Compensation by Race and Gender

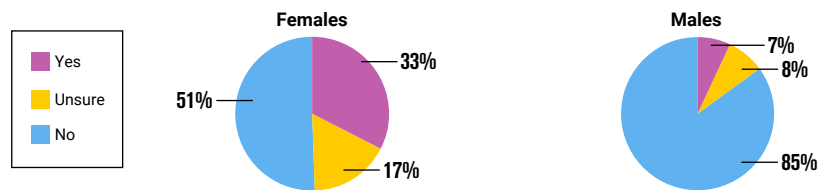
(Median)



Male respondents continued to outearn their female counterparts and white respondents continued to earn more than Black, Asian, and Hispanic/Latino respondents in 2024.

CHART 8

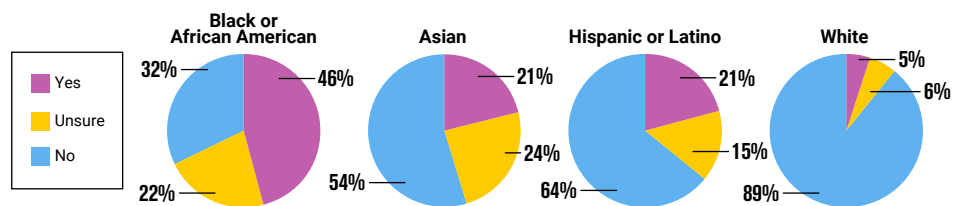
Has Your Gender Affected Your Career Advancement?



One-third (33%) of females say their career has been negatively affected by their gender.

CHART 9

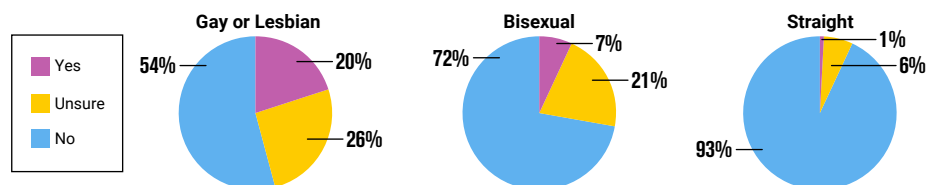
Has Your Race Affected Your Career Advancement?



Almost half (46%) of Black professionals say race has had a negative impact on their career opportunities.

CHART 10

Has Your Sexual Orientation Affected Your Career Advancement?



One-fifth (20%) of gay or lesbian respondents say their sexual orientation has negatively affected career progress.

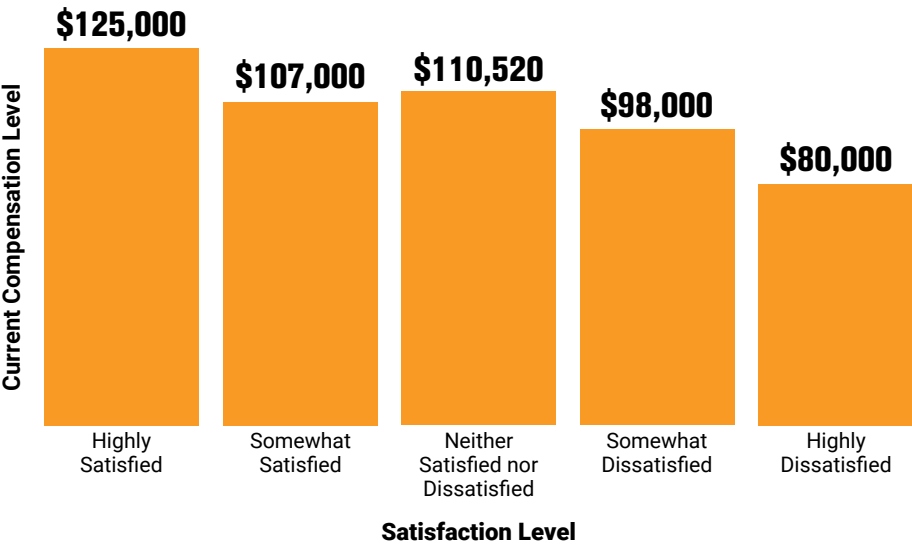
Middling Income Satisfaction

Science of food professionals are generally more satisfied than dissatisfied with their compensation, but most see room for improvement. On a five-point scale ranging from highly satisfied to highly dissatisfied, survey participants who received a raise this year ranked their satisfaction with their compensation at an average of 3.59. Those who did not get a raise or are self-employed ranked their satisfaction at 3.42, on average.

A slight majority are satisfied with their compensation, and fewer than 30% are dissatisfied with their compensation. Satisfaction levels increase with income levels: Those who ranked their satisfaction 5, or highly satisfied, have a current median pay of \$125,000. Those who ranked their satisfaction 1, highly dissatisfied, have a current median pay of \$80,000.

CHART 11

Satisfaction Level Increases With Pay

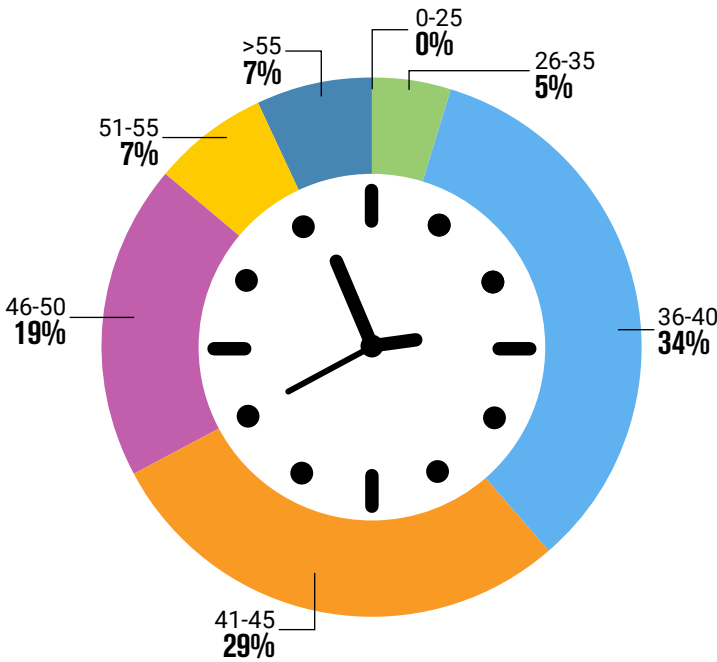


Respondents who earn more are more satisfied with their compensation, except for those who are neutral in their satisfaction level.

CHART 12

On the Clock

Number of Hours per Week and Percentage of Full-Time Respondents



Most full-time workers spend 36-40 hours working each week, while a small percentage works less and a significant percentage works even longer hours for their pay.

COMPENSATION

Sharing Salary Data No Longer Taboo

In the past few years, states including California, Colorado, New York, and Washington have implemented pay transparency laws, requiring employers to include salary ranges in job postings. As new regulations make salaries more transparent, employees across industries are embracing the trend.

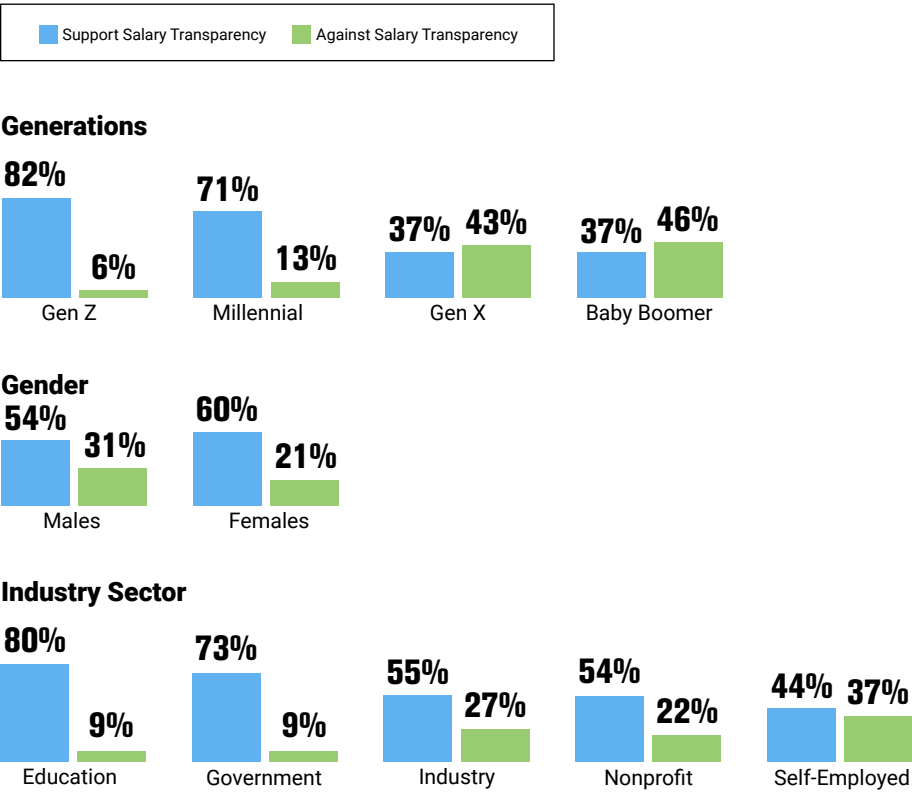
Science of food professionals are no exception, as most survey respondents (58%) said they would feel comfortable if all salaries were shared openly in their organizations. One quarter (25%) would not be comfortable if salary information was public, and 17% don't know.

Younger professionals are more comfortable with sharing salary information, as 82% of Gen Z and 71% of millennials favor it. Only 37% of Gen Xers and baby boomers agree.

Females also favor salary transparency more than males, perhaps because of the widely publicized gender wage gap. Among males, 54% support salary transparency and 31% are against it, while 60% of females support it and 21% are against it.

CHART 13

Organizational Salary Sharing Preferences

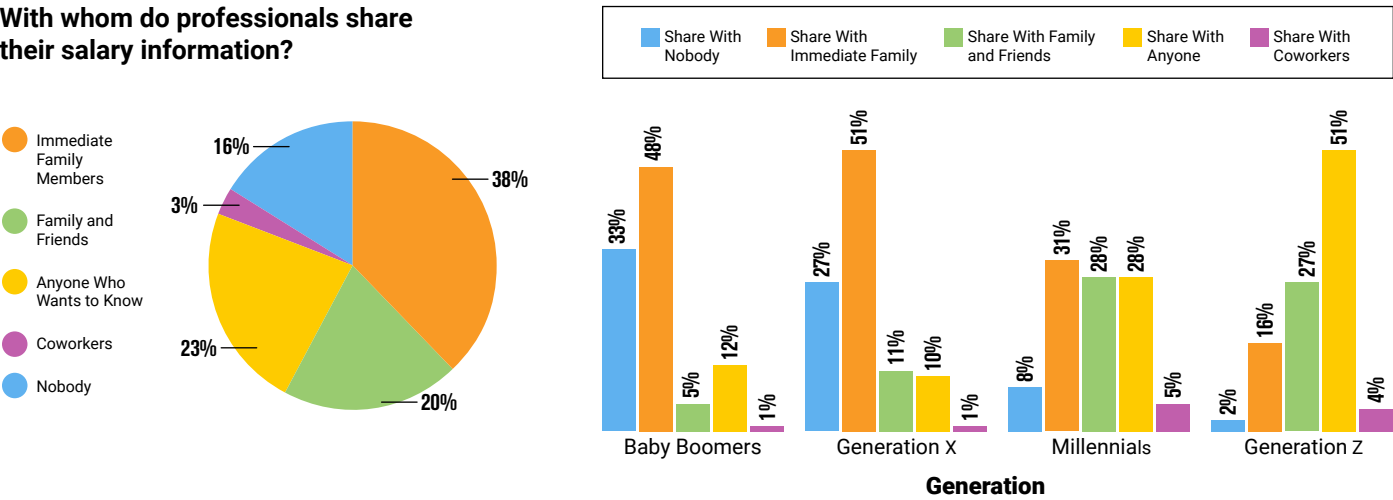


While most respondents would feel comfortable with salary transparency in their workplaces, opinions vary by generation, gender, and industry sector.

CHART 14

Personal Salary Sharing

With whom do professionals share their salary information?



While most respondents would feel comfortable with salary transparency in their workplaces, opinions vary by generation, gender, and industry sector.

Demographics

Making Way for a More Diverse Industry

Science of food professionals largely reflect the U.S. workforce as a whole, where the median age went from 40 in 2002 to 42.1 in 2012 to 41.8 in 2022, according to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Similarly, the average age of survey participants is 40.8 years. Almost half are millennials (48%), ranging from 27 to 42 years old, while 26% are Generation X (43 to 58), and at the extremes, 13% are baby boomers (59 or older) and 12% are Generation Z (26 or younger).

Not only do science of food professionals reflect a diverse range of ages, but also diversity among race and ethnicity, genders, sexual orientations, and employment structures. When asked about race or ethnicity, respondents were encouraged to check all that applied.

White (67%) is the most common race or ethnicity, followed by Asian (17%), Hispanic or Latino (9%), and Black or African American (5.5%). Far fewer indicate being biracial or multiracial, Middle Eastern or North African, American Indian or Alaska Native, or Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (4.3% combined). Another 4% preferred not to indicate their race/ethnicity.

Female survey respondents outnumber male respondents 58% to 41%. Nonbinary survey respondents number 0.7%.

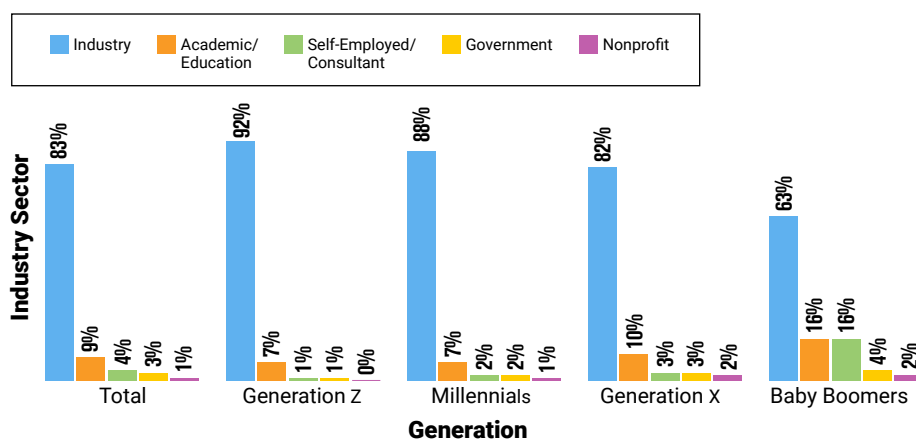
Among survey respondents, 88.6% are full-time employees, 2.2% are part-time employees, and 3.1% are self-employed in the science of

food. Most (83.3%) are employed by industry, followed by academic/education (9.2%), self-employed/consultants (3.7%), government (2.5%), and nonprofits such as associations, foundations, and nongovernmental organizations (1.3%).

Survey participants report a mean of 16.3 years of food-related work experience, and a mean of 7.7 years with their present employer.

CHART 15

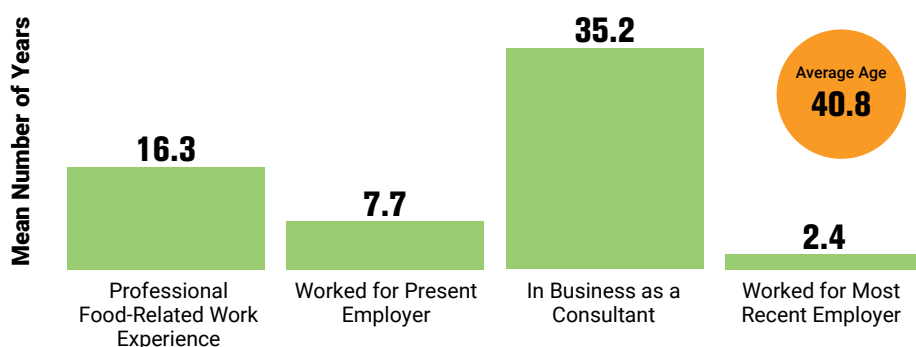
Sector by Generation



Younger generations are most likely to work in industry, while baby boomers are spread more liberally throughout industry, academia, government, and other food science organizations.

CHART 16

Deep Experience

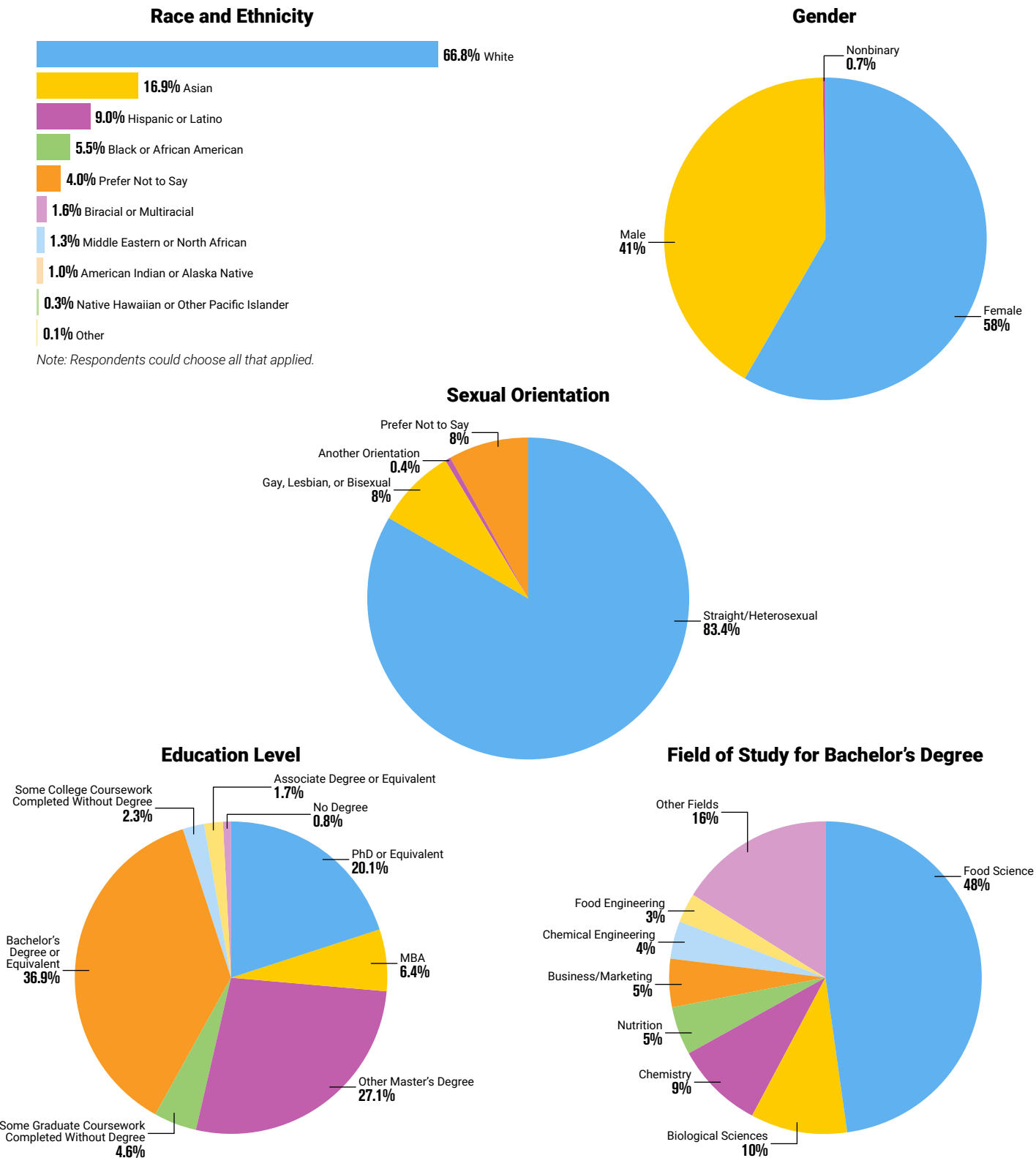


Survey respondents report an average of 16.3 years of professional food-related experience.

DEMOGRAPHICS

CHART 17

Personal Demographics



Career Paths

Job Change Interest Continues

Almost one-third (31%) of survey respondents have pursued a job change in the past 24 months, an increase from 25% in 2022. Although a substantial portion of respondents looked for new positions, just 47% of those who pursued a change actually made a change as a result of this search. Another 18% are actively searching and interviewing, 18% are not interviewing but monitoring open positions, and 16% are not actively looking but are open to offers.

Of those who pursued a job or career change in the past two years, most were seeking full-time employment. Just 4% were seeking part-time employment and 5% were seeking temporary employment. Five percent took new jobs in another sector.

Each professional's career path is unique, but many survey respondents have followed a similar path in the science of food. The most common career path consists of two to three employers, reported by 46%. Similar proportions report one (22%) or four to five employers (21%). At the extreme, 9% report having between six and 15 employers, and 2.4% have had more than 15 employers over their career.

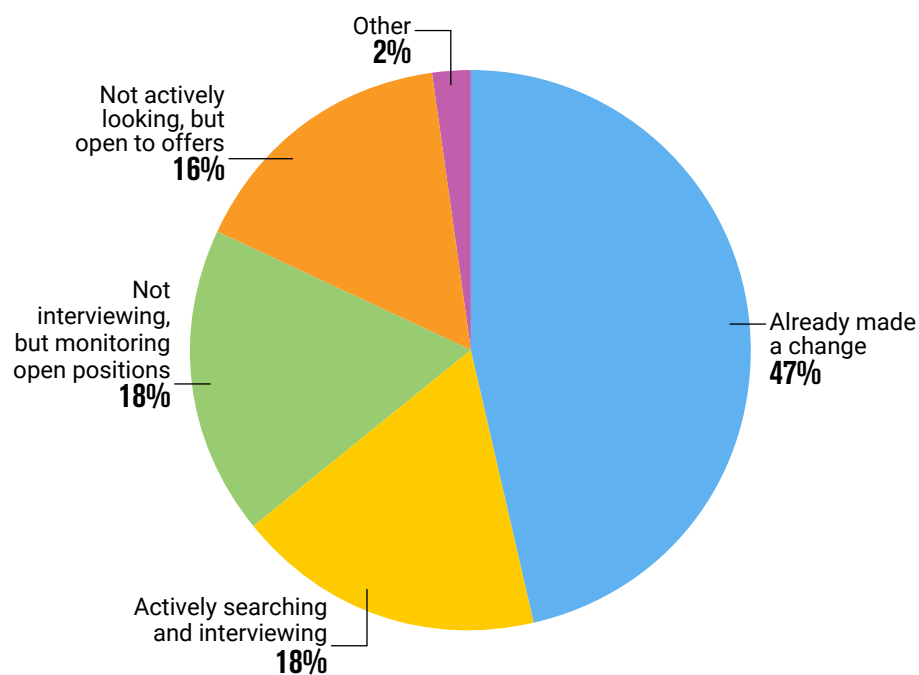
Among the small proportion who are between jobs, most report being out of work for 0–6 months (73%), with 9% each out of work 7–12 or 12–18 months, and 10% have been out of work for more than 18 months. Most individuals who left a previous employer indicate that it was a voluntary resignation (68%) while 12% were involuntary

layoffs, 6% indicated graduation (and entrance to the workforce), and 3% indicated retirement.

Although 14% indicated “other” reasons for being out of work, these responses didn’t distinguish between voluntary or involuntary. The reasons included relocation, new job or new role, or they were unhappy with various aspects of the previous job (such as bad management or COVID policies). Some indicated a promotion (presumably with the same employer). Some transitioned to consulting or self-employment, had a contract end, or their employer went bankrupt.

CHART 18

Ready for a Change



Nearly half (47%) of those who have pursued new employment opportunities in the past two years have already made a change.

CAREER PATHS

Earning Power Increases With Age

As expected, science of food professionals’ salaries tend to increase with age and years of experience in the industry. The median salary by position for full-time employees shows the highest-paid managerial positions are Vice President (\$219,500) and President/Owner/Partner/Officer/CEO (\$212,500), followed by Director (\$158,000), General Manager (\$125,000), Manager/Senior Manager (\$120,000), and Plant Manager/Supervisor (\$78,750).

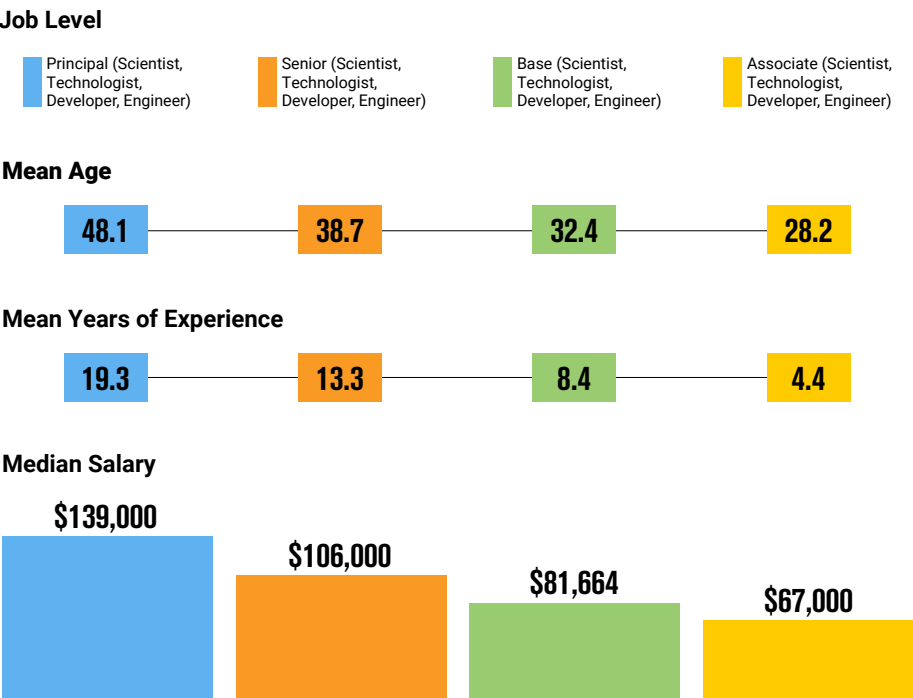
Although it seems counterintuitive that the role of President/Owner/Partner/Officer/CEO has a slightly lower median salary than the Vice President role, that most likely relates to the fact that a higher percentage of those in the former role are with smaller organizations than those in the Vice President positions and the survey also drew fewer respondents who held the most senior-level positions, IFT’s compensation researcher explains.

What Leads to Career Satisfaction?

The most important factor influencing job satisfaction is compensation and benefits. Almost all survey participants rate it extremely (58%) or very important (35%), and only 6% rate it somewhat important, for an average score of 4.51 on a 5-point scale. The next most important factors are supportive management, with 55% ranking it extremely important, and work/life balance, with 51% ranking it extremely important.

CHART 19

Age + Experience = More Pay



Respondents’ salary numbers generally reflect an increase in pay that correlates with age and increased experience.

CHART 20

Ranking Factors for Career Satisfaction

- 1 Compensation and/or Benefits
- 2 Supportive Management
- 3 Work/Life Balance
- 4 Job Security
- 5 Intellectual Stimulation
- 6 Career Development/Advancement Opportunities
- 7 Job-Related Stress
- 8 Workload
- 9 Having a Sense of Belonging
- 10 Organizational Mission and Integrity

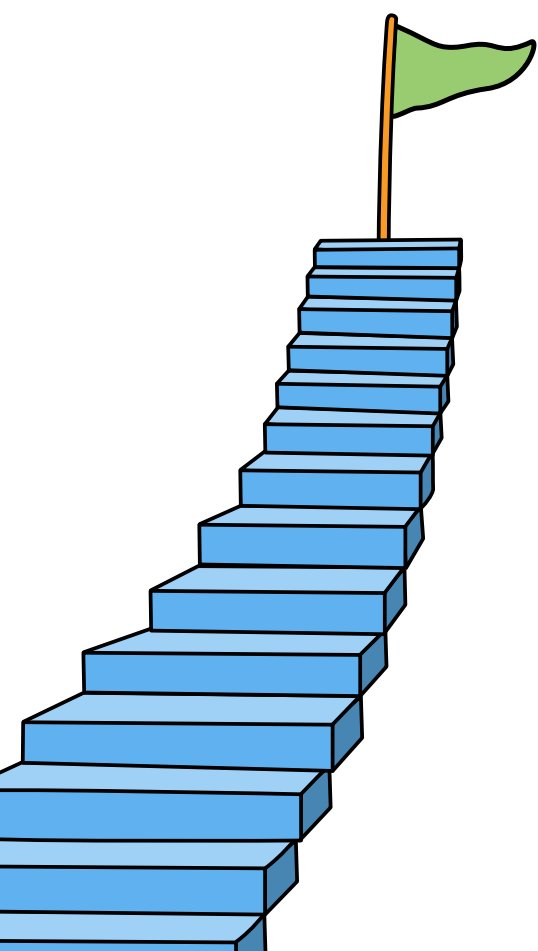


Respondents ranked 18 different workplace qualities for their importance in achieving career satisfaction on a scale of 1 to 5. The top 10 are included here.

CAREER PATHS

As another way of demonstrating their level of career satisfaction, survey participants were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with a list of statements pertaining to their workplace. In general, responses to these statements show that respect, diversity, and other positive characteristics are common in the workplace environment. Each statement was ranked on a scale of 1 to 5, ranging from strongly disagreeing to strongly agreeing.

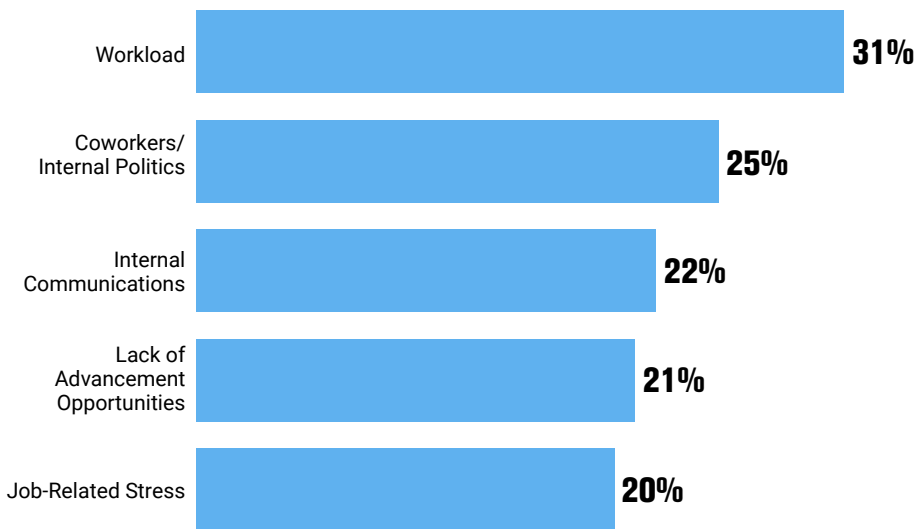
While survey respondents report general career satisfaction, no career is without challenges. Among a list of 20 specific issues, five were each rated as biggest by at least 10% and each of these was rated second biggest by at least 8%. Coworkers/ internal politics, lack of advancement opportunities, workload, job-related stress, and internal communications combined account for about 60% of the biggest work-related challenges.



Workplace Statement	Average Score
The people I work with treat each other with respect.	4.33
Workforce diversity is valued at our organization.	4.00
I have opportunities to network and learn from my peers.	3.99
My ideas are heard by my current employer.	3.98
My suggestions are fairly considered by my current employer.	3.98
I feel encouraged and equipped to succeed.	3.91
My contributions and accomplishments are fairly and appropriately recognized, relative to my co-workers.	3.91
I am included in important decisions that affect my work.	3.84

CHART 21

Facing the Challenges



Note: Respondents could choose more than one.

There is little consensus in what constitutes the biggest job-related challenges, but the highest number of respondents rank these as most or second-most challenging.

Joining the Gig Economy

Twelve percent of survey respondents reported income from side jobs, including 19% of baby boomers, 14% of Generation X, and 9% each of millennials and Generation Z. In IFT’s 2022 survey, just 7% reported earnings from secondary employment.

Consulting, reported by 45%, is by far the most common other professional activity that respondents are engaged in and paid for outside of their primary job. Teaching (15%) and research (10%) are reported less often, and 22% report some other activity. Other activities encompass a wide range, including farming, real estate, sales, health care, revenue-generating hobbies, or owning unrelated businesses such as career

coaching, Airbnb or short-term rentals, catering, chef, event planning, or a concession stand.

Overall, the average amount of time spent on secondary employment is not very time-consuming—a mean of 21 hours per month, or about 12% of a typical full-time work schedule.

Individuals doing side work report that they currently work on an average of 3.2 projects. The total number of clients is higher among those who primarily work in a nonprofit setting and lower among those who report being a full-time employee in their primary work setting.

When asked their reasons for participating in secondary jobs, extra income is the most common response (58%). However, it’s far from

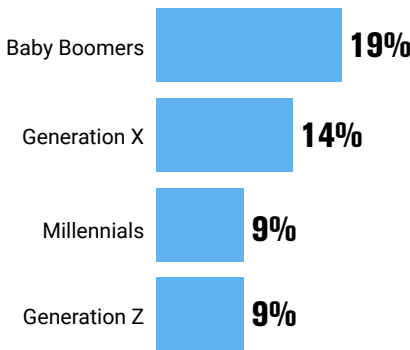
the only response—and for many, it’s not the single most important reason. Science of food professionals have a wide variety of reasons for engaging in extra work outside their primary jobs, including helping people, building a network, and learning new skills.

Long-Term Goals for Secondary Employment

For most professionals with side gigs in addition to their primary jobs, the long-term goal is simply the status quo—to keep supplementing their full-time employment with side work (54%). Only 17% plan to eventually replace their primary employment with their secondary jobs, and 12% plan to discontinue their secondary job/consulting role. Another 17% are unsure.

CHART 22

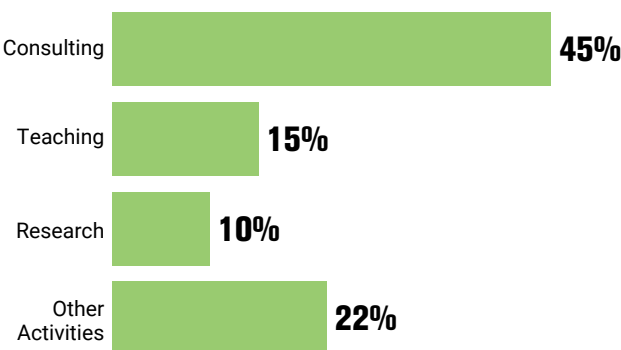
Second Jobs by Generation



Older workers were more likely than younger workers to report income from secondary employment.

CHART 23

Second Jobs Breakout

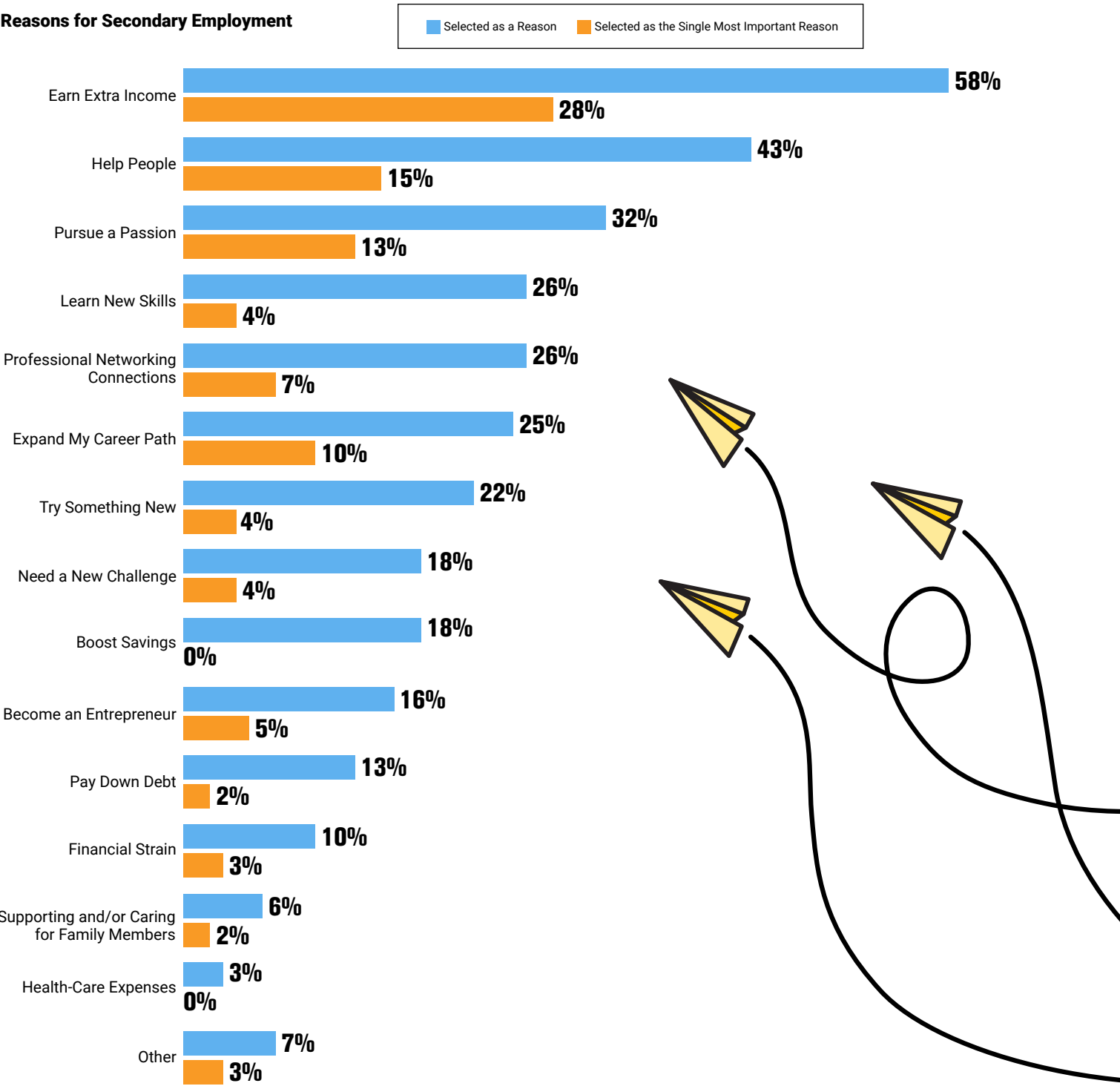


Note: Respondents could choose more than one.

Consulting is the most popular side gig for science of food professionals.

CHART 24

Why Participate in Secondary Employment?



While extra income is the most popular driver, professionals have a wide range of reasons for working side jobs.

Employment Benefits

Perks Beyond the Paycheck

For most respondents, the benefits that come with being a full-time employee are a crucial part of their compensation package and their career satisfaction. The average survey participant reports that they have 16 benefits available to them through their employers.

The most common employee benefits include insurance, retirement savings, and paid time off or other forms of leave.

Workplace flexibility has become increasingly important across the workforce, but most survey respondents still don't take all the leave they accrue from their employers. Respondents reported they have an average of 23.4 days of paid leave, but took an average of 16.5 days off in the past year.

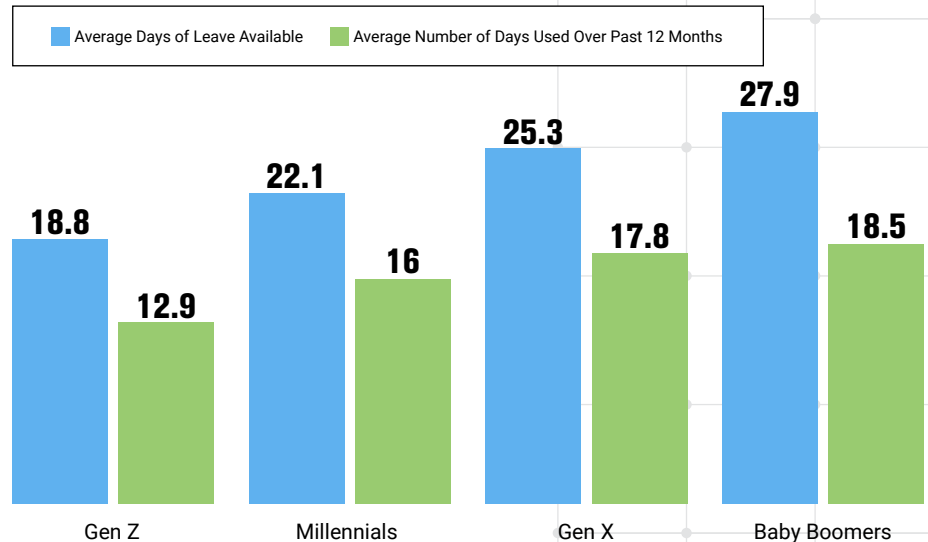
In answer to a multiple-choice question about why they don't use most of their leave, respondents most commonly answered that 1) they are too busy to take the time off, or 2) they can carry forward most or all of the leave so they don't mind. Each of these answers was mentioned by 40% of survey participants.

Other reasons for leaving days off on the table were that they lack sufficient backup to feel comfortable (29%) or the company culture discourages taking the time (7%). Many (18%) offer different reasons.

By generation, total leave accrued and used increased with age. Younger workers have fewer days off available to them and take fewer days, while older workers have more leave and take more leave.

CHART 25

Days Off Accrue With Age



Older workers report having more time off available and are more likely to take more days off.

EMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

CHART 26

Common Benefits

Benefit and Percentage of Respondents Whose Employers Offer It

Health Insurance _____ 98%	Relocation Expenses _____ 32%
Dental Insurance _____ 95%	Maternity/Family Leave – Unpaid _____ 31%
Vacation _____ 94%	Fitness Facilities or Fitness Club Membership _____ 30%
Vision Insurance _____ 91%	Nonprofit Donation Matching Program _____ 19%
Life Insurance _____ 87%	Stock Options _____ 18%
Retirement Savings Program (such as 401k) _____ 87%	Severance Policy _____ 18%
Sick Leave _____ 80%	Legal Assistance _____ 18%
Long-Term Disability Insurance _____ 77%	Profit Sharing _____ 16%
Short-Term Disability Insurance _____ 75%	Transit – Bus/Train/Parking Benefits _____ 13%
Flexible Spending Account _____ 72%	Pension _____ 11%
Work At Home – Telecommuting _____ 64%	Sabbatical, Paid _____ 8%
Bonus/Performance Compensation _____ 64%	Sabbatical, Unpaid _____ 8%
Maternity/Family Leave – Paid _____ 56%	Company Automobile _____ 8%
Association Membership Dues _____ 53%	Auto Insurance _____ 6%
Employee Wellness Benefits _____ 49%	Childcare _____ 6%
Tuition Reimbursement _____ 48%	Retiree Health Insurance _____ 6%
Flex Time _____ 42%	Retiree Dental Insurance _____ 5%
Reimburse Professional Certification/Recertification _____ 41%	Long-Term Care _____ 5%
Continuing Education Support _____ 41%	Homeowner's Insurance _____ 4%
Employee Assistance Program _____ 37%	

The most commonly reported employment benefits include various forms of insurance.

IFT Compensation Research: Historical Data

Trends over the past 58 years as indicated by previous IFT surveys^a

	1966	1979	1993	1997	1999	2003	2007	2009	2011	2013	2015	2017	2019	2022	2024
No. of questionnaires sent	7,100	12,370	18,916	19,538	19,478	13,667	11,139	10,874	10,901	10,282	11,178	10,817	11,345	28,734	35,899
No. of respondents	4,959	5,884	7,785	5,933	4,950	3,934	3,078	2,728	1,923	2,456	2,343	2,535	1,372	3,028	3,561
Percentage response	71%	48%	42%	31%	26%	29%	28%	25%	18%	25%	21%	24%	12%	10%	10%
Men (%)	NA	79%	66%	61%	60%	56%	52%	51% ^b	50%	48%	45%	43%	41%	44%	41%
Women (%)	NA	17%	34%	39%	40%	44%	48%	49%	50%	52%	55%	57%	59%	54%	58%
Men under age 30 (%)	NA	NA	32%	31%	31%	26%	27%	24%	27%	35%	26%	27%	23%	28%	30%
Women under age 30 (%)	NA	NA	68%	69%	69%	74%	73%	76%	73%	65%	74%	73%	76%	70%	70%
Highest degree in Food Science/ Technology (%)	17%	30%	41%	43%	44%	45%	44%	47%	54%	48%	48%	63%	65%	55%	57%
BS degree (%)	NA	47%	47%	46%	46%	42%	41%	39%	39%	38%	42%	41%	34%	32%	37%
MS degree (%)	NA	23%	23%	23%	23%	25%	25%	27%	26%	34%	26%	26%	34%	28%	27%
PhD degree (%)	NA	25%	23%	22%	23%	24%	23%	25%	26%	24%	22%	22%	23%	25%	21%
MBA degree (%)	NA	NA	6%	5%	5%	4%	6%	6%	7%	NA	7%	7%	NA	6%	7%
Employed in Industry (%)	74%	76%	67%	66%	68%	66%	69%	70%	68%	66%	74%	70%	56%	77%	83%
Employed in Education (%)	12%	13%	9%	9%	9%	11%	8%	9%	10%	12%	13%	9%	10%	13%	9%
Employed in Government (%)	8%	6%	4%	3%	3%	3%	2%	2%	2%	4%	3%	2%	1%	3%	3%
R&D/Scientific/Technical Function (%)	49%	50%	NA%	69%	70%	62%	63%	67%	68%	63%	66%	68%	68%	65%	NA
Management Function (%)	22%	20%	28%	10%	8%	10%	10%	8%	6%	8%	7%	6%	5%	7%	8%
Sales & Marketing Function (%)	12%	12%	11%	9%	10%	11%	9%	10%	10%	8%	9%	9%	9%	9%	8%
Education Function (%)	8%	9%	11%	8%	7%	11%	9%	9%	10%	12%	12%	9%	12%	10%	9%
Government Function (%)	NA	NA	9%	2%	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%	0%	2%	3%
Median Salary (\$)	\$13,000	\$24,000- \$25,999	\$53,000	\$60,000	\$65,000	\$73,150	\$84,000	\$87,700	\$87,000	\$90,000	\$90,000	\$92,000	\$95,000	\$110,000	\$107,300

^a Surveys conducted prior to 2001 were conducted by mail; surveys after 2001 were conducted via the Internet and were sent only to members in the U.S. whose e-mail addresses were known. Throughout this report, if the number of respondents in any category was fewer than five, the data were not included to ensure reliability of the data points.



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IFT's 2024 research report reveals a slight decline in median salaries, an emerging emphasis on salary transparency, and evolving workplace demographics for U.S. science of food professionals.

Slowdown

by Mary Ellen Kuhn



After surging by nearly 16% in the 2022 *IFT Compensation and Career Path Report* research, salaries have dipped slightly, according to a new IFT study. In the 2024 research report (surveys were conducted in late 2023), median compensation for U.S. science of food professionals was \$107,300, down 2.5% from 2022's \$110,000 median.

With nationwide unemployment below 4%, the job market is still strong. For many science of food positions, however, salary growth has stabilized since the red-hot period following the COVID-19 pandemic when employers struggled to fill positions, according to recruiters who spoke with *Food Technology*. Another likely contributor to the salary downturn is the fact that in the 2024 report, survey respondents had fewer years of professional food-

years of age and older) slightly edged out the 12% of Gen Z respondents (aged 26 and younger).

The science of food salary cooldown aligns with broader national trends. "Survey data is showing a tempering of pay increases," says Kathryn O'Connor, director of compensation services for HR Source, a non-profit group. "While we are still seeing an upward trend, employee pay increases are not as high as they were 12-24 months ago," she adds.

Salaries shot up after the pandemic, and now they've started to plateau, agrees Mike Pendergast, an account manager who specializes in food science positions at staffing services provider Actalent.

Many employers are keeping a careful eye on the bottom line, says Laurie Hyllberg, a vice president with food and beverage recruiting firm Kinsa Group. According to Kinsa's own compensation research, most food science salaries have been flat since 2022.

"Compared to two years ago, the salaries we're seeing are consistent," says Sheri Baker, president and CEO of HHI Search, a firm that specializes in the technical sector of the food and consumer products industry. "I would not say we've seen a decline, but we've not seen a significant increase either."

During the COVID and post-COVID period, "candidates had all the power," reflects Joel Oliver, a partner with food industry executive search firm OSI. "They could ask for whatever they wanted, and they got it."

But last year, Oliver continues, "I think there was this slowdown of employers who didn't have the money or didn't want to spend the money." Candidates, meanwhile, still had high expectations for salaries and benefits, he says. "And so there was a stalemate, if you will, of it was hard to hire because candidates and hiring companies were not necessarily in alignment."

That peaked around last summer, according to Oliver, and compensation expectations have moderated since then. "Candidates have come to a realization that salaries aren't that high anymore," he says.

For a breakdown of salaries by primary job function, see the table on page 39.

Median Earnings Snapshot

(All Respondents)

Salary	\$107,300
Bonus	\$10,321
Stocks	\$15,000
Total Compensation*	\$115,500

*Total median compensation does not equal the sum of median salary, bonus, and stocks because not all survey respondents have earnings in all categories.

related work experience—an average of 16.2 years in the most recent survey versus 19.2 years in 2022.

The demographics of the workforce are changing as baby boomers head into retirement, more members of Gen Z enter the workplace, and millennials, followed by Gen X, dominate. Nearly half (48%) of the survey participants in the 2024 *IFT Compensation and Career Path Report* were millennials, who range in age from 27 to 42 years

Who Needs to Know?

(% of Respondents and Feelings About Salary Transparency)

	Total	Gen Z	Millennial	Gen X	Baby Boomers
Will Share With No One	16%	2%	8%	27%	33%
Will Share With Anyone	23%	51%	28%	10%	12%

old. Just over a quarter (26%) were members of Gen X, aged 43 to 58. At 13%, baby boomers (59

Talking About Money

This year, for the first time, IFT’s compensation research analyzed data using a generational lens, and that analysis revealed some striking differences in perspectives on sharing salary information.

The majority (58%) of survey respondents support salary transparency (i.e., would be comfortable if their organization made all salary information publicly available). But while 82% of Gen Zers and 71% of millennials said they favored salary transparency, just 37% of Gen X and baby boomers shared that opinion.

Baby boomers play it close to the vest when it

Key Takeaways

- IFT’s compensation research shows a 2.5% median salary decline to \$107,300.
- Salary transparency is leveling the playing field for candidates, allowing them to negotiate more effectively.
- Employers seek candidates with skills in business, supply chain, and transformational thinking and prefer to steer clear of those who change jobs frequently.

comes to compensation. One-third (33%) of boomers said they don’t share their salary information with anyone in contrast with just 2% of Gen Z respondents who keep it confidential.

Cultural norms help explain it, according to workplace expert and coach Diane Rosen, president of dr-squared Consultants.

“Older generations grew up at a time where it was considered inappropriate or impolite to discuss money, and organizational culture promoted and validated those beliefs. In some organizations, employees were actually told not to discuss salary or bonuses with their coworkers,” Rosen says.

Median Salaries By Job Function

Function	Median Salary	Total Compensation
Executive/C-Suite/Department Leadership	\$200,000	\$233,500
Innovation/Incubator	\$133,657	\$147,500
Marketing/Sales/Business Development	\$133,000	\$158,000
Nutrition	\$126,608	\$136,000
Culinary	\$122,500	\$134,600
Manufacturing/Plant Operations	\$115,000	\$119,000
Flavors	\$111,500	\$122,000
Consultant	\$110,000	\$123,000
Technical Services	\$110,000	\$122,750
Research	\$110,000	\$113,600
Supply Chain	\$105,500	\$120,500
Research & Development	\$102,000	\$111,100
Food Safety	\$100,003	\$109,700
Engineering	\$100,000	\$100,000
Regulatory	\$98,500	\$107,500
Purchasing/Procurement	\$95,000	\$99,885
Product Development	\$94,600	\$100,000
Microbiology	\$90,000	\$99,000
Sensory and Consumer Science	\$89,621	\$95,261
Quality Assurance/Quality Control	\$88,000	\$95,504
Laboratory	\$74,000	\$75,000



Getting a Handle on Hybrid Work Weeks:
Scan the QR code to learn more about trends in hybrid work schedules.

Doing the Side Hustle

Slightly more than one in 10 respondents to the IFT salary survey (12%) reported having a second job. The median earnings from a second job were \$8,000. The breakout of those who reported secondary employment includes 19% of baby boomers, 14% of Generation X, and 9% of millennials and Gen Z.

Among those who have a second job, consulting is the most common form of employment, reported by 45%, followed by teaching at 15%, and research at 10%. Just over one-fifth (22%) report another kind of work, ranging from catering to real estate. The average amount of time devoted to a second job is 21 hours a month, respondents said.

Earning extra income was the top reason for secondary employment, noted by 58% of those who had a second job, followed by a desire to help people at 43%, and pursuing a passion at 32% (respondents could select multiple reasons). Rounding out the list of top five reasons were learning new skills and making professional networking connections, both indicated by 26%.

Ray Mossman, lab manager at Admix, a maker of mixing equipment, has had a variety of side gigs since graduating from Johnson & Wales University with a BS in culinary nutrition, and he capitalized on those secondary revenue streams to help pay off his college loans. Currently, he's tapping into the communication skills he developed both as a student and on the job to earn extra income as a freelance writer of documentation, product specifications, and other forms of technical communication.

For William Rollins of K'UL Chocolate, creating pottery and doing metalworking and woodworking have been both a creative outlet and a source of secondary income. "I'm very heavily regulatory and science-minded in my current position—or business-minded—and sometimes I just want to do something artsy," Rollins says.

Christy Kadharmestan, principal research scientist—women's health, global, at Amway, has been co-teaching a class on regulation of food and dietary supplements at the University of Southern California for many years. This year she will take over as lead instructor. It's not always easy carving out the time, but it's a passion project because it allows her to mentor others in the profession.

"It's something I look forward to every time because I always learn from these professional students," Kadharmestan says. "They keep me on my toes!"

According to the majority (54%) of respondents with a second job, their long-term goal is to continue supplementing income from their primary job. Just 17% said they plan to eventually replace their primary employment, 17% weren't sure, and 12% reported planning to discontinue their side hustles at some point.

Most of those working a second job (62%) said they didn't face any barriers getting started. Among those who did note barriers, those most frequently cited were not knowing how to get started (17%), lacking confidence in their abilities (14%), worrying about wasting their time (11%), and fearing failure (8%).

Based on the IFT survey, professionals in education have the highest comfort level with salary transparency at 80%, followed by those employed in government at 73%, industry at 55%, and nonprofit employers at 54%.

Evolving perspectives on salary transparency, coupled with laws in more than 20 states that prohibit potential employers from asking about salary history, are changing the conversation around compensation. "There's an equalization or a standardization in the market because of those two things," Baker says.

"Candidates know their market value now," she continues, noting that salary ranges are included in roughly half of the job postings she views on LinkedIn. "So, candidates are more educated on their value, and it's not based on what their prior company was paying them."

That's particularly true for millennials and members of Gen Z, says Tim Elliott, president and COO of Mr. Moxey's, a maker of cannabis mints that employs a multigenerational workforce. "Younger workers are entering negotiations armed with more information about industry standards, peer salaries, and the value of their skills," Elliott says.

"This transparency leads to more informed discussions between employers and employees, with younger employees using these to set the foundation for negotiations based on market data rather than just individual bargaining power," he continues.

William Rollins, QA manager at K'UL Chocolate, says he's found that transparency helps create a positive work environment. "I think you almost see a negative impact from companies that don't have that transparency," Rollins reflects, noting that it can trigger doubts about fairness and reduce trust among employees.

Salary transparency goes hand-in-hand with pay equity, experts agree, helping to level the playing field for members of underrepresented groups who may earn less than their peers. It's beneficial across the board, Baker says, noting that it can also help those who are making the leap from a small company to a larger one that has higher pay scales.

21
Average
number of
hours per
month
spent on a
second job

Charting Salary Gaps

Despite advances in salary equity, not all population segments are compensated equally, IFT's research shows. Consistent with past surveys, male respondents out-earned female respondents, and members of minority population segments earned less than the median.

According to the 2024 report data, women survey respondents earned a median of \$100,000, the same as





Workplace Priorities Vary by Generation

What employees most prioritize in their work lives varies along generational lines, the *2024 IFT Compensation and Career Path Report* research shows.

Work/life balance came in third on the list of top factors contributing to job satisfaction for both Gen Z and millennials in the survey, but it wasn't in the top five for baby boomers and was tied with intellectual stimulation at number four for Gen X.

Recruiter Moira McGrath, founder and president of OPUS International, says she finds that younger candidates place more emphasis than older job seekers on finding a job that will ensure work/life balance. "Someone in their late 40s, 50s, 60s—they're not talking about that," she notes.

Sheri Baker, president and CEO of HHI Search, theorizes that a focus on work/life balance may be related to the fact that younger adults prioritize mental health, and part of that comes from achieving life balance and avoiding burnout.

"So, I think there's a little bit of that social acceptance that it's okay to take time out for yourself that's making it more of a priority among the younger generations," Baker says. "When I was young in my career, we never talked about mental health. We never talked about recharging our batteries, taking time out for ourselves. It was a badge of honor to work in a plant for 15 hours straight. And that's not the case anymore. Now there's more people championing, 'take care of yourself.' So, I think maybe that is having an impact on work/life balance."

Bottom line, however, paychecks are the priority for many employees: Asked if they'd take a pay cut to achieve better work/life balance, exactly half (50%) of survey respondents answered no. Just 7% said definitely, 21% possibly, and 22% were unsure.

Top Five Job Priorities by Generation

Gen Z

1. Compensation and/or Benefits
2. Career Development/Advancement Opportunities
3. Work/Life Balance
4. Supportive Management
5. Job Security

Millennials

1. Compensation and/or Benefits
2. Supportive Management
3. Work/Life Balance
4. Career Development/Advancement Opportunities
5. Job Security

Gen X

1. Supportive Management
2. Compensation and/or Benefits
3. Job Security
4. Work Life/Balance and Intellectual Stimulation (Tied)

Baby Boomers

1. Intellectual Stimulation
2. Supportive Management
3. Compensation and/or Benefits
4. Organizational Mission and Integrity
5. Job Security

in the 2022 survey. That's 6.8% less than the 2024 median of \$107,300, an improvement over the 9.1% gap versus the median in 2022.

At a median of \$122,000, men's salaries were 13.7% over the median, close to the 14.5% figure in 2022.

In the 2024 report, the median salary for Black respondents was 8.9% less than the median, versus 8.6% less in 2022. For Asian respondents, the gap was 0.8% versus the median compared with 2.2% less in 2022. Hispanic/Latino respondents earned 6.8% less than the median, this year's report shows; in 2022, salaries for Hispanic participants were equal to the median.

Given the preceding figures, it's not surprising that nearly half (46%) of Black survey participants said they felt their opportunities for advancement and compensation were affected by their race/ethnicity and another 22% were unsure, leaving just under one-third (32%) to report not being negatively affected.

About one-fifth (21%) of Asian and Hispanic/Latino survey participants said they felt there had been a negative impact on opportunities and compensation, while 54% of Asian respondents and 64% of Hispanic/

A Look at the Demographics*

(IFT Survey Respondents)

Millennials	48%
Gen X	26%
Baby Boomers	13%
Gen Z	12%

*Total does not equal 100% due to rounding

Compensation Comparison (by Gender and Race/Ethnicity)

	Median Salary	Median Salary Differential
All Respondents	\$107,300	
Asian	\$106,403	-0.8%
Black	\$97,750	-8.9%
Hispanic/Latino	\$100,000	-6.8%
White	\$110,000	+2.5%
Male	\$122,000	+13.7%
Female	\$100,000	-6.8%

Latino respondents said they had not experienced a negative impact. One-third (33%) of women respondents reported a negative impact, 17% were unsure, and 51% said they had not been negatively affected. page B9 >>>



Hear more of recruiter Moira McGrath's insights on finding a job that's right for you in Episode 39 of the **Omnivore** podcast.



Culture Fit—It Counts

One of the biggest mistakes job seekers can make is taking a position with a company whose culture doesn't align with their own abilities and attitudes, says Moira McGrath, president of food science executive search firm OPUS International.

"What I think people are realizing more and more is how important culture fit is," McGrath observes. "When you're looking for a job, you have to look around at all the people that you'll be interviewing with and meeting with and working with. Is this the team that you really could work with every day, eight hours a day, five days a week for years?"

"When candidates call me and say they want to make a change, it's usually because of the culture fit," McGrath continues. "It's not because they're not promoted or they're not challenged or there's no opportunity for advancement. Sometimes that's the case, but it's mostly because they didn't look carefully enough when they made that decision to take that job."

To that end, she advises candidates to "take a couple extra days and talk to people. Call the boss that you could potentially be working with and ask the questions that you really want to have answered that you didn't ask in the interview.

"I say that companies have personalities," McGrath continues. "PepsiCo is an aggressive, dynamic company. It's a wonderful company to work for, but if you're not that personality, you're going to be miserable. Nestlé is science, science, science. They're very technical. [So is] Abbott. They're great companies, but if you're a Pepsi personality, you're not going to fit."

Company hiring professionals understand the importance of culture fit, she says. "I have companies say, 'Don't send me any candidates from X, Y, Z Company. They don't work out for us.'"



Delivering on Benefits

Benefits matter. In fact, securing better benefits is the number two reason for a job change, second only to a salary increase, according to data from management consulting firm McKinsey & Company.

The most available (and arguably the highest priority) benefits—received by more than nine out of 10 employees IFT surveyed—are health insurance, dental insurance, vacation time, and vision insurance. In addition, nearly that many, 87%, reported having a retirement program such as a 401(k).

Younger employees are more interested than their older colleagues in nontraditional benefits, according to a report from professional services company Marsh McLennan. The company reported, for example, that 62% of Gen Z employees characterized mental health benefits as very/extremely important compared with just 38% of baby boomers who prioritized them. IFT's survey didn't specifically break out mental health benefits, but about half (49%) of respondents reported having access to employee wellness offerings.

Benefits related to flexibility, mental health, and personalization are trending, according to Alicia Scott-Wears, content manager with WorldatWork, an association for human resources professionals.

"Varying life situations within a diverse workforce are driving efforts for personalized benefits," Scott-Wears says. "Customizable solutions like lifestyle spending accounts, nutrition coaching, stress management, and life-stage benefits are some examples of ways employers can ensure their benefit offerings address the needs of their employees no matter their generation."

Time Off Trends

Paid time off (PTO) is increasingly important to job search candidates and "much more of a negotiating piece," according to Joel Oliver, partner in food industry-focused executive search firm OSI.

IFT's survey shows a nearly even split between those whose benefits include PTO, which lumps vacation and

sick time together, and those who have separate sick time and vacation time. Forty-nine percent work for an employer with a PTO system and 51% have a separate vacation and sick time option.

The employees IFT surveyed have an average of 23.4 days of leave each year and report using 16.5 days of it over the past 12 months on average. Among those who didn't use all their leave, the most common reasons, each cited by 40% of respondents, were being too busy or being able to carry it over. In addition, 29% attributed it to lacking sufficient backup. (Respondents could choose multiple reasons.)

It's well known that vacation time yields valuable mental and physical health benefits, but research shows it can also boost productivity. A study by consultancy EY found that each 10 hours of vacation taken translated to an 8% improvement in year-end performance ratings.

An unfortunate 7% of IFT survey respondents said their company culture discourages using all their vacation time.

"I have worked for an employer where the expectation is that I will be available on email and messaging platforms during my PTO," says one survey respondent working in a director-level position for a midsize organization. "This heavily affects my ability and desire to take meaningful PTO days. What is the point of taking PTO, after all, if I am still expected to be engaged with work activities?"

"Companies in the United States need to seriously reevaluate their expectations around worker productivity and PTO," she continues. "If employers want to understand quiet quitting and employee burnout, then they need to understand

what proper PTO looks like and how to ensure their employees have access to it." ■

Breaking Out Benefits

Benefit	% Who Receive It
Health Insurance	98%
Dental Insurance	95%
Vacation Time	94%
Vision Insurance	91%
Life Insurance	87%
Retirement Program (i.e., 401(k))	87%
Sick Leave	80%
Long-Term Disability Insurance	77%
Short-Term Disability Insurance	75%
Flexible Spending Account	72%
Work at Home/Telecommuting	64%
Bonus/Performance Compensation	64%
Maternity/Family Leave (Paid)	56%
Association Membership Dues	53%
Employee Wellness Benefits	49%
Tuition Reimbursement	48%
Flex Time	42%



The Process

Conducted by a private research firm, the survey that provides the insights in the *2024 IFT Compensation and Career Path Report* was fielded in late 2023. Email surveys were sent to 35,899 U.S.-based professionals working in the science of food discipline. With 3,561 responses, the response rate was about 10%, and the overall results have a margin of error of less than 2%.

action with production and purchasing and sales. They need a knowledge of the procurement process and the price point of the ingredients that they're recommending or what can be substituted."

Recruiter Baker zeroed in on transformational thinking skills. "Transformation or leading transformation is a skill set that is highly desirable right now because just about every company is going through some sort of change—it's reacting to the economy or recovering from the pandemic, but there are changes in all aspects," she reflects. "So that's definitely a highly desired skill set we're seeing." It's important even for employees who aren't in leadership or managerial roles, she says, because they'll likely be working and communicating cross functionally.

What employers *don't* want are job hoppers, recruiters emphasize. It's true that changing jobs every year or two has become more and more common, but most hiring professionals don't look at it favorably, says Oliver. "They may be more understanding of it, but that's not what they want," he observes.

Sought-After Skills

What skill sets are employers prioritizing in the current market environment? "Procurement, supply chain, and business knowledge are must haves," says Kinsa's Hyllberg. Without such skills, employees won't be able to move up the career ladder, she emphasizes.

The ability to see the big picture is important, Hyllberg continues. For R&D roles, employers are looking for "individuals that understand the impact of their decisions on the bottom line. They need to have cross-functional inter-

Moira McGrath, founder and president of food science recruitment firm OPUS International, agrees. "My clients are saying to me, don't send me someone that's had three jobs in five years. We don't want to even see them," she says.

Employment Outlook

The U.S. labor market remained resilient in 2023 despite sky-high inflation, geopolitical turmoil, and the threat of recession, and overall job growth in the first three months of 2024 was strong, according to statistics from the U.S. Department of Labor. Research from firms and associations including Mercer, Payscale, and WorldatWork forecast average compensation increases ranging from 3.5% to 4.1% for 2024.

Alicia Scott-Wears, content director at WorldatWork, an association for human resources professionals, notes that although average wage increases have declined from the immediate post-pandemic era as turnover slows globally and inflation eases slightly, compensation growth is still better than it was before the pandemic. Throughout the decade starting in 2010, average increases hovered between 2.8% and 3.2%, she says.

The market for food science jobs tends to be stable, even somewhat "recession proof" given the necessity of feeding consumers in good times and bad, recruiters point out.

"We're starting to see inflation slow, so I'm hoping that we're starting to see the economy get better," says Baker. "That always translates into companies doing better, [and that] translates ultimately into hiring. We're

on the front edge of that, but that's what gives me hope that we're turning a corner, and the market will get better."

"It's not a 'name your price' [market] anymore by any means," according to Oliver, but salaries are still higher than they were before the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The market feels quite balanced

to me at the moment in that people are hiring, and people are looking, but there's not an excess in either direction," Oliver adds. **IT**

Mary Ellen Kuhn is executive editor of *Food Technology* (mkuhn@ift.org.)

Numbers to Note

71% Got a raise last year

\$165,000 Median salary of respondents with an MBA, the degree with the highest salary

14% Report working more than 50 hours a week

16.3 Average years of professional food-related experience

7.7 Average years worked for present employer

40.8 Average age

31% Pursued a job change within the past two years

3% Report overtime earnings

25% Say they were highly satisfied with last year's raise



Scan the QR code to view an executive summary of the *2024 IFT Compensation and Career Path Report*.

About IFT

The Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) is a global organization of over 11,000 individual members from more than 90 countries committed to advancing the science of food. Since 1939, IFT has brought together the brightest minds in food science, technology, and related professions working in academia, government, and industry to solve the world's greatest food challenges.

IFT works to ensure that its members have the resources they need to learn, grow, and innovate to advance the science of food as the population and the world evolve. IFT believes that science and innovation are essential to ensuring a global food supply that is sustainable, safe, nutritious, and accessible to all. For more information, please visit ift.org.

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