



UPA 2009 Salary Survey

Public Version

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promoting usability concepts and techniques worldwide



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PREFACE

This report is the public version of the 2009 UPA user experience industry salary survey. It contains a subset of the analyses offered in the members-only version of the report.

The members-only version of the report contains the following additional analyses:

- Salary by years working in the field
- By region within the US
- Salary change over time by region within the US
- Salary by education level
- Salary change over time by education level
- Detailed statistical analysis of the following questions:
 - How much does experience affect salary?
 - What effect does an advanced degree have on pay?
 - Do managers get paid more than individual contributors?
 - What is the effect of experience, degree and job type on salary?
 - Are there more men than women managers in UX?
 - Is there a difference in the proportions of men and women in management and individual contributor roles?
 - Do more men than women in UX have PhD's?
 - Do managers have more PhD's than individual contributors?

We encourage you to join UPA if you would like to receive the members-only report. To join UPA, browse to usabilityprofessionals.org/join, or call +1.630.980.4997.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the winter of 2009 the Usability Professionals' Association surveyed members of the user experience field to learn who our respondents are, where they work, what they do, and how much they are paid.

We received a total of 1,786 responses. Of these, 1,041 were "UPA International" or "big" UPA members. The 1,041 UPA members included 380 people who were affiliated with a local UPA chapter in their area, and 661 who were not. Of the 745 respondents who were not UPA International members, 132 were actually affiliated with a local UPA chapter.

The respondents were nearly equally split between females (887) and males (874). Twenty-five respondents did not report their gender.

Salaries for all respondents outside the US were converted to US dollars. Respondents entered salary information in their local currency, and all non-US salaries were converted to US currency at the exchange rates prevailing on May 9, 2009.

Salary in 2009

Overall, salaries increased by about \$2,000 USD to \$85,283 in the two years since UPA last surveyed the UX field in 2007. The main driver for this salary increase appears to be the increase in women's salaries over the past two years.

As measured by this survey, the UX "gender gap" has almost entirely disappeared. Women's salaries increased more than did men's salaries since the previous survey in 2007. Across all countries, women's average salary rose more than \$4,000 USD from \$80,680 in 2007 to \$84,892 in 2009. In contrast, men's salaries were essentially flat over the same time period, rising only \$186 to \$85,947 in 2009. This has reduced the user experience industry's gender gap from \$8,500 in 2005 to only \$1,000 in 2009.

There are several other interesting findings, among them:

- Education matters, but there isn't a large difference in average salary between those with a Bachelors and those with a Masters degree.
- Average salary increases are greatest during mid-career; specifically between 5 and 15 years in the field.

- There are large differences in average salary across regions of the United States. Those in Midwest states have the lowest average salary, and those on the coasts generally have the highest, although the Southwestern states' average salary has increased while the Northeast has remained flat. (This analysis is available in the members-only version of the report.)

We encourage you to read this report and draw your own conclusions. Feel free to share your thoughts about this report and the UX industry with us at office@usabilityprofessionals.org.

THE RESPONDENTS

Country

We received responses from people in 34 countries. The majority of respondents were from the United States (1237), the United Kingdom (128), Canada (95) Spain (68), and Australia (31).

There were a handful of respondents from Germany (18), New Zealand (13), Finland (12) and India (11).

Count by Country							
Country	Count	Country	Count	Country	Count	Country	Count
Argentina	10	France	6	Malaysia	1	South Korea	2
Australia	31	Germany	18	Mexico	4	Spain	68
Belgium	1	Hong Kong	7	Netherlands	6	Switzerland	7
Brazil	8	India	11	New Zealand	13	Taiwan	5
Canada	95	Ireland (Rep.)	1	Norway	5	UK	128
Chile	8	Israel	12	Philippines	1	UAE	4
China (except HK)	4	Italy	5	Poland	4	USA	1237
Denmark	6	Japan	2	Portugal	2	All others	49
Finland	12	Luxembourg	1	Singapore	1		

US Region

The respondents from the US were mostly from the Northeast (334 or 27% of total US respondents) and the West (297 or 24%) Approximately 23% of the US respondents (284 total) were from the Midwest part of the country; the rest were from the Southeast (195 respondents) and the Southwest (134 respondents).

The states included in each region are indicated in the table below.

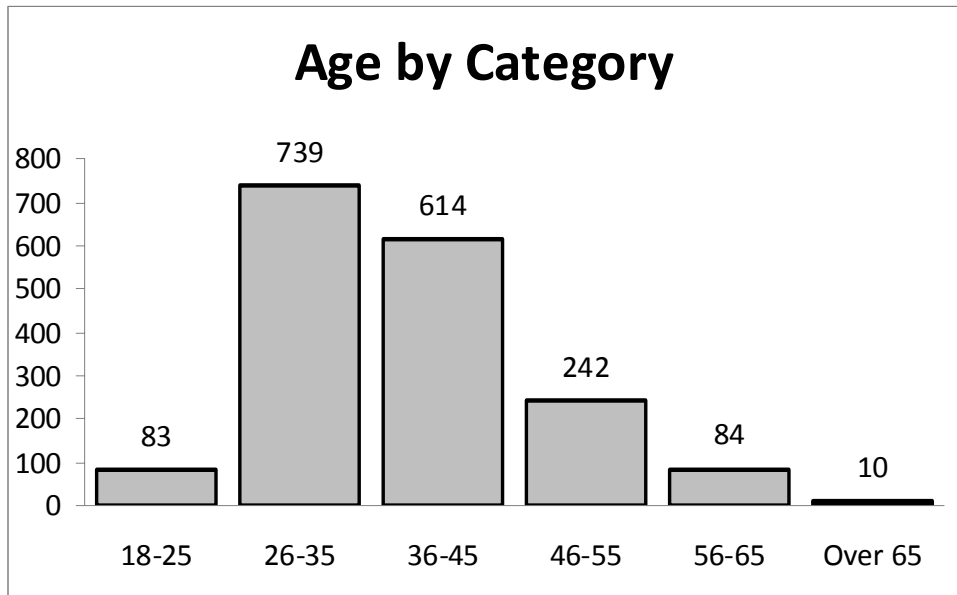
Country and Percent By US Region		
US Region	Count	Percent
Midwest	284	23%
Northeast	334	27%
Southeast	195	16%
Southwest	134	11%
West	297	24%

Northeast	Southeast	Midwest	Southwest	West
Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont	Alabama, Arkansas, the Carolinas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia	Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin	Arizona, southern California, southern Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, southern Utah	Alaska, Arizona, northern California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, northern Nevada, Oregon, northern Utah, Washington, Wyoming

Age

Our profession has a preponderance of people under the age of 45. Almost half (47%) of the respondents were under the age of 35 at the time of this survey in the spring of 2009. More than 1/3, or 35%, were between 36 and 45.

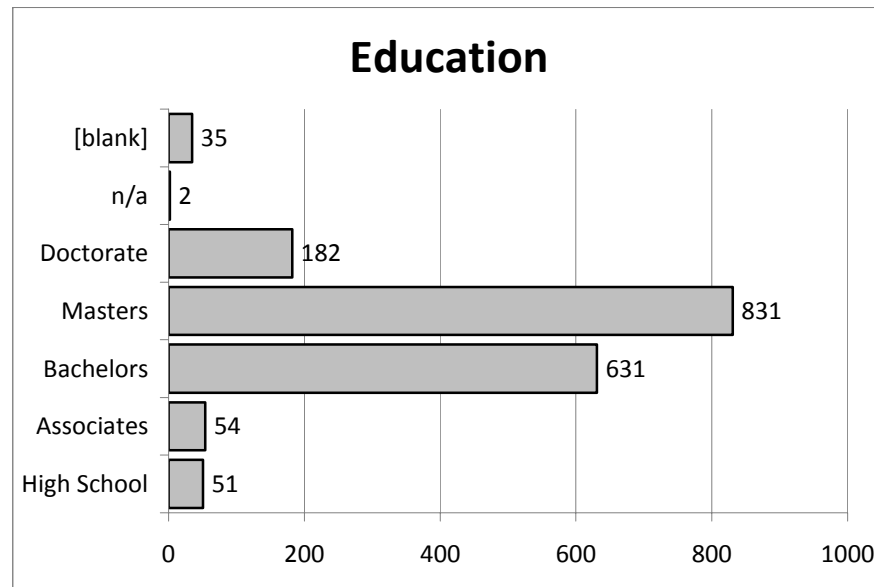
About 14% reported their age as between 46 and 55. About 6% of respondents were 56 and over.



Age by Category		
Age	Count	Percent
18-25	83	5%
26-35	739	42%
36-45	614	35%
46-55	242	14%
56-65	84	5%
Over 65	10	1%

Highest Degree Held

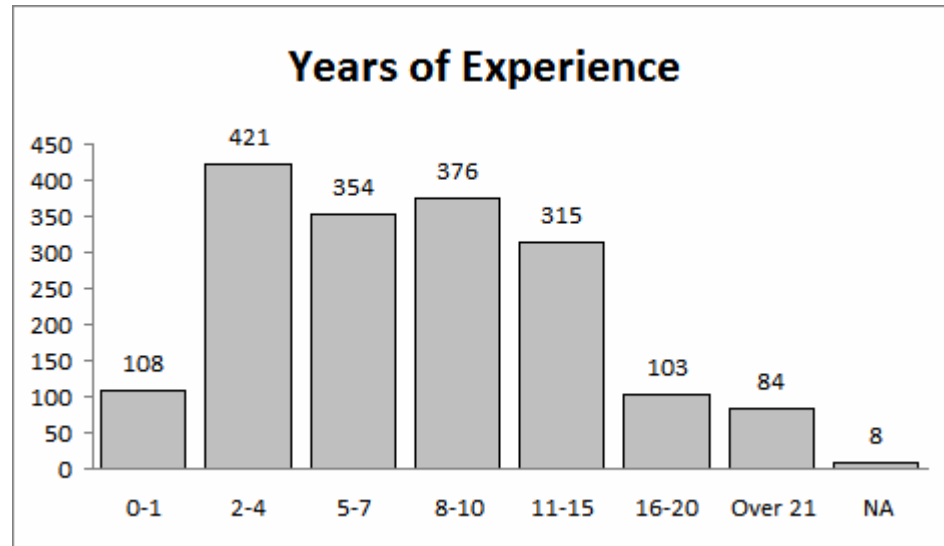
The respondents are a highly educated group. Approximately 3% of the respondents hold a PhD; almost half (47%) hold a Master's or greater; and 85% of the respondents reported having a Bachelor's degree or higher.



Education		
Highest Education Obtained	Count	Percent
PhD (Doctorate)	182	8%
Master's Degree	831	47%
College or University (Bachelor's degree)	631	35%
Technical or Associates Degree	54	3%
High School ('A' level, GCSE)	51	3%
Not applicable	2	<1%
Blank	35	2%

Experience

Half of respondents reported between 0 and 7 years experience in the UX field. Almost 40% reported 8 to 15 years in the field, and 11% reported working in the field for 16 or more years.



Years of Experience		
Experience	Count	Percent
0-1 years	108	6%
2-4 years	421	24%
5-7 years	354	20%
8-10 years	376	21%
11-15 years	315	18%
16-20 years	103	6%
Over 21 years	84	5%
Not applicable	8	0%

Current Organization

The largest group of respondents (25%, or 423 respondents) reported working for a software corporation or other type of corporation (32%, or 551 respondents). A large group of respondents (18% or 302 total) worked for a usability consulting firm.

One hundred and fifty-seven respondents, or 9% of the total, worked at a full-service advertising or design firm. The rest of the full-time employees worked for non-profit, government/military, or educational institutions.

Organization Type		
Organization	Count	Percent
Full service ad agency or design agency	157	9%
Government or military	59	3%
Non-profit organization	55	3%
Software company	423	25%
University or college	82	5%
User experience consulting firm (1-4 employees)	130	8%
User experience consulting firm (5-10 employees)	128	7%
User experience consulting firm (10+ employees)	44	3%
Other	82	5%
Other corporation	551	32%

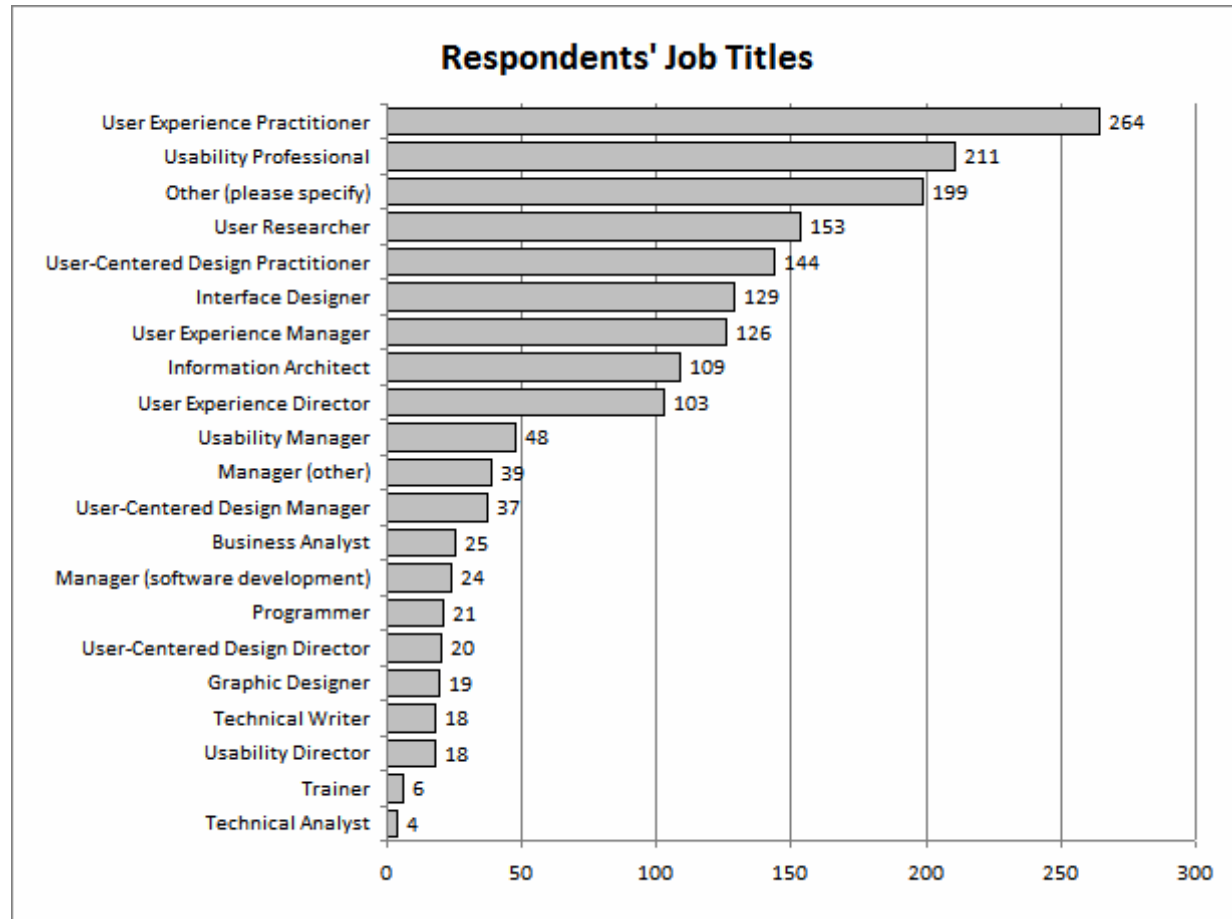
Current Position

Most of the respondents (1534) indicated that they currently hold full-time permanent jobs. Only 151 respondents reported working as contractors or independent consultants. The rest were either employed part-time, unemployed, or currently students.

Current Position	
Position	Count
Contractor / Freelance / Solo consultant	151
Full-time employee (30 or more hours per week)	1534
Part-time employee (less than 30 hours per week)	23
Student	8
Unemployed	20
Other	2

Job Title

The respondents reported a variety of job titles. The most prevalent titles were User Experience Practitioner (264), Usability Professional (211), User Researcher (153), User-Centered Design Practitioner (144), Interface Designer (129), User Experience Manager (126), Information Architect (109) and User Experience Director (103). A number of programmers, technical writers, and people from other related disciplines responded to this survey as well.



Employment Level

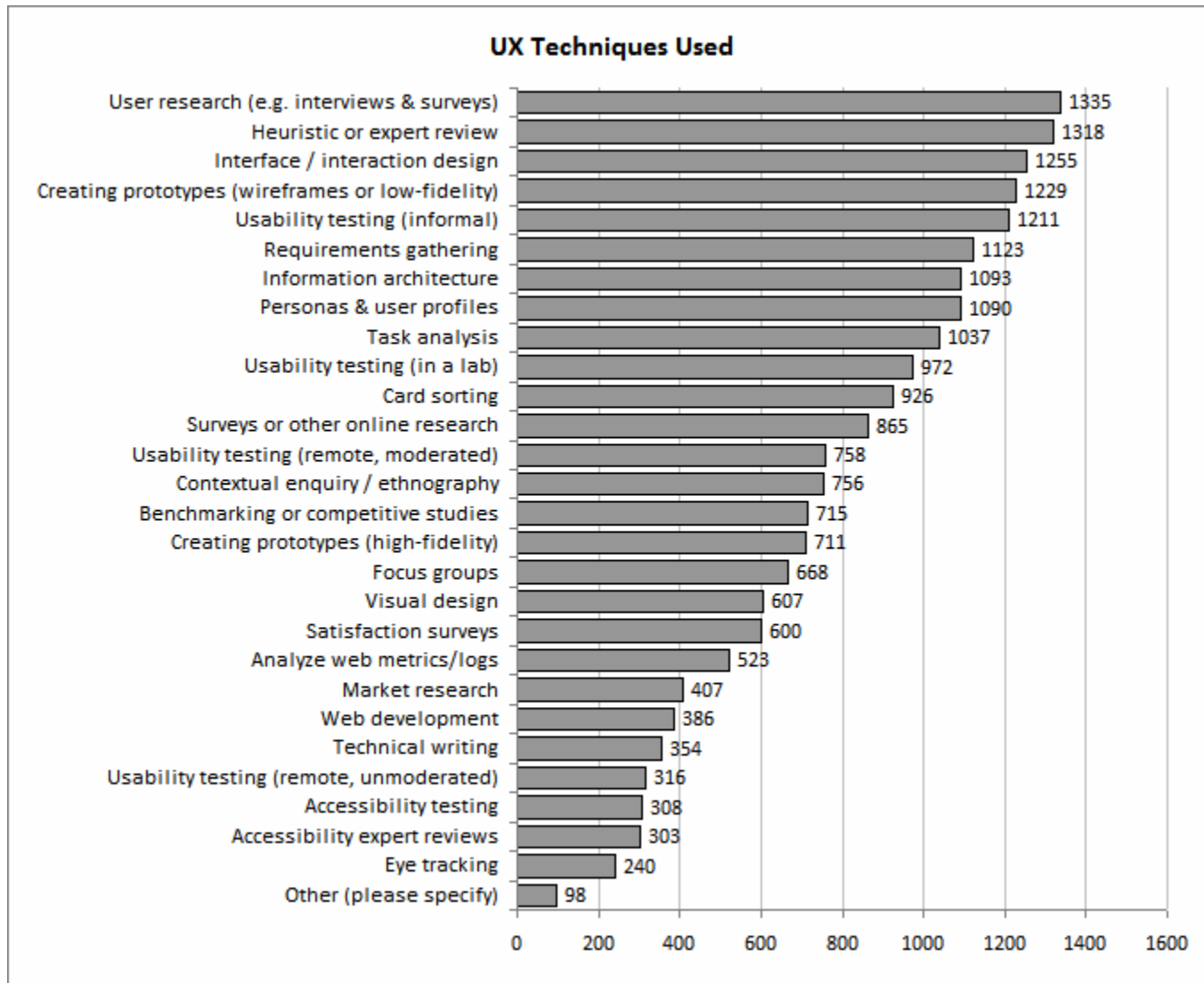
Over half (52%) of respondents are currently in a mid- or senior-level contributor position. More than one-third of the respondents (35%) indicated that they were in a supervisory or executive position. A small number of respondents indicated that they are currently in an entry-level position.

Employment Level		
Level	Count	Percent
Entry-level	89	5%
Mid-level, non-supervisory	544	32%
Mid-level, supervisory (Mgr or Sr Mgr)	291	17%
Senior-level, non-supervisory	472	28%
Senior-level, supervisory (Dir or VP)	148	9%
Executive	41	2%
Not applicable to me	110	6%

Techniques

Respondents also indicated which techniques they used in the course of their job tasks. The techniques used most often included informal usability testing (used by about 77% of respondents), heuristic / expert review (also 77%), user research such as interviews and surveys (74%), and interface / interaction design (73%).

Also widely used were persona and user profile creation (66%), requirements gathering (63%), information architecture techniques (63%) and task analysis (60%). The least prevalent techniques were eye tracking, accessibility review and testing, and web development.



UX Techniques Used		
Technique	Count	Percent
User research (e.g. interviews & surveys)	1335	75%
Heuristic or expert review	1318	74%
Interface / interaction design	1255	70%
Creating prototypes (wireframes or low-fidelity)	1229	69%
Usability testing (informal)	1211	68%
Requirements gathering	1123	63%
Information architecture	1093	61%
Personas & user profiles	1090	61%
Task analysis	1037	58%
Usability testing (in a lab)	972	54%
Card sorting	926	52%
Surveys or other online research	865	48%
Usability testing (remote, moderated)	758	42%
Contextual enquiry / ethnography	756	42%
Benchmarking or competitive studies	715	40%
Creating prototypes (high-fidelity)	711	40%
Focus groups	668	37%
Visual design	607	34%
Satisfaction surveys	600	34%
Analyze web metrics/logs	523	29%
Market research	407	23%
Web development	386	22%
Technical writing	354	20%
Usability testing (remote, unmoderated)	316	18%
Accessibility testing	308	17%
Accessibility expert reviews	303	17%
Eye tracking	240	13%
Other	98	5%

Technique Usage Change Over Time

Overall, the prevalence of use for various user experience and user-centered design techniques has been relatively stable. We have indicated those techniques with changes of greater than 5% in bold in the table below. Overall, the usage of techniques has remained mostly stable, with the exception of the 9% decrease in informal usability testing and the addition of a new category, “usability testing (remote, unmoderated)” which 18% of participants indicated utilizing.

Change in Techniques Used 2007 - 2009			
Technique	2007	2009	Change
Heuristic or expert review	77%	74%	- 3%
Usability testing (informal)	77%	68%	- 9%
User research (e.g. interviews & surveys)	74%	75%	+ 1%
Interface / interaction design	73%	70%	- 3%
Creating prototypes (wireframes or low-fidelity)	73%	69%	- 3%
Personas & user profiles	66%	61%	- 5%
Requirements gathering	63%	63%	
Information architecture	63%	61%	- 2%
Task analysis	60%	58%	- 2%
Usability testing (in a lab)	54%	54%	
Card sorting	52%	52%	
Surveys or other online research	47%	48%	+ 1%
Contextual inquiry / ethnography	46%	42%	- 4%
Benchmarking or competitive studies	44%	40%	- 4%
Usability testing (remote, moderated)	42%	42%	
Creating prototypes (high-fidelity)	42%	40%	- 2%
Focus groups	41%	37%	- 4%
Visual design	35%	34%	- 1%
Satisfaction surveys	35%	34%	- 1%
Analyze web metrics/logs	29%	29%	
Market research	24%	23%	- 1%
Technical writing	23%	20%	- 3%
Web development	23%	22%	- 1%
Usability testing (remote, unmoderated)	--	18%	+ 18%
Accessibility testing	19%	17%	- 2%
Accessibility expert reviews	19%	17%	- 2%
Eye tracking	13%	13%	

SALARY COMPARISONS

Overall

The average salary for all respondents in 2009 was \$85,283. (The median salary was \$83,000.) Males earned about \$1,000 more per year on average than did women, with males earning \$85,947 and females earning \$84,892. (The median salaries were \$85,000 for males and \$83,000 for females.)

Average and Median Salary - Respondents by Gender			
	All	Female	Male
Average	\$85,283	\$84,892	\$85,947
Median	\$83,000	\$83,000	\$85,000
n	1503	748	730

Salary Change Over Time – Overall and By Gender

Average and median salaries rose overall since the last UPA salary survey in 2007. The average salary in 2007 was \$83,297 (median = \$80,643); in 2009 the average salary was \$85,284 (median = \$83,000), representing an increase of \$1,987. (The median salary overall increased \$2,357.)

As measured by this survey, the UX “gender gap” has almost entirely disappeared. Women’s salaries increased more than did men’s salaries since the previous survey in 2007. Across all countries, women’s average salary rose more than \$4,000 USD from \$80,680 in 2007 to \$84,892 in 2009. In contrast, men’s salaries were essentially flat over the same time period, rising only \$186 to \$85,947 in 2009. This has reduced the user experience industry’s gender gap from \$8,500 in 2005 to only \$1,000 in 2009.

Change in Average and Median Salary 2005-2009												
	All				Female				Male			
	2005	2007	2009	Δ 07-09	2005	2007	2009	Δ 07-09	2005	2007	2009	Δ 07-09
Average	\$78,445	\$83,297	\$85,284	+\$1,987	\$74,316	\$80,680	\$84,893	+\$4,213	\$82,882	\$85,760	\$85,947	+\$187
Median	\$75,000	\$80,643	\$83,000	+\$2,357	\$72,000	\$79,000	\$83,000	+\$4,000	\$80,000	\$85,000	\$85,000	\$0
n	1329	1312	1503	na	659	636	748	na	647	676	730	na

By Country

We were able to compare salaries across several countries. While averages for countries represented by more than 30 or 40 respondents were relatively stable, we do not have great confidence in the averages and medians for those countries with less than 30 respondents.

Despite this caveat, we did find fairly large salary differences for UX professionals in different countries. According to our data, US-based user experience professionals earned the highest average salary in 2009 (\$95,564), followed by UX professionals in Canada (\$72,352), the UK (\$69,653) and Spain (\$42,154).

Salary By Country, In USD (n>10)								
	Australia	Canada	Germany	Israel	New Zealand	Spain	UK	US
Average	\$71,982	\$72,352	\$86,421	\$39,207	\$55,726	\$42,154	\$69,653	\$95,564
Median	\$63,920	\$69,498	\$79,680	\$44,000	\$54,684	\$39,840	\$60,480	\$90,500
n	23	84	17	11	11	55	103	1067

Salary Change Over Time – By Country

We were able to perform a comparison between the prior survey and this survey for three countries with sufficient sample sizes. Across the four year period from 2005 to 2009, we found that the average salary for US-based UX professionals increased steadily from \$86,689 to \$95,564, an increase of about \$9,000. The year-over-year trends for the UK and Canada seem suspect, probably because of the small sample sizes in previous years, and we recommend disregarding them. Nonetheless we report the findings below.

Salary By Country 2005 - 2009 (n>50)									
	Canada			UK			USA		
	2005	2007	2009	2005	2007	2009	2005	2007	2009
Average	\$59,729	\$75,118	\$72,352	\$72,435	\$87,379	\$69,653	\$86,689	\$94,341	\$95,564
Median	\$59,241	\$73,275	\$69,498	\$67,574	\$78,307	\$60,480	\$80,000	\$90,000	\$90,500
n	76	70	84	91	56	103	763	907	1067

Management and Individual Contributors

As expected, those in management had the highest salaries. User-Centered Design Managers averaged \$88,643 (median = \$90,000), Usability Managers averaged \$93,301 (median = \$99,613) and UX managers averaged \$92,642 (median = \$96,700). Directors averaged between \$108,746 and \$122,508.

Among individual contributors, User Researchers had the highest average salary (\$86,121), followed by UX Practitioners (\$83,888), UCD Practitioners (\$81,352), Information Architects (\$75,041) and Interface Designers (\$74,571).

Average and Median Salary By Job Title												
	Usability Professional	Usability Manager	Usability Director	User-Centered Design Practitioner	User-Centered Design Manager	User-Centered Design Director	User Experience Practitioner	User Experience Manager	User Experience Director	User Researcher	Interface Designer	Information Architect
Avg	\$77,565	\$93,301	\$122,508	\$81,352	\$88,643	\$108,746	\$83,888	\$92,642	\$120,194	\$86,121	\$74,571	\$75,041
Median	\$74,394	\$99,613	\$122,500	\$85,000	\$90,000	\$120,000	\$80,000	\$96,700	\$115,000	\$83,160	\$78,825	\$78,480
n	170	46	14	125	36	16	233	116	96	133	112	92

ABOUT THE USABILITY PROFESSIONALS' ASSOCIATION

The Usability Professionals' Association supports usability specialists, people from all aspects of human-centered design, and the broad family of disciplines that create the user experience in promoting the design and development of usable products.

Our goals are to:

- Provide an international network through which usability professionals can share information about the techniques and methodologies in the profession.
- Create an inclusive community for those interested in usability, whether it is their primary focus or a related discipline.
- Change new product development processes to include a concern for the people who use them by presenting the business case for usability in product development to colleagues, customers, the public and governmental agencies.
- Increase the body of knowledge about usability and user-centered design through professional education, meetings and conventions and other professional interchanges.

Contact UPA

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APPENDIX A: DETAILED STATISTICAL ANALYSES

This appendix provides more in-depth statistical analysis of the survey data. It is organized in a question-and-answer format. The following question is addressed in this section: *Do men and women make the same average salary?* In the full members-only version of the report, the following in-depth questions are addressed as well:

- How much does experience affect salary?
- What effect does an advanced degree have on pay?
- Do managers get paid more than individual contributors
- What is the effect of experience, degree and job type on salary?
- Are there more men than women managers?
- Is there a difference in the proportions of men and women at each level of Individual contributors and manager?
- Do more men than women have PhDs?
- Do managers have more PhD's than individual contributors?

Do men and women make the same average salary?

There is no significant effect of gender on salary (men and women make about the same). In the sample men reported making about \$1k more than women (\$85.7k vs \$84.7k). This difference is not greater than what we'd expect from chance fluctuations in the sampling.